

# Meng Huang

Elbow Room

Exhibition in Beijing: 8.11.2014–11.1.2015

Opening: Saturday, November 8, 2014, 4–7 pm

Galerie Urs Meile Beijing is delighted to announce our second solo exhibition by Meng Huang. As a Chinese artist who spends part of his time in Berlin, Meng Huang has embedded his perspective on history, derived from his personal experiences, into the background of his unique artworks. He is primarily a painter, but he also works in other media, such as photography and installation. This exhibition will showcase several different series of paintings Meng Huang has completed in recent years. His unique grasp of hue and his choice of theme, which has a rather realistic flavor, mirror the artist's reflection and analysis on the state of contemporary Chinese society.

Meng Huang started to work on his series *Distance* (2011-2013, oil on canvas, sizes ranging from 38 × 46 cm to 220 × 400 cm) in 2010. In his railway-themed paintings he explored his understanding of German culture, as well as his feelings about it. Meng Huang is able to express his notions of Germany through these images of railway tracks. These functional objects, especially their straight lines, bring forth his memories of childhood. As a child, he lived alongside a railway track; following the sleepers into the distance, he always imagined a happier place beyond the horizon. The implications of the railway itself, its abstract shape, and the feelings the artist has about life all mesh very well together, and thus the railway has become one of the key themes in Meng Huang's artworks in recent years.

After many years of painting, Meng Huang has summarized his own works as a portrayal of space. Meng Huang has taken the depth of feeling emanating from the horizontal expanse and breadth of one of his earliest series of paintings, *Paradise Lost* (1997-2001, oil on canvas, sizes ranging from 80 × 92 cm to 200 × 280 cm), as well as from *Distance*, and refined it into horizontal and vertical axes that then become a subtle space. *Space* (2009, oil on canvas, 50 × 40 cm each), a series of small-scale oil paintings in bright colors—which the artist rarely uses—is concise and forceful, and it also reflects the artist's exceptional control of color and expression.

While exploring the nature of painting and the nature of space, the real China has always been Meng Huang's main concern. *People* (2011, oil on canvas, 220 × 400 cm) and *Times Square* (2011, oil on canvas, 180 × 280 cm) reel the viewer's thoughts back to the real China. Meng Huang employs a bird's eye view to portray the crowds of onlookers that can be seen in towns and villages all across China; they're either playing cards, watching what's going on, or just hanging out, doing nothing. He then employs the opposite perspective, looking up from below to depict the flagstone paths that can be seen all over Europe, rendering the scene both preposterous and deeply meaningful. Meng Huang uses white to separate the human figures from the background, expressing the traces and mottled nature of time. Likewise, he depicts the rubble and construction sites that have appeared as a result of the rapid development of Chinese cities. With a fair amount of irony, he named this work Times Square. Visitors to the exhibition will be able to see his rarely shown series of landscapes, *Distant Mountain* (2008-2012, oil on canvas, sizes ranging from 38 × 46 cm to 95 × 150 cm).

In addition to oil paintings, Meng Huang has also accomplished a series of charcoal drawings. He has always been interested in objects with ambiguous features, and charcoal makes him express these uncertainties more freely and appropriately. Clouds and water are themes that he often deals with (for example, *Clouds 2* (2013, charcoal on paper, 77 × 109 cm)). Depicting clouds in the far distance overhead and water flowing freely underfoot, he uses the railway tracks to constitute space. Last but not least, the vagaries of clouds fit well with the wandering life of the artist.

Meng Huang was born in Beijing in 1966, and now divides his time between Beijing and Berlin. His works have been exhibited in galleries and art institutions all over the world. His major solo exhibitions include *I and We* in 2012 at Galerie Urs Meile, Lucerne; *Five Faces of a Man* in 2010 at Berlin's WiE Kultur; and *And What Do You Think? Landscapes* in 2008 at Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing. His major group exhibitions include *CAPITAL-Merchants in Venice and Amsterdam* in 2012 at the Swiss National Museum, Zurich, Switzerland; *Weltsichten* at the Museum Wiesbaden and Kunsthalle zu Kiel in Germany; and *Mahjong – Chinesische Gegenwartskunst aus der Sammlung Sigg*, in 2006 at Germany's Hamburger Kunsthalle.