

Tanya Leighton

Press Release

Han Shen
'DESIRES ARE ALREADY MEMORIES'

3 – 28 September 2024
Kurfürstentstraße 156, Berlin

Tanya Leighton, Berlin, is pleased to announce 'Desires are already memories,' a solo exhibition by Berlin-based artist Han Shen.

The exhibition explores the intricate interplay between longing and remembering, inspired by Italo Calvino's evocative tales in *Invisible Cities*. The title itself, a contemplative line from Calvino's 1972 novel, encapsulates the essence of how our deepest yearnings, once fulfilled, become memories. The traveller, upon reaching Isidora after years of wandering, finds that his youthful desires have transformed into mere memories—a duality that forms the core of Shen's exploration.

Shen's paintings are a visual symphony of fragmented landscapes, where the interplay of colour, form, and gesture invites viewers into a space where time and emotion converge. The unprimed canvas, with its subtle warmth, serves as a foundational element in his exploration of memory and desire. White, not merely an absence, acts as a high note, lifting and highlighting saturated hues, while the interaction of colour spots, lines, and canvas texture creates a complex relationship of positive and negative spaces.

Drawing on Calvino's reflections on the passage of time, Shen uses green and purple to symbolise the metamorphosis of youthful desires into memories. His compositions balance visibility and invisibility, with white space suggesting spatial ambiguity—echoing the ungraspable cities in Calvino's tales. Shen's technique, reminiscent of the traditional Chinese concept of 'liubai,' or leaving blank spaces, imbues his works with a subtle, ambiguous atmosphere. The natural hue of the unprimed canvas suggests skies, waters, or terrains, while the interplay of colours and lines conjures hidden landscapes.

Although Shen's works do not directly depict Calvino's cities, they share their names, capturing the fleeting, elusive nature of memory. His compositions transcend the depiction of real places, offering visions drawn from memory, where colour and form intertwine to evoke worlds that are transient and ethereal, vanishing as soon as they are spoken of.

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Han Shen (born in 1988 in Hangzhou, China) lives and works in Berlin.

He graduated from Universität der Künste, Berlin in 2017. Solo exhibitions include 'Room #5' at Kewenig, Berlin; 'West Lake' at PARIS-B, Paris in 2023; 'Intimate Morphology' at Vacancy, Shanghai in 2019; 'The Trajectory of Dream' at Galerie Paris-Beijing, Paris in 2019, and 'Open Up' at Edmond Gallery, Berlin in 2018. His work has been part of group exhibitions at Spoiler, Berlin; PM/AM, London; Hua International, Berlin; He Xiangning Art Museum, Shenzhen; Aurora Museum, Shanghai; Tansbao Gallery, Taipei; Qiao Space, Shanghai; König Galerie, Berlin; Galerie Anette Müller, Düsseldorf; Tang Contemporary Art, Bangkok, and Wuhan Art Museum, Hubei, among many others.

Shen's work is included in the permanent collections of Aurora Museum, Shanghai, and Wuhan Art Museum, Hubei.

For more information please contact info@tanyaleighton.com or telephone +49(0)30221607770.

The gallery is open Tuesday to Saturday, 11 am–6 pm and by appointment.