

Pearl Lam Galleries

Hong Kong

VIS- à -VIS

dual-space group exhibition

Featuring works by Bram Bogart, Ron Gorchov, Michael Staniak, Frank Stella, Su Xiaobai, and Zhu Jinshi

Hong Kong—Pearl Lam Galleries is pleased to present a dual-space group exhibition at both the Pedder Building and H Queen's galleries in Hong Kong. *Vis-à-vis* asks viewers to consider the agency of gestural abstraction through the semiotics of sculpture. Bram Bogart, Ron Gorchov, Michael Staniak, Frank Stella, Su Xiaobai, and Zhu Jinshi create works that evade binaries of genre; they are decidedly not-painting, not-sculpture and not-architecture. Their artworks favour alloy and hybridity, often marshalling the sculptural qualities of paint to further the possibilities of painterly mark making.

The term "autographic mark" entered our aesthetic lexicon following the conclusion of the Second World War when Abstract Expressionism dominated the Western art historical canon. At that time, abstract painting was characterized by gestural applications of paint whose appearance of spontaneity and all-over composition formed an artist's visual signature. Curator Kelly Baum recently described autographic marks as "gestures that indexed the artist's distinct will, personality, and psychological state." These autographic marks embodied a post-war exuberance, a new beginning for a global world order following the atrocities of the recent past. Over 70 years later, gestural abstraction has evolved in many directions. Some of these trajectories mine charged social realities, while other avenues serve as material reflections on a world ever more cynical, sceptical, dislocated, disenfranchised and yearning for authenticity, connectivity, and truth free from alternative facts. *Vis-à-vis* examines six currents of gestural mark making that question the function of gestural abstraction in our current cultural climate.

Pedder Building

Exhibition Dates 20 September–2 November, 2018 Monday–Saturday, 10am–7pm

Venue Pearl Lam Galleries
601-605, 6/F, Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Central, Hong Kong

Ron Gorchov's (b. 1930) simultaneously concave and convex, shield-like canvases encourage viewers to contemplate their immanent contradictions: their structure, composition, and markings occur as both otherworldly and familiar. Gorchov's work seamlessly glides through two and three-dimensions, profoundly articulating meditative calm and unsettling uncertainty: paint appears to run off the surface of the canvas while kidney-like forms seem to bleed down the picture plane. Shapes are drawn, then drawn again. Marks feel impermanent. Diaphanous layers of paint dispersions glide over the painting's surface as if emblemizing time slipping away. Linen edges are left unpainted and raw. Staples are visible and unselfconscious. Gorchov is undoing our expectations of what painting could and should be. The artist's sculptural "stacks" are equally replete complete with flaws and unevenness, letting gravity do the lion's share of the work. In these works, individually shaped paintings are stacked vertically and held together by an architecturally rigorous wood and metal armature. Recalling Donald Judd's eponymous sculptures, Gorchov's stacks undermine the rigid tenets of Minimalism, favouring humanist impulses over finish fetish experiences. Titled after stars in the universe, Gorchov's stacked works remind beholders of their own mortality.

Michael Staniak's (b. 1982) paintings intentionally complicate the legibility between the digital and the handmade. Although all of the artist's compositions are made entirely by hand, Staniak marshals synthetic colours to evoke digital platforms. Fluorescent, neon, and highly saturated pigments are airbrushed onto a sculpturally engaged ground to confuse expectations of flatness and create innovative trompe l'oeil effects. Staniak's practice updates and casts doubt on the traditional and altruistic role of colour field painting in the present day. For example, Staniak's *Internet Blueprint* series razes our ability to discern between actual ripples in the composition or merely a mirage of three-dimensionality. In this body of work, Staniak's implementation of "Facebook blue" simultaneously recalls a blank screen awaiting content and serves as a portal to the sublime.

Zhu Jinshi (b. 1954) sculpts with paint. His signature visual vocabulary, informed by living in both Berlin and Beijing, takes many forms, often combining textual language with mounds of paint whose collision with the picture plane generate a terrain evocative of jagged landscape. In these works, viewers are afforded an omniscient vantage point as if "reading" the picture plane from above. Working in diverse palettes—sometimes monochromatic, sometimes carnivalesque—Zhu's abstract paintings disarm the viewer through their intuitive yet calculated composition paired with irreverent tactility. Notorious for applying paint with shovels, his picture planes are organic ecosystems. Pigment and binder will inevitably separate, leaving oil residue to pool on an otherwise pristine white ground. Over time, crisp black calligraphic text becomes disambiguated. Zhu's work, rebellious by nature, abandons notions of collectivity in favour of vanguard originality.

H Queen's

Exhibition Dates 20 September–2 November, 2018 Monday–Saturday, 10am–7pm
Venue Pearl Lam Galleries H Queen's
9/F, H Queen's, 80 Queen's Road Central, Central, Hong Kong

Bram Bogart's (1921–2012) aesthetic marries colour with the abject. In Bogart's hands, paint is marshalled as if it were clay: moulded, formed, squashed, and slammed. Bogart's paintings belie traditional impasto, creating globular terrains of texture, form, and colour. As a Dutch artist living in Germany at the close of the Second World War, "abstraction" was a means of reconciling mass destruction and death tolls. The vibrancy of Bogart's monochromatic compositions is often at variance with its haphazard almost violent application of paint. *Een Kleur* (2005) appears as if a rectangular form forcibly engaged the painting's surface, causing crimson paint to ooze to the periphery. In *Rode Rouge* (2008), it appears as if multiple square and rectangular objects were used to create a picture plane built on indentions, allowing happenstance to guide and shape the dynamics of the painting. The monochromatic white composition of *Sunday Morning* (2007) foregrounds sporadic lunar-like globs that allude to an imagined experience of waking up on the moon. Bogart's unsettling works are unsettled by application and colour. Through his innovative amalgamation of pigment, binder, mortar, and other additives, Bogart redirected the formal and elegant palette of De Stijl into a tumultuous field of rubble and remnants.

Frank Stella (b. 1936) famously described sculpture as "just a painting cut out and stood up somewhere." The artist's assemblages, constructed from various industrial materials, including stainless steel tubing, nylon RPT, and aluminium, resonate as fragments of modern life arranged with architectural precision. Often overlaid with oil and spray paint, Stella's sculptures reveal themselves as nuanced positions on line, colour, form, and even modernity. His three-dimensional constructions present formal paradoxes: curved lines are formed from rigid metal and seemingly stoic aluminium is often adorned with pastel colours, dayglo, and flesh tones. The artist's use of industrial paint and construction materials, in dialogue with thoughtful and sympathetic compositions, allude to an attempt to critique connectivity in an otherwise synthetic and jaded world.

In many ways, **Su Xiaobai's** (b. 1949) work serves as an analogue and as a counterpoint to Gorchov's. With training at both the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing and Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, Su fuses the visual language of Abstract Expressionism with techniques intrinsic to Chinese craftsmanship. His gently curved paintings are an exploration into the cosmic and the meditative; they serve as portals into a complex subjectivity. With almost an uncanny elimination of the artist's hand, Su's paintings are masterfully handmade. A convex ground of wood and linen support innumerable veils of oil paint, and lacquer guides the viewer into a sublime unconscious where pigments and skeins of resin form a ground for contemplation.

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.

Further building on the Galleries' commitment, Pearl Lam Galleries opened its new gallery at H Queen's, Hong Kong's latest art hub, in March 2018. The four gallery spaces of Pearl Lam Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore represent an increasingly influential roster of contemporary artists. Chinese artists Su Xiaobai and Zhu Jinshi, 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 Leonardo Drew, Jenny Holzer, 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.

General Enquiries

Miki Wick-Kim / Pearl Lam Galleries
miki@pearllamgalleries.com / +852 2857 1328

Press Enquiries

Mary Zhang / Pearl Lam Galleries
mary@pearllamgalleries.com / +852 2522 1428

Jenny Zhang / Pearl Lam Galleries
jenny@pearllamgalleries.com / +852 2857 1328