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**Gathering Jade and Assembling Splendor:  
The Life and Art of Tseng Yuho**

**Melissa Jane Thompson**

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**University of Washington**

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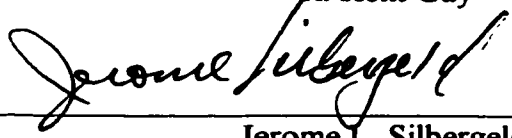
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Abstract

Gathering Jade and Assembling Splendor:  
The Life and Art of Tseng Yuho

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Painter, calligrapher, teacher, and scholar, Tseng Yuho's achievements in the field of Chinese art history are many. Her contributions as artist and scholar and the development of *dsui hua*, the collage-like technique that is her signature painting style, are the focus of this study.

Born in Beijing in 1925 to a family who embraced the twin ideals of Confucianism and modern education, Tseng graduated from Furen University. In Beijing, she was indoctrinated into the Orthodox painting traditions of her teachers Pu Jin and Pu Quan. This training fostered within her a deep commitment to the ideals of Ming dynasty artist and theorist Dong Qichang, particularly his theory of creative reinterpretation: in mastery of the past lay the roots of personal expression.

With her husband Gustav Ecke, Tseng emigrated to America in 1949 and settled in Hawaii, where she felt free to experiment. In this creative atmosphere was nurtured the development of *dsui hua* (literally, "assembled paintings"). The technique is entirely of Tseng's own creation, but has antecedents in both Chinese and Western art. Tseng's attention to Western art movements, local Hawaiian imagery and materials, and her

friendships with such prominent figures as Max Ernst, all contributed to the evolution of *dsui hua*. Within the Chinese tradition, the layers of influence are diverse and indirect, combining techniques and aesthetics from scroll mounting, textiles (*kasaya*), and trompe l'oeil painting (*bapo*). From 1960-70, Tseng was represented by Edith Halpert and the Downtown Gallery, an association that brought Tseng Yuho and *dsui hua* to the attention of a broader audience and led to numerous commissions and exhibitions.

Tseng Yuho's artistic career is distinguished by her parallel career in academia. Until her retirement in 1985, Tseng taught art history and studio art at the University of Hawaii, Manoa. Teaching, scholarship, publications and art historical exhibitions offered other avenues of expression for Tseng's creative and intellectual interests. Interviews with the artist, family members, and colleagues have been supplemented with material from various sources. These include correspondence, catalogues, press releases, newspaper and magazine articles, photographs, and scrapbooks. In addition, Tseng's own writings have been useful sources.

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## CHRONOLOGY

Much of this chronology is based on material provided by Tseng Yuho in two publications, *The Art of Tseng Yu-ho* and *Dsui Hua*, and by the artist's curriculum vitae. This information has been supplemented with details from my own research.

### 1925

Tseng Yuho was born in Beijing to Zeng Guangqing and Zhang Baozheng. Zeng was an overseas-trained government official. Zhang was a school teacher before beginning her family.

### 1927

Tseng spent the years 1927-1930 in Suzhou with her maternal grandmother, who taught her embroidery and the basics of brush handling.

### 1930

Tseng returned to Beijing and attended primary school.

### 1931

Zeng Guangqing and family moved to Harbin and Qingdao.

### 1933

The Zeng family returned to Beijing.

### 1935

According to Tseng, in this year she began to paint Western-style portraits using pencil, watercolor, and pastel.

**1936**

Tseng contracted pleurisy. During her long convalescence, she amused herself by painting. Her efforts caught the attention of a Japanese doctor who attended her. She was subsequently allowed to undertake art lessons with Mr. Fang.

**1937**

Japan invaded China and the Sino-Japanese War began. Tseng's two elder brothers left Beijing.

Tseng became a private student of Pu Jin.

**1940**

Tseng sat for three days of examinations to gain entrance to Furen University. Prior to matriculating, Zeng Guangqing encouraged her to change the characters of her given name from Zhaohe to Yuho. Gustav Ecke taught the Western art history class that Tseng took at Furen.

Tseng was detained briefly under suspicion of spying.

Zeng Guangqing left Beijing to join the war effort.

**1941**

Zeng Zhaoming, Tseng's younger sister, left Beijing to join her school in Chengdu. Zhang Baozheng and Zeng Zhaoyi, Tseng's mother and youngest sister, also left Beijing. Tseng moved in with her aunt and uncle.

**1942**

Tseng graduated from the Art Department of Furen University. After graduation, she pursued post-graduate studies as an independent student and held a variety of jobs, including working as assistant to Gustav Ecke and Pu Quan.

**1943**

Pu Quan organized a large group exhibition to present his students' work. Tseng's paintings were included.

**1944**

An exhibition that featured Tseng's work, along with her teacher's, was organized by Pu Quan

**1945**

Gustav Ecke and Tseng Yuho were married on February 25.  
An exhibition of her paintings was held at Peking Union Medical College.

**1946**

Tseng began to study Chinese scroll mounting techniques.

**1947**

Tseng lectured on Chinese painting and history at the Yale-Chinese Language School, Beijing.

A solo exhibition of Tseng's classical style paintings travelled to China Institute, London. The M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco, also held a solo exhibition of her paintings.

Ecke was invited to teach at Xiamen University. The couple left Beijing for Amoy. They took a short boat trip along the Min River, Fujian province.

**1949**

Tseng left Amoy for Hong Kong, where her works were shown at the Fung Ping Shan Library, Hong Kong University. Ecke joined her in Hong Kong following the exhibition. In Hong Kong, he received the offer of the curatorship of Chinese art at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. At the end of the year, the couple sailed for Honolulu.

**1950**

The first exhibition of Tseng's paintings in Hawaii was held at Gump's, Honolulu.

Stanton Macdonald Wright taught the summer session at the University of Hawaii.

**1951**

Tseng began teaching brush painting classes at the school of the Honolulu Academy of Arts, which she continued until 1963.

She painted the long *Min River* handscroll.

**1952**

“Paintings by Tseng Yu-ho” was presented at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. It subsequently travelled to the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco.

The Honolulu Academy of Arts acquired a portion of the Tseng-Ecke’s painting collection.

Tseng met Max Ernst when he accepted the University of Hawaii’s offer to teach during the summer session.

**1953**

Tseng and Ecke received a joint Rockefeller Foundation grant for a study tour of American public and private collections of Chinese art. She taught the summer session at the University of California, Berkeley.

Tseng began to mount her own paintings.

Exhibitions of Tseng’s works were held in Europe and America.

**1954**

The Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service circulated an exhibition of Tseng’s paintings throughout America.

Her first scholarly publication, “The Seven Junipers’ of Wen Cheng-ming,” was published in *Archives of Chinese Art Society of America*.

Josef Albers visited the University of Hawaii. Tseng attended his course on color theory.

**1955**

Tseng and Ecke became United States citizens.

She published “Hsüeh Wu and Her Orchids in the Collection of the Honolulu Academy of Arts,” in *Arts Asiatiques*.

**1956**

Tseng’s paintings showed at The Gallery, Honolulu. Her work was also included in the joint exhibition “Hawaii Painting and Sculpture” at Honolulu Academy of Arts.

She published “Notes on T’ang Yin” in *Oriental Art*.

### **1957**

Tseng and Ecke travelled to Europe. It was her first trip; they visited twelve countries. Tseng remained in Paris to prepare for a solo gallery show, held in May, at the Galerie d'Orsay.

### **1958**

Two of Tseng's *dsui* works were chosen to represent Hawaii in "Fresh Paint: American Art of the Western States" at Stanford Art Gallery, Stanford University. *Aquarelle* won first award of merit and the popular prize.

She completed murals for St. Catherine's Church, Kauai and the Chinese Cemetery in Manoa Valley, Oahu.

Tseng was commissioned to design stage sets and costumes for Luigi Dallapiccola's *Job* and *Orfeo* by Claudio Monteverdi.

### **1959**

"Recent Paintings by Tseng Yu-ho" appeared at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. It was her first exhibition of new *dsui* technique. The exhibition travelled to California where it was seen as "Paintings by Tseng Yu-ho" at the Stanford Art Gallery, Stanford University.

She published "A Report on Ch'en Hong-shou" in *Archives of Chinese Art Society of America*.

Harvey Arnason, Director of the Walker Art Center, was invited to teach at University of Hawaii as visiting professor, and was introduced to the works of Tseng.

In late summer, Tseng travelled to Europe with Ecke. They spent September 1959 to January 1960 in New York, where Ecke taught at Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.

### **1960**

Tseng had a solo exhibition of her work at Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

Edith Halpert became Tseng's exclusive representative. Her paintings were part of a group exhibition at the Downtown Gallery, "Seven Painters in Hawaii," as well as a solo exhibition.

Tseng received a scholarship from the Oriental Art Society of Washington, D.C. for a four-month study tour to Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

**1962**

Tseng had solo exhibitions of her work at the Downtown Gallery and the Honolulu Academy of Arts. Her paintings were also included in several group shows.

**1963**

Tseng had solo exhibitions in San Francisco, Stockholm, and Paris. She and Ecke travelled in Greece and Turkey.

She published *Some Contemporary Elements in Chinese Classical Art*.

**1964**

Tseng's paintings appeared in a solo exhibition at the Downtown Gallery, and were featured in a show of twentieth-century Chinese painters in Pittsburgh.

She completed *Western Frontier*, a ninety-foot mural, for Golden West Savings and Loan Association, San Francisco.

**1965**

With Ecke, Tseng travelled to Italy on a three-month Rockefeller Foundation award.

Her paintings were featured in numerous group exhibitions.

**1966**

She taught Chinese art history at the University of Munich and the Akademie der Bildenden Künste as part of a one-year Fulbright lectureship.

Tseng's works were seen in solo exhibitions at the Downtown Gallery and Honolulu Academy of Arts, as well in several group exhibitions.

**1967**

Tseng had solo exhibitions in Europe and New York. Numerous group shows featured her paintings.

She completed a master's degree at the University of Hawaii, History Department.

In the fall, she began residence and course requirements for her doctorate at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.

**1969**

Tseng returned to Honolulu and accepted a full-time teaching position at the University of Hawaii.

**1970**

*The Analects of Confucius*, translated by Lionel Giles with illustrations by Tseng Yuho, was published.

Edith Halpert died.

**1971**

*Chinese Calligraphy*, a catalogue authored by Tseng to accompany the exhibition of the same title, was published.

Gustav Ecke died, December 18.

**1972**

Tseng received her doctorate in art history from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. Her dissertation, "Emperor Hui Tsung, the Artist, 1082-1136," was awarded the prize for outstanding dissertation.

She received a travel grant from the University of Hawaii Foundation for three months of research travel to pursue her study of Chinese calligraphy.

She published "A Reconsideration of the Sixth Principle of Hsieh Ho: Ch'uan-mo i-hsieh."

**1973**

Tseng was appointed full professor at the University of Hawaii.

She completed a wall painting for Honolulu International Airport, commissioned by Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts.

**1974**

Tseng was awarded the Paul S. Bachman Memorial Award by the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council.

**1975**

Tseng participated in "Painting and Calligraphy by Ming I-min" symposium at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She also spent two months of field work in China.

**1976**

Tseng began a one-year sabbatical to write another book on Chinese calligraphy. She published "Chinese Calligraphy of the Seventeenth Century," *Chinese Folk Art in American Collections, Early Fifteenth through Early Twentieth Centuries*, and three artist entries for the *Dictionary of Ming Biography*.

**1977**

*Chinese Folk Art II*, an exhibition catalogue was published.

**1979**

Tseng took a study trip to Japan and Korea.

She completed a mural project for the University of Hawaii, Hilo, commissioned by the Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts.

She became Director of Chinese Studies, School of Hawaiian, Asian and Pacific Studies at University of Hawaii, Manoa.

**1980**

Tseng took a two-month study trip to the People's Republic of China.

**1981**

She completed a mural for the Maui Memorial Hospital, commissioned by the Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts.

Tseng published "The Importance of Ink-Imprints" in *Chinese Rubbings from the Field Museum*.

**1982**

*Poetry on the Wind, the Art of Chinese Folding Fans from the Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties* was published to accompany an exhibition of the same name.

Tseng travelled to China for six weeks.

**1983**

On sabbatical leave for half of the year, Tseng spent part of the time travelling in Europe.

**1984**

Tseng changed the written characters of her given name, Youhe, from “Young Lotus,” or “Shoulder the Responsibilities of Youth,” to “Safeguard Peace and Harmony.” She was appointed part-time adjunct curator at the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

**1985**

Tseng retired from the University of Hawaii.

**1987**

*The Art of Tseng Yuho*, co-authored with Howard S. Link, was published by the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

**1988**

Tseng published “Chinese Painting Overseas, A Personal Account of Chinese Painting Outside Chinese Society,” in *Twentieth-Century Chinese Painting*, edited by Kao May ch’ing.

*Wen-jen Hua, Chinese Literati Painting from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell Hutchinson*, catalogue and exhibition, was featured at the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

**1989**

“The Art of Tseng Yu-ho,” a solo exhibition of Tseng’s paintings, was held at the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

**1990**

Tseng’s artistic contributions were recognized with the Living Treasure of Hawaii award by Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betruin.

She became Associate Director, Council of Chinese Ming Domestic Furniture, Chinese National Committee of Arts and Crafts, Beijing

**1991**

“The Immortal Hermitage on the Peach Stream,” “Gustav Ecke” and “Appendix to ‘Notes on Chinese Furniture,’” were published in *Orientalism*.

Tseng was elected honorary president of the Council for Chinese Ming Furniture.

**1992**

*Dsui Paintings by Tseng Yuho: A Retrospective Exhibition* was organized by Hanart.

**1993**

*A History of Chinese Calligraphy* was published by The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

**1994**

“The Cosmic Mirror” was published in *Bronze Mirrors from Ancient China: Donald H. Graham, Jr. Collection*.

“Women Painters of Ming Dynasty” was published in *Artibus Asiae*, in memory of Alexander Soper.

**1995**

“Art of Incense Burning” was published for the International Snuff Bottle Society, based on lecture delivered in 1994.

**1996**

*Some Contemporary Elements in Classical Chinese Art* was reprinted as *Chuantong zhong de xiandai*.

**1997**

Tseng’s calligraphy was recognized in *The Living Brush: Four Masters of Contemporary Chinese Calligraphy*, an exhibition at the Pacific Heritage Museum, San Francisco.

**1998**

Tseng exhibited at the Michael Goedhuis Gallery, London, fifty-one years after her first London show at China Institute. Michael Sullivan attended the Goedhuis show, as he did the earlier one.

**2000**

The exhibition *By Design: The Art of Tseng Yuho* was held at Kaikodo Gallery, New York.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I first became aware of Tseng Yuho during my senior year at Stanford when I enrolled in Michael Sullivan's course, "The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art." *At Second Sight*, a *dsui* painting from 1964, graced the cover of Sullivan's text. In the intervening years, as my interest in Chinese art grew, Tseng was always there, both as scholar and artist. A casual conversation with Jerome Silbergeld outside the Fogg Art Museum in the fall of 1996 launched this dissertation. I am grateful to Tseng Yuho for enabling me to undertake this study of her life and art. She was unfailingly generous in her hospitality and showed me many kindnesses throughout my research.

I would also like to thank the members of my dissertation committee: Patricia Failing and R. Kent Guy at the University of Washington, and Jerome Silbergeld at Princeton University. Norman Taylor graciously agreed to serve as the Graduation School representative on my defense committee.

My own Gang of Four (Caroline Aaron, Paula Debnar, Mary Bellino, Kandice Hauf) offered encouragement and sustenance in many forms. I extend my warmest appreciation to each of them.

No one deserves my thanks more than Roger Thompson. This project has been with us from Cambridge to Waterville to Stanford, and never once has his patience or good nature faltered. For his support and encouragement, I shall always be grateful.

## INTRODUCTION

In 1962, an exhibition of Tseng Yuho's paintings was held at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. One of the artworks included in that exhibition, "Paintings by Tseng Yu-ho," was a calligraphy couplet. Brushed on paper and mounted on two panels, Tseng wrote the characters in her own *xingshu* (running style) script. The two panels read: *Gathering jade, assembling splendor* and *Tearing clouds, plucking mists* (fig. 1). Tseng composed the couplet to describe the painting technique she had developed, and which had been the focus of intensive work during the previous five years. In lyrical terms, Tseng's *Gathering Jade* couplet alluded to *dsui hua*, the collage-like technique that evolved from a combination of Western artistic influences, and techniques and aesthetics firmly based in traditional Chinese art. *Dsui hua* was nurtured in the experimental environment of America and Europe in the fifties when artists embraced abstraction in painting, and collage represented one means of exploring spontaneity. By 1962, when Tseng wrote *Gathering Jade*, *dsui hua* had become the artist's signature painting style. The couplet evokes the complex nature of her work, with its roots in the traditional arts of China and its continuation of the ideals of literati landscape painting.

This dissertation is the first in-depth look at Tseng Yuho's numerous achievements and contributions. My study focuses on the development of *dsui hua*, the growth of Tseng's career and recognition through the fifties, continuing in the sixties when she was under exclusive contract to Edith Halpert's Downtown Gallery, New York.

The dissertation traces developments in Tseng's *dsui* painting style from its beginning to the present, including her attention to calligraphy since the nineties, some of which might be interpreted as *dsui shu* (*dsui* calligraphy). It also situates the scholarly contributions of her teaching years at the University of Hawaii within the context of developments in the field of Chinese art history. Primary emphasis is placed on the role of Chinese tradition in defining Tseng's scholarly and artistic identity, cultivated in the fertile and creative environment of her new home in America.

The many strands of Tseng Yuho's life and art have been woven into a tapestry of great richness and visual appeal. The Zeng family counts among its ancestors Zengzi, devoted disciple of Confucius (551-479 B.C.), making Yuho a seventy-third generation descendant. As befitting Zengzi's heirs, a strong tradition of filial piety and Confucian ideals prevailed in her family, values which remain central to Tseng's world view. A complex interaction between traditional and modern ideas was a central part of Tseng's early life. While Confucian ideology informed much of the family identity, modern ideas were also embraced, particularly in the area of education. Progressive-minded parents and private tutors nurtured Tseng's artistic gifts. This instruction included a thorough grounding in the strict traditions of Chinese painting through her early studies in Beijing with the Orthodox painter and Manchu prince Pu Jin (1879-1966), and later as a student at Furen University, where her teachers included Pu Jin, Pu Quan (b. 1912), and Gustav Ecke (1896-1971). Each of them had a profound influence on her life: Pu Jin and Pu Quan as artistic mentors, and Ecke, first as her art history professor at Furen, and later as her spouse and intellectual partner.

Tseng Yuho's early training in China instilled in her a profound commitment to traditional Chinese art. As an art student in Beijing in the forties, she mastered the traditional brush styles of Chinese painting under the direction of her teachers Pu Jin and Pu Quan, themselves deeply immersed in the Orthodox styles of painting as transmitted by the followers of Dong Qichang (1555-1636). In the late Ming dynasty, Dong insisted that artistic genius lay in the creative reinterpretation of tradition. Only after intense study of the past could an artist then venture his or her own interpretation. Among the Qing dynasty painters who succeeded him and who sought to continue his ideas, the work of Dong's followers was characterized by highly accomplished brushwork and techniques derived from the intensive study of past styles. Tseng's teachers were influential artists and personages in Beijing--renowned painters and members of the former Qing imperial family who adhered successfully to Dong Qichang's ideals. They fostered in Tseng a deep understanding of brush technique and a life-long interest in past painting styles. The paintings in Tseng's first exhibitions in China and the West in the late forties were her copies of masters of the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, or combinations of these styles.

When Tseng left China to reside in Hawaii in 1949, many worlds seemed to be at an end. The attempt to establish a new-style government in China following the end of the Qing dynasty in 1912 met with a series of spectacular failures. In the midst of this internal chaos, Japan posed an external threat, invading Manchuria in 1931 and China proper in 1937. The ensuing Sino-Japanese conflict raged until 1945. Domestic divisiveness culminated in the civil war between Nationalist and Communist troops

during 1946-1949. It was against this background that Tseng Yuho came to maturity in China. The political situation, though not thoroughly resolved even today, reached a new stage in 1949 with the establishment of the People's Republic of China when the traditional social, cultural, and artistic ideals which had formed Tseng's character were suppressed in China.

In America, Tseng continued to embrace Dong's ideals, but the metamorphosis of her work offered a creative reinterpretation of the sort the Ming master could never have fathomed. Dong Qichang and the literati traditions he represents, view painting, particularly landscape painting, as an appropriate vehicle of expression for the cultivated individual. Landscape painting has never literally been about landscape, or the representation of actual places. Instead, for the literati painter, landscape was the physical manifestation of cosmic realities, and the depiction of landscape in painting was an intellectual exercise related to metaphysical concepts. Tseng has never completely forsaken the ideals of literati landscape painting, even in her most abstract works. Their foundation remains firmly rooted in Chinese tradition.

The isolation and parochial realities of post-war Hawaii did not impede the enhancement of Tseng's artistic development, still influenced by Dong Qichang's precepts, or her growing reputation. Finding her way in a new world, Tseng drew upon modern art movements in the West and the lush visual imagery of her American home in Hawaii to develop a new form of expression. Adapting traditional scroll mounting methods to a technique she calls *dsui hua* (assembled painting), Tseng works with hand-made papers, tapa cloth, paint, gold leaf, inks, and pigments. Elements of Chinese

landscape painting (trees, rocks, mountains) comprise the formal language of Tseng's paintings. Taking as her starting point the classical ideals of Chinese landscape painting and its intellectualization of form, Tseng has explored a wealth of modern Western art movements. She has experimented in media and styles far removed from the Chinese tradition and yet always, ultimately, leading back to it. Tseng's earliest *dsui* works took their inspiration from Song dynasty poetry, and the development of *dsui* can be associated with other Chinese traditions, including scroll mounting, Buddhist vestments (*kasaya*), and the trompe l'oeil painting style called *bapo*.

Tseng is also a scholar of Chinese art history. Her published works range from articles on incense and tea to folk art, calligraphy and literati painting. She is the author of a series of studies on Ming dynasty artists, and her 1972 dissertation, "Emperor Hui Tsung, the Artist, 1082-1136," remains the most important work on this key figure and a pioneering work in imperial patronage studies. In the annals of Chinese painting scholarship, Tseng's 1955 article on the Ming dynasty courtesan painter Xue Wu (ca. 1564-1637) represents a breakthrough which preceded the advent of gender studies by several decades. The article sought to place Xue Wu within the social and artistic world of the Ming courtesan.<sup>1</sup> *Chinese Calligraphy* (1971), the exhibition and catalogue she wrote for the Philadelphia Museum of Art, was the first serious attempt to introduce the Chinese calligraphic tradition to a non-specialist audience. Following two decades of continued research on the topic, Tseng published *A History of Chinese Calligraphy*

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<sup>1</sup> Tseng Yu-ho [Tseng Yuho], "Hsüeh Wu and Her Orchids in the Collection of the Honolulu Academy of Arts," *Arts Asiatiques* 2, no. 3 (1955): 197-208.

(1993), the artist's very personal interpretation of the subject. In addition, Tseng's career includes long appointments as professor of Asian art history at the University of Hawaii, and adjunct curator at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. In collaboration with her late husband, the German sinologist Gustav Ecke, Tseng and Ecke shaped the academic and museum world of Honolulu through their joint scholarly and curatorial positions.

Tseng Yuho has developed a unique painting style that positioned her as a Chinese artist at the meeting point of Eastern and Western art. When Chinese artists began exploring ways of modernizing Chinese art early in the century, they accepted the orientalist paradigm which affirmed the superiority of the West. Early attempts at creating a new art were deeply influenced by Chinese artists trained in Paris in nineteenth century French academic styles. Lin Fengmian (1900-1991) and Xu Beihong (1895-1953) both studied in Paris where they received a firm grounding in the academic styles still popular there. Both Lin and Xu responded enthusiastically to their experiences in the West, and upon returning to China sought to convey their new ideas through paintings and pedagogy, with varying degrees of success.

The Chinese diaspora of the past century created other demands on artists who shared a concern about the condition of Chinese painting as they confronted conflicting expectations and contradictory cultural realities. Among artists who left China in the late forties, many clung to their Chinese identity, others de-emphasized it. Zhang Daqian (1899-1983), C. C. Wang (b. 1907) and Pan Yuliang (1899-1977) each applied their encyclopedic knowledge of Chinese painting to the creation of their personal styles. Zhang enjoys twin reputations as painter and forger, and during his life, he produced an

impressive corpus of Chinese paintings, under his own name and that of legions of past masters. In his later years, Zhang painted large, freely expressive works that spoke to contemporary art movements, but were as likely based in past Chinese styles and techniques. Wang's works are similarly dependent on the artist's understanding of past masters, which he developed into a contemporary traditional Chinese landscape genre. Pan Yuliang, on the other hand, settled in Paris during the thirties, where she made her reputation as painter and sculptor. Some of her works combine Chinese techniques and media with Western subject matter--female nudes painted with brush and ink, for example--but her oil paintings and sculptures are Western in conception and execution.

Tseng Yuho, however, turned to a careful analysis of her own tradition to perfect what may be regarded as an early example of post-orientalist art. Every part of her work has its antecedents somewhere in the Chinese past, but they are translated into a wholly new visual language. Critic Gao Minglu has described recent Chinese avant-garde artists working overseas as negotiating modes of representation of their culture of origin: this is something Tseng's paintings have done successfully for more than four decades.<sup>2</sup>

Navigation of the liminal spaces of her world has marked every aspect of Tseng's art and life. In her personal life, from childhood to marriage, to her career in academia, Tseng defied expectations and drew strength from adhering to her own path. She was raised in a strict Confucian family who valued modern educational ideals. Her artistic education was solidly Orthodox, during a period when artistic debates raged in

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<sup>2</sup> Gao Minglu, "Toward a Transnational Modernity," in *Inside/Out: New Chinese Art*, edited by Gao Minglu (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 33-35.

educational circles concerning the shape of art education reform. Tseng's relationship with Gustav Ecke signaled her commitment to Chinese art and culture, ironically through marriage to a German scholar nearly three decades her senior. Moving to America, her new home in Hawaii was ethnically diverse and had a substantial Chinese population. Even there, though, Tseng stood out as a newcomer amongst an established Chinese community of *kamaaina*.<sup>3</sup> Later, Tseng was an exception among Edith Halpert's artists at the Downtown Gallery: young, female, Asian. In her professional life, she alternated between painting and academia, never fully relinquishing one for the other.

Tseng's painting education and the development of *dsui hua* offers examples of similar nimbleness. In Beijing, she learned from Orthodox style painters, and her own works reflect these literati tastes (ink monochrome landscapes), rather than the types of works more commonly associated with female painters (polychrome bird-and-flower subjects). In Hawaii, she continued to paint in a traditional Chinese manner, but not one readily understood or even desired by American collectors who preferred more decorative styles and who had yet to develop a taste for the ascetic literati styles. The development of *dsui hua* may have derived ultimately from within the Chinese aesthetic traditions, but it was nurtured by ideas encountered in the West and in an environment that prized innovation.

In recent years, a number of monographs have begun to explore the world of the

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<sup>3</sup> *Kamaaina* is the Hawaiian expression used for individuals who have been in the islands for a long time. Usually referring to being locally born, it sometimes merely means something like "old-timer." After fifty years in Hawaii, Tseng considers herself "nearly *kamaaina*."

twentieth century Chinese painter, concentrating on the lives and creative development of Chinese artists currently working in either the United States or China. One of the earliest is Jerome Silbergeld's *Mind Landscapes: The Paintings of C. C. Wang* (1987). Lucy Lim followed two years later with her study of *Wu Guanzhong: A Contemporary Chinese Artist* (1989). Silbergeld revisited the theme with Gong Jisui in 1993 in their work, *Contradictions: Artistic Life, the Socialist State, and the Chinese Painter Li Huasheng*. In the past decade, most of the work on contemporary Chinese painting has focussed on new art and the avant garde, artists separated from Tseng by time and experience. The art of artists like Xu Bing, Zhang Huan, and Fang Lijun may be seen as responding to new challenges, using new forms (performance) or redefining old ones (painting and calligraphy). Their engagement with tradition is one of self-conscious acceptance or repudiation, informed by the realities of their Chinese world: Mao Zedong, the Cultural Revolution, Tiananmen Square.

That little attention has been devoted to contemporary Chinese women artists is not surprising, as the role of women painters in East Asia has long been overlooked. Several important projects have begun to redress the imbalance, among them Marsha Weidner's *Views from Jade Terrace: Chinese Women Artists, 1300-1912* (1988) and *Flowering in the Shadows: Women in the History of Chinese and Japanese Painting* (1990). These works examined this much-neglected topic through presentation of the works of many fine but unheralded women artists. Both studies confined themselves to traditional painters of the pre-modern era. Among female artists of Tseng Yuho's generation, however, only Fang Zhaoling (b. 1914) and Zhou Luyun (b. 1924), both of

whom made their careers in Hong Kong, have received much attention, none of it monograph length.

This dissertation draws heavily upon interviews the author conducted with the artist in March and November, 1997. Others interviewed include members of her family and colleagues. These oral histories are supplemented with archival records and print materials. Two main archival sources are both part of the Smithsonian Institution. The National Archives of American Art contains records from Edith Halpert pertaining to the Downtown Gallery. Records for the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service were helpful in reconstructing Tseng's exhibition schedule in the mid-fifties. This material includes correspondence, catalogues, press releases, and newspaper and magazine articles. This previously unpublished material offers a more complete picture of Tseng's development and also rectifies a number of dating problems. Finally, secondary publications, especially exhibition catalogues, and Tseng's own writings over the years have been useful sources.

I have divided the dissertation into six chapters which unfold chronologically from her childhood in China to the present day. Chapter 1 covers the period from Tseng's birth in Beijing in 1925 to her departure from Hong Kong in 1949. It introduces relevant background information concerning her family and her early education. It was during this period that Tseng encountered three of the key influences in her life: Pu Jin, Pu Quan, and Gustav Ecke, and her relationship with each of them during this period is explored. Tseng matriculated in the first class of women students at Furen University, and this experience is one of the transforming events of her artistic and intellectual

development. The years immediately following the receipt of her degree, and her subsequent marriage to Ecke are discussed in this chapter. Her early painting style, which closely followed traditional models, is examined, and the early establishment of her international reputation is described.

Chapter 2 begins with Tseng's arrival in Hawaii in 1949 and follows her life and artistic development there until 1956. During this period her work largely followed the models of her Beijing teachers. Her reputation in Hawaii grew, as it did in the mainland United States and Europe during the period. The chapter examines some of the important innovations of her early years in Hawaii. The chapter also explores how a number of Western influences engaged her imagination.

Tseng's solo exhibition in Paris in 1957 is the primary event of chapter 3. From the success of this exhibition, Tseng drew confidence to devote her creative energy to the development of the nascent art form that became *dsui hua*. The context, evolution and influences related to *dsui hua* form the main portion of the chapter of this productive post-Paris period. Public commissions and recognition in national exhibitions marked this period of her development. The chapter ends with two key exhibitions and the impact of H. Harvard Arnason, director of the Walker Art Center, on Tseng's career.

Edith Halpert played a crucial role in the promotion of Tseng's art in the decade from 1960 to 1970. Chapter 4 discusses this period when Tseng was under exclusive contract to Halpert's Downtown Gallery, New York. Tseng's innovations in *dsui hua* in the sixties form part of the chapter, as do the exhibitions and publicity that the association with Halpert fostered. Tseng undertook a number of important commissions during the

period and they are examined in detail. The chapter ends with her decision to return to school, a decision that marked the shift from painting to academia.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on Tseng's later artistic production. Chapter 5 takes as its topic the period 1970-1985 when the artist's attention was redirected from painting to her academic career at the University of Hawaii. This chapter also discusses a brief experimental phase with plastic, three-dimensional works. Tseng's numerous scholarly contributions from 1970 to 2000 are presented to illuminate this productive period of publications and art-historical exhibitions. Chapter 6 examines the period following her retirement from full-time teaching in 1985, when she returned to a more active painting schedule. The chapter follows Tseng's life and art from 1985 to the present, including the resumption of exhibitions of her own paintings, and her new focus on calligraphy. Chapter 6 concludes by placing Tseng Yuho's life and art in the context of three peer artists: Pan Yuliang, C. C. Wang, and Zao Wou-ki. Like Tseng, they represent the range of artistic responses of diaspora artists of Tseng's near contemporaries, and underscore Tseng's unique accomplishments as an artist.

Tseng Yuho's contributions to Chinese art and scholarship have spanned six decades, since her first exhibition as a student in Beijing. Her artistic evolution began with the Orthodox styles of her teachers Pu Jin and Pu Quan and has reached the highly personal expression that is her signature. The development of *dsui hua* was dependent on the artistic atmosphere Tseng found in America, but is at its core a Chinese art form with roots in painting, scroll mounting, even textile arts. Tseng's contributions as scholar and educator underscore her commitment to Chinese art, its forms, and interpretations.

Note to the reader:

This dissertation uses the *pinyin* romanization system for rendering Chinese names in English, with one notable exception: the name of the artist. She originally romanized her name as Tseng Yu-ho, according to the conventions of the Wade-Giles system. Tseng now prefers to see her given name as Yuho, a non-standard form. References in the text to early works and publications by her use the older form, while the text itself honors her present preference.

## CHAPTER ONE

### TSENG YUHO IN CHINA, 1925-1949

#### **The Zengs in Chinese History**

Tseng Yuho was born into a family of distinguished descent who count among their ancestors Zengzi, a disciple of Confucius (551-479 B.C.). Even before the time of Zengzi, the Zeng clan was recognized in the histories, first under the suzerainty of the Zhou kings, and later, as founders of a state called Zeng which occupied an area that included parts of present-day Shandong, Henan, and Hunan provinces.

These events, however, are historical footnotes compared to the distinction brought to the clan by its most famous ancestor. Along with the descendants of Confucius (the Kongs) and Mencius (the Mengs), the Zeng clan can lay claim to one of the most prominent lineages in Chinese culture. Besides being a disciple of Confucius, Zengzi became known as the most filial son in Chinese history, with his filial acts remembered in a series of legends that illustrate his devotion to his mother. Zengzi was also considered the author of the *Xiaojing* (Classic of filial piety), a brief but influential text that extols filial piety as the fountainhead of all other virtues. Tseng Yuho counts herself the seventy-third generation descendant of Zengzi.<sup>1</sup> The family's affinity to Confucianism was never distant: "My father reminded us constantly that we are of

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<sup>1</sup> Tseng Yuho, letter to author, July 13, 1999.

Confucian descent.”<sup>2</sup>

In more recent times, the family name looms large during the late imperial period in the persons of Zeng Guofan and his son Zeng Jize, a collateral branch of the family. Zeng Guofan (1811-1872), sometimes referred to as the Confucian General, played a key role in helping to recapture Nanjing from the rebel Taiping army in 1864, thus marking the end of that calamitous uprising. From a poor family in Xiangxiang, Hunan province, Zeng Guofan earned a *jinshi* degree in 1838 and that same year became a member of the prestigious Hanlin Academy. In Beijing, he earned numerous promotions, and his career included many civil and military accomplishments, including service as governor-general of Jiangnan and Jiangxi provinces. As one of China’s most renowned modernizers, Zeng Guofan distinguished himself by advancing twin goals: reasserting “the ‘family values’ of a moralistic Confucian ethos” along with the selective use of Western technology for defensive industrialization. They were ideas at the core of the Self-Strengthening Movement of the 1860s to 1890s.<sup>3</sup>

Zeng Jize (1839-1890), cousin to Tseng Yuho’s great grandfather, was Zeng Guofan’s elder son. As befitting the Zeng family’s Confucian tradition and its commitment to education, Zeng Jize received a solid education in the Chinese Classics, history, literature, music, and archery. He also achieved some proficiency with the brush, in painting and calligraphy. His education included a background in Western science and

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<sup>2</sup> Tseng Yuho, letter to author, November 19, 1997.

<sup>3</sup> David Fraser, “Eyes in the Storm: The Historical Context for Artist in China from the Opium War to the Cultural Revolution,” in *Between the Thunder and the Rain: Chinese Paintings from the Opium War through the Cultural Revolution, 1840-1979* (San Francisco: Echo Rock Ventures and the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, 2000), 17.

English language, interests which marked him as progressive and reform-minded. Upon his father's death in 1872, Zeng Jize inherited the hereditary rank of *hou*, commonly translated as "Marquis," a title by which he would subsequently be known in the West.<sup>4</sup> Zeng's distinguished diplomatic career included appointments as minister to England, France and Russia. Upon his return to China, Zeng was appointed to the Zongli Yamen and he also served on the Board of War, the Board of Revenue, and the Board of Admiralty.<sup>5</sup>

#### Tseng Yuho's Family

Tseng Yuho's grandfather, Zeng Jigang, broke away from his natal family and settled in Henan province at Guangshan, where he became a property owner. Tseng Yuho's father Zeng Guangqing was born there. Like his father before him, Zeng Guangqing moved away from his birthplace. At age fifteen, Zeng Guangqing left home in search of educational opportunities beyond those available at the village level. It was a move that also allowed him to escape the entanglements of an arranged marriage. Zeng Guangqing's actions alienated him from his family, but were in keeping with the reformist ideals of the late Qing period.

By the late Qing period, the civil-service examination system had suffered serious decline. For a millennium the system had selected Confucian scholars to serve in the

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<sup>4</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, March 10, 1997. (All interviews were conducted in Honolulu.) In Europe during the fifties, Tseng Yuho was occasionally introduced in certain social circles as a descendant of "Marquis Zeng."

<sup>5</sup> Arthur W. Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period (1644-1912)* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943), 746-47.

ranks of the imperial bureaucracy. By the late nineteenth century many reformers argued that its Confucian-oriented curriculum was no longer relevant and in 1905, the examination system was abolished. But educational reforms had already been creating new opportunities and some of the most promising young students had forsaken the examination system, even before its demise, for the prospect of study overseas. Many reform-minded Chinese looked to Japan as a model for its successful incorporation of dramatic social and political changes after the Meiji Restoration (1868). Large numbers of Chinese students took advantage of new opportunities to study in Japan, especially following 1900. Many were self-funded. Some of the brightest and most promising, however, were given Qing imperial scholarships: Zeng Guangqing was among them.

Zeng Guangqing studied in Japan for eight years. According to Jonathan Spence, those on imperial scholarships “received comfortable stipends as long as they enrolled in an accredited Japanese school and followed a formal course of study.” Employment upon returning home was by no means certain, however.<sup>6</sup> Again, Zeng Guangqing was fortunate. Toward the end of his studies in Japan, he received an appointment to the Qing imperial naval academy. Even in its waning years, the Qing military was by no means insubstantial. Efforts had been taken to increase its size and strength, including reforms which featured Western-style armaments, organization, and tactics.<sup>7</sup> Zeng Guangqing, with his Japanese education, fitted the profile of desirable candidates.

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<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1990), 85.

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace: The Chinese and Their Revolution, 1895-1980* (New York: Viking Press, 1981), 90.

Zeng Guangqing was in Japan under the auspices of the Qing government, but he was there with a group of Chinese students who did not necessarily feel allegiance to the dynasty.<sup>8</sup> In Japan, Zeng Guangqing met Sun Yatsen (1866-1925). In the course of articulating his ideas for the overthrow of the Qing dynasty, Sun made several trips to Japan where he recruited support for the revolution among overseas Chinese students. Zeng was sympathetic to Sun's political ideas--ideas which eventually led to the overthrow of the Qing dynasty. Of her father's involvement in revolutionary activities, Tseng Yuho says: "Upon returning to China, he was among those who rose from Nanch'ang, marched into Hank'ou, and overthrew the Manchus, establishing the Republic of China."<sup>9</sup>

Under the newly established Republican government, Zeng Guangqing was appointed to a naval post in Beijing. He eventually left the navy and held civilian positions in Harbin and Qingdao. In 1933, he returned to Beijing with his family and took early retirement. An idyllic retirement eluded him, however. After 1937 when Japanese forces invaded China, Zeng Guangqing joined in the effort to expel the Japanese and participated in the ensuing civil war.

Tseng Yuho's mother Zhang Baozheng (ca. 1894-1986) came from Suzhou, Jiangsu province. She was born into a scholarly family which had produced a number of Hanlin scholars. Tseng Yuho's maternal grandfather was only thirty-five when he died, leaving her grandmother a widow with five young children. Baozheng, the eldest, was

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<sup>8</sup> Spence's *The Gate of Heavenly Peace* chronicles the experiences of some of this cohort.

<sup>9</sup> Tseng Yuho and Howard A. Link, *The Art of Tseng Yuho* (Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 1987), 29.

fourteen and assumed the responsibilities of helping raise the younger siblings. The widow Zhang was ill-equipped for her role as single mother; Tseng Yuho describes her as frail and hobbled by bound feet.<sup>10</sup> As the eldest child, Baozheng took seriously her increased responsibilities.

Too busy and ambitious to be slowed by her own bound feet, Zhang Baozheng unbound them. Social opposition to foot-binding increased throughout the late Qing period, and the unbinding of one's own feet was seen as a radical act that marked a woman as modern and reform-minded. Zhang Baozheng's act of determination would later resonate in her daughter's character. Zhang enrolled in public school, and saw to it that her four siblings also received the best education possible. For two younger brothers and a sister, this meant eventually sending them to France and Belgium for higher education. Zhang Yuzheng, Tseng Yuho's aunt, completed a doctorate in education in France at age twenty-four. She served as dean of Furen High School, and later, after the war, as principal of a women's college. Her uncle Zhang Jixian earned a doctorate in journalism. For Zhang Baozheng, the responsibilities of being eldest precluded overseas education, but she graduated from teacher's college and taught primary school until her first child was born

Zhang Baozheng asserted her modern aspirations in her marriage as well. Traditionally, a young woman was expected to bow to the pressure of family and matchmakers in the matter of marriage arrangements. The May Fourth generation questioned the tradition, and many young men and women sought instead the

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<sup>10</sup> Tseng Yuho, letter to author, June 14, 1999.

independence to choose their own partners. Zhang Baozheng renounced an engagement arranged by her family, in favor of marrying a modern, educated man. That man was Zeng Guangqing. In Tseng Yuho's recollections, their marriage was not ideal. Because of Zeng's career, the family moved frequently and he was often absent. In aspiring to a modern marriage, Zhang Baozheng had hoped to establish a marriage of equals. Her disillusionment was influential in defining the nature of marriage relationships for Tseng Yuho. Zhang Baozheng used her own situation to underscore for her eldest daughter how important it was that women be allowed to realize their own potential: "My mother so much wanted to make women to be something . . . to be useful to society, not just closed into a courtyard with four children."<sup>11</sup>

Zeng Guangqing and Zhang Baozheng had five children. The two eldest, both sons, were named Zhaomiao and Zhaoyu. Tseng Yuho, born in 1925,<sup>12</sup> was the middle child and eldest of the three girls. The younger sisters were Zhaoming and Zhaoyi. Tseng Yuho's given name was Zhaohe (*zhao1 he2*; "bright peace"), in keeping with the generational name (Zhao) of her siblings. Tseng relates how, during the Ming dynasty, the Yongle emperor (r. 1402-1424) bestowed a set of generational names on the families of Confucius, Mencius, and Zengzi, in recognition of the contributions of their distinguished ancestors. In a gesture intended to show his reverence for Confucius and

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<sup>11</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, March 12, 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Three birthdates have been cited for Tseng: 1923, 1924, 1925. She explains the confusion as arising from the conversion of Chinese dates to the Western calendar, a calculation she hastily, and erroneously, made in Hong Kong in 1949 when applying for a visa at the U.S. consulate. Years later, after Ecke's death, she decided to make an official correction--it took six years, but in 1986 she was finally officially allowed to use her 1925 birthdate on her passport. Tseng Yuho, letter to author, July 13, 1999.

Confucian ideals, Yongle established twenty-four characters to be used by the families for naming purposes, one per generation. In this way, generations of each of the three families can be easily recognized by the initial character of their given names, which are shared.<sup>13</sup>

### **Tseng Yuho's Early Years**

Tseng Yuho's years in China played themselves out against the drama of the Nationalist-Communist turmoil and the Japanese invasion of China. Beijing, the nominal capital of China, was in the hands of a succession of ineffective national leaders. Real power lay with the warlords who had divided China following the death of Yuan Shikai in 1916. By the time of Tseng's birth in November 1925, Sun Yatsen had been dead for eight months. 1925 also marked the mid-point of the first United Front (1923-1927) between the Nationalist Guomindang (GMD) and the Communists. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was founded in Shanghai in 1921, and by 1923, they joined forces with the Guomindang to defeat the warlords--a cause in both their long-term interests. It was against this highly factionalized and uncertain background that Tseng Yuho was born.

Tseng's earliest memories are not of Beijing, but of Suzhou, her mother's home town. In 1927, the first granddaughter was sent to live with her maternal grandmother. Madame Zhang's own children, Tseng Yuho's mother and aunts and uncles, had all moved away, and she lived alone, save for the company of a maid. Her grandmother

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<sup>13</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, March 16, 1997.

lived in what Tseng Yuho describes as a “typical Suzhou house”: two-stories with a small courtyard of the type called “heaven well” (*tianjing*).<sup>14</sup> These were magical years for Tseng Yuho, from which she retains vivid memories. They were also profoundly influential in her cultural development.

During the three years in Suzhou, her grandmother taught Tseng Yuho embroidery. For upper-class women of Madame Zhang’s generation, embroidery was a form of manual labor that contributed to household production but served also as an aesthetic pursuit. In a society that associated idleness with wantonness, embroidery skills were considered a model of virtue.<sup>15</sup> Tseng credits her early introduction to embroidery with instilling in her the twin virtues of concentration and diligence. Under her grandmother’s guidance, Tseng also learned the basics of brush-handling and calligraphy. One glimpses an early predilection for art in Tseng during these years. Her grandmother’s home was located near the Daoist temple Chenghuangmiao, site of a market Tseng enjoyed visiting. With her few cents’ allowance, she indulged her early passion for painting, with the purchase of illustrated printed books and magazines that she would then take home to color with crayons.<sup>16</sup>

In 1930, Tseng Yuho rejoined her family in Beijing. Even in first grade, she remembers being impressed by the artistic abilities of an older schoolmate who was able to render nice figures. Tseng Yuho resolved: “I would like to be able to paint like her.”

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<sup>14</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, March 17-18, 1997.

<sup>15</sup> Susan Mann, *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 17, 65.

<sup>16</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, March 17-18, 1997.

On her own, she began to attempt more complicated techniques for rendering, shading and coloring.<sup>17</sup> The family moved briefly to Mukden (Shenyang, Liaoning province) because of her father's work. Zeng Guangqing was posted in Harbin, Heilongjiang province, just north of the Sungari River, as a customs officer. Tseng Yuho and her elder brothers attended school in Mukden, and her father commuted from Harbin to see the family. In 1931, the family moved again, this time to Qingdao. Tseng Yuho fondly remembers Qingdao as a very beautiful place, and has pleasant memories of hiking through the pine-covered hills with her father. They left Qingdao, Tseng Yuho thinks, in the wake of some scandal, and returned to Beijing. In her eight years, Tseng had moved five times.

The family returned to Beijing in 1933. Zeng Guangqing, buffeted by the vicissitudes and factionalism of official life during the Republican period, took early retirement. In Beijing he pursued many interests and lived the life of the retired gentleman, tending to his garden and goldfish, and indulging his passions for Peking opera, cooking and mahjong.<sup>18</sup> Beijing represented a dramatic change from Qingdao, which, Tseng Yuho recalls, had a certain provincial charm. Nevertheless, the Zeng family's life in the capital was very comfortable. It was a large household: the parents, five children, four domestics, and, occasionally, her maternal grandmother from Suzhou. Their home itself had been carved out of a much larger and very grand dwelling that Tseng estimates originally dated from at least the eighteenth century. The Zengs

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<sup>17</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, March 17-18, 1997.

<sup>18</sup> Tseng and Link, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, 29-30.

occupied the garden half of the original home, which included five courtyards. Pear, date, and apple trees grew in the gardens, which also boasted pools with water lilies, artificial rocks, and long covered walkways.<sup>19</sup>

If not for the uncertain political situation--the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931-1932 and continued GMD-CCP struggle--Tseng's recollections of her early years sound nearly ideal. By Tseng Yuho's own account, it was a happy childhood. Two episodes, one personal and one national, marred this otherwise delightful period. In 1936, Tseng Yuho contracted a serious case of pleurisy. Then, in 1937, Japan attacked China and Beijing was occupied by Japanese troops. Her idyllic childhood was finished, and in retrospect, for Tseng it marked the beginning of the ruination of her own family, and by extension, of traditional Chinese culture.

Beijing winters are notoriously cold, and respiratory illness was a common occurrence. Tseng fell gravely ill with pleurisy in 1936. It left her racked with sharp chest pain and shallow, labored breathing. The doctor recommended total bed rest, which she did for six months. Her full recovery took another year, during which time she was kept out of school. She completed her school lessons at home and occupied her spare moments with drawing and painting.

Convalescence from the pleurisy signaled a turning point in Tseng Yuho's life. Zhang Baozheng harbored ambitions for her daughter, who was clearly very bright and capable. A teacher by training, and latent feminist by nature, Zhang had in mind a noble

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<sup>19</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 17, 1997b.

and useful profession for Tseng Yuho--medical doctor.<sup>20</sup> During this time, however, Zhang became aware of her daughter's talent and passion for art. Tseng Yuho put the long hours of her convalescence to good use, using the time to paint and draw. Portraits were her favorite genre. They included images of those around her, as well as visitors to the house. Some depicted celebrities, their images taken from magazines. She proudly hung these drawings around her bed. Zhang Baozheng may not have realized her daughter's artistic talent, but a Japanese doctor who attended Tseng Yuho did. He strongly encouraged the Zengs to allow their daughter to develop her artistic potential.

The earliest extant work by Tseng Yuho dates to this period. The source for many of her subjects derived from the magazines her brothers brought home to her. She recalls painting images of Deanna Durban, Shirley Temple, and other celebrities. A bigger challenge was to paint the people around her. One of these is *Portrait of an English Gentleman* (fig. 2). The subject of this early watercolor painting was an English visitor to the Zeng home. Tseng Yuho's uncle, who shared the family's home in Beijing, was a diplomat whose wife was eager to learn English. Tseng's aunt enjoyed inviting members of the consul corps to the house so she could practice her English conversation. Propriety dictated that her aunt never be alone with any of the male visitors, and occasionally Tseng Yuho acted as chaperone. It was during one of these occasions that Tseng Yuho captured the likeness of the unknown visitor in this watercolor portrait. Though perfunctory in execution, it documents the accomplishments of a twelve-year-old artist

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<sup>20</sup> Tseng recalls: "My mother wanted me to become a medical doctor so I could be useful to society." Tseng Yuho, interview with author, March 12, 1997.

largely self-taught in such western-style subjects and media.

Zhang Baozheng may have had other career plans for her eldest daughter, but she was able to acknowledge the young artist's talent. Though it was unusual for the time, Tseng's parents engaged a private painting teacher for her. A friend of Tseng Yuho's mother introduced a certain Mr. Fang to the family.<sup>21</sup> Mr. Fang was from Henan, the home province of Zeng Guangqing's family, and, as such, was deemed to be an appropriate and trustworthy person to serve as his daughter's teacher. This connection, however tangential, was important in establishing the suitability of Mr. Fang because, as Tseng Yuho recalls, "At that time, girls are not supposed to go to a stranger."<sup>22</sup>

Mr. Fang gave private lessons at his home and had a few other female students. Because Tseng Yuho was still convalescing and not yet strong enough to bicycle there herself, she commuted to Mr. Fang's lessons either on foot or by rickshaw. She spent nearly two years studying with him. At first blush, the lessons may not have seemed like the most productive use of her creative energy. Mr. Fang's teaching method consisted entirely of having Tseng Yuho produce tracing copies of figural works. As she remembers: "He would not allow me to paint actual flowers or landscape or anything. Only tracing."<sup>23</sup> She undertook endless figural copies, large and small, including one or two colored images of fairies. This method of learning, as frustrating as it was to Tseng, connects her to painting students throughout Chinese history. Copying was the standard

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<sup>21</sup> Tseng Yuho no longer remembers his given name.

<sup>22</sup> Tseng Yuho, letter to author, August 30, 1999.

<sup>23</sup> Tseng Yuho, letter to author, August 30, 1999.

method of learning to use the brush, either for calligraphy or painting, dictated by generations of painting teachers. Through copywork, one gained expertise in handling the brush, as well as instilling familiarity with the styles and idiosyncracies of past masters.

Although none of her early tracing copies exist, Tseng still has several *baimiao* (ink outline) images of the type of figures done under Mr. Fang's influence. *Portrait of Zhang Fei* (fig. 3) and *Bodhisattva* (fig. 4) were both painted years later and by her own admission are more mature than those early tracing copies. Nevertheless, they suggest her technical facility with the brush. In retrospect, she does not begrudge the seeming tedium of Mr. Fang's method. The discipline of drawing through tracing, she admits, gave her a firmly controlled hand.<sup>24</sup>

### **Tseng Yuho's Introduction to the Orthodox**

Classes with Mr. Fang ended through the intervention of Pu Jin (1893-1966), who became Tseng Yuho's most important tutor and mentor. When Zeng Guangqing joined a mahjong group led by Pu Jin in 1937, he took the opportunity to show his daughter's tracing copies to Pu Jin. In lieu of the praise which Zeng Guangqing surely expected, Pu Jin declared them "terrible" and "vulgar" and encouraged the discontinuation of Mr. Fang's tutelage immediately. Instead, he said, Tseng should come to study with him.<sup>25</sup>

Tseng Yuho's early artistic development can best be understood through the

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<sup>24</sup> Tseng Yuho, letter to author, August 30, 1999.

<sup>25</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 16, 1997; Tseng Yuho, letter to author, August 30, 1999.

training she received from two teachers in Beijing: Pu Jin and Pu Quan. What these two artists shared was a Manchu royal lineage and dedication to the Orthodox tradition of painting as represented by the Six Great Masters of the Early Qing. Li Chu-tsing noted the importance of the Pu brothers as representatives of the most conservative style of traditional painting, and their influence on Tseng Yuho.<sup>26</sup> Pu Jin and Pu Quan embodied the perpetuation of tradition. They eschewed change and innovation, preferring to maintain what they considered the high standards of the past in regards to brushwork and style. Pu Jin became her tutor and later her teacher at Furen University. She studied with Pu Quan at Furen as well, and worked as his assistant after graduation.

Beijing had been the cultural and political heart of China, at least since the Mongols relocated the capital there in 1264. Home to the imperial family, government ministries, and most of the important secular and religious activities of the emperor of China, Beijing represented the symbolic and real center of the Chinese universe. With the end of the Qing dynasty in 1912, many of the outward symbols of imperial life remained, but life had been irretrievably altered in China, particularly for members of the imperial clan. In earlier times, the cousins of the emperor would not have had to rely on their artistic abilities to earn their livelihood. But such was the situation in which Pu Jin and Pu Quan found themselves.

As scions of the royal family, they received the best education available. In addition, their artistic training was enhanced by access to the treasures in the imperial

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<sup>26</sup> Li Chu-tsing, *Trends in Modern Chinese Painting: The C. A. Drenowatz Collection* (Ascona, Switzerland: Artibus Asiae Publishers), 11, 167.

collection. In their new, reduced circumstances, they were forced to sell family heirlooms. In addition, those who painted, like Pu Jin and Pu Quan, were able to sell works by their own hands to generate income. Teaching offered another source of revenue. During the thirties and forties both Pu Jin and Pu Quan held teaching jobs in the art department at Furen University.

Pu Jin provided Tseng's introduction to the Orthodox painting tradition. Great grandson of the Daoguang emperor (r. 1821-1851) and distant cousin of the last emperor, Pu Yi (1906-1967), Pu Jin was a Manchu prince of the deposed Qing dynasty. Known as a man of many accomplishments, he was a member of the *Hu She* (Lake Society), a conservative art association in Beijing. The Hu She had been established by students and followers of Jin Cheng following his death in 1926. They banded together to follow Jin's ideals, and committed themselves to "strictly guarding the path of the ancients and promoting the ideas of the ancients."<sup>27</sup>

Pu Jin taught in the College of Art at Furen University during the thirties and forties and served for a time as dean of the college. In addition, he offered private tuition to a number of students. Tseng visited him every week, on and off, over the course of several years. His pedagogical style differed only slightly from that of Mr. Fang; rather than making tracing copies, Pu Jin had Tseng make copies of his own paintings. Tseng likens Pu Jin's pedagogical style to the process of smoking chicken: a long cooking process that results in a wonderfully complex product. When Tseng speaks of Pu Jin the

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<sup>27</sup> Richard M. Barnhart et al., *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press and Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1997), 308.

teacher, she likes to say he “smoked” her. There was little in the way of instruction; nevertheless, she credits this distinguished conservator of Qing orthodox painting style with initiating her into key aspects of the artist’s life: how to look at a painting, an appreciation for quality objects and materials, and how to comport oneself as an artist.

Painter and student formed a strong bond, which continued through the years. At Furen University where Tseng Yuho enrolled in 1940, Pu Jin was one of the faculty members who taught Chinese painting. And though she acquired other teachers and mentors, Tseng Yuho had enormous respect for Pu Jin and continued to visit him nearly every week until she left Beijing in 1948. Pu Jin’s life ended tragically in 1966 as a result of persecution in the early days of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>28</sup>

Tseng describes Pu Jin’s bearing as very “prince-like” and distinguished. One aspect of Pu Jin’s imperious demeanor Tseng did not like. After finishing a painting, she often took it to show him what she had done. She remembers once, when she was mostly copying from originals, she had copied the *Orchids* handscroll by Xue Wu in Gustav Ecke’s collection.<sup>29</sup> It was a very small copy but exact, painted on old Tibetan sutra paper, and she was particularly pleased with it. She eagerly sought Pu Jin’s comments. He ended up paying her the ultimate compliment. “Good,” he said, “alright, just give to me.” She never saw her painting again and was careful about showing her work to him

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<sup>28</sup> Michael Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 312.

<sup>29</sup> Gustav Ecke was one of Tseng’s professors at Furen University, whom Tseng subsequently married.

after that.<sup>30</sup>

### **Tseng Yuho's Furen Education**

In dynastic times educational opportunities in China had been severely limited to those able to pay for private instruction or fortunate enough to have within the family eligible tutors. With the establishment of the Republic, however, new opportunities were made available, including higher education for women. In 1940, Tseng applied to the art department of Furen University and succeeded in gaining admission in the university's Women's College. At Furen, Tseng began her formal education as an artist. Furen was her introduction to a larger world of art, including Chinese and Western art history, genres, and media.

### **Furen University: Background**

Furen University was founded in 1925, as the Catholic University of Peking (*Beijing gongjiao daxue*).<sup>31</sup> Its establishment marked the realization of a long-held dream among Catholic missionaries and converts. The presence of a Catholic university in Beijing was especially favored by the church since Beijing was not only the seat of government, but also China's major student center. By 1921, there were over fifty-two

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<sup>30</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 17, 1997a.

<sup>31</sup> The Chinese name, Furen, by which the university is known, is comprised of the two characters: *fu* and *ren*. They come from a line in the *Analects of Confucius*: "Junzi yi wen hui you, yi you fu ren (12:24)." It may be translated as: "Zengzi said: The gentleman/sage with his culture gathers friends, and with his friends supports *ren*." See E. Bruce Brooks and A. Taeko Brooks, *The Original Analects: Sayings of Confucius and His Successors* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 96.

institutions of higher education serving about fifteen thousand students.<sup>32</sup>

Furen University was originally maintained by the American Cassinese Congregation of the Benedictine Order. In 1933, partly owing to financial difficulties related to the economic depression in the United States, care of the university was transferred to the Society of the Divine Word, a German order. This transfer of control proved crucial to Furen's future. The German association enabled the university to remain in Beijing throughout the Sino-Japanese War, long after most other educational institutions had either disbanded or moved elsewhere. Furthermore, as Ruth Hayhoe pointed out in her research, this transfer to German administration allowed Furen to maintain its administrative independence, its commitment to academic freedom, and its policy of not recognizing Japanese political authority.<sup>33</sup>

The purpose of the University was given as follows:

The aim of the founders of the "Pei-ching Kung Chiao Ta Hsueh" is to supply the demand of a large group of the younger Chinese for higher education under Christian auspices. The University, as planned, is not intended to be primarily a professional school, but rather is intended to lay special emphasis on general culture and learning, which seems to be most needed in China at the present time.<sup>34</sup>

The founders' ideal was to establish a dialogue between Chinese and Western learning,

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<sup>32</sup> Furen was one of three Catholic institutions of higher learning in China. The other two were Aurora University in Shanghai and Tianjin College of Industry and Commerce. Aurora was founded before the Republic; Tianjin in 1923. See Anthony C. Li, *The History of Privately Controlled Higher Education in the Republic of China* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1954), 86-87.

<sup>33</sup> Ruth Hayhoe, "A Chinese Catholic Philosophy of Higher Education in Republican China," *Tripod* 48 (1988): 58.

<sup>34</sup> Donald Paragon, "Yang Lien-chih (1866-1926) and the Rise of Fu Jen, the Catholic University of Peking" *Monumenta Serica* 20 (1961), 210, quoting from *Bulletin of The Catholic University of Peking* 1, 13.

while bolstering moral and spiritual values. Faculty reflected these goals, with teaching staff comprised of priests, brothers, and lay teachers, representing many nationalities, including Chinese, German, and French.

For the campus, Catholic university was granted a perpetual lease for the palace and grounds of Prince Zaitao, uncle of Xuanton, the deposed Chinese emperor. As a former imperial residence, the estate encompassed eleven acres in the northern part of Beijing, behind Beihai. The estate was composed of a series of distinctive Chinese-style buildings,<sup>35</sup> and the art department was located at Gongwangfu. It is now a tourist locale, and preserved as a historic site.

With the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, higher education, along with most other aspects of life, were deeply affected. Many institutions of higher learning were destroyed or damaged by invading Japanese forces. Of those that survived, most moved to safer areas in China's western provinces. The Catholic institutions of higher learning, however, remained in their original campus locations. Not only did Furen University remain in Beijing, it also established a new Women's College as part of the university in 1938. It was entrusted to the sisters Servants of the Holy Ghost.<sup>36</sup> The demand for higher education continued to be strong in spite of the political situation, and by remaining in Beijing, Furen University "attracted a student body of high academic quality, as well as taking in many well-known scholars from other universities that were

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<sup>35</sup> Paragon, "Yang Lien-chih," 209-210.

<sup>36</sup> Li, *Higher Education*, 131.

forced to close or move away.”<sup>37</sup>

### Tseng Yuho at Furen

Tseng Yuho entered the art department of the Women’s College at Furen in 1940. Pu Jin was head of the Art Department at the Women’s College, and he encouraged Tseng to apply. All applicants were required to sit for the entrance examination. Even though she was applying to the art department Tseng was examined on a range of subjects, from English to chemistry to physics. It was, as she recalls, “very tough.” Tseng Yuho cites one advantage she had over other students: her calligraphy.<sup>38</sup> It is a distinction that ties her to other well-known artists from the past whose calligraphy earned them special recognition in their exams. Dong Qichang, for example, missed earning highest honors on the *jinshi* exam, but his distinctive handwriting caught the eye and appreciation of the examiner.

Tseng found university exhilarating. The art department offered a three-year course of study. Required studio courses covered both Chinese and Western painting and were taught by Catholic sisters and brothers from Germany and America. Subjects included still-life, design, and landscape and introduced a range of media: charcoal, pastel, watercolor, oil, and gouache. Classical Chinese painting was taught daily. Her instructors included Pu Jin and Pu Quan, Pu Jin’s younger brother, both of whom taught Chinese landscape painting. Figure painting in the Chinese style was the purview of

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<sup>37</sup> Hayhoe, “Chinese Catholic Philosophy,” 58. By 1945, student enrollment at Furen Catholic University totaled 3,364: 1,899 at the Catholic University of Peiping and 1,465 at the Women’s College.

<sup>38</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 16, 1997.

Chen Yuandu, while bird-and-flower painting fell to Wang Rong. Lu Hejiu taught seal-engraving, one of the important collateral arts of the traditional Chinese literati painter.<sup>39</sup>

For art history, she studied the history of Chinese painting with Pu Jin, and Western art history with Gustav Ecke, one of the German lay teachers at the university. Tseng's elective courses included Chinese literature and poetry. She describes her experience at Furen: "At that time, the art department of Furen University where I studied was the only art school that offered all inclusive courses. Western-style, still-life, design, and outdoor watercolors were taught by European nuns and priests. Chinese subjects were divided to landscape, figures, flowers, birds, and seal-engraving taught by the finest artists in Beijing. Then there were Western and Chinese art history, and other elected courses on classical poetry and literature."<sup>40</sup>

One specialty of the fine arts department at Furen was the development of Chinese Christian art. Archbishop Constantini, a former Apostolic Delegate to China, recognized the utility of indigenous art forms in the proselytizing effort. As such, students in the art department produced paintings whose inspiration sprang from Christian ideas. In addition, they designed other religious paraphernalia, also in Chinese style: "altars, liturgical emblems, church ornamentation, murals, chalices, patens."<sup>41</sup> This particular specialty was not required of the students in the Women's College; however,

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<sup>39</sup> Tseng and Link, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, 32.

<sup>40</sup> Tseng Yuho, *Chuantong zhong de xiandai: Zhongguo hua xuan xinyu* (The contemporary within the traditional: some contemporary elements in classical Chinese art), n.p. (Taipei: Dongda tushu, 1996), 123.

<sup>41</sup> Li, *Higher Education*, 79.

Tseng Yuho recalls one class in which they painted exclusively “Catholic subjects.” Her studies with Mr. Fang had given her experience with figural subjects, so she was familiar with the demands of the genre.<sup>42</sup>

### Sino-Japanese War

Despite the intellectual satisfaction that university brought her, Tseng could not avoid the tragic situation enveloping China. Beijing’s occupation by Japanese troops took its toll on the Chinese residents, who felt they lived under a cloud of suspicion and fear. Quite apart from the political consequences of occupation, many felt at personal risk. Tseng cut her hair into a short, boyish style and bought herself a small dagger: “Expecting any time to be assaulted by Japanese soldiers, I would defend my life.”<sup>43</sup> Her concerns were not unfounded. In 1940, she was detained briefly by a Japanese agent and accused of espionage. She suspects that her constant movements around the capital, as she dashed between lessons and private collections, may have attracted attention and provoked suspicion. Tseng, who says she was never afraid of anything, recalls having no fear this time either, just anger.<sup>44</sup> Her anger was shared by Zhang Baozheng, who accompanied Tseng and the arresting officer to police headquarters. Zhang roundly admonished the agents for presuming to arrest “an innocent child.”<sup>45</sup> Tseng was detained overnight and released the following day, and credits her release to her mother’s courage.

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<sup>42</sup> Tseng Yuho, letter to author, August 30, 1999.

<sup>43</sup> Tseng, *Chuantong*, 107.

<sup>44</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, March 12, 1997.

<sup>45</sup> Tseng and Link, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, 32.

Tseng's life was changed in another, lasting way. Prior to enrolling at Furen University, Zeng Guangqing suggested that his elder daughter change the characters of her given name. Zhaohe shared the same characters as those used by the Japanese emperor Showa, with whom China was at war. Zhaohe became Yu-ho (*Youhe* in pinyin; *you4 he2*), whose meaning can be read "delicate lotus," or, less poetically, "bear the responsibility of youth." She says her father chose these characters. Since 1984 she has used the homophonous characters *you4 he2*, meaning "protect harmony." Nearing sixty years old, she reasoned, it was time to replace a name redolent with suggestions of youth, for one more fitting her maturity. Today, she considers reclaiming her original name, reasoning that it was hers before the Showa emperor's enthronement in 1928, and now that he is dead, it would be nice to use it once again.

As the wartime situation worsened, it took a toll on Tseng Yuho's family. Moved by political commitment or by fear, the Zengs began to disperse. In 1940, Zeng Guangqing left Beijing for Nationalist-controlled territory. Tseng Yuho's mother and siblings soon followed, leaving Tseng Yuho alone in Beijing. Since Furen University elected to remain in Beijing rather than relocate to non-occupied territory, Tseng's classes continued, and she was eager to pursue her education uninterrupted. During this time, she lived with her maternal aunt, Zhang Yuzheng and her husband, Chen Guangxi, a professor of mathematics at Furen.

### **Post-Graduate Beijing**

Tseng graduated from Furen University in 1942. It was a precarious time in China, in the midst of the Sino-Japanese conflict. Tseng continued to live with her aunt

and uncle, and supported herself with a variety of jobs. In addition, she undertook post-graduate studies at both Beijing University and National Central University. Two of her professors from Furen University asked her to work as their assistants, and in this way, her relationships with Pu Quan and Gustav Ecke continued after graduation. Although she did not matriculate in a degree program at any Beijing university, Tseng studied with scholars all over Beijing renowned in Chinese art history (Han Shouxuan, Deng Yizhe), classical poetry (Gu Jiegang), calligraphy, and bronzes (Rong Geng, Huang Boquan), and research methods and connoisseurship (Qi Gong).

Tseng's extra-curricular work kept her busy. Her work as Ecke's research assistant continued an arrangement begun in her student days. For Pu Quan, her post-graduate activities included assisting with his painting students. By her estimation, Pu Quan had around thirty students to whom he gave private tuition in painting. Students came in groups of two or three, and Tseng Yuho assisted him with these classes. They developed a very close relationship.

Pu Quan (b. 1912), brother of Pu Jin, was one of Tseng's most important teachers. Whereas Pu Jin very much fitted the role of imperial descendant, Pu Quan was more modern. Pu Quan's relationship with Tseng was also much less formal. When Tseng visited Pu Quan, he always had a table available for her if she wanted to paint, or if he was painting, she would watch him. He never presumed to tell her what or when to paint, and she describes feeling almost like a member of the family. With Pu Quan, Tseng felt more relaxed and freer to be herself.

Tseng has high praise for Pu Quan both as a teacher and as an artist. He painted

in many different styles, and she considers him a much more accomplished painter than Pu Jin. While Pu Quan may have been more modern in outlook than his elder brother, his painting style was still thoroughly traditional. Tseng finds it difficult to describe: like Wang Hui (1632-1717) but more “dashing.” His brushwork she calls “quite articulate”: not like Shen Zhou or Wen Zhengming but maybe Xie Shichen and a bit of Gong Xian or Fan Qi.<sup>46</sup> In her view there was nothing modern about his work.

Tseng’s familiarity with Pu Quan’s painting style grew out of her post-graduate work. In addition to assisting Pu Quan with his painting classes, she also worked as his ghost painter: “I painted, he signed.” Pu Quan’s paintings sold well and he had a steady base of support in the metropolitan centers of Beijing and Shanghai, among collectors with orthodox tastes. When Pu Quan showed his works, it was not uncommon for a client to admire a work that had already sold, and request the artist paint another just like it. Tseng refers to this as a “re-commission.” Tseng was frequently the painter of these re-commissions.<sup>47</sup>

Pu Quan helped to promote Tseng’s works in two exhibitions. In 1943 he presented a large exhibition of works by his students in Beijing. It was the first time Tseng’s works were publicly exhibited outside of Furen student shows. The following year Pu Quan organized an exhibition which introduced Tseng’s works to a wider audience. The 1944 exhibition featured the works of both Pu Quan and Tseng Yuho and travelled to Shanghai and Tianjin. For the occasion, Tseng tried to paint differently from

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<sup>46</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 17, 1997.

<sup>47</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, March 12, 1997.

Pu Quan's style. She recalls that at the time she was already painting copies in Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing styles.<sup>48</sup> Tseng accompanied Pu Quan and the exhibition, enlisted as Pu's bookkeeper and assistant. With Pu Quan's vast network of connections, both exhibitions were well received.

Tseng's non-art related professional activity during this time included her work as a private tutor. She eagerly pursued paying work, and so accepted a part-time position as a tutor to a family with three young children, coaching them in academic subjects like mathematics and Chinese. The job did nothing to further her own career or education, but it was a source of income, and included the additional benefit of the occasional meal, an important consideration in times of such scarcity.

Living was increasingly difficult. Tseng Yuho was still residing with her aunt and uncle in a crowded household of seven people which included Tseng, her aunt and uncle, their three sons, and an amah. Tseng was determined not to be a burden on them, and to pay her own way. She recalls clearly the privations of the time. There was very little to eat. The rice and flour were rationed and of very poor quality. She remembers having to eat very carefully, always alert to the stray gravel chips that found their way into the foodstuffs. During the winter of 1944, Tseng wrote of the despair she felt in the midst of this troubled period:

Friend, tell me, why do I suffocate and struggle to breathe,  
As if I am dragging under a huge heavy iron chain, creeping slowly in a  
pitch-dark alley?  
I want to burst out of this pillory yoke to roar thunderously as the  
tempestuous East wind, to blast the cruel and cold world.

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<sup>48</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, March 12, 1997.

When I turn to look back, I find myself covered in blood, lying in filthy mud.<sup>49</sup>

### **Tseng Yuho and Gustav Ecke**

Tseng's personal life also realized a new form at this same time. It was during the busy and unsettled period after graduation that she grasped Gustav Ecke's interest in her transcended the student-teacher relationship of her Furen University days. Tseng the pragmatist saw no future for them together, and told him so. The dissolution of Tseng's family mirrored the chaotic political and social situation of China itself. The future seemed too uncertain to add romantic entanglement to the picture. Nevertheless, Ecke persisted and eventually prevailed. On February 27, 1945, Tseng Yuho and Gustav Ecke married.

### **Gustav Ecke**

Gustav Emil Wilhem Ecke was born in Bonn, Germany in 1896. He spent twenty-six years teaching in China, and became a noted authority on Chinese art, particularly Buddhist architecture and hardwood furniture. Twenty-nine years and vastly different social and cultural backgrounds separated them, and yet Tseng and Ecke shared many common interests, and fashioned an unconventional and lasting marriage.

Gustav Ecke was the son of Gustav Ecke and Elisabeth von Lepel-Hettenbach. Reverend Gustav Ecke, D.D. was Professor of Divinity at the University of Bonn. Ecke *filis* was raised in a cultivated academic environment. He graduated from Bonn am Rhein Gymnasium, and pursued his university education in Bonn, Berlin, and Erlangen, where

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<sup>49</sup> Tseng, *Chuantong*, 125.

he studied art history, philosophy, and aesthetics. Ecke was well read in Western culture, past and present, and wrote his doctoral thesis on the French printmaker Charles Meryon (1821-1868) under the direction of Wilhelm Worringer (1881-1965).<sup>50</sup>

Following his graduation from Bonn University, Ecke was uncertain about what to do. With the doctorate completed, he needed to make plans for the future. He considered pursuing another Ph.D. at Oxford University, when an unexpected opportunity arose. Through several Chinese graduate students Ecke befriended in Germany, the idea of going to China was born, and in 1923, Ecke received an invitation to teach at Xiamen University (Amoy). According to art historian Li Chu-tsing, Xiamen was the first Chinese university to hire a foreign professor of art history.<sup>51</sup> Gustav Ecke's lifelong relationship with China began there.

From 1923-1928, Ecke taught at Xiamen University. Among the distinguished faculty were Lu Xun and Lin Yutang. It was during his tenure in Amoy that Ecke began to make Chinese art and architecture a special focus of study. Ecke travelled to Japan in 1928, and spent 1928-1933 at Qinghua University in Beijing. A year in Paris followed in 1934. Disillusionment with the political situation in Europe led Ecke back to China, where he assumed a teaching position at Furen University. There he taught German and Slavic language and literature and western art history from 1935 to 1948.

Ecke developed a lifelong passion for Chinese art, and earned a reputation in China as both a scholar and serious collector. The subjects of his published works

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<sup>50</sup> Gustav Ecke, *Charles Meryon (peintre-graveur)*, (Leipzig, 1923).

<sup>51</sup> Li Chu-tsing, "Tseng Yuho: Unusual Life, Unusual Art," in *Dsui Hua: Tseng Yuho* (Taipei and Hong Kong: Hanart Gallery, 1992), 17.

suggest his range of scholarly interests: Buddhist architecture, bronzes, and furniture.<sup>52</sup>

Two of these studies on architecture and furniture were particularly noteworthy contributions.

Research for Ecke's first book, *The Twin Pagodas of Zayton: A Study of Late Buddhist Sculpture in China* was begun in the early years of his China stay. The study, undertaken in collaboration with French sinologist Paul Demiéville, examined a pair of octagonal thirteenth-century Buddhist pagodas in Quanzhou (ancient Zayton), Fujian province. Ecke first visited the pagodas in 1925, and was immediately drawn to them as architecture, but also for their Buddhist sculptures. The monograph was published by Harvard University Press in 1935. It is a slender volume (ninety-five pages) but one which benefits from Ecke's art history training and meticulous attention to detail. The book includes hand-drawn maps, detailed drawings and cross-sections. Ecke undertook all the measuring himself, in spite of his aversion to heights, climbing the scaffolding to measure stone by stone.<sup>53</sup> In acknowledgment of his contributions to the study of Chinese architecture, Ecke was the first European admitted into the *Yingzao xueshe* (Society for the Study of Chinese Architecture) in 1935.<sup>54</sup>

*The Twin Pagodas of Zayton* is an important study, but the research for which

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<sup>52</sup> For a complete list of Ecke's publications see Pierre Jaquillard, "In Memoriam: Gustav Ecke, 1896-1971," *Artibus Asiae*, 34, nos. 2-3 (1972): 117-118. Ecke's books include: *The von Lochow Collection of Chinese Bronzes* (Peking: Fu Jen Press, 1943); *Hui Hsien Ware in the Collection of the Honolulu Academy of Arts* (Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 1954); *Chinese Painting in the Honolulu Academy of Arts and Private Collections* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press for the Honolulu Academy of Arts, 1965).

<sup>53</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 18, 1997.

<sup>54</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 18, 1997.

Ecke is best remembered is his work on Chinese furniture. With the outbreak of hostilities with Japan in 1937, Ecke was forced to curtail his trips into the countryside to study vernacular architecture. He turned his concentration to furniture. Architecture and furniture are sibling arts in China and Ecke's appreciation for buildings and furniture and their intricacies of construction are readily apparent in his research. *Chinese Domestic Furniture*, his most significant scholarly contribution on the subject, was published in 1944 in Beijing. Much of Ecke's own furniture collection was included in the book. Printed with 161 plates, including 21 measured drawings, it featured 122 pieces drawn from the collection of the author and private collections in Beijing. Originally printed in a limited edition of two hundred copies, it is a prized possession of collectors, scholars, and libraries.<sup>55</sup>

Ecke is credited with pioneering the study of Chinese hardwood furniture, especially Ming dynasty furniture, in both China and the West. Early Western-language publications on Chinese furniture had focussed exclusively on lacquer, inlaid, and polychromed examples.<sup>56</sup> Ecke became acquainted with Ming-style furniture in Beijing and made it the focus of *Chinese Domestic Furniture*. He researched hardwood pieces that relied for their visual appeal on the quality of wood, simplicity of design, and artistry of joinery. Together with Professor Yang Yue (1902-1978), Ecke disassembled the

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<sup>55</sup> It has been reprinted twice by Charles Tuttle in 1962 and Dover in 1986, making Ecke's scholarship available in an inexpensive version readily available to the growing numbers of students of Chinese furniture.

<sup>56</sup> The 1922 publication of *Chinese Furniture*, with an introduction by Herbert Cescinsky, included sixty-four examples, all of them the lacquered, inlaid variety. See Herbert Cescinsky, *Chinese Furniture* (London: Benn Brothers, 1922).

pieces of his own collection and made precise measurements and drawings exact enough to serve as guides for furniture makers and designers. *Chinese Domestic Furniture* was the first detailed survey of Ming dynasty style and remains a useful reference work for furniture scholars and collectors.

Tseng Yuho admired the depth of Gustav Ecke's learning, which opened up intellectual worlds previously unknown to her. He was passionate in his devotion to Chinese art, a passion the couple shared. Ecke had amassed an impressive collection of Ming dynasty furniture during his time in China, and his library of first-edition works and art history tomes was impressive. Ecke was a natural collector with catholic interests. These included carpets, old clocks and watches, European-style furniture made by Chinese craftsmen, paintings, and books. Some of his interests Tseng considered to be very much following European tastes, tastes she did not necessarily share, but she admired his enthusiasm for collecting nevertheless.

Tseng Yuho first knew Ecke as one of her teachers at Furen University. It was in his art history courses that Tseng Yuho was introduced to the Western art history that would influence her in the years to come. Ecke was the instructor for the History of Western Art course the first fall when Tseng Yuho enrolled at Furen University. Years later, he recalled the moment when he saw her among the students, dressed in her school uniform, a loose-fitting dark blue wool cheongsam. "I remember the day well, and all the days that followed. Yu-ho had a youthful, indescribable charm composed of spirituality, delicacy, nobility. But there was strength emanating from her. As the days went by she reflected immediate and deep response to my teaching. She was at one with the spirit and

quality of the great works of Western art. I fell in love with her instantly.”<sup>57</sup>

Following her graduation from the Art Department at the Women’s College of Furen University, Ecke asked Tseng to continue as his research assistant, a job she was only too happy to accept. Ecke’s wide-ranging interests in Chinese art matched Tseng’s own, and her facility with Chinese source material was a resource that Ecke found useful for his numerous projects. Of her post-baccalaureate employers, Ecke, she recalls, paid the best. He often invited her to stay to dinner, and eventually began to court her seriously. Tseng told Ecke the relationship had no future.<sup>58</sup> She decided to leave Beijing, travelling to Shanghai where her joint exhibition with Pu Quan was being held, with the intention of moving on to Free China. Her departure was a blow to Ecke. “I became very ill at the thought of losing her.”<sup>59</sup> In Shanghai, Tseng says she sensed his distress, and decided to return to Beijing once more before going to the interior.<sup>60</sup> Years later, Ecke delighted in recalling the auspicious moment when he knew Tseng was coming back: “There were pigeons in the roof of my house. They left the day she left and did not come back until the night before she returned. When she returned we became engaged.”<sup>61</sup>

### Marriage

Ecke’s marriage proposal raised a dilemma. Tseng Yuho’s father had left Beijing

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<sup>57</sup> Cynthia Eyre, “Courtship in Peking,” *Honolulu*, September 1966, 25.

<sup>58</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 18, 1997.

<sup>59</sup> Cynthia Eyre, “Courtship,” 50.

<sup>60</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 18, 1997.

<sup>61</sup> Cynthia Eyre, “Courtship,” 50-51.

to fight the Japanese, and proper decorum dictated that Tseng and Ecke receive his approval for the marriage. Tseng dutifully sent a letter to him, and one to her mother in Chengdu, asking for their permission. Zhang Baozheng, as might be expected of a woman who had herself insisted on a love-match, replied with her consent. What mattered to her was the couple's commitment to one another, and that Tseng Yuho be able to find happiness with Ecke.

Consent from Zeng Guangqing, however, was not forthcoming and the couple wondered if they would ever receive a reply. Finally, Ecke approached Tseng's uncle, Chen Guanxi, with whom she was living, for permission. As the male relative responsible for Tseng Yuho in her parents' absence, it was the logical move. Chen knew Ecke well, having been his colleague at the university, and he knew Ecke's reputation and commitment to China and his vehement opposition to German National Socialism. Chen gave his approval: as long as Tseng desired the match, it was fine with him.<sup>62</sup> Only after the wedding did Zeng Guangqing's reply arrive: under no circumstances would he approve the union. Fiercely loyal and nationalistic, Zeng Guangqing had worked to restore the sovereignty of the Chinese state, first from the Manchu Qing dynasty and, by extension from the Western powers which had been exerting such influence since the Opium Wars. His eldest daughter's marriage to a foreigner--a German--was intolerable. It was a sad moment in Tseng's life, this estrangement from her father, but by the time his letter was received, the couple had already wed.

Her father wasn't the only one who found the marriage objectionable. At that

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<sup>62</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 18, 1997.

time, she explains, such unions were very rare. In China, it would be unusual for a Westerner to have any kind of contact with the daughters of a good family, who, as tradition dictated, would be sequestered. Tseng Yuho admits that the unusual political circumstances contributed to the fate of her marriage. “If it was not because of the war, I would probably never have married him. I was alone and by myself and he would never have had a chance to meet a woman from a decent family.”<sup>63</sup>

With the political situation worsening, Chen Guanxi encouraged the couple not to delay. Ecke approached the rector at Furen University to preside over the wedding. Ecke, the son of a theology professor, was a Protestant, but Tseng embraced no Christian beliefs. The request was declined, with the rector explaining that they did not acknowledge non-Catholic unions. Ecke himself was willing to convert but not Tseng, who found the exclusivity of Christian sects puzzling. The Furen authorities finally capitulated and the wedding took place. Five members of the Furen University administration attended the ceremony, along with a small group of friends and colleagues of the couple on February 27, 1945 (fig. 5).<sup>64</sup>

Tseng chose to wear a gold-embroidered *qifu* for the occasion (fig. 6). Bought at

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<sup>63</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 18, 1997.

<sup>64</sup> Tseng Yuho describes it as a “very, very simple small wedding,” held at Ecke’s home. A photograph from the occasion shows the couple surrounded by the thirty-five wedding guests who represent a sampling of their cosmopolitan Beijing world. Tseng Yuho’s aunt and uncle represented her family. Pu Jin, Pu Quan, and Qi Gong, professional colleagues of Ecke’s and all teachers of Tseng Yuho’s attended. From the European community, Max Loehr, Henry Vetch, Walter Fuchs, Helmut Wilhem, Reinhard Hoeppli, and the Chancellor of Furen were among the guests. The guest list was less cosmopolitan than it might have been at another time, with the German contingent heavily represented. In March 1943, the Western community in Beijing, except the Germans, were rounded up and sent to internment camps. Tseng recalls Ecke preparing packages of food and sundries to send to his European and American friends in the camps.

an antique store in Beijing, it is a man's Manchu gown of the type often called "dragon's robe," a reference to its main design motif and its association with the emperor. In addition to the richly embroidered dragons, the design illustrates the Chinese conception of the cosmos: waves around the lower part are interrupted by rocky outcroppings that represent the four cardinal points, and above this the cloud-filled firmament teems with dragons and other auspicious symbols. In her hair she wore a headdress ornamented by kingfisher feathers. Tseng altered the gown slightly to fit her better and removed the horse-hoof-shaped cuffs, a vestige of the Manchu's nomadic heritage which served to protect the hands of a rider on horseback. The choice of a man's Qing dynasty garment four decades following the fall of the dynasty was not only a striking fashion statement but a symbolic gesture of the uniqueness of her marriage. For while Tseng was in many respects breaking with the conventions of Chinese tradition by choosing and arranging for the marriage extrafamilially, the gown suggested that in a very material way, she was still cloaked in the past. Tseng's choice of wedding garment was significant as an expression of her individuality. During the Qing dynasty it would have been unusual even for a court official to have been seen in such a garment since these were traditionally worn with a plain surcoat that covered all but the lower portion. While this particular garment is a man's robe, it was of a style worn also by Manchu women. Differences in the styles of clothing worn by Manchu and Chinese women had faded by the twentieth century, and during the May Fourth Movement reformers such as the writer Xu Dishan had promoted the idea of abolishing gender-based dressing as a way of

achieving gender equality.<sup>65</sup>

The one-piece cheongsam garment (literally, “long gown”) that Chinese women adopted in the twenties is believed to have developed from a combination of sources, including this type of Manchu garment and the long robe traditionally worn by Chinese men.<sup>66</sup> The opportunity finding this garment in a Beijing antique shop afforded Tseng may be no more significant than the chance to show her appreciation for craftsmanship and detail. Nevertheless, this vestimentary androgyny underscores the blurred lines in her life and those around her between Han and Manchu, past and present. It would also appear to tie her in a direct way to her teachers Pu Jin and Pu Quan, princes of the deposed Manchu ruling family. In relation to Ecke, who wore a tuxedo for the ceremony, Tseng’s choice of gown represented a third option to the more obvious Western (white) and Chinese (red) choices, neither of which captured the nuances of her identity.

Shortly after their marriage, Japan was defeated and Beijing restored to Chinese sovereignty. Tseng recalled in 1966: “Post-war Peking was very gay and a very exciting way of life. The embassies filled again and became the center of social and international diplomatic life in the Orient. Scholars of the world visited our great universities. Ours was an ideal scholar’s life.”<sup>67</sup> Tseng moved into Ecke’s Beijing home in the Houmen district of Beijing. It was an old courtyard house and held within it Ecke’s formidable

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<sup>65</sup> Martha Huang, “A Woman Has So Many Parts to Her Body, Life is Very Hard Indeed,” in *China Chic: East Meets West*, edited by Valerie Steele and John S. Major (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 138.

<sup>66</sup> Valerie Steele and John S. Major, *China Chic: East Meets West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 48.

<sup>67</sup> Cynthia Eyre, “Courtship,” 52.

collections of objects and scholar's tools: ceramics, painting, furniture, baskets, glass globe lamps, rugs. Their lives were shaped by art. Ecke continued to teach at Furen, while Tseng pursued independent post-graduate studies and painted. Together they strolled the neighborhoods looking in at antique shops, acquiring objects and scholarly materials as they could afford them.

During this period, Tseng began to study scroll mounting techniques at a moulder's studio in Liulichang. Located in the western part of Beijing, since the early Qing dynasty the Liulichang district was crowded with booksellers, printers, and antique dealers. Tseng's passion for paintings extended to the materials and methods of the scroll moulder's studio, where she sought to learn the proper technique for mounting paintings. Presciently, she had foreseen a day when she might need to mount her own work.

#### **. Paintings, 1945-1949**

A number of Tseng's works from the years 1945-1949 survive, either in the artist's collection, or in photographic reproduction. Paintings from the period show her versatility in handling various styles and genres of the Chinese painting tradition. For painting models, Tseng had a wealth of examples at her disposal. Her teachers Pu Jin and Pu Quan both had painting collections, in addition to their own works, which were available to her. Gustav Ecke had a large library that supported her copywork, and she copied every work in Ecke's painting collection, including paintings by numerous renowned masters of the Ming and Qing dynasties, including Mei Qing, Xue Wu, Wen Zhengming, Chen Shun, Lu Zhi, and Tang Yin. Through her circle of distinguished colleagues and acquaintances, other private collections of painting were made available

for study. Works for sale in antique shops or Liulichang could also be viewed. In addition, Pu Quan maintained a large collection of photographs of old paintings. He secured the services of a photographer to shoot images for him, not of paintings in the imperial collection, but ones in Liulichang, where people had taken them to sell. Pu Quan allowed Tseng to copy from these, even letting her take them home with her.<sup>68</sup>

*Landscapes after Old Masters* (fig. 7) from 1945 is one collection of these early paintings. In this album of eight leaves, painted in ink on paper, Tseng pays tribute to the literati styles of the past. They are not, she says, in the styles of particular artists, rather meant to capture the feeling of the past. “There was no particular old master I painted after. They were more or less of the Northern Song style as I have known. Nor the poems not after any one, simply easy lyrics on landscape.”<sup>69</sup> *Inspiration of Dongpo* (fig. 8) recalls the Song dynasty painter, poet and statesman Su Shi (*hao*: Dongpo, 1037-1101). Su excelled at bamboo painting, a subject that became equated with Confucian virtue and strength in adversity. Tseng’s work paid homage to the tradition of ink bamboo painting that flourished among literati painters, founded in part by Su Shi. Ironically, the strength and flexibility for which bamboo is so admired has been compromised here. While the smaller, subsidiary stems sport lush foliage, the main branch ends abruptly in a ragged trail of ink and “flying-white.” The work was painted in 1948, after the Tseng-Eckes had left Beijing for south China. The rupture of the branch, revered for its flexibility under adverse conditions, serves as an appropriate metaphor for

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<sup>68</sup> Very few of Tseng’s pre-1949 works survive in her collection, none of them samples of her copywork. The fate of these copyworks is unclear.

<sup>69</sup> Tseng Yuho, e-mail to author, September 17, 2000.

the turmoil in Tseng's own life.

One of Tseng's favorite painters, Shen Zhou (1427-1509) inspired *Mountain Path* (fig. 9). A master of the Ming dynasty Wu School and often cited as its founder, Shen Zhou was from a distinguished family in Zhangqian (modern Suzhou). He devoted his life to painting and literature, preferring artistic pursuits to an official career, as might be expected from a man of his background. Shen studied with a few painting teachers, but learned to paint primarily by copying great works of the past, and yet he developed a style uniquely his own. Shen Zhou favored tranquil scenes of daily life painted with a clarity and simplicity that renders them both powerful and sweetly appealing. *Mountain Path* captures the look of Shen Zhou in its strong graphic quality, simple pictorial forms and meticulous brushwork.

Tseng's stylistic exploration also included the Yuan dynasty master Huang Gongwang (1269-1354). *Landscape in the Style of Huang Gongwang* (1948; fig. 10) recalls the Yuan painter's *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, dated 1350 (fig. 11). Huang's long handscroll is constructed of commonplace forms, repeated throughout the composition. Texture strokes, most notably of the "hemp-fiber" and "alum rock" variety, accent land and water with a similar repetitiousness. Tseng's landscape deviates from the model in the addition of light color and less reliance on the signature texture strokes of Huang's *Fuchun* scroll. Altered, too, is the dry brushwork that characterizes Huang's painting. Tseng's is, by comparison, much lusher. *Landscape in the Style of Huang Gongwang* more closely resembles an Orthodox School interpretation of the work than Huang's original.

Not all of Tseng's models during this period were Chinese works. She painted *The River Inn* (fig. 12) in Beijing around 1946 (the work is not dated). It is closely modelled on *Hatsuboku Landscape for Soen* by Sesshu Toyo (1420-1506), dated to 1495 (fig. 13). Sesshu's work was painted in Japan, where it has always resided.<sup>70</sup> Tseng could only have known it through reproductions, either painted or photographic. *Hatsuboku Landscape for Soen* was painted nearly twenty years after Sesshu visited China. It is a long hanging scroll, painted on two joined sheets of paper, with inscription above.

Tseng's work concentrates on the painted portion of Sesshu's composition, not on its overall proportions. *Hatsuboku Landscape for Soen* was painted in the "splashed ink" (*pomo*, in Chinese; *hatsuboku*, in Japanese) style associated with Chan painting in China and Zen painting in Japan. Splashed ink depends on the spontaneous effects of ink applied to the painting surface, in what has been described as "an unfettered celebration of the potential of wash technique."<sup>71</sup> The ink was allowed to pool and run, with much of the compositional form left to chance, the artist interceding to finish the work with a few well-placed brushstrokes. Splashed ink paintings found favor among Zen monks who carried the Chinese works from China to Japan, where they were preserved in temple collections.

Sesshu's work captures the spontaneous feeling characterized by the splashed-ink technique. The riverside landscape was suggested by a few areas of abstract inkwash,

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<sup>70</sup> This scroll is presently in the collection of the Tokyo National Museum.

<sup>71</sup> Jerome Silbergeld, *Chinese Painting Style: Media, Methods, and Principles of Form* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1982), 25.

whose kinetic energy is captured in the “flying white” and broken passages revealed between the hairs of the brush. A few added strokes define the narrative elements of the scene: a boat, rooflines of a wine shop, and a bamboo pole and flag announcing its presence. *The River Inn* follows the overall composition of Sesshu’s work, but instead of the spontaneity of splashed ink, it relies on brushwork and the careful application of texture strokes to more clearly define the central elements of the composition.

Tseng also found inspiration in archaic styles. *Boneless Landscape* (1946; fig. 14) returns to a decorative style of painting far removed in aesthetic taste and technique from the literati tradition. The blue-green style that *Boneless Landscape* alludes to emerged in the Tang dynasty, and is associated with the father-son painters Li Sixun (615-ca. 716) and Li Zhaodao (active ca. 670-730). No known works by these painters are extant, but they are credited with having perfected a detailed and decorative style whose colors were rendered in bright mineral pigments, primarily azurite (blue) and malachite (green), which gives the style its descriptive name. Zhao Boju (ca. 1120-ca. 1162) continued the style into the Song dynasty, painting court scenes with elegant figures and detailed architecture. Chinese artists still paint these blue-green landscapes, the style always conjuring archaic associations.

Tseng’s work retains all of the flatness and stylization of the early antecedents. Painted on eighteenth-century paper, the work is small in size (6 1/3" x 8 2/3") and jewel-like in its surface decoration. It depicts an otherworldly realm--scenery to which the blue-green style is particularly well-suited. The obvious attention lavished on this painting, from its careful architectural rendering to the mineral pigments and antique

paper, mark it as an extraordinary work.

Reaching into the treasury of Chinese landscape painting, Tseng found another archaic model in the Six Dynasties for *A Landscape in Fujian* (1948; fig. 15). Only a few examples of Six Dynasties painting have survived, most notably *The Admonitions of the Court Instructress* and *The Nymph of the Luo River*, both attributed to Gu Kaizhi (344-ca. 405) and both figural works derived from well-known literary compositions. Only the *Nymph* handscroll contains any landscape elements. Tseng's composition is wholly landscape: no figures, no dwellings, no boats. Her work is a painted interpretation of landscape elements more familiar to us from stone engravings, such as the Northern Wei sarcophagus, ca. A.D. 520-530, in the Nelson-Atkins Museum, whose surface decoration itself probably reproduces a painted image. Those scenes are much more crowded and depict detailed narrative elements. Nevertheless, the formal elements are rendered in a stiff and archaic manner, characteristics enhanced by the use of blue and green mineral pigments. Tseng's work is a fanciful melding of motifs, color and composition which suggests her conception of what Six Dynasties painting may have looked like. A similar work entitled *Autumn* was featured in her first London exhibition (fig. 16). About that work, Michael Sullivan wrote: "The interpretation of the Wei stone engraving shows in an interesting way how closely the engraved slabs (such as the famous Nelson-Atkins sarcophagus) must have followed the stylistic conventions of contemporary painting which has almost entirely disappeared."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Michael Sullivan, "The Traditional Trend in Contemporary Chinese Art," *Oriental Art*, Winter 1949-50, 109.

Tseng's artistic exercises of this period are consistent with the ideals of her teachers and the conservatism associated with Beijing and imperial painting circles. Her art betrays none of the revolutions engulfing China. In other circles, artists were struggling with ways to transform Chinese art so that it more closely reflected the realities of contemporary China, promoted the revolutionary agenda, or incorporated Western ideas. Painters of the Lingnan School, for example, introduced Western subject matter into works otherwise reliant on traditional styles and brushwork. Others surrendered completely to western styles and techniques. Xu Beihong and Liu Haisu are the best known of this latter group. A more tempered reaction to Western influence was promoted by artists such as Lin Fengmian and Pang Xunjian, who had studied in Europe. Returning to China, they developed a new form of expression that drew on both Chinese and Western traditions. Finally, there were artists like Feng Zikai and Zhao Wangyun whose paintings, woodblocks and drawings promoted the goals of the revolution. But advocates for traditional Chinese painting, like Tseng and her teachers, who continued to look to the past for models, were as tenacious in their commitment.

Not all of Tseng's works from this period depended on ancient models. In one acknowledgement of modern, Western-style art education, Tseng frequently sketched out of doors, a practice she did not learn from Pu Jin or Pu Quan. The idea of working directly from nature was a key element of Western art education introduced to China through art reformers such as Lin Fengmian and Xu Beihong. Both of these influential artist-educators studied in France and brought the concept back to China with them. Liu Haisu (1896-1994) was a pioneer in Western style art education in Shanghai, and among

the innovations he introduced into the curriculum at his Shanghai art academy were life drawing and open-air sketching. The concept was not new in China. Huang Gongwang advocated doing so in his *Xie shanshui jue* (Secrets of describing landscape), published in 1366. Huang advised: “One should always have some sketching brushes in a leather bag. Then when one happens in a beautiful spot to see trees that are strange and rare, one can sketch and record them immediately, so that there will be an extraordinary sense of growing life.”<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, the practice had fallen out of favor, and until the twentieth century, most artists preferred to model their landscapes after paintings rather than direct observation of nature. Two works from 1944-1947 resulted from Tseng’s first-hand experiences with Beijing’s natural scenery. The Summer Palace and the park at Beihai were particularly good sites, since they harbored some of the oldest trees in the city. These she captured with pencil and paper, recording the twisting forms of these majestic survivors (fig. 17) or their withered remains. On one occasion she painted the autumn scenery near Yuanmingyuan (fig. 18).

### **Post-1945 Exhibitions**

The Japanese surrender in August 1945 promised the end of international hostilities, and many were hopeful that the devastation and instability China had endured since 1937 would be ended. Hostilities between Nationalists and Communists, however, ensured that the “peace” of 1945 was short-lived. With most of the skirmishing taking place in the countryside, life in Beijing resumed an aura of normalcy. In 1946, Tseng

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<sup>73</sup> Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih, comps. and eds., *Early Chinese Texts on Painting* (Cambridge: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1985), 263-264.

Yuho had her first solo exhibition. It was held at a large hall at Peking Union Medical College.<sup>74</sup> There was a large turn-out and Tseng recalls that she garnered many positive reviews.<sup>75</sup>

In China, the audience for Tseng's art drew upon a diverse clientele who represented Tseng's and Ecke's cosmopolitan world in Beijing. Tseng had friends and family who supported her artistic work. In addition, Ecke had been resident in the capital since 1935 and active in social, academic, and diplomatic circles. His friends and colleagues included Chinese, Europeans, and Americans who shared the couple's interests in art and collecting, many of whom had the resources to pursue them. Finally, as a student of Pu Jin and Pu Quan, Tseng's work attracted the attention of patrons and collectors who admired her teachers.

Following its solo debut at Peking Union Medical College, the show travelled to London, thanks to the interest of A. G. Morkill, secretary of the British China Institute. He was impressed with the exhibition and proposed to hold an exhibition of her works in London. It was held at the premises of the China Institute in Gordon Square and featured thirty paintings.<sup>76</sup> Even though her works had been seen by the international communities in Beijing and Shanghai, this London show was her first exposure outside China. If the scant press coverage available is any indication, her works were not as well

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<sup>74</sup> Funded with money from the Rockefeller Foundation, Peking Union Medical College was the premier research and teaching institution for medicine in China. It was modelled on Western models, using Western methods and English as the language of instruction. It was a center of Western learning in China.

<sup>75</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 18, 1997.

<sup>76</sup> Attempts to locate early records from the China Institute have been unsuccessful.

understood at its London venue.

In the memory of a visitor to the exhibition, the China Institute show was rather poorly mounted. Nevertheless, Tseng's paintings made a powerful impression on one viewer: the art historian Michael Sullivan. Sullivan was recently returned from China, where he had taught and worked as a museum curator in Chengdu, Sichuan province since 1942. This fortuitous occasion marks a turning point for Tseng Yuho. Sullivan became one of her most ardent supporters. Beginning with the London exhibition, he has cited her work in numerous publications over the past fifty years.<sup>77</sup> His interest caused others to pay attention. Sullivan used the China Institute exhibition as a springboard for one of his early articles on contemporary Chinese painting.<sup>78</sup> In that article, he sees Tseng Yuho's London exhibition as providing "an opportunity for a re-appraisal of the state of traditional painting in China to-day, at a moment when it would seem that tradition in every field of Chinese life is being thrown overboard." For Sullivan, Tseng's art distinguished itself by betraying nothing of the revolutionary changes underway in China. Instead, Sullivan describes Tseng as "painting in a manner more purely traditional than that of almost any other living Chinese artist."<sup>79</sup> Citing Tseng as a modern-day exemplar of traditional Chinese painting, Sullivan ponders the fate of this elite-based art, whose eclipse, he hopes, would be temporary, and accommodation found

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<sup>77</sup> Michael Sullivan, *Chinese Art in the Twentieth Century* (London: Faber, 1959), *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art*, 2d ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), and *Art and Artists*.

<sup>78</sup> Michael Sullivan, "The Traditional Trend in Contemporary Chinese Art," *Oriental Art*, Winter 1949-50, 105-110.

<sup>79</sup> Sullivan, 105.

for it “once the first violent wave of anti-traditional feelings has subsided.”<sup>80</sup>

Following the London exhibition at China Institute, Tseng’s works travelled to San Francisco. “Chinese Painting by Tseng Yu-ho” was mounted at the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum in Golden Gate Park in November and December, 1947. The de Young exhibition featured thirty-five of Tseng’s own works and four handscrolls of Ming dynasty painting.<sup>81</sup> Eight of the works sold to Bay Area collectors.<sup>82</sup> Although sales represented only slightly more than twenty-two percent of the works exhibited, it was a respectable number, particularly for the first exhibition of a young artist unknown to the community. In ensuing years the San Francisco art world became one of Tseng’s most reliable bases of support.

The registrar’s records of this exhibition list the painting styles favored by Tseng at the time. Titles and descriptions of individual works list the styles of Tang, Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasty painters. Of the thirty-five paintings, the styles of the following individual artists are named: Li Sixun of the Tang dynasty; from the Song, Li Gonglin, Liu Songnian, Su Shi, Ma Yuan, Fan Kuan, Mi Fu, and Liang Kai; Ren Renfa, Wang Yuan, Wang Meng, and Wu Zhen of the Yuan dynasty; Wen Zhengming, Chen Shou, Wang Fu, Shen Zhou, and Tang Yin of the Ming, and Wang Shimin alone representing

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<sup>80</sup> Sullivan, 110.

<sup>81</sup> The registraral records for the exhibition include a handwritten notation at the end of the detailed list of Tseng’s paintings that reads simply: “4 hand scrolls of Ming dynasty painting.” Their provenance is unclear. See M. H. de Young Memorial Museum Registrar object list, “Chinese Paintings by Tseng Yu-Ho,” October 3, 1947.

<sup>82</sup> According to museum records, the buyers included: Mrs. Alfred Simon, Mrs. Arleen Browning Armstrong, Eric Mayell, W. Vincent Evans, and Ronald Diplock. See M. H. de Young Memorial Museum Registrar object list, “Chinese Paintings by Tseng Yu-Ho,” October 3, 1947. There is no record that any of these works subsequently made their way into Bay Area museum collections.

the Qing dynasty. Two works are interpretations of interpretations. *A Pine Tree* is described as a work in Ming style with brushwork after Wen Zhengming interpreting Wang Meng. Likewise, *Imaginary Landscape* is listed as after Wang Shimin's interpretation of Huang Gongwang. *The River Inn* was one of the works included in this exhibition, and interestingly, it is described on the registrar's list, not as a copy of Sesshu, but: "In the Sung tradition, 'ink-splash' style of Liang Kai (ca. A.D. 1200), popularized in Japan with the peculiar brushwork of the Chinese painter Ying Yu-chien (ca. A.D. 1200), famous through works of the Japanese painter Sesshu (1420-1506)."<sup>83</sup>

With works such as these, Tseng was establishing her mastery of traditional Chinese painting styles and genres. The tradition of Chinese artistic education dictated that a painter first show proficiency in past styles. This was learned through copying works of individual artists until one had thoroughly digested their style and brush technique. Orthodox painters like the Pu brothers continued the training techniques of the past, rather than the new ideas being introduced to China by reformers and artists trained in the West, such as Lin Fengmian and Xu Beihong. In this display, the influence of Tseng's teachers is evident not only in the styles of her works, but in choice of subject matter as well.

The San Francisco exhibition was important in another regard. Paper became a major element in the *dsui* technique Tseng developed in the fifties. Her proclivity for paper, as opposed to silk, may be dictated as much by the literati artist's penchant for

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<sup>83</sup> M. H. de Young Memorial Museum Registrar object list, "Chinese Paintings by Tseng Yu-Ho," October 3, 1947.

paper as a painting surface. Only two of the works in the de Young exhibition are painted on silk. Twenty-three of the works are listed as being painted on “old paper.” Old papers have long appealed to Tseng Yuho, and during her years in China she took great pleasure in the accessibility of Ming dynasty-era papers and old sutra papers for painting.

### **Beijing-Amoy-Hong Kong**

In China, the political situation was deteriorating steadily, and by 1947 the situation in Beijing had worsened too. It became increasingly apparent that Tseng and Ecke’s safety may be in peril. Furen University, which had remained in Beijing throughout the Sino-Japanese War, closed its doors. Although loathe to leave Beijing, Ecke was offered a teaching position at Xiamen (Amoy) University which they decided to accept while they waited for the political situation to be resolved.

Tseng Yuho remembers the chaotic times. Packing their library and collections was very time-consuming, especially since they did not know precisely where they were headed. She recalled in 1966:

It seemed as if the whole city was on the move and packers were almost unavailable. We had 40 crates of books and only a fifth of our library ever got out. Our furniture was too heavy to move and it was stored in the British and American embassies. Eventually, and quite miraculously, some of our pieces found their way to Hawaii. I was young and had never moved before. I took underwear and winter clothing and left our collection of jade, ceramics and bronzes behind!<sup>84</sup>

The paintings were more portable, however, and Tseng and Ecke carried with them some

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<sup>84</sup> Cynthia Eyre, “Courtship,” 52.

of their collection, including *Seven Junipers* by Wen Zhengming and the *Orchids* handscroll by Xue Wu which are now in the collection of the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

Going to Amoy was a homecoming of sorts for Ecke; his first position in China had been at Xiamen University. Tseng and Ecke relocated to Gulangyu Island (just off Amoy Island) in 1947-1948 and spent a year there staying at the home of their friend Robert Tally, a missionary to China. It became increasingly clear that the Tseng-Eckes would be unable to return to Beijing. Furen University closed its campus in Beijing indefinitely, and the political situation worsened. Their futures were uncertain as was the role China would play in them.

In mid-1949, Tseng Yuho left Amoy for Hong Kong “to earn some money.”<sup>85</sup> Tseng Yuho wasted no time getting herself established in Hong Kong. She arrived armed with three letters of introduction and painting supplies, including her antique papers and ink. In a matter of a few months she arranged a solo exhibition of her works which was held at the Fung Ping Shan Library from September 25-October 1, 1949.<sup>86</sup> Many individuals generously offered help. She lived in a women’s dormitory at the University of Hong Kong during the summer recess. Chen Baosheng, librarian at the University of Hong Kong, arranged studio space for her in an empty hall on the third floor of the Fung Ping Shan Library. There Tseng spent four months feverishly painting and preparing all the details of the exhibition.

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<sup>85</sup> Tseng Yuho, letter to author, October 19, 1999.

<sup>86</sup> Fung Ping Shan Library, on the campus of Hong Kong University, was given to the university in 1932 through the generosity of Mr. Fung Ping Shan. In 1963, the building was converted to a museum which features Chinese art.

The fifty paintings in the exhibition were in the “ancient classical style.”<sup>87</sup> As befitting her training and reputation, the works illustrated in print publications reveal her indebtedness to the past. The invitation she designed featured *Under a Bamboo Grove* (1949; fig. 19), an image of a pavilion beneath the arching branches of bamboo, signaling the conservative nature of the works in the exhibition. *Resist Not These Self-Emerging Crosswise Branches* (1949; fig. 20) continues a theme she had given close study in Beijing, that of old trees and branches. Between 1942 and 1948, Tseng had frequently sketched the old trees of Beijing *en plein air*, in addition to studying works on this theme by such masters as Wen Zhengming. Other works included an ink orchid suggestive of Zheng Sixiao and *Bamboo and Rock* recalls Wen Zhengming. Landscapes included a misty river scene in the Mi Fu style, and one whose brushwork shows an uncanny resemblance to Zhu Da. The stylistic range extended to figural themes as well. *Bodhisattva Guanyin*, for example, was painted for the Hong Kong exhibition.

The governor of Hong Kong, Sir Alexander Grantham, attended a preview of the exhibition and reception. Grantham’s mother had been a close friend of Ecker’s during his early days in China. Grantham and his wife both attended the reception held at the Roof Garden of the Hong Kong Hotel and subsequently hosted Tseng for lunch at the Governor’s house.<sup>88</sup> The exhibition was, by all accounts, well received. Advance publicity appeared in several publications, including the *South China Morning Post*, whose Sunday paper the week prior to the exhibition featured a lengthy article on the

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<sup>87</sup> “Ancient Classical Style: Miss Tseng Yu-ho,” *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), September 18, 1949.

<sup>88</sup> The reception was held on September 22 from 4:00 until 7:00.

artist and her work. It called her forthcoming exhibition “an event of particular interest.” “Miss Tseng,” it went on to say, “is one of the small band who adhere strictly to the ancient classical style of Chinese painting, and opportunities of seeing pictures of this kind are rare.”<sup>89</sup>

The exhibition in Hong Kong in 1949 was neither the first nor largest, nor necessarily the most successful of her shows, but it was significant for other reasons. The exhibitions arranged by Pu Quan in China introduced Tseng’s work to a wider audience, but Pu Quan and his work had been the main attraction. She came to Hong Kong “young, penniless and unknown.” Tseng learned much about her own tenacity and organizational skills: “It was the first time I faced the world on my own. It was my most memorable exhibition.”<sup>90</sup> The publicity generated by the show brought her to the attention of both the Chinese and Western audiences in Hong Kong, audiences that have remained supportive over the past fifty years.

Ecke joined his wife in Hong Kong in October 1949. The situation in China continued to be perilous, and the Tseng-Eckes considered what options lay before them. Returning to China was not one of them; neither did post-war Germany seem an attractive alternative. Ecke received an offer to teach in Switzerland. Friends in America encouraged them to come to Chicago. When Robert Griffing, director of the Honolulu Academy of Arts invited Ecke to become the Academy’s first Curator of Asian Art, Tseng and Ecke saw this as an ideal position from which to decide the shape of their

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<sup>89</sup> “Ancient Classical Style: Miss Tseng Yu-ho,” *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), September 18, 1949.

<sup>90</sup> Tseng Yuho, letter to author, October 19, 1999.

post-China lives. Neither of them realized, at the time, that Hawaii would be their permanent home. Honolulu proved to be a challenge for both of them, especially for Tseng Yuho. Regardless of what lay ahead, she had the success of the Fung Ping Shan exhibition fresh in her memory, and the confidence that accompanied it. In December 1949, Tseng and Ecke boarded the American cargo ship, *City of Alma*, as the only passengers, for the three-week journey to Honolulu.

By the time Tseng Yuho left China in 1949, she had earned acclaim for “painting in a manner more purely traditional than that of almost any other living Chinese artist.”<sup>91</sup> For models, Tseng turned to past painters like Su Shi and Shen Zhou as representative of literati painting, with its emphasis on monochrome landscape. Unlike the literati artists whose paintings her own works invoked, Tseng also explored the more decorative, polychrome styles of the Six Dynasties and Tang periods, venturing beyond Chinese painting to Japanese models, as well. This eclecticism she shared with Pu Quan, whose own oeuvre ranged from boneless-style flower painting to literati-style landscapes to close copies of Giuseppe Castiglione’s horse paintings.

In her mastery of past styles, Tseng acknowledged her indebtedness to them. Dong Qichang’s theory of creative reinterpretation demanded a thorough study of the past as the foundation upon which individual artistic expression developed. In China, Tseng proved herself to be an accomplished interpreter of past styles and techniques. Patrons familiar with her work in China, Europe, and America responded to her as

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<sup>91</sup> Sullivan, “Traditional Trend,” 105.

embodying what Sullivan described as the “traditional trend in contemporary Chinese art.”<sup>92</sup> She was accomplished in brush technique and displayed virtuosity in a diversity of painting styles. The paintings from this period appealed to collectors for whom Tseng represented an extension of traditional styles and techniques.

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<sup>92</sup> Sullivan, “Traditional Trend,” 105.

CHAPTER TWO  
NEW WORLDS OPENING, 1949-1956

**Life In Hawaii**

The journey from Hong Kong aboard the *City of Alma* took three weeks. Ecker recalled the first sight of their new home: “After all those weary weeks at sea, Kauai appeared on the horizon at dusk. The mountains were covered with clouds. The sun was setting in a blaze of red on one side and the moon rising palely on the other. The island appeared as if born of the sea. It was wonderful.”<sup>1</sup>

The first years in Hawaii were not easy ones. Tseng refers to them as her darkest period.<sup>2</sup> For all the physical beauty and charms of Hawaii, it was not an easy transition. In 1949, Hawaii was still an American territory, ten years away from statehood. Hawaii had been a crucial military outpost during the war and in 1949, reminders of the horrendous devastation of that engagement were still fresh. Hawaii may now be a major tourist destination, but it is the most remote archipelago in the world--a fact not lost on anyone who has ever flown there. Beijing was Tseng’s home for most of her life, and before the war, it had been a major cosmopolitan capital. Foreign residents and travelers from around the globe mixed there within the walls of the ancient city. Hawaii represented a startling disconnection with the world of Tseng’s past.

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<sup>1</sup> Cynthia Eyre, “Courtship,” 53.

<sup>2</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 19, 1997.

Tseng entered a new environment with its own Chinese heritage. The Chinese presence in the Hawaiian Islands dates back two centuries, with the first Chinese reported to be living there in 1794.<sup>3</sup> Early migrants were drawn to the islands largely as a consequence of the development of plantation agriculture. Commercial pioneers followed throughout the nineteenth century, giving the Chinese community a significant presence in the islands. Regulations and exclusionary laws affected Chinese migration in the latter nineteenth century and half of the twentieth, but after World War II, Chinese immigration resumed. When Tseng arrived in Hawaii, Chinese in the Hawaiian Islands numbered 32,376. A Chinese population of 26,724 resided in Honolulu. They represented eleven percent of Honolulu's population; many of them had lived in the Islands for generations.<sup>4</sup>

Racial prejudice, both among and within population groups, is part of the fabric of life in Hawaii. During the fifties certain neighborhoods maintained standards of racial exclusion, as did the social clubs. But Tseng never recalls being made to feel unwelcome, and never felt she and Ecke were excluded from anything. Dramatic changes in Hawaiian society and politics were underway in the fifties, most notably the assertion of Asian-Americans in local politics. In 1954, a group of Asian-Americans (mostly Japanese-Americans who had fought in World War II) assumed power, marking the end of a half-century of "haole-dominated" local politics.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Clarence Glick, *Sojourners and Settlers: Chinese Migrants in Hawaii* (Honolulu: Chinese History Center and the University of Hawaii Press, 1980), 1.

<sup>4</sup> According to census figures cited in Glick, *Sojourners and Settlers*, 128.

<sup>5</sup> Rodney Morales, "Literature," in *Multicultural Hawai'i: The Fabric of a Multiethnic Society*

Their first year in Honolulu, the Tseng-Eckes lived in a hotel across the street from Punahou School. Their lodging was spacious—one large room, bath, plus a lanai where Tseng was able to do a little painting. Hotel living ended following the burglary of their room. A thief entered via a window and stole some of their valuables. It was the final incentive to find a home. Even though neither Tseng nor Ecke knew how to drive, they found a small bungalow to rent at the foot of Tantalus. “One bedroom, one suite and kitchen.”<sup>6</sup> Tseng learned to drive, had a kitchen to prepare meals and even began painting again.

Their collection of furniture, books, and objects had been too unwieldy to move from China. The paintings, however, were more portable, and Tseng and Ecke managed to carry part of the collection with them to Hawaii. At the time, the Tseng-Ecke’s combined income, however, was still quite small and although they did not want to part with their painting collection, Ecke favored the idea of having the works enter the permanent collection of the Honolulu Academy of Arts. Tseng and Ecke settled on terms advantageous to both the museum and themselves, and in 1952, part of their collection was acquired by the Academy. The sold works included: Mei Qing, *Plum Blossoms*, Xue Wu, *Orchids*, Wen Zhengming, *Seven Junipers*, and Tang Yin, *The Gentleman Hermit*. The Academy’s collection of Chinese painting has grown dramatically in the past five decades. In 1952, the Tseng-Ecke paintings represented a major addition to the Academy’s works by acknowledged masters of the Ming-Qing period. With the sale, the

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(New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1998), 124. *Haole* is Hawaiian for “foreigners,” especially Caucasians.

<sup>6</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 19, 1997.

Tseng-Eckes were able to purchase a piece of property in Nuuanu where they built a home of their own. Working closely with an architect, Tseng designed the house set amidst the rainforest that is characteristic of that part of Oahu. It was, in her words, a “very cute” house set next to a stream, with windows that took full advantage of the setting. Tseng had conceived the space with expanses of windows to take advantage of the light and views of the tropical foliage and stream that graced the property. She recalls: “So after we built our home, everything was so much better. We both felt more settled.”<sup>7</sup> In Nuuanu, they finally had room for work, painting, and entertaining.

The Nuuanu house was made to feel even more like home by their reunion with some of Ecke’s Beijing furniture which they had never expected to see again. In leaving Beijing, Ecke placed part of his irreplaceable collection in the American and British embassies for safe-keeping. From 1951-1953, the British Chargé d’ Affaires in Beijing was Sir Lionel Lamb. His acquaintance with Ecke dated to his days as His Majesty’s Minister to Nanjing (1947-1949) when Lamb enlisted Ecke’s help to refurnish his home following a disastrous fire. Lamb came to Beijing to acquire furniture and Ecke introduced him to dealers and directed him to correct pieces.

When Lamb returned to Beijing as Chargé d’ Affaires he wrote to Ecke in Hawaii offering to buy the furniture that had been left in the care of the British embassy. Ecke accepted the offer. Lamb’s next posting was to Switzerland as Ambassador (1953-1958), from which he wrote again to Ecke. This time, however, it was to inform him that diplomatic privilege had permitted him to export Ecke’s furniture, and would he like it

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<sup>7</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 19, 1997.

back? Lamb offered to re-sell the furniture for the price he had paid Ecke. Benches, table, couch, bed--about nine pieces of Ming dynasty *huanghuali* furniture once again assumed their places in the Tseng-Ecke home.<sup>8</sup>

With Ecke's small salary and the financial demands of their relocation weighing upon her, Tseng adapted her skills to market demand in these first years in Hawaii. She taught Chinese brush painting classes at the Honolulu Academy of Arts school (1951-1963) and also at the University of Hawaii (1953-1966). In addition, Tseng did the Honolulu-artist's equivalent of an actor waiting tables: she designed aloha shirts.<sup>9</sup>

Aloha shirts are nearly as ubiquitous on the mainland now as they are in Hawaii, yet they remain strongly associated with island culture. The short-sleeved, collared men's shirts are decorated with all-over patterns often expressive of island life. The garment is not restricted to casual wear in Hawaii, but is worn for business as well as social occasions of all types, save the most formal. The demand for aloha shirts grew throughout the thirties and forties, and manufacturers often felt that only island artists were able to capture what was considered to be the proper feeling.<sup>10</sup> After the war, designs showed a strong Asian influence.<sup>11</sup> In the fifties, the demand for aloha shirts continued to grow, fueled by the burgeoning tourist industry. Tseng's brief career as a

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<sup>8</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 19, 1997.

<sup>9</sup> Similarly, in C. C. Wang's early years in New York, he painted lampshades and wallpaper designs. See Jerome Silbergeld, *Mind Landscapes: The Paintings of C. C. Wang* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1987), 23.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Steele, *The Hawaiian Shirt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), 60.

<sup>11</sup> Steele, *Hawaiian Shirt*, 15.

designer of aloha shirts coincided with these trends.<sup>12</sup>

At Furen, Tseng had taken Western design courses. She showed some of her designs to a printing company in Honolulu which selected several to print as textiles. She painted what she describes as “western-style” designs onto sheets of paper, approximately twelve inches by twenty inches. One or two of these, she recalls, were made into aloha shirts.<sup>13</sup> In a similar vein, an English textile representative who was in Honolulu commissioned her to paint Chinese-style flowers for a chinoiserie fabric. The compensation for these textile designs was quite good; however Tseng preferred the more reliable prospect of teaching studio classes at the art school of the Honolulu Academy of Arts and the University.

### **Painting: Honolulu, Early Fifties**

During her first years in Hawaii, Tseng painted in the conservative style of her teachers. *Twin Pines* (1951; fig. 21) capitalized on her meticulous tree sketches from sites around Beijing, here rendered in a finished composition in ink and slight color on paper. Ink landscapes, many of them interpretations of the styles of past masters, predominated. Two works feature the styles of the tenth-century masters, Dong Yuan (d. 962) and Juran (active ca. 960-980). *Shore* (1952; fig. 22) includes round, folded humps of land, devoid of vegetation, as found in *Summer Mountains*, a work attributed to Dong. *Landscape* (1952; fig. 23) mimics the style of Juran’s *Seeking the Dao in Autumn*

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<sup>12</sup> The details of this period are unclear; Tseng refers to her stint in textile design as lasting only a brief time shortly after they settled in Honolulu. Tseng Yuho, letter to author, October 7, 1999.

<sup>13</sup> Tseng Yuho, letter to author, October 7, 1999.

*Mountains* (fig. 24). The composition's main features are the steep slopes rising toward the center, and the texture strokes that define their contours. These curved strokes and the accent dots are followed by Tseng in her work.

*Three Horses* (1950, fig. 25) was an unusual subject for Tseng, whose tastes favor landscape. Both of her Beijing teachers, Pu Jin and Pu Quan, were accomplished horse painters and this is a rare example of the genre in Tseng's hand. Horse painting has a long and distinguished history in China, with the Qing emperors particularly interested in the subject, capturing, as it did, their roots as Manchu warriors. The Jesuit painter Giuseppe Castiglione (Lang Shining, 1688-1766) served at the court of the Qianlong emperor (r. 1736-1799) and established a style of horse painting that remained popular throughout the dynasty. His combination of Western realism in modeling and shading combined with a traditional Chinese subject matter was held in particularly high regard. In 1950, Pu Quan copied one of Castiglione's works in *Horse (after Castiglione)* (fig. 26). That same year, painting from her new home in Hawaii, Tseng painted *Three Horses* remembering her teachers and her life in Beijing.<sup>14</sup>

Tseng's first major painting in Hawaii was the *Min River* handscroll of 1951 (fig. 27). She was still adjusting to her new life and *Min River* held particular meaning to her. In Hawaii, Tseng had painted a number of small works, but nothing as ambitious as this work. *Min River* is monumental in both scale and conception. The painting measures seventeen inches by thirty-four feet, two inches. A prose essay at the end of the work adds another seven feet, two inches, making the entire piece over forty-one feet in length.

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<sup>14</sup> Tseng, *Chuantong*, 109.

In conception it recalls numerous traditional works of similar themes, particularly Huang Gongwang's *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*.

After leaving Beijing, Tseng and Ecke had taken a boat trip in Fujian province, along the Min River. For two days and one night, they plied the waters of this famous river. The majestic natural scenery was new to Tseng, and she was intoxicated by the landscape. The colors, she says, were burning. "I've never seen again anywhere colors just so beautiful as that."<sup>15</sup> Inexplicably, Tseng made the trip without a sketch pad, but as soon as the trip was over, she made a few sketches as an aid to memory. One of these, still in the artist's collection, is a small pencil sketch in which she captures the rough elements of the landscape: distant hills, rugged, rocky slopes, the river, and thatched roof houses. Tseng began laying out the project within months of her arrival in Hawaii.

The hotel accommodations in which Tseng and Ecke first lived afforded little space for painting, and the first house they rented was too tiny to allow her proper studio space. Painting such a monumental work would have been difficult under most circumstances. Their friend Louise Palmer was principal at Hanahauoli Elementary School, which was located near their home. Palmer offered Tseng the use of the school after school on weekdays and on weekends. It was a good situation for Tseng, though it meant structuring her painting time around school dismissals. The classroom was ample and long tables were easily transformed into painting tables. The major work she did there was the *Min River* handscroll. She painted on individual sheets, each measuring approximately sixteen to eighteen inches long, which she spread onto the classroom

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<sup>15</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, March 17-18, 1997.

tables. It took her twelve days to paint, using the boneless manner, only colors without ink outlines. In 1950, Jean Charlot, the mural painter who was then Ecke's colleague in the University's art department, described an early version of the *Min River* handscroll: "One of the slightest sketches is a striking project laid down along a thin strip of paper, three inches wide and four feet long. In accord with the cinematic principle, it sums up the sights of a two-day boating party along the banks of a river."<sup>16</sup>

The early works Tseng painted in Hawaii betrayed nothing of her new locale. Gradually, the physical landscape of Hawaii began to find its way into her work, in name, if not appearance. *Morning Wind* (1953; fig. 28) depicts the scenery on the windward side of Oahu. Near the summit of the Pali Highway that connects the windward and leeward sides of the island, is an overlook. Flanked by three thousand foot tall peaks, the vantage from the overlook affords one of the most dramatic views on Oahu. Green precipices and sheer cliffs (*pali*, in Hawaiian) below, stretch out to the shore and ocean beyond. The dramatic views have been softened and transformed in Tseng's painting into a generic Chinese landscape. *Hawaiian Landscape in Chinese Style* (1952, fig. 29), follows a similar style, with the reality of her new surroundings only revealed in the painting's title.

An unusual work from this period is *Scene of Oahu* (1951; fig. 30), this time painting tropical landscape, but revisiting the blue-green style works of a few years earlier in China. The lush vegetation includes palm trees, heliconia, and caladium, all

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<sup>16</sup> Jean Charlot, "Reflections of an Occidental Painter on Chinese Ink-painting, After Looking at the Works of Tseng Yu-ho," in Jean Charlot, *Art-Making from Mexico to China* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1950), 290.

recognizable Hawaiian plants. The style strongly suggests the archaic Six Dynasties style, with strong colors and stylized motifs. Here, however, the overall effect has been softened. This no longer seems an attempt to recreate an earlier style, rather moves towards a new vision. Besides the creative juxtaposition of archaic style with contemporary landscape motifs, *Scene of Oahu* is significant for its use of tapa. Tseng had a collection of antique papers in China, but very few of them were brought to Hawaii. In Hawaii, she discovered tapa, an indigenous product which she found comparable to her old papers as a ground for painting. Tapa cloth (as it is commonly known) played an important role in the development of her *dsui* technique,<sup>17</sup> but here it is strictly a surface for painting. As a medium in *dsui hua*, tapa will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

The physical and spiritual power of the Hawaiian landscape is difficult to ignore. Mountains, sea and sky, flora and fauna, sun and rain--all coalesce in endless combinations to underscore the power, fragility, and isolation of the place. Native Hawaiian culture revered nature, and this attitude is an important part of its legacy. Artists have long responded to the place and adapted elements of the landscape to suit their own styles and aesthetic agendas. The Chinese landscape painting tradition imbued the natural environment with metaphysical significance. In landscape one reads man's role in the order of the cosmos. Hawaii's dramatic natural world and the heritage that surrounds it, offered an ideal environment for directly exploring physical and metaphysical issues through painting.

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<sup>17</sup> *Dsui* became Tseng's signature technique. It involves the layering of papers with ink, color, and stylized landscape elements.

Tseng saw in Hawaii's mountain ranges and volcanic ridges the dragon-veins of Chinese cosmology. She found herself drawn to them as a way to explore "the structure of the islands."<sup>18</sup> *Hawaiian Landscape* (1954; fig. 31) depicts the Ko'olau Range on the island of Oahu. They are a distinctive and dramatic example of Hawaii's landscape. The range divides the windward and leeward sides of Oahu. The tall peaks and cliffs are covered with vegetation; waterfalls pour down the crevices after rainfall, which is frequent. Mist accumulates at the tops of the peaks, enhancing their ethereal, otherworldly feel. At Tseng's hands, the Ko'olau recall the monumental landscapes of the Northern Song (960-1127), particularly Xu Daoning's *Fishing in a Mountain Stream* handscroll (fig. 32). In both works, the landscape rises dramatically from the ground plane, suggesting the awesome power attributed to the natural world by Chinese cosmic beliefs. Yet Tseng's work differs from Xu's in significant ways. Atmospheric effects are minimized in favor of strongly delineated structure, with the chiaroscuro effects more reminiscent of Gong Xian (1619-1689) than Xu Daoning.

*Silent Action* (1955; fig. 33) reads like a magnification of *Hawaiian Landscape*. Instead of a panoramic view of the entire mountain range, *Silent Action* zooms in to show in greater detail the intricacies of the terrain. It has been described as "a complex pattern of rhythmic, biomorphic-like shapes."<sup>19</sup> The forces that gave form to the mountains in Hawaii are present everyday in the constant volcanic activity that continues to shape the islands. This geological heritage conforms nicely to the traditional Chinese notion of

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<sup>18</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 24, 1997.

<sup>19</sup> Stephen J. Goldberg, "The Art of Tseng Yuho: An Appreciation," in *By Design: The Art of Tseng Yuho*, 29.

mountains as the physical manifestation of *qi* (energy). In spirit, *Silent Action* evokes the dramatic landscape by Gong Xian (1619-1689), *A Thousand Peaks and Myriad Ravines* (fig. 34), itself a celebration of geologic anomalies. In format, repetition of shapes, and patternization of light and dark, Tseng's work recalls in spirit and form Gong Xian's work.

Stephen Goldberg, Tseng's successor at the University of Hawaii, suggests that the connection to Gong Xian may be deeper still:

*A Thousand Peaks and Myriad Ravines* has been shown to deploy Western conventions of realism that, when viewed from a traditional Chinese perspective, create a sense of "strangeness" or "surrealism." It can be argued that this was intended to give expression to the estrangement experienced by Han Chinese living under the foreign domination of the Manchus in the early years of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). Painting just six years after Tseng moved from China to the Hawai'ian Islands, *Silent Action*, in its seemingly endless repetition of mountain folds that cover virtually the entire surface of the painting with little or no relief, may perhaps be interpreted as a poignant, personal expression of what it means to live as an exile.<sup>20</sup>

Yet by 1955 Tseng's interests, in fact, had grown to embrace her new surroundings. She was painting productively and feeling increasingly settled after her initial "dark" period. Tseng's attention to Hawaii and its physical forms was a step forward in developing her own style, even though at this point she claims that "a lot of people" thought she had "gone to the dogs."<sup>21</sup> The new works signalled a shift from Tseng's earlier art which had largely perpetuated traditional Chinese styles and struck a discordant note among some of her admirers who liked the continuity with the past which her paintings represented. With resolve, Tseng began to explore new avenues of expression that allowed her to

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<sup>20</sup> Goldberg, "Art of Tseng Yuho," 29.

<sup>21</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 24, 1997.

interact with the present without abandoning her engagement with the past. The initial lack of enthusiasm Tseng recalls these new works meeting may have surprised her: up to this point, she had received much support for her work. The depiction of island scenery enjoys a strong market among collectors and visitors. The new mix of conventions that these works signalled was appreciated by a new audience, as well as some of her most constant supporters, like Michael Sullivan. *The Settlement* from this period, is one of Tseng's most frequently reproduced works.

Landscape was not her only genre in this period; Tseng also painted the flowers and plants of the island. Only a few examples of Tseng's bird-and-flower painting from Beijing exist. Among them, compositions like *Wild Crab Apple, Orchid, Dragonfly and Peony* show her competence with the genre. Tseng may have resisted, consciously or unconsciously, bird-and-flower painting.<sup>22</sup> Tseng's teachers may have minimized their importance too in favor of their preferred literati-style landscapes. In Hawaii, however, plants and flowers entered her oeuvre. The tropical flowers of Hawaii are hard to avoid; one encounters them daily, in every conceivable arena: gardens, arrangements, and personal adornment.

Tseng painted *Flowers* in 1954, twelve fan paintings mounted as a pair of folding screens (fig. 35). The theme has a venerable history in China, where flowers of the seasons were a favorite subject among literati and professional painters alike. Red heliconias became the subject of two works done in 1954 and are typical of her interest in

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<sup>22</sup> As the 1988 exhibition, "Views from Jade Terrace: Chinese Women Artists, 1300-1912" demonstrated, flowers, birds, plants and insects dominated the subject matter of paintings by women artists in pre-twentieth century China. See Marsha Weidner, ed., *Flowering in the Shadows: Women in the History of Chinese and Japanese Painting* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 24.

and curiosity about indigenous vegetation during this period.<sup>23</sup> Both paintings are titled *Red Heliconias* (fig. 36) and depict the brilliant red leaves of the heliconia plant in combination with a garden rock.

Of the many unusual plants in Hawaii, none is more striking than the banyan tree, whose aerial roots develop from its branches and descend to take root in the soil.<sup>24</sup> The trees can reach heights up to one hundred feet, with the lateral reach of branches, roots, and trunks spreading indefinitely. They are a common sight on Oahu. Two works, both entitled *Banyan*, and both dating from 1955, are detailed drawings. *Banyan* (fig. 37) is a more complete composition of the tree and its roots, with a ground plane evident and the subject readily recognizable. In the second *Banyan* the roots cascade to the ground, filling the picture plane in a tangled torrent. As with her depictions of Hawaiian terrain, the banyan studies are concerned with structure, linearity and *qi*. They signal her increasing interest in using natural forms to explore abstraction.

The traditional-style works of Tseng's training in China depict the natural world by means of conventions, with little attention paid to actual appearance. With Tseng's shift in the mid-fifties to Hawaiian landscape and scenery, she is signalling a break from the past by observing and painting the world of her surroundings. Mountains, trees, flowers, and rocks are scrutinized and become a springboard for explorations of line, pattern, and form.

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<sup>23</sup> *Heliconia* is the only genus of family *Heliconiaceae*, with approximately 120 species found in tropical areas of the Western hemisphere and western Pacific. They are large perennial herbs.

<sup>24</sup> *Ficus benghalensis*, or *F. indica*; from the fig genus in the mulberry family (*Moraceae*); native to tropical Asia.

### **Exhibitions: 1950-1956**

Three weeks after arriving in Hawaii the *Honolulu Advertiser* ran an introduction to Tseng Yuho and her work, including five photographs: Tseng, two paintings, her desk in Beijing with its painting accoutrements, and the artist at work.<sup>25</sup> Within the Oahu art world, her arrival was well-known; with newspaper publicity her presence was reaching an ever larger potential audience.

Within months of arriving in Hawaii, Tseng had her first exhibition in Honolulu. Held at the Gump's store in Waikiki from March 28-April 15, 1950, the show featured works she had painted in China and were wholly Chinese in style.<sup>26</sup> The paintings in that exhibition were described in a subsequent article by Jean Charlot who also wrote a regular column for the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*. Charlot recalled in 1966: "The repertory was the traditional one. Vertical cliffs contrasted with horizontal river scenes. Gnarled tree trunk opposed crotchety age to the youthful grace that stemmed from orchid leaves."<sup>27</sup>

#### **"Paintings by Tseng Yu-ho"**

There was considerable interest in Tseng Yuho's traditional-style paintings not only in Honolulu, but on the mainland and in Europe as well. Two years later her first

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<sup>25</sup> Annabel Damon, "Accomplished Young Chinese Artist Plans Honolulu Exhibit," *Honolulu Advertiser*, January 19, 1950.

<sup>26</sup> Gumps was founded in San Francisco in 1861 and established a reputation as a specialty store selling decorative arts and up-scale home furnishing, many of Asian origin. A branch in Honolulu opened in 1924 and closed in the fifties. The company is still in business with a large store in San Francisco and has recently ventured into e-commerce.

<sup>27</sup> Jean Charlot, "The Art of Tseng Yu-ho," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, July 13, 1966.

solo exhibition at the Honolulu Art Academy was held (January 3-24, 1952). "Paintings by Tseng Yu-ho" featured fifty works painted in Chinese style. The exhibition travelled to the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco the following month. Writing in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, critic Alfred Frankenstein found much to praise with the exhibition. He called Tseng's paintings "extraordinarily deft and poetic in both grand and intimate moods." He was particularly impressed with *Min River* (1951), Tseng's long handscroll recalling the Tseng-Ecke's river journey in Fujian province. Frankenstein felt this work showed her creative gifts at their best, "in the way it refreshes and accents the traditional impressionism of China with a new warmth of autumn hues."<sup>28</sup>

In large part, the works in this exhibition were an extension of her 1947 de Young show. They drew upon the models associated with her conservative training in Beijing. Markers of her relocation to Hawaii were not yet evident, except in two works painted on tapa cloth, which raised the single discordant note in Frankenstein's review. He found that their "color is a little hard or overbold in comparison with the rest of the show."<sup>29</sup>

From San Francisco, the exhibition travelled to Europe, where it was seen at the Musée Cernuschi, Paris (1953), the Fussli Gallery, Zurich (1953), and Il Istituto per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, Rome (1953-1954). In Europe, two of the three venues--Paris and Rome--featured Tseng's works in conjunction with other exhibitions of Chinese art. In Paris, the Cernuschi showed the collection of Dr. Kuo Yu-shou, who had bequeathed to the city of Paris a group of works by twenty-five contemporary Chinese painters.

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<sup>28</sup> Alfred Frankenstein, "Chinese Artist Proves Her Rare Skill in De Young Show," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1952. The clipping for this article from the artist's files is missing the date.

<sup>29</sup> Frankenstein, "Chinese Artist Proves Her Rare Skill."

These works, it was noted, were painted in China and avoided any Western influence.<sup>30</sup> At the Palazzo Brancaccio, the Institute was also featuring an exhibition of ancient objects, religious sculpture and paintings spanning China's dynastic era.

Local biases were apparent in European reviews of the exhibition. An article in one Rome publication detailed Giuseppe Castiglione's contribution to Chinese art as painter to the Qianlong emperor, while a Paris review suggested that some of Tseng's works took on the air of Vincent van Gogh or Raoul Dufy.<sup>31</sup> In general, Tseng's works were subject to more critical and intellectual scrutiny in Europe. Reviews in U.S. publications commonly dealt with her work in a slightly incomprehending way, mostly repeating press release information, standard biographical information, and a limited number of ideas about technique and themes. At this point even Alfred Frankenstein, who became one of the most astute critics of Tseng's work, saw her as "continuing the great tradition" of Chinese landscape and bird-and-flower painting.<sup>32</sup> The European reviewers sought to put the work in context by mentioning, albeit with necessary simplification, the philosophical foundations of traditional Chinese art and the extraordinary nature of Tseng's work--traditional and new. Writing in the *Zurich Tagesanzeiger*, Dr. von Tschärner, a professor of sinology at the University of Zurich wrote:

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<sup>30</sup> "La Chine possède une peinture vivante," *Beaux Arts*, July 1953. The artists included Pang Xunqin (1960-1985), Qi Baishi (1863-1957), Zhang Daqian (1899-1983), and Huang Junbi (1898-1991).

<sup>31</sup> Piero Scarpa, "L'arte cinese presentata ai romani," *Il Messaggero*, January 14, 1954; "La Chine possède une peinture vivante," *Beaux Arts*, July 1953. The painting list for these exhibitions has not been located. It is difficult to identify what specific works of Tseng's may be triggering these comparisons.

<sup>32</sup> Frankenstein, "Chinese Artist Proves Her Rare Skill."

Thus the question arises: is the national art of painting, now uprooted, likely to wither, separated as it is from its native soil? The answer is no. For we see Tseng Yu-ho making use of a Chinese master-brush to capture a Hawaiian atmosphere in terms of her own original art . . . The art of Tseng Yu-ho, as exhibited in Zurich, we consider to be nothing less than a healthy and youthful recreation of this very traditional national Chinese painting.<sup>33</sup>

Art Institute of Chicago and Smithsonian Institution  
Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES)

During the summer of 1953, the Art Institute of Chicago showed Tseng's works in their Oriental Galleries. Thirty-four works were shipped for the exhibition, which was held from July 15 to September 1. The registrational records for this exhibition no longer exist, so details of its inception and organization are unclear. Most were recent works, painted in traditional Chinese style: ink or ink and color on paper. Themes related to Hawaii dominated: *Scene from Hawaiian Islands, On Kauai Island, A Garden in Honolulu, Hawaiian Guava*. Others were more traditional Chinese literati themes: *Plum Blossoms, Bamboo with Sung Poems. Hills in Ink and Indigo* (fig. 38), the work illustrated with the *Christian Science Monitor* article, is wholly classical in theme and execution.

Included in this exhibition were four screen paintings: a pair of six-panel screens of *Flowers, Across the Strait* (two panels), and *A Garden in Honolulu* (four panels). Prior to this exhibition, Tseng had been assisting the Honolulu Academy of Arts with conservation of the Asian collection, including handling minor repairs on some of the museum's Japanese screens. Her interest in the screen format, though once found in

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<sup>33</sup> "Schicksale der chinesischen Malerei," *Zurich Tagesanzeiger*, n.d., 1953.

China, is more closely associated with Japanese art, and gave her work a pan-Asian flavor. *A Garden in Honolulu*, for example, was a Hawaiian theme (Honolulu garden), painted in traditional Chinese media (ink and color on paper), in a Japanese format (four-panel screen) by a Chinese artist living in an American territory.<sup>34</sup>

Some of Tseng's early paintings on tapa cloth were also featured. *Scene from Hawaiian Islands*, *Mountain Flow*, *Beyond the Rocks*, and *The Slope* were each painted with ink, colored ink or mineral colors on tapa. These early experiments with tapa were a unique feature of Tseng's work at this point, incorporating an indigenous Hawaiian art with traditional-style Chinese painting. Interestingly, they went unremarked on in the exhibition's accompanying publicity, which expressed instead Tseng's indebtedness to great painters of the Ming and Qing dynasties, while drawing upon the landscape and flora of Hawaii for her subject matter. Furthermore, her work was described as "not difficult to understand" and "very easy to like and admire."<sup>35</sup> Prospective audiences may have desired such reassurance: promoting the show as a challenging intellectual journey through traditional Chinese painting was likely to attract few viewers. Tseng's works, however, have never been simple. They are intellectual exercises which draw upon her mastery of styles, techniques, and genres. This was the first exhibition whose themes drew more heavily on Hawaii, and the prominence of flower and garden-related images suggests the decorative nature of some of these works. It may have been this aspect of Tseng's paintings that prompted the comment about their felicitousness for the museum-

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<sup>34</sup> Illustrations of these works cannot be located.

<sup>35</sup> Charles Fabens Kelley, "Chinese Art in Chicago," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 25, 1953.

goer.

Charles Fabens Kelley, curator of Oriental Art at the Art Institute, offered the exhibition to the Smithsonian Institution for its Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES).<sup>36</sup> He wrote to Annemarie H. Pope: “We like the show very much and consider Mrs. Ecke’s work is first-class; indeed, I doubt if there are many Chinese painters who do as well as she does. . . . I feel this is a very worthwhile show. It is easy for the public to like and to understand.”<sup>37</sup> Kelley’s recommendation was bolstered by Tseng’s successful exhibitions in other cities, most notably San Francisco. Furthermore, the Popes and Tseng-Eckes knew each other--John Pope and Gustav Ecke had overlapped in Beijing. Annemarie Pope considered the show an excellent idea and submitted the proposal to Thomas M. Beggs, Director of the National Collection of Fine Arts, confident that SITES could easily book the exhibition into museums in which Asian art was a presence. Beggs agreed.<sup>38</sup> A “suggested press release” circulated with the exhibition remarked how Tseng’s art was distinguished by her faultless technique and sensitive reaction to her surroundings.<sup>39</sup>

Twenty-five of the works exhibited at the Art Institute of Chicago were chosen

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<sup>36</sup> The mission of the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) was to arrange for the circulation of exhibitions of American and international art in the United States. See “Historical Note” in Smithsonian Institution Archives, Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>37</sup> Annemarie H. Pope memo in SITES Archives. Annemarie H. Pope was Chief of Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service from 1952-1963. She was the wife of John A. Pope, director of the Freer Gallery of Art, 1962-1971.

<sup>38</sup> SITES Archives.

<sup>39</sup> Suggested Press Release, SITES Archives.

for the Smithsonian exhibition. Between November 1953 and February 1955, “Chinese Paintings by Tseng Yu-ho” travelled to ten venues.<sup>40</sup> Tseng had already been establishing herself with patrons in Hawaii and San Francisco. The SITES exhibition marked the beginning of a broader market for her work in metropolitan areas throughout the mainland. The career groundwork laid between 1953 and 1955 would be capitalized upon in 1960 when Tseng entered an exclusive arrangement with Edith Halpert and the Downtown Gallery, as discussed in chapter 4.

### **Fifties Innovations**

Tseng Yuho’s painting style evolved gradually in Hawaii. It began with the inclusion of local motifs into her work. By 1953, Tseng’s creative innovations also touched on elements of Chinese painting more fundamental than subject matter or genre, to include experiments with paper, format and shape.

Tseng’s interest in paper dated to Beijing, where antique papers were readily available. In the Liulichang district, one could buy paper from old books and the leftover pieces from re-mounting scrolls. Tseng recalls that dealers charged only a small mark-up for these old pieces.<sup>41</sup> She amassed a collection of these papers and frequently used them in her painting. The advantage of antique paper, besides lending the work a certain authentic air, was the way in which it accepted ink and pigment. No contemporary

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<sup>40</sup> These were the Nelson Gallery, Kansas City; Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; George Thomas Hunter Gallery of Art, Chattanooga, Tennessee; Art Gallery, University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware; Birmingham Museum of Art; Miami Beach Art Center, Miami, Florida; Rosicrucian Art Gallery, San Jose, California; University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon; Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Washington; and the Art Center in La Jolla, La Jolla, California.

<sup>41</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 17, 1997.

papers could match this. The haste and confusion of their last days in China precluded Tseng from carrying with her a large stock of antique paper, and in Hawaii she explored available alternatives. Tapa cloth was one very satisfactory local product which she initially used occasionally, such as in *Scene of Oahu*. Tibetan sutra paper, which she had used in China, also had a good feel under the brush and took colors nicely. The dark blue color makes a dramatic ground, whose effects she exploited in *Hawaiian Landscape* (1954; fig. 39). Using mineral pigments on the dark blue ground, she painted the outlines of a volcanic hillside.

Tseng also began to experiment with the effects of torn paper in her work. These compositions took three forms. In the first, painted elements were torn from one sheet and affixed to another sheet of paper. An early example, *Hawaiian Landscape* (1953; fig. 40), features a boneless-style mountain landscape composition, whose edges have been torn to form an oval, then affixed to dark blue paper which frames the painting. In a variation of this technique, Tseng painted multiple elements of the design onto individual pieces of torn paper which were then arranged to form her composition. *Ten Song Poems* and *Thicket of Trees* (1956; fig. 41) illustrate this technique. *Ten Song Poems*, which were inspired by the Song dynasty poetry form called *ci*, included one work based on a poem by Liu Yong (fl. 1034). For *Ten Song Poems*, Liu Yong's "Tinkling Rain" (1954; fig. 42), Tseng used torn sheets of paper on which she wrote the poem, painted an image inspired by the poem, and affixed two seals. These four papers were then arranged on a dark blue ground. In a similar vein is *Thicket of Trees*. Three different types of foliage were painted on torn pieces of paper and the individual elements composed against two

pieces of blue ground. In a variation of the technique, Tseng arranged torn shapes of colored papers and then used them as the painting surface. *Rock* (1956; fig. 43) employed this technique, with elaborately convoluted rock form painted onto the torn papers.

In a third type, Tseng tore pieces of paper and used them as landscape elements in her composition. *The Blue Landscape* (1956; fig. 44) transforms torn papers and ink into a design reminiscent of landscape motifs. The earliest used colored papers from Japan. Brushstrokes were used to add vegetation and texture strokes. With this work, Tseng has come very close to the painting style that became *dsui hua*.

In 1992, Tseng reflected on her attraction to the use of torn papers, which she finds provide her with “an inexhaustible source of inspiration.” The randomness of the shapes can suggest images to her, and the element of spontaneity is one she finds “both challenging and stimulating.”<sup>42</sup>

Different formats and multiple images permitted another type of creative experimentation in the mid-fifties. At one stage, Tseng combined small paintings of different sizes to make a single composition. Pencil sketches (fig. 45) of several of these grouped-works have the appearance of handscrolls or hanging scrolls, cut and re-arranged. She described the next development: “When framing and mounting these paintings, it occurred to me that instead of cutting the edges of the paper straight, I could

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<sup>42</sup> Tseng Yuho, “*Dsui Hua*,” in *Dsui Hua: Tseng Yuho* (Taipei and Hong Kong: Hanart Gallery, 1992), 26 (hereafter cited as *Dsui Hua*).

tear the edges and thus create an irregular matting frame.”<sup>43</sup> She used this technique in *The Settlement* (fig. 46). A torn paper backing is visible between the work and mounting surface.

*The Settlement* combines many of her new ideas in a single work.<sup>44</sup> It is a two-panel screen, with a torn paper edging. The image itself is both recognizably Hawaii and indebted to past masters of Chinese painting. Sullivan called it a “brilliant adaptation of the style of the seventeenth-century master Gong Xian to the texture of the mountains of the islands.”<sup>45</sup> Gong Xian’s landscapes are usually dark and desolate; however, *Village on a Mountainous Lakeshore*, one leaf in a landscape album dated 1671, has houses clustered along the water’s edge (fig. 47). Tseng’s painting combines the mountain and village elements of Gong’s work, but hers suggests not desolation, but building boom, such as Hawaii experienced in the post-war period.

*Water Chestnuts* uses yet another format. It is comprised of six separate square panels, arranged horizontally (fig. 48). It reads like a handscroll but looks like a mounted screen. In overall feeling, the work recalls Zhu Da (Bada Shanren, 1626-1705), whose paintings frequently captured the essential nature of some humble creature or object in a few quick strokes. Like Bada’s works, Tseng’s plays with spatial ambiguity. The groundlessness of the work, with no relational object to situate the scene in space, recalls

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<sup>43</sup> Tseng, *Dsui Hua*, 26.

<sup>44</sup> Three different dates have been given for this work. The Honolulu Academy of Arts registrarial records list 1957; that is also the date the work entered the Academy collection. Sullivan lists 1955 in *Art and Artists*, 208. Finally, a hand-written notation by the artist on a photo reproduction gives 1956. I believe 1955 or 1956 is most likely, based on stylistic changes in her works after 1956.

<sup>45</sup> Sullivan, *Art and Artists*, 207.

similarly enigmatic works by Bada.

*Flowers* (1954), discussed earlier, is another multiple image, this time twelve separate compositions, each painted in a fan-shaped frame. Tseng was also experimenting with different types of mounting. *Flowers* she mounted as a pair of six-fold screens. *The Settlement* is a two-panel screen. During this period, Tseng's work at the Honolulu Academy of Arts had her tending to minor conservation tasks in the collection of Asian paintings. Among the works she handled were Japanese screen paintings, a painting format which had disappeared in China but been preserved in Japan. Multiple images could be mounted to form a single composition, or a single composition could be designed to span the articulated mounting surface of the screen. Tseng experimented with both.

Tearing the paper of her painting surface was just one way in which Tseng varied the shape of her works. Square or rectangular, hanging scroll or handscroll, album leaf or fan, these were formats most common in Tseng's works, as in most Chinese paintings. What might happen, though, if these conventions were not followed? Two works from 1955 are playful interpretations of established themes and motifs of Chinese painting. Fences are a common motif in literati paintings of landscapes and gardens, from rustic stick fence to elegant enclosure. Two of Tseng's favorite models, Wen Zhengming and Shen Zhou, turned to the theme on numerous occasions, most notably in Wen's *Album of Scenes in the Zhuozheng Yuan* (1551) and in a joint work with Shen Zhou, *Landscape Album* (mounted as a handscroll, in the Nelson-Atkins Museum). One of Shen Zhou's compositions, *Gardeners*, includes a long stretch of zig-zagging fence, as in Tseng's

composition (fig. 49).

Tseng's *The Long Fence II* (fig. 50) makes the fence itself the focus of the work, and Tseng emphasizes its centrality by shaping the work to follow its progress through the composition. It is not precisely clear what boundary the fence demarcates, nevertheless, it provides the narrative thread of the work. The painting's composition suggests a handscroll, and unfolds accordingly. Reading right to left, as one does with a handscroll, the fence zig-zags sharply and then trails out of the composition, close to the upper edge of the painting. Tseng's addition to the genre was to echo the movement of the fence in the contours of the work itself.

*The Railing* is a variation on the fence theme, and similarly explores the relationship between composition and contours (fig. 51). Rather than a humble country fence, the subject is a balustrade. An elegant, swastika-inset railing marks the edge of a terrace. This is a much bolder work than *The Long Fence* which used light colors and texture strokes to lend atmospheric effects. *The Railing* is painted with ink on paper, using strong brushwork and a full range of ink tones. The railing itself is only partially visible, closely cropped so that only in one small section do we actually see the top rail. Like Tseng's fence, this railing also makes two sharp changes of direction, and again, the form mirrors the painted image. In this case, the strong geometric feeling is exaggerated by the black border around the work and by the swastika patterns embedded in the lattice work of the balustrade. This relationship between form and image is one Tseng continued to develop, returning to it occasionally down to the present.

### Western Influences

Tseng Yuho was first introduced to Western art in 1940 at Furen University when she took Gustav Ecke's art history courses. Reflecting his own background and interests, and the intellectual currents of the time, Bauhaus artists loomed large in his lectures. Of these, Tseng was most attracted to Paul Klee, whose work assumed importance for her in Hawaii as her painting style was evolving. Ecke introduced Klee in his art history classes at Furen, along with other key figures such as Picasso, Braque, and Kandinsky. Tseng says about Klee: "I admire him greatly and think he is the most important person to me for the twentieth century. Far more than Picasso and the others. Because he made his abstractions so natural, to make sense, and put it into truly artistic and aesthetic level. And, no, I don't think anybody has jumped beyond what he has done."<sup>46</sup> Tseng calls him a "European literati."<sup>47</sup>

Paul Klee (1879-1940) painted works both abstract and figural. He was interested in experimenting with new ideas and new forms, which led him at one point to Chinese literature. In 1916, he received as a gift from his wife a volume of Chinese poems, *Chinesische Lyrik*, translated from French and English.<sup>48</sup> Thus began a period of serious interest in Chinese literature. He "resolved to 'compose' some of the poems as pictures,

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<sup>46</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, March 8, 1997.

<sup>47</sup> Tseng, *Chuantong*, 112.

<sup>48</sup> Jürgen Glaesemer, *Paul Klee: The Colored Works in the Kunstmuseum Bern*, translated by Renate Franciscono (Bern: Kornfeld and Cie, 1979), 38-39. *Chinesische Lyrik* was translated from French and English and included an introduction by Hans Heilmann. It was published in Munich and Leipzig in 1906.

as words are set to music.”<sup>49</sup> These first “letter pictures” were conceived as a cycle of six watercolors on Chinese poems. Klee’s watercolors, without benefit of the Chinese characters, attempted to marry poetic and pictorial space.<sup>50</sup>

Many of Klee’s experiments with media and material have been described as “allied more closely to the folk artist than to the professional.” Any material might give a desired effect, and so he experimented: “Beginning in 1914, he devised combinations of paints, glues, fabrics, and papers . . . Oil and watercolors were painted on grounds that had been richly built up with plaster, chalk, and encaustic.”<sup>51</sup> The experimentation and craft aspect of his work may have appealed to Tseng, who admired the folk traditions in Chinese art, and whose works had begun to incorporate native products in the form of tapa cloth in Hawaii.

Klee’s works were related to nature, whose forms he used to explore the intellectual issues related to pictorial structure. His ideas were reminiscent of Dong Qichang’s ideals of creative reinterpretation. Tseng was not the only Chinese artist to recognize the affinity between Klee and Chinese painting. Zao Wou-ki (b. 1921), for example, discovered Klee on a trip to Switzerland in 1951, and describes being spellbound by the works. Zao was astonished by the freedom of line and poetic feeling. For both Zao and Tseng, Klee represented a way into Western art that they could relate to their own intellectual and artistic pasts.

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<sup>49</sup> Glaesemer, *Paul Klee*, 39.

<sup>50</sup> Ann Temkin, “Klee and the Avant-Garde, 1912-1940,” in *Paul Klee*, edited by Carolyn Lanchner (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1987), 16-17.

<sup>51</sup> Temkin, “Klee and the Avant-Garde,” 14-15

The University of Hawaii also played a key role in Tseng's artistic education in the fifties. During that time, the university regularly invited distinguished individuals to visit, where they were able to teach classes, conduct research and deliver public lectures. Jean Charlot, who joined the faculty in 1949, was instrumental in this program, and the Art Department was particularly active in recruiting summer visitors. Beginning in 1950, artists who accepted invitations to visit Hawaii included Stanton Macdonald-Wright, Josef Albers, and Max Ernst. Tseng took advantage of this unique opportunity, at a time when she was expanding her artistic inquiries and beginning to develop her individual artistic identity. These contacts and some of the ideas they generated played a role in the evolution of *dsui hua* by introducing Tseng to the complex ways in which the mature artists she met had resolved issues in their own art, and by encouraging her experimentation.

#### Stanton Macdonald-Wright

Stanton Macdonald-Wright (1890-1973) came to the University of Hawaii in the summer of 1950.<sup>52</sup> Wright was an early figure in the development of modernist painting in America. He went to Paris in 1907 where he mastered the lessons of the Impressionists, Seurat and Cezanne. It was also during this time that Wright met the American painter Morgan Russell (1886-1953) with whom he co-founded Synchronism

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<sup>52</sup> It was not Wright's first trip to Honolulu. In 1904, he ran away from home and jumped a ship bound for Nagasaki. When it reached Honolulu, Wright deserted the ship, and made his way to Maui, where he lived briefly in the area of Mokuwao. See David W. Scott, *The Art of Stanton Macdonald-Wright* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1967), 21.

in 1913.<sup>53</sup> Their Synchronist style drew analogies between color harmonies and musical harmonies. The relationship between color and music was an interest shared by contemporaneous Orphist painters such as Robert and Sonia Delaunay whose main concern dealt with the depiction and perception of colored light. The Synchronists instead stressed the use of color to express three-dimensionality and form (fig. 52).

Wright's interests were wide-ranging, and during the twenties, he began a serious life-long involvement with Asian art and philosophy. He was especially drawn to Chinese calligraphy, Daoism, and Zen Buddhism, and studied both the Chinese and Japanese languages. Wright had been introduced to Asian art in 1912 by Henri Focillon while studying in Paris.<sup>54</sup> Over the years, he became a leading authority on Asian art and taught Asian philosophy and art history at the University of California, Los Angeles from 1942-1954. As a scholar of Asian art, Wright published several articles, including "Some Aspects of Sung Painting" (1949) and "Approaches to Oriental and Occidental Art" (1951).<sup>55</sup> Wright's interest in Zen Buddhism led him to spend five months each year at Kenninji, a Zen Buddhist monastery in Kyoto. He found in Zen and Asian art "a source for creating a more serene and transcendent vision."<sup>56</sup> As his career progressed, Wright's

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<sup>53</sup> The name Synchrony was "derived from 'syn-chromy,' meaning 'with color' as 'sym-phony' means 'with sound.'" See *Stanton Macdonald-Wright: Watercolors and Drawings* (San Francisco: The Art Museum Association, 1982), 2.

<sup>54</sup> Henri Focillon (1881-1943) was a French art history professor at the Sorbonne. Though his primary field of study was medieval Western art, he was deeply interested in Asian art, particularly Buddhist and Japanese art.

<sup>55</sup> Stanton Macdonald-Wright, "Some Aspects of Sung Painting," *Magazine of Art* 42 (October 1949): 221-226; "Approaches to Oriental and Occidental Art," (Summer Lectures, 1950), *Occasional Papers*, no. 54 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1951), 50-60.

<sup>56</sup> Ilene Susan Fort, "Stanton Macdonald-Wright," *Grove Dictionary of Art*,

own works were indebted to his study of Asian art. In 1948, he wrote: “Thus there is in my painting, a tincture of developed Synchronism, now sobered by added years of realist study; an ‘obligato’ line for whose inspiration I am indebted to the Tang and Sung Chinese; a classical flavor from which I have neither the wish or possibility of being separated.”<sup>57</sup>

Tseng had been in Honolulu less than six months when Wright arrived for the 1950 summer term at the University of Hawaii. In addition to his teaching, research and public lectures, a solo exhibition of his paintings was held at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. A review of the Academy exhibition drew attention to Wright’s references to Asian art, particularly in choice of subject matter: “In the later paintings (1947-50) there is a fusion of Oriental subject matter with Occidental technique reminiscent of early Synchronism. In these the artist has manipulated richly colored planes of nothingness which shift subtly into real forms. In some passages this relation of abstract color to subject matter seems somewhat forced, but in others it is managed with extreme facility.”<sup>58</sup>

Wright delivered “Approaches to Oriental and Occidental Art” as one of the Summer Lectures delivered at the University of Hawaii in 1950. In it, Wright criticized the state of contemporary art as “sick with materialism, drained by soft and fleeting successes and blinded by theoretical confusions.” He called it “static” and “moribund.”

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<<http://www.groveart.com/shared/views/article.html>> (April 13, 2001).

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in *Stanton Macdonald-Wright*, 4.

<sup>58</sup> J. Halley Cox, “One-Man Show Attracts Many at Art Academy,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, July 2, 1950.

He felt that artists of both traditions, East and West:

can learn from the other and translate what is learned into comprehensible terms. For, at bottom, while the approaches to creative activity have been, as we have seen, radically different in East and West, the final destination is a single one. The West, through the emphasis of form as symbol, has evoked psychic balance--the East goes directly, via ideation by means of unemphasized form, to psychic totality.<sup>59</sup>

Tseng took Wright's class and they became good friends.<sup>60</sup> Wright spent his career searching for a way to combine his two passions, abstract painting and Asia. His commitment to Zen Buddhism had helped in this effort. Wright was a painter who had found ways to straddle the divide between the two traditions, a position not unlike the one Tseng faced. Besides offering intellectual encouragement in negotiating her way through Chinese and Western traditions, Wright's example may have encouraged her to begin a reconsideration of color and ink.

The year following Stanton Macdonald-Wright's visit, Tseng painted her long *Min River* handscroll. In theme and composition the work is quite traditional, but it is unusual in Tseng's use of color. The autumn scenery of the Tseng-Ecke's river journey was a powerful memory, and Tseng chose bright, seasonal hues to convey the image, applying color without ink outlines using the "boneless" method.

### Max Ernst

Tseng met Max Ernst during the summer of 1952. His engagement was the university occasion for Ernst to deliver thirty lectures on the art of the twentieth

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<sup>59</sup> Wright, "Approaches to Oriental and Occidental Art," 60.

<sup>60</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 20, 1997.

century.<sup>61</sup> The general theme of the course was “Traces of the Influence of the so-called Primitive Arts on the Art of Our Time.” Over a hundred people attended the course, a combination of officially enrolled students and auditors, many of them from the ranks of the university’s teaching faculty. Tseng describes Ernst’s course as intensive. He was, by her account, an extremely polished speaker, a judgement rendered more remarkable for the fact that Ernst had prepared nothing in advance.<sup>62</sup> He introduced his view of the major developments in Western European art of the previous five decades, enhanced by the artist’s personal experiences and relationships with many of the key players.

It was natural that Tseng and Ecke would socialize with Ernst. Honolulu was a small and close art community, and Ecke and Ernst were contemporaries and both émigrés from Germany. In due course, they discovered that Ernst had known Ecke’s father at Bonn University and that they shared many friends and acquaintances in common. A small exhibition of Ernst’s work was held during the summer, and it was an opportunity for Tseng and Ecke to add this modern master to their eclectic collection of paintings. They purchased a small work, an image of a Hawaiian volcano.<sup>63</sup>

Since the early decades of the twentieth century, Max Ernst had been an art rebel. His professed goal was not to destroy painting but to find a painting “beyond painting.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> John Russell, *Max Ernst: Life and Work* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1967).

<sup>62</sup> Edward Quinn, *Max Ernst* (Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 1984), 343.

<sup>63</sup> The work is no longer in her collection.

<sup>64</sup> In 1937, a special issue of *Cahiers d’Art* was devoted to the art of Max Ernst. From it came the expression “beyond painting” which is commonly affixed to Ernst’s work. See *Cahiers d’Art*, nos. 6-7 (1937).

This he did through the utilization of many techniques and genres, most notably frottage, grattage and collage.<sup>65</sup> In his works, Ernst combined existing visual materials into new compositions that promoted the Dada and Surrealist agendas. While many other Dada and Surrealist artists experimented with collage in their work, Ernst stands out for his dedication to this medium and the central position it assumed in his works: collage novels, collage wood engravings, collage paintings. For him, releasing the creative forces of the unconscious mind was of paramount importance, and his collage-related techniques were a means of achieving this goal.

Although Tseng points to Chinese sources in describing the evolution of *dsui hua*, Ernst appeared in her life at an important moment. In 1952, Tseng's paintings were largely traditional in style, but she had begun her experiments with tapa cloth and color. The incorporation of non-traditional materials into his work was a hallmark of Ernst's style. His example served as a model for Tseng as she sought to redefine her painting style. Ernst relied heavily on printed illustrations he found in books and catalogues to promote his anti-art, Surrealist agenda. Tseng's goals and techniques were very different. While adapting certain collage techniques to her work, she preserved the idioms of Chinese landscape painting and the intellectualized ideals of that traditional art form. Ernst remained an important figure in her life until his death in 1976, helping her in Paris and encouraging her early *dsui* efforts with friendship, moral support, and patronage.

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<sup>65</sup> In frottage textures are reproduced by rubbing a drawing medium on paper laid over a design, as in the taking of rubbings from church brasses or stone inscriptions. Grattage achieves its effect from rubbing and scraping layers of paint. Collage refers to the general method of attaching materials or objects to a two-dimensional surface.

### Josef Albers

Josef Albers (1888-1976) accepted the Art Department's invitation and taught in the summer session, 1954. Tseng eagerly attended his course on color theory. It was the only studio course she recalls from the distinguished visitor series--the others were art history lecture courses.

Albers was renowned as both artist and teacher. Throughout his long life, he pursued dual careers as working artist and teacher at such celebrated programs as the Bauhaus, Black Mountain College, and Yale University School of Art. While it was the art students enrolled in degree programs, such as those at Yale, who benefited most profoundly from their association with Albers the teacher, he touched many others as well. Albers maintained an active schedule of teaching outside New Haven during sabbaticals and summers. As a visiting professor, Albers reached a much broader audience of student-artists. It was in this capacity that Tseng encountered Albers and his ideas.

Color, its properties, and our perception of them were among Albers' chief interests. Although Albers' *Interaction of Color* was not published until 1963, the ideas that it expounded formed the subject matter for his summer course at the University of Hawaii.<sup>66</sup> Nothing in Tseng's early training had prepared her for Albers' theory of color. Her approach to color had been received, through her teachers, from past masters of the Chinese tradition. A certain disdain for color reaches back to Confucius and the *Daodejing*, which found it superficial and even threatening to the moral and social order.

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<sup>66</sup> Josef Albers, *Interaction of Color* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963).

Zhang Yanyuan wrote in the ninth century about color in painting: “If one’s mind dwells on the five colors, then the images of things will go wrong.”<sup>67</sup> Although Tseng painted with pigments, most of her training, and most of the tradition from which she sprang, had privileged the use of monochrome ink. In ink, it was believed, one could express all the colors of the world. The “colors of ink”: it is an expression that captured the sense of completeness within the limited range of ink monochrome.

Unlike Confucius and Zhang Yanyuan, Albers’ interest in color was more scientific than moralizing. In 1954 Albers was four years into the painting project that would occupy him until his death. *Homage to the Square* resulted in over a thousand works in which Albers explored the effects of perception through the interaction of adjacent colors. His method was systematic and pursued under laboratory-like conditions. Albers’ combination of artistic talent, technical mastery, and intellect were impressive. In 1954, Tseng painted *Hawaiian Landscape* on blue paper using mineral pigments. The juxtaposition of pigments on dark blue ground suggests Albers’ influence, especially in the tension between color and ground.

Color was a major interest for both Albers and Wright, albeit in very different ways. Albers’ work was highly abstract, and color the subject. Wright’s works were also abstract, but in his painting he often uses color to give form to three-dimensional shapes in two-dimensional space. Their visits coincided with Tseng’s beginning to explore new ways to use color in her work. *Min River* (1951), for example, showcased Tseng’s ability with monumental composition rendered exclusively with color.

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<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Bush and Shih, *Early Chinese Texts*, 63.

Tseng's early years in Hawaii were marked by her early negotiations between the traditions of her past life and the realities of her new one. Living in Hawaii was, at first, a struggle on many fronts. Tseng and Ecke struggled financially, drawing small salaries from various jobs. She struggled culturally, as well, in the new environment, and the loss she felt for China may be reflected in the continued influence of traditional painting styles in her works.

Tseng turned this initial "dark" period into a creative one by opening herself to opportunities. She taught brush painting courses at the art school of the Honolulu Academy of Arts, and then at the University of Hawaii. She even experimented with textile design. Hawaii became more present in her works in the form of tapa cloth and landscape. Subtly at first, and then more forcefully, Hawaiian scenery became the subject of explorations of form and structure.

Ecke introduced Tseng to Western art history at Furen University, but her first exposure to Western artists occurred in Hawaii. The University of Hawaii played a key role in this. The summer visiting artist program brought to Honolulu distinguished working artists. In this way, Tseng encountered mature artists whose careers were marked by radical ideas and interests. Stanton MacDonald-Wright and Josef Albers suggested new approaches to color, while Max Ernst's commitment to collage encouraged Tseng's further experiments with tapa and paper. Her openness to new ideas is reflected in the creative experimentations that mark this period in media, technique, format and compositional arrangement. Yet, as she moved away from the traditional

landscape painting styles of her early reputation, Tseng challenged her supporters, as well as herself. Her determination to find a means of negotiating Western and Chinese conventions within the context of her Hawaiian environment was central to her artistic development during this period.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### PARIS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF *DSUI HUA*

Gustav Ecke took a sabbatical from his teaching and curatorial responsibilities in 1956 and the Tseng-Eckes left Hawaii to spend the year in Europe. It was Tseng Yuho's first trip to the continent. Together, the couple travelled extensively, sightseeing, visiting museums, and connecting with friends, family, and professional acquaintances. Tseng recorded her impressions, sketching small pencil designs of the artwork she was seeing (fig. 53). In Tseng's own works from the period, she was looking at structure and she did likewise with the Byzantine models she sketched in Florence. It is hard to imagine the originals on which these were based, stripped of narrative details and surface decoration.

At the end of the sabbatical, Ecke returned to Hawaii to resume his professional activities at the University of Hawaii and the Honolulu Academy of Arts. Tseng Yuho remained in Paris. The trip to Europe with Ecke and the five months she spent in Paris were turning points in her life and in her artistic development. Afterwards, she turned away from painting classical images to concentrate her creative energies on developing her *dsui* technique.<sup>1</sup> *Dsui hua* began with Tseng's experiments in incorporating into her works compositional elements painted on torn pieces of paper. In other cases, torn paper formed a framing device for her painting. Torn and uneven paper edges made a startling visual contrast with the refined brushwork of Tseng's painted images. The early forms

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<sup>1</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 18, 1997.

were described as watercolor-collage. The technique developed over time, with paper and paint layered and textured to form a unique and nuanced personal style, and by 1960 she referred to her works as *dsui hua*, meaning “assembled paintings.”

### **Tseng Yuho In Paris**

On her own in Paris in 1957, Tseng enrolled at the Alliance Française and lived in modest student accommodations on the Boulevard Raspail. In spite of the initial language barrier, Tseng felt in her element. Gallery shows, museum exhibitions, and the intellectual atmosphere of a city that takes art and culture seriously thrilled her.<sup>2</sup> Tseng’s time was structured by French language classes each morning at the Alliance Française. She had arrived in Paris with no French language background, but she was soon able to make her way around the city and keep abreast of the conversations around her, to the point where she felt quite comfortable.

Her goal in coming to Paris had been to arrange an exhibition of her work. Preparations for the show were her paramount concern, but she was also determined to embrace every opportunity for meeting people and seeing art. During the afternoons, Tseng Yuho visited museums and galleries, often in the company of friends and acquaintances. Earlier she and Ecke renewed their friendship with Max Ernst, who in turn introduced her to some of his friends. A photograph from the period captured Tseng and Ecke with friends at Huismes, the village near Chinon in the Touraine where Ernst

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<sup>2</sup> Paris loomed large in the imagination of Chinese artists dating back to the early years of the twentieth century. In the teens and twenties, government scholarships had enabled young artists to study in Europe. Among them, Lin Fengmian, Wu Zuoren, and Xu Beihong had all studied in Paris, and for each of them it had represented a turning point in their lives and art.

and Dorothea Tanning settled in 1955. In the picture along with Tseng and Ecke are Man and Juliet Ray, Dorothea Tanning, Max Ernst, and several others whom Tseng can no longer identify (fig. 54). Man Ray also commemorated Tseng Yuho's solo Paris sojourn with a portrait of her taken in his studio (fig. 55).<sup>3</sup>

### Exhibition

Ernst assisted Tseng in finding gallery space. Most of his contacts, though, were ones Tseng refers to as "surrealist galleries" which she found either too large, too small or too expensive. She was not prepared to pay the fees expected by some of the galleries and in the end, she decided upon the Galerie d'Orsay, located at 73 bis, quai d'Orsay. It had the disadvantage of not being located in the art center of the city, but Tseng found the space both adequate and welcoming. Zhou Ling, the gallery proprietor, was extremely supportive of Tseng and did not charge her a rental fee.<sup>4</sup>

The exhibition dates were set for May 2-18. The catalogue lists thirty-six works. Over six hundred people attended the press preview and *vernissage*. Noteworthy among art world visitors were Georges Salles, director of the Louvre, Max Ernst, Dorothea Tanning, Man Ray, Mme Paul Valéry, Georges Mathieu, Paul Claudel Jr., and André Masson. Pan Yuliang, who had made her home in Paris for many years, also attended. Gustav Ecke's family was well-represented: Baron Gunther Lepel, a maternal relative and head of the German branch of Ecke's family came from Frankfurt, as did Gilbert

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<sup>3</sup> Neil Baldwin, *Man Ray: American Artist* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1988), 311.

<sup>4</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, March 7, 1997.

Lepel-Cointet de Jumieges, head of the French branch of the family.<sup>5</sup> Ecke's co-author on *The Twin Pagodas of Zayton*, Paul Demiéville was also present.

Of the works in the exhibition, most were watercolors, of varying styles and themes. Several illustrations in the catalogue are Hawaiian landscapes: *Chaines de montagnes*, *Canon*, and *Ruisseau et arbres*. None of Tseng's paintings from the late forties were included, only recent works that depicted trees, rocks, and landscape forms in a variety of styles, many of them Hawaiian themes, like *Banyan* and one similar to *Silent Action* (1955).

Tseng included some of her assembled-paper paintings in the show, though her use of the medium was still in its early stages of development. Max Ernst purchased two of these works, a gesture of encouragement that bolstered her confidence. The exhibition was a success, over half the works sold. Returning to Honolulu she says, "I found a direction I wanted to go."<sup>6</sup>

Paris in the fifties was an environment primed for Tseng Yuho and her art. She enjoyed the support of a number of well-respected artists and notables in the art world, such as Max Ernst, Man Ray, and Georges Salles. Friends and acquaintances facilitated her visit with introductions and myriad other kind gestures. In addition, the artistic climate in Paris in the mid-fifties was receptive to Asian influences. Surrealist and Art Informel artists like André Masson, André Breton, Georges Mathieu, and others were

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<sup>5</sup> Described as a descendant of Lepel-Cointet who was an early patron of Courbet.

<sup>6</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 19, 1997.

interested in Asian art and philosophy.<sup>7</sup>

By mid-century, the emphasis on spontaneous expression led many French painters to embrace the artistic traditions of Asia with its indebtedness to ideals of abstraction and spontaneity. Under the influence of Zen, Henri Michaux, for example, began to simplify his compositions by restricting them to a few strokes.<sup>8</sup> George Mathieu, critical of Western aesthetics, looked to Asian calligraphy for inspiration. Similarly, Michel Tapié looked to the art traditions of China and Japan for historical precedents for the gestural abstractions he advocated.<sup>9</sup> Many of Tseng's supporters in Paris were participants in this evolving dialogue, or at the very least aware of it.

Concurrent with Tseng's Paris exhibition was a show of Zao Wou-ki's works at Galerie de France. Zao had lived there since 1948 and was considered by critics such as Michel Courtois "the most brilliant Chinese painter living in Paris."<sup>10</sup> Writing a brief description of two current gallery exhibitions in *Les Debats de ce Temps*, Courtois noted how interesting it was to observe the assimilation of Asian artists to Western means of expression. The two shows his article publicized were those of Zao and Tseng. Likewise, in the *International Herald Tribune*, critic Yvonne Hagen remarked on the presence of Asian artists in Paris:

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<sup>7</sup> Helen Westgeest, *Zen in the Fifties: Interaction in Art Between East and West* (Waanders Uitgeversveen: Cobra museum voor moderne kunst, 1997), 104, 105.

<sup>8</sup> Westgeest, *Zen in the Fifties*, 104.

<sup>9</sup> Helen Westgeest's study of the influence of Zen on the arts of fifties includes a chapter on "The Zen Arts of France." In it she pays particular attention to three artists: Jean Degottex, Pierre Alechinsky, Yves Klein. The chapter includes a general introduction to Asian influences on art in France since the nineteenth century. See Westgeest, *Zen in the Fifties*, 99-104.

<sup>10</sup> Michel Courtois, "La rencontre Orient-Occident," *Les Debats de ce Temps*, May 1957.

An Oriental influence has become more and more noticeable in the Paris galleries these last few months among the moderns as well as the classics. Recently there were the haunting mountain scenes by the Peking-born Tsen-Yu-ho [*sic*] in a very personal conception evolved from a classic technique at the d'Orsay Gallery, and then the abstract symbol-laden canvases of Sugai in various group shows. This week a Japanese 19th-century watercolor show opened at Janette Ostler Gallery, 26 Place des Vosges.<sup>11</sup>

The two reviewers both saw the same works by Tseng, and yet responded to them in contradictory ways. Courtois referred to Tseng's assimilation, while Hagen pointed to a personal expression derived from a classical Chinese technique. Neither of them recognized that Tseng was attempting no mere synthesis of East and West, rather developing a new Chinese form of expression. Its roots were deeply embedded in the Chinese past, but stimulated by currents in contemporary Western art.

### ***Dsui Hua: Its Evolution and Influences***

Tseng's new technique developed in Hawaii, but the foundation for its development was laid in China. In 1960 she named it *dsui hua* (assembled painting). The term *dsui hua* is Tseng's own, and carries with it allusions to textile and literary expressions which employ a related character. The form of the character *zhui* [*dsui*] most commonly known is composed of a silk radical and four hands, and means "to baste, mend, patch." Literary expressions similarly carry the sense of combining pieces together to render something complete. *Zhui fa* is a lesson in sentence structure and composition. *Zhui wen* refers to composing sentences, and also to the creation of a poem using lines from past works. *Zhui xue* are edited volumes of the Classics with added

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<sup>11</sup> Yvonne Hagen, "Oriental Influences in Paris Shows," *International Herald Tribune*, May 22, 1957.

appendices that represent different schools of thought. A favorite pastime of literati gatherings is *zhui ju*, where each participant contributes a line of verse in a collective poetry effort.

Returning to textile compounds, *bu zhui* not only means “to mend a garment” but describes the technique of repairing a damaged handscroll or hanging scroll, with its reliance on the careful fashioning of paper patches. Preserving this idea but eliminating the textile element, Tseng Yuho chose an old form of the character which substitutes the hand radical for silk, and underscores the labor-intensive process of her paintings, setting them apart from the familiar *zhui* expressions, but tying the process to earlier ideas.<sup>12</sup> The technique is one entirely of Tseng’s own creation, but it has antecedents in both Western and Chinese art. It is more clearly understood in terms of Western collage, whose popularity was widespread in the decades preceding the development of *dsui hua*. Within the Chinese tradition, the layers of influence are diverse and indirect. As indicated below they include scroll mounting, Buddhist vestments, and the painting style known as *bapo* (eight broken).

#### *Dsui Hua* and Western Collage

*Dsui hua* developed in an artistic climate favorable to collage and mixed-media techniques. Collage, the Western technique to which *dsui hua* is most closely related, takes many forms. The term itself derives from the French verb *coller*, to paste, and is related to a variety of practices involving objects or materials assembled together,

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<sup>12</sup> *Dsui Hua*, 24

ranging from the pasted works of Max Ernst, to the assemblage boxes of Joseph Cornell.<sup>13</sup> European collages can be traced to the sixteenth century, in the adornment of genealogical registers with painted and pasted images, and later examples include the use of gems, pearls, and gold leaf on Russian icons and Victorian-era Valentine collages. As Herta Wescher points out, collage and collage-like works were abundant in past centuries,

but only an insignificant number of these can be related in any way to what is done today. As products of craftsmen, folk artists, and amateurs, the forerunners all remained on the sidelines of the major artistic development and had no influence on it. Not until the twentieth century, when creative artists took to working with it, did collage become a new and valid means of expression, one which has left its mark indelibly on the art of today.<sup>14</sup>

Scholars generally point to 1912 as the pivotal year in the development of collage as a modern form of artistic expression, with the first collage being Pablo Picasso's *Still Life with Chair Caning* (May, 1912). In it, Picasso affixed a piece of trompe l'oeil chair caning to a painting purporting to be a café still-life. At about the same time, Georges Braque's experiments with different materials resulted in the first *papier collé* works, which incorporated faux wood wallpaper into the compositions. Other artists and movements embraced the technique. To Futurists like Umberto Boccioni and Gino Severini, collage was a way to "proclaim their ideals of a machine age--speed, dynamism,

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<sup>13</sup> Among the family of collage, one may distinguish the following: *papier collé* refers specifically to pasted papers, and was the form of collage favored by Braque and Picasso; *assemblage* is the putting together of parts and pieces in two- and three-dimensional forms; *décollage*, the opposite of collage, is ungluing; *découpage* is the decoration of furniture or wood surfaces with cut outs; and *bricolage* is the putting together of odds and ends.

<sup>14</sup> Herta Wescher, *Collage* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1968), 19.

lines of force, simultaneity, motion, etc.”<sup>15</sup> The Russian Revolution fueled the interest in collage in Russia, as artists became increasingly involved in producing propaganda material like posters and wall montages. Collage was especially influential in Dada and Surrealist art. Collage fitted the anti-art agenda promoted by Dada artists like Hans Arp who liked to exploit the element of chance it introduced, as well as the challenge it presented to authorial intention. Kurt Schwitters utilized found materials in his works to further blur the distinction between art and non-art, and used found objects as the equal of paint.

Among Surrealists, Max Ernst was particularly attracted to this practice. “With Max Ernst collage became more than a medium. It became a philosophy.” He was fascinated with the collage method as it allowed him to use irony, wit, and narrative. Ernst wrote about collage: “I am tempted to see in collage the exploitation of the chance meeting of two remote realities on an unfamiliar plane . . . coupling two apparently uncoupleable realities on a plane apparently unsuitable to them.”<sup>16</sup> Ernst’s collages relied on printed matter from books and catalogues including scientific engravings which he combined to make powerful and occasionally disturbing images. For his works, Ernst extracted images from their original context and used them to create new forms expressive of the unconscious mind. Ernst’s commitment to innovation, and to collage, in particular, would be an important influence on Tseng’s own ideas in the fifties.

During the period Tseng was dedicating herself to the refinement of her new

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<sup>15</sup> Katherine Hoffman, “Collage in the Twentieth Century: An Overview,” in *Collage: Critical Views*, edited by Katherine Hoffman (Ann Arbor and London: UMI Research Press, 1989), 8.

<sup>16</sup> Hoffman, “Collage in the Twentieth Century,” 17.

technique, the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston organized an exhibition of collage art in 1958 that illustrates the range of interest in the medium in Western Europe and the United States. Called "Collage International, From Picasso to the Present," the exhibition featured sixty-seven works by fifty-three different artists. With the exception of four nineteenth century works which establish the precedent, the remainder of the collages are twentieth century compositions, beginning with the early collages of Braque and Picasso and ending with twenty-nine artists active in the period 1950-1958. The exhibition checklist confirms the widespread appeal of the technique among artists working on different continents, in different countries, and with very different visions. From Jasper Johns' *Figure 1* (1956), encaustic on newspaper, to Henri Matisse, *Composition on Red Background* (1952), cut-out and gouache, to Ilse Getz's *The Game* (1957), playing cards, abacus, printed numbers, metal and paint--collage had achieved full acceptance as a form of artistic expression, and was practiced with great vitality.

In the introduction to the exhibition catalogue, Jermayne MacAgy wrote:

At present, collages seem to be in great fashion. They have been rightfully recognized as a legitimate technique: their employment of real texture is intriguing; and their qualities arising from the re-use of debris appeals to the modern sophisticate. Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Walter Meigs, Adolf Fleishmann, Esteban Vicente, Julio Girona, Angelo Ippolite, Marca-Relli and Burri are some who are represented in this exhibition with collages all executed within the last few years. It is perhaps interesting to note that many of the artists also included are women: Betty Voorh, Sonia Delaunay, Hannah Hoch, Judith Rothschild, Ronnie Elliott, Charmion von Wiegant, Anne Ryan, Sue Fuller, Ilse Getz.<sup>17</sup>

Among many of the twentieth-century artists who pursued collage, its attraction

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<sup>17</sup> Contemporary Arts Museum, *Collage International: From Picasso to the Present* (Houston: Contemporary Arts Museum, 1958), n.p.

lay in the medium's creative potential and in the way it challenged accepted notions of what constituted art. Arp liked the element of chance. Schwitters collected the detritus of the world around him and fashioned it into an "artistic medium able to stand beside painting."<sup>18</sup> Ernst experimented with collage as a means of liberating the imagination and delving into the psyche. The attractions are as varied as the artists that employed the medium. Tseng Yuho's adaptation of collage developed in Hawaii at mid-century when collage was at the center of some of the most significant developments in twentieth-century art. Tseng's creative reinterpretation of traditional Chinese painting evolved from forms rooted in the Chinese past, nurtured in an environment which acknowledged collage as "a major turning point in the whole evolution of modernist art in this century."<sup>19</sup>

During this same period, other Asian-American artists incorporated paper into their painting styles. In 1956, for example, the Seattle artist Paul Horiuchi (1906-1999) began to work in a combination collage-paint medium. Inspiration came upon viewing a bulletin board in Seattle's Chinatown: layer upon layer of torn and tattered announcements covered the board, many of the papers torn and weathered over time. Horiuchi liked the effect and applied it to his own work.<sup>20</sup> With his "abstract rice paper

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<sup>18</sup> Hoffman, "Collage in the Twentieth Century," 14.

<sup>19</sup> Clement Greenberg, "Collage," in Hoffman, *Collage*, 67.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Horiuchi was born in 1906 in Japan where he received his early art education. The family settled in Wyoming in 1921, and Horiuchi moved to Seattle in 1946. There he came under the influence of Mark Tobey, who encouraged Horiuchi to explore his Japanese artistic heritage.

collage” technique<sup>21</sup> Horiuchi was able to achieve the sense of serenity and inner harmony that he felt eluded him in other media.<sup>22</sup> Two works from 1959, *Echoes of the Temple Bell* and *December #2* (fig. 56), use collage and gouache to construct abstract images that subtly evoke the natural world.

### Chinese Scroll Mounting

Of Chinese techniques, *dsui hua* is most indebted to scroll mounting. It employs the same materials, but reverses their roles. The mounting paper itself, originally in a subsidiary role, became a key element in Tseng’s works. “Before leaving China, I knew I would have to mount my own artwork some day. From 1946 to 1948, I spent two years in a mounting shop in Beijing observing the master mounters at work. After settling in Hawaii in 1949, I was assisted by a fine Japanese mouter for two years. After his death, I began to mount my own paintings.”<sup>23</sup> The Honolulu Academy of Arts had neither a conservator nor scroll mouter on the staff, so Tseng Yuho also assumed the responsibility of repairing some of the screens and paintings in the Academy collection. As she described it: “Those restored works were not on large scale. Nevertheless, I tore paper in small bits, carefully pasted and touched up to achieve the invisible

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<sup>21</sup> Kazuko Nakane, “Personalizing the Abstract: Asian American Artists in Seattle,” in *Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions: Asian American Artists and Abstraction, 1945-1970*, edited by Jeffrey Wechsler (New York: Harry N. Abrams and Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 1997), 189.

<sup>22</sup> Jeffrey Wechsler, ed., *Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions: Asian American Artists and Abstraction, 1945-1970* (New York: Harry N. Abrams and Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 1997), 154.

<sup>23</sup> *Dsui Hua*, 26.

restorations.”<sup>24</sup>

The earliest complete description of the scroll mounting process was given by Zhang Yanyuan (ca. 815-after 875), though the technique dates to before ca. A.D. 100-220. Zhang came from a long line of scholars and collectors with a renowned family collection of art. He wrote extensively on painting and calligraphy and is famous for editing the *Lidai minghua ji* (Records of famous painters of all dynasties), dating to 847. In addition to artists' biographies, the text includes a chapter on scroll mounting; the methods described are very similar to those still in use today.

Like collage, Chinese scroll mounting mixes media--paper, paste, fabric, wooden staves and decorative roller ends--but strictly as a contribution to finishing a work of art, not as the work itself. Nevertheless, the contribution of the scroll mounter is substantial, and there is no question that scroll mounting has evolved into an art form in itself. When poorly realized, a mounting can damage the work, and when poorly conceived it can detract from the artistry of the painting or calligraphy. Object and mounting must be in harmony. The three most important materials used in the mounting of Chinese objects are paper, paste, and fabric. Whether the painting itself is executed on paper or silk, the use of these three is unchanging. Tseng's *dsui* works rely on paste and paper, minus the fabric element, though in some cases her works achieve fabric-like texture. Unmounted painting or calligraphy bears little resemblance to its mounted counterpart. It is flimsy, and not considered finished until properly mounted.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Tseng, *Chuantong*, 147.

<sup>25</sup> *Dsui Hua*, 25.

An object in need of mounting, whether on paper or silk, is presented to the scroll mounter who will be responsible for performing this meticulous transformation. The process is long and exacting, as Tseng learned during her time at Liulichang. Affixing backing paper for strength and silk as the decorative front mounting, the work of art undergoes a transformation that will help to preserve it and enhance its overall presentation. Tseng's *dsui* works do not follow the procedures precisely, but Tseng became very adept at handling paper and glue for mounting her own traditional paintings. She also began to see the possibilities for using the technique itself as an integral part of her works.

Tseng's interest in scroll mounting techniques ties her to one of the great literati painters of the past. Mi Fu (1052-1107), the Northern Song dynasty painter, calligrapher and connoisseur was also interested in scroll mounting. His legacy includes important treatises on the *Shu shi* (History of calligraphy), *Hua shi* (History of painting), and *Baozhang daifeng lu* (Records of searches for precious scrolls). There are notes on scroll mounting in all three. Mi does not give a thorough description of the process, but comments on topics of interest or concern to him. Like Zhang Yanyuan in the Tang dynasty, Mi Fu used to repair and remount his scrolls himself. In practicing this craft, Tseng aligned herself with artisans who practiced it for a living, as well as with this literati tradition as engendered by Zhang Yanyuan and Mi Fu.

### *Kasaya*

The character *zhui* (*dsui*), written with the silk radical, is closely related to the *zhui* of Zeng's *dsui hua* (she takes an old form, with a hand radical). The meaning of

*zhui* (with silk radical + four hands) is “put pieces together,” as in quilting or patchwork. It is this form of the character with which most people are familiar. The connection to textiles is appropriate since *dsui hua* borrows elements from textile art, especially in its interest in textures and the piecing together of fragments into a seamless whole. As such, Tseng’s *dsui hua* refers to another uniquely Asian art form: *kasaya*, the patchwork cloaks worn by Buddhist monks.<sup>26</sup> Their legendary beginning dates back to the historical Buddha himself (fifth century B.C.), with legend holding that the first *kasaya* was pieced together for the Buddha by his disciple Ananda. The garment originated in South Asia and was adapted by Buddhist followers, who are credited with the garment’s introduction throughout Asia.<sup>27</sup>

The earliest *kasaya* were humble garments, probably made of rags, and bore little in common with the sumptuous *kasaya* of later centuries. In ancient times, mendicant monks collected rags, cleaned them, and pieced them together. Simple, unadorned cloth was eventually exchanged for lavishly decorated silks and brocades. The humble monk’s garment, which was intended to symbolize the vows of poverty, evolved into one of material splendor.

There is no evidence to suggest that Tseng’s *dsui hua* technique was inspired by

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<sup>26</sup> The Sanskrit term *kasaya* was transliterated into Chinese as *jiasha*, characters which are rendered as *kesa* in Japanese. The garments are widely known as *kesa*, because of their prominence in Japanese Buddhist culture.

<sup>27</sup> The earliest sculptural example was found in Mathura, and dates to the second century A.D. and depicts the Buddha wearing *kasaya*. The richest source for actual Chinese examples in textile form are Japanese temple collections. Examples date from ca. eighth–sixteenth centuries and include three that once belonged in Horyu-ji and are important but of suspicious provenance. They are attributed as belonging to the historical Buddha, Bodhidharma, the founder of Chan Buddhism, and Prince Shotoku. Another group in Shoso-in of Todai-ji contains examples from Tang period China. See Barry Till and Paula Swart, “Elegance and Spirituality of Japanese *kesa*,” *Arts of Asia* 27 (July/August 1997): 59.

*kasaya*. However, the etymological associations between the two *zhui* characters closely relates the two art forms. *Dsui hua* and *kasaya* are comprised of multiples arranged into a single composition, though *dsui* forsakes the rigid structure of *kasaya* designs. In addition, Tseng's works employ the best quality papers and tapa, just as *kasaya* came to use the finest quality cloth. Finally, like *kasaya*, whose sumptuous decorative techniques include gold and silver-couched thread and impressed gold and silver foil, Tseng's *dsui* works eventually incorporated gold and silver paint and metallic leaf to achieve similarly luxurious textural effects. The concept of *dsui hua*, then, may be seen to have roots in an ancient textile tradition that reaches from South Asia to China to Japan.

### *Bapo*

Tseng's *dsui hua*, especially in its early form, also relates to *bapo*, a painting style that achieved some popularity in the mid-nineteenth century. *Bapo*, literally "eight broken," has been described as "Chinese *trompe-l'oeil* painting."<sup>28</sup> In *bapo*, the artist meticulously recreates in paint torn fragments of calligraphic works in so realistic a manner as to appear to be collage.

*Bapo* developed out of a seventeenth-century aesthetic for depicting antiquities in still-life paintings. Known as *bogu* (plentiful antiquities), these images reflected the period's fascination with the distant Chinese past and its rich material culture. As Nancy Berliner described:

The compositions of these *bogu* paintings included scrolls and books. By the

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<sup>28</sup> Nancy Zeng Berliner, "The 'Eight Broken' Chinese Trompe l'oeil Painting," *Orientalism* 23, no. 2 (February 1992): 61.

eighteenth century, the scrolls and books were occasionally being depicted as if opened and flattened onto the surface of the painting. This two-dimensional representation was not an entirely unanticipated feature—since the seventeenth century Chinese designers had been pasting multiple small paintings and calligraphies on to large decorative screens, creating collage-type surfaces. *Bapo*, the depiction in *tromp-l'oeil* form of these screen surfaces of pasted papers, was a subsequent step within the *bogu* tradition, though the deteriorated state of the papers in *bapo* is quite unlike the neatly-arranged album pages or calligraphies of its prototype.<sup>29</sup>

One explanation for the appearance of *bapo* paintings posits that the artisan painters responsible for them were responding to the devastation of China and the Chinese past by depicting the virtual wrenching of tradition and its artifacts. While *bapo* may, in fact, be “nostalgic grievings over the decline of Chinese art and culture,” as Berliner has suggested,<sup>30</sup> their significance is likely to be a good deal more complicated. Many of the objects in *bapo* paintings can be read as symbols of good fortune, thereby associating them with the large body of works intended as auspicious objects. In short, the significance of these objects is difficult to discern because of the small numbers of them extant and because of the lack of contemporaneous literature. They are likely to have been produced in response to complex artistic and social forces, and intended to express a variety of ideas and address numerous situations.

Although Tseng’s mature works bear little relation to the physical appearance of *bapo* painting, in that a *trompe-l'oeil* effect has never been her goal, there are certain similarities in the genesis of these two styles. Her early works, in particular when she was developing *dsui hua*, associate her compositions with this unusual technique. In

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<sup>29</sup> Nancy Zeng Berliner, “Questions of Authorship in *bapo*: Trompe-l’oeil in Twentieth-Century Shanghai,” *Apollo*, March 1998, 18.

<sup>30</sup> Berliner, “Questions of Authorship,” 18.

those early works, she used torn bits of paper arranged in collage-like fashion on a solid colored ground. For instance, her series of paintings on Song *ci* poems from the fifties discussed in the previous chapter included one work based on a poem by Liu Yong. This early example of her *dsui* technique contains the essential elements of a traditional composition: a painting, a calligraphic inscription, and seals. In this case, rather than painting these elements onto a single sheet of paper, the individual elements appear to have been torn from a completed painting and re-arranged onto a sheet of dark ground. The flavor of the work recalls that of the earlier *bapo* compositions.

Tseng Yuho included a *bapo* painting on the cover of the 1996 reprint of her 1963 book, *Some Contemporary Elements in Classical Chinese Art* (fig. 57).<sup>31</sup> In that publication, she described the illustrated painting by the Shanghai artist Yang Wei-quan (1885-ca. 1950) as follows: “The painting is dated 1942. A technique found during the nineteenth century, referred to as ‘chi chin,’ i.e. assembled brocades, generally depicts worn antiques. It looks like a collage but actually was painted by hand, most realistically.”<sup>32</sup> *Ji jin [chi chin]* (gathered brocades) is an alternative name by which *bapo* paintings are known.<sup>33</sup> Tseng came to know *bapo* works by one of the names which associates them with textiles, just as her *dsui* technique is associated with the patching or mending of garments.

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<sup>31</sup> Tseng, *Chuantong*.

<sup>32</sup> Tseng, *Chuantong*, n.p.

<sup>33</sup> There are at least five other names by which *bapo* paintings are known. They include: *jipo hua*, “lucky broken objects paintings” or “the gathering of broken objects”; *dafan zizhi lou*, “overturned wastepaper basket”; *jizhen*, “gathered treasures”; *duanjian canpian*, “broken letters and damaged writings”; and *zajin huidui*, “dustpile of miscellaneous brocades.”

### Three Types of *Dsui* Painting

Tseng has described three methods of generating her *dsui* painting, creative processes which she has used since the late fifties. In the first type, a random shape from a torn piece of paper leads the composition, and is similar to the method Hans Arp employed as early as 1916. Tseng writes:

I choose a piece of paper and tear it into a shape at random. Because I have no preconceived ideas the paper can suggest a wide variety of images. A simple accidental shape can develop into a predominant form or serve as the basis for a composition. The unpredictability of shapes and forms is both challenging and stimulating.<sup>34</sup>

The second type relies less on chance and spontaneity. She often sketches the rough structure of a design, perhaps suggested by a seal carving, a painting, or even a single character, which then serves as the foundation of a work:

I make preliminary sketches in the form of line drawings when I am on a train or airplane. Some consist of only a few lines, just enough for me to remember the thought I had at the moment. These line drawings may lay unused for years. At some point, I will choose one that inspires an idea. The same drawing may suggest different ideas to me on different occasions. Most of these lines are so basic that I call them my “underground geometry;” they are the skeleton support behind my painting. Some sketches are more elaborate and can lead to a painting with many layers of paperwork and color.

With this type of work, spontaneity is subverted to a structure already conceived, with layers of paper, pigment, and brushwork added according to her design. The third type of *dsui* painting was a relatively late development and incorporated metallic colors. At first she used pigment, but eventually found she preferred the textural effects of leaf. “I apply large amounts of gold or silver metallic colors (including palladium and aluminum) to my

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<sup>34</sup> *Dsui Hua*, 26.

work, a technique I developed around 1959.”<sup>35</sup>

Two of Tseng’s *dsui* series from the period 1957-1958 underscore the evolution of her commitment to the technique. Even as she was developing this highly individual style, one that seemingly was leading her away from the Chinese past, she turned to tradition for inspiration. Before going to Paris Tseng “painted” a series of *dsui* works that were inspired by Song dynasty *ci* poems called *Ten Song Poems*. These were the *dsui*-concept works she included in the Paris exhibition.

After Paris Tseng re-fashioned this series, varying certain details but largely drawing upon the earlier designs. In each, torn pieces of colored paper are painted with narrative details related to the poems they illustrate--architecture and landscape motifs. In *Song Ballad* inspired by Liu Yong, the one example for which both the first and second series can be directly compared, Tseng eliminated the text portion in the second version (fig. 58). The earlier 1956-shown-in-Paris work included an affixed piece of calligraphy which had the text of the poem written on it. In other respects, however, the compositions are similar. In the second series, the pieces of torn paper are an integral part of a more complex design less reliant on the conventions of Chinese painting. Paper and brushwork are layered together into a composition more nuanced and abstract than the first version. Also, without the appended poem and seals, the painting loses the most obvious markers of its Chinese-ness.

Works in the other series paid tribute to six painters of the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. They are more complex compositions than the Song poetry series, reflecting

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<sup>35</sup> *Dsui Hua*, 27.

perhaps Tseng's long study of the landscape genre. From existing reproductions of the paintings or preliminary sketches, four of the six artists can be identified: Shitao, Zhu Da (Bada Shanren), Wu Li, and Hongren.

Tseng was continuing to define her relationship to the past during this period, and the artists she chose to pay tribute to in this series had each succeeded in incorporating new, personal idioms into their works. Zhu Da, Wu Li, and Hongren, like Shitao, were uninhibited in their search for new forms of expression. *Landscape I* is her homage to Shitao--river, trees and riverbank, evoking Shitao without actual mimicking him (fig. 59). Paper, color and ink define the setting. Shitao's *Reminiscences of the Qinhuai River*, for example, includes a leaf with similar elements--water, hillock, and riverine vegetation (fig. 60). Most striking in Shitao's work is shading on the water, an effect Tseng captures in her work with pale color wash.

Shitao (1630-1707) was an individualist whose works give free reign to his own expressive vision, unfettered by the weight of the past. But Shitao's importance as an artist extends beyond the corpus of his painted works. Shitao would not be tyrannized by the past, rather his own personality took priority: "I am always myself, and must naturally be present in whatever I do. The beards and eyebrows of the ancients will not grow on my face, and the lungs and bowels of the ancients cannot be put in my body."<sup>36</sup>

*Landscape II*, Tseng's homage to Zhu Da, conjures his essence without benefit of the powerful brushwork that is the hallmark of his style (fig. 61). Using brush and ink,

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<sup>36</sup> Nie Chongzheng, "The Qing Dynasty (1644-1911)," in Barnhart et al., *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press and Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1997), 258.

Tseng interpreted landscape through repeated geometric forms. The straight lines of the painted forms are repeated in the torn, straight edges of the paper surface. Three highly abstract tree forms demarcate sections of the tall landscape, one on the foreground land, one on the hill beyond the water area, and one higher up in the high vertical passage. The round foliage of the near tree recalls the second scroll in Zhu Da's *Four Landscapes*, in which similar disproportionately large and round shapes are found as leaves (fig. 62). The surface textures of Tseng's work likewise repeat those found on this hanging scroll and the third one of the quartet.

*Landscape III* honored Wu Li (1632-1718), an orthodox painter of the early Qing period whose style was deeply influenced by the Yuan masters. Yet, Wu Li was not as bound by traditionalism as were other painters of his group, and developed a style that was freer and more expressive of his personality. Wu Li himself stated, "My paintings do not seek formal resemblance, and they do not fall into ready-made styles. You could call them spirited and free."<sup>37</sup> Some of Wu's works made landscapes out of repeated forms, constructing mountains from piles of rocks. Tseng's *Landscape III* (fig. 63) is a reductionist interpretation of Wu, substituting line and light tonal variations of color work for Wu's meticulous brushwork.

Other works from 1958-1959 referred to past styles. According to Tseng, *Grisaille* (fig. 64) was inspired by Huang Gongwang and Ni Zan, and *Tang Landscape* (fig. 65) refers in its title to a period better represented now in figure painting than landscape. The style of Tang dynasty landscape painting most often recalled in later

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<sup>37</sup> Nie Chongzheng, "Qing Dynasty," 264.

dynasties was the so-called “blue-green” style which relied on mineral pigments for its distinctive coloration. *Emperor Minghuang’s Journey into Shu*, attributed to Li Zhaodao, is one of the best-known works of this style. Though probably a Song-dynasty copy, its blue-green mountains rise in a series of spires across the composition. While Tseng’s work discards the typical Tang color scheme, the tall, narrow peaks are reminiscent of those in the Minghuang scroll.

Following her Paris journey, Tseng’s attention was focussed on developing her new technique. In works from the mid-fifties, the landscape and flora of Hawaii are central to her explorations of structure and form, in works such as *Hawaiian Landscape* (1954) and *Banyan* (1955). The relatively few extant works from the later period draw their themes and inspiration from past masters of traditional Chinese painting. Unlike the paintings in past styles that she undertook in China and the first years in Hawaii, these homages rely on torn paper and pigment and a high degree of abstraction to mark the development of Tseng’s personal style.

For Tseng, *dsui hua* represented a new challenge. Why *dsui*? She has responded, “Why is any technical method employed in artistic expression?”<sup>38</sup> Tseng’s mastery of the brush was achieved early in her career. By her own admission, her skill as a painter precluded spontaneity. With *dsui hua* she is never entirely certain how a finished work may appear, and this is part of the intellectual challenge she finds stimulating. A further aspect of *dsui* which appeals to her is her inability to duplicate images. Her early training had been one of copying, and as a mature artist, she has developed a technique in which

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<sup>38</sup> *Dsui Hua*, 26.

that is impossible.

### **Jean Charlot and the Mural Projects**

Tseng's *dsui* works predominated in the late fifties, but her experimentation was not limited to *dsui* or works on paper. In this period, she also painted two wall murals using fresco, a technique new to her, when she accepted mural commissions for St. Catherine's Church, Kauai and the Manoa Chinese Cemetery, Oahu.

Among the most influential of University of Hawaii faculty artists was Jean Charlot, who is best known as a mural painter and woodblock print artist. Born in France in 1898 to a wealthy family with ties to Mexico, Charlot developed an early interest in Mexican art and culture, and even while in Paris had begun to incorporate Aztec imagery into his art. Arriving in Mexico in 1921, Charlot became increasingly involved with the contemporary art scene there. His interest in fresco and murals led him to Diego Rivera, whom he assisted during the production of Rivera's encaustic mural, *Creation*.<sup>39</sup>

In 1949, Charlot accepted an invitation to the University of Hawaii to create a fresco for the first floor of Bachman Hall, the university's administration building on the Manoa campus. The finished work, a ten-foot-by-twenty-nine-foot mural, was titled, *Relation of Man and Nature in Old Hawaii*. Charlot also accepted a professorship in the department of art, a position he held until his retirement in 1966. In Mexico, Charlot had shown a passionate interest in the popular art and culture of the native peoples. Hawaii was no different. He was attracted to native Hawaiian culture in all its aspects: art,

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<sup>39</sup> Deborah Caplow, "Leopoldo Méndez, Revolutionary Art, and the Mexican Print: In Service of the People," Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1999, 42-43.

custom, history, religion, and he learned the Hawaiian language.

Charlot's years in Hawaii were productive ones. Between 1949 and 1976, he created approximately six hundred easel paintings, several hundred prints, and thirty-six works of public art in fresco, ceramic tile, and sculpture.<sup>40</sup> Besides his prodigious artistic output, Charlot reached a large audience through his teaching and the regular arts feature he wrote for the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*. Charlot and Ecke joined the university faculty the same year and Ecke, Tseng Yuho, and Charlot became good friends.<sup>41</sup> Charlot audited Ecke's Chinese art history courses, and he described Tseng as a patient teacher in her attempts to instruct him in Chinese calligraphy.<sup>42</sup> Charlot's 1950 book, *Art-Making from Mexico to China*, included an essay about Tseng and her art: "Reflections of an Occidental Painter on Chinese Ink-Painting, After Looking at the Works of Tseng Yu-ho."<sup>43</sup> Charlot's catholic interests in art were shared by Tseng Yuho and his career confirmed to her that an artist could work successfully outside one's own culture. Even more significantly, Charlot had been extremely creative in mixing techniques and themes.

Charlot undertook numerous large mural projects in Hawaii, and recruited help among his students. He knew Tseng to be an exacting artist with an abundant intellectual curiosity, and occasionally invited her to observe the work on his murals. In this way, Tseng Yuho learned some of the principles involved in the production of large-scale art

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<sup>40</sup> *Jean Charlot: A Retrospective* (Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Art Gallery, 1991), 23.

<sup>41</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 24, 1997.

<sup>42</sup> Charlot, "Art of Tseng Yu-ho."

<sup>43</sup> Charlot, "Reflections."

projects.<sup>44</sup> Observing Charlot prepared Tseng to undertake a fresco project of her own.

### St. Catherine's, Kauai

Recommended by Charlot, Tseng accepted a commission on Kauai in 1957 to paint a mural for St. Catherine's Church.<sup>45</sup> Father McDonald of St. Catherine's proposed the theme for Tseng's work: "St. Francis Xavier, the apostle of Asia." Acknowledging her preference for landscape painting, the life of St. Francis Xavier (1506-1552) seemed an appropriate theme. Most of Xavier's career had been spent in Asia, particularly India, Ceylon, and Goa, but in 1549, he sailed for Japan where he spent over two years winning converts and establishing Christian communities. His dream of proselytizing in China was never achieved, however. In 1552 he embarked for China with a Portuguese embassy but died along the way.

Tseng's mural focused on Xavier's Asian voyages, both realized and unfulfilled (fig. 66). His kneeling figure is flanked by landscapes representing various sites in Asia. The luxuriant vegetation on which he kneels suggests India, the site of his greatest success, and where he built his career. Two folding screens slice through the middle of the composition. On them are iconic scenes of Japan: Mount Fuji and scattered villages symbolizing his work there. Filling the background are mountain ranges, symbols of the China he never saw. More than China, however, these geological formations are reminiscent of the volcanic mountains of the Hawaiian islands, such as Tseng began to paint shortly after her arrival there.

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<sup>44</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 24, 1997.

<sup>45</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 24, 1997.

Tseng's composition is quite simple, and though monochrome, is executed in true fresco. By painting with monochrome, not only does she evoke the Chinese tradition of monochrome landscape painting, but she didn't have to worry about the alterations of color when the work dried.<sup>46</sup> The mural is an idiosyncratic combination of technique (fresco), Western subject (St. Francis Xavier), Asian forms (monochrome landscape and Japanese folding screens), and interpretation (Hawaiian landscape) by a Chinese artist in America who is not a Christian.

#### Manoa Chinese Cemetery

A more ambitious project was Tseng Yuho's commission to create a mural for the Manoa Chinese Cemetery in 1958. The cemetery is located in Manoa Valley, a short distance from the university. The Manoa Chinese Cemetery was the first Chinese cemetery in Honolulu. Chinese reverence for their ancestors and the importance of funeral rites made the establishment of a cemetery association of critical importance to the community and the Manoa Valley was the site of the earliest known Chinese grave in Hawaii, dating back to 1835. Over the years, other Chinese were buried nearby, and in 1854 a group of Chinese merchants formed the Manoa Lin Yee Wui (The Chinese Cemetery Society of Manoa), to oversee burials there. They erected a building nearby, and undertook the task of exhuming and preparing bones for reburial in China. In 1889, the group became the Manoa Lin Yee Chung (Chinese Cemetery Association of Manoa)

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<sup>46</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 24, 1997.

and eventually obtained title to the grounds from the Hawaiian owner.<sup>47</sup>

Though not a Hawaiian-born Chinese and a relative newcomer, Tseng was asked by the cemetery association to create a mural for a newly built pavilion at the entrance to the cemetery.<sup>48</sup> The composition covers one wall of the mortuary hall. She chose the theme of filial piety, one that befits the place and its function, undertaken in a style reminiscent of the ink rubbings from Han dynasty funeral monuments (fig. 67).

The mural is comprised of multiple sections, combining panels of different shapes and sizes in two different techniques. The black-and-white monochrome renderings that look like rubbings are actually fresco. These are flanked by side sections of painted and glazed ceramic tiles. Since Tseng was still a neophyte at fresco, her choice of a monochromatic color scheme again obviated the color problem.<sup>49</sup> The ceramic tiles of the side sections were glazed and fired by University of Hawaii ceramic students; the drawings were by Tseng.

Tseng's mural recalls the Wu Liang Shrine and its celebrated set of stone carvings. Erected as an offering shrine in A.D. 151, the Wu Liang images have been admired by antiquarians since the Song dynasty, when ink rubbings of them began to circulate within China. Three interior walls of the shrine were carved with a complex

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<sup>47</sup> Glick, *Sojourners and Settlers*, 187.

<sup>48</sup> The mural was still in situ in 1998, though covered. The building is now a Jewish community center.

<sup>49</sup> Charlot was an expert at the fresco technique, and at handling the exigencies of color application on the wet surface: "The shift of values and colors that takes place as the mortar dries into permanency precludes a visual checkup of the work in course." See Jean Charlot, *An Artist on Art: Collected Essays of Jean Charlot* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1972), 224.

narrative program which conformed to Han cosmology in its division into three realms: Heaven, land of immortals, and the human world. Tseng's design evokes elements of Wu Liang in the inclusion of creatures and motifs associated with immortality and the after-life. In addition, her mural follows the Wu Liang convention of labeling each scene with a cartouche.

Scenes for the Manoa mural centered on paragons of filial piety. In one scene Tseng depicted Zilu, one of the principle disciples of Confucius. According to legend, Zilu searched exhaustively for food during time of famine so that he could feed his parents. Here he is shown returning from the countryside, approaching the walls of his family compound, hunched over and carrying a bag of rice on his back (fig. 68).<sup>50</sup>

Tseng adapted the idea of Han rubbings to the Manoa cemetery mural in a manner that respected Chinese funerary traditions. She exerted artistic prerogative, though, in important ways. Unlike rubbings, which these scenes resemble, they are fresco. Furthermore, whereas rubbings are monochrome, these murals have occasional details picked out in color, mostly vessels and utensils in red or green, which add visual interest to the largely static compositions. The glazed turquoise ceramic panels that flank the mural, bearing design motifs and text inscriptions, are a further accommodation to the particularities of time and place. Finally, Tseng inserted a local marker. At the upper left, a large panel depicts the landscape of the Manoa Valley. Flanked on either side by palm trees, the valley, site of the cemetery itself, opens before us amidst the distinctive volcanic ridges that encircle it (fig. 69).

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<sup>50</sup> *The Saturday Star-Bulletin* (Honolulu), June 7, 1958.

While the themes and stylistic allusions of Tseng's Manoa mural are familiar, especially to an audience culturally literate in the Chinese past, they represent a major departure for her. Until these two mural commissions, Tseng had worked exclusively with brush, ink and colors on paper or silk. Undertaking an entirely new medium, and one related as much to sculpture as painting, suggests her willingness to experiment and challenge herself artistically. Charlot's career had been shaped by similar forces, and must have been a source of encouragement to Tseng Yuho. Charlot's influence also may be seen in the choice of a largely figural theme. With the exception of the occasional figure, mostly in her early works painted in China, Tseng Yuho's paintings had been largely devoted to subjects other than the human form. Charlot, by contrast, was best known for works that dealt with historic, religious, and mythological themes in heroic style.

### Stage Sets

Two other commissions punctuated 1958, one of Tseng's most successful and productive years. In addition to the two murals, she was commissioned that year to create sets for two stage productions: Luigi Dallapiccola's "Job" for Juilliard and Claudio Monteverdi's "Orfeo." She travelled to New York City and designed sets for a Juilliard School of Music production "Job." Dallapiccola's 1950 work received two performances at the Juilliard Concert Hall on December 19, 1958. Reviews of the piece itself and of the performance were mixed, but Tseng's designs received favorable notices. They were

hailed as “imaginative”<sup>51</sup> and “by far the most interesting aspect of the performance.”<sup>52</sup>

The commissions arose from Ecke’s long-time friendship with an opera director, with whom he had grown up in Bonn.<sup>53</sup> The director liked the idea of using painters for his set designs since they could offer refreshing visions for the theater. He viewed a selection of Tseng’s *dsui* paintings, and chose a work from the second series of *Ten Song Poems* to serve as a model for the sets. In addition she designed the costumes for both productions.

Working from her painting design, Tseng magnified the stylized landscape motifs of the work to stage-size proportions. A system of scrims was evolved which, in conjunction with the lighting, variously revealed or concealed the singers during the performance. Several months later she re-created the idea for a performance of Monteverdi’s opera “Orfeo.” The performance was held at St. John’s College, Annapolis, Maryland, in the college’s new concert hall designed by Richard Neutra.<sup>54</sup>

### Exhibitions

Tseng’s recognition during the late fifties was not confined to commissions. It included a number of important Hawaii and mainland exhibitions as well: two at Stanford University, one at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, and culminated with a show at the Walker Art Center held in early 1960.

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<sup>51</sup> Howard Taubman, “Music: ‘Sacred Drama,’” *New York Times*, December 20, 1958.

<sup>52</sup> Irving Kolodin, “Job by Dallapiccola--Bernstein’s Bach,” *New Yorker*, January 3, 1959.

<sup>53</sup> Tseng no longer recalls his name.

<sup>54</sup> More precise data on the St. John’s performance has not been found.

During the spring of 1958, Robert P. Griffing, Jr., director of the Honolulu Academy of Arts, was charged with selecting two recent works by artists in Hawaii for inclusion in "Fresh Paint: American Art of the Western States." Sponsored by the Committee for Art at Stanford, the exhibition was held at the university's art gallery May 19 to June 22, 1958. For the exhibition, twenty museum directors or chairs of college art departments in the West were asked to select two recent works by artists in their region. To represent Hawaii, Griffing chose Willson Y. Stamper and Tseng Yuho.<sup>55</sup> From Tseng's recent works, Griffing chose *Aquarelle: Collage* (1958). *Aquarelle* won both the First Award of Merit and the Popular Prize. Critic Alfred Frankenstein, writing in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, called it "the most remarkable picture in the whole show."<sup>56</sup>

Tseng's first decade in Hawaii was marked by a solo exhibition of her works at the Honolulu Academy of Arts during the summer of 1959. Included were forty-seven recent paintings, described by critic Austin Faricy in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* as works of "ceremonious sumptuousness." These were a blend of old and new style works, including several classical-style Chinese paintings and four calligraphies, giving a good overview of Tseng's ten years in Hawaii. His review lauds both the works in the exhibition and the physical design of the show. Tseng Yuho included her *Min River* handscroll. Faricy described it as "a tour de force in the Oriental device of twisting and unfolding landscape with a picture complete at every moment, and painted with

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<sup>55</sup> Stamper was a painter who had moved to Hawaii from Cincinnati after World War II. *Girl with Violets* (1958; oil on canvas) was described in the catalogue as a "romantic-expressionist" work partly influenced by Stamper's recent trip to Europe.

<sup>56</sup> Alfred Frankenstein, "There's 'Fresh Paint,'" *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 1, 1958.

affectionate gayety of color and human detail.”<sup>57</sup>

Following her success with “Fresh Paint,” Tseng’s works appeared at Stanford University the following year in a solo exhibition. “Recent Paintings by Tseng Yu-ho” was held at the university’s Art Gallery November 17 to December 6, 1959, and featured forty, mostly recent, paintings. As she had in most of her previous solo shows, several Beijing-period works were included by way of establishing her credentials as a painter of the traditional idiom. *Wind in the Valley* (1946), *Dry Wood* (1947), and *Peaks* (1948) were featured from this period. *Min River* (1951) though painted in Hawaii, was another thoroughly traditional work she exhibited. John D. La Plante, then Associate Director of the Art Gallery at Stanford, wrote a short introduction to Tseng’s work for the exhibition brochure. In it he referred to Tseng as an “evolutionary” rather than “revolutionary” artist:

In a time when “revolutionary” in art is accepted as a matter of course and when an artist’s value is judged almost entirely by how far he “departs from tradition,” it is a splendid experience to encounter a painter whose works seem to be a fulfillment of, rather than a departure from, her artistic heritage.<sup>58</sup>

In 1959, H. Harvard Arnason accepted an invitation as visiting Carnegie Professor for the Spring semester in the Art Department of the University of Hawaii. His brief tenure at the University of Hawaii represented a key moment in Tseng Yuho’s career. Chairman of the Art Department at the University of Minnesota and director of the Walker Art Center, Arnason was a distinguished and well-connected visitor. Tseng and Ecke socialized with Arnason, who became an admirer and promoter of Tseng’s works.

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<sup>57</sup> *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, July 13, 1959.

<sup>58</sup> John La Plante, *Recent Paintings by Tseng Yu-ho* (Stanford: Stanford Art Gallery, 1959).

In February 1959, Arnason served as a one-man Jury of Selection for the fifth annual art show sponsored by the Hawaii Painters and Sculptors League. He was sensitive to the concerns of island artists, especially their sense of isolation. But rather than finding their works to be provincial, Arnason found it a case of “the attitude is more provincial than the performance.” Arnason was deeply impressed by the quality of the works submitted by professional artists from throughout the islands, and felt they compared favorably to any regional show in America.<sup>59</sup>

No awards were made during the show, other than selection of entries for inclusion, but Arnason singled out nine works as particularly deserving of commendation. One of them was Tseng’s *Rock and Roll* (fig. 70), a work Arnason called “Stunning!” He felt the work to be a “beautiful blending of the Oriental with free abstracting as practiced in the U.S. and Europe today. Yet, she maintains her individuality.”<sup>60</sup>

These were not empty compliments. Arnason subsequently offered Tseng a solo exhibition at the Walker Art Center. It was held the following year, February 21 to March 27, 1960. Arnason’s introduction to the catalogue echoed the sentiment: “Tseng Yu-ho is without question one of the most important young artists to appear from the new state of Hawaii.”<sup>61</sup>

Arnason was not only a major supporter, he was also one of her more astute

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<sup>59</sup> “Juror’s Choice,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, February 28, 1959.

<sup>60</sup> “Juror’s Choice.”

<sup>61</sup> H. Harvard Arnason, Introduction to *Tseng Yu-ho* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1960), n.p.

admirers. He appreciated what she was attempting with her art, and the perils fraught therein: "For many young artists the attempt often results in the sentimentalizing of the older element and the enfeeblement of the techniques of the newer." In Tseng's case, however, he saw the strength of her art arising from the immutable strength of the tradition from which it developed: "There is no grafting of new elements onto old, but rather, as the present exhibition reveals, a logical and organic development of a totally original expression."<sup>62</sup>

The Walker Art Center exhibition featured forty-one works. Three works were painted in China (*Wind in the Valley*, 1946; *Dry Wood*, 1947; *Peaks*, 1948), *Min River* from 1951 was shown again, and the remainder were works painted since 1956, with an emphasis on works from 1959 (nineteen) and 1960 (five). The Walker acquired *Anywhere* (1959) for its permanent collection.

For Tseng Yuho, the experiences of Paris in 1957 represented a turning point in her life and her art. Bolstered by the encouragement she received there, Tseng returned to Honolulu confident that her tentative experiments with watercolor-collage were worth pursuing. With the exception of commissions, she worked exclusively with the new technique in this period. While it diverged from traditional conceptions of Chinese painting, Tseng's renewed attention to the themes of Chinese painting reinforced her ties to the past and to her training in China. Even in the non-*dsui* commissions from this period, for example the Manoa Chinese Cemetery, Tseng illustrated one of the

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<sup>62</sup> Amason, Introduction to *Tseng Yu-ho*, n.p.

fundamental concepts of Confucian society (filial piety) in an ancient style associated with funerary art (ink rubbings). The works of the late fifties are heavily indebted to the themes and forms of traditional Chinese art, and as the mural project indicated, not exclusively to the painted traditions.

Collage, as it is known in the West, has no correlate in China, but elements of collage can be found in other media and art forms. Scroll mounting, *bapo*, and *kasaya* each embody elements of Tseng's *dsui hua* technique, and further locate her work within a Chinese context. The focus of Tseng's works, however, is less about technique than about expression. *Dsui hua* poses many challenges which keep Tseng intellectually engaged with each work. Furthermore, the spontaneous effects of *dsui* eliminate the possibility for duplication, thereby avoiding complacency. Every work is a fresh challenge whose development is part of Tseng's intense interaction with her art.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### TSENG YUHO: THE DOWNTOWN GALLERY YEARS, 1960-1970

H. Harvard Arnason's invitation to teach at the University of Hawaii was an auspicious event in Tseng Yuho's career. As director of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Arnason was a respected art historian and museum director whose avenues of influence ran in many directions. During a visit to Honolulu in the winter of 1959, dealer Edith Halpert accompanied Arnason to see the works of Tseng Yuho. Halpert selected several for inclusion in a forthcoming group show at the Downtown Gallery, and immediately expressed interest in signing Tseng to a contract.<sup>1</sup> Halpert had been concentrating on older, established American painters like Ben Shahn and Stuart Davis, and the addition of Tseng to the roster of the Downtown Gallery represented a departure from her policy. Tseng was the first addition to the roster in nearly a decade.<sup>2</sup> It was also the first recommendation Halpert had ever accepted from a museum director.<sup>3</sup> In signing on with the Downtown Gallery, Tseng Yuho was associating herself with an institution. Edith Halpert and the Downtown Gallery had played a pivotal role in the promotion of contemporary art in America since 1926.

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<sup>1</sup> H. Harvard Arnason letter to C. Wright, January 13, 1960, Downtown Gallery Records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington., D.C.

<sup>2</sup> Downtown Gallery press release, January 3, 1962, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>3</sup> Edith Halpert letter to Honolulu Academy of Arts, January 9, 1960.

### **Edith Gregor Halpert**

Edith Gregor Halpert (1900-1970) was a pioneer in the world of contemporary American art. After studying at the National Academy of Design, Halpert found her way into the galleries of New York where she received her introduction to modern art from such distinguished dealers as Alfred Stieglitz and Newman Montross. A decade later, she abandoned a comfortable corporate career in New York to establish a gallery devoted to “unorthodox contemporary art.”<sup>4</sup> With Berthe Kroll Goldsmith, Halpert opened the Downtown Gallery in 1926 under the name “Our Gallery” and it remained in continuous operation until Halpert’s death in 1970.<sup>5</sup>

The declared goals of Our Gallery, as published in the opening announcement on November 6, 1926, attested to the founder’s bold vision. Halpert sought to establish a venue for all kinds of art, in an atmosphere of daring experimentation. The proclamation stated: “OUR GALLERY rises as a new need in the art life of New York. It will present interesting exhibitions chosen from the work of the best men representing the various tendencies in Contemporary American Art. OUR GALLERY has no special prejudice for any school. Its selection is directed by what is enduring--not by what is in vogue.”<sup>6</sup>

Halpert marketed her artists aggressively. If the dealing of modern art had been considered a genteel profession before, Halpert helped changed that. She was a master of

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<sup>4</sup> *Notable American Women: The Modern Period: A Biographical Dictionary*, edited by Barbara Sicherman and Carol Green (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1980), 301.

<sup>5</sup> The name was changed to Downtown Gallery in 1927.

<sup>6</sup> Diane Tepfer, “Edith Gregor Halpert and the Downtown Gallery, 1926-1940: A Study in American Art Patronage,” Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1989, 43.

publicity and marketing. Experiences in the corporate fields of efficiency, advertising, and investment banking had marked her earlier successful corporate life. These talents she applied to art dealing. Besides distributing hundreds of invitations and announcements of the gallery's exhibitions, she adapted the press release to the world of the art dealer:

The press release, itself then a relatively modern form of professional communication, was masterfully utilized by Halpert. The announcement of the Press Review became the standard conclusion of the Release. Advertisements and articles (written from the press release) in newspapers as far away as Boston and Chicago suggest the extent of Halpert's publicity campaign. Every exhibition was accompanied by some publication. Often the invitation served as announcement and catalogue (if any). The press release was separate.<sup>7</sup>

Halpert brought a missionary zeal to her profession. Gallery policies were designed to make acquiring art possible to a wider public. This included promoting lower-priced works that would be affordable to beginning collectors, or those of modest means. She also extended easy-payment plans. As Diane Tepfer pointed out: "The Gallery's standard policy of promoting contemporary American art at low prices, particularly to museums and public collections, helped to expand its audience and attract customers all over the United States."<sup>8</sup> The backbone of Halpert's clientele were moderately affluent collectors. Among her richer and more influential clients were powerful men and women who held "leadership positions as Trustees, Founders, and Benefactors of the art museums and public galleries which were opening or expanding all

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<sup>7</sup> Tepfer, "Edith Halpert," 53.

<sup>8</sup> Tepfer, "Edith Halpert," 59-60.

over the United States.”<sup>9</sup> These included Preston Harrison, Beram K. Saklatwalle, and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller.

Halpert also understood the potential of outreach in building the art market. She organized circulating exhibitions, produced publications, and founded the journal *Space*. She was successful in placing works by her artists in museums. Halpert especially favored university art museums. The limited resources of many university museums made her low prices and easy-pay policies attractive. University museums also offered permanent homes for the objects and lent status to the artists. Halpert also liked the idea of placing objects in collections which were not so richly endowed, thereby ensuring more frequent display of the artwork, and being part of an active collection for study and exhibition. In addition Halpert circulated shows out of New York. As Tepfer notes, “The Downtown Gallery’s well publicized out-of-town activities spread the reputation of the Gallery and its artists throughout the country and helped to develop private and industrial clients.”<sup>10</sup>

#### Edith Halpert and the Downtown Gallery Artists

From the outset, Edith Halpert aimed to bring a wide variety of artists before the public. Her impressive roster of artists over the years included Stuart Davis, Marsden Hartley, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Jacob Lawrence, Stanton Macdonald-Wright, John Marin, Georgia O’Keeffe, Ben Shahn, Charles Sheeler, Charles Demuth, Arthur Dove, and William Zorach. Herself an immigrant (Halpert had been born in Russia), Halpert

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<sup>9</sup> Tepfer, “Edith Halpert,” 124.

<sup>10</sup> Tepfer, “Edith Halpert,” 59-60.

developed strong nationalistic feelings for America. Many of the Downtown Gallery artists were foreign-born (Ben Shahn, William Zorach, Yasuo Kuniyoshi), but Halpert viewed them as American artists and promoted them as Americans.

The Downtown Gallery provided Halpert with the means for advancing her socially progressive ideals. For her, American art was represented by a diverse group of contemporary artists. Besides the many European émigrés, Halpert's roster included painters outside the mainstream. Yasuo Kuniyoshi (1899-1953) joined the Downtown Gallery in 1930. During World War II, Kuniyoshi was considered an "enemy alien." Nevertheless, Halpert mounted a solo exhibition of his work at a time when anti-Japanese sentiment was running high.<sup>11</sup> Also during the forties, Halpert promoted the work of black American artists. In 1941, the Downtown Gallery presented "American Negro Art, 19th and 20th Centuries," which featured paintings by forty-one artists, including little-known nineteenth century painters as well as contemporary painters such as Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000) and Romare Bearden (1914-1988). Halpert used the Downtown Gallery to promote her vision of America as a diverse and liberal society.

Halpert's integrative ideals are also evident in her interest in American folk art, in which she saw the historical and cultural roots of modern American art. Halpert was an early promoter of American folk art, and helped establish it as a valid part of American art and an attractive field for study and collection by museums, collectors, critics, and artists. Halpert's interest dates to the twenties, and in early 1928, she became art advisor

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<sup>11</sup> "Retrospective Loan Exhibition, Yasuo Kuniyoshi: 1921-1941" was held at the Downtown Gallery May 5-29, 1942.

to Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, whom she encouraged to add folk art to her collection of recent American art. In 1931, Halpert opened the American Folk Art Gallery upstairs at the Downtown Gallery. The new gallery afforded Halpert the opportunity to present under one roof the full spectrum of American art. The early American folk art she referred to as the “ancestors” of American modernism.

### ***Dsui Hua: Further Innovations***

Tseng Yuho joined the roster of Downtown Gallery artists in 1960.<sup>12</sup> With her new contractual arrangement, Tseng Yuho’s painting production increased. Halpert was always eager for more paintings to feed the demand of exhibitions at the Downtown Gallery, and the numerous group shows in which she placed her artists’ works.<sup>13</sup> The constant demand for works ultimately grew wearying, but by 1960 Tseng was fully in control of her new *dsui* technique, and during the period in which she was represented by Halpert, Tseng made a number of innovations and refinements. She added metallic leaf to her media, further developed the compositional and textural effects of *tapa*, experimented with a new technique, and for a period, concentrated wholly on abstraction.

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<sup>12</sup> She signed the standard contract which had been in use since 1926: the gallery would act as the artist’s exclusive agent, accepting works on consignment and receiving 33 1/3 percent on any sales. This applied to all sales, whether through the gallery’s instigation or the artist’s. Unlike other galleries, Halpert did not require the artists to pay any exhibition costs, only the commission fee. In return, Halpert would actively promote the artist’s work, arrange for museum and gallery exhibitions, and handle all aspects of publicity. Edith Halpert files, contract dated February 13, 1960, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>13</sup> Annual group shows were guaranteed in the Downtown Gallery contract. In addition, Halpert promoted her artists’ works widely around America. Rather than confining her efforts to New York City, Halpert arranged travelling shows outside of New York. Halpert’s aggressive marketing ideas placed Tseng’s works before interested audiences, and prospective clients, in every region of the United States, and in Europe as well. See appendix 1 for a complete list of exhibitions in which Tseng’s works were included.

### Metallic Leaf

In the late fifties, Tseng introduced a new element to *dsui hua* by applying synthetic gold and silver pigments to some of her paintings. In Beijing, she painted gold works on blue sutra paper, as well as depicting such traditional themes as bamboo, orchids and figures on gold folding fans.<sup>14</sup> The metallic pigment on her *dsui* works was not entirely satisfying, however, and she admits they tended to be too decorative--a quality avoided by the literati artist.

Gold has long been used in Chinese decorative arts, and even in some painting styles. Its incorporation into her own works, then, can be tied to this distinguished part of the Chinese artistic tradition. Tseng explained the use of gold in Chinese art in the introduction to the exhibition catalogue *Poetry on the Wind* (1981). In short, it dates back at least to the second millennium B.C. By the sixth century B.C. bronzes with inlaid gold and silver were a highly developed art form. Religious sculptures of bronze or wood were frequently gilded, and literary sources tell us that gold adorned architectural decorations and mural paintings in the Tang dynasty. In painting, the Tang dynasty court artists Li Sixun (651-716) and his son Li Zhaodao (ca. 670-730) were both known for their "gold and azure" landscapes (*jinbi shanshui*) and Li Tang (ca. 1050-1130) applied gold to his paintings on silk in the Song dynasty. In contrast to the plentiful use of gold and mineral pigments for decorative effects, by the Southern Song period paintings frequently included gold pigment, but used more sparingly. Many of these works employ

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<sup>14</sup> *Dsui Hua*, 26.

gold in subtle ways for naturalistic details or atmospheric effects.<sup>15</sup> By the Ming and Qing dynasties, gold flecked paper was an option for paintings and calligraphy. Much rarer in China than Japan is the use of gold as a ground for painting. A few examples are known, mostly fan paintings, but gold does not take ink well, and besides, most literati artists sought to avoid the appearance of being “decorative.”<sup>16</sup>

Travelling in Europe with Ecke, Tseng marveled at the many types of Western art which are adorned with gold. She was particularly fascinated by Byzantine and Renaissance works. Rather than detract from the central image, the gold ground in these works, she felt, enhanced the solemnity and devotional aspects of them. In this respect, she recognized that the use of gold in Chinese Buddhist images and Byzantine and early Renaissance Christian works shared in common the enhancement of their spiritual quality through the application of gold.

Tseng continued to seek a way to incorporate metallic effects into her work; the next attempt was more successful. By 1963, she substituted metallic foil (gold- and silver-leaf) for pigment, and achieved an effect she preferred (fig. 71). In this period, she recalls that her emphasis shifted from the use of metallic effects as a design element to its textural effects. She wanted the metal leaf to imbue the work with an otherworldly

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<sup>15</sup> Toda, Teisuke, “The Use of Gold in Southern Sung Academic Painting,” in *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy, and Painting*, edited by Freda Murck and Wen Fong (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991), 313-332.

<sup>16</sup> Tseng Yu-ho Ecke [Tseng Yuho], *Poetry on the Wind: The Art of Chinese Folding Fans from the Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties* (Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 1981), xxv. Literati artists embraced the austere, intellectualized styles of ink monochrome. Surface decoration was rejected as sensual and shallow, and equated with non-literati audiences.

solemnity.<sup>17</sup> Eventually, palladium replaced silver leaf, whose tendency to tarnish spoiled the effects she desired; in turn, palladium was replaced by aluminum, which she still uses.<sup>18</sup>

Tseng used four different methods for the application of metallic foil. In the most common method, gold or aluminum foil is pasted directly onto a work. This method is associated with the technique used, for instance, for Japanese screens, and is the one she continues to use. It was this process that she used for *Humidity* (1964; fig. 72). Strips of gold foil were affixed to the dark ground, arranged in seven horizontal rows. The textural effects are achieved by rubbing and scratching to remove sections of the foil. Tseng has reflected, in retrospect, on the amount of gold foil she wasted with this technique. It was said of Ni Zan, the Yuan dynasty painter known for his sparse use of ink, that he used ink like gold. In a reversal of this, Tseng conceived of a way to use gold as ink.

In 1962-1963, Tseng experimented with a new lacquer technique that employed metallic foil. In this method, a lacquer base was applied to paper, and the metallic foil applied before the lacquer dried completely. Unfortunately, Tseng suffered an allergic reaction to the lacquer, so she used this method for only a few works. One example of these is *Dragonland* (1963; fig. 73).

A third technique had Tseng applying metal foil to sheets of paper which were then cut into small pieces. The backed gold, palladium, or aluminum sheets were much

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<sup>17</sup> *Dsui Hua*, 26.

<sup>18</sup> Palladium is a silvery-white metal related to platinum; symbol Pd; it has the advantage over silver of not oxidizing but it is expensive.

easier to handle than in their thin leaf form. With this technique, which Tseng likened to mosaic, the small, cut pieces were pasted onto the painting surface. She found this effect pleasing, lending varying tones to the metallic pieces. Even without the addition of color, strips of gold appeared as graduated brush strokes, and lent similar effects of relief and volume. She sees brush-like effects in this technique, which seems far removed from the actual process. This technique was very slow, and she used it only on rare occasions. *Restless Earth a dsui* painting from 1967 is one of these (fig. 74). She eventually abandoned this cut-technique because, she felt, it was “too much like collage.”<sup>19</sup> The technique was interesting as an experiment, but the effect was too abstract, and too distant from the brushwork which she considers the foundation of her work.

Finally, for large-scale works Tseng applied metallic foils in combination with tapa cloth and varnish. She devised this method as a variation of the lacquer technique when she identified her lacquer allergy. The technique had the advantages of speed and permanency and spared her the deleterious effects that resulted from using true lacquer.

### Tapa

In developing *dsui hua*, Tseng experimented with different types of papers, especially hand-made papers, particularly those from East Asia. She began to use tapa soon after coming to Hawaii. The earliest works exploited it as a ground for painting. The blue-green style landscape from 1951, *Scene of Oahu*, was painted wholly on tapa. By the early sixties, tapa appeared more frequently, not as a ground but as a design

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<sup>19</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 21, 1997.

element.

Tapa is one of the most distinctive products of the Pacific islands, and its incorporation into Tseng's compositions suggests the complex interaction of opportunity and tradition which informed the development of her work.<sup>20</sup> Living in Hawaii, Tseng was introduced to the tradition of tapa and the pride of craftsmanship associated with it. Tapa has been produced for thousands of years in various parts of the world, including South America, Africa and Southeast Asia, but is closely associated with the Pacific islands, where "it probably reached its greatest refinement and variety among the islands of the South Pacific."<sup>21</sup> With the arrival of Europeans to the islands, tapa became "one of the most obvious symbols of Pacific identity."<sup>22</sup> Even in Hawaii, where the tradition was lost and revived, it remains a powerful reminder of pre-European Hawaiian heritage.

For Tseng, the medium's attraction lay less in its association with island heritage than with its physical properties, and its roots in the Chinese papermaking tradition. Ironically, even tapa seems to have its origins in China.<sup>23</sup> Archeological finds suggest that techniques for making tapa developed in mainland Asia and it, along with the raw material (mulberry), was transmitted through Southeast Asia and Indonesia to the widely dispersed islands of the Pacific. It would seem, then, that this most native of Pacific

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<sup>20</sup> The name "tapa" is used eponymously for all kinds of bark cloth; it is derived from the Samoan word *tapa* originally referring to the undecorated edge of bark cloth, and the Hawaiian word *kapa* for a variety of bark cloth.

<sup>21</sup> Roger Neich and Mick Pendergast, *Traditional Tapa Textiles of the Pacific* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 9.

<sup>22</sup> Neich and Pendergast, *Traditional Tapa Textiles*, 11.

<sup>23</sup> Archeological evidence indicates that bark cloth was produced in China around 4300 B.C.

island crafts has roots in the Chinese tradition.

Tapa is formed from the pulpy inner bark of certain trees. Most commonly used is the paper mulberry (*Broussonetia papyrifera*) which is native to East Asia and was brought to the Pacific islands via cuttings or suckers.<sup>24</sup> Breadfruit (*Artocarpus*) and banyan or wild fig (*Ficus*) are also commonly used. After stripping away and discarding the outer bark, the inner layer is pounded on an anvil with beaters to spread the fibrous pulp. With repeated soaking and beating, the pulp is beaten into thin sheets, which are transformed with dye and decorative motifs into distinctive articles of clothing and ritual objects.

The two types of tapa Tseng favors are Hawaiian and Samoan. The Hawaiian variety is made primarily from the bark of the cultivated paper mulberry (*wauke*, in Hawaiian). Less commonly used is *mamaki* (*Pipturus albidus*) which grows wild and produces a coarser product. Samoan tapa, produced from paper mulberry, tends to be rougher than Hawaiian tapa, an effect Tseng finds particularly pleasing. Tseng has recently been using Fijian tapa. When Tseng began using tapa, supplies were readily available, something which is no longer the case. In addition, the elements can take their toll. One large load of tapa Tseng purchased came pasted together with wheat starch paste, which the beetles, endemic to life in the islands, feasted upon, ruining most of the paper.

The roughness and pliability of tapa incorporated easily into Tseng's *dsui* works. Because of tapa's organic nature, it tears and stretches easily. Furthermore, it takes color

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<sup>24</sup> Neich and Pendergast, *Traditional Tapa Textiles*, 9.

beautifully: Tseng discovered that tapa receives ink just like old Chinese paper. A further attraction of tapa has been the organic effects she can achieve with torn pieces: “like it has been taken right from the tree.” Effects that are too tree-like, though, can be a liability, and she remarks that some viewers may see tapa as a shortcut. She admits that it is easy to make things that are “too obvious of tapa.”<sup>25</sup>

Tseng achieves varied effects with tapa. In *Courtship* (1961; fig. 75), the effect is very delicate. The pieces of tapa are lightly colored. Uneven striations lend texture and dimension, and stand as counterpoint to the rock-like form in the background. For *Fellowship* (1961; fig. 76), Tseng tore narrow strips of tapa to form the trunks of a row of tree-shapes which screen the mid-ground. *The Moon is Also Rising* (1962) combines tapa with paint and gold leaf. The torn pieces of tapa cloth assume the form of trees in silhouette. In developing a new idiom for Chinese art, Tseng’s search incorporated one of the quintessential Pacific art forms, using foreign elements to imbue her work with a new sensibility. Besides its workability and textural qualities, the use of tapa ties into Tseng’s interest in folk art. It was an interest Tseng shared with Edith Halpert. Like Halpert, Tseng saw how the aesthetic affinities between folk art and modern art might be promoted.

Tseng’s use of tapa served several purposes. In addition to the medium’s physical properties, tapa simultaneously tied into her interest in folk art, in this case indigenous Hawaiian art, and also reached back to ancient Chinese tradition through archeological finds. For Tseng’s island patrons, the local references would have been readily

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<sup>25</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, March 7, 1997.

understood and appreciated. For her mainland and international audiences, the incorporation of tapa into Tseng's works marked them as fresh and unusual, reinforcing as it did Tseng's identity as an artist whose work was not easily classified as purely modern or traditional, Chinese or American. Tapa cloth is the purest manifestation of Tseng's relationship to Hawaii and to her identification with regional traditions.

### Lacquer

In the early sixties, Tseng experimented with a new *dsui* technique using lacquer. As with many aspects of her art, she points to the Chinese past to explain its attraction. Early Chinese examples of lacquer date to the Bronze Age. Lacquer is a natural varnish made from the lac tree, a relative of the sumac, which grows in the western provinces of Sichuan and Yunnan. The lacquer resin was applied in thin layers to wooden objects, or used to impregnate cloth pressed onto clay models to form lightweight sculptures. Lacquer could be enhanced with the addition of gold dust, mother of pearl and red pigments. In Tseng's works, layers of paper and varnish were applied to masonite boards to form the ground. It was a time-consuming process. The drying itself took a week, after which she could begin to apply the surface decoration.<sup>26</sup>

Only a few examples of Tseng's lacquer-based works were made. *Dragonland* combined lacquer with gold leaf in a work whose red and gold palette is reminiscent of early vermilion-colored Chinese lacquer pieces. Tseng liked the effects she was able to achieve with the technique, but discovered she was allergic to the resin.

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<sup>26</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, April 18, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

### Abstraction

For several years in the mid-sixties, in compositions like *Fellowship* (1961), Tseng shifted to pure abstraction which represented a new challenge, adapting *dsui hua* to a new style. Through the fifties and early sixties, she steadfastly maintained representational landscape-like references in her works, though they were highly abstracted. During the mid-sixties Tseng virtually eliminated the tree and rock forms on which her style had come to depend. In their place were dots, squares and grids. *Humidity* (1964) used paper and gold leaf on masonite. The gold leaf was cut into strips and arranged in seven horizontal rows. Where she has not applied them, or rubbed them off, lacunae give the work its texture and design interest. Other works relied on dots. *Pegasus* (1965; fig. 77) employed strips of aluminum and rows of dots. She conceived of the dots in these works as texture strokes (*cunfa*): “To me, I was still thinking of Chinese dots. But instead of randomly, I made them orderly, but that was my trying to bring mosses.” In the Northern Song period, Mi Fu (1051-1107) had defined an entire painting style using dots, and to Tseng her works did not seem totally removed from such texture strokes. These works have a slightly mechanical feeling to them, an observation that took Tseng by surprise. Reflecting on that period, she said: “I did it when everyone was in abstraction. I just wanted to make people see that I could do it.” Satisfied, she moved on. Asked in 1997 whether she had been comfortable with pure abstraction, she replied, “That’s why I’m not doing it any more now.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, March 17, 1997.

### Beyond Innovations

By 1967, total abstraction had been largely replaced by a return to her early-sixties style. The post-abstraction works benefit from the abstract phase, however, in a certain clarity and conciseness many of the earlier works lacked. Tseng's experiments of the early- and mid-sixties coalesce in *A Song Ballad*, "A Phoenix Hairpin" by Lu You (1967; fig. 78). Tseng took her inspiration from the poem "Phoenix Hairpin" by the Song dynasty poet Lu You (1125-1210):

Pink, creamy hands,  
 Yellow-labeled wine,  
 Spring colors filling the city, willows by the palace walls.  
 East wind hateful,  
 Joys of love scarce,  
 One heart full of sad thoughts,  
 How many years of separation!  
 Wrong, wrong, wrong!

Spring the same as before,  
 She grows thin in vain;  
 Red are the stains of tears that have soaked the mermaid-silk scarf.  
 Peach blossoms fall,  
 Ponds and pavilions quiet;  
 Though mountainous vows remain,  
 Letters of brocade can't be sent.  
 No more, no more, no more!<sup>28</sup>

Song dynasty poetry had inspired Tseng's two sets of early *dsui* experiments in 1956-1958, *Ten Song Poems*. Once again, she turned to the literary tradition. Lu You's work, said to have been written in 1155, is a sad poem of love and separation, full of references to spring and garden imagery. Lu You composed the poem in response to encountering

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<sup>28</sup> Translation from Liu Wu-chi and Irving Lo, *Sunflower Splendor: Three Thousand Years of Chinese Poetry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 384.

his former wife one spring day in a garden. Though happily married, the couple had separated at the insistence of Lu's mother. His act of filial piety, however, did nothing to diminish his regret, even though both partners eventually remarried.

Lu You's poem uses seasonal imagery and garden references to evoke memory and regret. *A Song Ballad, "A Phoenix Hairpin"* by Lu You relies on tapa cloth and metallic leaf for the compositional elements and textural effects. Aluminum leaf gives the work its shimmering reflective surface. Tseng's composition lends elements of the poem unexpected visual form. The grid-like effect of the aluminum squares suggests the palace walls mentioned early in the poem, and are overlaid with garden-like forms (rocks, ponds). Yellow, the dominant color of Tseng's composition, is mentioned early in Lu You's work in reference to a wine label. Tseng suffuses her painting with soft yellow tones, against which garden details emerge. Even Lu You's red-soaked silk cloth is evoked with the addition of red-orange pigment to small areas of the painting. Tapa, torn into a single long strip assumes a tree-like presence, or perhaps the eponymous hairpin.

The appeal of this work lies in Tseng's effectiveness at evoking the complex emotions of Lu You's poem through suggestion and indirection. Visually engaging on its own, Tseng's painting becomes richer as the layers of allusions to the text emerge. This process is physically mimicked in Tseng's *dsui* technique here, layering paper, paint, aluminum, and tapa as did Lu You with the layering of color, imagery, memory, and emotion.

### **Exhibitions and Public Recognition**

Once she signed with Edith Halpert in 1960, Tseng Yuho's works were featured

regularly in the Downtown Gallery's exhibitions. The contract stipulated participation in an annual group show at the gallery, as well as regular solo exhibitions, "not less than once in three years."<sup>29</sup> The first group show in New York was in 1960. Tseng was one artist in a group exhibition of "Seven Painters in Hawaii."<sup>30</sup> Four of Tseng's works were featured: *Points of View* (1958), *Array* (1959), *Hawaii* (1959), and *Strife in Square* (1959). Halpert was impressed with Tseng's contribution which, she wrote, "elicited so much enthusiasm."<sup>31</sup>

Hawaii's admission to statehood in 1959 inspired the theme of the exhibition and continued the Downtown Gallery's long-established practice of fostering new talent in America. Halpert used the exhibition to acknowledge the new status of the islands and their artists. Halpert travelled to Hawaii for her winter holidays and had many friends and acquaintances in Honolulu. During the winter of 1959, she and H. Harvard Arnason spent time together surveying the works of local artists at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, the University of Hawaii, galleries and studios. Arnason's involvement in the recent annual exhibition sponsored by the Hawaii Painters and Sculptors League made him an ideal guide to artists in the Islands. At this point she met Tseng. Halpert chose sixteen works by seven artists which she felt reflected "a remarkably personal response to the

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<sup>29</sup> Edith Halpert file, contract, February 13, 1960, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>30</sup> Besides Tseng Yuho, the show included Bert Carpenter, Isami Doi, Raymond Han, Thomas Kealiinohomoku, Ben Norris, and Edward Stasack. Only three of the artists had been born in Hawaii; the catalogue does stress, however, that all of the paintings were chosen in Honolulu and painted in Hawaii.

<sup>31</sup> Downtown Gallery press release, April 11, 1960, Downtown Gallery Records.

unique natural environment—and a fresh contribution to American art.”<sup>32</sup>

After the group show of Hawaii artists in 1960, Tseng was featured in regular group shows until Halpert’s death in 1970. Solo exhibitions occurred less frequently, but were stipulated by the contract at least every three years. Tseng Yuho’s first solo show was held April 19 to May 7, 1960.<sup>33</sup> Exhibition space at the Downtown Gallery was limited, and Halpert wanted to concentrate on hanging Tseng Yuho’s more recent works, while including a few earlier examples by way of demonstrating Tseng Yuho’s artistic development. In late March, Halpert wrote to Tseng: “I hope very much that by this time you have completed some additional paintings.”<sup>34</sup> This would only be the first such request from Halpert. Their decade-long relationship was marked by Halpert’s insatiable demand for more paintings, faster. Halpert maintained an active schedule of exhibitions at the Downtown Gallery, as well as group shows throughout the United States. In addition, she found it advantageous to have numerous examples of an artist’s work on hand to show prospective buyers. The challenge became increasingly difficult over time, as Tseng’s obligations were spread between painting and her other professional activities.

Tseng’s first solo exhibition at the Downtown Gallery was rescheduled due to complications with receiving materials from the Walker Art Center and Tseng Yuho’s

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<sup>32</sup> Downtown Gallery press release, January 6, 1960, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>33</sup> The arrangements for this exhibition were complicated by its proximity to Tseng’s show at the Walker Art Center. The Downtown Gallery show was originally scheduled to open on April 11; the Walker exhibition did not close until March 27. Between packing and shipping, Halpert expressed concern about being able to meet publicity deadlines. Furthermore, she was reluctant to have too much overlap in content with the Minneapolis show.

<sup>34</sup> Edith Halpert letter to Tseng Yuho, March 23, 1960, Downtown Gallery Records.

recent paintings from Hawaii. It previewed on April 18 and featured twenty paintings in what was then called her “watercolor-collage” technique. In the catalogue, Arnason described Tseng’s unique artistic vision, bringing together qualities and techniques of East and West as “no grafting of new elements onto the old, but rather, a logical and organic development of a totally original expression.”<sup>35</sup>

The show received widespread publicity, and most of the reviews were favorable. Her works were variously described as achieving “a rare and beautiful fusion of the Oriental and Occidental styles.”<sup>36</sup> A brief review in the *New York Times* appeared under the heading, “The Mysterious East.” Reviewer Stuart Preston was struck by Tseng Yuho’s “mysterious and evocative landscapes,” which he found “almost wholly Oriental in character.” He calls her art “an art of reduction rather than accumulation, consummately done and combining, in the Oriental manner, draughts of poetry with pinches of stark fact.”<sup>37</sup> The one ambivalent note was struck by a reviewer in *Arts*, who concluded a brief description of the show and artist with: “The combination of Eastern and Western art has always been a difficult venture, one which has usually concluded with the untenable abridgment of both. Tseng Yu-ho is not excepted from the dilemma. The only solution, if she is seriously interested in abstraction, is to pursue it exclusively, as an international art.”<sup>38</sup> It was Halpert’s policy not to dictate the content or style of her

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<sup>35</sup> Downtown Gallery press release, January 6, 1960, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>36</sup> *New York Herald Tribune*, May 1, 1960.

<sup>37</sup> Stuart Preston, “A Mixed Company,” *New York Times*, April 24, 1960.

<sup>38</sup> “In the Galleries,” *Arts* (34), no. 8 (May 1960).

artists' works, so Tseng's subsequent experiment with abstraction was not motivated by her dealer. Instead, Tseng may have responded to the reviewer who saw her synthesizing style as unsatisfactory. Tseng experimented with pure abstraction, only to dismiss the style, once she felt satisfied that the challenge had been met.

The Downtown Gallery's first event of 1962 was another solo exhibition of Tseng Yuho's recent works, entitled "New Paintings by Tseng Yu-ho."<sup>39</sup> Eighteen works were included, this time described as "*dsui* painting." The press release for the show explains the switch from "watercolor-collage" to "*dsui*" as being more descriptive of the actual technique:

Formerly referred to as watercolor-collage, a misleading connotation, she now calls her technique Dsui-painting. Dsui is Chinese for synthesis or the combination of many small parts (of rice or bamboo paper) abutting or superimposed almost invisibly with a permanent adhesive used as early as the ninth century for backing silk scrolls--a technique Tseng Yu-ho mastered after a three year apprenticeship in China. She originated the extension of the method by painting the small individual papers before superimposing them, creating the combined Dsui-painting.<sup>40</sup>

Tseng devised a name for her technique which she felt captured more closely the essence of what she was doing. While "watercolor-collage" is both clear and descriptive, it suggests Western techniques and influences that Tseng found misleading. The genesis of *dsui* is Tseng's training in scroll mounting, and as the press release posits, it is this association that the new term reinforces. The Chinese source of the technique, with its emphasis on fine Asian papers, is a source of pride for Tseng. By adopting the term *dsui*

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<sup>39</sup> The exhibition was on view January 9-27, and extended until February 3. Edith Halpert letter to Tseng Yuho, January 29, 1962, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>40</sup> Downtown Gallery press release, January 3, 1962, Downtown Gallery Records.

*hua*, Tseng was resisting attempts to mainstream her art with Western currents and developments. Instead she was positioning herself as an innovator within the Chinese tradition.<sup>41</sup>

As with her first Downtown Gallery solo event, this one was both well-publicized and critically acclaimed. An illustration and short article appeared in the January issue of *ARTnews*, and reviews were published in the *New York Herald Tribune*, the *New York Sunday Herald*, along with numerous others. Preston again applauded Tseng Yuho's works in the *New York Times*, finding in them many exquisite visual and symbolical motifs of whose overall effect he claimed, "To call her work subtle is a profound understatement."<sup>42</sup> By late January, thirteen of the eighteen paintings had sold. Edith Halpert considered the show a "tremendous success" and remarked on the "very, very large attendance." She was also pleased that a number of influential museum directors who had been in New York on their way to the opening of a new wing at the Albright-Knox Gallery in Buffalo and been able to see Tseng's exhibition.<sup>43</sup>

The mission of Halpert's gallery was the promotion of modern American art. Tseng's works were well-received, but in a slightly confounding way, by viewers more familiar with Western art than Chinese art. Reviewers repeat the stereotypes of orientalism: "mysterious," "subtle," "profound." A rare exception was H. Harvard Arnason who recognized that Tseng's art did not result from the simple superimposition

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<sup>41</sup> Tseng Yuho to Edith Halpert January 2, 1962, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>42</sup> Stuart Preston, "Art: Tseng Yu-Ho Displays Collages," *New York Times*, January 12, 1962.

<sup>43</sup> Edith Halpert letter to Tseng Yuho, January 17, 1962. Downtown Gallery Records.

of old and new, East and West, but was a unique response arising from her background, training, and experiences.<sup>44</sup> He was among the few who recognized the intellectual depth Tseng sought to plumb in her works. Alfred Frankenstein echoed similar sentiments and moved away from the clichés of many reviewers.

### *Time*

Edith Halpert tried to keep it a secret, mostly because it occasionally happened that an article was dropped at the last minute owing to some news that superseded it, but Halpert had worked to arrange publicity in *Time* magazine to coincide with Tseng Yuho's January 1962 solo exhibition.<sup>45</sup> An article appeared in the January 19, 1962 issue of *Time* under the title "Painter in Paper." It ran in the Art Section for one and a half columns and featured two full-color reproductions, as well as a black-and-white photo of the artist in her studio.<sup>46</sup> The article introduced the artist with a brief biography and explained the genesis of Tseng's *dsui* technique, with its indebtedness to scroll mounting. The paintings, it said, "seemed to be composed of gossamer and mist. Their surfaces looked as if they could be disarranged by a breath."<sup>47</sup>

Edith Halpert was surprised to realize that her attempts to keep the news a secret from Tseng were futile. What she had not realized was that the local *Time* representative

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<sup>44</sup> Arnason, *Tseng Yu-ho*, n.p.

<sup>45</sup> Edith Halpert letter to Tseng Yuho, January 17, 1962, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>46</sup> The article about Tseng was one of two that appeared in that week's "Art" section. The other was on the eighteenth-century inventor of lithography, Johann Senefelder. Neither article is credited or initialled.

<sup>47</sup> "Painter in Paper," *Time*, January 19, 1962, 40.

in Honolulu had contacted Tseng for an interview. So much for Halpert's surprise.<sup>48</sup> Tseng Yuho was thrilled with the publicity, and thanked Edith Halpert for making it possible.<sup>49</sup> The author devoted half the article to detailing the derivation of *dsui hua* from its ninth-century use as a backing for scroll paintings, to Tseng's innovation in using different kinds of papers combined with brush and ink effects for what the author calls "paper-on-paper" paintings.<sup>50</sup> The emphasis is wholly on Tseng as a Chinese artist and her art as Chinese and modern.

#### Honolulu, San Francisco, and Stockholm

In April 1962, Tseng Yuho approached Edith Halpert with the possibility of a solo exhibition of her work at the Museum of Modern Art, Stockholm. The exhibition was being organized by Bo Gyllensvard, and conceived as part of a celebration of Asian art, from neolithic to the present, to be held on the occasion of the opening of the new building of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities. Tseng Yuho also received expressions of interest from both the Honolulu Academy of Art and the San Francisco Museum of Art,<sup>51</sup> to host the exhibition before it travelled to Sweden.

Eventually all the details were successfully worked out, but this episode underscored the conflicts inherent in Tseng's exclusive arrangement with the Downtown Gallery. Halpert wrote to remind Tseng that she would prefer to follow the "usual

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<sup>48</sup> Edith Halpert letter to Tseng Yuho, January 29, 1962, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>49</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, January 17, 1962, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>50</sup> "Painter in Paper," *Time*, January 19, 1962, 40.

<sup>51</sup> This museum is now the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

routine by having these organizations communicate with us, as your agents.”<sup>52</sup> Their correspondence on this matter continued for several months, with Halpert imploring Tseng, as late as July, to let the gallery handle the details.

Another source of conflict arose at this time. Tseng continued to sell works out of her studio, with the understanding of sending a commission check to Halpert. It took over three years before Tseng finally gave exclusive control over sales to the gallery. Confusion had arisen over arrangements and prices, and in February 1963, Tseng finally relented and agreed to send every new painting to New York. Halpert was eager to maintain a stock of recent works available at the gallery. Tseng, however, liked being able to maintain close ties with island collectors by giving them first choice of her recent works. Many of these patrons had supported her efforts since her early days in Hawaii and Tseng wanted to acknowledge her appreciation in this way. The next year the arrangements shifted again. It was agreed that Tseng Yuho could continue to sell her works, since she felt she was losing substantial sales among Island collectors.<sup>53</sup> Halpert may have agreed as way to appease Tseng, who had raised the possibility of a full-time teaching position. Halpert was eager to keep Tseng painting as much as possible, without the distractions of full-time teaching.

“Paintings by Tseng Yu-ho” opened at the Honolulu Academy of Arts October-November 1962 and then travelled to the San Francisco Museum of Art. Frankenstein reviewed it in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. He called Tseng “the leading artist of

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<sup>52</sup> Edith Halpert letter to Tseng Yuho, May 7, 1962, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>53</sup> Edith Halpert letter to Tseng Yuho, March 12, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

Hawaii, and one of the best in all the 50 states.” He explained that her works were paintings, but paintings that subordinated painting to the paper she uses. He described the papers: “Many different textures of the papers, their freely torn, fibrous edges, their lusters, and the sense of space they create when pasted one on top of the other--these are some of her resources. The watercolor frequently does little more than accent or develop the possibilities of the substance to which it is applied.”<sup>54</sup>

Another review in the *San Francisco News Call Bulletin* was equally positive:

The real news at the San Francisco Museum these days is the elegant and masterful show devoted to unique watercolor-collages by the Chinese artist resident in Honolulu, Tseng Yu-Ho. In these days of hectic, slobbering pretension, her simple, and fully contemporary, devotion to the cause of beauty is a remarkable thing, and we can't recommend this very attractive and provocative show too much. Look behind the gauze curtain and you see a magically expressive landscape world, artfully constructed with a most fantastically subtle and “different” handling of assorted papers.<sup>55</sup>

The exhibition's next venue was Stockholm. In connection with the inauguration of the new Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities at Skeppsholmen in 1963, several exhibitions of East Asian art were organized. These were held not only at the new museum, but also in the National Museum and the Museum of Modern Art (Moderna Museet).<sup>56</sup> Tseng Yuho's exhibition took place at the Museum of Modern Art during May and June under the title “Tseng Yu-ho Målningar.” A handsome large combination poster/catalogue featured a color reproduction of *At Second Sight* (1962) on the front

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<sup>54</sup> Alfred Frankenstein, “Chinese Artist--Subtle, Exquisite,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 27, 1962.

<sup>55</sup> *San Francisco News Call Bulletin*, January 5, 1963.

<sup>56</sup> The three museums belong to the same organization: The Swedish National Art Museums. Jan Wirgin letter to author, May 18, 1999.

along with exhibition information.<sup>57</sup>

As a guest of the Swedish government, Tseng was treated warmly. In a letter to Halpert, she described spending an entire week viewing objects in the museum collections. The King and Queen of Sweden attended the opening of the exhibition; Tseng presented them with Hawaiian leis Ecker had sent from home, and which, she recalls, were considered very exotic in that Northern European setting. A much reproduced photo shows King Gustav wearing the lei Tseng presented to him. He spent a long time questioning her about every painting, and one was acquired for the permanent collection of the museum.<sup>58</sup>

In proposing this Stockholm exhibition to Halpert in April 1962, Tseng Yuho expressed some concern about the logistics and rewards of such an undertaking. Acknowledging that it represented much trouble for unknown financial gain, she felt in the long run that it would be worth it.<sup>59</sup> A year and a half later, she wrote: "I am afraid this is my most complicated and financial flop exhibition I have ever had. I can not say I regret it. For national prestige, and human association are the best I have had."<sup>60</sup> Tseng was unaccustomed to such professional disappointment, and three months later she was still reflecting on the exhibition when she wrote to Halpert. The summer holiday with

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<sup>57</sup> On the back was an introduction to the show, a list of objects in the exhibition, black and white reproductions, a chronology of the artist, and other catalogue-like information. It was displayed prominently around the city, and Tseng Yuho noted seeing it installed beneath street-lamps along the boulevards.

<sup>58</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, June 27, 1963, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>59</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, April 16, 1962, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>60</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, September 10, 1963, Downtown Gallery Records.

Ecke in Europe helped her put the financial aspects in perspective and concentrate her attention, instead, on the less tangible notions of prestige and contacts.

Following the conclusion of the Stockholm exhibition, Tseng and Ecke travelled in Europe for the summer. Beginning in Paris, they embarked on an extended summer holiday--six weeks in Greece and Turkey. Ecke's education had included studying the Classics, and one of their objectives was to visit sites and ruins of ancient Greece. On this holiday, they concentrated on classical and Byzantine art, which had inspired Tseng's own use of gold pigment, and later gold foil. She also responded to the scenery in a number of works inspired by these travels: *Patmos* (1963), *Summer in Mykenae* (1963; fig. 79), *Parnasus* (1964), *Delos* (1964).<sup>61</sup> Donkey rides and the oppressive Mediterranean heat are part of her memories of the trip, but so is the golden landscape, so dry and different from Hawaii.

### Downtown Gallery Commissions

By the time Tseng Yuho signed with the Downtown Gallery, Halpert had been a successful art dealer for four decades. Her network of contacts was extensive and ideas for promoting her artists went far beyond gallery and museum exhibitions. They included commissions of varying kinds, from publications to works of art for public display. During the decade that the Downtown Gallery represented Tseng, Halpert provided three important opportunities: a *Mademoiselle* magazine commission (1960); a mural for Golden West Savings and Loan (1964), and the illustrations for *The Analects of*

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<sup>61</sup> Downtown Gallery Records.

*Confucius* (1970).

### *Mademoiselle*

In the first five months of 1960, just months after signing with the gallery, Halpert recommended Tseng for a commission for *Mademoiselle* magazine. In May, Tseng agreed to create an artwork that would accompany a short story to be published in the magazine. For a number of years, *Mademoiselle* had commissioned well-known artists to paint such accompanying illustrations. Among Halpert's artists, Jacob Lawrence and Ben Shahn both published works this way. In presenting the proposal to Tseng, Halpert wrote that the reason the gallery had agreed to the project over the years was that the painting did not have to be, strictly speaking, an illustration, but a mood painting reflecting the artist's response to the author's story.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, the paintings, which belonged to *Mademoiselle*, were featured in occasional exhibitions sponsored by the magazine. The magazine also had a generous loan policy, and this ensured that desirable works could be loaned for exhibitions in other venues. The *Mademoiselle* commission, in other words, afforded Tseng a chance to reach a nationwide audience, as well as having her work become a permanent feature of a corporate collection.

Working on a tight deadline, Tseng submitted *Nieh, or Descent of the Misfortunate* to accompany *My Heart Lays Down Its Load*, a short story by William Wood. It was accepted and published in the October 1960 issue along with a photo of the artist and a brief biographical note. Wood wrote to Tseng Yuho: "You have not merely

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<sup>62</sup> Edith Halpert letter to Tseng Yuho, May 18, 1960, Downtown Gallery Records.

done an appropriate illustration for a story of mine; you have done me enormous honor with an astounding and beautiful work of art.”<sup>63</sup>

### Golden West Savings And Loan

On the evening of December 28, 1964, Tseng’s largest and most ambitious project was unveiled in San Francisco. *Western Frontier* was an enormous mural designed for Golden West Savings and Loan Association (fig. 80). It covered two walls on the first floor of the building, newly redesigned by San Francisco architect Mario Gaidano. The mural was publicized at the time as “the most ambitious undertaking of any business firm in northern California in the arts.”<sup>64</sup> It consisted of nine panels that stood 9 1/2 feet high and nearly 90 feet in length.

Edith Halpert first raised the possibility of this commission in a letter to Tseng in April 1964. Herbert and Marion Sandler, clients of the Downtown Gallery, had sought Halpert’s assistance in working through ideas for a mural project that they envisioned for a new branch of Golden West Savings and Loan Association, of which they were president and vice-president respectively. Halpert showed them some of Tseng’s paintings and recommended her for the project.<sup>65</sup> Within weeks, the Sandlers came to Honolulu, met with Tseng, and showed her a plan of the building. The meeting went well and the Sandlers were enthusiastic about her ideas. Tseng suggested to them a work

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<sup>63</sup> William Wood letter to Tseng Yuho, October 5, 1960, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>64</sup> Downtown Gallery press release, n.d., Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>65</sup> Edith Halpert letter to Tseng Yuho, April 11, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

that would use the new lacquer technique with which she had been experimenting.<sup>66</sup> At the Downtown Gallery, the Sandlers had seen and been particularly interested in *Dragonland* (1963), which employed this new technique.<sup>67</sup>

For two months following the Sandlers' Honolulu visit, Tseng worked on her design and struggled with the complications of the myriad details and architectural vagaries of the project. The space included interior columns between which the murals needed to fit, as well as expansive counter space which would block some sight-lines. The Sandlers had originally conceived of two to four murals.<sup>68</sup> The completed project was nine. Halpert suggested, as was her practice in these situations, that the murals not be painted directly on the wall, but as independent panels, which could be removed, if necessary. Furthermore, she insisted that Tseng have free reign in conceiving the project. Halpert made it a practice to never condition an artist in any way, and from the outset assured Tseng that "this has to be your decision in every way except the specific dimensions."<sup>69</sup>

Tseng Yuho was eager for this job because of the challenge it represented.<sup>70</sup> She was concerned, however, about the time constraints. The Sandlers wanted the mural completed and installed in time for the opening of the building in late December. Tseng

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<sup>66</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, May 1, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>67</sup> Edith Halpert letter to Tseng Yuho, April 11, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>68</sup> Edith Halpert letter to Tseng Yuho, April 11, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>69</sup> Edith Halpert letter to Tseng Yuho, May 7, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>70</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, June 9, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

Yuho hoped to complete as much work as possible during the summer break, in order to meet a November deadline for shipping the work to San Francisco. In early June, she continued to wonder about final confirmation and was assured by Halpert that the commission was hers.

Tseng Yuho first made a series of rough sketches that showed the basic structure. This was her standard way of working, but she realized that for such a large project something more detailed might be needed. In spite of the time commitment involved, she constructed a scale model of the panels, mostly for the sake of the Slanders and Gaidano, the architect. She estimates that this step cost her around two weeks of work, but she conceded that the extra work was worth it as it also helped her to visualize the scale, color and composition. Furthermore, by working to such detail in this early stage, she was able to complete the design itself, making the rest “only a matter of procedure.”<sup>71</sup>

One of Tseng’s concerns was the architectural details of the interior, specifically the pillars that separated each panel of the mural. White plaster columns, she felt, would distract from the work and obscure the continuity of the design.<sup>72</sup> The colors of the interiors were also a subject of discussion. On a visit to San Francisco in July, most of these troublesome details were resolved. Tseng was particularly impressed with the sensitivity Gaidano showed for her as an artist.<sup>73</sup> She returned to Honolulu assured that her vision of the project would not be altered, and that the entire room would be “colored

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<sup>71</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, June 9, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>72</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Mario Gaidano, May 14, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>73</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, July 24, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

according to my mural.”<sup>74</sup>

Tseng Yuho was able to employ a technique she had recently developed which made use of brilliant red, gold and silver. These works were different from an earlier group of gold paintings in employing a method related to traditional lacquer technique. In Tseng’s new works, layers of paper and varnish were applied to masonite boards to form the ground. The drying process took a week, after which she could begin to work on the surface decoration. Tseng found a good, permanent paint through a Japanese craftsman who did interior wood decorations. She felt the new technique would be particularly well-suited to the mural. Its permanency of color and toughness of surface gave it a durability that she felt would work very well.<sup>75</sup>

The gold and silver effects were achieved through the use of gold- and palladium-leaf. Some of her previous works had included gold, but in the form of gold pigment. In these new works, she was intrigued at being “able to use gold and silver as color itself.” Her experiments with the technique had, until this point, been done on a small scale, as easel paintings. By the time Halpert approached her with the Golden West commission, Tseng Yuho felt fully confident in her control of the materials and technique.<sup>76</sup>

The issue of the metallic elements did raise some problems, however. Besides being costly, reflection posed a concern.<sup>77</sup> Marion Sandler also expressed reservations

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<sup>74</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, July 24, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>75</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, April 18, 1964. Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>76</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, April 18, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records. The gold leaf was 23-karat.

<sup>77</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, July 24, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

over the amount of gold in the work.<sup>78</sup> In spite of her professed policy of non-interference in the creative process of her artists, Halpert too foresaw problems with large areas of metallic surface. Admitting that it was handsome in conception, there were practical considerations. Specifically, Halpert mentioned the difficulty of properly lighting such a work.<sup>79</sup> In the end, Tseng Yuho prevailed, with Halpert encouraging her to “go ahead and use as much gold and silver as you like.”<sup>80</sup> Tseng Yuho’s original concerns had been allayed during her visit to San Francisco, where she found that the architect and interior designer liked the gold and felt the reflection problem would be no greater than with an oil painting. This gold- and palladium-leaf technique was still new and Tseng was very proud to have developed the process: “As to my knowledge nobody has done anything like this.” She felt these new works derived their vibrancy from this very mutable quality.<sup>81</sup>

Tseng Yuho received the final measurements in mid-August. Summer was drawing to a close, and, with the deadline fixed, a monumental task lay ahead of her. She had no experience with a project of this scale, and could not foresee precisely how long it would take to complete. With just three months before the mural had to be shipped to

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<sup>78</sup> Marion Sandler letter to Tseng Yuho, June 29, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>79</sup> In private homes, for example, the shiny surface created a distortion by assuming greater prominence than other areas. Edith Halpert letter to Tseng Yuho, July 13, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records. With her clients, Halpert found that artificial lighting was often unsatisfactory, and she worried that collectors might be reduced to enjoying such works on weekends or during other daylight hours when the glare of artificial light was eliminated. Edith Halpert letter to Tseng Yuho, August 3, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>80</sup> Edith Halpert letter to Tseng Yuho, August 3, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>81</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, July 24, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

San Francisco for installation, the Honolulu Academy of Arts generously offered Tseng the basement of the museum so she could spread out. The work was physically strenuous. Much of it had to be done on the floor.<sup>82</sup> The nine panels varied in length from 9 1/2 feet to 24 feet; each were 9 1/2 feet tall. Tseng Yuho had carpenters construct the masonite framework. Onto this, she applied papers of many types, including tapa cloth from Fiji and Samoa. She layered them to form the background to the large black and green abstract forms that were inspired by the silhouettes of redwood trees. They were, in turn, adorned with gold- and palladium-leaf along with ruby-red and turquoise-blue pigment. Tseng's design was intended to recall the grandeur of California's redwood forest. Her desire was to express the idea of growth, both as it related to the business of Golden West Savings and Loan, and to economic progress in general. She also wanted to tie the work to its specific locale, Northern California, and its tremendous wealth of natural resources.<sup>83</sup> The jewel-like effects of the surface decoration were inspired by old Spanish or medieval church jewelry, which used a lot of gold inlay and precious stones.<sup>84</sup>

Tseng worked alone intensively on the murals for seven weeks until she was finally able to enlist student help in early October.<sup>85</sup> By mid-October, she needed to relocate from the Academy basement to a venue where she could stand the panels upright

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<sup>82</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, August 18, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>83</sup> Downtown Gallery press release, n.d., Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>84</sup> Ligaya Fruto, "Artist Finishes Big Mural," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, November 13, 1964.

<sup>85</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, October 7, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

for final adjustments and surface treatment. For this phase, she moved into the vacant Iolani Barracks on Hotel Street. There she was finally able to see the work in its entirety. In a letter to Halpert, Tseng Yuho wrote with her own excited reaction. The mural looked so “up-lifting and heroic,” and betrayed nothing of the rushed schedule under which they were produced.<sup>86</sup>

On November 12, Tseng Yuho held a preview for local friends and artists before the panels were packed and shipped to San Francisco (fig. 81). The Honolulu newspapers covered the event, with the reviewer for the *Honolulu Advertiser* calling it a “historic occasion. For a few hours there was previewed a mural of gigantic size . . . without doubt the largest ever executed in Hawaii.”<sup>87</sup> Gaidano, the project architect was visiting from San Francisco, and called Marion Sandler to say how excited he was about the murals.<sup>88</sup> By November 13, the panels were on their way to San Francisco; they were installed on schedule and unveiled on December 28.

Frankenstein wrote a glowing review of the work in his “The World of Art” column for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. He was an early admirer of Tseng Yuho’s works, dating back to her 1952 exhibition at the de Young Museum. He brought to his interpretation of *Western Frontier* a depth of understanding that far exceeded the Golden West press release. Frankenstein suggested that redwood trees may not have been the only inspiration for the abstract shapes that populated the mural. He read them equally

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<sup>86</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, October 31, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>87</sup> Web Anderson, “New Mural is Portable,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, November 22, 1964.

<sup>88</sup> Marion Sandler letter to Tseng Yuho, November 11, 1964, Downtown Gallery Records.

clearly as abstractions of Shang dynasty bronze--*zun*, *gu*, and *jia*--with the surface decoration of the murals reminiscent of the designs and turquoise inlay of the ancient Shang vessels. Furthermore, Frankenstein understood the ways in which Tseng Yuho's art attempted to combine elements of various artistic traditions. As he saw it: "Miss Tseng's *Western Frontier*, then, is actually a psychological and spiritual frontier where Oriental and Occidental cultures derive strength from each other."<sup>89</sup>

Golden West Savings and Loan Association went out of business and the building at First and Market has been demolished. Tseng Yuho doesn't know the fate of the panels; she assumes they were destroyed. Nevertheless, *Western Frontier* remains one of her most significant works. With *Western Frontier*, many of the themes and techniques she had been weaving together for much of the previous decade were put on public display. Here *dsui hua* evolved to accommodate a new lacquer-inspired process. Influences for the theme and decorative elements ranged from California flora to ancient Chinese vessels to sacred objects of the medieval Christianity. *Western Frontier* was a large, and very public example of the artist's adaptation of themes and techniques.

### *The Analects of Confucius*

The third commission Halpert found was one with special resonance to Tseng. In 1967, the George Macy Company, New York, decided to publish an illustrated edition of *The Analects of Confucius* for the Heritage Club in New York.<sup>90</sup> The *Analects* are one of

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<sup>89</sup> Alfred Frankenstein, "The World of Art: Beauty at the Savings and Loan," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 31, 1964.

<sup>90</sup> The motto of the Heritage Club was, "The classics which are our heritage from the past, in Editions which will be the heritage of the future." Quote from the Heritage Club *Sandglass*, no. 36 (1970),

the classic texts of Chinese history and culture, and as a descendant of Zengzi, the work held special significance for her.<sup>91</sup> Tseng was given complete freedom to illustrate the work. She was very familiar with the Chinese text, but worked also from the English translation, since the publication was aimed at an English-speaking audience. The chosen translation was one by Lionel Giles (1875-1958).<sup>92</sup> It had been published by the parent company of the Heritage Press, the Limited Editions Club, in 1933 and three decades later, they decided this translation was still the best one available.

The finished work was published in 1970. One hundred-thirty pages long, it was elegantly printed with great attention to detail. It included a gold-tone slipcase and six double-page, full-color illustrations by Tseng. Each of the illustrations follows a similar layout. Divided unequally into two parts, the pictorial space dominates at right and a differently colored vertical section to the left features the calligraphic inscription that serves as each illustration's title. These five-character expressions were written in bold, archaic script.

"How can I illustrate Confucius?" was the question she faced.<sup>93</sup> Although many such depictions exist, Tseng preferred to deal with the Master's ideas and legacy rather than any imagined physical likeness. She chose to work in a style that recalled the Han

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issued monthly to the members of the Heritage Club.

<sup>91</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, June 14, 1967, Downtown Gallery Records; Tseng Yuho letter to Glixon, June 14, 1967, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>92</sup> Giles, who held an Oxford master's and doctorate, served as Keeper of Oriental Books and Manuscripts at the British Museum until his retirement in 1940. His father was the famed sinologist Herbert A. Giles.

<sup>93</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, March 13, 1997.

dynasty, the period when Confucianism was at its height. Each painting draws on themes developed in the text and symbolized six of the chief Confucian virtues: filial piety, humanity, loyalty, integrity, thought, and sincerity. Each of these principles was considered by Confucius to be “basic to the right conduct of life.” Tseng illustrated these abstract concepts with paired symbols or figures which, according to her explanation in the volume, “have no mythological connotations” yet are expressive of the ideals.<sup>94</sup>

In “Filial Piety is the Foundation of Humanity,” for instance, filial piety (*xiao*) is depicted by a man paying reverence to his father. As one of the five key relationships of Confucianism,<sup>95</sup> the father-son bond is the most important of family relationships and mirrors in domestic life the ideal relationship between ruler and subject. Within the silhouette of a Han-style building, she has pictured two figures, one seated, the other bowing.

Not every concept lent itself so easily to representation. Two deer suggest “Humanity is the Foundation of Man.” Even more abstract is a pair of watch towers to express “Sincerity is the Foundation of Etiquette” (fig. 82). In the artist’s explanation, “The outward signs of traditional etiquette are formality and measured movements, here represented by abstractions of twin ancient citadels.”<sup>96</sup> The strict bounds of sincerity (*zheng*) here are reflected in the model of architecture, which demands precision and

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<sup>94</sup> *The Analects of Confucius*, translated by Lionel Giles (New York: The Limited Editions Club, 1970), 130.

<sup>95</sup> The five relationships as defined by Confucius are: ruler-subject, father-son, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother, friend-friend.

<sup>96</sup> *Analects of Confucius*, 130.

adherence to procedures and standards for successful realization.

*Sandglass*, the monthly newsletter sent to members of the Heritage Club, devoted one issue to the club's new release of the *Analects*. It included an introduction to Tseng Yu-ho and a biographical sketch. It also mistakenly described the medium of the paintings as oil, and that the silver design elements were painted. The works employ Tseng's *dsui hua* method and silver leaf was used for the motifs. For each of the six illustrations she used a different muted two-color scheme. Paper and pigment that serve as the ground for each illustration has been applied as long, vertical striations on which the silver designs and black calligraphy were added. Though rendered with colors, the effect she achieved in these works recalls to some degree stone or bronze rubbings of designs contemporaneous with Confucius' era. As with the Manoa cemetery mural, Tseng Yuho reached into the sculptural traditions of ancient China for her inspiration.

### **1966: To Europe**

Gustav Ecke retired in 1966, an event that heralded many changes for the couple. Ecke's retirement signaled the end of his full-time teaching and curatorial activities at the University of Hawaii and the Honolulu Academy of Arts. Tseng, however, aged forty-one, was making the arrangements that would shift her focus from painting to academia. To mark the beginning of this new phase in their lives, Tseng and Ecke spent the 1966-1967 academic year in Europe. A joint Rockefeller Foundation grant sent them first to Villa Serbelloni in Italy. Tseng took no work so as to force herself to relax, but she wrote

to Halpert that she was so inactive that she felt uneasy and guilty about doing nothing.<sup>97</sup> They spent the year in Munich, where Tseng had accepted a one-year Fulbright grant as a visiting lecturer in the art history department at the University of Munich and the Akademie der Bildenden Kunst, and Ecke was looking forward to time in his native country.

Once settled in Munich, Tseng Yuho resumed a more typical schedule of activities: teaching, painting, studying, and learning German. The German academic calendar afforded them a long winter-spring break, during which the couple travelled, revisiting many places from Ecke's youth. Tseng spent much of the time, though, engaged with preparations for a forthcoming solo exhibition at the Kunstverein the following spring. The Institute offered her use of a large studio space, a luxury she felt sure would make her very productive. She brought some paintings with her, but wanted new works for the show as well. Halpert, as she had on previous occasions, encouraged Tseng to give the show a retrospective aspect. Halpert wanted her to include some of her earlier work, "to demonstrate that you are not what I call a 'one-imagist' and that every year shows an additional plus."<sup>98</sup> Tseng Yuho, however, conceived of a retrospective as more for the end of a career: "If the impression is good, one day I shall have a retrospective in the big style. Don't you think so?"<sup>99</sup>

The Kunstverein exhibition was held during April-May 1967. About four

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<sup>97</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, November 23, 1966, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>98</sup> Edith Halpert letter to Tseng Yuho, December 6, 1966, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>99</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, January 14, 1967, Downtown Gallery Records.

hundred people attended the opening, many of them of out-of-town guests. Tseng and Ecke had friends around the world, and for this exhibition, supporters from France, Switzerland, Germany and America came. The show included *dsui* painting and calligraphy, about thirty works total. She sold seven paintings which pleased her, considering the poor state of the European economy.<sup>100</sup> She had not expected the show to be a commercial success, rather an opportunity to introduce her work in Germany. She was particularly gratified that many of the buyers were professors and students. Tseng followed the Munich show with exhibitions at the Reitberg Museum, Zurich and at Karmeliter Kloster, Frankfurt during the summer.

Prior to Gustav Ecke's retirement, Tseng began to make plans for her future. The art department at the University of Hawaii expressed an interest in her teaching full-time and Tseng Yuho was tempted to pursue this opportunity. Her artistic career had been advanced significantly since signing with Halpert and she earned a good income from the sale of her works. Nevertheless, Tseng Yuho's passion for art had always been coupled with a dedication to scholarship. Tseng's mother, aunt, and uncle were all educators, and the most influential people in Tseng's life had all been teachers: Ecke, Pu Jin, Pu Quan. She has always seen herself as a teacher, with her art a material expression of her interests and ideas. An academic appointment would allow her to finally combine these interests in a more secure and structured way.

For her part, Halpert worried that full-time teaching would seriously impinge on

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<sup>100</sup> The terms of Tseng's contract with the Downtown Gallery applied to the sales of all paintings, including those generated by shows organized largely by Tseng, as well as to works sold directly from the artist's studio.

Tseng Yuho's creative production, and make her a professor first and painter second. Halpert had a vested interest in keeping Tseng painting, of course, and in a letter to Tseng Yuho she expressed her concerns: "My feeling is that you are too important an artist to make this a secondary project and become what is generally called a 'Sunday painter.' This would be very sad indeed."<sup>101</sup>

Nevertheless, by May, 1967, Tseng had decided to return to school. She considered studying for her Ph.D. at a German university, since Ecke was interested in retiring to Germany. The language issue posed a barrier, however, with Tseng uncertain that she wanted to pour her energy into polishing her German language skills to meet the demands of advanced study. In the end, Tseng and Ecke compromised by deciding to remain in Hawaii. Tseng was accepted into the Ph.D. program in art history at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. Originally, Ecke planned to accompany her to New York, but he was offered a teaching position at University of Bonn, his alma mater, which he accepted. Bonn was Ecke's home town and he had childhood friends and family there. Ecke was excited to be able to remain in Germany while Tseng was busy with her coursework in New York. That September (1967), Tseng matriculated at the Institute of Fine Arts. She wrote to Halpert: "Thus ended my glory of a professor, back to student once again."<sup>102</sup>

With Tseng's decision to return to graduate school, her relationship with Halpert entered a new phase. She continued to paint, but had little contact with Halpert even

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<sup>101</sup> Edith Halpert letter to Tseng Yuho, March 6, 1965, Downtown Gallery Records.

<sup>102</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, July 16, 1967, Downtown Gallery Records.

though they were both in New York. Tseng was busy doing graduate coursework, and Halpert's deteriorating physical and mental health meant their worlds did not often intersect. The relationship ended with Halpert's death in 1970, but had grown increasingly difficult in the last years. When Tseng signed with Edith Halpert and the Downtown Gallery it was a new arrangement for her. She had never been represented by an agent, and preferred to handle the details of sales and exhibitions on her own. One disadvantage of living in Hawaii was its remoteness from major markets, a reality Tseng managed to transcend; nevertheless, Halpert's attention to Tseng's work boosted her profile in the contemporary art world.

The relationship between Tseng and Halpert evolved over time, as the letters between them reveals. The correspondence also suggests the intense nature of the relationship between artist and dealer. The early letters exchanged between them were polite and business-like. They addressed the complications involved in organizing exhibitions, arranging shipping and the myriad details of their business relationship. Over time, though, the relationship developed another dimension: one of personal respect and even warm friendship. Indeed, Halpert was renowned for the intense friendships she developed with her artists; her social and professional worlds were one and the same. The Tseng-Halpert correspondence follows a similar pattern.

Tseng's association with Halpert brought many benefits, but the exclusive contract came at a price. Halpert wanted production from her artists and pressed Tseng to paint more and faster. Tseng reflected on the arrangement: "She was so much after me. Painting, painting, painting. Some of them I hadn't really properly finished yet. . . . Later

on, I could not stand it any more. I think I sent things too early. And that's why I was unhappy with her, although, she did a great deal of good for my career."<sup>103</sup> Also, Tseng disliked losing track of her works, since Halpert rarely shared with Tseng information about purchases. Eventually, Halpert's declining physical and mental state took their toll. Tseng recalls that Halpert became increasingly difficult to work with. Bouts of irrationality became more frequent. Tseng Yuho's experience was shared by others, even with friends and artists of very long standing. Indeed, by the end, Halpert had alienated nearly everyone around her. Nevertheless, she was, for the decade of their relationship, a large presence in Tseng Yuho's life.

#### ***Dsui Hua: Patronage of Many Kinds***

Tseng's works have benefitted from the patronage of many influential individuals and groups. Early in her career in China, Tseng's traditional-style works attracted the attention of Chinese and Western collectors who appreciated her mastery of the classical genres. In the West, having developed a new technique, Tseng's works tapped into different markets and sources of support in the form of traditional patronage, but also as intellectual patronage.

As art that is both modern and Chinese, Tseng's works appeal to audiences whose tastes embrace one, and sometimes both, of these interests. In Hawaii, she attracted the support of island collectors in the early fifties. Many of them have been collectors and benefactors who, with Tseng, share ties to the Honolulu Academy of Arts and the

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<sup>103</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, March 6, 1997.

Oriental Art Society of Hawaii. These include the collectors Phyllis Bowen, Ernest K. H. Lee, and the late Mitchell Hutchinson. Visitors to Hawaii have been another source of patronage. Max Ernst, H. Harvard Arnason, and Edith Halpert all met Tseng while visiting Oahu and subsequently became influential supporters of her work.

In the years following statehood in 1959, Hawaii experienced major changes to its political and social identity. Culturally, many trends followed the mainland, but in some areas Hawaii proved to be a leader and innovator. Two of these cultural commitments benefitted Tseng's career. In 1965, the Hawaii State Foundation for Culture and the Arts was established as the official arts agency of the islands. Two years later, Hawaii was the first state to enact the "Art in State Buildings Law," which generates revenue for the State Foundation for the purchase of works of art. The legislation and Foundation influenced the state's cultural self-perception and revitalized the local artist community. The Foundation currently owns thirteen of Tseng's *dsui* works, making its collection second only to the Honolulu Academy of Arts.<sup>104</sup>

Outside Hawaii, Tseng found supporters on the mainland, as well. Her works have been shown in numerous exhibitions in the San Francisco area since 1947, and interest in her work there remains strong. Edith Halpert's representation ensured an even wider audience. The Downtown Gallery, whose avowed goal was the promotion of modern American art, brought Tseng to the attention of collectors with no particular interest or background in Chinese art. In this way, Tseng's paintings were acquired by John D. Rockefeller III, Laurence Rockefeller, Joseph Hazan, and by numerous less

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<sup>104</sup> The Honolulu Academy of Arts holds twenty-one of Tseng's works in its collection.

affluent collectors.

Another form of patronage arose through Tseng's parallel career as a scholar of Chinese art history. Fellow academics have appreciated the nuanced interpretation of China's painting traditions that *dsui hua* represents. Michael Sullivan, whose interest in Tseng's work dates back to 1947, was the first to recognize her talent. Subsequently, others offered intellectual patronage. Li Chu-ting and Richard Barnhart, for example, have long admired Tseng's distinctive style, in which they recognize the Chinese foundations of her personal expression.

During the decade of Halpert's representation, Tseng's confidence increased. She was more secure in her new *dsui* technique and its possibilities. One sign of this new assurance was the incorporation of tapa cloth into her work. With its origins in ancient China, tapa fitted into Tseng's pattern of adapting existing Chinese forms to her art. In addition, tapa cloth tied Tseng's work to Hawaii, where tapa is appreciated as a local art form. Tseng used tapa as a way to assert her relationship to her island home, while maintaining an identity distinct from it.

For all the frustrations Edith Halpert brought Tseng recognition and sales. Through museum exhibitions, gallery shows, and commissions, Halpert promoted Tseng as a significant American artist. Prior to signing with Halpert, Tseng enjoyed primarily a regional reputation with a base of support in Hawaii and California. Halpert ensured that Tseng's works reached audiences throughout the country. With Halpert's emphasis on American art and American artists, Tseng reasserted herself as a Chinese painter by

emphasizing her Chinese training and background, and the Chinese genesis of *dsui hua*. In 1962, she signalled this by no longer allowing Halpert's publicity to refer to the technique as "watercolor-collage." This earlier name may have been more comprehensible to a public whose exposure to and understanding of Chinese art was limited. It is a sign of Tseng's emerging confidence in herself and in her art that is reflected in the name change.

This was not the only risk Tseng took in this period. While she had been able to earn a comfortable living selling her work, Tseng had always balanced painting with teaching and scholarship. Gustav Ecke's retirement from the University of Hawaii marked a change in the established pattern of their lives, and offered Tseng the opportunity to realize her academic goals on a full-time basis.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE TURN TO ACADEMIA

Edith Gregor Halpert died in October, 1970. Fourteen months later, Gustav Ecke died. In just over a year, Tseng Yuho lost two of the most influential people in her life. Their passing marks another critical juncture. The relationship with Halpert had become increasingly untenable over the years, but the bitterness of the end does not diminish the important role Halpert and the Downtown Gallery played in Tseng's life and in advancing her career. Tseng Yuho had known Ecke since her undergraduate days at Furen University, and the two of them forged a relationship around their mutual commitment to Chinese art. Ecke's health had been compromised by heart disease for many years, and both Tseng and Ecke were aware of the fragile nature of his condition. Even before Ecke's retirement, Tseng had begun to make plans for her own career, deciding to pursue a Ph.D. in art history in preparation for an academic position.

#### *Dsui Hua in the Seventies*

Between graduate studies for her doctorate (1967-1969) and assuming full-time teaching responsibilities in 1969, Tseng's creative energy in the seventies was focussed more on scholarship than on painting. After her prolific years with the Downtown Gallery, the downturn in her artistic production was dramatic. Still, in 1978, she completed two works now in the Art in Public Places Collection of the Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts. *Hawaii Formation* is a large (6' 6 1/2" x 22' 7") *dsui*

work for the University of Hawaii at Hilo; she also painted a small version (24" x 48") of the same composition (fig. 83). The two are similar, varying primarily in scale, with the Hilo mural comprised of eight panels. The color, predominantly blue and yellow, are intense and suggest the interplay of sunlight on sea and sky. The tree-like forms here are not the stick-like, calligraphy-derived tree shapes that she frequently uses. These are full silhouettes, ghostly in appearance with their pale forms thickly entwined and receding into the distance beneath the gentle curve of a faraway hill.

Between 1969 and 1971, Tseng expanded the concept of “assembled painting” to include a new medium: plastic. She applied the new technique to three-dimensional compositions that illustrated ancient Chinese cosmic concepts. Writing in 1995, Tseng explained:

Ancient Chinese studies often mingled true science and technology with mythology and speculation. Many [of these] creative and sophisticated scientific discoveries are still in use today. Later generations were ignorant of the true scientific knowledge [on which these ideas were based]. In recent years, scholars such as Joseph Needham, Wang Ling, Wang Zhenduo and others, have published contemporary interpretations of the ancient work and rediscovered the profound wisdom [of the ancient ideas]. Between 1969 and 1971, following research on Chinese symbolism and abstractions, I constructed a number of numerologic charts into a series of plastic reliefs.<sup>1</sup>

One of these works was *Calendar* (1969; fig. 84). Using yellow plastic strips and circles, she created the work following a Han design that illustrates the four seasons and twenty-four solar terms of the year in schematic form.

Another work from this series is *A Reading of Yijing* (1970; fig. 85). Drawing inspiration from the *Yijing*, the divinatory text of the Zhou dynasty court, Tseng’s

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<sup>1</sup> Tseng, *Chuantong*, 141.

construction is a precise, mathematical rendering of the sixty-four hexagrams. The *Yijing* relies on the use of eight trigrams, in a combination of unbroken (*yang*) and broken (*yin*) lines. Pairs of trigrams are combined for a total of sixty-four hexagrams. Each hexagram is named in the text and cryptic statements accompany them for divinatory purposes. The *Yijing* has been described as a treatise of “awesome obscurity,”<sup>2</sup> but one of great significance. Tseng’s work reflects the mystical nature of the text with an equally sophisticated and complex design.

Working with black and white plastic, *A Reading of Yijing* is comprised of two sections. The main section features each of the sixty-four hexagrams, beginning at upper left with *kun* which is wholly *yin* (six broken lines) to lower right, *jian*, which is all *yang* (six unbroken lines). Beneath each hexagram is the character identifying it by name. At the center of the composition is a round pivot. Yellow leads connect the identifying characters of each of the outer square, to the central knob. To the right, four smaller squares echo the main hexagram chart.

During a period in the sixties Tseng worked in pure abstraction, a style she didn’t find intellectually very satisfying. With these cosmic concepts, she was able to return to abstract work, but this time imbued with profound metaphysical significance. This inquiry contributed to the design and building of the home she designed in Hawaii Kai following Ecke’s death, which she built according to ancient principles. She calls it *Jiuzheng ge* (Loft of the nine). The design of the house follows the ancient belief that the

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Hucker, *China’s Imperial Past: An Introduction to Chinese History and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), 72.

realm was divided into nine equal regions. The concept dates back to antiquity and is credited to Yu the Great (third millennium B.C.), legendary founder of China's first dynasty called Xia. Yu was said to have engineered China's successful attempts at flood control, draining the empire to provide arable land amidst the nine regions. The regions themselves are schematized to correspond to the eight cardinal directions. The center is reserved as the particular domain of the Son of Heaven. *Jiuzheng ge* conforms to this idealized arrangement, even leaving a central courtyard open to the sky.

The plastic work lasted only a few years. Tseng discovered she is allergic to plastic resin, as she was to lacquer in the early sixties. In addition, she felt these works were not understood. Michael Sullivan, who had been a supporter of her stylistic changes since the forties, described this phase of three-dimensional plastic works as "happily brief."<sup>3</sup> These works differed from her painted works, which favored indistinct suggestions of depth and blurred lines rather than the stark precision of plastic geometric forms.

Some of the ideas from the plastic compositions, though, were incorporated into *dsui* works. *Quatrain* (1973; fig. 86), for example, is part of this period. The composition continues the cosmic ideas of the plastic works by the arrangement of the circle in a square. In Chinese cosmology, the circle represents heaven and the square earth and the superimposition of one on the other mimics the heaven/earth arrangement. *Quatrain* returns to the original *dsui* technique, using paper and aluminum on masonite

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<sup>3</sup> Sullivan, *Art and Artists*, 208.

but incorporating the intellectual ideas on which the plastic works were based.<sup>4</sup>

Other than these examples, the record of work from this period is extraordinarily slight in painted works. One notable exception is *Soul Song*, a 1982 painting inspired by a poem by Hawaii poet Coby Black (fig. 87). It is a large composition (6' x 8'), painted on four panels, using acrylics and aluminum on paper. Since developing her *dsui* technique, it had been unusual for Tseng to include inscriptions on her work. Traditional-style paintings from Beijing and the first years in Hawaii occasionally followed the literati pattern of combining painting with text, but not her *dsui* works. It is an indication of the artist's regard for Black's poem that she broke with convention. The poem, inscribed on the far right panel, reads:

A pearl suspended in infinity is my joy.  
This moment knows no time.  
I have been abandoned by my earth,  
Cast adrift beyond the realm of relativity.  
The universe enfolds me in the beauty of pure light.  
All flesh is shed and what is left of me condenses into immortality.  
I have become the tear of God.  
A poem by Coby Black

None of the poem's metaphysical references to infinity, relativity, immortality, and God lend themselves easily to physical representation. Instead, Tseng's work is bathed in a pale glow, manifestation of the "pure light" mentioned in the poem, perhaps, and enhanced by aluminum which makes the surface of the work glow. A passage of tree-like silhouettes emerges from this shimmering ground and straddles two of the

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<sup>4</sup> This work underwent repair in 1998. It is in the collection of Pacific Club, Honolulu, where it is displayed without benefit of climate control. Sun and humidity had taken their toll, and in 1998 Tseng reworked the surface.

panels. Their forms recall the ghostly shadows of the Hilo mural.

### **Scholarship**

Following graduation from Furen University in 1945, Tseng assumed the mantle of teacher: "I was a teacher since the day I graduated."<sup>5</sup> Tseng tutored a family of children to help support herself. In 1947, both she and Ecke taught at the California-Yale School of Chinese Studies in Beijing, where Tseng lectured on Chinese painting and history. In Hawaii, her teaching career flourished. Shortly after arriving in Honolulu, Tseng began teaching Chinese brush painting classes at the art school of the Honolulu Academy of Arts, a job she kept until 1963. She spent the summer session of 1953 at the University of California at Berkeley, where she lectured on the art of the Qing period. Tseng received no formal training as a teacher, nor had she earned any advanced degrees, but she enjoyed teaching and felt confident of her abilities in the classroom. Of her teaching, she says, "I think of myself as an educator first; second, I'm a painter."<sup>6</sup>

When Gustav Ecke retired from the University of Hawaii, the Art Department hired Tseng Yuho to fill the vacancy. She completed her Master's degree there in 1967, writing a thesis on the Song dynasty emperor Huizong, "Sung Hui Tsung and His Times" for the Department of History. In 1972, she earned her Ph.D. in art history from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, with her dissertation "Emperor Hui-tsung, the Artist, 1082-1136." She received promotion to full professor in 1973 at the University of Hawaii and assumed an active role in teaching and administrative work

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<sup>5</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 19, 1997.

<sup>6</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, March 12, 1997.

until her retirement in 1985.

As a professor in the Art Department, Tseng taught both sides of the Chinese art equation: studio art and art history. As an active and successful professional artist whose early career had been built upon her facility with the Chinese brush, she was an experienced teacher for Chinese ink painting and calligraphy courses. Her art history courses “covered all aspects of Chinese art, including painting, prints, calligraphy, sculpture, ceramics, architecture and crafts such as textiles, and lacquer.” She described her teaching style in barristerial terms: “Teaching Chinese art history, I seriously presented art like a lawyer in court, stating facts and drawing conclusions.”<sup>7</sup>

The Tseng-Eckes carried with them to Hawaii part of their collection of traditional Chinese paintings. In Honolulu, Tseng Yuho wrote scholarly articles on two of them: Wen Zhengming’s *Seven Junipers* and Xue Wu’s *Orchids*.<sup>8</sup> She was very familiar with their paintings from Beijing, so it was easy for her to make them the subject of her scholarly research. “‘The Seven Junipers’ of Wen Cheng-ming,” Tseng’s first scholarly publication, appeared in *Archives of Chinese Art Society of America* in 1954. The following year, her work on the courtesan painter Xue Wu was published in *Arts Asiatiques*.

#### “‘The Seven Junipers’ of Wen Cheng-ming”

Wen’s painting takes as its subject the so-called “Seven Junipers of Changshu.” According to the gazetteer for Changshu, the ancient trees were planted in A.D. 500 at

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<sup>7</sup> Tseng, *Chuantong*, 132, 135.

<sup>8</sup> In 1952, they were acquired from the Tseng-Eckes by the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

the Daoist temple Zhi Dao Guan in Changshu, Jiangsu province. Four of them were replaced around 1044. These ancient junipers became a local attraction and visitors included poets and painters who were inspired by their gnarled boughs and indomitable spirit. The handscroll, painted in ink on paper, is dated 1532.

Tseng begins the article by recounting the history of the famous theme and the honor bestowed upon it by writers and painters. Wen Zhengming's teacher Shen Zhou had commemorated a visit to the site in the handscroll of 1481 entitled *Three Junipers*. Since then, his work had been "respected as a climax of those depicting the ancient trees."<sup>9</sup> Tseng asserts instead that Wen Zhengming's version of 1532 is superior. She had the opportunity to examine Shen Zhou's painting when she lived in Beijing. The work, she recalls, "had its important aspects, but was not one of his greater paintings." In Tseng's opinion, Wen Zhengming's work was successful because "he integrates the seven junipers into a pattern of extraordinary tension. In depicting the trees Wen displays a brushwork of rare excellence. When painting them and when writing about them, he himself becomes the trees."<sup>10</sup>

Tseng discusses similar examples from Wen's oeuvre to bolster her argument and also introduces a previously unknown hanging scroll for consideration, *The Seven Stars*, like *Ancient Junipers*, which took as its subject the same grove of trees depicted in Wen's work.<sup>11</sup> Lacking signatures or seals, Tseng proposes it is a work, not by Wen himself, but

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<sup>9</sup> Tseng, "Seven Junipers," 22.

<sup>10</sup> Tseng, "Seven Junipers," 23.

<sup>11</sup> This work is in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing.

of his school.<sup>12</sup>

The 1952 transfer of ownership of *Seven Junipers* from the Tseng-Ecke's collection to a museum collection warranted publicity, given Wen Zhengming's stature. For the scholarly world, Tseng's article announced the accession of Wen's work into the collection of the Honolulu Academy of Arts. It seemed natural for Tseng to write about a work she knew so well. Furthermore, it would stand as a reminder of the couple's relationship to the work. Tseng's article provides detailed translations of inscriptions, colophons, signatures, and seals and situates the work within Wen's oeuvre and others of the same theme.<sup>13</sup>

#### “Hsüeh Wu and Her Orchids in the Collection of the Honolulu Academy of Arts”

In 1955, Tseng published a short article in *Arts Asiatiques* on a monumental ink monochrome *Orchids* handscroll by Xue Wu acquired from the couple for the collection of the Honolulu Academy of Arts. She maintains the comment that it is the finest ink-orchid painting of the entire Ming period in its brushwork, composition, and adherence to literati aesthetic ideals.

Xue Wu had an unmistakable talent for painting and the story of her life as a courtesan made her a compelling subject for study. Tseng's article is the earliest

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<sup>12</sup> Others have subsequently argued it as being from Wen Zhengming's own hand. See Anne de Coursey Clapp, *Wen Cheng-ming: The Ming Artist and Antiquity* (Ascona, Switzerland: Artibus Asiae, 1975), 65.

<sup>13</sup> Tseng's proprietary interest was subsequently challenged. Marshall Wu, for example, maintains that both this work and the Xue Wu *Orchid* handscroll are forgeries. Other Wen Zhengming scholars have continued to draw upon Tseng's research and accept *Seven Junipers* as a work by Wen Zhengming. See Richard Edwards, *The Art of Wen Cheng-ming, 1470-1559* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1976) and Clapp, *Wen Cheng-ming*.

scholarly treatment of a Chinese woman artist. Her study focused on sorting through the biographical details and literary references to the artist, and attempted to place Xue Wu within the social and artistic world of the Ming courtesan. Ironically, within the strict confines of Confucian society, courtesans often enjoyed the most freedom to realize their intellectual and artistic potential. Xue Wu's interests included Buddhism and poetry, and her many talents were enumerated in contemporary sources. They ranged from such genteel pastimes as weaving and embroidery to the performing arts (flute and lute), literati arts (paintings and calligraphy), and even martial arts (horseback archery).

Tseng scrutinizes Xue Wu's handscroll for its brushwork and technique. She explains the Ming artist's use of the "middle tip" method--the method favored by Tseng herself--and is able to identify three different types of brushes used by Xue Wu to achieve the painting's linear and textural effects. Tseng Yuho concludes her article with the following paragraph:

With the restlessness of her daily life, with her social experiences, it might have been easy for her art to succumb to the gorgeous effects of the Academic style. Instead, she followed the Wen-jen master's austere ideals. Hsüeh Wu, absorbing her cultural environment, reached an interpretation which zealously embodied the best influences of her time. Beyond that, her orchid scroll, as has been said, remains the most accomplished work of its kind for the whole Ming period, whether by a man or a woman painter. In her art she found the true exponent of her personality. What we see in her orchid painting is assurance and the self-reliance with which she achieved a union of object and subject in an execution that was lofty and pure.<sup>14</sup>

Susan Mann's research on the eighteenth century has shown how courtesans were increasingly marginalized as a result of Confucian moralizing promoted by the Qing. In

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<sup>14</sup> Tseng, "Hsüeh Wu," 208.

the literary milieu of Mann's study, this meant eliminating the writings of courtesans from published collections of women's works, even though courtesans were among the few literate women in China.<sup>15</sup> Xue Wu, then, may have been doubly marginalized in subsequent painting history, as a courtesan and as a woman. Tseng's own experiences as a woman in a male-dominated world made her sensitive to the plight of Xue Wu's reputation, and as an artist, Tseng responded to the quality of the Ming painter's work.

“Emperor Hui Tsung, the Artist: 1082-1136”

Tseng's dissertation was a pioneering work in the field of patronage studies. Written under the guidance of Professor Alexander Soper, “Emperor Hui Tsung, the Artist: 1082-1136” examined the artistic achievements of the Song dynasty emperor and his aesthetic contributions to the period.<sup>16</sup> Her master's thesis, completed in 1967, formed the first part of this project. “Sung Hui Tsung and His Time” was “a biographical study and survey of his contribution to Chinese culture.”<sup>17</sup>

The dissertation examined the aesthetic atmosphere of Huizong's time and the cultural activities that flourished under his rule. His true passion was art, not affairs of state, and his devotion to the arts has long been regarded as detrimental to the fate of the Northern Song. The invasion and defeat of the Northern Song state by the Jin in 1127

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<sup>15</sup> Mann, *Precious Records*, 121-123.

<sup>16</sup> Alexander Soper (1904-1993) was a leading scholar of Chinese art in the postwar period. With Robert Treat Paine he co-authored *The Art and Architecture of Japan* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1955), and with Lawrence Sickman, *The Art and Architecture of China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

<sup>17</sup> Betty Tseng Yu-ho Ecke [Tseng Yuho], “Emperor Hui-tsung, the Artist, 1082-1136,” Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1972, 5. Neither of these works has been published.

has colored Huizong's legacy, with his art and artistic contributions held in disgrace along with the deposed emperor himself.

Tseng's dissertation sought to establish the personality and character of Huizong the artist. To do so, she examined literary sources closely contemporaneous with him and mined them for information about his practices and ideas. He was an ardent collector, a fact made clear in the imperial catalogues of painting, calligraphy, and bronzes that were compiled of Huizong's collection. In addition, he composed poetry that Tseng described as not great, but graceful. He expanded the academies of painting and calligraphy, maintained rigorous standards for them, and was actively involved in overseeing their artistic production. Tseng examined Huizong's versatility as a painter, and the high standards he set for himself in both painting and calligraphy. The quality of his work was denigrated in succeeding centuries by the rise of literati painting--undeservedly, in Tseng's assessment.

Huizong's reign is one of the most compelling episodes in Chinese history, with the interests and personality of the emperor playing key roles in subsequent historical interpretations. Tseng's twin interests in history and art led her to the topic. The attraction of the artist-scholar to the artist-emperor was a natural one. In addition, Tseng had personal experience with artist-royalty. Her teachers in Beijing, Pu Jin and Pu Quan, were members of the Qing royal family, and this connection may have further fueled her interest. Through Pu Jin and Pu Quan, Tseng had seen the human side of royalty, with its full complement of frailties and the toll of privileged isolation from the world beyond the palace walls.

Tseng's facility with reading texts and documents and her familiarity with traditional sources were key elements in the success of the dissertation. She established a detailed biography of Huizong that is itself a major contribution to Song imperial scholarship. Recent interest in Huizong studies has subjected Huizong and his reign to new interpretations,<sup>18</sup> but the starting-point for any new research remains Tseng's dissertation, whose empirical nature and reliance on traditional sources make it a work of continuing value.

### *Chinese Calligraphy*

In 1971, the Philadelphia Museum of Art organized the first major exhibition in the United States devoted to the art of Chinese calligraphy. "Chinese Calligraphy" featured nearly one hundred objects drawn exclusively from American collections. The show opened in Philadelphia and travelled to two other venues: the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Jean Lee, curator of Asian art at Philadelphia organized the exhibition, with assistance from Tseng Yuho. The exhibition received support from John M. Crawford, Jr., many of whose works were featured in the exhibition. Tseng came to know Crawford during her time at the Institute of Fine Arts, and when the exhibition was in its planning phase, Crawford recommended Tseng to Jean Lee. Tseng accepted Jean Lee's offer to be a consultant and write the accompanying catalogue.

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<sup>18</sup> Emperor Huizong and his period was the subject of a panel at the annual meeting of the Association of Asian Studies (Session 82: "Huizong and the Culture of North Song China," March 9-12, 2000) and a scholarly workshop held the following year at the University of Washington ("Huizong and the Culture of Late Northern Song China," February 1-3, 2001).

The exhibition and the catalogue were both hugely successful. The show received favorable reviews in the *New York Times* daily and Sunday papers,<sup>19</sup> as well as inspiring a “Notes and Comments” piece in the *New Yorker*.<sup>20</sup> Richard Barnhart called Tseng’s catalogue, “The most recent and best introduction and historical survey, by a leading contemporary Chinese painter, calligrapher, and art historian.”<sup>21</sup> Tseng wrote an introductory essay for the catalogue, as well as entries for each of the ninety-six objects in the exhibition.

“Chinese Calligraphy” is Tseng’s most significant art-historical exhibition. Public reception to the show marked a turning point in Chinese exhibitions in America, proving that such an intellectually rigorous and abstract art could no longer be considered too esoteric or complex for U.S. museum visitors. The timing of the show was also fortuitous, coming as it did nearly simultaneously with the United States’ recognition of the People’s Republic of China. Two copies of *Chinese Calligraphy* were among the gifts Richard Nixon carried to China in 1972 as gifts for Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai. The catalogue was intended to convey the American people’s interest in and affection for Chinese culture.

In the introduction and ensuing entries, Tseng presents a general introduction to the development of Chinese writing and the evolution of calligraphy as China’s most esteemed form of artistic expression. The entries themselves stick closely to the objects,

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<sup>19</sup> *New York Times*, October 3, 1972 and March 15, 1972.

<sup>20</sup> “Fleshy Calligraphy,” *New Yorker*, April 1, 1972, 28-30.

<sup>21</sup> Barnhart, “Chinese Calligraphy,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 30, no. 5 (April/May 1972).

giving author and artist information, historical setting, translations, and occasional stylistic commentary. “Chinese Calligraphy,” the exhibition and the catalogue, were serious scholarly endeavors that resisted the urge to oversimplify for the benefit of a general audience. Tseng selected objects she considered to be the finest examples available, within the constraints imposed by borrowing exclusively from domestic collections, rather than works that would be easier to comprehend or visually most attractive. Furthermore, for the catalogue, Tseng was able to draw on her command of the vast Chinese literature on calligraphy, combined with her own training and experiences as a calligrapher.<sup>22</sup>

“A Reconsideration of ‘Ch’uan-mo-i-hsieh,’ the Sixth Principle of Hsieh Ho”

Tseng had been involved in mural painting in a very immediate way in 1957 and 1958 with the commissions at St. Catherine’s Church, Kauai and the Manoa Chinese Cemetery, Oahu. Fifteen years later the practical issues of fresco mural production became the foundation for Tseng’s research for presentation at an international symposium. In 1972 Tseng published “A Reconsideration of ‘Ch’uan-mo-i-hsieh,’ the Sixth Principle of Hsieh Ho.” She delivered the paper originally at an international symposium of Chinese art held at the National Palace Museum in Taipei. Xie He (Hsieh Ho), a painter active in Nanjing around A.D. 500, articulated six principles for evaluating a work of art. In his *Guhua pinlu* (Classification of painters) these six principles have become “the cornerstone of the vast literature on art criticism that has accumulated

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<sup>22</sup> The catalogue went through several printings and remains a highly sought-after addition to the Chinese art history scholar’s library.

through the ages.” As articulated by Xie He:

Good painting has six conditions. . . . What are they? The first is “animation through spirit consonance.” The second is “structural method in use of the brush.” The third is “fidelity to the object in portraying forms.” The fourth is “conformity to kind in applying colors.” The fifth is “proper planning in placing [of elements].” The sixth is “transmission [of the experience of the past] in making copies.”<sup>23</sup>

The first two laws, being the most obscure, have generated debate and commentaries since Xie He’s time. The others focus on aspects of technique and composition and tend to be less contentious. The third and fourth, for example, deal with the depiction of form and application of color. Five is concerned with the placement of objects within a composition, and six with the practice of copying as a means of learning how to paint.

With the first two principles still hotly debated, Tseng concentrated on the Sixth Principle, one of those generally considered to be fairly transparent in its meaning. The transmission of the past through the act of copying has long been considered invaluable in any Chinese artist’s training and was essential to Tseng’s own early training. Painters were expected to do mechanical copywork until sufficiently versed in the past. In doing so, one was able to fully appreciate the methods and principles that made an artist great. Only then one’s own style, through the lens of the past, might be exerted.

Tseng’s “A Reconsideration of ‘Ch’uan-mo-i-hsieh,’ Hsieh Ho’s Sixth Principle” examined the technical aspects of transferring and copying images. The controversial aspect of this paper was her belief that Xie He was referring not to scroll paintings but to

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<sup>23</sup> Laurence Sickman and Alexander Soper, *The Art and Architecture of China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 133.

murals. Evidence for her theory was drawn from examples of Buddhist works, ranging from the colossal fifth-century seated Buddha at Yungang to the cave paintings of Dunhuang. Owing to the scarcity of non-Buddhist examples, her main points of reference were Buddhist images, and mostly from the Tang period. The kernel of Tseng's paper took issue with the interpretations that *chuanmo yixie* (*ch'uan-mo i-hsieh*) acquired over time. Specifically, she noted that the word "ancient" never appeared in the original text, but has been understood as a key element of the Sixth Principle. In combination with copy (*mo*) it came to mean "old masters" and referred to the perpetuation (*chuan*) of tradition.

Tseng interpreted Xie He as writing about mural art, with his advice aimed at the artisan-craftsman responsible for copying and enlarging compositions and iconographic details for mural paintings. The production of these mural works relied upon a variety of mechanical techniques: tracing copies, pounce copies, and draft-sketches. As she asserted, "The procedure of making large murals is drafting, enlargement, transmitting, copying, and tracing. Hsieh Ho's words may have something to do with such a process."<sup>24</sup> With the decline of mural art, Xie He's principles were appropriated by intellectuals who adapted them to scroll painting and they (the principles) lost their association with a specific past (mural painting), and came to mean a more general past (antiquity).

A spirited discussion followed Tseng's presentation of her paper at the Taipei

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<sup>24</sup> Tseng Yu-ho Ecke [Tseng Yuho], "A Reconsideration of 'Ch'uan-mo-i-hsieh,' the Sixth Principle of Hsieh Ho" (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1972), 318.

symposium. Wen Fong reiterated the early existence of tracing methods; Akiyama Terukazu found the lack of evidence for Buddhist mural paintings in Xie He's time troubling, as well as Tseng's use of examples from eighth-century Dunhuang. This lively debate disproved any notion that the meaning of all but Xie He's first two principles had been settled.

### “Calligraphy in the Seventeenth Century”

The catalogue that accompanied the “Chinese Calligraphy” exhibition established Tseng's reputation as a serious scholar of the art. Issues of Chinese calligraphy continued to play an important role in her research and scholarship. In 1976, she published “Calligraphy in the Seventeenth Century” in the *Journal of the Institute of Chinese Studies*.<sup>25</sup> In Tseng's view, the outstanding calligraphy of the sixteenth century is characterized by such innovative artists as Dong Qichang, Chen Jiru, Mo Shilong, Mi Wanzhong, and Xin Tong. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the interest in archaic and epigraphic studies led to the taste for bold and more decorative script types. By comparison, then, the calligraphy of the seventeenth century appears “gentle and tame” next to that of the preceding and succeeding periods.<sup>26</sup>

Tseng's essay situates seventeenth century calligraphy within the complex political and artistic developments of the period. The artists of most interest to Tseng are a group of *yimin* artists whom Tseng considers “the most dedicated” of painter

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<sup>25</sup> Tseng Yu-ho Ecke [Tseng Yuho], “Chinese Calligraphy in the Seventeenth Century,” *Journal of the Institute of Chinese Studies* 8, no. 2 (1977): 469-486.

<sup>26</sup> Tseng, “Calligraphy in the Seventeenth Century,” 469.

calligraphers.<sup>27</sup> Represented in the group were Chen Hongshou (1599-1652), Gong Xian (1619-1689), Zhu Da (1626-1705), Fu Shan (1607-1684), and Shitao (1630-1707). Each of these artists was known for his dynamic personal style, and the ability to maintain a *wenren* identity while being professional artists. Against the orthodoxy of Dong Qichang, with its complete suppression of emotion, this group is distinguished for their emotionality and non-conformity, in life and art.

Shitao's calligraphy, and his writings, characterize the singular nature of the seventeenth century for Tseng. Shitao was aware of the weight of the past, and yet obsessed with originality and the source of artistic creativity. Throughout the essay, Tseng's comments resonate with the full weight of her experience as an artist. She reads the calligraphers and brush strokes with a practiced eye, alert to the method and idiosyncrasies of each. The tendency of Ming artists was to keep their painting and calligraphy separate. Dong Qichang used different names when signing his painted and written works. Wen Zhengming and Tang Yin used separate brushes and inks for the two arts. This practice was altered in the seventeenth century. Chen Hongshou, for example, used the same brush for painting and calligraphy, evident from the elongation of his characters with a long, thin brush, obviously the same brush used to achieve the wiry and elastic strokes of his line drawings. In Gong Xian's painting and calligraphy, she detected in the ink the "same gradation from dark to light as the newly fed brush runs out of ink." As for Zhu Da, it was clear he "preferred a worn brush for both painting and

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<sup>27</sup> Tseng, "Calligraphy in the Seventeenth Century," 471. The term *yimin* refers to individuals whose lives straddled two dynasties, but whose loyalties remained with the fallen dynasty. The Ming-Qing transition of the seventeenth century was one of the key moments in this historical phenomenon.

calligraphy. There is little modulation but honest solid lines. He possessed an inner simplicity with wholesome delivery. There is a naïveté suggesting concealed wisdom.”<sup>28</sup>

In “Calligraphy in the Seventeenth Century” Tseng redresses the idea of “gentleness” and “tameness” by discussing the intensity and emotionality of *yimin* calligraphy, in which many artists “readily expressed their state of restlessness.”<sup>29</sup> Her article contributed to the growing body of scholarship on calligraphy and the increased interest in *yimin* artists by proposing a new characterization of seventeenth-century calligraphy.

### *Chinese Folk Art*

Two exhibition projects in the mid-seventies focussed Tseng’s attention on Chinese folk art. The roots of her interest date back to China. As a child, she learned embroidery from her grandmother in Suzhou, and became attuned to the aesthetic expressions possible even in humble objects.<sup>30</sup> As an adult in Beijing, Tseng and Ecke fueled each others’ interest in aesthetic objects of all kinds, and their home displayed the finds from their frequent forays into the markets and antique shops of Beijing, and included large woodblock print door guardians on the front gate of their home.

Tseng began research in 1974 for a folk art exhibition to be held at the galleries of

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<sup>28</sup> Tseng, “Calligraphy in the Seventeenth Century,” 472.

<sup>29</sup> Tseng, “Calligraphy in the Seventeenth Century,” 471.

<sup>30</sup> Fig. 23 in the exhibition catalogue is a cotton resist-dye indigo coverlet whose provenance is given as: “Made by Madam Chang, grandmother of the Author. Author’s Collection.” See Tseng Yu-ho Ecke [Tseng Yuho], *Chinese Folk Art in American Collections, Early Fifteenth through Early Twentieth Centuries* (New York: China Institute in America, 1976), 42.

China Institute, New York. Two shows eventually resulted from this commitment. One was held at China House Gallery from October 1976 to January 1977. "Chinese Folk Art" featured fifty-nine objects drawn exclusively from public and private collections in the United States. Recognizing the depth of available resources and the scholarly void that needed to be addressed, Tseng took advantage of her work for the China Institute show for a second exhibition. "Chinese Folk Art II" was an expanded version of "Chinese Folk Art." The show featured 134 objects, 58 of which had been part of the first exhibition. Organized through the Honolulu Academy of Arts, "Chinese Folk Art II" travelled to three venues in addition to the Honolulu Academy of Arts in 1977 and 1978.<sup>31</sup>

Limiting the focus of the exhibition was difficult for Tseng; she eliminated some categories altogether (ceramics, musical instruments, children's toys, theater arts). The final exhibition list included bamboo objects, basketry, textiles, embroidery, wooden utensils, lacquered leather, gourds, metalwork, carved wooden statues, paper cuts, and wood block prints. In the catalogue, textual explanations clarified some sociological or technical issues for some of the objects. Primarily, though, Tseng left aesthetic appreciation to the viewer without the clutter of interpretation. She wrote in the introduction: "Fine folk art displays its craftsmanship with a childlike honesty. Because it has an instinctive respect for the material, it allows the qualities of the material to speak for themselves. Without intellectual elaboration, the intrinsic qualities of the material are

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<sup>31</sup> These venues were: Asian Art Museum, San Francisco; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago.

evident and the maximum result is achieved with a limited means.”<sup>32</sup>

Tseng’s interest in folk art sets her apart from the mainstream artistic tradition of her training. Painting and calligraphy, the two most highly esteemed art forms in China, had been elevated by generations of self-conscious intellectualization. These art forms are also an expression of individual identity. Folk art, by contrast, was seen as lacking self-conscious analysis, and embodying, as Tseng wrote, “the best portion of the ‘collective wisdom,’ silently holding a certain part of art history that is not to be underestimated.”<sup>33</sup> Folk art was an interest Tseng shared with Edith Halpert, who had been successful in promoting American folk art as the aesthetic roots of modern American art. The American Folk Art Gallery had occupied one floor of the Downtown Gallery premises since 1931, so Tseng’s own works had shared gallery space with Halpert’s American folk objects. Halpert’s interest in folk art was complex. As a dealer, folk art appealed to her financially and aesthetically. Intellectually, Halpert found in American folk art an unbroken line to the present.<sup>34</sup> Tseng’s interest in Chinese folk art diverges from Halpert’s financial concerns, but shares the dealer’s aesthetic and cultural interests. For Tseng, folk art represents the human impulse toward beauty, across time and cultures.

Serious attention to Chinese folk art had been scattered and scarce prior to

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<sup>32</sup> Tseng Yu-ho Ecke [Tseng Yuho], *Chinese Folk Art II in American Collections, from Early Fifteenth Century to Early Twentieth Century* (Honolulu: Hawaiian Lithography, 1977; distributed by University Press of Hawaii), xv.

<sup>33</sup> Tseng, *Chinese Folk Art II*, xiv.

<sup>34</sup> The Downtown Gallery’s 1931 folk art exhibition was entitled “American Ancestors.”

Tseng's two exhibitions. A few scholars in the West published occasionally on some aspect of the topic, among them Berthold Laufer's *Chinese Basket* (1925) and Schuyler Cammann's *Substance and Symbol in Chinese Toggles* (1962). Chinese scholarship was slightly more extensive, with books on Chinese handicraft, New Year prints and papercuts published in the forties and fifties. Tseng's two exhibitions were distinguished by the breadth of materials included. One of Tseng's strengths as a scholar is in the presentation and synthesis of large bodies of Chinese source material, whether historical, literary, or archeological. The focus on objects over interpretation in the case of her folk art exhibitions may reflect the scarcity of traditional scholarly attention to the subject. Following the precedent of Tseng's pioneering shows, in recent decades, topics on Chinese folk art have been the subject of books, articles, and exhibitions on a more regular basis.<sup>35</sup>

### *Poetry on the Wind*

The subject for Tseng's next major project returned to her interests in painting, poetry, and calligraphy in the folding fan format. In 1981, she authored *Poetry on the Wind, The Art of Chinese Folding Fans from the Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties*. The catalogue and exhibition were overseen by the Honolulu Academy of Arts, the show's first venue.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Most notably, *Chinese Folk Art: The Small Skills of Carving Insects* by Nancy Zeng Berliner (Boston: Little Brown, 1986). An exhibition of the collection was organized by the Yale University Art Gallery in 1986 and it travelled to museums throughout the country under the auspices of the Art Museum Association of America.

<sup>36</sup> During 1982-1983, the show travelled to three other museums: St. Louis Art Museum; David and Alfred Smart Gallery, University of Chicago; and Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara,

*Poetry on the Wind* was the first comprehensive study in English on the art of the Chinese fan. For the exhibition, Tseng limited her selection of objects to four major U.S. collections of Chinese fan paintings, two public and two private. The Honolulu Academy of Arts was home to a fine collection of fans which the museum had expanded in the two decades prior to the exhibition.<sup>37</sup> It was supplemented with objects from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the John M. Crawford, Jr. Collection, New York and the Mitchell Hutchinson Collection, Chicago. In all seventy-four fans were selected.

For the catalogue Tseng drew on historical literature as well as recent archeological evidence. Her essay included discussions on the history of fans, particularly the folding fan, and the relationships among the genre in China, Japan, and Korea. She explained the materials and methods of manufacture, the aesthetic climate in which folding fans gained popularity in the Ming and Qing dynasties, and the characteristics which make them valuable to our understanding of Chinese art and artists of the period. In short, it surveys several critical topics associated with the format.

### *Asian Orientations*

Tseng's contributions to the community of collectors in Hawaii were on display in the 1985 exhibition: "Asian Orientations: Treasures from Honolulu's Oriental Art Society." Tseng and Howard Link, Senior Curator of Asian Art at the Academy, organized the exhibition through the support of the Oriental Art Society and the

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California.

<sup>37</sup> James W. Foster, Preface to *Poetry on the Wind: The Art of Chinese Folding Fans from the Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties*, by Tseng Yuho (Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 1981), i.

Academy. It was shown at the Academy in the summer of 1985.

A decade earlier, the Oriental Art Society of Hawaii held their inaugural meeting on November 4, 1974, at which “a half-dozen founding members expressed their solemn intention ‘to increase our knowledge of Oriental art.’” Tseng was one of those founding members<sup>38</sup> and her initiative and support had been instrumental in the Society’s establishment and growth.<sup>39</sup> By 1985, the Society counted approximately sixty members whose common interest was Asian art and its collection. By the time “Asian Orientations” was undertaken, the membership collectively owned so much art that Tseng’s initial culling netted some eight hundred possible candidates for exhibition.<sup>40</sup> From those 800, nearly 350 were included in the exhibition, of which 258 were illustrated in the catalogue. They represented the countries of East and Southeast Asia and were drawn from all major media (prints, painting, sculpture, ceramics, scholar’s objects). Tseng contributed seventy-two catalogue entries for Chinese objects.

Tseng’s commitment to Asian art had been instrumental in the founding and success of the Society, in which she continues to play an active role. Her desire to build a community of interested individuals in Honolulu arose from the analogous motivation that made her a successful teacher. In his history of the Oriental Art Society in the catalogue for the show, David Eyre quoted Tseng’s reflections on the accomplishments

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<sup>38</sup> Others included the late Robert P. Griffing, former director of the Honolulu Academy of Arts, and the late Mrs. John Allison.

<sup>39</sup> David Eyre, “The Oriental Art Society of Hawaii,” in *Asian Orientations: Treasures from Honolulu’s Oriental Art Society*, edited by Howard Link (Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 1985), 10.

<sup>40</sup> George Ellis, Foreword to *Asian Orientations: Treasures from Honolulu’s Oriental Art Society*, edited by Howard Link (Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 1985), 9.

of the Society:

First of all, we are collectors. . . . We are few in number but extremely congenial and have successfully inspired one another. We have kept our group small in order to keep our learning on an intimate basis. It has helped our members to become better connoisseurs.

Aesthetic curiosity is at its best when it begins in the home where one can learn from the actual art object and exchange experiences with persons who have the same interests. It is very different from the impersonal studies of classrooms and museums.

Now selections from our collections are being shown in "Asian Orientations." The art objects included in this exhibition represent only one-tenth of what was available. They do, truthfully, represent our membership as we are.<sup>41</sup>

Beginning with their arrival in Hawaii in 1949, Tseng and Ecke worked diligently to foster interest in Asian art among the islands' art collectors and patrons. Teaching and curating were part of the equation, with the development of an active community of collectors as the third leg of this tripod. Tseng takes immense pride in this accomplishment, epitomized by the vitality of the Oriental Art Society, of which she continues to be an active member.

### *Wen-jen Hua*

On the occasion of a promised gift to the Honolulu Academy of Arts, Tseng Yuho undertook a challenge for which she was well qualified--a catalogue and exhibition on Chinese literati painting. Mitchell Hutchinson, a long-time supporter of the Academy, offered one hundred works of Chinese painting to the collection. As George Ellis, director of the Academy, wrote in his introduction to *Wen-jen Hua, Chinese Literati Painting from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell Hutchinson*, the additions

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<sup>41</sup> David Eyre, "Oriental Art Society," 11-12.

constituted “a significant milestone” in furthering the aims and objectives of the Academy in collecting Ming and Qing dynasty painting.<sup>42</sup> Tseng selected sixty-seven works to be featured in the 1988 catalogue and exhibition. The objects were by obscure artists (Fei Yigeng and Wen Shanglin), as well as well-known ones (Wen Zhengming, Shen Zhou and Zhang Daqian).

The Hutchinson-Tseng-Ecke relationship dated back to 1949. Mitchell Hutchinson spent five years in Nanjing and Shanghai as the son of missionary parents. His interest in Chinese culture continued into adulthood, with his interest in Chinese painting fueled at the University of Hawaii. There, he studied Chinese painting history with Ecke, who had only recently arrived in Hawaii. From Ecke, he learned to favor the literati painting tradition over “the then more popular and easily appreciated works” of the Ma-Xia (Southern Song) and Zhe (Ming) Schools.<sup>43</sup> Hutchinson’s first Chinese painting purchase was in 1950. He bought a hanging scroll by Tseng Yuho entitled *Two Trees*, painted in the manner of the Ming dynasty artist Wen Zhengming. Hutchinson moved to Chicago in 1953, but he maintained close ties with the Tseng-Eckes and the Academy, and thirty-five years later, Tseng presented his collection in the *Wen-jen Hua* catalogue and exhibitions.

For two years she researched every object in the collection. She combed through Chinese publications, including many literary works written by the artists themselves.

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<sup>42</sup> George Ellis, Introduction to Tseng Yuho, *Wen-jen Hua: Chinese Literati Painting from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell Hutchinson* (Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 1988), 5.

<sup>43</sup> Mitchell Hutchinson, Collector’s Preface to Tseng Yuho, *Wen-jen Hua: Chinese Literati Painting from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell Hutchinson* (Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 1988), 6.

Based on this research she characterized the individual personalities of the artists, thereby setting “his image against the cultural and critical ideas of the age.”<sup>44</sup>

Tseng’s scholarly interest in *wenren* painting was, as Howard Link pointed out, “an extension of her own commitment as an artist of the literati tradition.” The transmission of the tradition handed down since the time of Dong Qichang, was the foundation of Tseng’s training as an artist, and her scholarship reflected it:

The literati tradition, especially in its approach to art criticism, was strongly influenced by the Ming dynasty painter and theorist Tung Ch’i-ch’ang (1555-1636), who undertook to codify painting styles of the past in a way that satisfied his own sense of history, taste, and moral/ethical inclinations. He succeeded so well that most writers on literati painting in China, even down to the present day, are influenced in one way or another by his pervasive views. Dr. Ecke is no exception and herein lies the special interest of her approach, for it remains Chinese.<sup>45</sup>

Tseng’s essays chart the history of literati painting from Wang Wei’s (669-759) role in the formation of the tradition, down to Su Shi (1036-1101) in the northern Song period and Dong Qichang (1555-1636) in the Ming. She identified matters of concern to the literati artist: “the methodology of a personal style; the balance between subject matter and object description; and the expression of the main content beyond that of the subject.” The central figure in her essay was Dong Qichang, whose systematic classification of painters elevated the scholar-official amateur artists of the *wenren* ideal over the professionals he derided for their commercialization and lack of intellectual content. In addition, Dong asserted that the literati artist needed “to draw upon the past

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<sup>44</sup> Tseng Yu-ho Ecke [Tseng Yuho], *Wen-jen Hua: Chinese Literati Painting from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell Hutchinson* (Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 1988), 7.

<sup>45</sup> Howard Link, Editor’s Preface to Tseng Yuho, *Wen-jen Hua: Chinese Literati Painting from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell Hutchinson* (Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 1988), 8.

but to transform it into something new.”<sup>46</sup> In her own paintings, Tseng had closely followed this dictum, and her essay can be read as an articulation of her own artistic self-image.

The catalogue essays explored in some depth the *wenren* traditions of the Ming and Qing dynasties, as well as the nineteenth- and twentieth-century manifestations of the tradition. A final essay, “On Women Painters of China” highlighted a topic of long-standing interest to Tseng, personally and professionally. Since the publication of her 1955 article on Xue Wu, Tseng had had little occasion to revisit the subject. The Hutchinson Collection held a small number of important paintings by women artists of the Ming and Qing periods and Tseng included four of them in the exhibition: *Flowers of the Four Seasons* by Li Yin (1616-1685), *Beauty on the Shrub* and *Flowers and Insects* by Ma Quan (1640-after 1739), and *Flower Plum* by Fang Wanyi (1732-1784).

#### *A History Of Chinese Calligraphy*

*A History of Chinese Calligraphy* (1993) was published two decades after *Chinese Calligraphy* (1971), and grew out of that earlier project.<sup>47</sup> *A History of Chinese Calligraphy* presented a more personal version of her ideas on the subject. In this text Tseng was no longer restricted to the catalogue format which focussed exclusively on objects in an exhibition. She selected examples from sources far and wide, including recent archeological finds.

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<sup>46</sup> Tseng, *Wen-jen Hua*, 10, 16.

<sup>47</sup> Tseng Yu-ho Ecke [Tseng Yuho], *Chinese Calligraphy* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1971).

Tseng took as her models in this venture two past masters of Chinese calligraphy, Mi Fu (1051-1107) and Dong Qichang (1555-1636). She described both of them as “typical literati-artists who were devoted to the skill of the brush, and who combined their creative instincts with scholarship to write down their experiences for posterity.”<sup>48</sup> Both wrote extensively on calligraphy: Mi Fu’s *Shu shi* (History of calligraphy) was written between 1103 and 1107. This text, along with his *Hua shi* (History of painting) of 1103, described in detail specific pieces, along with recording their seals and inscriptions. They served as models of cataloguing for scholars of succeeding generations, including Tseng.

*A History of Chinese Calligraphy* is an ambitious and highly idiosyncratic volume. Tseng’s long involvement in calligraphy as artist and scholar is evident throughout. She acknowledged her qualifications for the project, as a “practicing artist, bred and immersed in Chinese culture.”<sup>49</sup> Her goal was to write a comprehensive history of calligraphy, adding her interpretation to the growing literature of the subject intended to introduce English-language readers to the art; Tseng’s history may be the most ambitious.<sup>50</sup> She began with calligraphy’s prehistoric origins as scratches on Neolithic pottery, and proceeded through the millennia to the highly evolved art form it is today.

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<sup>48</sup> Tseng Yuho, *A History of Chinese Calligraphy* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1993), xiii.

<sup>49</sup> Tseng, *History of Chinese Calligraphy*, xiii.

<sup>50</sup> Chen Chi-mai, *Chinese Calligraphers and Their Art* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1966); Fu Shen, *Traces of the Brush: Studies in Chinese Calligraphy* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1977); Nakata Yujiro, *Chinese Calligraphy*, translated and edited by Jeffrey Hunter (New York: Weatherhill/Tankosha, 1983); Léon Long-yien Chang and Peter Miller, *Four Thousand Years of Chinese Calligraphy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

Over four hundred pages long and including nearly seven hundred images and diagrams, this volume is a monumental project.

Tseng found previous histories of Chinese calligraphy incomplete in their lack of emphasis on the magical. The established histories, mostly written by scholars raised and trained in the Confucian tradition, reflect the rational and functional side of this art form. As with painting history, which privileges the literati tradition, so calligraphy history has devised a canon of great masters who reflect a narrow view of a large tradition.

The two exhibition catalogues Tseng published in the seventies, *Chinese Folk Art* and *Chinese Folk Art II*, underscored her commitment to reviving folk traditions. In her survey of Chinese calligraphy, Tseng emphasized that the practice of calligraphy is not exclusively the purview of the intellectual elite, but derives much of its vigor from craft and folk traditions. *A History of Chinese Calligraphy* re-introduces calligraphy's close associations with non-rational and magical qualities. Early forms of writing were deeply rooted in the supernatural, especially in divination and communication with the spirit world. These non-rational associations were eventually overshadowed by writing of the functional kind. Nevertheless, certain talismanic strains have remained vigorous, particularly in the folk tradition.

*A History of Chinese Calligraphy* presents a wealth of visual material in tandem with Tseng's personal views on a subject to which she has devoted much of her life. One reviewer credited Tseng with the courage to diverge from accepted ideas: "Drawn to objects, as opposed to individuals, she maintains a certain distance from the elaborate

canon of great masters that has developed over the centuries.”<sup>51</sup> However, in its ambitiousness, the volume favors detail at the expense of clarity, a drawback that compromises its usefulness for all but the most highly motivated reader.<sup>52</sup>

*Chuantong zhong de xiandai: Zhongguo hua xuan xinyu* (The contemporary within the traditional: some contemporary elements in classical Chinese art)

*Some Contemporary Elements in Classical Chinese Art*, a book which Tseng published in 1963, presented classical Chinese art through the eyes of a contemporary artist/art historian. Luo Qing, a Taiwan-based artist and literatus who earned a master’s degree at Washington University, read Tseng’s 1963 work in 1986.<sup>53</sup> As editor of an art series (*Arts in the Titanic Ocean*) in Taiwan, Luo obtained permission to reprint the volume. After thirty years, he believed, “her words still ring true and deserve renewed attention.”<sup>54</sup> *Chuantong zhong de xiandai* was published in 1996.

*Some Contemporary Elements* was based on a lecture Tseng gave in 1957, and illustrates how she introduced Chinese art to a Western audience. Drawing on the range of artistic traditions in China (painting, calligraphy, folk art), Tseng emphasized the creative aspirations shared by all cultures: “One can always find common elements

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<sup>51</sup> Peter Sturman, “A History of Chinese Calligraphy by Tseng Yuho,” *Orientalism* 26, no. 5 (May 1995): 80.

<sup>52</sup> A more serious constraint to its usefulness concerns the degree of editorial control Tseng exercised over the text. An English-language editor could have ensured that the most glaring stylistic and grammatical infelicities were corrected and the entire text made more approachable and professional.

<sup>53</sup> In Taiwan, Luo Qing has also been a professor at National Zhengzhi University and Furen University, the Taiwan reincarnation of Tseng’s own alma mater.

<sup>54</sup> Luo Qing, “Zhong-Xi yishu zhi qiao” (Bridging Chinese and Western art), in Tseng, *Chuantong*, n.p.

throughout art history East and West; they are as numerous as the differences.” Her stated intention was not to chronicle the incidences of resemblance, or to disentangle the philosophical relationships between the two traditions. Instead, her goal was “merely to examine some lesser-known materials and some interesting efforts of Chinese artists of the past which have given or which could give inspiration to the artists of today.”<sup>55</sup>

One alteration was made to the original publication. Luo invited Tseng to write an essay on her own art, which was published as “My Personal View of Chinese Traditional Art” and appended to the original text. Her essay marks a fitting coda to the 1963 volume. Four decades after the text was first published, Tseng was able to reflect on her career and artistic development. Her essay describes details of her biography along with insights into the myriad sources of influences that have shaped her life and art. She underscores her commitment to Chinese art, but also suggests how Western art and artists offered opportunities that shaped the development of *dsui hua*. Images, unpublished elsewhere, are a rich and rewarding source of visual material on her development.

Tseng’s research and writing schedule remain active. Her current projects include a volume on Chinese calligraphy, this time concentrating on the twentieth century. As a way to share her interest in Chinese folk art, Tseng has conceived an ambitious plan to build a Chinese tea house cum folk art center at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. She envisions this teahouse as a cultural center built in the style of a rustic Ming dynasty

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<sup>55</sup> Tseng, *Chuantong*, 8, 10.

retreat. Chinese tea and snacks would be served there, on furnishings made by Chinese craftsmen. She is currently negotiating with the university and raising funds to endow the scheme. Along with her many other research interests, exhibition obligations, and speaking engagements, she juggles these projects with her painting schedule.

Tseng's scholarly contributions to Chinese art history began with painting studies in the fifties that grew out of works in the Tseng-Ecke collection. Since then, her interests have concentrated on different aspects of the Chinese painting tradition, but reflect the breadth of her interests in Chinese art, from neolithic to contemporary, from folk art to bronze mirrors and incense. These catholic tastes in Chinese art are Tseng's greatest strength as a scholar. Her facility with traditional Chinese sources in history, literature, and art has enabled Tseng to tap into a vast body of material for her research and writing.

Tseng's scholarship on Chinese calligraphy has been particularly influential. Her initial presentation of material in *Chinese Calligraphy* (1971) set a high standard for subsequent exhibitions and publications on the subject. It was an early attempt to present a comprehensive overview of Chinese calligraphy to a Western audience, without oversimplifying or over-mystifying the complex nature of the art. Even her unpublished work has made a significant scholarly contribution. "Emperor Hui-tsung, the Artist, 1082-1136" has been a springboard for much of the subsequent work in Song studies.

One detects Tseng Yuho the artist in much of her scholarship. Her research follows unexpected avenues, as does her painted work. The 1955 article on Xue Wu

signals a concern faced by Tseng in her own life, notably moving female artists away from the periphery and making them part of the discourse of Chinese art. Throughout Tseng's scholarship one finds references to the central influence on her own work: the role of the past in the context of the present. In her Xue Wu study, Tseng credits the Ming painter with "absorbing her cultural environment" and being able to reach "an interpretation which zealously embodied the best influences of her time."<sup>56</sup> In 1971, the role of the past in stimulating change was addressed in the context of Chinese calligraphy. Tseng wrote in the introduction to *Chinese Calligraphy* : "The act of writing is a vital part of the experience of the dedicated calligrapher, and the true calligraphic artist is one who knows how to absorb the tradition without being enslaved by it."<sup>57</sup> The presence of the past informs the work of Tseng the scholar and Tseng the artist and it is in her publications that we may read what we see in her paintings.

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<sup>56</sup> Tseng Yu-ho. "Hsüeh Wu," 208.

<sup>57</sup> Tseng, Introduction to "Calligraphy in the Seventeenth Century," n.p.

## CHAPTER SIX

### TSENG YUHO IN “RETIREMENT”: 1985-PRESENT

Tseng retired from the University of Hawaii in 1985. The withdrawal of full-time teaching from her schedule did not result in an unconditional return to painting. Her association with the Honolulu Academy of Arts continued, along with many curatorial and research projects. Nevertheless, after 1985 Tseng was able to devote more attention to painting than at any time since she entered graduate school in 1967. The numerous art-historical exhibitions of the seventies and early eighties she curated are replaced in this period by exhibitions of Tseng’s own works. Perhaps the most significant development of this recent period is the new prominence of calligraphy as an alternate form of *dsui hua*.

#### *Dsui Hua, 1985-present*

*Dsui* paintings from this period are mature works whose themes reflect on the artist’s past and the Chinese literati tradition. The motifs are unchanged from the sixties, as is the technique, but many of the titles of these later works suggest Tseng reviewing episodes from her own past. Her life in Hawaii and travels to Europe informed the artistic development of her first decades in America. Following the Stockholm exhibition in 1963, Tseng and Ecke travelled in Europe, concentrating their attention on Greece and Turkey. Donkey rides and the oppressive Mediterranean heat are part of her memories of the trip, but so is the golden landscape, so dry and different from Hawaii. *A Memory of*

*Greece* (1985; fig. 88), painted two decades after that trip, gives visual form to her recollections. It is a large (48" x 48") two-panel screen whose colors and motifs can easily be read as sea and sky and mountains--the eternal elements of the Greek landscape. *Medieval Landscape* (1987; fig. 89) suggests, at least in title, a recollection of the hours she and Ecke spent viewing art on their visits to Europe. Tseng's Hawaii experience, too, is addressed. *Hawaiian Memories* (fig. 90) from 1988 is one of the few works from that year.

Tseng turned sixty years old in 1985, a noteworthy marker in Chinese culture. The sixtieth birthday signified that one had lived a complete cycle, according to an ancient calendrical system. It is cause for celebration and reflection as one begins the cycle anew. Tseng's own life experiences and her memories of them become the inspiration for many of her works in this period, not in a systematic fashion, but captured moments and impressions are the sources she mines.

Traditional themes are still important in this period. The flowering plum is one of the constant literati themes in Chinese poetry and painting. Inspiration to poets and painters for centuries, the flowering plum carries associations of moral purity, female beauty, transience and regeneration. Two of Tseng's later works evoke aspects of the theme. *Garden of Lin Bu* (1985; fig. 91) takes its title from the Song dynasty poet-hermit Lin Bu (967-1028) who lived a modest life of seclusion on the island of Gushan, in Hangzhou's West Lake. There Lin planted a garden of plum trees, tended his pet cranes, and devoted himself to poetry and calligraphy and nurturing what he loved. Without a family, people came to refer to the flowering plum as his wife and the cranes his children.

Nearing the conclusion of her university teaching career, and anticipating the transitions that lay ahead, Lin Bu made an appealing subject for Tseng. The painting itself is a subtle work which derives its visual impact from its minimal design elements. Stretching up the hillside, tree-like forms recall the rough and twisted trunks of plum trees. The trees themselves are as hardy as the blossoms are fragile, making the poetic allusions even richer in literati eyes. The composition and its reliance on twisting tree-like forms are consistent features in Tseng's oeuvre. What distinguishes this work is the specificity of its reference to an individual renowned for his single-minded devotion to the pursuits he loved. It is tempting to read it as an allusion to the artist and her life.

Plum blossoms, rather than the trees in landscape, are the theme of *Three Resonances of Plum Blossom* from 1997 (fig. 92). In China, plum blossoms appear at New Year, "when the calendar calls for spring but the bleak winter landscape still says winter."<sup>1</sup> The pale blossoms are an especially welcome sight amid the cold, gray winter weather, offering the promise of seasonal change. *Three Resonances of Plum Blossom* combines pale pink dots (blossoms?) with a crackled surface texture reminiscent of the ceramic glaze known as "cracked ice."<sup>2</sup> Plum and cracked ice is a common design motif in Chinese ceramics, the two seasonal occurrences--blossoming plum and breaking ice--markers of the end of winter. The motif may have its origins in textile design, but by the

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<sup>1</sup> Maggie Bickford, *Bones of Jade, Soul of Ice: The Flowering Plum in Chinese Art* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1985), 17.

<sup>2</sup> The cracked ice effect on ceramics results from the unequal contraction of body and glaze during firing. It is a consciously sought and desired effect, as opposed to crazing, which has a similar result but is unintentional.

seventeenth century it appeared on blue-and-white porcelains.<sup>3</sup> Tseng admires these unpredictable ceramic effects and in many of her paintings she translates the idea with color and paper to her own work. *Three Resonances of Plum Blossoms* exploits a literati theme and motif through the creative adaptation of a ceramic effect. In addition, employing her *dsui* technique with aluminum beneath the painting surface lends a pale reflective surface in perfect harmony with the theme.

Tseng's dialogue with the Chinese tradition was similarly evoked by works with strong references to past masters. On a visit to the Museum of Natural History in 1963, she was struck by the collection of rock crystals and sketched a number of them as study pieces. Throughout the years, the idea of these crystalline forms has informed the structure of many of her compositions, serving as a way of conceiving space and building form. *A Vista* (1991) is a mature work of this type whose perspective and volume "vaguely recall" Huang Gongwang (fig. 93).<sup>4</sup> Some of Huang's works display a kind of geometric, modular construction, not unlike that depicted in Tseng's work. This motif can be observed in Huang's *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, for example. Another obvious model is Hongren, whose *Coming of Autumn* is in the collection of the Honolulu Academy of Arts, and whose simplified and spare composition is mirrored in *A Vista*. Tseng, however, had Juran in mind when she painted the composition.<sup>5</sup> The tenth-century master's oeuvre is now reduced to a few works considered plausible attributions.

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<sup>3</sup> Mary Gardner Neill, "The Flowering Plum in the Decorative Arts," in Bickford, *Bones of Jade*, 219.

<sup>4</sup> Tseng, *Chuantong*, 137.

<sup>5</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 13, 1997.

Of these, *Seeking the Dao in Autumn Mountains* shares many of the characteristics of Tseng's work: a massive mountain form rising at the center, slopes textured with lines and dots along the contours, and the repetition of forms, all overlaid with an indistinct atmospheric quality.

Huang Gongwang and Hongren are both recalled in two other late works: *Fuchun Mountains* (1991; fig. 94) and *With a Heart of Hongren*. Huang's works have been an importance influence on Tseng since Beijing where she learned her appreciation of literati painting. The title, *Fuchun Mountains*, evokes the Yuan master's *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*. The stylistic affinities may seem vague, yet Tseng reinterprets the dry brush and purposeful texture strokes of Huang's style into one that is reminiscent of Huang, but clearly not Huang. The insistent dots and lines that mark Tseng's composition capture elements of the Yuan master's style, rendered in Tseng's *dsui* technique. *With a Heart of Hongren* (1993; fig. 95) is even less visually related to its nominal model. Tseng applies her fascination with crystalline forms to this work, which seems part rock crystal and part crackled ceramic glaze. Her allusion to the Qing individualist Hongren extrapolates upon his pristine and angular landscape compositions. Tseng's creativity with mounting is seen here in the use of grass-cloth wallpaper that frames the composition, and increases the textural effects. Here she continues the kind of contrasting framing seen in works like *Hawaiian Landscape* (1953).

### **(Re)turn to Calligraphy**

Though better known as a painter, Tseng Yuho is also a fine calligrapher. Her calligraphic training began as a child, and she has written calligraphy throughout her life.

In calligraphy, as in painting, the depth of Tseng's background in, and commitment to, the traditional forms is evident. Her works have their spiritual bases in the past, and her interpretations are always respectful, but they are also clearly infused with her own spirit as well. Furthermore, calligraphy is fundamental to her painting in one very real but unexpected way. By her own admission, calligraphy comes very easily to Tseng, whereas painting has posed more of an intellectual challenge, and so she was drawn to pursue painting, and ultimately *dsui hua*. In fact, her painted works draw heavily on calligraphy, in discipline, line, and structure.<sup>6</sup>

Tseng Yuho's training in the arts of the brush began at age three. Under Grandmother Zhang's instruction, Tseng's lifelong passion for painting and calligraphy began. Confident of her young granddaughter's small-motor skills, Madame Zhang taught Tseng the fundamentals of sewing and embroidery, in addition to encouraging her in the use of the brush. By the time Tseng returned to live with her family in Beijing and enrolled in school at age six, she was already familiar with writing characters. At home, Zeng Guangqing practiced calligraphy every day. For him it was "a form of mental exercise."<sup>7</sup> The father set an example his daughter followed. During her school years, calligraphy practice was a regular part of the educational curriculum and entailed the submission of daily exercises for the teacher's criticism.<sup>8</sup> After primary school, she knew the fundamentals of calligraphy, and in high school she recalls having very little in the

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<sup>6</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 13, 1997b.

<sup>7</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 13, 1997a.

<sup>8</sup> Lucy Lim, *The Living Brush: Four Masters of Contemporary Chinese Calligraphy* (San Francisco: Chinese Culture Foundation of San Francisco, 1997), 50.

way of formal training.

Tseng described the method by which calligraphy was taught in school in the introduction to *Chinese Calligraphy*:

When calligraphy is taught in school, a grid, generally of red lines and commonly referred to as a “red-copy” sheet, is used for guidance. . . . Once the principle of structure is understood, the grid system is no longer needed and the character is produced freely. Characters in small seal, official, and regular scripts are neatly contained within their square areas. Sometimes the placement of the characters is also matched horizontally from one column to the next. In other styles, however, the characters are not necessarily of uniform size and are not restricted to their squares. In running and cursive scripts, the characters are always more dramatically mixed, incorporating both large and small elements, so that the mood and rhythms are much more pronounced.<sup>9</sup>

It was painting which most captivated the young artist, and yet Tseng’s calligraphy has always been an important part of her identity as an artist. It is with obvious pride that she relates the story of her entrance examinations for Furen University. At a time when many people preferred the convenience of using Western-style pens, Tseng used traditional brush and ink to write her essay.<sup>10</sup> Such an act not only distinguished her as a traditionalist imbued with literati spirit, but recalls the example of Dong Qichang whose extraordinary calligraphy set him apart in the *jinshi* examination.

Only after entering the Art Department at Furen University did Tseng begin serious study of calligraphy. There, she had available for copy collotype reproductions of great calligraphy works of the past. Copying from reproductions was a time-honored means of learning calligraphy, but Tseng also had access to other sources. Through her relationships with her Furen teachers, particularly Pu Jin and Gustav Ecke, genuine

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<sup>9</sup> Tseng, *Chinese Calligraphy*, n.p.

<sup>10</sup> Tseng Yuho, interview with author, November 13, 1997.

calligraphic works were available to Tseng from the collections of her teachers and those of their Beijing friends and acquaintances, many of whom showed great generosity in allowing her to study them unhurriedly and then make copies. In addition, Pu Quan maintained an extensive collection of photographs of calligraphic works.

Some of Tseng's early, traditional-style works, particularly those painted in China, included inscriptions that show early examples of her calligraphy. *Landscapes After Old Masters*, an album of eight leaves from 1945, for example, seamlessly blends painting and calligraphy in a traditional format. Each small album leaf features a landscape painting, with a facing page of calligraphy. The calligraphy is executed in Tseng's own hand, rather than in an imitative style.

Tseng writes calligraphy using the method called "middle tip" (*zhongfeng*). With "middle tip" writing, the brush tip is centered, and produces a rounded stroke whose outer contours convey an effect of movement. The Tang dynasty Buddhist monk-calligrapher Huaisu (725-785) and most of his followers employed *zhongfeng*. Tseng points to the even thickness and graceful elongation that result from "middle tip" and even pressure of the hand. She can easily identify middle-tip and side-tip when looking at a painting or calligraphy. Zhang Daqian she cites as an example of an artist who favored the "side tip"--the result, she claims, of his lack of formal training.

Tseng's *dsui* paintings did not lend themselves to calligraphic inscriptions in the same way as her more traditional works. In most cases, the *dsui* works bear only a seal and signature. However, even as she was developing *dsui hua*, Tseng continued to write calligraphic works. Three works from 1959 illustrate her production. Two are pure

calligraphic compositions, and one incorporates characters into an abstract ground.

For *Slave of Painting*, Tseng employed a modified *dsui* technique, evident in the torn pieces of paper on which the characters are written (fig. 96). In all other respects, the work betrays little of the revolution underway in Tseng's paintings. Two characters--*nu* and *hua*--suggest her relationship to calligraphy's sibling art. Painted during a period of intense creative activity, she may, indeed, have felt like a slave to her work. The two characters are executed in small seal script (*xiaozhuan*), an archaic form of writing which lends the work an antique fragrance.<sup>11</sup> The characters in *xiaozhuan* are of uniform size, with each stroke of even thickness. They have lost any residual pictorial element that they may have once had. Chiang Yee noted that "it is a style much practiced by calligraphers and painters with the object of acquiring assurance of stroke and mastery of pattern."<sup>12</sup>

*Slave of Painting*, along with two other works from 1959, are the earliest examples of her use of seal script, which she returned to in succeeding decades. *Fragrance* and *Mute Message* are similar in concept to *Slave of Painting*. *Fragrance* isolates the single character on a plain ground, in a traditional vertical hanging scroll format (fig. 97). And like *Slave of Painting*, she employs *xiaozhuan* script for an archaic form of the character *xiang*, meaning "fragrant" or "fragrance." The composition is

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<sup>11</sup> Small-seal script, developed during the third century B.C., and was pioneered by Li Si, premier at the court of Emperor Shihuang of Qin. One of the tasks of the Qin emperor's unification of China included standardizing scripts. Li Si oversaw the modification of the regional scripts of the late Zhou period into a single official script. That script was small-seal script, also known as *qinzhuan*. Tseng, *History of Chinese Calligraphy*, 52.

<sup>12</sup> Chiang Yee, *Chinese Calligraphy: An Introduction to its Aesthetic and Technique* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 53.

strong and evenly balanced, characteristics important to successful seal-script writing. *Mute Message* is a more *dsui*-influenced work (fig. 98). In this work the characters are written on a ground mottled with pale ink. The forms float to the right of center. Tseng has said that she frequently uses characters or elements of characters to give structure (bones) to her *dsui* paintings. With *Mute Message* one can easily detect the beginnings of that process.

Tseng undertook the occasional calligraphic work during the next three decades, but most of her creative energy continued to be channeled into painting. A rare example from the seventies is *Marching Grasses* (1976; fig. 99). She wrote the character *cao* (grass), seven times in different sizes and ink tonalities. The script type suggests the seal form of the character, but is an idiosyncratic one of Tseng's own creation. The body of each character is straightforwardly written. The radical portion, however, which appears above, is tufted, as though a pictographic form of grass. The characters have a slightly anthropomorphized look to them--like stick figures. *Marching Grasses* displays the lightheartedness Tseng can bring to the most austere and dignified of Chinese arts. This levity is not present in her paintings.

The arrangement of seven *cao*, and the rich variety of ink tones she assigned them give the effect of characters advancing. In its repetitious use of a single motif, *Marching Grasses* recalls Muqi's *Six Persimmons* (fig. 100). Painted by a master of Chan Buddhist painting in the thirteenth century, Muqi painted six different aspects of persimmons using varied ink tonalities and placement within the pictorial space to achieve his dynamic composition. Muqi's work is invested with considerably more *gravitas* than Tseng's,

which is a more whimsical expression of the Chan master's existential exploration of the Buddha-nature.

Tseng devoted two and a half decades to researching and writing her two large calligraphy publications. She undertook a few calligraphic works during that time, but not until the nineties did she begin to fully explore the creative potential of calligraphy in her own art. Tseng was invited to participate in the 1997 exhibition, "The Living Brush: Four Masters of Contemporary Chinese Calligraphy," organized by Shirley Sun and the American Asian Cultural Exchange in San Francisco.<sup>13</sup> In addition to Tseng, "The Living Brush" included C. C. Wang (Wang Jiqian), Wang Fangyu, and Grace Tong. Calligraphic works had been shown occasionally in some of Tseng's exhibitions, but this was the first exhibition to display her contributions solely as a calligrapher. By 1997 when the exhibition opened, calligraphy had already held Tseng's attention for several years. The works chosen for the exhibition were mostly from the early nineties. As with her *dsui* paintings, these calligraphy works are solidly rooted in tradition by script type and literary association, but transformed by Tseng's brush.

As in some of her earlier calligraphies, a certain playfulness occasionally surfaces. *Willow Waves* (1992) and *The March* (1994) display the artist's literary whimsy, without irreverence (fig. 101). *The March* revisits the idea of her 1976 composition, *Marching Grasses*. In the later version, the composition format switches from vertical to horizontal. Perhaps she considered it a better axis on which to depict the parade-like effect of the character *cao* (grass). The small seal script (*xiaozhuan*) in which

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<sup>13</sup> San Francisco was its only venue.

*Willow Waves* (1992; fig. 102) is written lends the work an archaic feeling. Thin, unmodulated lines and even spacing characterize *xiaozhuan*, the most common form of script used in the carving of seals, and Tseng adheres to these general characteristics, while eliminating the stiffness. Instead, Tseng's composition captures the gracefulness of the characters themselves and the phenomenon to which their semantic denotation alludes.

To do so, Tseng broke with the strict verticality of each character in favor of fluidity, which emphasizes part of the meaning suggested in the two pictographs. The small-seal form of waves (*lang*) already harbors within the water radical itself this reference. Tseng exaggerated it and applied its curvilinear, fluid lines to the entire composition. The sense of movement in this wave-like pattern is furthered through the "flying white" effects in some of the strokes. In three of the curving lines of *lang* the solid ink lines give way to the uneven ink effects known as "flying white" (*feibai*).<sup>14</sup> In this work and associated especially with these characters, the brush technique suggests flowing water. Goldberg pointed out the contribution of "middle-tip" (*zhongfeng*) technique in advancing the sense of movement. Middle-tip produces a rounded stroke, "the outer contours of which convey an effect of movement."<sup>15</sup>

Not only does the script type, *xiaozhuan* (small-seal script), allude to seal carving, but the composition itself demonstrates Tseng's appreciation for this ancient art. As she

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<sup>14</sup> Jerome Silbergeld described how the "flying white" effect is achieved: "As the brush moves more rapidly than the ink is able to flow from it, the hairs of the brush tip temporarily dry and clump together, splitting apart and leaving a set of parallel tracks." See Silbergeld, *Chinese Painting Style*, 20.

<sup>15</sup> Goldberg, "The Art of Tseng Yuho," 33.

wrote in *A History of Chinese Calligraphy*, the calligraphy on seals “demands the rigid control of space. It focusses the artist’s attention on design. . . . The exact structural relationship (between positive/negative lines) builds the tension between the lines.”<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the particularities of seal carving, with its small, defined space, makes it less forgiving than calligraphy on paper. It requires an exquisite sense of design and a sure hand. Applying seal-carving aesthetics, Tseng balances the strokes with distinct negative spaces (the white areas left in reserve between individual strokes). The sensitive articulation of positive and negative space is a hallmark of successful seal-carving.

Seal carving influenced *Willow Waves* in another significant respect. The inspiration for the piece may have derived from a seal by the Qing dynasty artist Guo Lin (1767-1831). One of Guo’s seals bore the two seal-script characters, *Willow Waves* (fig. 103). The small seal measures one and one-quarter inches square and was carved in intaglio. The carved elements of the seal are finer and more closely contained than in Tseng’s work, but both convey the gentle motion and lyrical quality suggested by the characters.

*Tipsy Pot* (1994) is a visual pun, using a single character: *hu* (wine pot). It was written in the archaic seal script style as given in the *Shuowen jiezi*, China’s first real dictionary, compiled ca. A.D. 100. In Tseng’s composition, the wine pot character leans slightly off center, as if itself slightly inebriated (fig. 104). The form of *hu*, from the long “arms” to its rounded “body” seems a distinctly anthropomorphic reference. Literati painting and poetry frequently extolled the salubrious effects of wine, which loosened

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<sup>16</sup> Tseng, *History of Chinese Calligraphy*, 109-110.

both brush and spirit in composing paintings or poetry. Word play, too, was an esteemed past time among the literati of the past, and continues among well-educated Chinese speakers to this day.

Calligraphy as an art form may provide less latitude to the creative imagination than does painting, since the calligrapher is obliged to maintain a degree of fidelity to the structure of the written word and the conventions of grammar. In addition, Western innovations are less easily incorporated as a means of re-exploring the tradition than they are in painting. In the mid-nineties, Tseng's calligraphy experiments turned to the Chinese literary tradition for subject matter at the same time that she began more radical experiments with the media and format. The formal experiments of the mid-nineties coincided with Tseng's turn to the Chinese literary tradition for subject matter. The literary works of others have always provided literati artists material for their writings. Two of Tseng's choices--Qu Yuan and Li Qingzhao--illustrate the important role accorded the literati tradition in her work, as well as the ways in which she has pushed her work beyond the conventions of the traditional literary canons.

In the *Analects*, Confucius underscored the importance of poetry in the development of the complete human being and the maintenance of social order: "If you do not study poetry, you will not know how to talk. If you do not study poetry, you will not know how to live. Poetry serves to inspire emotion, to help observation, to make you fit for company, to express grievances, to teach you how to serve your father at home and the prince abroad, to enable you to learn the correct names of many birds, beasts, herbs

and trees.”<sup>17</sup> As such, poetry has long been one of the literati arts for expressing one’s erudition and learning. Along with painting and calligraphy, poetry is revered as one of the “three perfections.”

*Rhymeprose on a Fisherman, by Qu Yuan* (1999; fig. 105), superimposed an early work from the classical tradition with one of Tseng’s adaptations of the calligraphic tradition. Qu Yuan (343-278 B.C.) is regarded as China’s first major poet, and has, over the millennia, earned a cult-like status in the literary and folk traditions.<sup>18</sup> A statesman of noble lineage in the southern state of Chu, Qu Yuan attained high position at court and earned a reputation there for his upright character. Virtue, though, was not without its perils at court. Qu Yuan was victimized by rivals, lost favor with the king, and was eventually banished. Distraught, he eventually committed suicide by drowning himself in the Miluo River. An indication of Qu Yuan’s legendary status is the annual dragon boat festival observed in Chinese communities throughout the world, an act which symbolically recreates attempts to recover his corpse.

Qu Yuan turned his attention to poetry during his exile, and used the medium to express his feelings about the sordid conditions at court and the sad turn of events in his own life. His poems are contained in the *Chuci* (Verses of Chu), an ancient anthology of poetry which includes works from as early as the late Zhou period.<sup>19</sup> In addition to Qu

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<sup>17</sup> *Analects* 17:8a.

<sup>18</sup> Liu and Lo, *Sunflower Splendor*, 534.

<sup>19</sup> It includes Qu Yuan’s longest and most famous work, the “Li Sao” (Encountering Sorrow), an autobiographical lament that rings with moral outrage at the maltreatment of an honest man—all expressed in the poetical language of similes, allegories and fantasy. It remains a masterpiece of the Chinese literary tradition.

Yuan's works, the *Chuci* contains contributions by the master's "followers and imitators from the third century B.C. to the first century A.D."<sup>20</sup> The "Yu Fu" (The Fisherman) is one of these. "Yu Fu" is a dialogue-story written in rhymeprose, a form known in Chinese as *fu*, composed around the middle of the third century B.C. and attributed to Qu Yuan.<sup>21</sup> Like the "Li Sao," "Yu Fu" takes as its theme the unhappy fate of a loyal government official who is banished on the strength of his rivals' slander. In "Yu Fu," though, the self-pitying attitude of the poem's Qu Yuan character is mocked by the simple wisdom of the rustic fisherman whom he encounters. The fisherman's response to Qu Yuan's anguished musings reveals the sensible wisdom commonly associated with the eccentric or outsider in Chinese parables. As David Hawkes has written, "The Fisherman thinks Ch'ü Yuan [Qu Yuan] is taking things too seriously and should make less fuss about his principles."<sup>22</sup>

*Dsui* painting meets *dsui* calligraphy in *Rhyme Prose on a Fisherman, by Qu Yuan*. Tseng's "Yu Fu" panels show many of the characteristics associated with *dsui*: inventive use of ground, additive process, textural effects, experimentation with media and ground. Tseng's interpretation of this ancient work uses a calligraphy style synchronous with the time of the prose-poem's creation. The seal script form of writing lends the work a distinctive archaic look. She has combined ancient seal script with new media and

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<sup>20</sup> Liu and Lo, *Sunflower Splendor*, 534.

<sup>21</sup> David Hawkes, *Ch'u Tz'u: The Songs of the South* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), 88.

<sup>22</sup> Hawkes, *Ch'u Tz'u*, 91.

ground. Rather than ink on paper, she wrote on gatorfoam board.<sup>23</sup> Fifteen vertical panels have been individually prepared and written on and then combined as a single work. The surface of the gatorfoam boards was worked with daubs of acrylic paint in shades of yellow, red, and green. The overall effect suggests the tarnished surface of metal, much like the patina and decay on ancient bronze vessels.

Tseng Yuho revisited the work of Li Qingzhao (1084-ca. 1151). Li was one of the Song dynasty poets whose works had inspired Tseng's early *dsui* experiments, *Ten Song Poems*, and a work inspired by her was featured in the 1957 Paris exhibition. Tseng wrote Li's poem "Autumn Feelings" (*Sheng sheng man*); her composition, like Li Qingzhao's poem, is a complex and moving work (fig. 106). Li Qingzhao is widely recognized as the single most important female poet in Chinese history. Active during the Song period, Li's life bridges the northern and southern parts of that divided dynasty, and her life was deeply affected by the chaos of the time. Nevertheless, Li Qingzhao's creative spirit soared, and she especially excelled at the verse form known as *ci* (*tz'u*).

The *ci* poetry that Li favored developed during the Tang period but achieved its perfection during the Song. *Ci* poems are adapted to given melodies.<sup>24</sup> As Hu Pin-ch'ing has written:

The only woman whose literary fame was not eclipsed by that of men was Li Ch'ing-chao [Li Qingzhao], the great woman *tz'u* writer of the Sung. She was a genius, an epoch-making poetess who was on an equal footing with her contemporaries in prosody, rhetoric, and creation. The sobriety of her language,

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<sup>23</sup> Gatorfoam is a lightweight foam board prized for its durability. It is comprised of an extruded polystyrene foam core sandwiched between sturdy high-quality paper. This is, to my knowledge, the first use of the material for a work of Chinese calligraphy.

<sup>24</sup> *Ci* means "words for singing."

the harmony of her verses, the originality of her poetic imagery, and the sincerity of her emotion contributed to the perfection of her style. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that Li Ch'ing-chao is not only a great *tz'u* writer of the Sung dynasty, but also the greatest poetess of Chinese literature.<sup>25</sup>

Born in Licheng, Shandong province in 1084, Li's parents were both highly cultured individuals who embraced scholarly ideals in their own lives.<sup>26</sup> Contravening the tradition that young women not be educated, Li Qingzhao's parents imparted both scholarly ideals and scholarly aspirations to their daughter.<sup>27</sup> Li Qingzhao showed an early interest in poetry, and eventually became one of the finest poets of the *ci* tradition in China. Unfortunately, out of six volumes of her works, only around fifty individual poems are extant today.

At age eighteen, Li Qingzhao married a young, aspiring government official named Zhao Mingcheng. By all accounts, the couple enjoyed a happy life together. Zhao's interest in epigraphy became one his wife shared, together with a passion for collecting paintings, books, calligraphy and antiques. Zhao and Li collaborated on a monumental epigraphical study, *Jinshi lu* (Critical-analytical studies of metal and stone inscriptions). The finished work numbered thirty volumes and included inscriptions from two thousand bronze objects and stelae.

Her marriage served as an important source of inspiration for Li's poetry. Many of her *ci* recount blissful moments of married life:

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<sup>25</sup> Hu Pin-ch'ing, *Li Ch'ing-chao* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1966), 28.

<sup>26</sup> Licheng is modern-day Ji'nan.

<sup>27</sup> Li Qingzhao's father, Li Gefei served as Minister of Rites and was well known for his prose writing. Her mother was granddaughter of Wang Gongchen, a scholar; she also wrote poems and essays. See Hu Pin-ch'ing, *Li Ch'ing-chao*, 29.

Hardly have I turned my rippling eyes  
 Than he divines my thoughts.  
 Through the red silk of my robe  
 Appears my skin, delicate, smooth, white as jade.  
 Smiling, I whisper to my beloved:  
 Tonight, the muslin bed curtains, the pillows and the mat will be cool.<sup>28</sup>

Punctuating these love poems, however, are those which underscore Li's loneliness during the frequent separations from her husband. As a government official, Zhao was required to spend long periods away from home:

Only the flowing water in front of my pavilion  
 Knows that my eyes are fixed thereupon all day long.  
 Where there are strained eyes,  
 There is a newborn sorrow.<sup>29</sup>

In both spirit and biographical details, Li Qingzhao would seem an obvious candidate to attract Tseng's interest--singular women whose lives were touched by the tumult of their times. Among their shared traits were lives that spanned periods of great political and social unrest, marriage to intellectual equals who valued their spouse's talents and with whom they collaborated, and a solitary life following the husband's death. The poem Tseng chose may be Li Qingzhao's masterpiece: "Autumn Feelings" (or "Autumn Love") (*Sheng sheng man*). The poem is full of seasonal references to autumn and its melancholy associations of mortality and loneliness. Li's poem is distinctive in its use of reduplicated characters. The first fourteen words are doubled pairs of characters which emphasize the mournful atmosphere of the piece. At the end, the reduplication is repeated with the onomatopoeic use of the characters for "drop by

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<sup>28</sup> Translated in Hu Pin-ch'ing, *Li Ch'ing-chao*, 100.

<sup>29</sup> "Nostalgia of the Flute in a Phoenix Pavilion," translated in Hu Pin-ch'ing, *Li Ch'ing-chao*, 110.

drop” (*dian dian di di*). “Autumn Feelings” reads:

Search . . . seek  
 Dreary . . . desolate  
 Dismal . . . downcast . . . disconsolate  
 A warm spell--then it’s back to winter  
 Hard to find rest.  
 A few swallows of weak wine  
 Can hardly fend off the urgent wind towards evening.  
 The wild geese have gone--  
 Breaks one’s heart!--  
 They are acquaintances from the old days.

The yellow petals are piled all over the ground,  
 Forlorn and damaged: now, what’s worth the plucking?  
 At the window,  
 Alone, how do I brace myself against the encroaching dark?  
 The wutong tree soaks in the drizzling rain,  
 Drip-drops, drip-drops into the dusk . . .  
 These things, this moment,  
 How can one word--“grief”--say it all?<sup>30</sup>

Tseng’s *Poem by Li Qingzhao* (1998) is a dramatic and experimental interpretation of Li’s verse. It subverts the Song poem in feeling and form. Rather than a more lyrical, feminine script, Tseng wrote the verse in a type of seal script. One characteristic of that script, the even unmodulated lines which disguise the brush, is abandoned. Instead, the thick stokes of Tseng’s brush take full advantage of the instrument by varying ink tonalities and the widespread use of “flying white.” Tseng wrote the characters for the poem singly or in pairs on sixty sheets of irregularly sized paper, and mounted them on seven irregularly sized black panels. The characters as written defy the standard convention that dictates each character be laid out against an

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<sup>30</sup> Translated in *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism*, edited by Kang-i Sun Chang and Haun Saussy (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 98.

imaginary grid on which its elements are centered. Tseng abandoned strict linearity in favor of a more dynamic and kinetic composition. Elements of the thick brush strokes were cropped along the edges of the paper, making individual characters appear ready to burst from the confines of their ground.

To this monochrome field, a single red character makes an unexpected appearance. Midway through the left half of the work (at the left edge of the fifth panel), Tseng placed the character *du* (alone), brushed in red ink. *Du*, from the line, “Alone, how do I brace myself against the encroaching dark?” reinforces the central theme of the poem, standing apart as it does among the composition. Five seals of the artist on three small sheets of paper are affixed at the lower right and left edges of the work, perhaps tying the artist in a very visible way to the poem and its theme. Tseng had employed a similar method of affixing her seals over four decades earlier in the first version of *Ten Song Ballads, Liu Yong's “Tinkling Rain”* (1954).

In the introductory essay to *Chinese Calligraphy* (1971), Tseng wrote of the proper relationship between artist and the past:

The observations by great masters of calligraphy, however, should not be regarded as uncompromising rules, for the wisdom of others cannot always become one’s own wisdom. The act of writing is a vital part of the experience of the dedicated calligrapher, and the true calligraphic artist is one who knows how to absorb the tradition without being enslaved by it.<sup>31</sup>

Tseng’s calligraphic works, like her *dsui* paintings, conform to this dictum.

### Tseng Yuho Among Peers

Tseng Yuho is one of the first-generation artists of the Chinese diaspora--artists

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<sup>31</sup> Tseng Yuho, *Chinese Calligraphy*, n.p

whose lives were affected by the political situation at mid-century and chose to make their lives outside of China. Age, association, and training tie this group to currents of China's past.<sup>32</sup> Among Tseng's peers, there are several whose work and careers follow patterns similar to hers. They include Pan Yuliang, C. C. Wang, and Zao Wou-ki. Each of these artists was born, raised, and educated in China, and well-versed in the Chinese tradition. Their lives, however, have been spent largely outside of China, while maintaining a close and active relationship with Chinese art and culture. Each of them responded in very different ways to their situations. For each, their lives afforded them unique opportunities which informed their artmaking.

These first-generation artists share a number of striking similarities. They are all from families who valued education, which encompassed both traditional and progressive elements. Their artistic talents were exhibited early, though each received recognition at different points in their careers, with Tseng's reputation established preternaturally early. Each of them was induced by the political situation in China to build lives away from their birthplaces and assimilate into new cultures. Finally, each has defined a unique position to China and Chinese traditions.

Among female Chinese artists of the period, Tseng has few peers. The rare examples from her generation who are now highly regarded as artists, Fang Zhaoling (b. 1914) and Zhou Luyun (b. 1921), for example, did not devote themselves to painting until the fifties. At mid-century, the most well-known female Chinese painter was Pan

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<sup>32</sup> Melissa Thompson, "China Without Borders" in *China Without Borders: An Exhibition of Chinese Contemporary Art* (London: Goedhuis Contemporary, 2001), 9.

Yuliang (1899-1977), who is a full generation older than Tseng.<sup>33</sup> Pan studied in China with Liu Haisu at the Shanghai Art Academy, and in 1921, she received a government scholarship to study art in France. She returned to China eight years later and taught for a time at the Shanghai Art Academy and then at National Central University in Nanjing. In the mid-thirties, Pan returned to Paris, where she lived for the remainder of her life. Tseng and Pan overlapped there in 1957 when Pan attended the opening of Tseng's exhibition.

Pan was both painter and sculptor, but it is her figure painting for which she is best remembered. Her unique figural style often depicted female nudes, an entirely Western genre, using Chinese brush and ink. This blending of subjects and techniques was a hallmark of the modernizing elements in Chinese art in the early decades of the twentieth century, especially among Western-trained reformers like Lin Fengmian and Xu Beihong. Pan's embrace of new themes and experimentation with Western styles marked her as a modernist. And yet, socially and artistically, Pan Yuliang remained on the margins in both Paris and China. Pan may have been an accomplished painter in both oils and ink, yet many of her works typify the artistic dead-end represented by the facile synthesis of Chinese and Western techniques and subject matter.

C. C. Wang (b. 1907) is a half generation Tseng's senior, and his story closely parallels hers, though his life in America has been spent in Manhattan. Like Tseng, Wang embodies the ideals of the literati painter. He is not only a painter and

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<sup>33</sup> The story of Pan's widely romanticized life was the subject of the feature film "Pan Yuliang, a Woman Painter" (1994), directed by Huang Shuqin and starring Gong Li as the artist. Orphaned as a child, Pan Yuliang was raised in a brothel, where she met Pan Zhanhua, whose concubine she became. Pan Zhanhua recognized and encouraged Pan Yuliang's artistic talents.

calligrapher, but also a collector and connoisseur.<sup>34</sup> Wang's early works demonstrated his skill at traditional landscape painting. *Landscape* (fig. 107) is an early, traditional-style work to which Wang brings layers of art-historical allusions: trees that suggest Zhao Mengfu, branches that use an early Song dynasty technique employed by Li Cheng and Guo Xi, and inscribed with a Tang dynasty poem.<sup>35</sup> Not a work of great originality but a competent sampler of early styles and motifs. After moving to New York in 1949, Wang experimented with Western style painting, but never strayed far from Chinese landscapes. In the sixties, new techniques transformed his art and enhanced the range of possible texture strokes: crumpled or folded paper, ink daubed on with wax paper, painting on the back of the composition. *Sailing Boats and Misty Mountains* from 1964 is one of these works (fig. 108). Wang's encounters with Western art enabled him to see beyond surface and understand structure and composition in a more profound way. Like Tseng, he selectively applied lessons as a means of developing his own traditional-contemporary style.

A close contemporary of Tseng Yuho, Zao Wou-ki earned his reputation as an artist in Europe, where he has lived since 1948.<sup>36</sup> In Paris, Zao was first associated with the post-war School of Paris along with Karel Appel, Hans Hartung, Andrew Lansky,

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<sup>34</sup> Wang's connoisseurial skills were honed in China, and eventually led to his participation in a major authentication project with Victoria Contag. The result of their research was *Seals of Chinese Painters and Collectors of the Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties*, published in German and Chinese in 1940. It was the first systematic connoisseurial study of Chinese painting, and remains a key reference work in the field.

<sup>35</sup> Silbergeld, *Mind Landscapes*, 64.

<sup>36</sup> The transliteration that Zao uses for his name does not conform to either the Wade-Giles or *pinyin* systems, which would render his name as Zhao Wuji (*pinyin*) or Chao Wu-chi (Wade-Giles).

Jean-Paul Riopelle, Gerard Schneider, Pierre Soulages and Maria Helena Vieira da Silva.<sup>37</sup> Zao has been the subject of numerous scholarly books and articles.<sup>38</sup> Like Tseng, he enjoys a complex cultural heritage, grounded in Chinese tradition but informed by Western art and modernism.

Zao Wou-ki was born in Beijing in 1921 into a well-educated and wealthy family. His early education was overseen by his grandfather, who ensured that his grandson's early education followed the most traditional pattern: memorization of the classics and schooling in the art of the brush. In this conservative environment where literati ideals were still embraced, Zao found support for his artistic ambitions. In 1935 at age fourteen, he gained entrance to the Hangzhou Academy of Art. This prestigious institution was founded in 1928 through the combined efforts of Lin Fengmian and Cai Yuanpei. One of Lin's innovations as the academy's first director was to merge the faculties of *guohua* and *xihua*, so that students received solid grounding in both traditions. The six-year course of study featured studio art and art history, as well as English.<sup>39</sup> Zao graduated in 1941, aged nineteen, and Lin Fengmian immediately hired him as a teacher.

Zao left China for Paris in 1948. There he set about transforming himself into a wholly contemporary artist. As with Tseng, proximity to great museum collections

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<sup>37</sup> Walker Art Center, *School of Paris: The Internationals* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1959).

<sup>38</sup> Numerous European publications have chronicled his career and examined his artistic development. To name a few: Claude Roy, *Zao Wou-ki* (Paris, 1988); Jean Leymarie, *Zao Wou-ki* (Paris, 1986); Jørgen Ågerup, *Zao Wou-ki, the Graphic Work: A Catalogue Raisonné, 1937-1995* (Copenhagen: Edition Heede & Moestrup, 1994); Pierre Daix, *Zao Wou-ki, l'oeuvre 1935-1993* (Neuchâtel, France: Ides et Calendes, 1994).

<sup>39</sup> Sullivan, *Art and Artists*, 49.

enabled Zao to view the art he had tried to understand in China, but which had been restricted to poor quality reproductions. He learned French, studying at the Alliance Française, and consorted with fellow artists. In 1951, he discovered the works of Paul Klee. Zao was spellbound by them: colored rectangles punctuated by traces and symbols. He was astonished by the freedom of line and poetic feeling. His works spoke to Zao, as they did to Tseng, and were reminiscent of Dong Qichang's ideas of creative reinterpretation. For both Zao and Tseng, Klee represented a way into Western art, and opened a window for them on Chinese art as well.

Zao's style evolved and became more deeply involved with Western idioms, but China was not abandoned altogether. In the mid-fifties, Zao called upon the Chinese past in a pair of paintings that reveal his continued commitment to the Chinese tradition. *Homage to Qu Yuan* and *Homage to Du Fu* (fig. 109) honor two of China's greatest poets. By 1956, when *Homage to Du Fu* was painted, Zao had lived in Paris for eight years. Both Qu Yuan and Du Fu lived in exile and though Zao left China voluntarily, the sense of loss he felt must surely have been as real. He turned his feelings into an artistic reflection on his life and the voluntary emigration that had turned into exile. Vestigial Chinese characters emerge from the canvas, resembling those cast on ancient bronze vessels. They were motifs Zao returned to frequently in this transitional period.

By the late fifties, the narrative elements in Zao's works were increasingly suppressed. His medium was exclusively oil on canvas, and generally large scale. Zao paints in a full range of colors, light and dark, some very intense. The oil is thickly applied and heavily worked to lend a kinetic feeling to the work and to enhance surface

texture. Unlike C. C. Wang, whose strong links to China's past are manifest in the media, technique, and subject matter of his works, Zao favors media and styles that are very much of rooted in contemporary Western art.

For Pan Yuliang and Zao Wou-ki, Paris played a key role in their artistic development. In the post-war period, both artists benefited from the cultural affinities their art shared with contemporary art movements there. Pan's work fitted less easily into the trend toward abstraction, but her blend of Western subject matter with Chinese media made her work distinctively appealing to an audience whose attention was increasingly captured by Eastern aesthetic ideals. Zao's evolving painting style, with its mastery of Western media and gesture meant he was more easily folded into the artistic dialogue between East and West, especially among adherents of Abstract Expressionism and Art Informel. Tseng sensed this tendency during her stay in Paris in 1957. The enthusiasm her exhibition generated confirmed her audience's willingness to entertain new art forms. The positive reception her new work received in Paris was an important motivator in the development of *dsui hua*.

C. C. Wang chose to develop his art with the media of traditional Chinese painting, establishing himself as a contemporary literati artist whose life and art conform to many of the dicta put forth by Dong Qichang. Wang, like Tseng, remains committed to the *wenren*'s preferred art, landscape. The brushwork and techniques he employs are largely drawn from past masters of the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties whom Wang particularly admires. Tseng's technique, with antecedents in the Chinese past, is indebted to modern Western art, especially collage, in a way that Wang's is not. In

addition, Tseng found a rare opportunity in Hawaii, in the form of tapa cloth, to adapt a traditional local art form for her own art. This innovative use of material and opportunity is characteristic of Tseng's artistic development in the West and distinguishes her among her peer artists.

### **Exhibitions**

With retirement from teaching and the return to painting, Tseng's exhibition schedule also resumed. While busy organizing and overseeing art and historical exhibitions in her university and museum roles, exhibitions of Tseng's own works had seen a hiatus. When Tseng returned to an active exhibition schedule, interest in Tseng's paintings also intensified. Contemporary Chinese art has gained prominence as has interest in the contributions of Asian-American artists.

#### *The Art of Tseng Yuho, 1987*

Upon her retirement from the University of Hawaii, the Honolulu Academy of Arts staged a retrospective project to mark Tseng's many contributions to the artistic life of Honolulu. Since 1949 she has been associated with the Academy, first as wife of the institution's first curator of Asian art, and over the years as studio instructor in Chinese ink painting and consultant for Chinese art. In 1987, the Academy published *The Art of Tseng Yuho*, co-authored by Tseng and Howard A. Link, then senior curator emeritus of Asian art. In 1989, an exhibition of the same title was held at the Academy (July 13-August 20, 1989). Michael Sullivan and Kao May-ch'ing contributed short essays to the catalogue by way of introduction. Kao's is particularly significant for her admission that

overseas Chinese artists, like Tseng, had until recently been either ignored or criticized in the mainland. Their achievements were seen also to be inconsequential to Chinese living in China or Taiwan. Writing in 1986, Kao observed that “the tide has changed”: “As the modern era comes under the scrutiny of scholars and artists, the significant contributions of these overseas artists become apparent.”<sup>40</sup>

Link contributed four short essays on “Tseng Yuho and the Chinese Painting Tradition.” Tseng herself wrote a section entitled simply “My Chronology,” in which she narrated the major events in her life as an artist and art historian. Personal photographs from different periods accompany her essays, along with reproductions of some of her early works. The catalogue concludes with thirty-four color plates of her *dsui* works, dating from *Blue Landscape* (1956) to *You Need of Me and I Need of You* (1986). Together, they form a comprehensive overview of the stages of development of *dsui hua* from the relatively simple torn-paper and ink painting techniques of the late fifties through the abstraction of the sixties up to the more complex and lyrical *dsui* landscapes of the eighties.

*Dsui Hua: Tseng Yuho, 1992-1993*

The most ambitious exhibition project since her retirement from teaching was organized by Chang Tsong-zung of Hanart Gallery, Taipei and Hong Kong. “*Dsui* Paintings by Tseng Yuho: A Retrospective Exhibition” showed at five venues in Asia

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<sup>40</sup> Kao May-ch’ing, Introductory Remarks to Howard Link and Tseng Yuho, *The Art of Tseng Yuho* (Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 1987), 8.

during 1992-93.<sup>41</sup> Hanart is one of the premier galleries of contemporary Chinese art, which represents experimental and avant-garde art from China and Taiwan. As Kao May-ch'ing had noted above in her introduction to *The Art of Tseng Yuho* (1987), overseas artists like Tseng were beginning to be recognized as key figures in the history of twentieth-century Chinese art. Tseng's direct experiences with both traditions-- Chinese and Western--gave her a position many younger artists who never left China may have found enviable.

"*Dsui Paintings*" was a landmark exhibition for Tseng in another respect. It marked the first time her works had been publicly shown in China since the exhibitions of her post-graduate days in Beijing. Chang called it a "homecoming." Tseng's teachers, friends and colleagues had kept abreast of her activities during her frequent visits to China in the days following the normalization of relations between America and the People's Republic of China. The venues in Beijing and Shanghai introduced the public and art communities of China's two largest cities to Tseng Yuho the artist. As Chang's introduction stated: "For a whole generation of Asian viewers, the exhibition presents a first and unique opportunity to view for themselves the works of this overseas Chinese painter of international repute."<sup>42</sup>

The catalogue that accompanied the exhibition was also significant for the contributors who wrote for it. In most previous exhibitions, the text was written by art historians of Western art (H. Harvard Arnason, Julien Alvard) or Western-trained art

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<sup>41</sup> The venues were Shanghai Municipal Museum of Modern Art; China Art Museum (Beijing); Taipei Municipal Museum of Modern Art; Hong Kong Arts Centre; and National Museum of Singapore.

<sup>42</sup> Tseng, *Dsui Hua*, 6.

historians of China (Howard Link, Michael Sullivan). Over the years, only a few Chinese scholars had written about Tseng. In addition to Chang Tsong-zung's Foreword, the catalogue included "An Appreciation" by Richard Barnhart (Yale University), and essays by Li Chu-tsing (University of Kansas) and Ding Xiyuan (Shanghai Art Museum), and one by the artist herself.

As a retrospective, the exhibition was ambitious in scope and size. One hundred eleven paintings were included, half of them reproduced in color in the catalogue. The essays themselves, particularly Tseng's, contained supplementary black-and-white photographs which illuminated her early works and the development of her painting style. Tseng had expressed her desire for a large and comprehensive retrospective at some point in the future in a 1967 letter to Edith Halpert.<sup>43</sup> The Hanart exhibition was the first to attempt such an undertaking. As a retrospective "in the big style" that Tseng had hoped for, however, it emphasized recent work over comprehensiveness. If the catalogue accurately reflects the exhibition's content, most of the works shown dated from the preceding five years. Fifty-six works were illustrated in the catalogue. Only eight of them represented Tseng's stylistic development between 1957 and 1971, while the remaining forty-eight represented her work in the period 1987-1991. A full, scholarly retrospective of Tseng's work has yet to be undertaken.

*Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions: Asian American Artists  
and Abstraction, 1945-1970, 1997*

Edith Halpert promoted Tseng Yuho as an American painter, albeit one whose art

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<sup>43</sup> Tseng Yuho letter to Edith Halpert, January 14, 1967, Downtown Gallery Records

was profoundly influenced by her Chinese background. Working in a remote location and painting in a style of her own creation, Tseng's work has never fitted easily into any group or movement. In 1997, Jeffrey Wechsler curated one of the first influential exhibitions that recognized the work of Asian artists in America.<sup>44</sup>

"Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions" acknowledged the emergence of Asian-born artists living in America as a significant working group. It was pan-Asian in focus, featuring works of over fifty artists of Japanese, Chinese and Korean descent who lived and worked in America simultaneously with Abstract Expressionism. The artists in "Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions" represented a part of the Abstract Expressionist equation which had never been examined: artists of Asian ancestry working in America for whom the fundamental ideas of abstraction were part of their training and cultural heritage. Other artists in the exhibition included Zhuang Zhe, C. C. Wang, Wucius Wong, George Tsutakawa, and Isamu Noguchi. As Wechsler argues in the catalogue introduction, the rush to define Abstract Expressionism in America as an American art form meant a more nuanced genealogy would be unlikely. In his words, "some Americanists were thoroughly and defensively dismissive of any hint of Asian influence."<sup>45</sup>

Tseng Yuho was one of the artists whose works were included in Wechsler's survey. In addition, she contributed an essay for the catalogue, "'Abstraction' in the

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<sup>44</sup> "Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions" was organized by the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University and travelled to the Chicago Cultural Center, Fisher Gallery at the University of Southern California, and the Japanese-American National Museum in Los Angeles.

<sup>45</sup> Jeffrey Wechsler, "Introduction: Finding the Middle Path," in Wechsler, *Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions*, 10.

Traditional Art of East Asia.” It was adapted from an earlier work, *Some Contemporary Elements in Classical Chinese Art* (1963), expanding the focus from China to East Asia in general. Tseng sees the urge to abstraction as universal in early civilization, especially in East Asia where the appearance and essence of nature was at the core of art. She points out that traditional Asian art is full of experiments in abstraction, and cites the example of Chinese neolithic *bi* and *cong*: sacred representations of the world expressed as geometric forms. Tseng identified two fundamental concepts from which artistic expression developed: “Simple forms can hold profound meanings and . . . the resultant forms are sufficient in and of themselves as visual motifs.”<sup>46</sup> In her own words, it is the clearest description of what she has sought in her own art.

To Tseng, it seems only natural that the abstract nature of Asian art would serve as a source of inspiration to Western artists. As she asserts in her essay: “Traditional Asian art is filled with numerous examples of venturesome experiments in abstractionism. Centuries of deep-seated philosophical justification and social tradition made it acceptable for Asian artists to represent the natural world through stylized abbreviation.”<sup>47</sup>

*Tseng Yuho, 1998*

Tseng’s first overseas exhibition travelled to London in 1947 under the auspices of the Britain’s China Institute. In 1998, Tseng’s works were again the subject of a solo

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<sup>46</sup> Tseng Yuho, “‘Abstraction’ in the Traditional Art of East Asia,” in Wechsler, *Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions*, 21.

<sup>47</sup> Tseng, “Abstraction,” 21.

exhibition in London, this one at Michael Goedhuis' Chinese art gallery in Berkeley Square. Goedhuis was beginning to shift his focus and concentrate exclusively on contemporary artists, and the Tseng Yuho exhibition was one of the gallery's earliest forays in this area. The paintings in the 1998 Goedhuis exhibition bore little resemblance to the ones in her earlier London exhibition. Those works were all traditional Chinese-style landscapes in ink or ink and color on paper. The sixteen paintings in the Goedhuis show included only three paintings from previous decades: *My Garden* (1962), *Pasture in Spring* (1968), and *Soul Song* (1982). Nine of the works dated from 1997, with the remainder scattered throughout the nineties, and represented her mature *dsui* technique.

With none of the early works on view, the first-time viewer may not have fully grasped the distance Tseng has travelled artistically. The breadth of her interests was apparent with the inclusion of several calligraphic works, which displayed her talent with China's most revered traditional art form (calligraphy), using brush and ink unmediated by the innovations of her painting style. Though the show featured only a small number of paintings, within them was contained the entire development of Tseng's art. The emphasis on landscape was evident. The landscape forms (trees, rocks, distant hills), as well as the hazy atmospheric effects of the works, achieved through the manipulation of ink, color, and surface texture, remain constant features over time, varying by degrees of abstraction. *Soul Song* (1982) acknowledged Tseng's commitment to the Three Perfections of literati art (painting, poetry and calligraphy), but also signalled her creative reinterpretation of tradition with several significant innovations. Tseng's work is a large four-panel screen and the poem, written in English, is by a contemporary American poet.

This type of innovation within the spirit of tradition is a hallmark of Tseng's style. The viewer astute at nuanced readings of paintings could have discerned in Tseng's works an artistic vision both mature and unique.

Since Tseng retired from teaching in 1985, she has found more time for painting, as well as for her many research interests. The paintings of her post-retirement period continue the style she developed in the sixties, using motifs and themes whose roots lie in the Chinese tradition. She has devoted new attention to calligraphy in this period, returning to an art form whose challenges she had subjugated in favor of painting, which she found intellectually more rigorous. This return to calligraphy has been rewarded by new recognition of her talent as a calligrapher, as evidenced by her inclusion in the quartet of artists featured in "The Living Brush: Four Masters of Contemporary Chinese Calligraphy" in 1997. Demand for Tseng's paintings has also continued to grow, with exhibitions of her works regularly scheduled in Honolulu, mainland America, Europe, and Asia.

## CONCLUSION

In China, Tseng Yuho's training was of the most conservative kind. Her painting teachers Pu Jin and Pu Quan were among the last exemplars of the Orthodox tradition of which Dong Qichang was the progenitor. The lessons Tseng learned from them marked her paintings as an extension of their style. The paintings from the period before 1949 show her to be a talented artist whose works are accomplished re-workings of past styles, but anachronistic. What Tseng's training in China fostered was a deep commitment to Dong Qichang's ideal of creative reinterpretation.

Part of the literati ideals espoused by Dong Qichang dealt with the role of the past. Literati artists eschewed commercialism and decorative techniques, favoring instead to develop the intellectual content of their art through technique, motif, and allusion to a canon of worthy models from the past. According to Dong's influential theories, in the past lay the seeds of transformation. By understanding the past and the particular contributions of individual masters, an artist would be able to draw upon a wealth of approved styles and conventions, which might then evolve into a new, personal form of expression. In her painting and scholarship, Tseng has adhered to the literati model advanced by Dong. Art, teaching, and scholarly research offer Tseng opportunities for opening windows on the past.

Among artists of the Chinese diaspora, Tseng is unique among her generation and succeeding ones for having built her career away from the urban centers in which much

artistic activity is fostered. In Hawaii, she transformed her style from the venerable but outdated form of expression of her youth.<sup>1</sup> After 1949, the literati style of painting in which she excelled was outmoded in China, and ideologically unacceptable. In Hawaii, she was immune from the political repercussions of her artistic choices. In 1974, Tseng wrote, "In coming to Hawaii, I have felt a great sudden freedom from my childhood setting that maybe I can refer to as a classical setting. Then, without looking to the left or right, I have gone ahead working in my own direction. In the unhurried atmosphere of Hawaii I have not had to rush to any hasty professional conclusions in my work. Here I am able to work physically and mentally at the exact pace that is fully creative."<sup>2</sup>

In America, the skillful and nuanced interpretations which earned Tseng youthful acclaim in China could be fully appreciated only by a limited audience: Western scholars of China, overseas Chinese, and others with some experience of traditional Chinese art. Nevertheless, life in the West offered a fertile environment for Tseng's artistic development. Hawaii played a role in very real ways. Its pan-Asian atmosphere was conducive to diverse forms of artistic expression and she began to develop a local base of support soon after her arrival.

The physical environment of Hawaii and its legacy connected with Chinese beliefs about landscape and the cosmos and found their way into her work. First, as generic landscapes, then of identifiable locales, flora, and geological anomalies. Eventually, the

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<sup>1</sup> Tseng was not the only expatriate painter working in Hawaii. Lam Oi Char also settled there, but her work continued in a conservative fashion, painting traditional style ink landscapes.

<sup>2</sup> Francis Haar and Prithwish Neogy, *Artists of Hawaii: Nineteen Painters and Sculptors* (Honolulu: State Foundation for Culture and Arts, 1974).

lush imagery and markers of place were subsumed by the motifs of *dsui hua*, but the role of the natural environment of Hawaii remains in her work's affinity to nature.

The most tangible expression of Tseng's expertise at accommodating the opportunity and tradition Hawaii afforded is her use of tapa cloth. At first, tapa substituted for the antique hand-made papers Tseng had known in Beijing, and were used to paint traditional Chinese landscape compositions with mineral pigments. With the development of her new technique, however, Tseng adapted this fibrous material to her *dsui* compositions. Pieces of shredded tapa replaced brushwork as landscape motifs. Adapting a traditional Hawaiian art form, albeit one with archeological roots in ancient China, to her work, signaled Tseng's willingness to let the present help to define her relationship with the past.

Even the isolation of Hawaii played a role in the development of her art. The university's program for visiting scholars introduced Tseng to important figures and ideas. The summer visits by distinguished artists to the University of Hawaii brought Stanton Macdonald-Wright, Josef Albers, and Max Ernst into Tseng's life. Their influence on Tseng in the fifties, as she searched to establish a new artistic identity more relevant to her time and place, was profound. H. Harvard Arnason's introduction to Tseng also arose through a visiting scholar arrangement with the university. Through him, Tseng was brought to the attention of Edith Halpert, which led to her decade-long arrangement with the Downtown Gallery. Isolated in Hawaii, Tseng availed herself of these unique opportunities whose importance was magnified by their infrequency and intensity.

Exposure to Western art through travel was another important component of

Tseng's life in the West. Museums, private collections, meetings with artists, visits to architectural and archeological sites, all contributed to building Tseng's understanding of Western art traditions, and encouraged her own work. With Ecke, Tseng travelled throughout America and Europe. One suspects Ecke the art history professor reveled in being able to introduce his former student to original works of Western art and architecture and no longer depend on the black-and-white reproductions of his Furen teaching days. Tseng the student eagerly saw everything she could, visiting collectors and galleries and scouring museum storerooms.

The atmosphere of the fifties was congenial to the development of *dsui hua*. Asian art was fashionable among Abstract Expressionist painters and Tseng's ideas found currency among interested circles. In Paris, Tseng grasped the full significance of developing the connections between her work and the evolving dialogue on Eastern and Western art. Like Zao Wou-ki, Tseng benefited from the time and place in which she found herself. Zao embraced Abstract Expressionism. Tseng's chosen technique resonated with contemporary art currents in which collage had become a medium of expression readily understood and accepted.

Tseng promoted her work through exhibitions, beginning in China when her first international shows were circulated, and continued without interruption when she and Ecke relocated to Hawaii. Even before associating herself with Edith Halpert, Tseng's works were exhibited in America and Europe. The Honolulu Academy of Arts, with which she has enjoyed a long relationship, played a key role in this aspect of her career, counting five solo exhibitions there between 1952 and 1989. Halpert's promotion

accelerated the process, and through the Downtown Gallery and its vigorous promotion of American artists to collectors of modern art, Tseng reached an even broader audience. Edith Halpert's long career as a gallery owner meant connections, exhibitions, publicity, and commissions.

One element that distinguishes Tseng Yuho's career is her parallel career in academia. Many working artists are also teachers, but rarely do they teach outside of studio art. Tseng continued her education in Hawaii, formally and informally, earning a master's degree in history from the University of Hawaii in 1967. Five years later, she was awarded a Ph.D. in art history from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. She earned tenure in the Art Department at University of Hawaii and taught there until her retirement in 1985. Tseng's teaching, scholarly research, publications, and art historical exhibitions offered other avenues for her creative and intellectual interests. Contributions as a teacher and scholar mark her as slightly out of the mainstream in much of her work, anticipating a number of trends, and working in areas that were neglected by other scholars: Xue Wu, Huizong, calligraphy, folk art.

Among Tseng's experiments in the fifties were early *dsui* works. Adapting the techniques she learned at a scroll mounting studio in Liulichang, Tseng saw the possibilities of applying paper and paste to the front of a painting. In this act lies Tseng's artistic breakthrough, to have grasped the creative potential of the technique. In her early *dsui* works, Tseng applied pieces of torn colored paper, on which she brushed various landscape motifs. Over time, the works and their technique became increasingly sophisticated. Handmade papers made from bamboo, mulberry bark, cotton, rice stalks,

and hemp are layered with paint, gold leaf, aluminum, and ink. Inspiration comes from the world around her. The cracked-ice glaze of ceramics, the crystalline forms of rocks and minerals, the designs of Han dynasty bronze mirrors, all contribute to the creation of her works. Chinese characters and carved seals similarly inform her compositions, with their bold sense of design, volume, and space. In addition, ancient masters continue to be an integral part of Tseng's dialogue with the present.

*Dsui hua* grew out of Tseng's complex interactions with her past and present.

Never forsaking the Chinese tradition, Tseng perfected an art form that is both traditionally Chinese and modern. Adapting scroll mounting methods to *dsui hua*, Tseng works with hand-made papers, tapa cloth, ink, gold leaf, and pigment, and draws upon the aesthetic traditions of Asian art, specifically those art forms which use a similar additive process to achieve their goals. These include Buddhist vestments (*kasaya*) and the trompe l'oeil painting style called *bapo*. What Tseng Yuho has achieved is not merely a synthesis of divergent traditions and methods, or an uncertain reconciling of one with the other. Through a lifetime of study, inquiry, and reflection, she has internalized both traditions and transformed them through her own creative lens.

In 1999, Tseng painted *Brush and Ink Grow Flowers* (fig. 110). She wrote a four-character expression (*chengyu*): "brush and ink beget flowers" (*bimo shenghua*) with ink and acrylic on paper, using a bold seal script for the large characters. The strong use of color marks a departure for Tseng, whose calligraphic works tend to conform to the monochrome tradition of the genre. Even her paintings favor muted colors. But here the colors mimic some of nature's most assertive hues. The title *Brush and Ink Grow Flowers*

carries several meanings. The most literal one refers to the use of brush and ink in painting nature. The character *hua*, however, means not only “flower,” but “splendor.” Extrapolating beyond the literal meaning, then, this could as easily be read: “brush and ink beget splendor.” Finally, one further meaning of *hua* is “China”: brush and ink begetting China. Tseng’s works are rooted in China and it is that past which provides the touchstone for all that she has accomplished, and for the work she continues to create.



Figure 1. *Gathering Jade, Assembling Splendor; Tearing Clouds, Plucking Mists*, 1962, *Art of Tseng Yu-ho*, figure 65.



Figure 2. *Portrait of an English Gentleman*, ca. 1937, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, figure 42.



Figure 3. *Portrait of Zhang Fei*, 1942, *Chuantong*, plate 2.



Figure 4. *Bodhisattva*, 1948, *By Design*, figure 12.



**Figure 5. Photograph of the wedding party, 1945, collection of the artist.**



Figure 6. Studio portrait of Tseng Yuho in her wedding garb, 1945, collection of the artist.

經月深門長不翼  
 斤雲高木紫身采  
 程嬖倖久人主愛  
 見於縉居更上自



紅橋林山苑染雲  
 田并層層為斜  
 隱此中大為通卷  
 系鞋說亦更畫書天



Figure 7. *Landscapes after Old Masters*, 1945, *By Design*, plate 1.



Figure 8. *Inspiration of Dongpo*, 1948, Downtown Gallery Records.



Figure 9. *Mountain Path*, 1948, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, figure 3.



Figure 10. *Landscape in the Style of Huang Gongwang*, 1948, Sullivan, "Traditional Trend," figure 4.



Figure 11. Huang Gongwang (1269-1354), *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, 1350, detail, Loehr, *Great Painters*, figure 124.



Figure 12. *The River Inn*, n.d., collection of the artist.



Figure 13. Sesshu Toyo (1420-1506), *Hatsuboku Landscape for Soen*, 1495, Tanaka, *Japanese Ink Painting*, plate 112.



Figure 14. *Boneless Landscape*, 1946, *By Design*, plate 2.



Figure 15. *A Landscape in Fujian*, 1948, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, figure 6.



Figure 16. *Autumn*, 1947, Sullivan, "Traditional Trend," figure 5.



Figure 17. Pencil sketch of two pine trees at the Summer Palace, 1944, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, fig. 8.



Figure 18. Autumn scenery near Yuanmingyuan, 1947, *Chuantong*, plate 15.



Figure 19. *Under a Bamboo Grove*, 1949, collection of the artist.



Figure 20. *Resist Not These Self-Emerging Crosswise Branches*, 1949, collection of the artist.



Figure 21. *Twin Pines*, 1951, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, figure 7.



Figure 22. *Shore*, 1952, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, figure 30.



Figure 23. *Landscape*, 1952, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, figure 4.



Figure 24. Juran (active ca. 960-980), *Seeking the Dao in Autumn Mountains*, n.d., Loehr, *Great Painters*, figure 63.



Figure 25. *Three Horses*, 1950, *Chuantong*, plate 3.



Figure 26. Pu Quan (b. 1912), *Horse (after Castiglione)*, 1950, *Between the Thunder and the Rain*, catalogue 98.

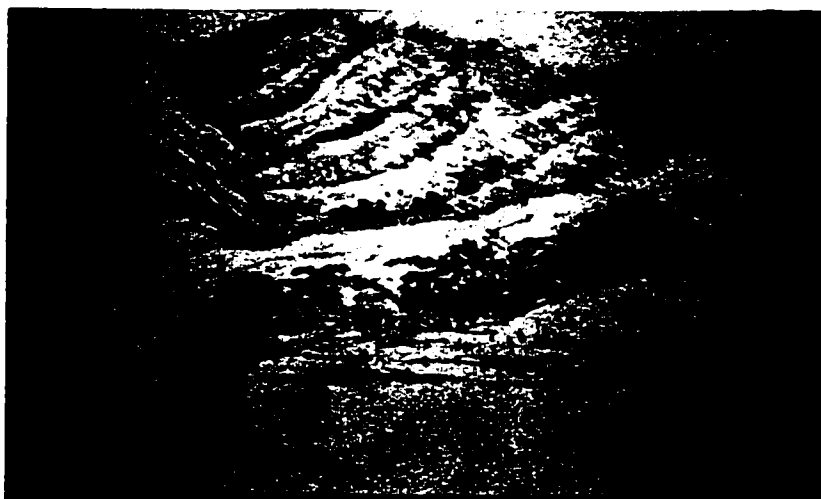


Figure 27. *Min River*, 1951, detail, photo by author.



Figure 28. *Morning Wind*, 1953, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, figure 57.



Figure 29. *Hawaiian Landscape in Chinese Style*, 1952, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, figure 9.



Figure 30. *Scene of Oahu*, 1951, collection of the artist.



Figure 31. *Hawaiian Landscape*, 1954, photo by author.



Figure 32. Xu Daoning (ca. 970-ca. 1052), *Fishing in a Mountain Stream*, n.d., Lee, *History of Far Eastern Art*, figure 465.



**Figure 33.** *Silent Action*, 1955, *By Design*, plate 6.



Figure 34. Gong Xian (1619-1689), *A Thousand Peaks and Myriad Ravines*, n.d., Lee, *History of Far Eastern Art*, figure 667.

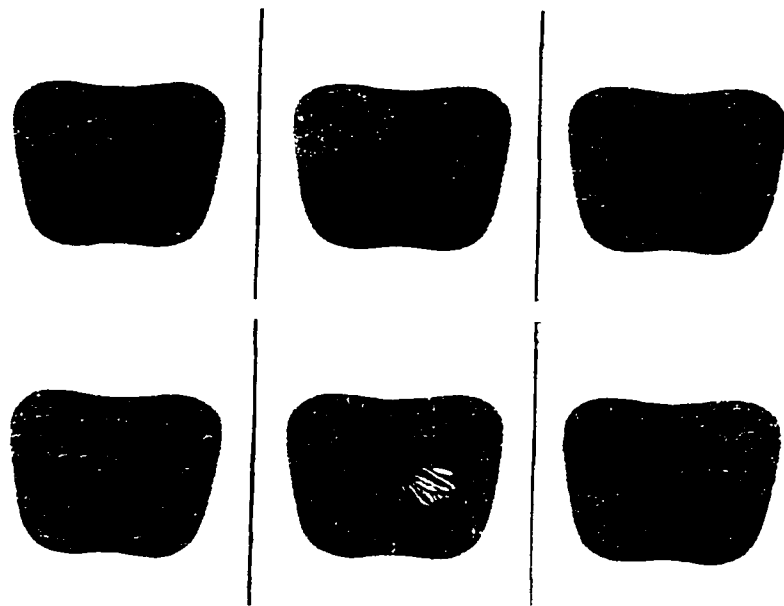


Figure 35. *Flowers*, 1954, detail, *By Design*, plate 4.



Figure 36. *Red Heliconias*, 1954, *By Design*, plate 5.



Figure 37. *Banyan*, 1955, *Art of Tseng Yuho* version, figure 58.



Figure 38. *Hills in Ink and Indigo*, n.d., *Christian Science Monitor*, July 25, 1953.



Figure 39. *Hawaiian Landscape*, 1954, *Chuantong*, plate 17b.



Figure 40. *Hawaiian Landscape*, 1953, *Chuantong*, plate 17a.



Figure 41. *Thicket of Trees*, 1956, *Chuantong*, plate 27b.

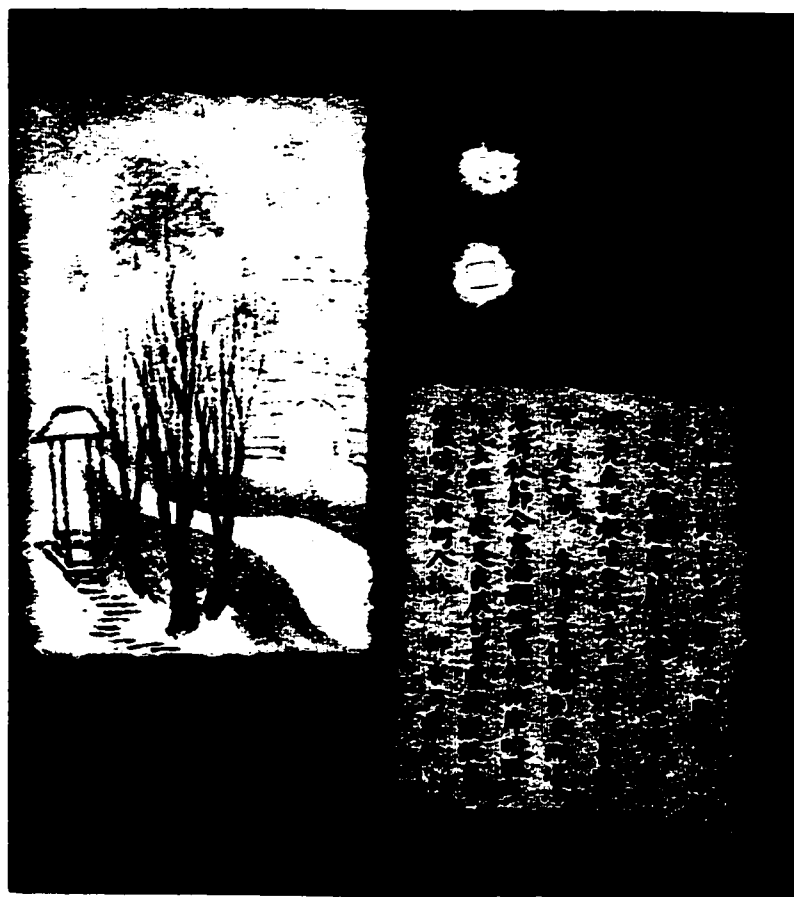


Figure 42. *Ten Song Poems*, Liu Yong's "Tinkling Rain," 1954, *Chuantong*, plate 27.



Figure 43. *Rock*, 1956, *Chuantong*, plate 27c.



Figure 44. *The Blue Landscape*, 1956, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, plate 1.

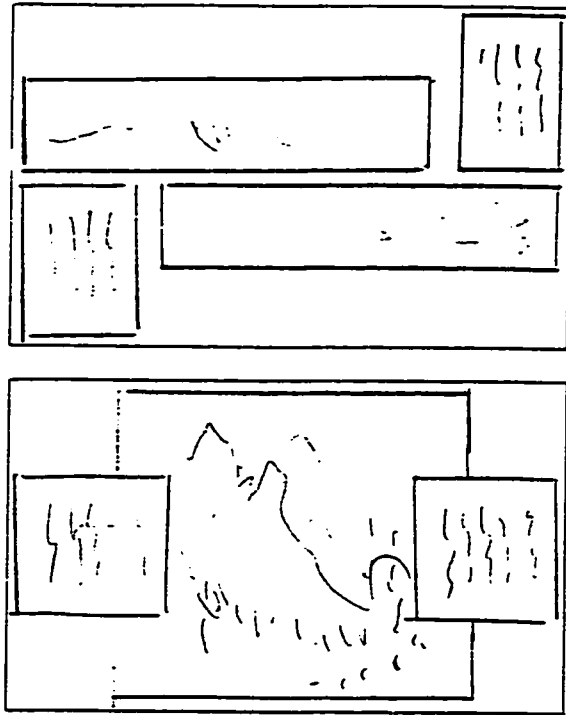


Figure 45. Pencil sketches, 1953-1957, *Dsui Hua*, 25.



Figure 46. *The Settlement*, 1956, artist's collection.



Figure 47. Gong Xian (1619-1689), *Village on a Mountainous Lakeshore*, 1671, *Eight Dynasties*, plate 214f.

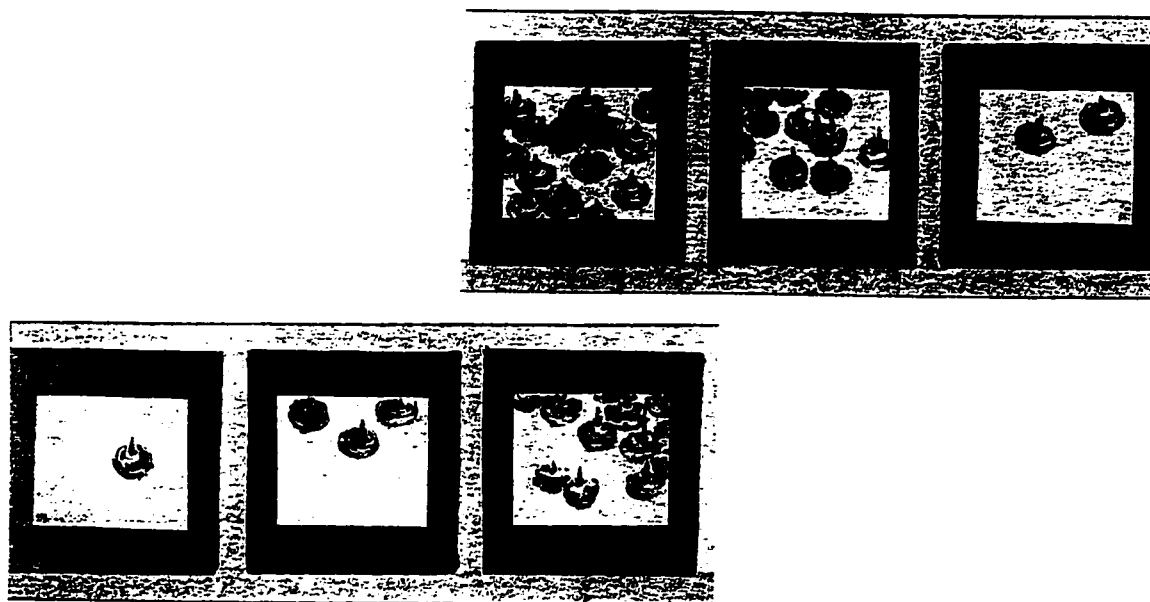


Figure 48. *Water Chestnuts*, 1954, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, figure 29.



Figure 49. Shen Zhou (1427-1509), *Gardeners*, n.d., *Eight Dynasties*, plate 154a.



Figure 50. *The Long Fence II*, detail, 1955, *By Design*, plate 7.

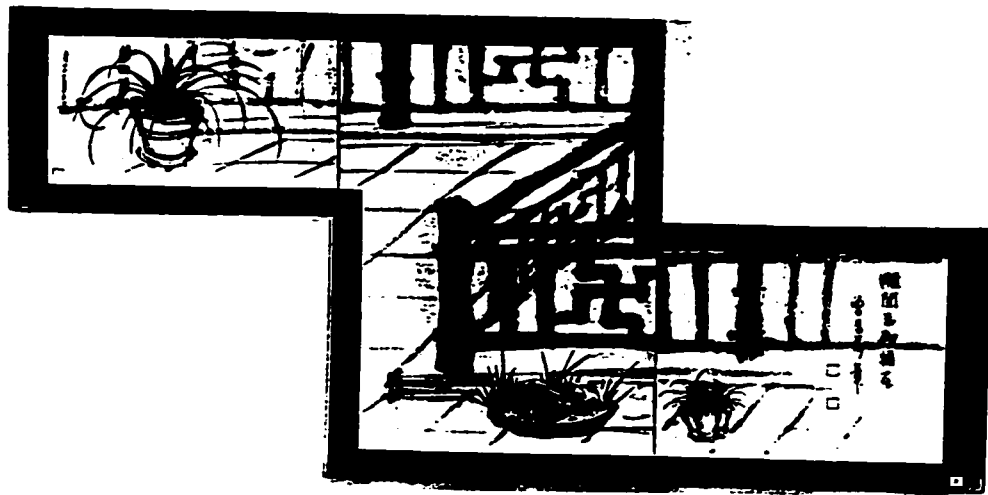


Figure 51. *The Railing*, 1955, collection of the artist.

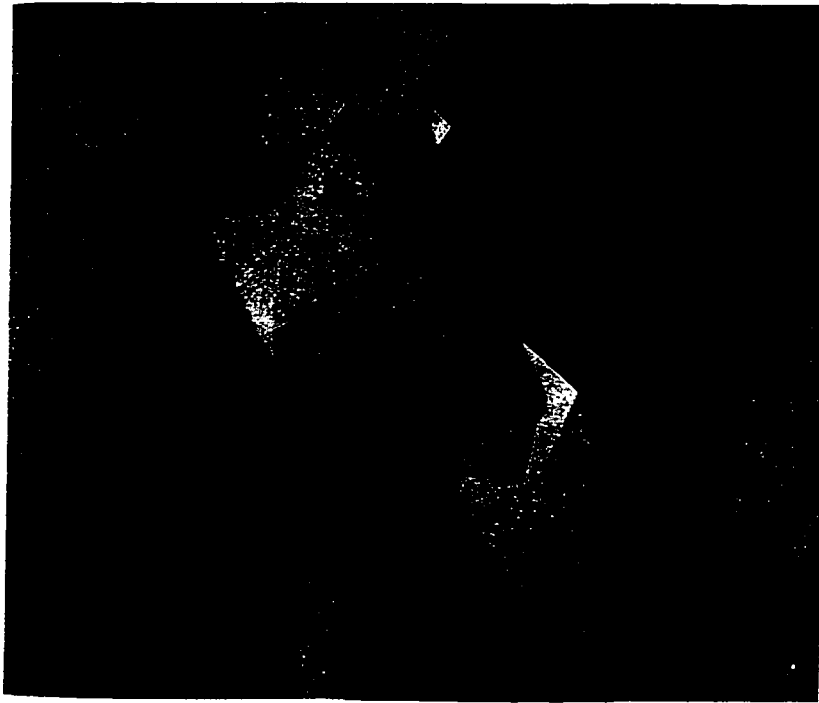


Figure 52. Stanton Macdonald-Wright, *Raigo*, 1955, Scott, *Art of Stanton Macdonald-Wright*, 19.

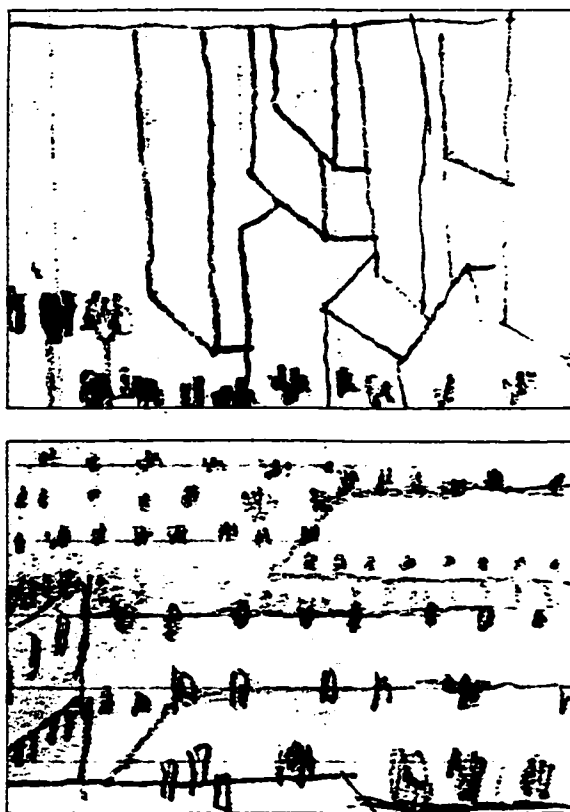


Figure 53. Pencil sketches, 1957, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, figure 35.



Figure 54. Photograph of Tseng and Ecke with friends, 1957, Baldwin, *Man Ray*, 311.



Figure 55. Man Ray (1890-1976), *Portrait of Tseng Yu-ho*, 1957, collection of the artist.

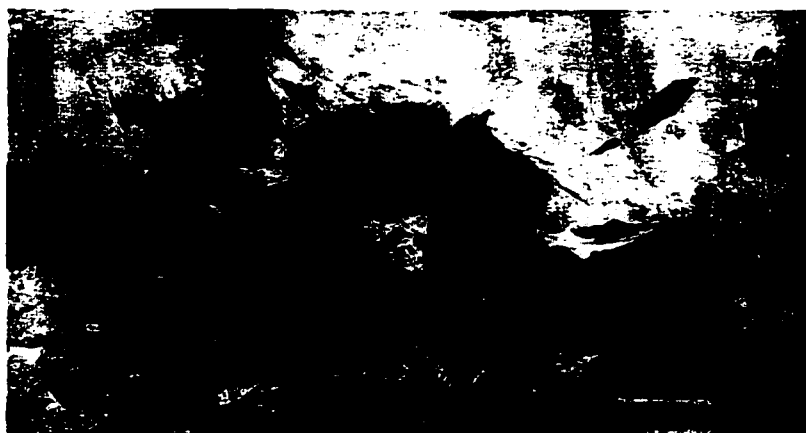


Figure 56. Paul Horiuchi (1906-1999), *December #2*, 1959, Wechsler, *Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions*, plate 122.

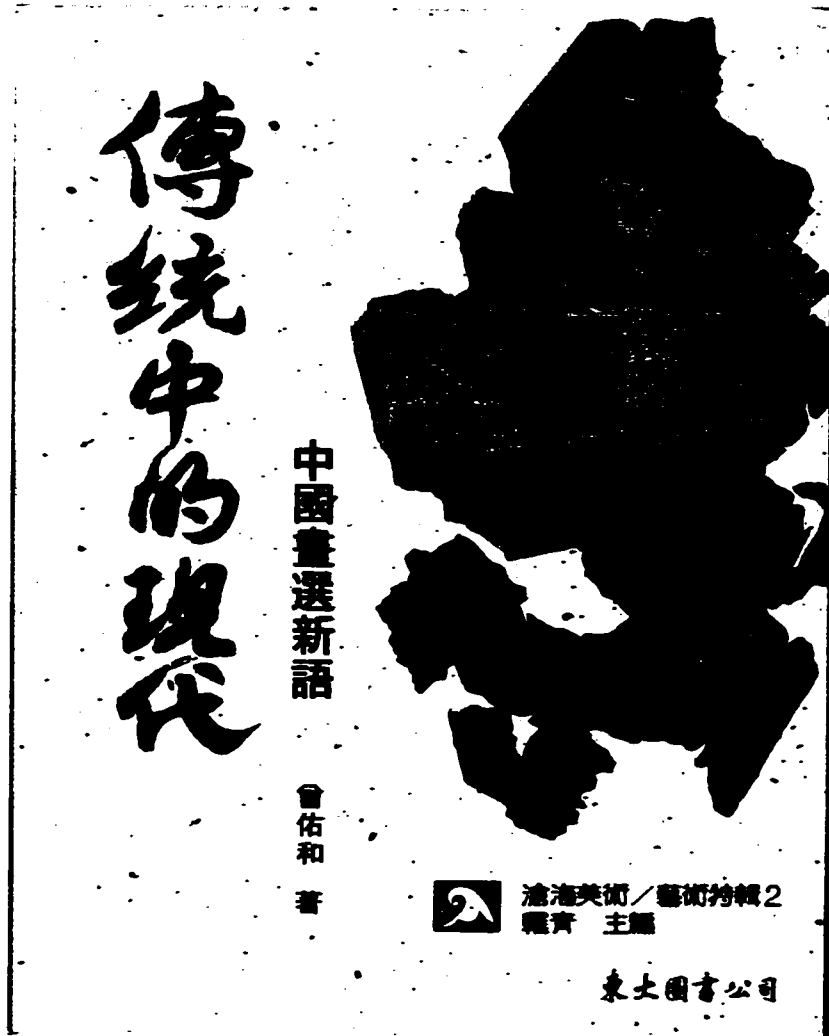


Figure 57. Yang Wei-quan (1885-ca. 1950), *bapo* painting, detail, 1942, cover of *Chuantong*.

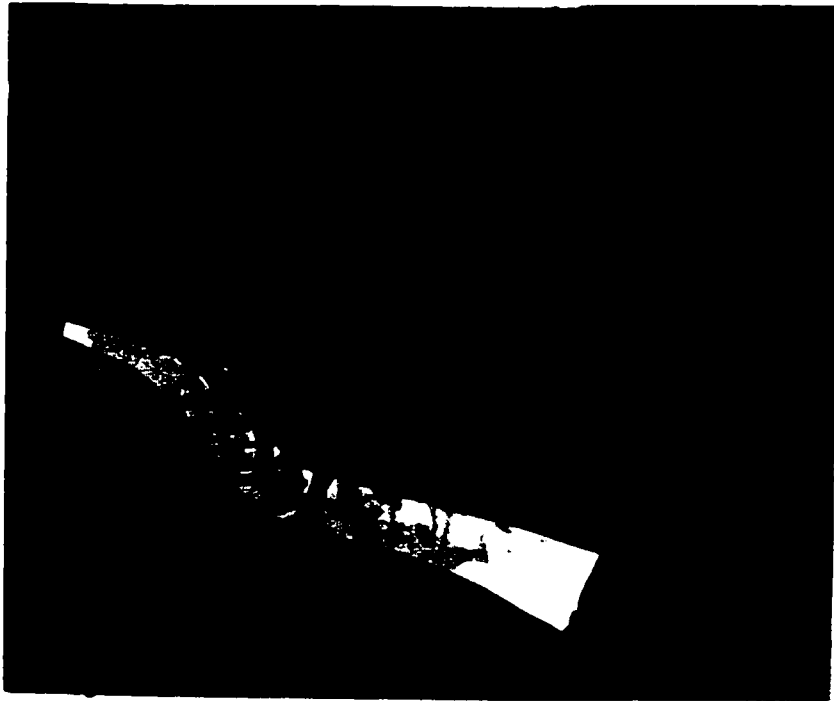


Figure 58. *Song Ballad*, 1958, author's slide.



Figure 59. *Landscape I*, 1957, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, plate 4.



Figure 60. Shitao (1630-1707), *Reminiscences of the Qinhuai River*, 1695-96, *Eight Dynasties*, plate 238h.



Figure 61. *Landscape II*, 1958, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, plate 5.



Figure 62. Zhu Da (1626-1705), *Landscape*, c. 1693, one from a set of four hanging scrolls, Barnhart, *Master of the Lotus Garden*, 143.



Figure 63. *Landscape III*, 1958, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, plate 6.

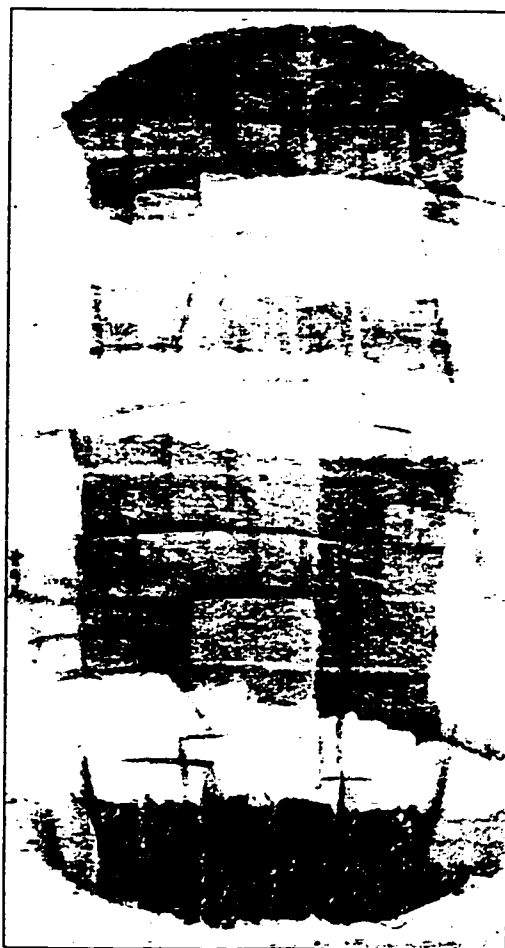


Figure 64. *Grisaille*, 1958, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, plate 7.



Figure 65. *Tang Landscape*, 1958-1959, artist's collection.



Figure 66. *St. Francis Xavier*, 1958, *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*.

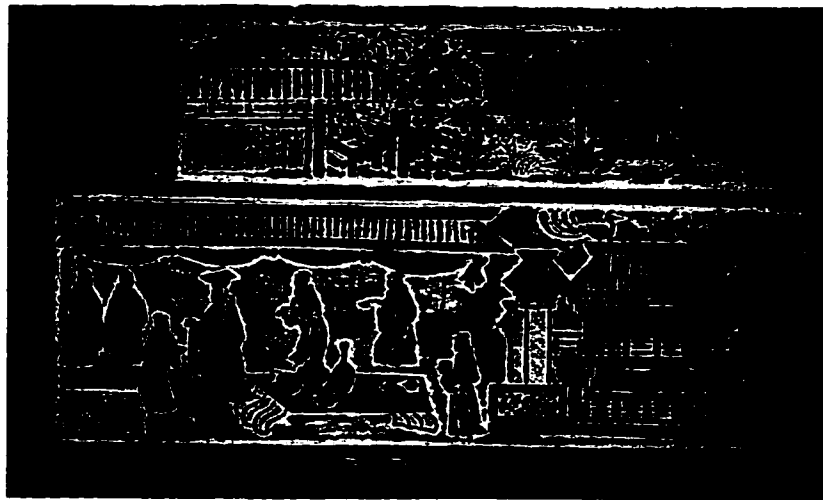


Figure 67. Manoa mural, 1958, detail, artist's collection.



Figure 68. Manoa mural, 1958, detail, *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, June 7, 1958.



Figure 69. Manoa mural, 1958, detail, artist's collection.

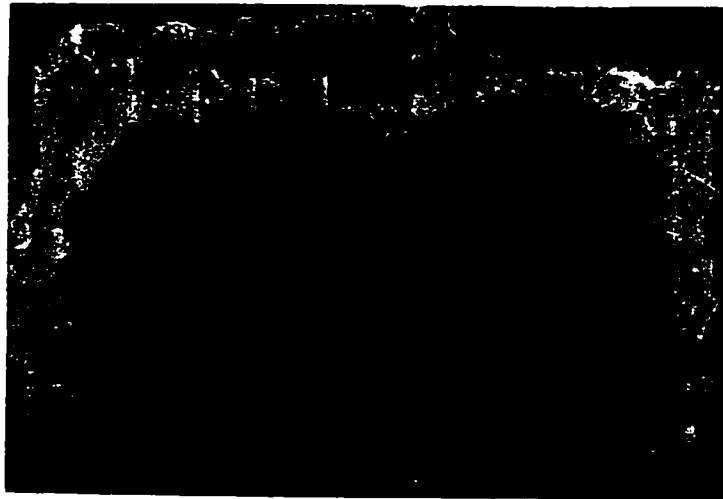


Figure 70. *Rock and Roll*, 1959, *Chuantong*, plate 23.

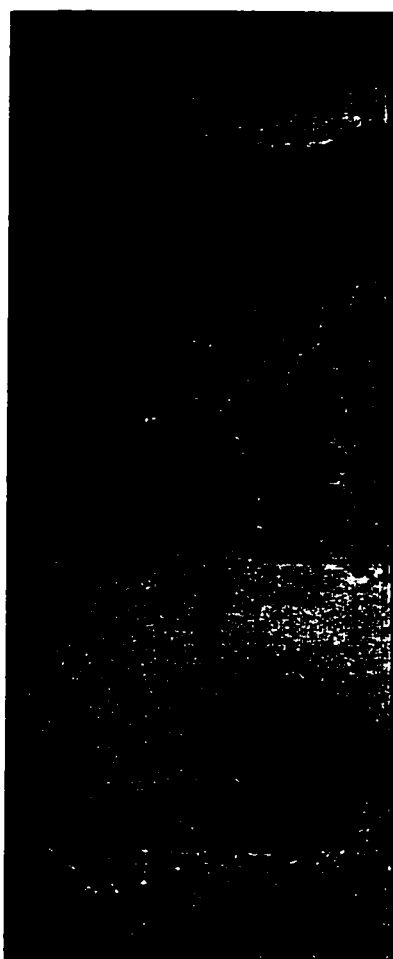


Figure 71. *At Second Sight*, 1962, Sullivan, *Meeting of Eastern and Western Art*, cover.



Figure 72. *Humidity*, 1964, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, plate 22.

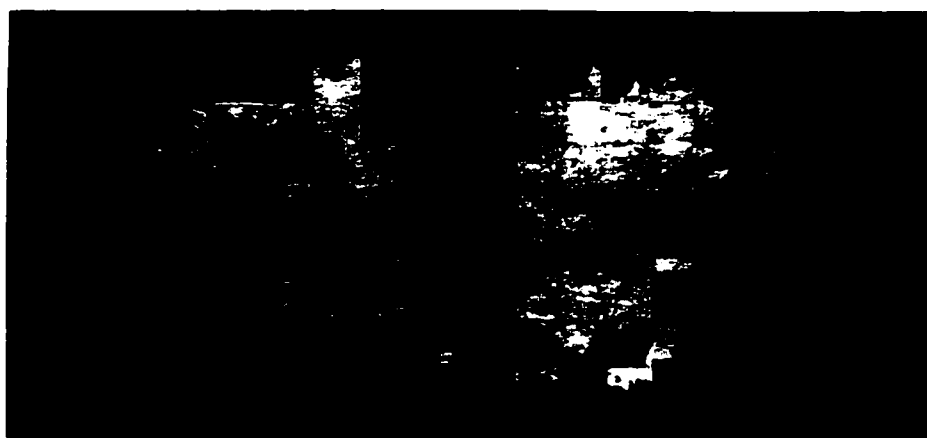


Figure 73. *Dragonland*, 1963, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, plate 20.



**Figure 74.** *Restless Earth*, 1967, artist's collection.



Figure 75. *Courtship*, 1961, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, plate 12.

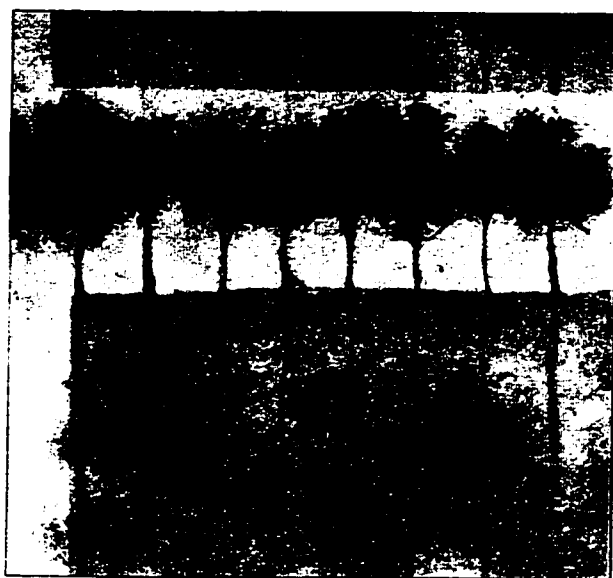


Figure 76. *Fellowship*, 1961, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, plate 13.

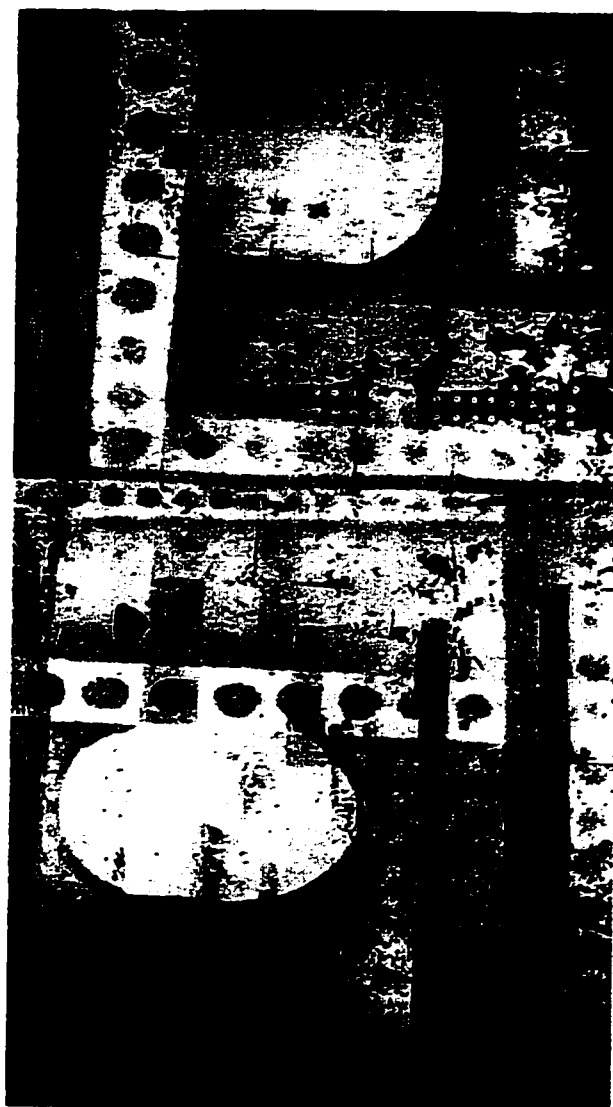


Figure 77. *Pegasus*, 1965, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, plate 23.



**Figure 78.** *A Song Ballad, "A Phoenix Hairpin,"* by Lu You, 1967, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, plate 26.

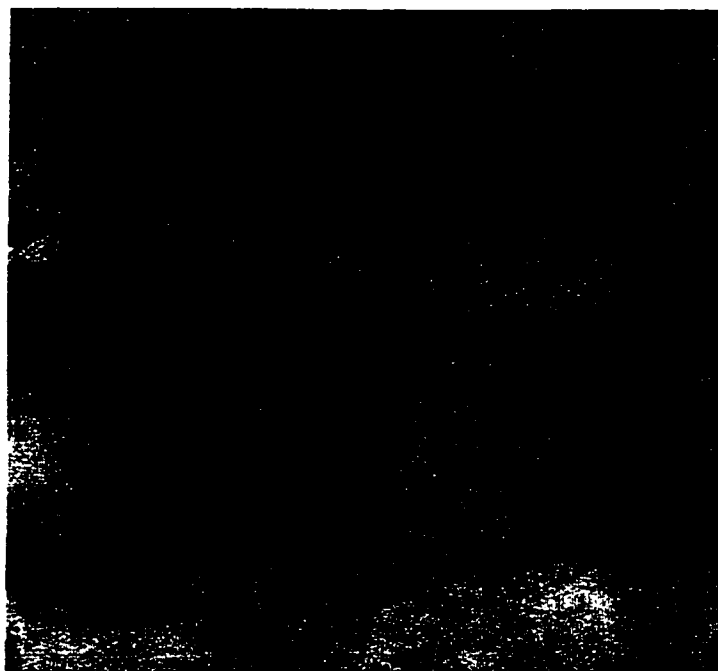


Figure 79. *Summer in Mykenae*, 1963, *Dsui Hua*, plate 14.

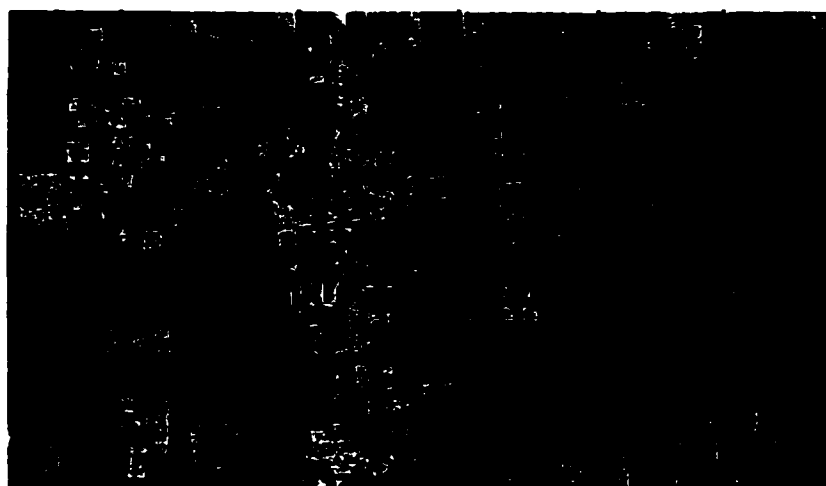


Figure 80. *Western Frontier*, 1964, detail, *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, November 22, 1964.



Figure 81. *Western Frontier*, 1964, detail, *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, November 13, 1964.



**Figure 82.** *Sincerity is the Foundation of Etiquette*, 1970, author's photo.

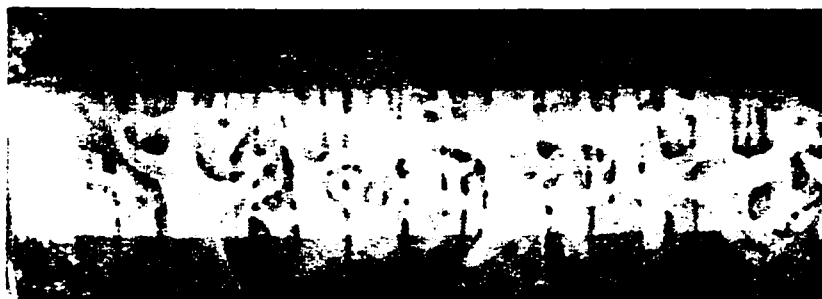
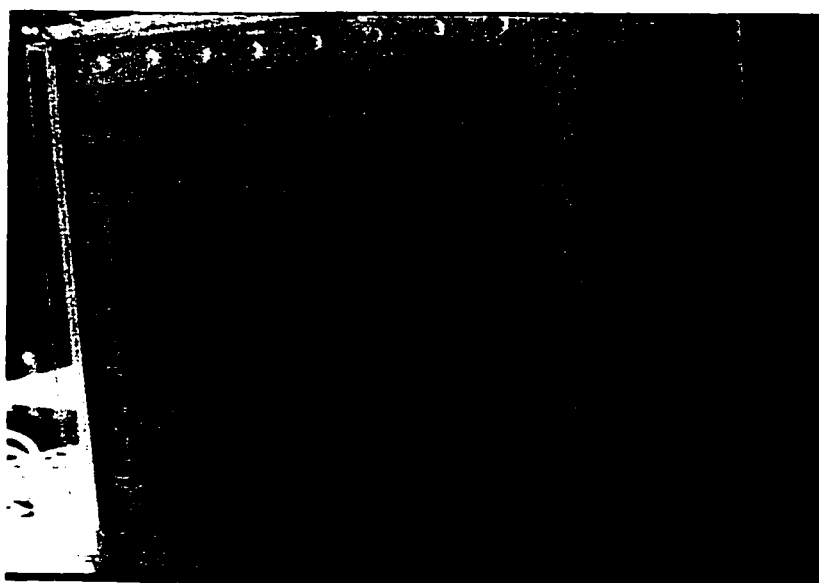


Figure 83. *Hawaii Formation*, 1978, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, plate 27.



Figure 84. *Calendar*, 1969, *Chuantong*, plate 26c.



**Figure 85.** *A Reading of Yijing, 1970, author's slide.*



Figure 86. *Quatrain*, 1973, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, cover.



Figure 87. *Soul Song*, 1982, *Tseng Yuho*, 18-19.

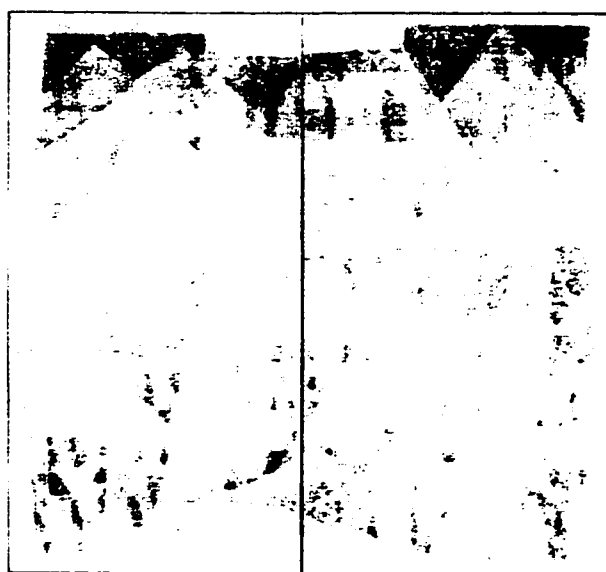


Figure 88. *A Memory of Greece*, 1985, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, plate 31.

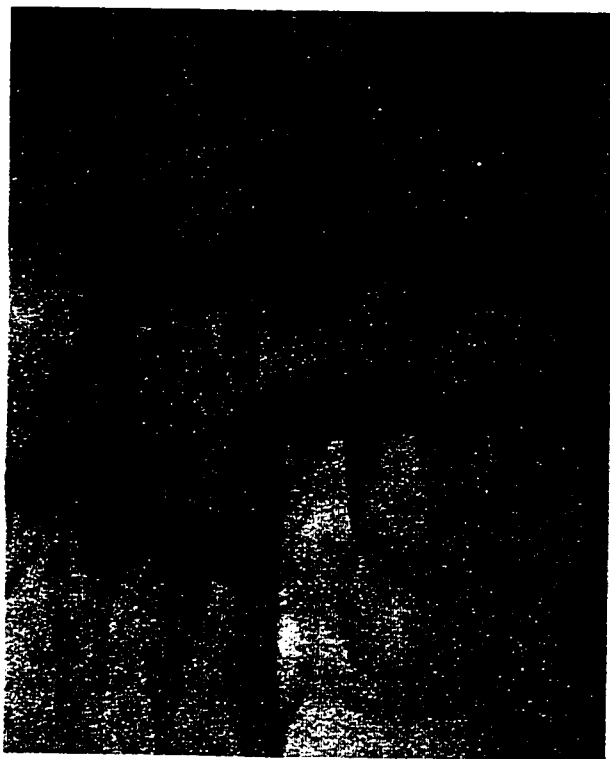


Figure 89. *Medieval Landscape*, 1987, *Dsui Hua*, plate 15.



Figure 90. *Hawaiian Memories*, 1988, *Dsui Hua*, plate 8.

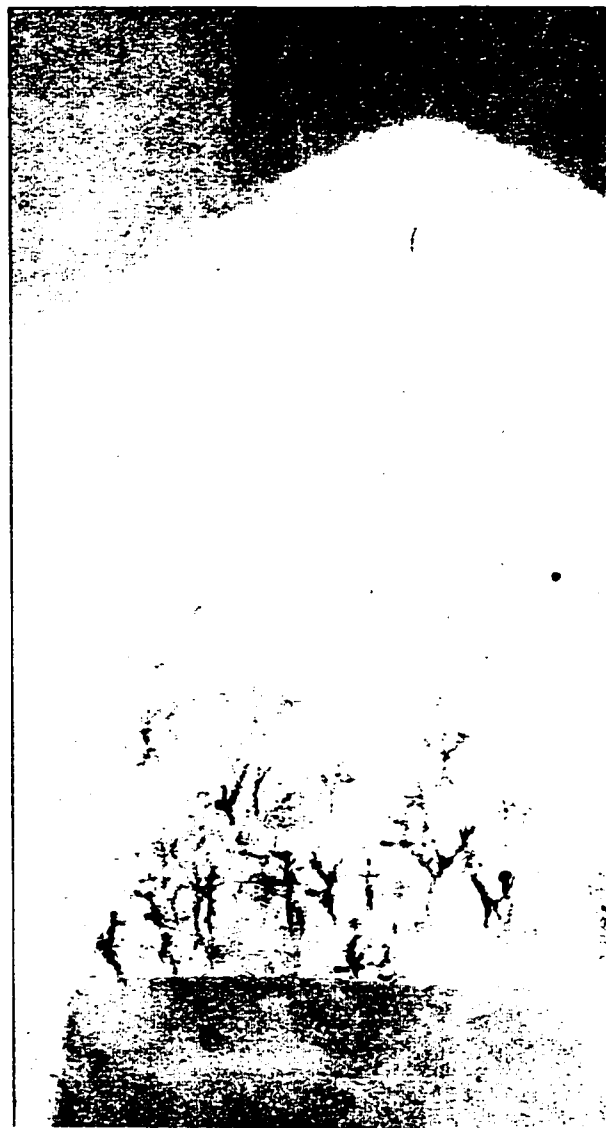


Figure 91. *Garden of Lin Bu*, 1985, *Art of Tseng Yuho*, plate 30.

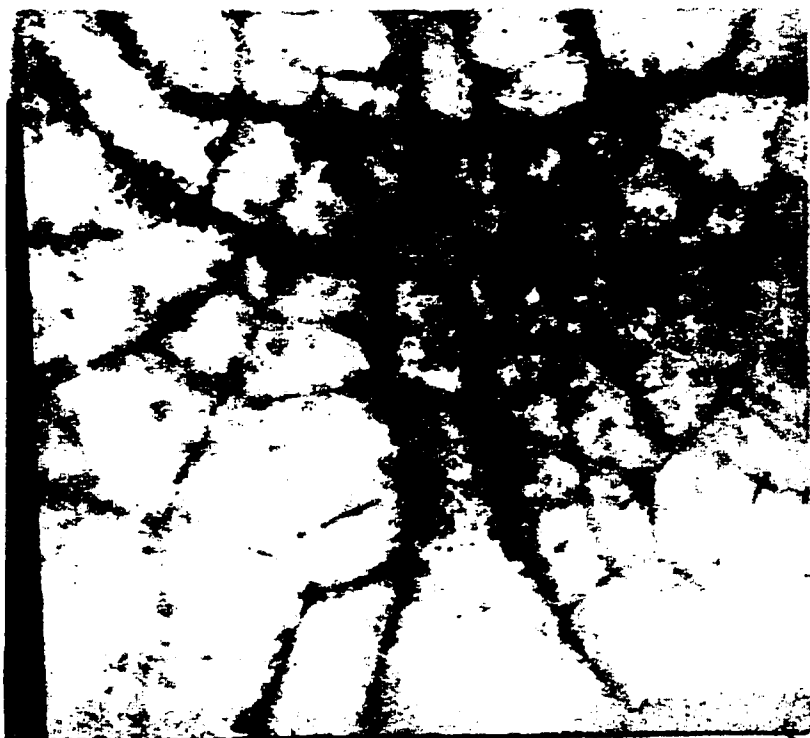


Figure 92. *Three Resonances of Plum Blossom*, 1997, author's slide.

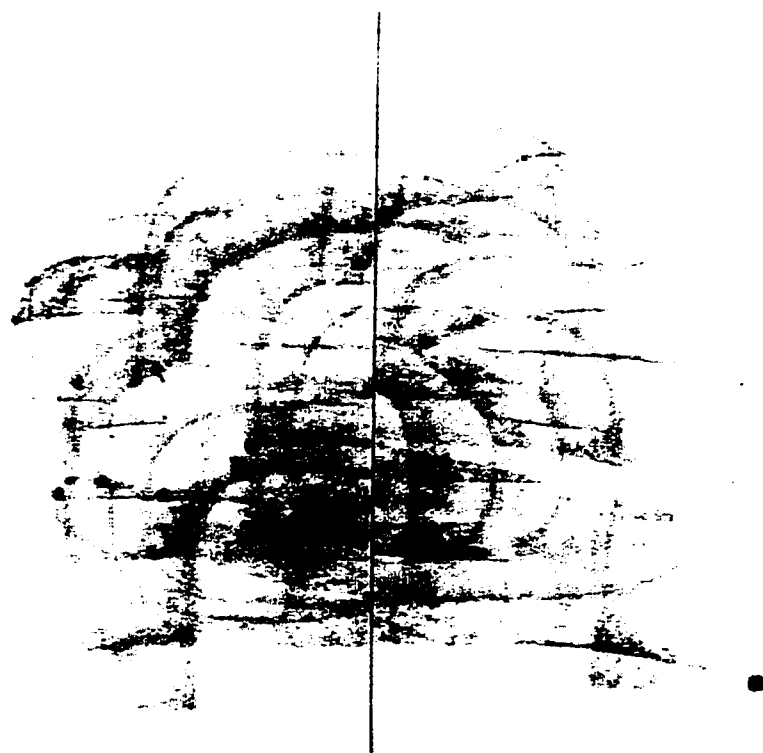


Figure 93. *A Vista*, 1991, *Tseng Yuho*, 8.



Figure 94. *Fuchun Mountains*, 1991, *By Design*, plate 10.

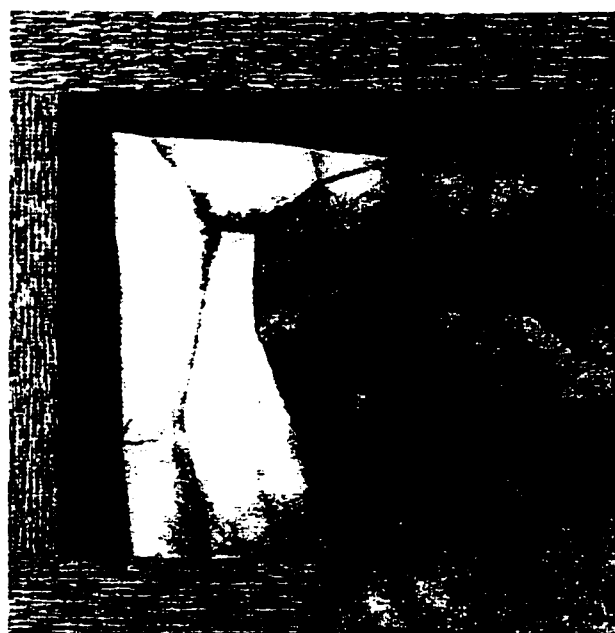


Figure 95. *With a Heart of Hongren*, 1993, *By Design*, plate 14.



Figure 96. *Slave of Painting*, 1959, artist's collection.



Figure 97. *Fragrance*, 1959, artist's collection.

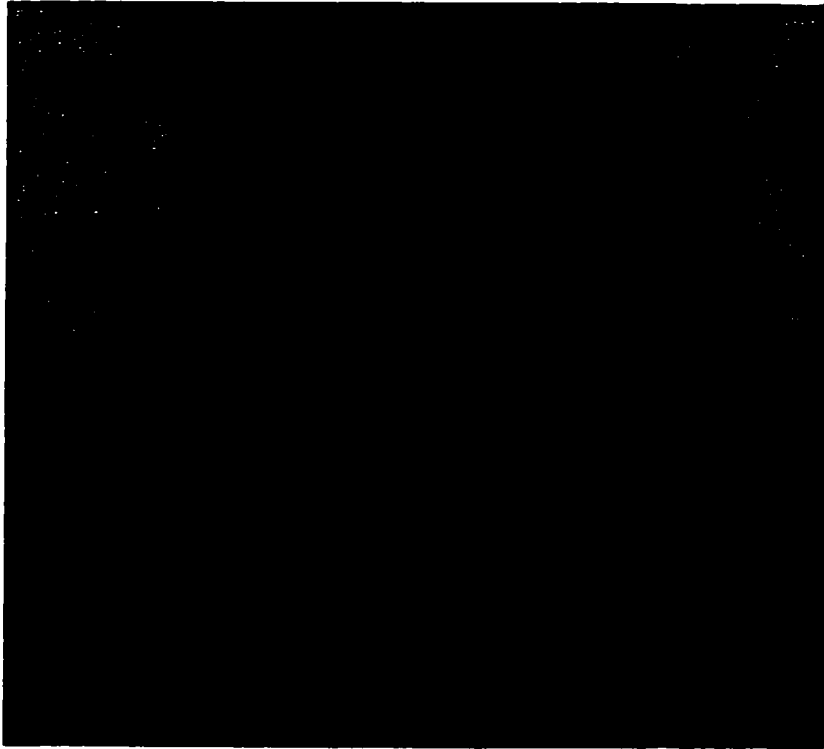


Figure 98. *Mute Message*, 1959, artist's collection.



Figure 99. *Marching Grasses*, 1976, *By Design*, plate 8.

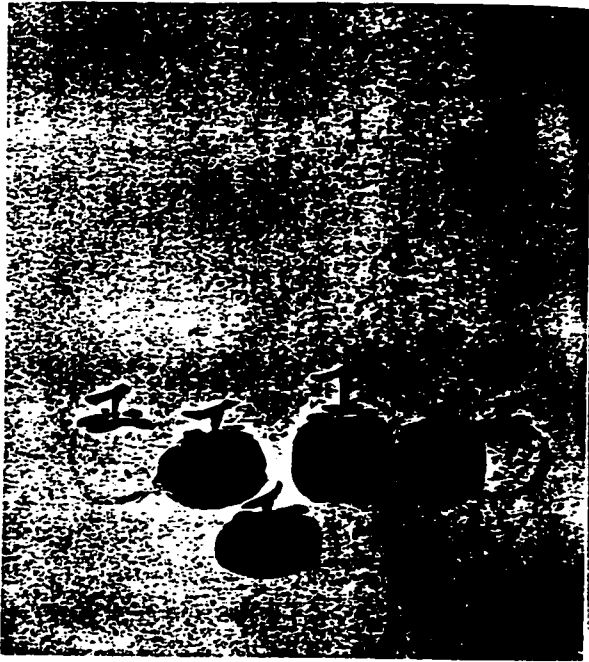


Figure 100. Muqi (thirteenth century), *Six Persimmons*, n.d., Sickman and Soper, *Art and Architecture of China*, plate 180.

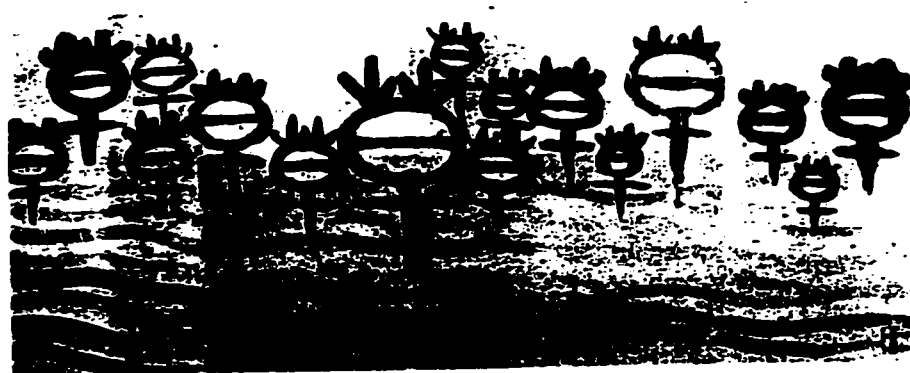


Figure 101. *The March*, 1994, Lim, *Living Brush*, 55.



Figure 102. *Willow Waves*, 1992, *By Design*, plate 12.

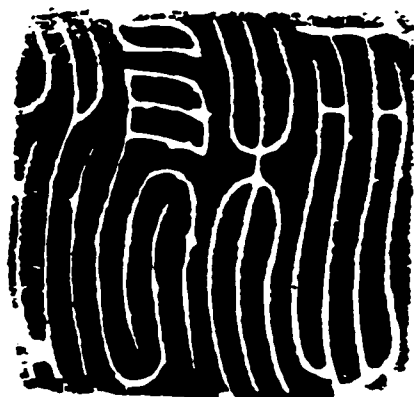


Figure 103. Guo Lin (1767-1831), *Willow Waves*, *History of Chinese Calligraphy*, figure 5.50.



Figure 104. *Tipsy Pot*, 1994, Lim, *Living Brush*, 52.



Figure 105. *Rhymeprose on a Fisherman*, by Qu Yuan, 1999, detail, *By Design*, plate 22.

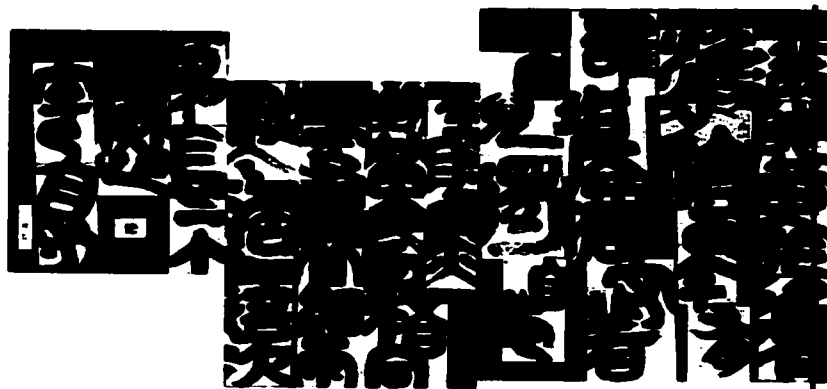


Figure 106. *Poem by Li Qingzhao*, 1998, detail, *By Design*, plate 24.



Figure 107. C. C. Wang (b. 1907), *Landscape*, 1943, *Mind Landscapes*, plate 28.

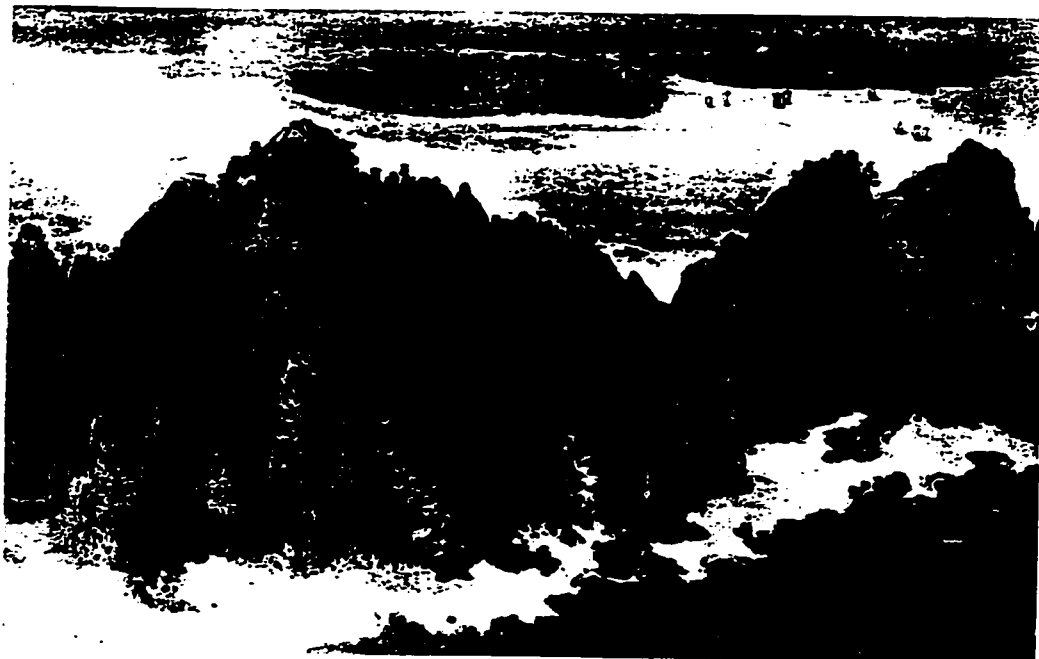


Figure 108. C. C. Wang (b. 1907), *Sailing Boats and Misty Mountains*, 1964, *Mind Landscapes*, plate 34.

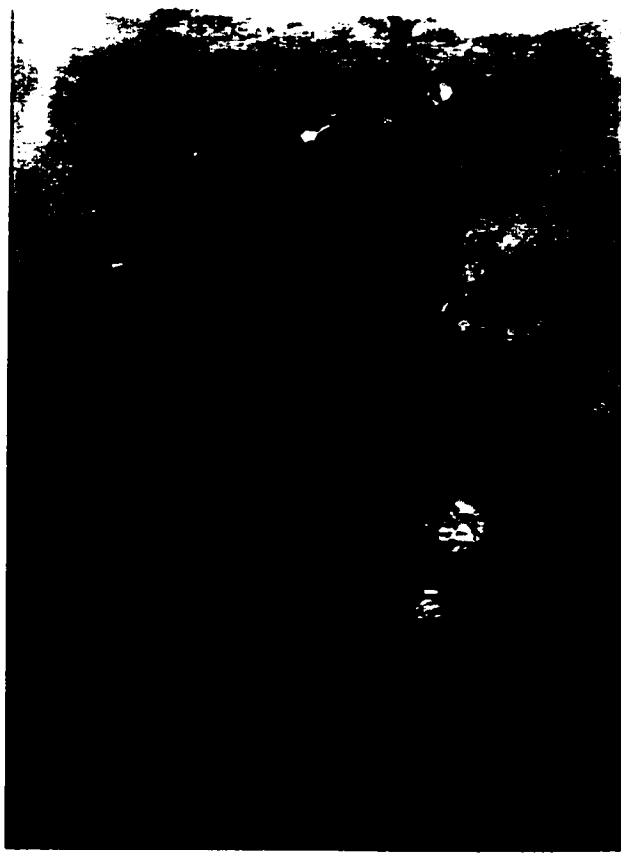


Figure 109. Zao Wou-ki (b. 1921), *Homage to Du Fu*, 1956, author's slide.

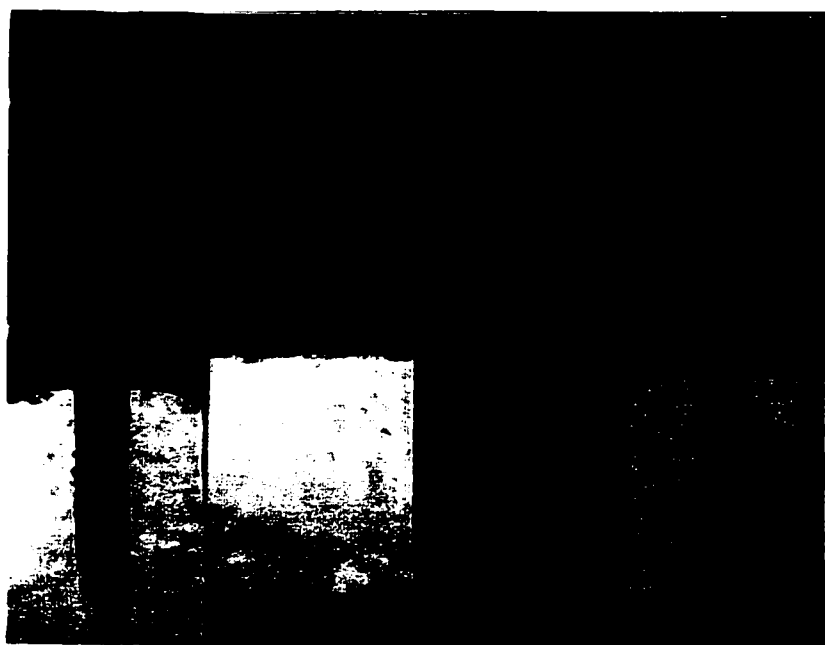


Figure 110. *Brush and Ink Grow Flowers*, 1999, *By Design*, plate 23.

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## APPENDIX ONE

## EXHIBITIONS

**1943**

Group exhibition, Beijing.

**1944**

Exhibition with Pu Quan, Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin.

**1945**

Painting exhibition, Peking Union Medical College, Beijing.

**1947**

Painting exhibition, China Institute, London; November-December, M. H. de Young Memorial Museum.

**1949**

"An Exhibition by Tseng Yu Ho," September 25-October 1, Fung Ping Shan Library, Hong Kong University.

**1950**

Painting exhibition, March 28-April 15, Gump's, Honolulu.

**1952**

"Paintings by Tseng Yu-ho," January 3-24, Honolulu Academy of Arts; February, M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco.

**1953**

Painting exhibitions: Musée Cernuschi, Paris; Fussli Gallery, Zurich; July 15-September 1, Art Institute, Chicago; L'Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, Rome.

**“Chinese Paintings,”** Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) exhibition, November 9-30, William Rockhill Nelson Art Gallery, Kansas City, Missouri.

#### **1954**

**“Chinese Paintings,”** (SITES exhibition): January 24-February 14, Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; March 1-22, George Thomas Hunter Gallery of Art, Chattanooga, Tennessee; April 4-25, Art Gallery, University of Delaware, Newark Delaware; May 9-30, Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, Alabama; June 15-July 15, Miami Beach Art Center, Miami, Florida; September 16-October 14, Rosicrucian Art Gallery, San Jose, California; November 1-22, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon; December 6, 1954-January 3, 1955, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Washington.

#### **1955**

**“Chinese Paintings,”** (SITES exhibition), February 1955, Art Center in La Jolla, La Jolla, California.

#### **1956**

Painting exhibition, The Gallery, Honolulu.

**“Hawaii Painting and Sculpture,”** group exhibition, Honolulu Academy of Arts.

#### **1957**

**“Tseng Yu-ho, Peintures Recentes,”** May 2-18, Galerie d’Orsay, Paris.

#### **1958**

**“Fresh Paint: American Art of the Western States,”** Stanford Art Gallery, Stanford University.

**“American Painting and Sculpture,”** University of Illinois.

#### **1959**

**“Recent Paintings by Tseng Yu-ho,”** Honolulu Academy of Arts.

**“Paintings by Tseng Yu-ho,”** Stanford Art Gallery, Stanford University.

#### **1960**

Painting exhibition, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

**“Seven Painters in Hawaii,”** Downtown Gallery, New York.

Painting exhibition, Downtown Gallery, New York.  
Group exhibition, University of Illinois.

**1962**

“New Paintings by Tseng Yu-ho,” Downtown Gallery, New York.  
Group exhibitions, University of Illinois, Rockford, Illinois, and the Virginia Museum, Richmond, Virginia.  
“Paintings by Tseng Yu-ho,” October-November, Honolulu Academy of Arts.

**1963**

Painting exhibitions, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, National Museum of Modern Art, Stockholm, and Musée Cernuschi, Paris.

**1964**

Painting exhibition, Downtown Gallery, New York.  
“Chinese Painting: Twentieth Century,” group exhibition, Hewlett Gallery, Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

**1965**

“Fifty Artists of the Fifty States,” Rockford Museum of Art, Rockford, Illinois.  
“Pacific Heritage,” Los Angeles, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, and Berlin.  
“Impact of Nature,” IBM Gallery, New York.  
“American Painting Biennial,” Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C.

**1966**

“Recent Works by Tseng Yu-ho,” July 12-24, Honolulu Academy of Arts.  
Painting exhibition, Downtown Gallery, New York.  
“Painting and Sculpture International,” Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.  
Group exhibition, Virginia Museum of Art, Richmond, Virginia.

**1967**

Painting exhibitions: Kunstverien, Munich; Reitberg Museum, Zurich; Karmeliter Klostr, Frankfurt; Downtown Gallery, New York.  
“Pacific Heritage,” Los Angeles, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, San Diego, and Berlin International Art Festival.

“Our Land, Our Sky and Our Water,” International World Exposition, Spokane, Washington.

“Fifty Artists of Fifty States,” Rockford Art Museum, Rockford, Illinois.

“An Exhibition of Contemporary Painting, Sculpture and Graphic Art,” National Institute of Arts and Letters, New York.

**1968**

“Painting and Sculpture International,” Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

“Edith Halpert and the Downtown Gallery,” University of Connecticut Museum of Art, Storrs, Connecticut.

**1982**

“Hawaii Painting and Sculpture,” Honolulu Academy of Arts.

**1983**

Group exhibition, Taipei Municipal Museum of Modern Art.

**1984**

“Twentieth Century Chinese Painting,” City Hall Art Center, Hong Kong.

**1989**

“The Art of Tseng Yu-ho,” July 13-August 20, Honolulu Academy of Arts.

“Tan-yi One,” Contemporary Museum, Honolulu.

“Tan-yi Two,” AmFac Plaza Gallery, Honolulu.

**1992**

“Dsui Paintings by Tseng Yuho: A Retrospective Exhibition,” April 20-30, Shanghai Municipal Museum of Modern Art; May 5-9, China Art Museum, Beijing; August 30-September 7, Taipei Fine Arts Museum; October 11-20, Hong Kong Arts Centre.

**1993**

“Dsui Paintings by Tseng Yuho: A Retrospective Exhibition,” March 3-15, National Museum of Singapore.

**1997**

“The Living Brush: Four Masters of Contemporary Chinese Calligraphy,” March 7-August 17, Pacific Heritage Museum, San Francisco.

“Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions: Asian-American Artists and Abstraction, 1945-1970,” March 23-July 31, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University; September 6-November 2, Chicago Cultural Center; December 10, 1987-February 14, 1998, Fisher Gallery at the University of Southern California and the Japan-American National Museum, Los Angeles, California.

**1998**

“Tseng Yu-ho,” June 17-July 10, Michael Goedhuis Gallery, London.

**2000**

“By Design: The Art of Tseng Yuho,” May 9-June 9, Kaikodo Gallery, New York.

**APPENDIX TWO**  
**COLLECTIONS**

**Art Institute, Chicago, Illinois**

**Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, England**

**Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, Massachusetts**

**Hawaii State Foundation for Culture and the Arts, Honolulu, Hawaii**

**Honolulu Academy of Arts, Honolulu, Hawaii**

**Marion Koogler McNay Art Institute, San Antonio, Texas**

**Moderne Museet, Stockholm, Sweden**

**Musée Cernuschi, Paris, France**

**Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Cologne, Germany**

**Ostasiatiska Museet, Stockholm, Sweden**

**Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota**

**Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts**

**VITA**

**Melissa Jane Thompson (née Walt) was born in Pasadena, California. She took her undergraduate degree from Stanford University in 1984. At Yale University she earned a Master of Arts degree in East Asian Studies in 1985. In 2001 she earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Art History at the University of Washington. She is currently a Resident Fellow at Stanford University.**