

劍氣

The Breath of A Blade

鄭木彰

Tay Bak Chiang

劍，器也；氣，神也。人劍合一，懾人于神而不在于劍。

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自序

劍，器也；氣，神也。人劍合一，懾人于神而不在于劍。

畫展名稱爲《劍氣》，是因爲我喜歡這兩個字能很快的就把我帶進武俠小說中那讓人蕩氣回腸的俠義世界。

我自中學開始就喜歡閱讀武俠小說，常常廢寢忘食、夜半挑燈，祇爲了多看一頁書中人物的肝膽相照和義無反顧。小說中的情節、人物或招式名稱都常常給我無窮的想像空間和畫面。

幾年前我創作向日葵系列，會無厘頭的聯想到金庸先生武俠小說《笑傲江湖》中的「葵花寶典」。我畫了一幅花瓣隨風而飄的向日葵作品，索性以書中人物「風清揚」爲作品名稱。構思石頭系列作品時也曾想過有一天說不定能以此創作《神雕俠侶》中黃蓉以五行八卦困住敵人的「亂石陣」。

這些最初源于好玩有趣的模糊構思，在我認真思考後決定把武俠小說及水墨畫這兩種我喜愛的藝術結合在一塊，用畫筆一圓自己多年來心中的武俠夢。

現實世界像極武俠小說裏的江湖；人性的偽善和欲望，古今相同。名門正派和邪魔歪道常做着同樣的事。那不求回報的事迹是否祇存在于書中的字裏行間？

古龍先生的武俠小說《多情劍客無情劍》是其中一本我極喜愛的作品。在書中，李尋歡的「小李飛刀」已經不單是一種武器，更是代表着光明，邪不能勝正的正義象徵。創作《小李飛刀》、《例不虚發》這兩件作品的過程是件享受的事。靜靜的想，反復的斟酌，面對這把没人見過如何出手的飛刀，我決定以最直接的方式來表現這件作品，希望那能穿透任何邪惡力量的不朽光芒常留于天際。

阿飛是同一本小說裏我所喜歡的少年劍客。用鐵片簡單釘制成的武器就是他的劍，連劍鞘都沒有的劍却是江湖中最危險的武器。「刺」是他的劍法；直接、沒有一絲多餘的華麗。我喜歡這種出身不平坦却又身懷絕技的角色。我們多數人一輩子都祇能平凡的度過，但也會希望自己能有機會閃耀出光芒，有着不平凡的人生。作品《阿飛的劍》我以粗澀却堅定的綫條描繪揮出的那一劍，是想表現阿飛不輕易向命運屈服的意志。

談到劍，最喜歡的或許還是金庸先生作品《笑傲江湖》裏的「獨孤九劍」，隨心而發、招招不同，所以也無招可破，如同畫畫時要胸有成竹，更希望能胸無成竹，無意之中就存有一天機。

武俠小說中有許多素材讓我得到新的創作聯想。像構思《太極》作品時，我用鬆動的筆觸嘗試表現某種連綿不斷、在意不在形的意念。而創作《藍鳳凰》的原因很簡單，就是喜歡她的名字，總覺得她的名字美得讓人心動，想像她是位個性剛毅却也深情的女子，可惜書中對她的着墨太少。用藍色，爲的就是想留下她的名字。

這幾年想畫一些不太具像的人物畫，構思《十八銅人》正好讓我可以很自然的以抽象的思維去琢磨這個題材。從一開始打算以石頭來塑造銅人，進而聯想到一些對人物形體有獨特表現的雕塑家的作品讓我有所啓發，再到如何在宣紙上表現銅的效果，一路上有着創作中似乎碰觸到新天地的興奮和驚喜。

武俠小說博大精深，可以讀上一輩子。十幾歲的我讀武俠，沉醉于書中人物鮮衣怒馬，仗劍江湖。二十幾歲讀武俠，對楊過與小龍女之間那份決絕的愛，好像又多懂了一分。三十幾歲讀武俠，對世間不平事有了一份覺悟。讀武俠，你我心中若能留下俠義的身影，不作惡，就已經是得了人生。

鄭木彰

Chinese *wuxia* (swordplay genre) novels have been a part of my life since I was a teenager. I would be so engrossed in them, reading late into the night, unable to resist that fictional world where loyalty is always unequivocal, where courage is unwavering in the face of danger. I have never stopped being a fan of *wuxia* novels; their plots, dialogue, characters and martial arts movements often play out in my mind’s eye.

This exhibition is an expression of my love for both *wuxia* novels and ink painting. It is so named because I like how I am instantaneously brought into the soul-stirring world of *wuxia* by the two words *jianqi* – or “breath of a blade”. *Jian* is sword, or blade; *qi* means breath, energy, or “life force”. When a swordsman and his blade come together as one, it is not his weapon that inspires awe; it is his aura – his *jianqi* – that does so.

The real world is not unlike the *jianghu* (which refers to the *wuxia* universe and literally means “rivers and lakes”). Hypocrisy and desire exist in both the real and fictional worlds, in the past as well as the present. Good and evil are in eternal opposition. The good guys may triumph by the last chapter, but heroes are not infallible. Could the so-called righteous ones commit the same misdeeds as the evildoers? Yes, it is possible. When does one do a good deed and not expect compensation or gratitude? Does this happen only in the *wuxia* world? Well, it depends.

The idea to see *wuxia* through the prism of my ink paintings began as a casual, playful thought a few years ago. I was working on my sunflower series, and my mind wandered to the *Kuihua Baodian* (“Sunflower Manual”), a martial arts manual that is central to the storyline in Jin Yong’s (Louis Cha) *Xiao Ao Jianghu* (*The Wandering Swordsman*). I created a work of swaying sunflowers and flitting petals and titled it Feng Qing Yang (“pure wind winnows”), the name of a character in this novel.

As I continued my stone series, I thought I could one day produce a work that recalls the *Luan Shi Zhen* (“Chaotic Rock Formation”) in *Shendiao Xialü* (*The Return of the Condor Heroes*). One of the protagonists, Huang Rong, uses this formation based on *wuxing* (Five Elements) and *bagua* (Eight Diagrams) to entrap her enemies.

These ideas set my imagination in motion, and I came to realise that I could fulfil my long-held *wuxia* fantasy using the ink medium.

Gu Long’s *Duoqing Jianke Wuqing Jian* (*Sentimental Swordsman, Ruthless Sword*) is one of my favourite novels. The protagonist Li Xunhuan’s weapon is the flying dagger, known as Xiao Li Feidao (“Little Li’s flying dagger”). It is not simply a weapon, but a symbol of justice prevailing over evil. The making of the works *The Flying Dagger* and *Never Misses A Target* was a contemplative and enjoyable process. How do I visualise a dagger that no one has seen being thrown? I finally decided on an explicit demonstration of the strength that could penetrate all villainy and leave the trail of righteousness in its wake.

In the same novel, A-Fei is a young man who uses a simple metal blade as his sword. He doesn’t even own a sheath, but his is the most dangerous weapon in the *jianghu*. He strikes by thrusting his blade – a most direct way that eschews any gratuitous elegance. I particularly favour this type of characters, who emerge from bumpy, uneven paths in life to become top exponents. Most of us live our lives as mundane days, even though we hope to have the opportunity to shine through, to create a life less ordinary. For the work *A-Fei’s Blade*, I used rugged, resolute strokes to illuminate that one strike of brilliance – after all, A-Fei is not one who yields to destiny.

Of all the martial arts movements in *wuxia* novels, my favourite is *Dugu Jiu Jian* (“Lonely Nine Swords”) in *The Wandering Swordsman*. It calls for every stroke to be unpredictable and different, unleashed as one wishes, such that opponents, perceiving no patterns, are unable to counter. I see a parallel to the practice of art: We seek to create what we have in mind, but really, don’t we hope even more for fortuitous outcomes?

For the work *Taiji*, I experimented with loose brushstrokes, to create a billowy, almost structure-less form. Here, form is secondary; essence is key. *Blue Phoenix* is titled after another character in *The Wandering Swordsman*. There is a beautiful ring to her name, and I imagine that she is a strong yet sentimental lady. It is a pity that the author does not dwell much on her. I used only blue in this painting, because I want her name to leave a vivid impression.

In recent years I had wanted to paint figures that are more abstract; the 18 Bronze Men series gave me the opportunity to do so in earnest. When I began working on the series, I was sure of only one thing – that the bronze figures would be stone forms. What followed was a process of experimentation leading to thrilling and unexpected discoveries. The final forms carry the effect of weathered patina and allude to the styles of some sculptors who have distinctive takes on the human body.

There is much wisdom in *wuxia* novels; I could spend my whole life reading them, over and over again. As a teenager, I was captivated most by the dashing characters and their courage against tyranny. When I was in my twenties, I thought I could understand the undying love between Yang Guo and Xiao Long Nü a little more. Now I am in my thirties, and *wuxia* holds up a mirror to the injustice in the real world. To read and understand *wuxia* is to own a little chivalry in our hearts. To read and understand *wuxia* is to know life.

Tay Bak Chiang

作品

Works

阿飛的劍 A-Fei's Blade / 12

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繩索床 Rope Bed / 15

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太極 Taiji / 20

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獨孤九劍之破劍式 Lonely Nine Swords: Unpredictable / 24

十八銅人之單挑 18 Bronze Men Series: One-on-One / 26

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阿飛的劍
A-Fei's Blade

116 x 200 cm
Chinese ink on rice paper
2012

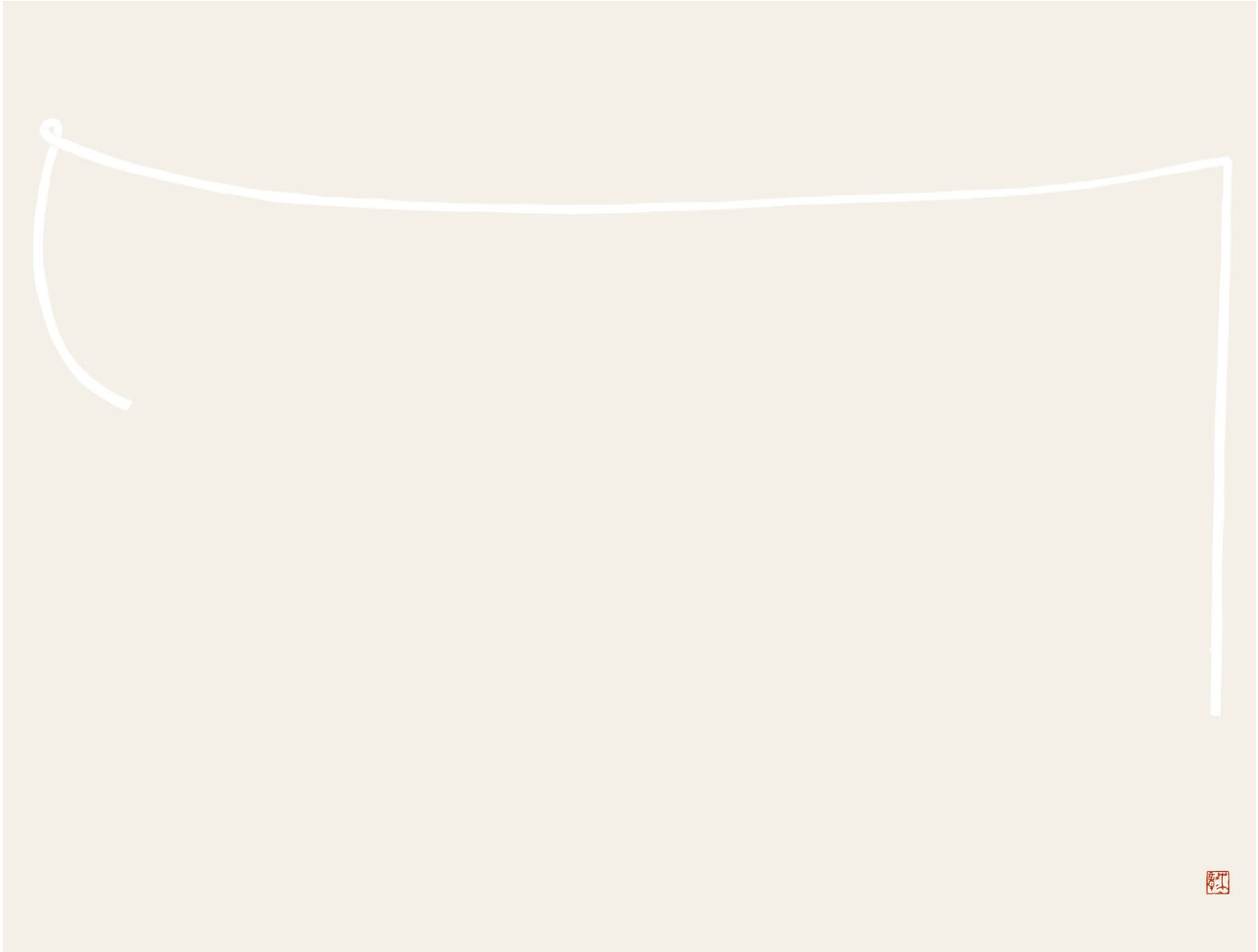


寒玉床

Bed of Ice/Jade

122 x 160 cm

Chinese ink and pigments on rice paper
2012



繩索床

Rope Bed

122 x 160 cm

Chinese ink and pigments on rice paper
2012



一山還有一山高

There's Always Another Mountain Higher

80 x 162 cm

Chinese ink and pigments on rice paper

2012

亂石陣之鬼斧
Disarray Series

Uncanny

200 x 140 cm
Chinese ink and pigments on canvas
2012





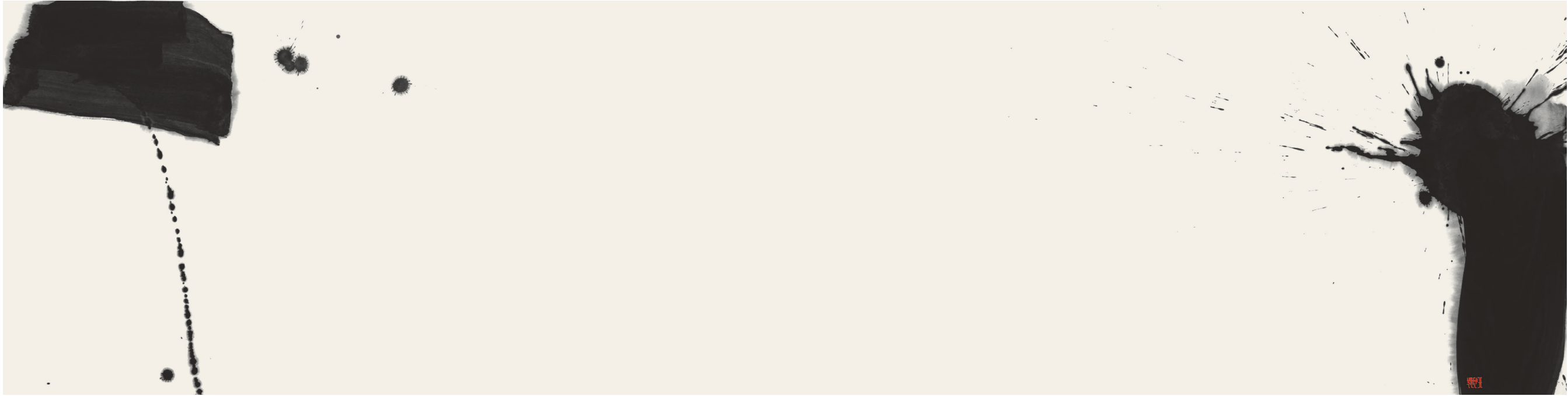
太極
Taij

124 x 160 cm

Chinese ink and pigments on rice paper
2012



藍鳳凰
Blue Phoenix
200 x 124 cm
Chinese ink and pigments on rice paper
2012



獨孤九劍之破劍式
 Lonely Nine Swords :
 Unpredictable
 246 x 62 cm x 2
 Chinese ink and pigments on rice paper
 2012

十八銅人之單挑

18 Bronze Men Series

One-on-One

123 x 123 cm

Chinese ink and pigments on rice paper

2012



十八銅人之行雲流水

18 Bronze Men Series:
Floating Cloud, Flowing Water

123 x 123 cm

Chinese ink and pigments on rice paper
2012



十八



十八銅人之他强任他强，
清風拂山岡
18 Bronze Men Series:
Unruffled

140 x 140 cm

Chinese ink and pigments on canvas
2012



十八銅人之不悲不喜
18 Bronze Men Series
Detachment

200 x 61 cm
Chinese ink and pigments on rice paper
2012



亂石陣之赤壁
Disarray Series:
Red Cliff

123 x 123 cm
Chinese ink and pigments on rice paper
2012

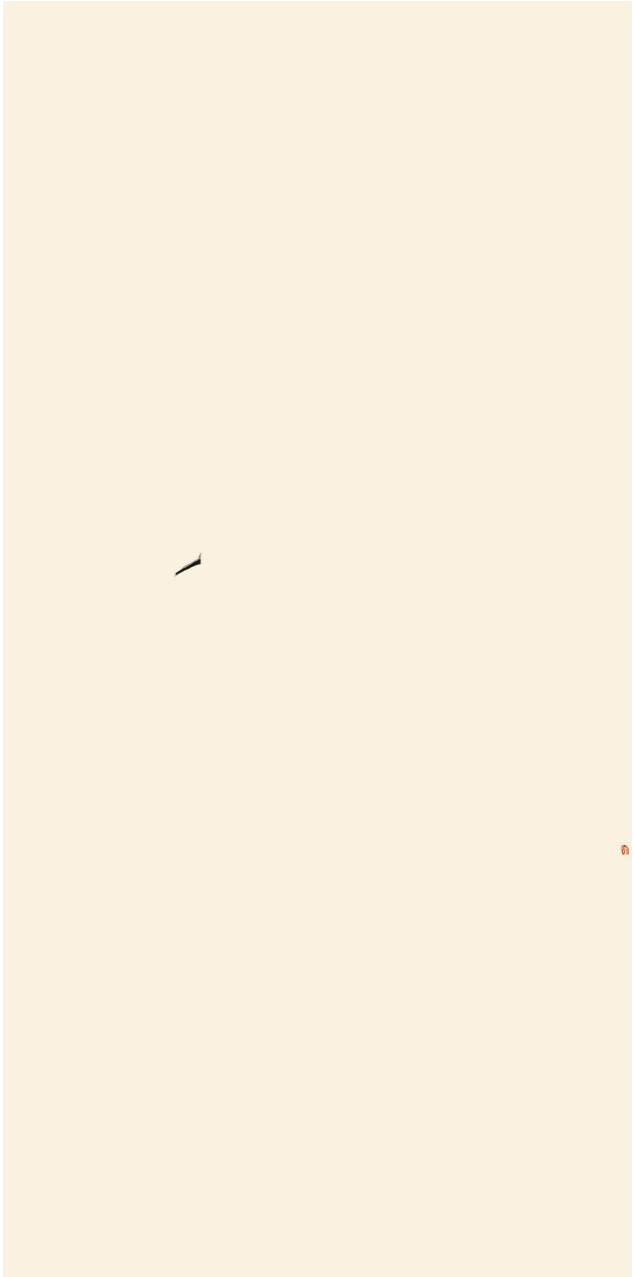


梅花椿
Plum Blossom Piles

123 x 246 cm
Chinese ink and pigments on rice paper
2012

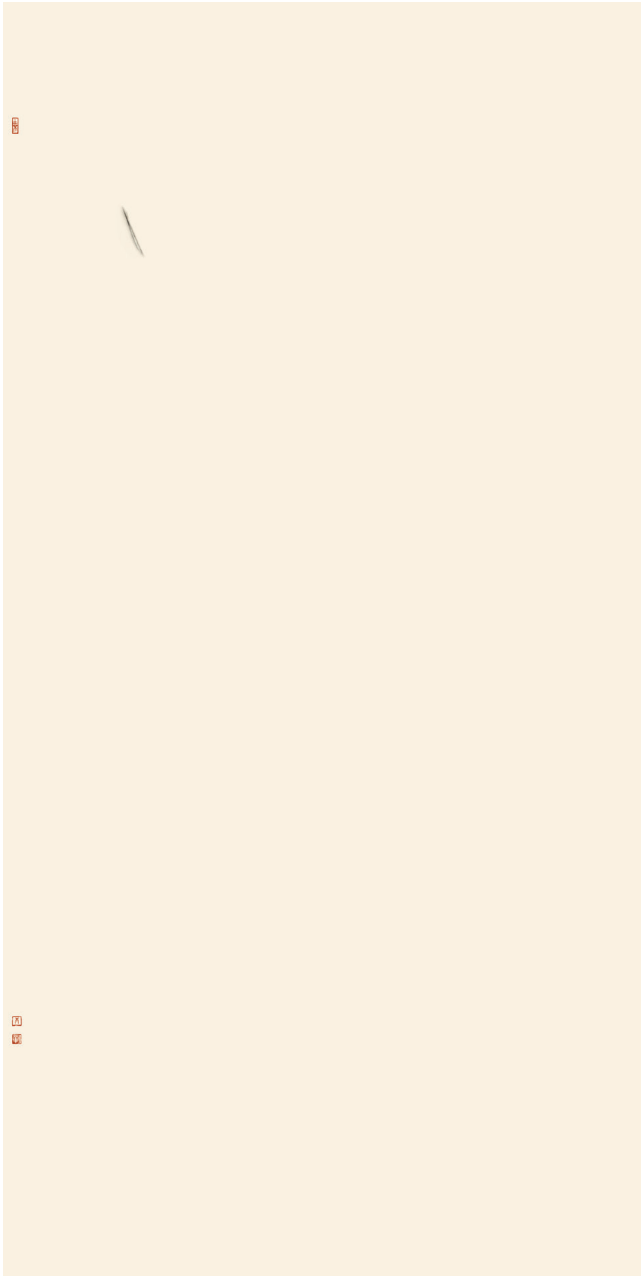
例不虛發

Never Misses A Target
Canvas
2012



小李飛刀

The Flying Dagger
Canvas
2012





亂石陣之布陣
Disarray Series:
Embattled

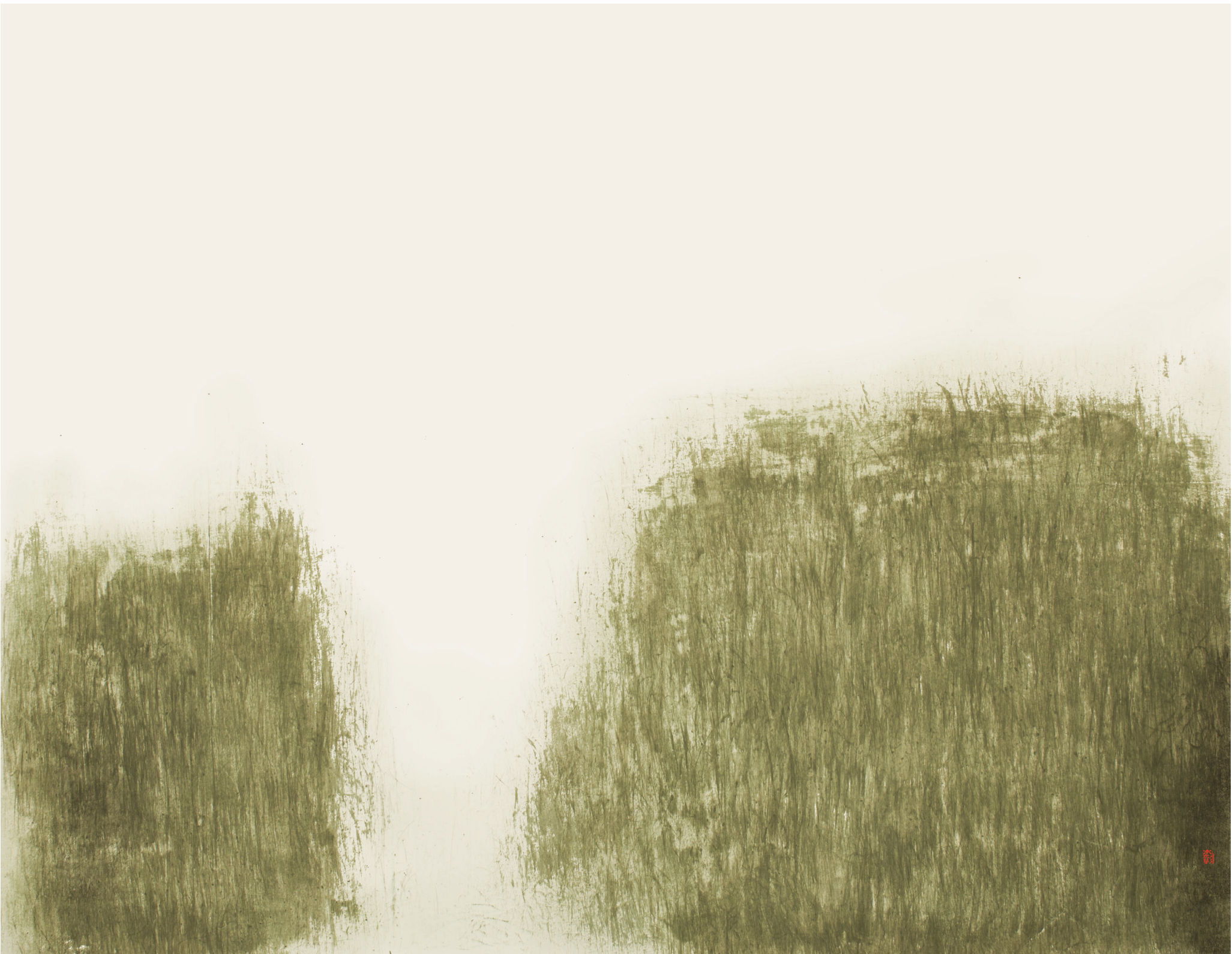
150 x 300 cm
Chinese ink and pigments on canvas
2012

亂石陣之千斤

Disarray Series:
Heft

200 x 200 cm
Chinese ink and pigments on canvas
2012





十面埋伏

Ambush

124 x 160 cm

Chinese ink and pigments on rice paper

2012

亂石陣之紅牆
Disarray Series:
Red Wall

160 x 140 cm
Chinese ink and pigments on canvas
2012



劍氣
The Breath of A Blade

180 x 110 cm
Chinese ink and pigments on rice paper
2012



无题

Unsheathe

49 x 180 cm

Chinese ink and pigments on rice paper
2012

Education

1997-1998	China Academy of Fine Art (People's Republic of China)
1992-1995	Diploma in Fine Art, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Singapore

Solo Exhibitions

2013	《劍氣》The Breath of A Blade, Jendela, Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, Singapore
2012	《且聽風吟》Hear the Wind Sing, Art Projects Gallery, Hong Kong
2011	《天工》Ingenuity, Chan Hampe Galleries, Singapore
2010	《呼吸之間》Between Breaths, Artfolio Gallery, Singapore
2003	《法自畫生》Fa Zi Hua Sheng, Plum Blossoms Gallery, Singapore

Selected Group Exhibitions

2013	Crisis of Monumentality, Chan Hampe Galleries, Singapore
2012	Cityscapes Unbound, OCBC Centre, Singapore
2012	《詩琴畫藝》Poetic Charm, Esplanade Recital Studio, Singapore
2012	《墨》Mò, Jendela, Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, Singapore
2011	Art for the Heart – Perpetual Spirit, in support of Mercy Relief, Helutrans, Singapore
2011-2012	Affordable Art Fair, F1 Pit Building, Singapore
2011	Asia Top Gallery Hotel Art Fair, Grand Hyatt Seoul, Korea
2010	Now and Next – Modern Arts of Korea, Japan, Singapore, National Museum of Gwang-Ju, Korea
2010	Space + Imagination, Korea Singapore Contemporary Art Exchange Exhibition, Jeollanamdo Okgwa Art Museum, Korea
2010	Celebrating Asian Art, Artfolio Gallery, Singapore
2010	Live Our Dreams Community Paintings, The Arts House, Singapore
2009	Nanyang in Paris, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts Gallery, Singapore
2009	Nanyang – 70 Years After, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts Gallery, Singapore
2005	Singapore Art Show, Singapore Management University, Singapore
2005	Singapore Art Fair, Suntec City Convention Hall, Singapore
2005	The Sixth Face, MICA Building Artrium, Singapore
2004	Internationale Cite des Arts, Paris, France
2004	SingArt – A Brush with Lions – public art exhibition, Singapore
2004	Siaw-Tao Chinese Seal-Carving Calligraphy and Painting Society Exhibition, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2003	Singapore Creative Calligraphy and Painting Exhibition, Chengdu and Shanghai, China
2003-2009	International Chinese Ink Painting Exhibition, Tokyo, Japan (2003-2009) and Hangzhou, China (2009)
2002-2012	Teochew Art Exhibition, Ngee Ann Cultural Centre, Singapore
2002	Urban Artists 2002, MICA Building Artrium, Singapore
2001	Nokia Singapore Art, Singapore
2001	Ten Contemporary Singapore Artists Joint Exhibition, MICA Building Artrium, Singapore
2000	AD2000 Kaohsiung 14th International Art Interchange Exhibition, Taiwan
1999	Nokia Singapore Art, Singapore
1997-2000	Singapore Art Society Annual Art Exhibition, Singapore
1997-2000	NAFA Alumni Association Annual Art Exhibition, Singapore
1995-2012	Siaw-Tao Chinese Seal-Carving Calligraphy and Painting Society Annual Exhibition, Singapore

Awards

2003	First Prize (Traditional Chinese Medium Category), 22nd UOB Painting of the Year Competition, Singapore
2002	Young Artist Award for Visual Arts (Awarded by National Arts Council, Singapore)
2000	First Prize (Traditional Chinese Medium Category), 19th UOB Painting of the Year Competition, Singapore
1999, 2002	Distinction, Chinese Painting Category, Dr Tan Tsze Chor Art Award, Singapore
1999	First Prize, Singapore Turf Club Art Competition
1995	16th Shell Discovery Art Award, Singapore

Interviews and Reviews

- “從心出發 本地藝術家為濱海慶生”, Lianhe Zaobao, 25 Sep 2012
- 《藝術無國界》Artistic Journeys, MediaCorp Channel U, Feb 2012
- “純粹的視覺體驗”, Lianhe Zaobao, 4 June 2011
- “幾何圖形的荷塘”, Lianhe Zaobao, 25 March 2010
- “法國美景在南藝 – 巴黎一綫牽”, Lianhe Zaobao, 3 Sep 2009
- “嘯濤 39： 不乏新風貌”, Lianhe Zaobao, 16 May 2009
- Travelling Palette, Asean Series (Luang Prabang, Laos), Arts Central, 2008
- 《藝意孤行》, Mediaworks Channel U, Dec 2004
- “No Turning Bak”, Cohesion Magazine, Nov-Dec 2004
- “魚上鳥下 反常合道”, Lianhe Zaobao, 5 Nov 2003 (Fa Zi Hua Sheng)
- “第 22 屆大華銀行全國繪畫比賽”, Lianhe Zaobao, 23 July 2003 (22nd UOB Painting of the Year Competition)
- “King of Swing Wins Top Cultural Award”, The Straits Times, 9 Oct 2002 (Young Artist Award)
- “五青年同摘藝術甜果”, Lianhe Zaobao, 9 Oct 2002 (Young Artist Award)
- “學成歸來獻才藝”, Lianhe Zaobao, 9 Oct 2002 (Young Artist Award)
- Interview, Good Morning Singapore, MediaCorp Channel 8, Oct 2002 (Young Artist Award)
- Interview, MediaCorp Radio Capital FM95.8, Oct 2002 (Young Artist Award)
- “思潮之間的大道”, Lianhe Zaobao, 14 July 2000 (19th UOB Painting of the Year Competition)
- “Winning with Horses”, The Straits Times, 15 Sep 1999 (Singapore Turf Club Art Competition)
- “馬迷入馬場也入了畫”, Lianhe Zaobao, 16 Sep 1999 (Singapore Turf Club Art Competition)

Collections

- The Istana, official residence and office of the President of Singapore
- Mandarin Oriental, Singapore
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore
- Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Singapore
- National Art Gallery, Singapore
- National Arts Council, Singapore
- OCBC Bank
- Singapore Turf Club
- SingTel
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