Hong Kong Cityscapes

Ink Painting in Transition

A Highlight of the Hong Kong Festival in London celebrating the 5th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
Hong Kong Cityscapes

Ink Painting in Transition

Jointly presented by
Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London and
Hong Kong Museum of Art
Leisure and Cultural Services Department
Hong Kong Festival in London

On behalf of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London, I would like to welcome you to the Hong Kong Festival in London. The Festival is organised in celebration of the 5th Anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Our aim is to introduce to London, as a world city in Europe, the different perspectives which underline Hong Kong as Asia’s world city.

*The Hong Kong Cityscapes: Ink painting in Transition* is a highlight of the Hong Kong Festival in London. Hong Kong's dynamic lifestyle and cosmopolitan outlook, with the blending of the best of East and West, provide local artists with an abundant supply of new ideas on which to draw to express their talent and creativity. Visitors to the exhibition will experience for themselves the rich art life of one of the world’s great, ever-changing environments.

Apart from this exhibition on Hong Kong’s modern paintings, the Festival includes an exhibition and a seminar on Hong Kong’s architecture and infrastructure with the theme *Hong Kong: City on the Move*. It also offers an interesting look at our lifestyle, photography, film-making and performing arts.

The exciting, multi-faceted Festival programme, with 13 components, will celebrate Hong Kong as a city that has made remarkable progress with a steadfast resolve to continue to grow and blossom, a city not only renowned for its business ethos but also a city of culture, and a city of warmth.

The Hong Kong Festival in London will run from July 2 to end of September. Details are available on our website: www.hongkongfestival.org.

I sincerely hope that you will enjoy this exhibition and the other events of the Festival.

Andrew Leung
Director-General
Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London
Introduction

Brush and ink painting is a uniquely Chinese art form boasting a long tradition that goes back more than a thousand years. Rich in cultural content, Chinese brush and ink painting is imbued with literati aesthetics and philosophical speculations. As a symbol of nature, landscape has always been a prominent theme in Chinese painting. As media for artistic expressions, brush and ink also represent the artist’s spiritual union with nature.

China’s political and economic encounter with the west in the last two centuries has engendered a programme of westernization and modernization. The reform of Chinese painting is an important issue in China’s cultural renewal.

Before the cessation to Britain in 1842, Hong Kong was a barren island at the southernmost tip of China. The arrival of the British meant an influx of western thoughts and practices that modified the outlook and attitude of an ethnically Chinese society. In art, immigrant painters from China in the 1920s brought with them the traditional mode of Chinese painting to Hong Kong. For decades, it was faithfully copied and transmitted. When Hong Kong gradually developed into an international financial center, modernist concepts of art also took root in Hong Kong and brought fundamental changes to all aspects of visual art in Hong Kong.
This exhibition features 22 paintings showing the dynamic innovation of Hong Kong artists in the renewal of a time-honoured tradition. Their ingenious contribution has sustained ink painting as one of Hong Kong's most vital and developed currents of artistic creation.

This exhibition also includes works that are explicitly defiant to tradition. Artists resort to entirely different means in answering many of the artistic problems that contemporary artists in Hong Kong confront. These artists address the issue of modernity by questioning the validity of orthodoxy. Their inquisition involves content, media, format of presentation, as well as cultural symbols and their inherent aesthetics and visuality. These works are presented here as Hong Kong artists' responses to the time-honoured tradition of Chinese painting.

**Mountain and Water: The Immutable Landscape**

As a dominant theme in the grand tradition of Chinese ink and brush painting, landscape is the source of unbound artistic inspiration. Drawing from a broad repertory of traditional techniques, immigrant and indigenous artists in Hong Kong carry on the legacy of the Chinese landscape painting and instill into their painting a new outlook.

Xing Baozhuang's *Hong Kong Landscape* shows his sentimental reference to the modest beginning of Hong Kong as an idyllic fishing village. Xing's landscape style is typical of the traditional approach of landscape painting in Hong Kong that took root in this island when the first wave of immigrant from Southern China came to Hong Kong in the 1920's to escape the turmoil of civil wars in China.

The introduction of modernist ideas from the West in the 1960s and 1970s opened up vigorous new directions for Hong Kong artists. Western art concepts and techniques reoriented the development of ink painting in Hong Kong.

Lü Shoukun merged Eastern and Western aesthetics in ink painting by incorporating Buddhist and Daoist iconic images into western abstract compositions. A new ink painting movement emerged. Lü Shoukun inspired a group of followers who further experimented with graphic presentations, space and light and arrived at a rich abstract vocabulary hitherto unknown in Chinese ink painting. Much of their work are involved with the transmutation of the landscape theme. The influence of his style can be seen in the works by Wang Wuxie, Zhou Lüyun, Jin Daqiang and Feng Yongji. These experimentations have significant impact on the development of ink painting both in China and Taiwan.

While Lü Shoukun and his followers form a distinctive school of ink painting in Hong Kong. There are individuals exploring new expressions in picturing landscapes. Huang Xiaokui's
Boating pushed the tilted picture plane to the extreme. The exaggerated verticality of the format gives the picture a peculiar tension. Li Junyi uses tiny blocks of Chinese scripts to build up his landscape formation in a rather surreal manner. Tian Chi’s landscape formation is an interplay of large areas of positive and negative space. Textural and tonal variations set up strong vibration across the painting. Textural pattern and spatial contrast is also a stylistic characteristic of Liang Juting’s painting. In Infinite Changes IV, Liang extends the two-dimensionality of this ink painting into three dimensional space by introducing an integral installation of rock and wood. Lü Zhenguang’s Landscape No. 9092 (Homage to Frantisek Kupka) is a transposition of landscape in oil to bring the genre to a rarified realm. It is unclear whether the stencil figure in Hu Yongkai’s Paramita looks forward or turns his back to the “other shore” on the top of the picture blocked by a screen of green mountains.

The transition in Chinese landscape painting in Hong Kong shows Hong Kong artists’ response to changing times. As a symbol of eternity, landscape has remained an important subject in the course of these changes.

**Skyscrapers and City Dwellers: The Human Landscape**

The dynamics of urban living have profound impact on artistic expressions as shaped by individual experiences in response to multi-faceted city life, cityscape and human relationship. Personalized sensitivity of the artists is projected through their artistic visions. These distinctive statements of Hong Kong art immensely enrich the traditional artistic language of Chinese ink and brush and bring it up to date with contemporary living.

Zhu Xinghua’s My Days in Temple Street describes his nostalgia for his experience growing up in the inner city where sprawling urban squalor was not regulated by programmatic city planning regimes. Humanistic concern arising from urban experience is expressed in a somber black and white palette in Wang Shouqing’s New Territories Series. In a way, it can be read as a eulogy of the demise of the rustic tranquility of the New Territories now overwhelmed by rapid industrialization.

The vibrant colours of Lin Tianxing’s Kwai Fong Estate resonate the exuberance of human activities in large public housing projects. Wu Xuanhua’s Strolling in the Metropolis weaves the urban landscapes into a maze of structures and lights exuding endless vitality.

Focused on human drama, Fang Zhaoling’s Boat people on the Sea expresses her empathy for the Vietnamese refugees seeking asylum in Hong Kong. Fang Su’s The Dying Game depicts four old women playing the shiwu, an old-fashioned card game fast becoming
obsolete just like the players. Zhu Xinghua puts his *Portrait* in an insane asylum where time, space and being are all drifting on the brink of existence. In the hub of a metropolis, the aged and the insane are pushed to the margin of a function-oriented society.

Unaffected by the sobriety of his contemporaries, Chen Fushan's *Execution* is typical of his fairy tale-like fantasies told in a surrealistic fashion. Treating life as a carousel ride, Chen's work exudes a disconcerting mode of urban psyche.

Meticulously executed in the *shuanggou* (fine line contour) technique harking back to over one thousand years ago, Shi Jiahao's *Colloquial Chop Suey* is a fantastic admixture of images from the subculture, utterly irreverent within the grand narrative of Chinese ink painting.

Without searching for absolute values, Guo Ying's *Mattress* is a strikingly bland approach to the creative process. The execution consists of an indefatigable repetition of a mundane motif that can evaporate into a transcendental mantra.

**Conclusion**

This exhibition shows Hong Kong artists' experimentation with new technical devices and presentation methods. Some transform the distinctive characteristics of ink and brush as alternatives to the traditional treatment of space, perspective and forms in Chinese painting. Their relationship to traditional ink painting is at best oblique. Subtle references to the prototypes can be drawn from evidences such as multi-paneled vertical-scroll presentation format, vestiges of imprinted ink, silk or Chinese paper. The ambiguity of the cultural identity of these works arouses titillating speculations as to the future of Chinese art.

The works by Hong Kong artists encapsulate the development of ink painting in Hong Kong in the last decades. The continual renewal and invigoration of ink painting in the rapidly changing city show the persistence of ingrained Chinese cultural symbolism in a long revered pictorial tradition that has confronted cultural erosion with deft adaptation to non-indigenous elements. As a cross road between the East and the West, Hong Kong art will continue to be renewed and invigorated by cross-cultural currents and trends.

Christina Chu  
Chief Curator  
Hong Kong Museum of Art
Mountain and Water -

The Immutable Landscape

LÜ Shoukun
XING Baozhuang
WANG Wuxie
ZHOU Lüyun
JIN Daiqiang
FENG Yongji
HUANG Xiaokui
LI Junyi
TIAN Chi
LIANG Juting
LÜ Zhenguang
HU Yongkai
呂壽琨  LÜ Shoukun (1919-1975)

禅畫  1970
水墨設色紙本
180 x 97 厘米

Zen Painting  1970
Ink and colour on paper
180 x 97 cm
AC1976.053
邢寶莊 XING Baozhuang (1940-)

香港風景圖 1999
水墨設色紙本
36.6 x 135.2 厘米
Hong Kong Landscape 1999
Ink and colour on paper
36.6 x 135.2 cm
AC2001.206

王無邪 WANG Wuxie (1936-)

清幽 1978
水墨設色紙本
40 x 185 厘米
Reclusion 1978
Ink and colour on paper
40 x 185 cm
AC1979.030
周綠雲 ZHOU Lūyun (1924-)

安定精進 1996
水墨設色紙本
122 x 180 厘米

Calm Peaceful and Creative 1996
Ink and colour on paper
122 x 180 cm
AC1998.014
JIN Daiqiang (1942-)

空山・旭日・泉聲 2000
水墨設色紙本三屏
200 x 300 厘米

Three Movements: Space Time Voice  2000
Ink and colour on paper,
a set of three
200 x 300 cm
AC2001.208
FENG Yongji (1952-)

Hong Kong Series 1996
Ink and colour on paper,
set of 4 square paintings
Each 30.3 x 30.3 cm
AC1997.021
黃孝逵 HUANG Xiaokui (1946-)

輕舟 2000
水墨設色紙本
285 x 60 厘米

Boating 2000
Ink and colour on paper
285 x 60 cm
李君毅 Li Junyi (1965-)

詩中有畫，畫中有詩  2001
水墨設色紙本
153 x 69 厘米

Poetry and Painting  2001
Ink and colour on paper
153 x 69 cm
天池  TIAN Chi  (1949-)

「錯體」-部份反裝的圖畫  2001
水墨紙本
150 x 290 x 25 厘米

Inverse  2001
Ink on paper
150 x 290 x 25 cm
梁巨廷  LIANG Juting (1945-)

渾變之四  1998-2000
混合媒介
一組二幀連石及木
各 136.5 x 69.4 厘米

Infinite Changes IV  1998-2000
A set of two paintings with
rock and wood
Each 136.5 x 69.4 cm
AC2000.053
吕振光  LÜ Zhenguang  (1956-)

山水第九零二九號
(Homage to Frantisek Kupka)  1999
Acrylic on canvas
213 x 92 cm
AC1999.117
胡永凯 HU Yongkai (1945-)

彼岸 1996
水墨設色紙本
142 x 73 厘米

Paramita 1996
Ink and colour on paper
142 x 73 cm
Skyscrapers and City Dwellers -

The Human Landscape

ZHÚ Xínghuá
WĀNG Shóuqìng
LÍN Tiānxìng
WÚ Xuánhuá
FĀNG Zhāolíng
CHÉN Fúshān
FĀNG Sū
SHÍ Jiāhǎo
GUGU Ō Ying
朱興華  ZHU Xinghua (1935-)

我在廟街的日子  1999
水墨設色紙本
180 x 96 厘米

My Days in Temple Street  1999
Ink and colour on paper
180 x 96 cm

AC2000.055
新界系列 1999
水墨設色紙本四屏
各 244 x 60 厘米

New Territories Series 1999
Ink and colour on paper,
a set of four
Each 244 x 60 cm
AC2001.210
Kwai Fong Estate (#1)
Ink and colour on paper
136 x 66.2 cm
AC2000.035
吳炫樺  WU Xuanhua  (1970-)

漫遊在大都會  2000
套色石版畫，屏風
各 117 x 51 厘米

Strolling in the Metropolis  2000
Colour lithograph,
screen of four folds
Each 117 x 51 cm
怒海浮沉 1981
水墨設色紙本
68.5 x 138 厘米

Boat people on the Sea 1981
Ink and colour on paper
68.5 x 138 cm
AC1994.047
陳福善  CHEN Fushan (1905-1995)

刑場  1974
水墨設色紙本
151 x 75 厘米

Execution  1974
Ink and colour on paper
151 x 75 cm
AC1984.035
方蘇  FANG Su  (1951-)

終局 2000
水墨設色紙本
144 x 197 厘米
The Dying Game  2000
Ink and colour on paper
144 x 197 cm
AC2001.132
朱興華  ZHU Xinghua (1935-)

像 1988
水墨設色紙本
172 x 97.5 厘米

Standing Woman  1988
Ink and colour on paper
172 x 97.5 cm
AC1989.065
SHI Jiahao (1970-)

Colloquial Chop Suey 1997
Ink and colour on silk, a set of six
31 x 27 cm (three pcs.)
33 x 29 cm (three pcs.)
Collection of Hong Kong Heritage Museum
Mattress  2000
Ink on silk
193 x 78 cm
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name in Pinyin</th>
<th>Name in Chinese</th>
<th>Other name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHEN Fushan</td>
<td>陳福善</td>
<td>CHAN Fook-sin, Luis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FANG Su</td>
<td>方蘇</td>
<td>FONG So</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FANG Zhaoling</td>
<td>方召麴</td>
<td>FANG Chao-ling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FENG Yongji</td>
<td>馮永基</td>
<td>FUNG Wing-kee, Raymond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUO Ying</td>
<td>郭瑛</td>
<td>KWOK Ying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HU Yongkai</td>
<td>胡永凱</td>
<td>HU Yongkai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUANG Xiaokui</td>
<td>黃孝逵</td>
<td>WONG Hau-kwei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JIN Daqiang</td>
<td>靳埭強</td>
<td>KAN Tai-keung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LI Junyi</td>
<td>李君毅</td>
<td>LEE Chun-yi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIANG Juting</td>
<td>梁巨廷</td>
<td>LEUNG Kui-ting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIN Tianxing</td>
<td>林天行</td>
<td>LAM Tianxing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LÜ Shoukun</td>
<td>呂壽琨</td>
<td>LUI Shou-kwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LÜ Zhenguang</td>
<td>呂振光</td>
<td>LUI Chun-kwong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHI Jiahao</td>
<td>石家豪</td>
<td>SHIEH Ka-ho, Wilson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIAN Chi</td>
<td>天池</td>
<td>TIEN Chi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WANG Shouqing</td>
<td>王守清</td>
<td>CHING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WANG Wuxie</td>
<td>王無邪</td>
<td>Wucius WONG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WU Xuanhua</td>
<td>吳炫樺</td>
<td>NG Yuen-wa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XING Baozhuang</td>
<td>邢寶莊</td>
<td>YING Po-chong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZHOU Lüyun</td>
<td>周緣雲</td>
<td>CHOU Lu-yun, Irene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZHU Xinghua</td>
<td>朱興華</td>
<td>CHU Hing-wah’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pamphlet Production Team

Editorial:

Chief Curator (Art):
  Christina CHU

Curator (Modern Art):
  TANG Hoi-chiu

Assistant Curator I (Modern Art):
  Jennifer SP CHU

Assistant Curator II (Modern Art):
  CHAN Lai-nee

Assistant Curator II (Modern Art):
  Leona CYU

Assistant Curator II (Modern Art):
  Crystal YF CHOI

Design:

Senior Technical Officer:
  Winnie WK KWAN

Technical Officer I:
  Candy LW CHOI

Technical Officer II:
  Alice CHAN

Produced by the Hong Kong Museum of Art
Copyright © 2002 Leisure and Cultural Services Department
All rights reserved

Special thanks to