



Xu Bing

Landscape Landscript

28 February - 19 May 2013



*'...our earliest established view of art was a socialist one, which was, roughly: art comes from life, art is higher than life, art returns to and enriches life...I have never departed from this artistic mindset.'*

Xu Bing interviewed for exhibition

## About the artist

Xu Bing was born in Chongqing, China, in 1955. He grew up in Beijing.

During the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) he was sent to the countryside for 're-education'.

He subsequently studied printmaking, becoming successful as both an artist and teacher. He moved to New York in 1999.

Xu Bing is now one of China's best known and critically acclaimed artists.

## Landscape, Landscript

Xu Bing creates landscape pictures using Chinese characters. He calls these 'landscripts'.



Chinese characters are themselves based on pictograms of real things so the symbol for a tree looks like a tree.

Xu Bing uses a wide range of Chinese letter forms – ancient, modern and rare. His work explores the ways in which these have defined Chinese people's relationship with nature, culture and with art.

Xu Bing writes words using Latin letters, but arranges them to look like Chinese characters, as for instance with his signature. He calls this 'square word calligraphy'.



Copying and reworking is an important aspect of the Chinese landscape painting tradition - it is the way artists learn. For this exhibition Xu Bing has reproduced 4 traditional Chinese landscapes. These incorporate his own inscriptions written in square word calligraphy, some acknowledging his debt to painters of previous generations.



## Themes for school projects

- > Nature and landscapes
- > Maps and journeys
- > Writing, scripts and calligraphy
- > Printmaking
- > Manuals of drawing
- > East meets West
- > Art and poetry
- > Our environment



## Links to permanent galleries

Gallery 6: Reading and Writing

Gallery 10: China to AD 800  
*Displays of early Chinese scripts and writing equipment.*

Gallery 11: Chinese paintings  
*Currently displaying Chinese landscapes from the 1600s*

Gallery 31: Islamic Middle East  
*Art of calligraphy*

Gallery 38: China from AD 800

## Further resources

Meet Xu Bing

[www.meetxubing.com](http://www.meetxubing.com)

Access interviews with Xu Bing, curators, videos, photos of Xu Bing throughout his life, Chinese folk tales, an online family trail and more. Use the interactive map to explore the exhibition.

All of these resources can be also be accessed in the exhibition itself using a smart phone, by scanning QR codes (barcodes). Wifi has specially been set up in the 3 exhibition galleries so that visitors can use smart phones in there.

Ashmolean Eastern Art Online:

[www.jameelcentre.ashmolean.org/](http://www.jameelcentre.ashmolean.org/)

Ashmolean Education:

[www.ashmolean.org/education/resources](http://www.ashmolean.org/education/resources)



*‘artists should approach landscape, not as a way of creating beautiful pictures, but as a way of engaging with the world and improving the environment rather than just depicting it.’*

Dr Shelagh Vainker, exhibition curator

## How to book

This is a charging exhibition but FREE for booked school groups and for under 18s.

To book a group visit please contact the Education Department:

[education.service@ashmus.ox.ac.uk](mailto:education.service@ashmus.ox.ac.uk)

t: 01865 278015