

Permanent Display:  
*Embracing Chaos 1.0*

Artist: XU ZHEN®



Xu Zhen

Untitled

2007

Steel, 4-cm tempered glass, fiberglass, silicone, etc.

296 x 200 x 1012 cm x 2

*Untitled* is an installation of colossal volume that presents a dinosaur halved and placed in two vitrines (10 × 2 × 3 m each). Modelled primarily with sculptural techniques, the enormous dinosaur was stuffed with animal viscera by the artist, who invites the audience to walk through the work. On the opening day of the exhibition, the work suffered water leaks due to issues during production. The artist then defined the damaged work as evidence of an "action", and thereby the work was no longer merely an installation, but came to be concerned with industrial production, collective action, attitude towards the art system, etc. It is also a microcosm of an "emptiness" and the uncertainty regarding value judgment against a background of rapid globalization at the beginning of this century.

In terms of its form, the work refers precisely to the internationally acclaimed contemporary artwork *The Shark* (as well as *Mother and Child Divided*) by Damien Hirst. If the British artist has redefined contemporary art by displaying animal specimens preserved in formaldehyde, then it is not unfair to say that the pastiche by XU Zhen, who follows Hirst's visual presentation faithfully, serves as a retort of the original work that has left a mark in art history.



XU ZHEN®  
New – Laocoön  
2019  
Resin, paint  
370 x 310 x 160 cm

XU ZHEN® appropriates and recreates the renowned marble statue of *Laocoön and His Sons*. The heads of the characters are magnified to generate humour and a cartoon-like quality that merges contemporary and classic tastes. Pliny, a Roman author, attributes the work to three Greek sculptors from the island of Rhodes: Agesander, Athenodoros and Polydorus. The statue depicts Laocoön, a Trojan priest, and his sons Antiphantes and Thymbraeus trapped to death by serpents.



XU ZHEN®  
New – Farnese Hercules  
2019  
367 x 165 x 142 cm  
Resin, paint

*New - Farnese Hercules* is based on the greatest demigod hero of Greek mythology, whose head is disproportionately magnified in this work. Legend has it that Hercules has extraordinary courage and wisdom and that his symbols are the lion skin on the shoulder and the olive wood club in his hands. The magnified head brings about a humorous spectacle out of a classic image. XU ZHEN® appropriates the proportions of figures in popular comics and skillfully places the Greek hero in a context of contemporary culture, offering a new aesthetics and viewing experience.

### “Eternity”

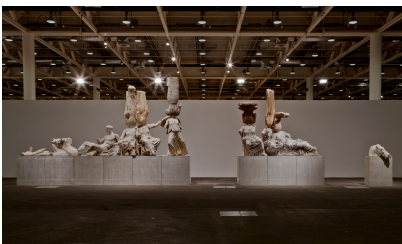
“Eternity” is a series of sculptural installations that fuses together and immortalizes classics of art history and great civilizations. Statues of Greek gods or Chinese divinities and Modern Art sculptures are replicated using mineral composite, taking on the form of visual hybrids. “Eternity” brings global civilization into a broader perspective, showing through the East – West cultural impact/collision, the historical influence of the traditional Orient and the modern Occident on contemporary life. Two kinds of visual experiences provide viewers neither close nor distant perception on cultural heritage. The use of forms and aesthetics between the East and the West, ancient and modern, figurative and abstract create a timeless classic moment.



XU ZHEN®  
Eternity (Greek Columns, Heels)  
2020  
Resin, stainless steel, paint, mineral pigments  
820 x 390 x 133 cm

XU ZHEN®'s sculpture *Eternity (Greek Columns, Heels)* places Collins columns atop red high heels, making the ancient Greek civilization and modern consumer economy coexist in a both colliding and harmonious way. The work continues XU ZHEN®'s exploration of the collision and symbiosis between classic visual images from different ages and civilizations in the “Eternity” series.

In this work, the Greek columns are placed in high heels like legs, juxtaposing Athenian cultural symbols and those of female-oriented contemporary consumer culture. Spanning the gap of time, popular culture throughout history gives birth to a new aesthetics and visual experience. The work is also a metaphor for power structure, gender identity and cognition that is both controlling and being controlled.



Eternity – Songwen Tower Headless Buddha, Northern Qi Standing Bodhisattva, Northern Qi Gold Coated Buddha, Northern Qi Standing Buddha, Northern Qi Buddha, Parthenon East Pediment  
2013 – 2014  
Glass fiber-reinforced concrete, marble grains, sandstone grains, steel, mineral pigments  
1522 x 110 x 464 cm (with pedestal)

The sculptures on the Parthenon East Pediment depict the passage of a day's time according to ancient Greek mythology. On the one side, as dawn comes and Athena arrives, the sun god Helios and his cavalry gallop through the sky in high spirits; on the other side, as the night draws to an end, the moon goddess Selene and her tired horses are about to leave. Six different Buddhist statues of the Northern Qi and Tang Dynasties are grafted onto the Greek ones. The artist thereby engraves the boundless dimension of mythological time into the fleeting moment, and reflects on the eternity of the core of Eastern and Western civilizations.



XU ZHEN®  
Eternity–Painted Terracotta Statue of Heavenly Guardian, Sleeping Muse  
2016  
Bronze, mineral composites, mineral pigments, steel  
201 x 85.5 x 45 cm

The original works are the painted terracotta statue of Heavenly Guardian from the Tang Dynasty and the bronze sculpture of *Sleeping Muse*, a masterpiece created by Brancusi in 1910. The Guardian's face is august, his demeanor stern, and his strength infinite, marking him in strong contrast with the gentle and tranquil expression of Muse. This is also a contrast between the dynamic physical strength and the introspective spiritual strength. With his foot stepping on the underworld imp and his hand lifting a western goddess, a classic and eternal moment is created.

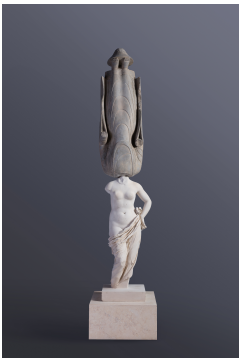


XU ZHEN®

Eternity — Northern Qi Standing Buddha, Amazon and Barbarian  
2014

Glass fiber-reinforced concrete, marble grains, gold foil  
304 x 100 x 340 cm

The upper part of the sculpture comes from a round-carved Buddha statue of the Northern Qi Dynasty, with a gorgeous beaded necklace wrapped around its neck and a net-shaped pendant all over its body. The golden part is a sculpture of an Amazonian knight in ancient Rome, about to deliver a fatal blow to the barbarian at his feet. The ancient sculptor recreated the brutality of the war in a Baroque style and monumentalized this historical moment. Grafted onto the knight's body, the Buddha statue appears ambiguous in attitude: it appears both conspicuous and withdrawn, both colluding in violence and embodying mercy, both absurd and logical.



XU ZHEN®

Eternity– New 40403 Stone Statue, Aphrodite Holding Her Drapery

2016

Mineral–based composite, mineral pigments, stainless steel

278 x 60 x 60 cm

Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, is holding her drapery with a mysterious beauty. The ancient Chinese stone statue of Buddha is solemn and dignified. While both statues take pains to depict the soft and natural lines of drapery, the secular, earthly beauty as embodied by the Greek goddess collides with the religious, otherworldly beauty of the Buddha, which prompts the viewer to reflect on the similarities and differences between Eastern and Western classical ideas of humanity versus divinity, and of beauty.



Eternity–Tang Dynasty Bodhisattva of the Hebei Province Museum, Northern Qi Losana Buddha of the Longxing Temple, Bodhisattva of the Xiude Temple, West Pediment of the Temple of Aphaia, 2016

Mineral–based composite, mineral pigment, stainless steel

224 x 382 x 140 cm



The sculpture is partly modelled after the figure of Trojan warriors on the west pediment of the Temple of Aphaia, a Doric temple located on the Greek island of Aegina and dedicated to the goddess of fertility and agriculture. XU ZHEN® upends and grafts Buddha statues onto three of the warriors whose heads were lost and extends the different angles of the soldiers' toppling bodies, thus dramatizing the interaction and visual tension inherent in the group of statues. The artist freezes the collision of Eastern and Western myths in a moment of sacredness and ambiguity.

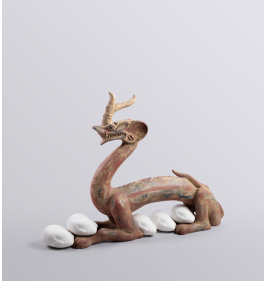


Xu Zhen®

Eternity — Sui Dynasty Gold Gilded and Painted Standing Buddha, Venus de Vienne  
2014

Mineral based composite, mineral pigments, steel  
110 x 85 x 357 cm

The lower half the work is an ancient Roman sculpture of the crouching Venus, commonly seen in Hellenistic art. The upper half is a Sui Dynasty Buddha statue, whose slender body, when upended, looks about to ascend to heaven. The collision of Eastern and Western sculptural art marks a contrast between two visual experiences. The mutilated and juxtaposed ancient sculptures exude an uncanniness, making the work a metaphor for the dramatic and far-reaching effects that cultural transplants and contextual shifts can generate in today's world.



Eternity – Six Dynasties Period Painted Earthenware Dragon, Sleeping Muse  
2016  
Mineral-based composite, mineral pigments, stainless steel  
335 x 105 x 105 cm

*Six Dynasties Painted Earthenware Dragon* was originally a burial object from the 4th to 5th centuries in China, which was intended to bring the owner of the tomb into the world of bliss. Meanwhile, ceramic dragon was usually made during drought as the ancients believed that "when the dragon appears, wind and rain will moisten the earth". The original piece is only 25.7 cm high. After magnifying it, the artist places Brancusi's egg-shaped *Sleeping Muse* under the belly of the dragon, creating new connotations about hatching and nurturing during the appropriation. The Western modernist sculpture, as a cultural symbol, is incorporated into the narrative framework of the work, thereby constructing a dialogue and symbiosis between the seemingly unrelated sculptures of the East and the West.

### **“Evolution”**

In the same vein as the “Eternity” series, the new series of works “Evolution” is based on cultural elements spanning time and space and focuses on cultural differences within globalization. However, “Evolution” series escapes the realm of classical culture to spread its creation field to a certain primary art, brought by subculture and cultural borders.



XU ZHEN®

Evolution – Tang dynasty painted pottery figure court lady, Fang Ngil ceremonial mask  
2016

Mineral based composite, mineral pigments, steel, wood

150 x 60 x 55 cm

The posture and bearing of this Tang Dynasty court lady reflects China history's powerful and open society. The court lady wears a Fang Ngil mask, creating an indefinable futuristic aspect. Ngil masks were worn in certain ritual by Ngil secret societies (which now no longer exist), the long heart-shaped face symbolizes juridical power.



XU ZHEN®

Evolution – Standing Female Attendant, Bwa Bobo Mask  
2017

Mineral-based composite, mineral pigments, stainless steel

88 x 50 x 195 cm

The dignified and graceful posture of the painted figurines from the Tang Dynasty reflects the Tang Dynasty's powerful and open society. The court lady wears a West African Bwa ethnic mask. After being masked, the figure presents an indescribable sense of wonder and future. The geometric character of the Bobo–Bwa mask, center of attraction, symbolizes the Sun in the Bwa ethnicity. Such masks were worn during tribal farming celebrations by dancers, who would perform around campfires at night to praise and celebrate the harvest of a year.

### **“Mountain”**



XU ZHEN®  
Mountains – Laokoon  
2020  
Resin, paint  
110 x 148 x 92cm

The artwork ‘Mountains – Laokoon’ consists of elements sourced from portrait sculptures of ancient philosophers. The artist skillfully enlarged part of the beards of the sculptures and present them reversed in the space. The missing part of the works stimulates the endless imagination of the viewers on what they exactly could be. From a remote distance, the reversed philosophers’ heads sculptures evoke Chinese stones, as if natural landscapes had been moved into an indoor space. However, after observing the works in detail, viewers can realize their original nature. Common experiences and inherent cognition is broken by this artwork through visual contradiction. The artist creates new experiences while challenging viewers’ cognitive habits.