

AYE Gallery is proud to announce the launch of *Drifting Through Eternity*, an exhibition in collaboration with Dr. Shen Qilan, showcasing Swiss-based artist Luo Mingjun's latest works, which reflect her artistic journey and ideas over the years. The exhibition will take place from October 15 to December 12, 2023.

Luo Mingjun: Drifting Through Eternity

Dr. Shen Qilan
Curator/Author

Luo Mingjun is embarking on a new stage of creation, revealing a more potent and profound space in her art. According to the artist, "The enigmatic state of the mysterious unknown is best expressed through rich, thick colors like black."

In some of Luo Mingjun's previous creations, memory often comes in the form of images, embodying the spirituality and ambiguity that mirrors the way memory operates in life. As Walter Benjamin put it, "The work of memory (reading oneself backward, he called it) collapses time," which is evident in her works that offer a perspective into the depths of memory. Her distinct gray-toned images possess a soulful luster reminiscent of the Proustian glow of individual memory.

If anything, Luo Mingjun expertise lies in evoking memories. Nevertheless, this time, she presents charcoal works that are invocation of the future. These enormous pieces on paper possess both simplicity and intensity. Against the nearly black background, a magnolia flower gradually blooms while two large leaves quiver ever so slightly, creating a world of their own.

Luo Mingjun's images no longer closely resemble reality or memories, but rather, are dominated by an imaginative representation of the future.

Most of these works were created in the new studio space on the first floor, whereas Luo previously created most of her works in the attic of her home. The first-floor studio provides more space and a broader view, shifting the artist's focus and sending a crucial message: She can finally belong to herself entirely.

The "*Zodiac Year (2023)*" holds significant meaning as it marks the beginning of a brand new state of mind for Luo Mingjun at the age of sixty. Her elder son's grand wedding, her younger son's move-out with his girlfriend, and the reclaiming of her body and time granted her full creative freedom. In a sense, at sixty, she was living independently again. As an official sixty-year-old female artist, Luo Mingjun feels both relieved and emotional.

Gazing at the flowers and branches that re-emerge from the darkness of the canvas, I am awed

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by the hands and mind that painted them, manifesting their strength and potential that were once inhibited by life's demands. The daily minutiae of life can wear down a woman who runs a household, where her time and attention must be shared with the rest of the room, as she becomes a wife and a mother. Like all female artists who struggle to balance their creative endeavors, Luo Mingjun has a small creative space in the attic, where she is the artist Luo Mingjun. Downstairs, she is a mother and wife. Throughout the days and nights of caring for her family, she transformed into the woman she is today - one with a career and a family, after years of hard work. When she finally dedicated herself to creation without any distractions, the images rewarded her with endless possibilities and space to flourish.

The depth and pleasure of Luo Mingjun's work touched me deeply, **signaling a life unrealized, waiting to be created.** The picture now represents 100% of her essence, as life is no longer a matter of addition or subtraction, nor is it either/or.

The title of the exhibition, "Drifting Through Eternity", goes beyond Luo Mingjun's career since she moved from China to Switzerland more than thirty years ago. The materials and elements of her art used to center around the exploration of identity and the fusion of Chinese and Western cultures, with isolation and integration being the driving forces of her creativity. However, as Luo Mingjun approached the age of sixty, confusion no longer reigned. She gained an unobstructed and sophisticated understanding of life, and her core emotions shifted from anger and sadness to something different. Instead of seeking clear answers to many questions, she accepted and understood life in her own way, proposing a new outlook as an artist. She embraced her long journey and derived courage and strength from it.

Through the first-floor studio window, a magnificent magnolia tree can be seen, which, in full bloom, appears as though spring has taken over the garden. The magnolia is a recurring image in Luo Mingjun's art. When I reflect on Georgia O'Keeffe's words, "When you take a flower in your hand and really look at it, it's your world for the moment. I want to give that world to someone else." I am reminded of Luo Mingjun's exploration of the new worlds that may emerge from the dark landscape of light. This time, the artist bestows a unique mental and spatial imagery upon these flowers and branches. The floating flowers and branches on the canvas represent the drifting of her life. Through the act of drifting, Luo Mingjun overcomes gravity and time, yet she possesses an unwavering vitality and strives to bloom.

The exhibition showcases Luo Mingjun, a female artist who has reached her 60s and entered a phase of mature enlightenment. All the works in the exhibition were created through a long and arduous journey, reflecting the cost of life and the struggles of drifting through time, identity, and destiny. Having once perceived herself as a drifting plant, Luo Mingjun gradually transformed into a drifting island - a woman who nurtured and cultivated her own life and vitality. The images portrayed in the exhibition originate from this newfound world, waiting for her to create and fully realize.

Therefore, let the drifting journey continue.
Drifting through eternity.

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