



Shen Hua 沈桦

Shen Hua works with paintings, installations, and sculptures. Articulating an aesthetic that is firmly grounded in an emotive representation of the Chinese proletariat, Shen Hua's language borrows from the 'Expressionist' era, in terms of motif, technique and artistic ambition, while bridging the gap from 'Socialist Realism' to 'Rustic Realism'. Through inspiration derived from 'Freudian Expressionism', his painting techniques employ heavy and powerful brushstrokes to render the strong and twisting muscles of the migrant workers, as well as to express his own inner feelings. By depicting the practical and banal, he manifests the dynamic forcefulness of reality. His command over his medium liberates his honest sense of humility, thereby allowing a keen psychological insight, and understanding of, society in motion to be put forth with candour. The treatment of Shen Hua's subject matter is characterised by a muted palette, with his figures garbed in non-descript clothing dulled by a very obvious layer of grime. His figures manipulate the audience's expectation of scale, appearing as if the figures have been shrunk to fit an oversized frame. Within each canvas, the artist's personality seeps through, a personality that is acutely self-conscious and aware of the things that have informed its scope of experience. This awareness is distilled into images that reflect the many personalities that make up society.

Most recently the artist explores the cultural connotations of tarpaulin, a cheap plastic material, used to make carrier bags or covers and mostly associated with developing countries or by low income people. Shen Hua plays on the visual effect of the material and designs suits or uses it in place of canvas. By transforming the function and form of the material and associating it with much higher class objects, the artist invites the spectator to question the status of the material and the people who use it. An earlier work, the *Bang Bang Series*, portrays in oil painting the manual workers of Chongqing, known as the "bang bang," who represent the last standing physical labourers in modern-day China. Breaking boundaries of expression, this body of work involves three-dimensional installations of his characters. Since 2007, Shen Hua has veered away from the conventional usage of canvases by doing two-sided paintings of rural workers. In early 2011, he took his art into a brand new territory with his experimental *Car Accident* sculpture series, in which he replicated the metallic wreckages after a car accident, an attempt to explore the relationship between visual impact and language, as well as the destruction of spirituality caused by the industrialisation of modern China. With a keen eye for observation and reflection, Shen Hua tells a realistic story behind this alienated and neglected collective, echoing China's current state as a country in transition. Through his work, Shen Hua continues to challenge our awareness of contemporary social issues, while subtly prompting questions about our own identity as a collective within society.

Main Gallery: G/F, 21-31 Old Bailey Street, Central, Hong Kong. Tel: (852) 2869-8802

Branch Gallery: G/F, 27 Hollywood Road, Central, Hong Kong. Tel: (852) 2542-3143

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Born in 1972, in Chongqing, Sichuan Province, China, Shen Hua still lives and works in his native city. He grew up in the countryside but later moved into the city, fully experiencing the differences and divisions between rural and urban people. In 1999, he graduated from the Fine Arts Department of the Southwest Normal University, and in 2000, from the Oil Painting Department of the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, both in Chongqing, where he still lives, works and teaches. In support of his unerring determination and ambition, Schoeni Art Gallery fully sponsored the tuition of the artist's three-year Master's degree at the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, which he completed in 2008. He was mentored by renowned artist Luo Zhongli, a painter considered one of the most acclaimed artists in China to depict farmers. In 2007, Shen Hua won the bronze medal at the Today Art Student Annual Art Awards at the Today Art Museum in Beijing, and in 2006, he was among the Top 30 Finalists at the Sovereign Asian Art Foundation in Hong Kong.

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