

<http://www.randian-online.com/en/reviews/reviews-2012/wang-xieda.html>



"Sages' Sayings"

Wang Xieda Solo Exhibition

January 16, 2012

by Gu Ling

(translated by Olivia Jingjing Chen)

(Photos courtesy of artists and gallery.)



Exhibition view.



Wang Xieda, "Sages' Sayings 010," bronze, 93 x 33 x 25 cm, 2005-2006.

It is hard not to have preconceived notions in mind when going to an exhibition of sculptures that is said to be influenced by contemporary ink art. One's head buzzes with echoes of previously seen shows before even laying eyes on the works.

Entering the courtyard of James Cohan gallery in Shanghai, one sees the afternoon sunlight of a winter's day pouring onto the greenery, while a trident stands like Poseidon's staff amid a shallow pile of white sand, surveying the sight.

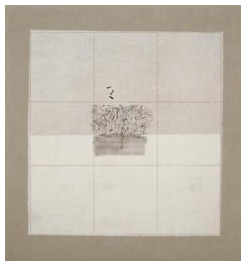
In 2002, Wang Xieda started the Sages' Sayings series of sculptures, which are infused with the playfulness of Alexander Calder and Joan Miró. By turns fluid and direct, the lines in his sculpture seem alive, while the works stretch out like strange copper frames in a far-off, desolate land, as though made for people to climb on. The personal style inherent in the works certainly makes one long to stay. And this set of miniature structures is accompanied by its own mirror image: the divine imagery in ink, and the scattered Chinese characters that seem to leap out of the square calligraphy practice sheets much like fish frolicking



Wang Xieda, "Sages' Sayings 026,"
bronze, 94 x 85 x 30 cm, 2006.



Wang Xieda, "Sages' Sayings 0901,"
rattan, paper pulp, ink, white sand,
light, shadow, and charcoal powder,
288 x 130 x 75 cm, 2009.



Wang Xieda, "Sages' Sayings 0907,"
paper pulp, ink, silica gel and rice
paper on canvas, 120 x 110 cm, 2009.



in lakes. There is also a rattan sculpture hanging from the ceiling that leaves shadows on the white sand beneath, in contrast to the ink painted on the sand. Shadows thus write calligraphy, and the existence of the sculpture is dissolved by its own projection, merging with the "prints" below and mutating with the rise and fall of the daily sun. The adjacent white plaster sculpture exposes rust, a marker of the passing of time.

The "sages" in "Sages' Sayings" refer to all kinds of sages, but the master calligrapher Wang Xizhi must surely be counted among them. The spirit, power, vitality and echoes we see in the sculptures spring from calligraphy. In a previous exhibition by Wang Xieda did with his wife, "Forgetting Craftiness" (忘机) the theme was inspired by an ancient Chinese story about the purity of motives (鸥鹭忘机). Wang Xieda, living off the land on the outskirts of Shanghai as a contemplative practice of life, got natural handmade paper for the exhibition in order to establish some sort of baseline to the paper paintings of "Forgetting Craftiness." Copper, fabric, rattan, sand, charcoal were all natural materials he used in his creations, while the organic silica gel gave his sculpture and paper paintings a transparent and gentle texture. It also works in tandem with the copper to give off a sense of warmth.

Wang Xieda's rustic moon is not the wet, watery moons of Duoyunxuan letterheads that were much beloved by Eileen Chang, but compared to the moons of cities and urban life, it is big, round, and white.