

## The Avant-Garde is Not Afraid of a Long March

Opening: 16 February 2019, 4pm – 7pm

Duration: 17 February – 18 April 2019

Hours: Daily 11am – 7pm excluding Monday, Tuesday and Public Holiday

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Singapore, January 2019 – ShanghART Singapore is pleased to present a group exhibition The Avant-Garde is Not Afraid of a Long March from 17 February to 18 April 2019. Featuring works from Birdhead, Chen Xiaoyun, Li Shan, Ouyang Chun, XU ZHEN®, Shi Yong, Sun Xun, Yang Fudong, Yang Zhenzhong, Zeng Fanzhi, Zhang Enli, and Zhou Tiehai, the exhibition bring together twelve artists of different generations. While the seemingly disparate mixture of works by pioneer and younger generation artists defies linearity, their individual breakthroughs and progressions chart the evolution of Chinese contemporary art through the years. Taking its name from the title of Zhou Tiehai's piece, the exhibition is a remark on the unwavering spirit of breaking norms and traditions in artmaking, while also highlighting perseverance as an integral part of the process.

One of the significant moments in the history of Chinese contemporary art occurred in 1989, when the China/Avant-Garde Exhibition survived for a mere two hours before being shut down.

As a participant of that exhibition and a leading figure in the Chinese avant-garde movement, Li Shan demonstrates his perceptiveness as an observer of his times through his political pop paintings and artistic approach to bioethics - a topic hardly discussed in art during its time. The work exhibited comes from his Rouge series, wherein he fuses political icons with abstract representations of a lotus flower; a symbolic reference to femininity and frivolousness.

Later artists such as Shi Yong, Zeng Fanzhi and Zhou Tiehai carved out new paths in the Chinese art scene despite the general cultural stagnation after the episode. One of the pioneers in installation and media art in China, Shi Yong took a decade-long hiatus in his artistic practice to engage with the arts scene from the perspectives of various stakeholders, only returning to making art in recent years. Zeng Fanzhi's artistic practice has seen various changes over the years, while Zhou Tiehai has reinvented himself in taking on directorial roles in museum and art fair.

While Zhang Enli and Ouyang Chun depicts their observations of the mundane and everyday life through paintings, Yang Fudong, Chen Xiaoyun, and Yang Zhenzhong rose to prominence in working with new media art and video works since early 1990s. The works shown in the exhibition reveal the different sides of their practice, and their persistent efforts in exploring different themes and mediums.

This exploration can also be seen in Xu Zhen, Birdhead, and Sun Xun's practices, as their works often strive to reconcile various subject matters across a wide spectrum, presented in different mediums ranging from installations, photography, painting, sculptures, woodblock printing, and conceptual art. As if taking on the mantle of their predecessors, they strive to achieve individual success through persistent rejection of the stable and comfortable for a critical, albeit playful, outlook of what is yet to be done.

**About Artists**

**BIRDHEAD** (Song Tao b.1979, Ji Weiyu b.1980) is an artist duo who based their artistic practice not only on photographs but also beyond the philosophy of photography. Capturing all the beings around them, Birdhead digests and applies the thinking mode of conceptual art into the context of their image interpretation. By combining the photographic matrix, collage, particular mounting technique and so on, Birdhead delivers a "Birdhead world" in various exhibition spaces and humanistic environment. From the photo matrixes combining different images to absurd still-life scenes, Birdhead reflects the instinctive reaction on raw materials, in response to the absurdity of real-world rules and looking on the vicissitude of human civilization. To trace human being's plainness and romantic spirit is the primary drive for their creation.

Birdhead's recent solo and group exhibitions include: Welcome to Birdhead World Again 2018, Vienna, Austria, and ShanghART Beijing, China (2018); Living Cities, Tate Modern, London (2017); The 7th edition Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism | Architecture, Shen Zhen (2017); Welcome to Birdhead World Again 2016, ShanghART Singapore, Singapore, and Fab-Union Space on the West Bund, Shanghai, China (2016); How to gather? Acting in a city in the heart of the island of Eurasia, The 6th Moscow Biennale, Moscow, Russia (2015); Birdhead were also nominated for the inaugural Hugo Boss Asia Art Award in 2013; New Photography 2012, MoMA, New York, U.S.A. (2012).

**CHEN Xiaoyun** was born in Hubei Province in 1971. He currently works and lives in Beijing. Chen Xiaoyun's works are always both artistic and poetic in style, with introspective thinking present in the narrative structure as well as the use of individual fragments of consciousness to channel the real world in pictorial form. His works usually start with a caption, a dialogue, or a motion that is then overlapped, refined, and abstracted, to make our known world more ridiculous, hesitant, and emptier.

Recent major exhibitions include: Arrival, ShanghART Beijing (2018); Simultaneous Eidos, Guangzhou Image Triennial 2017, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou (2017); Chen Xiaoyun: 106 Flashes of Lightning That I Collect, ShanghART Main Space, Shanghai (2016); Post-sense Sensibility, Trepidation and Will, Beijing Minsheng Art Museum, Beijing (2016); CHINA 8, Contemporary Art from China at the Rhine and Ruhr, Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg, Germany (2015); Chen Xiaoyun: Twenty-one Poems of Lenin, ShanghART Main Space, Shanghai (2014); Hysteria, Metaphorical and Metonymical Life-World, A4 Contemporary Arts Center, Chengdu (2013); Darker than Darkness, Death beyond Death, Fire Burning Fire, Walking Down along the Stairway, ShanghART Beijing, Beijing (2013).

**LI Shan** (b.1942, Heilongjiang) graduated from the Shanghai Academy of Drama. Li Shan has undergone many stylistic changes throughout his unique artistic career but has never lost his ability to express internal sensibilities as well as external reluctances. "Rouge" is based on the principle of ambiguity. Li Shan attempts to find an evolving form that can address the problem of trying to extract the recognizable out of the unrecognizable. In terms of artistic style, he has adopted decorative methods similar to those of folk art, thus creating intimate, eccentric and oddly organic objects. Indeed, they seem to be mutant creatures from some hypothetical textbook on horticulture. Li Shan's seemingly infinite variety of work reveals a sort of consistency upon closer inspection. All the works evoke a tension within the idea of the yet unknown. He manages to reconcile opposites in a way that leaves them un-reconciled, allowing viewers to reach their own conclusions.

Li Shan's work has been exhibited in many important exhibitions such as Reading Li Shan, Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, Taiwan (2012); Painting the Chinese Dream: Thirty Years of Chinese Contemporary Art, Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai (2010); The First Guangzhou Triennale - Reinterpretation: A Decade of Experimental Chinese Art (1990 - 2000), Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou(2002); Chinese Art 30 Years after the Revolution, that traveled through America, ending at the Brooklyn Museum, Inside Out, New Chinese Art, Exhibition of Art from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, Asia Society Galleries; PS1, New York; SFMoMA / Asian Art Galleries, San Francisco etc.(1998);

22nd International Biennial of Sao Paulo, Brazil (1994); China's New Art, Post 1989 Art Centre, Hong Kong (1993) and the 45th Venice Biennale (1993) etc.

**OUYANG Chun** (b.1974, Beijing) is a Chinese artist whose works feature independent contemporaneity, various techniques and abundant gradations that refresh the audience's eyes. The distinctive quality benefits from his manner of practice and the oppositional attitude towards the academic education. Escaping from preciosity, OUYANG Chun's paintings seek to draw stories childishly and unadornedly which mirrors his own life experiences and creative style.

His solo exhibitions include: A Drop of Dust, ShanghART Beijing, Beijing (2015); My Story, ShanghART Gallery, Shanghai (2015); Detritus, BANK, Shanghai, China (2014); Child, Today Art Museum, Beijing, China (2012); Reveling In Rambling, Yuz Museum, Jakarta, Indonesia (2012); Painting the King, Belvedere-Upper Belvedere & Augarten Contemporary, Vienna, Austria (2011); Ouyang Chun - Painting the King, me Collectors Room, Berlin, Germany (2010). Works by the artist is represented in museum collections include Belvedere, Vienna, Austria; Me Collectors Room, Berlin, Germany; Long Museum, Shanghai, China; Power Station of Art Shanghai, Shanghai, China; White Rabbit Contemporary Chinese Art Collection, Sydney, Australia.

**MadeIn Company** was established in 2009 in Shanghai by artist **XU Zhen** (b.1977). It is a contemporary art creation company focusing on the production of creativity and devoted to the research of contemporary culture's infinite possibilities. In 2013, the launch of 'XU ZHEN®'; a brand produced by MadeIn Company ("XU ZHEN® - Produced by MadeIn Company").

**XU ZHEN®** - Produced by MadeIn Company's exhibitions include: XU ZHEN®: Alien, ShanghART, Shanghai (2018); Fortune New Works Launch, XU ZHEN Store, Shanghai (2017); Sydney Biennial, Various locations (Cockatoo Island), Sydney, Australia (2016); China 8, Kunstmuseum Mulheim an der Ruhr, Germany (2015); 14 Rooms, Hall 3, Messe Basel, Basel, Switzerland (2014); La Biennale de Lyon (2013); "China China", A Group Show of Chinese Artists, Pinchuk ArtCentre, Kiev, Ukraine (2013); MadeIn Company, Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai (2012); Distance Produces Beauty, A Display Co-curated and Created by GUEST, TOF and MadeIn Company, ShanghART, Beijing (2012).

**SHI Yong** (b.1963, Shanghai) graduated from the Fine Arts Department of Shanghai Light Industrial School. He is a representative figure of contemporary Chinese artists who first started working with installation and video media. His artworks cover a wide range of mediums including performance, video, and installation. Shi Yong's earliest artistic practices focused on revealing the subtlety of our reality and the inherent tension of the "system". At the end of the 1990s, Shi began focusing on the idea of Shanghai's transformations under the Chinese economic reform, which contributed to a discussion of globalization and consumerism. Since 2006, with the piece "Sorry, There Will Be No Documenta in 2007", he turned his attention to the art world that he's been involved in, pondering how to provide a more rational perspective through his creative works. Shi Yong's 2015 solo exhibition "Let All Potential Be Internally Resolved Using Beautiful Form" continues his art practice, disclosing his intention to expand the reflection and practice of "control" under the seemingly "abstract" future.

Shi Yong has been exhibited widely since the early 1990's. Recent shows include: Nothing is Impossible (Solo Exhibition), Yellspace, Shanghai (2018); A ( ) Bird be Released from the Top of a Certain Tower (Solo Exhibition), Boxes Art Museum, Foshan (2018); This is Shanghai, Chinese Contemporary Art, Liverpool, UK (2018); Shi Yong: Under the Rule, ShanghART, Shanghai; Floating World, Bahrain (2017); Trace of Existence, UCCA, Beijing; The Crocodile in the Pond, Luzern (2016); Let All Potential be Internally Resolved using Beautiful Form (Solo Exhibition), MadeIn Gallery; Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art, Ekaterinburg; Essential Matters-Moving Images from China, Borusan Contemporary Perili Kosk, Istanbul, (2015); Hans van Dijk: 5000 Names, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing; Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, the Netherlands; Off-Site Programme, Silent Film, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham (2014).

**SUN Xun** (b.1980) was born in Fuxin, Liaoning Province. He currently lives and works in Beijing. He graduated from the China Academy of Fine Arts in 2005 and founded π Animation Studio in the following year. Sun Xun completed his first 3D animated film "Magic Party and Dead Crow," which was nominated in the 8th Rome Film Festival 2013, and has received Young Artist Award in The 8th AAC Art China Awards for the Most Influential in 2014. Some notable awards include Best Young Artist, Chinese Contemporary Art Awards (2010), Young Art Award, Taiwan Contemporary Art Link (2010), and the Arts Fellowship by Citivella Ranieri Foundation, Italy (2010).

Sun Xun's recent major exhibitions include SUN XUN, Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia (2018); Prediction Laboratory, Yuz Museum, Shanghai (2016); The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Chinese Art Initiative at the Guggenheim, Tales of Our Time, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, U.S.A.(2016); 2015 Asian Art Biennial, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung, Taiwan (2015); Republic of Jing Bang, a Country Based on Whale, Holland Animation Film Festival & City Hall, Utrecht, The Netherlands (2015), Unfounded Predictions, ShanghART Singapore(2015); Script Film-A Sun Xun Art Theater Residence Project, Hangzhou, China (2015); The Time Vivarium, Sean Kelly, New York, U.S.A (2014); PALIMPSESTES – Sun Xun Solo Exhibition, ShanghART Singapore, Singapore (2014); Brave New World, Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong (2014); Yesterday Is Tomorrow, Hayward Gallery, London, UK (2014); Magician Party and Dead Crow, ShanghART Beijing, Beijing (2013); The 4th Moscow International Biennale for Young Artists Exhibition in Moscow, Russia (2014); My Generation: Chinese Young Artists, Tampa Museum of Art and Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Florida, U.S.A (2014).

**YANG Fudong** was born in Beijing in 1971. He graduated from the China Academy of Fine Arts, Oil Painting Department in Hangzhou. He is among the most successful and influential Chinese artists today. He was one of finalists shortlisted for the Hugo Boss Prize in 2004 and received this honour as the third Chinese artist after Cai Guoqiang and Huang Yongping. Now he works and lives in Shanghai.

Yang Fudong has participated in prestigious international art events including Art and China after 1989: Theatre of the World, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, U.S.A. (2017); Bentu - Chinese Artists In A Time of Turbulence and Transformation, Foundation Louis Vuitton, Paris, France (2016); La Biennale de Lyon 2013, Lyon, France (2013); Sharjah Biennial 11, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (2013). He had had solo-shows at most acclaimed institutions and galleries, such as Dawn Breaking, Long Museum (West Bund), Shanghai (2018); Moving Mountains, Shanghai Centre of Photography, Shanghai (2016); Twin Tracks: Yang Fudong Solo Exhibition, Yuz Museum, Shanghai (2015); The Light That I Feel, SALT outdoor video installation, Sandhornoya, Norway (2014); Yang Fudong: Estranged Paradise, Works 1993-2013, The Kunsthalle Zurich, Switzerland (2013).

**YANG Zhenzhong** (b. 1968, Hangzhou, Zhejiang) has been living and working in Shanghai for more than 20 years with a career closely related to the development of new media art around the area. Since the end of 1990s, he has been curating and organizing numerous highly influential contemporary art exhibitions with artists including Xu Zhen and Yang Fudong etc. They have not only enlivened the atmosphere of the new media art industry in Shanghai, but also promoted the artist himself to stage on an international platform. The key themes of Yang's works are to strengthen the contradictions and disorders existed in the society with a cynical attitude on one hand, to utilise the perception of the space in political and psychological levels on the other hand. Now mainly focuses on the creation of new media like video, photograph, installation work and interaction etc., and curating as well.

Recent solo exhibitions include: Surveillance and Panorama, 1st Gallery Space, Tang Contemporary Art, Beijing (2018); Fence, Arrow Factory, Beijing (2017); Trespassing, Yang Zhenzhong Solo Exhibition, OCT Contemporary Art Terminal, Shanghai (2013); Don't Move, Yang Zhenzhong Solo Exhibition, ShanghART, Beijing (2011). Recent group exhibitions include: Shanghai Beat - The Dynamism of Contemporary Art Scene in Shanghai, Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto, Japan (2018); Art and China after 1989: Theatre of the World, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,

U.S.A. (2017); Our Bright Future: Cybernetics Fantasy, Nam June Paik Art Centre, Yongin-si, South Korea (2017); 11th Shanghai Biennale, Why Not Ask Again?, Power Station of Art, Shanghai (2016).

**ZENG Fanzhi** (b. 1964, Wuhan) studied oil painting at the Wuhan Art Academy, he lives and works in Beijing. Zeng Fanzhi's art simulates the fatigue of the contemporary experience: the rush to acquire and consume to the point of alienation and detachment. He traces the eruption of the corporeal into the optical sedition of visual art. Zeng Fanzhi delivers an art that feels new, not in its premises but in its refined vitality. His late paintings signify a shift in his focus from a formal concern with the representation of existential unsettlement to an interest in how we imagine ourselves interacting with nature. Still, in his newly developed landscape paintings, there is a notion of permanent escape – an attempt to inhabit the uninhabitable. Within these large-scale images there is a notion of fragility and vulnerability; like an attempt to create a terrain of uncertainty that inhabits both characters and landscape depicted. The grand scale of the paintings lends them a certain suggestive and sublime appearance. When viewed, the paintings constantly seem to evolve and create new particular impressions. The images reflect a social reality that is made up of multiple signifying systems of which the landscape is just one.

Recent solo exhibitions include: Zeng Fanzhi. In the Studio, Hauser & Wirth, Hong Kong, London, Zürich (2018); Zeng Fanzhi | Van Gogh, Van Gogh Museum, the Netherlands, Amsterdam (2017); ZENG Fanzhi: Parcours, UCCA, Beijing (2016); Zeng Fanzhi: The Louvre Project, ShanghART Beijing, Beijing (2015); ZENG FANZHI, Louvre Museum, Paris, France (2014); Zeng Fanzhi, Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France (2013); Zeng Fanzhi, Gagosian Gallery, London, UK (2012).

**ZHANG Enli** was born in Jilin province in 1965. He graduated from Wuxi Technical University, Arts and Design Institute in 1989 and currently lives and works in Shanghai. For Zhang Enli, painting itself is a vital activity, whether his brushes are illustrating human activities or everyday objects. As a painter who depicts the elements of daily life, Zhang devotes the same attention and passion into every object, whether it is a bucket, a wardrobe or a person. Each painting is not only a re-presentation but an expression as well. The expressive lines and curves of his painting style are influenced by traditional Chinese brush techniques, but are always underpinned by the structure of pencil-drawn grids. Immersed in the inherent space of the canvas, some objects within the paintings seem to almost dissolve in to the thin layers of paint.

Zhang has exhibited extensively worldwide. His solo shows include Bird Cage, Galleria Borghese, Rome, Italy(upcoming); Enli's Studio-Artist-in-Residence Programme, Project Life Drawing Room, Royal Academy of Arts, London, U.K.; The Garden, Hauser & Wirth, New York, U.S.(2018); Gesture and Form, Firstsite, Colchester, U.K.(2017); Intangible, Hauser & Wirth, Zurich, Switzerland(2016); Zhang Enli, ShanghART Main Space, Shanghai, China(2015); Hair, Shanghai Night Club, Shanghai, China(2014). His group exhibitions include Ambush on All Sides—Another Kind of Social Vision Intervention, Sichuan Fine Art Institute Museum, Chongqing, China (2018); Sanguine-Luc Tuymans on Baroque, Fondazione Prada, Milan, Italy(2018); White Flash, ShanghART Beijing, China (2018).

**ZHOU Tiehai** (b. 1966, Shanghai) lives and works in Shanghai. Zhou Tiehai's conceptual projects represent the artist's critical attitude towards the self-absorbed art market. His work's power to amaze and provoke is the result of a host of strategies that mix antagonism with sincerity. The key elements that drive Zhou Tiehai's unsettling yet amusing practice include appropriating classical imagery, generating ironic projections, proclaiming laconic yet heartfelt discourse, and actively subverting painterly craft. He takes on the role of both artist and patron as many of his airbrush paintings are rendered by assistants under his supervision. He permits himself to 'play' with art's historical baggage by making paintings that are simultaneously self-aware and self-abnegating, virtuosic and pop culture are both present within a single canvas. He manipulates acclaimed magazine covers for his own purposes and articulates the notion of 'artistic agency' within current conditions of the art world and global economy. He makes self-promotional images that subvert the establishment notion of how artists should look and behave.

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Zhou Tiehai has exhibited extensively in China and internationally. Selected exhibitions include: Side Lanes, ShanghART, Shanghai, China (2019); Life and Dreams: Photography & Media Art in China since the 1990s, The Walther Collection, Neu-Ulm, Germany (2018); As A Reason for December 12th, Hangzhou, China (2018); Will/We Must, Yuz Musuem Shanghai, China (2017); MAXXI, Rome, Italy (2015); Video Bureau Archive 27: Zhou Tiehai, Video Bureau, Beijing, China (2014); Shanghai/Paris, Modern Art of China, China Art Museum, Shanghai (2013); Portrait of the Times, Power Station of Art, Shanghai (2013); 7th Asia Pacific Triennial,, Queensland Art Gallery (QAG), Australia (2012).

### **About ShanghART Singapore**

Established in Singapore in 2012, ShanghART Singapore is ShanghART Gallery's first overseas gallery located in contemporary arts cluster Gillman Barracks.

### **About ShanghART Gallery**

ShanghART Gallery was established in Shanghai in 1996. It has since grown to become one of China's most influential art institutions and a vital player in the development of contemporary art in China, representing over 40 pioneering and emerging artists, including DING Yi, Melati SURYODARMO, Apichatpong WEERASETHAKUL, XU ZHEN®, YANG Fudong, and ZENG Fanzhi.

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