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NEW SHOOTS OFF THE OLD TRUNK: CONTEMPORARY CHINESE ART WITH CLASSICAL ROOTS

EXHIBITION DATES: MARCH 19 – 25, 2011

ASIA WEEK WEEKEND: MARCH 19 and 20, 11:00 – 5:00

China 2000 Fine Art takes great pleasure in presenting “New Shoots off the Old Trunk: Contemporary Chinese Art with Classical Roots,” which will be shown in the gallery at 434A East 75th Street in Manhattan and in an online exhibition on our website at China2000FineArt.com.

Wherein lays the “Chineseness” of contemporary Chinese art? Is the hold of classical art so paralyzing to the creativity of contemporary artists that they must break with tradition to establish something new, or is it possible to build on tradition? Are Chinese Americans considered Chinese artists? What makes the creation of a Chinese artist working with traditional Chinese materials and implements and themes contemporary? We have put together an exhibition that will pose these questions, initiate a dialogue, throw around some theories and draw a few conclusions that highlight the gallery’s thirty-year *raison d’être*.

Our primary requirement in selecting works of art for this exhibition was that the works reflect, revisit, and arise out of the artists’ response to their Chinese cultural heritage. A shorthand label that has recently surfaced for this group of artists is the New Literati. It is our opinion that they would be somewhat aggravated, and perhaps embarrassed, by such categorization. If they try to keep company with the past, it is not on a first-name basis. Xu Bing, Zeng Xiaojun, K.S. Wang, Wei Jia and Annysa Ng had to physically remove themselves from their native homes to retrace their cultural heritage from an exile’s perspective. Their art bespeaks the success of this undertaking. Ironically, the Chinese American, Mel Chin, revisited his cultural heritage in a nightmare that became “Scholar’s Nightmare.”

The remaining three artists in the exhibition, Ya Ming, He Saibang, and Zhang Lichen, have not resided outside China, and yet have successfully created works that speak to a contemporary sensibility. How have they enabled their creativity with the constraints of a rigid tradition within the borders of an authoritarian system? One answer lies at the heart of what is the greatness of this 2000 year old contiguous but evolving tradition of art. Chinese classical art is all about expressing the soul of the creator. The merit of the artwork is directly proportional to what the artwork reveals about the artist’s character. The process of creating art is a state of being, while cultivating a balanced spirit is a lifelong pursuit. Throughout the history of Chinese classical painting, the artist sometimes found himself retreating, sometimes further engaged with the world around him. In each successive generation, those artists who are brave enough to undertake this honest soul-searching create a new visual language that not only resonates with the infinitesimal residual vibration of the ancient chime but also can be read across continents and throughout time.



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Xu Bing (b.1955) - Square Word Calligraphy Couplet - Poem by Du Fu, 2010, Hanging scroll, ink on paper, Image: each 51 x 10.875 inches, Scroll: each 81 x 14.125 in



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SCHOLAR'S NIGHTMARE 2001

A Ming-style table, as seen in a dream,
where reality and abstraction converge.

wood, dye, animal part

Mel Chin (b. 1951) - Scholar's Nightmare, 2001, Wild cherry wood, aniline dye, animal part,
Table: 67 (l) 27 (w) 35 (h) in, Pedestal: 62 (l) 24 (w) 4 (h) in



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Zeng Xiaojun (b.1954) – Landscape, 1999, Color and ink on paper, 56.25 x 71.5 in



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Zeng Xiaojun (b.1954) – Mountains and Rocks as Companions, Ink and color on paper, 25 x 52.25 in



Annysa Ng - Ambiguous Space aka Hua Xuan, 2009, Ink on silk, Two panels: 30 x 40 inches each, overall dimension 30 x 80 in



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K.S. Wong (b.1934) – Calligraphy, 2000, Ink on paper, 37 x 67 in, Signed with three seals.



Zhang Lichen (b.1939) – Orchid, 1986, Ink and color on paper, 19.25 x 31.5 in, Signed with 5 artist seals



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Wei Jia (b.1957) - NO.0660 Yan Zhenqing, 2006, Mixed media, 52 X 52 in



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He Sai Bang (b.1959) - Golden and Silver Stone, 2006, Mixed media on paper, 61 x 39 inches each (A pair)



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Ya Ming (1924-2002) – Boat Trip at the Cliff, 1985, Ink and color on paper, Fan painting: 10.5 x 21.25 in, Signed with one artist seal