

# Hu Qingyan

Absent & Superfluous

Exhibition in Beijing: 3.11.–30.12.2018

Opening: Saturday, Nov 3, 4–6.30pm

Galerie Urs Meile Beijing is pleased to announce *Absent & Superfluous*, a solo exhibition featuring Beijing-based artist Hu Qingyan (\*1982) most recent works. The exhibition draws its title from a key concept in Hu's work, namely the tension between what is essential, supposed to be, but is not, and what is unnecessary, supposed not to be, but is. Along with some new works such as *Swaying Wall* (2015-2018, seven-pieces, dimensions variable) and *Empty Mountain* (2018, yellow marble, 170 × 110 × 95 cm), the exhibition will feature exciting developments of previously existing series, of which *Go in One Ear and out The Other* (on show: *Go in One Ear and out The Other No. 2*, 2016, carbon steel, air, 166 × 485 × 188 cm) or *Guardian Angel* (on show: *Guardian Angel II*, 2018, wood (paulownia), marble in various colors, 219 × 140 × 125 cm). A series of paintings will also be on display, where the artist continues to blur the boundaries between painting and sculpture. A key issue of the exhibition lies indeed in Hu's boundary-pushing exploration of the medium of sculpture, and, more broadly, of artistic conventions and the action of making art.

Whereas Michelangelo declared "I did not invent sculpture. The sculptures are inherent in the stones, I have only set them free", Hu Qingyan takes the opposing view of the renowned Italian sculptor with his *Empty Mountain*. The artist divided a marble stone about the height of an average adult-sized person into three distinct parts to empty them from their content. He then reassembled the pieces in their original shape, creating a hollow husk of stone. Thus, what appears as an ordinary boulder placed in an exhibition space, a ready-made, actually underwent a hidden transformation in its inner core. As the sculptural gesture is concealed from the observer, the essence of sculpture is paradoxically revealed.

In the series *Guardian Angel* and *Gem* (on show: *Gem I*, 2018, marble, metal pedestal, 42 × 85 × 70 cm), Hu Qingyan explores another concept at the heart of his artistic production – the accidental and the random. *Guardian Angel* consists of a found log serving as the basis of the work. The shape of the log, created by the random action of nature, dictates the rest of the sculpture, the marble stones prolonging its natural lines. While the "accidental" shape of the stones is preserved, Hu polished their surface, conferring the work a sculpture-like quality. The random and accidental factors as well as the artist's minimalist intervention are ultimately hidden beneath the harmony and simplicity that emanates from the work. The artist adopts the same approach in *Swaying Wall* a 7-part work consisting of steel cables and chunks of cement scavenged from the demolished studio building of the artist. Hu polished the cement into individual spherical shapes, connected together by the random welding of the cables. The polished surface of the spheres then contrasts with the violence and chaos of the overall composition.

In addition, *Absent & Superfluous* will showcase two series of Hu's reflections on paintings, *Contemporary Painting* (on show: *Contemporary Painting I*, 2018, dimensions between 180-222 × 160-320 cm) and *Flesh Color* (2018, 56 × 160 × 110 cm). Both series are stitched three-dimensional collages of scavenged scraps and cutouts from collected oil paintings created by fellow artists and students. This sculptural approach to painting is also a play on the tension between abstract and figurative: although resolutely abstract, the *Contemporary Paintings* series consists of cutouts taken from unidentifiable parts of figurative paintings. As of the *Flesh Color* series, what appears at first glance as a crumpled monochromatic pastel lying on the floor is in fact a somewhat appalling collection of painted body parts.

Hu Qingyan was born in 1982 in Weifang, Shandong Province, China and studied sculpture at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts in Guangzhou and the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing. He lives and works in Beijing. His recent solo exhibitions include *空壳Hollow Husk*, Galerie Urs Meile, Lucerne, Switzerland (2016); *Eternal Glory*, Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing, China (2015). *A selection of his most recent group shows include: Encounter Asia – Multi-vision of Youth*, Museum of Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, Tank Loft, Chongqing Contemporary Art Center, Chongqing, China (2018); *Forty Years of Sculpture · Part 1* (2008-2017), Museum of Contemporary Art & Planning Exhibition, Shenzhen, China (2017); *The 3rd*

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*Today's Documents – BRIC-à-brac: The Jumble of Growth*, Today Art Museum, Beijing, China (2016); *Shut up and paint*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia (2016); *The Exhibition of Annual of Contemporary Art of China*, Beijing Minsheng Art Museum, Beijing, China (2016); *M + Sigg Collection: Four Decades of Chinese Contemporary Art*, ArtisTree, Hong Kong, China (2016); *Familiar Otherness: Art Across Northeast Asia*, Hong Kong Arts Center, Hong Kong, China (2015); *28 Chinese*, Rubell Family Collection/ Contemporary Arts Foundation, Miami, USA (2013); *Building Bridges – Zeitgenössische Kunst aus China*, Wolfsberg, Ermatingen, Switzerland (2013).

His works can be found in the collection of many museums and institutions including National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, M+ Sigg Collection, Rubell Family Collection, Today Art Museum, and K11 Art Foundation.