ALMINE RECH

Nothing Still About Still Lifes
Three Centuries of Floral Compositions

Permanent exhibition | Deji Art Museum, Nanjing, China

The Deji Art Museum is pleased to announce the opening of 'Nothing Still About Still Lifes: Three Centuries of Floral Compositions,' the inaugural edition of the 'World of Flowers' exhibition series from the Deji Art Museum' s modern and contemporary art collection. Focusing upon the progression of global modern and contemporary art from the second half of the 19th century to today, this exhibition shows over one hundred works with floral compositions by nearly one hundred Chinese and Western masters starting with Impressionism, challenging traditional views on floral still lifes with a fresh transcultural and transdisciplinary perspective. Drawing upon nearly three hundred years of Chinese and Western history, the exhibition aims to contextualize changes in artistic style within the narratives of flower species circulation through global trade. Thus, this exhibition anchors the artistic production of still lifes within the greater landscape of political, economic, scientific, technological and cultural development that has nurtured rich dialogues between China and the Western world over the centuries. Through the dialectical relationship between "stillness" and "movement," the exhibition looks back upon the special significance of floral still lifes in Chinese and Western art history, exploring the vital force within these works that inspires our perception and imagination today.

The 'World of Flowers'collection of modern and contemporary artworks from the Deji Art Museum has been established over ten years of systematic acquisition, with modern and contemporary Chinese and international floral still life works forming the main body of the collection. 'Nothing Still About Still Lifes: Three Centuries of Floral Compositions' is the first exhibition curated from the 'World of Flowers' by Dr. Joachim Pissarro, Professor Emeritus at Hunter College of the City University of New York and former curator at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York. Exhibited artists include Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, Pablo Picasso, Piet Mondrian, Giorgio Morandi, René Magritte, Georgia O' Keeffe and other milestone figures of Western art, members of the first and second generations of Chinese artists to study abroad such as Sanyu, Pan Yuliang, Wu Dayu, Wu Guanzhong, Zao Wou-Ki and Chu Teh-Chun, modern art pioneers from other Asian countries such as Lê Phô, and finally major figures in contemporary art such as Andy Warhol, Yayoi Kusama, David Hockney, Jeff Koons, Yoshitomo Nara, Takashi Murakami and Damien Hirst.

Major exhibited works include:

Pablo Picasso, *Vase de fleurs*, 1901
A rare early still life work from a crucial moment in Picasso' s artistic development, Vase de fleurs was painted in the same year as his first solo exhibition in Paris, and was included in his 1932 major retrospective exhibitions in Paris and Zurich. This work reflects the influence of post-impressionism and other artistic styles upon his work, with the background' s blue tones foreshadowing the artist' s famous "Blue Period."

Jeff Koons, *Wall Relief with Bird*, 1991

Flowers, as an image and a medium, are a major leitmotiv in Jeff Koons' work. A work that is part of his "Made in Heaven" series and influenced by the rich artistic traditions rooted in the Baroque, Rococo and Romantic periods, Wall Relief with Bird was realized by German and Italian artisans with traditional polychromed carving technique. With this brightly colored and captivated flower sculpture, Koons depicts the natural world as an idealized paradise, celebrating abundance of love, life and eternity while foreshadowing the artist' s subsequent classic works using real flowers as medium, including Puppy (1992).

The Deji Art Museum carries on the deeply-rooted tradition of Nanjing as a city where different civilizations exchange and interact with each other, and where different visions on nature and cosmology form and transform, placing importance on the dialogue consciousness within still life works connecting China, Asia and the rest of the world. This exhibition examines the complex relationship between floral still lifes, specific historical contexts and Zeitgeist within the past three hundred years of cultural dialogue between China and the world, revealing the important journey of flowers and floral-themed art as a means of exchange surpassing time, space and cultural boundaries between China and the West. The exhibition also explores the limitless vitality within artworks, bringing new light upon pressing issues facing humanity today such as global dynamics, the ecological crisis and the relationship between technology and civilization.

Ai Lin, director of the Deji Art Museum, stated: "We are very pleased to present the first exhibition in the 'World of Flowers' series from the museum' s modern and contemporary art collection, sharing the fruits of the Deji Art Museum' s systematic collection and research activities over the past years. We hope to enrich and expand upon traditional art history narratives with plural and contemporary perspectives, giving the public an all-new art experience and cultural knowledge. We aim to continue our core mission of 'bridging art across cultures and time,' unceasingly sharing our collection's richness with the public through this series of exhibitions."

At the same time, the Deji Art Museum invites scholars of different disciplines from inside and outside China to pursue specialized research in connection with the collection of 'World of Flowers' from the Deji Art Museum' s modern and contemporary art collection, exploring the transformative power to connect, inspire, and uplift shared between flowers and art through publications, interdisciplinary academic forums and public educational programming.