

ASIAN ART NEWS

HK\$80/US\$10/
C\$14/€7/UK£9

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WILSON SHIEH

HOPEWELL CENTRE
合和中心
1980

CENTRAL PLAZA

LIPPO CENTRE
力寶中心
1988

HSBC BANK OF CHINA
香港銀行大廈
1988



Kwementyaye (Kathleen)
Petyarre * Chinsee * Wladyslaw
Dutkiewicz * Women In Film
And Photography * Reviews

HONG KONG CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION CENTRE
香港會議展覽中心
1977

HONG KONG CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION CENTRE
香港會議展覽中心
1977

CITY HALL
市政大廈
1962

BANK OF CHINA
香港銀行大廈
1988

EXCHANGE SQUARE
匯豐銀行大廈
1972

EXCHANGE SQUARE
匯豐銀行大廈
1972

THE UNITED STATES

Abstract Pioneer

Eli Klein Gallery is presenting a solo exhibition of work by Shen Fan, a pioneering figure of abstract painting in China. An artist whose career spans nearly 40 years, Shen is an artist who defies being categorized into a certain style or school. Titled *Shen Fan: Works in Abstraction 1992 – 2017*, the exhibition includes a range of works that illustrate Shen's ability to combine Western expressionism with Eastern philosophy and traditional Chinese art practices to pave a unique path for contemporary Chinese abstraction.

The exhibition is on view through February 16, 2019, and features twelve works from three important periods of Shen's career from 1992 to 2017: oils on paper from the early 1990s, *Shan Shui* paintings from the early 2000s, as well as three recent acrylics on newspaper from the *Punctuation* series. At a time when an increased number of historical and contemporary Asian artists with deep roots in Eastern philosophy are receiving attention in the U.S. and in Europe, this exhibition continues that dialogue by spotlighting the career of this important figure in the development of Chinese abstract art.

Contemporary art in China was mostly dominated

by Social Realism until it experienced a profound shift in 1978 with Deng Xiaoping's establishment of a new Open Door policy for the country. With the sudden availability of Western art publications, many artists began to adopt the Western style as a new mode of creating art, yet Shen rooted his work in Eastern philosophy in his pursuit of modernity. While Western Abstract Expressionism is often associated with action painting and direct, energetic brushstrokes,



Above left: Shen Fan, *92-013*, 1992, oil on xuan paper mounted on xuan paper, 140 x 70 cm. **Above right:** Shen Fan, *ShanShui-C-31*, 2008, oil on canvas, 138 x 69 cm.

in his oil-on-paper works from 1992 and 1993, Shen's indirect imprinting of ink through the gesture of rubbing—a technique that has been practiced in China for thousands of years—symbolizes Confucian values of order and moderation and other Eastern philosophical principles.

A number of abstract paintings from 2004 to 2009 illustrate Shen's reinterpretation of *Shan Shui* and his unique understanding of nature. For example, while



traditional Chinese paintings influenced by Taoism present water as soft and feminine and rocks as rigid and masculine, Shen's *Shan Shui* paintings subvert this dichotomy by depicting water with straight lines and mountains with curves. While the composition of these paintings may seem asymmetric at a first glance, a perfect balance is achieved with borders that are intentionally left blank—a key element in traditional Eastern paintings.

Finally, in his more recent acrylics on newspaper from his 2017 *Punctuation* series, Shen eliminates texts from Chinese newspapers such as *People's Daily* until only the patterns and structures of the paragraphs are left, exploring such themes as censorship and surveillance as well as the temporality of words.

Born in 1952 in Shanghai, China, Shen Fan graduated from the Fine Arts Department of the Shanghai Light Industry Institute. His work has been exhibited in museum shows around the world including solo exhibitions. His work has been part of group many shows. A fully illustrated digital catalog with an essay by Will Fenstermaker, editor at The Metropolitan Museum of Art and associate editor of *The Brooklyn Rail*, accompanies this exhibition.

Eli Klein Gallery is at 398 West Street, New York, NY 10014. Website: www.galleryek.com.



Shen Fan, Punctuation-Landscape-001-3, 2017, acrylic on newspaper mounted on wood in three parts, overall: 120 x 360 cm.