

SHAO FAN
An Incurable Classicist

contrasts

October 10-November 11, 2010
Opening reception: October 10, 4-6pm

SHANGHAI – *An Incurable Classicist*, an exhibition of 21 oil paintings by renowned artist Shao Fan, will be on view at Contrasts Gallery in Shanghai October 10 to November 11, 2010 at No 181 Middle Jiangxi Road, G/F, Shanghai, China. Shao Fan's paintings are modern interpretations of traditional 'Literati' thought and aesthetics, exploring the ramifications of philosophical and cultural changes taking place in China today. His first major solo exhibition, *An Incurable Classicist* takes this exploration to new heights, crossing the chasm where tradition and contemporary converge, and the individual becomes one with nature.

Shao re-contextualizes ancient Chinese philosophy, creating balance and unity between Man and Nature. Taking inspiration from ancestral painting styles, Shao's beautifully executed portraits are unusual and cryptic. A hare is not merely a hare, a deer not merely a deer. Shao Fan shows the spirit that exists in every living creature and that every living thing in the universe, man and nature alike, are one. He portrays the traditional Chinese style of painting, where form takes precedence over detail. By being detached from social constraints and Western influence, he explores the Taoist concept of being truly integrated with the Universe. His ultimate goal is the union of Self and Nature, which is the epitome of aesthetic achievement.

The works in *An Incurable Classicist* follow the ancient literati aesthetic by using a bare, stark and sober palate. The colors are neutral, soothing and do not evoke strong reactions. Shao incorporates techniques from both the Tang and Song Dynasty. He follows the way of 'wen ren' by painting what he sees rather than reality and therefore a depiction of spirit and 'aura' are portrayed. He also reflects on Gong-bi (工筆) known as Meticulous, the technique used by the Song dynasty court painters where they used oil paint to reinstate their concern about the loss of Chinese culture and aesthetics.

He reflects on 5000 years of history, contemporary and traditional thought, and creates a new language, re-evaluating Chinese philosophy and principles.

Highlights of the exhibition include:

In *Cradle*, 1989, unease and ambiguity engulf a screaming baby boy. The child's screams echo and reverberate throughout the painting, lingering in and haunting the viewer's mind.

Abatis, 2009, is a trial of personification. By diminishing the individual and rising the Self, the painting embodies a unitary world where Man is an integral part of Nature.

In *White Hare*, 2010, Shao Fan passionately renders an appreciation for the form of the hare. By portraying one of the most common species with such great detail, Shao Fan shows the spirit that exists in every creature, and ultimately proves that every creature is equal. An ancient Chinese symbol for moon, the hare's ears stand erect, depicting its desire to communicate and adapt with the world.

About Shao Fan

Shao Fan, born in 1964 into a family of celebrated artists in Beijing, began painting at the age of three and received formal training from both his parents and the Beijing Art and Craft College. He is one of the first Chinese artists to explore the boundaries between visual art and design. Shao's paintings and sculpture establish a cyclical and timeless logic. While his earlier work is primarily sculpture, Shao Fan considers painting to also be one of the most natural and immediate means of expressing his temperament, which has inspired his latest body of work.

Shao Fan has exhibited internationally with solo exhibitions in China and France. His works are part of the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the V&A Museum, UK, the Japan Tomioka Museum, and the Peabody Museum, USA. His 2008 show *I Dream, I Seek My Garden*, at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in the UK, received much acclaim and was awarded a gold medal for its outstanding design.

About Contrasts Gallery

Contrasts Gallery is dedicated to presenting creative excellence in art and design from East and West to the international art community. Founded by Pearl Lam in 1992 in Hong Kong, the Gallery nurtures and promotes creative talents where art, architecture, and design intersect. Contrasts Gallery has evolved from a philosophy rooted in Chinese "Literati" art, which promotes art for the sake of self-cultivation and embraces creativity without hierarchies. The gallery's exhibition program is designed to create new cultural exchanges by representing artists from all parts of the world working in divergent traditions and across disciplines. The gallery's 2010 schedule includes exhibitions by many leading Chinese contemporary figures: Shao Fan, Zhang Hao, Wei Ligang, Li Tianbing, Lan Zhenghui and Yi Zhou. Contrasts Gallery is based in Shanghai. www.contrastsgallery.com

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