



ELI AND EDYTHE **BROAD ART MUSEUM** MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

## **Broad Art Museum at MSU Presents Exhibition Exploring Changing Role of Women in Chinese Culture**

*Fire Within: A New Generation of Chinese Women Artists*  
**Features Twenty-Seven Emerging Artists Working in Painting,  
Installation, Sculpture, Video, Animation, Photography, and Performance**



耿雪 Geng Xue, *Mr. Sea*, 2013-2014. Courtesy of the artist and Klein Sun Gallery, New York.

East Lansing, MI – June 30, 2016 (Updated August 22, 2016) – The Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University (Broad MSU) presents a group exhibition that investigates a wide range of themes surrounding the changing role of women in China, *Fire Within: A New Generation of Chinese Women Artists*. On view August 27, 2016–February 12, 2017, the exhibition features twenty-seven emerging artists working across media, including performances by Hu Jiayi and Lin Ran.

The generation of artists born in China during the 1970s and 1980s witnessed significant changes throughout their society as the country opened up to foreign markets and international exchange. The artists featured in *Fire Within* confront ideological, cultural, and social topics throughout their work—including the changing perceptions of cultural and gender identity, social dynamics and status, and traditional values and belief systems.

“Rooted in experiences within a rapidly modernizing China, the artists in this exhibition offer new perspectives and ways of understanding an array of cultural, social, and political spheres throughout contemporary life,” said Dr. Wang Chunchen, Adjunct Curator at the Broad MSU. “The breadth of perspectives represented by some of the most exciting artists working in the country today offers the opportunity for intergenerational and cross-cultural dialogues on subjects both universal and specific to life in Chinese society. We’re proud to introduce the work of many of these artists to American audiences for the first time.”

The exhibition spans three galleries within the Zaha Hadid-designed museum, anchored by overarching themes within each: “Shifting Identities” explores how a changing China alters constructions of identity; “Body as Site” focuses on the physical body as a literal and figurative site of discussion and debate; and “Confronting Tradition”

highlights the ways in which artists draw inspiration from classical texts, teachings, and artistic practices to reinterpret and question evolving power structures and social norms.

Highlights include:

- GengXue's *Mr. Sea* (2013-14) uses porcelain figures in an elaborate stop-motion animation video work adapted from a traditional 18<sup>th</sup>-century Chinese text, *Liao Zhai Zhi Yi* (Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio). The use of porcelain figures throughout the thirteen-minute work underscores the fragility of the characters themselves and the relationship between long-established Chinese values and rapid modernization.
- Yu Feifei's installation *I want to. But I shouldn't* (2015) considers issues of repression and surveillance throughout society, which emanate from both internal and external forces. A fractured plaster mask is engulfed by an expansive installation of screen-printed tissue paper that obsessively repeat the work's title, reflecting the deeply personal and suffocating nature of these experiences.
- In *Art should be beautiful, Artist should be beautiful* (2015), Pei Li addresses a type of plastic surgery common amongst Chinese woman as a result of societal pressures to conform to increasingly unattainable norms of beauty and femininity. The bust depicts a young woman, with a piece of bone shaved from the figure's face cast in silver and placed just below.
- Hu Jiayi is represented with *Ice Skate* (2014), which comments on the erasure of the natural environment in the wake of modernization through a short video documenting a performance by the artist in her hometown of Xinjiang wherein she attempted to ice skate on tempered glass in a construction site. Hu will also perform *Suitcase* (2016), which addresses her experience of dislocation in the face of greater mobility brought about by China's development. The U.S. premiere of the performance will be realized across two galleries, creating an installation that will become a permanent part of the exhibition. In both works, the artist presents social observations by way of very personal experiences.
- Lin Ran's *Island* (2014-15) embodies the collective and personal experiences of LGBTQ individuals in Chinese society. A traditional Chinese medical herb cupboard is filled and surrounded by objects of particular meaning to members of this community—photographs, letters, clothing, marriage certificates, drawings, etc.—making visible a population that remains largely invisible. Accompanying the installation, Lin Ran will perform *Captivity* (2007) on the night of the exhibition's opening, exploring notions of isolation and constraint through the physical entanglement of her body in space.

A comprehensive catalog will accompany *Fire Within*, with an essay by Dr. Wang and individual interviews with the artists featured in the exhibition.

*Fire Within: A New Generation of Chinese Women Artists* is co-organized by the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University and the Central Academy of Fine Arts Art Museum in Beijing, China. The exhibition is curated by Dr. Wang Chunchen, Broad MSU Adjunct Curator and Head of the Curatorial Research Department at CAFAM, in collaboration with Steven L. Bridges, Broad MSU Assistant Curator. Support for this exhibition is provided by the Eli and Edythe Broad Endowed Fund; the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China; and the China Arts and Entertainment Group.

### **Dr. Wang Chunchen**

Dr. Wang Chunchen is the Head of the Department of Curatorial Research of CAFA Art Museum at the Central Academy of Fine Arts China, as well as an Adjunct Curator of the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University. In 2013 he was appointed as Curator of Pavilion of China at the 55th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia, the Deputy Principal Editor of *Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art* in UK, and the Editor-in-Chief of *The Chinese Contemporary Art Series* published by Springer-Verlag, Germany. In 2015 he was invited by the Tate as the visiting research fellow.

He is known for his contributions to the arts via his own body of works, publications, and curatorial experiences. In 2009 he was honored with the coveted Chinese Contemporary Art Award. The result of this award is the writing and publication of *Art Intervenes in Society*.

With some of the most notable shows being *Future Returns: Contemporary Art from China*, 2014, Broad Art Museum, USA; *Transfiguration: The Presence of Chinese Artistic Methods* in Venice, 2013, Italy; *Conceptual Renewal: A Brief History of Chinese Contemporary Photography*, 2012, Beijing; The First Shenzhen Independent Animation Biennale, 2012, Shenzhen; *Sub-Phenomena: A Report of the State of Young Chinese Artists*, 2012, Beijing; CAFAM Biennale 2011: *Super-Organism*, 2011, Beijing; *Mixed Maze*, 2008, London; *Supernatural – China's Photography in the New Century*, 2008, New York.

Wang Chunchen has also played a great influence on Chinese contemporary art criticism through his translations of over ten books of art history and theory: such as *After the End of Art* (Arthur C. Danto), *The Abuse of Beauty*, *Art Since 1940*, and *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985*. In 2013 his two volumes of essays were published: *The Democracy of Art* and *The Politics of Images*.

### **Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University**

The Broad Art Museum at MSU serves as a teaching institution and a cultural hub for the University, the community of East Lansing, and the broader Michigan region. Dedicated to international contemporary art as a way of questioning and understanding a variety of cultural and social issues, the Museum organizes original and traveling exhibitions and performances, and acts as a laboratory for new creative expression. A collecting institution with holdings from ancient cultures through the contemporary art of today, the Broad MSU draws upon its collection and the multidisciplinary resources across the University for its exhibition and educational programming for visitors, students, and faculty. The Museum opened in November 2012 within its dynamic Zaha Hadid-designed building and is named in honor of Eli and Edythe Broad, long-time supporters of the university whose lead gift established the Museum.

[www.broadmuseum.msu.edu](http://www.broadmuseum.msu.edu).

### **Michigan State University**

Michigan State University has been working to advance the common good in uncommon ways for more than 150 years. One of the top research universities in the world, MSU focuses its vast resources on creating solutions to some of the world's most pressing challenges, while providing life-changing opportunities to a diverse and inclusive academic community through more than 200 programs of study in 17 degree-granting colleges.

### **CAFA Art Museum**

CAFA Art Museum belongs to Central Academy of Fines Arts in Beijing (CAFA), it was originally called CAFA Exhibition Hall when it was constructed at downtown Beijing nearby TiananmenSquare at Xiaowei Lane, Dongcheng District in 1953, and in 2008 the Arata Isozaki--designed museum was completed in the new campus Huajiadi, Wangjing, Chaoyang District. Since 2008, CAFA Art Museum has curated and organized many exhibitions and symposiums, including CAFAM Biennial, Beijing Photo Biennial and so on. It has been awarded the National Top Art Museums of China 2010 and CAFAM has over 13,000 collections from ancient art to contemporary art, and now is committed to promoting multiple art and culture in education and public programs, and is regarded highly as one of the most prestigious art museums in China.

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