

Preface: *Qu Jianxiong*

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According to poet and artist Lo Ching, all good art is a living product of the moment. The artist must have a source of inspiration that he or she can bring to the work before it will be capable of moving the observer emotionally or intellectually (Li).

In his recent series of black and white ink paintings, artist Qu Jianxiong presents us with his own inspiration, using a surreal sense of narrative structure and figurative subjects. This narrative element grows from his ongoing examination of the relationship between humankind and modernity, desire and money, and the influence of Western economic power structures. In these terms,

Qu's paintings are truly a product of contemporary conditions.

Within the framework of classic Chinese ink painting, Qu explores expressive figurative relationships, in which the human form becomes the complex landscape commonly seen in traditional ink paintings. In his work, strongly defined human forms

intertwine with houses, temples, flowing hair, obscured faces and towering mythical figures. These scenes create a sense of ordered chaos, as though the elements are at once struggling and sharing a symbiotic relationship with each other.



"Black and White" Ink Painting Series
Qu Jianxiong, 2003

In a statement regarding themes addressed in his own work, Qu writes, "The pivot that controls the codes of factors has effectively exceeded another mode. In a society full of (economic) worship, the mode is driving human beings into a modern labyrinth." (Qu) In Qu's ink paintings, we can see the modern labyrinth that he refers to in his statement. His expressive treatment of the ink and brush forges an iron web of visual paths that leads the viewer's eye through a seemingly endless story of humanity, technology and tradition. In his complex human landscapes, Qu also powerfully conveys the shift in behavioral and moral codes inevitable in the transformation of not only Chinese culture, but other societies influenced by economic and cultural globalization.

In Chinese ink painting, natural landscapes serve as more than glimpses of scenery; they are also manifestations of the inner landscape of the heart and mind. The Tang dynasty's Du Fu wrote, "The country lies in ruins, yet the mountains and rivers remain; trees and flowers blossom in the city in spring." (Li) The writhing human landscapes in Qu's work present a metaphor for both the psychological and physical modernization of China; an ongoing struggle to forge a new global identity, while preserving its ancient heritage. Using a new vocabulary of traditional ink painting, Qu creates a portrait of the collective subconscious of a rapidly transforming society.

Works Cited

Li, Laura. "The Legacy and Transformation of Chinese Ink." *Sinorama Magazine*, No. 09, Vol. 22, September, 1997 <<http://home.sina.com/sinorama/0997/index.html>>.

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