

1. **Standing 2018**
Dry lacquer, ramie fabric, tile ash, metal leaves
Left: 213 x 24 x 32 cm
(Base: 45 x 50 cm)
Middle: 199 x 22.5 x 25.5 cm
(Base: 40 x 45 cm)
Right: 206 x 23 x 28 cm
(Base: 40 x 50 cm)

2. **Constellation 2019-19**
Chinese lacquer on wood panel, ramie fabric
160 x 122 x 7 cm

3. **Constellation 2019-20**
Chinese lacquer on wood panel, ramie fabric
160 x 122 x 7 cm

4. **Constellation 2020-7**
Chinese lacquer on wood panel, ramie fabric, gold leaves
121.5 x 100 x 6 cm

5. **Constellation 2020-6**
Chinese lacquer on wood panel, ramie fabric, gold leaves
121.5 x 100 x 6 cm

6. **Constellation 2020-21**
Dry lacquer
Diameter: 132 cm Depth: 6 cm

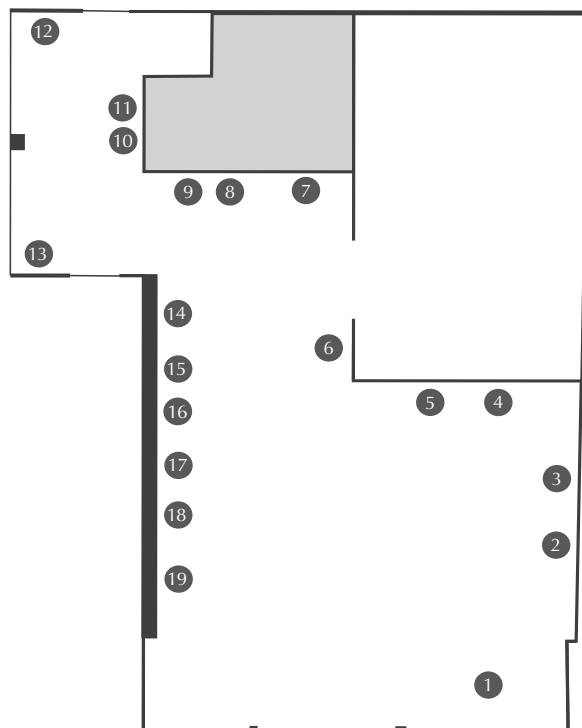
7. **Constellation 2021-19**
Chinese lacquer on wood panel, ramie fabric
60 x 80 x 5 cm

8. **Constellation 2021-14**
Chinese lacquer on wood panel, ramie fabric
181 x 81.5 x 7 cm

9. **Constellation 2021-13**
Chinese lacquer on wood panel, ramie fabric
181 x 81.5 x 7 cm

10. **Constellation 2021-11**
Dry lacquer, gold leaves
56 x 38 x 3 cm

11. **Constellation 2021-10**
Dry lacquer, gold leaves
62 x 36 x 3 cm



12. **Constellation 2020 - Microscopic plant cells 2**
Dry lacquer, metal leaves
44 x 32 cm

13. **Constellation 2021 - Text 1 & Text 2**
Diptych | Dry lacquer
65 x 48 x 8 cm with frame

14. **Constellation 2021-9**
Dry lacquer, vermilion pigment
76 x 77 x 6 cm

15. **Constellation 2020-13**
Dry lacquer, silver leaves
60 x 60 x 5 cm

16. **Constellation 2021-7**
Dry lacquer, vermilion pigment
61 x 62 x 7 cm

17. **Constellation 2020-20**
Chinese lacquer, gold lacquer, wood panel
65 x 45 x 6 cm

18. **Constellation 2021-4**
Dry lacquer, malachite green pigment, gold leaves
72 x 57 x 6.5 cm

19. **Constellation 2021-1**
Dry lacquer, vermilion pigment, metal leaves
175 x 95 x 8 cm

Constellation

WENG Jijun

2021.07.17 – 2021.09.11

Building 105, 199 Hengshan Road, Shanghai

Opening Hours: Tue - Sun, 11:00 - 19:00

Galerie DUMONTEIL Shanghai is pleased to present Weng Jijun's "Constellation", featuring up to 20 artworks that showcase Weng's most recent practice revolving around Chinese lacquer. "Constellation" is both the starting point of the artist's philosophical contemplation in today's social context and his latest development on the creative level. Drawing inspiration from lacquer, its characteristics and its tradition, Weng provides an alternative for us to re-examine our connection with the world in a way that bridges its different dimensions.

From Dust to Nebula A Constellation of Perspectives

During the pandemic, Weng Jijun began to pay more attention to our desire to explore the world of the unknown, using his works to reflect the connection between the macro and micro worlds beyond the prism of science. Weng's mastery of lacquer has enabled him to transform the traditional "patterns" and "motifs" into a search for the origin of life and a depiction of cosmic forms, breaking the stereotype of lacquer as a craft and decorative art from different aspects.

In several works of this exhibition, Weng transforms the seemingly uniform yet varied "Xipi", a unique decoration technique in Chinese lacquer art, into tiny units that construct microbial forms, representing the initial form of life as well as the various topographies, geologies and landscapes created by mother Earth. For instance, the work "Constellation 2019-25" uses a "Xipi" pattern composed of purple, black and silvery white, which is rare in lacquer, in combination with the overall abstract symbols, resulting in a surprising visual effect that resembles mineral crystals. For Weng, minerals, like lacquer, also belong to forms of life. Their forms reveal how the world is constructed.

The work "Constellation 2021-21", with its irregular, near-circular, dry lacquer form, illustrates the distant forms in the cosmos. The nebulous-like color comes from the oxidation process of lacquer itself, from milky white, blood red, to pitch black. The nuances among the various

1. Xipi, literally "rhinoceros skin", is one of the unique decoration techniques in Chinese art of lacquer. This technique involved the application in layers of different colors of lacquer over an uneven ground created through the action of "Da Nian"—using loofah sponge tissues to manipulate the drying lacquer surface. It is then polished flat to reveal the nodular pattern.

shades of black and brown are produced by the artist's use of raw lacquer from different origins, the accurate control of temperature, humidity and process. The bumps and dots of different sizes in the picture encompass imageries from gravel and sand, mountains and hills, to land and islands. Standing at the crossroads between the known and the unknown, the work seems "changed in you by turns to stone and stars"².

Color is also an important component in Weng's creation. To Mark Rothko, "Art is an adventure into an unknown world, which can be explored only by those willing to take risks"³. For Weng, color reveals emotion and energy. The artist prefers abstract expressions that have color at their core. Unlike the abstract brushwork on canvas and paper, the subtle yet visible complexity — the aggregate of energy and overlapping traces, the intentional and the accidental — are achieved by the interpenetration of accumulated lacquer layers and repeated polishing effects.

From Concept to Approach Reviving the language of lacquer

As a medium that has been passed down from ancient China to the present day, there's no doubt that lacquer has its own charm. The creation of a multiple-layer lacquered piece can take months or over a year, requiring great patience and concentration to complete the sophisticated process. In return, the artwork made by lacquer can remain its original color and texture for centuries; lacquer is a gift of time, so to speak.

In today's extreme pursuit of timeliness, it seems to be wise to abandon tradition and look for alternatives. However, this is not an option for Weng Jijun, "Lacquer fascinates me. More than a material, it moves, changes and has its own temper. To me, lacquer is like my partner rather than a creation tool. Agreements can only be reached after exchanges and collisions, and what I want to say is revealed in my works."

It is these 40 years of perseverance with lacquer that has allowed Weng to find new possibilities for presenting lacquer in a contemporary context while continuing the tradition — transforming the characteristics and technical vocabulary of lacquer into the representation and expression of his creations. The artist Ding Yi once commented, "Weng Jijun's works often shift between figuration, imagery and abstraction, focusing on the interaction between contemporary ideas and intriguing symbols and scenes of traditional Chinese culture, and creating a personalized system of expression through translation, interpretation and synthesis."⁴

In Weng Jijun's work, content, form and process are more closely interwoven than ever, collectively exploring the most essential visual language created by all three. The installation "Standing 2018", displayed by the entrance, consists of three dry lacquer columns that

combine the texture feelings unique to varied stages of lacquer creation — painting, mounting ramie, scraping, polishing, silver leafing, etc., while the strength and solidity of the overall appearance provide a strong contrast to the light, stripped texture. Works like "Constellation 2021-13" and "Constellation 2021-14", on the other hand, seek a balance between the overflow of lacquer paint and the flattened polishing effects, which conveys a painterliness constructed by control and freedom.

In "Constellation", Weng Jijun invites the viewer to see things anew from the perspective of perception rather than cognition, leading to a distinctive experience beyond our own senses. At the same time, the artist encourages us to look beyond the convention of traditional craftsmanship, to re-understand and appreciate lacquer. Together with the artist, we will explore more possibilities for lacquer art creation in a contemporary context.

About the Artist

Weng Jijun (b. 1955, Shanghai, China) graduated from Jiangxi Normal University College of Fine Arts in 1981 before continued his study at the Mural Paintings department of Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1994. Later he began his teaching career at Shanghai Art & Design Academy. He is recognized as a member of the China Artists Association, China Professional Lacquer Steering Committee, and director of the Working Committee of Lacquer Painting, Shanghai Artists Association.

Weng's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions including "Collision", Galerie Dumonteil, Paris, France (2019); "Urban Colors in the Shanghai School of Lacquer Art - Weng Jijun's Lacquer Art", Shanghai Urban Planning Center, Shanghai (2018); "The Enduring Practices of Lacquer", Galerie Dumonteil, Shanghai, China (2018); "He", Yibo Gallery, Shanghai, China (2015); "Buddha's head", Gallery on Old Bailey, Hong Kong, China (2007); "Weng Jijun's Solo Show", Gallery on Old Bailey, Hong Kong, China (2001), etc.

His work has been collected by major art institutions in China such as Guangzhou Museum of Art, Fujian Museum of Art, Chinese Olympic Committee, Expo Shanghai China, etc. His publications include "Weng Jijun", 2nd column of Shanghai Artists Work Collection (2005); "Splendidness - Lacquer Art", Shanghai Scientific and Technological Education Publishing House (2006).

2. "Evening", by Reiner Maria Rilke, translated by F.C. MacIntyre

3. Adolph Gottlieb (1903-1974) and Mark Rothko (1903-1970) with Barnett Newman (1905-1970) Statement, originally published in Jewell's column in the New York Times, 13 June 1943.

4. Preface by Ding Yi for Weng Jijun's solo exhibition "He" at Yibo Gallery, 15 August, 2015

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