

Topic: Contemporary Chinese Art – Connecting Past to Present

In the 1980's some Chinese artists tried to break out of the historical framework of western art, and embraced local history and traditional Chinese art, instead of being fixed on philosophical thinking. Furthermore, they rejected collectivism and focused more on individual pursuits.⁶

“Now that we have a completely different but equally powerful benchmark (the western art),” wrote Xu Bing in his letter about Modern Chinese Art in 2007, “our understanding of the value of our own culture has become deeper and more objective. The more we understand the West, the more we cherish our own culture. Our traditional culture, socialist culture and even Cultural Revolution and Maoism are valuable. Only if we are able to combine these traditions with the western culture, can we create art of the future... Chinese avant-garde should be showed to Chinese people, instead of just catering to the taste of western curators.”⁸

“My new work “Book from the Ground” may seem to be transnational and contemporary, and it incorporates new technology. However, the key to my inspiration for this work comes from our traditional hieroglyphic. Chinese people are the most sensitive to pictorial writings, this is why I’m so interested in this iconography,” Xu explained in his letter.

⁶ Wu Hung, *How Chinese Art Became “Contemporary,”* at The Art Institute of Chicago (February 2010).

⁸ Xu Bing, “Letter About Modern Chinese Art,” *2009 Beijing International Conference on Art Theory and Criticism* (Beijing: China Contemporary Art Forum, 2010).

Adapted from:

Lu, Ning. “How Chinese Art Became Contemporary.” Artnet News, March 11, 2013.
<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/how-chinese-art-became-contemporary-50469>