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From the Beijing Zoo to a Hong Kong Gallery: Wang Wei's Dioramic Landscape Paintings Consider Life in Captivity

In 2007, Chinese artist [Wang Wei](#) paid a visit to the Beijing Zoo, and was struck by the background art on display in the animal enclosures. This experience inspired a series of installations and the latest one, *Two Rooms* (2015), is the basis of the artist's new solo [exhibition](#) at Hong Kong's [Edouard Malingue Gallery](#).

ARTSY EDITORIAL

MAR 12TH, 2015 7:02 PM



Wang Wei, Two Rooms, 2015. Courtesy Edouard Malingue Gallery and the artist.

Comprised of life-sized landscape paintings that envelop entire rooms, the zoo exhibits that inspired Wang Wei offer imitations of a “natural” habitat and present a sort of analog virtual reality. His perception of these unusual, unassuming artworks led him to create a series of works investigating this type of painting, questioning its purpose and function, and developing a dialogue through creating his own. The resulting large-scale installations have been shown at Kunsthalle Vienna, among other international venues, and now, a new iteration of the series fills Edouard Malingue Gallery.



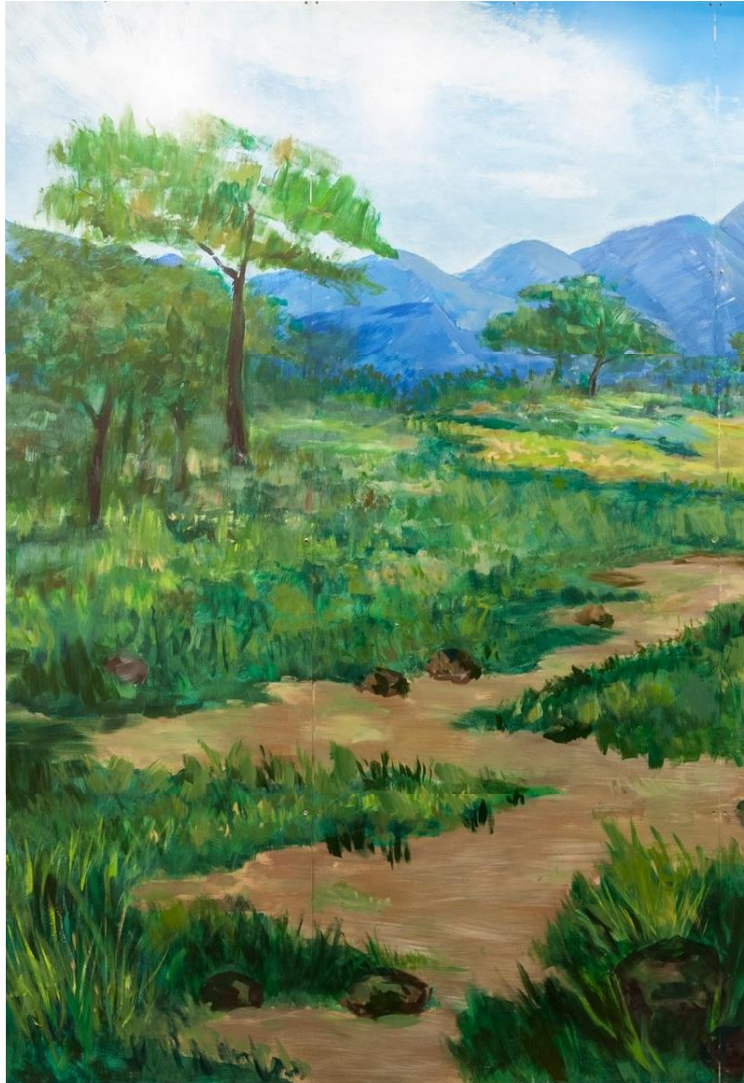
Detail of Wang Wei, Two Rooms, 2015. Courtesy Edouard Malingue Gallery and the artist.

To create paintings in these dioramic settings, artists utilize a specific technique in which space is compressed, creating an illusion of great depth upon a flat or gently curved plane. This method is designed for maximum viewer impact, heightening the feeling of being “within” the scene depicted. Wang Wei’s imitations of zoo dioramas explore the strange, but almost wholly accepted custom of collecting and displaying animals in faux habitats. We remove animals from the natural world, enclose them, and painstakingly recreate the places we took them from.



Wang Wei
Two Rooms (兩個房間), 2015
 Edouard Malingue Gallery

“Two Rooms,” on view concurrently with Art Basel in Hong Kong and Art Central, is Wang Wei’s most recent exploration of zoo artifice, consisting of two floor-to-ceiling paintings, each occupying the entirety of a gallery wall. The piece takes its inspiration from the mountainous landscape paintings in the Beijing Zoo’s Baboon House; taken outside of its normal context, one must consider the painting anew. On of the towering panels encapsulates dusk and autumn, while the other presents dawn and spring, each with color palettes and landscapes that reflect these seasonal moments in time. The inclusion of both dusk and dawn, key markers of daylight, may be a commentary on the absence of natural light for the sheltered zoo animals. By surrounding a human audience in the captive animals’ environment, the installation forces viewers to experience a sort of cognitive dissonance. The paintings are extracted from the overall zoo experience and become mere props, set paintings used to create an atmosphere, to fabricate the illusion of nature, and perhaps even to give humans a taste of their own medicine.



Detail of Wang Wei, Two Rooms, 2015. Courtesy Edouard Malingue Gallery and the artist.

—M.A. Wholey

“Two Rooms” is on view at Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong, Mar. 12–Apr. 15, 2015.

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Wang Wei, Two Rooms, 2015. Courtesy Edouard Malingue Gallery and the artist; Detail of Wang Wei, Two Rooms, 2015. Courtesy Edouard Malingue Gallery and the artist; Detail of Wang Wei, Two Rooms, 2015. Courtesy Edouard Malingue Gallery and the artist.

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Hong Kong full of creativity as galleries channel Art Basel buzz

Central is awash with art, from giant installations to a glass-enclosed doormat

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PUBLISHED : Saturday, 14 March, 2015, 12:50pm
UPDATED : Saturday, 14 March, 2015, 10:56pm



Inside Edouard Malingue Gallery's new space is Wang Wei's exhibition "Two Rooms", which may well be regarded as one giant work. Taking inspiration from the Beijing Zoo, the Chinese artist's immersive setting includes a cast iron radiator trapped in a metal cage, two floor-to-ceiling paintings that are respectively around 15 metres in length, as well as three bananas (one of which is eaten) on the floor.

Show Time

New exhibitions open at virtually every commercial gallery in Hong Kong during Art Week as they seek to make the most of the art-hungry crowds. These are our picks of the major shows not to be missed

BEN BROWN FINE ARTS SIMON BIRCH

British-born, Hong Kong-based painter Simon Birch is best known for his figurative female portraits, but in *Inevitable*, his second show under Ben Brown, he continues his artistic evolution towards a more abstract approach.

March 12-April 29, 301 Pedder Building, 2522 9600.
benbrownfinearts.com



Simon Birch at Ben Brown

BLINDSPOT GALLERY MUSEUM OF THE LOST

This exhibition features a series of 28 staged portraits of characters invented by Hong Kong-based artists Leung Chi-wo and Sara Wong at one of Hong Kong's only galleries dedicated to photography. The series is inspired by an ongoing collection of materials captured by the artists, who are married to each other and have been collaborating since 1992.

March 7-May 2, 15/F, Po Chai Industrial Building, 28 Wong Chuk Hang Rd, Wong Chuk Hang, 2517 6238.
blindspotgallery.com

DE SARTHE GALLERY ZOU WOU-KI

The late Chinese artist Zou Wou-ki (1920-2013) is best known for his marriage of Eastern and Western aesthetics in abstract works of



Zou Wou-ki at De Sarthe

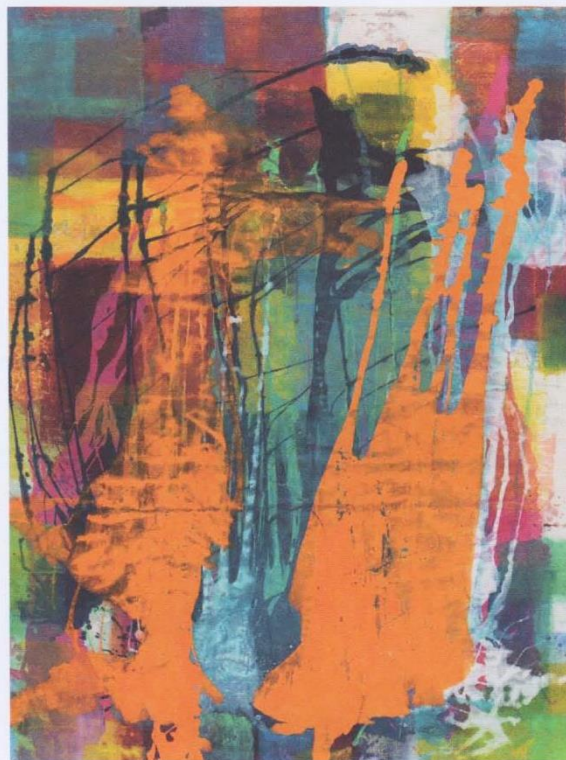
ink and watercolours on paper, and he is now one of the most commercially successful artists in both hemispheres. *Zou Wou-ki: Ink and Watercolour* offers an intriguing selection of seminal pieces produced in the 1950s during the artist's time in Paris, when he began to challenge his cultural identity through his practice, a process that would ultimately set him apart from his peers.

March 12-June 22, 8/F, Club Lusitano Building, 16 Ice House St, Central, 2167 8896.
desarthe.com

EDOUARD MALINGUE GALLERY WANG WEI

This immersive installation by Wang Wei is a continuation of the Chinese artist's ongoing work questioning who the scenic murals inside the animal enclosures at Beijing Zoo are supposed to placate: the humans or the animals? On show at Edouard Malingue's new—and much larger—gallery space, *Two Rooms* comprises a pair of replicated spaces from the zoo complete with 'natural habitat' murals that may leave you wondering which side of the zoological gaze you are on.

March 12-April 15, 6/F, 33 Des Voeux Road Central, 2810 0317.
www.edouardmalingue.com



Flight of Colours 9 (2014) by Qin Yufen in Yi Pai at Pearl Lam Galleries

GAGOSIAN RUDOLF STINGEL

Best known for his 2013 exhibition at Palazzo Grassi in Venice, where he coated the walls and floors of the 5,000sqm space in Persian rugs, and his 2007 mid-career retrospective at the Whitney Museum in New York, where he covered the walls in silver Styrofoam, Stingel has been questioning the essence of the painted form since the 1980s. The artist will be present from 6pm-8pm on opening day.

March 12-May 9, 7/F, Pedder Building, 2151 0555.
gagosian.com



Rudolf Stingel at Gagosian

GALERIE PERROTIN GREGOR HILDEBRANDT

German minimalist Gregor Hildebrandt is known for his works using the humble and





"I am particularly excited by the move of Para Site to an expansive space in Quarry Bay, just ahead of its 20th year. The new show promises to please and provoke in equal measure."

Yana Peel, CEO of Intelligence Squared

16 Mar 2015
Art Agenda [Excerpt]
"Art Basel Hong Kong," by Ming Lin
<http://www.art-agenda.com/reviews/art-basel-hong-kong-3/>

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by MING LIN

March 16, 2015

Art Basel Hong Kong

ART BASEL, Hong Kong

March 15–17, 2015

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In its third iteration under Swiss direction (Art Basel purchased the Art Hong Kong fair in 2013), Art Basel Hong Kong features an abundance of works that wobble, waft, or otherwise cross the threshold between different modes of sensory perception, in attempts to break with an exhibition format and context that otherwise utterly negates the potential for organic encounters and experiences. Within the sterile grounds of the Hong Kong Convention Centre, the works that appeal to the broader sensorium are the ones that manage deliver both aesthetic and conceptual acuity.

Paradoxically, Hong Kong is a sensuous city. Its dewy sub-tropical climate is a contributing factor, but so too is the sheer scale of both the built environment and the social changes that elicit such visceral reaction. This can be unpleasant (vertigo-inducing heights, over-crowding) or sanctifying (air-conditioning, elevated walkways, and perfumed tissues), and the everyday is a constant negotiation of polarizing physical, ideological, and historical elements. In the commercial context, such colonization of airways is palpable, as various enterprises compete for one's attention—shopping malls pump patented aromas, advertisements play musical jingles—thus it is perhaps unsurprising that in the context of the art world one finds accentuated stimulation.

But the fair itself is not contained; it seeps into other sectors of the city voraciously. In Central, just a few train stops away from the convention center, Hong Kong's Edouard Malingue Gallery is hosting an exhibition by Wang Wei, in which the artist has transposed a panoramic jungle mural extracted from the Beijing zoo (*Two Rooms*, 2015) onto the gallery walls. Wang, who is considered a proponent of China's Post-Sense Sensibility movement of the late 1990s and early 2000s, invites visitors to consider the artificial environments that structure the display of both contemporary art and wildlife in captivity. On the 13th floor of a nearby office building, a group exhibition titled "The Tell-Tale Heart," a joint effort between Shanghai's Leo Xu Projects, Pilar Corrias Gallery, and the local K11 Art Foundation, brings together work circling around themes of narration and perception. Ian Cheng's live video simulation (*Something Thinking of You*, 2015) suggests that consciousness is learned and not inherent, while Cheng Ran's LP record *HIT-OR-MISS-IST* (2013) blends soundscapes recorded by the artist on the island of Réunion, in Amsterdam, and in Paris, alluding to growth and expansion.

Returning to the fair grounds, walking past Yang Maoyuan's inflated taxidermic experiments (*"THEY" are coming to Hong Kong*, 2014, at Platform China, Hong Kong) and João Vasco Paiva's monumental tower of Styrofoam boxes rendered on stone resin modules (*Mausoleum*, 2015, presented by Edouard Malingue Gallery), a video work (*Radio Piece*, 2015) by David Claerbout for New York's Sean Kelly quietly speaks to the reality of global cities where physical space is increasingly scarce. "In Hong Kong," the "Encounters" section's curatorial text posits, "mental space has already become the new real estate." Can art provide a sanctuary for the senses or does the context of an art fair lend itself instead to their total domination?

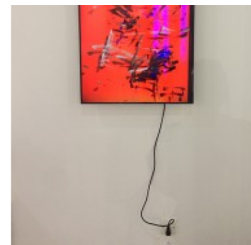
Ming Lin is a writer and researcher based in Hong Kong. Her work is featured in *LEAP*, *Art in America*, and *ArtAsiaPacific* magazines.



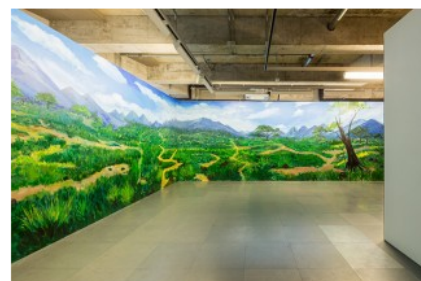
1 Xu Longsen, *Beholding the Mountain with Awe No. 1*, 2008-2009.



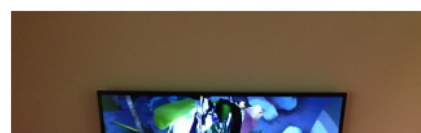
2 View of Blindspot Gallery at Art Basel Hong Kong, 2015, with works by Trevor Yeung.



6 Ken Okiishi, *gesture/data (feedback)*, 2015.



7 Wang Wei, *Two Rooms* (detail), 2015.



20 Mar 2015

Artforum

"World Cliques"

Link: <http://artforum.com/diary/id=50954>

XU ZHEN SOLO EXHIBITION
LONG MUSEUM WEST BUND SHANGHAI
28 MARCH - 24 MAY 2015

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- * Linda Yablonsky at Independent and Andrea Rosen's 25th anniversary party
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Celebrating the 1st Anniversary of LONG MUSEUM WEST BUND SHANGHAI

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World Cliques

HONG KONG 03.20.15



Left: Philosopher Lu Xinghua. Right: Dealer Johnson Chang, philosopher John Rajchman, and artist Xu Longsen.

WHAT EXACTLY MAKES A "WORLD"? Maybe a heady topic for an art fair, but that was the one courted by infamous philosopher Lu Xinghua last Friday during a book launch for *3 Parallel Artworlds* at Hong Kong's Hanart TZ Gallery. "Alain Badiou once said that we all live in the same world, but one reigned by different logics," Lu argued. "As a way of drawing equivalences, money has ruled us for the past five hundred years. If we could find a way to overturn the rule of money-logic, we may finally achieve communism."

I'm not sure if that's exactly how Badiou put it, but Lu's speech was a perfect fit for its subject. *3 Parallel Artworlds* began as a catalogue for the gallery's thirtieth-anniversary exhibition in 2014, "Hanart 100: Idiosyncrasies." A year later, after the addition of articles by Boris Groys, Gao Shiming, and Qiu Zhijie, the book has grown into a chunky, five-hundred-page tome. Lu didn't neglect to emphasize the value of Hanart-founder Johnson Chang's storied art collection while he continued to elaborate on the concept of the "world" and its complications. Indeed context is key: Nothing could make us realize the ambiguity around our different views of "world," as well as money's power to bring together like and unlike, than art fairs.

Yes, art has no national boundaries. Neither do art fairs, especially Art Basel. But that doesn't mean lines weren't drawn in the massive sorting last weekend, as galleries and other institutions did their best to lure the (right) crowds to every manner of party, launch, and dinner around Hong Kong. After a spate of openings Thursday night, visitors from the Western hemisphere had trouble distinguishing between two symbiotic vertigos: jetlag and hangover.



Left: Artist Olafur Eliasson; Right: Collector Xue Bing and Vitamin Creative Space Zhang Wei.

Our trip began Thursday morning in Guangzhou, where Olafur Eliasson opened his exhibition "We have never been disembodied" at Vitamin Creative Space's Mirrored Gardens. After enjoying congee with collectors like Yang Feng and Wang Wei, we strolled into the new galleries designed by Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto. Eliasson's works focusing on space and perception integrated beautifully with the architecture, which had been specially adapted to the local ecology. In one of the rooms, an enormous bronze compass needle hung in the center, bathed in orange light. "If you stare at the needle long enough, you'll find it gradually dissolving in your vision," advised Vitamin Creative Space founder Zhang Wei. Alas, we didn't have time to play hide-and-seek, as our 3 PM ride was taking us to Hong Kong. Though I did feel a little woozy walking out, a foreshadowing of what was to come.

By 6 PM we had already joined the army of art-spelunkers on the ground in Hong Kong. Starting with the "The Tell-Tale Heart" at chi art space, we eventually joined the excruciating long line to get into the Pedder Building galleries and finally walked to nearby Edouard Malingue Gallery, where Wang Wei's solo show "Two Rooms" had transformed the space into a human zoo. (One could pick up the bananas on the floor and eat them.) I gave myself a pat on the back for making it to the final stop, Dinh Q. Lê's show at 10 Chancery Lane Gallery, just before they locked the doors.

By 10 PM, *LEAP*'s party at Wai Chai's famous The Pawn restaurant was the gathering place for the Beijing art dogs. Some expressed disappointment at the most recent interior renovations to the hundred-year-old building, but we had to take their word for it, as the limited second-floor space could barely fit the guests. Those lucky enough to score drinks enjoyed them outside by the street fences, a familiar atmosphere that made me think of eating lamb kebab on the sidewalks in Beijing. As I was chatting up Ned Levin, *LEAP*'s former star translator and now a *Wall Street Journal* Hong Kong correspondent, UCCA director (and former *LEAP* editor-in-chief) Philip Tinari suddenly arrived. Looking enthusiastic, Tinari pulled out his phone, gathered the crowds, and tried to take a group picture. "Everyone, try to look a little depressed, please. We don't work for *LEAP* anymore!"



Left: *LEAP* publisher Cao Dan and UCCA director Philip Tinari. Right: Dealer Shugo Satani, artist Pio Abad, Paul Pfeiffer, and M+ curator Pauline J. Yao.

On Friday morning, Art Central, a new fair organized by the old ART HK crew and mostly geared to young Asia Pacific galleries, opened for a preview in the white tents at Hong Kong's Central Harbourfront. Only time will tell if they'll find their groove alongside Art Basel. Because of the Hanart book launch in the afternoon, we couldn't attend the preview for UCCA and PYE's T-Shirts collaboration, and we were also a little late to Art Basel's private preview, whose change in schedule from prior years had sent many galleries into a whirlwind of preparations. But somehow it all worked out, and, at least to those of us not here for the buying and selling, the fair seemed much neater than last year—and best of all, no flowers or skulls in sight.

Maybe it was Friday the 13th that brought bad luck to M+ curator Yung Ma, who seemed a little spirited when we ran into him at the fair. "Why now?" asked Ma, who had just lost his phone. At which point the resourceful artist Heman Chong whipped out his backup iPhone 4 and offered it up. My friend and I left the surprised Ma and went off in search of festive chat and refreshments at the Long March booth, usually a champagne reservoir. Long March director Lu Jie generously looked as though he could provide, but as he pulled out the bottle, there was nothing left inside. I guess business was just that good.

It's too bad. We could have used a drink to steel us through the weekend's obstacle course itinerary. On Sunday morning, Mobile M+: Moving Images had an opening at Cattle Depot Artist Village; in the afternoon, we attended the annual Intelligence² Debate, which ended with Christie's Elaine Kwok and *Artforum* publisher Charles Guarino scoring the winning points against the motion that "the art world is a boys' club." Then there was a viewing at Spring Workshop for "Days push off into nights," curated by Christina Li, Pékin Fine Arts for an Arik Levy show, and Para Site's opening for "A Hundred Years of Shame," or as the proper Chinese translation has it, "The Edge of the World." "World" remained the keystone for me, and I asked the curator of the last, Anthony Yung, how his show squared with *3 Parallel Artworlds*, which Hanart so articulately delineated as 1.) China's premodern world, 2.) China's socialist world, and 3.) the contemporary global capitalist world. "Hanart's three worlds are too mainstream. You can't possibly dig our 'Edge of the World' out of that, not until the end of time," he explained in Mandarin with a thick Hong Kong accent.

So I guess "world" is an elastic concept. Especially around an art fair, land of a thousand-million worlds. To use a Buddhist term, it's the great Trichilocosm. Too bad we only had three days to explore. But in any case the same old friends will be seen again, in March 2016, still in the Convention Centre.

— Du Keke



Left: Magician Space artist Qu Kejie and artist Wang Wei. Right: Writer and editor Aimee Lin and artist Lee Kit.

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"Wang Wei: Two Rooms"

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Wang Wei: Two Rooms

Thu 12 Mar 2015 to Wed 15 Apr 2015

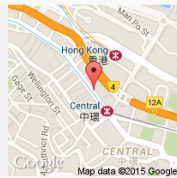
Edouard Malingue

Sixth Floor, 33 Des Voeux Road Central

www.edouardmalingue.com

Open: 10am-7pm Mon-Sat

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Wang Wei: Two Rooms at Edouard Malingue, Hong Kong, from March 12 to April 15, 2015

Two Rooms (2015) is an immersive installation created by the Beijing-based artist Wang Wei (b. 1972).





Conceived not so much as an artwork but rather a vehicle for situating artifice in the context of everyday life, the installation builds upon Wang Wei's interest in the Beijing Zoo; upon a visit in 2007 he was struck by the wall designs of the animal enclosures – were they intended for the humans or the animals? These evident fictions or 'natural' habitats have since inspired several installations exhibited at the Kunsthalle Project Space, Vienna as well as Observation Society, Guangzhou amongst other locations. Each project, including *Two Rooms* at Edouard Malingue Gallery, is an appropriation of an existing space and its visual elements, which Wang Wei then enlarges and adapts to a gallery setting. Through a process of identification, engagement and decontextualisation, Wang Wei questions the veracity of natural forms before fresh eyes and constructs windows for the investigation of new layers of meaning.

A graduate from the Fresco Painting Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1996, Wang Wei was already concerned with the principle tenets of space, viewer interaction and sensory perception. As a member of the artistic and curatorial 'Post-Sense Sensibility' movement in the late 1990s early 2000s, Wang Wei later developed an *ad hoc* spirit⁽¹⁾, a key ingredient that would bring Wang Wei's work not only into the realm of installation but that of performance carved out of a space. To varying degrees, each of Wang Wei's works inspired by the Beijing Zoo have channeled this dichotomy between structure and interaction. *A Zoo, No Animals* (2007), the first Beijing Zoo work exhibited in the city itself, brought abandoned animal cages into an art space, which visitors would then pass through thus inhabiting the cage-like structures, whilst being stripped of immediate context.

Wang Wei's subsequent installations, such as *A Zoo, No Animals 2* (2008) at the Kunsthalle Project Space, Vienna have been similarly immersive. Other iterations of Wang Wei's Beijing Zoo works, however, have involved different sorts of interaction; whilst remaining theatrical and immersive, less 'props' have been used to define the viewers' experience, relying instead on two-dimensional renderings and the visual as well as physical impacts of the pre-existing gallery space. In *Natural History 6* (2013) at Observation Society, Guangzhou, for example, Wang Wei confronted the viewer with a curved mural wall featuring the backdrop of the African Tortoise cage; a mountainous Saharan background fronted by an incongruously replete and vivid blue lake. Thus, the viewer through the great height of the wall and its encircling effect felt both engulfed and situated amidst a fictitiously 'natural' context.

Two Rooms follows from this last project, involving two floor-to-ceiling panels that cover the length and height of the gallery walls. As suggested by the title, two scenarios are cast, each depicting a separate room at the Beijing Zoo's Baboon House. Tonally distinct, one represents dusk/Autumn, whilst the other casts Spring/dawn. Created specifically for Edouard Malingue Gallery, the installation plays with the gallery layout, and leads the viewer through the undulations of the space till they are ultimately faced with the large 'Spring/dawn' room, which presents a florid and mountainous landscape under a tepid red sky. Having at first been faced with the 'dusk/Autumn' room, the viewer notes that the painted forms are remarkably similar – the mountains, odd trees, forms of foliage – signalling ultimately the repetitive monotony of the artificial setting; immersive, yet nonetheless vacuous.

Ultimately, *Two Rooms* (2015) conveys Wang Wei's persistence upon space and immersion. On the one hand, by inserting and recasting the backgrounds of these cages within the 'white cube', he decontextualises the original and highlights its fiction and absurdity. On the other hand, by altering the space of the 'white cube', he challenges the spaces' character and breaks down the gallery's supposed neutrality. This in itself is a great challenge, for Wang Wei is not altering the space's meaning through changing its architecture, but rather by immersing it in a constructed narrative sequence, replete with visual impressions that ultimately have intellectual and bodily repercussions.

Wang Wei's work has been exhibited in numerous important exhibitions including: 12th Chinese Pavilion, International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, Italy (2010); Shenzhen Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism, Shenzhen, China (2009); *The Real Thing: Contemporary Art From China*, Tate Liverpool, UK (2007); *Foreign Objects*, Kunsthalle Wien Project Space, Vienna, Austria (2007); *Beyond: The Second Guangzhou Triennial*, Guangdong Museum of Art, (2005); *A Second Sight*, International Biennale of Contemporary Art, National Gallery in Prague, Czech Republic, (2005); *Between Past and Future: New Photography and Video from China*, International Center of Photography, New York (2004); *The First Guangzhou Triennial*, Guangdong Museum of Art, China, (2002).

(1) Wang Wei: *Borrowing from Reality*, by Pauline J. Yao, June, (2012) p. 2

07 Apr 2015

Art Asia Pacific

Review of Two Rooms: Wang Wei by Katherine Volk

Link: <http://www.artasiapacific.com/Magazine/WebExclusives/TwoRooms>

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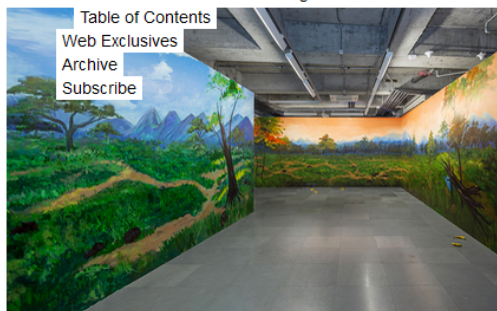
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TWO ROOMS WANG WEI

KATHERINE VOLK
EDOUARD MALINGUE GALLERY

HONG KONG CHINA



Installation view of WANG WEI's "Two Rooms" at Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong, 2015. Courtesy Edouard Malingue Gallery.

Earlier this year, Edouard Malingue Gallery inaugurated its new and expanded gallery space in the bustling central business district of Hong Kong. For its international launch, which coincided with the city's Art Basel week in March, Edouard Malingue chose to present a solo exhibition of Beijing-based Wang Wei, who specifically created an immersive painting installation that currently fills the walls of the gallery. Entitled "Two Rooms," the show is a continuation of Wang's zoo-inspired installation projects, exploring the assimilation and appropriation of nature in an artificial environment.

As a member of the "Post-Sense Sensibility" movement—an experimental underground group in China, active in the late 1990s and early 2000s, whose practices ran against the rigid grain of institutionalization—Wang's artistic style developed with an impromptu quality, which brought his work into the territory of performance and installation art. In 2007 Wang visited the Beijing Zoo, where he became fascinated with the wall designs of its animal enclosures, which included painted depictions of natural habitats, from the desert to the jungle to the tropics. It is an experience that has had a lasting impact on his subsequent artistic practice. Who was the wall décor intended for? Was it for the animals in the cage or the human visitors? Inspired by the fictional representations of natural habitat and fabricated spaces found in the zoo, Wang began a series of installation projects that appropriate such habitat enclosures. The outcome of these projects have been exhibited at various locations, including Vienna's Kunsthalle Wien Project Space in 2007 and, more recently, Guangzhou's Observation Society in 2013.



WANG WEI, *Two Rooms* (detail), 2015, wood, paint and aluminum, 300 x 1,554 cm. Courtesy Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong.

For "Two Rooms" Wang reproduced painted designs from the baboon house at Beijing Zoo. Walking into the gallery, visitors also encounter a radiator trapped within a metal cage. Emphasizing the unnatural dwellings forced upon animals at the zoo, the radiator is reminiscent of those placed inside the animals' cages to maintain temperatures similar to their natural habitats during Beijing's freezing winters. The caged radiator at the gallery is a stark reminder that, despite the intent to recreate the natural environment of the animal, the warmth emitted from a man-made appliance will never be a complete substitute for the heat of a jungle or desert.

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WANG WEI, *Two Rooms* (detail), 2015, wood, paint and aluminum, 300 × 1,464 cm. Courtesy Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong.

The tedious repetitiveness of the fabricated environments is highlighted by the similar way in which two time periods (day/night) and the four seasons are portrayed. The paintings, spanning nearly 15 meters in length, engross the viewer in the space and compel them to engage with the imaginary and artificial habitats that Liu has created. Vast lands painted onto the wooden boards give the false impression of an endless space that reaches out beyond the mountains, to a place that we will never be able to fully access as captives within the confinements of a gallery space.

By recreating backgrounds of animal cages, within the white walls of Edouard Malingue Gallery, Wang decontextualizes the zoo habitat in order to shed light on the ludicrousness of such pseudo-natural environments. Utilizing the architectural layout of the gallery, Wang creates an immersive world that visitors can experience, making "Two Rooms" a truly ambitious departure from traditional gallery exhibitions.

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"Wang Wei: Two Rooms" is on view at Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong, until April 15, 2015.

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2015.04.30 Thu, by Tsao Yidi Translated by: Fei Wu

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Wang Wei's "Two Rooms" opened at [Edouard Malinque Gallery](#) amid the flurry of openings fighting for attention during Art Basel Hong Kong. The show is simple and concise; one look around the room is sufficient to gauge its scope, but hidden within this simplicity is something indescribably complex. As an installation artist who has ranged over various disciplines, Wang Wei has over the years taken part in many exhibitions in China and abroad. Randian met the artist at the gallery to talk about the ins and outs of his creative practice.

Wang Wei shows me some photographs he took at the Beijing Zoo. The photos of wall art at the zoo look exactly the same as the paintings in the exhibition before us.

Wang Wei (WW): So this is what Beijing Zoo looks like. I've transplanted it here.

Tsao Yidi (TYD): What interests you about zoos?

WW: Zoos are man-made environments. Animals are kept in cages, but if they were kept in exhibition spaces, it'd be interesting. As time went on, the more I went to the zoo, the more I discovered. I like to think about why the zoo's designer created each situation and environment—why one space is large while another is small, why one wall is squared off while another is semicircular. There's a reason for everything. There are even hierarchies among the animals. For example, I assume rarer animals are treated quite well. There was a similar correlation in the wall art. Some of the paintings I did of the animals' rooms were very rough—I finished them in half an hour. Others are very realistic, such as a painting of the hippopotamus house. If you look carefully, they're all different. I think it has to do with how rare and precious the animal is. Some of the art in their pens are mosaics—there are even entire ponds made out of mosaic tiles because ceramic tiles are waterproof and can last a long while. So the more I went, the more I discovered.

TYD: Is every animal's pen similar?

WW: They're all similar, but this was based on the primate exhibit. Baboons are from Africa, so I imagine this was based on Mount Kilimanjaro. Perhaps the zoo artists did some research before doing the paintings. There were a few different landscapes; I chose a few of the more interesting ones. The landscapes are very realistic—one at dawn, one at dusk. This idea started with the current circumstances of each space, and I redesigned them. I removed the context of the zoo, forged a new type of relationship, and connected it with reality.

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Installation view of Wang Wei, "Two Rooms", 2015 (At Edouard Malinque Gallery, Hong Kong)
王卫《两个房间》展览现场，香港马凌画廊，2015



Installation view of Wang Wei, "Two Rooms", 2015 (At Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong)
王卫《两个房间》展览现场，香港马凌画廊，2015

TYD: I had the opportunity to see your project at Observation Society in Guangzhou. Could you talk about that?

WW: That was in 2013. The concept behind it was similar to this exhibition, so this show is basically an extension. That piece was entitled "Natural History VI". The inspiration for that also came from Beijing Zoo. Since 2007, I've been using elements from zoos. In 2007, there was a group exhibition at Long March Space called "NONO." The first piece was "A Zoo, No Animals"; it replicated four nocturnal animal exhibits. The exhibition space at Long March Space is relatively dispersed. My work was placed in a central position—four small, dark rooms that the viewers had to walk through. The installations recreated a zoo-like environment. What attracted me then about this project was that by nature, zoos are replicated environments—they mimic the natural habitats of animals. So I extended this act of "replication", replicating these false environs within an exhibition space, transforming them into art. They serve one purpose in the zoo, but when they are moved to the exhibition space, their attributes change. When viewers come...I mean, just as in a zoo, the audiences are still here to view exhibits, but the experience differs if you move from a natural setting to the zoo and then into a museum. So, my technique is about shifting the context, and thinking conceptually. I also made some adjustments and did some redesigning based on the exhibition space itself.

TYD: Is the reality you speak of the "original"? If a painting in the zoo is a copy of the Serengeti, then do you feel the "original" is the Serengeti?

WW: It is essentially an absurd situation within reality. For example, when we are in the zoo, the designer creates an environment that replicates reality based on research or his own imagination; then I borrow the visual tricks he uses.

TYD: So what you are recreating is this action of his? His act of "replicating"?

WW: You could explain it like that. There is already an existing relationship within the context of the zoo. When I borrow it for a piece of art, that relationship still exists, but it has been transformed because the context has changed—new signifiers have been added. The reference has not changed. That is to say, I have tried to preserve its original appearance to the greatest extent possible, but of course it isn't exactly the same. For example, the pieces this time are presented more like murals, but my previous works revolved around the zoo exhibits themselves, featuring food bowls and other such items. This time I wanted to present them as painted backgrounds in the exhibition. There's more abstracted.

TYD: Your specialization was in frescoes—how has this affected your current work?

WW: I studied fresco painting, but I wouldn't say there's a really direct relationship between my study and these pieces. Frescoes are an artistic manifestation—a form of public art. Frescoes are more commercial and decorative; they don't interest me very much. I worked as a photojournalist at Beijing Youth Daily for eight years after graduating from university. It was a long time. I worked on my own projects at the same time, putting together exhibitions with friends and classmates.

TYD: You are a member of the "Post-Sense Sensibility" movement. Can you talk more about that?

WW: After I graduated, I rented a small place and began painting, creating. I lived near Liu Wei; we graduated in the same year, but he went to China Academy of Art while I went to the Central Academy of Fine Arts. We saw a lot of each other back then; he even recommended me to Beijing Youth Daily—he was an arts editor there at the time. Through Liu Wei, I eventually met Qiu Zhijie and Jiang Zhi. At the time, Qiu Zhijie was arranging a "Post-Sense Sensibility" exhibition with Wu Meichun, taking aim at the cold, conceptual work trending at the time.

I feel there were a lot of very distinct ideas behind "Post-Sense Sensibility"; we wanted to encourage young artists and visit some studios. The environment in Beijing at like...no galleries or art spaces or anything. Whenever anything happened, it was very underground. Putting these kinds of exhibitions still demanded a venue and money. Initially, we were going to have an exhibition at Cai Qing's sister's place, but then Cai Qing went back to Germany and never came back. Things got held up until December 1998, when we finally found a place and we were going to have the show in just two or three weeks. It was in the neighborhood where Sun Yuan was living at the time, in Shaoyaoju near the North Fourth Ring Road; one day he noticed an empty basement in that neighborhood. They asked the property management people about it, and told them he needed to make some props and set pieces for a television show down there, something like that. It was a huge basement with dozens of little rooms, but it came cheap—just one or two thousand a month. We had been planning and preparing for nearly two years, and all of the exhibiting artists were locked in. In January of 1999, we held the first Post-Sense Sensibility exhibition. I could talk about this for hours.

TYD: What exhibitions do you have coming up this year?

WW: The one I'm sure about is the Cass Sculpture Foundation exhibition in the UK in May. It will be in an outdoor space. It might not have much to do with zoos, but something to do with mosaics.



Installation view of Wang Wei, "Two Rooms", 2015 (At Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong)
王卫《两个房间》展览现场, 香港马凌画廊, 2015



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Apr 2015

Monocle

'Embracing the contemporary' by Well Hung

BRIEFING
Art market



Nordic modern

Stockholm [AUCTION]

Modern-art auction

21-22 April

Since it was founded by Polish refugee Henryk Bukowski in 1870, Stockholm-based Bukowskis has gone on to become Sweden's biggest independent auction house.

"We've always tried to be cutting edge," says Carl Barkman, Bukowskis's head of experts. The auction house was among the first to put estimates in its catalogues and removed the traditional dark curtains in the 1980s, allowing passers-by to peer in.

On 21 and 22 April, Bukowskis holds its 584th modern-art auction, with lots including Ytterhogdalen-born painter Leander Engström's oil-on-canvas work "Den givmilda gossen" (pictured, top). If the colour palette feels familiar it is because Engström was one of Henri Matisse's students. The painting is expected to fetch a tidy SEK3m (€315,000). — JTT

bukowskis.com

Highlights

Leander Engström

"Den givmilda gossen", 1911, oil on canvas, 105 cm x 83 cm. Estimate: SEK3m (€315,000)

Bror Hjorth

"Ole och Boy" (pictured, middle), 1945, oil on canvas, 99 cm x 81 cm. Estimate: SEK1.6m (€170,000)

Gösta Adrian-Nilsson

"Blå husarer" (pictured right, bottom), 1918, oil on paper, 46.5 cm x 32 cm. Estimate: SEK1.2m (€130,000)



Rhine time

Köln [ART FAIR]

Art Cologne

16-19 April

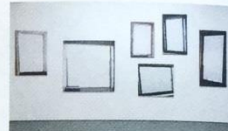
Back in 1967, Köln-based gallerists Hein Stünke and Rudolf Zwirner launched Art Cologne in their city to revitalise the west German art market and drum up support for local creatives. It is now the longest-running modern and contemporary-art fair in the world, with its 49th edition due to run from 16 to 19 April at the Koelnmesse exhibition centre on the banks of the Rhine.

This year sees the expansion of Art Cologne, from two to three floors, with designated areas for modern and postwar works as well as contemporary and emerging art from Germany and around the world. "Although we have gone through many changes

since 1967, the goal is the same," says Art Cologne director Daniel Hug. "That is, an overview of progressive galleries presenting art from the 20th and 21st centuries." Don't miss *Bookmarks*, a survey of conceptual art from the 1960s to the present curated by three Hungarian galleries.

Sample local artistic flair courtesy of Köln galleries such as Markus Lüttgen, Berthold Pott and Jan Kaps but seek out offerings from further afield, too. "Germany has the highest concentration of commercial galleries outside the US," says Hug of the countless showrooms and exhibition venues in cities such as Berlin, Hamburg, Düsseldorf and, of course, Köln. "It makes sense to bring them all together once a year." — JTT

artcologne.com



WELL HUNG

Embracing the contemporary

Edouard Malingue gallery

Hong Kong

When Parisian art dealer Edouard Malingue (pictured) moved to Hong Kong five years ago to set up his eponymous gallery, he opted for a decidedly international programme; his first show featured the largest Picasso exhibition the city had seen. In January, Edouard moved the gallery to a bigger location in the Central district in order to accommodate the growing ambition of his exhibitions and projects.

Beau Architects designed the new premises, which Edouard runs with his wife Lorraine (pictured). While the original metal-tiled floors were retained, the ceiling was removed to create a sense of space. The steel frames that support the gallery walls are a nod to that pioneer of modern architecture Mies van der Rohe, while a VIP room celebrates native materials such as rattan. "We wanted

the gallery to feel ample and contemporary while reflecting our commitment to Hong Kong," says Edouard.

The new space opened with a group show called *Invisible Light*, which featured contemporary artists from Hong Kong, Istanbul, Paris and New York incorporating and manipulating light in mixed-media works (pictured).

For March and April Beijing-based artist Wang Wei has transformed the entire gallery showroom into two "baboon rooms". The immersive installation is inspired by the natural-looking but artificial animal enclosures that are favoured by Beijing Zoo. "Hopefully it will prompt viewers to question the nature of their surroundings," says Edouard. — JTT

edouardmalingue.com

PHOTOGRAPHY: OLIVER CLARKE

Apr 2015

Artforum

Critics' Picks: Wang Wei by Ysabelle Cheung

Link: <http://artforum.com/?pn=picks§ion=world#picks51227>

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CRITICS' PICKS

Cape Town

- Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin
- "Thinking, Feeling, Head, Heart"

Beijing

- Liu Wei

Hong Kong

- Wang Wei
- Ren Ri
- "Days push off into nights"

New Delhi

- Alwar Balasubramaniam

Manila

- Poklong Anading

Seoul

- Haegue Yang

São Paulo

- "Imagine Brazil"

Hong Kong


Wang Wei

EDOUARD MALINGUE GALLERY
33 Des Voeux Road Central, Sixth Floor
March 12–April 18

"How often does one have to change the bananas?" It might not be the most academic of questions, but its relevance lies at the heart of Wang Wei's latest exhibition. Titled *Two Rooms* (all works 2015), the installation is a simulation of the scenery in animal enclosures, specifically at the Beijing Zoo, which the artist visited in 2007 and where he became fixated on the cages' garish decorations.

Two large murals in the second room split the L-shaped gallery space into distinct sections: The first is a crisp, apple-green spring landscape doused in midmorning light, while the second is a luminous autumn day at sunset—darker, redder, and with greater depth. The second mural is something of a secret, unseen from the entrance and only visible once you turn a corner. Freed from the high stakes of originality, the appropriated painterly marks on the walls are a product of neither Abstract Expressionism nor landscape realism, but are rather an odd cipher for staged environments.

Then there are the subtle markers that question the viewer's place in this scene, as spectator or captive. For instance, the sculpture in the first room is a painted radiator boxed in by a metal grate, suggesting that the gallery itself is a cage that corrals art in a similar way to a viewer's capture by the eye-pleasing, immersive murals. The bananas scattered on the floor throughout the gallery, which are left out for three days at a time before being replaced, would seem to serve as leftovers from feeding time for a rarefied art audience.



Wang Wei, *Two Rooms*, 2015, paint, wood, aluminum, bananas, dimensions variable.

— Ysabelle Cheung