



THE MATTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE AMERICAS

Groundbreaking Photographs by Latin American Artists

FREE ADMISSION
FEB 7-APR 30

Cantor Arts Center
at Stanford University



Follow

NEWS & FEATURES

REVIEWS

MAGAZINE

NEWSLETTER

SUBSCRIBE

REVIEWS Dec 4, 2009

Song Kun

LOS ANGELES

at Walter M. Muir

by Annie Buckley

Follow

Art in America

@ArtinAmerica on Twitter



ADVERTISEMENT

Globalism is often invoked in the interest of cultural branding, rather than in the service of finding authentic common ground. Song Kun's personal and reflective work stands out against this tendency, particularly in the context of Western fascination with abundant contemporary Chinese art that trends more pop and political. The artist's paintings of life in modern China express a quieter vision than the one put forward in celebrated artworks by her compatriots (Zhang Huan's provocative performances or the dramatic pyrotechnics of Cai

[WANTED
DESIGN]

REGISTER NOW

MANHATTAN
MAY 19-22 2018

BROOKLYN
MAY 17-21 2018

INTERNATIONAL DESIGN EVENTS



Guo-Qiang, for example). While we in the West often hear about China's industrial development and growing urbanization, Song's paintings of familiar scenes emphasize universal experience and a sense of spiritual searching. Born in Inner Mongolia in 1977, Song lives and works in Beijing.

This exhibition of Song's new work included 20 oil paintings, each approximately 18 by 24 inches, the majority presented as diptychs. All the images are culled from the artist's memories and rendered in a subdued palette of gray and sepia tones. Together, the works form a poetic view of quotidian existence—a woman reads a letter by the light of an airplane window; a man hoes his garden in the hazy glow of dawn; a sheet of paper floats on the low ripples of a steel-gray pond—universally recognizable moments, perhaps, but not in the sense of a global capitalist marketplace. Viewed up close, the pictures blur into soft swaths of color and discrete markings that resemble drips or smudges; from afar, they resolve into crisp silhouettes.

Titled for and inspired by a poem, "Seeking the Recluse but Not Meeting," by Jia Dao (779-843 c.e.), this body of work has undertones of mysticism and dreaming, indicating a search for the spiritual within the everyday. This sense is amplified by Song's carefully calibrated balance of precise and loose brushwork in her portrayal of light. Whether a pale strip of sky lighting a monk's view of the mountains or the glowing spotlights emanating from a hazy stage where a woman performs under the scrutiny of a man in uniform, light is used to indicate a pervasive trancelike state—memory perhaps, or mystery—running through even the most prosaic events. Adding to the contemplative environment was an ethereal soundtrack by electronic artist Mu Lian; the CD played in the gallery and was included in the catalogue published with this exhibition.

Photo: Song Kun: Man on the Road in Sichuan, 2008, oil on linen, 173/4 by 233/4 inches; at Walter Maciel.



Newsletter

Receive insider information from the art world every week.

SUBSCRIBE

Art in America

[CONTACT US](#)

[ADVERTISE](#)

[TERMS OF USE](#)

[PRIVACY POLICY](#)

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

[BACK ISSUES](#)



© 2018 Art in America. All Rights Reserved.