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**Asian**

**News**



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## 28 CHINESE

**Exhibition explodes narrow perspectives of contemporary art in China**

SAN FRANCISCO, May 19, 2015—This June, visitors to the Asian Art Museum will get a snapshot of some of China's most exciting artists from the country's booming contemporary art scene. The museum's special "Summer of Contemporary" series begins with the exhibition *28 Chinese*. *28 Chinese* offers glimpses of Chinese contemporary art through the works of 28 artists, ranging from those new to the spotlight like Liu Wei, He Xiangyu and Xu Zhen to the internationally acclaimed Zhang Huan and Ai Weiwei. These artists have made a significant impact on the

art world and expanded definitions of Chinese contemporary art. On view June 5 through Aug. 16, the exhibition features 48 artworks that reveal powerful responses to China today as well as reflections on Chinese tradition.

*28 Chinese* is the culmination of more than a decade's worth of exploration and research by art collectors Don and Mera Rubell. Between 2001 and 2012, the Rubells conducted six research trips to China, where they visited 100 artists' studios in Beijing, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Hangzhou, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Xi'an. The Rubells acquired artworks from 28 artists in a variety of mediums, from painting and installation to photography and new media. Organized by guest curator Allison Harding, the Asian Art Museum's presentation will be the first exhibition on the West Coast for many of these artists.

"*28 Chinese* offers glimpses into the myriad conversations ongoing in China's art studios and galleries," said Harding. "Together these 28 artists provide a springboard into the vast landscape of contemporary art in China."

While artworks in *28 Chinese* are only a sample of all that Chinese contemporary art has to offer, they represent a few of the most notable Chinese artists working today, as identified by two preeminent art collectors. A highlight of the exhibition is Zhu Jinshi's monumental installation, *Boat*, which is 40 feet long, making it the largest artwork the museum has installed. Visitors will see row upon row of carefully stacked calligraphy paper overlapping bamboo rods suspended from the ceiling by cotton thread. Another

*Boat*, 2012, by Zhu Jinshi (Chinese, b. 1954). Xuan paper, bamboo and cotton thread. *Courtesy of Rubell Family Collection, Miami.*  
© Zhu Jinshi, © ARS, New York.

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highlight is a large-scale painting by Li Shurui from her *Light* series—works that reproduce the look and feel of light in different environments, from Arctic landscapes to nightclubs. The exhibition also features Ai Weiwei's *Table with Two Legs* (2008), Xu Zhen's embroidered canvas, He Xiangyu's installation *Cola Project* (2009–2011), Qiu Zhijie's *Memorial for Revolutionary Speech* (2007) and a screening room featuring a wide range of new video works, including Huang Ran's *Blithe Tragedy* (2011) and Fang Lu's *Lovers Are Artists (Part One)* (2012).

"*28 Chinese* presents a range of universal ideas as broad and complex as China itself," said Jay Xu, director of the Asian Art Museum. "The artworks reflect the perspectives of 28 individuals, which represent just the tip of the iceberg of contemporary art from China."

The exhibition begins in the museum's ground floor galleries and courts and continues in the China galleries on the second and third floors, where contemporary works can be seen alongside traditional art from the museum's collection.

#### **Osher Gallery: Abstract Painting**

*28 Chinese* begins in Osher Gallery, which showcases a spectrum of abstract paintings. Liu Wei's *Liberation No. 1* (2013) is a powerful painting that stretches almost 18 feet long and more than 9 feet high. Liu Wei used computer software to generate patterns of this composition. As the artist explains, "The computer is like a big brain that is constantly thinking, and I am only organizing. . . . It is just pure logic into color." Yet the impact of his monumental painting suggests that there is more than a mechanical process going on.

Artist Zhao Yao also investigates logic, probing how it can replace originality and how preexisting experiences and assumptions color our views of art. For his paintings, *A Painting of Thought III—162* (2011) and *A Painting of Thought I—962D* (2011), he recreated geometric patterns borrowed from brainteaser books onto store-bought fabric to make his compositions.

Also on display in Osher Gallery is Li Shurui's *I am not ready. . . .* (2013) from her *Light* series. Her works give the impression of the movement of light or vibration on a picture's surface. The artist's studio is located in Beijing's industrial outskirts, and the artist uses the water from local wells to mix her paints. This water is thick with silt, and the back and sides of her canvases are filthy from the remaining residue. In this way, the artist connects the universal subject of light to local concerns that surround her studio.

#### **Hambrecht Gallery: Storytelling**

A number of artworks in *28 Chinese* present narratives in different mediums, and frequently these narratives are surreal, humorous, absurd and disorienting. In many cases, the artworks offer only a snapshot of a mesmerizing narrative formed from personal memories and fantasies, science, literature and everyday life. Photographer Chen Wei is a leading example of this type of narrative. He constructs intricate sets, often resembling rooms and confined spaces, showing a solitary figure, his presence adding tones of alienation and abjection. This is exemplified in his photographs *Unnamed Room No. 2* (2006), *Honey in the Broadcast* (2008) and *Sand and Nobody No. 1* (2007).

Artist Xu Zhen tells narratives in his series *Spread* by using pictorial scenes, combining international political cartoons, caricatures, medieval images, exotic bestiaries and other imagery in the form of cloth collages, installations and paintings. Hambrecht Gallery

showcases the artist's *Spread B-051* (2010) and "*The principal motor of action in this view is self-interest, guided by rationality, which translates structural and institutional conditions into payoffs and probabilities, and therefore incentives,*" *material: water, proteins, glucose, mineral salt*, (2012).

#### **Lee Gallery: New Media**

Lee Gallery features five new media works, presenting a range of narratives, from witty to unsettling. Huang Ran's *Blithe Tragedy* combines fantastical scenes of nature with unnerving suggestion of torture and death. Chen Zhou's *Morning!* (2011) follows a man through a typical morning routine of eating breakfast and reading the newspaper.

Artist Hu Xiangqian is a performer in his video works, in which he often uses his body to act out absurd narratives. In *Sun* (2008) he recorded himself sunbathing in a courtyard over six months, until he felt his skin tone resembled that of his African friends.

#### **Resource Center: Cola Project**

The Resource Center shows components of the *Cola Project* by artist He Xiangyu. From 2009 to 2011, the artist hired 10 industrial laborers who boiled 127 tons of Coca-Cola and extracted over 40 cubic feet of residuum. The resulting material has taken many forms, from mounds of highly corrosive residue to black ink used for a traditional Chinese painting.

#### **North Court & South Court**

In North Court, visitors can walk through Zhu Jinshi's *Boat* (2012) installation made of 8,000 sheets of crinkled calligraphy paper. Visitors may experience what the artist calls a "symbolic journey" that seems to block out the world. Zhu Jinshi says that this work is his attempt to "infinitely extend every moment," using the movement of a boat—and its ability to go in any direction in the water—as an analogy for the extension of time and experience.

Also in this court is Fang Lu's new media piece *Lovers Are Artists (Part One)* (2012). The film follows a young woman through Beijing's streets and alleyways as she goes about everyday activities. Her interactions with her surroundings become increasingly strange, representing the irrational state of being in love.

Visitors in North Court will also find Huang Yong Ping's *Well* (2007), where the artist has placed taxidermy animals of a snake, bats and a goat inside ceramic vessels. The artist's works often explore how cultures collide and evolve, and how they understand, or misunderstand, each other. For example, the bat is often feared in the West but thought to bring good fortune and happiness in China.

In South Court, visitors may sit on He Xiangyu's *The Man on the Chair* (2008–2009). The chairs are made from abandoned wooden aqueduct pipes that the artist collected in southwest China. The artist presents a grove of 11 chairs made from discarded wood that calls attention to nature's transformation through cycles of decay and regeneration.

#### **China Galleries, Second and Third Floors**

Several artworks are placed in the museum's China galleries, where visitors can experience contemporary works amid traditional Chinese art. For Ai Weiwei, referring to

history is a way to comment on the present. In the artist's *Ton of Tea* (2005) sculpture, he compressed one ton of tea leaves into one cubic meter. The compressed tea alludes to China's trade history, while the sculptural form is associated with American minimalism. In *Table with Two Legs* (2008), the artist used a Qing dynasty table (1644–1911), which was originally crafted without nails. Ai Weiwei disassembled the original table, erasing its original functional and aesthetic value, and then reconfigured the table with two legs, without leaving any trace of his intervention. Both works can be found on the second floor.

On the third floor is Zhang Huan's *To Raise the Water Level in a Fishpond (Distant)* (1997). This iconic photograph captures the second part of a three-part performance by the artist and a group of immigrant workers standing in a pond, their bodies displacing water to raise the water level.

The 28 artists featured in the exhibition are:

Ai Weiwei 艾未未	Li Ming 李明	Wang Guangle 王光乐
Chen Wei 陈维	Li Ran 李然	Wang Xingwei 王兴伟
Chen Zhou 陈轴	Li Shurui 李姝睿	Xie Molin 谢墨凇
Fang Lu 方璐	Li Songsong 李松松	Xu Zhen 徐震
He Xiangyu 何翔宇	Liu Chuang 刘窗	Yan Xing 颜醒
Huang Ran 黄然	Liu Wei 刘韡	Zhang Enli 张恩利
Huang Yong Ping 黄永砵	Li Zhanyang 李占洋	Zhang Huan 张洹
Hu Qingyan 胡庆雁	Qiu Zhijie 邱志杰	Zhao Yao 赵要
Hu Xiangqian 胡向前	Shang Yixin 尚一心	Zhu Jinshi 朱金石
Lan Zhenghui 蓝正辉		

Following the Asian Art Museum's presentation of *28 Chinese*, the exhibition will travel to the San Antonio Museum of Art (Sept. 5, 2015–Jan. 4, 2016). The exhibition premiered in Miami at the Rubell Family Collection on Dec. 4, 2013 and was on view through Aug. 1, 2014.

Over the past 15 years, the Asian Art Museum has made a concentrated effort to include contemporary art in its exhibition programs and acquisition pursuits. On Sept. 4 the museum will present *First Look: Collecting Contemporary at the Asian*, an original exhibition showcasing more than 40 contemporary artworks in the museum's collection. Visitors are encouraged to bring their ticket stub from *28 Chinese* for discounted admission to *First Look*.

#### PUBLICATION

The exhibition is accompanied by a substantive, richly illustrated catalogue published by the Rubell Family Collection; available in soft cover, \$39.95, 260 pages. Available at the Asian Art Museum store: <http://store.asianart.org> or 415.581.3605 or [shop@asianart.org](mailto:shop@asianart.org).

#### EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION

*28 Chinese* is organized by the Rubell Family Collection, Miami. Presentation at the Asian Art Museum is made possible with the generous support of China Art Foundation, Gorretti and Lawrence Lui, Silicon Valley Bank, The Akiko Yamazaki and Jerry Yang

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#### **ABOUT THE ASIAN ART MUSEUM**

The Asian Art Museum—Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture is one of San Francisco's premier arts institutions and home to a world-renowned collection of more than 18,000 Asian art treasures spanning 6,000 years of history. Through rich art experiences, centered on historic and contemporary artworks, the Asian Art Museum unlocks the past for visitors, bringing it to life while serving as a catalyst for new art, new creativity and new thinking.

Information: 415.581.3500 or [www.asianart.org](http://www.asianart.org)

Location: 200 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102

Hours: The museum is open Tuesdays through Sundays from 10 AM to 5 PM. From Feb. 26 through Oct. 8, 2015, hours are extended on Thursdays until 9 PM. Closed Mondays, as well as New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

General Admission: FREE for museum members, \$15 for adults, \$10 for seniors (65+), college students with ID, and youths (13–17). FREE for children under 12 and SFUSD students with ID. General admission on Thursdays after 5 PM is \$5 for all visitors (except those under 12, SFUSD students, and museum members, who are always admitted FREE). General admission is FREE to all on Target First Free Sundays (the first Sunday of every month). A surcharge may apply for admission to special exhibitions.

Access: The Asian Art Museum is wheelchair accessible. For more information regarding access: 415.581.3598; TDD: 415.861.2035.

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