

'Body and Objects'

Chambers

This three-person show, curated by Pi Li, a Ph.D. candidate at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, had a certain charm, although the subject of one of its young Chinese artists, Jiang Zhi, is anything but lighthearted. His glowing black-and-white photographs—unframed, casually taped to the wall—portrayed two topless figures in twinned poses against a blank ground. One was a mature, ballet-skirted woman with both breasts removed, her scarred chest marked by a pattern that resembled a curved tic-tac-toe board. The other figure was a transsexual in jeans, slim hips encircled by a jeweled belt, displaying beautifully formed but obviously fake breasts. The two form a kind of plus and minus as they bare their bodies for

inspection, without evident emotion—whether as objects of specialized desire or damaged goods is difficult to say—an incongruous cross between documentary photo and fashion shoot.

Because they appear so guileless and vulnerable—arms outstretched, heads flung back, torsos thrust forward as if throwing themselves upon the mercy of the viewer—they inspire more sympathy than pity or distaste.

In contrast, Tang Yi's whimsical photographs of a girl blowing up round balloons inside bamboo birdcages—Chardin's bubble-blower updated—formed a pretty sequence of transparent cocktail colors. The girl might also be suckling a tinted breast, except she is breathing air into the object, not taking it out.

Chu Yun created an installation out of about two dozen used bars of white soap, minisculptures that were smoothed and contoured by rubbing them over his body, a variant of self-portraiture. Emphasis on the body per-



Tang Yi, *Blue Balloon*, 2004, color photograph, 21" x 29 3/4".

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sonal is still a relatively new and transgressive idea in China, a concept that "Body and Objects" discussed stylishly, if not too profoundly. —Lilly Wei