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Cui Ruzhuo's Ink Wash Landscapes on Show at the Manege

By Dudley Baxter

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Cui Ruzhuo's paintings often contain several panels and can be several meters in length. **Moscow Manege**

Cui and Modern Chinese Art

Translated from Mandarin, the Glossiness of Uncarved Jade might sound like a rather clumsy exhibition title, but to the contrary, China's most expensive artist is incredibly graceful. Cui's diminutive stature and warm grin belie the fact he's a big deal in the art world, and the reporters, photographers, and many figures in suits buzzing around him at the press conference were far more indicative of his lofty status. At 72-years-old he's still going strong and is upbeat about the future of Chinese art.

"China is a growing nation, the country is on the rise so I'm sure we'll soon see Chinese art everywhere," Cui told The Moscow Times. "My country's president has a conception about

the Chinese Dream, and it's based on Chinese art."

The Chinese Dream is an idea championed by President Xi Jinping that shares materialistic components of the American Dream while pushing China's revival of wealth and power. Cui wasn't making a quip about the art employed by Xi to garner popular support (sometimes compared to the propaganda posters used by Mao Zedong) – he was referring to art as an indicator of economic and cultural strength. The artist is a proud Chinese citizen who has preserved, elaborated on, and propelled his country's artistic heritage into the 21st century.

"I know Western art, but I don't think you should forget your roots," he said, before adding that the exhibition is about cultural exchange.

Chinese-Russian Friendship

"I'm sure Russian viewers will understand my work, because they are educated and well versed in the arts," the artist said. Certainly his exhibition in St. Petersburg earlier this year was a success and a reliable litmus test for how the show would be received in Moscow.

The artist, who studied under the famous Li Kuchan, is not short on confidence. A couple of years ago he told he the Wall Street Journal that he would become the best-known Chinese of this century, and added that he hoped his work will surpass the value of Dali, Monet, and Picasso.

Stepan Mikailovsky, the exhibition's curator, told the press that Russians aren't generally familiar with Chinese art, but he had long planned to bring Cui's creations to Moscow, given his increasing popularity.

"He is an amazing artist and a very wise man," Mikailovsky said. "We had long conversations with him and were surprised by his temperament and the way he works. For example, for his daughter's birthday he painted a 65-meter-long scroll in only three months."

Meditative Symphonies

The scale of his work is striking and some paintings are displayed as polytychs, with rolling hills carpeted in forest neatly dissected into series spanning entire walls. Cui's work is poetic and calming. Standing before one of his scenes is meditative, and it's easy to forget you're only meters away from Mokhovaya Street and the relentless traffic outside. Cui describes his paintings as symphonies, and by the way his ink sequences come together it's easy to see why.

The 200 or so works by Cui adorning the walls of the Manege pay homage to the past, while defining the present. Stop in to admire, and to take a break from the bustle of the Russian capital.

Manage Central Exhibition Hall.1 Manage Square. Metro Ploshchad Revolyutsii, Teatralnaya. moscowmanege.ru*. Until Oct. 28.*

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