
Luo Mingjun: Dust

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Artist Statement

Fragrance of the dust, the dust of a lifetime: In Chinese, "dust" represents the "past". Every moment we experience also instantly becomes a part of our history, leaving behind traces of memory including memories of smells that belong to the past.

I have been living abroad for quite some time, far away from my hometown and father and mother, which fills me with a deep attachment for Hunan the place of my birth. Looking at those familiar and unfamiliar people and street scenes in Hunan, I always experience for an instant the fragility of memory. After every visit and departure of mine, I cannot help recalling the scenes and smells left behind, but details always allude me, dissolving into the vast grey mater of one's many memories.

I would like to rouse some kind of feelings in the heart of the audience with my works, as we all try hard to recall long-forgotten faces, often to no avail, with a remaining feeling of helplessness. My solution is to willingly spend a great amount of time carefully putting down the faint traces of my memory on paper with my pencil.

Of course, I use photos to aid my work; most of these photos were taken by me. These images define the scenes that I have experienced. I don't depict memories purposely; rather, I attempt to express the feelings brought about by my recollections, in the way I know best.

In my oil paintings, I choose to use the canvases' original surface as the main subject of my composition, reversing the traditional process. The unpainted areas are my subject matter, and the background shadows remain like a photo negative, using thin layers of white paint I can highlight the areas of the canvas deliberately left empty. In this way, like the painting technique of leaving blankness in the traditional Chinese painting, with almost no paint in the darkest sections, I am can reveal the subtle passage of time, emotion and traces of life.