

Nature in color

Seasons Change

Using the seasons as an inspiration for painting isn't an uncommon artistic trope. In fact Liaoning native Qu Fengguo has been using the four seasons in his artwork his whole life. Since the early 1990s he has been building on his body of work, using Chinese traditional solar terms such as "Qing Ming (清明)," "Cold Dew (寒露)" and "Summer Commences (立夏)" to capture his feelings and memories of the changing seasons through his abstract art. Qu Fengguo's latest solo exhibition Midsummer is currently on at Don Gallery West Bund.

The 24 solar terms were created by farmers in ancient China to guide their agricultural activities. They're based on the sun's position in the zodiac and reflect the changes in climate and natural phenomena that mirror the changes in season. "The Seasons series is

exploring the matter of time," explains the artist. "Individuals could have different feelings and memories about different seasons. You can feel the disappearing, extension and beginning of time from my paintings." "Cold Dew" (2015) is the earliest painting in the exhibition and also the smallest. The dark purples, magentas and cyans mirror the day marking the beginning of the seventeenth solar term, around October 8 or 9 when the first leaves start falling from the trees.

There is a perpendicular split down the painting, contrasted against the later paintings, which have diagonal tangents. "Summer Commences 2" (2017) is a complete contrast from "Cold Dew." It dominates the far wall of gallery space. Bright pinks and reds with sharp greens and yellows cutting through reflect the day marking the begin-

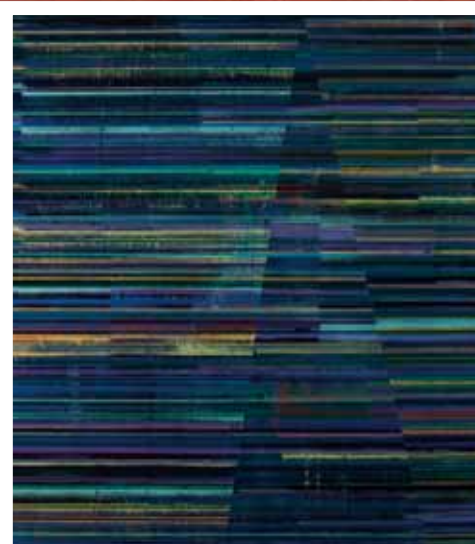
ning of the seventh solar term, around May 5, 6, or 7.

The scale of the larger work is quite astonishing when you consider the fact that the paint was applied with a ruler. The colors are scraped onto the canvas in layers, over and over, up to 73 times. These abstract pieces completely encapsulate the viewer; the bright colored paintings jump out and force the viewer to stand back, while the darker paintings draw the audience to the piece.

Qu Fengguo's works are like looking at somewhere far away through lines and patterns. There is distance and an illusion in his paintings.

★ Misha Maruma, cncreate.org

Midsummer at Don Gallery, Sunday, July 23, www.dongallery.cn



See more art reviews at www.cityweekend.com.cn/shanghai/arts-culture