



H U A
G A L L E R Y

contemporary chinese art

Yi Xuan

Inner Zen and Energy of Empty

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2012 Hua gallery

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'The word Hua means to paint, or a painting, in Chinese.'

Established in 2011, Hua Gallery specialises in the exciting and sometimes controversial space that is Chinese contemporary art.

As Chinese contemporary art continues to fascinate and intrigue collectors around the world, demand and appetite for fresh and innovative art from this fast-changing region continues to escalate.

Hua Gallery represents and exhibits cutting edge, stimulating works by established contemporary Chinese artists, as well as emerging contemporary Chinese artists who are not as yet "discovered" internationally.

Hua Gallery adopts a distinctive business strategy by acquiring works from artists before selling them, as well as by exhibiting and selling works by artists on a commissions basis - an approach which demonstrates a passion, dedication and commitment to the artists and also, importantly, provides confidence to art collectors who trust the gallery to help expand their collections.

Hua Gallery's founder and director, Shanyan Koder, has developed strong relationships with her artists, and hopes to build a Chinese contemporary art collection in her gallery that is different and inspirational. Every artist represented by Hua Gallery is chosen for their artistic individuality, the creative symbolism in their work, and the emotional energy their work creates.

Hua Gallery is situated on the Albion Riverside, a prestigious residential block on the Battersea riverside, designed by world-renowned architects Foster and Partners. With close to 2,000 square feet of gallery space, Hua Gallery is London's only Chinese contemporary art gallery with a permanent exhibition space of this size and scale.

Yi Xuan

“Life itself is a work of art, a live sculpture. The way to appreciate it is to experience your own soul.” – Yi Xuan

Yi Xuan (born 1965) is acknowledged in China as an inspirational and spiritual contemporary artist. Yi Xuan has held multiple successful solo and group exhibitions within China and more recently in Germany and the US.



Yi Xuan’s paintings are created during hours of deep Buddhist meditation. Yi’s paintings emerge from a deep, inner and hidden space, his art inspired during a state of Zen. The artist believes that truth can only be found amongst chaos, and spends many hours in meditation in search for his spiritual light. There are clear Buddhist themes which underline his art; Emptiness, Simplicity, Clarity and Enlightenment.



Yi Xuan speaks of his journey towards Enlightenment in three stages over the past twenty years. Prior to 2001, the artist spoke of himself as depressed, morose and spiritually lost; this heaviness was directly reflected on the paintings. The artist, during this time, was still in the process of finding enlightenment. His works during this period were dark, cheerless and desolate, his only medium Chinese ink on paper. The artist believes the years 2003 to 2007, when he met his spiritual master, Master Kanghai, to be his spiritually explosive period. The artist freely employed different media, his spirit felt liberated and light. The most recent years after 2007, during which most of the art in this exhibition was created, was for the artist a period of achieving deep meditation; the artist succeeded in the difficult spiritual process of filtering, calming and reconsidering, all of which helped Yi Xuan gather spiritual clarity, simplicity, and energy. This is the period during which

Yi Xuan's Zen and art merged into one another. The artist now only employs the use of ink and oil in his work.

Influenced by the ancient truths and teachings of Buddhism, Zen, Meditation, Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, and stirred by such artists as Marcel Duchamp, Joseph Beuys, Yong Pinghuang, Zhijie Qiu, and more recently Antoni Tapies, Yi Xuan merges his spiritual and meditative reflections with his knowledge of the Chinese and Western contemporary masters. Yi Xuan's own philosophy in art is to paint by painting nothing. For the artist it is the unawareness during his creation of a painting that is the most paramount and beautiful. The changing of time, material and space are all inspirations for Yi Xuan to create a unique language in art. Yi Xuan explores the inner and outer spiritual worlds during meditation, and translates this process into his art.



There is a beautiful, chaotic yet peaceful movement in his paintings, and a profound depth, calmness and serenity to them that the artist hopes will speak to one's inner being and soul.

Yi Xuan was born in the Ninghua county of Fujian province of China in 1965. He graduated in 1986 from Fujiam Industrial Arts College.

Past Exhibitions

The 3rd Art Exhibition of Youth of Fujian province (First Prize), 1986
Nationwide Exhibition of Collections of Calligraphy and Chinese ink-wash Paintings (Excellent work award), 1989
Chinese ink-wash painting displays in ZhengCang Museum, Shosoin, Japan 1990
Art Exhibition and Exchange of Views between the Strait, Taiwan, 1992
The First 1990s' Works of Art Biennial Exhibition of China, Guangzhou, 1992
A Grand Exhibition of Oil paintings of China, Hangzhou, 2001
Joint Exhibitino of Masterpieces by Famous Artists of Fujian, Xiamen 2002
Exhibition, *Anchor in Xiamen Harbor*, of Contemporary Art, China's European Art Center, 2003
A Dialogue Show, *Chat and Chat*, among Contemporary Artists of China and of Belgium, 2004
Yi Xuan's Personal Abstract Art Solo Exhibition, *Spiritual Flash*, Beijing International Art Exhibition, 2006
Inner ZEN, Yi Xuan's Abstract Art Solo Exhibition, Front For Shanghai International Culture Association, 2007
Songzhuang Contemporary Art Exhibition, Songzuang, Beijing, China, 2007
Chinese Contemporary Art Document Exhibition, Gehua Art Center, Beijing, 2008
Power. Shape. International Contemporary Art Invitational Exhibition, Bridge Art Center, Beijing, China, 2008
Beijing Left-Right International Art Festival, 2008
Chinesischer Wind, Die chinesische abstrakte Kunst bei der Globalisierung, Deutsch-Chinesischer Freundschaftsverein e.v.Ludwigsfelde, 2008
Chinese Abstract Art Exhibition (Hangzhou Art Museum ,China), 2009
Meditation & Conversation, Yi Xuan Art & ZEN Solo Show, VSC Red Mill Gallery , Vermont , U.S.A), 2009
Meditations, Yi Xuan Solo Exhibition, Hua Gallery, London, 2011

Major Publications and Literature on Yi Xuan

Collection of Nationwide Exhibition of Calligraphy and Chinese ink-wash Paintings, 1989
Chinese ink-wash paintings published by ZhengCang Museum of Japan, 1990
The First 1990's Works of Art Biennial Exhibition of China, 1992
A Collection of Oil Paintings in Grand Exhibitions of China, 2001
Art Space, on Yi Xuan's Abstract Works, 2002
Art China, on Yi Xuan's exhibition "Anchor in Xiamen Harbor", 2003
The Strait City Post, "A man and an ancient castle", interview with Yi Xuan on his art and life, 2005
Yi Xuan's Abstract Art of Zen, *Spiritual Light / The World of Deep Meditation*, 2006
The Boundary of Zen – Yi Xuan's works of abstract art and Zen, 2007
Hi-Yishu Art Magazine, an interview with Yi Xuan, his art and Zen, 2008
An Interpretation of Yi Xuan's Meditative Art by Xi Yun Du, Chinese contemporary art essayist, 2009

Excerpts from Yi Xuan's Interview with Hi-Yishu (Hi-Art) Art Magazine, an established Chinese art publication, 2008

Hi-Art: Is this the first winter for you to live in the north [of China]?

Yi: Yes, this time is for settling down. I have lived in many cities but all were sojourns, mainly for my exhibitions and to experience life there. I am already used to the environment in south [of China], besides the living space in south is all too small. To break the habit is to have a new chance for living. I was undecided on whether to live in Shanghai or Beijing, but I found Shanghai too sophisticated, fashionable, and commercial; Beijing on the other hand is broader and has a more profound, introspective feeling. The society here is less menacing – actually all societies are quite menacing. The key is how you face this reality. Everyone says Beijing is too dark a place to live, but if you don't experience it yourself, how can you know the truth?

Hi-Art: When life in Beijing has become a habit, will you leave?

Yi: It depends on the pre-destined relationship between the city and I. I quite like the status of being "between" stages, in between the city and the mountains, in between the top and bottom of society. The inspiration from this position is very helpful to Zen practice and art. It makes the "chaos" more vivid. It's easy for one to meditate in a quiet place, but it is much harder for one to study Zen in a busy city. I feel I need the latter location for my meditative study at my current stage in Zen, but I cannot predict the future.

Hi-Art: Do you believe in Buddhism?

Yi: In Sanskrit, the "Buddha" refers to Enlightenment. That doesn't mean a legendary idol, but it means the wisdom to find the insight and truth of the inner and outer worlds. This is a philosophy as well as an art of living. I am learning and applying this wisdom to my life and my art. Buddhism, Taoism, Chuangism, ancient and modern wisdom – they are not for people to believe or to be fascinated by. In contrast, they are here for us to live by! In recent years, I have become especially interested in the wisdom and practice of Zen. Zen came from religion but is above religion.

Hi-Art: When did you start to learn and live by this?

Yi: I grew up in a family that believes in Buddhism. I have been interested in the mysterious and unknown world. But it was my father's death when I was 13 years old which really shocked me and changed me – it was also my first time to experience death. In 2000, when I was in the Academy of Fine Art, two of my students, a 27-year-old and a 30-year-old died suddenly. Can you imagine having a

drink with your friend one week and he dies and becomes ash the next week? All of this gave me great shock, and made me pause and think about the meaning of life and death. I felt that their tragedy today might be my own tragedy tomorrow. I had a strong desire to solve my questions about the life and death. Then it happened by chance in 2001, that I participated in a "spiritual journey" in the Xuefeng Temple of Fujian province. It was a short journey for our 80 participants, to experience monastic life. It was my first time to live in a temple; I wanted to have a chance to calm myself. However, while I stayed there, my mind changed – it was the first time I appreciated the profound wisdom of Buddhism. At that moment, I had the idea of becoming a monk. Looking back now, that idea in fact was a way for me to escape without understanding Buddhism. In our age, there are a lot of pseudo-religions. For me personally, it is better to learn Buddhism at home instead of being a monk. I find it more important and intelligent to have the "heart of a monk" rather than the "body of a monk". So I studied Buddhism with Master JiQun. The real Buddhists do not care the way of your learning, as spiritualities are always ever present. As long as one achieves a peaceful mind one is in a temple.

Hi-Art: So have you found the answer to the questions of life and death?

Yi: I had read a large number of books on philosophy, psychology, Buddhism, phenomenology, and sociology. But I was still not satisfied with those theories, so I went to many places to talk with people of great wisdom and observed their daily lives. In 2003, I met my current mentor, Master Konghai. He came to the mainland from Taiwan to give lectures. He was a Traditional Chinese doctor before, but he found that to cure one's body was not enough, spiritual healing is much more helpful for one's health. When he realised that, he closed his clinic and started to focus on Buddhism, Psychology and Meditation. His lectures made me feel physically and mentally reborn. I can say that the philosophers such as Master Konghai, Ken Wilber and Krishnamurti helped me in finding the answers to life and death. They also awoke my vitality and creativity in art. However, people have to experience this process. The answers from me are only about my life and spirit.

Hi-Art: In this process, how did you develop your art?

Yi: Art and life is always coming together. From 1985 to 1993, there was a lot of movement in the art world. The art nourished me but I felt that there were too many things that were not true in them, and false inside. Art was falling into a meaningless situation. At that time I quite liked Duchamp, Beuys, Huang Yongping and Cui Jian. Qiu Zhijie was also a great influence on me. In 1986, I needed to jump out of art world to re-see art. I didn't want to sell my paintings to support myself – which would have decreased the purity and spirituality in my art. So, I worked in design, bars and resorts to feed my art first, while at the same time continuing to

the development of my art language. I did installation, video, photography and action. Most of my art then was quite avant-garde, but it was not systematic. Prior to 2001, I felt that I had a strong but unknown inner energy in my heart that needed to be released. It's true that art could heal one's heart, especially when one can put his emotions to the abstractism directly and instinctively. I created more than 40 pieces of in a series of abstract expressionist paintings, called Image of the Heart. During that period, I did not find Enlightenment, and my works were quite dark and solemn. After 2003, with the enhancement of my meditative and spiritual practices, I created the Inner Light Series. Later on I developed the Emptiness Series and the Mirage series. My creativity began to be unleashed with the gradual deepening and opening of my mind. My own structure of "Zen art" formed slowly. I started to focus on blending one's "inner view" and "outer view" in Zen Art. The "Inner view" was achieved primarily by the combination of abstract oil and ink painting. The immediacy in abstract painting creates a dialogue between painting and process, which helped me realise the status of "the painting and I becoming one". At the same time I used multiple media to achieve the "outer view": from video, photography, multiple material and installation. To be involved in the "outer view" is the way to see a "mirage".

Hi-Art: Do you repeat your work?

Yi: Never. Life cannot be repeated. The "you" that I see today will be different with the "you" tomorrow, certainly not the same. All moments are the first and last time in our life. This is one of the teachings in Zen.

Hi-Art: Will Zen make you quit romantic relationships?

Yi: I do not deliberately quit anything. To pursue freedom is human nature. "Zen" is not a doctrine, but a way for living. So it's very important to calm down and to observe truth. One's heart is like peaceful lake, which reflects everything. I prefer to be ugly instead of falsely beautiful. Everything is for the experience. The key is if your soul is always with you. Life itself is a work of art, a live sculpture. The way to appreciate it is to experience your own soul.

An Interpretation of Yi Xuan's Meditative Art

By Xi Yun Du, Chinese contemporary art essayist

Yi Xuan's art is meditative and abstract in nature. It is the kind of work which makes people aware of that quality in themselves. Compared to abstract western paintings, Yi Xuan's art is more closely aligned with traditional Chinese culture. His art is rich in emotional content; this is the essence of expressionism. In a civilized modern society, the expressionistic artists distort the reality for emotional effect. This art is filled with anger, nervousness, anxiety, fear and desperation. Yi Xuan's art pursues Chinese tradition. In Chinese history, Literati paintings (especially landscape paintings) emphasize the structure of images; they focus more on the use of ink and brush. As time goes by artist started to pay more attention to expressing their emotions through the use of ink and brush. In the revelation of Yi Xuan's emotions the spiritual realm becomes the standard of quality. The qualities the artwork embraces pertain to the values and philosophy of Chinese tradition. Yi Xuan's paintings forsake the realistic image; however, their essence is still Chinese traditional philosophy and values.

Certainly, as an artist living in the modern world, Yi Xuan cannot fully restore the traditional style. However, it is not necessary for him to do so. It is unavoidable for current rational Chinese people to compare eastern culture to western culture and make their individual cultural choices based on their learning and absorption of western culture. Meanwhile, these young people are re-appreciating their mother customs. Accordingly, the younger generation can avoid parochial nationalism or naïve internationalism. Yi Xuan has extensive societal view and broad mind. He also had much urban experience and deep understanding of urban life.

In Yi Xuan's works, the revelation of inner thoughts is also an exteriorization of spirituality. His works illustrate serenity of mind, tranquility and detachment. This serenity transcends to a soothing and non-attached joyfulness. This joyfulness evolves from the realization of the harmony between man and nature, and is the manifestation of the fulfillment of spirit. His art contains lively depictions rather than images of dramatic conflicts. It is because he does not entangle himself in corporeal desires, or strive for the discipline and independence that arise from methodic spirituality. His discipline and independence are not a result of world-weariness or pessimism, rather a way to address the mendacity of the world. Independent discipline is not lead by capricious social ideology or controlled self-consciousness. It is a way to define the relationship between a citizen and his/her society. The most important fact is that: narrow-mindedness and

shortsightedness can only be overcome by profound and genuine thoughts and values.

As a result of spiritual direction and order, Yi Xuan emphasizes on the process of painting (it is the process of formulating his spiritual direction and order), as well as the final presentation of the painting itself (it is a partial presentation of discovery process). The language and structure of his art, though in constant evolution (this is related to his different interpretation of language and life) is not a random evolution like that of amorphous illusions in the kaleidoscope. His style evolves within a relatively constant confinement, and maintains a moderate tension between order and disorder. Yi Xuan's stroke is skillfully measured, neither overly dominant nor seductively soft. He does not regard himself as infallible, nor does he humbly swim with the stream. He avoids great fluctuations without becoming lifeless. He exists in a dialectic between calm and pulsating. Yi Xuan adopted the Chinese traditional universe, which allows his work to give off spiritual light; the spirit that comes from the mother culture. This spirit has not entirely died out, even under the impact of Western civilization. This spirit light requires people to re-experience culture with a more mature and far-reaching view. The spirit power makes possible studied and measured re-observation.

01/06/2009
Beijing, China

01 Inner Zen Series No.1 (2011)

Oil on canvas, 90 x 160 cm



02 Inner Zen Series No.2 (2011)

Oil on canvas, 90 x 160 cm



03 Inner Zen Series No.3 (2011)

Oil on canvas, 150 x 200 cm



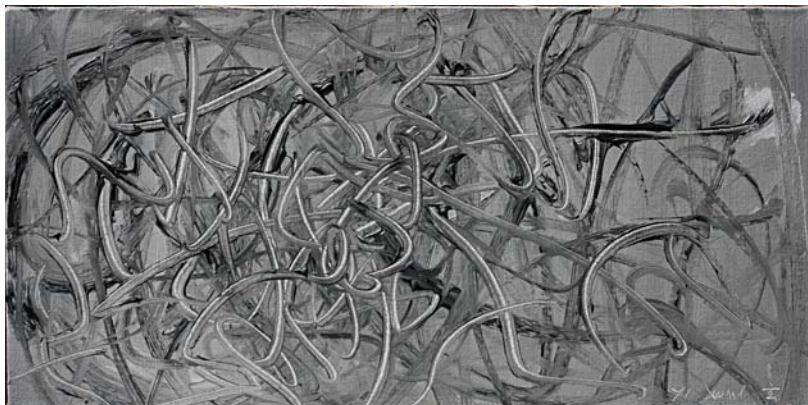
04 Inner Zen Series No.4 (2011)

Oil on canvas, 150 x 200 cm



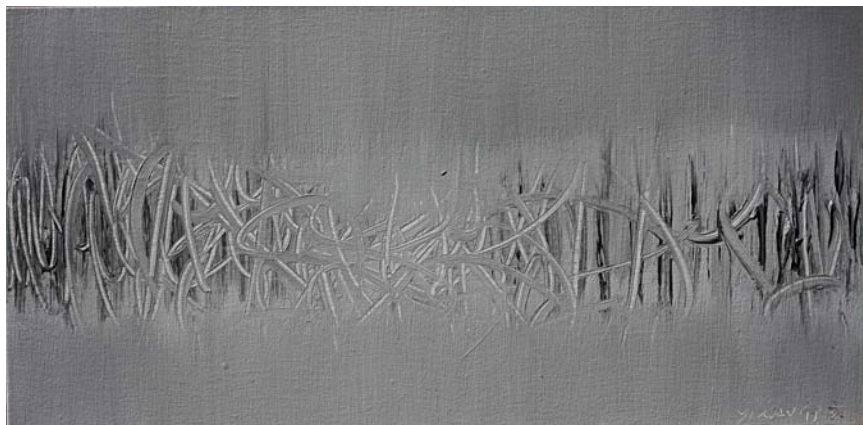
05 Inner Zen Series No.5 (2011)

Oil on canvas, 40 x 70 cm



06 Inner Zen Series No.6 (2011)

Oil on canvas, 40 x 70 cm



07 Inner Zen Series No.7 (2011)

Oil on canvas, 40 x 100 cm



08Inner Zen Series No.8 (2011)

Oil on canvas, 80 x 240 cm



09 Inner Zen Series No.9 (2011)

Oil on canvas, 80 x 240 cm



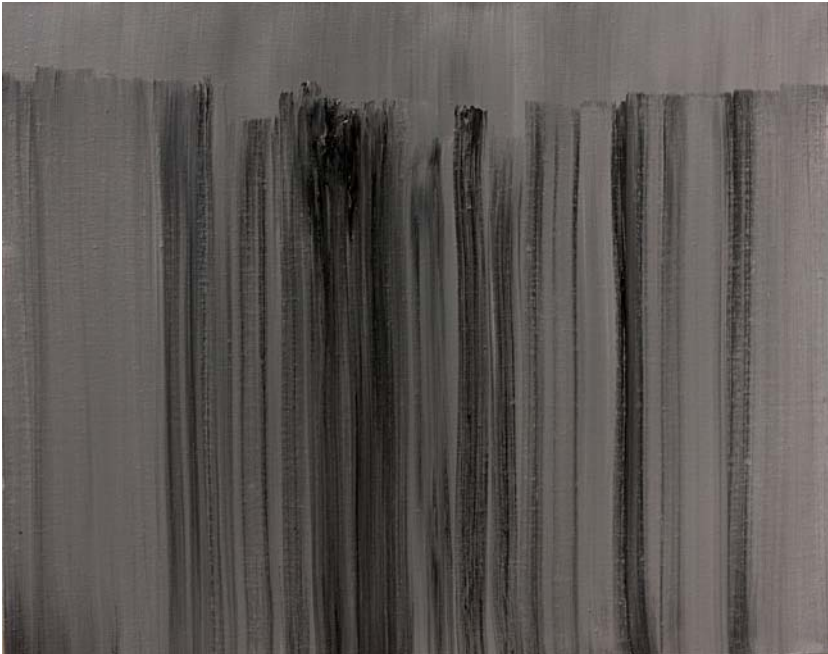
10 Inner Zen Series No.10 (2011)

Oil on canvas, 80 x 240 cm



11 Inner Zen Series No.11 (2011)

Oil on canvas, 80 x 110 cm



12 Inner Zen Series No.12 (2011)

Oil on canvas, 80 x 110 cm



13 *Inner Zen Series No.13* (2011)

Oil on canvas, 150 x 300 cm



14 Inner Zen Series No.14 (2011)

Oil on canvas, 200 x 300 cm



15 Energy of Empty Series No.1 (2011)

Oil on canvas, 80 x 100 cm



16 Energy of Empty Series No.2 (2011)

Oil on canvas, 200 x 300 cm



