

LISSON

DING YI

BIOGRAPHY



A leading figure in Chinese contemporary art, Ding Yi works across painting, sculpture, installation, and architecture. Since the late 1980s, his signature motif—the cross “+” and its variant “x”—has served as a symbol of structure, rationality, and a visual language exploring the essence of being.

Trained in both art and design, Ding Yi began experimenting with abstraction in 1982. During his student years, he developed a strong conviction about how to paint and what kind of artist he would become. Rejecting the Expressionism and Surrealism then prevalent in China, he chose a rational path “free from ideology.” Profoundly influenced by Western artists such as Piet Mondrian and Frank Stella during the 1995 “New Wave” art movement, Ding Yi launched his iconic *Appearance of Crosses* series in 1988, with a vision to create “an ultimate impression of abstraction”. At the time, he “designed” paintings that resembled plans for fabrics or blankets, using rulers and tape to eliminate traces of hand gestures—rigorously precise compositions formed through the repetition of the cross.

Ding Yi’s methodical structures are animated by vibrant, reflexively chosen colours, introducing an element of chance and tension into the work. Through colour and form, his paintings reflect on China’s rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, with visual motifs echoing QR codes and the sensory intensity of an information-driven society. Since 2010, Ding Yi has adopted a more expansive perspective in his examination of the world, integrating reflections on the broader human condition. His more recent works reveal greater luminosity and intensity, carrying a deeper emotional resonance.

Ding Yi was born in Shanghai in 1962, where he continues to live and work. He studied Design at the Shanghai Art & Design Academy (1980–1983), and later traditional Chinese painting at Shanghai University's Fine Arts Department (1986–1990). His recent solo exhibitions include those at Lisson Gallery, London (2025); Contemporary Gallery Kunming and Anthropology Museum of Yunnan University (2025); Mostyn, Llandudno, Wales (2025); Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne (2024), Paris and St. Moritz (2025); Château La Coste, Provence (2024); Ningbo Museum of Art and Huamao Museum of Art Education (2023); MOCAUP, Shenzhen (2023); Mojie Art Museum, Taiyuan (2023); TAG Art Museum, Qingdao (2022); Jebum-gang Art Center, Lhasa (2022); Galería RGR, Mexico City (2022); ShanghART Gallery, Shanghai (2018) and Singapore (2022); Timothy Taylor, New York (2021) and London (2019); Long Museum, Chongqing (2020) and West Bund, Shanghai (2015); Nova Contemporary, Bangkok (2020); Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich (2019); Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou (2018); Xi'an Art Museum (2017); Hubei Museum of Art, Wuhan (2016); Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai (2011); and Museo d'Arte Modena di Bologna (2008).

Ding Yi has exhibited extensively in major international group exhibitions at institutions such as The British Museum, London; M+ Museum, Hong Kong; Power Station of Art and MOCA Shanghai; SFMOMA; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York and Bilbao; Mercedes-Benz Contemporary, Berlin; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg; MAXXI, Rome; UCCA, Beijing; and touring exhibitions in Bern, Hamburg, and Barcelona. He has also shown in biennales and triennales including the Venice Biennale (1993), Asia-Pacific Triennial (1993), Biennale of Sydney (1998), Yokohama Triennale (2001), Shanghai Biennale (2006), Shenzhen Sculpture Biennale (2012), and Busan Biennale (2016). His work is held in numerous public and private collections, including The British Museum; Centre Pompidou; The Metropolitan Museum of Art; UBS Art Collection; Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art; City of Hamburg; M+ Collection; The National Art Museum of China; Guangdong Museum of Art; Power Station of Art; MOCA Shanghai; Long Museum; and He Art Museum.