

Tang Contemporary Art is proud to present

Jennifer Wen Ma solo exhibition: Cry Joy Park - Fold

Opening: October 27, 2018

Tang Contemporary Art 1st Gallery Space

D06, 798 Art District, No.2 Jiuxianqiao Road, Chaoyang Dist, Beijing, China

Tang Contemporary Art is proud to announce its first collaboration with internationally renowned artist Jennifer Wen Ma. Solo exhibition Cry Joy Park—Fold opens on October 27, 2018, in Tang Contemporary's First Space in Beijing. Stemming out of installation opera Paradise Interrupted, this series of new iconic work explores the notion of paradise and utopia. The exhibition features two newly commissioned works, two video installations and a multi-media painting installation. Xiaoyu Weng, Associate Curator at the Guggenheim Museum, contributes a critical essay that surveys the artist's recent works. The artist will join Weng at The Ullens Center for Contemporary Art on October 28 for a discussion about the exhibition and the body of work that led up to it.

Cry Joy Park, the latest series of work by Jennifer Wen Ma, examines the value systems that humans create when building civilizations. These systems are often composed of opposing forces that are difficult to reconcile and balance. The formation of a society requires the contributions of a large workforce, yet the resulting benefits are too frequently enjoyed by a select few. This unjust system is just one example of how our society does not include all of its members in the very premise of the paradise they strive to build. In this series of visually stunning work, contrasting black and white paper gardens invite the audience into an imagined utopian or dystopian landscape to explore issues of social inequality, wealth disparity, social participation, welfare, and personal empowerment, among others.

About the works

Cry Joy Park, 2018

Installation, Tyvek Paper, Copper, Mechanical System

Upon stepping into the Tang Contemporary gallery, one finds oneself in an immersive dark garden. A tangle of foliage, branches, and crawling vines hang from the walls and ceiling. Walking underneath the garden, viewers can see an exposed, netlike root system above, and hanging black paper vegetation that lends a sense of oppression. Created by the artist's unique honeycomb paper structures, golden highlights on the foliage bring out a tonal richness that shines through the layers of black paper. Large copper fruits hang heavily below the leaves and vines.

At the end of the room, the audience passes into another space that is the formal opposite of the first—a garden created in white paper, expansive and full of light. This space is high-ceilinged and well-organized. Whereas the first garden was dark and oppressive, this one is bright and expansive. A copper fruit sways freely in the air.

During the exhibition period, workers continue to build the two gardens. They cut, sew, assemble, arrange and hang paper to make the black garden increasingly more crowded, compressed, and challenging to navigate; while the white garden expands and climbs higher towards the ceiling. These two works, made from similar materials and methods, create drastically different effects in the two galleries. As they continue to change over the exhibition period, the dark and light gardens seem to compress and expand, respectively, extracting opposing energies.

Eight Views of Paradise Interrupted, 2017

Ink, paints, acrylic panels, paper, projector, animation

Jennifer Wen Ma's iconic work, Eight Views of Paradise Interrupted, is installed in the second gallery. The work consists of a panoramic landscape measuring 122 x 1300 cm, composed of seven Chinese ink paintings on transparent acrylic panels, a video projection on the painting, and a black paper garden displayed on the floor.

The paintings are made by applying ink and mirrored paint to the back of the acrylic. A projection of dancing fireflies on one painting produces rich shadow and light effects. The panels are arranged in an arc to form a long panorama, and the paintings' reflective quality places the viewer's reflection within the pictorial plane. The paintings depict the psychological landscape that Ma explored while creating the installation opera Paradise Interrupted.

A hand-cut black paper garden rests on the floor in front of the glass paintings. Constructed with the artist's special honeycomb method, the garden can be stretched to form various shapes and sizes at will. It evokes the garden set piece for Paradise Interrupted, and is the source of inspiration for the Cry Joy Park garden on view in the first gallery.

With a unique contemporary style, Ma combines elements of art history with modern themes to create subtle, ephemeral installations created with paper, ink, mirrors, and light. *Eight Views of Paradise Interrupted* draws inspiration from the traditional Chinese literati painting trope of “Eight Views of Xiao Xiang,” with each of the eight “views” representing a different aspect of the research and exploration that went into *Paradise Interrupted*.

Paradise Interrupted, the 80-minute installation opera in one act was the first interdisciplinary stage work that was conceived, co-written, visually designed and directed by Ma. It was previewed at the Temple of Dendur at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and presented in full at Spoleto Festival USA, Charleston; Lincoln Center Festival, New York; and Singapore International Festival of Arts, Singapore. It will be presented at the National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts, Kaohsiung, and the National Theatre and Concert Hall, Taipei, in December, 2018.

Dreamscape,

7:21, two channel video with audio, 2011

A wide video projection resembling a long horizontal scroll of moving dream vignettes weaves a surreal landscape. Ink washes link images fluidly from one scene to the next, over a sound landscape of heavy breathing and dream talk.

Brain Storm

10:40, single channel video with audio track, 2009

A man and a horse are a pair of unwavering, silent companions weathering through a landscape that abstractly reflects the storms of the mind.

Static Snow

Snow machine, strobe light, mirrors, 2018

Away from the dark and light gardens in the back of the gallery is a space that is relatively bare, apart from soft falling paper ashes and a pulsating light. Together, the ashes and pulsating light create a physical “static noise.” The room is lined with mirrors to create an infinitely expansive space. The snowing “ash” is not swept up, but left on the floor to accumulate over the exhibition period.

The contrasting sensations of light and dark, compact and infinite space, and slowly-falling snow and fast-pulsing light, reflect the opposing energies reflected in the first gallery. These intermingled energies are suspended in an arrested state of chaos, as if it is a pre-big-bang universe pulsing with potential energy before exploding into being.

About the Artist

Jennifer Wen Ma (1973, Beijing, China) is a visual artist who moved to the United States in 1986, and received her Master of Fine Art degree in 1999 from Pratt Institute, New York. Ma works and lives between New York and Beijing. Ma’s interdisciplinary practice bridges varied media such as installation, drawing, video, public art, design, performance, and theatre; often bringing together unlikely elements in a single piece, creating sensitive, poetic and poignant works.

Recent projects include: *The Alchemy of Making* at Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2017; *A Beautiful Disorder* at Cass Sculpture Foundation; *What About the Art?* at Qatar Museums, 2016; Installation opera *Paradise Interrupted*, Charleston, New York, Singapore, Taiwan, 2015-2018; Flux Projects, Atlanta; Market Square Public Art Program, Pittsburgh, 2015; 5x5 Nonument Park, Washington DC; Vancouver Art Gallery, 2014; Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, New York, 2013; Cambio Cultural, Belo Horizonte, Brazil, 2013; Performa 13, New York, 2013; The Republic of China Centennial Grand Countdown, Taipei, 2010; Biennale of Sydney, 2010; Echigo-Tsumari Triennial, Japan, 2009; Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain, 2009; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2008; and the National Art Museum of China, Beijing, 2008, among others.

Solo exhibitions include: Halsey Institute, Charleston, 2019; Tang Contemporary Art, Beijing, 2018; Sandra Gering Inc, New York, 2017; Art021, Shanghai, 2016; Hanart Square, Hong Kong, 2013; Ullens Center For Contemporary Art, Beijing, 2012; Eslite Gallery, Taipei, 2012; and The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, 2009, and others. Permanent and long-term public installations include: *Nature and Man in Rhapsody of Light* at the Water Cube, The National Aquatic Center, Beijing, 2013; *In-Between World—Daydream Nation*, Digital Beijing Building, 2008; *Aeolian Garden*, city of Colle di Val d’Elsa, Italy, 2005, among others.

In 2008, Ma was one of the seven members on the core creative team for the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics, and the chief designer for visual and special effects, receiving an Emmy Award for the US broadcast of the ceremony.

In 2015, Ma conceived, co-wrote, visually designed and directed installation opera *Paradise Interrupted*. It was previewed at the Temple of Dendur, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and world premiered at Spoleto Festival USA, Charleston, in 2015; performed at Lincoln Center Festival, New York, and Singapore International Festival of Arts in 2016; National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts, Kaohsiung, and National Theatre and Concert Hall, Taipei, in 2018. The opera won the prestigious international award from Music Theatre Now.