

UPDATE: May 14, 2023

Lou Zhenggang (婁正綱)

Announcement of participation in the Artizon Museum exhibition "ABSTRACTION: The Awakening and Development of Abstract Painting" and upcoming solo exhibition schedule

This exhibition explores the history of abstract painting, and its ties to the future. Beginning around the time of abstract painting's birth, it presents abstraction's rise, the trends that flourished in French painting, before and after WW2, as well as the resulting divergence of Hot Abstraction and Abstract Expressionism. It also delves into its simultaneous emergence in Japan through the Jikken Kobo (Experimental Workshop), Gutai, and other movements. (Cited from "ABSTRACTION: The Genesis and Evolution of Abstract Painting Cézanne, Fauvism, Cubism and on to Today", Artizon Museum)

ABSTRACTION also gives an opportunity to explore the multifaceted development of abstract painting and its ties to Lou Zhenggang's works (Size of art work: Height 194cm Width 810cm) as one of its flagbearers in the new generation. (Source: <https://www.artizon.museum/en/exhibition/detail/565>)

Exhibition title	ABSTRACTION: The Genesis and Evolution of Abstract Painting Cézanne, Fauvism, Cubism and on to Today
Exhibition period	3 June [Sat] - 20 August [Sun], 2023
Opening hours	10:00 - 18:00 (until 20:00 on Fridays except August 11) *Last entry 30 minutes before closing.
Closed	Mondays (except July 17), July 18
Organizer	Artizon Museum, Ishibashi Foundation
URL	https://www.artizon.museum/en/exhibition/detail/565

Thoughts Behind the Exhibited Work (Excerpt from an Interview with Lou Zhenggang)

Question: Could you tell us about the influence of your upbringing on your work?

Answer: I was born in Heilongjiang Province, near the border of China and Russia, where I grew up in a monochromatic world of black and white throughout the year. When I think of color, the memory that comes to mind is of a single red fruit tree visible from my window, in a place that could be described as the edge of the earth. Such memories still frequently appear in my dreams and serve as the archetype of the black and white that governs my work.

Question: As a calligrapher who has gained fame not only in China but worldwide, what led you on the path to becoming an abstract painter? Additionally, how has this influenced your approach to painting?

Answer: I began studying calligraphy at the age of three and enrolled in the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in Beijing when I was twelve, where I received specialized education. However, I was compelled to leave China in 1986 to escape political turmoil, and I later moved to Japan, where I have since established my creative base. During this time, while starting from calligraphy, I was influenced by Joan Mitchell, who transcended oppression in her contemporary era to rediscover herself and elevate her style. I also drew inspiration from Wu Guanzhong, who stepped beyond tradition to infuse the Chinese art scene with new ideas. I feel that I have been influenced by a wide range of works, regardless of era or geographical location. However, in recent years, I have increasingly explored themes related to "water," and I have been significantly influenced by abstract expressionist painters from post-20th century France, particularly Van Gogh, Munch, Monet, and Pollock.

Question: What are your thoughts behind the exhibited work?

Answer: The memories of my birthplace at the border, governed by black and white, remain the foundation of my creation. The monochromatic works exhibited this time reflect the unavoidable chaos that has dominated my life and the duality of "movement and stillness" born from confronting

it. At the same time, I take pride in being both a painter and a calligrapher. I feel joy in expressing the concept of "unity of calligraphy and painting" from China through my works in modern Japan.

Postscript:

Lou Zhenggang (hereafter referred to as Lou) leaves the interpretation of her created works to the viewers. This also signifies that her works possess the power to speak autonomously, even without her presence. While Lou states that she does not engage in subject-driven creation, many of her recent works have a deep connection with nature, particularly with water and clouds. This resonates with her own words about her creative process: "I want to paint what overflows from my heart like flowing water."

Lou has recently been in the spotlight in the West, and it is believed that the context provided by Western art history will offer a new narrative opportunity for her works. Viewers familiar with the art movements of the West, including the sensitively responsive artists from north of the Alps, and the masters of geographic landscape painting such as Ruisdael and Claude Lorrain, alongside Turner and Constable, who looked anew at their own nature under their influence, will encounter her works in that context.

Her works, imbued with a power to open new worlds in a foreign land, strongly convey to us the "power of abstraction" that transcends all boundaries and embraces everything.
(Interviewer/ Translator/ Editor: Kohaku Ashino, LZG Studio)