

For Immediate Release

**HAILED AS A GREAT ARTIST OF OUR TIME, AWARD-WINNING INTER-DISCIPLINARY ARTIST
SHEN WEI OPENS FIRST MAJOR SOLO EXHIBITION AT ASIA SOCIETY HONG KONG CENTER**

(Hong Kong, March 19, 2016) Continuing its celebration of Asian art, Asia Society Hong Kong Center (ASHK) opens its second exhibition, *Shen Wei: Dance Strokes*, during the Hong Kong Arts Month, featuring internationally renowned Chinese-American choreographer and contemporary painter Shen Wei.

Installed as a site-specific exhibition, *Dance Strokes* is the first major solo exhibition of the artist's recent large-scale oil paintings. The works evoke ink play, space, and rolling forms suggestive of Chinese landscape painting traditions. The exhibition is accompanied by a series of specially choreographed outdoor dance performances on ASHK's rooftop spaces by Shen Wei Dance Arts.

"Last year we had over 120,000 visitors come to ASHK, and this year we will bring more interesting programs to the community. In an exciting 'first' for our Center, we will not only be presenting one of the great artists of our time, but also working with our architects Tod Williams and Billie Tsien to transform the Hong Kong Jockey Club Hall into an exhibition space, with dance performances at the Joseph Lau and Josephine Lau Roof Garden to reflect the multifaceted and experiential nature of Shen's work. The artist's paintings will be presented across multiple spaces, each a unique experience for art aficionados to enjoy," says S. Alice Mong, Executive Director of Asia Society Hong Kong Center.

Curatorial Advisor Alexandra Munroe adds: "Shen Wei is internationally acclaimed as a force in contemporary dance, but until recently his painting practice has gone virtually unnoticed. This show at Asia Society should catapult Shen Wei into a new orbit, and stimulate conversations about the potential of creative synergies between the arts."

Tod Williams and Billie Tsien, this time tasked with reimagining the HKJC Hall and outdoor spaces into the site for the exhibition continue, "One of the great pleasures of being architects is witnessing the way our buildings are transformed and enjoyed through use. It is doubly rewarding when a new use is found, when the vision of others – in this case, the Center, Shen Wei, and Alexandra Munroe – discover what we had not imagined."

Working alongside Williams and Tsien was Hong Kong architect and artist William Lim, who provided advice on the exhibition's design and production.

Shen first debuted in Hong Kong in 2006, with his dance performance *Rite of Spring* at the New Vision Arts Festival, alongside an exhibition of his Movement painting series at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. Now a decade later, he is back at ASHK, reintroduced to art lovers as a painter in *Dance Strokes* with his massive oil paintings taking center stage.

Led by Curatorial Advisor Alexandra Munroe and ASHK's Head of Gallery Dominique Chan, with assistant curator Joyce Wong, *Dance Strokes* will be showcased at ASHK from March 20 to April 4, 2016. For further details, please visit asiasociety.org/hong-kong/exhibitions/shen-wei-dance-strokes.

Since 2012, ASHK has gained a solid reputation as a leading arts and culture institution in Hong Kong. World-class exhibitions that it hosted, such as *Light and Shadows - Caravaggio • The Italian Baroque Master; It Begins with Metamorphosis: Xu Bing; Temple, Scrolls, and Divine Messengers: Archaeology of the Land of Israel in Roman Times; and Life is Only One: Yoshitomo Nara* have enriched the local art scene. Apart from exhibitions, it has also produced a comprehensive public art and cultural program aimed at promoting and nurturing Asia's emerging young talents and cultivating young people's interest in the arts.

This year, ASHK is celebrating its fourth year of moving in its permanent home in Admiralty. Exhibitions like *Dance Strokes* and *Shahzia Sikander: Apparatus of Power* not only allow the Center to advance its mission, but also help the local community to appreciate the power of art.

Backgrounder

In a style dramatically different from his earlier paintings, Shen Wei's recent canvases are informed by years of practice and experimentation in the studio and inspired by his travels, life experiences, and growing self-awareness over the past 10 years.

Dance Strokes presents seven works. *Movement Number 1* through *12* were works featured in his 2006 exhibition at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre during the New Vision Arts Festival. These oil paintings features irregular, frenzied strokes in black, white, or red which takes over the entire canvas, inspired by music that Shen Wei listened to while painting.

Today, Shen Wei paints in silence. This change coincided with a decade of travel and learning. From 2005 to 2009, Shen Wei visited Tibet, Cambodia, and the Silk Road by himself. This resulted in his rediscovery of Asia after years of being immersed in Western culture. These years saw the creation of the *Re-Triptych* dance series. *Re-Part 1* (2006) centers on Tibet, *Re-Part 2* (2007) looks at Angkor Wat in Cambodia and *Re-Part 3* (2009) is about China's Silk Road. All three explore spirituality and the power of nature and the universe. As part of *Dance Strokes*, Shen Wei will stage performances in the outdoor spaces of ASHK which he considers a space between nature and the modern city. (A strictly limited number of media will be invited to view the dress rehearsal of these performances on-site.)

The highlight piece of this exhibition is *Untitled No. 31*, debuting for the first time at ASHK. Reminiscent of eccentric rock formations found in classical Suzhou gardens, the painting in gray,

burnt amber, tints of ivory, and white resembles the color of stone. With its jagged protrusions and different facets and hollow-like rock perforations, Shen's canvas literally breathes *qi* - the vital force that circulates in body and nature and in his dance works – which he captures during the painting process.

Much has been said about Shen Wei the dancer. But in *Dance Strokes*, people will see Shen's journey as a painter over the last 10 years. From the bold, all-encompassing brushstrokes in the earlier *Movement* paintings to the current more restrained works with its large amount of white space, Shen's paintings are self-expressions of his personal energy and spirit, and deal with the relationship between human spirit and nature. Viewers are also invited to explore the myriad of depicted shapes and forms in his paintings and to take an active part in viewing the paintings by filling-in-the-gaps with their own imagination.

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About Shen Wei

Choreographer, director, dancer, painter, and designer, Shen Wei is internationally renowned for the breadth and scope of his artistic vision. Lead choreographer for the Opening Ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Shen is the recipient of the MacArthur Fellowship (2016), the Helpmann Award, as well as the Algur H. Meadows Prize. Recently, his work as a visual artist and choreographer has entered into a new phase, with performative installations and site-specific works. As a visual artist and painter, Shen has had solo shows in the United States, and *Dance Strokes* is his first major solo exhibition in Hong Kong. Shen was born in China's Hunan province to Chinese opera professionals and currently resides in New York.

About Asia Society

Founded in 1956 by John D. Rockefeller III in New York, Asia Society is a leading educational organization dedicated to promoting mutual understanding and strengthening partnerships among peoples, leaders and institutions of Asia and the United States in a global context. Across the fields of arts, business, culture, education, and policy, Asia Society provides insight, generates ideas, and promotes collaboration to address present challenges and create a shared future. Asia Society is an international organization with 12 centers in the United States, Asia, and Europe: Hong Kong, Houston, Los Angeles, Manila, Mumbai, New York, San Francisco, Seoul, Shanghai, Sydney, Washington, D.C., and Zurich.

About Asia Society Hong Kong Center

As an affiliate of the Asia Society global network of 12 centers, Asia Society Hong Kong Center was established in 1990 by a group of Hong Kong community leaders, led by the late Sir Q.W. Lee, the honorary chairman of Hang Seng Bank. In February 2012, the Hong Kong Center established its permanent home in Admiralty, Hong Kong at the former explosives magazine compound of the old Victoria Barracks. The site is steeped in history, cultural significance, and natural beauty, and offers a broad range of programs in the form of lectures, performances, film screenings, and exhibitions to the community.

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