

## JIA – Lost Highway 29 April – 17 June 2017

In each case, the *Road Series* photos, and *Orientation I: Bicycle Tracks*, we assume the point of view of the artist from moving vehicles under conditions that frustrate the technological apparatus that records these movements, and obscure the locations from recognition. Each work bears an associated narrative from the artist's own past.

*The Road Series*, begun in 2009 and ongoing, derives from the recognition that in Beijing, where the artist grew up, once traditional neighborhoods were demolished in favor of high-rise apartment blocks, and as bicycle transportation gave way to a sudden tide of automobiles, inevitably, changes in attitudes, personalities, and aspirations also occurred. Even friends and fellow artists became dominated by obsessions of consumerist fantasy. Two elements stood out as the most coveted objects of desire: (1) Cars, and (2) The West ("where luxury brands are born").

*The Road Series* photos are all shot from moving cars in nine Western countries wherein the car windshield becomes a lens through which we see these places, most often under conditions of clouds and mist, and the perspective distortions that resemble the genre devices of traditional Chinese landscape painting. If the images might ever seem attractive, it is worth remarking that one can never gain from them even an approximate sense of which country they depict, or sometimes even whether it is day or night.

*Orientation I: Bicycle Tracks* derives from a childhood memory of a year when the artist's parents left her alone with a TV for lengthy periods while they worked long hours in a hospital. "At that time," the artist recalls, "almost no one in Beijing had a car, so even stars rode bicycles. When I saw my favorite TV host stopped at a corner on his bicycle, I asked my mother why he did not recognize me, why he did not even greet me." This disorientation of subject and object in representation and time is also present in *Bicycle Tracks*, wherein the artist, with an aim to acquaint herself with her new city, Berlin, with daily bicycle trips continually confronts childhood visions of her native city, Beijing: the bicycles, the broad avenues, the Plattenbau apartment blocks, the "Gingerbread Style" of Socialist Classicism.

The manner of execution reinforces this disorientation. She records her progress by means of GPS recording app that diagrams each day's route with a separate color. But what the device really registers is not the route *per se*, but an assemblage of points from an average distance between three GPS satellite positions with margins of error of 5-15 meters. This "fictionalization" of the diagram is compounded by the fact that, on her bicycle, she becomes the stylus of the drawing and is therefore blind to its overall form while making it.

Correspondingly, front and rear tires of a bicycle trace different routes measurable with a mathematical formula. According to the latter, whenever she would draw a discrete route by hand, the computer instantly would draw a different one.

Drew Hammond, 2017

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She lives and works in Berlin, Germany.*