

Press Release

Zeng Fanzhi : Paintings

October 10 – November 10, 2006

Private view: October 9, 6.30 – 9pm

Wedel is delighted to present its inaugural exhibition, **Zeng Fanzhi: *Paintings***. This will be the artist's first solo exhibition in Europe and will be held at West London gallery Allsopp Wedel.

The exhibition will include recent and previously unseen canvases including large scale, abstract landscapes, works from his acclaimed 'mask' series as well as the more ideologically provocative *Tiananmen Square*, bringing together three distinct, but inter-related strands within his work.

Since his studies at the Hubei Academy of Fine Art (1988-1991), Zeng Fanzhi (b. 1964) has attracted critical acclaim for his often haunting figurative allegories and scenes from his hometown of Wuhan and later Beijing. His 'mask' series (1994-2000) convey the artist's feelings as an outsider both within society and as a young painter.

Zeng Fanzhi's beautifully cool abstract landscapes mark a significant departure. Since embracing a less-regulated style of expression, his abstract landscapes are worked on with two brushes in the same hand. One maps out the depicted subject, the other is left to arbitrarily find its way around the canvas. The result is a set of paintings that off-set reflection with expression, control with an automatist freedom.

It is with this recent departure that Zeng's paintings achieve a conceptual and aesthetic balance. Having moved away from the more rigid model of European expressionism, Zeng's recent works combine a calligraphic touch with a more romanticist view of man and his relationship with nature. When seen within the context of ancient Chinese art and the landscapes of Fan Juan (over 1000 years ago), Zeng's 'outsider' status has grown into a willingness and desire to stand within the historical and artistic developments of China.

Zeng Fanzhi's vast *Tiananmen Square* further reveals the artist's desire to address the people and politics that have shaped China's recent history. As a living artist in a rapidly expanding and evolving socio-political context he understands the need to take on ideological themes as well as emotional and personal subject matter. Throughout the works in the show we see this being

achieved through a combination of detachment and expressive prowess that make Zeng Fanzhi one of China's most critically acclaimed and successful living artists.

Amelie von Wedel, gallerist, art consultant and founder of Wedel, commented, "The inaugural exhibition sees one of Asia's most original and acclaimed painters making his entrance to the European art scene."

A fully illustrated catalogue, with an essay by Pi Li will accompany the show.

EDITORS' NOTES

Wedel

Wedel is a gallery and art consultancy founded in July 2006 by Amelie von Wedel.

Wedel took up offices and is sharing a gallery space with Allsopp Contemporary at 8 – 10 Conlan Street. A primary focus is contemporary Chinese art, but Wedel also represents artists from a range of other countries including the UK, US, Germany, India and Russia. As an art consultancy Wedel is involved in a wide range of projects, including publishing, curating and advising corporate and private collections.

Zeng Fanzhi

Born in 1964, Zeng Fanzhi graduated in 1991 from Hubei Academy of Fine Arts, China, where he studied oil painting. Today, he lives and works in Beijing.

Zeng Fanzhi has been notable over the last decade for his characteristic mask series where symbolic and metaphoric connotations are inherent in the creation of each painting through character, costume, demeanour and emotions expressed.

His solo exhibitions have recently included new paintings at ShanghArt Gallery, Shanghai in 2006, 'Sky', Fine Art Literature at Wuhan in China in 2005 and the Hanart TZ Gallery in Hong Kong. In 2004, 'Scapes – Zeng Fanzhi works from 1989-2004' at Hexiangning Art Museum, Shenzhen took place as well as other solo shows in Singapore and Korea. Zeng Fanzhi is only the third contemporary Chinese artist to be afforded a retrospective at the Shanghai Art Museum - his solo exhibition took place in March 2003.

Group exhibitions include 'Majong, Contemporary Chinese Art from the Sigg Collection' currently at the Kunsthalle Hamburg, 'China, Contemporary Painting' at Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio, Bologna, Italy 2005 and 'The First Triennial of Chinese Arts' in Guangzhou Art Museum, China 2002, among a score of others.

Pi Li

Pi Li was the assistant curator of the Chinese Pavilion at Sao Pãulo Biennale (2002), curator of the Shanghai Biennale (2002), and Allôrs la Chine, Centre Georges Pompidou, France (2003). Pi Li has published several books, and is a lecturer of Curatorial Studies at the Art Administration Dept. of Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing as well as the director of Universal Studios, Beijing.