

**LISHA BAI  
HERE TODAY**

October 5 - November 5, 2017

Opening Reception: Thursday, October 5th, 6-8pm

“The sands of time” is surely an overused, even needlessly melodramatic, idiom. But of all materials on earth, sand is uniquely suited to make time visible. Hourglasses aside, sand’s particulate form bears witness to geologic time. Its smoothness and smallness is the result of millennia of erosion and weathering of quartz, aragonite, coral, and shellfish. Given time, sand accumulates and lithifies, turning back into rock (aptly called sandstone). Geologists say that half of all quartz sand grains have completed this sand-to-rock cycle at least six times.

Lisha Bai has been working with sand for over a decade. In her first sculptural experiments with the material, she fashioned it into slender columns and block-like cubes reminiscent of Minimalism’s bare austerity. Yet the sand’s crumbly texture, the way it made the edges of each of her objects uneven and crater-like, fused staid monumentality with informal disintegration. The works evoked the precarity of the timeless: things that seem fixed are bound to fall apart.

Bai’s latest body of work, assembled for the exhibition *Here Today*, retains this paradoxical combination of fleeting ephemerality and concrete fixity. A suite of site-specific trompe l’oeil-esque windows line the front of the gallery. The windows are cast from life in colored granules of feldspar, a mineral that makes up nearly half the earth’s crust. Bai composes the feldspar in bluish-purple and yellow-orange gradients that look like a fading sunset; in a formalist twist, the sand is both construction material and image-maker at once: it structures the dense widow-objects and the abstract horizons they contain. Though the windows image the solar day, they are merely simulated vistas. Embedded in these grains-of-sand-as-analog-pixels is something closer to the “screen time” of digital immersion.

Bai leaves traces of her physical person in other sculptures. These works, like a snapshot, fix the body in an instant. In “Weight of Me” a single footprint crushes a low pile of sand; “Reach” indexes the height of the artist’s upstretched hand giving a high-five. That bodies won’t last is one metaphorical implication, of course, but the works remind us that art, too, has a built-in obsolescence. Do not lose heart. At the back of the gallery, Bai closes the exhibition with “Could be Worse,” a smiley-faced doodle in sand. As we make our marks, so to speak, what have we got to lose? After all, nothing is permanent. Or as the old aphorism goes, “Here today....”

— Jenny Jaskey

Lisha Bai is a New York based artist. She received her MFA from Yale (2004) and her BFA from Washington University in St. Louis (2001). She was awarded a Terra Foundation for American Art Fellowship in Giverny, France and received the S.J. Wallace Truman Fund Award from the National Academy in New York. She has exhibited work nationally and internationally at such venues as Carroll Fletcher (London), Franklin Art Works (Minneapolis), Klaus von Nichtssagend (New York), and the National Academy Museum (New York).