

SEANKELLY

Editors. "Surface Area: The Earthly Minimalism of Su Xiaobai." *Artsy*. May 7, 2014.



At present, the phrase "Chinese contemporary art" may conjure caricatures of consumerism, communism, and Mao, and an emerging generation with political motives. [Su Xiaobai](#) takes an alternative approach, established decades ago, completely free of any recognizable imagery. Exploring painting's own intrinsic nature, the Wuhan-born artist gets his due this May with a major exhibition at [Pearl Lam Galleries](#).

Running alongside this year's Art Basel in Hong Kong, "Su Xiaobai: Painting and Being," explores a lifetime of experience and influences, which drove the artist to create a style all his own. "My object is the surface layer presented on the painting," Su has said of his works in lacquer and oil paint on linen and wood. Ranging from rough to fluid, the pieces call to mind, at turns, the essences of mother of pearl, glaciers, jade, and bone. These uncannily organic textures are created through the alchemy of "texture which needs a drying process and content, the thickness of the dye grain directly refracting the coloring saturation."

As a student at Dusseldorf's Kunstakademie, Su was influenced by the European avant-garde, which drove him away from the figure and into abstraction, blending Western modernism with Chinese traditions. By the time he returned to China in 2003, Su had reduced his work to its essential elements: layers of color and texture. The resulting works are compositions with three-dimensional build-ups of layered color, solid and yet with an almost transparent glow. Each one almost like a static version of [Jackson Pollock's](#) gestural abstractions or a glossy, painted answer to [Klara Lidén's poster paintings](#), imbued with an ethereal essence of natural phenomena. Now, debuting 20 new works in this compelling format, Su proves the timeless nature of his work and furthers contemporary dialogues about East vs. West and the potential of abstract painting.

"Su Xiaobai: Painting and Being," is on view at Pearl Lam Galleries, Hong Kong, May 14th–July 15th, 2014.