

Xi Zhang
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Talk about potential. Xi Zhang is brimming with it. His solo exhibition, which concludes its all-too-short run Saturday at the Rule Gallery, would be a notable accomplishment for a veteran artist. But considering that Zhang is 23 and just graduated last month from the Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design with a bachelor of fine arts degree, it's nothing short of astonishing.....This young Chinese artist already possesses an integrated, well-developed and surprisingly mature artistic vision, which plays itself out with impressive creativity.....Make no mistake. In the exploding Chinese art scene, Zhang has everything it takes to become a major player. "Emerging artist Xi Zhang delves into notion of identity in masses," Kyle MacMillan, Denver Post, May 2, 2008

Classical and contemporary. Eastern philosophy and Western sensibilities. Pixelations and paint. These elements collide in fascinating, often unexpected ways in the smart, quickly evolving paintings of 26-year-old Xi Zhang, who is finishing a master of fine arts degree at the University of Colorado at Boulder.....It might seem logical for an artist so obviously in tune with technology to render this updated imagery using a digital medium, but Zhang likes the subtlety and link to the past that painting provides. He grew up looking to the West for artistic inspiration (his father was a big fan of abstract expressionism), and it was only after he was in this country for a few years that he really began to pay attention to traditional Chinese painting.....Here and elsewhere in his work, he offers fresh, of-the-moment takes on those enduring, inescapable questions: What is old and what is new? What is reality and what is illusion? "Pathmakers 2011: Xi Zhang - Working with tradition, but adding 21st century twists," Kyle MacMillan, The Denver Post, January 2, 2011

The scope of Xi Zhang's work is as expansive as his native China. Although, like his home here in America, it moves within a boiling cauldron of pop culture mixed with soul that is, at once, frantic, effortlessly organic and as glossy as an Apple commercial. The efulgence emanating fromhis mind into his fngertips through the quick-drying acrylic on his canvases makes us question what it means to be human, to be alive, in this incredible time we find ourselves. "Psychadelic Prospector - Zhang!" Elliot Riis, 303 MAGAZINE, March 2012

Xi's painted worlds feel hallucinogenic, mysterious and deeply psychological. Xi illustrates his observations on interpersonal communication, modern technology and the intimacies of his childhood in China with a tremendous amount of exuberance and intrigue. From the basic academic viewpoint, Xi's individual style breaks all the rules: figures crash through barriers to float wildly, erotic and esoteric subjects coexist with the banal haphazardly, geometric overlays and bold mash-ups of color on frequently metallic-foiled grounds electrify his surface treatments. The overall effect is essentially a cacophony of visual stimuli—Kirkland meets Kierkegaard meets Kerouac—much like the world we all live in today, and the world Xi passionately interprets. It's safe to say Xi Zhang, with the undying support and enthusiasm of Ivar Zeile at Plus Gallery, has cemented his position among the Nation's leading contemporary painters in an astonishingly short amount of time.....He is certainly promoting the dawn of a new age for China as well as contemporary art on a global scale, but he isn't just a cog in the Chinese Contemporary Art market to himself or his supporters at Plus Gallery. He's a great painter, who happens to be Chinese, who has already enriched the cultural landscape of Denver, and deserves our attention and support for yawning at the boredom of convention with simple materials like paint, paper and canvas. Let's hope curators here and abroad agree, and collect his work for all the right reasons for many decades to come. "10Q: Xi Zhang," Christopher Fox, The Denver Dart, March 3, 2012

The paintings in 11 Ceremonies have an ambitious quality from several perspectives, including technique, subject matter and, most important, a kind of visual charisma. This final characteristic makes Zhang's works seem more monumental than they actually are — though they are pretty large. According to the artist's written statement, the paintings have to do with Zhang's interest in social media, but this is hard to see. That's because they are so apparently hand-wrought, and thus seem to be worlds away from the computer and the Internet. So while social media may be a source, it's possible to ignore this aspect and to focus instead on Zhang's accomplished sense for composition and his striking expertise in putting paint to canvas.....Among the many strengths of Zhang's paintings are their elaborately intriguing surfaces and their strong and widely varied palettes, which differ from canvas to canvas.....Zhang's taste for bold palettes is clear evidence of his origins in Chinese aesthetics, but he also channels the recent art history of figuration in America and Europe, making the resulting works extremely sophisticated on several levels. **"Xi Zhang and Out Figured shows provide strong counter-currents to abstraction," Michael Paglia, Westword, April 3, 2012**

The rise of contemporary art in China has to be the biggest story coming out of the art world in the early 21st century. And believe it or not, curators, scholars and even dealers in Colorado were among the earliest fans of Chinese contemporary art in the US. This makes it all the better to have an artist like Zhang here, contributing his own homegrown take on this Mile High aesthetic sinophilia. **"Xi Zhang: "11 Ceremonies" at Plus Gallery," Michael Paglia, Art Ltd., May 2012**

A blend of cultures—Zhang was born in China and moved to the United States with his family when he was 19—Zhang has long been interested in dualities: virtual versus real, East versus West, old versus new. His trippy paintings merge lifelike drawings of real people with abstract shapes and colors. And in exploring a very modern concept—social media—Zhang intentionally uses paint, one of art's oldest mediums. **"Outside The Lines - The Modernist Xi Zhang," Daliah Singer, 5280, September 2012**

Xi Zhang -- a traveler to the Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design, all the way from Kaifeng, China -- brought with him an almost uncanny, fully formed spirit of contemporary Chinese painting. This small, tight, color-splashed show at Plus Gallery sealed the deal, reminding us that we had a skilled genius in our midst. **"Twelve Denver arts flashbacks from 2012," Susan Froyd, Westword, Dec. 28, 2012**

If you are among the throngs this weekend who will descend on the McNichols Building — headquarters for the Doors Open Denver architecture extravaganza — be sure to pop up to the third floor to see the artwork of Xi Zhang. The Denver painter is a rising star, and this high-profile solo exhibit might just be his unofficial breakthrough. The show, "21st Century DNA," mixes themes both human and political; the work is engaging and pointed and not what you would expect to see in a government-owned gallery. The artist will be in residence all day Saturday and giving a live demonstration from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. McNichols, located at 144 W. Colfax Ave. at the north end of Civic Center, is open to the public 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Thursday-Sunday. Free. artsandvenuesdenver.com. **"Denver artist and rising star Xi Zhang at Saturday's high-profile solo exhibit," Ray Mark Rinaldi, Denver Post, May 9, 2013**

How a young painter from mainland China became a local treasure is a story unto itself, but Xi Zhang seems to have settled in Denver, along with a stunning portfolio of mature, explosive work that he's created here. Some of that work has been seen over the last few years at Plus Gallery, which represents Zhang. But starting today, Xi Zhang: 21st Century DNA, a mini-retrospective of more than thirty paintings done since 2009, will spread out in the expansive McNichols Building. Zhang notes that his favorite painting of all time — "No one's wonderland," his monumental six-by-twenty-foot University of Colorado at Boulder thesis painting that represents four months of work — is just one highlight of this

sprawling show. Work done during his 2012 URRRA Art Residency in Buenos Aires, where Zhang represented the United States in conjunction with Denver's Biennial of the Americas, as well as paintings from various series, including a set of circular, culture-clashing canvases enhanced with gold leaf, will also be on view. "Denver International," Susan Froyd, Westword, July 18, 2013

Whenever Plus Gallery artist Xi Zhang, who now lives in Milwaukee, returns to his once-adopted home of Denver, it's reason for a celebration, and his current visit will include that and more, with both a wedding and a new solo show at Plus on the talented Chinese emigre's agenda. The exhibition, Bone, will represent the juncture of several series by the trailblazing painter, including two interrelated ones: "Permanence Within" and "Permanence Without" both explore issues of nihilism from opposing points of view. The trick in hanging this show, which slingshots ideas in so many different directions, will be selecting a cross-section that covers ground while holding every-thing together, notes Plus owner Ivar Zeile. "[Zhang] paints with a lot of experimentation and has been evolving with several different styles over the last few years," Zeile explains. "With each step forward, you can see these abilities cohering more and more." See how Bone hangs together and help welcome Zhang back to his home away from home (he earned his BFA at the Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design and his MFA at the University of Colorado at Boulder) at tonight's opening reception, which runs from 7 to 9 p.m. at Plus, 2501 Larimer Street. "New Directions," Susan Froyd, Westword, May 29, 2014