



Ullens Center for
Contemporary Art
尤伦斯当代艺术中心

Wang Xingwei

UCCA retrospective celebrates the work of one of China's most important painters.

Editorial Contacts:

Amanda Halliday, UCCA
+86 10 5780 0243
+86 159 1062 0664
amanda.halliday@ucca.org.cn

Jade Ouk, Sutton PR Asia
+852 2528 0792
jade@suttonprasia.com

Exhibition Dates:
May 19 – August 18

Exhibition Venue:
Great Hall, UCCA

Curator:
Philip Tinari

Press material also available for
download from the UCCA website

On May 18 the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art will present "Wang Xingwei," the first mid career survey of the leading Chinese painter. Running through August 18, 2013, the exhibition will feature a grouping of paintings which highlight Wang's career from 1993 to the present, illustrating both the depth of his painterly talent and the breadth of his explorations over the past two decades. The exhibition is organized by UCCA director Philip Tinari in close collaboration with the artist, and will span the entirety of the UCCA's iconic Great Hall, the first time this space has ever been given over to a solo retrospective devoted strictly to painting. This is Wang Xingwei's first major institutional exhibition, and the accompanying catalogue is his most comprehensive monograph to date.

Since the early 1990s, Wang Xingwei (b. 1969, Shenyang; lives and works in Beijing) has pioneered a painterly vision that links Chinese contemporary art intelligently to its Western referents, socialist realist precedents, and immediate cultural context through a universe of recurring characters rendered in seemingly infinite subtle variations of style and composition. Wang is reflexive about the visual language he has inherited, but relentlessly inventive in its deployment. An artist known for his quirky sensibility and sharp wit, Wang freely appropriates style and content from different traditions, employing them in highly creative and dramatic scenarios.

Comprising 74 works, the exhibition features a maze-like, non-chronological layout in which the space is subdivided into three major sections based on the relationship of the painter or viewer to the figure depicted: rear views, profiles, and frontal views. This logic paradoxically also serves to group the works thematically and serially. Most of the works on view have been borrowed back from private collections in Europe and throughout China, and have never before been seen together.

"Wang Xingwei" represents the culmination of a long collaboration between UCCA and the artist. One of the original artists to enter the collection of the Fondation Guy & Myriam Ullens, Wang worked last year on the final episode in UCCA's "Curated By..." series, producing an



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exhibition of seven young painters whose work explored similar themes to his own. Wang also has a painting on view in the concurrent exhibition "DUCHAMP and/or/in CHINA," which positions one of Wang's artistic heroes in relation to the Chinese scene.

In bringing together Wang's key achievements of the first two decades of his career, this exhibition will contribute significantly to the reassessment and elevation of a key figure in contemporary Chinese art, who through the complexity of his vision proves the depth and richness of the tradition to which he belongs.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

"I see the artist as a postman, delivering letters. He should not be overly curious about what is inside the envelopes."

Born in an industrial city in northeastern China's Liaoning Province to an ordinary family, Wang Xingwei is an unlikely hero of the Chinese avant-garde. His early training in figurative painting at Shenyang Normal University, a provincial teachers' college, left him alone and isolated in his native city. Growing up amidst the '85 New Wave period, a time when Chinese contemporary art was embracing the foreign and conceptual, Wang was subject to a pedagogy that had not been revised according to these trends. But rather than eschew the formal models offered him by the system, Wang has maintained a critical dialogue with his own history by using the techniques he was trained in to interrogate their own logic. His works thus ask the key question: to what other ends can the apparatus of formerly propagandistic painting be put?

In the two decades of his mature output, Wang Xingwei has created an artistic universe all of his own, where references collide, characters recur, and styles proliferate, articulated in a deliciously skilful range of styles. While still working in Shenyang and Haicheng in Liaoning province, Wang was arguably "discovered" by the late Dutch curator Hans van Dijk in the mid-1990s and quickly fell into the Beijing circle around van Dijk, Ai Weiwei, and their experimental gallery China Art Archives and Warehouse. Wang's early works contain some of the most astute dialogues with Western art history and critiques of the fraught situation of Chinese artists ever produced in China, though he quickly tired of this type of referentiality, which has



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since become a major trend among the younger generation. In the early and mid-2000s, during an extended sojourn in Shanghai, he developed a distinct world of characters and styles, and a painting based on conscious variation and repetition among these. Nurses, golfers, airline stewardesses, penguins, pandas, old ladies, and cartoon lovers appear and disappear, flickering through Wang's painterly consciousness, hiding for years at a time, and reappearing undeterred. Like John Currin or George Condo, Wang Xingwei is deeply proficient in numerous painting styles, borrowing entire regimens of technique as if appropriating readymades. Wang Xingwei has been actively reluctant to narrate his own work. Having produced only two catalogues to date, both of which consciously exclude critical commentary, he proposes to let his paintings speak for themselves.

Wang Xingwei's work has been collected by major private and institutional players including Uli Sigg, Guy and Myriam Ullens, Sammlung Goetz, Lionel Ringier, Cristiane Leister, Qiao Zhibing, the Minsheng Art Museum, and the Rubell Family Collection. Selected group and solo shows include: Biennale d'art Contemporain de Lyon (1997); the *1st Guangzhou Triennial*, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou (2002); Shanghai Biennale (2006); *Large Rowboat*, Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing (2007); *Thirty Years of Chinese Contemporary Art 1979-2009*, Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai (2010); and *The State of Things, Brussels/Beijing*, at the National Art Museum of China, Beijing (2010), curated by Fan Di'an, Ai Weiwei, Luc Tuymans and Philippe Pirotte.

CATALOGUE

A full-length, bilingual (Chinese-English) exhibition catalogue will accompany the exhibition, featuring essays by Philip Tinari, Museum Migros für Gegenwartskunst curator Rafael Gygax, leading Chinese independent curator Zhang Li, and critic Nataline Colonello. Containing extended commentary and reproductions of nearly 100 of Wang's works, it will be by far the most comprehensive publication on the artist to date. *Wang Xingwei* is published by UCCA in collaboration with the Beijing editorial studio Hinabook and the World Book Publishing House. It is designed by the design studio Hinterland, New York, and available from the UCCA bookstore (UCCASTORE @ ART.BOOK).



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UCCA LIMITED EDITIONS

UCCA Limited Editions and Wang Xingwei have collaborated to make a Limited Edition series of prints of the *Old Lady* series that will be available from UCCASTORE to coincide with the exhibition. In this new image, a copperplate print published in an edition of ten, the old lady holds a pair of cats in her arms. The limited edition will debut at Art Basel in Hong Kong the week following the exhibition opening.

EXHIBITION SUPPORT

Major support for this exhibition comes from Qiao Zhibing and Galerie Urs Meile, with additional support from the Fondation Guy & Myriam Ullens. Further support comes from the UCCA Patrons Council. Duvel Moortgat has generously provided support in kind for the exhibition opening. The exhibition is possible only with the generosity of numerous lenders to the exhibition, including Bo Jiguang, Johnson Tsong-Zung Chang, Erlenmeyer Foundation, Guan Yi Contemporary Art Archive, Gu Zhenqing, He Jing Yuan Art Museum, He Juxing, Huang Liaoyuan, M+ Sigg Collection, Urs Meile, Meng Xianghua, Modern Chinese Art Foundation, Peng Pei-Cheng, Qin Qi, Ellen & Michael Ringier, Andrew Ruff, Manuel Salvisberg, Uli Sigg, Taikang Life Insurance Co., Ltd., Tang Contemporary Art Center, Tian Jun, Tian Kai, Yao Chien, Zhang Rui, and Zong Feng.

ABOUT UCCA

The Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA) is a comprehensive, not-for-profit art center serving a global Beijing public. Located at the heart of the 798 Art District, it was founded by collectors Guy and Myriam Ullens and opened in November 2007. Through a wide array of exhibitions and programs, UCCA promotes the development of the local artistic environment, fosters international exchange, and showcases the latest in art, design, and other fields. UCCA's cultural and educational programs bring the public into close contact with cutting-edge thought in art and the humanities, advancing the public cultural sensibility and bringing new experiences to its audience.

798 Art District
No. 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu
Chaoyang District
Beijing, P.R. China 100015
T +86 10 5780 0200
F +86 10 5780 0220
www.ucca.org.cn

北京市朝阳区酒仙桥路4号
798艺术区
邮编100015



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CURRENT AND UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS AT UCCA

- Teppei Kaneuji: "Towering Something," June 27 – August 25
- Tehching Hsieh, June 27 – August 25
- Taryn Simon: "A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters," September 12 – November 10
- Wang Keping, September 12 – November 10
- Tino Sehgal, September 26 – December 8
- Ji Dachun, November 21 – January 9
- Jordan Wolfson x Michael Majerus: "Dropped Pin," November 21 – January 9

The Ullens Center for Contemporary Art is located in the 798 Art District in northeastern Beijing. Museum hours are: Tuesday-Sunday, 10 a.m. - 7 p.m. Closed Monday. General admission: ¥10. Students, seniors over 60, and children below 1.3 meters are free. Admission is free on Thursdays. For general information, call +86 10 5780 0200, email visitor@ucca.org.cn, or visit www.ucca.org.cn.

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