

Shao Fan (Yu Han)

Big Rabbit +

Exhibition in Beijing: 14.5. – 17.7.2016

Opening: Saturday, May 14, 2016; 3–6 pm

Galerie Urs Meile Beijing is honored to announce Shao Fan (Yu Han)'s exhibition *Big Rabbit +*. This exhibition will concentrate on the artist's intriguing, traditional ink explorations of animal portraits with contemporary sense. Since his childhood, Shao Fan has been immersed in traditional Chinese culture and has searched through its long history for things that suit his contemporary style. He easily makes use of traditional ink, oil paint, sculpture, design, architecture, and even gardening, among other forms of media in his practice and artistic language. Shao Fan's works are restrained, full of tension and profound cultural features. With his usual careful perspective, Shao Fan expresses his attitude toward everything in today's world.

Raising a number of rabbits in his garden made Shao Fan want to paint their portraits. Shao Fan has repeatedly interpreted the subject of rabbits in his paintings, but to the artist, rabbits are the same as any of the other subjects. He hopes that through animals he can view the self.

"I try to look at rabbits not through the eyes of a human, but through the eyes of a rabbit." As the artist puts it, only by looking at rabbits through the eyes of a rabbit can you feel that the animal—seen by human eyes as "small"—is presented in the painting in a manner that is full of self-confidence, eye-to-eye with humans. According to the artist's description, everything has a soul. Exposed before the surreal, large-scale portraits, the massive size and strangeness of the painted images causes the audience to re-examine itself. Ultimately, his endless, craftsman-like layers of brush and ink portray those vulnerable rabbits in an extraordinarily large, resplendent, and inscrutable way, which also causes a strange, nearly tangible, visual feeling to emanate from the painting.

If you look carefully, you realize, that the rabbits that have sprung from Shao Fan's brush are composed of calligraphic strokes. Entire rabbits are composed of countless accumulated brush strokes, and each stroke is inscribed like a breath. To the artist, this is like a form of Zen meditation. Art critic Heinz-Norbert Jocks wrote in an epilogue to the conversation with Shao Fan in 2014: "His drawing on calligraphy as well as the special manipulation of Western oil painting reveal that Shao very much takes his time." Ruth Noack wrote in the critic for his new exhibition catalogue: "In Shao Fan's paintings, painterly planes and calligraphic traces are bound together in harmony."

The vast majority of Shao Fan's paintings have no light source. To him, the contrast in expressing shapes or certain images is already enough of a presentation. Thus, the world Shao Fan articulates is quiet, not loud. It is sincere, rather than dazzling, as if time and space have stopped. The viewer can clearly feel this hopeless classicist's love for traditional culture's symmetry, righteousness, and impartiality, as well as his persistence in developing a kind of personalization in this contemporary art environment.

A catalogue published by the gallery, with a text by Ruth Noack (curator and critic, Berlin) will accompany the exhibition.

Shao Fan, Zi: Yu Han, was born to a family of artists in Beijing and has lived there ever since. From his youth, he studied painting with his mother and father. His recent exhibitions include: *Chinese Whispers*, Kunstmuseum Bern and Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Switzerland (2016); *A New Dynasty—Created in China*, ARoS Aarhus Art Museum, Aarhus, Denmark (2015); "*Secret Signs*" *Chinese contemporary calligraphy exhibition*, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, Germany (2014); *De la Chine aux arts Décoratifs*, Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris, France (2014); *St. Moritz Art Masters*, St. Moritz, Switzerland (2013); *Confronting Anitya: Oriental Experience in Contemporary Art*, Palazzo Michiel, Venice, Italy (2013); *Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA (2013); *Go Figure! Contemporary Chinese Portraiture*, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, Australia (2012); as well as the *First Beijing International Design Triennial*, National Museum of China, Beijing, China (2011). Numerous museums around the world, such as The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, the Peabody Museum of Salem in the United States, The National Art Museum of China, The Victoria and Albert Museum in England, Hong Kong's M+ Museum, and The Fukuoka Art Museum in Japan, among others, have been collecting his works since 1988.