

Zhu Jinshi

June 1 – July 7, 2012

Opening reception: Friday, June 1, 2012, 6 – 8pm

Blum & Poe is very pleased to present twenty years of painting by Beijing-based artist Zhu Jinshi. This marks Zhu Jinshi's first solo presentation in the United States, as well as his inaugural exhibition with Blum & Poe.

Zhu Jinshi's dynamic, nearly sculptural paintings avoid easy classification, defining themselves instead through an inherent physicality and visceral power. Zhu's innovative style of painting (the aggressive application of massive amounts of oil paint and the employment of spatulas and shovels as his primary painting tools) retains a strong historical link to traditional Chinese mark making, while simultaneously finding a place within the canon of western action painting. Dramatically ranging in scale and palette, several works on view span more than ten feet tall, while others find their rhythm on a more intimate scale, often as diptychs or triptychs. Zhu's unique painterly style, mastered over many years, results in heavily built up surfaces resembling lush colorful landscapes. Despite aggressive application, the paintings always find equilibrium. As evidenced by many of the paintings' titles, including *Gravity Balancing Violence*, Zhu retains a reverence for Buddhist principles and masterfully finds a place of calm amongst implied chaos.

Zhu Jinshi developed his painterly skill while an apprentice and without formal academic training. The beginning of his mature work coincided with the onset of the Cultural Revolution in China (1966 – 1976) and was initially difficult to categorize as it was neither government-subsidized propaganda, nor traditional Chinese art. In order to exhibit in an "official" capacity, Zhu joined the Stars (Xingxing), a group of Chinese artists formed in 1979 with the mission to challenge aesthetic conventions and to exhibit their work in public. The Stars, including Ai Weiwei and Ma Desheng, were granted a formal show at the National Gallery in Beijing in 1980. This exhibition was a monumental breakthrough in Chinese cultural expression, defining the individual as creator, and inaugurating the transformation of a new Chinese contemporary art. In 1981, the group disbanded and many of the artists left Beijing to work in Europe and the United States. Unlike many of his contemporaries, whose artwork was laden with politics and irony, Zhu's work maintained a balance of traditional form while pushing the boundaries of artistic expression.

Zhu Jinshi was born in Beijing, China in 1954, where he currently lives and works. Zhu has been honored with numerous solo exhibitions including *On the Road*, Prague City Museum, Czech Republic, 2002; *Tao of Rice Paper*, Vancouver Museum, Canada, 1997; *Fangzhen*, DAAD Gallery, Berlin, 1990. Recent group exhibitions include *China International Gallery Exposition*, Contrasts Gallery, Beijing, China, 2011; *Mind Space: Minimalism in Contrasts*, University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 2011; and *China Now – The Glamour in Reincarnation*, Sammlung Essl Museum, Vienna, 2006.