

Press release – for immediate release

MIND AND COMPREHENSION – Exhibition of Li Lei Abstract Paintings

Press Release

The kind of painting one creates depends on the “heart” of the creator. “Heart” in this sense, is akin to “Comprehension”; both the conscious and subconscious comprehension and awareness of a multitude of sensory inputs. The “heart” has the same foundation and is the source of paintings, and paintings are the materialized presentation of the “heart”. Paintings preserve the “heart” within, waiting to be discovered by its viewer.

Li Lei 2006

MIND AND COMPREHENSION - Exhibition of Li Lei Abstract Paintings will be unveiled in Longmen Art Projects in Shanghai's Sinan Mansions on March 9, 2013. This exhibition will feature ten of Li Lei's latest works and twelve pastel sketches executed in 2012, including “Among Clouds and Water” series, “As the Wind Blows the Clouds, the Sky is Full of Flowers”, “The Dark Wind Urges the Red Sleeve of Xiang Ning” and “Guan Shan is Unfamiliar with the One in the Clouds”. We have also retrospectively selected 10 of Li lei's magnum opus between 2006-2011 such as “Wild Water”, “Dancing Flowers” and “The Seventh Sky”. The exhibition gathers the top abstract works by Li Lei since 2006 and leads the audience into a world of pure and poetic abstraction.



Li Lei
*As the Wind Blows the Clouds
the Sky is full of Flowers*
Acrylic on Canvas
150x100cm 2012



Li Lei
Wild Water No.03
Acrylic on Canvas
250x180cm 2009



Li Lei
Opusculum Sketch 1-4
Pastel on Paper
40x55cm(x4) 2012

Li Lei, born in 1965 in Shanghai, is the current Executive Curator of Shanghai Art Museum. As a former art major, no matter how busy his schedule is in the office, he never abandoned his artistic pursuits.

MIND AND COMPREHENSION - Exhibition of Li Lei Abstract Paintings will capture and convey his artistic ideology:

The kind of painting one creates depends on the “heart” of the creator. “Heart” in this sense, is akin to “Comprehension”; both the conscious and subconscious comprehension and awareness of a multitude of sensory inputs. The “heart” has the same foundation and is the source of paintings, and paintings are the materialized presentation of the “heart”. Paintings preserve the “heart” within, waiting to be discovered by its viewer.

As a descendent of “educated urban youth” who left Shanghai to the northwest of China, Li Lei’s childhood memories are full of thick and yellow earth where even the river looked yellowish, running wearily into the distance. To ease his adolescent anxiety and anguish, Li Lei’s mother, a doctor, used to take him to the riverside on the plain to gather herbs and taught him how to identify plants by their roots, stems, flowers, and seeds, through which she hoped to flavor his monotonous childhood and allow him to learn to appreciate the beautiful, sensitive and gentle side of mother nature. Besides, the elegance of ancient Majiayao Civilization and primitive, unsophisticated yet mysterious ancient legends also played an important role in nourishing his mind back then. He developed a personal attachment to that vast land which had effected on both his life and artistic creation. “The geographical features and colors of China’s northwest and ancient cultural symbols related to life have provided continuous motivation for Li Lei to devote himself to painting in his own unique way”, said renowned art critic Xu Hong.



Li Lei
I, Acting as the Sun-bird
Silk Screen
34x50cm 1986



Li Lei
Hell Change
Silk Screen
60x70cm 1987



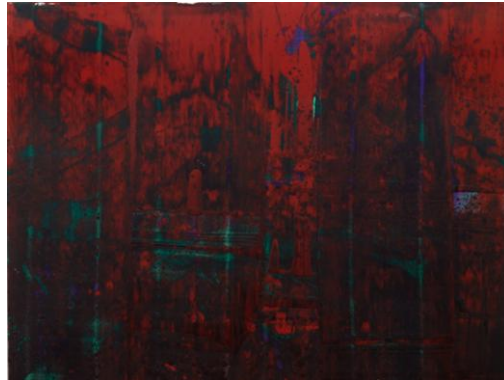
Li Lei
I Love Little Birds01
Oil on Board
45x34cm 1991

In 1978, Li Lei returned to Shanghai. He was a sensitive and introspective child. To adapt to his new life in a strange city, he tried to channel his anxiety into studying art. In the mid 1980s, “The 1985 Modern Art Movement” swept through Chinese art scene. With excitement, Li Lei went to art lectures, read tons of books about philosophy, psychology, cultural anthropology, and religion and followed all kinds of big events. He started to create self-narrative oil paintings such as “I, Acting as the Sun-Bird”(1986) and “Hell Change” (1989) which bear the same simple, sincere, and honest qualities of the artist. In the early 1990s, Li Lei unexpectedly took his oil painting into a more lively direction while vitality began to well up at all levels in the Chinese art community. He continued with self-narrative painting with new context to present actual personal experience in his life, such as “I Love Little Bird” (1991).

It was 1996 when Li Lei started to explore the field of abstract art and made the expression of individual non-figurative characteristics. Gradually he abandoned common shapes of objects and expressed inner feelings in abstract techniques and forms. He kept changing his way of presentation yet never ceased to reference his past experience.



Li Lei
*Peach Blossom Revelling
Last Night*
Acrylic on Canvas
150x100cm 2006



Li Lei
The Seventh Sky No.10
Acrylic on Canvas
180x240cm 2008



Li Lei
Wild Water No.04
Acrylic on Canvas
250x180cm 2009

In 2000, Shanghai abstract artists had formed a unique cultural phenomenon of this city. "Every artist, especially an abstract artist, is an integral and independent world himself. While probing into abstract art, people will find that the key is to keep on the free thinking spirit and express our inner world." Said famous art critic Gong Yunbiao, "China doesn't have a tradition of abstract art. All we have is reference, and that's exactly why China's abstract art is more innovative."

Now Li Lei is coming to a better understanding of so-called Chinese abstract art. Almost all Chinese abstract artists went through long tough journeys before they accomplished the transformation from concrete to abstract, so did Li Lei. "Abstract painting is a result of the artist's internal needs, a way to share the artist's personal life experience and explore mysteries of the inner world." Once he said, "I infuse my understanding of traditional Chinese culture into painting. I think in an oriental way. I have also borrowed some Eastern philosophical conceptions and art forms in creation, such as the idea that opposing elements mutually reinforce and interact with each other. Black and white, entity and emptiness for instance."



Li Lei
Amongst Clouds and Water No.16
Long Night in Autumn with Flute Playing
Acrylic on Canvas
80x100cm 2012



Li Lei
Amongst Clouds and Water No.09
Heady Flowers
Acrylic on Canvas
80x100cm 2012



Li Lei
*The Dark Wind Urges the
Red Sleeve of Xiang Ning*
Acrylic on Canvas
80x100cm 2012

In the midst of busy office work, Li Lei can always retreat to studio, his spiritual Shangri-La and secret garden where he can indulge himself in melodious classical music, colors and canvases, meditate on Buddha's word about time and life. He paints his realization about how short life is and how things change, from blossoming to withering, between cloud and water. Inspired by ideas of great masters as well as his mentors such as Zao Wou-ki, Mark Rothko, Pierre Soulages, Gerhard Richter, Li Lei created "Dhyana Flower", "Recalling Jiang Nan" "Intoxicated Lake" and "Shanghai Flower". Meanwhile he is still pondering, hoping to find a way out between the Chinese cultural essence and mature international abstract language for contemporary Chinese abstract art.

Eastern and western art are fundamentally the same, but we shouldn't refer to western art history when criticizing Chinese abstract art. My art originates from deep within my heart, and I utilize many different means of expression in order to fully and accurately express my inner thoughts and emotions; some are passed down from tradition, and some are learned from the west. Some are discovered on my own. If I can make use of it, then it is good; there's no need to place a label on it.

- Li Lei

MIND AND COMPREHENSION - Exhibition of Li Lei Abstract Paintings

Exhibition	March 9 - May 5, 2013 10:00am – 6:30pm
Venue	Longmen Art Projects
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