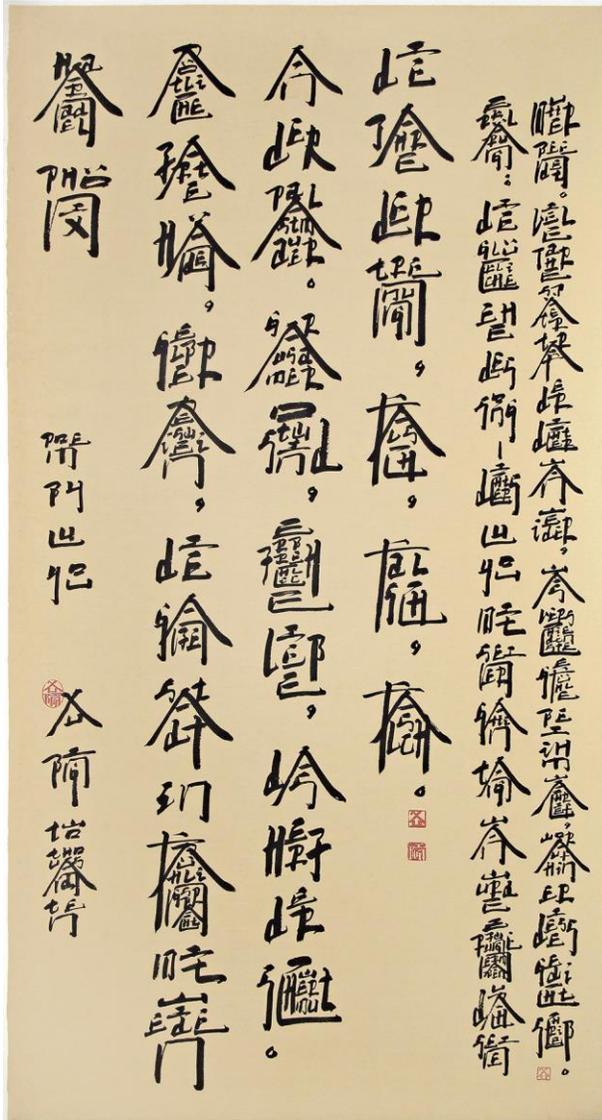




CHINA
2000
FINE
ART

Xu Bing (b. 1955)
Square Word Calligraphy in German, 2010
Ink on paper
76 x 41 in. (193 x 104 cm)



Calligraphy in German

钗头凤
Haarnadelphönix

红酥手，
Rötliche zarte Hände,
黄滕酒，
Gelber Reiswein,
满城春色宫墙柳。
Die ganze Stadt in Frühlingspracht mit Weiden
an der Palastmauer.
东风恶，
Grausamer Ostwind,
欢情薄，
Zerbrechliche Liebe,
一怀愁绪，
Das Herz der Schwermut,
几年离索，
Die Jahre der Trennung,
错，错，错。
Falsch, falsch, falsch.

注：宋代诗人陆游与爱妻唐婉的美满婚姻被陆母强行拆散。
多年后，陆游重逢唐婉，感慨万分，写就此诗。
Erklärung: Die glückliche Ehe des Song-Dichters Lu You mit seiner Gattin Tang Wan wurde erzwingenermaßen durch seine Mutter beendet. Viele Jahre später traf der Dichter Tang Wan wieder, was verschiedenste Gefühle bei ihm wachrief, woraufhin er dieses Gedicht schrieb.

Transcription of the English calligraphy
Poem by Lu You Xu Bing Two thousand ten

Translation of the title:
Phoenix Hairpin



CHINA
2000
FINE
ART

In this work, Xu Bing wrote the German translation of the first stanza of Lu You's (1125-1210) poem – *Phoenix Hairpin* with a short explanation in a smaller font on the right. The poem has two stanzas.

The full version of the poem in Chinese:

钗头凤
红酥手，黄腾酒，满城春色宫墙柳。
东风恶，欢情薄。一怀愁绪，几年离索。
错、错、错。

春如旧，人空瘦，泪痕红浥蛟绡透。
桃花落，闲池阁，山盟虽在，锦书难托。
莫、莫、莫。

The English translation:

**Pink soft hands, yellow rice wine,
The whole city in spring splendor with willows by the palace walls.
The east wind is biting, love is fragile,
Heart full of sorrow, so many years apart.
Wrong, Wrong, Wrong!**

Spring is as of old; the girl is empty and thin.
Traces of tears show through the sheer silk.
Peach blossoms falling, glimmering pond freezing,
The huge oath remains [in the heart], the brocade book [letter] is hard to exchange.
Don't, Don't, Don't!

Explanation colophon in English:

The happy marriage of the Song poet Lu You and his wife Tang Wan was forcibly ended by his mother. Many years later they meet again. It evokes a wide range of emotions, whereupon he writes this poem.

Note:

This poem is about the real love story of the poet, Lu You (1125-1210). In the poem, "Biting east wind" is a metaphor for the traditional Chinese view of women. Originally, the east wind can make the recovery of the earth, bring exuberant vitality to everything, but when it is too strong, it brings chaos and destroys the spring that it has nurtured. The poet uses east wind to hint that the separation of his marriage with Tang Wan was caused by his mother. After years of separation, Lu You encounters Tang Wan and her husband by chance at Shen's Garden (in Shaoxing, Zhejiang province) in 1155. Tang Wan asks her husband to let her send a glass of wine to Lu You. This is described in the first two verses. When her hands pass the wine to him, he sees her eyes brimmed with tears. His heart is broken, and he drinks the glass of bitter wine to the bottom. Under Chinese tradition, they were not allowed to communicate, as in the second stanza that mentions the brocade book [letter] is hard to exchange. They can only hide their feelings in their hearts. The poet, however, reveals his emotions by writing a poem on the wall of Shen's Garden (just as Xu Bing has written this poem on a brick to in the Berlin Wall ceremony).



CHINA
2000
FINE
ART

After this meeting with Tang Wan, Lu You went to the North to struggle against the foreign Jin Dynasty to pursue his dream of unifying China. During Lu You's lifetime, China was divided into North and South and the once-glorious Song dynasty in the northern part of the country had been invaded by the Tartars or Jurchen people (女真). The southern part of China continued to hold out as the Southern Song dynasty for another 150 years. Lu You is known for his many patriotic poems.

Fall of the Berlin Wall

To mark the 20th anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the Goethe-Institut presented The Wall in the World, an exhibition of "bricks" designed by artists from around the world. The bricks were lined up in front of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin as part of Festival of Freedom, and on November 9, 2009, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton toppled the first brick to initiate a domino effect, with each brick falling in succession.

Xu Bing, one of four Chinese artists invited in May to create a polystyrene brick for the exhibition, choose instead to create his brick from a slab of concrete on which he inscribed a German translation of a Song Dynasty poem in Square Word Calligraphy. The poem by Lu You (1125-1210) describes a couple's tragic separation and eventual reunion years later, a metaphor for the reunification of Germany. Because his was the only slab made from concrete, it was positioned as the last brick in the chain of "dominoes" and did not topple.

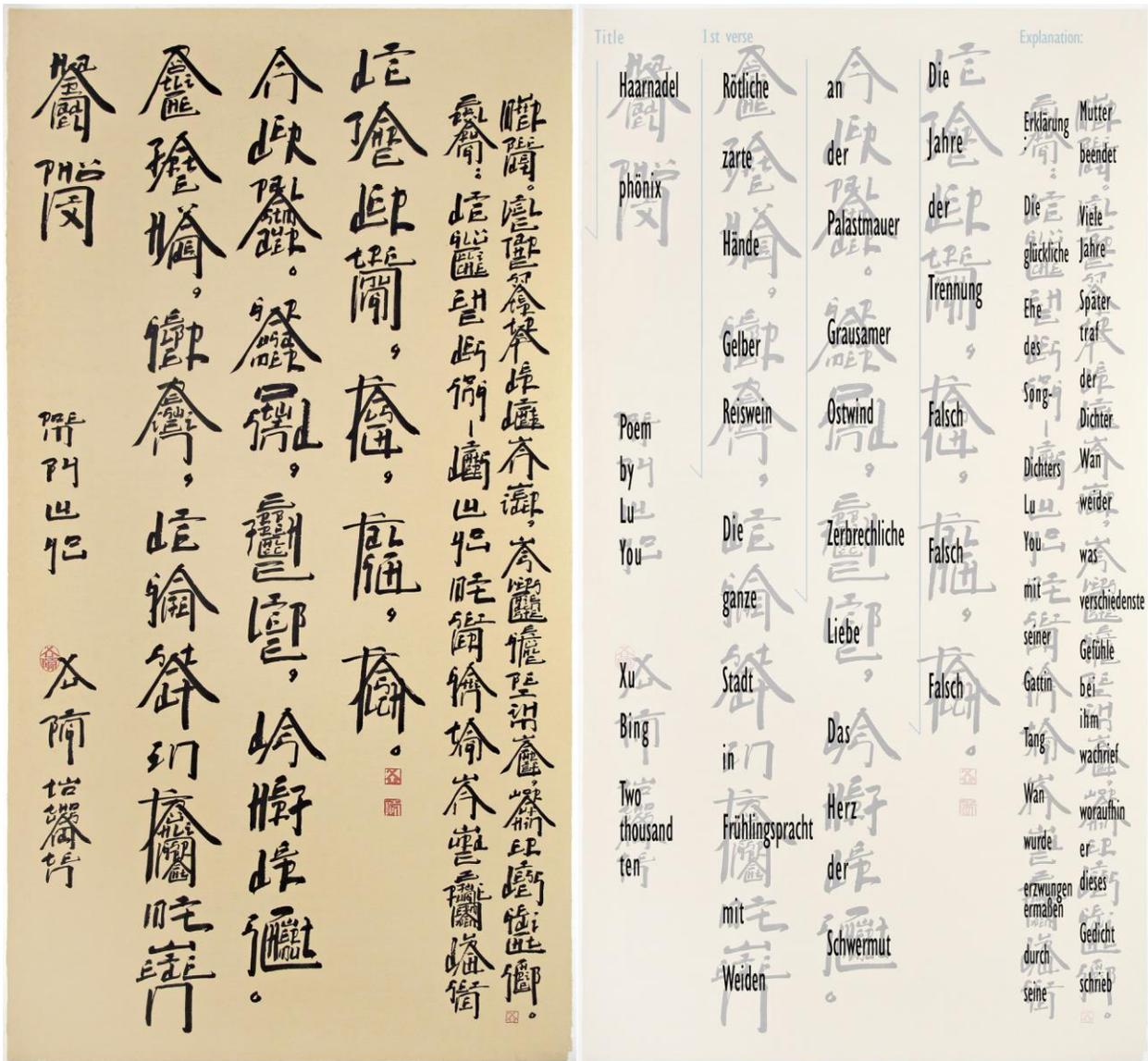
Because of the monumental importance of this event, we commissioned Xu Bing to do a one-of-a-kind Square Word Calligraphy (as it was done in German) of the words he inscribed on the brick.

Square Word Calligraphy is a new kind of writing, almost a code, designed by Xu Bing. The idea of inventing this new form of writing came to Xu Bing when he observed the attitude of awe and respect with which non-Asians regard Chinese calligraphy. Intrigued, he sought to create a work that would demystify calligraphy, and reward Westerners' engagement. For Square Word Calligraphy, Xu Bing designed a system whereby English words are written in the format of a square using the concept of classical Chinese stroke order to resemble Chinese characters.

捨 呼 峯	广	冂	丁
	斤	冂	凵
△	H	口	V
β	工	P	山
匚	丁	Q	X
凵	K	R	4
E	L	5	子



CHINA
2000
FINE
ART



Xu Bing was born in Chongqing, China in 1955 and raised in Beijing. After the Cultural Revolution, having spent the years working in the countryside, he enrolled in the Printmaking Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing in 1977, completed his studies in 1981, and later joined the faculty. He went on to earn a master's degree from the same institution in 1987. In recognition of his accomplishments, he was invited to the United States as an honorary artist in 1990. Xu Bing's career has been marked by a variety of notable achievements. In 2007, he returned to China and assumed several leadership roles at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, including Vice President, professor, and supervisor of doctoral students. Since 2014, he has served as the head of the institution's Academic Committee. Currently, he divides his time between Beijing and New York, where he lives and works.



CHINA
2000
FINE
ART

Xu Bing's work has been displayed in numerous prestigious venues around the world, including the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Guggenheim Museum, and the Sackler National Gallery in Washington, D.C. His work has also been exhibited at the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Museo Reina Sofia, as well as the Joan Miró Foundation. Additionally, he has participated in several international exhibitions, including the Venice Biennale, Sydney Biennale, São Paulo Biennale, and Johannesburg Biennale.

His works are included in major art history textbooks such as *Art Past, Art Present* (Boston: Abrahams Inc, 1997) and *Gardner's Art Through the Ages: A Global History* (Wadsworth: Cengage Learning, 2013).

Xu Bing has been the recipient of several esteemed awards throughout his illustrious career. In 1999, he was granted the MacArthur Fellowship for his exceptional originality, creativity, personal direction, and significant contributions to society, particularly in the domains of printmaking and calligraphy. In 2003, he was honored with the 14th Fukuoka Asian Cultural Award in Japan for his noteworthy contribution to the advancement of Asian culture. In his acceptance speech, Okwui Enwezor lauded Xu Bing as an artist who transcends cultural boundaries, bridging the divide between East and West and expressing his thoughts and realities in a visual language. Additionally, he won the first Artes Mundi Prize in Wales in 2004, and the lifetime achievement award from the Southern Graphics Council in 2006. In 2010, Columbia University awarded him an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters, while in 2015, he received the Andrew D. White Professor-at-Large from Cornell University and the Medal of Arts from the U.S. Department of State.

Recent exhibitions in 2021 include:

Xu Bing: Found in Translation, Museum of Art Pudong, Shanghai, China

Xu Bing: Art Beyond the Kármán Line, Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing, China

Xu Bing: Book from the Ground - Pop-up Book, Tokyo Gallery+BTAP, Beijing, China

Xu Bing: We Do Not Dream Alone, Times Square, New York, China

Currently "Xu Bing: Word Alchemy" is on view at the Asia Society Texas in Houston, Texas until July 24, 2024. Also "Xu Bing: Art Satellite—The First Animated Film Shot in Space" is on view at Santa Veneranda in Venice.