

# Zhou Zixi

# 周子曦



*Happy Life, 2005, Oil/acrylic on canvas, 120x160 cm*

*Happy Life, 2005, Oil/acrylic on canvas, 110x140 cm*



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What is clear from all of Zhou Zixi's work is the degree to which he understands the profound power of place, its capacity to transcend the prosaic and evoke complex metaphors of history, memory and nostalgia. Zhou, both in his photographic work as well as in his paintings, regularly exploits the power of places to create images of uninhabited landscapes and estranged interiors that nonetheless generate a multitude of narratives. His work moves with startling ease between modern rooms decorated in bright primary colors to dark scenes denoting menacingly notions of history; the common factor running between these two extremes is the powerful demonstration of ideology imposing itself on space. In a series of documentary work entitled *Sorry, I don't Know* Zhou Zixi has appropriated a large-scale photographic image of a male's portrait covering his face with his hands, and replaced it into random topographical spaces. His point is to insert an image without context into non-descript urban landscape in order to trigger the advent of an unframed, unforeseen visual encounter. The underlying scenario is not imposed on the spectator: on the contrary, the work offers a willfully ambivalent approach, open to a variety of interpretative angles.

Zhou's recent paintings oscillate between high art and kitschy popular culture integrating a visual language that is particular blatant due to the superficial environment depicted. What we see in these pictures are interior spaces filled with new consumer goods and other symbols of newly gained economic status. Rather than a mind calmed by the notion of home, these paintings record the external manifestation of China's frenzied development. These interiors evoke not awe but alienation, and the bright canvases and the slick surface appearance mirror the hollow world of consumerism and its imagery. Even though his paintings might be a serious take on many of society's less attractive features, some images also pay surprising tribute to fellow artists: He quotes their work by decorating his imaginary interiors with their paintings thereby underscoring that the art of today is integral to the logic of consumerism and day-to-day reality.

Zhou Zixi was born in Jianxi, China, in 1970. He graduated in 1989 after studying Literature. Today he lives and works in Shanghai. Recent exhibitions include *Happy Life*, BizArt, Shanghai (2005), *Interiors – Zhou Zixi* at Büro Friedrich, Berlin, Germany (2006), *Under the Blue Sky*, Grace Li Gallery, Zürich (2006), and *Under the Skin*, Universal Studios, Beijing, China (2006).



*Sorry, I Don't Know, Photo, 80x120 cm*