

Exhibition: *Line, Form, Qi: Calligraphic Art from the Fondation INK Collection*

Dates: April 6–October 19, 2025

Location: Resnick Pavilion



(Image captions on page 4)

(Los Angeles, CA—March 13, 2025) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *Line, Form, Qi: Calligraphic Art from the Fondation INK Collection*. The exhibition examines experimental works by 34 modern and contemporary calligraphic artists including Fung Ming Chip, Gu Gan, Inoue Yūichi, Lee In, Henri Michaux, Nguyễn Quang Thắng, Qiu Zhijie, Tong Yang-Tze, Wang Dongling, Wei Ligang, and Xu Bing, among others. *Line, Form, Qi* is the second in a series of exhibitions of works from LACMA’s Fondation INK Collection, a 400-piece collection of contemporary art in the spirit of ink.

Regional groups of avant-garde modern and contemporary calligraphers have developed across East Asia from the mid-20th century to the present, many of whose works engage with or respond to Chinese characters. Spanning ink on paper, works on canvas, wood board pieces, and ceramics, the exhibition illuminates how their practices have influenced and informed one another, as well as connections between East Asian calligraphy and Western abstract art. *Line, Form, Qi* is curated by Susanna Ferrell, Wynn Resorts Associate Curator of Chinese Art, and Wan Kong, The Mozhai Foundation Assistant Curator of Chinese Art, at LACMA.

“While East Asian calligraphy is anchored in tradition, it remains an extremely lively and experimental practice,” said Ferrell. “I am thrilled to introduce to our visitors—many, for the first time—work by artists and art groups with limited exposure in the U.S., such as the Vietnamese Zenei Group of Five.”

“As an art historian trained mostly in traditional Chinese art, I find it incredibly exciting to see how artists continue to reveal infinite possibilities for integrating deeply rooted traditions with contemporary concepts and materials,” added Kong.

“*Line, Form, Qi* makes critical connections between artistic practices from mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore, as well as Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and France,” said LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director Michael Govan. “With the unparalleled support of Fondation INK Collection founders, Gérard and Dora Cognié, LACMA is advancing its mission to reflect Los Angeles’s diverse, interlocking cultures across our collection, exhibitions, and scholarship.”

Exhibition Highlights

Line, Form, Qi presents more than 60 works across four thematic sections.

The evolution of Chinese characters from oracle bone inscriptions to standard script has been a process of abstraction: from painting pictorial images to writing standardized symbols. The exhibition’s first section, **Pictograph**, spotlights experimentation with the interplay of writing and painting. Here, artists explore and deconstruct the origin of Chinese script. This includes Gu Gan’s merging of Chinese tradition and Western abstraction in *Spring Rain* (2000), which simultaneously recalls and defies historical references. In *Landscape* (2022), Xu Bing situates written characters within his landscape to retether contemporary characters to the natural elements that once inspired their design.

Message probes relationships between content and form in Chinese writing. The artists featured in this section are conscious of both the linguistic and visual expression of characters, and incorporate these dual aspects into their works. One of the earliest works included in the exhibition, *A* (1961), shows Inoue Yūichi’s return to single, inked characters on paper after years of breaking boundaries between abstract painting and calligraphy. Moving through time, Joey Leung Ka-yin’s *Daisy Asks* (2012) contemporizes the gongbi (fineline) painting technique by instilling it with imagined narratives grounded in the daily life and culture of Hong Kong. Leung’s Cantonese text merges satirical language with classical poetic structure, reading like a single-panel comic strip with an inscription that mimics Fangsong, an imitation Song-dynasty typeface.

Calligraphers in East Asia have traditionally learned by referencing and copying specific scripts established by their predecessors. **Re-Form**, however, explores how artists have come to create new forms of characters through personal, cultural, and existential experiences. In *Buddhist Heart Sutra, ref 16* (2006), Fung Ming Chip’s calligraphy appears to be relatively standard, but on closer inspection, the center of

each character is punctuated by slightly more saturated ink. ***Buddhist Heart Sutra, ref 14*** (2006) juxtaposes the composition with white triangles surrounded by faint impressions of the same text.

In the final section, **Abstraction**, artists distill components of calligraphic art, such as a single black ink brushstroke or the shape of a block of text. Departing from tradition, these calligraphy-inspired works must be experienced rather than read. Irene Chou cultivated a language of lines in her abstract paintings, inspired by script found carved into a series of 5th-century boulders in north-central China. Her featured work, ***The Universe is My Mind***, combines elements of her one-stroke painting technique with the shape of a circle—an evolution of a sphere motif that had previously emerged in her work as a symbol for love and her inner mind.

Publication

The exhibition's accompanying catalogue explores significant trends and innovations in contemporary calligraphic art, including abstraction of the character, performance and phenomenological practice, and experimentation with alternative or nontraditional materials and calligraphy methods such as incense burn drawing and lithography. This publication also addresses different through lines from premodern calligraphy to contemporary practice, reflecting the evolution of the Chinese language from pictograph to ideograph and beyond. *Line, Form, Qi: Calligraphic Art from the Fondation INK Collection* is edited with text by Susanna Ferrell and Wan Kong. Foreword by Michael Govan. Text by Rika Hiro, Stephen Little, Virginia Moon, and Li Wei Ng. Co-published by LACMA and DelMonico Books/D.A.P.

Credit: *Line, Form, Qi* was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

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About LACMA: Located on the Pacific Rim, LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of more than 150,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of artistic expression across the globe. Committed to showcasing a multitude of art histories, LACMA exhibits and interprets works of art from new and unexpected points of view that are informed by the region's rich cultural heritage and diverse population. LACMA's spirit of experimentation is reflected in its work with artists, technologists, and thought leaders as well as in its regional, national, and global partnerships to share collections and programs, create pioneering initiatives, and engage new audiences.

Location: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036. lacma.org

Image captions: (Left) Gu Gan, *Spring Rain*, 2000, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, promised gift of the Fondation INK, © Gu Gan Estate, photo by Maurice Aeschimann, Geneva, courtesy of the Fondation INK; (center) Joey Leung Ka-yin, *Daisy Asks*, 2012, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, promised gift of the Fondation INK, © Joey Leung Ka-yin, photo by Maurice Aeschimann, Geneva, courtesy of the Fondation INK; (right) Fung Ming Chip, *Buddhist Heart Sutra, ref 14*, 2006, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, promised gift of the Fondation INK, © Fung Ming Chip, photo by Maurice Aeschimann, Geneva, courtesy of the Fondation INK

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