

Edouard Malingue Gallery

馬凌畫廊

Opening Hours

Tuesday to Saturday

11AM-7PM

Exhibition

'Zhang Huan: Aura of Disappearance'

First Floor, 8 Queen's Road

Central, Hong Kong

Dates

May 25 – June 30, 2011

Opening Reception

May 25, 6.30-8.30PM

Public Installation

May 23 – July 17, 10AM-10PM (daily)

1881 Heritage, Canton Road,

Tsim Sha Tsui

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Edouard Malingue Gallery is delighted to announce that it will hold a solo exhibition of works by the contemporary Chinese artist Zhang Huan, in cooperation with The Pace Gallery, from 25 May to 30 June 2011.

The exhibition will feature 10 striking ash paintings, and two haunting ash army sculptures, to be displayed in the elegant gallery space designed by OMA in Central. This will be first time these works have been shown in Hong Kong.

During this period, "1881 Heritage", one of Hong Kong's cultural and shopping landmarks, will also sponsor the exhibition of the sculpture, *Three Heads Six Arms*. This iconic and monumental work of art will be on display at the Grand Piazza of "1881 Heritage" in Tsim Sha Tsui. On May 23, 2011, Zhang Huan himself will also officiate the opening ceremony of the *Three Heads Six Arms* exhibition at the historical development, alongside representatives of "1881 Heritage" and Edouard Malingue Gallery.

Zhang Huan is one of China's most renowned performance and conceptual artists. Born in 1965 in Anyang, Henan Province, he studied painting at Henan University and earned an MA from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, but switched to performance art, which he found a more powerful means of expression. His often traumatic performances always involve his own body as an artistic medium.

In 1994, Zhang created the performance work, *12 Square Meters*, in which he smeared fish oil and honey over his naked body and sat in an outdoor public toilet letting flies swarm over him. This work, which like many others became famous through its photographic documentation, was interpreted as a condemnation of the appalling living conditions in Beijing East Village, the artistic community where Zhang lived, as well as the ability of the human mind to rise above pain.

Zhang also choreographed group performances, such as *To Raise the Water Level in a Fishpond*, in which he asked 40 migrant workers to stand in a pond; and *To Add One Meter to an Anonymous Mountain*, where he and 9 other artists climbed a mountain near Beijing, stripped and lay on top of one another. Nudity removed cultural identity and put people back in nature. In 1998, Zhang moved to New York and during his eight years there he created performance works, which often expressed his feeling of isolation in a foreign culture.

This exhibition focuses on Zhang Huan's ash paintings and sculptures which he began making after he returned to China in 2005 and set up his studio in Shanghai. The idea of the body being the link between the inner spirit and the outside world, between the individual and society, seen in his performance works, had its roots in Buddhism and other Asian spiritual practices. In 2005, Zhang converted to Buddhism and began to create his ash paintings, as well as sculptures inspired by the fragments of Buddhist statues.

Zhang chose to work with incense ash as a medium because of its associations with Buddhist religious practice. The ash is collected from several temples near Shanghai. He explains, "To me, incense ash is neither 'just ash' nor 'just a material'. It represents the collective souls, memories and prayers of the faithful... The prayers offered are all devout and beautiful... Using this incense ash to create paintings crystallizes the prayers, memories and souls within." For Zhang, the ash thus has a spiritual power which can manifest itself via his paintings.

The ash paintings are based on old black and white photos from magazines such as the *PLA Pictorial* or the *National Pictorial*, dating from the early years of the Republic in the 1940s and the latter years of the Cultural Revolution in the 1970s.

Zhang evokes the past in China, and uses ash, a medium redolent of China's centuries-old tradition and cultural history. By his radically new use of this medium, his aim is to resurrect and transcend the past. Just as in his performance works, Zhang's intention is liberation.

Three Heads Six Arms

The monumental copper sculpture *Three Heads Six Arms* is one of a series of works inspired by fragments of Buddhist statues, which Zhang Huan found in a market shortly after his return to China. Zhang was deeply moved by their destruction and started making large-scale copper hands based on the symbolic fingers of Buddhist deities. He then created larger works combining the legs, feet, hands and heads of Buddhist deities in an attempt to reverse the desecration and pain they had suffered.

Three Heads Six Arms is the largest sculpture in the series, measuring 800 cm x 1,800 cm x 1,000 cm and weighing 15 tons. The sculpture is based on the Chinese mythological figure Nezha and Tibetan Buddhist sculptures. Two of the three Buddha heads have been replaced by human heads, including a self-portrait of the artist. As in his performance pieces, Zhang places himself centre stage to emphasize the importance of liberation through experience.

"*Three Heads Six Arms* reflects the changing realities of Chinese people today, the attitude that humankind has conquered nature and even deeds of volition and hope," said Zhang. "While it clearly embodies ideas that are rooted in Chinese culture and tradition, it is also about our common humanity."

Three Heads Six Arms made its world premiere in May 2010 in San Francisco, California, where it remained installed for a period of nine months and was met with critical acclaim.