

T H E A R T O F

真 善 忍

ZHEN

Truth

SHAN

Compassion

REN

Tolerance

Exhibition Guide

Galleri Öbergska, Styrso

Introduction

The Art of Zhen, Shan, Ren (Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance) was first conceived in 2003. It consists of oil paintings and Chinese watercolours by a diverse group of artists from around the world who share a vision. That vision was initially articulated by the project's organiser, sculptor and painter Zhang Kunlun. It grew out of the crucible of his own poignant experiences when he was incarcerated in China as a prisoner of conscience. Zhang, who practises the spiritual discipline of Falun Gong, was made to plumb the depths of suffering when he was tortured physically and mentally in the Chinese labour camp system – China's answer to the Soviet gulag. Afterwards he was able to mend his body and soul by practising the spiritual discipline for which he was persecuted and by that which he had explored and taught for decades in his life – art. By 2004 Zhang had brought together other artists whose experiences paralleled his own or who shared his concerns. They all felt a call to give their voice – visually – to the experiences of people in China who had, merely for their beliefs, become targets of what one leading human rights lawyer has labelled as a “terrible form of genocide”.

Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance are universal principles. These principles are the cornerstone of human morality and the foundation of peace and freedom that transcend time and space, culture, religion and politics.

The exhibition captures the interest of a wide range of people. It appeals those who appreciate new explorations of the fine arts, to those who are interested in the relation of art to our society, and to those who are more broadly interested in the human experience and in the human capacity to overcome adversity. Those who are concerned with the contemporary world, particularly in China, will find a special importance in the issues the painters have engaged. Much of what this art depicts is currently unfolding and, indeed, is drawn from real events. That is why the exhibition is particularly timely and relevant today.

The technique of painting and the style of the paintings are mostly classical. The artists apply classical oil painting techniques once used by the old masters. Thus the artists refer to their art form as New Renaissance. Several other works also involve classical Chinese motifs, and are painted on silk or paper.

Finally, the exhibition is also a tribute to the timelessness of a sacred art. These works are not meant so much to entertain or delight, as to spark a reflection, inspire the soul and ennoble the spirit. This art is meant to benefit as well as to inform. The viewer is reminded of the power of the human spirit and of the capacity mankind has to confront and overcome acts of evil. Furthermore, in the tradition of China's Buddhist, Taoist and literati arts, this art seeks to extol moral righteousness and its fruits. It probes into the relation of man with the divine and suggests new horizons for understanding and appreciating this connection. There is a certain purity and depth marking these works. Most of the paintings, if not all, were born from a deep and sustained inner contemplation. Many visitors to the exhibition have mentioned feeling a sense of peace, calmness and beauty when standing in front of these works. Others felt a new-found sense of shared humanity with those in China who, although separated by oceans, share a common desire for goodness and greatness with the viewer.

Biographies of the main artists

Kunlun Zhang

Kunlun Zhang is one of contemporary China's most accomplished sculptors. He is a graduate of the Sculpture Department of the Art Institute of China, and specialises in oil painting and Chinese painting alongside sculpture. He has served as Director of the Sculpture Institute of the Shandong Art Institute, as well as Director of its Sculpture Research Institute. Zhang is the recipient of many awards, and has participated in many exhibitions in China and around the world. He or his works appear in *Who's Who in the World*, *The Encyclopedia of Outstanding Chinese* and *Collected Works of the World's Sculpture*, among other publications. In 2001, Zhang was a prisoner of conscience in China.

Xiaoping Chen

Michelle Chen is an accomplished painter who was born in China and has lived in Canada for several years. She studied watercolour and ceramics at the University of Mariana in 1997, and had her work featured in several private exhibitions. Her work has been chosen for reproduction in a variety of media, including in art calendars, as book illustrations and as book covers, among others. Chen was the recipient of many awards in China. In 1998 she was named an "Outstanding Artist" by the governor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. She won the gold prize in the 2009 NTDTV Chinese International Figure Painting Competition.

Xiqiang Dong

Xiqiang Dong is an accomplished painter who holds degrees from the Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts and the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, China. He was formerly professor and resident artist at the Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts as well as an artist at China's Central Institute of Fine Art. Dong is the recipient of numerous awards. In 1993 his work was displayed at China's prestigious National Arts Gallery, at which it won highest honours.

Kathleen Gillis

Kathleen Gillis is an artist and art teacher with an Honours BA from the University of Ottawa. She has participated in numerous shows in public galleries, arts centres, commercial galleries and alternative spaces in Canada and abroad. She has received grants and awards at the regional, provincial and national levels. Her works are part of collections found in the Canada Council Art Bank, the City of Ottawa, Carleton University and the University of Ottawa. Her solo exhibitions have been primarily installations, land art and large-scale paintings.

Yuan Li

Yuan Li began the study of art at age nine under a professor of oil painting from the Shandong Academy of Art. He has participated in many solo and group exhibitions in China, Japan and Italy, receiving numerous awards and prizes. In 1996 Li was listed in *The Comprehensive Almanac of Accomplishments by International Chinese Artists*. Since 1993 he has lived and painted in Tokyo, Japan.

Amy Lee

Amy Lee is graduated with a degree in fashion design from the Department of Fine Arts at Shandong Textile Institute. She later joined the graduate program of Chinese painting at the Guangzhou Art Institute, and specialized in Chinese portrait painting. She has won many awards for her works, including a Second Place Award at the Shandong Province Art Professionals' Annual Exhibit. Amy Lee was arrested, sent to prison, tortured and force-fed in China for practicing Falun Gong. In 2001 she came to the United States. Currently she lives in New York and works as a fashion designer and painter.

Theme:

Arrival of the Lord Buddha–Buddha’s Light Illuminates Everywhere

1. Buddha

Kunlun Zhang
Sculpture
2002

Professor Kunlun Zhang was born in China in 1941. From an early age, he was brainwashed by the atheist communist ideology. The propaganda had turned him into a stalwart atheist. When he started to practise Falun Gong, his horizons broadened. He began to understand the vastness of the universe, the immensity of the colossal firmament and the profundity of life.

Because of his belief, Professor Zhang was arrested four times. He was detained and tortured for three months. While in a forced-labour camp, he suffered all kinds of torture, including beatings and being shocked with an electric baton, and was on the verge of collapse.

But the brutality he experienced did not shake his faith. With the help of the Canadian Government, his friends and family, and concerned people everywhere, he was released. In appreciation of those taking part in his release, Professor Zhang created this sculpture, the image of the Buddha whom he reveres.

Theme: The Joy of Cultivation

2. Obtain the Fa

Yu-pei Hsu
Oil on canvas
2011

A pure, young Dafa Disciple happily creates kind affinity with all those who have not lost their conscience. Her face is full of joy as she looks at the lotus flower, made with her own hands, that she will later give out in order to help clarify the facts.

3. On the Streets of Manhattan

Kathleen Gillis
Oil on canvas
2006

To draw people’s attention to the brutal suppression in China, Falun Gong practitioners have been raising awareness and clarifying the truth on the streets of Manhattan in New York. Here, a western Falun Gong practitioner calmly meditates in the middle of a noisy Manhattan sidewalk at midday.

Luminous, mystical spheres dot the cityscape, reflecting the woman’s inner peace. Through the disciplined practice of Falun Gong, the practitioner attains a deep equanimity that carries over to daily life, and so she is unperturbed even by the bustle of a Manhattan street.

4. Waist Drum Troupe

Xiaoping Chen
Oil on canvas
2003

The waist drum originated in north western China and was played during traditional holiday festivities and celebrations.

In major cities around the world, people who practice Falun Gong form waist drum troupes to participate in parades as a celebration of traditional Chinese culture. The thundering drumbeats deter evil and cheer kind-hearted people. The artist has drawn celestial beings playing in the clouds, echoing the drum rolls below.

5. Entering the Divine Realm with Purity

Xiaoping Chen
Oil on canvas
2011

This artwork expresses the true state of the body and spirit of a Falun Dafa practitioner during cultivation, and her experience of utmost purity while in meditation. The young child with a pure heart easily sees the truth in other dimensions through his celestial eye.

6. Who Am I?

Nelson Dong
Oil on canvas
2011

Even with all the wealth in the world, this young lady still searches for the real meaning of life. After she reads Stories of Reincarnation, she ponders deeply, and ultimately sees the light on a paper lotus flower given to her by Falun Gong practitioners.

Theme: Persecution in China

7. Unshakeable Faith

Ben Li
Oil on canvas
2014

Falun Gong practitioners follow the universal principles of truth, compassion and tolerance. In the face of persecution and torture, the practitioner's determination is towering and indestructible like Mount Tai; like a blazing sun, the radiating light illuminates the universe.

8. Red Wall

Kunlun Zhang
Oil on canvas
2003

This work records the personal experience and internal turmoil of the artist, Professor Kunlun Zhang. Professor Zhang was imprisoned in China for three months, during which time he experienced physical and mental torture, including brainwashing. The "red wall" symbolizes Chinese Communist totalitarianism, and of the blood shed during the regime's reign of terror. Two white Chinese characters which mean "suppression" on the high red wall represent the suppression of Falun Gong in China—so overwhelming that it makes China seem like one big prison. Despite the wall's seeming invincibility, a crack foretells the collapse of the regime.

9. A Tragedy in China

Yuan Li
Oil on canvas
2004

A young woman sits on the side of the bed, her arms crossed, grasping her sleeves in grief. Her tears glisten in the dim light. The intensity in the woman's gaze, her crossed arms and firmly closed but not clenched hands express a strong determination to continue in her adherence to Falun Gong.

Her dead husband's body lies beside her, one hand over his bloodied abdomen. The other hand hangs down, clasping a torn, unsigned paper that reads "brainwashing papers".

His ankles are still in iron shackles, showing he died in detention. The wounds and bloodstains are the result of the torture he was subjected to before he died. The torn paper indicates that he refused to give up his belief.

This work tells of the courage and sacrifice that has come to mark Falun Gong practitioners in their struggle for basic human rights and freedom of belief.

Theme: Non-violent Resistance

10. The Call of Innocence

Xiaoping Chen
Oil on canvas
2005

Dwarfed by Manhattan's skyline and pummelled by rain, a young girl shows conviction beyond her years. Her eyes penetrate the grey landscape, imparting moral intensity to her placard's plea.

The girl pictured here and many others braved the elements in a remarkable year-long campaign in New York City to raise awareness of the torture and murder of China's Falun Gong practitioners. Thousands travelled to the city from around the world, often at great personal cost, to support the effort.

11. Brightness in the Night

Xiaoping Chen
Oil on canvas
2007

Darkness both metaphorical and material envelops a Chinese street. On this dark night a mother and her child post flyers decrying the oppressive communist regime. The child's meditative hand gesture expresses the inner conviction that inspires such valiant acts.

If discovered in this act, a person can be arrested, tortured, and murdered. Because of the totalitarian grip on print and broadcast media by China's communist rulers, this activity is the only way to protest and speak out against oppression.

Since 1999 the state has marshaled all of its media resources, led by the Ministry of Propaganda, in a nationwide campaign to vilify Falun Gong. The disinformation has bred hatred, distrust, and even violence.

12. Righteous Actions

Ruizhen Gu
Chinese painting
2003

This Chinese painting depicts a scene on a moonlit night in a small village, where a grandmother and her grandchild post messages that tell the truth about the persecution against Falun Gong to their neighbours. The disc-like objects in the sky are Falun, the symbol of Falun Gong.

Theme: Karmic Retribution

13. A Battle between Good and Evil

Zhiping Wang
Oil on canvas
2003

The painting shows a heavenly principle. When evil beings in other dimensions try to manipulate vicious people to persecute Falun Gong practitioners, gods in higher dimensions will not let them get away with it.

The man and woman in the forefront hold signs that read "Truth Compassion Tolerance," and "The Law Rectifies the Universe." The spirits of the undercover police bow before their victims, suggesting that the police, against their own conscience, have been deluded and coerced by authorities into carrying out orders.

14. Punishing Evil Collectively

Jing Wang & Xiaoping Chen
Composed by Kunlun Zhang
Oil on canvas
2015

The evil CCP knows Falun Gong practitioners are healthy mentally and physically. The CCP uses executive, judicial and military branches to harvest organs from living Falun Gong practitioners in secret. The crime they commit is “a form of evil that is beyond this earth”. The CCP have manipulated and misled their people and the international community. It rejected the request of an independent investigation into organ harvesting. When the evidence is revealed, in the face of allegations made by human rights activists in different countries, the CCP officials have nowhere to hide. The organ harvesting has led to legislation, Parliament and Commission on Human Rights to adopt resolutions to condemn the CCP for committing such an atrocious crime.

Theme: The Point of No Return

15. Tears of Grief and Joy

Kunlun Zhang
Oil on canvas
2007

Over 5,000 years ago, human morality had declined to a terrible extent. In response, a catastrophic flood almost wiped out the whole world. Three thousand years later, the Roman Empire brutally persecuted Christians. A series of plagues subsequently killed almost half of the population. Sadly, history seems to repeat itself. Today, the deterioration of moral values has once more fallen to a dangerous level.

Religions in the past talked about “The Last Judgement”. It is said that God would reappear to receive good people into heaven and strike down bad people to hell. “Good and evil shall receive their due reward” is an immutable truth of the cosmos.

The universal principles of Falun Gong – Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance – bring hope to humankind. However, since 1999 the Chinese Communist Party has carried out a brutal persecution of this peaceful meditation practice.

Profiteering from slave labour and the harvesting of organs from Falun Gong practitioners has reduced humanity to a new low. Lies and propaganda have generated misunderstanding and hatred against Falun Gong. Perhaps because of implied threat or financial inducements, world governments, the business community and international media have turned a blind eye to this human catastrophe. Such organisations pay lip service to conscience, freedom of belief and human rights.

The silence is deafening in the face of these crimes against humanity. So it is up to Falun Gong practitioners themselves in the middle of this persecution to raise awareness and bring out the truth. They continually speak the truth to provide an opportunity for the world's people to take a stand and position themselves.

The S shape composition in this painting links the two extremes – good people ascending to heaven and the wicked, facing destruction. This is the judgement that people make for themselves.

The artist earnestly wishes a bright future for those who have the opportunity to see this painting.