

# Huang Yishan Solo Exhibition

Curator / Cui Cancan

Opening / 2019.7.20 4 pm

Duration / 2019.7.20 - 8.28

Location / Tang Contemporary Art, 2nd Space, Beijing

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Tang Contemporary Art is pleased to announce the opening of Huang Yishan, a solo exhibition for Huang Yishan in the gallery's second space in Beijing, on July 20, 2019. Curated by Cui Cancan, the exhibition will showcase over 20 latest important works.

## Three Stories

Huang Yishan tells stories. He makes art historical allusions, referencing Michelangelo's *Night*, the snakes curled around Laocoon, and Beuys' overcoat. Sometimes, he directly utilizes pictures so that history appears vividly in the work; sometimes, he is not faithful to the original work, making various alterations to gradually distance it from historical experience. Even in cases of direct appropriation, he always provides an entirely new context, which makes the information both familiar and strange.

The stories are determined by the content, but also by the storyteller's perspective, skill, and context provided. In his images, there are multiple spatial narratives, and the perspectives and methods of realization are very diverse. Therefore, the context for Huang's work is not immediately obvious, and viewers must engage with "the gaze," constantly pulling closer and pushing away, finding clues and feelings, and hovering between similarity and dissimilarity, large and small, presence and absence.

(I)

The exhibition begins with three works, representing three stories. The first story relates Huang Yishan's dissatisfaction with the painting principles he learned in school. In the work, he is a person encircled by walls, with Vincent van Gogh's famed painting *Prisoners Exercising* hanging nearby. The painting expresses an emotion, and when paired with this mood, the enclosed spaces and painting-within-a-painting become resources for Huang's later work.

In these later pieces, the painting-within-a-painting becomes an increasingly rich motif, and the scenes created around it are more complex. The original paintings come from different periods and mediums and have different roles and functions in Huang's paintings. In *Unfinished Portrait of an Old Man*, Huang Yishan attempts to complete one of Li Tiefu's unfinished portraits. Obviously, this choice suggests deeper meanings, as Huang creates a dialogue across time with Li, a pioneer of Chinese oil painting. However, this dialogue is dislocated and fabricated. Huang relies on his own imagination and techniques passed down for one hundred years, perpetuating the shortcomings or regrets in painting history. The fabricated painting-within-a-painting motif is also present in *Self-Portrait of Picasso*. Based on a picture of Picasso, Huang imitates Picasso's Cubist style and "helps" him to complete a self-portrait that did not previously exist.

In Huang's work, the fabrication sometimes stems from creative juxtaposition, which is best represented by *Two Coats*. There are two pieces of clothing in the image; one is the overcoat that Beuys often wore, and the other was a women's style that Huang Yishan created based on it; they are hanging in opposite corners of the room. Strange juxtapositions and different scenes make the semantics of this painting more mysterious. The painting is set within a confined space and we cannot find a way out of it. A painting-within-a-painting is extended and given new life in many of Huang's works; the painting draws us in, but it is also isolated in space. Therefore, an encircled person and an enclosed space are always hovering at the beginning of this story.

(II)

The second story begins with a question. Huang Yishan often depicts floor tiles in his work and imagines presenting lawns from a parallel perspective. This method means that progress is very slow; he can only paint three or four centimeters per day. Over a long period of time, the grass is meticulously arranged using repeated motions, reflecting his later working methods.

Thickness, material, technique, labor, and intense texture are the most notable traits of Huang's works. These narratives of materiality can only be achieved through a lot of effort, requiring significant time and energy. Huang's work is slow, and his methods are akin to a construction project or shaping an exquisite piece of stone. He has established rigorous steps in his production; he draws a sketch, creates a computer model, and re-calculates the structures and modules. Developing the texture and deploying or adding various materials is just one-third of the project.

Sometimes, in order to achieve the perfect texture, he will replace a painted section with real materials. This is a production requirement, but it

also establishes a conceptual intention. In Huang's work, this part-real, part-fake materiality is ubiquitous; on the one hand, this complex production attempts to imitate a real presence, and on the other hand, real materials and fabrications have a philosophical relationship. In *Falling No. 2*, composite board is cut into different shapes to make a decorative space that can accommodate classical sculpture. When we stand before the work, we can start to differentiate fiction from reality.

While he was painting lawns, Huang also attempted to depict the sea, but it was only many years later that *Sea Level* emerged as the culmination of this vision. Its composition and methods reflect the increasing refinement that comes with practice. The three framed images of the sea are increasingly slanted; these paintings and the actual floors beneath them are partly real and partly artificial. The visual illusion of the rectangle guides us toward a logical paradox. We waver between the materiality and symbolism of the painting; therefore, the content is temporarily suspended until we begin to look back, doubting and reflecting on our visual experiences.

(III)

The third story takes place in a corner. Huang Yishan imitates a scene from Freud's studio, in which oil paints are hung on the walls. The half-open door makes the story feel unfinished; it covers the artist's figure in the first story and incorporates the lawn from the second story to create a painting-within-a-painting. The first two stories are layered here, and this layered accumulation of experience creates an all-new story through the constant fabrication of the self and reality.

The third story is a composite image in which the story and the self are both being depicted and constantly created. *Galloping* is one of Huang Yishan's largest works to date, covering multiple stories and creating intersections and parallels in artistic practices from different eras. *Goldfish* is its predecessor, a work that utilizes M. C. Escher's tessellation method to create a visual confluence of goldfish and horses. The creation of this composition has many elements, including developing geometric shapes, using geometric groupings, considering shapes in multiple ways, and making gradual changes based on tessellations. The figure of the horse in the image comes from a painting-within-a-painting that Huang made in 2017; it is a combination and adaptation of *Théodore Géricault's Horse Racing at Epsom* and Eadweard Muybridge's *The Horse in Motion*. This complex process creates a responsive relationship. In *Galloping*, a humorous and hypothetical method is used to place these past works into a solo exhibition for an unknown artist. This artist used a Pop method to paint multiple images of horses galloping, presented in a blue space.

*Moving a Sofa* became the best metaphor for this story, mixing together narrative and materiality in one work. A thickly-painted Freud painting is squeezed into a narrow crack, leaving open the possibility of an extrusion. Here, we witness an accident, and with the suspension of narrative and the presence of material evidence, the viewer is abandoned as he is leaving. How will the story happen? Where does it end? A painting that is about to vanish draws our vision beyond the painting and toward what happens before and after the story.

Huang Yishan's stories constantly invite and create commentary, and the commentary itself becomes another story. This new story includes art historical allusions and intellectual creations, but it is also the sum total of his definition of the self, his own artistic practice, and the time he has experienced. These fluid paintings also suggest Huang's classic style, space and perspective, appropriation and layering, material and technique; they are a painting-in-a-painting and a story-in-a-story.

Cui Cancan  
12 July 2019

#### About Artist

Huang Yishan was born in Shantou, Guangdong, China in 1983. He gained M.A. in the Oil Painting Department of Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts in 2009, and then became a lecturer in the Oil Painting Department of Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts.

Huang's solo exhibitions include *Interference: Artworks of Huang Yishan*, Guang Dong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, Guang Dong (2019); *Huang Yishan*, The 2nd space of Tang Contemporary Art, Beijing (2019); MiniQ, O2ART SPACE, Beijing (2018); *Dimension Imitation Transformation*, Tang Contemporary Art, Hong Kong (2017); *The Half-open Door*, Central Harbourfront, Hong Kong (2016); *Blue Sky*, Fei Gallery, Guangzhou (2015); *Not an investigation and research of physical things*, Antimetaphysical space narrative, Tong Space, Beijing (2013);

Huang's works have been collected by notable public and private collections. Including Australia White Rabbit Gallery, Guangdong Museum of Art, Hubei Museum of Art, He Xiangning Art Museum, Art Museum of Nanjing University of the Art etc.