

# NICHOLAS METIVIER GALLERY

## LI SHAN: OUTSIDE THE WINDOW

PRESS RELEASE

April 6<sup>th</sup> – May 4<sup>th</sup>

Nicholas Metivier Gallery is excited to announce Li Shan's first exhibition, *Outside the Window*, at the gallery and in North America. The exhibition will open April 6<sup>th</sup> and run through May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Li Shan joined the *No Name Group*, an artist collective which operated in China between the 1950s and early 1980s, when she was just fourteen years old. *The No Name Group* believed in the idea of 'art for art's sake,' at a time when art was a tool of ideological propaganda, intertwined with official political discourse. The group defied the conventions of academic painting, and Li Shan preferred to paint spontaneously, depicting scenes and objects en-plein-air. She developed a practice of working on a small scale and often used a travelling painting box. In the late 1970s, when China embraced modernization and reform, members of the *No Name Group*, including Li Shan, moved into other fields. Then in 2005, at the age of 48, Li Shan rediscovered her love of painting and found that, "the long-forgotten elements of painting had been integrated into [her] body, and formed a new style of painting". Now, as an independent creator, Li Shan feels more at ease and liberated.

Outside of painting, Li Shan is passionate about outdoor activities such as overseas travelling, hiking, and snowboarding, and has travelled to Canada, England, Scandinavia, Switzerland, and Nepal, using her paintings as a journal to record her journeys. In *Outside the Window*, Li Shan presents a series of landscapes from 2014 to the present, many of which are based on the places she has visited. Li Shan admits that the concentration and serenity she enjoys when creating her artwork directly contrasts the outgoing and adventurous personality she displays in her daily life. Li Shan's work bears similarity with the work of Milton Avery in its harmonious portrayal of the natural landscape and soft colour palette. Whether it is the wilderness or a beachside road, the charm with which Li Shan depicts her idyllic vistas allow viewers to imagine the artist directly in front of her subjects; we can trace the movements of her hand on paper through her use of oil sticks. Li Shan pours her love for beauty and life onto the canvas, imbuing them with a brightness and warmth.

### *The No Name Group*

The No Name Group, also known as The Wuming Painting Collective, was the first in-the-wild painting society in Chinese contemporary art, a term coined by Chinese artist and scholar GAO Minglu. The group was mainly active from the late 1950s to the early 1980s. During this time,

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China was in the throes of the Cultural Revolution; the socio-economic situation was dire, economic inequality was high, and everything outside of Cultural Revolution Art was suppressed. In the face of this repressive, the artists of the No Name Group continued to gather and sketch outdoors in the far suburbs of Beijing, evading severe blockades and censorship. Their subscription to the pure artistic idea of "art for art's sake" evolved into a kind of avant-garde modernity that rejected political pandering in an era of extremes.