

# Art in America

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## Chi Peng at Chambers

The young artist Chi Peng (born 1981) has recently taken a leading role in China's avant-garde. He has also rapidly become internationally known, with previous showings not only at Chambers Fine Art in New York but also in France, Australia, Denmark and Germany. His work is often about anonymous sex—although, paradoxically, the participants are all himself, thanks to the wonders of Photoshop. While his richly colored photographs demonstrate no overt political content, their erotic narcissism carries a reading of China as a complicated, brave

new world, best handled by obsessing over one's own body.

In his provocatively titled series "I Fuck Me" (2005), the artist stages mock sexual encounters in public places. The C-print *I Fuck Me—Telephone Booth* shows a naked Chi Peng couple inside a telephone booth, with one turning his back to receive the other's amorous attention. Outside there are more Chi Pengs, rendered as ghostly blurs, running by the booth, suggesting the possibility of multiple encounters. In *I Fuck Me—Public Toilet*, Chi Peng has a sexual encounter with himself in a public restroom, the door open for anyone to view. In *I Fuck Me—Office*, two Chi Pengs, each wearing a white shirt and tie but naked from the waist down, play out a fantasy under a cubicle desk in a large, empty office.

There is something disturbing about the images. The artist's trysts seem hopeless and sterile. The work feels allegorical without actually communicating an identifiable meaning. In a powerful photograph titled *Mirage* we see naked figures with dragonfly wings soaring in evenly spaced precision above an ocean. Here there is no sex, but the feeling remains of a palpable alienation. In reducing the circumstances of his art to such emblematic tableaux, the artist transforms his narcissism into a language that captures China's contemporary sense of displacement.

—Jonathan Goodman

Chi Peng: *I Fuck Me—Office*, 2005, C-print, 47¼ by 61 inches; at Chambers.

