



**Drawing the Line**  
Contemporary Artists  
Reassess Traditional  
East Asian Calligraphy

June 1 – October 5, 2003



# Drawing the Line

## Contemporary Artists Reassess Traditional East Asian Calligraphy

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The works in this exhibit explore the continued viability of traditional East Asian calligraphy at the dawn of the 21st century. Highlighted are works by contemporary Asian and Asian American artists who define a spectrum of responses to this challenge. They variously renew, reinvent, and deconstruct calligraphy, which traditionally was regarded as the highest art form in China, Korean, and Japan.

Focusing on Asian-American artists and on artists who maintain studios on two continents, this exhibit foregrounds works that explore transnational cultural identity. Influenced by assorted intellectual and political ideas, these works variously converse with past American interests in multiculturalism, recent Euro-American feminist theory, Chinese New Wave Art that emerged in the late 1980s, a growing philosophical skepticism independently emphasized in Buddhist and Postmodern thought, and an increased consciousness of the global impact of mass media communications.

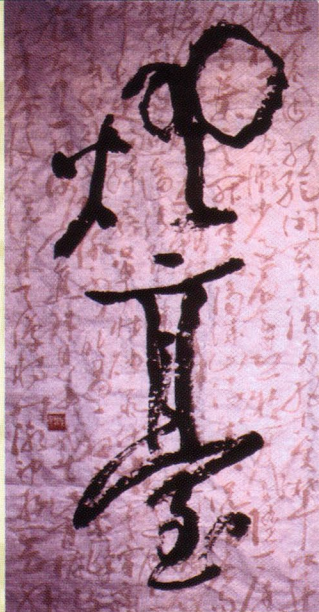
Operating at the intersection of the local and the global, these artists often twine interests in specific cultural heritage with trans-cultural concerns. Exploring the contemporary paths deemed open to calligraphy are Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Wenda Gu, Takenobu Igarashi, So Moon Kim, Hanong Sun Wuk Kim, Linda Nishio, Qin Feng, Kazuaki Tanahashi, Wang Nanming, Jane Park Wells, Flo Oy Wong, and Xu Bing. Divided into three overlapping categories, the exhibition moves from modernist to vanguard interpretations.

### Calligraphy Renewed

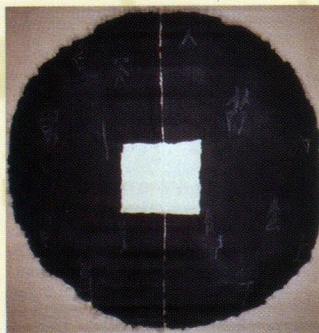
This section profiles works that converse with, but depart from tradition through method, material, and/or scale. While some works parody the weight of tradition through aggrandizing size, others de-emphasize physicality to underscore the changes wrought by time.

### Calligraphy Reinvented

This section features works that function like puzzles or games. Profiling invented letters and calligraphies, these works parody and



Hanong Sun Wuk Kim, *Light House*, 2003. Ink & color on paper. 52.75" x 27"



Qin Feng, *Heaven is Round, Earth is Square*, 2001. Ink on rice paper; bamboo sheet. 68.125" x 68.75".  
Courtesy: Art Beatus Gallery, Vancouver.





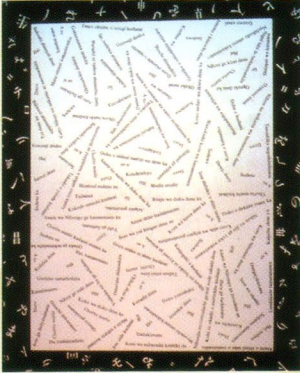
Xu Bing, *Square Word Calligraphy: Quotations from Chairman Mao*, 2001. Ink on paper. 118.11" x 118.11".

probe the complexities of cross-cultural communication. Simultaneously resembling Buddhist koans (riddles), while recalling Marcel Duchamp's suggestion that 'art is a game,' these works suggest that calligraphy and communication – like life – have as much to do with chance as with intention.

**Calligraphy Deconstructed**

The final section showcases works that focus either on traditional calligraphy's text or gesture, but rarely both simultaneously. While some works underscore the significance of human gesture, others replace the hand-drawn with printed, digital, or recorded words. Both approaches allude to the tensions between local and global worlds.

Trekking across conceptual lines that conventionally distinguish between East and West, the traditional and contemporary, sacred and profane, these artists raise issues critical to our time. Layering worlds, words, languages, histories, and philosophies the exhibited works allude to the disillusionments and dreams of cross-cultural communication and understanding.



Linda Nishio, *Watashi wa Nishio Desu* (detail), 1980. Photograph and ink and oil on glass. 30" x 40" photograph; 30" x 44" glass.

**EXHIBITION SPONSORS**

The exhibition has been made possible by the generous support of Constance Lees, Frank & Toshi Mosher, Lillian Chin & William H. Tillson, and David & Margaret Barry.

**GUEST EXHIBITION CURATOR**

Collette Chattopadhyay is a LA-based art critic, lecturer, and curator. She has authored numerous exhibition catalogue essays including contributing to *Shifting Perceptions* (PAM, 2000). She is a member of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA) and has published regularly in *ART Asia Pacific*, *Asian Art News*, *Sculpture*, *Artweek*, *Flash Art*, and *Art Nexus*.



# RELATED EDUCATION PROGRAMS

In conjunction with the L.A. International Biennial, the museum is hosting the following programs:

**Saturday, July 19, 2003**

**Calligraphy Festival: 1 pm - 4 pm**

This free festival for all the family will include calligraphy workshops, haiku poetry writing, guided tours of *Drawing the Line*, musical performances and refreshments. Free. *Sponsored in part by the City of Pasadena Cultural Affairs Division and the Pasadena Arts Commission.*

**Sunday, July 20, 2003**

**Exhibition Tour with Curator: 2 pm - 3 pm**

*Drawing the Line* exhibition tour with guest curator, Collette Chattopadhyay. Free with museum admission. Reservations required. Maximum of 40 people. *Sponsored by the Pasadena Art Alliance.*

**Friday, August 29, 2003**

**Calligraphy Exchange Workshop: 5 pm - 9 pm**

Exhibition artist Xu Bing will lead an exchange workshop with local graffiti artists using his Square Word Calligraphy, a fusion script invented by Xu Bing. Graffiti artists will share samples of their work. Interested artists must apply. Free to participating artists. Maximum of 15 people. *Sponsored by the Pasadena Art Alliance.*

**Sunday, September 17, 2003**

**Korean Calligraphy Workshop: 3 pm - 6 pm**

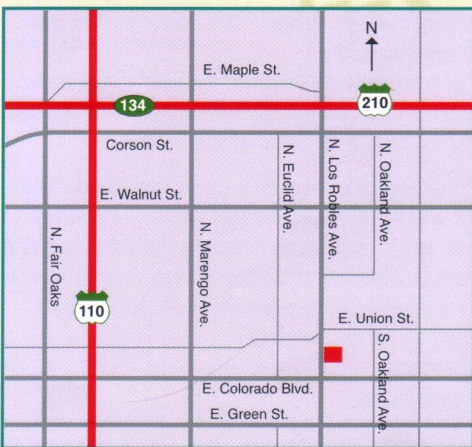
Exhibition artist Hanong Sun Wuk Kim will conduct a Korean calligraphy workshop open to children, teens, and adults. Free with museum admission. Reservations required. Maximum of 20 people. *Sponsored by the Pasadena Art Alliance.*

**Ongoing Calligraphy Workshops for School Groups**

During the exhibition, calligraphy workshops will be presented free to school groups touring the museum. Call ext. 23 to reserve. *Sponsored by The Freeman Foundation.*

For further information about the above education programs, please call 626.449.2742, ex. 40.

Cover Image Credit: Wenda Gu, *Mythos of the Lost Dynasties, #G-Series*, 1995-1999. Ink on rice paper. One of five exhibited scrolls from a suite of ten scrolls. Total measurement of five exhibited scrolls: 29' W x 11' H.



Pacific Asia Museum is open to the public Wednesday through Sunday, 10:00am - 5:00pm and until 8:00pm on Friday. Admission is \$5 for adults & \$3 for students & seniors. Children under 12 free.

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