

Johnen Galerie

Liu Ye

18 September - 2 November 2013

Opening: 18 September 2013, 6 - 9 pm

Liu Ye (born in 1964 in Beijing) is one of the most important Chinese painters of his generation. In contrast to his contemporaries, his atmospheric paintings are based mainly on his knowledge of the tradition of European painting from Romanticism through Biedermeier to Modernism. Therefore Liu Ye's visual cosmos is filled with protagonists of European cultural history: Hans-Christian Andersen, Piet Mondrian, Balthus, and again and again Miffy, a legendary figure from children's books, conceived by Dutchman Dick Bruna in 1955. His paintings form a unique synthesis of Chinese culture and European painting, weaving together fairytales, erotic fantasies, and an admiration of the purity of Bauhaus and De Stijl. But at the same time his paintings and their time-consuming process of creation remain always deeply connected to the notions of contemplation typical of Chinese painting. Abstract and figurative elements no longer seem like contradictory poles. Fairytale-like and seemingly idyllic depictions encounter motifs that only appear to be naïve. In some of his most recent paintings, for example, we see crayons and colouring sheets for children. This results in an ingenious play between a naïve subject and the subtly executed painting. And the two paintings in the exhibition that are devoted to the history of the Bauhaus style – a first for Liu Ye – oscillate between a monochrome plane and a three-dimensional object. His paintings derive their power and meaning from the tension of alleged opposites, which are brought into harmony. In this way, Liu Ye points to the Asian roots of his thinking as an artist.

This exhibition by Liu Ye, who studied at Hochschule der Künste in Berlin and the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam, presents new works, among them for the first time those devoted to Bauhaus. Liu Ye lives and works in Beijing.

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