

SPURS GALLERY

Hou Zichao: Fruit Hunting

July 13–August 25, 2024

Gallery I & II | SPURS Gallery, D-06, 2 Jiuxianqiao RD. N, Chaoyang, Beijing

SPURS Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of Hou Zichao's new solo exhibition, "Fruit Hunting," on July 13, 2024, featuring 16 of his recent paintings and installations of paintings in both Gallery I & II and VIP space. Following his 2022 solo exhibition with the gallery, "Child in the Woods," where Hou took his reflections on the human-nature relationship as the starting point of his paintings, "Fruit Hunting" brings together images of fruits, raw meat, animals, and natural views to further develop such discussion, revealing the critical aspect of Hou's painting practice.

In Gallery I, the eponymous large-scale painting *Fruit Hunting* (2024) is placed at the visual center. On the canvas, nature is fundamentally complex and fluid, with floating blocks of color resembling not only fallen wild fruits seen in a lush forest but also flooding fragmented information found in modern societies. The painting serves as a marvelous example of the outcomes of Hou's ongoing experimentation with imagery of fruits. As civilization progresses, food begins to accumulate increasingly complex significations. Hou once mentioned his various encounters with this inevitable subject: He hiked for days in the deep mountains, picking wild fruits and fetching river water to supplement his provisions; he tried raw mutton from a herdsman; he found mango trees all over the streets and alleys during his first visit to the southern city Foshan as a northerner. It was the local governmental authorities who decided to plant the mangoes. However, due to pollution and sour taste of the variety, the mangoes are inedible, making the fallen ripe fruits a nuisance to pavement cleaning and maintenance. So the government now plans to replace these trees with some other species. Such experiences can be seen as snapshots of the intricate relationship between modern human lifestyles and natural laws. In his book *The Fruit Hunters: A Story of Nature, Adventure, Commerce, and Obsession*, Adam Leith Gollner examines the significant roles and mythical lores of fruits in various cultures, the "evolution" of fruits fueled by modern cultivation, the social class difference in fruit intake, the trade of fruits, as well as the capitalization and industrialization progress. These all provide rich interpretations of the fruits in Hou's paintings. "Painting food offers a wonderful opportunity," says the artist, "it is a great place to start representing our relationship with nature, familiar and concrete."

The title "Fruit Hunting" also indicates the actions of Hou's painting practice: seeking, tracking, selecting, devoting techniques and patience to find the result through the process. At the same time, the hunt for fruits can be recognized as one of the innovative parts of Hou's methodology. It captures the mechanism of the relationship between humans and nature, which further explores the mechanism of transmitting and perceiving image information. Hou's painting constructs familiar scenes that are yet imbued with a sense of unfamiliarity. The layers act as filters of information, allowing some to be revealed and others hidden. The use of painting layers and images precisely demonstrates the dialectical relationship between concealment and presentation. Just as John Berger says, "We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves." "Fruit Hunting" perhaps offers a way of seeing that allows us to consider where we are as individuals in modern society and our true relationship with the world around us.

The exhibition will be on view until August 25, 2024.

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About the artist

Hou Zichao (b. 1988, Shanxi, China) received his BA Honors degree from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in 2012 and his Master's degree from Chelsea College of Art and Design in 2013. He now lives and works in Beijing.

Hou Zichao's practice involves a variety of media, including painting and installation, which focuses on the ambivalent relationship between man and nature in the current cultural context. His pictorial language emphasizes the distance between artificial landscape and nature, and an ideal environment that hovers between the garden of tranquility and the wilderness of desire. In the confrontation between the electronic image viewing habits and the artist's painting behavior, a complex and personal expression between ancient divination and data algorithm is hidden—through the superimposition of pictorial layers and the extraction of information, a delicate balance between “chaotic” images and abstract intentions is achieved.

Hou Zichao has been the subject of solo exhibitions including “Fruit Hunting,” SPURS Gallery, Beijing (2024); “Fallen lush racing share,” Tara Downs, New York (2023); “Practice Land,” Cans Project, Taipei (2023); “Child in the Woods,” SPURS Gallery, Beijing (2022); “Food Food: Hou Zichao & Hilary Pecis” (two-person exhibition), SPURS Gallery, ART021, Shanghai (2021); “Everlasting,” Downs & Ross, New York (2021). Hou Zichao's works have been included in group exhibitions including “Semi-Manual Era,” Gravity Art Museum, Beijing (2024); “The Inner Side of the Wind,” Gallery Weekend Beijing 2024 Up&Coming Sector, Beijing (2024); “Weaving in Entanglement, Mending in Punctures,” 69 Art Campus, Beijing (2024); “Screen Depth: Digital innovation in painting,” Guangdong Contemporary Art Center, Guangzhou (2024); “Edges as the Center: Riverine Borders, Bridges and Memory Spaces between China, Mongolia, North Korea and Russia,” G Museum, Nanjing (2023); “Bordercrossing: Possibilities and Interactions,” Yuz Museum, Shanghai (2023); “Crossing Frontiers,” Nassima Landau, Tel Aviv (2023); “The Disconnected Generation,” Song Art Museum, Beijing (2022); “The Glass Bead Game”, MAMOTH, London (2021); “CLEAN,” SPURS Gallery, Beijing (2020); “LOVE LOVE LOVE: Intimate,” Today Art Museum, Beijing (2018); “Elite Young Artists Program,” Rightview Art Museum, Beijing; Guan Shanyue Art Museum, Shenzhen (2016).

Hou Zichao's works are in major collections worldwide, including Nassima Landau Foundation, Tel Aviv; Yuz Museum, Shanghai; Long Museum, Shanghai; Song Art Museum, Beijing; Aurora Museum, Shanghai; Zhuzhong Art Museum, Beijing; Tiantai Art Collection, Qingdao; AAC Foundation, Beijing; Hort Family Collection, New York; The Soil Collection, Beijing; Shenzhen Qianhai Taikang Hospital, Shenzhen.