

Hao Zecheng: The Visions in My Mind

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Tang Contemporary Art Beijing 1st Space

Tang Contemporary Art is excited to announce Chinese artist Hao Zecheng's solo exhibition "The Visions in My Mind" opening on July 23rd, 4PM at our Beijing 1st gallery space. With an important article by Martina Koeppel-Yang, the exhibition will showcase Hao Zecheng's latest works.

The Visions in My Mind

Martina Koeppel-Yang

"But what I'd like to know, is could a place like this exist so beautiful? Or do we have to find our wings and fly away to the visions in our mind?"

— Stevie Wonder, "Visions"

A street-scene at night, residential houses cowering under tall trees. Some of them are bathed in a strange light, and so is the sky. The sequence of different color areas, as well as that of light and shadow disrupts the painting. Some of the objects are depicted blurry, like leaves and shadows, conveying the scene with a mysterious atmosphere. In "Star of Moranbah" (2022) Hao Zecheng depicts his memory of a nightly stroll through an Australian city. The artist puts the emphasis on rendering the residual emotional content of the scene, and the landscape is a key to represent the memory of this feeling.

Hao Zecheng's paintings capture a mood, a feeling generated by a specific place or situation, a feeling that becomes a memory eternally linked to a specific context. His works resemble snapshots, in which random factors change the final appearance of the image; and it is exactly these factors, the random noise, or image noise, which he uses as a catalyst to generate this particular feeling and invoke a particular memory.

Hao actually takes snapshots of everyday situations and objects with his mobile phone or a camera. Here he acts like the majority of people, for whom digital devices already became a major utensil to document their life and capture their memories. The camera first grounds the floating impressions and experiences as a digitally coded image, and only then - as the artist states - they become eternal and a support for an actual memory. The phone or camera however changes the image, as it is coded by the device. The image on the screen does not capture the moment authentically. There is always image noise, these random and unwanted variations in luminance and color or in the represented scene itself. Hao exaggerates these flaws and other surplus information generated by the camera, to reveal the original, the authentic image. This authentic image is always motivated, never objective.

To obtain this result the artist on the one hand relies upon concepts developed in traditional Chinese painting theory. He states that living abroad in a Western country made him cherish his Asian origins and search for a way to integrate his culture into his work. He mentions early Qing painter Shi Tao (1642-1707) and his "Treaties on Painting" (Huayu lu) as a reference. Shi Tao uses brush strokes, ink shades and dots to express his state of mind, and his landscape paintings are meant to represent an inner universe. Similarly Hao employs the line, and color dots as a means to create a certain mood, a viewpoint on the represented scene. The repetition and the intertwining of lines, as well as the overlapping color shades, and the use of vague shapes, mirror formal elements of Chinese painting, and stand further for the "ever-changing, subtle, yet complex human feelings and thoughts." Similar to Shi Tao's paintings, the scene is to represent the inner universe. And indeed, it is the depiction of the inner universe, which Hao qualifies as the authentic image he tries to reveal.

On the other hand, Hao Zecheng refers to contemporary Western painters interested in representing memories and using photography as a tool, like Peter Doig or Mama Anderson. He is fascinated by the mysterious and emotional depth of Doig's work, as well as by Anderson's subtle and somehow neutral painting style. Similar to both, Hao charges formal elements emotionally, playing with overlapping and vague shapes, hence intending to immerse the viewer into the painting space and recreate some kind of trance or enlightened awareness while facing the represented scene.

Even though Hao Zecheng's paintings indulge in a rich and mature painting language, he states that his aim is to break away from traditional painting aesthetics. Here, the use of digital photography comes in handy. Like with the digital image, the artist conceives of the painted image as a composition of countless vague shapes and color blocks. In addition, he introduces image noise into the painting language. This aspect is particularly evident in his most recent paintings, like in "Light is Hallucinogen" (2022), "Calligraphy under Flash" (2022) or "Creep, Twine, Fold, Melt" (2022). Bright and seemingly overexposed patches of color, contrast with dark shadows. These color patches, lines and fractures within the image generate some kind of disruption and chaos. The represented scenes seem to develop randomly, unexpectedly, and thus carry changing intentions and feelings.

With the increase of random elements, the emphasis on feeling and memory in the image gradually increases too. In the end, the original image is transformed: street lights change into fireworks, a street becomes the Milky Way, branches turn into calligraphy. Using such aesthetics of image noise generates a poetic space, in which reality, dream, imagination, perception and memory coexist.

Paris, July 2022

About Artist

Hao Zecheng was born in 1993 in Beijing, China. He achieved his master's degree in fine art in Slade School of Fine Art, UCL. Currently works and lives in Beijing, London.

Hao Zecheng used photos and memories as reference texts to describe the neglected scenes in daily life. Through the detailed description of uncertainty in the picture, he created images of time, space and events overlapping with each other. The artist recaptured the traces of time, presented the subtle relationship between self and image while processing the image, and connected the behavior mode with "sequential painting - disordering sequent- reconnecting", mixing reality and dreams, imagination and perception within the picture, which describes the artist's trance feeling of being and shuttling in the contemporary landscape.