

The background is a traditional marbled paper pattern in shades of brown, tan, and black. A large, thick, white brushstroke, resembling a calligraphic 'S' or a flowing ribbon, curves across the center of the image. Within the lower right loop of this white stroke, there is a black ink drawing of a human figure in a dynamic, contorted pose, possibly dancing or falling. In the top right corner, there is a small, realistic drawing of a rock.

Dans la nuit des formes

ZHOU Meng

Curateur: Henri Guette

Du 2 mai au 7 Juin 2025

Vernissage: le 2 mai 2025 à partir de 18h

espace temps

98 rue quincampoix 75003 Paris

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98 rue Quincampoix 75003 Paris | Du mercredi au samedi 14h-19h
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PRESS RELEASE

In the night of forms

From 2th May to 7th June 2025

Opening: 2th May 2025 from 6pm

Artist: ZHOU Meng

Curator: Henri Guelle

In the night of forms

The drawings seem to come alive in the dark. One step at a time, we enter the night, sinking into the gallery where geography and chronology fold into one another. The works blend into the walls like gestures from times immemorial. Much about prehistory remains unknown—a time so vast and distant, before writing. The Chauvet cave alone condenses, from its first antechamber to its deepest chamber, several millennia. This sense of vertigo deepens when similar motifs appear across continents. Meng Zhou's works seem to belong to a distant past that is also profoundly contemporary—a faraway place that feels remarkably close. They raise questions that remain unanswered. What could have been the role of cave painting? Who were these painters—men or women—and what rituals surrounded their practice? The artist sustains a sense of ambiguity by drawing figures that are at once extremely simple and deeply distinctive, on surfaces that sometimes resemble stone, sometimes are actual meteorites. His figures appear to dance with the stars, and narrative takes precedence over the pursuit of factual accuracy. Through this movement he captures, Meng Zhou reenacts the bewilderment that arises the first time we confront the smallness of humanity within the cosmos. Researcher Edward Wachtel once hypothesized, in his essay *The First Picture Show*, that caves might have hosted the earliest form of cinema. The gestures used to project paint, to draw figures in ash by the firelight, were gestures of animation. The painting vibrated and moved as it was being covered. Through repetition and variation, Meng Zhou seeks what is embedded in the very first gesture. In the night, his works take the shape of all things that remain unanswered.

Curiosity is likely the artist's primary driving force. Why, ultimately, is there something rather than nothing? And within this "something," this teeming life—why humans? This way of framing questions stems from a sense of wonder, a kind of childhood of art that has fueled modern artistic exploration from Matisse to Picasso to Klee. Beyond nature and culture, Meng Zhou allows us to feel, through form and line, the invisible fluids, energies, and forces that myths have long sought to capture and define. By incorporating fragments that evoke ancient cultures or fossils, he allows for continuous metamorphosis, the reformulation of a narrative of time—a cyclical affirmation, from a stone to the stone. The artist works with both traditional techniques and the most recent technologies. His gestures—touching at times on restoration, sometimes inscription, often assemblage—reflect an understanding of matter nourished by accidents and serendipity. Each piece tells a different story, and the way the artist envisions their display resembles a constellation; even in daylight, they stay with us.

Text by Henri Guelle

ZHOU Meng

As an artist/observer, his thinking logic is often constructed on the dialectic of transition and transformation of natural ecology and human heritage. He visualises the process of this discursive thinking using different mediums such as installation, video, painting and sculpture to explore our responsibilities or obligations as human beings in the face of culture and nature.



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His creative process usually originates from an inherent curiosity about nature and all known worldly materials. He then restores, assembles, and polishes these stories, fossils, and fragments through traditional or modern crafts and artistic means. Accidents and serendipity always point the way to his creations. He sees every contact with materials as a journey of metamorphosis rather than a simple transformation of material form, and each layer of the work records the temperature and texture of a different story. He strives to use his work as a medium and a bridge to open up an immersive yet fictional scene in which he abstracts the relationship between human beings and their environment, both dependent and subversive. At the same time, he copies, pastes and edits the dream world and extracts fragments of myths, allowing the viewer to wander between the virtual and the real, between the inner spiritual and the outer material world.

In recent years, he has drawn on the myths, natural environments and folklore of different regions in his work, depicting traces more or less altered by different mainstream cultures. He thinks that as human beings, we have inherited the endless legacy and gifts of history since the beginning, and it is the spirit of those sages who have transcended the mundane but shared the world that has always inspired and nudged him. In the face of the current macro situation and individuals' lives, we have to stay sober to recognise where we are now among all these conflicts.

Education

2016-2018 MA Moving image, Royal College of Arts, London, UK

2013-2016 BA Painting, Camberwell College of Arts, London, UK

Solo Exhibition

2025 Zhejiang Art Museum

2025 Espace Temps

2024 Il Trovatore, BMCA, Munich, DE

2024 Vacuum, R Plus, Hangzhou, CN

2023 Incomplete Wonder, Nan Ke Gallery, Shanghai, CN

2018 Bafeng, Liangshe China, Shanghai, CN

2017 Overtone, Art Night, St George in the East, London, UK

2016 0.064g, OXO Tower Gallery, London, UK

Henri Guette, Curator

Art critic and exhibition curator, Henri Guette came to contemporary art through an interest in contemporary poetry, and more specifically in Charles Pennequin's relationship to performance. A member of C-E-A and AICA, he approaches art through the lens of literature, paying particular attention to language and storytelling.

Graduated of the Master's program "Contemporary Art and Its Exhibition" (Paris IV), he has developed a research practice exploring the links between art and literature, which he presents in written form or through podcasts with Jeunes Critiques d'art and the radio show "En Pleines Formes."

He has held various positions, including literary programming coordinator for FILAF, and cultural projects manager at the University of Lille, where he oversaw artist residencies and part of the cultural programs. He is currently developing his curatorial practice within the association Fernrohr, working on the adaptation of a series of Jules Verne novels — among them *The Green Ray* — using fiction as a space for encounters.

espace temps

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