

## David Diao

Duration: 22 January – 28 February 2021

Singapore, January 2021 – ShanghART Singapore is pleased to kickstart 2021 with a solo presentation of David Diao (b. 1943, lives and works in New York). This will be the Chinese-American artist's first showcase in Southeast Asia, featuring paintings made between 1999 and 2018.

Diao's artistic practice, spanning more than 50 years, draws on inspirations and motifs from predecessors such as Kasimir Malevich, El Lissitzky, and Barnett Newman, among others. Recurring motifs from their paintings can be identified in Diao's works, employed in his own ways and sometimes combined to tell a visual story.

His return to China in 1979, after more than three decades, prompted a shift in his practice as he began incorporating biographical elements such as his own career histories, themes of his Chinese heritage, emigration, and displacement. Diao's paintings possess several layers of interpretations for their viewers as he superimposes text and images with common symbols.

Paying homage to the history while simultaneously raising questions about it, Diao borrows, appropriates, and translates content as forms, reflecting on his ancestry and legacy through minimal compositions. Referencing both personally and culturally significant themes, the works featured in this exhibition string together a conceptually distinctive narrative portrayed in Modernist aesthetics.

### About Artist

New York School abstract painter Diao's early works of the 1960s and 1970s are characterized by an earnest desire to contribute to the Modernist canon, while questioning its lineage and theoretical underpinnings. Early influences were Barnett Newman, a significant figure through Diao's career, and the hard-edge painter Al Held. By the early seventies, Diao's formalism was inflected with the social, cultural, and political. This has remained the primary preoccupation of Diao's work ever since. However, in the mid-eighties, Diao's style shifted radically, as he began incorporating silkscreened images, vinyl lettering, hand-drawn marker, and painted words, detailing his personal life and practice. Combining his radical formalism with avant-garde iconography, identity politics, and autobiography - namely, his Chinese identity as perceived by Western audiences, and his formative years as a boy in China, despite coming of age in America - Diao confronts the complexity of histories, whether they are canonised, global, or private, all of which are deeply personal to him.

Recent exhibitions include: *Bauhaus: Utopia in Crisis*, Camberwell Space, Camberwell College of Arts, London, U.K. (2019); *David Diao: Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, ShanghART Gallery, Beijing (2018); *David Diao*, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing (2015); *Front to Back*, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT, U.S.A. (2014); *Whitney Biennial 2014*, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, U.S.A. (2014); *David Diao / Two Generations of Color Painting (1970) in ICA@50*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, U.S.A. (2014).

Diao's works are included in the collection of Museum of Modern Art and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, U.S.A., the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, U.S.A., the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, U.S.A., the Fonds National d'art contemporain, Paris, France, the M+ Collection, Hong Kong, and the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, among others.

### About ShanghART Gallery

ShanghART Gallery was established in Shanghai in 1996. It has since grown to become one of China's most influential art institutions and a vital player in the development of contemporary art in China, representing over 60 pioneering and emerging artists, including DING Yi, LI Shan, Arin RUNGJANG, Melati SURYODARMO, Apichatpong WEERASETHAKUL, XU ZHEN®, YANG Fudong, ZENG Fanzhi, and ZHAO Renhui Robert.

ShanghART Singapore was established in 2012 as the gallery's Southeast Asia wing, located in the contemporary art cluster Gillman Barracks. The gallery's first overseas space serves as a platform to introduce Chinese contemporary art to the region while developing collaborations with Southeast Asian artists and bringing them to the international art scene.

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ShanghART Singapore

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