

PRIVATE AIR

LUXURY HOMES



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A man with glasses and a dark jacket is sitting on a metal railing, looking up and smiling. To his right is a large, glowing blue and gold horse sculpture. The scene is dimly lit, with the sculpture's light illuminating the man and the surrounding area.

ART, CULTURE, AND YEAR OF THE HORSE

*Captivating artist Simon Ma gallops into
Miami's Patricia & Philip Art Museum*

By: Megan Parks





The world tour of renowned Chinese artist and designer Simon Ma has descended upon Southern Florida in his latest exhibit *Heart Water Ink*. Ma blurs traditional techniques with fresh creativity, fusing the East and the West within works that cross mediums and cultural norms.

On display until October 19, 2014 at the Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum in Miami, Ma's first U.S. museum exhibit—and the tour's only stop in America—centers on the benevolent spirit of the horse and is a tribute to famous Chinese Master Xu Beihong. Ma, whose last name when translated means “horse,” has long felt a kinship toward this spirited creature. And it is no small coincidence that the exhibit's tour falls during the Chinese Zodiac calendar “Year of the Horse.”

“He's very much of a showman. He was doing a great painting during an exhibit, and we were simply captivated by him,” described Dr. Carol Damian, director and chief curator at the Frost Art Museum, of her first encounter with Ma at Art Asia 2012. For the past two years, Dr. Damian has been coordinating with Ma on *Heart Water Ink*.

More than 70 pieces of exhibited artwork demonstrate Ma's mastery in multiple mediums. Freehand brushwork, dimensional stroke and lacquer paintings, sculptures, 3-D art video, furniture, jewelry, Chinese calligraphy and projections explore the many dimensions of horses while also examining the harmony found in Nature.

“For Westerners to understand what is horses and for you to understand the many varieties of horses, I'm actually using a very simple ink brush with colors in the different forms and different materials for expression in my exhibition,” Ma explained. To produce the sculptures, Ma utilized fiberglass, bronze, Italian Murano glass, and Chinese ceramics to craft horses of varying textures and colors.

His use of Chinese splashing techniques on the horses, melds painting techniques into the



sculptures. “It’s not only a sculpture; it’s also a new creative piece of art,” Ma elaborated. Patrons’ gazes cannot help but drift to Ma’s horse dragon sculptures. The Chinese dragon is an iconic symbol for the people of China that dates back to ancient times. Ma combines the power and strength of the dragon with the benevolence of the horse to create a striking hybrid creature whose natural properties are explored through the artist’s mixed media works.

Ma draws from his own past for inspiration to blend Eastern and Western practices—both traditional and modern. Born in Hong Kong, Ma began studying art at the age of seven under Master Fan Tzu Teng. But in 1987 at age 13, Ma moved to London on his own, driven by a passion for music, art and design—he jokingly refers to himself as Mr. MAD. He studied architecture and urban design at the University College of London and then began the successful company MA Design based out of Shanghai.

In addition to horses, traditional Chinese calligraphy is also a recurring theme across the works featured in *Heart Water Ink*. Ma incorporates traditional Chinese freehand brushstroke techniques to produce the intricate characters that are incorporated into much of his art, including a series of graffiti paintings.

“Ink brush is the most simple, fundamental, original method and elements for creating the characters. In order to respect the traditional art and Master Xu Beihong, this is the most fundamental thing I want to use because nowadays many Chinese don’t know how to do the calligraphy because we don’t use brushes. We don’t use ink,” said Ma.

Heart Water Ink is much more than a simple art exhibit. Ma’s work in multiple mediums transcends traditional cultural boundaries in a celebration of nature and centers on ideas that encompass human experiences that are virtuous, generating good will. An afternoon spent among Ma’s dragon horses and calligraphy art will most certainly leave patrons feeling more inspired and light-hearted. ✈