
Mao Lizi: A Dream of Idleness

"My heart lives a roaming dream, and the rest evaporates in the autumn wind"

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Press Release

"As a child, I first saw Xu Wei's ink painting Grapes (Ming dynasty) in the Palace Museum. Its ineffable simplicity and beauty has remained with me, as the pinnacle of what I aspire to as an artist. Over the last 50 years, I have tried to remain true to the spirit of Grapes, regardless of the technique or style in which I paint. Pure beauty - beyond words - has left its indelible imprint on my heart. I've never taken art as something of extraordinary importance, despite experiencing the occasional euphoria of success. And I've never been weighed down by adversity. Nor do the ever-changing art trends of our time attract me. Instead, my gaze is fixed on creating simple, beautiful and intriguing works, combining tradition with modernity. I am unwavering in my on-going attempts to bring more beauty and food for thought to the world."

- Mao Lizi, Beijing, May 2016.

Pékin Fine Arts:

Pékin Fine Arts (Hong Kong) is pleased to host our 1st solo exhibit of pioneering avant-garde artist Mao Lizi. A founding member of the 1979-1980 "Stars Group" of Beijing unofficial grass-roots artists, Mao Lizi's first exhibitions were in protest against the lack of official recognition and support for artists working outside the State system. Initially self-taught, Mao Lizi later obtained a master's degree from the Oil Painting Dept. of Beijing's Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1987. After nearly ten years in Paris, Mao Lizi returned to Beijing and took up work as an artist, architect and designer. His work has been exhibited in museums and galleries around the world and is widely collected in China and internationally.

In his latest series of semi-abstract monochrome paintings Mao Lizi continues his study of traditional Chinese painting language, this time rendering ink wash and ink dry-brush painting techniques using oil on canvas. Remaining true to his avant-garde roots, Mao insists on employing oil on canvas to capture the spirit of ink painting. The results are subtle and highly skilled renderings of semi-abstract imagery, shadows of nature: focusing mainly on deceptively simple shapes of flower petals, water and landscape.

In approaching oil on canvas in the same way a traditional painter treats ink and brush on Chinese xuan paper, Mao takes big technical risks: There is little chance to correct the composition once brushstrokes touch the canvas in these minimalist studies of how paint moves across canvas. At the same time, the vast empty spaces of each composition must be treated with equal weight, so they remain "alive", as integral fields to overall compositions. One slip of the brush, in and among the empty backdrop of his canvas, and the work must be discarded, and Mao Lizi must start over. The result is a hard-to-achieve cohabitation of restraint and boldness in the artist's painting.

Mao Lizi's art has transitioned over the years from highly skilled photo-realist painter to non-representational abstract image making, affirming with each canvas a shift of the artist's focus, as he continues to move away from the concrete to the increasingly abstract painting world. In these recent paintings on exhibit in Hong Kong, we see a mature artist with rich experience, enjoying the action of abstract painting, and the freedom of expression that only comes later in life, after achieving great control of one's medium and deep understanding of one's environment.

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