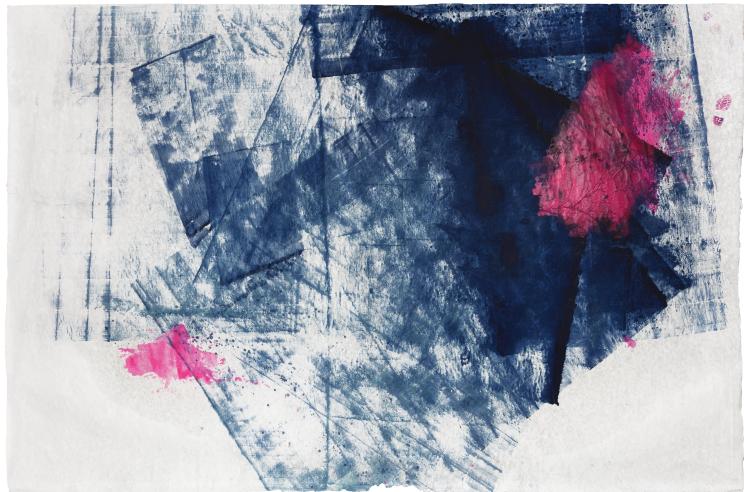


Zhang Wei

28 July – 31 August,
daily 4–7 pm

Preview:
Saturday, 27 July 2019, from 5 pm

Concert Mats Gustafsson:
Saturday, 27 July 2019, from 5 pm



Zhang Wei, Z-KIW1953, 2019, oil on Xuan paper, 400 x 600 cm

We are pleased to invite you to our summer exhibition with new works by **Zhang Wei**.

Specifically for the exhibition hall in Weidingen, the Beijing painter Zhang Wei has created a special work: a four-by-six-metre abstract painting on a huge sheet of handmade Xuan paper. The sheet will be hung in the middle of the room to be viewed from both sides, drenched by the changing light flooding through the skylights – a thin and fragile skin, soaked with light and colour, in a precarious balance between material and image, immanence and surface.

The idea came to the artist when he visited the exhibition space and was fascinated by the light conditions and the open glass wall that connects the interior of the venue with the surrounding nature. Zhang Wei started working on paper with his earliest oil paintings, landscapes that he painted during the 1970s in the parks around Beijing. Ever since, he has returned to this medium – the medium of calligraphy and traditional ink painting.

While in the traditional Chinese art of papermaking such huge sheets were used for landscape painting and calligraphy, it was not easy for the artist to find a manufacturer today. There is only one producer left, in Jingxian in the Anhui province, 750 miles south of Beijing, where Xuan paper is still manufactured in the traditional manner as part of a cultural heritage programme. Only once a year, in April, a small amount is made in a process that requires over a hundred stages with up to 60 workers, producing the sheets from the bark of the paper mulberry, or Chu tree, that is bleached in the sun.

Back in his Beijing studio, Zhang Wei spread the sheets on the floor and applied the paint with the help of squeegees made from 23 flat brushes while placing accents with an oil-drenched cloth. Xuan paper is an exceptionally fragile material that does not allow for corrections, and so the artist needs a mixture of anticipatory contemplation and spontaneous reaction to arrive at a composition. The paint fully engages with the texture of the material and the work is completely abstract – and yet for Zhang Wei colour always has something to say: “What I paint seems to be something that expresses itself as nothing, not conveying any meaning,” he explains. “But, in fact, human life is basically the same. The true meaning lies in the value of life itself.”

“Zhang Wei’s paintings are joyful. They are not a deliberate pursuit of flatness, yet he counters the so-called profoundness and spirituality of the traditional values with what appears to be an external view. So his relationship with Chinese traditions is not the defining point. It’s an open concept... The abstract language of Zhang Wei’s art is informed by his Eastern roots and Western expressiveness; the contradictions that emerge from this encounter are his special characteristics. The power of his work is born out of these conflicts; this energy is not harmony and must not be harmonious, since harmony will not have power. Zhang Wei’s paintings exist in a state of opposition. This is his singularity.” —Wang Luyan

As in previous years, the Swedish musician **Mats Gustafsson** will play a solo concert in the exhibition on opening day. Improvising freely on various saxophones and related instruments, Gustafsson explores both the space and the art, as well as the limits of his instruments, employing extended techniques with rhythmic intensity and sounding the space from all directions with the force of his breath.

As part of the programme, publisher **Hans Werner Holzwarth** will present a newly released monograph on Zhang Wei's abstract painting. It is the artist's third publication released by Holzwarth Publications, following a 2017 catalogue juxtaposing landscape paintings from the 1970s with recent abstract work, and a 2019 conversation about art, history and life between Zhang Wei and the conceptual artist Wang Luyan. For more information go to www.holzwarth-publications.de.

Zhang Wei (born 1952 in Beijing) is one of the pioneers of abstract painting in China. As a self-taught artist, he was among the first generation to paint against the official propaganda art with landscape in the 1970s and started to form avant-garde artist groups. In 1978 he worked as a stage painter for the Northern Kunqu Opera in Beijing; in 1979 he took part in the legendary exhibition of the No Name Group in Behai Park. In 1986 he took part in the exhibition *Avant-garde Chinese Art in New York*, and stayed in the city for almost two decades. In 2005, he returned to Beijing, establishing himself as a leading abstractionist. His works have been shown at numerous exhibitions by internationally renowned institutions, most recently at the Inside-Out Art Museum, Beijing (2017); the M+ Sigg Collection, Hong Kong (2016); Beijing Minsheng Art Museum, Beijing (2015); Deichtorhallen, Hamburg (2014); and the Caixa Forum, Barcelona (2008). He lives and works in Beijing.

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