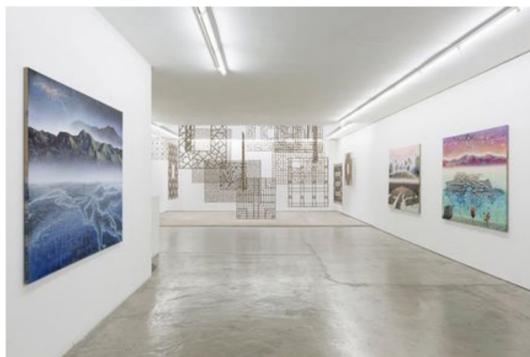




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View of Gordon Cheung's "Tears of Paradise," 2020.

LONDON

**Gordon Cheung**

EDEL ASSANTI  
 74a Newman Street  
 January 17–March 7, 2020

"Tears of Paradise" traces the fault lines of China's cracked map of utopia. (Note the ambiguous title: rupture as cause for trauma or joy?) Gordon Cheung's six new paintings offer

an empty and deceptively beamish bird's-eye view of the country via satellite shots printed onto collaged business newspaper, then thickly encrusted with sand and acrylic. In *String of Pearls* (all works 2020), China's army bases form the gleaming jewels in its geopolitical crown. Electric sunrises break over mountains to suggest new horizons, while neighboring India cools in the paranoid shadow of possible military intervention.

In the title painting, the Opium Wars of the 1800s bloom evergreen in the poppy heads at the canvas edge, as China's sprawling One Belt One Road network glows with the promise of hyperconnectivity. Yet the legacy of colonialism is a double-edged sword; how easily the oppressor can change places with the oppressed: *Desert of the Real* looks out onto a flattened circuit board of landscape, a vast "re-education" camp for the demonized Uyghur Muslim population. Nearby, in *Jing Jin Ji*, three major cities—Beijing, Hebei, and Tianjin—break apart like tectonic plates. The canvases' saturated sci-fi vision, with all the slickness of a synthwave video game, belies the threat of environmental catastrophe: a rainbow sheen of toxic pollutants.

The centerpiece is *Home*. A large-scale, floating architecture of over a dozen bamboo portals, it's pasted with more pages of stock-market data and sculpted with the finesse of wrought iron. A monument to Chinese houses razed amid rapid urbanization, the spectral layout provides a window onto a vanished world, with no one left to look out. At what cost progress? As China's railways minister notoriously opined: "To achieve a great leap, an entire generation must be sacrificed."

— Daniel Culpan

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