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山水刊

SHAN SHUI

MOUNTAIN AND WATER PAINTING MAGAZINE
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The Shanshui Magazine editorial and advisory board is composed of artists, scholars, and curators who share a deep commitment to fostering cultural dialogue between China and the world.

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Together, the board works to ensure that Shanshui Magazine remains an open platform for dialogue — where traditional wisdom, artistic practice, and contemporary thought meet to explore new forms of cultural and aesthetic sustainability.

Art is one of the deepest expressions of human thought — a way to communicate ideas, emotions, and visions of the world. Every artist, rooted in their own culture, reflects not only personal experience but also the intellectual and spiritual traditions of their society.

At Shanshui Magazine, we believe that art is a powerful tool for intercultural dialogue. By exploring the encounter between Chinese and Western artistic traditions, we aim to build bridges between two great civilizations and encourage a renewed understanding of art and nature.

Chinese shanshui (mountain and water) painting — with its 1,500 years of history — offers an alternative vision of the world, where harmony between humans and nature is central. This philosophy contrasts yet beautifully complements Western aesthetics, opening new ways of seeing and creating.

Our magazine presents contemporary Chinese and international artists, research on painting theory, and reflections on environmental aesthetics. We wish to make these ideas accessible not only to academics but to anyone curious about the living dialogue between art, ecology, and culture.

Through this magazine, we hope to promote a form of artistic expression that helps us rethink our relationship with reality, with nature, and with each other — beyond cultural boundaries.

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OUR APPROACH FROM THE FIGURE OF THE CHINESE INTELLECTUAL ARTIST TO CONTEMPORANEITY.

DURING THE EIGHTH CENTURY CHINA, A NEW FIGURE OF AN INTELLECTUAL ARTIST WAS BORN: THIS FIGURE WOULD BECOME TOPICAL IN THE CHINESE CULTURAL PANORAMA AND MAKE ITS WAY TO THE PRESENT DAY.

WENREN HUA 文人画, IS THE ONE WHO, FOLLOWING THE HUMANISTIC VALUES AND TEACHINGS OF THE TRADITION, UPDATES AND APPLIES THEM TO THE ARTISTIC-INTELLECTUAL NEEDS OF HIS TIME. THIS PROCESS HAS NEVER STOPPED, AND STILL PERSISTS IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD.

THE *WENREN HUA* ENCOMPASSES THE POET, THE PAINTER, THE CALLIGRAPHER, THE THEORIST, THE SCHOLAR AND THE INTELLECTUAL IN A SINGLE FIGURE, AND SEES THE CULTIVATION OF THE SPIRIT AND MIND AS ONE OF THE MAIN PURPOSES OF HIS/HER WORK.

IN THIS WAY, A CLOSE LINK IS ESTABLISHED BETWEEN PRACTICE AND ARTISTIC THEORY; AT THE SAME TIME THERE IS NO SEPARATION BETWEEN THE ARTS, AND THERE IS A COMMON THREAD BETWEEN INTELLECTUAL PRACTICE AND MATERIAL APPLICATION.

OF COURSE THIS FIGURE IS CLOSELY LINKED TO CHINESE CULTURAL HERITAGE, BUT THIS DOES NOT MAKE IT LESS COMPATIBLE WITH THE ARTISTIC-CULTURAL NEEDS OF WESTERNIZED CONTEMPORANEITY.

IT ALSO FITS NATURALLY INTO THE TREND OF ENVIRONMENTAL AESTHETICS, WHICH IS AN EXPRESSIVE CHANNEL OF CONTEMPORARY ART AND OF FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE, GIVEN THAT THE BIGGEST PROBLEMS THAT AFFLICT OUR SOCIETY ARE OFTEN LINKED TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE DESTRUCTIVE APPROACH THAT CONTEMPORARY MEN HAVE TOWARDS IT.

RESPECT FOR NATURE AND THE NEED TO PRESERVE IT BY LIVING WITH IT IN HARMONY ARE INTRINSIC ELEMENTS OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE THOUGHT AND THAT OF THE *WENREN HUA*, WHICH SEE MAN AND NATURE AS TWO ELEMENTS THAT ARE PART OF THE SAME SYSTEM: IN THESE TERMS, IN ORDER TO PRESERVE HUMAN LIFE, NATURAL EXISTENCE MUST ALSO BE PROTECTED, OR ELSE WE WOULD GO TOWARDS THE DECAY OF BOTH.

MANIFESTO

We find ourselves living in the era of globalization. Thanks to the infosphere we live in, with just one click we can be in Togo, with two clicks you can be studying Sanskrit, with three you're already updated on what's going on in Bhutan, and with four more clicks you're listening to a piece played with the duduk, and immediately after we could be looking at two whirling dervishes. In half a day we become experts in Armenian music, Sufi spirituality, Himalayan geopolitics and in any other aspect of world culture.

Fantastic. Finally, a world without cultural barriers, devoted to the exchange and access of mutual knowledge. In this global village without borders, we dance to the beat of superficiality, sloppy culture and of cultural arrogance, where ignorance is adorned with two-dimensional images, where the concept of "knowing that you do not know" has been abolished, although without knowing.

It's important to note that, in this Village the chief is western, the customs and habits are also mostly western, and so is the linguistic and material means of communication along with most, intellectual expressions and world views of its inhabitants. The inhabitants tend to ignore what is found outside the Village, not by choice, but by condition, not out of lack of curiosity, but because of the limited means. The Village is truly global on a physical level, it truly embraces the entire earth's surface, but in fact

it remains on the surface, it does not deepen, and if it deepens it does it in its own way, as it would in the centre from which it developed. In fact, the Village is ancient and full of History and histories, it has always had multiculturalism, always in expansion and translation, but only recently has it reached global status.

The Village is now global, so everyone is welcome but the rules to follow are those of the Village head. Everyone can bring something to the table, but it will still have to be adapted to the matrix of the Village.

With these premises, it is possible to face and analyse infinite issues concerning the actual state of the alleged globalization. For instance, how it believes to know different cultures, but in reality this knowledge is based only on a store of empty images which are then filled with the world view of the aforementioned head of the Village. The same goes for that mercantile capitalism that has arrived at every corner of the globe, but gives the best of itself only if we follow the needs of the Village. We stand against a single world view, when in fact there are many. The ones that does not support diversity, but translates them, one that does not make them participate in the debate with their own voices, but accepts them only after a trial of metamorphosis. We are against the imperialism of tastes and customs, of judgment, of means of expression, and of what to express, a situation which

inevitably leads to a cultural flattening. Against this self-proclaimed global Village. It does not have the ability to see neighbouring villages, since it believes that all possible villages are within itself.

We as Sino-artists (some of non-Chinese origin, devoted to the study and practice of Chinese painting), will focus on the areas concerning our cultural sphere, precisely that of Chinese art. Especially those related to painting, with a particular eye for landscape painting, which from now on we will call according to the Chinese denomination, Mountain and Water painting.

"shanshui hua 山水画"

The main will is to communicate with the Village through our art and our words, to present one of the many shaded areas with which it is scattered. Our task is to find a language that is intelligible to the Village as well as faithful to the original meaning. Without smoothing its diversity, without avoiding clashes, without sweetening the pill. In this way it will be the Village that will make the effort to understand, and only in this way will the communication be successful. In fact, we trust in the Village's ability to understand languages not forged by itself.

The reasons that drive us in this campaign are varied and erudition is not one of those. At best it can be a side effect.

One of the biggest problems of the Village is that it believes that movements of progress and evolutions only exists inside itself, that it has reached the status of "modern", and those who are not indigenous come from a static culture, backward and anchored to the past; without the use of the means forged by

the Village and without its revolutionary spirit no one can participate in the dialogue of contemporaneity. So, to finally get into the subject, in the Village Chinese painting is traditional, therefore linked to the past, unable to evolve, something good just for the art history books and museums, worthy of respect, but with the same respect that is given for archaeological finds.

There is no conception of a modern or contemporary Chinese painting, also because when the term Chinese painting is pronounced, for some reason it is always accompanied by the adjective "traditional", which clearly denies the concept of modernity. Chinese art can only be defined as modern if expressed through the means and processes of modern western art.

Revelation! There is modern and contemporary Chinese art; mountain and water painting has been evolving for at least 1500 years, and continues to evolve, and other painting expressions are even older. As obvious as it seems, China is extremely large, therefore there are many centres of cultural irradiation, and for this reason there are various schools within China that follow different pictorial expressions. Consequently there is not just one movement of contemporary Chinese painting.

Our main objective follows:

To spread the knowledge of contemporary Chinese painting outside of China, and to give voice to the great artists of the last century as well as to the new young artists.

Why is it important you may ask? For starters, in order to make sense of the term globalization. But above all, to enrich the Village and to redefine its ideas of intellectual absolutism.

Chinese art, together with all the other intellectual expressions of China, refers to a system of values that has come down to the present day from ancient times. This great apparatus of knowledge and ideas has influenced and is still influencing the world view of Chinese people and of course also their artistic expressions. The same discourse can be re-proposed in a general way also to the evolution of the western mind, a process that probably was less coherent than the Chinese one, which however led to the formation of various expressions of thought rooted in the conception of the world that the Village forged during its evolution. And this is exactly the key point of our reasoning, once the world interpretation system is established, it is almost impossible to get out of it, as it is invisible, and its boundaries unrecognizable. Because it being the only view you know, you believe that it is the only view that exists. It's like those unfortunate people who were chained in the platonic cave. It wasn't until someone came in from the outside, did they realize the condition they were in.

This was also the case for China until the mid-nineteenth century. China behaved like the Village, just another Village that did not see those who were outside of it, except of course through its own modalities. And even though external cultural influences were accepted, it was always retranslated in Chinese terms, just like the Village does. As a consequence, there was a sense of cultural superiority compared to that which was not Chinese. Until one terrible day, when the barbarians arrived with cannons and rifles and destroyed the armies of the great empire. On that day, besides the fall of many lives, many certainties also fell in terms of value. Their system had not protected them from catastrophe, as it once did since the dawn of Chinese culture. This was not the first time that China fell into the hands of foreigners, and every time the foreigners were sinicized. Thus, their cultural continuity persisted. However, the value system was still slowly collapsing to the point where it almost disappeared. Since then it has rebuilt itself, but the system of the other foreign villages took a hold as well, strong of its modernity.

Accordingly, in contemporary China it can be said that there are two systems, the original and the imported one. The same could be said for the world of art, but art can be applied at will on any area. This has created a unique situation where the two worlds communicate with each other, sometimes one taking over the other, creating conflicts but also at the same time a fertile ground for creativity.

It is exactly for this reason that we want to make this new system of thought known to the Village, only then will it be able to see its own boundaries, so that it will be able to ask new questions and give itself new answers.

Let's take a concrete example. The ancient western visual arts and the Renaissance up to modernity, basically acted in the field of mimesis. In painting, all the techniques to represent the visual aspect of the surrounding world comes together. Now coming back to the Village, to top it all, there was this terrifying yoke called Albertan's perspective. The Village gave a great deal of value to the sight, making it almost the only tool for perceiving reality. Establishing invisible perceptual borders because they were all-encompassing. However, at a certain point artists and intellectuals got tired of this conception, and thus historical avant-garde was born. Unfortunately, not knowing any other way of perceiving the world other than the anthropocentric one of the gaze, they found themselves in a rather uncomfortable position, so much so that the path ended with destruction of the form and that of the painting itself, and having to resort to new media to be able to express themselves. It is precisely for these reasons that in contemporary era we refer to paintings as an "old lady" who keeps up with new artistic expressions with great difficulty.

So where is all this getting at? In China, the influence of western art came between the late 1800s and early 1900's. The first to arrive was via Japan, the realistic techniques of the Barbizon school. And what were the most shocking innovations for the Chinese? Mimesis, focal perspective, chiaroscuro, and all those techniques which at the time in the West were considered regressed, representatives of a system that in those years the avant-gardes despised because of its anti-contemporary expressions. Why was this seen in China as revolutionary and innovative? Because traditional pictorial theories disgusted the view and representation of form as perceived

by our eyes, therefore it was an almost completely unexplored area.

China has had the good fortune of meeting and accepting a different way of interpreting the world, so why should the Village be deprived of it?

Just how much could a new way of understanding reality help the old painting of the Village? A whole world would open up, which should not mimic the Chinese one, but be inspired by it. So, we also take sides against the supremacism of sight and consequently against anthropocentrism. Our desire is to introduce these new visions, these new conceptions, and these new values. Not that the Village is completely unaware of it, but this knowledge is hidden in academic publications, accessible to those interested in the subject, but very far from the world of contemporary art or anyone else.

To conclude, we will introduce one of these intrinsic aspects of Chinese art which can be of great help and source of inspiration for our beloved Village. Why is mountain and water painting of great value in the contemporary world and why should the Village re-evaluate it? In the great pictorial experience of the Village, landscape painting as an independent genre was born late, and died early. The fact that in China it is already the higher form of painting and has a millennium and a half of history should make us ask questions about how it has probably been underestimated. Well, in reality it has not been underestimated, in fact there is no right and wrong in art, it has been evaluated according to the means that the Village head, according to its conceptions and ideas. And it is precisely

for this reason, we must open the doors to new value systems.

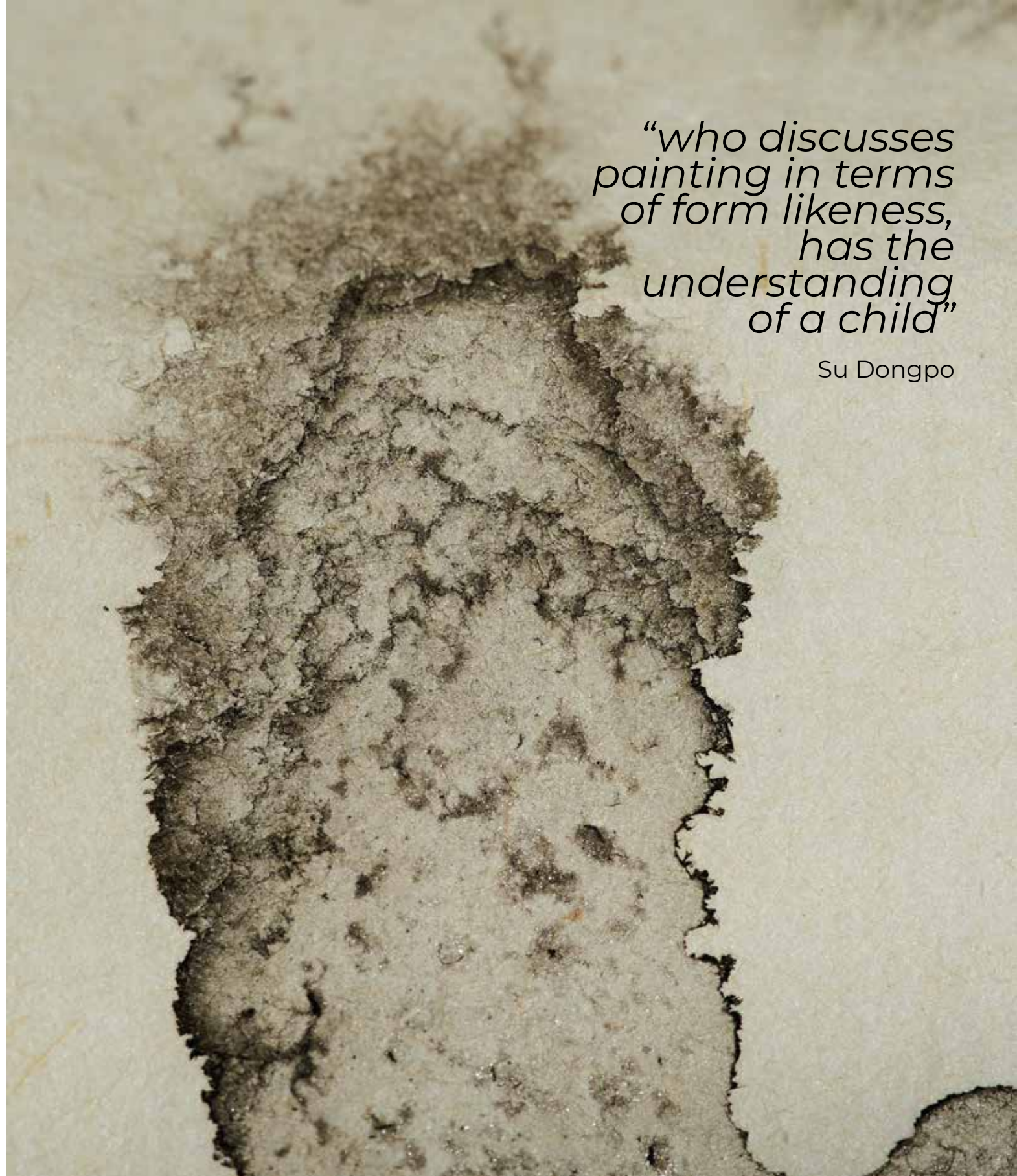
Art cannot be alienated from the reality in which it is produced, and one of the most important themes for us is that of ecology, in fact this hyper capitalist Village has massacred the world we live and does not seem to want to take steps back. Many have already set in motion to counter this destructive madness, but there is no contest. In the Village there has recently been talk of environmental aesthetics that lashes out against anthropocentrism to concert on environmental beauties, therefore going against one, the axioms of western aesthetics since ancient Greece, against that conception that sees man as the superior creature and dominant in the ecumene. This new point of view, at least for the Village, is one of the basic aspects of Chinese ethics. Philosophy and aesthetics are found in the texts at the base of Chinese culture, at the basis of Confucian philosophy and Daoist thought and continues to be repeated till modern times. A conception that does not just appreciate environmental beauties, but its holistic conception of the universe puts man on the same level as any other creation of nature. In *Yi Zhuan* 易传 (5th century BCE), a commentary on *Yi Jing* 易经, wrote that "the greatest virtue of heaven and earth is life" (天地之大德曰生), this is to say that the greatest virtue is to create an environment where all life forms and natural elements can coexist in harmony.

For this reason, too, the category of still life does not exist in Chinese painting, in fact for the Chinese artist it would be absurd to paint lifeless subjects.

For these and other reasons, the Village and the artists that reside in it will benefit from learning Chinese art. Mountain and water painting will inspire them, the beauty of nature will awaken the minds and set the minds in motion. The boundaries of the Village will begin to appear and we can finally begin to break them down.

*"who discusses
painting in terms
of form likeness,
has the
understanding
of a child"*

Su Dongpo



Oneness. On the Chinese Understanding of Nature

By; Heinrich Geiger

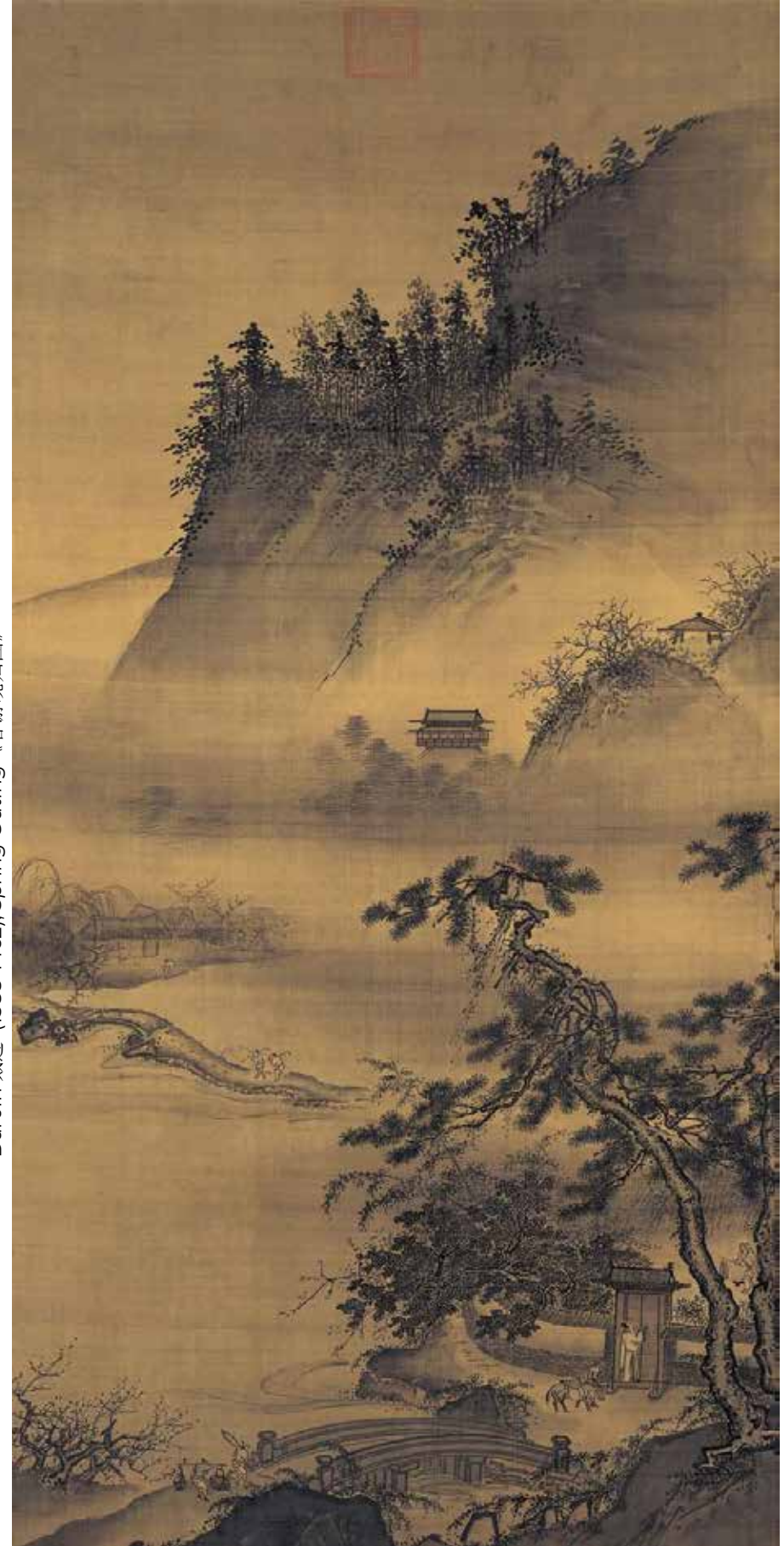
Technology has always been an inescapable part of life. In the present circumstances the term of the “Anthropocene” sends the message that technology is having undeniable impacts on the environment on the scale of the planet as a whole, so much so that even a new geological epoch has begun and an old epoch, the epoch of the Holocene, which lasted for 12,000 years, has gone. Martin Head, a geologist, described that process and its results with the following words: “We have talked to the earth, and now the earth responds to us.”¹ Besides many other meanings the term of the “Anthropocene” includes the insight that mankind has caused mass extinctions of plants, animal species, polluted the oceans and altered the atmosphere during its “talk” to the earth, as Martin Head has put it. The “response” of the earth is, among other things, the climate change, articulating itself in flooded coastal areas, droughts, wars and migration. This fundamental violence is done by man under the banner of scientific and technological progress. Science and technology may count as the greatest mythological beliefs of our time. In China today “Scientific Socialism” is propagated and put into political practice. According to my opinion, which is in line with Martin Heidegger, we have to grasp this unsettling essence of modern metaphysics and strive to overcome it by returning human existence (“Da-

sein”) to its origin in the world. Under the premises of the Anthropocene, not only the natural sciences, but also the humanities have to look for new ways to define themselves. By doing so, they cannot escape the crucial question whether the opposition of man and nature on the one and the opposition of natural and cultural sciences on the other side have not lost their original meaning in the new epoch? How to uphold these oppositions in a world where we cannot find a place which does not show ecological footprints of human beings? Man and nature cannot be separated from each other anymore, as they are parts of a dynamic process which does not distinguish between them. With respect to the question about individuals living a life of appropriateness and establishing their destiny, we also have to ask if the concept of naturalness, as it has been formulated in the book Laozi 老子 for example, is still able to provide cultural guidance. How can we define what is ethically right or wrong within processual orders, happening between nature and man? We might oppose genetically modified organisms in industrial food production because we see them as doing fundamental violence to the fabric of nature and humanity. However, another group of people may claim that genetically modified organisms in industrial food production are good because they allow a larger human population to be fed. What is ethically right and what is ethically wrong?

It seems that we inevitably fall into a kind of relativism regarding controversial issues like these. Values, judgments and appraisals are often

SHANSHUI

Dai Jin 戴进 (1388-1462), Spring Outing 《春游晚归图》



attached to certain particular stand-points. This leads to a confrontation between various opposites: between objects and the self, being and non-being, difficulty and ease, good and evil and, last but not least, because of this kind of thinking in dichotomies, to a misleading human approach to nature. In fact, the relationship between humanity and nature is at the heart of ontologies of all philosophical interrogations, albeit expressed differently in different historical epochs and cultural contexts. In ancient Chinese

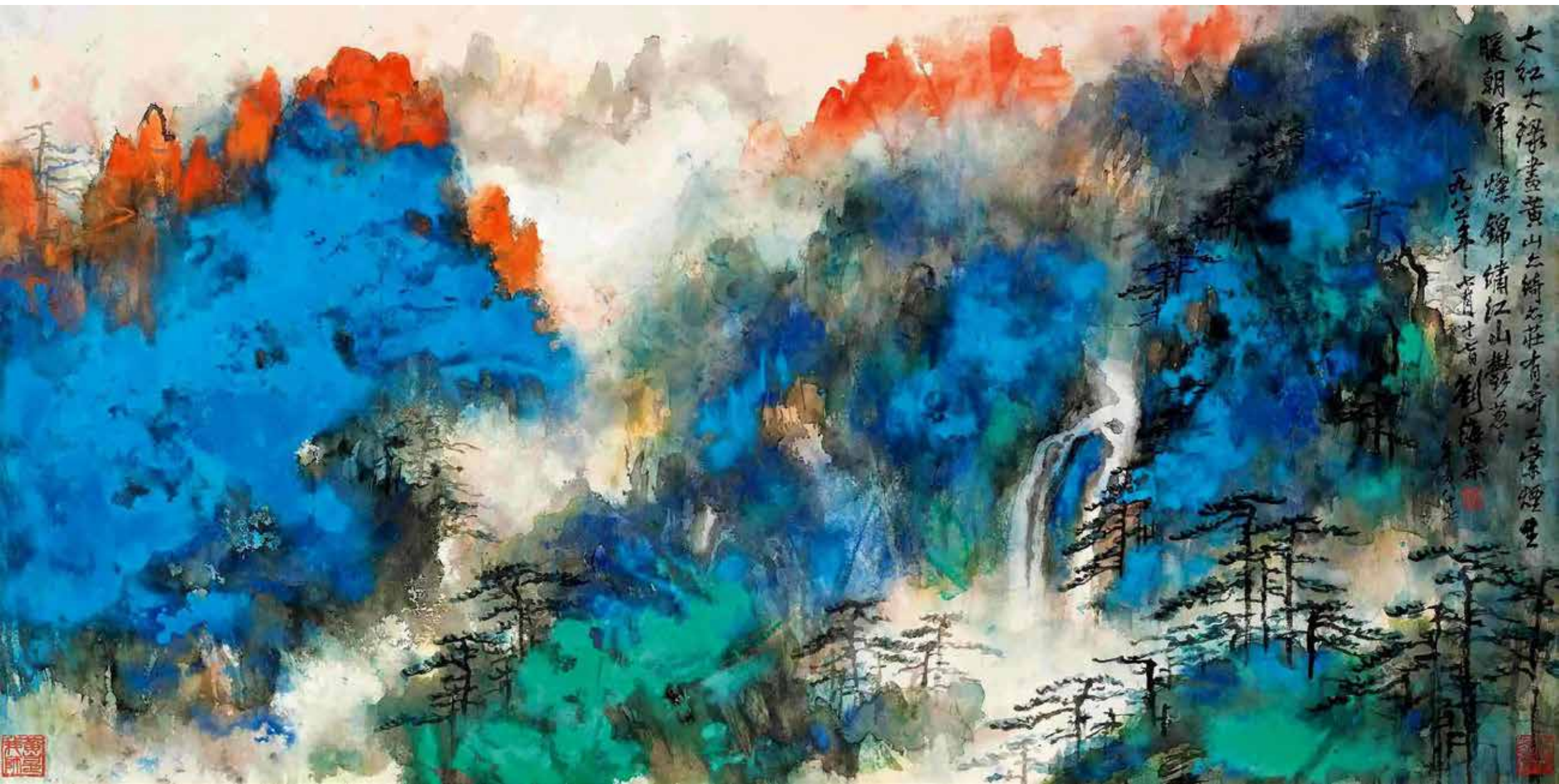
philosophy human essence is defined through relationship, and it is through the employment of such reasoning that one could attain access to the supernatural which is permeating the whole of nature. But if the relationship between human beings and the world is cut off, the atomization of individuals and the fragmentation of the natural world take place. Mankind is then nothing more than the dominator of nature, understanding that the world is created for its use – be it as a tourist destination or a place of econom-

ic exploitation. Under these premises man is the subject, the “measure of all things;” he is privileged and the keeper of nature.

Could ancient Chinese philosophy help us to overcome these predicaments, which are caused by a very harmful opposition of man and nature and by some kind of blindness towards the fact that human beings are not the masters of nature, nor can they exist independently of it? Does not ancient Chinese philosophy tell us

that human beings and nature are interdependent, improving one another, getting along well with each other and integrating? To remember, the book *Laozi* explicitly points out that a human being should hold a respectful attitude towards heaven, the *dao* 道, and naturalness, and respect the laws of nature; humans in conformity with the *dao* should not violate natural laws, they should follow them instead. Only in this way can they achieve oneness between man and nature and apply their technical skills

Liu Haisu 刘海粟 (1896-1994)



in the right and not in a destructive way – which is one of the core ideas of Daoism and, as I would like to state, of traditional Chinese culture. It permeates the arts of painting, calligraphy, craftsmanship and so on in general. Technology plays an important role; according to Chinese philosophy not as a tool of violence, but as a tool of human experience (some may call it “wisdom”) which unfolds its effects in the very process of living. The human person and the world are one ongoing process. Because there is no dichotomy between nature and nurture, between social and biological issues, there is also no antagonism between the realms of technology and ecology. “The problem is how human growth can unfold with the rhythm of nature.”²

The present government of the People’s Republic of China is running a plan, unveiled seven years ago in May 2015, called “Made in China 2025.” As China revved up its manufacturing machine to power growth over the years, officials were willing to tolerate some of the downside of scrap, namely the pollution of local soil and rivers by low-end-recycling practices. Further on, since the 1990s, the world has shipped its waste paper, discarded plastic and unwanted metals to China, where they have been destined to be used as raw materials to help power the country’s export-driven manufacturing boom. In 2016, China imported about \$ 18 million worth of what the government calls solid waste. But the situation has changed. China does not want to be the rest of the world’s trash can anymore. It started its regulatory fight against imported garbage in 2013, when a flurry of port inspections forced overseas recyclers to clean up

2 Liu Jing, “Growth, Experience and Nature in Dewey’s Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy,” in: *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 12 (March 2017) 1, pp. 90-103. Quotation on p. 96.

their operations and invest in new waste-sorting technologies.³

Among other things “Made in China 2025” means that the People’s Republic of China should no longer make such environmental sacrifices. Pollution figures strongly into the broader debate over the cost of growth in China. If successful, the antipollution campaign could produce blue skies and clean water across the country. And, not to forget: Following the guidelines of Scientific Socialism the Chinese government has designs to dominate cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence. It is enlisting some of the world’s biggest technology players in its push.

“Made in China 2025” is very ambitious. It means a national industrial policy that aims to project a new type of global might and influence. In my opinion, there is a common idea, shared by modern and traditional China. It lies in the fact that both focus on the interaction between human persons in community and the natural world so as to formulate a dynamic life philosophy or, as I would say, following the German philosopher Günter Wohlfart, an ethical system without morality.⁴ But in this system there exists a dilemma: The dilemma “between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people’s ever-growing needs for a better life,” as President Xi Jinping stated in 2017.⁵ Ecological consciousness and ethics without morality, can they work well together?

3 Mike Ives, “China Does Not Want to Be the World’s Garbage Dump Anymore,” in: *The New York Times International Weekly*, December 15, 2017.

4 Günter Wohlfart, *Die Kunst des Lebens und andere Künste. Skurrile Skizzen zu einem eurodaoistischen Ethos ohne Moral*, Berlin: Parerga 2005.

5 Keith Bradsher, “Harder Line on Pollution. Could China Slow Down China,” [Ist dies ein deutscher Artikel? Wie lautet der Titel in deutscher Sprache?] in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, November 10, 2017.

Remarks on the Concept of Nature in Traditional China⁶

The conventional term in Chinese philosophy for nature is *ziran* 自然. In general it is associated with Daoism. In the books *Laozi* 《老子》 and *Zhuangzi* 《庄子》 nature represents a certain desirable state beyond the realms of civilization and social norms. The followers of Daoism dissociate themselves from the followers of Confucianism. They are dreaming of a pre-historic period. Thanks to the natural living conditions at that time, human beings had, so the assumption, supernatural capabilities at their disposal. Through Neo-Confucianism the relationship between Daoism and Confucianism entered into a new stage at the end of the first millennium A.D. At the same time, *The Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 《易经》) began to play a new and far-reaching role.

Zhou Dunyi 周敦颐 (1017–1073) is generally called the pioneer of Neo-Confucianism. Being an outgrowth of ancient Confucianism, modified by Daoism and Buddhism, Neo-Confucianism thrived from the twelfth to the sixteenth century. Zhou laid the pattern of metaphysics and ethics for later Neo-Confucianism in his works *An Explanation of the Diagram of the Great Universe* (*Taiji tu shuo* 《太极图说》) and *Penetrating the Book of Changes* (*Tong shu* 《通书》). His *Taiji tu shuo* is not like any diagram of the Daoists. It is closer to *The Book of Changes* rather than to the books *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* of Daoism. Zhou Dunyi based his entire philosophy on *The Book of Changes* and, as such, used this classic for his own “rational philosophy.”⁷ Following *The Book*

6 Based on the book Heinrich Geiger, *Den Duft hören. Natur, Naturbegriff und Umweltverhalten in China*, Berlin: Matthes & Seitz 2019.

7 Chan Wing-Tsit (transl./comp.), *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton, New Jersey: Prince-

of Changes, the two complementary ethical formulae, seriousness (*cheng* 诚) to straighten the internal life and righteousness (*yi* 义) to square the external life, became the keystones in the method of moral cultivation of many Neo-Confucianists.

From the writings of Zhou Dunyi we may see that at the latest since the formation of Neo-Confucianism, this means from the beginning of the second millennium A.D., *The Book of Changes* had been very crucial again in a specific way for the understanding of the harmony between heaven (*tian* 天), earth (*di* 地) and men (*ren* 人). Zhou Dunyi assimilated the Daoist element of Non-Being to Confucian thought, but in so doing, he discarded the fantasy and mysticism of Daoism. In the following, nature was conceived as a part of a reality, which can be regulated. It was understood among other things as a functioning whole, be it a landscape with thousands of traces of *qi* 气 or a city with thousands of roads. Now, in the 21st century, not only a few are convinced that, following *The Book of Changes*, you even may discover the laws of nature in the stock-market. According to my own opinion, this is a late result of Neo-Confucianism, using *The Book of Changes* for its “rational philosophy.”

Culture and Nature⁸

In the history of Chinese thought nature is not opposed to culture or the world of man. *The Book of Changes*, which is characterized by the impact of different traditions of thought, shows that well.

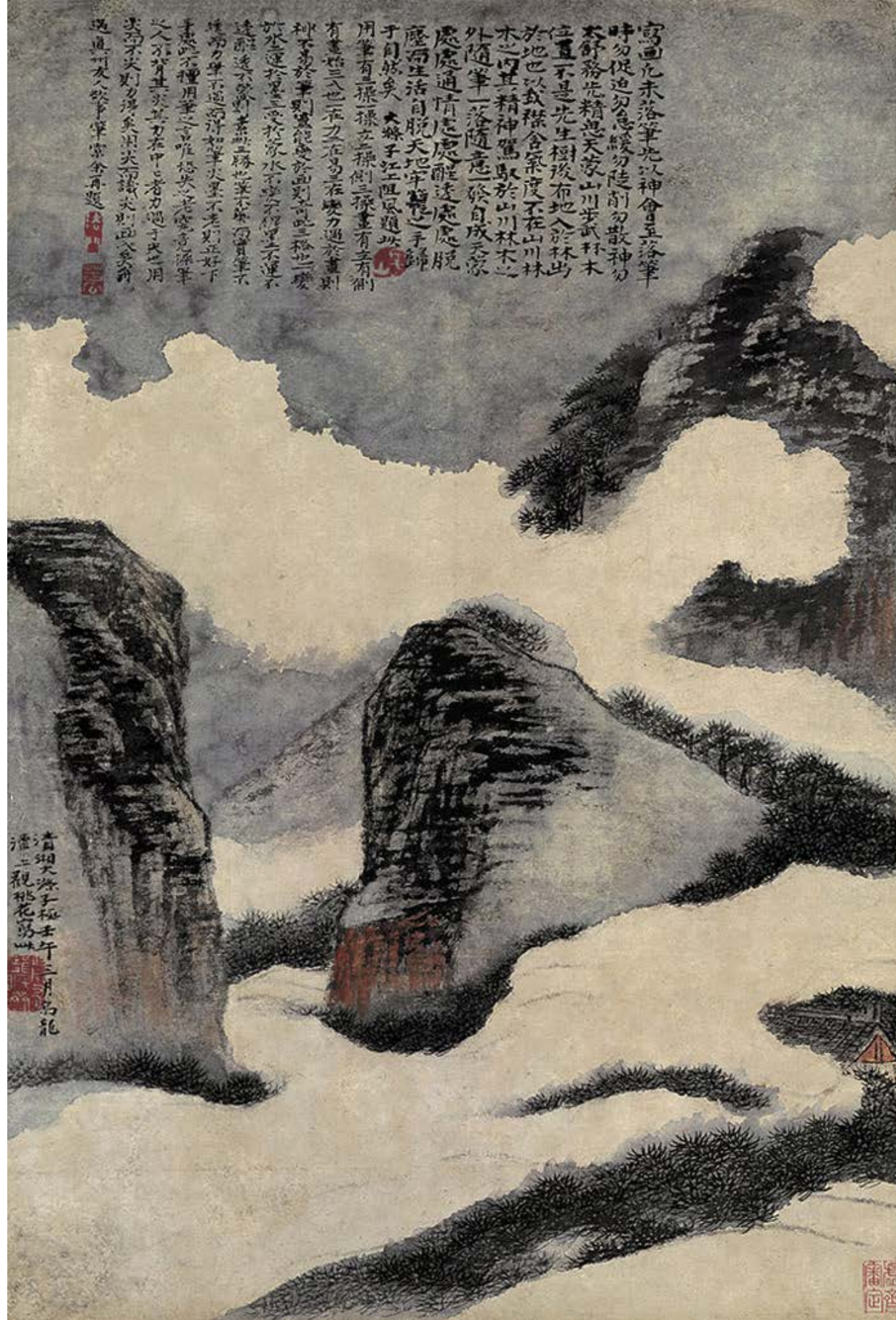
Since its very origin *The Book of Changes* consisted of the so-called eight Trigrams (*ba gua* 八卦, i.e., fig-

ton University Press 1969 (fourth printing 1973), p. 460.

8 Based on the book Heinrich Geiger, *Den Duft hören. Natur, Naturbegriff und Umweltverhalten in China*, Berlin: Matthes & Seitz 2019.

ures composed of three lines each), being then the name symbols for eight worldly natural objects or phenomena, such as Heaven, Earth, Thunder, Winds, Fire, Water, Mountains and Marshes. From those eight symbols they were extended to sixty four combinations of two combined Trigrams, called sixty four Hexagrams (*liushisi gua* 六十四卦, i.e., figures composed of now six lines each). Traditionally the invention of the eight Trigrams is ascribed to the mythical ruler Fu Xi 伏羲. King Wen 周文王 of the Zhou-Dynasty (approx. 1100–256 B.C.) is said to have doubled the Trigrams to Hexagrams and was the first to arrange them. But actually *The Book of Changes* has been accomplished by many people with generations of efforts. Different parts of it have been compiled over a long period by different groups of persons. The final shape must have evolved during the Warring States period (441–221 B.C.). During the last two centuries B.C., when cosmological speculations prevailed, there were four different traditions of the *Yijing* for which professorships were established. The versions of Meng Xi 孟喜 (B.C., exact life data unknown) and Jing Fang 京房 (78–37 B.C.) soon dominated over the others, but were themselves, at the end of the Eastern Han-Dynasty (25–220 A.D.), overshadowed by the versions commented by Zheng Xuan 郑玄 (127–200 A.D.) and Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249 A.D.). Matters of dispute are the actual dates of the completion of the *Yijing* commentaries. Feng Youlan 冯友兰, for example, dates the commentaries as late as the Western Han-Dynasty (206 B.C. – 9 A.D.).⁹ The *Ten Wing Commentaries* (*Shi yi* 《十翼》) which interpret the Hexagrams and their statements in a lexicological, symbolistic and philosophical way should be considered

9 Fung Yulan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, transl. by Derk Bodde, 2 vols., Princeton: University Press 1952/3, pp. 381–382.



products of that time.

Talking about *The Book of Changes*, we may presume that the text describes an ancient system of cosmology and philosophy which underwent a process of reinterpretation by Neo-Confucianism. In its early times it was used as an official book of divination by ancient rulers. Later on its meaning was applied in geomancy as corresponding to points of the compass. But, despite that fact, one should not forget its heterogeneity. At the time of the classical philosophers in around 500 B.C., after the Zhou-State weakened and China moved in to the Spring and Autumn Period (770–481 B.C.), *The Book of Changes* began to show traces of different schools which utilized the material of the same to be interpreted into their own system of thought. Confucian influence played a great role, but also Daoism and the Yin-Yang school. As Burton Watson in his book *Early Chinese Literature* explains:

*It thus provided an opportunity for scholars with a more metaphysical and transcendental bent of mind to indulge their tastes without going outside the realm of the Five Classics, and the endless volumes of commentary on the hidden meaning of the Changes are the result. Had there been no such text in the Confucian canon, it is likely that such men would have abandoned Confucianism entirely in favour of the Daoists, who from the beginning interested themselves in mystical and cosmological speculation. It was probably to preclude just such an eventuality that the early Confucian scholars took over The Book of Changes and made it part of their literature.*¹⁰

10 Burton Watson, *Early Chinese Literature*, New York – London: Columbia University Press 1962, p. 153.



Jia Kemu 贾客暮, *Contaminated mountains and waters* 《污染山水》, 16x112, 2022

Starting from the 10th century A.D., the Neo-Confucian school understood the “father of all classics and source of a hundred schools of thought” in a more moralistic and, as pointed out above, functional manner.

In the *The Book of Changes* there is no real line between culture and nature, they are inseparable from each other. Studying nature means a communication within an overall context, to which we human beings belong. In their encounter with nature human beings reflect the basis of their own existence. They face, so to speak, relations all the way down, and all the way up and all the way out, which they have to consider. The Hexagrams of the *The Book of Changes* prove that there are no terms of relations which are not simply clusters of further relations. For the sake of an unrestricted understanding of the concept of nature as it is represented by *The Book of Changes* we have to keep that in mind. As it deals with Tri- and Hexagramms we have to understand the reader of *The Book of Changes*, following Charles Sanders Peirce, as someone “who knows no more recondite reality than that which is represented in a true representation.”¹¹ But this is, thanks to the deep meaning of the Tri- and Hexagrams in *The Book of Changes*, the reality of the whole universe, comprising heaven (*tian*), earth (*di*) and men (*ren*).

11 Martin Krampen et al. (ed.), *Die Welt als Zeichen. Klassiker der modernen Semiotik*, Berlin: Severin und Siedler 1981, p. 38.

The concrete never satisfies the mind: Even though numerous physical models have been constructed and a multitude of mathematical models have been formulated, through the history of *The Book of Changes* we may learn that the mental experiments still continue. The hermeneutic of this classical book is justified by the idea of “second nature” (John McDowell, born 1942, *Mind and World*, Harvard University Press 1996) which is based on the capacity of human beings as potentially rational and dialogical, responsive to “Bildung” (education or, better, formation). It is not only justified by the insight into nature itself or what we may call “first nature” and laws which may be explained by knowledge of fact. The textual tradition of the Chinese classics as it was shaped by Neo-Confucianism shows that we cannot leave our own horizon, as the effective history of a continuing tradition depends on constantly new assimilations and interpretations.

The Concepts of *ziran*, *tian* and *xing*¹²

For a genuine understanding of the concept of nature in China, the studies on *ziran* 自然 are not enough. To show it in all its diversity and depth, explanations on *tian* 天 and *xing* 性 have to be included. In that context I will not talk about the concept of *qi* 气 which was used as early as the Western Zhou-Dynasty (app. 1100–771 B.C.) in the meaning of nature.

¹² Based on the book Heinrich Geiger, *Den Duft hören. Naturbegriff und Umweltverhalten in China*, Berlin: Matthes & Seitz 2019.

ern Zhou-Dynasty (app. 1100–771 B.C.) in the meaning of nature.

Ziran 自然

We come across the term *ziran* from the 4th century B.C. amongst others in the Mohist canon. In the book *Daodejing* 《道德经》 (English: *True Classic of the Way and the Power*) the term *ziran* is used as an expression for something which cannot be named and realizes the utmost in itself. Also Wang Bi defines *ziran* in a very general way: according to him *ziran* should be understood as something which is empty or non-existent and comes into being through action or motion. The passage from potentiality to actuality is important. Therefore in ancient Chinese philosophy the concept of *ziran* gets its meaning on the one hand as a universal notion within an ontological model. On the other hand it is referred to in a significant manner as a human ability to fully merge with the *dao*, to get into oneness with the ten thousands things (*wan wu* 万物).

The character for *ziran* consists of two parts: *zi* 自, which is to be meant as “self,” and *ran* 然, which is joined to it, again consists of three component parts: right the radical “dog,” left the radical “flesh” and below them the radical for “fire.” *Ran* has been used in its etymological meaning of “burning” up to the Han-period (206 B.C. – 220 A.D.). However, we face many difficulties and fundamental philosophical problems in the act of translating

ziran. A dependence of this core concept of East-Asian thinking on Western concepts should be avoided.

Within the concept of *ziran*, nature is respected as a dynamic, self-regulatory essential form. First and foremost, it is understood as a rational, systematic arrangement, as is the case in *The Book of Changes*. Hence the meaning of nature (*ziran*) has not necessarily to be derived from the love for nature, but from the perspective of reflective human beings who are concerned about their own existence. This is an important difference between Chinese and Western culture which should be considered when we talk about environmental issues, too. Love for nature or unity with nature under the premise that it cannot be separated from man – this means two different relational settings of nature and man.

The core ideas of the Chinese concept of nature (*ziran*) may be found in *The Book of Changes*, as already pointed out above. According to the system of cosmology and philosophy, that is intrinsic to ancient Chinese cultural beliefs, every existence is a product of firm and yielding forces, it is at the same time a physical being as it is a force which interacts with other forces. From the third commentary of *The Book of Changes*, the *Great Commentary* (*Da zhuan* 《大传》) or, as it is also called, *About the Relationship of the Hexagrams* (*Xi ci zhuan* 《系辞传》), Section I, Chapter I, Paragraph 1 we can get an idea about the process of evolution of the universe from pri-

mordial chaos to ordered entity:

Heaven is high, the earth is low; thus the creative and the receptive are determined. In correspondence with this difference between low and high, inferior and superior places are established.

*Movements and rest have their definite laws; according to these, firm and yielding lines are differentiated. Events follow definite trends, each according to its nature. Things are distinguished from one another in definite classes. In this way good fortune and misfortune come about. In the heavens phenomena take form; on earth shapes take form. In this way change and transformation become manifest.*¹³

Even though this comment is a product of the Han-Dynasty, it is evident that such a conception must go back much earlier. We learn that cosmic evolution proceeds in four stages. The very first is the setting of the value levels of heaven and earth, and those in between. It is followed on the second stage by the differentiation of the firm and the yielding which is the precondition for the distribution of the two forces into different value levels on the third level. These value levels obey the rules that “similar things tend to group together” or “similar natures respond to each other.” On the fourth stage it comes to a formation of all the phenomena and things because they interact with each other and keep changing harmoniously due to a closed system of order.

Tian 天

“Heaven is high, the earth is low,” as we have heard from the *Great Commentary of the Yijing*. The term of

13 Richard Wilhelm, *The I Ching*, transl. by Cary Baynes, New York: Princeton University Press 1967, p. 280.

“heaven,” in Chinese *tian*, already appears in the texts of the *Shujing* 《书经》. From the outer appearance *The Book of Documents*, as the *Shujing* is called in English, goes back to the period between the 20th to the 7th Century B.C. But in reality it may count as a compilation of texts from the 10th to the 6th Century B.C. Together with the *Shijing* 《诗经》, *The Book of Poems*, it belongs to the oldest traditions of China.

Since the term of “heaven” (*tian*) is not clearly explained by the *Shujing* or by the *Shijing*, it came to the fact that it had been identified in some cases by Western ideas in the meaning of a personal God. Reasons for that had been given particularly by paleographic analysis of the graphic character *tian* which clearly shows, as it was seen, a human figure with big head and distinctive limbs. However the definition of “deity” in the Christian meaning as creator of cosmos and the human beings, etc. is eliminated as possibility for the *Shujing* as well as for the *Shijing*, as the heaven in these texts does not act as a creator. Even though in the *Daodejing*, the book *Laozi*, cosmogonical reports can be proved, there is good reason to conclude that in classical Chinese texts, as there are the *Shujing*, the *Shijing* and the book *Laozi*, the idea of a deity in the sense of a creator God does not exist. *Tian* has to be understood as a term which symbolizes the entity of ancestral spirits of a dynasty.

Wolfgang Bauer has explained on various occasions how heaven (*tian*) slowly lost its transcendent position during the Zhou-Dynasty.¹⁴ According to the German sinologist, in the course of that process the meaning of *tian* changed from a generic term for the entity of ancestral spirits of a dynasty

14 Wolfgang Bauer, “Gläubigkeit und Rationalität. Über das Verlassen von Göttern und Geistern in der zweiten Hälfte des ersten vorchristlichen Jahrtausends,” in: Kulturstiftung Ruhr, Essen (ed.), *Das*

finally into “nature.” Tian, the heaven, did not anymore, as it did before, look after the human beings, listen to them or speak to them. It appeared rather in a plethora of natural phenomena, from which the human beings had to draw their own lessons for concrete political decisions. This provided a very special historical background for the use of *The Book of Changes* as an official book of divination and geomancy.

Xing 性

Besides and together with the terms *ziran* and *tian* the Chinese understanding of nature is closely related with the term *xing*, which I would translate as “human nature.” In classical Chinese philosophy the identification of *xing*, suggested by etymological word relatedness, with the “inherent” (*sheng* 生) is very common. In the meaning of “heavenly nature” the concept of *xing* is found in a text passage in *The Book of Documents* (*Shujing*). There it is mentioned as a reason for a lost battle and the relief of the Shang (approx. 1600 – approx. 1100 B.C.) by the Zhou-Dynasty. It was argued that the last king of the Shang-Dynasty disrespected his “heavenly nature” (*xing*).

In the *Shujing* the will of heaven had been regarded as the crucial moment for the victory or rather the defeat of a dynasty, even though heaven itself did not execute it, but specific historical persons. Those who had been victorious had proved already that they are capable of implementing what is conceived as being in accordance with human nature (*xing*). This story tells us that according

alte China: Menschen und Götter im Reich der Mitte. 5000 v.Chr. – 220 nach Chr., München: Hirmer Verlag 1995, pp. 147-155.





to the *Shujing* human nature (*xing*) is not really free in the modern sense of the word. It is bound by a contract, which emanates from the “will of heaven” (*tian ming* 天命) and requires its implementation by several means that we also know from the *Yijing*.

Closing Remarks

The concept of *tian* changed from “heaven” to “nature” in the meaning of natural phenomena within the last centuries B.C. And also the concept of *xing* underwent a transformation in the same direction. From the writings of Mengzi 孟子 (372–289 B.C.) and Xunzi 荀子 (298–238 B.C.) we know that during the 4th and 3rd century B.C. human nature was not seen any more within an order set by heaven. It was seen in the light of human nature itself which Mencius understood as good and Xunzi as bad. Mencius talked about the virtues of men, Xunzi about their sensual and instinctive nature which could be used for the sake of a harmonious state by the means of music and ritual.

These transformations have to be kept in mind when we speak about nature in China and its underlying cosmology which is also basic for *The Book of Changes*. We should learn from these transformations that the Chinese perception of nature comes along with a diverse history, which brought specific Confucian concepts into the vicinity of Daoism, especially at the time of the Western Han-Dynasty (206 B.C. – 9 A.D.), and again, together with some Buddhist impact, at the time of Song-Dynasty (960–1279 A.D.), based on the *The Book of Changes*.

Now we are living in the epoch of the Anthropocene. After a break with its own tradition in the course of the 20th century, Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism again play a certain

role in the academic world of present day China. During the last decades, a whole range of discussions and mechanisms have evolved to address the loss of nature, environmental degradation and ecological corrosion. Along with an emphasis on these issues, there has also been an increasing focus on how to find an adequate response to what nowadays is seen as a global challenge in dealing with environmental degradation and ecological corrosion. Historically speaking, one could say that there has been worldwide an evolution from nature conservation education to environmental education to the recent idea of education for sustainable development.

The greatest challenge for environmental questions in a global and an intercultural perspective is to find a respectful way to compare Western and non-European, in our case Chinese, traditions. It is challenging, yet crucial, not to distort non-European traditions by making them conform to Western traditions. They must be a part and parcel of creating a culture of care and raising global awareness for our common home. Not to forget: In Chinese culture nature has a lot to do with practice. That means: You can only protect nature, if you protect your own culture.

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Innocence in the Mountains

—Zhang Cangjian's Practice of Chinese Mountain and Water Painting

By: Lin Jiangquan

Zhang Cangjian's 张仓健 landscape is not only a material state, but also a spiritual state of "gathering things". "Getting the eye, embodying the hearts, and forming between the brush and ink" (Shen Zhou, *Calligraphy and Painting Collection*). "得之目，寓诸心，而形于笔墨之间" (沈周《书画汇考》) Besides the landscapes, there is another Zhang Cangjian. In Zhang Cangjian's paintings, objects are not only semiotics, but his brush and ink communicate with the soul in the wild and transparent spirituality. His spirit tries to start towards a borderless free state, so as to be unrestrained and arbitrary. ("出也无滞，成也无心，随手点拂而物态毕呈。")

In the quiet, boundless or vigorous natural scene, Zhang Cangjian reminds of the factors that have not yet come and will come. His impassive landscape and the hidden corners in the current situation of life form an intertextuality, reflecting the complex social sentiment in these ancient corners, and discovering another part in the overlapping interpersonal network. He breaks the huge sociological landscape into fragments and then allegorizes the mixed and wrong structure. The existing thought shape and mutual materialized representation play in the landscape image. What can these images generated by staring achieve?

The world in Zhang Cangjian's landscape is not far away from the real world. He often uses the "banded schema" of virtual reality to separate our perception, and watches the land-

scape traces that are groping for differences fall into namelessness or disorder. Mountains, rivers and flowing waters or exotic natural environments were disrupted and connected by him. An unpredictable scene loomed in the blues. The psychological space in the real state was revealed in his region. It was gradually revealing the patchwork facts, loose essence, fragmented embrace and cold and empty appearances of the world, such as his works *Valley of Wind* 《风之谷》, *Harvest Story* 《收获物语》, *Illusion of Early Autumn* 《幻化初秋》, and more.

Whether learning from Huang Binhong 黄宾虹 (1865-1955) and Tang Liuru 唐六如 (1470-1524) or learning from Jing Hao 荆浩, Guan Tong 关仝, Dong Yuan 董源 and Ju Ran 居仝 of the Tang, of the Five Dynasties and Song Dynasty from afar, mountain and water painters should adopt their own methods to the ancients rather than imitate their traces. Throughout his mountain and water painting career, Zhang Cangjian has come down in one continuous line from ancient people to modern people. His brush, ink and techniques are like those of his predecessors, but his brush, ink and ideas are nourished by them. Huang Binhong said, "People say that you can walk in the sparse parts of the picture composition, but not in the dense parts. I prefer to say that you can walk in the dense parts, but not in the sparse parts." ("人们讲画面构图疏处可以走马，密处不使透风；我偏说密作可以走马，疏处不使透风。") . "Read" Zhang Cangjian's image, and go deep into a pioneering structure where ink and color are both in conflict and harmony. The secret of deep focus and shallow shift is hidden in the dense

Clouds of compassion on the mountain ridge 《慈云岭》，240x120, 2019





Valley of Wind 《风之谷》，137x68, 2018

Source of the clear mountain stream 《澄涧之源》，137x68, 2018



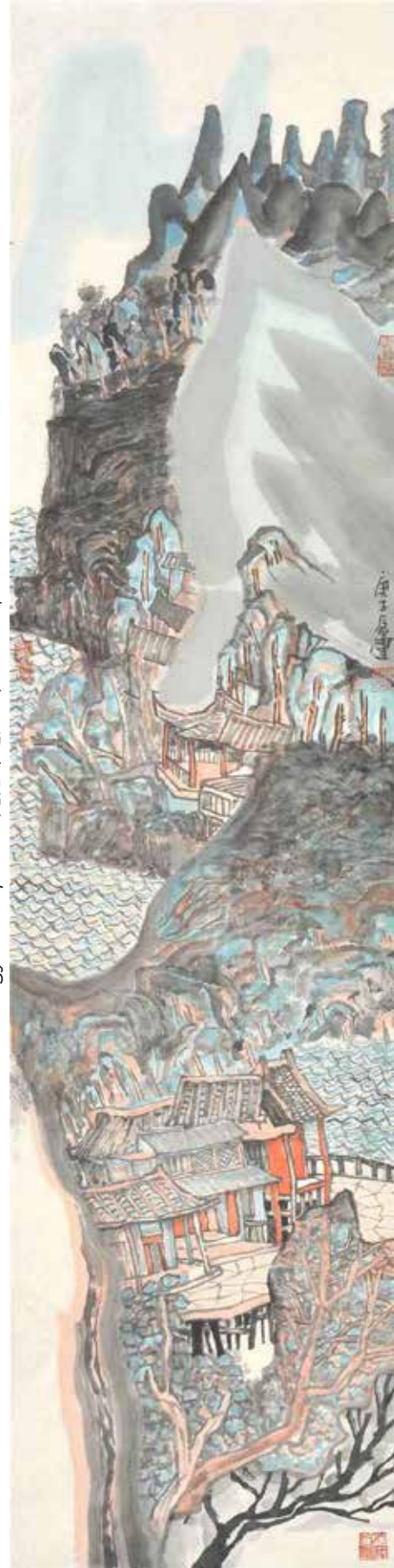
parts and sparse parts.

Zhang Cangjian's landscape is a landscape that can lead to countless realistic paths. In his practice, landscape is not only a landscape, nor just a noun. He continued to move the moving track of the clouds and the mists until everything became clouds and the mists, or all the mountains contained five color layers that appeared in his deconstruction, such as *Love Seeks Color* 《情牵物色》, *Morning Talk* 《晨之语》. Different layers appear as images generated from time to time recognition of mountains. When he excavated the complex state of mountains and waters, he embodied several paths: first, he described the mountains and waters from fantasy to reality to direct resistance to reality; the second is to explore the subtle psychology brought by mountains and waters. He combines the poetic nature of mountains and waters with the original trauma of mountains and waters, explores the mysterious inner world of landscapes, and often emphasizes some variables of fate. He has a thorough understanding of the artistic characteristics - talking about self with images. He used thick ink blocks to separate the mountain combination that should have been in conflict, and ink and color were interwoven in the mountains, giving out a thick low voice or singing briskly. And the connection between the mind and the image is in a state of uncertainty, which eventually leads to the state of "taking pleasure" - "losing pleasure" (取兴 - 兴尽).

With the unique landscape equation to promote the development of his images, different brush and ink paths have developed a new gaze mechanism in a sharp or calm way. Through the gaze and blue color, the viewer is quietly lead to the overwhelming reality. He can set the clue of limited landscape, eliminate the infinite model, and try to reach the unknown "cloud" territory ahead with the progress of depth of field. Clouds and mists repeat



Longyin Temple 2 《龙隐寺之二》, 137x34, 2020



Longyin Temple 6 《龙隐寺之六》, 137x34, 2020

and advance step by step, creating another "cloud" image effect, fulfilling the promise given by clouds and mists internally.

The mountains were reconstructed, superimposed, re-reconstructed and re-superimposed by Zhang Cangjian, or a "reconstruction theory" was reached outside the mountains, resulting in chemical reactions inside and outside the mountains. In the face of his banded language setting, in the vague provocation and alienation, layers are deleted and reconstructed from the bottom to the top, but there is a resurgence of the yellow finch behind. When one kind of mountains and clouds seems to want to lead the theme to oppression, they are soon swallowed up by another, more common theme. When this depth of field has lost the attachment of the first half of the pair, it becomes related to the outside of clouds and mists. Such overlapping processing of landscape images indicates the opposition between human instinct and sociology. The landscape is divided by time and space, and in the narration of memories or dreams, it reflects the nihilism view that the artist and the depth of field have reached a consensus.

The most basic linear image production of landscape samples, such as *Qing Mu-chuan Journey* 《青木川记游长卷》, *Longyin Temple* 《龙隐寺》 series, and *On the Lake* 《湖上》 series, runs through his image practice. From tranquility to uncontrollable, and then back to tranquility as a mystery, clouds and mists advance layer by layer with a sense of destiny. The momentum of repetition and ferocity are equally important. For the first time, it is boundless or disorderly, hiding multi-level meanings behind unbridled mountains. Suspended, confused and nervous, the different mountain plots hold an extraordinary continuity in tune, and show their relatively unified spiritual essence under the constant variation of clouds and smoke. The mountains are compact



and stacked in strips, which firmly guide the perception of the retina. It seems that every step of the vision is full of suspense. Silence is often cruel, overlapping and interlacing into a synonym of the same "I"; Or bounce back from the depression of self doubt.

The scope of a person's travel is his world. Zhang Cangjian's travel has covered Asia, Europe, America and China, especially in Iran, India, Laos and other mysterious countries. Along with his travels abroad, he went deep into the social scene of different languages and searched all the wonderful peaks abroad with his painting bag. What brought Zhang Cangjian a broad path to his creation was that he constantly "negated" himself in the schema, and the technique of "either this or that" created a constantly changing painting style. The brewing and promotion of "leading pleasure" 引兴 concentrated on the middle stage of the painting process. Li Rihua 李日华 (1564-1635) called the eye-catching observation of "pleasure" as "the ignorance of meaning", and believed that "the ignorance of right and wrong has to be ignored." (Li Rihua's *Miscellaneous Decorations of Purple Peach Pavilion* 《紫桃轩杂缀》:是非有心于忽,盖不得不忽也。). The so-called "ignorance" has the meaning of observing uncertainty and the uncertainty of aesthetic image. Zhang Cangjian has transcended countless mountains and rivers with this double uncertainty, from "entering" in the traditional classics of ancient people to "going out" from the learning from the past, to "learning from my heart and writing my method" to "writing the law outside of me", spanning Descartes' "I think, therefore I am", to Lacan's "I am outside of me".

A mountain seen up close has one aspect, seen from a distance of a few li it has another, from one of many it has yet another, each distance has its own particularity, this is called "the mountain that changes shape at every step". The front is one way, the side still another, the back still another, from every [point from which you look at it] there are just as many differences, this is called "the mountain changes shape from every point of view". In this way thousands of mountain shapes join together in one mountain, shouldn't we be aware of this?

Guo Xi



The sign in Van Gogh's sketches produced in letters to his brother Theo and the expressive line in the *Shanshui hua* paintings by Ma Lin and Guo Xi

By: Aurora Vivenzio

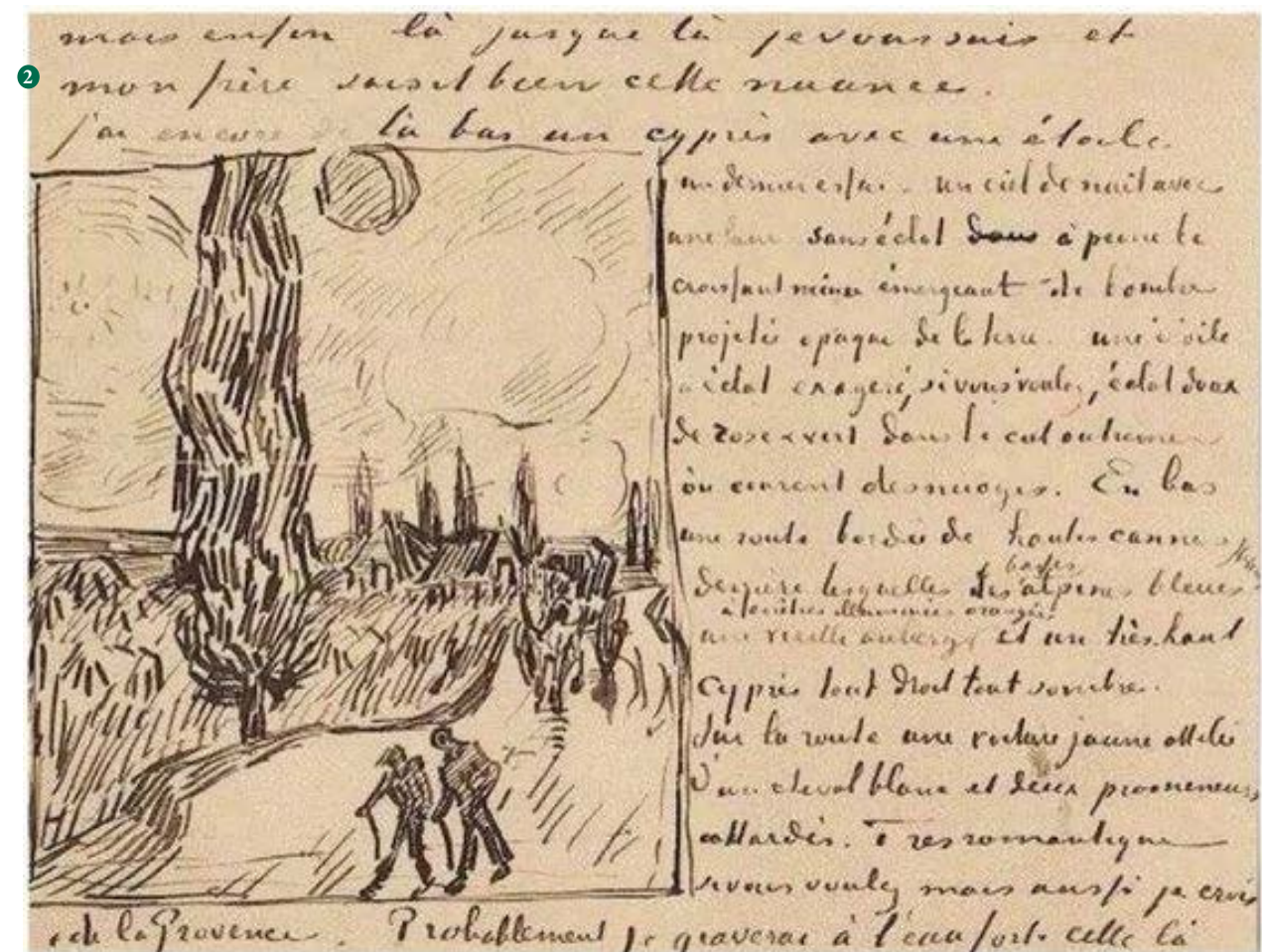
Sign and line capture and delineate, 画 *hua*, the phenomenal form of objects and nature. This manifests itself to man in all its potential and spirit that makes matter flow, move, modify and transform. This intrinsic soul in nature was already known and present in the productions of landscape painting, in line with Taoist and Confucian theories. In the West, as we know, it would only be necessary to wait until the first half of the 19th century and the renewal of the Romantic spirit, for artists to abandon the Platonic idea of nature perceived as a backdrop, and proceed to scientifically and religiously revalue landscape as a 'living being'.

This attention to the spirit of nature, to its manifestation as an entity endowed with a life of its own, with internal laws that only the 'chosen few' can understand, are the 'theories' and themes that drive the work of one of the pre-expressionist artists of the early 20th century: namely, Vincent Van Gogh. The sketches found in the letters to his brother Theo and the preparatory ink sketches (such as *The Cave of Machpelah*, letter 116 to Theo van Gogh, Amsterdam, 28 May 1877 (fig.1)) show his strong desire and interest in capturing through line that vitality (气 *qi*), that life of its own that nature possesses. And the production of this Dutch painter must be read in a religious key. Indeed, he as a 'bonzo' (this is how he describes himself in a painted self-portrait, on his return from Paris *Self-portrait* (dedicated to Paul Gauguin), 1888), felt invest-

ed with a mission, namely, to express through his painting the true noumenon of nature. His objective, like his "modus operandi", is comparable to ink painting and landscape painting in that lines delineate and describe the phenomenal object, capturing its essence and vital pulsion in a sign, in a stroke, now dense, now subtle, now continuous, now discontinuous (figs. 2-3).

Thus, after a realist period, which saw him dwell on the representation of the poorer social classes, 1888 was the year in which he went to Paris to become acquainted with the new Parisian circles and the new pictorial currents that were emerging. His interest fell on the vibrant, luminous, material brushstrokes composed of only the complementary colours of the Impressionists, but it was in the force of light and colour of the pointillist Seraut that Van Gogh found his dimension, and in the broken, slashing lines of the faces of the men and women of Lautrec, that cruelty and vitality inherent in reality: that which is not objective of the phenomenal datum, but the essence of nature itself.

Van Gogh, as with many Chinese painters, saw in the vibration of the sign, now pictorial, now graphic, the manifestation of a nature, and as with the countless Japanese prints (浮世絵 *ukiyo-e* by Utamaro, Hokusai and Hiroshige) that he observed, copied and bought to make that line his own, using it as a descriptive medium, but



Vincent Van Gogh, *Avenue of Cypresses under the Starry Sky*, letter RM23 to Paul Gauguin, Auvers-Sur-Oise, 17 June 1890



Ma Lin: *Spring Fragrance, Clearing After Rain*. *Spring Fragrance, Clearing After Rain*, ink and slight colour on silk album leaf, National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Guo Xi, *Early Spring*, detail of a hanging scroll, ink and slight colour on silk, 1072 National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.

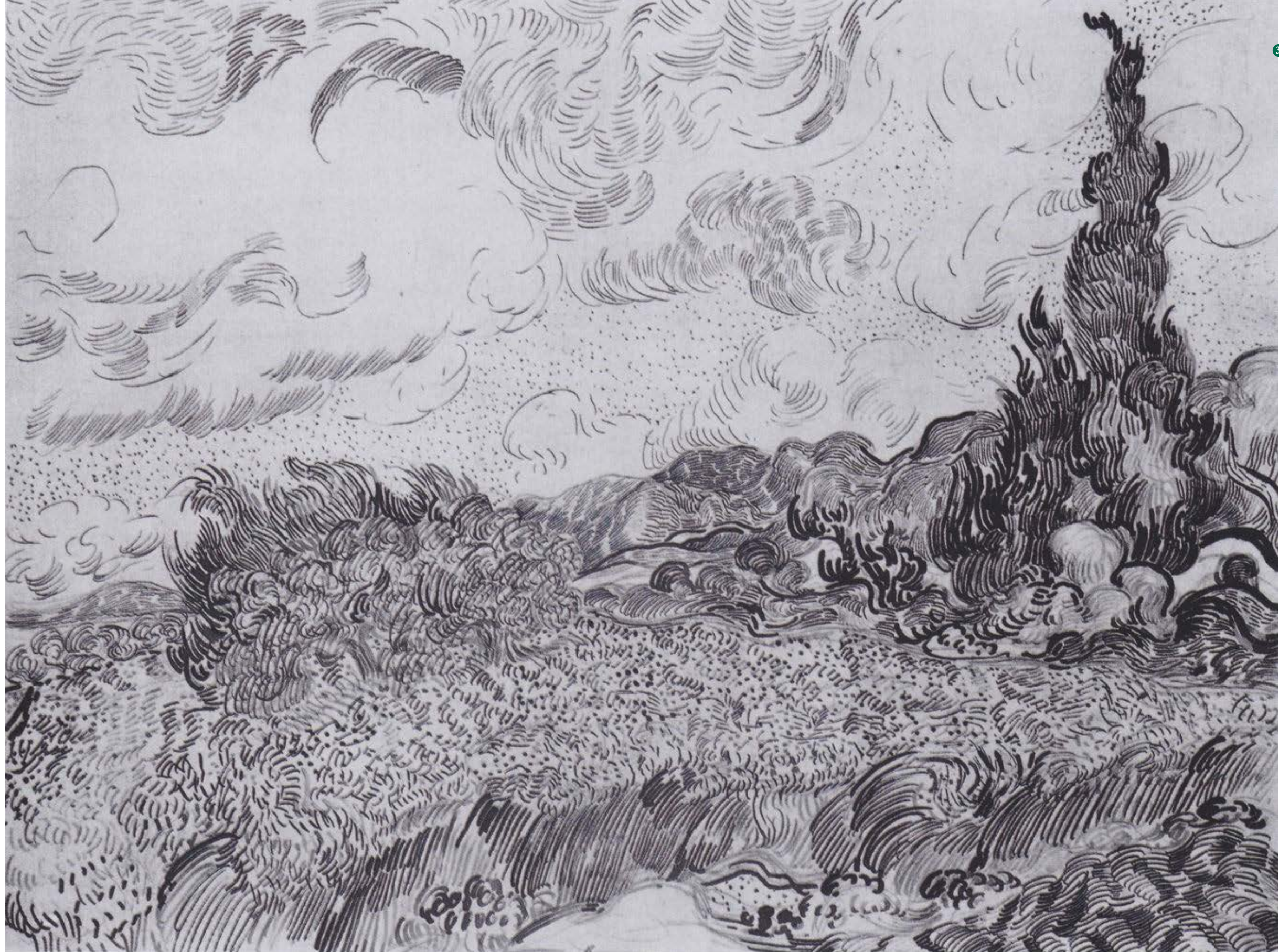
giving it that expressive function, and transfiguring reality on the basis of his own religious feeling, and fulfilling that mission of giving life and voice to the 'mother-mother'.

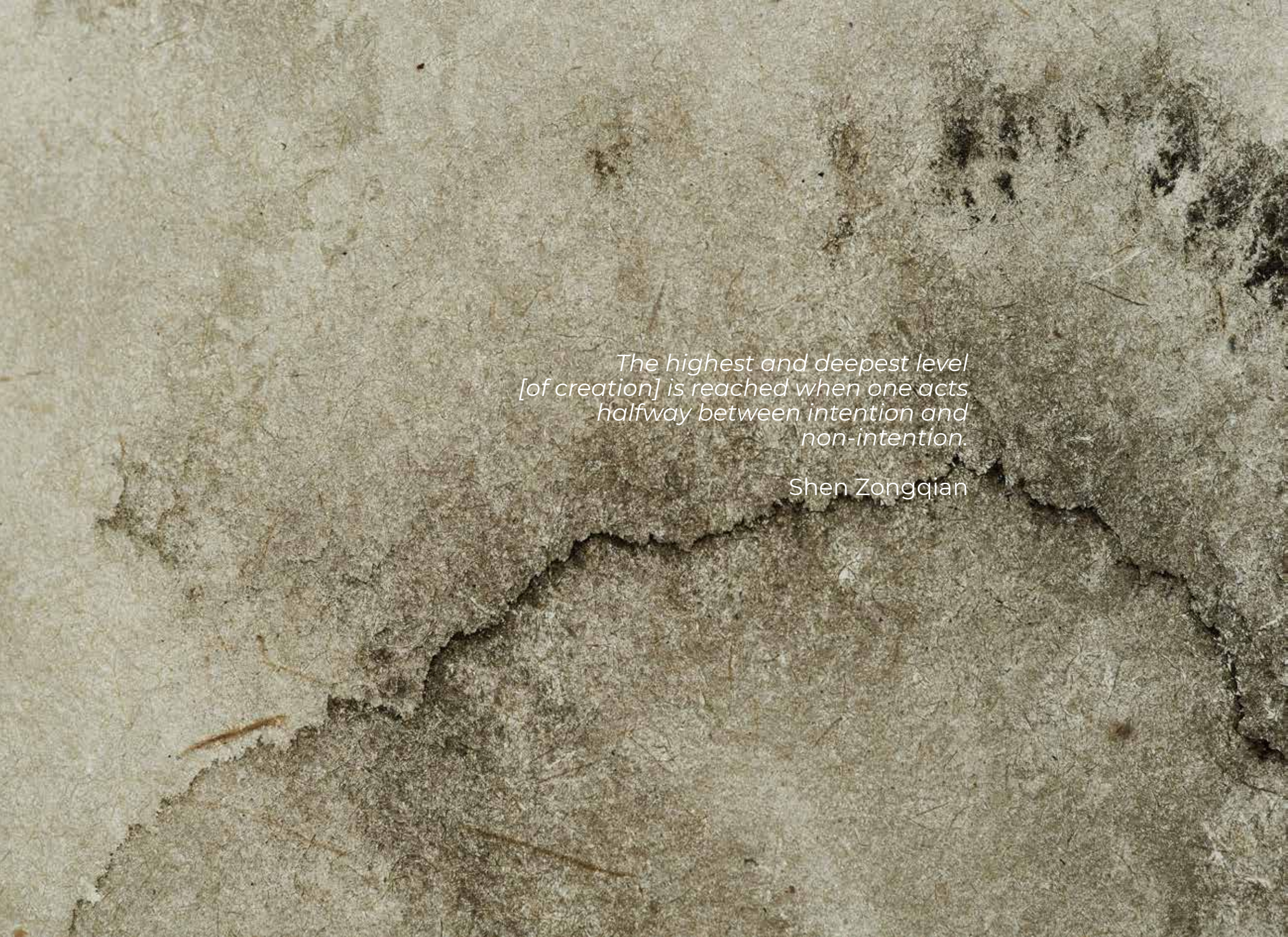
There are many of his ink sketches, which show this desire in his ideational stages, to distort the way of seeing and depicting reality. He exploits perspective as a means of giving form to his feeling and that of nature, not subject to a geometric grid, a canon of proportion or symmetry, but as a free, overflowing, indomitable and restless entity, which follows no logic and in its manifestation is now fluid, now with discontinuous, broken, randomly oriented and arranged lines, thus giving form to its internal laws.

Colour, and as in landscape painting, gives and restores that sense of reality, because the soul of nature itself is not only form and volume, but also light and colour. This also causes the painter's palette to become much brighter and more charged. Thus, this nature is humanised, but not subjugated to man. Contrary to appearances, in Van Gogh one does not feel, or perceive, that sense of communion and union with nature, but on the contrary of terror and tension. His strokes do not run across the landscape, and the viewer does not navigate and lose himself with his gaze in his works, but on the contrary is limited to observing a single part of it with a close-up view. It almost seems as if the painter himself is overwhelmed and frightened by the force of nature, and therefore knowing that his vision is limited, compared to the omniscient vision of God, he dwells on just one segment of the landscape, forgetting everything else. This 'romantic' view understood as subjective, i.e. that the vision of a landscape is limited to a single point of view (one-cornered) is also found

in the late 12th and early 13th century productions of the Yuan painters. Indeed, when the Li Tang 李唐 tradition retreated to a more collected and dreamlike vision of nature, *Shan-shui hua* painting began to be characterised by much freer strokes and "slashing" brushstrokes (large ax-cut). Among the many works from this period is Ma Lin's 马麟 *Spring Fragrance, Clearing After Rain* (fig. 4), the son of Ma Yuan 马远, is distinguished by his compositions depicting a tree in the foreground with nervous, broken strokes, with meandering troughs and downward curving branches. The work is asymmetrical and, through a kind of monochromatic area perspective, leads the viewer's gaze into a vast and aesthetically poignant expanse of misty emptiness with many distant mountain peaks - a scene taken from Hangzhou's West Lake. Ma's works achieve a sense of stillness linked to the mystical and philosophical sense of nature, and communicate a latent awareness of how nature acts and how man is only part of a system that he can witness, mediate and commune with.

In Guo Xi 郭熙's work *Early Spring* (fig.5), we feel that sense of drama, given by a fluid, full-bodied, intense brushstroke and a mysterious, impenetrable composition that leaves that sense of emptiness and suspension, that sense of waiting for an event that is about to take place and where the artist can only grasp its coming. The Ma-Xia 马夏 school, as it was called, was much admired in Japan during the Muromachi and Azuchi-Momoyama periods. They also influenced a good deal of the Japanese productions and prints that came to Paris in the 19th century and marked the production of many Impressionists, including Van Gogh.





*The highest and deepest level
[of creation] is reached when one acts
halfway between intention and
non-intention.*

Shen Zongqian

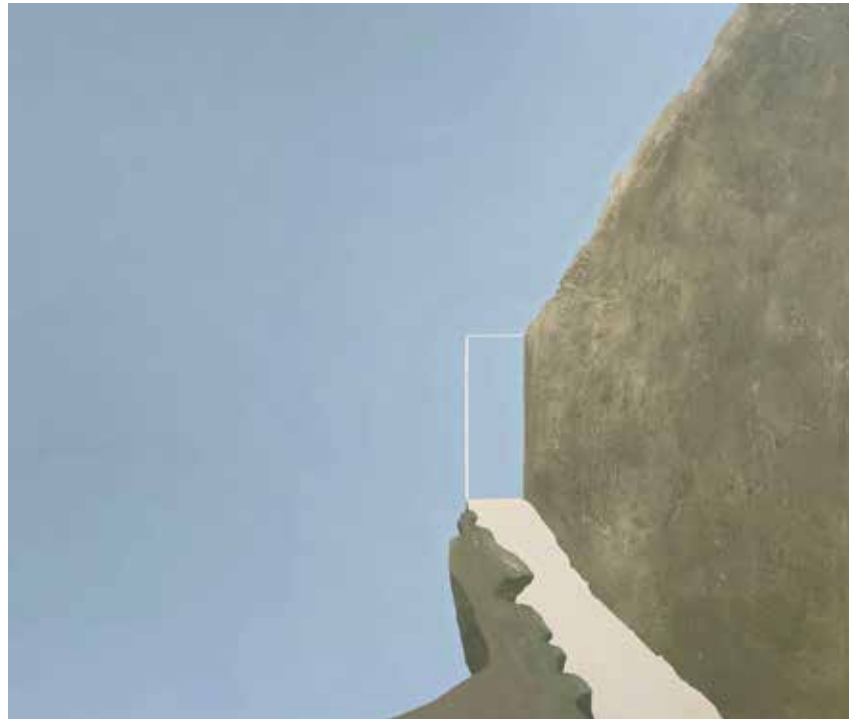
Pierpaolo Curti's Art

Painting, especially western painting, has often shown subservience to the strong powers, contributing in part to their empowerment; think, for example, of the representations commissioned by the church during the Counter-Reformation period, or the purely ideological proselytism of painters who adhered to totalitarian regimes, or the many portraits requested by aristocratic families to give lustre to their lineage, or the exploits of Napoleon on horseback.

If we add to this the intrinsic narcissism of the painting, the vanity of the artist, who both love to be looked at, we understand that we are faced with overly conditioned and conditioning narratives that leave the viewer little room to move. Pierpaolo Curti's research goes in the opposite direction. In his works, the active performance of the observer is strongly demanded. Curti demands an emancipated, active spectator, able to complete the work in full autonomy. To do this, the artist constantly seeks an open symbolism, capable of unleashing multiple keys to interpretation, for a rebus that is always renewable, never resolved. The devices that Curti places, also use rhetorical elements, but well channelled, such as bridges, doors, paths, mountains, all assembled in a dry manner, without frills or easy seductive elements that could lead to useless distractions.

This highly recognisable layout, built up over a career spanning more than 30 years, is made up of calibrated colours, never showy, with a strong predominance of greys, which allow the blues and whites to stand out, to better highlight the subject, the true centre of the painting. The only constraint Curti imposes on the viewer, who always remains free to move mentally as he or she sees fit, is to accept a condition of solitude and introspection, in which the meditative and spiritual environment is immediately evident.

The artist uses emptiness as a hospitable



White Thread

White Door



White bridge 170x150 mix technique on wood, 2010

Platform 200x200 mix technique on canvas, 2015





Plauground



zone, within which everything can find a place, stimulating the viewer to new dimensional passages, where the courage of action becomes fundamental. The favourite subjects of the last decade are those of the mountains, which more easily allow the artist to achieve an enlarged metaphorical framework. Curti knows the mountains well, which he usually practices in the summer months, with long hikes at high altitudes. The impassable passages, the iron paths, the ledges exposed to vertiginous heights, ascents and descents, bivouacs and shelters that are salvific but momentary, fatigue and concentration, all necessary elements to advance. What counts is the journey and not the destination.

Another fundamental element of Pierpaolo Curti's painting is the "Here and Now". The apparently neo-metaphysical, static layout of the paintings, blocked in its meagre elements, is in truth capable of triggering immediate mental mobility, immersing the viewer in the work as the true protagonist of the painting, which is why Curti prefers large formats.

A final element, less obvious to the eye, is applied by the artist to construct the image. Very often, the constituent elements of the picture follow an imitative mnemonic process, which in its unfolding already suggests an enhancement of observation. The artist expresses this concept as follows: "When one speaks of augmented reality, one immediately thinks of the enhancement of sight or hearing, through sophisticated technological prostheses, but how to enhance the soul? Why not devote ourselves to it? Why not act on our inner software?". This call for greater awareness is translated by Curti through slow observation, capable of restoring a deeper and more participatory relationship with nature. The artist positions himself in front of a landscape or part of

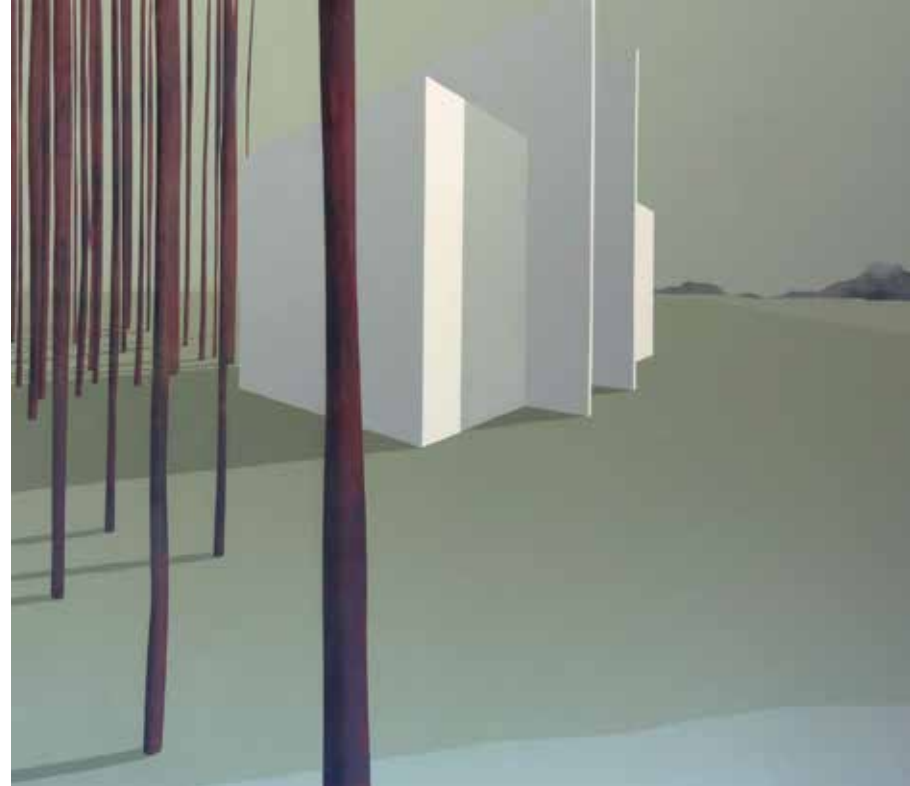
it and tries to observe all its details to saturation, without taking pictures.

Back in the working studio, a retrieval of the information stored in the memory is activated and the vision, at least of certain parts of the painting, is returned to the canvas. For the artist, this way of proceeding is educational, at least for oneself. In a society with a very fast fruition, which is too often summarised, this detailed activation of the gaze becomes a necessity and an enhancement of attention. The elements, often architectural, that complete the picture are the ones that break the bank; they are the structures that allow the visual blackout capable of suspending any easy solution.

Curti's approach to other expressive media is by continuity and never by contrast. The only difference between painting, a place of narration that uses a single image to achieve a communication, and video, or installation, is the specificity of the theme and the mode of narration. "When I cannot convey a communication with painting, I emit the signal with another expressive wave. We art-



Six supports 200x320 mix technique on canvas, 2012



White Cathedral



Altar



Variation of the theme 160x160, acrylic and beeswax on canvas, 2014

ists are antennae, repeaters, capable of receiving and emitting signals in a sensitive manner. We are the antibodies of society".

This statement gives us a good idea of the extent to which the use of one means of expression communicates differently from another. The most appropriate example of these differences in Curti's research can be found in the first installation that the artist created in 2001 entitled *Coltivazione*. At the turn of the mil-

lennium, between 1998 and 2000, we experienced fundamental passages, little discussed and not taken seriously by insiders, such as GMOs, the first cloning of Dolly the sheep, the discovery of the human genome and the possibility of correcting its cells, and the increasingly dense diffusion of control cameras in cities, the basis for occult observation at all levels.

Certain films such as *The Matrix*, *The Truman show*, *The Cube*, document-

ed very well these delicate transitions, which had strong repercussions on today's society. Curti's installation seemed to concentrate on all these issues. The work presented 49 cauliflowers, which, deprived of their leaves and placed in contact with the soil, appeared as an ambiguous cultivation of brains, or of an unlikely product returned from an abused land. Painting this situation would not have affected the viewer, like being able to physically enjoy it, walking through the prose of the garden with one's shoes in the wet earth. The continuity of the research with the painting is in the open symbolism of the work. In addition to the suggestions mentioned above, cultivation can also make one think of the homologation of thought, or of the social practices that would soon be imposed. The enormous shake-up at the end of the millennium, which has speeded up and changed our lives considerably, has also had major repercussions on the church, which has found itself having to respond to the obvious contradictions between Christian thought and economic empire. In this case, too, Curti did not think of a pictorial work, but of an installation that is always in progress; even today, in fact the artist still collects books with a Catholic theme, to then resin them and make them inaccessible. "I thought of a big fossil, so the death of something; but also its eternal preservation. Perhaps the death of Catholic powers, but at the same time the preservation of the power of Christ's message".



Coltivazione



Scripta



Source (x2)





Curti returned to the religious theme in 2016 with the installation *Source*.

A stoup, placed in the centre of the space, contains a black liquid from which a white thread starts its race through space, until it finds a way out and leaves the entire structure. The artist calls it a "three-dimensional Dao", where black and white seem to overturn the reading planes of the traditional stoup and its function in churches. In this work, which Curti also painted, the distance between the painting and the installation thins out, because the work's abstraction is greater than in older installations.

If painting shows the last scene of a

story to be reconstructed, the installation takes us physically into the scene itself; the object, the space, the touch, allow the audience an interaction different from the painting where the process is purely mental.

Even more different is the approach to video art, which in its unfolding unfolds history and makes us seemingly more passive than painting or installation. This does not happen in Curti's video proposal, which also for this medium seeks a constant complicity with the observer.

The artist made four videos between

Poliedro (x4)

2007 and 2013, all of them aimed at stimulating the viewer, and all of them with an obvious circular pattern, in which there is no beginning and no end. The only one of the four short films that does not feature a natural environment is the first one, *Poliedro*, from 2007, in which a monk sitting on a cushion in the midst of meditation is continually scrutinised and annoyed by a polyhedron, generated in post production. The continuous shots from different angles on the monk raise doubts as to which of the two presences is really polyhedral. Editing and sound favour this continuous coexistence until the fade-out.

In the other three works, the natural element is fundamental. The forest, the mountain, the path, the enchantment, the journey, are elements that are always present, all suggesting a deeper search for things, which can be fully realised if there is the will to discover.



Definition of the term "blue-green mountain and water" in Chinese painting

By: Naoto Marukawa

In the past 20 years, the study of green landscape painting, a new field of research, has become increasingly active. Related works have been published one after another. Today, the colourful blue-green mountain and water painting has attracted the attention of the world for its unique colourful beauty. In particular, the "Thousands of Miles of Rivers and Mountains Throughout the Ages Blue-green Landscape Exhibition" organized by the National Palace Museum in Beijing in 2017 brought together mountain and water paintings of all generations, a major exhibition showing the clear development of colorful landscapes. Since the 2000s, with the increase in the number of exhibitions

of this type of color mountain and water, and the publication of exhibitions and catalogues, as well as the spread of high-speed Internet and the advance of electronics, it has become more convenient to view color plates than before. It is for these reasons that the study of green landscape painting has advanced significantly.

When it comes to the study of "blue-green landscape painting", it is necessary to first explain the definition of the term. From ancient times to the present, there are many terms for mountain and water painting with color, such as coloring: *zhao se* 着色, *zhu se* 著色, *zhao cai* 着彩, *she se* 设色; gold and jade-green, *jin bi* 金碧; blue-

green, *qing lü* 青绿; big blue-green, *da qing lü* 大青绿; small blue-green, *xiao qing lü* 小青绿; light violet, *qian jiang* 浅绛; light color, *dan cai* 淡彩; cinabar-blue, *danqing* 丹青 and more. In today's art books and in the introduction of works in museums there is also a mixture of writing styles, and although the terms are rich, the definitions lack a certain benchmark.

Since the term "blue-green" is used in the title of this treatise, I will first explain the definition of the term used in this text. In the field of mountain and water painting, the terms "blue-green" and "light violet", which are commonly used today, were not used before the Song dynasty. Wen Zhengming 文征明 said:

"I learned that in ancient times (*shanggu* 上古), paintings were mainly in colours, while the art of the ink was treated as secondary, hence paint-

ers applied green and blue pigments in great amounts. In the middle ancient times (*zhonggu* 中古), painters switched to light purple, while ink-and-wash gained in importance. Therefore, paintings created in ancient times could only reach the divine level, while those created throughout the middle ancient times attained the untrammelled level. Even so, each category of works stands on its own foundation, which is why one may not distinguish them in terms of better or worse."¹

In fact, paintings before the Tang dynasty were usually painted in color, and it was only after the change of ink wash painting in the late Tang and Five dynasties that the mainstreaming of ink painting was formed. The change in style from colorful paint-

1 [明]文征明《岳雪楼书画记》，俞剑华《中国古代画论类编》，北京：人民美术出版社，2004年，第714页。





ing to ink painting can be seen in the surviving examples of pre-Tang dynasty works of clear origin, or in the Dunhuang caves frescoes produced from the Five Hu and Ten Kingdoms (五胡十国) to the early Yuan dynasty. The Five Dynasties, an era when ink painting dominated, works such as Dong Yuan's 董源 *Xiao Xiang Tu* 《潇湘图》 (fig.1) or Guo Xi's 郭熙 *Early Spring* 《早春图》 were inked as a whole, although the pavilion figures and other parts were usually endowed with light colors.² Li Tang's 李唐 *Wind on Pines of ten thousandth valleys* 《万壑松风图》 (fig.2) also used stone green at first, but now the color has faded, therefore now it looks closer to the state of ink wash painting. By the Southern Song dynasty, there were few works of pure ink and wash in mountain and water painting. Pure ink and wash works eventually predominated and the definition of the terms used for color was refined after the Yuan dynasty. In the painting treatises before the Song dynasty, such as *The famous Paintings of history* 《历代名画记》, *Painting Manual of Xuanhe Era* 《宣和画谱》, and *Impressions on observed paintings* 《图画见闻志》, the terms *dancing* 丹青, *zhu se* 著色 and *she se* 设色 can be found everywhere. However, these terms only mean "colour painting".

As a specific term to distinguish mountain and water painting, the first term used was gold and jade-green mountain and water, *jinbi shanshui* 金碧山水. This term itself was already recorded in the *Painting Manual of Xuanhe Era* during the Northern Song dynasty. However, the term was summarized in the early Yuan dynasty in Rao Ziran's 饶自然 *Twelve taboos of the painting* 《绘宗十二忌》 where the de-

2 [日]小川裕充《水墨画と着色画》，静嘉堂文库美术馆《笔墨の美 水墨画展》，东京：嘉堂文库美术馆，2009年。

scription of its colour method and materials is more specific:

"Let us now discuss the use of pigments, gold, and jade-green. All may be divided in light and heavy. Light mountains may be painted in dark blue, trees and rocks may be dyed in green, while human figures should not be traced in white powder. Dark mountains can be painted in stone blue-green, and adorned with rocks and trees. Human figures may be traced in white powder. When using gold, and jade-green, rocks should be executed in textured strokes, while blank areas may be highlighted with washes of green and dark blue. Textured strokes may be highlighted in stone blue-green, while leaves can be dyed in multiple green washes before being gone over stone blue-green. Golden paste should be used for the foundation of rocks, sand spits, and rosy clouds. This is however only suitable for the morning, evening, and sunny sceneries, which are bright in appearance. Human figures and pavilions, though outlined with white powder, must be executed in light tones. Except for red leaves, one should not misuse gold and vermilion (*zhujin* 朱金), cinnabar and blue (*dancing* 丹青). Commendable examples are Li Sixun (李思训) and Li Zhaodao (李昭道) of the Tang dynasty, Dong Yuan, Wang Jinqing (王晋卿), Zhao Danian (赵大年), as well as other great painters of the Song dynasty."³

Not only the explanation of *Jinbi* 金碧, but also the way of colouring is divided into two kinds of heavy and light and the names of specific materials are listed, and the names of famous painters are also mentioned. Here, in order to understand his clas-

3 [元]饶自然《绘宗十二忌》，卢辅圣主编《中国书画全书》第三册，上海：上海书画出版社，2009年，第526页。

sification, I would like to introduce the ancient colour materials.

For a long time, the traditional colour materials used in Chinese mountain and water painting were basically 赭石 ochre, 花青 flower blue, 螺青 snail blue (dark blue), 藤黄 gamboge (yellow), 朱砂 vermillion (red), 石黄 stone yellow, 石绿 stone green, 石青 stone blue, and 铅白 lead white. In addition, materials such as 金泥 gold clay, 金箔 gold leaf gold, 胭脂 rouge (purple-red) and 丹 dan (cinnabar) were also used occasionally until the era when literati painters, *wenren hua* 文人画, became the mainstream, when their use was gradually reduced. Strictly speaking, these materials can be divided into mineral pigments (stone green, stone blue, vermillion, stone yellow, lead white, etc.), clay pigments (ochre, yellow clay, etc.), vegetable dyes (flower green, gamboge, carmine, etc.), and metal materials (gold clay, gold leaf, etc.), and there is a clear difference in the characteristics of these materials. Mineral pigments and metallic materials must be mixed with glue before being used. Because of the large size of their bodies and particles, they cannot be fixed on the screen without the fixing agent (glue). Moreover, the gum also breaks down quickly after dissolving once, and it is a relatively inconvenient pigment to use as it has to be degummed and adjusted every time. Moreover, the particles of mineral pigment are large and bright, so it is easy to cover the next layer, and it

is not easy to apply evenly. If the pigment is too thick, brush marks will easily appear, and if there is too much water, the particles will spread in the water and become a very light colour, with almost no visible brush marks. It is also not possible to mix colours for use on saucers, non-water-soluble materials.

On the contrary, the particles of clay pigments and vegetable dyes are very small and can be used with a little glue or even without it, so they are quite convenient materials. Moreover, with clay pigments it is easy to adjust their transparency and have water-soluble characteristics, and their usage is not much different from that of ink. Of course, minerals or metals are also much more expensive than clay and plants, and there is a big difference in economical convenience. This fact can also be understood by looking at the prices of ancient materials.⁴

After understanding the characteristics of these traditional pigments, it is possible to understand the difference by looking at Twelve taboos of the painting, such as "Light mountains may be painted in dark blue, trees and rocks may be dyed in green, while human figures should not be traced in white powder" and "Dark mountains can be painted in stone blue-green, and adorned with rocks and trees." These are obvious differences in ma-

4 [日]渡边明义《古代绘画の技術》，东京：至文堂，1994年。

terials. The "lighter" use of dark blue (snail blue) is the original animal dye extracted from shells, later replaced by the plant dye blue, where its transparency is higher. The green colour is made by mixing it with gamboge. Both of them are vegetable dyes. In contrast, the stone green, stone blue, and lead white used in the "heavy one" are mineral pigments. Jinbi, on the other hand, is a colouring method that adds gold clay to the use of heavy clouring. However, in most of the extant mountain and water paintings with strong colour settings, except for frescoes, there are no examples of mineral pigments alone. The artists mentioned by Rao Ziran left their works with a combination of vegetable dyes and clay and mineral pigments. Therefore, he defines the use of only water-soluble and transparent pigments with dyes or clay as "light", those with minerals as "heavy", and those with gold clay or gold leaf as "gold and jade-green". This classification is based on Wen Zhengming's statement that "In the ancient times, all paintings were still in colour, and the ink method was second, so green and blue were mostly used. In the early Yuan dynasty at the latest, people already had a certain understanding of the difference in colouring methods according to the type of colouring materials."

The original source of the word blue-green, *qinglü* 青绿, should be "Zhao Boju (赵伯驹, fig.3) --- good at blue-

green landscape" in the *Painting supplement* 《画继补遗》 written in the 2nd year of 大德 Dade (1298). It was then used several times in Xia Wenyan's 夏文彦 *A Treasure Trove of Illustrations* 《图绘宝鉴》 in the 25th year of the reign of Zheng (1365). In this book, there are entries on green and blue, especially for the late Song and Yuan dynasties, but the entries on Li Sisun, Dong Yuan, and Wang Shen 王诜 are mostly used as "mountain and water in colour". This is because some parts of *A Treasure Trove of Illustrations* directly follow the *The famous Paintings of history and Painting Manual of Xuanhe Era*. Therefore, it can be seen that the term "blue-green" was most likely established in the middle and late Southern Song dynasty. By comparing Zhang Xunli's 张训禮 "One says that the colouring is as blue-green as Zhao Qianli's brushwork"⁵ with Qian Xuan's 钱选 "Blue-green is the same as Zhao Qianli's", we can understand that Xia Wenyan thought that the colouring was equivalent to blue-green. At about the same time, Tang Wei's 汤垕 in the *Ancient and Modern Paintings* 《古今画鉴》, written in the first year of the Tianli era (1328), does not contain the word "blue-green", but rather the word "coloured". The same is true of Huang Gongwang's 黄公望 *Writing mountain and water* 《写山水诀》. Therefore, although the term "blue-green" appeared in the

5 [元]庄肃《画继补遗》，卢辅圣主编《中国书画全书》第三册，上海：上海书画出版社，2009年。





late Southern Song dynasty, it was not fully established in the Yuan dynasty. With the change of time, the name "blue-green" was commonly used in the painting theory after the Ming dynasty. And in the late Ming dynasty, it began to be written in more detail, such as "big colouring", "big blue-green", "heavy colouring" etc. The expression of "big" and "heavy" began to be given to the expression of strong colour. Although the names are not completely unified, it can be assumed that they refer to the big blue-green landscape with heavy colours that is generally referred to now. However, the origin of the term "small blue-green" cannot be found in the Qing dynasty painting theory. Today the term "small blue-green" can often be found in domestic research papers, but no previous studies can be found to verify the origin of the term. It is likely that the new term emerged for convenience after the modern era. In the Ming dynasty, such as Zhan Jingfeng's 詹景鳳 *Zhan Dongtu Xuanlan bian* 《詹东图玄览编》 Dong Qichang's 董其昌 *Zen Painting Essay* 《画禅室随笔》 and Li Rihua's 李日华 *Weishui Xuan Diary* 《味水轩日记》, the terms "light colour" can only be seen sporadically, and it is not clear whether they refer to the light violet colour or what is generally referred to today as the so-called term "small blue-green" is not known. However, the most frequent representative work in today's research on "small blue-green" is Zhao Mengfu's 赵孟頫 *Autumn Colors on the Que and Hua Mountains* 《鹊华秋色图》, which was regarded as a "blue-green landscape painting" by Dong Qichang's friend Chen Jiru 陈继儒. It is likely that the painting was seen in Dong Qichang's collection, and it is estimated that Dong Qichang shared the same view. In this way, people at that time were not quite aware of the difference between

"blue-green" and "small blue-green". The term "light violet" appeared a little later than "blue-green", and became fixed as a term for mountain and water painting from the mid-Ming dynasty. After Wen Zhengming's (fig.4) account, Zhan Jingfeng's text is more specific. The book uses the term "light vividness" (浅绛) more than 20 times, although its usage is not uniform. One is the same as "lighter", as Rao naturally put it. That is, the use of flower blue, ochre, grass juice 草汁 (a mixture of flower green and gamboge, also known as bitter green 苦绿) and other vegetable dyes or clay pigments of light colour. Secondly, it is used as a juxtaposition of "blue-green". For example, in the *Sansheng tu erduan* 《三生图二段》, it is written "stone green for the light purple-red", and about Dong Yuan's *Longsu jiao min tu* 《龙宿郊民图》 (fig.5) it is written "its mountain dyeing method. The bottom with bitter green, the upper with light stone green. All in light purple. The foot of the mountain and the foot of the stone with ochre." These statements refer only to a lighter colouring concentration. Kong Deping 孔德平 points out whether the word "light vivid" by Zhan Jingfeng sometimes means "light" and sometimes means "red (equal to vivid)".⁶

In this way, the definition of the term "light violet" was also quite vague at first. However, it soon became the generally accepted meaning of the term today, which is used only in terms of floral blue and ochre. Li Lihua's, *Zitao xuan you zhui* 《紫桃轩又缀》 that "painters light violet-red colour began in Dong Yuan, and flourished in Huang Gongwang, called the Wu dress."⁷ Here appeared "light vividness" that is equal to the "Wu dress" 吴

6 孔德平《原型与意造——晚期古典设色山水画研究》，中国艺术研究院，2012年，第13页。

7 李日华《紫桃轩又缀》卷三，第37页A，复旦大学图书馆藏本影印版。

装 concept. The legend of "Wu dress" is that it was a form of light-colored coloring pioneered by Wu Daozi 吴道子 in the Tang dynasty, and later became a term applicable to mountain and water painting as well. There are no surviving works by Dong Yuan in "Wu dress", but most of Huang Gongwang's works in his collection are in "Wu dress" (light violet) color. And he mentioned it in his text. He said:

"The beauty of painting rocks resides in absorbing a small amount of yellow diluted in water and mixed with ink. This will lighten up the ink. It is however important not to add too much yellow pigment, as this would cloud the brush (the ink contained in the brush). Mixing some indigo in the ink can produce an equally refined effect. A hue that is both simple and elegant pleases the eye and lends spirit to the ink."

"Apply indigo on the rocks and mix yellow pigment directly into the ink. Executing trees in a moist brush enhances their beauty."⁸

Here he is talking about a lighter style of painting with a mixture of ink and colour. The material is the same as the "lighter one" that Rao Ziran refers to, which is also based on water-soluble dyes. These statements were later included in the *Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* 《芥子园画谱》, "Coloring Rules" section and because of the popularity of the book, it was gradually accepted as a consensus.

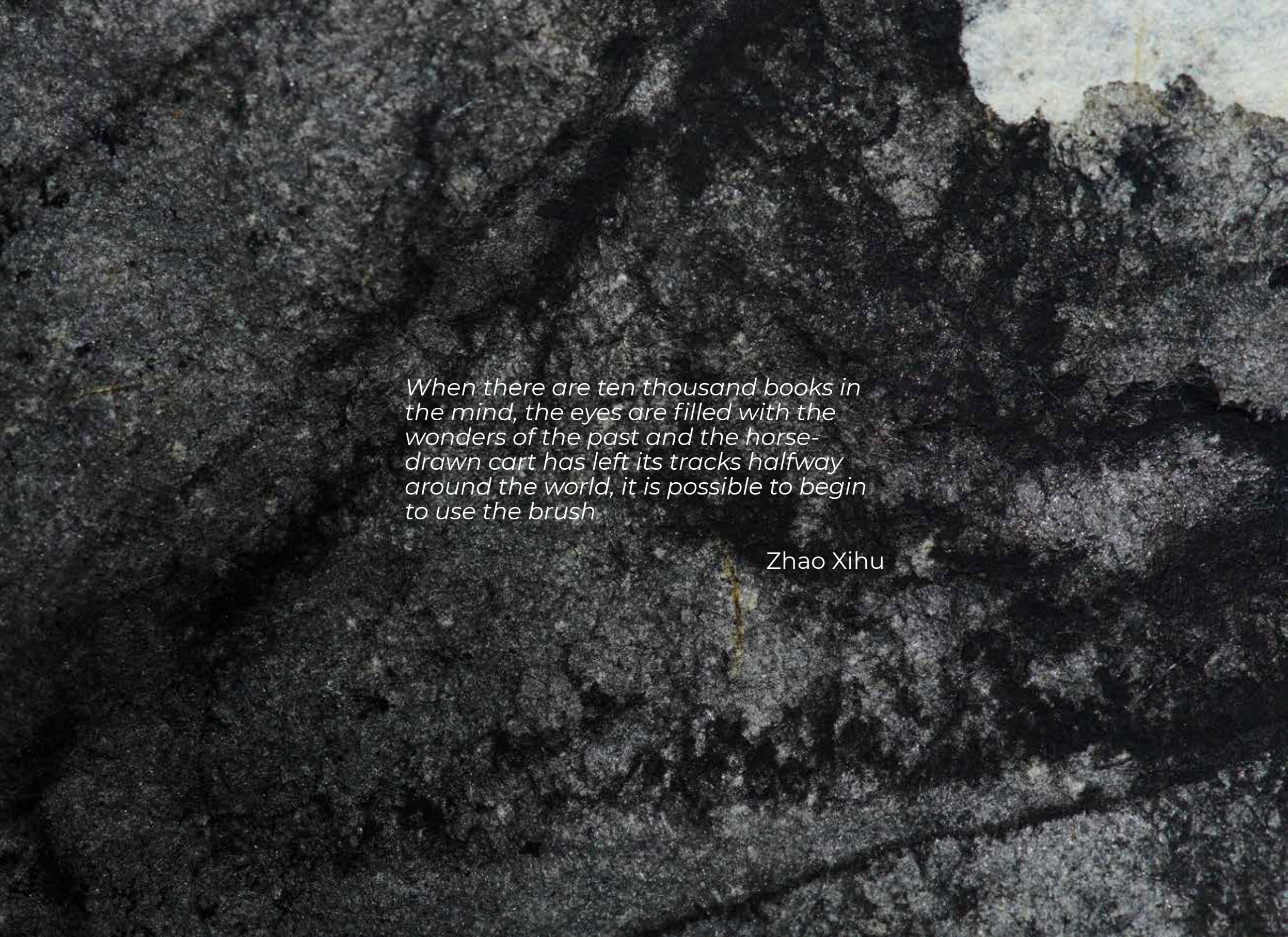
In general, there is certainly a sense of distinction in the concentration of colour, but the concept of differentiation by pigment material is also likely to exist. In particular, the use of mineral pigments such as stone green and stone blue is used as a bench-



mark for judging, and blue-green mountain and water paintings are selected and studied. Since many works have not yet been scientifically analysed, the judgment of their material use is mostly made by first-hand observation in museums and the use of high-definition images. It may be the case that what is now generally believed to be painted with mineral pigments is in fact light violet, or conversely that light violet paintings actually use minerals. These judgments are basically based on the classification of prior research, and the reliability of their arguments will have to wait for future research and scientific analysis. Further understanding of the term "blue-green mountain and water painting", may be a step forward in the future study of colour in Chinese painting.

Naoto Marukawa, born in Hiroshima, Japan in October 1989. In 2012, he graduated from the Tokyo University of the Arts painting department majoring in Japanese painting. Obtained a master's degree from the Tokyo University of the Arts Graduate School in 2014. Under the tutelage of Professor Guan Chu. In 2017, he was selected as a national outstanding international student, and his works are collected by the Education, Science and Art Committee of the National People's Congress. In the same year, he won the first prize at the National Southern Painting Essence Exhibition in Japan. In 2018, he received a master's degree from the Chinese Painting Department of the China Academy of Art (中国美术学院). In 2018, PhD student enrolled in China Academy of Art.





*When there are ten thousand books in
the mind, the eyes are filled with the
wonders of the past and the horse-
drawn cart has left its tracks halfway
around the world, it is possible to begin
to use the brush*

Zhao Xihu

Helge Emmaneel's painting practice

By: Judith Beck

Translated by: Oliver Onken

As true and good as it would be to teach geography to children at an early age, in my judgement, however, one must begin with the nearest surroundings of formative nature.

Everything that makes an impression on their eyes and ears attracts attention: sun, moon and stars, fire, water, snow, ice, clouds, thunderstorms, animals, plants and stones.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe to Dietmar, July 1786

These lines from Goethe capture the essential fascination for clouds, water, nature and landscapes that has accompanied the artist Helge Emmaneel since childhood and, still to this day, is reflected in his works. His current artistic focus is particularly influenced by the theme of clouds.

The attention to the fleeting forms in the sky is shown in the paintings as a specific concept of nature – containing its untouchedness, its unspoilt state, as well as an uninfluenced- and unaffectedness.

Contrary to their intangibility, the clouds exhibit size and mass, take the stage, meteorologically point to the future, the present and the past, harboring a time factor in their becoming and passing that alludes to the extra-temporal.

Clouds exist as a concept for thousands of years and as a thing for millions upon millions of years. Their “materialization” itself – in the course of their forming and re-forming – paints



Cloudsketch n.2



moments of displacement, equally arranges zones of constancy and yet in parallel forms the gap and creates the vacuum onto conscious perception of an ancestral space that has just been filled.

What remains are not only impressions of fractures, of rough, torn and tattered states, but also perceptions of softness and grace, of movements in the light.

This itself changeable, the superimposing, the inward and outward movement is illustrated by Emmaneel's classic brush-oil-canvas handling. This technique works with layers and produces effects such as depth and shimmer that themselves create an intense sense of space.

Emmaneel's paintings and drawings represent a different means of expression as well as a realignment of his artistic work since he switched from photography which for a long spell had been his favored medium.

The artist's handling of the coloring, however, challenges the viewer. His paintings are mostly characterised by a minimalist colour arc as if sequentially extending across his works.

This movement towards a certain colouring style originally is owed to a self-limitation to shades of grey from black and white mixtures. Blue and green colours were added to it at a later stage only, that together with the monochrome shades of grey, now form the reduced colour palette allowing Emmaneel to maintain the focus on form throughout.

In this way, he abstracts the concrete

observation of the clouds into a tense-ness that imposes itself on the viewer's quick glance. Extended viewing of the grey tone nuances, however, manifests itself as a contemplative interaction of imago and figmentum.

In addition, the artistic procedure allows for a background to illuminate the light conditions within a cloud. The perception of what is happening there is made possible at the moment of becoming and passing, where for most viewers, in the brevity of the sight, nothing happens.

Emmaneel's conscious dividing of available space in the painting becomes evident from the arrangement of co-existing clouds, landscapes and a few selected motifs. Most notably landscapes that have not yet been cultivated are to be read like a pictorial statement.

Accordingly, nature is not viewed as a purely civilisational challenge. It rather is the almost reverent lingering in nature that generates the particular in the general.

Following the logic of reductionism, staged aeroplanes and houses convey in methodically consistent fashion the isolation that arises from the alienation and disenchantment of nature.

In this respect, the seemingly incongruous civilisational aspect contrasts with the ever-present conception of nature. Birds, on the other hand, symbolize being part of a natural environment that is hardly unspoilt anymore. They resonate in the recipient as his or her own naturalness and as an allegory for freedom of movement.

Finally, the artist deals with the mi-



Cloudsketch n.5

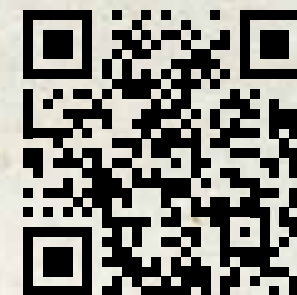


cro- and macro structures of what makes clouds consistent in a way that is similar to the application of the colour scheme. Single drops of water, or those being reflected whilst moving, exemplify the small in the large, when behind the cloud's substance the cloud itself, as a backdrop, is unfolding an ensemble of dimensions and in doing so noting the beauty of the ephemeral - puddle mirrors, haze vapours, rain formations, force of water, sea drift, wind wanderings, aerial scenes, impressions of cold and warmth as well as streams of light and shadows:

Helge Emmaneel's paintings are visible sojourns located in clouds.

Cloudsketch n.6

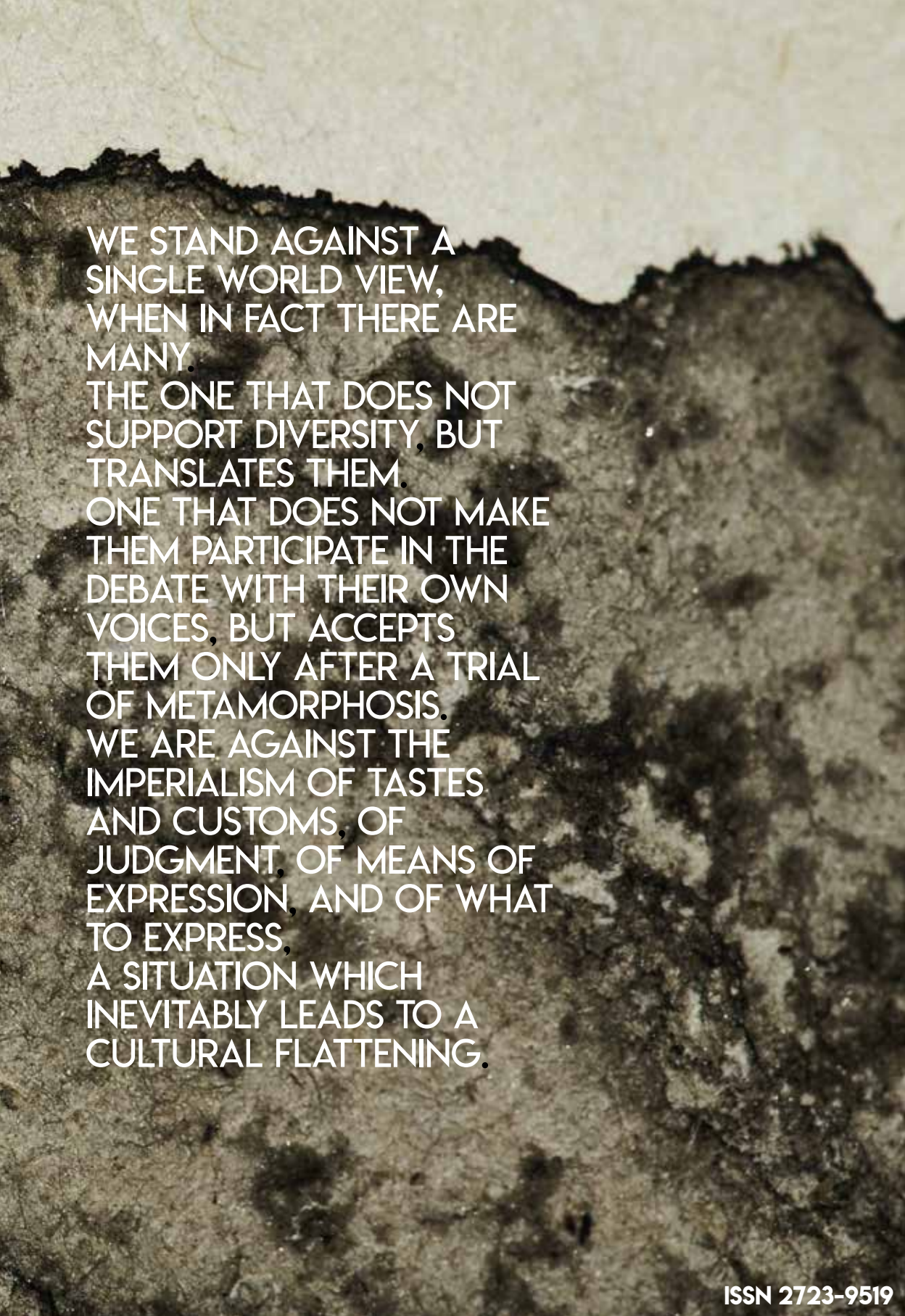




*Giving a voice to the great masters of the past
and to the contemporary artists*

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WE STAND AGAINST A
SINGLE WORLD VIEW,
WHEN IN FACT THERE ARE
MANY.

THE ONE THAT DOES NOT
SUPPORT DIVERSITY, BUT
TRANSLATES THEM.

ONE THAT DOES NOT MAKE
THEM PARTICIPATE IN THE
DEBATE WITH THEIR OWN
VOICES, BUT ACCEPTS
THEM ONLY AFTER A TRIAL
OF METAMORPHOSIS.

WE ARE AGAINST THE
IMPERIALISM OF TASTES
AND CUSTOMS, OF
JUDGMENT, OF MEANS OF
EXPRESSION, AND OF WHAT
TO EXPRESS.

A SITUATION WHICH
INEVITABLY LEADS TO A
CULTURAL FLATTENING.