

ETHAN COHEN

Ethan Cohen Gallery

Yin Mei: Living Line

May 6 – June 4, 2022 | Opening Reception: May 6, 6–8 pm



Ethan Cohen Gallery is pleased to present ***Living Line***, the first solo exhibition by **Yin Mei**, the celebrated female Chinese artist based in New York.

Kinetic in all senses, Yin Mei's monumental paintings invoke the timeless Chinese tradition of ink on paper, but scaled so large that they often encompass three vertical floors. To their invention she brings a trance-like physical and performative execution, utilizing her body, limbs and extremities as brush, in a complete danced encounter with the painting surface as partner, vessel and portal to transcendence. The result is a swirling glimpse into the purest forces of creation within the artist and at the universe's core, an abstraction of chaos realized. In Chinese mythology, the Gates of Heaven allow bodies to pass through and become souls, framing the eternal exchange between energy and form. Yin Mei's canvases serve a similar function, acting as receptacles for embodied forces reincarnating into elemental markings. What we see discharged are swashes, sweeps, torsion lines, sudden or elongated brushstrokes, dark impressions of cosmic secrets and nebular implosions amid the human struggle to encompass and cohere.

Yin Mei's years-long practice as a renowned dancer and choreographer, the personification of channeled life-force, informs the expressionist dance of abstraction transmitted to the painting ground. She accomplishes her works by moving her body as brush across spaces of paper laid on the floor, stepping or twisting across them, alighting here and detailing there in sustained motion. One feels that, here for the first time through the medium of painting, the artist has found a new and needed outlet not only to express celestial energies but also to transcend psychological turmoils and compacted personal traumas. The works constitute a unique form of “danced ink” – or embodied calligraphy – that blurs the line between the visual and performative forms of artistic expression. The works exhibited are the remnants of a moment, a movement in time – standing as resonances of an eternal passing. Her new-found art form has given her liberation and resolution anew.

ETHAN COHEN GALLERY

251 W 19TH ST
NEW YORK, NY 10011

T 212-625-1250
ecfa@ecfa.com

KUBE ART CENTER

211 FISHKILL AVE
BEACON, NY 12508

T 212-625-1250
ecfa@ecfa.com

ETHAN COHEN

Yin Mei

(b. China)

Yin Mei is a director, choreographer, visual artist, and curator known for her work that fearlessly bridges geographic, technological, artistic, and cultural divides. Employing Chinese energy direction and spatial principles, her work explores themes of artistic and spiritual significance arising at the intersection between Asian traditional performance and Western contemporary dance.

Yin Mei's choreography has been hailed by critics as "theatrical magic" (New York Times) and as inhabiting "the tremulous space where dreams and memory reside" (Village Voice). Yin Mei herself is described as a "dancer of exquisite lyricism and delicacy" (New York Times) and "a stunning presence, bringing her classical Chinese training and aesthetic into a blend with her adopted Downtown sensibilities with refined grace" (Dance Insider).

Yin Mei's most recent work-in-progress, *DreamLetters-REvolution\Simulacrum* is an integration of multidimensional action, investigation, recording, and representation in time. A first residency took place at the Baryshnikov Arts Center in New York City in May 2021. Yin Mei's evening-length dance theater work, *Peony Dreams: On the Other Side of Sleep* (2019-20) was supported by the National Dance Project and the New England Foundation for the Arts. It premiered at LaMaMa Experimental Dance Festival and toured to the Asolo Theater, Ringling Museum at the start of the global Pandemic in 2020. *Farewell my Concubine* (2016) her multimedia dance theater collaboration with Clifton Taylor was performed at the Poly Theater in Ningbo, China by members of the Ningbo Dance Company. Her adaptation of the Chinese literary classic, *The Red Dress*, was performed at Lincoln Center (2015). Directed by Wang Xiaoying of the National Theater of China and choreographed by Yin Mei, the work featured 45 dancers with the Ningbo Dance Company. Yin Mei's evening-length work *DIS/oriented* was a collaboration with composer Bora Yoon, playwright Hansol Jang and dancer Fei Bo (National Ballet of China). Supported by the Rockefeller MAP Fund, the work premiered at the Asia Society in New York in 2013. Her evening-length work, *Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove*, was commissioned by the Hong Kong Dance Company and premiered in Hong Kong with 45 dancers in March 2012. The work, widely seen as breaking new ground in using new media, featured innovative "live cinema" staging by noted theater director Jay Scheib (Platonov, World of Wires, Bellona The Destroyer). In April 2012, Yin Mei was the choreographer for John Adams's opera production *Nixon In China* at the Theatre du Chatelet in Paris under the direction of Chen Shi-Zheng (Peony Pavilion). In 2010, Yin Mei choreographed the contemporary ballet *A Scent of Time* with media designer Aaron Harrow (Media director, MOMA NYC) for the Beijing Dance Academy's 46 dancer ballet company in 2009. In 2010, her evening-length dance theater work *City of Paper*, created in collaboration with visual designer Tennessee Rice Dixon, premiered at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival and toured the U.S. thereafter. *Nomad: The River*, a multi-media dance theater piece created in collaboration with sound and visual designer Christopher Salter, premiered at Dance Theater Workshop (NYLA) in New York City in March 2005 and was presented at the Contemporary Theater Festival in Shanghai, the Beijing Modern Dance Theater in 2006 and toured the U.S. in 2006-07. Yin Mei's

ETHAN COHEN GALLERY

251 W 19TH ST
NEW YORK, NY 10011

T 212-625-1250
ecfa@ecfa.com

KUBE ART CENTER

211 FISHKILL AVE
BEACON, NY 12508

T 212-625-1250
ecfa@ecfa.com

ETHAN COHEN

solo evening, *Tea*, in collaboration with installation artist Gu Wenda, lighting designer Lea Xiao and musician Ralph Samuelsson, premiered at the Asia Society 2003. Other work includes */Asunder*, a multi-media, cross-cultural dance theater work created in collaboration with installation artist Cai Guoqiang and composer Robert Een, which premiered at Danspace Project at St. Mark's Church in New York toured eleven U.S. cities throughout 2002 to critical and audience acclaim, starting at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival. Yin Mei's first evening-length dance theater work, *Empty Tradition/City of Peonies*, premiered at the Asia Society in New York in fall 1998 and was presented at the Jacobs Pillow Dance Festival in August 1999. Conceived, choreographed and directed by Yin Mei, *Empty Tradition/City of Peonies* was the product of a year-long collaboration with Indonesian composer Tony Prabowo and prominent visual installation artist Xu Bing and was hailed as a tour de force for Yin Mei in the New York Times.

Yin Mei's choreography is described by critics in terms that reveal an uncanny, almost magical, effect on audiences: *Nomad: The River*: "real yet unreal, vivid yet somehow misted in beauty, . . . [the work] brushes our minds with images whose poetry ensnares us, whose enigmas taunt us" (Village Voice). */Asunder*: "filled with movement that translates an agony that is repeatedly saved with an embrace" (Dance Insider). *Empty Tradition/City of Peonies*: "[t]he piece proceeds from one distilled memory to another, not illustrating them but evoking their emotions in passages of shimmering, pensive and abrupt movement" (New York Times).

Yin Mei has also worked as a creative visual artist. As artist-in-residence at the Baryshnikov Art Center in 2021, Yin Mei created 60 large scale paintings and is at work on a film culled from 40 hours of video footage taken during the residency. Her combined performance/visual art work entitled *Cursive* was exhibited at the Queens Museum, as part of the Biennial in 2006-07, and also at various New York art galleries. In January 2007, Art Review magazine devoted a two-page color spread to Yin Mei creating this work at the James Cohan Gallery in New York. Yin Mei also had a solo exhibition "3000" of her art and performance work at the DeVos Museum, Northern Michigan University, in October 2007 and the Duke university 2008. Yin Mei was one of a number of prominent U.S.-based Chinese-born artists interviewed for NPR's "Studio 360" program entitled "Overseas Chinese". Her most recent solo exhibition, "Interactive Narrative", is being held at Long Island NYC/MDF Multidisciplinary Festival.

Yin Mei's choreography has been presented at leading New York dance and performance venues including the City Center Fall for Dance Festival, Lincoln Center David Koch Theater, St. John the Divine Cathedral, Danspace Project at St. Mark's Church, Dance Theater Workshop, La Mama ETC., the Asia Society, the Japan Society, PACE Downtown Theater, the Mulberry Street Theater, the Lincoln Center Out-Of-Doors Festival, Movement Research at Judson Church, the Queens College Theater, P.S. 1, the Knitting Factory, the Williamsburg Art Center and the Queens Museum. Her work has been presented three times at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, and at U.S. venues including the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts LA, the UCLA's Center for Performing Arts, the Asolo Theater at the Ringling Museum Florida, the Miami Performing Arts Center, the Columbia College Dance Center, the University of California Los Angeles, UMASS-Amherst, the University of California at Santa Cruz, the Kohler Arts Center, the University of

ETHAN COHEN GALLERY

251 W 19TH ST
NEW YORK, NY 10011

T 212-625-1250
ecfa@ecfa.com

KUBE ART CENTER

211 FISHKILL AVE
BEACON, NY 12508

T 212-625-1250
ecfa@ecfa.com

ETHAN COHEN

Arizona, Brown University, Arizona State University, Hamilton College, University of Alaska, Trinity College, Bryn Mawr College, Wake Forest University, University of California at Riverside and Bard College. Internationally, her work has been presented at the National Theater of Beijing, the Grant OperaTheater of Nanjing, the Poly Theater at Ningbo and Beijing, China, the Shanghai Contemporary Theater Festival, Beijing Theater for Modern Dance, the Hong Kong City Hall Theatre, Tokyo's Theater X, the Chikamatsu Festival Japan, the BBB Festival Germany, the Indonesian Dance Festival, the Korea International Dance Festival and the Contemporary Dance Festival West Sumatra. the Jerusalem Museum, etc. She was one of ten international choreographers invited to participate in the 50th anniversary of the American Dance Festival.

Yin Mei's work has been recognized and supported by grants from the Fulbright, the Guggenheim Foundation, three times Rockefeller Foundation Multi- Arts Production Fund, three times Doris Duke Fund of the National Dance Project of the New England Foundation for the Arts, multiple times National Endowment for the Arts, the Jerome Foundation, Meet The Composer, Music for Dance, Arts International, Greenwall Foundation, New York Foundation for the Arts, the BUILD NYFA, New York State Dance Force, Asian Cultural Council, Bossak/Heibron Charitable Foundation, the Asian American Arts Alliance, the Research Foundation of City University of New York, the Queens College Foundation, NYC Dance Advancement Fund. Grant application currently in pending is the Creative New York grant for community engagement, the Creative Capital Wildfutures grant for innovative work, and the MAP grant in 2022.

Yin Mei was a fellow in the Asia Pacific Performing Arts Exchange (APPEX) in Bali, Indonesia sponsored by the Center for Intercultural Performance at UCLA. A longtime practitioner and teacher of somatic studies, applying the principles of Laban movement analysis, Feldenkrais principles, Taiji, Qigong, Yoga, and a long time student of *I Ching* the Book of Change, her research into Chinese ancient philosophy and contemplative practice integrated into her contemporary art making was recognized with a Contemplative Practice Fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies. Recently, she has been an invited lecturer at Peking University, Beijing, the William & Mary University, and Wake Forest University.

ETHAN COHEN GALLERY

251 W 19TH ST
NEW YORK, NY 10011

T 212-625-1250
ecfa@ecfa.com

KUBE ART CENTER

211 FISHKILL AVE
BEACON, NY 12508

T 212-625-1250
ecfa@ecfa.com

ETHAN COHEN

Statement from the Artist

When I am “creating”, what I am in fact doing is “translating” the experience of an illogical, dream-like space through my body, movements and actions. I am, in the truest sense, embodying. The movements and actions are not planned, but received, though a place Rumi described as the “field beyond right and wrong,” and which the Buddhists called “emptiness where dust has nowhere to collect.” This is the place where our innermost life flows, mirroring the entirety of the phenomenal world in its own image and rhythm.

When I dance in ink, I empty myself in order to receive myself, and in order to receive the world.

My residency at the Baryshnikov Arts Center was a testimony to the abundance of our inner-nature (本自具足). The gestures of heaven spring from this place within us, providing an intimate understanding of how one should approach body and time-based art. Although “I” am involved in the process throughout, the outcomes are unplanned. I am following a path laid out in the present moment – a moment full of koans in the form of coincidences.

These artistic “coincidences” derive from my entire history and are manifested as a past divination instituted in the present moment. As I stood in the Cage/Cunningham studio at BAC, I felt time fall away, and suddenly I was that person I was 30 some years ago in Hong Kong imagining the arc of my life as an artist. Time has now drawn this circle to a close. I am enlightened by the “happening” in my own work of a series of chance encounters with blank space, blank paper, body, ink.

During this BAC residency, I created 70 large-scale paintings, accompanied by 30 hours of film footage over 12 days. These works are essentially “portraits” of stories that trace back through what the ancient Chinese denoted as phenomena, similarities, and personas (the three “Xiangs 象/像/相”). In this way, we arrive in the moments where our personal life stream is at one with the cosmos, where we become embodied narrators of the “larger story (天垂象)”, translated through our bodies and recorded as traces of danced ink on paper. These are stories without a timeline. Every dot contains the whole, just as every step contains the dance.

We consulted the I-Ching at the first day of our residency, and our questions led the path into the unknown space of insights and intuition. Energies appear and disappear in this space, and the artist creates interferences and resonances in order to allow what is already there to become visible. The entanglement of Yin and Yang, dark and light, love and hate, reveals the myriad phenomenon of the hidden world, connecting otherwise random traces and completing the otherwise incomplete story of our perceptions.

The marks that you see on paper are energetic in form, just like the marks embedded within ancient Chinese characters. The process of bodily “translation” is identical to that of creating a language (真文). Linguistic symbols are a manifestation of the phenomenal world, but in my art

ETHAN COHEN GALLERY

251 W 19TH ST
NEW YORK, NY 10011

T 212-625-1250
ecfa@ecfa.com

KUBE ART CENTER

211 FISHKILL AVE
BEACON, NY 12508

T 212-625-1250
ecfa@ecfa.com

ETHAN COHEN

the ancient Chinese literary symbols (汉字) used as inspiration are pathways leading to a luminous dimension that is felt and sensed as more than two dimensional, interweaving realities.

In a way, then, the viewer must engage in a form of research to find in the images on paper the remnants of an experience in space-time, a circling back, a divination -- the morphing of a higher dimension "laid flat" on a surface but waiting to be interpreted and "stood up" again. These paintings contain the vibrations of the space-time shared in the making of the works, a rhythm, a music. The invisible and the visible exchange spirit.

— Yin Mei

ETHAN COHEN GALLERY

251 W 19TH ST
NEW YORK, NY 10011

T 212-625-1250
ecfa@ecfa.com

KUBE ART CENTER

211 FISHKILL AVE
BEACON, NY 12508

T 212-625-1250
ecfa@ecfa.com