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Mao Yan

534 West 25th Street, New York

March 6 – April 4, 2015

Opening reception: Thursday, March 5, 6 to 8 PM



New York—Pace is pleased to announce its presentation of Mao Yan's first solo exhibition in the United States on view at 534 West 25th Street from March 4 through April 4, 2015. The exhibition features fourteen new paintings by one of China's most revered portrait artists and will be the first time his work has been exhibited publicly in New York. An opening reception for the artist will be held on Thursday, March 5 from 6 to 8 PM.

To accompany the exhibition, Pace will publish a catalogue featuring a new essay on the artist's work by art historian and critic Donald Kuspit.

Mao Yan contends with the history of portraiture in his work, interpreting figures and faces through a subjective language steeped in the technical formalism he developed while studying in Beijing in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Mao Yan's paintings exhibit tropes of portraiture such as the seated nude and oval frames, but cede deliberate representation to style and mood. Aqueous blue, green, and grey tones swirl around, coalescing into smoky figures defined by gestural brushwork. He empties his portrait subjects of interiority and identity, divorcing them from any background or context and allowing paint to take precedence. Mao Yan paints not to represent but to explore and capture the relationship between painting's spiritual and technical dimensions.

Painting at different sizes, Mao Yan creates distinct effects. Three nude portraits feature full figures looming over the viewer on their more than ten-foot-tall canvases. More small scaled works show only a head or a bust and allow for a more intimate exchange between the painting and viewer.

The exhibition includes six recent portraits of Thomas Rohdewald, an émigré to China who has frequently appeared in Mao Yan's work since 1999. Mao Yan began painting Thomas to move away from depicting his

immediate circle of friends and family. The six versions of Thomas on view exhibit subtle differences that emphasize the artist's concern with translating mood and spirit through paint and technique over any interest in mimesis.

Mao Yan (b. 1968 Hunan Province, China) began studying painting as a child and graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1991. He left Beijing to teach at the Nanjing University of the Arts where he began to develop his first body of portraits. He was a 2013 recipient of the Martell Artists of the Year award by the Today Art Museum, Beijing, where his work was shown in the attendant exhibition.

In 2009 Mao Yan was the subject of the solo exhibition *Longing for More* at the Shanghai Art Museum. His work has also been featured in numerous group exhibitions including *The Second Triennial of Chinese Contemporary Art*, Nanjing Museum (2005); *China: Construct and Deconstruction*, National Gallery of São Paulo (2009); *China Mania: Colorful, Diverse and Distinctly Narrative*, Arken Museum of Modern Art, Ishøj (2010); *Phenomena and Situation since 1985: Trends in Hubei and Hunan Chinese Contemporary Art 1985–2009* (2009); *Collecting History: China New Art*, Chengdu Museum of Contemporary Art (2011); and *Portrait of the Times: 30 Years of Chinese Contemporary Art*, Power Station of Art, Shanghai (2013). The National Art Museum of China, Beijing, included the artist's work in *Chinese Oil Painting in the 20th Century* (2000) and *Towards a New Image: 20 Years of Contemporary Chinese Painting* (2001), both of which traveled to the Shanghai Art Museum. His work was also included in *Mahjong: Contemporary Chinese Art from the Sigg Collection*, Kunstmuseum Bern (2005), which traveled to the Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg; Museum der Moderne, Salzburg; University of California Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive; and the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA.

His work is included in the collections of the University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong University; Shanghai Art Museum; and the Shenzhen Art Museum, among others.

Mao Yan lives and works in Nanjing. This is his second exhibition at Pace.

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Image:

Mao Yan, *Xiao Dai*, 2013-2014, oil on canvas, 51-3/16" x 35-7/16". Photo courtesy Pace Gallery © Mao Yan courtesy Pace Gallery.

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