

PearlLam Galleries

Singapore

Luminescence:

SU XIAOBAI solo exhibition

Exhibition Dates 24 November–31 December, 2016 Daily, 11am–8pm
Venue Pearl Lam Galleries, 15 Dempsey Road #01-08, Dempsey Hill, Singapore 249675

Singapore–Pearl Lam Galleries is pleased to present a solo exhibition of Chinese born artist Su Xiaobai (b. 1949, Wuhan, China). Su's highly contemporary artworks combine the vocabulary of an international artistic style, cultivated during his studies in Germany, with an aesthetic and philosophical practice rooted in Chinese tradition. Self-restraint is at the core of Su Xiaobai's artistic beliefs. His gift of expressing a grand vision through simple forms has made him one of the most profound artists to address the question of existence through art since the Abstract Expressionists.

In an echo of what the German-American painter Josef Albers (1888–1976) referred to as the *materie*, the manipulation of the external appearance or character of the work perceived by touch and vision, Su Xiaobai gradually reduces the primacy of material form over the work itself, integrating the material into its core until it becomes inseparable from the work. This impulse originates from his explorations of the alternative energy present in *materie*. Ignoring the dangers of obstacles or failures, Su's poetic inspiration remains unwavering throughout these artistic experiments. He is not afraid to express sincerity in his work, trusting his intuition to bring him towards the actualisation of a simple yet rich "concrete reality" in his experiments. The innocuous flat plane of painting is transformed using the techniques of bodiless lacquerware, creating entities that are curved, textured, and sculpture-like. These works stand at the boundary of object and artwork. Each mark, crease, indentation, and crack documents Su's complex and time-consuming production process.

The changing form of his paintings is not meant to convey a subject or a meaning, nor does it narrate a concept or express personal emotions. Day after day, he applies colours on linen, polishes layers of lacquer, introduces subtle undulations, light and shadows, depth of texture, tactile sensations, and movement into his artworks. The artist has elevated his "material" from something with practical use to the embodiment of a meditative state. It is exactly because the material has been taken as meditation rather than a tool of description that the works are able to contain rich cultural implications, expressing a non-traditional visual force and existential power.

Su Xiaobai has an independent view of the world. Influenced by Western philosophy's view on the nature of existence and ontological argument, Su chose lacquer, a traditional Chinese material with thousands of years of history, as a material to embody his artistic ideology. Lacquer not only possesses a distinctive and majestic range of colours but also a unique temperament; during the process, if there is a lapse in temperature-control, humidity, lighting, or ventilation, the surface of the lacquer will not dry for a long time. In contrast to traditional methods of working with lacquer, Su deliberately cracks and wrinkles what is supposed to be a glossy exterior and creates undulating and textured rather than smooth surfaces, breaking up what is meant to be a whole. Su identifies with the Daoist belief of "action through inaction" by resisting the allure of traditional presentation and not relying on the innate nature of lacquer. Using the ideas of *materie*, Su indicates presence and quality, speaking in its unique language and creating an undeniable tension on the surface of the artwork.

This exhibition will present a series of subtle and understated monochromatic paintings. The choice of colours and hues that only vary slightly brings about a kind of mystery. In the all-white *Luminous White* series, a rich and expressive range of tone is still present and reflects the beauty and simplicity that is the essence of these works.

About the Artist

Su Xiaobai, one of China's most distinctive painters, was born in 1949 in Wuhan, Hubei province, China. In 1965, he joined the School of Arts and Crafts in Wuhan, and from 1985 to 1987 he studied oil painting at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing. In 1987, he moved to Germany to pursue his postgraduate studies at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf (Düsseldorf State Arts Academy), returning to China in 2003. He currently lives and works between Shanghai and Düsseldorf.

Solo exhibitions include *Painting and Being* (2014), Pearl Lam Galleries, Hong Kong; *Grand Immensity: The Art of Su Xiaobai* (2013), National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung, Taiwan; *Su Xiaobai* (2010), Raketstation Hombroich, Neuss, Germany; *The Dynasty of Colours* (2009), Langen Art Foundation, Neuss, Germany; *Kao Gong Ji—Su Xiaobai Solo Exhibition* (2008), Today Art Museum, Beijing, China; and *Great Form is Shapeless, Su Xiaobai Solo Exhibition* (2007), Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai, China. Selected group exhibitions include *The World Is Yours, as Well as Ours* (2016), White Cube Mason's Yard, London, UK; *The Act of Painting in Contemporary China* (2015), PAC Milan Museum of Contemporary Art, Italy; *Where Does It All Begin? Contemporary Abstract Art in Asia and the West* (2014), Pearl Lam Galleries, Singapore; *Chinese Contemporary Abstract, 1980s Until Present: MINDMAP* (2012), Pearl Lam Galleries, Hong Kong, China; and *Yi Pai: Thirty Years of Chinese Abstract Art* (2008), Beijing, China and Madrid, Spain.

About Pearl Lam Galleries

Founded by Pearl Lam, Pearl Lam Galleries is a driving force within Asia's contemporary art scene. With over 20 years of experience exhibiting Asian and Western art and design, it is one of the leading and most established contemporary art galleries to be launched out of China.

Playing a vital role in stimulating international dialogue on Chinese and Asian contemporary art, the Galleries is dedicated to championing artists who re-evaluate and challenge perceptions of cultural practice from the region. The Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore collaborate with renowned curators, each presenting distinct programming from major solo exhibitions, special projects, and installations to conceptually rigorous group shows. Based on the philosophy of Chinese Literati where art forms have no hierarchy, Pearl Lam Galleries is dedicated to breaking down boundaries between different disciplines, with a unique gallery model committed to encouraging cross-cultural exchange.

The four branches of Pearl Lam Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore represent an increasingly influential roster of contemporary artists. Chinese artists Zhu Jinshi and Su Xiaobai, who synthesise Chinese sensibilities with an international visual language, are presented internationally with work now included in major private and public collections worldwide. The Galleries has also introduced leading international artists, such as Jenny Holzer, Leonardo Drew, Carlos Rolón/Dzine and Yinka Shonibare MBE, to markets in the region, providing opportunities for new audiences in Asia to encounter their work. Pearl Lam Galleries encourages international artists to create new work which engages specifically with the region, collaborating to produce thought-provoking, culturally relevant work.

Press Enquiries

Chloe Ho / Pearl Lam Galleries gallerysg@pearllamgalleries.com / +65 6570 2284