



AUTO PORTRAIT JAUNE AVEC COQ | 2007 | OIL ON CANVAS | 200 X 160 CM



AUTO PORTRAIT SUR TOILE | 2007 | OIL ON CANVAS | 150 X 150 CM

GALERIE KASHYA HILDEBRAND

Talstrasse 58, 8001 Zurich, Switzerland Tel: +41 44 210 02 02 Fax: +41 44 210 02 15
Opening Hours: Monday to Friday: 11 – 18.30, Saturday: 12 – 16.00, or by appointment
info@kashyahildebrand.org www.kashyahildebrand.org



TIANBING LI

THE CHILDREN'S PROJECT



AUTO PORTRAIT AVEC PARAPLUIE | 2007 | OIL ON CANVAS | 200 X 160 CM

Born in 1974 in Guilin, the capital city of China's southern province of Guangxi, Li Tianbing first discovered painting as a child with traditional Chinese ink painting techniques. In 1997 he moved to Paris to attend L'Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts, from which he graduated with highest honors in 2002. He has continued to reside in Paris, although he frequently returns to China and has recently begun to exhibit his work internationally.

Although he is still a young artist, Li has already produced a substantial body of work in a surprising variety of contrasting stylistic idioms. Li believes artists should avoid repetitive production of signature styles: "I always struggle against this idea," he says. "Style for me is a way to see the world, the world changes, our vision changes."¹ The present work, is part of a series of paintings from the *My Other Childhood* series, in which the artist deploys old family photographs as models and reimagines himself as a child, in some with a fictional brother and in others with tiny contemporary toys in bright colors that he did not possess. The series follows on his previous *Beizitou - One Hundred Children* series, in which lone children are portrayed in a similar though more closely-cropped manner in remembrance of China's one-child policy and the deprivations of that era. The title is ironic in that *beizitou* is a traditional Chinese motif in which groups of joyful babies are depicted at play as a sign of prosperity and happiness.

In the bleak gray tones of old black and white photographs, Li instead pictures typical children in typical Chinese settings as he revisits today his own past, adding colour and imagination to the somber childhood that was his. In both of these series, the artist's rendering of the photographic calls attention to the passage of time and to imperfections in the past's conservation; meticulously painted surface 'defects' suggest the weathered photographs were long forgotten in a damp place in which the images progressively degraded. The tension between the photograph as documentary evidence, the registration of memory, and as a physical, constructed (even fictional) object is highlighted in Li's work, which provides a poignant entrée to both the times of his own childhood and his recent aspirations for how things might have been.

¹Cited in Randy Rosen, "To Arrive Where We Started And Know the Place For the First Time," published in conjunction with the exhibition Li Tianbing: *Beizitou - One Hundred Children*, Zurich, 2007.



AUTO PORTRAIT AVEC SAC ROUGE | 2007 | OIL ON CANVAS | 200 X 135 CM