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Wesley Tongson – The Journey

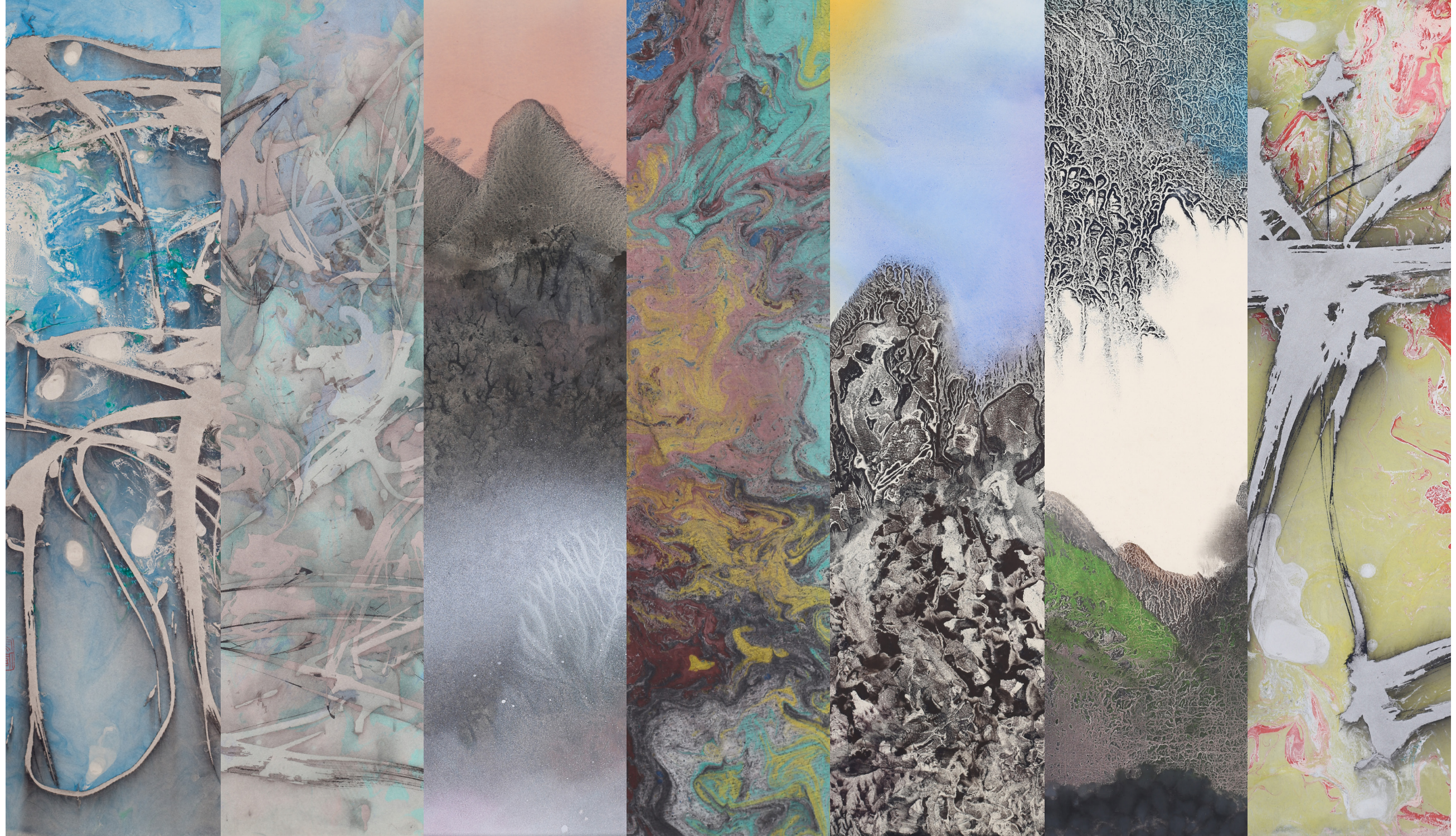
唐家偉：旅塵

Guest Curator: Catherine Maudsley

October 12, 2018 - March 9, 2019
2018年10月12日 - 2019年3月9日



舊金山中華文化中心



My paintings are natural. Great artists have to attain the zenith of nature.
我的畫是天然的，畫家要天然最高境界，妙有真空。

———— Wesley Tongson 唐家偉

ABOUT WESLEY TONGSON

關於唐家偉

Wesley Tongson, with his family's roots in Zhongshan, Guangdong Province, was born in Hong Kong in 1957.

He was 15 when he was diagnosed with schizophrenia, a condition that, together with a fervent commitment to Zen philosophy, shaped his bold artistic vision and his life.

At 17, while still a student at Hong Kong International School (HKIS), Tongson commenced to paint formally, at first in a manner inspired by the Chinese literati style, *wenren hua*.

Following graduation from HKIS in 1977, Tongson moved to Toronto, Canada, where he studied Western painting at Ontario College of Art and Chinese brush painting with the renowned Madame Gu Qingyao (1896-1978).

It was at this time that Tongson also began to explore and to teach himself splash ink painting, a technique which originated in 8th century China and was exemplified by the work of Zhang Daqian (1899-1983) in the 20th century — and for which, eventually, Tongson would himself become best known.

Tongson returned home to Hong Kong in 1981, where he continued his studies with Harold Wong (Huang Zhongfang) (b. 1943), the distinguished collector, connoisseur, and painter. In the ensuing decade, Tongson continued to explore the creative possibilities of splash ink painting and began to draw on his Western and Eastern influences for the creation of highly original contemporary works. During the latter half of the 1980s, these early works were shown in several solo exhibitions and in the 1988 group show, “Modern Chinese Paintings by Five Artists,” at Hong Kong's City Hall.

Throughout his career, Tongson considered landscape painting to be the most difficult and highest accomplishment of

Chinese art and devoted most of his energies to mastering the form, in particular mountainscapes. Indeed, in the 1990s, he often referred to himself as “Mountainscape Teacher” (Shandou Laoshi) and, in his later years, signed his paintings as “Mountain Taoist” (Shandou Daoren). Tongson also excelled in painting bamboo, plum blossoms, lotus, orchids, and pines, and was a highly accomplished calligrapher.

Throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium, Tongson intensified his commitment to splash ink painting. His spiritual journey towards Zen-based enlightenment was by this time inseparable from his artistic explorations—transcending the conventional bounds of landscape painting was akin to transcending one's self. Tongson referred to his works during this period as Mountains of Heaven Zen paintings, and attributed their remarkable, meditative imagery to a pure state of mind, describing them as flowing from a world beyond and, emanating from, the artist's heart.

At the same time, Tongson continued to be inspired by Western art. Indeed, the strong colors in his work may have been directly influenced by his Western art studies. In particular he admired Cubism for the way in which it brought volume into painting, and among Western painters, he revered Picasso.

Tongson's work was shown to acclaim at solo exhibitions in Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, and the United States throughout the 1990s and at the group shows “New Trends – Art Hong Kong” in 1994 and “Art Asia” in 1995.

Tongson continued to form his own style of Chinese landscape art and to break from the traditional forms of Chinese landscape painting. From the late 1990s onwards, he explored ways of integrating his splash ink methods with traditional Chinese brushstroke techniques. Beginning in



唐家偉祖籍廣東中山, 1957年在香港出生。

十五歲時發現患有思覺失調症,這連同他對「禪」的熱誠, 塑造了他大膽創新的藝術視野和一生。

當唐家偉十七歲還是一名香港國際學校的學生時, 他開始正式繪畫, 起初的風格是受到中國文人畫感染。

1977年在香港國際學校畢業後, 唐家偉移居加拿大多倫多, 並在安大略藝術學院學習西方繪畫,及師從著名的顧青瑤女士(1896-1978年) 學習中國畫。

唐家偉在這個時候開始探索及自學潑彩山水——是二十世紀中葉國畫大師張大千 (1899-1993年) 將源於八世紀中國的潑墨法混合青綠山水的色彩而開創出來的獨特畫法。最終, 潑彩山水亦讓唐家偉為人熟識。

唐家偉在1981年回流香港, 跟隨出色的收藏家、鑑賞家及畫家黃仲方(生於1943)繼續學習。在往後的十年間, 唐家偉繼續探索創作潑彩山水的無限可能, 融合東、西方的意念, 創作出極具原創性的當代作品。1980年代的後半期, 這些早期作品在他的幾次個展, 及1988年在香港大會堂〈中國現代水墨五人聯展〉中展出。

在唐家偉的創作生涯中, 他認為山水畫是中國藝術裏最難, 但卻是中國藝術的最高成就。他因此以大部分精力專注於掌握筆墨神韻, 特別是山水的意境。他在1990年代時常稱呼自己為「山斗老師」, 在往後的年間他在畫作中亦署名為「山斗道人」。唐家偉擅長畫松、竹、梅、蘭和荷花, 也是一位卓然有成的書法家。

從九十年代到千禧年, 唐家偉對潑彩畫更全情投入。他邁向禪悟的靈性之旅, 此時已與他的藝術探索不可分割——超越傳統山水畫的界限如同超越自我。唐家偉稱他這個時期的作品為「天界山水禪」, 因靈感來自冥想中純淨心境, 稱其為空中源流, 並從藝術家的心汨汨流出。

與此同時, 唐家偉繼續受到西方藝術感悟。事實上, 他作品中的強烈色彩可能是受到鑽研西方藝術的影響。他特別仰慕立體主義, 並顯示在他的作品中。西方畫家之中他顯然鍾愛畢加索, 尊敬其創作力。

1990年代期間, 唐家偉曾於香港、英國及美國等地舉行個展,並曾參展〈香港國際新興藝術博覽會〉(1994)及〈香港世界藝術博覽〉(1995)。唐家偉繼續塑造他對中國山水畫的個人風格, 並突破中國山水畫作的傳統形式。九十年代後期, 唐家偉結合他的潑彩方法與傳統中國畫筆法。2001年起, 他開始實驗指畫, 較早前他有可能曾經利用手指靈巧地操控潑彩山水畫中的墨水, 在往後十年間, 他的畫作越來越多使用手指和指甲。到了2009年, 他實際上已停止使用畫筆。

縱其短暫但經歷豐富的一生, 唐家偉與思覺失調對抗, 他以藝術抗衡這種狀況。這恆常的創造張力遺留給我們一個獨特的藝術遺產, 展現了一個平靜、光明、無垢的自然世界, 與他身處的自我、苦澀的世界形成強烈對比。他的畫作為世界多家公共博物館及私人藏家所收藏, 包括香港的香港藝術館、M+視覺文化博物館及梅潔樓藏, 以及美國的南加州大學亞太博物館。

唐家偉在2012年7月16日離世。

2001, he also experimented with finger painting. He may well have used his fingers to subtly manipulate ink in his splash ink landscapes before then but, over the next decade, he worked increasingly with fingers and nails. By 2009, he had virtually ceased using brushes.

Throughout his all-too-brief, intensely experienced life, Tongson was challenged by schizophrenia, countering this condition through his art. This constant creative tension, left us with a unique artistic legacy that realized a tranquil, enlightened, unspoiled natural world in stark contrast to the private, difficult world in which he lived. His work is in collections including the Hong Kong Museum of Art, M+ Museum for Visual Culture and MK Lau Collection in Hong Kong, the USC Pacific Asia Museum in the United States and numerous public and private collections worldwide.

Tongson left this world on July 16th, 2012.

THE JOURNEY

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CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Wesley Tongson – The Journey
Catherine Maudsley

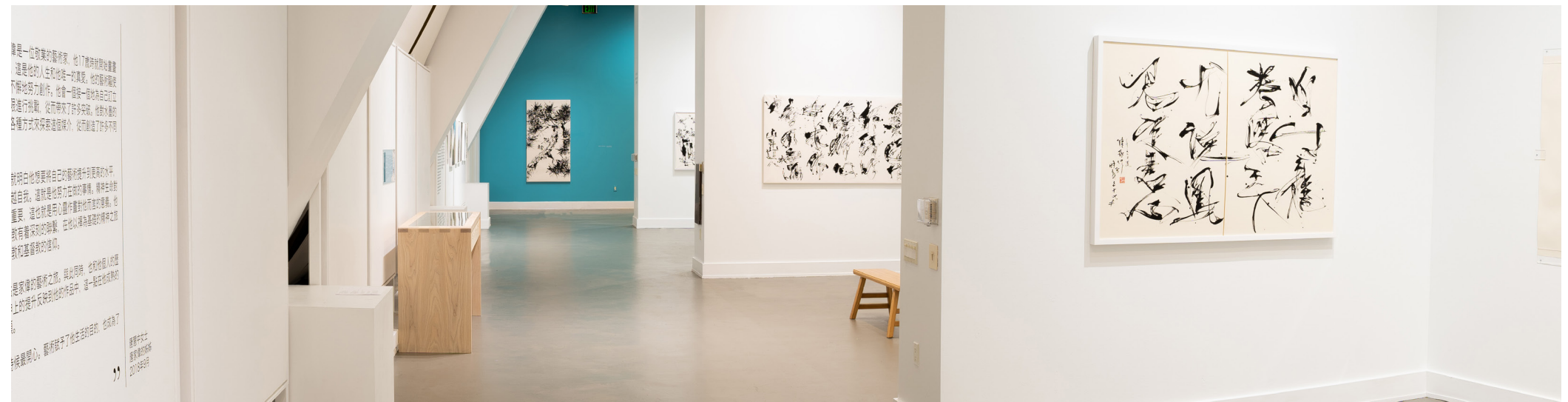
Wesley Tongson's creative journey was inextricably tied to tradition and innovation, and ink in its many variations. Although he actively participated in group exhibitions and solo shows in the decade from 1985 to 1995, he worked increasingly in solitude from then onwards. Few people other than his family knew of his continued accomplishments and experiments in ink, especially his large-scale finger paintings. "Wesley Tongson – The Journey" is a concise and compact exhibition joyfully celebrating ink art in the hands of a dedicated, innovative artist. And it is literally his hands which have created his mature, dynamic ink paintings, bursting with energy. By abandoning the brush and choosing to paint with his fingers and fingernails, Tongson brings us unmistakably into direct contact with the force of life. The exhibition traces the artist's creative path from ink and color splash landscapes inspired by great 20th century painters such as Zhang Daqian (1899-1983) to Tongson's own unmistakable signature style of finger painting. Tongson's mature, large-scale vertical and horizontal paintings are full of sweeping, energetic lines and dots. They mostly depict landscapes or plants; some are monochrome while others are rich in color.

During his formative period, especially under the direction of the well-known painter and educator Liu Guosong (b. 1932), Tongson, like many other young Hong Kong artists, was encouraged to leave behind the brush as a principal means of painting and instead took up a wide variety of non-brush techniques, including ink rubbing and marbling. But he also had a firm foundation in traditional brushwork. During his years in Toronto, before his return to Hong Kong in 1981, he was very fortunate to be taught by Madam Gu Qingyao (1896-1978), a member of an illustrious family of civil officials, painters, calligraphers, collectors and connoisseurs in Suzhou, where the famous "Garden of Leisure" (*Yi Yuan*) was the family home. Back in Hong Kong, he studied briefly under Harold Wong (Huang Zhongfang) (b. 1943),

the distinguished connoisseur, collector and painter. But Tongson's journey was primarily a solitary one.

The exhibition juxtaposes color and non-color works, dense and sparse works and explores other contrasts, seeking to communicate the creative tension at the very heart of this singular artist's life and work.

Catherine Maudsley
Hong Kong
September, 2018



策展前言

唐家偉: 旅塵
毛岱康

唐家偉的創作之旅與傳統、創新以及墨的多樣形式密不可分。儘管他於1985至1995年間積極參與各個群展和個展，但自那以後的他更多選擇的是閉門創作。除了家人以外，極少有人知道他仍在繼續水墨實驗並且不斷有新的突破，尤以其大幅指畫為甚。〈唐家偉：旅塵〉是一個精煉而又緊湊的展覽，讓我們一同歡快地歌頌這位極具專注力與創新精神的藝術家用雙手繪製的水墨藝術。事實上，也的確是他的「雙手」創作出了他那成熟同時卻迸發著活力的水墨畫。

他棄用畫筆，選用手指和指甲作畫，因而我們能在他的作品中真切地感觸到生命的力量。這一展覽記錄了藝術家從受張大千(1899-1993年)等20世紀繪畫大師啟發的潑彩山水，到開創出極具個人特色、無疑為出自唐家偉之手的手指畫的創作歷程。唐家偉那成熟、大尺幅的橫向、縱向繪畫被瀟灑恣意、充滿生機的線與點所佔據。畫作描繪的往往是風景與植物，其中部分為單色畫，而另一部分則色彩濃郁。

唐家偉在其個人風格的形成期裏，尤其在受到了著名畫家、教育家劉國松（生於1932年）的指引與鼓勵後，放下了畫筆這一主要的作畫工具，轉而嘗試如拓印和水拓石紋等各種非畫筆技法。同時，唐家偉在傳統筆法上亦是功底深厚。在他1981年回到香港之前曾旅居多倫多，在那裡他有幸師從顧青瑤女士(1896-1978年)學畫。顧青瑤出身蘇州名門，族中多官員、畫家、書法家、收藏家和鑒賞家，著名的「怡園」即為顧氏的私家園林。後於香港，唐家偉還短暫地成為了著名鑒賞家、收藏家和畫家黃仲方先生（生於1943年）的學生。但終究，唐家偉的旅程是他獨自一人的。

這一展覽將彩色與黑白、密集與稀疏以及其他充滿對比的作品並置展陳，以此來表達藝術家的生命和作品核心的創作張力。

毛岱康
香港
2018年9月





STATEMENT BY CYNTHIA TONGSON

Wesley Tongson's Sister

My late brother Wesley was a dedicated artist who took up painting at the age of 17 and never stopped. It was his life and his one true love. His art drove him and he worked relentlessly at it. He would set himself goal after goal, always pushing boundaries that resulted in his many breakthroughs. His passion for ink led him to explore various ways that he could work with the medium, creating many different styles and techniques.

From early on, Wesley understood that to elevate his art to a higher level, he must transcend himself from within. This was what he worked on. The life of the spirit was essential to his quest and that was what painting from the heart meant to him. He recognized that art and religion shared a deep connection and he explored both Buddhist and Christian faiths for his Zen-based spiritual journey.

The focus of this exhibition is Wesley's artistic journey. At the same time, it is also about his personal journey. His spiritual evolution is reflected in his works, most evident in his mature finger paintings.

Wesley was happiest when he was painting. Art gave him purpose in life, and became his greatest achievement.

Cynthia Tongson
Sister of Wesley Tongson
September, 2018

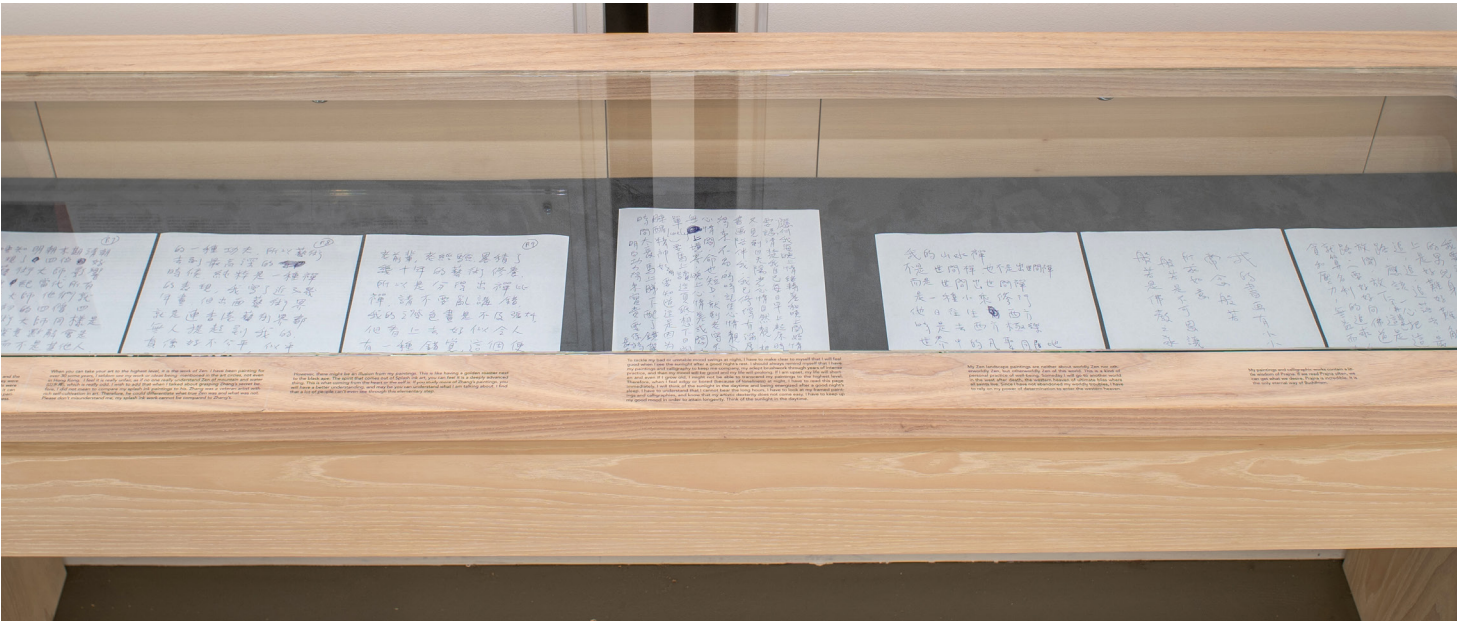
我已故的弟弟唐家偉是一位敬業的藝術家，他17歲時就開始畫畫並且從未停止過。這是他的生命和他唯一的真愛。他的藝術驅使他前進，他堅持不懈地努力創作。他會一個接一個地為自己設定目標，不斷對界限進行挑戰，從而帶來了許多突破。他對水墨的熱情促使他通過各種方式來探索這個媒介，從而創造了許多不同的風格和技法。

從一開始，家偉就明白他想要將自己的藝術提升到更高的水平，他必須從內部超越自我。這就是他努力在做的事情。精神生命對於他的追求至關重要，這也就是用心靈作畫對他而言的意義。他認識到藝術與宗教有着深刻的聯繫，在他以禪為基礎的精神之旅中，他也探索了佛教和基督教的信仰。

本次展覽的重點是家偉的藝術之旅。與此同時，也和他個人的歷程相關。他精神上的提升反映到他的作品中，這一點在他成熟的指畫中尤為明顯。

家偉在畫畫的時候最開心。藝術賦予了他生活的目的，也成為了他最大的成就。

唐慧中女士
唐家偉的姊姊
2018年9月



A selection of Wesley Tongson's handwritten notes on view at "Wesley Tongson – The Journey"



墨索

INK EXPLORATION

During Wesley Tongson's creative journey, he, like many other young artists, emulated more experienced masters. Before arriving at finger painting as the signature style of his mature years, Wesley Tongson explored many artistic paths. Chief among these was his long-standing interest in splash-ink painting. His early work shows the clear influence of Zhang Daqian's splash-ink style. Later, along with many other young Hong Kong artists who studied with Liu Guosong (b. 1932), Wesley Tongson left the brush behind as a principal means of painting and instead took up a wide variety of non-brush techniques, including ink rubbing and marbling for texturing, which produced a broad spectrum of effects in his paintings. The marbled patterns are dependent on the overall visual context: their resemblance can range from rock folds and ridges to deep valley clefts. By at least 2001, his painting inscriptions explicitly record the use of his fingers instead of a brush. In one small-scale vertical work where swift lines and deliberate dots in ink are juxtaposed with white space and solid black, he recorded "Wesley Tongson finger painting" (Tang Jiawei zhi).

在唐家偉的創作歷程中，他像很多其他年輕的藝術家一樣，以趕上大師水平為目標。在到達以指畫為成熟期的個人風格前，唐家偉探索過許多藝術途徑。其中最主要的是他對潑墨畫長久以來的興趣。他早期作品明顯受到張大千水墨畫風的影響。其後，像很多其他跟隨劉國松（生於1932年）學習的香港年青藝術家一樣，放棄用畫筆為繪畫的主要工具，代之以各式各樣的皴筆技法，包括以拓印及水拓來作皴紋，為畫作產生渾厚的效果。親手皴擦，唐家偉畫作中的水拓石紋圖案有不同形象，由岩石的裂縫到山谷的凹陷。至少在2001年，他的畫作題款明確記錄了他以指代筆。在小幅垂直作品裏，水墨快速的揮、皴擦的點與留白部分和純黑的山水並置，署名是「唐家偉指」。









WESLEY TONGSON — THE JOURNEY
國家畫院：展覽

EXHIBITED WORKS



「₁」 *Landscape 10, 1988*
《山水 10》
Ink & color on paper
35.5 x 67.3 in



「₂」 *Landscape 11, 1988*
《山水 11》
Ink & color on paper
35.3 x 67.4 in



「3」 *The Light*, 1992
《光》
Ink & color on board
23.3 x 15.3 in



Blessed Rain, 1992 「4」
《恩雨下降》
Ink & color on board
23.1 x 15 in



「5」
God's Light, 1992
 《神光》
 Ink & color on board
 23.6 x 15.3 in



「6」
Of Old, The Dragon Conquered All and The Phoenix Calmed The Spirit, 1995
 《自古龍拳勝天下, 尤說鳳眉定君心》
 Ink on board
 38.5 x 58.5 in



「₇」 Everyone can see the omnipotence of the Buddha. His clear vision radiates from his inner self, 2011
《皆式睽佛陀之神通，亮目藏中》

Ink on paper
38.1 x 71 in



With the prevalence of ink, arrogance subsides. 「⁸」
 We can observe the teachings of Buddha, whose wisdom is all-encompassing, 2011
 《墨道揚，縱驕碍，憶佛始中求，佛智因無漏也》

Ink on paper
 38.1 x 71 in

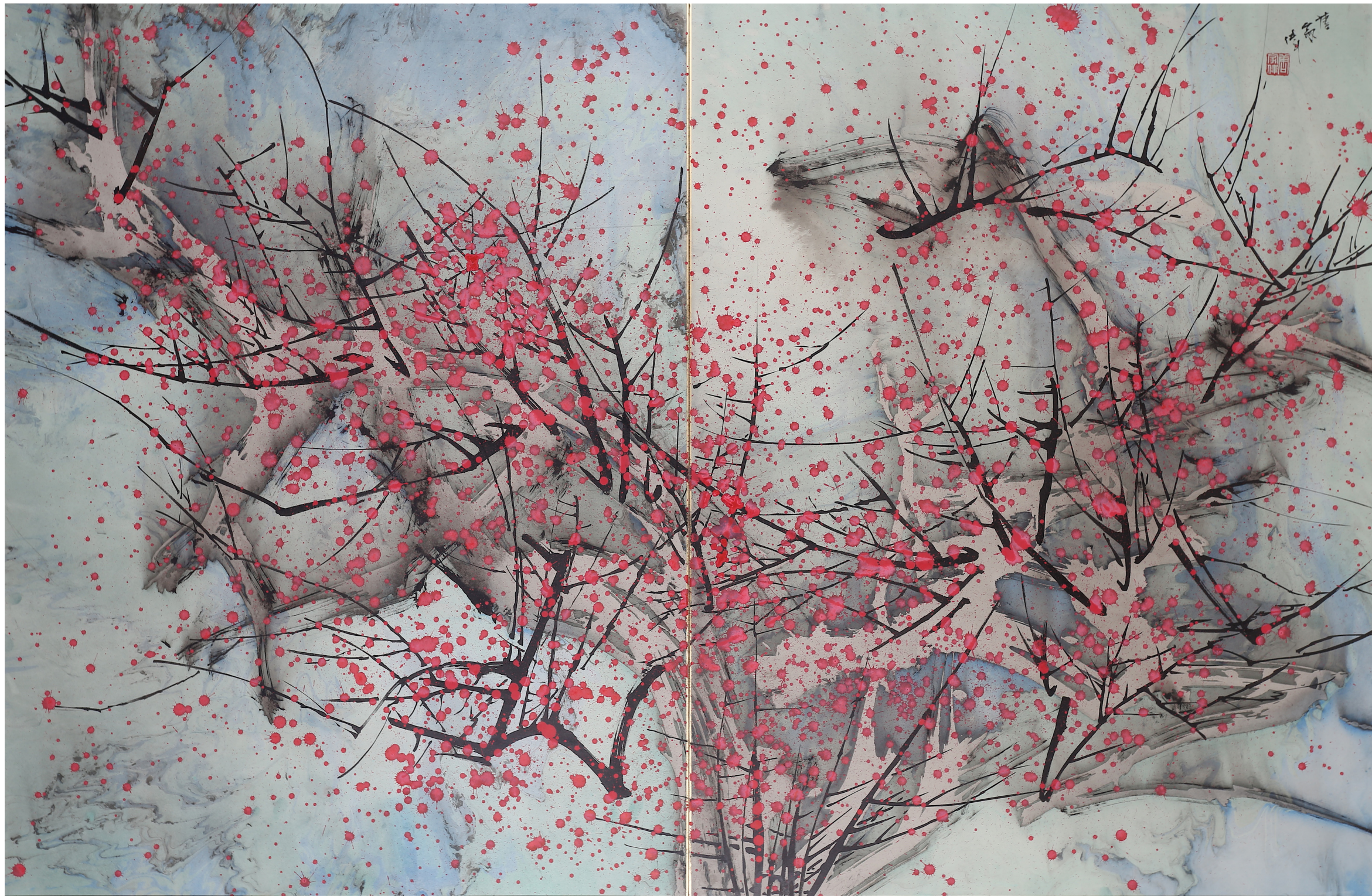
Spiritual Mountains 6, 2012 「9」
 《靈山 6》
 Ink & color on paper
 71 x 38.1 in



「10」 Spiritual Mountains 7, 2012
 《靈山 7》
 Ink & color on paper
 71 x 38.1 in



「₁₁」 *Spiritual Mountains 8, 2010*
 《靈山 8》
 Ink on paper
 97 x 48 in



「¹²」 Red Plums Over The Earth, 1993
《滿地紅梅》

Ink & color on board
37.8 x 58 in



「¹³」 Plum 5, 2011
《梅5》

Ink on paper
38.1 x 71.1 in



「14」

Lotus 4, 1995
《蓮 4》

Ink on paper
70.5 x 37.8 in



「15」

Lotus 3, 2011
《蓮 3》

Ink on paper
71 x 38.1 in



Pine 2, 2010 「松 2」
Ink on paper
97.6 x 48.8 in



「松 3」 Pine 3, 2011
Ink on paper
71.1 x 38.1 in

INK EXPLORATION

During Wesley Tongson's creative journey, he, like many other young artists, emulated more experienced masters. Before arriving at finger painting as the signature style of his mature years, Wesley Tongson explored many artistic paths. Chief among these was his long-standing interest in splash ink painting. His early work shows the clear influence of Zhang Daqian's (1899-1983) splash ink style. Later, along with many other young Hong Kong artists who studied with Liu Guosong (b. 1932), Wesley Tongson left the brush behind as a principal means of painting and instead took up a wide variety of non-brush techniques, including ink rubbing and marbling for texturing, which produced a broad spectrum of effects in his paintings. The marbled patterns are dependent on the overall visual context: their resemblance can range from rock folds and ridges to deep valley clefts. By 2001, his painting inscriptions explicitly record the use of his fingers instead of a brush. In one small-scale vertical work where swift lines and deliberate dots in ink are juxtaposed with white space and solid black, he recorded "Wesley Tongson finger [painting]" (*Tang Jiawei zhi*).

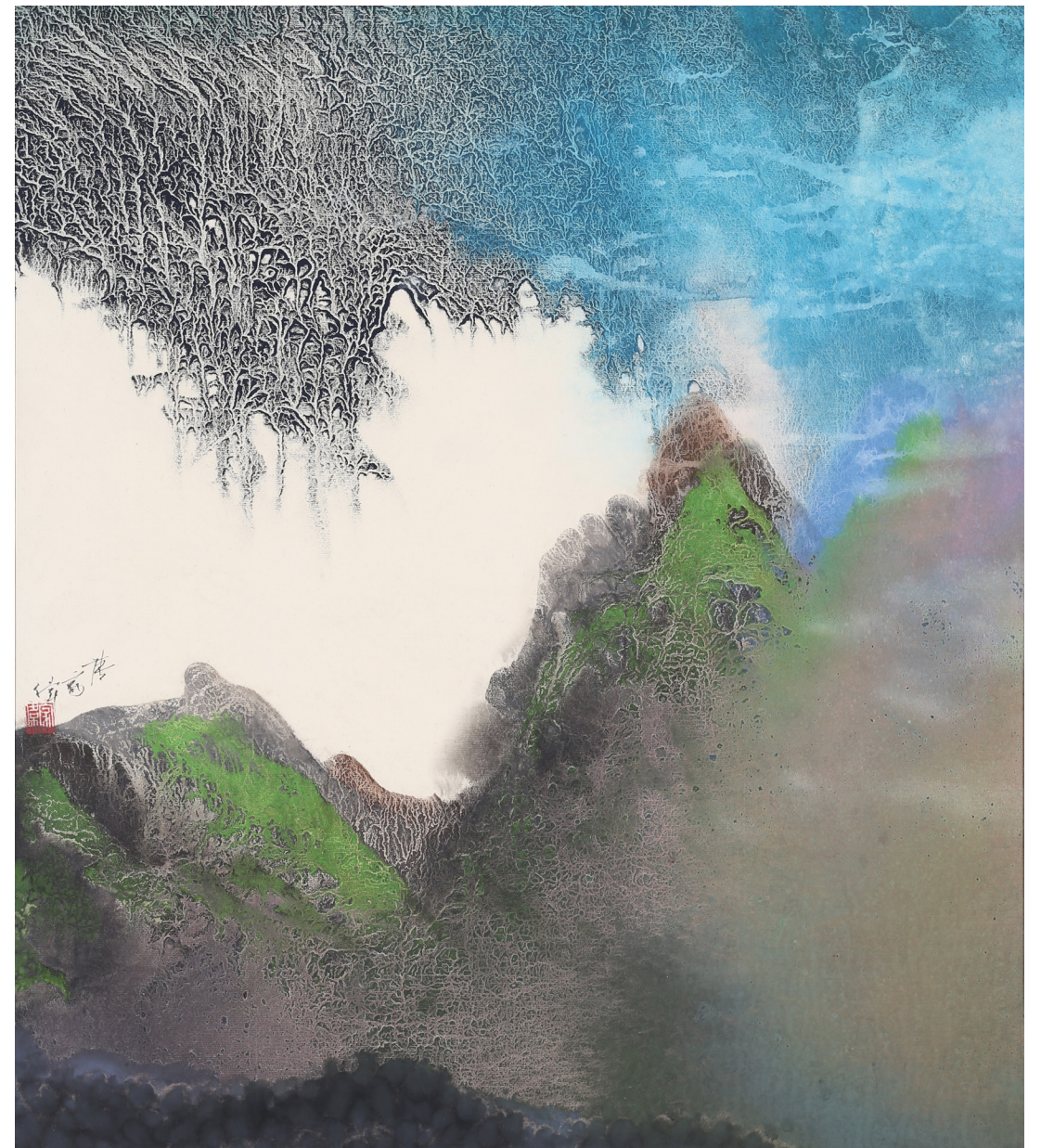
在唐家偉的創作旅程中，他像很多其他年輕的藝術家一樣，以趕上大師水平為目標。在到達以指畫為成熟期的個人風格前，唐家偉探索過許多藝術途徑。其中最主要的是他對潑墨畫長久以來的興趣。他早期作品明顯受到張大千水墨畫風的影響。其後，像很多其他跟隨劉國松（生於1932年）學習的香港年青藝術家一樣，放棄用畫筆為繪畫的主要工具，代之以各式各樣的棄筆技法，包括以拓印及水拓來作皺紋，為畫作產生廣泛的效果。視乎眼界，唐家偉畫作中的水拓石紋圖案有不同形象，由岩石的裂縫到山谷的凹陷。在2001年，他的畫作題款明確記錄了他以指代筆。在小橫張作品裏，水墨快速的線、細緻的點與留白部分和純黑的山水並置，署名是「唐家偉指」。





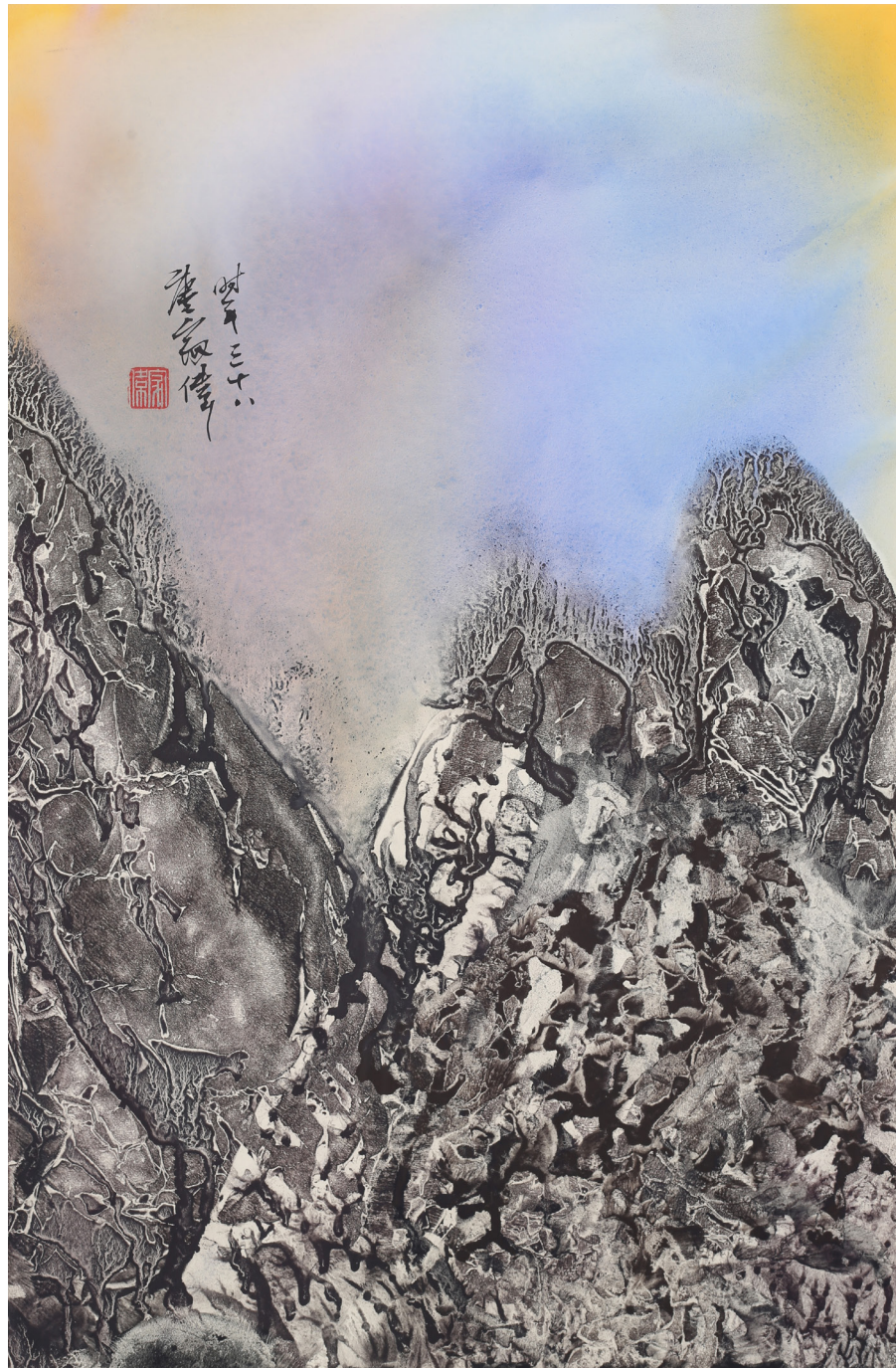
「₁₈」 *Water Rhyme*, 1988
《水韵》

Ink on paper
16.3 x 13.3 in



「₁₉」 *Approaching Rainstorm*, 1988
《山雨欲来》

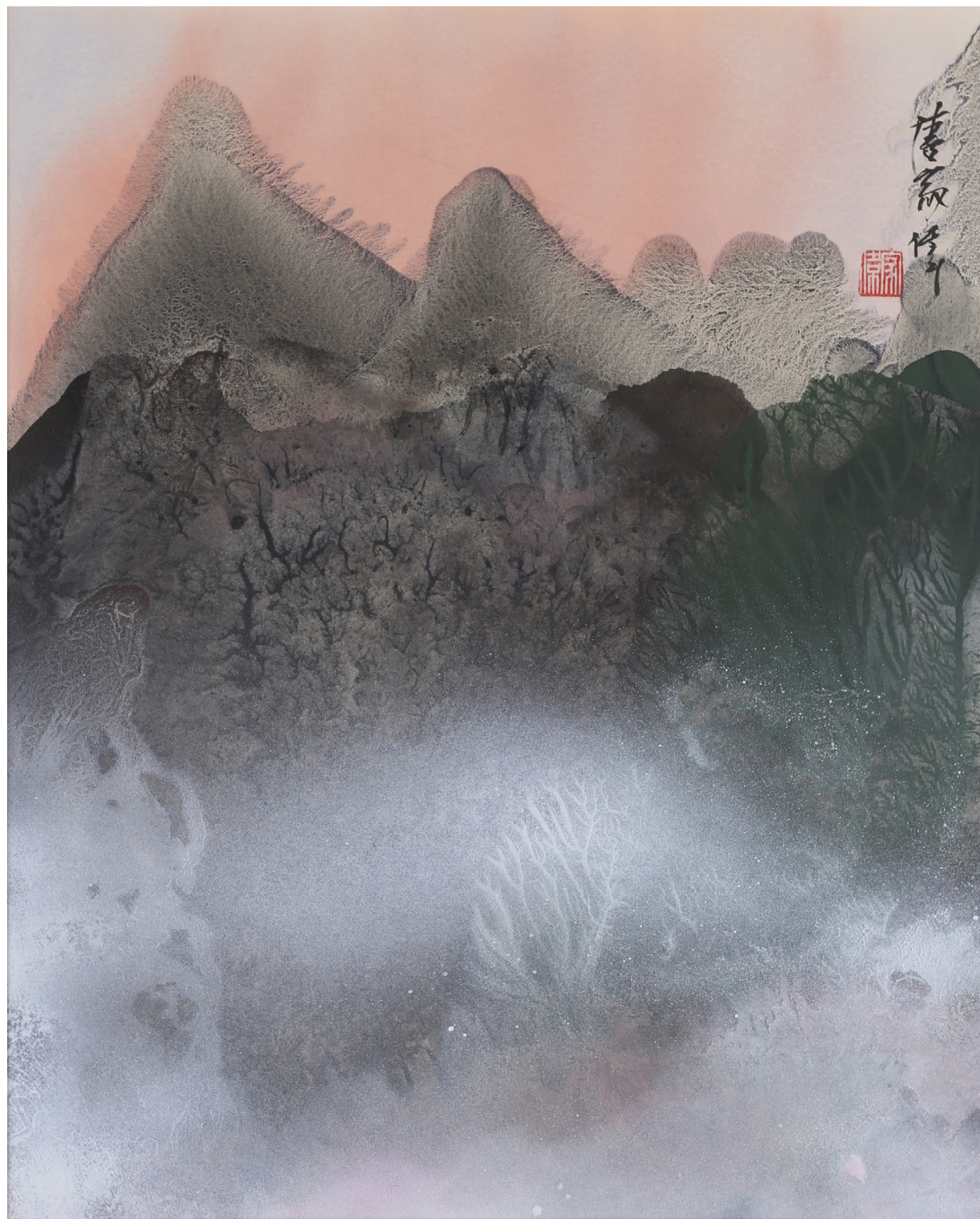
Ink on paper
25.9 x 22.9 in



「₂₀」 Mountain 1, 1995
《山斗 1》
Ink & color on board
22.9 x 14.9 in



「₂₁」 The Rugged Path, 1997
《崎岖之道》
Ink on board
23.1 x 15.1 in



「₂₂」 Misty Mountains, 1993
《雾山》
Ink & color on board
18 x 15 in



「₂₃」 Landscape 12, 2001
《山水 12》
Ink on board
23 x 15 in



WRITINGS

In Conversation

David Chan, Dick Chen, and Cynthia Tongson

Essays

The Journey Begins with a Single Step, Catherine Maudsley

The Contemporaneity of Traditional Chinese Ink Painting and its
Transposition—The Ink Painting of Wesley Tongson, Wu Song

Wesley Tongson's Secluded World of Ink, Mary-Ann Milford Lutzker

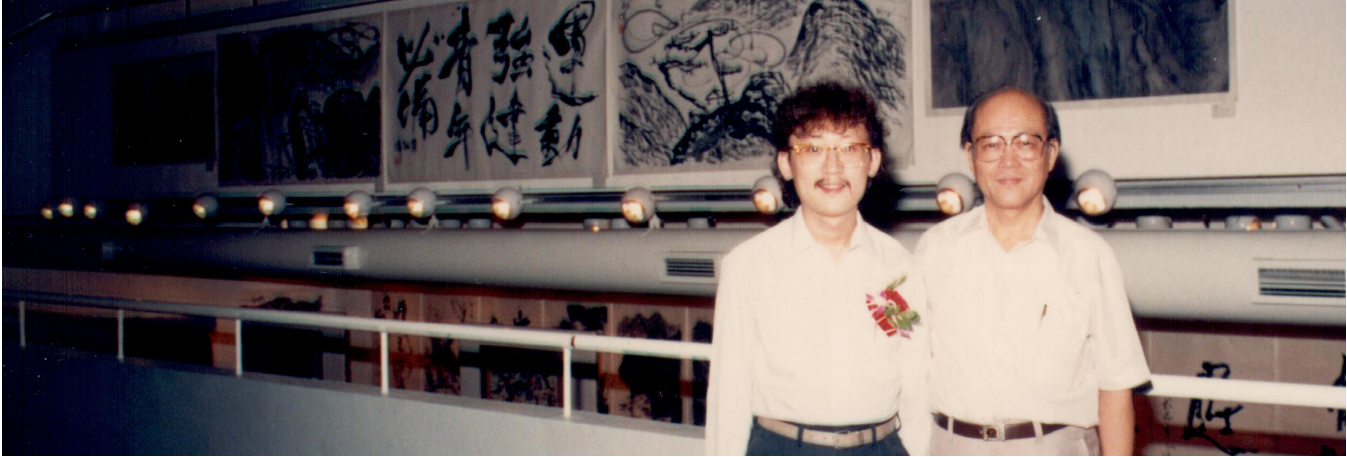
Wesley Tongson—The Journey, DeWitt Cheng, Published in Artomity

Exhibition Talk

A Search for Transcendence: Art and Spirituality
Catherine Maudsley, Abby Chen, Cynthia Tongson

IN CONVERSATION

David Chan, Dick Chen, and Cynthia Tongson
April 15, 2016



Wesley Tongson (left) with friend (right) at Hong Kong Arts Centre, 1988

David

We can have a dialogue from three perspectives, first, from the perspective of Ms. Cynthia Tongson, Wesley's sister; second, from the perspective of Mr. Dick Chen who knows a lot about ink painting. And I am the one to raise questions. Here, I have 14 questions for our Q&A.

The first question is: Can you tell us about Wesley as a person and his character?

Cynthia

He was a quiet person, a little bit on the shy side. I think his mental illness also affected his character too. He was usually a bit paranoid and did not trust people easily. He really had a very good heart... so in short, he was usually pretty quiet and not too sociable, not easy to talk to people...

David

Like a reserved young boy...

Cynthia

Yeah, that's the kind of person I am referring to. That's his personality, very quiet, mild, kind of gentle person. And he was very childlike. That definitely had something to do with his mental illness because he had it when he was 15 while his brain was still developing. That's how my mother explained it.

David

Did he spend most of the time with you? Were you in Hong Kong when he was diagnosed with the illness?

Cynthia

No, actually he was not diagnosed yet when I left Hong Kong to study abroad. I think he was 13 at that time. I would only come back to Hong Kong for holidays. He was always very quiet, kind of timid growing up, very mild manner.

David

Dick, what do you know about him?

Dick

I met him at an art gallery. He was an artist and he would show me his artworks. As Cynthia said, he was really a gentleman, you know, mild and nice. At that time, I didn't even know he had this issue (the mental illness). I knew that he didn't have many friends. He told me that. That's why his works show this emotion.

Cynthia

He didn't have too many friends. It was not easy for him to make friends.

Dick

Yeah, I guess I was just lucky that he found me easy to talk to.

David

The second question: How did he become an artist?

Cynthia

He just told my mother one day that he wanted to learn how to paint.

David

This incident happened when he was like 15, right?

Cynthia

About 17. It is really very interesting because before that, he really didn't have much interest in art and he couldn't draw. In grade school, I had to do his art homework.

David

But there must be some kind of epiphany, right? For instance, he suddenly saw something that triggered him to be an artist.

Cynthia

I don't know...I don't know what triggered him. He just suddenly said he wanted to learn how to paint. Then he started with the traditional style.

David

Was he studying at St. Paul's Co-educational School or Hong Kong International School at that time?

Cynthia

At Hong Kong International School. It was after he was diagnosed. I guess Wesley's desire to learn how to paint possibly had something to do with his mental issue.

David

What was his working process?

Cynthia

What do you mean by working process?

David

How did he work as a painter, like his process of making art?

Cynthia

Well, he said that when the idea came to his mind, it would be very clear, like a whole image in his mind. Whenever he had this in his mind, he had to immediately do the painting. It didn't matter what time it was. Once he started, he couldn't stop until he finished his painting. Basically, he only painted when the idea came to him. He described that the images, like his landscapes, came from a very pure state of mind. All this appeared in his mind. He just literally put them down on paper. It's something that he said he was always able to do. Whatever was on his mind, he could always put it down on paper.

David

How old was he when he was able to do so?

Cynthia

I guess it was during his splash ink period around 1981 when Wesley was 24. I don't know how he executed the traditional bamboo paintings. But I think it was more likely that he was referring to the landscape paintings at the time he talked about this. He always said that he could really create what came to his mind. When the image came to him, he just had to put it down.

David

So he didn't elaborate as to how the image came to him?

Cynthia

No, I think it was just through his practice of meditation that the image came to him.

David

When it came to him, he felt the need to put it on paper?

Cynthia

Yep, to literally put it down immediately.

David

By what means? I mean, would he do drawings or...

Cynthia

No, he directly visualized it on paper. He never did sketches and always did it directly on the paper. He really said, "Whatever is on my mind, I can always put it down."

David

That's interesting.

Dick

Yeah, it is.

Cynthia

That was how he created his works.

David

Immediacy was the key.

Cynthia

Yeah, it didn't matter what time it was.

He never really said, "Ok, I need to practice now. Let me do that." No, I don't think everyone would work that way. It's always the idea came to his head, then he would paint. When an idea came to his mind, he just walked around the table. One time, my mother had a little glimpse of him. This was how he entered into a different state of mind, like he would be in a "zone." He would go around and around and around... walking around the table, then he would start painting. But he really did not let anybody watch him while he was working.

David

Is that the same table that we saw at his studio?

Cynthia

Yes. He did not let people watch him paint. It was definitely his private time. But for the large-scale splash ink painting which required help, he did have assistants to work with him. He was there to give directions and stuff, telling the assistants what to do, how to hold the paper and so on. But he always kept the practice of circling the table in order to get into his "zone."

David

To get into a state of mind...

Cynthia

To get into a meditative zone. Obviously, he was not aware of everything else that was going on around him and only concentrated on what he was doing. That is how I would describe his working process.

David

The fourth question: What was his concept for art? I mean, he must have a concept for his works, right? As I know, he talked a lot about Zen in his writings.

Cynthia

The Zen philosophy was definitely very important to him. That's the main thing. Because he felt that in order to create a good piece of painting, one's own training and self-cultivation was really important. You really have to transcend yourself first, to go deep into it, the soul. It's like a mindset I guess.

David

How did he practice Zen as it can be both a religion and a kind of philosophical thinking?

Cynthia

I think he really worked on his path to enlightenment.

David

Did he read a lot or meditate?

Cynthia

He did read a lot. He didn't mention about sitting down to meditate. I think painting was a form of meditation for him. I guess he got into that zone and it was a way of meditation. The images would come out. But I think at some point, he did study about Buddhism. I think the idea is to create a really great painting or what he called Zen painting, he really had to work with his inner self. The work itself represents the level of his spiritual development, his path to enlightenment.

David

When did he start an interest in Zen?

Cynthia

I think his interest in Zen started when he did the splash ink paintings. He really read a lot about Zhang Daqian and his paintings. He always said Zhang's works were very "high-level Zen paintings." They inspired him a lot. I guess he saw a lot of Zhang's paintings and learned from them.

David

If Zhang Daqian was an influence, did he probably see Zhang Daqian's paintings in Hong Kong?

Cynthia

I think, firstly, he read a lot of books about Zhang Daqian. I am sure he saw paintings by Zhang Daqian, maybe at auction houses. He used to visit auction houses a lot.

Dick

When did he actually start working on splash ink painting? Was he in Canada or Hong Kong?

Cynthia

He started experimenting with splash ink painting in Toronto, Canada, by himself. I think he did it by reading Zhang Daqian's books. Although I have never really seen his splash ink works there, he did say in his notes he experimented with splash ink by himself in Toronto.

David

In Canada, he studied paintings under Madame Gu Qingyao, right?

Dick

And he went to Ontario College of Art (OCA), Toronto as well.

Cynthia

Yeah, but he said by that time, he had already started to experiment with splash ink. And then when he came back to Hong Kong in 1981, he took a two-month course taught by Liu Guosong. I think from that course, he really learned the basic ink splashing techniques to create the splash ink paintings. During the course, Liu Guosong did encourage the students to be innovative and think of different ways and techniques to experiment. My cousin, Christopher Leung, actually took the course with him. I asked him about the course but he didn't remember too much about it. My cousin didn't practice but just did his homework. Wesley, of course did and experimented himself. I think he actually learned the basic techniques and from there, he further developed his own techniques.



Liu Guosong (left) and Wesley Tongson (right) at group exhibition, "Modern Chinese Paintings by Five Artists," Hong Kong City Hall, 1988

David

Do you still have any of the works that he did at OCA? It would be interesting to see what he did then and later.

Cynthia

No, but I remember they were still ink paintings.

David

Still ink, that's interesting!

Cynthia

Yeah, but those works were more Western style. For his art, there's always a fusion between the East and West. Because that was important to him to fuse the East and West.

David

The Western influence in his art would make reference to artists like Picasso, for instance, I think? Did he say anything about Picasso?

Cynthia

He talked about Picasso's Cubism, the way Picasso brought volume, the three-dimensionality to a painting. That was very important to Wesley. In all the periods of his career, Wesley always wanted his paintings to have a strong sense of depth and volume.

David

Dick, were you in Toronto too when Wesley was studying at Ontario College of Art?

Dick

According to him, he remembered that he met me at an art gallery run by a Chinese guy, one of Lui Shou Kwan's students, in Yorkville.

David

So you guys met there. From your perspective, maybe based on your past correspondences with Wesley, did he also mention other key influences from art history?

Dick

Not really.

Cynthia

It's interesting that even though he took the course taught by Liu Guosong, he never mentioned this teacher.

Dick

He never mentioned Liu in front of me. He did mention Gu Qingyao but never Liu Guosong.

Cynthia

He really got along well with Madam Gu Qingyao and he really respected her.

David

But he studied with Gu for a very short period of time, right?

Cynthia

Yeah, very short, only a year since unfortunately, she passed away. Madame Gu especially got up in the daytime to teach my brother. Her schedule was reversed. She slept during the daytime and woke up at night. Wesley really liked studying with Gu and when he asked her for another lesson, she was willing to do it too.

David

So they had class twice a week?

Cynthia

Yes, twice a week. My mother said Madam Gu spoke with a very heavy accent that she could not understand well. But somehow, Wesley could understand and they could communicate well with each other.

David

But you don't know much about how the class was taught and the contents, etc.

Cynthia

We don't.

Dick

I think one of the reasons why his bamboos are so perfectly executed is that Wesley was well taught by Madam Gu on the basic techniques.

Cynthia

Yeah, I think he really got a good foundation.

David

Was Gu Qingyao a painter specializing in bamboo?

Dick

She specialized in traditional Chinese paintings. But when did Wesley first start to paint bamboo?

Cynthia

He first started to paint at 17 when he told my mom that he wanted to take lessons. My mom had a friend who was retired at that time and also lived on Mac-donnell Road in Hong Kong. The lady took up Chinese painting at a later stage in life. She was the one who taught Wesley to paint at the beginning. Her strength was bamboo, so she actually taught Wesley bamboo. That's the subject matter that Wesley started with. She painted for her own pleasure and didn't sell her works. Then, when they [Wesley and his mother] moved to Toronto, my mother was very anxious about finding him a teacher, a friend of hers mentioned about Gu Qingyao being in Toronto and thought Gu might not be as busy as she used to be in Hong Kong since she was retired in Toronto. Madame Gu actually didn't teach anymore there but my mother convinced her to teach Wesley.

David

Although Wesley was interested in ink, I think there were probably not many Chinese professors at the time when he studied at OCA. Do you know anything regarding this?

Dick

There were some Chinese artists and professors who specialized in Chinese watercolor at OCA.

David

To summarize, basically he learned Western Art at OCA, then he came back to Hong Kong and studied with Liu Guosong and tried to find his own language.

Cynthia

Yeah, he always wanted to find his own language.

David

When did he begin to show an interest in calligraphy?

Cynthia

I think he also did calligraphy at the very beginning too.

Dick

He always did calligraphy in different periods of his career. As he mentioned in our telephone conversation, there was a certain period that he just involved himself solely in calligraphy and executed it seriously and exquisitely like a master.

David

When was it?

Dick

It was after 1999 when my father passed away and I went back to Toronto. He started calling me every week. For two years, he kept saying that, "Now, Dick, you should come back and take a look at my masterpieces. I am now a master in calligraphy." And then after that, he probably developed the finger paintings.

David

How did his techniques evolve over the years, from the early works to the splash ink paintings and then the finger paintings?

Cynthia

When he stopped doing those colorful splash ink paintings and started doing the blockish ones which I did not really understand, I was like "Wow! What happened? How come it's all black now?". Because I really liked the colorful ones, I asked him, "Why did you stop doing the colorful splash ink paintings?"

Since before the emergence of this new style, he had wanted to splash to the point that the painting would look like a photograph, that was his goal at that time. So I said, "You haven't reached that goal yet and now, you suddenly turn to a different direction." But he said, "Well, I was trying to make some breakthroughs but I was at a point where I couldn't go any further. I just feel it's boring for me to continue ... there's nothing new coming out."

David

When did he say that? Around 1999?

Cynthia

2003 or 2004. He still did some splash ink paintings in 2004 and the blockish ones emerged in 2003. He decided to change gears during that period.

Dick

It makes sense that he did that for his next stage.

Cynthia

Yeah, because he was bored and he couldn't go forward. I think, for him, painting had to be challenging, something that could constantly challenge him. He would set one goal and then when he reached one

goal, he would set another goal. He just needed the challenge. When he believed he couldn't go forward, he had to change direction. He then went back to the black ink.

Dick

I did come back to Hong Kong for a month after I moved to Toronto with my wife. That time, I did meet Wesley and saw his calligraphy. His calligraphy was really good and strong.

Cynthia

He had always done calligraphy.

Dick

He was a great calligrapher. His works were really masterpieces.

Cynthia

That reminds me of an incident that my mother recalled. When Wesley was very young, probably in first grade or even kindergarten, my grandmother taught him how to write with a brush. One day, my uncle, who was an art collector and collected calligraphy, somehow saw those pieces written by Wesley. He was shocked and asked, "Who did these? These are really good!" My mother told him that they were done by Wesley. He was like, "What? Wesley?" and was totally shocked because he thought they were really good. Maybe Wesley really had a talent for that and had already shown it back in those days. But of course, nobody paid attention to it at the time and didn't think to have him continue to practice. But I guess he found the passion for calligraphy again later.

David

Even from this book, as early as in 1992, he did some calligraphic works. It's always like a recurrence.

Cynthia

I think the earliest calligraphy by Wesley that we had was done in the '80s.

One time, I asked him, "Why did you spend so many years perfecting your splash ink techniques and now you dropped it and change to something else? I think it's such a waste." I was like "What are you thinking?" He said, "Don't worry. In order for me to go forward and make a breakthrough, I have to explore something else." And later on, he said, "It will come back. I will

use the color ink again. It will come back. But then, my paintings will be at a much higher level." So, at the very end, he did add colors back to his finger paintings.

David

But there are only very few of these colored finger paintings.

Cynthia

Because he just started doing it. But he was right, it was at a totally different level.

David

To sum up, it's interesting that calligraphy was always an important aspect of his art. He also painted bamboo and other traditional Chinese subject matter. Then, he developed and excelled in splash ink paintings after studying with Liu Guosong when he came back to Hong Kong until he felt tired of it. Then, he changed to create the blockish works. They are even more Cubist in some ways. Eventually, he developed the finger paintings. Actually, I see that his artistic evolution is not a linear development. He always went back to his interest in Western art, in particular, Cubism. Many of his works can be related to his bamboo and calligraphy. He didn't really abandon any of the Eastern or Western influences.

Cynthia

He didn't abandon anything as he explained to me.

Dick

I think he never stopped painting the bamboo.

Cynthia

Yeah, he never stopped. He constantly did it.

Dick

It was like his leisure. Calligraphy was part of his exercise. A kind of daily cultivation.

David

But he only had very few bamboo paintings.

Cynthia

He did a lot but there are just a few left. I think he sold some bamboo paintings. His bamboo was popular.

Dick

I remember he had a lot more paintings in his studio

when I visited his studio before.

David

I think there's a connection between his bamboo and calligraphy as shown in his Beijing show. It's very easy to point out a phase followed by another phase but it doesn't work like that for Wesley and many other artists like Lui Shou Kwan.

Cynthia

So, they are not distinctive phases but basically these phases are all related. Each of them is a part of the development.

Dick

The passion for painting bamboo and calligraphy was in his blood.

Cynthia

Definitely.

Dick

This is the traditional Chinese literati style.

Cynthia

Painting was his passion, like there was nothing else but this. It was so important to him.

David

The shift from the splash ink painting using methods like ink rubbing and ink marbling to finger painting, for me, as a beholder or audience, was kind of a liberation of the artist. But what was Wesley's own account of this development? Did he say anything about the fact that he, during his late career, focused a lot, almost solely on this kind of finger painting?

Cynthia

Unfortunately, I didn't go back to Hong Kong during the last two years before he passed away. I really didn't see his latest finger paintings until after he passed away.

Dick

I had no idea about the emergence of the finger paintings either. I was really astonished when I saw these.

Cynthia

He only said to me, I think around 2008 or 2009, that he didn't use a brush anymore. He was doing both before, sometimes he used a brush while sometimes

he used fingers. He started to experiment with finger painting in 2001. I remember he told me around 2008 or 2009 as I noticed his fingers were very black when I took him out to dinner. I asked him if he could wash his hands before dinner as his fingers looked so yucky. I couldn't stand it. Then he told me that he didn't use a brush anymore and only used fingers to paint. It was impossible for him to remove the ink stains on his fingers. He also asked me to keep it a secret.

He also told my parents the same thing. The reason for keeping it a secret was because he was paranoid about people copying his techniques. I then asked him what was the good in keeping it a secret since I was sure people could tell he used fingers to paint. He replied people could not tell. But he didn't really explain why he went into finger paintings.

It was not until I did my own research on his works that I realized the change of style made sense to me. He always explored non-brush techniques, as a natural progression, basically there was no "distance..." I mean with the brush, the distance exists, but in order to really get in there, with fingers, he could pour his emotions directly on the paper.

David

I think this point relates to what we have said in the beginning. You said when the image came to his own mind, he felt the need to realize it.

Cynthia

Yes, he could realize the image better without something in between.

Dick

This practice in the way the artist literally copied the image from his mind on paper is so unique. I have never heard of that.

Cynthia

Really?

Dick

Yes, it is. I mean, can you imagine, for instance, Beethoven had all the notes in his mind when composing his music?

Cynthia

And basically all he did was to copy them down.

Dick

Yeah. Not every artist can do that.

David

I think that's a very interesting point. I think I am going to deviate a bit from the Q&A. But I feel that even for M+ or other museums, you can talk to them about Abstract Expressionism being the same deal, like Pollock. I am not saying that the way Wesley painted was the same as Pollock, but I think the case can be made to talk about the directness. I don't think among the Hong Kong artists, someone would come up with an idea that "I want to go direct with my fingers to paint," right? That in itself is the case. It's a strong case to pitch. The directness, the action of dropping the image from your mind to there through that immediacy, I think, is quite interesting.

Dick

It is actually the most direct and most difficult.

David

I think through this Q&A, certain things become clearer. Let's say if you go to M+ or any institution, you can answer questions like "What's the deal with Wesley? Why is he special?" Obviously, we don't have the first-hand account from the artist. But based on this discussion, we can piece all the puzzles together and try to form a picture of his position in the art scene.

Dick

This artist is really unique because normally, most artists will have little sketches at least, but this guy..

Cynthia

No sketch at all...

Dick

Just from his head according to what you told us, the picture was already there, then he painted it out. This practice is so unique.

Cynthia

His execution was really fast.

David

Very fast?

Cynthia

It was very fast. He even told me that he couldn't tell

people how fast it was because otherwise, people would think his paintings might not be worth so much.

David

I am so surprised. I thought his paintings are quite laboriously executed because he had to work on the patterns on the water. How could he do that?

Cynthia

I don't understand but he said he did it very fast. That's why he sometimes got bored. It didn't take him a long time to do a painting and for the rest of the day, he had nothing to do. He always complained about being bored. I asked him, "What about your painting?" He just said, "I paint so fast. It doesn't take me a long time."

And then there's another thing about his bamboo paintings that my mother told me. My mother sometimes peeked at Wesley when he painted the bamboo. He didn't paint the painting as a whole. He painted it on two boards which were placed side by side. My mother asked him how he could paint the bamboo separately but when he put them together, all the parts matched. He told her that they would just connect and said he could even do it on four separate boards. He really did one. It makes sense to me because if he had the image in his head, all he needed to do was just to copy it down. He didn't need to join the boards together before he painted.

David

This practice might have something to do with the idea of Zen, like all the stuff was in his head.

Cynthia

He also believed that Buddhism and Chinese painting are closely linked and cannot be separated in general.

Dick

He studied and listened to the Buddhist teachings.

Cynthia

He explored Christianity and Buddhism.

David

He could choose whatever worked for him...

Cynthia

I really feel this is the way, whatever works for him, so

he went both ways. At the same time, he managed to find a balance between Christianity and Buddhism. That's another perspective from which to look at this.

David

What were the public responses to his past exhibitions, as he did exhibit for quite a number of times before?

Cynthia

He did exhibit in Hong Kong at the beginning. I think in some of the media coverage, he actually said that at that time, his early splash ink wasn't popular. People didn't really collect this type of work. He said that they still preferred traditional Chinese paintings. But he really believed in the future of splash ink so he would continue to do it. I think his works did not sell well in the early period because they were too ahead of their time in the period from the early 1980s to '90s.

Dick

He didn't even mention to me about selling his work.

Cynthia

Selling was not the reason he painted.

Dick

He didn't mention about the need or importance of selling his works but he did mention about his participation in a few exhibitions, here and there, as well as different competitions.

Cynthia

Because he wanted people to see his works.

Dick

He would like people to know about his works because he didn't have too many friends.

David

I think we can only base what we know about the public responses at that time on what was written in the newspapers.

Cynthia

I remember the exhibition in Pasadena held in 1993. I was there in LA. People were amazed.

David

The one in Pacific Asia Museum?

Cynthia

Yeah.

David

Do you have pictures and documentation on it?

Cynthia

I do have some pictures. We actually have a tape, a DVD of one of his exhibitions at the Hong Kong Arts Centre. He talked about his paintings.

David

Right. It is actually very important.

Cynthia

I have to look it up. The DVD was not professionally done, it was done by some friends of my dad's. It's a long tape. I remember looking at it briefly. Towards the end of it, Wesley did talk about his paintings. I have not revisited the DVD. I have to look for it.

David

Next question is about his first retrospective at Hong Kong Arts Centre. Was there any particular issue that came out from the exhibition?

Cynthia

Do you mean the feedback?

David

It could be anything or any revelation that you found after putting on the show...

Cynthia

Well, there was a big revelation while preparing for the exhibition. I really had to do a lot of research and try to understand what all the things were about so I could talk about it and give the information to Catherine Maudsley, our curator. I really found out a lot through Wesley's notes and past media coverage such as newspaper, interviews, that sort of things. I was just trying to piece things together. I really didn't understand about the finger painting too much before the exhibition. But I think, through the exhibition, I got to understand it a little bit more. I just found myself really drawn to his finger paintings. I was there at the Hong Kong Arts Centre every day for two hours talking to people. But every time when I was there, I really had to look at, particularly, those three vertical pieces, the three plants [finger paintings]. I couldn't help myself

but literally just had to look at them. People were really amazed by the works. They were very surprised. They had no idea there was such an artist who did such work. I really didn't know whether his works were good or not but I had wanted to do a retrospective.

David

I think he did a lot of works not in terms of numbers but in terms of their aesthetic value. I have just studied his materials for six months. I think he really loved painting.

Cynthia

He loved painting. That was really his passion, his life, his lifeline. Without it, he would die inside. It was that important. He didn't really care about anything else but his paintings. I think everything he did in his entire adult life was for his art. Literally if you took that away from him, it would be the end of his life.

David

There's a question for Dick. Can Wesley be considered as a part of the New Ink Art Movement of Hong Kong? It's an open question.

Dick

Yes, definitely. He was a student of Liu Guosong and had relentlessly experimented with different techniques of ink art. All along his art career, he kept going back to traditional Chinese paintings, like bamboo paintings. In his final phase of development, he abandoned brushes and used his fingers to express his inner self on paper as a unique way of communication with the viewers and the world at large.

David

I think, first and foremost the term New Ink Art Movement has to be further elaborated. But I feel something has to be done...I wouldn't say to historicize him because actually some of his works are still quite recent works. I think how to reposition him in relation to what was happening at that time is the project in the coming phase for you. Given what we have discussed, for instance, the creation of splash ink paintings in relation to the context of Hong Kong society at that time and how they associate with the traditional bamboo paintings. All these instances you have to have it grounded somehow. The more you do that, the more one is able to articulate how progressive these works are. You have to have this kind of foundation. With Wesley,

I think the difficulty is that there are very few first-hand materials. We can only piece things together. It can be a research project for professors and students at university, it is doable. I think for institutions, if his works are already collected or to be collected by institutions, they also will need the contents. They need to have some archival materials. They need to have some “bullets” to explain why Wesley’s work is important. I think this will do Wesley a big service, to get all the pieces down. I think it will be the next move.

In terms of landscape as subject matter, why do you think it was important to him? He repeatedly painted landscapes, he called them “spiritual mountains.”

Cynthia

I think may be because he once said that landscape painting was the highest form of achievement, the pinnacle in Chinese painting and the most challenging subject to master.

David

I am wondering if Wucius Wong knows anything about Wesley.

Dick

I didn’t ask.

David

You should ask. It would be very interesting. Wucius was a former curator at Hong Kong Museum of Art. He would know quite a lot about what was going on in Hong Kong’s art scene.

Cynthia

Wesley did approach Hong Kong Museum of Art before.

David

I think it would be interesting to ask if you have a chance.

Cynthia

Wesley did try to talk to people over there. I don’t know whom he met and talked to exactly though. But he said the people at the Hong Kong Museum of Art were not interested in his art. He felt snubbed.

David

It’s interesting to find out if they know anything about Wesley.

I think the “spiritual mountains” as the motif is interesting. I think he was trying to find his spiritual anchor somehow. That’s my own interpretation.

Cynthia

Wesley called his splashed ink landscapes “Mountains of Heaven.” He also called his landscape paintings “Zen painting.”

David

Interesting. Do you think it is relevant to even address Wesley’s illness in relation to his artworks?

Cynthia

I think art helped him. I think because he seemed to develop an interest in art after he was diagnosed. Then he immediately put so much effort in it and did so well. For instance, he started with the bamboo and he progressed very quickly. I mean he only started painting bamboo for a few years before he studied with Madam Gu.

David

Do you think Wesley cared whether people knew that he was schizophrenic?

Cynthia

No, he didn’t care.

David

Because I think the art was made not because he was schizophrenic. The art was made by him, an artist.

Cynthia

Definitely, he did not relate his art to his illness.

David

On the other hand, I think his way of seeing, his perception, and his feelings might have something to do with his illness. It is understandable. For example, like Van Gogh, do you want to acknowledge him as an artist who was insane or simply acknowledge him as an artist because he was undoubtedly a good artist? If the mental condition allowed him to do some experiments, it is ok. But it doesn’t mean that the work was done by an artist who was schizophrenic. It was a work by an artist. That’s how I see his works and what I want to clarify.

Cynthia

That’s true.

Dick

I think the illness helped him to focus 100 percent on his art when compared to “normal” people. He was solely devoted. That was his life!

Cynthia

He actually had no constraints. He was very childlike. His mind was quite pure. He had no worries. He was not like a regular person who has worries in their daily life. He did have his own worries. He was paranoid due to his illness but he did not have those regular worries that every day people have. I think in that respect, it really allowed him to have the freedom to do whatever he liked. He didn’t paint because of money. He didn’t care about whether his paintings could sell or not. He just painted because he wanted to do it. That was how he expressed himself. He was not going to let you tell him what to do or what not to do. I think that attitude gave him a little advantage.

David

Last but not least, considering the acquisition of Wesley’s works by institutions, I think there’s an important issue for you and your family to consider. For instance, if you have five to ten works for an institution, what kind of universe has this body of work created for the audience? What will be the potential interpretation given by these works? How broad a reading can be created for the audience based on those 5 or 10 selected works? As for Wesley, the situation will be different from artists like Lui Shou Kwan whose works have been widely collected by a number of institutions and collectors for a long period of time. If you would like to do justice to your brother, you probably need to consider the criteria of the selection which includes his paintings in traditional style, splash ink, and finger paintings in order to articulate his universe and way of thinking. The concept of the selection can be Zen for example. The question of “What will be the right representation of Wesley’s entire career?” will be an issue for you and your family to discuss.

Basically our discussion has come to an end. Thank you all so much.

- END -

對話

陳浩揚（David Chan）、陳定中（Dick Chen）及唐慧中（Cynthia Tongson）
2016年4月15日

David

我們可以從三方面討論：第一，從唐家偉的姊姊唐慧中小姐（Cynthia Tongson）的角度；第二，從陳定中先生（Dick Chen）的觀點，他對水墨畫素有研究；而我則負責提問。我準備了14道問題。

第一個問題是：你可否講述一下家偉的為人和性格？

Cynthia

他為人沉默寡言，比較害羞，我想他精神方面的疾病也對他的性格有所影響。他經常多疑和不容易相信別人，但是他真的非常善良……總括而言，他通常是相當文靜和不善於交際，不容易跟別人交談……

David

好像一個含蓄的男孩……

Cynthia

對啊，他就是這樣的一個人，個性非常沉默、溫順、文靜，而且蠻有稚氣，這肯定跟他的精神病有關，因為他在15歲時開始發病，正在他腦部發展的時期，這是我母親對他性格的解釋。

David

他以前是否經常和你在一起？當他確診患上這個病的時候，你是否在香港？

Cynthia

不是，其實當我到海外升學時，他才13歲，還未診斷患上精神病。我只會在假期返港。他經常都是非常沉默、害羞和舉止溫文。

David

定中，你所認識的家偉是怎樣的？

Dick

我在一所藝術畫廊結識他。他是一位藝術家，他會

拿他的畫給我看。正如慧中所說，他真是一個彬彬有禮的男士，態度平和而友善。我當時不知道他有精神問題，只知道他的朋友不多，這是他告訴我的，而他的作品正好反映他的情緒。

Cynthia

他沒有很多朋友，他不善於交朋結友。

Dick

對啊，我想我純屬幸運，能令他覺得易於和我傾談。

David

第二題：他是怎樣成為藝術家？

Cynthia

他只是有一天跟我媽說他想學畫畫。

David

這件事是在他15歲時發生，對嗎？

Cynthia

大概17歲，這真是很奇妙，因為在這之前，他對藝術沒有多大興趣，而且不懂得畫畫。在小學時，我還要替他做美術科家課。

David

但是這必然是一種頓悟，對嗎？例如：他突然看到一些事物，激發他想成為藝術家。

Cynthia

我不知道……我不知道是什麼激發了他，他只是突然說想學習畫畫，然後便開始學傳統中國畫。

David

他當時是否在聖保羅男女學校或是香港國際學校就讀？

Cynthia

在香港國際學校。當他確診之後，我想這（家偉想學習畫畫的意願）應該跟他的精神病有關。

David

他的工作情況是怎樣的？

Cynthia

你所指的是什麼工作情況？

David

他作為畫家是怎樣工作的，例如：他藝術創作的過程？

Cynthia

哦，他說當靈感出現在腦海時，是非常清晰，好象整個圖像浮現在腦中。每當他靈感一到，不論在什麼時間，他都會立即作畫；一旦開始，他便不能停下來，直至完成為止。基本上，他是有靈感才會畫畫的。他形容那些圖像，例如：他的山水畫，都是從空靈中化現出的。當圖像出現時，他只是直接把它畫在紙，他說他經常都能做到。無論有怎樣的圖像在腦海，他都能把它畫在紙上。

David

他能夠這樣作畫是在什麼年紀？

Cynthia

我想大概是在1981年，唐家偉當時24歲，當他畫潑墨畫的時期。我不知道他是怎樣畫傳統的竹樹畫，但是我想他應該是指他的山水畫。他經常說他可以根據靈感創作，只要圖像出現，他便可把它畫出來。

David

所以他並沒有講解圖像是怎樣產生的？

Cynthia

沒有，我想他是透過冥想而產生圖像的。

David

當圖像出現，他覺得必需把它畫在紙上。

Cynthia

是啊，立即確實地把它畫出來。

David

用什麼方式？我意思是，他會畫繪圖或是……

Cynthia

不會，他會直接地把圖像畫在紙上，他從不畫草圖，而是直接了當地畫在畫紙上。他真是這麼說的：「無論我的腦海浮現什麼圖像，我都能把它畫出來。」

David

這真是很有趣。

Dick

對啊，真有趣。

Cynthia

這就是他的創作方式。

David

即時性是關鍵。

Cynthia

是啊，無論是什麼時候。

他從不會說：「好了，我現在需要畫畫了，我要去做。」不會，我想不是每個人都是這樣創作的，他通常是有靈感才會畫畫。當靈感出現時，他會繞著桌子走，有一次被母親瞥見，他就是這樣進入超越自我的境界，在那個「空間」，他會繞著桌子走幾圈，然後開始畫畫。在他創作時，他不會讓任何人看見。

David

是否我們在他工作室所看見的那一張桌子？

Cynthia

是的。當他作畫時，是他的絕對私人時刻，他不會讓別人看見，但是在創作大型的潑墨畫作時，他會要求他的助手協助，指示助手怎樣做、執紙張的方法等等。他會不斷繞著桌子走，以保持自己進入他的「空間」狀態。

David

爲了進入某個精神狀態.....

Cynthia

爲了進入冥想的狀態。當然，他只會全神貫注在創作過程，而不會察覺身邊所發生的事情，這是我對他的工作情況的了解。

David

第四個問題：什麼是他的藝術概念？我想他必定對自己的作品有特別的概念，是嗎？我知道他的文章經常提及禪學。

Cynthia

禪學肯定是對他非常重要，因為他認爲要創作傑出的作品，個人的培訓和修養是相當重要的，你必先超越自我，走進自己靈魂的深處，我想是在思想方面。

David

禪學可以是信仰，亦可以是哲學思想，他是怎樣修煉禪學的呢？

Cynthia

我想他在啓蒙路上確實有下功夫。

David

他是否閱讀許多文章還是進行冥想？

Cynthia

他的確閱讀許多東西，但是沒有提及打坐冥想。我想畫畫是他冥想的一種方式，我猜當他進入那個境界，便是進行冥想的方式，圖像便會浮現出來。但是我想在某程度上，他確實對佛教有所研究，希望創作出真正偉大的畫作或是他所稱的禪畫，所以他必須要用內心創作，而作品本身則代表著他的靈性發展階段，是他通往啓蒙的道路。

David

他是在什麼時候開始對禪學產生興趣？

Cynthia

我想他對禪學的興趣是在作潑墨畫時期開始的，他閱讀過許多有關張大千的文章及畫作，他經常說張大千的作品是非常「高水平的禪畫」，對他有很大的啓發。我想他看過許多張大千的作品，並且從中學習。

David

如果他是受到張大千的影響，他是否很可能在香港看過張大千的作品？

Cynthia

首先，我想他應該讀過不少有關張大千的書籍，而且也肯定看過張大千的畫作。他以前經常到拍賣行，有可能是在拍賣行看過。

Dick

其實，他何時開始創作潑墨畫的呢？是在加拿大還是在香港？

Cynthia

他在多倫多時開始自行研究潑墨畫，我想他是透過閱讀張大千的書籍而實踐的。雖然我從未真正在那裏見過他作潑墨畫，但是他的筆記中提及，他曾經在多倫多自己研究潑墨。

David

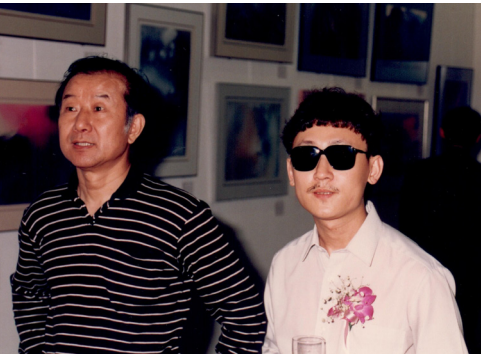
在加拿大，他是跟顧青瑤女士學畫的，是嗎？

Dick

而且也在多倫多的安大略藝術設計學院進修。

Cynthia

是啊，但是他說是在這之前，他已經開始研究潑墨，然後當他在1981年返港，便開始修讀由劉國



劉國松（左）與唐家偉（右）攝於1988年香港大會堂〈中國現代水墨五人聯展〉

松老師教授的兩個月課程，我想是從那個課程，他真正學會潑墨的基本技巧來創作潑墨畫作。在課堂上，劉國松老師鼓勵學生創新以及用不同的方式和技巧研究。我的表弟梁慶榮跟他一起修讀那個課程，慶榮只是做家課，但沒有加以練習；而家偉卻會做家課兼研究潑墨。我想他是從課程中學習了基本技巧，然後進一步開發自己的技巧。

David

你仍然保存著他以前在安大略藝術學院做的作品嗎？能夠看到他當時與後期的作品，應該是很有趣的事情。

Cynthia

沒有，我記得那些都是靜態水墨畫。

David

靜態水墨，真有趣！

Cynthia

是啊，但是那些作品都是比較西洋化，他的藝術通常都是中西合璧，這點對他是很重要的。

David

我想西方對他的藝術影響可能是指一些藝術家如畢加索，是嗎？他有沒有提及畢加索呢？

Cynthia

他有講過關於畢加索的立體主義，畢加索把體積、三維帶進畫作裏，這對家偉是很重要的。在他藝術生涯的所有時期，家偉的作品都有強烈的深度和體積。

David

定中，家偉在安大略藝術學院就讀時，你是否也是在多倫多呢？

Dick

根據家偉所說，他記得我們是在約克維爾的一家藝術畫廊裏認識的，那家畫廊是一個中國人所開的，他是呂壽琨先生的學生。

David

你們是在那裏認識，根據你以前跟家偉的通訊中，他有沒有提及其他藝術歷史對他的重要影響呢？

Dick

沒有。

Cynthia

有趣的是，雖然他曾經修讀劉國松先生的課程，但是從來沒有提及這位老師。

Dick

他從沒有在我面前提及劉國松，他有提及顧青瑤，但是沒有提及劉國松。

Cynthia

他真的跟顧青瑤女士很投契，而且非常尊敬她。

David

但是他跟顧女士學習了一段很短的時間，對嗎？

Cynthia

對啊，很短時間，只有一年，不幸地顧女士便離世。顧女士為了教授我的弟弟，特別在日間起床，為他改變了自己的作息時間。她通常是在日間睡覺，到晚上才起床。家偉真的喜歡跟顧女士學習，當他要求顧女士多教他一堂課，她也樂於答應。

David

所以他們一個禮拜有兩堂課？

Cynthia

是啊，一個禮拜兩節課。我媽說顧女士的口音很重，她不太明白顧女士的說話；不過家偉卻能夠明白，而且兩人可以溝通得很好。

David

但是你們不知道課程教授的方式與內容等等？

Cynthia

我們不知道。

Dick

我想他的竹樹畫這麼美，是因為得到顧女士傳授的基礎技巧。

Cynthia

對啊，我想他基礎打得很扎實。

David

顧女士是否擅長畫竹的畫家？

Dick

她擅於畫中國傳統水墨畫，但是家偉是何時開始畫竹的呢？

Cynthia

他在17歲時跟母親說要學習畫畫，然後便開始了。我媽當時有一位已經退休的朋友，她也是住在香港麥當奴道，在成年時才開始畫畫，這位女士就是第一個教家偉中國畫的，她擅長畫竹，所以應該是她教家偉畫竹的，也是家偉開始畫畫的主題。她只是為興趣而畫畫，而不會把作品出售。後來，當媽媽和家偉移居多倫多時，我媽便急於為他找個老師。母親的朋友提及顧青瑤也是住在多倫多，而且已經退休，心想顧女士應該不會像在香港時那麼忙，可是顧女士其實已經不再教畫畫了，但媽媽卻說服了她教家偉。

David

雖然家偉有興趣水墨畫，但是我想當時在安大略藝術學院裏的中國教授不多，你知不知道這方面的資料？

Dick

當時在安大略藝術學院有幾位擅長中國水彩畫的中國藝術家和教授。

David

總括來說，他基本上是在安大略藝術學院學習西方藝術的，後來他返港跟劉國松學習，並嘗試尋找自己的語言。

Cynthia

是啊，他時常都在尋找自己的語言。

David

他是什麼時候開始對書法產生興趣？

Cynthia

我想他也是很早便開始寫書法。

Dick

他在藝術生涯的不同階段，都有經常寫書法。他跟我通電話時提及，他曾經有一段時間完全融入在書法中，而且已經達到大師般精煉。

David

是哪個時期？

Dick

是在1999年之後，當時我因為父親過身，所以返回多倫多，家偉便開始每個禮拜打電話給我；連續兩年，他都會跟我說：「定中，你應該返香港看看我的傑作，我現在是書法家了。」之後，他很可能開始研究手指畫。

David

從他的早期作品到潑墨畫，及至後期的手指畫，他在技巧上是怎樣演變的呢？

Cynthia

當他停止畫彩色的潑墨畫後，他開始作版畫，這令我很費解，我便跟他說：「噢！發生了什麼事？為什麼現在全都是黑色的呢？」因為我實在太喜歡他的彩色作品，我問他：「你為什麼不再畫彩色的潑墨畫呢？」

在這種新風格出現之前，他希望把他的潑墨畫做到好像照片一樣，那是他當時的目標，所以我便對他說：「你的目標尚未達到，現在卻突然轉換方向。」但是他答道：「我之前嘗試創造突破，但我已到了不能再前進的地步，我很厭倦維持這種膠著狀態.....沒有任何新的創意。」

David

他是什麼時候說的？大概1999年？

Cynthia

2003年或2004年，他在2004年還有作一些潑墨畫，而版畫則在2003年面世，他是在那時期決定改變方向的。

Dick

他是為自己下一個階段鋪路，這是很合理的。

Cynthia

對啊，因為他已經覺得沉悶，而且不能繼續提升。我想對他而言，畫畫必須具挑戰性，不斷挑戰自我。他會定下一個目標，然後當目標達到後，他便會定另一個目標，他只是追尋挑戰。既然他認為停滯不前的話，他便需要另闢新徑，然後再回歸水墨。

Dick

在返回多倫多之後，我曾經和我妻子回港一個月，在這期間，我見過家偉並看過他的書法，他的書法蒼勁有力，非常優秀。

Cynthia

他是經常寫書法的。

Dick

他是一位很好的書法家，書法作品真的很出色。

Cynthia

這令我想起母親憶述的一件事：在家偉年幼時，可

能是他讀一年級甚或是幼稚園，我的祖母教他用毛筆寫字。有一天，我的舅父，他是一位藝術收藏家，也有收藏書法，當他看見家偉寫的毛筆字，非常驚訝地問道：「這些字是誰寫的？真的很好啊！」我媽媽告訴他那些都是家偉寫的，他覺得難以置信地說：「什麼？家偉？」因為他認為那些字真的寫得很好。

可能家偉在這方面的確很有天分，在他年幼時已經顯露出來，但是當時沒有人在意，而且也沒打算要家偉繼續寫書法，我想他對書法的熱愛在往後的日子再重燃起來。

David

即使打從早在1992年的畫冊裏，也有他的一些書法作品，就好像是在循環不息。

Cynthia

我想我們現有他的書法作品中，最早的是在八十年代寫的。

我有一次對他說：「你為什麼花這麼多的年頭去改善你的潑墨技巧，現在卻突然放棄潑墨，改變另類風格？我覺得這樣很浪費。」我大概是說：「發生什麼事？你到底在想什麼？」他說：「不用擔心，我要繼續向前尋求突破的話，就必須探索新的路向。」然後他續說：「它將會回歸，我必定會再用彩色墨水的，而且到時會達到更高的境界。」所以在他的後期，他真的再次把色彩加入他的手指畫中。

David

但是這類彩色手指畫的數量不多。

Cynthia

因為他只是刚开始這樣做，但是他說得對，他的作品真的達到一個截然不同的境界。

David

總而言之，我覺得很有趣，書法一直在他的藝術中具有重要地位，他也會畫竹樹和其他中國傳統的主題。當他回流香港後，他跟劉國松學習，開始鑽研潑墨畫並且不斷優化，直至他感到厭倦為止；然後他改變方向，創作較富立體感的版畫；最後，他開創手指畫。其實我可以看到他的藝術進程並不是直綫的，他經常重拾他喜愛的西方藝術，特別是立體主義。他的不少作品都環繞著竹樹和書法，他沒有真正放棄任何東方或西方的元素。

Cynthia

他並沒有放棄任何事，就如他曾向我講解的一樣。

Dick

我想他從未停止過畫竹樹。

Cynthia

是啊，他從未停止過，而是持之以恆地畫。

Dick

這猶如是他的休閒活動，而書法則是他自我鍛煉的一部分，作為日常的修養。

David

但是他只有很少的竹樹作品。

Cynthia

他畫過許多但只剩下少數，我想他把部分竹畫賣掉了，因為他的竹畫作品很受歡迎。

Dick

我曾經到過他的工作室，我記得那裏有許多畫作。

David

我想他的竹畫跟他的書法是有關聯的，正如在他的北京展覽中展示出來。以創作時期介紹作品是簡易不過的方法，但是我們不能用這個方式展示家偉的作品，而且對許多藝術家，例如呂壽琨也是不適用的。

Cynthia

所以它們並不是個別的階段，而基本上這些階段都是相關的，每個都是他發展歷程的一部分。

Dick

他在骨子裏熱愛竹樹畫和書法。

Cynthia

絕對是。

Dick

這是傳統文人畫風格。

Cynthia

他鍾情於畫畫，沒有其他東西可以取替，對他是非常重要的事。

David

作為一個旁觀者或觀眾，他從運用墨拓及把墨做成像大理石花紋的潑墨畫，演變至後期手指畫，對我而言，是藝術家的一種解放，但是家偉對自己的藝術發展有什麼敘述？他對於自己在後期主要集中在手指畫有沒有跟你說些什麼？

Cynthia

可惜我在他過身前兩年都沒有返回香港，所以我只是在他離世後，才看見他最後期的手指畫。

Dick

我也不知道他創作了手指畫，當我看見那些作品時，真是感到很詫異。

Cynthia

我想約在2008年至2009年之間，他跟我說，他不再用畫筆了。之前他會畫筆和手指兼用，有時他會用畫筆，有時他會用手指。在2001年他開始鑽研手指畫，我記得他大概在2008年至2009年之間告訴我的，因為當時我請他外出晚膳，發現他的手指很黑、很嘔心，要他吃飯前洗手，於是他便告訴我他不用畫筆了，他只用手指畫畫，所以很難把手指的墨痕洗掉，他還要我替他保守這個秘密。

他亦對父母說過同一番話，因為他擔心其他人會抄襲他的技巧。我對他說，反正其他人都會看出他的畫是用手指畫的，那又何需保守這個秘密呢？他答道其他人是看不出來的，但是並沒有解釋他用手指作畫的原因。

直到我對他的作品做過一些研究後，才明白他為何要改變風格。他不斷研究非畫筆創作的技巧，在自然的進展中，真正達到「零距離」...。我意思是用畫筆的話，距離仍然存在，但是要真正做到毫無距離，他唯有用手指，才可以直接把情感傾注入作品裏。

David

我想這點可以跟我們在開始時談及的內容有關。你說每當有圖像在腦海浮現時，他便覺得有必要把它畫出來。

Cynthia

對啊，在沒有任何隔膜的情況下，他可以把圖像畫得更好。

Dick

藝術家直接把腦海中的圖像臨摹在畫紙上這種方法真是非常獨特，我從來都沒有聽過。

Cynthia

真的嗎？

Dick

是啊，你可否想像貝多芬在作曲時，已經在腦海裏存在著樂章的所有音符嗎？

Cynthia

基本上他只是把圖像臨摹出來。

Dick

是的，但不是每個藝術家都能做到的。

David

我覺得這點非常有趣，我想在此暫時偏離我們的問答。我認為即使是在跟M+或其他博物館討論時，你可以提及抽象表達主義，就如傑克遜·波洛克（Jackson Pollock）那樣，當然我並不是說家偉的畫跟波洛克的畫一樣，但是你們可談及畫畫的直接性，我想在香港的藝術家之中，沒有一位會有這個想法：「我要直接用手指畫畫」，是嗎？這是強而有力的論點，這個直接從想象中畫出來的創作方式，是相當有趣的。

Dick

其實這是最直接，也是最困難的。

David

我想透過這次的答問會談，把一些事情已經弄得較清楚。比方說，如果你到M+或其他的藝術館，當他們問及「什麼是家偉的藝術？他有什麼獨特之處？」你大可作出回答。雖然我們沒有藝術家第一身的描述，但是根據這個討論，我們可以把零碎的資料湊合在一起，嘗試找出家偉在藝術壇上的位置。

Dick

這位藝術家真是獨一無二，因為通常多數的藝術家都會起碼先畫草圖，但是這個人.....

Cynthia

沒有任何草圖.....

Dick

根據你所說是圖像已經存在腦子裏，然後他把它畫出來，這樣多麼獨特的方法。

Cynthia

他畫畫的速度相當快。

David

很快？

Cynthia

是非常快，他甚至對我說過，他不敢告訴人家他畫畫有多快，不然，他恐怕他們會覺得他的畫不值那麼多錢。

David

這令我很驚訝，我以為他作畫是頗耗時費力的事，因為他需要把圖像在水中形成，他怎麼辦到的呢？

Cynthia

我不知道，但是他說他做的很快，所以他有時候會感到無聊。他作畫的時間不太長，而其餘時間他卻無所事事。他經常跟我抱怨感到沉悶，我便問他：「你的畫作怎樣？」他只是說：「我畫畫很快，不用花太多時間。」

然後，我的母親提及一件關於他的竹畫的事情：我媽有時候會窺看家偉畫竹樹，他不是整幅畫一次過畫的，而是畫在兩塊並排的畫板上；我媽問他為什麼他可以分開畫竹，但是當拼合上時，圖像卻又完整無缺？他跟我媽說，那些圖像就是會連上，他甚至可以分別在四塊板上畫成一幅畫，他真的這樣做過。這是理所當然的，因為如果圖像真的在他的腦子裏，他只是把圖像臨摹出來，就根本不需要事先把畫板連上。

David

這個方法跟禪的意念有點相似，好像所有東西都是在他的腦中。

Cynthia

他也相信佛教跟中國畫是息息相關，不能分割的。

Dick

他曾經去修讀及聽佛學。

Cynthia

他曾經研究基督教及佛教。

David

他可以選擇任何對他合適的東西.....

Cynthia

我真的認為他會採納任何適合他的東西，所以兩者他都曾經追尋過，但同時又能夠在基督教與佛教之間取得平衡，那是探討這個問題的另一個角度。

David

他在以前曾經參加過一些展覽，公眾對他的展覽有什麼反應？

Cynthia

開始時，他的作品曾經在香港展覽，我想在一些媒體的報導中，他當時也指出，他早期的潑墨畫並不是很受歡迎，收藏這類畫的人不多，當時觀眾仍是

比較喜歡傳統中國畫，但是他相信潑墨畫是會有出路的，所以他會繼續做下去。我想他的作品在早期的銷情不大理想，是因為他在1980年代早期至1990年代之間的作品，在當時實在太前衛了。

Dick

他並沒有跟我提及他把作品出售。

Cynthia

賣畫並不是他作畫的原因。

Dick

他沒有跟我說關於他有賣畫的需要或是這對他的重要性，但是他不時有跟我談及他有參與一些展覽和不同的比賽。

Cynthia

因為他希望別人可以看見他的作品。

Dick

他希望別人認識他的作品，因為他沒有許多朋友。

David

我想我們只可以根據報紙的報導，得知當時公眾的反應。

Cynthia

我記得於1993年在美國洛杉磯帕薩迪納舉行的展覽，當時我在洛杉磯，觀眾都驚嘆不已。

David

是美國洛杉磯亞太博物館嗎？

Cynthia

對啊。

David

你有沒有那個展覽的照片及紀錄？

Cynthia

我有一些照片，其實我們有他在香港藝術中心舉行的其中一個展覽的數碼影音光碟，記錄了他在介紹他的畫作。

David

好，這真是非常重要的。

Cynthia

我要去找一找，那片光碟的製作並不是很專業，是

由我父親的一些朋友做的，是一個頗長的錄像，我記得我曾經看過一次，在錄像的末段，家偉講述他的畫作。我還未有重溫那個錄影，我一定要把它找出來。

David

下一個問題是關於在香港藝術中心為他舉行的第一個回顧展，在那個展覽中有沒有任何特別的事情？

Cynthia

你是指反應嗎？

David

這可以是你從籌劃那個展覽所發現的任何事情或啓示.....

Cynthia

在籌備展覽的過程中，我有很大的發現。我真是有很多研究工作要做，而且嘗試理解所有作品和資料，以便向別人講解，以及提供資料給展覽策展人毛岱康女士（Catherine Maudsley）。透過家偉的筆記和媒體的報導，包括報章、訪問等等，我發現了許多東西，並嘗試把它們拼合起來。在展覽之前，我對手指畫的了解不多，但透過展覽，讓我對手指畫的了解多一些，並且被這種畫吸引著。在展覽期間，我每天都到香港藝術中心逗留兩個小時，跟參觀者交談；但是每次我都不由得特別去看看那三幅以植物為題的豎直手指畫，只是凝望著它們。參觀者都對家偉的畫作感到十分驚嘆，他們不知道曾經有位藝術家作過那些畫。我不知道他的作品是好與否，但是我只是想幫他辦一個回顧展。

David

我想他做過許多作品，我是指在美學價值上，而並非數量方面；我也用約六個月的時間看過他的資料，我想他真的很喜歡畫畫。

Cynthia

他喜歡畫畫，這是他的熱愛甚至是他的生命；若果不能作畫，他的心會死掉。除了他的畫作之外，他對其他事情都不大感興趣。我想他的整個成年期都是投放在他的藝術上，如果你不讓他畫畫的話，簡直是等於剝奪他的生命。

David

我有一個問題問定中：你認為可否把家偉納入香港新水墨運動的一部分呢？這是一道開放的問題。

Dick

這個當然可以，家偉是劉國松的學生，而且努力不

懈地鑽研不同的水墨技巧，然而他還經常作中國水墨畫，例如竹樹；在他的後期藝術創作，他甚至放棄用畫筆，直接用手指把他的內心世界活現於紙上，這是他跟觀眾以至全世界溝通的獨特方式。

David

我想我們首先要將新水墨運動更具體說明一下，但是我覺得我們可以做些事情.....我不是說要把他納入歷史中，因為他部分作品其實是很近期的，我認為是如何把他跟當時發生的事情重新定位，是你下一階段要做的事。根據我們剛才的討論，例如：他創造的潑墨畫跟當時香港社會環境的關聯，以及如何把潑墨畫跟傳統竹樹畫串聯起來，這些事情你都必須要細心想想；你越是弄得清楚，別人便越容易理解這些作品所具有的前瞻性，你必須具備這樣的基礎。對於家偉，我想困難在於我們擁有的一手資料不多，只能夠把零碎的資料湊合起來，這可以作為大學教授及大學生的研究項目，是值得研究的課題。對於藝術機構來說，他們也需要內容，一些檔案資料、一些重點去闡釋家偉作品的重要性，這將是下一步要做的事情。

以山水為題，為什麼對他是重要的？他重複地畫一些類似的風景——他所謂的「靈山」。

Cynthia

我想是因為他說過，山水畫是中國畫中最高的成就，而且也是最具挑戰性的主題。

David

我很想知道王無邪是否知道關於家偉的事情。

Dick

我沒有問過他。

David

你應該去問問，這會是挺有趣的。王無邪是香港藝術館的前策展人，必定知道許多當時香港藝術界所發生的事情。

Cynthia

家偉以前曾經跟香港藝術館接觸過。

David

如果有機會的話，去問他可能會有發現。

Cynthia

家偉曾經有到過香港藝術館跟他們談過。雖然我不知道他確實跟誰見過面，但是他說香港藝術館對他的作品並不感興趣，他覺得被冷落。

David

我倒想知道他們對家偉有多了解。 我覺得用「靈山」為題相當有趣，我想他是在嘗試尋找心靈的支柱，這是我個人的觀點。

Cynthia

家偉把他的潑墨山水畫稱為「天界」，也稱他的山水畫為「禪畫」。

David

很有趣，你認為可否把他的疾病和畫作拉上關係嗎？

Cynthia

我認為藝術對他有所幫助，因為他似乎是在確診之後才開始對藝術產生興趣，然後他便全情投入作畫，而且做得非常出色。他開始時畫竹，進步得很快，他只是畫過幾年竹樹，便跟顧青瑤女士學習。

David

你覺得家偉介意別人知道他患上思覺失調嗎？

Cynthia

不會，他並不介意。

David

因為我認為他的藝術並不是因為他患有思覺失調，他是位藝術家，而藝術是他的創作。

Cynthia

絕對是，他並沒有把他的藝術與疾病扯上關係。

David

另一方面，我想他的觀察力、感知及感覺可能跟他的疾病有關，這是可以理解的，例如梵高，你會認同他是一位有精神病的畫家，抑或是純粹欣賞他是一位偉大的藝術家。如果藝術家的精神情況容許他進行一些實驗，那就可行；但是也不能代表作品是

由患有思覺失調的藝術家做的，畢竟那件作品就是由一位藝術家所創作，我希望藉此澄清我對家偉的作品之觀感。

Cynthia

沒錯。

Dick

我想他的疾病讓他可以百分百集中在藝術上，比起其他「正常」人，他可謂是全心全意，這就是他的人生！

Cynthia

他沒有任何束縛，充滿稚氣，思想很單純，無憂無慮似的。他並不像普通人般，擔憂著日常的生活。他也有他的煩惱，因為他的病令他感到很焦慮，但是不是像平常人一般的煩惱。在這方面，我想他確實可以自由地做他喜歡的事，他並不是為掙錢而畫畫，他不在意他的作品是否會有買家，他只是因為想畫畫而畫畫，這是他表達自己的方式，他不會對別人言聽計從，我想這種態度可能令他有著少許優勢。

David

最後，考慮到家偉的作品為藝術機構所收藏，我想你和你的家人應該要考慮一個重要的問題，例如：倘若你有五至十幅作品給一所機構，這些畫作會為觀眾締造一個怎樣的藝術空間？這些作品可以有什麼潛在的闡釋？這些精選作品可以給觀眾提供一個多大的想象空間？對於家偉，他的情況有別於其他藝術家，例如呂壽琨，他們的作品已經長期獲多個機構及收藏家廣泛收藏。如果你想為你的弟弟取得他應有的地位，你可能需要考慮作品系列的要求，包括傳統中國畫、潑墨畫及手指畫，以表達出他的藝術世界及創作理念，例如：以禪學作為系列的概念，而「什麼最能恰當地代表家偉的整個藝術生涯？」將會是你和你的家人需要討論的問題。

我們的討論到此為止，謝謝你們的參與。

THE JOURNEY BEGINS WITH A SINGLE STEP

Catherine Maudsley

"Wesley Tongson – The Journey" is a compact and concise exhibition of just 23 paintings. Laozi's universally applicable saying from Chapter 64 of the *Tao Te Ching*, "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step", is an excellent departure point for considering Wesley Tongson's creative journey. Even more intriguing than progress from one single step to another are the leaps and bounds in creative growth and technical prowess that define Wesley Tongson's career. Exhibition viewers journey from a starting point of tame, diffuse, colorful abstract landscapes to bold and raw expressions of emotion. Raw emotion combined with technical prowess and dexterity make his signature-style, mature finger paintings deeply compelling.

The Chinese Culture Center's exhibition space is divided into four well-defined bays, which is a curator's dream in presenting a terse and dramatic visual exposition of an artist's life work. The precise, focused space of each bay demands a terse, unmeandering storyline, and allows for concise juxtapositions.

Bay One's six paintings acquaint us with Wesley Tongson's early interest in and indebtedness to the splash ink paintings characteristic of Zhang Daqian's (1899-1983) late career. *Landscape 10* (1988) (plate 1) and *Landscape 11* (1988) (plate 2) were both painted in 1988 in ink and color. They use deep and rich free-flowing colors to capture the majesty of nature. Three calligraphic works from 1992, all in ink and color on board, *The Light* (1992) (plate 3), *Blessed Rain* (1992) (plate 4), and *God's Light* (1992) (plate 5), express the artist's spiritual beliefs on the one hand, while showing his interest in creating colorful, textured backgrounds for his calligraphy. Bay One is completed by a large horizontal ink on cardboard calligraphy from 1995, *Of Old, The Dragon Conquered All and The Phoenix Calmed The Spirit* (1995) (plate 6) (fig. 1), in which the artist delights in the "flying white" (*feibai*) calligraphic script style. This brush technique is rooted in ancient times, dating back almost two thousand years. The flowing brush work shows split tips, empty white spaces, fullness and void and a variety of ink tones, coming togeth-

er with a lively dynamism. The split tips are produced by pressing the brush forcefully down and vigorously moving it across the painting surface, leaving empty white spaces.

Wesley Tongson's journey was an unrelentingly spiritual one, encompassing readings about and interest in Christianity,

Fig. 1 Detail of *Of Old, The Dragon Conquered All and The Phoenix Calmed The Spirit* (1995)



Fig. 2 *Spiritual Mountains 6* (2012) before color application

Islam, Buddhism and Taoism. Clear expressions of his interest in Buddhism are seen in two horizontal calligraphies in ink on paper dated 2011 and displayed in Bay Two: *Everyone can see the omnipotence of the Buddha. His clear vision radiates from his inner self* (2011) (plate 7), and *With the prevalence of ink, arrogance subsides. We can observe the teachings of Buddha, whose wisdom is all-encompassing* (2011) (plate 8). Shown on opposite walls, they surround two landscapes painted in ink and with strong, potent color. The eye can discern the brush technique of flying white (*feibai*) calligraphy, but it sometimes requires archival records to demonstrate the progression in the creation of paintings. Very fortunately, two photographs of Bay Two's two vertical landscapes *Spiritual Mountains 6* (2012) (plate 9) (fig. 2, 3) and *Spiritual Mountains 7* (2012) (plate 10) in their unfinished state guide us through their creation. The completed works are dated 2012, while the dates of the photographs which show the "bare bones" ink structure are undated. Schooled in tradition during his training with eminent Chinese brush painters Madam Gu Qingyao (1896-1978) and Harold Wong



Fig. 3 *Spiritual Mountains 6* (2012)

(Huang Zhongfang) (b. 1943), Wesley Tongson followed the tried-and-true method of first painting these two towering landscapes in ink and then applying color. It appears that *Spiritual Mountains 6* and *Spiritual Mountains 7* were complete works in themselves before Tongson decided to apply color. The heavy sections of velvet-like pigment add an extra dimension to these rich, dense paintings.

In Bay Three, the tempo changes radically by concentrating on paintings of vertical lotuses and horizontal plum blossoms, which are contrasted not only by spatial orientation, but, more importantly, by time. *Red Plums Over The Earth* (1993) (plate 12) is an ink and color painting on cardboard. Its marvelously linear branches in ink joyfully set off dancing plum dots in red. It is a superb condensation of the singular importance of lines and dots in Chinese painting. Nearly two decades later, in 2011, Wesley Tongson painted *Plum 5* (2011) (plate 13), an almost architectonic interpretation of the plum blossom. Restricted to ink on paper and devoid of color, *Plum 5* boldly divides the picture plane in half with a



Fig. 4 Detail of *Pine 3* (2011)

vertical stroke of ink bisecting the composition. An entirely different understanding and interpretation of lines and dots emerges in this work, showing not steady steps, but artistic and creative leaps and bounds when compared with the 1993 plum blossom on the opposite wall. The two horizontal plum blossom paintings embrace and surround two vertical lotus paintings: *Lotus 3* (2011) (plate 15) and *Lotus 4* (1995) (plate 14), both in ink on paper. *Lotus 3* is vigorous, forceful and dark, whereas *Lotus 4* is softer, gentler and in light and medium ink tones.

Bay Four presents the culmination of Wesley Tongson's journey, epitomized by *Pine 3* (2011) (plate 17) (fig. 4). While not the largest in size of his finger paintings, it is the most stunning and powerful. The pine needles are spikes in ink that literally sing and dance. In them, we can feel the sharpness of needles and sense their invigorating scent. Mindful viewing of the painting, absorbed in the pine tree's essence and life force provides an experience similar to the now widely appreciated practice of *shinrin-yoku*, which means "taking in the atmosphere of the forest." Two large finger paintings composed a year earlier in 2010, *Pine 2* (2010) (plate 16) and *Spiritual Mountains 8* (2010) (plate 11), despite being more conservative than *Pine 3*, are leaps and bounds apart from the artist's earlier work and are rarely seen in contemporary ink.

In Beijing, in November, 2018, Pan Tianshou's (1897-1971) extraordinary masterpiece *View from the Peak* (1963) was auctioned by China Guardian. Measuring 141 by 59 inches,

it was the artist's largest-ever finger painting. Dated 1963, it is the culmination of Pan's prowess in finger painting, a technique he began using in the 1920s. *View from the Peak*, apart from its size, has a magnificent robustness, vitality and boldness. All three paintings in "Wesley Tongson - the Journey," likewise, are robust and raw.

Before embarking on finger painting, it is imperative to have a command of brush techniques. An understanding of ink and its qualities is essential because unlike the brush, fingertips cannot hold ink. Some of the steps and technical explorations in Wesley Tongson's journey are presented in the exhibition's "Ink Exploration" section. They are *Water Rhyme* (1988) (plate 18), *Approaching Rainstorm* (1988) (plate 19), *Mountain 1* (1995) (plate 20), *The Rugged Path* (1997) (plate 21), *Misty Mountains* (1993) (plate 22) and *Landscape 12* (2001) (plate 23). Taken as a group, they are some of the stepping stones in Wesley Tongson's journey.

Laozi's saying in Chapter 64 of the *Tao Te Ching*, "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step" has become a widely known aphorism that applies to many of life's circumstances and situations. Little can be achieved in life without that all important single step—the determination to begin followed by the determination to continue to place one foot in front of the other. It is an encouragement to never give up and it is an acknowledgment that adversity can be overcome. Wesley Tongson's personal creative and artistic journey was characterized by courage and determination.

CATHERINE MAUDSLEY

Catherine Maudsley is a Hong Kong-based art historian, art advisor, curator, educator and writer. She has lectured at global forums and a wide range of institutions, including the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Hong Kong, the HKU Space Executive Programme with Art Basel and Central Saint Martin's, the Hong Kong Art School, Christie's Education, Sotheby's Institute of Art, and the UBS Art Education Series. Maudsley has acted as a moderator for the Asia Society, Christie's Forum, L'ECOLE Van Cleef & Arpels and many other organizations. Maudsley has written for a wide range of publications including *Arts of Asia*, *Asian Art Newspaper*, and *Orientations*. She has contributed to and edited a number of art related books.

The recipient of over twenty awards for exceptional achievement, Maudsley was a Connaught Research Scholar at the University of Toronto, a Canada-China Scholar at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing and a Commonwealth Scholar at the University of Hong Kong. She has served on the Executive Committees of the University of Hong Kong Museum Society and the Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong, and is a Hong Kong Art School Council Member.

Catherine Maudsley Ltd, founded in 1994, provides art advisory and curatorial services to distinguished collectors worldwide.

旅塵始於足下

毛岱康

《唐家偉：旅塵》是一個只有23幅畫，既緊湊又精煉的展覽。老子的《道德經》第64章裡有一句舉世通用的名句：「千里之行始於足下」，用它作為唐家偉的創作旅程的出發點最好不過了。而比起從單一的一步到另一步的進程來說，更令人著迷的是唐家偉那些足以定義他繪畫生涯，創作成長和技法實力上的飛躍和突破。參觀展覽的觀眾將從充滿克制，擴散狀顏色的抽象山水畫開始旅程，直至看到他那些大膽的，原始的情感表達為止。赤裸的情緒和精湛，成熟的技法相結合，使得他那些代表性的成熟手指畫極具感染力。

中華文化中心的展覽空間被分為四個精心定義的展廳。以這樣既簡潔又充滿戲劇視覺張力的方式去呈現一個藝術家的畢生創作，是每個策展人的夢想。每個展廳精準又集中的空間都貫穿著一個簡潔，直接的敘事線，而各個展廳之間也差不多構成了並列。

第一展廳內，六幅畫讓我們了解到唐家偉藝術生涯早期階段，以及其對張大千（1899-1983年）晚期代表性的潑墨畫的濃厚興趣和傳承。《山水10》（1988）（圖版1）和《山水11》（1988）（圖版2）都是創作於1988年的設色水墨畫，它們運用了濃墨，自由流動的色彩去捕捉自然的壯麗。三幅創作於1992年，在紙板上用墨水和顏料創作的書法作品《光》（1992）（圖版3），《恩雨下降》（1992）（圖版4）及《神光》（1992）（圖版5），表達了藝術家的精神信仰，同時彰顯出他對於為書法創作充滿色彩和質感的背景的興趣。展廳一以一幅1995年創作的大幅橫向紙板水墨書法作品《自古龍拳勝天下，尤說鳳眉定君心》（1995）（圖版6）（圖1）收尾。在這幅作品中，藝術家醉心於「飛白」，這種筆法技巧來自上古時期，至今將近兩千年歷史。流動的筆法顯示出筆尖的分叉，留白的空間，圓滿和空無的對比，以及深淺不同的墨調，這些全都和生機勃勃的張力融為一體。「飛白」開叉的技法指由於用力壓毛筆並迫使其在繪畫表面大力移動而留下空白空間。

唐家偉的旅程是一種精神上對無盡的求索，其包含了對基督教、伊斯蘭教、佛教和道教的解讀和興趣。對佛教的興趣明確地體現在他2011年創作的兩幅橫向水墨書法作品中，展於展廳二：《皆式睽佛陀之神通，亮目藏中》（2011）（圖版7）和《墨道揚，縱驕癡，憶佛始中求，佛智因無漏也》（2011）（圖版8）。展於相對的兩面牆上的是兩幅充滿強有力色彩的水墨風景畫。雖然說肉眼便可見飛白的筆法，但有時尚需檔案記錄來證明繪畫創作的過程。幸運的是，關於展廳二中的兩張縱向山水畫《靈山6》（2012）（圖版9）（圖2，3）和《靈山7》（2012）（圖版10），有兩張它們未完成狀態的照片留存下來，幫助我們研究它們的創作歷程。這兩幅畫作均完成於2012年，但兩張展現水墨框架「骨骼」的照片拍攝日期並未被記錄。唐家偉接受過傳統的書畫訓練，在他師從傑出的國畫家顧青瑤女士（1896-1978年）和黃仲方先生（生於1943年）期間，唐家偉嘗試了經過名師檢驗而可靠的技法：先用水墨勾勒這兩處高聳的風景，再施以顏色。《靈山6》和《靈山7》似乎在唐家偉決定上色之前就已經是完整的作品了。塗滿天鵝絨般顏料的深色區給這些濃墨重彩的畫增添了另一種新的層次。

展廳三內，展覽的節奏因為著重於縱向的蓮花圖和橫向的



圖2 《靈山 6》（2012）上色前

梅花圖而突然轉變，不僅僅在展廳的空間定向上，連時間分佈都和前面展廳產生了強烈反差。1993年創作的《滿地紅梅》（1993）（圖版12），是一幅紙板上的設色水墨畫，水墨勾勒出令人讚歎的線狀枝條，活潑地襯托了跳躍的紅色梅點；這是對國畫中最重要的點和線運用的絕妙精煉。將近二十年後，在2011年，唐家偉又創作了《梅5》（2011）（圖版13），一幅對梅花近乎建築結構般的解讀。《梅5》克制地只有紙上水墨，沒有設色，大膽地用豎向的一筆把畫面分割成兩半。這幅畫裡呈現了一種對線和點的全新解讀，相較掛在對面牆上那幅1993年創作的梅花圖而言，與其說是一種沉穩的進步，更像是藝術和創造力上的飛躍和突破。這兩幅橫向梅花圖圍繞包裹著兩幅縱向的紙上水墨的蓮花圖：《蓮3》（2011）（圖版15）和《蓮4》（1995）（圖版14）。《蓮3》生機勃勃，有力而深邃，《蓮4》則更柔軟，溫和，其墨調屬於中和淺色之間。

展廳四代表著唐家偉旅程的高潮，其中2011年創作的《松3》（2011）（圖版17）（圖4）尤為突出。在唐家偉的手指畫



圖3 《靈山 6》（2012）

中，《松3》雖不是尺幅最大的，卻是最震撼人心也是最有力量的。松針化作了歌唱舞動著的墨色長釘，通過它們，我們彷彿能觸摸到針尖的銳利，聞到它們令人精神充沛的氣味。用心觀賞這幅畫，沉入松樹的精華和生命力裡，會帶給你一種類似於現在廣為人稱頌的森林浴（日語指的是「吸入森林的空氣」）的體驗。在這前一年（即2010）創作的兩幅大型手指畫《松2》（2010）（圖版16）和《靈山8》（2010）（圖版11），雖然相比《松3》來說相對保守，仍屬於藝術家脫離早期創作的飛躍和突破，它們在當代水墨裡異常罕見。

在北京，中國嘉德於2018年11月拍賣了潘天壽（1897-1971年）的一幅傑作《無限風光》（1963）。其尺寸為141 x 59”，是他最大尺幅的手指畫。潘於1920年代開始嘗試這個技法，而這幅畫創作於1963年，屬於藝術家手指畫創作的巔峰時期。《無限風光》除了其驚人的尺寸之外，還散發出無限韌性、生命力和魄力。同樣，〈唐家偉：旅塵〉裡的三幅手指畫，都生機勃勃，充滿活力。

圖1 《自古龍拳勝天下 尤說鳳眉定君心》（1995）的分部



圖4 《松 3》(2011) 的分部

開始手指畫創作之前，對筆法的掌握是很有必要的。對墨水及其特質的把握至關重要，因為不像毛筆，指尖並不能留住墨汁。唐家偉的〈旅塵〉中對一些技法的試煉和摸索都在展覽的〈水墨探索〉章節得以體現。它們包括《水韻》(1988) (圖版18)、《山雨欲來》(1988) (圖版19)、《山斗1》(1995) (圖版20)、《崎嶇之道》(1997) (圖版21)、《霧山》(1993) (圖版22) 和《山水12》(2001) (圖版23)。這些畫作為一個整體，反映了唐家偉旅程的一系列里程碑。

老子的《道德經》第64章裡的一句「千里之行始於足下」，日後變成了一個能夠廣泛慣用在不一而足的人生境遇和情景中的警句。如果不開始眼前的一小步，大部分的人生目標都無法實現。下定決心去開啟並堅持旅程，一步接著一步，這是在鼓勵人們不輕易言棄，也是對克服困境的認可。唐家偉在其個人、創作及藝術上的旅程，因其勇氣和決心而獨樹一幟。

毛岱康

毛岱康是一位在香港生活和工作的藝術史學家、藝術顧問、策展人、教育者和作家。她曾在全球論壇和各種機構講學，包括香港大學美術系、香港大學聯合巴塞爾藝術展和中央聖馬丁藝術與設計學院空間行政課程、香港藝術學院、佳士得美術學院、蘇富比藝術學院和瑞銀藝術教育系列。毛岱康曾在亞洲協會、佳士得藝術論壇、梵克雅寶學院等機構擔任論壇主持。她曾發表文章在《亞洲藝術》、《亞洲藝術報》和《東方雜誌》，並參與編輯藝術書籍工作。

毛岱康曾獲得二十多個傑出成就獎，曾是多倫多大學康諾研究學者，北京中央美術學院加拿大-中國學者，以及香港大學的英聯邦學者。她亦參與香港大學博物館學會執行委員會、香港東方陶瓷學會及香港藝術學院督導委員會等文化藝術組織的工作。

THE CONTEMPORANEITY OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE INK PAINTING AND ITS TRANSPOSITION

The Ink Paintings of Wesley Tongson
Wu Song

The solo exhibition of Wesley Tongson's paintings, "Wesley Tongson – The Journey" was held from October 12, 2018 to March 9, 2019 at the Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco. In the global context of art today, Tongson's ink paintings represent a singular oeuvre regarding the contemporaneity of traditional Chinese ink painting and its transposition, and it is one that warrants further study and reflection.

1. An unexpected discovery in Chinese ink painting

The work of Wesley Tongson¹ is an unexpected discovery in Chinese ink painting. I see his calligraphy as part of his painting; his fierce brush strokes bring to mind the slender gold script from the era of Emperor Huizong of the Song Dynasty, while their sharpness, sensitivity and delicateness illuminate the artist's spiritual character. Although the regular script and cursive script differ in form, one can feel something intrinsic running through both styles. His work also reminds one of Lucio Fontana (1899-1968). Fontana's cuts on the blank canvas also carry a striking sharpness, yet they mark the move beyond the two-dimensional space on the canvas. Tongson painted with his fingers and fingernails in place of brush and knife. In this extension of the body, we see the artist transforming finger painting techniques

into spiritual symbols and going beyond the boundaries of Chinese finger painting. This technique is exemplified in *Of Old, The Dragon Conquered All and The Phoenix Calmed The Spirit* (1995) (plate 6) (fig. 1). On the one hand, Tongson's late work calls to mind Chinese literati painting, and one may compare it to the work of Xu Wei of the Ming Dynasty. On the other hand, it echoes action painting in Western art. With the sense of writing and motion it embodies, his work transposes the ritual of classical Chinese literati painting to a contemporary realm in a fascinating shift.

Fig. 1 *Of Old, The Dragon Conquered All and The Phoenix Calmed The Spirit* (1995)



1. Wesley Tongson (1957-2012). Born in Hong Kong in 1957, he attended St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School and St. Paul's Co-educational College from 1963 to 1973. He attended Brentwood College School in Canada in 1973. He was diagnosed with schizophrenia at age 15. In 1974, he took up studying traditional Chinese painting. In 1977, he graduated from the Hong Kong International School; in the same year, he moved to Toronto, Canada, where he studied with renowned Chinese painter Madame Gu Qingyao. He also studied Western painting at the Ontario College of Art. Inspired by the work of master Chinese painter Zhang Daqian, he began to create splash ink paintings. In 1981, he returned to Hong Kong and studied Chinese painting with Harold Wong. Starting in 1985, he participated in solo and group exhibitions in Hong Kong, Pasadena, and London. He passed away in Hong Kong in 2012. His work has been collected by public institutions and private collectors around the world, including in Australia, Canada, China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Thailand, the UK, the US, Hong Kong and Taiwan.



Fig. 2 *Spiritual Mountains 1* (2010)
Ink on paper
48.5 x 97.5 in

Genius is often a surprise against a backdrop of normality; so is art. Tongson's life journey was proof to such genius. Regardless, we can discover the reasons for this by looking at his brief yet intense journey of life and art in several respects. They include the changes in his use of the body as a creative tool and his spiritual character, which began in his youth and lasted throughout his lifetime; his manifold understanding of religion, ranging from Christianity, Buddhism and Taoism to his exposure to Islam, and the influence of Zen in particular; his learning of traditional art, primarily his systematic study of traditional ink painting and his appreciation of calligraphy and painting; his fascination with the splash ink painting of Zhang Daqian (1899-1983) during a particular period, and his experimentation with techniques in the medium of ink; his study at a Western art college, and his understanding of art since Modernism. Among the various reasons, we can see traces of Tongson's inner conflicts, self-discovery and exploration of different paths, as well as the spiritual surges in his late work. All this offers us a context for comprehending this unexpected discovery. In this light, his work not only goes beyond traditional ink painting in form or artistic language, but it stems from the artist's confrontation with his interior world. It shows us a real and struggling soul on the quest for rebirth; it shows us the suffering and eruptions behind a pure realm.

At the heart of Chinese ink painting is the historical development of literati painting. It began with the first of the "six principles of Chinese painting" established by Xie He of the Liu Song and Southern Qi dynasties, "Spirit Resonance,"² which became the standard for appreciation of painting. In the Tang Dynasty, Wang Wei's painting opened up a new poetic realm that spelled the spirit of Zen and a transcendent view of nature. Su Dongpo of the Song Dynasty em-

phasized the encapsulation of essence over form, stating that "judging a painting by its faithfulness of portrayal is akin to seeing from the eyes of an unlearned child."³ Zhao Mengfu of the Yuan Dynasty pinpointed "the shared genesis of calligraphy and painting"⁴ in his theories of the aesthetics and methods of painting. Ming Dynasty painter Dong Qichang's views on the "Northern and Southern schools"⁵ of painting had a profound impact on the history of Chinese art. The development of this aesthetic direction shaped the formal characteristics and spiritual qualities of literati painting. There were changes as well as elements that remained unchanged in the themes, styles of expression and the identity of the painter, as the genre evolved throughout history. It is precisely between these changing and unchanging elements that Chinese ink painting has continued to thrive.

Tongson's study and understanding of tradition permeates and shines through his work, as the echoes between the classical and the contemporary reveal the essence that is "unchanging." As we look at his work, the emotion elicited by the visuals is the answer to this question: how the changes in his spiritual character, his knowledge, his surroundings, and his imagination of artistic ideal intersected, clashed and collided within the artist. The tremendous visual impact guides us to go beyond what is seen—we see a solitary figure who retreats from the world and immerses himself in introspection, like someone who spends his days observing

3. From the first of *Two Poems on Paintings of Flowers by Registrar Wang from Yanling* by Su Shi (Su Dongpo).

4. Inscription by Zhao Mengfu for *Withered Trees, Bamboos and Rocks*: "The brushwork of the rocks resembles the flying white, and that of the trees recalls the seal script in calligraphy. One must master the eight principles if they are to paint the essence of bamboos. To grasp this point, one must be aware that calligraphy and painting share the same genesis."

5. *Notes from the Painting-Meditation Studio*, Scroll 2, by Dong Qichang: "There are the Southern and Northern schools in Zen, and the divide originated in the Tang Dynasty; the divide between the Southern and Northern schools of painting also originated in the Tang Dynasty."

2. Su Shi (Su Dongpo): "Looking at Wang Wei's poetry, I see painting; looking at his painting, I see poetry."

the nature in a Bodhidharma. It is the spiritual refinement that goes beyond the visual realm to connect the past and the present—it is "change."

In *Spiritual Mountains 1* (2010) (fig. 2) for instance, the landscape is robustly delineated in firm, masterly crafted ink strokes, yet it resounds with a vibrant energy. The composition of his painting brings to mind the work of Gong Xian, hinting at an artistic vein that has run through landscape painting from the classical era to the present. He used ink blocks and dots to create an overlapping texture, yet the painting rings with spiritual resonance. He painted with his palms, fingers and fingernails in place of brush; the lines and ink flow between a radiant intensity and a rich solidness, while the interweaving of ink lines skirts between a gentle touch and a dazzling sharpness. All this reveals a spontaneous artistry. In his work from this period, the artist's command of the language of ink has reached an impeccable height. His ink language and spiritual world have merged, and it stems from and transcends technique at the same time. The composition of ink in his painting unfolds between large blocks of black and white, and between intricate and rhythmic layers; it is filled with passion and sensitivity. Yet the world that emerges in his work is one of light and transcendence.

One can glimpse further into this world in *Spiritual Mountains 4* (2011), where the landscape rendered in thick ink is accentuated by washes of pale blue and light ochre. The work features ink as the main color over the color washes. The overall composition conveys a sharp rhythm; it unveils a touch of richness in the wilderness, and a feeling of lightness amid heaviness. On the one hand, the mountains seem to call to one another; the shimmering lines in between evoke the surging wind or the clouds, and movement or stillness, as well as rings of solemnness in the landscape. Yet amid the density of black, the mountains stand like two reflections of the joy of nature, with touches of childhood innocence and youthful curiosity. On the other hand, the mountains converge from the front to back and left to right, stirring hints



Fig. 3 *Spiritual Mountains 5* (2012)
Ink & color on paper
70.3 x 38 in

of clashes in an unusual composition that reflects the artist's state of mind at the time.

Spiritual Mountains 5 (2012) (fig. 3) is another revelation. The portrayal of the landscape hints at the classical and elevated perspective, yet it also appears to be born of a spontaneous composition. The mountains are lit up by faint washes of cinnabar and pale yellow, contrasted with malachite that springs from the layering and coalescence of colors. The malachite flows, and the color of ink runs. In the painting, the colors and ink make a harmonious unison in places; they strike discordant notes at other moments, particularly in the layering and coalescence of colors. This intentional discordance or the disregard for discordance, and the graffiti-like interweaving of dots, lines and ink blocks all allude to the artist's state of mind at that moment. It evokes a solitary yet graceful figure, who treads beyond the norms of the mundane world. Perhaps this is the spiritual realm of Wesley Tongson, the sage.

Fig. 4 *Plum 3* (2010)
Ink on paper
49 x 97.6 in



Fig. 5 *Plum 4* (2011)
Ink on paper
48.8 x 97.5 in

Tongson's painting, such as *Plum 3* (2010) (fig. 4), *Plum 4* (2011) (fig. 5), *Plum 5* (2011) (plate 13), *Orchid 1* (2010) and *Lotus 2* (2010) encapsulate a distinctly personal language and emotions, as well as the characteristics of the era. These finger ink paintings exemplify Shitao's words: "Brush and ink should be a reflection of the time." The works revolve around traditional subjects that have been rendered with utmost fineness by the literati throughout the ages. We see the works harkening back to history, such as the art of Xu Wei and Bada Shanren. Yet in these works we also see a unique approach to composition, where the scattering, wildness and capture of the subject's essence is elaborate and intense. One feels a strong sense of motion and ritual in looking at his works; it is the process and channel for his spiritual surges, as these flowers in his late work bear the imprints of his life and time.

Be it the landscape paintings, calligraphy, or flower and plant paintings in Tongson's late oeuvre of finger ink and ink works, the imagery emanates a tremendous momentum and a surging, unstoppable vitality, as if it was the artist's final strike at the zenith of life. He used larger or delicate surfaces of his body to create, shifting between sharp and gentle touches, dots and planes, lines and blocks, plainness and colors at a fast or slow pace, with complete spontaneity and impeccable artistry. His body and mind were one with painting: in these works, the mountains are real, or illusory, and finally both; so are the flowers, birds and plants, as well as his calligraphy.

At this point, Tongson's art had reached an elevated realm.

2. Transformation and sublimity

There are two distinct artistic veins in Tongson's work. The first has its roots in traditional Chinese calligraphy and paint-

ing; it encompasses the calligraphic structure and abstraction, and the language and temperament of literati painting. The second stems from the visual perspectives and experimentation in modern painting; it includes color, texture and tension, the trials and errors as well as discoveries in painting. Tongson's manifold understanding of culture and religion, his intellectual sensitivity and its development, his studies and travels to different countries, and the purity that marks his temperament and his focus on his work—all this overlaps, collides and condenses until it reaches sublimity, unveiling the varied facets of his works from different periods.

His early works show both the imprints of his study of traditional painting techniques and the trends of the era. For instance, he was deeply inspired by Zhang Daqian, whom he revered; he was also influenced by Liu Guosong's (b.1932) revolutionizing of materials and technical experimentation in painting. His works from this period highlight the experimentation with materials, splash ink and color, and the external form.

It is reflected in the expansiveness of form in *Water Rhyme* (1988) (plate 18) and *Approaching Rainstorm* (1988) (plate 19). This expressive style in the artist's work matured throughout the 1990s, as seen in *Beauty of Tranquility* (1992). The colors gravitate towards a subtle restraint, yet the imagery spells a tremendous presence. It echoes the spirit of Zhang Daqian's color ink painting, with hints of the misty background color in Mi Fu's (1051-1107) style of landscape painting. In this work, we can grasp Tongson's expression of his conception of landscape, while the external form embodies the pursuit of greater distances in the artist's mind. *Landscape 11* (1988) (plate 2) and *Landscape 10* (1988) (plate 1) portray hues that resound with Chinese sensibilities as well as symbolism. The composition of the

work is grand in its richness and purity, and with the resonance of ink shining through the solid colors.

In Tongson's work, calligraphy is a structural element that is concealed or distinct at different moments. In *God's Light* (1992) (plate 5) and *Blessed Rain* (1992) (plate 4), the form of the Chinese calligraphic aesthetics comes into unison with the overall composition, spelling nuances of calligraphy and text. The painting is read as it is seen; the image alludes to calligraphic writing, the mountain or the landscape, while it also carries philosophical reflections. This creative format of instilling meaning into form originated from approaches in traditional Chinese folk art, lending to the work a sense of familiarity and vitality.

His ink and colored bamboos harken back to the brushwork and execution of ink in traditional literati painting, while also reflecting the spirits and sensibilities of the times. In *Bamboo 1* (1993) and *Bamboo 2* (1997), the malachite bamboo leaves and ink bamboos reveal Tongson's attention to the traditional artistic language, and his revamping of traditional motifs in painting.

During this period, Tongson arrived at a gradual change in his understanding of hue and ink; it is the shift from vibrancy to plainness, a process that hints at retrospection on the past. *The Rugged Path* (1997) (plate 21) is a representative work from this period. It features pure ink colors in evoking an abstract realm that echoes the artist's life—the climb up the rugged path is one through an abysmal, deserted, vast and solitary land. *Plum 1* (1993) also conveys a similar state of mind and emotional realm.

Looking at Tongson's oeuvre, one sees how his pursuits throughout different periods enrich the world of his paintings. Yet ink remains the crux of his work, and the background color could be interpreted through these traditional aesthetic notions—that calligraphy and painting share the same genesis, and a painting should possess an intrinsic essence and vitality. The qualities of his character and his artistic practice—one that is filled with fierce, striking sparks—coalesce into a coherence that slowly reveals itself, as the grandest revelations are distilled into utter simplicity. In the end, like I mentioned before, his late works show the surges of genius.

Tongson's work may seem like an unexpected discovery in

Chinese ink painting, but it is not. It embodies the "change" of brush and ink that moves with the times, and it also contains elements that are "unchanging" and which are grounded in the historical development of the art. Further, it is the manifestation of his exceptional life journey.

WU SONG

Born in 1962, Wu Song enrolled in the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in 1979, and the China Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1990. Since 2000, he has been Professor at the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute. From 2002 to 2015, he served as the Director of Graduate Studies at Sichuan Fine Arts Institute. He is currently the Director of Wu Song Chinese Ink Studio at the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute. He is a 2018 visiting scholar at the University of California, Berkeley.

His main research and professional areas include the contemporariness of traditional Chinese ink, mixed media painting, and arts education. He is currently a visiting scholar at the Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, Berkeley. His work has been widely exhibited and recognized with various accolades and collected by museums and private collectors. It was featured in the Venice Biennale 2013, collected by the British Museum in 1996, and awarded the Prize of the Italian Republic in 1995.

His major publications include *State—Works and Education* (Jiangxi Fine Arts Publishing House, 2017), *Onsite—Arts Education and the Creative Ecology* (Jiangxi Fine Arts Publishing House, 2016), *The Art of Mural* (Chongqing University Publishing House, 2016), and *The Art Experience* (Hebei Fine Arts Publishing House, 2009).

中國傳統水墨的當代性轉換個案研究——唐家偉的水墨作品

吳松

唐家偉個人畫展〈唐家偉：旅塵〉，2018年10月12日-2019年3月9日在舊金山中華文化研究中心舉行。在國際化情境中，在中國傳統水墨的當代性轉換這個話題中，他的水墨繪畫是一個特殊案例，值得研究。

一、唐家偉的作品是水墨繪畫的一個意外

唐家偉^①的作品是水墨繪畫的一個意外。他的書法，我視其為他繪畫作品的一部分，他那凌厲鋒芒的筆劃，令人想起宋徽宗的瘦金體，尖利、敏感、脆弱，淋漓盡致的顯示了藝術家的精神氣質，雖然，楷體、草體，形態各不相同，但你能清晰的感受到某種一致的東西；他的作品也令人想起封塔納（Lucio Fontana）（1899-1968年），封塔納在白色畫布上的幾刀，同樣的凌厲鋒芒，但卻是架上繪畫走出二維的歷史分野。而唐家偉的繪畫，在以指為筆，以甲為刀，在身體的延伸中讓我們看到了藝術家把指畫的技藝轉換成精神符號，超越了過往的中國指畫範疇，如他的《自古龍拳勝天下，尤說鳳眉定君心》（1995）（圖版6）（圖1）。唐家偉晚期的作品，一方面我們可以聯繫到中國文人畫的脈絡，比如和明代徐渭相比較；另一方面也可以對應西方的行動繪畫，他作品的書寫感、動作感，把中國古代文人的繪畫儀式轉換在當代的情境之中，這無疑是一種奇妙的穿越。

天才是常態的意外，藝術亦是如此，唐家偉用生命的旅程來印證了這樣的一個意外。儘管如此，在他濃縮的生命與藝術的旅程中我們還是可以從幾個方面找到這個意外的原因。從他少年時期開始貫穿一生的身體器質和精神氣質的演變；多元的宗教文化認知，包括基督教、佛教、道教，以及接觸到的伊斯蘭教，特別是禪的影響；對傳統藝術，主要是傳統水墨畫的系統學習，對書畫鑑賞的了解；一段時間對大千潑彩的痴迷，對水墨材料的技藝實驗；在西方藝術學院的學習，對現代主義以來藝術的理解。諸多原因中，我們看到唐家偉內心衝突、尋找自己、摸索路徑的痕跡以及晚期作品的噴發，由此，我們理解這個意外就有了一個來龍去脈。因此，他的作品對傳統水墨畫的突破不僅在於形式語言層面，更在於他直面自己的心靈世界，讓我

們看到一個真實的、掙扎的、磐涅的靈魂，讓我們看到一個潔靜世界後面的煎熬與澎湃的過程。

中國水墨畫，主要以文人畫的歷史脈絡為代表。自南齊謝赫的「六法」第一要之「氣韻生動」^②的品畫標準，唐王維的詩畫意境的禪意和超然像外的山水自然觀，宋蘇東坡「論畫以形似，見與兒童鄰」^③的寫意形象觀，元趙孟頫「書畫同源」^④的美學特徵與繪畫方法論，明董其昌的「南北宗」^⑤畫論對美術史觀的影響，這樣一個美學取向的脈絡，基本塑造了一個水墨文人畫的形式特徵和精神品質。它的繪畫主題、表現方式和作者身份，在歷史的演變中，有改變有不變。而中國水墨繪畫的生命延綿正是在這變與不變之中呈現的。

唐家偉對傳統的學習和個人理解，在他的作品中有自然的流露和體現，這是古今脈絡的聯繫，有一種「不變」的氣息；而唐家偉的精神氣質的演變，知識結構的演變，周圍環境的演變，個人對藝術理想的想像，這些在藝術家的內心是怎樣疊加、衝撞和煎熬的，當我們面對他的

圖1《自古龍拳勝天下，尤說鳳眉定君心》（1995）



圖2《靈山 1》（2010）

作品的時候，那種視覺真實感便是答案。那種強烈的視覺力量，把我們引向視覺表面的背後，我們看到一個孤獨奮鬥者，他閉關自問，彷彿於一個道場之中，看山看水看石頭，這是視覺之外的，試圖打通古今的修為，這是「變」。

比如，他的《靈山1》（2010）（圖2），畫中山水若鐵鑄一般，墨跡老辣，然而卻氣象靈動。他的畫面佈局恍若龔半千，從中我們可見其山水的古今脈絡。他用大大小小的墨塊、墨點、層層疊疊，然而畫面卻氣韻通透。他以掌以指以甲代筆，用線用墨，恣意揮灑，或凌厲鋒芒，或飽滿醇厚，墨線間鈍利交錯卻如繞指之柔，如劍鋒之利，運用自如。可見這一階段作者把握水墨語言的功力已到了一個很高的境界。他的水墨語言與精神靈界的合為一體，是在於技又是超乎於技的。他的作品，其水墨的置陳布勢，大黑大白，層層疊疊，頓挫纏繞，充滿著激情和敏感，然而他呈現出的卻是一個明朗的超凡脫俗的世界。

又如他的《靈山4》（2011）（圖3），濃墨山水中染淡青染淺赭，作品以墨色為主，染色次之，畫面的整體節奏明朗，蒼茫中見滋潤，凝重中見揮灑。一方面山勢俯仰照應，山體間線條炫動，若疾風若祥雲，若行若立，神態儼然，黑壓壓中有兩組天趣之松姿態屹立，見童真，若少年顧盼；一方面前山後山，上下左右擠壓聳立，顯衝突之狀，佈局上出乎常態，反映了作者當時的心境。

再如他的《靈山5》（2012）（圖4），山水似佛借用了高遠之望的透視古法，然而又似乎是隨意置陳。畫中山體略施硃砂和淺黃，之後運用了濃重的積色石綠，石綠順勢流淌，墨色恣意揮灑。畫面的色相墨相有融合之處，又有刻意的生硬和間離的地方，特別是積色的部分，這種刻意的生澀呈現，或對生澀之處的視而不見，以及彷彿塗鴉般的點線以及墨塊的交織，無不反映出他

當時的心境，孤寂的，卻翩翩然，獨行獨步於常態之外，那也許就是山斗道人唐家偉所在的靈界世界。

唐家偉的《梅3》（2010）、《梅花千夢4》（2011）、《梅5》（2011）（圖版13）、《蘭1》（2010）（圖5）、《蓮2》（2010）等，有著濃烈的個人語彙、個人情感以及時代特徵。這些指墨所應證的，是筆墨與時代的關係。他的這些作品的題材是傳統的，是已被歷代文人騷客演繹得淋漓盡致的。我們從中可以尋見歷史的脈絡，比如徐渭，比如八大，進而在他的這些作品中，我們卻看到了不一樣的佈局，那是在構成中的打散、狂放寫意，鋪陳而強烈。在他的作品面前你能感受到強烈的動作和儀式感，那是他精神噴發的過程和管道，因而他晚期的這些花卉有了明確的時代與個人印跡。

唐家偉晚期的一系列大尺幅的指墨水墨作品，無論是山

圖3《靈山 4》（2011）



圖4《靈山 5》（2012）



水、書法還是花卉植物，畫面氣象廣大，精力噴發，力破萬鈞，彷彿人生高潮的最後一擊。他用身體的大小觸面，或利或柔，或點或面，或線或塊，或素或彩，或疾或徐，已達到隨心所欲的境界。他的身心與繪畫一體，畫山是山，畫山不是山，畫山還是山，花鳥植物亦如是，書法亦如是。

此時，唐家偉的作品已入化境。

二、唐家偉作品的演變與昇華

唐家偉作品有兩個清晰的語言脈絡。其一是源於中國傳統書畫，包括書法的結構和抽象，包括文人畫的語法和氣質；其二是源於現代繪畫的視覺觀和實驗性，包括色彩、質感與張力，包括繪畫的試錯與發現。唐家偉多元的文化認知和宗教理解，個人的思覺器質及其演變，跨國的學藝與遊藝的經歷，以及他專注單純的性情與工作狀態，如此這些疊合在一起，交織、衝突、沉澱與昇華，形成了他不同時期的作品面貌。

他的早期作品，在對傳統繪畫技法研習的同時，也受到時代風潮的影響，比如他尊崇的張大千（1899-1983年）的影響，比如受到劉國松（生於1932）繪畫材料革新的影響，以及技法的實驗等，這一時期他的作品注重材料試驗，潑彩撞墨，形式外化。

比如《水韻》（1988）（圖版18）、《山雨欲來》（1988）（圖版19），作品形式鋪張，酣暢淋漓。進入到九十年代，他的這一風格日趨成熟。比如《寂靜之光》（1992），顏色開始節制，氣象卻很舒展。作品呈現出張大千彩墨繪畫的神韻，亦隱約可見米家煙雨的底色。在這個作品中，我們可以理解到唐家偉自然山水觀的表達，在外形式下，他的心境試圖要追得更遠。比如《山水11》（1988）（圖版2）、《山水10》（1988）（圖版1），作品呈現出我們熟悉的有中國意味的色相，具有象徵性。作品構成大方，飽滿單純，重彩中又水韻墨彰。

在唐家偉的作品中書法一直是一個或隱或顯的結構性因素。比如《神光》（1992）（圖版5）、《思雨下降》（1992）（圖版4），中國書法美學的外形態與畫面整體佈局有機的結合在一起，有書意，有文達，可讀可觀，似字似山似景亦載道，這種表形達意的作品格式來源於中國傳統民間藝術的工作方法，令人親近而有生命力。

而他的墨竹彩竹，源於傳統文人畫的筆法墨法，同時又有自己和時代的面貌與特點。比如《竹1》（1993）、《竹2》（1997），比如畫中的石綠竹葉和墨竹，它們顯示出唐家偉對傳統語法的用心，以及在傳統題材上的繪畫新意。

這一階段唐家偉對於色相墨像的理解與運用開始有了一

個漸變，那是由絢爛趨於素淡的過程，這個過程似乎是回望探古。《崎嶇之道》（1997）（圖版21）是這個階段的象徵性作品，它以單純的墨色呈像出抽象的意境，猶如作者的人生，攀爬在崎嶇之道上，幽冥、荒寂、曠達、孤傲。《梅1》（1993）傳達出的也正是這樣的心境和意境。

縱觀唐家偉的作品，不同階段的追求豐滿了他的繪畫世界，但作品的主軸是水墨，其底色可以從書畫同源和氣韻生動的傳統美學觀來詮釋。他個人的生命氣質與左沖右突的藝術實踐，厚積薄發，大道至簡。最終，在如前所述的他的晚期作品中呈現出天才般的噴發。

唐家偉的作品似乎是水墨繪畫的一個意外，然而卻不是一個意外。他的作品，是筆墨隨時代之「變」的結果，亦有歷史脈絡之「不變」的原因，更是他個人特殊的生命旅程的呈現，這便是唐家偉水墨繪畫的藝術價值和獨特意義所在。

圖5《蘭 1》(2010)



注①：唐家偉（1957-2012）。1957出生於香港，1963-1973就讀於香港聖保羅男女小學和中學，1973就讀於加拿大班特伍德中學，15歲時確診患上思覺失調症，1974開始學習傳統中國畫，1977畢業於香港國際學校，同年移居加拿大多倫多，受業於國畫名家顧青瑤女士，進入加拿大安大略藝術學院學習西方繪畫，受國畫大師張大千啟發，創作潑彩水墨，1981回流香港，隨黃仲方老師學習中國畫。1985開始在香港、加州巴沙迪納、加州舊金山、倫敦、北京等地舉辦個人畫展和參加聯展。2012在香港逝世。他的作品被世界各地公共和私人收藏，包括澳洲、加拿大、中國、日本、韓國、新加坡、泰國、英國、美國和香港、台灣等地。

注②：蘇軾：「味摩詰之詩，詩中有畫；觀摩詰之畫，畫中有詩」

注③：蘇軾《書鄴陵王主簿所畫折枝二首》其一

注④：趙孟頫題《枯木竹石圖》：「石如飛白木如籀，寫竹還須八法通，若還有人會此，須知書畫本來同。」

注⑤：董其昌《畫禪室隨筆》卷二：「禪家有南北二宗，唐時始分。畫之南北二宗，亦唐時分也。」

吳松

吳松，1962年生。1979年就讀於四川美術學院，1990年就讀於中國美術學院。2000年起任四川美院教授，2005年—2012年任四川美院研究生部主任。現為四川美院吳松水墨綜合工作室主持。2018年加州大學伯克利分校訪問學者。

主要研究和工作領域：中國傳統水墨的當代性轉換。綜合材料繪畫。藝術教育。目前是加州大學伯克利分校中國研究中心訪問學者，致力於國際背景下中國水墨畫的發展。作品廣泛展出和獲獎，並被博物館和私人藏家收藏，包括2013威尼斯雙年展展出、1996年大英博物館收、1995年獲意大利共和國繪畫獎等。

主要著作：

《狀態-作品與教學》江西美術出版社，2017。

《現場-藝術教育與創作生態》江西美術出版社，2016。

《壁畫藝術》重慶大學出版社，2016。

《藝術經驗》河北美術出版社，2009。

WESLEY TONGSON'S SECLUDED WORLD OF INK

Mary-Ann Milford-Lutzker, Ph.D.

Wesley Tongson, Ink Artist

Wesley Tongson (1957–2012) took the name “Mountainscape Teacher” (Shandou Laoshi) and, in his later years, signed his paintings as “Mountain Taoist” (Shandou Daoren). By doing so, he identified himself with the ancient *wenren hua*, literati, tradition of Chinese scholar-amateur calligraphers and painters that can be traced back as early as the Six Dynasties period (220–581 CE), when the creative use of the brush was first recognized as the critical form of expression by China’s educated elite. Since then *shu fa*, calligraphy, the art and method of beautiful writing, has been considered the most important form of Chinese aesthetics. This is because the same brush that is used for writing is also used for painting, and it is understood that the strength of the brushed line imparts a sense of the creator. None of this was lost on Wesley Tongson, who in the tradition of an educated young student studied and practiced writing and painting from his earliest years.

Above all else, Tongson was an impassioned artist who wrote and painted every day of his life, ultimately disbanding the use of the brush so that the ink and pigments flowed literally from his hands, fingers and nails. He was following the canon of the *Liu fa*, *Six Elements of Painting*, written by Xie He in the Sixth Century in his *Guhua pinlu* (*Old Record of the Classifications of Painters*). Xie He’s first element requires that brush strokes, whether written or painted, be filled with *qi*, spirit resonance, which means that they should possess a profound sense of vitality; the second element discusses the “Bone Method” which is the way of using the brush, the handle of which is considered an extension of the artist’s own hand. Following these ancient canons, Tongson adhered closely to the tenets of classical forms of expression, as both his calligraphy and his paintings convey a deep sense of conviction that can only come from a pure heart.

Ink as an Instrument of Political Dissent

When considering Tongson’s art, it is important to recognize the political environment that existed in the second half of the Twentieth Century. Mainland China was embroiled in Mao Zedong’s Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), and Great Britain’s 99-year lease on Hong Kong was to be terminated in 1997. Chinese identity for those living in Hong Kong was in flux as there was no sense of cultural stability for the foreseeable future. It was this climate of uncertainty that faced Tongson during his formative and most impressionable years, and it was during this time that he sought comfort in painting his Taoist inspired landscapes and calligraphic Zen aphorisms, as *wenren* artists of earlier times had done before him. The parallels with history are strong. During times of invasion and duress, intellectuals, particularly those who worked at the Imperial Court, would often choose to take leave of their official duties and escape to remote areas where they could live secluded lives, often choosing to be close to Taoist and Buddhist communities. Tongson’s own interest in Taoist mysticism and Zen Buddhism included Christianity; these great religious traditions gave him spiritual support and provided him with insights into the deeper workings of nature, bringing him closer to a place of inner peace.

During the Southern Song period (1127–1279 CE), disillusionment with political transgressions led to the rising interest amongst many intellectuals in the meditative Zen (Chan) sect of Buddhism. It was a time when the important painters Liang Kai (early 13th century) and Muqi (mid-13th century), broke with the courtly professional styles of painting that used colorful pigments and finely detailed outlines, to develop their own strong, individualistic and expressive brush strokes, by means of pure black ink.” They experimented in the unfettered spiritual environments of Buddhist temples



Fig. 1 Detail of *Spiritual Mountains 8* (2010)

and Taoist retreats. A similar situation arose in the 13th and 14th centuries with the invasion of China by the Mongols led by Genghis Khan, whose grandson, Kubilai Khan (r. 1260–94) established the Yuan Dynasty (1260–1368 CE).

I-min, Left-over Subjects

During this time of oppression under the Mongols, many Confucian scholars refused to serve at the Khanbalik court out of loyalty to the fallen Sung Dynasty, they were known as *i-min*, or left-over subjects, many of whom settled in the area around Hangzhou. They were scholars, calligraphers, poets and painters, who rejected not only official service, but also the perceived weak styles of the Southern Sung court painters. The Yuan period paintings of Qian Xuan (c. 1235–1300), Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322), Huang Kung-wang (1269–1354), and Ni Zan (1301–1374), etc. were critiques of the overly refined, colorful professional works of the past, and as such, today in the twenty-first century their spirits and attitudes can be recognized as being thoroughly modern in their dissenting positions. It is in this sense that Tongson, although not overtly political, fits the role of the *i-min*. He was a distinctive and accomplished artist who understood the tenets of traditional ink painting. He also had the

courage to paint in the highly intellectual ink styles forbidden during the Cultural Revolution. A case could be made that he had the freedom to do so because he was living in Hong Kong; however, having been trained in both Chinese and Western forms of artistic expression, he joined an older distinctive group of contemporary twentieth century artists who were adhering to the traditional values of ink painting whilst exploring new forms of expression. Artists of the early 20th century, including Pan Tianshou (1897–1971), Zhang Daqian (1899–1983), and Lui Shou Kwan (1919–1975), were faced with the demise of the old imperial order that had been sustained by the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912) and the opening up of China to the rest of the world. It was during this tumultuous time that new forms of aesthetic expression were introduced that inspired them to rethink the position of traditional ink painting. They experimented by using innovative methods and ideas, many of which were influenced by the introduction of colorful Western oil painting, yet they never strayed from ink as their principal source of artistic expression. This was also the case with the next generation of younger artists, many of whom lived and studied in the West, including Arnold Chang (b. 1954, New York) a contemporary of Tongson’s and a student of the renowned experimental ink artist C.C. Wang (Chi-Chien Wang) (1907–2003). Chang, like Tongson, faced similar challenges in his efforts to infuse modern (read Western) approaches into his traditional art through collaboration and photography.

Landscapes

Fundamental to studying traditional Chinese painting is the acknowledgment of the hierarchy of subject-matter. Ink paintings of the natural environment follow that of the gods and spiritual beings and are considered the most important form of aesthetic expression. Landscape painting, *shan-shui hua*, translates as “mountain and water painting.” The natural world was believed to be the sacred abode of *xian*, Taoist immortals, who inhabit the mountains, hills, rivers, lakes, and islands in the oceans. Tongson painted many landscapes in a variety of styles, most of which were done in the classical vertical format, to be read from the foreground at the bottom, up to the mountains and clouds, the abode of deities, at the top. Some are named by consecutive numbers, such as *Mountain 1* (1995) (plate 20) and *Mountain 2* (2001), or *Landscape 3* (2001), and *Landscape 6* (2003), etc.; however, most have distinctive Taoist or Zen titles such as *The Rugged Path* (1997) (plate 21), or the series of

Spiritual Mountains, in pure ink, including *Spiritual Mountains 3* (2010), or the more colorful *Spiritual Mountains 4* (2011) and *Spiritual Mountains 5* (2012), in which the blue-green and gold colors are highly referential to Tang Dynasty (618-906 CE) early landscapes, the most well-known of which is the painting of *Emperor Minghuang Xuanzong's Journey to Shu* (c. early 8th century). Following paths through rocks, over rivers, and up through mountain slopes is a reassuring experience for viewers; however, the heavily-inked rocks and mountains in *Spiritual Mountains 4*, portend a deep sense of anxiety that is even more prevalent in *Spiritual Mountains 8* (2010) (plate 11) (fig. 1), in which Tongson dispenses with any color that would have relieved the intensity of his feelings. His black ink landscapes recall those defiantly painted by Li Keran (1907-1989) during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Yet the most intense landscapes are those he painted with his fingers and nails such as *Spiritual Mountains 3*, that harken back to the influence of the earlier masters Pan Tianshou (1897-1971) and Zhang Daqian (1899 -1983), who worked in the spontaneous *pomo*, splashed ink, style that offered a freedom of expression from the highly controlled *cun*, texture strokes, that form the foundation of traditional ink painting.

Calligraphic Mantra Characters

Throughout his life, Tongson sought solace in Taoist mysticism, Zen Buddhism and Christian teachings. In nature he felt a deep sense of spirituality as is evidenced by often calling his landscapes "Spiritual Mountains." This is palpable in a series of paintings he made in the 1990s wherein he adhered to the ritual tradition of writing characters and syllables that would be used in meditation as sacred mantras in Christian and Zen Buddhist practice. The calligraphic character in *The Light* (1992) (plate 3) is boldly written in large grey ragged strokes that impart a sense of energy which make the character seem to float above the green, pink and blue marbled background; however, the darkness of the black ink appears to fade in the strength of "The Light of Christ" that can also reference the symbolism of the Buddha's Enlightenment. In another painting, *God's Light* (1992) (plate 5), the characters have become illegible; the highly expressive flying white, *feibai*, strokes are dissolving in the intensity of *God's Light* and appear to be immersed in the pale aqua-colored marbled waters. The grey characters in *Blessed Rain* (1992) (plate 4) are written with a sense of scattered frenzy with *pomo* raindrops falling over and be-

tween the lines onto the blue marbled background. Three paintings that have specific Buddhist references are *Ksitigarbha* (1992) (fig.2), *Boundless Compassion* (1993), and *Buddhadharma* (1997), all of which are painted with a chaotic fury, making the characters virtually illegible. The dark palette of *Ksitigarbha* references the *bodhisattva* who lights the way for all those in hell and is the guardian of deceased children. The lines of *Boundless Compassion* appear to spiral with great intensity as they represent the enormity of the work of the Buddha and *bodhisattvas* as they seek to save all sentient beings. *Buddhadharma* is written on two boards with the same energized movements witnessed in the other paintings in this series; here the reference is to Bodhi Dharma, a Central Asian Buddhist monk who brought the teachings of the Buddha from India to China in 520 CE, and introduced the meditative sect of Chan, known as Zen in Japan.

Trees and Flowers

Trees and flowers are imbued with significant meanings that remove them from the purely decorative; hence Tongson's paintings of the *Suihan Sanyou*, "Three Friends of Winter," that is, the pine, plum, and bamboo, convey strong associ-



Fig. 2 *Ksitigarbha* (1992)
Ink & color on board
23.2 x 15.1 in



Fig. 3 Detail of *Lotus 3* (2011)

ations with longevity, courage, endurance and loyalty, all of which are based upon Confucian values. Often these three "friends" are painted together to reinforce their meanings; however, Tongson made many large paintings of each individually, allowing the values of each to be expressed in its own way. Evergreen pine trees that withstand the bitter cold of winters are enduring symbols of longevity, especially when paired with rocks. In *Pine 2* (2010) (plate 16), Tongson pairs a rather stiff upright pine with a rugged vertical rock; heavily inked pine needles that he made with his nails, provide dense canopies over the rough surfaces of the rock and the tree trunk, denoting the tenacity and age of both. *Pine 3* (2011) (plate 17) is a painting of a branch that reaches diagonally across the surface of the paper with its pine needles appearing to explode in star-like bursts. In this pine branch there is a lightness and dynamic quality to the strokes that Tongson made with his nails to define the needles. The whole painting exudes a sense of energy that contrasts with the rigid, static *Pine 2*.

The evergreen bamboo, known for its tensile strength and ability to withstand the rigors of winter, represents vitality, endurance and longevity. It bends in strong winds but does not break, thus it symbolizes humility, fidelity and integrity. Painting the stalks and leaves of bamboo provides the foundation for calligraphic brush strokes so is known to all who practice writing and painting. On the two boards of *Bamboo 1* (1993), Tongson captures the tensile strength of the vertical trunks as they are blown in the wind, and one can almost

hear their delicate spiky leaves rustling against each other.

Plum blossoms, the third of the "Three Friends of Winter," are symbols of perseverance and purity; they bloom in the midst of winter on gnarled old trees, with the promise of rebirth and longevity. Tongson painted them in a variety of styles, from the heavily inked dense abstract rendition in *Plum 2* (2004), to the horizontal *Plum 3* (2010), wherein, using his nails, the strokes virtually fly over the surface of the paper, barely touching it, giving the lines a sense of movement as if dancing through the air. It has that same sense of spontaneity and immediacy that can be detected in *Pine 3*. In other paintings of plum blossoms, such as *Red Plums Over the Earth* (1993) (plate 12) and *Plum 1* (1993), Tongson introduces a joyful sense of vitality through the auspicious red blossoms that are splashed on in the highly spontaneous *pomo* style, as they alight on the snow-covered, angular branches.

Lotus, the sacred Buddhist flower that connotes spiritual purity, was a particularly important image for Tongson. His paintings of this beautiful flower are intense and dark. *Lotus 1* (2002) is an exercise in stark contrasts between the white petals of the flower and a leaf that drapes down like a skirt, against the intense solid black background. *Lotus 2* (2010) is a vertical painting in which black lotuses are barely visible against the dark grey wash. In both these works there is a premonition of foreboding. This darkness is taken further in *Lotus 3* (2011) (plate 15) (fig. 3) where the whole surface

of the paper is filled with seemingly chaotic black ink brush strokes. Any sense of spiritual enlightenment seems to have dissipated. Even in the towering vertical painting of *Lotus 4* (1995) (plate 14) (fig. 4), the flower has passed its prime. It seems that the spiritual awakening that Tongson sought from Zen Buddhism is beyond his reach.

Calligraphy and Ink

Tongson expressed himself in distinctive and personal ways through his control of ink, whether with a brush, his hands, fingers or nails. He excelled in different styles of calligraphy as can be seen in his large character work *Calligraphy 4* (2011), which is done with his fingers, wherein he writes the characters in a boldly splattered ink *li-shu*, clerical script, that have the energy of a written Zen aphorism. *Calligraphy 2* (2009), on the other hand is also written with his fingers in the *li-shu* style; however, each character is clearly formed, with softly defined and rounded edges giving a more formal essence. In *Calligraphy 3* (2009) each character adheres to an invisible rectangular shape that is also evident in his pre-

ceding works. In this calligraphy he has executed it with a certain lightness and delicacy that is punctuated by heavier areas and splattered dots in his distinctly recognizable style.

Two outstanding examples of Tongson's Zen calligraphy are Buddhist in nature: *Everyone can see the omnipotence of the Buddha, His clear vision radiates from his inner self* (2011) (plate 7); and *With the prevalence of ink, arrogance subsides. We can observe the teachings of Buddha, whose wisdom is all-encompassing* (2011) (plate 8). In both of these large works, Tongson displays an almost lyrical sense of movement that can be traced down the vertical lines that are punctuated with alternating areas of dense black ink and delicate, swift *feibai* strokes. The message of the Buddha's teachings further adds to the intensity of these powerful calligraphies.

Perhaps Tongson's most distinctive calligraphy can be seen in *Of Old, The Dragon Conquered All and the Phoenix Calmed the Spirit* (1995) (plate 6). It is a strongly Taoist work written in the *tsao-shu*, cursive script, that exudes tremendous energy. Following each stroke becomes a visual dance for the viewer, wherein heavily inked areas abruptly twist and turn into flying white, *feibai*, strokes, and the finest, most delicate lines are as slender as silken threads. The result is an extraordinarily cohesive and compelling work of aesthetic achievement that captures the essence of the complementary powers of the dragon and the phoenix.

Tongson was the consummate ink artist. Limiting himself mostly to traditional literati themes, he experimented with different forms of painting, from highly linear and calligraphic to colorful intense washes. He was inventive in his methods of painting, yet stayed true to his commitment to ink as his ultimate form of aesthetic and spiritual expression. His paintings are defined by his commitment to the expressive potential of ink in the true spirit of Zen.

Fig. 4 Detail of *Lotus 4* (1995)



MARY-ANN MILFORD-LUTZKER

Mary-Ann Milford-Lutzker, Professor of Asian Art History, holds the Carver Chair in East Asian Studies, at Mills College. She received her Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. Her courses cover the ancient, classical and contemporary histories of the art of India, China, Japan and the Himalayas. The focus of her research is on the contemporary art of Asia, and on Asian-American artists, which resulted in her curating the first exhibition of contemporary Indian art to be held in the United States. In support of her work she has received many grants and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the Smithsonian Institute, and the American Institute for Indian Studies (AIIS). She has also curated exhibitions on the arts of India, China, Japan, Korea and Indonesia.

She has served on the Board of Directors of the College Art Association (CAA), 2005-2010, and on the Board of Directors of ASIANetwork, 2006-2009. She has also served on the Board of Directors of the American Council for Southern Asian Art (ACSAA) and the Society for the Art and Cultural Heritage of India (SACHI). She serves on the Advisory Committee for the Society for Asian Art of the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, and is on the Commission for Asian Contemporary Art, San Francisco. She currently serves on the CAA Art History Fellowship Committee. In 1995, she served as an NGO Delegate to the United Nations 4th International Conference on Women, in Beijing, China.

唐家偉的隱逸水墨

Mary-Ann Milford-Lutzker博士

水墨畫家唐家偉

唐家偉（1957-2012年）自稱「山斗老師」，後期在自己的畫作上以「山斗道人」落款。可見他以文人自居，文人畫的傳統可追溯自六代時期（220-581年），筆下的創作第一次被士人階層視為抒發性靈的重要媒介。自那以後，書法，或書寫的藝術和方法，皆成了中國美學中最重要的形式。因為毛筆不僅被用於書寫，也被用來作畫，這一筆一畫所蘊含的力量皆被認為是創作者本性的流露。而這一切都在自幼學習書法繪畫的唐家偉身上得到了延續。

更為重要的是，唐家偉是一名充滿激情，無一日不書不畫的藝術家。最終他棄用畫筆，任由水墨顏料在他的指尖流淌。他追隨謝赫於六世紀所著的《古畫品錄》中提出的六法論，六法中的第一條為「氣韻生動」，要求筆法無論在書寫或繪畫中都不失「氣」，即生動的氣度與韻味；而其二則討論的是「古法用筆」，講究的是作者運筆時如同活動自己的手一般靈活自如。通過遵循這些古老經典，唐家偉堅守著傳統表達形式的準則，他的書畫傳達的向來只有其純淨內心深處的信念。

水墨作為宣洩政治不滿的工具

在欣賞唐家偉的藝術時，我們有必要對20世紀後半葉的政治環境有所認識。中國大陸被捲入毛澤東發動的「文化大革命」（1966-1976年）中，香港由英國統治的「99年租約」於1997年到期。對於香港居民來說，中國身份是一個變化中的概念，在他們可見的未來中缺乏一種文化安定感。正是在唐家偉的性格形成時期，也是在他最易受影響的年歲裡，圍繞他的不穩定感促使他在受道教所啟發的山水風景畫和禪宗箴言書法中尋求慰藉，這與過去的文人藝術家們無甚不同。在遭遇侵略脅迫的日子裡，學者、尤其是在朝文官常常選擇辭官棄職，繼而歸隱偏遠山林，且常常與道士佛僧交往密切。唐家偉對於道教神秘主義和禪宗佛教的興趣還包容了基督教，這些偉大的宗教傳統給予了他精神支柱，助他深入了解大自然的深層運作，並將他帶向了其內心深處的祥和之地。

南宋時期（1127-1279年）對政治越界感到幻滅的諸多文

人學者對佛教禪宗教派的興趣愈發濃重；也是在這段時間，著名畫家梁楷（13世紀初期）和牧谿（13世紀中期）打破了精美細緻、用色富麗的宮廷畫風，用純黑墨法開創了極富影響力、個人主義以及表現力的筆墨技法。他們恰是在佛教寺廟和道教精修這樣自由放逸的環境中縱筆實驗。13世紀和14世紀時，成吉思汗率蒙古大軍攻打中國，其孫忽必烈（在位1260-1294年）建立元朝（1260-1368年），同樣的情形再度上演。

遺民

在受蒙古人壓迫的這段時期裡，諸多儒士出於對亡朝的忠義，不願赴大都侍奉元廷。他們被稱為遺民，即亡國之民，且其中的許多人留在了杭州一帶。他們中有學者、書法家、詩人與畫家，他們視之為可恥的不僅有仕途，還有南宋畫院那積弱不振的風格。錢選（1235-1300年）、趙孟頫（1254-1322年）、黃公望（1269-1354年）和倪瓚（1301-1374年）等元代畫家的作品皆是對過去崇尚細緻工筆和華麗色彩的宮廷繪畫的批判。可以說，他們處在反對立場所表現出的精神與態度即使在當今21世紀也是絕對現代的。從這個層面上來說，唐家偉雖沒有公開探討政治，卻實則一名遺民。他深知傳統水墨繪畫準則，是一位與眾不同、造詣非凡的藝術家。在文化大革命期間，他亦敢於用被禁的高知水墨風格作畫。人們固然可以說，他因生活在香港所以有這麼做的自由，然而，接受過東西兩方藝術表現形式訓練的他選擇加入了一個老一輩的20世紀當代藝術家的獨特群體，他們在探索新的表現形式的同時，堅持著水墨畫的傳統價值。包括潘天壽（1897-1975年）、張大千（1899-1983年）和呂壽琨（1919-1975年）在內的20世紀早期藝術家面對的是清朝所維繫的舊帝國秩序的消亡和中國對世界其他地區的開放。在這個動蕩的時代，他們了解到美學表達的全新形式，而這也轉而激發了他們對傳統水墨繪畫的重新思考。他們運用革新的方法和思想進行試驗，且其中多半受到豐富的西方油畫的影響，但他們從未偏離水墨作為藝術表達主要來源這一方向。他們後一輩的年輕藝術家們亦是如此，其中就不乏有西方生活學習經驗的藝術家，例如唐家偉的同輩、著名實驗水墨藝術家王己

千（1907-2003年）的學生張洪（生於1954年，紐約），就在通過與攝影藝術家合作的方式，努力將現代（以「西方」來解讀）方法融入至傳統藝術的過程中面臨著相似的挑戰。

山水畫

對主題等級之分的認同是中國傳統繪畫研究中至關重要的部分。描繪自然環境的水墨畫就猶如是在描摹神靈一般，故而被視為美學表達中最為重要的方面。自然界被認為是道教神仙的居所，他們棲身於山、丘、江、湖和海島之中。唐家偉創作的山水畫風格各異，但大多數以經典的立軸方式呈現，觀眾從底部的前景看起，往上看向山景雲霧，直至最頂端的仙居。不少唐家偉的作品以連續的數字命名，例如《山1》（1995）（圖版20）、《山2》（2001）或《山水3》（2001）、《山水6》（2003）等，但大部分有著獨特的道教、禪宗標題，例如《崎嶇之道》（1997）（圖版21）或他的《靈山》系列，其中既有僅用黑墨繪成的《靈山3》（2010），亦有色彩更為絢麗的《靈山4》（2011）和《靈山5》（2012），後者所用的青綠色和金色不難讓人聯想到以最負盛名的《明皇幸蜀圖》（約作於8世紀初）為代表的唐朝（618-906年）早期山水畫。對於觀者而言，隨著小徑沿著溪流向上行至山間是一場舒心暢快的體驗，然而像《靈山4》裡由濃墨堆積而成的山石卻散發著厚重的焦慮感，《靈山8》（2010）（圖版11）（圖1）中的可謂更甚，唐家偉捨棄了任何會削弱他情感的色彩。他的黑墨山水不禁令人回想起李可染（1907-1989年）在文化大革命期間（1966-1976年）不畏恫嚇批判畫出的作品。不過，情感最為激烈的仍是他用自己的手指和指甲繪出的《靈山3》，從中不難看出早年大師潘天壽和張大千對唐家偉的影響，二人皆喜以酣暢淋漓的潑墨法作畫，他們從傳統水墨畫的基石——需極強控制力的皴法中解脫出來，追求淋漓灑脫的表達自由。

書寫曼特羅

唐家偉這一生都在道教神秘主義、佛教禪宗和基督教教義



圖1 《靈山 8》（2010）

中尋求慰藉。他在大自然中感受到強烈的靈性。這一點從他為自己的山水畫命名為「靈山」中便可看出，在他20世紀90年代創作的一組系列繪畫中同樣顯而易見，他堅守著書寫在基督教和佛教禪宗的冥想修行中被用作真言、咒語的文字和音節的儀式傳統。他在《光》（1992）（圖版3）中用灰色的枯筆大膽書寫的大字散發著一種能量，使得字形仿佛漂浮在綠、粉、藍的大理石波紋背景之上，但與此同時，黑墨的陰鬱似乎在「基督之光」面前淡化，或許這也可被理解為佛祖啟蒙開化的象徵。而在另一幅畫作《神光》（1992）（圖版5）中，字跡已然不可辨認；極富表現力的飛白在強烈的《神光》下消散，浸沒在淺淡的水色波紋中。唐家偉在《恩雨下降》（1992）（圖版4）（圖2）中書寫的灰色大字凌亂癡狂，潑墨形成的兩點滴落在字跡上、筆畫間，和藍色的波紋背景交融在一起。三幅擁有明確佛教涵義的繪畫有《地藏王》（1992）、《無緣大悲》（1993）與《佛法》（1997），且畫面皆豪放不羈，字跡幾乎無法辨識。《地藏王》的深色色調寓意菩薩為墜地獄者照亮地府，同時也是早逝孩童的守護神。在《無緣大悲》中，線條呈巨大的螺旋狀，代表的是佛祖和菩薩欲拯救蒼生之功業的偉大。《佛法》書於兩塊木板之上，其所蘊含的能量與同系列其他作品並無二致，只是該主題談及的是菩提達摩，一位於520年從印度到中國傳授

佛教、並且引入了冥想教派——禪宗的中亞佛僧。

花木

花木被賦予的象徵意義使得它們從來都不是純裝飾性的繪畫題材；唐家偉對「歲寒三友」：即松、梅、竹的描繪與儒家價值——長壽、勇氣、忍耐和忠孝的含義關聯緊密。這「三友」通常會被放在一起呈現，使得它們的特質得以放大，可唐家偉卻選擇為它們分別繪製了許多大型作品，讓每一種植物的精神得到各自的體現。松樹經冬不凋、耐寒長青，尤其在和岩石一處時，是長壽的象徵。唐家偉在《松2》（2010）（圖版16）中描繪了一棵傲立的松樹和粗糙的岩石；他用指甲與濃墨畫出的松針密集地籠罩著象徵屹立與年歲的粗糙岩石和蒼老樹幹。《松3》（2011）（圖版17）展現的是一根沿著紙張對角線展布的樹枝，枝上的松針如星狀向四處迸裂。這隻松枝的松針因由唐家偉指甲勾勒而成而有著輕盈靈動之感。整幅畫散發出的能量與精準保守的《松2》形成了鮮明對比。

竹子長青，因其堅毅的韌性與不懼霜雪嚴寒的耐力被視為生命力、忍耐力和長壽的象徵。它在強風中彎而不折，這代表著謙遜、忠誠與高潔。描繪竹子的莖與葉為領悟書法中的筆法提供了基礎，這對於接受過書寫或繪畫訓練的人來說絕不陌生。在《竹1》（1993）中，唐家偉為樹幹在風中巍然挺立的畫面定格，觀眾仿佛可以聽到尖細的葉子相互摩擦時沙沙作響的聲音。

梅花，「歲寒三友」中的第三友，是毅力與忠貞的象徵；它們生長在粗糙的老樹上，又只在寒冬中開放，許諾的是長壽與重生。唐家偉筆下的梅花風格各異，既有《梅2》（2004）中用色濃黑的抽象詮釋，又有橫幅的《梅3》（2010）中用指甲輕捷地飛過紙面、如在空中舞蹈般畫下的線條。畫中的自發性與直接性和《松3》中的異曲同工。在《滿地紅梅》（1993）（圖版12）和《梅1》（1993）中，唐家偉用極具自發性的潑墨法濺灑出令人歡喜的紅花，任由它們落在冰雪覆蓋的曲折枝條上，畫面無不洋溢著一種輕快的活力。

蓮花，是出淤泥而不染的佛教聖花，對唐家偉來說也是尤為重要的圖像。他對這種美麗花朵的描繪是濃烈而又深沉的。在《蓮1》（2002）中，潔白的花瓣和形似裙擺的葉子與沉重的純黑背景形成極為鮮明的對比。《蓮2》（2010）是一幅豎畫，黑色的蓮花在深灰的水墨背景上幾乎不可見。這兩幅作品都隱喻著一種預兆。唐家偉在《蓮3》（2011）（圖版15）（圖3）中對深色的運用可謂有過之而無不及，整張紙都被看似癡狂的黑色筆觸所佈滿。任何精神啟蒙的跡象都不復存在。在豎幅的《蓮4》（1995）（圖版14）（圖4）中，花朵甚至已經過了它的盛開期。看來，唐家偉試圖從佛教禪宗中尋求的精神覺醒似乎可望卻不可及。



圖2《恩雨下降》(1992) 的分部

書法與墨

無論是藉助畫筆、雙手、手指或指甲，唐家偉都在用對墨的掌控和獨特的創作方式表達著自己。他擅長多種書法風格，他的大幅書法作品《書法4》（2011）中有著和禪宗箴言一樣強大力量的飛濺隸書是他用手指寫成的。《書法 2》（2009）同樣是用他的手指以隸書的風格書寫，但每個字的字形更加清晰柔和，轉折處更加勻圓，更顯其形式上的本質。《書法3》（2009）裡的每一個字好像都依附著一個不可見的長方形，這一點在他之前的作品裡也不難看出。這幅書法作品中，唐家偉在輕巧地處理字形時，極富辨識度地添加了較深的部分和濺出的墨點。

兩幅完美展現了唐家偉的禪宗書法於本質上便與佛教密不可分的作品有：《皆式睽佛陀之神通，亮目藏中》（2011年）（圖版7）和《墨道揚，縱驕凝，憶佛始中求，佛智因無漏也》（2011）（圖版8）。唐家偉在這兩件大幅作品中展現出的近乎抒情般的律動感，在豎劃中濃黑的墨跡和靈動的飛

白的交替部分一覽無遺。佛陀的教義為這已然強勁有力的書法更添了幾分厚重感。

或許唐家偉最有特色的書法可在《自古龍拳勝天下，尤說鳳眉定君心》（1995）（圖版6）中看到。這是一幅用盡顯性情的草書書體創作的道教題材作品。跟隨筆畫一同跌宕起伏，對觀眾來說就好像在欣賞一場視覺舞蹈，濃墨戛然而止，忽而轉為飛白，最細的線條好似絲線。這種種最終造就了這幅凝結了龍鳳之間互補本質的扣人心弦的美學大作。

唐家偉是一名完美的水墨藝術家。他畢生投身於傳統文人畫的題材，卻嘗試了各種形式的繪畫，從以線條和書法為主風格，到色彩繽紛、熱情洋溢的水墨均有涉獵。他的繪畫方法獨具一格，但同時又堅守著他對墨作為其美學、精神表達最終形式的承諾。唐家偉本著禪宗精神對墨之表達力的忠誠便是對他繪畫的最好定義。



圖4《蓮 4》(1995) 的分部

圖3《蓮 3》(2011) 的分部



Mary-Ann Milford-Lutzker

Mary-Ann Milford-Lutzker, 亞洲藝術史教授，在米爾斯學院擔任東亞研究的Carver主席。她於加州大學伯克利分校獲得博士學位。她的課程涵蓋了印度、中國、日本和喜馬拉雅的古代、古典和當代歷史。她的研究重點是亞洲當代藝術以及亞裔美國藝術家，這也促成她策劃了第一次在美國舉辦的當代印度藝術展。為了支持她的工作，她獲得了許多來自NEH（國家人文基金會），史密森尼學會和AIIS（美國印第安研究所）的資助和獎學金。她還策劃了關於印度、中國、日本、韓國和印度尼西亞的藝術展覽。

她曾在2005至2010年於美國大學藝術協會（CAA）的董事會任職；2006至2009於ASIANetwork董事會任職；她還曾擔任美國南亞藝術委員會（ACSAA）和印度藝術與文化遺產協會（SACHI）的董事會成員；她是舊金山亞洲藝術博物館亞洲藝術協會諮詢委員會成員；並且是舊金山亞洲當代藝術委員會的成員。她目前在美國大學藝術協會藝術史獎學金委員會任職。1995年，她在中國北京擔任聯合國第四屆國際婦女大會的非政府組織代表。

WESLEY TONGSON —THE JOURNEY

DeWitt Cheng
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The idea that life is a spiritual journey was once common in European and American religious culture: *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan's 1678 allegorical adventure of a Christian soul, used to be required reading. Spirituality has largely fallen by the wayside, however, replaced by modern materialism. In developed countries now we focus on scientific and economic progress, and largely neglect the spiritual aspect of life, still part of the social menu of traditional cultures, which patronising contemporary standards adjudge backward.

The paintings of Hong Kong artist Wesley Tongson (1957-2012), aka Tong Ka Wai, in "Wesley Tongson – The Journey" at San Francisco's Chinese Culture Center October 10, 2018 through March 9, 2019, constitute a spiritual pilgrimage as well. Curated by Catherine Maudsley, and featuring biographical notes by Cynthia Tseng (aka Cynthia Tongson), the artist's sister – who, she reveals, did her brother's art homework when he was a child, before his interest in art surfaced in adolescence – the show reveals a talented hand, both disciplined and intuitive, at the service of a restless, relentless creative drive.

Spiritual Mountains 7 (2012)

Tongson, who grew up in a Chinese Christian family in Hong Kong, was diagnosed with schizophrenia at age 15, in spring 1973. Shortly afterwards, at age 17, he declared an interest in studying traditional Chinese painting, and began taking lessons, encouraged by his family and teachers. Says Tseng: "Due to his illness, Wesley could not do anything else. Art was the only thing he could do. He was good at it and it was what made him happy, so my parents were supportive and encouraged him to continue. Wesley was a lonely person. Later, when he retreated into his own world, he disconnected with friends and family. Art was his life; it gave him purpose and the courage to go on: his constant companion. He found solace in his art. He was able to cope with his illness," including his paranoia and the side-effects of his medication. "Without his art, I honestly don't know how he would have survived all those years."

Not only did Tongson survive; he thrived, visibly, in his art. The paintings on board and paper, framed or mounted onto wooden strainers, are artfully laid out in the venue's three small galleries, with pairs of large coloured landscapes flanked by monochromatic calligraphic paintings, facing each other: landscape and calligraphy, the twin poles of traditional Chinese painting, recapitulated and reinterpreted with modernist verve and dash. Along the adjacent hallway are smaller works that show the evolution of Tongson's famous splashed landscapes, accompanied by writing by the somewhat reticent artist and his sister, a talented keeper of the flame.



Fig. 1 Detail of *Plum 5* (2011)

While a chronological arrangement that traced the artist's development would have been preferable, the space dictated the arrangement; attentive viewers can puzzle out the progression, however, and the works of various styles speak to each other anyway. While still in high school in Hong Kong, Tongson studied traditional Chinese painting styles and themes, such as pine trees, plum blossoms, bamboo, with their symbolic and homophonic associations with longevity, perseverance and congratulation respectively. With incessant practice, he became a young latter-day *guohua* painter in the retired-Confucian-scholar mode before graduating in 1977. At Ontario College of Art from 1977 to 1981, he studied western painting, especially the metamorphic Picasso, and began experimenting with splashing ink, probably influenced by Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) and certainly by Zhang Daqian (1899-1983), the versatile modernist master, and virtuoso mimic/forged of older masters, who sported an antiquarian long beard and flowing robes, and developed a late splashed paint style, *pocai*, which came, as Tongson writes in a letter, directly from his heart.

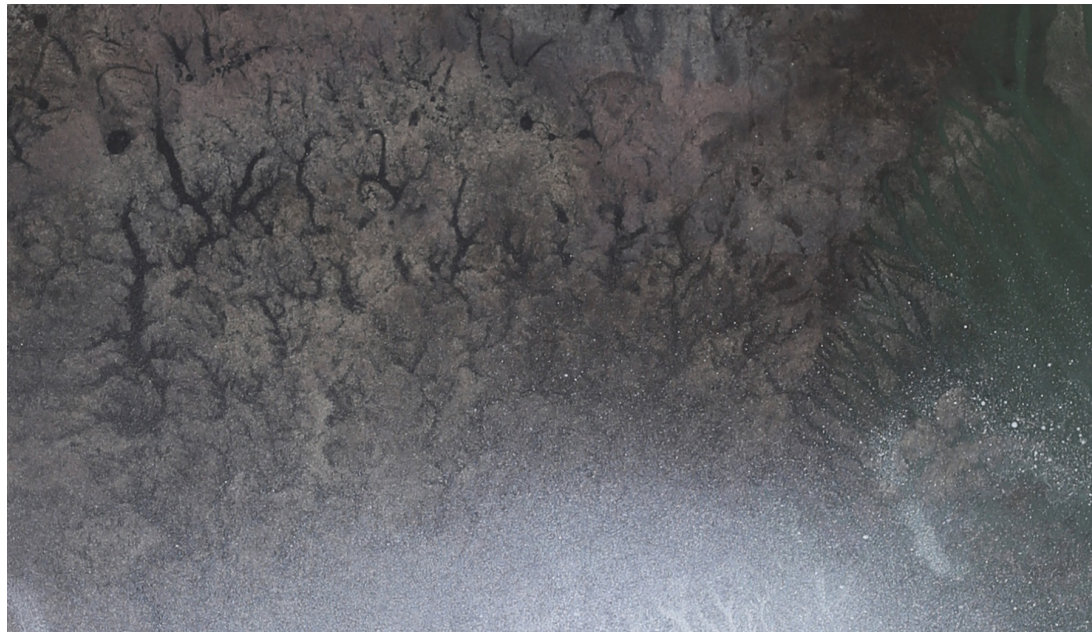


Fig. 2 Detail of *Misty Mountains* (1993)

Tongson returned to Hong Kong in 1981, studying with Madam Gu Qingyao (1896-1978) and Harold Wong (Huang Zhongfang) (b. 1943), and he continued experimenting with and perfecting various non-brush ink application techniques. He was instructed by Taiwanese painter Liu Guosong (b. 1932) in ink staining, rubbing, dyeing and marbling – floating ink on the surface of water and dipping the paper into it, capturing the swirling, cosmic patterns used for the psychedelic end papers of deluxe books. These masterly landscapes, combinations of time-honored themes and new techniques, garnered praise from critics and collectors, museums and galleries in Hong Kong, Beijing, Suzhou and London. The artist, whose visions originated in Mahayana Buddhism's Western Paradise, and who called these richly textured works, improvised yet impossibly perfect, his Zen Mountains of Heaven paintings, referred to himself at the time, with irony and pride, as Shandou Laoshi (mountainscape teacher). Finally come Tongson's late, monumental landscape paintings, created with his hands, fingers and fingernails, without tools: direct transcriptions of his nervous system, like Pollock's loops and skeins of liquid paint flung from a stick.

San Francisco is fortunate to have even this modest sample of Tongson's prodigious output of work, the latest of a series of exhibitions assembled by the Tongson family, which can take pride in the achievement of its prodigiously talented, hard-working, solitary son. It includes a few extraordinary works worth singling out: the three 1992 calligraphic splash paintings *The Light* (1992) (plate 3), *Blessed Rain* (1992) (plate 4) and *God's Light* (1992) (plate 5), pictograms that seem to be both carved and liquid, monumental yet evanescent; *Red Plums Over the Earth* (1993) (plate 12), a traditional bucolic motif given explosive energy, with the plums represented by perfectly sized and placed drops of vermilion ink; *Plum 5* (2011) (plate 13) (fig. 1), with fruit-laden trees dissolving into what appears a dance diagram or musical score; and *Mountain 1* (1995) (plate 20) and *Misty Mountains* (1993) (plate 22) (fig. 2), small, magical miracles of evocation: paradise, regained.

生命是一場靈性之旅，這一理念一度在歐美的宗教文化中盛行：約翰·班揚1678年關於基督靈程經驗的寓言作品《天路歷程》曾一度是必讀書目。靈性或精神性現今已不再受吹捧，被現代唯物主義取而代之。如今在發達國家，我們關注的是科學和經濟發展，幾乎忽略了精神生活。後者雖依舊是傳統文化中的一部分，卻在當代被屈尊對待。

香港藝術家唐家偉（1957-2012年）於2018年10月12日至2019年3月9日在舊金山中華文化中心舉辦的畫展〈唐家偉：旅塵〉，同樣是一次心靈的朝聖之旅。此次展覽由毛岱康擔當策展人，圍繞唐家偉的姐姐唐慧中所撰寫的人物志展開。據唐慧中透露，小時候她總幫著弟弟完成美術作業，直至弟弟少年時期開始展露出對藝術的興趣。展覽展露出一隻才華橫溢的手——訓練有素又直抒胸意，在永不安分，源源不斷的靈感驅動下創作出一幅幅佳作。



唐氏成長於香港一個中國基督教家庭，1973年春天，15歲的他被診斷患上思覺失調症。17歲時，他說自己想學傳統中國畫並在家人和老師的鼓勵下開始接受此方面的教育。姐姐說：「弟弟由於疾病困擾而無法從事其他事情，藝術是他唯一能做的。他做的很好也快樂，所以我們的父母非常支持，不斷鼓勵他繼續下去。家偉性格孤僻，之後，他退守到自己的世界中，和朋友，家人都斷了聯繫。藝術就是他的生活，陪伴著他，給了他繼續向前的目標和勇氣。他在藝術中找到慰藉，得以抗衡疾病包括自己的妄想症和藥物帶來的副作用。如果不是藝術，老實說我不知道他還能否捱過這些年。」

唐家偉不僅捱過了這些年，還在藝術中傲然蓬勃。原先在畫板和紙上的繪畫，經過木質裱框被精心展示在展館的三個小展區中—成對大幅彩色山水畫的兩側面對面擺著單色的書法，山水畫和書法，這一國畫中的兩極經過現代主義的神韻與奔放的薰染被重新演繹和詮釋。毗鄰走道中的小幅作品揭示了唐家偉為之聞名的潑墨作品的發展軌跡，作品隨附文字，出自這位有幾分緘默的藝術家和他卓越地守護著他的創作的姐姐的手筆。

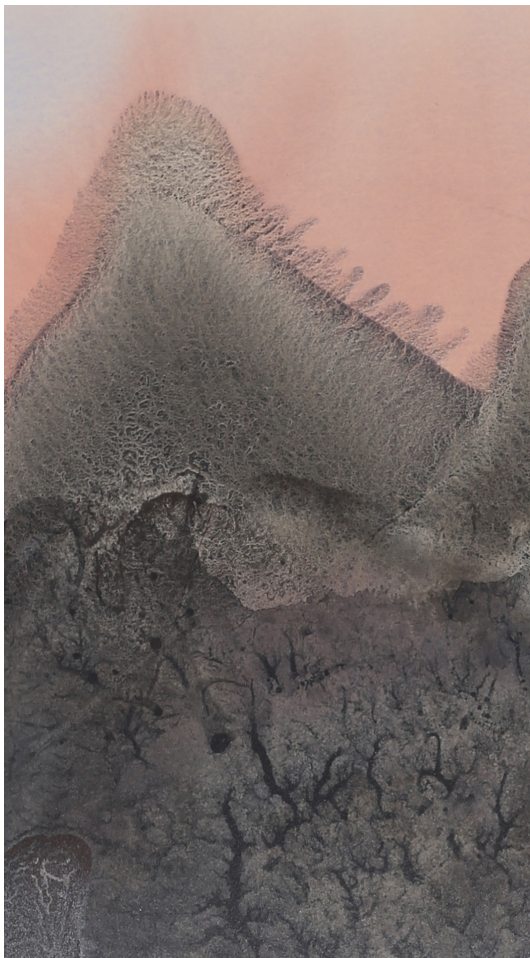
儘管按照時間順序追溯藝術家軌跡的展示方式會是更合意的選擇，展覽空間卻決定了展出安排;留心的觀眾可以揣摩出其美學發展蹤跡，此外各類風格的作品也在相互吐露心跡。在香港讀中學的時候，唐家偉開始學習傳統中國畫的風格和主題，如松、梅、竹以及它們各自的象徵意義和諧音意—長壽，堅韌和報喜。經過不斷的磨練，1977年畢業前他成為了一名近代年輕儒學國畫家。1977-1981年，他在安大略藝術學院學習西方繪畫，尤其專注於畢加索。同時他開始嘗試潑墨畫，這或許受到傑克遜·波洛克（1912-1956年）當然還有張大千（1899-1983年）的影響。張大千是近代一位多才多藝的現代主義國畫大師兼藝術鑒賞家和臨摹大家。他留著古人式的大鬍子，穿長袍，創立了近代潑墨風格—潑彩，正如唐家偉在信中所言，此為其「心畫」。

唐家偉1981年回到香港，受業於顧青瑤（1896-1978年）和黃仲方（生於1943），並繼續探索及精進無筆水墨創作的技藝。他受台灣畫家劉國松（生於1932）老師所創的水拓法、漬墨法和拓墨法的啟發—將紙浸入漂浮著墨汁的水中，從而獲得出現在精美書本迷幻扉頁上的漩渦式、宇宙般的圖案。這些巧奪天工的山水畫，融合了悠久主題與新穎畫法，受到評論家、收藏家以及香港、北京、蘇州和倫敦各地博物館與畫廊的讚譽。他的想像源自大乘



圖1《滿地紅梅》（1993）的分部

圖2《霧山》(1993) 的分部



佛教中的西方極樂世界，他將那富於質感雖為即興創作卻不可思議之完美的作品叫做自己的「天界山水禪」，並略帶諷刺和驕傲稱呼自己為「山斗老師」。到了後期，唐家偉終於開始棄用畫筆，通過用手、手指和指甲創作山水畫—他將意念直接揮灑於紙上，如同波洛克用棒滴下一圈圈、一連串的顏料。

實之有幸，舊金山中華文化中心得以呈現唐家偉如此多產的作品。此得益於唐家偉家族近期組織的一系列展覽，這位才華異稟，勤奮而如隱士般的家人實為讓他們自豪。其中包括幾件尤為值得呈現的作品：三幅1992年的書法潑墨畫——《光》（1992）（圖版3）、《恩雨下降》（1992）（圖版4）和《神光》（1992）（圖版5），其中的象形圖既精雕細琢又如行雲流水既意境深遠又易於消散；作品《滿地紅梅》（1993年）（圖版12）（圖1）以大小適宜，恰如其分的朱色墨水滴下的朵朵紅梅為傳統的田園主題賦予了巨大爆發力；作品《梅 5》（2011年）（圖版13），果實累累的樹叢慢慢融入一副舞蹈圖或樂譜中；《山斗 1》（1995）（圖版20）與《霧山》（1993）（圖版22）（圖2），令人不言而喻，細小而神奇的奇跡，猶如重拾天堂。

EXHIBITION TALK

A SEARCH FOR TRANSCENDENCE: ART AND SPIRITUALITY

Speakers: Catherine Maudsley, Cynthia Tongson, Abby Chen
Transcribed and edited by: Eileen Li
Talk Date: October 11, 2018

Catherine

To understand Wesley Tongson's work, it's key to know the context he grew up in and his aspirations.

This brief discussion is in two parts: the first is on religion and the second is on spirituality. I'm excited to hear more about the background and religious beliefs of the Tongson family from Cynthia Tongson, Wesley Tongson's sister. We're also very fortunate that the Artistic Director of CCC Abby Chen will join me to talk about Wesley's work and other work in connection with spirituality.

I want to start by describing the difference between religion and spirituality. By looking at dictionary definitions, religion is referred to as an institutional type of belief, practice, and viewpoint. The world's great religions - Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, all have a set of beliefs and standard practices. On the other hand, spirituality is often a personal experience. The exhibition is named "Wesley Tongson - The Journey" after his creative development and spiritual expression during his lifetime.

Let's start by looking at [an image of] *The Light* (1992) (plate 3). The Chinese character *guang* means light; however, it is a reference to Christian scriptures in the context of Wesley's work. "God is light; in him, there is no darkness" is a quote from the Christian scriptures and very meaningful to Wesley's work as a calligrapher.

Cynthia, can you tell us more about your family's re-

ligious background? Can you speak a little on why Wesley's work contains overt Christian messages in his early period?

Cynthia

My parents came from Shanghai, and my mother grew up in a Christian family. While my father did not have a particular religion, he was baptized when my parents got married. Both of them became members of the China Congregational Church, a Protestant Church in Hong Kong. Wesley and I grew up with Christian faith; when we were young, my mother would read Bible stories to us, and we would attend Sunday School. Wesley and I really liked Sunday school because afterwards, we got to go to the theater to watch cartoons. At that age, we were too young to attend the full service; they didn't want us there, playing, making noise. We started attending the full service when we got older.

Catherine

There's also a Buddhist element in your upbringing, as shown in one of Wesley's earlier works, *Guanyin* (circa 1993) (fig. 1). His previous works feature representational imagery referring to specific words and phrases from the Bible, but there's also an image of a Buddhist deity. Cynthia, how was Wesley introduced to Buddhism?

Cynthia

My dad's mother was a Buddhist, and she lived with us. We would see her pray and perform rituals. Of course,



Fig. 1 *Guanyin* (circa 1993)
Ink & color on board
23.4 x 15.8 in

this raised our curiosity. I think this was the introduction to Buddhism for my brother. I didn't ask too many questions, but my brother probably did. She would tell us a little about Buddhism, but at the same time, she respected my parents and their Christian faith. Our grandmother didn't try to convert us, but when we had questions, she would explain.

So from early on, Wesley knew that in order to take his paintings to a higher level, he must transcend himself. He also recognized a deep relationship between Chinese art, Chinese painting, and Buddhism. That is one of the reasons why he explored Buddhism and Zen philosophy.

Catherine

I'm going to show some photos of Hong Kong, specifically of Causeway Bay, the neighborhood where Wesley grew up.

These are photos of the Tongson family church, the China Congregational Church, back in the day before it was rebuilt and as it is today (fig. 2, 3). I live in this neighborhood, and it's two minutes from my home. At night time, on the top of the new building, there's a dove that lights up. I love seeing it as a reminder of peace when we go for walks in the neighborhood.

Cynthia

Yes, this church was a part of our upbringing. We even attended nursery school there. The new church was built not long ago, and it's much bigger. The old cross and window are from the original church. Going to the church always brings back so many memories. The old church had amazing interior architecture.

Catherine

I think a lot of us, including myself, are in awe of architecture. I'm also very fascinated by religious architecture.

Now, please join me on a theoretical 15-minute walk in my neighborhood in Causeway Bay in Hong Kong. I really love this neighborhood.

There is a phenomenal building, a Catholic chapel, part of St. Paul's Church, which is right across the street from the China Congregational Church. Right next to it is the nuns' residence. As we exit and cross the street from St. Paul's, we come to St. Mary's Church, an Anglican Church (fig. 4). It's a fascinating building because

it retains Chinese architectural components but serves as a Christian church.

Then, not far away in Happy Valley, is Tung Lin Kok Yuen. It's a building established by a great philanthropist and very committed Buddhist, Lady Clara Ho-Tung in Happy Valley. It's a nunnery and also a school, established in the 1930s in Hong Kong, and recently renovated. Lady Clara was very interesting because she was an ardent Buddhist and the second wife of Sir Robert Ho-Tung, a very well-known Hong Kong personality. Lady Clara adopted what's called a Bodhi-



Fig. 2 China Congregational Church, Hong Kong before its reconstruction



Fig. 3 China Congregational Church, Hong Kong after its reconstruction

sattva Vow, a Buddhist commitment to oneself and the well-being of all living creatures and sentient beings.

On that point about taking vows, was Wesley confirmed in the Church or baptized?

Cynthia

Yes.

Catherine

In my understanding of Buddhism, a lot of us adopt Buddhist practices and benefit from its meditation techniques and so on. But to be a Buddhist requires a ceremony called taking refuge. As far as we know, Wesley was influenced and inspired by Buddhist views but not a Buddhist in that respect.

Nestled in this Buddhist temple, [Tung Lin Kok Yuen], you'll notice a little pathway. You can see the Star of David on the gates. This is the entrance to the Jewish cemetery in Hong Kong. The main Synagogue is quite far away, exceeding our theoretical 15-minute walk limit. Nevertheless, the cemetery is the resting place for many incredibly important members of the Hong Kong Jewish community, many who came to Hong Kong after 1949 and were vital to building up Hong Kong's infrastructure. The cemetery is the final resting place of many of the members of that Jewish community in Hong Kong.

Not far away from Tung Lin Kok Yuen and the Jewish cemetery is the Zoroastrian Temple in Hong Kong. The outside of the building looks like a regular office building, but inside, in the temple, is the sacred fire. A lot of the Parsi community originated in Iran and made their way to India (usually Bombay or Calcutta), then even-



Fig. 4 St. Mary's Church, Hong Kong

tually to Hong Kong. The Sikh Temple is also within our 15-minute walk radius. There is a very active Sikh community in Hong Kong. Also within our 15-minute range is the Tin Hau Temple in Causeway Bay and next to the temple is a small Guanyin Temple.

It is clear that Wesley Tongson was a member of the Christian faith, understood Buddhism through his paternal grandmother, and was exposed to religious and spiritual practices. Hong Kong is a multi-faith community. I'm glad to say that individuals have the right to choose the way we worship, and this is enshrined in Hong Kong life. Naturally, Chinese religious beliefs are very important to a lot of our customs and celebrations.

Cynthia

I did not realize all of this is within the same neighborhood until you pointed them out, even though this is the area I frequent.

Catherine

Thank you for mentioning that. I find it absolutely wonderful that in Hong Kong we have the freedom and the right to worship as we choose. There's a very vibrant community. Hong Kong is a city of trade, economics, and finance. In addition, we also have vital expressions of art and religion. To me, these are the most meaningful things in life. So let's thank Cynthia for joining us here. And then I'd like to invite Abby Chen on stage to talk about spirituality. Thank you, Cynthia.

Wesley's work is very appealing because his search is not only for creativity and artistic expression, but there is also deep seeking of transcendence in his work.

We're now going to broaden the conversation. A lot of you may have seen the *Infinity Room* by Yayoi Kusama, a Japanese artist of international repute. This is an example of the human desire for transcendence. Perhaps this is really universal. It's contemporary art. It has no reference to representational art of any type.

Abby

Yes, and I think as curators, talking to each other is exciting and we are always curious about each other's knowledge and perspective. First of all, I appreciate the context of Hong Kong because that gives us a background of Wesley's upbringing. As we are looking at Yayoi Kusama's work, we need to again relate to Wes-

ley Tongson and think about how his human desires got translated into physical paintings. Can you share more of your perspective in this realm?

Catherine

We will definitely do that.

I thought of Kusama for another reason. Kusama, as we know, is not only one of the world’s leading artists, she also happens to be an incredible example of a person who has lived with personal adversity and has had a very productive life. Kusama resides in a psychiatric institution. She is schizophrenic — as was Wesley. Wesley’s schizophrenia was identified at age 15. One of the reasons it’s such a great joy to curate the show and work with the Tongson family is because there is often a taboo about acknowledging mental illness. I have been so inspired by Cynthia and her parents in not making a fuss about it.

Kusama is schizophrenic and resides in a psychiatric institution which is quite close to her studio. To me, she has always been walking evidence that schizophrenia is [just a] part of her makeup. That is who she is. She’s also an incredibly accomplished artist who has consistently broken boundaries throughout her long and very productive career.

[Abby], when you assess her work, do you immediately think of her schizophrenia?

Abby

No, I don’t. I think of her as a great artist. I think Wesley is one of the great artists; they’re always ahead of their time, they’re ahead of us, going beyond a lot of existing human understanding. What is so amazing is to see artists be very frank and open about their mental states. They can translate those mental states into a physical form that wows us. On that part, it’s always a treat, not only to see artists with such fantastic artwork but then to see the interpretation of them by others, such as by curators like yourself.

Catherine

Yes, artists like Vincent van Gogh and Yayoi Kusama have universal appeal. You can live anywhere in the world and speak any language, yet still be moved by their art. In *Starry Night*, Van Gogh was able to understand the star-filled night and interpret it in a way that no one ever had. There is quite a bit of turbulence in this painting. It’s an interpretation of the sky and the

cosmos in a way that no one had ever done before. And it pulsates with life.

Abby

I think Vincent van Gogh’s work is a prime example of how artists see and interpret things we were not able to see. They’ll show us a new way of seeing things, and that is incredibly precious.

Catherine

In the film *Loving Vincent*, it’s very well known that Van Gogh had mental afflictions. He didn’t have an easy life. He had mental illness challenges. However, the turbulent expression in Van Gogh’s paintings is entirely different from the serenity found in ink painting and Wesley’s work.

I believe the practice and the aspirations of ink art are indivisible from transcendence. How can the practice of ink painting be so suited to the search for transcendence? Ink painting uses simple materials like ones seen in traditional images of a scholar sitting at his desk with his ink, paper, and brush. [The essence of ink painting] is the manner of painting, lifestyle, and viewpoint that come with the art.

One of the most interesting technical aspects of Wesley’s work is finger painting, primarily using the body as an extension of the brush, [and an extension of] talent, vision, and the internal unseen. Let’s call it *prana* or *qi* energy. This is part and parcel of the tradition of ink painting in my understanding. We see finger paintings particularly towards the end of his career. The technique uses the fingernails, and sometimes we can discern the tips of the fingers. Wesley’s hands were quite stained with permanent ink.

That’s what makes ink painting so phenomenal; you cannot make a mistake in the sense that it is a permanent pigment. When it [ink] goes on the paper or silk, you can’t redo it. It carries a tremendous spontaneity unlike oil painting or work in acrylic that can be edited. Ink cannot be changed. There’s a tremendous vitality that can be felt in ink and on the paper.

The connoisseurship in regards to paintings requires one to look very carefully at the quality of the brush marks, the lines, and the dots. Very early on, after I left the academic world and spent time with connoisseurs and painters, I adopted a very simple rule of thumb, no pun intended. When looking at an ink painting, I

might say that it sings and dances. It’s alive. It has life. If a painter who’s not so skilled with ink and brush, it’s just dead, and it has no vitality. That’s my rule of thumb between an excellent painting and a not so good painting.

Abby

Putting that aside, the way I would interpret that is through the action itself. The action within the painting and the movements in paintings. In my limited experience with classical painting, we like to talk about the serenity and the tranquility of the painting. I think only in recent decades have we started to see a breakthrough from that. I was quite astonished when I first saw some of Wesley’s paintings.

Another vivid memory is when we had that little episode on curatorial choice. When working with a guest curator in an institution, we always feel we know more about the space than the guest curator.

I’m always very curious about our guest curator’s choices. When you enter the gallery, the most critical work usually is at the end of our gallery on a large wall. Typically, the most prominent work will be hung there. We knew three works that Catherine might put there, but we didn’t know which work Catherine would place on the large wall. So when I saw the work there, I asked our other curator Hoi Leung, “Is it Catherine’s choice to use this relatively smaller painting? There is a larger one that fits right in.” Hoi immediately dialed into Hong Kong. I didn’t know what time it was for you, but we asked to make sure that this was your choice. Catherine was very adamant; yes, that is the work.

Catherine

I think I remember saying that if you and your team feel very strongly, I will go with your decision considering that I am the guest curator. But I would much prefer my choice!

The choice seems counter-intuitive, as Abby said. It’s a large wall painted blue, so it stands out, and it really attracts your eye. There was an obvious choice which is a pine tree, a beautiful study, and a very large painting. However, in my assessment and viewpoint, there’s another pine tree which extracts the essence of pine needles and conveys it so magnificently. Although the size is smaller, to me, the size is irrelevant. It’s the power of the ink, and it happened not with the brush, but with the fingernails. The vitality that Wesley has

achieved, and what all artists hope to achieve, is the authenticity within both his voice and the subject matter. Similarly, in my understanding of Chinese painting, it’s the parts that are representational that can convey such authenticity. For example, we see this in the Song Dynasty paintings of beautiful birds and flowers that contain the essence of the subject. Another example is the mountains that lead us to think solidity, majesty, and so on.

There are two pine trees in the exhibition. One is a very accomplished version, a formal study of a pine tree. And the other one—the smaller painting—is what I believe to be the culmination of Wesley Tongon’s journey as an ink painter.

Abby

Only a very confident and accomplished curator will make those gutsy choices. To me, the smaller pine tree was not the obvious choice, but it becomes so much more evident after you see it.

Catherine

Thank you for the opportunity to work on the exhibition. Thank you so much, Cynthia, for including me in this journey. And we really look forward to sharing the exhibition. Here, I’m saying the royal “we”—I already feel part of the CCC family. So thank you very much.

Abby

Thank you.

Catherine

We have time for a couple of questions. Cynthia, can you join us back on stage?

Audience Member

I wanted to ask a little bit more about Wesley’s private life. There’s not a lot that’s known about his private life. We know that he had great teachers. He studied under Harold Wong, and even studied, I think, with Liu Guosong. At the same time, I want to get a sense of where he got the inspiration to do his finger paintings. The splash came from Zhang Daqian, that’s quite obvious. What sort of message do you think he was trying to bring across with the finger paintings?

Catherine

Finger painting in Chinese painting history is not unprecedented. Gao Qipei is a very famous finger paint-

er, as well as Pan Tianshou. Other artists have done this. You also mentioned his private life. We were really fortunate because in the exhibition there is a display cabinet with Wesley's writings, sharing some of his personal objectives in life and the role that art played for him. I think seeing those notes will amplify more of his private life.

Cynthia

Wesley has always explored non-brush techniques. I believe it was a natural progression to finger painting because transcendence was very important to him. It really makes sense because when painting with the fingers, there is no longer a distance. There's nothing between, not even a brush. He was able to feel and flow his energy onto the paper directly.

I don't think Wesley had a particular message because he painted for himself. Art was important to him. I think he found solace in it. The more important thing when looking at his painting is what you get out of it. For me, a lot of these very bright colors, splash ink paintings and bright light in the sky really represented hope for Wesley. Through all the challenges and struggles he went through, there was still the light of hope. I have learned that no matter how difficult your life can be, there's always hope. No matter how bad things seem to be, good can still come out of it, like Wesley creating art despite facing troubles in his life.

Audience Member

I'm curious about what you just said, considering that the color white is a symbol of aspiration and hope. I've often looked at traditional Chinese painting as a reflection of the literati inner world. It's not the landscape, but the journey that he goes on. My eye is often spending a lot of time in these wonderful paintings, and the white space was far more critical than any of the details. It gives a sense of peace, rest, hope, equanimity to the viewer. This is not so much a question as a comment of appreciation.

Catherine

Thank you so much for sharing that. We would be very fascinated to get your comments on the plum blossom painting because it's quite unlike any painting I've seen, there's a lot of white space within a flower painting. I'm more accustomed to seeing white space in landscape compositions. I'd love to get your comments on that particular one.

Abby

Many times, I look at paintings from more of a modernist or contemporary approach. When I look at Wesley's paintings, one of the things that really stood out for me was his composition.

Even though I'm not an expert in classical painting, we have featured quite a few artists that break out of that here at the Chinese Culture Center. One of them is Zheng Chongbin, and the other one is Fong Chung-Ray. These artists all try to break through a form that Chinese ink painting has imposed for thousands of years.

Fong Chung-Ray tried so hard and struggled to break through that he started to paint aged walls to avoid the foreground and background layers of Chinese landscape painting. For Zheng Chongbin, his breakthrough is turning the physicality of his traditional training in portraiture to block and then from block to what he's currently doing. Wesley does something very similar to Fong Chung-Ray and Zheng Chongbin.

In the gallery, you will see the brilliant juxtaposition and comparisons by our curator in the contrasting plum blossom paintings, and Wesley's breakthrough.

Catherine

The focus of this evening is art, religion, spirituality, transcendence and the moving aspects of life which "Wesley Tongson – The Journey" has been able to demonstrate. Thank you.



Left to Right: Catherine Maudsley, Cynthia Tongson, Abby Chen, Exhibition talk "A Search for Transcendence: Art and Spirituality," 2018

- END -

WESLEY TONGSON'S
NOTES

此安也
般若是不可思議
般若是指教 = 永生的唯一道路

我的山水障 也是世間障
從世間已世間障
而是一種小乘修行
他日住生西方極樂
世界是去西方極樂
世界中的月是同居地
因而我未斷煩惱
可憐心 (集法力)
住生西方

此安也
般若是不可思議
般若是指教 = 永生的唯一道路

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般若是不可思議
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我要清楚自己先天與生俱來
的男兒身，女人心，在人生路
上是好難好難解決，如果我
追，追，追落去，最後走向死
路，應該一心把這問題全部
放開，放下（不再追求），
（要好好向佛道，墨道。）

I have to be clear with myself that I was born in a male body with a woman's heart inside. It is extremely difficult to resolve this in life. If I keep on pursuing, I will only reach a dead end. I should let go of this problem and give up (the pursuit). This is my only way out. (I have to observe Buddha's teaching and the way of ink.)

我要清楚自己先天與生俱來的男兒身，女人心，在人生路上是好難好難解決。如果我追、追、追落去，最後走向死路。應該一心把這問題全部放開，放下（不再追求），這是唯一我的生路。（要好好向佛道，墨道。）

LETTER TO DR. HUI

Wesley Tongson
Written c. 2008, age 51

This note was addressed to Dr. Hui, Wesley's family doctor, and was never sent.

Talking about my art, you know they are splash ink landscapes. Let me tell you it was Zhang Daqian who created the splash ink painting art. Zhang's artistic attainments were extraordinary. Many say he was the reincarnation of the black ape from over 500 years ago. Although this might have been a legend and it seems profound to some, I can see the reasoning behind this. The world of splash ink is the vitality of the black apes, also the vitality of Zhang. Just think of it, from the very beginning when I first started my splash ink art, I already grasped this key factor and that was what I focused on and worked hard at. If you take a closer look at my splash ink paintings, you will realize I already grasped the secret of Zhang's work, this being the result of my efforts in Zen study. It seems that no one really understands Zen of mountain and water. I hear people talk about the so called Zen paintings; people should distinguish whether the artists are using the idea of Zen in a painting or creating a landscape painting with the essence of worldly dharma. You should know that art and religion share a deep connection.

Did you know there were four significant painters during the end of the Ming dynasty and the early Qing dynasty who had prominent influence on all Chinese contemporary artists? They were the four monks of the end of Ming dynasty and the early Qing dynasty. These four artists were also monks, not ordinary people. Therefore, when Zen, Dharma and Art come together, it can elevate your art to a higher level. This was what Zhang meant when he wrote about his late period's splash ink paintings coming from the heart, from within the self. It is a form of mindfulness. When you can take your art to the highest level, it is the work of Zen.

I have been painting for over 30 some years, I seldom see my work or ideas being mentioned in the art circles, not even in Hong Kong. I feel it is really unfair, as if no one really understands Zen of mountain and water, which is really odd. I wish to add that when I talked about grasping Zhang's secret before, I did not mean to compare my splash ink

paintings to his. Zhang was a veteran artist with rich self-cultivation in art. Therefore, he could differentiate what true Zen was and what was not. Please don't misunderstand me, my splash ink work cannot be compared to Zhang's. However, there might be an illusion from my paintings. This is like having a golden rooster next to the black ape. The spirit that comes out of splash ink art, you can feel it is a deeply advanced thing. This is what coming from the heart or the self is. If you study more of Zhang's paintings, you will have a better understanding, and maybe you can understand what I am talking about. I find that a lot of people can't even grasp this elementary step.

Zhang Daqian once said an artist was a portrayal of a divinity as the artist could create everything on paper. In this way, I feel I am a divinity in painting. When my craftsmanship reaches a higher level, I too can create on paper like how God created those beautiful landscapes on earth. Zen philosophy is nothing like the ordinary. Therefore, there is a saying in Buddhism telling you not just to believe in a divinity, but to become one yourself.

In the end, after many years of artistic training and practice, my art will become more three- dimensional, going in the direction of Picasso's and illustrating another facet of Picasso's idea of Cubism is my artistic direction.

講到我的畫，你知是潑色山水畫，你就可以問下你那位蘇富比拍賣行的朋友。我可以話比你知，潑色畫就是張大千所創，張大千藝術造詣，十分超凡，又被稱為五百年來黑猿托世，個中是有理由這樣講法。可能有好多人口以為這是一個傳說，我可話你知潑色世界就是黑猿的命脈，就是張大千的命脈。你可想而知，我一開步，在我早年期間，我已從潑色畫入手下功夫。我在這個關鍵上把握著下苦功，你想下其實我有幾厲害。你再細心地看看我的山水畫，你可以問下你那位朋友，我已經掌握到張大千的天機，這就是禪的功夫。所以，似山水禪是無人理解得到，外面見到人提及的所謂什麼禪畫，真係要搞清楚是借用禪這個題材去表達的畫，還是真正修行世間法修出來的山水畫。認真分別，你要知道藝術和宗教其實都有好密切的關係。

你又知唔知明朝末期清朝初期出現了四位好重要的藝術大師，影響住二十一世紀當代所有中國國畫大師。他們就是明末清初的四僧，四位藝術大師同樣是四位和尚，而不是其他人。所以禪、佛法和藝術同時發揮就可以將境界推到好高的層次。所以張大千在書寫中提到晚年的潑色山水畫是以心為師，同樣這是修心識的一種功夫。所以藝術去到最高深的時候，純粹是一種禪的表現。我寫了近30幾年畫，但出面藝術界就是連香港藝術界都無人提起到我的，真係好不公平。似乎是無人理解山水禪真係好奇怪，我想補充一句話你知，我之前提到我已經捕捉到張大千的天機，並不是指我的潑色畫能夠和他的相比，張大千不竟是老前輩，老經驗累積了幾十年的藝術修養。所以是分得出禪比禪，請不要亂講錯。我的潑色畫是不及張大千，但看上去好似令人有一種錯覺，這便是黑猿之後，還有金鷄。講多少少禪上面的理解，你就會發現好多好多人都唔知其實是一回什麼。

張大千講藝術家就比喻好似是上帝的縮影，能創造萬物在紙上，我都覺得我是一個畫神，當我功力去到好高深一日，直頭可以做足(在畫中)神創造山水十足表現功夫，佛教的禪認真不簡單，所以佛教有句話講不單叫你去信

神，直頭叫你去做神，我們藝術家的散心禪境界依然是好低，只是紙上談兵，好化學，好似黃大仙修成神靈，可以替天行化世人。真正是一個出世間層面，我講神神佛佛的嘢，其實目的是比較出禪的程度，最後經歷了好多年的畫功會變成立體主義，跑出畢加索條路，另一面去演繹畢加索的立體主義，這個便是我藝術上的方向。

講到我的画，你知是潑色山水⁵畫，你就可以問下你那位蘇富比拍賣行的朋友。我可以話比你知，潑色畫就是張大千所創。張大千藝術造詣，十分超凡，又被稱為五百年來黑猿托世，個中是有理由這樣講法，可能有好多人口以為這是一個傳說，我可以話你知潑色世界就是黑猿的命脈，就是張大千的命脈。你可想而知。我一開步，~~是我早年~~在我早年期間，我已從潑色画入手下功夫。

我的書畫有小小般若
常念般若
所求如意
般若不可思議
般若是佛教之永生的唯一道路

My paintings and calligraphic works contain a little Prajna (wisdom). If we read Prajna often, we can get what we desire. Prajna is incredible. It is the only eternal way of Buddhism.

我的書畫有小小般若，常念般若，所求如意。般若是不可思議，般若是佛教之永生的唯一道路。

我的山水禪
不是世間禪，也不是出世間禪
而是世間出世間禪
是一種小乘修行
他日往生西方
時是去西方極樂
世界中的凡聖同居地，
因為我未斷煩惱，
可靠心力（專注力）
往生西方。

My Zen landscape paintings are neither about worldly Zen nor otherworldly Zen, but otherworldly Zen of this world. This is a kind of personal practice of well-being. Someday I will go to another world in the West after death, the western heaven of ultimate bliss where all saints live. Since I have not abandoned my worldly troubles, I have to rely on my power of determination to enter the Western heaven.

我的山水禪，不是世間禪，也不是出世間禪，
而是世間出世間禪，是一種小乘修行。
他日往生西方時，是去西方極樂世界中的凡聖同居地，
因為我未斷煩惱，可靠心（專注力）往生西方。

To tackle my bad or unstable mood swings at night, I have to make clear to myself that I will feel good when I see the sunlight after a good night's rest. I should always remind myself that I have my paintings and calligraphy to keep me company, my adept brushwork through years of intense practice, and then my mood will be good and my life will prolong. If I am upset, my life will shorten and even if I grow old, I might not be able to take my paintings to the highest level. Therefore, when I feel edgy or bored (because of loneliness) at night, I have to read this page immediately. I will think of the sunlight in the daytime and being energized after a good night's sleep. I have to understand that I cannot bear the long hours, I have to look at my framed paintings and know that my artistic dexterity does not come easily. I have to keep up my good mood in order to attain longevity. Think of the sunlight in the daytime.

應付我每晚上情緒轉差和晚上開始情緒不穩定，要認清楚我自己每日早上起床時精神夠，又見到白天陽光，心情自然好；想到自己有書畫陪伴我，我已修得有深厚筆力，功力得來不易，時常記住心情就會好，命也長久；心情悶，命也變短，即使到老也寫不到至高無上境界。晚上心情差或悶時（因為孤單），要馬上讀這頁紙，想到白天的陽光時，睡醒精神好時，要知道這是因為我不能承受過長的時間，要馬上看看上了鏡架的字畫，明白功力得來不易，要保持心情好才可以長壽。想一想白天的陽光。

應付我每晚上情緒轉差和晚上開始情緒不穩定
要認清楚我自己每日早上起床時精神夠，
又見到白天陽光，心情自然好，想下自己已有
書畫陪伴我，我已修得有深厚筆力，功力
得來不易，時常記住心情就會好，命也長久
心情悶，命也變短，即使到老也寫不到至高
無上境界，晚上心情差或悶時（因為孤單）
要馬上讀這頁紙，想下日間陽光時，
睡醒精神好時，要知道這是因為我不能承受過長的時間，
要馬上看看上了鏡架的字畫，
明白功力得來不易，要保持心情好才可以長壽。想一想白天的陽光。

我的畫是天然的
畫家要天然最高境界
妙有真空
我心空卻畫出
許多山水畫，那
是妙有
叫妙有真空

My paintings are natural.
Great artists have to attain the zenith of nature.

我的畫是天然的，畫家要天然最高境界，妙有真空。
我的心空卻畫出[許]多山水畫，
那是妙有，叫妙有真空。

The background of the image is a blurred photograph of a bookshelf. Several books are visible, with spines in various colors including blue, green, and brown. The focus is soft, creating a sense of depth and a library-like atmosphere.

PROGRAMMING



Exhibition opening reception, October 12, 2018



Exhibition preview night and curatorial tour, October 11, 2018



Exhibition talk "A Search for Transcendence: Art and Spirituality," October 11, 2018

Exhibition Talk "A Search for Transcendence: Art and Spirituality," October 11, 2018





Exhibition opening reception, October 12, 2018



Exhibition opening reception, October 12, 2018



Exhibition tour with Society for Asian Art, January 12, 2019



Exhibition tour with students from California College of the Arts, February 22, 2019



"Slow Dancing with Art: Mindfulness and Art," a workshop series by Stephen Holtzman, February and March, 2019



Arts engagement with preschoolers from Wu Yee Children's Services, March 8th, 2019

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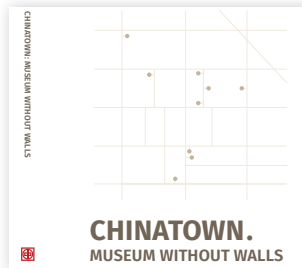
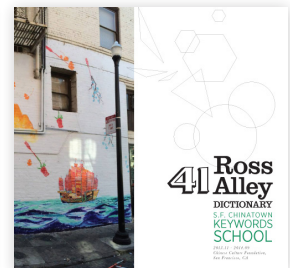
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