

Press Release

Zhang Enli. Looking Outwards

Hauser & Wirth St. Moritz
9 July – 10 September 2022



An exhibition of paintings and works on paper by artist Zhang Enli opens this summer season at Hauser & Wirth St. Moritz. Unfolding across both floors of the gallery, 'Zhang Enli. Looking Outwards' showcases works from recent years, all connected through the artist's remarkable use of line and colour. The works on view are an invitation to look beyond oneself, onto the peripheries and off centre, and inspire us to see the world anew. Coinciding with the presentation in St. Moritz is Zhang Enli's site-specific project 'A Cheerful Person' (2021) in Montabone, Italy for Art Mapping Piemonte – an art project launched by the Piedmont Region with the support of Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, produced by Fondazione Torino Musei and curated by Artissima.

Using his paintings to mirror the outside world, Zhang Enli documents the more prosaic aspects of contemporary life, often representing ordinary objects and individuals in his works. Though abstract in style with loose and free brushstrokes, his recent works are anchored in figuration with descriptive titles, such as 'The Surgeon' (2020) and 'A Man Who Travels to Space' (2021). In these outward looking paintings, Zhang Enli projects his impressions of individuals and recollections onto the canvas through colour, composition and mood. In the background of 'A Man Who Travels to Space' (2021), thin layers of blue colour culminate to form nebulae across the canvas that float amongst clusters of golden loops. In contrast to the subdued tones are striking spherical shapes in crimson and dark brown that resemble astronomical bodies. In this way, Zhang Enli does not depict an object or person as a truthful representation but instead, presents their essence.

The works on view, such as 'A Melancholic Person' (2019), exemplify Zhang Enli's distinct abstract visual language. The artist's expressive lines and curves are always underpinned by the structure of his pencil-drawn grids. Influenced by the washes of traditional Chinese brush painting, the artist dilutes his paint until it is almost like a glaze, leaving grids visible beneath the layers of paint. By allowing the pencil marks to show through the painted surface, Zhang Enli constantly reminds us that his paintings are artistic constructs, not direct representations of any given object or individual.

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Continuing onto the first floor of the gallery, the exhibition presents a range of works on paper, including a series from 2019 that depicts dynamic, curvilinear forms in watercolour, coloured pencils and oil pastels. Zhang Enli's line work is also seen in watercolours from the artist's new 'Born in the Year of the Tiger' series which have not before been displayed in Europe. Created in 2021, Zhang Enli masterfully employs colour and light in these works to draw on the optimism and vitality of the Chinese New Year, and the prospect of renewal and transformation. The bold brushstroke lines and vibrant colour-block in 'Born in the Year of the Tiger 2' (2021) allude to the essence of the Tiger – a symbol of power and confidence. This is juxtaposed with the calm, translucent wash of paint in the negative space, executed in a natural, muted shade of yellow. Understanding empty space as an escape from reality rather than nothingness, Zhang Enli's works not only look to the year ahead but also to a world that has opened up with renewed energy.



Sharing many of the same themes as the works on view in St. Moritz, Zhang Enli drew on the style of his gestural paintings to revitalise the exterior of the 18th-century Church of San Rocco in Montabone, Italy with a mural. Titled 'A Cheerful Person' (2021), the artwork borrows from the colours of the surrounding landscape and transforms the outside of the structure into an abstract smiling face, whimsically incorporating the flower-shaped window in the centre of its façade as its nose. Intended as a happy presence capable of bringing a smile to those who encounter it, Zhang Enli's mural draws on the creativity of childhood and the ability to transform reality with the force of imagination.

About the artist

Zhang Enli was born in 1965 in the province of Jilin in China. In 1989, he graduated from the Arts & Design Institute of Wuxi Technical University and relocated to Shanghai to teach at the Arts and Design Institute of Donghua University, a transition that greatly affected his artistic practice and the evolution of his painting. Zhang Enli continued teaching at the University until 2008. Zhang Enli's paintings have been featured in numerous important exhibitions, including solo exhibitions at The Long Museum Chongqing, China (2021); Power Station of Art, Shanghai, China (2020); Galleria Borghese, Rome, Italy (2019); K11 Foundation, Shanghai, China (2019); Firstsite Gallery, Colchester, England (2017); Moca, Taipei, Taiwan (2015); Villa Croce, Genoa, Italy (2013); Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, England (2013); Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai, China (2011); Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai China (2010); and Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, England (2009), a presentation which travelled to Kunsthalle Bern, Bern, Switzerland (2009).

In 2020, The Power Station of Art in Shanghai, China published a catalogue on Zhang Enli, marking the biggest survey publication on the artist.

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Hauser & Wirth St. Moritz

Via Serlas 22
7500 St. Moritz

Gallery hours:
Tuesday – Saturday
11 am – 7 pm

www.hauserwirth.com

Caption and courtesy information:

Zhang Enli
A Man Who Travels to Space 2021
Oil on canvas
250 x 200 cm / 98 3/8 x 78 3/4 in
© Zhang Enli
Courtesy the artist, Hauser & Wirth, and
ShanghART Gallery
Photo: Birdhead

Zhang Enli
Born in the Year of the Tiger 1
2021
Watercolour on paper
108 x 78 cm / 42 1/2 x 30 3/4 in
© Zhang Enli
Courtesy the artist, Hauser & Wirth, and
ShanghART Gallery
Photo: JJYPHOTO

Art Mapping Piemonte. Zhang Enli, A cheerful
person, 2021. Church of San Rocco,
Montabone (AT). Photo © Giorgio Perottino/
Artissima. Courtesy of the artist and Hauser &
Wirth