

Heller Lecture, 2015

To Move Mountains: Old Script and New Practices in Contemporary Chinese Art

Professor Eugene Wang

Tuesday, March 17, 7pm

UBC Robson Square
Theatre C300

Tickets: \$20 for Members and \$30 for the General Public. Visit <http://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/> to purchase.



Liu Xiaodong painting *Out of Beichuan*
Beichuan, China, May 7, 2010
Photo: Weng Yunpeng

The Vancouver Art Gallery is pleased to present Eugene Wang, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Professor of Asian Art at Harvard University, as the 14th annual Heller Lecturer. This illustrated lecture, *To Move Mountains: Old Script and New Practices in Contemporary Chinese Art* addresses the complex relationships that tradition and history have within contemporary Chinese art. Presented alongside *Unscrolled: Reframing Tradition in Contemporary Chinese Art*, it builds on the current exhibition's key themes, with a fulsome discussion about how tradition is transformed through personal experiences, politics and contemporary art practices.

About the Lecture: A third-century Chinese fable has it that a ninety-year-old man resolved to move two mountains that stood in front of his house. For nearly 1,700 years this story of foolhardiness and determination fluctuated in and out of popularity until the twentieth century, which saw a renewed cultural interest in the old man's spirit and drive to tackle the impossible. This ancient story has now turned into a new source for art making. If art is about "purposive purposelessness," as philosopher Immanuel Kant proposed, the old man's stubbornness indeed makes a good recipe for art and fuels many instances of modern and contemporary Chinese art practices. *To Move Mountains*, a lecture by Professor Wang, elaborates on how contemporary Chinese art engages with traditional thought and explains why and how this happened.

About Professor Wang: Eugene Wang, a native of Jiangsu, China, studied at Fudan University in Shanghai and subsequently at Harvard University. He began teaching at Harvard University in 1997, and became the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Professor of Asian Art in 2005. A recipient of numerous awards, including the Guggenheim Fellowship, his extensive publications cover the entire range of Chinese art history from ancient funerary art to modern and contemporary Chinese art and cinema. Recent books include the award-winning, *Shaping the Lotus Sutra: Buddhist Visual Culture in Medieval China* (2005) and his work as the art history associate editor of the *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (Macmillan, New York, 2004). He serves on the advisory board of the Center for Advanced Studies, National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. and the editorial board of *The Art Bulletin*.

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