

# Art in Review

## Qiu Zhijie

### The Shape of Time

*Chambers Fine Art*  
210 11th Avenue, at 25th Street,  
Chelsea  
Through Feb. 24

“Brush and Ink,” the excellent exhibition of Chinese calligraphy that closed last month at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, followed that ancient tradition into the present with work by Gu Wenda, Xu Bing and Zhan Wang, but their efforts were still confined to paper. In his second solo show in New York, Qiu Zhijie takes calligraphy into real space, emphasizing both its performance aspect and its longtime ties to landscape painting.

Instead of executing calligraphy on landscape scrolls like the painter-poets of old, he executes it in the landscape itself, at night, writing in the air with a flashlight in front of a camera set on a long exposure. He chooses his sites to represent the changing seasons, one for each of the 24 solar markers of the Chinese year.

The large color photographs are unsentimental yet poignant in the way they juxtapose old and new China — whether natural or man-made. The start of summer is marked by a photograph of tourist boats — one shaped like a pink fish — stranded in a field of tall grass that was once a famous river. High summer, or the solar marker “minor heat,” is portrayed with an image of a beekeeper sitting in front of a small hut, like a poet-painter contemplating the landscape, albeit one that is greatly diminished.

And in every image, a rapid-fire bit of calligraphy hangs crisply above the scene, like a disembodied neon light, testifying to an extraordinary mastery of the art. Sometimes there is also a blur of Mr. Qiu’s legs and feet, caught in the act and offering verification of what the eyes may find hard to believe.

ROBERTA SMITH