

For immediate release

GALERIE ORA-ORA PRESENTS *BLACK: RECATEGORIZE*, A GROUP EXHIBITION FEATURING ARTISTS CARLA CHAN, JURI MARKKULA, ZHANG YANZI, HUANG DAN, XIAO XU, CINDY NG AND MARKING PATRICK NILSSON'S ASIA DEBUT

06 September – 13 October 2018



Left: Juri Markkula, *Desat Ground*, 2016, 150 x 150 cm, pigmented polyvinyl, polyurethane. Right: Zhang Yanzi, *Inescapable 1*, 2016, 150 x 150cm, gauze bandage, Chinese herbal medicine and etc. Both images courtesy of the artists and Galerie Ora-Ora.

HONG KONG – 18 August 2018 – Galerie Ora-Ora is delighted to present a group exhibition which seeks to challenge the audience perception and ask the question: ‘What is black?’ Bringing together works by seven pioneering artists, ‘*BLACK: RECATEGORIZE*’ will explore the dynamic and nuanced depictions of black - a colour often dismissed and disregarded due to its ubiquity. Through paintings, contemporary ink, new media and low-relief sculpture, the exhibition will seek to shed new light on this deepest of colours; at once rejecting and confirming a variation on the age old maxim, that black is the new black.

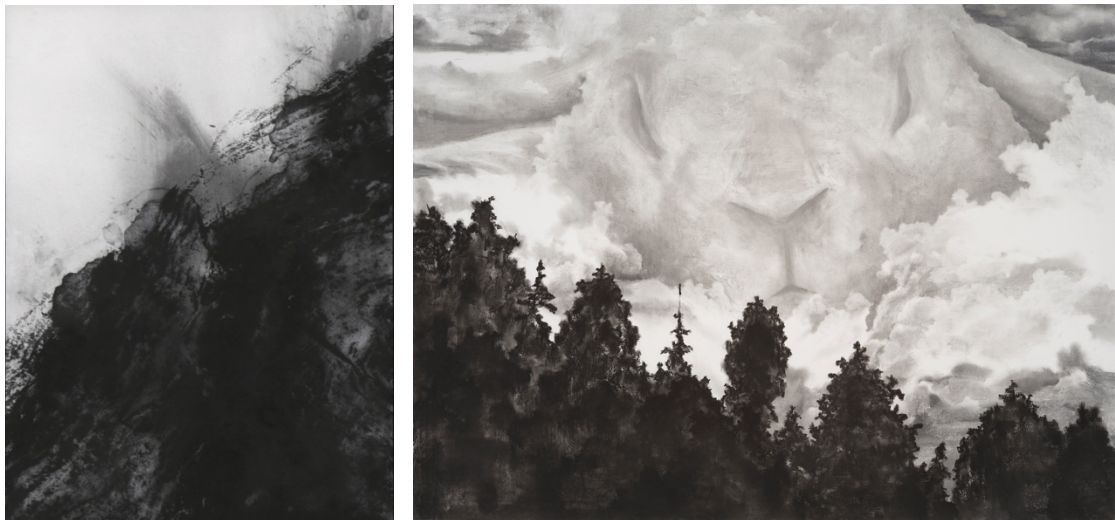
Black has often found itself to be but a ‘blank canvas,’ – adopted for a movement, an emotion, a statement. In a world where colour relays shorthand meaning, black has been appropriated as a totem by many, from Hells Angels to disaffected youth, from Queen Victoria’s mourning to Coco Chanel’s couture. There have been fleeting moments where black has been championed as something much more than nothingness or emptiness – in 1915 Russian avant-garde artist Kazimir Malevich subverted art history with the *Black Square*, which heralded the ‘modernism’ epoch in tumultuous style.

In ancient China, the concept of ‘black’ was often replaceable by the ‘Xuan’ colour (玄色). The meaning of ‘Xuan’ can be interpreted as “deep, profound, mysterious, philosophical”. Although the final form of the ‘Xuan’ colour is presented as the colour black, its connotation is far more than a darkness of appearance. Chinese Ink is recognized as multi-tonal. The existence of colour imagery is expressed by the mastery of the “five gradations of Ink” which allows for the same range of expression with the use of just one colour, black.

For the artists selected for this exhibition, black defies the simple convention of what black is. Presented collectively, the use of black in these works take the viewer on multiple journeys, each presenting a portal from our world into today's richness of black itself, creating an opposite to nothingness and an opening into everything.

To begin , Ora-Ora introduces Patrick Nilsson, for the Swedish artist's first time exhibiting in Asia. Nilsson's works often play with the powerful contrast between black and white, delighting in the juxtaposition of structure and conformity with the nebulous and non-linear which he identifies in the natural and man-made world.

Carla Chan and Cindy Ng use the monochromatic but simplistic effect of black and white with great finesse. Both Carla Chan and Cindy Ng enjoy working at the intersection between natural beauty and the digital form. Chan revels in forming works which highlight the new iterations of natural beauty being realised as a result of human intervention. In Chan's works '*Blacken White #2*' and '*Between Happening #5*,' we see beauty through the ephemeral qualities of the natural world encapsulated by exquisite simplicity as black and white distort in equal measure. Her works, like dust held up in the wind, suggest fleeting moments with startling effect. In contrast, for Ng, art is constantly being created and destroyed, at sea, on land, in the sky. Ng seeks to confuse our convention by combining the technical artistry of more traditional Chinese ink art with the unstructured enigmatic rhythms of nature.



Left: Carla Chan, *Blacken White #2*, 2017, 50 x 37 cm, carbon powder reacted with acetone, glued and printed on paper. Right: Patrick Nilsson, *So Never is Most Lonely Man Alone*, 2009, 120 x 160cm, soft pastel on paper. Both images courtesy of the artists and Galerie Ora-Ora.

In Juri Markkula and Zhang Yanzi's work we see an alternative approach which both evokes Malevich's '*Black Square*' in obvious shape, but also in the subversion of the mundane and the aggregation of an idea in its purest form. For Markkula, '*Desat Ground*,' becomes an amplification and a natural culmination of his 'RGB' series, seen recently in Ora-Ora's '*Amplified*' shows. When Red Green and Blue are mixed they should turn to white, but as we see here, it is the black which prevails – the difference between a digital and physical reality. The dark crevices and use of bespoke

technological innovation create a nuanced piece showing the depth and natural beauty that black can produce.

Zhang Yanzi's work is no less striking in execution and in tone, with *'The Inescapable'* challenging not only the viewer, but the artist herself, in her philosophical search for meaning in the human form and the path we are dealt to walk through life. The emblematic black square is here again but is at odds with itself in its representation of healing vs. death and decay.

To complete the show, we showcase works from Huang Dan and Xiao Xu. The inverted use of black in Huang Dan's compositions imbibe her work with an incandescent and bold atmosphere. The uncompromising choice of colour, coupled with the unique softness of touch, empower her depictions of nature with an atmosphere that is both ethereal and formidable. Cascading black waterfalls as seen in *'Incandescence'* and *'Unceasing,'* offer serene power when viewed in juxtaposition with Xiao Xu's *'Cold Mountain,'* where we enter a hyper-realist realm governed by unreality. Here our perceptions are awakened through his magical landscapes that retain the same vastness and majesty, whilst showing us an entirely different view of the world. Xiao Xu's fine ink works use the complete totality of black and build a depth which shows that its potential is more than just a background or a counterpoint.

Henrietta Tsui-Leung, founder of Galerie Ora-Ora commented: "In *'BLACK: RECATEGORIZE'* we are delighted to show works from a collection of acclaimed artists who utilize black as both a powerful, elemental force, and at the same time one of nuance and felicity. In a world where it is easier to look for light and colour, it is short-sighted to view black in such narrow terms. When in its monochromatic form, does an artwork leave trails of mystery and uncertainty, or in contrary, connect more directly with the viewer, opening up to the infinite possibility of personal connections and imagination? *BLACK: RECATEGORIZE*" challenges the viewers to find new meaning in the familiar and conventional. The exhibition builds on a year of exploration and ambition, as 2018 has seen Ora-Ora recategorizing itself; a contemporary new art space, which embraces the future whilst revitalising the status quo."

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Gallery Opening Hours:

Monday – Friday from 10am to 7pm;
Saturdays 11am to 7pm

Notes to Editors -

About Galerie Ora-Ora

Ora-Ora began in Hong Kong in 2006, with globally-sourced artists who are thought-driven innovators. Our artists interpret history and philosophy to bring new perspectives to our modern world and the lively dialogue between east and west. Recognized for our support of Asian contemporary art, we have grown to represent artists from Asia, Europe and the US across a variety of media. Ora-Ora was founded by Alfred Leung and Henrietta Tsui-Leung. Henrietta then co-founded the Hong Kong Art Galleries Association, which builds connections and opportunities in the growing Hong Kong art industry. The gallery continues to develop alliances and partnerships with institutions globally to enable discovery of our artists in fresh environments. From our base in Hong Kong, we travel regularly to meet our clients at global art fairs and our international exhibitions.

2018 marks a new chapter in the Ora-Ora's story now we have entered our new gallery space at H Queen's in Central, Hong Kong. The opening show, *Screaming Books*, on view 1 – 17 May 2018, embodied the spirit of a gallery which is, as ever, both research-based and future-focused. Other acclaimed exhibitions held in 2018 include: "Eventide" – Xiao Xu solo exhibition, "Inspirations" – Huang Dan solo exhibition, and "Amplified" – Juri Markkula and Cindy Ng Seo Ieng joint exhibition.

About Patrick Nilsson

Patrick Nilsson is a master of paradox and surprise, of playful gravitas. His art embraces contradictions between humour and seriousness, playfulness and darkness. In his words: "I enjoy being side-tracked. I look for contradictions. I look for humour, black and dark. I notice that the best work I do, I feel almost embarrassed by it, by its emotion. There are two Patricks, one social, one artist. They have little in common." Nilsson received his MFA from the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm. Later, he continued his post-graduate studies at the Valand Academy of Gothenburg University. With over 20 years into his artistic career, Nilsson currently also teaches at the School of Architecture, Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm.

About Carla Chan

Carla Chan is a contemporary artist based in Berlin and Hong Kong where she obtained her bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from the School of Creative Media, City University of Hong Kong. Chan is a multi-media artist working with video, installation, photography and printmaking. Much like the never-ending development of new technology, Chan considers media art as a medium with infinite possibilities for artistic expressions.

Born in the post-digital period, Chan is influenced by computational thinking in her artistic research. She invents different methods of capturing and recomposing in her photography and moving images. She often plays with the ambiguity between forms of nature and the digital realm, toying with the blurred boundaries between reality and imagination, figure and abstraction. Her style is minimal, often with a dash of Chinese flavour.

About Cindy Ng Sio-leng

Cindy Ng Sio-leng has liberated ink from its subordination to the brush and from its longstanding obligation to render words and images. Born in Macau, Ng worked at the Chinese Calligraphy and Paintings Collection Research of the British Museum during her stay in London from 1993 to 1994, and then moved to Taiwan in 1997. Her works are recognized by various art bodies and have been exhibited in many countries in Europe, America and Asia, including the Today Art Museum in Beijing, Taipei Fine Art Museum, Dadao Museum, Taiwan and the Orient Foundation Gallery in Macau. She currently lives and works in Beijing.

About Juri Markkula

Juri Markkula grew up in Finland and moved to Sweden for a year of preparatory art school, before being admitted to The Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm, for a Master Program in Fine Arts from 1997 to 2002. Markkula is an artist who makes the industrial and the technological beautiful, turning chemicals into art. Since 2017, Markkula's huge project for Stockholm's MTR is an enticing draw to the Stockholm City Train Station - a vast project made up of seemingly infinite glass tiled mosaics, the installation symbolizes the artist's ability to render the industrial human.

About Zhang Yanzi

Graduated from Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing in 2007, Zhang devoted herself to traditional calligraphy and landscapes. In 2010, she recalled the peaceful familiarity of the medical apparatus of her childhood; and began to depict medicine in her art. In 2013, Zhang held a very successful exhibition at Beijing's Today Art Museum, winning the Lu Xun Cultural Award for Best Exhibition. In the same year, she held a breakthrough exhibition, *Remedy*, at Art Basel Hong Kong in 2013. PAN Palazzo delle Arti di Napoli, Italy (2014), *Essence* at the Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences (2016), and Volta New York (2017). In March 2018, she exhibited in Galerie Ora-Ora's *Leap to Light*, at Art Basel Hong Kong 2018. Currently, Zhang has two exhibitions in the G.B., *A Quest for Healing* at Surgeon's Hall Museum in Edinburgh, and *A Quest for Wellness* at The Museum of East Asia Art.

Zhang lives in Beijing and serves as the Professor of the Central Academy of Fine Arts and the Editor-in-Chief of CAFA Art Info. Her art is collected by the National Art Museum of China, the Jiangsu Provincial Art Museum, the Audemars Piguet Museum and others.

About Xiao Xu

Graduating from Sichuan Fine Arts Institute with a bachelor's degree and master's degree in Chinese Painting in 2007 and 2010, Xiao Xu has become one of the leading forces in contemporary ink in China. An artist who acknowledges his own love of the dark dreams and myths imbued in his paintings: "It might be that I see too many dark sides of the world." Xiao's works always remain monochromatic and carefully constructed in shades of grey, forming a picture of controlled planes and volumes. From his earlier works of which the imageries indubitably disclosed a strong precarious uncertainty and insecurity, Xiao's more recent works invite the viewers to enter the gateway that leads from reality to abstraction, beginning a psychological expedition of conflictual forces. In these works, the artist has broken free, and runs into the infinite landscapes of his own creation.

About Huang Dan

Huang Dan (b.1979) graduated with a BA from the Department of Traditional Chinese Painting at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 2001. In 2004, she was awarded an MA from the same institution. Marking her official debut into the art world, her first solo exhibition was the *Scent of a Woman* in Seoul in 2006. This event took place simultaneously with a group show entitled: *The Seventies Ink Exhibition* at the Yanhuang Art Museum, Beijing. Since then she has participated in solo and group exhibitions in China and Hong Kong (*Devotion to Ink* at the Maritime Museum, 2014) and has been part of group shows at Galerie Ora-Ora, including curated booths at Art Basel in Hong Kong since 2016.