

For Immediate Release

West Bund Art & Design 2024

7 - 10 October 2024

Booth B131 | West Bund Art Center Hall B (No.2555 Longteng Avenue, Shanghai)

Blindspot Gallery is pleased to return to Shanghai West Bund Art & Design 2024 (**Booth B131**), presenting **Zheng Haozhong's** solo exhibition. Zheng's paintings encompass his everyday fields of vision, focusing upon the people and subjects in his vicinity. With his studio as both a personal sanctuary and backdrop for his works, he carefully stages portraits and scenes fraught with visceral gestures. His works often display spontaneous brushstrokes, free-flowing and unfettered, pulsating with rhythm, akin to the vivacity of jazz.



Blindspot Gallery is proud to announce our representation of Zheng Haozhong. Coinciding with Shanghai West Bund Art & Design, Zheng's eponymous solo exhibition is taking place at Aranya Art Center North (22 September, 2024 - 9 February, 2025), featuring the artist's paintings of friends, self-portraits, and studio-themed compositions.

Zheng is known for his portrait paintings. He often captures on his canvas friends and acquaintances who hang around his studio, delineating their postures and mannerisms. In **Green Chair LINKE** (2021), Zheng depicts his friend Lin Ke, a new media artist, curled up in a green chair in the artist's studio on a frigid winter's day. Lin holds a half-empty beer bottle in one hand, his lethargic gaze veiled behind his spectacles. His polka dot shoes abstractly form a triangle with the green chair and his huddled body, reclining quietly in nonchalance.

TANGCHAO and the Green Chair (2021) centers on the video artist, Tang Chao. Sporting a blue hat and loose shirt, he leans back into the chair stolidly. In both paintings, certain details are intentionally omitted, the green hue of the chair back accentuating the two figures' countenances, encapsulating their inner worlds and auras. Zheng repeatedly portrays familiar friends, objects, and spaces as means of self-expression. Even when portraying the same chair or person, he imbues them with varying nuances according to

the different environments, contemplating on the notion of the self through depicting the other.

The bold use of negative space in both paintings is characteristic of Zheng's practice. He is not preoccupied with whether to fill the canvas, but instead, these detemporalized vacuums become catalysts for reflection, control, and beginnings. Every dot, line, and surface is built on his trust in reality, stemming from his long-term observations and interactions with people in his surroundings. These paintings are not merely life studies, but conduits into creation.

In another work, **LINKE** (2016-2019), the subject sits in a meditative pose, shrouded by rows of blue lines, like those on the screen of a computer, his gaze peering through the fissure. His scrupulous stare meets with the eyes of the artist and audience, forming a closed loop between the three; it is as if he has something to conceal. Shrill and animated strokes slather across the canvas center, evoking an inner agitation and fret. The viewer catches a glimpse of the sitter yet simultaneously feels watched.

It took Zheng five years to complete **LIXINYANG embedded in the dream** (2018-2024), an intimate portrayal of his partner. The painting was originally conceived as a "stream of consciousness", where memories and dreams wander across the canvas. Over time, Li Xinyang emerges and takes form in the composition, her body lying in calm reverie. Curling up like a feline, her face embeds into the circle, a projection of the dreamscape into which she slowly drifts.

If the portrait is the exploration of the figure and painting, then the self-portrait is the dialogue between the artist, self, and the history of art. In **Envisioned Self-Portrait** (2018), Zheng takes on the persona of an African American artist and musician living in the 1950s. Wearing a hippie-patterned tweed jacket with a pink shirt, he holds a brush in one hand, envisioning it as a trumpet. In the center of the canvas, Zheng's cat which hides inside a cardboard box is contoured in rough strokes, dislodging the viewer from the rest of the painting. Under the influence of Rembrandt and other masters, Zheng's portrait shows his objective scrutiny and depiction of the self, a manifestation of his inner thoughts at different stages. The self-portrait is a personal dialogue he performs, through which he contemplates



existential questions. Zheng likens art history to a vast ocean, and the process of painting becomes the means in which he navigates its deep waters.

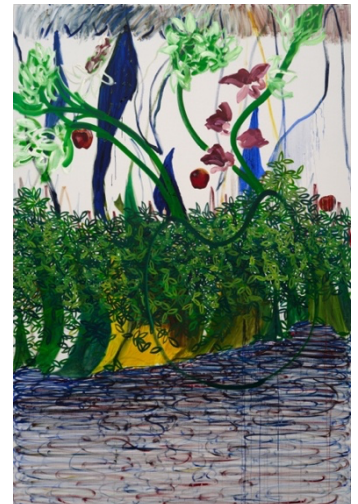


Submerged in his studio and enveloped by paintings, Zheng creates pastiches that playfully incorporates his other works. In ***Bread in the Studio*** (2017), Zheng depicts his bull terrier, which has accompanied him for nearly a decade. Zheng has a dog and two cats living with him in the space and being little troublemakers, they are whimsical yet an integral part of the studio, carriers of the artist's thoughts. Above the dog's head hangs a painting of a loaf of bread, the metonym of money and material basis. In the early years, his dog had accompanied him on his travels across China in search of opportunities, loyal to him through thick and thin. He palpably recalls baking bread with his dog on a chilly day, all suited up to pursue a sense of formality for the occasion. The painting-within-a-painting is collaged directly onto the surface of the canvas with expanding polyurethane foam, which oxidizes and resembles a golden carved frame.

Zheng believes that people and objects weigh equally in his paintings. ***Still Life Solo*** (2023) depicts a symphony orchestra, with the table serving as its stage, the palette, fruits, mirrors, and net bag as its musicians, the colors its melodies. They amalgamate into a space where the painting performs its "solo". The small canvas in the upper left-hand corner echoes the composition and elements in the foreground, transposing the audience from one concert into the next. Fruits were the earliest subjects Zheng painted, and the last twenty years of his artistic practice had been a linear process of integrating himself into the painting. In the process, the still life table becomes the site of his artistic language, underpinning and encompassing his understanding of painting.

Tropical Orchids, Leaves, the Lake, Apples Relieving the Quarrel, a Polyphonic Melody (2017-2024) demonstrates how Zheng understands painting at different periods of life. The leaves in the imagery are densely layered one on top of the other, corresponding to a polyphonic melody. The motif of the apple recurs in Zheng's paintings, harking back to Paul Cézanne who often depicted apples and other everyday objects as connotations for the transience of life. The brushwork of the lake with its swirling ripples pays homage to the Norwegian Expressionist Edvard Munch, emphasizing a sense of anxiety through distorted lines. The painting becomes a cohesive convergence of different layers and artistic languages, unfolding Zheng's rich understanding of the painting discourse. His diverse expressions mirror the complexity of his psychological landscape.

"My painting method is a comprehensive engagement of the body, involving intuitive and improvisational judgments on technique, emotion, and structure. Therefore, my work is a result of this process, not refined, nor aimed at achieving a singular outcome."



About Zheng Haozhong

Zheng Haozhong (b. 1985, Shandong Province, China) is a painter, musician, and writer, his paintings often conflating his various artistic practices. His figurative paintings, depicting friends, acquaintances, and himself in his studio, capture the gestures, expressions, and psyches of his sitters. His paintings carry a rhythmic quality with expressive brushstrokes that are freestyle and not confined within a rigid parameter, mirroring the music he plays. His characteristic use of negative space conjures the imagery of liubai (leave blank) in Chinese ink paintings, bringing out a linearity which delineates the features of his subjects. Zheng graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 2008. In 2014, Zheng's painting *QIUCHEN* was awarded the Grand Prize for the John Moores Painting Prize China and was exhibited at museums internationally including the National Museums Liverpool (Liverpool, 2015), Minsheng Museum (Shanghai, 2016), and later exhibited in Beijing and Macau. Zheng has held solo exhibitions in Aranya Art Center North (Beidaihe, 2024), Blindspot Gallery (Hong Kong, 2023), KWM Art Center (Beijing, 2018) and esea contemporary (formerly Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art) (Manchester, 2016) where he also had an artist residency. Zheng was previously artist-in-residence at Gwangju Museum of Art. His works are in the collection of White Rabbit Gallery, DSL Collection, the Moegling Foundation, BY ART MATTERS, and Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts, Shanghai University. Zheng currently lives and works in Shanghai, China.

About Blindspot Gallery

Set up in 2010, Blindspot Gallery is a contemporary art gallery based in Hong Kong. The gallery features diverse contemporary art practices, by emerging and established artists mainly from Asia but also beyond.

For enquiries and media interviews, please contact Ms. Helena Halim at +852 2517 6238 or by email at helena@blindspotgallery.com.

Image captions :

Zheng Haozhong, *Green Chair LINKE*, 2021, Oil on canvas, 150 x 100 cm

Zheng Haozhong, *Envisioned Self-Portrait*, 2018, Paper plate, acrylic, and oil on canvas, 188 x 171 cm

Zheng Haozhong, *Bread in the Studio*, 2017, Polyurethane foam and oil on canvas, 120 x 100 cm

Zheng Haozhong, *Tropical Orchids, Leaves, the Lake, Apples Relieving the Quarrel, a Polyphonic Melody*, 2017-2024, Oil on canvas, 300 x 200 cm

(Image courtesy of artist and Blindspot Gallery)