osage

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PRESS RELEASE
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Osage at Art Basel Hong Kong 2017

March 21-25, 2017 | HKCEC, Wanchai

Insights | *Booth **3D39*** | Jiang Zhi, Shen Shaomin, Zhao Zhao

Encounters | *Booth **1E06*** | Shen Shaomin

Film | *agnès b. CINEMA* | Shen Shaomin

Salon | *Auditorium* | Shen Shaomin, Masaki Fujihata

INSIGHTS – TREMBLING, TWISTING, TESTING

Curatorial Statement:

Trembling is often taken as a sign of weakness – stimulated by a state of too much, or too little, a state beyond the normal, which reduces us to our bodies and its own instincts. It is the body existing beyond the will of the mind. In modern society, where we are disciplined and our movements 'choreographed' to ensure maximum efficiency and harmony, trembling is a sign of the primitive. Presented as part of the Insights booth will be projects by three Chinese artists who outline mechanisms of power and control through making visible moments of the very opposite – instances of slippages, outbursts of transgression and situations that spiral out of control. In these moments we are witnesses to vulnerability, to the unspoken rules of daily life, and to possibilities of existing beyond these rules.

Jiang Zhi sees emotion as the central focal point of his practice. Particularly, in his video installation, *Tremble*, Jiang Zhi probes expressions of emotions when they "reach a certain point of transition." *Tremble* consists of seven life sized projections, each projection depicting a person, either male or female, in the nude, holding static poses to the best of their ability while standing on top of vibrating plates. The effort of maintaining control is more visible on the faces of some than on others – the occasional flinch, prolonged blink, or the determined gaze being some tell-tale signs. *Tremble* enables us to see the most shocking interpretation of discipline and micro power embedded in all of the bones and muscles of our bodies. At the same time, trembling shakes us loose as if an exorcism of pent up tensions is performed –

hence a moment of release. Véronic-Ting Chen accredits this trembling to that induced by the state of hyper capitalism: "Ours is a system that can stimulate us into an involuntary state of excitation, into artificial Parkinson's that seems voluntary, but in fact is unnatural, despite how natural we deem it to be…in this system there is something we are always sentimentally attached to, that is the illusion of freedom."

Shen Shaomin turns invisible violence into tangible forms in his Bonsai series. The work consists of Bonsai plants on and around which the artist has placed metal tools – cables, nuts, bolts – in an attempt to restrict the growth of the Bonsai. *Bonsai* makes us reconsider the brutality in daily life, particularly that which has been transformed into kinds of aesthetic perception or concealed within nature itself. This group of works achieves its efficacy not because it displays the results of these man-made transformations, but makes apparent the process of transformation itself. From a broader standpoint, Bonsai reveals an introspective look on the notion of control. Control can take place in the abuse of the physical body, like foot binding, and it can also be performed through a distortion of intellect and psychology, such as training children to become filial sons, faithful wives, and "war heroes." Revealing conflict and tragedy, Bonsai delves into an essential layer of human culture.[1]

Zhao Zhao's four performance works – *A Slap to the Face*, *Crush*, *Leather Shoes* and *Family* – test the unspoken rules of a society. *A Slap to the Face* is the first part the series. Through open calls, Zhao Zhao was able to recruit volunteer Zhao Haixing. At a designated place at 20:20:20 on the 20th of October, 2013, the volunteer let Zhao Zhao slap him once each on his right and left cheek. For, *Crush*, volunteer Sun Yuan was recruited through open calls. Sun Yuan agreed to let Zhao Zhao stab him in the back with a knife. In *Leather Shoes*, the knife used in *Crush* to stab Sun Yuan in the back is given as a gift to the next volunteer, in a totemic exchange. The condition being that this volunteer must convince Zhao Zhao for the gift. *Family* is the last part to the series. Zhao Zhao was introduced as a guest to a family of six by a volunteer. Zhao Zhao's intentions in the visit to the family was to try to prolong/overstay his welcome as a guest. Zhao Zhao stayed from noon on the 5th of December 2014 until he was kicked out by the family at 2:40 am the next day. Through setting up these exchanges, Zhao Zhao creates acts of transgression that in turn makes himself and the participants vulnerable and open, in an almost Bataille inspired fashion. It is in these abrupt social contexts that irreplaceable bonds are formed between the artist and the participants of the performance. As witnesses to these relationships, we are called to probe the frontiers of the fabric of social relations.

ENCOUNTERS

Shen Shaomin's *Summit* has a profound semantic aspect in its naming. The Chinese for summit is 'feng hui'. The character 'feng', taken literally, means 'peak', 'top of the mountain', or rather 'authority'. Going further, it can also mean 'avant-garde', 'sharp' or 'acute'. There is an old Chinese saying, 'Man can top the highest mountain', follow from which summit or 'feng hui' can also be seen as an encounter between superiors.

[1] Wu Hung, Curatorial notes on *Bonsai* by Shen Shaomin.

When referring to the word 'summit', the annual G8 Summit (Group of 8 summit involving America, England, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Canada and Russia) or the Davos World Economic Forum, comes to mind. At the G8 Summit every year, manifestos are made and perspectives shared regarding the global political and economic events, while views from the Davos World Economic Forum are always the centre of attention of economists worldwide.

The objective of a summit is to establish its authority and shape public opinion through discussion and dialogue, reaching consensus on important issues. The project *Summit* takes as its starting point a hypothetical summit meeting of the most significant Communist leaders in history, Vladimir Lenin, Mao Zedong, Kim Il Sung, Ho Chi Minh and Fidel. The work was created during a time when the whole world was drawn into a vortex of economic crisis and questions had emerged about the values inherent in Capitalism. These questions have become even more important today: are the ideas and ideals of these long-gone socialist vanguards still relevant? Will their ideas, concepts and theories reflect ours again someday? Coming of age during the grim years of the Cultural Revolution in China, the artist envisages the work as his riposte to these questions.

This hypothetical meeting is only possible because of the very fact that socialist countries have a practice of preserving the bodies of their leaders. The only difference is in the shapes of the crystal coffins these past leaders are kept in, which reflect their different cultural origins. The project will therefore present the five leaders with their bodies in crystal coffins, holding the summit in the formation of a pentagram. One exception is Castro, whose demise only came after the conception of the artwork. The former Cuban statesman lies on his deathbed, still breathing, but speechless, making the summit scene an eerie, silent one.

FILM

Shen Shaomin's film *I am Chinese* takes up the issues of refugees and immigrants, as a reflection on culture, race and religion. When Germany invaded Russia in WWI, some Russians were forced across the border to Hongjiang Village in China. During the 1960s, after China and Russia became enemies, many in the village were suspected of spying and the village became known as the "Village of Spies". Today in the 21st century, these 'immigrants' are still trying to integrate with Chinese society.

SALON

Shen Shaomin and **Masaki Fujihata** will be on the panel for Salon, an open platform for a series of short, informal presentations, such as artist talks, panels, lectures and performances with a range of speakers representing many different aspects of the artworld.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Jiang Zhi

Born in 1971, Jiang Zhi comes from Hunan province, China. He currently lives and works in

Beijing and Shenzhen, China. He works with a range of mediums; such as photography, video, and installation. From the early stages of his artistic career, Jiang has been writing novels while taking photographs, which stems from his deep interest in poetry. Jiang Zhi has consciously positioned himself at the intersection of poetry and sociology. He fervently weaves familiar and mundane social experiences into his works, while at the same time maintaining the tenseness between daily life and our reading of the text. Hence, he has consistently avoided unspecific personal emotions and political statements, and shies away from feeble expressions and critiques. In this aspect, Jiang's works are open-ended, supple, and possess a taste of poetic vigour.

Shen Shaomin

Born in Heilongjiang province, China. Originally trained as a printer during the Cultural Revolution, throughout the last 20 years Shen has forged an important international career. Shen Shaomin is one of a few Australian-Chinese artists who moved to Sydney in the 1990's. Since returning to Beijing, this experience abroad has been a key impetus in his shifts in thinking towards experimental, provocative and audacious work. Shen has presented work across the US, Europe, China and Australia including the 17th Biennale of Sydney; the first Kiev Biennial 2012; Liverpool Biennial 2006; Busan Biennial, Korea 2012; Guangzhou Triennial, China 2012.

Zhao Zhao

Zhao Zhao was born in Xinjiang, China, in 1982. He graduated with a BFA from the Xinjiang Institute of Arts from the department of Oil Painting in 2003. Zhao Zhao's multidisciplinary body of work is an inspection of China's contemporary profile, and the socio-political consequences of individual human action. His abstract shattered glass paintings reveal a car accident he was involved in, and represents the ripple effect of action; his "Safe" sculptures substantiate his fellow citizens' paranoid views on security. He currently lives and works in Beijing, China.

Masaki Fujihata

Masaki Fujihata is one of the pioneers of Japanese new media art, beginning his career working in video and digital imaging in the early 80s. He is most recognized for his sophisticated interactive network installations and his primary concern has been to employ multimedia technology in order to examine the possibilities for communication within virtual spaces. His interactive works include Removable Reality (1992), which used an infrared cordless phone, and Impressing Velocity (1994), in which he used a laptop computer equipped with GPS to digitally map Mount Fuji. Fujihata has exhibited extensively throughout Japan and internationally, such as the 1983, 1984, 1996, and 2000 Siggraph conferences (USA), Ars Electronica (Linz), DEAF (Rotterdam), "CyberForum" (Lisbon), and VEAF (Vancouver). His work is also part of the permanent collection of the ZKM (Karlsruhe).

ABOUT OSAGE GALLERY

Osage Gallery was established in Hong Kong in 2004 and grew quickly to become one of Asia's largest commercial gallery groups. Osage has become well known in the art world for

its uncompromising support for the most challenging and critically thought-provoking contemporary art.

Osage Gallery dances the edge of the latest innovations in art, culture and technology and is a platform for forward thinking and new ideas. Osage Gallery is curatorially driven and aims to be a catalyst for creative expression and the active engagement of audiences. Its programmes of exhibitions, publications and research examine the questions that shape and inspire us as individuals, and our cultures and communities.

Osage Gallery has gained wide international recognition for the global, multidisciplinary and diverse approaches of its programmes. Osage was the first Hong Kong gallery to feature at the Statements section of Art Basel, Basel in 2011, the Spotlight section at Frieze Masters in London in 2012, Arte Fiera in Bologna, Italy, 2014, Art Cologne in Germany, 2014, and is one of the first Hong Kong galleries to participate in Moving Image New York, 2014. Osage has also participated in Art Hong Kong from 2008 – 2012 and at Art Basel, Hong Kong from 2013-2016.

www.osagegallery.com

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Please download high res images from the following link:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B0BploAWkf1bQ0U2aWwydllRS2s

Jiang Zhi
Tremble
2009
7 channel video installation
Dimensions variable

Image courtesy of the artist and Osage Gallery

Shen Shaomin
Bonsai No. 20
2016
Plant, iron tools
60 x 50 x 106 cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Osage Gallery

Shen Shaomin
Bonsai No. 21
2016
Plant, iron tools
100 x 50 x 67 cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Osage Gallery

Shen Shaomin
Bonsai No. 22
2016
Plant, iron tools
60 x 50 x 106 cm

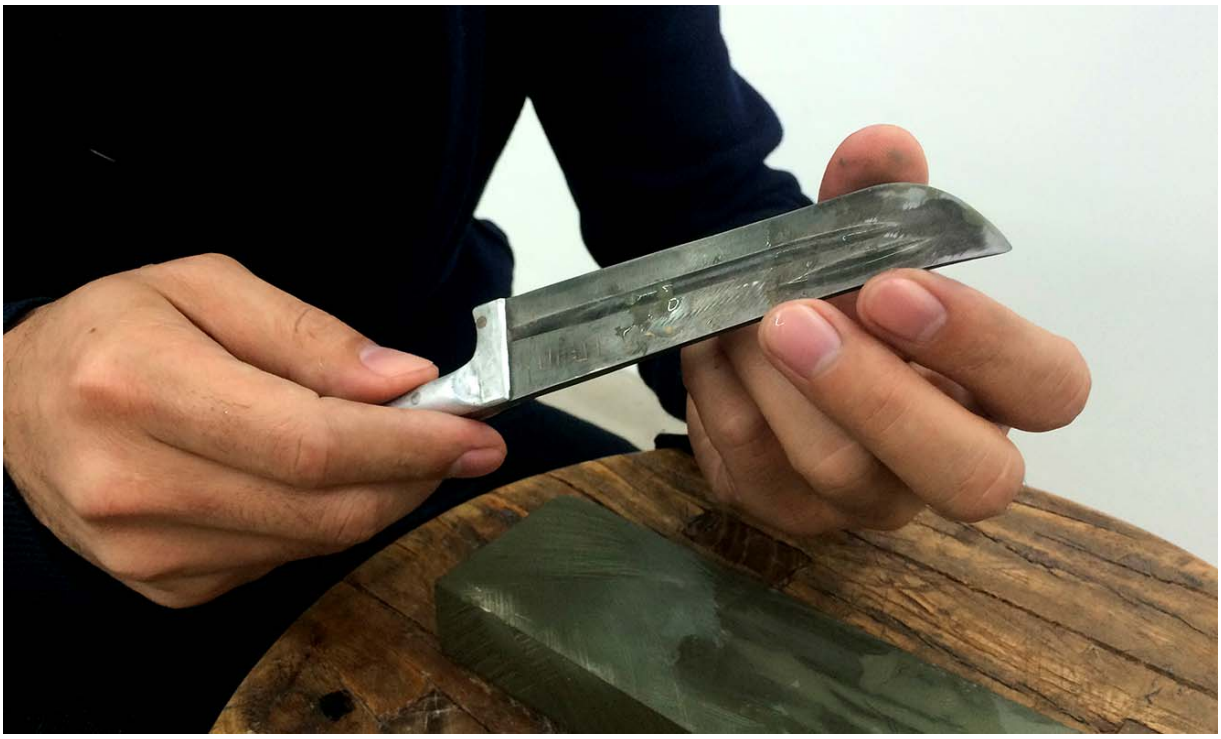
Image courtesy of the artist and Osage Gallery

Zhao Zhao
A Slap to the Face
2014
Digital c-print
90 x 150 cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Osage Gallery

Zhao Zhao
Crush
2014
Digital c-print
90 x 150 cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Osage Gallery



Zhao Zhao
Leather Shoes
2014
Digital c-print
90 x 150 cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Osage Gallery

Zhao Zhao
Family
2014
Digital c-print
90 x 150 cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Osage Gallery

Shen Shaomin
Summit
2009
(as exhibited in After Utopia: Revisiting The Ideal In Asian Contemporary Art at Singapore Art Museum, 2015)
Installation
Dimensions Variable

Image courtesy of the artist and Osage Gallery

Shen Shaomin
I am Chinese
2007
HD video, colour, stereo
1:14’29”

Image courtesy of the Artist and Osage Gallery