

Zhang Xiaogang Mao Yan Qiu Xiaofei

Nov 22, 2019 – Feb 5, 2020

12/F, H Queen's

80 Queen's Road Central

Hong Kong

Opening Reception:

Thursday, Nov 21

6–8 PM

Right: Zhang Xiaogang, *Shoes*, 2018, oil on paper, 102 cm × 153 cm
(40-3/16" × 60-1/4") © Zhang Xiaogang



Hong Kong — Pace Gallery is pleased to present a group exhibition featuring three renowned Chinese contemporary artists: *Zhang Xiaogang, Mao Yan and Qiu Xiaofei*. These painters, active in the international art scene, explore notions of identity, memory, and history through the power of painting as both a process and a medium of expression and communication. The show includes new paintings by Zhang Xiaogang, which have never been exhibited before, as well as Mao Yan's and Qiu Xiaofei's signature works from recent years. Through their unique and signature styles, these artists all possess a dynamic approach to painting that compounds realism, abstraction, and expressionistic qualities through portraiture, still life, and landscape. The exhibition will be on view at Pace Gallery in the H Queen's building from November 22, 2019 – February 5, 2020, with an opening reception on Thursday, November 21 from 6 – 8 pm.

Zhang Xiaogang is recognized for integrating the introverted and sensitive qualities of his personality into stylized portraits and scenes rendered through somber greys and saturated colors as well as extremely refined brushwork warm with life. The exhibition focuses on the artist's continued use of narrative scenes and portraits, composed through a lens of constructed memory and imagination, with new paintings that build on the artist's continued impact on the international stage. The technical and figurative composition of this work reflects the artist's broad interrogation of the nature of painting as a physical manifestation of the unconscious and as interpretive of individual and collective memory, here reflecting on the cultural terrain of contemporary China and individual notions of identity.

The portraits by Mao Yan included in the exhibition display the artist's signature aesthetic of grey ashen tones. In his work, such as the well-known Thomas series, Mao Yan depicts everyday faces with fine and delicate brushstrokes, guiding his audience to enter a state of meditation and tranquility within the fast-paced world. In conjunction, his works draw on an historical legacy within the art of portraiture, seen through his use of various motifs, as in the oval as a framing device. Mao's physical and explicit subjects flirt with abstraction through layered paint and deemphasized features that blend into and out of their surroundings. Through portraiture and still-life, he conveys a profound connection between the physical application of brushstrokes and the interior world of his emotions, exuding an existential yet poetic exploration that transforms his paintings into a spiritual medium that surpasses everyday reality.

As the youngest artist in the group exhibition, Qiu Xiaofei has undergone enriching transformation in style and vision. His recent works shift into expressive all-over abstractions that contain broad brushstrokes meandering across fields of color on the surface of the canvas. Still, Qiu's paintings hint at objective things including landscapes and figures, retaining his approach to narrative through the context of autobiography and the history of painting. This exploration builds on a creative dialogue between material and concepts of memory and representation. "Painting starts with imagery and finally returns to imagery," he says. "In fact, my works are not purely abstract. There is concretization in my paintings, like spatial specifics...there is always a relationship between that and your consciousness and intentions..." Qiu's recent works, such as *The Trotsky Wilderness* (2018), reveal further reflection toward images and the language of painting through historical reflection—here recalling the Soviet revolutionary Leon Trotsky. As such, his examination and approach attempt a more conscious initiative: to awaken the potential of human perception hidden in the depths of the mind and collective memory through shapes, colors, and the act of painting itself.

Zhang Xiaogang (b. 1958, Kunming, Yunnan Province, China) navigates the cultural terrain of contemporary China with works that question notions of identity and the construction of memory. Zhang came to prominence in the 1990s amid the new wave of Chinese artists breaking from aesthetic traditions. Playing off the conventions of state-sponsored Socialist Realism and inspired by Surrealism, he paints individuals and groups in stylized images that evoke photographic portraits and dreamlike scenes, also producing stark interiors, still lifes, and landscape paintings, as well as figurative sculptures. Rendered in somber grays and saturated colors, Zhang's work communicates an existentialist point of view within the context of Chinese society.

Mao Yan (b. 1968, Xiangtan, Hunan Province, China) is among the most important painters currently working in China. Known for his portraits, landscapes, and still lifes, he deemphasizes recognizable cultural or temporal signifiers, placing emphasis instead on representation and the process of painting. His works exclude a background, emptying the compositions of any discernable environment or contextual clues. In a palette of cool gray and blue tones, Mao's painterly brushstrokes are loose and atmospheric but coalesce into a finely detailed figuration. He invokes the history of portraiture and figuration from diverse traditions and responds to his subjects, creating psychologically charged, visually compelling paintings.

Qiu Xiaofei (b. 1977, Harbin, China) has worked with diverse media—including oil and acrylic paint, watercolor, sculpture, and installation—in an oeuvre originating in the layered and subjective experiences of personal memory. These recollections emerged in representational paintings and painted objects based on photographs and other visual sources from Qiu’s history, communicating an introspective desire to translate memory into tangible images. Developing from his preoccupation with memory, Qiu began exploring more collective realms of thought and introduced abstraction into his work, initiating a creative dialogue and exchange between artist and material. His expressive marks interpret the fluidity of time and space, as well as his psychological states during the creative process. Allowing his subconscious to drive his work, Qiu investigates the profound spaces of consciousness and the dimension between abstraction and reality.

Pace is a leading contemporary art gallery representing many of the most significant international artists and estates of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

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Pace advances this mission through its dynamic global program, comprising ambitious exhibitions, artist projects, public installations, institutional collaborations, performances and interdisciplinary projects through Pace Live, and curatorial research and writing. Today, Pace has seven locations worldwide: two galleries in New York—including its newly opened headquarters at 540 West 25th Street, and an adjacent 8,000 sq. ft. exhibition space at 510 West 25th Street—as well as galleries in Palo Alto, London, Geneva, Hong Kong, and Seoul.

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