

Art Exhibition
Here & Now: Chinese Artists in New York

Curator: Zhijian Qian
September 22, 2009-March 8, 2010

The Museum of Chinese in America presents *Here & Now: Chinese Artists in New York*—its first group show of contemporary artists, featuring prominent Chinese artists who live and work in New York City. For the past two decades, artists in the Chinese Diaspora have caught increasing attention in an art world that is becoming ever more trans-cultural and international.

Working collaboratively with curator Zhijian Qian, *Here & Now* is inspired by MOCA's desire to explore the identity category "Chinese American" through the visual language of contemporary art. While cosmopolitan American cities like New York have long been, and continue to be, sites of consumption of Chinese and Chinese-inspired art, we have entered a new phase of interest in Chinese art that reflects the rise of China as a global power. The role and dimension of Chinese America has also changed, and the exhibit attempts to explore this new moment through the Chinese American artist as interlocutor in this cross-cultural dialogue. The exhibition explores the fluid relationship of Chinese artists to notions of place, time, and cultural identity by showcasing twelve prominent artists of Chinese diaspora and descent, who have established their careers in the global metropolis of New York City.

Here & Now is organized into three, seven-week long chapters:

Part I: Visual Memories (September 22-November 2, 2009)

Xu Bing (b. China, 1955; arrived in Wisconsin, 1990)
Yun-fei Ji (b. China, 1963; arrived in Arkansas, 1989)
Lin Yan (b. China; arrived in New York, 1986)
Cui Fei (b. China; arrived Pennsylvania, 1996)

Part II: Crossing Boundaries (November 19, 2009-January 4, 2010)

Zhang Hongtu (b. China, 1943; arrived in New York, 1982)
Long-bin Chen (b. Taiwan; arrived in New York, 1994)
Ming Fay (b. China, 1943; Hong Kong, 1952; arrived in California, 1970)
Shiyi Sheng (b. China; France; New York)

Part III: Towards Transculturalism (January 21-March 8, 2010)

Hung-Chih Peng (b. Taiwan, 1969; Taipei, Beijing, New York)
Yoyo Xiao (b. China; arrived in New York, 2003)
Emily Cheng (b. U.S.)
Shen Chen (b. China, 1955; arrived in Maine, 1988)

Each chapter highlights the diversity of the artists' responses and approaches to issues related to this specific moment and this specific place. The exhibition examines why and how some of the artists choose to reconnect with the Chinese art and cultural tradition after years of immersion in the Western art world, what approaches some artists take in crossing artistic and cultural boundaries in a multicultural environment, and how others participate in the trend of transculturalism. Each of these approaches is explored by the artists using a variety of art forms, media and styles, each with his or her own unique way of addressing the location of their artistic practice. With China

emerging as a new superpower in a swiftly globalizing world, many Chinese artists in New York are asking themselves, “Why still here?” and “Why still now?”

Part I: Visual Memories demonstrates how four artists reconnect with Chinese art and cultural tradition in their adopted country of settlement. Before their migration out of China, Xu Bing, Yun-Fei Ji, Lin Yan and Cui Fei had very limited exposure to traditional Chinese art and culture—they received an art education that largely followed the mode of Western tradition. Yun-Fei Ji, Lin Yan and Cui Fei had four years of training in drawing and oil painting, the style of which was a mix of French Academicism and Soviet Union Socialist Realism imported to China in the 20th century by two generations of Chinese artists who studied overseas. Xu Bing had seven years of training in modern printmaking, which was introduced to China in the early 20th century from the West through Japan. Their disconnection with Chinese tradition was further encouraged by the unprecedented enthusiasm in China for the Reform and Open-Door policy that widely embraced modern Western art and culture. It was only when they were immersed in the Western art world, and that of New York City in particular, that they started their journey of reconnecting with a tradition that had been left behind, largely unknown and unexplored. Detached from the cultural and social context of China, these artists reconnect with the Chinese art tradition mainly through memories of a visual nature.

Part I: Artist Biographies

Xu Bing: Born in Chongqing, China in 1955 and raised in Beijing, Xu Bing entered in 1977 the printmaking department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA), Beijing. In 1981, he completed his BA and stayed on as an instructor at CAFA, earning his MFA in 1987. In 1990, at the invitation of the University of Wisconsin–Madison, Xu moved to the United States, where he lived and worked until 2008 when he was invited by CAFA to serve as vice president and professor. Xu Bing now divides his time between Beijing and New York. Solo exhibitions of Xu Bing’s work have been held at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; the Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin–Madison; the Joan Miró Foundation, Barcelona; and the National Gallery in Prague, among other major institutions. In 2001, the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, mounted a large-scale solo show entitled *Word Play: Contemporary Art by Xu Bing*, and in 2004 the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst (Museum of East Asian Art, now Museum of Asian Art), Berlin, held the major retrospective *Xu Bing in Berlin*.

Xu Bing has shown in many group exhibitions at institutions including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; The British Museum, London; P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York; The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia; and the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland. Additionally, Xu Bing has shown at the 45th and 51st Venice Biennials, Italy; the Johannesburg Biennial, South Africa; the Shanghai Biennale, China; the Gwangju Biennale, China; the Taipei Biennial, Taiwan; the Asia–Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia; and the Guangzhou Triennial, China, among other international exhibitions.

Over the years, Xu Bing’s work has appeared in art history books including *Art Past – Art Present* by David Wilkins et al, *Gardner’s Art Through the Ages* by Fred Kleiner et al, *Art in China* by Craig Clunas, and a volume in the *Oxford History of Art* series. In 2006, the Princeton University Press published Silbergeld and Ching’s *Persistence/Transformation: Text as Image in the Art of Xu Bing*, a multidisciplinary study of Xu Bing’s landmark work *Book from the Sky*. In 1999, Xu Bing was named a recipient of the MacArthur Fellowship. In 2003, he was awarded the Fukuoka Asian Culture Prize. In 2004, Xu Bing won the first Artes Mundi Wales International Visual Art Prize, and in 2005 he was presented with a Youth Friends Award from The New York City Department of Education and the School Art League. In 2006 the Southern Graphics Council, the largest printmakers’ organization in the United States, awarded Xu Bing their lifetime achievement award. During the spring semester of 2008 at Columbia University, New York, Professor Robert E. Harrist, Jr., Chair of Chinese Art, began teaching a graduate seminar entitled “The Art of Xu Bing.”

Yun-fei Ji: Yun-fei Ji was born in Beijing, China, in 1963. He received his BFA in painting in 1982 from the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in Beijing, and his MFA from the University of Arkansas in 1989. He has been awarded numerous honors, including a Fulbright scholarship; a grant from the New York Foundation for the Arts;

an Art Omi International Arts Center Residency (Omi, New York); the P.S.1 Contemporary Arts National Studio Program Fellowship (Long Island City, New York); the Sharp Foundation Fellowship (New York); and the Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome, Italy.

In 2004, Yun-fei's works on paper were the subject of *The Empty City*, a traveling solo exhibition organized by the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, St. Louis, Missouri. His recent solo exhibitions include *Great News Comes From the Collective Farm*, ZenoX, Antwerp, Belgium, and *The Water that Floats the Boat Can Also Sink It*, James Cohan Gallery, New York. Major group exhibitions have included the 2002 Whitney Biennial, New York, and the 2002 Altoids Curiously Strong Collection, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York. His work has been featured in publications including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The New Yorker*, *Modern Painters*, and *Artforum*, and in major public collections such as the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Brooklyn Museum of Art. He lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Lin Yan: Born in Beijing to a distinguished family of artists, Lin Yan graduated in 1984 from the Department of Oil Painting at the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA), Beijing. Following in the footsteps of her grandfather Pang Xunqin and mother Pang Tao, she continued her education in Paris, where she studied at L'École National Supérieur des Beaux-Arts. In 1989 she received her MA from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, with her thesis show "Tai Chi in Painting," which infused Chinese philosophy into her own language of "constructing paintings."

Lin relocated to the United States in 1986 and settled in New York in the early 1990s. Her work has been shown widely in the United States and China, and she has received critical acclaim for her contribution to the *Century—Women* exhibition at the National Art Museum of China, Beijing (1998). Group exhibitions have included *Three Generations of Chinese Modernism* at the National Art Gallery of China, Beijing (1998); *Contemporary Brush Strokes: New York Artists from China* at China 2000 Fine Art, New York (2002); *Travelers Between Cultures* at the Visual Arts Center of New Jersey, Summit (2006); and *Qiyun* at ChinaSquare, New York (2008). Her work is included in the collection of the National Art Gallery of China, Beijing; the Pang Xunqin Museum, Changshu; the Chengdu Contemporary Art Museum, Chengdu; and the Museum of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing. Lin Yan also works as an independent curator.

Cui Fei: Born in Jinan, China, Cui Fei attended the Affiliate Art High School of Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts (now China Academy of Art), Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China, where later she received her BFA in painting. Following graduation, she was engaged by the Shandong Academy of Fine Arts, Jinan, where she taught for three years as assistant professor. Cui Fei moved to the United States in 1996 to pursue higher education, earning her MFA in painting at Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 2001. During her academic training, Cui developed a solid foundation in a wide variety of media, including drawing, painting, sculpture, and calligraphy. After graduating, she moved to New York City to pursue her artistic career. She has had three solo shows and participated in more than fifty international group exhibitions, including the 22nd annual Artist in the Marketplace program, AIM 22, at the Bronx Museum of the Arts; *Fantasy: New York & Shanghai Young Artists Exchange Exhibition* at the Liu Haisu Art Museum, Shanghai; *Queens International 2004* at the Queens Museum of Art, New York; *East Transplanted West* at the CAS Gallery, Kean University, Union, New Jersey; *Contemporary Combustion: Chinese Artists in America* at the New Britain Museum of American Art, Connecticut; and *Chinese Gardens for Living: Illusion into Reality* at Kunstgewerbemuseum (Museum of Decorative Arts), Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Dresden (Dresden State Art Collections), Germany.

Curator Zhijian Qian is an expert of modern and contemporary Chinese art and art of the Chinese Diaspora. He is an art historian, critic and curator. He currently teaches art history at Parsons The New School for Design, and is expecting his doctoral degree from New York University. He has also taught Chinese and Asian Art at Drew University, Kean University, Fashion Institute of Technology, and William Paterson University. He was a senior editor of *Art Monthly*, a Beijing-based art magazine, before he relocated in the United States in 1997. Since the early 1990s, Mr. Qian has been writing broadly on modern and contemporary Chinese art, and he has worked closely with a number of contemporary artists both in and outside China. His most recent curatorial works include *Travelers Between Cultures* at Visual Arts Center of New Jersey (2006) and *East Transplanted West* at Kean University (2006).