

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE



QIU SHIHUA

Visible... Invisible

Press kit

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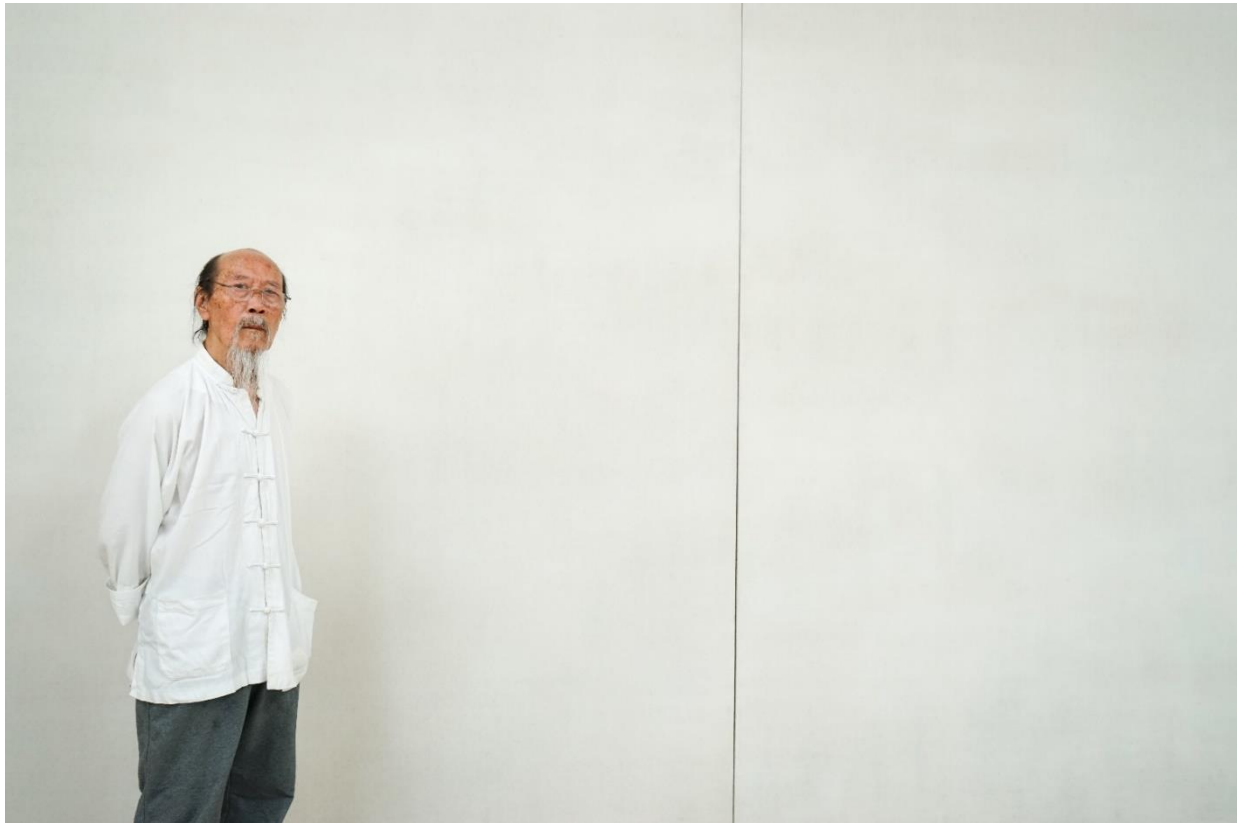
Artist's quotes

"It is like being in meditation, when the entire cosmos looks like a white mist. Here, time and space seem to be annihilated. Human passions do not matter."

"I began to cultivate myself according to the principles of Taoism, which took a very long time. From that point on, my heart became calmer and I became much more relaxed. Taoism unconsciously permeated my work [...]. I felt that I was always looking outwards, but now I look inward."

"Forget everything. When there is nothing left, you can taste the pleasure of emptiness [...]. When everything outside disappears, there is an explanation inside: when form retreats, the spirit reveals itself."

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Portrait of Qiu Shihua in his studio in Beijing, 2016. Photo : HuaXia

Biography

Qiu Shihua was born in 1940 in Zizhong, in Sichuan province (China). He began to paint, self-taught, from a very young age, and obtained a diploma from the Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts in 1962 with a focus on oil painting, in a China that was still closed to the Western world and its art. At that time, he focused on practising outdoors, a rather unusual choice in view of the cultural context of a country under Mao Zedong, in which art was primarily dedicated to propaganda. For over twenty years, the artist worked as a poster artist in a cinema, until he travelled to Europe in 1984. His first personal exhibits took place only in the early 1990s in Chinese galleries. Today, Qiu Shihua is an internationally recognised artist. In 2001 the Kunsthalle of New York held his first monographic exhibition outside of China and since then, his work has been part of many collective exhibitions in Europe: *Mahjong* at the Bern Kunstmuseum in Switzerland (2005), an exhibition which then travelled to Hamburg (Germany) and Salzburg (Austria); *The sublime is now* at the Franz Gertsch Museum (2006) and *Shanshui* at the Luzern Kunstmuseum (2001) in Switzerland. In 2012, the Berlin Hamburger Bahnhof and the Pfalzalerie Museum in Kaiserslautern, Germany dedicated two major personal exhibitions to his work. His works were also exhibited at the São Paulo Biennial in Brazil (1996), the Venice Biennial (1999) and the Shanghai Biennial (2004). His works are part of major collections including the Louis Vuitton Foundation (Paris); the Kunsthalle Basel; the Metropolitan Museum of Arts (New York); and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Los Angeles). Qiu Shihua lives and works between Beijing and Shenzhen (China). He has been represented by Galerie Karsten Greve since 2015. A catalogue was published by the gallery to celebrate his work in 2018.

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Qiu Shihua

Portrait of Qiu Shihua in his studio in Beijing
2018

Photo : Qiu Shihua Studio

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Qiu Shihua, *Untitled*, 2018, oil on canvas, signed and dated on the bottom left edge, 82,5 x 172 x 3 cm. Photo: Christoph Münstermann

QIU SHIHUA

Visible... Invisible

From 28 August to 9 October 2021

Vernissage on 28 August from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

After the success of the 2015 and 2018 exhibitions, Galerie Karsten Greve is delighted to present a new personal exhibition by the Chinese painter Qiu Shihua in its Parisian gallery, featuring a selection of fifteen canvases painted between 2000 and 2019 and on display for the first time.

Nature has always been at the heart of the artist's work. Always untitled, Qiu Shihua's work has no intention either to be strictly representative, or truly figurative – he paints landscapes from allegorical impressions of the world. At first glance, the canvases appear to be empty – the possibility of discovering the ethereal landscapes then becomes a matter of intuition and trust. The paintings change depending on the light and the distance of viewers, details appear and disappear in a flowing ballet of brush strokes. As when viewing impressionist paintings, looking too closely prevents from seeing anything¹. During his first trip to Europe in 1984, Qiu Shihua discovered Claude Monet and his artistic movement, in which impressions are key. “What I do here [...] will simply be the impression of what I, and only I, have felt,” said Monet, and Qiu Shihua has appropriated this concept. He translates memories inspired by “natural atmospheres”, as did William Turner in his late works. Qiu Shihua finds his inspiration in *Shanshui*, a pictorial tradition that appeared during the 4th century in Southern China. A *Shanshui* painter does not seek to create an illusory or realistic representation, sometimes working without ever having seen the landscape that they are painting. What matters is to paint the sensations that the idea of the sight brings to the spirit. Qiu Shihua stays true to this ancient pictorial tradition from his country, keeping to its visual language: the absence of linear perspective and the rhythm of blank patterns to engage viewers in active contemplation. He goes further in that quest and reappropriates *Shanshui* through Western techniques, preferring to use oils rather than the

¹ “Painting reveals its power by dazzling us, by demonstrating that we see nothing of what it is showing us. Nothing! But this nothingness is not just anything”, wrote the art historian Daniel Arasse.

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traditional ink. The result is unique – neither landscape nor total abstraction, a fusion of the ancestral and the contemporary, the Western and the Eastern.

This evolution coincides with the artist's trip to the Gobi Desert at the end of the 1980s, a trip he refers to often. This spiritual pilgrimage was a turning point in the painter's lifestyle and artistic approach as he converted to Taoism, an ancient philosophical doctrine founded by Lao Tse. In Taoist ideology, humans and nature are complementary, similarly to the Yin Yang. The quest for wisdom lies in harmony, which is found when the heart and spirit are aligned with the *Tao*, the Way of Nature, said to allow humans to free themselves from limits and let their spirits "ride the clouds": when the external and internal are one.

In his canvases, Qiu Shihua gives shape to the Taoist concept of "action through inaction" – letting results arise through their own paths – or rather, its opposite: non-action through action. Through creative action, he realises paintings that raise questions in their apparent absence. He succeeds in painting emptiness. It is no accident that in Chinese, the words "white" and "emptiness" (respectively *Baise* and *Kongbai*) have the same root (*-bai-*). The colour white then represents the quest for emptiness as the ultimate essence of all things. In order to see, we need to reach beyond the glare of white light, beyond a brief glance, towards absolute perception.

The Chinese painter modernises this ancient philosophy through his pieces, in which he creates a "space for reflection" based on dreamlike landscapes, a "transposition of the embodied subject into a transcendental subject, of the reality of the idealised world into an ideality", to use the words of the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty. His landscapes waver on the borders of perception, between the visible and the invisible: "it is like a deep geological stratum, an invisible 'thing', that can be found somewhere behind certain living entities, and for which we suppose that the correct observation point needs only to be found", wrote Merleau-Ponty.

In the spectral landscapes of Qiu Shihua, white dominates in the most subtle variations. The art historian Michel Pastoureau wrote that white is the oldest colour, one that "speaks to us about what is essential: life, death, and perhaps also [...] a little about our lost innocence". It also plays the role of bringing universal balance – a landscape would not exist without whiteness. It is the most uniform colour in nature, one that manifests in all elements – the colour of primordial light, the beginning of time. "For me, having colour or not having colour is not an issue. With colours, all colours combine into one, which is somehow the same as having no colour," says Qiu Shihua about his palette. The artist plays with the surface of the bare linen canvas, onto which he applies successive layers of paint which structure the nebulous atmosphere of the pieces. In this way, he creates discreet transitions between the figurative elements inlaid in the matter. The landscapes are diluted and progressively reveal themselves in nuances and transparencies, not unlike the mind becoming clearer during meditation. The many tonalities of white covering the small strokes of colour form a multi-chromatic kaleidoscope in which the landscapes disappear like noemas, hidden behind an opaque fog. Merleau-Ponty wrote that "what is tangible is not only things, but also everything that they give shape to, even through blanks, everything that leaves a trace on them, everything that is comprised in them, even through disparities and forms of absence", like the trace of auras in landscapes present in absence.

In a silent dialogue, Qiu Shihua pushes his viewers to detach from their usual way of thinking and 20th century "-isms", because the essence of his large paintings lies in contemplative meditation. Today, Qiu Shihua represents a new generation, between the modernisation of traditional Chinese art and the adaptation of the techniques and ideas of Western art, between landscape paintings and abstraction.

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Qiu Shihua

Untitled

2008

In 3 parts : oil on canvas

187 x 789 x 6 cm / 73 2/3 x 310 2/3 x 2 1/3 in

Lower left side signed titles and inscribed:

QIU Shibua July 2008 I of three parts left; QIU Shibua July 2008 II of three parts middle; QIU Shibua July 2008 III of three parts right

QSHBJ09

SQ/M 41

Exhibition view, *Impressions*, 2018, Galerie Karsten Greve Cologne

Photo: Galerie Karsten Greve Köln Paris St. Moritz

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Public collections (selection)

M+ Museum, Hong-Kong, CN
Zhuzhong Art Museum, Beijing, CN
The National Museum of China, Beijing, CN
Museum DKM, Duisburg, DE
Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, FR
The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, IL
The Royal Accademy of Art, Londres, UK
The Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET), New York, USA
Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Los Angeles, USA

Solo exhibitions (selection)

2021 *Qiu Shibua, Visible... Invisible*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, FR
2020 *Qiu Shibua – Empty/Not empty*, Galerie Urs Meile, Lucerne, CH
Qiu Shibua – Empty/Not empty, Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing, CN
2019 *Qiu Shibua, Landscapes*, Galerie Karsten Greve, St-Moritz, CH
2018 *Scheinbar: nichts. Bildwelten von QIU SHIHUA im Dialog*, Museum unter age-Situation Kunst,
Bochum, DE
Qiu Shibua, Impressions, Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne, DE
Qiu Shibua, Impressions, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, FR
2017 *Qiu Shibua*, Galerie Urs Meile Beijing, CN
2015 *Qiu Shibua. Aura of Nature*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne, DE
Qiu Shibua, Calme, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, FR
2013 *Qiu Shibua - New Works*, Galerie Urs Meile Lucerne, CH
St. Moritz Art Masters Winter Exhibition, reformierte Dorfkirche, St. Moritz, CH
2012 *Qiu Shibua. Landschaft, Licht und Stille*, Museum Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern,
Kaiserslautern, DE
Qiu Shibua, Gallery Luis Campaña, Berlin, DE
Qiu Shibua. White Field, Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin, DE
2010 *Qiu Shibua*, Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing, CN
2009 *Qiu Shibua - New Works*, Galerie Urs Meile, Lucerne, CH
2008 *Qiu Shibua*, Shanghai Gallery of Art, Shanghai, CN
2007 *Qiu Shi-Hua*, Luis Campana Gallery, Cologne, DE
2006 *Qiu Shibua*, Galerie 75 Faubourg, Paris, FR
2005 *Qiu Shibua*, Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing-Lucerne, Lucerne, CH
Insight: Paintings by Qiu Shibua, Chambers Fine Art, New York, USA

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- Visions of Fields by Qiu Shihua*, Hanart TZ Gallery, Hong Kong, CN
- 2004 *Qiu Shihua*, Künstlerverein Malkasten, Düsseldorf, DE
- 2003 *Qiu Shihua*, Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing-Lucerne, Lucerne, CH
Qiu Shihua, Galerie Luis Campaña, Cologne, DE
- 2002 *White Landscape*, Pruss & Ochs Gallery, Berlin, DE
- 2001 *Landscape - Painting on the Edge of Visibility*, Galleria OTSO, Espoo, FI
Qiu Shihua, The New York Kunsthalle, New York, USA
- 2000 *Qiu Shihua*, Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing-Lucerne, Lucerne, CH
Qiu Shihua, Landscape - Paintings on the Edge of Visibility, Galerie Rudolfinum, Prague, CZ
Galerie Sternberk, Sternberk, CZ
- 1999 *Qiu Shihua*, Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, CH
- 1997 *Qiu Shihua*, Hanart TZ Gallery, CN
Qiu Shihua, Hanart Gallery, Taipei, TW
- 1995 *Qiu Shihua*, Hanart TZ Gallery, HK
- 1991 *Qiu Shihua*, Hanart TZ Gallery, HK
Qiu Shihua, Hanart TZ Gallery, Taipei, TW

Group exhibitions (sélection)

- 2021 *SNAPSHOT*, Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing, CN
Minestrone, Galerie Urs Meile, Ardez, CH
- 2020 *Chinese Colours: Eastward Turn To Absoluteness*, Long Museum, Shanghai, CN
China Longing for Nature - Reading Landscapes in Chinese Art, Museum Rietberg, Zurich, CH
THE WHITE Into THE BLANK, Whitebox Art Center, Beijing, CN
- 2018 *Lolo's Entanglements*, De Warande, Turnhout, BE
A Chinese Journey, The Sigg Collection, Noordbrabants museum, 's-Hertogenbosch, NL
- 2017 *Autumn Show*, Galerie Karsten Greve AG, St. Moritz, CH
- 2016 *Winter Accrochage*, Galerie Karsten Greve AG, St. Moritz, CH
Summer Show, Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne, DE
Ink and the Mind: Ink and Phenomenology. Exhibition No.2, Ink Studio, Beijing, CH
M+ Sigg Collection: Four Decades of Chinese Contemporary Art, Artis'Tree, HK
- 2015 *Beyond Horizon. Reflexion on the horizontal line*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, FR
Harmonie und Umbruch. Spiegelungen chinesischer Landschaften, MARTa Herford, Herford, DR
Accrochage, Galerie Karsten Greve AG, St. Moritz, CH
- 2014 *Unscrolled: Reframing Tradition in Chinese Contemporary Art*, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, CA

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- DIALOGUE5:5*, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn, DE
- Right Is Wrong: Four Decades of Chinese Art from the M+ Sigg Collection*, Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, NL
- 2013 *Building Bridges - Zeitgenössische Kunst aus China*, Wolfsberg, Ermatingen, CH
- Blank to Blank - Inframince Exhibition II*, Soka Art Centre, Beijing, CN
- Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA
- 2012 *Duchamp' Inframince in Painting – First Zhuangzi International Conference Parallel Exhibition*, Yuan Art Museum, Beijing, CN
- Weltsichten. Landschaft in der Kunst vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zum 21. Jahrhundert*, Kunstmuseum Dieselkraftwerk Cottbus, DE
- Landschaft als Weltsicht*, Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, Chemnitz, DE
- Self-essence Naturalism*, Today Art Museum, Beijing, CN
- 2011 *Weltsichten. Landschaft in der Kunst seit dem 17. Jahrhundert*, Museum Wiesbaden, Wiesbaden, DE
- Weltsichten. Landschaft in der Kunst seit dem 17. Jahrhundert*, Kunsthalle zu Kiel, Kiel, DE
- Shanshui - Poetry Without Sound? Landscape in Chinese Contemporary Art*, Kunstmuseum Luzern, Lucerne, CH
- 2010 *Weltsicht. Landschaft in der Kunst seit dem 17. Jahrhundert*, Situation Kunst, Bochum, DE
- 2009 *Linien stiller Schönheit*, DKM Museum, Duisburg, DE
- Black and White - Qiu Shihua and Yang Liming*, Found Museum, Beijing, CN
- 2008 *RED Aside - Chinese Contemporary Art of the Sigg Collection*, Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, ES
- Yi School: Thirty Years of Chinese Abstract Art*, Palma, Barcelona, Madrid, ES
- Qi Yun - The International Travelling Exhibition of Chinese Abstract Art*, China Square Gallery, New York, USA
- Mahjong: Contemporary Chinese Art from the Sigg Collection*, The University of California, Berkeley Art Museum, Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, USA
- Nur der Schein trügt nicht*, Situation Kunst, Kunstsammlungen der Ruhr-Universität Bochum, DE
- 2007 *Mahjong - Chinesische Gegenwartskunst aus der Sammlung Sigg*, Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, AT
- Qi Yun - The International Travelling Exhibition of Chinese Abstract Art*, OCT Contemporary Art Terminal of The Xiangnin Museum, Shenzhen; Art Now Gallery, Beijing; Hong Kong Artist Commune, HK
- Art from China - Collection Uli Sigg*, Centro Cultural Banco do Brazil, Rio de Janeiro, BR

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- White Out*, Künstlerhaus Palais Thurn und Taxis, Bregenz, AT; Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken, Saarbrücken, DE
- 2006 *The Sublime is Now*, Museum Franz Gertsch, Burgdorf, CH
Mahjong - Chinesische Gegenwartskunst aus der Sammlung Sigg, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, DE
- 2005 *Pictorial DANN made in China*, Galerie Urs meile, Beijing-Lucerne, Lucerne, CH
Mahjong - Chinesische Gegenwartskunst aus der Sammlung Sigg, Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern, CH
China. Prospettive d'Arte Contemporanea / China: As Seen by Contemporary Chinese Artists, Provincia di Milano, Spazio Oberdan, Milan, IT
- 2004 5th Shanghai Biennale, Shanghai, CN
Shanghai Biennale, Shanghai, CN
Le Printemps de Chine, CRAC Alsace, FR
- 2003 *Einbildung - Das Wahrnehmen in der Kunst*, Kunsthau Graz, AT
New Zone - Chinese Art, Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, PL
- 2002 *China - Tradition und Moderne*, Museum Ludwig Galerie Schloss Oberhausen, DE
- 2001 *Take Part II*, Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing-Lucerne, Lucerne, CH
The Inward Eye: Transcendence in Contemporary Art, Contemporary Art Museum, Houston, USA
2nd Berlin Biennale, Berlin, DE
Take Part I, Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing-Lucerne, Lucerne, CH
- 2000 *Landscape - Painting on the Edge of Visibility*, Galerie Rudolfinum, Prague, CZ
Our Chinese Friends, ACC Galerie et Galerie der Bauhaus-Universität (en collaboration avec Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing-Lucerne), Weimar, DE
- 1999 *d'APERTutto*, La Biennale di Venezia, 48. Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte, Venice, IT
- 1998 *Eight Chinese Artists*, Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing-Lucerne, Lucerne, CH
- 1996 *China*, Kunst Museum Bonn, Bonn, Allemagne; Künstler Wien, Vienna, AT
Art Museum Singapore, Singapore; Zacheta national Gallery of Art, Warsaw, PL; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, DE
Qiu Shibua, The 23rd São Paulo Art Biennial (guest of honor), São Paulo, BR
- 1995 *China's New Art Post - 1989*, University of Oregon Museum of Art, Portland, USA
- 1992 The First Annual Exhibition of Chinese Oil Painting, HK
- 1986 *Chinese Art Festival*, La Défense, Paris, FR

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Portrait of Qiu Shihua in his studio in Beijing, 2016. Photo : HuaXia

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Monographies and solo exhibition catalogues (selection)

- 2018 Galerie Karsten Greve (Ed.) cat., *Qiu Shihua*, Paris.
- 2012 Buhlmann, B. E. & Kittelmann, U., (Ed.), *Qiu Shihua*, Museum Pfalzgalerie, Kaiserlautern, Richter & Fey Verlag.
- 2010 Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing-Lucerne, *Qiu Shihua, New Works*, Beijing.
- 2005 Mao, C. W., (Ed.), *Insight, Paintings by Qiu Shihua*, Chambers Fine Art, New York.
- 2000 Galerie Rudolfinum (Ed.) cat., *Qiu Shi-hua, Landscape Painting*, Prague.
- 1999 Kunsthalle Basel (Ed.) cat., *Qiu Shihua*, Schwabe & Co, AG Verlag Basel.
- 1996 Chiu, C., Mazella di Bosco J. B., *Qiu Shihua*, Biennial of São Paulo, Fundação Biennial de São Paulo.



Exhibition views, Qiu Shihua, *Impressions*, 2018, Galerie Karsten Greve Cologne
Photo: Galerie Karsten Greve Köln Paris St. Moritz

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Qiu Shihua

Untitled

2018

Oil on canvas

82,5 x 172 x 3 cm / 32 1/2 x 67 3/4 x 3/4 in

QSH18A5

SQ/M 23

Photo: Galerie Karsten Greve Köln Paris St. Moritz

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Qiu Shihua

Untitled

2013

Oil on canvas

153 x 198 cm / 60 1/4 x 78 in

Lower left side signed, dated and inscribed (in Chinese characters):

QIU Shihua October 30th, 2013

Beijing

Qiu Sh50060

SQ/M 8

Photo: Galerie Karsten Greve Köln Paris St. Moritz

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Qiu Shihua

Untitled

2014

Oil on canvas

70 x 80 x 2.5 cm / 27 1/2 x 31 1/2 x 1 in

Lower left side signed, dated and inscribed (in Chinese characters):

Qiu Shihua July 29, 2014 in Beijing

QSHBJ02

SQ/M 36

Photo: Galerie Karsten Greve Köln Paris St. Moritz

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Portrait of Karsten Greve and Qiu Shihua in Paris, 2015. Photo : Michel Lunardelli

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Exhibition views, Qiu Shihua, *Impressions*, 2018, Galerie Karsten Greve Cologne
Photo: Galerie Karsten Greve Köln Paris St. Moritz

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BLOUINARTINFO

Qiu Shihua's "Impressions" at Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris

Par BLOUIN ARTINFO, en ligne le 11/09/2018

Galerie Karsten Greve in Paris is featuring new works of Chinese painter Qiu Shihua.

On view through October 6, this is the second solo show of the artists in France, following the great success of his last exhibition, held in 2015 in the gallery space and it consist about 20 paintings completed between 2001 and 2012.

"Nature has always been the source of Qiu Shihua's art. The artist often refers to his journey across the Gobi desert — its immensity and its dryness — as being a founding experience for his artistic process. While he did indeed begin his career painting outdoors, he would soon discover a preference for working in his studio where he would translate the feelings that nature inspires into paintings. His works are therefore 'Natural atmospheres' more so than representations of a physical reality," the gallery says.

"In his landscapes, white is the highlight. Qiu Shihua twins white with light itself, and conceives of the pictorial creation as a transition from the realm of shadows into the clear perception of the pattern or image: as would an Impressionist who makes light the focal point of the piece," the gallery adds.

Qiu Shihua was born in 1940 in Zizhong (Sichuan, China). He studied painting at the Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts, training first and foremost in traditional Chinese painting techniques.

After a solo exhibition held in 2001 at the New York Kunsthalle, and group shows such as Mahjong at the Kunstmuseum Bern, Switzerland (2005); and subsequently those held in Hamburg, Germany, and Salzburg, Austria (2006); "The Sublime is Now" at the Franz Gertsch Museum (2006) and "Shanshui" at the Kunstmuseum Luzern, Switzerland (2011); Qiu Shihua has earned international renown.

His work was featured at the Venice Biennale in 1999; the Shanghai Biennale in 2004 and at the Sao Paulo Biennale in 1996. In 2012, two important retrospectives of his work were presented at the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin and at the Pfalzgalerie a Kaiserslautern in Germany.

"Impressions" is on view through October 6, 2018 at Galerie Karsten Greve, 5, rue Debelleye, 75003-Paris, France.

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Art in America

Qiu Shihua

Par Travis Jeppesen dans *Art in America*, en ligne le 17/11/2015

From a distance, they look like white monochromes—if anything at all. Quite often, they suggest raw canvas, without even a layer of gesso. When you get a bit closer, however, and allow your eyes to rest upon them for half a minute, a full minute, longer, suddenly entire landscapes appear before you—worlds half-known and half-dreamed, much as in classical Chinese landscape paintings.

How does he do it? This is the inherent mystery of Qiu Shihua's paintings. Even on close inspection the shapes of trees, forests and suns on the canvases seem to have been rendered almost accidentally, resembling light coatings of amassed dust. What's more, the difficulty of discussing Qiu's paintings in a critical context (namely, the fact that they are almost impossible to reproduce) is exacerbated by his choice not to title them, which is perhaps partly why so few people have written about his work.

Qiu's recent exhibition at Luis Campaña consisted of six paintings of varying sizes, and was thus fairly compact—fittingly so, considering the amount of concentration each canvas requires. One of the smallest works in the show, dated 2014 and measuring around 16 by 20 inches, is centered with a full moon—or could it be an overripe sun? It shines above a round hollow, which we take to be a lake or a pond, surrounded by land. In the foreground, a tree stands proud, naked with its barren autumn branches outstretched like monster claws in an expressionist film.

A larger canvas, about 45 by 94 inches, dated 2006, utilizes the barest discernible inferences of green to infer the movements of the sea—or is that a bed of clouds? Looked at from another angle, it could also be a conference of mountains or rolling hills, seen from above.

We often don't know, and sometimes two viewers might disagree on just what it is they are seeing. That is the mystery, the value of Qiu's painting. Images are hidden in snow or smog, or, to use an analogy to the mind's processes, it is as though they are shrouded in the mists of memory: you have to go somewhere in order to locate them. Such probing always leads back to the self: what am I doing here and why? A horizon conceals as much as it shows; there is always a certain amount of deception in such instances of blatant nakedness.

Qiu's project remains steadfast and unrelenting as the years go by and the canvases pile up. Nature is our friend; it is also, inevitably, our end. Qiu is painting the void we are all well aware of, and that some of us may even wish to enter permanently.

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Los Angeles Times

'Ink Art' at Metropolitan Museum of Art plays with Chinese tradition

'Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China' at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York features artists including Ai Weiwei drawing on tradition in unexpected ways.

Par Scarlet Cheng dans Los Angeles Times, en ligne le 11/01/2014

NEW YORK — It's hard to break from the past. Even under the Chinese Cultural Revolution, which sought to smash the "Four Olds" of customs, culture, habits and ideas, the tradition of calligraphy was held in reverence, as it had been for centuries. Chairman Mao's own calligraphy served as nameplate for the powerful newspaper the People's Daily.

"Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China," at the Metropolitan Museum of Art through April 6, ambitiously seeks to tie past with present through the work of 35 artists. It's the first contemporary Chinese art show at the museum, and curator Maxwell Hearn, head of the Asian art department, has carefully and sometimes wittily interwoven the work into the Chinese galleries, which usually display Imperial porcelain, scholar scrolls and the Ming garden.

The juxtaposition highlights how the Chinese avant-garde, which rose in the 1980s, has been able to deploy traditional themes and media for its own purposes. While ink on paper works were obvious choices, Hearn cast his net wider by including works such as the white-on-white oil paintings by Qiu Shihua and an art film by Yang Fudong — they reminded him of Southern Sung paintings "obscured by mist," he says during a walkthrough of the exhibition. "I feel some of these artists are reaching back to draw on their traditions in ways that are surprising and unexpected."

In the 1980s Chinese artists began experimenting with "ink flow" and abstract imagery. In a 1985 group show, Gu Wenda presented large-scale paintings in which he combined genres and reconfigured the very components of Chinese writing. "Ink Art" includes three panels from his landmark series "Mythos of Lost Dynasty--Tranquility Comes from Meditation." "I tried to combine the two highest forms of Chinese art, calligraphy and landscape," says Gu.

They depict a mysterious landscape, with a hybrid word looming in the central panel. It is made up of three parts, with the combination of the left two meaning "spirit," and the right two meaning "smooth" or "unobstructed." Hearn translates it as "to liberate the spirit" — in short, a manifesto for new Chinese art.

Gu, and later Xu Bing, became famous for "pseudo-characters," which questioned the very nature of words and what they convey; Chinese characters that are missing or have additional strokes are unreadable. The exhibition presents Xu Bing's "Book From the Sky" in its own gallery — an installation made up of open books on a raised platform with scrolls hanging over them. They seem grand and intimidating, yet they are covered with thousands of "pseudo-characters" Xu concocted.

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The exhibition features several works by Ai Weiwei, probably the best-known Chinese artist today. "Map of China" is a wooden map of China pieced together from remnants of Qing temples. Says Hearn, "I see the symbolism here of China as a jigsaw, a fusion of many different regions and ethnicities." Elsewhere, in a room of Ming furnishings, are two examples of his reconfigured furniture — one is two stools fused together, the other is a table bent in the middle, with two legs placed on the wall.

A younger generation using new media is emerging. In her "Scroll" series, Xing Danwen combined multiple shots on one roll of film (in those pre-digital days), creating a horizontal scroll of overlapping pictures. One shows ordinary citizens seated along a walkway, another architectural details in the Forbidden City. Duan Jianyu refers to landscape in her own way, painting scenic highlights such as the Great Wall or Guilin mountains with ink on cardboard — corrugated cardboard, with some of the top layer torn away to reveal the rippled paper beneath.

One rising art star, video artist Sun Xun, has an unusual short in "Ink Art." He usually employs hand drawing or painting, but "Some Actions Which Haven't Been Defined Yet in the Revolution" features something even more labor-intensive, woodblock carvings — a medium popular during the Maoist era. The 12-minute video traces the strange Kafka-esque day in the life of a Chinese worker.

"I think ink is not a dead culture in China," he says via email, "and tradition becomes a part of life." And while he understands traditional Chinese art practices — he was trained at the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou — he's veered from them, and thinks of them as a tool, not a calling. "I just use relevant materials to extend the tradition. What I paint is not 'ink.' it's me!"

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Exhibition views, Qiu Shihua, *Calme*, 2015, Galerie Karsten Greve Paris
Photo: Antonio Maniscalco

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For any press enquiries, please contact:
info@galerie-karsten-greve.fr

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE PARIS

5, rue Debelleye
F-75003 Paris
Tel. +33 (0)1 42 77 19 37
Fax +33 (0)1 42 77 05 58
info@galerie-karsten-greve.fr

Opening hours :
Tue – Sat : 10am - 7am

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE KÖLN

Drusugasse, 1-5
D-50667 Cologne
Tel. +49 (0)221 257 10 12
Fax +49 (0)221 257 10 13
info@galerie-karsten-greve.de

Opening hours :
Tue – Fri : 10am – 6:30pm
Sat : 10am – 6pm

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE AG ST. MORITZ

Via Maistra, 4
CH-7500 St. Moritz
Tel. +41 (0)81 834 90 34
Fax +41 (0)81 834 90 35
info@galerie-karsten-greve.ch

Opening hours :
Tue – Fri : 10am -1pm /
2pm – 6:30pm
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