

# Pearl Lam Galleries

Hong Kong

## THE EVANESCENT

Featuring works by Jana Benitez, Mr Doodle, Dale Frank, Michal Korman,  
A. A. Murakami, Thukral & Tagra, Zhang Jianjun, Zhu Jinshi

Exhibition dates 20 June–27 September, 2024      Monday–Saturday, 10am–7pm  
Venue Pearl Lam Galleries, G/F, Ruttonjee House, Ruttonjee Centre, 3–11 Duddell Street  
Central, Hong Kong

Hong Kong—“The public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one.” —Walter Benjamin

Featuring significant works by eight artists, including **Jana Benitez** (b. 1985, USA), **Dale Frank** (b. 1959, Australia), **Mr Doodle** (b. 1994, UK), **Michal Korman** (b. 1987, Slovakia, based in France), **A.A. Murakami** (b. 1983, UK & b. 1984, Japan), **Thukral and Tagra** (b. 1976 & 1979, India), **Zhang Jianjun** (b. 1955, China) and **Zhu Jinshi** (b. 1954, China), *The Evanescent* acknowledges the innate temporal and sensible qualities that are embodied by an artwork. By embracing the ephemeral nature of our visual experience, the grouping of artworks aims to connect with audiences and provoke new meanings to emerge.

The logic of living in an information age dictates the ways in which we recognise different images; increasingly disparate visual bytes are stored instantaneously in our brains with little significance. What is the meaning of art in the age of post-mechanical reproduction? Instead of relying on art for spiritual guidance, contemporary art now functions more as a vehicle for claiming broader inclusivity. Increasingly art immerses the audience in a sea of ideas, but at the expense of focusing our attention towards a single idea for too long.

In Walter Benjamin's closing paragraph for *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, he writes, “The distracted person, too, can form habits. More, the ability to master certain tasks in a state of distraction proves that their solution has become a matter of habit. Distraction as provided by art presents a covert control of the extent to which new tasks have become soluble by apperception.” While Benjamin's treatise focuses on probing moving images and its psychological impacts on the masses, the distinction between two-dimensional art and time-based media is becoming increasingly blurry. The viewing of art objects is now widely disseminated via various social media platforms, thereby propagating a cinematic reading of art.

Absent-mindedness or amnesia has become the order of the day. Apperception takes away the delight of looking at something for the first time. Looking now depends on how we negotiate with the residue of our assumptions based on the imagery inside our subconscious. How to regain a fresh perspective of looking at an artwork remains an elusive pursuit. Running contrary to the Western belief of the binary opposition between light and dark and that the two cannot coexist, Thich Nhat Nanh, the late Zen

Buddhist monk, says, “Opposition between good or bad is often compared to light and dark, but if we look at it in a different way, we will see that when light shines, darkness does not disappear. It does not leave; it merges with the light. It becomes the light.” The essence of art does not lie solely with its dialectical nature; art also has the potential to elicit self-discovery and transformation.

**Jana Benitez’s** painting practice explores concepts of Buddhism, Daoism, and Tantra, using the medium as a mindful, somatic exploration. Her gestural, vibrant works oscillate between abstraction and figuration, conveying a sense of fullness and emptiness, presence and absence. *Hitting on a Sunbeam*, *Isadora* and *Valley Spirit* are all critical examples that serve as meta-manifestations of philosophical and spiritual ideals, offering art as a form of healing.

**Dale Frank’s** paintings engage the audience subconsciously through universal codes like colour and form, transporting non-verbal communication to a physical dimension. His works depict abstract impressions, emitting a pop sheen and jewel-like luminosity. Frank’s peculiar artwork titles inject another psychological dimension to his works that often propose uncertain outcomes. His perspex paintings shown in this exhibition emphasise the schizophrenic quality of the materials and challenge viewers to contemplate their own interpretation of what they see.

**Mr Doodle’s** graphic style, often featuring black ink on white backgrounds, creates a mesmerising world of quirky, anthropomorphic forms. His free-hand doodles, seen in works like *Dusty Flowers* and *Day*, emerge with a fluid, hypnotic rhythm, filling surfaces and spilling out to cover the world. As a form of release or meditation, his process is fluid, therapeutic, and uncalculated, channelling his imagined land into ours and seeking to spread a sense of wonder, mayhem, and hope, while exploring his place in the universe.

**Michal Korman** finds inspiration in the natural world, transforming plants, flowers, and gardens on canvas. Fascinated by light, colour, and form, he adds ornamental “motifs” to interrupt their presence. Korman works in oil paint using a super-flat, cloisonné-style technique with music as a strong source of inspiration. His style conveys a sense of timelessness, as the cut flowers in his latest alluring painting series, *The Flowers of the Twelve Months*, do not wilt. Though he avoids overtly political themes, Korman’s work is imbued with personality, focusing on the quiet, everyday moments of life. He sees painting as an intellectual activity, aiming to engage the viewer beyond the surface of his subjects.

**Thukral and Tagra’s** artworks blur the lines between art and popular culture. Their playful works comment on the globalisation of consumer culture and its impact on Indian identity. Their *Mythological Induction* series narrates the story of Kalki, the final incarnation of Lord Vishnu, reflecting on how society is conditioned to think about God and prayer. The series probes the connection between the spiritual and the mathematical. The artist duo delves into their subconscious and questions our reliance on conventional belief systems and institutional structures. Rather than adhere to the formal language of Western modernism, they opt for instinctive working processes to project a prophetic vision of a new future.

The core of **Zhang Jianjun’s** artistic practice is his use of ink and water to explore Daoist concepts of time and existence. His *First Drop of Water* series (2015–16) connects the past and present, building on his earlier *Pond* series (1990s) that celebrated the versatility of form. Across his oeuvre, Zhang employs geometric forms from traditional Chinese paintings to depict the material-universal relationship and water as a symbolic motif to visualise Daoist beliefs, reflecting the influence of Oriental cosmology and existentialism in his abstract paintings.

*Day 1* is a large translucent coloured gradient glass panel by the artist duo **A.A. Murakami**, which captures daylight from the gallery to create a more natural experience. Drawing inspiration from the Metabolism architectural movement in post-war Japan, the duo bridges technological advancement with vernacular aesthetics to investigate the cultural, historic, and economic changes of the postmodern world. Driven by a fascination with materials and how they shape human societies, A.A. Murakami seeks to occupy the blurred line between dream and reality by combining material research

with new technology and their backgrounds in art and architecture. Their interdisciplinary practice celebrates the cyclical and metamorphic relationships between nature, the built environment, and the human body.

**Zhu Jinshi's** paintings *Thirty Ways No. 1* and *Thirty Ways No. 2* embody fleeting experiences through inert substances, inviting viewers to explore the intersection of metaphor and materiality with Taoist philosophy. The artist's distinctive "thick painting" style utilises heavy, textured applications of colour to create sculptural, three-dimensional effects. The expressive power of his paintings derives from the fluidity of the paint itself, reflecting a Taoist-inspired perspective that views the works as self-contained visual systems. His unconventional tools, like palettes and shovels, imbue the paintings with a sense of monumental, natural forces.

## About Pearl Lam Galleries


Pearl Lam Galleries is a driving force within Asia's contemporary art scene. Founded in 2005, the gallery plays a vital role in stimulating international dialogue and cross-cultural exchange between the East and West.

Following a rigorous programme, Pearl Lam Galleries presents museum-quality exhibitions that re-evaluate and challenge perceptions of cultural practice in Asia. With a thoughtfully balanced roster of Chinese and international artists, the gallery is strategic in its curation, positioning itself as an educator.


The gallery maintains spaces in Hong Kong and Shanghai. With a team of international staff, Pearl Lam Galleries' reach is global, having presentations at major international art fairs including Art Cologne, Art Basel, Frieze Masters, and West Bund Art and Design.


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