

GUO JIAN

OUR LIVES ARE FULL OF SUNSHINE

ARC
ONE
GALLERY

我们的生活充满阳光

9 AUGUST - 16 SEPTEMBER



GUO JIAN, *BLOW A BALLOON*, 2023, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 200 X 300 CM.

GUO JIAN makes huge paintings. He has to. Their scale addresses the largeness of political and cultural artifice, where an acute sense of urgency quickly becomes apparent. Optimistically titled *Our Lives are Full of Sunshine*, this epic series represents the artist's first exhibition of paintings in over a decade. These electrifying works portray an idealistic society that shies away from harsh realities, preferring to live in visions of beauty and nostalgia.

Our Lives are Full of Sunshine feature fiendish reworkings of the Chinese 'Nianhua' or 'New Year' paintings, which present highly symbolic landscapes and romanticised figures that represent hope for a beautiful, peaceful, prosperous and long-lived life. These visions of joy and longevity are celebrated at the turn of the new year, and convey aspirations for the future. Against this tradition, Guo Jian has invented a cast of childlike characters who lie, cheat, steal and run amok in front of the paintings of utopia.

These figures are cynical sprites, expressions of a naïve generation. They frolic in the infantilised uniform of some unreal military, and denote both victims and perpetrators. Walled off from an unobtainable vision of heaven, these 'children' are devoid of innocence. In cold, concrete streets, they turn on each other. We'll never be sure of what happens to these youthful soldiers, but one thing's for sure: their paradise is questionable.

Guo Jian is an iconic artist of Cynical Realism, a contemporary movement that examines Chinese history and culture with a satirical lens. Author Nicholas Jose has described Guo Jian as "a fabulist,

a performer, a trickster, and a storyteller.” Following his experience as a propaganda artist and officer in the People’s Liberation Army in the late 1970s, Guo Jian has carved an impressive career as a contemporary artist in Australia, participating in numerous exhibitions here and in Germany, France, Belgium, Sweden, USA, Mexico, New Zealand, Hong Kong, and China. He has major works in key institutional collection at the National Gallery of Australia, the Art Gallery of New South Wales and Queensland Art Gallery. He is well-represented across several significant private collections, including the Geoff Raby Collection of Chinese Art, which last year was gifted as a record-breaking donation to the La Trobe University.