

**SHEN**

**WEI**<sub>IN</sub>

**BLACK, WHITE  
AND GRAY**

Your Guide to Choreographer, Shen Wei's Art  
Basel Exhibit

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By Hans Morgenstern



When Art Basel comes to Miami, every arts organization looks to put their best foot forward. You need something special for this week, and MDC Live Arts and the MDC Museum of Art + Design have joined forces to bring a true star in the contemporary art scene to Miami. Multi-hyphenate Shen Wei will bring a unique, brand new multi-disciplinary work to Miami, “Shen Wei – In Black, White and Gray,” which combines his talents like no other work in his oeuvre.

Also, see: [Museum Basel: Your Miami Art Week Museum Guide](#)

[Shen Wei](#) is a choreographer, director, dancer, painter and designer best known for some of the most memorable bits of choreography at the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony. He’s also a MacArthur Genius grant winner. Beginning this Friday, December 5, his Shen Wei Dance Arts group will begin a series of dance performances inside the Freedom Tower in Downtown Miami among large-scale paintings by Wei.

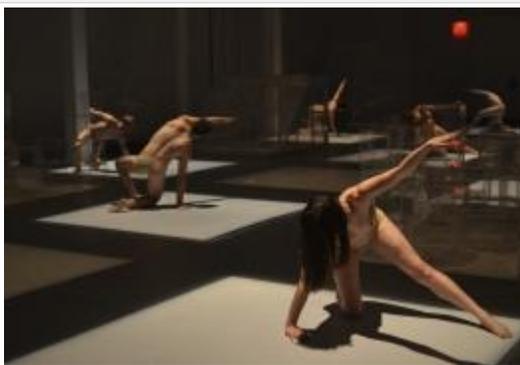


This marks the first time that this highly-regarded artist blends his painting and choreography in such a manner. Shen has collaborated with visual artists in the past with choreography and his has also choreographed works with his own video, but this is the first time he uses his own paintings alongside his choreography.

“This is the first time that he marries the two in this way,” notes Kathryn Garcia, executive director of MDC Live Arts, “that he has a full-on exhibition of his paintings with dance in the space.”

The paintings, which are large in scale, including one as large as 20 by 30 feet, will first be unveiled with the performances that will unfold on the floor of the gallery among the paintings. There will be no benches or chairs. This is an experience of painting and dance and includes the audience. It’s about the spectator walking through and among the art of dance and painting. “There’s no definition or any delineation between the audience, the work and the choreographed pieces,” explains Jeremy Mikolajczak, executive director of the MDC Museum of Art + Design . “They’re all sort of happening simultaneously. You’re able to travel through the space to be the viewer and sort of participate in the performance in itself.”

[click an image to expand photo gallery](#)



In the past, Shen's dance works that included painting have led to the production of paintings that have basically been the record of the dance, with dancers using ink on the dance floor, for instance. But in the case of "Shen Wei – In Black, White and Gray" the paintings will provide the foundation for the choreography that occurs throughout the art space. Mikolajczak says the work offers a special side of Shen.

“This is a very rare opportunity to experience the work, especially of the stature of an artist like Shen Wei,” notes Mikolajczak.

“He’s so technically advanced in the production aspect of his large, formal productions that this is really sort of a stripped down, raw version of the creative genius that he is and really understanding the fundamental basics of his artistry both from a formal sense of the painting but also for the choreography as well, which again will be sort of relating to that painting, that sort of raw visual, visceral experience.”



After the dancers are gone, the paintings will remain inside the Freedom Tower for a couple of months and will stand as significant works unto themselves. Garcia says, “I think the paintings are so strong visually, they’re so impactful, that even if you see those alone, it’s an extraordinary experience.”

Mikolajczak adds, “I think the paintings themselves really become kind of the record of movement and motion and really, relate to the choreography further ... The paintings are extremely vivid. They’re extremely active, even down to the stripping of the color to just black, white and gray.”



click an image to expand photo gallery





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“Shen Wei – In Black, White and Gray” opens December 5 with hour-long dance performances at 1 p.m. and 8 p.m. There are two more performances the following day at the same hours and one more at 1 p.m. on Sunday, December 7. Exhibit and performances are free and open to the public but you must RSVP. The paintings will remain in the space through February 1, 2015. For more information, click [here](#).

Hans Morgenstern is local art, film, and music critic in Miami who contributes to the Miami and Broward New Times, The Miami Herald and PureHoney, locally. Visit his film and music blog [here](#) or follow him on Twitter: [@HansMorgenstern](#)