

PearlLam Galleries

Singapore

The Art of Line: Contemporary Chinese Ink and Brush

Featuring works by Lan Zhenghui, Qin Yufen, Qiu Deshu,
Wang Dongling, Wang Tiande and Zhang Wei



Lan Zhenghui (b. 1959). E04, 2013. Ink on Xuan paper, Painting 246 x 615 cm, Scroll 307 x 656 cm

Exhibition Dates

14 August–18 September, 2014

Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–7pm; Sunday, 12–6pm

(Closed on Mondays and Public Holidays)

Opening reception: Thursday, 14 August, 2014, 7–9pm

Pearl Lam Galleries, 9 Lock Road, #03-22, Gillman Barracks, Singapore 108937

Singapore—Pearl Lam Galleries is pleased to present *The Art of Line: Contemporary Chinese Ink and Brush*, a group exhibition which looks at line as an aesthetic preoccupation in Chinese art, and explores how China's ancient pattern of seeking cultural renewal, through the reinterpretation of past models, remains a viable creative path. .

The exhibition showcases works by six Chinese contemporary artists: Lan Zhenghui, Qin Yufen, Qiu Deshu, Wang Dongling, Wang Tiande, and Zhang Wei. Although each of these artists have transformed their sources through new modes of expression, visitors will recognise thematic, aesthetic, or technical attributes in their creations that have meaningful links to the centrality of line that has persisted from ancient to contemporary times in Chinese art.

Showcasing works by six artists who reinvent sources drawn from the fertile landscape of China's artistic development, be it the lines in decorative motifs of coloured pottery, bronzes and jades, or in the later calligraphy, painting and Buddhist sculpture, this exhibition explores the ways in which Chinese art can be viewed as an art of line.

Highlights include Lan Zhenghui's 6.5 metre long scroll painting, "E04", whose composition is activated by the artist's signature bold, heavy brushstrokes. The powerful swathes of black ink that sweep across the painting's length re-envision the conventional lines of traditional Chinese scroll paintings in a gestural, unfettered way. Qin Yufen's installation work "Extension", too, references the familiar visual form of a Chinese scroll; yet, in its exaggerated scale and use of a single strand of copper wire to replace the conventional painted ink line, reinvents the Chinese scroll painting as both readymade and Minimalist sculpture. The idea that the form of Chinese written characters has attained independence from their symbolic meaning, holding expanded possibilities for abstract calligraphy, is fleshed out in Wang Dongling's four ink on Xuan paper works, all of which have no decipherable Chinese characters yet capture the essence of their titles through abstract strokes of the Chinese ink brush.

Zhang Wei, who studied sculpture in the former USSR, will present two bronze sculptures from his "Mountains" series which depict craggy, majestic mountains and plateaus, bringing the elegiac lines of these natural forms in Chinese landscape paintings into three-dimensions, and drawing on China's traditional bronzes in their use of medium. Wang Tiande's "Houshan" series explore the expressive possibilities of Chinese landscapes through the use of lines burned through, rather than painted on, Xuan paper. Qiu Deshu's signature "fissure" paintings in the exhibition present dynamic pictorial fields formed by fragments of vividly-coloured Xuan paper pieced together, leaving "cracks" that travel across the painting's surface and symbolize the many paths we traverse in life.

Abstraction and reduction are at the core of traditional Chinese artistic consciousness. Over the course of art history, categories such as "existence and non-existence", "form and spirit", "qi and dao" all have their origins in abstraction and reduction. The Chinese artistic spirit has consistently sought a high degree of abstraction, distilling or condensing an object to its simplest and purest form, and its most essential and unadorned lines. Abstract line also gives rise to a boundless spiritual world of connotations and emotions. The works in this exhibition collectively map out the expanded ways in which the expressive power of abstract line continues to be used in the field of contemporary Chinese art.

Lan Zhenghui

Lan Zhenghui (b. 1959) graduated from Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in 1987, and currently lives and works in Beijing and Toronto. Lan's monumental paintings and striking use of ink reflect his constant pursuit of expression and feeling. His works are "bursts of emotion on paper" and are characterised by an abstract ink-splash style. His brushstrokes are created by systemic body movements, which contribute to the visual and spiritual impact of his works, evoking the swelling of muscle, blood and physical power. Lan has had solo exhibitions at Sanshang Art (Hangzhou), Pearl Lam Galleries (Shanghai), O House Gallery (Jakarta), National Art Museum of China (Beijing), and the Guangdong Museum of Art (Guangzhou). His work has recently been acquired by the Rubell Family Collection (USA).

Qin Yufen

Qin Yufen (b.1954) was born in Shandong Province, China. She began to create abstract art in the late 1970s, and in the mid-1980s moved to Germany. Her works from this period synthesised both Western and traditional Chinese ink painting techniques, while evoking the Oriental aesthetics of tranquility and ethereality embodied in Zen meditation. Since the mid-1980s, Qin has mainly engaged in the creation of installation and land art. Her works often integrate visuals, audio, and symbols of Chinese traditions, as well as modern elements, to express the introspective processes of self-examination and contemplation. Qin Yufen has held solo exhibitions in Beijing, Tokyo, and Berlin, among other international cities. She has participated in several group exhibitions including *Left Hand, Right Hand: A Sino-German Exhibition of Contemporary Art* (2003), Beijing; *The Wall: Reshaping Contemporary Chinese Art* (2005), New York; *The First Today's Documents 2007* and *Energy: Spirit, Body, Material* (2007) at the Beijing Today Art Museum.

Qiu Deshu

Qiu Deshu (b. 1948) was born in Shanghai, China. He was among the artists who cofounded the post-Mao experimental art group called the Grass Painting Society (*caocao huashe*) in the 1970s. In the early 1980s, he developed his signature style of works called “fissuring” (*lie bian*). The concept of “fissuring”, which literally means tearing and changing in Chinese, is a pictorial metaphor for the artist’s life and as his artistic career, both of which have experienced dramatic disruptions and setbacks. In these works, he applies vivid colours to xuan paper, which he tears up and mounts the fragments to a base layer, often leaving space between to create a pictorial field with the “cracks” that he feels are symbolic of life’s journey.

Wang Dongling

Wang Dongling (b. 1945) was born in Jiangsu, China. At present, he lives and works in Hangzhou, China. One of the most successful and gifted of modernist calligraphers in China, Wang is also one of the few who has for many years enjoyed an international reputation. His works are influenced by his experience in the United States from 1989 to 1992. During this period, Wang began developing a new form of composition that synthesises traditional Chinese aesthetics with modernist art. Usually there are no decipherable Chinese characters in his works, which have become closer to abstract painting than to calligraphy. Wang Dongling has been enormously influential on the development of contemporary calligraphy and ink painting as a whole. His notable exhibitions include *Exhibition of Chinese Art & Civilization of Five Thousand Years* (1998), Guggenheim Museum, NY, USA; *Brushes with Surprise: The Art of Calligraphy in Modern China* (2002), British Museum, London, UK; and *Ink & Brush—Chinese Writing Art Exhibition* (2006), Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, USA. His works are collected by the British Museum, London, UK; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA; Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA; The Palace Museum, Beijing, China; National Art Museum of China, Beijing, China; Zhejiang Art Museum, Hangzhou, China, among others.

Wang Tiande

Wang Tiande (b. 1960) was born in Shanghai. With ink paintings that largely reference traditional Literati concepts, Wang Tiande captures a new form of expression that reflects today’s contemporary culture while incorporating conceptual ideas, recreating ink brush painting for the twenty-first century. By burning symbols, which resemble Chinese characters, onto rice paper, his works evoke the essence of traditional Chinese art in a modern context. The burn marks are made with an incense stick, creating shapes and spaces, similar to that of landscapes, water and mountains. Wang Tiande’s innovative approach does not dispel the significance and influence of tradition in his work; rather, he embraces traditional concepts and methods while injecting a modern perspective that is fresh and distinctly his own. Wang’s work has been collected by the British Museum, London, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Boston Museum of Fine Art, Hong Kong Museum of Art, Shanghai Art Museum, Guangdong Art Museum, Shenzhen Art Museum and JP Morgan Bank. In 2006, Wang Tiande exhibited in *Brush and Ink*, which was the first exhibition of contemporary Chinese painting held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Zhang Wei

Zhang Wei (b. 1968) is an artist who studied in the former Soviet Union, Russia. When studying European sculpture, a powerful personal driving force was thinking of special ways to express the social, cultural and political changes that China as a country and a society had undergone in the context of Chinese culture rather than Western. Amongst the genres of sculpture, landscape sculpture had never existed, which implied that it was not possible to sculpt a landscape. Zhang Wei, however, after undertaking extensive exploration, made landscape sculpture a reality, establishing it as a unique art form in its own right. It was the product of delving deep into China’s culture, and gestures at how living traditions can be pre-existing traditions that have undergone reflection and re-creation.

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, the Galleries is dedicated to breaking down boundaries between different disciplines with a unique gallery model committed to encouraging cross-cultural exchange.

Contemporary Chinese abstract art is heavily represented in the Galleries roster. Influential 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, Jim Lambie and Yinka Shonibare MBE (RA) 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 works, which engage specifically with the region—collaborating to produce thought-provoking and culturally relevant work.

Pearl Lam Design shows works by established and emerging international designers, including Maarten Baas, Mattia Bonetti, André Dubreuil, and Studio Makkink & Bey, in exhibitions and design fairs around the world. They are invited to push the boundaries of traditional Chinese art and craft techniques and create new works that reflect their experiences in China. A fourth gallery and concept store devoted solely to design will open shortly in Shanghai.

Press Enquiries

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