



上海市对外文化交流协会
Shanghai International Culture Association

Exhibition: **Mou Huan**

Institut Valencià d'Art Modern (IVAM)
4 October 2011 – 4 December 2011

Organised by: Institut Valencia d'Art Modern (IVAM)
Shanghai International Culture Association

Curated by: Yang Jianzhong

The exhibition *Mou Huan*, organised by the IVAM and the Shanghai International Culture Association, comprises 29 works from the Chinese artist's most recent production. Huan, took part in the group exhibition of 16 Chinese artists held in the Sala de la Muralla in 2007.

Mou Huan's works cannot be classified within any particular school or trend. As he is an artist "who moves between two cultures", Mou Huan has a broader field of action and greater diversity of themes thanks to his Oriental baggage and his long experience in the learning and practice of Occidental art.

A catalogue has been published for the exhibition with reproductions of all the works displayed and texts by the curator of the exhibition, Zheng Jiayao, Noberto M. Ibáñez, the director of the Shanghai International Culture Association, Zheng Jiaya, and the director of the IVAM, Consuelo Císcar.

"All people grow up in a certain cultural milieu where they accept a culturally influenced way of thinking from childhood. I think people's values, religion, morals and aesthetic tastes will stay with them forever. Artists always construct their works based on their own cultural baggage."

Mou Huan

When one explores the lengthy artistic trajectory of Mou Huan (Sichuan, 1959), one observes that in practically all of it there resides a common element that

consists in the almost total renunciation of an architectonic space capable of contextualising the human figure, the absolute protagonist of his canvases. From this point of view, since 2000 Huan has repeatedly developed actions in which an isolated, solitary human being progressively sets his centre of gravity in a vacuum, as we can see in the pieces *Float* or *Kungfu*, both of 2005. Despite the fact that these peculiar characters are the main strand running through Huan's narrative language, we could say that painting is the real champion of his scenes.

Furthermore, we must imagine the physical qualities and states of mind of Huan's figures and creatures, since none of them has a face. They are imprecise, abstract, anonymous beings that conceal their faces, perhaps following the Chinese cultural tradition according to which the face is a sociological concept, in general linked to the dignity and prestige a person has regarding his social relationships. In this way, Huan scarcely reveals any details about the nature of his creations, but leaves part of the construction of the characters and the scenes up to the fantasy of the spectator.

Nevertheless, from 2008 onwards one observes in the artist a certain tendency to incorporate some referential data in his canvases. For example, in *Earthquake*, 2008, or *Space*, 2010, there are slight spatial boundaries and slight complements in the figures that add some innuendos of naturalism to the paintings.

Many of Huan's characters are naked, clean, unclothed. But none of them adopts an attractive demeanour, rather the opposite, since their rather unnatural movements or foreshortened postures provoke more pain than passion. However, there is a surprising series dedicated to the nude female figure where we can again find a certain amount of naturalism in the treatment of the scenes and, above all, a seductive treatment unusual in Huan's oeuvre. Similarly, it is curious that some of the women's faces comprised in this series are revealed, as is the case of *Room*, 2006, or *Untitled*, 2006. Furthermore, it is surprising that none of them conveys suffering or anguish, unlike works like *Tuishou*, 2003, *No.4*, 2007, *Yi*, 2006, *Rad[Bad / Red] Baby*, 2003, or *Shadow*, 2002.

We find the same procedure Huan uses to eliminate the most enigmatic and stressful part of his work in a series of portraits dedicated to political leaders of communist governments like Vladimir Putin or Fidel Castro. These painted busts belong among his most recent work, where he seems to be more persistently taken with figuration and the reality around him. This leads him to be more explicit in the tales he tells, to abandon that surrealist aura that he had before, for now he feels the need to portray situations, circumstances or stances that affect a world society in crisis. These images of Huan's could well act as informative panels that strive to make the spectators aware of what they see when they look at them and reflect about it.

The series called *Event* and *Made in China* point in the same direction, as do paintings like *9.11.2011* and *Enriched Uranium*. In these pieces that he has produced in the last few years, Huan tells us we live at a time in which we must

pay special attention to our social environment, where we face up to many events day after day and, as citizens, we want to know the true story behind each event, for each one exists for a reason.

The human body has been Huan's principal work tool. He uses it to investigate and analyse all its possibilities. In this way, he plays with the bodies from all possible and impossible angles, from every distance and beyond the limitations imposed by their own nature. Each figure has a unique constitution and he gives each body an unrepeatable and unfathomable soul, which it reflects. Faithful to the idea that that the greatest art always brings you to the vulnerability of the human condition, the work of the Chinese artist is a constant reflection about the fragility of the human being,