

# 艺术界

2016  
八月号  
AUG.

RMB ¥50  
HK\$ 80  
NT\$ 300  
EURO € 8  
US\$ 11  
UK £ 6.6

THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE OF CONTEMPORARY CHINA

## LEAP

1950-2009

### 情感汹涌

#### HOOKED ON A FEELING

张慧/ZHANG HUI

艾德·阿特金斯/ED ATKINS

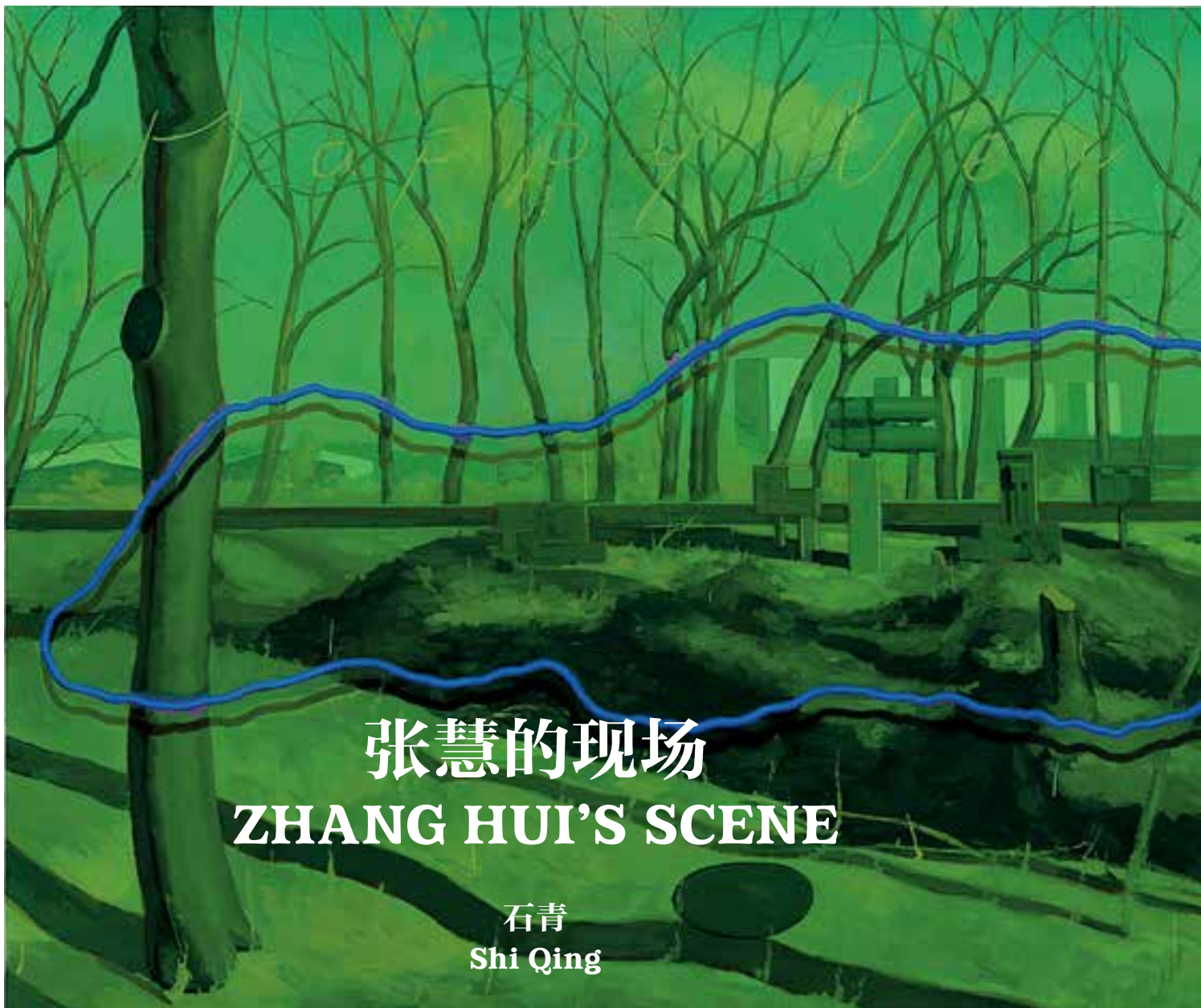
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总第165期 | leapleap.com

ISSN 1003-6865



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# 张慧的现场

## ZHANG HUI'S SCENE

石青  
Shi Qing

艺术家似乎无法自我凝视，只有通过找到镜像才能完成——艺术家的形象和工作是在多重镜像中建构处理的，这就像相互环绕转动的星体。然而，艺术家与艺术家之间，又很少当面称赞或批评，大家会彼此保持一个合适的距离——艺术家通常都不是特别谦虚的观察者，只有对自己感兴趣的东西才会集中一下注意力。张慧提供了足够多的样本让我观察，而作为他的艺术家同行，这些样本也使得我可以自我审视——一个艺术家是另一个艺术家的现场。

### 合作 | 剧场

张慧喜欢合作，不知道是不是当年做戏剧留下的习惯。合作对他而言，不是想法的聚

集，而是完成他无法独立进行的测试。在这个意义上，艺术都是“某种”集体创作——围绕着基本话题和语境发生跳动。而创作是这种震动下各自痕迹的留存。

2001年在“报应”展里，我和张慧合作了“灭顶”系列。“后感性：狂欢”和“后感性：内幕”是由张慧和我、还有其他几位艺术家一起完成的，相互之间都是独立的作品，展览现场也融为一个整体的剧场。当时对“现场性”的强调，对于张慧来说，和他的戏剧背景能直接产生关系；后来，他和邱志杰、余极还合作过“黑白动物园”系列的戏剧；2005年在“联合现场”中与秦思源合作；张慧也和他的学生组织“异象聚”小组，进行带有现场表演的创作；即使完全转入了绘画，他也与秦思源、何

岸合作过展览“一次”（2013）。

另一方面，张慧也从事着绘画（2006年的“局部地区”是他第一次大规模的绘画个展），但他却在绘画的图像之外，进行着对空间的“编织”。这种绘画图像和空间的关系，在他2008年的作品《时刻准备着》中表现得有些纠结，看上去他是把绘画当成装置在做，或者说把装置变得更加绘画化——他做了一个高2.4米、直径7米的木结构环形墙，木墙的外层是绘画，观众可以走进木墙之内，看到内层类似道具的物品。这件作品既可以看作是在巨型弧形木板上的绘画作品，也可以看作是一件装置。绘画和装置之间物的关系，被代入到一种作品的结构关系之中，而绘画又在剧场性的空间里以另一种面目出现。





《蔓延（新年快乐）》  
2016年  
布面油画  
200 × 400 厘米  
*Overgrown (Happy New Year)*  
2016  
Oil on canvas  
200 x 400 cm

相对于我们已经习惯了的在当代艺术展览中对图像的解读，张慧在这件作品中营造的剧场性，给这种阅读方式制造了障碍——就他理解的剧场而言，是一个多向涌入的、共时性的空间，如果只是试图从一个解读点进入，就会陷入解读的迷宫。张慧的图像就是诱捕观念的诱饵。

张慧的注意力在于，如何使自己画出的图像，在空间中产生、组织出一种来自身体感受的关系，而且，这种关系在已有的观看作品经验之外。观众身处这样的空间，就被艺术家去掉了可以凝视的中心点。张慧从早期做装置、表演，后来又画画，这样的创作线索被认为很“散”——其实不是因为艺术家创作的不稳定而“散”，而或许是我们的“观看”习惯了有中

心、可以凝视的东西。

因此，张慧的绘画不能孤立地被看待，因为那些只能算他创作过程中使用的“道具”——而且这些道具是一个个的陷阱，是为带着旧有观看方式而来的观众准备好的陷阱——这些陷阱还是用图像制成的。在被张慧毁掉的两幅早期绘画中，可以找到证据：一幅画描绘了光线，另一幅画描绘了一件被照亮的衣裳。张慧把两幅画摆在一起，或者相距不远的地方。于是，当我们整体看这两幅画时，会感觉到，似乎第一幅里被画出来的光线，越过了画框，直接照在了另一幅画面里衣服上，衣服才亮了起来。而在后来的创作中，张慧又回避了这种直白。毕竟，艺术家如果要塑造一个情境，这样的设置还是太过于“聚焦”。

## 覆盖 | 排练

张慧的画往往打了深色底子，然后靠明亮的颜色一层层往上覆盖。压得住就压，压不住的颜色就泛上来。覆盖和泛起，是一组不对称的反抗：不断覆盖的笔触，都是对前一笔绘画事实不断地骚扰、试探和挑衅。覆盖，显得似乎有些暴力，但却不是抹去（这也形成了某种空间上的层次感），因为那些被遮掉一层的图像内容并非是无效的——一场“不揭开幕布的戏剧”，难道就不能被称为戏剧？

张慧是个用功的艺术家，早晨8点去工作室，不吃中午饭，一直工作到傍晚，但产量并不高——如果用资本投入/产出的逻辑来衡量，他并不是一个高效的艺术家。然而，我把

他的这种“无效”和日常状态看作是他在工作室里进行的“排练”，是他对自身已有工作的一次次的否定——就如同张慧在画面中每一笔对之前绘画内容的覆盖。

张慧在工作室的“排练”，是和自己的较劲。他对自己画面一层层否定性的覆盖，挑衅着艺术家自身的合法性（一些已经展出过，甚至被画册出版过的绘画，只要作品本身还在工作室，张慧也还会继续地覆盖和修改），这样的创作状态有点像一场自虐。自虐，是可以回味的，容易上瘾；同时，这种自虐也可以被看作是张慧在对给自己设置的难度进行着挑战。或许，张慧就是靠着这种“作”，来使得他在绘画创作中所塑造的情境更有层次。

在消费主义价值主导的世界里，解读一件作品往往是很快的。在艺术界各种“急匆匆”的活动现场，观众除了能直观地看到作品外在的视觉，还能看到那些被挂出来的、可供解读的作品意义的阐述。谁还愿意在“急匆匆”的艺术活动中，去看一场“不揭开幕布的戏剧”？或许，这种“不揭开幕布的戏剧”，是做给同处在幕布背后，处在聚光灯照射之外的、黑暗之中的同行看的。

张慧在布展中喜欢用日光灯作为照明光源，画面中描绘的物体，往往也是处于均匀光线的铺洒之下（2009年和2016年的两件同名作品《装置（我过去的情人变老了）》，专门描绘了日光灯和日光灯的均匀光线），他所画之物很少被置于在舞台上制造神秘感的或者观看中心的聚光灯的照射之下——均匀的光线感虽然也在照亮对象、袒露对象，但却是没有焦点、中心的照射，也正因为没有了焦点、中心，才能看到除了焦点、中心之外的其他东西——这同样是一种塑造空间的行为。

张慧的作品有时被指责为“绕”（人为地制造解读障碍）。这种批评或许反倒是陷入了一种知识的惯性、经验的惯性之中。不断被解读的当代艺术，似乎一直在被分类、被定义。这就好像一处本来在户外自我生长的热带雨林地区，被规划成了植物园。于是，其中的植物就被现代园林知识带来的管理经验所重新安排和组织——这和科学主义遭到的批判情形类似：无法被已有的知识所描述和归类的身体经验，却屈从于现有知识体系所带来的逻辑。

观察遭到了驱逐，观众只能去相信从逻辑中推导出的清晰解读。

艺术家相信世界本身是复杂的（如同自我生长的热带雨林），既存在着时间感和空间感的平行，也有交错。艺术家只需进入这个现场，去沾染，去激活本已复杂的关系就好。张慧的工作将目光所及的现实，编织到了他的创作逻辑之中；把现实中游离的、跳跃的、本身就复杂的关系，暂时固定住。因循着这个逻辑

可以发现：张慧绘画作品中的水纹，虽然有滑动和漂移的意向，但却被很实在的阴影锚住——他以这样的方式重新给予观众以“图像”。而且，在张慧的画面中，用以锚定现实中不断游离和跳跃的复杂性的工具，是来自其日常生活的艺术家朋友的形象、自家住宅楼的形象，甚至还可以是抽象物，比如“蓝色”这样一种在日常中不以为意的颜色。

雪的形象在张慧的画中频频出现（2015年的《雪景（浮雕）》、2014年的《雪景 II》），和他东北生活的记忆有关（积雪可以覆盖万物）；另一方面，张慧在画雪的过程中用到白色（有较强的画面覆盖能力）。但其实在艺术家不断修改的过程中，那些覆盖掉前一笔的白色，有的也并不持久——如同那些冬天覆盖大地的积雪，还是会有一部分慢慢地融化，使下面原本的底色显露出来。张慧有着大量的阅读和思考，这些也像雪，悄悄地、一层层地覆盖在他的创作之上，再由温度和感性去慢慢融化掉覆盖之物。

有一次在后半夜，我和张慧一起从酒吧亿多瑞走出来。对面的丽都广场曾经是艺术家夜间聚集的场所，他突然说出了一句：“今年雨水多，我会好一些”。不知为什么，这句话给我的印象特别深。丽都广场他画过好几次，画了又改，改了又画（《蓝图·快感》，2009年至2010年，2013年）。最后画面里的人物、树杈、餐桌、餐盘，甚至啤酒杯都被覆盖上了厚厚的雪，似乎在保护着那些白雪隐藏之下已经悄然发生的东西。如今，张慧很少再去亿多瑞，酒也喝得少了。朋友间的聚会通常也会选在他家的附近。张慧是个恋家的人，经常离开北京三天就嚷嚷着想家。尽管艺术已经挤占了他更多的时间，并且把他的生活压缩为从望京（家）到一号地（工作室），或者从望京（家）到东棉花胡同（张慧作为中央戏剧学院舞美专业老师的上课地点）的两条路线的生活。张慧被迫固定在某些不断重复的路径上，面对各种被规训的日常，艺术家的本能或许就是去软化这些界限。

张慧不只一次心有余悸地说起过楼下的那场大火，这催生了他的一系列心理事件和绘画行动（《壁画》，2010）：那些救火员《无题（围观2）》，2011）、被包裹的树《树3》，2011）、外形酷似救生圈的椅子（《救生圈2》，2011）……这些作品都绕开了有时间感的线性叙事。

艺术家需要依赖各种不靠谱的方式让自己暂时停顿下来，这不是绝对的停顿，而是在行进中的停顿；艺术家或许并不关心到达，也不是等待那场即将揭幕的演出，而是将其间的路径复杂化、彻底地模糊掉——这样的“现场”，是需要艺术家制造的事件和突变来驱动

产生的。每一次解读的发动，都恰发生在这些断裂和停顿的边界上。

Without the aid of mirrors, artists seem to be incapable of self-reflection. Their images and works are constructed and processed in the face of the many peers surrounding them, one orbiting another like planets around the sun. Artists, who rarely praise or criticize each other face to face, are nonetheless careful to keep an appropriate distance from one another—not because they are humble observers, but rather because they seem incapable of paying attention to things outside their own areas of interest. Having provided more than enough examples to convince me of this reality, Zhang Hui has inspired me to self-examine, and to ruminate on how one artist becomes the scene of another.





## Collaboration | Theatre

Zhang Hui's fondness for collaboration is a habit perhaps picked up during his years in the theatre. In his line of thought, the process is not really about bringing different ideas together so much as it is a way of testing out ideas impossible to pull off solo. Seen in this light, all art is collective work "one way or another," as it jumps its way around a root topic or through a given socio-linguistic context.

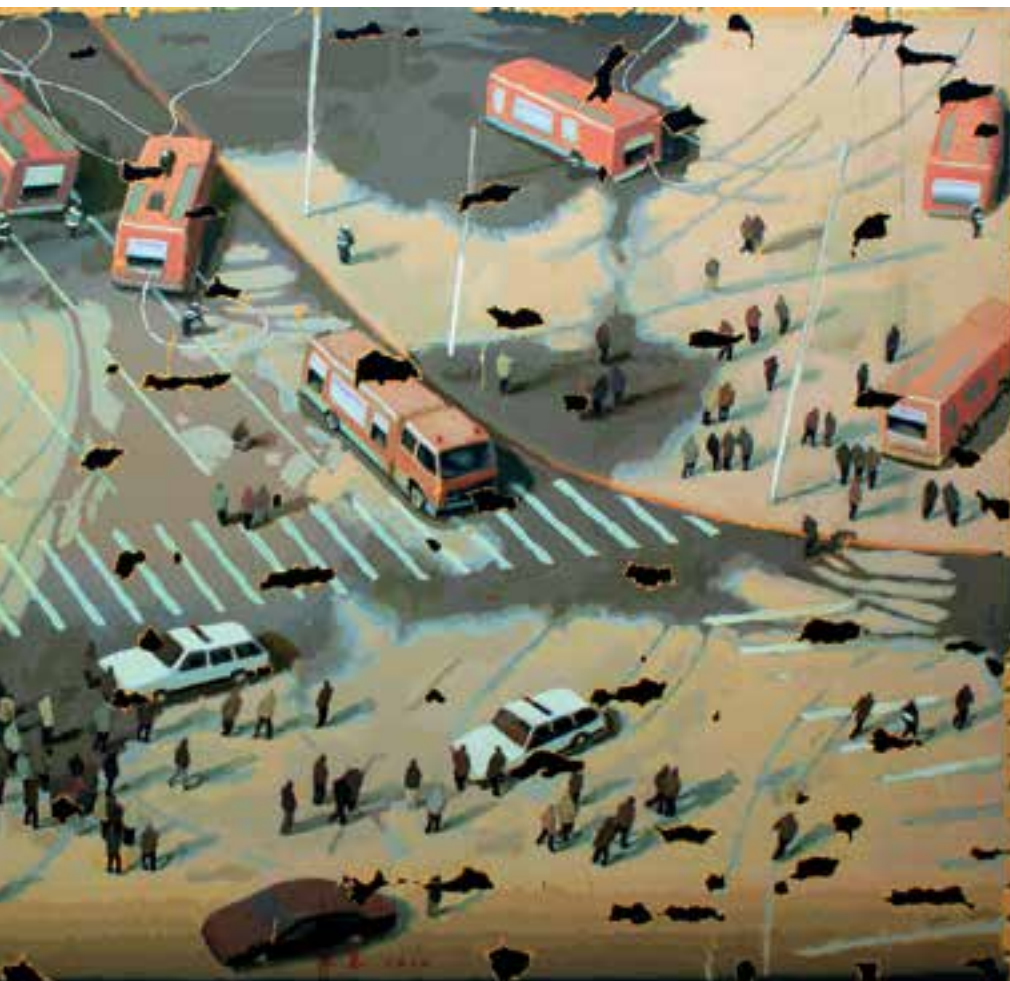
In our 2001 exhibition, "Retribution," Zhang Hui and I collaborated on a series of works which we titled "Underwater." Two other works, "Post-Sense Sensibility: Spree" and "Post-Sense Sensibility: Inside Story," were completed by Zhang Hui and myself along with a number of other artists. Initially begun as individual

works, these were joined together into a single, integrated piece at the site of the exhibition. At the time, Zhang Hui felt that the emphasis on the "here and now" could be seen as directly connected to his background in the theatre. Later on, he even produced a collaborative play, *The Black and White Zoo*, working with Qiu Zhijie and Yu Ji. In 2005 he collaborated with Colin Chinnery on the Complete Art Experience Project. He then organized the Odd Phenomena Group with his students, producing live performances before finally turning to painting with the 2013 exhibition "Once," a collaboration with Colin Chinnery and He An.

The 2006 exhibition "Local Area" was Zhang Hui's first large scale solo painting exhibition, and indicated his intent to work outside the image to create "woven" space. The relationship between images and space was shown to

be extremely fraught in his 2008 work "Ready Any Time," where it became clear that Zhang Hui sees painting as a sort of installation art, or perhaps one could say that he is engaged in a process of making installations more painterly. For "Ready Any Time," Zhang Hui built a massive circular wall of wood, 2.4 meters high and 7 meters long, with a painting on the outside. Walking inside, viewers were met with what appeared to be props from a stage play. On the one hand this work can be treated as a painting, but it can also be treated as an installation as well. In this way, the relationship between the painting and the installation seems to have been brought inside the painting's composition, giving it a degree of theatrical space while also allowing the work to present another face to viewers.

The theatrical space opened up by Zhang Hui's work thwarts the



《壁画》

2010年

布面丙烯

200 × 290 厘米 (大)、80 × 100 厘米 (小)

Mural

2010

Acrylic on canvas

200 x 290 cm and 80 x 100 cm





《无题（围观2）》

2011年

布面丙烯

227.5 × 182 厘米

*Onlookers No.2*

2011

Acrylic on canvas

227.5 x 182 cm

typical pictorial analysis we've become accustomed to using at contemporary art exhibitions. The theatre, in his understanding, seeps in from a multitude of vectors, co-existing in a common temporal space, meaning that any approach with the sole intent of analysis cannot help but lead us into an analytical labyrinth. Viewed in this light, Zhang Hui's images are akin to the bait in a conceptual trap.

Zhang Hui's attention has been focused on how to use the images he paints to produce or bring together a connection to corporeal perception, one that is foreign to the seasoned viewer of art. The space in which viewers find themselves is a space without a center of focus. Having begun with installations and performances during his early period, only to move into painting later on, creative careers like Zhang Hui's might be considered "scattered." However, perhaps it would be more accurate to say it is not the nature of the work that is uneven, but rather that our "viewing" is habituated to things with centers of focus.

What this all means is that Zhang Hui's paintings cannot be viewed in isolation, being nothing more than "props" in his creative process- traps prepared for the old-fashioned viewer created from images. Evidence to this end can be found in two early paintings since destroyed by the artist: the first featured rays of light, while the second contained items of clothing under bright light. When showing the paintings, Zhang Hui would place them side by side, or, failing that,

not far from each other. Whenever I saw these two paintings together I always felt the rays of light in the first painting were moving across the frame to light up the clothing in the second one. In more recent works however, Zhang Hui has avoided making blunt statements of this kind. For the artist seeking to mold the atmosphere around his work, after all, installations like this are far too "focused."

### Concealment | Rehearsal

Zhang Hui's paintings are often built over a dark background, concealed under layer after layer of brighter colors. The effect is in some places complete, but in parts the ground suffuses up from underneath. The interplay between concealment and suffusion is asymmetrical: as the ground becomes concealed under countless brushstrokes, the over-layer is in turn disturbed, probed, and provoked by the inescapability of the under-layer. Although concealment seems to be, to a degree, a violent act, it is not erasure (this being another strategy used to suggest a sort of depth in space), because the construction of the covered up images was not entirely in vain. Who would argue, after all, that a "play behind closed curtains" is not really a play?

Zhang Hui is extremely committed to his craft: arriving at his studio every morning at eight, he often skips lunch to work late into the evening. Yet he can hardly be said to be prolific, so from the perspective of capital

investment / return we might say that he is an inefficient artist. To my way of thinking however, the "inefficiency" of his daily routine is actually a sort of "rehearsal," a repeated rejection of the work he has already completed, paralleling the way every brushstroke in his paintings exists to conceal an under-layer of already painted content.

In the studio, Zhang Hui's "rehearsal" becomes a competition with himself. The rejection and concealment of his own work, layer by layer, is meant to provoke the artist's own sense of legitimacy (in many cases, Zhang Hui has continued to conceal or alter works already been exhibited and even printed up in retrospective albums). In some regards, his creative process can be seen to be one of masochistic self-flagellation. Masochism lends itself equally to reflection and addiction. At the same time, this specific kind of masochism can also be seen as Zhang Hui's way of challenging himself via adversity. It is quite possible that Zhang Hui employs this "ploy" as a way of imparting his paintings with a greater sense of depth.

In a world under the dictates of consumerism, little time is devoted to deciphering works of art. Amid the hustle and bustle of various art world events, viewers directly observe the extrinsic visual effect of a work with the added aid of the short explanatory treatises placed alongside each work. Is it at all surprising that few viewers choose to abandon this hectic game to go watch a "play behind closed curtains?" It seems

《雪景 II》

2014年

纸上水彩

38.5 × 26.5 厘米

*A Scene of Snow II*

2014

Colored ink on paper

38.5 x 26.5 cm





张慧  
 《蓝图·快感》  
 2009年至2010年、2013年  
 布面丙烯  
 182 × 450 厘米，每块：182 × 225 厘米（共2块）  
 Zhang Hui  
*Blueprint.Pleasant Sensation*  
 2009-2010, 2013  
 Acrylic on canvas  
 182 × 450 cm, composed of 2 pieces, 182 × 225 cm each



that the true audience for Zhang Hui's work can be found among his peers, the ones sitting behind the curtain in the darkness that reigns outside the spotlight.

At exhibitions, Zhang Hui often prefers to use fluorescent lights for illumination, allowing the objects described in his paintings an equal degree of light (two works completed in 2009 and 2016 with the same title, *Installation (My Former Lovers Have All Grown Old)*, are dedicated to fluorescent lights and the evenness of their light). It is thus uncommon for the objects in his paintings to produce a sense of mystery or provide a single object onto which a spotlight might be cast. The even light illuminates and exposes its subject as well as any other, but it is light without a focal point or center. It is exactly this lack, however, which allows objects outside of the focal point or center to be seen. The artist could be said to be molding the space itself.

Zhang Hui's work is sometimes criticized for being "discursive" (an obstacle to manufactured readings).

Criticisms of this sort are perhaps a result of becoming trapped in intellectual and experiential inertia. Contemporary art is constantly being read, and the process of classification and definition never seems to end either. The whole field is like a tropical jungle that sprang up of its own accord, only later to be manicured into a botanical garden. Modern gardening expertise has left room for only some kinds of plants and plotted them out accordingly. The criticism to be made is similar to the one leveled at scientism—experiences incapable of being described and categorized are taken and forced to submit to the logic of currently existing intellectual systems.

When direct observation is verboten, viewers have no choice but to place their trust in the clear readings derived from this logic.

Artists believe that the world is complicated (like the tropical jungle) existing both in time and space, with countless crossovers between the two. For most artists it is sufficient to enter the scene, then pollute and stimulate these

already complex relationships. Zhang Hui's task, however, is to take observed reality and weave his own creative logic into the fabric of that reality; to take those disparate, sketchy, and already complex relationships and pin them down for a time. Taking this process to its logical conclusion, we find that, while the watermarks in Zhang Hui's paintings seem inclined to slide around and float about, they are in fact anchored by very real shadows. The artist uses this technique to provide viewers with a new "image". What's more, in Zhang Hui's paintings, the tools used to anchor this floating, sketchy complexity come from images of his artist friends from daily life, from images of the building he lives in, and even abstract concepts, such as "blue," a color with no obvious significance for day-to-day life.

That images of snow appear over and over again in Zhang Hui's paintings (for example, in *A Scene of Snow (Relief Sculpture)* from 2015 and *A Scene of Snow II* from 2014) is perhaps related to his memories having lived





in China's northeast (piled up snow conceals multitudes). Zhang Hui uses white paint in the process of painting snow (an especially effective concealer), but in the endless process of alteration, many of the areas of white covering up his earlier brushstrokes are by no means lasting, just like those patches of actual snow which cover the earth for a winter spell, gradually melting away and allowing the original colors of the ground beneath to be revealed. That Zhang Hui reads and thinks a great deal also brings to mind snow, silently accumulating, covering up his work layer by layer before temperature and sentiment conspire to slowly melt it all away.

When Zhang Hui and I were leaving the Beijing bar Eudora Station late one night, I looked across the street to see Lido Place, stomping grounds of a great many artists in years past. Suddenly he said, "It's rained a lot this year, so I'll be okay, I think." I don't know why, but his words left a deep impression on me. Lido Place has appeared in his paintings more than once, becoming the subject of

constant alterations and over-painting (see for example, *Blueprint. Pleasant Sensation*, 2009-2010, 2013). In the end, the people, trees, tables, plates, and even beer glasses all found themselves covered in a thick blanket of snow, as if to protect these things afflicted by sorrow by hiding them under its white, white surface. These days, Zhang Hui rarely visits Eudora Station, and he drinks less, too. When he meets with friends, he usually chooses somewhere close to home. He's the kind of homebody who'll start complaining about missing home after three days away from Beijing. Art takes up most of his time and has compressed his life into a choice of going between Wangjing district (home) and Art Base 1 (his studio), or from Wangjing district to East Mianhua Hutong (his classroom as a professor at the Central Academy of Drama). One way or the other, his life takes place along these two paths. Limited to repeating the same circuits over and over, Zhang Hui faces a regimented daily routine. It is perhaps the unique skill of artists to soften boundaries like this.

Artists are forced to rely on a variety of unreliable means to force themselves to take pause, but theirs is not an absolute pause. It is instead one that carries a sense of forward momentum. Quite possibly, artists are not so much concerned with arriving, nor do they await the performance whose curtain is about to rise. Instead they complicate the path between two points, blurring it entirely. This kind of "scene" is dependent on the events and sudden changes engineered by artists to come into being.

More than once, Zhang Hui has talked about the fire disaster outside his building uneasily, giving rise to a series of breakdowns and attendant paintings (see his 2010 work *Mural*): those firefighters in *Onlookers No. 2* (2011), the wrapped trees in *Tree 3* (2011), and the lifesaver-shaped chairs in *Life Buoy 2* (2011) ...all of which succeed by bypassing the temporality of the linear narrative. With every attempt at reading, ruptures and breaks such as these will continue to occur in the world. (Translated by Nick Stember)