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## Qiu Zhenzhong

Born in 1947 in Jiangxi Province, Qiu Zhenzhong is one of China's most celebrated contemporary calligraphers. Holding teaching positions in some of the country's most prestigious art institutions, including Central Academy of Fine Arts, the prolific artist is also known for his paintings and poetry collections. During his Hong Kong exhibition, "From 'Romance of the West Chamber' to Matisse," he talks to Penny Zhou.

By [Penny Zhou](#) | Nov 08, 2012

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### HK Magazine: How did you start practicing calligraphy?

**Qiu Zhenzhong:** As a kid, I'd always been sensitive to and fond of words. Teachers would compliment my handwriting, but I didn't really do anything to further polish it till I was 15. I had just entered high school at that time and wanted to pick up something to train my patience and perseverance, so I thought calligraphy would be a good fit. Every day, I'd pick 16 Chinese characters and practice writing them in Yan style [a regular script style invented by Yan Zhenqing, a leading Chinese calligrapher from the Tang Dynasty]. For the next three years, I never stopped.

### HK: Did you think of becoming a calligrapher then?

**QZ:** I was more interested in becoming a writer or a poet! Literature has been an important part of me, and poetry remains a passion of mine. I've written quite a number of poems and I feel lucky that a lot of them have been published and gotten good reviews.

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**HK WEEKLY**



Matisse - Female Nude in Studio



**HK: Can you talk a little about your Hong Kong exhibition?**

**QZ:** Traditional Chinese ink painting is perhaps the most iconic art form from China, and it has been a hot topic in China's, and the world's, art circle—especially in recent years. I think part of the reason why it is gaining so much attention is that China's modern art has surpassed the phase of learning from and imitating western art, and is now looking back at the roots of our own rich cultural history for inspiration.

As an artist, I have created works from the most traditional Chinese calligraphy to modern art, and through this body of work, I'd like to directly explore the relationship between traditional and modern art styles. But of course, when you're set to incorporate two styles, you have to start with specific targets, so on one hand, I picked Chinese wood-block print illustrations of "Romance of the West Chamber" [a famous Chinese dramatic work written by Yuan Dynasty playwright Wang Shifu]; and on the other, I chose the works of Matisse, for which I developed a fondness during a stint in Paris. I thought that if this series could achieve some success, it would prove that ink painting can form harmonious relationships with its traditional roots and western influences, and that the future for coexistence is bright. I, among many Chinese artists, believe firmly that we can create modern art that's our own.



Romance of the West Chamber

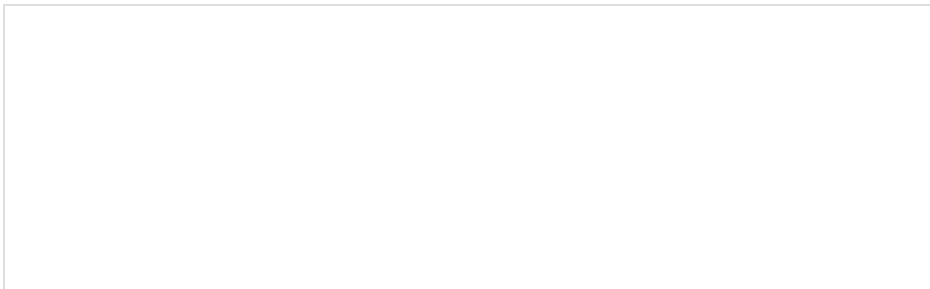
**HK: Have you encountered difficulties in the creative process?**

**QZ:** Oh, huge [problems. Like] how to incorporate wood-block prints and western oil paintings, and then transform them into ink paintings, which is an entirely different art form from them both. And how to not lose sight of the essence of the two original art forms in process. It's an incredible challenge to my imagination, and I've tried and failed many times. It took me a whole year of researching and prepping to be able to present these works you see. The curator also included some of my old works—a few of them were made some 20 years ago—in this exhibition, so the audience gets to see the artistic progress in my own career and the relation between my old and newest paintings.

**HK: Calligraphy, painting, poetry—how do your different artistic aspects affect each other?**

**QZ:** Personally I think for an artist, a poet or an intellectual, no matter what they do, or how they do it, it's their spiritual depth, and their humanistic altitude, that's the core—not their medium or even style. As long as you keep exploring and broadening your intellectual sphere, no matter what your artistic outlet is, you can make good work. So instead of affecting each other, my outlets are all affected by my exploration. In Chinese history we've had quite a few all-around artists; it's almost an ancient tradition that artists wanted to do it all. And I guess I want that, too.

**Qiu's exhibition runs till Dec 6 at Pearl Lam Galleries.**



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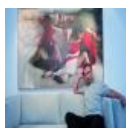
**Fung Siu-wah**

HK Magazine: How did you get started in Chinese calligraphy? Fung Siu-wah: I started at a young age trying to sell my calligraphy as a street vendor in Mong Kok. Because I was so young, nobody believed that the calligraphy...



**From Romance of the West Chamber to Matisse**

A major ink painting series developed over the past ten years by contemporary Chinese master ink artist Qiu Zhenzhong, this exhibition showcases a body of work inspired by the lines of Chinese wood-block prints illustrating the "Romance of the West..."



**Upclose with Liu Yuanshou**

HK Magazine: You were born and raised in Beijing during the Cultural Revolution. How did you develop an interest in art? Liu Yuanshou: It's a weird thing because my parents are doctors, but I've loved painting since I was a kid...



**Upclose with -M-**

HK Magazine: Who is -M-? Is it a heightened version of Matthieu Chedid or an imaginary character you use on stage? -M-: He is my artistic double—the essence of Matthieu we could say—since it is the sum of my personality...



**Gao Xingjian**

HK Magazine: What would you say is your greatest accomplishment? Gao Xingjian: Freedom—the freedom to do what I want to do. And I finally did it. HK: You write poetry, prose, scripts, and you also paint—what is the relationship between your...

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