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# Predictable Irrational

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## Press Release

MAMA Gallery is proud to present Predictable Irrational, a solo exhibition by Li Zhenwei, curated by James Elaine. This is Li's first exhibition with the gallery and his first outside of China. As a young boy, Li was always interested in circumventing decreed forms of expression. While training in traditional Eastern and Western painting at the Central Academy of Fine Art in Beijing, Li was given several potatoes and an assignment to draw them over the course of a month. Li went home that day, cooked the potatoes, and ate them.

The following year, one of Li's teachers gave him a studio on the outskirts of the city and a large supply of paints to last him, but no tools with which to paint. As he sat alone in his new studio, he contemplated why

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a painter is customarily taught to remove paint from its tube, place it onto a surface, and then transfer it to another surface with an intermediary device. That night, Li considered a more direct approach.

When Li first applied oil paint from its tube onto canvas, he realized he was forming circular marks. Li was taught early on that everything can be reduced to a circle. He learned early how to make a 'perfect' circle, then how to draw a tiger from that circle, then all other things in nature from that circle.

The circle led Li to a curiosity surrounding the mathematical constant  $\pi$ , whose decimal sequence never forms a repeating pattern and never ends. Through Li's exploration of the incomprehensible and infinite nature of  $\pi$ , he uncovered a process; meticulous application of paint in a formulaic manner. In mathematics,  $\pi$  is both a transcendental and irrational number; applying this concept to Li's work, he finds order within chaos.