

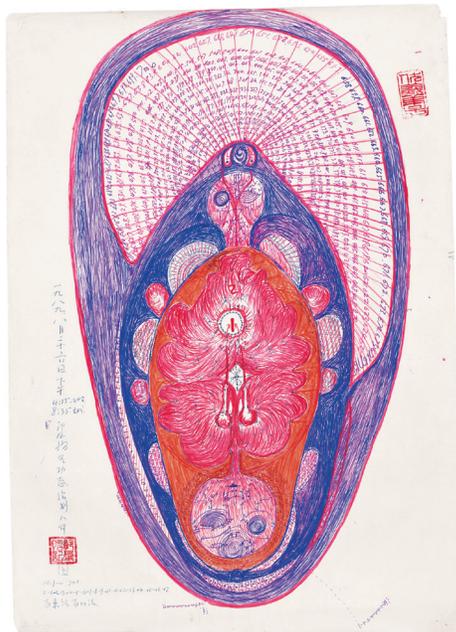
Guo Fengyi: To See from a Distance

February 20 – May 10, 2020

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Wednesday: 12–6pm
Thursday: 12–8pm
Friday-Sunday: 12–6pm



New York, NY... The Drawing Center is pleased to present *Guo Fengyi: To See from a Distance*, the first major institutional exhibition of the Chinese artist's work in the United States. Born in 1942 in Xi'an, the site of China's historical capital, Guo began making art in her late forties after debilitating arthritis forced her into early retirement from a job at a chemical fertilizer factory. To alleviate her chronic pain, Guo devoted herself to qigong—an ancient Chinese wellness and healing technique that combines coordinated movements, breathing, and meditation—and subsequently developed a highly personal drawing practice. Producing an astonishing body of work in the last two decades of her life, Guo created more than 500 intricate ink drawings on subjects ranging from cosmology and Chinese mythology to traditional Chinese medicine and philosophy.

On view from February 20 through May 10, 2020, *Guo Fengyi: To See from a Distance* features more than thirty works from Guo's brief yet prolific career, including drawings executed on the backs of book and calendar pages and on cloth, as well as small- and large-scale drawings on rice-paper scrolls. Spanning two floors of The Drawing Center's galleries, *To See from a Distance* provides an overview of Guo's visionary drawings, which incorporate the diagrammatic, the mystical, and the wildly imaginative.

Guo understood qigong as a science through which she could analyze and heal her own body as well as those of others. She kept a journal in which she recorded her activities, including the dates and times of her self-healing sessions, as well as detailed written descriptions of how her body, mind, and spirit moved together as she practiced. Guo soon began to see images, colors, and shapes during her qigong meditations, and quickly shifted from writing detailed descriptions of her bodily responses to filling the pages of her journals with drawings of mythological creatures, complex anatomical systems, and ornately dressed humanoids.

Qigong allowed Guo, who did not have an academic art training, to develop a deeply personal and symbolically charged visual language. Her early journal writings reveal that the visions she experienced became so powerful that she couldn't prevent herself from depicting them. Drawing appeared quite naturally to Guo as a mode of inquiry, and she drew to interrogate the meaning of what she saw as if, she wrote, "from a distance."

Guo drew what she envisioned, including sites and subjects that she couldn't physically visit, or that she didn't know about. Many of Guo's earliest drawings—including *Diagram of the Human Nervous System* (1989) and *The Diagram of the Liver Meridian* (1990)—carefully map anatomical systems that the artist intuited rather than actually saw. Other drawings, such as *Huangdi Mausoleum* (1996), reference ancient Chinese history, depicting the contents of the sealed burial chambers of China's earliest emperors. By the mid-1990s, Guo had abandoned her journals, switching to paper scrolls. Taking advantage of their length and verticality, Guo created compositions dominated by expansive lines drawn with sweeping, controlled gestures. Over the last decade of her career, she amassed more than seventy drawings made on the backs of old calendars and on rice-paper scrolls that measure up to six-meters long.

Together, Guo's works speak to the power of drawing as a means to comprehend and "see" the unknown. Deeply rooted in the understanding of the relationship between the human body and the universe that has persisted for millennia throughout Chinese culture, Guo's drawings incorporate both the micro and the macroscopic, revealing universes both internal and external.

Guo Fengyi: To See from a Distance is organized by Rosario Güiraldes, Assistant Curator, and Laura Hoptman, Executive Director.

Image: Guo Fengyi, *Fetus*, 1989. Colored ink on calendar paper, 31 5/16 x 21 inches (99.7 x 73 cm). Courtesy of Long March Space.

About the Artist

Guo Fengyi began exhibiting her work in the mid-2000s, and continued to do so until her death in 2010 at age 66. Solo exhibitions of her work have been presented by Gladstone Gallery, Brussels, Belgium; Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York; Long March Space, Beijing; Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada; Collection de L'Art Brut, Lausanne, Switzerland; and Galerie Christian Berst, Paris. Over the past several years, her work has been included in group exhibitions at OCAT Xi'an, Xi'an, Shaanxi, China; Borderless Art Museum No-Ma, Shigaken, Japan; Kunsthall Rotterdam, The Netherlands; The Hayward Gallery, London; the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, California; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; The Museum of Everything, London; and Kunsthhaus Graz, Austria, among others. Guo's drawings were included in The Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, China (2010); the 55th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy; and the 57th Carnegie International, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (both in 2013).

Publication

Guo Fengyi: To See from a Distance is accompanied by a softcover catalog that includes full-color illustrations of the works on view, as well as an introduction by Laura Hoptman, and essays by Rosario Güiraldes, Kathleen M. Ryor, and Xu Tan. The publication will be available for purchase at The Drawing Center and in its online bookstore at drawingcenter.org. As with every publication produced by The Drawing Center, *Guo Fengyi: To See from a Distance* will also be available to read in a digital format, free of charge on issuu.com.

Public Programs

DrawNow! Guo Fengyi presented in English and Mandarin
Saturday, March 14, 2020, 10:30 - 12pm, \$5

In Conversation: Olivia Shao and Bob Nickas on Guo Fengyi
Tuesday, March 17, 2020, 6:30-8pm, \$5

DrawNow! Guo Fengyi presented in English and Mandarin
Thursday, April 2, 2020, 6:00-7:30pm, Free

Drawing as Divination, Art as Medicine in the Work of Guo Fengyi: A talk by Professor Kathleen Ryor
Thursday, April 23, 2020, 6:30-8pm, Free

Credits

Guo Fengyi: To See from a Distance is made possible by Long March Space.

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