

Beauty Without Beards: Ren Hang Memorial Solo Exhibition

July 8th – August 26th, 2017

Media Preview: 15:00-16:00, July 8th, 2017

Public Opening: 16:00-20:00, July 8th, 2017

Modern Art Base and KWM artcenter are pleased to announce a solo exhibition of the Chinese photographer Ren Hang – ‘Beauty without Beards’ – the first memorial solo exhibition since his death in February. The exhibition will be held from July 8th to August 26th 2017, at Modern Art Base.

The Chinese translation of the title ‘Beauty Without Beards’ is ‘*Wu Xu Zhi Mei*’. ‘*Wu Xu*’ has two meanings. First, it literally means ‘without beards’. The Ancient Greeks were great admirers of the beauty of the human body and for them, the most beautiful living form of existence was the young man before he began puberty or could grow facial hair. An example of this, much appreciated by Ren Hang, is the 5th century B.C. Greek sculptor Polykeitos’s ‘Doryphorus’ (the Spear-Carrier). It is not only an epic sculpture of a beautiful youth in the ancient Greek tradition, but also exemplifies his aesthetic theories of the mathematical bases of artistic perfection, perfect proportions and muscular tone. The second meaning is ‘unnecessary’. Greek body aesthetics is not necessarily experienced or natural in our contemporary context. The ‘unnecessary’ or ‘unusual’ feeling caused by this body idealisation positions us on the other side of the social norm or the quotidian, and exposes us to an often hidden landscape.

The exhibition comprises of 19 photographic works. In these precious works, the bodies of young men without beards showcase the most innate beauty of youthful life. Ren Hang was interested in photographing nudity. Not only does it best present bodily beauty, but also reveals human fragility and the truest moment of existence. Ren Hang once said: ‘Body is body; it is turned into something else by any attachment. I don’t care about the models’ sex when I’m taking pictures, man or woman...it makes no difference to me.’ Ren Hang’s observation of the body is devoid of the ordinary social discourse, and consequently lend the nudes in his works an easy and natural charm.

Ren Hang’s youthful subjects attract in two particular ways: through the beauty of exuberance and through the beauty of abstraction. The bodies in his works are naked, alive, tactile and desirable; at the same time, they are also compositions, gestures, arrangements and forms. The young males in his works are wild animals or plants when positioned in a deserted natural scene, but they change into brush strokes or artisanal materials when they are twisted in front of a white wall in an internal setting. When you examine the photos as portraiture, you still receive the psychological information and the poignance of desire but enter the arena of fantasy. The attraction of the young masculine bodies lie in their ability to appear both immature and prime simultaneously. They are at their peak of physical energy and youthful narcissistic pondering.

Ren Hang left us at a time when his career had just taken off. His works retain all the exploration of immaturity and curiosity, which wholeheartedly justifies all our attention. Since Ren Hang’s death on the 24th February 2017 King Woods and Malleson law firm and Beijing Fang Zheng Notary Office have been working very closely with the parents of the deceased, on their request, regarding their son’s legacy. KWM has aided with the legal authentication of the rights of succession. Every work in this exhibition was printed by the artist himself. They are legally, according to the announcement of the mother of the artist, the last editions of the images that will ever be printed. This exhibition bears witness to Ren Hang’s instinctive talent and his dedication to the photographic medium.

As one of the most promising photographers worldwide, Ren Hang’s decease constitutes a great loss for the contemporary art world. We hold the sincere wish to invite friends to come together in memory of him and in honour of his contribution to photography.

ABOUT MODERN ART BASE

Located in the Bridge 8 Creative Park complex on Jianguo Road in downtown Shanghai, the space presents a regular program of independent exhibitions with a particular focus on photography and lens-based media. Offering a professional space for the creative possibilities explored in Modern Media’s art publications, Modern Art Base produces newly commissioned projects with artists, partners with international galleries and nonprofit art spaces, and publishes catalogues, photo-books, and artist books based on its internal program of aesthetic research. In Hong Kong, a sister space attached to Modern Media Group’s headquarters in the art district of Wong Chuk Hang focuses on showcasing thematic selections from the collection and special artist commissions.

ABOUT KWM ARTCENTER

The KWM artcenter opened on 20th October 2016. It is located on the second floor of the WFC center CBD in Beijing. The new art center is supported by the law firm King & Wood Mallesons and an KWM artcenter affiliated private art fund. The KWM artcenter has over 700 sqm of exhibition space, including an exhibition space, a VIP room and an educational space. It will be used to present and promote artists both domestically and overseas. In particular, it will act as a rare art institution at the heart of the economic central area in Beijing. It will provide high-quality art educational activities and courses aimed to cultivate art lovers and collectors. It serves to improve the international influence of Chinese Art and become a powerful communicator of Chinese Contemporary Art.

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EXHIBITION SPACE INFO

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