

PHILLIPSEX PRESENTS *LIU DAN: MORPHOGENESIS*

The Artist's Most Extensive Solo Exhibition to Date, Highlighting 40 Years of Artistic Evolution

On View at Phillips' Asia Headquarters in Hong Kong's West Kowloon Cultural District from 22 April – 12 May



Liu Dan

Primal Vibrancy, 2025

Ink on Paper, 205x527.4cm.

Hong Kong – 15 April 2025 – To mark its 10th anniversary in Asia, Phillips will present a series of specially curated programmes. As one of the highlights of the celebration, [PhillipsX](#), a selling exhibition platform operated by the global Private Sales team at Phillips, is delighted to present [Liu Dan: Morphogenesis](#), taking place from 22 April to 12 May at Phillips' galleries in Hong Kong's West Kowloon Cultural District. Liu Dan is a prominent figure in contemporary Chinese ink art, and the selling exhibition features 26 important works, marking his most extensive solo presentation to date. The show spans themes such as dictionaries, flowers, rocks, and his iconic 'Grand Landscape' series from recent years. It systematically traces his artistic journey over four decades, revealing how ink art transcends the boundaries between Eastern and Western aesthetics to construct a contemporary spiritual vision that defies time and space. Select works on display will be available for purchase through Phillips' private sales.

Dina Zhang, Head of Modern & Contemporary Art, China, Phillips, said: "We are honoured to collaborate with Liu Dan to present this landmark exhibition at Phillips' Asia headquarters. From his early ink and drawing works to his iconic *Great Landscape* series, Liu Dan has redefined Chinese ink art internationally through his unique artistic approach. His works are deeply rooted in traditional heritage and engage in a dynamic dialogue with contemporary visual concepts, establishing a new paradigm. We look forward to welcoming collectors and art enthusiasts to our West Kowloon galleries to experience this extraordinary artistic journey."

This exhibition showcases a series of the latest creations by the artist, including the monumental *Primal Vibrancy*, which measures 527 centimetres wide. This groundbreaking work redefines the contemporary possibilities of Shan Shui (landscape) as a vessel for Eastern spirituality through scientific inquiry and cross-cultural perspectives. The painting's exquisitely elegant composition transcends mere representation of rock formations, transforming physical forms into ineffable visions that establish a new order beyond materiality, free from



Liu Dan
Sunflower, 2025
Ink on Paper, 200x200cm.

narrative constraints. Another leading highlight, *Sunflower*, employs traditional Chinese ink-on-paper techniques with a drawing-like approach to depict a floral subject. The magnified sunflower pulses with silent yet monumental vitality on Xuan paper, where the rhythmic breath of Eastern ink brushwork seamlessly merges with contemporary visual syntax. Also created in 2025, *Rock from Studio "Xiao Gu Shan" I* depicts a scholar's stone with the artist's signature meticulous brushwork. Viewed from afar, the composition evokes the grandeur of towering peaks and undulating mountain ranges. The upper section of the painting features 'Record of Artificial Mountains,' a text by the late Ming-early Qing dynasty monk Dokushō Shōeki (独立性易), exemplifying 'painting with words' while elevating garden aesthetics to a cosmological dimension.



Liu Dan
Rock from Studio "Xiao Gu Shan" I,
2025
Ink on Hand-Dyed Paper, 71x45cm.

Another standout highlight, *Taihu Rock aka "Yu Ling Long" (from Yu Garden, Shanghai)* (2024), reinterprets the Song dynasty scholar's stone aesthetic through contemporary ink language, offering a transcendent dimensional

dialogue with traditional literati spirit. In this piece, the artist masterfully captures the quintessential "wrinkles, perforations, slenderness, and penetrability" characteristics and material essence of "Yu Linglong" – the legendary Taihu rock from Shanghai's Yu Garden. Through nuanced ink gradations on paper, the composition constructs an ethereal spatial dimensionality where solid stone appears to breathe with vitality, perfectly embodying the classical philosophy that "universe within the stone" in traditional Chinese stone appreciation culture.

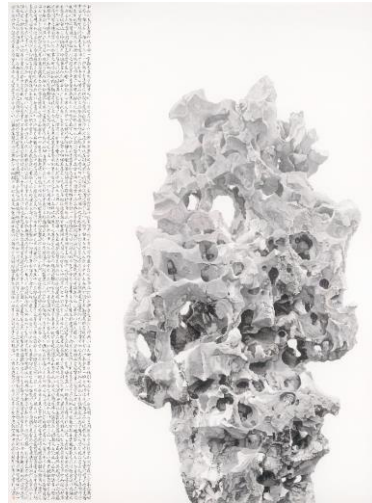
In *Dictionary*, Liu employs traditional Chinese ink techniques alongside a photorealistic approach, deliberately subverting conventional viewing logic by dramatically enlarging the scale of the dictionary. This bold choice creates an overwhelming and immersive visual experience. While grounded in contemporary aesthetics and marked by meticulous attention to detail, the work retains the subtle, lyrical quality unique to Eastern brushwork.

Created in 1993, *Drawing No.1* represents a pivotal experimental work from Liu's transitional period, marking a crucial shift from traditional ink painting to contemporary expression. Using only simple charcoal on Xuan paper, the piece retains the rhythmic vitality characteristic of Eastern paper art while engaging with Western sketching techniques. In this work, the artist transforms the literati painting philosophy of "a stone contains the spirit of a mountain" into a modern still-life composition, ingeniously employing charcoal's grayscale to emulate the subtle tonal variations of ink's "five degrees of ink tone."

Additionally, the exhibition features [*In the Time Immemorial*](#), a monumental 24-metre-long epic work that was previously showcased at the Suzhou Museum. This grand scroll unfolds a visual narrative of Earth's geological evolution, showcasing five epochs from left to right and condensing 4.6 billion years of geological history into a stunning visual experience. The value of this work lies not only in its technical marvel of scale-breaking execution but also in its profound inquiry posed through traditional Chinese mediums: "Can art become a time machine?"



Liu Dan
Dictionary, 2009
Ink and Color on Paper,
200.5×262.5cm.



Liu Dan
Taihu Rock aka "Yu Ling Long" (from Yu Garden, Shanghai), 2024
Ink on Paper, 251.6×340cm.



Liu Dan
Drawing No.1, 1993
Pencil on Paper, 12.7×32.9cm.

About Liu Dan

Liu Dan was born in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province in 1953 into a family of educators. He started learning Chinese painting under Mr. Ya Ming in 1972. In 1978, he enrolled in the postgraduate program of Jiangsu Academy of Chinese Painting through competitive exams to study traditional Chinese Painting. He moved to the United States in 1981 and has settled in Beijing since 2005.

As the first contemporary Chinese artist to use rock as subject of a painting, Liu Dan started to give special attention and thought to the subject of rock in early 1980s. He has since activated the rethinking of rock, and revitalized rock as a subject of artistic creation in our times. He is of the view that rock has been an important element in the composition of Chinese paintings. He started with the tradition of rock appreciation, in order to explore the consciousness of time and space behind Shan Shui 山水 (landscape) paintings, and to transform this unique painting language from the macrocosmic to the microcosmic. He suggests that rocks perform the function of “stem cells” in the formation of a new Shan Shui 山水 (landscape) consciousness. A new transcending Shan Shui 山水 (landscape) was created from observing and meditating over a rock. He approaches natural objects with ingenious insight and imagination, consequently, changing the viewing habits towards Chinese Shan Shui 山水 (landscape) art. This has been the important trajectory of Liu Dan’s artist exploration and practice.

Liu Dan’s artworks have been exhibited in important museums both in China and abroad, either in solo exhibitions or in group shows, including: Suzhou Museum West (2024), Art Museum of Nanjing University of Arts (2023), The Palace Museum of Beijing (2022), Pompidou Biennale Chengdu (2019), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (2017-2018), Minneapolis Institute of Art (2016), The Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology at University of Oxford (2016), The Metropolitan Museum of Art (2014), Suzhou Museum (2013), British Museum (2012), Guimet Museum (2012), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2011), Princeton University Art Museum (2009), The Israel Museum (2008), Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (2007), Arthur M. Sackler Museum of Harvard University (2006), Museum of East Asian Art Berlin (2005), San Diego Museum of Art (1999), The Art Institute of Chicago (1999), Yale University Art Gallery (1999), etc.

Liu Dan’s artworks have been collected and acquired by collectors in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan; collectors and foundations in USA and Europe; as well as well-known international museums and academic institutions which include: British Museum, Guimet Museum, Arthur M. Sackler Museum of Harvard University, Brooklyn Museum, San Diego Museum of Art, Minneapolis Institute of Art, The Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology at Oxford, Suzhou Museum.

Location: Phillips Asia Headquarters | G/F, WKCD Tower, West Kowloon Cultural District, No. 8 Austin Road West, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Date & Time: 22 April – 12 May, 10 am to 6 pm (Closed on 1 May & 5 May)



ABOUT PHILLIPSX

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ABOUT PHILLIPS

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