



CHINA  
2000  
FINE  
ART

**Shen Chen** was born in Shanghai, China, in 1955. He began his art education in high school and continued his training at Shanghai Art College (previously known as the Shanghai “5.7” Art School). He moved to Beijing after earning his BFA from the Shanghai Academy of Theater in 1982. In 1988, he came to the United States on a fellowship as artist in residence at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Later that year, he moved to New York upon receiving an exchange student fellowship from the Studio School of Painting and Sculpture. He continued his studies at Boston University on an MFA scholarship the following year. He has lived in New York since 1991.

In the 1980s, Shen Chen was one of China’s pioneers of Chinese abstract painting and experimental ink painting. He was an active member of “Art Salon” (an underground art movement). In 1978, he organized an experimental exhibition “Wild Rose” while he was still in college. Since then, he has shown his works at various art museums, including the Shanghai Art Museum and Ningbo Museum of Art. He held his first solo show in 1984 at the China Journalist Society in Beijing, and has continued showing his work in China and abroad at venues including the National Art Museum of China (NAMOC), Roma Academy of Fine Arts, Today Art Museum, Nantong Museum of Art, San Shang Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai University Museum, Queens Museum of Art, Zhendai Museum of Modern Art, Hexiangning Museum of Contemporary Art, Xi Hu Art Museum, Doulun Museum of Modern Art, Museum of Chinese in America, Singer Museum of Art, Bochum Museum, and Kunsthalle Recklinghausen.

The works of Shen Chen consist of fields of overlapping brushstrokes, mystical lines and patterns mostly in gray with foggy tones. A range of textures seems to float to the surface of the canvas, with marks that look more like rubbings, drawn lines, or wood-block prints, than brushstrokes. The lines or patterns are distant to each other in the depth beyond the flat surface, and are dissolved downward or upward into a transparent space that energizes the view. The other aspect that is his investigation of visual possibilities to express the eternity of the immaterial world of the inner mind as expressed in Zen Buddhism. While many artists explore the possibilities through fabricating pictorial effects, Shen Chen emphasizes his experience of Zen practice during the very process of painting. A number of his works were executed with brushes that he holds against large canvases laid flat on the floor of his studio. During painting, Shen holds a brush bound onto a wooden stick which he dips in acrylic colors and lays down onto the canvas on the floor where rich and subtle lines, shapes and colors are created through his painstaking repetition. This repetitive action is reminiscent of Zen Buddhists who perform the same practice day after day. The process of such boring and tedious practice is the very approach for the artist to realize the Zen state of mind in order to create the beauty and the mysterious power of Chinese ink painting with Western materials and formats.