

Zhang Wenchao: Hidden in a Theater Path

16th Mar – 30th Apr, 2024

Organized by Tokyo Gallery + BTAP, with the academic support of Xu Bing and curated by Feng Boyi, the exhibition "Zhang Wenchao: Hidden in a Theater Path" will open on March 16, 2024, at Tokyo Gallery + BTAP.

Born in 1985 in Beijing, Zhang Wenchao received his MFA in 2014 from the Printmaking Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA). He is currently the director of the Art and Technology Direction of the School of Design at the Central Academy of Fine Arts and a researcher at the Institute of Science and Technology and Art at the Central Academy of Fine Arts. His art practices draw on human experiences, behaviors, and imaginations from the virtual environment, rendering montage-like immersive experiences through non-linear and enmeshed space-time structures. His works and projects involve interactive installations, algorithmically generated images, games and virtual worlds, and other art languages using emerging technologies.

Zhang Wenchao's debut solo exhibition in Beijing consists of ten recent works, including video, interactive video installations, oil on canvas + projected animation, interactive games and digital prints, as well as his latest space art creation, which has been selected for the "Xu Bing Space Art Residency Program" and will be experimented with "SCA-1", the first satellite of the "Star Chain of Arts Project" chaired by Xu Bing, exploring one's knowledge and possible relationships between his art practice and the universe.

By appropriating historical and literary sources and investigating narratives of legends and fables, Zhang reveals his observation and tracing of civilization from today's science and technology perspective.

Moreover, he also wades through the everyday virtual reality system that's reliant yet ambiguous to the physical world and memories of space that carry the individual's travels, tracing fluid pathways and unexpected encounters along the shared domains.

In this exhibition, he connects, integrates, and transforms the interlocking zones of reality and the virtual world through hyperlinks while attempting to break the boundaries of art. Zhang's intertextual nesting of the virtual and the real, his adept docking of historical narrative and personal imagination, and the integration of elements such as the universe, fantasies, deduction, suspense, etc., afford scenes of strange and immersive domains of multiplicity. The resulting synthesis reveals the essential logic operating in virtual and real worlds. In this sense, this exhibition is both Zhang Wenchao's journey and his return. Here, Zhang Wenchao is undoubtedly not an optimistic prophet but someone who traverses history, reality, and the intervals of time and space, providing us with much-needed energy and imagination.

It is particularly unique that the artist has conceived the exhibition into a theatre based on the architectural features of Tokyo Gallery + BTAP and set up the show such that one would self-navigate and criss-cross through the works on display autonomously through the prologue and the five sections of a play. Zhang presents to the spectator a montage-like roaming experience filled with theatrical tension that satisfies the curiosity and desire of an online community yearning for fresh stories. This approach is how the artist constructs "Pop Script," or the "Infinite Theater," where he continuously interprets the ever-changing visual stories.