

LONG MARCH SPACE

LONG MARCH SPACE 长军空间

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Plaza

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by Long March Space
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Artist(s): ZHANG Hui
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"When falling, people have two fears: The first is fear of the pain we expect to feel upon crashing into the ground. But if we continue falling endlessly we experience another sort of fear, the fear that we will continue to plummet eternally, that we will never fall to earth. The former will eventually fade away, but the latter is a fear that will never cease."

"Groundless", Zhang Hui's last solo exhibition held two years ago at Long March Space Beijing was inspired by such fears. The exhibition title is imbued with this never-ceasing fear of endless uncertainty, of never reaching the ground, fear of a physical and mental existence lacking foundations. For two years, Zhang Hui continued to work in the state of 'groundlessness' while simultaneously striving to find a plane on which all his thoughts of the past, present and future could co-exist. "Plaza", his new solo exhibition at Long March Space takes its name from "this search to find a relatively tranquil, yet fleeting space of temporary respite" in an existence of perpetual free-fall. The gallery will feature more than twenty of his most recent paintings of alienated objects emerging from a backdrop of black canvas to create a bizarre yet vibrant 'plaza'. It could be said that the vibrancy one is confronted with here, is not that indicated by the miscellaneous objects depicted in the paintings, yet the vibrancy fashioned from Zhang Hui's form of 'visual thinking' and the brilliance of his cognitive perceptions.

There are many ways in which an artist can work and Zhang Hui begins his artistic creation with his subconscious intuition. This intuition acts as an inspiration to enter deeper into his mental framework, searching for thoughts which then emerge onto the canvas as visual manifestations of his ideas. It is under the guidance of this cognitive-visual procedure that the actual form of Zhang Hui's thought process is successively revealed to us in his artworks.

This creative process has matured and developed to the extent that everything, from the individual brushstrokes of pigment to the overarching composition as a whole becomes a cerebral tool for the artist. This is particularly apparent in the visual portrayal of Zhang's thoughts which arise due in part to his particular wish for control. However, oftentimes what ultimately is portrayed on the canvas is not necessarily the same the principal subject or thought he had initially wished to portray. Zhang Hui himself has admitted that this is due to the fact that he wishes to 'un-fetishise' the subject matter of his paintings. This is consistent with the reality of his artistic production, for if the object which emerges onto the canvas is incompatible with the thought structure which engendered it, Zhang Hui will routinely alter or even abandon said painting.

However, non-fetishising objects does not mean that they are ultimately absent from Zhang Hui's work. No matter how confusing or unstable his train of thought might be, Zhang Hui will still attempt to temporarily capture this rugged confusion through the objectification of his mental processes via painting. He uses captured illusions and gorgeously multicoloured shadows to help the objects displayed in his 'plaza' materialise. His actions are utilised to invoke a narrative of seduction to tempt his audience into entering his own subconscious. At the same time, he must tempt himself to penetrate deeper into his own subconscious and continuously re-evaluate the endless processes that lie in the space between his visual-intellectual deliberations and their embodiment in his artworks. To unlock the key to Zhang Hui's works, one must first work layer by layer to try and uncover the depth of meaning which lies behind this complex process of artistic creation.

The works displayed in this exhibition all relate to Zhang Hui's conjectures that the reality of lived existence depends entirely on the machinations and designs of mankind and the subsequent creations to arise from such planning. If we take reality to be located along a temporal axis and consider it as the point of origin, then everything preceding this point of reality would be our plans and attempts, our designs and aspirations. This multifaceted and complex web of mental activities is exemplified in the painting series "Blueprint" (2012- ongoing). What follows after the point of reality is a world of inspiration for Zhang's thoughts, a world in which visual-intellectual creative processes form the basis of interpretation. Working along this temporal axis, Zhang Hui has perfected the structural relationship between his various works. In the years since his "Miraculous Slope Analysis" (2008) series, Zhang has gradually been able to systematise his process of artistic creation built upon the visual thinking process, a development which has become increasingly fully-formed and enriching as exemplified by the "Blueprint" series shown in this exhibition.

Zhang Hui wanted to create a resting place, a plaza, to catch his free-falling train of thoughts, but even the plaza is in a perpetual state of descending, never reaching the ground. However, no one can tell where his ceaseless pondering will lead to in the future, what the next fleeting point of fall will be like.

*image (left)
courtesy of the artist and Long March Space