

88 MOCCA: The Museum of Contemporary Chinese Art That is Always Open

By Leslie-Ann Boctor



Zeng Fanzhi, Red Tie

The two young men in Red Tie have their backs turned, staring off into the distance to face an uncertain, red-streaked horizon. The painting by Zeng Fanzhi, which hangs in the lobby of Kaiser Ritter Partner Bank, depicts the young men as the pioneers of the Cultural Revolution, wearing the traditional red iconic neckerchief. Some employees remarked that they somehow felt close to the two men, despite not being able to see their faces. It seems the fragility and uncertainty of their situation had somehow meshed with the daily whirl of activity in the bank's lobby.

In contrast to the contemplative and fragile nature of Red Tie, the bold stare of Communist Sister often stops both employees and visitors in their tracks. She is certainly provocative, her flaming red lips at odds with the communist signature red stripe on her arm. Communist Sister – Don't Cry for Me No. 1 by Ling Jian has been hanging in the guest lounge of Kaiser Ritter Partner Campus for some time, her quizzical, bold gaze following visitors and employees around daily.

For many who work at Kaiser Ritter Partner Group, these paintings are their first encounter with Chinese contemporary art and inevitably it sparks conversations and reactions. The response is generally twofold – first, disbelief that such dynamic art is being created in China and second, what good fortune to find it at their workplace, because they would have

not known where to find it elsewhere. “We live with art in our office buildings,” says 88 MOCCA founder Fritz Kaiser, also the Executive Chairman of Kaiser Ritter Partner Group. “People at the office tell me they are developing relationships with these works of art, one that develops in intangible, subtle ways on a daily basis.” Next to his desk hangs *Little Graduate (From my Dreams)* by Zhang Xiaogang, one of China’s best-selling contemporary artists. The young graduate looks muted and compliant, almost eerie. The size of his head is exaggerated, his eyes unusually large and fully illuminated, yet hollow and clone-like. His lifeless eyes convey stifled emotions and entrapment. “I wanted to, in a sense, set him free,” says Kaiser. “Free him from the lost dreams, the corrupted innocence.”



Zhang Xiaogang, *Little Graduate*

Kaiser found a way to relieve his need to do something for the graduate, at least metaphorically. “I felt he needed to ‘graduate’ to a wider audience,” says Kaiser. He had been toying with innovative venues to share his collection of



Guo Jin On stage

Chinese contemporary art for some time. The response to the art at the firm’s headquarters confirmed an instinct of his – outside of the major art cities, there’s very little opportunity to view the dynamic works the country’s artists are producing. “China’s art needs to get out of auction houses and hip galleries in Shanghai and Manhattan and reach a totally different and broader audience in cyberspace. Many of the country’s great works are locked up in private collections,” admits Kaiser. “I wanted to make the art in our collection readily available and share the experience of viewing it with as many people as possible. A virtual museum is perfect because anyone, whether they are in Australia or Zimbabwe, can view it at any time, free of cost.”

88 MOCCA is one-of-a-kind museum, a virtual art space that’s accessible, social and interactive. The museum’s mission is to support and showcase great Chinese contemporary art by providing engaging content for viewers. It exhibits over 100 works from across the country using high-resolution

images. Viewers can discover and explore some of China’s masterpieces using a range of interactive functions to enhance their visit. The collection is divided into cyber galleries. Alternatively, the viewer can choose to explore the collection by criteria or by self-directed “intuition”. With a mouse click, a row of icons pop up over each work to provide a description of the artwork and a biography of the artist. An audio guide for each work will be available soon. The viewer can also post comments and send e-cards. The multi-media section offers a range of interviews with some of China’s brightest and greatest artists.



One of the newest additions to 88 MOCCA is a “virtual venue”, a space for visiting exhibits, complete with multimedia content and curatorial information. The museum is collaborating with both leading art institutions and independent artists to exhibit at 88 MOCCA, and “on the ground” at the partner museum, simultaneously. Currently, 88 MOCCA, in partnership with the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, is proud to present: “Endlessness of Life: A 25-Year Retrospect of Fang Lijun”. The exhibition brings together Fang Lijun’s art work from museums and private collections from across Europe, Japan, China and Taiwan.

Lorenz Helbling, the director of the ShanghART Gallery in Shanghai, says 88 MOCCA has injected a creative buzz to the art scene, offering a much-needed space for discussion and exchange. “88 MOCCA has not only accumulated a collection that represents a range of excellent artists, it provides a context to understand the country’s art scene. Chinese contemporary art is just now starting to pop up on the Internet, but I can count on one hand that number of sites that provide interesting content,” says Helbling. “Contemporary Chinese art has migrated from an underground space into a public space quite suddenly. So there’s a need for critical discussion and evaluation and the Internet can have a profound effect on how the art is perceived and understood.”

There are those who predict the Internet will become the cornerstone of the art market, as more and more art is bought and sold over the web. While nothing can replace an encounter with an original artwork, the web presents new opportunities for exposure and creates new relationships between viewers and artists. 88 MOCCA is evolving into a space that initiates encounters, often unexpected ones, making connections between curators, academics, writers and collectors. The result is a dialogue engaging all the key players of the art scene while introducing new ones – something not easily found on the web or elsewhere.



Lin Jian Don't Cry for me No.1

Related Link:

[Collector Q&A: Fritz Kaiser](#)

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