



GAFFER

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Chen Ping

Born in 1962 in Shantou China, works in China and Australia

Artist Statement: Unseen Forest

Ancestor Di Jun was a god with the head of a bird, the body of a monkey and only one leg. There was a country in which the people all had one head and three bodies. These were Di Jun's children; He had another ten sons who came out one at a time after washing in the south-east sea and then took turns to work as the sun in the sky; He also had twelve daughters who were the moons, they always bathed in the remote west and took turns to come out at night. Occasionally, Di Jun came down to meet the five coloured birds in the east valley. They danced joyfully. In the ancient Chinese myth, the creator of the world, Pan Gu, had the head of a dog and the body of a human. Nu Wa, the goddess who created humans, had the face of a woman and the body of a snake. The first king, Huang Di, was a bird, with four wings and six legs. There was also a god of the ocean and wind, and he was sometimes a fish with a human face and sometimes a bird.

These great majestic creatures, once the carriers of the human spirit, are now nowhere to be seen. Their forests have been lost. Since the dream of communism shattered, we have turned ourselves into hungry hunters of a concrete reality, and our souls have been transmuted.

I traverse among spirit, illusion and reality; mingle man with landscape and animals. This is where I could once again let my spirit fly. Looking down, I increasingly disengage from politics and society.

"The phoenix has never come in the sky, the picture has never appeared from the river, and yet my life is near the end!" (Confucius)

Catalogue Essay: The Artist & the Threshold

James Arvanitakis

The contemporary world is one of contradictions: globalization is accompanied by aggressive nationalism; militant religious movements emerge within secular states; scientific rationalism makes us desire enchantment and meaning in nature.

Staring at Chen Ping's ethereal paintings such contradictions emerge: while one part of the artwork is busy, congested, verging on exhausting, other parts are composed, calm, contemplative.

The works represent the language of paint, not a classification of the abstract/ classical, East/West or unadulterated human or uncontaminated nature.

The works capture the simultaneous connection and disconnection between humanity and nature that Ping identifies as his motivation.

Ping highlights that nature is not separate from us: it is not 'over there'. Rather, our relationship with nature is everywhere, both precarious and robust: from the Tasmanian wilderness, to the Himalayas, large urban centres, and even the art galleries that hang such works.

This is key to Ping's work: we might think that we can disconnect ourselves from the world, but across space and time, both our quality of life and very existence, depends on this relationship.

The controversial German philosopher, Martin Heidegger, described the concept of the 'threshold': the moment we move from a state of ignorance to reflection. Here we look around and see the world with fresh eyes and identify what is most important: our humanity and the essence of the relationships we build.

Once we cross this threshold, the world is different: more beautiful, intense, full of increasing insight and emotions.

Heidegger argued that it is the artist who can guide us through the threshold: poets, musicians, painters.

Chen is a unique artist who defies definition and can guide us through the threshold: showing the world in a different way.