

PearlLam Galleries

Shanghai

Undercurrents

Featuring works by Li Yongbin, Mu Xue, Shi Yiran, Tao Yi, Wu Chao, Zhou Maiyou, Zhu Xiaohe, and Zhu Jinshi

Exhibition Dates 28 July–15 September, 2018 Monday–Sunday, 10:30am–7pm

Venue Pearl Lam Galleries, 181 Middle Jiangxi Road, G/F, Shanghai, China 200002

Shanghai—Pearl Lam Galleries is pleased to present the summer group exhibition *Undercurrents* in Shanghai, organized by the galleries' associate curator Xia Jing. Through a presentation of diverse and independent practices by each exhibiting artist, the exhibition interweaves hidden clues as to how remains of the past renew themselves in the present day and how poetics and critical thoughts complement each other. The exhibition also explores recurring key words such as self-consciousness and perceptual vitality, as well as imagination and its penetration into reality, which are “potentials” that call for the challenging of existing boundaries, alertness of consciousness, and visibility of silent thoughts. Participating artists include Li Yongbin (b. 1963), Mu Xue (b. 1979), Shi Yiran (b. 1983), Tao Yi (b. 1978), Wu Chao (b. 1977), Zhou Maiyou (b. 1936), Zhu Xiaohe (b. 1956), and Zhu Jinshi (b. 1954). As a special feature, the exhibition will present both early and recent works by Star Group member Zhou Maiyou, which have never been exhibited before, together with works from the 1980s by Zhu Jinshi, to whom Zhou Maiyou has been both a mentor and friend. The revealing of both historic and current works to the public casts doubt on how modernity and contemporaneity are defined in today's art.

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“The sky is thinking. The tumbling clouds are its brain, and I am floating with the dust. I was a hard rock, but I was weathered and now am weightless.” This poem was written by Stars Group member Zhou Maiyou, who was born in 1936. Since 2000, he has often used poetry and painting to express his feelings and thoughts regarding his life in seclusion. His poetry shows a vast world, and his paintings convey a free and comfortable state of mind and witty sense of humour, while showing pure and bright images created using distinctive techniques. Zhou began painting in the 1960s; in the late 1970s and early 1980s, he displayed his paintings on the Democracy Wall on Xidan Street in Beijing and participated in two editions of the Stars Art Exhibition. He was one of the earliest practitioners of modernist art in China with his early paintings merging cubism with a practice of freely and faithfully expressing his mood at the time of painting. As a result, younger generation artists of his period have called his art “decadent” or “pioneering works of romantic avant-garde”. In the late 1970s, Zhu Jinshi often painted alongside Zhou at his home located on West Gulou Street, and the two shared a sort of master-student relationship. During this time, Zhu unconsciously catalysed an important shift in his personal creations. It was also a period of artistic freedom shared by two individuals incompatible with the social environment of that time. The current works of Tao Yi, a younger generation artist, also maintain that considerable freedom and openness. His paintings have shifted from initial rigorous and orderly portrayals to free and improvised representations. Tao regards art as a natural expression of life and believes one should not deliberately set limits for him or herself.

The painting process of Zhu Xiaohe is similar to a work of an ascetic. He interprets ideas through a metaphysical perspective. While painting, he lets a variety of images related to history and reality pop into his thought process, consciousness, and the picture itself, but he opposes reproducing reality in a subjective, figurative way. In his paintings, countless short lines are interlaced in a fine and precise manner. In the process of rewriting, disassembling, interpreting, and supplementing image resources, the kinetic energy generated by the picture gradually forms a difficult, ambiguous, complicated, silent, unrecognizable, and speculative visual language. He defines painting as a kind of writing of univocity, namely long-term, boring, manual operations that follow strict procedures and rules to let the painting return to an unbiased calmness and seriousness of the thought(s), embodied in the process of movement, opening up a pioneering, future-oriented perceptive space via artistic practice.

Mirror Tower, a long-term research project by Mu Xue, philosophically and psychologically explores the structure of self-image and self-awareness in the real world. This exhibition features the project's trailer. The film utilizes "The Hall of Mirrors" by Kraftwerk, a song that echoes a strong sense of space. The song's narrator finds himself in a three-dimensional hall filled with mirrors, where he is constantly watching and correcting his reflections. In the film, Mu transforms the structure of the hall of mirrors into a helix-shaped mirror tower and defines it as a self-generated structure that possesses characteristics such as instinct, internal conflict, rationality, behaviour, and an ability to reflect upon itself. Mu's *Black Diamond* series of paintings features an explosive, flowing energy that seems to rush out of the picture. This energy is not a manifestation of some kind of psychological activity, but the effect of combining strong intuition with rigorous thinking.

Unlike Zhu Xiaohe's speculative painting and Mu Xue's construction of self-consciousness, the latest painting series by Shi Yiran, *Lost and Found*, combines personal experience with the function of consciousness and thought. The inspiration for this series derives from Shi's experience of searching for lost luggage during her travels. In her creations, she removes the daily details of her thoughts and refines the understanding of "outer objects" (the kind of consciousness that gives us a sense of existence, but which in turn causes psychological cues). Shi borrows the connotation of Four Similitudes (defined by Foucault in "Prose of the World" as convenience, emulation, analogy, and sympathy) in order to explore a kind of "light in the dark" so that the mutually distant material objects are brought closer to each other and present the beauty of poetry through artistic imagination.

The art intervention project that Wu Chao has been working on since 2014 focuses on how to reach the most subtle aspects of human life consciousness from an outside-in, interdisciplinary perspective. The exhibition presents her most recent video works *Memory Dust—Morning* and *Memory Dust—Noon* (2017), which utilize daily sounds and scenarios, causing viewers to actively perceive, imagine, and recall what is familiar. The videos are also used in hospitals as materials to stimulate the unconsciousness for the *Audio-Visual Project to Awaken Patients in a Vegetative State*. This project originated from the instinct to utilize art to promote life and ultimately lead to the awakening of a vegetative consciousness. It received attention and raised controversy when certain detectable medical results were achieved, therefore transcending the boundaries between artistic creation and social practice. As of 2018, the project team has expanded into a research group comprised of dozens of professionals from fields such as medicine, psychology, religion, and artificial intelligence. They have renamed it the Vitality Research Community, further challenging the boundaries between disciplines while mobilizing the perception of individuals and social organisms by means of artistic and social practices.

The last part of the exhibition is dedicated to *Face No. 17*, the last part of the *Face* series created by Li Yongbin between 1994 and 2007. (Since 2005, Li has gradually moved away from art circles; the works on display belong to the private collection of Pearl Lam, the founder of Pearl Lam Galleries.) These images combine people's inner experiences of time with the ultimate issues of life and eternity. If time is the undercurrent of eternity, then the life of a creative individual—whether it is "in isolation" from art circles, committed to creating complicated constructions regarding thinking and perception, aimed at restoring the original vitality of daily life, or focused on recombining and reimagining daily scenes—and its exploration, practice, and persistence are the driving forces that constantly push the undercurrent of this time or, in other words, the agents hidden in the darkness.

About Pearl Lam Galleries

Founded by Pearl Lam, Pearl Lam Galleries is a driving force within Asia's contemporary art scene. With over 20 years of experience exhibiting Asian and Western art and design, it is one of the leading and most established contemporary art galleries to be launched out of China.

Playing a vital role in stimulating international dialogue on Chinese and Asian contemporary art, the Galleries is dedicated to championing artists who re-evaluate and challenge perceptions of cultural practice from the region. The Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore collaborate with renowned curators, each presenting distinct programming from major solo exhibitions, special projects, and installations to conceptually rigorous group shows. Based on the philosophy of Chinese Literati where art forms have no hierarchy, Pearl Lam Galleries is dedicated to breaking down boundaries between different disciplines, with a unique gallery model committed to encouraging cross-cultural exchange.

The four branches of Pearl Lam Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore represent an increasingly influential roster of contemporary artists. Chinese artists Zhu Jinshi and Su Xiaobai, who synthesize Chinese sensibilities with an international visual language, are presented internationally with work now included in major private and public collections worldwide. The Galleries has also introduced leading international artists, such as Jenny Holzer, Leonardo Drew, Carlos Rolón/Dzine, and Yinka Shonibare MBE, to markets in the region, providing opportunities for new audiences in Asia to encounter their work. Pearl Lam Galleries encourages international artists to create new work which engages specifically with the region, collaborating to produce thought-provoking, culturally relevant work.

Press Enquiries

Floria Xu / Pearl Lam Galleries floria@pearllamgalleries.com / +86 136 7173 4780