

Tang Contemporary Art presents  
Xu Qu Solo Exhibition – Straight Line



Xu Qu, *Maze Pink Blue*, acrylic on canvas, 250 x 372 cm, 2016  
徐渠, 《迷宫粉藍》, 布面丙烯, 250 x 372 cm, 2016

**Exhibition Dates:** January 7 – February 10, 2021

**Location:** 10/F, H Queen's, 80 Queen's Road Central, Central, Hong Kong

**Media Preview:** Thursday, January 7, 3 - 6 pm

**Opening Reception:** Thursday, January 7, 6 - 8 pm

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**Tang Contemporary Art Hong Kong** is proud to announce the opening of "Straight Line," a solo exhibition for Xu Qu, on January 7, 2021. The show will feature works from Xu's *Currency Wars* and *Maze* series made between 2016 and 2020. In these two series, Xu's ideas intersect and run in parallel as he explores visual form.

In *Currency Wars*, Xu Qu chooses small details of banknote patterns from around the world, then he enlarges them dozens of times in his paintings. The patterns of the banknotes are significant as symbols of the financial and capital structures that serve political ones. After the patterns are chosen and enlarged, their symbolic and economic properties are removed, and they transform into the lines, spaces, colors, and other elements of abstract painting. *Currency Wars* is a work of art, and in the act of purchasing and collecting, this work becomes a commodity that circulates in the art system, mimicking market dynamics.

The *Currency Wars* paintings presented at Tang Contemporary Art Hong Kong stem from the third series of renminbi banknotes issued by the People's Republic of China. The series was circulated and used from 1962 to 2000, making it the longest-circulating series in the nation's history. In those 38 years, China's economy and society have changed drastically and these circulating banknotes bear stories rich with history. Xu Qu divides the banknotes into sub-series, based on whether they are new or old. The new banknotes have hard-edged, abstract forms, with straight lines and sharp corners. In contrast, similar designs on the old notes have blurrier edges. The addition of a projected effect makes the images indistinct and uncertain, creating a more expressive abstraction and more intense relief. New and old are

two ends of a timeline that allows us to compare printing and painting, symbols and memories, financial characteristics and temporal backgrounds. Through this comparison, memories of a society and a historical period become identifiable.

Xu Qu began *Maze*, the other series in the exhibition, in 2007. Compared to *Currency Wars*, there is no time or place in *Maze*—there is no specific source. He was inspired by “how humanity is fascinated by discussing the significance of paintings and pictures.” He painted complex, endless mazes comprised of paths headed in different directions, inviting the viewer to participate in the visual game of selecting a path and trying to find a way out. In some of the works, the mazes become double images; two reverse mazes are juxtaposed as mirror images, adding to the visual challenge of the viewing experience. In contrast to the earlier pieces in this series, Xu has particularly emphasized the linear contours of the spatial structures in his more recent *Maze* works; the blocks of color that were used in the past to give the works a sense of three-dimensionality have become indistinct. After the depth and perspective created by blocks of color are stripped away, structures comprised of pure, minimalist lines create a tension between real and illusory in the paintings, making the spaces richer and more diverse. This is a new exploration of visual form, in which the artist both structures and resolves the space. In Xu’s own words, *Maze* is “the most important pictorial type, which combines visual and actual functionality.” By presenting mazes in painting, the issues he focuses on are those of painting itself.

These maze images are full of overlapping, interweaving, and enclosing parts, offering a reflection of the world and how information circulates. How people find their way through the chaotic fragments of information is a more complex issue. In his explorations of painting style or his metaphors for real connections, *Currency Wars* and *Maze* expand and continue one another, collectively inquiring into disputed interests and potential crises within a unified global economy.

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#### **MEDIA INQUIRY**

For high-res images and interview with **Xu Qu** and/or **Sharlane Foo, Director of Sales and Marketing**

Please contact : Cindy Lim - [Cindylim@tangcontemporary.com.hk](mailto:Cindylim@tangcontemporary.com.hk)

#### **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Xu Qu (b.1978, Jiangsu Province, China) currently lives and works in Beijing, China. Xu Qu graduated with MFA in Fine Arts and Film at Braunschweig University of Art in 2008. From the “51 m2 11#” at Taikang Space to the project “Xi Sha, South China Sea Projekt 1#” and the “Upstream”, Xu Qu’s art practice has always been discussing the aesthetic considerations behind social connections through direct movements. However, although he adopts direct movements as before, he attempts to get rid of any unnecessary elements that distract the theme, using the minimalism to simplify the picture. The ultimate goal of the artist is to examine the ultimate target of anthropic aesthetics, and what kind of values and thoughts that the confrontation or mixture of different aesthetic experiences would bring us in different eras.

#### **ABOUT TANG CONTEMPORARY ART**

Tang Contemporary Art was established in 1997 in Bangkok, later establishing galleries in Beijing and Hong Kong. The gallery is fully committed to producing critical projects and exhibitions to promote Chinese contemporary art regionally and worldwide, and encourage a dynamic exchange between Chinese artists and those abroad. Acting as one of the most progressive and critically driven exhibition spaces in China, the gallery strives to initiate dialogue between artists, curators, collectors and institutions working both locally and internationally. A roster of groundbreaking exhibitions has earned them international recognition, establishing their status as a pioneer of the contemporary art scene in Asia.

#### **GALLERY CONTACT**

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