

PRESS RELEASE

TANG SHUO SHADOWS OF BOULDER HILL

14 September – 4 November 2023
Rue des Vieux-Grenadiers 2
1205 Genève

28 September – 18 November 2023
Avenue Louis-Ruchonnet 6
1003 Lausanne

Fabienne Levy is delighted to introduce the inaugural exhibition of artist Tang Shuo in Switzerland. "Shadows of Boulder Hill" encapsulates an intimately personal journey that resonates deeply with the artist. In this remarkable exhibition, we embark on a journey into the artist's past, specifically his cherished childhood memories from Boulder Hill, a place where stories have both their roots and their ongoing chapters. This marks a significant evolution in his artistic expression, as it's the very first time he has woven narrative threads into his canvas. "Shadows Of Boulder Hill," is a groundbreaking exhibition. Tang Shuo takes on an unprecedented artistic quest, striving to breathe life into these characters and unveil the captivating tales that surround them. The artist's aspiration is clear, to transport us into the rich tapestry of stories and legends that have taken root in Boulder Hill. Some of these tales are etched deep into his own memory, while others have been lovingly passed down through generations by his family, and continue to unfold until today.

For the Geneva space, the artist weaves a narrative that spans the life of an elder, a figure from his childhood whose story left an indelible mark. This elder's journey began around 1950 when he made the fateful decision to flee to Xinjiang, escaping a harrowing chapter in his family's history.

His father, once a prosperous landowner, found himself trapped in the tumultuous aftermath of the establishment of the People's Republic of China and the sweeping land reform movement. In the eyes of the new order, the wealthy class in China, including his father, bore the guilt of their privilege. Tragically, his father paid the ultimate price, losing his life to the radical shifts of the era. As a family member, the elder had no recourse but to embark on a path of exile, leaving behind his homeland and all that he held dear. The story unfolds through distinct moments, each depicted in the artist's evocative artworks:

"The Sorrow of the Decision to Flee" : This piece captures the aftermath of his father's tragic death, a moment fraught with grief and fear. Tears flowed freely as he grappled with the loss of his father and the weight of his impending escape.

"The Fugitive Resting Under the Tree" : Amidst his perilous journey to Xinjiang, this artwork portrays a scene where the elder finds respite under the shade of a tree, a fleeting moment of solace in his arduous escape.

"Grape Harvester" : Life in Xinjiang saw him transition into a grape picker, where he toiled to earn a livelihood, forging a new existence far from the comforts of home.



Grape Harvester, 2023, oil on canvas, 90 x 70 cm

"The Man who leaves the Decision the coin" : After several years, as land reform swept across much of China, the possibility of returning home became a tantalizing prospect. Yet, the elder was torn between longing for his family and the uncertainty of his hometown's safety. In a moment of profound indecision, he entrusted his fate to the toss of a coin.

"Way Home" : This artwork portrays his arduous journey back to Boulder Hill, where an unexpected deluge threatened the cherished letter he had received from home. He ingeniously sought refuge beneath a roadside branch to shield it from the rain's embrace.

Upon his return to Boulder Hill, he embarked on a new chapter in his life. However, his father's history cast a long shadow, and many in his hometown did not welcome him with open arms. Despite the challenges, he built a family, married, and even adopted a daughter whom he named Moon, a poignant testament to his enduring homesickness. Ultimately, his life journey reached its conclusion around the year 2000, succumbing to illness. The artist has drawn upon the accounts of the elder's own recollections, infusing these stories with his own imaginative touch in these five poignant pieces.

Biography

Tang Shuo lives and works in Liverpool. His initial interests were installation and material art, which he studied at the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in Beijing, China. Upon moving to the United Kingdom in 2020, he turned solely to painting. His work explores memories of his childhood in rural Southern China, home to many wild animals and tropical plants. The figures in his paintings derive from himself and echo a game he used to play as a child. Tang and his friends would play different roles and take on various identities such as shepherd, woodcutter or hunter. In his paintings, he cultivates this game by painting himself in different postures and imagining himself within these roles.

When he moved to England, he had to face adversities in adapting to a new lifestyle and has had to rethink what was now his current country and present identity. In his work, he questions the relationship between individuals and society, revealing a certain feeling of loneliness and alienation, positing painting as a form of solace. Memory, identity and connection are important themes in his work.

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