

Zhang Hui: Imprints

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Zhang Hui solo exhibition: Plaza

Long March Space (4 Jiuxianqiao Road, Chaoyang District, Beijing), **Apr 19–Jun 22, 2014**

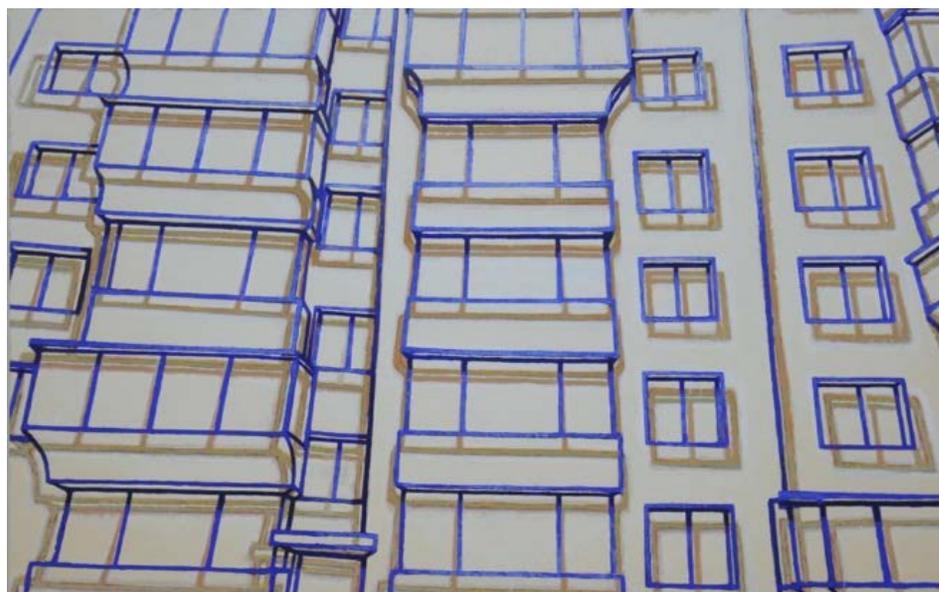
The most impressive paintings in “Groundless”, the previous exhibition by Zhang Hui at Long March Space, depicted life rings. Isolated from ordinary context, the robustness of these objects—in spite of their smooth, oddly narrow shape—was brought to the fore out of empty (though not insubstantial) painted fields.

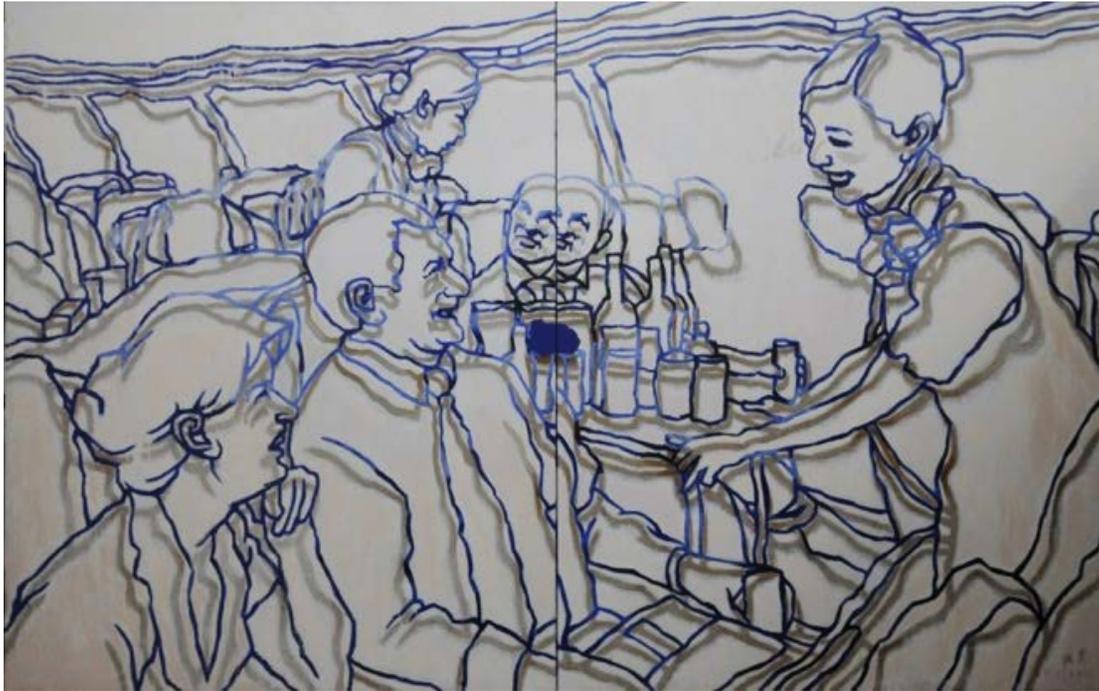
If the works in that show were literally “groundless,” the works in this new exhibition “Plaza” have been bestowed again with a sense of environment. A plaza conjures thoughts of display—open, yet fluid space for people and events, a public place supporting and witnessing situations of whatever kind. The idea of theater—always integral to Zhang’s work—is not remote from a plaza, being in many ways a stage upon which action unfolds.

Coupled with this is a certain aura of possession conveyed through the idea of the “blueprint”. It infuses the show, visually, as the color blue—that familiar, powerful tone not unlike Yves Klein’s—which has its own aesthetic attraction for the viewer and, one imagines, the artist. It is used for the ribbon-like depiction of an apartment block (“Blueprint, Second Floor”, 2014), for example, and a scene of a couple being served by an air hostess (“Blueprint, Communication 1”, 2012–13). *Blueprint* is the title of this leading series in the exhibition, and is explained in the exhibition text in terms of the reality of existence depending on “the machinations and designs of mankind and the subsequent creations to arise from such planning” — a distinctly humanistic perspective, which seems to deny chance.



See all photos (24)





Zhang Hui, "Blueprint. Communication I", acrylic on canvas, 225 x 362 cm, Courtesy of LONG MARCH SPACE

张慧，《蓝图.交流 1》，布面丙烯，225 x 362 cm，2014，图片由长征空间提供

The feel of this notion across the show can be called possessive for the way this blue hue seems to be in everything; on sawn-off tree stumps in the painting "Blueprint, Accident" (2014), blue is revealed inside the trunk; in "Blueprint, Spread" (2014) and "Blueprint, footprints" (2012-14), it covers—even replaces—the soles of sports shoes. In a much more sinister way, while this blue seems to be inside trees and beneath objects and infilling speech (in a bubble in the exchange with the air hostess), it is also seen on human fingers and palms. Three paintings like this ("Blueprint, Interior" and "Blueprint, Exterior", both 2012, and "Blueprint, Partial", 2013) somehow hint at the painter himself as orchestrator, or orchestrated—just as other beings and objects are. Overall, a strange sense of inevitability pervades the works, with the same force among them visible as a color, either hidden inside or otherwise present. Blue itself is a color at the cooler end of the spectrum often interpreted as conveying calm; in this exhibition, it simultaneously evokes passivity and influence in a way that borders on the uncanny.

An artist who began with theater design and used installation as part of the "Post-Sense Sensibility" group before settling on painting, Zhang Hui has consistently explored the layers of reality, finding holes in it. A painting is simply another layer on which things can appear to us and are experienced and explored. Duration, too, is something that intrudes into these newer works. The painting entitled "Blueprint, Solidification" (2014) appears at first simply to show a grid of white rectangles—perhaps a floor or wall. Upon closer or later inspection one sees the outlines of simple figures in a grouping (as of a crowd seen from above) materialize in the milky paintwork. This discovery places the viewer in a state of surprise and involves them and the painting in a mutual time frame, where recognition (of further content: the figures) develops and is confirmed. Surprise is theatrical, and the time of the realization plays out in its own way, also. Even as the ribbon-like images of the apartment and airplane scene elsewhere in the *Blueprint* series might look as if they could blow easily away, so this image instead instills itself, offering more to the viewer if one notices its depth.

Despite the number of works in this exhibition, some paintings deliver a clear sense of their significance where others seem more incidental. The work “Blueprint, Fold” (2012), showing paper outspread after having been crumpled up, is one such work. The piece “Blueprint, Pleasant Sensation” (2009-10, 2013, which mimics a New Year greetings card with a large blue snowflake on it at bottom right and shows a waiter figure comically covered in snow), again, has its roots in the permutations of reality and surface (and, possibly, sardonic humor) that Zhang wishes to go into, yet may not instill itself deeply. Those works which deal more readily with scenes or figuration—rather than articles or objects—are more persuasive in this exhibition, not least because of their more direct link to human action. In them it seems Zhang’s case deepens most bravely.



Zhang Hui, “Blueprint. Accident”, acrylic on canvas, 225 x 182 cm, Courtesy of LONG MARCH SPACE

张慧，《蓝图.意外》，布面丙烯，225 x 182 cm，2014，图片由长征空间提供

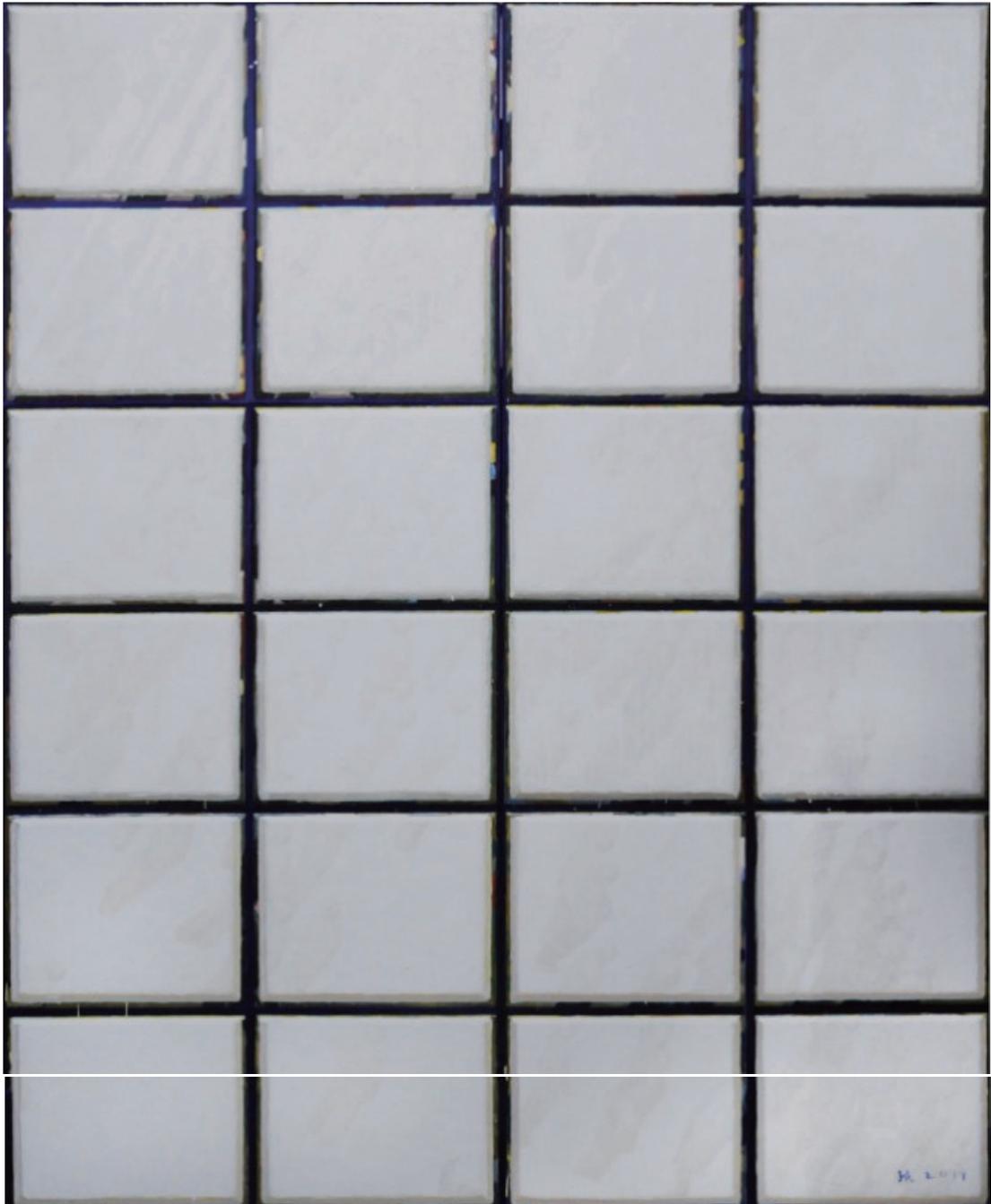


Zhang Hui, "Blueprint. Spread", acrylic on canvas, 112 x 162 cm, Courtesy of LONG MARCH SPACE
张慧, 《蓝图.漫延》, 布面丙烯, 112 x 162 cm, 2014, 图片由长征空间提供



Zhang Hui, "Blueprint. Footprints", acrylic on canvas, 200 x 150 cm, Courtesy of LONG MARCH SPACE

张慧，《蓝图.脚印》，布面丙烯，200 x 150 cm，2014，图片由长征空间提供



Zhang Hui, "Blueprint. Solidification", acrylic on canvas, 300 x 240 cm, Courtesy of LONG MARCH SPACE

张慧，《蓝图.凝固》，布面丙烯，300 x 240 cm，2014，图片由长征空间提供