

**Press Release: Xu Zhen's solo exhibition "Patination by the Globe, Aura of Shan Shui" in Tibet examines the production of knowledge in globalization.**

The artist Xu Zhen's first solo exhibition in Tibet, titled "Patination by the Globe, Aura of Shan Shui" opened on September 22 at the Jebum-gang Art Center in Lhasa. The exhibition is curated by Professor Lu Mingjun from the Department of Art Philosophy at Fudan University and will showcase more than 20 new ink paintings created by the artist, focusing on Tibet within the context of globalization. The works present the artist's exploration and latest practices regarding cultural mobility and cognitive relationships.

Due to its geographical and cultural characteristics, Tibet has long attracted the attention of scholars and travelers worldwide. Since the last century, Tibetan studies have become a popular field of the humanities globally. Particularly in the West, Tibet has been regarded as **"a postmodern utopia, an ideal spiritual world disconnected from material reality."** This perception has also turned the **"Tibet issue"** into a matter of universal values and political stance relevant to all people around the world. As Professor Shen Weirong, a Tibetologist, stated, "The Western world has achieved a form of spiritual colonization of Tibet through the creation of this Shangri-La-like mythic image of Tibet." In response to this Shangri-La-like portrayal, artist Xu Zhen used a more vivid term: "patination." **Perhaps it is this long-term, unbounded "patination" that makes this sacred land even more mysterious and distant.**

Xu Zhen is no stranger to Tibet. **As early as 2005, he created his first work related to Tibet, titled 8848- 1.86.** In this piece, Xu claimed that with the assistance of his teammates, he sawed off 1.86 meters from the summit of Mount Everest—this being his height. At the exhibition, he simulated the process of climbing the mountain by displaying climbing tools, materials, and a looping "documentary" of their act of sawing the summit. Placing human beings above nature and beliefs, this work an absurd and ironic response to Western "spiritual colonization" and has attracted widespread attention.

Continuing along this line, 20 years later, Xu Zhen once again focuses on Tibet. The entire exhibition uses traditional Chinese painting as a medium to express reflections on the relationship of cultural cognition between the East and the West. In Xu Zhen's view, Chinese painting and its spirit can be seen as a new cultural energy, an attempt to harmonize the reality of global "patination". It also serves as a particular form of technology that counters the Western technological view of nature as an object to be conquered and exploited.

The space has become an important supplement to the exhibition's text. The Jebum-gang Art Center is Tibet's first public cultural space transformed from an ancient architectural preservation. It retains intact Qing Dynasty murals. The original building, Jebum-gang Lhakang, was constructed in the second half of the 19th century to resist Western imperialist invasions. Curator Lu Mingjun stated that the exhibition features ink paintings in scroll form, creating a spiritual mirror image against the backdrop of vibrant ancient murals. This aims to inspire a renewed understanding of Tibet through the form of traditional Chinese literati painting. Through this approach, the artist seeks to dissect Western mysticism and Orientalist imaginings of Tibet, rewriting Tibet under globalization from a local perspective using Chinese media.

DOCUMENTS and BLUE ELEPHANT are providing special sponsorship support for this exhibition, DLX Lighting Design is offering lighting design and equipment support, and Land Rover is providing vehicle support. The exhibition will open to the public for free on the afternoon of September 22 and will run until the end of March 2025.

### **About the artist**

Artist, Curator, MadIn Company Founder

Xu Zhen was born in 1977, and lives and works in Shanghai.

Xu Zhen has been considered as an iconic figure in Chinese contemporary art. In 2004, Xu won the prize for 'Best Artist' at the Chinese Contemporary Art Award. His practice covers various media such as installations, video, painting and performance, etc.

Xu Zhen has exhibited internationally, at museums and biennales, such as, Venice Biennale (2001, 2005), The Museum of Modern Art (New York, 2004), Mori Art Museum (Tokyo, 2005), MoMA PS1 (New York, 2006), Tate Liverpool (2007), Hayward Gallery (London, 2012), Lyon Biennial (2013), Armory Show (New York, 2014), Long Museum (Shanghai 2015), Al Riwaq Art Center (Qatar, 2016), Sydney Biennial (2016), Guggenheim Museum (New York, 2017), Sharjah Biennial (2019), Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles, 2019), National Gallery of Australia (Canberra, 2020), among others.

Xu Zhen's works are included in the permanent collections of many international art museums and institutions, including Tate Gallery, London; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australia; Queensland Art Gallery, Queensland, Australia; The Art Institute of Chicago; Fondation Louis Vuitton; DSL Collection, Paris; Ruppel Family Collection, USA; UBS Group, Switzerland; Uli Sigg Collection, Switzerland; Teroche de Leon Collection, Spain; National Gallery of Victoria, Australia; White Rabbit Contemporary Art Collection, Australia; M+ Museum, Hong Kong; Fondation Ullens, Guy and Miriam, Switzerland.

### **About the Curator**

Lu Mingjun, professor in the Department of Art Philosophy at the School of Philosophy, Fudan University, curator. He has published widely in publications such as 'Literary & Art Studies', 'Artistic Research', 'Theoretical Studies in Literature and Art' and 'Twenty-First Century'. Recently, he published 'Revolution of Art and Modern China: Radical Origins of Chinese Contemporary Art', 'Symphony of Fission: Three Contemporary Moments in 20th Century Chinese Art', 'Promise of the Avant-garde: Interviews for 'October' . In recent years he has curated 'Frontier: A Re-assessment of Post-Global Politics' (2017-2018), 'River Flowing without a Beacon, 1979' (2019), 'Tangle of Revolution and Political Soul' (2021), and 'Up in the Air' (2023). In 2015, he received the Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Chinese Research Grant; in 2016, he won the Yishu Chinese Contemporary Art Writing Award; in 2017, he received the Asian Cultural Council Grant (ACC). In the same year he won the 10th Chinese Contemporary Art Award (CCAA) for Art Criticism; In 2019, he won the Annual Curator Award at the Awards of Art China (AAC).

## **About Jebum-gang Art Center**

Jebum-gang Art Center Lhakang, originally built in the second half of the 19th century, is the first public cultural space in Tibet created through the protective renovation of an ancient building. The original structure, Jebum-gang Lhakang, was constructed in accordance with the most representative three-dimensional stupa structure of Tibetan architecture and was once a landmark of the ancient city of Lhasa, embodying the essence of Tibetan art, architecture, and history. After government restoration and investment and efforts from Tihu Art for protective renovation, it was unveiled in July 2021 and opened free to the public. The center promotes the creative transformation and innovative development of contemporary culture in Tibet through contemporary art exhibitions, artist residencies, and public education programs.