

Echoes

An exhibition of work by Qu Leilei

29th January – 9th March 2019

Academic Advisor - Dr. Wang Chunchen
Artistic Director - Calvin Hui



Qu Leilei, *Hope Remains in Our Hands*, Ink on Paper, 92 cm x 170 cm, 2018.

3812 Gallery is delighted to present *Echoes*, an exhibition of new and recent works by UK-based Chinese contemporary ink artist, Qu Leilei. Inspired by, yet simultaneously breaking with traditional Chinese ink painting, Qu creates starkly realistic works and intimate portraits. His paintings, executed in ink and water, demonstrate mastery in brush control and handling of monochromatic pigments. The result can be intensely photographic.

Calvin Hui, co-founder of 3812 Gallery says: “Echoes offers the perfect opportunity to view the intriguing ink medium via the work of an established master. Qu’s remarkable blending of Chinese aesthetics with western artistic traditions encapsulates the experience that 3812 brings to our new London gallery.”

Traditionally, using shuimo (ink and water) to paint a subject has never simply been about reproducing it, but about capturing its spirit. Portraying soul and emotion are of more value than copying reality. The works exhibited in *Echoes* tap into this artistic tradition. In the *Hope Remains in Our Hands*, he imbues his painting with the emotions of the subject, capturing vulnerability, longing and piety in the simplicity of the outstretched palms.



Qu Leilei, Figure 5. Night Light, ink on paper, 170 x 92 cm, 2018.

Qu also employs a keen understanding of the human form. He blends Chinese principles with Western aesthetic conventions, which value naturalistic form and authenticity in artistic representation. In *Figure 5. Night Light*, Qu uses varying ink intensity to achieve extraordinary tonal variations across his subjects' skin. Educated from a young age in painting and calligraphy, Qu later studied human anatomy at Beijing Medical University, an experience which has educated his understanding of the complex form of the human body. Although traditional Chinese painting does not depict light, Qu is accomplished in this area. Light and shade are dexterously handled across the human form in *Figure 5. Night Light*; dramatic chiaroscuro heightening the figure, making it palpably real.

Working across these traditions, Qu's work stands in the unique position of viewing these cultural and aesthetic traditions objectively, engaging with them lithely. This is why, for celebrated art historian Rose Kerr, Qu Leilei's work represents a successful fusion between the painting of East and West: "some ink painters have chosen to push boundaries by making traditional styles more abstract or ornamented. By contrast Leilei has sought to blend descriptive, realistic styles of the European Renaissance with Chinese ink painting".



Qu Leilei, *Determination and Responsibility*, 170 x 92 cm, 2018.

The title for the exhibition can be read as a reference to Qu's adroit depiction of the human spirit in all its tangible detail. Of *Echoes*, Qu Leilei says: "From form, sound, soul, human nature to time, art itself is the echo of life". His work adheres to ink painting traditions but also to western artistic principles of capturing reality. These cultures reverberate throughout his work. Nowhere is this more evident than in his images of hands in *Determination & Responsibility*. The gentle opacity of the ink mimics the crevices of skin but these clasped hands - symbols of friendship and care - also capture the spirit of human connection throughout time.

As a Chinese artist living and working in the UK, Qu Leilei's reinvigorated traditionalism is intimate yet subtle, and each piece speaks with overwhelming emotional power.

Notes to Editors

Praise for Qu Leilei

"the future possibilities for the development and maturing of his talents are limitless. Only he knows where he will go... In the meantime, we must thank him for the range and richness of his work, to which we can respond in so many different ways with equal pleasure."

Michael Sullivan, *About Qu Leilei*.

"Qu Leilei's love of beauty for its own sake, combined with his and careful studies of anatomy and Renaissance old masters, no doubt contribute to a create a greater sense of monumentality in his figure painting."

Dr Yan Liu, *Qu Leilei, a Chinese artist in Britain*.

"I think it is true to say that no other ink painter has managed to capture modelling and chiaroscuro with such skill."

Rose Kerr, *Qu Leilei: A Series of Natural and Spontaneous Changes*.

"His art could be said to be a synthesis of Chinese and Western that draws from the best aspects of the two, but stands as its own fully independent school."

Chen Chuanxi, *A Distinctive School of Synthesis between China and the West - On painter Qu Leilei and his painting*.

Qu Leilei

Born in 1951 in Hei Longjiang Province, China, Qu received training in painting and calligraphy at an early age. He was a founding member of the avant-garde Stars Group, who campaigned for freedom of artistic expression in Beijing in the late 1970s and were the first contemporary art movement to appear in communist China. Regarded as one of China's leading contemporary artists, Qu Leilei has lived in the UK since 1985. He is known for his large hyper-realistic figurative works, blending the ancient tradition of Chinese ink painting with contemporary forms. His recent projects have been exhibited internationally at the Venice Biennale, the Beijing Biennale, the Ashmolean Museum, and the National Art Museum of China. He has works in the collection of the British Museum and the V&A and has been chairman of the UK Chinese Brush Painting Society. Qu Leilei currently lives and works in London.

<http://www.3812gallery.com/team/qu-leilei/>

Wang Chunchen

Academic advisor for Echoes, Wang is a renowned scholar and curator in the Chinese contemporary art world who has widely gained international exposure. He is 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 Broad Art Museum of Michigan State University. In 2013 he was appointed as Curator of Pavilion of China at the 55th Venice Biennale and also Deputy Principal Editor of Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art in UK. He is also the editor-in-chief of The Chinese Contemporary Art Series published by Springer-Verlag, Germany.

3812

3812 Gallery was founded in Hong Kong in 2011 and is recognised in one of the foremost experts in contemporary Chinese art, with a speciality in ink art. 3812 London Gallery is the 3812's first international space and is situated in the heart of the vibrant and exclusive district of St. James's. Inside a two-storey building, 3812 Gallery London is dedicated to foster cultural understanding of contemporary Chinese art with Eastern origin and contemporary expression. At the frontier in Asian contemporary art, 3812 Gallery aims to engage international collectors to experience, appreciate and collect Chinese Contemporary art through its expertise and exciting exhibition programme.

www.3812gallery.com

For Media Enquiry

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