

ART

HOW ZHU JINSHI'S BOAT TRAVELS

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After six research trips to China and 100 gallery visits between 2001 and 2012, the Rubell Family Collection gained more than 30 new pieces of contemporary Chinese art by 28 artists. Last week during Art Basel, the family unveiled "28 Chinese," an exhibit in which each artist received his or her own gallery at the family's museum in Miami. "28 Chinese" includes works by established names like Ai Wei Wei and Zhang Huang, but also newcomers like Zhu Jinshi. Despite visual separation, the sculptures, installations, paintings, and videos are thematically unified, addressing contemporary Chinese issues such as cultural practices, politics, and identity.



Walking into the 45,000-square-foot museum, visitors are immediately greeted by Zhu Jinshi's monumental *Boat*. Bamboo, cotton and 8,000 sheets of pale white Xuan (rice) paper meticulously hang from the ceiling, forming a spherical tunnel and stopping just before touching the ground. "I used materials, thoughts, and traditions of the East as a tool to go against the power of West-Centrism," Zhu says.

Using Xuan paper—a material laden with Chinese history and tradition—Zhu creates a symbolic representation of a boat. But more than a boat, the 12-meter long installation also represents a journey. "He challenges the audience to think," says Zhu's gallerist, Pearl Lam. "Why do you have to walk into this boat? Because whenever you walk in you feel very spiritual. It's like an enlightenment."

When moving through the installation, the outside world is quieted; noise is muted, and light is dulled. One's movement through the tunnel becomes a representation of a boat's journey, of the drifting and mixing of cultures.

"Globalization is manufacturing a homogenous culture, and this makes people think about cultural identity," Lam explains. "For him, sculpture and installation are very Western, so he is [trying] to bridge between the West and Asia."

The installation itself has traveled across the bridge that Zhu has attempted to create with it. While his paintings have been exhibited around the world, this is the first time *Boat* is on display in America. In addition to *Boat*, "28 Chinese" also highlights Ai Wei Wei's *Ton of Tea* sculpture and Zhang Huan's politically and socially inclined photographs, as well as Liu Wei's pixilated paintings.

BOAT, AND THE REST OF "28 CHINESE," IS ON VIEW AT THE RUBELL FAMILY COLLECTION THROUGH AUGUST 1, 2014.



CURRENT ISSUE
DECEMBER 2013

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