

LÉVY GORVY 厲為閣

LÉVY GORVY PRESENTS A SURVEY OF PAINTINGS BY ARTIST TU HONGTAO

Tu Hongtao

25 March – 30 May 2020

Lévy Gorvy
Ground Floor, 2 Ice House Street
Central, Hong Kong



Tu Hongtao, 2019

Hong Kong—Following last month's announcement of its global representation of Tu Hongtao, Lévy Gorvy will present a solo exhibition of key paintings from the past decade and a half. On view from 25 March through 30 May, *Tu Hongtao* will survey the development of his practice from Tu's sardonic early cityscapes to his recent synthesis of Chinese and Western painting traditions.

Spanning the entirety of Lévy Gorvy's Hong Kong gallery on the ground floor of St. George's Building in Central, the exhibition includes select paintings loaned by museums as well as by important private collections from mainland China and Hong Kong. From his earlier urban landscapes that vent contemporary feelings of desire, tension, and confrontation, to the expressive abstractions he is painting today, Tu's intricate works offer reinterpretations of the abstract landscape of time and space. He has described the relationship between the act of painting and himself as "finding philosophical insights from traditional poetry."

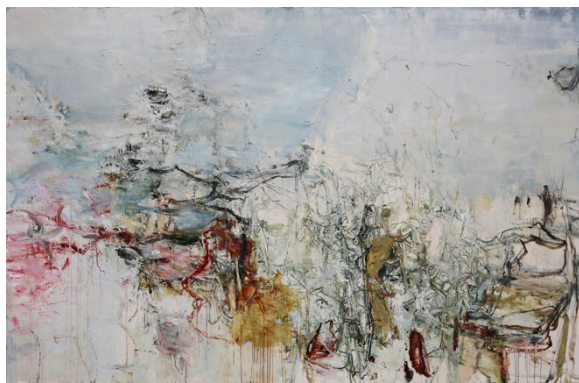
As an exemplary painting from his early days, *Chengdu, Tokyo or Shenzhen* (2006), composed with light yet generous strokes, depicts the peculiar "society of spectacle" resulting from rapid urbanization. Staged in a theatrical composition, the three cities that have deeply influenced the artist are assimilated and merged with an uncanny sense of resemblance, while the foreground features important motifs in Tu's early works—a doll-like girl and paper piles. Tu would soon transition from his earlier figurative



Chengdu, Tokyo or Shenzhen, 2006. Oil on canvas, 78 3/4 x 118 1/8 inches (200 x 300 cm). © Tu Hongtao.

urban style, while establishing the natural landscape as his primary subjects. The *Stroll Fairyland—E Mei* (2007), also painted in this period, belongs to his *Snow Forest* series. These tranquil landscapes served as the artist's "detox" from the real world, with objects and doll-like figures scattered within. As artist Chen Xianhui has said: "The fatigued souls gain a sense of nourishment and safety in the shelter of nature."

If the aesthetic direction of his early *Plant* series still falls within the category of realistic landscape derived from figurative painting and Western visual language, *In Dream and Somnus* (2012) presents the Eastern tradition furthered by Tu—inspired by the abstract spirit of literati paintings. Tu's adoption of calligraphic techniques allows him to ponder the inner relationships between representation and expression. Inspired by the landscape poems of Xie Lingyun (Northern and Southern dynasties), these paintings constitute a unique view of the Chinese landscape. By revisiting the same scenery, Tu rearranges our temporal expectations, capturing poetic qualities and allowing time to be traced back within his works.



A Horse of All Things, 2014-18. Oil on canvas, 82 11/16 x 126 inches (210 x 320 cm). © Tu Hongtao.

A Horse of All Things (2014–18) was created over four years, and its title comes from Daoist philosopher Zhuang Tzu's aphorism that "everything passes like a galloping horse." The artist presents the concept of time in Chinese literature onto his canvas in a purely abstract expression. Spanning 5 meters, *Goddess of Luo River* (2016–18) is one of the most important large-scale paintings by the artist in recent

years. Kindly loaned by the Long Museum, it was the key piece in Tu's solo exhibition *A Timely Journey*, which traveled from the institution's location in Shanghai to its Chongqing pavilion.

His latest painting, *Wind through the Valley* (2018–19) takes its place within the avant-garde tradition pioneered by China Academy of Art alumni Lin Fengmian, Wu Dayu, and by the second generation of Chinese abstractionists who worked in France, Zao Wou-Ki and Chu Teh-Chun. Tu's inheritance of their East Asian spirit and abstract interests are reflected in this painting, together with these artists' reconciliation of Eastern and Western aesthetics. As the curator Nina Nyima Lhamo has declared: "Tu Hongtao has chosen refined detachment and observation as an answer to the complexity of the world, hoping to preserve a traditional sense of beauty even alongside his primitive carnality and burgeoning energy."

In addition to the oil paintings, several works on paper that outline Tu's conceptual process will guide viewers into an understanding of his aesthetic. The exhibition will also feature a short film directed by Wang Yu. Incorporating a deconstructed visual language, the film is intended to initiate a dialogue between Tu's creative process, personal background, and striking works of art.

About Lévy Gorvy

Lévy Gorvy cultivates a program devoted to innovation and connoisseurship in the fields of modern, postwar, and contemporary art. Founded by Dominique Lévy and Brett Gorvy, Lévy Gorvy maintains gallery spaces at 909 Madison Avenue in New York, in Mayfair, London, and in Central, Hong Kong. The gallery fosters continued dedication to the living artists and artists' estates that it represents and offers a robust program of exhibitions and multidisciplinary events. The gallery also produces ongoing art-historical research and original scholarship, publishing exhibition catalogues, monographs, and other key publications. The Zürich office, Lévy Gorvy with Rumbler, offers bespoke private advisory services to collectors and institutions around the globe.

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