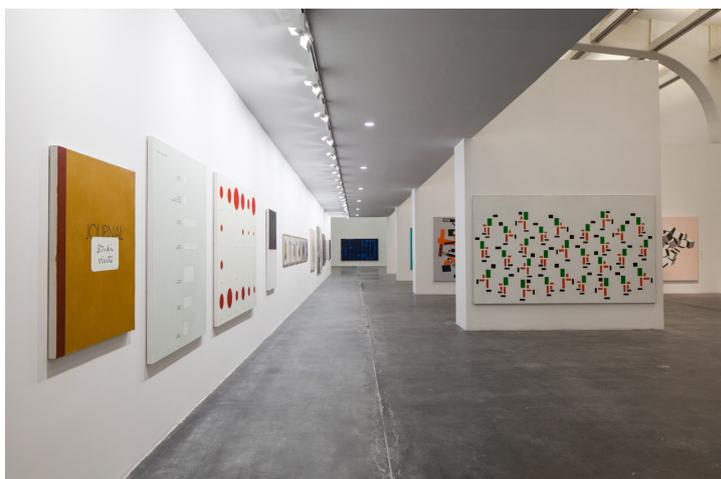


# ARTFORUM

## David Diao

ULLENS CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART 尤斯当代艺术中心  
798 Art Zone, No. 4 Jiuxianqiao Road, Chaoyang Di | 朝阳区酒仙桥路4号798艺术区内  
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View of "David Diao," 2015

There is a subtle difference between the English and Chinese titles of the UCCA survey of David Diao's work. The latter contains the additional word "retrospective," and the same characters feature in Diao's painting *Retrospective* (in Chinese), 1995, part of a series depicting invitations to fictitious exhibitions at illustrious institutions such as MoMA and the Centre Pompidou. Such works critique the artist's perceived exclusion from the institutional art system, laying bare his desire to be accepted by those institutions even while surrendering all hope. Another painting, *Carton d'Invitation*, 1994, replicates the design of a card for a Pompidou Joseph Beuys retrospective, substituting Diao's name for Beuys's and adding an image of the actor Bruce Lee, arguably the most recognizable Chinese person in popular culture, as Diao's stand-in.

Conceptually complex and at times humorous and self-mocking, Diao's vibrant canvases—some of their surfaces characteristically burnished with a palette knife—question the tenets of modernism and facilitate his transgressions of accepted codes of artistic conduct. Among the 115 works installed at UCCA, *Glissement*, 1984, and *Black and White with Chair*, 1984–88, were based on a ubiquitous photograph of Kazimir Malevich's 1915 *0:10 The Last Futurist Exhibition*, critically revered as the beginning of abstraction. That *Close!*, 2002, wryly depicts a map of artists' graves, showing their proximity to that of Jackson Pollock's. In a departure from painting, the silk-screen and collage work *Synecdoche*, 1993, fearlessly reproduces an article where Diao has struck out references to Gerhard Richter's name and works, replacing them with his own. Erudite, critical, and self-referencing, Diao's uncompromising, multifaceted works are endowed with a seemingly inexhaustible capacity to provoke and stimulate, returning huge dividends to the diligent viewer.