

Aug 12, 2017

Wang Dongling: The Bamboo Path

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Dates Aug 12 – Nov 12, 2017
 Venue Exhibition Hall A and B, OCAT Shenzhen
 Curator Wu Hung

Organizer
 Supported by



深圳市南山区恩平街
 华侨城创意园F2栋
 F2, OCT Loft, Enping Street
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开放时间 Opening hours:
 每日 10:00–17:30 daily
 逢周一闭馆 Mondays closed

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OCAT Shenzhen is pleased to present the solo exhibition “Wang Dongling: The Bamboo Path”, curated by Prof. Wu Hung, the renowned art historian, curator, and fellow at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences; the exhibition will be presented in Hall A and Hall B of OCAT Shenzhen and will run from August 12 to November 12, 2017. The works presented in this exhibition are specially created by Wang Dongling, and expand from the artist’s long-running explorations and creative directions in his persistent calligraphic practice. By fusing the three visual tropes (yixiang) of “calligraphy/writing” [shu], “bamboo” (zhu), and “voyage” (you), the audience is repositioned within a hazy field of affect, with the artist thereby endeavoring to bump up against the limits of memory and history, environment and site, medium and symbols, images and installations.

To take writing with the “bamboo radical” as an example: bamboo, as the image of a medium of cultural transmission, has touched on sundry fields in society and life from the time writing first emerged. The use of jiandu (bamboo slips, the main medium for textual documents in ancient China) can be traced from the Western Zhou dynasty (c. 1046–771 BC) all the way to approximately 400 AD, when—due to limitations in their effectiveness—bamboo slips were replaced by paper, already in wide use by then. At the turn of the 19th and 20th century, “calligraphy” (shu, which can also signify “writing” or even “books”), which was once favored by the Chinese literati, gradually lost its practical significance with the spread eastwards of “Western knowledge” (xixue dongjian). Precisely due to the loss of bamboo slips and brush-writing in terms of their forms and discernment thereof, the artistic potential of both can thus be excavated.

This exhibition will take up Hall A & Hall B at OCAT Shenzhen. Hall A will present “bamboo poems” (zhushi) by famous poets throughout history. Wang Dongling wrote these on 201 bamboo stems, along with the calligraphy of “Chaos Script” which he executed on transparent acrylic. With the medium of writing manifested in the original form and with the ink-calligraphic symbols scattered throughout the

space, there is here an attempt to unite the traditional and the contemporary. The bamboo path is both a scene of creation and the content depicted. With its distinctive, invasive visual impact, the bamboo installation collides with people’s cognitive experience of calligraphy, triggering reflections on the limits of things as well as the definitions of “things” and the “self”; its presence (anwesenheit) is thus manifest. Calligraphically writing “bamboo” on bamboo is a realization of the “meta-picture”; as Giorgio Agamben has said, “It must first of all say language itself.” The texts floating on the transparent acrylic along with the famous sayings rendering “bamboo” on the bamboo slips converge and overlap in the exhibition space; as the paper disappears, the content loses its significance in the space, only leaving behind visual impressions veiled in black and active sensations triggered by the installation views. In Hall B, Wang Dongling’s jottings (xiaogao) of ink abstraction will be presented for the first time along with a video documenting the artist writing calligraphy on bamboo in Hangzhou. Moreover, the artist will specially create for one wall in the hall a magnificent large-scale work of “Chaos Script” calligraphy (luanshu) measuring 8.4 x 5.5 m, on which he writes poems by Ji Kang and Ruan Ji (of the Seven Sages in the Bamboo Grove).

Over the course of the exhibition, there will also be numerous events connected to the exhibition, such as an on-site calligraphic performance by the artist on the opening day, as well as discussions, lectures, and workshops throughout the duration of the exhibition. Participants will include Shen Yubing, Han Bi, Johnson Chang, Yan Shanchun, among others.

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About the curator

Wu Hung, a permanent member of the American Academy of Art and Science, is a famous art historian, critic, and curator. Currently he holds the Harrie A. Vanderstappen Distinguished Service Professorship at the Department of Art History and the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago, and is also the director of the Center for the Art of East Asia and the Consulting Curator at the Smart Museum at the same university. He sits on many international committees including Guggenheim Museum's Asian Art Council, and chairs the Academic Committees of OCT Contemporary Art Terminal and Yuz Museum. Wu Hung's research interests include both traditional and contemporary art. Regarding contemporary art, he has curated many exhibitions since the 1980s, including individual artists' one-person shows, thematic group exhibitions, and biennales and triennials. In addition to the catalogues that he compiled for these exhibitions, he has published many influential books and anthologies, including *Making History: Wu Hung on Contemporary Art* (2008), *Wu Hung on Contemporary Chinese Artists* (2009), *Contemporary Chinese Art: Primary Documents* (2010), and *Contemporary Chinese Art: A History* (2014).

About the artist

Wang Dongling is a calligrapher and an artist. He holds the positions of Professor of Calligraphy at the China Academy of Art, Hangzhou (where he is also a PhD supervisor); Director of the Contemporary Calligraphy Research Centre at the China Academy of Art, Hangzhou; Chairman of the Hangzhou Calligraphers Association; and Chairman of the Lanting Calligraphy Society. He has had over 40 solo exhibitions in China and around the world. He has also been invited to present his artworks of large-scale calligraphy, grass script, and "Chaos script" at numerous museums, including the British Museum, London; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; the Metropolitan Museum, New York; Brooklyn Art Museum, New York; Malmö Art Museum, Malmö, Sweden; Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, Belgium; Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada; Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, Auckland, New Zealand; Istanbul Modern Art Museum, Istanbul, Turkey; Hong Kong Art Museum, Hong Kong; and also in many academic institutions such as Harvard University; Stanford University; University of Minnesota; Muthesius University in Kiel, Germany; and City University of Hong Kong. Wang Dongling's works have been collected by many museums, such as the British Museum, London; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; the Metropolitan Museum, New York; National Library of Canada, Ottawa, Canada; Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada; National Art Museum of China, Beijing; The Palace Museum, Beijing; and by universities such as Harvard University, Yale University, Stanford University, University of California (Berkeley), among others.

His publications include *Zhongguo Shufa Zhuanke Jianshi* (A Brief History of Chinese Calligraphy and Seal Cutting), *Shufa Fanben Jingdian* (Classic Calligraphy Models), *Qingdai Lishu Yaolun* (Essentials of Qing Dynasty Official Script), *Shufa Yishu* (Calligraphic Works), *Zhongguo Yishu Jiaoyu Daxi: Shufa Zhuanke* (Chinese Art Education Encyclopedia: Calligraphy and Seal-Engraving), *Hua Ren Xue Shu Gaishu* (Essentials of Learning Calligraphy for Painters), *Wang Dongling Shuhuaji* (Collected Works by Wang Dongling), *Wang Dongling Shufa Yishu* (The Calligraphic Works of Wang Dongling), *Shufa Dao—Wang Dongling Shufa Yishu* (The Way of Calligraphy—Wang Dongling's Work), *Wang Dongling—Hei Bai Zhi Shang* (Wang Dongling: The Ultimate Black and White), *Wang Dongling Tan Xiandai Shufa* (Wang Dongling's Comments on Modern Calligraphy), *Wang Dongling Chuangzuo Shouji* (Wang Dongling's Creation Notes), and *Wang Dongling Tan Mingzuo Mingjia* (Wang Dongling's Comments on Famous Calligraphers and Works). Wang Dongling has also curated a number of exhibitions, including the "Modern Calligraphy Exploration Exhibition", National Art Museum of China, Beijing (1994); "International Modern Calligraphy Biennial", Hangzhou (1995); "Word Is Not Word: The Open Calligraphy Space", International Modern Calligraphy Exhibition, Hangzhou (2005); "Word Is Not Word", International Modern Calligraphy Exhibition (2010); "Word Is Not Word", International Modern Calligraphy Exhibition and Archival Exhibition of "Word Is Not Word", Hangzhou (2015).

About OCAT Shenzhen

OCAT Shenzhen was founded in 2005 and functions as the headquarters of the OCAT Museums. As the first art establishment among the OCAT museums, OCAT Shenzhen has a long-term commitment to the practice and research in the field of contemporary art and theory both inside of China and in the international arena.