

PRESS RELEASE

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DAVID DIAO

BEST LAID PLANS

30 OCTOBER - 13 DECEMBER 2008

PREVIEW WEDNESDAY 29 OCTOBER, 7-9pm

SPECIAL EVENT: ARTIST'S TALK, 6pm (Please R.S.V.P to info@tanyaleighton.com)

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For over forty years David Diao has made remarkable works that borrow from the history of modernist painting. Tanya Leighton Gallery will showcase new and recent paintings and works on paper by this eminent abstractionist. Best Laid Plans is David Diao's first solo exhibition in Germany and his first at Tanya Leighton.

In the beginning of his career in the 1960s, Diao's work engaged formalist concerns of process and material, and in the mid-80s he moved towards addressing modernism's discursive and materialist formations in his paintings. In this recent body of work, he questions some of the culturally ingrained truisms of art making: genius, permanence, expression, and autonomy. The artist's key question in this exhibition is: "Can digging among the remnants be a means to rescue whatever criticality the project of modern painting had once imagined?" (Diao)

Inspired by his renovation of a Marcel Breuer-designed house, Diao turned to modernism in architecture as a subject for further inquiry. In The Rug, It Shrank!, his topic is Philip Johnson's Glass House as a kind of failed utopia epitomized by its rug, which, despite precise plans for the arrangement of furniture, continues to shrink with each cleaning. Endangered Species 2 also takes architecture as starting point, mapping modern houses in the wealthy enclave of New Canaan, Connecticut, where their famous architects have not prevented many structures from being torn down and replaced by "McMansions" – the ubiquitous nemeses of modernist architecture.

That Close! (Updated) pictures the ground plan for the Green River Cemetery

TANYA LEIGHTON AT KURFÜRSTENSTRASSE 156, 10785 BERLIN

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on Long Island, the final resting place of many revered figures from the New York School: Jackson Pollock, Frank O'Hara, Elaine DeKooning, and Ad Reinhardt. Pollock's plot forms the epicenter of Diao's painting where concentric circles map the distance of other artists to the famous abstract expressionist. Reflecting on the lasting attraction the cemetery holds for New York artists – many of whom have reserved plots here – That Close! (Updated) questions both painting's status as the privileged medium of art as well as New York's claim to being the center of the international art world, unraveling the myth around painting in general and the mythologizing of Abstract Expressionism in particular. Berlin Cemetery, with its reference to individuals such as Herbert Marcuse, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, and Bertolt Brecht, continues Diao's interest in targeting sites and figures of historical significance.

David Diao was born in 1943 in Chengdu, Sichuan, China. He moved to Hong Kong with his grandparents when he was six and joined his father in New York six years later. Diao first attracted attention with his show at Paula Cooper Gallery in New York in 1969. Two-person shows followed the same year at Leo Castelli Gallery in New York (with Peter Young) and at Carmen Lamanna Gallery, Toronto (with Brice Marden), and three years later with Cy Twombly, at Hampshire College, Massachusetts. His work was included in Konrad Fischer's show Prospect '73 at Städtische Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf. He presented work in High Times Hard Times, New York Painting 1967-1975 at ZKM, Karlsruhe, earlier this year. Major shows have been mounted in Paris, Dijon, Rennes, Toronto, Vancouver, Warsaw, Rotterdam, Taipei, Hongkong, and Beijing. His work is featured in the collections of MoMA, NY, Whitney Museum of American Art, NY, Brooklyn Museum, NY, High Museum, Atlanta, GA, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY, Akron Museum, Akron, OH, SFMOMA, San Francisco, Blanton Museum, University of Texas, Austin, MOMA, St. Etienne, France, FRAC Brittany and Burgundy, Ontario Art Gallery, Toronto, and Vancouver Art Gallery, Canada, among others. Diao has shown regularly with Postmasters since the opening of the gallery in 1985. He lives in New York.

Tanya Leighton is grateful to Harriet Mitchell, Postmasters, New York, Walid Raad, and Heinz Peter Schwerfel for their generous help in realizing this exhibition.

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Open Wednesday – Saturday 12-6pm and by appointment