At the East-West Crossroads — The Art of Wucius Wong
A world-renowned artist, Wucius Wong has been very active in the arts circle and has made significant contributions to art, art criticism and art education over the past fifty years. By incorporating Chinese landscape elements and design concepts, his works unveil a new horizon in ink painting. This is a major retrospective exhibition to commemorate the accomplishment of Wucius Wong. It features 77 representative works displayed in 5 chronological sections. With each section covering a decade of his works, the exhibition will showcase the stylistic evolution and the superb achievement of Wucius Wong from the 1950s to date.

Existentialism has a strong influence on Wucius Wong in his early years. In its shadow, the young painter had a pessimistic outlook on life. Anxiety and malaise are found in his early works. They are loaded with fragmented elements and melancholy. His representative works of this period, such as *Fantasia, Inside the Train* and *Storm*, etc. depict a nightmarish world. Their vibrant, disordered and irrational use of colour, brushwork and composition lends them a Surrealist and Fauvist touch. Sullen, bizarre and chaotic, these works mirror the depressed mind of a young man entrapped in a stressful city.
1961至1965年間，王無邪在美國攻讀藝術，受波普藝術影響，開始以日常生活物品、幾何圖形、文字和設計元素入畫，注重作品結構的構築及其畫面空間的完整性。在《殘碑》中，畫面左方的圖象彷彿易經中的卦象，右方加入類似「生」、「一」等文字、圖象、文字，縱橫交錯的線條創造意義空間，使作品更添象徵意味。王氏以前衛的形式，幾何化的元素演繹中國文化，由此確立自成一格的風格。此特色在同期的《秋分》、《追憶》及《四格》極為明顯。

From 1961 to 1965, Wucius Wong studied art in the United States and was exposed to the wave of Pop Art. He began to apply everyday objects, geometric shapes, Chinese characters and design elements in his work, with a focus on compositional structure and spatial entirety. In *Broken Stele*, for instance, an image resembling one of the trigrams in *Yijing* (*The Book of Changes*) on the left juxtaposes with characters resembling the Chinese words for “birth” and “one” on the right. These superimposed images, words and lines lend a sense of ambiguity to the pictorial space, enhancing the symbolic connotations of this work. His geometric, unconventional representations of ancient Chinese culture witnessed the emergence of a distinctive style. Such distinctiveness is also apparent in *Autumn Equinox*, *Remembrance* and *Four Squares* of the same period.
Oblivion No. 2 exemplifies a series of works inspired by the color and crackle pattern of ancient jade. But in fact, apart from being a manifestation of the subtle beauty of a Song ceramic ware or a piece of ancient jade, this work embodies Wong’s tribute to the moral courage and the virtues of the literati which has long been metaphorically associated with jade. This painting is of such significance that he deliberately bought it back from auction. The concept of the “jade series” burgeoned in the 1970s, extended through the 1980s, and found maturity in Mountain Dream and Mountain Dream No. 3, both displayed in the next section—“Tracing Back to the Source” (1975-1984).

The inspiration of this set came from Wong’s trip to the Swiss Alps, but it is not an onsite painting. A triumphant manifestation of chiaroscuro, it captures the gradations of light from oblique angles, the contrast of the solidity and the void as well as the atmospheric mood by a skillful application of ink and wash in the style of the Lingnan School. Linear strokes accentuate the silhouette of the mountains; together with the darkened sky, they reinforce drama and rhythm in the work.

Based on the 1976 version commissioned by the Hong Kong Excelsior Hotel which was executed in meticulous brushwork and soft hues, this set is comparatively subdued in colour, vigorous in brushwork and monumental in style.
1986年王無邪遊三峽既畢，將印象寫成他的第一件手卷作品《江行圖卷》。當時他已移民美國，常有遊子之歎。江河由源頭流向大海，正好比遊子漂泊。同時人到中年，有感逝水年華，遂借江河兩岸之急流淺灘、雲煙氣氛、陰晴風雨，寓心中一種漂泊無根、歲月催人的無奈之情。江河的題材亦寄託了他在藝術路上尋根覓源，重新估計中國藝術傳統的心志。畫家採用喜愛的俯瞰角度，貫徹不畫人和物的習慣，凌越比例和空間的限制，賦予作品永恆的感覺。

In 1986, upon his return from a tour to the Three Gorges of the Yangzi River, Wucius Wong turned the impressions into his first handscroll, entitled River Journey. Living in the States and feeling culturally rootless at the time, he identified himself with the river——drifting away from its motherly source, heading for the ocean, much like a wanderer away from homeland. The irrevocable river is also a symbol of the passage of time and the transience of life, which echoes the painter's concerns in his middle age. His affliction is abstracted into a depiction of the changing weather and ambiance along the banks and the turns. The river theme also represents his search of the origins on his artistic pursuit and his reappraisal of Chinese artistic traditions. By adopting the bird's-eye perspective——a feature he always favours, and the habitual deliberate omission of people and objects that denote scale in a landscape, he imbues his work with a timeless quality.

王無邪鮮以香港之景物為題，回歸後才破例。當中又以1997年的《新夢》系列特別有意思。是次展覽亦展出一幅此系列的代表作。這批作品為香港回歸誌慶之作，代表王無邪心中的「回歸之夢」。1999年寫成的《香江幻彩》是同期的經典之作，透過幾何元素及印象派的點彩技巧，演繹絢爛的維港兩岸，表達畫家對新時代的憧憬，流露他的家國情懷。目前陳列於香港機場富豪酒店大堂，高2米、長16米之巨大壁畫，即根據此作放大寫成。
Wucius Wong seldom painted the scenery of Hong Kong until after the 1997 Handover. One of such works is a meaningful series entitled *New Dream*, dated 1997, painted to celebrate the return of Hong Kong to China, charged with his dreams for the future. A representative example of the series is on display in this exhibition. The most remarkable work of the same period, bearing the same theme is an album entitled *Scintillating Hong Kong Harbour*. In this work of 1999, he turns the fascinating view of the Victoria Harbour into geometric fragmentations and Impressionist dabs of colours, and by doing so, redefines a cityscape as his vision of the new era, making this work a token of his patriotic fervour. An awesome mural painting (measuring 2m x 16m) currently on display at the lobby of the Regal Hong Kong Airport Hotel is a magnified version of this album.
While the New Dream series is about Hong Kong’s Handover, the New Dawn series, comprising New Dawn No. 1 and New Dawn No. 3 in this exhibition, commemorates the return of Macau to Chinese sovereignty in 1999. In this reflection of his felicitations for his country and its people entering a new epoch, Wong offers a reinterpretation of the Pearl River Delta—the sparse islands and vast sea and sky which often came into his sight during the days he lived in Discovery Bay as well as on occasional trips to Macau. Similar to the New Dream series, the New Dawn series has a rich palette; they turn out to be more buoyant than other works of the same period.
Wucius Wong's cityscapes are mostly abstract and reflective. His typical urban scenery such as the City Dream and Window Dream series reflect the mental fatigue of urban life and the painter's own philosophies. Geometric imagery in City Dream No. 7 are overlapped, disintegrated and collaged to create a shattered and fragmented pictorial space, which incarnate the despondent souls of city-dwellers and their alienation from mother nature. Superimposed colour dots seem to resemble city illuminations, but may also symbolize shattered dreams.

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