The background of the entire page is a traditional Chinese ink wash painting. It depicts a large, gnarled tree trunk with several branches extending upwards and outwards. The brushwork is expressive, with varying shades of grey and black ink on a light background, creating a sense of depth and texture. The tree's form is somewhat abstract, focusing on the fluidity of the brushstrokes.

Brushwork:

Ink Art in the Stanley Museum of Art

In collaboration with ARTH:3250 Brushwork in Chinese Art, Fall 2024

This event is made possible by the Stanley Museum of Art and co-sponsored by the School of Art, Art History, and Design and Center for Asian and Pacific Studies.

All images courtesy of the Stanley Museum of Art

Project leader: Amy S. Huang (Assistant Professor, Art History)

Design team: Dania Green, Alex Leonard, Weiling Lin, Jennie Villanueva

Administrative and PR team: Aly Hurley, Emma Steele

Lead editors: Maggie Adams, Elise Dahan, Hannah Lang, Allana Lopez, Kaitlin Smrcina

Peer editors: Madison Bockenstedt, Matthew Coffelt, Feda Elbadri, Deston Gornick, Nichole Johnson, Anna Ottavi, Sam Schuster

Presenters: Ollie Smith, Lila Eggerling-Boeck, Luke Krchak, Anna Jolie, Dana Larsen

Booklet design: Weiling Lin, Dania Green

Please visit our online exhibition catalogue at
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Brushwork: Ink Art in the Stanley Museum of Art

Brushwork is at the heart of ink art from East Asia due to the main tool used by painters and calligraphers alike—the soft brush with fine tip known as Chinese calligraphy brush or Japanese sumi brush. This exhibition represents works of ink art in the collection of the Stanley Museum of Art, from seventeenth-century landscape painting, calligraphy and rubbing, Zen (or Chan) painting, and modern ink painting from the twentieth century. Members of ARTH:3250 Brushwork in Chinese Art (Fall 2024) created interpretive texts, artistic responses, and an exhibition catalogue. Given the course's focus on Chinese Art, the exhibition is anchored in works by Chinese artists but also includes a work from Japan that demonstrates the strong cultural ties between the two areas in art and religion.

This exhibition also explores the legacy of ink art at the University of Iowa. Many of the artworks on view were donated by individuals associated with the university. Nancy Seiberling donated Huang Xiangjian's *Scenery on the San-tu Pass* in honor of Frank Seiberling, Lester Longman's successor as the head of Iowa's School of Art and Art History. Virginia Myers, a retired Iowa printmaking professor, donated the calligraphy rubbing, while Hu Hung-shu, a professor emeritus and former Head of Design of the SAAH (now SAAHD) had two of his own artworks donated to the Stanley by Judy Hu. Ramon Lim, a professor emeritus of neurology donated a group of his own calligraphic artworks to the Stanley collection as well. All of the mentioned donations are on view in this exhibition.

To emphasize Iowa's active community of ink artists, the exhibition includes student artworks that respond to the traditions and practices of Chinese ink art. In this way, the exhibition highlights the local living legacy of Chinese ink art.

This exhibition is made possible by the Stanley Museum of Art and co-sponsored by the School of Art, Art History, and Design and the Center for Asian and Pacific Studies. Our gratitude goes to Kimberly Datchuk, Sayuri Hemann, and the team at the SMA.

Amy S. Huang and Hannah Lang

The tradition and transformation of ink art in China

Ink art makes up a vital part of the cultural identity of China. Traditional artists, often members of elite society, contributed to centuries of art-making and art-theorizing. This work culminates in various traditions through time that praised different brushwork techniques, styles, features, and qualities upon which a person could evaluate art as admirable. Artists participated in copying the works of masters and then evolved their own distinct styles, a tradition that created centuries of legacies built on the techniques and aesthetic qualities of those who came before. [1] Done with brush and ink, Chinese ink art involves everything from breathtaking landscape and intricate bird-and-flower painting to meticulous and effervescent calligraphy.

What can be read in the brushwork of Chinese ink art? The speed of the artist's hand, the dryness and wetness of the brush, and even the weight or lightness of the artist's hand reveal the artwork's journey. In landscape and other paintings, artists aimed to capture the essential character or an inner animation of both the object being painted (qiyun or "spirit consonance") and of the artist's own inspiration and essence.[2] The artist's confidence, personality, style, legacy, and schooling are infused in every contour, thickness, and bleed of the ink. This value system carries into calligraphy as well. Students practiced copying from the great calligraphers using manuscripts preserved in copy books and rubbings from carvings. In this way, different scripts or styles were carried on through history.[3] With every reiteration, the artist evolved their own personal style and the copied style was distilled, reinterpreted, and even changed over the centuries.

The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 marks a turning point in Chinese history and had a major impact on its cultural evolution.[4] This ushering into modernity and onto the global stage prompted artists to reconcile what it meant to infuse their artwork with Western influence and adopt its techniques. It also prompted artists to keep drawing on the traditional influence of past artists, saturating their paintings with references to the past and doing so with a modern flair, all in an attempt to create a Chinese modern art.

From the earliest paintings to ink artwork today, all artists have amalgamized or synthesized references and styles from past artists.[5] Chinese brushwork is a great lineage of artistic practice and canon in which everything from the tastes of the time to valued styles are preserved, rearranged, transformed, and adapted.[6]

Allana Lopez

- [1] James Cahill, *Painter's Practice: How Artists Lived And Worked in Traditional China* (New York: Columbia University Press), 10.
- [2] Guo Ruoxu (ca. 1080), "An Account of My Experiences in Painting (Tuhua jianwen zhi)," adapted from *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, ed. Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 95-6.
- [3] Maxwell Hearn, "Chinese Painting," in Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2008. https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/chin/hd_chin.htm
- [4] Bai Qianshen, "Wu Dacheng to Mao Zedong: The Transformation of Chinese Calligraphy in the Twentieth Century" in *Chinese Art: Modern Expressions*, ed. Maxwell K. Hearn and Judith G. Smith (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art), 247.
- [5] Ibid, 246-283.
- [6] Richard Vinograd, "Classification, Canon, and Genre" in *A Companion to Chinese Art*, ed. Martin J. Powers and Katherine R. Tsiang (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.), 254-277.



Landscapes

Huang Xiangjian

(Chinese, 1609-1673)

Scenery on the San-tu Pass

Dated 1657

Hanging scroll

77 x 22 1/2 in.

Gift of Nancy Seiberling

In memory of Frank Seiberling

1991.7

Scenery on the San-Tu Pass, an ink and color painting, is part of a group of writings and paintings commemorating Huang Xiangjian's perilous journey to retrieve his parents from the war-torn southern Chinese province of Yunnan. Both the series of paintings, and the writings that document their travels in relation with the paintings, serve as a physical record of the family's journey and their responses to their situation. Given the dynastic shift happening at the time the area was rampant with conflicts caused by different political alliances making travel exceedingly unsafe. Journeying through these lands, Huang Xiangjian shows his filial commitment and bravery, which after returning home, he capitalized on to drum up support and funds for his family.[1]

This piece connects to the exhibition through the brushwork. The textural strokes in *Scenery on the San-Tu Pass* play a large role in the storytelling in Huang's work. Large, even washes of ink create a background and base for the smaller details in the foreground. Values are built up to insinuate some depth, although there is no constituted effort at modeling or realism. The figure at the bottom is intentionally created from only a few strokes, devoid of detail because the focus is not the character, it is the journey. This is a common trait through the series, although the number of figures differs depending on if his parents appear in the scene.

As such, there is much more care given to depicting the land. Although it is not depicted as it would be seen in real life, the form of the rocks and the winding of the thin path helps communicate the perilous, lost feeling that Huang might have felt as he took this journey. Care is taken in the small dapples that make up the canopies of the trees, thin, slow strokes drip down to make trunks. The outlines of craggy rock formations are made by jagged, tapered lines that layer one over the other.

Something unusual about this piece and the others in this series, is that it is based off a real place. In traditional Chinese landscape painting, it is unusual that a painting portrays a real location, since landscape paintings were supposed to speak more to the artist's interpretation and concept of a landscape than an actual place. However, Huang Xiangjian chose to show real places to depict his path and the trials he faced along the way in a storytelling manner.

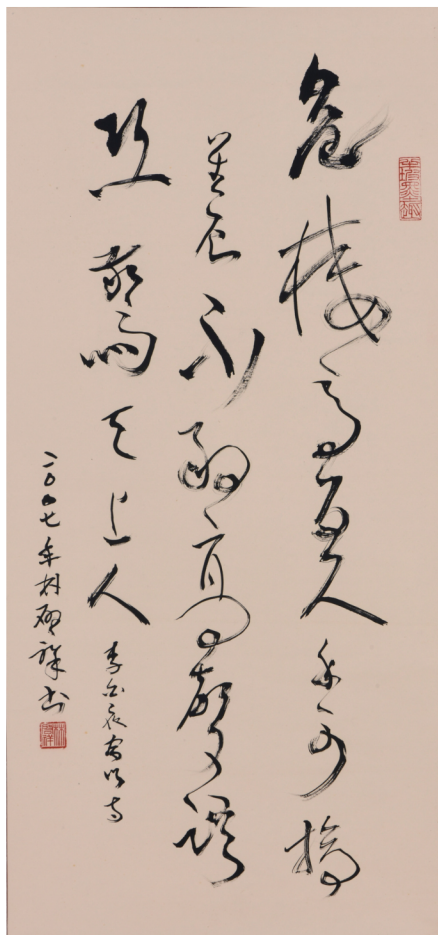
Through the production of these works, Huang Xiangjian connected with the cultural appreciation of familial commitment. Because the family was effectively poor upon returning home, Huang felt the need to provide income efficiently. To do this, he produced numerous paintings about his journey, sticking to a few uniform compositions with different subjects to quickly make quality works.[2] Through the creation and distribution of these emotional works, Huang Xiangjian saved his family and earned his place in art history.

Sam Schuster

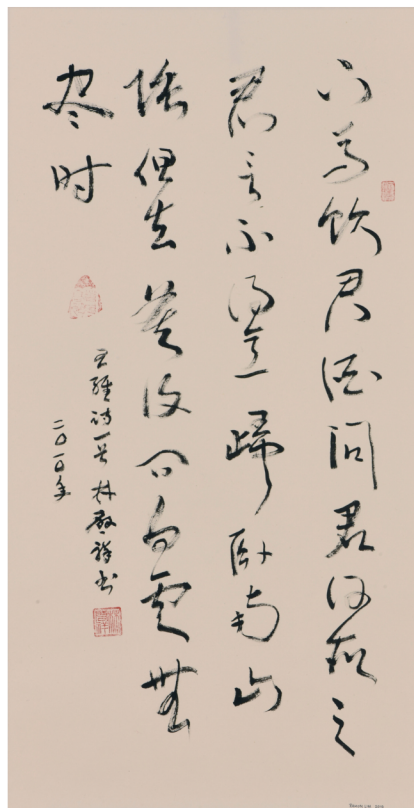
[1] Elizabeth Kindall, *Geo-narratives of a filial son: the paintings and travel diaries of Huang Xiangjian (1609-1673)* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2016).

[2] Elizabeth Kindall, "The Paintings of Huang Xiangjian's Filial Journey to the Southwest," *Artibus Asiae* 67, no. 2 (2007): 297–357. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25261882>.

Calligraphy



Ramon Lim (Chinese American, born in the Philippines, 1933)
Overnight in a Mountain Temple
 2007
 46 1/2 x 22 in.
 Gift of the artist
 2023.38



Ramon Lim (Chinese American, born in the Philippines, 1933)
Farewell to a Friend
 2010
 37 x 19 in.
 Gift of the artist
 2023.40



Ramon Lim (Chinese American, born in the Philippines, 1933)
Great Squares Show No Corners
 2018
 36 x 16 in.
 Gift of the artist
 2023.42

This group of scrolls represent the cursive calligraphy works by Dr. Ramon Lim (born 1933), a Chinese American artist based in Iowa City. Trained as a doctor and neurologist, Lim is Professor Emeritus at the University of Iowa and a calligrapher, painter, and writer. Born and raised in the Philippines, Lim started creating abstract paintings when he was in medical school in Manila. In later years, Lim turned his artistic interest to Chinese calligraphy in which he combines traditional practices and modern aesthetics.[1] Like all the Chinese calligraphers who came before him, Ramon Lim learned calligraphy by copying masterpieces from the past with the goal of developing his own artistic interpretation.

Lim specializes in cursive calligraphy, a script that developed around the end of the Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) and matured during the Tang Dynasty (618-907). Initially developed as an abbreviated and quicker way of writing, cursive script simplifies the Chinese characters and turns multiple strokes into a continuous movement of the brush.[2] As an abstract painter, Lim was attracted to the expressive and rhythmic visual qualities of this form of writing. His cursive calligraphy draws inspiration from both ancient and modern masters from China. Lim cites Huaisu (737-799), a master of “wild cursive” calligraphy, as his main source of inspiration.

The scrolls on display in this exhibition all transcribe well-known texts from ancient China. 2023.38 presents “Overnight in a Mountain Temple,” a poem by Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai (or Li Bo, 704-762). Working with a non-conventional brush, Lim uses the split ends and low absorbency of chicken feather to create dramatic effects of “flying white.”

2023.40 features “Farewell to a Friend,” a poem by Tang Dynasty poet Wang Wei (701-761). This piece shows stylistic affinity to modern calligraphy master Yu Youren (1879-1964). Yu is known for developing the so-called “standard cursive” that aims to make cursive calligraphy more accessible. Lim’s work captures a hallmark of Yu’s cursive calligraphy in that every character is separate from each other.

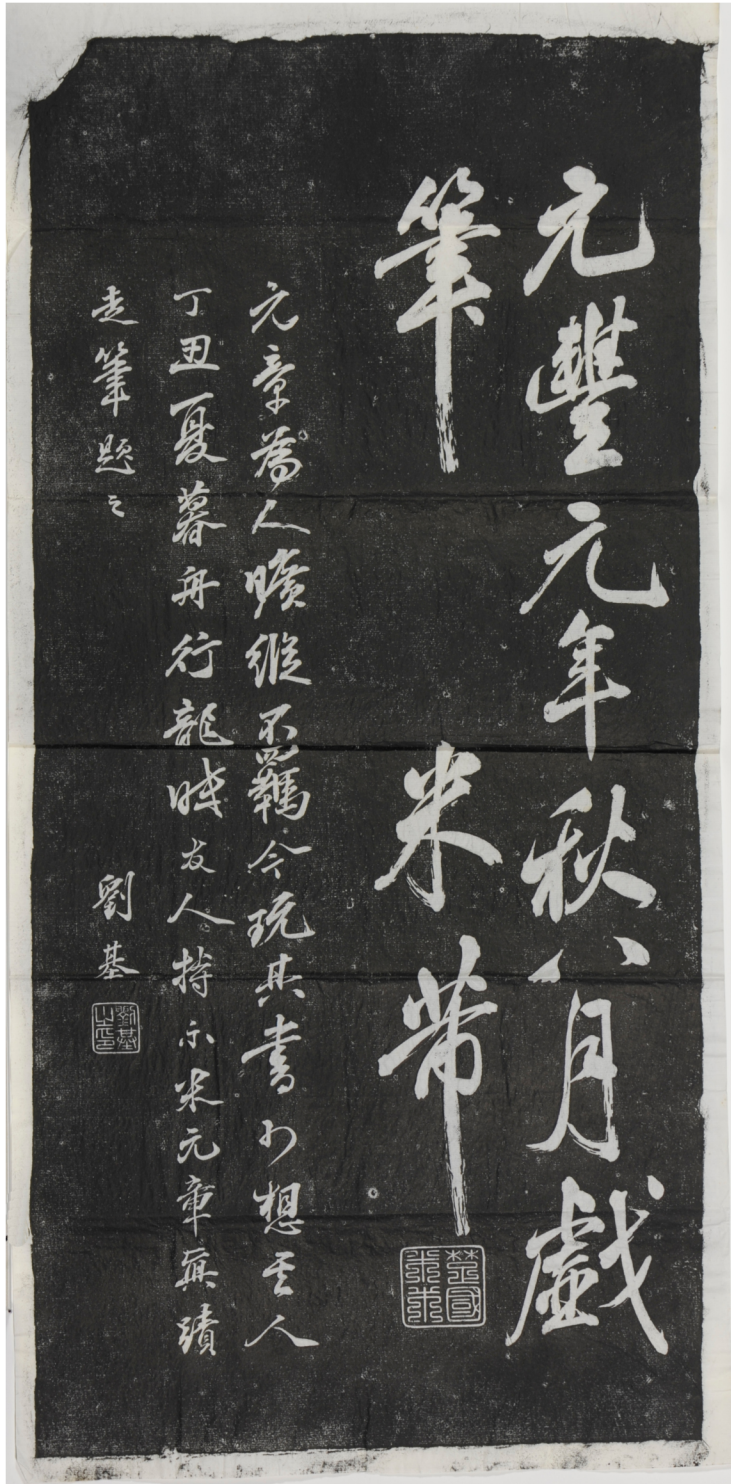
2023.42 is Lim’s interpretation of a single phrase from the *Daode jing*, an ancient Chinese classic that dates to the fourth or third century BCE and traditionally credited to Laozi. Here Lim creates a bold image with the characters’ simple forms and the vibrating lines inspired by the style of modern calligraphy master Lin Sanzhi (1898-1989).

Amy S. Huang

[1] Ramon Lim, *An anthology of literary and artistic works of Ramon Lim* (Manila: Philippine Chinese Literary Arts Association, 2008).

[2] National Museum of Asian Art, “Cursive script,” <https://asia-archive.si.edu/learn/chinas-calligraphic-arts/cursive-script/>

Rubbing



Attributed to Mi Fu
(Chinese, 1051-1107)
Calligraphy rubbing
Late 20th century
27 x 12 3/4 in.
Estate of Virginia A. Myers
2017.148

This piece attributed to Mi Fu is a rubbing of his calligraphic transcription of Tang Dynasty poet Cui Hao's poem titled "Respectfully Harmonizing with Supervising Secretary Xu's poem "Night duty"; offered to my friends." Tang poetry was often selected for the content of calligraphic work to provide the viewer with literary and historical intrigue as well as aesthetic appeal of the brushwork itself.[1] The larger text on the right side is the last page of the work with the date and Mi Fu's signature and seal. The smaller text on the left side is an inscription signed by Liu Ji (1311–1375) containing a commentary on the calligraphic work.

Mi Fu was well known not only for his skillful calligraphy, but also for his status as a connoisseur. Mi Fu started his career when he was young, by copying famous works of calligraphy that were originally produced by old masters.[2] Copying and learning through rubbing was a key practice in the calligraphic tradition in China due to the scarcity of original writings by ancient calligraphy masters.

This rubbing is an example of Mi Fu's running script, or semi-cursive script, which is an informal script that is based on standard script Chinese and can come very close to cursive writing. The majority of Mi Fu's work that transcribes poetry, lyrics, or prose, is written in running script. Running script originates from poetry and prose handscrolls written in the post-mid-Tang period.[3] Mi Fu modeled his fluid calligraphy style after Tang masters whose work included lots of twists and turns.[4] Although Mi Fu began his career by copying other masters, as he progressed, he was able to create his own distinct style of calligraphy.[5] Mi Fu's running script is thick and full, with a tendency to extend both vertical and diagonal lines. This results in characters that occupy lots of space, in contrast to Liu Ji's running script on the left, which is smaller and self-contained.

The inscription on this rubbing bears a signature by Liu Ji, who was the chief advisor of the founding emperor of the Ming Dynasty. Liu Ji was known as a prominent Daoist military strategist with strong intellectual abilities.[6] The notable identity of the inscription writer is important because it adds validity and credibility to the main body of work.

Lila Eggerling-Boeck

[1] Ronald Egan, "The Relationship of Calligraphy and Painting to Literature," in *The Oxford Handbook of Classical Chinese Literature*, ed. Wiebke Denecke, Wai-Yee Li, and Xiaofei Tian (Oxford University Press, 2017), 104-105.

[2] Nakata Yujiro, "Calligraphic Style and Poetry Handscrolls: On Mi Fu's Sailing on the Wu River," in *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy and Painting*, ed. Alfreda Murck and Wen C. Fong (The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Princeton University Press, 1991), 96.

[3] Yujiro, "Calligraphic Style and Poetry Handscrolls," 99.

[4] Peter C. Sturman, *Mi Fu: Style and the Art of Calligraphy in Northern Song China* (Yale University Press, 1997), 63.

[5] Sturman, *Mi Fu*, 54-63.

[6] Hok-Lam Chan, "The Making of a Myth: Liu Ji's Fictionalization in the Yinglie zhuan and Its Sequel," in *The Scholar's Mind: Essays in Honor of Fredrick W. Mote*, ed. Perry Link (The Chinese University Press, 2009), 51.

The Art of Transmission: Rubbing and Copying Traditions in Chinese Calligraphy

Throughout Chinese art history, few practices have been as crucial to cultural preservation and artistic development as the traditions of rubbing and copying calligraphy. These methods, refined over centuries, served not only to preserve important works but also to establish artistic lineages and maintain cultural continuity across generations. The intricate relationship between original works, their copies, and the subsequent interpretations of both reveals complex attitudes toward authenticity, preservation, and artistic innovation that differ markedly from Western traditions of art making and collecting.

The transmission and preservation of Chinese calligraphy through rubbing and copying represents a complex cultural practice that fundamentally shaped the development of this art form. As Amy McNair's seminal research demonstrates, these practices were not merely mechanical reproduction methods but rather sophisticated systems of cultural preservation that influenced both the "physical life" and "critical life" of calligraphic works.[1] Since the Later Han dynasty (25-220), ink-written calligraphy has been seen as an expression of the writer's personality, making the transmission of these works particularly significant.[2] The rubbing of running script attributed to Mi Fu in this exhibition, featuring his 1085 calligraphy of Cui Hao's poem with Liu Ji's 1337 inscription, exemplifies these traditions' enduring significance.

Historical Development and Technical Process

The practice of creating stone engravings and subsequent rubbings emerged as early as the fourth century BCE but gained particular prominence during the Tang and Song dynasties. Beginning in the tenth century, famous works of calligraphy in palace and private collections were systematically copied and engraved in stone.[3] The model-letters tradition (*tiepai*) formalized this practice through imperial compendia such as the *Chunhua ge tie* (992) and *Daguan tie* (1109). These collections served to canonize certain works and styles while establishing a systematic approach to transmission.[4]

Authentication and Connoisseurship

The question of authenticity in Chinese calligraphy presents fascinating complexities. McNair's discussion of Song dynasty connoisseurs Mi Fu (1052-1107) and Huang Bosi (1079-1118) reveals sophisticated debates about authenticity that went far beyond simple questions of originality. Their critical evaluations of the *Chunhua ge tie*, where they questioned nearly half of its attributions, demonstrates the complex relationship between original works and their reproductions.[5] Mi Fu, whose Running Script rubbing we examine, was himself a prominent critic of authentication practices, declaring in 1088 that he had "roughly divided [the letters] into genuine and fake." [6]

Social and Political Dimensions

The production of rubbings and copies served important social and political functions. McNair notes that the Song critics' reception of Northern Wei Buddhist inscriptions was heavily influenced by considerations of social class and cultural identity. Ouyang Xiu (1007-1072), a prominent Song dynasty scholar-official, expressed concern about the "vulgarity" of Northern Dynasty stele engravings, particularly their poor grammar and incorrect characters, which he attributed to their "barbarian" origins.[7]

Material Culture and Preservation

The physical aspects of rubbing and copying played a crucial role in preservation. McNair describes how the Chunhua ge tie deteriorated within a hundred years, demonstrating the vulnerability of even imperial collections.[8] The durability of stone engravings and the ability to produce multiple rubbings provided a more reliable means of preservation, as evidenced by the survival of Mi Fu's Running Script through late 20th-century rubbings.

Contemporary Significance

By the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), attitudes toward stele inscriptions had shifted dramatically. Kang Youwei (1858-1927) and other late Qing scholars began to appreciate anonymous Northern Dynasty inscriptions for their aesthetic qualities rather than their historical or social significance.[9] This shift in critical reception demonstrates how the evaluation of calligraphic works could evolve over time, independent of their original context or authorship.

The late 20th-century rubbing of Mi Fu's Running Script exemplifies the enduring relevance of traditional reproduction practices. While modern technologies offer new means of reproduction, the rubbing technique maintains a direct physical connection to historical works that many practitioners and collectors continue to value. The presence of Liu Ji's 1337 inscription adds another layer of historical significance, demonstrating how these works accumulated meaning through generations of engagement and interpretation.

Conclusion

The practices of rubbing and copying in Chinese calligraphy represent a sophisticated system of cultural transmission that shaped the art form's development over centuries. Through examples like Mi Fu's Running Script rubbing, we can understand how these practices served multiple functions: preservation of important works, transmission of artistic techniques, establishment of cultural authority, and creation of new artistic possibilities through reinterpretation. McNair's research reveals not just technical processes but fundamental aspects of Chinese cultural attitudes toward artistic creation, preservation, and transmission.[10]

Madison Bockenstedt

- [1] Amy McNair, "Engraved Calligraphy in China: Recension and Reception," *The Art Bulletin* 77, no. 1 (March 1995): 106.
- [2] McNair, "Engraved Calligraphy in China," 106.
- [3] McNair, "Engraved Calligraphy in China," 106-7.
- [4] McNair, "Engraved Calligraphy in China," 107-8.
- [5] McNair, "Engraved Calligraphy in China," 107-8.
- [6] McNair, "Engraved Calligraphy in China," 107.
- [7] McNair, "Engraved Calligraphy in China," 110-11.
- [8] McNair, "Engraved Calligraphy in China," 107.
- [9] McNair, "Engraved Calligraphy in China," 113-14.
- [10] McNair, "Engraved Calligraphy in China," 113-14.

Zen Painting

Attributed to Sengai (1750-1837)
Dragon
n.d.
Sumi ink drawing in scroll format
67 x 12 in.
Museum purchase
1973.43



This painting of dragon bears the signature and seal by Sengai Gibon (1750-1837) from the Edo period (1603-1868). The exact date that this work of art was created is unknown. It was purchased by the museum in May of 1973. This scroll was made with sumi ink and stands for the uninhibited and playful style Sengai is known for. The brushstrokes seem quick and rushed without creating much depth to the drawing, along with a cursive style to the calligraphic inscriptions. This “rushed” brushstroke style shows Sengai’s playfulness that he conveys in his art. He expresses this informality throughout his art to reflect a free attitude unbound by conventions which originates from Zen Buddhism.[1]

The dragon in Japan has complicated symbolism, combining myths and lore from China, India, and Japan. Most of all, it is associated with water and rain, seen here in the mists and clouds surrounding the dragon.[2] Sengai used a lot of negative space to bring attention to the dragon. The shapes, shading, and lines in this scroll are much more defined when your eyes draw closer to the dragon’s face. Sengai is making these aspects more defined when you look closer to the dragon, as he is trying to direct the viewer’s attention to the dragon.

Towards the top of the scroll, there is an inscription. The inscription says, “Monk Sengai paints dragon, it is magnificent.” This is an overly simplistic text compared to Sengai’s typical inscriptions that reflect his musing and ideas as a Zen monk. Sengai spent his whole life as a Zen monk who always tried to promote peace and happiness of earth through not only his whimsical and humorous art but his teachings as well. After serving two decades as an abbot, he devoted his life to his art. He would teach calligraphy and painting, where his teachings would reflect his beliefs of peace and happiness.[3]

In “Dragon,” Sengai combines Zen art with his values through his playful and whimsical brushstrokes. The dragon, being a sign of good fortune and power, further explains his beliefs in peace and spiritual freedom. This scroll captures Edo-period Japanese Zen art (Zenga) in its playful art style, which made Zenga popular in Japan and globally in the post-war era. Zenga has its origins in Zen art in medieval Japan when Zen (or Chan in Chinese) Buddhism was introduced to Japan from China.[4] Sengai’s scroll proves the close ties between Japan and China in art and religion.

Deston Gornick

[1] Galit Aviman, “On monkeys, illusion and the moon in the paintings of Hakuin Ekaku and Sengai Gibon,” *Japan Studies Association Journal* Vol. 8 (2010): 209.

[2] Zoey Kolligian, “The Japanese Dragon in Art and Mythology,” Asian Art and Architecture, Connecticut College, December 17, 2023, <https://diluo.digital.conncoll.edu/Asianart/author/zkolligiaconncoll-edu/>

[3] Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *Sengai: The Zen of Ink and Paper* (Greenwic, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1971).

[4] Yukio Lippit, “Zenga: A Brief History,” None Whatsoever: Zenga Paintings from the Gitter-Yelen Collection, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2023, <https://emuseum.mfah.org/catalogues/gitter-yelen-collection/menu/zenga-a-brief-history>

Chinese Influence in Japan Zen Painting

Zen painting is a famous genre of painting from the Edo period in Japan. Zen paintings—works of art created by Buddhist monks — have close ties to Zen Buddhism. Zen monks spread the teachings and ideas of Zen Buddhism in their works, all in the hope of awakening people's inner worlds and minds, as well as contributing to their own personal cultivation through their paintings.[1] Japanese Zen paintings, with their simple brushstrokes and spiritual connotations, have become a representative category of art that is deeply influenced by Chinese Chan (Zen in Japanese) culture.

Chan/Zen Buddhism, originating in India, spread into China and became popular during the Northern and Southern Dynasties period. The influence of Buddhism led to the creation of different forms of Chinese art, each with religious aspects.[2] Chan Buddhist art began to develop as early as the Tang Dynasty in China, and Buddhism's influence on the art form reached its peak during the Song Dynasty. It was also during this period that monochrome ink painting became the main form of expression for Chan Buddhist paintings. Chan paintings were simple and straightforward, emphasizing simplicity and valuing brushwork that could convey the artist's inner spirit while spreading the teachings of Buddhism. Monochromatic ink painting served as a medium to spread the philosophy and connected the paintings to the spiritual world of man by capturing momentary thought.[3] For these Chan paintings, artists usually choose natural landscapes or objects as their subject matter, including mountains, flowers, birds, and bamboo. These elements have different symbolic meanings in China, and artists prefer to depict these subjects as a reflection of a person's inner spirit and as a teaching of what they should become.[4]

During the Song dynasty, many Japanese monks and artists began to visit and study in China. During this time, called the Kamakura period in Japan, the Chinese style of Buddhist painting was established in Japan as Zen painting.[5] In addition to art, Chinese calligraphy, literature, and philosophical ideas were also brought to Japan.[6] The samurai class – the warrior class in Japan — found Chan Buddhism's simple and rigorous philosophical ideas appealing. As a result, Zen Buddhism was widely accepted and integrated into Japanese culture. This led to the widespread acceptance and integration of Zen into Japanese culture.[7]

The minimalist monochromatic ink paintings imported from China had a profound impact on Japanese painting and art forms,[8] and monochromatic ink paintings have since become an iconic form of Zen art in Japan, forming the primary medium of Zen art. Chinese artists pioneered this technique of relying on ink shades to create mood and texture, which was adopted by Japanese artists as a minimalist tool for conveying Zen ideas. The directness of the brushstrokes and the capture of instantaneous thoughts in Chinese Buddhist art caught the

interest of Japanese Zen artists. This idea of simplicity, transience, and spontaneity became the indispensable spirit behind Japanese Zen painting. In fact, “simplicity” and “rusticity” took their place in the aesthetic of Japanese art and came to be known as *Wabi-sabi*, an aesthetic of natural simplicity brought about by the spirit of Zen.[9]

In addition to style and inner spirit, the subject matter of Japanese Zen paintings also draws heavily on the traditions of Chinese Chan art. Natural themes such as landscapes, flowers, birds, animals and figures, which were popular in Chan paintings, were also favored by Japanese monks and artists, and symbolized a spiritual uniting of man and nature. Animals were an especially popular element, as viewers can see from Sengai’s work.

From the introduction of Zen Buddhism to the influence brought by Chinese ink painting, China laid the foundation for the development of Japanese Zen art.[10] Rather than simply copying the forms of Chinese Chan art exactly, Japanese artists have adapted them, incorporating local culture, context and aesthetics into their paintings to create a unique artistic tradition that continues to inspire and captivate audiences around the world.[11] By combining Chinese artistic practice with Japanese innovation, Zen painting has become a powerful medium of spiritual expression, embodying its pursuit of Zen cultural practice and its sense of personal enlightenment.

Weiling Lin

[1] Department of Asian Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, “Zen Buddhism,” October 2002, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/zen/hd_zen.htm

[2] Jin-Shan Shen, Yu-Meng Xiao, and Chih-Long Lin, “Exploring the Characteristics of Zen Painting,” *Creative Education* 15 (April, 2024): 652–77. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2024.154040>

[3] Shen et. al., “Exploring the Characteristics of Zen Painting.”

[4] Department of Asian Art, “Zen Buddhism.”

[5] Shen et. al., “Exploring the Characteristics of Zen Painting.”

[6] Department of Asian Art, “Zen Buddhism.”

[7] Shen et. al., “Exploring the Characteristics of Zen Painting.”

[8] Shen et. al., “Exploring the Characteristics of Zen Painting.”

[9] Department of Asian Art, “Zen Buddhism.”

[10] Yukio Lippit, “Zenga: A Brief History,” The Gitter-Yelen Collection Online Catalogues, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, <https://emuseum.mfah.org/catalogues/gitter-yelen-collection/menu/zenga-a-brief-history>

[11] Shen et. al., “Exploring the Characteristics of Zen Painting.”

Modern Paintings



Liu Kuo-sung (Liu Guosong)
(Taiwanese, born in Anhui, China, 1932)
Peaks in Contemplation
1967
Ink wash on paper
18 x 37 1/4 in.
Gift of Charles Read
1991.208

During the early 1960s, Liu Kuo-sung began his exploration to create modern abstract art inspired by Chinese ink painting to reinvigorate this artistic tradition. He conducted a variety of experiments in painting techniques and styles, incorporating elements of Chan Buddhism and cursive calligraphy in his pursuit of a modern Chinese ink painting with a global perspective. Here, Liu adapts the tradition of landscape painting into an ambiguous topography made up of bold brushstrokes and seemingly organic forms. This work was created a few years before Liu first visited the University of Iowa in 1975 as a visiting professor. Liu's time in Iowa marks the encounter between UI and one of the most important Chinese artists of the 20th century.

Modern Paintings

Hu Hung-shu
(Taiwanese American, born in
Shanghai, China, 1935-2015)
Separated
1981
Oil on canvas
44 x 34 in.
Gift of Judy Hu
2023.17



Hu Hung-shu
(Taiwanese American, born in
Shanghai, China, 1935-2015)
Soaring
1983
Oil on canvas
34 x 38 in.
Gift of Judy Hu
2023.19

Hu Hung-shu (1935-2015) was a Taiwanese American architect, designer, sculptor, painter, and educator. Born in Shanghai, China and educated in both China and Taiwan, Hu went abroad to the United States in 1964 to pursue another degree.[1] Hu's degrees include a B.S. in architecture from Cheng-kung University and an M.F.A. in design from the Cranbrook Academy of Art.[2] In 1966, Hu started teaching design at the University of Northern Iowa, where he would stay until 1968.[3] Hu then took over the new design program for the School of Art and Art History at the University of Iowa until 2003, after which he retired.[4] While he excelled in many areas, Hu's paintings consistently went on exhibition in the U.S. and made appearances in France, South Korea, and Taiwan.[5]

Hu's *Soaring* and *Separated* in this exhibition on ink art are of interest to us. Despite lacking actual ink, both paintings express Hu's desire to combine traditional Chinese ink painting with modern practices to create a type of modern Chinese ink painting that explores abstraction. Hu wished to defy the norms of traditional Chinese ink painting which typically uses water-based ink on paper and/or silk.[6]

From here, Hu experimented with the traditional medium by using oil paints mixed with water on canvas and also with techniques for applying paints. These techniques produced paintings that showcased no noticeable traits of the typical tools used in painting. Hu allowed the paints to flow freely on the canvas, responding to gravity, or he would even blow the paint. These techniques would create natural images with little human manipulation.[7] In *Soaring*, viewers can see that the paint was blown, especially regarding the light shape, darkly outlined on the upper left-hand side. *Separated* is representative of the use of gravity in Hu's process, as viewers can see by the vertical lines that adorn the canvas. These modern ideas join with traditional Chinese ink painting using a water and pigment mixture, and strict adherence to black and white elemental colors to create modern Chinese ink paintings.[8]

Another modern idea that *Soaring* and *Separated* utilize is abstraction. Hu, like other modern ink painters in China, aimed to extract the essence of a form when attempting abstraction. He was avoiding complete abstraction, something often seen in works by artists like Jackson Pollock. While at first glance viewers may be reminded of complete abstraction, Hu is pulling imagery of landscapes in through organic [9] For example, looking at *Soaring*, one may be reminded of clouds, water, or even rock formations. *Separated* may be reminiscent of trees in a forest or flowers growing among the grass. While we can recognize the appearance of abstraction here, we also see aspects of traditional Chinese ink painting through this evocative imagery comparable to Chinese landscape [10] Hu's paintings are therefore also representative of an abstract movement among modern Chinese artists.

Aly Hurley

- [1] Robert Albright Rorex, "Hung-shu Hu Paintings: 1975-1995," in *Hu Hung-shu Oil Painting Solo Exhibition: New Techniques and New Artistic Concepts*, ed. Lin Manyuan (Taiwan: Taiwan Provincial Museum of Art, 1985), 16-19.
- [2] "About," Hu Hung-shu, accessed November 22, 2024, <http://www.huhungshu.com>.
- [3] Xu Jing-yue, "Beyond the Definitions of 'Tradition' and 'Modernity': The Painting World of Hu Hung-shu," in *A Thousand Views and a Million Scenes: Hu Hung-shu Modern Oil Painting Exhibition*, ed. Yeh Yuiseng, Huang Shihfeng, Kang Jill, et al. (Taiwan: Chan Liu Art Museum, 2006), 14-17.
- [4] Rorex, "Hung-shu Hu Paintings: 1975-1995," 16.
- [5] Xu, "Beyond the Definitions of 'Tradition' and 'Modernity': The Painting World of Hu Hung-shu," 15.
- [6] Rorex, "Hung-shu Hu Paintings: 1975-1995," 17.
- [7] Huang Cheng-zhi, "Meeting Point of the West and the East: A Review on Prof. Hu Hung-shu's Oil Paintings," in *A Thousand Views and a Million Scenes: Hu Hung-shu Modern Oil Painting Exhibition*, edited by Yeh Yuiseng, Huang Shihfeng, Kang Jill, et al. (Taiwan: Chan Liu Art Museum, 2006), 5.
- [8] Rorex, "Hung-shu Hu Paintings: 1975-1995," 18.
- [9] Rorex, "Hung-shu Hu Paintings: 1975-1995," 18.
- [10] Rorex, "Hung-shu Hu Paintings: 1975-1995," 17.

Ink Painting Without Ink – Between Realms

Ink painting (*shuimo hua*) as a genre has long been used synonymously with Chinese painting (*guohua*) itself.[1] For centuries, the ink and brush stood steadfastly at the center of China's artistic tradition, determining the aesthetics and techniques that make up the historically respected canon. Then, at the onset of the twentieth century, their emblematic significance was only solidified with their sharp contrast to Western-style painting (*xihua*) and its use of watercolor and oil. The tension in this dichotomy has at times blinded art historians to the nuanced complexities of the artistic exchange between the so-called East and West; but it has also inspired Chinese artists to push past these strictly defined realms of tradition and modernization to create art that transcends all cultural expectations.

The systematic introduction of Western art in China at the beginning of the twentieth century attempted to maintain distance between Chinese tradition and encroaching Western schools. [2] Chinese artists were trained in either ink or oil, the Chinese tradition or Western style respectively. Their artistic identities were also subsequently defined by this binary; they were bound to work only in one medium or the other for their entire careers. Even artistic exhibitions, criticism, and scholarship of the time were defined by their focus on either *guohua* or *xihua*, but never both. They remained, by all accounts, entirely separate artistic realms – worlds apart, even in the same city.

However, by the 1980s, there was an explosion of new avant-garde art groups and exhibitions in China dedicated to modernizing Chinese art based on Western models.[3] Though this Art New Wave movement was constrained by its strictly linear view of artistic exchange, it successfully encouraged Chinese artists to critically reevaluate the taboos, techniques, and subjects of traditional *guohua* for the first time. Reactions to the Art New Wave were complex and remain difficult to succinctly trace to modern art movements. Artists and scholars alike rallied behind the banner of modernization at the movement's conception, but their interpretations of modernity in the context of Chinese tradition varied widely.

Ink painter Wu Guanzhong, whose essays are largely credited with inciting these critical reflections of Chinese art, centered his own argument for modernization in direct opposition to Chinese socialist art. The rigid expectations of socialist China outlined a specific list of acceptable subjects for Chinese artists, placing emphasis on content rather than form.[4] Wu emphatically rejected these restrictions, declaring that individual expression and abstract beauty are at the core of artistic creation and should therefore not be limited by political agendas. Many of Wu's contemporaries agreed with this general principle, using the traditional ink and brush for a variety of new genres and subjects – a movement many critics now refer to as modern ink painting. Yet, while these artists succeeded in liberating the ink and brush from the constraints of the past, they had yet to fully transcend the East-West dichotomy. Painting

Western subjects in ink did not remove the rigid boundaries between these cultures but simply reimagined them as flexible lines.

To fully embrace complete artistic freedom, Chinese artists had to turn away from this binary of cultural mediums and explore the universal language of emerging experimental art forms. While some Chinese artists had already ventured into the realms of installation and performance art as early as the 1950s, the Chinese art world catapulted into an era of experimentation following the fusion (*ronghe*) trend of the 1980s. Rather than remain bound to the idea that ink is necessary to create ink painting, modern Chinese artists are exploring the artistic innovations that lie beyond and between the confines of medium and tradition.[5] Installations by artists such as Liu Jianhua and Xu Bing evoke ink drips and brushstrokes in unconventional materials such as industrial debris, fabric, and lights. Additionally, performance art pieces like those of Song Dong, which gained incredible popularity after the turn of the century, draw from the inherent performativity of calligraphy. In this way, Chinese artists' experimentation in alternative mediums, are new expressions of a continuous tradition – a new lens through which to view the potential of the past.

This uniquely retrospective quality of contemporary experimental ink art is what gives them their beauty and power. Modern Chinese artists are inspired by their nation's cultural history, not because they seek to recreate it, but because they recognize how it can be completely reimagined in today's global landscape.[6] Innovative works like these would not exist, let alone be so striking, without their haunting similarity to Chinese ink art of the past. The two Hu Hung-shu paintings in this exhibition – *Soaring* and *Separated* – are incredible examples of this new way of interpreting tradition. The abstract, monochromatic landscapes Hu Hung-shu creates use oil paint to evoke the delicate movement of ink. Yet, his works do not represent a linear exchange between two sole cultures and mediums; rather, they express one artist's distinctive vision, brought to life through the intersecting planes of past and present, old and new. After all, do the running lines of *Separated* not echo the sloping peaks in *Scenery on the San-tu Pass*? And do the bleeding forms in *Soaring* not mirror the swirling forms in a calligrapher's water dish? Even in the abstract and experimental, there are remnants of material truth, the ever-present trace of sacred tradition.

Anna Ottavi

[1] Wu Hung, "Transcending the East / West Dichotomy: A Short History of Contemporary Chinese Ink Painting," in *Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China*, edited by Maxwell K Hearn and Wu Hung (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013), 19.

[2] Wu, "Transcending the East / West Dichotomy," 19.

[3] Wu, "Transcending the East / West Dichotomy," 20.

[4] Wu, "Transcending the East / West Dichotomy," 20.

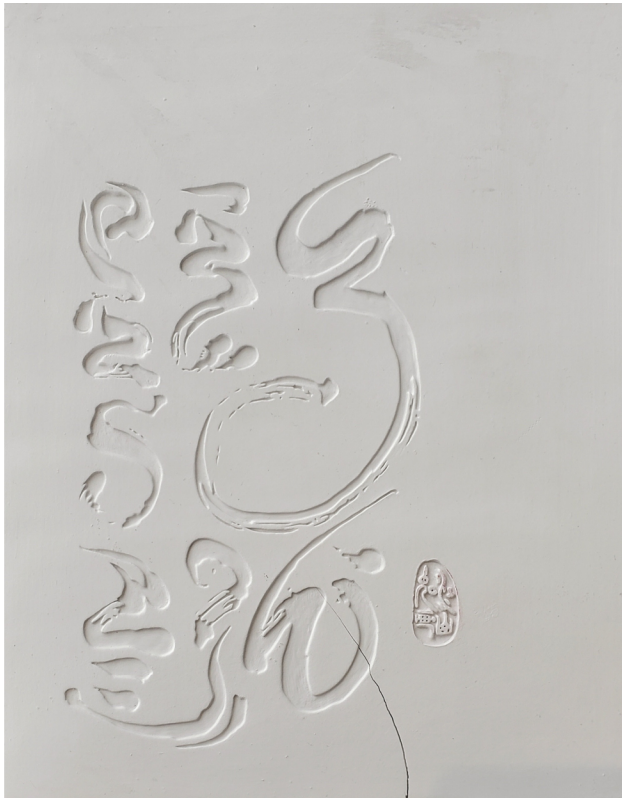
[5] Sarah E. Fraser, "Beyond Ink: Contemporary Experimental Ink Art," in *Xu Bing: Beyond the Book from the Sky*, edited by Sarah E. Fraser and Yu-Chieh Li (Singapore: Springer, 2020), 60.

[6] Fraser, "Beyond Ink," 65.

Creative response



Maggie Adams



Asemantic Iteration is inspired by the use of calligraphic rubbings to preserve and disseminate knowledge over the course of many centuries in China's history. I find the gradual mutation of style and standard through imperfect copying, either from lack of skill or failure of materials to withstand repeated use, captivating and beautiful. In this multimedia work, I have designed a process that quickly compounds human and material error, drastically changing the image from its original form in only a few iterations.

The original work on paper uses asemic writing, a writing system that blends the aesthetics of written language and drawing. Asemantic Iteration adopts a style that heavily draws on the forms and brushwork present in Chinese calligraphy, however, the abstract characters you see hold no meaning. This is in line with the connoisseurship of Chinese calligraphy, as the content of a master calligrapher's writing was typically irrelevant and revered for the aesthetic qualities present in the brushwork above all else.

The Chinese art historical canon is founded on iteration. Many of the highly revered calligraphic samples we have from pre-modern China exist only as copies or rubbings, the originals lost to time. Copies of master calligraphers' scripts were highly sought after for cultural and social capital among the elite. Calligraphy was also taught through studying the fore-mentioned scripts and then copying those copies. Asemantic Iteration questions what gets lost in translation through these many iterations; what deviations from the original are preserved and revered by future generations, to be passed down and altered once more?

Matthew Coffelt



The brushwork in Chinese art sounds like a pretty cut-and-dry topic; at least to me what comes to mind is traditional ink scrolls or serene Buddhist paintings. There are so many more mediums and ways of creating that can incorporate the idea of brushwork. For example, the project I have made is a ceramic and ink piece. The outside of the main portion has a recreation of Tang dynasty poet Li Po's "Going Up to Sun Terrace." On the container are engraved flowers that are reminiscent of traditional peach blossom depictions.

On the top of the container are engraved and painted peach blossoms, a common motif in Bird and Flower painting. Although many other types of flowers have been popular throughout the Chinese art historical canon, the cultural meaning of peach blossoms is the most in line with what I am currently working towards with my own studio goals. Peach blossoms have commonly been associated with utopian society and peaceful life. On the main body of the container Li Po's calligraphy, "Going Up to Sun Terrace," has been transcribed onto the body of the piece. Li's calligraphy has themes of the fleeting beauty of life and personal freedom. Calligraphy and flower paintings are two prevalent aspects of brushwork in Chinese art, which is why I chose to incorporate them in my representation of brushwork in art. Additionally, I am using the associations and meanings of the motifs and calligraphy in a similar way to how they were used in dynastic China; this include associations of flowers, animals, or objects to attract certain aspects of life to the owner of the art piece.



Li Po (Li Bai)
"Going Up to Sun Terrace"
Palace Museum Beijing



In Eugene Wang's article, *Inkscape and Mindscape: Liu Kuo-Sung's "Abstraction,"* Wang introduces the reader to Kuo-Sung's work. While describing some of his works Wang uses the term "clump in the breast" to describe some of the visual "blockages" in Kuo-Sung's paintings. Although Wang is writing about this notion in 2023, Wang tells us that Chinese artists have been contemplating and creating in response to this feeling since the 3rd century. In his essay, Wang quotes the Qing Dynasty artist Wu Changshuo, "[I] drank ink with abandon, so I may spit out the clump in my breast."^[1]

I was very intrigued by this term when I read Wang's article, not because the idea is entirely new to me (that artists are attempting to express their discontent), but the specificity of the language struck

me, the physicality of it. This idea also seemed to parallel what we have discussed over the course of the semester, thinking about calligraphers and painters as attempting to communicate an interior space of the mind and body through the brush and from the brush onto the paper. I was also struck by the subjects in Liu Kuo-Sung's work and I created a painting inspired by Kuo-Sung's moons, mountains and color palette. I also chose to employ the traditional landscape colors of green and blue.

In my work I often use text, and while creating this painting and thinking about the notion, "clump in the breast", I envisioned a horse galloping through these mountains which is why it is titled, *For the Horse*. Someone once told me that I am like a "wild horse" (mostly, I just have commitment issues) and while I don't know if that is accurate, I do feel like most of us are asked to negotiate or silence our own "wild horse." Through this work, I am reminded to not forget mine.

[1] Eugene Wang, "Inkscape and Mindscape: Liu Kuo-sung's Abstraction," in *Liu Kuo-sung: Experimentation as Method* (Singapore: National Gallery Singapore), 42–61.

Feda Elbadri

I struggle with making decisions in art and being able to erase is a large part of my drawing process. Making a 'mistake' is to be expected. However recently I have begun to paint strokes across a canvas and feel content with how they appear. Yet I always have a way to go back and erase my marks or cover up my brushstrokes with deeper colors.

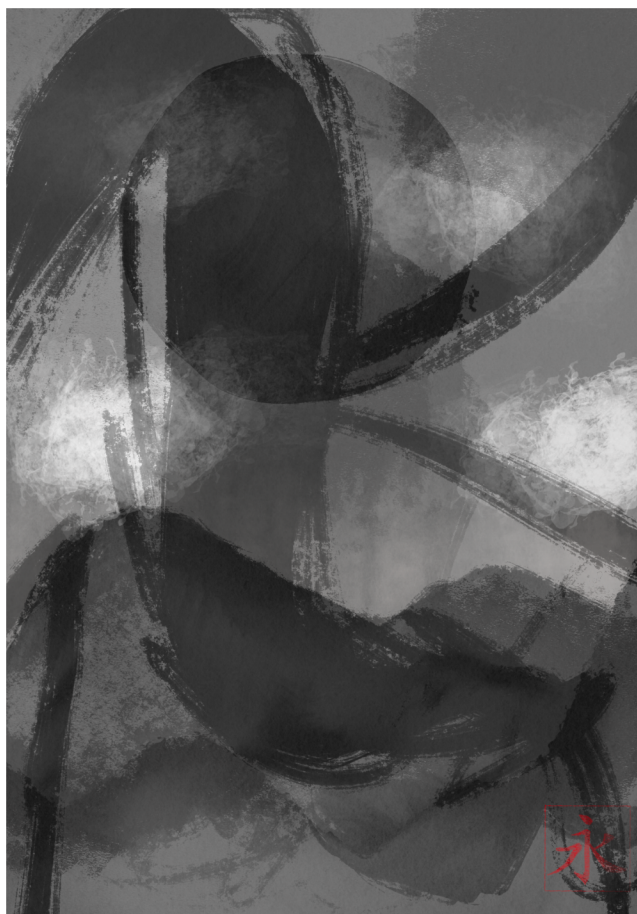
Working with ink for this project was completely outside of my comfort zone. Mixing ink with water meant I had to test the wash first, something I was a bit unfamiliar with. Was it dark enough? Too light? I often had to adjust, try again. Ink can be diluted- but it can not be erased.



I gained a deep appreciation for the ink painting genre, more than I had previously when I was only reading about the artists and their work. Working with the ink was difficult and as soon as I began, I realized what it meant to spend hours manipulating ink into something purposeful. Once it touched the paper, the ink was permanent. And so I came to realize that there are no mistakes in an ink painting, there are only decisions and the decisions always remain.

The works I have created are a response to the modern ink painting genre. I was particularly inspired by Liu Guosong's *Peaks in Contemplation* and Hu-Hung Shu's *Separated*. I was drawn to the abstract landscape qualities of *Peaks in Contemplation*. The varying shades of grays are intriguing, as they force the eye across the canvas, they make me think about what I am seeing. *Separated* does something similar. Though painted with oil, Hu-Hung Shu expertly imitates a watery scene on the canvas. But a scene of what? Trees? Mushrooms?

I attempted to bring out these visual qualities in the pieces I made for this project, and I wanted to see varying shades of black and gray, of watery lines and the hint of something natural. I leave it up to the viewer to decide what they find in the paintings that I have created.



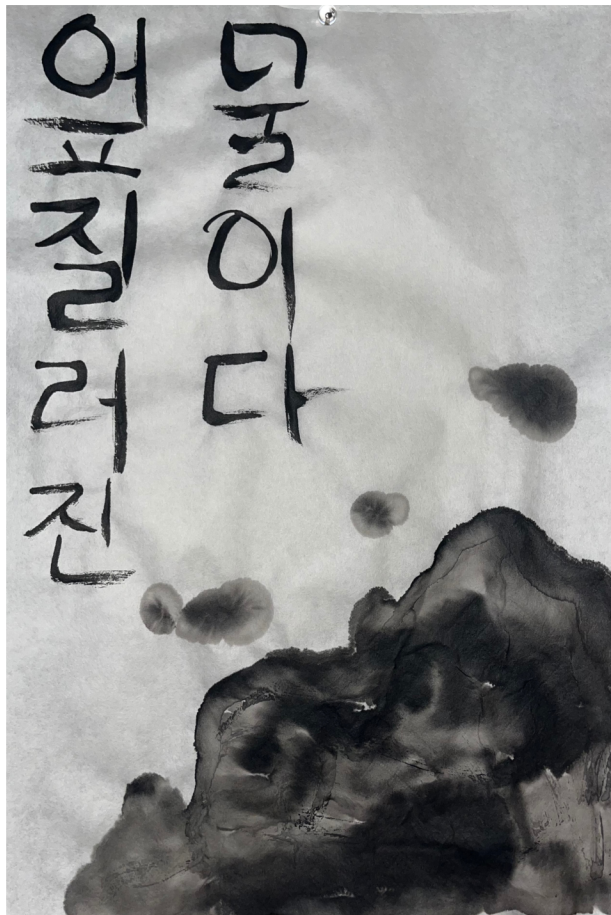
Nichole Johnson

Modern Chinese abstract painting has a deep, rich history; it is all about taking inspiration from the past while experimenting with new art mediums and techniques. Growing in popularity during the 1920's, many artists during this time implemented Western techniques to their paintings and Liu Guosong is no exception. Liu Guosong is a Chinese painter that was most active in Taiwan during the 1960's and 1970's and was the founder of the Fifth Moon Group.

In response to his "Peaks of Contemplation," made in 1967 with ink wash, I have made a piece on the drawing app Procreate. By using a digital medium, rather than the traditional ink and brush, I aim to make this genre of Chinese art more accessible to the public as digital art is more easily and widely shareable. I am also exploring the relationship between two very different artistic mediums: digital tools and physical ink and brush.

A key theme in Liu Guosong's work is fluidity and movement, which is what I am recreating in the digital realm. Fluidity and movement are a key feature in Chinese abstract painting, and Chinese ink art in general, as ink is a versatile medium to paint with. Liu Guosong combined traditional Chinese methods of painting and calligraphy with newly experimented-with western painting methods. This is echoed in my work through the combining of traditional and new methods of painting in my digital project.

Featuring a minimal color palette restricted to just blacks and whites, I aim to combine minimal shapes to create a maximalist composition. My stylus is no match for authentic brush and ink, but in using brushes on Procreate that replicate a real brush, I can still express fluidity and movement in a new modern context.



I remember the first time I saw someone writing calligraphy on a scroll with ink. It was in the Korean drama “Hwarang: The Poet Warrior Youth”. This show focused on training young men in combat and scholarly topics. Though this is a Korean drama, they were writing traditional calligraphy, which was written in hanja, or the Korean word for classical Chinese characters. This show portrayed the scholarly hierarchy that we have talked about all semester in Brushwork of Chinese Art. When I heard we were able to choose a creative response I knew immediately that I wanted to work in the ink and scroll medium.

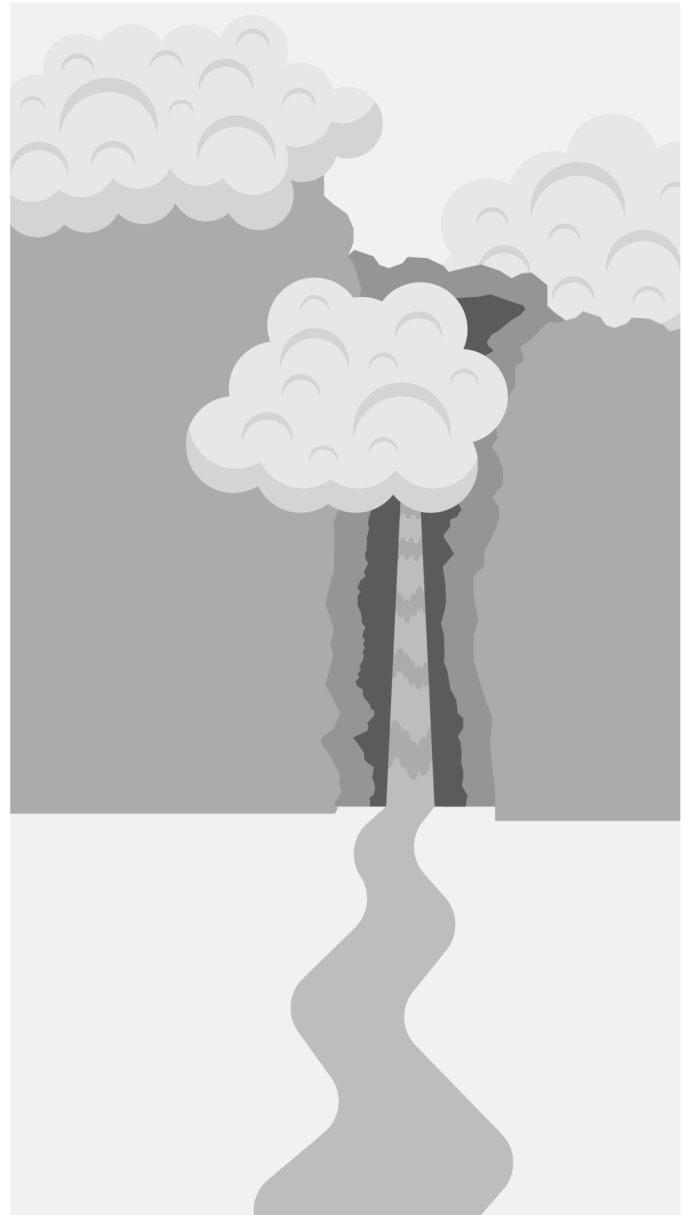
It was difficult trying to figure out which genre of brushwork I wanted to try. I knew I would not be able to create an intricate mountain scene that went from ceiling to floor, but I could still dabble in some flowers and bamboo. I also was interested in practicing calligraphy, however since I do not know Chinese and I do not want to write anything wrong, I planned on writing short poems in Korean. I have a Korean minor and have read a few poems given to me by my professors and I knew I could draw from this experience. I had a good start on my supplies from previous projects, so I started brainstorming. Prior to this I did not have a lot of experience working with this medium, however, during this class we got demonstrations from Truc Deegan This gave me the background I need to start on my journey.

Brushwork art is unlike my main mediums, painting and drawing. In painting and drawing I can easily cover up mistakes, but brushwork makes me think more about every stroke I decide to make. It makes me slow down the process and get into a critical state of mind, planning out every stroke before finally committing. This experiment in brushwork has taught me knew ways to approach art and an enjoyment of a new medium of art.

Alex Leonard

In the Spring 2024 semester I was enrolled in the Art History course, Asian Art and Culture where I was introduced to Song Dynasty landscape paintings. Since then I have been fascinated with these paintings and for my creative response I created a digital image of a Song Dynasty Chinese landscape painting.

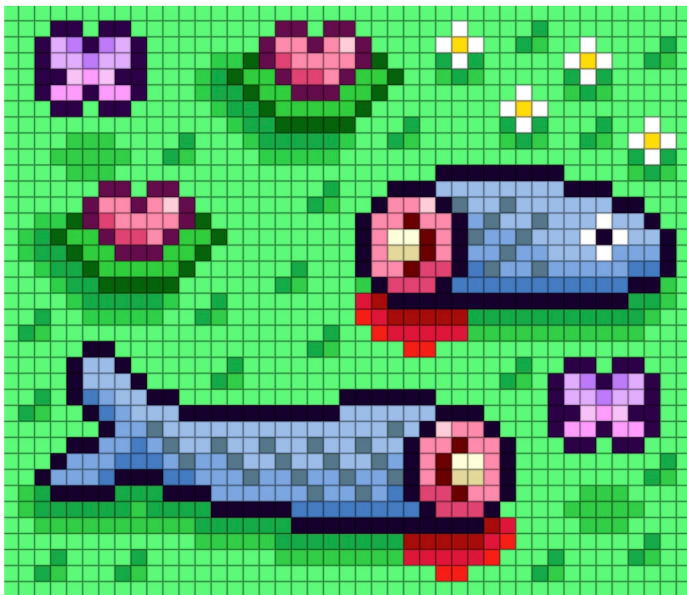
While in general I appreciate landscape paintings, there are elements of Chinese landscape paintings that I find even more interesting. The brushstrokes and natural elements in these works, such as- rocks, water, and plant life are all different from one another yet the natural motif stays the same across the board. Another element which I find fascinating is that all of these were done in black and white, as colored ink during Ancient China was not as plentiful as it is today. The way the artists included so much detail while only using black and white shows how much depth one can create while using shades of gray.



For my creative response I used Adobe Illustrator as it is my favorite program for graphic design. Unfortunately Illustrator does not use painterly brushstrokes, so I chose a vectored image of a typical Chinese landscape painting. As the viewer can see the image appears animated and cartoon-like, which is my favorite style of design. I wanted to create a digital image because I wanted to show that one can pull inspiration from a completely different artistic medium and apply it to the medium in which they excel. As artists we can take inspiration from almost anything and make creative, innovative work.

Kaitlin Smrcina

Butterflies, and Bisected Sardine, is a commentary of the boundary between art and craft in traditional Chinese Bird-And-Flower paintings. While considered decorative with no intellectual or spiritual meaning, Bird-And-Flower work prospered for their subject matter's auspicious powers and beautifying capacity. Despite their surface level compositions, Bird-And-Flower paintings have stood the test of time, being popular beyond the Song dynasty, for their iconic and beautiful motifs that distinguish themselves for their flatness and sometimes impossible, or out of place, compositions. This tendency of flatness, also present in Japanese art, inspired Takashi Murakami's famous 'Superflat' in contemporary art.



Interested in subverting the Bird-And-Flower painting genre, I lean into “craft” through ceramic mosaics, and use traditional imagery alongside numbers to derive transgressive meanings. Translated in my own compositional language, the mosaic medium keeps the image ‘Superflat’ while doubling down on the craft aspect. Looking at the subject matter, the background is placed in summer, which, while a fruitful time, the inevitability of fall is around the corner with impending decay. Daisies are a symbol for hope while 4 has been,

modernly, considered unlucky for it being almost homophonous to the Chinese character for death. For the prominent “foreground” flowers, I use Crabapple buds to express heartbreak and sorrow. Fish are a symbol for wealth and abundance in Chinese culture and 1 as a number is neither auspicious or inauspicious. While 2 is considered lucky, with the common saying ‘good things come in pairs’, what happens when 1 becomes 2 through violence? The act of bisecting my primary subject is a response to the 2024 presidential election. While the results did not surprise me, the constant reminder of America’s hatred and disregard towards marginalized communities and women is detrimentally discouraging. As a way to leave the audience with hope, the bisected fish is flanked by two purple butterflies, representing celestial symbols of immortality of love, and transformation.

From every aspect of the background to subject matter, this composition is an attempt at giving weight to the Bird-And-Flower genre, by politicizing the subjects and disputing the connoisseurs of the dynastic time’s hatred of the genre for its “simplicity.”

Emma Steele

In pre-modern China handscrolls were a way for artists to tell stories. These objects allowed for an immersive experience on the part of the viewer, operating similarly to a book or a comic. For my creative response I wanted to follow the idea of a continuous narrative and story in a more modern and accessible way. I will create a zine to make the style of a handscroll more accessible.



Along with narrative and modern handscroll rendition, my painting falls under the Bird-and-flower category of ink paintings. The zine will include ink and watercolor paintings of flowers, shrubbery, and insects. The painting will have a continuous scene and story that will follow traveling butterflies through a whimsical floral scene. As inspiration for the ink paintings, I chose Qi Baishi (1864-1957), a famous Chinese painter that was notable for his whimsical and loose brushwork. In several works of Qi Baishi's works, the artist features chrysanthemums, which are flowers that are often pointy and usually display colors of white, yellow and red. These flowers can be seen in works such as *Flower and Butterflies*, *Autumn Flowers*, *Chrysanthemums and Dragonfly*, etc.[1] I plan to replicate these works by combining both Qi Baishi's style and my own artistic style.



I am learning from this process and assignment that it takes time and dedication to create an ink painting, specifically an ink painting that is continuous. I have to be conscious of the last scene that I designed and how the idea progresses through the rest of the pages. Working with ink is not something that I am used to and while ink painting is not my preferred medium, it was interesting and intriguing to practice/experiment with this medium. In comparison to acrylic or oil (a medium I am more familiar) the brushstrokes and movements need to be precise and move in a certain way and direction to create the perfect stroke.

[1]https://www.christies.com/en/searchentry=Qi+Baishi&page=1&sortby=relevance&tab=sold_lots.



Jennie Villanueva



In Chinese art, bamboo is a popular motif since the resilient plant represents a person's upright character. Due to the linear shape of the bamboo's stem and leaves, ink painters often incorporate calligraphy techniques when they paint this subject. Using calligraphic brushstrokes, each element is painted in a similar manner when someone writes a stroke in calligraphy. After all, Chinese ink artists use the same brush for painting and calligraphy. For my creative response, I wanted to explore the relationship between both calligraphy and bamboo art within a more modern context. I will be using Procreate, a professional digital painting app that allows users to amplify their work by having a whole category of brushes to create artwork. My work is inspired by Trúc Deegan, a talented Vietnamese artist in Iowa City whose art mainly focuses on Chinese ink painting technique.

Trúc Deegan's art, as she demonstrated in our class, is my main source of inspiration. Her artistic practice of creating pieces of bamboo as her subject matter truly does reflect how much she cares about nature. Her live presentation helped me understand a little bit better about adding pressure with ink in comparison to how to apply that to digital media. When I tried doing brushwork with ink and brush, I noticed it takes a lot of focus and there's less room for mistakes. It was difficult to recreate some of the effects digitally. However, I do have good practice with adjusting to my environment and being able to create the piece in my own way. Within Deegan's painting display, I noticed she works a lot quicker with experience.

Some things I realized while creating my work: it's a little bit easier in the sense of being able to manipulate my work. With Procreate, I'm able to erase, smudge, add layers, add color if I wanted to, and do a bunch more features. While creating my work, I realized how you can never recreate what's on paper on digital media. I focused on the layering and being able to find brushes similar to a calligraphy brush. This assignment challenged me to gather my thoughts and figure out an appreciation for Chinese calligraphy and recognizing everyone has their own style of work.

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