ALMINE RECH

Lou Zhenggang
Shizen

Apr 22 — May 24, 2025 | London

Almine Rech London is pleased to present *Shizen*, Lou Zhenggang's first solo exhibition with the gallery, organized with Simon de Pury, on view from April 22 to May 24, 2025.

Almine Rech is thrilled to present *Shizen*, the first commercial exhibition of paintings by the highly acclaimed Asian artist Lou Zhenggang in Europe.

A celebrated figure in China, her country of birth, as well as in Japan, where she has lived and worked for over three decades, Lou Zhenggang's art has been avidly collected by devoted Asian collectors. Her works have commanded strong demand in both the primary market and at auctions held by China Guardian and Poly, China's two largest auction houses. Until now, however, her work has remained largely unseen outside of Asia.

Born in 1966 in Heilongjiang Province, China, Lou was a child prodigy who quickly mastered the art of Chinese calligraphy under her father's guidance. Her extraordinary talent allowed her to surpass her masters at a remarkably young age.

In 1986, Lou moved to Japan, where she held numerous successful exhibitions. During the early 1990s, she spent time in New York, immersing herself in contemporary Western art before returning to Japan at the end of the decade. She then withdrew from public life entirely, devoting herself obsessively to painting—night after night, in complete solitude. This period of intense focus and isolation became a catalyst for an extraordinary creative outpouring. Lou developed a visual language and technique that are entirely her own, pushing the boundaries of her medium with an unwavering dedication to evolution and refinement.

Since 2018, she has worked in a large studio in Izu, overlooking Sagami Bay, a setting that provides the perfect backdrop for her relentless artistic pursuit.

The Essence of *Shizen*

Shizen, the Japanese word for nature, also conveys meanings of human nature and spontaneity. Lou Zhenggang's paintings, though abstract, are deeply personal—expressions of her innermost emotions—yet they evoke the raw force of nature. Her work balances the unrestrained freedom of spontaneous brushwork with the rigorous discipline of a master calligrapher, honed over years of devoted practice.

The Exhibition

The *Shizen* exhibition at Almine Rech London features twenty-one paintings created between 2018 and 2023. These recent works, while undeniably contemporary, possess a timeless quality. The exhibition includes both monochromatic works—rendered in infinite shades of black and white—and paintings infused with color. Whether viewed up close or from a distance, each work possesses a staggering beauty, regardless of its scale.

Lou Zhenggang is now recognized as one of the great masters of abstraction, as evidenced by her inclusion in the seminal 2023 exhibition 'Abstraction: Genesis and Evolution of Abstract Painting. Cézanne, Fauvism, Cubism, and on to Today' at the Artizon Museum (formerly Bridgestone Museum) in Tokyo. Lou Zhenggang's work remains quintessentially Asian in spirit, yet universal in its appeal. While some may draw distant parallels to Zao Wou-Ki or Cy Twombly, her artistic language is entirely her own, blending the cultural heritage of China and Japan into a unique and powerful expression.

Despite her prominence, Lou Zhenggang is entirely dedicated to her craft and uninterested in promoting her own work. She has abandoned travel, avoids distractions, and keeps studio visits rare, choosing instead to devote all her time to painting. Fortunately, her admirers and collectors—moved by the depth and power of her work—have taken it upon themselves to champion her art on the global stage.

'Shizen' was curated by Almine Rech and Simon de Pury.

— Simon de Pury