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Work Critique: Liu Fujie's "Gate"

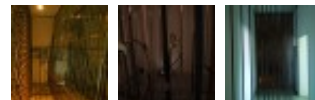
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"Black Dwarf/Part 1," group exhibition with Navachaa, Liu Fujie, and Fan Xi.

Star Gallery (798 Arts Zone East Street, 2 Jiuxianqiao Rd, Chaoyang District, Beijing, China, 100015) **Jun 27 — Jul 25, 2013**

Currently, the entire right section of Star Gallery's space has been cut off by a metal fence. Placed diagonally from top to bottom, the installation serves to make the already dim walkway seem even more oppressive. When viewers "squeeze" through an opening in the lower right corner of the railings, they are immediately greeted by layer upon layer of even more claustrophobic metal bars. The dim and pallid exhibition lighting casts an insidious pall of fear, and viewers find themselves trapped inside a cage.

Perhaps this is precisely the message and atmosphere Liu Fujie wishes to express with her site-specific installation. The piece is made entirely of metal welded together from various bars of different material – including standard vertical fences and chain-link iron material. In total, there are six layers, carefully arranged to partition and fill the small exhibition space. When viewers walk a set path through the small portals left in the metal fences, they are forced to navigate through a forest of metal. This process leads audiences to associate their experience with concepts like freedom, bondage, confinement, and control.



[See all photos \(4\)](#)



Liu Fujie, "Gate," installation, 2013

刘符洁, 《闸》, 装置, 2013

Perhaps due to her gender, Liu Fujie has chosen to use several metal headboards and bed-rails decorated with metal flowers in her piece. However, the piece itself does not give off an iota of sentimentality or tenderness; just the opposite, it emanates indifference and rigidity. When confronted with this work, one naturally thinks of Max Weber's theory of the "iron cage." Particularly in capitalist societies where rationalization increases economies of efficiency, all social norms become firmly fixed. The more frightening implications are the limitations placed on the lives and mindsets of people in these systems. The oppressive power of this

phenomenon is not only known, it is also felt – much in the way Liu's work keenly presses upon its "participants."

Of course, we can also interpret her piece from a different angle: the relationship between Art and the System (or those parts of the Official System able to affect Art) is a paradoxical to some extent – once the desire is strong enough, one may find escape through some small opening, but upon escaping, find oneself stranded deeper in the labyrinth of cages.



Installation view

装置现场



Installation view

装置现场

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