

## ***A Garden Window: Joint Exhibition of Lin Yan and Wei Jia***

**Kwai Fung Art Gallery** is delighted to present *A Garden Window*, a joint exhibition of Lin Yan and Wei Jia, which will mark the first time either artist has shown in Hong Kong.

Lin Yan and Wei Jia are based in Brooklyn, New York. The two artists grew up in China, and although their individual artistic development took them along different paths, they nevertheless arrived at the same preferred material: Chinese traditional Xuan paper. The two artists bring this centuries-old material into the present, each in their own unique manner. Lin Yan creates transformative *in situ* installations; Wei Jia employs an intensely process-oriented method of collage. The resulting works are stunning, and while they remain stylistically distinct from one another, there is nevertheless a common spirit that emanates from the work of these two artists – a sensibility that goes beyond the material. This exhibition seeks to open a window to this shared spirit between Lin Yan and Wei Jia.

**Lin Yan** grew up within a distinguished family of artists (Pang Xunqin is her grandfather) and was exposed to art at an early age. She studied oil painting at Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, and later continued her studies in Paris and the United States, where installation art became her focus. Although untrained in traditional ink painting, Lin has always been drawn to the expressiveness of paper and ink, and claimed these materials as her own. Utilizing paper and ink as her own personal vocabulary, Lin Yan draws from her surroundings and life experiences to craft intimate, installation-based works that seem to live and breathe of their own accord.



Lin Yan, *Embracing Stillness*, Flatiron Building, New York, 2013



Lin Yan, *Inhale*, Tenri Cultural Institute, Beijing, 2014

Lin Yan has created a type of architectural intervention specifically for the present exhibition. Her installations are always created *in situ* – responding to, and interacting with, the physical spaces themselves. Both *Co-Existence* and *Inhale & Exhale* are pieces that address themes of modernization and its impact upon the natural world. The first installation, *Co-Existence #1*, is a response to the construction-obsessed culture that is inherent to Hong Kong. In an effort to gain headroom, many indoor spaces within the city eschew a proper ceiling, instead laying bare a maze of cables, ductwork, and pipes. Lin Yan at once obscures and reveals these industrial elements, nestling them within layers upon layers of Xuan paper. *Inhale & Exhale* raises the issue of the way in which humans choose to live alongside the natural world. Situated near the entrance to the gallery space, a dark, ink-saturated mass hovers overhead as visitors enter the exhibition. Into this mass, she has literally stitched into this mass is an ink painting of a leopard, crumpled and distorted. The image provides us with a reminder of the heavy cost of human modernization, and that our actions are inextricably linked to the world around us.



Lin Yan, Study for *Inhale & Exhale* (detail), Ink and Xuan Paper, 2015

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**Wei Jia** was trained in ink painting from a young age. His early proficiency led him to study at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, where he met Lin Yan. Yet he found the rules of traditional Chinese calligraphy too stifling, and as he began his graduate studies in the U.S., he sought out new means of expression. Ever mindful of this tradition, which he continues to hold in high esteem, Wei Jia incorporates methods and materials that he learned in the U.S.; collage and gouache appear regularly in his art. Wei's work redefines tradition through his use of bold colours, his methodical tearing and remounting of Xuan paper, and the re-appropriation of Chinese script, which he strips of meaning and treats as abstract forms.



Wei Jia, No.15176 (detail), Ink and Goache on Xuan Paper, 2015



Wei Jia, No.14170, Ink and Goache on Xuan Paper, 2015

In his calligraphic collage works, Wei Jia literally tears apart his handiwork in order to create something wholly unique. Working on several sheets of Xuan paper layered together, he methodically covers the surface with traditional Chinese characters, using a mixture of Chinese Ink and gouache. Inspired by nature, he is drawn to colours that to him evoke a certain mood or memory. After studying the individual shapes of the brushstrokes, as well as the spaces between them, he begins to pull these elements apart, tearing fragments of paper from the surface, rearranging and layering them, and repeating this process over and over again until he feels the work is complete. Beginning from the meditative exercise of writing calligraphy, Wei Jia's subsequent method of deconstruction allows the element of chance to enter his artistic process, and each piece becomes a puzzle for the artist to solve. The resulting 'all-over' compositions, with their rhythmic, layered gradations of colour, emanate a unique presence that invites the viewer to take a closer look.



Wei Jia, No.14161, Ink on Xuan Paper, 2015



Wei Jia, No.15182, Ink and Goache on Xuan Paper, 2015

Within the evolving material culture of traditional Chinese art, Lin Yan and Wei Jia offer a fresh look at their chosen material, traditional Xuan paper. As this exhibition shows, however, neither artist is pre-occupied with tradition; it is part of myriad qualities that make up their artistic and personal identities. Growing up in China, educated abroad, and often traveling internationally, the two artists are enmeshed within an increasingly global art scene. Remarkably, however, they maintain down-to-earth, unhurried lives. Wei Jia spends his mornings in the greenery of nearby Prospect Park; Lin Yan finds inspiration in subtle architectural peculiarities on her daily commute to her studio. It is the effortless, seamless manner by which they infuse these daily life experiences into their art that makes it so authentic, and so compelling. Among the Zen-like, meditative works of Wei Jia and the deeply personal, yet socially conscious works of Lin Yan, we are given the chance to peer through a window into the complexity of their shared spirit.

**The exhibition opens on November 17<sup>th</sup>, and will run until December 17<sup>th</sup>.**  
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**Lin Yan**

Lin Yan, born to a distinguished family of artists, grew up in Beijing and left China in 1985 before China's modernization. She followed her grandfather and mother's footsteps by studying art in Paris, before moving to the United States in 1986, where she obtained her master's degree in Fine Art. Her first solo show, *Tai Chi in Painting* at her graduate school in Pennsylvania, infused Chinese philosophy into her various "constructed paintings".

Taoist thought remains in Lin Yan's life and art. She seeks the simplest possible use of elements in her work. Though her forms are often quite minimal and quiet in nature, they are nevertheless filled with complexity and nuance. The foundation of Lin Yan's large sculptural paper collage is a variety of hand-made paper, traditionally used for Chinese painting and calligraphy. The crumpled layers of soft handmade paper and ink create the paradoxical effect of a strong, post-industrial feeling. Inspired by old Beijing architecture from her memory and industrial elements in her Brooklyn home, Lin Yan blurs boundaries, embraces conflict, and brings histories both past and present together. Aware of the struggle between humans and nature in the world, she balances this restlessness with the tranquility of her materials.

Lin Yan's works have been widely shown in galleries and museums, included in recent exhibitions at Museum of Chinese American in America in New York, the National Art Museum of China in Beijing, Dresden State Art Collections in Germany, Chengdu Contemporary Art Museum in China; reviewed and featured in the New York Times, Art News, Art in America, Art Asia Pacific, Architecture and Art, Elle China, Women of China, World Journal and CCTV, among others.

**Notable Collections:**

Chengdu Contemporary Art Museum, Chengdu, China  
Deutsche Bank Art Corporate Citizenship – Art, New York  
Long Museum, Shanghai  
Museum of Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing  
National Art Museum of China, Beijing  
Pang Xunqin Museum, Changshu, China



**Wei Jia**

Wei Jia was born in 1957 in Beijing. Graduated with a B.F.A from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing (1984) and M.F.A. from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania (1987), Wei Jia currently works and lives between New York and Beijing, where he teaches at the Central Academy of Fine Arts.

Chinese traditional painting and calligraphy has been an integral part of Wei Jia's maturation as an artist. Wei Jia practiced calligraphy, Chinese painting and studied classical poetry from an early age. After graduating and teaching at CAFA in Beijing, he moved to the United States to continue his studies in 1985. The feeling of cultural displacement and co-existence of cultural identities within himself led him to seek a balance between the influences from Eastern and Western cultures in his work.

Wei Jia uses hand-made traditional Xuan paper to make abstract collages. His process involves a rigorously repeated cycle of tearing, mounting and painting, which leaves the artwork full of serendipitous combinations which cannot be replicated. The final work is made of layers of ink, pastels, gouache and hand-made paper, which seems to emanate a feeling of serenity and balance. Upon closer inspection, the myriad tiny fragments of paint and paper invite the viewer to take a visual journey around the artwork.

Wei Jia has had numerous solo and group exhibitions internationally, including Central Academy of Fine Arts (Beijing), National Museum of Art (Beijing), Dadu Museum (Beijing), CU Art Museum University of Colorado at Boulder (Boulder, U.S.A.), Lincoln Center (New York), The Museum of Chinese in America (New York), and The Bruce Museum (Greenwich, CT).

**Notable Collections:**

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, New York

Dadu Museum, Beijing

National Museum of Chinese History, Beijing

The Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia

Utah Museum, Salt Lake City