



9th JULY: PRESS PREVIEW 11:00 a.m. and OPENING 7:00 p.m.

with Birdhead, Chen Shaoxiong, Ding Yi, Guo Hongwei, He Xiangyu, Kan Xuan, Lee Kit, Li Huasheng, Li Shurui, Liao Guohe, Lin Ke, Qiu Zhijie, Su Xiaobai, Tang Dixin, Wang Gongxin, Wu Chi-Tsung, Xu Zhen, Yan Pei-Ming, Zhang Enli, Zhao Zhao.

Jing Shen. The act of painting in contemporary China explores – from an innovative point of view – the emergence of themes and methods that are typical of classical Chinese art in the work of twenty artists from three different generations.

Open from 10th July to 6th September, it is the first exhibition designed and curated by the PAC Curatorial Board¹ for Expo 2015 and is part of Expo in Città, the schedule of cultural events planned by Comune di Milano for the six-month period of the Universal Exposition.

Promoted by Comune di Milano - Culture, *Jing Shen* is produced by PAC Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea and by Silvana Editoriale in cooperation with the Aurora Museum of Shanghai.

By entering into a dialogue with the mission of Expo, the exhibition deals with the topic of 'intellectual nourishment', exploring the way in which contemporary creativity feeds on a cultural and artistic heritage.

The exhibition expands beyond the spaces of PAC with two special projects at the **Soglia Magica**, which links Malpensa airport with its railway station, and at the new exhibition space of **Feltrinelli Duomo** at Galleria Vittorio Emanuele in Milan.

Moreover, thanks to the cooperation with the cutting-edge start-up Bepart – the Public Imagination Movement – *Jing Shen* will be **the first exhibition** on display in several points throughout the city, though **augmented reality**.

Together with the Istituto Confucio of the Università Statale di Milano, main partner in the project, the PAC will develop a **series of activities** to introduce grown up visitors and families to Chinese art and culture; from workshops on calligraphy to those on the art of cutting paper, from morning events devoted to *taiji quan* to those focussing on food preparation rituals.

In Chinese culture, painting holds an exceptional position. One need look no further than the fact that, in China, writing is painting. And vice versa. For artists, critics, curators, collectors and the audience, painting is and has always been a privileged device to reflect on and understand the world and art. It is a means that still gives rise – with well-thought awareness – to broad and deeply meaningful reflections and outcomes.

¹ The PAC Curatorial Board – directed by Domenico Piraina, Director of the Polo Mostre e Musei Scientifici – is formed by Defne Ayas (director of the Witte de With - Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam), Ilaria Bonacossa (director of the Museo di Villa Croce, Genoa), Davide Quadrio (director of Arthub Asia, Shanghai), Diego Sileo (PAC conservator) and Massimo Torrigiani (director of the new centre for contemporary arts of Bari), who coordinate the work.

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Its influence is such pervasive that it emerges and makes itself visible not only on canvas or paper, but also in installations, performances, sculptures, videos and digital works. Therefore, *Jing Shen – The act of painting in contemporary China* is not – or not only – an exhibition of paintings, but rather an exhibition on the relationship of painting with other media; on its fundamental role within a cultural universe.

The curators' view on the exhibition – the originality of its approach – entails going beyond the interpretation according to which Chinese contemporary art is a reflection of its Western counterpart – and origin. *Jing Shen* argues that classical Chinese art – not only painting, but also ceramics and woodblock printing, for instance – already contains the ingredients and nutrients of thoughts, attitudes and shapes that represent the richness of contemporary Chinese art. The dialogue with the West and with other worlds (let us not forget our marginality within the cultural geography of China) enriches this osmosis between the past and the present, this continuity – which is sometimes difficult – but never replaces it.

'Jing Shen' means 'awareness of the gesture', but also 'inner strength'. It refers to the moment preceding the pictorial act in classical painting – also of Buddhist or Taoist tradition. It is the climax of a preliminary work that occurs before facing the creation of an image. An idea and a practice that emphasise a well-thought search for awareness and its active outcome: the gesture, the act of painting.

A 'proactive' painting, which finds its original means in the liquidity of ink and in calligraphy, whose traces surface in the most diverse ways in the selection of works and artists on display at PAC. For instance, from the way in which pictorial works are created with the help of fate and everyday life influences (Lee Kit); to the paintings' rejection to become static, maintaining their features as images of movement (Li Shurui); to obsessive reiteration as a supreme form of change (Ding Yi); to its becoming instinctive, mimetic and spatial (Zhang Enli). All of this is the counterpoint of a Western painting that has always been more solemn and iconographical.

Jing Shen also wants to suggest to what extent art and the Western avant-gardes of the second post-war period have been influenced by this artistic culture, by ink painting and calligraphy, and by their underlying philosophies: from Hartung to Pollock, to Cage, to Burri, to Boetti.

And it wants to think of art as a whole, as the outcome of an exchange and continuous influence over time and space, where the rules of interpretation can only be errant, adaptable and provisional.

In this sense, *Jing Shen – The act of painting in contemporary China* becomes part of the programme launched by the PAC in January 2014, with the assignment to its new Curatorial Board, which is currently at its third exhibition, with a view to exploring the main trends of current art in connection with the cultural specificities of Milan.

In this city, from the avant-garde movements of the early 20th century on, the boundaries between visual arts and other media – architecture, performing arts, design, publishing, literature, fashion, music, poetry, advertisement – have always been redefined and scientifically called into question, from Marinetti to Munari to Sottsass to Cattelan. A tendency that also arises from the openness of Milan in accepting other cultures while preserving its own one, which considers and practises thinking and doing as two parts of the same process: learning by doing.



Milan and PAC are therefore influential points of reference for the movements that are changing the global artistic environment. The relationships between past and present, individual and collective, high and low, artistic and industrial, original and copy are radically reconfiguring, often ambiguously and contradictorily, following new and unexpected paths. Contemporary art is a privileged area to produce and observe these changes.

The catalogue of the exhibition (144 colour pages), edited by Davide Quadrio and Massimo Torrigiani, members of the PAC Curatorial Board, is designed by Tommaso Garner and published by Silvana Editoriale. Within a single three-language edition – Italian, English and Chinese – it presents the papers by scholar Britta Erickson, by scholar and curator Venus Lau and by Quadrio and Torrigiani themselves.

A special section of the book collects 20th-century works and aims at defining the theme of the gesture, by emphasising the main issues of the exhibition and analysing its themes in the developments of Chinese modernism and its ambiguous – and ambivalent – relationships with Western art.

The exhibition is supported by TOD'S, sponsor of the PAC's exhibition activity, with the contribution of Alcantara and with the support of Vulcano.

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