

Zhou Zixi: Ensemble

Artist	Zhou Zixi
Opening	January 13, 2023 16:00 – 19:00
Exhibition Period	January 13 – March 5, 2023
Venue	MadeIn Gallery, No.1, -1F Sunken Garden, Lane 9 Qufu Road, Jing'an District, Shanghai

MadeIn Gallery is pleased to present artist Zhou Zixi's solo exhibition "Ensemble" on January 13, 2023. Zhou is a history painter, not commonly seen in our era, whose epic-like canvas brims with allegorical prowess. The exhibition features his "Debris Flows" series and landscape paintings, some of which are emotional, some sombre, and others acutely personal, all succumbing to and united by an introspective force typical of Chinese intellectuals. The artist's work unremittingly resonates with the polyphonic narrative of modern and contemporary Chinese history, while avoiding being reduced to a mere credit line and thus losing the subjectivity of painting as a medium.

The solo exhibition testifies to Zhou's commitment to art in the face of alternating social trends, as well as his sensitivity towards and compassion for the motifs throughout his practice. The works on view are rooted in his life and "memories" in Shanghai, including from his studio in Songjiang District and residency at MadeIn Art Museum, Chongming Island. They are a reminder that artists are inevitably an integral part of the world outside their studio. The lyricism and, occasionally, anguish inadvertently revealed in the paintings foreshadow the major changes about to befall him, telling of his struggles as an artist and father in an age of turmoil and transformation. Yet he refuses to be taken away by specific events, and instead strives to uphold the purity and mystery of the world on his canvas by willpower. The exhibition is in this sense an ensemble interwoven by art, era, history, and individual destiny.

The "Debris Flows" series involves different scenes/landscapes of the intrusion of private/public spaces, as symbols of human civilization, by mudslides in a fatalistic setting. Occupying the center of the picture, the mudslide renders the entire space into "ruins" while generating a dynamic posture signifying transformation. It is a beginning as much as an end, and is perfectly in line with Zhou's perception of reality: he mourns the destruction of civilized order, but does not dwell in it or stop forging ahead. His paintings therefore exude a deeply-felt sorrow without being mawkish.

Meanwhile, Zhou's landscape paintings are immersed in a subtle, idyllic tranquility. These monochromatic, lyrical landscapes urge us to "stop and listen!", rather than to simply look. Romantic and mysterious elements abound, which only become noticeable upon close inspection: for instance, despite the stormy sky, the stag standing on the branch seems unusually calm. Beneath the verdant branches, the artist adeptly guides our attention to the subjects placed in the lower third of the composition: people, animals, sculptures, etc., foregrounded to recount his exploration of the duality of life and death.

About Zhou Zixi

Born in 1970, Zhou Zixi currently lives and works in Shanghai. Since the beginning of his career in 1993, Zhou's brushstrokes have progressively evolved to depict national and population's trauma, collective memory and oblivion, alienation of individuals, as well as contemporary events and crises. Rooted in his studies of history and literature as well as a concern for human sufferings, the paintings create profound narratives of time and space, society and individual, politics and culture, disaster and daily life. A relation is then built among the works, which mutually complement and reflect one another while generating an epic-like quality. The artist sees his artistic career as an ideal architecture, which he hopes can penetrate the desolation and absurdity of the entire history of human civilization.

Recent solo exhibitions include: "Promised Land", Tsutaya Books, Shanghai (2021); "The Longing the Distant Worlds Aroused Spoke More to the Home Than to Anything Unknown", Powerlong Museum, Shanghai (2021); "Spring Outing in Xiaogang", MadeIn Gallery, Shanghai (2015); "One Afternoon...", ShanghART Gallery, Singapore (2014); "Late Spring and Early Summer", ShanghART Gallery, Beijing (2011); "China 1946-1949", ShanghART H-Space, Shanghai (2008); "Interiors", BüroFriedrich, Berlin, Germany (2006); "Happy Life", BizART, Shanghai (2005); "Sorry, I don't know", BizArt, Shanghai (2004). Recent group exhibitions include: "Advent: Inventing Landscape, Producing the Earth", Qianshao Contemporary Art Center, Shanghai (2019); "Side Lanes", ShanghART Gallery, Shanghai (2019); "Why Not Ask Again?", 11th Shanghai Biennale, PSA, Shanghai (2016); "China 8, Contemporary Art from China at the Rhine and Ruhr", Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg (2015); 1st Kyiv International Biennial of Contemporary Art, Kyiv (Kiev), Ukraine (2012); "China Power Station - Part 4", Pinacoteca Agnelli, Torino, Italy (2010); "China Power Station: Part II", Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, Norway (2007).