

PearlLam Galleries

Pearl Lam Galleries Shanghai is pleased to present

BEYOND BLACK AND WHITE: CHINESE CONTEMPORARY ABSTRACT INK



WANG DONGLING, *Yuan Ji* (2013), Ink on Paper, 96 x 180 cm (37 4/5 x 70 9/10 in.)

Exhibition Dates

21 July–7 September 2013

Monday–Sunday, 10:30am–7pm

Opening reception on **Saturday, 20 July, 2013, 5–7pm**

Pearl Lam Galleries, 181 Middle Jiangxi Road, G/F, Shanghai, China 200002

SHANGHAI— Pearl Lam Galleries is pleased to present ***Beyond Black and White***, an exhibition showcasing 18 works by eight Chinese contemporary ink artists including Feng Mengbo, Lan Zhenghui, Qiu Deshu, Qiu Zhenzhong, Wang Dongling, Wang Tiande, Wei Ligang and Zheng Chongbin. These artists are part of a growing circle in China that draws inspiration from traditional Chinese ink painting and its philosophy as well as Chinese calligraphy. The exhibition opens to the public on **21 July 2013**.

The medium and technique of ink and brush plays a significant role for these artists as they seek to display the unique heritage of Chinese artistic culture in a new, contemporary context that reflects today's globalised world. The philosophy of ink painting also plays a central role among contemporary ink artists whose energy is laid bare in their artistic creations. This energy expresses another realm of beauty that goes beyond the visual quality of the painting.

This is known as Qi, or vitality, and is one of the Six Principles of Chinese Painting, established by Xie He in the 5th century. This exhibition aims to address the role of ink and its enduring philosophy in contemporary China and challenge the traditional use of the medium.

The artists in *Beyond Black and White* are all deeply indebted to Chinese culture and art history, using these traditions to guide their work whilst embracing a wide range of sources including Chinese calligraphy, landscape painting and poetry. Whether it manifests itself through the medium, the philosophy or the form, they all draw inspiration from the classical canon.

The exhibition demonstrates that through an exploration of China's past, contemporary Chinese artists are able to make sense of the present: creating works which are relevant in today's society as well as being rooted in Chinese culture's deep appreciation for artistic scholarship. It is this combination that has led to the popularity and re-evaluation of contemporary Chinese ink painting.

Tiger Wind is a monumental cursive calligraphy work by Wang Dongling. The artist's rapid creative process is filled with uncertainty, and the large scale of the piece emphasizes the relationship between the artist's bodily movements and the finished work of art, whilst driving the viewer's own immersive experience of the piece. Wang's monumental work breaks through the traditional rules of penmanship, form and composition, revealing the artist's unique and distinctive style and personality.

In Wang Tiande's installation *Chinese Clothes* he presents a traditional Chinese silk dress (qipao) which he has burned through to reveal glimpses of another layer of silk below covered in calligraphy. The tension between the painted and burned words and the costume is united by the traditional aesthetics of calligraphy, thus creating a deeper meaning beyond the object.

Yengisar Knife is from Qiu Zhenzhong's 'New Poetry Series'. Qiu uses his unique style and subtle control of space, time and line to combine elements of traditional Chinese ink painting for his modern art. His concern is the aesthetics of the space of calligraphy as well as the brushstrokes. Qiu's paintings aim to liberate traditional Chinese calligraphy and ink painting from its typical ideology, so as to transform its aesthetic function into something more authentic and absolute.

Notes to editors

Feng Mengbo

Feng Mengbo was born in 1966 in Beijing, China. He graduated from the Printmaking Department of Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing in 1991. He is currently a guest professor at the Central Academy of Fine Arts and lives and works in Beijing, China.

As a leading new-media artist in China, Feng Mengbo has worked at the intersection of painting and digital media since the early 1990s, he has infused his personal thoughts, experiences and cultural memories into paintings and new media works like CD-Rom installations and large-scale interactive video game installations. Feng Mengbo has constantly combined the digital and the handmade, as well as the past and the present, in a thought-provoking and dynamic way. Beginning in 2005, he returned to painting without abandoning his deep immersion in the cyber-world, allowing him to reassess and explore traditional Chinese culture in his own unique way.

Lan Zhenghui

Lan Zhenghui was born in 1959 in Sichuan, China. He graduated from Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in 1987. Lan currently lives and works in Beijing and Toronto.

Lan Zhenghui's monumental paintings and striking use of black ink reflect his constant pursuit of expression and feeling. His works are "bursts of emotion on paper" and are characterized by an abstract ink-splash style. Influenced by his background in science, Lan's aesthetic moves deftly between the realms of the rational and irrational. His brushstrokes are created by systemic body movements, which contribute to the visual and spiritual impact of the works with the swelling of muscle, blood and physical power.

Qiu Deshu

Born in Shanghai in 1948, Qiu Deshu is one of the few artists in the field of contemporary ink painting to have gained international recognition since the 1980s. Qiu studied traditional ink painting and seal carving when he was a child, however his career in art was interrupted by the Cultural Revolution when he was sent to work at a plastics factory. At the end of this period, he picked up ink painting again and co-founded the Grass Painting Society (*Cao Cao Hua She*), one of China's first experimental artist circles in the post-Mao period.

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 colors 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.

Qiu Zhenzhong

Qiu Zhenzhong, born in 1947 in Nanchang, He is Professor at the China Central Academy of Fine Arts, Director of the Calligraphy and Painting Comparative Research Centre, Member of the National Art Museum of China Expert Committee, and Vice Director of the Chinese Calligraphers Association Academic Committee.China,

Qiu uses his unique style and subtle control of space, time and line to combine elements of traditional Chinese ink painting, calligraphy and modern art. Qiu's paintings aim to liberate traditional Chinese calligraphy and ink painting from its typical ideology, so as to transform its aesthetic function into something more authentic and absolute.

In October 2012, Qiu held a solo exhibition at Pearl Lam Galleries Hong Kong entitled "From Romance of the West Chamber to Matisse". The exhibition included two series of works, one inspired by the Chinese masterpieces of wood-block print based on the Chinese classic "Romance of the West Chamber" and the other inspired by the Western master of modern art: Matisse. Through his use of lyrical lines, form and composition, Qiu Zhenzhong reinterprets these iconic images from Western and Chinese culture using this ancient ink brush technique, and both poses and attempts to answer questions of tradition, art and interpretation.

Wang Dongling

Wang Dongling was born in 1945 in Jiangsu. Lives and works in Hangzhou. Wang graduated from Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts (now China Academy of Art) in Hangzhou in 1981 and is now professor of Calligraphy Department of China Academy of Art, and Director of Contemporary Calligraphy Research Centre of China Academy of Art.

Wang Dongling is one of the most successful and gifted of the modernist calligraphers in China and one of the few who has for many years enjoyed an international reputation. His works were influenced by his experience in the United States from 1989 to 1992, when he served as a visiting professor at the University of Minnesota and at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Wang began developing a new form of composition that synthesizes traditional Chinese aesthetics with modernist art. Often, Wang's works contain no decipherable Chinese characters, and have tended more towards abstract painting than to calligraphy. Wang Dongling has been enormously influential in the development of contemporary calligraphy and ink painting in China.

Wang Tiande

Wang Tiande was born in Shanghai in 1960. The artist aims to re-contextualize tradition within a contemporary framework through ink paintings, digital compositions, and thought-provoking installations. With ink paintings which reference traditional Literati concepts, Wang Tiande captures a new form of expression that reflects today's contemporary culture. By burning symbols, which resemble Chinese characters, onto rice paper, his works evoke the essence of traditional Chinese art in a contemporary 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, recreating ink brush painting for the twenty-first century.

Wei Ligang

Born in 1964. Wei's works can be classified into three styles. The first style takes the form of modern calligraphy with a freehand foundation and adapts the traditional rules of calligraphy creation. This style mixes conventional strokes with painterly ideas, whilst at the same time inherits the spirit of the modern Japanese calligraphic school, in trying to delineate the border between abstract and concrete. The second style utilizes experimental ink applied in an abstract manner, mixed with new materials like lacquer and propylene, with the aim to build a bridge between Chinese and Western paintings. The third style, or "Wei's Works" as the artist calls them, are the overall result of his exploration into Chinese characters.

Although his works display certain characteristics of Western modern art forms and ideas, their most vital features are again threefold: their unreserved focus on Chinese characters, the structure of the characters, and the significance placed on the strokes themselves as opposed to the representative aspect of the picture. In all his works we can sense these features, consciously or otherwise.

Zheng Chongbin

Born in Shanghai in 1961, Zheng now lives between San Francisco and China. Throughout his career, Zheng has reinterpreted traditional Chinese art and fused it with contemporary Western Abstract art. The artist uses ink wash techniques to enrich his artistic language, constantly exploring the potential of ink as a medium, whilst also working in other media including installation, porcelain and video.

Zheng received rigorous ink brush training in the 80s whilst he also absorbed American Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism, combining them to create his own unique visual language. Zheng's abstract works originate from his exploration of space whilst expressing a deeper metaphysical meaning not restricted by written language or representational forms. By blending Western and Eastern art traditions, Zheng's works strive towards a harmonious balance which ink painters have for centuries looked to achieve.

About Pearl Lam Galleries

Founded by Pearl Lam, the Galleries' mission is to stimulate cross-cultural dialogue and cultural exchange between the East and West by establishing distinct and rigorous programming in each of its gallery spaces in Hong Kong, Shanghai and the forthcoming Singapore gallery.

Pearl Lam Galleries is dedicated to championing Chinese artists who re-evaluate the philosophy and perception of Chinese contemporary art, whilst also committed to presenting major exhibitions by international artists. Jim Lambie, Jenny Holzer, Yinka Shonibare and Zhu Jinshi are among the line-up of artists who will have solo exhibitions at the Galleries in 2013.

Pearl Lam Design shows works by established and emerging international designers including Maarten Baas, Mattia Bonetti, André Dubreuil, and Studio Makkink & Bey. They are invited to push the boundaries of traditional Chinese art and craft techniques and create new works that reflect their experiences in China.

Press Enquiries

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