

WHITE CUBE

Inside the White Cube

Zhou Li

Original State of Mind

17 April – 30 June 2019

White Cube Bermondsey

North Galleries

White Cube is pleased to present an exhibition by Zhou Li at Bermondsey. Featuring large-scale paintings from two new series of works, it marks the artist's first solo exhibition in the UK.

The title of the exhibition, 'Original State of Mind', relates to the unique position that Zhou Li occupies when making art. Throughout her practice, she seeks to question the relationship between herself and her surroundings, explaining: 'The way people normally view the world is as through a window, from inside out or outside in, but I try to stand in the middle. I see myself from a neutral point of view, and I see the world from a neutral point of view at the same time.'

In her abstract paintings, Zhou attempts to position herself outside of the usual parameters of perception – a process that is normally accepted as either subjective or objective. Attempting to access an unhindered way of observing and understanding, she considers both her own self and the objects around her as equally valuable to her art; each indivisible one from the other. The duality of perception is challenged as well as that of sensibility and rationality, by prioritising the phenomenological understanding of life – and her own experience of it – over existing concepts or formations.

Zhou says that when she paints she imagines her subject and then communicates with it through her painting. This 'subject' could be herself, another person, an event or simply an emotion. Equally, it can derive from a kind of meditation that is stimulated by a particular moment in time or by social or political events. All of this subject matter is then consciously re-perceived as an object, reduced to pure experience based on the relationship between selfhood and the object, beyond established customs or rational rules. Zhou has described this position as akin to 'the middle of the window', suggesting that experience shapes consciousness, and she examines both. Through this approach, Zhou attempts to access original thought, which could derive from her experience as a changing entity – the 'heart' – or, at the same time, the physical world which shapes it. This inclusive approach, relating to Eastern philosophy of the mind, underpins this exhibition.

Line-making lies at the core of Zhou's paintings, which incorporate illusory, endless loops and defining blocks of colour that delimit transient, open spaces.

Her abstract works can be considered in dialogue with contemporary Western art – in particular, the paintings of Mark Rothko or Cy Twombly – but also with Chinese masters of calligraphy. These include painters such as the 7th-century artist Zhan Ziqian, famous for the earliest blue-green landscape painting *Strolling about in Spring*, and the 4th-century writer Wang Xizhi, author of *Preface to the Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion*.

Suggesting a sense of flow and movement which reflects the artist's own restless self-examination, in her work Zhou explores the relationship of emotions to perception and the fusion of the logical and illogical within inner consciousness, ideas which lie at the core of ancient Chinese philosophy.

BIOGRAPHY

Zhou Li was born in 1969 in Hunan, China, and lives and works in Shenzhen. She studied oil painting at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, China, graduating in 1991. In 1995 Zhou moved to France, where she lived and worked until 2003.

In 2015 Zhou was appointed Director of the Institute of Abstraction and Contemporary Arts, at the Centre of Research on Artistic and Cultural Innovation and Development, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China. Since 2013 she has been a guest professor in the Oil Painting Department, Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, China. She has also been artist in residence at Shenzhen Art Academies, a guest professor at the Art Design College of Shenzhen University and the art consultant for Shenzhen Airport.

Solo exhibitions include 'Shadow of the Wind', Yuz Museum, Shanghai and 'The Ring of Life: Zhou Li', Hive Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing (both 2017). Zhou Li has also been featured in numerous group exhibitions, including 'The world is yours, as well as ours', White Cube, London (2016).

White Cube Bermondsey is open
Tuesday–Saturday, 10am – 6pm and Sunday, 12 – 6pm.
Admission is free.

For further information, please contact
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NORTH GALLERY

- 1 *The Peach Garden No.16*
2018
Mixed media on canvas
25 × 60 cm | 9¹³/₁₆ × 23⁵/₈ in.
- 2 *The Peach Garden No.15*
2018
Mixed media on canvas
160 × 130 cm | 63 × 51³/₁₆ in.
- 3 *The Peach Garden No.18*
2018
Mixed media on canvas
251 × 600.5 cm | 98¹³/₁₆ × 236⁷/₁₆ in.
- 4 *The Peach Garden No.19*
2018
Mixed media on canvas
200 × 300 cm | 78³/₄ × 118¹/₈ in.
- 5 *The Peach Garden No.7*
2018
Mixed media on canvas
200 × 300 cm | 78³/₄ × 118¹/₈ in.
- 6 *Wind and Thunder No.3*
2018
Mixed media on canvas
200 × 300 cm | 78³/₄ × 118¹/₈ in.
- 7 *Wind and Thunder No.1*
2018
Mixed media on canvas
251 × 601 cm | 98¹³/₁₆ × 236⁷/₁₆ in.
- 8 *Blue No.5*
2018
Mixed media on canvas
200 × 300 cm | 78³/₄ × 118¹/₈ in.

