

# ULLENS CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART 尤伦斯当代艺术中心

## JENNIFER WEN MA'S HANGING GARDEN IN INK AT UCCA

April 14, 2012. Beijing, China

New commission continues the artist's ongoing investigation into the contemporary possibilities of an ancient medium.

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### Media/UCCA Members/VIP Preview:

April 14

### Exhibition dates:

April 15 – May 27, 2012

UCCA is proud to present a major new work by the artist Jennifer Wen Ma. "Hanging Garden in Ink" is a tableau vivant of live plants painted intensely black with Chinese ink. Suspended in The Nave, a transversal, semi-public space where UCCA typically presents new site-specific commissions, the piece is scaled at twenty meters long, three meters wide and eight meters high. Abundantly alive with plants and trees, the lower half of the tableau consists of plants that mirror the top half of the installation, creating the effect of a garden reflected on water, or a three-dimensional Rorschach test drawing.

Jennifer Wen Ma's work references the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Legend holds that King Nebuchadnezzar II created the garden on the walls of his palace as a gift for his wife, who longed for the green mountains of her homeland. "The work is a meditation on the illusion of material wealth, declarations of love, and the power of nature and myth, among other things," the artist has noted.

The installation is also an extension of the Beijing-born, New York-based artist's exploration of a contemporary approach to *mo*, Chinese ink, an organic material that has been the main medium of expression and communication for centuries in East Asia. It embodies all colors, emulates all forms, and gives meaning to brush strokes and aesthetic achievements. Concurrently, black is the absence of all colors of light, or an exhaustive combination of multiple colors of pigment. It is a powerful symbol of void and



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muteness.

Black ink dominates the artistic vocabulary of this work. Rather than painting a landscape on paper, Ma applies the ink directly to the plants in three-dimensional space. Time then acts as the fourth dimension, altering the work over the course of its viewing period. The plants give evidence of the perseverance and resilience of life throughout the exhibition period by continuing to grow, showing tender green shoots through the black. The plants' growth refers both conceptually and formally to the significant "time" component in the Chinese ink painting practice. Here, Ma poetically transcends the traditional legacy of ink, weaving poignantly between history, art, and culture.

The programs in conjunction with the exhibition will include an artist talk on April 22 as part of the smart Artists' Talks series. On the same day, Ma will lead an interactive children's workshop focusing on the essential qualities of organic materials and traditional mediums. UCCASTORE will also feature a series of collaborations designed with the New York-based fashion line EKO-LAB.

## Related Programs

### Art Discoveries at UCCA Series: Making Garden Mobiles with Sierra Forest

Time: Sunday, April 21, 10.30-11.30  
Venue: UCCA Salon  
Teacher: Sierra Forest  
Language: English with Chinese translation

### Children's Art Workshop: Imagining Chinese Ink

Time: Sunday, April 22, 10:00-11:30  
Venue: UCCA Salon  
Guest: Jennifer Wen Ma  
Language: Chinese with English translation

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## smart Artists' Talk Series: Jennifer Wen Ma and Her Art Works

Time: Sunday, April 22, 13.30-15.00

Venue: UCCA Auditorium

Guest: Jennifer Wen Ma

Language: Chinese with English translation

### About UCCA

The Ullens Center for Contemporary Art is a not-for-profit art center in Beijing, located at the heart of the 798 Art District. As a platform for contemporary art linking China and the world, UCCA offers around 15 exhibitions a year and over 500 public programmes including art talks, film screenings, performances, workshops and public festivals. The international center maintains a special focus on recent developments and historical movements in Chinese contemporary culture, showcasing the latest in art and design and fostering international exchange.

[www.ucca.org.cn](http://www.ucca.org.cn)

### About Jennifer Wen Ma

Jennifer Wen Ma was born in 1973 in Beijing, China, moved to the United States in 1986, and received her master's degree in fine art in 1999 from Pratt Institute, New York. Ma works in varied media including installation, video, drawing, fashion design, performance, and public art. She has participated in numerous exhibitions internationally.

Some of her recent projects and exhibitions include: *Lingua Franca* for the St. Moritz Art Masters; solo exhibitions at Eslite Gallery, Taipei and Art Space NIJI in Kyoto, Japan; artistic direction for The Republic of China Centennial Grand Countdown, Taipei; two projects for the 2010 Sydney Biennale; a solo exhibition at The Phillips Collection in Washington DC; the 2009 Echigo-Tsumari Triennial; a commissioned video installation for Guggenheim Bilbao, 2009 and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2008; and a permanent public artwork for the Digital Beijing Building.

Ma was a member of the seven-member core creative team for the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, and its chief designer for visual and special effects. Additionally, as the main liaison with the international broadcast teams, she won an Emmy for the U.S. broadcast of the ceremony.