



# HONG LING

A RETROSPECTIVE

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**H**ong Ling is one of China's leading contemporary landscape painters and we are delighted to be presenting some 50 of his works in the SOAS Brunei Gallery at the start of our Centenary year. The retrospective exhibition shows the development of Hong Ling's artistic path and vision, the changing situation in which the artist has worked and the social, political and economic changes that have taken place in China since the end of the Cultural Revolution. This exhibition supports the SOAS mission of promoting and advancing knowledge of Asia in the United Kingdom and globally. Hong's art, his personal stories, and the wider cultural development of China form part of the teaching resources used by the exhibition's curator, Professor Shane McCausland, and assistant curator, Dr Tian S. Liang.

My thanks to our patrons and the contributors to this project. Soka Art has facilitated the exhibition and provided funding for a postdoctoral fellowship and the conference we are holding in September. UNEEC Culture and Education Foundation sponsored the exhibition. And a huge thank you to the curatorial team, Brunei Gallery staff and SOAS China Institute for their support. Finally, many congratulations to Hong Ling.

Baroness Valerie Amos  
*Director*  
*SOAS University of London*



**O**nce the private library of Sir Alfred Chester Beatty (1875–1968), today the Chester Beatty Library is a national cultural institution. It is unique among Irish museums for its holdings of Asian art, and the potential these collections create for developing relationships between Ireland and Asia. While these conversations may start at a cultural level with the sharing of artworks and expertise, they can also help pave the way for political and economic engagement as the 'soft power' of culture is increasingly appreciated.

The collections that Chester Beatty first shared with friends and scholars are today enjoyed by some 350,000 visitors a year from all over the world. Displays in the two permanent galleries are supplemented by a programme of temporary exhibitions which allow us to focus on different aspects of the collections. These exhibitions also permit us to introduce contemporary artists when their work is of particular relevance, thus bringing a new dynamism to the collections and their interpretation for our public.

Engaging with China's rich landscape traditions, the art of Hong Ling deepens our appreciation of the past while we delight in the contemporary. The exhibition in the Chester Beatty Library is a smaller selection than that on display in SOAS' Brunei Gallery; nevertheless the Curator of the East Asian Collection, Dr Mary Redfern, charts the high points of Hong Ling's distinguished career.

It is a pleasure to work once again with Professor Shane McCausland, a former Head of Collections at the Chester Beatty Library. We are particularly grateful to Hong Ling and Soka Art for sharing this work with an Irish audience for the first time: we hope that Hong Ling's lifelong explorations of nature will resonate with you, the visitor and reader.



Fionnuala Croke  
*Director*  
*Chester Beatty Library*  
*Dublin*

Set right in the heart of Georgian Bath is the Museum of East Asian Art. This gem of a museum houses an exquisite collection of nearly 2000 artefacts—jades, bronzes, ceramics and much more—all celebrating the artistry and craftsmanship of China, Japan, Korea and beyond. Spanning over 7000 years of history from the Neolithic period to the twentieth century, these objects also showcase the development of creativity across time.

We are proud to be the only museum in the United Kingdom solely dedicated to offering visitors the opportunity to learn about and appreciate the arts and cultures of East Asia. In 2017, we are delighted to give them the added pleasure of exploring the exhibition *Hong Ling: A Retrospective*. This is the third in our successful series of exhibitions of contemporary paintings over the past four years.

Hong Ling has shown his paintings all over the world and we are privileged to have them here in Bath. Just as the Museum of East Asian Art embodies the coming together of East and West with an Asian collection being displayed in a traditional English building, so too does Hong Ling's art which blends the traditions of Chinese landscape with Western oil painting techniques.

Bringing this exhibition to Bath has only been made possible through the generosity of the UNEEC Culture and Education Foundation, Taipei. We are grateful for the sponsorship. We would like to thank Professor Shane McCausland of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) whose idea it was to invite the Museum of East Asian Art to join this special exhibition tour. Our thanks are also due to Dr Tian S. Liang, Postdoctoral Research and Curatorial Fellow at SOAS, and Soka Art for their kind assistance. Finally, our gratitude to the Board of Directors and to our staff, especially to our Curator, Dr Nicole Chiang, for their untiring support for the Museum.

Anne Shepherd MBE  
Chair  
*The Museum of East Asian Art*  
Bath



# THE NATURAL TRACES OF A LIFE

## 1. Origins

1982 was a time of confinement and poverty, and materials were scarce. I remember that in the Beijing of my youth, large-scale construction had not yet begun. The entire city was grey and dusty.

I graduated from university having studied art for three years in a state of confusion. My specialty was oil painting, and I worked on painting after painting of figures and still lifes. But my heart was not in the classroom, it was in nature, far away from the city. Whenever we painted natural scenery in class, my heart was full of joy. Strange though it may be to say, my body is always rejuvenated when I encounter nature. It allows my spirit to be free.

My love for nature can be traced back to my elementary school years. I would wander with my classmates for miles in the hills on the outskirts of the city. Studying painting then led me to begin reading copies of the *Palace Museum Weekly* in my family's possession, in which I saw the works of past masters. Although at first I did not know the origin of these ink landscape paintings, and I had no idea who Wang Meng (c. 1308–1385) or Dong Qichang (1555–1636) were, my spirit felt a connection with those effortless brush strokes.

Graduating from university was the beginning of a process of inner exploration for me. I had a passion for landscapes but was hit by wave after wave of interference from artistic trends. Eventually, I heard a voice from the depths of my being, and I chose to engage with natural landscapes for nearly thirty years at Huangshan, giving free rein to my natural emotions.

Year after year of working and creating at Huangshan gave me a deeper understanding that all things ultimately come from the heat of life, and that art also comes from the heat of its creator. When we immerse ourselves in the natural world, we simultaneously retreat inside ourselves, becoming like the farmer who toils relentlessly yet has no real plan. We immerse ourselves in all creation to lift our spirits.

## 2. Doubts

Humanity increasingly lacks love. The instinct for love is degenerating and no longer has a kind of original warmth. All that remains is the coldness of technology. When humans are faced with the essence of nature, they do not surge towards it, they do not stare at or contemplate it, thereby losing the most instinctive focus. This suggests that humans have prematurely entered an emotional ice age. Everything is overshadowed by the joys of technology. Yet quickness, convenience and simplification are the enemies of carefreeness, simplicity and ease. When you stroll through nature, bring only your eyes, let your soul catch up, and walk with slow and deliberate steps.

At the moment, this gulf between humans and nature is especially apparent in China. Some time ago, we went to Sri Lanka and the feeling there was one of harmony. The people there lived more closely with nature. Yet, as Western technological industry developed, it treated nature in a different way than we do in the East, with our more holistic awareness. The West is unlike the East, where poetry and philosophy include the holistic awareness that painting has towards nature. The West however still has a kind of subconscious intuition: when the West was developing industrial technology, they did not destroy the environment. Bonds with nature were not completely destroyed.

But the sad thing is that we [in China] have now severed our strong bonds with nature. This is especially sad. Of course, the development of modern technology offers us much convenience, but should people destroy nature for the sake of convenience? This is worthy of discussion. Because of this dilemma, there is a paradox. If this problem is not adequately solved, ultimately we will dig our own graves.

In the past, no matter whether people were walking slowly along the road or riding in a horse-drawn carriage, their hearts would always be in sync with nature. When you look at nature calmly, you see the entire sunrise and sunset, you see a tree swaying in the wind, you feel life everywhere. Along the way, you interact with and perceive the soul of nature. You will feel the richness of a complete soul. So why did people in past days have this kind of inherent love? I think it is because of the simple way they interacted with nature.

In their more 'advanced' state, people nowadays often show indifference or hostility towards nature. When you shuttle back and forth at high speed along the freeway, you are actually cutting through the organism that is nature like a blade, and you cannot see anything in detail: your heart is already separated from nature. When you finally reach whatever destination you might be headed to, the living nature is tightly confined and cannot be enjoyed without interruption. It has become locked inside a form of prison. Just like people who eat their meals at designated times each day and so have lost the opportunity to synchronize their hearts with nature, people are locked up inside a concept. Slowly and casually, our close watch upon nature has unconsciously disappeared from our daily lives.

### 3. Return

I am a conservative person, and look at things from a conservative point of view. When I criticize modern life, it creates mental tension. Travelling from Beijing to Huangshan now takes me five and a half hours (by the newly completed high-speed railway). In fact, I enjoy the convenience of technological development. Will people say this is hypocritical? I have worried about this all day long. Actually, human development is like that. Human cultural development brings with it a process of reflection. It develops in a state of contradiction. Only in contradiction does tension manifest itself. The act of thinking itself is life. It also reveals the quality of spiritual life.

In ancient China, people were in awe of nature, so they offered sacrifices to the heavens. It was a form of ritual. In primeval times, when the lives of people were closer to those of other animals, humans lived in a natural state. As people started to become more and more powerful, they removed themselves from the other forms of natural life. Humans began to see themselves as a solitary group and thought of all that they could achieve. This led them to treat nature without the respect it deserves. Once people started to treat nature badly, their appreciation and awe of it disappeared.

In the eyes of modern man, from a pragmatic point of view and from a technological point of view, nature has become a resource to be utilized. So in today's society, nature is looked upon with a purposeful intent, people want to change the natural living condition into a man-made 'nature' with all their might. Therefore, contemporary man has no morality to their life.

Modern people's utilization of the tools of science and technology is a double-edged sword. Its reverse side is highly lethal, with people becoming numb and indifferent to nature. While humans are desperately rushing towards the future, they leave principles and perseverance far, far behind. This is a problem for all of humanity: it is not merely the problem of one country or nation. It is, as Christianity says, that humans live in a state of original sin. It is destructive and lethal. This is most likely the fate of mankind.

To give an example closer to home, after the time of Li Keran (1907–1989) Chinese landscape painting has been marked by weakness. Similarly, the way in which the human race takes care of the natural environment has also changed. When we now look at nature, we are more or less numb, and our hearts are less poetic. When you look purposefully at nature, you look to see where there are still large quantities of mineral resources, where there is a forest to be cut down, and where you could build a water reservoir.

This planet reached capacity many years ago. For reasons of survival and selfishness, humans now regard nature with a cold heart. Unable to produce a mutually beneficial coexistence, they cannot regard nature with a warm heart, and cannot, as Wang Wei (699–759) said in his poem, 'pluck chrysanthemums under the

eastern fence and gaze serenely at the southern mountains.' Humans cannot achieve a natural state of intercommunication with nature, so talking about landscapes today is a luxury. When nature is no longer regarded as something to be used for practical purposes that kind of beauty and state [of coexistence] will rise of itself. It will resonate within your heart. This is the only way for humanity's innermost being and nature to achieve a state of harmony. Only through serene meditation can we pass into a new realm and find a common path with nature.

### 4. Expectations

The spirit of landscape is a natural, living care system completely based on enlightenment and synergy. To be able to make an observational choice and elevate the spirit of a landscape, you need a very mature mind. In this respect, many notable artists have paved the way for us. Only if we follow this path can we produce inspiration from collisions with landscape. Only then can we discover what others have not been able to observe. The prerequisite for discovery cannot be that we cannot see the wood for the trees. Modern people's eyes are contaminated, their minds blinded. They do not see the beauty of nature, so they cannot get close to nature. Landscape is in fact the essence of Chinese culture, but this tradition has been fading ever since the Song (960–1279) and Yuan (1271–1368) dynasties.

When spring arrives, we see everything in bloom. The dense shade of midsummer foliage spreads a canopy over life. Autumn is the season of harvest, ponderous and truly giving. Winter is a period of hibernation. You will hear the quiet breathing of life, waiting for the start of spring. Moving in cycles, the world spins, with all things completing their own journey of growth and decline.

From a philosophical point of view, cyclical movement, from the joy of birth to the silence of death, is a great and mysterious force of nature. All that we can do during this process is to capture and accumulate bit by bit, looking for our own corresponding expression and tension of life. When you are immersed in nature's annual cycle of the four seasons, you will find a choreography of life's meaning in each season's breath. When you ponder on the wonder of eternal renewal, you find the joy and sorrow that life brings. Life does not need that much explanation; follow it to find the excitement in your heart, and to discover what may resonate with life.

Hong Ling  
March 2016, Huangshan

# HONG LING: A Moment in Retrospect

This exhibition is a retrospective of the work of China's celebrated contemporary landscape painter, Hong Ling 洪凌 (b. 1955). Hong Ling has exhibited in Europe before, including representing China at the 1997 Venice biennale. To date, though, audiences have only had one opportunity to see his work in the British Isles, in a colourful, week-long show of recent work mounted at the Asia House in London as part of the 'Asian Art in London' festival in the autumn of 2012.<sup>1</sup> Now we present something more ambitious. This is, first of all, a larger exhibition, comprising in its entirety some 50 works from across Hong Ling's career, to be mounted at the Brunei Gallery at SOAS University of London. Second, it also travels across Britain and Ireland in different selections, to the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin and then to the Museum of East Asian Art in Bath, over the course of 2016 and 2017. Each of these three venues provides a complementary but distinctive framework for approaching Hong Ling's painting: the university context of the SOAS gallery in a place for the study of Asia, the Middle East and Africa; the literary outlook of a bibliophile's collection which is one of Ireland's national cultural institutions; and the East Asian purview of the regional art museum in Bath. At SOAS, we are particularly glad to be presenting Hong Ling's art, underscoring our deep connections with the culture and people of China, on the occasion of the university's Centenary, which is celebrated in the 2016-2017 academic year.

The majority of the works displayed are painted in oils on canvas, the predominant painting medium in Hong Ling's oeuvre. There are also a few ink paintings, in Chinese 水墨畫 *shuimo hua*, a mode that Hong Ling has long worked in privately but only started to exhibit over the last decade. There are, in addition to this, a small selection of watercolours, sketches and photographs, mostly created while the artist was travelling, whether in the picturesque mountains or canal-towns of China, on safari in Africa, sailing along the ice-strewn coasts of Antarctica and the far north Atlantic or in the damp heat of equatorial Southeast Asia. The photographs also showcase Huangshan (Yellow Mountains), the picturesque misty highlands of southern Anhui Province in south-central China which Hong Ling has made his home away from Beijing and his fertile working environment for more than two decades.

The concept of this exhibition as a retrospective owes to two principal factors. The first is Hong Ling's desire to mount this kind of show as he passes a milestone in



fig. 1 Hong Ling Studio (Honglu) in Huangshan City, 2015, photo courtesy of Soka Art.

his artistic career. He retired in 2015 from the faculty of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, or CAFA, in Beijing, which he joined to teach oil painting after his own graduation from the Academy in 1987. Retirement from teaching students at the age of just 60 is an appropriate moment to pause to take stock of a career. The second factor was a condition. Through negotiations, the Brunei Gallery at SOAS emerged as the venue where the show was to originate, and a condition was that any one-person exhibition should be a retrospective. Hong Ling welcomed the chance and has since said that he regards this as the most important exhibition of his career to date. Work already underway on the retrospective concept also helped to shape the interpretation in Hong Ling's twin exhibitions mounted in Beijing, which opened on 2nd and 3rd December 2015. A selection of his ink paintings was shown in the Jianfugong (Palace of Established Happiness) in the Palace Museum concurrently with a much larger group of oil paintings and ink paintings, including some going back to the 1980s, at the National Art Museum of China (NAMOC).<sup>2</sup>

The preparations for this exhibition were founded upon two trips I made as curator to view works and exhibitions in China and Taiwan in the autumn of 2015. On the first occasion, there were opportunities to root out works that Hong Ling has kept in storage in Beijing, including early works long put aside, which

on rediscovery triggered strong memories for him—of student days, prizes won, of exhibitions at home and abroad. We include some of these works such as the graduation work, a female nude, which secured his job at CAFA, *Figure 8* 人體系列八 of 1986 (cat. no. 7).

The trip also included, at Hong Ling's invitation, a visit to his studio residence in the town of Huangshan in September 2015. The artist's country residence here is called the Honglu, which literally means 'Hong's cottage' although it is probably better described as a *cottage ornée*, a studio-and-residence compound finished in the vernacular architectural style of the locality, Wannan 皖南 (southern Wan) or Anhui Province 安徽 (fig. 1). This style and the culture that produces it are still known as Hui style. After my visit to the Honglu in 2015, I travelled straight to Beijing and there in the Palace Museum happened to see an album leaf painted by the Qing-dynasty (1644–1911) orthodox master Wang Yuanqi 王原祁 (1642–1715) depicting a *gaoshi* 高士 (lofty scholar) in his country cottage. The inscription cites as inspiration for this view the Tang dynasty (618–907) poet-painter Wang Wei's 王維 (699–759) famous 'mountain villa' retreat and states that 'a thatched hall of a cottage is the place where the lofty scholar quiets his spirit and nourishes his nature'.<sup>3</sup> This description is a most appropriate way to think of Hong Ling's studio-retreat.

The significance of this particular locale, Huangshan, in Hong Ling's artistic

1. *Hong Ling: Contemporary Chinese Landscape*, Soka Art at Asia House, 30 October–9 November 2012. Hong Ling has been represented by his gallery, Soka Art, which has branches in Taiwan and Beijing, since 1999.

2. Soka Art ed., *Tiandi damei—Hong Ling conyi sishinian huiguzhan 天地大美—洪凌從藝四十年回顧展* [Hong Ling: Beauty of the Nature] (Taipei, Beijing & Tainan: Soka Art, 2016); see [http://www.namoc.org/xwzx/xw/news/201512/t20151204\\_294309.htm](http://www.namoc.org/xwzx/xw/news/201512/t20151204_294309.htm) (cited 1 February 2016).

3. Leaf 1 from Wang Yuanqi's album of ten leaves, *Ten Views from a Thatched Hut* 廬鴻草堂十志圖: 草堂為廬高士安神養性之地·寫右丞《山莊圖》擬之·王原祁。

development and practice since the 1980s is underlined in a conversation we had during my visit; see pages 38-48 for a transcript. We also made two memorable short trips from the town. One was to the Huangshan Scenic Area, the popular UNESCO World Heritage Site some 50 km to the north of the town where today cable-cars whisk visitors up onto the spectacular peaks. We walked and climbed along the steeply meandering paths among the pines and rocks on the kind of day the Yellow Mountains are famous for, one of damp, dense, swirling mists. Hong Ling was in his element in this environment. Some of these scenes are included in the film shown during the exhibition. The other trip was to the artist's rural retreat beside Toad Stone Reservoir (Hamashi Shuiku) to the west of the town of Huangshan, literally at a point where the pine-covered foothills end and the flat plains bordering the banks of the Xin'an River begin. More importantly, all of this scenery and the experience of it, in all its seasonal variety and climatic extremes, is a foundation of Hong Ling's landscape oeuvre. Some of his paintings embody an epic, cosmic, even creationist vision of this extraordinary region, such as the triptych *Boundless* 觀蒼莽 (cat. no. 27)



fig. 2 *Creation of Yellow Mountains (Huangshan)* 造化黄山. Oil on canvas, 200 × 298 cm, 2011. Private Collection.

or *Creation of Yellow Mountains (Huangshan)* 造化黄山 (fig. 2), both of 2011, or *Heart of the Dao* 道心 of 2014 (cat. no. 32). Others are contemplations of pure, raw nature as if before the arrival of humanity, as in *Wild Silence* 野寂 of 2008 (cat. no. 24), where a thick cover of grey-white snow stretches back to a distant horizon weighed down by a lowering sky.

A retrospective exhibition affords a chance to look back at phases of artistic development. In Hong Ling's case, we have nothing from before his 20s, nothing until after the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), when the art academies began to admit students after the chaotic hiatus of the late Mao years and Hong Ling was able to begin his formal art education. So, this retrospective selection is bookended by a small early oil painting from 1979, depicting trees in the snowy grounds of the Temple of Heaven in the south of old Beijing, *White Poplars in the Temple of Heaven* 天壇白楊 (cat. no. 1), and some of his most recent works from 2014-2015, including *A Peak of Reds* 丹頂 and *Rainbow-like* 如虹 (cat. nos 33 & 34). We also include an ink painting in hanging scroll format which Hong Ling painted for this exhibition in the spring of 2016, *Lone Skiff, Night Rain* 孤舟夜雨 (cat. no. 41). The selection of student works of the 1980s up to Hong Ling's graduation from CAFA comprises examples from the various series he painted at this time. There are series of domestic buildings and settlements in rural or coastal places, like *Morning at Fishing Island 2* 漁島之晨二 (cat. no. 2), which won the Beijing prize for artistic excellence in 1983. There are also two works from the *Beijing Hutong Series* 胡同系列 of 1986 (cat. nos 3 & 4), depicting the traditional courtyard residences in which Hong Ling grew up in the capital, once ordinary homes which have barely survived the encircled *chai* 拆 ('for demolition') signs that today herald the arrival of bulldozers and redevelopment.

Formal art education after the Cultural Revolution reintroduced life drawing and painting in the studio so there are also several nude studies (cat. nos 6, 7 & 10) and other figural works from 1986-88 (cat. nos 5, 8-9). The studio studies demonstrate Hong Ling's interest in some of the early-twentieth-century European painters that still capture his attention today, including Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920), Giorgio Morandi (1890-1964) and Egon Schiele (1890-1918), as well as the late Lucian Freud (1922-2011). Other works in these figural series exemplify a trend among Chinese painters in the 1980s toward depiction of the ethnic and regional populations of China. *People from My Homeland (Yunnan) 2* 故鄉人之二 (cat. no. 8) features a small crowd of mountain people in colourful dress tending horses: this is set in the region of Hong Ling's ancestral home in the south-western province of Yunnan, home of the Naxi and other minorities including Hong Ling's own Bai minority. A painting from the *Silk Road Series 8* 絲路風情之八 (cat. no. 9) shows a mother and child riding a Bactrian camel under an ageing crescent moon, symbol of Islam, in the desert regions of western China.

Between 1987 and 1989 we see a brief, curtailed play with abstraction. The almost monochrome *Female Figure 124* 女人體之一二四 of early August 1988 (cat. no. 10) edges towards this, in the representational ambiguity of the space around the



seated nude. In name at least an outdoor painting, *Lily 蓮* of June 1987 (cat. no. 11) had gone even further: the idea of water flowers growing here among rocks is not a necessary association with the composition. One of Hong Ling's largest works of this period, entitled *Untitled B-5 無題 B-5* (cat. no. 12) and dated to May 1989, is a work of pure abstraction. Layered conjoining squares and rectangles of green paint in various tones, linked by patches of white infill, form an enclosure like an interlocking grid around a wet fusion of yellow and brown colours in the centre. Art without any figurative content is not common in China—arguably, because of a critical emphasis on lyricism and self-expression as ideals of symbolic content—and even today there are not many abstract painters. The excitement and sense of freedom that had been building all through the 1980s reached fever pitch during the student pro-democracy movement in the early summer of 1989, centred in Tian'anmen Square in Beijing. The turbulent month of May saw student demonstrators going on hunger strike there, Gorbachev's visit and the imposition of martial law as well as construction of the ten-metre-high statue named the Goddess of Democracy by CAFA students at the end of the month. The bloody crackdown ordered by Deng Xiaoping and referred to in Chinese as 6/4, but which remains a taboo subject in China, followed soon after, on the night of 3rd-4th June.

In the early 1990s, Hong Ling settled into landscape. In a sense, all his paintings since then have been landscape series, in which the academic technical achievements in oil painting, honed in the studio in the 1980s, inform an individual journey in painting in the genre of landscape, that mainstay of the scholar art tradition in late imperial China. Some favoured idioms emerge, like the round pond edged by trees and a rustic dwelling in the foreground, often to the right and often cut off at the bottom edge of the canvas, announced in the 1991 work *Cold Snow 寒雪* (cat. no. 14) and still seen in recent works like *Pure Ground 素處* of 2013 (cat. no. 28). Or the tall straight tree standing close to the left edge of a composition, anchoring the foreground of a composition, as in *Snow Dome 穹雪* from 2000 (cat. no. 19). The paintings grow in size from the mid-1990s in step with Hong Ling's growing critical and commercial success. At 750cm wide, the triptych *Green Mist, Pure Breeze 煙翠風清* of 2002 (cat. no. 23) is not his largest work, but it is the largest we could conceivably fit in the Brunei Gallery space. Another triptych entitled *Boundless 觀蒼莽* (cat. no. 27), introduced already, is two and a half metres high by almost five and a half metres wide; its title in Chinese translates as 'gazing into boundlessness'.

The four-panel suite of paintings, *Four Seasons 春夏秋冬* of 2000–01 (cat. no. 20), exemplifies Hong Ling's perennial treatment of the full range of seasonal aspects, moods and experiences. His paintings evince a probing interest in the interplay in nature between the tangible and atmospheric worlds. His paintings often seem to capture a meeting point between the landscape and climatic extremes of heat and cold (see, for instance, the watercolours; cat. nos 42–46), of humidity and saturation of the air with mist and cloud and precipitation (*Misty Rain in Xiao-Xiang (Hunan) 瀟湘煙雨* of 1993; cat. no. 15), and of the surging of wind or inaudible stillness of air (*Wild Silence 野寂*; cat. no. 24). While evoking this range of sensations and responses,

Hong Ling further demonstrates a continuing focus on transitional moments such as experiencing the sudden flowering or fading of trees and shrubs, as in *Pear Blossoms in North Jin (Shanxi) 晉北梨花* of 2000 (cat. no. 18), *Spring Peach Blossoms 春桃* (cat. no. 22) of 2002 and the ink painting *Diffuse Spring 漫春* of 2014 (cat. no. 40); or the freezing or congealing and melting points of a fall of rain or snow on freezing or warming ground, like *Melting Snow 融素* of 2009 (cat. no. 25). There is also the cycle of transformations seen in nature from one state to another, like from ice to water to humid mist or fog to precipitation as snow, sleet or rain; and the latent effects of transparency, density, opacity and translucency. Some may find a strongly poetic element here reminiscent of passages in modernist poetry, such as T.S. Eliot's (1888–1965) evocation of what he calls 'midwinter spring' in the 'Four Quartets': 'between pole and tropic... The brief sun flames the ice, on pond and ditches... Between melting and freezing/The soul's sap quivers.'<sup>4</sup>

All of these states and changes have their figurative connotations in the working practice of 'conceptual landscape' 意象山水 (*yixiang shanshui*). Nowadays, Hong Ling works in parallel in oils and in ink. He has two separate studios for these in the Honglu in Huangshan. The works he creates there are informed by situation and process in ways that we can point to, specifically, the topography, season, ecology and cultural ambience in or immediately around the studio, and technical responses during the daily (or nightly) progress of making various paintings, with moments to reflect, at the same time. Evidently, even large paintings sometimes come off quickly on a set occasion such as the traditional New Year's Day painting: the huge *Green Mist, Pure Breeze 煙翠風清* (cat. no. 23) is dated *yuandan 元旦* (first dawn) of 2002. What is harder to define are the ways in which Hong Ling's wealth of experiences on his travels, where he does record the sights and scenery in plein air drawings (cat. nos 47–52) and watercolours (cat. nos 42–46), return to him during the creative process. In the interview in this volume, Hong Ling recognizes the creative value of these memories in his practice but acknowledges that their role in the painting process may be largely sub-conscious.

Focus on all these features can let us see the most recent work as a culmination of artistic development. To be sure, recent work bears the signs of an ever more accomplished technique. Take the layering of paint in *Boundless 觀蒼莽* of 2011 (cat. no. 27), for instance, where colours are glimpsed through the foreground screen of high contrast black and dark-green pine trees laden with white snow. The deciduous leafage of shrubbery in the valley below and opaque frozen greys on the horizon above serve to intensify the visceral impact on the viewer of the blast of snow that swirls around, in this painting, as herald to the arrival of winter. At the same time, recent work also shows new interests bubbling up, such as redefined attitudes to colour and framing.

Colour, for example, appears to be shouldering more of the expressive burden or 'work' in new paintings like *A Peak of Reds 丹頂* of 2014 (cat. no. 33), where the representational function of the paint media gives way, for more than a moment and

4. In 'Little Gidding' from the 'Four Quartets'; T.S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 191.

perhaps repeatedly, to colourist abstraction. The painting of the cold air may be even more intense than before in the dark hues cloaking the red peak, almost as if it was a tangible substance, while also creating the differential qualities of a backdrop. One is reminded of similar effects won by China's monochrome ink painters in the so-called *xieyi* 寫意 (expressive or 'sketch conceptualist') tradition of painting, like Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521–1593). Hong Ling acknowledges these ventures with colour in the titles of new works such as *A Peak of Reds* (2014) and *Rainbow-like* 如虹 of 2015 (cat. no. 34).

As to the distinctive framings we find in Hong Ling's work, we have noted habits like the placement of a vertical line, usually a tree, at the left edge, seen in *Boundless* or *Creation of Yellow Mountains* or the earlier *Snow Dome* 穹雪 (2000; cat. no. 19). Other recent works play around more than before with the positioning of the viewer, while the framing of views and angles of vistas in them become palpably more about the human experience of Huangshan. Through framing, they position the viewer in sometimes surprising ways with regard to the image, but ways that enrich the authenticity of experiencing the picture. A focus on powerful structure is clear from the figurative title of *Pine Trunks: Bones* 松骨 of 2014 (cat. no. 31), but the image itself enhances the contrast between us and the dragon-like pines by situating us at the base of this stand of trees, with our heads back, gazing up at the rising and tapering trunks and the undersides of the canopy.

In this Huangshan vignette, we are witness to the seemingly ritualized and genteel conduct of the pines towards one another, not encroaching but sharing the light of the sun above, growing in concert—or even in conversation—with polite spaces around the edges of their canopies. Elsewhere we get to behold scenes, as if momentarily through unexpected gaps in the undergrowth. Walking the paths and climbing the steps criss-crossing the peaks of Huangshan one does suddenly reach breaks in the undergrowth and clouds to see for a fleeting moment across the valley to peaks opposite, if it is clear, or else to glean close-up views of branches shrouded in mist in a shallow depth of field. Paintings like *Delicate Wonder* 妙微 of June 2013, and *Jade Breeze* 玉風 of 2014 (cat. nos 29 and 30) all suggest this kind of experience.

In exploring current directions in Hong Ling's work, we could also take a cue from the changing ambience of his Huangshan property, the Honglu, seen in some of the photographs in the exhibition (cat. nos 57–61). Since the early 1990s, the architecture of the place has undergone constant transformation. It started out as a western style residential building set in a walled compound that has gradually changed into a modern take on a traditional scholar's retreat. Hong Ling has changed the roofs to the local Hui-style, enhanced the garden spaces and colonnaded walks, created terraces with garden furniture to sit and drink tea among the stone sculptures, planted pines carefully transplanted from Huangshan and acclimatised to the plain, as well as lotus and lilies in the fish ponds. The change from a western to a local Hui-style studio residence has been effected using salvaged materials from old buildings in the region, including large carved stones and ashlar and also massive

old timbers used as exterior pillars and stretchers to support eaves. Hong Ling is an increasingly successful artist but remains a convivial soul who is artistically, socially and ecologically invested in this place. He joined up with the collective farm at Toad Stone Reservoir to generate home-grown produce. His network of connections among the local intelligentsia, including regional officials, and the *tuhao* 土豪 (local entrepreneurs), including some of the antique dealers, has also been vital.

If there is, then, more interplay in Hong Ling's work of late between ink and oil techniques—like splashing and flicking techniques from ink painting done with liquidised oil paint—it is part of a larger pattern of rediscovery and deep appreciation of the Huangshan locality and its traditions, amidst the contrastingly rapid modernization of the lived world all around, exemplified by the recent arrival of the *gaotie* high-speed rail network there. In Hong Ling's recent ink paintings, he has started to attach multiple artist's seals, which speak to his surer identity as an ink painter and a Chinese artist. Some of his recent oils celebrate his lifestyle in Huangshan and the seemingly carefree attitude of a successful painter-recluse living among locals, as in *Drunk in Frozen Forests* 霜林醉 (2011; cat. no. 26). Others, like *Heart of the Dao* 道心 (2014; cat. no. 32), afford personal world views and speak, through landscape art, to humanistic topics like the individual artist's position in the cosmos. Now that he has retired from teaching, Hong Ling may find himself shuttling less between contrasting lifestyles in Huangshan and Beijing but we will continue to watch with interest as he pursues his rich and dignified, and occasionally even solemn celebration of nature.

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## ARTISTIC ENCOUNTERS IN ‘LAND-SCAPE’: On Hong Ling’s Art and Life

The audience’s first encounter with Hong Ling’s (b. 1955) art, on entering the gallery space in the Brunei Gallery at SOAS University of London, will be to see a landscape painting. This work, entitled *Pine Trunks: Bones* 松骨 (June 2014; cat. no. 31), best illustrates the recent artistic developments of Hong Ling’s work in oils. Set against a pinkish pastel background, the dark, thick and robust pigments are layered by the artist without any vacillation to suggest the cracked bark of the pine trunks; short and confined brushstrokes painted in juniper green in the upper part of the painting point to the tree’s evergreen nature. The strength and power of the pine trees are further unleashed through depictions of compacted tree branches or vines seen growing in swirling motion; these dark-coloured lines weave a cobweb-like net allowing the light to shine through the twigs from above. A cluster of white, red or pastel dots sprinkled on the surface of the painting adds another atmospheric effect of the work. This painting will immediately arouse visual memories in those who have travelled to Huangshan (a misty mountainous area in the south of China) and seen the Huangshan pines. When I travelled to the Huangshan Scenic Area with the artist and this exhibition’s lead curator, Shane McCausland, on a misty and damp day, we climbed up and down the slab steps among a sea of pines and varieties of vegetation. Growing at high altitude on steep and rocky crags, the Huangshan pines stretch high up into the sky; when we looked up, we could peer through their branches to make out the colour of the sky (fig. 1)—a scene represented by this opening piece in the exhibition, *Hong Ling: A Retrospective*.

It is no coincidence to find depictions of Huangshan pines in Hong Ling’s works. Huangshan occupies a significant role in Hong Ling’s art and life. It is not only a place that constantly inspires his artistic creation, but also a landscape in which the artist has resided over the past twenty-some years. This essay considers Hong Ling’s artistic development in relation to these surroundings and their ecosystem. I use the term ‘land-scape’ to unpack the artist’s perceptions of the land he lives in, and to

illustrate how his artistic creations have changed in tune with his understandings of the land. However, my intention here is not to suggest that one should read Hong Ling's works from the perspective of landscape painting in the Western oil tradition rather than through Chinese *shanshui* 山水 (literally, mountain and water) norms (see the essay by Mary Redfern in this volume, pp. 28–37). Rather, it is to explore how the artist's changing understandings of the 'land' have informed and continue to determine the direction of his artistic practice.

The word landscape, derived from the Dutch term *landschap*, is distinguished from 'land' by the suffix '-scape', which is equivalent to the more common English suffix '-ship'.<sup>1</sup> The suffix '-ship' in English suggests a kind of relational connection between the land and those who belong to the land. As the philosopher Holmes Rolston III wrote, 'The "land" exists, but the "scape" comes with human perspective.'<sup>2</sup> That is to say, 'land-scape' represents a kind of human response to nature, as the land/nature *per se* does not have a definitive shape, but is only shaped by the eye of the onlooker. As an aesthetic onlooker upon the land and nature, Hong Ling, through his art, denotes his subjective observation of the land he engages with.

However, Huangshan is not the only land that runs through Hong Ling's art and life: the artist was born and raised in the northern capital city of Beijing, a place where he also received his artistic training. Born into an intellectual family in Beijing in 1955, during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), like millions of other urban youths, Hong Ling was sent down to the countryside, in his case on the outskirts of Beijing. Although the hard labour he was assigned to do emaciated his physical body—Hong Ling's autobiography records that he constantly faced hunger during these years<sup>3</sup>—he kept on sketching and painting as a hobby in his spare time. Hong Ling's artistic talent was discovered by Ding Cikang 丁慈康 (b. 1932), a professor of the Fine Arts Department at Beijing Capital Normal University, who went down to the rural areas around Beijing in 1976 looking for talented young people that he could bring back to the city to receive higher education. With the support of Ding Cikang, Hong Ling was admitted to the university in September 1976 to study oil painting. Back in the 1970s, painting nude models in a life class at universities was a practice still banned by the government, so much of the academic training in oil painting in this period lay in the depiction of still life as well as outdoor sketching.

One of the earliest works in the current exhibition, *White Poplars in the Temple of Heaven* 天壇白楊 (1979; cat. no. 1), documents Hong Ling's gestational interest in representing the land he saw in front of his eyes. The painting portrays a row of withered white poplars—a type of tree that is typical of Beijing—standing on snowy ground. The straight and slim tree trunks, and the brittle branches that were painted with quick sharp brushstrokes in an upward movement, remind us of one of those cold, dry and icy days in wintry Beijing. Moreover, everything in this painting is toned in pale grey. Other works from the 1980s also evince Hong Ling's sensitivity to the land he embraces, such as paintings in the *Beijing Hutong Series* 胡同系列 (1986; cat. nos 3-4). The subject of these paintings marked a shift from depictions

1. Kenneth R. Olwig, 'Representation and alienation in the political land-scape', *Cultural Geographies* 12, no. 1 (January, 2005), pp. 19–40.
2. Holmes Rolston III, 'LANDSCAPE: Landscape from the Eighteenth Century to the Present', in Michael Kelly ed., *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, 2nd ed. vol. 3. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 117.
3. See Hong Ling 洪凌, *Fanchen zhong de yinshi: Yixiang shanshui dashi Hong Ling de rensheng tiyan* 凡塵中的隱士：意象山水大師洪凌的人生體驗 [Recluse in the Mortal World: Life Experience of the Conceptual Landscapist Hong Ling] (Taipei: Tianxia yuanjian chuban gufen youxian gongsi, 2012), pp. 80–99.

of trees in nature to capturing the traditional Chinese courtyards where Hong Ling grew up. Here we find the use of dense and thick oil paints in dark grey carefully applied to represent the concrete and cement walls of the ordinary homes in which local Beijingers lived.

During the years he painted the *Beijing Hutong Series*, Hong Ling also started to pursue his postgraduate training in oil paintings at one of the most prestigious art schools in China—the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in Beijing. Two studio works of female nudes (cat. nos 6-7) reveal a fundamental change in the Chinese art education system in the 1980s, as life drawing classes finally returned to the curriculum in 1980. Chinese art students in this period were trained to hone their skills in looking, seeing and portraying the human figure, a practice that has been central to Western oil painting practice since the Renaissance period. As Shane McCausland argues in his essay in this volume, Hong Ling's figure paintings in this period (cat. nos 5-7) demonstrate his interest in 'European modernist painters such as Amedeo Modigliani (1884–1920), Giorgio Morandi (1890–1964) and Egon Schiele (1890–1918), as well as the late Lucian Freud (1922–2011)' (p. 15). Although trained primarily in the studio practice of figure painting at CAFA, Hong Ling did not stop responding to the land he observed around him, as seen in his graduation work of 1987, in which he combined his academic expertise in the portrayal of human figures with depiction of a vast rural land and snowy mountains in *People from My Homeland (Yunnan) 2 故鄉人之二* (cat. no. 8). Yunnan, a province in the southwest of China, is in fact the ancestral home of Hong Ling. He has said that in 1987, when he travelled to Yunnan for the first time in his life, he immediately felt his ancestral connection to the mountains even though he was a northerner who had grown up in the capital city.<sup>4</sup> In the same year, 1987, Hong Ling graduated from CAFA, and was offered a teaching position there by Zhu Naizheng 朱乃正 (1935–2013) in the no. 3 painting studio in the oil painting department. Zhu had been deeply impressed by Hong Ling's artistic talent and technique seen in a study of the female nude, *Figure 8 人體系列八*, painted in 1986 (cat. no. 7).

The 1980s was also a period in which Hong Ling carried out several sketching trips to various parts of China. In 1981, he encountered Huangshan for the first time, and was immediately moved by this damp and verdant land in the south of the country. Almost like a magnet, Huangshan drew Hong Ling to paint this land, a land that had been portrayed by numerous Chinese ink painters for centuries. However, Hong Ling realised, not a single artist in China had previously painted this land in oils: thus, he recognised the opportunity and excitement of trying to represent it with his thick oil paints and linseed oil. It was also following this encounter with the southern landscape that Hong Ling's hope of setting up a studio in Huangshan started to gestate. In an interview Hong Ling gave during Professor McCausland's visit, the artist reminisced how, back in the early 1980s, he dreamed of setting up a studio in Huangshan if he ever had any money (see 'Hong Ling in conversation with Shane McCausland', pp. 38–48).

4. See Hong Ling's biography in this volume, pp. 195–211.

By the early 1990s, when Hong Ling had saved up some tens of thousands of RMB, he had the chance to visit Huangshan for the second time. At that time, new economic developments were spreading all over the country, enabling private individuals to lease land for the first time in the PRC. With the help of a student's uncle, who was a construction director in Huangshan City, Hong Ling walked all around the town to choose the plot for his studio. He finally settled on a place that was below a mountain facing the Xin'an River. In 1992, the construction of the Huangshan studio was completed: it was a two-storey building made of red bricks in a style very similar to the chalets in the Alpine region in Europe (fig. 2). The property was enclosed by walls made of large boulders. A big tree stands in the courtyard in front of the studio itself—a tree just as the artist envisioned, which symbolises his love for nature.<sup>5</sup> Hong Ling recalls, when the construction was being carried out on site, how the local villagers often wondered, in whispers, if he was building a church, as his heavily bearded face made him look like a priest.<sup>6</sup> Comparing Hong Ling's red-brick studio with the surrounding landscape and other local buildings, it is not surprising that the locals were puzzled, as houses in this Southern Wan (Wannan 皖南) area of Anhui province were typically built with grey tiled roofs and white walls, like most southern Chinese houses.

Back in the early 1990s, Hong Ling's painting studio was unique in its Westernized appearance, and the building itself stood out from the land it occupied not only in its colour but also in its architectural style. The same might also be said of Hong Ling's painting practice in the 1990s, as his works in this period still retained that strong look of thick oil paints, similar to the *Beijing Hutong Series* discussed above. *Cold Snow* 寒雪 (1991; cat. no. 14) is one of the works Hong Ling painted in this transitional period of his life, as he moved between Beijing and Huangshan. The work may well be a painting from life (*xiasheng* 寫生), as the viewer can follow the artist's brushstrokes to visualise a waterside village at night in a snowy landscape. A light touch of white paint, sitting in the cerulean sky in the upper part of the painting, indicates the crescent moon that lights this remote village at night. Reflections of the trees and houses in water painted in sapphire blue define the spatial composition of the round pond seen in the bottom right corner. Overall, the painting is rendered in a schema of blues and dark browns, but various other colours were added by the artist to describe the forms of the arid trees or the three-dimensionality of the snow-covered mountains. Thick oil paints were layered by the artist to capture a veracity in the composition and the correct projection of light from above. For instance, if we look at the heavier brushstrokes loaded with white paint at the bottom left of the painting, we can clearly read the frontal position of this part of the mountain as it turns towards the viewer. One may argue that, at this stage, Hong Ling's works are more realistic and representational, since *Cold Snow* almost narrates a real landscape in situ in front of the viewer's eyes.

In the 1990s, Hong Ling also began experimenting with new painting formats as

5. See 'Hong Ling in conversation with Shane McCausland' in this volume, pp. 38–48.

6. Hong Ling, *Fanchen zhong de yinshi: Yixiang shanshui dashi Hong Ling de rensheng tiyan*, p. 133.



fig. 2 Hong Ling with a friend at the newly built Huangshan studio, 1993, photo courtesy of Soka Art.

a way to find his own language to capture the intrinsic disposition of the land he had just moved to. *Autumn Water* 秋水 (1994; cat. no. 16) is a five-panel work, a format rarely seen in his earlier works, which is also distinctive in its large size (200 x 260 cm). The work depicts a landscape scene in autumn; the green-water pond contrasts strongly with the trees painted in the warm orange colours of harvest time. Traces of human habitation can be found in the centre panel, where two skiffs float on the pond besides a row of houses. The dry, flicked brushstrokes used to paint the tree leaves in this work remind us of the ways in which the leg muscles are portrayed in *Figure 8* 人體系列八 (cat. no. 7). If we take a closer look at the panel to the far left, we find how the land in *Autumn Water* is not only suffused with rich and varied colours. Thin and wiggly traces of lines painted in dark brown here suggest silhouettes of the tree branches. However, if the viewer stands back, these lines begin to diffuse and eventually seems to merge into the colourful background. Arguably, these lines function here more to add another textural layer to the work than to accentuate actual forms of the trees.

Although the Huangshan studio was completed in 1992, it was not until August 1993 that Hong Ling began to live and work here: he started to produce dozens of oil paintings in large sizes, such as *Autumn Water* 秋水 (cat. no. 16). During his early years in Huangshan, Hong Ling only resided there for about four months per year, as most of his time was devoted to teaching at CAFA in Beijing. The artist gradually increased his time spent at Huangshan, so that in recent years, he has usually worked in his studio there for about seven to eight months a year. Devoting more time to this land meant Hong Ling started to observe nuanced seasonal changes in the landscape of Huangshan before his eyes. By the 2000s, we see how intensely he concentrated on colour in his work, as his landscapes began to carry more calibrated seasonal colours. *Four Seasons* 春夏秋冬 (2000–2001; cat. no. 20) is a four-panel work painted between 2000 and 2001. In it, one can hardly make out the shape of individual trees or particular scenes in nature, as each individual panel is loaded with the strong colours of its designated season. Comparing this to *Autumn Water* 秋水 (cat. no. 16) of 1994, the range of the colour palette is reduced in *Four Seasons*, creating a harmonious single-toned depiction of nature for each season. This is a distinctive choice of palette by the artist. As Hong Ling recalls, 'in some of my paintings, I basically try to reduce the amount of colour to the minimum... I actually try to reduce the volume of colours [to the quietest level]' (p. 46). Why did he choose 'to reduce the volume of colours' in his painting practice? How does this reflect the artist's shifting understandings of the surrounding land? Did this artistic development, in choice of colours, dramatically change the style of his works?

These questions can perhaps be best answered if we look at some of the works painted in the 2000s: *Snow Dome* 穹雪 (2000; cat. no. 19), *Pine Snow* 松雪 (2001; cat. no. 21), *Spring Peach Blossom* 春桃 (2002; cat. no. 22), *Green Mist, Pure Breeze* 煙翠風清 (2002; cat. no. 23), *Wild Silence* 野寄 (2008; cat. no. 24), and *Melting Snow* 融素 (2009; cat. no. 25). Out of the six paintings listed here, four of them actually depict freezing wintry landscapes—a theme Hong Ling not only likes to paint but also one

that occupies a very significant position in his artistic practice. If we compare the four snowy landscapes, these works in fact demonstrate how the cold and freezing landscape can be painted with different tones and in different moods.

*Snow Dome* is a work that is strong in its composition and would readily catch the viewer's eye from afar. The background, painted flat in light blue, almost pushes the trees and the snowy ground forward. The painting seems to be lit from top left (suggested by the lightest touches of white paint on the tree branches in the middle), which creates an eerie atmosphere in which the land seems to breathe. In *Pine Snow*, we meet a line of pines growing on the hillside against a sky painted in a celadon shade which casts a melancholic overtone on this image. In *Wild Silence*, the artist captures the frozen stillness of snow-covered ground on a tranquil night. A touch of dark blue skimming over the sky in the upper part of the painting mimics the freezing air that wraps the land. In *Melting Snow*, trees, snowy ground and the white dots varying in size sprinkled all over the picture re-present a tempestuous transformation of the land. One can almost seize the acoustic effects of the movements of melting snow. In these works, we see the artist intentionally reducing the volume of colours as a way to deliver a holistic feeling to the image. This choice may also reveal the artist's changing perception and reading of the land, towards a temporal dimension as in *Snow Dome*, which may be read as a depiction of land at dawn, while *Wild Silence* clearly points to a night-time scene. These paintings show us the artist's different choices of colour palette whereby the volume of colours essentially helps Hong Ling to develop new ways of handling paint on canvas—something which drove his artistic practice forward in these years.

The 2000s also saw a significant change to Hong Ling's Huangshan studio, both in its architectural makeup and in the works being made in the space inside. In the mid-2000s, Hong Ling's studio gradually changed from a red-brick chalet to a Chinese tiled-roof courtyard building, with almost every component of the new building having been sourced locally in the Wannan area (cat. no. 61).<sup>7</sup> One of Hong Ling's friends affirms that the compound is forever in a state of transformation, as every time he visits the artist, there is ongoing construction work on site.<sup>8</sup> In 2006, Hong Ling turned one of the rooms inside the inner courtyard into an ink painting studio. Works in the medium of ink in the current exhibition include three albums (cat. nos 35-37) and three landscapes in ink and colours on paper mounted in frames (cat. nos 38-40). Although these works in ink date to the last few years, in fact, Hong Ling began to practise ink painting in the Huangshan studio from the mid-2000s, and he continues to work in ink side by side with oil painting in his two adjacent studios in Huangshan.

In the past ten years, then, Hong Ling has developed parallel practices of ink and oil painting. Works such as *Diffuse Spring* 漫春 of 2014 (cat. no. 40) is almost an abstract painting created in ink. The density of this work is enhanced by the dark ink traces, the sprawling lines of the vines, and the various ink and colour dots that have been splashed onto the paper. It reminds us of works deploying similar techniques

but painted in oils, such as *Jade Breeze* 玉風 (2014; cat. no. 30). However, in the oil paintings, we can almost find traces of calligraphic brushstrokes (representing tree branches) emerging from the heavy, thick oil abstraction—as in *Boundless* 觀蒼莽 of 2011 (cat. no. 27). The merging of calligraphic-style brushstrokes found in the oil paintings, and the abstract handling of lines and forms in the ink paintings suggest a new direction of artistic practice that Hong Ling is currently pursuing. As the artist has now retired from teaching, we may expect him to spend even more time in the land of Huangshan, and to bring us more works inspired by this land while also presenting his ever-developing perspective on Huangshan to his audience.

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7. See Shane McCausland's essay in this volume, pp. 12–19.

8. Hong Ling, *Fanchen zhong de yinshi: Yixiang shanshui dashi Hong Ling de rensheng tiyan*, p. 134.

# OIL IN THE REALM OF MOUNTAINS AND WATER: Hong Ling's *Shanshui*

At first glance, the thick, vibrant colours found in some of Hong Ling's most recent oil paintings may appear to be studies in abstraction, but as the viewer gazes into the layers of pigment hazy mountains emerge from the mist and pools of water collect beneath rocky pine groves. While the medium of oil on canvas may be considered Western, the subject and conception expressed in these works is that of Chinese landscape painting or *shanshui* 山水, literally 'mountains and water'. Hong Ling's commitment to this heritage is most immediately apparent in his small albums of paintings in which gnarled trees and mountains shrouded by cloud are expressed in brush and ink—the materials that shaped Chinese landscape painting for over a millennium. Hong Ling, however, trained as an oil painter and his engagement with *shanshui* is also fully realised in this alternative medium. Visually more extraordinary than orthodox, Hong Ling's oil paintings offer a new way of understanding *shanshui* as much as *shanshui* offers a means to understand them.

Focusing on formative experiences, place, purpose and engagement, this essay uses the words of China's old masters as a gateway to understanding Hong Ling's *shanshui* oil paintings. Landscape painting developed as a genre within China from the tenth century; in the generations that followed, roles of artists, theorists and connoisseurs regularly overlapped, fostering a discourse both self-conscious and reflective that repeatedly engaged with the guidance of past practitioners. It would be far beyond the scope of this essay to present even a digest of the history of landscape painting in China, but nonetheless it is vital to acknowledge that the genre was neither static nor evolving on a proscribed path.<sup>1</sup> In this way, although the authorities of the past remained a valued source of inspiration within imperial China, they were not self-reproducing; rather, *shanshui* painting and its precepts were available for reinterpretation, appropriation and modification in each generation. Working in oil on canvas, Hong Ling's paintings reveal his own engagement with *shanshui*, conveying the relationship between man and nature that lies at its heart.

1. For a helpful introduction to this vast subject, see: Peter Sturman, 'Landscape' in *A Companion to Chinese Art*, edited by Martin J. Powers and Katherine R. Tsiang (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), pp. 177–94.

**Great masters and understanding scholars do not restrict themselves to one school, but must select from many for comparison, and discuss widely to investigate on a broad basis in order to achieve their own style eventually.**

**Guo Xi (c.1000–c.1090), *The Lofty Message of Forests and Streams*<sup>2</sup>**

In his influential treatise on landscape painting *The Lofty Message of Forests and Streams*, the artist and scholar of China’s Northern Song dynasty (960–1127), Guo Xi, advised his readers not to only follow one master, but to draw on different models and then find their own path. For the scholar-artists of the eleventh century and their successors, this might entail studying the paintings of the old masters (and copies thereof) and engaging with the written discourse within which Guo Xi was himself a prominent figure. In this way, the techniques, precepts and aesthetic of landscape painting were made available to new generations. Such mechanisms of transmission, however, were not guaranteed. For Hong Ling and his peers, born centuries later in the early years of the People’s Republic of China (founded 1949), political events shaped the opportunities available for their artistic development.

From the Song (960–1279) and Yuan (1271–1368) dynasties, landscapes painted with ink and brush were closely associated with China’s literati class: a scholarly elite of officials who brought their skills in calligraphy to the art of painting. At the beginning of the twentieth century, aspiring artists were able to enrol in China’s new art institutions, where they encountered a broadening spectrum of artists and techniques. Some turned to Western models, others sought to preserve indigenous forms of expression. As the political climate shifted, however, China’s new leaders repudiated such affiliations to the nation’s former cultural elite. Following the establishment of the PRC by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949, during the Anti-Rightist movement of the late 1950s and then the Cultural Revolution of 1966 to 1976, artworks that were perceived to counter Party ideals were destroyed, artistic traditions and their practitioners denigrated, careers and lives lost in what might be considered a brutal moment of rupture for China’s landscape painting arts and their transmission. In its place came a new focus on the figure and the mural, previously little valued in China’s scholarly discourse, and growing interest (political and artistic) in the merits of poster arts and slogans within the image, Soviet oil painting and realism.

Born in 1955, Hong Ling grew up through this turbulent period. As a child, however, he can point to encounters with traditional Chinese arts and their techniques. Hong Ling’s maternal grandfather worked at the Palace Museum, Beijing, and Hong Ling came across traditional Chinese paintings in old copies of the Museum’s magazine, *Palace Museum Weekly*. Hong Ling’s mother also engaged an artist, Wang Guangxiu (then a worker at Beijing Power Supply Bureau), to tutor her son. Under his guidance, Hong Ling copied pages from *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* (*Jieziyuan huazhuan* 芥子園畫傳), a primer for Chinese painting conventions first printed in 1679 and subsequently extended and reprinted in multiple editions

2. Translation taken from: Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, 1985 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), p. 160.

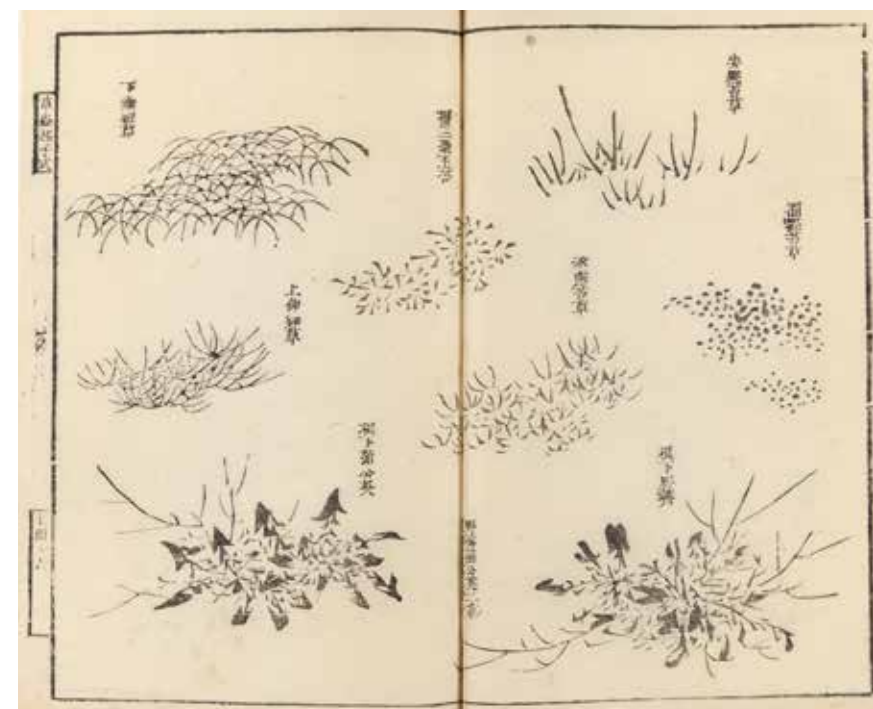


fig. 1: Mosses and grasses in the *Book of Grasses, Insects and Flowering Plants from the Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*. Woodblock printed book. China, c.1800. CBL C 1724. © Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.

(fig. 1). Even so, after the Cultural Revolution, when art schools began admitting students again in 1978, Hong Ling and his contemporaries faced a changed horizon.

Graduating from Beijing Capital Normal University in 1979, Hong Ling undertook graduate studies in the Oil Painting Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing. He has since reflected, ‘Having witnessed the previous generation being deprived of their rights, we wanted to make up for their lost time.’<sup>3</sup> The young artist studied Chistiakov’s sketching techniques and the works of other Russian masters. In the earliest of Hong Ling’s paintings included in this exhibition, *White Poplars in the Temple of Heaven* 天壇白楊 (cat. no. 1), painted in 1979 just three years after the end of the Cultural Revolution, the impact

can be seen. The trees are anchored by their shadows, light and dark carefully mapped across the white snow: effects that would not be expressed in traditional Chinese landscape painting. Into the late 1980s, Hong Ling drew inspiration from Western masters as Shane McCausland’s essay in this volume details. Hong Ling’s studies of architecture and the female nude (so central to Western institutional art practice) focus on issues of form, perspective and materiality, from which he then experimented briefly with abstraction. Hong Ling has wondered what might have become of his work had he stayed on the path he followed as a student. From his own words, everything shifted when he arrived at Huangshan: the Yellow Mountains. Here, drawing on models indigenous and imported, Hong Ling developed his own personal style and focus.

**In landscape, first pay attention to the major mountain, called the master peak. When this one is established you can turn to others, near and far, large and small. We call it the master peak because, in this manner, it is sovereign over the entire scene. It is like the hierarchy of lords and ministers.**

**Guo Xi (c.1000–c.1090), *The Lofty Message of Forests and Streams*<sup>4</sup>**

Guo Xi offers his reader concrete guidance on how they might approach painting a landscape. First, he recommends, they must attend to the master peak: the

3. Hong Ling, *Boundless Momentum: Book of Hong Ling* 蒼莽氣象：洪凌文字集 (Beijing: Soka Art, 2011), p. 233.

4. Translation taken from: Bush and Shih, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, p. 178.



mountain that will dominate and guide the rest of the composition. For Hong Ling, the Yellow Mountains of Huangshan (fig. 2) stand as both catalyst and muse for his work as a painter of landscapes. Hong Ling was not born with a connection to Huangshan's Anhui province: his ancestral home lies in Yunnan province, and Hong Ling himself was born, raised, trained and employed in Beijing. He set eyes upon the mountains of Huangshan in the early 1980s. In 1992, he established his studio in Huangshan City, and Huangshan continues to inspire his artistic practice. Breathing in the heavy, fertile air of the Yellow Mountains, Hong Ling has traced the footsteps of China's old masters who wandered this landscape in centuries past; in his studio his brush found a new path.



fig. 2: Misty view at Huangshan, photo courtesy of the artist.  
© Hong Ling.

The formidable granite peaks of Huangshan and the clouds that cling to them form a dramatic landscape (fig. 2) that has captured the imagination of poets and painters. The artist Huang Binhong (1865–1955) is among those Hong Ling has cited as a model. In the first half of the twentieth century, Huang Binhong saw the past as the best foundation for China's artistic future. Anhui was his ancestral home, and the articulation of this landscape and his family's history within it was central to his efforts to sustain Chinese ink painting.<sup>5</sup> While Huang Binhong found strength in the heritage of landscape, other artists found freedom in nature. The seventeenth-century poet and artist Shitao (1642–1707) travelled in Anhui, climbing Huangshan on different occasions. Inscribed upon his memory, the mountains of Huangshan returned as a subject for paintings later in Shitao's career, a wilderness that stood alternately as a place of exile and a leisure retreat.<sup>6</sup> For Shitao, direct experience of this landscape—a landscape to which he had not been born—enabled him to explore the relationship between man and nature for himself rather than following the masters of the past. Hong Ling found both legacy and freedom in his own experience of nature among the peaks of Huangshan. As he has stated, 'A key left behind by these great sages will fall into your hands, which can gradually open a door that leads to a realm where the soul connects with nature.'<sup>7</sup>

At Huangshan, Hong Ling embraced the challenge and the freedom to explore *shanshui* from a new direction. As he recalls in his interview for this exhibition: 'Entering this humid and fertile region amidst uninterrupted mountain chains, I felt a powerful expressive impulse. Oil painting was something that had arrived in China from elsewhere and no one had ever really tried to forge a connection with this southern landscape ... I felt that I could paint it in oil.' The Yellow Mountains, their mists and tall pines, remain a key focus of his artistic practice. In 2011, Hong Ling looked back on his time at Huangshan, observing: 'I have been living in Huangshan for almost twenty years. In the blink of an eye, many years have passed by as I spent them painting. ... living amongst the landscape of mountains and waters, I have

5. For a discussion of Huang Binhong's career and his relationship to his heritage, see: Claire Roberts, 'The dark side of the mountain: Huang Binhong (1865–1955) and artistic continuity in twentieth century China' (PhD diss., Australian National University, 2005). <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/11334> (cited 1 February 2016)
6. For a contextualised study of Shitao's life and works, see: Jonathan Hay, *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
7. Hong Ling, *Boundless Momentum*, p. 235.

8. Ibid., p. 226.

9. Ibid., p. 273.

10. Translation taken from: Bush and Shih, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, p. 146.

found a spiritual space that truly belongs to me.'<sup>8</sup> When a colleague suggested that he had perhaps been at Huangshan too long, Hong Ling responded: 'by laying down roots, one can uncover a locale's soul ... I will dig deeper and complete my search.'<sup>9</sup> The focus of that search is the essence of the landscape.

**Painting is equivalent to measuring. One examines the objects and grasps their reality. He must grasp the outward appearance from the outward appearance of the object, and the inner reality from the inner reality of the object. He must not take the outward appearance and call it the inner reality. If you do not know this method [of understanding truth], you may even get lifelikeness but never achieve reality in painting ... Lifelikeness means to achieve the form of the object but to leave out its spirit. Reality means that both spirit and substance are strong.**

#### Jing Hao (c.870–c.930), *A Note on the Art of the Brush*<sup>10</sup>

In reaching for the soul of Huangshan in his work, Hong Ling subscribes to a key precept of *shanshui* painting that took shape in the discourse between China's scholar-painters of the Northern Song dynasty. Instead of seeking to accomplish likeness, literati artists urged each other to move beyond mimesis and capture the inner essence of their subject. In Hong Ling's 1991 painting, *Cold Snow* 寒雪 (cat. no. 14), created a year before his studio at Huangshan was completed, we witness a moment of negotiation between the realist schools he trained in and his engagement with China's *shanshui* traditions. With a lakeside pavilion set amongst the mountain's wooded groves (fig. 3), the subject and its idealised composition are familiar from *shanshui*. Hong Ling has stated that the work stands as a tribute to the old masters: Fan Kuan (d. c.1023), Guo Xi and Li Cheng (919–967). Within this, the reflections of the trees traced over the water's surface are out of place. Elements that would not be depicted in an orthodox Chinese landscape painting, they are perhaps echoes of Hong Ling's earlier training. As he reached for the essence of the mountain, Hong Ling negotiated with both the conventions in which he trained and those of China's *shanshui* heritage.



fig. 3: Detail of *Cold Snow* 寒雪 (1991; cat. no. 14).

Neither abstract nor realist, the oil paintings Hong Ling has produced since taking up his studio at Huangshan have found their own path towards the essence of the landscape as defined by Jing Hao. These developments can be seen within the changing palette for his works, from the naturalistic palette of *Misty Rain in Xiao-Xiang (Hunan)* 瀟湘煙雨 painted in 1993 (cat. no. 15) to the orchestrated tones of *Green Mist, Pure Breeze* 煙翠風清, which he painted on New Year's Day 2002 (cat. no. 23). And yet, in their rich use of colour, Hong Ling's landscape oil paintings contrast sharply with the models of China's past and indeed with his own ink paintings. From the Song and Yuan dynasties, the medium of ink and brush formed a connective tissue between the arts of

calligraphy, poetry and painting for the literati artists of imperial China. Although colours were sometimes employed, expressive brushwork in black ink took a leading part in the landscape paintings created by these scholar-artists. In Hong Ling's explorations of *shanshui* in the medium of oil on canvas, however, colour takes on a more pivotal role.

Considering Hong Ling's suite of paintings *Four Seasons* 春夏秋冬 (2000–01; cat. no. 20), each season has its own defined palette. The use of colours in these works, however, goes beyond the simple representation of changing seasons to capture the human emotions that they inspire. To quote Guo Xi: 'In spring mountains, mists and clouds stretch out unbroken and people are full of joy. In summer mountains, fine trees offer profuse shade and people are full of satisfaction. In autumn mountains, bright and clear leaves flutter and fall, and men are full of melancholy. In winter mountains, dark fogs dim and choke the scene, and men are full of loneliness.'<sup>11</sup> Literati artists sometimes conveyed such emotions through the poems they inscribed upon the surface of the work, or through the use of allusive motifs. In Hong Ling's *Four Seasons*, however, the emotions that Guo Xi describes can be seen in the colours that are vivid but controlled: the promise of spring's first pale pink blossoms gives way to the intense greens of a lush summer, and the shifting ochres of autumn lead into the cold blue-tinged grey of winter. As Tian S. Liang's essay in this volume describes, Hong Ling's winter paintings from around this time incorporate a diversity of nuanced palettes, each suggesting a different emotional experience. Hong Ling once commented, 'Nature has taught me to use my soul to feel.'<sup>12</sup> Vibrant or stark, the colours in his work realise the intensity of that engagement.

**It is generally accepted opinion that in landscapes there are those through which you may travel, those in which you may sightsee, those through which you may wander, and those in which you may live.**

**Guo Xi (c.1000–c.1090), *The Lofty Message of Forests and Streams*<sup>13</sup>**

*Shanshui* paintings reflect upon the relationship between man and nature. Traced by meandering pathways and dotted with pavilions, paintings of mountains and water by China's old masters also offer landscapes into which the viewer might escape from the everyday world. For Guo Xi, paintings should create space for the viewer to dwell within the landscape. In *Cold Snow*, Hong Ling offered the viewer a pavilion in which they might rest and contemplate the icy lake, but in his more recent oil paintings such signs of human presence are harder to find, perhaps absent, and yet these landscapes continue to function powerfully as spaces for travel and repose. Exploiting the materiality of these works and the viewer's engagement with them, Hong Ling brings the viewer into the landscape in a different but equally compelling way.

Dominating the landscape tradition from the Song and Yuan dynasties into the beginning of the twentieth century, China's literati painters employed the same materials and techniques for paintings that they used for calligraphy. Paintings were

11. Translation taken from: *ibid.*, p. 153.

12. Hong Ling, *Boundless Momentum*, p. 235.



fig. 4: Hong Ling in the studio, photo courtesy of the artist.  
© Hong Ling.

mounted in handscroll or hanging scroll formats, or bound into albums. Today displayed in the glass cases of museums, a painted hanging scroll might once have been brought out to enjoy among friends at a social gathering, while the physical act of unfurling a handscroll served to draw the viewer in through the promise of a slowly revealed scene. Within Hong Ling's oil paintings, echoes of such formats are most clearly seen in the suite of paintings *Four Seasons*, but while these works may assume the proportions of a silk hanging scroll, they cannot be taken down and rolled as a scholar might pack away a scroll after his guests retire. The materiality of Hong Ling's oil paintings as shaped by their medium represents a departure from the ink paintings of the literati, and combines with their scale to guide how the viewer might engage with his work.

The growing scale of Hong Ling's oil paintings (fig. 4) reflects both his confidence and stature as an artist, but also has a dramatic impact on the viewers' involvement. At 7.5 metres long and 2.5 metres high, the triptych *Green Mist, Pure Breeze* is nothing short of monumental. A scale little seen in Chinese landscape painting since landscapes were used to decorate palaces in the early years of the Northern Song dynasty, it fills the viewer's vision drawing them into the landscape. Standing in front of *Pine Trunks: Bones* 松骨 (June 2014; cat. no. 31), the viewer is

led deep into the forest, looking up to catch glimpses of a colourful sky through the outstretched branches of the canopy. Hong Ling's paintings offer an alternative form of immersion to that presented by handscrolls and album paintings, no less powerful but perhaps better suited to the spaces in which his art is now enjoyed. In his ink paintings, Hong Ling switches between the unorthodox and orthodox for format. Some works, such as *Diffuse Spring* 漫春 (2014; cat. no. 40), are produced on a scale that stands shoulder to shoulder with his canvases, framed and hung on the wall; others are pasted into albums to be studied in the hand. As Hong Ling continues to develop and exhibit his works in ink alongside his oil paintings, further questions will come to the fore in terms of medium, materiality and engagement within his work.

**You see a white path disappearing into the blue and think of traveling on it. You see the glow of the setting sun over level waters and dream of gazing on it. You see hermits and mountain dwellers and think of lodging with them. You see cliffs by lucid water, or streams over rocks, and long to wander there ... This is the wonderful power of a painting beyond its mere mood.**

**Guo Xi (c.1000–c.1090), *The Lofty Message of Forests and Streams*<sup>14</sup>**

In the interview to accompany this exhibition, Shane McCausland asked Hong Ling what advice he might have for the audiences that would see his paintings exhibited in Europe. Hong Ling observed that it might be easier for audiences more

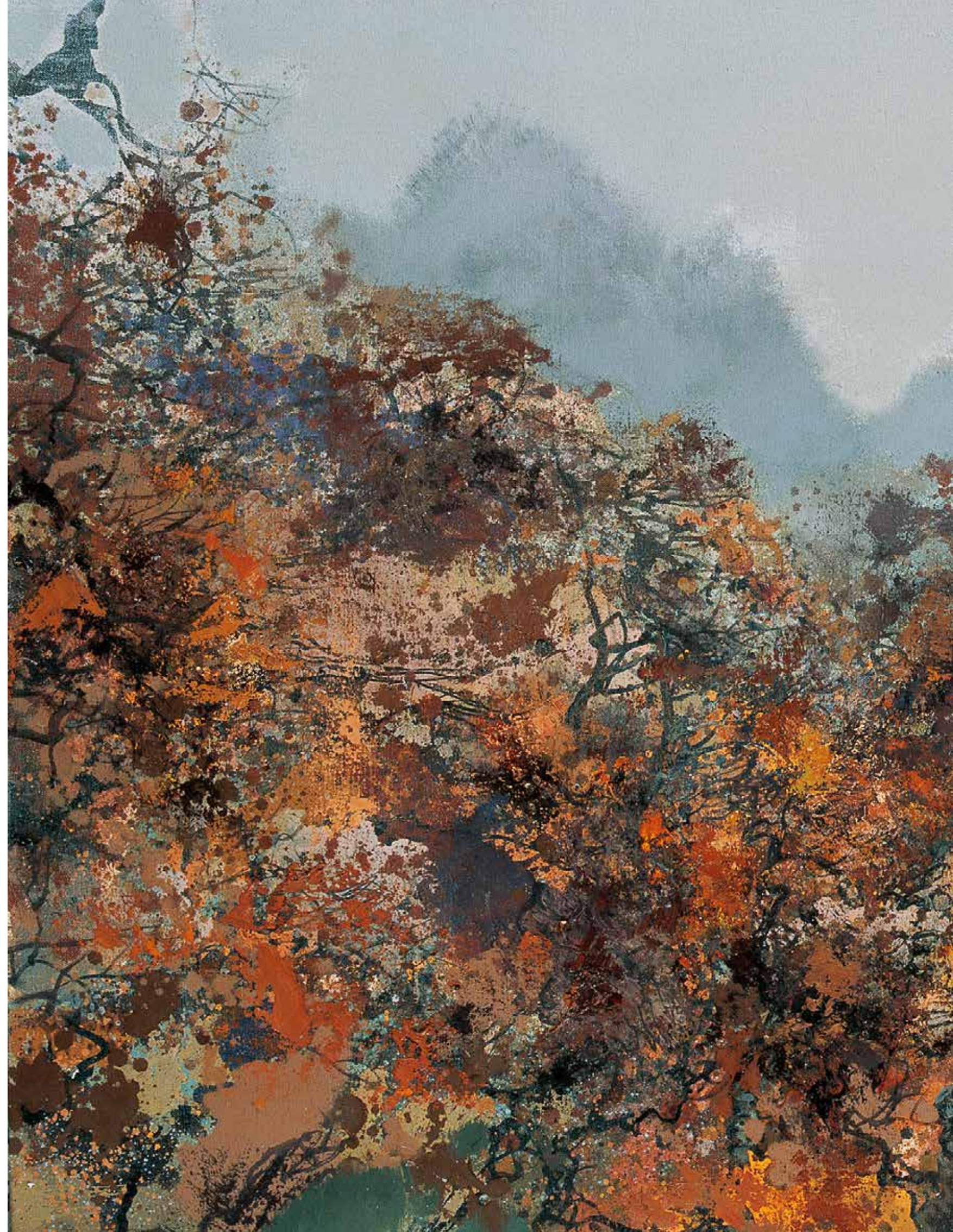
13. Translation taken from: Bush and Shih, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, p. 151.

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familiar with China's painting traditions to appreciate his work. In the past, others have also observed that Hong Ling's work is best understood through the traditional theories of *shanshui*.<sup>15</sup> And yet, Hong Ling concluded, by virtue of our common humanity, the subject of nature would be available for all to experience. Hong Ling's oil paintings compel the viewer to join him in the landscape that is his home and inspiration. As we pause to contemplate his work, we feel the crisp chill that seizes the fading autumn colours of *Drunk in Frozen Forests* 霜林醉 (2011; cat. no. 26), the leaden stillness of *Wild Silence* 野寂 (2008; cat. no. 24) and the soaring exhilaration of *A Peak of Reds* 丹頂 (2014; cat. no. 33). Before long the damp mists close around our shoulders and we realise that we too have found a place to dwell among the mountains.

Mary Redfern  
Curator of the East Asian Collection  
Chester Beatty Library  
Dublin

15. Tsao Hsingyuan, 'Cosmos within Brush Strokes: Hong Ling's Shanshui (landscape) in Oil' and Claire Lee, 'Landscape of the Mind' in *Hong Ling: Contemporary Chinese Landscape* (London: Soka Art at Asia House, 2012).



Opposite: detail cat. no. 26

# HONG LING IN CONVERSATION WITH SHANE McCAUSLAND

At the Honglu, Hong Ling's studio-residence in Tunxi, Huangshan City, Anhui Province  
13 September 2015

## Note to the reader:

The Honglu (literally, Hong's Cottage) is a walled courtyard residence covering about half an acre, comprising indoor and outdoor living spaces and painting studios, on Huashan St, Tunxi District, on the south bank of the Xin'an River on the eastern edge of Huangshan City. This southern part of Anhui Province is densely covered by pine forests over mountains and hills. The Xin'an River runs from west to east through the middle of Huangshan City. In the city centre, the Hengjiang, a major tributary which enters the Xin'an from the north, is spanned by a Ming dynasty bridge. The famous Huangshan Scenic Area lies 50km or an hour's drive to the north of Huangshan City. Hong Ling also has a rural retreat upriver (west) from Huangshan City, situated beside Toad Stone Reservoir (Hamashi shuiku) on a small collective farm, south of Hexi village, Shangshan district in Xiuning County. The reservoir retreat is on the edge of the reservoir among dense pine-covered hills, where the hills end and the plain of the Xin'an River, just to the north, begins.



fig. 1 Hong Ling preparing tea in his Huangshan studio (Honglu).

**Shane McCausland (SMcC):** I have a few simple questions to start off with. I'm gradually going to work round to questions about the artworks. So, thank you so much for the invitation to the Honglu where we are now (figs 1 & 2). I wonder, how did you choose the site of the place literally underneath a hill [on the outskirts of the city of Huangshan]—and between a hill and [Xin'an] river, such a wonderful place?

**Hong Ling (HL):** It's coming back to me now. In fact, it's like you say in your question: I clearly remember feeling that this was a good place. Back then, basically, at that time, I'd grown up with my family in a big city, in a *hutong* [traditional neighbourhood of alleys and courtyard residences] in Beijing. It's quite true that

we didn't have even an acre of land, nor any experience of building a house. But intuitively, I had already prepared myself mentally for this... ever since, in the early eighties, I took a long-distance [200 km] bus from Hangzhou to Huangshan with a few friends. We wound our way along the entire length of the Xin'an river. This whole trip [made a real impression on me] as a northern lad coming to the south for the first time, south of the Yangtze River... seeing this lush place and the local Hui-style architecture. Back then, there weren't anything like the number of new houses you see today. They were all simple, old houses, set in amongst the green-brown hills of late autumn. There were also the streams and rivers, and not that many people, not like today with all the visitors that come. At that time, there really were far fewer people.

The whole trip created this kind of illusion for me. This was because, ever since I started drawing pictures as a child, and by that time I was painting in oils too, I've always liked depicting landscape scenery. That first time in Huangshan, it wasn't

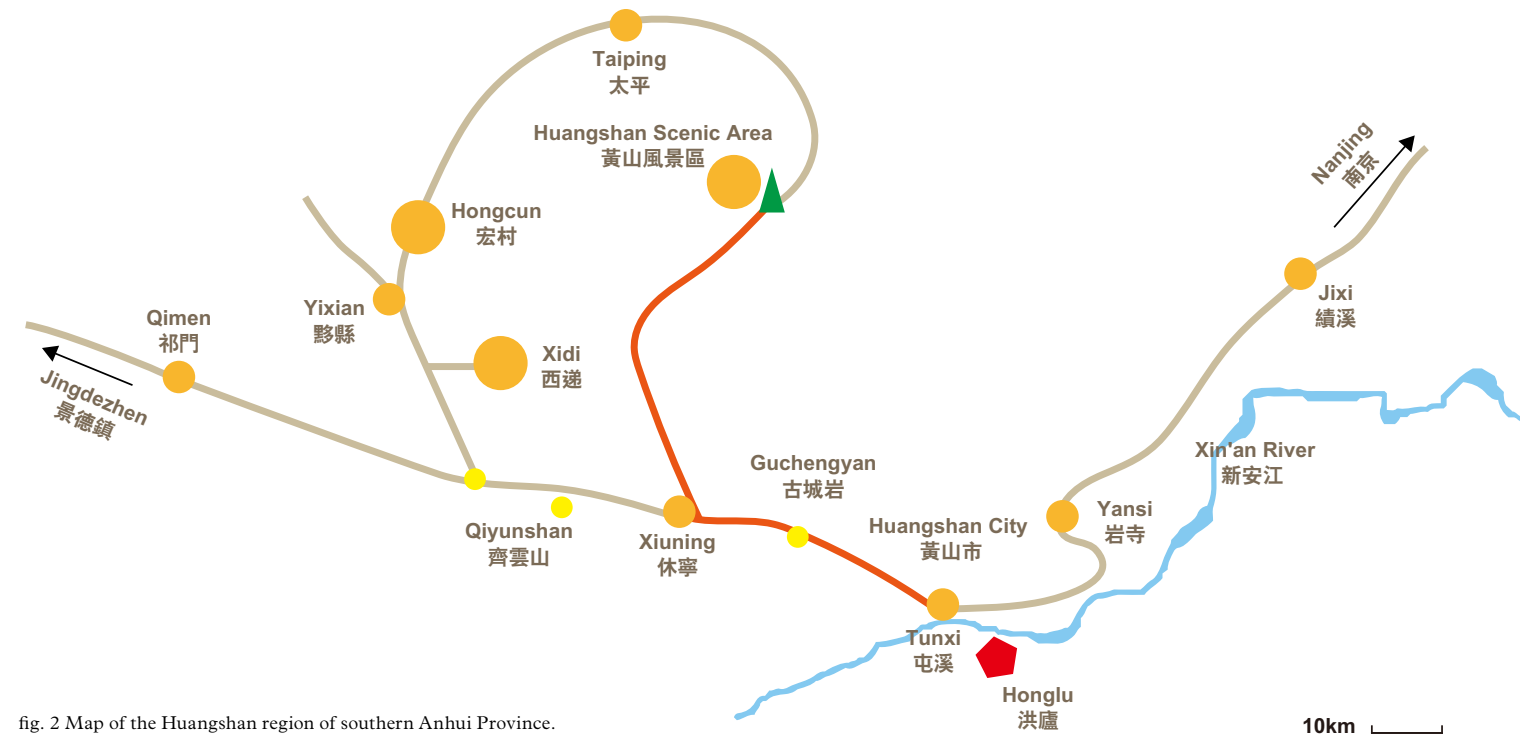


fig. 2 Map of the Huangshan region of southern Anhui Province.



fig. 3 Huangshan I, June 2009, photo courtesy of Barry Lam.



fig. 4 Huangshan II, June 2009, photo courtesy of Barry Lam.

just about the trip, it was also about sketching and drawing the scenery. So, at that time, I felt a very powerful response (see figs 3 & 4)... it being my first time south of the Yangtze River. Entering this humid and fertile region amidst uninterrupted mountain chains, I felt a powerful expressive impulse. Oil painting was something that had arrived in China from elsewhere, and no one had ever really tried to forge a connection with this southern landscape [in that medium]. Now I was impulsive at that time, and I felt that I could paint it in oil—that was my belief. But it wasn't so easy to settle down and paint then since there were no hostels. The countryside was pretty basic and the lives of the ordinary people were tough. What I desired to do, if I'd had any money, was to set up a studio here, but it was wishful thinking. In those days, China had only just managed to feed and clothe the people, and there was no market for us oil painters, and not the smallest wage to be had. So it was just a dream.

But by the early 90s, I did have some money. By then, I had saved up more than ten thousand dollars, which was just as well as I now had the chance to visit Huangshan for the second time. My student's uncle was a construction director. He was the head. Working under a new planning policy, they were building new development zones. To build these new zones, it was now legal to transfer land into private ownership. In China, this was the earliest time that this was even a possibility and I decided right then that I wanted to build a house here. When the time came to choose the plot, my student's uncle took me walking all around to look. My heart was in a muddle at the time. I thought since I wanted to paint the scenery and landscapes, that what I loved was nature, and so if I was choosing a site for a painting studio, it needed to have a mature tree. I thought it would be best if there were a big tree in the courtyard. Second, I needed to be near the mountains—somewhere very close to me, there should be a mountain. Or, the studio should be built right in the bosom of the mountains... or surrounded by mountains. Best of all, the front of the studio would face a river or a lake. It just happened that this spot here was tailor-made for my simple wishes. There was a mountain, there was a river and there was a tree. And that is how I chose this place.

I was also thinking from the perspective of daily life. Here, we're now on the outskirts of Huangshan City but back then, this suburb was still basically countryside. There was a small dirt road which wasn't wide but it was good enough for me to be able to bring in my canvasses and I could drive my little car on it. That's what it was like. By a simple track like that and with the mountains and water either side, you could see the mountains and water every day. It was like a constant mutual regard that is both visual and spiritual; being face to face with nature like that, one's response only becomes more profound. And that's how I made this studio.

**SMcC:** Although there has been lots of construction and development in China in the last twenty years, I still think the character of this place hasn't changed that much. So it must continue to be a nice place to work. What interests me... to go further with what you were saying: Can you say how local traditions, the local concept of the land and its use and the local attitude to space and the natural environment affect you? How does all that actually manifest in your work? How does it, for example, shape the way you frame [a scene] on the canvas or the way you may conceive a scene within it?

**HL:** Actually, choosing the Jiangnan region in the south, from the perspective of a boy who grew up in the north, or a young person, is in itself very peculiar. There are several peculiar things about it. The first peculiar thing is that I came from the north. In those early days, no artist could move away from home. My moving here [to Huangshan] is a bit like an English artist setting up a studio in Italy. Home is England but he went off to Italy to start a studio, choosing to set up a personal work space such a long distance away.

In fact, north China also has mountains and water [that is, landscape] and of course I've experienced this for myself. But I eventually discovered Huangshan, discovered southern Wǎn [the ancient name and modern shorthand for Anhui Province], and put this studio here. Let's say I wanted to capture a kind of intrinsic disposition, the secret [of this place]. Perhaps it was my personal story to discover Huangshan, to discover southern Wǎn. Perhaps deep in one's inner being there is a particular plotline which at the start is covered up, obscured. When you are learning the whole process of painting, you are in pursuit of the richness of colours, the brightness, the variation, including also the shaping of forms, including veracity in composition, the correct projection of light and three-dimensional structure. These things were actually really important at the early stage of learning oil painting. But when I started painting outdoor scenes [*fengjing*]... when we study that, we all adopt a way of painting from life [*xiusheng*], and this way of painting from life is actually my own tradition, my own Chinese landscape painting... So that, later on, I resolved to absorb nourishment from within landscape painting. Or [to put it another way], I turned my own painting into a kind of oil-painting landscape, an expression of that kind. In fact, at that time, I really didn't have very clear ideas; I just liked nature, the kind of nature I found here in the south.

To me, this piece of nature had a certain power of attraction but at the same time was unfamiliar. My whole experience of learning had been for the most part about mastering representation in three dimensions and realism, so this was mainly a kind of painting from life [*xiusheng*]. But, later, at the very end of my student days, our painting from life had already become a way of painting from life that was not very natural... Resulting in a language that I really liked, as in the way that the Impressionists and Post-impressionists had put more emphasis on structure, liberating brushwork. Opening up structure in this way enabled a picture to have more of a sense of beat and rhythm.

At that moment I came to Huangshan and having seen the environment of this place, I took stock of my own progress and direction. I recognised that from realistic painting, I was moving step-by-step towards an artistic expression in a more subjective language that emphasized form, akin to that of the western Post-expressionists. I had come to a turning point: in the way I was painting from life, I was changing from being passive to being more active. In that oil painting is about expressing one's inner passion, I was still really attracted to traditional oil painting as a practice, the essence of oil painting and its tradition that had come from the west. We studied oil painting and the places where it originated: they were undergoing wholesale changes but the delightful artworks that resulted are still here to be seen.

So when I arrived here in the south, it was the early 90s. It was probably in about 1990 that I decided to make a studio here. I was already 35 or 36 years old. Looking at my own piece of land, I told them that it was both unfamiliar and attractive. And that in the eyes of us oil painters, this whole area should have been developed for traditional Chinese ink painting, because everywhere you looked it was all so

damp and moist, monochromatic, unsettled, hazy. But such is the language of oil painting... If you follow the path of oil painting, you may end up on a different road, one that enters into China's landscape. As far as scenery painting [*fengjing*] goes, we start by painting actual scenes [*xiusheng*], and enter a landscape expression after. In choosing to put my studio here, I chose to stay here and observe my surroundings. Coming to an environment like here in the south is like... In fact, after the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279), this area of Jiang-Zhe-Su-Wan [Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui Provinces] can be said to have been the second womb of culture in China. The first was the Yellow River basin. The second was probably here, and on this second occasion it brought forth the colours you find in this moisture-rich [atmosphere] and chaotic [swirling clouds and mists]. When I first saw this landscape, from a philosophical point of view, from the perspective of deep spiritual meaning, I felt the shock it gave me. It was, in fact, on the inside. I thought that this place... Because in the north, they used to all paint autumn forests, or bright autumn colours or spring. All very bright. When I got to the south, I immediately thought I wanted to give this a try. But would oil painting work? I had arrived here where I could see China from a position to the south of the Yangtze, but would it be possible to develop in tandem with the local culture, to open up to new possibilities, ones that were different from others'.

So, I think that being here for this length of time, having worked here for twenty years, it has really had a huge impact on me... My painting and observation, and my mindset have all become very southern. I have absorbed quite a few new things as I've gone along. It has also made my oil paintings tend to be very personal and individualistic.

**SMcC:** Thanks. So I'll just ask a couple of really quick questions now. Just one word answers will be fine. What artists, if any, are you looking at right now?

**HL:** I actually prefer [to look at] Western [artists], those who started from the classics or who were forging a modern creative language in accord with the classical way, such as Balthus (1908–2001), Lucian Freud (1922–2011) and also [Giorgio] Morandi (1890–1964). Actually, I pay most attention to these artists since in the modern artistic language framework they used they still retained a love of the classics and the philosophy of the classics.

**SMcC:** Fascinating. Of course, Balthus' [second] wife [Setsuko Ideta; 1943–] was Japanese...

**HL:** Yes, that's right. He [Balthus] had a big house. His creative practice was also very closed, private unto himself.

**SMcC:** Looking at your works, at your artistic practice in general, the artist you have a lot of in common with is Wu Guanzhong (1919–2010). You both work in oils and in ink. You both have done nature painting [*fengjing hua*] with abstraction. Would you say, if you had to make a comparison, that he is the Chinese artist you would be most directly associated with?

**HL:** Very generally speaking, Wu Guanzhong and Lin Fengmian (1900–1991), Chinese painters like these... these early painters... and even earlier, Yan Wenliang (1893–1990)... China had a number of these painters, and their practice continued up until Mr. Wu Guanzhong passed away. In fact, their [work harboured] Chinese sensibilities and Chinese culture within it. In France... there is abstraction. Two of these people are rather closer to my work... in terms of directions, the exploration of their directions: One was Lin Fengmian. One was Wu Guanzhong. Wu Guanzhong may have paid more attention to form. For Lin Fengmian, it was maybe more about the inside, the inner spirit.

**SMcC:** I have one more question before coming on to talk a bit more about the exhibition. It seems to me that a really important part of your life experience as an artist is the travel you have done. You have travelled to both the north and south polar regions, Africa, and lots and lots of other places. Could you describe to us how important this has been for your personal development as an artist?

**HL:** Actually, travelling... Anyone who loves life enjoys the contact with nature, enjoys what's new and strange. There is no experience in this world that one cannot appreciate or see so that everything, to one's mind, will be a new stimulus or new kind of nourishment, creating new impulses. But as far as painting is concerned, these experiences subconsciously influence your heart. The subconscious can greatly increase your visual experience. It is like refraction, being indirect. It may be stored, and, at the right time, it may become a nutrient that can be poured into your canvas. It is imperceptible, in all these ways.

Also, as we were just talking about Wu Guanzhong, I'd like to add something. Actually, I am very different from Wu Guanzhong and those others. This is because in their work they did not set out from China's traditional landscape and philosophical spirit to end up revitalising the roots of China's [culture, like I have].

**SMcC:** Now let's move on to talk about the exhibition a bit. The exhibition we're organising is a retrospective, so it's not the kind of exhibition that you would prepare for by painting new works. Maybe some new works, but it will not include that many.

It draws from works from your whole career so it is slightly unusual in that way. How would you say you are preparing for it differently?

**HL:** Actually, I think that of all my exhibitions, I think this is the one I have looked forward to most. That's because the concept is so unique. I am someone who always looks ahead and never back, but, this time, I am forced to look back and see how I arrived here. It doesn't matter if I was trembling or staggering along. Along the way, where did you turn, where did you go smoothly, where did you fall? In fact, some of my paintings have got scattered about and lost. Actually, a lot has been lost but some have been kept. There are these things you normally don't see in yourself, or rarely see. This time, it was like going all out: I looked at my height; I looked at my weight; I looked at my whole body. I had to have a comprehensive understanding and this was a very good opportunity [to do that].

**SMcC:** So I'm wondering what expectations you might have of the European audience. Actually this is a question we might print at the end but I'm going to ask it now, which is, what advice would you give to European audiences that might be unfamiliar with your work. If they were to read this before they saw the exhibition (or after), what advice might you give?

**HL:** I feel that this topic relates to... I think European audiences are perhaps more concerned with people or with society. China has a bunch of audiences that, because they have had landscape paintings—and in China these would be quite developed landscape paintings—and Chinese painting [*Zhongguo hua*], they have a tradition of this, they have had the training that leads to appreciation. This kind of training is slowly developing in China, slowly developing on the mainland, but I think Taiwan has a very good tradition [of appreciation]. So, on the whole, broad public audiences that are able to appreciate my paintings are more common in Taiwan. Now, in Europe, it is slowly starting. I suppose that because of our common humanity, faced with nature, we have a common reaction and character, since nature is our mother. Our human lives are actually brimming with a kind of deep affect or sensibility. I think that as long as there are people who desire to observe and experience nature then there shouldn't be a problem. They can take their time to look into and experience this.

**SMcC:** So I have just a few more questions. We're going to go back and talk more about the works. You trained in oil painting but you also practise ink painting. What is it you like about this combination of the two... which you are able to practise in two different spaces in parallel, in two studios in parallel. This obviously works for you; you are able to go back and forth. Could you say more about that?

**HL:** Actually, artistic creations are basically all interrelated, in communication with each other. Even east and west are actually in communication. They are all human creations. The Western artists that I pay attention to would be painters who made sculptures like [Amedeo] Giacometti (1884–1920) and Morandi. In my youth, I really liked the way the human figure was painted by Modigliani.

**SMcC:** Italians.

**HL:** In fact, they made sculptures and also painted pictures. There are also currently many Chinese painters who actually cross boundaries [in this way], who simultaneously express themselves through oil painting and through western ways of expression. They also add a frame, use *xuan* [traditional deluxe painting] paper and express themselves in ink-painting mode. At the outset, [these elements] may be quite distinct but the moment comes when they will connect again like trees. This branch comes in, and that branch goes out. Two trees grow into each other, in one place, until it is not clear which tree is which. And then sometimes, it will continue to grow. Actually, when I paint *guohua* in ink, my ink, my experience will stay on the ‘canvas’. The ‘canvas’ has a repeated accumulation of colours. Because experience, the feeling of its composition, the method, will also move onto the *guohua* ‘canvas’. In fact, our practices interlock. It is just that the tools are different. Maybe the effect of the whole picture, and the flavour, the charm is perhaps not the same. Actually, the overall direction is identical.

**SMcC:** This is very interesting. It seemed to me [on seeing your new work in oils this visit], and you confirmed it in our brief conversation in the studio earlier, that you are looking and seeing more with colour. So I wonder how that works out when you then go back to *shuimohua* 水墨畫 [painting in ink].

**HL:** Actually, it is like this. Actually, in my Chinese *guohua* paintings you’ll see that there aren’t any colours or at most there might be some supplementary colours. Maybe the colours are more spread out in oil paintings. But, in my oil paintings there is something else different to what you see in other people’s paintings. Or, in other words, in my oil paintings, in some of my paintings, I basically try to reduce the amount of colour to the minimum, such as in water landscapes, or misty landscapes. So, I actually try to reduce the volume of colours [to the quietest level]. Recently, Mr Ma [Prof. McCausland] came to see these big paintings of mine. Because of their size... or perhaps, it is because this big exhibition can stimulate certain kinds of feelings and emotions in a person. It is like a person used to writing poems who suddenly wants to write a novel but in the end writes a long piece... In fact, in terms of my personal nature, the colours in my paintings are relatively modest. But, in these

paintings, I have used stronger colours. It is a kind of experiment, and, this time, it also happens to have this kind of state. So, the colours of these paintings are full as well as vivid. But, my *guohua* paintings are relatively simple, relatively monochrome. I have thought before about when to attempt this in my ink paintings... when to add more colour components. In the future, I might suddenly have this impulse, this kind of thought. While I’m in the process of actually painting, my *guohua* paintings might become brightly coloured, or even multi-coloured. It would depend on my requirements, my mood, my self.

**SMcC:** Last one. One of the really distinctive characteristics in your works is the layering, that kind of very rich layering that you get with colours, which is especially notable for me. One might expect that when you depict tangible things like rocks, trees, leaves and things like that, that you might apply this sort of layering. But, in your work, you also seem to give even the freezing cold air some quality like that... and it also seems to be something you could almost touch. There is a very... you know, very rich and interesting kind of colour quality to that, to the air, especially to cold air in your pictures. I wonder how you arrived at that idiom.

**HL:** This observation of Mr Ma... the last time I saw you and we spoke [in London at the time of Hong Ling’s exhibition at Asia House in 2012] it also came up in the conversation (fig. 5). You spoke about the frozen air... this type of cold in snow landscapes, and then painting it layer by layer, with the result that the air in the picture looks congealed. There are times when it’s as cold as this, with this kind of moisture, when your whole body feels a little bit frozen... a feeling rather like the transparency

of ice is somehow formed. Actually, it’s what I most like to paint when I paint in oils... Perhaps I am most sensitive to it. Perhaps it is this colour range that stimulates me most, stirs me. Perhaps it is this range of grey colours. I’d also include snowscapes in this, because snow landscapes can cause hallucinations: real things, concrete things, especially in sunlight, will be very clear. They will show their qualities. I mean their outward physical qualities. And after other things have come into play, when there is only snow and objects... (apart from what we call stones and trees, apart from their own substance...) when those things come into play, it causes a qualitative change. This quality might become more of a hallucination. This is because other matter enters the scene, other feelings. For instance, between two mountains, between two trees, there is mist, snow, stuff. When these things are added, it all seems to become blurry and hazy. At this time, you



fig. 5 Installation shot of *Hong Ling: Contemporary Chinese Landscape* at Asia House, London, 2012.



can use your thinking and brush strokes to control the dynamic of the whole picture, make it more passionate. And, in the process of controlling, there are some things which are exposed. Some things might have been obscured by other things, covered, have come in and out, in and out, and in between, and an amazing tempo is created. It is just like in the Chinese saying where we say that we can see the head of the dragon, but not the tail.

So, I am also very excited when I am in this process, wondering what things will emerge and what will go in and how many of these things can be included. Actually, there are quite a lot of limitations. It is not real space. Perhaps in certain areas it can be, as in the case of a mural. In the limited scope of space, there you try your best to show that you are in control of this kind of state.

Actually, when I am painting with oil, what I am most focussed on is preserving nature. You see, when I paint in oils I rarely paint animals. There are people and there are houses, because I am showing the state of nature itself. When I am painting with ink [*guohua*], I might paint a small boat or a small house (fig. 6). Actually, painting *guohua* in ink is like the mind having its own way... one's self is a state of the inner mind, something rather solitary, a state of retreat into one's self, a kind of state of solitary enjoyment. But painting landscapes one is more enveloped. So, I think what Mr Ma just said is especially good. I paint these things but actually, the best thing may be that I can let myself feel, that I can enter this state. Sometimes, when I finish painting I don't know myself how a painting came to be. After I decide I want to reach a particular pictorial realm, as a person I forget myself. Then, all the things that appear come from this wonderful state.

**SMcC:** Thanks very much for your really rich and detailed responses. I think the audience will find it very helpful to read them.

**HL:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr Ma, for travelling such a long distance.



Opposite: fig. 6 Hong Ling painting *guohua* in his studio (*Honglu*), Huangshan City.



# OIL PAINTING

Opposite: detail cat. no. 27

cat. no. 1

*White Poplars in the Temple of Heaven* 天壇白楊, 1979

Oil on canvas, 37 x 46 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 2

*Morning at Fishing Island 2* 漁島之晨二, 1983

Oil on canvas, 79 x 73 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 3

*Beijing Hutong Series 1* 胡同系列一, 1986

Oil on canvas, 111 x 81 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 4

*Beijing Hutong Series: Grey Winter 1* 北京胡同灰色的冬天之一, 1986

Oil on canvas, 104 x 91 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 5

*Portrait of a Woman* 女人肖像, 1986

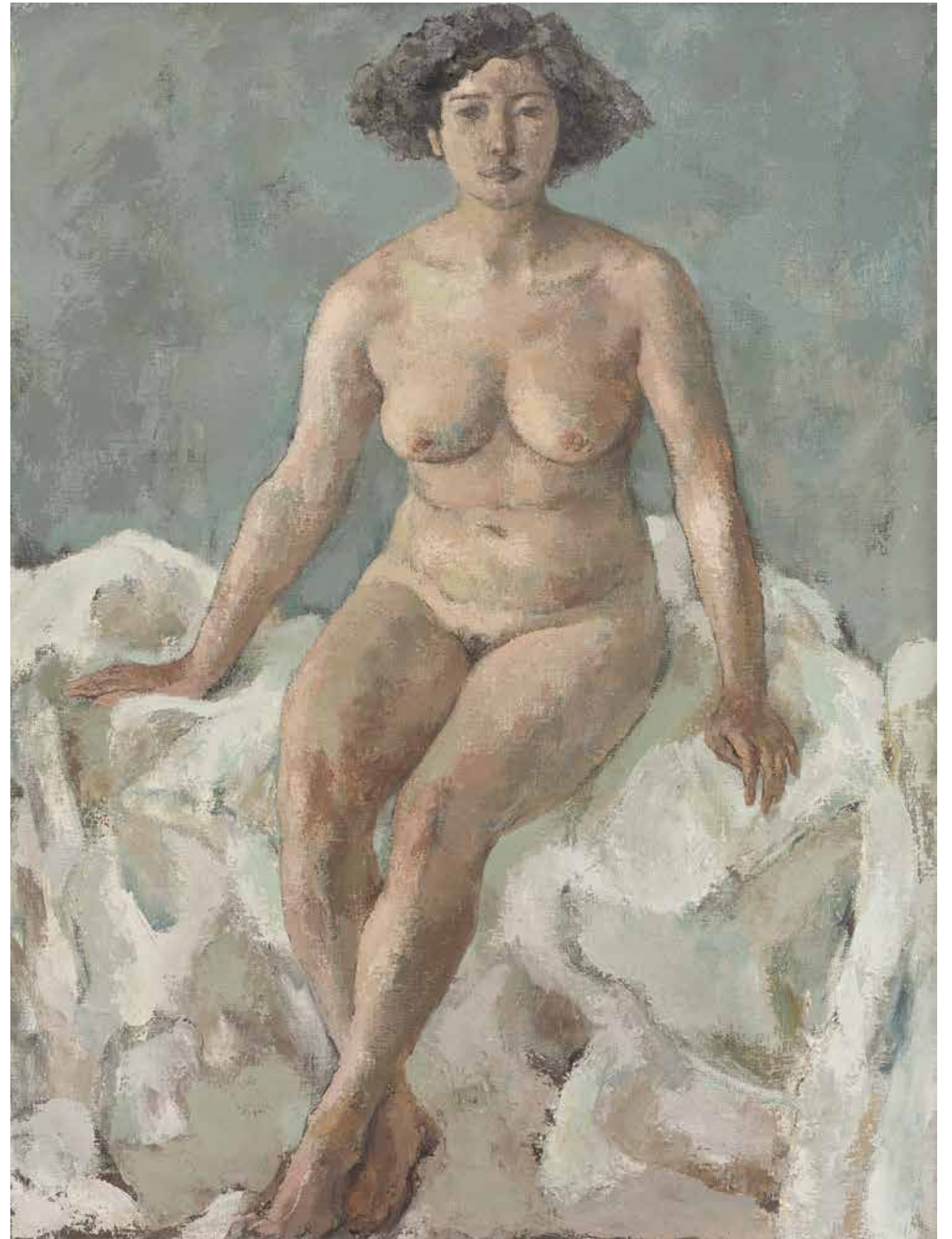
Oil on canvas, 120 x 85 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 6

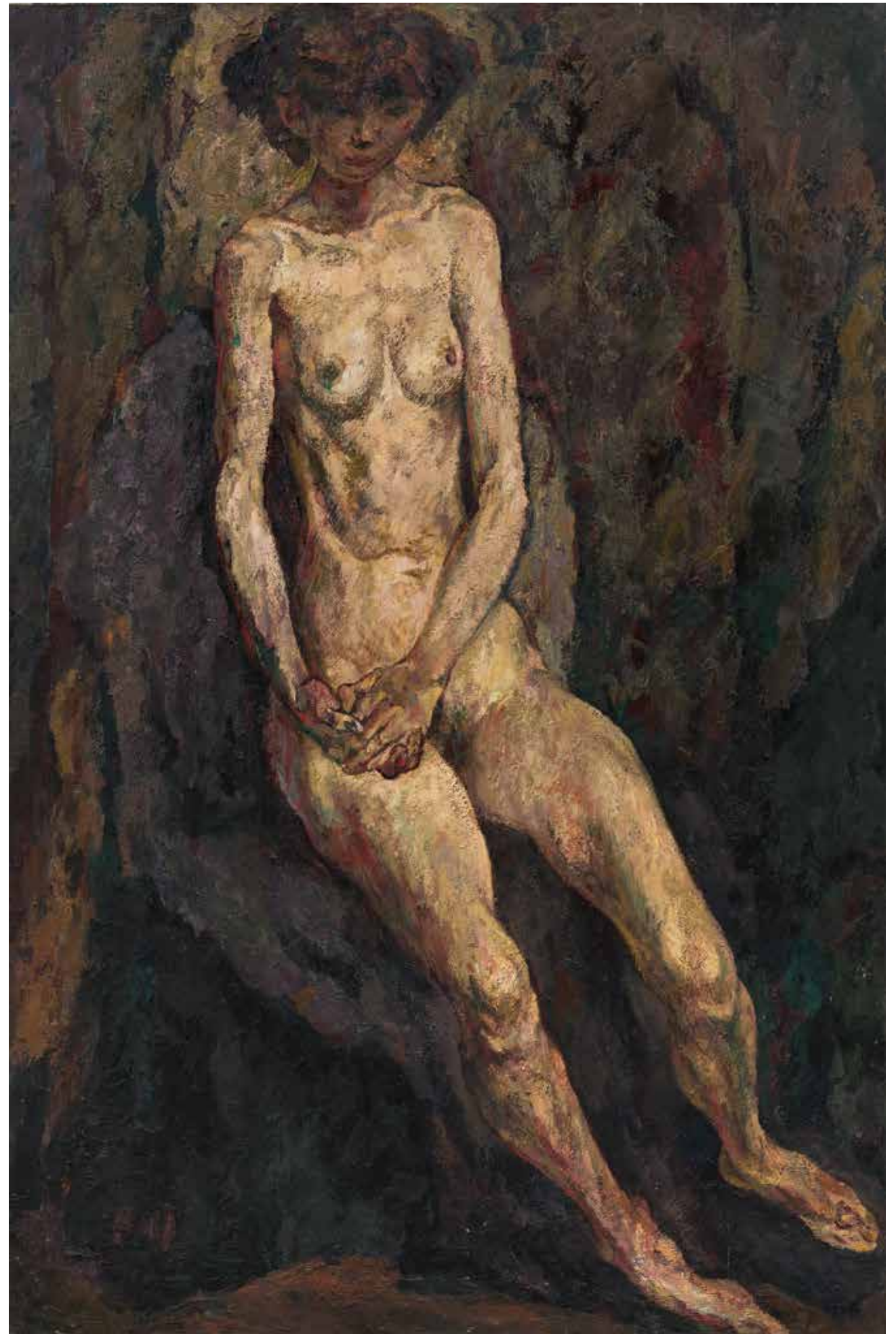
Figure 7 人體系列七, 1986  
Oil on canvas, 130 x 97 cm  
Collection of the artist





cat. no. 7

Figure 8 人體系列八, 1986  
Oil on canvas, 149.5 x 99 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 8

*People from My Homeland (Yunnan) 2 故鄉人之二*, 1987

Oil on canvas, 189 x 190 cm

Collection of the artist

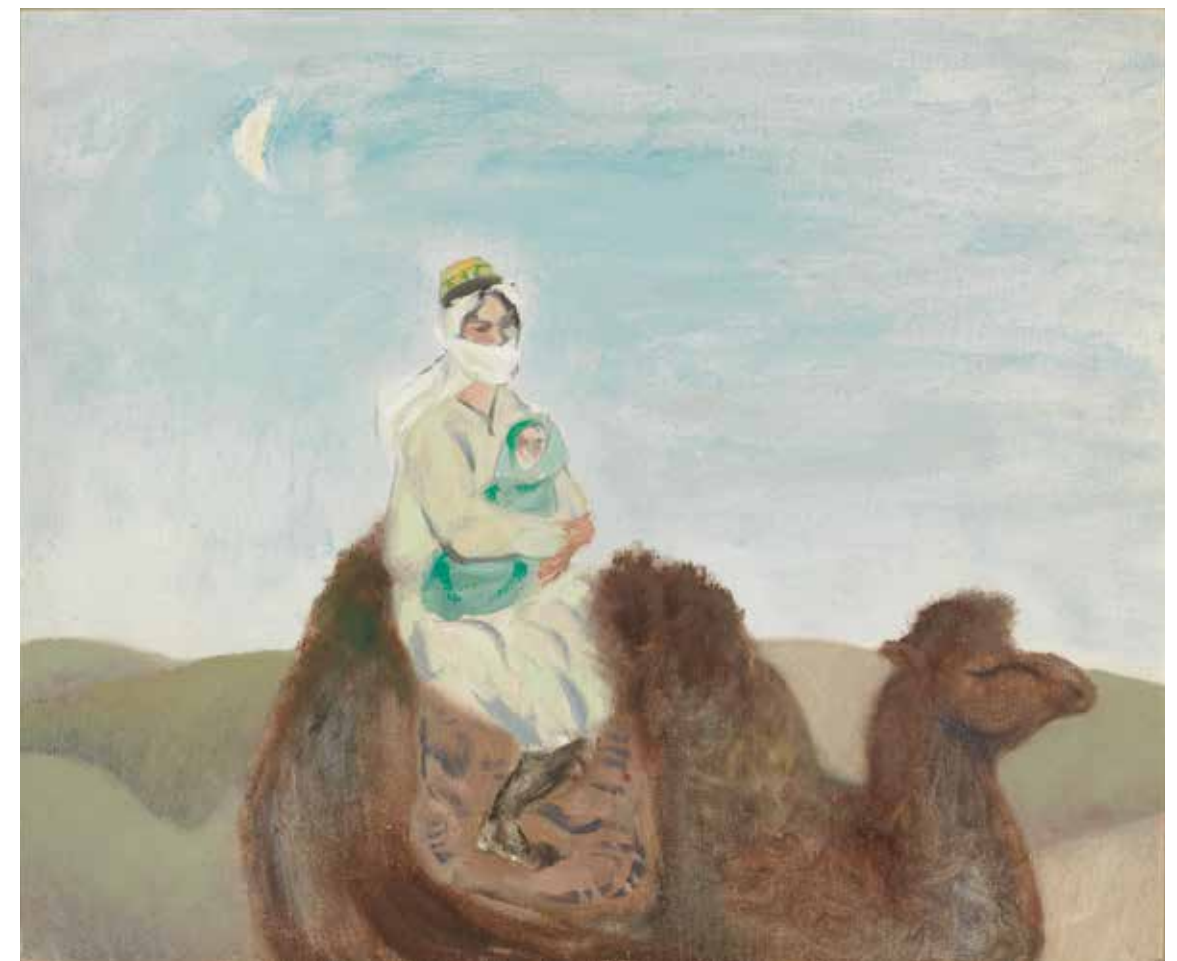


cat. no. 9

*Silk Road Series 8* 絲路風情之八, 1988

Oil on canvas, 50 x 60 cm

Private Collection, Taiwan



cat. no. 10

Female Figure 124 女人體之一二四, early August 1988

Oil on linen, 102 x 110 cm

Private Collection



cat. no. 11

*Lily* 蓮, June 1987  
Oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm  
Wu Collection, Taiwan

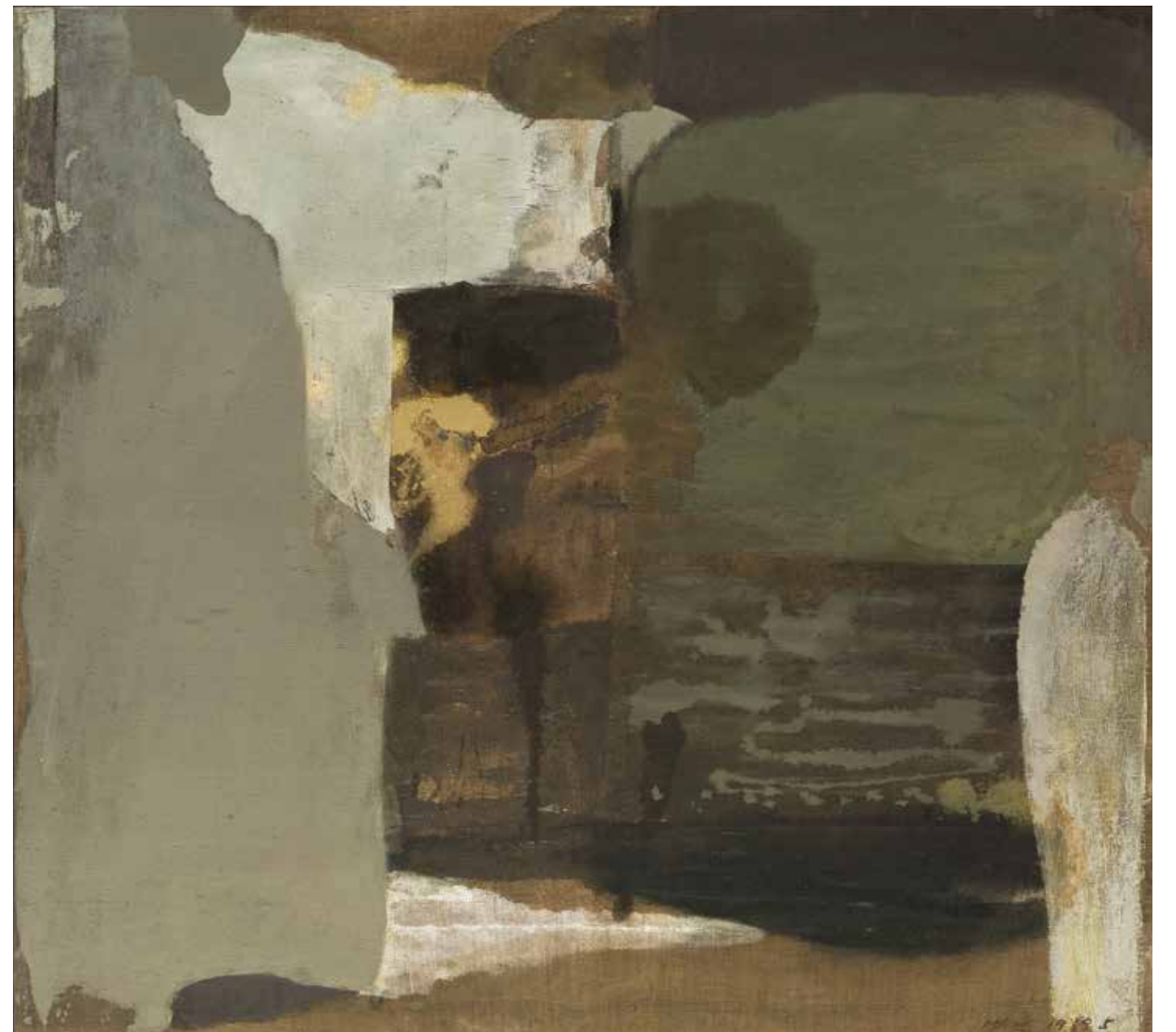


cat. no. 12

Untitled B-5 無題 B-5, May 1989

Oil on canvas, 155 x 170.3 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 13

*Village 2* 郷野之二, 1988, reworked 1992

Oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 14

*Cold Snow* 寒雪, 1991  
Oil on canvas, 180 x 190 cm  
Collection of Soka Art





cat. no. 15

*Misty Rain in Xiao-Xiang (Hunan)* 瀟湘煙雨, 1993

Oil on canvas, 130 x 170 cm

Collection of Soka Art



cat. no. 16

*Autumn Water* 秋水, August 1994  
Oil on canvas, 5 panels, 200 x 260 cm  
Private Collection



cat. no. 17

*Pine Hills* 松谷, 1994  
Oil on canvas, 80 x 80 cm  
Wu Collection, Taiwan



cat. no. 18

*Pear Blossom in North Jin (Shanxi)* 晋北梨花, 2000

Oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm

Wu Collection, Taiwan



cat. no. 19

*Snow Dome* 穹雪, 2000  
Oil on canvas, 200 x 200 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 20

*Four Seasons* 春夏秋冬, 2001/2001/2000/2001

Oil on canvas, 4 panels, 152 x 218 cm

Wu Collection, Taiwan



cat. no. 21  
*Pine Snow* 松雪, 2001  
Oil on canvas, 25 x 35 cm  
Private Collection



cat. no. 22  
*Spring Peach Blossoms* 春桃, 2002  
Oil on canvas, 30 x 38 cm  
Wu Collection, Taiwan



cat. no. 23

*Green Mist, Pure Breeze* 煙翠風清, New Year's day 2002

Oil on canvas, triptych, 250 x 750 cm

Private Collection, Taiwan





cat. no. 24

*Wild Silence* 野寂, 2008  
Oil on canvas, 100 x 149 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 25

*Melting Snow* 融素, 2009  
Oil on canvas, 180 x 200 cm  
Private Collection



cat. no. 26

*Drunk in Frozen Forests* 霜林醉, 2011

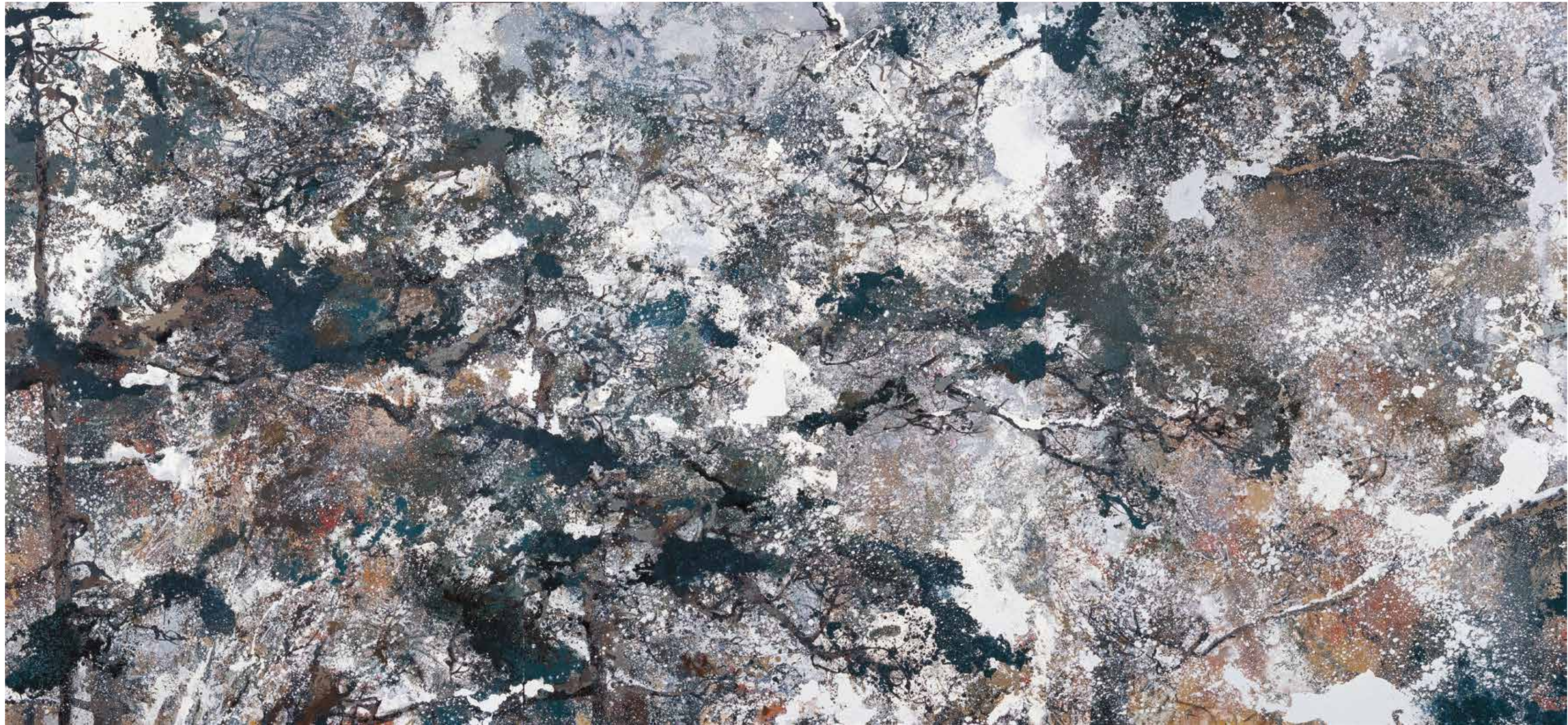
Oil on canvas, 100 x 160 cm

Private Collection



cat. no. 27

*Boundless* 觀蒼莽, Summer 2011  
Oil on canvas, triptych, 249 x 540 cm  
Private Collection



cat. no. 28

*Pure Ground* 素處, 2013  
Oil on canvas, 160 x 220 cm  
Collection of the artist

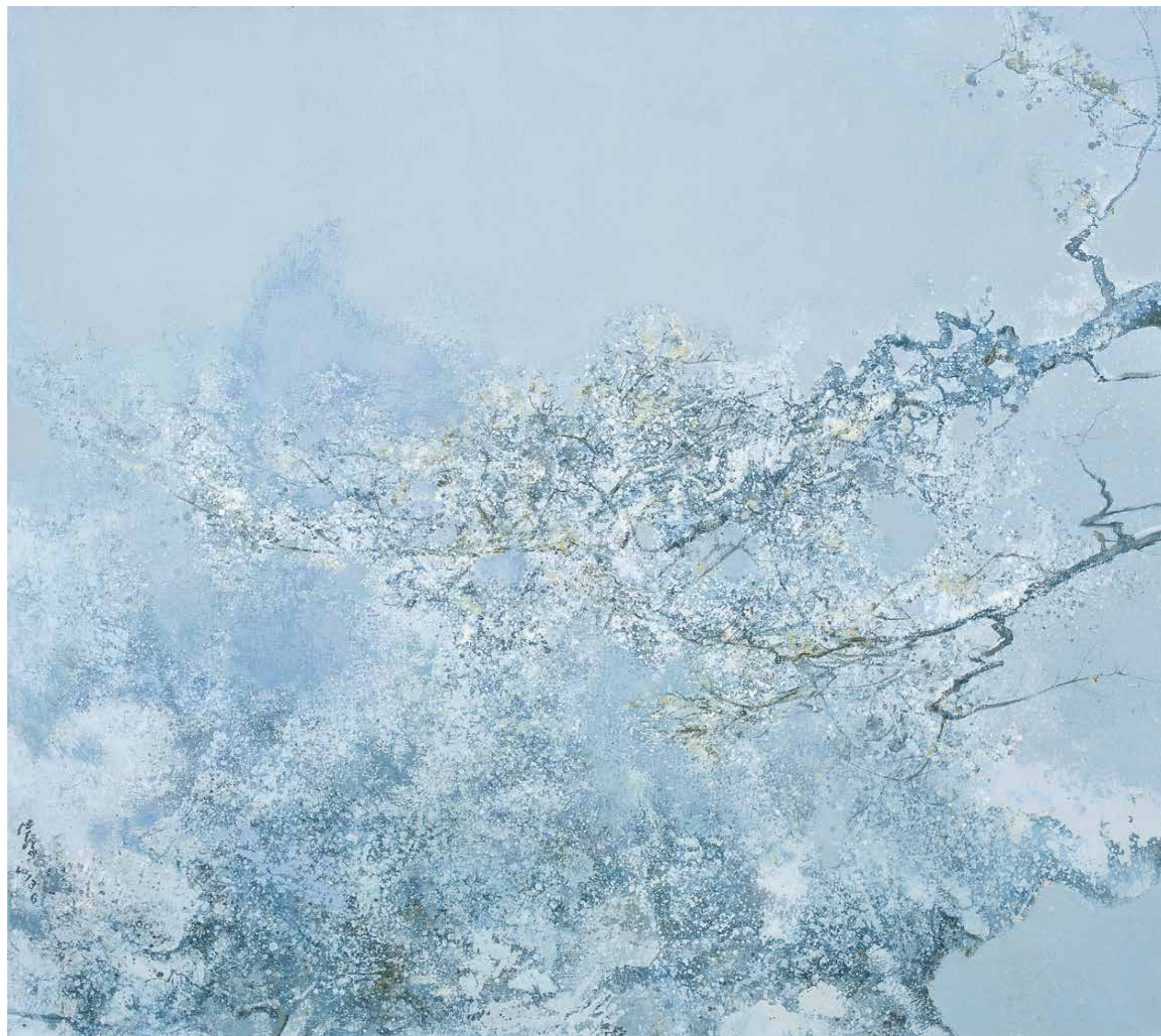


cat. no. 29

*Delicate Wonder* 妙微, June 2013

Oil on canvas, 170 x 190 cm

Collection of the artist



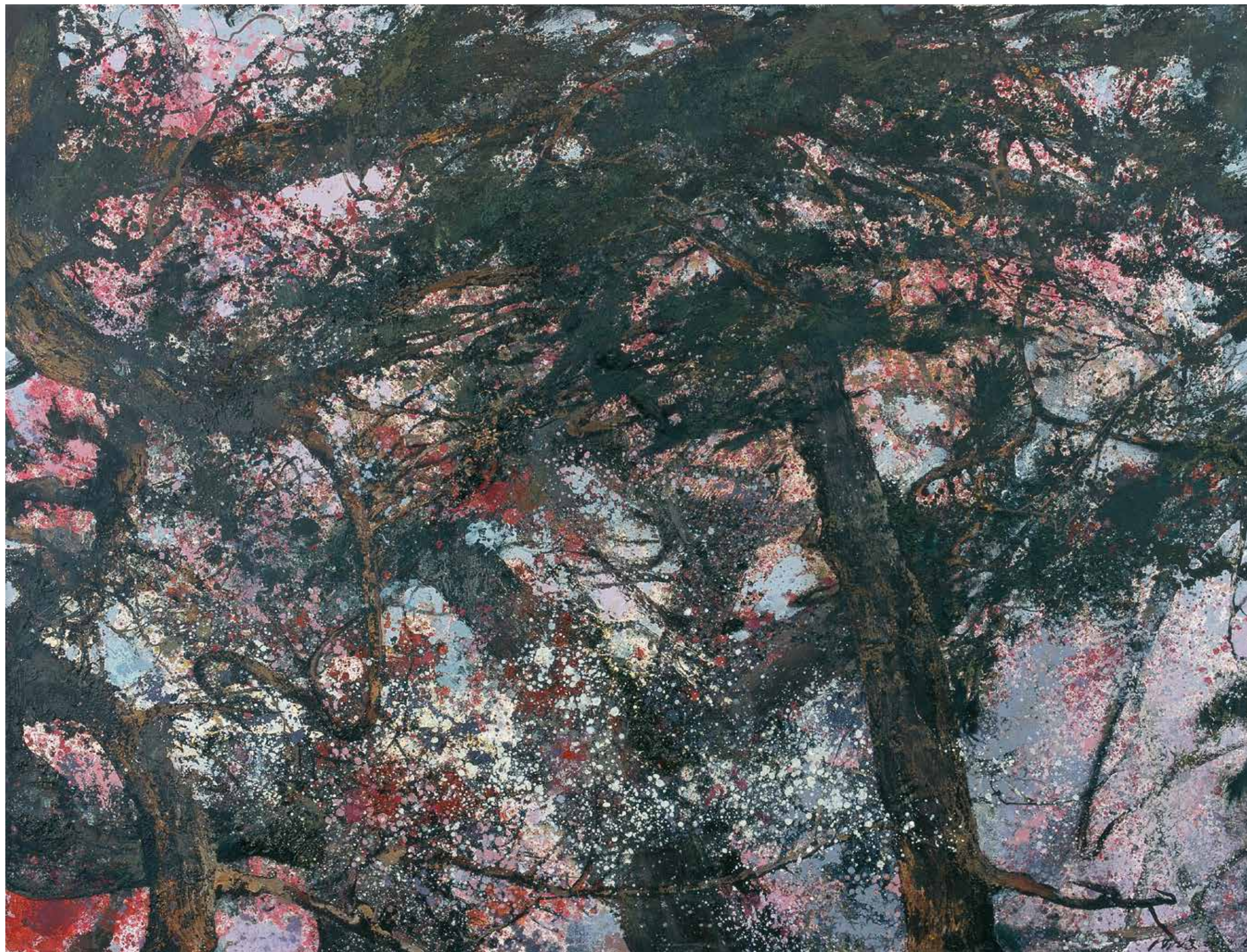
cat. no. 30

*Jade Breeze* 玉風, 2014  
Oil on canvas, 180 x 180 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 31

*Pine Trunks: Bones* 松骨, June 2014  
Oil on canvas, 190 x 250 cm  
UNEEC Foundation Collection, Taipei





cat. no. 32

*Heart of the Dao* 道心, 2014  
Oil on canvas, 220 x 160 cm  
Private Collection



cat. no. 33

*A Peak of Reds* 丹頂, 2014  
Oil on canvas, 150 x 160 cm  
Private Collection



cat. no. 34  
*Rainbow-like* 如虹,  
2015  
Oil on canvas,  
200 x 300 cm  
Private Collection





# INK PAINTING

Opposite: detail cat. no. 38

cat. no. 35a

Album 1, leaf a 冊頁一、頁a, 2013

Ink on paper, 22.5 x 60.5 cm

Collection of Soka Art



cat. no. 35b

Album 1, leaf b 冊頁一、頁b, 2013

Ink on paper, 22.5 x 60.5 cm

Collection of Soka Art



cat. no. 35c

Album 1, leaf c 冊頁一、頁c, 2013

Ink on paper, 22.5 x 60.5 cm

Collection of Soka Art



cat. no. 35d

Album 1, leaf d 冊頁一、頁d, 2013

Ink on paper, 22.5 x 60.5 cm

Collection of Soka Art



cat. no. 35e

Album 1, leaf e 冊頁一、頁e, 2013

Ink on paper, 22.5 x 60.5 cm

Collection of Soka Art



cat. no. 35f

Album 1, leaf f 冊頁一、頁f, 2013

Ink on paper, 22.5 x 60.5 cm

Collection of Soka Art



cat. no. 35g

Album 1, leaf g 冊頁一、頁g, 2013

Ink on paper, 22.5 x 60.5 cm

Collection of Soka Art

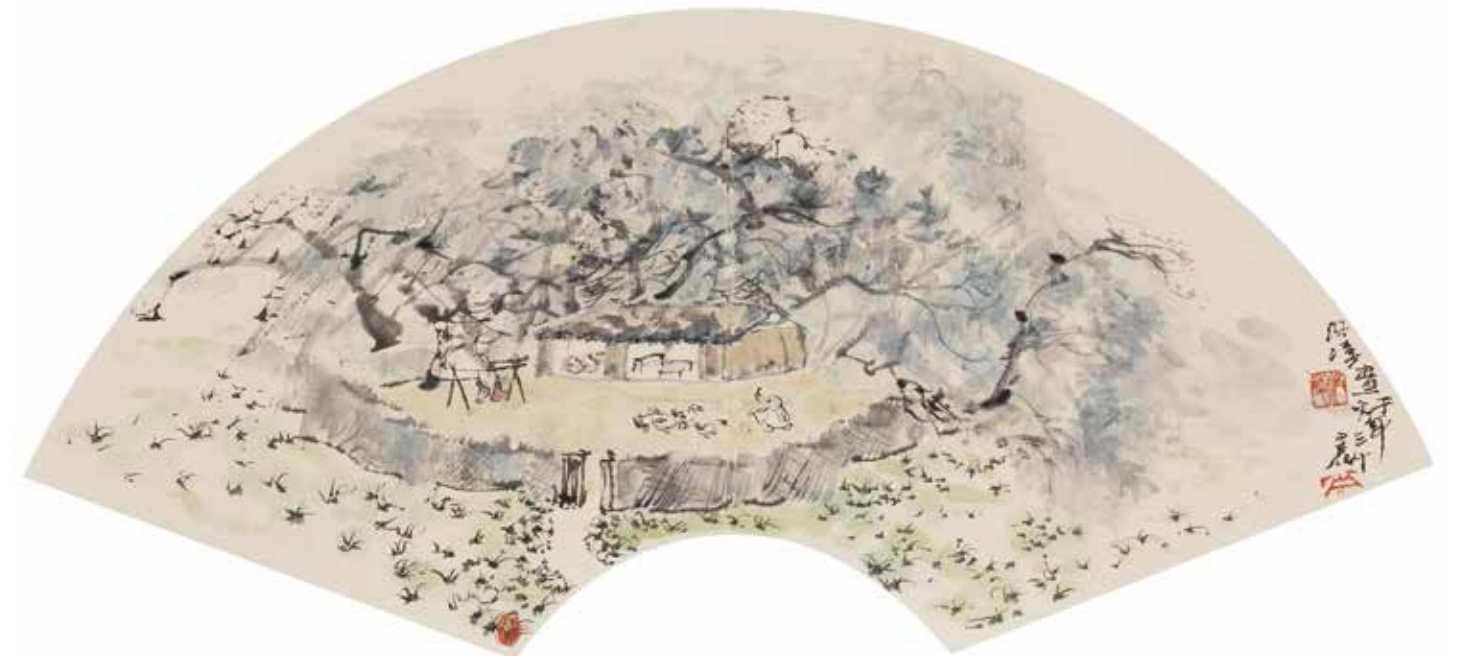


cat. no. 35h

Album 1, leaf h 冊頁一、頁h, 2013

Ink on paper, 22.5 x 60.5 cm

Collection of Soka Art





cat. no. 35i

Album 1, leaf i 冊頁一、頁i, 2013

Ink on paper, 22.5 x 60.5 cm

Collection of Soka Art



cat. no. 35j

Album 1, leaf j 冊頁一、頁j, 2013

Ink on paper, diameter 28 cm

Collection of Soka Art



cat. no. 36a

Album 2, leaf a 冊頁二·頁a, 2012

Ink on paper, 24 x 64 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 36b

Album 2, leaf b 冊頁二·頁b, 2012

Ink on paper, 24 x 64 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 36c

Album 2, leaf c 冊頁二·頁c, 2012

Ink on paper, 24 x 64 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 36d

Album 2, leaf d 冊頁二·頁d, 2012

Ink on paper, 24 x 64 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 36e

Album 2, leaf e 冊頁二·頁e, 2012

Ink on paper, 24 x 64 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 36f

Album 2, leaf f 冊頁二·頁f, 2012

Ink on paper, 24 x 64 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 36g

Album 2, leaf g 冊頁二·頁g, 2012

Ink on paper, 24 x 64 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 36h

Album 2, leaf h 冊頁二·頁h, 2012

Ink on paper, 24 x 64 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 36i

Album 2, leaf i 冊頁二·頁i, 2012

Ink on paper, 24 x 64 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 36j

Album 2, leaf j 冊頁二·頁j, 2012

Ink on paper, 24 x 64 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 37a

Album 3, leaf a 冊頁三·頁 a, 2010

Ink on paper, 22.5 x 60.5 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 37b

Album 3, leaf b 冊頁三·頁 b, 2010

Ink on paper, 22.5 x 60.5 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 37c

Album 3, leaf c 冊頁三·頁c, 2010

Ink on paper, 22.5 x 60.5 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 37d

Album 3, leaf d 冊頁三·頁d, 2010

Ink on paper, 22.5 x 60.5 cm

Collection of the artist





cat. no. 37e

Album 3, leaf e 冊頁三·頁 e, 2010

Ink on paper, 22.5 x 60.5 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 37f

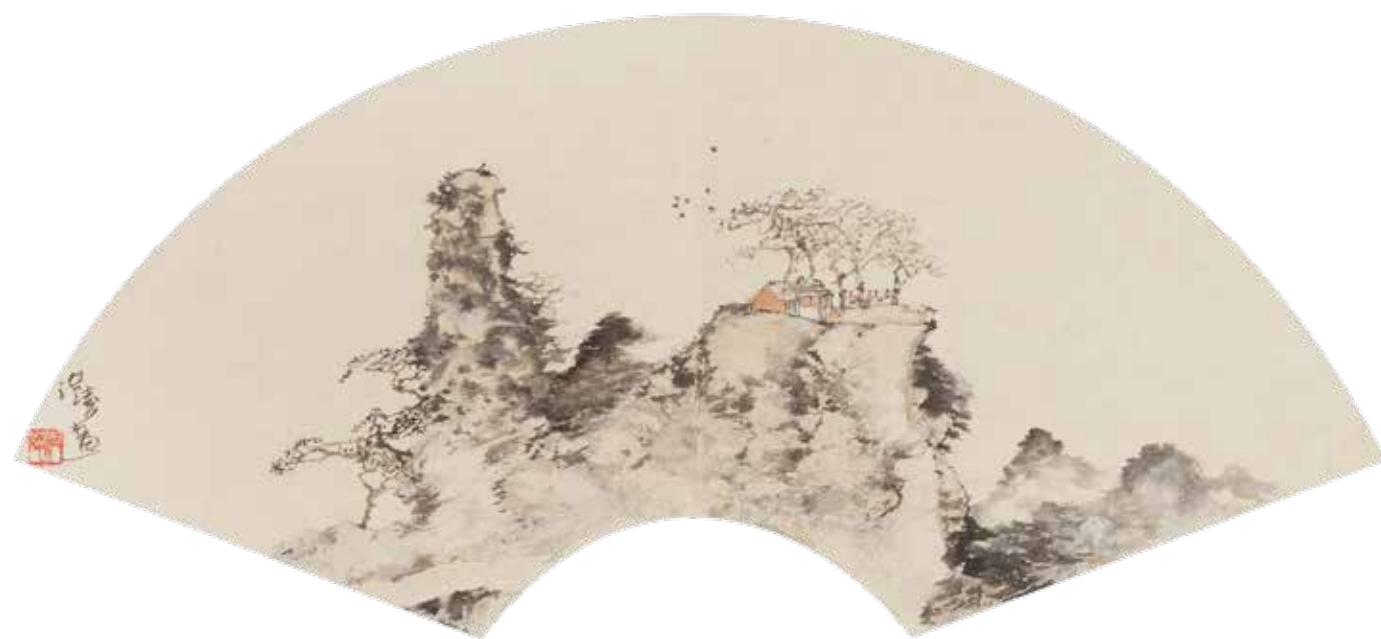
Album 3, leaf f 冊頁三·頁 f, 2010

Ink on paper, 22.5 x 60.5 cm

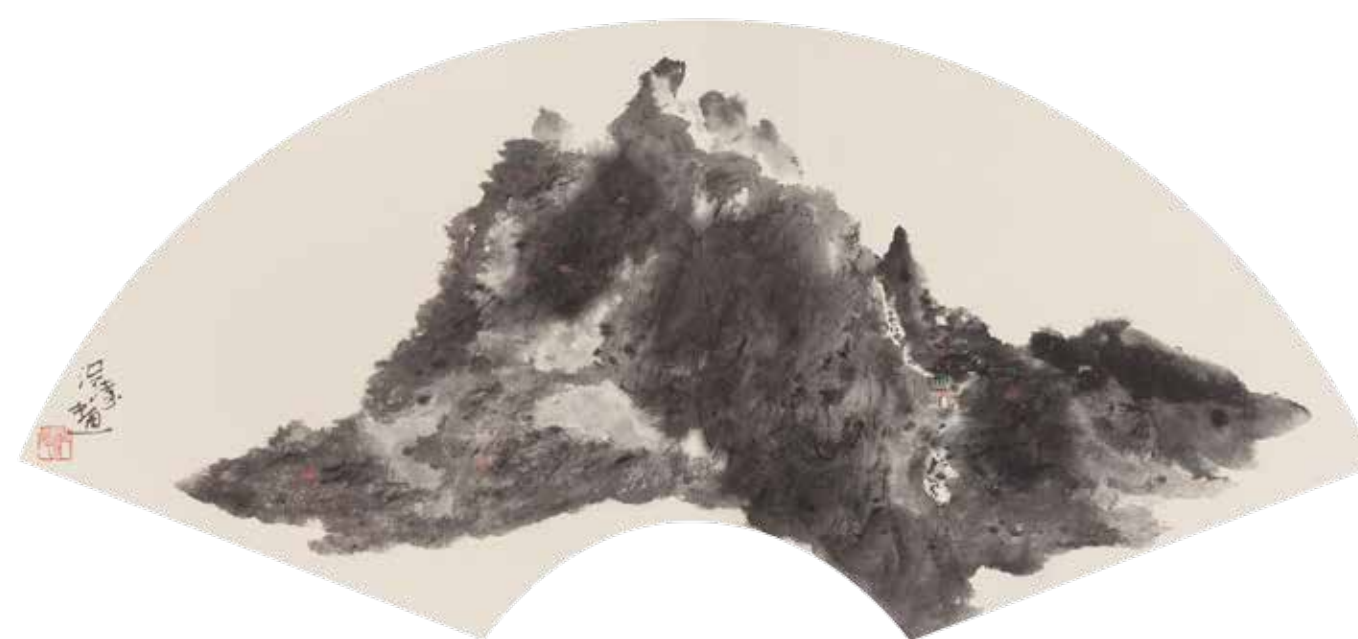
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 37g  
*Album 3, leaf g* 冊頁三·頁 g, 2010  
Ink on paper, 22.5 x 60.5 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 37h  
*Album 3, leaf h* 冊頁三·頁 h, 2010  
Ink on paper, 22.5 x 60.5 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 37i

Album 3, leaf i 冊頁三·頁 i, 2010

Ink on paper, 22.5 x 60.5 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 37j

Album 3, leaf j 冊頁三·頁 j, 2010

Ink on paper, diameter 28 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 38

*Spiritual Intuition 2* 心師造化之二, 2013

Ink on paper, 145 x 162 cm

Private Collection, Taiwan



cat. no. 39

*Spiritual Intuition 23* 心師造化之二十三, 2013

Ink on paper, 46 x 70 cm

Private Collection, Taiwan



cat. no. 40

*Diffuse Spring* 漫春, 2014

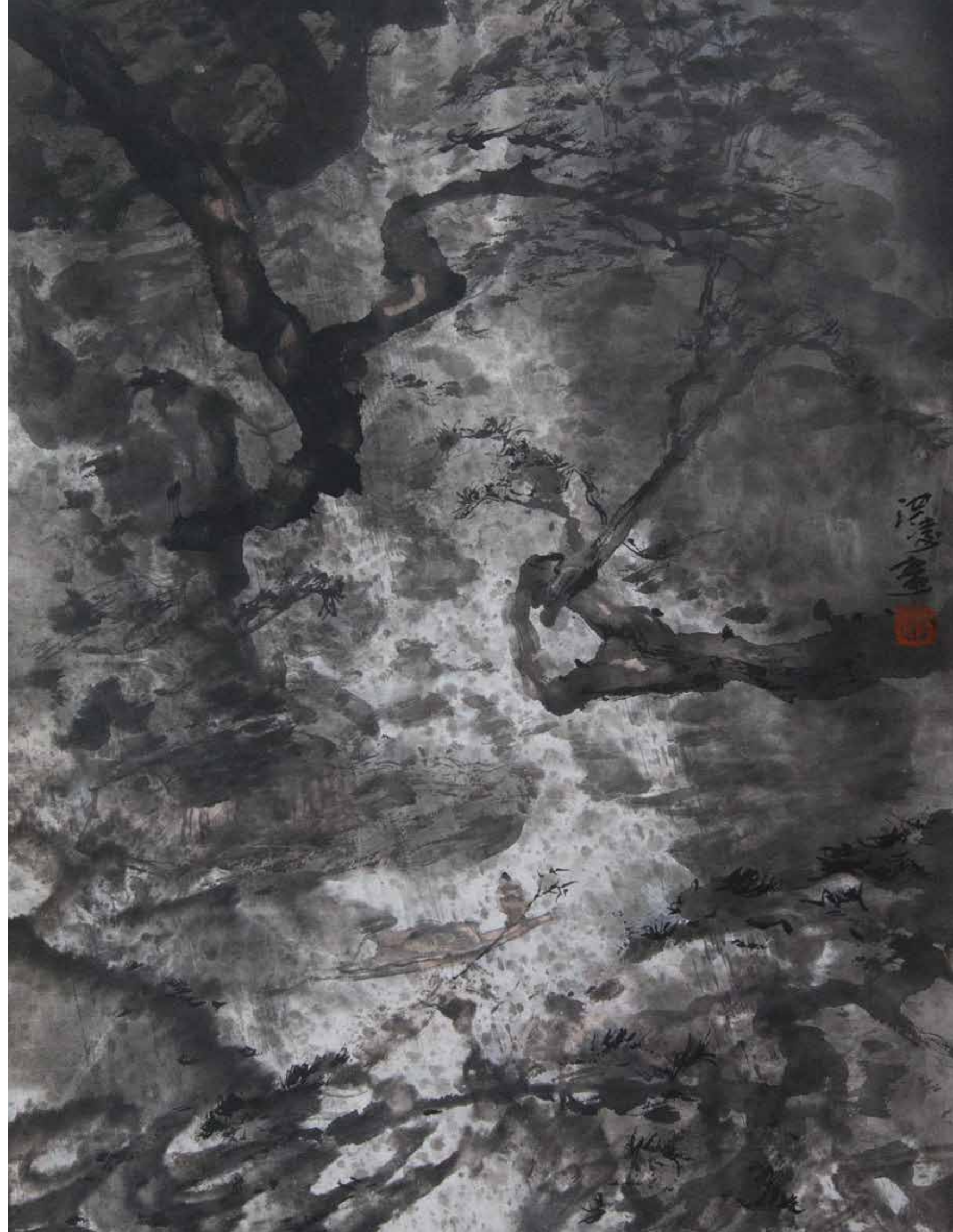
Ink on paper, 175 x 193 cm

UNEEC Foundation Collection, Taipei



cat. no. 41

*Lone Skiff, Night Rain* 孤舟夜雨,  
April 2016  
Ink on paper, 140 x 50 cm  
Collection of the artist





# WATERCOLOUR

Opposite: detail cat. no. 46

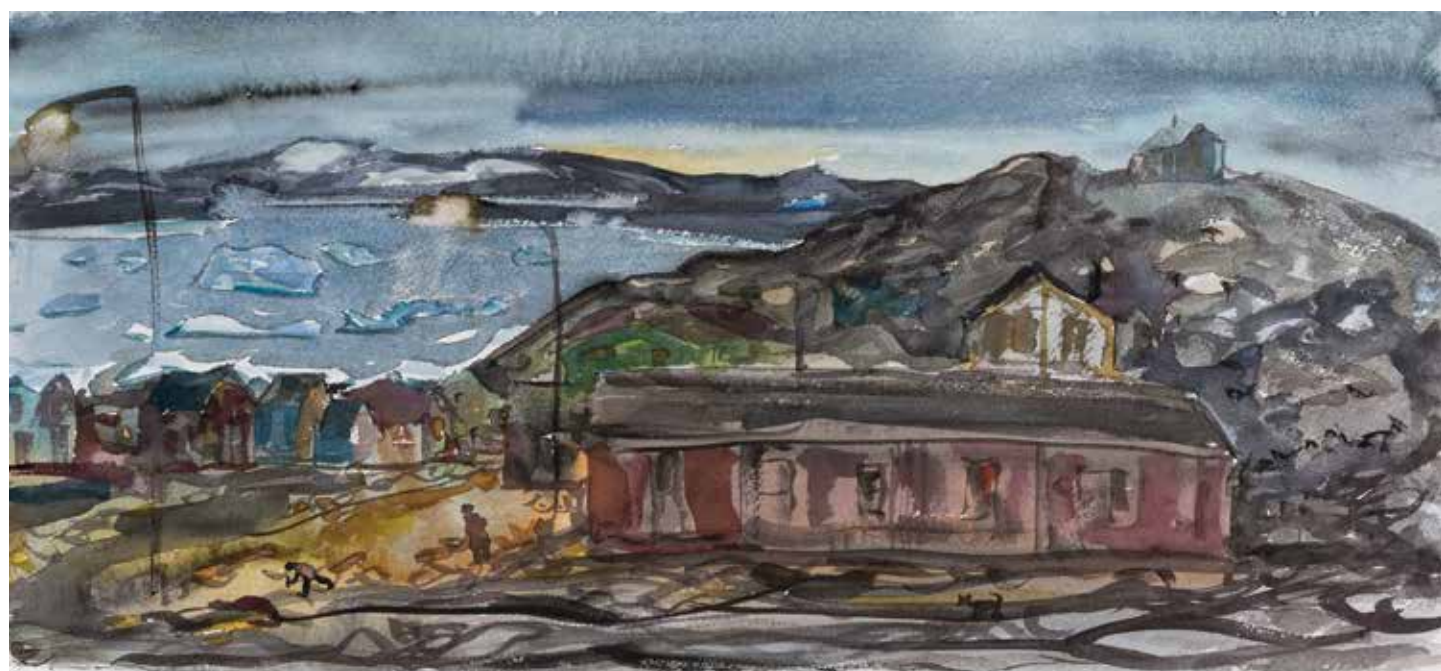


cat. no. 42

Watercolour 06 水彩六, 2007, Greenland

Watercolour, 26 x 57 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 43

Watercolour 09 水彩九, 2006, Malaysia

Watercolour, 30 x 40 cm

Collection of the artist



cat. no. 44

Watercolour 01 水彩一, 2007, Greenland  
Watercolour, 29 x 78 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 45

Watercolour 02 水彩二, 2007, Iceland  
Watercolour, 56 x 77 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 46

*Watercolour 10* 水彩十, 2006, Malaysia

Watercolour, 30 x 40 cm

Collection of the artist





# SKETCHES

Opposite: detail cat. no. 51

cat. no. 47

Sketch 01 素描一, 1995, Anhui  
Pen and ink on paper, 18.5 x 29.5 cm  
Collection of the artist



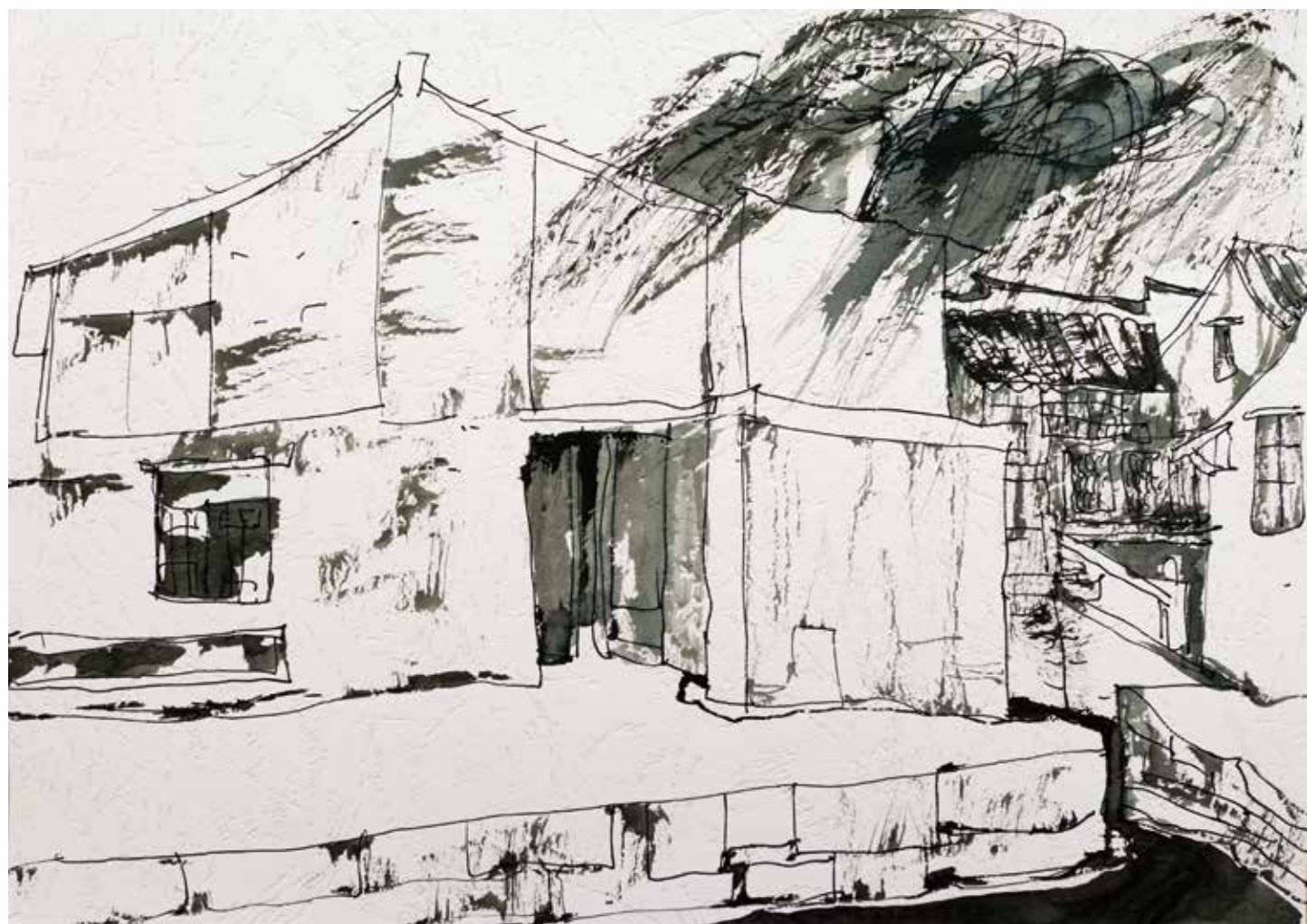
cat. no. 48

Sketch 04 素描四, 1998, Zhouzhuang, Zhejiang  
Pen and ink on paper, 20.5 x 29.5 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 49

Sketch 05 素描五, 1998, Zhouzhuang, Zhejiang  
Pen and ink on paper, 20.5 x 29.5 cm  
Collection of the artist



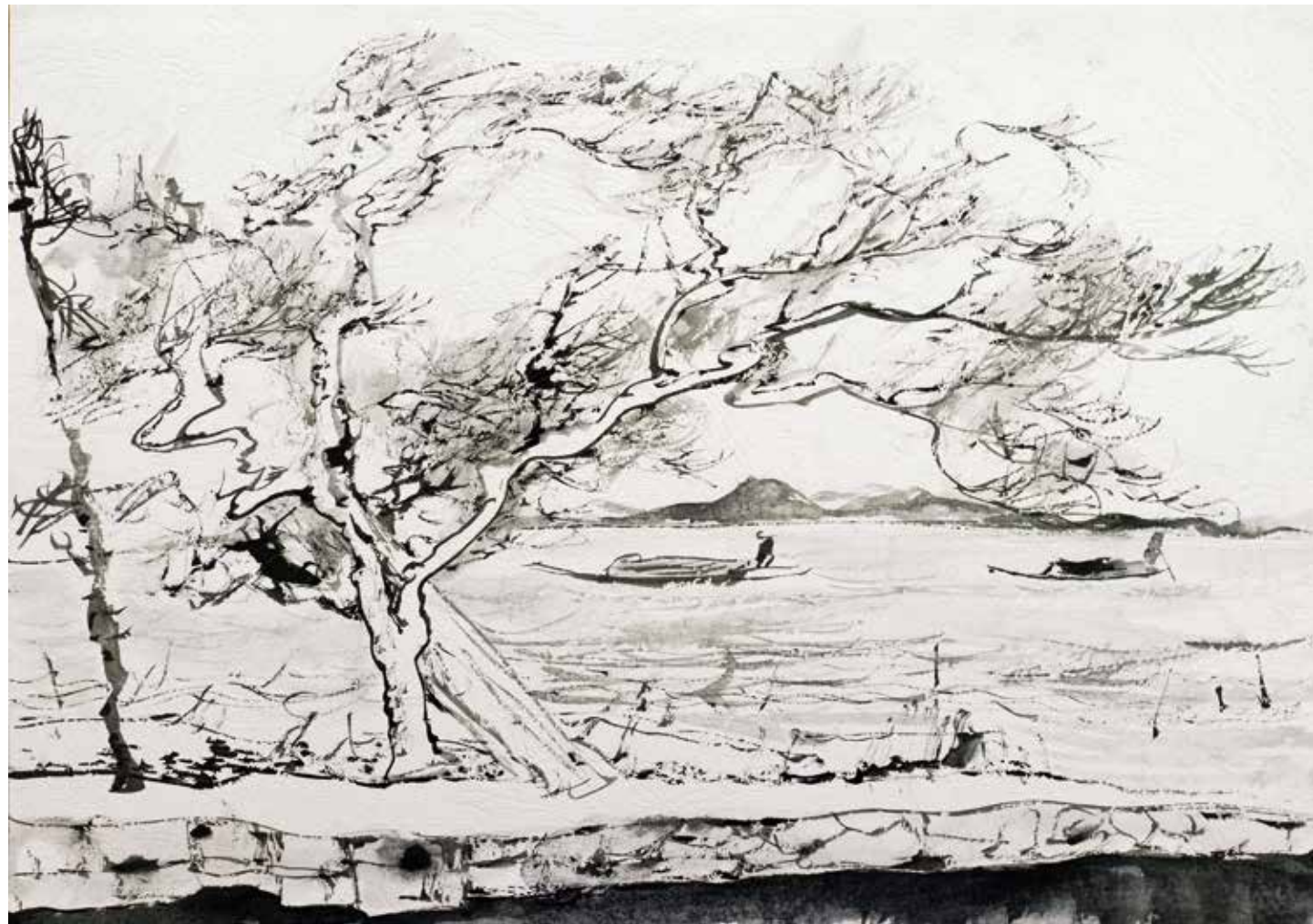
cat. no. 50

Sketch 06 素描六, 1998, Zhouzhuang, Zhejiang  
Ink on paper, 20.5 x 29.5 cm  
Collection of the artist



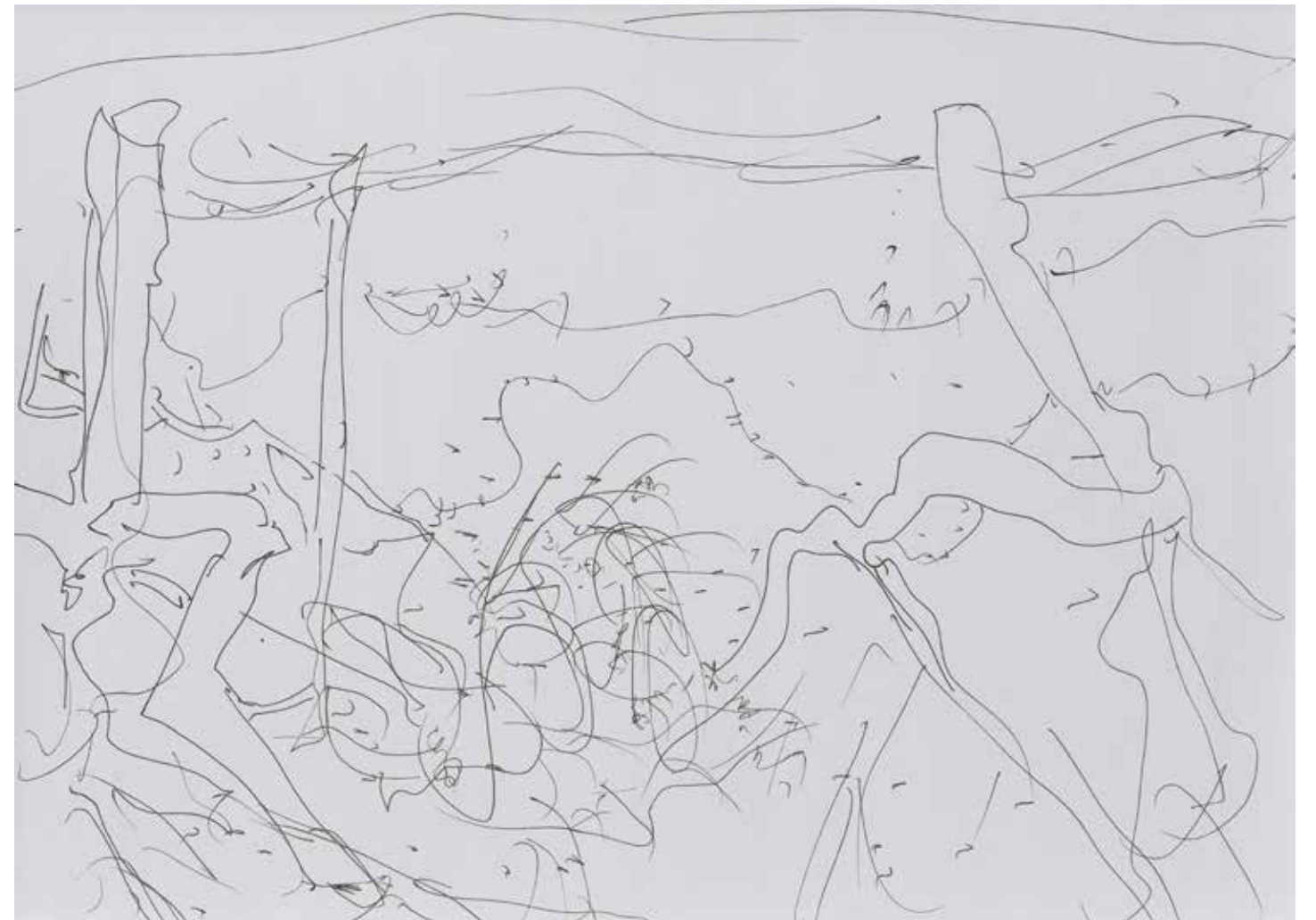
cat. no. 51

Sketch 09 素描九, 2003, Taihu, Jiangsu  
Ink on paper, 20.5 x 29.5 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 52

Sketch 10 素描十, 2011, Taihu, Jiangsu  
Pen on paper, 19 x 26.5 cm  
Collection of the artist





## PHOTOGRAPHY

In addition to the 52 artworks across oil, ink, watercolour and sketch media, we also include a selection of 23 photographs in this catalogue. Some of these photos portray the artist at work in his Huangshan studio and the studio-residence, or Honglu, itself; others document his experiences travelling in Malaysia, India, East Africa, Egypt, Greenland and Antarctica. As the land and nature constitute indispensable elements in Hong Ling's artistic practice, we hope these photos will add another dimension to the reader's understanding of the artist's life and art, and his passion for representing landscape with his brush.





cat. no. 53  
*Hong Ling Studio (Honglu), Huangshan*  
黄山洪凌工作室 (洪廬), 2000  
Photograph, 29 x 40 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 54  
*Hong Ling Studio (Honglu), Huangshan*  
 黄山洪凌工作室 (洪廬), 2007  
 Photograph, 29 x 40 cm  
 Collection of the artist



cat. no. 55  
*Hong Ling Studio (Honglu), Huangshan*  
 黄山洪凌工作室 (洪廬), 2013  
 Photograph, 29 x 40 cm  
 Collection of the artist



cat. no. 56  
*Hong Ling Studio (Honglu), Huangshan*  
 黄山洪凌工作室 (洪廬), 2008  
 Photograph, 27 x 40 cm  
 Collection of the artist



cat. no. 57  
*Huangshan Hong Ling  
Studio (Honglu)*  
黄山洪凌工作室  
(洪廬), 2005  
Photograph,  
40 x 27 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 58  
*Hong Ling Studio (Honglu), Huangshan*  
黄山洪凌工作室 (洪廬), 2006  
Photograph, 40 x 27 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 59  
*Hong Ling Studio (Honglu), Huangshan*  
黄山洪凌工作室 (洪廬), 2013  
Photograph, 40 x 27 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 60  
*Hong Ling Studio (Honglu), Huangshan*  
 黄山洪凌工作室 (洪廬), 2009  
 Photograph, 27 x 40 cm  
 Collection of the artist



cat. no. 61  
*Hong Ling Studio (Honglu), Huangshan*  
 黄山洪凌工作室 (洪廬), 2010  
 Photograph, 27 x 40 cm  
 Collection of the artist



cat. no. 62  
*Hong Ling Studio (Honglu), Huangshan*  
 黄山洪凌工作室 (洪廬), 2009  
 Photograph, 26.5 x 40 cm  
 Collection of the artist



cat. no. 63  
*Hong Ling Studio (Honglu), Huangshan*  
 黄山洪凌工作室 (洪廬), 2009  
 Photograph, 27 x 40 cm  
 Collection of the artist



cat. no. 64  
*Huangshan* 黄山, 2010  
Photograph, 22.5 x 40 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 65  
Qiyun Mountains, Anhui Province 齊雲山, 安徽, 2007  
Photograph, 27 x 40 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 66  
*Greenland* 格林蘭, 2007  
Photograph, 25.5 x 40 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 67  
*Antarctica* 南極, 2013  
Photograph, 25.5 x 40 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 68  
*Antarctica* 南極, 2013  
Photograph, 8.5 x 40 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 69  
Malaysia 馬來西亞, 2008  
Photograph, 25.5 x 40 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 70  
Egypt 埃及, 2000  
Photograph, 26.5 x 40 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 71  
Kenya 肯尼亞, 2009  
Photograph, 27 x 40 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 72  
Kenya 肯尼亞, 2012  
Photograph, 27 x 40 cm  
Collection of the artist





cat. no. 73  
South Africa 南非, 2015  
Photograph, 27 x 40 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 74  
India 印度, 2012  
Photograph, 30 x 40 cm  
Collection of the artist



cat. no. 75  
India 印度, 2012  
Photograph, 40 x 30 cm  
Collection of the artist



# HONG LING: ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

**Name:** Hong Ling

**Gender:** Male

**Born:** 1955

**Ethnicity:** Bai

**Birthplace:** Beijing

1979 - Graduated from the College of Fine Arts of Beijing Capital Normal University

1987 - Graduated with a post-graduate certificate from the Oil Painting Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing

Emeritus Professor and graduate student supervisor at Number 3 Painting Studio in the Oil Painting Department of the School of Fine Arts, Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing

Member of the Oil Painting Committee of the China Artists Association

Member of the China Artists Association

Visiting professor at the Fine Arts Department of Anhui Normal University

Visiting professor at the Fine Arts Department of Anhui University

## 1955

2 February. Born at No. 5 Zhuchao Street, Xicheng District, Beijing, China (formerly Zhongshan Assembly Hall). Hong Ling's father, Hong Yuan (from Dali in Yunnan; Bai ethnicity), is a graduate of l'Université Franco-Chinoise; he is a historian working as a research fellow at the Institute of History at the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Hong Ling's mother, He Yueya (from Zhongshan in Guangdong; Han ethnicity), is a graduate of the National Women's Normal University and works as a foreign language teacher at the Beijing 78 Middle School.

## 1968 (age 13)

September. Enrols as a student at the Beijing 78 Middle School. Likes drawing and is passionate about sports; serves as captain of the school's basketball team and is a high jump champion.

## 1971 (age 16)

December. Graduates from middle school; following an introduction by his father's friend Huang Ling, he goes to study painting at the newly established Jinan Middle School Art Teacher Training Course at Shandong University of Arts. For half a year, studies mainly oil painting under the tutelage of art professor Zhang Qixin.

## 1972 (age 17)

Summer. Travels to Qingdao to study watercolour painting and sketching under the tutelage of his aunt's old friend, the watercolour painter Yan Wenzheng. Later attends Qingdao City's art teacher training course.

Winter. The Cultural Revolution (1966-76) is underway: Hong Ling is sent to the small village commune of Weishanzhuang, Daxing District, Beijing, as a member of a production brigade; spends three years with this commune as a production brigade member.

## 1973–75 (age 18-20)

Autumn, 1975. Older 'educated youths' start to return from the commune to Beijing for work; Hong Ling is the last one left in his village, waiting to be recommended to enrol in university; continues labouring with the peasants.

Winter. A new cohort of 'educated youths' arrives at the village. Hong Ling becomes kitchen manager and chef, preparing food for more than forty people.

**1976 (age 21)**

September. One of the last in the category of ‘worker-peasant-soldier students’ in China, Hong Ling enters the Fine Arts Department at Beijing Capital Normal University (formerly Beijing Teacher’s College), specialising in oil painting. Meeting this hard-won opportunity to study art, Hong Ling’s motto is ‘study hard, study intensively, and cherish every day’.

**1977 (age 22)**

Spring. The house of father’s old friend, Ye Rulian (professor and translator in the Department of French, Peking University), becomes a small salon for the discussion of art. In that closed era, Mr. Ye introduces Hong Ling to the works of Van Gogh, Gauguin and Picasso, and Chinese Taoist philosophy for the first time.

**1978 (age 23)**

Spring. Forges bond with his university teacher, Ding Cikang. Learning from him outside class, Hong Ling paints and sketches outdoor landscapes in colour.

**1979 (age 24)**

June. Creates graduation piece, *Dawn*.

August. Graduates from university and is assigned to Beijing Service School as an instructor in photography, cooking and arts. After studying cookery, compiles class materials on culinary art.

**1981 (age 26)**

February. Hong Ling marries his wife Xu Min, also an oil painter.

May. Makes a sketching trip to Shandong with his wife; creates *Morning at Fishing Island* and participates in the *Beijing City Oil Painting Exhibition* (Beihai Park), winning second prize.

Late Autumn. Makes a three-month sketching trip with a painter friend to Dayudao in Shandong, Keqiao in Zhejiang and Huangshan in Anhui; completes more than sixty works.

**1982 (age 27 years old)**

Creates *Fishing Island* and participates in the *Beijing Art Exhibition* (National Art Museum of China); the work is acquired by the Beijing Artists Association collection.

**1983 (age 28)**

Creates *Fishing Island Small Landscape* and participates in the *Small and Medium Landscape Exhibition* (National Art Museum of China) held by the Beijing Artists Association; the work is acquired by the Beijing Artists Association collection.

**1984 (age 29)**

Opens a studio in the Beijing Service School and starts making a large number of landscape paintings.

Hong Ling’s son, Hong Ke, is born.

Participates in the *Chinese Contemporary Oil Painting* exhibition in Australia.

**1985 (age 30)**

Spring. Takes the entrance examination for the Oil Painting Department of Central Academy of Fine Arts; gains admission and begins postgraduate studies there.

Summer. *Fishing Village* is entered in the Beijing Artists Association’s *Small Landscape Painting Exhibition* (Beihai Park) and acquired by the Beijing Artists Association collection.

July. The *Beijing Hutong Series* is entered into the *Step to the Future* exhibition (National Art Museum of China), jointly held by the *Step to the Future* editorial board and Sichuan People’s Publishing House.

**1986 (age 31)**

Researches and practises the depiction of the human figure, trying different expressive techniques; continues *Beijing Hutong Series*.

Autumn. With classmate Su Xinhong and two others, holds the *Oil Paintings of Four People Exhibition* at the newly founded exhibition centre of alma mater, Beijing Capital Normal University.

**1987 (age 32)**

Travels to ethnic homeland in western Yunnan for the first time, and feels that he is ‘a son of the mountains’; creates *People from My Homeland* series, based on experiences in Yunnan.

Early representative work *Female Nude* published in *Art in China* magazine (1987, no. 4).

July. *Fishing Island* is entered into the *Rivers and Mountains of Beijing Art Exhibition* held by Beijing Artists Association (Beihai Park).

August. Achieving top grades, after graduation assumes a coveted teaching position in Number 3 Painting Studio of the Oil Painting Department at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, the studio established by Dong Xiwen.

October. *Beijing Hutong Series* works are exhibited at the post-graduate graduation exhibition (National Art Museum of China).

December. *People from My Homeland* is exhibited at the China Artists Association's *First Exhibition of Chinese Oil Painting* (Shanghai Exhibition Centre).

### 1988 (age 33)

*Female Nude* published in magazines *China Oil Painting* (1988, no. 1) and *Artist-Magazine* (1988, no. 2).

July. Invited to enter the works *Wannan Mountain Landscape 1, 2 and 3* in *Third International Arts Exhibition* (National Art Museum of China).

December. With Ge Pengren, Zhang Yuan and Wu Xiaochang, Hong Ling holds the *First Exhibition of Chinese Oil Paintings of the Human Body* (National Art Museum of China); exhibits his *Figure* series. In these early days of 'reform and opening up', the exhibition causes a sensation and draws unprecedented numbers of visitors to NAMOC.

### 1989 (age 34)

Explores abstract art.

April. Participates in the China Artists Association's *Invitation Exhibition of Eight Artists* (National Art Museum of China) alongside the painter Shang Yang and others; exhibits *B Series 1, 2 and 3*.

September. *Untitled B-5* is entered into the *Seventh National Exhibition of Fine Arts* (Nanjing International Exhibition Centre) held by the China Artists Association. The Central Academy of Fine Arts Young Teachers Art Research Association presents its Creative Award to Hong Ling.

### 1990 (age 35)

Begins a new artistic exploration through a return to nature; creates works that integrate traditional Chinese art forms.

Representative work *Wild Mountain* is entered in the *First Exhibition of Chinese Oil Painting on Scenery* (Chinese National Historic Museum, now the National Museum of China) to wide acclaim.

Summer. *Autumn Mountain* and *Early Summer* are entered in the *Exhibition of Oil Paintings by Teachers from the Central Academy of Fine Arts* (Central Academy of Fine

Arts Gallery). *Early Summer* is acquired by the National Art Museum of China.

October. *Early Summer* is exhibited at the *Masterpieces of the National Art Museum of China Collection: Travelling Exhibition in Japan* (Kawaguchiko Museum of Art, Yamanashi, Japan).

November. *Autumn Landscape* and *Mountain Stream* are acquired by the Nakagawa Museum of Art, Japan.

### 1991 (age 36)

July. Hong Ling and friend and CAFA professor Ge Pengren hold the *Hong Ling and Ge Pengren Joint Exhibition* at Dragon Arts Ltd Exhibition Hall, Singapore.

November. Oil painting *Cold Snow* (cat. no. 14) is entered into the '91 *Exhibition of Chinese Oil Painting* (Chinese National Historic Museum, now the National Museum of China) jointly held by the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China and the Oil Painting Committee of the China Artists Association; wins the Excellent Artwork Award.

*Autumn Mountain* is exhibited at the *Chinese Contemporary Famous Artists Exhibition on Oil Painting* (Hong Kong Art Museum).

### 1992 (age 37)

Spring. Returns to Huangshan in southern Anhui (Wannan); decides to build a studio in this picturesque and culturally rich locale.

*Cold Snow* appears on the front cover of the magazine *Art in China* (1992, no. 2).

*Art in China* (1992, no. 10) publishes many works and an interview by Liu Jian, 'Merging with Nature—An Interview with Hong Ling'.

August. *Autumn Colour* and *Autumn Mountain* are acquired by the National Art Museum of China.

October. Starts to be represented by Schoeni Art Gallery, Hong Kong.

Works are exhibited at the *Exhibition of Artworks by Teachers from the Central Academy of Fine Arts* at Singapore EXPO held by Chung Kiu Investment Holdings Ltd.

*Spring Snow* is exhibited at the '92 *Exhibition of Chinese Oil Painting* held by the China National Academy of Arts and Hong Kong Art Museum.

October. *Family of Anhui* is exhibited at the *Golden Autumn Oil Painting Exhibition* (Cheerful View Exhibition Hall Hong Kong) organised by the National Art Museum of China and Cheerful View Ltd.

**1993 (age 38)**

March. The work *Landscape* is exhibited at the inaugural exhibition of Schoeni Art Gallery in Hong Kong.

June. *Autumn Mountain* is exhibited at the *Special Exhibition for the Celebration of the National Art Museum of China's 30th Anniversary* (National Art Museum of China).

August. Moves into Wannan studio in Huangshan and creates dozens of large paintings.

October. *The Pond Behind the Mountain* is exhibited by Schoeni Art Gallery at Asia Art Fair, Singapore.

November. *Smooth Rain, Clear Pond* is exhibited by Schoeni Art Gallery at '93 *Art Hong Kong*; then shown in *Chinese Contemporary Famous Artists Exhibition on Oil Painting* (Hong Kong Exhibition Centre).

**1994 (age 39)**

Spring. *Fertile Land* put up for auction at Christie's Hong Kong.

Summer. Participates in the China Artists Association and the Beijing Crown Plaza Gallery's *Invitation Exhibition of Five Artists* (Beijing Crown Plaza Gallery).

October. Participates in the *China Exhibition of Artists Nominated by Art Critics* (National Art Museum of China) with 25 leading contemporary painters and 15 art critics, showing the works *Misty Rain in Xiao-Xiang (Hunan)* (cat. no. 15), *Spring Fog*, *Light Rain*, *Autumn Water*, and *Cool Mountain Autumn Fog*.

October. The work *Autumn Mountain 2* is exhibited by Schoeni Art Gallery at '94 *Art Hong Kong*.

**1995 (age 40)**

April. The works *Autumn Grass* and *Autumn Mountain 2* are acquired by the National Art Museum of China.

Summer. Invited by President Yang Shangkun, an admirer, to create large oil painting, *Autumn Colour in Huangshan*, in Yang's private residence.

*Spirit of Landscape—Hong Ling Solo Exhibition* is mounted at Schoeni Art Gallery, Hong Kong, and the catalogue receives a design award.

November. The work *Green Valley and Deep Pond* is entered into the *Third Annual Exhibition of Chinese Oil Painting* (National Art Museum of China) held by the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China and the Oil Painting Committee of the China Artists Association; it wins a bronze medal.

Autumn. *Early Summer* and *Spirit of Landscape* are entered into the international

exhibition *Post Modernist Chinese Art* (Fine Arts Museum of Brussels, Belgium).

Hong Ling appears in the *International Chinese Artists Yearbook*.

**1996 (age 41)**

Summer. Receives PRC government funding to travel as a visiting scholar to research for 6 months, based in France.

Explores museums and galleries in Italy, Spain, Germany and the Netherlands; meets the acclaimed Chinese-French artist Xiong Bingming in his Paris suburb residence; holds *Hong Ling Solo Exhibition* at International Art City, Paris.

May. The work *Deep Pond Behind the Mountain* is added to the permanent collection of the General Office of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Consultative Conference and is awarded a certificate.

September. Guangxi Arts Publishing House publishes *Oil Paintings of Hong Ling* in the series *A Collection of Modern Chinese Art*.

**1997 (age 42)**

*Morning Fog* and *Wild Rhythm* are entered in the 47th Venice Biennale, *Future, Present, Past*, in Italy.

The works *Autumn River* and *Cold Snow* are published in the fourth volume of *Complete Book of Contemporary Chinese Art*.

**1998 (age 43)**

July. With wife Xu Min, holds the *Spirit of Landscape-Flower World—Hong Ling and Xu Min Oil Painting Exhibition* at Cape of Good Hope Art Gallery, Orchard Road, Singapore, and a catalogue is published.

November. The work *Vigorous Autumn* is exhibited at the '98 *China International Art Year—Exhibition of Contemporary Chinese Landscape Paintings* (National Art Museum of China) held by the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China and the Oil Painting Committee of the China Artists Association.

November. Participates in the *Exhibition of Oil Paintings by Teachers from the Central Academy of Fine Arts* (Central Academy of Fine Arts Gallery).

**1999 (age 44)**

Spring. China Fine Arts Publishing House publishes a catalogue of sketches.

Publishes essay, 'Regression and Regeneration: Recording the Road to Landscapes', *Art Observation* (no. 2).

Participates in Beijing Art Fair; wins the main award.

Summer. Special report and dozens of works published in *LEAP magazine*.

Interviewed by a fashion magazine about Huangshan studio, lifestyle, taste and artistic practice.

Participates in the Shanghai Art Fair at the Shanghai Art Museum.

August. *Summer Rhythm*, *Mid-Autumn*, and *Silver Snow* are exhibited at the '99 *Qingdao International Fine Arts Invitational Exhibition* at Qingdao Museum held by the China Artists Association and Qingdao City Government.

### 2000 (age 45)

January. Works are entered in *Gateway to the Century—Exhibition of Chinese Art 1979–1999* organised by Chengdu City Government and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chengdu, and exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chengdu.

The work *Snow Dome* (cat. no. 19) is entered in the China Artists Association's *Upstream and Downstream of the Big River—A Retrospective Exhibition of Chinese Oil Paintings in the New Age 1976–2005* at the National Art Museum of China, Beijing.

April. *Snow Rhythm* is acquired by the Central Academy of Fine Arts and awarded a certificate.

Summer. Participates in the small-scale *Sino-German Artists Joint Exhibition* at the Düsseldorf Exhibition Centre, Germany; visits Konrad Klapheck at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and views many of his works.

Travels on to Turkey, Italy and Austria, with Zhu Naizheng and Song Xiewei of the Central Academy of Fine Art and their wives, visits sites and museums for a month.

Autumn. *The Spirit of Landscape—Hong Ling Oil Painting Exhibition* is organised by Cape of Good Hope Art Gallery at the Paragon, Singapore, comprising large-size, freehand-style paintings, and a catalogue is published.

### 2001 (age 46)

The *Spirit of Landscape* exhibition is held by Soka Art, Beijing.

Participates in Art Taiwan at the Taipei World Trade Centre.

### 2002 (age 47)

Participates in the First Korea International Art Fair at the Taipei World Trade Centre.

Participates in *China Art Annual Exhibition* in Guangzhou, China.

Holds *Rhythm of Misty Rain in the Mountains—Hong Ling Touring Exhibition* in Beijing, Taiwan and South Korea; in Seoul, participates in the First Korea International Art Fair.

### 2003 (age 48)

Summer. *Spirit of Mountain—Hong Ling Solo Exhibition* is held at the prestigious Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Taiwan, and a catalogue is published.

Autumn. Holds the group show *From Beijing to Melbourne* at the Melbourne Art Association Art Centre, Australia, alongside Zhu Naizheng, Hong Ling, Xu Min and Lu Shunfei.

October. Invited by the Beijing Conference Centre to paint *Spring Mountain*; the work is acquired for the Beijing Conference Centre's permanent collection and awarded a certificate.

### 2004 (age 49)

*The Symphony of Seasons—Hong Ling Solo Exhibition* is held by Cape of Good Hope Art Gallery, Singapore, and a catalogue is published.

Summer. The work *Snow Bamboo* is entered into the *Entering the New Century Hand in Hand—Third Chinese Oil Painting Exhibition* held at the National Art Museum of China by the Ministry of Culture and the China Artists Association's Oil Painting Committee; wins the oil painting award.

September. *Fog Rhythm 3* is entered into the *2004 Wuhan—First Nominative Exhibition of Fine Arts Literature* held at the Wuhan Art Museum by the magazine *Fine Arts Literature* and receives an award nomination.

The work *Painting on Paper* is exhibited at the *Commemorating Qi Baishi Oil Painting Exhibition* held at Shanghai Oil Painting and Sculpture Institute.

### 2005 (age 50)

The work *Australian Impressions 1* is entered into *Nature and Humans—The Second Contemporary China Oil Painting Landscape Exhibition* held at the National Art Museum of China by the China Oil Painting Society and the Research Institute of Traditional Chinese Painting; Hong Ling is appointed as one of the judges.

January. Returns to Paris to International Art City: Singapore studio for a three-month residency and research trip; visits Iceland, Austria and the south of France to explore and meet local artists; paints a number of watercolours.

December. *Australian Impressions 1* is acquired by the National Art Museum of China and awarded a certificate.

**2006 (age 51)**

*Spirit of Mountain—Hong Ling Solo Exhibition* is held by Soka Art in Beijing, and a catalogue is published.

*Hong Ling's Oil and Ink Paintings Exhibition* is held at Cape of Good Hope Art Gallery in Singapore and a catalogue published.

Paints landscapes at Mount Wuyi; participates in *Images of Wuyi—Sino-German Artist Exchange International Touring Exhibition* held in Beijing and Germany.

Autumn. Triptych *Guanshan* is exhibited at the *Endless Landscape—Northern and Southern Invitational Oil Painting Exhibition* held at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing by the magazines *Art Research* and *Literature & Art Studies*.

**2007 (age 52)**

Participates in the *China Today Art Exhibition* at the National Art Museum of China.

July. Holds *Hong Ling's Ink Paintings Exhibition* at the Shengling Art Gallery in Shanghai, his first *guohua* painting exhibition in China.

August. Invited to Reykjavik City Hall's artist studio and visits three Nordic countries for creative exchange; travels to Greenland, entering the Arctic Circle for the first time; sees ancient glaciers and icebergs and meets Inuits; remarks upon vivid colours, scale of the landscape and marine life, which all make a lasting impression.

October. *Huangshan Autumn View* is exhibited at the *Great Century—Chinese Painting Exhibition*, a major display organized for October and November in Hong Kong and Beijing, respectively, to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the handover of Hong Kong to China; awarded a certificate by the Ministry of Culture, which hosts the exhibition.

*Spring Rain in Xin'an* is exhibited at the *Tenth Anniversary of the Return of Hong Kong—Famous Chinese Painter Exhibition* in Hong Kong and Beijing. The General Office of the CPPCC National Committee, which hosts the exhibition, acquires the work and publishes a catalogue.

**2008 (age 53)**

February. Biography and catalogue *Paintings and Biography of Chinese Contemporary Artists—Hong Ling* published in series on leading Chinese artists by Hebei Education Press.

*Spiritual Landscape—Hong Ling Solo Exhibition* is held by Soka Art, Taipei, and a catalogue is published.

*Pure Tranquility—Solo Ink Exhibition* is held at Cape of Good Hope Art Gallery in Singapore.

The work *Australian Impressions* is part of the project *Ode to Peace—Space Art Journey* organized by the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China and sent into space on Shenzhou VII.

The National Art Museum of China acquires *Early Summer* for its collection and sends it to be exhibited at *Open Chinese Art—An Exhibition of the Masterpieces of the National Art Museum of China* in Moscow.

December. *Drunken Face* is exhibited at *Expansion and Integration—Chinese Contemporary Oil Painting Research Exhibition* held by the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China, the China Oil Painting Society and the Chinese National Academy of Arts at the National Art Museum of China; the work is acquired by the National Art Museum of China.

*A Collection of Famous Chinese Painters* is published.

**2009 (age 54)**

June. Invited to become a member of the Oil Painting Committee of the Third China Artists Association.

The work *Like Cloud* is acquired by the National Art Museum of China and a certificate is awarded.

July. Invited to Mongolia to participate in *Commemoration of Sixty Years of Sino-Mongolian Diplomatic Ties—An Exhibition of Paintings by the Chinese Painter Delegation* hosted by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the Economic and Commercial Counsellor's Office of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Mongolia.

Summer. Participates in *Transforming Pictures: A Contemporary (Re)presenting of Traditional Thoughts* held by the Oil Painting Committee of the China Artists Association at the National Art Museum of China

Participates in *Enjoying the Full Autumn*, Soka Collection exhibition at Soka Art, Taipei.

December. *Wild Jade* and *Winter Dream* are included in the exhibition *Mountain and Water—China Contemporary Art Exposition* at Guan Xiang Art Gallery, Taipei, curated by Yin Shuangxi.

**2010 (age 55)**

February. Travels to Miami for the maiden voyage of the cruise ship *MS Oasis of the Seas* on a fourteen-day trip around the Caribbean. The southernmost point of Florida, Key West, leaves an impression; visits Hemingway's former residence, where the author wrote *The Old Man and the Sea* and other novels; notes the house's design is conducive to artistic creativity; comes away inspired by the beauty of the



Bahamas.

June. Appointed ‘invited artist’ by the China National Academy of Arts—Oil Painting Institute.

Summer. *Any Scene You Want—Hong Ling Solo Exhibition* is held by Soka Art, Taipei/Tainan.

Works exhibited in *Art HK 10*, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Hong Kong.

Works exhibited in *Clouds—Power of Asian Contemporary Art*, Soka Art, Beijing.

### 2011 (age 56)

June. Appointed board member by the China International Painting and Calligraphy Research Association for its sixth council.

Summer/Autumn. *Boundless Momentum—Hong Ling Solo Exhibition* is held at Zhejiang Art Museum, Hangzhou, and Today Art Museum, Beijing; a catalogue is published.

August. Visits eastern Africa on a twelve-day safari: sees migrating herds in Tanzania and Kenya; stays in a tent on the Serengeti; experiences wildlife and climate of the wilderness and records these in photographs.

September. *Early Summer* is exhibited in *New Realm—Chinese Contemporary Art Exhibition* held by the National Art Museum of China and the National Gallery of Australia at the National Gallery of Australia, part of Australia’s ‘Year of Chinese Culture’.

Participates in 2011 *ART TAIPEI* at the Taipei World Trade Centre Hall 1.

*Solitary Track* is exhibited in the *2011 Shanghai Art Fair—International Contemporary Art Exhibition* held at the Shanghai Expo China Pavilion.

Participates in *FUTURE PASS—Collateral Event of the 54th International Art Exhibition* in Venice; the Asian curator is Lu Rongzhi.

### 2012 (age 57)

Spring. Participates in *Art HK 12* at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre.

August. Invited by the art jury to serve as a judge for *Creative City—2012 London Olympics Art Exhibition* at the Barbican Centre, London; a work is acquired by the Barbican Centre and Hong Ling is awarded a certificate.

August. Invited to travel to South Korea with a delegation of seven artists to participate in the China Artists Association’s *Group Exhibition of Chinese Oil Painters*

held at the Chinese Embassy in Seoul, Korea.

*Autumn Mountain* is exhibited at *Open and Inclusive—Chinese Contemporary Art Exhibition* jointly held by the National Art Museum of China and the Hungarian National Gallery at the Hungarian National Gallery, an exhibition that is part of Sino-Hungarian cultural exchange.

November. *Hong Ling: Contemporary Chinese Landscapes* is held by Asia House, London.

Participates in *The Oil Paintings by Teachers from the Central Academy of Fine Arts Work from Beijing* at the *New York Academy of Art Exhibition*.

Hong Ling participates in *Vision—Soka Art 20th Anniversary*, Soka Art, Taipei.

Participates in 2012 *ART TAIPEI*, Taipei.

*Snow Dome* is exhibited at the *2012 Chinese Contemporary Art Exhibition* held by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Beijing.

December. The work *Mid Summer*, part of the long-term exhibition at the National Centre for the Performing Arts’ reception room for foreign guests, is acquired by the Centre and a certificate awarded.

### 2013 (age 58)

*Destruction and Creation—Cai Guoqiang, Hong Ling, Xu Bing Joint Exhibition* is held at Soka Art, Taipei.

Hong Ling participates in *ART BASEL HK 2013*, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Hong Kong.

Summer. *Shanshui—Hong Ling, Chu Teh-Chun, Zao Wou-Ki Exhibition* is held at Soka Art, Taipei.

Participates in *The Revival of Traditional Chinese Contemporary Art Exhibition*, Istanbul Convention Centre, Istanbul.

Participates in *Once More Paint Nature in Collective Freehand—Famous Chinese Artists Nature Oil Painting Research Exhibition*, National Art Museum of China, Beijing.

September. *NATURE—Hong Ling Solo Exhibition* is held at the Taipei National University of the Arts’ Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts; reviewed by art critic Wang Te-Yu; a catalogue is published.

November. *Iceland Nature 1* and *Iceland Nature 3* are entered in *This Era’s Scene—National Nature Painting Artwork Exhibition* held at the Military Museum of the Chinese People’s Revolution by the China Artists Association.

December. *A Spiritual Intuition of Natural Principles—Hong Ling Chinese Ink Painting* is held at Soka Art, Taipei/Tainan.

December. *Autumn Mountain* is exhibited at the *Chinese Contemporary Art Exhibition* jointly held by the National Art Museum of China and the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation and Development at the Centro Conde Duque in Madrid.

At the end of the year, travels to the Antarctic on a twenty-day trip which leaves a strong visual impression.

### 2014 (age 59)

Spring. *Aspiration—Hong Ling Solo Exhibition* is held by Poly Gallery, Hong Kong.

February. *River Snow* and *Autumn Pond* are exhibited in *Essence of China—Touring Exhibition of Contemporary Chinese Oil Painting & Retrospective Exhibition of Chinese Oil Painting of the Past Hundred Years* at the Dadu Museum of Art in Beijing, China Art Palace in Shanghai, Guangdong Museum of Art, Wuhan Art Museum and Shandong Art Museum; the exhibition is organised by the China National Academy of Painting and China Central Television.

March. Travels on a six-day trip to Japan to see the cherry blossoms; visits Kiyomizu and other temples in Kyoto by day and night.

Participates in *On the Scene – Art Exhibition*, National Art Museum of China, Beijing.

Participates in 2014 *ART TAIPEI*, Taipei World Trade Centre Hall 1, Taipei.

Participates in *ART BASEL HK 2014*, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Hong Kong.

August. Granted a visa, applied for in 2013, to visit Bhutan; treks through Himalayas for two weeks to visit Taktshang Monastery at 3,000 meters above sea level; this remote, unspoilt mountain kingdom has a deep impact.

### 2015 (age 60)

Spring. Works are exhibited in Beijing at *Chinese Freehand Art—Invitational Exhibition of the National Art Museum of China* (2015) held by the National Art Museum of China.

October. Invited to participate in *China Spirit: The Fourth China Oil Painting Exhibition—Images of the Heart: Contemporary Chinese Oil Painting Marketability Research Exhibition*, a touring exhibition that travels to Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Shandong and Xi'an; in Beijing, it is held at the China National Academy of Arts by the Oil Painting Committee of the China Artists Association.

December. The exhibition *Beauty of Nature—Hong Ling Oil Painting Art World Touring Exhibition* is mounted in the Circular Hall and East Hall of the National Art Museum of China and concurrently in the Palace of Establishing Good Fortune (Jianfugong) in the Palace Museum, the first solo show by an artist in the former Forbidden City; a seminar in conjunction with the exhibition is held in the Palace of Establishing Good Fortune.

December. Invited by The National Centre for the Performing Arts to create a large landscape painting in its hall; starts preparations, and expects to complete in 2016.

### AWARDS:

2003 - Award for best Chinese oil painting at the 3rd Chinese Oil Painting Exhibition

1999 - Art Fair award

1995 - Bronze medal at the '95 Exhibition of Chinese Oil Painting

1993 - Bronze medal at the '93 Exhibition of Chinese Oil Painting

1991 - Award for excellent artwork at the '91 Exhibition of Chinese Oil Painting

### BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SOLO EXHIBITION CATALOGUES:

2015 – *Hong Ling: Beauty of the Nature*, Soka Art, Beijing

2014 – *Aspiration—Hong Ling Solo Exhibition*, Poly Gallery, Hong Kong

2013 – *NATURE—Hong Ling Solo Exhibition*, Soka Art, Taiwan

2012 - *Contemporary Chinese Landscapes: Hong Ling*, London

2012 - *The Hermit in the Dust*, Commonwealth Publishing Group, Taiwan

2011 - *Boundless Momentum—A Collection of Words from Hong Ling*, Soka Art, Taiwan

2010 - *Any Scene You Want*, Soka Art, Taiwan

2008 - *A Collection of Famous Chinese Painters—Hong Ling*, Hebei Education Press

2008 - *Spiritual Landscape—A Collection of Hong Ling Oil Paintings*, Hebei Education Press

2008 - *Pure Tranquility—Solo Ink Exhibition*, Singapore

2007 - *Paintings and Biography of Chinese Contemporary Artists—Hong Ling*, Hebei Education Press

2006 - *Hong Ling's Oil & Ink Paintings*, Cape of Good Hope Art Gallery, Singapore

2004 - *Symphony of Seasons*, Cape of Good Hope Art Gallery, Singapore

2003 - *Spirit of Mountain*, Soka Art, Taiwan

2000 - *Conscious Landscapes*, Anhui Fine Arts Publishing House, Anhui

2000 - *Famous Contemporary Oil Painters—Hong Ling*, The Blossom Press, Beijing

1998 - *Spirit of Landscape—A Collection of Hong Ling Paintings*, Singapore

1996 - *Hong Ling—A Collection of Modern Chinese Art*, Guangxi Arts Publishing House, China

1995 - *Spirit of Landscape*, Schoeni Gallery, Hong Kong

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Shane McCausland

*Percival David Professor of the History of Art  
SOAS University of London*

# HONG LING: A Retrospective

**ARTIST:**

Hong Ling 洪凌

**CURATOR:**

Shane McCausland 馬嘯鴻

**ASSISTANT CURATOR:**

Tian S. Liang 梁天爽

**CATALOGUE EDITORS:**

Shane McCausland, Tian S. Liang

**CONTRIBUTORS:**

Shane McCausland, Tian S. Liang, Mary Redfern with  
additional text from Soka Art

**HOST MUSEUMS:**

**14 July 2016 – 24 September 2016**

Brunei Gallery, SOAS University of London

Thornhaugh Street,  
Russell Square,  
London, WC1H 0XG  
United Kingdom

Gallery Manager: John Hollingworth MBE

**21 October 2016 – 29 January 2017**

Chester Beatty Library

Dublin Castle  
Dublin 2  
Ireland

Director: Fionnuala Croke

Head of Collections and Conservation: Jessica Baldwin

Curator of the East Asian Collection: Mary Redfern

**25 February 2017 – 2 July 2017**

The Museum of East Asian Art

12 Bennett Street  
Bath, BA1 2QJ  
United Kingdom

Chair: Anne Shepherd MBE

Curator: Nicole Chiang 蔣得莊

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Soka Art

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