

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Guo Fengyi

12 Rue de Grand Cerf, Brussels
January 22– March 9, 2019
Opening January 22, 6 – 8pm

Gladstone Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of works by Guo Fengyi, the artist's first exhibition with the gallery since announcing their representation in 2018. This show visually and conceptually explores the three major bodies of work that Guo created during her lifetime, and demonstrates the breadth and complexity of her ever-explorative practice and long-lasting impact on contemporary Chinese art.

Born in 1942 in Xi'an, China, Guo was a self-trained artist who did not begin her artistic career until the latter portion of her life. Guo worked at a rubber factory until the age of 39, when she developed severe arthritis that forced her into early retirement. As a way of alleviating pain and hoping to continue working with her hands, Guo started to practice qigong, a Chinese system of physical exercise and breath control connected to tai chi. While engaging in qigong, Guo would enter into a hallucinatory state of being that prompted a series of transcendent visualizations. Guo would attempt to capture the figures she saw on various scrolls, both small and large scale. This practice of artmaking helped Guo connect her mind and body, an exercise much like the Surrealist practice of automatic drawing, which was developed in Europe during the early 20th century.

Early in her career, Guo created many of her drawings on the backs of calendars and discarded sheets of paper, visualizing imaginative depictions of unseen objects and concepts: human organs, the underworld, and energy channels. She then began to use readymade Chinese scrolls to make ornate, free formed drawings, mostly in black and white, that helped Guo formalize her signature stylistic approach to drawing. She used these scrolls in untraditional ways, however, enabling Guo to employ an otherworldly method of production that distinguished her practice and ability to invent her fantastical subjects. Guo's third and most prolific series of works were created on rice paper and depict different figures connected to specific locations or powerful energies. This practice led to the creation of vibrant and deeply personal portraits of close companions and anonymous characters alike.

After years of showing her work throughout mainland China, Guo began to receive international recognition for her artistic practice through a series of important museum exhibitions and collaborations, at venues and festivals, including the Gwangju Biennial (2010); The Museum of Everything, London (2009), Mori Art Museum, Japan (2009); Kunsthaus Graz, Austria (2007); Shenzhen Biennial (2006); Taipei Biennale (2005); Yokohama Triennial, Japan (2005); Prague International Biennale of Contemporary Art (2005); and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Lyon, France (2004). In 2002, Guo worked with Judy Chicago on a multi-venue event for Long March Project.

Guo's works depict a series of elaborately drawn characters, such as dragons, mythological figures, ornately dressed humans that embodied both humanoid and otherworldly qualities. Designed with exacting details and vibrant colors, these whimsical subjects also connected to Guo's research of *I Ching* (*Book of Changes* in English), an ancient Chinese divination text and the oldest of the Chinese classics. The subjects she imagined relate to traditional Chinese systems of thought, namely cosmology, divination, acupuncture energy maps, sage kings, geomancy and dynastic grave sites, all of which have become dispensable in a modernizing China.

After her death in 2010, the Contemporary Art Gallery in Vancouver, Canada organized the first North American survey of Guo's work that opened in 2012. Other group exhibition venue highlights after her passing include The Museum of Old and New Art, Tasmania, Australia (2017); Kunsthal Rotterdam (2016); Carnegie International, Carnegie Museum of Art (2013); Hayward Gallery, London (2013); The 55th Venice Biennale (2013); and the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco (2012).

Claudia Comte
515 West 24th Street
January 11 – February 16

Ian Cheng
530 West 21st Street
January 31 – March 15

Paloma Varga Weisz
130 East 64th Street
January 12 – February 16

For further information, please contact Andrew Huff: ahuff@gladstonegallery.com
Brussels gallery hours: Tuesday–Friday, 10am–6pm and Saturday, 12pm–6pm
New York gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 10am–6pm