

Hate you
Love you
Fuck you

HE WEI



HE WEI

Hate you. Love you. Fuck you



"I think that every expression of art is a representation of feelings and a container of vital energy. Colours, shapes and symbols, which seem to be randomly chosen, are linked to the unconscious and to my memories: the transport of this meaning is the reinterpretation of thoughts and experiences. If the artwork is the 'personification' of thoughts and feelings, then what we see is only a way to interpret them, and the different gestures presented in his works represent the most direct, simple and impulsive communication. This kind of communication has an effect outside concept of values like what is right or wrong".

- He Wei



Cosa c'è (e non c'è...) nell'opera di He Wei

Che strano artista He Wei...

E soprattutto, che strano artista cinese.

Seguo la Cina e i suoi artisti da oramai venticinque anni. Credo di aver conosciuto, e probabilmente scoperto e lanciato, sia in Italia che in Europa, alcuni dei nomi più importanti della scena; a distanza di anni, alcuni di essi costituiscono la nervatura della storia dell'arte contemporanea di quella immensa nazione. Ma He Wei, che trovo un artista già straordinario, con un forte potenziale da esprimere, è sicuramente un caso atipico.

Nel suo lavoro, infatti, si perdono i connotati tipici di tutti gli altri autori: non c'è realismo, non c'è cultura pop, non ci sono riferimenti alle loro grandi icone, non c'è nessuna presenza di ink-painting o di un'arte astratta che rimandi ai loro maestri (Chu Teh-Chun e Zao Wou-Ki), i personaggi delle sue opere non sono autoctoni, non c'è presenza di scrittura o di qualsivoglia riferimento culturale locale.

Cosa troviamo, invece?

Una raffinata pittura neorealista, principalmente in bianco e nero, nella quale si evidenziano riproduzioni parziali o totali di ritratti di personaggi famosi della cultura occidentale (John Cage, Marie Curie, Rachel Carson, solo per citarne alcuni), di dive o pseudo tali nelle pose tipiche delle fotografie celebrative e idealizzanti della filmografia Hollywoodiana degli anni '50 e '60 (che lui dapprima ricerca meticolosamente in archivi storici e nella galassia di internet, per poi studiarli e catalogarli con grande cura e attenzione), stralci di immagini reali o frutto di una parziale invenzione. In sostanza, protagonisti eccellenti



del nostro patrimonio culturale, sia scientifico che umanistico, che lui utilizza per tentare una sorta di ricucitura con una parte di storia mancante, se non del tutto assente, del suo Paese, che agli artisti - e non solo, ahimè - pesa molto.

Mi ero già imbattuto in un simile processo di ricostruzione temporale quando conobbi Shi Xinning, uno dei pittori a mio avviso più colti e metaforici che la Cina abbia mai espresso, con il quale He Wei condivide lo slancio verso le immagini patinate e americaneggianti del dopoguerra, cui Shi dedicò un'ampia serie di ritratti dei divi del cinema. In He Wei la nostalgia di quel periodo si mescola però ad un fascino più ricollegabile a un certo cinema in bianco e nero squisitamente cinese, di grande qualità e più intellettuale, dove i riferimenti più noti a noi occidentali sono i film artistici di Yang Fudong.

Questa partenza del suo lavoro, che gli permette di produrre una pittura foto-realistica di particolare fascino e qualità, che ci rimanda in qualche modo alla straordinaria pittura di Gerard Richter dei primi anni della sua carriera - che è certamente la parte che lo affascina di più, stimolandolo alla successiva realizzazione del dipinto - si alterna con una pratica di parziale, se non addirittura totale, sconfinamento nell'astrazione più pura, dove i riferimenti dell'arte moderna occidentale (Miró, Kandinsky, Calder...) si mescolano ai riferimenti della pittura del suo paese (Liu Wei (1965), Zhou Chunya, ecc.) nel tentativo di creare nuove forme (idee) di pittura transnazionale, di passaggio verso una nuova forma di pittura, del nuovo millennio, di carattere universale.

Queste forme, ricercate durante la fase di studio della sua pittura, diventano in questa nuova esposizione, tridimensionali, dando vita a sculture di grande respiro, postmoderne, solide, con rimandi mnemonici a Le Corbusier, al Bauhaus, e anche Roy Lichtenstein.

Sculture molto intriganti, celebrative della sua nuova ed evoluta visione artistica, che grazie ad esse fa un nuovo passo avanti.

He Wei, con queste opere, si pone tra i più innovativi artisti cinesi delle ultime generazioni, in continuazione ed in alternativa ad altri artisti del suo paese, che stanno aggiornando la pittura con grande riferimento all'astrazione, quali Wang Guangle, Xie Molin, Jiahua Qian, Wang Zhongjie, ponendosi però, grazie all'introduzione delle pratiche scultoree, quale antagonista del più grande Liu Wei (1972). Oltre ad essere la più grande risposta cinese all'astro nascente della pittura asiatica, il giapponese Tomoo Gokita.

Primo Giovanni Marella



What is (and is not) in He Wei's work

He Wei is such a strange artist...

And he is especially a strange Chinese artist.

I've been following China and its artists for more than twenty-five years now. I think that I have met, and probably discovered and helped launch the careers of some of the most important names in the art scene, both in Italy and in Europe. Through the years some of these figures have come to constitute the rib of the history of contemporary art of that immense nation, however, He Wei—who I already consider an extraordinary artist, with strong potential to express—is surely an atypical case.

In his work, in fact, the elements that typically characterize all the other artists are lost: there is no realism, there's no pop culture, there aren't references to their great icons, there's no inkpainting or abstract art referencing the great masters (like Chu The-Chun or Zao Wou-Ki), the figures in his works are not natives, and there is no writing or local cultural reference of any kind.

So, then, what is there?

A refined neorealist painting style, predominantly in black and white, in which partial or total reproductions of portraits of famous people from Western culture (John Cage and Woody Allen, just to name a few), divas, or nearly, in poses typical of celebratory and idealized photographs from the Hollywood of the 50s and 60s (that he first meticulously researches in historic archives and the galaxies of the internet, to then study and catalogue with care and attention), taken from real images or being the results of partial invention. Essentially

they are the most excellent protagonists of our cultural heritage, both scientific and humanistic one, which he tries to knit together with a piece of his country's history that is missing, if not completely absent; a lack that is particularly poignant not only for the artists.

I happened upon a similar temporally reconstructive process when I met Shi Xinning, one of the most cultured and metaphorical painters to ever come out of China; He Wei shares with him a penchant for glossy Americanized post-war images, to which Shi dedicated an ample series of portraits of the divas of cinema. In He Wei the nostalgia for that period mixes, however, with a fascination that is more connected with a particularly Chinese black and white cinema, that is more intellectual and of a higher quality, where the most noteworthy references, for us Westerners, are the artistic films of Yang Fudong.

This point of departure for his work allows him to produce photo-realist paintings with a particular appeal and a quality reminiscent in some way of the extraordinary paintings made by Gerard Richter just at the beginning of his career—and this is clearly the part that fascinates him most, and stimulates his production.

This passion alternates with a practice of partial, if not complete, trespassing into the purest abstraction, where the references of modern western art (Miró, Kandinsky, Calder...) are mixed with the references of the painting tradition of his country (Liu Wei (1965), Zhou Chunya, etc.), in an attempt to create a transnational painting or a new form of painting - of the new millennium, and of universal character.

These forms, sought after long period of study of his painting, become three-dimensional in this new exhibition, giving life to large-scale, postmodern, solid sculptures with mnemonic references to Le Corbusier, the Bauhaus,

and even Roy Lichtenstein. They are very intriguing sculptures, celebrating his new and evolved artistic vision, which thanks to them takes a new step forward.

With these works, He Wei places himself among the most innovative Chinese artists of the last generations and as an alternative to other artists of his country, who are updating the painting with great reference to abstraction, such as Wang Guangle, Xie Molin, Jiahua Qian, Wang Zhongjie, placing himself, thanks to the introduction of sculptural practices, as the antagonist of the greatest Liu Wei (1972). In addition to being the greatest Chinese response to the rising star of Asian painting, the Japanese Tomoo Gokita.

Primo Giovanni Marella



C'è un tratto comune che lega la maggior parte dei nomi di riferimento per la scena dell'arte contemporanea cinese, per lo più appartenenti alla generazione nata tra la fine degli Anni Cinquanta e primissimi Anni Settanta, emersa nella stagione successiva ai fatti di piazza Tienanmen anche grazie all'esplosività dell'esperienza del Realismo Cinico. Ed è la ricerca di un equilibrio tra stili narrativi globali e l'urgenza di confrontarsi in modo anche critico con un sentire profondamente locale. Una tendenza che potremmo allora quasi definire globale, e che ci offre le cartografie calligrafiche di Qiu Zhijie e la nemesi del realismo socialista di Liu Xiaodong, passando per le manifeste opere politiche dei vari Ai Weiwei, Zeng Fanzhi e Fang Lijun. Un tema, quello del rapporto tra Oriente e Occidente, comunismo e consumismo, progresso e sostenibilità (economica, sociale, ambientale) a cui guardano anche artisti più giovani: pensiamo ad esempio a Cao Fei, lucida analista delle perverse dinamiche che, nell'era dei social media, mandano in cortocircuito la distanza tra realtà esperita e realtà immaginata.

In un contesto sì ricco di mille sfaccettature, ma nel profondo intimamente omogeneo, non mancano le intriganti eccezioni. Tra queste He Wei, che da tempo sembra aver reciso il cordone ombelicale con la propria terra di origine (si è formato in Italia, tra Firenze e Milano) per abbracciare un fare arte che parla l'universale linguaggio dell'intimità, dell'introspezione, della caccia alle domande irrisolte.

He Wei gioca a carte scoperte, sentendosi libero di esplicitare i propri modelli senza falsi pudori, con limpida schiettezza, agli antipodi dei sofismi di molti artisti – giovani e meno giovani – che coprono la fragilità concettuale del proprio lavoro con un citazionismo masturbatorio, autoreferenziale al punto da risultare impenetrabile. C'è Picasso, nei suoi lavori: c'è in alcuni tratti e in alcune soluzioni formali, ma c'è soprattutto nello spirito che anima una ricerca attenta e meticolosa, giocata sulla tensione tra ciò che siamo e come appariamo. Come lo stesso Picasso indagò il tema della maschera in qualità di feticcio per penetrare la complessità dell'uomo, volgendo quindi lo sguardo all'arte tribale, così He Wei si incammina sulla strada tracciata dal maestro, assumendone i volti scomposti, le smorfie apotropaiche, quale punto d'accesso per buttarsi a capofitto nei segreti dei sentimenti.

Nascono qui, allora, le sue figure impossibili. I volti presi da pubblicità senza

tempo, le pose nemmeno troppo diverse dalla seducente ritrattistica del Seicento, si ritrovano trasfigurati in dettagli anatomici che trovi nel Picasso dei primi Anni Trenta (ma anche in Léger), immersi in una graffiante atmosfera alla Basquiat. Capita – come nello straordinario *The hunger of your heart, uncertainty, danger* (2017) – che sorrisi scintillanti siano sostituiti da zanne acuminate, vergate con una mano volutamente infantile – quasi a ribadire quanto vivere sia sì un mistero, ma in fin dei conti buffo. Come vivere sia un gioco. Ecco allora perché le figure di He Wei non incutono timore, nei loro corpi a tratti mostruosi, ma muovono a tenerezza; ecco perché i suoi quadri, spesso caricati di titoli funerei e paranoici, non trascinano nell'incubo ma inducono al contrario a esorcizzarlo, seguendo un percorso felice e irreverente che ricorda anche visivamente i divertissements raccolti da John Lennon nei suoi libri d'artista (*In His Own Write* e *A Spaniard In The Works*).

E che ci rimanda a quando, bambini, si scacciavano le ombre che nella semioscurità facevano capolino da sotto il letto o da dietro una tenda semplicemente stringendo forte gli occhi. Per ritornare presto, finalmente liberi, ancora una volta a giocare. E quindi a vivere.

STELVA ARTIST IN RESIDENCE 2018:
HE WEI@MECCANICHE DELLA MERAVIGLIA 13
by **Francesco Sala**



There's a common feeling that links most of the main characters of the contemporary Chinese art scene, mostly belonging to the generation born between the end of the Fifties and the early Seventies, risen up after the Tienanmen Square protests, thanks to the explosive power of the Cynical realism movement. This feeling is the research of a balance in between global storytelling styles and the urgency of a critical approach to the proper local cultural mood. We should consider it a kind of glocal attitude, that has been able to give us the calligraphic cartographies by Qiu Zhijie and the Liu Xiaodong's socialist realism nemesis; but also the obviously politic works by Ai Weiwei, Zeng Fanzhi and Fang Lijun. The relationship between East and West, communism and mass consumption, progress and economical, social, environmental sustainability is a topic also for younger Chinese artists: for example Cao Fei, a clear headed analyst of the vicious dynamics that, in the social media era, cracks the distance between reality as it actually is and reality as it is imagined.

In this kind of cultural landscape, full of peculiarity and contradiction but deeply uniformed, there are amazing exceptions, too. He Wei is one of these. It seems for sometime now the umbilical cord has been cut between him and his mother country (he studied in Florence and Milan, in Italy), with the purpose of making art that is able to speak the universal language of intimacy, introspection, and the search for unanswered questions.

He Wei plays it straight, feeling himself free to show off his role models, with no false shyness but with clear honesty, far away from the quibbles that a lot of artists of any age use to hide the conceptual poverty of their work, seeking help from quotes that look like mental masturbations, so self-referential to be incomprehensible. We can find Picasso in He Wei's works: we can find him in some of He Wei's lines and shape solutions, but most of all in an attitude that inspire an accurate and meticulous research, based on the distance in between who we are and how we appear to be. As Picasso had studied the mask topic as it was an issue for deeply scanning human intricacy, in a similar way He Wei walks now on the same footpath of the old master, taking his iconic fragmented faces and his apotropaic sneers as an entry point for losing himself in the feeling of secrets.

This is where Hei Wei's impossible characters are born. Their faces inspired

by timeless commercials, their poses not so far from the XVII century seductive portraits, have been transferred into anatomical details close to Picasso's works from the Thirties (and close to Léger's style), dipped in an abrasive Basquiat mood. So it goes – for example in the marvelous *The hunger of your heart, uncertain ty, danger* (2017) – that shiny smile becomes sharp tusks, voluntary drawn with a childish style; as the artist would remind us that life is a mystery play, but after all it's a funny one. That life is a game. That's the reason why He Wei's characters, with their terrible bodies, are not scary; why his paintings, often charged with paranoid and dark titles, don't drag us into a nightmare, but help us to dispel it, following a happy disrespectful trace that recalls John Lennon's *divertissement*, included in his artist books *In His Own Write* and *A Spaniard In The Works*.

He Wei takes us back to when we were children, and we shooed away shadows that used to scare us in the half-light. Keeping storms behind a curtain or underneath the bed, or just simply squeezing our eyes shut. To return soon, finally free, again a time to play. And therefore to live.

STELVA ARTIST IN RESIDENCE 2018:
HE WEI@MECCANICHE DELLA MERAVIGLIA 13
by **Francesco Sala**



We talk crap, so what, 2019
Spray paint on iron
200 × 300 × 8 cm
Private Collection



MLGB, 2019-2020
Spray paint and varnish on iron
280 × 350 × 90 cm



Geometric Bounce, 2019-2020
Paint on iron
270 × 80 × 8 cm





Orgasm control, 2020
Paint on iron
150 × 90 × 25 cm







Homage with tongue, 2020
Paint on iron
100 × 110 × 35 cm

Hypnotism, 2020
Paint on iron
120 × 100 × 30 cm





Voodoo X, 2019
Oil, pastel, oily ink on canvas
130 x 150 cm







You are happy with your current status, I am not happy with your status, 2019
Oil and oily ink on canvas
140 x 120 cm



It's just a restless feeling by my side, 2019
 Oil and oily ink on canvas
 125 x 95 cm
 Private Collection





Summertime sadness, 2019
Oil, pastel and oily ink on canvas
130 x 100 cm

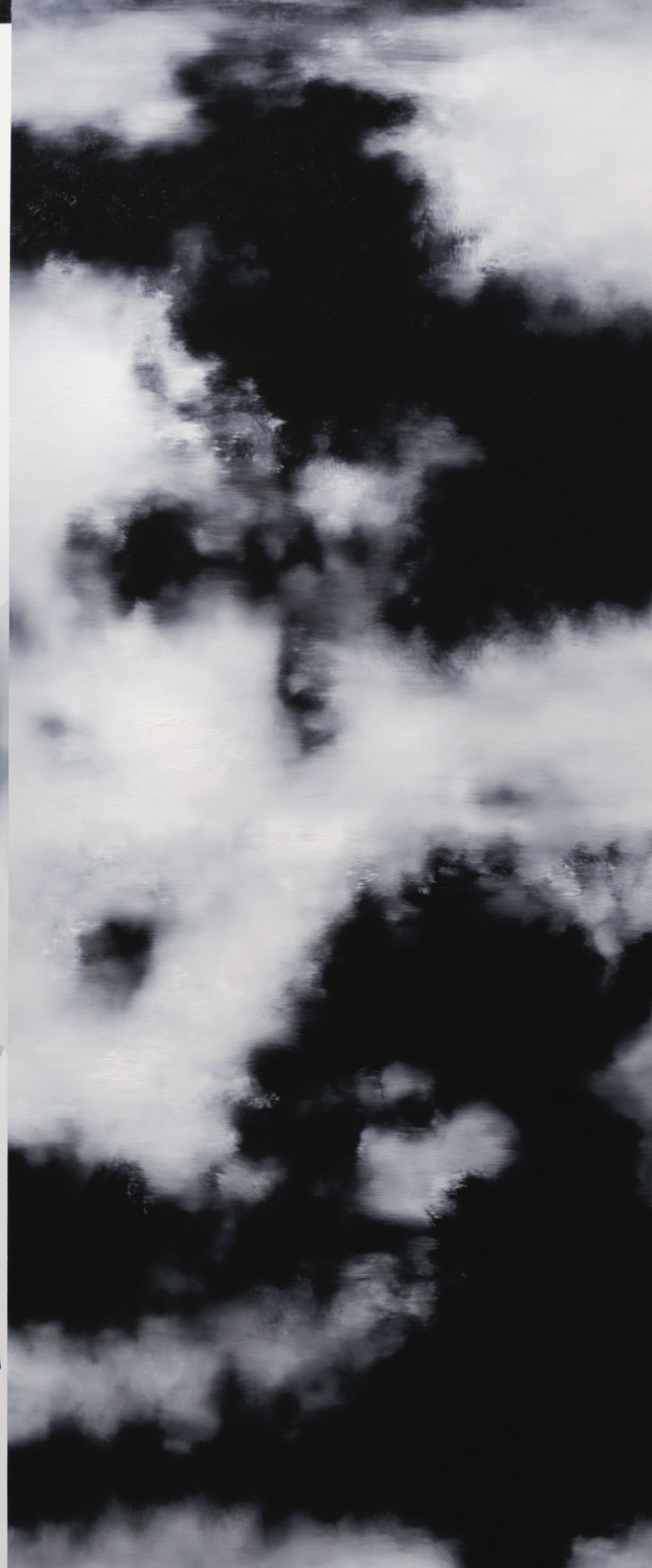


Points, lines, planes, how do we give meaning to these basic elements?

No.

They make sense in themselves, more than we do.

Mountain, 2019
Oil on canvas
Private Collection



"All things are poisons.

for there is nothing without poisonous qualities.

It is only the dose

which makes a thing poison."

- Paracelsus

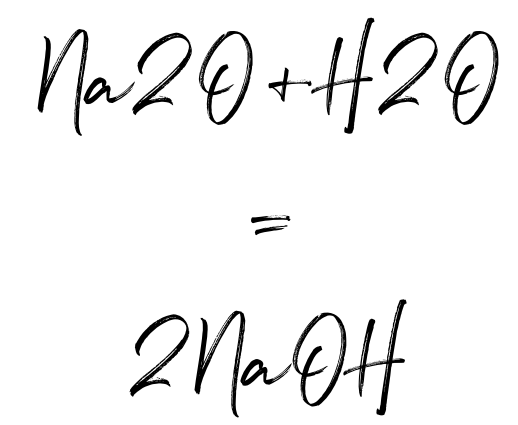
*Venom, 2019
Oil on canvas
187 x 220 cm*

*Only love
can hurt*

like this

Only love can hurt like this, 2019
Oil on canvas
160 x 200 cm





The ringer, 2019
Oil on canvas
110 x 84 cm (artwork)
127 x 107 cm (with frame)

For whom the bell tolls?

It tolls for us, for our Stupidity

Unsure, 2019
Oil on canvas
160 × 144 cm







You lie to me.

I know you are lying.

you know I know you are lying.

but you still lie

Love Syndrome, 2020
Oil on canvas
190 x 240 cm





Artwork title and details.



Love is as strong as death.

as hard as Hell.

Death separates the soul from the body.

but love separates all things from the soul.

- Meister Eckhart

Guilty love, 2019-2020
Oil on canvas
200 × 160 cm







Nothing else

can make me feel ...

Nothing else can make me feel the way you do, 2019
Oil on canvas
200 x 160 cm

... the way you do

Nothing else can make me feel the way you do, 2019
Oil on canvas
200 x 160 cm (painting)
114 x 26,5 x 6 cm (sculpture)



I can see you're sad

even when you smile

even when you laugh

I can see you're sad, even when you smile, even when you laugh, 2019
Oil on canvas
140 × 120 cm







My heart has grown cold

my love stored away

My heart has grown cold my love stored away, 2019
 Oil on canvas
 120 x 100 cm
 Private Collection

Hallucinogen (Love) / (Hate) is a psychoactive agent which most likely causes hallucinations, perceptual anomalies, and other substantial subjective changes in thoughts, emotion, and consciousness.

An endless haze, 2020
Oil on canvas
110 × 84 cm
Private Collection



God,

let me give you my life

God, let me give you my life, 2019
Oil on canvas
120 × 140 cm





*Does truth really exist?
We believe what we want to believe.
Physical world and human spirit.
Which is more powerful?
It's all like a nightmare*

Puzzle, 2019
Oil on canvas
110 x 84 cm

No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity.

But I know none, and therefore am no beast.

- William Shakespeare (Richard III)

"No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity. But I know none, and therefore am no beast". - William Shakespeare, 2019
Oil on canvas
120 x 100 cm





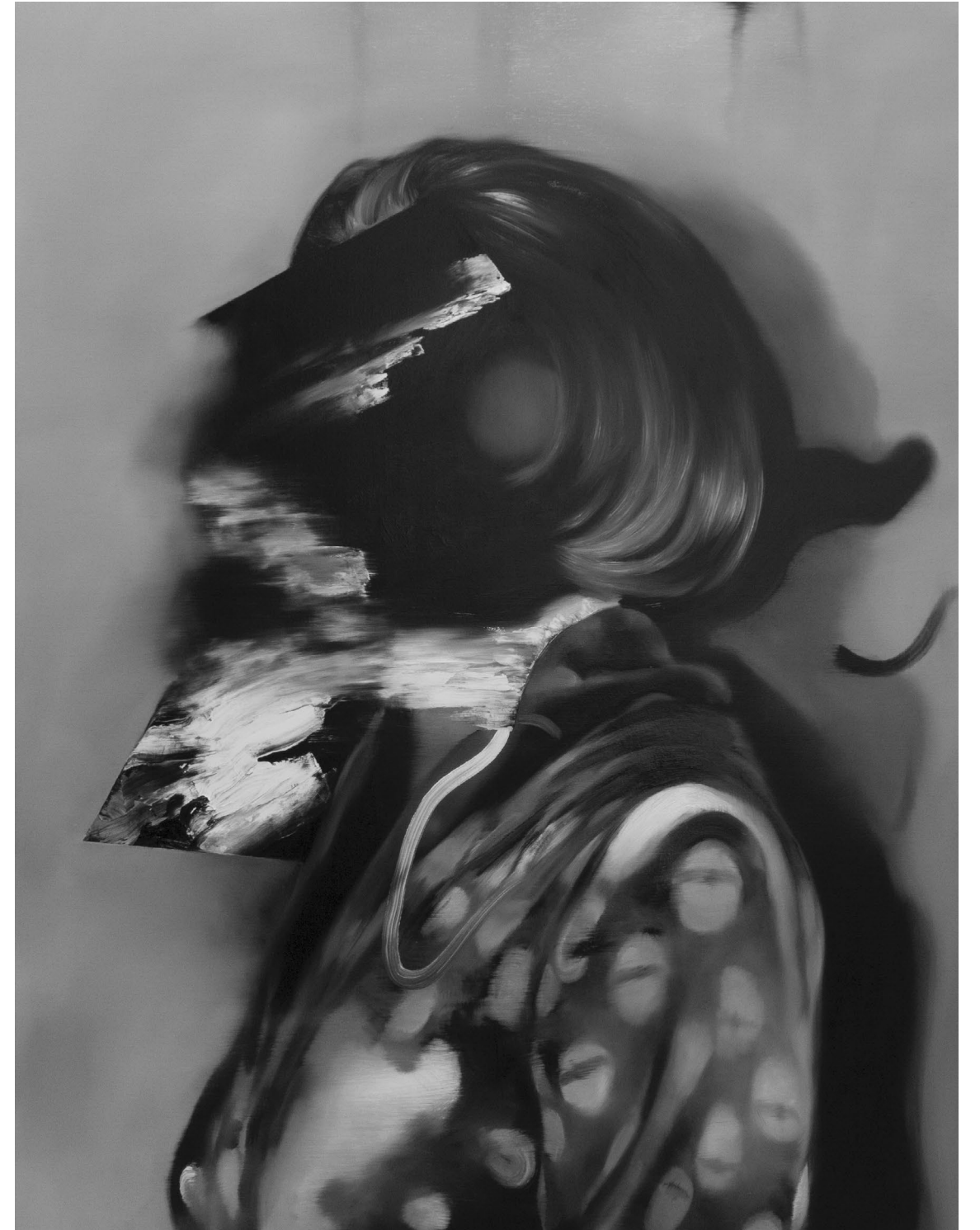
She got me going psycho, 2019
Oil on canvas
90 x 80 cm

She got me going psycho

Kiss me

like I'm oxygen

Kiss me like I'm oxygen, 2019
Oil on canvas
110 x 84 cm



Previous artworks

Boa Noite, 2018 - 2019
Oil and charcoal on canvas
160 x 128 cm





Under my sensi, 2018 - 2019
 Oil and oily ink on canvas
 160 x 144 cm
 Private Collection

Silhouette of love, 2018 - 2019
Oil and oily ink on canvas
180 x 162 cm
Private Collection





Pepper 2, 2018
Oil and spray on canvas
147 x 160 cm

Leaning on the Sonata, 2018
Oil and ink on canvas
160 x 147 cm



N32, 2019
Oil and oily ink on canvas
200 x 180 cm
Private Collection





Walking through the doom, 2018-2019
Oil ink and charcoal on canvas
180 x 200 cm
Private Collection



Double JC, 2018-2019
Charcoal, acrylic, spray paint and oily in and oil on canvas
200 x 160 cm
Private Collection



Cool time on the dark side, 2019
 Oil and oily ink on canvas
 180 x 240 cm



Purple dream, 2018
Oil, spray paint and oily in on canvas
240 x 180 cm



I will move on as the wind blows and close my eyes until I disappear, 2017 - 2018
Oil, oil ink on canvas
240 x 180 cm



Stand on the edge of the black hole and shout to the silver of the full moon, Yes!, 2017
Oil, oily ink on canvas
180 x 158 cm
Private Collection



Silent Desire, 2017
Oil, oily ink on canvas
180 x 150 cm
Private Collection



Double Face, 2017
Oil, oily ink on canvas
130 x 125 cm



The terrible loneliness, 2017
Oil, Oily ink on canvas
150 x 140 cm
Private Collection

CV

Nato nel 1987 nella provincia di Anhui, Cina
Vive, studia e lavora tra Italia e Cina

FORMAZIONE

2005
Anhui University, Anhui China
2008
Fine Art Academy, Florence
2012
Brera Fine Art Academy, Milan

MOSTRE

2020
Hate you, Love you, Fuck you, Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, Italy
2019
Meccaniche Della Meraviglia: He Wei, Solo Exhibition MO.CA Brescia Italy
2018
Undertow, Primae Noctis Art Gallery, Lugano, Switzerland
2017
Lost into a Nurse's Dream, Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, Italy
Destination Asia, Now, Primae Noctis Art Gallery, Lugano, Switzerland
Artissima, Special project, Turin, Italy
Asia Now, Special project, Paris, France
2015
He Wei's solo show, Prime Noctis Art Gallery, Lugano, Switzerland
2014
Laguna Award, Arsenale di Venezia, Venice, Italy
2012
Zeitgeist, Rugu Zhai Gallery, Beijing, China
2011
Academy on show, EX3 Contemporary Art Centre, Florence, Italy
2008
The Second Anhui Oil Art Exhibition, Anhui, China

CV

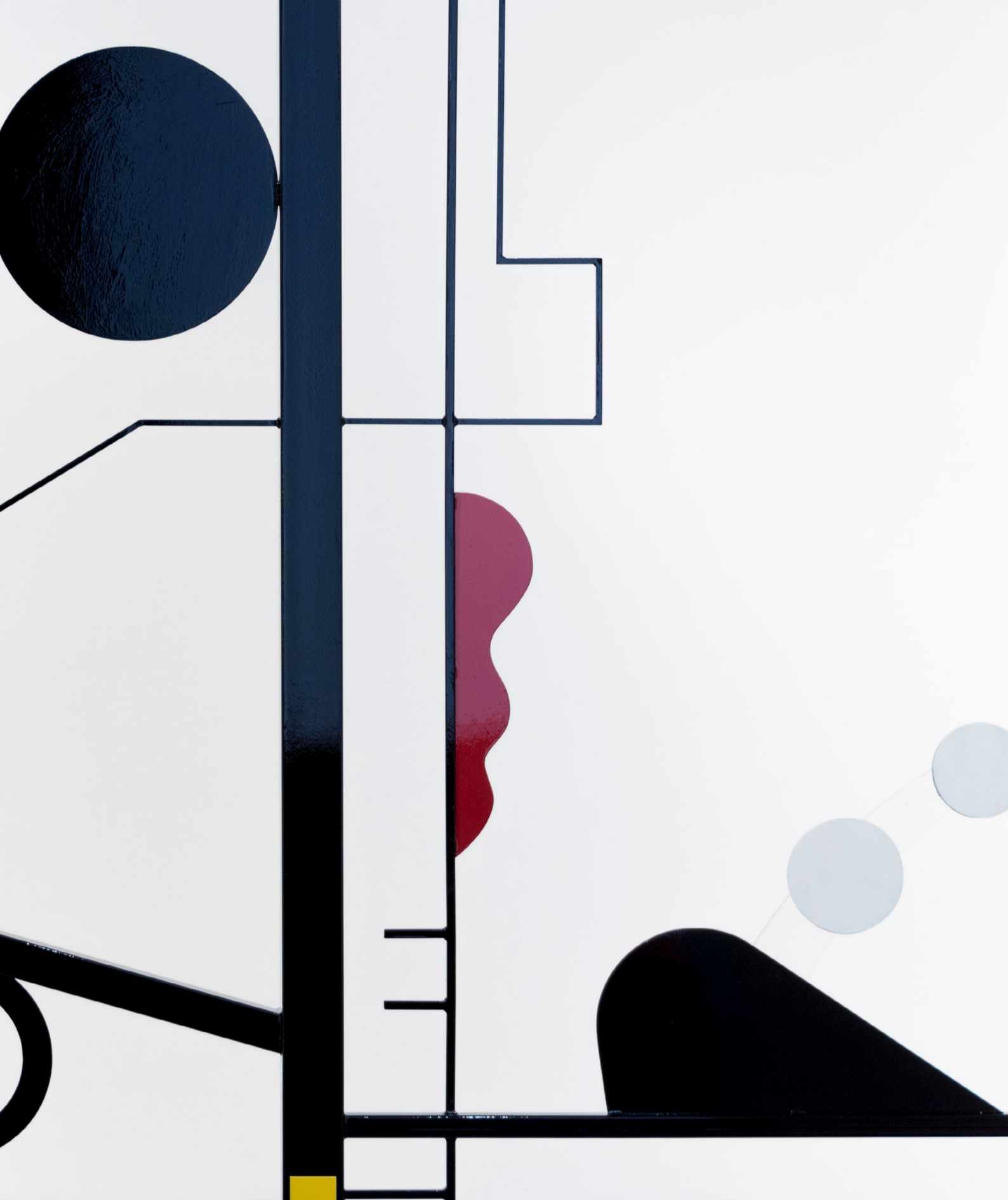
Born 1987 in Anhui province, China
Living and working between Italy and China

EDUCATION

2005
Anhui University, Anhui China
2008
Fine Art Academy, Florence
2012
Brera Fine Art Academy, Milan

EXHIBITIONS

2020
Hate you, Love you, Fuck you, Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, Italy
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The Second Anhui Oil Art Exhibition, Anhui, China



HE WEI - *Hate you, Love you, Fuck you*

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