

JAMES COHAN GALLERY

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SHI ZHIYING: *THE RELICS*

June 20 - July 26, 2013

Opening Reception Thursday, June 20, 6-8PM

James Cohan Gallery is pleased to present *The Relics*, Shi Zhiying's first exhibition in the United States, opening on Thursday, June 20th. **Shi Zhiying** has become well known in her native China for stark monochromatic paintings of uniform vistas — open water, Zen sand gardens, carpets of grass — that flood the viewer's field of vision. Her fluent observational

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painting embodies, and promotes, intense reflections on individuality and the passage of time. "Some things haven't changed, from the distant past all the way to the present and the future," the artist states. "They are things which everyone possesses." *The Relics* debuts large-scale paintings of decorative and religious relief carvings and intimate portraits of antique vessels.

The monumental paintings of eroded carved stone capture an immeasurably slow but consistent transfer between physical presence, flatness and nothingness. Inspired by the artist's travels in China, Cambodia and India, her chosen subjects have been softened by hands and the environment, and riven with the small surface imperfections of age. Carefully rendering these weathered reliefs, Shi's depictions of ancient artworks intimate the spirit of the imagery that has endured for hundreds of years.

A complementary suite of paintings depicting isolated historical vessels suggests a collective cultural worth and the way meaning resonates through time. Ritual objects for domestic use such as reliquary boxes, chalices and bowls captured in lush black and white, cease to hold their original practical meaning as one now encounters them: behind glass, as artifacts in museums. Viewed out of context and through a modern lens, these once every day, functional objects have new significance. No longer useful, they contain a vacancy charged with past and present—an experience Zhiying believes is shared. "I wish to face things quietly, attentively" the artist has stated, "I treat painting [and objects] sincerely; I am communicating with them..." Her paintings turn these vessels into small monuments — monuments to usefulness and its reverse, emptiness, as well as the humanity we breathe into the objects of our world.

Shi Zhiying (born in Shanghai, 1979) graduated from the Oil Painting Department, Shanghai University Fine Arts College. In 2009, the artist was the subject of a major solo exhibition entitled *From The Pacific Ocean to the High Seas* at the Ullens Center of Contemporary Art in Beijing. Her work has been featured in distinguished group exhibitions including *Reactivation*—the 9th Shanghai Biennale at the Shanghai Museum of Contemporary Art, *N Minutes Video Art Festival*, Shanghai, *Decade of the Rabbit*, White Rabbit Gallery, Sydney, and *DAS ICH IM ANDEREN*, Stiftung Mercator, Essen, in 2011; *Double Act – 2010 Chinese Contemporary Art Exhibition*, Red Town Warehouse, Shanghai, and *Centennial Celebration of Women in Art*, Shanghai Art Museum, in 2010; and in solo exhibitions at James Cohan Gallery, Shanghai, in 2012, and White Space, Beijing, in 2010 and 2013. She currently lives and works in Shanghai.