

# COLLECTION DE L'ART BRUT LAUSANNE



## GUO FENGYI

18 November 2011 – 29 April 2012

### PRESS PACK

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Lausanne



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# GUO FENGYI

## THE EXHIBITION

**The Collection de l'Art Brut proudly presents the very first retrospective honoring the Chinese creator Guo Fengyi. Accompanying this major event are a documentary film specially produced for the occasion, together with a monographic essay to be featured in the twenty-third issue of the *L'Art Brut* series launched by Jean Dubuffet in Paris in 1964.**

The Chinese creator Guo Fengyi (1942-2010) began drawing at the age of 47, exclusively as therapy to alleviate pains due to her bouts of acute arthritis. Her spontaneous and autodidactic approach to creating was exempt from all artistic ambition and stripped of any need for cultural or social recognition. Gradually, it evolved into something more adventurous, ending up as a spiritual and philosophical quest. «I paint in order to know,» she would confide. Twenty years after her first drawing, her flow of production had increased enormously, so that by the time of her death her oeuvre amounted to about a thousand works.



Guo Fengyi  
*La divination de Tai*, 1991  
encre de Chine sur papier  
135 x 65,5 cm  
Photo: Marie Humair.  
Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne.

Guo Fengyi's preferred iconographic motif is the human body. No doubt her personal experience of illness and suffering gave her a heightened feeling for her body—a feeling she cultivated daily by practicing *Qi-gong*, a branch of Chinese medicine based on vital energy, both physical and mental. This discipline brought out her creative potential, and contributed to the development of her painting.

It is thus that Guo Fengyi accomplished her personal body-mapping oeuvre. Her early drawings, carried out on the back of salvaged calendar pages, show bodies crossed over by meridian lines, circuits of energy, and pathways of symbolic dots. Next came historic figures (Empress Wu Zetian), figures drawn from mythology (the Moon Fairy), divinities (Buddha), imaginary creatures and self-portraits. All are depicted in ever-stricter verticality, at times to dizzying extremes, since the vegetable fiber paper of some of her scrolls are ten meters high. These long-bodied, majestic silhouettes take shape in symmetrical fashion because they are built up of precisely and endlessly layered brushstrokes applied in ink, ultimately forming a multilayer network of exact and delicate interweavings.

Asserting that «the message comes from heaven,» Guo Fengyi refused, like so many of her fellow Art Brut creators, to present herself as the author of her production. She ascribed her works to an innate power of acceding to Revelation: «My works serve as intermediaries towards mystical spaces.»

The Collection de l'Art Brut gratefully acknowledges Guo Fengyi's outstanding donation of works, part of which is presented in this exhibition. Also featured are other works belonging to the creator's family, enlarging the show to some fifty paintings.



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## THE CREATOR

Guo Fengyi (1942-2010) was born in Xi'an, in China. After graduating from high school in 1962, she worked as a technician in a rubber and solvent plant. The mother of four children, she became plagued by attacks of acute arthrities at the age of thirty-nine, and was forced to cease all professional activity. After suffering for several years, she began practicing *Qi-gong*, a branch of traditional Chinese medicine, in order to alleviate her pain. With her mastery of the metaphysical contemplation belonging to that discipline, new horizons opened up for her.

Guo Fengyi began producing drawings in 1989, after experiencing a first appearance of a figure on a page of her private diary. Over the next years she produced a large number of paintings. In order to create, she would enter into a state of meditation, claiming to derive her inspiration from Buddha. Her oeuvre comes to around a thousand paintings.



Guo Fengyi  
Photo : Lucienne Peiry, Xi'an, 2008

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# GUO FENGYI

## THE PUBLICATION

Penned by Lucienne Peiry, director of the Collection de l'Art Brut, a monographic essay on Guo Fengyi appears in Issue 23 of *L'Art Brut*, the series of fascicles devoted to the Collection de l'Art Brut creators. Here, readers will find various bits of information and excerpts of conversations that Lucienne Peiry enjoyed with Guo Fengyi in Xi'an in 2008 and 2009.

In the same publication, they will also find essays on other creators, notably : Gregory Blackstock, Helga Goetze, Angus McPhee, Laure Pigeon, Guillaume Pujolle and George Widener. Lavishly illustrated by seventy color plates, this publication is jointly published by the Collection de l'Art Brut (Lausanne) and Infolio (Gollion). Price: CHF 48.-

## THE FILM

The Collection de l'Art Brut (Lausanne) and Lokomotiv Films (Le Tourne) are pleased to present the first and only documentary devoted to this Chinese creator no longer among us: *Guo Fengyi et les rouleaux magiques* (Guo Fengyi and the Magic Scrolls) by Philippe Lespinasse and Andress Alvarez, 2011, 19 min., original version (Chinese), French/English subtitles.

A public screening will take place at the Bio movie theater in Carouge (GE) on Wednesday, November 30. [www.cinema-bio.ch](http://www.cinema-bio.ch).

The DVD *Guo Fengyi et les rouleaux magiques* Philippe Lespinasse and Andress Alvarez Lausanne/Le Tourne, Collection de l'Art Brut/Lokomotiv Films, 2011, 19 min., Chinese original version with French/English subtitles, can be purchased at the museum bookstore. Price: CHF 39.-

## THE BOOKLET

*Guo Fengyi*  
by Lucienne Peiry  
Lausanne, Collection de l'Art Brut, 2011  
French  
18 color plates  
32 pp. Price: CHF 10.-

The Collection de l'Art Brut extends its heartfelt thanks to Gérald Béroud/SinOptic for his steadfast support of this exhibition, for all his advice and interest on behalf of our retrospective of Guo Fengyi's work.

The Collection de l'Art Brut extends its thanks to its exhibition partners:



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## AVAILABLE IMAGES

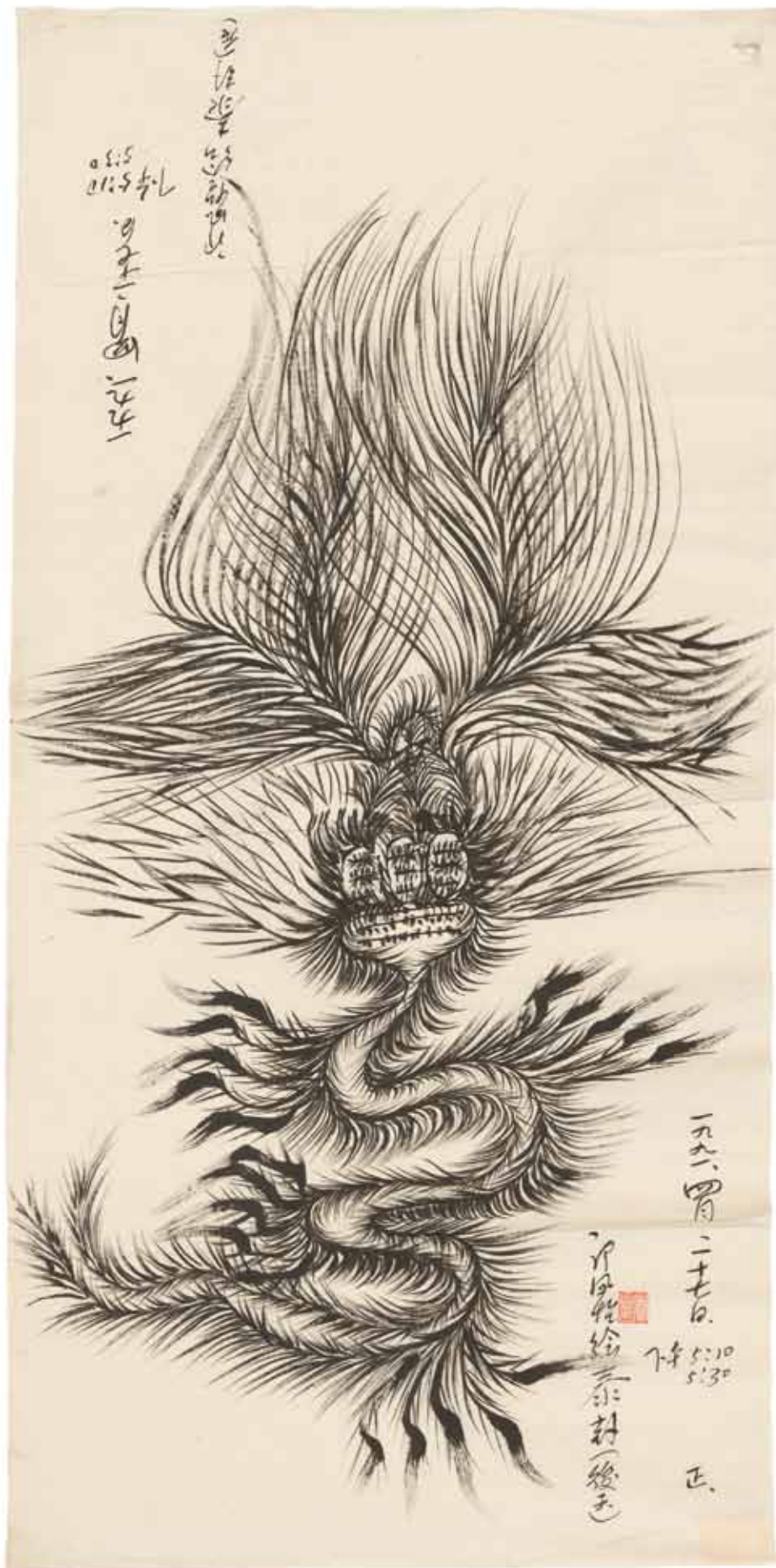
Available images can be found at our site [www.artbrut.ch](http://www.artbrut.ch) under «Médias > dossiers de presse». These images are available only to promote the Guo Fengyi exhibition. Mention of the image captions is mandatory.



Guo Fengyi  
*Le Mont Putuo*, 1993  
Ink on paper  
153,5 x 52 cm  
Photo: Caroline Smyrliadis.  
Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne.



Guo Fengyi  
*La divination de Shihe*, 1991  
Indian ink on paper  
91 x 67,5 cm  
Photo: Marie Humair.  
Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne.



Guo Fengyi, *La divination de Tai*, 1991  
Indian ink on paper, 135 x 65,5 cm  
Photo: Marie Humair.  
Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne.

## EXCERPTS FROM L'ART BRUT, Issue 23

Guo Fengyi

It was for exclusively therapeutic reasons that Guo Fengyi (1942-2010) took up drawing at the age of 47. Her main ambition was to relieve her physical sufferings, and also to care for other sick persons. Her approach to her works on paper, in a spontaneous and autodidactic vein—»instinctive« is how she termed it— was exempt of all artistic ambition and stripped of any need for cultural or social recognition. The range of curative virtues that she sought out in her drawings widened over time, attaining a greater scale in every sense of the word. Her approach gradually evolved into something far more adventurous, ending up as a spiritual and philosophical quest. «I paint in order to know,» she would confide. Twenty years after her first drawing, her flow of production had increased enormously, so that by the time of her death her oeuvre amounted to about a thousand works.

[...]

As it happens, the term «irruption» is particularly appropriate, since the first drawing cropped up suddenly on May 21, 1989, in the ninth volume of her personal diary, thereby attesting to its private and confidential nature. It is, moreover, closely linked to a revelation for which Fengyi could specify the exact date. Like several other pieces belonging to this early period, such as they appear in this same notebook, the composition takes shape by way of dotted lines in black ballpoint pen: the creator would apply successive and repeated graphic touches, akin to jerky dashes, preparing a still undefined outline to suggest the coming form. A kinship with the first drawings by the Art Brut creator Ataa Oko of Ghana proves to be as obvious as it is unexpected: in both cases, the drawing comes into being through short linear fits-and-starts, attesting the search under way. No matter how uncertain and restrained the initial approach, the lines in Guo Fengyi's work soon acquired an easy flow that would steadfastly continue to develop. The draftsman began enjoying this means of expression. She managed to get hold of a number of large, outdated calendars, using the backs of their pages to record her investigations and discoveries.

[...]

Her working process took the form of a ritual. She worked without any preliminary sketches or preconceived ideas. As if practicing her *Qi-gong*, she would begin by entering into a state of contemplation, concentration, vacuousness and intense availability. Seeking out the middle of her roll of paper, she would paint in a few Chinese characters indicating her chosen and convened subject. With that, the spark was ignited, the impetus given. From then on, she confided, she had visions, and the composition would fall into place without her either mastering or controlling it; the forms would be revealed to her at the same time as it came into being. She was wont to paint rapidly, in one and the same gesture, in a single breath, without a qualm. The work would arise, involuntarily, and happen: «It comes true,» is how she put it. The speed with which she worked at a piece and the iterative nature of her lines contributed to her remove from herself and from reality, and were thus all the more conducive to the hypnotic state that she sought. In her paintings, Guo Fengyi reveals «moments,» and she took care to inscribe each work with the times at which she began and finished that piece. She said that she derived her inspiration from Buddha, adding «the message comes from heaven, [...] my works are inspired,» in order to avoid presenting herself as the creator of her production, in keeping with so many of her fellow Art Brut creators.

Lucienne Peiry

## EVENTS

- Press conference** Thursday 17 November 2011, 11am  
at the Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne, Switzerland
- Opening reception** Thursday 17 November 2011, 6:30pm  
at the Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne, Suisse
- Free guided tours** Sunday 12 February 2012, 11am  
Thursday 15 March 2012, 7pm  
For groups and classes: tours upon request (in French, German, English, Italian, Chinese and Japanese)
- Free guided tours for teachers** Guo Fengyi  
Wednesday 23 November 2011, 5pm  
*By advance booking, on a first come first served basis*
- Film screening** Wednesday 30 November 2011  
***Guo Fengyi et les rouleaux magiques*** Bio movie theater, Carouge (GE), [www.cinema-bio.ch](http://www.cinema-bio.ch)  
*Guo Fengyi et les rouleaux magiques* (Guo Fengyi and the Magic Scrolls) by Philippe Lespinasse and Andress Alvarez Lausanne/Le Tourne, Collection de l'Art Brut/Lokomotiv Films, 2011, 19 min., original version (Chinese), French subtitles.
- Interactive tours for children ages 6 to 12** Duration: 30 minutes (advance booking)  
Fr. 4.- / child

## PRATICAL INFORMATION FOR CLASS VISITS

The recommended schedule for class visits is during the museum opening hours (11am to 6pm). Nonetheless, visits outside that time schedule can be set up by prior agreement. Two kinds of visits are foreseen : guided and self-guided tours.

Reservations for guided tours and workshops must be made with the Collection de l'Art Brut 15 days ahead of time; these always receive written confirmation.

**Guided tours for teachers** Wednesday, 23 November 2011, 5pm

*By advance booking, free of charge, on a first come first served basis*

**Self-guided tours** Anyone following a study course (ages 4 to 30) accompanied by a teacher, under no matter what auspices, enjoys free entry to the museum.

Visitors arriving as a group (minimum 6 persons) enjoy a reduced fee (CHF 5.- instead of CHF 10.-).

**Guided tours** **Interactive tours**

Organized for young people ages 4 to 16 (minimum 6 persons, maximum 25). The fee is CHF 4.- per person. Groups of over 21 young people enjoy a set price of CHF 80.-. Teachers and/or accompanying adults (max. 3) enjoy free entry.

**Workshops** Workshops are set up for young people (ages 6 to 12, at times 4 to 9). These are generally in connection with temporary shows. The fee is CHF 10.- per youngster. The best solution is to set up a workshop for a single group of youngsters (e.g. a school class, or a community center group).

**Educational kit** Information on the Collection de l'Art Brut and the temporary exhibition can be downloaded at [www.artbrut.ch](http://www.artbrut.ch)

**Image portfolio** The Collection de l'Art Brut lends out a portfolio of reproductions of the exhibition works for prior classroom study.

**DVD** Around twenty short films presenting the Art Brut creators, including Gregory Blackstock, are available on loan in DVD format.

**Class reading** Jointly with the Collection de l'Art Brut, Bibliomédia lends out a selection of books providing an overall view of Art Brut: [www.bibliomedia.ch](http://www.bibliomedia.ch), Tel. 021 320 23 27.

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

**Publications** *L'Art Brut*, Issue 23, co-edited by the Collection de l'Art Brut (Lausanne) and Infolio (Gollion), 2011. Price: CHF 48.-

**Documentary film** *Guo Fengyi et les rouleaux magiques* (Guo Fengyi and the Magic Scrolls) by Philippe Lespinasse and Andress Alvarez Lausanne/Le Tourne, Collection de l'Art Brut/Lokomotiv Films, 2011, 19 min., original version (Chinese), French/English subtitles. On sale at the Collection de l'Art Brut bookshop. Price: CHF 39.-

**Booklet** *Guo Fengyi*  
by Lucienne Peiry  
Lausanne, Collection de l'Art Brut, 2011  
French  
13 color and b/w plates  
32 pp. Price: CHF 10.-

**Poster, small poster postcards** Standard (120 x 90 cm) and A3 (29.7 x 42cm) exhibition posters; postcards.

**Press kit** Illustrations and press kit can be downloaded at [www.art-brut.ch](http://www.art-brut.ch) under the heading «Média > dossiers de presse». Documentary film available by purchase order.

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**Opening hours** Tuesday thru Sunday from 11am to 6pm. Open on holidays.  
Closed on 24 + 25 December 2011 and 1 January 2012  
No entrance fee the first Saturday of the month

**Entrance fee** Fr. 10.-  
Reduced price: Fr. 5.-  
Groups of six: Fr. 5.-  
The unemployed and youngsters until age 16: free entry

**Temporary exhibitions at the Collection de l'Art Brut** *Blackstock*, until 19 February 2012

**Accessibility** The exhibition is inaccessible to persons with reduced mobility