

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Major Exhibition of Chinese Contemporary Art
Explores Reinvention of Chinese Tradition in Present-day Visual Culture**

***Unscrolled: Reframing Tradition in Chinese Contemporary Art* features work by artists across three generations including Ai Weiwei, Xu Bing, Sun Xun, Jennifer Wen Ma and others.**



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Media preview: 9:00am, Thursday, November 13, 2014, with co-curators Diana Freundl and Carol Lu, and participating artists Zhang Enli, Liu Jianhua and Jennifer Wen Ma.
To RSVP, please email Debra Zhou at dzhou@vanartgallery.bc.ca

Vancouver, BC – November 5, 2014 – The Vancouver Art Gallery presents *Unscrolled: Reframing Tradition in Chinese Contemporary Art*, an exhibition spotlighting the work of three generations of contemporary Chinese artists, including **Ai Weiwei, Xu Bing, Yunfei Ji, Sun Xun, Chen Shaoxiong, Zhang Enli, Madeln Company, Liu Jianhua, Qiu Shihua, and Jennifer Wen Ma**. On view from November 15, 2014 to April 6, 2015, this exhibition features a dynamic range of artworks—from site-specific installations made especially for the exhibition to digital animations—that examine the influence of traditional aesthetics on visual culture in present-day China. Together with *The Forbidden City: Inside the Court of China's Emperors* (on view through January 11, 2015), *Unscrolled* inaugurates the Vancouver Art Gallery's new *Institute of Asian Art*, a comprehensive initiative expanding the Gallery's exhibitions, collections and programs in the field of Asian art.

"*Unscrolled* provides a unique opportunity for audiences to consider the influence of China's dynastic cultural past on art making in the present, offering contemporary analysis on how artists today are addressing the idea of tradition," said Kathleen S. Bartels, Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery. "By presenting *Unscrolled* in parallel with *The Forbidden City* as part of our recently launched *Institute of Asian Art*, we hope to stimulate discourses through these diverse artistic perspectives and to further strengthen our commitment to produce Asian art exhibitions and programs in an accessible and scholarly way."

Featuring nearly 30 large-scale artworks, *Unscrolled* explores China's cultural heritage as a source for contemporary artistic practice. After the 1980s, Chinese artists often melded traditional Chinese aesthetics with modern European art theories and practice in ways that would transcend any dominating culture. Today, tradition is transformed by individual experiences, contemporary challenges and present-day concerns. *Unscrolled* creates a narrative experience that unfolds as audiences move from overt representations of tradition to those that re-invent traditional aesthetic theory in new conceptual ways. The results provide a myriad of means to understand and re-examine tradition's relevance to visual culture in present-day China.

The first artwork viewers see upon entering the exhibition is a ten-metre-long landscape light box by Xu Bing. The work seemingly renders a traditional Chinese landscape painting in ink from the collection of the Palace Museum; however, upon closer inspection, the actual media is revealed—plant foliage and salvaged discarded objects cast shadows to create an intricate landscape. The work sets the stage for the core questions at the heart of *Unscrolled* and invites viewers to look beyond the superficial application of tradition in contemporary Chinese art.

Other exhibition highlights include Ai Weiwei's critical work *Bang*, a large-scale site-specific installation first exhibited in the German Pavilion of the 2013 Venice Art Biennale. Comprised of 886 wooden stools, *Bang*'s components are made and installed entirely by traditional Chinese craftsmen and arranged as an expansive rhizomatic structure. Sun Xun presents his latest and in-progress work, *Shan Shui—Cosmos*, introducing traditional Chinese painting into a diverse selection of filmmaking techniques. Covering entire Gallery walls with large ink murals intermixed with projections that feature drawings frame-by-frame and classical Chinese, *Shan Shui—Cosmos* recreates the multilayered texture of traditional landscapes through a flickering animation effect. Jennifer Wen Ma's *Inked Chandelier*, composed of more than 700 species of flora native to Canada's West Coast, is completely covered with ink and continue to grow as green buds sprout from the blackness. The site-specific artwork pays homage to the legacy of ink painting by emphasizing time as an element of the composition, and it invites viewers to observe the live sculpture transform over time.

The Gallery is very grateful for generous support to the exhibition provided by Presenting Sponsor, BMO Financial Group. "*Unscrolled* is truly a unique exhibition that we are honoured to support at The Vancouver Art Gallery," said Michael Bonner, Senior Vice President, B.C. and Yukon Division, BMO Bank of Montreal. "Asian art is an important thread in Vancouver's cultural fabric and we encourage everyone to visit the exhibition when it opens to the public on November 15."

Unscrolled: Reframing Tradition in Chinese Contemporary Art is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and curated by Diana Freundl, Assistant Curator, and Carol Lu, Beijing-based curator and art critic. The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated publication, co-published with Black Dog Publishing. Available in February 2015, this book will feature new photography, interviews with Hou Hanru and Wu Hung, as well as essays by the curators, Dr. Thomas J. Berghuis and Zheng Shengtian.

Related Events

A **media preview** will take place at 9:00am on Thursday, November 13, 2014, at the Vancouver Art Gallery, with curators Diana Freundl and Carol Lu, and artists Zhang Enli, Liu Jianhua and Jennifer Wen Ma. Media attending please RSVP to Debra Zhou (dzhou@vanartgallery.bc.ca) by November 12.

Artists Tour: Jennifer Wen Ma, Liu Jianhua, Zhang Enli
(In Chinese and English, with translation)
Saturday, November 15, 2014, 2pm, at the Vancouver Art Gallery

Curator's Tour:
Diana Freundl
Tuesday, November 25, 2014, 7pm, at the Vancouver Art Gallery

About the Vancouver Art Gallery

Founded in 1931, the Vancouver Art Gallery is recognized as one of the most respected and innovative visual arts institutions in Canada and is committed to strengthening ties between artists and diverse communities throughout the city, province, and beyond. As the largest public art museum in Western Canada, the Gallery features the work of ground-breaking contemporary artists from around the world and presents historical art of international significance, is committed to exploring the art of Asia, and provides a global platform for British Columbia's dynamic artistic community, including the work of First Nations artists. Its growing collection represents the most comprehensive resource for art in British Columbia and is the principal repository for visual art produced in the region, as well as related works by other notable Canadian and international artists. The Gallery also places an emphasis on advancing scholarship through major publications and presents a multitude of public programs that offer new ways to consider art for visitors who come from throughout the region and internationally.

In response to the significant growth in collections, exhibitions and attendance over the past decade, the Gallery announced in 2014 the selection of Herzog & de Meuron for the design of a new and expanded home in downtown Vancouver. The new facility will double the Gallery's current size and will be a vital catalyst to Vancouver, enhancing the city's cultural community and serving as a centre for cross-cultural dialogue and exchange in the visual arts.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is a not-for-profit organization supported by its members, individual donors, corporate funders, foundations, the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council, and the Canada Council for the Arts.

About the *Institute of Asian Art*

Building upon the Vancouver Art Gallery's longstanding commitment to fostering cultural connections throughout Asia, the *Institute of Asian Art* is a comprehensive initiative to advance scholarship and public appreciation of art from China, India, Japan and Korea. With the support of an endowed senior curatorial position for Asian art and an international advisory council, the *Institute of Asian Art* will expand and further develop the Gallery's exhibitions, public programs, and permanent collections dedicated to the visual arts of Asia.

The *Institute* was launched in Fall 2014 with two major exhibitions of Chinese art: [The Forbidden City: Inside the Court of China's Emperors](#), featuring approximately 200 rarely seen historic works from Beijing's Palace Museum; and [Unscrolled: Reframing Tradition in Chinese Contemporary Art](#). The exploration of Chinese art continues throughout 2015 and the *Institute* will also present a major two-part exhibition on historic and contemporary Indian art in 2016.

Image credits: (left) Sun Xun, *Shan Shui-Cosmos*, 2014-, view of work in progress at the Vancouver Art Gallery, ink mural and video installation, Courtesy of the Artist and ShanghART Gallery (right) Ai Weiwei, *Bang*, 2010-13, Installation at the Venice Biennale, 2013, 886 antique stools, Courtesy of the Artist

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