

STUDIO NEWS:

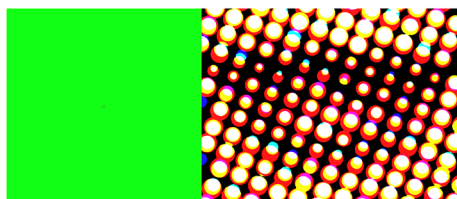
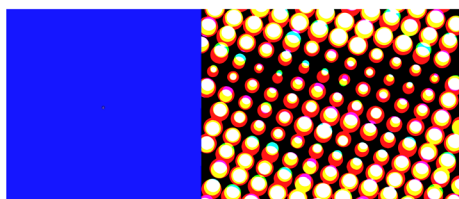
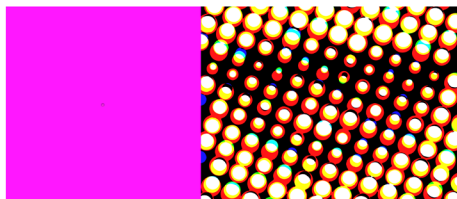
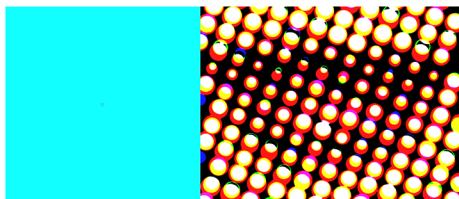
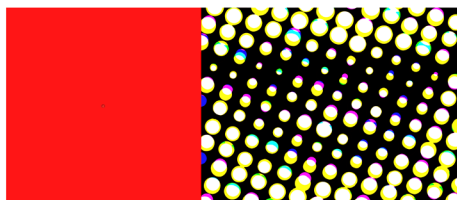
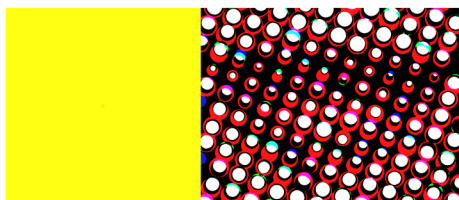
Contemporary Chinese artists at Magnolia

Through the courtesy of a partnership with Shanghai's Ren Space Gallery, over the last year Magnolia Editions has had the privilege to publish new print and tapestry editions by several major figures in the Chinese art world.

In a 2008 essay, curator Jeff Kelley explains the importance of these vanguard thinkers, who rose to prominence in the 1980s: *In the aftermath of Socialist Realism's conformity, he writes, the development of personal styles was liberating, indeed revolutionary, for [Chinese] artists. Personal styles replaced the official style. Famous artists became the party leaders of the Chinese avant-garde.*



Yu Youhan in his Shanghai studio with his 2015 tapestry *Abstract Circle 85-6*; photo credit: Ren Space Gallery.



Zhang Peili - *Lips of a Female Announcer*, 2014. Archival pigment prints on Rives BFK. 30 x 44.4 in. each. Edition of 12, suite of six prints; co-published with artist and Ren Space, Shanghai. Please see page 7 for more work by Peili Zhang and an interview with the artist.

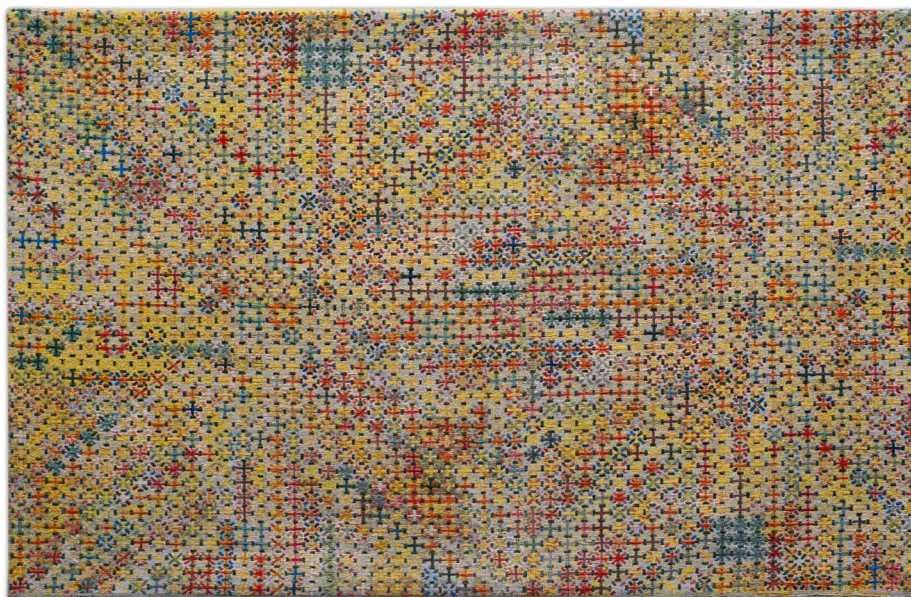
In the summer of 2014, Ren Space's Jung Lee began by bringing the "god-father of Chinese video art" Zhang Peili to Magnolia's Oakland studio space to be inspired and challenged by new mark-making possibilities. Magnolia has since published more than a dozen new prints by Zhang, as well as new editions by noted abstract painters Ding Yi and Yu Youhan.

These three artists have been enthusiastic and prolific, working with speed and concentration to proof and edition new works on paper, mixed-media works on panel, and tapestries. Executed in unfamiliar or technologically updated mediums, each edition marks an exciting new chapter in the practice of its creator, while remaining keenly engaged with the signature aesthetic and intellectual concerns for which each artist first rose to prominence. ■

NEW EDITIONS:

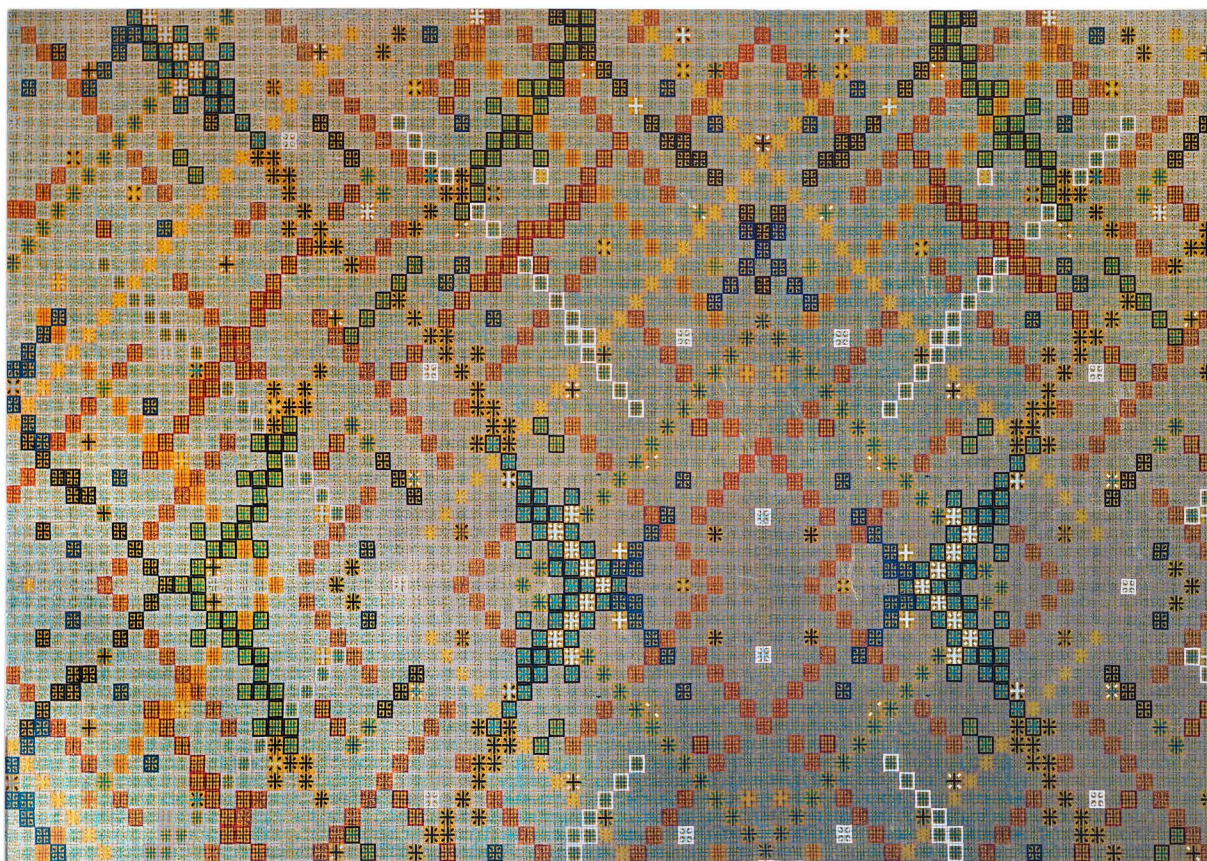
Ding Yi

Since 1988, abstract painter Ding Yi has committed to working with “x” and “+” symbols, exclusive of any mimetic or representational content, in an act of political defiance that continues to the present day. Born in 1962, the Shanghai-based artist’s studies were restricted to the political realist style of Mao’s Cultural Revolution until the early 1980s, when his studies with influential abstract painter Yu Youhan exposed him to early Modernist movements and Western techniques. Ding’s marks were originally inspired by the alignment and color crosses used in publisher’s proofs: “the publisher’s cross is a formal construction, functional but meaningless,” writes Sam Gaskin, “which is exactly how Ding sees his own crosses.”

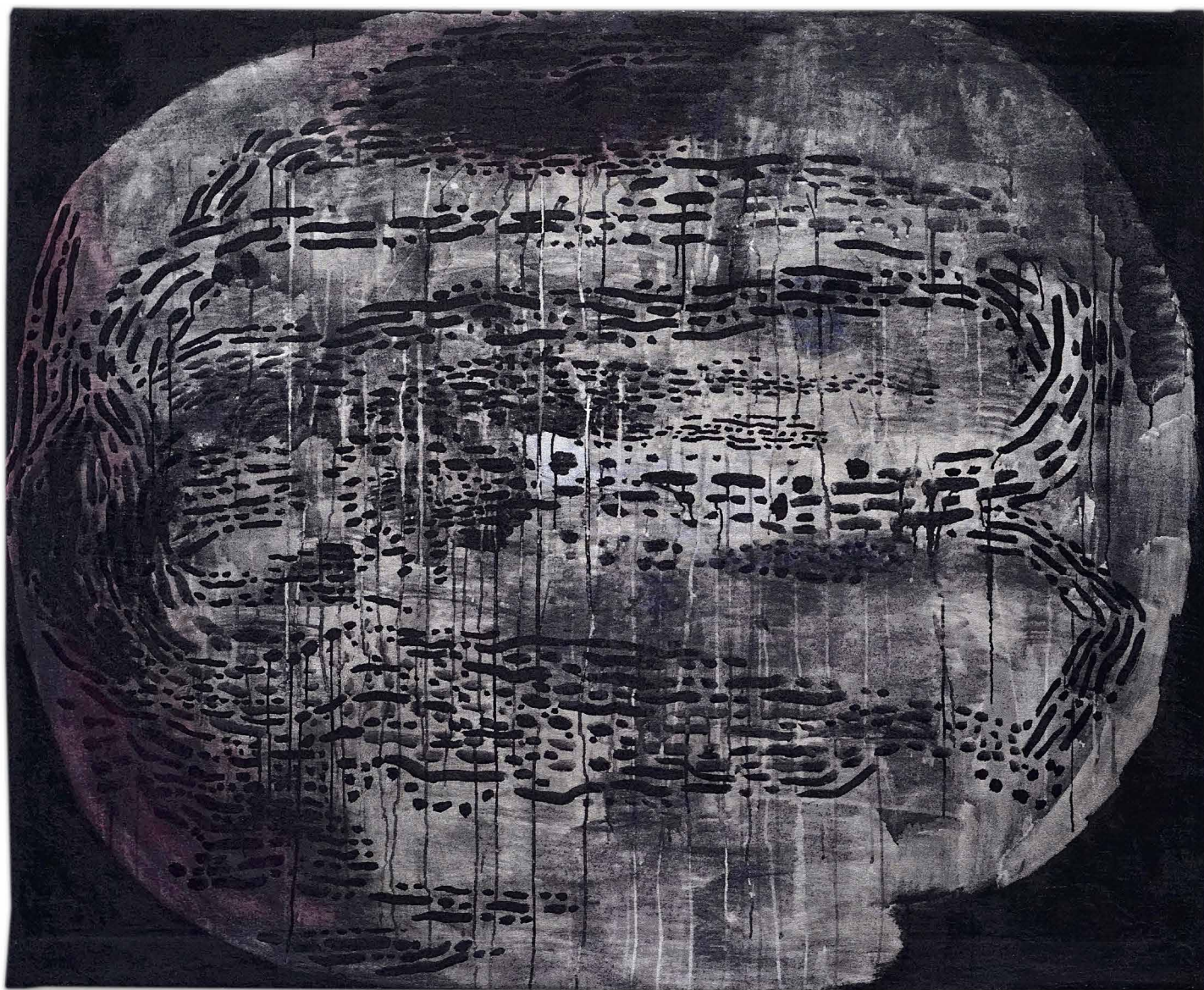


Ding Yi - *Appearance of crosses 2015 #3*, 2015. Jacquard tapestry, 60 x 80 in. Edition of 3. Co-published with artist and Rén Space, Shanghai.

In 1993, Ding’s use of a ruler to meticulously regulate his strokes began to cause him severe back pain and the artist had no choice but to start painting freehand. Gaskin describes this transition as a liberation of Ding’s practice, catalyzing experiments with new materials, colors, fabrics, and eventually, Jacquard tapestry. “For Ding,” he notes, “the changes within this singular choice of motif are endless and are still, in a sense, at an early stage.” ■



Ding Yi - *Appearance of crosses 2015 #1*, 2015. Metal leaf and acrylic on paper; 30 x 44 in. Edition of 18. Co-published with artist and Rén Space, Shanghai.



Yu Youhan - *Abstract Circle 85-6*, 2015. Jacquard tapestry, 89 x 108 in. Edition of 3; co-published with artist and Rén Space, Shanghai.

Yu Youhan

Abstract Circle 85-6 is Yu Youhan's first Jacquard tapestry edition and is based, as its name suggests, upon one of his *Circle* paintings from the mid-1980s. Yu has been a respected and influential figure in the Chinese art world since the early 1980s, transitioning from abstraction to his famed 'Political Pop' style of the 1990s and then returning to an abstract practice inspired by the Taoist principles of Lao Tzu. Describing his *Circle* series in 2011, Yu noted: "Not only is it concerned with society, but also with nature and human thought. Everything is contained within." Yu continues: "I am very fond of Lao Tzu's basic worldview and therefore want to create a feeling of endless vitality in my painting."

The Jacquard weave renders Yu's abstract language of strokes and drips into a sculptural object comprised entirely of colored threads, whose weave structures impart a subtle variety of textures to its surface. The circle itself appears like a giant but weightless stone or cloud; imbued with a powerful physicality yet softened by its translation into textile, it exudes a calm, meditative atmosphere. Through a repetition of short strokes and spots of paint, Yu's paintings suggest both unity and flux; his tapestry's capacity to impart the same visual experience bears witness to the sure hand and clear vision of a contemporary master. ■

INTERVIEW:
Zhang Peili

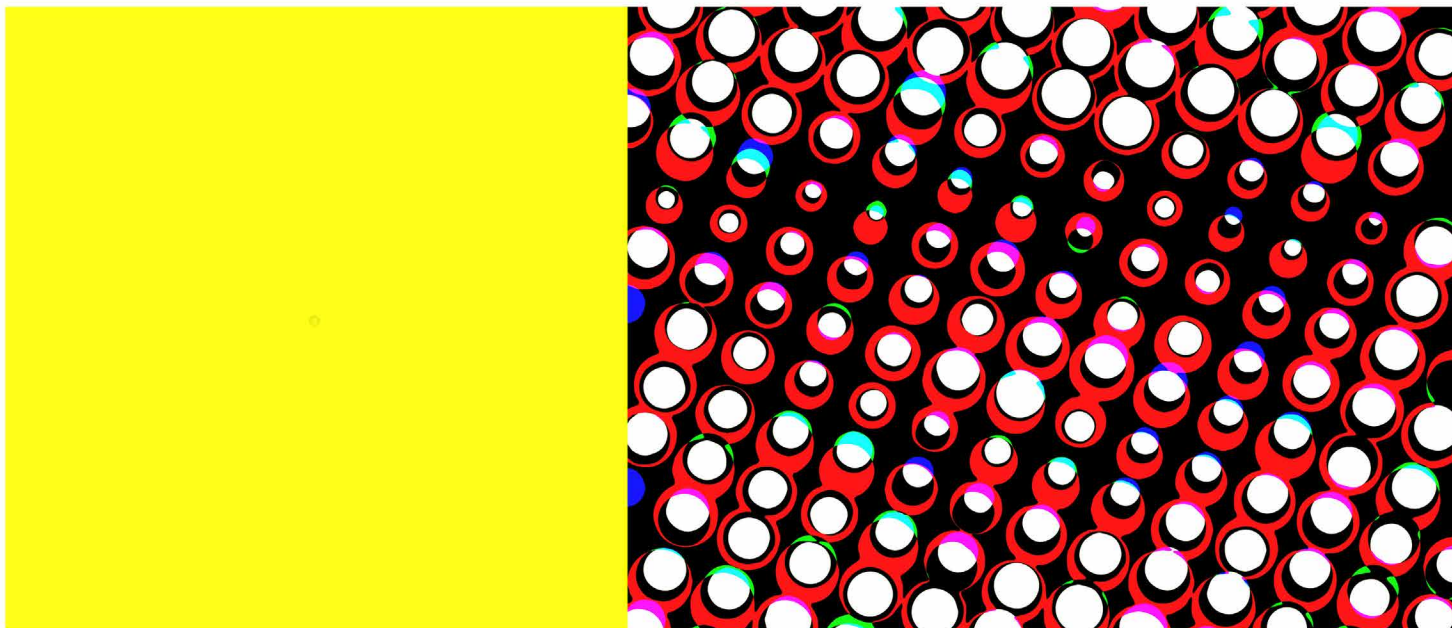
Honored with the Art China Awards' prestigious Artist of the Year award in May of this year, Zhang Peili is often tagged as the 'godfather of Chinese video art,' but he has also produced nearly four decades worth of celebrated and conceptually provocative work in painting, performance, photography and installation. His work evinces an iconoclastic and darkly humorous view of contemporary life, often with an eye toward examining the individual's relation to authority, instruction, and control. The artist's sense of satire is matched, it seems, only by his desire to blur the line between art and life; when Oakland Police Department officers stopped by Magnolia for a print project, the otherwise understated Zhang was visibly enthused to pose with them in a surreal memento of his visit to Oakland.



Zhang Peili (far right) with Oakland Police Department officers and Ren Space Gallery Director Summer Jin at Magnolia Editions in 2014; Zhang, whose work often examines the individual's relation to authority and control, could not resist this surreal photo opportunity. Photo by Donald Farnsworth.

In his well-known video work Water: Standard Version from Cihai Dictionary (1991), the artist hired high-profile CCTV newscaster Xing Zhibin – seen nightly by millions of Chinese viewers for many years – to read aloud, in the pleasant, bureaucratic cadence of a professional broadcaster, the official dictionary definition of water, repeating this

transmission for 23 increasingly absurd minutes. Several of Zhang's new print editions with Magnolia revisit Water, placing an absurdly tiny reproduction of the recently retired Xing Zhibin's familiar face in the center of a vibrant field of color, side-by-side with abstracted enlargements of a television screen depicting the newscaster's lips.



Zhang Peili - *Lips of a Female Announcer*, 2014. Archival Pigment Print on Rives BFK. 30 x 44.4 in. Edition of 12, co-published with artist and Rén Space, Shanghai.

During editioning, Nick Stone spoke with the artist (through his translator, Ren Space's Gallery Director Summer Jin) about his experience at Magnolia and the imagery in his new prints:

NS: I know the woman's face in your new prints "The Lips of a Female Announcer" and "Ink Trace" is a well-known Chinese television broadcaster who appeared in your 1991 video "Water: Standard Version from Cihai Dictionary." I'm curious why you chose to revisit this image in a static format like prints.

ZP: I did the video in the early 1990s, when this woman had already been on TV for more than twenty years. Now she's no longer on TV — she has since retired. I have a completely different concept in wanting to use her image now. Previously, I felt she was like a machine, so I asked her to read the dictionary. It was a little bit political and also very iconic. In this case, I wanted to challenge the boundaries between a star and all of the people in China who know her: to investigate the difference between her image and that of a common person's portrait.

NS: The theme of anonymity seems to run through these works.

ZP: I agree that this concept of being anonymous is something I want to explore in this work. I am trying to hide all specific features and to mix up cultural characters with my modification. Precisely, I want the audience to have no idea



Zhang Peili - *Ink Trace*, 2014. Etching and acrylic on Rives BFK. 30 x 22 in. Edition of 12; co-published with artist and Rén Space, Shanghai.

as to the background, culture, or politics behind the work. So all these figures are what people will come across naturally in their daily life.

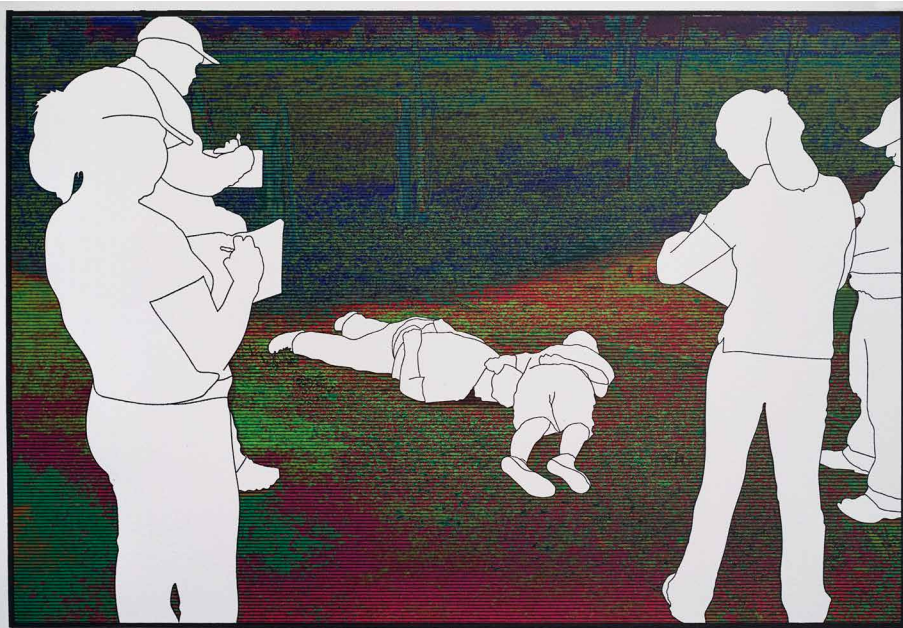
NS: Who are the figures in these prints on mirror? [These prints have not yet been editioned.]



ZP: They're all wanted by the Chinese police — suspected of different crimes: murder, economic crimes. I took the images from the official website of the Chinese police.

NS: I understand the crime scene photo was also sourced from the internet. Are you familiar with the circumstances of this particular crime?

Zhang Peili - *Arrest Warrant No. 3*, 2014. Archival pigment print with acrylic on Rives BFK. 22 x 30 in. Edition of 12; co-published with artist and Rén Space, Shanghai.



Zhang Peili - *Crime Scene No. 1*, 2014. Wood Block Print with UV Acrylic on Rives BFK. 22 x 30 in. Edition of 12. co-published with artist and Rén Space, Shanghai.

actly happened, without any politics or social background, people can still read the image.

NS: What has been most exciting or engaging for you about working at Magnolia?

ZP: It's exciting to work at Magnolia because I feel Don is such a genius. When I brought in these images, he provided so many different media for me to experiment with. I also feel re-charged: I used to paint, and had some famous oil paintings like the glove series, but I stopped painting for more than twenty years. I also used

ZP: Not all of the images I'm using are from China; this is actually a murder scene from a country in South America. You can't see the figures clearly but it's still a familiar image. Most people, people from all different countries, are probably familiar with this kind of crime scene. Without any idea where it ex-

to do silkscreen prints. In my practice I like to always change my methods and try new media. So I feel very comfortable here at Magnolia; I don't want to repeat my work and Magnolia is a good match for my working method.

I'm very happy to work with Don; we work well together. The collaboration itself has caused an emerging feeling of inspiration. Sometimes living itself can be considered art, and art is also a part of life. So I feel the process of producing artworks should always be pleasant.



Zhang Peili, Donald Farnsworth and Tallulah Terryll at Magnolia Editions in 2014; photo by Nick Stone.



Zhang Peili - *Crime Scene No. 2*, 2014
Wood Block Print with UV
Acrylic on Rives BFK.
22 x 30 in. Ed: 12



Zhang Peili - *Crime Scene No. 3*, 2014
Wood Block Print with UV
Acrylic on Rives BFK.
22 x 30 in. Ed: 12

NS: *Have you made digital prints before?*

ZP: I've only used inkjet printers to print my photographic works, which I also used Photoshop to edit.

NS: *The concept of the outlaw, being a criminal in the eyes of the state, seems to be a major issue in many contemporary Chinese artists' work, especially with artists like Ai Weiwei being openly persecuted.*

ZP: I've always been very interested in the idea of criminality. I question the law: how it issues from the government and what kind of relationship exists between the people, the instructions everyone is supposed to follow, and criminals. It is a common social problem faced everywhere: no one can avoid it. Somehow, at the same time I also feel very insecure inside. I've always wondered: perhaps one day will I be considered a criminal? It could happen to anyone in their daily life, no matter whether they intended it or not. So it inspires some deep consideration.

I think in this society, no one is completely 'secure' from being labeled as a criminal. The day we chose the images for the mirror prints we were looking through the wanted photos on the Chinese police website and joking that we hoped we wouldn't come across any familiar faces. Luckily, we didn't see anyone we knew. ■

Until next time, be sure to check

[HTTP://BLOG.MAGNOLIAEDITIONS.COM](http://BLOG.MAGNOLIAEDITIONS.COM)

for all the latest updates from Magnolia Editions!