

Press Release

Zhang Enli

29 May – 22 August 2026

Hauser & Wirth West Hollywood



Los Angeles... This May, Hauser & Wirth West Hollywood will present Zhang Enli's first West Coast solo exhibition, bringing together a new series of the artist's abstract portraits. While anchored in figuration and paired with descriptive titles, the works on view convey their subjects' essence via evocation rather than likeness, with Zhang Enli's increasingly loose brushwork proving abstraction's power to disclose information about the human condition.

Zhang Enli has used painting to document the more prosaic aspects of contemporary life—everyday objects, interiors and individuals—since his arrival on the Shanghai art scene in the 1990s. Over the past decade, his focus has moved from such figurative elements toward the abstract portraits that define his work today. The works in the exhibition mark a return of motifs from Zhang Enli's earlier still-life series—tubes, ropes and wires—now woven into enigmatic canvases that privilege neither object nor ground. The viewer's eye is directed less toward things than toward the ambient conditions that make them visible.

Zhang Enli's distinctive approach draws on both Eastern and Western painterly traditions. Fluid, gestural lines recall traditional Chinese brush painting while penciled grids, often left visible beneath thin washes of paint, point toward the Western penchant for squaring up. Working in translucent layers, he dilutes his medium until it is almost a glaze, leaving a visible trace of process on the surface. Paintings with titles such as 'Gallerist' (2024) and 'Psychologist' (2025) name their subjects without visually depicting them; through color, composition and mood, Zhang Enli registers what he saw or felt in the presence of the individuals depicted. As he has said, 'Painting is never an illustration of words. On the contrary, painters reveal the face of the world through painting. We don't need to reproduce the world, but to show something which is obscure and unclear.' Here, decades of technique and experience yield to the subconscious; inseparable from Zhang Enli's own memories and projections, the real and the imagined fused in each mark.



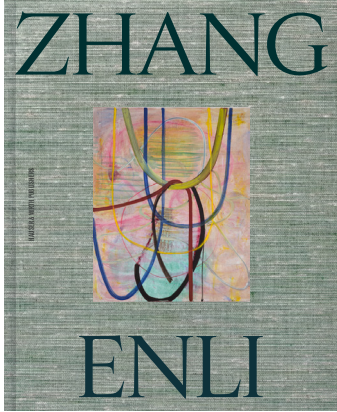
In 'Visitors on the Icy Mountain' (2026), dark green and crimson lines loop across the canvas against pale blue washes of paint. A cloud-like field of white and beige floats off-center—hovering between foreground and background with the optical effect of a blinding winter sun. Sook-Kyung Lee has observed of Zhang Enli's work, 'Prolonged viewing reveals changes: what first appears abstract becomes spatial and what seemed solid begins to waver.' This instability is a quality Zhang Enli actively cultivates. 'I hope the viewers find the paintings tricky to perceive,' he has said. In 'Zhang Enli,' the canvas becomes less a picture than a field in which perception itself is on display.

About the artist

Zhang Enli was born in Jilin province in 1965. He graduated from Wuxi Technical University, Arts and Design Institute in 1989. Zhang Enli currently lives and works in Shanghai. He has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions, including at Mingyuan Museum, Shanghai (2025); Long Museum (West Bund) (2023); He Art Museum, Shunde (2023); Long Museum (Chongqing) (2021); Power Station of Art, Shanghai (2020); Galleria Borghese, Rome, Italy (2019); K11 Art Foundation, Shanghai (2019); Royal Academy of Arts, London, UK (2018); Firstsite, Colchester, UK (2017); Moca, Taipei (2015); K11 Art Foundation, Hong Kong (2014); Villa Croce, Genoa, Italy (2013); Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, UK (2013); Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai (2011); Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai (2010); and Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK (2009), a presentation which travelled to Kunsthalle Bern, Berne, Switzerland (2009).

Zhang Enli's work is included in significant institutional collections such as Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham, UK; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Galleria Borghese, Rome, Italy; K11 Art Foundation, Hong Kong; La Maison LVMH Collection, Paris, France; Long Museum, Shanghai; M+ Collection, Hong Kong; Power Station of Art, Shanghai; Royal Academy of Arts, London, UK; Rubell Family Collection, Miami, USA; Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai; SIFANG Art Museum, Nanjing; Start Museum, Shanghai; TANK SHANGHAI, Shanghai; Tate Modern, London, UK; The UBS Art Collection, Zürich, Switzerland; and Yuz Foundation, Jakarta, Indonesia.

Hauser & Wirth Publishers



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Essay by Sook-Kyung Lee

Published on the occasion of an exhibition of the artist's work at Hauser & Wirth West Hollywood, this elegantly designed publication explores the last two decades of Zhang Enli's celebrated practice, culminating in his most recent paintings. Since emerging as an artist in the 1990s, Zhang Enli has combined Eastern and Western influences to create enchanting paintings inspired by ordinary objects and elements of everyday life. Beginning in the 1990s with the artist's striking portraits of human figures, 'Zhang Enli' traces the development of the artist's work through the evocative object studies of the 2000s and early 2010s to the captivating abstract portraits that continue to occupy him today, including new paintings produced for the Los Angeles exhibition. An illuminating essay by curator Sook Kyung-Lee guides readers through Zhang Enli's artistic evolution, illustrated by a generous selection of artwork reproductions that showcase the extraordinary lyricism of the artist's work.

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Gallery hours:
Tuesday – Saturday, 11 am – 6 pm

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Caption and courtesy information:

Zhang Enli
Gallerist
2024
Oil on canvas
300 x 500 cm / 118 1/8 x 196 7/8 in
© Zhang Enli
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth
Photo: JJYPHOTO

Zhang Enli
Visitors on the Icy Mountain
2026
Oil on canvas
200 x 180 cm / 78 3/4 x 70 7/8 in
© Zhang Enli
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth
Photo: South Ho

Zhang Enli
Psychologist
2025
Oil on canvas
210 x 170 cm / 82 5/8 x 66 7/8 in
© Zhang Enli
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth
Photo: South Ho

Cover of 'Zhang Enli'
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