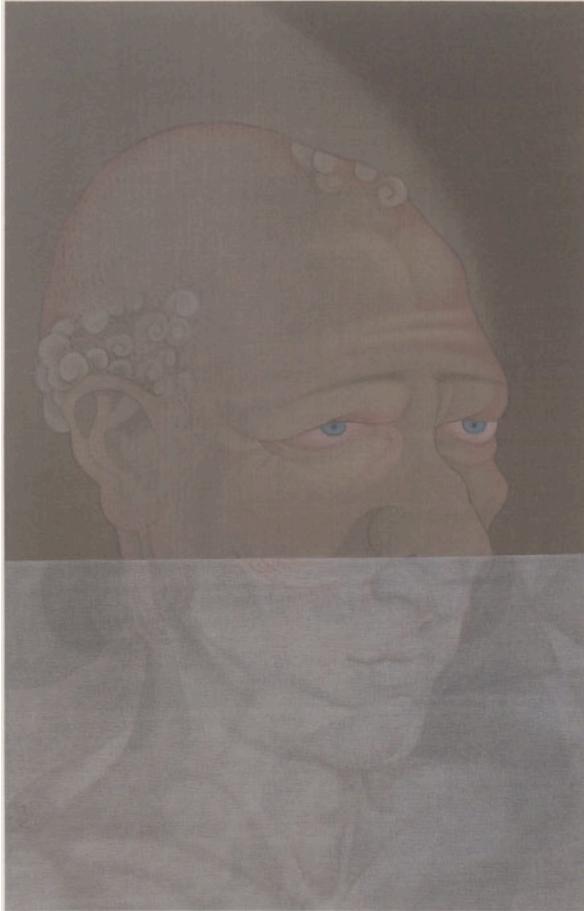


G A G O S I A N

April 10, 2018



HAO LIANG PORTRAITS AND WONDERS

Opening reception:
Tuesday, May 8, 6–8PM
May 8–June 23, 2018

980 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10075

In my study of traditional ink and wash paintings, my view of time and space staggers and jumps. When I read the artistic theories of Dong Qichang, the Ming dynasty scholar and painter, I suddenly think of [Wassily] Kandinsky. When I travel in nature, I see the details of ancient Chinese paintings, flashing before me like a film montage by [Sergei] Eisenstein.
—Hao Liang

Gagosian is pleased to present an exhibition of new works by Hao Liang, one of the foremost contemporary artists working in traditional Chinese ink painting. This is his first solo exhibition with the gallery, and his first in the United States.

Seeking to revivify and extend the conventions of ink and wash painting, Hao spent many years studying Chinese classical paintings, acquiring vast knowledge of historical works, as well as the many motifs and poetic traditions related to them. Yet, in his silk handscrolls, portraits, and landscape paintings, Hao filters these techniques and themes through a contemporary

cosmopolitan consciousness, effortlessly weaving together Su Shi and Shostakovich; Zhao Mengfu and Sergei Eisenstein; Wang Wei and Gilles Deleuze.

In this exhibition, which includes intricate, masterfully painted landscapes and portraits, Hao considers the perpetual flux of nature and time. *Streams and Mountains without End* (2017) is a silk scroll measuring over thirty-two feet. Departing from his previous narrative scrolls, Hao seeks to unite the details and symbols of traditional Chinese landscapes with twentieth-century art theory, bringing together Ming dynasty scholar and artist Dong Qichang (1555–1636) and Russian modern artist Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) in a panoramic sweep. Reading from right to left, the viewer first encounters a man’s profile, an interlocutor between reality and representation. Implying multiple dimensions, various strange scenes unfurl and intersect. Mountains, trees, waves, and rolling clouds give way to sinuous patterns painted in gray, blue, green, and red, inspired by the muscular and vascular systems of human anatomy. Then, Kandinsky’s telescoping circles are launched into swirling orbit while a man in red views the scene from outer space, suggesting a divine, cosmic perspective. At the end of the scroll, the same figure from the beginning stands naked in a refracted abstract realm, looking back at a journey that is both micro- and macrocosmic.

Time and perspective are explored further in a diptych titled *Day and Night* (2017–18), which depicts the same landscape in two different sizes, the larger presenting a colorful day, and the smaller showing the intense dark of night. In both, Hao distorts proportions of space and objects to emphasize the ever-changing interplay of sea, land, and sky. This was inspired by the inkstone tablets of Qing dynasty literatus Wang Ziruo, who created small replicas of huge, eroding ancient monuments engraved with various texts, pictures, and historical information. Struck by the skin-like surfaces of the tablets, as well as the paper rubbings created from them, Hao applied the same logic to his landscapes, showing how light, scale, and texture alter legibility and memory.

Considering a single subject from many angles is a common exercise in Chinese literati culture, explored in both poetry and painting. Hao takes the idea of the scholar’s rock, depicted from infinite viewpoints, and applies it to portraiture. While *Red Nose* (2017), a triptych, seeks to embody an everyman, with no particular race, age, or epoch discernible, *A Thousand, Thousand Churning Waves* (2018) depicts a foreigner, a Westerner, in the style of Yuan dynasty painter Zhao Mengfu, specifically alluding to Zhao’s painting of the artist and poet Su Shi of the Song dynasty, holding a bamboo stick. In one of his most famous poems, “Nian Nu Jiao – Reminiscence of Red Cliffs,” Su Shi recounts a memory of a striking landscape, demonstrating the endless flux of nature. In his work, Hao carries this sentiment forward, embracing the simultaneity of the past and the present in all things: the mountains and the cosmos; the body and the mind.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, *Hao Liang: Portraits and Wonders*, which includes an essay by Loïc Le Gall and an interview with Phil Tinari.

Hao Liang was born in 1983 in Chengdu, China, and lives and works in Beijing. Collections include the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Kadist Art Foundation, San Francisco; and Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, Netherlands. Recent institutional exhibitions include “Hao Liang: Aura,” Bonnefantenmuseum, Netherlands (2016); “Hao Liang: Eight Views of Xiaoxiang,” Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing (2016);

57th Biennale di Venezia (2017); “Streams and Mountains without End: Landscape Traditions of China,” Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2017); and “1977–2017: Le Centre Pompidou fête ses 40 ans,” Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2017).

Image: Hao Liang, *Red Nose* (part I), 2017, ink and color on silk, in 3 parts, 10 3/4 × 7 inches (27.4 × 17.7 cm) © Hao Liang.

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