

Press Release

Exhibition: Varvara Shavrova 'Windows on the Hutong'
Opening: Wednesday 12th January 2011 6 – 9 pm
Exhibition dates: 13th January to 12th February 2011

Patrick Heide Contemporary Art is delighted to present a solo exhibition with new works by Russian-born and Beijing and Ireland-based artist Varvara Shavrova.

After over 5 years in Beijing Shavrova returns to London with her first solo presentation in the gallery. The London exhibition is mainly dedicated to one of Shavrova's last projects, 'Windows on the Hutong' and will feature a selection of photo-sound light boxes alongside a large site-specific installation. 'Windows on the Hutong' was presented for the first time in Beijing last March in cooperation with Pekin Fine Arts and supported by the Embassy of Ireland.

The photography series was made in response to the rapidly changing traditional hutong neighbourhoods of Beijing, areas that have been largely demolished with its residents evicted and dispersed over the past years. The intense modernization process Beijing is undergoing has seriously jeopardized most aspects of Chinese cultural history. In particular, following the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the number of Beijing hutongs, alleys formed by lines of siheyuan, traditional courtyard residences, has dropped dramatically as they are torn down to make way for new roads, apartment buildings and real estate speculation.

Intensified by the sound installed directly next to the images, Shavrova's light boxes offer a glimpse of Beijing hutong's daily life, allowing a nostalgic and intimate insight into a vanishing traditional culture while preserving them over time.

Most of the images and sounds were recorded on October 1st 2009 in the hutong neighbourhood where the artist lived herself, on the date when the whole of China celebrated the 60th Anniversary of the foundation of the People's Republic.

Shavrova has made a number of projects while living in Beijing about the capitalization and westernization of Chinese culture. Amongst the projects was "Portraits and Still Lives", a documentation and mixed media installation about a specific hutong area, which Shavrova had visited regularly and documented in much detail. A London version with local furniture and other apartment interiors packed up into demolition netting will be presented at the opening, in good parts outside the gallery as a vanishing social sculpture and 'take away' art installation.

Varvara Shavrova was born in Russia and studied at the Polygraphic Institute in Moscow. She left her hometown in 1989 and since then lived in the UK and Ireland. Shavrova spent the past 5 and a half years living and working in Beijing, and has recently moved to Dublin, where she is currently living, and sharing her studio time between Broadstone Studios in central Dublin and her own studio space in the village of Ballycastle in Co. Mayo, in the West of Ireland.

Shavrova's "Borders" and "Untouched" solo projects presentations in Beijing, Shanghai and Galway Arts Festival received great critical acclaim. Whilst in China, Shavrova originated and curated "Map Games: Dynamics of Change", an ambitious art and architecture project involving specially commissioned projects by 22 Chinese and international artists and architects. Shavrova received numerous international awards and fellowships including the Culture Ireland Grant (2008, 2007), the Arts Council Grant (2001), the Ballinglen Arts Foundation Fellowships (1999-2003) and the Prince's Trust Award (1994). She has exhibited widely in Ireland, Britain, Germany, Russia and China, where her work features in many corporate and private collections.

Shavrova's most recent project includes a film and a video and photography installation involving live performance with Peking Opera actors. The project premier in Europe is scheduled for 2011.

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