

The Works of Wu Hao

魔金石空間
MAGICIAN SPACE



Watermarks Project: Wuhan, Shanghai, Hong Kong (iteration shown at Palais de Tokyo)

Installation

Mixed media

Dimensions variable

2013-2014

Edition: Unique piece

In his ongoing series the 'Watermarks', paintings are created by mixing colors of acrylic with water, pouring the liquid into wine glasses and other vessels of differing shapes and sizes. These objects are then left until the evaporation of water leaves behind a residue of paint pigment. In a previous iteration 'Watermark Project', the work was produced in Wuhan, Shanghai, and Hong Kong, revealing degradations of chromatic variation in tandem with differing conditions of weather, heat and humidity unique to these cities. Taking this idea further, the artist taught participants from these cities the technique – enriching his 'collection' of time to include the input of anonymous individuals.

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Watermarks Project: Wuhan, Shanghai, Hong Kong (iteration shown at Palais de Tokyo)

Installation

Mixed media

Dimensions variable

2013-2014

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Watermarks Project: Wuhan, Shanghai, Hong Kong (iteration shown at Magician Space)

Installation

Mixed media

Dimensions variable

2013-2014

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Watermarks Project: Wuhan, Shanghai, Hong Kong (iteration shown at Magician Space)

Installation

Mixed media

Dimensions variable

2013-2014



Watermarks Project: Wuhan, Shanghai, Hong Kong (detail)

Installation

Mixed media

Dimensions variable

2013-2014



Watermarks Project: Wuhan, Shanghai, Hong Kong (detail)

Installation

Mixed media

Dimensions variable

2013-2014



Rolling Gate No.2

Installation

Metal shutter gate

265×330cm

2014

Edition: Unique piece

The materiality of paint and its ubiquitous presence in the city is explored in the work 'Rolling Gate'. Comprising a series of interventions, Wu Hao collects old rolling gates from stores in Wuhan pockmarked with telephone numbers advertising the service of laborers, which have then been re-painted in attempts by city authorities to beautify urban areas. The work's creation process activates a permanent trace in the city as the artist initiates a dialogue with shopkeepers to part with these objects in exchange for a new gate. Displaced into an exhibition space, these found objects embody both conscious and unconscious attitudes filtered through the action of painting, standing as an unexpected measure of social temperatures, and demarcating degrees of order and disorder in the city.



Rolling Gate No.2

Installation

Metal shutter gate

265×330cm

2014

Edition: Unique piece

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卷帘门

Rolling Gate

装置

Installation

现成品

Ready Made

尺寸可变

Dimensions variable

2014

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Rolling Gate No.2

Installation

Metal Shutter gate

265×275cm

2014

Edition: Unique piece



***Watermarks* (2014.3.2 - 2014.10.5)**

Installation

Mixed media

76×56cm

2014

Edition: Unique piece



***Watermarks* (2014.3.2 - 2014.10.5) (detail)**

Installation

Mixed media

76×56cm

2014

Incorporating flat panels of transparent glass into the paint mixture, the correspondence between dimension and duration take on a more prominent role. With a form of experimentation occupying months and years to bear fruit, Wu Hao has become adept at approximating time and dimension to probe further the vocabulary of abstract painting – an increased level of control, paradoxically giving rise to further nuances of unpredictability.



***Watermarks* (2014.4.22 - 2014.10.5)**

Installation

Mixed media

76×56cm

2014

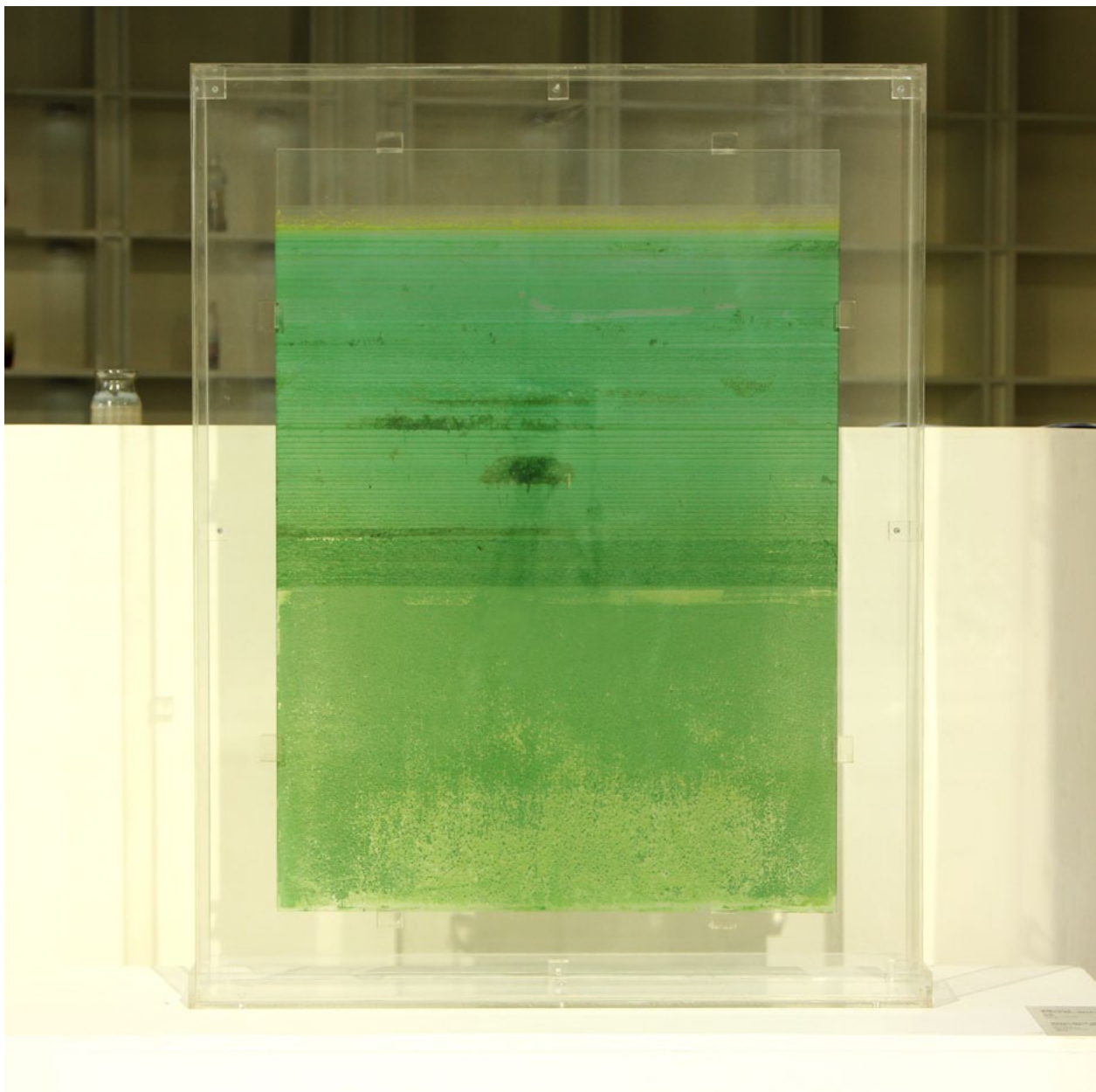
Edition: Unique piece

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Watermarks (2014.4.22 - 2014.10.5)
Paint Pigment on Glass Panel
76×56cm
2014

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水痕 NO.1 2013.7.23—2013.11.11

Water Marks NO.1 2013.7.23—2013.11.11

裝置

Installation

綜合材料

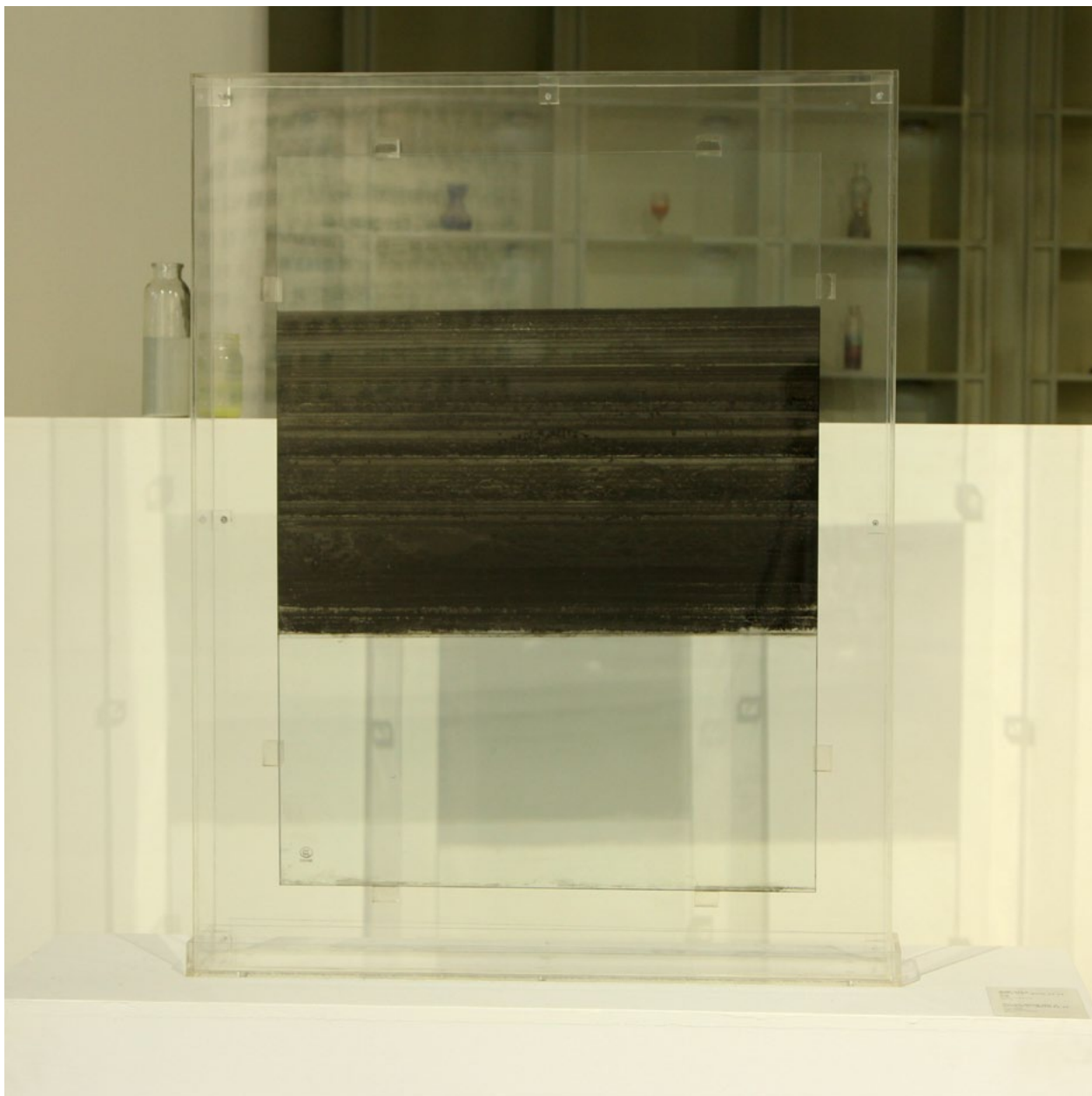
Mix media

56cm x 76cm

2013

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水痕 NO.2 2013.8.8—2013.11.11

Water Marks NO.2 2013.8.8—2013.11.11

裝置

Installation

綜合材料

Mix media

56cm x 76cm

2013

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The exhibition will also include a selection of figurative paintings Wu Hao continues to produce in parallel to his temporal paintings. Pulling images from screen-shoots taken from Cinema, they are portraits of archetypal female characters whose images are saturated by staged gestures, fake traumas, and enveloped with nostalgic undertones. These works offer a synthetic structure for feeling and intimacy, lending a more formalized interplay of gazes with viewers in the space.



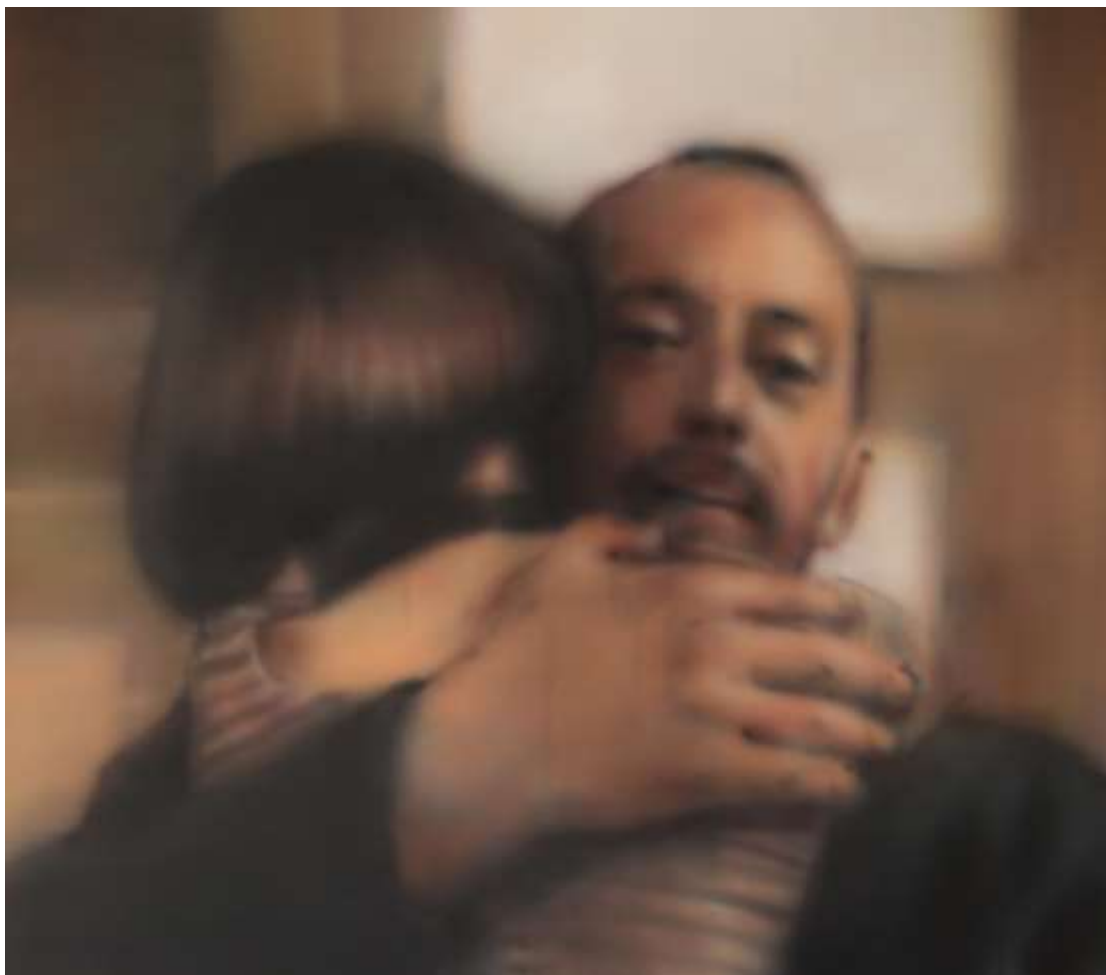
You Left 2

Acrylic on canvas

110x125cm

2011

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Goodbye

Acrylic on canvas

110x125cm

2011

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你走了
You Left
布面丙烯
Acrylic on Canves
150cmx200cm
2010

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我恨你

I Hate You

布面丙烯

Acrylic on Canves

200cm x 130cm

2009

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我可怜你
I Pity You
布面丙烯
Acrylic on Canves
130cmx200cm
2009

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I Pity You No.3

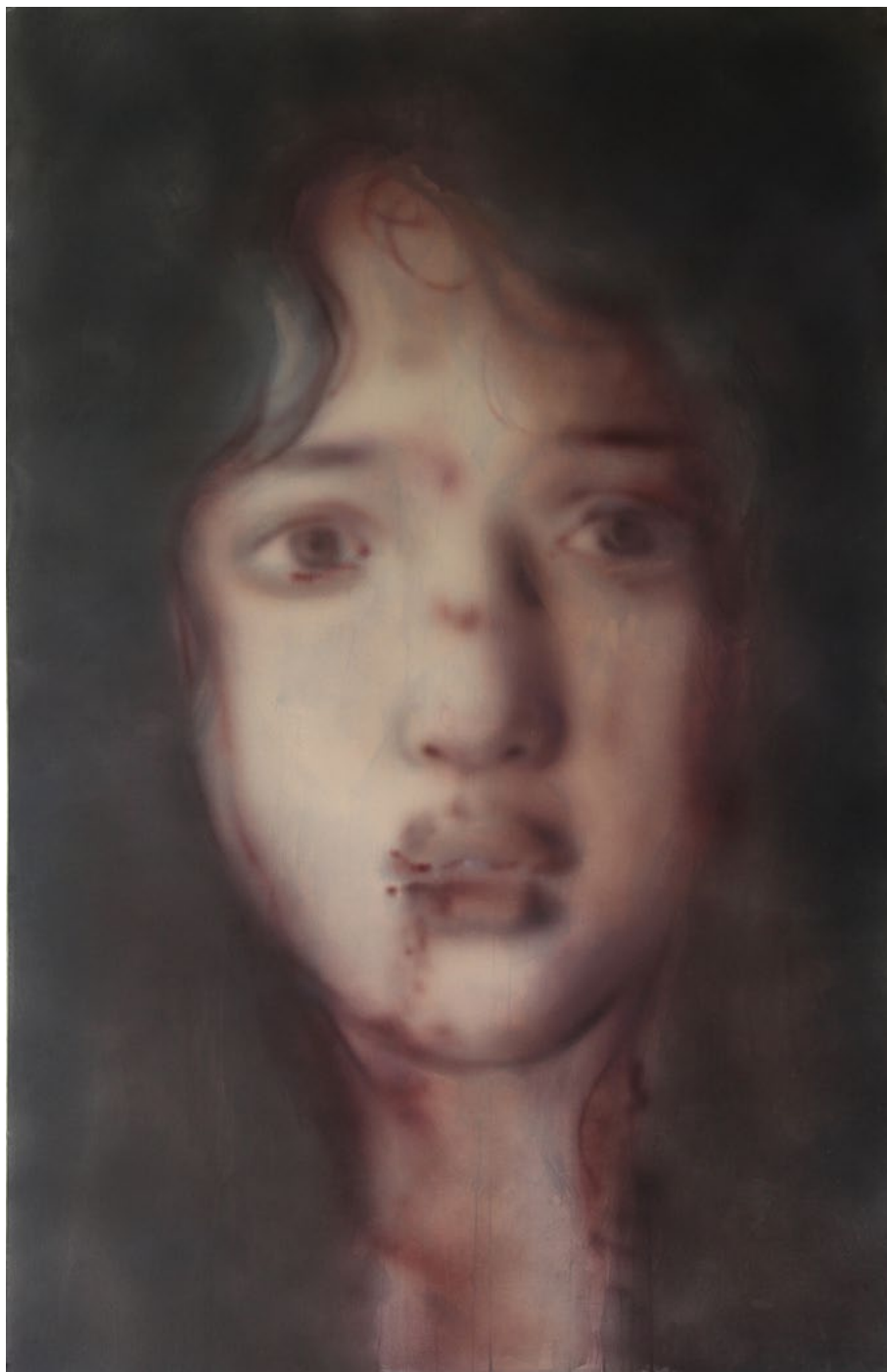
Acrylic on canvas

200×130cm

2014

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我可怜你 NO.2

I Pity You NO.2

布面丙烯

Acrylic on Canvas

130cmx200cm

2014

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Interview with Wu Hao

By Billy Tang (Curatorial Director of Magician Space)

September 2014

B: With the work Watermarks they have been executed in different locations such as Wuhan, Shanghai, and Hong Kong. Can you talk further about this concept?

W: That's right, these were made in different places. I organized workshops in these cities and told participants how to create the work - afterwards collecting the results. This is a public project and contributes to an iteration of the 'Watermarks' series. The idea in the beginning was to collect multiple 'watermarks', which felt to me like generally a collection of time. It also felt very self-satisfying. Later the work helped me to understand relationships from people-to-people and also the inter-connections between different cities – it suddenly turned into something very complex.

B: It's interesting that creation here centers on organizing workshops, which contrasts a mythical idea of the solitary painter.

W: Right, I have a lot of work completed outside the studio: the 'Watermarks' series has been created also in various temples; the series 'Rolling Gates' is a continual engagement with shop-fronts; and Aunt Li's potted plant is a work that connects to a cleaning lady. Certainly there is a deliberate level of organization and I like seeing where these differences lay. In fact, the Watermarks Project in and of itself is not as important as the attention to one's experience surrounding the work. For example in relationship with the participants, especially in Wuhan, they were mostly close friends. This grounded the work in a reality that is completely my own – it gives you a way to truly understand me without necessarily knowing the relationship between these people and me. I regularly tell people these stories when I am describing a particular project, of the melancholic things or things unsaid that are then forgotten. With the resulting work of the Watermarks Project created from friends in Wuhan, they really did have the ability to evoke their personality and differences. With the collection made in Shanghai, the emotional texture wasn't as much. Perhaps this is because Shanghai is an open city, it's a city that absorbs a lot of things, just like the watermarks. Hong Kong was completely different; they assert things more boldly in some ways. Afterwards, with the collection in Hong Kong – the participants took a lot of these objects away for themselves. The collaboration with these particular participants were more intense, but there was less feeling absorbed into the work – maybe it has something to do with today and the economic situation there. With recent events like 'Central Occupation', perhaps before I would think this type of event would be impossible there, but now after this project it seems like something entirely conceivable.

B: Similarly in the series 'Flood Marks', I was wondering specifically how paint is applied and allowed to react with things like temperature, humidity and time.

W: Flood Marks is also very complex. In the beginning, 'Flood Marks' wasn't actually the title for the work. For example one quantity of water to create the watermarks for this particular work requires eight months. For example, if the work was to begin in January last year to August, I would title name of the piece as 'Water Mark Work, 2013.1.8 – 2013.9.8, Wuhan'. With this title you can get a sense of time recorded, one would hope that the audience could see the existence of time through this work. Flood Marks is also not simply a reaction to paint, temperature, and humidity. The basic process and the intuitive response to the question is - the lower the temperature, the more concentrated the color, which means the pigment will be more distinct. The watermarks also embody something much more, for example I have been influenced a lot by religion. Everyday when I observe the watermarks, there is always an observable change and transformation. Generally speaking, the entire city somehow influences the work.

B: With Watermarks, the abstraction is unfolded through layers of physical residue leaving these visual coincidences and patterns. So there is a lot of information internalized within the painting, pointing to physical ways of seeing through patterns, and marks that decay or accumulate in time. I was wondering if this perhaps is a view to how you see painting in general?

W: What you said about information accumulating behind watermarks is also at the center of all my paintings: all the expressions from these figurative female paintings are all from moments of distress. I always feel that moments of distress give to people an enduring sense of beauty – there is perhaps a religious undercurrent to this – there are also influences from Japanese culture. I regularly gaze at my paintings for a long duration of time, as well as the watermarks too. They are like eternal moments or passages of time.

B: There are also varying degrees of turns from direct representation in your work, particular in the ways you devolve the level of decision-making and control to become more inclusive of ephemeral influences.

W: Right, lowering the influence of control and pre-determined ideas enables the effect of the moment to become more prominent. But actually in the new group of watermarks I am currently working on, I am increasing the level of subjective control I have on the watermarks. But this control always exceeds my expectations; the results are always a pleasant surprise to me. I really have no way of interfering with the final form of the work - the work naturally completes itself. Going forward I will be able to increase the level of control, try to push the level of control further, making the results even more unpredictable. From now on, there is a possibility I completely will have no control whatsoever.

B: Connected to this, how much then of your life and the world around goes into the work. Are there social concerns you have or is there a dialogue with the history of the medium – for example any direct influences from other painters?

W: Generally speaking my works are intimately connected to my life. In the recent work, for example 'Rolling Gate' and 'Aunt Li's Potted Plants', but also 'Water Marks' they all focus on social questions, but this kind of focus is derived from my immediate experience in life. There are many painters who have influenced me. Recently a big influence has been Rothko, his work can give me an experience. No matter whether it is my oil painting or the watermarks, this is a kind of experience I want to convey across to other people through my work. Classical sensibilities also have influenced my painting too.

B: How do you normally plan out each series of painting and the processes leading to a new idea for work?

W: I primarily work from my own intuitive feelings when thinking about work. In the early canvas works you can say they completely emerged from bursts of my own subjective emotions. Going to the current installations, they are also following a path of inquiry through my own feelings, the only thing is that the methods have changed – in this way I am expressing things in a clearer way perhaps. So during the making work, I first ask myself whether the piece is about something specific to itself, following on I begin to think about other meaning connected to it. A lot of new ideas of work originate from feelings of the moment. Because it is something very sensitive – you can focus on the extreme minutiae of changes – it is a feeling that is regularly there and from which I am able to make records of. I often go through long periods of contemplation about work before I finally decide whether it is ok to proceed on with production.

B: Is there a particular way of determining how scale appears in the paintings?

W: I haven't thought about this in a deliberate way. My early paintings were normally 200cm x 130 cm, this dimension was very much one that enabled me to express my feelings – and so after they were mainly produced to this size. The dimensions of Water Marks are normally decided in consideration according to the time I want to follow in making the work. If I want to make a watermark that evaporates after a decade, I would probably need one around five meters.

B: With the portraits you source from cinematic images. Can you talk about how this culture connects to the act of painting - there is a very subtle intimacy, almost exuding the reverence of a fan in some of the works. This is in stark contrast to works in other series. Unmistakably there is a visible style or signature – the idiosyncratic gesture of lines around the faces, the specific uses of color, and cropping etc. Can talk about this approach in relation to how they work with or against your other series?

W: With the paintings created from screenshots, there isn't a particularly specific relationship between its culture and painting. Of course that is to say there is a connection as it emerges from a particular passion for cinema. I also wouldn't say its anything like the adoration of a fan. Rather there is a kind of infatuation; a momentary obsessive feeling that is disturbing. All the figurative work from cinema has this image of infatuation. The method of painting is also not so important, the most important element is the state I am in while painting – I have to completely bring into the work all my feelings. The line and color is secondary - how a lot of my work becomes resolved is always different. But if you look at the work, you can see clearly it is my work – because the feeling there is something constant.

B: Rolling Gate a work that doesn't appear to contain any obvious mark instigated by you. But like the dynamics creating Water Marks, it somehow creates itself - what are the differences? Can you talk a bit more about Rolling Gate and what it means to you as an object and as an artwork? Do you see these objects as beautiful, melancholic, or banal?

W: Actually there is a brush mark on the piece, which is my signature on the work. The other works of mine are unsigned - only with *Rolling Gate* has my sign on it. There were originally three relationships connecting the work *Rolling Gate*, there is the owner of the house, then the advertisers who stamp contact numbers, then the people working for city authorities charged with beautifying the city - my signature to the work adds a fourth relationship. These complex and contradictory relationships form an abstract image and it becomes my work. *Rolling Gate* primarily involves my interest in society so with this particularly work there will not be too many pieces – its like once the question is solved I can move onto other things. With Watermarks there can be many changes because with different pre-determined decisions, the work can have many different possibilities. It's not limited to something solely social or naturalistic – the most important issues are that Watermark continues to have a profound influence on me. I think the beauty in *Rolling Gate* is its melancholy, not matter whether it covered in advertising, or paint marks; these are all occurrences that happen at night or in the early morning - processes that are invisible in the daytime. In the night, they appear in a moment to leave a trace with no conception to paint – it's only because of their work that there is a lot of power left in their traces and with that also a lot of pathos.



Wu Hao

1985 Born in Wuhan, Hubei Province
2005 Graduated from Jiangnan University
Currently lives and works in Wuhan, Hubei

Solo Exhibition

2014 “20140302-20141005”, Magician Space, Beijing, CN

Group Exhibition

2014 *Inside China – L’ Interieur du Geant*, Palais de Tokyo, FR
2013 *The collaborative exhibition of K11 artists*, Wuhan/Shanghai/Hong Kong, CN
 Free Activities – The Young Artist Exhibition, Fine Arts Literature Document, Wuhan, CN
2012 *Our Land Our People*, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, CN
2011 *Representationalism and Expression – Wuhan Fine Art Academy Exhibition*, National Art
 Museum of China, Beijing, CN
 Impression of Wuhan Century Old Houses, Wuhan, CN
2010 *Italian Embassy Art Exhibition*, Tianjin, CN
 “1+1” Contemporary Hubei Fine Art Exhibition, Wuhan, CN
 Links of Value – Canton-Wuhan Art Exhibition, Shenzhen, CN
2009 *Wuhan Art Annual Exhibition*, Wuhan, CN
 Hubei Painting Institute Art Exhibition, Wuhan, CN
 The 11th National Art Exhibition, Wuhan, CN
 Hubei Fine Art Exhibition, Wuhan, CN
 Hubei College Art Exhibition, Wuhan, CN