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Press Release

May 2012

Ink

The Art of China

at the Saatchi Gallery 19 June - 5 July 2012



Xu Lei, *Tree of Blue Underglaze*, 2008, Ink and color on xuan paper, (213 x 125 cm)

Ink is an exhibition featuring the finest examples of contemporary Chinese Ink Art at London's landmark **Saatchi Gallery**. The exhibition, curated by Michael Goedhuis, is the first comprehensive display of this genre to be shown in a public gallery of international standing and draws together major examples from distinguished collections around the world. Timed to coincide with London in June when art and antique collectors from all over the world descend on the capital, this cutting-edge show will feature ground-breaking artists from the

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internationally recognized Xu Lei to the avant-garde Qiu Anxiong. **Ink** will run from Tuesday 19 June to Thursday 5 July 2012 at the Saatchi Gallery, Duke of York's Square, London, SW3 4SQ.

The New Ink Art is perhaps the boldest pictorial experiment in Chinese culture today. Artists trained in, and deeply knowledgeable of classical painting, are meeting the challenge of creating a pictorial language that is a convincing expression of the world of TODAY and in particular the transformed world of China. It is the theme of this exhibition to define just how audacious and innovative the best of these artists are, despite, or perhaps because of, their deep study of the past. Just as Cezanne and Picasso assimilated the work of Poussin and Velazquez and other Old Masters in order to develop their own revolutionary language, so the ink artists are grappling with the same challenge – how to express the transformation of their society with works that are meaningful precisely because they take account of the past in order to make sense of the present.

Michael Goedhuis, who was the first dealer in the west to recognize the significance of these radical innovations in Chinese culture, has concentrated in the past eighteen months on identifying for this exhibition the artists who are in the process of shifting the axis of Chinese aesthetics. It is for this reason that informed art-lovers and collectors and indeed the public at large will be drawn to the Saatchi Gallery for this culturally ground-breaking initiative. Although this exhibition is a loan show and works will therefore not be for sale, it is significant that the price range for the best of contemporary ink paintings is still very accessible by international standards.

A highlight of the exhibition is *Tree of Blue Underglaze* by the internationally established artist **Xu Lei** who last year was the chosen artist for the design of the 2008 vintage Chateau Mouton Rothschild wine label. Inspired by the significance of the year 2008 for the Chinese and to highlight Mouton's stature in the Chinese wine market, Baroness de Rothschild selected a Chinese artist. Xu Lei himself is one of China's foremost painters and a leader in the innovative field of ink painting; he serves as the art director of the Today Art Museum in Beijing and is the editor-in-chief of the magazine 'Classics'.

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Qiu Jie, *Mao in the Cotton Field* , 2007, pencil on paper, (150 x 168 cm)

Other works of note include **Gao Xingjian** represented by the painting *Dream Mountain (La Montagne de Rêve)*, who was born in Ganzhou, Jiangxi Province in 1940. A writer, translator and dramatist he moved to Paris in the 1980s as a political refugee. Here he immersed himself in nature creating semi- abstracted landscapes, believing that art should not be used for political activism, but instead should be an expression of the soul. He received the Nobel Prize for literature in 2000. **Qiu Jie**, who was born in Shanghai in 1960, grew up during the most violent phase of the Cultural Revolution and by the age of 10 was nurturing his talent making copies of propaganda images from local newspapers. He creates images blending stark themes from the Cultural Revolution with striking elements from contemporary culture (see illustration).

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Artists to be exhibited include:

Gao Xingjian (高行建), Gu Wenda (谷文达), Henri Chen KeZhan (陈克湛), Li Huayi (李华弋), Li Jin (李津), Liu Dan (刘丹), Liu Kuo-sung (刘国松), Liu Qinghe (刘庆和), Liu Wei (刘伟), Lo Ch'ing (罗青), Lu Hao (卢昊), Qin Feng (秦风), Qiu Anxiong (邱黯雄), Qiu Deshu (仇德树), Qiu Jie (邱节), Qiu Zhijie (邱志杰), Wang Dongling (王冬龄), Wei Ligang (魏立刚), Wilson Shieh (石家豪), Wu Yi (武艺), Xu Bing (徐冰), Xu Lei (徐累), Yang Jiechang (杨诒苍), Yang Yanping (杨燕屏), Yao Jui-chung (姚瑞中), Zeng Shanqing (曾善庆) and Zeng Xiaojun (曾小俊).

Contributors to the catalogue are:

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