

Timur Si-Qin  
Transformers  
28/10/2011 - 10/12/2011

Artforum described Si-Qin's 2011 exhibition *Mainstream*, his first at Société and the first time the artist exhibited his *Transformers* work: "The artist lined the gallery's two rooms with thirty-two computer printout copies of posters for the movie *Transformers* (2007) and overlaid each with plant leaves of varying shapes, sizes, and species. [...] Nature and culture, here framed in stark contrast to one another, nevertheless exist on the same plane. In fact, the logic of mechanical reproduction and the aesthetic of mass culture constitute our contemporary natural order. Si-Qin's art, in the free rein that it takes on culture, simultaneously embodies the act of consumption and the ethos and forms of digital media. Contemporary society's dissociation from a state of nature can be seen in the screen-tested aesthetic regime of *Transformers*, where lines deriving from American car production designate Optimus Prime as the kindred, benevolent protector, and organic design elements identify Megatron as an evil, foreign body threatening destruction."

In the run-up to that exhibition, Si-Qin photographed each of the 32 collages, some more than once, and some at different stages in their development. This display consists of 22 of those photographs mounted in chrome frames; the collages' frames are aluminum. Over the course of the 2011 exhibition, the plant matter in the collages deteriorated – wilted, browned, and began to rot, quickly, as organic matter tends to do, while the exhibition was still up. The collages incorporated the irreversible life cycle of consumption and planned obsolescence into their very nature. The second incarnation captures instances in the course of the collages' deterioration but also preserves the moment in which some of them were new, pristine capturing the fantasy of newness through photography's arm's-length remove from reality.

In the years since 2011, Si-Qin has made work that exhibits an explicit relationship to Taoism, mainly through his incorporation of the Taiji into the PEACE visual identity with which he has branded many of his recent works. Si-Qin interprets the first line of the Tao – "The Tao is not the eternal Tao." – as meaning that nothing stays the same. No solution is ever an eternal solution. He sees the Western tradition of criticality as a conflation of truth and beauty with moral righteousness. From an Eastern perspective, right and wrong are more interconnected, mutually manifest, and situated beyond the reach of human notions of right and wrong. The *Transformers* works don't reference this tradition explicitly; the perspective is still nascent, emerging, in the work.