

Synergy between Tradition and the Contemporary — Brush-and-Ink, Materiality and Multimodality in Chinese Calligraphy and Seal Engraving: Daniel C.K. Lau Solo Exhibition

— ***Dr. Sarah NG (Exhibition Curator)***

In the realm of contemporary Chinese art, Dr. Daniel C.K. Lau stands out for his unique vision that seamlessly blends tradition and innovation. This exhibition presents an in-depth exploration of Lau’s artistic world, showcasing how calligraphy and seal engraving are reinterpreted through contemporary lenses of materiality, scale, and multimodal expression.

Lau’s creative approach is rooted in respect for tradition while constantly pursuing artistic experimentation. Grounded in the *beixue* (Stele/ Epigraphical) School, he propels calligraphy and seal engraving into new frontiers of contemporary art. The concept of “materiality and multimodality” forms the core of his artistic practice. By reimagining calligraphy across diverse media—from massive tapestries to sculptures—Lau challenges our understanding of the functions of calligraphy, transforming Chinese characters into vehicles for multisensory experiences.

This exhibition comprehensively displays Lau’s innovative vision. Oversized calligraphy is juxtaposed with intricate seal engravings, while video showing calligraphy performance contrasts with contemplative calligraphic sculptures. This interplay of scale, medium, and engagement reflects the diversity of Lau’s artistry and the infinite possibilities he uncovers within traditional art forms. This exhibition adopts a non-linear layout, creating a dynamic space for visitors to explore freely, encouraging the discovery of connections and contrasts between works. By presenting works in various calligraphy scripts, sizes, styles, media, and cross-media formats, the exhibition demonstrates how Lau integrates concept and experimentation, revealing the complexity of his creative process.

As this exhibition curator, I hope this exhibition will challenge audiences’ preconceptions about calligraphy and seal engraving, demonstrating their vitality as evolving art forms. Through Lau’s works, we invite audiences to reconsider the roles of cultural heritage, artistic innovation, and traditional arts in contemporary contexts.

“Synergy between Tradition and the Contemporary” bears witness to the enduring vitality of Chinese artistic traditions. Lau’s innovative interpretations showcase how calligraphy and seal engraving transcend historical boundaries to become expressive contemporary art media. This exhibition invites viewers to reconsider these ancient arts, exploring their infinite possibilities in the 21st century. This is not just an exhibition, but an experience—one that will reshape perceptions, provoke thought, and inspire a new appreciation for the potential of traditional arts in our contemporary world.