

# Ju Ting

## *Summer*

Galerie Urs Meile, Zurich Rämistrasse

June 12 – August 22, 2026

Opening: Saturday, June 13, 2026; 6 – 8pm

The artist will be present

Galerie Urs Meile is pleased to present *Summer*, a solo exhibition by Ju Ting (b. 1983, Shandong; lives and works in Beijing) at the gallery's Rämistrasse location in Zurich. At its centre stands the artist's recent series *Deep Waters Run Quiet*: new paintings in which Ju Ting builds up dense strata of acrylic paint only to cut, carve and lay them open – staging destruction not as refusal but as a condition for new form.

### *Destroy, She Said*

Text: Mareike Dittmer

To cut, to tear, to beat, to break. On the floor, layers of acrylic paint gather in waiting – patient strata building up, time thickening into material. Elevated, lifted up the drawing table, these layers are disrupted, attacked with tools. Knife and hammer carve openings into the dense surface. It yields, resists, yields again. When the paintings are turned upright and hung onto the wall, not only their orientation but the very act of looking at them has shifted. What remains is a dialogue in fragments – like an excavation, a dissolution of form, a slow undoing. 'And erosion by desire?' / 'Yes. By your desire.'<sup>1</sup>

What am I looking at? Or rather: what are you looking at? In these paintings – with their material, visual presence that encloses a way of thinking – there is tension. Tension that violates not only the coloured strata but also our habitual ways of seeing. The surface, once smooth, almost seductive, now carries incisions – openings that refuse to close. They reveal something like an interior, though nothing inside is stable. Structure appears only to dissolve again, and to embrace brokenness, to reveal complexity. The open surface becomes an entry point into deeper layers of affect. To leave that path. To go further. Not to hesitate.

In exposing structure as surface, and thus revealing its inner logic, Ju Ting works in accumulation, and then goes against it. She builds, then interrupts. Cuts into growth, fractures continuity, and in doing so releases something else – something not planned, not fully contained. Destruction here is not refusal. It is a condition. A beginning that arrives disguised as an ending. And as the French philosopher Catherine Malabou suggests for this very moment – describing the condition after rupture – it is about 'becoming absolutely other'.

Malabou's *destructive* plasticity marks a break in continuity. Derived from the Greek *plassein*, plasticity names the simultaneous capacity to receive form, to give form, and to annihilate form altogether. Not metaphor, but event. Not symbol, but matter. Form is literally undone. Split open. Displaced. Made to begin again. For Ju Ting, what emerges does not resolve. It holds contradictions. From the site of the cut – where one expects loss – there is warmth. Resistance. A quiet insistence. Even if life is structured by constraints, by limits, by restrictions, yet art insists otherwise. It opens a passage. A way through, or a way out. So, alongside the violence of making, something else persists. Colour speaks differently. Softly, almost against the gesture that produced it. And somewhere within this, a sentence returns – Albert Camus, carried like a quiet undercurrent and referred to in the exhibition's title: 'In the middle of winter, I at last discovered that there was in me an invincible summer.'<sup>2</sup>

Look closely. Into the cuts. They do not behave like wounds. Or if they do, they refuse closure. They hold open a possibility of inside, of depth without resolution. You follow. You encounter a moment of recognition.

You become a seer, attentive to detail, to the merging of colour. The layers resemble geological strata, a mountainous landscape of temporal encounters that becomes a thoughtscape.

Time is present. At its core, Ju Ting's practice materialises Malabou's schema: separating a whole into parts, revealing underlying structures, and positioning destruction as a condition of emergence. The incision does not uncover an intact past; it produces a new configuration of fragments that exist only through the destructive act. Layering and cutting, vertical lines and repetition – these do not merely strive toward perfection through reiteration; they also signal restraint. A controlled rigidity. And from within this control emerges a search for the accidental: something wild, playful. A breaking of lines, layers, rules.

My thoughts turn to Sigmund Freud, who wrote: 'If we throw a crystal to the ground, it breaks, but not into haphazard pieces; it comes apart along its lines of cleavage into fragments whose boundaries, though invisible, were predetermined by the structure of the crystal.'<sup>3</sup> The break reveals what was always already structured to break. Such moment of rupture may produce a form of awareness that flickers – simultaneously present and absent. An awareness that appears and disappears at once. Not stable. Not continuous. But real. The *Deep Waters Run Quiet* series marks a return, a reconsideration – an articulation of the present collective condition. It signals a shift from earlier bodies of work, including the *Winter is Coming* series, where stillness prevailed and demanded pause. Yet even in stillness, there was no true pause. At a certain point, violence became necessary: to break the silence, to resist, to push through. Now, the tempo slows down again. In these new works, the thread unwinds. There is a turning inward, a gradual return, a search for one – or many – selves. The trajectory becomes precise: from the blunt force of the hammer to the scalpel, the knife as surgical instrument. In cold blood. Or, simply, in clarity. Violence is no longer explosive but analytical. Dissection replaces rupture. Layers are built to uncover what was – and what is becoming. This becoming persists in the charged strata of paint, revealed to the viewer – you – as an open invitation to look into and beyond the surface. One might say: in these paintings, Ju Ting stages a material incision into colour as stratified memory. As Marguerite Duras, in her writing, radicalises deconstruction by erasing narrative and subject alike. For both, Malabou offers a conceptual framework in which destruction is not negation but the very condition for the emergence of radically new forms.

In certain moments in history, protest does not erupt loudly. It moves quietly instead. Beneath. Within. A resistance that does not declare itself but persists all the same. Perhaps this is where these works reside: Not in spectacle, but in insistence. In the slow breaking of something internal. In the refusal to remain closed. An articulation of what remained otherwise concealed.

Writing moves in lines. Images do not. They scatter, return, overlap, hesitate. They allow contradiction to remain unresolved. And still – these layers asked to be opened. To be cut. To reveal something like tenderness. Something like compassion.

*Destroy, she said.*

1 Marguerite Duras, *Destroy, She Said*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Grove Press, 1986), p. 82.

2 Albert Camus, *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, trans. Philip Thody (Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 1968), p. 169.

3 Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 22, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), p. 59.

ARTIST BIO

Ju Ting (b. 1983, Shandong, China) is a Beijing-based artist whose work challenges the conventions of abstract painting by fusing painterly and sculptural approaches. Her practice investigates the material and spatial possibilities of acrylic paint, dissolving the boundary between surface and object.

Institutional exhibitions include KANAL-Centre Pompidou, Brussels, Belgium (2026); Long Museum, Shanghai, China (2026); Museum of Contemporary Art Yinchuan, China (2024); Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, Michigan, USA (2016). Her works are held in prominent public and private collections, including Arario Museum (South Korea); National Art Museum of China; M+ Sigg Collection (Hong Kong/Switzerland); White Rabbit Gallery (Australia).

AUTHOR BIO

Mareike Dittmer is a writer, curator and editor engaging in transdisciplinary alliances and practices. Since 2025, she gives artistic direction to REFLECTION and ALP, a public art programme and summer laboratory hosted by Kulturstiftung St. Moritz. Since 2024 she is the curator of the writers' residency programme TEMPORARS SUSCH at Muzeum Susch. She also co-chairs The Futurological Congress 2015–2030 with Julieta Aranda. Her latest book projects include *Muzeum Susch: Alpine Laboratory* (2025) and *Temporars Susch & The Exemplary Syllabus* (2026).