

## ZHANG WEI

57 rue du Temple, 75004 Paris

6 February – 13 March 2021

Opening : Saturday 6 February, 10 a.m – 5.30 p.m

For his first exhibition at the Paris gallery and second with Galerie Max Hetzler, **Zhang Wei**, one of the leading figures of Chinese abstract art, has selected twelve oil paintings and two oils on watercolour paper, made between 2016 and 2020. These recent paintings reveal the ongoing influence of Action Painting on his work, which he discovered in 1981, through a travelling exhibition of American painting, organised by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Here, he encountered the works of western Abstract Expressionists such as Jackson Pollock, Frank Kline, and Helen Frankenthaler, for the first time, later meeting Robert Rauschenberg during his 1985 visit to Beijing. This led Zhang Wei to abandon figuration altogether, rooting his practice in the freedom of expression offered by abstraction, which he uniquely combined, with a profound understanding of Chinese traditional art.

In these recent works, **Zhang Wei** confronts the viewer with canvases, on a monumental scale. Made with bright and contrasting colours, his explosive brushstrokes express an intense emotion, adding both a performative and physical consciousness to the work. On this, C.S.Chinnery observes, *“there is a violent energy in numerous recent paintings by Zhang Wei, but it is not the central element. Rather, it serves as the intermediary to essential energy. Despite the impetuous contrast of colours and textures, what truly defines Zhang Wei’s work is a sense of balance.”\** Contrasting with these bright outbursts of colour, large parts of the canvas are left blank, integrating the notion of incompleteness into his work, whilst also revealing a compositional awareness of space, characteristic of Chinese ink painting. Meanwhile, three paintings of a more modest size and softer tonality, where petals seem to float in water, offer a rest for the eye.

Finally, two oils on watercolour paper, in seafoam green, are also on view. They are made with a distinct line of Celadon colour that is poured onto the surface, morphing into diaphanous shapes evocative of the attempt to take a deep breath — at once fragile and penetrating, they remind us of the importance of the “qi” spirituality in the artist’s work.

Describing painting as a liberating process for one’s energy at the moment of contact between the ink and paper, through the brush, the “qi” isn’t the only traditional technique marking Zhang Wei’s work. The skillful and balanced gesture of the calligraphic line is present everywhere, underlining a movement, accentuating an empty space and illustrating the vision of the artist: to approach, as closely as possible, the idea of freedom through his art.

\*C. S. Chinnery, ‘A colourful dissonance: On the paintings of Zhang Wei’, in *Zhang Wei*, exh. cat., Berlin: Galerie Max Hetzler and Holzwarth Publications, 2017, p. 29



Zhang Wei, Z-AC2018, 2020, 180 x 200 cm.;  
70 7/8 x 78 3/4 in.

photo : Yang Chao Photography Studio, Beijing

**Zhang Wei** was born in 1952 in Beijing where he lives and works. At the end of the 1970s, he worked for the Northern Kun Opera Theatre in Beijing. From 1986 to 2005 he lived in the United States. His work has been exhibited in international institutions and most recently at Beijing Minsheng Art Museum, Beijing (2020); Song Art Museum, Beijing (2020); the M + Sigg Collection, Hong-Kong (2016); Beijing Minsheng Art Museum, Beijing (2015); Deichtorhallen, Hamburg (2014); Asia Society, Hong Kong (2013); China Institute Gallery, New York (2011); Yuan Art Museum, Beijing (2010) and CaixaForum, Barcelona (2008).

His work can also be found in the public collections of M + Museum of Visual Culture, Sigg Collection, Hong Kong and the Art Institute of Chicago.

**Further exhibitions and events :**

**Navid Nuur**

*Apart from the secret that it holds*  
41 Dover Street W1S 4NS Londres

**Jeff Elrod**

Bleibtreustraße 15/16, 10623 Berlin

**Karel Appel**

*Object Paintings*  
Goethestraße 2/3, 10623 Berlin

**Inge Mahn**

Bleibtreustraße 45, 10623 Berlin

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