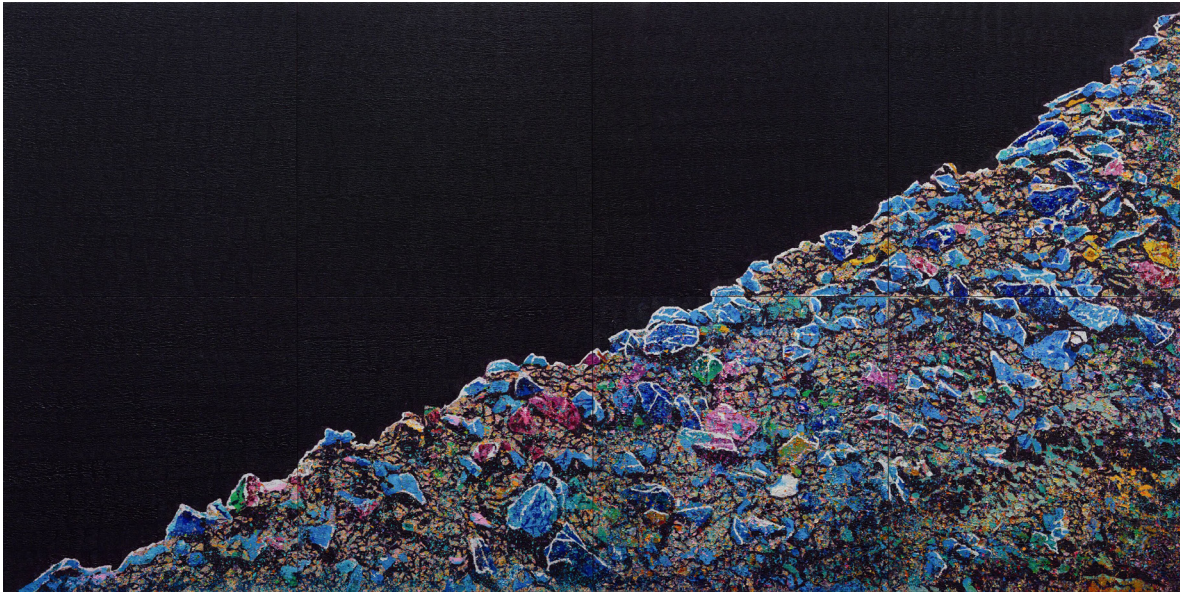


Press Release

Zeng Fanzhi

5 November 2026 – 16 January 2027

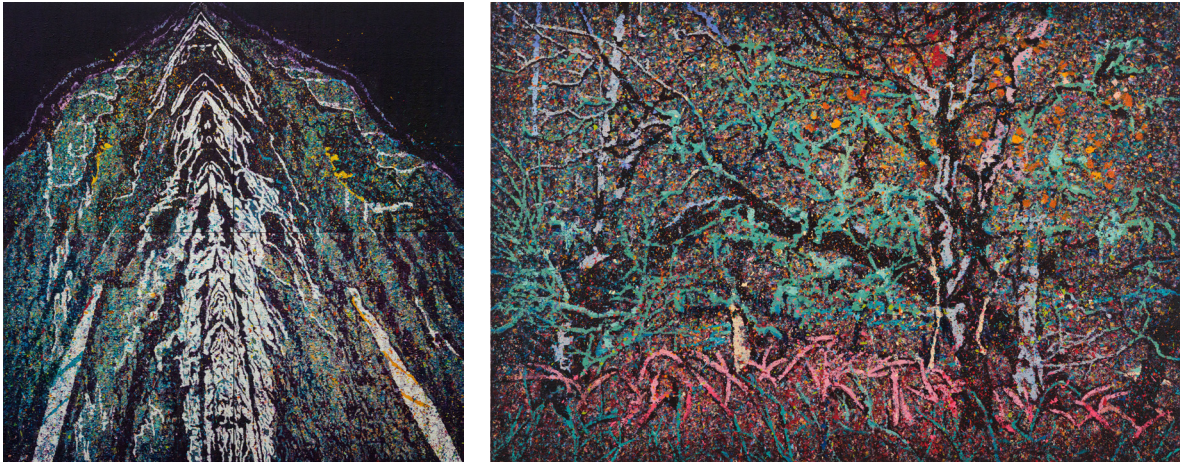
Hauser & Wirth New York, 22nd Street



New York... For his first New York City exhibition in over a decade, Zeng Fanzhi will present a new sculpture and a suite of resplendent new paintings that conjure imagined celestial landscapes and topographies. The works advance the celebrated Beijing-based artist's ongoing investigation of color, perception and the material possibilities of paint. The exhibition introduces the latest chapter in Zeng's practice, following on from his critically admired presentation 'Zeng Fanzhi: Near and Far/Now and Then' on view during the 2024 Venice Biennale, organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA).

Informed by many years of research into color theory and the paint-layering techniques pioneered by the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists, Zeng's latest paintings employ the principle of 'mélange optique,' or 'optical mixing,' in which hues are layered and placed alongside one another alla prima on the canvas rather than blended on the palette. Seen from a distance, these coalesce into images of landscapes and geological formations; observed up close, that legibility dissolves into mesmerizingly complex fields of pure pigment.

Zeng's dramatic optical effects are the result of a highly kinetic process: working wet-on-wet, Zeng uses multiple paint brushes at once, creating twin marks that are directed yet deliberate in their loss of total control. Each new tier of oil paint disrupts the ones still actively drying beneath it. His decision to deliberately undermine his own authority over the final image—a process that distances his hand from what it lays down—results in the defining dynamism of his art's physical surfaces. Zeng's approach harkens to the perceptual experiments of 19th century masters while pushing into a distinctly contemporary expression: his grand oils evoke both the dense impasto of pointillism while manifesting the fractured pixelation of 21st century digital imagery.



In these works, Zeng's visions evoke unfamiliar worlds beyond any fixed sense of time or place, appearing both futuristic and prehistoric. Jagged formations evoke the rugged terrain of an uncharted planet, where rock formations, trees, bodies of water and enigmatic alien presences appear within the landscape. Beyond them, pitch-black horizons open onto the infinite expanse of the universe. Across these imagined geological strata, radiant swaths of turquoise, yellow and deep crimson appear like crystalline fossils or fragments of bioluminescent matter. Central to these works is the tension between structure and the unknown: precise grids and lines suggest systems of mapping and excavation, while the movement and accumulation of Zeng's brushwork disrupt the order they establish. Several works collapse multiple spatial planes within a single composition, creating a sense of disorientation and suggesting a world that feels both unfamiliar and otherworldly.

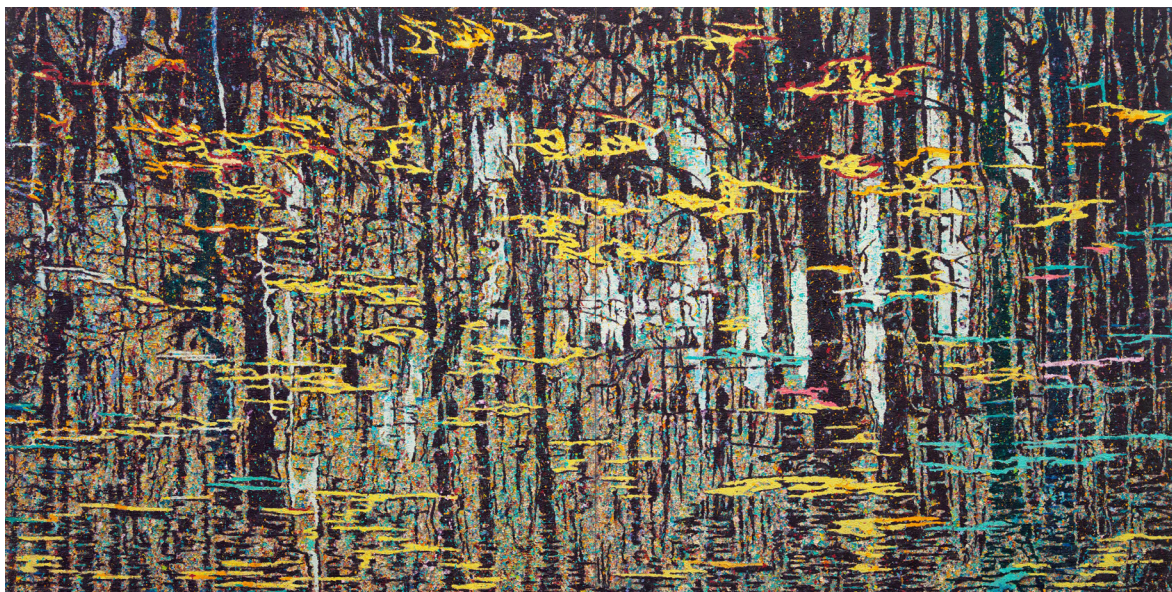
The new sculpture on view extends these ideas and techniques into three dimensions: a blue onyx obelisk-like object suggests both abstract form and an artifact from another as-yet untraversed place. Although constructed from naturally occurring gemstone, this blue and cream banded quartz stable strikes the viewer as something excavated from the imagined planets depicted in Zeng's paintings. Like those canvases, it occupies an ineffable realm between image and matter. The artist's oscillation between landscape, abstraction and imagined archaeology invite reflection on time, memory and humanity's place within a vastly larger continuum.

About the artist

Born in Wuhan, China in 1964, Zeng Fanzhi graduated from the Hubei Institute of Fine Arts in Wuhan in 1991. During his early education, Zeng immersed himself in Western art, philosophy and the social realist techniques of the 1985 new wave movement in China. These interests became definitive in shaping his earliest series of paintings, Meat Series and Hospital Triptychs. These early works between 1989 and 1994 set the stage for an intensely personal and expressive painting practice that documents a prolific period of social and economic development in Chinese history.

Working in the wake of rapid modernization and urbanization in China, Zeng turned his attention to figures from the industries around him. Inspired by artists such as Francis Bacon, Willem De Kooning and Max Beckmann, these works, known as the Mask and Behind the Mask series, straddle realism and imagination to reveal a valuable autobiographical and introspective reflection on his times and a meticulous attention to technical detail, cumulated into a rich body of portraits and unique imagery.

Over the past two decades, Zeng has reacquainted himself with classical Chinese painting philosophy, and particularly art from the Northern Wei to Song and Yuan dynasties, from the fourth to 14th centuries. Informed by these new interests, Zeng has moved further into abstraction. Works grouped under Abstract Landscape Series have experimented via four phases of evolution, characterized by highly gestural landscapes that share the same dynamic energy of his portraiture. These canvases are traversed by meticulous and calligraphic lines, blending with and obscuring the legible objects in the background, to investigate the complex tension among nature, wildlife and humanity.



Zeng Fanzhi has been the subject of major solo exhibitions at renowned institutions, including 'Zeng Fanzhi: Near and Far / Now and Then' at the Scuola Grande della Misericordia, Venice, Italy (2024, organized by LACMA); 'Zeng Fanzhi: Old and New (Paintings 1988 – 2023)' at Museum of Art Pudong, Shanghai, China (2023); and 'Zeng Fanzhi | Van Gogh' at the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands (2017). His work is held in prominent public collections throughout the world, including Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles CA; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York NY; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco CA; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France; Pinault Collection, Paris, France; and M+ (Sigg Collection), Hong Kong, China.

For additional information, please contact:

Andrea Schwan, Andrea Schwan Inc., andrea@andreaschwan.com, +1 917 371 5023

Christine McMonagle, Hauser & Wirth New York, christinemcmonagle@hauserwirth.com, +1 347 320 8596

Sarah Knight, Hauser & Wirth New York, sarahknight@hauserwirth.com, +1 615 975 3449

Caption and courtesy information:

All images:

Zeng Fanzhi

Untitled

Oil on canvas

© Zeng Fanzhi

Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

2025

4 panels

Overall: 300 x 300 cm / 118 1/8 x 118 1/8 in

2025

180 x 270 cm / 70 7/8 x 106 1/4 in

Photo: South Ho

2024

8 panels

Overall: 300 x 600 cm / 118 1/8 x 236 1/4 in

2026

2 panels

Overall: 220 x 440 cm / 86 5/8 x 173 1/4 in