

Qiu Shihua

Ausstellung in Luzern: 9. März – 29. April 2023

Eröffnung: Donnerstag; 9. März, 17.30-19.30 Uhr

"The landscapes in my works are no more than an entry point. They are a kind of orientation aid, quasi mental picture world. Landscape is an offer, not a simple pictorial object. As for my relationship to the landscapes in my paintings, I cannot say whether they are a reflection of me or whether I am one of them. In any case, they are ambiguous. It is the same with the viewer: if he succeeds in gaining access to the picture, he also unconsciously loses his own reality. In a real landscape, one is clearly distinguished from nature; in the paintings, the separation between our existence and nature blurs: they become one."

- Qiu Shihua in Beijing / Shenzhen, Autumn 2011

The focus of this exhibition at Galerie Urs Meile Luzern is exclusively on the oil paintings of Chinese artist Qiu Shihua (*1940, in Zizhong, Sichuan Province, China). On display are works in various formats, created since 1997. The viewer is confronted with, at first glance, almost monochrome white canvases - on which unique landscapes are revealed.

To find an access to Qiu Shihua's paintings, one needs patience, time and curiosity. The works, so similar at first sight, unite in themselves Qiu Shihua's whole universe and attitude to life. The painter is considered a phenomenon in the contemporary art scene: training in the style of Socialist Realism, interest in various French and German styles, finally a formative stay in Paris in the 1980s. The attempts to develop his painting and the striving to invent something new challenge Qiu. He considers his constant search to be in vain - until he discovers Daoism, which first influences his private life and then revolutionizes his artistic practice. On this path, which he calls Daoist, he begins to reduce his initially colorful landscapes more and more, searching for the limits of the visible.

Since then, his technique has continued to evolve. Nowadays, the color application is done by skillful rubbing with self-mixed pigments, short bristled brushes and little binder. This creates motifs that seem to emerge and reappear from the canvas. Hardly has the eye found a focus, this eludes again. This pulsation follows the very own inner rhythms of turning to the world and can become an exercise of the principle of wuwei, acting without active intervention, which is central in Daoism. Qiu entrusts his works to the viewers and their own rhythms. With the landscape representations he strives to depict not the outer world - but the inner state - the variations of the inner mental landscapes.

The co-presence of the viewer allows the images to become visible only slowly, whereby visibility here does not end with a motivic recognition. Rather, the visual process of perception, which makes motifs appear as visible, is the actual experience in Qiu's work and is incomparably more important than what is depicted.

Qiu Shihua's paintings stand in radical opposition to the current increase in sensory stimuli with the aim of supposedly intensifying the quality of experience. The lack of optical stimuli to which he exposes the viewers of his pictures stimulates conscious perception.

The visual experience loses its externally controlled tempo and gains incomparably more depth.

With this exhibition we invite you to find an inner balance again - be it through meditation, targeted training of the attention span, letting go of any art-historical associations and concepts, or through quiet contemplation.

Qiu Shihua was born in Sichuan Province in 1940 and now lives and works in Beijing, Sacramento and Shenzhen. In 2022, his works could last be experienced at the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst in Cologne, Germany, and in 2020 at the Museum Rietberg in Zurich, Switzerland. In 2017, the Museum unter Tage in Bochum, Germany presented a major solo exhibition. Previously, a number of group and solo exhibitions worldwide have been held at De Warande, Belgium (2018), Vancouver Art Museum, Canada (2014), Metropolitan Museum of Art, USA (2013), Hamburger Bahnhof, Germany (2012), Museum Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern, Germany (2012), Berkley Art Museum, USA (2008), Kunstmuseum Bern, Switzerland (2005), and The New York Kunsthalle, USA (2001), among others. In 1999, Kunsthalle Basel held the first monographic exhibition of his work outside of China. Among others, his work has been presented at the Sao Paolo Biennale, Brazil (1996), the Venice Biennale, Italy (1999), and the Shanghai Biennale, China (2004).