

## **Fan Dongwang Bio**

Chinese Australian artist Dr Fan Dongwang studied traditional Chinese art at Shanghai School of Arts and Crafts (SSAC) in 70's and later became an art teacher at SSAC. As an established Shanghai artist, his work exhibited regularly in Shanghai Art Gallery since 1982, including 1986 Shanghai Art Museum Inaugural Art Exhibition, 1987 Shanghai International Art Festival. As a member of the top professional body Chinese Artists Association he was awarded the Prize for Excellent Work for Shanghai International Culture Exchange. In 1990 Fan migrated to Australia as an artist of 'Distinguished Talent'. Fan studied Master of Arts at COFA, NSW University in 1995, and received Post Graduate Award and completed Doctor of Creative Art at Wollongong University in 1999. His doctoral theses *Shifting Perspectives and the Body* established a theoretical model for comparing the differences between the representation of spatial depth in Chinese and European paintings. He was a guest lecturer at ANU, Wollongong University and visiting fellow at Curtin University. His painting was shown in group exhibition at National Gallery of Australia and his solo exhibitions were held at Wollongong City Gallery, Drill Hall Gallery, Sydney University College of the Arts Galleries and Macquarie University Art Gallery. He was awarded Wollongong University Postgraduate Award, Mosman Art Prize, Festival of Fisher's Ghost Art Award, Liverpool City Art Prize; Willoughby City Art Prize; Ian Potter Cultural Trust Grant; and Art on The Rocks Prize. He was twice the finalist at the Wynne and Sulman Prizes at the AGNSW and the finalist at Moran prize. Recently Fan's work was featured in China CCTV. Currently lives and works in Sydney.

## **The Gum Tree**

My large canvas paintings titled *The Gum Tree* to explore the notion of painting Australian landscape through the techniques of Chinese painting, carving and calligraphy.

Humble, resilient and iconic, the Australian gum tree has been drowned under roiling floods, consumed in flames, fallen to the buzz of the miller's saw and slowly choked of thirst. Yet each year it endures. The trees spread back across the land, from scorching deserts to desolate mountains. In the twilight their majestic trunks soar towards the sky in ecstatic salutation, their branches becoming narrow roads winding towards a heavenly and spiritual destination.

If you look closely, they become living things akin to human beings: their solemn trunks dance in the wind, their magnificent bodies transforming into awe inspiring male and female torsos. Gum trees are painterly subjects too, with the strokes breaking free and the colours both subtle and vivid.

*The Gum Tree* is developed from my knowledge of Chinese relief carving, a unique method of composing 3D images within the narrow dimensions of the carving material to create striking landscapes. Thus the paintbrush becomes my chisel, 'carving' out the trees' body shape, applying strong upward perspectives to manipulate the canvas surface to create powerful visual illusions. I also use "the art of line" from Chinese calligraphy combined with western Op art colour arrangement to paint the free flowing and gracious trunks and branches.

By revitalising old traditions, I provide Australians with a fresh perspective of their trees and country. The great 'Australian landscape' tradition, once emblematic of the Euro-centric vision of Australia has now embraced indigenous views of the landscape. It will be further strengthened when Asian artistic perspectives join in. *The Gum Tree* helps Asians and Australians understand both the cultural differences and the universal experiences embodied in the representation of our environment.

–Fan Dongwang