Zhou Zixi: A Stranger Called ZHOU Zixi

Artist Zhou Zixi

Opening March 1 2024 16:00 – 18:00 (Artist Talk: March 1 2024 15:00 – 16:00)

Exhibition Period March 1 – April 30, 2024

Venue 33/F, Tower A, Victory Plaza, 103 Tiyu West Road, Guangzhou

Jointly with MadeIn Gallery, Guangzhou 33 Contemporary Art Center is pleased to present "A Stranger Called ZHOU Zixi", the solo exhibition of artist Zhou Zixi on March 1st, 2024. Over the past three decades, Zhou Zixi's landscapes and figures have become the last barrier guarding the marginalized and forgotten human spirit. The tranquil, almost restrained nature of series such as "Lost Landscape" (2014-), "Debris Flow" (2019-), and "Black Hole" (2021-) suggests a suffocating mystery ceaselessly lingering even in the wilderness.

"A Stranger Called ZHOU Zixi" consists of 13 paintings that embody the signature "flowing" style of Zhou's paintings. He intentionally paints in a sketch-like manner, using large quantities of oil and thin pigments, to loosen the bonds of the complex "environmental drama" created with his brushes, and thus arrive at an unpredictable, even destructive, boundary. The works, despite their different content, focus on uncanny and surreal dreamscapes: theaters and churches flooded with debris flow, black holes suddenly appearing in the wild and urban lands, and a glass suddenly pouring itself out in the mid-air of the living room in the late afternoon... Zhou's different series conspire to emphasize the impossibility of replicating a succession of chance events.

"Strangers" in the exhibition title serves as a double-entendre, first referring to the fact that Zhou Zixi's name is not familiar to the contemporary art scene in the Guangzhou region; As a middle-aged man who chose to move to Spain to start a new life, the word "stranger" is also a reflection of Zhou's personal reality. Here, Zhou connects with the characters and scenes in his paintings: the deer standing alone on a branch, the library as a symbol of human civilization, or the middle-aged man leaping into the flood... The viewer is endowed with a direct or semi-aerial view in front of the paintings, which reinforces the effect of detachment similar to the indifference in the novels of the French writer Houellebecq.

However, despair is merely an undertone of Zhou's painting, on the contrary, the artist's insistent care for the here and now of life is weaved within, offering a warm undercurrent for us to grasp. Decay and renewal, wreckage and growth co-exist in the images, where the past and the future collapse embracing each other. The pictorial world is thus filled with allegory, evenly born by scenes of hope and loss, romance and mystery. Zhou confesses that even in his middle age, he still cannot stop confronting and questioning the problems of our world, among which painting is his way of thinking and responding silently. It is through this solicitude that his work substantiates a tension that transcends the content and the medium of painting.

About Zhou Zixi

Born in 1970, Zhou Zixi currently lives and works in Shanghai and Valencia. Since the beginning of his career in 1993, Zhou’s brushstrokes have progressively evolved to depict national and population’s trauma, collective memory and oblivion, alienation of individual, as well as contemporary events and crises. Rooted in his studies of history and literature as well as a concern for human sufferings, the paintings create profound narratives of time and space, society and individual, politics and culture, disaster and daily life. A relation is then built among the works, which mutually complement and reflect one another while generating an epic-like quality. The artist sees his artistic career as an ideal architecture, which he hopes can penetrate the desolation and absurdity of the entire history of human civilization.

His recent solo exhibitions include: “Ensemble”, MadeIn Gallery, Shanghai, 2023; “Promised Land”, Tsutaya Books, Shanghai (2021); “The Longing the Distant Worlds Aroused Spoke More to the Home Than to Anything Unknown”, Powerlong Museum, Shanghai (2021); “Spring Outing in Xiaogang”, MadeIn Gallery, Shanghai (2015); “One Afternoon…”, ShanghART Gallery, Singapore (2014); “Late Spring and Early Summer”, ShanghART Gallery, Beijing (2011); “China 1946-1949”, ShanghART H-Space, Shanghai (2008); “Interiors”, BüroFriedrich, Berlin, Germany (2006); “Happy Life”, BizART, Shanghai (2005); “Sorry, I don't know”, BizArt, Shanghai (2004). Recent group exhibitions include: “Advent: Inventing Landscape, Producing the Earth”, Qianshao Contemporary Art Center, Shanghai (2019); “Side Lanes”, ShanghART Gallery, Shanghai (2019); “Why Not Ask Again?”, 11th Shanghai Biennale, PSA, Shanghai (2016); “China 8, Contemporary Art from China at the Rhine and Ruhr”, Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg (2015); 1st Kyiv International Biennial of Contemporary Art, Kyiv (Kiev), Ukraine (2012); “China Power Station - Part 4”, Pinacoteca Agnelli, Torino, Italy (2010); “China Power Station: Part II”, Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, Norway (2007).