

ART | NEED TO NOW

Mr Chow's Recipe for a Painter

Pearl Lam Hong Kong hosts the restaurateur's inaugural art show

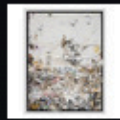
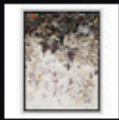


Image: Fredrik Nilsen

JANUARY 13 2014 **VIRGINIA BLACKBURN**

Thanks to his global network of Mr Chow restaurants, **Michael Chow** is one of the most fêted and popular restaurateurs in the world. Now, however, he has revealed another string to his bow – his artistic side, presented to the world under his Chinese name of Zhou Yinghua. On Monday January 13, Yinghua is marking his return to China for the first time in 50 years with an exhibition of paintings at Pearl Lam Galleries in Hong Kong, entitled *Recipe for a Painter* (until Saturday March 8). A series of large-scale mixed-media canvases created using a wide variety of precious and household items, including gold leaf, acrylic paint, melted metals and found objects, will be on sale for US\$100,000 to \$600,000 for the larger works, with the smaller around the \$40,000 mark (such as *Inseparable II*, *Lava* and *Rite of Spring I*; first, second and third pictures).

The exhibition marks the latest twist in not just a creative journey but a personal one. Yinghua comes from a noted artistic family – in that his father Zhou Xinfang was one of China's greatest Beijing Opera or “Jing Ju” performers, famous to this day – but after Yinghua was forced to leave China at the age of 13, just before the Cultural Revolution, he never saw Xinfang again, and his mother only once.

Schooled in the UK and now known as Michael, he had initially wanted to follow his father into opera, before realising that the visual arts were his calling. However, Chinese artists were not much in favour at that time, and he was forced to take “a break that became a long, radical sabbatical”. And so a culinary empire was born. The first Mr Chow was founded in Knightsbridge in 1968; Mr Chow and his restaurants went on to achieve global fame. In the meantime, he also became a designer, tackling everything from his own restaurants to speciality boutiques for Giorgio Armani, as well as becoming a noted collector in his own right. Finally, he has returned to his roots, both

geographically and professionally; this late flowering as an artist is the fulfilment of a childhood dream.

Yinghua's work reflects his cross-cultural upbringing, being influenced by abstract impressionism, colour field painting and the landscape traditions of Chinese ink and calligraphy. "I love China," he says. "Although it was taken away from me at a very young age, it has remained with me for my entire life. Everything I have done or accomplished has been an attempt to reconnect with my culture. My father was a great artist, albeit in a different medium, so it is particularly humbling and gratifying to return as an artist to the place my heart has always called home."

Recipe For A Painter, until Saturday March 8 2014, Monday–Saturday 10am–7pm, at Pearl Lam Galleries, 601–605 Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Central, Hong Kong (+852-2522 1428; www.pearllam.com).