

Vivien Zhang *Field Conditions*

30 April – 27 June 2026
Goethestraße 2/3, 10623 Berlin

Opening: Thursday, 30 April, 6 – 8pm



Vivien Zhang, *Tectonic Bloom*, 2026, photo: Jack Hems

Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin, is pleased to present *Field Conditions*, an exhibition of new paintings and works on paper by **Vivien Zhang**. This is the artist's inaugural exhibition with the gallery.

Interweaving personal and collective experience, Zhang engages with migration, technology and the natural world in her distinctive visual practice. Drawing on diverse source material, from world map projections and mathematical forms to the classification of plants and butterflies, Zhang challenges established modes of perception and interpretation within contemporary narratives and visual culture. Informed by her upbringing in China, Kenya and Thailand, as well as her shifting relationship to London where she lives and works, Zhang explores themes of identity, linguistics and the complexities of visual translation in her work, within the context of an increasingly globalised and digital world.

The exhibition title alludes to the term used to describe fluctuating circumstances that occur in real-world environments, as opposed to controlled or simulated ones. Drawing parallels with many of the central facets of Zhang's practice, *Field Conditions* thus probes the boundaries between reality and illusion, original and fake, analogue and digital, flatness and depth. In her body of flower-inspired paintings, Zhang presents large-scale, vibrant canvases which shift between representation and abstraction. Foregrounding the limitations of classification, Zhang references plant species with affixes such as *pseudo* or *affinis* – implying a fake or affiliated version of an original. Raising questions about authenticity and flawed attributions of values, Zhang considers the ways in which identities are forged. Her painting *Tectonic Bloom*, 2026, is based on a flower native to Southern China, whose local name translates to 'false-Sterculia'. The artist has only seen the flower in a mediated form: sent as a photograph from her mother, it becomes a symbol of motherland. Deconstructed petals in the work are rendered in broad washes of orange pigment. Shiny black seeds scatter across its surface, their meticulously painted shadows imbuing them with a three-dimensional quality.

Vibrating with a palpable tension between their source references and aesthetic forms, Zhang's works express a careful choreography of order and spontaneity. 'Once on the canvas,' the artist notes, 'it's more about arrangement, assemblage, how to create a rhythm, and how the eye travels when looking at the work.' Painted with oil and acrylic paint, the canvases are rich with texture: loose brushstrokes and drip-marks are met with thick oil paint. Often, the sequence of mark-making is reversed, disturbing

the natural reading of a foreground-background relationship. Composed in segments and facets, Zhang's built geographies emerge and recede with the illusion of depth.

In her butterfly paintings, Zhang engages with different butterfly species, exploring their innate characteristics and migration habits as an analogy for human behaviour. In two paintings titled *to slip between (Ithomia)*, 2026, the artist references the clearwing butterfly, or *ithomiini*, whose transparent wings are primed for camouflage and mimicry. Rendered over a geometric format, the butterfly silhouettes allude to the 'Butterfly' World Map projection. As opposed to the more traditional – and contested – Mercator projection, this method of representing the round globe as a flat diagram is known for its less biased representation of scale and landmass. Addressing upheld systems of information and social interactions, the works resonate with the artist's own experiences of migration and assimilation.

Zhang's works on paper present variations of her plant and butterfly compositions. On the brink of abstraction, the plant drawings depict loose petals which shift through bright orange to deep crimson. Suspended in space, they appear akin to calligraphy strokes. Sequins, held in place with specimen pins, disperse like seeds across their surface. In the butterfly maquettes, Zhang plays with perceptions of depth, creating real folds of paper for the wings, which are echoed in the larger paintings as *trompe l'oeil*. Stepping further into 'real' space, Zhang presents a three-dimensional painting formed from six irregularly shaped canvases: deconstructed and reassembled, its organic forms appear fluid and in flux. Rupturing established assumptions through a process of abstraction, fragmentation and recontextualisation, Zhang creates unexpected formal juxtapositions in which disparate worlds collide.

Vivien Zhang (b. 1990, Beijing) lives and works in London. The artist's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions in institutions including Aranya Art Center, Beidaihe (2025) and TANK Shanghai (2020); and group exhibitions at He Art Museum, Foshan; By Art Matters, Hangzhou (both 2025); Le Consortium, Dijon; Leeum Museum of Art, Seoul; Long Museum, Shanghai; K11 Art Foundation, Hong Kong (all 2024); CAPC Musée d'art Contemporain de Bordeaux; Song Art Museum, Beijing (both 2022); and Hayward Gallery, London (2021), among others. Zhang's work is in the collections of Arts Council Collection, London; Groeninghe Art Collection, Bruges; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; Inimá de Paula Museum, Belo Horizonte; Kistefos Museum, Jevnaker; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum Azman, Kuala Lumpur; Nanjo Art Museum, Okinawa; The Perimeter, London; Sammlung Goetz, Munich; Shah Garg Foundation, New York; and Tanoto Art Foundation, among others.

Further Exhibitions and Events

BERLIN

The Self Assessed
30 April – 30 May 2026
Potsdamer Straße 77–87
10785 Berlin

Darren Almond
Between the Lines
30 April – 30 May 2026
Bleibtreustraße 45
10623 Berlin

PARIS

Eddie Martinez
Purple Flopper
28 May – 1 August 2026
46 & 57, rue du Temple
75004 Paris

LONDON

Grace Weaver
Plaids
21 April – 28 May 2026
41 Dover Street
London W1S 4NS

MARFA

Rinus Van de Velde
The Dinner
24 May – 6 December 2026
1976 Antelope Hills Road
Marfa, Texas

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