

Press Release:

IN INK 绘事后素
Contemporary Chinese Ink Painting Exhibition
at the Royal College of Art Gallery, Kensington London
7th -13th September 2016

Chinese ink art has a time-honoured tradition, a tradition that has, since the day it was born, been going through relentless changes, mainly driven by its intrinsic movements before the 20th century as there was neither desire nor channel for the Chinese culture to interact with those of other countries against the backdrop of China's self-closed cultural environment.

The beginning of the 20th century witnessed the most dramatic changes in history to China, which led to, among others, ruptures and fragmentation of Chinese cultural traditions with the increasing influence of the west on China. The ink art, as one of the symbols of Chinese cultural traditions, since then embarked on a path of the so-called "transformation", with modernization as the purpose and learning from the west the approach.

This transformation has been accompanied by disputes until the 1980s, a period that saw the prominence of a contemporary sense of questioning in the creation of Chinese ink art. The creators, while stressing the "micro-times" and "micro-trends" in the context of "macro-times" and "macro-trends", began to show diversities and personalities. What remained the same about the ink artists then were the principles of "I'm expressing my own inner world" and "harmony but not conformity", although some of them tended to envy the unrestrainedness of western expressionist art, and some others preferred to go back to the traditional "brush and ink play" of ancient Chinese literati painting.

It is undoubted that the Chinese ink art of the early 21st century will be nothing but a flash throughout its tremendously long history. It is now showing more enhanced diversities and personalities with the involvement of young ink artists. The tradition of Chinese ink art has been more inclusive thanks to the efforts of the past generations of ink artists, and it is based on this inclusiveness that Chinese ink art is starting to be experimental and avant-garde.

For the young artists, ink is either the material they feel comfortable with, or an opposite medium they use to express their own opinions, or a route of time travel for them to connect with ancient artists. That's why they have been so captivated by the creations and experiments of ink art, which count as the most direct and easiest modes to express themselves as well as their attitudes about the current era.

It is our pleasure to bring the creations of such a group of young artists to London, the culturally diverse metropolis where we would like to unveil the contemporary Chinese ink art. Belonging to the new generation of contemporary Chinese ink artists, the several young artists featured in this exhibition, who are known for their practice art out of unrestrained will, have all chosen ink art as if by prior agreement. For them, ink art is where the vitality lies, and their mission of artistic creation is to tell the story of “themselves” or reveal the spirit of their generation in the contemporary cultural context, instead of continuing the tradition of ink art.

by Professor Zhao Li
Academic director of the exhibition
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Artists: Chen Jun Hang Chunhui Hao Shiming Ma Lingli Peng Jian
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