

Dutch painter with passion for China

Wang Jie

Distinguished Dutch artist Jan Peter van Opheusden has only been to China twice, and only briefly, but he has a passion for Chinese culture and even has a Chinese name from literature, Lin Chong.

"Don't laugh. I know who Lin Chong was," says the 69-year-old painter, whose exhibition of abstract and surreal Shanghai scenes opens tomorrow at Xintiandi.

Lin was one of the best-known figures in the novel "Outlaws of the Marsh" (also known as "Water Margin").

The novel, considered to be one of the four greatest Chinese classical literary works, describes a heroic revolt in the Song Dynasty (960-1279).

Opheusden, who was born in 1941 in Eindhoven, Netherlands, is among the most representative painters in Europe. His works have been shown and collected

worldwide. He is strongly influenced by Dali, Miro, Ernst and other painters of surrealism, and his style is somewhere between fauvism and surrealism. His works are vivid and feel spontaneous.

Opheusden held his first exhibition in China in 2008.

"At that time I regarded China as a mysterious country with a profound history," he says. "I think both Beijing and Shanghai are attractive, but Shanghai is infused with more energy and vitality."

The upcoming exhibition in Xintiandi reflects some of his impressions of Shanghai, including streets in the former French concession and the Waibaidu Bridge. He uses blocks of color to conjure up familiar yet distant images, as seen through the eyes of a newcomer.

"No one ever told me that I was painting icons of Shanghai," he says. "I just walk around the city and capture what surprises me."

"I have always had an

emotional link with the East," he says. "I collect Chinese antique furniture and use it every day because that makes me feel that I am living in a Chinese story."

He enjoys Chinese food and green tea.

"I have held many exhibitions around the world and I am happy I am finally coming to China with my art," he says.

When asked why he calls himself Lin Chong, a dashing and romantic character, Opheusden says: "Lin was a legendary figure. His wife was a daring and beautiful lady whom he loved dearly. His fate changed when he tried to avenge her murder — it's a romantic and sad love story. I bet this is a name Chinese people remember."

He didn't explain further.

Date: August 7-29, 10am-4pm (Reservations required)

**Address: No. 1, North Block of Xintiandi, 181 Taicang Rd
Tel: 5382-9898**



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