



## Master Calligrapher Wang Dongling's Abstractions Shine at Chambers Fine Art

ARTSY EDITORIAL  
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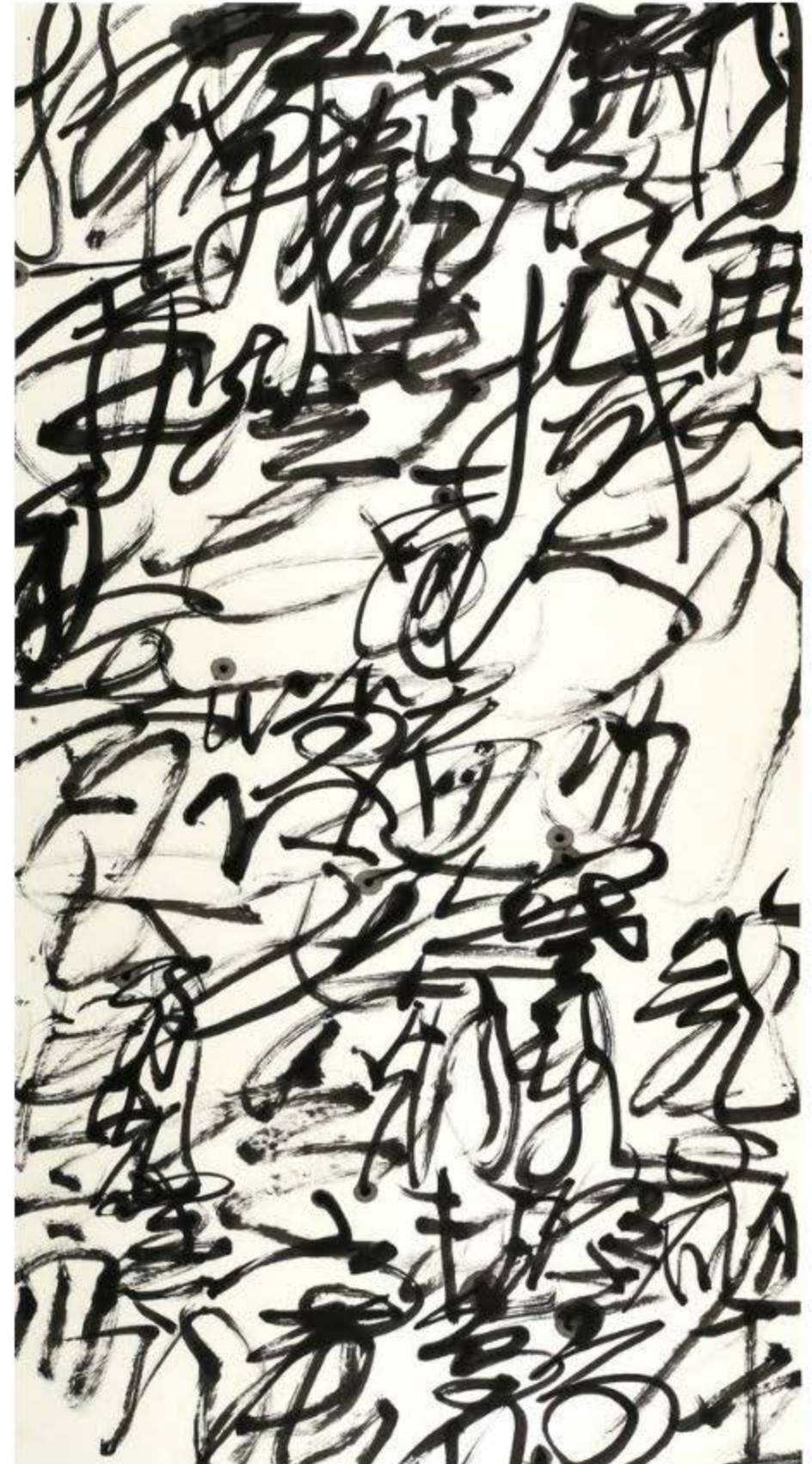


Earlier this year, Apple made a splash in Hangzhou, China, when it opened an eye-catching new store. The source of the attention? The building's exterior featured a massive mural by [Wang Dongling](#), the Chinese artist who is considered one of the living masters of calligraphy.

Showcasing Wang's work—in this case, a handwritten Chinese poem, rendered in larger-than-life black characters—in a contemporary, commercial setting was an intriguing decision. The move put the traditional art of calligraphy squarely in the public eye, and positioned Wang as its premiere practitioner. The work also served as a prelude,

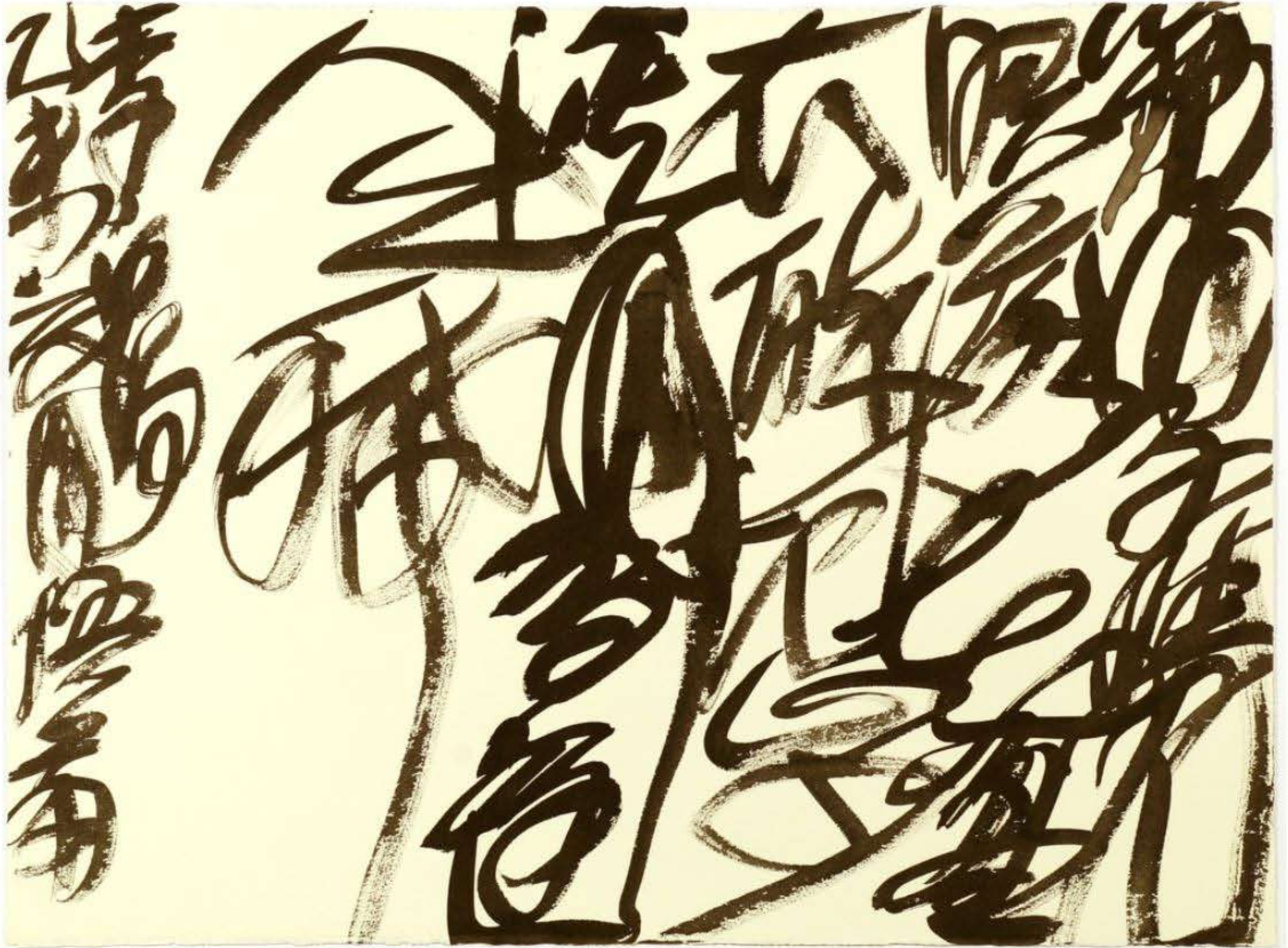


Knowing Wang's cultural and personal history is integral to understanding the works on view at Chambers. The artist was born in Rudong, Jiangsu Province in 1945, and later studied under the master calligrapher Lin Sanzhi (1898-1989). Calligraphy is central to Wang's vision, not to mention tremendously important to Chinese culture. Although the term "calligraphy" derives from the 17th-century Greek word *kalligraphos*, meaning "person who writes beautifully," the art form has a deep history in China with written records showing that the practice dates at least as far back as the Tang Dynasty (618-906.) Wang currently serves as Director of the Modern Calligraphy Study Center at the National Academy of Fine Arts in Hangzhou, where he is helping steer the ancient tradition into the present.





Wang's newest works, while grounded in traditional forms, are abstract (the poem-mural on the Apple store was an anomaly for Wang, who doesn't usually create such literal pieces). What his Apple store piece has in common with his latest work is the large sense of scale. The two and a half-foot-tall *Flower in Mist* (2015) almost resembles one giant Chinese character (or, perhaps, a flower in mist), while *Sun Guangxian-Serenity in the Moonlight* (2015), featuring smaller individual markings, is more than twice that size. At this scale, their lyrical calligraphy-based abstract compositions have an intense impact. The triptych *Li Bai-Her Envious Beauty* (2015) seems to be an experiment in balance, while the busy *Li Bai - Drinking Alone, Unaware of Sunset* (2015), has a playful bent.



Wang Dongling  
*Li Bai - Drinking Alone, Unaware of Sunset*, 2015  
Chambers Fine Art

In these new works, Wang offers a fascinating modernist twist on a classic form, an approach that has garnered him critical acclaim, not to mention three solo exhibitions at the National Art Museum of China. His experimentation brings to mind an old maxim: you have to know the rules so you can break them.

—Bridget Gleeson

*“Wang Dongling: New Works” is on view at Chambers Fine Art, New York, Sep. 12th – Oct. 24th, 2015.*