

1. Can you give us an insight into your artistic process?

My painting is greatly influenced by my training in decorative arts in Shanghai; I learned that Chinese jade or lacquer carving is one of the most important art forms in the history of Chinese civilization. In thousands of years, it reached technological heights and aesthetic brilliance. I learnt that the Chinese jade or lacquer low relief carving is a time-consuming and painstaking process in which the artist designs a Chinese landscape on the surface of the material and then subtracted, or cut away, superfluous material until the desired form or depth was reached. The material was usually hard, and the design was compact and was governed by the natural depth of the treasured material. In my gum tree paintings, I strive to model these images to have a sense of three-dimensional volume. My painting style in Australia is also influenced from my research project for my doctoral study at Wollongong University, "Shifting Perspectives and the Body", which looked at using changing perspectives and combining multiple viewpoints to portray different subjects. For example, when I walk close to a gum tree, I look upwards. This way I shorten the tree trunk dramatically and only seeing the distorted trunk and canopy.

2. Is your work pre-planned or created intuitively? How long does each work take to complete?

My work is pre-planned and the time it takes me to complete varies, from a small painting which takes 3 days, to larger one which I can work on for many months.

My creative process starts from thinking what I want to do: concept, research for the suitable subject and select what medium I will use. Once that's decided I will need some sort of reference (such as photographs, or drawings) to start working on a composition. I normally plan a series of paintings, exploring the one theme. The whole process normally takes months or years to complete. But sometimes I have an idea to quickly start on the actual painting to keep it fresh. If the medium changed from acrylic on canvas to Chinese ink brush on rice paper, the creative process is finished within a day.

3. Can you explain your technique; how you manipulate the medium(s)?

All of my works in this exhibition aim to transform traditions of the East and West by using a technique called Sculptural Painting. My painting however is a process of applying this traditional technique to reverse the low relief carving back into painting. I use brushes to 'carve (paint) out' the painting's surface, to produce decorative lines, patterns and shadows as if carving jade in low relief.

Thus, I bring out a restricted sense of three-dimensional volume protruding from the two-dimensional canvas surface, a visual illusion expressed brilliantly in traditional Chinese decorative carvings. Here, Western postmodernist art theory was instrumental in the painting's process of transforming the traditional seamlessly in combination with the Western linear perspective to achieve a sense of space beyond the canvas surface.

My paintings' surface is mostly flat, resembling the graphic design painting techniques I have learnt when I was working as a designer in China (with no computer). I find inspirations from hard-edge abstraction, optical art, pop art and minimalists that have little or no surface texture or markings.

4. Do you keep some kind of ongoing drawing book or diary? Or a collection of images or photographs for inspiration?

I have an ongoing drawing book of some sort, a collection of drafts and photographs and use a diary - list of the things to do in my computer to record my creative ideas and arrange them in order of importance and urgency to help my studio work to be productive.

Most of the time I will only start after I consider a composition is perfect. But sometimes when I have a good idea, I will start straight away to keep the momentum going.

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6. Who are your favourite artists? Who do you draw inspiration from?

Works by Paul Cézanne, René Magritte, Roy Lichtenstein, David Hockney as well as Hokusai and many Chinese masters are in my mind when I am creating my own art.

The style I incorporate in my painting are hard-edged, field colour, optical illusory. To depict gum tree's trunk, I use flat brushwork. Bright colours are influenced by the Western hard-edge abstract, optical illusionism and pop art. While the lines of the smaller branches embodying the free-flowing techniques of Chinese calligraphy. In these ways, my paintings combine and transform the principles of contemporary Western and traditional Chinese Art.

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