

Kiang Malingue Seeking Traces

馬凌畫廊
kiangmalingue.com

10 Sik On Street, Wanchai, Hong Kong
50 Eldridge St., New York, NY 10002

(Artist) Zheng Zhou

(Opening)
Mon, 23 March, 6 – 8 PM

(Date)
24 March – 23 May 2026

(Gallery Hours)
Tue to Sat, 12 – 6 PM

(Location)
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Kiang Malingue is pleased to present at its Hong Kong space *Seeking Traces*, Zheng Zhou's fifth exhibition with the gallery, showcasing recent paintings by the artist.

Zheng Zhou's 2024 exhibition *Spanish Grilled Fish* at Kiang Malingue's Hong Kong space continued the artist's fascination with multifaceted, uncanny characters: his figures appear blurred, often rendered as simplified silhouettes, while layers of colour, decidedly saturated or subtly muted, weave these ethereal characters into profoundly alluring, vibrant environments. The current exhibition showcases the artist's radical shift towards abstraction in recent years: rectangular colour blocks emerge irregularly as a recurring motif across multiple works, charting elementary chromatic networks through vibrant or deep hues like titanium white, scarlet, violet, and cobalt blue. In this new series, the mystifying narratives found in Zheng Zhou's previous works give way to unrestrained rhythms: sweeping colour blocks cover the canvas like billowing brocade, producing a visual experience that is intricately layered and variegated.

The diptych *Spring in the south* (2025) is exemplary of Zheng Zhou's recent shift toward abstraction: The large-scale canvas is fragmented into multiple loose clusters by minute, vibrant colour blocks, dispelling any coherent narrative formed by human movement, natural landscapes, or light and shadow. Instead, the organic play of stacked colour blocks builds a delicate and entrancing labyrinth. The seemingly flat space is guided by multiple threads of purple and green, revealing an immense constellation of compositional potentials. The triptych *Seeking traces among the deep blossoms* (2025) further employs colour as space: colours become each other's frames or screens; parallel strokes of wild brushwork stabilise precarious gravitational relationships; a few hastily sketched figures once again hint at incorporating milieus of uncanny depth—amidst the interplay of intrepid and tenuous strokes, Zheng Zhou's compositions invite viewers to seek traces and lose themselves within.

Works such as *Secret passage to hidden depths* (2025) and *A boy* (2025) are reminiscent of Zheng Zhou's iconic landscape paintings, focusing on an isolated figure that is on the verge of becoming indistinguishable. Purely abstract compositions like *In water* (2025) and *Nostalgia 3* (2025), on the other hand, rely on delicately balanced palettes. These pieces either underscore Zheng Zhou's enduring fascination with natural forms, or resemble some sophisticated endgame of go, transforming viewers into players whose involvement is poignantly at stake.

Zheng Zhou studied at the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts in Hangzhou (now the China Academy of Art) during the 1990s, where he was taught by Liang Quan. In the winter of 2025, Liang Quan authored an essay analysing the aspirations and evolution of Zheng Zhou's artistic practice:

“From 1990 to 1994, Zheng Zhou and I crossed paths in the Printmaking Department of Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts. I was a teacher; he was a student. In retrospect, it seems that that group of students back then knew exactly what they wanted and pursued it with relentless determination. As their teacher, however, I was numb and lacking in

empathy, simply following the Ministry of Culture's prescribed curriculum guidelines into the classroom day after day... Reflecting on the past, I feel a sense of regret—it's unfortunate that we can't experience life twice.

A few days ago, Zheng Zhou told me that I had given high marks to two students in the class back then, and he was one of them. Nearly thirty years have passed, and I no longer recall the specifics of that classroom assignment. Yet his grip on the assignments, technical proficiency, and artistic sensibility left a profound impression on me. After graduation, he resolutely abandoned academia to enter the art world. For years, he has worked tirelessly in Beijing and Hangzhou, quietly perfecting his studio in a hermetic fashion. His efforts have borne remarkable fruit. I find his recent shift toward abstract expression truly invigorating.

In his creative process, he consciously or unconsciously reveals a contemplation of the spectral logic of colour. Many artists attempt to unify the aesthetic appeal of their works based on purely personal preferences for certain colours: a single shade of grey or saturated hues, designing a sophisticated colour system tailored to their individual tastes. In Zheng Zhou's work, the vibrancy of colour strives to restore the most fundamental data of spectral wavelengths. Colour is simply colour; colour is free, and the artist is free. At no point need they yield to some made-up visual system or bow to conventionalised aesthetic tastes.

This is precisely why I was delighted when I saw Zheng Zhou's recent abstract works. I believe he will only grow stronger in his art, for he lives in a state of simplicity, self-assurance, and modest means.”

(About Zheng Zhou)

Zheng Zhou (b. 1969, China) is a painter of instinct, conveying onto canvas observations from the world, as ad hoc as they may be. His strokes, furtive yet decisive, depict an urgency to grasp that mesmeric multitude of the cosmos, the 'phenomena' we, or more precisely he, is a witness to. Referencing 'I Ching' ("The Book of Changes"), Zheng channels the astronomical, remarking the myriad of components that make up our universe, mimicking its duplicity through his subject range, hues and techniques.

A prolific painter, Zheng debuted by studying Printmaking at the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts, which led to a post at the Printmaking Department of the China Academy of Arts from 1994 to 1996. Zheng subsequently shifted his creative practice towards one of painting, pursuing a Masters in Oil Painting at the China Academy of Art from 1997 to 1999, following which he became a lecturer at the China Academy of Art Affiliated High School from 2000-2010. Throughout these years of tuition and pedagogy, Zheng painted systematically and doggedly, before relocating to Beijing in 2013 to work as an artist. Over the course of several decades Zheng, now based in Hangzhou, created canvas after canvas, depicting a range of phenomena, albeit away from the public eye—a private stream of observational consciousness. Zheng Zhou's works have been collected by White Rabbit Collection, Sydney and APSMUSEUM, Shanghai.