

The Art of Liu Kuo-sung
and His Students



Rebel as Creator

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Director's Preface

NanHai Art is proud to present the exhibition *Rebel as Creator: The Art of Liu Kuo-sung and His Students* for the first time in the San Francisco Bay Area. It has taken NanHai and exhibiting artists more than one year to prepare for this exhibition, not to mention the energy and cost involved in international communication and logistics. Why did we spend so much time and effort to present Liu Kuo-sung? It can be traced back to when NanHai underwent the soul-searching process to reconfirm its mission. At that time, the first name that came to my mind was Liu Kuo-sung. As one of the earliest and most important advocates and practitioners of modernist Chinese painting, Liu has perfectly transcended Eastern and Western, tradition and modernity, established a new tradition of Chinese ink painting and successfully brought it to the center of the international art scene. Liu's groundbreaking body of work best echoes NanHai's commitment to present artworks that reflect the unique aesthetics of Chinese art while transcending cultural and artistic boundaries with a contemporary sensibility.

A lot has been said and written on Liu Kuo-sung and his works by art historians, curators, and critics. Believing that no one else can surpass the historical importance of Liu towards the modernization of Chinese ink painting, Michael Sullivan compared Liu with Chang Dai-chien. However, in getting to know Liu Kuo-sung and working with him, I am deeply impressed by not only his art, but also his character. A quote from the Analects of Confucius would best reflect the Liu Kuo-sung in my eyes: *"The educated intellectual (shi) may not be without breadth of mind and vigorous endurance, for he has taken up a heavy responsibility and a long course (士不可以不弘毅,任重而道远)."* Liu best exemplifies the traditional ideals of *shi* (士): On the one hand, Liu has a deep understanding and mastery of both Chinese artistic tradition and western techniques. His international experience further broadened his vision, thus his artistic rebellion was rooted in the essence of Chinese tradition, and at the same time synthesized modern sensibilities. On the other hand, Liu has demonstrated vigorous endurance in both life and art. After the Sino-Japanese war took the life of his father, Liu and his mother were forced to drift from place to place. Liu finally moved to Taiwan on his own at the age of seventeen. This life experience certainly reinforced the endurance in his character, which led to his fearlessly questioning the decayed tradition, constantly making new innovations, and tenaciously persisting in his artistic approaches. In addition, Liu has always been imbued with the sense of historical duty and cultural mission, as seen in traditional Chinese intellectuals, to rejuvenate the culture of China. This sense of mission has led to his continuing artistic endeavors even now in his eighties.

Rebel as Creator: The Artistic Innovations of Liu Kuo-sung

Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen

Julia F. Andrews and Shen Kuiyi once wrote an essay named *"Hearty Laughter: Liu Kuo-sung and His Art."* Like others who know Liu Kuo-sung, I am also deeply touched by his "hearty laughter." Only the one with a pure heart like the newborn (赤子之心) has this kind of laughter. Liu is a man of true nature and best exemplifies the beauty of man's unity with the universe. His dedication to truth, goodness and beauty has been the source of strength for his artistic pursuit. His sense of mission has led to his more than sixty years' relentless advocating and teaching. I am glad to see the new tradition of ink painting prevail and thrive through the paintings of his students, and I pay tribute to Master Liu for his persistent endeavors and great achievements.

Last but not least, I am immensely grateful to Professor Julia F. Andrews and Professor Kuiyi Shen for their curatorial advice during the preparation for this exhibition, and I am indebted to their friendship and scholarly support along the way.

*Edward Gui, Director
June 2014*

As the artist delicately pulls the fibers out of his paper, one by one, the crisp snows of the Himalayas arise vividly from a haze of black and gray ink. From this exposure of what lies underneath the painted surface ground, this removal of ink, emerge with miraculous clarity monumental mountain forms. Liu Kuo-sung's work both evokes and denies the accomplishments of early masters of landscape painting, who created grand landscapes by painstakingly building up their texture strokes in ink. In the most literal sense, Liu Kuo-sung has mutilated his paper in a radical rejection of traditional painting techniques. This destructive gesture, however, has brought forth a series of new techniques, and a new landscape imagery that possesses a power and immediacy that may equal that of the great Chinese painters of the past. Liu Kuo-sung's mountains, created by a modern man in an epoch of burgeoning science, share their universality with landscapes painted by Northern Song (960-1127) artists, who painted to capture the cosmic truths known from the philosophy of their own era in the form of mountains and streams that emulated the process of natural creation itself.

The young Liu Kuo-sung emerged in Taipei in the late 1950s as a rebel and a Westernizer, an artist who abandoned the traditional Chinese painting of his early artistic education in favor of modernist canvases. Within a few years of graduating from National Taiwan Normal University, he had helped establish the Fifth Moon Society, a group of iconoclastic painters in Taipei. In this role he fearlessly confronted critics who made dangerous claims that the Fifth Moon aesthetic rebellion was instead political subversion. In his own right, Liu Kuo-sung began to enjoy some international success as an oil painter, invited to join the Sao Paulo Biennial and to exhibit in Paris, among many other places.

This recognition opened the door to a career as a modernist painter in the Western definition of the term. Another painter might have taken an easier path, but Liu Kuo-sung's ever-inventive spirit led him into another challenge. Dazzled by the power of the eleventh century landscape paintings newly exhibited in the temporary galleries of the National Palace Museum in Taichung, he was inspired to hold modernism up against China's own artistic tradition. After two years of intense aesthetic struggle, in 1963 he emerged with newly invented techniques of making art and new purposes for creating it. The battle between modernism and Chinese painting had been fought, and what had survived was simultaneously art of both those worlds. Abstraction, a primary focus of his art and his theoretical writing, began to give way to the landscape, and canvas gave way to custom-made Chinese paper and ink. Over the subsequent decade, he exhibited and taught internationally and

Liu Kuo-sung: A Master Artist and Art Educator

Chun-yi Lee

domestically, living for long periods in the U.S. and Europe. His work of the 1960s was bold, gestural, and self-expressive, in keeping with international trends of the time, but his use of Asian materials and formats and his return to the landscape as primary subject, marked his work as something different. Indeed, the seal that he adopted as the logo for his 80th birthday exhibition, reading “Dong xi nan bei ren (A man of East and West, South and North)” well sums up the trajectory of his life and art took beginning in this period. This seal both denies the limited claims of national borders on Liu Kuo-sung’s art and affirms his place in the post-war generation of artistic pioneers.

The cosmic aspirations of pre-modern Chinese landscape painting and philosophy and the scientific goals of contemporary society came vividly into focus for Liu Kuo-sung with the appearance of manned space travel. His landscape was transformed into moonscape, and hand in hand with new expressive concerns came new ways of applying ink, color, and imagery, painting with crumpled paper and anything but the brush. Indeed, in the decade of the 1970s, when he led the new Chinese landscape painting program at Chinese University of Hong Kong, he advocated eradicating the brush, or more precisely, eliminating use of the literati brush (*ge zhongfeng de ming*; literally: decapitating the centered brush). He had rejected the practice of copying, whether it be copying the ancient Chinese masters or parroting contemporary Western artistic fashions, and now sought to make ink paintings without conventional brushwork. From this fruitful skepticism were born a series of new ways of creating images. His inventiveness has continued into the new millennium, when the seventy-year-old artist created mesmerizing images of the rippling blue-green water of Jiuzhaigou on architect’s drafting paper with a modified monoprint technique. The subtle coloristic effects seem more true to the actual experience of seeing this breathtaking site, both visual and psychological, than photography. Known as one of China’s most important ink artists, in this body of late work he turns completely away from ink.

Liu Kuo-sung remains a rebel. He has challenged the art of the past, found fault with the art of the present, and even turned away from his own past work. He never lets go until he has discovered something new—not novelty for its own sake, but a solution to the expressive problem before him. For him, critique is a positive creative act, the first step in the birth of new techniques and new concepts. His genius for invention keeps his art always young. Equally important, it serves as a platform from which his students, well-represented in the current exhibition, may take their own leaps into realms as yet undiscovered.

Amidst the torrential changes that have occurred in the field of Chinese art in the past century, Liu Kuo-sung is without a doubt an artist of tremendous influence, who, as the Chinese saying goes, “commands the winds and the clouds.” Liu Kuo-sung’s initiative and drive to contribute to the revitalization and revalidation of ink painting tradition dominated over sixties years of artistic creativity. In his semi-abstract landscapes from the early period, he demonstrates how the calligraphic qualities of abstraction make his works both “Chinese” and “modern.” His artistic approach of viewing the planets beyond Earth in his so-called “Space Series” also allows him to transcend the earthly boundaries of “East” and “West” while infusing his original and personal style of ink painting with a new universal appeal. Later works by Liu Kuo-sung that utilize the intriguing “water rubbing” and “steeped ink” techniques, further explore the representational possibilities of the ink painting media, through which he incorporates traditional philosophical and aesthetic concept of naturalness with modern-day environmental concerns.

Widely regarded as one of the earliest and most important Chinese advocates and practitioners of modernism, Liu Kuo-sung founded the Fifth Moon Group in 1957 and became a pivotal figure in the modern art movement that strived to overthrow the prevailing conservatism in the art world of Taiwan. He was enthusiastic in introducing new artistic ideas and techniques from the West to enrich the tradition of Chinese painting. In order to further promote the ink painting tradition, Liu Kuo-sung united groups of artists and students with common interests to establish the Chinese Ink Painting Society in Taipei in 1968 and Modern Ink Painting Association in Hong Kong in 1975. Despite his stress on tradition, he maintained a critical attitude towards the narrow ideological confines of traditional ink and brush, and hence he proposed the idea that “the brush is the dots and lines, the ink is the planes and colors,” as well as “*cun* is the textures.” He emphasized that the fundamental painting elements of dot, line, plane, color and texture can be achieved not only through the traditional use of ink and brush, but richer painting effects can be attained through new techniques in modern ink painting. Liu Kuo-sung even put forth the daring statement of “revolution against the brush.”

In addition, Liu Kuo-sung challenged the practice of emulation. He pointed out that the ancients’ *cun* techniques are only the basis for the traditional practice of brush, while innovative paintings have their own technical standards. Therefore, in creating modern ink paintings, one must

Innovation through Challenge: The Creation of My Landscapes

Liu Kuo-sung

grasp the guiding principle of “being different first, and then becoming refined.” He further accentuated the concept of using special techniques to “produce” a painting, thoroughly subverting the established system of traditional ink and brush. Liu Kuo-sung also disagreed with traditional painting education in which “learning is like a pyramid;” he believed that an overemphasis on the training of basic techniques smothers a student’s creativity. He otherwise offered an alternative pedagogical model of “learning is like a skyscraper,” encouraging young artists to develop their individual new techniques and rise above among others like towering skyscrapers.

As an artist and an art educator, Liu Kuo-sung enjoys widespread fame and influence in the Chinese art world. He has inspired young generations of artists to explore new creative directions, and in particular, he has fostered the emergence of exciting experiments and innovations in ink painting. Liu Kuo-sung strives to advocate modern ink painting, imparting to students his new innovative ideas and techniques. After his retirement from university teaching in 1999, he has continued to offer instruction classes to public because he feels a heavy responsibility and sees the building of modern ink painting as a lofty goal akin to the Confucian ideal of continuing, inheriting, reviving and promoting China’s cultural heritage. He even organized a touring exhibition entitled “The Tension of White Lines” to promote a new painting practice that is rich in national spirit and modern significance. Acknowledging the rise of China as a political and economic power on the world stage and witnessing a continuous flow of new Chinese talents, Liu Kuo-sung affirms his belief that a new tradition of ink painting will prevail with the arrival of the “Chinese Century.” Now at the advanced age of eighty-two, his artistic endeavors and educational legacy remain important sources of inspiration for the continual process of renewal and invigoration of Chinese ink painting in the 21st century.

Before the Tang dynasty (618-906), Chinese art was dominated by figure painting. When landscape originated as the background of figure painting and became an independent genre, artists still used lines that would depict human figures to delineate the contours of mountains and rocks, and applied the color ochre, which gave rise to early blue-and-green landscape. Subsequently, in order to represent the different textures of various mountains and rocks, artists invented many different patterns of texture strokes. Since the Sui (581-618) and Tang dynasties, through the Five Dynasties (907-960), and up until the Song dynasty (960-1279), many masterpieces in different styles were already created by artists such as Jing Hao, Guan Tong, Dong Yuan, and Juran in the Five Dynasties and Li Cheng, Fan Kuan, Guo Xi and Li Tang in the Song dynasty. In the Song period Mi Fu, Mi Youren, Ma Yuan, Xia Gui, and Yujian preferred to use abbreviated brushwork to sketch the idea. Among the four masters of the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), Wang Meng invented the ox-hair texture stroke, Ni Zan invented the folded-belt texture stroke, Huang Gongwang invented the alum-head texture stroke, whereas Wu Zhen invented nothing. Since the Yuan dynasty, with the predominance of literati aesthetics, amateur painters were of higher stature than professional ones. Because they were trained in classics and held official positions, they spent most of their daylight hours writing memorials to the throne, reading official documents, composing prose and poetry, practicing calligraphy, and only afterwards, during their spare time in the evening, would they paint a little. Therefore, they regarded painting as a leisure activity, and while they were fond of elegant gatherings and gifting each other with paintings, they treated professional painters with disdain as philistine craftsmen. As laymen in painting, scholar-officials had to imitate ancients. Consequently, imitation became a popular trend, which further evolved into a tradition. This situation lasted for about five to six hundred years, until the mid-twentieth century, and no new texture strokes or techniques were invented. The scholars were diligent calligraphy-practitioners, so it was only natural for them to paint with the same brushes used for writing, and they invented the theory of the shared origin of calligraphy and painting. In fact, calligraphy and painting did not share an origin. While painting could be dated back to primitive times, when was the invention of written characters? If one insists that calligraphy and painting shared an origin, it was only in brushwork that they had similarities. Based on this theory, it was further proposed that calligraphy should be incorporated into painting, and calligraphic brushstrokes should be employed to “write” paintings. Because “*zhongfeng*”, literally a centered-tip or upright brush, was most often used in writing, it was even more ridiculously proposed that good paintings are impossible without the use of an upright brush. Chinese

painting had no development since that time, and instead it went on a narrow path leading to impasse and decline. Huang Binhong once summarized it succinctly: “Tang dynasty painting was like yeast, Song dynasty painting was like alcohol, Yuan dynasty painting was like wine. Since the Yuan dynasty, it was like blending alcohol with water. The closer in time, the more water blended. Recently paintings were mostly water with little alcohol, and were thus insipid and tasteless.”

I started to study Chinese painting at the age of fourteen. The teacher who taught Introduction to Art in my first year in college said: “all art comes from life!” This statement led me to reflect on painting that I had learned before, which was all about imitating ancients and had nothing to do with my own life. Only when I learned to sketch from life in watercolor and oil painting classes in the second year did I realize that this was truly from real life. So like most young people, I was dissatisfied with the hegemony of literati painting and disappointed in their performance; I aspired instead to the innovative spirit and techniques of expression of twentieth-century Western art. As a result, I completely gave up the study of national painting and accepted wholesale Westernization. In terms of modes of expression, in sketching from life, I then followed the footsteps of the Impressionist masters, and then the Abstract Expressionists. Finally I discovered that Abstract Expressionist masters had sought inspiration from Chinese calligraphy for their artistic creation, but if *we* were to follow *them*, how odd and funny it would be! After repeated introspection, I came to the realization that my own criticism of Chinese conservative painters with regard to their imitation of the ancients and lack of creativity was equally naive, just like the pot calling the kettle black. So I put forward that “imitating the new cannot be substituted for imitating the old; copying what’s Western cannot be substituted for copying what’s Chinese,” which is still a meaningful slogan today. I was determined to blaze a trail between the two traditions of the East and the West. At that time, I was still using Western materials to achieve the synthesis of Chinese and Western expressions. However, when I carefully studied Chinese and Western art histories and compared their courses of development, I discovered that as early as the early thirteenth century, in China’s Song dynasty, Liang Kai already produced the masterpiece *Immortal in Splashed Ink*, when the Renaissance had not yet begun in Italy. In the development of Western art history, it was not until the early twentieth century with the emergence of German Expressionism that there were paintings comparable to *Immortal in Splashed Ink* in terms of idea, technique, and form. Following this logic, prior to the twentieth century, Chinese painting had been 700

years ahead of Western painting. If we count *Two Patriarchs Harmonizing Their Minds*, attributed to Shi Ke and now in Japan, Chinese painting had held a lead of nearly 1000 years. Therefore, I was imbued with a feeling of responsibility and a sense of mission to prevent the great tradition of Chinese painting from dying in the hands of our generation, and to rejuvenate the noble culture of China.

Since the defeats in the Opium Wars and in the war against the Eight-Nation Alliance, the pride and confidence of the Chinese were completely crashed, and China suddenly turned from a great nation into an inferior colony bullied by world powers. I have never seen a people that so deeply love and detest its own culture at the same time as we do. The May Fourth Movement advocated the overthrow of Confucian doctrines and feudal ideas on the one hand, and undertook a cultural revolution on the other. The May Fourth was called the New Culture Movement, because it aimed to complement the political and economic revolutions led by Sun Yat-sen. Although the Minister of Education at the time, Cai Yuanpei, urged again and again not to forget art in the New Culture Movement, literati painters were, however, handcuffed by feudal ideas and were hardly awake to the situation. The May Fourth New Culture Movement eventually succeeded only as a revolution in literature, with vernacular language replacing classical language, and new-style poetry replacing old-style poetry. Cai Yuanpei invited Lin Fengmian to return from Europe and educate those who would revolutionize Chinese painting at the National Art Academy, located by the West Lake in Hangzhou. However, because of the Japanese invasion and Lin Fengmian’s being labeled a Rightist by the Communist Party, the efforts fell short of success. Luckily Taiwan provided a temporary shelter. In 1961, I put forward the slogan of “the modernization of Chinese painting,” when I willfully decided to abandon the Western media with which I was already at ease and return to the ink tradition of Eastern painting. On the one hand, I wrote articles to champion a revolution in Chinese painting, and lectured widely to promote ink innovation. On the other hand, I practiced what I preached, experimenting in artistic creation, holding numerous exhibitions, and promulgating the experimental spirit that sought to create personal techniques and establish a unique personal style. I also emphasized that the studio is not a factory where paintings are produced, but a laboratory of the artist. Human civilization is created by two kinds of people—while material civilization is created by scientists, spiritual civilization is created by artists, broadly defined. The reason why a scientist becomes a scientist is that he first has a new idea, and in order to prove his idea correct, he has to carry out experiments in the laboratory. When the

experiments are successful, he has made an invention. Those who make big inventions are big scientists, those who make small inventions are small scientists, and those who make no invention are not scientists. A painter is not different from a scientist. He must also first have innovative ideas and feelings, and the desire to represent them. When old techniques and materials fail at such representation, he must experiment with new techniques and materials. When the experiments are successful, he has created something. Those who create something big are big painters, those who create something small are small painters, and those who created nothing are of course not painters. Because I wanted to put my ideal into practice, I was the first to design a course on “modern ink” at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1973. I did away with the traditional pedagogy based on imitation, and proposed the experimental method of instruction that “sought difference before quality.” And I was able to train some innovative ink painters. Meanwhile, I still wanted to awaken those obstinate traditional painters, and to liberate them from the hegemony of brush and ink upheld by the narrow-minded feudal literati. I especially explained the original meaning of “brush and ink”: “brush” refers to traces left by the moving brush on the painting surface. If the traces are good, the brush is used well. What are the traces? Are they not dots and lines? “Ink” is synonymous with color. After dots and lines are drawn, ink or colors are applied as blocks and planes, so ink in fact refers to colors and planes. “Brush and ink” are in fact dots, lines, planes, and colors. *Cun* is texture, *cunfa* is the texture-creating method. If traditional painters could come to realize this, when good dots, lines, and textures are created regardless of method, it should be regarded as good use of the brush; similarly when ink and colors are applied well, it should be regarded as good use of the ink. In this way, isn't it true that you could let yourself freely fly in the open sea and sky?

Before I put forward the slogan of “the modernization of Chinese painting” and returned to Eastern paper and ink in 1961, I had painted a series of large-scale paintings on canvas that synthesized Chinese and Western elements, two of which are now in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago. But during the two years before I managed to recreate my personal style in 1963, I experienced the most painful experimental period in my life, which I later called the two-year throes of childbirth. During that time, I visited all the paper shops in Taiwan, and experimented with all kinds of paper. A kind of lantern paper with fine fibers gave me great inspiration, because after painting on this paper, you would notice some delicate white lines on the reverse side of

the paper, which are very beautiful. So I asked a paper manufacturer to make a kind of paper with thick fibers for me, which has later been called the “Liu Kuo-Sung paper.” I requested the paper manufacturer to apply another layer of thick fibers on top of cotton paper. I would remove the paper fibers after painting with brush, ink and color, which would give rise to many white lines. This type of white lines appeared in the history of Chinese painting for the first time, and I was very proud of it. In reference to Fan Kuan's raindrop texture stroke and Guo Xi's mud-and-water texture stroke, I named this innovative technique “plucking out tendons and peeling off skin texture stroke,” which was the first new texture stroke invented in the five to six hundred years since the Yuan dynasty. In the past, painters and art historians agreed that Chinese painting was greatly influenced by the philosophy of Laozi and Zhuangzi. As early as the Tang dynasty, Wang Wei and Wang Qia had already created a freehand style of painting, but the essence of Lao-Zhuang philosophy, the Yin-Yang dualism, was never represented. Because dots and lines in Chinese painting were always black, the color of yin, and there were no lines in white, the color of yang, Chinese painting was regarded as painting of yin. I created white lines for Chinese painting, perfectly representing the philosophy of Laozi and Zhuangzi.

In the 1960s, after I painted a series of abstract landscapes, many people thought I learned from the West, but actually it was the West that was under the influence of Eastern abstract aesthetics. China has been a nation that could appreciate abstract beauty since ancient times, and abstract aesthetics have long entered the everyday life of the Chinese. Take pottery as an example for comparison, while Chinese painted pottery has abstract patterns, designs on Egyptian painted pottery in the West are all representational. While stage designs and actor movements in Chinese operas are always abstract, Western theatrical settings are always realistic. Until today, the general public in the West still fail to understand why the Chinese are so fond of rocks, placing them everywhere, whether outside in the courtyard or inside the rooms, and why they would cut rocks into various shapes for decoration, and establish all sorts of museums dedicated to beautiful and peculiar rocks. Why did not abstract painting emerge in Chinese art? It was simply because literati painters were calligraphers at the same time, and when they had abstract feelings to express, they would resort to calligraphy which is an abstract form of art. Western Abstract Expressionist art, for me, only acted as a catalyst.

At the end of 1968, the U.S. Apollo 7 spacecraft brought back

photographs of the earth for the first time, which touched me profoundly. Our field of vision was expanded from the ground to outer space, and humankind also entered a space age. As a modern painter, it was impossible for me to remain unresponsive. Beginning in 1969, I painted outer space for five or six years, and completed four to five hundred artworks of varying sizes, compositions and palettes. After the mid 1970s, I felt I had almost exhausted what I wanted to say about outer space, so I thought of experimenting with some new patterns of texture strokes. I had come across a term when reading Chinese art history, "water painting," in which ink is floated on water and then imprinted on paper. It apparently had been lost, so I attempted to recover it. After some time, I mastered the technique and produced a series of wonderful landscapes with water rubbing. In the late 1980s, I no longer considered water rubbing a challenge, so again I embarked on experimentation with other new techniques, and invented an innovative one known as the blotted ink technique. In 2000, after my visit to Jiuzhaigou in Sichuan, I was deeply moved by the natural scenery there. Every sea or lake there is of a different color, and is astonishingly beautiful. In order to express such feelings of beauty, I spent a lot of time experimenting with various kinds of paper and techniques, but to no avail, and I felt rather depressed. In Taiwan in the past, no art school or art department would dare hire me, and I was relegated to teaching posts in the department of architecture. I saw the paper students used for architectural drawings, and took it for experimentation. I finally managed to succeed, and have been creating a large body of artworks in the Jiuzhaigou series up until today. Subsequently, I requested to visit Mount Everest in the Himalayas, on the occasion of an invitation to lecture at the University of Tibet. The beauty there was truly beyond description, and I totally forgot myself, reveling in the kaleidoscopic mountain scenery for nearly three hours without knowing how time had passed. Although at the expense of the hearing in one ear, I was able to paint two to three hundred artworks of snowy mountains in the Tibet series. This year I had my 82nd birthday. I am not sure whether in the future I will have new inspirations and feelings, whether I will continue to experiment with a new technique and create new artworks. Thank you!

(This essay was delivered by Liu Kuo-sung as the keynote speaker at the *Symposium of Chinese Landscapes – Explorations in Literature, Poetry, Film, and the Visual Arts* at Stanford University on May 1st, 2014. Translated by Wu Yao)



Liu Kuo-sung

劉國松

A native of Shandong, Liu Kuo-sung was born in Anhui, China in 1932. He moved to Taiwan in 1949 and graduated from the Fine Arts Department of Taiwan Normal University in 1956. Universally recognized as one of the earliest and most important advocates and practitioners of modernist Chinese painting, Liu is known as the “Father of Modern Chinese Ink Painting” in Taiwan and the “Pioneer of Modern Chinese Painting” in Mainland China. Liu has taught at Chung Yuan University, Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Tainan University of the Arts. He was also a visiting professor at the University of Wisconsin – Stout and the University of Iowa. Currently, he is a Chair Professor at the National Taiwan Normal University.

Liu has exhibited extensively across the world and his works have been collected by sixty-eight prestigious museums and galleries, including the Palace Museum in Beijing, the British Museum in London, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Museum of Asian Art in Berlin. In addition, Liu has won a variety of awards and grants, including the John D. Rockefeller III Foundation grant in 1966 that allowed him to travel around the United States and Europe, First Prize for Painting at the *Mainstream '69 USA*, the Special Award in the Sixth National Art Exhibition in Beijing, the National Award for Arts in Taiwan, and the Award for Lifetime Achievement from the China Arts Awards. Liu's artistic achievements have been noted in eleven Art History books, published in China, the United States, Britain, France, and Switzerland.

Liu began to study traditional Chinese painting when he was 14, then practiced western painting at the age of 20. In 1956, not long after his graduation from Taiwan Normal University, he founded the Fifth Moon Painting Society (Wuyue huahui) to encourage modernist art in Taiwan and advocate wholesale westernization. However, in 1959, he realized that it was inappropriate to simply imitate the western and began to advocate the synthesis of eastern and western art. Two years later, Liu abandoned canvas in favor of paper, ink, and collage, aiming to create a modern ink painting. As a result, a group of native modern ink painter was formed in Taiwan. In Mainland China, Liu's role as a pioneer of modern ink painting has been celebrated as well. In 1983, Liu was invited by the Chinese Artists Association to hold his first mainland solo exhibition at the National Art Museum of China. In the following three years, Liu continued to travel, speak and exhibit in eighteen major cities in Mainland China. In 1984, Liu was awarded the Special Prize in the Sixth National Art Exhibition in Beijing, along with Li Keran, as recognition to his tremendous impact in both art and theory.

Liu's art and theory has inspired many younger artists. He believes "imitating the new cannot be substituted for imitating the old, copying what are Western cannot be substituted for copying what are Chinese". He disagrees the literati painting's theory of "having a well-thought -out plan in advance". Instead, he considers "painting strategies are similar to playing chess". He opposes the blind acceptance of complete Westernization and encourages experiments and innovations. Liu also strongly proposes his pedagogy philosophy of "first seek uniqueness, then be refined". During his time as the Dean for the Fine Arts Department at Chinese University of Hong Kong, Liu created a course of "Modern Chinese Ink Painting", cultivating a large group of creative painters. Liu believes artists are similar to scientists; both are creators of human civilization. Therefore, he states, "painters' studios are their laboratories but not factories to manufacture paintings".

Liu has devoted himself to art education for more than fifty years. He believes it takes generations to establish a new tradition, thus his passion for education continues today even at the age of eighties. In addition to funding modern ink painting awards, Liu has also sponsored scholarships, encouraging younger generations to contribute to the revival of Chinese art and culture.



Liu Kuo-sung 劉國松
Moon's Metamorphosis 206, 2014
月之蛻變 206
Mixed Media, 38 1/2 x 24 3/4 in.



Liu Kuo-sung 劉國松
Late Autumn, 2014
深秋
Ink and color on paper, 18 1/16 x 72 7/16 in.



Liu Kuo-sung 劉國松
Natural Meshy White Lines of Snow Mountains, 2014
雪網山痕皆自然
Ink and color on paper, 71 x 36 1/2 in.

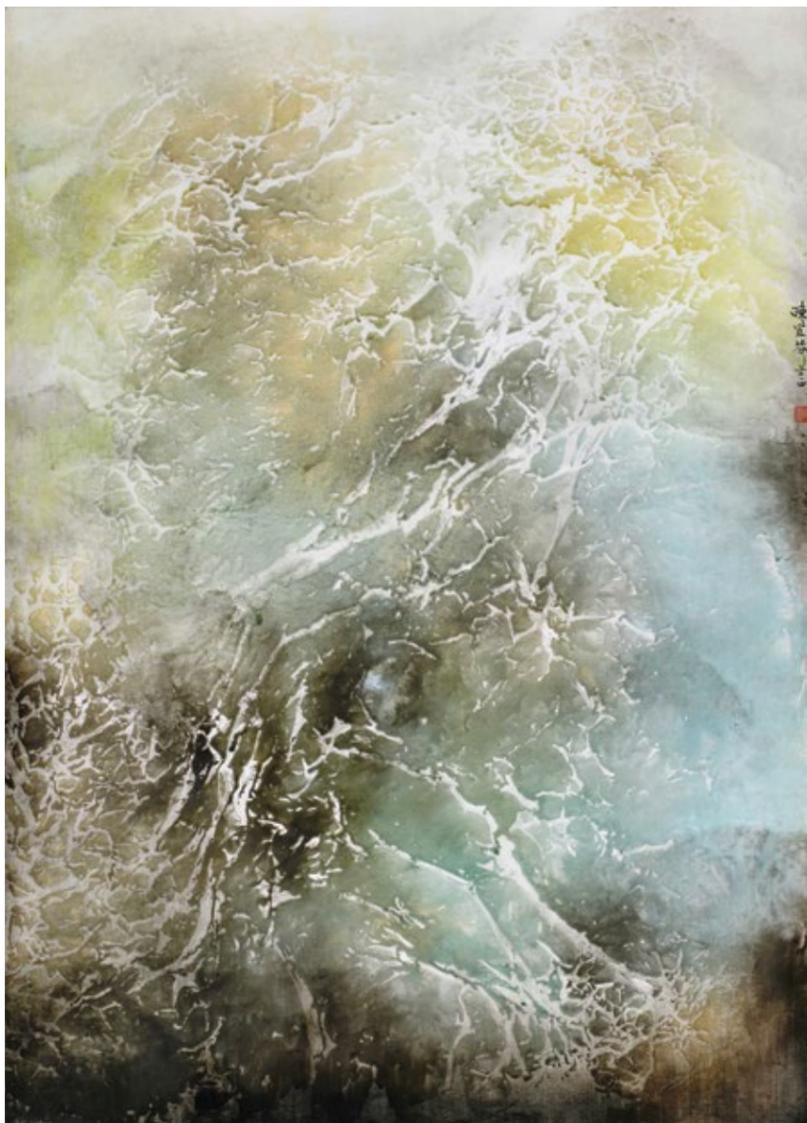


Chen Yifen

陳宜芬

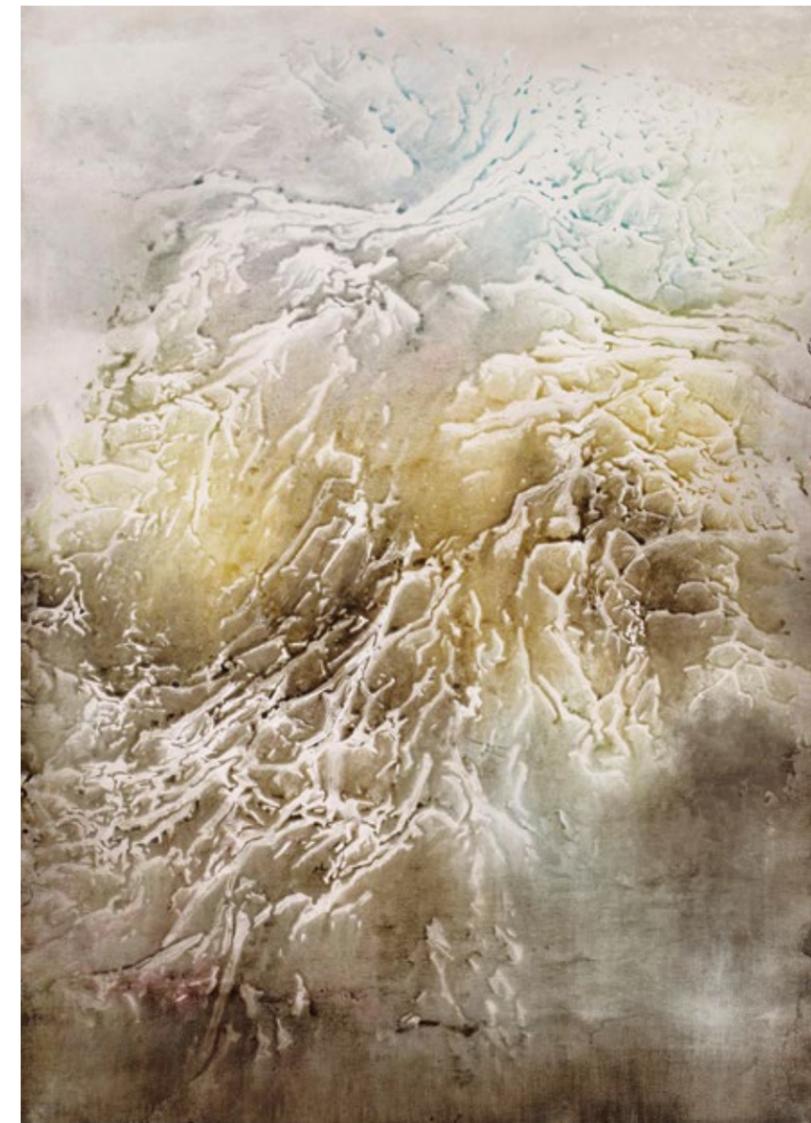
Born in 1957 in Yilan, Taiwan, Chen Yifen is a member of the Ink Painting Group at the Department of Fine Arts at Taiwan Normal University. Ms. Chen is introduced to traditional Chinese landscape painting at an early age and eventually chose to focus on modern ink painting. Her works subtly integrate creative techniques and elements into traditional Chinese landscape paintings, allowing her to express the free spirit of Chinese traditional painting while seeking a charm between similarity and dissimilarity.

Ms. Chen's works have been shown in *Tension of White Line - Modern Ink Painting Exhibition by Artists from Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan*. Her works have also been exhibited at the National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Taipei, Guangdong Tsuiheng Museum of Art, Shandong Museum, Art Center in Chiao Tung University, Art Centers in Taoyuan, Taichung, Keelung and Kaohsiung, Tainan Cultural Center, and Taitung Art Museum. In addition, Ms. Chen has won the Taoyuan Art Exhibition Award in 2013.



Chen Yifen 陳宜芬
Hide, 2014
藏

Ink and color on paper, 43 1/4 x 31 7/16 in.



Chen Yifen 陳宜芬
Seek, 2014
尋

Ink and color on paper, 43 1/4 x 31 7/16 in.



Chiang LiHsiang

江麗香

Born in 1950 in Tainan, Taiwan, Chiang LiHsiang received her Bachelor of Art in Literature and Master in Fine Arts in Ink Painting from Department of Fine Arts at Taiwan Normal University. Breaking the convention of traditional Chinese ink painting, her works are infused with modern creative techniques.

Ms. Chiang's works have won numerous awards nationally and internationally, including the Asian Ink Painting Exhibition Awards in 2002, 2003, and 2004; the 36th International Funding Exhibition Award in Japan in 2008; a nomination for the 72nd Yiyang Art Exhibition Award; and the honorary award in the Fourth Taipei International Modern Ink Painting Biennial. Ms. Chiang's works have also been included in many exhibitions worldwide. In 2014, she has been honored with a solo exhibition, *Chiang LiHsiang Contemporary Ink Painting Exhibition*, at the National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Taipei.



Chiang LiHsiang 江麗香

Mountain in the Clouds, 2013

雲山知幾重

Ink and color on paper, 31 1/2 x 40 1/2 in.



Chiang LiHsiang 江麗香
Mountains and Streams after Rain, 2013
溪山新雨後
Ink and color on paper, 31 1/2 x 43 in.



Lien Yu

連瑜

Born in 1952 in Jiayi, Taiwan, Lien Yu graduated from the Department of Painting and Calligraphy Arts at Taiwan University of Arts.

Ms. Lien has received many awards, including first place in the 31st Taoyuan Art Exhibition Award – Ink Painting in 2013 and the Creative Painting Award in the Fourth Taipei Contemporary Ink Painting in 2012. Ms. Lien's solo exhibition, *Variations Composed of Mountains and Rivers Series* has been hosted by Taipei Cultural Center in 2013. Her group exhibition *Tension of White Line - Shanghai New Ink Painting Exhibition* has been hosted at Shanghai Zhu Qizhan Art Museum. In addition, Ms. Lien has held exhibitions in Sydney, Athens, San Francisco, Brussels, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shanxi, and Shandong.



Lien Yu 連瑜
Boundless, 2014
無垠

Ink and color on paper, 42 1/2 x 30 5/8 in.



Lien Yu 連瑜
Swift Currents, 2014
激流

Ink and color on paper, 42 9/16 x 30 13/16 in.



Lin Shaingyuan

林象元

Born in 1949 in Zhanghua, Taiwan, Lin Shaingyuan was the Director of Training and Chief Instructor of Computer Graphics Design at the Career Training Center of the Council of Labor Affairs for the Northern Region. Currently, he is serving as a board member of the Chinese New Generation Art and Culture Exchange Association and the Chinese Global Art Creative Association.

Mr. Lin's works combine the modern techniques of spraying and rendering with the spirit of traditional Chinese ink painting. Breaking the conventional Chinese painting traditions, his paintings depict three-dimensional forms. Lin's works keep in tact the essentiality of traditional Chinese art while seizing the spirit of modernity, creating a distinctive style. In addition, Mr. Lin's works have been collected by Fujian Art Museum.



Lin Shaingyuan 林象元

Summon of the Nature, 2013

大自然的呼喚

Watercolor and ink on rice paper, 27 15/16 x 37 in.



Lin Shaingyuan 林象元
Mountains and Streams in Cascading Green 5, 2014
谿山疊翠 5
Watercolor and ink on rice paper, 28 3/4 x 36 1/2 in.



Luo Zhiying

羅志英

Born in 1959 in Taiwan, Luo Zhiying was drawn to the ethereal qualities of Chinese ink painting. She first studied painting with Xiao Jinxing and Yang E'xi. In 2009, she was introduced to contemporary ink painting and began to study under Master Liu Kuo-sung. Ms. Luo broke new grounds by incorporating non-traditional elements into her paintings. She also studied under Master Luo Fang, Yuan Jinta, and Li Zhenming. Currently, she is a student of the Department of Fine Arts at Taiwan Normal University.

Ms. Luo's works have been included in multiple exhibitions, including the Third Taipei International Modern Ink Painting Biennial in 2010; *Tension of White Line - Modern Ink Painting Exhibition by Artists from Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan* from 2011 to 2014. Ms. Luo also has presented her works at many exhibitions with Master Liu Kuo-sung in Taiwan, Guangdong, and Shandong.



Luo Zhiying 羅志英
Back Mountain, 2014
後山

Ink and color on paper, 62 3/16 x 42 7/8 in.



Luo Zhiying 羅志英
Hidden Valley, 2013
秘谷

Ink and color on paper, 42 7/8 x 30 11/16 in.



Wu Peihua

吳佩華

Native from Meixian, Guangzhou, Wu Peihua was born in Taipei. Ms. Wu started learning Lingnan style of Painting in Hong Kong in 1988 and studied under Master Hu Nianzu in 2001. Currently, Ms. Wu is studying under Master Liu Kuo-sung. Inspired by Master Liu's theory of "first seek uniqueness, then be refined", she combines her observation of transformations of trees in different seasons with her imagination, and then paints the trees by applying the blank-leaving technique. She uses the texture of painting and colors of different forms to express her inner emotional world. She also presents her works as descriptive, romantic, passionate, and colorful.

Ms. Wu's works have been shown in numerous exhibitions, including museums and galleries in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, America, and Australia. Moreover, Ms. Wu has won the first place in the First International Contemporary Calligraphy and Painting Competition in honor of Master Huang Junbi in 2005, and has got the Innovation Honorable Mention in Contemporary Ink Painting in 2010.



Wu Peihua 吳佩華

Leaping White Line Series No. 43 (2 in 1), 2014

白線的跳動系列之 43 (2 in 1)

Ink and color on paper, 43 1/4 x 46 7/16 in.



Wu Peihua 吳佩華
Leaping White Line Series No. 32, 2013
白線的跳動系列之 32
Ink and color on paper, 62 1/4 x 43 1/4 in.



Xu Xiulan

許秀蘭

Born in 1952 in Taipei, Xu Xiulan received her Bachelor in Foreign Language at Providence Women's College. She also studied at the Master of Fine Arts Program from the Department of Fine Arts at National Taiwan Normal University. Ms. Xu used to teach at Hsing Wu Institute of Technology and Military Police School and now she is a teacher of ink painting.

In addition to being featured in numerous solo exhibitions, Ms. Xu's works have been included in multiple group exhibitions, including the Third National Contemporary Ink Painting Exhibition, Taipei International Modern Ink Painting Biennial, Tainan Art Exhibition, and Contemporary Asian Art Biennial in Japan Beppu-Navi Museum.



Xu Xiulan 許秀蘭
Freezing Mountains Series No. 51, 2013
寒山曲系列之 51
Ink and color on paper, 31 1/8 x 42 7/8 in.



Xu Xiulan 許秀蘭
Freezing Mountains Series No. 61, 2014
寒山曲系列之 61
Ink and color on paper, 42 3/4 x 31 1/8 in.



Zhang Meixiang

張梅香

Born in 1964 in Tainan, Taiwan, Zhang Meixiang studied Mechanical Graphics and had worked in garment structural design for more than ten years. Ms. Zhang began to study traditional Chinese landscape painting in 2001. She was introduced to modern ink painting in 2010 and showed strong interest and talent in it. In her series of work "Waiting to Observe Flowers", Ms. Zhang developed her own unique painting style by using bubbles.

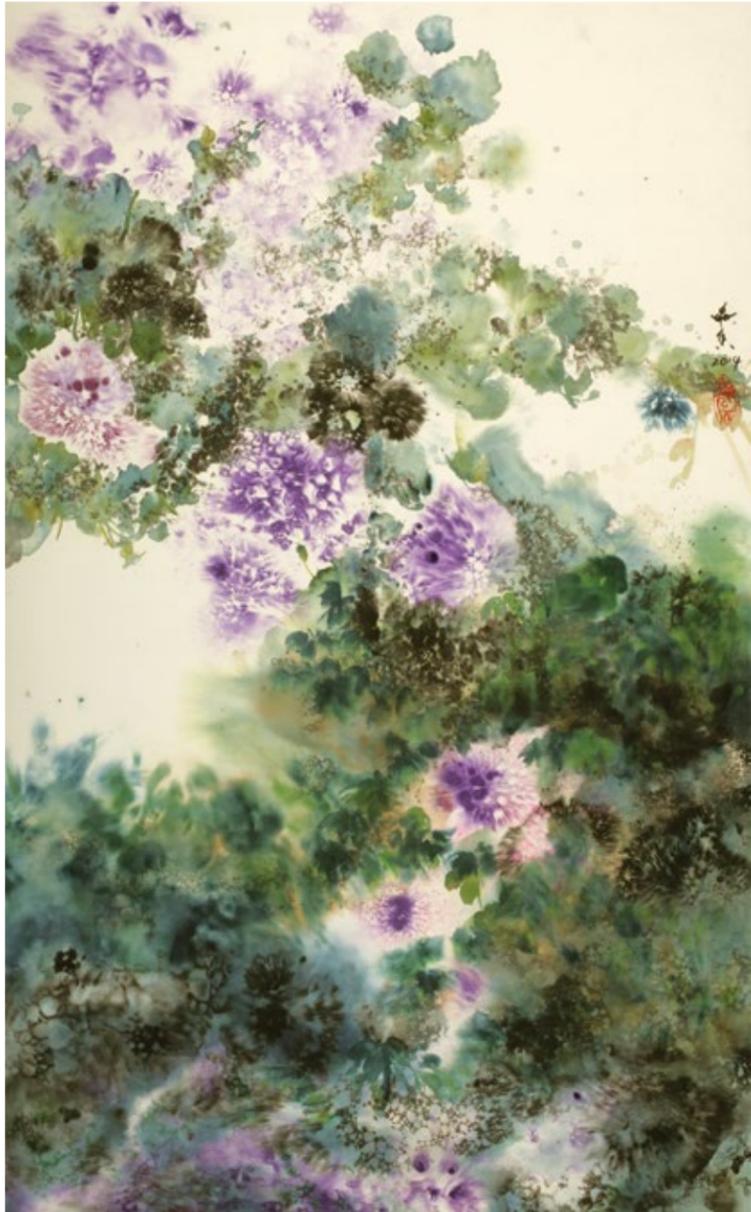
Ms. Zhang has held several solo exhibitions, including *Bursting Bud* in Taiwan in 2011 and *Garden of Soul* in Keelung Culture Center Exhibition Hall in 2012. Moreover, Ms. Zhang's next solo show *Flower Dream* will be hosted at the Library of New Taipei City in 2014.

Zhang Meixiang 張梅香

Oriental Girl, 2014

東方女孩

Ink and color on paper, 27 1/2 x 38 9/16 in.



Zhang Meixiang 張梅香
Waiting to Observe Flowers Series No. 36, 2014
待察花系列之 36
Ink and color on paper, 44 7/16x 27 1/2 in.

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August 9 – September 13, 2014

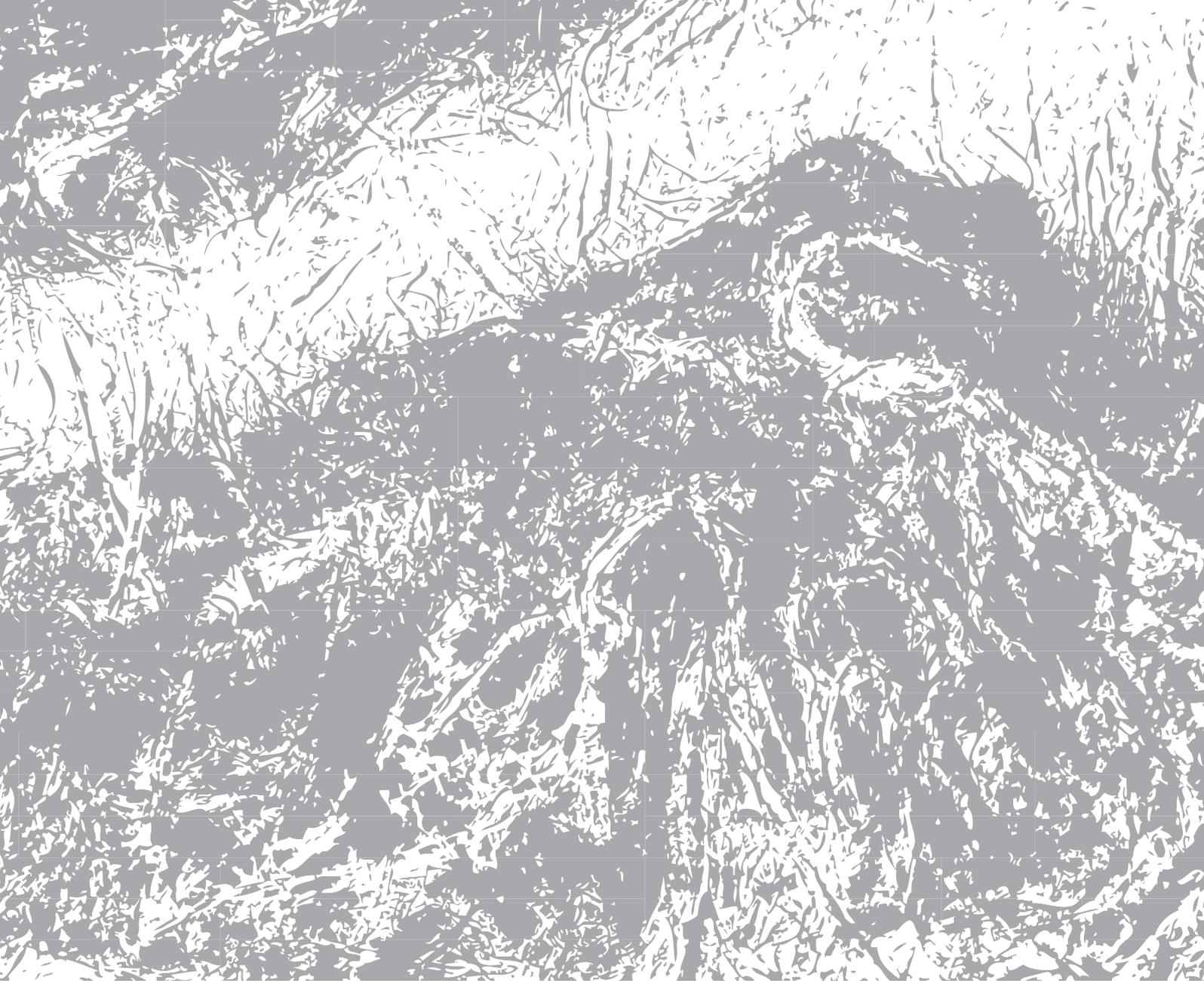
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Liu Kuo-sung remains a rebel. He has challenged the art of the past, found fault with the art of the present, and even turned away from his own past work. He never lets go until he has discovered something new—not novelty for its own sake, but a solution to the expressive problem before him.

Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen

