INK REMIX

Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong
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墨變：中國大陸台灣香港當代藝術

curated by Sophie McIntyre
Published in association with the exhibition

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Canberra Museum and Gallery
3 July – 18 October, 2015
Exhibition curator: Sophie McIntyre

TOUR DATES
UNSW Galleries: 26 February – 21 May 2016
Museum of Brisbane: 16 September 2016 – 19 February 2017

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2014
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Exhibition website: www.inkremix.com.au
ISBN 978-0-9872457-3-1

Design: Coordinate
Printing: Paragon Printers Australasia

Canberra Museum and Gallery
Cnr London Circuit and Civic Square,
Canberra City, Australia
www.museumsandgalleries.act.gov.au

Cover Image:
Ni Youyu, Galaxy,
2012–2015, 80 (approx.) painted coins, size variable (detail).
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CHIEF MINISTER’S FOREWORD

I am delighted to introduce the exhibition, INK REMIX: Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong to Australian audiences. Many Australians have a keen interest in this region and will welcome the opportunity to become immersed in its contemporary art and to be enriched in creative conversation.

The Canberra-Beijing sister city relationship fosters generosity, mutual interest and an eagerness for shared business, educational and cultural exchanges in the Canberra Region. Similar connections extend across Shenzhen, Shanghai, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

These close connections breathe life into our shared cultural and educational events, and our skills exchanges and trade missions, on an almost daily basis.

I am aware that the cultures of mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong exert a strong influence here at many levels. This influence results not only from having many people in our community with cultural roots in the region, but also from our interaction with our many visitors. In Canberra we celebrate the fact that our overseas visitors are most likely to come from China, and that, after English, Mandarin is the most common language spoken in Canberra homes.

Further evidence of these important cultural connections is that our new Chinese Garden, a generous gift to Canberra from Beijing, has so quickly become such a popular lakeside destination.

The presence of The Australian Centre on China in the World at the Australian National University is another significant beacon in Canberra for Australia-China relations. We are most grateful to the Centre for its generous financial contribution to the development of this exhibition.
On my recent visit to Beijing, I was glad to discuss another major exhibition, *Celestial Empire: Life in China 1644 – 1911*, with the Director of the National Library of China, Mr Han Yongjin. This exhibition will soon be staged at the National Library of Australia in Canberra. I also enjoyed addressing students at Peking University about the fruitful relationship of their University with our own Australian National University.

It will be a pleasure to welcome a branch of the Australia China Business Council to the ACT in the near future and, of course, the support Huawei and Aquis have already shown as major sponsors of our home Rugby League and Union teams, greatly warms our sporting hearts.

From Canberra, *INK REMIX: Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong*, will tour to Bendigo, Sydney and Brisbane. While Canberra Museum and Gallery has developed the exhibition in response to our own community’s strong interest in the region, I am confident that it will be received with great enthusiasm as it tours across Australia. There will be many new points of connection and opportunities for dialogue between those who know these cultures well and those who are only just awakening to their contemporary riches.

I am confident that the many relationships between our countries will strengthen as our cultural links grow at individual, community, regional and national levels. The opportunities for cultural, business and educational exchange and investment are diverse and profound. I have experienced first-hand the excitement that exists to pursue our shared interests, and it will be deeply satisfying to watch these connections grow.

I commend this exhibition as an important example of the rich and meaningful partnerships that exist between our countries and as a powerful symbol of the deep cultural engagement we share.

**ANDREW BARR MLA**

Chief Minister of the ACT,
INK REMIX: Contemporary Art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong brings together the recent work of 14 leading contemporary artists to provide us with a rich insight into a culture in transition.

The artists have used diverse and often unlikely techniques to express their response to the cultural changes that are taking place in their world.

The changes they address include our growing understanding of subjectivity and gender, the increasing dynamism of our social structures, labour-force changes, challenges to environmental sustainability and our economic and political participation. These matters touch us all at the beginning of the twenty-first century, whether we live in Canberra, Bendigo, Brisbane or Sydney; Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong or Taipei.

Of course we each draw on the unique language of our own culture to chart an individual path through these changes. In doing so we create new meanings and new ways of expressing our reality. And so often we need to reach out to other cultures, or even back to the roots of our own culture, to find a genuine and powerful way to engage with our contemporary experience.

Exhibition curator, Dr Sophie McIntyre, has cleverly selected works of art for this exhibition that draw inspiration from the traditional practices of Chinese ink painting. The artists are connected by the diverse ways in which they reference, reinterpret and subvert this tradition. But their works are perhaps even better understood through the way they select and graft specific ideas drawn from traditional ink painting with other contemporary visual art approaches.

It is a privilege for Canberra Museum and Gallery (CMAG) to be able to present such a wonderful selection of works, and it has been a great personal journey for me to work with Sophie as she has gathered this fascinating material together.

CMAG’s brief is to present exhibitions and programs that engage with the stories and visual arts of our region. Most often our region is considered to include the NSW local government areas that border the ACT. This exhibition stretches that boundary.
out, just a little more. From a global perspective, mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong are of course our near neighbours. And Australians whose cultural background springs from this region are contributing to our society in ways that enrich us all.

Importantly this is a project that responds to Australian's ongoing and increasingly sophisticated curiosity about the contemporary culture of their wider region. In addition, we have sought to ensure that the exhibition will 'speak' to visitors with a cultural background from mainland China, Taiwan or Hong Kong, just as profoundly as it does to those of us with Western roots. We recognise that unfamiliar cultural references require interpretation for a Western audience, but we have also strived to create an exhibition that would not feel out of place in a contemporary gallery in Beijing, Shanghai, Taipei or Hong Kong.

We are proud of our global role. When it received a commendation in the 2014 Canberra and Capital Region Tourism Awards, CMAG’s citation mentioned that it 'serves a unique role, as a site both to engage with the diverse and dynamic history and culture of the ACT, and to gain a deeper understanding of Australia in its regional and global setting'.

This exhibition and its fine accompanying catalogue fulfil this role to the letter. I commend them both to you.

Great thanks are due to the exhibition curator, Dr Sophie McIntyre and volunteer assistant Tzu-Yu Chiu, and to the highly professional team at CMAG who have helped realise this exhibition under the thoughtful leadership of Assistant Director Exhibitions and Collections, Mr Mark Bayly. I am profoundly grateful for the generous sponsors of this exhibition, which include The Australian Centre on China in the World and the School of Art, the Australian National University; Taiwan’s Ministry of Culture, which has sponsored artists to fly to Canberra for the exhibition; catalogue sponsors CBR Brand Canberra, Invest Canberra and Study Canberra; International Art Services; and members of the Cultural Facilities Corporation Board who have personally assisted in meeting the significant logistical expenses of mounting the exhibition and developing its education program. Thank you to all who have supported the vision of this exhibition and helped to realise its magnificent fruition.

SHANE BREYNARD
Director, Canberra Museum and Gallery and ACT Historic Places
There are two main systems of Chinese transliteration: Wade-Giles and Hanyu Pinyin, and also full-form and simplified written characters. In this catalogue we have adopted the local conventions: i.e. Wade-Giles and full-form characters for names, places and terms in Taiwan; Hanyu pinyin and simplified characters for mainland Chinese names, places and terms; and Hanyu pinyin and full-form characters for Hong Kong names, places and terms. We also use the conventional name order for Chinese names (i.e., surname followed by first name). There are, however, exceptions when artists and other individuals have chosen their own names, by which they are widely recognised; and when authors and publishers follow a different system of transliteration.
Contemporary ink art has emerged as one of the most significant and ubiquitous artistic trends in mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong and, over the past decade, it has attracted increasing attention from the media and the international art community. Acclaimed as ‘the new Chinese art’, some of the world’s most prominent museums and galleries, including New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Saatchi Gallery in London, have presented major survey exhibitions of ink art.\(^i\)

It is also fetching record prices in the global art market and, as a sign of the burgeoning interest in this field, commercial galleries and major international and Chinese auction houses have been established to promote contemporary ink art.\(^ii\) What are some of the regional and global forces driving this growing interest in contemporary ink art? Why are growing numbers of artists, particularly younger artists, seeking to revitalise and reinterpret an artistic genre that, until recently, occupied a marginal position in the contemporary art field? What defines the phenomenon that can loosely be described as ‘ink art’ (shuimo yishu)?

In responding to this recent artistic development, **INK REMIX: Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong** engages with these complex questions, which are often overlooked or under-explored in exhibitions that emphasise the historical, metaphysical and culturally specific aspects of ink art. In contrast, this exhibition, presenting more than 35 works by 14 artists from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, calls attention to the innovative, socially engaged and transnational aspects of contemporary ink art. Since the mid-twentieth century, artists including Liu Kuo-sung (劉國松) (1932–) and Hsiao Chin (蕭勤) (1935–), from Taiwan, and Lu Shoukun (呂壽琨) (1919–1975) and Wucius Wong (王無邪) (1936–), from Hong Kong, have pioneered the modernisation and internationalisation of ink art, yet artists from these regions have received significantly less international curatorial attention compared to their mainland Chinese counterparts. The broad and inclusive approach of *INK Remix* brings together artists’ works from this wider region and highlights their shared and individual perspectives. The exhibition questions

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\(^i\) The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s exhibition *Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China* (2013–2014) featured works by 35 artists from mainland China. The Saatchi Gallery’s *Ink: The Art of China* (2012) encompassed works from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, and was curated by Michael Goedhuis, a commercial art dealer who specialises in ink art. Other museums in Euro-America that have presented exhibitions focusing on contemporary ink art include the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, with *Fresh Ink: Ten Takes on Chinese Tradition* (2010); and the Musée Guimet, Paris, with *Scholars’ Rocks and Paths of Artist Creation in China* (2012).

\(^ii\) For example, commercial galleries including Ink Studio (Beijing) and Michael Goedhuis Gallery (London/Beijing) specialise in ink art; and Sotheby’s and Poly Auction (Hong Kong) have established departments dedicated to contemporary ink art.
essentialist and monocultural perceptions of Chinese ink art by demonstrating how these artists are embracing and assimilating local, regional and global influences, and engaging with their histories, society, culture and environment in unique and inventive ways. The vast majority of works presented in *Ink Remix* have been produced over the past decade, and several artists have created new works especially for this exhibition.

East Asia has a long tradition of ink painting, yet it is often regarded as a quintessentially Chinese medium. In the West it is widely associated with ancient Chinese calligraphic scrolls and paintings depicting sublime, mythical landscapes painted in monochromatic washes using ink and brush (*bi mo*) on paper or silk. This exhibition challenges these preconceptions by offering new and different ways of thinking about ink art as a contemporary and culturally heterogeneous form of visual expression that is not defined or restricted by style, subject or media. Rather than focusing on the history, medium or practice of ink art, this exhibition explores the idea of ink art as a mutable and fertile field of artistic, philosophical and spiritual enquiry. While some artists literally or metaphorically reference the tradition of ink painting, and explore the material and metaphysical aspects of ink, they do so in a contemporary context as a source of inspiration and medium of expression. They delve into a range of issues and themes relating to the environment and the impact of industrialisation and urbanisation on society and nature; the meaning and significance of history and memory in contemporary society; identity and cultural belonging; and the body, gender and sexuality. Some artists, inspired by Buddhist and Daoist spiritual and philosophical concepts, explore deeper metaphysical and spiritual concerns that probe the nature of existence and the universe.

It is noteworthy that fewer than half of the artists in this exhibition use ink and brush, and their works incorporate diverse materials including Coca-Cola, tea, biro, ink jet and lithographic prints, as well as photography, video and animation. Their works reflect the ways in which the discourse has developed and expanded over the last decade, attracting artists from different generations, who have diverse backgrounds and interests and whose works not only conceptually engage with the ink tradition, but also act to transform and transcend it.

The artists in this exhibition, who were all born after 1960, comprise established mid-career artists as well as younger, emerging artists. They include Chen Shaoxiong (陈劭雄), Feng Mengbo (冯梦波), He Xiangyu (何翔宇), Hung Keung (洪強), Cindy Ng Sio Ieng (吴少英), Ni Youyu (倪有鱼), Pan Hsin-hua (潘信華), Peng Hung-chih (彭泓智), Peng Wei (彭薇), Qiu Zhijie (邱志杰), Wilson Shieh (石家豪), Charwei Tsai (蔡佳葳),
Yang Yongliang (杨泳梁), and Yao Jui-chung (姚瑞中). These artists grew up during a period of political, social and cultural change during which there was unprecedented exposure to the West and access to information, materials and resources that were otherwise not available to their predecessors. From the 1980s the rise of economic modernisation, political and cultural liberalisation and globalisation opened up new opportunities for these artists to travel and exhibit overseas, and several have resided and completed postgraduate degrees in the West. In mainland China and Taiwan, especially, this generation has been able to take advantage of cultural products and media (including Western art publications) that were unavailable or prohibited during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) in China and under martial law (1949–1987) in Taiwan. The internet and advancements in digital technology have also had a powerful impact on these artists, many of whom now rely on technology to produce their works. Chinese video artist Feng Mengbo recalls being one of the first artists in China to buy a computer in the early 1990s, and Shanghai-based Yang Yongliang says it would have been impossible to create his digital art works decades earlier when computers were not available locally. Furthermore, the flow-on effect of the Chinese art market’s exponential growth during the 1990s has allowed many of these artists across the region to develop full-time careers in art and to acquire and experiment with a range of media.

In light of these significant cultural and technological developments, and the plethora of opportunities and resources that are now available to these artists, one may question why many of them are turning to the past and, in particular, to the Chinese ink tradition as a source of artistic inspiration and critical investigation. Some cynics may argue that this revivalist trend is driven by the art market in China and the West, and by official ideologies promoting cultural regeneration, and also popular nationalist sentiment, especially in mainland China. There are, however, real and important socio-cultural and psychological factors that have triggered this resurgence of interest in ink art. The effects of globalisation and China’s economic ascent have had a far-reaching impact on the Greater China region, and artists from the mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan are responding to these developments in incisive, insightful and often paradoxical ways. For some artists, the pace and scale and environmental cost of industrialisation, urbanisation and consumerism have engendered a profound sense of dislocation, disillusionment, and nostalgic longing, and some of them are turning to the past and to nature, to make sense of these changes. Works by Yang Yongliang, Qiu Zhijie, Feng Mengbo, Chen Shaoxiong, Wilson Shieh and Hung Keung reflect and respond to the effects of globalisation and rapid urban development on the natural and built environment, as well as on language, memory, and conceptions of identity. Some artists, including Peng Wei, Ni Youyu, Pan Hsin-hua
and Yao Jui-chung, are delving into deeper philosophical concerns and examine the relationship between the self, humankind and nature, and notions of place, unity and harmony. These ideas were also explored by artists during the Song (960–1279) and Yuan (1279–1368) dynasties especially, and many of these artists draw inspiration from the traditional landscape paintings (shanshui, literally water-mountain) of that period. Amidst an urban cacophony, there are other artists, including Charwei Tsai, Cindy Ng, He Xiangyu and Peng Hung-chih, who explore more abstract metaphysical and spiritual realms, relating to our inner consciousness, the universe and notions of existence and impermanence, which are central tenets of Buddhist and Daoist belief.

Paradoxically, China’s increasing global influence means that the sense of dislocation is accompanied by a strong sense of cultural pride and belonging, especially amongst many younger mainland Chinese artists who were trained in Western and Chinese art and who are committed to rediscovering their cultural heritage. According to Ni Youyu, Chinese cultural tradition is an integral part of his identity. He states, ‘I do not dare say there is still traditional Chinese culture flowing through my veins, but there has to be at least one birthmark ... [and] ... Birthmarks are inherent ... [one] cannot get rid of it easily.’ Ni, along with other artists in this exhibition, seeks to reclaim and revive aspects of China’s rich cultural heritage, which he believes have been suppressed, neglected, ignored and marginalised both in China and the West. Many of these artists have also increasingly become disenchanted with Western art and are questioning its authority and influence in the global contemporary art mainstream. As the internationally prominent and widely respected Chinese artist Xu Bing (徐冰) explains:

Now that we have a completely different but equally powerful benchmark [i.e., Western art] ... our understanding of the value of our own culture has become deeper and more objective. The more we understand the West, the more we cherish our own culture. Our traditional culture, socialist culture and even Cultural Revolution and Maoism are valuable. Only if we are able to combine these traditions with the Western culture, can we create art of the future.\(^v\)

This is not the first time that artists in mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong have sought to revitalise, experiment with and challenge the conceptual, aesthetic and cultural conventions and parameters of ink art. From as early as the tenth century, Chinese literati painters liberated painting from its political, religious and descriptive purpose and explored the expressive potential of ink. Since then, artists have sought to revive, emulate and challenge their forebears. By the early twentieth century, artists in this region endeavoured to modernise and assimilate Chinese and Western influences, and distinctions between Chinese ‘national painting’ (guohua) and
Western-style painting (xihua) were made. This new artistic classification displaced earlier ones, which were based on style and subject matter, such as landscape, figure and bird-and-flower painting, and it further tested and expanded the boundaries of the Chinese ink tradition. For many contemporary artists, the past informs the present, as Peng Wei has elucidated:

"contemporariness has a different meaning for every person … once a work is complete, it is the past – the present is the process … I don’t have a boundary between the traditional and the contemporary … For me, the question is, what approach is best or what can best help me arrive at my destination?"

Unlike their predecessors, however, the majority of artists in this exhibition are not ink painters and do not consider their works part of this ink tradition. Rather, they regard themselves as contemporary, international artists who work across a range of media. Although many of them have learnt and are inspired by aspects of traditional Chinese ink painting and calligraphy, they consciously reject or choose to ignore the principles, techniques and tools associated with the Chinese traditional ink art. Viewing these artists’ works through the lens of the Chinese ink tradition ignores, undermines, distorts and misapprehends the contemporary significance of their works and the nuances and influences that inform them.

As the exhibition title suggests, the artists in Ink Remix are exploring a vast archive of information and images, sourced mainly from the internet, which they sample, remix and reinterpret, imbuing them with new meaning and significance. Responding to the global proliferation, exchange and consumption of images, some of these artists are consciously reproducing or imitating other artists’ works. Imitation is integral to the tradition and evolution of Chinese ink painting, but these artists are strategically deploying this practice in a postmodern context, to question, parody and challenge notions of originality, authorship and authority. They are appropriating, deconstructing, reassembling and reinterpreting images, symbols and motifs to engage in a dialogue with their history, society and culture, and broader global issues. It is this complex but seamless layering and interlacing of traditional and contemporary ideas and artistic influences that bestows a unique identity on the work of these artists. They are developing a new language that is simultaneously local and global, and which brings together the past, the present and the future.

Ink Remix was inspired by the question ‘What defines or constitutes contemporary ink art today?’ Defining contemporary ink art is a subject of ongoing debate and contention in the field of Asian contemporary art. In his paper ‘A New Definition of..."
Contemporary Chinese Ink Painting', the American art theorist James Elkins observes that people’s views on this question diverge and conflict such that ‘the art form, its definition, and its way forward (remain) in flux’. While some art historians, such as Jason Kuo and Wu Hung, take a broad view and interpret ink art in a regional and pluralistic context and in terms of the different conceptual and aesthetic strategies artists are adopting, others insist that ink art should be defined by the medium of ink, and by the artist’s style and technique. There are also scholars, curators and artists who claim that ink art should embody certain Chinese characteristics that are linked to China’s cultural past, while others seek to expand East–West dichotomies and argue for a more cosmopolitan vision. The works in this exhibition demonstrate that contemporary ink art is conceptually and aesthetically diverse, locally and globally engaged, and transformative, and they offer an insight into, and suggest new possibilities for, its future potential.

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All in the Name of Tradition:
Ink Medium in Contemporary Chinese Art

EUGENE WANG

Chinese ink medium has suddenly become all the rage. For some time, ink painting did not quite make the face of contemporary Chinese art. Now, it is poised to do so. A combination of factors accounts for this sudden surge. Outside of China, international curators and critics, either out of the inertia of 1990s' identity politics or fearful of the blitz of sweeping globalisation, are eager to look for something authentically 'Chinese'. In China, there is a stocktake taking place of the legacy of the 1980s, which was a historical turning-point in recent memory. It was the time when the country was trying to unshackle from the previous decades of Maoist ideological stricture. The reopening of China to the world made the Chinese painfully aware of the debilitating consequences of decades of isolation from the world and its pathetic entrapment in a time warp. Modernisation (xiandaihua) was the collective aspiration and driving force. This essentially meant Westernisation. The 1980s was therefore a heady time. Every self-respecting college student was reading Hegel, Nietzsche, Freud and Camus, among others. Critiquing Chinese tradition was a shared intellectual passion. To the extent that Chinese ink painting bears an unmistakable traditional burden, for many, it was not the favoured medium by which to channel the modernising energy and it was certainly low on the generic hierarchy of mediums favoured by 1980s' 'avant-gardism'. Now, more than two decades later, that phase of history is already a distant memory. For artists born after 1990, that was a historical past with a yawning gap to be bridged. With China's economic surge and growing self-confidence, many artists and critics in China now view the 1980s with some ambivalence. They patronisingly acknowledge the necessity of learning from the West as part of the modernisation process. Meanwhile, they have also begun to have a jaundiced view of the collective zeal for embracing Western values and forms. Chinese contemporary art, it is now felt, has been driven too much by a narrative centred on Western art mediums and forms. Now, some argue, Chinese art should have its own narrative. For that purpose, what better medium than ink painting, a traditional medium that is always 'ours'. The revival of this traditional art medium also harmonises with the government push to 'revive' Chinese civilisation.
Tradition is presumed to have some kind of continuity with a time-honoured practice whose origin lies in a misty past. In the case of using ink as the material medium for painting and calligraphy, indeed, the continuity goes a long way back. The tricky part is to define the set formal property that makes the ink-based medium what it is.

To put it simply, it takes two: the inked brush and paper. The Chinese brush is a distinct tool. The commonly used type is made of hare and weasel hairs bound together with a cavity inside to allow the controlled flow of ink to the pointed tip. Applied with varying degrees of lifts and presses and the flexible switch of tuft sides, it produces strokes of a variety of effects. Deliberate calculation of the levels of moisture adds to the effects. Meanwhile, the brush has to work with different kinds of paper for effect: un-sized paper (i.e., paper that has not been primed with a mixture of animal glue and alum) allows for broader painterly strokes, sized paper (i.e., primed with glue and alum) makes the linear execution possible, and half-sized paper works in between. When it comes to painting, there is also a distinct formal division of labour between brush-centric and ink-centric modes. Through the variation of brush tips, either centered or slanted, and varying stresses through wrist control, the brush-centric mode delineates contours and articulates linear forms. The ink-centric mode, by comparison, renounces contours and produces washes of varying moistures to effect tonalities.

Brush and ink usage blend to create rhythms and resonances.

The ink medium carries cultural values. Not every painter equally favours the use of both brush-centric or ink-centric modes. Brush-centric painters explore dry and sparse brushworks to produce austere compositions with an implicit moral stance of restraint and spiritual abhorrence of material excess. Ink-centric painters produce works with the stance of a free spirit given to spontaneity, freedom and abandonment.

Over time, the interaction between brush-centric and ink-centric modes becomes the medium property that defines the ink painting. It is the benchmark by which critics judge qualities of ink painting. Much of this premise was, however, challenged in the 1980s. Wu Guanzhong (吴冠中) (1919–2010), a Paris-trained artist, took his cue from modernist abstraction. His bold, iconoclastic announcement ('brush and ink usages amount to naught!') was anathema to orthodox traditionalists. There was, as Wu insisted, more to the medium of ink painting than the brush and ink. Formal properties such as dots, lines, and planarity are equally, if not more, significant qualities. It is just as remarkable that Wu produced identical compositions rendered in the mediums of both ink and oil. Wu thus undermined the long-cherished brush-and-ink fundamentalism of assumed medium specificity.
Wu was not alone in challenging brush-and-ink essentialism. Qiu Deshu (仇德树) (1948–) took it on through a material-based approach and fashioned newfangled crack-painting. He did so by tracing water-saturated brushes onto the surface of rice paper, resulting in cracks. Cracked sheets were then mounted on ink-primed or painted canvas so that they faintly manifest the base colour or ink underlay. Qiu's approach changed the rules of the game for ink painting. The brush was no longer obligatory and, instead, the contingency of paper cracking became a focal interest of image-making.

An impetus from Hong Kong fed the radical revisionism of the ink medium in mainland China. Since the nineteenth century, Hong Kong served as a bridge linking the world to mainland China. In the early twentieth century, it was part of the operational base for radical revolutionary Guangdong artists such as Gao Jianfu (高剑父) (1879–1951), Gao Qifeng (高其峰) (1889–1933) and Chen Shuren (陈树人) (1884–1948). They were among the first group of students seeking art education abroad, which meant, initially, travelling to Japan, the most accessible portal linking China and the modern West. What they brought back from Japan was an aesthetic premised on the primacy of ink wash. In the modernisation drive around 1900, the Japanese art world sought to align itself with the modern West and they reductively characterised Chinese painting – and the traditional Kano School that followed the Chinese model – as an art of linearity; they saw the West – especially the romantic watercolour – as an anti-linear art. From this dichotomy emerged a hazy-style (morotai) painting that favoured substantial ink washes coupled with light-and-shade effects. The Gao brothers brought this back to China and launched their first assault on traditional Chinese ink painting. Around 1949 Hong Kong became the haven for migrant artists leaving mainland China, most notably, Ding Yanyong (丁衍庸) (Y.Y. Ting, 1902–1978), Lü Shoukun (呂壽琨) (Lui Show-Kwan, 1919–1975) and Zhou Shixin (周士心) (1923–). Drawn to both Western modernist idioms and traditional Chinese painting, they sought to fashion modes of painting that spoke to their circumstances most immediately. Often their choices were strategic and contingent on pressures from particular historical moments. At various points in their careers they were attracted to ink, for different reasons. They invariably made the medium the linchpin of their modernising aspirations. Each, however, saw different aspects in the medium of ink. For Ding, it was the brush-centric linear quality that defines Chinese tradition; for Lü, it was the ink wash. Ding started his art education in Japan where he had been immersed in Fauvism, which eventually earned him the reputation of ‘Matisse of the East’. In his later years, he turned more to traditional Chinese ink painting, and was particularly drawn to the pristine art of Bada Shanren (八大山人) (1626–1705). His rediscovery of ink was apparently inflected by a sensibility that had long been trained on Fauvist lines.
His works explore brush-centered linear fluidity and pushed its limits, as evidenced in his *Yang Guifei Out of the Bath* (1970s). In comparison, Lü saw spiritual overtones in ink washes. The spiritual turn was spurred by the Hong Kong leftist movement of the late 1960s against the British rule, which came to a head in 1967. For Lü and his like-minded peers, Western aesthetics had long dominated pictorial taste in Hong Kong, a British colony. They found traditional Chinese ink painting to be closer to their heart. Instead of adopting a staunch East/West oppositional stance, however, they were open to a syncretic cosmopolitan approach, mixing ink with oil, fluorescent pigments, and other non-traditional materials to fashion a new ink medium. It was in this context that Lü launched the ‘New Ink Movement’. The driving force behind the movement was an earnest quest to seek the ‘spiritual root’ in Daoism and Buddhism, which, to Lü and his followers, the Chinese ink medium embodies. Lü’s signature works were minimalist Chan (Zen) compositions consisting of geometric planar forms of massive ink washes.

As the New Ink Movement was gaining momentum, it was further energised by the arrival in Hong Kong of Liu Kuo-sung (劉國松) (b. 1932) in 1971. Born in mainland China and educated in Taiwan, Liu taught in Hong Kong between 1971 and 1992. Since the 1960s, he spearheaded the mutiny against traditional brush-and-ink fundamentalism with a stirring rallying call to ‘overthrow the brush-centricism’. He did so by physically re-priming rice paper and deploying un-brush-worthy brushworks into ink painting. Inspired by images captured by the Apollo 8 moon landing in 1968, Liu began to make the stratosphere and moonscapes the primary subject of his ink painting. As he published, lectured and exhibited in mainland China in the 1980s, Liu essentially brought Hong Kong’s New Ink Movement and his cosmic ink-scape into mainland China.

The 1980s’ spiritual turn in ink painting in mainland China was practically a rerun of the New Ink Movement that had surged in Hong Kong since the late 1960s. Just as Lü and his followers were searching for a spiritual root in Daoism and Buddhism, so the same rallying calls reverberated on the mainland. Lü’s search for the ‘inner self’ was, likewise, recapitulated and played out on the mainland, only it now had a more Western philosophical overtone. The feverish inhaling of Western philosophy by young Chinese, and the Japanese-mediated rediscovery of ‘Eastern’ Chan/Zen tradition in the 1980s, energised the ink medium. The result was a sublime visionary ink-scape with metaphysical overtones. Works by Gu Wenda (谷文達) (b. 1955) and Zhang Yu (張雨) (b. 1959) exemplified this impulse. Even though works by other artists, such as those of Li Shinan (李世南) (b. 1940) and Jia Youfu (賈又福) (b. 1942), carry less cosmic aspirations or pretensions, they nevertheless shared the same wavelength in exalting the sublime.
From the above, it is apparent that the current prevalent master narratives about 1980s China give the heady decade short shrift. The anti-tradition iconoclasm that is now commonly associated with the decade does not begin to describe the complex dynamics of the time. The mid-1980s spiritual turn was very much an effort to reclaim tradition, albeit in a spirit of critical reflexivity. It is remarkable that the medium of ink was among the formal anchors of the spiritual turn. It is just as notable that the term shuimo (literally, ‘water-and-ink’), which designates ink as the medium for painting, had very little purchase in Chinese art discourse for the first half of the twentieth century. Its use only gained a rather modest currency in the 1950s and it suddenly gained wide popularity in the 1980s. This dramatic surge may have to do with the influx from Hong Kong mentioned above. The reformist energy of the 1980s apparently challenged old assumptions about ink. Purists entrenched in brush-and-ink fundamentalism insisted on calling the newfangled ink art practiced by Qiu Deshu and others ‘modernist ink’ (xiandai shuimo) as opposed to the brush-and-ink painting of the traditional mode. With experimental ink art increasingly gaining currency and variety, such distinction is now hardly deemed necessary.

If the ink medium in the 1980s was a vehicle for critical reflection on cultural traditions, it had evolved into a new incarnation in the 1990s. One trajectory has been largely one of introversion in comparison with the extroversion of the 1980s. Even though many of the claims in that period about searching for an inner self suggest a spiritualised inward-looking stance, the era in fact carried an aspiration toward a cosmic expansiveness and an all-encompassing sense of the sublime. In comparison, artists of the 1990s no longer subscribed to that outward-directed aspirational stance. That rhetoric was largely deflated in the 1990s. Instead, artists chose to withdraw into the private cocoon of the inner sensorium. The change in ethos was registered in the way ink was handled. The reformist 1980s was more concerned with radically pushing the boundary of the material medium of ink painting. Entering the 1990s, artists became less concerned with deconstructing the medium. Instead, they were vested in releasing its latent potential.

Ink facilitated this inward turn. One distinct quality of the medium is the whimsical effect of ink wash. The soft tuft applied with varying levels of wrist pressure produces spreads of ink-wash overrun, which, once seeping into the solvent fibrous paper, results in freewheeling passages at once controlled and seemingly out of hand. This, combined with more assertive drier strokes, spells a cryptic inner realm largely kept to itself. Ink painting’s hermetic impulse occurred in the 1990s in part as a response to the psychological disorientation many felt at a time when China was
roiled by the sudden rampage of highly commercialised consumer culture that overran
society at that time. As society has adjusted, there are now clearly signs of artists
re-engaging with the larger world. Growing globalisation in recent decades has no
doubt also galvanised worldly connectivity.

Another development since the 1990s has been experimentation with new
possibilities. Use of water-based ink is no longer limited to the domain of calligraphy
and painting. It has also been integrated into installations, video, animation and other
multimedia forms. The performance artist Song Dong (宋东) (b. 1966), for instance,
persists in the daily routine of writing on surfaces with nothing but pure water,
leaving ephemeral traces known only to him. His celebrated act of stamping a seal
on water in Tibet, captured on video, pushed the boundary of water-based work to
the extreme. Qiu Anqiong (邱黯雄) (b. 1972) created animation videos made entirely
of images in the vein of ink painting. Qiu ignores the brush-and-ink fundamentalism.
For him, the potential of ink lies in its inherent caprice. It is only to be expected
that animation can bring out this whimsical quality. One of his video works, the
New Classic of Mountains and Seas (2005), draws on the ancient Chinese compendium
of mytho-geographic accounts of monsters in all kinds of impossible shapes
overrunning mythic terrains. Qiu intercuts these imaginary flora and fauna with
postmodern landscapes. Unpredictable metamorphosis is the rule of the game.
Oil drilling rigs may take the form of colossal spiders. Headless birds may fly. Yet the
uniform tonality of the various shades of ink images lends his fantastic world an air
of apocalyptic grandeur and earnestness.

The floodgate is now open. The angst over preserving the purity of the medium and
the brush-and-ink fundamentalism of the 1980s has, by now, apparently lost its grip.
Now, pretty much anything goes. Given this new loosened state of affairs, it is all the
more remarkable that, no matter how awry the newfangled formal experimentation
tagged as ink-medium works may go, the aura of ‘tradition’ still prevails.
The history of Taiwan's ink art cannot be separated from the island's immigration history, colonial history, postwar politics and international influences. Ink art has had different meanings and identities in successive historical periods, and stylistic transformations of ink art have occurred as the prevalence of the practice of ink art has fluctuated.

Ink art was brought to Taiwan, along with traditional Chinese literati culture, during the late Ming and early Qing periods, when Zheng Chenggong (鄭成功), known as Koxinga (1624–1662), ruled Taiwan. Shen Guangwen (沈光文) arrived in Taiwan between 1651 and 1652 and – along with other literati in the Koxinga administration, such as Han Youqi (韓又琦), Zhao Xingke (趙行可) and Zheng Tinggui (鄭廷桂) – he formed the Fu-Tai (福台) New Poetry Recitation Society (福台新詠), which marked the inception of Chinese-influenced literary and artistic history in Taiwan.

Among the next generation of literati, some – such as Lin Chaoying (林朝英), Zhuang Jingfu (莊敬夫), Lin Jue (林覚), Xie Bin (謝彬), Xie Guanqiao (謝琯樵) and Lin Shu (林紓) – became known for their ink painting. Their ‘wild styles’ – using brush idioms that did not follow the literati style aesthetic – in the modes of ‘Zhe School’ (浙派) and ‘Min habits’ (閩習) laid the foundation for the development of Taiwanese ink art, a process that was categorised as the so-called Central Plain influence.

In 1895, after the First Sino-Japanese war, the defeated Qing government agreed to cede Taiwan to Japan, which resulted in Taiwan experiencing a half-century of colonisation. As a result of Japan having intentionally cultivated friendly relations with ‘leftover subjects’ and literati of the Qing period, they were able to use this group to govern and control Taiwanese society. The colonial government’s promotion of literati and artistic culture among the gentry encouraged and sustained Taiwan’s Chinese-influenced literary and artistic movements. Important ink painters of the early colonial period included Pan Chunyuan (潘春源), Chen Yufeng (陳玉峰), Lü Bisong (呂壁松), Li Xia (李霞), Lin Tianjue (林天爵) and Xu Nanying (許南英).
In the 1920s, the middle period of Japanese rule, Japanese warlords continued their territorial expansion and invasion of other Asian countries. At this time, the colonial government established a new system of education in Taiwan that resulted in Taiwanese students, who wished to study abroad, having no choice but to do so in Japan in a familiar linguistic and educational environment. The establishment of the annual colonial official art exhibition, the Taiden (Taiwanese Fine Arts Exhibition) had tremendous impact on the development of Taiwanese art in the latter half of the early twentieth century, beginning in 1927. This, with the Imperial Art Exhibition, begun in 1919 and held annually in Japan, were the two most important officially sponsored exhibitions in which Taiwanese artists could advance their careers through colonial channels. This official system controlled taste and ideology, however, and Taiwanese artists who wanted to succeed had to adhere to the new Japan-leaning aesthetic and dogma.

The Taiden was divided into the categories of Toyoga (東洋畫) and Saiyoga (西洋畫). Toyoga included Japanese Nanga (南畫) (literati painting derived from Chinese literati traditions) and Nihonga (日本畫) (national style painting, jiaocai hua (膠彩畫), using animal-based glues mixed with pigments). By that time, the Japanese Nanga tradition had departed from the original Chinese literati traditions and moved toward more decorative craft-influenced gongbi (工筆) (fine-brush realistic) styles. These styles were vastly different from the Min and Zhe styles that had been popular in Taiwan. Taiwanese painter Guo Xuehu’s (郭雪湖) new style Nanga- painting Flying Waterfalls amid Pine Ravines was entered into the first Taiden exhibition, signifying how the Japanese judges Gobara Koto (郷原古統) and Kinoshita Seigai (木下靜涯) intended to promote a new aesthetic standard.

The most important subgenre of Toyoga, however, was Nihonga and, in order to assert Japan’s cultural dominance in Asia, the colonial government intentionally termed Nihonga ‘Toyoga’ in colonies such as Korea and Taiwan. While this style of painting was also based on earlier Chinese styles, at that time, Toyoga was influenced by Western plein-air painting, combined with influences of lyrical romanticism. This new style arose as a result of Western and Japanese critics and purveyors of taste, such as Ernest Fenollosa and Okakura Tenshin (岡倉天心), encouraging Japanese artists to refocus on their indigenous culture, which had been in decline in the midst of Westernisation and since the Meiji Restoration (1860s – 1880s). As a result, a new style of painting was developed that was full of nationalistic symbolism at a time when Japan, the self-proclaimed ideal nation-state, was on the rise in Asia. Guo Xuehu, Lin Yushan (林玉山) and Chen Jin (陳進) – who were known as the Three Youths of Taiden – and other painters became important in Taiden through their Toyoga achievements and the colonial government openly favoured ink painting and jiaocai hua that were anchored in plein-air and realism.
This spirit of realism reached a peak on Taiwan in the postwar era, owing to the arrival of leftist artists from China, and their introduction of social-realist style of oil painting and woodblock printing. The 2/28 Incident in 1947 and ensuing martial law further hindered the continuity of this style of art in Taiwan.¹ Yet concurrently, Japanese-influenced ink painting also faced the postwar challenge of responding to the goal of returning to the motherland culture and Chinese identity. The power imbalance between the new immigrant influx from the Chinese mainland and the Taiwanese, compounded by the benefit derived from controlling art circles, resulted in a debate over the orthodoxy of guohua (國畫) (national painting). Debate was ignited by selection policies in the Shengzhan (省展) (Provincial Exhibition), the postwar title of the Taiden. The first Shengzhan was adjudicated by Taiwanese oil painter Yang Sanlang (楊三郎) and the Toyoga painter Guo Xuehu. It was not until the third Shengzhan in 1948 that mainland Chinese Ma Shouhua (馬壽華) was appointed an adjudicator, in deference to his official titles as minister of finance and president of Taiwan Land Bank. This signified the traditional literati painters’ entry into the judicial system.

Chiang Kai-shek’s (蔣介石) forces moved to Taiwan following their defeat in China in 1949. A number of mainland artists also arrived in Taiwan, some of whom had already achieved great fame in China. These artists could not become judges in the official exhibitions in Taiwan and had to go through the established channel of competing in the Shengzhan exhibitions and gradually moving up to the status of adjudicators. This inevitably created friction between the new immigrants (the ruling class), who could not accept being judged by the old establishment (Taiwanese artists). One point of contention was whether the national painting category in the Shengzhan should include Japanese-style Nihonga works. The two-decades-long argument was embedded in different experiences of colonial history, with mainlanders’ memories of traumatic suffering under Japanese wartime brutality coming into contact with Taiwanese nostalgia for Japanese imposition of an orderly society and modernisation of Taiwan. The dust did not settle until 1983 when the Shengzhan separated the ‘National Painting’ category into ‘National Painting’ (guohua) and jiaocai painting became independent from it. The argument’s origins lay in early twentieth century Shanghai, when the National Essence school (國粹學派), modelled after Japanese Nihonga, renamed ‘traditional Chinese ink painting’ guohua, which connoted strong nationalistic sentiment. This led to the orthodoxy of the national painting debate on Taiwan.

¹ This landmark event, which encapsulates Taiwanese resentment against mainlanders, saw the killing of hundreds of Taiwanese by nationalist soldiers on 28 February 1947 in response to a Taiwanese women’s illegal sale of cigarettes.
In the wake of the dwindling influence of Toyoga on Taiwan, traditional ink painting became dominant. Not only did it replace Toyoga in the college art education system, it was also promoted by the Kuomintang (KMT) government as part of its Cultural Renaissance movement and elevation of anti-communist art and literature. Most of the artists who came over to Taiwan with the KMT in 1949 preferred more traditional Chinese literati painting styles. On Taiwan they established many painting societies such as Zhongguo Yiyuan (Chinese Art Academy), Qiyou Huahui (Seven Friends Painting Society), Liuli Huahui (Six Couples Painting Society), Bapeng Huahui (Eight Friends Painting Society) and Renyin Huahui (Renyin Cyclical Date Painting Society). Through the activities and efforts of these artists and their groups, they expanded the influence of traditional Chinese ink painting and educated the next generation of Taiwanese artists in that style.

Among them, Fu Juanfu (傅狷夫) and Huang Junbi (黃君璧) emphasised plein-air depictions of Taiwanese landscapes, while Jiang Zhaoshen (江兆申) and Pu Xinyu (溥心畬) trained students to continue the imagined shanshui (山水) (mountains-and-water) of traditional landscape.

The most dramatic and important change in ink art in Taiwan in the postwar era coincided with the modernisation process. Between 1957 and 1958, the Dongfang (東方) (Eastern) and Wuyue (五月) (Fifth Moon) art groups were established. Most members of Dongfang were young men serving in the military and, under the inspiration of the Japanese-trained painter Li Zhongsheng (李仲生), they began to explore new directions in art. Although few among them relied on ink as their main medium of artistic expression, and few sustained their interest in ink, in the process of learning and creation they adapted ink styles and utilised the philosophies of Laozi (老子), Zhuangzi (莊子) and Buddhism, and thus created a new channel for abstraction in contemporary Chinese art on Taiwan. This new direction coincided with the international trend of abstract expressionism, and provided new nourishment for ink painting to move toward avant-garde exploration. Xiao Qin (萧勤) was the luminary of the Dongfang group and, through his efforts, members of Dongfang were able to exhibit in Europe. Some of those of the group who moved to Europe to further their artistic explorations co-founded the Pointe Art Organization. Li Yuanjia (李元佳) was a 'wild talent' of this group, and some of his works reflected the aesthetic influence of Japanese rock gardens and the simplicity of Chan philosophy.
In his proposition for reformation of modern Chinese ink art, Liu Kuo-sung (劉國松) of the Wuyue art group (Fifth Moon Painting Group) exerted his influence. In fighting against the old guard of traditional guohua, Liu criticised the way in which traditional literati painting had clung to and copied centuries-old modes and lacked new ideas. In order to save Chinese painting for the future, Liu suggested beginning with the Chan school of painting, which had been heavily criticised by literati since the Yuan dynasty. He argued that the semi-abstract xieyi (‘writing ideas’) style of Chan painting had predated Western abstraction by five hundred years. That is to say, by dovetailing the Chinese modern art abstraction movement with Chan painting, Chinese painting could abandon the ill influence of literati painting since Dong Qichang of the late Ming dynasty, and move toward full abstraction, which not only coincided with international trends at the time, but also enhanced and highlighted the avant-garde characteristics of Chinese art. Chan school philosophy and art had been promoted by Japanese, such as Suzuki Daisetsu (鈴木大拙) (D. T. Suzuki), in the United States during the nineteenth century and had begun to ferment within modern art circles, which attracted the attention of art historians. It was also true that abstract expressionism derived elements from Chinese calligraphic strokes and other East Asian modes of expression. In Taiwan’s postwar era, the Dongfang and Wuyue artists began to strengthen the ‘Chineseness’ of modern art and derive their ideas directly from ancient philosophy, history and painting techniques, so as to reform and create a new ink art in the modern era.

The fervor for abstract ink expression waned toward the end of the 1960s, with the international recognition of Beijing as the legitimate government of the Chinese state. Taiwan lost its seat at the United Nations and the UN Security Council and, following these setbacks, international diplomatic relations began to be removed from Taiwan and established with China. By the end of the 1970s, few countries recognised Taiwan’s legitimacy as a nation, compared with more than 200 at the beginning of the decade. Art and literary circles responded to this national crisis by turning inward to look for local identity, sparking the inception of Nostalgic Localism (xiangtu). Instead of painting imagined shanshui landscapes or following American abstract expression, artists began to focus on small corners of Taiwan’s traditional Chinese houses and factories. Huang Ming-chang’s (黃銘昌) and Yuan Jin-taa’s (袁金塔) ink depictions of brick factories, the Jiufen (九份) area, and trains aptly represent this trend.

Taiwan entered into the art museum era in the early 1980s. In 1983, the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM) opened its doors to the public and became the first modern museum on Taiwan. While few among the artists active at the museum at the time focused only on ink painting, some continued the abstractions originally
promoted by Liu Kuo-sung. This trend is apparent in works of the early 1980s by Li Chongchong (李重重), Guan Zhizhong (管執中), Huang Chaohu (黃朝湖) and Li Jinchou (李錦綢). At the same time, traditional ink painting continued to renew itself. Students of Jiang Zhaoshen sustained the traditional literati style of imagined shanshui (mountains-and-water) landscape, while the plein-air tradition of ink art (begun two generations earlier during the Japanese colonial era) also became popular since the 1970s in the wake of the Nostalgic Localism movement. In Taiwan’s current pluralistic society, different aesthetics will find their own patrons and, with the arrival of the multimedia era, the possibilities for expansion of ink art are infinite. Artists such as Zhang Yongcun (張永村), Zhu Deyi (曲德義) and Li Jinxiu (李錦繡) added installation components to their ink art, dovetailing with 1990s developments, while Yu Peng (于彭) and Huang Zhiyang (黃志陽) delved into new eccentricities of individualistic figure and landscape ink expressions. Yu Peng’s non-academic background allowed him to remain unconstrained by lineage and styles and gave him the freedom he needed for creativity. The same free spirit can also be seen in Yu Chengyao’s (余承堯) Taiwan landscapes. Yu, a retired general from the KMT army, entertained himself in the 1960s and 1970s with an eccentric painting style that brought new dimensions to Taiwan’s traditional ink art.

Ink art on Taiwan started from the Minxi (Min habits) and Zhepai (Zhe school) styles that were brought over by Han Chinese immigrants of the late Ming and early Qing periods. They were reshuffled into Toyoga as the ‘standard’ during the Japanese colonial period. In the postwar era, ink art under the KMT government’s Cultural Renaissance movement reunited with the ‘orthodox’ shanshui painting tradition, which was based on imaginary landscapes. With the arrival of the art museum era in the 1980s, coinciding with the lifting of martial law and increasing internationalisation, Taiwanese society has become pluralistic and all-inclusive, and multiple expressions of ink art are flourishing simultaneously.
ARTISTS’ WORKS
AND ESSAYS

Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong
CHEN SHAOXIONG
陈劭雄

Chen Shaoxiong has an international reputation for his innovative and experimental art practice that incorporates photography, video, animation, painting and drawing. Chen was a founding member of the experimental artist collective Big Tail Elephant Group, which was established in Guangzhou in 1990, and he now lives in Beijing where he works independently and collaboratively with other artist groups. Chen belongs to a generation of Chinese artists who grew up during a period of significant political, socio-economic and cultural change in China, when information and images were routinely suppressed and restricted, and when distinctions between fact and fiction were blurred. Perhaps because of this experience, Chen is acutely conscious and skeptical of the ways in which history is (mis)read and (mis)represented, stating that even today ‘in our education, history is deliberately misinterpreted, randomly deleted and repeatedly distorted’. Although his works are politically engaged, Chen refrains from making bold political statements, preferring a more multi-layered and open-ended approach, which he is able to achieve through the moving image.

Since 2005, Chen has produced five ink, animated videos that respond to a range of local and global issues, and reflect aspects of his daily life. Two of his most recent works in this series, *Ink Media* and *Ink History*, are in this exhibition. *Ink Media* is based on a collection of photographs, sourced from the internet, of political protests and public demonstrations from across the world that Chen deconstructs, reinterprets and transforms into an animated ink montage. It explores how our experience and understanding of the world is shaped by the mass media, and how different narratives are constructed to suit specific contexts and points in time. *Ink History* was inspired by Chen’s grandmother’s experiences growing up in China and it visually chronicles China’s history, from the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911 to the beginning of the twenty-first century, exploring the relationship between personal and collective memory within the context of China’s historical trajectory. The work is accompanied by a soundtrack of well known propaganda songs, historical speeches and the relentless ticking of a clock. The artist states:

The point of this work is not to reproduce a version of history. Experience shows that history is difficult, even impossible, to reproduce. In reality, history merely provides material for interpretation, and different interpretations are produced to fit different political needs.

1 Chen Shaoxiong, ‘Artist statement’, http://www.chenshaoxiong.net/
2 Chen, http://www.chenshaoxiong.net/
Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong

Top:  
Chen Shaoxiong,  
Ink Media, 2013,  
single channel video animation (detail). Courtesy of the artist and Pékin Fine Arts.

Bottom:  
Chen Shaoxiong,  
Ink History,  
Feng Mengbo is widely known for computer-generated, interactive works that combine and deconstruct images from video games and historical events, such as the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966–76). Feng was one of the first artists in mainland China to buy a computer and procure an internet connection and, for more than a decade from the early 1990s, he was preoccupied with exploring the infinite possibilities of the cyber world. In recent years, however, he has somewhat paradoxically turned his attention to China’s cultural heritage for inspiration, including folk art (which he collects), guqin music (which he draws on for inspiration) and Chinese classical ink painting and calligraphy (which he learnt as a child). As a restless innovator Feng reflects on the rising popularity of video art and the emergence of a younger, technologically informed generation, stating that ‘there is too much new media art now, and I want to make art using my hands which for me is more challenging.’

Journey to the West and Not Too Late, which feature in this exhibition, reflect Feng’s growing interest in Chinese landscape painting and calligraphy. This multi-layered series of computer-generated ink jet prints and videos explores ideas relating to history, authenticity, time and space. The digital landscapes in Journey to the West were inspired by the painting style that was popular during the Song (960–1279) and Ming (1368–1644) dynasties. The artist asserts, however, that these images bear no direct relationship to a particular artist or work of art, and nor does the series’ title relate to the classic Chinese novel, Journey to the West (c. 1592) (otherwise known in the West as ‘The Monkey King’). In these works Feng appropriates, deconstructs and remixes images derived from the Chinese landscape painting tradition and, utilising three-dimensional computer-modelling techniques, he reconstructs the landscapes, staining them with tea to create what he describes as an ‘antiquarian feel’.

In Not Too Late Feng readapts and personalises the video game engine from the Quake Arena III, removing its original figurative references to emphasise the lines of force, which he reinterprets as Chinese calligraphic gestural strokes. They explode and splinter on screen, and transcend real or perceived boundaries between past and present, and between reality and virtual reality. While Feng says he is not interested in cultural identity issues, or in ink painting per se, he believes that China’s ink tradition has a ‘strong life force’ and offers contemporary artists a new direction and future.

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1 Feng Mengbo, interview with the author, 2014.
2 Feng Mengbo, Not Too Late, catalogue, 2010.
Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong
Feng Mengbo,
JTTW2010V07
(from Journey to the West series),
2010, Chinese ink, tea and ink jet on xuan paper, 154.5 x 79.5 x 4.6 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Shanghai Gallery of Art.

JTTW2010V02
(from Journey to the West series), 2010, Chinese ink, tea and ink jet on xuan paper, 154.5 x 79.5 x 4.6 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Shanghai Gallery of Art.
Born in 1986, He Xiangyu is the youngest artist represented in this exhibition, and he is rapidly establishing a reputation as one of China’s most innovative contemporary artists. His conceptually driven art practice comprises diverse media of historical and contemporary significance, including ancient Chinese artefacts, rice, porcelain, silicone, methamphetamines and Coca-Cola. Like an alchemist, the artist transforms and imbues these materials with new meaning, exploring a range of local and global historical, socio-political and cultural issues.

He Xiangyu is best known for his ‘Coca-Cola Project’ (2009–2011) in which he worked with Chinese factory labourers over the course of a year to boil down 127 metric tonnes of Coca-Cola. The soft drink was reduced to crystalline lumps and these were ground into a dark fluid. With a colour and consistency similar to ink, the artist applied this Coca-Cola essence to a series of small landscape paintings in the style of the Song dynasty (960–1279) landscape painting (shanshui) tradition. Collectively titled Antique Circular Fan, this series can be interpreted from multiple viewpoints – as a playful and ironic reinterpretation of China’s history of landscape painting; in relation to the impact of Western colonisation; and as a comment on the effects of globalisation, consumerism and the mass media on society and cultural traditions.

In the personal and introspective work Everything We Create is Not Ourselves 68–2, the artist focuses his attention on his state of consciousness. The sequence of images, which portray the inside of the artist’s mouth, are an intimate diary of his anatomical, psychological and sensory state chronicled over 68 days. Utilising ink, watercolour, and pencils on paper, combined with digital prints, some images are formless, indistinct and even banal, while others are detailed and expressive. The artist explains:

By using my tongue to touch and sense my palate, which I cannot see, I attempt to translate and render the felt texture and detected space onto a flat plane of a painting ... During this process I try to allow different psychological states and physical conditions, as well as remnants of feelings from daily life to permeate ... the work.¹

From top to bottom:

He Xiangyu,
Cola Project –
Antique series
Circular Fan II,
2009-2010, ink
and Coca-Cola
on silk, 28 x 30 cm.
Courtesy of
the artist and
Lucien Y. Tso.

Cola Project –
Antique series
Circular Fan III,
2009-2010
He Xiangyu,
*Everything we create is not ourselves, 68-2,*
2013-2014, ink, watercolour, pencil on paper and inkjet prints, 31 x 41 cm each x 68 pieces (detail). Courtesy of Peng Pei-cheng.
He Xiangyu,
Everything we create is not ourselves, 68-2,
2013-2014, ink, watercolour, pencil on paper
and inkjet prints, 31 x 41 cm each x 68 pieces.
Courtesy of Peng Pei-cheng.
Leading Hong Kong new media artist Hung Keung creates interactive videos and installations that examine the relationship between time and space, and aspects of Chinese tradition. In 2005 he founded innov + media lab (imhk) to explore new directions in new media art and design and through which he has developed the interactive software that is used in his works. Although trained in painting, Hung believes video offers him greater possibilities and freedom to develop an interactive dialogue with audiences who participate in the work, and to explore personal, philosophical and spiritual ideas without spatial and material constraints.

While Hung’s work is technologically driven, it is also inspired by ancient Chinese ideas and practices, and he is particularly interested in Daoist philosophy and in the Chinese written language. Although the artist has lived in Hong Kong for much of his life and has travelled widely, he maintains a strong connection to his Chinese heritage. Hung was born in south-west China and his Indo-Chinese parents taught him traditional Chinese painting and calligraphy. Hung states that the reunification of Hong Kong with mainland China has ‘led to much confusion and ambiguity about our language and identity’, and in his work he seeks to re-awaken peoples’ consciousness of the meaning and significance of Chinese cultural tradition in Hong Kong contemporary society.

This exhibition features a recent version of Dao Gives Birth to One, a multi-screen video work that has been displayed in various configurations and which explores, through digital media technologies, aspects of classical Chinese philosophy, language and calligraphy. Hung draws on the Daodejing (道德經), one of China’s oldest texts, to examine the idea of unity in relation to the Chinese word ‘one’ (yi) (indicated by the Chinese character “一”):

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\text{The Dao (the ‘way’) gives birth to one. One gives birth to Two, Two gives birth to Three. Three gives birth to thousands of things or all things in the universe. All things carry yin and embrace yang. When yang and yin combine, all things achieve harmony.}^1
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Inspired by this passage, the artist utilises computer animation techniques to explore ideas of unity and multiplicity. He creates an interactive space where Chinese characters drift, fragment and collide with human and animal forms to form a dialogue and eventually become ‘one’.

1 Artist’s translation drawn from the Daodejing, chapter 42, https://hungkeung.wordpress.com/exhibition/dao-gives-birth-to-one/
Multimedia artist Cindy Ng Sio Ieng was born in Macau and is currently living in Beijing. For more than two decades she has produced videos, photographic and performance-based works that delve into the conceptual, material and metaphysical aspects of ink, which she reinterprets in a contemporary context. Ng describes her works as ‘mind-scapes’ or as ‘moving poems’ that inspire and stimulate ideas, images, sensations and emotions and awaken our inner-consciousness. The artist’s interest in notions of impermanence and emptiness, which are central to Buddhist philosophy, is metaphorically explored in her videos through the flow of ink, and in the forms and patterns that emerge, disperse and dissolve.

Ng’s lack of formal training in ink painting has, arguably, given her greater freedom to experiment and to question the orthodoxy and parameters of ink painting. She does not use a brush to create her painting and, as well as using ink, she incorporates a range of substances in her works including mineral water, milk, coffee, beer and soya sauce. Her technique and process is akin to traditional Chinese mogu painting in which forms are composed of splashes, stains and washes of ink and colour, rather than lines, and it also resembles American colour-field and action painting. Ng often invites musicians and dancers to respond to her video works, so that the work of art transforms into a live, collaborative and experiential performance.

No Limit, the audio-visual installation featured in this exhibition, is emblematic of the ways in which Ng is investigating and challenging the conceptual and aesthetic boundaries of ink. The milk that is incorporated into this work drifts, interacts and merges with ink and water in a rhythmic dance that engenders tension and harmony. The work’s expressive and poetic moving images are accompanied by an ambient composition of sampled and remixed traditional and experimental sounds devised by Monbaza, a Taiwanese musician, which correspond and resonate with the ebb and flow of inky, abstract forms.
Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong
Shanghai-based artist, Ni Youyu, is representative of a younger generation of Chinese artists who are rediscovering China’s cultural heritage, and its ink painting tradition, which he seeks to reinterpret and situate within a contemporary and global art discourse. While studying Western and Chinese art, the artist became enamored with traditional Chinese landscape paintings (shanshui) from the Song (960–1279) and Yuan (1279–1368) dynasties. Ni describes himself as an international Chinese contemporary artist, yet he is critical of Western-dominated contemporary art discourses that promote ‘the new’ and disregard or denigrate the role and influence of tradition in contemporary art. He is a self-described skeptic, and the artist questions the meaning of terms that are frequently used in international contemporary art circles, including, ‘innovation’, ‘individuality’ and ‘originality’, concluding that ‘most contemporary art looks the same’. The artist reminds us that Chinese art has developed over the centuries through a process of replication and reinvention, and he asserts that ‘there is no cultural innovation … only cultural development and improvement’.

Ni is interested in the materiality of objects. Over the last decade he has used a range of materials, including wooden boxes, ceramics, soap, resin and paint, and produced installations exploring the interrelationship between humankind, nature and the universe, which is a common theme in classical Chinese landscape painting. Galaxy (2012–2015), which was created for this exhibition, is based on a star chart and is inspired by ancient Chinese cosmology. It is made up of hundreds of coins that the artist collected and laboriously pounded and flattened into uniformity. Ni has assigned the coins a new value and identity by painting miniature landscapes, human body parts, animals and other symbols and motifs onto their surface. In Chinese, the word ‘galaxy’ translates as ‘silver river’ (yin he), and the adverb ‘to pound money’ (za qian) can be used to refer to a businessman who squanders money to make a fast profit. The installation is his most recent work in a series that the artist began when he left art school, and during the global financial crisis (2007–2008). It reflects on the poverty that Ni experienced during this period, and is an oblique critique of the global economy, consumerism and the commodification of art.

From top to bottom:


Some critics argue that contemporary ink art is burdened by the conventions of tradition and is, therefore, unable to engage with contemporary issues. At first glance, Pan Hsin-hua’s surreal and finely rendered ink paintings appear antiquated and inward-looking. A closer inspection, however, reveals that they are in fact incisive commentaries about contemporary society, engaging with topical issues that range from Taiwan’s geopolitical history to religion. The artist draws inspiration from the picture maps that were produced during the Japanese colonial period in Taiwan (1895–1945), nature, and from his Paiwan aboriginal heritage and childhood experiences growing up in Taitung, in south-east Taiwan.

Pan studied traditional Chinese ink painting as a high school student in Taipei, but he only began regularly practicing it in 1996. While he acknowledges the influence of several painters who were active during the late Song (960–1279), early Yuan (1279–1368) and late Ming (1368–1644) dynasties, including Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322), Qian Xuan (1235–1305) and Chen Hongshou (1598–1652), Pan asserts that he wants to develop a visual language that reflects and engages with his environment: ‘I want to situate my work in a Taiwanese rather than mainland Chinese context. I’ve never been to Huangshan, and I want to focus on Taiwan since this is my reality.’

In this exhibition, *Earth III* and *Magnetic Attraction* engage with the ongoing debate regarding Taiwan’s national identity and status, including issues of politics, history, culture and religion. In *Earth III*, the artist explores and parodies Buddhist ideas relating to *samsara* (the mundane world of birth, suffering, death and rebirth) and *nirvana* (the state of total liberation), the latter of which is signified by the miniature pug dog, which, unlike his human devotee, has successfully attained enlightenment. *Magnetic Attraction* is a whimsical and more subdued reflection on Taiwan’s geopolitical isolation and its history of political authoritarianism, which is signified by the diminutive statues of the former Kuomintang leader Chiang Kai-shek. Pan recalls that when he was growing up statues of this now much maligned leader were ubiquitous in Taiwan but, from the early 2000s, pro-independence supporters removed many of them from public spaces as part of the process of de-Sinification or Taiwanisation.

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1. Huangshan is one of China’s most famous mountains located in Anhui province. It has been an important source of inspiration for Chinese artists, poets and writers over the centuries, and it remains a popular tourist destination. Pan Hsin-hua, interview with the author, 2015.
From top to bottom:

Pan Hsin-hua,
Magnetic Attraction,
2012, coloured ink on paper, 144.2 x 218 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Asia Art Center.

Pan Hsin-hua,
Heaven and Earth III,
2014, coloured ink on paper, 295 x 176 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Asia Art Center.
Peng Hung-chih, who trained as a painter, is best known for his politically and socially engaged video and installation works that explore issues relating to global power relations, the effects of capitalism, environmental degradation and religious extremism in society. He is often referred to as the ‘dog artist’ because, over the past 15 years, he has produced numerous videos and interactive installations featuring dogs (both real and artificial). These works are infused with humour and irony, but they also raise critical socio-cultural and philosophical questions about the nature of the relationship between humans and animals in our society. In one of his first works in this series, Siao-Pai (1999), the artist mounted a pinhead-sized camera on the head of his pet dog (after whom the video is named), enabling audiences to see the world from a dog’s-eye perspective. In doing so, the viewer identifies and becomes one with the dog. With our nose to the ground, we obediently follow our owner through Taipei’s traffic-congested streets, tracing scents, devouring food scraps, and sniffing other dogs and people we encounter along the way. In his videos, Peng often uses mixed-breed dogs, which serve as a metaphor for Taiwan’s heterogeneous cultural identity.

The video works in this exhibition are from the series collectively titled Canine Monk (2004–2008) and they critically explore the relationship between ideology, religion and spirituality. Peng’s four-legged companion literally stands in for the artist, becoming the main actor and creative producer. On a white wall, the artist inscribes in oil and dog food phrases and words from classic Chinese religious and philosophical texts, including the Dao De Jing, the Analects of Confucius, and script inspired by the Baha’i faith. On cue, the dog licks the wall clean, and the process is repeated. Utilising digital technology, the artist reverses the film footage, so that his dog (or God?) is writing rather than obliterating these sacred texts. Peng states, ‘during a period in which religion – and, with it, religious fundamentalism – is on the rise throughout the world, the dog ...reminds us of the commonalities that often get lost in a constant amplification of differences.’
Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong

Peng Hung-chih,
Excerpts from the Taoist Protective Talisman (from Canine Monk series), 2006, 5 channel video.
Courtesy of the artist.
Peng Hung-chih, Unity of all Religions
(from Canine Monk series), 2007, single channel video. Courtesy of the artist.
Peng Wei is one of the few female artists in China to have forged a successful career in the competitive, male-dominated field of contemporary ink art, and her work is increasingly attracting international attention. For more than a decade she has painted and produced mixed-media installations, described as ‘ready-mades’, which explore the confluence between the past and present.

Peng embraces her Chinese cultural heritage, and she draws inspiration from the aesthetics of traditional Chinese painting, including its motifs, forms and patterns, which she freely appropriates and reinterprets in her work. While she respects and admires China’s ink painting tradition, the artist is not oriented towards a particular period, school, style or genre, and she flouts entrenched moral codes and artistic conventions in her work. Peng also rejects fixed Western conceptions of contemporary art that are based on notions of innovation and resistance, of breaking free from the past, and of boundaries forged between traditional and contemporary art. In an interview with Uli Sigg, a prominent Swiss collector of Chinese art, Peng remarked:

the word ‘resistance’ is almost non-existent for me because it seems I don’t have this wall in mind. Every artist yearns to break boundaries or cast off certain pre-existing restrictions, but often the result of these breakthroughs is the discovery of a boundary.1

Peng seeks to develop a new language that combines traditional, modernist and postmodernist influences so that ‘the old and new can become reconciled’. Her works in this exhibition draw on classical Chinese motifs from Chinese erotic art and the landscape tradition, which she deconstructs and feminises, imbuing them with new meaning. She freely applies these motifs to a range of modern garments and unconventional objects, including Sergio Rossi boots, handcrafted silk shoes and mannequins. These items, which are associated with notions of femininity and beauty, are symbolically stripped of their purpose or function and are refashioned into contemporary art objects. Her hand-crafted and highly refined installations are often read in a feminist context and, although the artist does not describe herself as a feminist, she acknowledges her works are informed by and imbued with a female consciousness and sensibility.2

2 Peng Wei, email correspondence with the author, 2015.
Peng Wei, Good Things Come in Pairs - no. 5, 2011-2013, silk shoes with painted insoles, 24 x 17.5 x 5 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Tina Keng Gallery.
Peng Wei, Night, 2010, bust with rice paper, 53 x 30 x 22 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Tina Keng Gallery.

Left:


Right:

Peng Wei, Tang Dynasty Polo, 2011, Sergio Rossi boots and rice paper, 60 x 25 x 30 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Tina Keng Gallery.
Qiu Zhijie is one of China’s most established contemporary artists, and he is also a writer, teacher, curator and a self-confessed eccentric. His conceptually driven and socially engaged art works explore ideas relating to Chinese and Western history, philosophy and culture, and his practice encompasses painting, photography, video, performance and installation art. During the early–mid 1990s, Qiu actively contributed to China’s burgeoning art scene but, unlike many of his peers who rejected Chinese convention and embraced Western art forms, he developed a growing interest in Chinese calligraphy and painting, declaring that he ‘never [goes] anywhere without a Chinese brush’.1 The artist rejects some critics’ assertions that contemporary art is inspired by Chinese cultural tradition is escapist. In his essay ‘Why I do Ink Painting’ the artist declares, with a hint of irony:

Practicing calligraphy and painting are not forms of escape. They’re different from sitting in a lotus position with classical Chinese music in the background, faking nirvana, or pretending that you have extinguished all evil thoughts from your mind. It’s not like dressing up like a scholar and giving Tai Chi lessons to foreigners. On the contrary, I have never cut myself off from deep involvement in Chinese society; in fact, in the past few years I have only become more active.2

The Birdseye series is one of Qiu’s most recent and ambitious projects, comprising a total of 26 works. Described by the artist as ‘cartographic calligraphy’, from a distance these scrolls resemble traditional Chinese landscape paintings, but a closer inspection reveals that they are in fact a sequence of maps of the world, viewed from a topographical, historical, geopolitical and cultural perspective. The map is emblematic of exploration, imperialism, nation-building, civilisation and globalisation, signified in these works by images and symbols of the world’s greatest natural wonders, man-made structures, and also of industrialisation, and environmental degradation. As the title suggests, these works can be viewed from multiple perspectives: as a visual topography and history of the world, or as a commentary on globalisation and contemporary perceptions of place in the world. About this series, the artist states:

observing the marks that mankind has left on the earth from a bird’s eye view, it is impossible not to feel the beating pulse of civilization; like reading a book, the whole of human history swells up to fill the mind’s eye.3

1 Qiu Zhijie, ‘Why I do Ink Painting’. The artist presented this paper at a symposium held on 21 February 2014 in conjunction with the exhibition, Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, http://www.qiuzhijie.com
2 Zhijie, 2014.
From left to right

Qiu Zhijie, The Fanatics, The Secret of Mosaics Has been Forgotten & Heaven is Better than Any Other Nation (detail from Birds eye series), 2013, ink and colour on paper. Private Collection. Courtesy of Hanart TZ Gallery.
From top to bottom:

Qiu Zhijie, Birds eye series, 2013, ink and colour on paper, 1.8x2.5m (total), (installation – Hanart TZ Gallery). Courtesy of Hanart TZ Gallery.

Qiu Zhijie, Heaven is Better than Any Other Nation (from Birds eye series), 2013, ink and colour on paper, 180 x 97 cm (detail). Private collection. Courtesy of Hanart TZ Gallery.

Right page:

Qiu Zhijie, The Secret of Mosaics Has been Forgotten (from Birds eye series), 2013, ink and colour on paper, 180 x 97 cm. Private collection. Courtesy of Hanart TZ Gallery.
Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong
Wilson Shieh is one of Hong Kong’s most prominent and prolific contemporary artists. He is best known for his finely executed ink paintings and his witty, sometimes fetishistic, caricatures of film stars, music legends and femme fatales. Beyond the comical appearance and posturing of his subjects, these works are in fact political and socio-cultural commentaries that critically reflect on aspects of Hong Kong’s history, society and culture, and engage with global issues relating to gender, the body and sexuality.

Shieh recalls that, as child in Hong Kong, he considered Chinese culture antiquated and irrelevant, and was more interested in Western art and Japanese popular culture. During the 1990s, however, he began experimenting with Chinese ink painting and with the *gongbi* (fine or meticulous brush) painting technique, which is believed to date back to the Han Dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD) and is characterised by its fine contours and colours. In the *Fleshy* (1997) series the artist employs the *gongbi* technique for the first time, exploiting its aesthetic and narrative potential to explore the dialectic between tradition and modernity. The works from this series that feature in this exhibition, including *Fatal Dignity*, *Lotus Family* and *Harvest*, playfully engage in a tug of war between the sexes and critically reflect on the influence of mass media and globalisation on changing roles and perceptions of gender in Hong Kong society.

The series *Famous Modern Architecture* (2006–2010) explores the culture of corporate capitalism and the mentality of ‘mine is bigger and better than yours’ is exemplified in this series by the ubiquitous high-rise building. Before undertaking formal training in visual art, Shieh studied architecture for one year (1989–1990). In this series, he focuses his attention on some of Hong Kong’s tallest and most famous buildings, which he transforms into a cast of slim and beguiling women clad in semi-translucent dresses. His twin works, *Famous Modern Architecture of Hong Kong Before 1997* and *Famous Modern Architecture of Hong Kong After 1997* reflect on Hong Kong’s transformation since the transfer of sovereignty to mainland China in 1997. Shieh comments that ‘these works can be interpreted as a political statement, but they also reflect my childhood memories of Hong Kong’s urban environment’. In critically responding to the ongoing and often divisive debate concerning Hong Kong’s urban development and the preservation of its cultural heritage, the works express what one scholar evocatively describes as ‘the culture and politics of disappearance’ in Hong Kong.

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Clockwise from left:

Wilson Shieh,
Lotus Family, 1997,
Chinese ink and colour on silk, 28 x 40 cm. Collection of Hong Kong Heritage Museum.

Fatal Dignity, 1997,
Chinese ink and colour on silk, 35.5 x 40 cm. Collection of Hong Kong Heritage Museum.

Harvest, 1997,
Chinese ink and colour on silk, 38.5 x 42 cm. Collection of Hong Kong Heritage Museum.
Wilson Shieh,
Famous Modern Architecture of Hong Kong Before 1997 (from Architecture series), 2011,
ink on paper, 175 x 105 cm. Private collection.
Wilson Shieh,
Famous Modern Architecture of Hong Kong After 1997 (from Architecture series), 2011, ink and gouache on paper, 164 x 95 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Osage Gallery.
Form is emptiness, emptiness is form; 
emptiness is not other than form, 
form too is not other than emptiness …
Likewise, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, 
and consciousness are all empty.¹

During the past decade, Charwei Tsai has produced videos, photographs and performance-based works that delve into aspects of Buddhist philosophy. The Heart Sutra, one of the oldest and most revered Buddhist texts, has become a key source of artistic inspiration for Tsai and, although not religious, she recalls finding comfort in the Heart Sutra scriptures as a child, and the ancient text has acquired increasing importance and meaning in her life.² The artist’s peripatetic existence, living between Taipei and Ho Chi Minh City, has inspired her interest in the concept of impermanence, which she defines as an ‘understanding of the interdependence between oneself and the universe, and the transient nature of this relationship’.³

The act of writing, and the meditative and performative aspects of calligraphy in particular, is central to Tsai’s practice. In her Mantra series (2005–), Tsai employs brush and ink (bi mo) to inscribe excerpts from the Heart Sutra onto organic materials, including tofu, meat, mushrooms, lotus leaves and flowers. The time-lapse videos, Tofu Mantra and Incense Mantra, which feature in this exhibition, visually record the texts’ obliteration as a result of decay and degeneration. These images are powerful visual metaphors for the ephemeral nature of existence, and of the relationship between form and emptiness that is central to Buddhist philosophy. Incense Mantra, a site–specific work that was created in Hong Kong, is imbued with historical, cultural and religious significance. Hong Kong, which translates as ‘Fragrant Harbour’ in Chinese, was an important producer of the incense sourced from locally grown sandalwood, which is still widely used for its healing properties and for ancestor and temple worship.

The artist has created the works in Bonsai Series III (2011–2012) by inscribing lyrics from a love song written by the sixth Dalai Lama (1683–1706), who is well known for his literary and pleasure-seeking activities, onto a series of lithographic prints depicting bonsai trees. The practice of pruning, manipulating and controlling the growth of these miniature trees is deeply rooted in Chinese cultural tradition and is associated with beauty and self-cultivation. In this series, however, the artist critiques and explores these ideas in relation to Buddhist ideas of compassion, suffering, impermanence and emptiness.

² Charwei Tsai, interview with the author, 2015.
³ Charwei Tsai, interview with Lesley Ma, in Charwei Tsai: Transience, Osage Gallery, Hong Kong, 2009 http://charwei.com/texts/interviews/lesley-ma-charwei-tsaï/
Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong
Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong

Left page, top:

Charwei Tsai,
Bonsai Series III – no. VI, 2011, black ink on lithographs, 49.4 x 54.9 x 5 cm. Courtesy of TKG+.

Left page, bottom:

Charwei Tsai,
Bonsai Series III – no. IX, 2011, black ink on lithographs, 49.4 x 54.9 x 5 cm. Courtesy of TKG+.

Above:

Charwei Tsai,
Bonsai Series III – no. VII, 2011, black ink on lithographs, 49.4 x 54.9 x 5 cm. Courtesy of TKG+.
I deeply feel the need for a thorough change in Chinese art. I deeply sense the cultural belonging problem. How to create contemporary art standing on one’s own cultural roots rather than simply imitating the form of Western contemporary art?¹

As one of China’s leading young artists, Yang Yongliang’s ‘digital landscape paintings’ attract significant international attention. Trained in graphic design, Yang has been experimenting with photography, video and computer graphics for almost a decade, creating works that are inspired by, but also transcend, the Chinese tradition. A retired teacher from Hong Kong trained Yang in traditional Chinese ink painting and, like other artists of his generation, he strongly identifies with, and seeks to revitalise, the Chinese ink tradition, saying ‘Chinese contemporary art often lacks self-awareness and reflection’.² He is also, however, aware of the need to modify, reinterpret and transform Chinese tradition to reflect present-day realities and technological advances. He rejects the tools and media associated with Chinese traditional painting, including the brush, ink and paper, claiming ‘creating works in ink does not itself convey an understanding of Chinese culture’.³

From a distance, Yang’s picturesque images of lofty mountains draped in mist, cascading waterfalls and deep ravines closely resemble ancient Chinese landscape (shanshui) painting, and bear a formal likeness to ink paintings created during the Song (960–1279) and Yuan (1279–1368) dynasties, which have inspired his work. A closer inspection, however, reveals concrete forests and miniature cities replete with towering high-rise buildings, flickering neon billboards, congested highways and soaring construction cranes. Yang has said that ‘the ancients used landscape paintings to convey their emotion but I use landscape work to criticise society’, and these images evocatively capture and critique the massive and rapid pace of urban development in China’s burgeoning cities.

*Rising Mist* is one of Yang’s most recent videos and it critically responds to China’s mounting environmental crisis, particularly the prevalence of air pollution. This is signified by the hazy miasma that slowly wafts over the landscape and shrouds the mountains, the city and its inhabitants. Yang’s photographic series, collectively titled *A Bowl of Taipei*, explores the conjunction between tradition and modernity, and questions the role of Chinese cultural tradition in contemporary society. The compression and molding of miniature urban landscapes to fit inside rice bowls reflects on China’s long-standing tradition of bonsai (or, in Chinese, penjing) cultivation, and also on the rise of urbanisation and consumerism in our cities.

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² Yang Yongliang, interview with the author, 2014.

Yang Yongliang,
*Rising Mist,*
2014, single channel video animation (detail). Courtesy of the artist.
Yang Yongliang,
A Bowl of Taipei no. 3, 2012, photographs (Epson Ultragiclee print on Hahnemuhle paper), 100 x 100 cm. Courtesy of the artist.
Yang Yongliang,
A Bowl of Taipei no. 4,
2012, photographs
(Epson Ultrachrome print on Hahnemuhle paper) 100 x 100 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.
With the demise of traditional Chinese landscape painting, the quest for aesthetic innovation through the imitation of the classics is one of my current creative concerns.1

Yao Jui-chung is one of Taiwan’s most prolific and inventive artists whose practice spans painting, drawing, photography, video, performance and installation art. He is also a writer, curator, teacher and co-founder of the independent gallery VT Artsalon. The artist grew up in Taiwan during the post-martial law period, when artists enjoyed unprecedented freedom and, at art school, he elected to study art history and theory rather than studio art. His artworks are conceptually driven and politically engaged, exploring issues concerning Taiwan’s history and its complex and contested identity, which are topics of ongoing debate in Taiwan. Since the mid-1990s, Yao has been researching Taiwan and China’s historical, political and cultural relations, which he examines in his work from official, fictional and personal perspectives. His works reflect a tongue-in-cheek irreverence towards authority and power, and they offer a critical counter-point to official, celebratory and essentialist narratives about the nation and identity issues.

Since 2007, Yao has been producing what he describes as ‘pseudo landscapes’—mixed-media paintings that draw inspiration from the ‘classics’ of Chinese landscape (shanshui) painting. Yao sources artworks by famous Chinese landscape painters, including Shi Tao (1642–1707) and Dong Qichang (1555–1636), which he appropriates and deconstructs, inserting ideas, forms and motifs that reflect his daily life and environment in Taiwan. The practice of copying or imitating artists’ works is central to traditional Chinese art, and Yao explores this idea in a postmodernist context, to question, subvert and parody notions of authenticity and what he describes as the ‘hegemony of Chinese culture’.2 The artist consciously rejects traditional materials and methods that are associated with classical Chinese painting, including the brush, rice paper, seals and inscriptions and instead uses biro and a fine-point oil pen on handmade paper, which he embellishes with glitter and gold. In Chinese culture, gold is a signifier of prosperity, and Yao uses gold leaf to fill the empty spaces of his compositions and to achieve a flattening effect. There is a strong autobiographical element in many of these works and, in Yao’s Journey to Australia, which the artist created for this exhibition, he envisions himself as a Buddhist disciple, sitting cross-legged in the middle of a map of Australia, visualising and meditating on his forthcoming journey.

2 Yao, 2012.
Yao Jui-chung,
Yao’s Journey to Australia, 2015,
biro, oil pen with gold leaf on Indian handmade paper, 200 x 546 x 6cm (detail). Courtesy of the artist and Tina Keng Gallery.
Yao Jui-chung, Yao's Journey to Australia, 2015, biro, oil pen with gold leaf on Indian handmade paper, 200 x 546 x 6cm. Courtesy of the artist and Tina Keng Gallery.
LIST OF WORKS


FENG Mengbo, *JTTW2010V07* (from *Journey to the West* series), 2010, Chinese ink, tea and ink jet on xuan paper, 154.5 x 79.5 x 4.6 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Shanghai Gallery of Art.

FENG Mengbo, *JTTW2010V02* (from *Journey to the West* series), 2010, Chinese ink, tea and ink jet on xuan paper, 154.5 x 79.5 x 4.6 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Shanghai Gallery of Art.


HE Xiangyu, *Everything we create is not ourselves*, 68-2, 2013-14, ink, watercolour, pencil on paper and inkjet prints, 31 x 41 cm each x 68 pieces. Collection of Peng Pei-cheng.

HE Xiangyu, *Cola Project – Antique series Circular Fan II*, 2009-10, ink and Coca-Cola on silk, 28 x 30 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Lucien Y. Tso, ONCE Projects.

HE Xiangyu, *Cola Project – Antique series Circular Fan III*, 2009-10, ink and Coca-Cola on silk, 28 x 30 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Lucien Y. Tso, ONCE Projects.


PAN Hsin-hua, *Magnetic Attraction*, 2012, coloured ink on paper, 144.2 x 218 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Asia Art Center.

PAN Hsin-hua, *Heaven and Earth No.3*, 2014, coloured ink on paper, 295 x 176 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Asia Art Center.


PENG Wei, *Good Things Come in Pairs - no. 4*, 2011-13, silk shoes with painted insoles, 23.5 x 17 x 4 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Tina Keng Gallery.

PENG Wei, *Good Things Come in Pairs - no. 5*, 2011-13, silk shoes with painted insoles, 24 x 17.5 x 5 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Tina Keng Gallery.

PENG Wei, *Good Things Come in Pairs - no. 20*, 2011-13, silk shoes with painted insoles, 24 x 17.5 x 4.5 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Tina Keng Gallery.

PENG Wei, *Night of July 7th*, 2009, bust with rice paper, 65.5 x 33 x 19 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Tina Keng Gallery.


QIU Zhijie, *The Fanatics* (*from Birdseye series*), 2013, Ink and colour on paper, 180 x 97 cm. Collection of Mr and Mrs Wadsworth’s ‘the humble cabin on the pine mountain studio’. Courtesy of Hanart TZ Gallery.

QIU Zhijie, *The Secret of Mosaics Has been Forgotten* (*from Birdseye series*), 2013, Ink and colour on paper, 180 x 97 cm. Collection of Mr and Mrs Wadsworth’s ‘the humble cabin on the pine mountain studio’. Courtesy of Hanart TZ Gallery.

QIU Zhijie, *Heaven is Better than Any Other Nation* (*from Birdseye series*), 2013, Ink and colour on paper, 180 x 97 cm. Collection of Mr and Mrs Wadsworth’s ‘the humble cabin on the pine mountain studio’. Courtesy of Hanart TZ Gallery.


SHIEH Wilson, *Famous Modern Architecture of Hong Kong After 1997* (*from Architecture series*), 2011, ink and gouache on paper, 164 x 95 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Osage Gallery.

SHIEH Wilson, *Central Plaza*, 2011, ink and gouache on paper, 200 x 64 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Osage Gallery.

SHIEH Wilson, *Fatal Dignity*, 1997, Chinese ink and colour on silk, 35.5 x 40 cm. Collection of Hong Kong Heritage Museum.

SHIEH Wilson, *Lotus Family*, 1997, Chinese ink and colour on silk, 28 x 40 cm. Collection of Hong Kong Heritage Museum.

SHIEH Wilson, *Harvest*, 1997, Chinese ink and colour on silk, 38.5 x 42 cm. Collection of Hong Kong Heritage Museum.


TSAI Charwei, *Bonsai Series III – no. III*, 2011, black ink on lithographs, 49.4 x 54.9 x 5 cm. Courtesy of TKG+.

TSAI Charwei, *Bonsai Series III – no. VI*, 2011, black ink on lithographs, 49.4 x 54.9 x 5 cm. Courtesy of TKG+.

TSAI Charwei, *Bonsai Series III – no. VII*, 2011, black ink on lithographs, 49.4 x 54.9 x 5 cm. Courtesy of TKG+.

TSAI Charwei, *Bonsai Series III – no. IX*, 2011, black ink on lithographs, 49.4 x 54.9 x 5 cm. Courtesy of TKG+.


YANG Yongliang, *A Bowl of Taipei no. 3*, 2012, photographs (Epson UltraGiclee print on Hahnemuhle paper), 100 x 100 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

YANG Yongliang, *A Bowl of Taipei no. 4*, 2012, photographs (Epson UltraGiclee print on Hahnemuhle paper) 100 x 100 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

YAO Jui-chung, *Yao’s Journey to Australia*, 2015, biro, oil pen with gold leaf on Indian handmade paper, 200 x 546 x 6 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Tina Keng Gallery.
CHEN SHAOXIONG

1962 Born in Guangdong. Living and working in Beijing

EDUCATION
1984 Print department, Guangzhou Fine Art Academy, China

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2014 Chen Shaoxiong: Ink History, Ink Media, Seattle Art Museum
2012 Air – Dry History, Pékin Fine Arts, Hong Kong
2009 Chen Shaoxiong: Ink Things, Spencer Museum of Art, Kansas
2008 Collective Memory, Art & Public – Cabinet PH, Geneva
Cash In, Para/Site Art Space, Hong Kong
2007 Visible and Invisible, Known and Unknown, Universal Studios - Beijing
Chen Shaoxiong, Barbara Gross Galerie, Munich
2006 Chen Shaoxiong, Art & Public – Cabinet PH, Geneva
Ink City on Paper, the Courtyard Gallery, Beijing
Let's See Who's Lucky, BizArt Art Center, Shanghai
2005 Double Landscape, Grace Alexander Contemporary Art Gallery, Zurich
Ink City: New Works by Chen Shaoxiong, the Courtyard Annex, Beijing
2003 Anti-C.S.X., Vitamin Creative Space, Guangzhou

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2014 CHINA 8, the Folkwang Museum, Germany
De/constructing China: Selections from the Asia Society Museum Collection, Asia Society Museum, New York
2014 Sights and Sounds: Global Film and Video, the Jewish Museum, New York
Background Story: Reframing Tradition in Chinese Contemporary Art, Vancouver Art Gallery
Art-Histories, Museum der Moderne Salzburg, Austria
SITE: Places of Memories, Spaces with Potential, Hiroshima MOCA
2012 Roundtable, the 9th Gwangju Biennale 2012, Korea
2003 The 50th Venice Biennale – Arsenale: “Zone of Urgency” (ZOU), Venice

AWARD
2013 Bellagio Creative Arts Fellows, the Rockefeller Foundation Visiting Artist, Bellagio, Italy

FENG MENGBO

1966 Born in Beijing. Living and working in Beijing

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2015 Picturing Feng Mengbo: The Loudest is Silence, Hanart TZ Gallery, Hong Kong
2012 My Private Museum, Shanghai Gallery of Art
2011 Mengbo 2012, Today Art Museum, Beijing
2010 Feng Mengbo, PS1, New York
2010 Journey to the West, Shanghai Gallery of Art
2010 1 BiTe, Chambers Fine Art, New York
2009 Restart, UCCA, Beijing
2008 Chinese Painting: Feng Mengbo, Galerie Rudolfinum, Prague
2006 Build to Order: r_drawworld 0, Singapore Tyler Print Institute
2002 Q4U, the Renaissance Society, Chicago
2001 Feng Mengbo: Phantom Tales, Dia Center for the Arts, New York
1998 Feng Mengbo, Holly Solomon Gallery, New York
1994 Game Over: Long March, Hanart TZ Gallery, Hong Kong

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2013 Gameplay, ZKM, Germany
2010 Decode, Victoria & Albert Museum, London; CAFA Museum, Beijing
2007 China Welcome You... Desires, Struggles, New Identities, Kunsthaus Graz, Austria
2004 Ars Electronica 2004, O.K Center, Austria
2003 Alors, La Chine?, Centre Pompidou, Paris
2002 Documenta 11, Kassel, Germany
1999 The 1st Fukuoka Asian Art Triennial 1999, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka
1998 ISEA98 (the 9th International Symposium on Electronic Art): Revolution98, Liverpool
1997 Documenta X, Kassel, Germany
1997 The 2nd Johannesburg Biennial, South Africa
1993 The 45th Venice Biennale, Venice
HE XIANGYU
何翔宇

1986 Born in Liaoning Province. Living and working in Berlin and Beijing

EDUCATION
2008 Graduated from Oil Painting Department, Shenyang Normal University

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2015 Dotted Line III, White Space Beijing, Beijing
New Directions: He Xiangyu, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing
He Xiangyu, Bischoff Projects, Frankfurt
2014 Dotted Line I, White Space Beijing, Beijing
He Xiangyu, White Cube Gallery, London
2013 Crossed Beliefs, SCAI the Bathhouse, Tokyo
2012 He Xiangyu, White Space Beijing, Beijing
A4 Young Artist Experimental Season the 2nd Round Exhibition, A4 Contemporary Arts Center, Chengdu
Cola Project, 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney
2011 The Death of Marat, Künstlerhaus Schloß Balmoral, Germany
2010 The Coca Cola Project, Wall Art Museum, Beijing

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2015 Lyon Biennale, Lyon
Fire and Forget, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin
28 Chinese, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco; San Antonio Museum of Art, San Antonio
The 2nd CAFAM Future Exhibition Observer-Creator, CAFA Art Museum, Beijing
2014 Exhibition of the Shortlisted Artists, the Pinchuk Art Centre, Ukraine
Shanghai Biennale, Shanghai
Yokohama Triennale, Yokohama
Vision of Proximity, SCAI the Bathhouse, Tokyo
The 8 of Paths: Art in Beijing, Uferhallen, Berlin

HUNG KEUNG
洪強

1970 Born in Yunnan. Living and working in Hong Kong

EDUCATION
2014 PhD, Planetary Collegium, Zurich University of the Arts, Switzerland
1997 MA (Film & Video), Central Saint Martin’s College of Art and Design, London
1996 BA (Hons), the Department of Fine Arts, the Chinese University of Hong Kong
1992 Dip (Design), the Swire School of Design, Hong Kong Polytechnic University

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2015 Catharsis: Real But Not True, A.M. Space, Hong Kong
2013 Hung Keung: Transmigration: From Single to Multiple Screens, Schoeni Art Gallery, Hong Kong
Dao x Microcosmic Play and Appreciation, Art Basel Hong Kong 2013, Hong Kong
2012 Hung Keung: Dao Gives Birth to One, Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester
2011 Retrospective: Video Works by Hung Keung, Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art and Cinema Pacific, Oregon
BSCL Project by Hung Keung, White Box, the University of Oregon, Portland

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2015 China 8’ Show 2015, Skulpturenmuseum Glaskasten Marl, Germany
2014 Lui Shou Kwan & Hung Keung, d3eart, Hong Kong
Conforming to Vicinity – A Cross-Strait Four-Region Artistic Exchange Project 2014, Macau Museum of Art, Macau; Pingtung Art Museum, Taiwan; He Xiangning Art Museum, Shenzhen; University Museum and Art Gallery of the University of Hong Kong
2013 2013 Young Artist Project: Video Festival Loop, Alternative Space Loop, Seoul
2012 Move on Asia -Video Art in Asia 2002 to 2012, ZKM Karlsruhe, Germany
2011 Jakarta Biennale, Jakarta
NG CINDY SIO IENG
吴少英

1966  Born in Macao. Lived in Taiwan from 1997-2006, working in Beijing since 2007

EDUCATION
Early 1990s Studied etching at the Slade School of Fine Arts, London University

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2015  So Far So Close, Orient Museum, Lisbon
2007  Ink in Motion Shadow, Today Art Museum, Beijing
2007  Ink in Motion, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle
1996  Traveling, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2015  Silent Poetry - Chinese Contemporary Art Exhibition, China Cultural Centre, Sydney and Adelaide Festival Centre, Adelaide
2014  Tao of Nature - Chinese Abstract Art Exhibition, Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai
2010  Time Unfrozen - New Media Art Exhibition, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei
2008  GrünDerZeit - Landschaftsarchitektur in und aus Peking, Institute of Cultural Foreign Relations, Germany

COLLECTION
Today Art Museum, Beijing
Taiwan Museum of Arts, Taichung
Peninsula Hotel Paris, Paris
Hubei Museum of Art, Wuhan

NI YOYU
倪有鱼

Born in 1984. Living and working in Shanghai

EDUCATION
2007  Fine Art College of Shanghai University

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2015  Ni Youyu, Contemporary Fine Art Independent Project in Art Basel Hong Kong 2015, Hong Kong
2014  Inches of Time, Art Museum of Nanjing University of the Arts, Nanjing
2013  Form and Matter - Ni Youyu, Hive Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing
2012  A Brief History – Ni Youyu, Shanghai Art Museum

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2015  Harmony and Transition - Reflecting Chinese Landscapes, Museum Marta Herford, Germany
2013  Outside the Lines - New Art From China, RH Contemporary Art, New York
2013  Confronting Anitya - Oriental Experience in Contemporary Art, Kunstwerk Charlshuette, Germany
2012  The 9th Gwangju Biennale Special Exhibition, Gwangju Museum of Art, Gwangju
2012  The First CAFAM Future Exhibition, CAFA Art Museum, Beijing
2012  The 8th International Ink Art Biennale of Shenzhen, Guan Shanyue Art Museum, Shenzhen
2011  Shanshui: Poetry without Sound? Landscape in Chinese Contemporary Art, Museum of Art Luzern, Switzerland
2010  Big Draft–Shanghai, Contemporary Art from the Sigg Collection, Kunstmuseum Bern, Switzerland
2009  Material Link - Technopolis, City of Athens, Greece
2008  Material Link – a Dialogue between Greek and Chinese Artists, OCA Shanghai, Greek State Museum of Contemporary Art, Greece
PAN HSIN-HUA
潘信華
1966 Born in Taimali, Taitung. Living and working in Hualien and Taipei

EDUCATION
1991 Graduated from Taipei National University of the Arts

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2013 Gaze into Illusion - Pan Hsin-hua Solo Exhibition, Asian Art Center, Taipei
2011 The Moon - Pan Hsin-hua Solo Exhibition, Moon Gallery, Taichung
2010 Ink and Color in Transition - Pan Hsin-hua Solo Exhibition, National Central University Art Center, Taoyuan
2009 The Color-Ink Painting - Pan Hsin-hua Solo Exhibition, Very Temple Artsalon, Taipei
2008 Landscape of Child Play – Color & Ink Painting Exhibition, Moon Gallery, Taichung
1999 Vanish Landscape, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2014 Collection and Dialogue - Taiwan’s Contemporary Ink Painting, Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Kaohsiung
2010 Rendering the Future Chinese Contemporary Ink Painting Exhibition, Asian Art Center, Beijing
1999 Vanish Landscape, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei

PENG HUNG-CHIH
彭泓智
1969 Born in Taipei. Living and working in Taipei and Beijing

EDUCATION
1997 MFA, San Francisco Art Institute, USA
1992 BFA, National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2009 God Pound, Musee Guimet, Paris
2007 Hung-chih Peng, MIT List Visual Art Center, Massachusetts
2006 Beware of GOD, IT Park Gallery, Taipei
2002 Little Danny, O.K Center for Contemporary Art, Upper Austria

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2014 Taipei Biennial – The Great Acceleration, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei
2009 Manimal, National Center of Contemporary Art, Moscow
2008 Home-Taiwan Biennial 2008, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung
2007 The 10th International Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul
2006 The Era of Contention: Contemporary Taiwanese Visual Culture, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, New York
2004 The Epic in the Everyday, Palazzo della Arti Napoli (PAN), Naples
2003 Time After Time, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco
2002 The 2nd Fukuoka Triennale, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka

AWARDS
2007 The 5th Taishin Art Award, Taishin Bank Foundation of Arts and Culture, Taiwan
1998 SOCA Award, Society of Contemporary Art, Taipei
PENG WEI
彭薇
Born in Chengdu. Living and working in Beijing

EDUCATION
1997 BFA, Oriental Culture and Art Department of Nankai University, Tianjin, China
2000 MFA, Aesthetics of Nankai University, Tianjin, China

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2014 Art Basel Hong Kong, Ora-Ora Gallery, Hong Kong
2013 Letters from a Distance - Peng Wei’s Solo Exhibition, Tina Keng Gallery, Taipei
2011 Take Off the Shell - Peng Wei Works 2002-2011, He Xiangning Art Museum, Shenzhen
2010 Body & Robe - Peng Wei’s Solo Exhibition, Tina Keng Gallery, Taipei
2009 Painting Skin- Peng Wei, Artside Gallery, Beijing

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2014 The 2014 APB Foundation Signature Art Prize, Singapore Art Museum
Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Signature Art Prize Exhibition, Singapore Art Museum
2013 Real Life Stories - the Chinese Contemporary Art exhibition, Bergen Art Museum, Norway
Break Trough - Work by Contemporary Chinese Women Artists, Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Maine
Shuimo - Water Ink: Chinese Contemporary Ink Paintings, Sotheby’s New York
2011 Shanshui: Poetry without Sound? Landscape in Chinese Contemporary Art, Museum of Art Luzern, Switzerland
2009 Europalia International Arts Festival: Attitudes-Female Art in China, the European Centre of Contemporary Art, Brussels
2008 New Scene - The Exhibition of Chinese Contemporary Ink Paintings, National Museum, Berlin; National Art Collection Museum, Dresden
2004 Dot-Radiation and Far--reaching-Vision Expression from Paper and Ink, Malaysia National Art Museum, Malaysia; Guangdong Art Museum, Guangdong
The 10th Asian International Art Exhibition, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka

QIU ZHIJIE
邱志杰
1969 Born in Fujian. Living and working in Beijing and Hangzhou

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2013 Qiu Zhijie: Bird’s Eye View, Hanart TZ Gallery, Hong Kong
2013 Fondazione Querini Stampalia: Qiu Zhijie - The Unicorn and the Dragon, Venice
2012 Break Trough, Witte de With, Rotterdam
2011 Qiu Zhijie: DÉJÀ VU, Hanart TZ Gallery, Hong Kong
2009 Grand sight, Chambers Fine Art, New York
A Suicidology of the Nanjing Yangzi River Bridge 4 - Twilight of the idols, The World’s Cultural Palace, Berlin
2008 The Bridge, Nanjing, Under the Heaven, Hanart TZ Gallery, Hong Kong
A Suicidology of the Nanjing Yangzi River Bridge 1 - Ataraxic of Zhuang Zi, Shanghai Zendai Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2015 China’s Changing Landscape: Contemporary Chinese Ink, Amos Anderson Arts Museum, Finland
Art Basel, Messeplatz, Switzerland
The 31th Sao Paulo Art Biennial, Sao Paulo
Hanart 100: Idiosyncrasies, Hanart Square, Hong Kong
2013 Abu Dhabi Art 2013 Exhibition, United Arab Emirates
Fine Art Asia 2013, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Hong Kong
2012 Beppu Art Month 2012, Japan
Eine andere Moderne: Zeigenossische Chinesische Tuschemalerei, Kunsthau Hamburg GmbH, Germany

CURATORIAL PROJECTS (selected)
2012 Shanghai Biennale, the Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai, Shanghai
2005 Archaeology of the Future: the second China Art Festival Three, Nanjing Museum, Nanjing
SHIEH WILSON
石家豪

1970 Born in Hong Kong. Living and working in Hong Kong

EDUCATION
1994 BA, Fine Arts, the Chinese University of Hong Kong
2001 MFA, the Chinese University of Hong Kong

SOLO / TWO-PERSON EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2013 Wilson Shieh ... Sumbody, Osage Kwun Tong, Hong Kong
2011 Mortal Coil - Wilson Shieh, Osage Soho, Hong Kong
2009 Wilson Shieh: Music Families, Singapore Tyler Print Institute, Singapore
2007 Ladyland, Grotto Fine Art, Hong Kong
2005 Nan Yang: Ocean of the South, Grotto Fine Art, Hong Kong

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2012 Ink, the Art of China, Saatchi Gallery, London
2010 Legacy and Creations: Ink Art vs Ink Art, Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai
2009 Three Decades of Contemporary Chinese Collection, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
2009 Asian Art Biennial, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung
2008 The 6th International Ink Painting Biennial of Shenzhen, Shenzhen Art Academy
2004 Past in Reverse: Contemporary Art of East Asia, San Diego Museum of Art, California
2003 Hong Kong Art Biennial Exhibition 2003, Hong Kong Museum of Art
1999 The Third Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane

COLLECTIONS
Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, U.S.A.
Hong Kong Heritage Museum
Hong Kong Museum of Art
M+ (Museum for Visual Culture), Hong Kong
Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia
National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan

CHARWEI TSAI
蔡佳葳

1980 Born in Taipei. Living and working between Ho Chi Minh City and Taipei

EDUCATION
2010 Post-graduate Research Program La Seine, L’École, Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, France
2002 BFA, Industrial Design and Certificate in Art & Architecture History, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, USA

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2014 We Came Whirling Out of Nothingness, TKG+, Taipei
2013 Meeting Point: Dual Solo Show of Charwei Tsai and Wu Chi-Tsung, Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong
2012 A Dedication to the Sea, Curated by Eugene Tan, Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton, Singapore
2009 Water, Earth and Air, Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2015 Go East: Gene and Brian Sherman Contemporary Asian Art Collection, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Simple Forms: Contemplating Beauty, curated by Jean de Loisy and Fumio Nanjo, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo. In collaboration with Centre Pompidou-Metz and Fondation d’entreprise Hermès
Typemotion: Type as Image in Motion, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung. In collaboration with ZKM Center of Art and Media, Germany
2014 Simple Shapes, curated by Jean de Loisy, Pompidou Center-Metz, Metz
2013 Dojima River Biennale, Osaka
Sharjah Biennial 11, curated by Yoko Hasegawa, United Arab Emirates
2012 Millenium Magazines, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York
2011 Yokohama Triennale 2011, Yokohama
Arrival-Searching for Now, Ruhrtriennale, Jahrhunderthalle Bochum, Germany
2009 The 6th Asia-Pacific Triennial, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
Yang Yongliang
杨泳梁

1980 Born in Shanghai. Living and working in Shanghai

EDUCATION
2003 BA, Visual Communication, China Academy of Art, Shanghai, China

SOLO EXHIBITIONS
2015 YAN, Shanghai Gallery of Art, Shanghai
FT5 Review: Yang Yongliang Film Screening, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka
2013 Moonlit Metropolis, Schoeni Art Gallery, Hong Kong
Silent Valley, MC2 Gallery, Milano
The Moonlight, Galerie Paris-Beijing, Paris

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2015 China8 – Contemporary Art from China, Stiftung für Kunst und Kultur e.V., Germany
Humanistic Nature and Society – an Insight into the Future, the 56th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, Palazzo Flangini, Venice
State of Play, White Rabbit Gallery, Sydney
2014 The 5th Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka
The 5th Daegu Photo Biennale, Culture & Arts Center, South Korea
Contemporary Photography in China 2009-2014, Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai
The 4th Singapore International Photography Festival, Singapore ArtScience Museum
2013 Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Images Festival: How far away is the horizon? Holbæk, Denmark
Space-time: the 5th Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, Moscow
Stad in Beeld, Beeld van een Stad, Stedelijk Museum Zwolle, Netherlands
Ventid’orient, Galleria Al Blu di Prussia, Naples
Dreamers, Contemporary Culture Center, Milano
Landmark: The Fields of Photography, Somerset House, London

Yao Jui-Chung
姚瑞中

1969 Born in Taipei. Living and working in Taipei

EDUCATION
1994 Taipei National University of the Arts, Art Theory, Taiwan

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2014 The Space that Remains, the 14th International Architecture Exhibition of the Venice Biennale, Church of Santa Maria della Pietà, Venice
2013 Long, Long Live, Tina Keng Gallery, Taipei
2012 Long Live/Landscape, Tina Keng Gallery, Taipei; Beijing
2007 Wonderful, IT Park, Taipei
2006 Everything will fall into Ruin, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei
1996 Recover Mainland China - Preface & Military Service, IT Park Gallery, Taipei

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selected)
2015 The Great Ephemeral, New Museum, New York
Asia Biennial, National Taiwan Arts Museum, Taichung
2014 Seoul International Media Art Biennale, Seoul Museum of Arts, Seoul
Asia Triennial Manchester, Manchester
Post Pop: East Meets West, Saatchi Gallery, London
Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Signature Art Prize Exhibition, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
Beijing Photo Biennal, Hubei Museum of Art, Hubei
Shenzhen Sculpture Biennale, OCT Contemporary Art, Shenzhen
Taiwan Biennale, National Taiwan Fine Arts Museum, Taichung
2013 The Multitude Art Prize, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing
2012 Shanghai Biennale, Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai, Shanghai
2009 Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
2005 International Triennial of Contemporary Art Yokohama 2005, Yokohama
2000 Promenade in Asia-cute, Art Tower Mito, Japan
1997 La Biennale di Venezia, Palazzo delle Prigioni, Palazzo Ducale S.Marco, Venice
WRITERS’ BIOGRAPHIES

Sophie McIntyre is a curator, lecturer and art writer. She is a Visiting Fellow at the Australian National University, and is writing a book, based on her Ph.D., on art from Taiwan (to be published by Brill). Her research explores the relationship between politics, identity and artistic agency in the production, selection, display and reception of art, particularly in Taiwan, Hong Kong and mainland China. She has worked as a gallery director and curator in art museums for more than 20 years, in Australia, New Zealand and Asia. She has curated over 30 exhibitions, including several from Taiwan and mainland China (e.g. Penumbra: New Media Art from Taiwan, 2007; Concrete Horizons: Contemporary Art from China, 2005; and Face to Face: Contemporary Art from Taiwan, 1999–2000). Her texts have been published in periodicals, catalogues, books and other arts publications.

Eugene Y. Wang is the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Professor of Asian Art at Harvard University. His extensive publications range from the ancient to modern and contemporary art and cinema. He has received Guggenheim, Getty, and ACLS Ryskamp fellowships. His book Shaping the Lotus Sutra: Buddhist Visual Culture in Medieval China garnered the Academic Achievement Award (2006) from Japan. He is the art history editor of the Encyclopedia of Buddhism (2004). He has served on the advisory board of the Center for Advanced Study of Visual Art, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Getty Foundation, and the editorial board of The Art Bulletin.

An-yi Pan is a specialist in Chinese art. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of Kansas in 1997 and he has taught in Cornell University’s Art History Department since 1998. He is the author of Painting Faith: Li Gonglin and Northern Song Buddhist Culture (2007). His scholarly participation in modern and contemporary art is mainly through the organisation of exhibitions such as Contemporary Taiwanese Art in the Era of Contention (2004) at Cornell University; and Moving Memories (2006) shown in conjunction with the Third Annual Humanities Consortium in Asia at Academia Sinica, Taipei. In 2014, he curated Boundaries (Jie): Contemporary Art from Taiwan exhibition at Cornell’s Johnson Art Museum. His second book, tentatively titled Embattled Identity: Post War Taiwanese Art, is in progress.
CURATOR’S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SOPHIE MCINTYRE

There have been numerous organisations and individuals in Australia, East Asia and the United States who have been involved in the evolution of this exhibition, from its inception to its presentation. In Australia, I would first like to thank the Canberra Museum and Gallery (CMAG), including the Board, CEO, Director and staff at CMAG, who supported and contributed towards the exhibition in different ways. INK REMIX is a major undertaking for CMAG, and I acknowledge the foresight and commitment of its Director, Shane Breynard, who enthusiastically agreed to undertake this exhibition, a bold step into the international sphere; the Assistant Director, Mark Bayly, for generously offering assistance and encouragement when it was most needed; and to other CMAG staff who have helped bring this exhibition to fruition, and it has been a pleasure to work with them. My special thanks to Chiu Tzu-yu who has generously given her time and assisted greatly in the development and presentation of this exhibition and catalogue. I would also like to acknowledge the support of the exhibition touring venues including Bendigo Art Gallery, UNSW Galleries, and the Museum of Brisbane.

I am most grateful to The Australian Centre on China in the World at the Australian National University (ANU) which provided funding during the crucial initial stages of exhibition research, and I would especially like to thank Geremie Barmé, Benjamin Penny and Merrilyn Fitzpatrick. I also express my sincere thanks to staff at the School of Art at ANU, especially Denise Ferris and Martyn Jolly, for their ongoing support, and the Research School of Humanities and the Arts at ANU for providing financial assistance towards the artist residencies. Also, thanks to the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (Andy Bi especially), Ross Maddock, and also Christopher Lim and Graeme Meehan at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for their support and guidance.

In mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, many people have contributed significantly towards this exhibition. CMAG is indebted to the collectors, museums and galleries in the United States and East Asia who have graciously loaned their works to the Museum to include in this touring exhibition. I would like to extend my special thanks to the
following collectors, museums, gallerists and their staff: Mr & Mrs Wadsworth (and Yang Liping), Chuak Chan and Tarlan Amigh, the Hong Kong Heritage Museum, Osage Gallery (and Agnes Lin for her generous hospitality), Hanart TZ Gallery (and Johnson Chang), Meg Maggio and her staff at Pékin Fine Arts, Tina Keng and her staff, Lucien Tso, Asia Art Center (Samantha Chiu), Shanghai Gallery of Art (Rachel Shen), and Arario Gallery (Jessica Sun). I would also like to express my gratitude to Taiwan’s Ministry of Culture and the Macau government for providing financial assistance enabling some of the artists to attend the opening, and I am deeply grateful to Sean Hu and Huang Yu-wen at Hu’s Art for helping to secure support in Taiwan.

Thanks also to those who have generously contributed towards this fine catalogue. They include: Professors Pan An-yi from Cornell University and Eugene Wang from Harvard University, whose engaging and insightful essays on the history and development of ink art provide a broader context for this exhibition. Thanks also to Dr Claire Roberts for her ongoing support and valuable feedback on my essay, Justine Molony for her editorial expertise, and Coordinate for their creative design.

I would also like to acknowledge my colleagues and friends in Australia and East Asia who provided advice, assistance, and hospitality during the development of this exhibition. They include: Caroline Turner, Jane DeBevoise, David Clarke, Lansheng Zhang and Catherine Hlavka, Simone Hlavka and Stephen White, Leung Chi Wo and Sara Wong, Aliang Liang, Mia Yu, Lauren Hu, Zhang Jinghong, Susan Acret and Richard Wu. My deepest gratitude goes to my partner, Paul Meibusch for his enduring support and encouragement, to William and Lachie for their patience and good humour, to my parents, and my good friends who have supported me in many different ways during the past two years when this exhibition was evolving.

Finally, I would like to thank the artists for their inspired vision and enthusiastic support of this exhibition, and for allowing us to exhibit and publish their work. I would particularly like to acknowledge the artists who created new works for this exhibition; it is their labour and creativity that is celebrated here. The exhibition has benefited greatly from my discussions with the artists about their work, and I wish to express my deepest gratitude to them for sharing their insights, and for the new and enduring friendships that we have developed.