

TANG SHUO

The Narrators

PREVIEW: THURSDAY 6 JUNE (6-8PM)
EXHIBITION: 7 JUNE - 13 JULY 2024

There's a curious development happening in the ongoing narrative of Tang Shuo's work where the occupants of his former home Boulder Hill (or Da Shi Shan, 大石山) have all slowly morphed into variations of the artist himself. This seems symbolic, even melancholic, where an artist aspires to pave the lacuna between fact and memory and continues inserting himself into the role of the Chinese farmer, worker, neighbour or family member. "Some of these pieces reflect my own experiences, while others are narratives passed down to me from my parents or people still living in the area." This repetition of a single individual or identity throughout the works is something of a psychological trick; both enticing and confounding the viewer.

The Child Catching Butterflies clearly shows Tang as a grown man; *Weeder* presents the artist almost genuflected as if wounded, the work somehow reminiscent of Millet's 1857 Masterwork *The Gleaners*. But Tang's works are also strongly reminiscent of Mexican painter Diego Rivera – with their broad dark features and wide eyes – they seem to fit the archetype of the field worker or peasant. But by placing himself in each of these guises, Tang appears to ask us to find traces of ourselves within these (arche)types, just as he has.

In recent popular media, for instance, Charlie Kaufman's animated *Anomalisa* used a similar trick, wherein each character apart from the titular Lisa was voiced by David Thewlis. Something about underscoring or limiting the individuality of the characters asks viewers to immerse themselves in the narrative; question our own positioning to the works. By making himself ubiquitous, he paradoxically makes himself anonymous.

"I also seek to delve into the most secretive psychological aspects of these narratives, even if they may not be entirely factual. In this exhibition, I hope viewers can immerse themselves in the stories of Boulder Hill, experiencing the memories and emotions I have encountered. I aim for these artworks to evoke resonance and provoke contemplation on personal memories, hometown history, and human emotions."



A Family (2024)
Oil on linen, 190 x 180 cm

In *A Family*, Tang recounts the tragedy of a personal friend whose family was plagued by an illness that claimed the lives of the friend and those around him. Here, Tang depicts various stages of grief and mourning; from the leftmost figure pondering searching for hope; the central figure struck by the weight of mortality; and the rightmost figure plagued mentally by the ills of an irreversible illness.

In some respects, these works function as a *memento mori*, in which viewers are meant to internalize the powerful scenarios or messages incorporated herein to remind us of our limited time on earth. Tang says: "I want to contrast the different states of mind among these individuals, juxtaposing their suffering with ideas of innocence."

As we reflect on these works, their power seems to multiply. These are calming works teeming with staggering, quiet intensity, and Tang seems keen to remind us of those introspective moments within ourselves and with our loved ones. We are so thrilled to be exhibiting these new works by Tang for his inaugural solo exhibition.

TANG SHUO (b. 1987, Guilin, China) currently lives and works in London, UK. He graduated from Guangxi Arts University with a bachelor's degree in Mural Painting. After that he studied Experimental Art at Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA), Beijing.

Solo exhibitions include: *The Narrators*, BEERS London, London, UK (2024); *Shadow of Boulder Hill*, Fabienne Levy Gallery, Geneva (2023); *Shadow of Boulder Hill*, Fabienne Levy Gallery, Lasuanne (2023) and *Boulder Hill*, Ojiri Gallery, London (2023). Forthcoming solo exhibitions to be held at Steve Turner Gallery, Los Angeles, USA (2024) and König Galerie, Berlin, Germany (2025).

Group exhibitions include: *Family & Friends*, BEERS London, London (2023); *Patterns of Identity*, Prior Art Space, Barcelona, Spain (2022); *Wilderness of Being*, HdM Gallery, London, UK (2022); *Sync In Progress*, Tang Contemporary Art, Beijing, China (2022); *Null Protocol*, Func Gallery, Shanghai, China (2022); *Talking All Day*, Badre El Jundi Gallery, Madrid, Spain (2022); *Polychromy*, Actual Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon (2022); *Return To Flesh*, The Room London Gallery, London, UK (2022); *That Wilderness Within*, PRIOR Art Space, Barcelona, Spain (2022); *Identity*, Artistellar Gallery, London, UK (2022) and *paper*, Beers Gallery, London, UK (2022).

Art fairs include: *Untitled Art Fair Miami*, Steve Turner Gallery, USA (2024); *Art Paris*, HDM Gallery, Paris, France (2023); *Artgeneve*, Fabienne Levy Gallery, Geneva, Switzerland (2023) and *Asia Now*, HDM Gallery, Paris, France (2022).

