

What we cannot speak about

“What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.” This is how Ludwig Wittgenstein’s Tractatus logico-philosophicus ends. “What we cannot speak about is the basis of my paintings” is how Chen Ruo Bing would end this sentence. Either remain silent, or try to say it without words, speak silently, and yet that is merely an attempt, because what-we-cannot-speak-about remains outside the sphere of what can be said. Can we speak of light? In many ways. It appears in all religions, it is explained by physics, and it is the subject of many myths. Without light no life, no vision, no shadow, no contrasts, no space, no world. For a painter, light is essential. It can be experienced while looking at the sky, and its reflection on a surface of water.

Chen Ruo Bing does not use it as an aid, he turns it into the subject of his paintings, without however turning it into a symbol, or speaking about it, and without any formula from physics. With him, light is created with a brush and acrylics on canvas. He does not use luminous paint. With these simple means, he creates paintings that seem to shine, as if they had a source of light built into them. But the simpler the means that are openly revealed to the beholder, the more mysterious the result seems – like something about which we cannot speak, where words fail, and painting wins.

Most of the paintings by Chen Ruo Bing shown in the exhibition were completed either this year or at the end of last year in his studio in Düsseldorf.

Chen Ruo Bing (born in 1970 in China) studied at the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts in Hangzhou, and with Gotthard Graubner at Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. He has received numerous prizes and fellowships, including residencies from the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation (2000) and the Heinrich Böll Stiftung (2014). In recent years, he had solo exhibitions at Kunstmuseum Bochum (2016) and the Youngmoo Museum of Contemporary Art, Gwangju (2013). As a representative of China's abstract art, he has been shown numerous times in museums in China and Germany.

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Poster
Reverse
2009, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 200 x 200 cm
1711, 2017-2020, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 50 cm

CHEN RUO BING

What We Cannot Speak About

September 11 – November 14, 2020

Opening September 11, 4 – 8 pm



