

## Vitamin P3: New Perspective in Painting Phaidon Press, 2016

Lee Kit is, despite the perceived limitations of the label, primarily a painter. This categorization comes from Lee himself: 'I am a painter', he wrote in relation to his subtle geometric patterns. 'Perhaps I am naturally poor at making dots. At the furious age of twenty-three, I started to paint chequers. In the repeated lines and squares, I practiced how to have a dialogue with myself.' It was in 2001 that Lee started experimenting with painting on fabric. At the time he was studying with the abstract painter Lui Chun Kwong (b.1956) in the Department of Fine Arts at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. For decades, Lui has remained committed to obsessively translating the elemental forces of nature into abstractions of lines and coloured strips, creating paintings that are as infinitely varied as they are consistent.

Lee's paintings – both on cloth and found cardboard that often contains hints of foreign packaging – use gently pastel colours, evocative of some of the tones in Lui's compositions, or indeed those of the American painter Agnes Martin (1912–2004). Yet Lee's images are perhaps the least committed kind of painting, doggedly refusing to be recognized as a painted picture. His acrylic stripes and checks, together with occasional hand-painted song lyrics, are created with painstaking care and a minimalist sensitivity, yet come in many guises: picnic blankets, tablecloths, bed sheets, curtains, wall decorations and flags for street protests. The results are tidy and meticulously regular, so much so that they often pass as mechanically printed. These textile paintings have every desire to be integrated into the appearance, actions and order of everyday life, always ready to be used, stained and circulated.

But what does it mean for a painting to be not simply seen but, more importantly, used? As a tablecloth or picnic blanket, such paintings are incorporated relatively easily into the running of art events or gatherings with friends and colleagues (which the artist documents and considers artworks). In fact, Lee's painted fabrics blend in so well that they are not so much artworks pretending to be everyday objects as everyday objects proper: material for people to sleep on, dine on, wipe a table with, to cover a window or just to bear witness to events.

Like many traditional Chinese intellectuals and artists who are concerned with social politics but limited by national circumstances, Lee chooses to express his frustrations and opinions imaginatively, infusing his politics into the narratives and stories that accumulate – sometimes literally – on his paintings. By providing practical functions and offering a space or a platform for events to take place, these hand-painted textiles could be said to activate actions, connections and social relationships. The question is no longer whether we should still consider them as paintings, rather, how do we evaluate the subtle presence that these patterns have in the political realities today? This is not overtly political painting, but painting as politics.

– Carol Yinghua Lu

LEE KIT Born 1978, Hong Kong. Lives and works in Taipei, Taiwan.

Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2015 – SMAK, Ghent, Belgium; 'Please Wait', mother's tankstation, Dublin; 2014 – 'How are things on the West Coast?', Lombard Freid Gallery, New York; 2013 – 'You (you)', Hong Kong Pavilion, 55th Venice Biennale; 2012 – 'Every Breath You Take', Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai; 2011 – 'Henry (Have you ever been this low?)', Vancouver, Canada. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2015 – Sharjah Biennial, UAE; 2014 – 'Ten Million Rooms of Yearning: Sex in Hong Kong', Para/Site, Hong Kong; 'Room Service', Staatliche Kunsthalle, Baden-Baden, Germany; 2013 – 'Duchamp', Ullens Centre for Contemporary Art, Beijing; 2012 – 'Home WHERE?', Lombard Freid Projects, New York. Selected Bibliography: 2014 – 'Bringing a Flagship of Contemporary Art to Hong Kong', *The New York Times*, Mar; 2013 – Anthony Yung, 'Lee Kit: The feeling of being hit head-on', *ArtReview*, Spring/Summer; John Jervis, 'In Pursuit of ... Lee Kit', *ArtAsiaPacific*, Mar/Apr; 2010 – Victoria Yip, 'Material Man', *Muse Magazine*, Feb.



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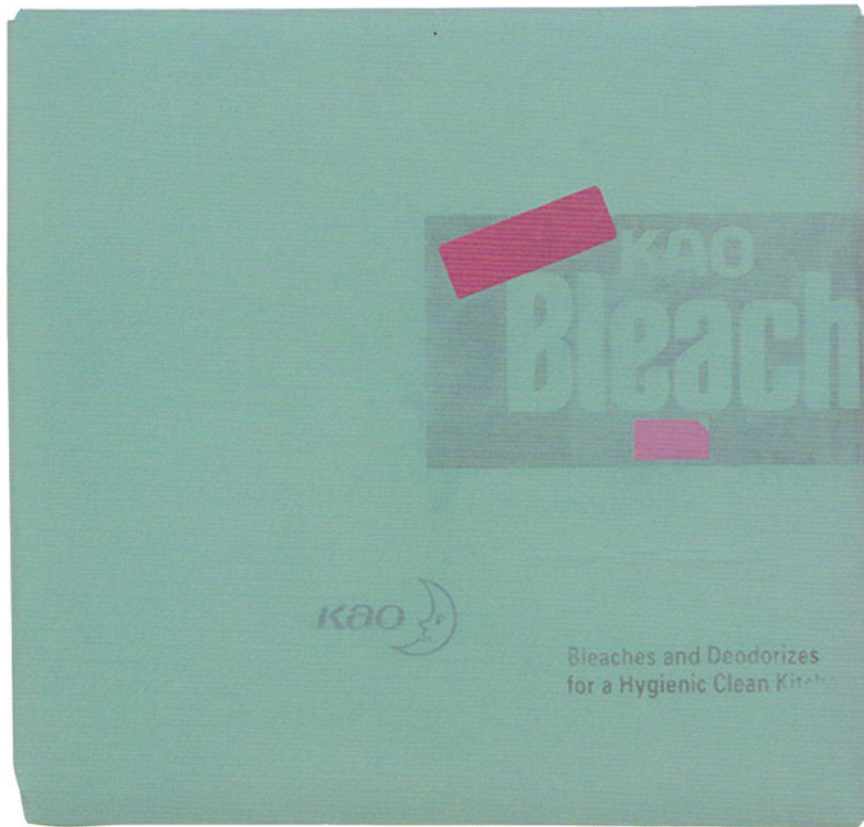
1. All Day, 2012  
Acrylic, emulsion paint and inkjet ink on cardboard, acrylic on fabric, readymade objects, installation view

2. Sunday Afternoon: Picnic with friends and hand-painted cloth at Yung Shu O, Sai Kung, Hong Kong, 2003  
Acrylic on fabric, photograph  
Dimensions variable

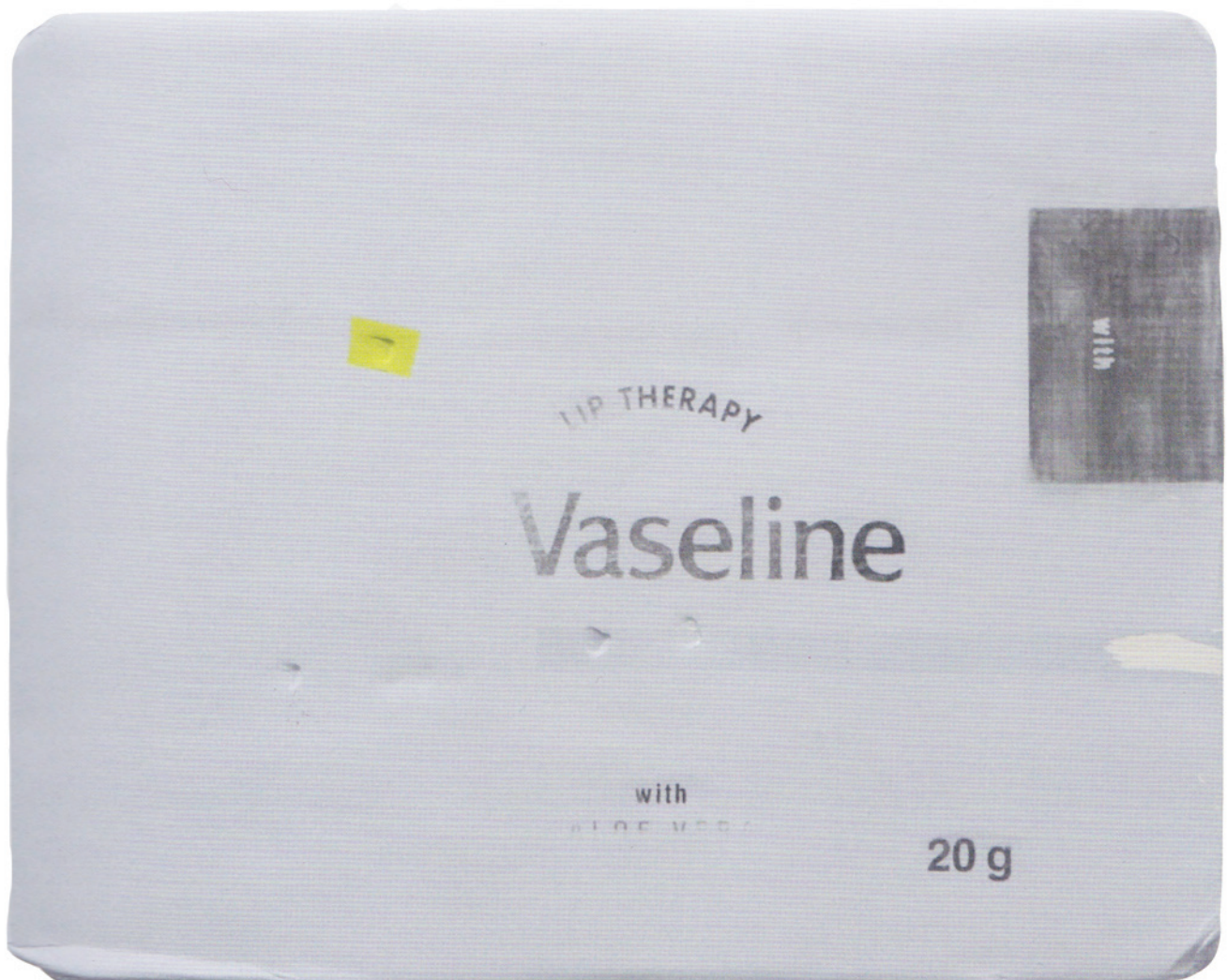
3. KAO – Bleach, 2011  
Acrylic, emulsion paint and inkjet ink on acid-free board  
47 × 44 cm / 18 1/2 × 17 3/8 in

4. Vaseline – with, 2012  
Acrylic, emulsion paint and inkjet ink on acid-free board  
67 × 62 cm / 29 1/8 × 24 3/8 in





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Cui Jie's paintings are largely based on her continuous study of the architectural landscape in the three cities in which she has lived: Shanghai, where she was born and grew up, Hangzhou, where she attended the National Art Academy, and Beijing, where she currently lives and works. She observed at first hand the outstanding transformation that urbanization in Chinese cities has brought about, drastically changing the cityscape, with a proliferation of buildings, high-rises and plazas being erected throughout. Set in motion by the Chinese government's relentless introduction of marketization since the 1980s, and in particular after 1989, this ruthless process of modernization standardized urban planning. The result was a formula of buildings that mix the influences and aesthetics of the Bauhaus with Soviet and Chinese communist styles, complemented by highly symbolic public sculptures taking centre stage in open squares and expansive plazas.

Cui's paintings depict these urban architectural creations and presences, but from her distinct perspective. In her eyes, the sculptures that inhabit the different city squares appear superimposed on the buildings in the background. At some point, due to the effects of the depicted light, the surface of one merges with the surface of the other so that the sculpture becomes part of the architecture and the architecture part of the sculpture. Her large canvases present surreal architectural drawings, in which enlarged sculptures are grafted onto anonymous buildings found on city avenues, on street corners and in suburban areas. Cui recognizes that this explosion in urban development privileged speed and efficiency over stylistic concerns, resulting in odd changes, random interpretations and, at times, distortions of form and scale. In her work, the buildings are both non-specific and familiar; as are the sculptures which tend towards stereotypes such as birds in flight (be they eagles, pigeons or cranes), arrangements of supported stainless-steel balls, flowing ribbons, or archetypal female and or athletic figures. Donning bright colours, her paintings weave together true-to-life images with imaginary ones to generate the effect of multiple exposures, spotted with marks that resemble the scratches on the surface of photographic negatives.

Overbearing office buildings, common-looking residential housing blocks, circular staircases, blue glass façades, unremarkable ceilings in parking lots, tiled floors, an abundance of columns and domes: all these architectural elements, and more, are juxtaposed in Cui's paintings, with careful attention to composition and surface texture, as well as to the physical 'architecture' built up on the painting by multiple layers of paint. This lengthy, painstaking process can take between several months and a year. The architectural and sculptural elements in her images are given sharp, clean edges through the use of sticking tape, removed once the paint has been applied. Their surfaces, which merge and blend into one another, are painted with steady, smooth brushwork that gives them a distinctively metallic shine and texture. The backgrounds, in contrast, are treated with a more abstract approach, in which the artist gives herself free rein, juxtaposing sometimes incongruous colours. Even so, despite the imaginary nature of these cityscapes, Cui Jie's paintings perhaps remain one of the more perceptive and realistic depictions of the absurd and multi-layered excesses of a particular moment in Chinese urban development.

– Carol Yinghua Lu



**CUI JIE** Born 1983, Shanghai, China. Lives and works in Beijing.  
Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – mother's tankstation, Dublin; 2015 – Start Gallery, Jaffa, Israel; 2014 – 'The Proposals For Old and New Urbanism', Leo Xu Projects, Shanghai; 2012 – Leo Xu Projects, Shanghai. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2015 – 'The World in 2015', Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing; 2014 – 'My Generation: Young Chinese Artists', Tampa Museum of Art & Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, FL; 2013 – 'Green Box-Remapping: The Space of Media-Reality', Tianhong Mei Heyuan Arts Center, Hangzhou, China; 2012 – 'Face', Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai; 2009 – 4th Prague Biennale, Czech Republic. Selected Bibliography: 2015 – Christina Sanchez-Kozyreva, 'Unpredictable Constructions', *Pipeline*, Sep-Nov; 2014 – Hanlu Zhang, 'Cui Jie: The Proposals for Old and New Urbanism', *Artforum*, Dec; 2013 – Ling Gu, 'Cui Jie', *LEAP*, Feb; 2012 – Kelly Crow, 'China's Rising Art Stars', *The Wall Street Journal*, Jan.

1. **S House #1, 2015**  
Oil on canvas  
200 x 150 cm / 78 ¾ x 59 ½ in
2. **Worker Cultural Palace in Dongguan, 2014**  
Oil on canvas  
150 x 200 cm / 59 x 78 ¾ in
3. **Overpass at Shuang Jing Qiao, 2014**  
Oil on canvas  
150 x 200 cm / 59 x 78 ¾ in

**Vitamin P3: New Perspective in Painting** *Phaidon Press, 2016*



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4. Crane House #4, 2015  
Oil and canvas  
230 × 150 cm / 90.5 × 59 in
5. Zhao Wei Building, 2014  
Oil on canvas  
200 × 190 cm / 78 ¾ × 74 ¾ in

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Mairead O'hEocha creates compelling images from places that many of us would probably pass by without a second thought. In *Mespil Road Petrol Station and Canal* (2013), the canopy of an otherwise unremarkable petrol station is reflected in water at night, creating a vibrant, animated pool of colour in the foreground of the painting. Another inhospitable night scene, *Hoarding, Lights and Rain* (2014), shows a blank wall flooded with teal, sky blue, yellow, apricot and pink streaks that recall the sun-drenched abstractions of the Californian painter Richard Diebenkorn (1922–93).

O'hEocha's project is not as easily understood, however, as a simple reassessment of overlooked subjects. For every petrol station there is a painting like *Castle Ruin at Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly* (2011) or *Flowers and Herakles* (2015), both of which take on rather conventional landscape and still life subjects. These works subtly reveal one of the artist's enduring philosophical themes – the often dissonant conjunction of the past and the present, the traditional and the contemporary. In the case of the latter painting, O'hEocha's picture eschews the twee decorativeness that might historically be associated with such a floral subject, and instead approaches it as an opportunity to reflect on image appropriation (the Greek mythical subject featured on the vase) and the trope of *vanitas* – symbolizing the brevity of human life – as implied by the barely-there, already wilting flowers.

Many encounters with O'hEocha's art begin by focusing on the geographical specificities of her painting: the landscape of Ireland, particularly the counties around Dublin, where she lives. This region, though beautiful, can also be bleak and withdrawn; *Sunset Please* (2014) is the humorous title of a chilly seascape. Generally lacking the dramatic, picturesque qualities of Ireland's southwest coast, the places that O'hEocha chooses to paint are not those of a pristine wilderness, rather they are indelibly marked by habitation. Ireland's turbulent and violent past is never far from our minds in looking at her work, nor the country's recent economic tribulations, even if the physical traces of those histories are not always apparent.

Since O'hEocha never includes human figures, even supposedly jolly locations – a merry-go-round, for instance, or an arboretum – become desolate, unloved and haunting. In the case of *Gorilla Ornament, Arboretum, Co. Carlow* (2012), the great ape provides an amusing non sequitur, but that moment of comedy is not enough to humanize the scene. O'hEocha manages to make paintings that are at once traditional and stridently contemporary, specific and archetypal, loaded with pathos but also inflected with an elevating glint of humour.

– Jonathan Griffin

MAIREAD O'HEOCHA Born 1962, Dublin, Ireland. Lives and works in Dublin. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2016 – mother's tankstation, Dublin; 2014 – 'The Paradise', The Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin; 2012 – 'The sky was yellow and the sun was blue', mother's tankstation, Dublin; 2011 – 'Whisper Concrete', Butler Gallery, Kilkenny, Ireland. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2016 – 'The Mud of Compound Experience', mother's tankstation and Leo Xu Projects, Hong Kong; 2015 – 'What Is and What Might Be', Drogheda Arts Festival, Highlanes Gallery, Louth; 2012 – 'Up the Walls', The Model, Sligo, Ireland; 2011 – 'Terrible Beauty: Art, Crisis, Change & The Office of Non-Compliance', Dublin Contemporary. Selected Bibliography: 2015 – Niall McGonagle, 'What lies beneath – Hoarding, Lights and Rain', *Irish Independent*, Feb; Aidan Dunne, 'Mairead O'hEocha: Paintings', *The Irish Times*, Jan; 2013 – Ruth Handler, 'Kunst = Kapital', *Capital*, Jun; 2011 – Gemma Tipton, 'Mairead O'hEocha', *Artforum*, Apr; Isobel Harbison, 'Mairead O'hEocha', *Frieze*, Sep.



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| 1. Castle Ruin at Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly, 2011<br>Oil on board<br>40 × 49 cm / 15 7/8 × 19 1/4 in | 3. Gorilla Ornament, Arboretum, Co. Carlow, 2012<br>Oil on board<br>38 × 53 cm / 15 × 20 7/8 in  |
| 2. Sunset Please, 2014<br>Oil on board<br>58 × 75 cm / 22 7/8 × 29 1/2 in                           | 4. Mespil Road Petrol Station and Canel, 2013<br>Oil on board<br>43.1 × 60.2 cm / 17 × 23 3/4 in |



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