

Press Release

Zhang Enli Intangible 无形

Hauser & Wirth Zürich

12 October – 23 December 2016

Opening: Tuesday 11 October, 6 – 8 pm



Hauser & Wirth Zürich is delighted to showcase a new series of paintings by Zhang Enli. The oil on canvas works take inspiration from the artist's abstract Space Paintings, marking a significant departure from the figurative renderings of utilitarian objects and nature, for which he is best known. In the Space Paintings Enli covers the walls, ceilings and floors of a room with expressive marks and delicate washes of colour, to create visceral, atmospheric environments. For the new body of work Enli has advanced this uninhibited, intuitive approach; he has developed a looser abstract language of gesture and movement whilst maintaining a deeply personal and contemplative approach to his subject matter. Realised in a palette of soft blues, greens and browns, the paintings encourage both a visual and experiential engagement with the artist's sensitive perception of his surroundings, demonstrating a ceaseless, intense scrutiny of ways of seeing.

Zhang Enli has dedicated the past year to developing this abstract visual language, allowing his free handling of form and colour to flourish across the large-scale canvases. The works are brought together under the title 'Intangible', translated from the Chinese 无形, a term alluding to that which is unknown, indefinable and ethereal. Within this collection, the paintings can be seen to follow three stylistic trajectories: one group formed from sweeping lyrical tendrils, another bearing muted, translucent swathes of wash, and a set presenting grid-like horizontal planes densely filled with frenzied brushstrokes.

'Green Lines' (2016) bears the unmistakable trace of Zhang Enli's earlier paintings of pipes, waterhoses and tangled wires. Yet, a perceptible shift has occurred between the identifiable everyday articles of those works, and the expressionistic, simplified delineations that appear here. The artist's gesture has taken on an increased dynamism, making the two-dimensional picture surface a site of creative energy, spontaneous movement, and bodily action. Lush evergreen vines surge across the picture-plane, interrupted by permeating browns and yellows, evoking foliage with animated strokes.

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'Yellow-Green' (2016), realised in a delicate range of chalky hues, calls to mind the atmospheric landscape paintings of JMW Turner. The muted expanse of sea green, created from washes and waves of pigment, is interspersed with strokes of shimmering yellow light, while a grey storm brews on the horizon. Colour and gesture tacitly articulate the artist's response to and conviction about that which he has visually experienced, be it directly in the external world, or in his mind's eye.

In 'Red-Green Brushwork' (2016), frantic angular motions come together to form an arrangement of squares or rectangles. The pencil-drawn grids in Zhang Enli's earlier works have been viewed as a metaphor for ordering the chaos of contemporary life. In this work the strokes defy any attempts of order, as reds and browns collide with teals and blues, merging into one another. The artist maps the surface of the painting with an undulating brush, addressing both the world and its structures.

About the Artist

Zhang Enli was born in 1965 in the province of Jilin in China. In 1989, he graduated from the Arts & Design Institute of Wuxi Technical University and relocated to Shanghai to teach at the Arts and Design Institute of Donghua University, a transition that greatly affected his artistic practice and the evolution of his painting.

Zhang Enli's paintings have been featured in numerous important exhibitions, including solo exhibitions at Moca, Taipei, Taiwan (2015); Hauser & Wirth London (2014); Villa Croce, Genoa, Italy (2013); Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, England (2013); Hauser & Wirth Zürich (2012); Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai, China (2011); Hauser & Wirth New York, 69th St (2011); Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai, China (2010); and Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, England (2009), a presentation which travelled to Kunsthalle Bern, Berne, Switzerland (2009).

Zhang Enli's work was also featured in the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Kochi, India (2012); 'On Contemporary Era – The First Chinese Oil Painting Biennial', The National Art Museum of China, Beijing, China (2012); 'The 6th Curitiba Biennial: Beyond the Crisis', Instituto Paranaense de Arte, Curitiba, Brazil (2011) and '10,000 Lives. The Eighth Gwangju Biennale', Gwangju, Korea (2010).

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Gallery hours:
Monday to Friday, 11 am – 6 pm
Saturday, 11 am – 5 pm

www.hauserwirth.info

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Zhang Enli
Yellow-Green
2016
Oil on canvas
250 x 270 cm / 98 3/8 x 106 1/4 in

Zhang Enli
Red-Green Brushwork
2016
Oil on canvas
300 x 400 cm / 118 1/8 x 157 1/2 in

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