

**Chen Hui "Reduce Internal Fire"**

Exhibition: April 15 – July 30, 2011

Opening: April 15, 2011, 6 – 8pm



Chen Hui  
"Reduce Internal Fire" 2010  
oil on canvas  
65 x 50 cm

**Chen Hui – "Reduce Internal Fire"**

Freedom Liberated - The Story of Chen Hui and Her Paintings

As a girl, Chen Hui (\*1974, Jiangxi Province, China) fell under the influence of her father, who loved painting. From an early age, she displayed considerable talent in painting. After graduating from the Central Academy of Drama (Beijing, China), where she finished as make-up artist at the Faculty of Stage Design Arts, Chen Hui taught her profession at the Communication University of China in Beijing. To qualify for faculty promotion, she applied to the Graduate School of the Chinese National Academy of Arts, where she had to paint a work to qualify. In this practical painting she created "Xiao Q", a portrait that won her teachers' enthusiastic kudos. This event seemed to ignite Chen Hui. Freedom burst forth within her like an exploding volcano that, once erupting, spews forth on and on, impossible to ever contain.

From that time on, Chen Hui has unveiled an entirely new look. She has found a niche in her spirit for her artistic imagination to nest. Thus her paintings come textured with the most awesome awareness, the finest feelings of nature. This state allows Chen Hui to nurture her sublime sense of art and her exquisite artistic vision.

Chen Hui makes character modeling her study, and thus comes into frequent contact with image design. She likes to observe people's characters and watch their expressions. She is also engrossed in pop fashion culture as it touches on creating masks. Quiet and demure in demeanor, Chen Hui has never sought an individualized identity, but seeks rather to be a soul partner, accompanying her husband Xia Xiaowan the livelong day as he creates art. She chats with artist friends and swaps anecdotes, pregnant with her own premonition of painting. Ten years have swept by with days just like these, plain indeed, but also very, very diverse.

Chen Hui is a dab hand at alluring, dynamic observation. Undistracted by the technical aspects of painting, she tacitly engages with society's kaleidoscopic vista, and with life's everyday woes and joys. Then she starts to paint, and her life experiences transmogrify into gorgeous pictures tumbling from her brush. These seem to tell tales of freeze-frame ephemera. Each is a mosaic of sundry social circumstances viewed through a perspective glass of

time. Bright and gaudy, her works are also grotesque and burlesque. As a painter, she eschews abstract rhetoric when diagnosing the disease symptoms of public life in our era, but she does adopt a typified vision to convey her feelings about life as an allegory for contemporary events. Her paintings have a knack for capturing figures' expressions and their wandering, aimless gazes that never come to rest. There is something missing here. Something has been abstracted, with most figures transported into an incognito space. Bright, exaggerated images fail to cloak their discomfiture at being marooned in such sloppy, chaotic tableaux. They appear flustered and blurry, utterly forlorn, banished by modern consumption (see "Gleaners" and "On Fire"). "A Rousing Tour in the Park", "Playing Water", "Delighted", all of these set scenes replete with a sense of absurdity, in which the behavior of human figures against the backdrop of a brooding environment hints at endless conflict and discord. Yet there is no lack of helpless, involuntary humor, either.

Moreover, Chen Hui is adept at grasping portraits of modern people and applying their profiles to mirror the real conditions of prosperity and the slavish pursuit of fashion ("Twitter Time"), and also to reflect images of self-degradation ("Mengmeng") and the purging of the resulting heartsick angst ("Reduce Internal Fire" and "Please Call Me Loli"). Her scathing satire of classical elegance here is tantamount to sheer insurrection.

Chen Hui seeks to encompass and give voice to a state of wildness. Unadulterated by stereotypes, she offers it as a sanctuary succoring those mashed down and crushed by the implications of hum-drum visual experiences. Today's painting and its august contemporary art stand in particularly urgent demand of decompression, an unfastening of the fetters, and a homecoming back to the wellsprings of life.

With single-minded devotion, Chen Hui forges a unique world espied only by her. This imparts to her paintings new meaning and craft, and enlarges the direct narrative range of her painting. By visually reinventing contemporary reality, she conjures up a new world order as a vision to enrich our perception. Chinese contemporary painting itself had just such a birth, fashioning a lucid, brilliant sky filled with bright new possibilities. Only by viewing Chinese contemporary painting from this panoramic eminence are we able to fathom the fresh freedom Chen Hui confers upon it.

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