

Chen Danqing : Step Back 1968 – 2019

Curator: Cui Cancan

Date: 2 Nov - 28 Dec, 2019

Location: Tang Contemporary Art Beijing 1st&2nd Space

Tang Contemporary Art proud to present the biggest solo exhibition by artist Chen Danqing 'Step Back 1968 - 2019' occupying both our Beijing spaces from 2 Nov to 28 Dec, 2019.



Curated by Cui Cancan. In riotous profusion of splendid paintings spanning over 50 years, the exhibition will feature 9 sections celebrating the abundant creative output by Chen Danqing, theming Soviet-Union Realism, Tibetan Series, Copying the Historical Paintings, Catalogues and Literatures, Sketches, Fashion Models, Workers and Farmers, Still Life, Variations of Self-portraiture.



The title "Regression" comes from Chen Danqing's book *A Collection of Regressions*, and it is the primary narrative thread for the exhibition. Advancement and regression among the series serves as both an assumption and a metaphor for re-examining the changes in Chen's paintings from 1968 to the present.

The exhibition is divided into several parts, beginning with the exercises of his youth. That section showcases Chen Danqing's imitations of reproductions of European paintings in a loft in Shanghai. In the 1970s, Chen was a sent-down youth, and he made many life drawings and illustrations. It wasn't until *Tears Sprinkled Over a Bumper Crop* that his vision of Soviet painting allowed him to shake off the dogma of the Cultural Revolution. In 1980, with the single-minded devotion and kindness of *Tibetan Series*, he washed away that second-hand Soviet influence, and his art once again returned to movements of life, marking a symbolic change in Chinese art history.

The next year, Chen Danqing went to New York. Broadening his horizons made him abandon his biases, and through imitation, he had a true experience of Western painting. In 1997, Chen began his new catalog series, returning to many years of imitation and realism. These works and his latest figure paintings are placed together. Politics, society, and stylistic concerns retreated from his work, along with Soviet, French, and classical painting techniques. Chen made the shift from a Cultural Revolution painter to an individual painter.

In this long process, we can see paintings, but we can also see the changes in the artist and his paintings as circumstances changed. In the end, when describing Chen Danqing, there has always been progression and regression. Revealing these changes and discussing these themes were the goal of curating this exhibition.

In Chen Danqing's fifty-year artistic career, regression has had multiple meanings. On the one hand, it is a positive freedom that points to the active choices made in a personal mode of creation, showing what he continued and what he abandoned. Behind these choices, the artist actively responds to changes in his times and himself. On the other hand, this is also a negative freedom. Within the circumstances of painting today and a past that de-emphasized personal achievement, his art has returned to its early state. In several of Chen's works from 1968, he did not have a clear style and he wasn't preaching anything; they were just a young person's first interests and passions. Today in particular, discussing progression and regression, together with these two types of freedom, seems particularly important.