

Pearl Lam Galleries

Hong Kong

A DIARY OF STATES OF MIND: Su Xiaobai, Leonardo Drew, Dale Frank

Exhibition dates 21 September—2 November, 2023 Monday–Saturday, 10am–7pm
Venue Pearl Lam Galleries, 6/F, Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Central, Hong Kong

Hong Kong—Presented by Pearl Lam Galleries, *A Diary of States of Mind* is a journey into the minds of three artists: Su Xiaobai, Leonardo Drew, and Dale Frank, each presenting a unique perspective on how their daily engagement with art serves as a means of self-reflection, liberation, and transformation. The exhibition beckons viewers to delve into the laborious art practices where the boundaries of materiality, time, and emotion blur, giving rise to the search for the essence of art.

Titled *A Diary of States of Mind*, the exhibition underscores how daily artistic practice cultivates an interiority through the making of art objects and precipitates material transformation to celebrate the autonomy of art. This group exhibition focuses on the emergence of the artists' inner worlds and how we as viewers come to terms with such visual experiences in return.

With precision, Chinese artist Su Xiaobai reduces the materiality of the artwork to investigate its core meaning, creating curved, textured, and sculpture-like entities that are both tactile and contemplative. His daily ritual of applying and layering lacquer paint on linen is a meditative process that captures the ever-evolving states of his mind. Subtle undulations, light and shadows, depth of texture, tactile sensations, and movements in his paintings serve as tangible traces, inviting viewers to explore his inner world. Su's use of traditional Chinese lacquer not only reflects his deep connection to China's past but, more importantly, also conveys a sense of longing to bring forth the innate quality of the medium. Su's art refrains from explicit meaning, hence inviting us to enter into his states of mind.

New York-based sculptor Leonardo Drew's approach to raw materials is a powerful manifestation that draws from the memories of his own lived experience in the city. Drew uses jagged, gold-plated shards of porcelain to create "living" works that engage in a profound dialogue between geology and modernity. His creations, weathered and stacked to resemble the debris and ruins from urbanisation, carry the weight of his daily contemplation.

Drew claims: "There are a number of different dimensions you can arrive at with the actual material. So much history feeds into it. They keep evolving. Each piece is unique and may come from our different iterations, but each time we use them, they become stronger."

Drew's work reflects the cyclical nature of contemporary life, mirroring the ever-shifting states of his mind as he transforms raw materials into thought-provoking objects. His emphasis on materiality squarely challenges the viewer's expectations, inviting the public to reconsider the origins of materials and their capacity to retain memories of form that are characterised by chaos and entropy—a testament to an ongoing dialogue with the world around him.

Refusing to be limited by the materiality of art, Australian Dale Frank expresses the unpredictable quality of his subconscious through the act of creation itself. Frank views his artworks as independent beings, with lives of their own, continuously evolving and rupturing. For him, painting becomes an open form for expressing a transcendental state not bound by worldly events nor individual authorship. In Frank's oeuvre, time is a central theme—an ever-present issue that he masters as he paints. His creations capture the ephemeral nature of time, inviting viewers to partake in the exploration of the temporal nature of the mind. Through his innovative use of Perspex and reflective imageries, Frank challenges viewers to contemplate their own containment by what they see, creating a schism in between mediums and aesthetics.

About Su Xiaobai

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.

Before moving to Germany in 1987, Su's work inclined towards social realism. However, first-hand experience of avant-garde Western art radically affected his outlook. During the 1990s, his work became progressively less figurative, and following his return to China in 2003, it has increasingly focused on the essential characteristics of colour, shape, and surface. Having eliminated recognisable subject matter and imagery, Su's arresting and compelling art engages both with the language of Western abstract art and also with the traditions of Chinese philosophy including the Buddhist Sutra: "Everything is nothing, nothing is everything."

About Leonardo Drew

Leonardo Drew was born in 1961 in Tallahassee, Florida and grew up in a public housing project in Bridgeport, Connecticut. He seemed bound to work as a professional artist from a young age. Drew's works were exhibited publicly for the first time when he was only thirteen years old, and by fifteen he was being courted by both DC and Marvel Comics to work as an illustrator. However, Drew would apply his talents to a very different artistic path. He became inspired by abstract works, especially those of Jackson Pollock, and began to experiment for himself. He went on to attend the Parsons School of Design in New York and then earned a BFA from Cooper Union in 1985.

Drew's works are always sculptural, although he tends to avoid making freestanding pieces. Instead, he will often mount objects onto panels or directly to the wall, which can be seen as a nod to his beginnings as a painter and draftsman. The materials he chooses are of particular importance. They often reflect memories of his days in the projects, sociopolitical issues related to his African American ethnicity, or themes of death, darkness, and decay.

About Dale Frank

Born in 1959, Australian artist Dale Frank creates paintings that traverse between solid and liquid, minimalist and expressionist, purity and the abject. Over a 36-year career, Frank has explored painting's potential through experimentations of materials and process that challenge the concept of painting by embracing the full physical transformation process of the medium itself.

Using universal codes such as colour and form, Frank engages with the audience on a subconscious level. He transports this non-verbal communication to another parallel dimension, as if his paintings were a kind of wormhole to another universe.

The pigmented varnishes melt and fold into abstract impressions, and unique unexpected colours from acrid pastel pink to cobalt blue are utilised. Bound to reflective Perspex, the works create immersive and mirrored distortions, and they emit both a pop sheen and jewel-like luminosity.





About Pearl Lam Galleries

Pearl Lam Galleries is a driving force within Asia's contemporary art scene. Founded in 2005, the gallery plays a vital role in stimulating international dialogue and cross-cultural exchange between the East and West.

Following a rigorous programme, Pearl Lam Galleries presents museum-quality exhibitions that re-evaluate and challenge perceptions of cultural practice in Asia. With a thoughtfully balanced roster of Chinese and international artists, the gallery is strategic in its curation, positioning itself as an educator.

The gallery maintains a flagship space in the historic Pedder Building in Hong Kong, whilst the Shanghai gallery is situated in the heritage architecture in the Bund district. With a team of international staff, Pearl Lam Galleries' reach is global, having presentations at major international art fairs including Art Cologne, Art Basel, Frieze Masters, and West Bund Art and Design.

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