

Exhibition: **Bonsai: The tangible and the unreal of nature in Chinese art**

Valencian Institute of Modern Art (IVAM)
28 July – 28 August

Organized by: Valencian Institute of Modern Art (IVAM)
Shanghai International Cultural Association (SICA)

Curator: Song Kexi

The Exhibition called “Bonsai: The tangible and the unreal of nature in Chinese art” is a collection of 43 works of contemporary art, including painting, sculpture and installations, created by 12 Chinese artists who expect to show their social concerns from a critical and personal point of view. The exhibition intends to shed more light on the Chinese contemporary art displaying works of art in which the Eastern art traditional concepts and techniques combine with the new materials and forms of expression of the Western artistic trends.

This exhibition is the result of the cooperation agreement which started in 2007 between the IVAM and the Shanghai International Cultural Association (SICA) and which today still maintains an artistic exchange program. On the occasion of the exhibition a catalogue reproducing the art works that are on display has been published and it collects some texts by the Vice-President and General Secretary of the SICA, Zheng Jiayao, by the Director of the Asia-Pacific Branch of the SGAE, Mari Cruz Alonso, the exhibition curator, Song Kexi, and the Director of the IVAM, Consuelo Císcar.

Chinese culture is undergoing a Renaissance that has led to very significant successes all around the world. Specifically, in the field of plastic arts, the creators, especially those who belong to the new generations, are spreading and internationalizing on the market, firmly aiming at demonstrating that they have many things to say and many stories to tell, by means of a particularly original aesthetics in which they put together the traditional Chinese spirit and the last trends, close to a Western aesthetics, so that this powerful State has an ever more predominant role in the world-wide scenario.

Song Kexi, the curator of this exhibition, expects to show a specific aspect of the Chinese contemporary art relying on the delicate balance between the Western and the Eastern, the public and the private, the tangible and the unreal, the urban and the rural, the superficial and the spiritual, the organic and the artificial, the modern and the traditional, etc. All those contrasts coexist in a subtle balance in the everyday life of contemporary China, which is undergoing a rapid and accelerated social and economic transformation.

The twelve artists that are included in this exhibition tell us about this balanced struggle, ranging from the traditional and classical contrast existing between Ying and Yang that we can see in Wang Pin's video installation to the clash between Chai Yiming's modern town planning in Shanghai and the quaint landscape that can be seen in Kong Yi's Fuchun Mountains. All of them present an opposition between traditional techniques and novel themes and vice versa.

Another example of this underlying battle can be found in Yuan Kan's Panda Family and Ji Wemyu and Zhu Weibing's Garden. The first work uses silicon, a material that is not commonly found in traditional art, to shape a classic animal within the Chinese bestiary, whereas in the second piece of work we can see that cloth, a material that is, in principle, anti-sculptural but with a personality of its own, comes to life and shapes a labyrinth that has a mysterious and bucolic feel to it, leading the spectator to the garden, which is a centre of meditation and entertainment.

Zhu Lan's informalism, Yang Dongbai's expressionism –which reminds us Giacometti's languid figures– and the delicate way in which Ding She treats chromatic ranges contrast with Song Kexi's pop airs, Chen Qiang's visual effects and Cai Bing's biological series. All of them break with the traditional codes, and yet they are presented as an adaptation to the new times in which the past is neither rejected nor buried. On the contrary, it is subjected and adheres to a profound transformation.

The artists used very different techniques which remain quite close to their tradition, such as the use of rice paper or ink and watercolor. Besides, we can also appreciate the willingness to break those ancient links by means of new materials, such as silicone and canvas.