

Kurt Chan Solo Exhibition

“Old Landscape – Lightning, Water and Rocks”

Date: 15 November – 30 December 2023

Venue: Galerie du Monde, 108 Ruttonjee Centre, 11 Duddell Street, Central, Hong Kong

Opening Reception: 15 November 2023 (Wednesday), 17:00 – 19:00

The artist is available for press interviews.



Kurt Chan, *Stone River* (2023) Mixed media on canvas, 120 x 120 x 5 cm

HONG KONG — Galerie du Monde is delighted to present a solo exhibition by Kurt Chan from 15 November to 30 December 2023 in Hong Kong. Inspired by cosmology, “Old Landscape — Lightning, Water and Rocks” will feature a dynamic body of new works by the artist, spanning ink and mixed media paintings, to 3D-print, metal and petrified wood sculptures, and video installation.

Kurt Chan’s art is a commanding fusion of spirituality vs materiality, instinct vs method, and the binary between local and Western cultures, each force acting in concert with the other.

A veteran of the Hong Kong art scene, Chan graduated from the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1983 and later went to study in the United States. While establishing himself as an artist in the 1990s, Chan struggled between internationalization and localization. Forced, but motivated, Chan generated his own brand of philosophy in mixed media as a contemporary art practice. His mixed media installations were widely exhibited in the 1990-2000s, including the 51st Venice Biennale.

In 2016, Chan retired from his 27-year tenure at the CUHK. A year after, he rented a studio to resume his practice as a full-time artist. He has split the studio into two zones – one side is dedicated to Chinese ink, and the other to Western-style painting. Departing from his concept-based mixed media installations which are more direct in execution, Chan expresses that his paintings are developed from his “lengthy dialogues” with paint and canvas.



Kurt Chan, *Reincarnations* (2023)

Mixed media on canvas, 64 x 100 x 3 cm; polylactide 3D-print sculptures, 5-part work,
dimensions variable: 50 x 29.9 cm / 51.8 x 26.7 cm / 31 x 26.2 cm / 50 x 27.4 cm / 19.7 x 13 cm

Transferring his experience in Chinese calligraphy practice, Chan has employed his techniques with ink on paper to mixed media on unprimed canvas. Chan repeats the process of layering and sgraffito, the resulting works are gestural and rich in textures. The extension of his strokes mimics a web, an electrical network. They also look like tree branches intertwined and lightning strikes that manifest an evolving cosmos.

Chan expanded his multimedia experimentation to 3D-print sculptures. A key installation in the exhibition is “Reincarnations” which features a mixed media painting and five sculptures, each representing a mass extinction. There have been five mass extinction events in Earth’s history, at least since 500 million years ago: Late Ordovician (444 million years ago; mya); Late Devonian (360 mya); Late Permian (250 mya); Triassic-Jurassic (200 mya); and Cretaceous-Paleogene (65 mya).

The cosmos shapes every aspect of our lives — giving rise to our origin stories, religions, systems of time, economies, means of navigation, sciences and social orders. Early Chinese philosophical texts also contain sophisticated conceptions of the nature of the cosmos. The natural world has long been conceived in Chinese thought as a self-generating, complex arrangement of elements that are continuously changing and interacting. Uniting these disparate elements is the Dao. Daoism is the dominant principle by which all things exist. In this new body of work, Chan explores the relationships between the various elements in nature. He considers the notion of “landscape” in scientific terms — the rocks are the minerals, the water is the mediator, and the electricity is the tree. Kurt Chan leads the audience on a journey into the cosmos from multifaceted perspectives through his paintings, sculptures and installation.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Old Landscape — Lightning, Water and Rocks

The original meaning of "old landscape" is the landscape of the Earth before mankind came into existence, or even shortly after the birth of life.

It is said that life on Earth began in a "primordial soup" of water, hydrogen, nitrogen, carbon, minerals and electricity; water was the medium, the minerals were the materials, and the electricity was the catalyst - the Earth was once a kitchen, where life was created from a heated mixture of gases and elements electrified.

It's interesting to think of landscapes in scientific terms. The rocks are the minerals, the water is the mediator, and the electricity is the tree.

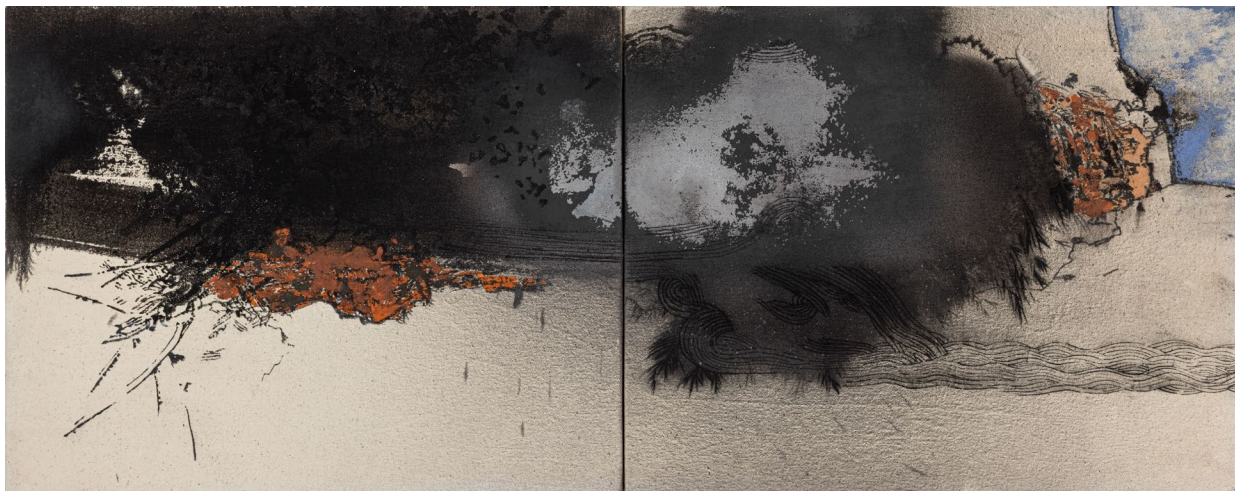
This assumption is at the core of my series of works, which is inspired by my love for Chinese landscape painting, but I also feel that its inherited format is inadequate for contemporary artistic expression, which unexpectedly pushes me to experiment with different mediums and concepts.

Today, when we talk about landscapes, we naturally have more perspectives than the ancients did, and the scientific perspective is one of the overlooked aspects. From the development of life science on earth to astrophysics, all kinds of phenomena that cannot be comprehended visually not only expand our horizons, but also make us think about our own position in nature and the universe, as well as the purpose of our lives.

By taking a cosmic view of the visible nature of mankind, and by incorporating the Chinese philosophy of Taoism and the discourse of landscape, a subtle relationship can be discerned.

Art is a tool for me to interact with the world, and returning to the primitive world and looking to the infinite universe is my way of resisting the unbearable reality.

Kurt Chan
Hong Kong, 2023



Kurt Chan, *Silky Waters* (2023)
Diptych, 40 x 100 x 3 cm, Mixed media on canvas

About the Artist Kurt Chan



Kurt Chan Yuk-Keung (b. 1959, Hong Kong) is an artist, an educator and a prominent figure in the development of the Hong Kong contemporary art scene. Chan obtained his BA from the Department of Fine Arts, The Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1983; and his MFA from the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan, United States in 1988. He has participated in over 100 exhibitions, including the 51st Venice Biennale and the 2nd Asia Pacific Triennial. Chan was the chief editor for Hong Kong Visual Arts Yearbook, and taught at The Chinese University of Hong Kong for over 25 years. He is now an advisor of Asia Art Archive and the Yale-China Association. He lives and works in Hong Kong.

As an artist, Chan is widely recognized for his experimentations in mixed media, ink and calligraphic works. In the 1990s, Chan established his unique concept of “domestic aesthetic” — a response to the limited space that Hong Kong artists confront, offering new ideas to develop conceptual installations in a constrained environment with creative tools invented using unrelated found objects from daily life.

Chan learnt Chinese calligraphy at a young age. The fine art heritage and aesthetic of Chinese ink art has a life-long impact on Chan's artistic practice. In the past decade, Chan continues his attempt to push boundaries and create new experimentations with the traditional art form. He reinterprets the historical calligraphy practice by deconstructing structure, leaving behind the dots and lines that form the characters. His script retains the mind of the Chinese literati whilst emphasizing the instinctiveness of Western abstract expressionists.

Recent exhibitions include “Old Landscape: Lightning, Water and Rocks, Galerie du Monde, Hong Kong, 2023; “To Paint the Written World”, Hanart TZ Gallery, Hong Kong, 2023; “Sky Rains Grain”, “By the People: Creative Chinese Characters”, Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong, 2022; Contemporary by Angela Li, Hong Kong, 2022; “Perhaps words - Bone. Skin and Dust.”, Touch Gallery, Hong Kong, 2021; “New Horizons: Ways of Seeing Hong Kong Art in the 80s and 90s”, Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong, 2020. Chan's works are in many public and private collections across Greater China, including the Hong Kong Museum of Art and the Hong Kong Heritage Museum.

About Galerie du Monde

Founded in Hong Kong in 1974, Galerie du Monde has been specializing in modern and contemporary works by internationally established Chinese artists for 49 years. The gallery also nurtures and promotes emerging talent, presenting a varied program of solo and group exhibitions with a strong focus on works of art on canvas, paper, sculpture, photography, and new media. To celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2014, Galerie du Monde introduced the GDM Project series to strengthen the gallery's support to a wider group of artists from different geographical regions, providing them the opportunity to exhibit outside of their own areas.

Website: www.galeriedumonde.com
Instagram: [@galeriedumonde](https://www.instagram.com/galeriedumonde)
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Galerie du Monde opens from Monday to Saturday, 10:00 – 19:00