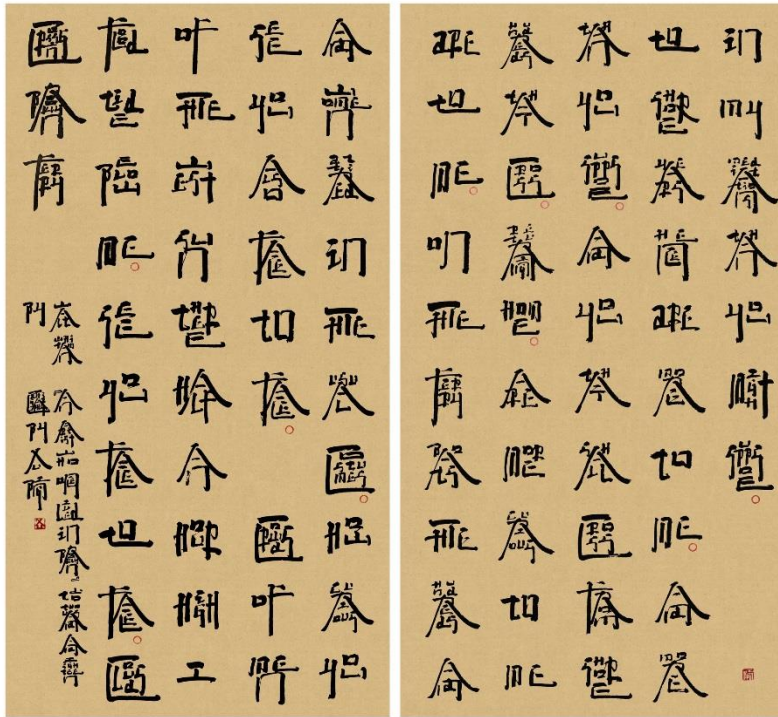


Press Release

Brooklyn Museum



Xu Bing (Chinese, born 1955). *Square Word Calligraphy: Crossing Brooklyn Ferry, Walt Whitman*, 2018. Ink on paper, 89.3/8 x 48.13/16 in. (227 x 124 cm). Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Xu Bing to the Brooklyn Museum in honor of his father, 2018.24a-d. (Photo: Courtesy of the artist)

The Brooklyn Museum Presents *One: Xu Bing*

The exhibition features Xu Bing's *Square Word Calligraphy: Crossing Brooklyn Ferry, Walt Whitman*, honoring the famous American poet Walt Whitman on his 200th birthday.

On view October 25, 2019–April 26, 2020

One: Xu Bing features a new acquisition, *Square Word Calligraphy: Crossing Brooklyn Ferry, Walt Whitman* (2018), and celebrates the famous American poet's ties to the Brooklyn Museum during the 200th anniversary of his birth. Xu Bing, widely regarded as one of China's most important living artists, created this work specifically for the Brooklyn Museum using "square word calligraphy," a conceptual method of writing English words stylized as Chinese characters that Xu developed while living in Brooklyn in the early 1990s. The resulting painting is a commentary on the immigrant experience of living between two cultures, simultaneously serving as an example of the new traditions and unique perspectives that evolve when cultural experiences are shared. The exhibition, part of the

One Brooklyn series focusing on an individual work from the Museum's collection, is curated by Susan L. Beningson, Assistant Curator, Asian Art, Brooklyn Museum.

Xu Bing was born in China in 1955 and immigrated to the United States in the early 1990s. During his time in the U.S., Xu lived in Brooklyn, where he still maintains a studio today. It was only after arriving in New York that the artist developed his "square word calligraphy" system of writing. Although the form of each rectangular unit resembles a Chinese character, the elements are actually English letters. This unique method of writing is a direct result of his living in the U.S. as an immigrant, straddling two cultures and forming roots in a new "home."

Square Word Calligraphy: Crossing Brooklyn Ferry, Walt Whitman is a prominent new gift to the Museum's collection of Chinese art. The large-scale painting features Whitman's poem *Crossing Brooklyn Ferry*, which details the narrator's journey across the East River on a Brooklyn-bound ferry and the excitement he witnessed among his fellow ferry passengers as they came from Manhattan to Brooklyn. Published as part of his famous collection *Leaves of Grass*, the Whitman poem uses the shared experience of diverse travelers on a crowded ferry to comment on human relationships across time and place. Similarly, Xu Bing's homage to the poet celebrates the global interconnectedness experienced by immigrants of different ethnic backgrounds melding cultures and creating new traditions.

Whitman, who was known as the American poet of democracy, also served as an early librarian at the Brooklyn Apprentices' Library Association, the predecessor to the Brooklyn Museum. On view alongside *Square Word Calligraphy: Crossing Brooklyn Ferry, Walt Whitman* will be material from the Brooklyn Museum Archives celebrating the poet's relationship to the Museum and the borough. Also included in the exhibition is archival material from Xu Bing illuminating his artistic process in the creation of both "square word calligraphy" and this specific painting. *One: Xu Bing* will open in conjunction with the newly reinstalled Arts of China and Arts of Japan galleries, highlighting the Museum's important and diverse collection of works from both countries. *Square Word Calligraphy: Crossing Brooklyn Ferry, Walt Whitman* was created to honor the reopening of the China collection.

One Brooklyn is made possible by a generous contribution from JP Morgan Chase & Co.