

# PearlLam Galleries

Pearl Lam Galleries Shanghai is pleased to present

## BEYOND COLOUR: CHINESE CONTEMPORARY ART



Juju Sun, No. 1202, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 200 x 180 cm

### Exhibition Dates

27 November 2013 – 10 January 2014

Monday-Sunday, 10.30am–7pm

**Opening reception** on **Saturday, 30 November 5-7pm**

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

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**SHANGHAI** – Pearl Lam Galleries is pleased to present 'Beyond Colour: Chinese Contemporary Art', a group exhibition showcasing the work of five cross-generational abstract artists including André Kneib, Juju Sun, Lan Zhenghui, Li Lei and Qiu Deshu.

In contrast to 'Beyond Black and White', a group exhibition held at the gallery earlier this year, 'Beyond Colour' is a vibrant, visually arresting snapshot of the current epoch through colour in abstract painting.

It is unmistakably contemporary, yet also indicative of a thoughtful engagement with past developments in the use of colour across Chinese painting history. The works of these five artists demonstrate their diverse, unique relationships with colour, evoking a varied spectrum of educational backgrounds, schools of thought, cultural influences and time periods. Collectively, these artists envisage a contemporary abstract painting practice that inventively employs colour as a means of expression.

The exhibition features eighteen works combining both Eastern and Western artistic practices. André Kneib is a French artist who works in the traditional Chinese medium of ink on xuan paper. Kneib injects colour to a calligraphy style that is traditionally monochromatic, a feature derived from Western visual culture. 'Friend' and 'Landscape at Puberg-11' are two such paintings, which combine Eastern medium with a Western palette creating truly transcultural works. In contrast, Juju Sun, the only female artist exhibited, chooses the Western medium of acrylic on canvas as a vehicle for expression. The works in this exhibition, No. 1214 and No. 1201, are characteristically bold and robust, reflecting her dynamic energy and enthusiasm.

Qiu Deshu is an artist who developed his own signature style of works called "fissuring" (lie bian). This style turns the traditional medium of Chinese ink on rice paper on its head. Qiu transforms the language of landscape into a contemporary idiom of creative expression, using ink colour and paper in a collage-like process.

In the context of this exhibition, each of the artists' use of colour is situated within a broader innovative spirit. This spirit is captured in works that embody their varied formal concerns, philosophies and epistemologies, and that acknowledge indebtedness to the rich heritage of Chinese artistic culture. Mapping out a wide-ranging discourse that goes beyond just the inventive use of colour, these works gesture at new frontiers in the field of contemporary abstract painting.

## André Kneib

André Kneib (b. 1952) was born in Alsace-Lorraine, France. In 1995, Kneib began his study of calligraphy with Ung-No Lee, a master Korean calligrapher at the Musée Cernuschi, in Paris. He is currently maître de conférences, teaching Chinese civilization at the National School of Oriental Languages (INALCO), Paris and at the University of Paris 4, Sorbonne.

André Kneib's distinctive calligraphy work pays close attention to the nuances of semantic meaning and the emotional resonances implicit in individual Chinese characters. Perhaps the most important contribution that André Kneib makes to the development of modern Chinese calligraphy is the introduction of colour as integral to the formal structure and emotional tenor of the written character. In some works, subtle inflections of color serve to accent the highly gestured movements and shapes of the ink markings. In other works, such as the ones in this exhibition, colour forms the very body and flesh of the character, as modulations in the saturation and suffusion of hues add an evocative dimension and depth to his brushstrokes. This has defined a new range of transcultural formal and expressive issues for contemporary abstract calligraphy practitioners inside and outside of China to explore.

## Lan Zhenghui

Lan Zhenghui (b. 1959) graduated from Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in 1987, and currently lives and works in Beijing and Toronto. Lan Zhenghui'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 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 his works, evoking the swelling of muscle, blood and physical power. This, combined with his use of vibrant acrylic hues on traditional Chinese Xuan paper as featured in his recent works in the exhibition, demonstrates bold use of colour as a vehicle for challenging conventions in traditional medium and form.

## Li Lei

Li Lei (b. 1965) was born in Shanghai, China and is widely acknowledged as one of the early and pivotal figures in the field of Chinese abstract art. While deeply rooted in Chinese philosophy and culture, his work has surmounted the formal strictness of Asian art and he has found a free and unfettered way to paint without eschewing the significance of expressive statement.

Li Lei's paintings shifted to the non-figurative early in his career. However, his abstract work has not ceased to reference the rich imagery of the landscapes he discovered as a child. The rivers, flora and fauna, and rich, yellow earth of northwest China continue to inform many of the forms and colours in his work, as does the elegance of the ancient Majiayao Civilization and its primitive yet mysterious legends. Abstract, gestural and pictorial as they are, his works are evocative of personal feelings and emotions – put simply, they "come from the heart".

## 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.

## Juju Sun

Juju Sun (b. 1973) was born in Jiangxi, China. She moved to the USA at age 18 and studied at the Ottawa School of Art and the Art Student's League of New York. Feeling that her cultural roots were important, she returned to Beijing and now divides her time between Beijing and New York. Juju Sun's paintings revel in the beauty of the medium of paint, suggesting landscapes through scribbles and thick swaths of gestural strokes. Her work variously shows the influence of French Impressionism, Abstract Expressionism, and the flowing naturalism of Chinese brushwork. By jointly assimilating these techniques and traditions, Sun captures such ineffable effects as

shimmering water and dancing sunlight in her abstract compositions. She sees her paintings as originating from the very center of her being, imbuing them with an ontological awareness and a sense of temporality. Sun's mastery of exuberant colour and the poetry of line is coupled with a fearless painterliness – she describes the act of painting as a joyful one, 'a great love'.

## About Pearl Lam Galleries

Founded by Pearl Lam, the Galleries' mission is to stimulate cross-cultural dialogue and cultural exchange between 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 and Zhu Jinshi are among the line-up of artists who will have solo exhibitions at the Galleries this year.

Pearl Lam Design shows works by established and emerging international designers including André Dubreuil, Maarten Baas, Mattia Bonetti, 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.

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## Press Enquiries

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