

Exhibition: *Legacies of Exchange: Chinese Contemporary Art from the Yuz Foundation*

On View: July 4, 2021–March 13, 2022

Location: Resnick Pavilion



(Image captions on page 4)

(Los Angeles—May 26, 2021) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *Legacies of Exchange: Chinese Contemporary Art from the Yuz Foundation*. Featuring Ai Weiwei, Huang Yong Ping, Wang Guangyi, Xu Bing, and more, the exhibition brings together 20 works of Chinese contemporary art created by 15 artists in response to international trade, political conflict, and global artistic exchange. Drawn from Yuz Foundation’s esteemed collection of contemporary art, *Legacies of Exchange* spotlights encounters, exchanges, and collisions between China and the West. This exhibition is part of LACMA’s ongoing collaboration with Yuz Museum in Shanghai, China and Qatar Museums in Doha, a joint effort to create exhibitions and to provide the museums with greater access to a more diverse collection of artworks.

This spring, funds were contributed by the 2021 Collectors Committee to support the conservation of Ai Weiwei’s *Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads*. Part of the conservation efforts will take place on LACMA’s Smidt Welcome Plaza where the work will be on-view May 29–June 13, 2021 before being installed in the Resnick Pavilion as part of the exhibition. The installation is made possible by the Long Family Foundation.

“*Legacies of Exchange* highlights works that relate to cross-cultural exchange, both recent and historical, between China and the West, as a part of our recent collaboration with Yuz Museum,” said Susanna Ferrell, Wynn Resorts Assistant Curator of Chinese Art at LACMA. “As the first Los Angeles–based collaboration between LACMA and Yuz, we are thrilled to present these incredible works from the collection of the Yuz Foundation to Los Angeles for the first time.”

Yuz Museum's exchange with LACMA centers on a robust schedule of exhibitions drawn both from Yuz's Chinese contemporary art holdings and LACMA's encyclopedic collection, accompanied by public programming. This combination provides the opportunity for an unprecedented cultural collaboration that deepens engagement between Chinese and American audiences. The inaugural exhibition of this exchange, *In Production: Art and the Studio System* (2019), was on view at Yuz where it welcomed 20,281 visitors, and *The Abode of Illusions: The Garden of Zhang Daqian* concluded its presentation in April 2021. LACMA's *Yoshitomo Nara* exhibition will travel to Yuz Museum following the exhibition's run in Los Angeles. Additional shows based on LACMA's permanent collection will travel to Yuz in the coming years.

"Budi Tek, founder and chairman of the Yuz Foundation, is among the most significant collectors and visionary advocates for Chinese contemporary art. His passion for promoting art—contemporary Chinese art in particular—resulted in LACMA partnering with his Shanghai-based Yuz Museum since 2019," said LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director Michael Govan. "This L.A.–Shanghai partnership of exhibitions and programs is intended to support cross-cultural exchange and introduce significant artworks to audiences across the world. We are excited to continue this collaboration with *Legacies of Exchange*."

Budi Tek said, "Art, as a universal language and the carrier of civilization, is an important medium for conveying the essential emotions of human beings. Art can be a double-sided mirror, not only does it show a culture from deep within, it evolves and creates new perspectives by interacting with other cultures. Only by opening oneself, a wider world will come. Art provides a platform for different worldviews, cultural expressions, and interpretations of civilizations. This platform enables art to nurture new viewpoints, dimensions, philosophies, sciences, possibilities, and even new emotions. I hope through our collection, the west could have a new and fresh experience of Chinese Contemporary Art."

### **About the Exhibition**

*Legacies of Exchange* explores the influence of China's rich history of material, intellectual, and cultural exchange on contemporary Chinese art, in the midst of a swiftly globalizing contemporary art world. Beginning in the 2nd century BCE, the "Silk Road"—a loose collection of trade routes—was famed for transporting the most luxurious goods of its time across Eurasia and the outside world. Over centuries, these routes allowed for the communication of new technologies and resources, but equally made way for destructive forces. Not only did they serve as transportation routes for luxury silks, gold, and porcelain, but as pathways to war and imperialism, contributing to a multifaceted legacy of exchange with China. This legacy of international exchange has had a lasting impact on both China and the rest of the world, and is now centuries in the making.

The first section of the exhibition focuses on re-creations and re-interpretations of historical European paintings by contemporary Chinese artists. In 1978, following the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), a sociopolitical movement intended to modernize China through the destruction and suppression of tradition, an exhibition of European painting traveled to Beijing and Shanghai. This opened the door to an influx of European and American art publications and exhibitions, which many young Chinese artists saw as foreign and enticing. New practices developed rapidly in the 1980s and '90s, and as Chinese artists sampled from their pick of global influences, the trend of subverting classic European paintings emerged. Whether using a new style or medium, replacing a central figure with a signature character, or re-imagining an entire scene, many of the edits made by these artists contribute to a sense of irony in their work. For example, Qiu Anxiong's *The Doubter* (2010) replaces the tragic figure in Jacques-Louis David's *The Death of Marat* with a robed chimpanzee. Zhou Tiehai combines the iconic cigarette mascot Joe Camel with works by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Jacopo Palma, and Peter Paul Rubens. Yue Minjun replaces the central figure in Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas* with his signature pink laughing man.

The second section of the exhibition presents works related to branding and advertisement, mostly of Western companies with a presence in China. China underwent a number of economic reforms to move away from communism and toward capitalism following the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), and in the 1980s, Nike, Coca-Cola, and many other U.S. brands began selling their products in China. As trade regulations were loosened, foreign goods were increasingly imported into the country, bringing on a new era of consumerism and branded culture. These radical shifts inspired many young artists who saw the China they knew rapidly changing.

The second section of the exhibition also includes a single gallery dedicated to Xu Bing's *Tobacco Project—The Language of Smoke: 1902*. First installed within an old tobacco-processing warehouse in Shanghai, *The Language of Smoke* is part of Xu Bing's series *Tobacco Project* (1999–2011), an examination of the early importation of American tobacco into China and the lasting impact of this now prominent industry. From a nebulous haze within the installation emerge neon characters of a 1902 advertisement, selling British-American tobacco in China. This is the first time *The Language of Smoke* will be installed in the U.S.

**Credit**

This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

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All exhibitions at LACMA are underwritten by the LACMA Exhibition Fund. Major annual support is provided by Meredith and David Kaplan, with generous annual funding from Terry and Lionel Bell, Kevin J. Chen, Louise and Brad Edgerton, Edgerton Foundation, Emily and Teddy Greenspan, Marilyn B. and Calvin B. Gross, Mary and Daniel James, David Lloyd and Kimberly Steward, Kelsey Lee Offield, Mr. and Mrs. Anthony and Lee Shaw, Lenore and Richard Wayne, Marietta Wu and Thomas Yamamoto, and The Kenneth T. and Eileen L. Norris Foundation.

### **About LACMA**

Located on the Pacific Rim, LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of nearly 142,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of artistic expression across the globe. Committed to showcasing a multitude of art histories, LACMA exhibits and interprets works of art from new and unexpected points of view that are informed by the region's rich cultural heritage and diverse population. LACMA's spirit of experimentation is reflected in its work with artists, technologists, and thought leaders as well as in its regional, national, and global partnerships to share collections and programs, create pioneering initiatives, and engage new audiences.

**Location:** 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90036. [lacma.org](http://lacma.org)

**Image captions:** (Left) Yue Minjun, *Infanta*, 1997, Yuz Foundation, © Yue Minjun, photo courtesy Pace Gallery; (Right) Zhou Tiehai, *Venus and Cupid*, 2006, Yuz Foundation Limited, © Zhou Tiehai, photo courtesy of the artist

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