

# Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle

**Ma Ke**

**Journey to the West**

**Sep 09 – Nov 05, 2022**

**Exhibition Opening: Friday, Sep 09, 6 – 8 pm**

**A comprehensive publication will be published on the occasion of the exhibition**



Ma Ke, Journey to the West, 2022, Oil on wood, 90 x 130 cm (35 x 51 inches), courtesy of the artist

Born in 1970, Ma Ke is a distinctive painter whose art is difficult to define. In his second solo exhibition at Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle the artist focuses on the depiction of his iconic figures, such as the central, repeatedly recurring figure of the equestrian; as he roams through the dark forest, for example, or tries, almost surreally, to keep his balance on a thin rope. Often the figures, floating free from the background, are in a moving balancing act. The title of the exhibition confronts the viewer with two controversial associations. On the one hand, “Journey to the West” can be read as a critique of the Chinese social structure: four fairy-tale figures from the classical Chinese narrative are setting off towards the West. On the other hand, the dark forest backdrops and the consistently overpainted background point to the connotation of fictitious, Western values, which are always addressed but often remain utopian. It can be seen that by minimalizing and abstracting his own practice, the painter attempts to carve out “a thread of truth” from the chaotic reality. In this way, the painter encourages the viewer to question the relationship between their being and the nature of the world. In other words, Ma Ke explores his own model of being through his art.

*“My path in painting is actually my own journey towards modernization. And it is one that I have chosen myself. For a while I thought that I should express my anger and fear in my paintings and that my paintings should be against the system. I have since left that phase behind me. Great artists - like Cézanne –have the ability to create a model of the outside world, a model of thought. They discover something while using the rules of their model of thought. The world before my eyes is a mechanism constructed by language, and the essence of language is abstraction. I paint with this attitude. I no longer express anger, and as a result my art moves on a different level.”*

After graduating from the Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts in China, Ma Ke taught for a year in Eritrea, Northeast Africa. He then did postgraduate study at the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in Beijing. At the same time, he travelled throughout China and later had artist residencies in Western Europe. All these experiences have contributed to Ma Ke’s way of thinking and have had varying degrees of impact on his artistic output.

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