

SHEN WEI

3 May - 22 June, 2019
Private View Thursday 2 May, 6-8PM

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Flowers Gallery is delighted to announce the first major UK solo exhibition by New York-based Chinese artist Shen Wei. The exhibition brings together works from several series from 2009 to the present day, incorporating photography and moving image.

Responding to his conservative upbringing in Shanghai, Shen Wei's self-portraits, nudes and sensuous landscape photographs explore notions of identity, memory and sexuality. This exhibition draws connections between the influence of Chinese culture and his own personal process of self-discovery.

On view will be photographs from his new series *Broken Sleeve* including provocative self-portraits role-playing iconic Chinese characters from historical and popular culture, inspired by folk tales, films and personal experience. Creating a secret world of time, energy and dreams, *Broken Sleeve* explores the co-existence of harmony and danger, power and submission. Alongside the portraits, altered images of doorways and pavilions reflect the complex social significance of doors and entrances in China as indicators of status, control and identity. Nude self-portraits from Wei's earlier series *I Miss You Already* also suggest notions of desire and control. *Bent* (also in the collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum), portrays the body stretched to create a taut arch within the contained space of a cave, while *Syracuse* examines the potent interaction of two figures.



Emperor (Ball), 2017,
Archival inkjet print.

Also in the exhibition are works from *Between Blossoms*, a series of introspective nude self-portraits and landscapes created across continents, from the United States to Europe and Asia. These seductive photographs capture a unifying sense of other-worldliness within the changing landscape that Wei describes as "deeply connected to my inner melancholy, a dream-like state of mind." The works from this series bind the influence of traditional themes of landscape within Chinese art, with the ancient philosophy of Qi - a powerful unseen life force within natural phenomena.

Wei's attention to the interactions of darkness and light, and negative or void spaces gives these hidden forces tangible form, drawing from the philosophical treatment of emptiness as solid space often found in Chinese painting. The interplay of positive and negative elements also articulates oppositional emotional states of fear, attraction, joy, loneliness and absence. This can be seen in the near pitch-black void within *Peach Tree*, from which a lush, flower-studded tree emerges, and is also present in images from the *Broken Sleeve* series, for example in the light-filled cavity of *Doorway (Blue)*.

On view will be examples of Wei's video work, *Bubble* (2013) and *Like Its Own Tear* (2016). Performing for the camera in moving image works such as *Bubble*, Wei explores the intense effects of bodily experience, drawing out a provocatively extended gesture of blowing a bubble until reaching a state of exhaustion. In contrast, the meditative close up view of dew-laden foliage in *Like Its Own Tear* uses the slowing of time to focus and attune the senses.

For more information and images please contact Hannah Hughes: 0207 920 7777 / hannah@flowersgallery.com



Clockwise from left: *Peach Tree*, 2014, Chromogenic print; *Stage*, 2017, Archival inkjet print; *Self Portrait (Bent)*, 2009, Chromogenic Print; *Doorway (Blue)*, 2017, Archival inkjet print.

ABOUT SHEN WEI

Born and raised in Shanghai, China, Shen Wei is a visual artist based in New York City. He also works in video, mixed media drawing, and performance. His work has been exhibited internationally, with venues including the Museum of the City of New York, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Power Station of Art in Shanghai, La Triennale di Milano, the North Carolina Museum of Art, and the Moscow Museum of Modern Art. Shen Wei's work is included in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Photography, the Library of Congress, the Carnegie Museum of Art, the Museum of Chinese in America, and the Ringling Museum of Art, among others. Shen Wei is a recipient of the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center Arts Residency, the Asian Cultural Council Arts & Religion Fellowship, the New York Foundation for the Arts Photography Fellowship, and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Arts Grant. He holds an MFA in photography, video, and related media from the School of Visual Arts, New York; and a BFA in photography from Minneapolis College of Art and Design.

NOTES TO EDITORS

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Exhibition opening hours: Tuesday - Saturday 10am - 6pm.