

# PearlLam Galleries

## CHINESE ABSTRACT MASTER ZHU JINSHI PRESENTED AT PEARL LAM GALLERIES

DURING ART BASEL IN HONG KONG



Left: *Hard Roads in Shu 1*, 2012, Oil on canvas  
Right: *God Particle B*, 2012, Oil on canvas

**HONG KONG** - Pearl Lam Galleries brings to Hong Kong for the first time a major exhibition of the work of Chinese Abstract Master: Zhu Jinshi, who participated in The Stars first ever show of contemporary art in China in 1979, and debated Abstract Expressionism with Robert Rauschenberg. *Zhu Jinshi: The Reality of Paint* will be curated by Paul Moorhouse, Abstract Expert and Senior Curator at the National Portrait Gallery London and will feature 26 new strikingly dense and abstract oil paintings. The exhibition will open to the public on **Wednesday 22 May 2013**.

During the Cultural Revolution, Zhu Jinshi was an active participant in underground cultural and literary activities and in the late 1970s emerging as a member of the renowned and groundbreaking 'Stars' (Xingxing) avant-garde artist group alongside Ai Weiwei and Ma Desheng. Working in Berlin in the 1980s and influenced by Kandinsky, Zhu began his lifelong commitment to the language of pure abstract form. His involvement with abstract expressionist painting is not simply a desire to emulate Western antecedents however, but to invest that art form with characteristics that are specific to Chinese traditions of free brush (xie yi) and ink painting. In 1985, Zhu recalls having a heated debate with Robert Rauschenberg, who was exhibiting a retrospective of his work at the National Art Museum in Beijing, as Zhu attempted to explain that the theoretical bases of Abstract Expressionism, such as gesture and the expressive nature of the brush, were not

new and actually had been part of Chinese aesthetic theory for centuries. Zhu's paintings are a visceral means of expression and whilst being embodied with preoccupations of his own culture the works take on a physical presence of their own. Moorhouse has described Zhu's paintings as dense tapestries of interconnected experience, in this respect their thickness is essential, giving tangible form to the fleeting and ephemeral.

Highlights of the exhibition include *Water Lilies*, 2006, which Moorhouse has included deliberately for its importance in the stylistic and material evolution of Zhu's work; it marks his move towards a more vibrant palette whilst hinting at his preceding work and connection to Gerhard Richter. Featured works include the enormous triptych *Season of Paralyzing Strokes*, 2012 which is almost 5 meters wide. The piece represents Zhu's tribute to modern Chinese poets, including Bei Dao, with whom Zhu became close friends in Berlin after he was exiled from his homeland in the 1980s. It is a record of this formative period of time in the artist's life as well as the artist's expression of the deep emotion felt towards Bei Dao, particularly after hearing that his friend had fallen ill in 2012.

The series of three paintings *Hard Roads in Shu*, will also be on show for the first time at this exhibition. Inspired by the literary works of renowned Tang dynasty poet Li Bai (701 - 762 AD) that describe the sublimely majestic mountains and impassable valleys in Sichuan (Shu). The influence of traditional Chinese landscape genre paintings can also be seen here with large areas of blank canvas left (liu-bai), a noticeable departure from his previously covered canvases. Zhu Jinshi has said of his series *"Although these paintings are not able to move mountains or break stones, the exceptional power of these paintings lies in their ability to clear the mind of all worries... [unblocking] creative and spiritual pathways."*

Zhu describes how his works' completion hinges on the influence of time, material and environment. *"There is a distinct visual difference in the painted surface now and from when the paintings had just been completed. The passage of time bestows upon the artworks new life, as if the material itself were living and breathing."*

*"Zhu Jinshi is one of China's leading contemporary artists. His highly distinctive approach was apparent from the early 1980s, when he made his first abstract paintings...His paintings assert themselves on their own terms, but they are not simply inert. Colour, light, texture and atmosphere are vital elements that animate these extraordinary works, informing them with the mysterious aura of life."* Exhibition curator Paul Moorhouse, former curator at Tate Britain and now Senior Curator at the National Portrait Gallery, London

*"It is an honour to be presenting Zhu Jinshi's first solo show in Hong Kong to celebrate the first anniversary of the gallery. Bringing this important artist to Hong Kong at a time when the city is becoming a major art hub both in Asia and globally represents another milestone in Pearl Lam Galleries' mission to promote artistic dialogue between the East and West. Zhu's engaging and unmistakable paintings attempt to reconcile two traditions and underline how Chinese abstract has been a major undiscovered force in contemporary art."* Althea Viafora-Kress, international gallery director of Pearl Lam Galleries

## Press Enquiries

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## Exhibition Dates

22 May–13 July, 2013

Monday-Saturday, 10am–7pm

Pearl Lam Galleries, 601–605, 6/F, Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Central, Hong Kong

## Notes to Editors

### About Zhu Jinshi

Zhu Jinshi was born in Beijing, China in 1954. After completing an artist-in-residency in Germany and teaching in the Architecture Department of the Berlin Technical University, Zhu returned to Beijing, where he currently lives and works. He began painting abstract works in the late 1970s, and participated in the Stars (Xing Xing) group exhibition, the first avant-garde art exhibition after the Cultural Revolution. Zhu has exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions including *Chinese Contemporary Abstract, 1980s until Present: MINDMAP* (2012) at Pearl Lam Galleries, Hong Kong; *Power and Jiangshan* (2008) at Arario Gallery, Beijing; and *On the Road* (2002) at Prague City Museum, Czech Republic. Zhu's work is represented in many private and public collections across the globe, including Canada where his rice paper installation *The Tao of Xuan Paper* (1997) is on permanent display at the Vancouver Art Gallery. In May 2013, to coincide with the first edition of Art Basel in Hong Kong, Zhu will have his first Hong Kong solo show at Pearl Lam Galleries. His work is also currently showing in *Alone Together* at the prestigious Rubell Family Collection in Miami till August. He is represented in many private and public collections worldwide.

### About Paul Moorhouse

Paul Moorhouse has been Curator of 20th Century at the National Portrait Gallery, London since 2005. He began his career as a curator at the Government Art Collection in London before joining Collections at Tate, and later Contemporary Art. He is a specialist in international 20th century art and has organised numerous exhibitions, including: *The Queen: Art and Image (2011-12)*, *Gerhard Richter Portraits (2009)* and *Pop Art Portraits (2007-8)* at the National Portrait Gallery. He has published extensively. Recent publications include *Anthony Caro: Presence (2010)*, *Gerhard Richter—Painting Appearances (2009)*, *Pop Art Portraits (2007)*, *Interpreting Caro (2005)*, as well as numerous exhibition catalogues, among which recent titles include *Tony Bevan Self-Portraits (2011)*, *Bridget Riley—From Life (2010)*, and *Frank Auerbach: London Building Sites 1952-1962* (Courtauld Institute 2009). His monograph, *Cindy Sherman*, will be published this year. Moorhouse is currently organising a major exhibition, *Giacometti—Pure Presence*, to be held at the National Portrait Gallery, London in 2015.

## About Pearl Lam Galleries

Founded by Pearl Lam, the Galleries' mission is to stimulate cross-cultural dialogue and cultural exchange between East and West by establishing distinct and rigorous programming in each of its gallery spaces in Hong Kong, Shanghai and the forthcoming Singapore gallery.

Pearl Lam Galleries is dedicated to championing Chinese artists who re-evaluate the philosophy and perception of Chinese contemporary art, whilst also committed to presenting major exhibitions by international artists. Jenny Holzer and Yinka Shonibare are among the line-up of artists who will have solo exhibitions at the Galleries in 2013.

Pearl Lam Design shows works by established and emerging international designers including André Dubreuil, Maarten Baas, Mattia Bonetti, and Studio Makkink & Bey. They are invited to push the boundaries of traditional Chinese art and craft techniques and create new works that reflect their experiences in China.