

# LÉVY GORVY

## LÉVY GORVY DEBUTS NEW PAINTINGS BY TU HONGTAO IN LONDON

### ***Tu Hongtao: Twisting and Turning***

2 October–19 December 2020  
22 Old Bond Street, London W1S 4PY

6–31 October 2020  
40 Albemarle Street, London W1S 4TE

**Opening Reception: Thursday 1 October, 12–8 PM**



Tu Hongtao. *Green Mountains Shall See Me Like This*, 2019. Oil on canvas, Four panels, overall: 102 3/8 x 330 11/16 inches (260 x 840 cm), Each: 102 3/8 x 82 11/16 inches (260 x 210 cm). © Tu Hongtao

London—Lévy Gorvy is pleased to announce its first European exhibition with acclaimed Chinese artist Tu Hongtao (b. 1976). Following the gallery’s career survey of Tu’s paintings in Hong Kong in early 2020, this exhibition will debut new works never before exhibited. On view at both 22 Old Bond Street and 40 Albemarle Street, *Tu Hongtao: Twisting and Turning* features expansive paintings that occupy an expressive realm between landscape and abstraction, reflecting the atmosphere and influence of the rural area near where the artist resides. Tu synthesizes Chinese aesthetic traditions with postwar abstraction to create painterly effects that are vividly realized and profoundly original.

The exhibition’s title *Twisting and Turning* is inspired by the Chinese idiom *Yibosanzhe*—“a twist and three turns”—a phrase that originates from Jin Dynasty master calligrapher Wang Xizhi (303–361 CE). Originally referring to the elegant flourishes of Chinese calligraphy, the phrase now describes unpredictable, abruptly changing states of affairs, while also implying that good things never come easy. As Tu explains: “I understand these words as espousing a certain aesthetic sensibility, namely, that painting ought not to be too neat and orderly, nor artistic production too decorative; both, rather, should involve a kind of friction, as with a blade against a grindstone.” In the face of the uncertainty and global predicaments of the present, he has broken through with new forms of painterly expression in this new body of works.

Based near Chengdu, Tu explores the constantly evolving relationship between memory, place, image, and technique in his paintings. A graduate of the renowned China Academy of Art, his work developed within the avant-garde tradition pioneered by his predecessors,

Academy alumni Lin Fengmian and Wu Dayu, and by the second generation of great Chinese abstractionists who worked in France: Zao Wou-Ki and Chu Teh-Chun. Inspired by the spirit of Chinese literati painters and poets along with Western innovators ranging from Paul Cézanne to Cy Twombly, Brice Marden, and David Hockney, Tu has synthesized his own approach to calligraphic form, lush colors, and fluid brushwork to ponder the relationships between representation and expression. For him painting has a bodily connection, an immediate feeling that cannot be feigned. By quite literally stretching out across the space of his canvas with paint, Tu's compositions create a powerful sense of motion through an ineffably beautiful landscape.

Tu's lyrical abstractions are inspired by his journeys through specific locales and evince the aesthetic, emotional, and intellectual associations they spark. The artist finds his subjects while walking through China's distinctive mountainous terrain, immersing himself in the environment and mentally recording impressions that feel "almost like a dream." Returning to his studio, he works from memory to create sketch after sketch, giving structure to his recollections of sights, scents, and other sensory experiences. Over the past two years, he has endeavored to incorporate more historical reality into his paintings, folding in conversations with friends, thoughts about what he has read, and reveries about the landscapes he has traversed.

A highlight of Lévy Gorvy's London exhibition is *Falling Leaves Rustling Down* (2019–20), a work based on Tu's recent journey to a Buddhist religious site near Chengdu in the company of a poet friend. Amalgamating his experience over several days into a single image, the painting's textured layers convey the feeling of being within a heavily forested mountain range in the evening. Through his bravura brushwork, Tu's poetic interpretations scramble and reconstruct those impressions to deliver a vivid, cohesive whole.

The exhibition continues at 40 Albemarle Street from 6 to 31 October with a presentation of *Green Mountains Shall See Me Like This* (2019), a multi-panel painting that extends over eight meters. A sublime mountain scene of craggy cliffs, bare-limbed trees, verdant forests, and falling water are here conveyed by varied brushstrokes that exist in intense chromatic and textural contrast to scumbled washes of thinned paint. Compelling in its brilliant deployment of colors and gestures, the work fully embodies Tu's deep engagement with and reworking of the legacy of Chinese landscape art. He has remarked, "Chinese painting has a set of schemas that illustrates the relationship between space and time. . . . What I want to do is change these schemas."

### **About Lévy Gorvy**

Lévy Gorvy cultivates a program devoted to innovation and connoisseurship in the fields of modern, postwar, and contemporary art. Founded by Dominique Lévy and Brett Gorvy, Lévy Gorvy maintains gallery spaces at 909 Madison Avenue in New York, in Mayfair, London, in Central, Hong Kong, and in the Marais, Paris. The gallery fosters continued dedication to the living artists and artists' estates that it represents and offers a robust program of exhibitions and multidisciplinary events. The gallery also produces ongoing art-historical research and original scholarship, publishing exhibition catalogues, monographs, and other key publications. The Zürich office, Lévy Gorvy with Rumbler, offers bespoke private advisory services to collectors and institutions around the globe.

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