



ATTENTION ART EDITORS
For Immediate Release

WANG KEPING
BIRDS - Harmony of the Forest



Bird 1-17, 2010, Elm, 52 x 31 x 13cm

Opening Reception with the artist at 10 Chancery Lane Gallery:

26 April, 6.30-8.30pm

(Members of the press are invited to attend the opening reception)

Artist's Talk at 10 Chancery Lane Gallery:

Saturday, 29 April, 5:00-6:00pm

(RSVP Essential: rsvp@10chancerylanegallery.com)

(26 April, 2017) HONG KONG-

10 Chancery Lane Gallery and as part of Le French May associated projects announces the latest premier of acclaimed French-Chinese Artist Wang Keping, *Birds, Harmony of the Forest*. This series focuses on Wang Keping's Bird series from 1982 to 2016. He explains that he sees birds within the trees through their branches and shapes. The creatural forms are an abstraction of actual birds and allow him to expose the details of the wood and its textures that they can lend to the sculpture. This exhibition invites viewers into the world of Wang Keping's *Birds, Harmony of the Forest* and to understand their elegance, eroticism and humor.

"Birds, the harmony of the forest," has been accomplished through many years of creating and keeping aside his favorite bird sculptures to be shown for the first time together in Hong Kong during the Silver Jubilee of the French May. This group of works remains very special to the artist, allowing him to work with such simple shapes, almost

a swirl of movement creating an undefined formation within space. Endearing somehow with tenderness they urge to be caressed. Wang says, "My birds are not really birds," a notion that is not hard to grasp as they are somewhere in between reality and otherness. Wang's work has evolved over the last 40 years to incorporate a lifetime of his collaboration with wood, nature and his simplified creatural sculptures. His bird sculptures are yet another way to express his meaning. His truth is somewhere in the core of our humanity and it is there inside the wood waiting for him to bring it out. The strength is the way he pulls all of these aspects together and Wang Keping does it with such poignancy and honesty that we are drawn to his works because they exude the joy of what art can give to all of us, truth and beauty.

Wang Keping's birds are just one of his main themes, along with women, men, mother holding child, couples and abstract works he terms "ex-voto." Ever present around him in his atelier he observes the birds as the harmony of the forest but he observes them in relation to the trees and their branches that also resemble the figure of a bird. Like all of his works the object he sculpts is less important than the form that emerges from it. The subject is an excuse to get to the essence of what truth and beauty he is looking for inside the block of wood. The final image is an abstraction of the idea. And through the process, all the natural elements of the wood become important. The natural knot might be in the middle, and the artist will cut a curve into the work around it incorporating the swirl of a beak. The grain might allow the flowing of the neck or even create a pattern that resembles feathers. The cracks might create an even blanket on the work that etch a circular pattern. The wood might be a flowing river of natural bumps and contours; he appreciates their ability to add certain feelings and textures to the piece and he consciously incorporates them into the sculpture itself. All of these refined aspects of the wood are thought about and employed. He knows all the intricacies of the different trees he works with and the characteristics they will give. Ash wood has a beautiful and prominent grain; maple tends to show little grain yet can be dense like stone but shows tones of honey coloring. Yew is a hard and knotty bush that contains numerous bumps and protrusions that he allows his hand to go around rather than fight through its toughness. "Some parts are soft," he explains, "others hard, I let the wood guide me." The feeling is always there, he knows where to go. He explains, "Each piece of wood will give something different." He might have ten pieces of cedar wood or yew wood but they will not give the same outcome. "Each tree is unique, having grown under different conditions thus the wood from each tree even if they are the same will be different," he explains. It is this understanding that allows such a personal conception and perception of each piece he sculpts. Around his studio, he shows me a bird sculpture in process. The work is covered with a plastic bag. "I want to control the speed in which the work dries so the cracks will be more even." Large blocks of wood will take several years to dry, smaller chunks maybe two years, thus from the beginning, it is a minimum of two to three years before it is finished. He is patient and a perfectionist.

About the Artist

Wang Keping was born in China in 1949, the year of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Self taught, he started making wooden sculptures in 1978 and became one of the founders of China's first contemporary art movements, The Stars (Xing Xing 星星) Group. His works were a voice of revolt within a China that was on the verge of transformation in the years following the end of the Cultural Revolution and the death of Chairman Mao Zedong. The first Stars Exhibition was an unauthorized exhibition of artists who hung their works on the gates of the National Art Museum of China. After two days the police confiscated the works and the Stars artists organized a

march to demand artistic freedom. A year later, the same group of artists was invited to show inside the National Art Museum of China. Wang Keping's works were some of the most boldly political among the group and were written about in the New York Times and Wall Street Journal in 1979 and 1980. His sculpture "Silence" showed a deafened and blinded man, an analogy of the times. His work "Idol" was perhaps the first artwork ever to make a parody of Chairman Mao by turning him into a Buddha figure. Artist Wang Keping along with Huang Rui and Ma Desheng were the key leaders of the Stars Group movement which also included Ai Wei Wei. Wang Keping left for France in 1984 and continued his work turning away from political focus and concentrating more on simplified sculptures of both figurative and abstract themes. Inspired by the simplicity of the modernist Constantin Brancusi, the elegance of Chinese Han sculpture and the bruteness of African sculpture, Wang Keping for the last 40 years has honed a unique sculptural voice truly his own. At the heart of his work is the wood. He describes his sculptural process of a collaboration of what the wood has to give him and what he has to give to the wood.

Wang Keping is recognized internationally and has been collected and exhibited at the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; the M+ Uli Sigg Collection, Hong Kong; the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka, among others.

In 2015, Wang Keping was awarded with the Chevalier de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (France).

About 10 Chancery Lane Gallery

Since 2001, 10 Chancery Lane Gallery has been a driving force in contemporary art in Hong Kong and is one of Asia's leading contemporary art galleries. Representing the Asia-Pacific, the gallery is particularly interested in emerging art movements and historically important artists from the region.

Representing important artists such as Huang Rui, Wang Keping and Shi Guorui (China), Atul Dodiya (India), Bui Cong Khanh, The Propeller Group and Dinh Q. Lê (Vietnam), and Manit Sriwanichpoom (Thailand), 10 Chancery Lane Gallery is committed to playing a role in documenting the development of Asian art. The gallery has worked with curators Feng Boyi, Beyond the Red Curtain - China, Erin Gleeson, Forever Until Now - Contemporary Art Cambodia, iola Lenzi, Subjective Truth - Thai Contemporary Art, Zoe Butt and Dinh Q. Lê, Time Ligaments - Vietnam. Katie de Tilly is co-President and one of the founders of the Hong Kong Art Gallery Association.

For press enquiries and to arrange interviews, please contact Bo Kim on bo@10chancerylanegallery.com or +852 2810 0065.

High-resolution images can be downloaded here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/qtddoe40irykz2g/AAD9vuS0k1ic8dmZjjBis5QEa?dl=0>

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