

The background of the entire page is a textured, layered composition. At the top and bottom are dark, reddish-brown areas with a rough, organic texture. The central portion is a lighter, blue-toned area with a similar textured appearance. Overlaid on this blue area is a detailed, dark blue or black line drawing of a deer or horse, facing left. The drawing is intricate, showing the texture of the animal's fur and its skeletal structure.

# WANG AI

HIDDEN WISDOM

HUA  
GALLERY  
contemporary chinese art

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H U A  
G A L L E R Y

contemporary chinese art

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2015 Hua gallery

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## THE WORD HUA MEANS TO PAINT, OR A PAINTING, IN CHINESE.

Hua Gallery specialises in the exciting and sometimes controversial space that is Chinese contemporary art.

As Chinese contemporary art continues to fascinate and intrigue collectors around the world, demand and appetite for fresh and innovative art from this fast-changing region continues to escalate.

Hua Gallery represents and exhibits cutting edge, stimulating works by established contemporary Chinese artists, as well as emerging contemporary Chinese artists who are not as yet internationally recognised.

Hua Gallery adopts a distinctive business strategy by acquiring works from artists before selling them, as well as by exhibiting and selling works by artists on a commissions basis - an approach which demonstrates a passion, dedication and commitment to the artists and also, importantly, provides confidence to art collectors who trust the gallery to help expand their collections.

Hua Gallery's founder and director, Shanyan Koder, has developed strong relationships with her artists, and hopes to build a Chinese contemporary art collection in her gallery that is different and inspirational. Every artist represented by Hua Gallery is chosen for their artistic individuality, the creative symbolism in their work, and the emotional energy their work creates.

Hua Gallery is situated on the Albion Riverside, a prestigious residential block on the Battersea riverside, designed by world-renowned architects Foster and Partners. With close to 2,000 square feet of gallery space, Hua Gallery is London's only Chinese contemporary art gallery with a permanent exhibition space of this size and scale.

# Wang Ai

## HIDDEN WISDOM

*“All true beauty we apprehend  
consists of intersection and interaction,  
that is to say, active encounters on many levels”<sup>1</sup>*

Respected Chinese poet and artist Wang Ai creates delicate paintings made with rice paper, tea and Chinese ink. Characterised by harmony and balance, his works exude ethereal feelings and reveal elegant forms. The use of tea seems to add varying transparent layers to the pieces generating a sense of texture – although the colour is applied in a flat way.

In traditional Chinese paintings, artists did not aim to portray the outer experience of natural elements; rather they tried to capture the inner essence, breath and motion of nature. Wang Ai’s works also encapsulate the spirit of his subjects, “charging the picture with meaning beyond simple description”<sup>2</sup>. The artist, influenced by ancient masters who rejected the use of vibrant colour - considered a distraction - in order to grasp the inner life of their subjects, also creates his pattern with a subtle colour palette.

The layered simplicity of his works and the hidden wisdom of the images reveal intriguing visual perceptions. From a distance the pieces look almost abstract - the surface texture engulfs the intricate symbols positioned in the centre of the paper. The muted and softly outlined geometric shapes evoke Rothko's meditative art. Upon closer inspection this evanescent effect slowly fades away unexpectedly unveiling an extraordinary meticulousness of structure and variety of detail. Wang Ai's paintings lead the viewer on a journey through abstraction and figuration.

The artist painstakingly depicts extracts of poems and Buddhist sutras by engaging with the power of language, which stands at the core of Chinese culture. As Chinese curator Sun Lei notes "by making moves of inscription Wang Ai reanimates the desire of language itself."<sup>3</sup> Upon careful observation, subtle and enigmatic images fused with calligraphy slowly emerge. The focal point of the paintings becomes animals, fragments of landscapes and modern technologies.

By combining suggestive hues with minute detail, Wang Ai's paintings create symbolic connections between man, the natural world and society. Methodical and attentive, his work celebrates an unspoken yet indissoluble bond between humans and nature, resulting in images of a highly refined beauty. This aesthetic level, however, is often well balanced by the presence of opposing elements - modern machinery immersed in ancient landscapes. Active encounters unfurl on different levels. Building up a dynamic context, Wang Ai's art proves to contain what Austrian collector Alexandra Grimmer defines as "the necessary quantum of tension a good painting needs in order to remain memorable to the viewer over the long term."<sup>4</sup>

Dagmar Carnevale Lavezzoli

1 Francois Cheng, *Cinq Méditations sur la Beauté*, Editions Albin Michel, Paris, 2006

2 Alexandra Grimmer, *Wang Ai, About Wang Ai and the reception of his work in Europe*, Huge Stone Gallery, Beijing, 2014

3 Sun Lei, *Wang Ai, An Entirety of Variances*, Huge Stone Gallery, Beijing, 2014

4 Sun Lei, *Wang Ai, An Entirety of Variances*, Huge Stone Gallery, Beijing, 2014

# Symbolism in Wang Ai's Paintings

**Bird (鸟 – niǎo)**- Birds hold a special place in Chinese culture and their symbolic representation is wide ranging, including many different species. Their meaning varies dependent on species, such as a crane for longevity, a goose or duck to mean fidelity and marital bliss, a dove to stand for devotion to one's children, or as a general omen of good fortune, a swallow may be used. *Niao* is also the colloquial Chinese word for the male member, as such a bird is traditionally used to symbolise a young man in pursuit of the woman he loves.

**Butterfly (蝴蝶 – húdié)** – The butterfly is a fortunate symbol of elegance, beauty, young love, and long life. What they represent may be found in the pronunciation of their name: *hú* sounds

similar in sound to *fù*, meaning *good fortune* and *dié* sounds the same as *diē*, meaning *the elders*. When embroidered on clothing they are believed to strengthen the energy of love and when seen in a painting they are often used to signify longevity.

**Deer (鹿 – lù)** – The deer symbolises longevity and wealth. Deer are often placed in or around temples emphasising the longevity of faith and of the temple itself. In addition, the Chinese word for deer, *lu*, has the same pronunciation as an ancient word of the same sound for the salary paid to a government official. This gives the deer its connotation with power, status, and wealth and is thought even to possess the power to grant wishes.

**Eagle (鹰 – yīng)** – A symbol of strength, an eagle shown perched in a pine-tree is a pleasant gift for an older man, wishing him strength of an eagle and longevity of a pine-tree. Perched on a rock in the sea this bird may stand for a hero who fights a lone battle. When the eagle is depicted struggling with a snake the reference is to the Indian Garuda bird, a divine creature that appears in both Hindu and Buddhist mythology.

**Horse (马 – mǎ)** – The seventh of the twelve members of the Chinese zodiac, the horse is a symbol of endurance, purity, and loyalty. Horses may also be used to signify strength and a quick advancement in rank. Revered for their long history of companionship with mankind, horses hold a place of honour for their contribution to the establishment and advancement of civilisation.

**Mountain (山 - Shān)** –Mountains play an important spiritual role in that they are the geographic point at which people may be closest to the gods, where the earth unites with the cosmos. Believed to be the highest points of the universe, mountains represent the sacred power of nature providing a vital life source in the form of rain and a destination for pilgrims looking for spiritual purification. Should a mountain appear to have an opening, such as a grotto or cave, it is thought to lead to a Taoist *dongtian*, or cave heaven, where those who enter cease to age and may live in peaceful fellowship.

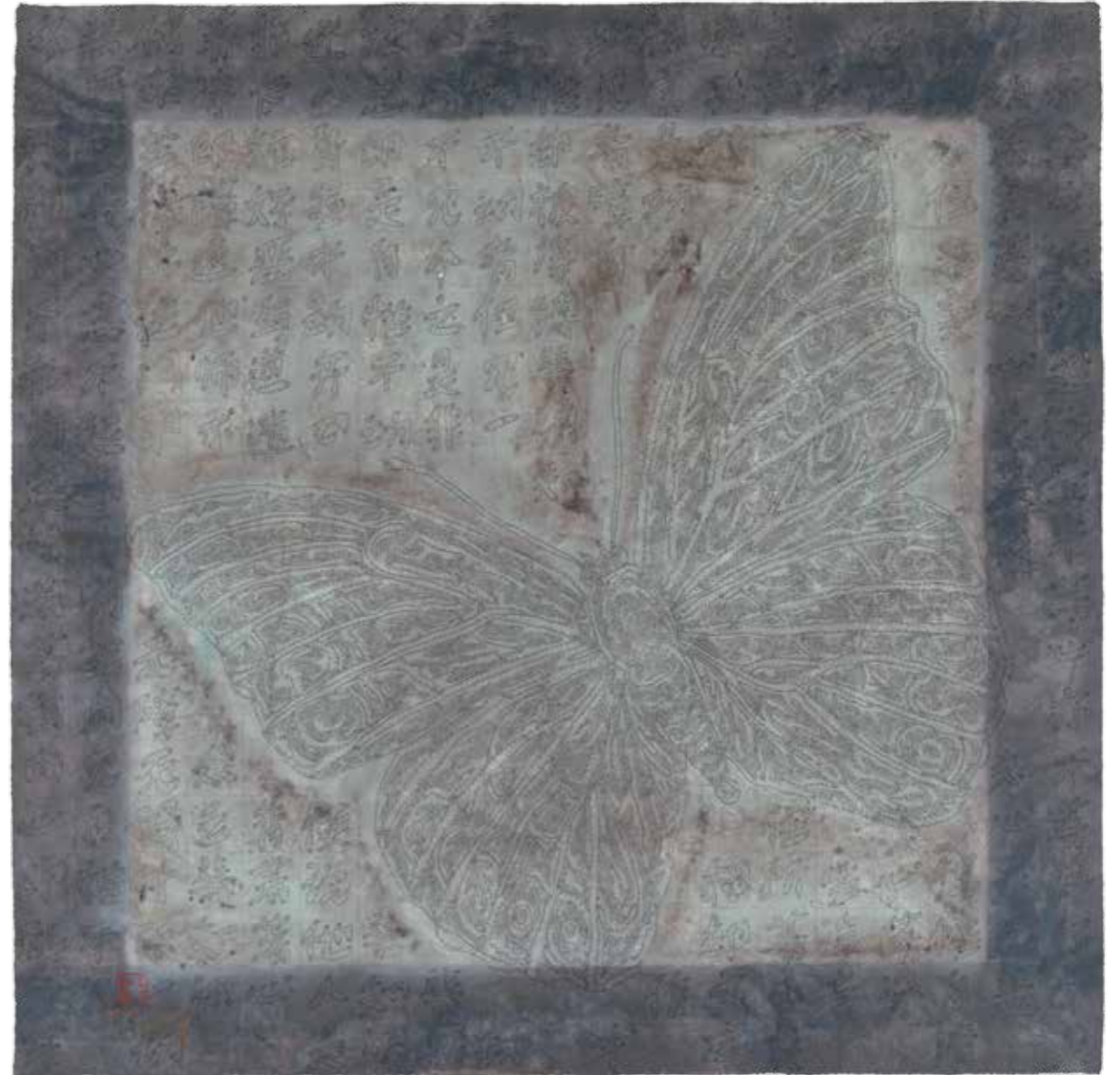
**Phoenix (凤凰 – Fènghuáng)** – Sometimes referred to as the ‘August Rooster’, the phoenix is considered superior to all other birds and shares only superficial traits with the Western ideal of the same creature. It is described as being a combination of several different birds, including the golden pheasant, mandarin duck, peacock, swallow, parrot, and crane. Symbolising high virtue and grace, the phoenix has been affiliated with royalty and weddings and is often pictured with the dragon. The pair together demonstrates a happy union between husband and wife, the phoenix representing the female *yin* energy of the two.



DEER  
2014  
96 X 95 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER



BUTTERFLY 1  
2014  
95 X 96 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER





THE LANGUAGE OF BIRD 3  
2013  
96 X 95 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER



SCRIPTURE DEER 2  
2014  
95 X 96 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER





BIRD 1  
2014  
95 X 96 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER



BIRD MOUNTAIN  
2014  
95 X 96 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER



DEER  
2013  
131 X 151 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER





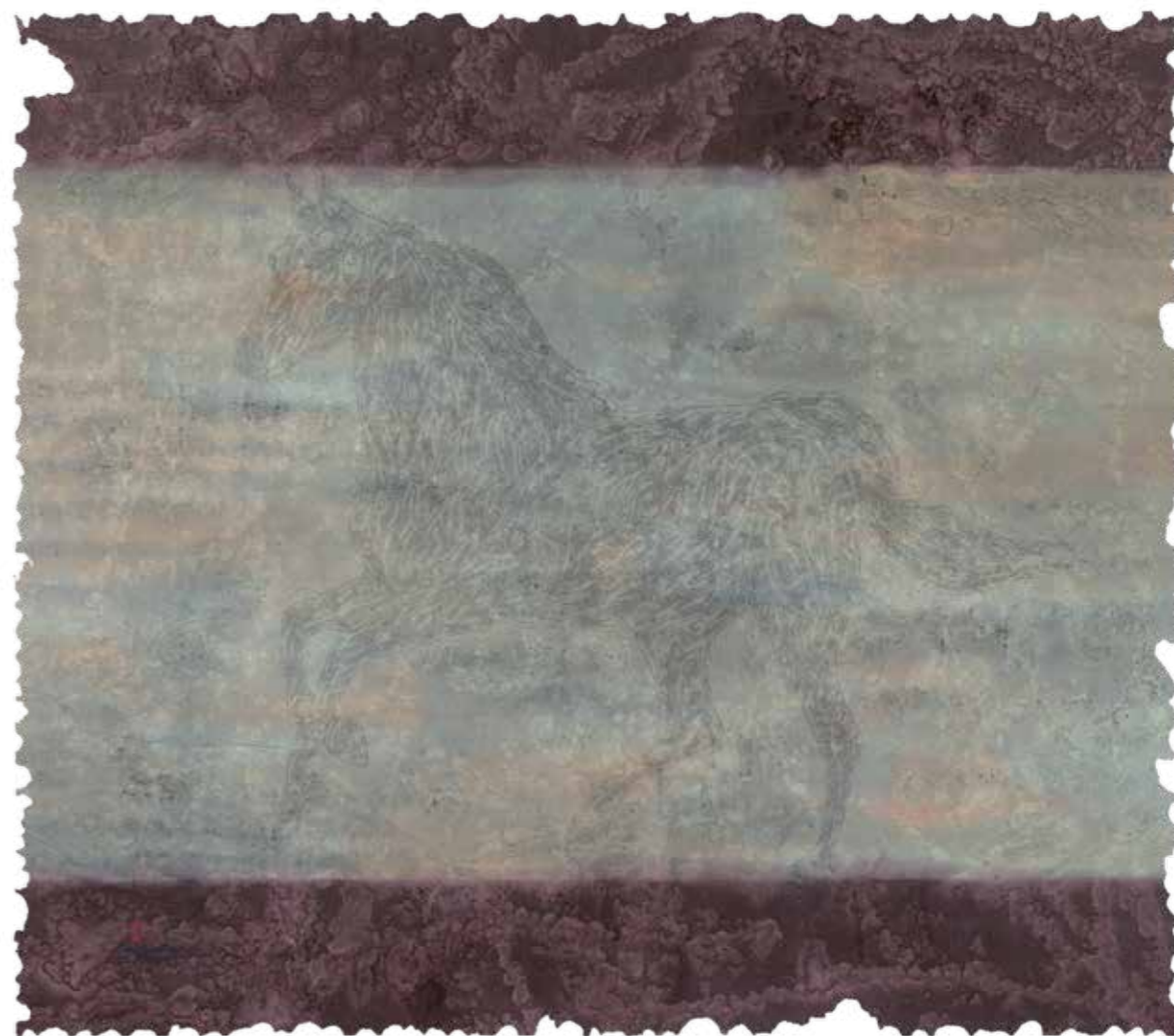
THE LANGUAGE OF HORSE 1  
2014  
108 X 136 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER



MOUNTAIN ON A CAR'S BACK 1  
2014  
101 X 136 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER

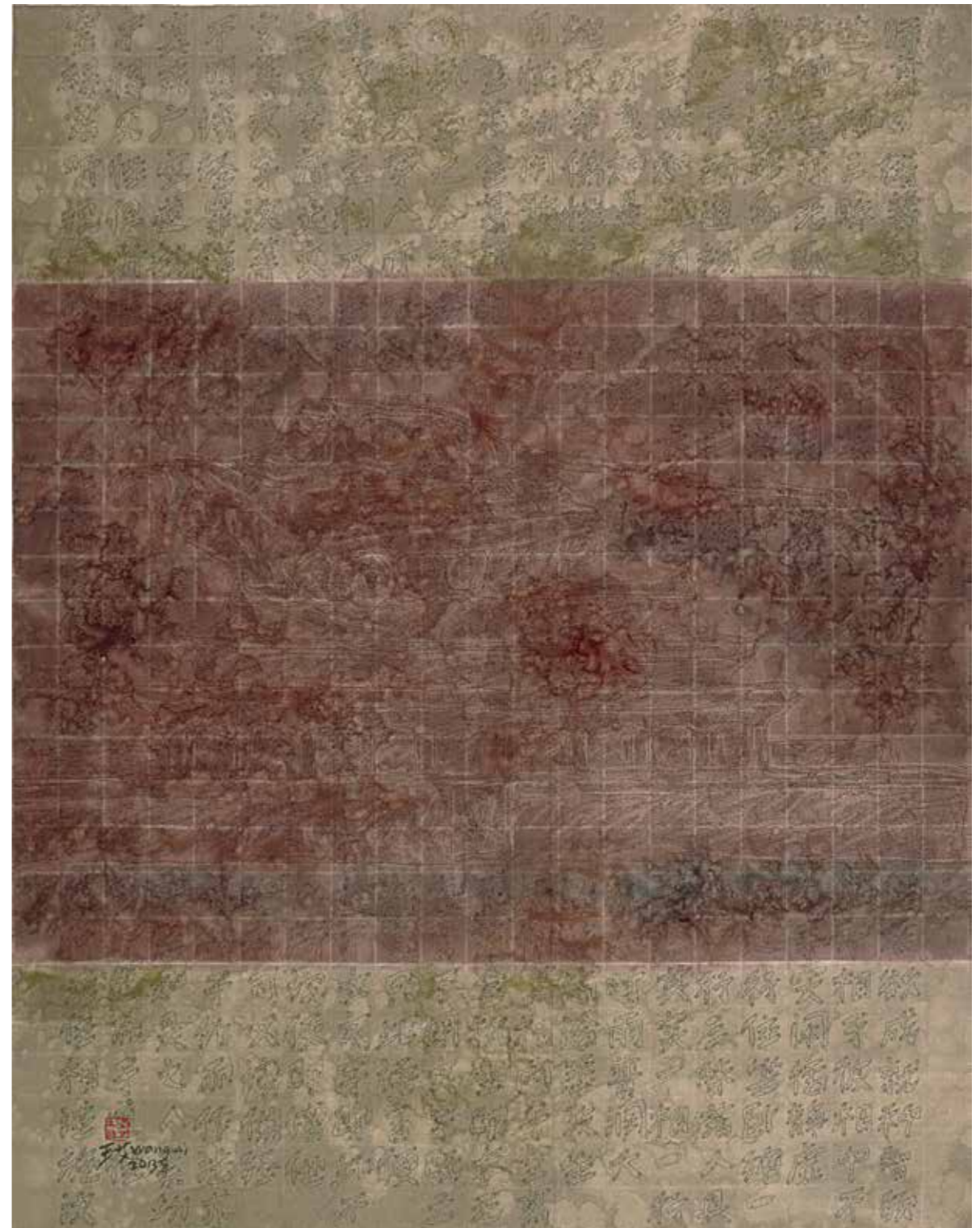


EMPTY HORSE  
2014  
134 X 150 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER





ROLLED OVER BY POWER  
2013  
136 X 106 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER



PHOENIX 2  
2014  
95 X 96 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER





SCRIPTURE DEER 3  
2014  
95 X 96 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER



EMPTY MOUNTAIN 3  
2014  
52 X 67 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER





EMPTY MOUNTAIN 4  
2014  
52 X 67 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER



EMPTY MOUNTAIN 2  
2014  
97 X 68 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER





MEDITATION 2  
2014  
52 X 67 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER

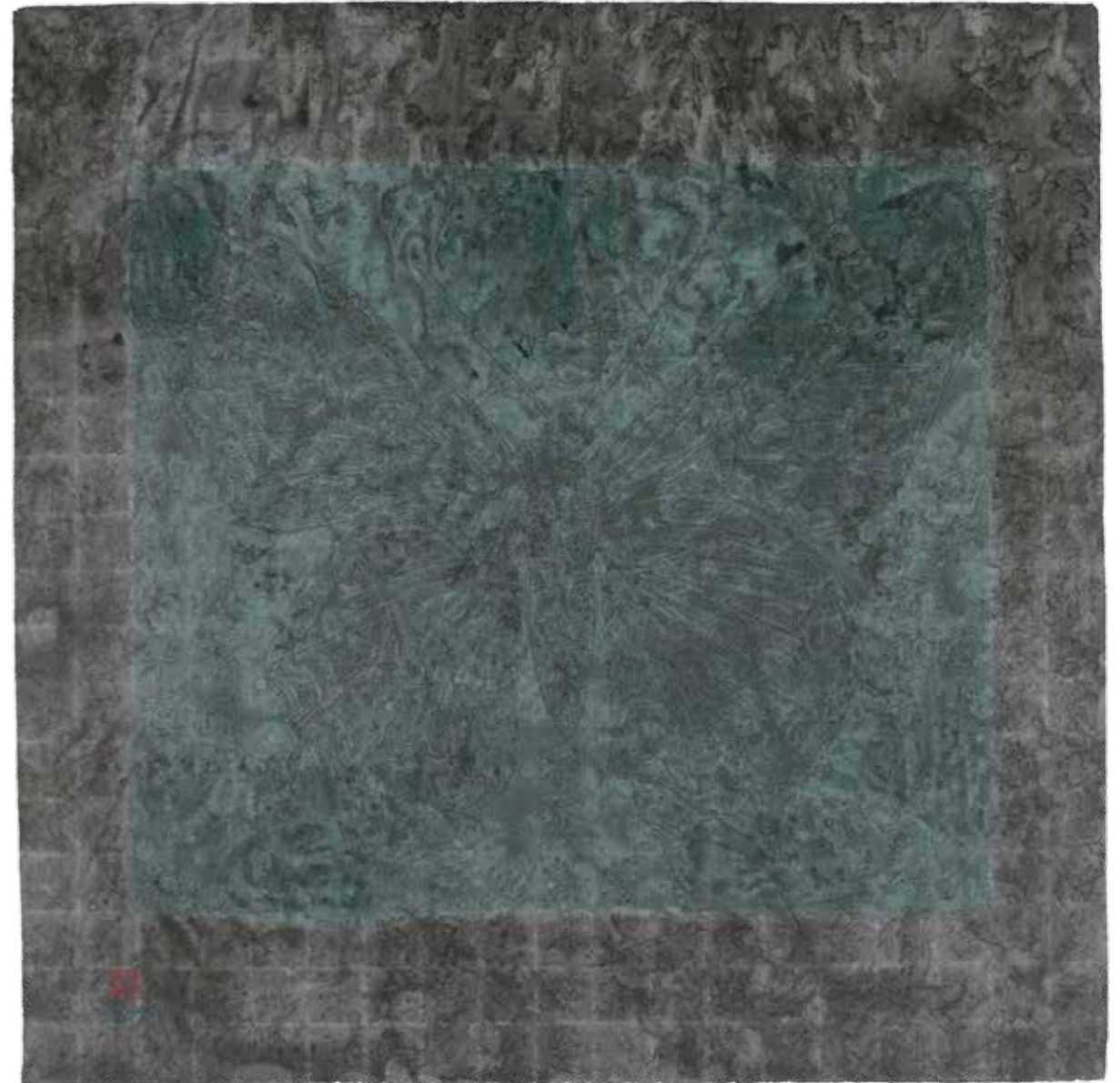




BIRD 2  
2014  
67 X 79 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER



BUTTERFLY 2  
2014  
95 X 96 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER

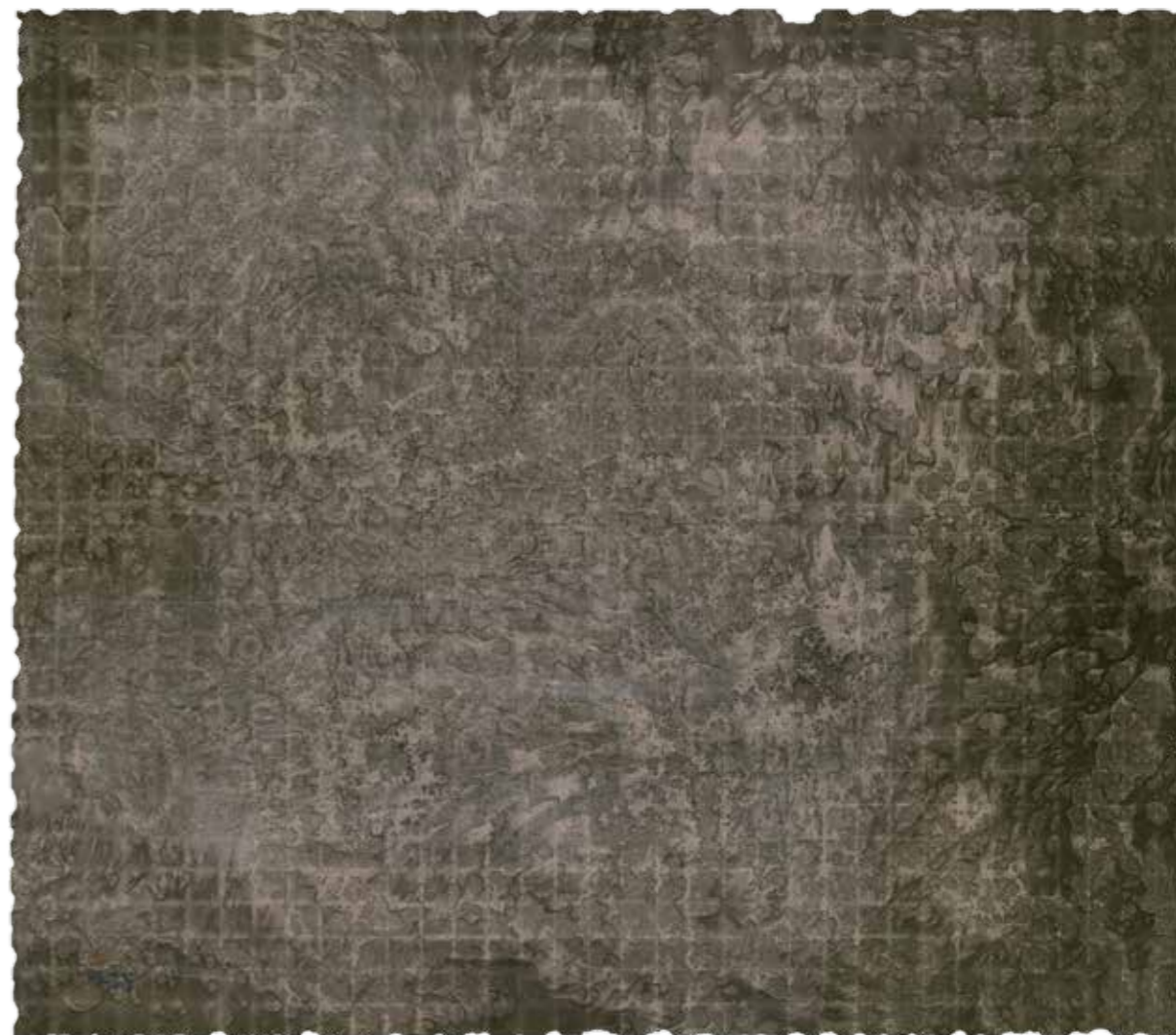


MECHANICAL MOUNTAIN  
2015  
106 X 136 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER





CONCEALED MOUNTAIN 3  
2010  
154 X 175 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER



SCRIPTURE DEER  
2014  
136 X 106 CM  
MIXED TECHNIQUE ON RICE PAPER



# BIOGRAPHY

# WANG AI



**Wang Ai was born in 1971 in Huangyan, Zhejiang Province, PRC. He currently lives and works in Beijing.**

Wang Ai is a poet, artist and fiction writer. During his youth he learned art and poetry under the influence of his father and older brother. He began publishing poetry in the mid-to-late Eighties and in the early Nineties he worked for an animation company in Shenzhen. In 1994 he moved to Beijing and resided in the Yuanmingyuan Artists Village. During the Nineties he won poetry prizes and co-edited the independent poetry journals Biaozhun (Standards) and Shiyi (Poetic Craft). He also wrote a full-length novel Sijiao-chaotian (Four Feet Turned Skyward) and a collection of novellas entitled Sheshi-wushidu (50 Degrees Centigrade). His poetry collections include Qingrou de yuyan (Svelte Discourses), Meng de gaikuo (Encapsulation of Dreams) and long poems Kuanghuanjie (Carnival) and Hailuoyin shidai (Age of Heroin). After 2000 he wrote the poetic suite Nanfang (Southland). He has also written more than ten pieces of art criticism.



## SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:

**2015**

Hidden Wisdom, Hua Gallery, London

**2014**

Journeyman Artist- Wang Ai Solo Exhibition, Huitong Contemporary Gallery, Beijing

No Contrivance No Reins, Contemporary Culture and Art Exhibition Century Altar Exhibition Space, Beijing

Shuffling The Cards: The 6 Round, Kammerhof, Gunmden, Austria

The first 70 ink painting exhibition, JinLing Art Center, Nanjing

**2013**

Wedge (the second time), Contemporary Art Exhibition Mirror Gallery, Beijing

Castle Resident Art Project - Wang Ai Paper Shows, Vichtenstei, Austria

SHUFFLING THE CARDS 3rd Round, Hipp Hulle Gunmden, Salzburg, Austria

Art And Fashion Copais Fashion Industrial , Shen Zhen  
Wedge - Young Artists Exhibition, Sui feng Art Gallery , Beijing

Special Exhibition of Chinese Contemporary Artists, Tokyo Chinese Art Center,  
Tokyo, Japan

Asia Contemporary Art Show, JW Marriott Hotel, Hong Kong

Encounter Taipei: Contemporary Poets' Painting Exhibition, STARTS' Studio, Taipei

**2012**

The First Contemporary Art 'Weibo' Exhibition, Songzhuang Art Center, Beijing

Echoes of The Sea: Chinese Contemporary Poet Art Exhibition, Fangyuan Gallery,  
Qingdao

Ibn Battuta - Inspirations After 7th Century, Chinese Artists Paint the Spirit Moroccan,  
People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, Beijing

Shuffling The Cards: Chinese Contemporary Art Reloaded, Hilger BROTKunsthalle,  
Vienna, Austria

Fidgety: Art Exhibition, Mirror Gallery, Beijing

Northern Latitude 39.8 N, Mirror Gallery, Beijing

Beyond, Babu Space Shenzhen, Beijing

The 1005th Friday, NO.1 Shao Garden, Fuzhou

A Picture -14 Contemporary Artists' Invitation Exhibition, Mirror Gallery, Beijing

N Degree of Sight. Graphics meets Cars, Chongqing Shangchao Gallery, Chongqing

Calm, Red Gate Avant Guard Art Exhibition, Red Gallery, Fuzhou

**2011**

Lexical Field, Shenzhen

Poetic School , Chinese Contemporary Poet Painting Exhibition, Yu Ao  
Contemporary International Art Center, Chongqing

The Poetry Sound Painting and Calligraphy Exhibition Across the Straights, Fujian

Painting and Calligraphy Academy, Fujian

**2010**

Rhetoric - Chinese Contemporary Poets Painting Exhibition, Chuncui Art Space, Beijing

Width 2, Beijing Contemporary Art Gallery, Beijing

**2009**

Focus on Water and Ink-Chinese and India International Water and Ink Exhibition,  
Taj Mahal Gallery, New Delhi India

Structure and Deconstruction, Capital Art Center, Taipei

Location - Oil Painting Exhibition, Wenjin International Art Center, Beijing

**2008**

Writing Painting, Ying Gallery, Beijing

Pattern - 1001 Gallery, Shenzhen

Chinese Contemporary Poet Art Exhibition, Central Fine Art Academy, Beijing

Chinese Contemporary Youth Painting Exhibition, Mayor's Gallery, Austria, Austria

**2007**

The First Biennale of Chinese Character, Chinese Character Space, Beijing

Free Riding, Studio Open Exhibition, Huantie Yixian Space, Beijing

Violation, Huantie Art Museum, Beijing

Chinese Most Promising Young Artists Exhibition, RAAB Gallery, Berlin, Germany

Chinese Character, Chinese Character Space, Beijing

Inserting Poems, Chinese Contemporary Poets Painting Exhibition, Beijing XinRui Art Planning Space, Beijing/Yishihousu Gallery, Nanjing

**2006**

Secrete Speed Up, Huantie Art Zone Group Exhibition, Mocha Space, Beijing

Beijing Background, Dashanzi International Art Festival, Huantie ArtZone, Beijing

# WANG

# AI HIDDEN WISDOM

CURATED BY: DAGMAR  
CARNEVALE LAVEZZOLI

EDITOR: SASHA STODDARD

DESIGN: NICHON GLERUM



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