

## APR 5 LIU BOLIN: ORDER OUT OF CHAOS | ELI KLEIN GALLERY

REVIEWS (/CULTURE/CATEGORY/REVIEWS)



Liu Bolin (born Shandong, China, 1973). *Hiding in Italy-Teatro*, 2019. Archival inkjet print, 44 1/4 x 59 inches (112.5 x 150 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Eli Klein Gallery. © Liu Bolin.

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Eli Klein Gallery's latest exhibition, "Order out of Chaos," presents an arresting progression of Liu Bolin's artistry. The exhibition, which runs through May 25, 2024, ushers in Bolin's foray into sculpture with the debut of his "Chaos" series, alongside his recent photographic works. This exhibition is the artist's ninth solo show at the gallery, exploring the ramifications of our society becoming progressively more intertwined with technology.

At the heart of "Order out of Chaos" is the "Invisible Man" transforming others to become "invisible." This shift is encapsulated in his novel approach to sculpture, where the artist employs a 3D scanner in performances that are as much about sensing as concealing. The intentionally outdated scanner captures each subject as though they are glitching or struggling to download — a poignant commentary on the digital era's inability to erase or conceal identity fully. This relinquishing of control to the machine results in a somewhat random composition and speaks volumes about our surrender to digital categorization and fragmentation.

“Presently, I’m concentrating on using 3D scanning and printing technology to convey a “fragmented” effect, showcasing the detachment of human souls from their bodies, while also articulating my concerns regarding artificial intelligence.”

— Liu Bolin



Liu Bolin. *Chaos No.6 - Little Girl*, 2024. Painted hyper polylactic acid, 22 x 9 7/8 x 11 7/8 inches (56 x 25 x 30 cm) Unique Courtesy of the artist and Eli Klein Gallery © Liu Bolin



Liu Bolin. *Chaos No.7 - Couple*, 2024. Painted UV curable resin, 22 x 8 5/8 x 8 5/8 inches (56 x 22 x 22 cm) Unique. Courtesy of the artist and Eli Klein Gallery © Liu Bolin

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Does your formal training as a sculptor inform your photography process?

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*"Starting from 1991, I've undergone professional sculptor training in China, completing both undergraduate and graduate programs, which has provided a robust groundwork for my present photography pursuits. Sculpture and photography reside within the realm of art, although they are different forms of expression. In my artistic endeavors in both forms, I maintain a consistent coherent thinking mode that permeates between sculpture and photography. The influence is reflected by each other. When I engage in photography, I am also concurrently involved in sculptural creation. Conversely, sculptural creation stimulates my multidimensional perspective on photography."*

-Liu Bolin

The exhibition also extends Bolin's exploration of invisibility through his "Hiding in the City" series which enriches the exhibition with layers of visual and thematic complexity. Works like the collaboration with Annie Leibovitz in "Central Park", the politically charged "HK Message Wall," and the consumerism critique "Hiding in Italy - Fruit Juices" demonstrate the artist's continued mastery in using his body to blend into environments, highlighting social, cultural, and political criticism. Through the meticulous process of painting his body to mirror his surroundings, Bolin becomes a chameleon of sorts, his presence both concealing and revealing in this segment as well. This duality invites viewers to engage in a visual hide-and-seek, prompting a deeper examination of the environments we inhabit and often overlook. Each photograph is a meticulously crafted narrative, urging the audience to ponder the interaction between the individual and the collective, the visible and the invisible, and the personal and the political. The photographs are more than images; they are visual puzzles that challenge perceptions, making the familiar unfamiliar and in doing so, encouraging a reevaluation of our relationship with the everyday.





Liu Bolin (born Shandong, China, 1973), *HK Message Wall*, 2019. Archival inkjet print, 44 1/4 x 59 inches (112.5 x 150 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Eli Klein Gallery. © Liu Bolin.

“In my works, through the disappearance of my personal body or the disappearance of the people around me, I have been trying to ask questions about the relationship of mutual constraint and dissolution between human beings and the civilization created by mankind.”

— Liu Bolin

Your first work of the “Hiding in the City” series, created in 2005, was in response to the demolition of your studio by the Chinese government. Do you think you would have found inspiration for the

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series at a later time had this event never happened?

*"This is a particularly good question. Looking back at this series from today's perspective, the inspiration behind my creation was to protest against the demolition of the studio in Suojia Village in Beijing in 2005. It aimed to express artists' voices through the disappearance of my body, provoking societal introspection. But if we trace back further, the clothing in my first piece was tailored before the demolition of the studio. I made a lot of preparations for the cloth, crafting camouflage military uniforms from silver reflective fabric. At the time of tailoring the cloth, I was not expecting the exact day the studio would be demolished. In fact, I experienced a special period of ten years, from graduating with my undergraduate degree in 1995 until truly working on this piece in 2005. As a young art graduate entering society at that time, I was constantly striving to pursue my inner dreams, while experiencing the trials and tribulations of society. The experiences of these ten years made me deeply feel the sense of being on the margins of society, in a state of being neglected and disappearing into the environment. So even if the studio demolition had not occurred, this series of works would still have been created, though perhaps it would have taken longer to find an appropriate time and way for expression. The demolition of the studio happened to trigger my creation. Of course, in a sense, history is not accidental in some ways."*

*-Liu Bolin*

The collection is a thought-provoking exploration of visibility, identity, and the digital footprint. The sculptures, fragmented yet whole, visible yet invisible, invite introspection about our place in a digital landscape that both defines and obscures. The outdated 3D scanner, rather than a limitation, becomes a metaphor for the imperfections and disruptions of digital translation, sparking a reflection on the authenticity of our online selves. Through these works, Bolin and his collaborators invite viewers to peer beyond the surface, challenging them to consider the layers of meaning hidden in plain sight.





Liu Bolin (born Shandong, China, 1973). *Central Park*, 2016 Archival inkjet print 53 1/8 x 70 7/8 inches (135 x 180 cm). Photograph by Annie Leibovitz. Courtesy of the artist and Eli Klein Gallery © Liu Bolin © Annie Leibovitz

**How do you approach collaborations? Whether that be working with painters for the “Hiding in the City” series or your work with Annie Leibovitz and Kenny Scharf?**

*“The awareness of my work has increased with the development of media and the internet. So there are a lot of brand collaborations and artist collaborations happening gradually. The new chemistry is created with other people in the process of different collaborations. Since 2011, I’ve been working with musicians like Bon Jovi. I’ve also collaborated with some brand designers, organized by Harper’s Bazaar magazine. Whether it’s brand designers, musicians, or artists such as Annie Leibovitz and Kenny Scharf, we all have our understanding of color and shape and also share ideas with them. These variances and resemblances in the art subsequently sparked fresh possibilities during the whole creation process. In creating Hiding in the City, I asked different people to help me paint my body and clothes, and record photography. I have my arrangement and conception of the light and shadow, the set, the effect of the image I would like to present, and the idea behind the image. In the process of creating my work, my role is more like a movie director. Interestingly, we had a conversation about this when I was working with Annie Leibovitz. I asked her, I said we’re both photographers, who does this work belong to? And she said to me, “This work is yours, and I’m going to help you photograph it.” “*

*-Liu Bolin*

"Order out of Chaos" is a critical discourse on the interplay between technology and human essence. Liu Bolin's evolution of invisibility mirrors our societal

visual art to become a vital analysis on the human condition in the digital age. This show is a must-see for those interested in the intersection of technology, art, and society, offering a unique perspective that resonates with our digital era.

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Liu Bolin (born Shandong, China, 1973). *Chaos - Me*, 2024. Painted UV curable resin and stainless steel 26 x 82 5/8 x 29 1/2 inches (66 x 210 x 75cm) Unique. Courtesy of the artist and Eli Klein Gallery © Liu Bolin

“Like the uniform I wear, akin to a chameleon, imbued with vitality, I will observe and interpret the world in my way. As long as I exist, my art creation journey will endure.”

— Liu Bolin

**You've said before that your work is a response to your encounters, a form of protest to global cultural, social, and political issues— what**

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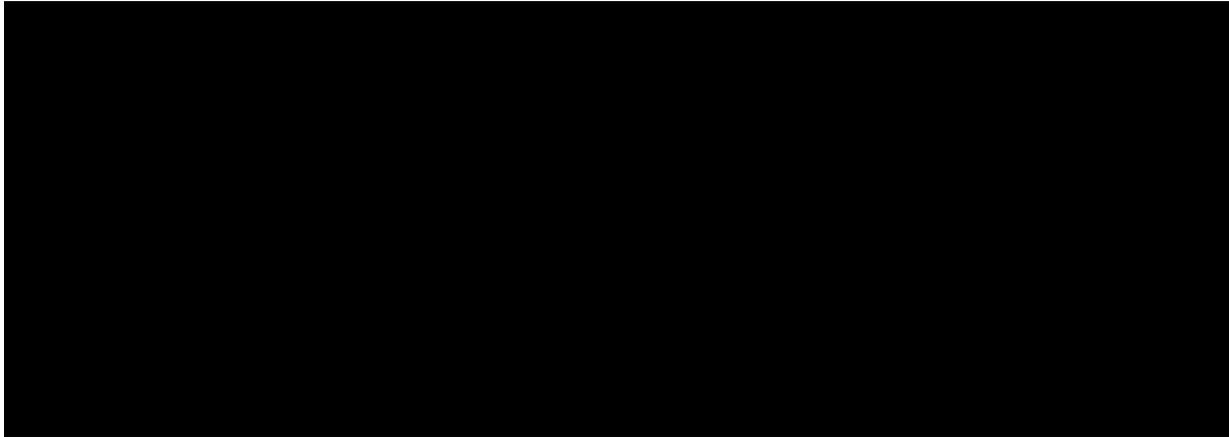
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current events ~~are~~ informing your next body of work?

*"In my works, through the disappearance of my personal body or the disappearance of the people around me, I have been trying to ask questions about the relationship of mutual constraint and dissolution between human beings and the civilization created by mankind. Let me give you an example. Six years have passed since I last came to the United States. In these years, people around the world have experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russo-Ukrainian war, the war between Israel and Gaza, and technologically the innovations of Chat GPT and Open AI. Then I realized, we human beings are facing an unprecedented crisis. This crisis is not about consumption, energy, or political issues that I have focused on in my previous works in this series. It seems to me that human society has entered a new era and needs to face a more potential crisis. Therefore, if this series continues, I hope that the issues I focus on will not only be around me personally, but in a broader sense, the issues that all human beings need to face in the development of civilization."*

*-Liu Bolin*



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*Courtesy of the artist and Eli Klein Gallery. © Liu Bolin.*

Liu Bolin (</culture/tag/Liu+Bolin>), Order Out of Chaos  
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