

ZHOU YILUN

Q.S.K.T.

March 6 - April 9, 2020

Galerie Peter Kilchmann is pleased to present the first solo exhibition at the gallery by the Chinese artist Zhou Yilun. He was born in Hangzhou, the capital of the Chinese province Zhejiang in 1983, where he studied and currently lives. Using a wide range of techniques such as painting, graffiti, the use of recycled packaging or discarded everyday materials, he creates complex paintings and objects/ sculptures which prompt the beholder to reflect on the values and claims to validity of our modern, globalised society. A new work group is on show, consisting of large-format paintings in acrylic and spray paint on canvas.

With his many-layered series Zhou Yilun examines the stereotypes of a popular culture that is continually reinventing itself, influenced by the daily news, politics and culture as well as by propaganda posters, entertainment programmes and social media. At the same time, from the perspective of a Chinese artist of the young generation, he breaks through the canon of Eurocentric art history and takes apart and parodies its iconography piece by piece. Individual subjects are carefully selected and extracted from their original context and deconstructed with overlays and various means of dissociation.

The title of the exhibition *Q.S.K.T.* is indicative of this technique. Concealed behind this combination of letters are the first letters of the Chinese mobile app transcribed into Pinyin, "Qing Song Kou Tu" (轻松抠图), which translated means "simply cut out". It is a picture editing app that the artist has installed on his phone and with which he regularly creates digital images which he then publishes on his WeChat Moments (in China similar to Instagram). As in his processed photo collages, the works in the exhibition are also about the fragmentation and questioning of already existing ideas and levels of meaning. Key scenes from world politics and culture are manipulated and set in a fictive, make-believe context. The artist finds an inexhaustible source for his inspiration in various mass media such as magazines, websites and television. The individual scenes in the various works, which obviously belong to very different situations, are overlaid many times on the two-dimensional paintings thus creating new readings. The titles of the individual works point to the same principle as the exhibition title by abbreviating their depicted subjects with their first letters.

The work 三个日落 *S.G.L.R. (Three Sunsets)*, suggests a relaxed scene in an idyllic holiday moment. Three apparently female figures stand with their backs turned to the beholder on a beach in front of a sea bathed in the deep-red glow of a sunset. Because of the warm, yellow light of the sun, which is setting three times simultaneously on the horizon, the figures can only be made out as dark shadows. Other human silhouettes can be seen swimming and paddling among the waves, while the scene is overlaid in the middle with a hovering jade pearl bracelet. The purple colouring is taken from traditional Japanese painting. Even if strongly abstracted, the scene brings to mind the advertising banner of a luxury brand. Bright, glittering particles on the surface of the sea underline this effect. However, any heroic, iconic or allegorical pretension is removed from the pictorial language of the original and transformed into a satire with absurd comedy.

The painting 红色鼻子 *H.S.B.Z. (Red Nose)* features a scene from the news, possibly an act of political violence: several people press another person to the floor. The scene is highlighted with spray paint in blue and red and its compositional arrangement is framed by a group of six red-nosed dwarves. They float through the picture like friendly ghosts. They are taken from the decoration of a children's playground in the artist's neighbourhood. An innocent pet dog observes the viewer from their midst.

In 马到成功 *M.D.C.G (Godspeed)* (see invitation card) the contours of two male portraits can be made out. The person on the right is white and wears a suit, possibly a western politician from the international Chinese news channels, but the features are blurred. The faces are painted over with six differently arranged dragon sculptures, in the style found on Chinese shopping websites. Individual, characteristic parts are veiled or covered with detailed depictions of cute pet dogs. The center was cut out and replaced with the detail of the white racing horse sculpture of a Mustang that originally belonged to the painting *B.S.Y.M.* Single blossoms are the remains of a Hawaiian flower wreath.

The work 三串手串 *S.C.S.C. (Three Bracelets)* refers to an image from the news and shows a blurred scene of a confrontation between demonstrators and the explosion-protected police during a parade. The three pearl bracelets floating in the air symbolize a mysterious power, generating calm and energy. Bracelets like these are very popular in China. The round pearls are usually made of gemstones or plants. Many young people in China earn their living by making and selling these pearl bracelets and the social media channels on smart phones are flooded with their various advertising images.

The outlines of three human figures can be seen in the background of 白色野马 *B.S.Y.M. (White Wild Horse)*. Their facial features and bodies are painted over with bold green and made unrecognizable. Only their sporty posture with one leg kneeling on the ground is clearly visible. It is a scene from the sports news. In the front appears the huge logo of an American Mustang sports car. The Mustang has always been a symbol of freedom. But only the head and tail of the white race horse are left. The center was cut out and replaced with the Hawaiian wreath of flowers that originally belonged to the painting *M.D.C.G.* In the middle of the flowers the head of a pink pet dog faces the observer.

The painting 爱心绿叶 *A.X.L.Y. (Leaf Heart)* shows the silhouettes of monochrome classical western sculptures in the background. Part of the scene is covered by details of the landscape of plants inspired by an image taken by the artist during a trip to Hawaii. As a third layer a centered formation of green leaves in the shape of a heart can be seen. The seemingly innocent eyes of a pet are watching the observer.

Characteristic to all of Zhou Yilun's paintings are the sharp brush stroke and the angular expressionistic elements that penetrate the delicately painted pastel tones and round, harmonious shapes. Intensive and almost dazzling colours merge into milky shades. The sculptural aesthetic achieved by the overlaying reinforces the digital 3D effect of the scenes. Like the endless flood of images on social media, the beholder is inundated, absorbed and prompted to think through the stories already begun about current trends, icons from sport and fashion, political tendencies as well as urban and technical developments.

In 2006 Zhou Yilun graduated in painting from the China Academy of Art, Hangzhou. Since 2006 his works have been presented in solo and group exhibitions at international institutions. Some of the most important exhibitions in recent years include: TANK, Shanghai, China (2019); Beijing Commune, 798 Art Factory, Beijing, China (2019, 2017); KWM artcenter, Beijing, China (2018); Nicodim Gallery Los Angeles, US (2019); Bucharest, Romania (2016); Tampa Museum of Art, Tampa, US; Platform China Contemporary Art Institute, Beijing; Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, US; and Oklahoma Museum of Art, Oklahoma (all 2015). Two monographic catalogues have been published in the context of his shows at Nicodim Gallery (2016) and Platform China Contemporary Art Institute (2015) and are available for sale in the gallery. Zhou Yilun is, in addition, the founder of the R3PM3 design label which produces clothing and furniture from old, everyday objects and fabrics, which he presented for the first time in 2015 at the Inna Art Space, Hangzhou. Due to the current circumstances the artist will unfortunately not be able to attend the show.

In conjunction to this, a solo exhibition of the swiss artist Andriu Deplazes will be shown.

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