

# ARTFORUM

OCTOBER 2007

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

## The Art of Production

MUNICH

Lisa Tan

GRIMM|ROSENFELD

Never before have I seen such an austere conceptual exhibition with so few images and so much text that, at the same time, was imbued with such lightness, tenderness, heartfelt longing, imagination, and even humor. For her previous show in Munich, New York-based artist Lisa Tan plotted out an imaginary journey in *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, 2004, that would take her to visit all the publicly exhibited works by Hieronymus Bosch in 124 days. In this exhibition, “The Baudelaire Itineraries,” she turned her attention to the writings of the French poet, art critic, and dandy Charles Baudelaire. Selecting pages from an English translation of his review of the Salon of 1846, she constructed an itinerary to visit the artworks mentioned, now housed around the world.

The show opened with a photograph of the title page of *Art in Paris 1845–1862*, edited by Jonathan Mayne, from which she took Baudelaire’s text. Alongside it hung a famous photograph of the poet scowling; a caption beneath gives the photographer’s name, Carjat, and the picture’s approximate date, 1861–62. A third photo, a lithograph, shows a couple in swapped roles: The woman is dressed as a man, and the man as a woman. Lithography was a popular medium in this era for the dissemination of mildly pornographic images. A caption bears the title *Don’t Play the Heartless One*, the artist’s name (Tassaert), and the location where the image is housed (the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris). All three photos are carefully framed in white.

Large, primed canvases formed the rest of the exhibition, printed with text and framed in white like the photos. Each tells of a journey to see a specific artwork, indicating the expected length of Tan’s stay, the address of the hotel, and the name of the museum or collection where the work is held, along with other details. The artist took only

one of these trips, however: She traveled to London, stayed at a hotel for three days, and visited the Wallace Collection to see the portrait of Miss Nelly O’Brien by Joshua Reynolds. The work also documents her reading: books by E. T. A. Hoffmann and Madame de Staël. Accompanying this brief account of her journey is a photograph of the relevant page from Baudelaire’s text, including the footnote that refers to the Reynolds painting.

Other works in the show tell of potential trips to Amsterdam and Chantilly, home to two pictures by Alexandre Gabriel Decamps, and, of course, to Paris, along with Cambridge, Dublin, and Cleveland, where Delacroix paintings are on view. A romantic, if fictional, gallery-going journey unfolds before our eyes on eight panels: a leisurely voyage free from haste, and with the added luxury of exclusive hotels. This is how gentleman scholars and dandies in the nineteenth century were accustomed to traveling, in an atmosphere of comfort and ease, of refined pleasure—a dream come true.

—Noemi Smolik

Translated from German by Susan Bernofsky.



Lisa Tan, *Itinerary*  
Based on the  
Footnotes from  
Baudelaire’s Review  
of the Salon of  
1846, p. 89, 2007,  
archival ink on canvas  
and digital color  
photograph, 16¼ x  
16", 12¼ x 9½".