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Obtrusive / Elusive Recent Ink Work by Zheng Chongbin

February 17 - April 2, 2011

Opening reception with artist, February 17, 2011, 5:30pm to 7:30pm

Haines Gallery is proud to present a new collection of ink paintings by Bay Area and Shanghai based artist Zheng Chongbin. Zheng's unique approach to painting is rooted in both Western abstract art and Chinese literati painting. The textures, layers, large brush strokes, and ink washes in his large-scale, monochromatic works explore the boundaries between form and formlessness, often alluding to landscape or figurative forms while simultaneously reading as powerful abstractions.

This dual reading stems from Zheng's 25-year inquiry into ink painting practice. Unsatisfied by the common duality of Western vs. Eastern abstraction, Zheng sought to reinvestigate the limitations of these practices and extend their combined methodologies into a new kind of painting. He argues that, while Western abstract artists have explored form through calculated, often reductive mark making, Chinese ink painting employs a certain amount of uncertainty in the process, allowing the form to evolve out of body/brush coordination and improvisation. The former, Zheng writes, "has shown astonishing physicality; it is immediate and monumental – matter is substituted by its own imposed form." In the latter,

the work is "inviting...it guides the mind. Material presence disappears...vitality depicts blandness."

The success of Zheng's paintings lies in his ability to render both obtrusive and elusive forms out of ink, ink wash, and acrylic media. His process is very much rooted in physicality, both of his own body and the materials he uses, which are skillfully layered on Xuan paper, a soft and textured paper which originated in ancient China and is primarily used for Chinese calligraphy and painting. Full of depth, these paintings expand the possibilities for ink as a medium and continue to push the limitations of abstract painting.

Zheng Chongbin was born in 1961 in Shanghai, China. He earned his BFA in Chinese Painting from Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts (now China Academy of Fine Arts) in Hangzhou, and his MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute. He has exhibited throughout the US and Asia, including the National Art Museum, Beijing; Today Doland Museum, Shanghai; and the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco. He currently splits his time between the Bay Area and Shanghai. (Images available upon request)