

**Zhang Huan exhibition dedicated
to the philosophy of love
to open at GUM-Red-Line Gallery**

February 9 – April 8, 2021

The exhibition *Zhang Huan. Love as Wisdom* organized by GUM-Red-Line Gallery on Red Square together with Pearl Lam Galleries is set to open on February 9, 2021. The exhibition will be dedicated to the artworks by the famous contemporary Chinese artist Zhang Huan. The State Hermitage presented paintings from the *Love* series created in 2020 during the *Zhang Huan: In the Ashes of History* exhibition. The art pieces will be a part of the large-scale retrospective at the Venice Biennale.

Zhang Huan reflects on love that “moves the sun and the stars.” Paintings from the *Love* series do not address the viewer in the language of frivolous passion. Seeing them, one imagines solemn multi-part chants steadily growing in intensity within a cave of an ancient monastery. Almost abstract red circles against a white background are unusual among the oeuvres of Zhang Huan who has extensively studied classical Chinese realism. The forms, reminding one at various times of a globe, the sun, or a naked heart, are not fully overt; they remain subtly elusive.

The exhibition space where the two paintings — *Love No. 2* and *Love No. 7* — are presented is somewhat reminiscent of a monk’s cell — a place of prayer and meditation for the monastic painter. Zhang Huan sees art as the direct continuation of life, something explicitly connected with mundanity. That is why that monk’s cell is placed in the very heart of Moscow, the capital city of Russia, in a gallery overlooking the main square of Russia – Red Square. Within this space, filled with the sound of calming Tibetan music, there is a possibility to seclude oneself and completely immerse oneself in gazing at the two paintings in hopes of revealing the innumerable internal and external facets of love inside and from the outside. Buddhism views love primarily as compassion, empathy, the embodiment of the perfection of human nature, and, thus, the main condition for attaining immortality. If selfish love precludes us from enlightenment, then reverential, compassionate love allied with respect for the identity of another person allows us to gain rightful salvation.

Zhang Huan was not immediately drawn to painting. He began his career in the 1990s with performance art pieces in the course of which his body was placed into conditions unbearable for regular people, forcing him to battle phobias and grapple with the relations between the spirit, the body, and the outside world. His art was a tool for freeing himself from fears, close to the experience of true love. Zhang Huan left performance art for painting in the mid-2000s. This change coincided with the artist discovering Chinese religious traditions for himself. He began visiting sacred places, including the unique Buddhist cave complex in Dunhuang and started using temple incense ashes in his artworks. Now Zhang Huan visits Tibet every year, searching for unique spaces combining emptiness, serenity, and the richness of ancient Buddhist acoustics.

In his pieces, Zhang Huan regularly touches upon issues of religion, family, politics, poverty, and hunger. Zhang Huan aspires to rejuvenate the modernist techniques of abstraction and minimalism by framing them within Buddhism and Chinese culture.

The artist actively cooperates with the art world of the West: he produces opera performances at Le Theatre Royal de la Monnaie in Belgium, constructs large statues in the USA, and regularly participates in the Art Basel fair. During the autumn of 2020, the State Hermitage presented the artist's first solo exhibition in Russia. The exhibition included, among other pieces, the artworks from the *Love* series. These art pieces will be presented together with other artworks by Zhang Huan at his exhibition at the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022.

The exhibition is organized by Pearl Lam Galleries together with GUM-Red-Line Gallery. Project curators— Dmitry Ozerkov, Head of Contemporary Art Department of the State Hermitage, and Alyona Ivanova, Director of Pearl Lam Galleries Russia. Curator assistant — Elizaveta Sadovaya. Director of GUM-Red-Line Gallery –Igor Kazakov.

Additional Info

Zhang Huan

Zhang Huan was born in 1965 in the city of Anyang, Henan Province, China. Zhang Huan received his B.A. from Henan University in the city of Kaifeng in 1988. In these early years, he was greatly influenced by the paintings of Rembrandt van Rijn and Jean-François Millet. Five years later, in 1993, Zhang Huan graduated with an M.A. from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing and around this time started creating performance works, which tested his physical and mental endurance. He continued to produce paintings, too, also mastered the art of photography and sculpture. His time spent living and working in America, from 1998 to 2005, was hugely influential for him. As an artist, Zhang Huan is well known throughout the world. He lives and works in Shanghai and New York, combining western artistic techniques with concepts traditionally associated with Chinese culture.

Works by Zhang Huan can be viewed in some of the most famous art collections of the world — the Museum of Modern Art, Guggenheim Museum in New York, Museums of Art in Philadelphia and San

Diego, the collection of Harvard University. His latest works were presented at art galleries and museums in Italy, Australia, USA, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Great Britain, Russia, and many other countries. In 2020, the artist's retrospective exhibition was presented in the Nicholas Hall of the Winter Palace, State Hermitage.

Pearl Lam Galleries

Pearl Lam Galleries is a driving force within Asia's contemporary art scene. With over 20 years of experience organizing exhibitions of key contemporary Asian and Western artists, the gallery plays a vital role in stimulating international dialogue between East and West. Pearl Lam Galleries presents museum-quality exhibitions that re-evaluate and challenge perceptions of cultural practice in Asia. With a team of international staff, Pearl Lam Galleries' reach is global, having presentations at major international art fairs, including The Armory Show, Art Cologne, Art Basel Hong Kong, Frieze Masters, and West Bund Art and Design. The Gallery's flagship space is located in the historic Pedder Building in Hong Kong, whilst the Shanghai space lies in the heart of the Bund district. The gallery was established by Pearl Lam – one of the most influential women of Asia, according to Forbes, and one of the most respected figures in the field of contemporary art.

GUM-Red-Line

GUM-Red-Line Gallery occupies a space of 280 SM in the front section of GUM. It overlooks the Red Square. Besides the spectacular architecture created by Alexander Pomerantsev, the remarkable feature of these halls is their extraordinary historical heritage. This is the actual location of the Henri Brocard Gallery that was established right here in 1893. Henri Brocard was a famous Moscow perfumer and collector. While maintaining the legacy of the past, GUM-Red-Line Gallery is a starting point for the creation of a new cultural space, where GUM customers can get an insight into contemporary art.