



Contemporary Chinese Works on Paper

Seabrook Press

Contemporary Chinese Works on Paper 2016

Priseman
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Cai Longfei | Cai Xiaohua | Chen Yan | Chu Shaowei | Dong Zhong | Gao Hao |
Gu Xiang | Guo Tao | Guo Zichun | He Dan | He Tianqi | He Yating | Hou
Zhuowu | Hu Zuhao | Jiao Ye | Kumi Usui | Li Changlong | Li Ma | Li Xiaoqian
| Liao Zongrong | Liu De | Lui Xijie | Su Jie | Sunlei | Wang Chao | Wang
Fenghua | Wang Yigang | Wu ShuNong | Yang Feng | Yang Shuangqing | Yao
Zhihui | Yu Aijun | Yu Cun | Zhang Xiaotao | Zhang Danni | Zhang Lei | Zhao
Jia | Zhong Xiaojing | Zhou Chaowei | Zhou Zhongming |

Curators:

Marco Cali | Robert Priseman | Mengmeng Wang |

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Contemporary Chinese Works on Paper

The 19th and 20th Centuries have been times of great change for China and its people. A terminal decline in the empire during the 19th Century was followed by invasion from Japan in the 1920s, then civil war in the 1940s, and the tumultuous times of Communist rule. Even the 21st Century has been a time of incredible change. In little over one generation China has gone from a poor largely agrarian society to the industrial and economic power of today.

How differing generations of living artists have responded to this is the subject of this exhibition. Prior to opening to the West, fine art in China was influenced by classical European art via the traditions of Russian art academies. In parallel to this, traditional Chinese art has continued to exist, largely unchanged, in a separate world of academic teaching and practice.

Today there is great interest in contemporary art from the west. But most Chinese artists are in the same situation as the artists in medieval Britain were with respect to European art. They just don't see much of it in the flesh.

Although far more nuanced than I set out here, the artists in this exhibition can be understood to represent three major shifts in Chinese life: Those shaped by the trauma of the Cultural Revolution, those who grew up in its immediate aftermath and those who were born under the one child policy.

The Cultural Revolution (1966-76) was a time of suppression, of erasing the past and with it, the individual. Children were actively encouraged to spy on their parents and report them for activities that went against the Maoist doctrine. Teachers and the educated were sent back to the land, to work on collectivised farms or employed as heavy labour in massive construction projects. How some artists

managed to continue their practice is a large part of the story when seeing their works.

The subsequent generation was heavily influenced by this social trauma. There was an invisible barrier of silence between parents and children where certain areas of life were not spoken of. This, of course, was the intention of the Communist project; to abolish the family and make individuals subservient to the state. The arts had also been co-opted into this process, so that taking the lead from the more established Soviet model, existing and new art academies (Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts est 1949, Yunnan Arts University est 1959) taught the communist realism model as the norm. Again, this art form serves to suppress the individual and hold up a collective, and even specifically state level, ideal. For the visual arts this meant heroic figures as model citizens and all creative forms sending out the same message of group, not individual, aspiration. In addition, this generation has seen the falling away of the command economy and the introduction of market forces. However, they have been brought up through an education system that was still in thrall to the traditions of the Communist period. This system although excellent in many respects, is centred on a rote-learning style and continues with a mix of traditional and Communist era Chinese cultural forms, such as regimented dancing routines, stylized singing and lyrics and slogans in praise of this or that subject matter. The youngest artists whose work is seen in this collection, are of a generation for whom, of course, modern technology is ubiquitous. This is a feature of everyone of this age alive today, and not just in China. However, the one child policy, introduced in between 1978/80 and phased out in 2015, gives them a uniquely Chinese experience. This is broadly significant on two fronts. First, these individuals grew up under the biggest shift to a market economy seen in our times and secondly their personal life experience is completely at odds with that of their parents.

On the one hand they have also gone through an education system that is still heavily influenced by the traditions of the old. On the other hand, this generation has been fully immersed in the dynamic energy of market forces. Cities that for previous generations were relatively stable environments are now changing at a rapid rate. Massive buildings, 40 stories high apartment blocks or gigantic commercial centres spring up right across the urban landscape. The low rise, often

quite poor quality rows of three or four floor flats with their narrow streets filled with small business vendors and market stalls have and continue to be, incredibly quickly, swept away, block-by-block.

The second notable significance to this generation's experience, is that they are emotionally and economically tied to the traditions of the historic Chinese family, with its multiple generations and many off-spring. These children were expected to honour and look after the parents and grandparents in their dotage. However, where this burden would be shared amongst many such sons and to a lesser extent daughters, now this situation has been turned on its head over the space of essentially one generation, so that now a single person finds him or herself with two parents and four grandparents. For a married couple, this means up to twelve elderly people to be looked after with at most a joint wage, as well as the expectation of bringing up their own family.

This generation has been, more than any other, inundated with the tsunami of Capitalist, and particularly Western, market culture. This spans all the forms, from film, fashion, music and, of course, art. What they have lived through is more at odds with what their formative years have equipped them with than for any previous generation.

We are at a very exciting time in the development of Chinese culture, and the visual arts in particular. All the drawings included in this collection speak of a very personal response to one of the most extravagant experiments in shaping a nation. The 19th Century was the time of Franco-British cultural hegemony, and the 20th Century was the so-called American Century. During both these periods the common language of the world could be understood as being led by these political, economic and military powers. It is very hard not to conclude that the coming time is one when we will see an increasing influence of Chinese culture throughout the world.

Marco Cali 2016

The Works

















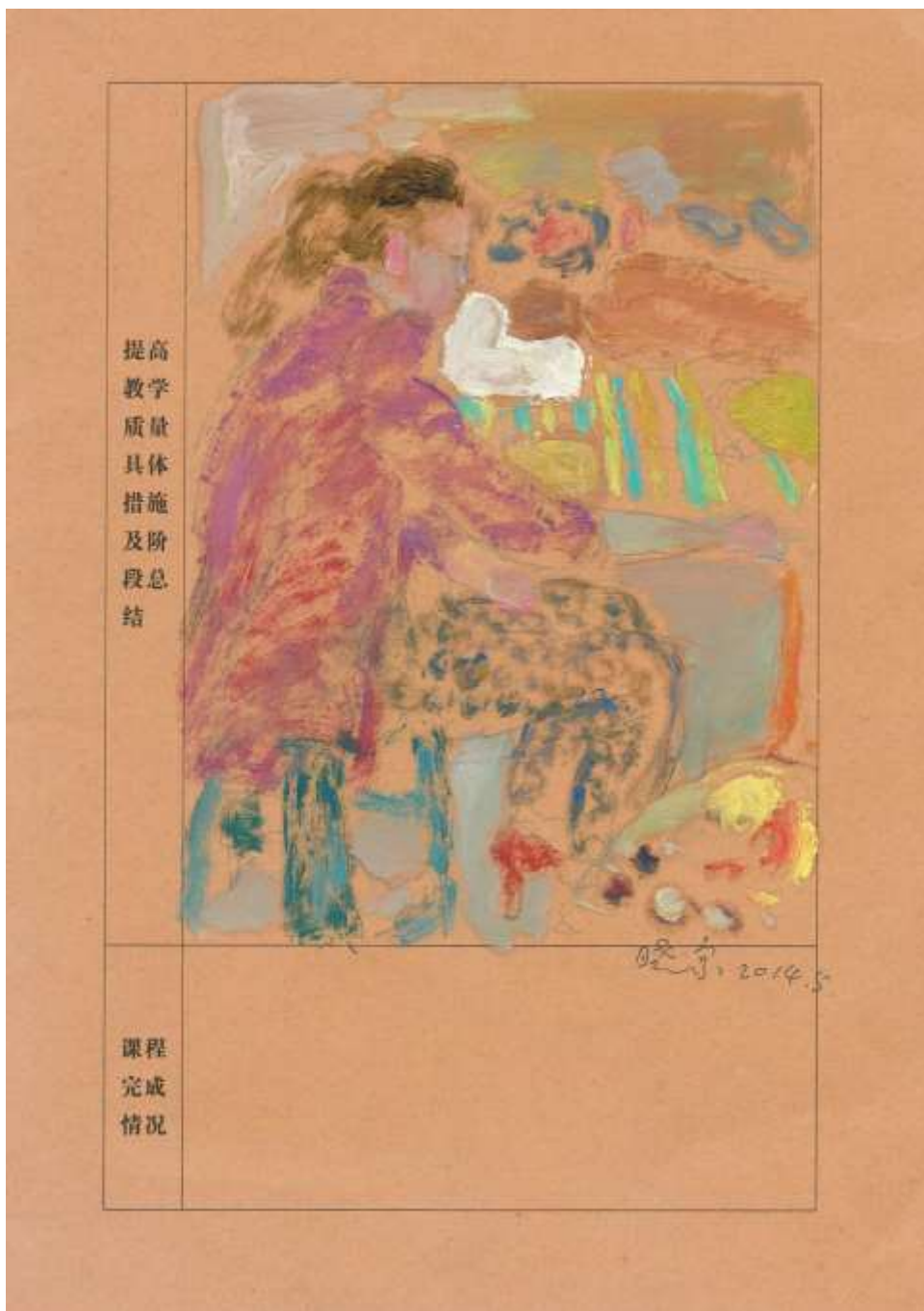












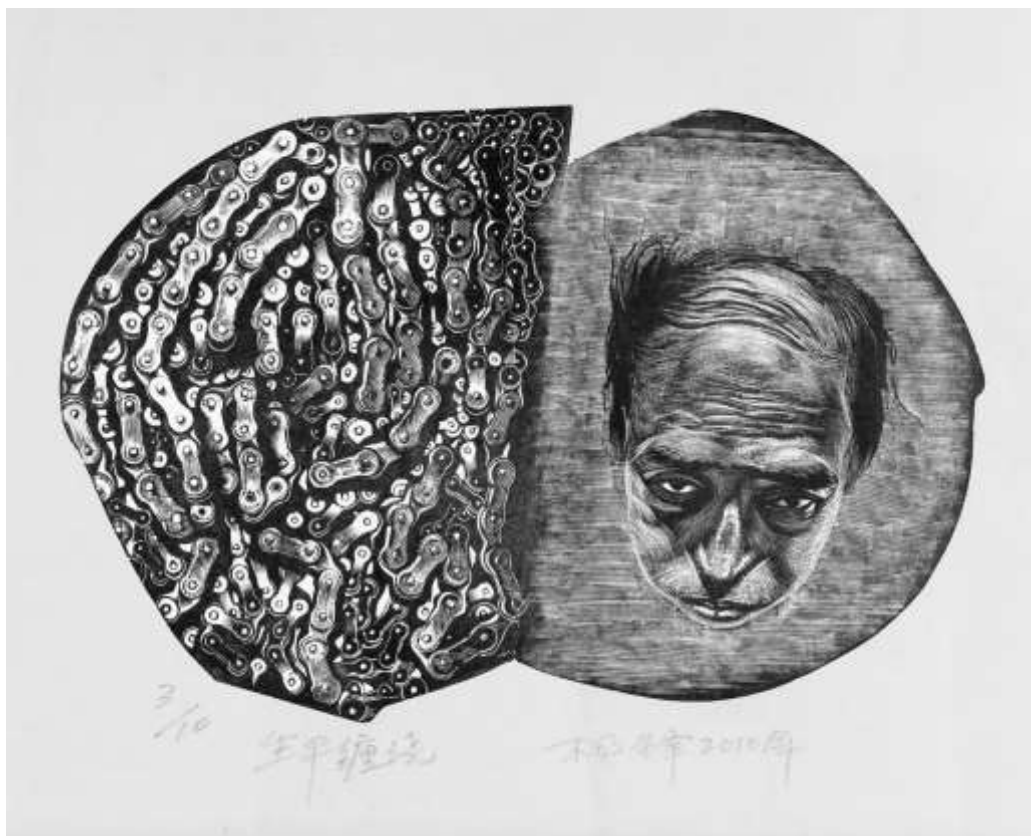
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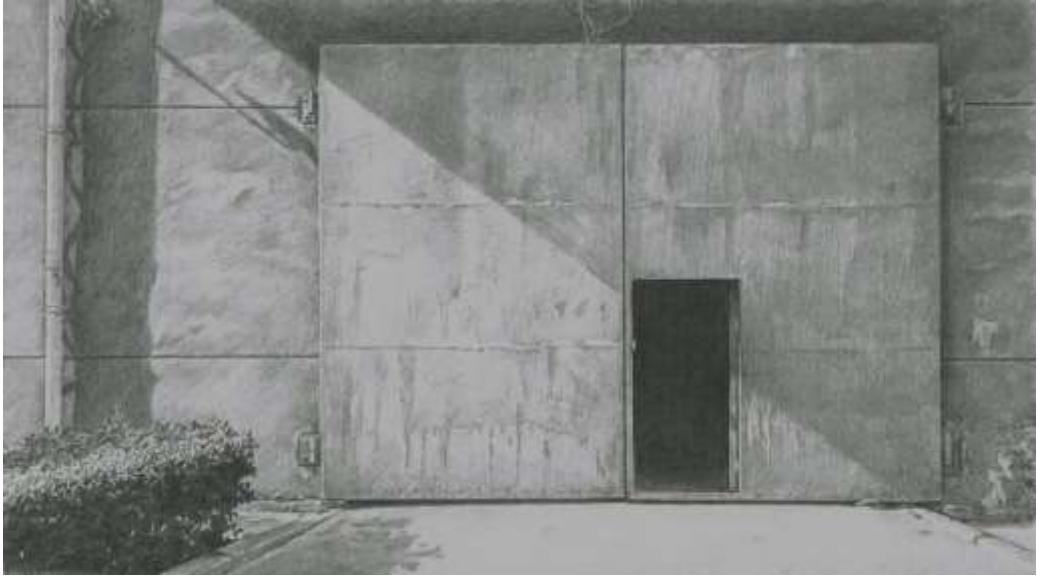


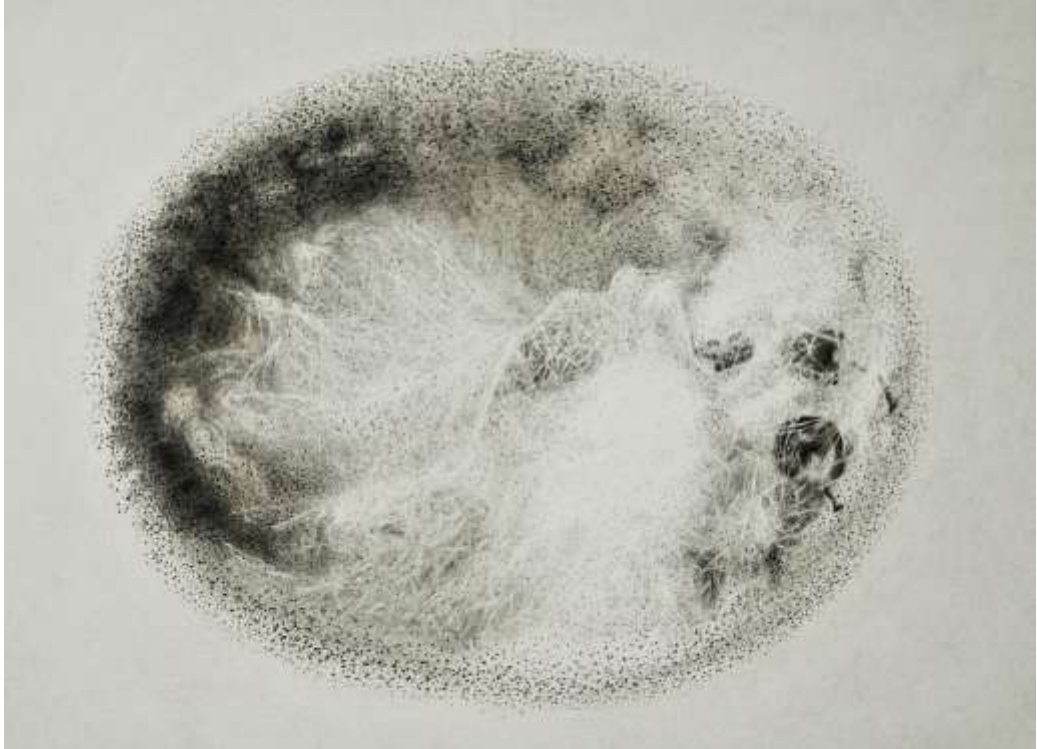




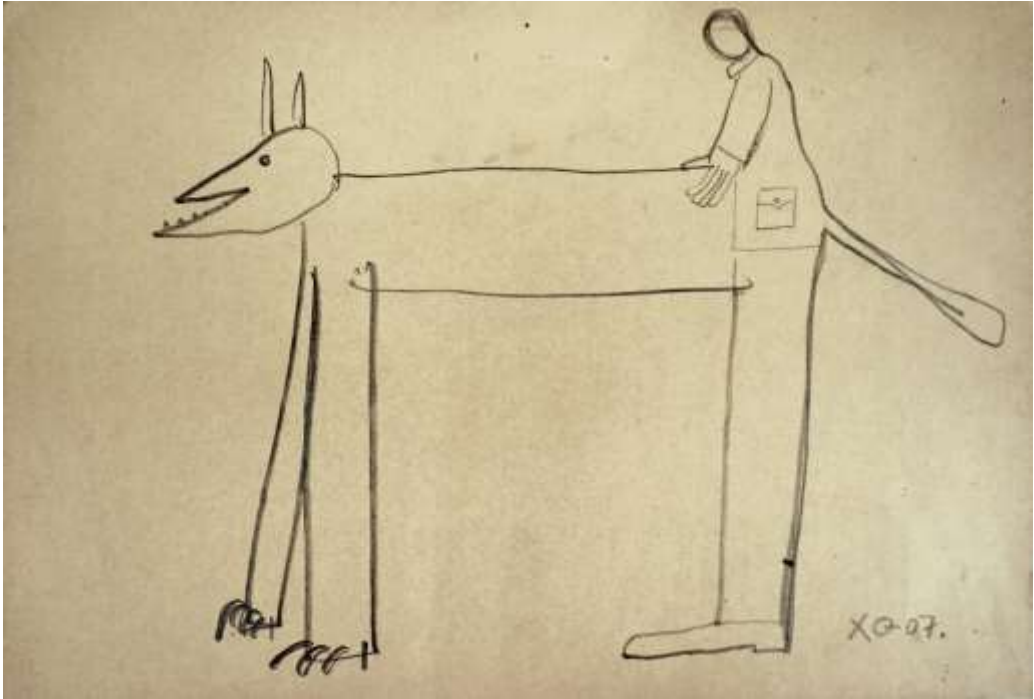






















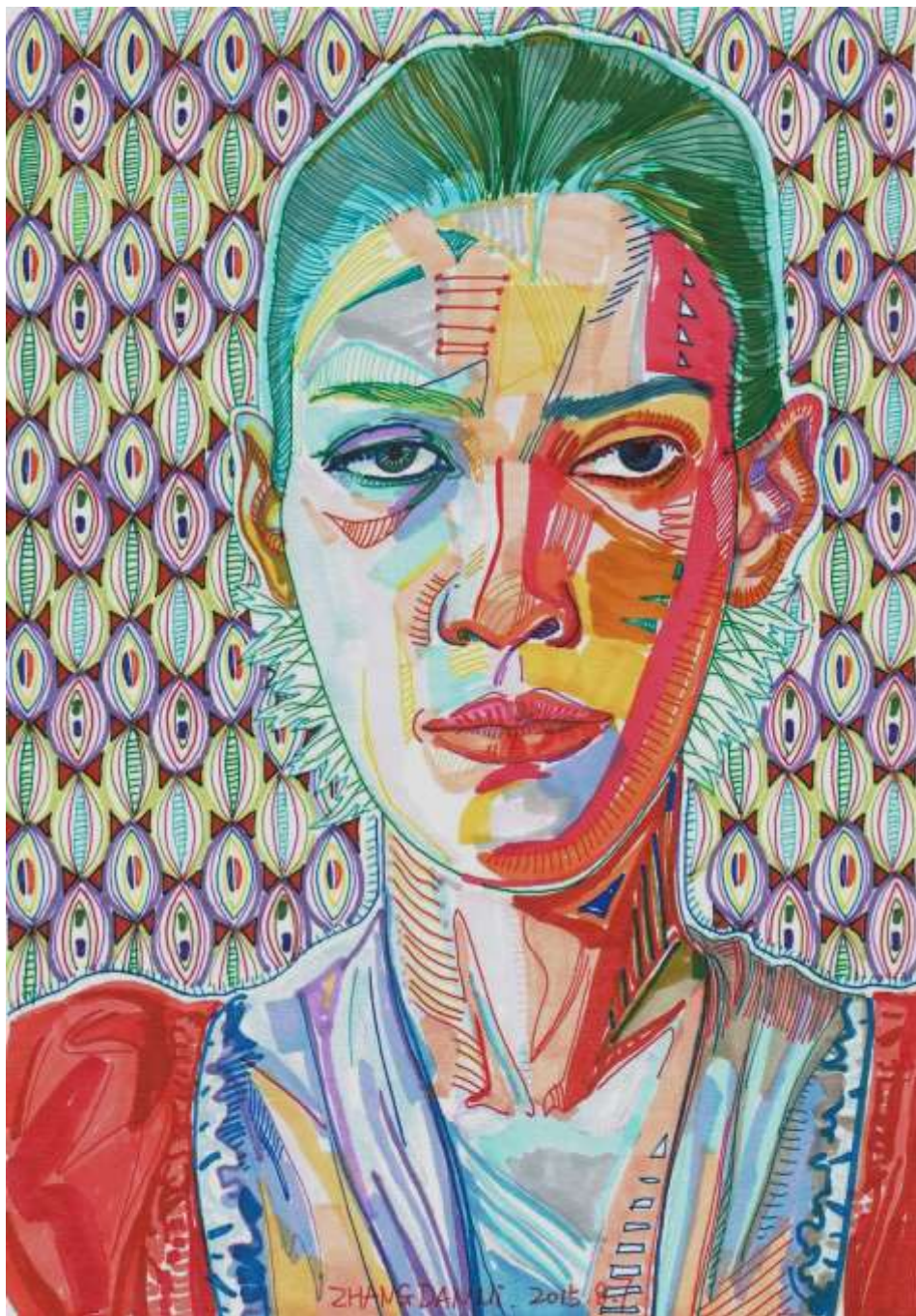










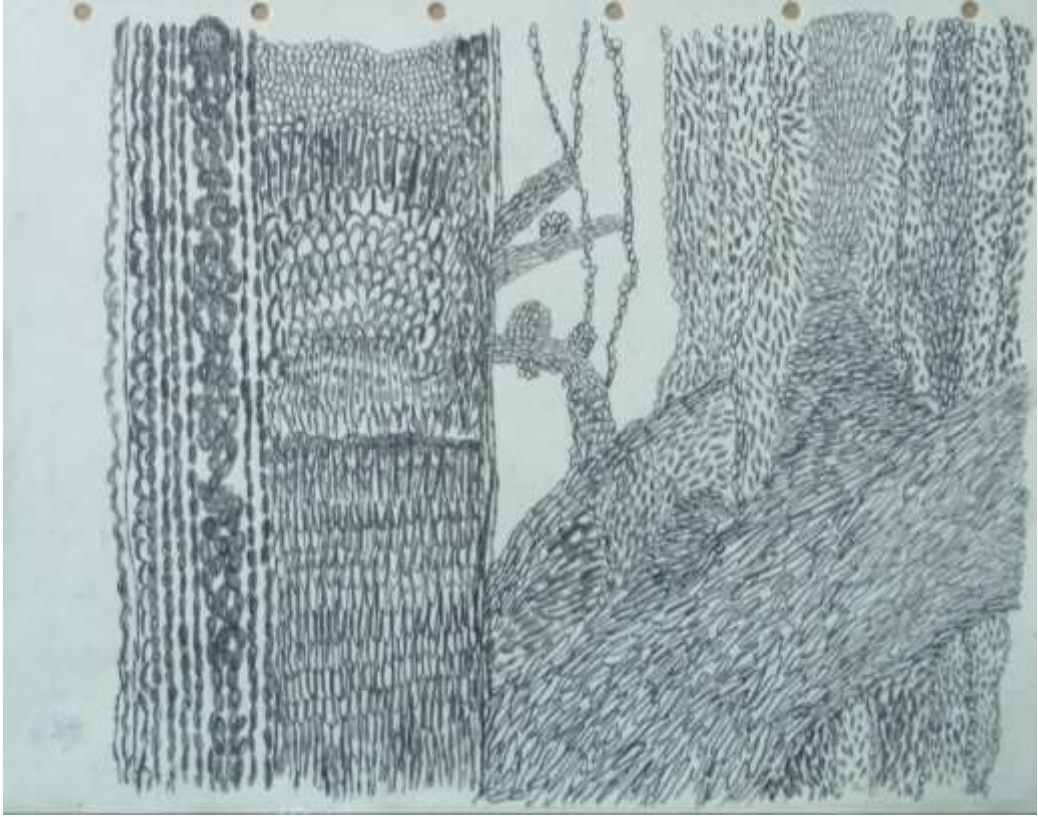


















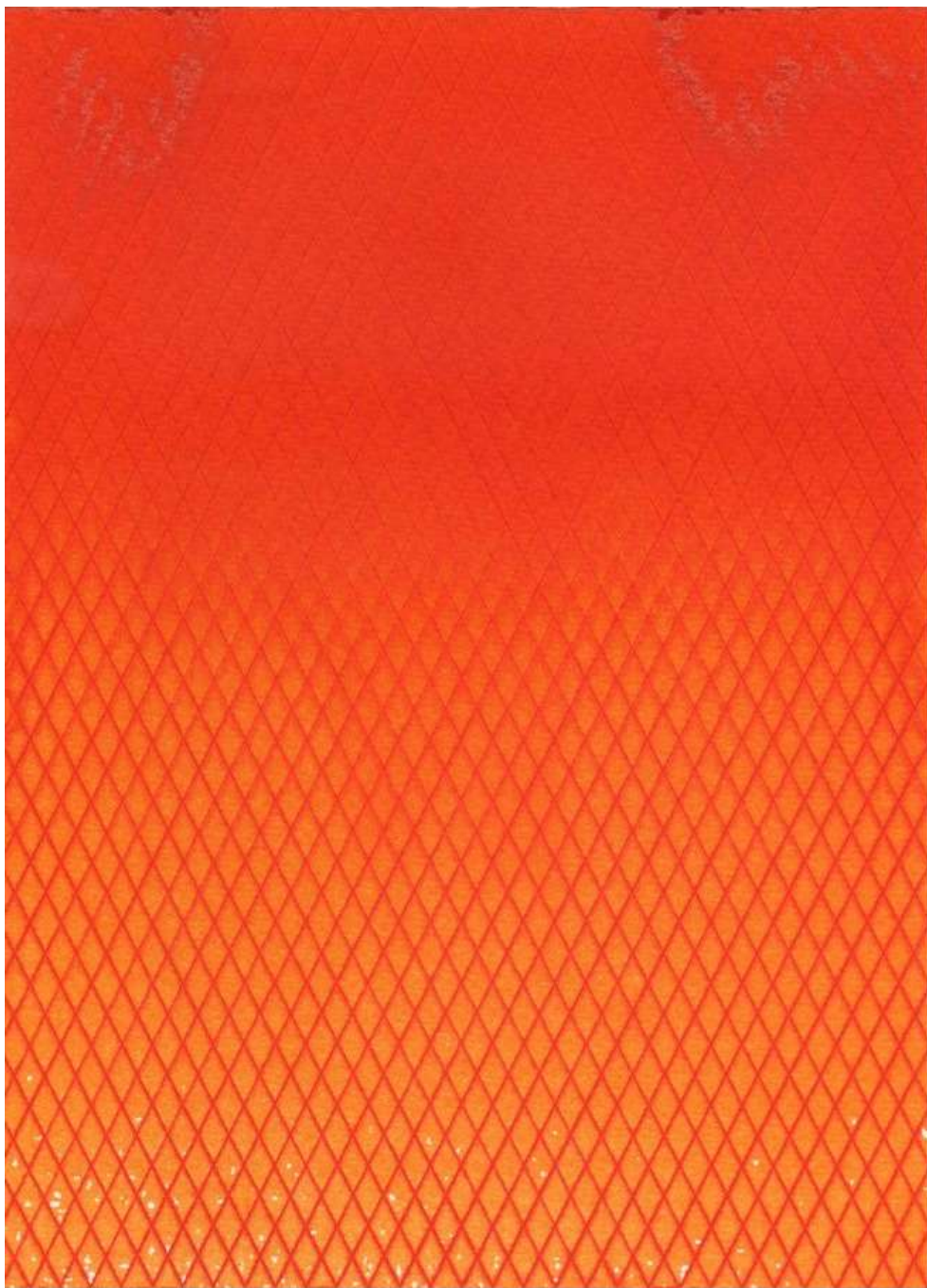




















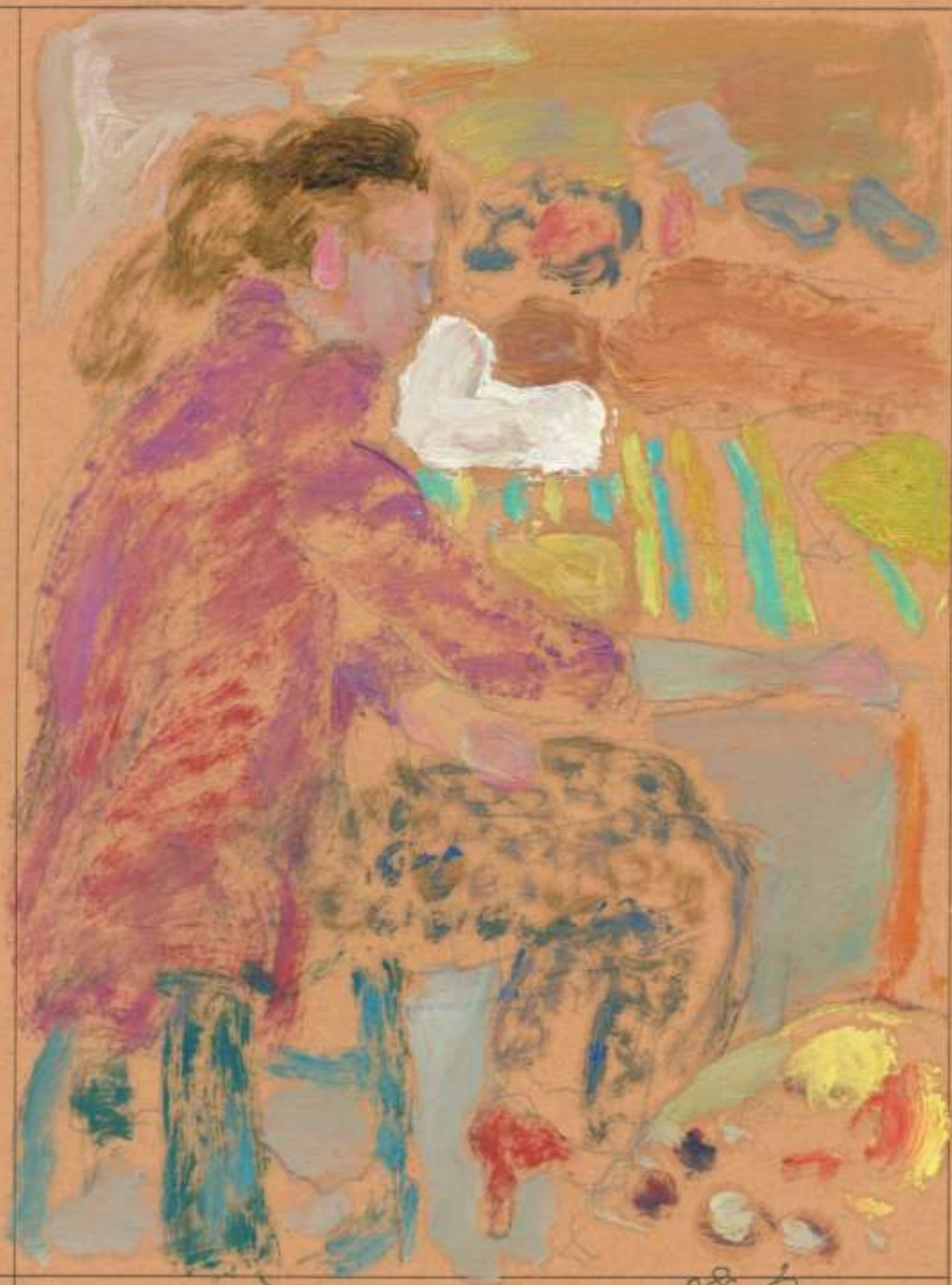
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The University of Suffolk

And all the artists who have helped make this possible.

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总结



晓东, 2014.5

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