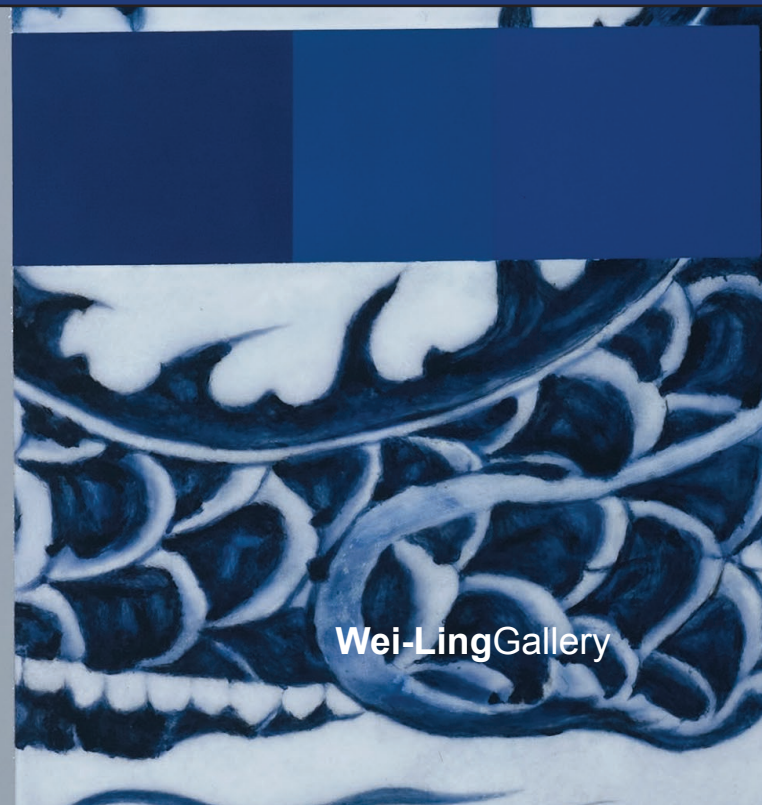




chína

Sean Lean

6th December 2022 - 14th January 2023



Wei-Ling Gallery

china



“This time around, I am looking outside of myself more, as in looking at China politically, socially and attempting to incorporate those issues into my work.”

- Sean Lean

A continuation of his previous two exhibitions, ‘Motherland’ (2015) and ‘M2’ (2020) in respectively, ‘china’ is Sean’s investigation into his heritage and personal cultural history which deals with the Chinese culture.

Breaking out from previous formats of squares and rectangles, the artist’s works are cut into the shapes of source materials he references, of Chinese porcelain. Half of the series is fashioned out of aluminium, and the other half using mild steel, the latter chosen because of its propensity to show rust.



“I really want to show the process in the final works, and accentuating the quality of the materials used. It’s not so much of a permanent material, rust changes with time. I want to show that to the viewer. As for the other half of the works, aluminium does not corrode. It’s heavier than canvas, but lighter than steel.”

His aluminium based works comprise two sections welded together, in the shape of the shadow of a pot, and within the ‘darkness’ dwells the political and cultural issues that concerns him most.

Using metal paint, automotive components and tools, the works are sectionalised, the reference materials segmented, and in between lies either the material or paint used. It is Sean’s way of forcefully ‘inserting’ himself into his art as opposed to just duplicating or replicating a particular work. The biggest sections of the process put into his works are the rust effects, to break the illusion, the immersion, and to put into focus a sense of transience - that things change, that they are beyond the artist’s control. It is very much in line with his views about culture; it is ever-shifting and ungovernable.

‘china’ is about the artist’s doubts, and as he postulates, *“It comes naturally when investigating something as complex as the ‘idea’ of China, and perhaps that is why my shadow pieces darken considerably, and the more research I do, the less certain I am about the issues that I am tackling. At some point, information from both sides seem to lean into propaganda. I question everything, from sources of information to authorship.”*



青花婴戏图碗 (*innocents*)
Automotive paint on Aluminium
47.5cm x 109.10cm
2021



青花人物碗 (creed)
Automotive paint on Aluminium
40.4cm x 119.1cm
2021



青花龙纹碗 (*majesty*)
Automotive paint on Aluminium
42.4cm x 92.25cm
2021



Installation view at Wei-Ling Contemporary, Brickfields



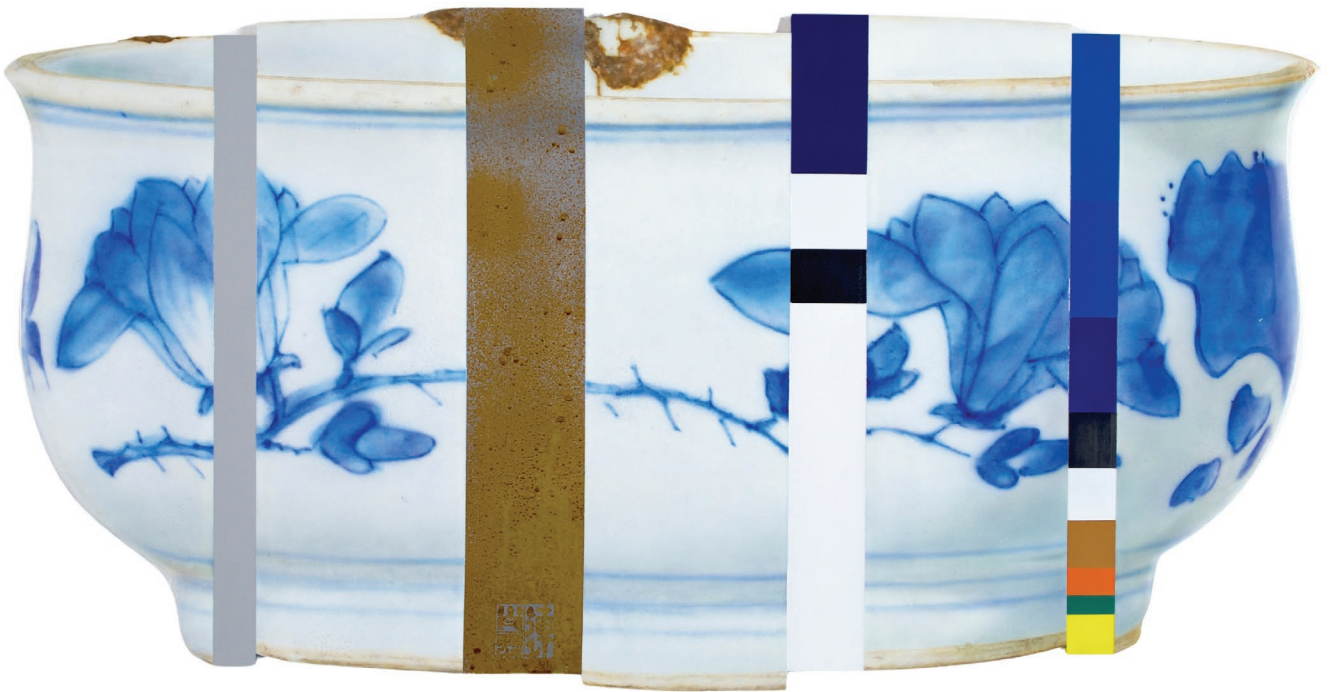
青花釉里红云龙纹瓶 (Power)
Automotive Paint on Aluminium
133cm x 144cm
2022



青花麒麟芭蕉纹盘 (Medicine)
Automotive Paint on Aluminium
82cm x 101cm
2022



青花龙纹执壶
Automotive Paint on Steel
160cm x 108.5cm
2022



青花洞石花卉罗汉炉
Automotive Paint on Steel
62cm x 120cm
2022



青花水波云龙缠枝莲花纹大罐
Automotive Paint on Steel
115cm x 132cm
2022



青花八骏图纹碗
Automotive Paint on Steel
54cm x 118cm
2022



青花十八罗汉香炉
Automotive Paint on Steel
91cm x 200cm
2022



青花莲池清趣图折肩大贯耳壶 (*Leavings*)
Automotive Paint on Aluminium
139cm x 140cm
2022



青花布袋和尚图三足炉 (*Tolerance*)
Automotive Paint on Aluminium
97cm x 149cm
2022



青花山水人物纹铃铛杯 (April)
Automotive Paint on Aluminium
53.5cm x 103cm
2022



青花花蝶纹铃铛杯 (*Trance*)
Automotive Paint on Aluminium
72.5cm x 103.5cm
2022



Installation view at Wei-Ling Contemporary, Brickfields

Sean Lean (b. 1981)



Having obtained his Diploma in Visual & Digital Arts from Limkokwing University College of Creative Technology in 2000, Sean Lean's work often deals with the issues of fragmented identities and the contradictions between traditional Eastern values and the lure of Western popular culture.

Through his works, Lean branches out with his own history and personal memory and reflects on the events that have shaped his country and his region. He traces social, political, and religious tensions, disparities, and engages with stories that have shaped the collective memory of his region. Despite the seriousness of the issue, elements of humor often find their way into his practice.

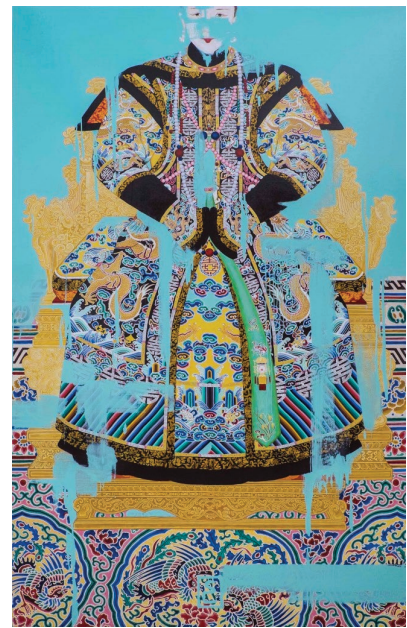


His solo exhibition '3' (2019) presented various triptychs, each one highlighting the relationship between art and society. '3' is a body of work that delves into his own history, but at the same time transcends his own individuality in its line of questioning tradition, religion, way of living, dogmas, and long-held beliefs. Interrogating identity, navigating history, and questioning ways of being is a thread that runs throughout Lean's practice.

'3' (2019) installation view at Wei-Ling Contemporary

His previous exhibitions have followed a similar path. Through *'Motherland'* (2015) the artist examined the core of what it means to be Chinese, questioning the shifting definitions/criterion of what it takes to be a Chinese person, and the generational loss and gains of a culture inherited and gradually diluted. In his process, he leans towards methods that were more "industrial", and akin to techniques used in automotive painting. The artist feels that the exploration of methods that are more "mechanized" is more relevant and reflective of the time we live in.

'M2', Lean's most recent show, is a continuation of *'Motherland'* and explores many similar concepts and ideas as *Motherland*. Lean treats his subject matter here with an undeniable sense of play and light heartedness this time, refusing to be bogged down by seriousness and guilt when discussing his cultural past. His approach this time is much more experimental and metaphorical, playing with colour and materiality with his use of steel and unexpected palettes, all while tying his subject matter back to his disparate cultural upbringing.



Tiffany Blue (after 19th century anonymous court painter)
Enamel Alkyd on canvas
231cm x 146cm
2015
'Motherland' (2015) series



'M2' (2020) installation view at Wei-Ling Contemporary



'Flesh: Blacks and Whites' (2013) installation view at Wei-Ling Contemporary

His earlier series *'Flesh: Blacks and Whites'* (2013) followed the artist's subconscious state as he underwent a period of introspection. The inspiration behind the works stems from his inherent obsession with flesh. Initially a compulsion, it consequently progressed into an investigation of his personal idiosyncrasies. Each painting, presenting an albinistic or melanistic animal, serves as an introspective measure, whereby each animal depicted represents a particular facet of Lean's 'selves'.

In 2018, he was one of 6 artists from around the world commissioned by KENZO, in collaboration with Tiger Beer and WWF to work on a project called Rare Stripes – a collection of garments inspired by actual stories of wild tiger. Sean Lean's design of Kamrita is very apt, as it showcases three sets of paw prints in different colours, signifying the Himalayan tigress with her two cubs walking through the forest floor. For years, Kamrita was "WWF's adopted tiger and a symbol of hope for her whole species". The collection was unveiled at the Ginza Six KENZO store in Tokyo, and was available in limited collection. He was also commissioned by Harper's Bazaar to create a cover specially for Bazaar Art magazine in 2017.

EDUCATION

2000 Diploma in Visual & Digital Arts, Limkokwing University College of Creative Technology

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 china, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2020 M2, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2018 3, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2015 Motherland, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2013 Flesh: Blacks & Whites, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 A Paradigm Shift - Reflecting on Twenty Years of The Malaysian Art Scene, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2021 S.E.A. Focus 2022, Tanjong Pagar Distripark, Singapore
- 2018 Patriots: By Malaysians for Malaysians, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Teh Tarik with The Flag, curated by Wei-Ling Gallery, in association with The National Visual Arts Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2017 Through Rose-Tinted Glasses, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
18@8 RIGHT HERE! RIGHT NOW!, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2016 Art Stage Jakarta 2016, Sheraton Grand Jakarta Gandaria City Hotel, Jakarta, Indonesia
- 2015 The Space Between, curated by Anurendra Jegadeva & Rahel Joseph, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2014 Bologna Fiere SH Contemporary 2014, Shanghai Exhibition Centre, China
- 2013 18@8 Mirror, Mirror on the wall, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Measuring Love, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2012 Bright Young Things, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2002 Urbanscapes, organized by Klue Magazine, Grappa, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
VDA Graduation Show, Loke Mansion ADKL, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2001 Manusia, NN Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
Doors, Loke Mansion ADKL, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2000 Eyes Wide Open, LUCT, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

AWARDS

- 2002 Presidential Scholar Award, Limkokwing University College of Creative Technology
Young Achievers Award, Limkokwing University College of Creative Technology
- 2001 Best Student Award in Visual & Digital Arts, Limkokwing University of Creative Technology
- 1999 NST Scholarship Award, Limkokwing University College of Creative Technology



Produced by Wei-Ling Gallery

To accompany the exhibition entitled '*china*' by Sean Lean from 6th December 2022 - 14th January 2023

Wei-Ling Gallery & Wei-Ling Contemporary

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COVER IMAGE | 青花水波云龙缠枝莲花纹大罐 (2022) (Close-up)

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