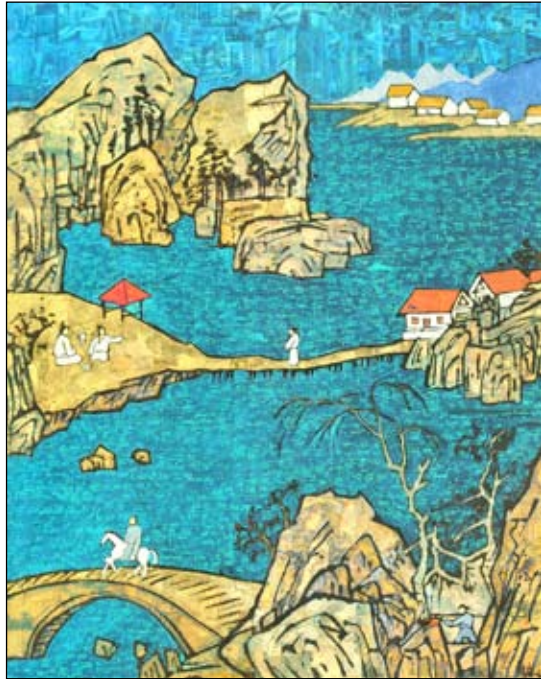


Is it still ink painting if there's no ink?

New Landscape — Ink Painting in Motion brings together seven artists from China, Macao and Taiwan, and hints that this centuries-old genre is undergoing a renaissance

BY NOAH BUCHAN
STAFF REPORTER



Xue Song, *Bon Voyage* (2008).

PHOTO COURTESY OF NOU GALLERY

Exhibitions that show contemporary interpretations of traditional ink painting seem to be all the rage. Last year's Open Flexibility: Innovative Contemporary Ink Art (開顯與時變—創新水墨藝術展) at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, for example, explored the modern development of ink painting in Taiwan and China.

Galleries throughout the country have been keen to showcase working ink artists updating the tradition as well. From Lo Ching's (羅青) Song Dynasty reinterpretations in One "Man" Cultural Revolution (一"人"文化大革命) at Taipei's 99 Degree Art Center (99 藝術中心) to Li An-cheng's (李安成) solo show of unbounded ink wash paintings at Kaohsiung's Soaring Cloud Art Center (上雲藝術中心), there is no shortage of artists approaching this old medium with new ideas and galleries willing to show them off.

New Landscape — Ink Painting in Motion (傳統與現代山水相遇的驚濤火花), currently on view at the recently opened Nou Gallery (新畫廊), formerly known as Leisure Art Center (悠閒藝術中心), brings together seven artists from China, Macao and Taiwan, who expand the genre of their modernist and classical predecessors with a superb exhibit using new media — video, interactive installation, photography — along with more traditional media such as oil and ink painting.

Curator Hsieh Hui-ching (謝慧青) and assistant Sophie Huang (黃鈺心) skillfully arranged the exhibit into two parts: New Landscape offers contemporary interpretations of brush painting masters, while Ink Painting in Motion deftly employs new media to examine the unbounded textures of ink.

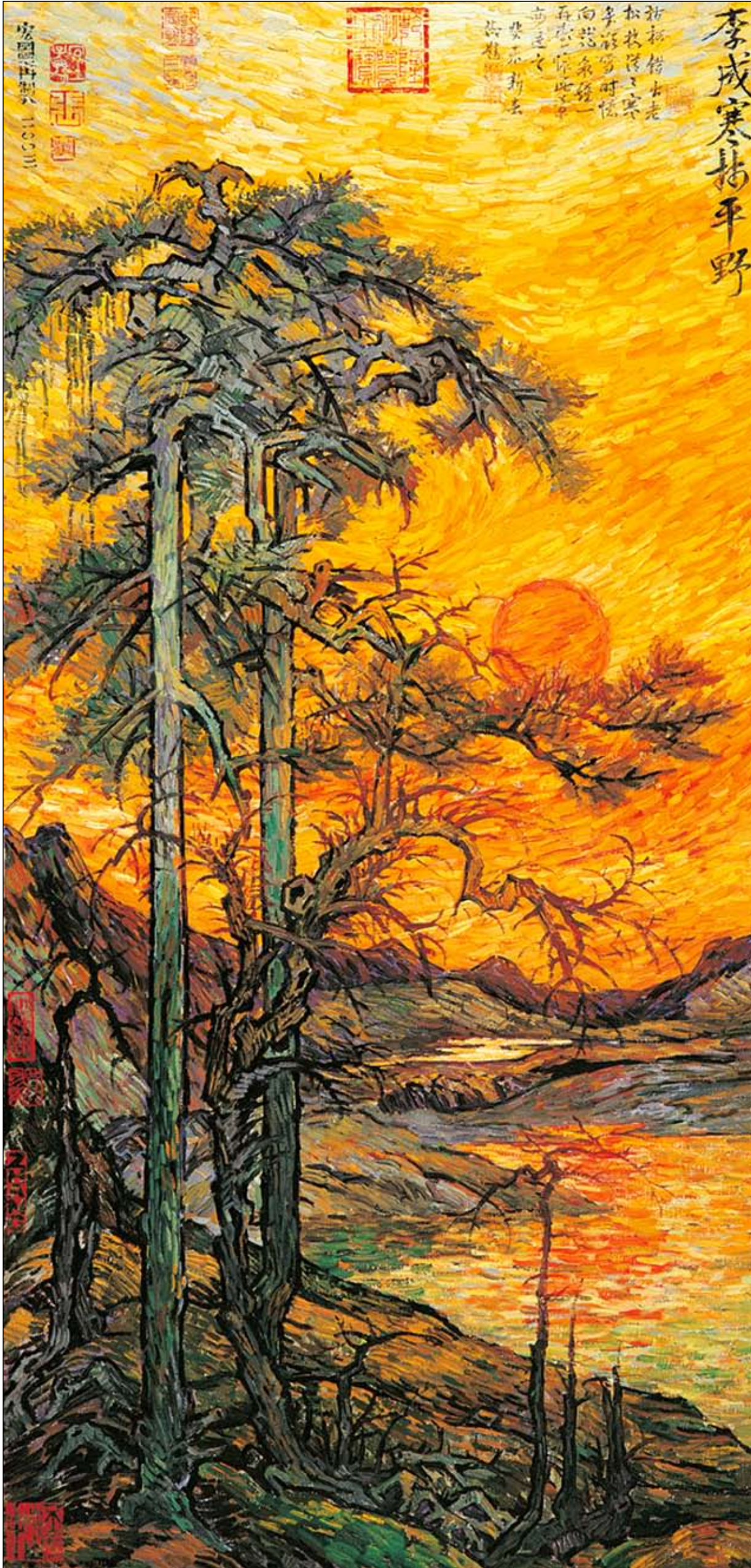
"I'm trying to develop a new approach to contemporary ink painting. Before, they used abstract or modern methods to express this traditional form. But these [seven] artists tend towards conceptual art and new media art," Hsieh said.

And yet all the represented artists remain clearly rooted in the classical tradition of ink painting. The traditional approach to learning various ink-painting styles, developed over many centuries, involved copying the works of the great masters. Having gained a thorough competency in the genre through imitation, these burgeoning ink painters could gradually develop their own style.

Chen Chun-hao (陳俊豪) takes this practice one step further with *Ma Yuan Singing and Dancing* (馬遠踏歌圖). At first glance, the work is a faithful replica of Ma Yuan's (馬遠) 13th century painting, *Dancing and Singing* (Peasants Returning From Work) (踏歌圖). Closer scrutiny, however, reveals that the painting doesn't use ink at all. Chen spent four months tacking 214,000 tiny metal spikes onto the canvas' surface. When viewed up close, it evokes the pointillism of Seurat.

Having competently imitated the master, Chen is free to create his own work, which he does with an expansive landscape of Yangmingshan, *Tengu Look Into the Distance* (天狗望遠). It was created using 140,000 spikes.

Less striking in his use of materials is Zhang Hong-tu's (張宏圖) *Lee Cheng — Van Gogh NPM*



Zhang Hong-tu, *Lee Cheng — Van Gogh NPM* (2003).

PHOTO COURTESY OF NOU GALLERY

(李成 — 梵谷NPM), a large painting that compositionally imitates Li Cheng's *Wintry Grove on a Level Plain* (寒林平野圖). Rendered with the vibrant impressionistic brushstrokes of Van Gogh, it merges two disparate traditions in to one canvas.

Whereas New Ink Painting offers fresh interpretations of earlier masters, Ink Painting in Motion probes the abstract textures of ink wash painting.

Jenny Chen's (陳張莉) floor installation, *A Pond of Beams of Light* (池光), is a matrix of 81 resin squares that rest on an elevated platform. Evoking the abstract constructions of Tang Dynasty painters (who were known to spit or spray ink onto rice paper), Chen dripped and smeared the paint onto between two and four of the transparent slabs that she then fused together. Combined, they create a complex array of unbounded forms.

Meanwhile, Cindy Wu's (吳少英) video, *Ink Walk* (散步), meditates on the fluid textures of ink by combining the colors black, white, blue and brown.

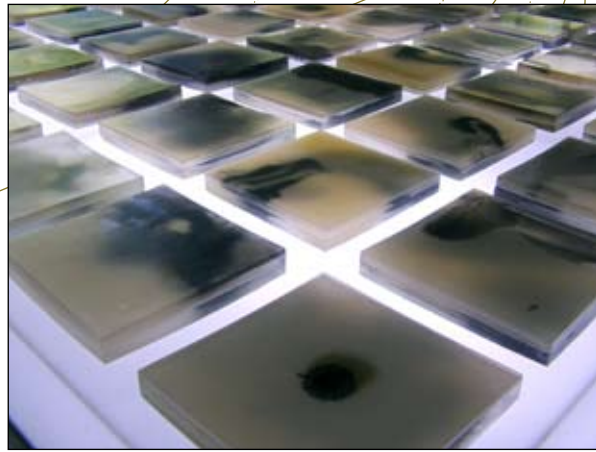
"Wu allows the audience to engage in the process, rather than just giving them a finished work," Hsieh said.

EXHIBITION NOTES:

WHAT: New Landscape — Ink Painting in Motion (傳統與現代山水相遇的驚濤火花)

WHERE: Nou Gallery (新畫廊), 232, Renai Rd. Sec 4, Taipei City (台北市仁愛路四段232號)

WHEN: Until July 17. Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 11am to 7pm, closed on Mondays. Tel: (02) 2700-0239



Jenny Chen, *A Pond of Beams of Light* (2008).

PHOTO COURTESY OF NOU GALLERY

More engaging still is Mark Lin's (林俊廷) interactive installation *Beyond the Frame* (化境). It is the hit of the show and deserving of its own category because it integrates new media savvy with emblems drawn from ink painting history.

It's also a lot of fun. Four touchscreen interfaces are arranged horizontally in front of four vertical flat-screen televisions hanging on the wall. Each television contains one of four iconic plants or trees found in the Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting (芥子園畫傳) — chrysanthemum, plum, orchid and bamboo — and is linked thematically to certain objects, which appear on the touchscreen monitor.

For example, the television showing a plum tree is paired with dozens of plum blossoms (created using Maya 3D software) that, when touched, undulate and float across the screen. Another interface features the image of a Chinese zither, or *gu zheng* (古箏), that can be strummed when touched. Doing so causes a rustle amid the bamboo thicket on the vertical screen.

Though some way quibble that video or interactive installations have little to do with ink painting, for this reviewer, New Landscape — Ink Painting in Motion demonstrates that new media is eminently suited for the reinterpretation of ink painting. Though compact, the exhibit offers an excellent overview of the preoccupations of contemporary artists working in the genre and how they employ disparate media to expand on a classical tradition.



Hsu Ming-jen, *Wet Field* (2010).

PHOTO COURTESY OF IAY

Hsu Ming-jen (許銘仁) depicts the natural beauty and scenery surrounding Grass Mountain Village in his solo show *On the Other Side of the Landscape* (在風景的彼岸). Hsu says he used drawing as his medium in this series because it "illustrates my thoughts and observations for its direct and basic

quality." The clean and blurred lines of these images mirror the artist's ideas about the monumentality of mountains and the mysterious landscapes that blanket them.

■ Grass Mountain Artist Village (草山國際藝術村), 92 Hudi Rd, Taipei City (台北市湖底路92號). Open Wednesdays to Sundays from 10am to 4pm. Tel: (02) 2862-2404. Opens Saturdays at 11am ■ Until July 25

Taiwan's fishing ports, farm scenes and village life are among the rich and vibrant landscapes seen in the retrospective exhibit of Chen Bo-wen (陳博文), *The Beauty of Taiwan — A Memorial Exhibition of the Art of Chen Bo-wen* (展現台灣風情 — 陳博文創作紀念展). In addition to Chen's realist paintings, the exhibition includes sketches from his notebooks

and extracts of writing that shed light on his artistic philosophy in a show that illustrates not only the artist's achievements but also his profound love for his native land.

■ National Museum of History (國立歷史博物館), 49 Nanhai Rd, Taipei City (台北市南海路49號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2361-0270. General admission: NT\$30 ■ Until July 25

Pale human heads emerging from the throat of verdant green frogs and an emaciated flying horse with its front half in the form of the torso of a naked woman are among the surrealist figures found in Japanese painter Tomohiro Takagi's solo show *Fur — Away*. Takagi's unusual and highly original paintings playfully depict the relationship between humans and nature, while also offering warnings about environmental destruction.



■ Elsa Art Gallery (雲清藝術中心), 3F, 1-1 Tianmu E Rd, Taipei City (台北市天母東路1-1號3樓). Open daily from 1pm to 7pm, closed Mondays and Tuesdays. Tel: (02) 2876-0386 ■ Until July 18

Tripolar — 3 Positions in German Video Art presents six works by three German artists, Robert Seidel, Max Hattler and Daniel Burkhardt, working in video. The show attempts to map the characteristics of German video art and its evolution over the past several decades. The exhibition is also screening *Taipei Impressions*, a video meditation on the artists' one-week sojourn to Taipei. ■ Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei (MOCA, Taipei), 39 Changan W Rd, Taipei City (台北市長安西路39號). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 11am to 6:30pm. Tel: (02) 2711-0055 ■ Until June 30

to Sundays from 10am to 6pm. Tel: (02) 2552-3721. General admission: NT\$50 ■ Until July 18

Chinese-born German artist Zhang Qikai (張奇翀) examines the perceived discordant relationship between East and West in *Mr Panda's Wonderland* (Mr.熊貓的魔法時空). Employing China's iconic panda as an emblem of the spiritual quest to find true meaning, Zhang's realistic paintings juxtapose the materialistic aspirations of the West, symbolized, for example, by diamonds, dice and poker cards, with the spiritual longings of an artist far from home. ■ Metaphysical Art Gallery (形而上畫廊), 7F, 219, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段219號7樓). Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 11am to 6:30pm. Tel: (02) 2711-0055 ■ Until June 30