

Another room is given over to Zhang's student work, juxtaposing the socialist realist paintings and drawings he made in China with the fiercely expressionistic and experimental pieces he created while studying at the Art Students League of New York shortly after arriving in the city. In one particularly sly piece, which like performance art exists now only in the form of photographic documentation, Zhang rewrote (and replaced) help-wanted ads that he found on the walls of Chinatown sweatshops in the calligraphic style of Wang Xizhi, a 4th-century figure commonly known as the Sage of Calligraphy.

Hybridity has always been a major element of Zhang's work. In his series "Shanshui" (Mountains and Water, 1998-ongoing), he re-creates famous Chinese ink paintings in the style of Western masters like Cézanne and van Gogh. The seven examples on view make evident Zhang's immense talent for stylistic mimesis. Beyond their visual lushness, the works set up a kind of cross-cultural viewing experiment: which does one see first, a classical Chinese composition or its Post-Impressionist brushwork?

The newest series represented in the exhibition shows Zhang branching into environmental criticism. Called "Remake of Ma Yuan's Water Album (780 Years Later)," these 10 paintings from 2008 present the ancient master's beautiful scenes as they are today, badly polluted. They are brooding works, dark and atmospheric, yet still gorgeous in the manner of sunset colors spreading through smog. The paintings share a room with one of the museum's permanent installations, *The Water Supply of the City of New York* (1938), a large topographical model made for the 1939-40 world's fair. It's a thoughtful juxtaposition that highlights one of the most foreboding critiques in the show.

—Charles M. Schultz

CORINNE WASMUHT

Petzel

Anyone actively participating in contemporary urban life across the globe would feel a sense of déjà vu looking at the high-velocity, fragmented cityscapes and architectural spaces in Corinne Wasmuht's luminous, often panoramic paintings. They are based on digital collages Wasmuht seamlessly weaves together on the computer from hundreds of photographs she takes herself or collects online of

people moving through airport terminals, shopping malls, pedestrian plazas and other busy public places worldwide. The paintings draw viewers into the familiar-feeling vistas with strong receding vanishing points, only to confuse with shifting perspectives and structures that merge and melt into abstraction. They mirror the slippery, nonlinear narratives of dreams or unreliable memories.

For the seven paintings in this show, the Berlin-based artist worked at an ambitious scale not uncommon in contemporary German painting. Yet her radiant palette is highly distinctive—full of mint greens, atmospheric blues, soft pinks, purples and grays, often shot through with darker colors suggesting shadows. In a painstaking process that can take as long as a year for a single work, she builds countless layers of thin translucent glaze on whitewashed and polished wood or aluminum panels. Conjoining stained-glass windows or light boxes, the paintings seem almost illuminated from behind. Colors appear to eat into each other like digitized images breaking apart, but each puzzle piece of pigment is in fact executed carefully by hand.

Pebœ Towers (2013), the largest piece on view, at more than 23 feet wide, is a sweeping scene anchored by the dark columns of an outdoor pavilion structure that repeats three times across the image. Figures appear to be in constant motion, moving forward and receding, and also seem in the process of materializing from or dissolving into a dizzying, dappled ground composed of infinite bits of color, dominated by bright blues and greens. Whipping around the entire scene like Saturn's rings are blue streaks suggesting centrifugal force or a time warp. Indeed, close examination reveals the repetition of some figures, altered only by the shifting background merging with their bodies, like films stills stuttering and overlapping in a projector. An abstracted cluster of figures on the far right of the painting becomes the focus of a smaller work titled *Pebœ P* (2015), with only one of the several faces clearly visible. The face is suspended as though in a daydream, capturing the psychological isolation of being lost inside one's own head in the chaos of a crowd.

In *Almitak* (2015)—the only painting in the show devoid of people—frothy waves and crystalline structures in an icy palette of pale blues, purples, grays and whites encroach on geometric architecture and a streetscape, turned sideways, of high-rises and parked cars. Wasmuht, who has compared herself to an archaeologist, here suggests the relentless deluge of nature on man-made habitats, in the future as in the past.

—Hilarie M. Sheets

Corinne Wasmuht:
Pebœ Towers, 2013,
oil on wood, 6½ by
23½ feet; at Petzel.

