

**Blueproject Foundation presents the work of Chen Zhen, one of China's most renowned contemporary artists.**



*Six Roots Enfance | Childhood*, 2000, bathtub, barbie, fabric, boat, toy soldiers, metal. bathtub: 215 x 55 x 80 cm about; boat: 173 x 382 x 150 cm about. Courtesy GALLERIA CONTINUA, San Gimignano / Beijing / Les Moulins. Photo Ela Bialkowska

**“Chen Zhen: In-Between” will be on display in *Il Salotto* from November 28<sup>th</sup> 2014 to February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2015 and consists of five artworks that are representative of the artist's work.**

**Chen Zhen is one of the leading figures of contemporary art in China. Since the early 80s, he was one of the pioneers of the generation that followed China's Cultural Revolution and a precursor to today's interest in the West for Chinese art.**

**This is the first time his work is shown in a solo exhibition in Spain. “Chen Zhen: In-Between”, in the Blueproject Foundation, is a reflection on the balance of inner life, the relationship with Western culture and the fragility of the individual's inner world.**

**Barcelona, 04<sup>th</sup> November 2014.**

Chen Zhen (1955, Shanghai, China - 2000, Paris, France) is considered **one of the leading figures of the Chinese vanguard** and one of the most important figures of Asian art in recent years. His work, which is both poetic and compelling, **uses great subtlety and visual strength to deal with themes such as cultural relations between East and West**, the way we view others, inner balance (physical and mental) and the relationship of the individual with otherness and his/her place in society. Born into a family of doctors, his life was marked when, at the age of 25, he was diagnosed with haemolytic anaemia. His struggle to deal with this condition would lead the artist to **reflect on the human body, its limits, its balance** and the way in which one could uncover and understand the inner life that inhabits us.

In 1986 his arrival in France, where he would settle and live until his death in 2000, led him to reflect on the differences between the two cultures and the way the East and West understand spirituality and reality.

In 1989 he decided to gradually turn away from painting to begin working directly with the objects that surrounded him and thereby question human spirituality, today's world and nature. **This mix of diverse cultural influences, spiritual concerns and exposure to new experiences were termed “transexperience” by the artist.** “I wanted to stress the importance of multiple experiences, the idea that art should no longer be dominated by the concept but by the experience of movement in time and space”, explains the artist himself in an interview with Jérôme Sans; “it is the water strategy: water runs everywhere and nowhere. Lacking its own shape, it is shaped by circumstances; it is supple, flexible, transparent, changing, moving, penetrating, circulating”<sup>1</sup>, he says about “transexperience”.

**“Chen Zhen: In-Between”, his first solo exhibition at the Blueproject Foundation, reveals this complex and all-encompassing vision, this profoundly intimate and personal art**, which is at once aware of and concerned about the challenges of the society that surrounds it. Through a selection of five installations that are representative of the artist's career, and a series of drawings and sketches, **“Chen Zhen: In-Between” offers a journey through Chen Zhen's most pressing concerns and revealing his work's deepest quandaries.**

“Zen Garden” (2000), for example, proposes a meeting and fusion of China and the West's vision of medicine, through an octagonal scale-model that conceals a “celestial” centre, which can be observed from different perspectives. In the centre there is a group of floating organic forms that combine to form an “inner landscape” of the human body. This idea can also be found in “Crystal Landscape of Inner Body (Serpent)” (2000), a glass table on which the viewer discovers an “inner landscape” formed by inner body crystal organs. Each of twelve tables realized corresponds to one of the star signs,

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<sup>1</sup> *Chen Zhen The Discussions*. Edited by Jérôme Sans. Les presses du Réel. 2003. Dijon. p. 277

symbolizing the differences between individuals. The “organs” represent the fragility of every human being.

**Chen Zhen’s art is a constant reflection on the fragility of the human body, investigating energy balances, the tools available to both cultures and the concept of healing and care.** At the end of his life, Chen Zhen wanted to become a doctor. “I now dream of one day becoming a doctor, practising traditional Chinese medicine. I dream of learning this “dialectic diagnosis” which is a process created by the “association of ideas and imaginations”, a “figurative” evolution in a place of chaos. It is not a concept or a material, but rather a true experience”, underlines the artist. The body became an essential part of his life; art and life thereby becoming one and the same. By delving into the hidden depths of our inner selves, the artist also posed an existential reflection of a more universal appeal and applicable to the world that surrounds us.

“Six Roots Enfance | Childhood” (2000), therefore, can be seen both as a deeply personal piece or a universal approach to the stereotypes that determine humanity. The piece belongs to a series of six installations that compose an allegory of human life: birth, childhood, suffering, conflict, memory, death-rebirth. Chen Zhen composed this series for the MOCA in Zagreb. “That space has a human dimension that also made me think of a series of organs: a body in six parts, a life in six stages... *Six Roots* is a Buddhist expression that describes our bodies’ essential senses: sight (eyes), hearing (ears), smell (nose), taste (tongue), touch (body) and knowledge (consciousness)”.

**His work is a union between the universal and personal, internalized time and life stages, daily objects and stereotypes, as well as different cultures.** This can be seen in “Lumière innocente” (2000), a magnificent aerial installation that awakens the most personal intimacies and archetypes shared by humanity. A bed, a light, a round and protective form hanging in empty space are enough to express the innocence alluded to in the title.

“Lands-Objectscape” (1995) is a sort of glass coffin where different kind of objects of every day life - the witness / victim of our consumer society – are taken out of context and placed and mixed with earth. This gesture becomes a rite of transition, that purifies them giving a new life after their use. It is a true sublimation, a latent spirit after the death of consumable products.

“Chen Zhen: In-Between” at the Blueproject Foundation is completed with a series of preliminary sketches and drawings for “Zen Garden” and “Crystal Landscape of Inner Body”.

**“Chen Zhen: In-Between” will be accompanied by a catalogue** to be presented at the beginning of 2015, compiled by Menene Gras, exhibition director at Casa Asia.

Special thanks to:

GALLERIA CONTINUA,  
San Gimignano / Beijing / Les Moulins



## **Solo Exhibitions (selected)**

- 2014** .“Chen Zhen, Fragments d'éternité”, Galerie Perrotin en collaboration avec Galleria Continua, Paris
- 2012** .“Chen Zhen, Même lit, rêves différents”, Faurschou Foundation, Beijing
- 2011** .“Les pas silencieux”, Galleria Continua, San Gimignano, Italy
- 2010** .“Chen Zhen”, Musée Guimet, Paris
- 2008** .“Il corpo come paesaggio”, curated by Gerald Matt and Ilse Lafer, MART, Rovereto, Italy
- 2007** .“The Body as Landscape”, curated by Gerald Matt, Kunsthalle Wien, Wien
- 2006** .“Chen Zhen”, Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai
- 2005** .“Transexpériences”, Galleria Continua, Beijing
- 2003** .“Chen Zhen, Silence sonore”, curated by Jérôme Sans, Palais de Tokyo, Site de création contemporaine, Paris
- .“Chen Zhen. Un artista fra Oriente e Occidente”, curated by Jean-Hubert Martin, PAC Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan, Italy
- .“Chen Zhen: A Tribute”, organised by Antoine Guerrero”, P.S.1, New York
- 2001** .“Chen Zhen”, curated by Lisa G. Corrin, Serpentine Gallery, London
- 2000** .“Field of Synergy”, Galleria Continua, San Gimignano, Italy
- .“Six Roots”, curated by Zelimir Koscevic, Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, Croatia
- .“Chen Zhen, Elogio della Magia Nera – In praise of Black Magic” curated by Alessandra Pace, GAM – Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin, Italy
- 1998** .“Jue Chang/Fifty Strokes to Each”, curated by Nehama Guralnink, Tel Aviv, Museum of Art, Helena Rubinstein Pavilion for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv
- 1996** .“Chen Zhen”, Centre international d'Art contemporain de Montréal, 11e édition des 100 Jours d'art contemporain de Montréal, Canada
- 1995** .“Field of Waste”, curated by France Morin, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York
- 1992** .“Chen Zhen au Magasin”, Magasin – Centre national d'art contemporain, Grenoble, France

**Blueproject Foundation, Barcelona / 28 November 2014 – 22 February 2015**

**Opening: Friday 28 November 19h00**

### **PRESS CONTACT**

**Gerardo Peral**

[g.peral@blueprojectfoundation.org](mailto:g.peral@blueprojectfoundation.org)

[www.blueprojectfoundation.org](http://www.blueprojectfoundation.org)

T 933 301 888

T 637 818 238