

A Tribute to Liu Kuo-sung: Introduction by Curator Olivia Wang

It is a great honour and privilege to curate *A Tribute to Liu Kuo-sung*. Liu Kuo-sung (b.1932) is undoubtedly one of the most important figures in the development of contemporary Chinese ink painting. Over the course of his career spanning more than six decades, he has worked fearlessly in shaping a new language of ink painting. This exhibition features 12 works from the 1960s to the 2000s. As Liu has played a seminal role as an educator in mentoring a new generation of ink painters, the show includes works by two of his students, Kwok Hon-Sum (1949-2004) and Lee Chun-Yi (b. 1965), who themselves are noted artists. Indeed, Lee Chun-Yi, who is also an art historian, has shed light on Liu's fervent dedication to education in his catalogue essay.

All the works in *A Tribute to Liu Kuo-sung* are on loan from private collectors hailing from Hong Kong, Taiwan and the UK. Many have followed Liu's artistic career over the decades and some have enjoyed friendships with him. For this show, each collector was invited to share his or her personal thoughts about the work s/he owns. They generously agreed to have their tributes published here.

The earliest work is *Rising towards Mysterious Whiteness* (1963). Created a few years after Liu co-founded the Fifth Moon Group in Taipei in 1956 and only a year after he abandoned oils to solely pursue ink and paper, the work demonstrates his synthesis of Abstract Expressionism with Chinese ink painting. Brushed in forceful calligraphic ink strokes, it evokes the feeling of a mountain range floating dramatically in the void. Liu has given the abstract landscape texture and modulation by an innovative technique for which he became known for – crumpling and pulling off fibres from coarse cotton paper, leaving white lines and streaks in the ink.

Liu's experimental spirit is further demonstrated in *Inside? Or Outside?* (1967) and *Untitled* (1968), works created after travelling around the world on a grant awarded by the John D. Rockefeller III Foundation where he gained exposure to European and American art. They each combine collage – a technique that became an important part of Liu's practice – with calligraphic brushstrokes. The multiple dimensions and layers in *Inside? Or Outside?* set the compositional tone for his subsequent "Space" series.

Inspired by the Apollo missions of 1969 that landed the first man on the moon, Liu developed his acclaimed "Space" series, reflecting his newfound artistic vision of nature and the universe. *Metamorphosis of the Moon No. 21* (1970), *New Moon* (1970) and *Midnight Sun* (1972) are among the earliest works in this series. The spectacular *Midnight Sun*, an over five-metre-wide work comprised of seven vertical panels, amalgamates geometric forms with traditional Chinese brushwork to render a gentle arc of seven suns shining over earth. The use of bold, vibrant colours was a breakthrough at the time, as the majority of Liu's contemporaries continued to use monochromatic ink with sparing amounts of colour. *New Moon*, which depicts a crescent moon floating over earth amid a starry sky, invites the viewer into an otherworldly realm. As the collectors Hwee Leng Whang and Raymond Ch'ien put it, "[the work] is the epitome of transcendental cool...it washes

away worldly weariness, and it is more effective than any medicine against jet lag."

By the mid-70s, Liu began to return to "earth" from space, although references to the cosmos still appear in his work. Liu's portrayal of the precipitous, glacial cliffs in *Mountain Light Blown into Wrinkles* (1985) reflects the grandeur of nature far beyond its small size (26 centimetres in width). It is not surprising that this painting, along with *White Snow is White* (1983), composed of dense and stark rock formations, are among the favourite works in the collection of the Master of the Water, Pine and Stone Retreat. Liu's innovative techniques of using ink and water can also be seen in *Trees in the Mist on the Spring Hill* (1990). Composed of layered washes of ink and vivid green tones over a textured surface, the abstract landscape captures the vivacity of spring.

Entering the 21st century, Liu Kuo-sung has continued to build upon his artistic language in the steadfast quest to innovate. Since visiting Sichuan and Tibet in the early 2000s, Liu has produced a new body of work – the "Jiuzhaigou Valley" series, inspired by the ethereal nature of water, and the "Tibet" series, which reflects both the hostile environment and majestic grandeur of the Himalayas. *Changhai Sea in the Four Seasons, Jiuzhaigou Valley series No. 152* (2009) is a stunning example from the former. Here, Liu has encapsulated the changing energies and colours of the lake's surface over the four seasons. He achieved this unique shimmering effect by steeping ink and colour between two sheets of architectural tracing paper. The "Tibet" series depict some of Liu's most dramatic landscapes, such as *Glacier: Tibet Series No. 100* (2008) and *The Thawing Snow Mountains* (2009). The snowy mountain ranges, with their topography delineated by white lines set against dark, rocky peaks, were created using his signature fibre-plucking technique, painting and creasing both sides of the paper.

Liu's generous and pioneering spirit is reflected in the art of many of his students. The works of two of them, Kwok Hon-Sum and Lee Chun-Yi, are exhibited here, although both have gone in different directions from their teacher. Encouraged by Liu's call to employ novel tools and techniques, Lee Chun-Yi has forged a distinct visual language that eschews self-expression via calligraphic brushwork. In his creative process, he carves wooden seals and stamps their impressions with ink on paper to compose images of landscapes, trees and flowers, as in *Falling Black Stars* (2013). By contrast, Kwok Hon-Sum shifted his focus away from traditional landscapes to semi-abstract compositions featuring the iconography of Tibet, such as *The Supreme Wisdom* (1989).

A Tribute to Liu Kuo-sung at this year's edition of Ink Asia would not be possible without the collectors who have lent their works. Furthermore, their tributes and personal anecdotes compliment our appreciation for Liu's art. With works from pivotal moments and different periods in Liu's career, the exhibition offers an opportunity to view Liu's new visions and immense contribution to the world of Chinese art. It seems apt to end with collector Leo Shih's tribute, "it is easier to obtain recognition than be a true genius. Liu Kuo-sung was born to be a great master."

向劉國松致敬：策展人言

汪鈴

能夠策展「向劉國松致敬」是一種光榮和榮幸。劉國松（生於 1932 年）無疑是當代中國水墨發展史上最重要的人物之一。在六十多年的職業生涯中，他一直無所畏懼地為水墨畫塑造了新的語言。本次展覽展出了廿世紀 60 年代到 21 世紀的 12 件作品。作為一名教育家，他積極指導和培育新一代水墨畫家，所以是次展覽亦展出了他的兩名學生郭漢深（1949-2004）和李君毅（生於 1965 年）的作品，他們現在也是著名的藝術家。

所有於「向劉國松致敬」的展品都是由來自香港、台灣和英國的私人藏家借出，他們大部份已跟隨劉老師的藝術生涯數十年，並與他結為好友。在這個展覽中，他們分別分享了他們對借出的作品的個人想法，他們都很樂意在此向劉老師致敬。

這裡最早的作品是「升向白茫茫的未知」（1963 年），是劉國松 1956 年於台北成立〈五月畫會〉之後數年，並且是在其捨棄油畫並改為只用水墨紙本僅僅一年後的創作。這件作品展示了他以中國水墨畫和抽象表現主義的綜合。藝術家以強烈的書法筆觸繪畫，戲劇性地把空虛的山脈喚起了浮動的感覺。劉老師以一種創新的技術給抽象的風景賦予紋理和調節，他在粗織棉紙上抽出纖維的筋線，在墨水裡形成白色的紋理。

劉的實驗精神在「誰在內？誰在外？」（1967）和「無題」（1967）中進一步表現出來。他在獲得約翰·D·洛克菲勒三世基金會（John D. Rockefeller III Foundation）的資助後遊歷世界各地，從中見識了歐洲和美國的藝術作品，並創作了這兩幅畫作。他們各自合併拼貼 - 一種成為劉國松常規創作技巧的重要部分 - 並與書法筆觸結合起來。「誰在內？誰在外？」的多維度和層次為他的後續作品“太空”系列設定構圖色調。

受到 1969 年登上月球第一人的阿波羅號航天飛船的啟發，劉國松開創了自己的“太空”系列，反映了他自然和宇宙所發現新的藝術視野。「月之蛻變之二十一」（1970 年）、「新月圖」（1970 年）和「午夜的太陽」（1972 年）是本系列最早的作品之一。壯觀的「午夜的太陽」是由七塊垂直面板組成超過五米寬的作品，融合了幾何圖案與中國傳統的筆法，以優雅的弧度呈現七個照耀著地球的太陽。運用大膽而鮮豔的色彩在當時是一個突破，因為同時代的畫家仍以單色墨水為主導，只有少量著色。「新月圖」描繪了在星空中飄浮的新月，帶領觀者進入另一個世界。正如收藏家錢果豐夫所說：“「新月圖」給觀者一種脫離塵世的澄澈清涼感受…每當遠遊返家，入目景象可洗盡時差引起的不安”。

到 70 年代中期，劉國松開始從太空回到“地球”，雖然在他的作品中還是提到了宇宙。劉在「吹皺的山光」（1985 年）中描繪的陡峭的冰川懸崖，反映了自然的宏偉，遠遠超出了它的小尺寸（26 厘米寬）。水松石山房主人在劉國松芸芸作品中最喜歡這幅畫和由厚實而堅硬的岩石構成的「白雪是白色」（1983 年）是不足為奇的。在「春山煙樹」（1990 年）中，劉在運用墨和水的創作技法也可見一斑。在織紋的表面以墨的分層洗滌和生動的綠色組成，使抽象的景觀融入春天的活力。

進入二十一世紀，劉國松一直堅持以自己的藝術語言為基礎，堅定不移地追求創新。自從 2000 年初期探訪四川和西藏後，劉國松便製作了新的作品，包括受川流不息的大自然流水啟發的“九寨溝”系列，和反映了喜馬拉雅山的險峻環境和宏偉壯麗的“西藏”系列。「長海四季變化 - 九寨溝系列 152 號」（2009 年）是前者的一幅代表作品。在這裡，劉國松把四季以變化的能量和湖面的顏色包裹起來。他通過在兩張建築描圖紙之間浸漬墨水和彩色，實現了這種獨特的閃光效果。劉國松在“西藏”系列描繪了一些最戲劇性的景觀，例如「冰川：西藏組曲 100 號」（2008 年）和「融化中的雪山」（2009 年）。雪山的山脈，以白色線勾畫其地勢，平衡了黑色的岩石和山峰，這個創作是採用他的招牌抽出纖維技術，在紙張的兩面進行繪畫和起縐。

劉國松的慷慨和開拓精神反映在他的許多學生的藝術中。他的其中兩位學生，郭漢深和李君毅的作品都在這裡展出，縱然他們跟老師的風格各有不同。受到劉國松老師的鼓勵去利用新穎的工具和技術，李君毅已經建立了一種獨特的視覺語言，通過書法的筆法去避開自我表達。在他的創作過程中，他雕刻木印，用墨水在紙上印上印記，組成山水、樹木和花朵的圖像，就如「墮落的星星」（2013 年）。與之相反，郭漢深把注意力從傳統的風景轉移到以西藏的肖像研究構成半抽象作品，如「正寺菩提」（1989）。

「向劉國松致敬」展覽得以在今屆水墨藝博舉行，各位藏家借出他們的珍藏實在功不可抹。而且，他們的稱讚和提及的個人軼事也是對劉國松藝術的欣賞。是次展覽包括了劉國松職業生涯中的重要時刻不同時期的作品，為我們提供了一個機會，看到劉國松新的願景，及他為中國藝術世界做出的巨大貢獻。以收藏家 Leo Shih 的致意來作結似乎最為恰當：“中國水墨的現代化當然來自「水墨現代化之父」，稱謂易取而奇才難求。劉國松生而大師”。