

Shao Fan

“Appreciation of Oldness: The Paintings of Shao Fan”

Artist: Shao Fan

Opening: Saturday, 10 November 2012 – 4PM to 7PM

Exhibition: 10 November 2012 – 13 January 2013

Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing-Lucerne, Beijing:

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Galerie Urs Meile is pleased to announce the opening of Shao Fan’s very first solo exhibition at our gallery, “Appreciation of Oldness: The Paintings of Shao Fan,” in which we will showcase more than ten of his latest paintings.

“Appreciation of Oldness” by Shao Fan is the central topic of the show. “Oldness” here does not indicate a physical or biological state, but rather refers to the beauty of the sublime, and is the fruit of a distillation of time and experience. “Appreciation of Oldness,” in other words, marks a return to aesthetics, and is at the same time a validation and veneration of the beauty of “oldness”. This “Appreciation of Oldness” crafted by Shao Fan uses “old” to express a sense of awe for things, a sublimation of aesthetics. These works express Shao Fan’s consistent attitude towards the aesthetics, and thus also serve as a reply to the present with Chinese classical style.

Shao Fan’s new paintings of recent vintage convey a highly distinctive atmosphere. Pure, peaceful backgrounds enable the artist to extract the subjects - animals, landscapes and portraits - from their ambient vulgarity, thereby reducing the influence of narrative and timeliness to the bare minimum. Through the artist’s tranquil and prudent perspective, together with his unique visual language, the paintings reflect Shao Fan’s attitude towards life. As the Chinese art critic Feng Boyi comments, “Shao Fan’s paintings at the same time stand for a restoration of a sort, one marking a behavioral return to the wellsprings of visual art that re-approaches the very creation and origin of life itself through its penchant for a naturalist composition.”

It is truly noteworthy that the notion of “justification” in Chinese traditional culture is well represented in his recent paintings. *Front of a Horse* (2012, oil on canvas, 220 x 140 cm) is based on Shao Fan’s myriad studies and observations of the form and figure of the horse. As we may perceive, the artist has once again chosen a frontal perspective and, through the precise symmetrical composition that interprets the central ideal in Chinese traditional culture, thus illustrates the magnificence of justified symmetry. At the same time, with an intent to preserve objectivity, he has persisted in his own style using the technique of avoiding individual brushstrokes. With a Zen Geist and exquisite elegance, the image of the horse springs forth from the canvas, achieving the task of personification the artist assigned to it at the start, but while also exuding an unwanted aura of mystery.

Painting is Shao Fan’s attitude manifesto. In his words, “Painting is the most ancient, natural, and immediate means for me to express my temperament.” That which sought by him during these long years is best summed up in his daughter’s comment that: “The best painting is a painting which is not really like a painting.” He tries to exalt everything except himself, and this causes his persona to fade from the resultant work. In addition to painting, Shao Fan’s creation further diversifies across a wide range encompassing sculpture, to graphic design to horticultural design. His deconstructed, recreated Chinese classical furniture won him the distinction of being the very first Chinese artist whose work is collected by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, UK.

Born in Beijing, China in 1964, Shao Fan has learned painting since childhood. He currently lives and works in Beijing. His works have extensively featured at many exhibitions throughout the world. Recent group exhibitions have included “Go Figure! Contemporary Chinese Portraiture” at the National Portrait Gallery in

Canberra and the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation in Sydney, Australia; The 4th Guangzhou Triennial; “Three Artists – One Journey” at the National Art Museum of China in 2010, and “China Garden for Living – Illusion into Reality” at Staatliche Kunstsammlung Dresden in Germany in 2008.