Zheng Chongbin
郑重賓
White Ink

exhibition curated by
Abby Chen
with text by
Colette Chattopadhyay
Shen Kuai

This catalogue accompanies the Xian Rui (Fresh & Sharp) Artist Excellence Exhibition 2011 featuring Zheng Chongbin & his White Ink.

Chinese Culture Foundation of San Francisco
Silicon Valley Asian Art Center, Santa Clara

Fresharp
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The exhibition is on view from May 19, 2011 to July 30, 2011 at Chinese Culture Center and from June 18, 2011 to July 17 at Silicon Valley Asian Art Center.

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The Silicon Valley Asian Art Center is pleased to announce the exhibition of Zheng Chongbin’s ink paintings in the summer of 2011, in collaboration with Chinese Culture Foundation (which manages Chinese Culture Center) of San Francisco, located in Chinatown in the city’s downtown area. The Silicon Valley Asian Art Center, about 50 miles from San Francisco, is in the South Bay where many technology companies are headquartered. This will be a great event, with the two art institutions working together to present the different works of this artist. The exhibition at the Chinese Culture Center is from May 19 to July 30, 2011, and the exhibition at the Silicon Valley Asian Art Center will open on June 18, and close on July 17, 2011.

For this exhibition I particularly thank Ms. Abby Chen, the Artistic Director of the Chinese Culture Foundation of San Francisco, who connected me to Zheng Chongbin. With her introduction, I got a chance in the spring of 2010 to visit the artist’s studio in the North Bay. I was stunned and excited to see his innovative approach in ink that is so boundless and profound. I told him “this is the space station of the cosmic world of ink painting.”

“I stand firmly and vigorously in the ocean of ink” is the famous quote from Shi Tao’s book On Painting. I hope by seeing Zheng Chongbin’s exhibition, viewers will associate his paintings with the next sentence of the above quote, which is “let light come out of the chaos.”

I think that might be a good explanation for the title of this book, White Ink.

Shu Jianhua, Curator
Silicon Valley Asian Art Center
March, 2011
White Ink, the Painter is Absent

Abby Chen

I can only pray for a transformative experience coming along with every year’s Xian Rui artist. The memory of brainstorming this exhibition with Zheng Chongbin two years ago is still vivid. I was looking at the two large vertical paintings of his biomorphic series, finding them aggressive and radical. I wondered where he would go with another loop. And here we are: a whole new body of artwork that bears no heavy-handed intervention, nor does it take on any set pattern. It is spontaneous, but somehow with a very controlled appearance that dictates the entire energy of the gallery. There seems to be an unspoken perseverance amidst the free flowing form, with some spots or blots emerging randomly, creating a magnetic and misty mood. White ink shows a consistent expression of caesuraless chaos, but with a refined control that points to a less present painter. The energy of Zheng’s painting is like a string of secret codes that emanate from the work, affirming that its vibe has motion and is real. While staring at the work, even at close range, I often forget all the elements that go into this piece: that it is ink and that it is painted. Every shade and shape seems organic, unplanned, and unstructured. I seldom think of the artist who made the work. It is as if he does not exist. It is the border and the snowflake shaped ink spots that serve to vaguely remind one of the presence of Zheng Chongbin, the Chinese Culture Foundation’s 2011 Xian Rui (Fresh & Sharp) artist, a painter who seems to create paintings without painting them.

Looking back at Zheng’s early biomorphic forms, one of the endeavors that mark his early attempt at abstract work, one can see that Zheng’s work at this stage was experimental, bold, and rough. But it is obvious that the stroke of ink is asserted with a soaring gesture like graffiti on a bright wall, visually violent and emotionally unsettled, alluding to the strong presence of the painter. The style of whimsy and unpredictability Zheng revealed in those paintings is something very uncommon amongst the Chinese artist in America. White Ink presents a visual overlap, which allows for receiving both forms, without a prior knowledge of one or the other. The energy flow Zheng generates with this exhibition actualizes a process of transformation that denotes the presence of ink in these paintings almost resembles the identity of the painter himself and his methodology: in the early works, it has to be loud, direct, and raw; then it mixes, fades, and disappears. It feels to me that he initially needed to forcefully, almost recklessly, dash out in order to rebel and break free, and later subtly, gently, and even secretly paint on, inhale, and dominate. What Zheng has managed to achieve from this process is evident and crucial to his artistic development, as well as to the actual practice of what it means to be a Chinese artist in America. White ink presents a visual overlap, which allows for receiving both forms, without a prior knowledge of one or the other. The energy flow Zheng generates with this exhibition actualizes a process of transformation that denotes Xian Rui’s founding goal: to offer a fresh and sharp perspective that provides new possibilities of thinking about not just Chinese culture, but culture at large, through the lens of an individual artist.
Defining His Own Terrain

Zheng Chongbin: Defining His Own Terrain

Zheng Chongbin’s new large scale, contemporary ink paintings convey a cultural complexity that mingles the knowledge and study of contemporary global history with a broad cognizance of not only traditional and contemporary Chinese art, but an in-depth familiarity with contemporary Euro-American art of recent decades. While tradition is manifested in the physical properties of his ink on Xuan paper works, his paintings manifested an artistic imagination that seaweaves across cultural divides. In the process, his works manifest a familiarity with not only historical and contemporary Chinese art, but a visual fluency with contemporary Euro-American art developments. The bold and engaging works assembled for this exhibition present Zheng’s newest ideas in relation to both a reconsideration of inherited artistic canons and the identification of promising directions for ink painting in the contemporary context.

Zheng emerged on the art world stage in the 1980s, when the subjectivism of Neo-Expressionist painting in the United States and European art worlds by storm. It was also the decade which saw the emergence of White Paintings, both of which break with tradition’s attenuated insistence upon cultivated modulations of tone and brushwork rendered on a large scale. Zheng’s works of that period visually present moments of climactic experience rendered in ink paintings wrought on a large scale, defining the zeitgeist of that era. At their core, these works validate immediate artistic expression, transmuting instantaneousness, wild and even ‘illegible’ signatures as markers of artistic articulation and insight. Defining the catharsis of social change that was underway, these daring and confident works interpret on a grand scale the cathedrals of social change endemic to that time.

Zheng’s new works, by comparison, that form the focus of this exhibition, gather their energy from more than the knowledge and study of contemporary global history with a broad cognizance of not only traditional and contemporary Chinese art, but an in-depth familiarity with contemporary Euro-American art of recent decades. The bold and engaging works assembled for this exhibition present Zheng’s newest ideas in relation to both a reconsideration of inherited artistic canons and the identification of promising directions for ink painting in the contemporary context.

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for an overall image whose objective was—traditionally speaking—the articulation of cultural refinement. Simultaneously, these assembled works also expand the parameters of traditional ink painting’s lexicon by presenting images that appear to exist in the darkest of spaces or, conversely, in the brightest of white light. Studying visual overstatement and understatement as defined within the parameters of the ink tradition, selected works in this exhibition explore ink’s capability to address the postmodern era’s brush harshness, and its frequent neglect and disregard for sophistication and subtlety. Working exclusively with black and white color hues, two new series of Zheng’s works reference these realties in artistic terms, offering in certain respects a sharp critique of the contemporary world itself. The Environ black paintings travel into these new territories, upending some of the most cherished values of China’s centuries’ old tradition of ink painting. Here, dense, dark charcoal forms parade across the image space accentuating their presence with such power that the images scarcely grant the viewer air to breathe. Gone or repressed is any traditional interest in the subtlety of balancing and counterbalancing compositional forms that is endemic to traditional ink painting. Instead, Zheng’s new works project a dense, claustrophobic, foreboding psychological reality. If the work references a physical reality, it is surely one of the darkest of nights. The whole image projects such brutality or obduracy that the viewer is left to seek a place to flee, though there is none granted. Physically, the ink here is thick and viscous, built with so many layers that the Xuan paper base has given way, torn and ripped in certain places under the painter’s insistent brushwork. Like an old fashioned film running backward, these dense, dark, vertical forms flicker in the mind’s eye with the memory of Robert Rauschenberg’s early alla white paintings that dared viewers to go beyond literal reality towards the metaphysical. Do Zheng’s works mine the obverse of those early postmodern American impulses or do they converse with Antoni Tàpies’ paintings that resemble walls or other mundane, obdurate realities? Certainly, these new Zheng works give the thinking viewer pause. As a corollary to the Environ black paintings, Zheng has created a sequence of works that disavow their brilliant whiteness. It is something of a relief perhaps that the dark vision gives way to a different sequence of works, yet these pose their own challenges. Flooding the viewer’s image field with a brightness that is overwhelming, works such as Untitled (Fluctuating White 1) (2011), or Light, Dark, Wet, Dry engulf the viewer, due to their large scale and size, yielding an intense visual experience that can be akin to trying to see in the fog. Few of the works feature a horizon line, leading to a further sense of visual disorientation. Historically speaking, the work Light, Dark, Wet, Dry nods in respect to Mark Rothko’s large, luminous forms while granting something of a ghostly apparition of that artist’s legacy. Of course, Zheng has completely transformed the work of this mentor, for where Rothko studied the intensities of color, Zheng creates with black and white. Further, the details wrought on Zheng’s white forms reveal a multitude of scratches as though time has scuffed the surface of an obdurate mass that although large and oversized, is not impervious to time and its erosions. While perhaps presenting soft, luminous, hovering shapes, the scratched condition of these mammoth forms is difficult to shake. Large, even vaporous from afar, they suggest rock faces up close that have been chafed by wind, rain, and twigs. In the works fragile gentleness, the image bears as well references of neglect. If the condition of these mammoth forms is difficult to shake. Large, even vaporous from afar, they suggest rock faces up close that have been chafed by wind, rain, and twigs. In the works fragile gentleness, the image bears as well references of neglect. If the past painting was a piece of music, the image’s melody would be hauntingly sad, whispering of a blighted reality. As an visual image, it projects metaphors of social erasure brought into the brilliance of the light for all who may wish to see. These are not easy works, but rather ink paintings that give pause, and that challenge and brave unfamiliar frontiers. In this sense, Zheng’s works often present a foreboding or haunting scene that projects a quality of lost grandeur. While the large scale of these works grants them extraordinary visual power, it is their articulation of the sweeping expanse of time and space that remains memorable in the mind’s eye. Such qualities of existence, made manifest through the immediacy of gestured expression writ both in positive and negative artistic form, suggesting the passage of time and its neglects, make these works formidable, haunting, and memorable. Presenting images endowed with unforgettable visual melodies that dare to trace the perimeter of the land known as obduracy, Zheng’s works mingle the past and present, granting glimpses of realities studied, seen and envisioned that burn brilliantly with poetry, poignancy, and power.
新近创作的一批大型水墨画作品,蕴含着文化理念上的复杂性,他对当代与历史的理解不仅在于对传统和现代的中国艺术文化有着广泛的认识并能将其融入于自己的创作中,同时更以作品表达了他对近数十年的当代欧美艺术的谙知贯通。他以墨色本身在宣纸上形成的层次的浓淡干湿的传统法来体现空间的同时,跨越于不同艺术门类之间的艺术表现和想象。他的画作是对中国传统语言的取舍和当代艺术内涵的娴熟相接,更从视觉驾驭上明显看的出他对当代欧美艺术的发展的思考。此次展出的多幅大胆而富有表现力的画作延续了他对重新审思本体文化的传承观和找出当代艺术以水墨为媒介的可行定位。

郑重宾于二十世纪八十年代在艺术界初露头角,那时候,新表现派画作所表现的主观主义在欧美艺术界非常盛行。同年代,在中国也兴起了一种新潮艺术。这两种视觉艺术都着重抽象性地表现艺术主张,而且,它们都是通过大型作品的画法渲染出艺术表现的强大力度。这一期间,郑重宾的作品在视觉上体现了那一时代的艺术表现思潮。这些作品对新领域的探索,颠覆了中国几百年传统水墨画最珍视的一些价值。画作中,密集、深邃的炭黑色穿插交错,强调其不容忽视的存在感,一种力量感,让看者不禁屏息凝视。人们对传统水墨画中情有独钟的构成形式,隐喻而微妙的平衡在这里消逝。取而代之的是,在郑重宾的作品中,反映出紧绷的、幽闭的宿命的心理现实。如果画作以实景为创作蓝本,那么这必定是某一个最最暗淡的夜色。整幅画作折射了暴戾、漠视之情,让欣赏者禁不住寻觅一处逃生之地。从作品的质感上来看,墨感真实,凝结厚重且直接而本能,层层叠叠使某些宣纸层面裂痕破碎。显眼之处,意向所指。如同经典回放一部老式的电影,这些浓密、深邃的垂直形态如同历历在目的回忆,回眸着罗伯特-劳森伯格早期全白画作,挑战观者超越现实,有表取里到形而上的体验。郑重宾的作品是否挖掘了对这些早期美国后现代主义表现的深入观察?还是这些画作逆转了安东尼•塔皮埃斯绘画主张体现真实的客体或是世俗的、冷酷的现实。但肯定的是,郑重宾的这些新作引发了观者的驻足思考。随《黑色侵蚀》之后,郑重宾创作的一系列的画作都有意渗透了白色的表现空间。这或许是为了释放作品不同层面的次序感,也可能是想留出更多的空间来表现黑色,然而这也带来了对自身的挑战。明亮的白色场能让观者沉浸其中而忘却四周。比如《彷徨的白色I (Fluctuating White I (C 38))》、《灰色与白色(Grey and White (2009))》或者《浓淡干湿(Light, Dark, Wet, Dry)》等作品,其大型的画作带有被其吞噬之感,强烈的视觉感受如同被迷雾深锁。有些作品暗示了隐约的地平线,更让视觉的方向错位。从历史上来看,《浓淡干湿》这幅作品展现了对马克-罗思科擅用的大幅明亮的表现形式的致意,某些地方可以依稀发现罗思科的影子。然而,郑重宾完全变换了大师的作画领域,比如罗思科所研究的颜色强度,郑重宾则利用了黑白两色的多元。而且,郑重宾在白色形态上精心关注,带有许多的划痕感,仿佛时间在原本坚固的表面上留下烙痕,尽管痕迹大到令人无法忽视,但是却丝毫影响不了时间的飞逝和岁月的侵蚀。
Zheng Chongbin studied in the Chinese painting department at Zhejiang Academy (now China Academy of Art) from 1980 to 1984, a member of the first post-Cultural Revolution class of students. The program, which dates back to the 1930s, had been fully re-instated by the brilliant traditionalist in the 1980s and then further developed in the 1980s by the literal-style landscape Lu Yanshou. From its beginnings, a very strong literati tradition has been rooted in this program. As early as the twelfth century, literati painting theorists articulated a value system in which self-expressive brushwork was considered far more admirable than “form-likeness,” or realism. In this regard, literati painting, although never completely non-objective, has conceptual similarities to some aspects of twentieth century abstract art. Artists of the Zhejiang Academy’s Chinese painting department were particularly badly criticized and abused during the Cultural Revolution, and the program’s revival in 1980 was highly significant. Of particular significance was the rejection by many artists, young and old alike, of a socialist realist practice that had become mainstream during the Cultural Revolution – that all acceptable paintings have an important and clearly legible political theme.

Thus, at the beginning of the 1980s, abstraction became a key focus of debate and argument in the Chinese art world. It most directly reflected a revolt against the mainstream art of the PRC, and its thematic paintings. Theories of Western abstraction were brought into the arguments of the day by artists such as the French-educated Wu Guanzhong, who set them up primarily in opposition to the idea of art as propaganda. Abstraction thus became a symbol of progress, novelty, and innovation. Finding one’s own voice as an artist, rather than as a cog in the political machinery, was essential, and moving Chinese art in a new direction became a key thing for artists, young and old alike, of a socialist realist practice that had become mainstream during the Cultural Revolution. Abstraction thus became a key focus of debate and argument in the Chinese art world. It most directly reflected a revolt against the mainstream art of the PRC, and its thematic paintings. Theories of Western abstraction were brought into the arguments of the day by artists such as the French-educated Wu Guanzhong, who set them up primarily in opposition to the idea of art as propaganda. Abstraction thus became a symbol of progress, novelty, and innovation. Finding one’s own voice as an artist, rather than as a cog in the political machinery, was essential, and moving Chinese art in a new direction became a key thing for artists, young and old alike, of a socialist realist practice that had become mainstream during the Cultural Revolution.

Zheng Chongbin, in one of China’s liveliest and most important art schools during the height of this debate, must have been powerfully affected. Moreover, for most students in his generation, the task of overturning the dominance of socialist realism was a deeply felt mission. Bringing the expressive quality from literati painting into contemporary art was one way to leave behind propagandistic trends. At the same time, Western abstract painting, along with all forms of modernism, simultaneously reanimated China in the 1980s. Ink painting students at the time periodically condemned abstract art and penalized its practitioners up until the mid-1980s. Zheng Chongbin’s concerns, however, were more unique. He was not simply satisfied with bringing Western abstract expressionism onto the surface of the paper by means of the Chinese medium of ink painting. He wanted to explore how to construct a three-dimensional abstract space on the two-dimensional surface of the paper. He thus applied acrylic pigment, opaque and thick, in combination with his ink, in multiple layers on xuan paper, as a way to create depth of space in his paintings. For him, construction of space became the way he challenged traditional ink painting, adding new layers to abstract expressionism. In some ways we might see in the works of Jackson Pollack similar concerns, but Zheng Chongbin insists on lending himself to the Chinese literati hues of black, gray, and white, his white acrylic mixed with ink. Literati painting relies on the emptiness of blank paper to create space in the imagination of the viewers. Zheng’s paintings, by contrast, fill the entire surface, as in a western painting, but use the application of opaque white pigment to reintroduce space to his paintings. He argues that white is not the same as blankness; by using many layers of applied paint, during the process of his painting the texture of the acrylic constructs a real space that leaves a tangible three-dimensional form on the surface of his work. “White symbolizes a kind of flaw... It is both lacking chromatic quality and pure by itself. Gray is different from blankness. Blankness provides room for the imagination; a white color is an area of tangible material. A blank space allows contemplation; a white area lets me gaze.”

For him, abstraction is without theme or form, but it is highly tangible. Through the layering of synthetic paint on this unadorned surface of soft handmade Chinese paper, he partially replaces shape and form with a depth and richness of texture previously unknown in Chinese painting, and through the built-up quality of his surface textures creates space. It was widely accepted that in literati painting, through use only of monochromatic black ink, along with countless intermediate shades of gray, it was possible to suggest texture and volume. Zheng Chongbin’s work suggests that it is possible to do the same with synthetic paint. A wide range of varied brushstrokes and colors is used to create a three-dimensional virtual space that can be seen as a way to incorporate the more open modes of expression and communication that came from the West.

The appeal of Zheng Chongbin’s painting stems from his ability to create a sense of physical space on the delicate two-dimensional surface of the absorbent xuan paper traditionally used as a ground for Chinese painting. Taking an unusual approach to his medium by combining ink, ink wash, and acrylic, he successfully translates the concepts and vocabulary of Western abstract expressionist painting and Chinese literati painting into a unique personal mode of expression. Indeed, Zheng Chongbin’s work demonstrates that there is no simple duality between East and West, or literati and modern, but, by rendering their language fully translatable, the artist creates a single coherent artistic vocabulary built on creative citations from both. This translatability grounds his work firmly in both artistic worlds.

Zheng Chongbin’s work demonstrates that there is no simple duality between East and West, or literati and modern, but, by rendering their language fully translatable, the artist creates a single coherent artistic vocabulary built on creative citations from both. This translatability grounds his work firmly in both artistic worlds.
Chengdu Biennial in 2007. He is the recipient of fellowship awards and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, Social Science Research Council, Luce Foundation, the best known are A Century in Crisis: Tradition and Modernity in the Art of Twentieth Century China held at the Guggenheim Museums in New York and Bilbao in 1998, and Drawing the Future (Stanford, 2010), and Arts of Modern China (Berkeley, forthcoming). He also maintains an active career as a curator. Among the exhibitions he has curated, Francisco, 2006), Mahjong: Art, Film and Change in China (Berkeley, 2008), Art and China’s Revolution (New York, 2008), Chinese Posters (Munich, 2009), Tracing the Past, Francisco, 2000); Word and Meaning (Buffalo, 2000); Zhou Brothers (Stuttgart, Germany, 2004), Shanghai Modern (Munich, Germany, 2005), Elegant Gathering (San Francisco, 2006); Art and History (Zhejiang Academy of Art, China, 2007).  

Dr. Shen Kuiyi is Professor of Art History, Theory, and Criticism. His research focuses on modern and contemporary Chinese art and Sino-Japanese art exchanges in the late Qing and early Republican period. His recent projects include numerous exhibitions such as Art from China: Traditional and Modern (New York, 1990), The Flamingo and the Manchu-Chinese Painting from the Qing to the Cultural Revolution (San Francisco, 2000), Tongue and Meaning (Shanghai, 2001), Zhejiang Academy of Art: From Traditional to Modern Art (Shanghai, 2002), and Chinese Modern Art: From Modernity to Postmodernism (New York, 2003). His writing has appeared in a number of journals and books, including a special issue of the American Journal of Chinese Studies devoted to his research on modern Chinese art. His recent publications include The Chinese Art of Ink (New York, 1994), Chinese Poetry in Art (1996), The Art of Chinese Painting (New York, 1997), and The Art of Chinese Enamel (New York, 2000). He is currently working on a book titled “The Art of Chinese Painting in the 20th Century.”

In 1980 and 1984, he studied at the Zhejiang Academy of Art in Hangzhou. Since 1991, he has been a professor at the China Academy of Fine Arts, Hangzhou, where he teaches modern and contemporary Chinese art. He has also been a visiting scholar at Harvard University, the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Oxford. His research focuses on modern and contemporary Chinese art, with particular emphasis on the relationship between traditional Chinese painting and contemporary Chinese art. He has published extensively in Chinese and English, and has contributed to numerous exhibitions and publications. His most recent book, The Art of Chinese Painting in the 20th Century, was published in 2010.

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在现代文人画中，被广泛认可接受，它通过单一的黑色水墨颜料和无数种灰色中间基调将世间所有色彩一一呈现。但是郑重宾在水墨颜料，尤其是多层次感不透明的白色颜料中增加了丙烯材料，在纸张表层营造出一种空间的物理深度。他正在抽象主义风格的水墨画中创造出一种可触摸的真实空间。就这点而言他继续坚持单色调的文人画风格，而另一方面他却故意激活了绘画的物质性因而违反了二维层次定论。正如他解释道，“中国文人画在水墨画的样式要求下经常在创作过程中不明确来来，同时也缺乏这种形式的转变。因此它是以过程再画而并非事先计划，犹如行驶中调整驾驶，即使倾向于以理性方式理解水墨画所描述的三维空间存在。

有评论指出郑重宾的创作方式很大程度上起源于物质基础，包括他自己的身体和他使用的材料。根据这位艺术家的说法，“我与自己同在的创作——这令我保持好奇和可触摸性。它给你感受是3D的描绘，但又具有画面的透明性。我想通过我的作品来尝试在某种方式以一种物质的方式描绘现实。所以我试图将物质的量和形式同地表形态上用的强度、变换形式。我的作品会试图尝试一种从物质和潜能到形式之间的变换。”

从身体引申至随之而来的，用郑重宾的话来讲 “幻想、记忆和玄学的空间……被遗忘的虚构空间：缺失的空间既带抽象且又呈现唤起互动的形态。"在郑重宾的眼中美国抽象艺术就像“丧失对理性的兴趣[但却是]关于绝对性以及…… 实用主义的现实……连同令人诧异的物质性和可触性。它给人感觉是即时的扑面而来，很直接且具有纪念碑的含量。我注意到传统水墨缺少这种感觉。我想让我的作品同时涵盖这两种方式以便冲破各自风格限制。"他的绘画将水墨作为一种媒质的潜力推至极限，与此同时挑战抽象画的界限。因此他可能会说，“我的水墨作品体现了一个概念那就是物质都会利用以自身形式同时产生形而上学的维度。换句话说，我的作品目的只不过在于超越纯粹的材质，词汇经常伴随作量及可触性，‘‘水墨颜料已超越实际作用。你所见到的并非你真实得到的。’’然而与此同时由艺术家构造的空间具体而真实，层层笔墨与丙烯颜料运用于平面纸张上从而加深了水墨层次感。这种空间尚未完全抽象化，反而将自身平稳过渡到新的形式让观者驻足凝视或以更长时间去体味它的内涵，这并非意指单纯抽象的无形概念而是描绘风云的变化行径，犹如从图象背后仿佛置身于真实的风景之中。"
Zheng Chongbin
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This interview was originally conducted for Asian Contemporary Art Week 2011.

1. How did you start making art?

I grew up in a back-alley neighborhood in Shanghai. A few of my neighbors liked to paint every day during their free time. It was always fascinating for me to watch how they used the brush. Painting was something ritual to them, and it was a moment for them to escape from the real world. That was a time approaching the end of Cultural Revolution. I learned much later that they were demoted from their political status. They showed me all kinds of technical tricks. My first public drawing was a propaganda illustration on the blackboard at the entrance of a street alley. I was very excited that my drawing could be shared with viewers.

2. Briefly describe your art from the perspective of what it could tell us about you?

As a kid growing up in China, my first impression of something called painting was ink and brush. Learning was a process starting with my curiosity extending into extensive training of traditional Chinese painting with my teachers in an academic environment. I eventually experienced the clash of an ideological shift during the period of social transformation in mid-1980s. It affected my attitude towards art. I became suspicious of tradition by embracing the changing climate of cultural conditions at the time. My early work was marked with what I had gone through. By relocating to the West and adapting different cultures, my work manifests a fusion resulted from the choice of my residency. The complexities of formation in my work overlap with the duality of my mental landscape. They collapsed all into the work as an un categorizable hybridity of abstract forms.

There is no meaning in my work. In another word, my work only has the material characteristic of its own, by being the narrative as a code of physical evidence. As a result, my work cannot be categorized. It is the style of no style. I have been challenged as I am constantly trying to find out my true representation. This challenge has been staying within me, and I want to pass it onto the viewer.

3. What experiences have most influenced your choice of subject matter, medium and style?

I always want to explore the meaning of painting. The historical form might be deemed muted or exhausted, yet from that I still see how artists perceived the world and how they constructed their language into art making. This understanding becomes an integral part of my thinking. Why do I need to paint? In fact, I am really charged when I start to paint. Perhaps there is no subject and the only matter is my work. Conversely, matter imposes my inquiry and the subject is “I,” as I am “doing” the work, and able to discern which work is better or worse. How do I construct the visual language? It is the choice of aesthetics. It really reflects my own interpretation to the current surroundings.
4. Is your formal or informal training as an artist useful? How? Training only gives me the perspective to gain better understanding in how artistry carries weight in many forms of art. For me, training is not about being an artist. Knowing how to evaluate the form of language is most important. It will only be useful if I need to validate it or reject it.

5. Does your work reflect issues in yourself, in society or community?

To me and to my work, “self” and “society” cannot be separated. I make an aesthetic choice, which is very political. My work is the product hybridized in the context of cultural duality existing in my living reality day by day. My art is always associated with the desire to identify and to be identified.

6. What would you say is the purpose for making art?

I know I can distract myself because I am distracted by my choice of life. I don’t suppose “making” is the exact word. My life is a form of art that I can only think in this peculiar way. It is the form of communication and response between my own world and the big world. Hopefully I can show some clarity of what I am doing and why I’m doing it through my work.

7. Do you appreciate culturally specific works of art? If so how does your personal and cultural background show up in your work?

The expression of art is constructed by an artist’s own perception and cultural heritage. I am fascinated by culturally specific works of art. How it sees the world is rooted with its own custom and anthropology. My work will always reflect the nuance of my own culture and aesthetics. When I read Ad Reinhardt, I can think about Jean-Paul Sartre. At the same time, I am also thinking about Huang Binhong, Shi Tao, and others. Some of my works arrive from this kind of position.

8. Is there anything you would like to say about your local art scene or the international art market, art education, and/or system for art exhibition?

I think it is extremely important as an artist to participate in the local art scene, especially with institutions dedicated to the community; these institutions are inspired by the challenge they face today. They are working in an extremely limited economic situation, yet striving to remain as creative and resourceful as they can. The engagement between the artist and institution as such often sparks most extraordinary result.

9. How does your current portfolio fit into the rest of your body of work?

My current portfolio shows a part of syntheses of my approach towards the scrutiny to the art. It is a consistent development from what I had in the past, with a vision I wanted to carry out. It spans from the choice of material and the historical reference, to the level of engagement to the art, or maybe all of the above, all for one fundamental reason, which is to facilitate my visual conversation in the different segments of cultures. My current portfolio exemplifies the circumstances of my life that I have experienced to this date.
1. 您是怎样走上了艺术创作道路？

我在上海的弄堂度过了自己的童年，我的一些邻居总喜欢在闲暇时刻挥笔作画。对我而言，看到他们的画笔游走于白纸之上是一件莫大的趣事。绘画对他们来说，也是逃避现实生活的—种方式。当时正值文化大革命临近尾声时期，我后来才知道他们正倍受政治下放的煎熬。从他们那里我学到了不少绘画技巧。我的第一幅公开作品是上海弄堂入口的黑板画。当时，向家人展示自己的画作令我兴奋异常。

2. 您能否简单介绍下您希望通过画作向人们传递怎样的信息？

作为一名生于长于中国的孩子，我对绘画的初始印象是水墨和毛笔。最初是出于好奇，后来开始学习中国传统绘画，并进入正规院校追随师长学习。在上个世纪80年代中期的社会变革中，我感受到思想意识形态变化所产生的巨大冲突。这深刻影响到了我的艺术态度。对传统的质疑让我转而拥抱剧烈变化的文化环境。从我的早期作品可以发现我当时的蜕变。后来，我移居西方并接触吸纳各种不同的文化，我的作品也反映出一种新的交汇融合。我的作品糅合了错综复杂的形构和个人的二元化精神世界，塑造了一种难以名状的抽象艺术表达形式。

我的作品并无明确想表达的具体意义。换言之，我的作品仅仅具有其自身的物质特性，是叙事风格的形态化展示。其结果就是，我的作品无法被归入任何画派。没有风格就是我的风格。找寻真我是我的一种自我挑战。这种挑战一直存在，而我也想将其传递至画作的观者。

3. 您的哪些个人经历对您选择绘画主题、方式和风格的影响最大？

我总是渴望探索绘画的内涵。传统绘画方式可能被认为静默而平和，但我仍能从中看到艺术家对世界的感知以及他们如何将自己的思想注入到绘画创作中。这种理解成为我创作思维不可分割的一部分。我为何要拿起画笔？实际上，我总是满怀激情的开始创作。也许其实并没有什么主题，只有随心而为的作品本身。从另一角度来说，作品承载了我的探寻，主题就是“我”，因我是在创作，并由我来辨别画作的良莠。我如何构建自己的视觉语言？那就是我的美学境界。它真实的反映了我面对当前环境的自我诠释。

4. 您的成功是否受益于曾接受过的正式或非正式绘画教育？具体体现在哪些方面呢？

我所接受的这些教育是帮助我更好的领悟不同艺术形式的文艺特性。对我而言，它与是否成为一名艺术家紧密相关。它最重要的作用是让我能够辨识和欣赏美术语言。只有在需要判断接纳或拒绝某种美术语言时才有用。

5. 您的作品是否反映了一些您自身的或社会的问题？

对我来说，我的作品中，“自我”和“社会”是密不可分的。我所做的审美选择，是有倾向性的。我所生存的真实世界里的二元化文化特性交织融合在我的作品中，是与“认同”和“被认同”密切相关的。

6. 您投身艺术的目的何在？

能够自由选择生活方式让我觉得快乐。我认为“投身”用得不很确切。我只能说我选择的生活就是艺术。它是连接我的个人世界与周围大世界的纽带，一种沟通和回应的途径。我希望能够通过我的作品来表达我的所想以及我为什么要做这些。

7. 您是否欣赏具有文化特异性的艺术作品？如果是，您如何在作品中体现您的个人和文化底蕴？

我对本土艺术界的、国际艺术市场、艺术教育及艺术展览体系有何看法？

我认为，一名艺术家活跃于本地艺术界很重要，特别是与本地艺术机构建立各种合作。这些艺术机构面临着各种机遇和挑战。它们在极其有限的经济条件条件下仍然保持创造性和活跃性。艺术家们与艺术机构的同心协力往往能够产生最好的结果。

9. 您的当前作品与之前的其它作品之间有何关联？

我当前的这些作品呈现了本人在艺术道路上的又一次探索。它们是我之前探索经历的延续，秉承了我的一贯艺术观点。从选材和资料参考到对艺术的热情，或者可以说，所有这些作品，都是我在不同文化阶段的视觉对话。我当前的这些作品深刻反映了我一直以来所经历的生活环境。

8. 您的当前作品与之前的其它作品之间有何关联？

我以前的这些作品呈现了我在艺术道路上的又一次探索。它们是我之前探索经历的—种延续，秉承了我的一贯艺术观点。在题材和资料参考到对艺术的热情，或者可以说，所有这些作品，都是我在不同文化阶段的视觉对话。我以前的这些作品深刻反映了我一直以来所经历的生活环境。
Mirage / 2011 / Ink, Watercolor, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L71" x H75"

海市蜃楼 / 2011, 水, 水彩, 丙烯, 宣纸 / L178cm x H190.5cm
Fluctuating White 1 / 2011 / Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L38” x H35”
白色的脉动 1 / 2011,水, 墨, 丙烯, 宣纸 / L96.5cm x H89cm

Fluctuating White 2 / 2011 / Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L38” x H35”
白色的脉动 2 / 2011,水, 墨, 丙烯, 宣纸 / L96.5cm x H89cm
Field
2011
Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper
L82" x W54.5"

场
2011
水，墨，丙烯，宣纸
L208cm x W138.5cm
Evaporation No.3 / 2011
Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L54.5" x H107"
蒸发 No.3 / 2011
水, 墨, 丙烯, 宣纸 / L138.5cm x H272cm

Evaporation No.2 / 2011
Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L54.5" x H108"
蒸发 No.2 / 2011
水, 墨, 丙烯, 宣纸 / L138.5cm x H272cm
White Ink A / 2011 / Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper (L49" x H35.5")
白墨 A / 2011 / 水, 墨, 丙烯, 宣纸 / L125cm x H90cm

Light, Dark, Dry, Wet
2010
Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper
水, 墨, 丙烯, 宣纸
L51" x H95"
干湿浓淡
2010
水, 墨, 丙烯, 宣纸
L129.5cm x H242cm
Eroded white / 2011 / Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L97cm x H139cm

Expended form / 2011 / Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L97cm x H139cm
Field 0-1 / 2010 / Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L91" x H52"

界 (1) / 2010, 水, 墨, 丙烯, 宣纸 / L238cm x H132cm

Zone (1) / 2010 / Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L71" x H38"

界 (1) / 2010, 水, 墨, 丙烯, 宣纸 / L180cm x H97cm
Field 5-4 (2010) Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper | L164cm x H76cm

场 0-4 / 2010, 水, 墨, 丙烯, 宣纸 | L164cm x H76cm
Zone (5) / 2011 / Ink, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / 165cm x 152.5cm

界 (5) / 2011, 水、墨、丙烯, 宣纸 / L165cm x H152.5cm
Zone (3) / 2010 / Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L58” x H61.5”
界 (3) / 2011 / 水, 墨, 丙烯, 宣纸 / Line L147cm x H156cm

Two Sides of Line / 2010 / Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L54” x H54”
线的两边 / 2010, 水, 墨, 丙烯, 宣纸 / Line L137cm x H137cm
Dissolved Form / 2010 / Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L71" x H77"
溶解的体形 / 2010,水, 墨, 丙烯, 宣纸 / L180cm x H195cm
Up: Stained No.2 / 2009 / Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L220.5” x H56.5”
墨迹系列 No.2 / 2009,水,墨,丙烯,宣纸 / L560cm x H144cm

Below: Cannibalism of The Praying / 2009 / Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L112” x H34”
食肉者的祈祷 / 2009,水,墨,丙烯,宣纸 / L284cm x H86cm
Raw / 2010 / Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L65” x H80.5”
露骨 / 2010，水，墨，丙烯，宣纸 / L162.5cm x H153.5 cm
Stained No. 3

2009

Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper

L65" x H30"

墨迹系列No.3

2009

水, 墨, 混合, 宣纸

L164cm x H76cm
Stained No. 4 / 2009 / Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L145" x H88"

墨迹系列 No.4 / 2009, 水, 墨, 丙烯, 宣纸 / L368cm x H223.5cm
Stained No.5 / 2009 / Ink, Wash, Acrylic; Xuan Paper / L111" x H145"

墨迹系列 No.5 / 2009,水,墨,丙烯,宣纸 / L280.7cm x H367cm
Untitled / 2009 / Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L64" x H60"  
无题 / 2009, 水, 墨, 丙烯, 宣纸 / L163cm x H152.4cm

Untitled / 2010 / Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L64" x H60"  
无题 / 2010, 水, 墨, 丙烯, 宣纸 / L162.6cm x H152cm
The Dimension of Ink No.4 / 2009, Ink, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L96” x H60”

墨道系列No.4 / 2009,水,墨,丙烯,宣纸 / L244cm x 153cm
Matrix No.2 / 2008 / Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L66" x H52"
寄生物系列 No.2 / 2008,水,墨,丙烯,宣纸 / L66cm x H52cm

Formless No.2 / 2008 / Ink, Wash, Acrylic, Xuan Paper / L32" x H26"
无形 No.2 / 2008,水,墨,丙烯,宣纸 / L66cm x H81cm
ZHENG CHONGBIN


EDUCATION
1991  M. F. A. San Francisco Art Institute
1984  B. F. A. Chinese Painting Department, Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts (now China Academy of Fine Arts), Hangzhou, China

AWARDS & HONORS
2008–10  Rising Forest (site-specific installation), Marina Bay Sands Integrated Resort, Singapore, Moshe Safdie Associates
1989/91  First International Fellowship, San Francisco Art Institute

TEACHING
1984/88  Chinese Painting Department, Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts (now China Academy of Fine Arts), Hangzhou, China

SOLO EXHIBITIONS
2011  Untitled  Flo Peter Gallery, Hamburg, Germany
       White Ink  Fresharp, Chinese Culture Foundation, San Francisco
       Ink-Query Ooi Botos Gallery, Hong Kong
       Obtrusive/Intrusive Haines Gallery, San Francisco, CA
       Emergent, Valentine Willie Fine Arts, Singapore
2005  Michael Martin Gallery, San Francisco
1997  East Meets East in the West (Brush Painting), Limm Gallery, San Francisco
1990  Humanism in The Art (Painting and Mixed Media Installations), Montgomery Gallery, San Francisco
1989  Introduction Show, Bruce Velick Gallery, San Francisco
       New Stone Color Ink Paintings, Riskin–Snow Gallery, San Francisco
1988  Chongbin Zheng, Paintings, Mixed Media Installation, Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS
2011  Qi Yun Sheng Dong Contrast Gallery, Shanghai
2010  Inauguration of the exhibition of Zendai Contemporary Art Exhibition Hall, Shanghai, China

BIBLIOGRAPHY
郑重宾

1961 出生于中国上海，现居美国加利福尼亚和上海。职业艺术家。

学历
1980-1984 畢業於中國美術學院中國画系/BFA
1989-1991 舊金山藝術学院國際學者獎/MFA

获奖
1989 獲舊金山藝術學院國際學者獎/San Francisco Art Institute
2008 上升-永久公共艺术装置。新加坡金沙集团/摩西·沙芙迪建筑设计协会（美国）

教历
0984-88 任教於中國美術學院國畫系

展览/个览
2011 无题-佛罗.彼的画廊/汉堡
2011 白墨-中华文化基金会文化中心/舊金山
2011 墨问-俄伊普多画廊/香港
2011 强势与含蓄-汉斯画廊/舊金山
2010 浮现-郑重宾水墨,装置个展/瓦倫丁美术館/新加坡
2006 水墨畫展-麥可·馬丁畫廊/舊金山
2001 水墨畫展-麥可·馬丁畫廊/舊金山
1997 當代水墨畫展-稀樹 Ciudad/舊金山
1990 人文与藝術-蒙哥馬利畫廊/舊金山
1989 墨-布魯斯·凡立克畫廊/舊金山
1988 鄭重賓抽象水墨个展/上海美術館/上海

群览
2011 气韵生动-对比窗画廊/上海
2010 当代水墨-麥可·馬丁畫廊/舊金山
2008 水墨学术展-中国国家画院 (北京)
2008 2008 釜山国际现代水墨艺术展(韩国)
2008 当代水墨展-明圆藝術中心(上海)
2004 水墨符碼-台北第三屆2010當代水墨雙年展/台灣
2002 水墨魚-中國美術館/東京
2001 對話-麥可·馬丁畫廊(達拉斯)
1999 抽像水墨畫展-舊金山中國文化藝術中心(舊金山)
1996 米/螺/鴿-裝置展-馬立帝安畫廊(舊金山)
1995 感知/體現/定位-康可的藝術中心(康可的)
1994 文化定位与移民-奧立佛藝術中心.CCAC(奧克蘭)
1993 在文字的背後-聖荷西現代藝術中心(聖荷西)
1992 物的形而上-斯蔕文·華爾茲畫廊(舊金山)
1991 沉默-裝置展-吉亞畫廊(舊金山)
1990 中國水墨畫展-德國漢堡藝術学院
1988 現代中國繪畫展-大阪藝術館