Lui Shou Kwan & Modern Ink Painting

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Ph. D. Thesis

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Lui Shou Kwan was born in Guangzhou, China in 1919 and passed away in Hong Kong in 1975. Beginning from the late 1940s, Lui developed a strong desire to resurrect Chinese ink painting as a means to rejuvenate Chinese culture. He realized this dream later in Hong Kong via both his work and art teaching. His abstract, individualistic depiction of Hong Kong’s topographical landscapes and the subject of Zen made him an iconic figure in the art scene of Hong Kong since the early 1960s. Meanwhile, his frequent exhibitions abroad also won him a name in the international art arena. The part-time painting courses which Lui taught at the then two universities in Hong Kong between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s further made him a figure of import in art education with lasting influence.

This thesis attempts to offer the first comprehensive study of Lui Shou Kwan’s work with which to demonstrate the pioneering role he played in the modernization of ink painting in the second half of the twentieth century. The first two chapters of this thesis trace Lui Shou Kwan’s artistic origins through respectively a survey of the development of Chinese painting in Guangdong before 1950 and a study of his early life and work in Guangzhou. The third chapter explores the changes observed in Lui’s work accompanied by his experimentation with the abstract idiom in Hong Kong. The modernism and avant-gardism peculiar to Lui poses an individual issue for examination in the fourth chapter. In the fifth chapter, the focus of analysis is placed on Lui’s Zen paintings which helped affirm his position as an ink painting modernizer and lead him to scale a new height in his artistic career. The sixth chapter, serving as a long conclusion of the whole thesis, discusses Lui’s principal ideas about art education as well as the legacy he left through his art teaching.
LUI SHOU KWAN & MODERN INK PAINTING

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Art History and Theory
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The University of Sydney

2011
Declaration

I declare that this thesis represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

Signed

LAI Mei Lin
Acknowledgements

A thesis is never completed in isolation but with the support of others. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor John Clark, my supervisor. His encouragement, guidance and patience have guided me through my studies. Professor Clark’s original insight on the subject of modern Asian art was invaluable to my analysis and evaluation of Lui Shou Kwan’s art. His advice during our occasional conversations over coffee table had also offered me much intellectual stimulation and inspired me to pursue important issues which I would not have thought of otherwise.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration ........................................................................................ i

Acknowledgements .............................................................................. ii

Table of Contents ................................................................................ iv

Introduction ....................................................................................... 1

Chapter One: The Guangdong Art Scene Before 1950 ......................... 20

Chapter Two: The Early Life and Work of Lui Shou Kwan (1919-1948) .... 63

Chapter Three: Lui Shou Kwan’s Rise as a Modern Ink Painter in
Postwar Hong Kong (1948-1966) ..................................................... 102

Chapter Four: Lui Shou Kwan’s Modernism and Avant-Gardism .......... 155

Chapter Five: Lui Shou Kwan’s Zen Painting Series .......................... 195

Chapter Six: Lui Shou Kwan’s Artistic Legacy ................................... 262

Appendix I ....................................................................................... 313

Appendix II ..................................................................................... 321

Brief Biography of Lui Shou Kwan ................................................... 323

Selected Bibliography ........................................................................ 325

Glossary ......................................................................................... 370

List of Interviews .............................................................................. 383

List of Illustrations .......................................................................... 385

Plates
Introduction

Lui Shou Kwan 呂壽琨 (Lü Shoukun, 1919-1975) was one of the most highly regarded artists in Hong Kong in the early decades after the Second World War.¹ The honour he enjoyed was due not only to his dedication to the modernization of Chinese art, but also to his establishment of a distinctive personal style which opened up fresh opportunities in revitalizing traditional Chinese shuimohua 水墨画 (literally, ‘water-and-ink painting’, usually abbreviated as ‘ink painting’).² The reputation he earned in the art world during his lifetime has positioned his work as an icon of modern Hong Kong art which continues to grace the covers of many official publications.³ Yet Lui Shou Kwan’s importance in the local art history was not confined to his experimental spirit in artistic creation, it also lay in his labour in art writing and, above all, the tremendous influence he exerted as an art teacher over a generation of young reform-minded artists, inspiring them to seek modern artistic

¹ All Chinese names in this thesis are given with the surname first in accordance to the Asian tradition. For romanization of Chinese names, terms, and phrases in quotations, the pinyin system is adopted with the following exceptions: 1) self-chosen names of artists, writers, and scholars which are more characteristically known through previous publications, e.g., Lui Shou Kwan (not Lü Shoukun), Wucius Wong (not Wang Wuxie); 2) place names which are rendered in the Wade-Giles and Cantonese systems because of the greater familiarity with their usages, e.g. Hong Kong (not Xianggang), Taipei (not Taibei); and 3) names and terms in the titles of publications using different systems of romanization. Where a system other than that of pinyin is used for a name in the text, the pinyin version of that name is provided in parentheses when it first appears, with the Chinese characters written next to it. Conversely, where the pinyin system is employed for a name, the former common spelling of that name is offered in brackets. Dates of individual artists and Chinese dynasties and periods are also given on first mention within the text. The glossary of this thesis will provide again the Chinese characters for all the artists’ names, titles, and terms appearing in the text.

² For simplicity’s sake, shuimohua will be rendered as ‘ink painting’ or ‘Chinese painting’ in this thesis.

³ Unless otherwise specified, the ‘modern’ period pertaining to Hong Kong art in this thesis refers mainly to that which occurred in the twentieth century.
expressions. His influence was most conspicuous in the role he played as a leading light in the New Ink Painting Movement which flourished in the territory during the 1970s and the early 1980s. Whether one accepts Lui’s artistic concepts or not, one cannot deny that his work has left an indelible imprint in the history of modern Hong Kong art. Although more than three decades have passed since his premature death in 1975, his impact is still felt to this day through the extended influence of some of his students in the local art sphere, and the persistent propagation of his art by the official museum as the visual marker of postwar modernity in this territory.

Throughout his life, Lui Shou Kwan held a very open attitude towards receiving non-Chinese influences in artistic creation. Ironically, his ideas about modernizing traditional Chinese ink painting, which were considered as profound and insightful by many of his students, were taken as rhetorical to the point of expansive in the eyes of not a few of his contemporaries. Lui’s forthright criticism of the imitational practice which was prevalent among ink painters of his time had drawn sharp ripostes from some traditionalist and conservative artists and art critics alike; their criticisms rumbled on for many years after his death. The tension and intense arguments between Lui Shou Kwan and his opponents have constituted an ineluctable component in the construction of postwar modern art history of Hong Kong.

Despite its engagement with the modern world soon after the Second World War, Hong Kong was viewed for a long time, even in the 1980s, by many people as a cultural backwater. In the writings of some migrant mainland intelligentsia who took refuge there after the war, Hong Kong was denigrated as a vulgar, corrupt, superstitious and backward place, lacking an independent cultural entity worthy of
attention. They believed that should there be any culture at all, it was destined to be banal and commercial. To these mainland refugees, Hong Kong was just a minuscule and marginal region of China, so insignificant that its culture was necessarily provincial and thus inconsequential. Although Hong Kong had achieved very rapid economic growth as well as become an important financial centre in South East Asia by the 1970s, its development on the artistic front had not kept pace with such successes. The refugees continued to regard Hong Kong’s artistic development as a minor tributary of the larger Chinese culture. They saw Hong Kong as a place that lived on the cultural periphery of China and was by no means a city of serious art and culture. Such preconception about Hong Kong has continued to linger in the mind of many people and may directly or indirectly explain the minimal attention Hong Kong art has received in the art world.

As late as the early 1990s, some Hong Kong cultural workers who had a key role to play in the local art domain, such as Oscar Ho Hing Kay 何慶基 (He Qingji, b.1956), were still lamenting the serious lack of study on Hong Kong art history. A perusal of

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5 On Ho’s lament on the paucity of historical writing on Hong Kong art, see Ho Hing Kay, ‘Art History in Hong Kong’, *Dangdai shishi zhoukan* (Contemporary), 24 March 1990, p. 31. Ho is one of the few artist-curators in Hong Kong who enjoys an international standing. He received his artistic training in Canada and the U.S. and came back to his homeland, Hong Kong, in 1984. After serving a number of part-time teaching posts in various academic institutions, he joined the Hong Kong Arts Centre as Exhibition Director in 1988 and remained there until 2001. From 2001 to 2003, he was a senior research officer of the Home Affairs Bureau of the Hong Kong government. Then, he took up the post of Director of the newly opened Museum of Contemporary Art in Shanghai between 2004 and 2005.
past writings on Hong Kong art till the end of the last century indeed proved the point. It was not until 2005, when mainland scholar Zhu Qi 朱琦 transformed his doctoral thesis into a book, titled *Xianggang meishushi 《香港美術史》* (Hong Kong Art History), that despite certain gaps, the people in Hong Kong could obtain a lucid and more up-to-date account of the artistic development of their own land.⁶

**Writings on Lui Shou Kwan**

Notwithstanding the general lack of serious research in different forms of visual arts in Hong Kong, ink painting remains the pictorial genre that has been most widely written about. The major reason is that since this genre started to develop in Hong Kong in the early decades of the last century, it has enjoyed wide popularity among art lovers and art connoisseurs, as well as attracted the greatest number of art practitioners to work in this medium. However, as regards studies in Lui Shou Kwan's art, apart from discussion appearing in the form of catalogue articles or essays written for his one-man shows, and sporadic studies by scholars who are interested in the general development of twentieth-century modern Chinese art as a whole, only one monograph has hitherto been written. The monograph, titled 'The Development of Lü Shoukun’s Art', was completed by Flora Kay Chan (Chen Fengqi 陳鳳姬, b.1935), a former student of Lui Shou Kwan, as her MPhil dissertation at The University of Hong Kong (‘HKU’) in 1991.⁷ Like many monographic studies, Chan Since 2006, he has been working as Director of a M.A. Programme in Cultural Management for the Department of Cultural & Religious Studies of The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

⁷ Chan was a student of an ink painting course taught by Lui Shou Kwan in the Department of Extramural Studies of The Chinese University of Hong Kong between 1968 and 1969. Apart from this
constructed her discursive framework in a chronological order, wherein she divided the artistic development of Lui Shou Kwan organically into the early, middle, and late periods. Probably due to her closeness with Lui and with his wife Mui Sin Ping 梅倩萍 (Mei Qianping, b. 1918), Chan was able to enrich her writing with many biographical and anecdotal details about Lui and his family. Moreover, in delineating her teacher's developmental trajectory, she could also name artists, both Chinese and non-Chinese, whom she knew might have influenced his stylistic evolution. Credit must indeed be given to Chan for her industry in gathering rich information which enables us to put together a general frame for viewing the artistic development of Lui Shou Kwan. The provision of this framework, I believe, is where the value of her study lies.

Despite the wealth of information contained in her dissertation, Chan's writing on Lui Shou Kwan is not without its problems. Owing to her personal engagement with her teacher and respect for him, her discourse is largely couched in a commendatory tone. As a consequence, her study appears more like a panegyric rather than an objective, critical appraisal of Lui's artistic achievement. She could be less defensive in her standpoint and in her choice of words. Her explanation of some of Lui's artistic moves could also be afforded with more concrete evidence. Chan's frequent omission of the many important factual sources from which she culled her information does not facilitate cross-references for more thorough evidential research. The simple causality she employed to account for the changes in Lui's art and the generalizations she offered in such accounts would have difficulty in standing up to the scrutiny of those

__MPhil thesis, Chan had written an article on Lui a year after his death. See Flora Kay Chan, ‘Tan Lü Shoukun de huihua yu shengping’ (A Discussion of Lui Shou Kwan's Painting and Life), Xiongshih meishu (Lion Art), no. 59 (1976/1), pp. 145-147.__
who harbour a real interest in Lui’s work. Notwithstanding the rich details in her study, one also has the feeling that the abundant information she provided could have been streamlined without seriously undermining her principal arguments.

As regards the other articles and essays on Lui Shou Kwan mentioned earlier, they are mostly found in the exhibition catalogues of the artist’s solo shows staged at the Fung Ping Shan Museum (now the University Museum and Art Gallery) of HKU and the City Hall Museum & Art Gallery (now the Hong Kong Museum of Art). Among these articles and essays, the most important ones were written by Wucious Wong 王無邪 (Wang Wuxie, b. 1936), Laurence C. S. Tam 譚志成 (Tan Zhicheng, b. 1933) and Tang Hoi Chiu (Tan Haichao 鄧海超). The three authors have all worked as assistant curators or curators at the latter Museum which was the only official art museum in Hong Kong. While Wong and Tam have respectively resigned and retired from their official posts, Tang is still working at the Hong Kong Museum of Art as Chief Curator. As most of the writings in exhibition catalogues are meant to be instructive, their articles and essays on Lui Shou Kwan invariably seem to

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8 Lui Shou Kwan’s solo exhibitions which have been mounted at the Fung Ping Shan Museum include Lui Shou-kwan 1919-1975 (1979) and Hong Kong in Ink Moods: Landscape Paintings by Lui Shou-kwan (1985); the ones held by the City Hall Museum & Art Gallery or the Hong Kong Museum of Art include Lui Shou Kwan (1964), The World of Lui Shou Kwan (1976), and Lui Shou-kwan - New Ink Painting (2002-2003).

9 The first official art museum of Hong Kong was set up in the 1870s within the old City Hall. Museum services ceased to exist, however, in 1947 with the demolition of the old City Hall. The second official art museum in Hong Kong was named the City Hall Museum & Art Gallery. It was established in 1962, along with the inauguration of the Hong Kong City Hall that same year. In 1969, the Museum was renamed the City Museum & Art Gallery. Six years later, it was split into the Hong Kong Museum of Art and the Hong Kong Museum of History.
publicize rather than assess his work in an academically critical way.\textsuperscript{10} The eulogistic tone is particularly evident in the ones written by Wong and Tam, due to the fact that they were Lui’s former students and invariably looked upon him as a progenitor of modern art in Hong Kong. Although their closeness to Lui privileged their writings with firsthand information and personal experience, their intimate ties with their teacher seemed to have blunted their critical perspectives in examining his rise as a pioneering modern ink painter, hence skewing their overall evaluation of his art. In any event, their ideas will be drawn on, where appropriate, in this thesis for explicating Lui’s artistic aspiration and achievement.

A handful of scholars have from time to time also thrown notable glances at Lui Shou Kwan’s modern ink painting. They include Michael Sullivan, Petra Hinterthür, David Clarke, Li Chu-tsing 李籌晉 (Li Zhuzun), Wan Qingli 萬青力, and Zhu Qi. Hinterthür, Clarke, and Zhu have each directed particular efforts at studying the development of twentieth-century Hong Kong art, while the rest have merely given occasional nods to the art of Hong Kong in their wider survey of twentieth-century art of Mainland China and Taiwan. Since modern Hong Kong art occupies just a very small part in the overall research of the latter group of scholars, their discussions of Lui Shou Kwan tend to be simplistic, fragmented, and not very well placed in context. Among the academics of this group, the British art historian Michael Sullivan was the first to have noticed Lui’s art, and had early in 1963 written a short biography on Lui

for his one-man show held in Edinburgh the same year.\textsuperscript{11} Given that Sullivan was then already quite well-known in the Chinese modern art world, the biography he wrote for Lui would certainly help him build a modest fame, if not in the art world, at least in the art circles of the U. K.

Petra Hinterthür was the next author, among those who take a serious interest in Hong Kong art development, to have made a relatively more detailed study of Lui Shou Kwan's work. A former writer for newspapers and magazines, Hinterthür arrived in Hong Kong in 1976. She later established her art gallery in the territory, dealing in art works created by local artists as well as those from other Asian and overseas countries. In 1985, she published a book titled \textit{Modern Art in Hong Kong} (1985), in which she revered Lui as one of the few pioneers in modern ink painting during the early postwar era.\textsuperscript{12} In those days when writings on Hong Kong art were scarce and Zhu Qi's \textit{Xianggang meishushi} had yet to be published, Hinterthür's book had served as a useful, quick reference on the artistic development of Hong Kong. However, it proves disappointing to those who wish to grasp the meaning of 'modernity' in Hong Kong art, including that in Lui Shou Kwan's work. Hinterthür did not provide any firm criterion of artistic modernity in her book, with which to specify what she regarded as the modernity of Hong Kong art. When it comes to the genre of modern ink painting in Hong Kong, one can detect in her narration an overt voice of Wucius Wong and Flora Kay Chan. As Hinterthür herself declared in the 'Acknowledgments', they had helped her read through the text and had made valuable suggestions to her. Other


\textsuperscript{12} See Petra Hinterthür, \textit{Modern Art in Hong Kong}, Hong Kong, Myer Publishing Ltd., 1985, pp. 60-65.
students of Lui Shou Kwan, including Laurence Tam, Irene Chou 周綠雲 (Zhou Luyun, b. 1924) and Aries Lee Wai On 李維安 (Li Wei’an, b. 1937) were also mentioned in Hinterthür’s ‘Acknowledgments’. Considering her personal connections with these artists, it is hardly surprising that her perception of Hong Kong art and Lui Shou Kwan’s position in it tended to lean towards their viewpoint.

In contrast, Zhu Qi’s Xianggang meishushi has proved a more scholarly study of Hong Kong art. It is also a more up-to-date survey of modern art development in this city since its narration covers the 1990s, despite its omission of some important art forms. In his book, Zhu has delineated the development of Hong Kong art into nine periods, each described in one chapter. They are the Formative Period (Late Qing-Early Republican Period – mid-1920s), Expanding Period (mid-1920s – 1937), Transplanting Period (1937 – 1949), Establishing Period (1949 – late 1950s), Modernist Period (late 1950s – 1960s), Maturing Periods I, II, and III (1970s – late 1980s) and lastly, Pluralistic Period (c. mid-1980s – late 1990s). Zhu’s account of Lui Shou Kwan’s rise and influence are located in the fifth and seventh chapters, respectively under the captions of the Modernist Period and the Maturing Period II. Like Hinterthür, his investigation of modern Hong Kong art was based largely on published information and materials which he gathered or obtained directly from some of the artists whom he had contact with. Partly because of this, his account of Lui’s work appears to be little different from that of Hinterthür. While being able to foreground some prominent artists, art groups, and artistic activities to delineate

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13 See Petra Hinterthür, ‘Acknowledgments’, in Modern Art in Hong Kong, unpaginated.
certain crucial developments in Hong Kong art during the past century, he fails to advance a clear notion of what artistic modernism meant, and with it to argue for his perception of modernity in Hong Kong art. As a result, his discussion of Lui Shou Kwan’s modern work, like that of Hinterthür, cannot avoid sweeping generalizations, despite his regard for Lui as a trail-blazer of modern ink painting in postwar Hong Kong.

David Clarke is more learned theoretically than Hinterthür and Zhu, and is thus more capable of highlighting some important moments in the recent development of Hong Kong art by theme and by artist. Clarke came to Hong Kong in 1986, and has since been lecturing on Western art history in the Fine Arts Department of HKU. The personal ties he has established with some local artists and his own close observation of the art scene of Hong Kong have enabled him to develop a more grounded vision of the artistic evolution of Hong Kong. Although his research interest primarily lies in contemporary art of his time, he has attempted to trace the roots of artistic modernity in Hong Kong to earlier periods. To date he has completed two books on Hong Kong art, namely Art and Place: Essays on Art from a Hong Kong Perspective (1996) and Hong Kong Art: Culture and Decolonization (2001), both published by the Hong Kong University Press. In some chapters of these two books, Clarke has addressed

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16 HKU’s Fine Arts Department was set up in 1978. Its establishment initiated the nurturing of locally-trained art historians in Hong Kong.

17 Clarke had also launched, with funding from HKU, a project called ‘The Hong Kong Art Archive’ in 1999, with a view to promoting Hong Kong art on a worldwide basis and evoking the awareness of Hong Kong artistic achievement. The digital resources and a rather exhaustive bibliography on Hong Kong art available in its associated website would be of great use to those who wish to look for information on Hong Kong ink painting. The website address is: http://finearts.hku.hk/hkaa/. The Fine Arts Department of The Chinese University of Hong Kong had likewise launched two projects on Hong Kong art in the past years. One of them, named ‘Hong Kong Art after 1911’ (1995-1999), was
the issue of modernity directly and used the example of Lui Shou Kwan as a point of entry to discuss postwar modern art in Hong Kong. He demonstrates in these writings a strong penchant for adopting the semiotic approach to relate art history to the sub-structure of social and political changes in Hong Kong. In doing so, he is able to offer some insightful comments on Lui’s art in connection with cultural identity, whilst pointing out the dilemma in the artist’s endeavour to reconcile Chinese tradition with Western modernism. Yet, Clarke’s inability to read Chinese (as in the case of Hinterthür) has restricted his exploration of Lui’s art to the levels of subject matter and technique. It prevented him from conducting deeper dialogues with Lui’s work, as well as with that of other Hong Kong artists through consulting pertinent Chinese-language materials. Consequently, although Clarke is able to provide some theoretical tenets for evaluating Lui’s artistic experimentation with the modern in his books, his consideration of the modernity in Lui’s work is incomplete.

Before stating my objective of writing a monograph on Lui Shou Kwan, let us make a slight digression here to take a cursory look at the scholarship on twentieth-century modern Chinese art as it would allow me to better present the case of my study.

inaugurated by Kao Mayching; the other, titled ‘A Study of Calligraphy in Twentieth-Century Hong Kong’ (2002-2006), was initiated by Harold Mok Kar Leung. The information collected for these two projects is, however, not accessible online.

18 See, for instance, David Clarke, ‘Between East and West: Negotiations with Tradition and Modernity in Hong Kong Art’, in Art and Place: Essays on Art from a Hong Kong Perspective, pp. 67-69; and also ‘Varieties of Cultural Hybridity’, in Hong Kong Art: Culture and Decolonization, pp. 17-18.
Scholarship on Twentieth-Century Modern Chinese Art and
My Objective of Studying Lui Shou Kwan

Modern Chinese art of the twentieth century is a rather young sub-field of study in the discipline of art history. In the West, it is noted that interest in this specific field of study began with Sullivan’s *Trends in Twentieth-Century Chinese Painting* (Stanford University Press, 1959). Yet, a strong fascination with twentieth-century modern Chinese art did not surface until the 1970s and the 1980s, with the publication of books by a few scholars such as Li Chu-tsing and Arnold Chang 張洪 (Zhang Hong). The undertakings of Li, Chang, and others were succeeded by new generations of art historians in the following two decades, including Joan Lebold Cohen, Kao Mayching 高美慶 (Gao Meiqing), Ellen Johnston Liang, Jerome Silbergeld, Ralph Croizier, Julia Andrews, Shen Kuiyi 沈揆一, John Clark, Gao Minglu 高名潞, and Wu Hung 巫鴻. The cumulative efforts of these younger academics have opened up a range of new methodologies for re-writing modern Chinese art history as well as re-evaluating earlier conclusions. The theoretical approaches they have employed in their studies range from Marxism, psychoanalysis, semiotics, structuralism, to many ideas appropriated from current aesthetic, cultural and philosophical trends. Meanwhile, the scope of the field of study has also been expanded from such popular subjects as ink painting and academic oil painting to

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19 'The West' in this thesis refers basically to the nations of Europe and North America. Where I wish to make a distinctive reference to the contexts of Europe and America, I shall specify them clearly or with the help of the word 'Euramerican'.

woodcut print, satirical cartoon, serial pictures, calendar painting and traditional folk art, amongst others. Modern Chinese art of the twentieth century has emerged as an intellectually rewarding field of study, showing promise for cross-disciplinary development from many angles of vision.\textsuperscript{21}

The enormous concern accorded to the study of modern Chinese art is indeed worth celebrating. However, amidst all the heated debates on the subject, the achievement of Hong Kong artists has been ignored by many art historians, both inside and outside China. If not for the issue of the 1997 handover,\textsuperscript{22} Hong Kong art would have been


\textsuperscript{22} It refers to the handover of Hong Kong to China by the British government in 1997. This historic event sprang from a trading war, known as the Opium War, fought between the Manchu empire and Britain between 1839 and 1842. The defeat of the Manchu troops in the war led to the signing of the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing (Nanking), resulting in the cession of Hong Kong to the British crown and the opening of five ports to foreign commerce and residence. The British later augmented her colonized land through an acquisition of the southern tip of the Kowloon peninsula up to Boundary Street on a permanent lease under the Convention of Beijing. The Convention was signed in 1860 following Britain’s victory in the second Anglo-Chinese War (also known as the Arrow War, 1856-1860). In 1898, Britain further demanded China to make a 99-year lease of the New Territories and the outlying islands to her, with the expiry date being set in 1997. In 1984, in view of the imminent expiry of the lease, the Chinese and the British governments began to hold talks on the future of Hong Kong. After many rounds of intense negotiations, a mutual agreement was eventually reached, according to which China was to recover Hong Kong and assert again its suzerainty over the territory on 1 July 1997.
neglected for much longer. Given the political and cultural significance of the handover, the city of Hong Kong had finally captured the attention and imagination of scholars, which resulted in an upsurge in the research on various 'histories' (including the art history) of Hong Kong around the time of 1997. Unfortunately, this sudden fancy about Hong Kong came and went relatively quickly. Once the handover was over, interest in Hong Kong art quieted down within a few years.

It is due to the prolonged neglect of Hong Kong art and insufficient exploration of Lui Shou Kwan's work that the present author is prompted to pursue the first comprehensive study of the artist. By exploring Lui's life and work in Guangzhou and Hong Kong and the changes in his art in the latter city, this thesis attempts to argue that moments of artistic breakthrough to a consciously modernist idiom had occurred in Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s, and that Hong Kong had served as a unique breeding ground for modern artistic expressions at that historical juncture. Through the case study of Lui Shou Kwan, this thesis hopes to demonstrate that the artistic achievement of Hong Kong in the early postwar era deserves to be properly integrated into the discourse of twentieth-century modern Chinese art.

The methodologies to be adopted in the present study will be a blend of biographical, contextual, thematic, and theoretical approaches. This monograph seeks to situate Lui Shou Kwan's work within a larger social, cultural, and political context for consideration. In other words, it will not focus solely on his artistic pursuit and stylistic development, as most past writings on Lui Shou Kwan have done. The primary aim here is to provide more critical insight into his artistic conception and development in relation to the external conditions which helped to foster his artistic ambition, nourished his artistic growth, and shaped his artistic trajectory. Mapping
Lui's work against a broad backdrop will enable one to see the historical significance of his work from a fuller and wider perspective.

This thesis is divided into six chapters, each of which is further sub-divided into smaller sections. The first chapter begins with a short introduction on the development of art in Guangdong where Lui Shou Kwan grew up and undertook his earliest artistic training. Following this, a literature review of the writings on Guangdong art history is offered. Given that the study of twentieth-century modern Chinese painting in southern China has today received scant attention in Western scholarship, the information presented in this section may help to fill partially the gap. Next, a short discussion of the artistic achievement of outstanding ink painters from Guangdong during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1912) times is given. It will serve as a prelude to our discussion of the call for artistic revolution by leading Chinese thinkers in the early decades of the twentieth century. The background being set, our attention will be turned to the development of modern art in Guangzhou, the art centre of Guangdong, during the first half of the twentieth century. Emphasis will be placed on the three pen wars that Lingnanpai (the Lingnan School of Painting) and Guohua yanjiuhui (the Chinese Painting Research Society), the two major art groups of the day, had launched with each other between the mid-1920s and late 1940s. The key points in their debates will be looked into

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23 I have followed the example of the editors of Encyclopedia of Modern China in taking 1912, rather than 1911, as the ending date of the Qing dynasty, since it was only on 12 February 1912 that the last emperor abdicated. I concur with their idea that '[t]he proclamation of the Republic on January 1, 1912 does not automatically make December 31, 1911 the last day of the Qing. It would be wrong to think of the Qing having ended in 1911, a matter confused by the frequent reference to "the 1911 Revolution," which brought down the Manchu ruling house, but only in 1912'. Quoted from 'Major Chronological Periods', in Encyclopedia of Modern China, vol. 1, ed. David Pong, Detroit, Charles Scribner's Sons/Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009, p. LXIII.
meticulously since they are significant to our exploration of Lui Shou Kwan’s subsequent call for artistic modernization.

The opening section of the second chapter is a biographical sketch of Lui Shou Kwan’s early life and work in Guangzhou. It is written with a view to providing, through a careful collation of disparate threads of information from various primary and secondary sources, a more detailed study of Lui’s initial artistic exploration. The revisiting of the artist’s early life and work is important because without grasping the root concerns in his art, it is not possible to adequately understand his subsequent drive and zeal for revitalizing Chinese ink painting. Taking that Lui Shou Kwan was close to his father Lui Tsan Ming 呂燦銘 (Lii Canming, 1892-1963) in the early days of his artistic career, a synchronic study of the personal and artistic backgrounds of the two will be conducted. After tracking the intersections of their early lives, we will enter into a more focused study of Lui Shou Kwan’s painting career, in the course of which a painting inscription by him will be singled out for examination as it allows us access to his incipient artistic thought at that specific point in time. The chapter ends with a trace of Lui’s self-learning process in concert with a brief analysis of a few more surviving works by him.

In the third chapter, Lui Shou Kwan’s emergence on the art scene of Hong Kong and rapid rise as a modern ink painter in this former British colony is examined. The period under study is confined to that which spans from 1948, the year Lui arrived in Hong Kong, to 1966, the year he quitted his full-time working life and dedicated himself to his art. Prior to exploring Lui’s artistic pursuit, an outline of Hong Kong’s socioeconomic changes at this juncture is offered as it can illuminate the conditions of the larger environment which were to affect his artistic bearing. Following this
socioeconomic portrait is a review of Lui Shou Kwan’s artistic activities in Hong Kong. Attention will go to the many one-man and group shows which built his name at home and abroad. In this connection, his modernness will be explored with his fresh attempts in ink painting by theme and by style. How did Lui Shou Kwan himself view artistic modernity? Why would he specifically select the abstract idiom for modernizing Chinese painting? In what ways did his approach resemble or differ from those adopted by Euramerican abstract painters of his time? To these questions, a particular paradigm concerning modernity in Chinese painting will be drawn on to assess the modernness of Lui’s abstract work. The artistic milieu of early postwar Hong Kong, which unveils how he gained access to the modern art world, is to be inspected in the last section of this chapter.

Chapter four explores the modernism and avant-gardism of Lui Shou Kwan’s work by interrogating their implications with the normal usages of the two concepts in the Western context. To this end, some well-received theorizations of the notions ‘modernity’, ‘modernism’, and their closely related term, ‘the avant-garde’, will be introduced. The introduction is followed by a short review of relevant studies on twentieth-century modern Chinese art. Subsequently, the modernist and avant-gardist aspects of Lui Shou Kwan in his capacity as an artist, art critic, and art educator will be examined. The examination is conducted through a combined consideration of Lui’s writings and painted works against the above discursive backdrop. In the final part of this chapter, a conclusion is drawn on the artist’s status pertaining to his modernist and avant-gardist identity.

The fifth chapter concentrates on investigating Lui Shou Kwan’s Zen (Chinese: Chan) painting series. The series reflected Lui’s artistic maturity and posed him as a
forerunner of modern art in the late colonial history of Hong Kong. Prior to our evaluation of these Zen paintings, we shall briefly survey the rise of Zen Buddhism in China and the introduction of Zen into Japan. The questions as to how Lui perceived the Zen concept and gave form to it in pictorial terms will then be explored. The exploration will bring us to examine the artist’s personal encounter with Zen Buddhism and his references to the subject. Given that the lotus flower and the lotus leaves are the two key leitmotifs in Lui’s Zen series, their symbolic implications, especially those of the lotus in Buddhist and Chinese culture, will be examined.

Following this, Lui’s Zen paintings will be analyzed under two distinctive modes of expression, namely the calligraphic mode and the splashed mode. In investigating the latter mode, the lotus-based imageries projected by him in connection with the moon, the sun, the mirror, and the ocean will be studied. In view of the fact that the majority of past discussions on Lui’s Zen paintings fell short of making clear of the symbolic connotations that he had assigned to the lotus motif and its variations, a meticulous study of them will help make up for this failing.

Chapter six, which serves as a long conclusion for the whole thesis, delves into the artistic legacy of Lui Shou Kwan. In elucidating Lui’s long-lasting artistic impact, an investigation of his role as an inspiring artist-teacher, especially during the last ten years of his career, is carried out. Several interrelated issues will be explored. They include the ideological-intellectual framework which Lui devised for accomplishing his art-educational ideal; the core components of his teaching scheme; the major factors leading to his rise as a dominating influence on the postwar Hong Kong art scene; and the controversies which he stirred up among his fellow artists and art critics. During our examination, Lui’s mind-oriented approach to the making of art, his immense concern for art education, the New Ink Painting Movement which he
brought about in concert with his followers, as well as the major criticisms on his charge list will be discussed. All this constituted what Lui Shou Kwan was as a pivotal figure in the modern art history of Hong Kong during the early postwar era.

Finally, the thesis includes two appendices. The first appendix is a list of the solo and joint exhibitions which Lui Shou Kwan held or joined in Hong Kong and abroad, and the second is a summary of “The Cradle of New Chinese Ink Painting Movement” exhibition and its related activities organized by Laurence Tam between 2006 and 2010, which helped to keep broadcasting Lui Shou Kwan’s name in the art-educational world.
Chapter One:
The Guangdong Art Scene Before 1950

Introduction

Guangdong province is located on the southern part of China and had for long been regarded by the imperial centre as a hot, damp, barbaric outland, where criminals were banished, and disgraced scholar-officials were posted as punishment. Ironically, in times of wars and natural calamities, this less than civilized southern rough land was also the place where the refined people from the central plains would seek refuge. Due to several large population movements from the north in the past centuries, Guangdong had gradually become home to migrants from other parts of China, with few of its inhabitants having a genuine claim to native ancestry. Culturally, Guangdong as a southern frontier of China was considered far inferior to the northern regions. Its geographical and cultural marginality took on a further hybridity when its capital city, Guangzhou, was designated by Qing as the only port opened to foreign trade in 1757. From then on until the First Opium War (1840-1842), Guangzhou was the only southern gateway for foreign sea trade.\textsuperscript{24} Given Guangzhou's special status as a port of diplomacy and commerce and a city where Western consuls and merchants resided, it had long been exposed to the influences of the outside world.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{24} Guangzhou lost its monopoly of the maritime trade with the opening of four additional trading ports, Shanghai, Xiamen, Fuzhou and Ningbo, as stipulated by the Treaty of Nanjing which was signed in 1842.

\textsuperscript{25} Until 1842, foreigners including merchants, diplomats and visiting artists were only allowed to reside in Guangzhou and Macau by the Qing court. Most of the foreign artists staying in China before then were Catholic missionaries from Italy and France. For those non-missionary artists, they could only penetrate China if they bore the title of an ambassador. For an overview of the activities of
By the last years of the Qing dynasty, Guangzhou had already developed into a crucial meeting point between Chinese and foreign cultures. Under the Republican Government, this old port city became a fertile ground for the planting of new ideas and beliefs from the West and other places. Guangzhou's prolonged exposure to foreign culture rendered the artists working there more receptive to external influences as well as developed a distinct sensitivity towards progressive thinking. With the continual influence of mainstream Chinese culture from the middle and northern regions, the necessary ingredients were there for the development of a dynamic and diversified art scene in the early decades of the twentieth century.

**Literature on Guangdong Art**

Despite its rapid cultural development since the late Qing dynasty, Guangdong's artistic achievement had not been taken seriously by either Chinese or non-Chinese scholars before the 1990s. Until then, Chinese art critics and art historians working outside Guangdong were quite ignorant of the situation there. This curious neglect within Chinese art history was chiefly due to the deep-seated perception of Guangdong as a cultural backwater on the fringe of the culturally sophisticated central plains. Another possible reason for this overlook might be related to the failure of Guangdong scholars to come to terms with their own culture and, as a result, they had little interest in conducting systematic research on their native art. The late scholar Chuang Shen 莊申 (Zhuang Shen) considered that one of the main reasons for such Catholic missionary-artists during the Qing dynasty, see *The Golden Exile: Survey of the Western Missionaries' Painting School of the Qing Dynasty Court*, Macau, Museu de Arte de Macau, 2002.
inattention lay in the fact that Guangdong art was completely overshadowed by the size of the Chinese art history. He also pointed to the general lack of extant materials required to conduct comprehensive study. There is probably truth in both points.

The shortage of studies on Guangdong art began to show some slight improvement in the 1920s, with the publication of Wang Zhaoyong’s 《嶺南畫徵略》 (A Brief Sketch of Guangdong Painting) in Shanghai in 1927. This volume is the first serious study of Guangdong painting ever attempted by a Guangdong scholar. It consists of twelve chapters, covering a total of 547 artists active between Tang (618-907) and Qing times. Fourteen years later, another book of a similar nature, titled Guangdong xiandai huaren zhuan 《廣東現代畫人傳》 (Biographies of Modern Painters in Guangdong), was published by Li Jianer 李健兒 in Hong Kong. That same year, a set of two stout volumes, named Guangdong wenwu 《廣東文物》(Guangdong Cultural Relics)(fig. 1), documenting a wide range of cultural objects of Guangdong also came out in Hong Kong. They were published as commemorative catalogues for the 1940 exhibition ‘Guangdong wenwu zhanlanhui’ 廣東文物展覽會 (The Guangdong Cultural Relics Exhibition) staged at HKU’s Fung Ping Shan Library. These catalogues are now essential references for students of early twentieth-century Guangdong art and culture. Then there was a long hiatus before several other studies came out in print in the second half of the 1980s.

27 The book was reprinted, with a supplement and an addition of 149 Guangdong artists, by the Joint Publishing (H.K.) Co. Ltd. in Hong Kong in 1961.
28 See Li Jianer, Guangdong xiandai huaren zhuan, Hong Kong, Jinlu wenyi yuan, 1941.
29 See Guangdong wenwu, 2 vols., ed. Guangdong wenwu zhanlanhui, Hong Kong, Chinese Cultural Institute, 1941.

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They include Xie Wenyong's 謝文勇 Guangdong huaren lu 《廣東畫人錄》 (A Record of Guangdong Painters, 1985); Zheng Chunting’s 鄭春庭 Lingnan jindai huaren zhuanliie 《嶺南近代畫人傳略》 (Brief Biographies of Contemporary Lingnan Painters, 1987); and Guangdong xiandai huatan shilu 《廣東現代畫壇實錄》 (A True Record of the Contemporary Painting Scene of Guangdong, 1990) co-edited by Huang Xiaogeng 黃小庚 and Wu Jin 吳瑾. Not long after, the literature on Guangdong art was further expanded with the publication of a few anthologies dealing with a wider range of pictorial genres. The two which attracted most interest are Xie Wenyong’s Xie Wenyong meishu wenji 《謝文勇美術文集》(Anthology of Art Writings by Xie Wenyong, 1994) and Chen Ying’s 陳澄 Chen Ying meishu wenji 《陳澄美術文集》(Anthology of Art Writings by Chen Ying, 1995).

The expansion of scholarship on Guangdong art was in some way related to the regional politics in China. Since China re-opened its door to the outside world in the late 1970s, the provincial government of Guangdong has employed significant amount of resources in researching the history of local art. As a consequence, there has been a significant rise in research output, both quantitatively and qualitatively, on Guangdong art and culture since the 1990s. Regarding the subject of ink painting alone, the most outstanding study is unquestionably that which is related to the work of Lingnanpai 嶺南派 (Lingnan School [of Painting]), especially that of its three founders, Gao Jianfu 高劍父 (1879-1951), Gao Qifeng 高其峰 (1889-1933) and Chen Shuren 陳樹人 (1884-1948). This specific area of study was given a great

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30 See Xie Wenyong, Guangdong huaren lu, Guangzhou, Lingnan meishu chubanshe, 1985; Zheng Chunting, Lingnan jindai huaren zhuanliie, Hong Kong, Guangyashe, 1987; and Huang Xiaogeng and Wu Jin eds., Guangdong xiandai huatan shilu, Guangzhou, Lingnan meishu chubanshe, 1990.

31 See Xie Wenyong, Xie Wenyong meishu wenji, Guangdong, Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1994; and Chen Ying, Chen Ying meishu wenji, Guangzhou, Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1995.
boost with the establishment of Lingnan huapai yanjiushi (Lingnan Painting School Research Institute) at Guangzhou meishu xueyuan (Guangzhou Municipal Arts Institute) in 1986, and the successive opening of the Chen Shuren Museum (1988), Lingnan Painting School Museum (1991), Gao Jianfu Museum (2004), and a number of art galleries featuring exclusively the work of second-generation masters of Lingnanpai at Guangzhou yishu bowuguan (Guangzhou Art Museum) in the late 1990s. Apart from such institutional support, the Guangdong government has also offered assistance in holding inter-regional exhibitions and seminars on the art of Lingnanpai in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau. In Guangzhou, the official support to Lingnanpai was most vividly manifested in some large-scale activities such as a recent seminar titled 'The Tradition of the Lingnan Painting School and Its Contemporaneity' and the 'Contemporary Lingnan Chinese Painting Biennale' held successively in August 2009 and November 2010. As a result of these concerted efforts, Lingnanpai has become one of the most prominent subjects of study in the field of art history. The more well-known scholars who have engaged in this field of research include Li Weiming, Yu Feng, and Zhu Wanzhang who worked in Guangzhou. In addition, there were other scholars who have made contributions in this area. They include Chen Jichun, Lin Mu, Shu Shijun, and

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32 Lingnan huapai yanjiushi is one of the eight research institutes under the Art Research Centre established by Guangzhou meishu xueyuan in 1986. The other two research institutes from this group which are directly related to the study of Lingnanpai are Guan Shanyue yanjiushe (Guan Shanyue Research Institute) and Li Xiongcai yanjiushi (Li Xiongcai Research Institute). The founding of these institutes has produced a series of anthologies and collectanea on the art of Lingnanpai.

33 These second-generation masters of Lingnanpai include Guan Shanyue, Li Shaoqi, Zhao Shao'ang, Li Xiongcai, Yang Shanshen and Yang Zhiguang.
Shanghai; Hong Zaixin 洪再新 from Hangzhou; Wang Hongyi 黃鴻儀 from Nanjing; Ralph Crozier from Canada; and Cai Xingyi 蔡星儀 from the U.S.\textsuperscript{34}

The rapid success of the Lingnanpai project would not have been possible without the earlier contributions made by some scholars and art museums in Hong Kong. One of the chief exponents of Guangdong art and of Lingnanpai, in particular, is Kao Mayching, former Professor of the Fine Arts Department at The Chinese University of Hong Kong ('CU'). During Kao's long association with CU (1972-1999), she had devoted time and energy in researching the rich collection of Guangdong art in the Art Museum (Wenwuguan 文物館, founded in 1971) of the University. Between 1986 and 1997, she helped to stage six exhibitions on the art of Lingnanpai, some of which were directly connected to her research project on Gao Jianfu launched in 1993.\textsuperscript{35} Two years following the conception of this project, Kao published a book titled \textit{The Art of the Gao Brothers of the Lingnan School}.\textsuperscript{36} Meanwhile, a number of studies on individual Guangdong artists were completed by some postgraduates of CU's Fine Arts Department.\textsuperscript{37} The University's Art Museum had also mounted a series of five exhibitions on its collection of paintings and calligraphy by Guangdong artists.

\textsuperscript{34} For a comprehensive index on the study of Lingnanpai by these Chinese-descent scholars, see 'Lingnan huapai yanjiu' (The Study of the Lingnan Painting School), Duyun, no. 59 (2003), pp. 291-320.

\textsuperscript{35} The research project was called 'Paintings by Gao Jianfu (1878-1951) in the Art Museum Collection: Documentation & Analysis'. For a list of those relevant exhibitions curated by Kao at the Art Museum, see Mok Kar Leung, 'Xianggang de Zhongguo yishishi yanjiu' (The Study of Chinese Art History in Hong Kong), in \textit{Hong Kong Visual Arts Yearbook 1999}, eds. Chan Yuk Keung and Mok Kar Leung, Hong Kong, Fine Arts Department, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, p. 74.

\textsuperscript{36} The book was published by CU's Art Museum in 1995.

\textsuperscript{37} Their titles can be checked from the following website: http://www.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/-fadept/research.html.
between 1981 and 1986. The official art museum of Hong Kong, now called the Hong Kong Museum of Art, has also shown an intense interest in paintings by Guangdong artists from the early days of its establishment. Since the late 1970s, it has held a number of large-scale exhibitions and retrospectives on the art of Lingnanpai’s first- and second-generation masters, including Gao Jianfu, Gao Qifeng, Chen Shuren, Zhao Shao’ang (1905-1998) and Yang Shanshen 楊善深 (1913-2004).

Apart from the interest in Lingnanpai, there was also increasing academic attention on Guohua yanjiuhui ('Guohuahui') in recent years. It was an artist group established in Guangzhou in 1925, essentially as a rival to Lingnanpai. Guohuahui consisted of traditionalist artists who took a different view on Chinese painting to those held by Lingnanpai, and was concerned with Lingnanpai's rapidly increasing influence in the early 1920s. The person who led the renewed interest on this painting society is Huang Dade 黃大德, son of the renowned painter Huang Bore 黃般若 (Wong Po Yeh, 1901-1968). A former editor of Zhongguo zuojia xiehui 中國作家協會 (The Society of Chinese Writers), Huang Dade has devoted much of his energy to studying Guangdong art history of the first half of the twentieth century since the late 1980s. His research has revealed a historical importance of Guohuahui which his father helped to establish. Huang Dade’s attention was also focused on the heated debates between Lingnanpai and Guohuahui spanning from the 1920s to 1940s. For over two decades, he has immersed himself in a vast array of archival materials in hopes of piecing together a clearer picture of the work of Guohuahui and identifying important

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39 Unless otherwise specified, the word ‘traditional’ or ‘traditionalist’ is meant to be taken as a neutral term without any derogatory meaning in this thesis. It is used to refer mainly to those artists who paint with traditional Chinese media, such as ink, water and paper.
information on the debates with Lingnanpai which were not available in the public domain. His painstaking research enabled relevant information to come to light, and a better picture on the development of art in Guangdong in the early twentieth-century. We shall make regular references to Huang Dade's writings later in our discussion of the debates between Guohuahui and Lingnanpai.

The above is a brief sketch of the growth of scholarship on Guangdong art in the past decades. The following section will be a short introduction to the achievements of Guangdong artists in the Ming and Qing dynasties, and a snapshot of the vibrancy of the Guangdong art scene in the first half of the twentieth century. Together they help to provide a backdrop for our examination of the initial stage of Lui Shou Kwan's artistic development in the next chapter. Obviously, the picture that follows will draw heavily from the research of the aforementioned scholars.

The Artistic Achievements of Ming and Qing Painters from Guangdong

In the long history of Chinese painting, Guangdong artists had exerted little impact on its evolvement due to their geographical and cultural marginality. Although some Guangdong artists' names have been passed down from the Tang and Song (960-1279) dynasties, no images of their works have survived. It was not until the Ming period that some artists of Guangdong origins began to acquire a national status. The two most notable ones from Nanhai county are Yan Zong 颜宗 (1393-c.1459) and his student Lin Liang 林良 (active c. 1488-1505). Yan Zong was active during the Yongle 永乐 era (1403-1424). He was a figure of particular import since his only surviving work, *Hushan pingyuan tujuan* 《湖山平遠圖卷》 (A Level View of the
Distant Mountain and Lake), is also the earliest documented landscape painting in Guangdong art history (figs. 2 and 3). Yet, Lin Liang’s artistic achievement is perhaps more important than that of Yan Zong since Lin was the first court painter from Guangdong to have earned a nationwide reputation for his exquisite application of mogufa 没骨法 (boneless method) in the depiction of birds and flowers. Despite their fame, Yan Zong and Lin Liang had negligible influence on the art scene of their homeplace. Around this time, nevertheless, Guangdong began to embark on a period of intense cultural exchange with central China, particularly through the inter-placement of government officials between the southern and northern regions. By the seventeenth century, a large number of artists with a high level of literary cultivation had emerged on the Guangdong art scene. Some of them were able to improvise works in the literatus’ manner, while others were excelled in painting particular subject matter. Yet, Guangdong painters could not claim to have forged open a regional style of their own; at best they might be counted as outstanding followers of the mainstream art prevalent in Beijing and Jiangnan.

40 The earliest Guangdong artist to have appeared in Chinese art history is actually Zhang Xun, a landscape painter active in the late Tang period. Unfortunately, none of his works has survived. After Zhang Xun, no other Guangdong painter is mentioned by any Song or Yuan (1271-1368) writers. During the Ming dynasty, apart from Yan Zong and Lin Liang, there are also some other Guangdong artists whose works have survived to the present day. On Yan Zong’s work, see Zhu Wanzhang, ‘Yan Quan zuizao de Guangdong huaji’ (A Record of the Earliest Painting by Yan Quan), in Yuehuafanggu (Visiting Antiquity through Guangdong Paintings), Beijing, Guwu chubanshe, 2005, p. 12. On the works by other Guangdong artists, see Zhu Wanzhang, ‘Song Yuan yiyun: Mingdai Lingnan shanshuihua’ (The Artistic Legacies of Song and Yuan: The Lingnan Landscape Painting of the Ming Dynasty), ibid., pp. 8-9.

41 According to Chuang Shen, the artistic centres in Guangdong of the day were located in the Pearl River delta, notably the counties of Panyu, Shunde and Nanhai. In addition to this delta, another triangular region, comprising Dongguan, Xiangshan and Xinhui, was also noted for their prosperous artistic activities. For a study of these two regions, see Chuang Shen, ‘Some Observations on Kwangtung Painting’, Kwangtung Painting: Landscapes, Figures, Plants and Animals by Past Kwangtung Masters, 15th to Mid. 20th Century, p. 12.
In the last years of the Ming period, a number of Guangdong painters formed themselves into a militant force against the invading Manchus. Record has it that some of them had given their lives for their act of defiance. For those who had survived, quite a few subsequently retired into the mountains as recluse or entered the monasteries as Buddhist monks as a gesture of loyalty to the former monarchy. Some had since devoted themselves to the art of painting and calligraphy. Wu Ruilong 伍瑞隆 (1584-1668), Li Suiqiu 黎遂球 (1602-1646), Lai Jing 賴鏡 (active in the seventeenth century), Chen Gongyin 陳恭尹 (1631-1700), Zhang Mu 張穆 (1607-1687) and Gao Yan 高煥 (1616-1687) are just a few examples.\textsuperscript{42}

After undergoing a period of economic and cultural downturn in the early years of the Qing dynasty, Guangdong had restored its peace and prosperity by the mid-reign of Kangxi 康熙 (1662-1722). The Pearl River delta began to develop a market of painting and calligraphy. This helped to enhance the taste and appreciation of traditional arts among the Guangdong art enthusiasts, artists, and collectors alike. During the Qianlong 乾隆 (1736-1795) and Jiaqing 嘉慶 (1796-1820) eras, a good number of Guangdong artists won critical acclaim for their rendition of the three perfections (poetry, calligraphy and painting), among whom the best known were Li Jian 黎簡 (1747-1799) and Xie Lansheng 謝蘭生 (1760-1831). These two artists were able to break away from the orthodox painting styles of the Four Wangs 四王 which were then in fashion,\textsuperscript{43} and created a personal hallmark for their own artistic

\textsuperscript{42}See Wan Qingli, Bingfei shuailuo de bainian: shijiu shiji Zhongguo huihuashi (The Century was not Declining in Art: A History of Nineteenth-Century Chinese Painting), Taipei, Xiongshi meishu, 2005, p. 154.

\textsuperscript{43}The Four Wangs are: Wang Shimin (1592-1680), Wang Jian (1598-1677), Wang Hui, (1632-1717) and Wang Yuanqi (1642-1715). The work of the latter two Wangs were particularly hailed as 'orthodox painting' by the Qing court.
creation. Later, during the reign of Daoguang 道光 (1821-1850), two eccentric painters, Su Liupeng 蘇六朋 (c.1796-c.1862) and Su Renshan 蘇仁山 (1814-c.1850), emerged and broke new ground in the painting of people. Su Liupeng was well acclaimed for depicting the everyday life of common people as well as for tinting his work with a strong sense of secularity. His seeming haphazard composition and desultory inscription earned him a name for being wild and nonconformist. Su Renshan lived a short and tragic life. Most of the figures he portrayed are historical and legendary characters whose stories appeared to have something in common with his own erratic character and personal adversity. His work is often painted with forceful brushwork and composed in particularly awe inspiring ways. Aside from the two Sus, other Guangdong artists who were able to achieve certain novelty in their work include Chen Qiaosen 陳喬森 (active in the second half of the nineteenth century), Li Kui 李魁 (active in the nineteenth century), and Liang Yuwei 梁于渭 (？-1913). Together, they brought the standard of Guangdong landscape painting to a new height. The Daoguang era also saw the emergence of two talented bird-and-flower masters, Ju Chao 居巢 (1811-1865) and Ju Lian 居廉 (1828-1904),

44 The highly individualized styles of the two Sus have inspired some Chinese and Western scholars to conduct extensive research on their art. Some of the important studies are: Pierre Ryckmans, The Life and Works of Su Renshan, Paris, University of Paris, 1970; Jian Youwen, Huatuan kuaxie Su Renshan (The Bizarre Figure of Su Renshan on the Art Scene), Hong Kong, Jianshi mengjing chuqu, 1970; Kao Mayching, Su Liupeng Su Renshan shuhua (The Painting and Calligraphy of Su Liupeng and Su Renshan), Hong Kong, Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1990; and Li Huanzhen, 'Su Liupeng de danbo rensheng yu sushi yishu' (Su Liupeng's Prosaic Life and Secular Art), in Lingnan shuhua kaoxi (An Investigation and Analysis of Lingnan Paintings and Calligraphy), Guangzhou, Lingnan meishu chubanshe, 2006, pp. 15-105.

45 For some other Guangdong artists who were active between the early eighteenth and the mid-nineteenth century, see Laurence T. S. Tam, 'An Introduction to the Development of Kwangtung Painting', in Kwangtung Painting: Landscapes, Figures, Plants and Animals by Past Kwangtung Masters, 15th to Mid. 20th Century, pp. 37-38; and also Wan Qingli, Bingfei shuailuo de bainian: shiji shiji Zhongguo huihuashi, pp. 155-156.
whose work marked a revival of bird-and-flower painting in Guangdong since that of Lin Liang.\textsuperscript{46} The two Jus were cousins. Both of them were acclaimed for their use of the \textit{zhuangshui} 撞水 (splashed water) and \textit{zhuangfen} 撞粉 (sprinkled powder) techniques to capture the form and manner of small living subjects in a refreshing and verisimilistic manner. By the last years of Guangxu’s \textit{光緒} reign (1875-1908), the ‘Ju’ style had become the most commonly employed technique among Guangdong bird-and-flower painters.\textsuperscript{47} Although Ju Lian acquired his painting skills largely from Ju Chao, he appeared to have a wider artistic influence of the two. Ju Lian’s impact on the Guangdong art scene was evident in the artistic achievements of his students, Gao Jianfu, Gao Qifeng and Chen Shuren, in the early twentieth century. Collectively dubbed the three Lingnan masters, the two Gaos and Chen showed a far greater concern than other Chinese artists for such technical problems as the use of colours, the rendering of form, chiaroscuro, and optical perspective. We shall discuss, in a short while, their rise on the art scene and the new chapter they unfolded in the history of modern Chinese art.


\textsuperscript{47} For the biographies and art of the two Jus, see Zhu Wanzhang, \textit{Ju Chao Ju Lian yanjiu} (A Study of Ju Chao and Ju Lian), Guanzhou, Lingnan meishu chubanshe, 2007; \textit{Strolling in the Fragrant Garden: Paintings of Ju Chao and Ju Lian} and \textit{Ju Chao Ju Lian Yishu Yantaohui wenji} (An Anthology of the Essays Delivered in the Seminar on the Art of Ju Chao and Ju Lian), both eds. Guangzhou Museum of Art and Hong Kong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, Lingnan meishu chubanshe, 2008.
Guangdong Art Scene in the Early Twentieth Century

The art scene of Guangdong saw an unprecedented flourishing in the early decades of the twentieth century. A crucial element of this phenomenon lay in the successive return of a good number of foreign-educated Guangdong artists to this city at the time. Among them, there were some who had long settled overseas but chose to go back to China to further their artistic career, as well as those who went abroad to pursue their art training with every intention of returning to their homeland upon completion of their studies. Regardless of their intentions, they had one purpose in common, and that was to put themselves in the service of their country which had suffered political upheavals, economic collapses, and social disintegration.

Until the mid-1920s, Japan ranked above all other nations to have attracted the largest number of artists and art students from Guangdong to go there for formal or informal art training. Guangdong natives' decision to study in Japan probably rested on three


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major reasons. Firstly, most of them found it financially more affordable to stay and study in Japan than, say, in France or America, because of her geographical and cultural proximity. Secondly, Chinese might find it easier to take up their studies in Japan than elsewhere since a large quantity of Chinese characters has been incorporated into the Japanese written language. And thirdly, the rise of Japan as an economic and military power as a result of the Meiji Restoration (1868-1911) was something many Chinese people aspired to, and hoped China could model after.49

In regard to the genre of painting, the late Meiji masters' had been successful in incorporating and Japanizing Western elements into their national ink painting. This approach was considered by some Chinese artists as a valid way to achieve a kind of painting with a 'modern yet Chinese' feel about it. It was probably because of a desire to experience further such Japanese examples that the three Lingnan masters were persuaded to pursue their art studies in Japan in the 1910s.50 Of the three, Chen

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49 For a comparative study of the modernization of Japan and China between the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, see Yoda Yoshiie, Rizhong liangguo jindaihua bijiao yanjiu (A Comparative Study of the Modernization of Japan and China), translated into Chinese by Bian Liqiang, Yan Lixian, Ye Tan and Jiang Songyan, Shanghai, Shanghai yuandong chubanshe, 2004.

50 As an aside, I should mention that among those Guangdong artists who returned from Japan, a fair number were trained in Western art. Beginning from the early 1920s, these Japan-trained returnee artists were active in founding Western art groups and art institutions in Guangzhou. The better known examples include Chishe meishuhui (Red Society), Zhonghua duli meishu xiehui (Chinese Independent Art Association), and Guangzhou shili meishu zhuankan xueba (Guangzhou Municipal College of Fine Arts) which was the first state-sponsored art school in southern China.

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Shuren was the only one to have succeeded in completed a formal art training programme in Japan.\textsuperscript{51} When they returned from Japan, Chen and the two Gaos began to harbour a wish to revolutionalize Chinese painting. Indeed, of all the Japan-educated Chinese artists, the three Lingnan masters were most relevant to our present study since they were the foremost progenitors from Guangdong to have eagerly instituted a reform of Chinese painting in Republican China (1911-1949). Their discontent with the imitational atmosphere then prevalent in the art scene, their aspiration to formulate a fresh idiom to create what they called \textit{xin guohua} 新國畫 (new Chinese painting), and the option they adopted to achieve this goal, that is, through a fusion of Chinese and non-Chinese elements (notably the realistic and romantic style of the Maruyama-Shijō School 圓山四條派 masters) - all foreshadowed Lui Shou Kwan’s attempt in modernizing Chinese painting in Hong Kong decades later.\textsuperscript{52} Although the naturalistic idiom which the Lingnan masters embraced is the opposite of the abstract one that Lui would adopt for his artistic reform, their persistence and self-discipline in the seeking and utilizing elements from foreign cultures to modernize Chinese painting are, in essence, analogous. Moreover, Gao Jianfu’s advocacy of depicting contemporary subject matter (e.g., airplanes, airplanes,


automobiles, railways, and telephone poles) to reflect the artist’s time spirit is in some sense consonant with the strategy employed by Lui for negotiating the traditional with the modern. The synthetic or eclectic approach which the Lingnan masters adopted in their art gained favour with some young, modern-inclined artists of their home town during the 1920s and 1930s. Within a short time after their return to China, they quickly became renowned modernizers of Chinese painting.

Let me make a slight digression here and proffer one extraneous reason which might explain the Lingnan masters’ swift rise in the early 1920s and the disputes they courted with Guohuahui. In Japan, the two Gaos and Chen had all joined the Tongmenghui 同盟會 (The Alliance Society), an anti-Manchu organization established by Sun Yat-sen 孫中山 (Sun Zhongshan, 1866-1935) in Japan in 1905, and had engaged in political and revolutionary activities of the society. After the fall of the Qing dynasty, the two Gaos withdrew from politics and devoted themselves to the course of painting, whereas Chen continued with his political career by taking up various official posts in the Nationalist government. Although the Gao brothers retreated from political activities, they managed to maintain their political contacts and were able to obtain financial support from the Guangdong government for their cultural pursuits. Soon after the 1911 Revolution, they set up a publishing house called Shenmei shuguan 審美書館 (Aesthetics Appreciation Bookshop) in Shanghai in 1912, and at the same time also issued a periodical named Zhenxiang huabao 真相畫報 (The True Record)(fig. 4). The periodical, comprising an admixture of political and cultural subjects, served as both a mouthpiece for Sun Yat-sen to

53 Shenmei shuguan had published an album of paintings by each of the three Lingnan masters which helped to propagate the birth of their 'new' paintings. After the bookshop was closed in 1918, the two Gaos returned to Guangzhou and began their teaching careers there.
propagate his political ideas and a platform for the Lingnan masters to disseminate their ideas on artistic reform. In the same year as the establishment of Shenmei shuguan, Gao Jianfu staged his maiden solo show in Shanghai and took it to Hangzhou and Nanjing subsequently. In the following years, he continued to stage more solo exhibitions in these cities as well as expanding such activities to Chongqing and Guangzhou. Most of Gao Jianfu's solo exhibitions succeeded in securing public patronage from the government and won high praises from political dignitaries, such as Wang Zhaoming (1883-1944), Sun Ke (1891-1973), Chen Lifu (1900-2001) and Yu Youren (1879-1964). Personalities from the art and educational circles, such as Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940), Xu Beihong (1895-1953), Liu Haisu (1896-1994) and Fu Baoshi (1904-1965), had also been generous with their compliments. As for the other two Lingnan masters, Chen Shuren and Gao Qifeng, the support they received for their exhibitions from people in power and influence was equally not lacking. As a result of their extensive political and cultural connections, their experience and skill in

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54 A total of seventeen issues of *Zhenxiang huabao* were published between June 1912 and February 1913. On the origin of its publication and other commercial activities that Shenmei shuguan organized during this period of time, see Qiu Zhigen, ‘Liudong de jiangjie: yi manghua weili kan minchu Shanghai gaojie yu tongsu meishu de fenlei yu jiexian wenti’ (Floating Boundaries: A Look at the Issues of Classification and the Dividing Line Between High Art and Low Art in Shanghai, with Comics as an Example), M.A. thesis, Taizhong National Central University, 2004, pp. 61-64.

55 As early as in 1908 when Gao Jianfu returned from Japan, he had already held a one-man show in Guangzhou, in which he started to declare his work as ‘new Chinese painting’. This exhibition was not only Gao’s first solo show, but was also the first Chinese painting exhibition ever held in China. See Li Weiming, ‘Cong zhezhongpai dao Lingnanpai’ (From Eclectic School to Lingnan School), in *Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu wenxuan* (Selected Essays on Art in Twentieth-Century China), vol. 2, eds. Lang Shaojun and Shui Tianzhong, Shanghai, Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1999, p. 512.

mounting exhibitions at the time, the three Lingnan masters had been hugely successful in their exhibition endeavour and enjoyed wide media coverage. These had subsequently enhanced their status and influence. For instance, in the First Provincial Art Exhibition of Guangdong held in 1921, Gao Jianfu was appointed its Vice-President and was given the opportunity to display works of Lingnanpai under the banner of ‘New-Style Chinese Painting’, alongside two other broad categories of painting, namely ‘Western-Style Painting’ and ‘Traditionalist Painting’. The exhibition turned out to be a significant marker of Lingnanpai’s emergence as a new school of Chinese painting on the art scene of Guangdong. Although the Lingnan masters proclaimed themselves as Zhezhongpai 折衷派 (Eclectic School), they were also known as the exponents of Xinpai 新派 (New School), and even more commonly known as ‘Lingnanpai’ later. As we shall see, the question regarding the validation of their stylistic ‘newness’ would provoke huge controversies between them and the traditionalist artists from Guohuahui. Of note is that from 1921 onwards, Gao Jianfu began to devote his entire energy to creating his new Chinese paintings in hopes of rescuing his country from going into a rapid decline (yishu jiuguo

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57 Many scholars have viewed this as a direct cause for exciting the traditionalist artists’ dissatisfaction with Lingnanpai. See, for instance, Lang Shaojun and Yun Xuemei, Fang Rending, Shijiazhuang, Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2003, p. 9.

58 On the evolution of these generic names, see Li Weiming, ‘Cong Zhezhongpai dao Lingnanpai’ (From Eclectic School to Lingnan School), in Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu wenxuan, vol. 2, pp. 507-523; Lin Mu, ‘Xianzai Zhongguo huashi shang de Lingnanpai ji Guangdong huatan’ (The Lingnan School and Guangdong Art Scene in the History of Modern Chinese Painting), in ‘Lingnan huapai yanjiu’, Duoyun, no. 59 (2003), pp. 32-37; and also Huang Dade, “‘Lingnan huapai’ ming kao’ (An Investigation on the Use of the Term ‘Lingnan Painting School’), Duoyun, no. 44, pp. 45-53.
His willingness to appropriate elements from foreign arts for attaining this purpose was to find a vivid echo in the future work of Lui Shou Kwan.

The Call for Revolution in Early Twentieth-Century Guangdong

The first half of the twentieth century was undoubtedly one of the worst chapters in the history of China. During this time, China endured a series of devastating internal and external events, including the Eight-Power Allied invasion (1900), the Boxer Protocol (1901-1902), the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) which was fought on her soil, the collapse of the Qing dynasty (1912), the Japanese seizure of German possessions in Shandong (1914), the beginning of her warlord era (1916), the May Fourth Movement (1919-1927), the first civil war (1930), the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), and the second civil war (1946-1949). Within the same period, some horrific natural disasters, for instance, the flooding in Yellow River basin and the famine in Hubei province in 1939, also broke out on Chinese soil. Ironically, the first fifty years of the last century was an age of reform and revolution for the Chinese civilization. Many Chinese political and cultural elites, having witnessed their country plunging in turmoil under the military and industrial might of foreign imperialist powers, feared that China as a state and Chinese as a race might be threatened with extinction. Some of them were convinced that the only way to save their country was to adopt the methods of the 'barbarians' in order to tackle the 'barbarians', in other words, China must learn to use the advances of the Western powers to rebuild herself.

Given the strength of this conviction, the early decades of the twentieth century saw in China the most fervent embrace of Western science and democracy, and the most ruthless assault on traditional culture and values. In the midst of this ‘out with the old and in with the new’ fever, Guangdong came to the forefront as a vital centre for political revolution and cultural reform. In the political arena, there were, for instance, Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858-1927) and Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929) who acted as the standard-bearers of the 1898 Hundred Days Reform, and Sun Yat-sen as the helmsman of the 1911 Revolution and also the founding father of the Chinese Republic. On the cultural side, there were Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲 (1848-1905) and Liang Qichao who acted as the spearheads in advocating dramatic changes to the traditional form of poetry and literature. Kang Youwei’s critique of the literati’s xieyi 寫意 (literally, ‘sketching the idea’) painting style and his endorsement of realism for the revival of Chinese painting were well known. Kang’s idea also found resonance in Chen Duxiu’s 陳獨秀 (1879-1942) proposal of borrowing Western realism to reform Chinese painting. To the minds of both Kang and Chen, the extent of the decay in Chinese painting was such that a complete revival could only be achieved through the use of scientific and realist ideas of Western art. From this perspective,

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60 The term xieyi has been widely used in the field of art history to refer to that style which is characterized by a spontaneous rendition of the brush and ink for the communication of ideas and feelings. This manner of free-style painting had been the commonest practice among scholar-painters since Song China. Apart from xieyi, the transliteration, ‘sketch conceptualism’, coined by the U.S.-based art historian Eugene Wang, is also lately adopted by some scholars as an alternative signifier. For this coinage, see Eugene Y. Wang, ‘Sketch Conceptualism as Modernist Contingency’, in Chinese Art: Modern Expressions, eds. Maxwell K. Hearn and Judith G. Smith, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001, pp. 102-161.

the Lingnan masters' adoption of naturalistic effects in their work might be seen as a
direct response to the zealous calls of Kang and Chen, as well as their effort to
address a pressing need for change in an era of artistic decadence.

In view of social, political and cultural disintegration across China, the question of
how to revive the vigour of Chinese painting so as to regenerate Chinese culture and
thus elevating China's cultural status, was no longer a concern exclusive to the
reformist thinkers. It was also becoming a matter of urgency to those traditionalist
artists who were concerned about the survival of their cultural heritage. In Guangdong,
the traditionalist painters who were active on the art scene made a prompt response to
the blazing rise of Lingnanpai in the early 1920s by first organizing themselves into a
cooperative called Guihai hezuoshe 癸亥合作社 (Chinese Painting Cooperative) in
1923. The fast expanding cooperative was turned into the aforesaid Guohuahui in
1925 (fig. 5), and a branch was set up in Hong Kong and Dongguan in the same
year.62 Guohuahui was the largest and the most influential art group in Guangdong in
the 1920s and 1930s. From the onset of its establishment, it took on as its mission the

62 My information on Guohuahui is chiefly gathered from the following sources: 1) Huang Dade,
‘Guihai hezuo huashe – Guangdong guohua yanjiuhui dashi’ (A Chronology of the Great Events of the
Guilai Painting Cooperative and the Chinese Painting Research Society), Guangzhou meishu yanjiu,
no. 4 (1990), pp. 74-77; 2) Huang Dade, ‘Guangdong danqing wushi nian – 1900-1949 Guangdong
meishu dashi ji’ (Guangdong Painting of Fifty Years – 1900-1949 A Record of the Great Events on
‘zheng’ shi xiangbei de Guohua yanjiuhui’ (The Chinese Painting Research Society that Goes Against
the Authorized History), in Guangzhou meishu yanjiu, no. 1 (2004), pp. 98-106; 4) Chen Ying,
‘Guangdong guohua yanjiuhui’ (The Guangdong Chinese Painting Research Society), in Guangdong
yu ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu (Guangdong and the Twentieth-Century Chinese Art), ed. Guoji xuexu
yanjiuhui, Nanchang, Jiangxi meishu chubanshe, 2004, pp. 1-4; and 5) Guardians to Tradition: The
Guangdong Painting Society 1923-1937, Hong Kong, Guangdong Provincial Museum and Art
preservation and promotion of the national cultural heritage for the glory of the country. Its founders shared a common conviction that Chinese painting was a viable art form in the modern age and any new development should be based on a thorough understanding of the art form and its execution. The membership of this society was most varied, comprising of artists from different parts of Guangdong, young and old, of different social status, and even those who also practiced Western-style art. Almost all the best known painters and calligraphers in southern China at the time were once its members. Some renowned traditionalist painters outside Guangdong, notably Huang Binhong (1865-1955), were also recruited by the society. The activities of the society ranged from weekly literary gatherings, annual exhibitions, academic seminars, to occasional fund-raising sales for charity. It had its own editing, writing, sales, publishing and research departments, as well as a fine arts library with a huge collection of over 8,600 volumes by 1930. During its thirteen-year existence (1925-1937), Guohuahui had issued two art magazines: one was called Guohua tekan 《國畫特刊》 (Chinese Painting Magazine), and the other was named Huafeng 《畫風》 (Painting Styles). Another publication of the society, Guahua yanjiuhui tekan 《國畫研究會特刊》 (Special Feature of the Chinese Painting Research Society) issued in January 1926, is regarded as the earliest anthology of art writings in Guangdong. Despite its importance, Guohuahui had escaped the notice of many art historians for nearly half a century. It was not around the late 1980s and early 1990s that a small number of Guangdong scholars began to pay greater attention to it.

64 See ibid., p. 13.
Dade is, as mentioned, one of the earliest to have intensively studied this art group. We owe it to his persistent effort in collecting information on Guohuahua and its debates with Lingnanpai that we now have a better idea of the significance these debates had had on the Guangdong art scene, as well as on the history of twentieth-century modern Chinese art. In retrospect, we may find the exchanges between Guohuahui and Lingnanpai were just as sharp, if not sharper, than any other disputes which have occurred in the art history of twentieth-century China. Considering the relevance of the debates to our discussion of Lui Shou Kwan's artistic conception and aspiration, it is probably worthwhile to look into their underlying causes and outcomes in some detail.

Debates between Guohuahui and Lingnanpai

The modernization of Chinese art in the first half of the twentieth century was marked by several heated debates over the future of Chinese painting among leading figures in the artistic and cultural fields. While most of the people involved were acutely aware of the need to make changes to this art form, their opinions on what should be done were deeply divided over the need to bring in foreign ideas and elements to facilitate its renewal. Even among those who were receptive to foreign ideas, there was little agreement on the extent to the manner in which it should be done. There were two main groups involved in these debates. There were those who insisted that the modernization of Chinese painting must be rooted in China's own pictorial traditions, and those who considered the traditional painting styles as backward and needed to be rejuvenated with Western ideas, be it partial or wholesale. According to Shen Kuizi, the first hot debate on the reform of Chinese painting began in the 1920s
as an upshot of the New Culture Movement’s (Xin wenhua yundong 新文化運動, mid-1910s – 1920s) inexorable onslaught on traditions. He saw it as a debate between those who advocated changes, the ‘reformists’, and those who advocated the retention of existing practices which were uniquely Chinese, the champions of ‘national essence’ (guocui 國粹).66 Even among the reformists, there were disagreements. While people such as Xu Beihong and Wang Yachen 汪亞塵 (1894-1983) who advocated the assimilation of elements from Western Neo-classical and Romantic art styles because they found them suitable for a China just began to be exposed to Western culture and science, there were also those who endorsed the rejuvenation of Chinese painting through the assimilation of more recent art trends such as Impressionism, Post-impressionism, Cubism, and Fauvism because Neo-classicism and Romanticism were already unfashionable in the West. Some scholars saw this divergence of opinion among the reformists as essentially a debate between the traditionalists versus the modernists.67 Of this particular traditionalist-modernist argument, the clash between Xu Beihong and Xu Zhimo 徐志摩 (1897-1931), a famous literary apologist for modern art, over what were the Western art styles suitable for assimilation, may be the most memorable. It neatly summarized the preoccupation of the intellectual and art worlds of the time.68

67 See, for instance, Ralph Croizier, ‘Post-Impressionists in Pre-War Shanghai: The Juelanshe (Storm Society) and the fate of Modernism in Republican China’, in Modernity in Asian Art, ed. John Clark, Sydney, Wild Peony Press, 1993, p. 135. The complex terminological issue surrounding such terms as ‘modernity’ and ‘modernism’ will be examined in greater detail in the fourth chapter of this thesis.
68 The debate between the two Xus can be found in three issues of Meizhan (Art Exhibition), which was published in conjunction with the First National Art Exhibition held in Shanghai in 1929. For Xu Beihong’s articles, see ‘Huo’ (I am Puzzled), Meizhan, no. 5 (22 Apr., 1929), pp. 1-2; and ‘Huo zhi bujie’ (An Unresolved Puzzlement), Meizhan, no. 9 (4 May, 1929), pp. 1-2, 4. For Xu Zhimo’s articles,
The debates between Guohuahui and Lingnanpai, which sparked off most fiercely in 1925-1927, 1930 and 1948, originated likewise from similar disagreement between the reformists and traditionalists. The initial debate between the two art groups occurred in about the same time frame as the dispute in the north. Moreover, the ruminations emerged in this debate also echoed some of those basic concerns and worries that were articulated by the northern polemicists. Unfortunately, due to the passage of time and ravages of wars, a complete recovery of all the relevant materials on the three principal pen wars between Guohuahui and Lingnanpai is no longer possible. What we have today is only a partial picture of what transpired or salvaged by the meticulous research of some scholars from Guangdong. It is not possible to determine the extent to which Lui Shou Kwan knew about these verbal exchanges, although there was a brief reference to them in his early writings. Nevertheless, we might conjecture that out of the three pen wars, he should have a greater concern for the first one since two of its protagonists, Huang Bore and Gao Jianfu, were both friends to his father; he himself also later revered Huang Bore as one of the greatest painters in modern China. Yet on the whole, the inherent conflicts and dilemmas manifested in the three debates should have individual significance to our exploration of Lui's contemplation upon the traditional as well as his experimentation with the modern.

see ‘Wo ye “huo”’ (I am also ‘Puzzled’), Meizhan, no. 5 (22 Apr., 1929), pp. 2-4; and ‘Wo ye “huo” (xu)’ (I am also ‘Puzzled’ (continued)), Meizhan, no. 6 (25 Apr., 1929), pp. 1-2, 4.

69 See, for instance, Lui Shou Kwan, Guohua de yanjiu (A Study of Chinese Painting), Hong Kong, The Author, 1957, p. 77. For the sake of clarity, this book will be referred to in its English translation from this point on.
The First Debate: Fang-Huang Dispute (1925-1927)

The first debate between Guohuahui and Lingnanpai started off with the former’s discontent at the three Lingnan masters’ claim of having created a new-style Chinese paintings, which they considered as plain copies of works by Japanese artists from Meiji (1868-1911) and Taisho (1912-1925) periods. A few core members of Guohuahui had voiced their dissatisfaction in newspapers and cautioned against wholesale adoption of Japanese art style in Chinese painting. However, the direct cause of a Lingnanpai retort was probably the appearance of two articles by Huang Bore, titled ‘Piaoqie xinpai yu chuangzuo zhi qubie’ (The Difference Between Plagiarism by the New School and Artistic Creation) and ‘Biaoxian zhuyi yu Zhongguo huihua’ (Expressionism and Chinese Painting), in the supplement of the newspaper Qishier hang shangbao 《七十二行商報》 in 1925.

The person who took up the defence for Lingnanpai was Fang Rending 方人定 (1901-1975), a student of Gao Jianfu. In February 1926, Fang published his rebuttal, ‘Xin guohua yu jiu guohua’ (New Chinese Painting and Old Chinese Painting), in Guomin xinwen 《國民新聞》 (People’s News), in which he

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70 Guohuahui members had written a number of articles to show their dissatisfaction, some of which can be found in their publication, Guohua tekan (A Special Publication on Chinese Painting), issued in October 1925.

71 The exact dates of publication of these two articles are not known. Their full texts can be found in Huang Bore meishu wenji (An Anthology of Huang Bore’s Writings on Fine Arts), Beijing, Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1997, pp. 21-22, 23-25.

72 According to Fang Rending, it was Gao Jianfu who instructed him to refute Guohuahui’s charge. See Fang Rending, ‘Lue tan Lingnan huapai’ (A Brief Discussion of the Lingnan School of Painting), Dagong bao (Hong Kong), 25 November 1962.
upheld the Lingnan masters' reform of Chinese painting and criticized Guohuahui members' for sticking to the old and the outworn, that is, their conservatism. Huang Bore fired back with a reply several days later, maintaining that what the two Gaos and Chen engaged in were not art reform, but acts of plagiarism. In his rejoinder, Fang argued that it was not surprising to find in the early works of the Lingnan masters certain features of Japanese paintings, since they had all studied in Japan. Huang refused to accept this argument and pointed out that the Lingnan masters had put their signatures on these works, thus signifying that these were original creations. It is known that in one of Huang’s articles, he went as far as to juxtapose pictures of Japanese works with those of the Lingnan masters in order to substantiate his accusation of plagiarism. In another article titled ‘Xinpai hua shi Zhongguo de yiguan ma?’ (Can the Painting of the New School Stand for China?), Huang, while persisted on his attack on Lingnanpai’s plagiarism, raised a new point by describing its type of realist works as out of date, since

73 See Huang Dade, ‘Yang Yinfang nüshi dawen lu’ (A Record of Questions and Answers with Ms. Yang Yinfang), in Huang Bore meishu wenji, p. 187. Yang was the widow of Fang Rending.
74 This article cannot be located any more. However, Huang Bore’s act of juxtaposing the images is documented by Huang Dade in his interview with Ren Zhenhan (1907-1991), a contemporary painter of his father’s generation. See Huang Dade, ‘Ren Zhenhan xiansheng dawen lu’ (A Record of Questions and Answers with Mr. Ren Zhenhan), in Huang Bore meishu wenji, p. 192. Ralph Croizier has also provided some nineteen visual examples in his article, ‘Reverse Current: Early 20th Century Japanese Influence on Chinese Painting’, to illustrate the remarkable similarities between the works of certain Japanese artists and those of the three Lingnan masters. For these examples, see Sino-Japanese Cultural Interchange: Aspects of Archaeology and Art History, Papers of the International Symposium on Sino-Japanese Cultural Interchange, vol. 1, pp. 185-197.
75 This article was originally published in Guomin xinwen on 1 March 1927. The text is incorporated in full by Huang Dade in ‘Yu “zhengshi” xiangbei de Guohua yanjiuhui’, Guangzhou meishu yanjiu, no. 1 (2004), p. 104.
Futurism and Expressionism were already in vogue in the contemporary art world. Fang Rending countered by condemning the traditionalists’ practice of imitating old masters disguised a lack of individual creativity, as well as a lack of understanding of Western drawing technique. He said that the literati painting so ardently endorsed by the traditionalists stunted Chinese painting’s development and caused it to lose its rightful place in the art world. Fang’s choice of words was most vitriolic. For example, he referred to the traditionalists as ‘psychotics’, ‘mounting technicians’, ‘forgers of old masterpieces’, and ‘hawkers of forgeries’. He also rejected their works as ‘common’, ‘vulgar’, ‘silly’, ‘wicked’ and ‘disgusting’.

No one knows exactly how many articles Fang Rending and Huang Bore had exchanged in total. But judging from the information we have in hand, we can tell that Huang had all along targeted his attack at Lingnanpai’s plagiarism which was, in the eyes of the leaders of Guohuahui, not merely a butt of jokes, but also a serious matter of right or wrong, truth or deception. Moreover, in their view, the success of the Lingnan masters relied solely on the support and patronage they were able to garner through their association with political heavyweights, and had nothing to do with the creativity or artistic achievements. In this clash between Huang and Fang, it was clear

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76 Huang Bore might obtain his information on the then current Western art trends through his contact with some returnee artists from Japan, France, America and other countries. These foreign-educated Guangdong artists were active in forming art groups, organizing art exhibitions, and running art courses in Guangzhou in the 1920s and 1930s. As a result of their activities, people in Guangzhou came to know of a wide variety of Western art, ranging from Realism, Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Fauvism, Purism, Surrealism, to Expressionism. Some of these returnee artists later also became members of Guohuahui. For an account of the Guangzhou art scene of the day, see Wu Wan, ‘Ershiwu nian lai Guangzhou huihua yinxiang’ (Impression of the Guangzhou Art Scene over the Past Twenty-Five Years), in Guangdong xiandai huatan shilu, pp. 142-154.

77 Quoted from Fang Rending, ‘Wenrenhua yu surenhua’ (Literati Painting and Philistine Painting), Guomin xinwen, 2 June 1927. Its reprint can be found in Guangdong xiandai huatan shilu, pp. 38-40.
that the issue of 'old' and 'new' was a bone of contention, thus the pen war between Lingnanpai and Guohuahui was often referred to as Xinjiu zhi zeng 新舊之爭 (Dispute between the New and the Old), or simply, Fang Huang zhi zeng 力黃之爭 (Dispute between Fang and Huang).

During this debate, Fang Rending had also responded to articles written by someone called Ling Mei 嶺梅 and Nian Zhu 念珠 who argued on the side of Guohuahui. Acrid diction kept recurring in their polemics. For example, in one of Fang’s articles, he criticized the traditionalists for their hardheadedness and compared it to that of the past royalists’ and warlords’ attack on the Nationalist Party. He also described the retrogressive practice of the traditionalists as comparable to the work of the devil. After a rash of name calling between the two sides, the dispute between Lingnanpai and Guohuahui came to a halt in June 1927.

The debate between Lingnanpai and Guohuahui may easily be taken as an argument between the ‘modern’ reformists and the ‘conservative’ traditionalists. There was no dispute between Guohuahui and Lingnanpai on the need for change in Chinese painting because of its obvious developmental stagnancy. Their disagreement lay only in the way it should be achieved. Guohuahui members’ stance, like that of many traditionalists elsewhere in China, was that the renewal should be steeped in Chinese culture, while the Lingnan masters (Gao Jianfu being its sole spokesman) contended

78 Four articles of their argumentation are compiled in Guangdong xiandai huatan shilu, pp. 41-52. Ling Mei and Nian Zhu might be the pennaes of Huang Bore since Ren Zhenghan recalled that Huang had employed pseudonyms to carry on his verbal fights with Fang Reding.

that the perpetuation of this art form depended upon cultural accommodation, which meant to them the rejection of outdated modes of expression in their painting tradition and assimilation of new approaches and elements from foreign arts regardless of whether they were from the East or the West, the past or the present. There is no denying that some members of Guohuahui were quite obstinate in hanging on to the supremacy of their native culture. There were, however, also some who placed emphasis on artistic creativity and were not entirely averse to foreign artistic influences. Pan Zhizhong 潘致中 (1873-1929), a key founder of Guohuahui, for instance, had studied Western anatomy and produced large drawings of nudes for his own art teaching. Pan Dawei 潘達徵 (1880-1929), another founder of Guohuahui, was a vanguard in promoting modern art and had in the early 1920s photographed the female nude (fig. 7) and displayed the pictures in the photo shop he set up in Hong Kong. Some Guohuahui members had also acquired experiences in practicing other forms of Western art, such as watercolours and oils; others had run western art courses, or used satirical cartoons as a medium to comment on current affairs.80

These examples highlight an interesting phenomenon in the art scene of Guangdong during the Republican period, in that quite a number of the so-called traditionalist artists indeed shuttled between Chinese and Western art and assumed multifaceted identity in their artistic careers. Such a cross-cultural oscillation indicates that despite their insistence on the excellence of Chinese painting, they were by no means absolutists who held fast to its supremacy or the correctness of its values over all others. In other words, they allowed, in certain circumstances, a space for mutual

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80 For greater details of these practices, see Huang Dade, 'Historians Looking at Lingnan: In Between Local & Global – Repositioning the History of Lingnan Culture', in The Second Guangzhou Triennial Beyond: An Extraordinary Space of Experimentation for Modernization D-Lab 1, Guangzhou, 2005, p. 289.
illumination and enrichment between different cultures. The question that begs us to ask then is: why would Guohuahui raise such a strong objection to Lingnanpai's Japanization of their work?

The objection was first and foremost connected with the timing of the rise of Lingnanpai. One must bear in mind that the dispute between Fang and Huang occurred at a juncture when there saw an outburst of nationalistic fervour in China. During this time, political and cultural elites vied with one another to formulate programmes to prevent a semi-colonized China from falling entirely into the hands of Western and Japanese imperialist powers. Guohuahui's objection to Lingnanpai's grafting of Japanese art onto their painting culture was an alternative expression of the larger fear of losing their country's independence. The criticisms its members made in their writings suggested deep concern for the fate of their nation, and reflected the need to position themselves as keepers of their cultural heritage. They saw it as an obligation they owed to their own history. In China, the rise of nationalism began after her defeat by the British in the First Opium War. This nationalistic feeling intensified even further after her defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). Of all the battles lost to foreign powers on Chinese soil, this defeat by Japan was particularly heart-wrenching to the Chinese people, which, as Liang Qichao

emphatically put it, awoke them ‘from the dream of four thousand years’. The decision made in the 1919 Versailles Peace Conference to transfer Germany’s concessions in the Shandong province to Japan inflicted a deeper wound on Chinese national pride, and triggered off the anti-imperialist May Fourth Movement in 1919. All these resulted in a feeling of immense bitterness towards Japan which reached almost every corner of China thereafter. From the late 1910s on, call to battle Japanese imperialism and protest against Japan’s cultural invasion were ubiquitous.

Setting the Fang-Huang dispute against this historical backdrop, one may infer that behind Guohuahui’s diatribes against Lingnanpai lurked their enmity towards Japanese, their fear of Japanization (more so than Westernization) of Chinese culture, hence, a desire to cleanse the latter from any obvious trace of the former. As indicated earlier, Guohuahui members were not unaware of the decrepit state of their beloved art form, yet they also believed that its rejuvenation might be achieved by getting rid of the stale and the tired, and by concentrating on the best parts of its own tradition. On no account would they endorse a modernization through Japanization of the art form. They saw Japanese art as merely a spin off from the Chinese culture. They found the need to copy from the enemy in order to survive was something despicable and amounted to cultural effacement. In the light of this hatred of the Japanese, Guohuahui’s disapproval of Lingnanpai is, therefore, understandable. It also explains why its members should turn what was an artistic issue into an ethical one. From another angle, one also sees that Guohuahui’s dedication to preserving China’s national essence was in conformity with the goal set by other traditionalist painting societies such as Zhongguo huaxue yanjiuhui 中國畫學研究會 (The Chinese

Painting Research Society) in Beijing, Yiguan xuehui (The Association of Art Learning) in Shanghai, and Baishe (The White Society) in Zhejiang. 83

In their ways, Gao Jianfu and his party were no less nationalistic than their opponents. Although their realist mode of expression owed its origin from Japan, nevertheless, it was in line with Western academic realism advocated by the likes of Kang Youwei, Chen Duxiu, Xu Beihong, and Cai Yuanpei. 84 Gao's ambition to create a new type of Chinese painting that synthesized East and West, past and present, was also in accord with their call for cultural Westernization. In a general sense, the approach adopted by the Lingnan masters might be likened to a cultural rehabilitation programme devised by Chinese intellectuals at the time to cultivate and uplift the quality of the people. However, the new Chinese paintings created by Lingnanpai did not make a complete break from the traditional culture and value system, and should be better described as an artistic reform than an artistic revolution.

It appears that being nationalistic was not the only thing Guohuahui and Lingnanpai had in common. Both parties had demonstrated a tendency to be self-opinionated and a lack of awareness to the weaknesses of their defences. Although Guohuahui made a

83 For a discussion of these painting societies and also the then currents of Westernization and anti-Westernization in twentieth-century Chinese art, see Chen Ruilin, Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu de “xihua”, “fanxihua” chaoliu yu Guangdong huatan xinju zhi zheng (The Currents of Westernization and Anti-Westernization in Twentieth-Century Chinese Art and the Debate Between the Old and the New on the Guangdong Art Scene), Twenty-First Century Online, no. 24 (31 Mar., 2004), unpaginated.

84 Cai Yuanpei's endorsement of realism was evident in a 1919 speech he delivered for Beijing daxue huafa yanjuhui (The Painting Research Society of the Beijing University), in which he explicitly encouraged his fellow painters to incorporate Western realism into their artistic creation. The speech was titled 'Zai beida huafa yanjuhui zhi yanshuoci' (A Speech for the Painting Research Society of the Beijing University) and published in Beijing daxue yuekan (Beijing University Monthly) in October that year. For its reprint, see Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu wenxuan, vol. 1, pp. 36-37.
case of Lingnanpai’s appropriation of Japanese painting style, they were unable to acknowledge the pioneering spirit and the vision of their opponents as well as the freshness in their works. Despite a good understanding of the traditions of Chinese painting, they failed to put forth cogent argument in support of the virtue of literati painting alone or suggest how it could be developed further to stay in tune with the sentiment and requirement of the time. As for Lingnanpai, while its sole defender Fang Rending was able to argue that the reform of its leaders was indeed opportune, he appeared to be restricting his defence to answering accusation, instead of attacking the weaknesses in his opponent’s case. He would find ancient precedents of foreign influences in Chinese art to justify his leaders’ eclectic approach, and resort to emotive and abusive name calling, instead of arguing with solid logic in his writings. What the debate between Guohuahui and Lingnanpai in the mid-1920s exposed were problems facing an old and proud civilization when invaded by foreign cultures which appeared to be threatening its survival. And many of these concerns became Lui Shou Kwan’s concerns, too, when he set his heart on modernizing Chinese painting. The artistic path which he took to fulfill his ambition will show us, in some respect, a replay of the bold attempt made by earlier reformers such as the Lingnan masters

The Aftermath of Fang-Huang Dispute

Although the dispute between Fang Rending and Huang Bore nominally drew to a close in 1927, exchanges between Lingnanpai and Guohuahui continued intermittently in the following years. In 1930 and 1948, two trenchant arguments flared up again among some supporters of the two camps. The dispute in 1930 involved Wu Wan 吳婉 (1899-1979), then a modern-style oil painter, and Situ Qi 司徒奇 (1907-1997), a student of the Fauve-style painter Ding Yanyong 丁衍庸
The dispute that took place in 1948 was triggered by an article of the young art critic Li Yuzhong 李育中. His discussion on the subject of artistic eclecticism precipitated another round of debate on the worth of Lingnanpai’s assimilation of Japanese painting. Given that the key participants of these two latter clashes were not close (except Gao Jianfu) to the Lui family and that their main points of argument were basically a continuum of the first debate, I shall offer just a brief account of them and concentrate my examination on points which cast lights on Lui Shou Kwan’s nationalistic outlook.

The 1930 Debate

The debate between Wu Wan and Situ Qi sprang from a joint exhibition of Gao Jianfu and his students which was mounted in celebration of a provincial art exhibition jointly presented by a number of educational organizations in Guangdong. Situ Qi and his art teacher, Ding Yanyong, wrote a sterling review for Gao’s exhibition. Wu Wan found the accolades they gave to Gao and his students in the review deeply upsetting. So much so that Wu proceeded to write his own review of the exhibition. In Wu’s review as well as a few follow-up articles, he was harshly critical of Lingnanpai for producing outdated, Japanized paintings which attracted only uncultivated traders and merchants. Wu Wan praised Japanese painting as delicate and exquisite, yet lacking the seriousness and profundity that characterized Chinese painting, or the vigor and liveliness that marked Western one. In sum, he found that Japanese painting was lacking in innovative or creative spirit. On that basis, he rejected Lingnanpai artists’ works as absurd, naïve, crude and stale. In one of the articles, Wu even attacked Gao Jianfu for fawning on the leaders of the Nationalist Party for his reputation as a
'revolutionary' artist as well as for a living.\textsuperscript{85} It is uncertain whether Ding Yanyong had responded to Wu Wan's criticism, but fragments of Situ Qi's responses have survived as quotations in Wu Wan's writing. On the evidence of these fragmentary records, we can surmise that Situ Qi was not a match for Wu Wan both in terms of knowledge in art history and as an art critic. Moreover, like Fang Rending, Situ Qi tended to be emotive in administrating his rebukes. For example, he described Wu's art views as backward and anti-revolutionary, and compared Wu to a general who wished to return to autocratic rule in the past.\textsuperscript{86} As in Guohuahui's and Lingnanpai's first debate, little was achieved except more ill feelings between the two parties. The clashes lasted for about one and a half months. However, Situ Qi's attempt at defending Lingnanpai had won him a place in the camp of Gao Jianfu, and he became Gao's student soon after the clashes ended.\textsuperscript{87}

\textbf{The 1948 Debate}

After a lapse of eighteen years, heated argument on Lingnanpai's copying of Japanese painting broke out again. The debate was kindled by an article of Li Yuzhong, titled 'Tan Zhezhongpai de hua' (A Discussion of the Painting of the Eclectic School), published in February 1948. In the three months following the appearance of this article, a number of artists, art critics, and art educationalists had expressed very different opinions over the issue brought up by Li. The key participating polemicists included Chen Sidou, Wang Yilun, and Hu

\textsuperscript{85} Wu Wan had written altogether five articles in this debate. They are compiled in his \textit{Wu Zifu yitan} (Art Discussions of Wu Zifu), Guangzhou, Lingnan meishu chubanshe, 1994, pp. 86-107. Wu Wan called himself Wu Zifu after 1945.

\textsuperscript{86} On such ideas, see Wu Wan's \textit{Wu Zifu yitan}, pp. 95, 96, 98.

Gentian 胡根天 (1893-1985), Gao Jianfu, and Fang Rending. The latter two being key figures in the mid-1920s debate.

In his article, Li Yuzhong stated explicitly that his intention was to raise the topic of eclecticism for discussion. He wished that with the participation of experienced practitioners, proper guidelines for art criticism examining eclecticism could be set up. He made it a point that eclecticism in painting was an acceptable idea, yet there was a problem of finding a way of putting it into practice. Despite his oblique support of Lingnanpai’s artistic reform, he did not hesitate to point out that the Lingnan masters appeared to have lost the direction because of technical entanglements. On the other hand, he also criticized the tart remarks that Guohuahui members had made about Lingnanpai. In his conclusion, he expressed a longing that painters of his time would strive to establish a common language by bridging over geographical and cultural gaps between different traditions, as well as to produce works that caught up with time. As a matter of fact, Li’s article might well be a swipe against Guohuahui members who criticized Lingnanpai’s plagiarism again several months ago in newspapers. When Li’s article came out in early 1948, it quickly elicited prompt responses from the supporters of both sides. For those on the side of Guohuahui, although red herrings were strewn in their arguments, their main points of arguments

88 Li’s article was originally published in Daguang bao between 17 and 19 February 1948. For its reprint, see Guangdong xiandai huatan shilu, pp. 365-370. On Li’s recollection of the debate he provoked, see Huang Dade, ‘Li Yuzhong jiaoshou fangtan lu’ (A Record of the Interview with Professor Li Yuzhong), in ‘Guanyu “Lingnanpai” de diaocha ziliao’, Meishu shilun, no. 1 (1995), pp. 25-28.
89 See, for instance, Zhao Haogong, ‘Guohuahui shi zenyang chengzhang de’ (How did Guohuahui Develop), Zhongshan ribao, 13 September 1947; and Jun Xu, ‘Guangdong huihua de qiyun wenti’ (The Question of Spirit Resonance in Guangdong Painting), Zhongshan ribao, November 1947. For their reprints, see Guangdong xiandai huatan shilu, pp. 311-314, 331-334.

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were again largely focused on the ‘newness’ of the Lingnan masters’ paintings.90 One exceptional occurrence in this debate was that Gao Jianfu finally broke his reticence by writing an article to refute the criticism targeted against him. However, his article did not really help in clarifying matters because he did not address the issues under discussion, but instead sought to validate his eclectic approach by relying on compliments paid to him by such personages as Pan Tianshou 潘天壽 (1897-1971) and Cai Yuanpei.91

One of the polemicists who could maintain a measure of neutrality in his argument was Wang Yilun. He was sympathetic to the artistic aspiration of Lingnanpai, and accepted that Lingnanpai had an undisputable influence on the Guangdong art scene. However, he also pointed out that it behoved Gao Jianfu to put forward a solid theoretical base for the ‘new’ Chinese painting; otherwise, he asserted that Lingnanpai’s reputation might seem undeserved.92 Indeed, Gao Jianfu had thus far never offered systematically any theoretical justification on Lingnanpai’s artistic endeavour. Gao’s longest and most quoted article, ‘Wo de xiandai guohua guan’ 〈我的現代國畫觀〉 (My Views on Modern Chinese Painting), was not published until after his death in Hong Kong in 1955. In effect, the article was amended and expanded by his students.93 Gao Jianfu’s younger brother Gao Qifeng, who died early

90 See, for instance, Chen Sidou, ‘Tigong de tigong’ (Supplier’s Supply), Zhongshan ribao, 24 February 1948. For its reprint, see ibid., pp. 371-373.

91 See Gao Jianfu, ‘Guohua de bianzheng’ (The Dialectics of National Painting), Xianfeng ribao, 26 February 1948. For its reprint, see ibid., pp. 374-376.


93 According to Li Weiming, this article was expanded on the basis of a manuscript by Gao Jianfu, titled ‘Wo de xiandai huihua guan’ (My Views on Modern Painting), which he drafted specifically for a
in 1933, had likewise not expressed any theoretical view on his art publicly during his lifetime. The remaining Lingnan master, Chen Shuren, though having edited and translated a work called Xin huafa 新畫法 (New Painting Method) and had it published in Zhenxiang huabao (reprinted as a single-article pamphlet in 1914), did not produce any further theoretical instruction thereafter. Wang’s perception thus proved to have hit the mark.

Of all Lingnanpai’s critics in the 1948 debate, Hu Gentian might be said to be the harshest. However, in the three articles he contributed to this debate, he advanced two new ideas which might be worth mentioning. One of them was the mapping of art with nationalism, and the other was his presentation of Chinese painting as a sturdy type of art. In Hu’s opinion, art was an emblem of both the author and his country. He held that since Chinese painting of the past had proved to be a strong and vigorous art, the kind of Chinese painting to be developed or rebuilt in future must also manifest such a characteristic. He fervently believed in the notion of ‘purity’, or that Chinese painting must be uniquely Chinese and nothing else. In his words, one should seek to resuscitate the dying (referring to the declining Chinese painting) rather than to look for perpetuation in the body of someone else (meaning the old-style Japanese painting that Lingnanpai copied).
China in the late 1940s was still engulfed in a wave of nationalism. Although the eight years’ war with Japan was won, the wound of China’s past humiliations delivered by other foreign powers were still fresh in the memories of most Chinese, and the hatred towards the invading powers remained deeply ingrained in the national psyche. To most of the Chinese people, Japan was the most evil of all the invaders because the long war she forced on China in the 1930s and 1940s was the most savage and had ravaged their country to an extent unknown before. Due to this bitter feeling against the Japanese, it is not surprising that Guohuahui felt so strongly against Lingnanpai in the late 1940s. To members of Guohuahui, Japanese had blood on their hands and the Lingnan masters’ appropriation of their obsolete art was embarrassing and detestable.

The oddest thing that happened in the third pen war was no doubt the volte-face of Fang Rending. Instead of continuing with his former role as a passionate defender of Lingnanpai, Fang surprised many by contributing two articles in which he became critical of Lingnanpai and his mentor, Gao Jianfu. In one of the articles, he went so far as to describe Lingnanpai as half-dying. He suggested that Lingnanpai founders had only a partial understanding of Western art, and this led them to the mistaken belief that depiction of lifelike and contemporary subject matters was the only means to transform Chinese painting into a modern art (fig. 8). Fang’s articles prompted Li

March 1948; and 3) ‘Minzu yishu de jianli’ (The Establishment of National Art), 25 March 1948. Their reprints can be found in Guangdong xiandai huatan shilu, pp. 384-386, 391-395, 396-400.

96 The two articles by Fang Rending were both published in Daguang bao. They included: 1) ‘Huihua de zhezhongpai’ (The Eclectic School of Painting), 11 March 1948; and 2) ‘Yishu de lunzheng’ (The Polemics of Art), 14 May 1948. Their reprints can be found in Guangdong xiandai huatan shilu, pp. 387-390, 401-402.

97 Here I should mention two incidents about Fang Rending that might account for the peculiar change of his position. One incident concerns his study in Japan between 1929 and 1935. During this period of
Yuzhong to write another article with a view to putting an end to the whole debate which he instigated. In his second article, Li summed up the diverse viewpoints that the polemists had put forward in their arguments. He also took the opportunity to reiterate his endorsement of eclecticism in the reform of Chinese painting as well as to urge his contemporary painters to face their time, their people, and be creative in their artistic expression.⁹⁸ With this article, the pen war between Guohuahui and Lingnanpai finally came to an end.

Conclusion

The debates between Guohuahui and Lingnanpai traversed over three decades and, as a whole, might be regarded as the largest and most complex discussion on the future of Chinese painting in the history of twentieth-century Chinese art. The issues brought up during the debates covered the old and the new, tradition and reform, and other key considerations in the Chinese art world of the time. They provided a side view of the time, Fang journeyed twice to Japan and there he discovered that the Lingnan masters had indeed made almost exact copies of some Japanese works. According to his wife Yang Yinfang, he once brought back some pictures of such Japanese works to China and showed them to Gao Jianfu, asking him to destroy his own reproductions. Another incident is related to his reconciliation with Huang Bore. In 1938, Fang held a one-man show in Hong Kong. During the time of exhibition, he was introduced to Huang Bore, his former rival, through a mutual friend of theirs. Subsequent to what had happened in the previous years, Fang had by then dispelled his enmity towards Huang. After that meeting in Hong Kong, he and Huang became friends. On Yang’s recollection of Fang’s study in Japan, see Huang Dade, ‘Guanyu “Lingnanpai” de diaocha ziliao’, Meishu shilun, no. 1 (1995), p. 19. On the meeting between Fang and Huang, see En Chou, ‘Fang Huang shiyuan ji’ (The Reconciliation between Fang and Huang), in Guangdong xiandai huatan shilu, p. 204.

⁹⁸ See Li Yuzhong, ‘Zaitan zhezhong de hua – jieshu zhe yici lunzheng’ (Another Discussion about Eclectic Painting – A Termination of This Debate), Daguang bao, 25 May 1948. For its reprint, see Guangdong xiandai huatan shilu, pp. 403-410.
arduous journey that many Chinese artists had taken in their search for a recipe to preserve their traditional culture, whilst attempting to regenerate their native art.

A most interesting phenomenon occurred in the wake of the debates and that was the reversal of artistic trajectory between Gao Jianfu and Huang Bore. Almost as soon as the first debate came to an end, Gao Jianfu set about consolidating his skill in the use of brush and ink by imitating old masterpieces. At times, he would abandon the washing effects he favoured earlier and turned to classicizing his work by painting in the style of traditional scholar-artists.99 In 1933, Gao even declared a wish to create a new Song academic painting style (*xin Songyuanhua* 新宋院畫), and in 1948 a new literati painting style (*xin wenrenhua* 新文人畫). As for Huang Bore, not long after he had settled in Hong Kong in 1949, he came to realize the futility of clinging to tradition and accepted the need for novel ways of applying the brush and ink in order to capture the new scenery and new subjects that were assaulting his vision, and to express the new ideas and new feelings growing in his heart.100 The fresh approach Huang adopted to depict the landscapes of Hong Kong, as we shall see later in the third chapter, would have a considerable impact on Lui Shou Kwan’s depiction of the same landscapes. Huang’s success in establishing a new painting mode might actually be the inspiration Lui needed to bid farewell to the painting style of Lingnanpai, which he practiced in the early days, and moved on to find his personal artistic path.

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After the war ended in 1945, most Guangdong artists who took refuge in Hong Kong, Macau, and other parts of China during wartime began to return to Guangzhou. Their return had provided the energy for the local art scene to develop with increasing momentum and vitality. The first postwar years saw the founding of new art societies and the re-grouping of old ones. Many newspapers started to allocate column space for coverage of art activities and for artistic commentary. An important official art and cultural institution called Guangdong wenxianguan (Guangdong Archive Bureau) was established at this time. The artistic and literary activities organized by the gallery provided a further boost to the development of art in Guangzhou. Within a short time and before the Communists came to power in 1949, Guangzhou had revived its earlier status as one of the most important hubs in China for the supply of art information and art publications. Lui Shou Kwan and his family found their way back to Guangzhou immediately after the war. It was amidst this ambience of artistic effervescence in postwar Guangzhou that Lui resumed and completed his academic studies and, most important of all, arrived at a resolution to devote his life to art.

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101 Some twenty members of Guohuahui had gathered together to discuss about the regrouping of the society in 1947. Sadly, the idea was never brought to fruition since one of its core members died a year later and a large portion of its art collection was lost during the war. See Zhu Wanzhang, ‘The Guangdong Painting Society and Its Members’ Painting Styles’, Guardians to Tradition: The Guangdong Painting Society 1923-1937, p. 11.
Chapter Two:
The Early Life and Work of Lui Shou Kwan (1919-1948)\textsuperscript{102}

Lui Shou Kwan, zi Yuhu 譽虎, 玉虎, 玉甫, came of a cultured elite class family and was born on 11 November 1919 in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. His life can be conveniently divided into two stages, the first being the time he spent in Guangzhou where he was brought up and educated, and the second began in 1948 when he moved to Hong Kong where he took up residence. Lui was the third son of a family of seven boys and two girls (fig. 9). His father Lui Tsan Ming, a native of Heshan of Guangdong province, was born in Foshan county, and his mother Choi Sing Wah 蔡醒華 (Cai Xinghua), a native of Jiangxi province, moved with her elder brother to live in Guangzhou at a young age. Lui Tsan Ming was a scholar as well as a competent painter and calligrapher. He had worked for the Republican government for almost forty years in various capacities. In the late 1920s, with a view to improving the living of his family, he opened a picture-mounting and antique shop next to where he lived, which turned out to be a seedbed for the development of Lui Shou Kwan's interest in Chinese painting. The artistic knowledge that Lui Shou Kwan gathered from his father's art shop, the paintings available there for him to gaze at and learn from, and the acquaintances he made with his father's artist-friends all offered him considerable help in building a solid foundation for his subsequent artistic endeavour. It is known that the senior and the junior Lui had maintained a close relationship whether they were in Guangzhou or Hong Kong. A discussion of Lui Shou Kwan's life and art would, therefore, be incomplete without simultaneously

\textsuperscript{102} For an earlier version of this chapter, see Lai Mei Lin, 'The Early Life and Art of Lü Shoukun', in \textit{Hong Kong Visual Arts Yearbook 2007}, Hong Kong, Department of Fine Arts, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2008, pp. 89-116.
looking into his father’s personal and artistic background. Below is a cross study of some crucial parts of the lives of both father and son, with a focus on the period from the late 1920s to the late 1940s. The examination will highlight certain events in the early part of Lui Shou Kwan’s life and help us to understand the conditions in which his art activities took place in Guangzhou.

**A Synchronic Study of the Personal and Artistic Backgrounds of**

**Lui Tsan Ming and Lui Shou Kwan**

Lui Tsan Ming, *zi* Zhiwei 智惟, *haos* Chanlu 禪侶 and Fulinglou zhu 復靈樓主, was a member of a rather well-to-do family in Heshan. In the late nineteenth century, his father moved the whole family from its native place to Foshan county where he was born and educated. Lui Tsan Ming began to take lessons from private tutors at the age of seven. With them, he studied the major Confucian classics, including the Four Books 四書 and Five Classics 五經. When he reached fifteen, he went to study under Xi Xuegeng 洗雪耕, Pan Yuegen 潘月根 and Feng Boji 馮伯緯 at Foshan shuyuan 佛山書院 (Foshan Academy). He stayed there for altogether five years, during which time he continued with his private tuitions on the classics as well as the classical Chinese language. During this period, he also spent a good deal of time

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103 The Four Books are *The Great Learning* (*Daxue*), *The Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong*), *The Analects* (*Lunyu*), and *The Mencius* (*Mengzi*). The Five Classics include the *Changes* (*Yijing*), *Documents* (*Shujing*), and *Poetry classics* (*Shijing*), the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu*), and the *Record of Rites* (*Liji*). In imperial China, these classical texts formed the core curriculum in the education of Chinese literati and were subjects of mandatory study for those who wished to sit for the civil service examinations.
studying the commentaries and sub-commentaries on the Confucian classics. His studies at the Academy was followed by another five years of learning at Guangdong gaodeng shifan xuetang 廣東高等師範學堂 (Guangdong College of Higher Education), a modern-style teaching institute in Guangzhou, where he continued to pursue his previous studies with Hu Shaonan 胡紹南. All this time while he was exploring the classical subjects, Lui Tsan Ming also cultivated a deep passion for Chinese painting and calligraphy. His fascination with these traditional arts prompted him to work incessantly in seeking out fine works of art from the collections of his family clan for study and appreciation. Compared to Lui Tsan Ming, Lui Shou Kwan was less well versed in the Chinese classics since he was born in an age when all traditional thinking in China, be they social, economic or political, were under assault of Western influences. Nonetheless, Confucian classics were still taught at school during the early Republican era. His lesser classical training notwithstanding, the art critiques that Lui Shou Kwan wrote later in his career show that he did have a fair command of the subjects. This was probably due to the influence of his father. As

104 On this early part of his life, see Lui Tsan Ming, 'Zixu' (Preface), Fulinglou ji (Anthology of Fulinglou), Hong Kong, The Author, c. early 1960s, unpaginated.

105 In 1898, the Qing government decreed that the traditional colleges (shuyuan) which prepared students for the imperial civil service examinations were to be renamed learning institutes (xuetang), and that these learning institutes had to include the teaching of Western subjects such as science and mathematics in their curriculum. However, on 2 September 1905, the Qing government made an official announcement that all the imperial examinations were to be abrogated starting from 1906. On this abrogation, see Guangxu zhao Donghua lu 5 (Memorials and Edicts of the Guangxu Reign 5), ed. Zhu Shoupeng, Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, 1984, p. 5392.

106 See Lui Tsan Ming, 'Zixu', Fulinglou ji, unpaginated.

a matter of fact, the senior Lui’s fascination with Chinese painting and calligraphy also seemed to have inspired his son to foster an interest in the traditional arts.

Lui Tsan Ming began his career as an official in the Republican government when he was twenty years old. In 1912, he was appointed secretary to the magistrate of Foshan.\(^{108}\) Within two years in Foshan, he had earned a name for himself in the literary circle and was elected as a director to Dakuitang 大奎堂, a famous club for the gentry of that town.\(^{109}\) In 1914, he took office as secretary to Tan Xueheng 譚學衡, a commissioner in charge of water conservancy in Xinhui county. During his ten-year tenure as Tan’s secretary, Lui Tsan Ming also served as commissioner to the Education Bureau of Xinhui. His directorship at Dakuitang and his position in the Education Bureau provided plenty of opportunities for him to get to know famous men of letters and artists of the day.\(^{110}\) Despite his heavy official duties, Lui managed to find the time to teach Chinese literature on a part-time basis at a municipal secondary school of Xinhui. He explained that in taking up this job, he wished to plant the seeds of education for the future generations.\(^{111}\) Seen from here, his wish is not too dissimilar to the one which was expressed by Lui Shou Kwan later on when he proceeded to launch a new artistic terrain for succeeding generations of artists. During a total of thirty-eight years beginning from 1912 up till his retirement in 1949, Lui Tsan Ming had served in about ten secretarial posts in various government

\(^{108}\) See Flora Kay Chan, *The Development of Lü Shoukun’s Art*, pp. 3-4.

\(^{109}\) See Lui Tsan Ming, ‘Bianyuange zeng Boduan youxu’ (Song to Boduan), in *Fulinglou ji*, p. 140; and Zheng Chunting, ‘Lü Canming’ (Lui Tsan Ming), in *Lingnan jindai huaren zhuanlue*, p. 72.

\(^{110}\) See Lui Tsan Ming, ‘Yuexi fashi bashi shouxu’ (Preface to the Eightieth Anniversary of the Birthday of Venerable Yuexi), in *Fulinglou ji*, p. 48.

departments, including the Development Department, Transportation Department, Railway Department and Police Department, at the provincial and municipal levels.

The last official appointment which Lui Tsan Ming accepted before the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War was to serve as the magistrate of Longmen, a small, poor and backward county located on the northern part of Guangdong province. During his three-year tenure (1936-1939) there, Lui proved himself to be a clean and honest administrator. Through hard work and a friendly attitude, he won over the local people who honoured him with the title, 'Magistrate of the People'. During the last year of his governance in Longmen, the war between China and Japan finally broke out in full. As the magistrate of Longmen county, he was required to enlist local people into the army and to sell government bonds for the war effort. A scholar at heart, he was reluctant to perform such duties and hence had tendered his resignation from the post. His resignation, however, was denied repeatedly, and it was not until the fourth submission before it was endorsed.\(^\text{112}\) Once released from his public duties, Lui Tsan Ming immediately took his mother and family to Hong Kong. To support his livelihood in this former British colony, he worked at a military office which the Nationalist Party had set up there. Aside for this work, he devoted the rest of his time to his artistic pursuit.\(^\text{113}\) Unfortunately, not long after the Lui family had settled in Hong Kong, the city fell into the hands of the Japanese in late 1941. The Luis were thus compelled to flee from Hong Kong, and began their long run away from the

\(^{112}\) See Lui Tsan Ming, 'Hongxuezhai Fulinglou heji', \textit{Lü Zhiwei wenyi}, unpaginated.

\(^{113}\) See Lui Tsan Ming, 'Wu Tiecheng liushi shouxu' (Preface to the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Birthday of Wu Tiecheng), in \textit{Fulinglou ji}, p. 34.
Japanese that took them cross several thousands of miles between Guangdong and Guangxi provinces.\textsuperscript{114}

During the time he was working for the Republican government, Lui Tsan Ming often found it difficult to make ends meet because his salary was too small to support his family which by 1927 had grown to fifteen members. To alleviate this difficulty, he opened a picture-mounting and antique shop in front of his house on Guangwei Road, Guangzhou, in 1928. He called it Hongxuezhai (literally, 'Wild Goose on Snow Studio'). The words hongxue was taken from the Chinese idiom xueni hongzhao (literally, 'wild goose's claw marks on melting snow'), which found its origin from a poem by the Song poet Su Shi (also known as Su Dongpo 蘇東坡, 1036-1101), titled Hezi you Minchi huaijiu shi 《和子由漉池懷舊詩》. The poem and the idiom both meant to lament the brevity of the human passage. Lui Tsan Ming’s adoption of the term hongxue was likewise intent to remind himself of the transience of man’s life on earth and similarly of the retention of art works at his shop.\textsuperscript{115} Apart from selling paintings and calligraphy, Hongxuezhai also traded in bronze and jade artefacts.

Prior to the Japanese occupation of Guangzhou in October 1938, Hongxuezhai had established itself as a reputable mounting shop where famous poeople and artists

\textsuperscript{114} See Lui Tsan Ming, ‘Panche fengmu tuluwen’ (An Illustrated Record of Lui Tsan Ming’s Tending of His Mother), in Lü Zhiwei wenyi, unpaginated.

\textsuperscript{115} For Lui’s self-explanation of the meaning of hongxue and the reasons he offered for opening the shop, see Lui Tsan Ming, ‘Hongxuezhai Fulintou heji’, Lü Zhiwei wenyi, unpaginated. On the establishing date of Hongxuezhai, see Lui Tsan Ming, ‘Guan Lang Jingshan yingzhan er zongtan wuguo huajia’ (A Review of the Photography Exhibition of Lang Jingshan and General Survey of the Painters of Our Country), in ibid., unpaginated.
would frequent. Guangzhou had long been a centre for the buying and selling of traditional art works since the sixteenth century. By the early twentieth century, it had seen the blooming of mounting shops. In Guangzhou, as elsewhere in China, mounting shops used to be family trade for the lower classes handed down from generation to generation. Considering the personal and educational background of Lui Tsan Ming, it might appear a little unusual for him to engage in the business of mounting painting. In one of his accounts, Lui explained that the intention of his engaging in the business was twofold: to prepare for a rainy day in case he lost his job, and to enhance the opportunities for himself to be exposed to fine works of art. In any case, Lui’s distinctive class standing was beneficial to him in obtaining business from the official and upper social circles. One example was that after the war, the renowned military figure, General Xiang Hanping 香瀚屏將軍 (1889-1978) who had a vast collection of art works, used to pay frequent visits to his shop. We will discuss this connection further because of the significance it had on Lui Shou Kwan’s knowledge and skill of traditional Chinese painting.

Apart from attending to his normal business routine, Lui Tsan Ming would sometimes arrange gatherings of artists at Hongxuezhai, where they would compose poetry and give spontaneous demonstrations of painting and calligraphy. Extant records indicate that those who had shown up regularly at Hongxuezhai consisted of both the

116 On the mounting trade in Guangdong between the late Qing and the Republican era, see Li Weiluo, ‘Guangzhou zhuaniao zihuadian mantan’ (A General Discussion on the Mounting Shops in Guangzhou), Ming Pao Monthly, no. 10 (1990), pp. 91-94. In his article, Li has reviewed a total of twenty-four mounting shops, one of them being Hongxuezhai. Li Weiluo is the penname of Lee Kwok Wing who was a close friend of Lui Shou Kwan in the late 1950s and the 1960s. We shall discuss their artistic relationship in the subsequent chapters.

117 See Lui Tsan Ming, ‘Zixu’, Fulinglou ji, unpaginated.
traditionalists from Guohuahui and the reform-minded painters of Lingnanpai. The artists from the former camp included Li Yanshan 李研山 (1898-1961), Zhao Haogong 趙浩公 (1881-1948), Lu Zhenhuan 盧振寰 (1887-1979), Li Yaoping 李瑋屏 (1883-1937), Zhang Guchu 張谷炤 (1891-1965), Huang Junbi 黃君璧 (1898-1991), Huang Bore, Deng Feng 鄧紳 (1892-1963), Lu Zishu 盧子樞 (1900-), and Wen Qiqiu 温其球 (1862-1941). Those from the latter group included Gao Jianfu, Zhao Shaoang, Huang Shaoqiang 黃少強 (1901-1942), and Yang Shanshen. Without doubt, Lui Shou Kwan’s encounter with artists of such diverse backgrounds at Hongxuezhai had directly and indirectly exposed him to different artistic approaches, thereby enhancing the breadth and depth of his understanding of Chinese painting. This put Lui Shou Kwan at a distinct advantage over other aspiring artists and art students. He was fortunate indeed to be surrounded by art works and established painters at such a young age. The propitious outcome of such contact manifested itself clearly when Lui Shou Kwan resolved to devote his life to the rejuvenation of Chinese painting in the late 1940s.

At the time Lui Tsan Ming was working hard to make ends meet in the 1920s and 1930s, Lui Shou Kwan was undergoing his childhood and adolescence. During this period, Lui, together with some of his family members, were shuttling between Guangzhou and Hong Kong to get away from political unrest. Lui received his high school education at Zhiyong zhongxue 知用中學 (Zhiyong Secondary School) in Guangzhou in the first few years. He finished the final year of his schooling at the same high school in 1938, but this time in Hong Kong since the school had moved

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118 Many authors have mistaken that Zhang Guchu died in 1968. In fact, he died on 15 October 1965. See his obituary in Wah Kiu Yat Po, 18 October 1965.
there. Upon graduation, he joined the Guangzhou University, a private university which had been established in Guangzhou since 1927 but moved to Hong Kong in 1937 when the Sino-Japanese War broke out. However, after reading economics there for merely two years, he had to flee from Hong Kong before it fell into the hands of the Japanese on 25 December 1941.

On Lui Shou Kwan’s whereabouts during the war years, there is no better source than Lui Tsan Ming’s writings since they contain detailed information on the movement and activities of the family during wartime. Those writings by Lui Tsan Ming that have survived were largely written by him during his wartime sojourn in Guilin and subsequently in postwar Guangzhou and Hong Kong. They are mostly elegiac couplets, exhibition reviews, speeches, and articles concerning art and topics related to Buddhism. In the 1950s and 1960s, Lui Tsan Ming successively compiled these writings into two thin volumes: *Lü Zhiwei wenyi* (The Literary and Artistic Work of Lü Zhiwei, 1952) and *Fulinglou ji* (Anthology of the Tower of Restored Soul, c. early 1960s)(figs. 10 and 11). The latter volume is particularly important to our present exploration because it registers the critical parts of the wartime circumstances of the Lui family. Combining the information contained in this volume with the content of an inscription by Lui Shou Kwan in one of his early paintings, as well as with the information offered by Lui Shou Kwan’s wife, Mui Sin

119 Information on Lui Shou Kwan’s high school education is gathered from his own diary marked 1962-1964 as well as from my interview with his younger brother, Lui Chiu Chun, on 24 November 2004.

120 On the history of this university, see *Guangzhou jinbainian jiaoyu shiliao* (Historical Material on the Education in Guangzhou over the Last Hundred Years), eds. Cao Sibin, Lin Weixiong and Zhang Zhi, Guangzhou, Wenshi ziliao yanjiu huiyuanhui, 1983, pp. 159-162.

121 See Flora Kay Chan, *The Development of Lü Shoukun’s Art*, p. 25.
Ping, and his younger brother, Lui Chiu Chun 呂超俊 (Lü Chaozin, b. 1921), we could arrive at a fairly accurate idea of the route taken by the Luis in their wartime retreat. In brief, we know that the Luis first took refuge in Guangzhouwan (present-day Zhanjiang). There, Lui Tsan Ming had opened a small restaurant in order to provide a livelihood for the family. Afterwards, they moved to Guilin, and stayed there for a relatively longer period of time until it fell to the Japanese. At the fall of Guilin, the Lui family took the road again. This time, they embarked on a long journey back to Guangdong. This trip took them to Pingle, Zhaoping, Fuhe, Majiang, Shazi, Babu and Lian county in Guangxi. Then they passed Sanjiang before finally arriving at Shaoguan (called Jujiang during wartime). The family settled in the city of Shaoguan until the end of the war. According to Lui Shou Kwan, it was in a town called Fuxi in Renhua county that he learned about the Japanese surrender.

On the question of whether Lui Shou Kwan went on most of this wartime journey with the rest of the Lui family, both Mui Sin Ping and Lui Chiu Chun gave an affirmative answer. When asked about his possible artistic activities during the wartime, Mui replied that her husband neither had the time nor opportunity for such pursuits in those days of extreme hardship. As far as could be gleaned from a variety of sources, Lui Shou Kwan had, during this period, worked as a secondary school teacher in Guangzhouwan, then as a government employee in Guilin and Shaoguan. In Shaoguan, he was a middle-ranking official in a government organization known as

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122 The sources referred to here include: 1) Lui Tsan Ming, 'Hongxuezhai Fulinglou heji', Fulinglou ji, pp. 1-4; 2) Lui Shou Kwan's inscription on a bird-and-flower painting, titled Dawn, which he did in 1948 and will be examined later in this chapter; 3) my interview with Mui Sin Ping on 9 August 2006; and 4) my telephone conversation with Lui Chiu Chun on 16 February 2007. In addition to these sources, Zheng Chunting's 'Lü Canming zhuan' (in Lü Zhiwei wenyi, unpaginated) also provides some useful information on the Luis' wartime retreat.
Guangdongsheng shitang zhuanmaiju 廣東省食糖專賣局 (the Sugar Bureau of Guangdong). In contrast to those prewar years when he was surrounded by paintings, artefacts as well as artists at Hongxuezhai, the wartime period was a series of unfamiliar refuge where finding a living was hard and in the absence of all the things he was used to. Perhaps the lack of artistic activities did not matter a great deal to him at that point since he had not yet taken art seriously. However, the same could not be said about his father who appeared to be able to stay in touch with the art world even under those difficult circumstances. In an article written by Lui Tsan Ming to celebrate Yang Shanshen's visit to America, he made reference to a joint exhibition co-held by him with Yang, Zhao Shao'ang, and Zhang Shaoshi 張韶石 (1913-1991) in Guangzhouwan not long after the outbreak of the war. While Yang and Zhao were outstanding second-generation painters of Lingnanpai, Zhang was a traditional artist famed for his painting of peonies. Lui Tsan Ming’s collaboration with them indicated that he was on good terms with artists from very different circles, among them included both reformists and traditionalists. In fact, he was able to maintain good relations with these and other artists when they met up in Hong Kong in the late 1940s. Some of his artist-friends were, as we shall see, helpful to Lui Shou Kwan right at the start of his artistic career.

As soon as the Sino-Japanese War came to an end on 15 August 1945, the Luis immediately found their way home and re-established themselves in Guangzhou. Hongxuezhai, which had been changed into a tofu factory by the Japanese army

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123 The information here is collected from: 1) my conversation with Lee Kwok Wing on 5 November 2006; 2) Flora Kay Chan, The Development of Lui Shoukun’s Art, p. 25; 3) my interview with Mui Sin Ping on 9 August 2006; and 4) my interview with Lui Chiu Chun on 9 November 2006.

124 See Lui Tsan Ming, 'Song Yang Shanshen you Mei xu' (Farewell Preface for Yang Shanshen’s Travel to America), in Fulinglou ji, p. 52.
during the war, was restored and renovated by Lui Tsan Ming with a new look (figs. 12 and 13). Over time, its business returned to normal and art gatherings were once again held at the shop from time to time.\(^{125}\) Some time between 1947 and 1948, Lui Tsan Ming added an attic, which he named Fulinglou 復靈樓, to his shop. The addition of the attic was in celebration of the recovery of a small coloured landscape painting by the Ming artist Zhang Ling 張靈 (active c. 1500). When Lui Tsan Ming needed money to take his family to Hong Kong before the fall of Guangzhou to the Japanese, he borrowed from his rich friend, Feng Hanbo 馮翰泊, and the Ming painting was handed over to Feng as surety. When Feng returned this painting to him after the war, Lui Tsan Ming built the attic to commemorate Feng's gracious gesture and called it Fulinglou (meaning 'Tower of the Restored Soul').\(^{126}\) The attic was used to house Zhang Ling's landscape painting. Besides, it was also used by Lui as a place to rest, to read, to paint, as well as for offering worship to the Buddha (fig. 14).\(^{127}\)

It might be appropriate here to examine briefly Lui Tsan Ming's religious belief and activities, since they can shed some light on the quasi-religious paintings which Lui Shou Kwan was to create in the 1960s and 1970s. As was well known among his friends, Lui Tsan Ming was a devout Buddhist and had actively participated in various Buddhism activities since adulthood. In his writings, Lui Tsan Ming confessed that he became a Buddhist when he was still small. In 1947, he received Buddhist consecration from Venerable Runjiang 潤江法師. Later still, he became a follower of the influential Zen master, Venerable Xuyun (Hsu Yun, 1840-1959) 處雲法師 who

\(^{125}\) My interviews with Lui Chiu Chun 24 November 2004 and 1 August 2005.

\(^{126}\) The word *ling*, apart from making reference to Zhang Ling, also carries the meaning of 'spirit'. The name of the attic could thus be taken to mean Lui Tsan Ming's recovery of Zhang Ling's painting as well as his recuperation of his spirit after enduring the trials and tribulations of the war.

\(^{127}\) See Lui Tsan Ming, 'Hongxuezhai Fulinglou heji', *Lü Zhiwei wenyi*, unpaginated.
was invited to Guangzhou to reconcile a dispute happened in Liurongsi 六榕寺 (Six Banyans Monastery), a historic temple of the city. After the dispute was settled, Lui Tsan Ming was instructed by Xuyun to serve on the committee of the monastery in order to make his contribution to the protection of Buddhism (fig. 15).\textsuperscript{128} This assignment was not a small honour and, in a way, reflected the reputation that Lui Tsan Ming held in the Buddhist community.

There is no evidence which tells if Lui Shou Kwan was also a Buddhist, though he once referred to himself as a follower of the Buddhist dharma in the inscription on a portrait of Guanyin 觀音 which he painted in 1948.\textsuperscript{129} However, if we take a close look at the references to Buddhism in his writings, we would find that they were no different from the way Chinese intellectuals normally expressed themselves in finding solace or spiritual enlightenment in Chinese philosophical thoughts. In any event, Lui Shou Kwan is known to have borrowed Buddhist terminology to express his artistic ideas quite early in his Hong Kong period. Moreover, of all the schools of Buddhism, Zen Buddhism seemed to be of particular interest to him. His creation of Zen paintings in the 1960s and 1970s was a reflection of this interest. Although the question of whether Lui Shou Kwan was a pious Buddhist is not of the paramount concern on how we perceive his Zen paintings, one might gather that his interest in Buddhism was influenced by his father’s own passion for it.

\textsuperscript{128} See Lui Tsan Ming, ‘Nuonajingshe bei’ (The Stele of Nuona Temple), in Fulinglou ji, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{129} In a narrow sense, dharma means specifically the body of teachings expounded by the Buddha. In present-day usage, however, the word actually takes on several more layers of meaning. Apart from the teachings of the Buddha, dharma may also refer to the methods (teachings) for becoming enlightened; the reality that one realizes at enlightenment; and the various divisions of the mental and physical worlds that are part of the teaching. In the particular context of Zen Buddhism, dharma also denotes the transmission of authentic doctrine.
After reestablishing his business at Hongxuezhai, Lui Tsan Ming went back to work in the Republican government. He first worked as chief secretary to Chen Ce 陳策 (r. January - May 1946) and then to Ouyang Qu 歐陽驅 (r. June 1946 - September 1949), successive directors of the municipal government of Guangzhou, between 1946 and 1949. When Lui Tsan Ming was busy re-starting his shop and assuming his duties in the government, Lui Shou Kwan returned to his studies at Guangzhou University which had moved back to Guangzhou from Hong Kong. Having got married, Lui Shou Kwan chose to study on a part-time basis when taking up a full-time job. In 1946, he graduated from Guangzhou University with a bachelor degree majoring in economics (fig. 16). No sooner than his graduation he went to work as an inspector in the Finance Department of the municipal government of Guangzhou. He remained in that position until he went to Hong Kong in the spring of 1948. It is significant to note that back in 1946, Lui Shou Kwan had already taken on the revitalization of Chinese painting as his calling.

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131 Lui Shou Kwan once revealed that he had worked as a journalist writing editorials for many years. However, except this self-confession, there is no other source which tells when he started the job or how long he had worked in that post. For Lui's self-revelation, see Lui Shou Kwan, A Study of Chinese Painting, p. 166.
132 My interview with Mui Sin Ping on 9 August 2006. In my subsequent telephone conversation with Lui Chiu Chun on 16 February 2007, I was yet informed that Lui Shou Kwan might be working in the Tax Department instead of the Finance Department.
The Prelude to Lui Shou Kwan’s Formal Artistic Journey (1946-1949)

The year 1946 was a watershed in Lui Shou Kwan’s life. He was then twenty-seven, a father of two, and on his way to completing his university education. More importantly, it was this year that he made a firm determination to dedicate himself to art. The question that immediately came to mind must be the cause of the shift from an economic-related career to becoming an artist with a mission. His wife, Mui Sing Ping, had no doubt about the answer. It was simply because Lui Shou Kwan abhorred the widespread corruption which he witnessed in the government and the community during and after the war. Lui Shou Kwan himself had said as much to his students. Flora Kay Chan tells in her thesis that Lui was deeply affected by his experience of the destructive forces of outside powers during the war, the accompanying drastic societal changes, and their resultant effects on human nature. When the war came to an end, Lui felt he was no longer the same person and his life from then on did not belong to himself alone. Looking back, this ‘self-awakening’ of Lui Shou Kwan, if one might put it, was undoubtedly the cause that spurred him on to start searching for the meaning of life - a meaning, he hoped, that would enable him to contribute to the rebuilding of his country and its people.

Although sporadic accounts of Lui Shou Kwan’s postwar self-reflection and his initial urge to become a painter could be found in the writings of his students, such accounts

133 In a letter written to T. G. Barker, his art agent in England, Lui affirmed that it was in 1946 that he decided to become a painter. The letter was written on 21 December 1963 and is now in the archive of the Ashmolean Museum of the Oxford University.
134 Mui Sin Ping’s reply was recounted to me by her daughter, Lui Chin Lo, over the phone on 18 July 2006.
135 See Flora Kay Chan, The Development of Lui Shoukun’s Art, pp. 26-27.
were still far from being complete, especially in regard to the conditions that gave rise to Lui’s introspection and determination. It was not until the presentation of the large retrospective, *Lui Shou-kwan – New Ink Painting*, in late 2002, and the publication of a catalogue under the same title by the Hong Kong Museum of Art the following year that we could obtain a fuller understanding of those conditions. The revelation lies in the display of a painting by Lui, titled *Dawn* (1948)(fig. 17), in the exhibition and, more importantly, the transcription of his inscription on the same painting in the Museum’s catalogue. Lui’s inscription on *Dawn* consists of an inordinate length of sixty-two lines of characters. In it he disclosed the reasons for his change of outlook on life as well as the beginning of his self-education in art. In view of its autobiographical significance and the hitherto paucity of material on Lui Shou Kwan’s early life and work, I shall reproduce this inscription into several sections for detailed examination. There are two reasons for this reproduction. First, I want to show what it was meant to be a painter in Lui Shou Kwan’s mind at that particular juncture; and second, I wish to highlight the initial steps he had taken in his study of Chinese painting. An elucidation of these two points will demonstrate more clearly his resolve to become a painter of worth, and his insistence on sincerity as an essential virtue in artistic pursuit.

*136 The exhibition was mounted by the Hong Kong Museum of Art at its own venue from 22 November 2002 to 2 March 2003; the catalogue came out after the ending of the exhibition in 2003.*
Lui Shou Kwan’s Inscription on *Dawn* and Its Implications

Lui Shou Kwan’s inscription on *Dawn* gives us a glimpse into his way of thinking during the first few postwar years in Guangzhou. It begins with a brief mention of his return to Guangzhou and the reopening of his father’s mounting shop after the war. Then it spends some length relating the unpalatable things he saw in postwar Guangzhou. Lui said that while his hometown was in ruin and pending reconstruction following the withdrawal of the Japanese troops, he was amazed to find that many people continued to live in constant fear of political purges. It pained him to see that some Chinese, having survived the war with the Japanese, were inflicting sufferings on their own people. He complained that traitors and collaborators of the Japanese puppet government, who were masquerading as men of morality and war heroes, were able to monopolize most of the assistance available, and thus leaving the good and the honest without the help they deserved. Lui admitted that he was perplexed and rendered speechless by this phenomenon. His bewilderment prompted him to contemplate the fate of his country and its people.

The *Dawn* inscription by Lui Shou Kwan is infused with an overt sense of crisis over China’s fate and security. This deep concern was understandable because ever since Japan’s invasion of Manchuria in 1931, the Chinese community all over the country had been extremely worried about the future of China, to the extent that it overshadowed all other considerations. The intelligentsia and the students were noted

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137 For the full transcription of this inscription, see *Lui Shou-kwan - New Ink Painting*, pp. 204-205.

138 The Japanese had established a puppet nation of the Manchus called Manchukuo in 1932, under the nominal rule of the last Qing Emperor Puyi (1906-1967). The puppet government ceased operating in 1945 along with the ending of the Second World War.
to be especially affected. They had deep apprehension about the imminent destruction of China as a nation and as a cultural entity. The students in Guangzhou had been particularly active in organizing protests and demonstrations to express their anger and frustration of this dire circumstance. This anxiety for China’s future might have eased off a little after the end of the Second World War, but intensified again when the split between the Nationalist and the Communist Parties led quickly to a civil war in 1945-1949.\footnote{For a detailed account of Chinese students’ protests against foreign imperialism as well as domestic wars between the late 1910s and the late 1940s, see Guangzhou jinbainian jiaoyu shiliao, pp. 282-315.} All these changes to the political, social, and cultural fabrics of China were happening around the young life of Lui Shou Kwan when he was receiving his high school and university education in Guangzhou and Hong Kong. While Lui Shou Kwan did not take part in any student activities, one might imagine that he would be thinking about his country’s destiny as well as his own part in it. His doubt and worry in the mid-1940s were manifest in the questions he asked of himself in the inscription on *Dawn*:

\begin{quote}
I do not have the talent to make my country stable, but I do have a considerable love for her. What can I do for it? How can I repay it? ... What is it that I can do on my own to repay my country? How would I be able to live my life without shame? I have been thinking over these questions for a hundred times. As they make me stay up in the quiet of the night, I gather myself to read poems and books. While I remain inside contemplating [the above questions], the outside world is getting more chaotic day by day.\footnote{Quoted from *Lui Shou-kwan – New Ink Painting*, p. 204. Unless otherwise specified, all the English translations of the writings by Lui Shou Kwan and other artists in this thesis are mine.}
\end{quote}

The above declaration tells that Lui started to think of doing something to bring about changes to the society for the betterment of his country in the late 1940s. By his own
account, this longing for doing something for his country had prompted him to shut himself up in his room to read, to study, and to contemplate. He said that it was in the company of books and paintings when he came to realize the cultural significance of the art of Chinese painting:

The outside world is in chaos, yet I am in the quiet of seclusion. So I pick out some famous paintings to be mounted by our shop for copying. Since I am an impatient man by nature, each time I copy a painting, I will only stop until it is completed. Hence I always find myself copying the whole day. After I am done with the work, I will have my copy mounted on the board. My father and his guests, upon seeing my imitations, often pay me charming compliments. Gao Jianfu once even took me to Chunshui huayuan [the Spring Slumber Studio], his studio at Mt. Guanyin 觀音山 to see how his pupils, such as Guan Shanyue 關山月 [1912-2000], do their paintings. Gao also encouraged me to join their rank. I responded to his suggestion with a laugh. At the time of national crisis, we young people with patriotic fervor only wanted to lay down the pen to join the army to defend our country. How would it be possible for us to amuse ourselves with the brush and ink? [At that time I thought] painting was only a trivial pursuit. It was not until I went through the whole Chinese painting history have I come to recognize that the merit of painting is equal to that of liuji 六籍, and that the most important spirit and thought of a country or a people lie in its academic learning and culture.\(^{141}\)

\(^{141}\) *Liuji* refers to the Six Arts of antiquity, including ceremonial (*li*), music (*yue*), archery (*she*), charioteering (*yu*), writing (*shu*), and reckoning (*shu*). The idea that the merit of Chinese painting is comparable to that of the Six Arts originated from *Records of Famous Paintings Through the Ages* (*Lidai minghua ji*), the first general art-historical writing of China by the late Tang scholar Zhang Yanyuan in 847. In section one of the book, ‘On the Origins of Painting’, Zhang argued that painting is valuable in helping one to govern the world by completing the process of sagely transformation and promoting human relationships, and its virtue ranks as high as that of the Six Arts. For a full translation of this section, see William R. B. Acker, *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1954, pp. 61-80. For Acker’s personal remarks on this section, see *ibid.*, pp. 81-110.

\(^{142}\) Quoted from *Lui Shou-kwan – New Ink Painting*, p. 204.
Although Lui Shou Kwan described the way he taught himself to paint in the inscription, what he did not say was that he also tried to learn the skills of painting from *Jieziyuan huazhuan* (The Painting Manual of the Mustard Seed Garden, 1679), a popular step-by-step painting instruction book for beginners. Out of the two learning processes, Lui Shou Kwan found that copying actual paintings was more helpful to him because it allowed him to get a better grasp on the use of the brush, ink, and colour, as well as the meaning of spirit resonance (*qi yun*) in Chinese painting. In his book, *A Study of Chinese Painting* (*Guohua de yanjiu* 《國畫的研究》, 1957 and 1963), Lui tells us that the works he was copying at that time included double-line bird-and-flower paintings of Song and Yuan, gold-and-blue landscape works of Tang, as well as landscape paintings of various modes and styles from Tang, Song, Yuan, down to Ming and Qing periods. From the names he cited in the book, we know that most of the works he copied were by those artists who were highly creative or individualistic. ‘Creativity’ or ‘individuality’, as we shall see, was regarded by Lui Shou Kwan as the most important criterion for judging the value of a work of art. It was also the test he sought for his work throughout his artistic career.

As mentioned earlier, Lui Shou Kwan had profited by his contact with both reformist and traditionalist artists. His inscription on *Dawn* testifies to his acquaintance with the Lingnanpai spokesman, Gao Jianfu, in postwar Guangzhou. Gao Jianfu had been

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143 The 1957 edition of *A Study of Chinese Painting* was published by the author himself in Hong Kong; the 1963 one was issued by a publisher called Heping chubanshe in Taipei. The contents of these two versions are basically the same, except that the later one is annexed with two new prefaces (each by a Taiwanese scholar) and some more recent paintings done by Lui Shou Kwan in 1961 and 1962. All the references made in this thesis are drawn from the earlier edition.

friendly with his father Lui Tsan Ming for many years. There were two articles by Lui
Tsan Ming which offer us some idea of the closeness of their friendship. In one the
articles which talked about his happy recovery of the landscape painting by Zhang
Ling, Lui Tsan Ming revealed that Gao Jianfu had offered his valuable items to
exchange for Zhang's work on many occasions, despite being turned down
repeatedly.¹⁴⁵ In the other article which was written by Lui in commemoration of
Gao's passing away in 1951, we are told that after the war, Gao often went to
Hongxuezhai to purchase some worn-out or incomplete paintings, or to exchange
them with his own works. Lui also said that Gao would occasionally borrow some
fine and expensive paintings to take home for close study and copying.¹⁴⁶ Lui
thought highly of Gao's artistic achievement. He considered Gao a great artist for
being able to create a personal seal by drawing references from ancient Chinese
painting, contemporary Japanese art, and the natural world. Although he recognized
that Gao's high standards had fallen off a little in his late years due to poor eyesight,
he saw the works Gao did between 1926 and 1936 were sufficient to put him among
the masters.¹⁴⁷

Gao Jianfu's advocacy of reforming Chinese painting through a fusion of different
cultural traditions won the support of quite a number of younger artists of his day. Lui
Shou Kwan was probably one of them, given that he had made serious efforts to study
Lingnanpai's work, including Gao Jianfu's, during his early years in Hong Kong. A
few paintings by Lui Shou Kwan during this time exhibited a formal and thematic

¹⁴⁵ See Lui Tsan Ming, 'Hongxuezhai Fulinglou heji', Lü Zhiwei wenyi, unpaginated.
¹⁴⁶ See Lui Tsan Ming, 'Dao Gao Jianfu' (Commemorating Gao Jianfu), in Lü Zhiwei wenyi,
unpaginated.
¹⁴⁷ See ibid.
likeness to those created by the Lingnan masters. Since we shall discuss these paintings in the following chapter, we would leave the examination of the plausible influence that Gao Jianfu might have on Lui Shou Kwan for the time being. Suffice it to say that Lui’s idea of using art to revive the cultural vigour of his country and his acceptance of foreign elements to enrich Chinese painting made him a spiritual confre of Gao. And this sharing of common thoughts would form the primordia of a close relationship between the two artists.

From the earlier excerpt of the *Dawn* inscription, we know that Lui Shou Kwan concurred with Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠 (c. 815-?), the great art historian and art theorist of Tang, in placing the merit of Chinese painting on a par with that of the Six Arts of antiquity. The remaining part of the inscription further informs us that Lui was not content to have cognizance of the value of Chinese painting only, but wanted to go a step further by finding a way to actualize it. He revealed to us that during those days he spent incommunicado, he began to ponder over the matter of fulfilling his own sense of worthiness. This is how he put it:

If I want to achieve something, I could rely on my own hands to break new ground and do my own cultivation. Or I could leave it to the next generation by passing ideas to them for their development....

I am not yet thirty, but I know what I learned in the past have laid the ground for me to make my choice today. This is time to set a goal for myself. When I was small, I painted to impress others with my talent, and people considered me a genius. Only now do I know that genius is just an appealing word to cover up one’s lack of sound knowledge, solid foundation, and real learning. I am called painter simply because I copied paintings. I was even asked to take part in literary gatherings and painting exhibitions. But is the merit of Chinese painting, which has shone for hundreds of generations, really that easy to achieve? ...
thus shut myself from the outside world and study Chinese painting on my own. The more I learn, the more I come to realize that while art critics can tell which paintings are good, they cannot explain why they are good. [Similarly,] artists who tend to paint in the loose-brush style do not truly understand the value of the use of brush and ink. Most of those who boast of sketching from life are often making copies from photographs. They take the easy instead of the difficult path, and prefer a simple rather than a complex way [for learning]. They are eager for instant success and profit. 148

In Lui Shou Kwan’s view, the greatest and strictest training of Chinese painting could be found in the works of the Song dynasty. The landscape painting of the Northern School and the bird-and-flower painting in the academic style were good examples to learn from. Yet, serious training of this like appeared to have long been abandoned by artists. With this in mind, he started his learning process from scratch. The visual image of Dawn is, in this regard, a vivid example of the outcome of his initial self-training. An early exercise in the fine-line style, the painting unfolds a natural world filled with lush vegetation, in which a few lively rabbits of different colours and poses are spotted about in various locations. The whole picture is meticulously composed and painted. Its elaborate details and exquisite colouring combine to give off a sense of joy and dynamism, as well as an exuberance that captures the advent of spring. If not informed, one might be forgiven in thinking that the work was done by a veteran artist.

Apart from Lui Shou Kwan’s own inscription, there are two other inscriptions that can be found on the painting surface of Dawn. One is by Lu Yougang 陸幼剛 (active in the second half of the 20th century), the other is by Lui’s cousin, Liu Jingtang

148 Quoted from Lui Shou-kwan – New Ink Painting, p. 204.
Lu Yougang’s inscription says that *Dawn* was modelled after the painting style of Lin Zhuang 林椿, a Southern Song painter-in-attendance between 1174 and 1189. However, Flora Kay Chan has another view on the stylistic lineage of this painting. She believes that the painting was modelled after a work done no earlier than the Qianlong era. She points out that the daisy motif in the picture was a more recent element and seldom found in the court paintings of Southern Song. Instead of Lin Zhuang, Chan presumes that the work was possibly based on a copy by either Zhao Haogong or Lu Zhenhuan, which was, in turn, based on another copy of an earlier painting, titled *Flowers, Birds and Animals after Liu Yongnian* 《仿劉永年花卉翎毛手卷》(1741),\(^{149}\) by the Qing court painter Yu Xing 余省 (1692-1767)(fig. 18).\(^{150}\) Who were Zhao Haogong and Lu Zhenhuan? And what were their relationships with Lui Shou Kwan?

Zhao Haogong and Lu Zhenhuan were professional artists who had studied painting with a senior painter called Wang Zhuxu 王竹虚 (c. 1859-1924). Together with Lu Guanhai 劉觀海, Lu’s younger brother, they ran a mounting shop called Lanxuezhai 蘭雪齋 (literally, ‘Orchid and Snow Studio’) in Guangzhou.\(^{151}\) Zhao Haogong and Lu Zhenhuan were both acclaimed for their superb painting techniques. Their outstanding painting skills had tempted some art dealers to collaborate with them to produce fake copies of famous paintings for local and overseas buyers. Zhou was a founder, and Lu a member of Guohuahui. Although they were known to be Lui Shou Kwan’s earliest artistic mentors, their exact relationship with Lui had never been well

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\(^{149}\) Liu Yongnian was a Northern Song painter (1020-?) and a relative of the imperial family. He was renowned for painting a variety of subject matter, including birds, flowers, animals, fish, insects, as well as Daoist and Buddhist figures.


documented. However, now that we have Lui's own inscription on *Dawn* as a reference, we can present a slightly clearer picture of their relationship. In this inscription, Lui mentioned that he had borrowed a painting, called *The Yangtze River of Ten Thousand Li* (長江萬里圖), from Lu and Zhao for emulation, which could be taken as an oblique reference to a teacher-student connection. Unfortunately, Lui said that when he went to see Lu and Zhao again after he had finished copying the painting, he found out that Zhao had by then fallen very ill and was unable to receive him. Although he managed to see Lu who took the opportunity to show him how to paint a few landscape motifs, they had never met again from that day on. This visit was thus their last meeting. While we do not know exactly for how long Lui Shou Kwan had been studying with Zhao Haogong and Lu Zhenhuan, it could not have been for very long. Even if they started their teacher-student relationship immediately after Lui graduated from the university in 1946, they would only have about two years together before Lui moved to Hong Kong again in the spring of 1948. Since their relationship might have been a short one, and that none of the existing works by Zhao and Lu comes close to *Dawn*, one could not conclude with any degree of certainty that *Dawn* was based on a copy of Yu Xing's painting by Zhao or Lu. Nevertheless, there is resemblance between Lui's and Yu's painting in respect of the choice of motifs and the ways they are depicted. According to Lui Chiu Chun, Lui Shou Kwan actually had the motifs modelled after a painting he found at Hongxuezhai.\(^{152}\) However, without that painting in hand for verification and comparison, it is impossible to tell whether *Dawn* was Lui Shou Kwan's faithful copy or subjective re-creation of the work.

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\(^{152}\) My interview with Lui Chiu Chun on 24 November 2004.
Today, only a few paintings by Lui Shou Kwan of the 1940s have survived. The abovementioned *The Yangtze River of Ten Thousand Li* (fig. 19), which predates *Dawn*, is another fine work by the artist which can still be located and is worthy of our attention. Same as *Dawn, The Yangtze River* is also in a handscroll format. It shows a grand view of the mountains, rivers and villages along the gorges of this important Chinese river. Production of such long handscrolls capturing the splendour of the Yangtze River was rather common in Southern Song. The reasons could be ascribed to the wistful yearning of the artists at the time for the past glory of Northern Song, and their hope that painting the river would inspire fellow countrymen to better efforts in recovering the land lost to the Jin Tartars. Many features appearing in Lui’s work are characteristics of the trend in Southern Song. Save for the ‘one-corner’ and ‘half-sky’ compositions, which marked paintings, especially those by Ma Yuan 马远 (active c. 1189-1225) and Xia Gui 夏圭 (active early 13th century), of the time, the traits displayed in *The Yangtze River* conform to the pictorial conventions of this later Song period. These characteristics include the axe-cut strokes used to depict surfaces of rocks and mountains, the application of light ink washes to outline the shapes of distant mountains, and the generally sparse furnishing of the landscape.

As a celebrated landscape painter of Southern Song, Xia Gui left behind only a few works which art historians would confirm as authentic. In his artistic repertoire, there was a painting which also carried the same title as Lui Shou Kwan’s *The Yangtze River of Ten Thousand Li*. This work happened to be the first painting of the river documented in the history of Chinese painting. However, it had long been lost. Thus Flora Kay Chan has, in her thesis, used Xia Gui’s attributed work, *The Remote View of Hills and Streams* 《渓山清遠圖》, for visual comparison with Lui’s Yangtze River painting (fig. 20), arguing that the two paintings are close in terms of spatial
composition and the wielding mode of the brush. Yet, my research suggests to me that the painting by Lui might be a copy of the Ming painter Dai Jin’s (1388-1462) *Summer in Mt. Xi* (溪山消夏長卷) (fig. 21), part of the collection of the Guangzhou Art Gallery. Dai Jin was a master-hand in the Ma-Xia tradition. *Summer in Mt. Xi*, however, was not Dai Jin’s original work. It was actually done by an anonymous artist after a long handscroll, titled *Boundless Territory* (江山無盡圖卷) (fig. 22), currently in the collection of the Liaoning Provincial Museum.

Lui Shou Kwan’s *The Yangtze River* shows a striking resemblance in depiction to Dai Jin’s *Summer in Mt. Xi*, be it in style or spatial structure. Unfortunately, what we have of Lui’s painting is only an incomplete set of black-and-white photographs. From these monochromatic images, it is hard to tell if the work was coloured or if it was meant to be a plain ink work. In any case, even if Lui’s painting was a simple ink work and a copy of another artist’s imitation, there is no doubt that the painting was skilfully executed. The firm brushwork which Lui demonstrates in this work, and the delicate application of lines and colours that he exhibites in *Dawn* are testimonies to his gift in painting. These two handscrolls also indicate his early attempts at diversifying the scope of his painting subjects and expanding the range of his painting techniques.


154 According to the investigation of Yang Rekai, the Liaoning Provincial Museum’s painting connoisseur, *Boundless Territory* was possibly done by someone active in a time earlier than that of Dai Jin. For Yang’s argument, see Yang Renkai, ‘Gudai huashi shang de yizhuang gongan- liangjuan liangshan wujin tu de bianxi’ (A Complicated Case in the History of Ancient Chinese Painting – A Differentiation and Analysis of Two Scrolls Likewise Titled *Boundless Territory*), *Han Mo*, no. 13, pp. 118-127. I am grateful to Hui Lai Ping, chief editor of *Han Mo*, for bringing this article to my attention.
Apart from painstaking practice on subjects and techniques, Lui Shou Kwan's self-training programme included an intensive study of the history and theory of Chinese painting. Such frenzied hard work was obviously driven by his intention to equip himself with the necessary knowledge on art history and technical proficiency in preparation for the day when he was ready to choose a specialty to establish his personal stamp. His inscription on *Dawn* tells us that by the time he was painting this work, he had already made up his mind to learn as much as he could, yet was willing to let go of everything when it was time for him to develop his individual hallmark. Note how he put it:

I don’t need to be clever, nor am I clever. What I have is only sincerity. Sincere people are foolish. As I am learning from antiquity, all ancient masters are thus my teachers. I learn everything, yet nothing is worthy of my following. 155

Strictly speaking, Lui Shou Kwan’s self-learning scheme was not very different from that pursued by many great painting masters in Chinese art history. What distinguished Lui from other painters was his highly reflective and critical attitude when he reviewed the development of Chinese painting. In his inscription on *Dawn*, Lui stated that while his painting skills might not match that of ancient masters, his incessant practice of a wide variety of brushwork and painting styles enabled him to discern the principles in artistic creation as well as finding out the pros and cons of the works of his contemporary artists. It seems that Lui was then already quite confident of his own perceptiveness. Hence, in the same inscription on *Dawn*, he dared to make pointed remarks on the strengths and weaknesses of such famous masters as Zhang

155 Quoted from *Lui Shou-kwan – New Ink Painting*, p. 205.
Daqian 張大千 (1899-1983), Yu Fei’an 于非闇 (1889-1959), even Zhao Haogong and Lu Zhenhuan, his artistic mentors. The question of whether the remarks are justified or fair is not relevant in the present examination. What matter is that his outspokenness and readiness to question and dissent had manifested at this early stage of his career. Needless to say, these tendencies of his would provoke attacks from some Hong Kong artists in his later years. Towards the end of his inscription, Lui Shou Kwan raised a point that since people of his day had improving opportunities to view authentic Song paintings, they should not ask charlatans to be their teachers or attach themselves to the wealthy and powerful. Apparently, he saw such doings as part of the cause for the decline of Chinese painting. Moreover, Lui revealed his own artistic aspiration at the end of the inscription by saying:

What I wish for is to learn what is true [to the art of painting]. Only have I learned what is true can I tell what is false. Knowing what is false I can then avoid committing the same error myself.... The future is uncertain and beset with difficulties. The more there is ahead for me to do, the more it is worth my while sacrificing everything to accomplish it. When I am happy, I paint; when I am angry, I paint;

156 Here are a few reasons that might explain why artists could obtain more opportunities to view authentic paintings of ancient times in the early decades of the twentieth century. One reason is the ransacking of the Yuan Ming Yuan by the British and French forces in 1860, which led to a massive outflow of imperial art works onto the marketplace. Another reason is the transference of many ancient works of painting and calligraphy, which Emperor Puyi took with him to the puppet Manchukuo, into the hands of Nationalist Party officials, connoisseurs, art dealers, buyers, and collector after the Japanese surrender in 1945. Meanwhile, with the fall of the Qing dynasty and the toppling of the whole imperial system, many former imperial family members and avaricious court officials also found it expedient to sell the art treasures they had collected from the Forbidden City. As a result of these reasons, there occurred a wide dispersal of previously unavailable art works into public markets. Circulation of the images of these art works were later made possible through the publication of private and official catalogues. The National Palace Museum, which was established in Beijing in 1925, for instance, began publishing their holdings in the 1930s. Its publications as well as those issued by private collectors became invaluable sources for artists to study ancient masterpieces.
when I am in pain or misery, I paint. [Even] after returning home with my daughter whom I took to the hospital for medical consultation, I have an immediate urge to paint. I decline all functions and parties because I want to sit at my painting table. Thus I know I belong to [the domain of] painting.\textsuperscript{157}

With the above words, Lui Shou Kwan closed his lengthy inscription on \textit{Dawn}. To sum up, there are several points of import about this inscription which are worth repeating or emphasizing. First, it tells us that soon after Lui Shou Kwan started his artistic pursuit, he was already filled with ambition to become a great painter. Second, it discloses that Hongxuezhai was important to his early artistic exposure and edification in that it offered him a convenient access to many art works and renowned artists of his time. Third, it confirms that Zhao Haogong and Lu Zhenhuan were indeed his early artistic mentors, even though for only a very short period of time. Fourth, it shows that Lui’s self-education in art consisted of both scholarship and application - by studying the history and theory of Chinese art and by honing his skills in brushwork. In respect of the latter, the two works, \textit{Dawn} and \textit{The Yantze River of Ten Thousand Li}, clearly reflect the skills he had attained by the late 1940s. Fifth, Lui’s frank and uncompromising views, his sharp observations, and his open ambition to be the standard bearer of the next generation of artists all seemed to predestine his future role as an intrepid art critic as well as a zealous art teacher.

\textsuperscript{157} Quoted from \textit{Lui Shou-kwan – New Ink Painting}, p. 205.
Artistic Interaction between Lui Tsan Ming and Lui Shou Kwan

Lui Shou Kwan began to earnestly involve himself in the art activities conducted by Lui Tsan Ming in postwar Guangzhou. According to Mui Sin Ping, her husband had accompanied Lui the senior to morning art fairs in search of potential works for sale at Hongxuezhai before and after the war. The morning art fairs which Mui referred to were held at Xilai chudi, a small place on the western side of Guangzhou, where people from the neighbouring villages gathered to sell their art objects, even heirlooms, early in the morning. Lui Chiu Chun recalls that ever since Hongxuezhai was established, Lui Tsan Ming would go to Xilai chudi almost every morning to look for arbitrage opportunities. By Lui Tsan Ming’s own account, after picking his pieces, he would go for morning tea in a restaurant nearby where, if he was lucky, he might meet buyers for his new acquisitions and have some transactions closed on the spot. Then, he would return to the antique-mounting shop to record in details of the art works which he brought back, and to leave instructions to his staff on the necessary repairing and remounting work. After that, he would report back to his government office and attend to his duties.

Despite his own involvement in art business, Lui Tsan Ming did not seem to have any intention to bring up Lui Shou Kwan or any of his children as art dealers or train them as artists. Nonetheless, his artistic versatility must have given Lui Shou Kwan a certain introduction to Chinese arts. On their morning trips to Xilai chudi, Lui the junior surely could also have learned a lot of skills in bargaining and connoisseurship.

158 My interview with Mui Sin Ping on 9 August 2006.
159 My interview with Lui Chiu Chun on 9 November 2006.
160 See Lui Tsan Ming, ‘Hongxuezhai Fulinglou heji’, Lü Zhīwei wényì, unpaginated.
from Lui the senior. One might posit that once Lui Shou Kwan made up his mind to give himself over to art, he would spend more time with his father on these morning travels. Conceivably, he would get even more involved in the activities conducted at Hongxuezhai, which included trading, appraising and exchanges of art works, as well as the hosting of art gatherings.\textsuperscript{161} Wucius Wong, Lui Shou Kwan’s student, tells in his writing that Lui Shou Kwan used to declare himself as a self-taught artist and his artistic foundation was built on his early efforts in copying classical paintings.\textsuperscript{162} This was obviously true about his painting skills. But it was probably true, too, that Lui Tsan Ming must have helped him along on his artistic development. Even if it was only by way of introducing Lui Shou Kwan to his own circles of artist-friends and art collectors would help him to open up his artistic horizon. There is little doubt that Lui Tsan Ming’s shop had opened up opportunities to Lui Shou Kwan which would not be available to other young, aspirant artists. Hongxuezhai must have been like a perfect nursery for a beginning painter where supporting resources such as paintings and contacts were readily available. Otherwise, Lui Shou Kwan would not be able to reach the standards he achieved within such a short span of time.

In the course of learning Chinese painting, Lui Shou Kwan did not restrict himself to paintings of any particular school or historical period. The only exception would be those orthodox paintings created by Ming and Qing artists which he deemed duplicative. Lui’s open-mindedness, coupled with his freedom from being limited by the teaching of any teacher, enabled him to receive all the artistic influences that came his way. Among all the sources of influences that he might have encountered, a major

\textsuperscript{161} See \textit{ibid.}

one, as just mentioned, came from those paintings that he found at Hongxuezhai. The question was: what kinds of paintings were available there, particularly in early postwar Guangzhou? To this question, Lui Tsan Ming gave us a most direct answer. In one of his exhibition reviews, he made it clear that they comprised both ancient and contemporary paintings, many of which were genuine pieces by Song and Yuan masters, with some being collotype copies.\footnote{See Lui Tsan Ming, ‘Guan Lang Jingshan yingzhan er zongtan wuguo huajia’, Lù Zhiwei wényì, unpaginated. In the first half of the twentieth century, many collotype reproductions of Chinese paintings were printed into a book form, under the name of the artist or the collector, or by period or by genre. Rōnggēng fùlǔ shūhuà lù (A Record of the Collected Works of Painting and Calligraphy in Rōnggēng’s Fulu Studio, 1936) published by Yānjīn dàxué kaogu xuéshè, and Gugōng shūhuà jì (The Works of Painting and Calligraphy in the Collection of the National Palace Museum, 1930s) published by Běipíng gugōng bówuyuán guwuguàn are two cases in point. Most of these books were published in Shanghai and Beijing, but were also on sale in big cities such as Guangzhou. Despite their costliness, many artists purchased them and looked upon them as model books for studying Chinese painting. In Japan, some publishing houses also issued similar collotype painting albums. Although the images of these albums were largely taken from the Chinese publications, their quality often appeared better than that of their originals. Many of the Japanese albums were later re-circulated back to China for sale.}

In addition to those works at Hongxuezhai, Lui Shou Kwan had access to an important source of authentic Song and Yuan paintings, which was through the Mengshilou 夢詩樓 (literally, ‘Studio of Dream Poetry’) of the renowned military figure, General Xiang Hanping, whom we have briefly mentioned in our discussion earlier. A native of Hepu 合浦 county, Xiang Hanping was an important man in the Nationalist regime in Guangzhou. He was once appointed director of the Police Department and commander of the Ninth Battalion of the Nationalist army. Privately, Xiang was also a well-known art collector as well as an acclaimed calligrapher of the
the running and cursive styles. Although there is no documentary evidence on when Xiang Hanping and Lui Tsan Ming became acquainted, the latter did mention in one of his writings that the former often went to see him at his place after the war, and more importantly, had kindly let Lui Shou Kwan view and copy the Song and Yuan paintings in his collection. This invaluable opportunity to study the brushwork of ancient masters at close quarters, which is known to have lasted for a few years, was incontrovertibly of immense help to Lui Shou Kwan in broadening his artistic vision. His lifelong passion in Song painting and perception of it as an emblem of the highest achievement of Chinese painting may be traced back to the influence of Xiang Hanping’s collection.

A browse through Lui Shou Kwan’s whole artistic oeuvre indicates that of all the genres of Chinese painting, he was most drawn to landscape painting. Yet at the beginning of his career, his works also covered figure, bird-and-flower, and animal paintings, as well as paintings of some simple subjects such as fish and insects. The

164 For a short biography of Xiang Hanping, see *Chinese Painting and Calligraphy by Guangdong and Hong Kong Artists from the Taiyilou Collection*, Hong Kong, Hong Kong Museum of Art, 1992, p. 152.

165 See Lui Tsan Ming, ‘Xiang Hanping xiansheng qishi shouxu’ (Preface to the Seventieth Birthday of Mr. Xiang Hanping), *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, 24 December 1959. This article is reprinted in his *Fulinglou ji*, pp. 44-45.

166 The kindness which Xiang extended to Lui Shou Kwan is substantiated by two pieces of evidence. One is the preface written by Liang Hancao for Lui Shou Kwan’s first one-man show in 1954 (see Liang Hancao, ‘Xu Lü Shaokun huazhan’ (Preface to the Painting Exhibition of Lui Shou Kwan), in *Contemporary Chinese Artist: Lui Shou-kwan, Modern Edition*, no. 4 (1963), p. 4; originally published in *Wah Kiu Yat Pao*, 18 February 1954). The other evidence is Lui Shou Kwan’s self-confession which he made in an article published in Hong Kong (see Lui Shou Kwan, *A Study of Chinese Painting*, p. 98). Both accounts attest to the fact that Xiang was really Lui’s benefactor in his early artistic exploration. From the dates given in Liang’s article, one can deduce that Lui had started to copy the paintings in Xiang’s collection in 1946.
motivation of this persistent industry stemmed, as suggested before, from his desire to engage himself broadly and deeply in the Chinese pictorial tradition with a view to developing a fresh mode of expression. In his own words, it was to go into the methods (入法) in order to come out of them (出法), and ultimately to become himself. All through his painting career, Lui Shou Kwan had maintained an insatiable appetite for things connected to art. As we shall see, his artistic curiosity was not confined to Chinese art, but would also extend to the arts of other cultures, though without necessarily taking them all on board.

While both the paintings at Hongxuezhai and Mengshilou were material to Lui Shou Kwan’s artistic growth, Lui Tsan Ming’s own artistic creation had undoubtedly influenced his son’s artistic development. Lui Tsan Ming was a great admirer of Su Shi’s poetry and calligraphy. Not only did he adopt Su Shi’s verse to name his antique-mounting shop, he was deeply attracted to Su Shi’s free, and uninhibited writing style. In fact, his calligraphy was often compared to Su Shi’s by his friends and critics of his time. One could easily see the resemblance in the extant calligraphic works of Lui Tsan Ming, especially in terms of the apparent obesity of the characters and their left-slanting inclination (fig. 23). Aside from calligraphy, Lui Tsan Ming also liked to paint a little in his leisure. His surviving works are mostly landscape (fig. 24) and bird-and-flower paintings (fig. 25) done in the spontaneous fashion of the literati. He often put poetic inscriptions on the paintings to express ideas and feelings. His abbreviated manner of execution was exalted by some of his friends and critics as akin to the untrammelled spirit exhibited in the work of two

167 See, for instance, Lui Shou Kwan, A Study of Chinese Painting, p. 27.
168 See, for example, Chen Jingxiong, ‘Xu’ (Preface), in Lü Zhiwei wenyi, unpaginated.
highly acclaimed Ming monk-painters, Bada Shanren 八大山人 (1626-1705) and Shitao 石濤 (1642-1718). Although this praise might sound a little exaggerated in some instances, they gave evidence to the fact that Lui Tsan Ming did enjoy a certain standing in the art field. Unlike his father, Lui Shou Kwan was not specialized in calligraphy, but emerged on the art stage solely as a painter from the very beginning. Under Lui Tsan Ming’s influence, however, he had spent some time studying Su Shi’s calligraphy. After Lui Shou Kwan’s premature death in 1975, his wife found out that he had retained a large quantity of the reproductions of Su Shi’s calligraphy bequeathed to him by his father.

A large majority of the works that Lui Shou Kwan did in Guangzhou have been lost over the years. Apart from The Yangtze River of Ten Thousand Li and Dawn, there are only two other paintings done by him in the late 1940s whose images can still be located in Lui Tsan Ming’s Lü Zhiwei wenyi. One of the pictures is a sacred portrayal of Guanyin (fig. 26), the great Bodhisattva who renounces nirvāṇa in order to salvage humanity from recurring in the six realms of existence; and the other one is a small fan painting of a desolate landscape with an atmospherically corresponding poem inscribed on the upper left corner (fig. 27). The painting of Guanyin presents a sinicized image of the goddess whose plump face, voluptuous body, elegant S-curve pose, and rich ornamental accoutrements are characteristic of the many court ladies depicted in Tang times. The likes of such a secular, well-nourished image of the Bodhisattva is also found in many silk scrolls and mural paintings excavated from the Dunhuang 敦煌 grottoes of the same dynastic era. However, although Lui’s Guanyin reflects the aesthetic beauty of the Tang ladies, her image is unmistakably modelled

169 See, for example, Zheng Chunting, ‘Lü Canming zhuan’, Lü Zhiwei wenyi, unpaginated.
after a painting of the goddess done by an anonymous artist in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, presently in the collection of the National Palace Museum in Taipei (fig. 28). This unknown painter's work manifests the diversity of source materials that Lui Shou Kwan had used as prototypes for his self-training. It adds weight to his claim in his *Dawn* inscription that he had made copies from a vast array of paintings in Guangzhou during the first few years after the war.

In the fan-shaped landscape painting, Lui Shou Kwan produces the scene of a bleak landscape in grim winter, where a few bare trees are placed prominently against a rugged mountain range in the far distance. The cold and lonely atmosphere is exactly like the one imparted by the poem which appears on the painting surface. Lui's adroit handling of the brush captures the nip in the air and the melancholy of the season. Although one might not be able to identify a painting from which this fan-shaped work was modelled after, it would not be surprising to find that it was also a copy. From Lui's own admission in *Dawn*, and the fact that most of his works with surviving images during this period were copies of other paintings, one could assume that, so far, he had been focusing his efforts in widening his range of subject matter, brush techniques, and also his all-round ability in simulation. At this juncture, he was still groping his way for an individual mode of expression.
Conclusion

The portrayal of Lui Shou Kwan’s early life and work in Guangzhou in this chapter is based on a blend of firsthand information and a variety of secondary materials. It shows that Lui’s artistic foundation took root in Hongxuezhai, Mengshilou, and his father’s circles of friends and acquaintances in the art field. In addition, it tells that from the very beginning, Lui Shou Kwan took his artistic endeavour very seriously and conceived a strong desire to develop his painting career into a noble undertaking of making a difference to the painting culture of his time. The immense pains he took in exploring different aspects of the art of Chinese painting was linked to an earnest desire to return this native art form of his country to its early glory. His lengthy inscription on Dawn provides, in this respect, an essential window for us to perceive his inchoate dream of modernizing Chinese painting. It was his monologue, yet also his public statement to make known his wish. Now that we have a better understanding of his wartime experiences during the 1930s and 1940s, we might consider his painting activities as some kind of inner healing. After damages had been done to his youthful, vulnerable spirit in those volatile years, it seems he was determined to heal the wound, however difficult and arduous the task might be. To this end, painting was what he selected.

After Lui Shou Kwan made up his mind to live an artistic life in 1946, he immediately engaged himself in public art activities. That year, he helped organize a fund-raising show, called the ‘Painting Exhibition for the Guangdong Flood Charity Fund’, in Guangzhou. The following year, he submitted his works to the first postwar ‘National
Art Exhibition’ to be held in Nanjing in 1948. Although no image of the works which he sent to these two exhibitions could be found, his participation in such activities helped to mark his emergence on the art scene. From this point onward, he had an artist’s identity.

A year before the Communists took over China in 1949, Lui Shou Kwan and his family fled to Hong Kong, along with thousands of refugees from all parts of the mainland. The following chapter will trace how he continued his artistic journey, and promptly built a name for himself at home and abroad as an abstractionist modernizer of Chinese painting.

Chapter Three:
Lui Shou Kwan’s Rise as a Modern Ink Painter in Postwar Hong Kong (1948-1966)

The formative and most productive phase of Lui Shou Kwan’s painting career took place in Hong Kong between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s. During this period, Lui participated in a wide array of art activities, mounted a number of one-man shows, and took part in many joint exhibitions at home and abroad. In Hong Kong, where exposure to outside influences was readily available, Lui also began to take an interest in modern Western art. This interest turned out to be significant for his artistic development. It led him to rethink the entire approach to his art on several occasions, and eventually prompting him to veer away from the traditional in search of the modern via the abstract idiom which was then widely pursued in the West. Lui Shou Kwan’s artistic experimentation quickly brought him to the front of modern Chinese painters, at a time when Hong Kong was undergoing rapid industrialization and urbanization. No chronicle of Lui’s artistic development could be complete without taking a look at the socioeconomic transformation of Hong Kong at this particular juncture. Hence, before addressing Lui’s artistic attempts in the 1950s, we should briefly survey the social and economic changes in Hong Kong during the 1950s and 1960s as it will cast important sidelight on his artistic development. Then, we could proceed to examine Lui’s works and activities under the following topics: the variety of art activities which he embarked on; the sources of written information that helped him to understand Western art; the modern ink paintings he put on display in his solo and joint exhibitions; the relations between his experimentation of the modern with Western abstraction; the people who might have exerted timely and crucial impact on his artistic endeavour; and finally, the advantages he had enjoyed in Hong Kong.
which helped expedite his phenomenal rise on the local and international art scene.
The time frame of our discussion will span from 1948, the year Lui Shou Kwan came
to Hong Kong, to 1966, the year he quit his full-time employment and devoted
himself to art education.

Hong Kong's Industrialization and Urbanization in the 1950s and 1960s

Hong Kong became an industrialized city in Southeast Asia in the 1960s. Its transformation from an entrepôt before the Second World War into an industrial city in a brief span of two decades after the war was in every sense remarkable, especially when one took into consideration its disadvantages such as an acute shortage of water, little flat land to develop on, and a total lack of natural resources. Moreover, the absence of a sufficiently large domestic market suggested that even manufacturing activities could be risky. In some people’s eyes, Hong Kong’s early postwar economic success was anything short of miraculous.  

Although Hong Kong did venture into heavy industries such as ship building and ship repairing soon after the British government declared it as a free port in 1843,  

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171 An instance of this may be elucidated by the opinion of the former British Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, who regarded Hong Kong as nothing more than ‘a barren island with hardly a house upon it’, and Britain’s acquisition of this small island as a rotten bargain (see Hong Kong Report for the Year 1961, p. 339). To be fair, Palmerston’s contemptuous view was not completely ungrounded since Hong Kong was for a long time mainly inhabited by a small number of fishermen, farmers and stone-cutters, and was notoriously known as a retreat for smugglers and pirates.

172 Hong Kong was made a free port by the Supplementary Treaty of the Bogue in October 1943. According to this Treaty, all persons of Chinese origins were free to enter the place for trading purposes (see Hong Kong Report for the Year 1961, p. 340).
growth in industrial activities did not take place until after Britain regained it from the
Japanese in August 1945.\footnote{Following Hong Kong's liberation from the Japanese occupation on 30 August 1945, a provisional
government was set up by the then Colonial Secretary F. Gimson; it was later replaced by a temporary
military government under the rule of Rear Admiral, Sir Cecil Harcourt. A civil government was not
restored until Sir Mark Young resumed his interrupted governorship on 1 May 1946. For an account of
the establishment of these three governments, see Hong Kong Report for the Year 1961, p. 346.} One important factor underlying Hong Kong's rapid
rehabilitation from the damages of war was the British government's early
recognition of the People's Republic of China. This permitted Hong Kong to resume
its trading activities with China. Hong Kong's prompt recovery was also made
possible by the shrewd investments of its industrialists who capitalized on the relative
stability of the sociopolitical conditions of the colony and produced a wide range of
consumer goods to meet the demand of some war-ravaged countries in East and
Southeast Asia. But it was not smooth sailing for Hong Kong all the way. There were
unexpected internal and external obstacles in the 1950s and 1960s, which impeded the
economic development of Hong Kong. The important ones included the embargo
imposed by the U.S. on China in the early 1950s which dealt a crippling blow to the
bourgeoning industrial activities in Hong Kong,\footnote{China's support of North Korea in its war with the U.S. (1950-1953) had led the U.S. to impose a
comprehensive embargo on trade with China. Under the Foreign Assets Control Regulations enacted in
1952, all imports originating from Communist China, including Hong Kong, were banned from the U.S.
It led to a significant contraction of trading business in Hong Kong. The U.S. later re-established
trading with Hong Kong on the conditions that its colonial government could provide guarantees for
the end-use of American materials shipped to its factories. Facing various changes caused by the China
embargo, Hong Kong industrialists were quick to modify their business strategies for survival, such as
looking for alternative sources of supply outside the U.S. and opening new overseas markets for their
products. For some official accounts of the effects of the embargo on Hong Kong economy in the
1950s, see Hong Kong Annual Reports 1952 (pp. 12-14), 1953 (p. 7), 1956 (pp. 10-12), 1957 (p. 15),
and 1958 (pp. 7-8).} and the outbreak of the 1967 riot
in Hong Kong which seriously threatened to revert the inflow of capital into this
territory. 175 Fortunately, the business acumen of the industrialists and traders of Hong Kong enabled them to overcome these difficulties, and helped Hong Kong to go through these troubled times. However, one must not lose sight of an important factor. Just as many commentators of the time had observed, maintaining Hong Kong’s prosperity was advantageous to both China and Britain, and neither would want it to lose the gains it had made over the years. To the Chinese government, Hong Kong was financially important to them because the proceeds from China’s direct trade with Hong Kong and the remittances from Hong Kong people to their families on the mainland were then the chief sources of foreign exchange for the Chinese treasury. To the British government, not only was Hong Kong most useful as its only gateway to China, it was also a source of invisible earnings because Hong Kong’s reserves in pound sterling was held in London. 176

Among all the factors which helped to propel Hong Kong’s postwar industrial take-off, the inflow of capital, the entrepreneurial skills within the community, and a cheap labour force provided by the Chinese immigrants proved to be the most essential. In its whole colonial history, Hong Kong had been a depot for people

175 The 1967 riot stemmed from a dispute over an increase in fare by the Star Ferry Company in Kowloon in March of the same year. The dispute was followed by a series of conflicts between workers and managements at a few other companies, including the Nam Fung Textile Mill in Tsuen Wan, the Green Island Cement Company in Hung Hom, and the Hong Kong Artificial Flower Works in San Po Kong. To show their support of the workers, the drivers of four taxi companies also went on strike. Rioting reached its peak with the assassination of an anti-Communist radio announcer in August that year. Nevertheless, the rioters finally gave up their confrontation with the colonial government of Hong Kong after nearly six months’ work stoppages, demonstrations, and terrorist bombings. Following this riot, the Hong Kong-British administration started to implement a series of policies with a view to addressing labour grievances and improving the general welfare of local citizens.

176 For such comments, see, for instance, Trea Wiltshire, ‘Hong Kong – The Thriving Rock’, Orientations (May, 1970), p. 44.
coming out of China, particularly at times of domestic unrest and civil wars, where hordes of mainlanders would come through the unguarded borders to seek refuge in this city.\footnote{Before the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the Hong Kong government had granted all Chinese free entry into this British colony. Immigration control and entry restrictions were not carried out until overcrowding posed a serious problem to Hong Kong. In 1949, the colonial government implemented the Registration of Persons Ordinance which provided for compulsory registration of all persons in Hong Kong and the issuance of identity cards to all registered persons. A year later, a quota system was devised by the government in the hope of balancing the number of those who entered and those who departed Hong Kong at its borders with Mainland China. More restrictive policies were to follow in the ensuing decades. For an extensive study of Hong Kong’s immigration policies, see Chan Chi-kin, A Study of Hong Kong’s Immigration Policy for Mainland Chinese, MPA thesis, The University of Hong Kong, 2005.} The incursion of people from the mainland around the 1911 Revolution and the outbreak of Sino-Japanese War in China in 1937 were two prominent examples. Yet, in terms of speed and magnitude, the one that took place between the late 1940s and the 1950s was unparalleled.\footnote{When the Second World War ended in 1945, there were only about 600,000 people inhabiting in Hong Kong. However, with the prompt return of former residents and the arrival of new comers, the total number of residents had risen at a drastic rate in the following years. An official estimate indicated that between 1945 and 1956, the population of Hong Kong had increased by 1,000,000, out of which about 700,000 were refugees, making a total population of over 2,500,000 by the end of 1956 (see Hong Kong Annual Report 1956, p. 3).} There were other characteristics which distinguished this postwar influx from all the previous ones. While those who fled China in the earlier years were mainly peasants from the province of Guangdong, a lot of those who arrived in Hong Kong after the Second World War were from northern China. Although peasants still occupied a large percentage of these postwar refugees, there was a wide spectrum of other social classes, including politicians, businessmen, doctors, engineers, educators, writers, artists and craftsmen. Among those from the north, the people from Shanghai and its neighbouring regions deserve a special mention because of the impact they had on the development of Hong Kong. These people brought with them capital, business acumen, industrial technologies, and...
manufacturing experience when they arrived at this city. Together with the cheap labour provided by the other refugees, Hong Kong had all the basic ingredients for rapid industrialization. As it happened, the then Financial Secretary of Hong Kong, John James Cowperthwaite, introduced the laissez-faire policy in 1961. This policy provided just the right environment for the entrepreneurs to put their skills and experience into practice and transformed Hong Kong into an industrial city, and its economy into one of the strongest and most stable in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{179}

While Hong Kong’s industrialization was gathering speed and its population was increasing in the 1950s and 1960s, pressure points such as the shortage of living accommodation and land for industrial development became more and more acute. In order to overcome these problems, the government undertook a series of changes in its policies which enabled the industrialization process to continue and eventually changed the landscape of Hong Kong. These structural changes included wholesale introduction of reclamation in order to make more flat land available for both industrial and residential accommodation, the introduction of multistoried developments to make full use of the valuable building land available. Still, the problem of accommodation for the large number of people coming into Hong Kong remained. Most of these people were living in poorly constructed wooden shacks on hillside, or anywhere they could be put up, and without water or utilities. The 1953

\textsuperscript{179} Cowperthwaite finished his term of office in 1971. Charles Philip Haddon-Cave, his successor, continued his policy until 1981. Under the laissez-faire policy implemented by both Financial Secretaries, the vast majority of Hong Kong’s imported goods were exempt from excise duty, with the exception of a few items such as alcoholic liquors and cigarettes. For an overall account of Hong Kong’s postwar non-interventionist policy, see Stephen Chiu, \textit{The Politics of Laissez-Faire: Hong Kong’s Strategy of Industrialization in Historical Perspective}, Hong Kong, Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1994.
Shek Kip Mei squatter fire which made 53,000 people homeless overnight was but one example of the huge problems facing the community. Instead of dealing with the problem on a makeshift basis, the government took the opportunity to introduce a new policy of building low-cost accommodation for renting to people with little means. This was, of course, the beginning of the huge public housing programme in Hong Kong. After the 1967 riot, even greater structural changes, such as those relating to public transportation, postal and telecommunication, were introduced to bring more improvements to the living conditions of the majority of the population. Some skeptics put these efforts by the government down as diversionary tactics to take the attention of the population away from the general lack of political rights which was a much more sensitive and prickly concern. I have no intention of going into the hidden motives of the government in these matters which would sidetrack our study of Lui Shou Kwan's art. Suffice it to point out that these policies of the colonial government of Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s had helped the city to develop into a prosperous, stable, and orderly metropolis in subsequent decades.

Broadly speaking, Hong Kong's postwar development might be said to have satisfied certain key aspects of a paradigmatic theory of Western modernity conceived in social terms, which deems the rise of capitalism as arising from a concentration of population, industrialization, urbanization and other related social factors. Nonetheless, any prompt or enormous change happened to a place would unavoidably transform, for better or for worse, its conditions of living and the perception of the people living in it. Hong Kong being a rapidly industrialized and urbanized city in the 1950s and 1960s was no exception. Apart from the obvious changes that were brought to Hong Kong people's general codes of behaviour and dressing, the gradual fostering in their mind of having advanced into a modern age was also manifested in the 1960s
and grew even stronger over the next two decades when the city headed towards more sophisticated levels of industrialization and urbanization. As modernizing forces in Hong Kong continued to gather momentum, traditional beliefs, customs and attitudes began to lose their appeal to the younger generations who saw themselves as men and women of a new age. In the domain of art and culture, the introduction of new trends and new concepts from Europe and America into this city correspondingly called into question the viability of old practices. Thus the pulsating tempo of development was everywhere in Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s, be it in terms of a state of being or a state of mind. This was truly a distinctive epoch in the colonial history of Hong Kong, whose new perceptions and sensibilities could justifiably be termed 'modern'.

Although Hong Kong then still made no pretense at parliamentary or representative democracy which is normally viewed as conterminous with the rise of capitalist industrialization, the city’s adoption of a non-interference policy and largely independent judiciary did guarantee the people living there a high degree of freedom. This allowed them to uphold any political ideologies they identified with so long as they did not try to challenge the authority of their government or undermine its autocratic rule. At a time when most of the Chinese,

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180 The experience and sensibility of modern life arisen from the industrial, demographic, and urban transformations in early postwar Hong Kong may find some kindred spirits in the picture of modernity portrayed by Marshall Berman in his *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1982; New York, Penguin Books, 1988). In his book, Berman traces the changes in human conditions and experiences caused by the socioeconomic development from capitalist modernization in different places in America and Europe during the nineteenth century. Using Karl Marx’s political dialectical model to frame his narrative, he argues that modernity is able to unleash fresh dynamism and imaginative power in the fields of literature, architecture, visual arts and music. He sees the city as most vital in fostering modern experience and the forces of modern life as capable of opening up time and space, as well as setting free the individual self. To him, industrial, political, economic, and psychological changes within modernity are all interconnected forces constituting the maëlstrom of modern life.
whether in Mainland China or Taiwan, were still reeling from earlier wartime devastation and enduring different forms of political suppression, this rare degree of freedom that people could enjoy in Hong Kong carried with it a special significance. For most of those who had gone through varied cataclysmic changes and uncertainties of life in China before taking refuge in the safety of this small island, postwar Hong Kong was a haven, if not a paradise, where they found work, had somewhere to live, and could plan for their future.

The vast changes that took place in Hong Kong in the third quarter of the twentieth century took place in the second half of Lui Shou Kwan’s life span. Like many young cultural practitioners of his time, Lui Shou Kwan was enthralled by the various forms of modern art introduced to Hong Kong from Europe and America during this period, so much so that he was even inspired to appropriate some of the elements from modern Euramerican art in his own artistic creation. As we shall see, Lui’s exposure to outside art currents was seminal to the development of his unique painting style, with which he strove to modernize Chinese painting. We shall look into the few avenues of his imbibition of foreign art after tracing the beginnings of his art activities in Hong Kong.

**Lui Shou Kwan’s Early Art Activities in Hong Kong**

Hong Kong was not an altogether unfamiliar territory to Lui Shou Kwan when he made his permanent domicile there in 1948, since he had been traveling between Guangzhou and Hong Kong from time to time in the 1930s and the early 1940s. The reason for his abandoning his home in Guangzhou was due to the rekindling of a civil
war between the Nationalists and the Communists after the Second World War. When the civil war turned increasingly bloody, Lui and his family felt obliged to seek shelter elsewhere.

In the first two years following his settlement in Hong Kong in 1948, Lui Shou Kwan occupied himself in finding work to support his family. He started out by running a small café with his wife in 1949. The café was called the Swan Café and located in Causeway Bay. However, it was not a success and he was forced to close it in 1951.¹⁸¹ Prior to the closure of the café, Lui had found a full-time employment as a ferry inspector for the Hong Kong and Yaumati Ferry Company Limited,¹⁸² one of the few large public utility companies in Hong Kong at the time. The job might seem lowly for Lui Shou Kwan considering his academic qualifications. Yet, he accepted it because employment was hard to come by in those days. People were compelled to take any job they could find in order to survive. In fact, very few artists in Hong Kong could rely on their professional skills to earn a living. For the sake of making some money or increasing their income, they would write articles (e.g., Gao Zhenbai 高贞性, 1906-1992) or draw comic illustrations for newspapers and magazines; teach art and other subjects at high schools or colleges (e.g., Wu Lianqing 吳練青, 1906-1988; Lu Dinggong 魯鼎公, 1903-1979); or work as editor or art director for newspapers, comic books or theaters (e.g., Zheng Jiazhen 鄭家鎭, b. 1918; Luo Guanqiao 羅冠樵, b. 1919; Li Bing 李秉, 1903-1994). One common line of employment for artists was to teach their specialized art at their own studios or at private art schools. Those who were good at painting portraits (e.g., Wu Guhong

¹⁸² My interviews with Lui Chiu Chun on 24 November 2004 and Mui Sin Ping on 9 August 2006.
could earn some extra money by doing commissioned works for the rich and the famous. Once we know the difficulties facing the artists in making a living then, we could understand why Lui Shou Kwan would accept the job as an inspector for a ferry company, even though it was only a mundane job which did not require people with his level of education. However, another way of looking at it was that he might have been pleased to have landed this job since it offered him a steady salary, a small office, and plenty of time on his hand which enabled him to do what he liked best, and that was to paint and to write art critiques (fig. 29).

Throughout almost the entire 1950s, Lui Shou Kwan and his father Lui Tsan Ming remained closely connected with each other in their art activities. There is much evidence to show that Lui Tsan Ming had managed to sustain his former influence in the spheres of art, literature, and Buddhism in Hong Kong. He had held several one-man shows in Hong Kong in the 1950s and participated in a number of local and overseas joint exhibitions until the early 1960s. Because of his recognized scholarship in Chinese classics, he was once appointed to lecture on Chinese literature in the United College, one of the three colleges that made up the CU. He had undertaken radio programmes on Chinese classics on Radio Hong Kong and given talks at the prestigious private cultural institute, Xuehai shulou 学海書樓. Lui Tsan Ming was even better known in the Buddhist community of Hong Kong. He had served as secretary to the World Buddhist Association (Shijie fojiaohui 世界佛教會), as well as adviser to the Hong Kong and Overseas Lotus Society (Xianghai lianshe 香海蓮社) and the Correct Perception Lotus Society (Zhengjue lianshe 正覺蓮社). His positions in all three well-known Buddhist associations clearly reflected the status he enjoyed among the local Buddhists. While still in Guangzhou, Lui Tsan Ming had developed an amiable friendship with the Zen master Yuexi 月溪 (1879-1965)(fig. 30). After
Yuexi came to Hong Kong in the late 1940s, Lui helped him to transcribe his *dharma* teachings into written texts and had them published in a local Chinese newspaper (fig. 31). Apart from Yuexi, Lui Tsan Ming was also acquainted, if we might remember, with Venerable Xuyun when the latter went to Guangzhou to settle a Buddhist dispute. Xuyun was a great Chinese Zen master of the twentieth century. Lui’s position in the Buddhist circle was again highlighted when he was invited to deliver a speech on Xuyun’s life in a memorial organized in Hong Kong a month after Xuyun died on the mainland in September 1959 (fig. 32). When Lui Tsan Ming passed away in 1963, more than two thousand people, including some distinguished people from a variety of fields, showed their respect by attending his wake (fig. 33). All these stood as testimonies of the amplitude of Lui Tsan Ming’s social network which would be of assistance to Lui Shou Kwan when he began his artistic career in Hong Kong.

Apart from his father, Lui Shou Kwan’s mother Choi Sing Wah might also have been of help to him at the early stage of his career. Choi had settled in Hong Kong for some time before her family joined her in the late 1940s. In order to relieve the family’s financial difficulties, she rented a spacious apartment in Central and sub-rented a large part of it to the Alumni Association of The Lingnan University, keeping only a small room as living accommodation for herself and her husband. The Association used the space to run their club restaurant, known as the Lingnan Club (Lingnan huizuo 嶺南會所), which turned out to be a popular meeting place for the graduates of the Lingnan University (fig. 34). At one point, Choi had invited a Hebei *taijiquan* master, Dong Yingjie 蓋英傑 (fig. 35), who was her husband’s old acquaintance, to teach the martial art at the Club. Choi herself had also studied *taijiquan* with Dong for seven years and later became a teacher of this martial art herself. In order to promote
taijiquan, she had organized classes as well as given private tuitions to a large number of students (fig. 36). She had attracted quite a large following, among them some were social celebrities such as Li Zhoumin 李卓敏, the first vice-chancellor of CU (fig. 37). Through the Lingnan Club and her teaching, Choi was able to establish, like her husband, a wide circle of contacts. Although there is no evidence which tells that she had helped Lui Shou Kwan in his artistic career, she had, through her contacts, helped him in other ways. For instance, it was known that Lui Shou Kwan managed to secure his employment with the Hong Kong and Yaumati Ferry Company largely because of her recommendation of him to someone she knew working there.

Here we may take a look at the early postwar art scene of Hong Kong to see what kind of help Lui Tsan Ming’s old acquaintances had given to Lui Shou Kwan at the beginning of his career. A cursory account of Lui Shou Kwan’s participation in two exhibitions held in 1950 might offer us some clues. One of the exhibitions, titled ‘Paintings and Calligraphy by Renowned Artists from South and North China’, featured the work of a total of 150 artists who were mostly from the mainland but had already been identified as Hong Kong residents. The other exhibition, named ‘Appreciation of the Art of Painting from Lingnan’, showcased the work of altogether

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183 Choi had taught taijiquan at the YWCA and a few secondary schools. She also gave classes at the homes of her private students. Her teaching career had lasted for more than thirty years by the time she retired at the age of 87. On Choi’s teaching, see Chen Weizun, ‘Taiji nü quanshi – Lü Cai Xinghua’ (The Female Taichi Master – Lui Choi Sing Wah), The People, no. 3 (30 Nov., 1975), pp. 78-81; and ‘Cai Xinghua – Gaoling nü tieren’ (Choi Sing Wah – An Aged Iron Woman), Xin won bao, 10 December 1968.

184 My interview with Lui Chiu Chun on 3 December 2004. Apart from Lui Shou Kwan, two other members of the Lui family, including Lui Chiu Chun, were also able to obtain employment with the Hong Kong and Yaumati Ferry Company through their mother’s recommendation.

185 See the press report in Sing Tao Yat Pao, 12 June 1950.
59 artists, the majority of whom were again newcomers from Mainland China. The sheer size of these two exhibitions indicated that postwar Hong Kong was not lacking in artistic talents as a result of the arrival of many emigrating Chinese painters and calligraphers. Together, they helped to inject plenty of excitement into the early postwar art scene of Hong Kong. These new arrivals included well known members of Guohuahui as well as leading figures of the second-generation Lingnanpai, and among them were good friends of Lui Tsan Ming. It was these people who rendered help to Lui Shou Kwan at the onset of his career. The help would normally come in the form of warm commendation in their reviews of Lui Shou Kwan’s solo exhibitions, or by inviting Lui to join the art clubs and joint exhibitions which they organized. Lui Tsan Ming, on his part, would often give subtle boost to his son’s career by inscribing poems or colophons on his paintings, or by asking his friends, such as the famous poet Liu Boduan (1887-1963), to do the honour on inscribing on his son’s works (fig. 38). At times, Lui Tsan Ming would also do collaborative paintings with Lui Shou Kwan (fig. 39), or instruct his son to do a painting for his friends (fig. 40), perhaps for recording a memorable event or a special occasion. On evidence of all the above, one could see that Lui Tsan Ming remained an important figure in Lui Shou Kwan’s artistic life in the 1950s. And up to that point, the two remained closely associated with the circles of traditionalist artists. In the following examination of the works which Lui Shou Kwan exhibited in his 1954 maiden show, we shall explore in greater detail the help that he had received from his father and also the standard that he had then achieved in respect of his manipulation of the traditional painting media.

187 See ‘Lü Zhìwei shuhua zhanlan’ (Exhibition of Paintings and Calligraphy by Lü Zhìwei), Sing Tao Yat Pao, 23 February 1953.
Lui Shou Kwan’s 1954 One-Man Show

Lui Shou Kwan’s artistic endeavour during his first few years in Hong Kong was basically a continuation of his earlier self-study in postwar Guangzhou. Here in the British colony, Lui went on practicing a variety of painting styles, principally in the landscape and bird-and-flower genres. However, the works emulated were no longer confined to those by ancient masters, but expanded to cover works which were created by artists of the recent past. While in Guangzhou he had the collections of Hongxuezhai and Mengshilou to serve as his artistic repositories, in Hong Kong he also managed to find new sources to continue with his self-learning process, largely because many fine works of art were brought to Hong Kong by artists and art collectors from the mainland. Lui had confessed that he was lucky to have been able to gain access to the masterpieces in some of these collections and exploited them for his use. This sequel of self-education was vital to him as it allowed him to expand his painting skills, and to enhance the overall standard of his technical competency. Some critics said that the best of his copied works at this time could be passed as genuine pieces.

The results of Lui Shou Kwan’s vigorous self-training were on view in the first solo exhibition which he held at the Hong Kong Cultural Works Gallery, Hong Kong Hotel, in 1954 (fig. 41). In this début show, Lui displayed over forty landscape as well

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188 See Lui Shou Kwan, A Study of Chinese Painting, p. 68.

as some figure and bird-and-flower paintings. Most of the paintings were executed in a traditional manner and could hardly be described as novel in any real sense, yet visitors to the exhibitions had the opportunity to gain an overview of the technical virtuosity of this emerging artist (figs. 42 to 44). What made this exhibition important to our present study was that it featured two distinct groups of paintings which were not found in Lui’s previous oeuvre. One group consisted of paintings which displayed overt stylistic and thematic affinities with Lingnanpai, as exemplified by *Sunset at the Five-storeyed Tower, Guangzhou* (fig. 45) and a painting of deer (fig. 46). In both of these paintings, wet washes were generously applied and the atmosphere romantically captured in the fashion of the Lingnan masters. The *Sunset* painting was apparently emulated after Gao Jianfu’s *The Five-storeyed Building, Guangzhou* (fig. 47), and might be taken as the artist’s tribute to Gao since it was completed in five months after Gao passed away. Lui Tsan Ming, as pointed out earlier, was a close friend of Gao Jianfu. Like his son, he had also painted in the manner of the pioneers of Lingnanpai (fig. 48). He was also known to have worked on some bird-and-flower paintings with the school’s second-generation masters Zhao Shao’ang (fig. 49) and Yang Shanshen (fig. 50). The close artistic relations that the Luis had established with Gao Jianfu and his followers suggested that Gao, a modern-minded painter, could have in some way steered Lui Shou Kwan in the direction of his fervent hope of modernizing Chinese painting. Although Lui had not, as Gao did, cried out for artistic ‘revolution’, he was nevertheless Gao’s spiritual acolyte in the sense that he also championed the notion of modernizing Chinese painting through selective

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190 In her thesis ‘The Development of Lü Shoukun’s Art’ (p. 64), Flora Kay Chan says Gao Jianfu often encouraged Lui Shou Kwan to work hard for the future of Chinese painting.
borrowing of elements from other cultures. The two artists’ ideational kinship will be brought up again for discussion at the end of this chapter.

Another group of paintings which likewise stood out from Lui Shou Kwan’s more conventional works in his 1954 show were those which presented the optical world in a highly naturalistic manner. *The Seagulls* (fig. 51), *Angel Fish* (fig. 52), and *Chicago – A Rainy Scene by the Lake* (fig. 53) are three prominent examples. The images of these three paintings are all so lifelike that one might well suspect that they were copied from photographs. This idea may find some support in a remark made by Lui Shou Kwan in his *A Study of Chinese Painting*, where he said that he found photography, as a pictorial medium, was not as free and effective as Chinese painting in regard to the rendering of light source, perspective, distance, and subjective focus.¹⁹¹ Perhaps that was the reason why his paintings under discussion look rather rigid, and lacking the same degree of vivaciousness usually found in his more traditional works. In fact, Lui Tsan Ming might have used similar practice for his own work, since in a handwritten note to a friend, he had asked for a supply of suitable photographs for reference (fig. 54). The above two groups of distinctive paintings in Lui Shou Kwan’s 1954 solo exhibition pointed to one significant development, and that was, after eight years of disciplined training, of emulating works of the ancient painting masters, Lui had branched out to try something new, something more contemporary. Along this line, he would make a greater breakthrough in his artistic pursuits in a few years’ time.

Considering that he was still a novice in the early 1950s, Lui Shou Kwan’s first one-man show could be described as extremely successful. Most of his exhibits were sold, with a few items received repeated requests for duplication from buyers. Of course it was important that the exhibition was warmly received, yet what was more significant to Lui Shou Kwan were the prompt approaches he received from the two large local art associations, the Hong Kong Art Club and the Bingshen Art Club, about membership after the exhibition.

Lui did not, however, bask long in his first flush of success. Not long after his début show, he threw himself once more into the study of classical Chinese painting and painting theory with a view to establishing a unique signature for his own art. To achieve this goal, he destroyed all the fine emulations of ancient works which he did over the past years, and began exploring in earnest the potential use of Chinese colours. Meanwhile, he entered an extraordinary phase of his career by assuming multiple roles as painter, art critic, and art teacher. The range of activities that he pursued included writing articles and reviews on both Chinese and Western art for newspapers and art magazines (an activity which he actually started in 1951); co-founding three art groups with friends, including the Chinese Art Club (later renamed the Hong Kong Chinese Art Club), the Seven Artists

192 See Flora Kay Chan, ‘The Development of Lü Shoukun’s Art’, pp. 41 and 70.
Club 七人畫會,\textsuperscript{195} and the Society of Hong Kong Artists 香港藝術家協會;\textsuperscript{196} and publishing his \textit{A Study of Chinese Painting} in 1957 (figs. 55 and 56). Furthermore, Lui also took part in the annual Hong Kong Arts Festival, sat on the selection panels of various art competitions and art exhibitions, gave art talks on TV and the radio, and taught art in his New Art Painting Studio (Xinyi huayuan 新藝畫苑, set up in 1957) as well as at a high school and a private art gallery. All these artistic pursuits collectively marked his presence on the Hong Kong art scene, which soon made him a highly visible figure in the local art circles towards the end of the 1950s.

The first three years after Lui Shou Kwan's 1954 one-man show were of particular significance to his artistic development. During this period, he began an intensive study of modern Western art which would eventually help him to accomplish his goal of forming a personal artistic hallmark. It was from this point on that he started to project himself conspicuously as the lone warrior of his generation who carried the entire weight of the mission of modernizing Chinese painting. This sense of mission was often present in the articles and exhibition reviews that he wrote. Obviously, the notion of artistic modernity that he had developed owed a great deal to his reading of the modern art practices in Europe and America since the mid-1950s. Given the fact that Lui's proficiency in English was limited, and that he had little opportunity to view foreign, not to say modern, art in early postwar Hong Kong, one wonders

\textsuperscript{195} The Chinese Art Club was formed in 1956, and the Seven Artists Club in 1957. For the names of the founders, dates of establishment, and activities of these two art clubs, see Zhang Waiyi, \textit{Xianggang shuhua tuanti yanjiu} (A Study of Hong Kong Art Groups of Painting and Calligraphy), Hong Kong, Department of Fine Arts, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1999, pp. 151-153.

\textsuperscript{196} Apart from Lui Shou Kwan, the founders of the Society of Hong Kong Artists included Lee Kwok Wing, Douglas Bland, Kwong Yeu Ting, Julia Baron, and Ruth Robertson. Lui was the only artist of the Society who worked in traditional Chinese media. The Society was disbanded shortly after holding two joint exhibitions in 1957 and 1960.
through what channels did he acquire his knowledge of this subject and what help did he get in acquiring a good understanding of it. And from what we could see in his writings at the time, the knowledge was acquired in a rather short period of time. We have to examine the then Western art scene in Hong Kong in order to find an answer to this question.

The Western Art Scene and Lui Shou Kwan’s Study of Modern Art in Early Postwar Hong Kong

There were not many avenues to acquire knowledge about modern art in Hong Kong in the 1950s, even into the 1960s. Although private art schools and private studios were in existence during this time, the scope of Western art forms available for study was limited, and the chance of finding a tutor who could cover the latest trends in the international art world was slim. Furthermore, the tuition fees that some art schools and art tutors asked for were well above the affordability of many local people who might be interested in art. Instead of seeking formal art training, some young aspiring artists who wished to learn new art forms or art styles would, therefore, be looking for opportunity or material for self-study. The most convenient and economical way to obtain knowledge on Western art was through browsing art books, art magazines, and art journals from local bookstores, such as Swindon and Apollo, which were known to have a fair stock of foreign-language publications; or through the libraries of the two largest cultural institutions from the West, the British Council and the United States Information Service. These libraries were popular study centres for students, young artists and writers. Given Lui Shou Kwan’s interest in modern art and his financial
conditions at the time, it would be unreasonable for him not to make use of these sources of information to update himself on Western art in this direction.

Apart from the above bookstores and libraries, three people deserve a special mention in this connection because they had, in their individual ways, also provided Lui Shou Kwan no small assistance in opening up his horizon on modern art. They were Luis Chan 陳福善 (Chen Fushan, 1905-1995), Josiao Lea 諸朝石, and Chung Hon Kee 鍾漢琦 (Zhong Hanqi, ?-1964). Of the three, Luis Chan was perhaps the most important. An outstanding artist in Hong Kong excelled at watercolours, Chan was the first local artist of Chinese descent to have been inducted into the aforesaid Hong Kong Art Club which had for long been dominated by Western art lovers. He was also elected the first Chinese chairman of the Club. By Lui Shou Kwan’s account, he and Chan became friends around 1954 (fig. 57). 197 And according to Chan, he had lent some of his Western art books, including one on J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851) and one on John Piper (1903-1992), to Lui Shou Kwan in the first year of their acquaintance. 198 Petra Hinterthür, author of Modern Art in Hong Kong, said that the list of books that Chan lent to Lui also consisted of some issues of The Studio, an English art magazine to which Chan had subscribed since the 1920s, as well as some volumes from the Famous Water-colour Painters series which he had ordered through this English magazine. 199 It would appear that Chan’s personal art library was an important source of information for Lui’s early study of Western art.

198 See Chen Fushan, ‘Cong xiandai guohuapai shuo dao Lü Shoukun de xingpai guohua’ (From Modern Chinese Painting to Lui Shou Kwan’s New-Style Chinese Painting), Wah Kiu Yat Po, 10 February 1964.
199 See Petra Hinterthür, Modern Art in Hong Kong, pp. 77 and 80.
Josiao Leaó and Chung Hon Kee were a couple of art lovers who also helped to keep Lui Shou Kwan informed on the development of modern Western art. Leaó was the consul-general of Bazil. When he took office in Hong Kong in 1954, he brought some thirty modern art works by both European and American artists with him to this territory. During his term of office in Hong Kong, he made friends with many modern art practitioners including Luis Chan. Chan recalled that Leaó had invited him and other members of the Hong Kong Art Club over to his home to view his art collection.²⁰⁰ Lui Shou Kwan might well have been among the invitees since he had by then befriended Chan, and it would be unlike Lui to give up an opportunity to see authentic art works of any style. Anyhow, even if Lui was not there on this occasion, he would have other opportunities to see Leaó’s collection because Lui and Leaó became good friends up until Leaó left Hong Kong in the late 1950s. As a matter of fact, some of Lui’s paintings also caught the fancy of Leaó and became part of his collection eventually.²⁰¹

Chung Hon Kee worked in the stock-brokering business. He had shown an immense interest in modern art, so much so that he had taken on, as a sideline, the selling of Western art books, art magazines, and Impressionist prints in his own office. Lui Shou Kwan was benefited by Chung’s enthusiasm for art and his involvements in the trade

²⁰¹ Luis Chan, Josiao Leaó and Chung Hon Kee were mutual friends. The three had made a joint visit to Lui Shou Kwan’s place in 1956, and during that visit bought five paintings from Lui. See Luis Chan’s reminiscence in ‘Yingguo wenhua weiyuanhui zhuban Lü Shaokun huazhan’, Contemporary Chinese Artist: Lui Shou-kwan, Modern Edition, no. 4 (1963), p. 8.
of foreign art materials. Chung was also known to have assisted Lui in studying the work of such important Western thinkers as Francis Bacon (1561-1626), René Descartes (1596-1650), Charles Darwin (1809-1882), and Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), amongst others, over a period of five to six years. The cordial friendship that Chung and Lui had struck up might have been due to their common perception of the need to modernize Chinese painting. Lui’s regard for Chung could be seen in an inscription on one of his paintings, where he praised Chung as a vital advocate of modern art in Hong Kong (fig. 58). Although we do not know the works Lui saw in Leao’s collection or the prints and art books he came across in Chung’s office, it was almost certain that the art materials made available by both Leao and Chung would have been helpful to him at a time when his curiosity over Western art was just whetted.

Still, one wishes to know how Lui Shou Kwan could have made best use of the materials made available to him to build up his knowledge of modern Western art. A combination of various sources suggests that Lui had adopted a practical solution to this problem, which was to ask his family members, students and friends (Chung Hon Kee included) to explain to him, verbally or in writing, those foreign-language references which he suspected to be of use to him. If no help was on hand to interpret or translate for him, then he would have to rely on his own judgment of the images available in the materials.

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202 See Lui Shou Kwan, *The Manuscripts of Lui Shou Kwan (Lu Shoukun shougao)*, Hong Kong, Chinese University Press, 2005, p. 391. *The Manuscripts* was compiled from the artist’s surviving handwritten lecture notes, which amount to over one thousand pages, by his family.

203 An example of such materials is the catalogue of ‘The 1961 Pittsburgh International Exhibition of Contemporary Painting and Sculpture’ (held by the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania) which Wucius Wong presented to Lui Shou Kwan. The catalogue is now in Lui’s family collection.
In order to gain a deeper understanding of modern Western art, Lui had collaborated with an oil painter, Li Shek Peng (Li Xipeng 1910-?), in the translation of a book which dealt with the histories and theories of various modern painting schools. Lui and Li were both co-founders of the Seven Artists Club. Li had studied drama in the U. S. He lived in Hong Kong for some years in the 1950s, during which time he was better known for his abstract oils. He and Lui began their translation project in May 1955, and the project turned out to be extremely strenuous. Lui revealed in an interview that he had spent about four to six hours everyday over a period of three years on the translation. A handwritten Chinese manuscript by Lui, titled The Meaning of Art (figs. 59 and 60) has survived, and there are clear notes in it stating that it was completed on 31 July 1956 (fig. 61), and was the result of a co-translation of Herbert Read’s (1893-1968) book with the same title by him and Li. Read was an influential writer in the British art world between the 1930s and the 1950s. He championed modern art and modern design, and had his reputation built on his formidable output and successful art lectures. In his opinion, art ought to carry cross-cultural and trans-historical properties, and abstraction, having such universal

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204 In Hong Kong, Li Shek Peng had held an annual solo exhibition between 1952 and 1954 (see Hong Kong Yearbook 1953, p. 76; Hong Kong Yearbook 1954, p. 93; and Hong Kong Yearbook 1955, p. 94 – all published by Wah Kiu Yat Po). Later in November 1956, he mounted a one-man show at the British Council (see Lui Shou Kwan, ‘Li Xipeng de chouxiang yishu (1)’ (Li Shek Peng’s Abstract Paintings (1)), Wah Kiu Yat Po, 7 September 1956).


206 Herbert Read’s The Meaning of Art came out in 1931 and had been reprinted many times thereafter. The version that Lui and Li adopted for their translation was probably the one published by Faber and Faber in London in 1950. The Meaning of Art is one of the very few books by Read that has remained in print today.
qualities, was exactly the kind of precursor to bringing new art into being. As it happened, Lui Shou Kwan and Li Shek Peng did not bring out their translation of Read’s book in print, but in completing this laborious collaboration, Lui had once again demonstrated the seriousness he had always held towards his study. One could postulate that The Meaning of Art was instrumental in forming Lui Shou Kwan’s early conception of modern art. In fact, it might also have offered him some inspiration for fresh artistic attempt after his 1954 one-man show. Such evidence could be gleaned from two paintings, Waves (fig. 62) and Midday Sun (fig. 63), he did in 1956. In both of these paintings, Lui modeled the images after the works of other artists. Waves was modelled on Turner’s Snow Storm at Sea (fig. 64), while Midday Sun was modified from Graham Sutherland’s (1903-1980) Sun Setting Between Hills (fig. 65). Turner’s and Sutherland’s paintings resemble each other in their renunciation of perspective in the interests of what was essentially a non-scenic vision of landscape. The fact that Lui had managed to capture the visual effects of their works with purely traditional Chinese media was quite remarkable. The manner of setting forms against a flattened backdrop or representing nature fragmentarily as he did in these two paintings would, as we shall see, become a constant feature in his experimentation with abstraction.

Another book which should have similar weight on Lui Shou Kwan’s conception of modern art must be the Chinese edition of Sam Hunter’s Modern American Painting and Sculpture (1966). The book offers a broad survey of the development of the

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208 Sam Hunter’s Modern American Painting and Sculpture was originally published by Dell in New York in 1959. It was later translated into Chinese by Chen Ziming and Tang Xinmei and published by Jinri shijie chubanshe in Hong Kong in 1966. From a date which Lui left on his copy of the book, we
two titled art forms in America from the early to the mid-twentieth century. In regard to the genre of painting alone, the works by such famous abstract artists as Helen Frankenthaler (b. 1928), Willem De Kooning (1904-1997), Adolph Gottlieb (1903-1974), Clifford Still (1904-1980), Mark Rothko (1903-1970), Robert Motherwell (1915-1991), Franz Kline (1910-1962), Hans Hoffmann (1880-1966) and Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), are well illustrated and discussed by the author. Some of these artists' influence could be detected in Lui's work of the 1950s. On the cover of his copy of Hunter's book, Lui had left a few words to the effect that no one should borrow or take the book away from his studio. Taking this warning note and the annotations and commentaries which he had put on almost every page of the book into account, one could see how much he had valued this volume. Incontrovertibly, Lui looked upon Hunter's as well as Read's books as his artistic bibles which he made references to whenever he wanted to consult or revisit the ideas on modern Western art practices.

In all respects, Hong Kong was where Lui Shou Kwan came into contact with Western art as well as where he nurtured his sense of artistic modernity. Although modern art trends from Europe and Japan had been introduced into China as long ago as the 1930s, there is no document which indicates that Lui was ever in touch with any Western-style artist or art group while he was in Guangzhou, whether in prewar or postwar years; nor is he known to have shown any conspicuous interest in Western art then. All evidence suggests that the first spark of his curiosity over modern Western art occurred in Hong Kong in the early 1950s. As we shall see, his quest for learn that he had finished reading it about a month after its Chinese translation came out in June that year.
fresh artistic expression with traditional Chinese media in conjunction with Western art elements would become prominent in his second one-man show in 1957. An examination of the works he presented in this show and his subsequent exhibitions would enable us to follow the steps he had taken to establish himself as a pioneer abstractionist of modern Chinese painting.

Lui Shou Kwan’s Modern Ink Paintings (1957-1966)

Lui Shou Kwan’s second solo exhibition was staged at the British Council Library in 1957, after a lapse of three years from the preceding one. While the lack of existing records does not allow us to reconstruct a satisfactory picture of this second one-man show, we do know from some fragmented pieces of information that Lui had showcased a large number of paintings on the topography of Hong Kong (fig. 66). Some of these paintings also captured the characteristic foggy environment of the city (fig. 67). What made this exhibition distinctive was that Lui Shou Kwan was the first Chinese painter working in the traditional media that the British Council had ever invited to hold a solo exhibition at its library. This was a rare honour because the Council had long been regarded as a quasi-official cultural institute in early postwar Hong Kong, and Lui certainly had reason to be proud of this event. Like the former 1954 show, Lui’s second solo exhibition was also very well received. K. C. Wong, editor and art reviewer of the local English newspaper South China Morning Post, for

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example, billed the artist as a fresh talent whose work had crossed the boundaries between Chinese and Western painting.\textsuperscript{210} Several other good reviews were also accorded to Lui's work by Lui Tsan Ming's friends, including Liang Hancaoe 梁寒操, Yang Shanshen and Wang Jiyou 王季友, something we have touched on earlier. In their reviews, Lui Shou Kwan was variously praised as a rare talent in art, an artist who excelled in both painting and painting theory, and a representative artist of the younger generation who was capable of blending the ancient and the contemporary as well as the Chinese and the non-Chinese.\textsuperscript{211} Given that these reviewers were all well known in the Hong Kong art world, their kudos no doubt greatly elevated Lui's status among his fellow artists. Lui persisted with his interest in Hong Kong landscapes and produced many more such paintings in subsequent years. We would be discussing how these painting paved the way for his overseas exhibitions and how they helped to raise his reputation shortly.

Discussion of Lui Shou Kwan's novel rendering of the landscapes of Hong Kong between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s can be approached by theme and by style. Thematically, Lui's attention focused on those popular scenic spots, such as the Lion Rock, the Victoria Harbour, as well as scenes of the coastal and fishing spots of this small island. Given that Hong Kong's topography was still uncommon in Chinese painting, Lui's depictions of the unique scenery of Hong Kong conveyed a sense of freshness, and won him admiration from some of the contemporary art critics. Stylistically, Lui's mode of expression could be divided into two broad types which might be termed 'traditional' and 'semi-abstract/abstract'. The works ascribable under

\textsuperscript{210} See K. C. Wong, 'A New Approach Noted', in \textit{ibid.}, pp. 5-6.

\textsuperscript{211} For these comments, see 'Yingguo wenhua weiyuanhui zhuban Lü Shaokun huazhan', in \textit{ibid.}, p. 7.
the ‘traditional’ rubric are, as the word suggests, generally composed in a conventional manner, with details of the landscapes meticulously attended to. Examples of this type of work are numerous in Lui’s oeuvre. *Tin Hau Festival at Fat Tong Mun* (fig. 68) and *Lion Rock* (fig. 69) are just two of the more illuminating examples. In the former painting, Lui presents a scene showing the hustle and bustle at a waterfront temple on the birthday of Tin Hau, goddess of heaven and protectress of Chinese seafarers. The picture offers a panoramic scene of the festival from a distance, with the concrete minutiae verily drawn out in traditional brushwork. In *Lion Rock*, the magnificent subject is also scrupulously presented with the typical dots, lines and strokes of Dong Yuan 董源 (c. 934 - c. 962) and Juran 巨然 (active c. 960-985), the two great landscape masters from the Five Dynasties (907-960).

Despite the relatively sketchy rendition of the buildings and ships below the rocks, the image in its entirety calls to mind many of the monumental paintings created by Northern Song masters.

Lui Shou Kwan’s traditional works were highly valuable in their own right because they demonstrated his technical expertise and command of a wide array of painting styles. Nevertheless, it was his semi-abstract and abstract creations that truly earned him a name as an innovative artist. We should note that when Lui conceived the idea of assimilating abstraction to modernize Chinese painting, most Chinese painters were still clinging to tradition and producing works with the faces of yesterday. Compared with their often commonplace renditions, Lui’s semi-abstract and abstract paintings must look strikingly fresh and modern. Years of working at the pier as a ferry inspector must have familiarized Lui Shou Kwan with Hong Kong’s climatic and atmospheric changes, in different hours of the day and in different seasons. His experience and sensitivity towards climatic changes might have been so strong that it
forced him to paint the nature as they appeared in front of his eyes instead of emulating the worlds as portrayed by past masters.

Lui's shift from past works to the real world might also have been inspired by the new creations of Huang Bore. Huang, like the Lui family, also fled to Hong Kong in the late 1940s. At the beginning, his artistic activities remained consistent with those of a versatile traditionalist. A sudden change, however, occurred to his art around 1957-1958, during which time he started to pay a lot more attention to his own surroundings and there was a tendency to apply ink in an unrestrained manner (fig. 70). These could be seen in many of the paintings on the harbours, fishing villages, and outlying islands of Hong Kong which Huang did between the late 1950s and the 1960s. Huang's weekly trips with members of the Yung Club (Yongshe 庸社)(fig. 71), a local hiking group, to different places of Hong Kong during this period could well be the cause of his growing appreciation of Hong Kong landscapes. Whatever the reason might be, Huang's refreshing representation of the local landscapes won him plaudits from quite a number of his contemporaries, including Lui Shou Kwan. Lui might have been a little surprised to see this senior painter-friend of his father, a master of the classical tradition, to be able to break away from the traditional mode and created a new individual artistic stamp. He clearly held Huang's art in high esteem, even deeming his achievement as comparable to that of

212 The Yung Club was formed by several young journalists of Wah Kiu Yat Po, in 1932. As its membership grew after the war, it became a large hiking group in the 1950s and 1960s. The Club is still in existence today. For its past history and activities, see Yongshe liushiwu zhourian jinian tekan: 1932-1997 (Special Feature of the Yung Club in Commemoration of its 65th Anniversary: 1932-1997), Hong Kong, Yung Sheh, 1997.

213 For a survey of Huang Bore's depictions of Hong Kong landscapes, see The Art of Huang Bore: A Eulogy of Hong Kong Landscape in Painting, Hong Kong, Hong Kong Museum of Art, 2008.
such masters as Huang Binhong, Fu Baoshi, and Li Keran 李可染 (1907–1989). Indeed, Huang was the only artist in Hong Kong whom he still thought of highly after the 1960s. Lui’s exceptional evaluation of Huang Bore, though not something shared by all, was founded on his recognition of Huang as a forerunner in simplifying the composition of Chinese painting, an approach he identified with obviously. Huang’s influence on Lui could not be more explicit in the latter’s manifestation of a similar penchant for capturing Hong Kong’s fabulous vistas from a high vantage point (c.f. figs. 72 and 73), and snapping scenic spots in a simplificative manner (c.f. figs. 74 and 75).

A work which might best illustrate Lui Shou Kwan’s daring approach in reducing the referentiality of his composition around this time is *Victoria Peak* (fig. 76), done in 1960. In this portrayal of the symbolic emblem of Hong Kong, Lui places the Peak imposingly across the upper register of the paper, in a way as if it is lying on the same pictorial plane with that of the inky buildings at the bottom. Most of the surface details and textures of the mountain have been eliminated, with only a few broad sequences of ink strokes to form the basic contours. The Peak on the whole still looks majestic, but in a way that much of its volume has been stripped away. Spontaneously rendered landscapes of this nature were legion in Lui Shou Kwan’s postwar output (figs. 77 and 78). In some of these works, the artist has the details removed to such a bare state that they seem to verge on pure abstractions (figs. 79 to 82). The near-total abstract qualities of these paintings indicated that Lui occasionally would take a bold

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flight from reality by distorting or deforming natural appearances in the interests of pictorial design. Given their non-representationality, the works' literalness was correspondingly wrenched away. Though Lui Shou Kwan and Huang Bore were both hailed as modernizers of Chinese painting from the early postwar period, Lui outvied the latter by the reach and freshness of his imagination.

In interpreting Lui Shou Kwan's semi-abstract and abstract landscape paintings, I personally think there is no need to put forward any cliché such as capturing the inner truth behind surface appearance to justify his stylistic experimentation. As some of the above examples have shown, there were times that Lui Shou Kwan simply relished in playing with form or formal configuration. In other words, he subordinated the subject to the pictorial structure, thus releasing his formal vocabulary from recognizable sources. Should there be any aesthetic response or spiritual dimension to speak of about these paintings, it is, I would say, chiefly mediated through sight, rather than through any verbal reference or association. Yet his bold artistic endeavour notwithstanding, Lui never gave up painting traditionalist works. Even in times when he was at his most abstract, one finds moments of his traditionalism. Such an interesting parallelism often stood out sharply in his solo exhibitions. When asked to comment on this retardataire practice of Lui Shou Kwan, David Lam Chun Fai 林鎮輝 (Lin Zhenhui, b. 1932), his close artist-friend in the 1950s, recalls that Lui had once said to him that by featuring both abstract and traditional styles of works in his exhibitions he wished to send a message to his audience, including his critics, that his modernness was steeped in tradition. Lam’s recollection is reliable since Lui’s combative prose that marks out the articles he contributed to newspapers and

216 My interview with David Lam on 11 August 2006.
magazines over the years laid him open to easy refutation. By featuring both his traditional and modern-style works in his exhibitions, Lui could succinctly refute his opponents’ unjust derision that he was lacking in traditional training. By reverting to traditional practices, he could also brush up his painting skills. He might have used them as diversions when his inventiveness failed him or when he was waiting for new inspiration to move on to his next artistic experimentation.

In the history of Hong Kong art, Lui Shou Kwan was not the only artist to have been captivated by the topographical landscapes of Hong Kong. Other than Huang Bore, a handful of other artists of Lui’s time, such as Peng Ximing 邓馨明 (1908-2002), He Qiyuan 何漆園 (1899-1970) and Wu Guhong, had all been drawn to depicting the scenery of this land. Outside Hong Kong, the celebrated mainland painter-theorist Huang Binhong had also transformed his memories of Hong Kong into highly subjective images following his visits in the 1920s and 1930s (fig. 83). Yet, no matter how marvelous their depictions might be, none of them had ever painted the landscapes of Hong Kong as expressly as Lui had done for the sole purpose of modernizing Chinese painting. From this standpoint, it would be fair to describe Lui’s semi-abstract and abstract landscapes as exceptional of his day.

If we are to characterize more minutely Lui Shou Kwan’s semi-abstractions and abstractions, we may further divide them into two sub-categories: one being characterized by the use of broad ink and/or colour strokes, with all contour lines expunged and cumbersome elements discarded; and the other by an admixture of ink and colour splashes, occasionally with a fusion of fine frail lines. A large quantity of Lui’s paintings in the early 1960s can be ascribed to the first group. In some of these works, ink/colour strokes and dots are so radically dispersed, combined, or overlapped
that the final image might come across like a graphic sign, an enigmatic ideogram, or an unintelligible Chinese character floating on the paper (fig. 84). The sparse economy of composition and rhythmic wielding of the brush often seem to compel viewers' attention to the movement of the artist's hand instead of the literal or potential meaning of the image. In some cases, the gesture given rise to by the visual image might even manifest the physical presence of the artist. And each stroke on the painting paper appears to be a direct expression of the artist's temperament. The gestural emancipation of Lui's works might on the whole be taken as an overt sign of his endorsement of pure expressivity. While 'purity', a central tenet of Western artistic modernism, is an issue that we shall explore in the following chapter, we might note for the moment that Lui Shou Kwan's writings of the time were filled with restatements of the prime value of absolute freedom. To Lui's way of thinking, absolute freedom signified spiritual liberty, in other words, an independence from outside influences.\textsuperscript{217} Lui made it plain that he accorded the same paramountcy of freedom to art as to life. In his writings, he frequently upheld the idea that art served nothing other than art itself; indeed, it was repeated even at the risk of being made to sound like a platitude. In any case, amidst his repetitions, Lui stated it clearly that abstraction denoted to him the visualization of freedom, independence, and absolute wisdom. It is doubtful if there was any other Hong Kong artist in the 1950s and 1960s who was as anxious as Lui was in championing the modernization of Chinese painting through abstraction.

\textsuperscript{217} In his \textit{A Study of Chinese Painting} (p. 96), for example, Lui stressed that it is important to free art from the tyranny of political, social, religious, moral and didactic obligations.
In the second sub-category of his semi-abstract and abstract works, Lui Shou Kwan went the opposite way by filling up the whole painting surface with ink and colour washes, rendering them close to what might be called, in Western artistic terminology, ‘all-over’ compositions. The best of these paintings might give viewers a sense of mystique through the combination of a sensitive blending of flicks and wisps of colours with a judicious grading of effects, invoking in them a notion of the infinity of the universe or the untamed forces of primal nature. Since these works had so little recognizable references, Lui titled some of them directly as Abstract or Abstract Landscape (figs. 85 to 87), as he did with a number of paintings classifiable under the former sub-category (figs. 88 and 89). Not all of Lui Shou Kwan’s semi-abstract and abstract pictures, be they of the first or the second sub-category, are successful. As much as they are revealing examples of his original pictorial statements, a number of them seem perfunctorily done or look rather monotonous due to a uniformity of tone. Some of them cannot avoid giving a sense of triviality owing to their reckless execution. The inconsistency on Lui’s painting standard might be due to the fact that a prodigious output was demanded of him to cope with the many solo exhibitions he was invited to hold abroad in the early 1960s.

In most of the past writings on Lui Shou Kwan, it was usually said that his interest in Western abstraction surfaced after the mid-1950s, and his first pure abstraction did not appear until the late 1950s. A thorough examination of his artistic oeuvre showed, however, that he had in fact tried to synthesize the Western abstract idiom with Chinese traditional painting media as early as 1951. There are four paintings by Lui Shou Kwan which may be held up as examples (figs. 90-93). All of them were done in 1951. Although they are inchoate pieces which suggest that the artist was then still fiddling with abstract shapes, tonal gradation, and formal arrangement in the mode of
Western abstraction, the relentless thrashings of ink and colours displayed are clearly experimental even in today's terms. They reveal that Lui had from very early on entertained the idea of reconciling Chinese painting with contemporary Western art, even before he came to read Herbert Read's and Sam Hunter's books. Moreover, they testify that Lui was one of the earliest postwar painters of his generation to have headed towards this reconciliation.

**Lui Shou Kwan's Experimentation with Western Abstraction**

Lui Shou Kwan's semi-abstract and abstract paintings, which he began creating abundantly in the late 1950s, showed that he was quick to embrace innovations in abstraction from Europe and America with the wish to build a signature style of his own. Very generally put, Western abstraction may be viewed as a visual language of form, colour, and line used to create a composition with a certain degree of independence from appearances or references in the phenomenal world.\(^{218}\) In the early twentieth century, abstraction occurred simultaneously in several countries – in Germany, Russia, the Netherlands, and later in France, Switzerland, Britain and

\(^{218}\) The following books are particularly useful for my research on twentieth-century Western abstraction: 1) Mark Rosenthal's *Abstraction in the Twentieth Century: Total Risk, Freedom, Discipline* (New York, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1996) which offers an excellent overview of the major approaches and practices in Western abstract painting and sculpture of the century; 2) Briony Fer's *On Abstract Art* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1997) which surveys canonical 'abstract' art works whose concerns and practices actually go beyond the boundaries of purely formal categories, with special references to the psychoanalytic theories and the writings of the French philosopher Georges Bataille; and 3) Mark A. Cheetham's *Abstract Art against Autonomy: Infection, Resistance, and Cure since the 60s* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006) which gives a good investigation into more recent developments in Western abstraction with a particular emphasis on its growing social concerns.
America – alongside the fundamental changes taking place in technology, science, and philosophy. The gestural paintings of Vasily Kandinsky (1866-1944), the rectilinear compositions of Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), the Suprematist works of Kazimir Malevich (1878-1935), and the organic abstractions of Jean Arp (1887-1966) and Joan Miró (1893-1983) are normally looked upon as the pioneering works which laid the grounds for the subsequent evolvement of various forms of abstract art. By the late 1940s, abstraction had become a defining aesthetic in the art making of Europe and America, where artists and art critics deployed different sources to establish their arguments to support their own practice of this formal language as well as the abstract art movements they endorsed.

Although some progenitors of abstraction from Europe had produced works which approximated total abstractions in the early years of the twentieth century, the purist tradition of abstraction did not reach its apogee until the 1950s and 1960s when a wave of abstraction took hold in the U. S. In terms of timing, it coincided with the arrival of a number of celebrated European artists and intellectuals who went to the country to escape fascism. These exiled European artists turned out to be important bridge figures in spreading the aesthetics of abstraction and making formalist values influential on the American art scene. Together with a few local art critics and art curators, they helped to group American artists into distinctive stylistic groups, the most prominent of which was indubitably the New York School emerged after the Second World War. Artists from this School included two types of practitioners: the gestural painters such as William de Kooning, Franz Kline, Jackson Pollock and other...

219 One might cite the production of electric lights and automobiles, Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity, and Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory as respective examples here.
action painters; and the colour-field painters including Josef Albers (1888-1976), Barnett Newman (1905-1970), Ad Reinhardt (1913-1967), Clyfford Still (1904-1980) and Mark Rothko. Also commonly known as Abstract Expressionists, these postwar American abstractionists favoured heroic-scale work, and were particularly noted for their emphasis on formal purity, compositional unity, universality, unrestrained creative freedom, and the expression of transcendental concerns. Abstract Expressionism was America’s first native art movement which had an international impact. Its more lyrical, expressive mode of expression, for instance, had inspired a variety of new practices in 1950s Europe, including Art Informel (literally, ‘art without form’), Art Autre (‘art of another kind’) and Tachisme (taches in French means ‘patches of colour’), in France, Italy and Spain. Ironically, the rise of such new art practices also called the fundamental premises of abstraction into question after the mid-1960s. Together with the emergence of Minimalism and Conceptual art, as well as with the Structuralist philosophy and Postmodernist thinking in Europe and America in the 1960s and 1970s, the earlier overwhelming focus on formal problems in the discourse of modern art came to be disavowed by many art critics and art theorists. The employment of unusual materials and innovative treatments of surfaces and textures by the younger generations of European and American artists in the last few decades of the twentieth century have set new foundations for alternative readings of art.

Constrained by his own cultural milieu, Lui Shou Kwan’s response to Western abstraction was mainly fastened upon the abstract expressionist practice that was current of his time. Yet his response was at the same time a resuscitation of the abstract (xiyi) mode of expression which he held to be an integral part of his native pictorial tradition. Since Lui reckoned that ancient Chinese painting masters had
already mastered this stylistic, he saw Western abstraction in the twentieth century not at all a ground-breaking innovation in world art history. Indeed, regardless of how far he might seem to have yielded to the temptations of Western abstraction, he never meant to sever his link to his culture’s pictorial tradition. Now and again, he would reiterate in his writings that Western abstract painting originated from contact with Eastern painting, and it was not until the early twentieth century that Western abstractionists were able to break the fetters of natural light source and gave emphasis to their own feelings and emotions. In contrast, he held that Chinese painters had from the third century on been able to create masterpieces that gave expression to their personal ideas and feelings through the study of nature, yet consciously maintaining some distance from it. Lui argued that Chinese artists’ success in producing creative works was the result of their ability to commingle life-sketching (xiesheng 写生) with form-creation (zaoxing 造形), and this success had made Chinese painting the earliest form of abstract art and Chinese painting theory the richest and the most profound of all art theories in the world. Lui’s emphasis on Chinese painters’ antecedent conception of abstraction might stem partly from his wish to counterbalance his Western influences. This said, he was fully aware of the

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220 The notion that Chinese abstraction occurred much earlier than Western abstraction and that the latter did not appear until Western artists had had contact with Eastern painting, to be more precise, Japanese painting, is an idea that has been well discredited by some scholars. John Clark, for example, has pointed out that ‘[t]his view is art historically primitive since Japanese ukiyo-e had absorbed “Western” perspective and all manner of optical mimetic devices at least since the 1720s, that is 100-150 years before ukiyo-e had an impact in Western Europe, even before we consider the autonomous trajectories of “Western” abstraction’. For details, see John Clark, ‘The Tradition of Chinese Painting Reconceived: Liu Guosong and Modernity’, in Yuzhou xinyin: Liu Guosong- yijiazi xueluntan [bilingual, 2007 symposium], ed. Xiao Xiangling, Beijing, Zijincheng chubanshe, 2008, pp. 156-174.

221 See Lui Shou Kwan, A Study of Chinese Painting, p. 118; and also Lui Shou Kwan, ‘Li Xipeng de chouxiang yishu (1)’, Wah Kiu Yat Po, 7 September 1956.
pressing need for Eastern and Western cultures to establish closer dialogues with each other, and this responsibility, he held, fell squarely on the shoulders of the cultural workers from both sides. He believed that a bilateral cultural exchange would result in mutual understanding, and hence mutual influence.²²²

Unlike what he did on his traditionalist paintings, Lui Shou Kwan seldom inscribed any long colophon on his semi-abstract or abstract body of work. Often he would simply autograph such paintings with his signature and a date. Nowadays, one might view such minimal inscribing as a normal practice, but it was not so three or four decades ago when most painters specializing in the traditional Chinese medium still maintained the millennium-old habit of putting long poems or inscriptions on their paintings. Given Lui’s serious attitude towards Chinese painting in general, this break from the tradition of long inscriptions was probably a deliberate act. From one perspective, one might say that his notion of artistic modernity was principally identified with a visual rather than a verbal mode. From another perspective, one might surmise that he was perhaps trying to claim a link with the art of Tang and Song when the habit of inscribing was not yet a common practice as it became subsequently. These would make sense should one take into account of Lui Shou Kwan’s regard of Tang and Song times as the two most creative periods in Chinese art history. In contrast, Lui saw the periods from Ming on were rampant with the corrupt imitational practice which he considered as the chief cause for the decline of Chinese painting. As an artist who spent most of his life ruminating over the modernization of Chinese painting, Lui might also find inscriptions superfluous since

²²² See Lui Shou Kwan, A Study of Chinese Painting, p. 119.
all they did was to quote from someone else’s poems, or to harp on one’s training in
the classics, or to show off one’s qualities to the audience.

Lui Shou Kwan maintained that his move towards abstraction was a natural outcome
of his artistic development and of his study of Western art.223 On many occasions, he
insisted that the abstract mode of expression was the only way for him to achieve
modernity in Chinese painting. In his opinion, the closer a painting leaned on
figuration and imitation, the farther it would be removed from artistic modernity.224
To him, the way to abstraction followed three main steps. First, one should seek
inspiration from nature; then, one would have to free oneself from the shackles of
nature; and finally, one must incorporate one’s own experience of studying nature into
the individual plastic form one went on to create.225 Concerning the process of his
own art making, Lui had said that when he started a painting he was armed with
nothing more than a feeling inside him for which there were no words or pictures, and
he would simply let his feeling mingle with his brush and allow the mingling to run its
course and arrive at whatever image it might lead to. This was how he once described
his working method to T. G. Barker, his art agent in England, in the early 1960s:

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223 Lui once said: ‘I do not paint designedly in abstract. My abstract paintings are the fruits of a slow
but industrious plantation. They come out NATURALLY. It must be understood that I have emerged
from piles of old paintings, having worked my way through what are called Classicism, Naturalism,
Romanticism, Expressionism, Surrealism and perhaps Symbolism. I seek for the Absolute Self and
attempt the so-called “freer” painting. This is the basis of my present style.’ Quoted, in its original form,
from the unpaginated exhibition leaflet of Lui Shou Kwan’s one-man show held at the City Art Gallery

224 See Lui Shou Kwan, ‘Preface’, in The First International Salon of Paintings, exhibition pamphlet,

225 See Chen Xuru’s citation of Lui’s idea in his article, ‘Lü Shoukun de hua’ (The Painting of Lui
At the beginning of painting I have only a certain conception or motive, and do not yet grasp the full particulars of the whole painting. I am like a frogman, who, before diving, has ideas of fish, rock, sand and plants in his mind, but cannot foresee the actual particulars of the scene that will unfold itself to him in the depths of the sea.

As soon as dots and lines appear on the paper at the touch of my brush, some new idea and sentiment may come into play. I may not then dictate or force my brush to obey my original sentiment and idea. My brain, my hand and all the materials that come in contact will work together in union. They are like the spokes of a wheel: each spoke plays its part and cannot be spared or separated from the others.

This way of painting is not my own invention. I merely follow the traditional principle of the ancient painters, which was to use both the conscious and the unconscious. I believe that every true artist, whatever his race or background, must be governed by this principle, which does not change with place or time.²²⁶

Although Lui Shou Kwan associated his working method with that of his painting ancestors, the approach to painting without any preconceived idea, that is, to let the creative forces from the subconscious liberate from the control of logic and reason, obviously echoed with that of many modern Western abstractionists, such as the American abstract expressionist Jackson Pollock.²²⁷ Here, the powerful impact of modern Western art on the artist's creation is once again in evidence.

²²⁷ Note how Pollock had described his working process: 'When I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing. It is only after a sort of “get acquainted” period that I see what I have been about. I have no fears about making changes, destroying the image, etc., because the painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through. It is only when I lose contact with the painting that the result is a mess. Otherwise there is pure harmony, an easy give and take, and the painting comes out well'. Quoted from 'The Paris-New York Shift', in Art of the 20th Century. Part 1: Painting, ed. Ingo F. Walther, Köln, London, Madrid, New York, Paris, Tokyo, Taschen, 2000, p. 270.
The influence of Western art on his style and approach notwithstanding, Lui Shou Kwan’s determination to modernize Chinese painting was essentially connected with his nationalistic sentiment as a result of his witnessing a China which was torn by invasion, civil wars, and political chaos. The China that Lui experienced was very different from the one that claimed the pedestal of the world stage prior to 1840. This China was compelled to play a very unfamiliar role in its relations to other countries. Not only was it humbled before the established Western powers, more painfully, it was humiliated by the military and economic might of its tiny neighbour, Japan. Few Chinese could remain impervious to this sorry state of affair. With the country in a semi-colonized state, nationalistic feelings filled the heart of many Chinese. Lui Shou Kwan was one of those who harboured a sense of nostalgia for China’s past glory as well as a sense of being inferior due to the forced subordination to invaders.

Lui’s experience of war was part of his initiation into adulthood. Like so many intellectuals who went through it, he spent his first few postwar years in Guangzhou trying to understand its significance, for himself personally as well as for others of his generation. By the time he made Hong Kong his permanent domicile in the early 1950s, he had already set a task for himself to reinvigorate Chinese painting. This determination might be seen as part of the same call for cultural renovation made by the earlier May Fourth cultural elites. And similar to these intellectuals who were doing their best to develop solutions for China’s problems, Lui was also trying to find a cure for China’s ills. He came to believe that he could make contributions to the revival of Chinese culture through regenerating Chinese painting by modernizing this valuable art form and winning a place for it in the art world. Lui’s rejection of conformism in art and cry for cultural resuscitation were in his public utterances, in
the articles he published in newspapers and art magazines, and in the reviews and
prefaces that he wrote for artists with whom he had connection. Lui simply would not
let slip of any opportunity to promulgate his artistic belief. However, most of the
views he enunciated on artistic modernization were quite brief. His article, ‘My View
on Art’, which was published in the Taiwanese magazine *Zhe yi dai* (This
Generation) in October 1965, might have given the most thorough treatment of the
subject. It behoves us, therefore, to take a look at this article in order to gain an
insight into his conception of the constituents of modern art and, in this respect, the
duty he thought a modern artist should assume. The key ideas that Lui expressed in
his article could be summarized into the following points:

1. All modern artists should abide by one single principle and that is
   individual creativity;
2. Modern art of today might be seen as a betrayal of the past, or a
   transgression of the rules and ideas passed down from the old days.
   If we would approve such a betrayal or transgression today, we
   should also permit it to happen in the future;
3. Modern artists should nurture the next generation of artists by
   helping them to look for their own artistic idioms and encouraging
   them to develop their art on their native soil;
4. Modern art could be abstract or figurative. We need not stick to
   any one of these modes of expression. What we do need, however,
   is to reject sterile imitation because this is what has led Chinese art
   to degrade into a shameless state;
5. Modern Chinese art scene should be open and accommodative,
   allowing artists holding different views and working in different
   media to create their individualistic work at their own will;
6. Modern Chinese art scene requires not only creative artists, but
   also art educators who can teach modern aesthetics to the masses.
   A variety of methods are now being employed by modern artists

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228 See Lui Shou Kwan, ‘Wo de yishuguan’ (My View on Art), *Zhe yi dai*, 10 October 1965, pp. 22-25.
in their teaching; what they should also do is to introduce art theories in addition to their creative works to the public;

7. Art seeks advancement. It is through the collective efforts of individual artists that the train of modern Chinese art can be kept moving forward;

8. Modern art is not about substitution, jettison, or sabotage of tradition. It is rather a matter of creation and establishment. Artists of this generation should create their individualised works which are representative of their own time.

Lui Shou Kwan's view on modern art, as illustrated by the above précis, was characterized by his consciousness of the present, and its opportunities and challenges. However, elsewhere in his writings, Lui also showed that he had a profound conviction about the greatness of China's past culture. His problem was with the practice of the post-Song periods. For Lui, the only way to modernize Chinese painting was to slough off the bad habit of blind imitation which he believed to have passed from Ming and Qing down to his time, and went back to relearn the Way of painting (huadao 畫道) from the painting masters of the Tang and Song dynasties.

What exactly did the Way of painting mean to Lui Shou Kwan? As can be gleaned from his scattered remarks on the subject, the Way of painting meant the correlative stress on creativity and modernity. He asked Chinese painters to prepare for the future by tracing the ancient creative origins of their native art, and to extend this tradition with their own creative work.

Lui Shou Kwan's attempt at modernizing Chinese landscape painting by feeding on the stylistic devices of other artistic traditions was not a singular case in twentieth-century China. Early in the last century, some modern-minded painters active in Guangzhou as well as in Shanghai and Beijing had tried out ways of harmoniously fusing Chinese and non-Chinese artistic elements in their work. Gao
Jianfu, Gao Qifeng, Xu Beihong, Lin Fengmian 林風眠 (1900-1991), and Tao Lengyue 陶冷月 (1895-1985) were artists who had achieved distinguished results in this direction. By merging what they thought to be the best of their own pictorial tradition with some elements appropriated from foreign cultures, they invariably hoped to lay afresh the foundation of Chinese painting for generating new modes of expression with which to rival other painting genres in the international art world. In the case of Lui Shou Kwan, Gao Jianfu’s plausible influence over his early artistic trajectory should not be overlooked, bearing in mind that Gao was highly esteemed by Lui Tsan Ming and that Lui Shou Kwan’s view on the modernization of Chinese painting was conceptually akin to that of Gao. Like Gao Jianfu, Lui Shou Kwan stood committed to the notion that Chinese painting had become stereotyped and so fallen behind in the international competition for modernity that its renewal was becoming urgent. For this reason, both of them had similarly borrowed useful elements from non-Chinese arts to nourish, hence modernize, Chinese painting. In spite of these conceptual commonalities, it needs pointing out that Gao Jianfu’s ultimate objective, itself conceived in political terms, was to achieve ‘artistic popularization and popularization of art’, whereas Lui was convinced that art must be segregated from politics and return to itself - to express the artist’s own feelings and emotions. This divergence in motivation underscored their choice of a different path to fulfill their tasks. For Gao, it meant a marriage of realism with contemporary subject matter; and

229 Lui Shou Kwan yet denied having heard of any of Gao Jianfu’s art ‘theories’ until the latter’s Wo de xiandai guohua guan (My Views on Modern Chinese Painting) was published in Hong Kong in 1955 (see Flora Kay Chan, ‘The Development of Lü Shoukun’s Art’, p. 63). Lui’s denial is perhaps justified, given that Gao was, as pointed out before, no real theorist. However, Gao’s practical work and verbal communication with Lui in the postwar years could have driven him to contemplate deeply on the future of Chinese painting.
for Lui, it produced a blending of abstraction with the topographical landscapes of Hong Kong.

Factors Contributing to Lui Shou Kwan’s Rise in Postwar Hong Kong

Lui Shou Kwan’s rapid rise on the postwar art scene of Hong Kong was greatly assisted, as hinted at earlier, by the city’s free artistic ambience in the 1950s and 1960s. The benefit that Lui gained in this colonial space may be cast into better relief if we are to compare the working environment of artists in Hong Kong with that in Mainland China. In Hong Kong, art practitioners were allowed to pursue any art form or art style of their own choosing. However, in China, where the government had implemented a close-door policy by putting up a ‘bamboo curtain’ around her after the Second World War, artists were placed at the mercy of political power, so much so that they were obliged to practice the officially sanctioned socialist realism. Moreover, they were often allowed only to do a narrow range of subjects, such as that relating to Chairman Mao Zedong’s (1893-1976) poems, and the ideals envisioned by Mao and other party leaders. Under these circumstances, most modern-inclined artists on the mainland could not but give up the kind of work or style they were pursuing, or else they would be branded as ‘reactionaries’ or ‘rightists’, and their work be judged as bourgeois indulgence. Although so-called ‘modern’ Chinese paintings were produced in China between the 1950s and 1970s, they were modern only in a very limited sense. The majority were stylistically identical and thematically laden with heavy political connotations. Famous artists such as Fu Baoshi, Lu Yanshao (1909-1993), and Li Keran had all painted works of this like. Despite the fact that some artists in Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Xi’an and Guangzhou had tried to break out of the straitjacket of the Maoist
orthodoxy in the 1950s, they were deprived of the opportunity to exhibit or publish their works.\textsuperscript{230} The latest Western art trends that might be displayed in their works were restricted to Post-impressionism, Cubism, Fauvism, Expressionism, Futurism, and Surrealism which had been introduced into China in the 1920s and 1930s. The art currents emerged in Europe and America after the Second World War were simply beyond their reach.\textsuperscript{231}

Artists in early postwar Hong Kong were far more fortunate than their mainland counterparts in that there were no restrictions on their opportunities to study freely the latest art trends or art practices brought into Hong Kong. Perhaps more importantly, artists did not have to worry about the handling of political campaigns such as those brought against ‘Western spiritual pollution’ and ‘bourgeois liberalization’ which their peers on the mainland had to contend with. While in China the Maoist cultural and artistic policies subjugated all individuals to the collective reification of class struggle, in Hong Kong there was no tenet of any official cultural policy to speak of and artists were virtually left to do whatever that pleased them, and out of their free will, so long as they did not try to challenge the authority of the colonial administration. Such freedom proved to be extremely valuable for Lui Shou Kwan. With this freedom, he felt at ease to learn, to reflect, to try out new ideas and materials in the actualization of his dream.


\textsuperscript{231} Thus both Ellen Johnston Laing and Shao Dazhen proclaim that Chinese art before the 1980s had never undergone a phase of development where formal properties were given an exclusive concern. See Ellen Johnston Laing, ‘Is There Post-Modern Art in the People’s Republic of China?’, in ibid., p. 212; and Shao Dazhen, ‘Chinese Art in the 1950s: An Avant-Garde Undercurrent Beneath the Mainstream of Realism’, ibid., p. 77.
Aside from its rather relaxed artistic atmosphere, Hong Kong had provided Lui with other opportunities which were important to his artistic growth and development. In Hong Kong, he was at liberty to engage in dialogues with overseas artists (fig. 94). His meeting with Zao Wou-ki 趙無極 (Zhao Wuji, b. 1921) and Alan Wong 王潤生 (Wang Runsheng, b. 1938), at a time when he was at his most productive and feverishly experimenting with the abstract idiom, was perhaps most crucial to him. Zao Wou-ki was an internationally renowned oil painter from France. He was in Hong Kong taking up a guest lectureship at CU in 1958.²³² His seemingly effortless incorporation of Chinese elements, such as lines reminiscent of inscriptions on ancient Chinese bronzes, into his abstract canvases (fig. 95) appealed to many Hong Kong artists who harboured a similar wish of harmonizing Chinese and Western art. Lui Shou Kwan was apparently one of Zao’s admirers.²³³ It is known that he had met with Zao on two occasions during the latter’s sojourn in Hong Kong: once in his own painting studio and once over dinner with his artist-friends.²³⁴ While he was teaching at CU, Zao had organized an exhibition of the new works which he created in Hong Kong. It would be difficult to imagine that Lui might have missed the opportunity to visit this exhibition. Although Lui had by then tried his hand at the abstract for a short

²³² See Anita H.S. Ng, *The Development of Hong Kong Art Education in Sixty Years (1939-99)*, Hong Kong, The Hong Kong Institute of Education, 2000, p. 89.

²³³ Lui’s admiration of Zao can find evidence in his retaining of an issue of the Taiwanese magazine, *Xinwen tiandi* (no. 31, 1958), where an autobiographical article by Zao was published (pp. 12-13). Just like what he had done on Hunter’s book, Lui also left a few words on this magazine instructing that anyone who took the magazine away must return it to him, and that it must not be lost.

²³⁴ By Lui’s own account, Zao had visited him at his studio in August 1958 (see *Contemporary Chinese Artist: Lui Shou-kwan, Modern Edition*, no. 4 (1963), p. 28). And according to Lee Kwok Wing, Zou had also dined with Lui together with him and other members of the Society of Hong Kong artists in early 1959 (my interview with Lee Kwok Wing on 9 September 2005).
while, his meeting with Zao and viewing some of his more mature presentation of the language must have impressed him and inspired him to greater efforts. In a similar manner, the paintings by Alan Wong, an oil painter who came back from the U.S., might also have given Lui some stimulation to work with the abstract idiom. Wong is a native of Hong Kong. He received his basic artistic training in the U.S. In 1962, he came back to his home town to stage his first one-man show at the City Hall. The works on view in this show were distinctly abstract and minimalist (fig. 96). Lui Shou Kwan was so impressed by what he saw that he wrote a review on it. He commended Wong’s exhibition as the first major show of abstract paintings by a Chinese artist that had ever been held in Hong Kong. Although Lui did not have any private contact with Wong, there was no question that Wong’s work had touched him in a major way. Wong’s simple yet bold abstractions certainly would have boosted up Lui’s confidence in continuing with the path that he was treading. It is noteworthy that some overseas Chinese artists, such as Zhang Daqian in Brazil, Zeng Youhe (b. 1923) and Wang Jiqian (1907-2003) in the U.S., were then also trying to merge the abstract idiom with their ink-based work. Yet, in terms of keenness, efforts, and extent of such trials, Lui Shou Kwan had no parallel in Hong Kong.

Apart from being a free place for artistic exchanges, Hong Kong also afforded Lui a precious chance of getting his name known to Western audiences in his capacity as a Commonwealth artist, whence helping him to launch a career in the Western art world. In 1959, Lui mounted his first overseas one-man show in the U.S. From that time up

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235 Wong was to hold two more solo exhibitions at the same venue in 1963 and 1971.
to the year 1966 when he resigned his post in the ferry company, Lui had held a total of 48 one-man shows abroad (Appendix I). Every year since then, except 1971, 1972 and 1975, he had at least one solo exhibition staged in the U.K., through the hard work of his agent T. G. Barker there. This extraordinary frequency of exhibitions was amazing, even judged by today’s standards. However, it also had its drawback. It gave rise to an uneven standard of Lui’s output. Even so, some of Lui’s more novel attempts continued to capture the attention of Western art critics and art historians, and helped him to secure early recognition in the art world.237 Among those foreign art critics and art historians, the most important was no doubt Michael Sullivan, author of *Chinese Art in the Twentieth Century* (London, Faber and Faber, 1959). Sullivan, then a lecturer in art history at The University of Malaya in Singapore, had no idea who Lui Shou Kwan was until he saw his work at the Commonwealth Institute in London in 1963 (fig. 97). After this viewing, however, Sullivan was willing to write a preface for Lui’s one-man show held later that year at the Commonwealth Gallery in Edinburgh. A few years later, Sullivan began to refer to Lui as a pioneering abstract landscape painter from Hong Kong in his writings.238

237 Art experts such as Eric Newton, Herbert Read, Michael Sullivan, Eli Levin, and George Butcher had all praised Lui Shou Kwan for his daring experimentation in ink. For the excerpts of their praises, see *Contemporary Chinese Artist: Lui Shou-kwan, Modern Edition*, no. 4 (1963), pp. 12, 39, 48, 54-56.

238 See, for instance, Michael Sullivan, *The Arts of China*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1973, p. 240. Earlier in *Chinese and Japanese Art*, the ninth volume of *The Book of Art: A Pictorial Encyclopaedia of Painting, Drawing, and Sculpture* (New York, Grolier Inc., 1965), Sullivan had used an abstract painting by Lui Shou Kwan, titled *Mountain* (1962), as an illustration to build up his following conclusion: ‘Works such as this one suggest that the chief contribution of Far Eastern painters to the new international art is a vitally calligraphic use of the brush, and a feeling for nature revealed even in pictures that appear at first glance to be entirely abstract’ (p. 296).
In retrospect, the 1963 solo exhibition which Lui Shou Kwan mounted at the Commonwealth Institute and an earlier one which he staged at the Ashmolean Museum of the Oxford University in 1962 (figs. 98 and 99) might well be the key events that brought his name to the notice of experts in the Chinese art world. The importance of the 1962 show would become apparent should one take its background into consideration. It was the first time that the prestigious Oxford University had assembled the work of an oriental artist and an occidental artist for simultaneous display in its museum. The occidental artist was the world famous Henry Moore (1898-1986), and Lui Shou Kwan was the oriental artist selected for the honour. The exhibition which was staged a year later at London’s Commonwealth Institute also helped to augment Lui’s international reputation greatly. It was significant that the mounting of the show depended entirely on the recommendation of the Institute’s selection panel, and Lui was the first Chinese artist from the Commonwealth nations selected by the Institute to have a solo exhibition mounted at its venue. In fact, this show might also be the first major one-man show of a Hong Kong-Chinese artist that had ever been held in the U.K. after the Second World War. As one can imagine, Lui’s energetic brushwork, compendious composition, and restrained use of colour would appeal to Western eyes because these features struck a harmonious chord with those observed in the works of many Euramerican action and gestural painters. The contemporaneity of mood emitted from Lui’s paintings could be the key to the approval he won from Western viewers, including the fastidious art critics. The warm

239 See ‘Ying lianbang xueyuan yizhan jiemu - Niujin bowuguan ban Lii Shoukun huazhan’ (The Opening of the Commonwealth Institute Exhibition - Lui Shou Kwan’s Painting Exhibition at the Museum of Oxford University), Wah Kiu Yat Po, 15 November 1962.

reception that Lui's shows were able to generate abroad (fig. 100) demonstrated that he was recognized as a worthy painter of his time.

The success of Lui Shou Kwan's overseas exhibitions in the 1960s not only propelled him to the forefront of modern Chinese painters, but also brought him instant fame back home. In 1962, Lui was appointed as an Honorary Adviser to the City Hall Museum & Art Gallery by the Hong Kong Urban Council. No sooner he was invited by the same Council to stage a solo exhibition at the Museum in 1964 (fig. 101). Perhaps, one ought to know that the City Hall Museum & Art Gallery was then the only official institution in Hong Kong which had the accommodation suitable for holding art exhibitions. To be invited to hold an exhibition there was regarded as exceptional honour and was, needless to say, a dream cherished by many local artists. The fact that Lui Shou Kwan should be given such a coveted honour within a decade of his first solo exhibition in Hong Kong in 1954 inevitably attracted criticism from his detractors, an issue which we shall address later in the concluding chapter. In any event, with his overseas successes and the honours conferred on him, the few years that followed saw the continued flourishing of his artistic reputation and the progressive cementation of his status as a modern ink painter. The question of how 'modern' Lui Shou Kwan was in regard to his practical work and attitude towards artistic modernization is an important subject for investigation. In the coming chapter, we shall focus on examining in what way did Lui's work meet (or not) the criteria that have been defined for the concepts of 'modernity', 'modernism' and 'the avant-garde' in art.
Chapter Four:
Lui Shou Kwan’s Modernism and Avant-Gardism

Lui Shou Kwan’s position as a pioneering modernizer in Chinese ink painting started to be established in the early 1960s, and was further consolidated in the following decades. Irrespective of this sustained reputation, Lui’s modernism has hitherto been seldom studied by scholars. Its discussion is absent, as has been pointed out, from both Petra Hinterthür’s Modern Art in Hong Kong (1985) and Flora Kay Chan’s MPhil thesis, The Development of Lü Shoukun’s Art (1992); nor can it be found in Zhu Qi’s more recent Hong Kong Art History (2005). Such a prolonged void with regard to the study of Lui Shou Kwan’s modernism makes the investigation of this issue necessary; its urgency is now even more imminent given that modern Chinese art has become an increasingly appealing and rewarding subject for study in the discipline of art history. For these purposes, the present chapter is devoted to the examination of the modernist and avant-gardist aspects of Lui Shou Kwan’s work. The examination will be conducted by exploring Lui’s modernism and avant-gardism against the same notions conceived in the West. Two reasons necessitate this cross-examination. Firstly, the concepts ‘modernism’ and ‘the avant-garde’ originated from the West and they have remained useful tools for critically exploring some forms of modern Asian art. Secondly, Lui Shou Kwan was the most outstanding ink painter of his generation to have been greatly attracted to Western modern art. Not only did he apply modern art elements from the West to reform Chinese ink painting, he also frequently adopted the abovementioned Western-coined terms, ‘modernity’ (or ‘modernism’) and, more sparingly, ‘the avant-garde’, in his writings. Lui’s artistic indebtedness to Western sources and concerns is unarguable. Hence, by drawing on the critical apparatus formulated by
Western art critics and art theorists to interrogate his work, one could arrive at a better articulation and understanding of his art.

Some people might yet have doubts about employing Western critical concepts to interpret the modern art produced outside Europe and America. Their trepidation is that under the Western frame of reference, non-Western modern art might appear as unoriginal and consequently be rejected as being 'derivative'. These worries are understandable. But the perceived risk can be avoided if one always keeps conscious, throughout one's study, of the discrepancies between different cultures and histories as well as their effects on artistic development. Nevertheless, for the sake of investigating the locus of Lui Shou Kwan's modernism and avant-gardism, we need to set a certain working definition for each of these notions in order to proceed with our discussion. In the beginning sections of this chapter, let us first present some well-accepted ideas pertaining to 'modernity', 'modernism' and 'the avant-garde' in the Western context. Then, we shall turn to the Chinese context and see how scholars approach these notions in their studies of twentieth-century modern Chinese art. A brief note on the references to Lui Shou Kwan's work in some of these studies will be inserted near the end of the review. Finally, Lui Shou Kwan's personal conception and actualization of modernism and avant-gardism will be placed against the above discursive backdrop for examination.
Modernity, Modernism

The terms 'modernity' and 'modernism' both stemmed from the word 'modern', itself deriving from the Latin *modernus*. 'Modern' is normally taken to signify a purported clear demarcation between modern (industrial) and traditional (pre-industrial) epochs. In the domain of visual arts, the word 'modernity' was first used by the French poet and critic Charles Baudelaire (1821-67). In an article, titled 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne' ('The Painter of Modern Life', 1863), he used the word to refer to the draftsman and aquarellist Constantin Guys (1802-1892). To Baudelaire, modernity was a concept that spoke in the present and contained a notion of temporality referencing the human experience in a specific social, cultural, and historical moment. Matei Calinescu has explained his idea succinctly as follows:

Modernity ... is a temporal/historical concept by which we refer to our understanding of *the present in its unique historical presentness*, that is, in what distinguishes it from the past, from the various relics or survivals of the past, and also in what it promises for the future – in what it allows us to guess, rightly or wrongly, about the future and its trends, quests, and discoveries.  

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Calinescu’s explanation tells that ’modernity’ in Baudelaire’s usage was both a periodizing category registering a break from the past as well as a qualitative term denoting something new in the character of a particular time frame. Historically, Baudelaire was one of the earliest critics to connect modern life with modern art and celebrated the living experience in an industrial age. After Baudelaire, the idea that modern art occurred chiefly in a modern, urban environment brought about by industrialization became well accepted. The wide acceptance of this notion also went hand in hand with the idea of experimenting new materials and new techniques, representing modern subject matter, and adopting novel methods for composition or art making. It entailed that a modern artist must have a certain sense of imagination and inventiveness, and had a unique way of seeing things anew.

As for the term ‘modernism’, I contend that it has no great semantic difference from the word ‘modernity’, if they are likewise used to signify the ‘modernness’ of an artist or a work of art. Thus, I shall use them accordingly as such in the following discussion. However, under certain circumstances, ‘modernity’ may refer to the precondition for the rise of modernism in art. Here modernity means social modernity, and artistic modernism is posited to have emerged out of the ‘consciousness’ or ‘sensibility’ of the social modernity in a specific period. Today, the idea that modernity happened in the plural in Europe and the U.S. under different conditions and in different time spans during the twentieth century is widely endorsed by scholars. This implies that the features of Western modernities, whether on the materialistic, institutional, or conceptual level can be very different, and we

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should no longer assume that social modernity and artistic modernism must necessarily occur in a continued sequence. However, the notion of modernity is still generally theorized in developmental terms and conceived as closely associated with urbanization, capitalist production and bourgeois consumption – all resulting from the sweeping economic and social changes brought about by industrialization. These phenomena remain to be valid criteria for scrutinizing the artistic modernity of some periods and places in the last century.

Insofar as ‘modernism’ may imply the cultural manifestations of social modernity, it promises to break with traditions that restrict creativity. In art history, the word ‘modernism’ points to a wide range of art styles and art practices, many of which emerged in the early decades of the twentieth century. The ones which are usually ascribed under the rubric include Symbolism, Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism, Fauvism, Futurism, Constructivism, Dada, Surrealism, and a few others. The sheer plethora of art movements connected with ‘modernism’ indicates an encompassment of a wide spectrum of ideas, beliefs, values, standards, usages, agendas, and strategies of individual artists. Yet, the successful re-definition of ‘modernism’ by American Abstract Expressionists around the mid-century once made the meaning of the term almost synonymous with the formalism which characterized these artists’ works. To this date, ‘modernist’ as a noun and an adjective is still closely associated with that type of painters who cherishes a special interest in technical innovations, or whose works exhibit an unconventional compositional order, spatial arbitrariness, gestural or painterly brushstrokes, or concern for the process of art making.
Clement Greenberg, the most fervent promoter of American Abstract Expressionism, contributed the utmost efforts in publicizing their modernist paintings after the Second World War. Greenberg argued that there was a self-critical tendency in the development of Western painting in connection with pure optical experience. He saw 'flatness' as the key trait of painting and claimed that all the ambitious Western paintings had converged on emphasizing painterly purity and the autonomy of pictorial medium by the mid-nineteenth century. A champion of the idea of 'art for art's sake', Greenberg saw the inner logic in modern Western painting which he identified as being far removed from the mundane affairs of the human world. This logic presumed that art developed in a linear trajectory from the past to the future, and artistic progress could be measured in relation to some unspecified point in the past. Unlike Baudelaire, who viewed modernism as a celebration of the new realities of the industrial age, Greenberg placed modernism within the tradition of high art, yet saw it progressively breaking away from traditional figurative realism and perspectival illusionism. Baudelaire's and Greenberg's views represented two different conceptualizations of 'modernism'. While Baudelaire's position called attention to the present by showing a concern for contemporaneous subject matter, Greenberg's upheld a supposedly 'self-reflexive' trend in painting whose continuation relies on a renewal of its formal elements. This difference

244 To quote Greenberg's idea in 'Modernist Painting' (1960/1965): 'Modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence. ... Manet's became the first Modernist pictures by virtue of the frankness with which they declared the surfaces on which they were painted. ... It was the stressing of the ineluctable flatness of the surface that remained, however, more fundamental than anything else to the processes by which pictorial art criticized and defined itself under Modernism. For flatness alone was unique and exclusive to pictorial art'. Quoted from Clement Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting', in Art in Modern Culture: An Anthology of Critical Texts, eds. Francis Frascina and Jonathan Harris, London, Phaidon, 1992, pp. 308-310; for the full text, see ibid., pp. 308-314.
notwithstanding, both Baudelaire and Greenberg prized newness and originality as the basis for the next step or next period in artistic development. Greenberg's notion of modernism, as we shall see, is more relevant to our study of Lui Shou Kwan's work. It is not only because Greenberg was active in about the same era as Lui, but more importantly his idea of 'art for art's sake' and the American Abstract Expressionists' paintings which he promoted held enormous appeal to Lui. There is, of course, much more to modernism than has been said about this postwar American art movement. There are a number of related issues which, due to the limitation of space, had to be omitted from the above discussion. Yet, the modernist aesthetics devised by Greenberg provide a sufficient gauge for measuring Lui Shou Kwan's modernism.

The Avant-Garde and Its Relations to Modernism

Closely related to 'modernism' in art is an approach referred to as 'avant-garde', literally 'advanced guard', 'front guard' or 'vanguard'. The term originated from French military lexicon, meaning a small group of highly skilled troops which is sent to the battlefield ahead of the main body of soldiers. Its earliest use in the realm of visual arts is taken to be by the French utopian socialist philosopher, Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825). In a book which he completed in 1825, Saint-Simon employed the term to think through the notion of social progress, whilst assigning the industrialist, the scientist as well as the artist each an important role in the rebuilding
of society. From the onset, 'the avant-garde' was thus bestowed with a social and political meaning. As an art term, it was used to refer to a small collective of experimental intellectuals, writers, and artists whose work demonstrated a breaking away from the norms or transcendence of the boundaries of a tradition, a common practice, or an existing institutional system. In brief, 'the avant-garde' suggested a confrontation between the marginal and the mainstream, or the unconventional and the orthodox.

Despite its early usage in the artistic context, the avant-garde's formal theorization did not come out until over a decade after the Second World War. The Italian essayist Renata Poggioli and the German literary critic Peter Bürger were the earliest theorists who attempted to provide a concrete conceptualization of the term and its relationship with 'modernism'. Poggioli's 1962 book, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (translated into English in 1968), however, offers merely a description of certain artistic phenomena in Europe rather than a real theorization of the avant-garde. Bürger's presentation of the concept in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974) is relatively clearer and this clarity has made his conceptualization a sort of *locus classicus* of interpretation since the book came out in English in 1984. While Poggioli viewed 'modernism' and 'the avant-garde' as more or less the same concept, Bürger saw them as two discrete ones. To Bürger,

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modernist art was essentially an art of the bourgeois, whereas the art of the avant-garde was subversive and iconoclastic. He designated the avant-garde a function to bridge the gulf between art and life in a bourgeois-dominated culture which, in his eyes, had institutionalized aesthetically autonomous art as high art. By re-engaging art with life, Bürger argued, the artist could gain back experiential or life meaning. In his book, he reserved the avant-gardist status exclusively for such art movements as Futurism, Dada, Surrealism and, to a lesser extent, Constructivism, Expressionism and Cubism – all signalled to him an attempt to reintegrate art into the praxis of life through attacking the bourgeois art institution, including its productive and distributive apparatus. These art movements are now commonly known as the ‘historical’ or ‘classical’ avant-gardes. Since Bürger drew his examples largely from early twentieth-century French, Russian and Italian art to conceptualize the term ‘avant-garde’, his observations were inevitably limited in some way, and hence leading to the problematic assumptions of the term. Nevertheless, Bürger succeeded in giving ‘the avant-garde’ a definition which has been looked upon as the basic reference for new interpretations or re-interpretations of the concept.


Generally, the avant-garde may be epitomized as a spearhead of artistic modernity at large and is also describable as, in Matei Calinescu’s words, ‘a radicalized and strongly utopianized version of modernity’.

Nowadays, any in-depth or critical discussion of modern Western art seems unable to do without a mention of the concept of the avant-garde and its relation with modernism which can be as intertwining as conflicting. The two notions, for all their diversity of meaning, share some common features, including their criticism of the stagnant forces in tradition, reverence to novelty and originality, and conception of art in developmental terms.

**Study of Twentieth-Century Modern Chinese Art**

The study of modern Chinese art in the twentieth century may be said to have begun with Michael Sullivan’s *Chinese Art in the Twentieth Century* (1959). Nevertheless, this sub-field of Chinese art studies did not flourish until the mid-1980s, subsequent to China’s gradual opening to the outside world under the rule of Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997) and his successors. At the onset, the narrative structures of most studies on modern Chinese art revolved around temporal or geographical binaries, such as ‘past-present’, ‘old-new’, ‘East-West’, ‘centre-margin’, ‘local-foreign’, and so on. Since the late 1990s, some scholars have started to explore...
the subject in a new direction, which is to investigate the issue of whether China had the capacity to modernize art on its own, or if the impetus for China's artistic modernity stemmed from outside forces, albeit using local source materials. An important cause underlying this recent shift in Chinese art historiography is creditable to the influence of Paul A. Cohen's book, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (1984), which proposes a new approach to Sinology that takes the Chinese viewpoint and China's historical experience into account.\(^{251}\) In the past, China before the Western intrusion was perceived as a static, unchangeable society. Western Sinologists used to reckon that modern Chinese history only began with the Opium War in 1840, and the impact of the West on nineteenth- and twentieth-century China was of critical importance.\(^{252}\)

Cohen's provocative proposal yet prompted some of his fellow historians to search for the modern in Chinese history when the Western impact was less intensive and extensive, whence replacing a Western-dominated by a more Chinese-based approach in American China historiography. At the same time, Cohen's suggestion also directed some art historians to re-assess the origins of China's artistic modernity in her own terms and from her own point of view.\(^{253}\) The significance of this

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\(^{251}\) In his book, Cohen has distinguished three dominant American approaches to Sinology, which he respectively calls 'impact-response', 'modernization', and 'imperialism'. Cohen argues that these approaches distort the 'real' history of China since they take on an inherent Orientalist bias. For a thorough discussion of the three approaches, see Paul A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1984, pp. 9-147.


\(^{253}\) The influence of Cohen's viewpoint may be discerned, for instance, in the writings by Jonathan Hay and Wan Qingli. Hay has put forward an idea that 'modernity' can be equated with 'subjectivity' (rather than with 'Westernization') and argued that the subjective, self-referential work by the late
changing viewpoint lies in that it leads one to rethink how to define artistic modernity across different cultures and variant contexts, thereby eschewing the indiscriminate use of totalizing, Western-derived concepts in non-Western contexts.

Despite such inspiring efforts in recent Chinese art scholarship, many so-called ‘modern’ Chinese art histories (chiefly of painting), particularly those produced in Mainland China, are still largely descriptive accounts of a well-established canon of art works. The authors of these histories have rarely placed the concept ‘modernity’, let alone ‘the avant-garde’, under serious theoretical scrutiny. A quick glance at the literature of modern Chinese art history in the last two decades will reveal that a lot of mainland scholars have continued to select more or less the same group of major artists, art schools, and art groups for discussion. Their main concerns are commonly laid on the responses of Chinese artists to the challenges posed by Western art and culture, the validity and re-orientation of Chinese pictorial tradition, and the relationship between Chinese painting and ethnic culture. Although some of the mainland scholars have done a good job in mapping art with socio-cultural development in modern China, their studies often fall short of presenting a critical judgment on the modernity of Chinese art. At times, their narratives also bear obvious Marxist ideological bias. Given that most of such studies are written with a

Ming artist, Shitao, is a revealing example to demonstrate an ‘early modernity’ in Chinese painting (see Jonathan Hay, Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001). In 2005, Wan published a book, titled The Century was not Declining in Art: A History of Nineteenth-Century Chinese Painting, which advocates that Chinese art history should be studied from a Chinese angle of vision. In this book, Wan uses a late nineteenth-century painting school dubbed jinshi (referring to ‘antiquarian studies’) - a school which was under the direct impact of the then archaeological findings of China’s ancient stele calligraphy - as a case to argue that the root of modernity in Chinese painting could reside within China’s own culture (See Wan Qingli, Bingfei shuailuo de bainian: shiji shiji Zhongguo huihuashi, 2005).
view to providing a general, macroscopic survey of twentieth-century Chinese art, they give little regard for theoretical explanation of art concepts. The result is their authors often dwell too much on stylistic issues, overlooking the fact that modernism may denote a set of attitudes rather than formal stylistics. Since many currently active and prolific art historians in China (as well as those abroad) are not that well-informed about the development of art in Southern China (including Hong Kong), their research on twentieth-century modern Chinese art normally surround the works by northern artists, especially those from Shanghai and Beijing. Hong Kong art, if mentioned at all, is often done so in a very broad brush.

The spate of research on modern Chinese art in the past twenty years precludes naming all the examples as discussed above. Consequently, I cite just several key texts here to illustrate my point. They include Lang Shaojun’s 郎紹君 Lun xiandai Zhongguo meishu 《論現代中國美術》(A Discussion of Modern Chinese Art, 1996), Liu Xilin’s 劉曦林 Zhongguohua yu xiandai Zhongguo 《中國畫與現代中國》 (Chinese Painting and Modern China, 1997), and Pan Yaochang’s 潘耀昌 Zhongguo jinxiandai meishushi 《中國近現代美術史》 (Recent and Modern Chinese Art History, 2004). Notwithstanding the incorporation of the word ‘modern’ in their titles, all three volumes fail to offer even a brief definition of the concept ‘modernity’ or ‘modernism’ as their interpretative framework of modern Chinese art. Moreover, Hong Kong art is not mentioned by Lang and Liu. Pan does assign about ten lines to discuss the artistic conditions of Hong Kong and Macau in his book, yet his analysis is grossly vague and imprecise, not to say the length is far

from being adequate. Pan says that the arts of Hong Kong and Macau were closely associated with Lingnan culture, and because of the two places’ past colonial status and reception of refugees during their colonial eras, their arts were inevitably marginalized and displayed a kind of immigrant culture. He argues that the arts in these two former colonies, albeit pluralistic, were ‘transitional’ in nature. Yet he asserts that following Hong Kong’s and Macau’s successive return to Mainland China, the arts of these two places have become more vigorous and started to take on an individual character.  

Pan’s viewpoint sounds ‘politically correct’, but his idea about Hong Kong art is highly contentious and debatable. Equally debatable is that he only includes Wucius Wong and Ding Yanyong in his reference to Hong Kong ink painters, without anywhere mentioning Lui Shou Kwan. Considering Lui’s pioneering role in the modernization of Chinese painting in early postwar Hong Kong, Pan’s omission is obvious. In *Shouhu yu tuojin* (Maintenance and Development), a volume published by Lang Shaojun in 2001, and *Ershi shiji Zhongguo yishushi* (A History of Art in Twentieth-Century China, 2007; expanded in 2009) a recent book by Lü Peng, a separate chapter does have been devoted to the discussion of modern Hong Kong art, in which Lui Shou Kwan is respectively given a prominent place. Lang Shaojun and Lü Peng invariably emphasize Lui Shou Kwan’s experimentation with the ink medium; the latter even explicitly states that Lui ‘was the first Hong Kong painter to attract international attention, and his experiments with traditional materials made him one

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255 See Pan Yaochang, *Zhongguo jinxiandai meishushi*, p. 255.

of the first ink-and-wash painters to move towards abstract experimentation'.

Nevertheless, the focal point of Lang's and Lü's discussion is, like many other studies of modern Chinese art, centred on the artist's stylistic transformation, rather than his motive for or attitude towards modernizing Chinese painting. Not the slightest hint at Lui's modernism or avant-gardism is ever noted by them.

With the gradual opening of China to the outside world since the late 1970s, Western art historians interested in twentieth-century Chinese art have been able to gain access to previously denied sources of information and, consequently, been able to bring out significant research outcomes in recent years. Their in-depth studies of the changes to China's social environment, economy, and art market in the last century, together with their firsthand knowledge of modern Western art, have enabled them to cast their studies of the technical and stylistic innovations as well as development of new art forms by Chinese artists in greater relief. Ralph Croizier's Art and Revolution in Modern China: The Lingnan (Cantonese School) of Painting, 1906-1931 (1988) is one outstanding example; Julia A. Andrew's and Shen Kuiyi's co-authored A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth-Century China (1998) is another. Despite these notable academic achievements, Western scholars are, on the whole, more interested in exploring the interaction between China's political, social, and economical transformations and


development of modern art, than in critically examining her artistic modernity. Moreover, Hong Kong art has seldom been their foremost concern.

John Clark has studied the appropriateness of applying Western-derived concepts to interpreting modern Asian art. His writings have spurred us to think about the different problems Asian societies faced during their courses of modernization, and the potential incongruity of employing the concepts of ‘modernity’ and ‘the avant-garde’ to discuss their modern art. Notwithstanding his acknowledgement of the limits of the legitimate use of such concepts, Clark argues that they can still be applied to explore modern Asian art, if only one exercises flexibility in the use of them and keeps a firm empirical grasp on various Asian art histories. In a 1996 article, titled ‘Problems of Modernity in Chinese Painting’ which specifically address Chinese painting done in traditional media, Clark has categorized three stages of modernity in Chinese art which may serve as useful frameworks for our analysis of Lui Shou Kwan’s modernist aspect. According to Clark, the first stage of modernity ‘allows for a dialogue with tradition through exploration of the technical means of media and the expression of new subjects’. The second stage ‘requires a far more conscious awareness by the artist and the audience of the constraints on expression or formal exploration provided through the traditional media and their stylistic formulae’. Meanwhile, the second stage also reveals a direction ‘towards more formal and painterly pre-occupations’. The third stage, Clark opines, ‘may be called that of “modernism” proper’, since at this stage the picture and its image signs are established as ‘a way to picturing’, that is, ‘the process of picturing itself’ has

become ‘part of the subject of the painting’. Clark further adds that ‘the most clearly modernist paintings do make the abstraction of the pictorial qualities of media their subject ...’\textsuperscript{260} Aside from the notion ‘modernity’, Clark has also presented an exhaustive study of the use of the concept ‘avant-garde’ in Asian contexts in his \textit{Modern Asian Art} (1998).\textsuperscript{261} I do not intend to belabour this issue here. But I would like to quote some central functions relating to the concept which are raised in Clark’s study to facilitate our subsequent discussion of Lui Shou Kwan’s avant-gardism. In Clark’s analysis, ‘the avant-garde’ is a very broad concept and may be identified as both a thought and an art practice, denoting as ‘types of artworks, aesthetic positions, and the functions of art institutions’.\textsuperscript{262} Like the historical avant-gardes in the West, many avant-garde artists in Asia, he observes, also displayed an anti-establishment stance. Some of them might come out as charismatic leaders, guiding a generation of like-minded artists to form small, short-lived groups, often with a clear social, political or artistic agenda. These groups sought to become the agent that implements a new golden age. Clark points out that Asian avant-gardists felt free to explore native art forms alongside the discourses they operated on, and frequently challenged the hierarchies of art practice that tried to maintain the status quo which privileged the taste of the rich and the powerful.\textsuperscript{263} ‘In serving as the agent of reflexive operation in and on art discourses’, says Clark, ‘the avant-garde functioned as a social institution’.\textsuperscript{264} Clark’s ideas on ‘modernity’ and ‘the avant-garde’ are helpful in lending insight into our exploration of modern Asian

\textsuperscript{260} See \textit{ibid.}, pp. 273, 276.


\textsuperscript{262} Quoted from \textit{ibid.}, p. 222.

\textsuperscript{263} See \textit{ibid.}, p. 219.

\textsuperscript{264} Quoted from \textit{ibid.}, p. 221.
art. The following sections will draw upon his ideas as well as those discussed before to examine Lui Shou Kwan's work.

**Lui Shou Kwan's Modernism and Avant-Gardism**

Lui Shou Kwan emerged as a modern ink painter in Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s. As has been argued, Hong Kong was then embarking on a rapid process of industrialization and urbanization and its development, in a very broad sense, satisfied certain key aspects of a paradigmatic theory of Western social modernity. From this perspective, we may say that Lui Shou Kwan's artistic modernization was temporally in line with the general criteria set for Western artistic modernity which we have mentioned a while ago. Yet any discussion of Lui Shou Kwan's modernism and avant-gardism in art cannot ignore the threefold aspect of his career: as an artist, art critic, and art educator. Indeed, the reputation that he built in Hong Kong rested as much in his art writing and art teaching as in his personal artistic creation. Thus in considering Lui's artistic modernism and avant-guardism in the unique space and time of early postwar Hong Kong, we need to look into some of his crucial writings to see how he perceived the concepts in question. The following discussion will put together the relevant information from his two authored books, *A Study of Chinese Painting* (1957) and *Lectures on Ink Painting* (1972), his lecture notes, as well as his articles in newspapers, art magazines and exhibition catalogues for consideration. As we shall see, Lui's notion and actualization of modernism and avant-gardism is a good instance to demonstrate that the two concepts need not be taken in such a way as to prioritize their originary Western usages, but can be treated as elusive ones.
applicable outside the Western context to accommodate different cultural expressions.

**Lui Shou Kwan's Modernism**

In his lectures and art critiques, Lui Shou Kwan did not elaborate precisely on how he perceived the meaning of modernism. However, his verbal texts indicate quite clearly that his basic notion about it was shaped from an agglomeration of what he heard and read, as well as of what he was told during those days when he was most profoundly attracted to modern Western art in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, given his inability to read English, his understanding of modern Western art was unavoidably restricted by what he could obtain or learn from those artists and art lovers who were on close terms with him. Moreover, he could not enjoy, as we do now, the benefit of accessing to various interpretations and re-interpretations of modern art, since most of the relevant publications did not exist in his time. And for those which were in print, including Poggiloi’s and Bürger’s books on the theory of the avant-garde, they were either not available in English or were scarcely noticed by artists in Hong Kong at the time. As far as Western writers are concerned, Herbert Read should have the greatest influence on him, if we remember the tremendous efforts he had made to co-translate Read’s *The Meaning of Art* with Li Shek Peng in the mid-1950s. Read’s impact is also reflected in his frequent references to this British scholar in his writings. One example is his mention of Read’s discussion of the subconscious in art.265 Another example is the reference he made to Read’s integration of art with

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philosophy and aesthetics in his *The Philosophy of Modern Art* (1952). In prewar and postwar Britain, Read was an active, staunch defender of modern art in the art circles. The new art movements that he had introduced to his countrymen comprised Cubism, Expressionism, Surrealism, Constructivism, Abstract Expressionism, amongst others. Of all the modern stylistics that Read endorsed, abstraction was considered by him as a prime idiom with which an artist could utilize to fulfill his potential as a creator. Apart from *The Meaning of Art* and *The Philosophy of Modern Art*, Lui is also known to have studied Read’s *Art Now: An Introduction to the Theory of Modern Painting* (first published in 1933) and *The Grass Roots of Art* (first published in 1946). Lui’s extensive exposure to Read’s writings suggests that the latter’s ideas must have certain formative effects on his conception of modernism, and might also have affected the direction of his artistic endeavour. One telling point is that early on in Lui’s Hong Kong period, he began to experiment with the abstract idiom in his work, and not long after that he began to advocate the use of the idiom to modernize Chinese painting in earnest. To date, few people who are interested in twentieth-century modern art would think of consulting Read’s books. Yet, Read was quite a well-known name on the international art scene between the 1930s and 1950s. Lui was certainly a beneficiary of his writings.

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268 In my interview with Lee Kwok Wing on 9 September 2005, I was told that Li Shek Peng had also invited Lui Shou Kwan to his place where he verbally explained Read’s *Art Now: An Introduction to the Theory of Modern Painting* (New York, Pitman, 1960 / London, Faber and Faber, 1960) to him. As regards Lui’s reference to Read’s *The Grass Roots of Art* by Read, see his *A Study of Chinese Painting*, p. 148.

As much as we know Lui Shou Kwan was affected by Read, we have to ask how Lui himself talked about modernism in his writings. All through his life, Lui did not explain very thoroughly his views on this matter. Apart from his 1965 article ‘My View on Art’, whose key points on modernism we have discussed in the last chapter, there seems no other writing by him that gives as lengthy an explanation on the subject as that article does. Lui did, however, address the concept ‘modernism’ through brief, scattered remarks in other contexts. The following is one of his more important remarks on the subject which I would like to reproduce here:

...the primary meaning of modernism refers to free and incessant pursuit of new modes of expression. In an age where visual arts are constantly changing, artists who aspire to be creative should make the greatest sacrifice [for their art].\(^{270}\)

Lui’s preoccupation with ‘newness’ (xin 新) as revealed in this short comment corresponds with Late Qing and Early Republican cultural leaders’ strong desire for a new era. The reformist thinker Liang Qichao, for example, had proposed a revolution (geming 革命) in literature as early as in 1899; a few years later in 1902, he named a journal he founded as New Fiction. In 1917, Chen Duxiu and Hu Shi proclaimed a literary revolution; the following year Chen was to make another clarion-call for artistic revolution. The pursuit of ‘newness’ was indeed widespread in both public and private debates among the intellectuals in the early decades of the twentieth century, and the term was a common expression in the various publications and propagandas these intellectuals produced at that time. New Youth (Xin qingnian

\(^{270}\) Quoted from Lui Shou Kwan’s manuscript, titled ‘Zhide jiejian de yinzheng’ (The Proof that is Worth Drawing Lessons from), in The Manuscripts of Lui Shou Kwan, p. 455.
《新青年》) and New Tide (Xin chao 《新潮》), two cultural journals which were widely circulated during the May Fourth Movement, are revealing examples of the movement's overwhelming concern for things new in those days. It is worth noting that many art schools and art societies then also jostled each other to pronounce themselves as founders of a new age, as manifested in a newspaper advertisement placed by the South China Art Academy (Nanguo yishushe 南國藝術社) set up by Xu Beihong in 1928. 271 Aside from the word 'revolution', other wordings which hinted at 'newness', such as 'creation' (chuangzao 創造), 'reformation' (gailiang 改良) and 'improvement' (gaijin 改進), were also popular watchwords amongst the Chinese intelligentsia. 272 Lui Shou Kwan's early revelation of a wish to create a 'new' path for Chinese painting in the inscription he put on the 1948 Dawn painting was axiomatic of his sharing of the same sentiments with those early twentieth-century thinkers. His eager quest for newness was most manifest when he set up his New Art Painting Studio in 1958 and when he began to run new ink painting courses for CU's Extramural Studies Department in the late 1960s. 273

Lui Shou Kwan's quest for things new, aside from being affected by the works of native Chinese intellectuals of the preceding era, also reflected the impact of Western modernism. In his writings, one easily comes across his expression of concern for formal properties and artistic autonomy, as well as of faith in the value of innovation,

271 See the advertisement in Xinwenbao, 26 January 1928.
273 Lui's art teaching and artistic influence will be explored in greater depth in the last chapter of this thesis.
authenticity, and individual authorship. Such concern and faith attest to his endorsement of the mainstream tenets of Western artistic modernism. It is this engrossment with formal-aesthetic issues and his ability to realize 'creativity' in his own work that allowed him to be justly ranked as a painting modernizer. Lui paralleled the notion of 'creativity' advocated by modern artists in the West with the Way of Painting which he found innate in the Chinese pictorial tradition. He saw creativity as the paramount principle in art, and held that 'genuine' Chinese painting was marked by original, creative self-expression.\(^{274}\) As has been pointed out, Lui Shou Kwan deemed that authentic Chinese paintings could be found in Tang and Song periods when many artists (e.g., Wang Wei 王維 (699-759), Fan Kuan 范寬 (active c. 1023-1301)) then were purveyors of originality and creativity. However, this creative lineage was broken, he bemoaned, by those who did nothing but blindly imitated past works in the subsequent Ming and Qing dynasties.\(^ {275}\) Lui was intent on recovering the lost 'authentic' tradition of Chinese painting. His creation of semi-abstract and abstract Hong Kong landscapes might be seen as the first step he took to attain this goal. The fact that he should choose the abstract idiom as the particular mode for his artistic expression was due to his perception of an affinity over the abandonment of verisimilitude and emphasis on subjective expression between Chinese xieyi painting and modern Western abstraction. However, he held that Western abstractionists' elimination of inessential elements from their works was by no means very 'modern' since countless Chinese painters in the ancient past had been able to create spontaneous and highly subjective works which broke

\(^{274}\) For Lui's discussion of 'creativity' and analysis of the Way of Chinese Painting, see his *A Study of Chinese Painting*, p. 71; and *Lectures on Ink Painting*, pp. 132 and 145.

\(^{275}\) On this view, see, for instance, Lui Shou Kwan's *A Study of Chinese Painting*, pp. 73-74; *Lectures on Ink Painting*, p. 82; and *The Manuscripts of Lui Shou Kwan*, p. 69.
through to the fringe of abstraction. This convinced him of the superiority of Chinese painting over Western painting.

Lui Shou Kwan's view of the superiority of the painting tradition of his native culture over that of the West was not uncommon among the Chinese. Until lately, not a few artists and art historians of Chinese origins have maintained that there is a resemblance between Chinese xieyi painting and Western modernist painting. The eminent U.S.-based scholar Wen Fong, for instance, has said that 'the evolution of realistic representation to calligraphic self-expression ... that occurred in fourteenth-century scholar painting in China finds a distinct parallel in the displacement of the mimetic by the expressive by such early-twentieth-century Western artists as Paul Cézanne and Pablo Picasso'. The support administered by Fong and other writers of similar or lesser standing to the view under discussion is noteworthy. However, the sort of parallelism they perceive between Chinese and Western painting is crude and superficial. One thing they have neglected in their comparisons is that a diversity of abstract paintings (such as those dubbed 'gestural', 'geometric' and 'biomorphic') was produced in the West between the late nineteenth

276 A number of scholars have noticed such an argument and made a special note of it in their studies. See, for instance, Ralph Croizier, 'Post-Impressionists in Pre-War Shanghai: The Juelanshe (Storm Society) and the Fate of Modernism in Republican China', Modernity in Asian Art, p. 147; and Eugene Y. Wang, 'Sketch Conceptualism as Modernist Contingency', Chinese Art: Modern Expressions, p. 103.

and mid-twentieth century. One cannot simply have them all shoehorned into one single category of abstraction, not to say to match them with a narrowly defined Chinese concept of *xieyi*. The question regarding to what degree or in what sense the abstractness of Chinese painting commensurate with that of Western abstract painting is indeed a contentious issue that requires much more serious and meticulous study. Like many artists of his time, Lui Shou Kwan did not seem to have noticed the intricacies involved in the comparison between Chinese and Western painting. However, this lack of awareness had its advantage. It provided him with a ‘convenient’ platform to negotiate art of the past (China’s ancient creative pictorial tradition) with art of the present (Western abstraction of his time). The negotiation also enabled him to mobilize like-minded peers to rebuild with him the glory of Chinese painting and to develop this centuries-old pictorial genre into a category of world culture. For Lui, the history of modern Chinese art could only be meaningful if it was situated in the context of world art.

Aside from ‘creativity’, the concern for the present, which defined a paradigm of modern Western aesthetics, was also a coordinate element in Lui Shou Kwan’s conception of modernism. In Lui’s mind, an artist might only be described as modern if he could reflect the spirit of his time or symbolize the age in which he lived. In one of his lecture notes, he said unequivocally that temporally, art ought to mirror its time, create its time, and be the rod and staff of its time. In the same lecture note, he further raised a point that art could be spatially divided into two types: one being categorized by nationhood and ethnicity, and the other by universalistic humanity.

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278 On this hope, see Lui Shou Kwan, *A Study of Chinese Painting*, pp. 32 and 148.
279 See Lui Shou Kwan’s *A Study of Chinese Painting*, p. 47; *Lectures on Ink Painting*, p. 71; and *The Manuscripts of Lui Shou Kwan*, p. 345.
He said it was with the latter category that modern art tended to be sided.\textsuperscript{280} Lui's faithful disciple, Wucius Wong, has rephrased his temporal-spatial notion in modern art neatly in a commemorative article written a year after his death:

Modernism is a lesson all Hong Kong artists must learn. Hong Kong is part of the world and is in the twentieth century. Hong Kong artists must know and understand what modern art in the West is about. Hong Kong art must be developed from two coordinate axes, the time axis and the space axis. Modernism provides the time axis. The next is to locate the space axis. Without this Hong Kong art would become rootless and could be too easily swept by vogues and fashions from the West. Hong Kong is basically a Chinese society and is geographically related to China. Hong Kong art must find its roots back in ancient Chinese tradition. The danger is with increasing Westernization, such roots can soon be forgotten by succeeding generations.\textsuperscript{281}

The above passage by Wong conveys pretty much the same idea as that put forward by Lui in his lectures. In view of its importance in elucidating Lui's idea on modern art, I venture to present a list of the main points made by Wong as I see it:

1. It is essential for Hong Kong artists in the twentieth century to pursue modernism since Hong Kong is part of the world.
2. Hong Kong art is framed by a time axis and a space axis.
3. The time axis refers to modernism (meaning 'to learn from the West').
4. Hong Kong is also part of China, geographically and ethnically.
5. Hong Kong artists, therefore, need to trace their cultural origins in ancient Chinese tradition in order to meet the space axis. Those who failed to do so would lose their anchor and be easily swept away by the tide of Westernization.

\textsuperscript{280} See Lui Shou Kwan, \textit{The Manuscripts of Lui Shou Kwan}, p. 434.

\textsuperscript{281} Quoted from Wucius Wong, 'Lui Shou Kwan and the Development of Hong Kong Art', in \textit{The Festival of Asian Arts}, exh. cat., Hong Kong, Urban Council, 1976, p. 32.
These five points can be summed up into one basic premise which is: Hong Kong is defined spatially and culturally with the world and with China, and it is essential that Hong Kong artists should associate their work with both Western and Chinese cultures. This premise spells out exactly Lui Shou Kwan’s lifelong desire of placing China in a world contest for cultural prestige. Yet, Lui’s psychological orientation towards the future is not without its ambivalence since it is paradoxically mixed with a longing to embrace China’s cultural heritage. Such a simultaneous gaze at the future and into the past bespeaks his uncertainty about his modernist identity. In point of fact, Lui had the habit of emphatically expressing a wish to hold fast to his Chinese national identity in his writings. That being the case, how could he resolve his leaning towards the West? A review of his paintings tells that his Zen painting series (fig. 102), which he began to conceive in the early 1960s (to be discussed), offered him a way out in this regard. As in his semi-abstract and abstract landscape works, Lui Shou Kwan showed a vivid concern for formal values in his Zen paintings. What is so particular about this painting series, however, is that in it he had found a solution to instill his ‘Chineseness’ in his work by making symbolic references to a medley of essentially Chinese literary, religious, and philosophical sources. Through such symbolic allusions, he demonstrated that painting was for him not purely a matter of following the inherent laws dictated by the medium, but could be used to convey messages which reflected his own culture and humanistic concerns. One question arises here and which pertains to our investigation of his modernness: why should he create in a symbolic manner when all the time he was still painting abstract landscapes, sometimes in an almost purely abstract mode? A plausible answer to this question is that at some point in his career he became aware of the danger and limitations of pure formalism. In other words, he came to be aware of the
danger of asserting absolute artistic autonomy since it would necessarily exclude many elements involved in aesthetic experience. If we accept this argument, we may see his representation of Zen as a purposive choice. Given that Zen is a homegrown tradition of Buddhism in ancient China, to depict it in a manner which is at once modern (in an abstract mode) and symbolic (with Chinese elements) could render China not only as a recipient of modernist influences from the outside, but also as an agent for or a contributor to the development of modernism in the art world.

The mix of traditionalism and modernism in Lui Shou Kwan’s conception of his work may be compared to the thinking of post-May Fourth neo-traditionalists and the traditionalists in the artistic realm. Post-May Fourth neo-traditionalists looked at the earlier May Fourth Occidentalism with great misgivings. At the core of their disenchantment was their resentment towards the Occidentalists’ holistic rejection of tradition and their indiscriminate endorsement of Westernization. It invoked in them a fear that China might ultimately lose her own cultural and national identity. Although some neo-traditionalists, such as Yan Fu 嚴復 (1852-1921) and Liang Qichao, were not total strangers to Western culture, they invariably chose to fall back on Chinese culture to contemplate China’s future. Their re-examination of Chinese culture led them to rebuild a confidence in China’s cultural tradition. To such neo-traditionalists, the modernity of China should not rely on a drastic destruction of her own culture, but rather on a critical appraisal of it and on assimilating promising elements from the West with the best from Chinese culture.\textsuperscript{282} Liang argued that after the First World War, many farseeing Westerners of his time were also thinking

of merging their own culture with Chinese and Indian ones to attain a harmonized
culture between East and West. However, he predicted that the final cultural
reconciliation would be achieved by the young people from China. He urged his
fellow young men to take up this huge responsibility, and advised them to
accomplish it by first studying Western thought since Westerners had developed
sound research methodology and were well noted for their free and diverse thinking.
Liang projected that eventually a new, synthesized culture would result from a
blending of Chinese and Western cultures. In the meantime, some Chinese
traditionalist painters also expressed confidence in their national culture and thought
positively of appropriating Western cultural elements for enriching Chinese painting.
Chen Shizeng 陈師曾 (1876-1923) was perhaps the most outspoken of them in
promoting the value of the past and the importance of reformation. His maxim, ‘to
preserve the old through day-by-day renewal’ (‘yi xin quan qi jiu’ 以新全其舊) divulged the high regard he gave for historical continuity and also his awareness of
the need for regenerating Chinese painting on a gradualist basis. Both Chen and
Liang were open-minded traditionalists who distinguished themselves from those
conservative ones who slighted the present in order to favour the past, as well as
from those nativists who blindly believed that China was the centre of the world and
that Chinese culture was all there was of value in the universe. The merit of their
ideas lay in that they were willing to reconcile essentialist Sinicization with totalistic

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283 For this projection, see the excerpts from Liang Qichao’s ‘Ouyou xinying lu’ (Impressions of Travels in Europe), in Wusi qianhou dongxi wenhua wenti lunzhan wenxuan (Selected Essays from the Debates on Eastern and Western Culture around the May Fourth Period), ed. Chen Song, Beijing, Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1989, pp. 379, 388.

284 For a discussion of Chen Shizeng’s aesthetic viewpoint, see Hu Jiang, ‘Hualao chun rengzai – lun Chen Shizeng de wenhua baoshuo zhuyi’ (Spring is Still There even though Flowers are Gone – A Discussion of Chen Shizeng’s Cultural Traditionalism), Meishu guancha, no. 111 (Dec., 2004), pp. 82-84.
Westernization and choose a practical way of reinstating the agency of Chinese culture.

The attitude which Lui Shou Kwan held towards Chinese painting comes close to that held by Liang Qichao and Chen Shizeng towards Chinese tradition. Like them, Lui had great pride in the uniqueness of his native culture and fully believed in its competitiveness with other great cultures of the world. And like those two apologists of tradition, Lui rejected the May Fourth Occidentalists' iconoclasm since he concurred that if China were to go entirely Western she would sooner or later lose her unique identity. Despite his espousal of the notion of progress, like many May Fourth thinkers, his sense of historical development was not necessarily temporally linear. True, he looked to the West for models, thus tacitly acquiescing to the notion that his modernism embodied external resources, yet in no way would he ever give in to the idea that to enter the modern must wholly be dependent on the West. His free borrowing of myriad sources from past and present as well as East and West for creating his modern-style Chinese paintings, notably those titled 'Zen', bear vivid testimony to this belief. His syncretic approach reveals that he was, like Chen and Liang, a 'reformist' at heart who placed Chinese culture at the centre of his artistic modernization without descending into chauvinism. Instead of essentializing Chinese painting tradition, he conspicuously opened himself up to various external influences with a view to exploiting them to give Chinese painting resilience. He had no qualms about syncretizing various sources and materials placed in his hands

285 Lui's intention to pit Chinese painting against Western painting is frequently observed in his writings. Examples can be found in his A Study of Chinese Painting, pp. 1, 14, 38, 47, 155.

286 On Lui's liberal view towards absorbing external influences for cross-cultural fusion, see, for instance, his A Study of Chinese Painting, pp. 119, 181.
by the circumstances of his time, though the incentive of his syncretization was inspired by a grand mission to enrich the art of Chinese painting.

Taking the above arguments into account, can we still regard Lui Shou Kwan as a 'modernist' artist proper in the Western sense? The answer is both 'yes' and 'no'. It is my contention that Lui Shou Kwan was an artist with an ambition to be thoroughly modern. His modernist rhetoric such as his advocacy of 'art for art's sake',\(^{287}\) may, in this respect, amply vindicate his artistic modernism. Yet, inasmuch as the word 'modernism' is taken to mean pictorially the Western 'high modernism' in the formalist sense, Lui's modernism is confined to those works in his artistic oeuvre which approach total abstraction (fig. 103) and those which focus their attention on the rendition of brushstrokes or structural pattern (fig. 104). Clark's idea that 'the most clearly modernist paintings ... make the abstraction of the pictorial qualities of media their subject' may apply here. However, the pureness of Lui's modernism is much moderated in his semi-abstract landscapes and Zen paintings which bear allusions to natural or symbolic motifs. A precise judgment on his modernism, therefore, rests on the type of work to be assessed.

Lui Shou Kwan's Avant-Gardism

Compared with the words 'modernity' and 'modernism', 'the avant-garde' (qianwei 前衛 in Chinese) is a term which appears far less frequently in Lui Shou Kwan's writings. In Lectures on Ink Painting, for example, he only mentioned it three times,

\(^{287}\) For this idea, see, for instance, Lui Shou Kwan, A Study of Chinese Painting, pp. 110, 194.
all in passing, when relating to the subject of ink painting, modern art education, and artistic environment. The term is likewise only brought up a few times in his extant manuscripts. It appears respectively in his discussion of Chinese and Western art theories, the art views of Lin Fengmian and Li Keran, and the attention modern artists paid to medium in their art making. Yet on none of these occasions did he clearly advance his view on the meaning of ‘the avant-garde’. In one instance, he even conflated the notion of avant-gardism with that of modernism by taking the concern for painting medium as a trait of both concepts. To quote his words: ‘Jing Hao [荆浩 (c. 855-915)] ... tried to establish, with [the painting] material, [an idea] that painting is painting, and that brush-and-ink is itself painting. This [notion] is in accord with the 1970s theory of the avant-garde’. The avant-gardism that Lui referred to here is overtly the aesthetic avant-gardism demonstrated by the American Abstract Expressionists. Through quoting Jing Hao, a celebrated painting master of the Five Dynasties, as an example to argue for Chinese painters’ distant respect for painting medium and hence their avant-gardism, Lui revealed his desire of placing Chinese art on equal footing with Western avant-garde painting. One hardly needs to say that the idea of comparing the theory of an ancient Chinese painter with twentieth-century Western artistic thought is unreasonable and conceptually simplistic. Furthermore, Lui never indicated any distinction between the aesthetic avant-garde and the political avant-garde as conceived by Western scholars in his writings. Taking this unawareness and his aforesaid argument for Chinese painters’ avant-gardism into consideration, one may safely surmise that his understanding of the notion ‘avant-garde’ was very vague. Apparently, the difference between the two

290 See ibid., p. 23.
said avant-gardes was something that he had not put his mind to. In this he was like many Chinese artists from a *guohua* (Chinese or national painting) or *shuimohua* background of his time. 291

However that might be, should we accept the key spirit of the avant-garde as a critical reflection on existing art practices, then we might regard Lui Shou Kwan's hard-nosed attack against the practice of imitation which he deemed prevalent on the art scene of his time as a token of his avant-gardist or, in Chinese terms, radical (jijin 激進) stance. Besides, the usual sense of utopianism attendant on the concept of the avant-garde is also evident in his self-imposed task of seeking a palingenesis of Chinese painting. Lui Shou Kwan, as mentioned previously, saw the long halt in the development of Chinese painting as due to the imitative mode of teaching and learning Chinese painting. To Lui, such a mode of teaching and learning only encouraged unthinking adherence and conformity. He was thus determined to create his own signature work, and made it his responsibility to promote a kind of liberal and systematic art education with which to liberate Chinese painting from this crippling burden and to cultivate creative minds among the young. Lui's confidence in his ability to mould the human minds and to guide his fellow men into the future is

291 The notion that Chinese ink painting is comparable to Western modernist or avant-garde painting of the early twentieth century began to be ingrained in the minds of many Chinese artists and art critics around the mid-1920s. Chen Shizeng gave us a vibrant example in this respect. We may quote Julia Andrews' discussion of his idea here for illustration: 'Linking literati painting to the subjectivity of post-impressionism, cubism, futurism, and expressionism, Chen Shizeng thus argued in Beijing in 1921 that literati painting is not only progressive in terms of the internal dynamics of Chinese painting, but also in terms of its intellectual and spiritual parallels with the most advanced contemporary European artistic practice. Despite Chen Shizeng's untimely death the following year, by 1925 his ideas had taken root'. Quoted from Julia F. Andrews, 'In Search of Modernity: Aspects of Chinese and Japanese Artistic Exchange in the Republican Era', in *The Proceedings of the International Conference for Chinese Modern Paintings Researches*, p. 7.
best illustrated by his effusive announcement of a craving for ‘succeeding the superb learning of past sages and forging peace for all ages’ (‘wei wangsheng ji juexue, wei wanshi kai taiping’ 為往聖繼絕學，為萬世開太平’). This noble, epigrammatic, Confucianistic declaration is in keeping with the Western modernist concept of historical progression. It also calls to mind many of the passionate and idealistic promulgations that some European avant-garde artists (e.g., Futurists, Surrealists) had made in their manifestos. Lui ostensibly believed himself engaged in the work of a critical introspection that prepares consciousness for the prospect of cultural change. His vehement rejection of the imitative mode of artistic production and his desperate wish to be remembered as a forerunner of modern Chinese painting, taken together, manifest clearly a countercultural-cum-futurist mentality which is a typical feature of the historical avant-gardes.

Today, the sort of utopian dream that Lui Shou Kwan and the historical avant-gardes cherished might appear too positivist or optimistic, especially to those who identify themselves with the various revisionist (broadly namable as ‘postmodernist’) approaches in art-historical writing which debunk cardinal modernist values pertaining to progress, individuality and originality. To these postmodernist champions, the notion of the avant-garde is simply history. However, one should note that although postmodernist ideas began to be bandied about in the West in the 1970s, they had not come into full play in Hong Kong until the 1980s. In truth, postmodernist art critique was not in vogue in the Western art world until Charles Jenck’s essay, ‘The Rise of Postmodern Architecture’, was published in 1975.

292 For the suggestion of this longing, see, for instance, Lui Shou Kwan’s A Study of Chinese Painting, p. 110; and Lectures on Ink Painting, p. 130.
followed by Jean-François Lyotard’s book, *La Condition postmoderne*, in 1979.\footnote{See Richard Sheppard, ‘Dada and the Last Post of Modernism’, in *Modernity-Dada-Postmodernism*, Evanston, Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 2000, p. 351.} From this we know that the clamor that early postmodernist thinkers vented against modernism did not fall within the earshot of Lui Shou Kwan. A look at his existing writings shows that the word ‘postmodern’ or ‘postmodernism’ has never been part of his vocabulary, or has it ever appeared in the 1960s and 1970s writings of his close friends and students. Until the end of his life, Lui did not have any idea of the emerging postmodernist thinking which challenged the reified image of modernism and its binary East-West mode of thinking about art and culture. This entails that modernism was still a very much valid project in the artistic domain during his day. From the late 1950s on, Lui gathered around him a number of artists and writers with whom to promote modern art and culture in Hong Kong. He offered them advice on various matters relating to art and assisted them in forming their art groups. At the same time, he took up advisory posts in organizations like the Modern Literature & Art Association, Circle Art Group, In Tao Art Association, and One Art Group. His willingness to serve as advisor for these organizations indicated his belief in the effectiveness of collective activity which was another prominent feature of the historical avant-gardes.

Despite Lui Shou Kwan’s display of some avant-gardist inclination in his roles as art critic and art leader, there is nevertheless a cleavage between him and the historical avant-gardes in terms of the attitude towards artistic creation. One might note that the historical avant-gardes had a clear political orientation in their criticism of the existing cultural establishment and life values. Lui had yet an overt repugnance
towards politics in his refusal to map it with his art. However much he abhorred the art scene of his time, the cause of his aversion rested with its duplicative mode of art production, and not the separation of art from life in bourgeois societies as assumed by Western theorists such as Peter Bürger. Furthermore, the strategies Lui adopted to revitalize Chinese painting were via self-practice and art education, and not through any subversive methods which the early European avant-gardes employed to dethrone the mainstream bourgeois culture. The idea concerning the division between mainstream and avant-garde culture is also not applicable to the case of Lui since he was, in actual fact, part of the mainstream culture. One might remember that he was appointed Honorary Advisor to the City Hall Museum & Art Gallery in 1962, and was invited to join the Museum’s inaugural show, ‘Hong Kong Art Today’, the same year (fig. 105). In addition, he was invited several times by the Museum to take part in the annual Arts Festival it co-hosted with the Hong Kong British Council (fig. 106). Since the late 1960s, Lui and some of his students were also regularly selected by the Museum to represent Hong Kong in overseas art exhibitions. The peak of his official recognition came in 1971. That year, he was awarded an M.B.E. by the British government for his distinguished contributions to the promotion of art in Hong Kong (fig. 107). All these indicate that Lui Shou Kwan had never assumed the role, as the historical avant-gardes did, of attacking art as an institution. There is also no evidence of him ever attempting to merge art with social life or engaged in any political or ideological struggles. Although in his teaching he liked to express his opinions on a broad spectrum of subjects including politics, in his artistic creation he deliberately eschewed political comments in favour of personal expression. Rather than employing art as a means for social subversion, he viewed art as solely a matter of expressing one’s absolute individuality, and for himself perhaps also as a way to escape from the humdrum of life.
Looking back, one might find Lui Shou Kwan's indifference to politics was not without its reason since he came to Hong Kong to flee a past that filled him with fear and disillusion. The horrifying experience that he had gone through during the Sino-Japanese War and the Nationalist-Communist internecine struggle in postwar Guangzhou turned him into a politically apathetic artist who preferred to withdraw into a spiritual-aesthetic realm. Indeed, Lui was still haunted by his wartime experiences fifteen years later after he had settled in Hong Kong. He simply knew too much about the human cost of political struggle. The fact that he could survive the wars also made him believe that his life had been spared for a purpose. The rumination he gave utterance to in one of his diaries (fig. 108), which I translate below, fully illustrates this thought:

Having undergone eight years' hardship and struggle during the war of resistance and the strife between the Nationalist and the Communist Parties, we, albeit lacking any interest in political or state affairs, are yet governed by them; such affairs might even have changed our lives totally. I am lucky to have been able to escape peril and from the 'red' [meaning 'the Communist'] calamities, and to huddle in the comfort of this small island. The life I have now is truly precious and fortunate.

Many people had tried with all their might to seek freedom. However, once they were in the free zone, they forgot their earlier sufferings on the one hand, and lost their will to fight for liberty on the other. Consequently, they wasted their fortunate and dear lives on luxury and dissipation.

The fact that I could get away from the two said crises and remain alive implies that there must be something important pending for me to complete. At least, I knew that if I could save myself from being embroiled in the eight-year trial and the Nationalist-Communist
fighting, I should not live a life of material comfort and take it as worthy of my precious and fortunate life.  

While Lui Shou Kwan’s concern for spiritual and aesthetic issues already places him at some distance from the socially critical position of the historical avant-gardes, his readiness to work with the cultural establishment further diminishes his avant-gardist edge. However, Lui’s divide from the notion of the avant-garde, like that of modernism, is not without its ambivalence, considering how he frequently portrayed himself in his writings as an artist looking on the art scene from the periphery, fighting alone against the whole world of mediocre and conservative artists who do not know what art precisely means. Lui often addressed these mediocre and conservative artists as ‘they’, and pictured them all as a group dominating the local art scene of Hong Kong. He viewed them as the culprits for degrading Chinese painting into an anaemic state by making a fraudulent appeal to tradition, when all they were really doing was recycling or duplicating what had been done already. In professing his dislike of these artists, Lui was never polite, tolerant, or even cautious. On the contrary, he could be unflinchingly direct and offensive. For example, he might accuse those who produced and taught imitative works as drug dealers, and describe their pernicious influence over their students as imprisoning people inside an opium den. There were times, too, when he might berate those who supplied works designed to satisfy the tastes and flatter the vanity of their clients as sycophants, hangers-on, or as shameless, ignorant and amoral girls who work in the street. To Lui, true art was something difficult to achieve and had to be fought for.

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294 This diary is in Lui Shou Kwan’s family collection.
295 For such criticisms, see Lui Shou Kwan, A Study of Chinese Painting, pp. 42, 61, 66-67, 172.
296 See Lui Shou Kwan’s The Manuscripts of Lui Shou Kwan, pp. 343, 382; and Lectures on Ink Painting, pp. 146-47, 149.
This conviction led him to proclaim time and again that, for the sake of creating new, original art, he was prepared for sacrifice and hardness, to live at war with his decadent contemporaries, as well as to challenge the ‘old him’ with the ‘new him’.

The wholesale condemnation that Lui Shou Kwan made against his fellow artists is, of course, not entirely fair, since it consists of sweeping generalizations and overlooks the fact that among them were some people like Ding Yanyong, Peng Ximing, and Fang Zhaolin (1914–2006) who were clearly capable of creating refreshing works without forsaking the Chinese brushwork heritage. Yet, despite the disputability of Lui’s unrelenting criticism of his fellow painters, few who knew him well would deny that he was a sincere person in the sense that he truly believed in what he said and what he did, including the grand artistic and educational functions he thought he could perform for his country. Perhaps, Lui’s vehement denunciation of the practice of his peers sprang from his view of them as the obstacle to his dream of resuscitating the art of Chinese painting. Anyhow, the militancy in his declaration of war with them, and with himself, is in every respect avant-gardist per se.

Conclusion

The overlap of certain aspects of the Western-originated concepts ‘modernism’ and ‘avant-gardism’, and the concurrent negation of some other aspects of the two notions in the work of Lui Shou Kwan make him an interesting case study in the

297 For such expressions, see, for instance, Lui Shou Kwan’s *Lectures on Ink Painting*, pp. 148-49.
interpretation of non-Western modern art with Western critical terminology. If a
decision has to be made to define Lui’s artistic identity, it would be just to consider
him more as a modernist than an avant-gardist artist in view of the heavier weight he
placed on formal innovation and artistic autonomy, both of which being central to the
notion of ‘modernism’. In addition, the attention he showed to the present, the
here-and-now, also reflects a crucial spirit of artistic modernity. Here I would like to
enlist the help of Robert Wohl’s view to express my conception of Lui Shou Kwan’s
modernism and avant-gardism. In his article ‘Heart of Darkness: Modernism and Its
Historians’, Wohl makes it a point that there is a need to distinguish the modernist
movement from the highly self-conscious and sometimes politically-driven groups
associated with the avant-garde. His ground is that ‘all avant-gardists were modernists
but not all modernists belonged to avant-garde groups’, since the former might not ‘all
sympathize with the widely varying goals and methods of the avant-gardes’.298
Wohl’s idea fittingly describes Lui Shou Kwan’s case. From what has been discussed
in this chapter, we can conclude that Lui’s modernism, by and large, prevails over his
avant-gardism, in other words, the latter is subsidiary to the former. As a modernist
artist, Lui’s historical importance as a principal conduit for the reception of artistic
modernism in early postwar Hong Kong cannot be gainsaid. In the next chapter, we
shall look into his Zen painting series. A series of work representing his highest
artistic achievement, it will show us how he exploited Western modernist art forms
and painting techniques to reform an age-old Chinese pictorial genre with which to
create a highly individuated signature and win a significant niche in the history of
modern Hong Kong art.

298 Quoted from Robert Wohl, ‘Heart of Darkness: Modernism and Its Historians’, The Journal of
Chapter Five:
Lui Shou Kwan’s Zen Painting Series

Lui Shou Kwan’s Zen painting series, which he start conceiving in 1962, stood out to be his most significant artistic endeavour in his entire career. By conjoining two motifs, the lotus bud and the lotus leaf, in this series, Lui successfully constructed a basic compositional formula with which to express a contemporary notion of Zen unique to himself. Towards the end of the 1960s, Lui further elaborated the content of the lotus-based imagery by melding it with other imageries associated with the motif of the moon, the sun and the mirror to enrich the meaning of his Zen series to higher levels of cosmology. The present chapter will focus on investigating this painting series and examine how Lui Shou Kwan’s sui generic expression of ‘Zen’ established him as a pioneering modernizer of Chinese ink painting. Before analyzing Lui’s Zen paintings, we shall first take a very brief look at the early development of Zen Buddhism in China, then its introduction into Japan and the birth of Zen painting there. After this brief survey, we shall explore Lui’s knowledge of Zen and his theological inclination, in conjunction with the immediate causes for his conception of Zen painting. The latter exploration will take us to a short account of the popularization of Zen in America in the 1950s and 1960s. The account is necessary since it informs us how the artist came to think of employing Zen as a theme in postwar Hong Kong. Following this account will be an examination of Lui’s personal

299 ‘Zen’ is the Japanese word for the Chinese character, ‘Chan’, itself an abbreviated form for the Sanskrit word, ‘dhyana’, meaning ‘meditation’ or ‘quiet contemplation’. Given that the Japanese were seminal in popularizing the concept of Zen to the rest of the world in the twentieth century and that the Japanese pronunciation of the word has been much widely used than the Chinese one around the world, I shall adopt ‘Zen’ instead of ‘Chan’ for use in this thesis. Unless otherwise specified, the meaning of ‘Zen’ should be taken as the same as that of ‘Chan’.

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idea of ‘Zen’ in concert with the actual Zen paintings he did under two distinct modes of expression. I shall name them as the ‘calligraphic’ mode (shufa shi 書法式) and the ‘splashed’ mode (posa shi 潑灑式). The formal and thematic decoding of these two modes of expression will lead us to explore the pivotal ideas behind Lui’s portrayal of the Zen-lotus imageries pertinent to his own time and space. Of the two modes of expression, greater attention will be devoted to the calligraphic one since a much larger number of Lui’s Zen paintings were rendered in this style. Here, the conventional symbolism of the lotus relating to the Buddhist and Chinese cultures will be brought up for discussion. A summary of Lui’s artistic achievement based on his creation of Zen paintings is provided at the end of this chapter.

**Zen Buddhism in China**

Zen Buddhism as a ‘home-grown’ school of Buddhism in China was formally established between the seventh and the eighth century. Unlike other Buddhist schools, Zen Buddhism was for long regarded as a special transmission of the dharma from mind to mind without laying great stress on written words. Such a method of preaching is claimed to have begun with the esoteric teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha (also known as ‘Gautama Buddha’, ‘the historical Buddha’, or simply ‘the Buddha’, c. 563 – c. 483 B.C).\(^\text{300}\) In a sermon on dharma given to his pupils, the Buddha is said to have uttered nothing at one point in the lecture, but simply held a flower in his hand, and smiled. Among all his pupils, only one is deemed to have truly

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\(^\text{300}\) More recent opinion may designate the date of the Buddha’s death to some time between 411 and 400 B.C.
gained a direct insight into the Buddha's mind by returning the smile. This gesture of mutual understanding between the Buddha and his disciple is held by Zen Buddhists as the foremost example of mind-to-mind communion.

After the Buddha, the practice of mind-to-mind transmission is said to have been carried on by twenty-eight Indian patriarchs. But it was the last patriarch, Bodhidharma 菩提達摩 (died c. 532), who really initiated the development of Zen Buddhism in China. Bodhidharma went to China by sea in the fifth century A.D. and there disseminated the special transmission of dharma to the Chinese. After some unsuccessful periods, Zen eventually secured a golden age during the Tang and Song times. Popular account has it that Zen Buddhism was subsequently split into two schools, the Northern School and the Southern School, at the end of the eighth century. The Northern School was headed by Shenxiu 神秀 (605?-706) and the Southern School by Huineng 慧能 (638-713). While the Northern School emphasized sutra study as a means to achieve gradual enlightenment, the Southern School advocated sudden enlightenment and encouraged teaching the dharma through dynamic, non-verbal and unconventional practices.³⁰¹ Be it of the Northern or the Southern School, Zen advocates believed that every person possesses an inherent

³⁰¹ Some recent Zen studies have put forward substantial evidence to testify that the distinction between the Northern (the gradualist) and the Southern (the sudden) Zen schools in regard to monastic practice was not as neat as it was once thought. And contrary to the traditional narrative which holds that Chinese Zen was matured in the Tang dynasty, some modern-day Buddhist scholars have convincingly argued that the maturity of Chinese Zen occurred only in Song times when Zen's institutional base, principal lineages, and unique literature were fully developed. For an example of such revised accounts of early Chinese Zen, see Morten Schlütter, How Zen Became Zen: The Dispute Over Enlightenment and the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-Dynasty China, Hawaii, Kuroda Institute, University of Hawaii Press, 2008.
Buddha-nature and that one needs only to realize it, to wake up to the enlightenment one potentially has.

Both Shenxiu and Huineng were revered by their own adherents as the Sixth Patriarch in the Chinese Zen lineage. The lineage is believed to be descended from Zen’s founder, Bodhidharma, and his four Chinese successors, Huike (487-593), Sengcan (?-606), Daoxin (580-651) and Hongren (601-674). Huineng had for long been attributed to be the author of The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch (Liuju tanjing 六祖壇經), the only indigenous Chinese text considered to be significant enough to be dubbed a ‘sutra’ (jing 經). According to The Platform Sutra, the Southern School is the orthodox transmitter of Zen. It tells that between the ninth and tenth centuries, the Zen school was divided into five sects, including the Caodong 曹洞, Linji 臨濟, Weiyang 潮仰, Fayan 法眼 and Yunmen 雲門 sects. Each of these sects had developed its own emphases and specialized teaching methods. Linji Zen further branched off into the Huanglung 黃龍 branch and the Yangqi 楊岐 branch in the next century, which were followed by more sub-divisions in the ensuing periods. By the last years of the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279), the overall influence of Zen Buddhism had, however, greatly diminished in China. Linji and Caodong Zen were the only two sects remaining to have an impact over Chinese intellectuals and the lay public in the subsequent eras.

Following its establishment in China, Zen Buddhism underwent a long process of adaptation and amalgamation with Chinese traditional culture, philosophies and

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302 However, The Platform Sutra is widely accepted today as authored by Shenhui (686-760), a disciple of Huineng.
religious customs. During Tang-Song times, some principles of Zen were incorporated into the humanism of Confucianism and the naturalistic mysticism of Daoism, the two main streams of philosophical thought in China. As a result of this incorporation, a syncretic philosophical culture emerged in China and henceforth exerted a profound influence on the thinking of Chinese intellectuals. From Tang up to Ming times, many great Chinese thinkers (e.g., Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819), Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846)) studied Zen Buddhism; renowned scholar-painters (such as Wang Wei, Su Shi) also now and then composed poems and paintings with an explicit Zen flavour. The impact of Zen’s emphasis on meditation and mind-to-mind transmission was perhaps most pronounced in its giving rise to an influential Confucian school of idealist philosophy (lixue 理學) during the Song and Ming periods. Not a few distinguished Chinese scholars of recent times have acknowledged the tremendous importance of Zen to Chinese culture. The late polymath, Ji Xianlin 季羡林 (1911-2009), even argued that one could never fully understand Chinese culture, Chinese philosophy, and Chinese history without knowing Buddhism.\footnote{See Ji Xianlin, ‘Wo he fojiao yanjiu’ (Buddhist Study and I), in Ji Xianlin tanfo (Ji Xianlin’s Discussion on Buddhism), Hong Kong, Joint Publishing (H.K.) Co. Ltd., 2007, pp. 279-280.}

Although Ji Xianlin was not specifically referring to Zen Buddhism when making this comment, Zen as a unique outcome of Chinese culture fits in as well with his assertion.
Introduction of Zen into Japan

Zen Buddhism was initially brought to Japan by Chinese adherents of Buddhism during the Nara (710-793) and Heian (794-1184) periods. However, the dissemination of this particular Buddhist tendency in Japan was at first sporadic and could hardly claim to have gained any significant result. It was not until the Kamakura period (1185-1336) when Chinese and Japanese monks began to pay visit to each other's monasteries that Zen gradually emerged as a major religious force in Japanese society. During this period, Zen thought and Zen meditation, along with the monastic forms and cultural idioms current in Southern Song China, were introduced into Japan.

Rinzai (Linji) and Sōtō (Caodong) Zen were the two Zen sects that gained the widest receptivity in Kamakura Japan. Rinzai Zen was founded by monk Myōan Eisai (1141-1215) in 1191, while Sōtō Zen was established by monk Dōgen Kigen (1200-1253) in 1227. Eisai and Dōgen were pilgrim monks, amongst many others, who travelled from Japan to China to pursue a more thorough learning of those Buddhist sects which held interest to them. At the time Japanese monks were undertaking Buddhist training in China, some leading Chinese Zen teachers, including Lanxi Daolong 蘭溪道隆 (Japanese: Rankei Dōryū, 1213-1278), Wuan Puning

元庵普寧 (Japanese: Gottan Funei, 1197-1267) and Yishan Yining 一山一宁 (Japanese: Issan Ichinei, 1247-1317), were invited to Japan to instruct Japanese monks on various matters concerning monastic practice. Some of these Chinese monks were even installed as abbots to the monasteries built by their Japanese patrons. With time, the practice of Zen in Japanese monasteries became a close copy of that which was observed in China. Near the end of the fourteenth century, thousands of Rinzai and Sōtō Zen monasteries, subtemples, branch temples, nunneries and hermitages were founded in Japan. About this time, an official three-tiered institutional system known as the ‘five mountains’ (Chinese: wushan 五山; Japanese: gozan), originally set up by the Southern Song court to regulate Zen centres, was introduced to and assimilated in Japan with the support of the shoguns and aristocrats who championed Rinzai Zen.

During its long course of development in China, Zen underwent many transformations in terms of practice. An example would be the invention of many unorthodox methods, such as shouts, slaps, and the use of iconoclastic language or kōans (literally ‘public cases’; meaning ‘questions or exchanges with masters’), by Chinese Zen teachers for assisting their pupils to attain enlightenment. Although Rinzai and Sōtō Zen both originated from the Southern School of Chinese Zen, they evolved different emphases in their respective development in Japan. While Rinzai Zen stressed intense kōan practice as a path to enlightenment, Sōtō Zen accorded primacy to meditation as the core of monastic life and the best practice leading towards sudden enlightenment. In addition to this difference, Rinzai and Sōtō Zen also earned their support from

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divergent social classes. Rinzai Zen gained its chief support from the shoguns and the imperial court, whereas Sōtō Zen won favour mainly from the families of warriors and farmers. Although a third major Japanese Zen sect known as Ōbaku (Chinese: Huangbo 黄檗) was founded by the Chinese monk Yinyuan Longqi 隱元隆琦 (Japanese: Ingen Ryūki, 1592-1673) in the mid-seventeenth century, Rinzai and Sōtō remained the two largest and most enduring Zen sects, thriving from the Kamakura through to the Muromachi (1333-1573) and Momoyama (1573-1600) periods. During these periods, Zen witnessed various forms of transformation and accommodation in Japan, alongside its prevailing religious and cultural conditions. In the realm of aesthetics, Zen's influence was discernable on broad areas of Japanese art and culture, ranging from temple architecture, ink painting, calligraphy, gardening, tea ceremony, flower arrangement, poetry, to martial arts and Noh drama. The enormous influence of Zen in medieval Japan is undisputed. Even after neo-Confucianism replaced Zen as the dominant social and ethical code in the Tokugawa (or Edo) period (1600-1868), Zen managed to retain a certain degree of significance in the lives of the general populace.

306 For the influence of Zen on these forms of Japanese art and culture, see Heinrich Dumoulin, 'Zen in Art and Culture', in Zen Buddhism: A History, translated into English by James W. Heisig and Paul Knitter, New York, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990, pp. 221-250. For a list of useful references on the subject, see ibid., p. 251, note 17.

307 Buddhism was, however, under a nationwide attack during the subsequent Meiji period (1868-1912), during which time the government established Shinto as the state religion and ordered numerous Buddhist temples to be dismantled and thousands of monks and nuns to return to secular life. It was not until the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century that some well-educated Japanese monks and lay preachers would join hands to recover the vitality of Buddhism, including Zen Buddhism. For a discussion of the difference in reception of Buddhism during the Edo and Meiji periods, see Audrey Yoshiko Seo and Stephen Addiss, 'Introduction', in The Art of Twentieth-Century Zen: Paintings and Calligraphy by Japanese Masters, Boston and London, Shambhala, 2000, pp. 4-7.
Birth of Zen Painting in Japan

Painting and calligraphy as two major art forms of China were principally introduced into Japan by Japanese pilgrim monks and Chinese Zen teachers. Eisai, for example, is known to have brought calligraphy back to Japan after he finished his studies and training in China in the twelfth century. Dōgen, the exponent of Sōtō Zen, was himself a competent calligrapher and had inspired his school to promote the art of calligraphy. As for those Chinese Zen teachers who found their way to Japan, many of them were capable teachers of painting and calligraphy. They taught their Japanese supporters and disciples the arts that were esteemed by the Chinese scholars in the gozan monasteries of which they took charge. In return, their shogunal and aristocratic patrons sponsored the printing of Buddhist texts and Chinese classics, as well as treatises on Chinese poetry. Some of these patrons also collected Chinese paintings and art objects, deriving an appreciation of these from their Chinese teachers or Japanese monks who were conversant with the intellectual and cultural interests of the Chinese literati. The Zen monasteries thus posed as important centres for the cultivation and spread of Chinese arts. With the establishment of Ōbaku Zen in the seventeenth century, more contemporary styles of Chinese painting and calligraphy were introduced to Japan. As Zen became well rooted in Japan, the direct transplantation of Zen from China was no longer necessary. From the seventeenth century onwards, Japan saw the emergence of her own masters who excelled in both painting and calligraphy. Hakuin Ekaku (1685-1769), Sengai Gibon (1750-1838), and Ryōkan (1758-1831) were just a few of those well-known Zen monks who gave form to their inner experience and religious insights through the medium of ink.\footnote{See Heinrich Dumoulin, ‘Zen in Art and Culture’, Zen Buddhism: A History, pp. 232-233.}
Although many people imagine that Zen painting is Chinese in origin since Zen Buddhism was established on Chinese soil, Zen painting as an independent category of artistic expression was actually born in Japan.\(^{309}\) There it was originally conceived as a form of *zenga*, a term which the Japanese used to refer to the brushwork of their leading Japanese Zen masters who had an affinity for communicating their enlightened minds in brush and ink.\(^{310}\) Japanese monks proved themselves to be experts in giving a good variety to the expression of Zen in their works. Some of them took evocative landscapes as their ideal expressions. Some preferred to depict Zen stories and Zen parables. Still, there were some who favoured making portraits for Zen masters,\(^{311}\) exemplary figures including the historical Buddha and Guanyin (Japanese: Kannon), or even legendary ones such as Hanshan 寒山 (Japanese: Kanzan) and Shide 拾得 (Japanese: Jittoku), both being eccentric hermit-poets from Tang China. Generally, Japanese Zen paintings were marked for their clarity, simplicity, and directness in execution. They might be used as a vehicle of active

\(^{309}\) According to Charles Lachman, the term ‘Zen painting’ is not found in any Tang and Song text; nor can it be located in any ancient Chinese art writing. Lachman further tells that even *Six Persimmons*, a widely acclaimed work by the monk-painter Mu Xi (late thirteenth century), is absent from the art critiques of his time. For details, see Charles Lechman, ‘Art’, in *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez Jr., Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2005, pp. 41 and 43.

\(^{310}\) Concerning the initial appearance of *zenga*, Heinrich Dumoulin says it was already developing freely in the Zen temples of Kyoto during the Muromachi period (1333-1573). Stephen Addiss, however, sets the date more precisely in 1600 and argues that *zenga* is a word referring to the paintings and calligraphy done by the Zen monks from that point on up to the present time. See Heinrich Dumoulin, ‘Zen in Art and Culture’, *Zen Buddhism: A History*, p. 235; and Stephen Addiss, ‘Introduction’, in *The Art of Zen: Paintings and Calligraphy by Japanese Monks 1600-1925*, New York, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989, p. 6.

\(^{311}\) Here, I should mention that there was a tendency among Chinese Zen masters to give their own portraits to their Japanese disciples and let them take the portraits back home as visual certificates for their completion of studies.
meditation for the creators themselves, or as a form of visual instruction for those who viewed or received them.\textsuperscript{312}

As a unique form of Japanese visual arts, Zen painting flourished most conspicuously between the early fourteenth and the mid-sixteenth centuries, under the support and patronage of the ruling samurai and cultured aristocrats.\textsuperscript{313} Such support and commissions waned, however, in the Momoyama and Edo periods when they were gradually diverted to new painting schools such as those named Kano, Tosa, Shijo, Rimpa, Ukiyo-e and Nanga.\textsuperscript{314} In this circumstance, rather than painting for the ruling classes and aristocrats as before, Japanese Zen masters turned to paint for themselves as well as for their students, parishioners, and the ordinary folk. This change in patronage went hand in hand with a corresponding shift in theme. While earlier Zen monks showed a bent for depicting figural, landscape, historical and anecdotal subjects, these later monk-painters were inclined to create highly personalized, bold and expressive images with a view to expressing their personal experience or bringing to beholders a deeper understanding of their own nature. The Zen paintings created in this manner were straightly visual tools of enlightened communication.\textsuperscript{315}


\textsuperscript{314} See Alice Rae Yelen, 'Looking at Zen Art', in \textit{Zenga: Brushstrokes of Enlightenment}, pp. 21-22.

\textsuperscript{315} For a detailed discussion of these later Zen paintings, see Stephen Addiss, 'Introduction', \textit{The Art of Zen}, pp. 10-13; and John Stevens, 'The Spiritual Dimensions of Zen Art', \textit{Zenga: Brushstrokes of Enlightenment}, p. 12.
As a specific term, 'Zen painting' appeared rather late in the discipline of art history. Although publications and translations of important texts on Chinese painting in English, German and Japanese had come out by the late 1910s, the term 'Zen painting' was not employed by Western writers until several years later. The first scholar who adopted it in art-historical writing was Arthur Waley (1889-1966). An autodidact in Oriental languages, Waley once worked as an assistant to the art scholar, Laurence Binyon (1869-1943), head of the Department of Oriental Prints and Drawings of the British Museum, from 1913 to 1929. While working at the British Museum, Waley had written a short paper titled 'Zen Buddhism and Its Relation to Art' (1922). In it he used the term 'Zen painting' to address the works of a few ancient Chinese painters, including Shi Ke (mid-tenth century), Liang Kai (active thirteenth century), Mu Xi (late thirteenth century), Bada Shanren and Shitao. Waley's paper is known to be the earliest treatment of the subject in any Western language. In his paper, Waley paralleled Zen painting more or less with Zen Buddhism, viewing the former as carrying a similar function as the latter in foregrounding 'something' which is psychologically deeper than what is visible on the surface. After Waley, Zen painting was viewed by lots of people as a spiritual art which advocates direct, transcendent experience versus logical analysis. In Lui Shou Kwan’s time, the idea that Zen painting is a special pictorial genre which aims


319 On such a paralleling between Zen and Zen art, see Charles Lechman, ‘Art’, Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism, p. 46.
to evoke in the spectator an intense experience beyond words and concepts was approved almost without question.

**Lui Shou Kwan’s Understanding of Zen and His Theological Inclination**

Lui Shou Kwan began his tentative exploration of Zen in pictorial terms in 1962. He called most of the works he created in this vein directly as ‘Zen’ (fig. 109) or ‘Zen Painting’ (fig. 110). Often, he would sign them simply with a date and perhaps also with a short Zennist, Daoist, or Confucianist maxim (fig. 111). Given that Zen Buddhism was normally perceived in his day as a religion which gives little regard for written words and Zen painting accordingly as a genre which conveys the unspeakability of some transcendent experience, Lui’s bald titling was unavoidably greeted with derision by not a few of his fellow artists and art critics who viewed such naming as superfluous and indicative of the author’s ignorance about Zen. Was Lui Shou Kwan really that uninformed about the Zen tradition that he would so imprudently title his works as ‘Zen’ or ‘Zen Painting’? To answer this question, we may first take a brief immersion into the studies of the early Zen history during the last century to see if this native Chinese school of Buddhism was in actuality that resistant to words and letters.

In the first few decades of the twentieth century, notable advances in the field of Zen studies occurred with the discovery of two ancient manuscripts of *The Platform Sutra* in Dunhuang grottoes.³²⁰ Hu Shih 胡適 (Hu Shi, 1891-1962) was one of the few

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³²⁰ *The Platform Sutra* is also known in English as *The Altar Sutra, The Mandala Sutra,* or *The Sutra of Huineng.* It is the most important text in the study of the history and doctrine of Zen Buddhism. Over
earliest historians to have capitalized on part of these ancient manuscripts, which were made available on microfilm at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and the British Museum in London, to reshape the discourse of early Chinese Zen history. Many of Hu Shih's ideas may now appear crude and over-simplifying. However, his bold argument that it was Shenhui 神會 (686-760), and not Huineng, who actually wrote The Platform Sutra and that it was due to this sutra that the Southern School was made the orthodox lineage of Chinese Zen, significantly set the field of Zen studies on a new track. Notwithstanding the keystone Hu Shih laid in rewriting Chinese Zen history, the traditional view concerning the orthodoxy of the Southern School continued to dominate the vast majority of writings on Zen Buddhism. Important breakthroughs in the field of Zen studies did not occur until the late 1980s when some the past centuries, different versions of this sutra had been found, including the Dunhuang version of Tang, the Huixin and Qisong versions of Song, the Deyi and Zongbao versions of Yuan, and the so-called 'original Caoxi version'. Each version has several different recensions. With time, the Zongbao text (1211), containing a total of 20,000 characters, became the most popular version after it was compiled into the Chinese Tripitaka of the Ming dynasty. In 1932, Japanese Buddhist scholar Keiki Yabuki discovered an ancient manuscript of The Platform Sutra (containing about 12,000 characters) at the British Museum. The manuscript was later recensed by another Japanese scholar, D. T. Suzuki, in 1934. Since then, interest in studying early Chinese Zen began to be roused among Japanese and Chinese scholars. In 1935, Dunhuang resident Ren Ziyi discovered yet another recension of The Platform Sutra which is more finely written, has fewer textural errors, and contains 68 more characters than the old Dunhuang version. For an account of the discovery of the two Dunhuang manuscripts, see the prefaces by Yang Zengwen and B. Mukherjee, in The Mandala Sutra and Its English Translation: The New Dunhuang Museum Version, Revised by Prof. Yang Zengwen, trans. and eds. Tony K. Lin, Tsai Kunchang and Josephine Lin, Taipei, Jiafeng chubanshe, 2004, pp. 19-26, 27-32. For an English translation of The Platform Sutra based on the recension of the new Dunhuang text by Yang Zengwen, see ibid., pp. 66-315. For the various recensions of the different versions of The Platform Sutra, see also ibid., pp. 61-63.

critical studies of the history and practice of Zen began to be successively brought out in Japan and America. The prodigious command of East Asian Buddhist literature by modern-day Japanese and American scholars have allowed them to reassess the developments of the Southern and Northern Zen Schools and, in this connection, the ‘orthodox’ lineage of Chinese Zen. Knowledge of a wide array of methodological tools, moreover, have permitted them to augment the approach to Zen from the past archival, historical and philosophical perspectives to encompass a broader scope of vision pertaining to socio-political, intellectual and cultural histories. As a result, a wide range of studies covering such issues as the relationships between Zen and social, political and economic changes, the ideological and cultural constitutions of Zen, as

322 There are a few Western scholars whose names deserve a mention here, given that their studies have contributed to a more integrated understanding of Zen history and culture. They include Heinrich Dumolin, Martin Collcutt, Robert S. Sharf, Bernard Faure and John R. McRae. Among them, Faure and McRae may deserve a more special mention since their works pioneered the jettisoning of the Zen orthodoxy and linearity. The books by Faure which have reshaped the course of Zen studies are: The Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan/Zen Buddhism (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1991); Chan Insights and Oversights: An Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition (Princeton, N. J., Princeton University Press, 1993); The Will to Orthodoxy – A Critical Genealogy of Northern Chan Buddhism (Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1997); and Chan Buddhism in Ritual Context (London, New York, Routledge Curzon, 2003). McRae has also written two books which are widely quoted in the Zen studies by other scholars. They are: The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch’an Buddhism (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1986); and Seeing Through Zen: Encounter, Transformation, and Genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003). Into the twenty-first century, some younger scholars, among them T. Griffith Foulk, Albert Welter, Morten Schlütter, Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright, have also edited or published books which have altered the discursive trajectory of Zen. For an overview of the methodologies adopted by past and present Zen scholars from America, Japan, and also Europe and Mainland China, see Gong Juan and Chen Jidong, Zhongguo chanxue yanjiu rumen (An Introduction to the Study of Chinese Zen), Shanghai, Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2009. A useful list of Chinese, Japanese and English sources on Zen Buddhism is offered in ibid., pp. 269-310. For a specific discussion of the change in Zen historiography over the last few decades, see Bernard Faure, ‘Rethinking Chan Historiography’, in Chan Insights and Oversights, pp. 92-99; and also Bernard Faure, ‘Chan and Zen Studies: the State of the Fields’, in Chan Buddhism in Ritual Context, pp. 1-35.
well as the use of religious instruments and visual media in the Zen rituals have been published in recent years. Some scholars have even gone beyond canonical materials (such as lamp records and recorded sayings) and adopted ‘external’ texts (e.g., ancient stele engravings, literary sources, etc.) to re-examine the development of Chinese Zen. The above extensive research has led to a fuller and more nuanced account of the practice, tradition and culture of Zen Buddhism.

One point that has been verified by recent Buddhist scholarship and which is crucial to the present study is that ancient Zen masters’ preaching of the dharma was not entirely, as presumed, beyond the reach of intellectual analysis. Despite the fact that Southern Zen practitioners did not give as heavy a stress on scriptural understanding as those of the Northern School in their pursuit of enlightenment, many outstanding Zen teachers descended from Huineng’s Southern lineage did value textural study as a way of learning and teaching. A telling example is that they would use verbal texts, including Zen κoans and Buddhist scriptures, to assist themselves as well as their disciples in seeking wisdom. As such, many scholars today no longer regard Zen as an exclusive doctrine that advocates the quest of wisdom outside the realm of intellect. This revised notion of Zen was, of course, out of the ken of Lui Shou Kwan and his contemporaries. During Lui’s time, Zen’s rejection of scholastic learning was looming large in the minds of many Buddhists and lay people, since Zen was then still narrated in a shroud of mysticism. Did Lui Shou Kwan believe, as most people of his day did, in Zen’s purported emphasis on the visceral as against the cerebral?

To examine Lui Shou Kwan’s understanding of Zen, we must look into two items of circumstantial evidence furnished by his art agent, T. G. Barker. In one of these evidential texts, Barker stated:
It is clear from private conservation that he [Lui Shou Kwan] has made some study of Buddhism, but he will not consent to go on record as saying anything in particular about it. It is a thing to be lived, not talked of. On Zen, he is especially reticent. Painting that calls itself ‘Zen Painting’ is in his view highly suspect, if not a contradiction in terms. The spirit of Zen, he says, can appear in a painting, but cannot be put into it.\(^{323}\)

The other evidential text can be located in one of Barker’s written correspondences with Lui Shou Kwan, in which Lui is quoted to have said:

> The apprehension of Zen does not depend on a person’s worshipping the Buddha, or reading the sutras, or being a Buddhist monk.... the basis of Zen is man’s nature – that is to say, the individual man’s original nature – and it is fundamental that the apprehension of it is to be sought by cutting through the intellectual process and using means other than the reasoning faculty.\(^{324}\)

The above two items of evidence reveal clearly that Lui Shou Kwan was aware of a core tenet in Zen teaching which tells that one’s original nature is to be sought by looking into one’s own self. Lui’s basic understanding of Zen is also indicated in some art writings by him. In *A Study of Chinese Painting* (1957), for instance, he made direct references to such popular Zen usages as *dunwu* 頓悟 (sudden enlightenment) and *buli wenzi, zhizhi renxin, jianxing chengfo* 不立文字，直指人心，見性成佛 (to point to one’s mind without relying on words, to see one’s own nature and [directly]


accomplish buddhahood). Elsewhere in his lecture notes, he also referred to Zen’s mind-to-mind transmission of the dharma by quoting the Buddha’s ‘noble silence’ or ‘smile of comprehension’. Yet, the most intriguing evidence attesting to Lui’s ‘real’ understanding of Zen is the idea he advanced in several manuscripts, where he made it a point that language is not unimportant in the transmission of Zen. The idea in question apparently contradicts the previous view concerning Zen’s inexpressibility. Despite this contradiction, Lui’s recognition of the fact that Zen’s transmission cannot entirely do without language is, in every respect, exceptional for his day. One should not forget that the significance of language in the teaching of Zen and in the preservation of Zen history and Zen culture is only a matter of rather recent acknowledgement. The above evidence indicates that Lui Shou Kwan indeed had a good working knowledge of Zen when he came to create his Zen paintings. In this light, the derision that his critics directed against him was only a prima facie one and did not correspond to the truth. Yet, if Lui Shou Kwan was aware of the key tenets of Zen, why would he risk being mocked and insist on adopting ‘Zen’ as his titles and even inscribing the word on his paintings? The answer to this is illusive. A reasonable guess is that he feared that if he did not name his works thus, his audience might be puzzled by his somewhat ‘enigmatic’ images and come to interpret them in ways that he did not wish them to be seen.

Inasmuch as we know that Lui Shou Kwan was far from being ignorant of Zen, we may bring out a further couple of questions in order to tease out the causes for his conception of Zen painting. First, we have to ask under what circumstances he

325 See Lui Shou Kwan, A Study of Chinese Painting, pp. 210 and 203.

encountered Zen. Next, we need to know what prompted him to select Zen as a subject for conveying his creative imagination. The two questions are interrelated. Answering them requires us to go back to early postwar Hong Kong to examine the development of Buddhism then and there.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Hong Kong witnessed a rapid expansion of Buddhist activities following the arrival of many Buddhist monks and lay Buddhists from Mainland China. Among those who fled to this former British colony included famous and learned masters, such as Venerables Tanxu 僧虛, Fahang 法舫, Yinshun 印順, and Dingxi 定西. Of them, some chose to settle in Hong Kong where they facilitated the spread of Buddhism amongst local residents through teaching sutras in monasteries, hermitages, or nunneries. In the meantime, a variety of courses on Buddhism were also conducted under the auspices of some Buddhist associations. With the launching of these activities, Buddhism thrived in Hong Kong within a short period of time. Amidst this prosperity of Buddhist activities in postwar Hong Kong, Zen Buddhism, however, did not enjoy a particularly distinguished development. It

327 On the postwar development of Buddhism in Hong Kong, see Zhang Mantao, ‘Xianggang fojiao’ (Hong Kong Buddhism), in Yijuqiqi nian foxue yanjiu luntanji (1977 Anthology of Dissertations on Buddhist Studies), Gaoxiong, Foguang chubanshe, 1995, pp. 218-239; and K. J. Tang, The Development of Buddhism in the 20 Century Hong Kong, Hong Kong, Hong Kong Buddhist History and Culture Society, 2007. Apart from these two references, Ko Wing Siu, a famous Buddhist teacher in Hong Kong, has also written three essays which form a good overview of the subject. They include: ‘Xianggang fojiao yuanliu’ (The Origin of Hong Kong Buddhism), in A Carnival of Gods: Studies of Religions in Hong Kong, ed. S. H. Chan, Hong Kong, Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 107-139; ‘Xianggang fojiao fazhanshi’ (The History of Hong Kong Buddhism), in Hong Kong & Macau Regional Centre of The World Fellowship of Buddhists Limited: The Golden Jubilee Commemorative Book, Hong Kong, 2002, pp. 67-75; and ‘The Sources and Flow of Buddhist History in Hong Kong’, in The Dharmalakshana Buddhist Institute Buddhist Journal, vol. VI (Dec., 2008), pp. 143-167.
was pursued merely as a minor Buddhist school, alongside the more prominent ones that existed in Hong Kong.\textsuperscript{328}

In view of the fact that Zen Buddhism did not have an outstanding development in Hong Kong during the early postwar decades, one wonders what could have motivated Lui Shou Kwan to conceive of Zen as a theme for artistic expression. Concerning this query, Flora Kay Chan has proffered two causes that might partly explain Lui’s fascination with this theme. According to Chan, one of the causes could be traced back to Lui’s Guangzhou period when he would join his father in studying \textit{The Platform Sutra}. The other cause, Chan says, might be due to the visits the two Lus paid to some Buddhist monks in Hong Kong, among them was Venerable Yuexi who also fled to Hong Kong about the time the Communists took over the mainland.\textsuperscript{329} As suggested previously, Lui Tsan Ming was an active member in the Buddhist circles in both Guangzhou and Hong Kong. After Yuexi settled in Hong Kong, Lui Tsan Ming often went to see him at his place in Shatin. Lui Tsan Ming, we know, had helped Yuexi to transcribe his Zen teachings in writing and had the transcriptions published in a local Chinese newspaper. Lui Chiu Chun confided to me that when Yuexi had built his own monastery, the Ten Thousand Buddhas Temple (Wanfosi 萬佛寺), in 1957,\textsuperscript{330} Lui Tsan Ming assisted him in inscribing the names of the ten thousand Buddha statuettes to be housed inside the Temple (fig. 112).\textsuperscript{331}

\textsuperscript{328} From my conversations with Ko Wing Siu, Lee Yun Sang, and Venerable Sik Hin Hung between January and February 2008. Lee is Honorary Professor of the Centre of Buddhist Studies at The University of Hong Kong, and Hin Hung is a Founding Fellow of that Centre.

\textsuperscript{329} See Flora Kay Chan, ‘The Development of Lii Shoukun’s Art’, p. 152.

\textsuperscript{330} On the erection of this temple, see \textit{Xianggang Fanyu} (Hong Kong Buddhist Monasteries), Hong Kong, Xianggang Fanyu chuban weiyuanhui, 1999, p. 262.

\textsuperscript{331} My interview with Lui Chiu Chun on 9 November 2006.
The closeness between Lui Tsan Ming and Yuexi is also reflected by a poem and a preface which Lui Tsan Ming composed for Yeuxi, which are collected in the latter’s anthology, *Yuexi fashi siqi fashu ji* 《月溪法師詩詞法書集》 (A Collection of Poems and Calligraphy by Yuexi), published posthumously in 1977. Considering the rapport between the two as well as Lui Shou Kwan’s own intimate connection with his father, it is strongly suggestive that the junior Lui would have had many opportunities to get to know Yuexi. Although we do not know how often Lui Shou Kwan might have accompanied his father to visit Yeuxi, we do know from Lui Shou Kwan’s daughter, Lui Chin Lo 吕展露 (Lü Zhanlu), that he had called on Yuexi alone in just her company. Weaving the above diverse sources of information together, we can come to a conclusion that although Lui Shou Kwan might not have forged as close a friendship with Yuexi as Lui Tsan Ming had, it is plausible that he had come across Yuexi’s teaching through his father’s transcription. Besides, it is likely that he had also read his father’s own writings on Buddhism or Zen Buddhism. The conjecture of this thesis is supported by Lui Shou Kwan himself in his citation of Yuexi’s ideas in his *A Study of Chinese Painting*. Yet, despite these citations, there is no indication that Lui had devoted a considerable portion of his time to studying Zen concepts seriously. His writings suggest that what he acquired from his reading was mainly the general framework and vocabulary of Zen.

With the exception of Yuexi, Lui Shou Kwan is not known to have established close contacts with other Zen monks in Hong Kong, though the two Zen temples, the Po

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332 This commemorative anthology was edited and published by Wu Xingji, the second abbot of the Ten Thousand Buddhas Temple, in Hong Kong. The book is unpagedinated.
333 My telephone conversation with Lui Chin Lo on 28 August 2008. Lui Chin Lo remembers that his father had taken her to visit Yeuxi when she was still small.
Lin Monastery (Baolian chansi 翁蓮禪寺) and the Chuk Lam Sim Yuen (Zhulin chanyuan 竹林禪院) were already there in this city during the early postwar years. Furthermore, there is no information which shows that Lui was ever associated with any Buddhist organizations which underwent a proliferation in Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s. Although he once signed himself as a ‘Buddhist follower’ on an early portrait of Guanyin (as discussed in the first chapter), there is no other surviving work by him which shows that he ever did the same again. Regarding his personal theological inclination, Lui Shou Kwan confessed on one occasion that he had no particular religious belief, but trusted that a god is somehow in the universe to take care of everything.\footnote{See \textit{The Manuscripts of Lui Shou Kwan}, p. 327.} Be that as it may, his interest in Buddhism sustained throughout his artistic career. His writings, accordingly, manifested from time to time an overt sense of religiousness, as is exemplified in ‘Yuseng ji’ (遇僧記) (‘Notes on Meeting a Monk’, 1962), a story recounting a long dialogue which he dreamed to have held with a Buddhist immortal. The story portrayed Lui as an individual embroiled in existential anguish. Through his dialogue with the immortal, he expressed a strong desire to renounce the material world, to live in solitude like a monk and to do so by channelling it through painting. On the whole, the story aimed to tell that painting was the ruling passion of Lui’s life, his \textit{raison d’être}.\footnote{For a full script of this story, see \textit{The Manuscripts of Lui Shou Kwan}, pp. 3-8.} Yet, more important about the story to our present discussion is perhaps its indication of the author’s affinity for Buddhism and for integrating the elements of this religion into his work. While Lui Shou Kwan was not a Buddhist worshipper or Zen practitioner, he was certainly an agnostic with a marked interest in Buddhism in general, and Zen Buddhism in particular.
Immediate Causes for Lui Shou Kwan’s Conception of Zen Painting

Having pieced together a picture of Lui Shou Kwan’s knowledge of Zen in connection with his theological inclination, we can now further inquire into the immediate causes that might have inspired him to launch his Zen painting series in 1962. The information gathered discloses that the Lui’s growing interest in Zen at that particular juncture could be credited to Pau Shiu Yau 鮑少游 (Bao Shaoyou, 1892-1985) and Lee Kwok Wing 李國榮 (Li Guorong, b. 1929), both being his close artist-friends between the late 1950s and the early 1960s.

As has been pointed out, Lui Shou Kwan was always eager to maintain dialogues with his fellow artists, especially those with an exposure to modern art. This eagerness did not wane even when he was coming of age as an artist after holding his second one-man show in 1957. Nonetheless, since he could not acquaint himself with Western modern art on his own due to his inability to read any foreign language, he had to rely on others to provide him with information about the current painting styles, techniques, form types, and discourses in the art world. Pau Shiu Yau was able to provide important assistance to him in this respect. Pau graduated from Kyoto College for Commercial Art, Japan, in 1915. After returning to Hong Kong, he founded the Lai Ching Art School 麗精美術學院 in 1928, where he personally took up some teaching of Chinese painting. By Pau’s account, Lui Shou Kwan often came to see him at his studio in the late 1950s. During those visits, Pau said he had let Lui Shou Kwan browse through the books in his personal art library. He also divulged that Lui had audited some of the painting classes he gave at the Lai Ching Art Institute.
between 1957 and 1959. Considering Pau’s Japanese background, Lui Shou Kwan’s contact with him would, conceivably, allow him to acquire knowledge on a wide spectrum of Japanese art, including Zen painting.

Despite the possible inspiration from Pau Shiu Yau, Lui Shou Kwan’s initial idea of representing Zen in brush and ink might in fact owe more to Lee Kwok Wing’s introduction of the subject to him. Between 1956 and 1974, Lee was Art Lecturer of the Grantham Training College (renamed the Grantham College of Education in 1967) in Hong Kong. Lee also taught an ‘In-Service Course of Training for Teachers’ and a three-year art course for select art teachers organized by the Department of Education during the same period of time. During my interview with Lee Kwok Wing, I was told that Lui Shou Kwan’s conception of Zen painting had much to do with the Zen boom then prevailing in Europe and America. Lee told me that Lui had given evening painting classes for adults at the Chung Shan Middle School between the late 1950s and the early 1960s. In those days, Lui often went to see him at his home after class. Lee confided to me that during those gatherings, he had shown some foreign art magazines and newspapers to Lui, including the two Japanese art magazines

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338 Here, I may also mention that early in the 1950s, HKU’s main library had admitted a few Japanese art books into its collection. Among them were the two volumes of Pageant of Japanese Art issued by the Tokyo National Museum between 1952 and 1954, and Hugo Munsterberg’s The Arts of Japan: An Illustrated History published by Thames and Hudson in London in 1957. These art books might also be useful for Lui to accumulate his knowledge on Japanese art.
339 In 1974, Lee moved to work as Art Lecturer at the Northcote College of Education. Later in 1980, he went back to teach at the Grantham College of Education until his retirement in 1984.
Geijutsu Shincho 芸術新潮 and Bijutsu Techo 美術手帖, the English art magazine Studio, and the French newspaper Le Figaro.\(^{341}\) Although Lee could not read Japanese or French, his fair conversancy with the English language would have permitted him to relate to Lui what he knew about those images appearing in the magazines and newspapers. Between 1958 and 1959, Lee obtained a scholarship to pursue his studies in art education at the Brighton College of Art and Craft in the U.K.\(^{342}\) While he was pursuing his overseas studies, he came to learn of the popularity of Zen in the West, especially in America. Lee remembers clearly that he had told Lui Shou Kwan about this Western phenomenon upon his return to Hong Kong. This recollection of Lee should be reliable since he himself had exhibited a series of calligraphic works on the poems by the legendary Zen figure, Hanshan, in his one-man show, ‘Le Clodo du Dharma 25 Poèmes de Han-Shan, Calligraphies de Li Kwok-Wing’, at Centre de Publication Asie Orientale, Universite de Paris – VII, in 1975 (fig. 113). As a matter of fact, Lee still keeps a book on Hanshan and the American Zen boom in his personal library.\(^{343}\) Given that the postwar Zen boom exerted not a small effect upon a number of American modernist artists, and that some of these artists’ stylistics had an overt bearing on Lui Shou Kwan’s work, it behoves us to briefly discuss the Zen boom before going into Lui Shou Kwan’s Zen painting series.

\(^{341}\) My interview with Lee Kwok Wing on 9 September 2005.

\(^{342}\) See Wong So Lan, ‘Lee Kwok Wing’, in Oral History of Hong Kong Art Education: Starting from the Drawing Lesson, Hong Kong, Hong Kong Society for Education in Art, 2001, p. 66.

\(^{343}\) The book, titled Hanshan shiji (Anthology of Cold Mountain Poems), was published by Wenfeng chubanshe in Taipei in 1970. Taiwanese scholar Zhong Ling has contributed an article to this book discussing Hanshan’s position in Oriental and Western literature in relation to the postwar Zen boom in America (pp. 1-20).
Postwar Zen Boom in America

The postwar Zen boom in America took place in the late 1950s and the 1960s. Its occurrence is traceable to a multiplicity of reasons. For the sake of preventing our discussion from wandering too far afield from Lui Shou Kwan’s art, I shall not enumerate in detail all the possible causes that might have led to the emergence of the Zen boom. Perhaps it is adequate to point out that Zen as a Mahayanist branch of Buddhism arrived rather late in America, and was not introduced formally to the American people until the turn of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. In the course of the transmission of Zen in America, a host of figures (among them monks, scholars, historians, philologists and intellectuals) had helped to spread it to different levels of the American society through their translations, interpretations, and writings on Zen. The most crucial elements for bringing Zen to the range of common curiosity, however, were sown by a group of well educated Japanese Zen monks and lay preachers who visited America in the early decades of the twentieth century. These Zen proponents from Japan endorsed a new kind of Buddhism which made Mahayana Buddhism, Zen included, into a more socially engaging and intellectually respectable religion adaptable to the modern age. Moreover, they were keen on attributing Zen qualities to the Japanese and propagating them as unique to the Japanese culture.\textsuperscript{344} Through the essays and books they wrote as well as the speeches and lecture tours some of them offered in America and Europe, they successfully disseminated Japanese Zen and Japanese Zen aesthetics to their Western audiences.

Of the Japanese Zen missionaries who journeyed to America, the most pivotal was the Buddhist scholar, D. T. Suzuki (1870-1966). Suzuki first arrived in America in 1893 as the interpreter of his teacher, Shaku Sōen (1859-1919), an invitee to ‘The World Parliament of Religions’ held in Chicago that year. Between 1897 and 1958, Suzuki made three more visits to America. During his stays there, he produced many English writings on Mahayana Buddhism and Zen Buddhism: in the forms of translations, books, articles, essays and reviews.345 As a result of his prodigious writings, coupled with a handful of other books published earlier by such Japanese writers as Okakura Kakuzō (1862-1913) and Nukariya Kaiten (1867-1934),346 Zen as a spiritual belief gained wide receptivity in postwar America.347 Suzuki saw Zen generally as a non-dual and intuitive spiritual tradition which stands in sharp contrast with Western culture that champions reason and a dualistic mode of thinking.348 Due to his


346 Examples include Ideals of the East, with Special Reference to the Art of Japan (London, J. Murray, 1903), The Awakening of Japan (New York, Century, 1904), and The Book of Tea (New York, Putnam’s, 1906) by Okakura; and Religion of the Samurai: A Study of Zen Philosophy and Discipline in China and Japan (London, Luzac, 1913) by Nukariya.


emphasis on Zen's intuitive and non-dualistic aspects, Suzuki's teaching of this spiritual tradition was tinged with a strong sense of mysticism or transcendentalism. In Suzuki's interpretation, Zen was also seen as 'the very heart of Asian spirituality, the essence of Japanese culture, and the key to the unique qualities of the Japanese race'. In viewing Zen as an emblem of Japanese spirituality, Suzuki thus placed Zen at the core of almost everything Japanese, including Japanese thought, character and aesthetic tastes. In all respects, Suzuki was the most important advocate for Japanese Zen and Japanese Zen culture to the West in the early years after the Second World War. Under his influence, 'Zen' was turned into a household term to the Americans in the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, the impact of the Zen persuasion was not merely felt in America, but also observed in some European countries such as France and Germany.

350 Regarding the vital role that Suzuki played in the Western understanding of Zen, see Bernard Faure, 'The Rise of Zen Orientalism', in Chan Insights and Oversight, pp. 52-88; and Abe Masao, 'The Influence of D. T. Suzuki in the West', in A Zen Life: D. T. Suzuki Remembered, pp. 109-117.
351 A number of American scholars have pointed out that the appeal of Zen to postwar Americans owed a great deal to the loss they felt after the war and their realization of the limitations of reason as an avenue towards satisfying man's spiritual longing. Moreover, they have pointed out that the then moribund religious institutions in the West might also be a reason for attracting the Americans to Zen, since Zen's advocacy of intuitive experience opened up a new spiritual vista to them, enabling them to seek peace and solace inside themselves. For such arguments, see, for instance, Van Meter Ames, 'Current Western Interest in Zen', Philosophy East and West, vol. 10, no. 1/2 (Apr.-Jul., 1960), pp. 23-33; and Henry C. Finney, 'American Zen's "Japanese Connection": A Critical Case Study of Zen Buddhism's Diffusion to the West', Sociological Analysis, vol. 52, no. 4 (Winter, 1991), Religious Movements and Social Movements, p. 394.
Aside from explicating Zen through his writings, Suzuki also gave talks on this subject in American cities and universities. As it turned out, his lectures further spread his influence among American intellectuals from different academic disciplines. Those he delivered at the Columbia University between 1952 and 1957 were especially useful for him to strike up a wide acquaintanceship with prominent figures from the fields of religion, psychology, psychoanalysis, literature and broadcasting. Carl Jung, Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, Martin Heidegger, Thomas Merton, Hugo Munsterberg, Alan Watts, and the ‘beat’ poets and writers including Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and Gary Synder, had all come under his influence. The fascination that these American intellectuals had for Zen and Zen literature prompted some of them, particularly the ‘beat’ poets and writers, to practise Zen meditation, translate Zen-flavoured Chinese landscape poems, and even write poems, novels and essays emitting a Zen taste.

In the artistic domain, Helen Westgeest demonstrates in her *Zen in the Fifties – Interaction in Art between East and West* (1996) that quite a number of celebrated American artists were also attracted to the Zen teaching by Suzuki. John Cage (1912-1992), the composer-cum-artist, is an outstanding example. According to Westgeest, Cage had attended Suzuki’s lectures at the Columbia University and had held private talks with him. After meeting Suzuki, Cage began adopting Zen ideas to compose his conceptual music and art events. This aside, he also tried to pass on his

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354 For an extensive discussion of the relationship between Zen and American literature, see Zhong Ling, ‘Chan wenhua yu Meiguo wenxue’ (Zen Culture and American Literature), in *Zhongguo chan yu Meiquo wenxue*, pp. 297-370.
knowledge of Zen to his fellow artists through the talks he gave at The Club in New York. Westgeest’s research shows that Cage’s passion for Zen had in turn initiated noticeable enthusiasm for this spiritual belief in some American Abstract Expressionists, including Robert Motherwell, Franz Kline and Ad Reinhardt. Like Cage, they were inspired to produce works reflective of Zen under the direct or indirect influence of Suzuki.

Did Lui Shou Kwan know Suzuki’s specific notion of Zen and his notable influence in the American art world? Similar to other issues revolving around Lui’s Zen painting, there is no clear answer to this question. Although we cannot find Suzuki’s name in any of his writings or in those by his followers, we have reason to believe that Lui must have heard of Suzuki since he was an avid reader and had an appetite for everything relating to art. Based on what he learnt from Lee Kwok Wing, Lui could have further traced the development of Zen in America and Europe, and looked for those Zen-inspired works by consulting his artist-friends and those foreign art materials made accessible to him. There is no way to tell, however, how much or how deep he might know of the Suzuki brand of Zen. After all, the Chinese translations


357 One point that I ought to point out here is that under the great tide of rewriting Zen over the past two decades, the Zen rhetoric which Suzuki constructed for the Western audiences did not escape criticism. From 1980 on, some scholars have reproved him for a number of issues, including the considerable license with which he took in interpreting certain central concepts of Zen and the nationalistic ideology that underlay his praise of Japanese culture. For some insightful discussions on the rise and fall of the Suzuki brand of Zen in America, see Robert H. Sharf, ‘The Zen of Japanese
of Suzuki’s works had not yet come out in his time. All we can tell is that Lui came to conceive his Zen painting series in a few years after he had made friends with Lee Kwok Wing and Pau Shiu Yau. As we shall see, his lack of skill in foreign languages, hence, incomplete understanding of foreign art works, turned out to be an advantage for him to freely exercise his imagination. Just as Zen negates any fixity in meaning, the Zen paintings created by Lui seem to promise a commensurable space, where different styles, techniques, themes and iconographies can blend in with each other without a definite code of interpretation.

Lui Shou Kwan’s Personal Notion of ‘Zen’

Although the Zen painting series is of crucial importance to the overall evaluation of Lui Shou Kwan’s artistic achievement, we cannot find any writing by Lui which gives a precise explanation on how he perceived Zen as both a religious and artistic concept. This notwithstanding, the present section aims to patch up some relevant information scattered in Lui’s writings to present a general picture of his personal notion of ‘Zen’. To do this, we shall make references to three sources of information. They include the artist’s two undated manuscripts, respectively titled ‘Life Philosophy and Thinking of Painting’ (‘Rensheng zhexue yu huihua sixiang’ (人生哲學與繪畫思想)) and ‘A Self-Explanation of My Thought and Pursuit’ (‘Sixiang yu zhuixun zishu’ (思想與追尋自述)), and his attributed article, ‘Symbolism and Zen: A Nationalism’, Curators of the Buddha, pp. 107-160; Judith Snodgrass, ‘From Eastern Buddhism to Zen: A Postscript’, in Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the West: Orientalism, Occidentalism, and the Columbian Exposition, Chapel Hill and London, The University of North Carolina Press, 2003, pp. 259-277; and Gong Juan, ‘Chanxue shuxie yu xifang shijie’ (The Discourse of Zen and the Western World), in Zhongguo chanxue yanjiu rumen, pp. 245-252.
Let us begin our discussion with the manuscript 'Life Philosophy and Thinking of Painting' since it contains a short yet unequivocal comment on Lui Shou Kwan's religious inclination. Previously, we came to a conclusion that Lui was an agnostic with a strong interest in the Buddhist religion. In this manuscript, Lui again confirmed that he had no particular religious belief, yet he said this would not deter him from talking about religion, including Zen. In a lecture note compiled in *The Manuscripts of Lui Shou Kwan*, Lui further put forth a view that almost all the great Chinese thinkers and scholars in the past had familiarized themselves with Buddhism, among whom some eventually became Buddhist scholars. Lui did not specify which Buddhist school he meant. However, the school that was preoccupying him at that point would likely be the Zen school. There is ground for this conjecture. For one, Lui had developed by then an amiable, if not exactly close, friendship with the Zen monk Yuexi. Besides, many past eminent scholar-painters, notably Wang Wei, the

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359 See Lui Shou Kwan, 'Life Philosophy and Thinking of Painting', unpaginated.
360 See *The Manuscripts of Lui Shou Kwan*, p. 292.
earliest champion of ink painting in Chinese art history, were conversant with Zen and even practiced Zen meditation themselves.\(^{361}\)

Besides entrenching Zen within the Chinese intellectual tradition, Lui Shou Kwan also applied the concept of Zen to himself by declaring that his own attitude towards life and art could be encapsulated by the word ‘Zen’. What did Zen mean to him? For this question, we may again refer to the manuscript ‘Life Philosophy and Thinking of Painting’, *The Manuscripts of Lui Shou Kwan*, and *Lectures on Ink Painting*. In ‘Life Philosophy and Thinking of Painting’, Lui stated clearly that ‘Zen means primarily to seek sudden enlightenment, that is, to become a Buddha.’ But what did it mean by Lui to be a Buddha? ‘A Buddha means’, Lui said, ‘self-awareness, awakening others, and the full perfection and acting out of wisdom’. And what exactly was the nature of a Buddha in Lui’s mind? ‘The nature of a Buddha’, Lui deemed, ‘is awakening and being able to act out one’s awakening (jue er neng xing, wei zhi foxing 覺而能行, 謂之佛性).’\(^{362}\) The idea concerning the nature (xing 性) of a Buddha that Lui Shou Kwan put forward here conforms to that which he used to hold for the ‘enlightened’ artist. To Lui’s way of thinking, the nature of the Buddha and that of the ‘enlightened’ artist have a commonality of performing altruistic acts, albeit aiming at different targets. Lui held that a truly wise artist seeks not merely self-awareness, but also aspires to help others to achieve their awakening. Considering his high regard for ‘awakening’ in both life and art, there is little wonder that Lui would often profess his


own painting as a kind of ‘painting of the enlightened mind’ (juexing de huihua （覺性的繪畫）).³⁶³

The word xing (also translatable as ‘mind’) is a key concept in Zen teaching and is of great significance in Lui Shou Kwan’s perception of artistic pursuit. Under different circumstances, Lui had used the term variously to refer to one’s ‘self-consciousness’, ‘personal spirituality’, or ‘selfhood’. But more often he would mean it to signify zixing 自性 (‘individual mind’). Moreover, he tended to employ it in concert with jue 偵 (‘to perceive’ or ‘awakening’) and xing 行 (‘to act’ or ‘action’), another two common expressions in the Buddhist lexicon. In Buddhist sutras, the implications of jue and xing are usually associated with the life and work of Sakyamuni Buddha. In his ‘Life Philosophy and Thinking of Painting’, Lui made it a point that the Buddha’s greatness lies in his showing the way to discover one’s inherent Buddha-nature, as well as the means to attain enlightenment for oneself and for others.³⁶⁴ Since Lui saw religious enlightenment as comparable to artistic awakening, he had more than once mentioned the Buddha’s self-enlightenment and the Buddha’s assistance of others to achieve their own enlightenment in his art discussions. Such frequent references to the Buddha’s compassion for other living beings are evidence of his own identification with the approach of the Mahayanist. As the Salvationist branch of Buddhism, the Mahayana (‘the Great Vehicle’) is distinguishable from the Hinayana (‘the Small Vehicle’) in its endorsement of the notion of universal Buddhahood. Unlike the Hinayana which focuses on the practitioner’s self-cultivation of the dharma, the Mahayana champions the pursuit of enlightenment not only for one’s own self, but

³⁶³ See, for instance, Lui Shou Kwan, Lectures on Ink Painting, p. 76.
also for all other sentient beings. The regular references that Lui made to the Buddha's personal enlightenment and compassion for others point to his approval of the idea that everyone has a unique nature waiting to be fully explored. Many times in his writings, he spoke of tongjue tongxing 同覺同行 and tongxing tongzheng 同行同證 (both similarly meaning 'to practise and cultivate awakening together').

Although Lui insisted that art should be pursued for its own sake, his vision about artistic creation was yet broad. He reckoned that art does not merely involve one's personal artistic achievement, but also implies one's commitment and selfless contribution to the future development of the art which one pursues. Taking that Lui's writings abound in attempts to convey this idea, I believe it makes sense to view and interpret the imageries he created in his Zen paintings with such a notion in mind.

Lui Shou Kwan's Zen Painting Series

The vast majority of Lui Shou Kwan's Zen paintings are executed in a non-figurative manner which evokes the immediacy of the abstract works by many Western expressionists. Stylistically, they can be divided into two modes of expression: the 'calligraphic' mode which is characterized by the employment of dry brushwork and bold, linear configurations; and the 'splashed' mode which is marked by the use of expansive washes of ink and colours, often across the whole painting surface. Compared with his semi-abstract and abstract landscapes, Lui's Zen paintings are relatively large in size and may measure up to 330x180 cm. And different from those

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365 See, for instance, The Manuscripts of Lui Shou Kwan, p. 292.
landscape works which have their focus placed primarily on visual perception and the
innovation of formal elements, the Zen paintings that Lui created are often borne with
extra formal connotations through his deployment of a symbolic language of forms
pertaining to the lotus motif.

The calligraphic type of paintings was the first group of paintings that appeared in Lui
Shou Kwan's Zen œuvre. Given that they evolved initially out of Lui's abstract
landscapes, some pictorial forms resembling, say, a boat, a mountain, or a small island
(figs. 114 and 115), can still be detected in such early pieces. As a matter of fact,
some of these early calligraphic Zen works and those abstract landscapes by Lui may
look so similar in appearance that one can perceive the latter as a 'skeleton' waiting to
be fully fleshed out in the former. We may take an abstract landscape painting (fig.
116) and a Zen painting (fig. 117) done by Lui in 1963 as exemplars to illustrate this
point. In the Zen painting here, we can see how the sun appearing in the guise of a
circular form and the sequence of ink washes representing a mountain range in the
landscape work have been transformed into the shape of a lotus bud and the like of
lotus leaves. In the late 1960s, Lui Shou Kwan gradually stabilized his Zen
compositions by rendering the lotus in the shape of a bud and a mass of leaf-form.
The two forms since then became the twin foundations that constituted the majority of
the Zen paintings which he created thereafter. They were the leitmotifs which allowed
him to strive for iconographic perfection and aesthetic excellence. Of the two motifs,
the lotus bud was more important for Lui to express his idea. It served both as a
departure point for him to express his unique understanding of Zen as well as a
motivating theme for him to develop other imageries relating to this motif. Below we
shall examine some of the lotus-derived imageries created by Lui under the captions
of the calligraphic and splashed modes of rendition. The symbolic dimension which
he opened up in his Zen painting series will give us an intimate view into his psyche, as well as inform us how he perceived himself and wished to be perceived.

**Zen Paintings in the Calligraphic Mode**

The vast majority of the images in Lui Shou Kwan's Zen series were rendered in the calligraphic mode of expression. Very often they were composed against the bare whiteness of the painting paper, with the lotus captured in the form of a red bud or, some might read it, a red flame. Sometimes, Lui might depict the lotus in the shape of a square or a rectangle, and in blues or yellows. As for the lotus leaves, Lui was inclined to brush them out with a sequence or sequences of bold, angular and overlapping ink strokes, at times horizontally, at times vertically across the length of the painting paper (fig. 118). On some occasions, he might surround the leaves with random splatters, drips, or sweeps of ink (fig. 119). Still, there are some cases in which he wielded the dark cluster of ink leaves from the bottom all the way up to the top, or vice versa, in one single breadth (fig. 120); or he might shape the leaves like a slight curve on one side of the painting (fig. 121). For these calligraphic Zen images, Lui Shou Kwan was accustomed to depicting them with a flat, broad brush (*diwenbi* 底紋筆 or *paibi* 排筆) and on a highly absorbent paper (usually *yubanxuan* 玉版宣). This combination, according to Wucius Wong, enabled Lui to obtain the aesthetically appealing *feibai* 飛白 (literally 'flying white') or staining effect that he hoped for.\(^{367}\)

As one may perceive, the broad strokes executed in this manner would become at

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once the substance as well as the contours of the pictorial forms. They were material to generating an optical vigour and a modernist charm of simplicity that were rarely found in the works by other Hong Kong ink painters in Lui’s time.

Despite their structural simplicity, Lui Shou Kwan’s calligraphic Zen paintings were conceived with a desire to convey a spiritual depth. This desire was made clear by Lui himself in an article, titled ‘A Self-Explanation of My Thought and Quest’, in which he laid bare a few levels of meaning that he meant to confer on the lotus- and leaf-form. We may start by discussing the connotations of the lotus leaves. Lui said if the inky strokes representing the lotus leaves are wielded like a vast expanse of the sea, they may be taken to denote the mundane world where human beings inhabit. Yet when they are depicted in the semblance of billowing sea waves, they may signify the boisterousness of the petty world of mankind. At times, Lui might write out his strokes in a stormy manner. In that case, he advised us that they may symbolize a human path which is beset with difficulties or, conversely, a thriving and prosperous everyday world. And if the strokes are brushed like water waves, Lui proposed, they may be viewed as a sign of the delusion of this world. In contrast to the multivalence of the leaf-form, the symbolic meaning which Lui invested in the lotus flower (be it in the bud-form or otherwise) is a great deal much simpler. Briefly put, the lotus was meant by Lui to symbolize the unmoved and the unperturbed, or a state of total control or spiritual transcendence. Apart from the lotus-bud and the lotus-leaf forms, Lui had also thought of bestowing meanings to other physical parts of the lotus plant as well as to some objects that are associable with the lotus. He had set down his thoughts elsewhere in the form of questions, purportedly for self-contemplation. These questions have been nicely translated by Wucius Wong into English as follows:
Can the mire of the lotus pond symbolize darkness, chaos and filthiness of the sea of the mankind?

Can the upright imagery of the lotus stems which are straight outside but hollow inside, with no offshoots or branches, be portrayed in abstract lines?

Can the feeling of mercifulness be expressed by the petals and the yellow stamens of the lotus flower which become abstract planes and dots in visual representation?

Can a modern expression be achieved by representing the varying greenness of the lotus leaves in different components of pure yellows and blues, and by using a line to indicate the surface of water which implies the ups and downs of human lives?

Can the fresh and elegant imagery of the lotus be created with the rearrangement of its petals wherein the curvilinear lines and colours are transformed with the addition of one or two dew drops?

Can the idea of the new replacing the old be expressed by changing tenderly green leaves into partially square shapes or by enlarging parts of the edges of the withering ones? 368

Reading the questions which Lui Shou Kwan asked of himself in conjunction with the information provided earlier, we might see the artist’s desire of turning the lotus into a symbolic motif with which to open a humanistic dimension in his artistic creation. Unlike many Chinese painters who focused on depicting the particularities of the lotus, Lui cared little about seeking an exact effigy of this flower. Rather, he chose to distort

368 Quoted, with slight modifications, from Wucius Wong, ‘Introduction’, The World of Lui Shou-kwan, p. 9.
the lotus motif in the interest of portraying it in an intellectual manner. At base, this approach conformed to his consistent urge for creativity in art. In his writings, Lui once said that the most potent means of expressing creativity is to revamp the physical form of an object into an artistic form, and re-configure it on the painting surface. This idea might explain in part why he kept emphasizing in his teaching that the ultimate goal of the artist was nothing other than to seek satisfaction through expressing his personality and aspirations. What were Lui Shou Kwan's aspirations then when he launched his Zen painting series? We shall explore this question after reviewing the symbolic meanings of the lotus in Buddhist and Chinese cultures.

The Lotus in the Context of Buddhist and Chinese Culture

The lotus is a sacred icon saturated with rich meanings in the Buddhist world, and is also an oft-cited symbol in Chinese culture. The popularity of the lotus has much to do with its unique provenance of growth and physical structure. Given the fact that the lotus grows in muddy waters yet blossoms pure and immaculate out of such waters, this flower is seen by the Buddhists as a perfect icon to refer to man's nature which they presume as originally unstained. In this light, the lotus is also viewed as a symbol of the enlightened mind which is freed from the delusion of the manifest world. If placed in a broader religious context, the origin of this particular symbolism of the lotus may be traced back to ancient Hindu mythology, where it stood variously

369 For Lui's advocacy of 'creativity' as the cardinal virtue of art production, see Lui Shou Kwan, A Study of Chinese Painting, pp. 65, 71, 77-78.

370 See, for instance, ibid., pp. 50-51, 148.
as an emblem of the primordial waters, of birth and creation, as well as of life and wealth.\textsuperscript{371} When the symbolism of the lotus was later taken over by the Buddhists for their own teachings, it was modified into a simile for stainless spirituality, liberation, and enlightenment. The Mahayana scriptures, be they in Sanskrit, Chinese or Tibetan, are replete with references to the lotus. It may be used to denote the life, teachings, or physical image of the historical Buddha, or the worship paid to the bodhisattvas. Or it may connote the splendour of certain Buddha-lands and palaces. In some instances, it is used to refer to the iconic attributes of certain bodhisattvas, deities, or celestial beings. Apart from these uses, the lotus may also be employed figuratively to describe the forms of some seated postures and hand gestures adopted by the Esoteric school (\textit{Mizong 密宗}). In the domains of Buddhist teaching and Buddhist art, the lotus is indeed everywhere. Almost every single part of the lotus plant (such as the lotus bud, lotus stalk and lotus leaf) and every possible image that may be tied with the lotus (e.g., lotus offering, lotus pedestal, lotus throne, lotus pond, lotus nimbus) have been fully utilized to portray the holiness of the depicted subject. Among all the connotations of the lotus, the one which points to its purity and, by implication, its symbolic wisdom, is beyond question the commonest in visual arts. We may find abundant evidence of this reference in the religious and decorative arts of such Asian countries as China, Japan, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, the Malay Archipelago, and Indochina whose cultures were at various points considerably influenced by Buddhism.\textsuperscript{372}

\textsuperscript{371} For the origin of the lotus' symbolic usage, see William E. Ward, 'The Lotus Symbol: Its Meaning in Buddhist Art and Philosophy', \textit{The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism}, vol. 11, no. 2 (Dec., 1952), Special Issue on Oriental Art and Aesthetics, pp. 135-146.

Of all the Asian cultures that have been under the tremendous sway of Buddhism, the Chinese culture may be said to be the one that has taken the greatest interest in exploiting the lotus' symbolic purity in literature. One major reason for this is that a similar idiomatic usage has been employed by Chinese writers since the eleventh century. The most important textural usage began with the prose essay, ‘Ai lian shuo’ (‘In Praise of the Lotus’), by the Northern Song philosopher Zhou Dunyi (1017-1073). Zhou’s essay offered high praises to the beauty of the lotus and presented it as a symbol of chastity having an uncorrupted and transcendent character of humanism. The excerpt below shows how the philosopher accorded his encomia to the lotus:

... the lotus ... emerges from muddy dirt but is not contaminated; it reposes nobly above the clear water; hollow inside and straight outside, its stems do not straggle or branch. Its subtle perfume pervades the air far and wide. Resting there with its radiant purity, the lotus is something to be appreciated from a distance and not to be profaned by intimate approach. In my opinion, the chrysanthemum is the flower of retirement and leisure; the peony the flower of rank and wealth. But the lotus is the flower of purity and integrity ...

Since Zhou Dunyi gave his elegant eulogy of the lotus, the flower’s attributed loftiness has become classic in Chinese culture. For centuries, numerous poets, writers and artists have drawn upon such symbolism to comment on things related to moral purity and integrity. The imprint of this conventional symbolism of the lotus can also be discerned in the work of Lui Shou Kwan. Besides alluding subtly to the lotus' classical symbolism in the aforesaid questions which he drafted for self-contemplation,

Lui had also made several references to Zhou Dunyi’s personification of the lotus in other writings. In the manuscript ‘A Self-Explanation of My Thought and Quest’, for example, he stated explicitly that the real motive behind Zhou Dunyi’s writing of his ‘Ai lian shuo’ was to illuminate the importance of the nurture of morals, an essential prerequisite for a junzi 君子. To the Chinese, the term junzi implies ‘a gentleman’, ‘an ideal person’, or ‘a perfected human being’. The concept of junzi was central to Confucianism, the philosophy which formed the key basis of Chinese culture and practically China’s entire intellectual tradition. Confucian practitioners emphasized a person’s self-realization as well as setting of an exemplary model of propriety for emulation in society. The junzi that Lui referred to in his writing, if mapped with this facet of Confucian doctrine and his own Mahayanist approach in art, might be interpreted as denoting a person who is poised, mature, magnanimous, and helpful towards others. In the history of Chinese painting, countless artists have made figurative connections of flowers and plants with human character to express their personal ideals and visions. The plums, orchids, chrysanthemum, bamboo, for instance, have each been attributed with individual moral qualities symbolizing strength, steadfastness, or resiliency in adversity. The symbolism of these flowers and plants, and a few others, is actually more often appropriated than that of the lotus in Chinese painting. Lui Shou Kwan, however, was insistent on utilizing the canonical connotations of the lotus alone to exert his creative imagination, to conceive his Zen aesthetic, as well as to project his individualistic self in it.

The Lotus as the Artist's Ideal Self

Lui Shou Kwan's intention of projecting an image of his own ideal self in his Zen series can be illustrated by two calligraphic Zen works which are likewise inscribed with the Chinese characters *buran* 不染 ('not defiled')(figs. 122 and 123). In these two paintings, the lotus is uniformly positioned at the upper register of the painting and disassociated from a dark mass of broad strokes which appears to be climbing forcefully high up from the bottom. The soaring lotus in both works likewise hints at Lui's personal transcendence. The thesis of this symbolic usage can find support from his manuscript, 'Life Philosophy and Thinking of Painting', which contains the following remarks:

To a religious believer, transcendence means to seek refuge in a monastery, to detach from society, or to escape from reality. Yet from the philosophical viewpoint, transcendence implies no such detachment or escape, but means to keep oneself awake in society, remaining undefiled. This is the idea of 'untainted purity' as symbolized by the lotus. A person having spiritual consciousness and a sincere character ... lives and works like other people in society. People of this like, however, distinguish themselves from the ordinary folks by having in their minds a special goal to pursue. Their goal differs from that of the common people in that it is not meant for the pursuit of material pleasures, but for a spiritual end or the actualization of a thought. This goal enables them to proclaim their existence in another world, make their contributions to society, and offer salvation to other living beings.\(^{375}\)

The above passage tells vividly of Lui Shou Kwan's ambition to attain artistic transcendence and to impart his apprehension of the way to achieving this to other

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\(^{375}\) See Lui Shou Kwan, 'Life Philosophy and Thinking of Painting', unpaginated.
people. As has been argued, Lui Shou Kwan saw himself as a loner fighting against the prevalent trend of blind imitation, and cherished the dream of rejuvenating Chinese painting through reviving the creativity of its practitioners. Taking these aspirations of Lui into consideration, we might view the towering lotus in his Zen paintings as a pictorial symbol of his pure and worthy soul, a soul which is unsullied by the filth of this prosaic world. Another work where we find a similar yet sly comment on Lui’s spiritual transcendence is Zen #0-76 (fig. 124). Here, instead of specifying the idea of loftiness via actual written characters, the artist has graphically presented this notion through a few inky strokes and a couple of small, red geometrical forms which jointly suggest the words bu 不 (‘no’) and ran 染 (‘defile’).

Aside from buran, Lui Shou Kwan had also borrowed other Zen terms to create his lotus-based paintings. One of them is wunian 無念 (literally, ‘no-thought’ or ‘absence-of-thought’). The term wunian is seminal in the teaching of Zen. In The Platform Sutra, Huineng is said to have brought forward the term several times to his disciples. On one occasion, he told his followers that wunian means ‘to be free from any notion of an independent object, and to give rise to no thought while involved in dharmas.’ On another occasion, he explained its meaning as ‘to see all dharmas without being attached to them, to be detached from time and space’. There is no way to tell how deeply Lui Shou Kwan might have learnt about the concept when he came to create his wunian paintings, such as the one titled Beyond All Thoughts (1970) (fig. 125). However, we may recall that Lui was aware of a core tenet of Zen which

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376 Tony K. Lin’s translation, quoted from The Mandala Sutra and Its English Translation, pp. 119, 189.
sees that everyone originally possesses a Buddha-nature, only that this nature is defiled by various delusions; but if one can eliminate these delusions, one will recover one’s innate purity and attain wisdom. The notion of Buddha-nature is closely connected with the concept wunian. Knowing this notion enables us to see why Lui Shou Kwan should have arranged the Chinese characters wunian, the lotus-bud and the leaf-form in a descending order in the painting under discussion. If the characters and the lotus may be collectively taken as pointing to his own self, the massive leaf-form, which is tempestuously brushed out by him in the lower part of the painting, can be seen as a symbol of the chaotic world where he finds himself in. In this vein, it will not be too far-fetched to interpret the whole image as Lui’s proclamation of his transcendence of the worldly.

In some of his calligraphic Zen paintings, Lui Shou Kwan tried to further enrich their contents by incorporating into them a certain Daoist thought. In Chinese culture, the association of Zen with Daoism is not unusual since these two native Chinese philosophical streams share many similarities, especially in regard to their search for spiritual liberation. The Daoist quest for harmony between man and the universe and its stress on intuitive insight, quiet contemplation, and the unspeakability of Dao 道 ('Way'), for example, are held by many Chinese scholars as compatible with the Zen notions of meditation, enlightenment, and the inexpressibility of the true reality. Lui Shou Kwan’s Zhuangzi (fig. 126) is a work which demonstrates his implicit concurrence of the compatibility between Zen and Daoist thought. In this painting, Lui has the lotus spread out into a form reminiscent of a pair of butterfly wings, in part responding to the inscription he has put on the right, which reads ‘Zhuangzi zizai’ 莊子自在 (literally, ‘Zhuangzi is at ease’). Zhuangzi is the most significant of China’s early interpreters of Daoism and is best known for his advocacy of a life of
untrammelled freedom through cultivating *wuwei* 無為 ('no-action'). The message conveyed here calls to mind one of Zhuangzi’s most memorable parables, commonly known as *Zhuangzhou mengdie* 莊周夢蝶 ('Zhuangzi Dreaming a Butterfly'). The parable accounts how Zhuangzi once dreamed of a carefree butterfly, yet could not determine afterwards whether he was really the Zhuangzi who had dreamed a butterfly or it was a butterfly which had just dreamed he was Zhuangzi. This dream of Zhuangzi is a quaint metaphor for the indistinctness between reality and illusion. Lui Shou Kwan apparently found this message commensurate with the Zen notion of emptiness, and hence unhesitantly substituted the butterfly for the lotus in the present work bearing the philosopher’s name. The result is, while we may regard this painted *Zhuangzi* as an allusion to the ultimate absence of things, we may also project the butterfly as another alter ego of the artist. Like the former *wunian* painting, Lui’s *Zhuangzi* seems to be a visual statement of his spiritual sublimity – a sublimity which signifies his ability to take control of his own life and to overcome the impediments he encountered in this secular world of desires and afflictions. The interpretation ventured here is endorsed by Lui’s personal utterance in an article, titled ‘The Life of Zhuangzi is Art’ (‘Zhuangzi de rensheng jiushi yishu’ 莊子的人生就是藝術), in which he asserted Zhuangzi’s full embrace of freedom and mastery of his own life is worth being considered a work of art. Lui said:

> Independence and freedom made up the art of Zhuangzi’s life, the appeal of his life.

> ... Zhuangzi contemplated the subjective ‘I’ from the objective perspective. From there he looked on the cosmic life and obtained real freedom. He contemplated his own self as well as the whole world. The root of the art of Chinese painting indeed lies in such a kind of contemplation.
Why does a painter paint? Why does he want to pursue spirit-resonance, form, and imagery in his work? Why should he study nature and yet seek not a direct portrayal of it?

It is because when the painter paints a work, he is like what Zhuangzi molds his own self or writes his Nanhuajing [The Pure Classic of Nanhua]. To express subjectivity and freedom in painting is to express one’s consciousness and the appeal of art. ...

What is the value of such a painting then?

Such a painting is comparable to a Buddha statue or Nanhuajing. It allows the viewer, amidst his daily labours, to contemplate the author’s vision and imagery, and to feel and enjoy the peace, quiet, and a sense of undefiled spirituality that his work brings to him, and also to reflect upon the thought that is awakened in him. The value offered by such a painting is utterly spiritual. This is the most unique value of Chinese painting ...

Lui Shou Kwan believed that Chinese painting was a branch of human knowledge and its cornerstone was laid on Chinese academic thinking. In view of this belief, there is little surprise that he should have thought of blending Zhuangzi’s thinking into his Zen pantheon, since Daoism was a principal philosophical and intellectual tradition in Chinese culture and Zhuangzi was a key founder of Daoism. The Zhuangzi that Lui created is compact, clean and crisp in its total effect. Its modernist brushwork and formal simplicity, along with its philosophical signification, make the work a most memorable one in his Zen series. By the late 1970s, Zhuangzi had been written into art history as a representative work of modern Hong Kong ink painting. In the years

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377 Nanhuajing is another name for Zhuangzi, a classic Daoist book by the philosopher Zhuangzi. The name has been in use since 742 when the Tang emperor Xuanzong mandated honorific titles for Daoist texts.

378 My free translation of Lui’s wordings in The Manuscripts of Lui Shou Kwan, p. 312.
that ensued, it continued to lend itself as a major example of modern painting in the discourse of twentieth-century Chinese art (figs. 127 and 128).

Lui Shou Kwan remained vigilant about the new art trends in the West all the time. In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, the newly emerged 'hard-edge' painting came to his notice and inspired him to add a feel of this painting type to his Zen imagery. The primary strategy which Lui adopted to achieve this feel was to integrate the lotus motif with some geometric planes in the form of, say, a rectangle or a triangle (figs. 129 and 130). In several cases, he gave the 'hard-edge' feel a slight twist by using a line or lines to divide his composition into several compartments. A noted example is a painting done in 1969 (fig. 131), in which a red, thick line is placed in the middle to bisect the picture surface roughly into two halves. When asked by his art agent, Barker, about its potential meaning, Lui disclosed that the red vertical was conceived as a lotus flower at the onset, but he later developed it into a dot, then a line, and finally its present form. He told Barker that the two massive leaf-like forms in the painting could be viewed as the symbols of the right and left parts of the cerebrum.\textsuperscript{379} Based on Lui's own explanation, we can infer that the two leaf-forms are there to point to the profane versus the celestial, or the material versus the spiritual. Although our curiosity about this bizarre image may not be completely satisfied by such an inference, we should perhaps settle our curiosity by accepting that the incompleteness of Lui's explanation is in accord with the Zen rhetoric which takes words as beyond the question. In any event, Lui's fusion of abstractionism with the hard-edge stylistic

succeeds in adding to his Zen series a fresh touch which is not observed in his former Zen paintings.

A review of Lui Shou Kwan’s early calligraphic Zen paintings (figs. 132 and 133) indicates that his dialogues with his Western counterparts were conducted not only in terms of formal configuration and colour scheme, but also of the manipulation of the brush. The reverberations are most evident when juxtaposing Lui’s early Zen works with some of the paintings by Adolph Gottlieb (1903-1974)(fig. 134), Pierre Soulages (b. 1919)(fig. 135) and Franz Kline (fig. 136). Taking that Lui had developed a strong interest in Western modern art very early on in his Hong Kong period, it is plausible that the works of these Western artists had already come to his notice prior to his conception of Zen painting. There were then a few sources which could keep him informed of their works. One of the sources was Herbert Read’s *Art Now* (1960), in which the paintings by Gottlieb, Soulages and Kline were illustrated. The other sources would be the art books and art magazines subscribed by the American Library (later renamed the U.S. Cultural Centre). Lui Shou Kwan’s artist-friend, David Lam, and his student, Chui Tze Hung (Xu Zixiong, b. 1936), had both worked as Exhibit Specialist at the Library. Lam remembers that during his employment there (1954-1964), the Library carried two American art magazines, *Art News* and *Art in America*, in its collection, which reported frequently on abstract art

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380 Figs. 134, 135 and 136 illustrated here all come from Read’s *Art Now*.

381 The American Library was initially housed in the Hong Kong Charter Bank Building in Central. When it was moved to Ice House Street, it was renamed the U.S. Cultural Centre. The Centre retained a library and established a new Film Department. The Centre was subsequently relocated to the Pacific House on Queen’s Road Central and then the Coda Plaze in Admiralty. When the library was closed in 1995, all its archives were destroyed (my telephone interview with Solomon Wong, former Art Director of the library), on 5 November 2010.
trends in Europe and America. Then a few other weekly magazines, including *Time*, *Life* and *Post-Saturday Evening*, to which the Library also subscribed, provided likewise regular news on current American art movements in the form of write-ups and visual images. According to Lam, he and Hon Chi Fun 韓志勳 (Han Zhixun, b. 1922), another close artist-friend of Lui, often helped to verbally translate some of the articles in the above magazines concerning American abstract art to Lui, and the three might hold interesting discussions on these articles afterwards. About 1960, Chui Tze Hung succeeded David Lam as Exhibit Specialist of the American Library. Although Chui cannot recall having translated any English-language article for Lui, he does remember that he had seen Lui browsing the art books and art magazines in their Library. The American Library aside, other libraries, for instance, HKU’s main library whose collection also carried art magazines issued in America, including the early 1950s issues of *Art News*, could also be avenues for Lui to gather information on the current happenings in the America art world.

Other than Gottlieb, Soulages and Kline, other American Abstract Expressionists, including Motherwell, Still, Rothko and Reinhardt, may also be drawn in to discuss and compare with Lui Shou Kwan’s abstractionistic rendition of Zen painting. Moreover, Alan Wong, a native Hongkonger whom we have mentioned in chapter three, could be a timely inspiration for Lui, too, to conceive the Zen series. A cross-viewing of Lui’s calligraphic Zen-lotus paintings with some of the abstract

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382 The information is gathered from my e-mail communication with David Lam dated 5 November 2010.

383 My telephone interview with Chui Tze Hung on 4 November 2010.

paintings done by Wong in the early 1960s shows that their works at the time reveal marked affinities in respect of composition and in the way the strokes were sparsely applied (c.f. figs. 137 and 138). Yet, no matter how close Lui’s Zen images may resemble those of Wong and his Western counterparts, one thing which is clear is that Lui never intended to imitate or replicate others’ work. His Zen paintings demonstrate that his wish was merely to make good use of some suitable styles to extend his Chinese awareness and to create a personal idiom ultimately his own.

Regarding the ‘spontaneity’ displayed in Lui’s calligraphic Zen paintings, one might argue that there is a clear dedication of the artist to the creativity of the unconscious as espoused by the American Abstract Expressionists and some European modernist artists. This argument may seem tenable if we have not seen the surviving sketches of Lui’s Zen paintings. As some of these sketches (figs. 139 and 140) may illustrate, the spontaneous feel on view in most of Lui’s calligraphic Zen paintings indeed sprang from the creative forces of his ‘conscious’ mind. In point of fact, Lui had not at least once denied having employed an intuitive approach to composing his Zen paintings. Below is the denial he made in 1963:

I do not paint in abstract because of awareness of a School of Abstract Painting: I paint in accordance with the Chinese philosophy of art, which stresses expression of the individual mind and nature of the artist. The Chinese way of life is more on the side of nature than of emotion. In our two thousand years’ tradition emotion has supplied only motive to the work of art: creation can never depend entirely upon emotion. My paintings are, therefore, more of consciousness than
of emotion – reflection of all that is hidden in the mind rather than responses of the moment to objectivity.\textsuperscript{385}

A joint reading of the above declaration by Lui Shou Kwan with his extant Zen sketches tells that there was always a preconceived plan in his mind when creating his Zen paintings. However, Zhou Luyun 周緣雲, better known as Irene Chou (b. 1924), has something different to say in her recollection. Chou is an ink painter who was close to Lui in the 1960s and 1970s (some regard her as Lui’s former student). She reminisces that before proceeding with his painting, Lui tended to place some old newspapers underneath the painting paper and, in the course of creation, might accept the characters, graphics, or advertisement pictures on those newspapers which were faintly visible from behind as optical stimulants to complete his work.\textsuperscript{386} Judged from the contrariness arising from Chou’s recollection and Lui’s self-declaration, one might contend that there was no absolute boundary between prior conception and intuitive perception in Lui’s execution of his Zen paintings. In other words, while there were times when Lui depended on a preconceived idea to finish his work, there were also times when he permitted his feeling and emotion at a particular moment to guide him through to the final process of his painting. In either case, Lui’s unconventional depiction of the lotus sent out a clear message that he was determined to reject the formulaic in Chinese painting and establish a unique representation of the Zen concept.

\textsuperscript{385} Eric Newton’s translation of Lui Shou Kwan’s words, quoted from the ‘Foreword’ he wrote for Lui’s one-man show at the Commonwealth Institute Art Gallery in 1963. For its reprint, see Contemporary Chinese Artist: Lui Shou-kwan, Modern Edition, no. 4 (1963), p. 41.

\textsuperscript{386} See Irene Chou, ‘Ji Lü Shoukun hua de fangshi’ (Notes on the Painting Method of Lui Shou Kwan), Shidai qingnian (Youth of the Age), no. 76 (15 Dec., 1975), p. 17. During my interview with Chou on 2 September 2004, she confided to me that most of Lui’s Zen works were done in her painting studio in Yaumatei, Kowloon, because he felt free there to splatter his ink without the need to worry about staining the surrounding space, as it would be the case for him at home.
Painting No. 2 (1969)(fig. 141) is another baffling calligraphic work by Lui Shou Kwan which shows a different treatment of the Zen theme. Here the lotus is depicted, as usual, at the upper part of the painting, yet it has been stylized into a red rectangle. Below this rectangle, one finds a large, whirling circular form in the shape of an inverted capital letter 'Q'. This letter ‘Q’ is half-enclosed at its base by several broad, angular ink strokes which are fashioned like the letter ‘U’, above which lies a straight, horizontal line. Both the Q- and the U-forms are painted in dark ink. When asked about the meaning of this work, again by Barker, Lui answered:

For an age in which men travel in space Zen also has its truth and relevance. Scientists can speak of it; it is potentially within the reach of all men.\textsuperscript{387}

In the same reply, Lui volunteered to offer Barker an explanation of the Chinese term, 

\textit{yuzhou} 宇宙 (‘the universe’), saying that the term traditionally denoted to a state of the mind that has reached a full understanding of all things, and hence came the dictum, \textit{yuzhou shi wuxin} 宇宙是吾心 (‘the universe is my mind’).\textsuperscript{388} Why should Lui add this explanation to Barker? The answer will become clear if one remembers that Painting No. 2 was done in 1969, the year when the American astronauts launched the unprecedented moon landing. The spectacular photographs of the earth, which Commanders Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin captured from their spacecraft Apollo 11 (fig. 142), spread all over the world and had a significant visual and psychological impact on many of those who saw them. Painting No. 2 was obviously


\textsuperscript{388} See \textit{ibid.}.  

248
created by Lui Shou Kwan after he had seen these pictures, perhaps on television or in newspapers. The fact that he could visualize this pioneering undertaking of the Americans so quickly was probably because he found little difficulty in representing the event in his usual mode of rendition. One might notice that the above space photographs feature a composition not unlike that of Lui’s normal calligraphic Zen paintings. Viewing Painting No. 2 against the photographs might lead us to project the U-form in this painting as an alphabetical rune of the universe, and the horizontal line as a symbol of the sea horizon which serves to separate the earth from the vast reach of outer space. In addition to its elegant simplicity, Painting No. 2 also takes on a sense of compressed energy via its tightly contrived composition and its rapid as well as dynamic brushwork. The spatial dimension presented in this work, moreover, breaks through the normal confines of the human world.

The topical interest manifested in Painting No. 2 brings to mind many of the ‘space’ collages that the Taiwanese modernist artist, Liu Guosong (b. 1932), did about the same time (figs. 143 and 144). Like Lui Shou Kwan, Liu Guosong also embraced a burning ambition to renew and modernize Chinese painting. In an article written in 1963, Liu Guosong revealed that he had exchanged artistic views with Lui Shou Kwan through written correspondences for a long period of time, and those exchanges had exercised a great impact on him. Liu’s disclosure indicates that

389 The American moon voyage had inspired Liu Guosong to create as many as three hundred collage works on this subject between 1969 and 1973. For a discussion of these works, see Lin Mu, ‘Taikong hua’ (Space Art), in Liu Guosong de Zhongguo xiandaihua zhi lu (The Road of Liu Guosong’s Modern Painting), Chengdu, Sichuan meishu chubanshe, 2007, pp. 181-210.

some mutual influence was in existence between the two artists during the time they were on good terms. The juxtaposition of their works created between the late 1960s and the early 1970s shows an overt kinship between them in terms of spatial composition. Yet, Lui Shou Kwan’s works appear less mechanical than Liu Guosong’s since Lui’s images were drawn with the brush, and not, as Liu did, composed with the spray gun or by means of the collage technique. Liu Guosong’s portrayal of the infinity of the universe, however, looks more vivid than Lui Shou Kwan’s. One reason is that the colour scheme which Liu employed is richer than that of Lui. Moreover, Liu’s use of ‘pulled-fibre’ technique with specially manufactured coarse papers enabled him to achieve highly naturalistic textural effects. By contrast, Lui often depicted his images with merely a few abstract ink strokes and against a blank, unornamented backdrop. As a result, his works appear more clandestine and also harder to decode than Liu’s. Painting No. 2 is such a case in point.

Generally, the aesthetic pleasure afforded by Lui Shou Kwan’s calligraphic Zen-lotus paintings is chiefly derived from their simple composition, restrained brushwork and subdued colouring, whose combination gives forth a suggestive power which adequately evokes different responses from the audiences. Lui Shou Kwan was, of course, not a rare example from the last century to have been attracted to the depiction of the lotus. Wu Changshuo 吳昌碩 (1844-1927), Qi Baishi 齊白石 (1864-1957), Zhang Daqian, Yang Shanshen, to name just a few, had all produced impressive works of the flower in multifold profiles. The lotus, in their hands, might appear sturdy and elegant or bitter and grievous; in solitude or in a group; in half bloom or

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391 In my interview with Liu Guosong on 5 August 2007, Liu told me that Lui Shou Kwan had helped him remit money to his mother, who was residing in Mainland China, for some time during the early postwar era when Liu himself could not do so from Taiwan.
full bloom; with the company of fish, birds or insects; in the sunshine, under the moonlight, or enveloped in wind, rain or snow. However, very seldom would their lotus be abstracted or dismembered that drastically, or be assigned with so many levels of meaning, as Lui Shou Kwan did in his Zen paintings. Instead of presenting the lotus for sheer aesthetic delectation, Lui transformed the motif into a profound symbol equivalent with man’s mental cosmos, whilst bringing his own personality to bear on it. The lotus was thus his self-portrait, and a vehicle for him to proclaim his individualistic existence and transcendence in art. Picturing himself as a spiritually enlightened artist, Lui Shou Kwan showed up in his paintings under the guise of a lotus, peeping above the ground, peeping at life itself.

**Zen Paintings in the Splashed Mode**

During the last two years of the 1960s, Lui Shou Kwan began creating a small number of Zen paintings in the splashed mode of expression. In this group of paintings, the lotus motif is often merged or juxtaposed with a prominent circular form suggestive of the moon, the sun or the mirror (fig. 145). Different from Lui’s calligraphic Zen works which show a dislike of gorgeousness, these splashed Zen paintings take on a characteristic feature of graded ‘fluidity’ resulting from his liberal application of ink and colour washes. This fusion of ink and colours is essential in closing the gap between the two distinct worlds respectively symbolized by the lotus and the leaf-form in Lui’s calligraphic Zen pieces. An outcome of such a fusion, as we shall see, is the opening up of other levels of meaning which help to further enrich the content of Lui’s Zen series.
The foremost significance of the circular form alluding to the moon, the sun, or the mirror in Lui Shou Kwan's splashed Zen paintings lies in its augmenting the implication of enlightenment inherent in his Zen series. One may notice that the circle is a form without beginning and end. Because of this formal specificity, it was appropriated by many Zen masters as a symbol to signify enlightenment, meaning 'an awakening to the co-dependence of all things in the world'. Record has it that Nanyue Huairang 南嶽懷讓 (677-744) was the first of Chinese Zen monks to impart the idea of true enlightenment by drawing circles in the air. Later, the Weiyang sect of the Southern Zen School also made use of the circle to develop a complex dialectical diagram of ninety-seven circular figures (yuaxiang 図相) with which to represent the steps towards ultimate awakening. As time went by, the circle became an important motif in the visual expressions of monk-painters. In the ninth century, monk Dongshan Liangjie 洞山良价 (807-869) developed a complex theological system, known as the 'Five Ranks' (wuwei 五位), to denote a five-step progression towards enlightenment. Meanwhile, he also came up with a method of visualizing the system by representing it via five circles with segments ranging from black to white. Despite its early exploitation by the Chinese in teaching the dharma, the circle's prominent use in art was yet initiated by Japanese Zen monks. Japanese monk-painters saw the circle as a perfect symbol for expressing at once visibility and


393 For a detailed discussion of this system, see Heinrich Dumoulin, S. J., 'The "Five Houses"', in The Development of Chinese Zen after the Sixth Patriarch in the Light of Mumonkan, translated into English with additional notes and appendices by Ruth Fuller Sasaki, New York, The First Zen Institute of America, Inc., 1953, pp. 24-29.
invisibility, emptiness and fullness, as well as the void, the all, and the Buddhist Wheel of the Law (meaning 'the Buddhist doctrine or truth'). In their eyes, the intriguing visual properties of the circle was an ideal symbol to represent Zen's non-dualistic teaching of existence and non-existence, the annulment of all oppositions, and hence, also the eventual emptiness of this phenomenal world.\textsuperscript{394}

Over the sixteenth century, many Japanese Zen monks, including Ungo Kiyō (1582-1659), Bankei Yōtaku (1622-1693), Hakuin Ekaku (1685-1769), Tōrei Enji (1721-1792), Gōchō Kankai (1739-1835) and Nantembo Tōjū (1839-1925), had featured the circle as an outstanding motif in their paintings.

Did Lui Shou Kwan know about the iconographical use of the circle in Japanese Zen art? The answer is quite positive. One reason, as has been argued, is that Lui could have acquired some knowledge of it through his contact with Pau Shiu Yau and Lee Kwok Wing. Besides, there are two calligraphic paintings in his Zen oeuvre (figs. 146 and 147) which show that he must have seen the works by some of the Japanese Zen monks. In these two paintings, Lui Shou Kwan has likewise reduced all essential details to a minimum, leaving the circle and a dark swing of strokes as the only prominent motifs on the picture surface. If not for the wavy ink strokes, the images of the two works would appear almost identical with those which are found in many Japanese Zen paintings, such as the ones created by Bankei (fig. 148), Hakuin (fig. 149) and Nantembo (fig. 150). The resemblance pointed out here suggests that

\textsuperscript{394} On these symbolic connotations of the circle, see Stephen Addiss, 'Introduction', \textit{The Art of Zen: Paintings and Calligraphy by Japanese Monks 1600-1925}, p. 12; and also Helmut Brinker, 'Aesthetics of Zen Buddhist Painting and Calligraphy', \textit{Eastern Aesthetics and Modern Art' Conference Treatise}, pp. 218, 222 and 225.
Lui's overlapping of the lotus with the circle in his splashed Zen variations was not a haphazard combination.

Until now, few scholars have taken note of the importance of the circle in Lui Shou Kwan's Zen series, let alone to associate the circle with the moon, the sun or the mirror in their discussions. Nevertheless, Lui's own writings do reveal that he was conscious of the symbolic connotations borne by these circular motifs and their potential for enhancing the meaning of his Zen works. In Buddhist teachings, the moon, the sun and the mirror each have their symbolic relations with the lotus. The moon and the mirror, in particular, were often paired up by ancient Chinese Zen masters as symbols to signify Buddha-nature on the ground of their common clarity and purity. Huineng, for instance, had made explicit references to the symbolic wisdom of the moon and the mirror. In *The Platform Sutra*, he is quoted to have uttered the following words: ‘wushang da niepan, yuanming chang jizhao’ 無上大涅槃，圓明常寂照 (‘supreme, great Nirvana is bright, perfect, permanent, still and shining’). In the same sutra, Huineng is also cited to have compared man’s nature, wisdom, and intelligence to the sun and the moon thus: ‘shiren xingjing, youru qingtian, hui ru ri, zhi ru yue’ 世人性淨，猶如清天，慧如日，智如月 (‘the nature of all the people in the world is as pure as the clear sky, and their wisdom is comparable

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395 The earliest mapping of the lotus with the sun is traceable to ancient Egyptian mythology, where the lotus was treated as a symbol of the sun and of life, as well as of immortality and resurrection. See William E. Ward, ‘The Lotus Symbol: Its Meaning in Buddhist Art and Philosophy’, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 11, no. 2 (Dec., 1952), p. 135.

396 These wordings are found in a Yuan version of *The Platform Sutra*. See Heng Ch’ih’s translation in *The Six Patriarch’s Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra: With the Commentary of Tripitaka Master Hua*, Burlingame, California, The Buddhist Text Translation Society, 2002.
to the sun, their intelligence to the moon'). The above two citations indicate that Zen masters saw enlightenment not only as a matter of dusting off all thoughts, bad or good, from one's mind, but more really as a matter of, in Peter Hershock's words, 'shining or polishing one's situation to the point of brilliance, revealing one's original purity'. Given the moon's and the mirror's commonality of accepting and reflecting everything that comes to them without holding on to anything, Huineng aside, many other Zen masters in the past had also employed the two motifs symbolically to elucidate their notions of emptiness, wisdom and enlightenment. Lui Shou Kwan has made explicit references to such symbolic treatment of the moon and the mirror in his manuscript, 'A Self-Explanation of My Thought and Quest', when making a comment on mortal beings' self-illumination. Elsewhere, Lui has further associated the symbolic connotations borne by the circle, the mirror and the moon with artistic creation, arguing that a painting's form and substance are not unlike external experiences of the world and that painting is capable of expressing the Buddhist notion of 'wubian sexiang, yuanman guangming' ('boundless external appearances, perfect light of wisdom and form').

Lui Shou Kwan, as we shall see, would make full use of the symbolism of the circle in the form of the moon, the sun and the mirror in his creation of his splashed Zen paintings. Before formally exploiting it in these works, he had tried out the idea of 'boundlessness' in a small number of lotus-based paintings. His strategy was to

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399 See Lui Shou Kwan, 'A Self-Explanation of My Thought and Quest', unpaginated.

narrow or reduce the empty space between the lotus and the leaf-form formerly observed in his calligraphic Zen pieces. The works titled *Zen Lotus A69-9* (fig. 151), *Zen #S-23* (fig. 152), and *In Search of Zen* (fig. 153) may be held up as examples here. In these transitional paintings, Lui has the lotus encircled by softly inflected areas of light ink shades and in turn has these shades blanketed by some darker and broader splashes of ink. As a consequence of this blending, rich surface textures arise and the two realms as symbolized by the lotus flower and the lotus leaves in those calligraphic Zen works come closer to each other.

The unity between the pure and the defiled as symbolized in Lui Shou Kwan's calligraphic Zen works would not yet be complete until he substituted his usual fleeting strokes entirely with fluid layerings of ink and colours, as is evident in *Zen IV* (fig. 154) and *Lotus in Zen* (fig. 155). The lotus motif in these splashed paintings is often merged with smoothly washed segments of pigments. Although the dark leaf-form may still be discerned at the bottom of such works, it is usually transmuted into a vague dark form or dark plane resembling the sea horizon. In producing these splashed Zen images, Lui Shou Kwan was inclined to first sprinkle his painting paper with water, then he would wet his brush fully with diluted ink and colours before setting it freely down on the paper. This manner of execution would let ink and colours intrude upon each other and interfuse in ways beyond his total control. The resultant ink and colours, in this way, appear either translucent and floating, or heavy and subsiding.

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401 For a description of Lui's technical execution of these paintings, see Wucius Wong, 'Introduction', *The World of Lui Shou-kwan*, p. 8.
A large number of the Zen paintings done by Lui Shou Kwan in the splashed mode are marked by a broad, circular application of flamboyant washes. Their images often conjure up a scene which leads viewers to think they are looking at the moon or the sun behind some resplendent sea-clouds. In short, the images bring to mind the glow of daybreak or the spectacle of sunset (figs. 156 and 157). As the lotus motif in such paintings is still often positioned atop a dark mass of ink strokes and is depicted in such a way that it seems to be emerging in the dazzle of the heavenly body, the previously suggested allusion to man's spiritual triumph over the darkness of the evil world remains a valid interpretation. However, since the fusion of pigments in these paintings tends to flatten out the painting surface into a single plane, the hierarchical distinction between the divine and the terrestrial, as noted in Lui's calligraphic Zen works, is curtailed. Given that Zen is a spiritual tradition that encourages a holistic cognition for cultivating non-discriminatory wisdom, one might actually find the mingling of the two worlds in Lui's splashed paintings a better reflection of the Zen doctrine. In some cases, the contrast of transparency and opacity produced by the modulation of ink and colour washes in these paintings also presents a sensuous touch not seen in other Zen works by Lui. Occasionally, we may find a certain gleaming effect in such works, whose existence prompts us to interpret the image as a subtle comment on the luminousness of the things in themselves, that is, just as what they originally are.

In some of his Zen paintings in the splashed mode, Lui Shou Kwan has applied his ink and colour washes so freely gestural that their images appear to nearly forsake legibility (fig. 158). Such imagistic indistinctness may be read as an oblique reference to the co-relatedness of all things in this boundless world, as is preached in every Zen and Buddhist scripture. There were times, too, that Lui might blend obscure fields of
colour with sprinkled ink and/or colour dots. *Zen #T-94* (fig. 159) is one of the examples which best illustrates this manner of execution. Here, we find an image which takes after a scene captured from the depths of the ocean. The ocean imagery suggested here is not at odds with the other imageries we have discussed earlier in connection with the motif of the circle. As a matter of fact, apart from the moon and the mirror, the ocean is also a subject frequently exploited by Zen teachers. Like the moon and the mirror, the ocean betrays a quality of fully receiving everything that comes to its surface, yet allowing everything to retreat from it. Moreover, just as the mirror reflects a thousand facets, the waters of the ocean mirror myriads of colours. Both the mirror and the ocean let everything come and go without obstruction. Eventually the mirror remains the mirror, the ocean as the ocean. None of their material substances is tainted by any form or colour that has been reflected on them.\(^{402}\) Given their close similarity, the ocean and the mirror are often paired up in Zen teachings as a means to illuminate the innate purity of Buddha-nature.

*Zen Painting* (1971)(fig. 160) is another example which likewise demonstrates the above symbolism of the ocean. Although this large work is not as lavishly washed with ink and colours as other splashed Zen works by Lui, its surface is likewise filled up, albeit this time with inky brush spatters. As early as in 1957, or even before then, Lui Shou Kwan had pondered over the possibility of finding a way to represent the idea of 'the beginning or destination of the universe'.\(^{403}\) The *Zen Painting* under review may be regarded as a response to this query. Here we see a greenish, dwindled

\(^{402}\) For an account of the symbolic matching of the mirror with the ocean in Buddhist teachings, see Robert H. Sharf, 'The Empty Mystery of the Point of Genesis', *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 2002, p. 250.

moon-like circle hovering by itself at the upper part of the painting, below which is a blotch of dark ink strokes. The space between the moon-like figure and the dark strokes has been filled with numerous effervescent, bubble-like forms and dense ink dots which are dispersed all over the picture surface. As a result of this mapping, everything on the painting appears to be moving yet interwoven. In this wake, a certain rhythmic momentum also occurs. The movement and the momentum, joined together, gives forth an impression that allures one to feel that one is watching a cyclical, cosmogonic process at work. As much as the image of this work is redolent of the deepest depth of the sea, it also invokes an image of a primordial world of chaos before the advent of class distinctions. It is worth remembering that all Zen and Buddhist texts teach us that everything in this world is co-dependent, and that the world is dynamic and constantly changing. Bearing this notion in mind, we might come to view the imagery of the present painting as a visual statement on the infinity and indefiniteness of the world, where matter and non-matter, the individual self and the cosmic self, are undifferentiated. The painting's nebulous, intricately built-up surface might, in this vein, be interpreted as pointing towards the impermanence of all external phenomena and, by extension, the ultimate emptiness of all things. Zen Painting is truly a monumental work, whose scale, style and subject address an audience seldom known to Chinese ink painting.
Lui Shou Kwan's Zen painting series helped him to realize his goal of modernizing Chinese ink painting through the interplay of native traditions and traditions from without. By synthesizing Chinese philosophical traditions with Japanese and Western art styles, Lui was able to introduce new possibilities to the representation of Zen which had not heretofore been on the horizon. While the Zen images in the calligraphic mode enabled him to declare his personal transcendence in the art world, those in the splashed mode permitted him to elevate his representation of Zen to a higher level of cosmology, thereby investing in the series broader religious and philosophical implications. In either case, a sense of visual economy is in play, since a few strokes, lines, or splashes of ink and colours are all there is in the painting to set the theme and melody. The best of Lui’s Zen paintings are marked by a fine control of ink tones, flexibility of the brush, and rich textural effects.

Lui Shou Kwan’s Zen paintings reveal clearly that his commitment to creativity and individuality, in sum, his pursuit of artistic modernity, was unwavering throughout his artistic career. If to be modern suggests the ability to be unconstrained by or at least to have relativized conventions and rules, Lui can be said to have satisfied this basic demand with his Zen painting series which came up in his artistic œuvre just slightly over a decade after he first experimented with the abstract idiom in 1951. While the technical, stylistic and imagistic innovations displayed in Lui’s Zen paintings assure the viewer that he has met with the modernist demand for novelty, the artist’s projection of his own personality in these works through the lotus and its affiliated motifs has also allowed him to fulfil another key tenet of the modernist aesthetics, which is to treat the self as a principal source of artistic creation. In a sense, the Zen
series has assisted Liu in accomplishing his ambition of integrating a temporal and spatial element into his work via mapping the contemporary ethos in the West with the roots of Chinese culture.

No doubt the Zen painting series was Lui Shou Kwan’s most significant artistic breakthrough as well as his most original contribution to the modernization of Chinese ink painting. Had he not died unexpectedly at the prime of his creative energy in 1975, he could have rerouted again the course of ink painting in Hong Kong, and even in the larger Chinese art world. In any case, he had travelled a long way to bridge the gap of his native and foreign cultures. From emulating the styles and works of past painting masters in his early days, to experimenting with abstractionism in his Hong Kong landscapes, through to syncretizing abstract, expressionist, symbolic, as well as Chinese and non-Chinese elements into a unique whole in his Zen paintings, Lui Shou Kwan proved himself to be a most inveterate experimenter. Eventually, it was this consistent, obsessive labour that fuelled his artistic achievement.
Chapter Six:
Lui Shou Kwan’s Artistic Legacy

The significance of Lui Shou Kwan to the art scene of Hong Kong lay not only in his personal revitalization of Chinese painting through his creation of landscape and Zen paintings, but also in his ability to muster a group of like-minded artists to work with him in shaping postwar modern art in Hong Kong. Without question, Lui was one of the most influential artist-teachers in Hong Kong between the late 1960s and the mid-1970s. He gave distinction to this era and made the territory a place which could boast of its own culture.

Not long after he settled in Hong Kong in 1948, Lui Shou Kwan started to entertain a hope of founding an art school where he could teach ink painting in a proper and systematic manner, as well as to develop this Chinese pictorial genre into a twentieth-century idiom. As has been pointed out, Lui Shou Kwan deemed that most Chinese paintings of the previous centuries and of his time were merely poor or weak duplications of earlier works and lacked originality. Holding the notion that Chinese painting was in dire need of change, he devoted the years following his retirement in 1966 to art education. Through teaching, writing and actively participating in the activities of several modern art groups and art societies, he strove to renew Chinese painting into a self-expressive, self-reflexive and synthetic art with an intellectual basis. The painting courses he taught in the Department of Extramural Studies at CU and HKU made his campaign for changing the practice of Chinese painting almost an instantaneous success. They provided him with opportunities to free art students from the constraints of tradition, whilst inspiring them to venture into new avenues of experimentation and develop their own modes of expression. Today, Lui’s impact can
still be felt on the art scene of Hong Kong, given that some of his students remain
active and have achieved admirable results with their individual artistic explorations.

This final chapter, which serves as a long conclusion of the present thesis, will focus
on examining Lui Shou Kwan’s artistic legacy. It will investigate, in a crisscrossing
manner, three interrelated issues: i) the ideological-intellectual framework and core
components of Lui’s art-education reform scheme which he formulated to teach
Chinese painting; ii) the major factors that paved the way for Lui’s rise to prominence
in the 1960s and the 1970s; and iii) the controversies that were provoked around Lui
alongside the success he and his students achieved in the official art arena. The
residues of some of these issues comprise and continue Lui Shou Kwan’s artistic
legacy to this day.

Ideological-Intellectual Framework of Lui Shou Kwan’s Art-Education Reform

As a staunch champion of modern art in early postwar Hong Kong, Lui Shou Kwan
viewed the establishment of a proper art education as of overriding importance to
bring new blood to the then stagnant art scene. With this he hoped to blaze a new path
for the development of Chinese painting. He saw the rise and fall of a region as
decided by the quantity of talent in that region; and to train talent for a region, he
considered it imperative to cultivate correct thought and attitude by its people. 404 To
this end, he purposively structured an intellectual framework for his art-educational
reform by incorporating the introduction of Chinese philosophy, notably

404 See Lui Shou Kwan, Lectures on Ink Painting, p. 148.
Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, into the curriculums of the extramural ink painting courses he ran at CU and HKU. The integration obviously rested on his belief that the art of Chinese painting had its origins in Chinese philosophical thinking. Another reason for it might be that mapping Chinese painting with Chinese philosophy would allow him to bring academic respectability to the teaching and learning of the former, thereby detaching it from its past apprenticeship status. A combination of the above two reasons offers us a glimpse into Lui’s grand dream of developing Chinese painting into an expression of an independent, liberal voice of the intellectual.

While Lui Shou Kwan took a special interest in appropriating the concepts of Zen Buddhism into his actual painted work, his attitude towards art education was ostensibly Confucianist. Confucianists maintain that man is ‘designed’ to perform a great task in life, in order words, to attain ‘self-realization’. They assert that a person’s ‘self-realization’, if manifested in its fullest form, will lead to peace in the world and also perfect identification with Heaven (the ultimate source of life and reality). Lui was no pacifist or mystic; nor did he ever attempt to strive for accomplishing a unity with Heaven. His Confucian inclination, it seems, lay chiefly in his taking it as his vocation to mould a sense of the independent and responsible individual in art, and with which to counter the effacement of the self in the repressive moral and political totality he experienced during wartime. As an artist and art teacher, what could he do to achieve this goal and hence also to find a way forward for his

405 Lui’s interest in Chinese philosophy might be initiated by his scholar-father, and its emergence could be dated back to the beginning of his artistic career when he spent his days devouring the doctrines of the early schools of Chinese philosophy.


264
own field of practice? Lui had proffered two choices in response to this question. One of the choices, according to him, is to look for an environment in which one feels at ease to work; the other choice is to construct one's own environment for actualizing one's ideal. 407 Both choices similarly hinge on an individual's own decision. Lui's resolution to develop his art in Hong Kong and to expend his late years on reforming the teaching of Chinese painting, as it turned out, vindicate that he meant to take the two choices into his own hands.

The leading question here is how Lui Shou Kwan undertook the rebuilding of the art-educational system from the ground up. His teaching at the two universities tells that the first thing he did was to try to eradicate the undesirable practice of taking 'imitating as creating' by encouraging his students to develop a keenness for pursuing individuality and creativity in art. In order to call for a fundamental change in the attitude towards artistic creation, Lui borrowed a few concepts, including xin 心 ('the mind' or 'the heart'), xing 性 ('nature', with the notion of character) and jinxing 竭性 (meaning 'fully developing the nature') which have their textual bases in the Confucian classics, the Mencius (Mengzi 《孟子》) and the Doctrine of the Mean (Zhongyong 《中庸》), to illuminate his proposed reform. 408 On the metaphysical relationship between xin (mind) and xing (nature), Mencius (c. 371 - c. 289 B.C.) the philosopher had a particularly concise explanation to offer:

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407 See Lui Shou Kwan, Lectures on Ink Painting, p. 76.

408 The Mencius is a record of Mencius' doings and sayings, and contains his statements on the goodness of human nature. The Doctrine of the Mean, a small work of the Confucian School, is traditionally attributed to Zisi, grandson of Confucius; it can be found in the Book of Rites (Li Ji), a Han compilation of earlier Confucian materials.
One who has fully developed his mind knows his nature. Knowing his nature, he knows Heaven. By preserving one's mind and nourishing one's nature one has the means to serve Heaven. When neither the brevity nor the length of a lifespan engenders doubts, and one cultivates one's person in an attitude of expectation, one has the means to establish one's destiny. 409

Mencius' explanation shows that he was concerned with the way in which one should develop one's mind-heart in order to understand one's own nature, and thereby to know Heaven. Elsewhere in the Mencius, the philosopher asserted that there is in the xing ('nature') of every human being some innate impulses for being good, and if these impulses are properly nourished, they can germinate into ren 仁 ('benevolence' or 'humanity'), yi 義 ('righteousness'), li 禮 ('propriety') and zhi 智 ('wisdom'), all being the cardinal virtues of Confucianism. For more than two thousand years, the Mencian theory of xing was interpreted and elaborated by many distinguished philosophers, including Xunzi 荀子 (c. 300 – c. 230 B.C.), Hanfeizi 韓非子 (c. 280 – 233 B.C.), Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (c. 179 – c. 104 B.C.) from the ancient past, and Kang Youwei, Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 (1893-1988), Xiong Shili 熊十力 (1885-1968), Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895-1990), Tang Zunyi 唐君毅 (1909-1978), Mou Zongshang 毛宗三 (1909-1995) from the last two centuries. Their expositions offered profound reconsiderations of Mencius' original insights into

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the concept of xing.\textsuperscript{410} In recent decades, some Western Sinologists have also made contributions to the interpretation of the content-meaning of xing.\textsuperscript{411} Irene Bloom's pithy elucidation, for example, helps to aptly distil the word in question:

\begin{quote}
Xing is complex in two senses: (1) it is in part given to us by Heaven and in part realized or enacted by us, that is, partly within and partly beyond our control; and (2) it is a complex of dispositions, moral as well as appetitive, that is, intelligible in both normative and descriptive terms. Realizing this complex xing – what we are and what we should be – is within the capacity of the fully developed human mind; knowledge of xing, more than assuring individual self-fulfillment, places us in the context of Heaven or Nature as a whole, and enables us to participate in and serve the larger whole.\textsuperscript{412}
\end{quote}

As argued earlier, Lui Shou Kwan’s references to xin (‘mind’) and xing (‘nature’) in his teaching was concerned with not so much a harmonious union with Heaven and

\textsuperscript{410} For a specific treatment of this concept, see Mou Zongshang, Xinti yu xingtì (The Mind-Heart and the Nature), 3 vols., Taipei, Zhengzhong shuju, 1968-1969.


Earth or the inherent goodness in human nature, than with the potentialities of artists and their need to give full expression to their personal character. In Lui’s mind, it is incumbent that the artist should follow the dictates of his mind or heart and exert his nature to the fullest. He held that through jinxing, that is, developing one’s nature to the utmost, one can utilize one’s full potential and become an independent and creative person. In this vein, he insisted that an artist must develop a personal notion and express his own character in his artistic pursuit. Lui’s frequent citations of the Northern Song landscape painter Fan Kuan’s idea of ‘learning from one’s mind’, 413 and the late Ming monk-painter Shitao’s notion of ‘following no method’ or ‘painting in one’s own style’, fully exemplify his endorsement of individualism in the practice of Chinese painting. 414 Since Fan Kuan was recognized at his time as the first great landscape painter to have proclaimed the significance of ‘self’ in artistic creation and Shitao as a well-accepted icon of modernity in Chinese art history, Lui’s recurrent citations of their ideas might have an effect of affirming his call for originality and modernity, the two guiding principles which he held dear, in the act of Chinese painting. Borrowing the concept xin and xing to frame his ideological-intellectual

413 The motto comes from the following saying by Fan Kuan: ‘To learn from another person is inferior to learning from nature. To learn from nature is inferior to learning from one’s own mind’. See Zheng Wuchang, Zhongguo huaxue quanshi (A Complete History of Chinese Painting), Shanghai, Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1985 (initial print 1929), p. 253.

414 These ideas are drawn from Shitao’s most oft-quoted declaration which reads: ‘I am myself because “I” naturally exists. The whiskers and eyebrows of the ancients cannot grow on my face, nor can my body contain their entrails. I express my own entrails and display my own whiskers and eyebrows. Even when there may be some point of contact with some master, it is he who comes close to me, not I who am trying to become like him. Nature has endowed me thus. As for antiquity, how could I have learned from it without transforming it?’ For this English translation, see Enlightenment Remarks on Painting by Shih·T’ao, Pacific Asia Museum Monographs, no. 1, translated and introduced by Richard E. Strassberg, Pasadena, Pacific Asia Museum, 1989, p. 65. For a modified translation by Jonathan Hay, see Hay’s Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 229.
approach to the teaching of Chinese painting, Lui instructed his students that *jinxing* is as crucial in Chinese culture as in the art education of the Chinese. Lui put it this way:

The pre-Qin culture of China was *jinxing* culture. The Confucian education was *jinxing* education. *Jinxing* means paying respect to one’s individuality. Those who give high regard to their individuality will respect the individuality of other people. ... The culture of our country used to be a *jinxing* culture. The education of our country, which is exemplified by the teaching of the great educator Confucius [551-479 B.C.], used to be a *jinxing* education. The Chinese people was a *jinxing* people ... During the past thousand years of time, the Chinese not only lost the *jinxing* spirit completely, but actually showed a pathological *yixing* [*suppressing the nature*] attitude ... it is [now] hard to find a person who can preserve his character and dignity.\(^4\)

Disregarding the simplistically linear causal manner of his argument, Lui Shou Kwan’s concern for *xin* and *xing* as expressed in his teaching obviously owed much to his perception of *xin* as the seat of the intellectual faculty which guides a person to make important decisions, and *xing* as an innate quality which directs a person to create art works expressing the true self. Although Lui did not attempt to probe deeply into the meanings of these two terms, his repeated use of them in his writings reveals that his artistic standpoint was powerfully individualistic. Aside from the concern for individuality, Lui might sometimes add a sense of morality in his discussion on art education by emphasizing the value of *cheng* 誠. Like the concepts *xin* and *xing*, *cheng* is also a cardinal notion originated from the Confucian ideology. The word may be interpreted as ‘being truthful to one’s own self’ or simply, ‘sincerity’. Its root source is again traceable to the *Mencius*, where the term is taken as an essential quality which assists one to realize the true nature, not only of oneself, but also of

others as well as of the whole phenomenal world. One can yet find an explanation of the term cheng in the *Doctrine of the Mean*, where its meaning and relation to xing are made even clearer:

> *Cheng* is the end and beginning of things. Without *cheng* there would exist no things. Therefore the Superior Man considers *cheng* as the noblest of all attainments.

It is only he who has the most *cheng* who can develop his nature to the utmost. Able to do this, he is able to do the same to the nature of other men. Able to do this, he is able to do the same to the nature of things. Able to do this, he can assist the transforming and nourishing operations of Heaven and Earth. Being able to do this, he can form a trinity with Heaven and Earth.

To the Confucianists, only a person with the utmost sincerity can fulfill his nature (commonly termed *licheng jinxing* 立誠盡性), find his own life purpose, perform a great task in life, and establish his position in the world. Since Lui Shou Kwan followed the example of the Confucianists in prioritizing sincerity as an admirable quality of a person, he naturally reckoned that only a sincere artist who does not ingratiate himself with others can produce creative and genuine work. An overview of Lui's writings indicates that the notions *xin*, *xing* and *cheng* are inseparable from and indispensable to each other in his ideological construction.

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419 For this idea, see Lui Shou Kwan's *Lectures on Ink Painting*, p. 132; and *A Study of Chinese Painting*, p. 5.
whose implications underscored the intellectual framework of his art-educational
reform.

Nevertheless, Lui Shou Kwan realized that it was inadequate merely to introduce
Chinese philosophy and Chinese art history and theory to his students. He felt that it
was also his obligation to inform his students of what he knew about Western
philosophy. Given his deficiency in the English language and lack of training in
science subjects (e.g., physics which saw remarkable advances in the last century), his
knowledge of Western philosophy was understandably less than his grasp of Chinese
philosophy. As far as can be known, the modern Western thinkers who were
introduced in his classes included Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Rene Descartes
(1596-1650), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and Charles Darwin (1809-1882).
Lui probably also covered some other important Western philosophers in his teaching,
but their names are missing from his extant manuscripts. Nonetheless, his
combination of both Chinese and Western philosophy in his ink painting curriculum
plan bespoke his desire to evoke in his students a genuine interest and pride in their
native art and culture, as well as an awareness of the philosophical roots of the recent
developments in Western art. This double responsiveness - from within and from
without - was a significant step in his reform strategy to help his students to develop a
two-way dialogue and with which to cultivate in them a sense of purpose to develop a
new visual culture of their times. For the sake of furthering the intellectual basis of his
students, Lui Shou Kwan also made an extra effort to instil in them a love of
knowledge by sharing with them, in public or in private, his opinions on various
issues relating to art (fig. 161), as well as on other non-visual-art subjects such as
those pertaining to literature, history and film which likewise snared his interest (fig.
Today, this method is still an effective way to expand the minds of art students and assist them in creating ideas and materials for their artistic pursuits.

Although Lui Shou Kwan had begun his teaching career at the Chung Shan Art School early in 1958, his teaching did not gain distinction until he took up part-time lecturing on ink painting at CU and HKU around the mid-1960s. Between 1966 and 1975, Lui had taught the following courses at CU’s Department of Extramural Studies: ‘Chinese Brush and Ink Painting’, ‘Advanced Brush and Ink Painting’, ‘Brush and Ink Landscape Painting’, ‘Traditional Landscape Painting Techniques’, and a few other courses relating to the fundamentals of Chinese painting, the emulatory practice of Chinese painting, and the relationship between Chinese painting and Chinese literature. From 1965 to 1973, Lui is also known to have been appointed by HKU’s Department of Architecture as part-time instructor in Chinese Painting for its first- and second-year students. In addition, he also taught ‘History of Chinese Painting’ and ‘Brush and Ink Painting’ (1969-1970); ‘A Survey of Art’ (1972-1973); and ‘Basic Painting Workshop’ (1972-1974) at HKU’s Department of Extramural Studies. Besides, the Department of Extramural Studies of both CU and HKU had invited Lui to lecture on Chinese ink painting for their design programmes, respectively named the ‘Certificate Course in Graphic Design’ and the ‘Certificate Course in Fundamentals of Art and Design’.

These evening art courses helped Lui Shou

Kwan to foster a number of vigorous, modern-minded ink painters who were to form two important ink painting groups, the In Tao Art Association (1968) and the One Art Group (1970). Under his leadership, the two art groups jointly brought about the first and as yet the only vernacular art movement, commonly known as the New Ink Painting Movement, in Hong Kong at the turn of the 1960s and the 1970s. What was there in Lui Shou Kwan's teaching that distinguished him as an outstanding art teacher of his day? The following section will address this question through an examination of certain key components of the curricula which he devised for CU and HKU.

The Core Components of Lui Shou Kwan's Teaching at CU and HKU

In order to execute the ideological-intellectual approach which he conceived to reform the teaching of Chinese painting, Lui Shou Kwan adopted a novel and systematic way of teaching this art genre in the courses he delivered for CU's and HKU's Department of Extramural Studies. The most notable step he took to set about transforming the instruction of Chinese painting was by inviting his students to practice the control of the Chinese brush and ink through rendering shapes with such geometric elements as points, lines and planes, in place of asking them to learn to paint traditional Chinese

Hong Kong, Dadao meishuyuan, 1981, p. 128; and 7) Lui Shou Kwan's surviving documents in his family archive.


422 The following discussion on Lui Shou Kwan's teaching is largely summarized from the information given in his lecture notes as well as from my interviews with some of his former students.
subjects and genres. This mode of teaching apparently had its roots in Bauhaus industrial design as well as in the writings of a few early twentieth-century Chinese painting masters, including Pan Tianshou and Huang Binhong, who likewise discussed the importance of basic compositional elements in the rendition of Chinese painting. Lui Shou Kwan was no doubt aware of both sources. Unlike most art teachers of his time, Lui did not demand his students to copy his works or those by other painters. Instead, he put stress on stimulating his students’ analytical and imaginative power. Thus following his introduction of basic formal elements to his students, it was his practice to propose a theme to his students and ask them to compose a picture in whatever way they preferred. By doing so, he hoped to help his students to release their creative potentials by breaking the constraints that tradition might put on their study of Chinese painting. Probably because of this reason, Lui’s praise, as recalled by his former student Ip Hoi 葉愷 (Ye Kai, b. 1932), often went to those works which were creative enough to show an unusual mode or angle of representation.423

Despite his novel teaching of Chinese painting, Lui Shou Kwan was firm that a new mode of expression could only be created on the strength of a solid understanding of the past tradition. To help build up his students’ knowledge of traditional Chinese painting, apart from verbally introducing them to a wide sweep of the history and theory of Chinese painting (fig. 163),424 Lui also took great pains to explain the

424 For each of his lectures, Lui Shou Kwan was inclined to prepare extensive teaching notes which he would revise for later use. The profuse and, at times, complex nature of the information in these notes has led some people to regard him as an art theorist. To me, it may be more appropriate to use the general and less restricted term ‘artistic thought’ than the culturally loaded term ‘art theory’ to
characteristics of the masterpieces that came down from past ages to them, through some visual media such as slides, printed reproductions and book illustrations. It was only at the last stage that he would teach by self-demonstration. When the time arrived, Lui let his students freely pick a work by a historically acknowledged artist for whom they had a special fondness, and he would show them how to paint in the style of that artist in class (fig. 164). Lui did not mean to flaunt his painting skills in front of his students. His purpose was just to demonstrate to them the various ways of rendering brush conventions (\textit{cunfa}). Sometimes, Lui might have the requested work completed at home and shown later to the students in the classroom in order that they could make comparisons and analyses (fig. 165). The extant works of this nature illustrate amply that Lui was able to master a broad scope of styles, ranging from those practised in the Five Dynasties (fig. 166), Song (fig. 167), Yuan, Ming (fig. 168) and Qing periods, to those which typified the works of some painting masters from the earlier decades of the twentieth century (fig. 169). The high standard on display in many of these demonstration pieces reveal Lui’s aptitude for having been an accomplished traditionalist painter, and that he was not a vain ideologue as some of his critics claimed him to be.

Another means through which Lui aimed to augment his students’ knowledge of Chinese painting was to add self-written inscriptions on those copied works which he did for them. From these surviving works, we know that Lui had a tendency to interweave his inscriptions with art-historical references (fig. 170). Some of them can be very long, amounting to over 2,000 words (fig. 171). In view of the limited time characterize Lui’s lecture notes, since the latter may impose certain expectations (such as hoping to find a distinctly original and organized presentation of art views) that his notes cannot entirely fulfill.

\[425\] See Lui Shou Kwan, \textit{Lectures on Ink Painting}, p. 81.
that Lui might offer to each of his students in class, these inscriptions could function as supplementary teaching aides for him to expound his ideas on certain artists, art schools, or art principles. As mentioned earlier, Lui never showed or asked his students to copy his own paintings. His reason was that the age-old practice of copying the teacher's works had made Chinese painting stagnated and fall into the confines of conformity. Lui Shou Kwan's keenness on promoting art as an activity of the intellect as much as of the eye eventually led him to abandon demonstration of painting altogether. This is reflected in the individual teaching he gave to his private students during his last years. In lieu of showing them how to paint in a certain style or with certain techniques, Lui sought to teach them by solely discussing with them about his views on a variety of art-related issues. This was the teaching mode he employed with Koo Mei 顧媚 (Gu Mei, b. 1934) in the last few months of his life.426

The encouragement that Lui Shou Kwan gave to his students to explore beyond the traditional repertory and experiment with unconventional tools, techniques and methods was also a distinctive feature of his reform programme. The underlying idea was to help the students to seek an independent creative path and novelty in art.427

Using unorthodox means to render ink-based painting has become so commonplace nowadays that it may no longer seem radical, but it was a bold attempt thirty years ago. Although Lui never moved from his belief that the mastery of a wide range of skills and techniques is necessary as the groundwork for an artist to produce original works of art, he maintained that the acquirement of skills and techniques is only a

426 Koo Mei was one of the last few private students of Lui Shou Kwan. She told me that during his tuition with her, Lui had hardly demonstrated to her how to paint a stroke, or shown her any work by him or by other artists (my interview with Koo Mei on 10 August 2006).

427 For Lui's discussion of using various unconventional means to create Chinese painting, see his Lectures on Ink Painting, pp. 109, 110.
means to an end.\textsuperscript{428} To him, an art work should be valued for its expression of the author's thought and spirit, and not for the materials and tools that were used to produce it.\textsuperscript{429} Lui insisted that an artist can only claim to have attained true artistic creation if he has established a unique identity in art. For this reason, he reiterated in his teaching that no artist should be held captive by the skills and techniques he had learned. That said, Lui's own works, particularly his Zen paintings, make it plain that he had no objection to selectively borrowing useful techniques, media, materials, and painting styles from other cultures if they were useful for nourishing and revitalizing Chinese painting. As long as such borrowing could engender the new art, Lui did not feel that the artist should be bound by any art formulae.

In Lui Shou Kwan's art-educational reform, the ideal of egalitarianism occupied a large component in his overall scheme. Like the ideological elements constituting the intellectual framework which he structured for his reform programme, this ideal was likewise modelled on Confucianism. Confucius, founder of Confucianism, advocated teaching without discrimination, and in accordance with individual character, temperament and will. Lui Shou Kwan's teaching and writing show that he fully supported this view. Like Confucius, Lui held that art education should transcend region, class, occupation and gender. In rejecting the idea that creativity is a 'gift' monopolized by the few, he emphasized instead the conscious and wilful element in the process of artistic creation. For Lui, the object of art education is to assist the would-be artist in developing his cognitive and analytical power, whence the ability to

\textsuperscript{428} For this idea, see, for instance, Lui Shou Kwan, \textit{A Study of Chinese Painting}, pp. 11, 75, 121.

\textsuperscript{429} On Lui's conception of the value of art and the necessity of learning basic technical skills, see \textit{The Manuscripts of Lui Shou Kwan}, pp. 342, 344.
choose and discern, and ultimately to establish a unique artistic direction.\(^{430}\) Lui was able to achieve, at least partly, this objective via the extramural painting courses he gave at CU and HKU. Since these part-time art courses were open to the public without any special entry requirements, they were attended by men and women from all classes with very different personal and educational backgrounds. Extant records indicate that the ages of those students enrolling in Lui Shou Kwan's courses might range as wide as from 18 to over 60. While some of them came from the upper or middle class with university degrees, some were from the lower social rankings without a complete primary education. Lui did not seem to care about the class differences of his students. He let those (including his personal artist-friends) who did not wish to formally enrol in his courses to audit his classes for free.\(^{431}\) He even paid, out of his own pocket, the tuition fees for some poorer students who were unable to afford tuition (fig. 172). Sometimes, if he happened to know of a student's liking for a particular artist, he might lend a copy or even the original of a painting by that artist in his private collection to him for study, hoping that it might help him to gain a deeper understanding of the artist (fig. 173). Lui also frequently encouraged his students to exhibit their works or join an art competition whenever there was a chance. When some of his students did manage to stage an exhibition, he offered them a boost by contributing a preface to their exhibition catalogue, and perhaps also drafting a review of the exhibition as a means of publicizing it. From time to time, Lui would take his students to see the exhibitions of traditionalist paintings and offered them on-spot expositions and critiques of the works on view.\(^{432}\) All the efforts that Lui Shou Kwan

\(^{430}\) See *The Manuscripts of Lui Shou Kwan*, p. 457.

\(^{431}\) Irene Chou and Leung Kui Ting, for instance, had sat in on Lui's lectures delivered at CU's Department of Extramural Studies without paying any tuition fee.

\(^{432}\) For Lui's own account of this outdoor activity, see *The Manuscripts of Lui Shou Kwan*, p. 372. For an account of it by his student, see Laurence Tam, "Tracing the Origin of a New Program for Learning
put into his teaching endeared him to his students and continued to attract many people following different vocations to enter his lecture room. Among them, some were or would become practising artists and art teachers.

Indeed, not many painters of Lui Shou Kwan’s generation were as busy as he was in pursuing a concatenation of activities as teacher, critic and exhibition organizer, or had quite so artistically chequered a career. A few weeks prior to his death, Lui was still discussing with Wucius Wong about the possibility of organizing a long-term course, named ‘The Foundations of the Way of Chinese Painting’, to be run as the blueprint for a similar course which he hoped would be taught in the fine arts department of a university or an art school. Though the planning of the course was still at its early stage, he had drawn up a rather comprehensive outline for it. The contents of this outline encompassed the followings:

1. The development of Chinese painting;
2. The thought of Chinese painting;
3. The elementary training on the Way of Chinese painting;
4. The teaching of traditional Chinese painting skills;

& Teaching Chinese Ink Painting', in The Cradle of New Chinese Ink Painting Movement, Hong Kong, Wah Yan College, Kowloon, 2009, p. 24. Tam reveals in his account that Lui and he once visited the same teacher-student show which was held at the City Hall in the late 1960s. He recalls that when he arrived at the exhibition venue, Lui and his students had just left, but the teacher of that exhibition was then foaming with rage because Lui had openly criticized the exhibits in front of his students. According to Tam, this incident aroused his curiosity about Lui and prompted him to seek his teaching.

Laurence Tam remembers that the first time he went to attend a lecture by Lui at CU’s Department of Extramural Studies, he was amazed to find that the whole classroom was filled with people - not only were the forty or so seats fully occupied, all the empty space inside the classroom was packed with people, and late comers could only stand outside the door. See Laurence Tam, ibid., p. 24.

Wucius Wong, Leung Kui Ting, Chui Tze Hung, Jat See Yeu, Lee Wai On, Lee Ching Man and Chan Yin Man were some of the noted examples.
5. A selective reading of Chinese painting theories;
6. The study of famous painting albums and writings on Chinese painting;
7. Chinese and Japanese prints;
8. A brief discussion of the general knowledge on Chinese painting;
9. A guided reading of Chinese art; and
10. Chinese painting and calligraphy.  

The above outline, tentative though it was, signalled that Lui Shou Kwan was approaching his final step of establishing an all-round scheme for the teaching of Chinese painting. Lamentably, Lui did not live long enough to see the course come to fruition. His desire to innovate the practice of Chinese painting through educational change remains yet a lofty ideal that has brought him enduring fame as a most influential art teacher in postwar Hong Kong.

**Major Factors Contributing to Lui Shou Kwan’s Rise and Success**

There were several factors that might contribute to Lui Shou Kwan’s success in the art scene of Hong Kong during the 1960s and 1970s. Foremost among them were the Lui’s own novel rendition of brush and ink and his enthusiastic as well as innovative teaching of Chinese painting. From a broader perspective, Hong Kong’s progressively positive reception of influences from the outside world beginning from the 1960s, which created an environment conducive to change, also indirectly helped Lui to secure artistic success in the city. Lui’s fame as a modern-style artist was, moreover, extended by the increasing reputation he gained abroad, especially in the U.K., which

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legitimized his modernness and accelerated his rise as an unconventional ink painter in Hong Kong. The above factors collectively explain why, within a few years after his second one-man show, he was appointed Honorary Adviser to the City Hall Art Gallery & Museum in 1962. As noted, the Museum was then the only official art institution in Hong Kong. Many local artists looked to it as the centre of artistic and cultural activities as well as the most prestigious venue for holding art exhibitions. Lui Shou Kwan’s honorary appointment there was crucial in that it gave him an important and convenient platform to advance his ideals of modernizing Chinese painting. The support he obtained from the key personnel of the Museum, including its founding curator, John Warner, and his two assistants, Wucius Wong and Laurence Tam, provided the impetus required to push through his programme. Warner, a Briton, had studied painting at The Leeds College of Art before he came to Hong Kong in the late 1950s. Wong and Tam happened to be high school classmates at St. Joseph’s College and both had studied Chinese painting with Lui Shou Kwan before joining the Museum. When the three began their curatorial work, they were all in their thirties (Warner was 32, Wong 33, and Tam 38). Warner held the post as Curator of the Museum from 1962-1976; Wong as Assistant Curator from 1967-1974 (also as Acting Curator between 1972 and 1973); and Tam as Assistant Curator from 1971-1976. Along with two other members on the curatorial team of the Museum, they organized a number of exhibitions in the 1960s and 1970s, some of which bore a clear target at introducing contemporary Hong Kong art to local and overseas audiences. Warner, Wong and Tam supported Lui Shou Kwan’s conviction that if Hong Kong art

436 Tam was later promoted as Chief Curator in 1985. He worked in that title until he retired from the Museum in 1993.

437 The other two members on the curatorial term were James Watt and Ho Ching Hin. They had worked at the Museum as Assistant Curators at different points of time in the 1960s and 1970s.
was to have a future it needed to learn and reflect on values and shared experiences from other cultures and demonstrate a modernist or creative spirit.

Before joining the Museum, Warner had taught art at the Northcote Training College in Hong Kong and also offered painting courses at HKU’s Department of Extramural Studies. With the recent publication of Open Dialogue: A Launching Publication for the “Hong Kong Art: Open Dialogue” Exhibition Series 2008-09 by the Hong Kong Museum of Art in 2008, we now have a better understanding of the curatorial policy that Warner adopted for the Museum in his early days there, and with which to explore Lui Shou Kwan’s probable influence at the Museum at that time. In his article, Warner tells that he came to know of Lui Shou Kwan’s name not long after he arrived in Hong Kong via a joint exhibition of the Society of Hong Kong Artists (which Lui helped set up in 1957), and later had the opportunity to meet Lui in person at a private demonstration of modern Chinese ink painting which Lui gave. Furthermore, Warner discloses that when he first took office at the Museum in 1962, the Urban Council, then overseeing the operation of the Museum, had set a specific policy for it to follow, which was to centre its attention on Hong Kong. The Museum did not have a collection of local art works at the time it opened. Thus from the beginning of his

438 This part of information on Warner is gathered from: i) my telephone conversation with Lee Kwok Wing on 9 October 2009; and ii) Leung Po Shan’s article, titled ‘Xuanxiao yu zaodong’ (The Clamour and Hubbub of Colonial Modern Art), Fleurs des Lettres, no. 15 (Aug.-Sep., 2008), p. 100.


440 The Museum, however, had a few private collections which were transferred to its hands by the Hong Kong government. The objects in these collections comprised historical paintings, trade paintings, drawings and prints, Chinese porcelain, Chinese bronze wares, and Japanese ceramics. For more details about these collections, see John Warner, ‘Back in Time’, ibid., p. 14; and Tang Hoi Chiu, ‘Hong Kong Museum of Art: On the Crossroads of Curatorship’, ibid., p. 93.
days there, Warner says, he had to think of a way to build a Hong Kong art collection in order to comply with the Council policy. Nowadays, museum people tend to subscribe to the idea that the institutional role of an art museum is to show the artistic achievements or changes in the culture of a place and to accomplish this task, the museum is tasked with constructing a history of local art which leads to a definition or redefinition of what art is.\(^{441}\) This idea did not seem to be applicable to the situation of Warner half a century ago. Nevertheless, it is clear from the exhibitions he organized and from those which he let his assistants to curate, that ‘art in the modernist sense’ was the guiding principle that the Museum had adopted to assemble a collection of local art works, its side product being the construction of a local artistic genealogy that helped to initiate a new art scene in Hong Kong. Since Lui Shou Kwan’s artistic standpoint found favour with Warner, Lui could have affected the way Warner viewed the future art development of Hong Kong and might also have stirred up Warner’s passion for promoting what he considered worthy in the contemporary art scene (fig. 174). The Museum’s extension of invitations to such modern-style artists as Cheung Yee 張義 (Zhang Yi, b. 1936), Kwong Yeu Ting 鄭耀鑾 (Kuang Yaoding, b. 1922), and Douglas Bland (1923-1975) to hold solo exhibitions were oblique evidence of this influence. A more salient example would be the 1962 ‘Hong Kong Art Today’ exhibition which Warner mounted to celebrate the opening of the Museum. All the works showcased in this exhibition manifested a clear preference for modern-style art.\(^{442}\) Yet, Warner’s own words should, above all, give testimony to

\(^{441}\) For a useful discussion on the roles of the art museum today, see *Contemporary Art and the Museum: A Global Perspective*, Peter Weibel and Andrea Buddensieg eds., Karlsruhe, Germany, ZKM Centre for Art and Media, 2007.

\(^{442}\) The ‘Hong Kong Art Today’ exhibition featured altogether 120 works of art. The show turned out to be controversial since a large number of artists working in a traditional or conventional manner were excluded from it. Examples included Luis Chan and all the members of the Chinese Contemporary
Lui's implicit impact on him. In the same article that he wrote for the *Open Dialogue*, Warner provides the following reminiscence:

After a slow start in the 1960's and through the influence of Lui Shou-kwan, an inspired teacher, a new generation of shui-mo (water-ink) painters began to emerge. Firmly rooted in Chinese tradition but with a contemporary vision they began to dominate and refresh the visual arts in Hong Kong. We promoted, purchased and exhibited their work. Lui Shou-kwan became one of our advisers and had his splendid one-man show with us in 1965. 443

Wucius Wong and Laurence Tam were other key staff from the Museum who had an important role to play in actualizing Lui Shou Kwan's artistic belief. Of the two, Wong was of greater help to Lui during his lifetime. Wong started taking Lui's painting classes at the latter's New Art Studio in 1958. Before then, Wong had attempted to paint with felt-tip markers, fountain pens, water-colour brushes, and palette knives on his own for a few years. 444 His interest in Chinese ink painting was minimal until he met Lui. Partially under his teacher's encouragement, Wong went to seek formal art training in the U.S. in 1961. 445 After completing his five-year study of art and design in the U.S., he returned to Hong Kong in late 1965. Not long after that,

Artists' Guild which Chan helped found. For an account of this controversy, see Jack Lee, 'Luis Chan and the "Hong Kong Art Today" Dispute', translated into English by Lai Kin Keung, in *From Reality to Fantasy: The Art of Luis Chan*, ed. Jack Lee, Hong Kong, Asia Art Archive (Hong Kong), 2006, pp. 134-140.


445 Wong first enrolled at the Columbus College of Art and Design in Columbus, Ohio (1961-1963), then shifted to study painting at the Maryland Institute, College of Art, Baltimore, Maryland for two years (1963-1965). He received both his B.F.A. and M.F.A. degrees from the latter college.
he landed a job as part-time Administrative Assistant (1966-1967) in charge of art and
design courses at the newly established Extramural Studies Department of 
CU. A year
later, he moved on to work as an assistant to Warner at the City Hall Art Gallery &
Museum, eventually for a total of seven years (1967-1974). Both the jobs enabled
Wong to transform Lui Shou Kwan's dream, to a certain extent, into reality. An
ardent supporter of Lui, Wong championed his teacher's belief that to rejuvenate
Chinese painting, the artist needed to be attentive to modern Western art trends and to
utilize their useful elements to modernize his own work. Given that Wong had
personal experience with modern art through his overseas studies and visits, he had
some edge over Lui in respect of comprehending and writing about modern Western
art. This notwithstanding, Wong remained Lui's most faithful disciple and forceful
defender throughout his life.

During the seventeen years of their acquaintance, Wucius Wong and Lui Shou Kwan
worked closely together and their collaboration gave rise to fruitful results. As far
back as in 1959, Wong had invited Lui to be the adviser of the Modern Literature and
Art Association which he founded with a few friends a year earlier. Later, the
Association asked Lui to head the selection committee for the three International
Salons of Paintings it organized in 1960 (fig. 175), 1962 and 1963. When Lui threw
himself whole-heartedly into his teaching work after resigning from the Hong Kong

\[446\] During his tenure at the Museum, Wong obtained a fellowship from the John D. Rockefeller 3rd
Fund, with which he spent half a year visiting New York and half a year visiting Britain between 1970
and 1971 (see Wucius Wong, 'The City Museum and Art Gallery and Me', Open Dialogue: A
Launching Publication, p. 22). After quitting his Museum job in 1974, Wong moved to work as Senior
Lecturer in the Department of Commercial and Industrial Design at The Hong Kong Polytechnic. There
he was promoted to Principal Lecturer in 1977. Wong was appointed Honorary Adviser of the Museum
in 1976. He left the Polytechnic in 1984 and emigrated to the U.S. the same year. He returned to Hong
Kong in 1997.

285
and Yaumati Ferry Company in 1966, his collaboration with Wong was to become even closer. Through the proposal of Wong, Lui started to engage in part-time teaching in the Department of Extramural Studies of CU the same year. Wong often sought Lui’s advice on various matters relating to art shows and art activities which he presented for the Museum. In turn, Lui Shou Kwan and his students frequently joined (or were invited to take part) in those art exhibitions and art activities organized by Wong, including the 1967 ‘Hong Kong Art Exhibition’, the 1968 ‘Circle Art Group Exhibition’, and the 1969, 1972 and 1974 ‘Contemporary Hong Kong Art Exhibition’. Lui Shou Kwan’s artistic standing and the impact he had over a host of young aspiring artists indeed would not have been so prominent, if not for the trust and unflagging support of Wong, and also of Warner.

Being an eloquent art critic and art writer, Wucius Wong further helped consolidate Lui Shou Kwan’s artistic position in Hong Kong by placing him in the two most important timeslots of a historical framework which he conceived for analyzing the development of art in postwar Hong Kong. Wong’s framework spans from the late 1940s to the 1980s and is divided more or less equally into four phases. The first phase started from the late 1940s and ended in the late 1950s. Wong deems it as a period when traditionalism prevailed. The second phase lasted from the late 1950s to the late 1960s; it was a period when a modernist movement began to surface. The third phase ran from the late 1960s to the late 1970s, a time which saw an intensification of the modernist movement as well as a strong inclination towards creating a visual vernacular. The last phase extended from the late 1970s into the 1980s, a period which, in Wong’s eyes, betrayed an intense introspection and which
anticipated a new departure in art.\textsuperscript{447} For the modernist movement which traversed the second and the third periods, Wong has further distinguished it into three waves which he perceives to have emerged alongside the formation of a few select art groups and art societies. The first wave occurred with the establishment of the Society of Hong Kong Artists (1957), the second with the Modern Literature and Art Association (1958) and the Circle Art Group (1963), and the third with the In Tao Art Association (1968) and the One Art Group (1970).\textsuperscript{448} Wucius Wong and Lui Shou Kwan were both involved directly or indirectly with these art groups and art societies, either as a member, an adviser, or a spiritual leader. The formation of the In Tao Art Association and the One Art Group, which inaugurated the New Ink Painting Movement, represented particularly the zenith of Lui’s artistic influence, given that the founders of the two art groups all came from the ink painting courses he offered for CU.\textsuperscript{449} In view of the fact that this Movement would invoke long-lasting

\textsuperscript{447} On this periodization of postwar Hong Kong art, see Wucius Wong, ‘Introduction’, in \textit{Contemporary Hong Kong Art Exhibition}, exh. cat., presented by the Metropolitan Museum of Manila, the Philippines, 22 September – 2 November 1982, unpaginated.


\textsuperscript{449} The In Tao Art Association was founded by Laurence C.S. Tam, Ho Chung Wah, Wong Wang Fai, Tan Doen, Own Teh Bay, Tang Sek Wing, Irene Chou, Poon Yee Shiu, Lee Wei On, Ng Yiu Chung and Tsang Tia Hwe. The One Art Group was founded by Cheng Wei Kwok, Jat See Yeu, Chui Tze Hung, Chan Yim Man, Diu Yin Ngoh, Lee Ching Man, Wong King Seng and Yeung Yick Chung.
controversies over Lui's teaching from the early 1970s, we might briefly turn to look at the works created by the new ink painters here.

A vast majority of the works by the new ink painters belonged to the genre of landscape painting. Stylistically, they could be broadly described as abstract, semi-abstract, or expressionistic; more minutely, they might be said to carry, in varying degrees, a romantic, abstract expressionist, pointillist, conceptual, hard-edged, or surrealist ring. On the whole, the new ink paintings were marked by their free renditions of lines and strokes; exaggeration, distortion, or truncation of shapes; and, in some cases, a conscious merging of Chinese and Western styles and painting techniques. Although the movement which the new ink painters launched was dubbed the New Ink Painting Movement, the word 'ink' was not a generic term which suitably categorized all their works since some of them exhibited a highly experimental use of ink with non-Chinese pigments (e.g., acrylics, watercolours, oils) and unorthodox techniques (such as marbling, rubbing, and painting at the back of the paper). Besides, there was a divergence in the new ink painters' approach to depicting landscapes. While some of these artists showed a particular fascination with the dissolution or rearrangement of line- and brushwork in pursuit of new imageries (figs. 176 and 177), some displayed a special liking for presenting strong visual impact or new textural effects (figs. 178 and 179). However that might be, they succeeded in jointly presenting a new face of ink-based painting as well as evoking a sudden burst of interest in the genre on the Hong Kong art scene between the late 1960s and the 1970s.\(^{450}\) Wong has boldly asserted the New Ink Painting Movement as an

\(^{450}\) At the time the new ink paintings emerged as an important art current in Hong Kong, the modern-style ink works by some Taiwanese artists also came up as a notable force in the American art world, with the backing of the American Federation of Arts and the promotion of Li Chu-ting, a
‘awakening’ in Hong Kong art.\textsuperscript{451} While the Movement was certainly the product of team work, Lui Shou Kwan undoubtedly played a crucial role in it, for as adviser to the then only official art museum of Hong Kong he was accountable for planning the future artistic growth of this city. His function in cultivating an interest in new ink painting cannot be underestimated.

Apart from Wucius Wong whose articulateness allowed him to be a pivotal champion of Lui Shou Kwan’s artistic belief, Laurence Tam, with his grasp of art-historical knowledge and analytical prowess,\textsuperscript{452} also proved himself to be an equally capable writer in establishing Lui as the inspiration of modern art in postwar Hong Kong. Prior to his working at the Museum in 1971, Tam had studied art education at the Northcote Training College (1954-1956) and then taught art and mathematics at Wah Yan College, Kowloon (1956-1971). Like Wong, Tam also had direct exposure to Western modernism through his overseas studies and visits to a number of major art museums in the West.\textsuperscript{453} Although he only came to know Lui Shou Kwan almost a


\textsuperscript{452} Tam obtained a M.A. degree in Chinese art history from HKU in 1970. That year, he began teaching Chinese art history and painting techniques at HKU’s Department of Extramural Studies.

\textsuperscript{453} While Tam was pursuing a diploma in Teaching of English as a Second Language at Moray House College of Education, Edinburgh, under a British Council Scholarship in 1960, he made use of that opportunity to visit many famous museums in Europe and North America, including the British Museum, the National Art Gallery and the Tate Art Gallery in London, the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, as well as the Chicago Art Institute, the Philadelphia Museum, and the San Francisco Museum of Asian Art. See Tam Chi Sing, Laurence, ‘Tracing the
decade later than Wong, he was no less an ardent supporter of Lui after taking his extramural ink painting courses at CU between 1966 and 1968. Tam was enthralled by Lui’s vast knowledge of Chinese art and Chinese philosophy, as well as his frank criticism of the contemporary art scene. Before attending the ink painting courses at CU, Tam had studied Western and Chinese painting with five renowned artists in Hong Kong. By his own account, he could learn from these teachers the basic painting techniques as well as how to paint in their styles, but not the way to create his own work because they all followed the traditional method of ‘teaching through copying’, a method then widely practised in private art studios and at teachers’ training colleges. Compared with the five teachers with whom he had studied, Tam finds Lui Shou Kwan a far greater teacher since Lui passed on to his students not merely the technical knowledge of painting, but also a proper perspective towards artistic creation which is to express independence and creativity in art. Tam’s previous studies made him realize Lui’s keeness and novelty in art education. He commends Lui as the first postwar Hong Kong art educator who was bold to pronounce unique individual expression as the most important goal in Chinese painting.


Tam had studied Western painting with Luis Chan (watercolour painting and portrait), and Chinese painting with Yuan Fung (landscape and bird-and-flower painting of Lingnanpai), Chang Bihan (traditional Chinese landscape painting), Xiao Lisheng (traditional Chinese figure painting), and Zhou Shixin (traditional bird-and-flower painting). See Tam Chi Sing, Laurence, ‘Tracing the Origin of a New Program for Learning & Teaching Chinese Ink Painting’, The Cradle of New Chinese Ink Painting Movement, pp. 22, 23.

Compared to Wucius Wong, Laurence Tam seemed to have greater worries about the latent conflict of interest in making his viewpoints public while he was working at the Museum. Perhaps because of this reason, the open support he gave to Lui during his lifetime came chiefly in the form of action rather than writing. The support was realized largely in the leading role he assumed in the New Ink Painting Movement and in his application of a similar experimental mode of teaching Chinese painting at Wah Yan College between 1966 and 1971. The effusive praise that Tam bestowed on Lui did not manifest itself in writing until 2006. In December that year, Tam organized an exhibition, titled ‘The Cradle of New Chinese Ink Painting Movement’ at the Hong Kong City Hall. The show was distinctive in that it featured the old painting exercises of Tam’s students from Wah Yan, and not the works by ‘artists’ in the ‘proper sense’ of Hong Kong art protocol. These painting exercises, completed by Wah Yan’s F. 1 and F. 2 students, were the results of Tam’s implementaion of an experimental method of teaching Chinese ink painting at the college. The ink works by these junior-form students were highly exceptional for the day since they were neither pencil drawings, nor poster- or water-colour paintings that most students were normally expected to do then at high school. Yet, while the works were impressive for their display of a remarkable sense of innovation (figs. 180 and 181), more important to our present exploration of Lui Shou Kwan’s artistic legacy are the articles that Tam especially wrote for this exhibition. The articles confirm the key points of Lui’s

456 The articles have been rendered in both Chinese and English by Tam. For the Chinese catalogue, see Tam Chi Sing, Xinshuimo yundong de yaolan (The Cradle of New Chinese Ink Painting Movement), Hong Kong, Wah Yan College, Kowloon, 2006. For the English catalogue, see Tam Chi Sing, Laurence, The Cradle of New Chinese Ink Painting Movement, Hong Kong, Wah Yan College, Kowloon, 2009. All the references that have been and will be made in this chapter come from the later catalogue.
teaching which we have discussed a while ago. I would like to extract two passages from Tam’s articles to illustrate how much he appreciates Lui’s former guidance:

In [Lui Shou Kwan’s] ... teaching at the two universities, he ... insisted that students be serious and attentive to their artistic pursuit in theories and techniques and that they should also cherish and respect their own creativity, not allowing it to be smothered under the stylistic weight of old masters or even their own teachers. Lui strongly encouraged painters to develop an individual voice and independent creative path, and emphasized that copying and imitating other’s works was only a means to an end and should never be taken as the goal of one’s artistic work. He also encouraged students to try a variety of media and methods, including those that had been used in the past and those that had never been used before. In this way, he believed, every painter naturally could develop a unique identity and style of his own. He considered that it was only when one had acquired a unique identity and style in painting that true artistic creation could take place. 457

By updating the earlier Chinese philosophy and painting theory that pointed to nature and mind as the source of all art forms, he upheld his belief that Chinese traditional art theory was not inferior but comparable to the twentieth century modern art theory of the West. To him, what needed improvement was not the Chinese painting tradition, but the painting concept conceived in the mind of contemporary Chinese painters, and the traditional learning and teaching methods. A teacher should not teach the students the painting theory and technique of just one particular school. He should provide ample opportunities for students to acquire a broader base of painting knowledge of various schools of the past and the present, Chinese and non-Chinese. At the same time, the teacher should assist his students to know more about themselves as individuals, and encourage them to respect their own feeling and personal capacities, in preparing them to meet the

challenges in the process of creation and re-creation in their painting studio. 458

The articles which Tam wrote for the ‘Cradle’ exhibition not only helped restate Lui Shou Kwan’s pioneering role in art education, but also provided himself with a basis to endorse his past unconventional teaching of Chinese painting (itself the first of its kind in Hong Kong) at Wah Yan. Tam’s articles also permitted him to herald Wah Yan as the ‘cradle’ of the New Ink Painting Movement since, by his account, it was in an art room of the college where the In Tao Art Association and the One Art Group were successively formed. 459 Meanwhile, the articles allowed Tam to give credit to the members of the In Tao Art Association (of which he was the founding chairman) for forming the first main force that brought Lui Shou Kwan’s artistic doctrine into an art movement. 460 The ‘Cradle’ exhibition ultimately became a great success. Following its first mounting at the City Hall in December 2006, the exhibition continued to tour around Hong Kong, China (Guangzhou, Shanghai and Beijing) and Canada (Vancouver and Toronto) thirteen times until December 2010. Through the various activities (including forums, symposiums, lectures and workshops) that were organized to accompany these exhibitions, Tam made Lui Shou Kwan and his artistic belief known to wider and different groups of audiences (Appendix II).

459 Tam was given permission by the Wah Yan authority to use a fully equipped art room of the college to entertain Lui Shou Kwan and his students to do creative Chinese painting, and to hold art discussions and meetings every Sunday between 1968 and 1971. See, Tam Chi Sing, Laurence, ‘Discussion Paper Three’, The Cradle of New Chinese Ink Painting Movement, p. 247.
460 See ibid., p. 248.
In the ‘Cradle’ exhibition catalogue, Tam has expressed similar views as those of Wucius Wong in designating the Modern Literature and Art Association, the Society of Hong Kong Artists, the In Tao Art Association, and the One Art Group as the key markers of the development of modern art in Hong Kong. Where Wong places Lui Shou Kwan in a central position in his ‘four-phase, three-wave’ structure which he devised to analyse postwar Hong Kong art, Tam builds an even more ambitious canvas for Lui by mapping him, on one hand, against the whole backdrop of twentieth-century modern Chinese painting and, on the other hand, by defining two separate waves of development in this larger context. In Tam’s periodization, the first wave of modern Chinese painting took place in China in the 1930s and was brought about by such artists as Xu Beihong, Lin Fengmian and Liu Haisu in the North, and the Three Lingnan Masters in the South. The second wave occurred in Hong Kong in the late 1960s alongside the formation of the In Tao Art Association and One Art Group. According to Tam, the major difference between the two waves of development lies in that the first wave denoted merely a breakthrough in regard to technique and subject matter, whereas the second wave signified a real, profound reform in terms of spirit, a reinstatement of the value of individuality. In his articles, Tam also acknowledges the contributions made by some overseas Chinese artists, including Liu Guosong in Taiwan, Zeng Youhe in America and Zhang Daqian in Brazil, in promoting modern Chinese painting during the early postwar era. However, he maintains that Lui Shou Kwan’s contribution prevailed over the others’, since Lui not only displayed a creative spirit in his own work, but also helped rekindle it among his following by providing them with an intellectual foundation for their artistic pursuit.461 Tam’s argument for Lui’s teaching and influence is substantial and

461 For Tam’s analysis of the two waves of reform in Chinese painting, see Tam Chi Sing, Laurence,
convincing. Its persuasiveness should allow us to make a nod at the position he meant to establish for Lui in the twentieth-century history of modern Chinese art.

Warner, Wong and Tam thus joined forces in building up a reputation for Lui Shou Kwan, rendering him a prominent voice on the local art scene of Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s. Lui’s influence over Wong and Tam might particularly bring to mind Michael Baxandall’s revised notion of ‘influence’ in art history. Based on his observation of the game of billiards, Baxandall put forth a ‘billiard-table’ analogy which argues that if one is to talk about an artist’s influence over another artist, say, X over Y, it is better for one to see that it is Y who has ‘acted upon’ X, in a way not dissimilar to how balls are moved on the billiard table. Baxandall’s idea, simply put, is this: ‘to be influenced’ signifies a response to something which exists in the earlier artist’s work, in other words, art is a positional game. ‘[E]ach time an artist is influenced,’ Baxandall says, ‘he rewrites his art’s history a little.’ The billiard ball model of causality conceived by Baxandall is insightful and can be used to explain many artistic influences. However, Baxandall’s rather absolute view that no artist can be said to have influenced another, but rather that an artist can choose to be aware of and thus act ‘retrospectively’ to change the view of a former artist’s work, is not entirely applicable to the case of Lui, Wong and Tam. First of all, considering that the three lived in the same era and had direct teacher-student relationships, the influence that Lui exerted over the other two artists could be said to be direct and immediate.


463 Quoted from ibid., p. 60.
This being the case, there is no such thing as a temporal gap, hence, also no 'retrospective' gaze between them per se. As for the posthumous kudos that Wong and Tam gave to their teacher, some critics might speculate that these involved certain self-interest on their part, perhaps a desire to highlight their own artistic achievements. No remembrance of the past remains undistorted. However, anyone who has sifted through Wong’s and Tam’s past writings can tell that the respect they showed to Lui was constant and unaltered, and their devotion to passing on his artistic ideal to the next generation was strong and sincere. They proved themselves to be Lui’s most committed campaigners with a similar point of view and made no apologies for expressing it. Indeed, the tremendous efforts that Lui put in to promoting the idea of ‘to be one’s own self’ in artistic creation and his embodiment of this value in his personal work easily set him aside from the average artist-teachers. This may account for why he is still missed by some of his former students today. Laurence Tam, for example, insists that Lui was ‘a genius’, ‘a man of insight’.464 Others, such as Hui Suet Bik 許雪碧 (Xu Xuebi, b. 1943), Ip Hoi and Choi Yan Chi 蔡衍姿 (Cai Renzhi, b. 1949), who received Lui’s tutorship at different points in their careers, maintain that Lui was a great art educator, even an epochal figure.465 Over the course of years, many students of Lui Shou Kwan have dropped out from the art scene for good, yet some have made unfailing efforts to keep refining and diversifying their modes of expression, whilst also mentoring their own adherents. From this angle of vision, one might argue that Lui’s influence persists to this day and his contribution to art education equals or even surpasses his personal artistic achievement.

464 Quoted from Tam Chi Sing, Laurence, ‘Tracing the Origin of a New Program for Learning & Teaching Chinese Ink Painting’ (p. 24) and ‘Discussion Paper Three’ (p. 247), both in The Cradle of New Chinese Ink Painting Movement.

Aside from the curatorial staff of the Museum, a few Western art dealers, including Nigel Cameron, Dorothy Swan and Sara Larkin, who formed part of Hong Kong’s nascent artistic infrastructure in the 1960s and 1970s, were also of some help to Lui Shou Kwan in solidifying his status as a modernist artist. Cameron was perhaps the most important auxiliary to Lui in his capacity as editor of *The Mandarin Hong Kong* (the house magazine of the Mandarin Hotel in Hong Kong), as regular contributor to the art page of *South China Morning Post*, and as Honorary Adviser to the City Hall Art Gallery & Museum on exhibitions and acquisitions. In each of these roles, Cameron was equally keen on introducing Lui Shou Kwan to his readers. Since 1965, he began to write on and illustrate the artist’s abstract Hong Kong landscapes in *The Mandarin Hong Kong*. In addition, he also organized joint exhibitions for Lui and his students. The ‘Co-exhibition of Hong Kong Artists’, which Cameron mounted as part of the programme for the 1975 Hong Kong Arts Festival, was a noted example. For this particular exhibition, Cameron specifically wrote an article, titled ‘Hong Kong Art - The Quiet Revolution’, and had it published in *The Mandarin Hong Kong*. In it he commended Lui as ‘one of the greatest living Chinese artists’ and for bringing about a ‘quiet revolution’ in Chinese art. Editing and writing aside, Cameron’s advisory post at the Museum could have further allowed him to enhance the reputation of Lui Shou Kwan, if not his income. One way of achieving this would be by proposing Lui’s name to the Museum’s acquisition committee when it was time for the Museum to consider adding in more works to its Hong Kong art collection.

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466 Cameron’s introductions of Lui’s work can be found in the following issues of *The Mandarin Hong Kong*: vol. 1, no. 5 (Jun., 1965), pp. 21, 29; vol. 1, no. 8 (Nov., 1966), pp. 34-35; vol. 4, no. 1 (Mar., 1973), p. 35.

467 Quoted from Nigel Cameron, ‘Hong Kong Art - The Quiet Revolution’, *The Mandarin Hong Kong*, vol. 6, no. 1 (Feb., 1975), p. 10.
Dorothy Swan and Sara Larkin were two other Western art dealers in Hong Kong who proffered help to Lui Shou Kwan in disseminating his artistic belief to local audiences. Swan's gallery, a small one, was called the Chatham Galleries. It was located on Chatham Road, Kowloon, and opened in late 1962 (figs. 182 and 183). During her five-year operation of the gallery, Swan had arranged art exhibitions for Lui and also asked him to deliver painting classes to small groups of people there. From time to time, the Chatham Galleries would sponsor the holding of exhibitions for some of the new ink painters it represented. For such exhibitions, public dignitaries, including Sir David Trench, the then Governor of Hong Kong, might be invited over to the gallery to officiate their openings. Larkin's gallery, named Sara Larkin Salon, was set up at her own vast apartment on Hong Kong Island in 1973 (figs. 184 and 185). Larkin had studied Chinese painting with Lui Shou Kwan and was probably his final private art agent. As far as is known, she had organized a large-scale exhibition, titled 'Hong Kong Arts Festival: First Exhibition of Contemporary Hong Kong Art', at the Furama Hotel, Hong Kong, in 1974, where the works by Lui and six of his students were showcased. Although Swan and Larkin had not contributed any significant article to art journals or art magazines to boost up Lui's fame, the exhibitions they curated and their social networks would definitely make Lui's name better known to local art-lovers, including those who were sympathetic to his ideal of reanimating Chinese painting.

470 The students included Irene Chou, Chui Tse Hung, Leung Kui Ting, Ng Yiu Chung, Laurence Tam and Wucius Wong.
The appreciation and endorsement that Lui Shou Kwan obtained from his students, art agents, and the Museum curators combined to promote him as a leader in the art circles of Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s. Undeniably, Lui was a critical figure in shaping the art of Hong Kong during this period which saw a huge transformation in the creation and reception of ink-based painting. Lui’s prominence on the Hong Kong art scene became particularly noticeable in the early 1970s, as can be glimpsed in the following five large art shows which he and his students were invited to join:

i) the 1970 ‘Hong Kong Art’ exhibition held at the Hong Kong Pavilion of Expo 70 in Osaka, Japan - the first overseas exhibition of contemporary Hong Kong art ever presented by the Museum;

ii) the 1971 ‘Art Now • Hong Kong’ exhibition (fig. 186), again presented by the Museum, which toured around London, Edinburgh, Manchester, and Bristol in the U.K.;

iii) the inter-regional exhibition, titled ‘Zhongguo shuimohua dazhan’ (Large Exhibition of Chinese Ink Painting) held alternately at Taiwan Provincial Museum in December 1971, and at Hong Kong City Hall in February 1972;

iv) the 1972 exhibition, titled ‘Zhongguo huihua zhi xin fangxiang - shiyi wei dangdai Zhongguo yishujia’ (New Direction of Chinese Painting - II Contemporary Chinese Artists), which was organized by the University of Kansas Museum of Art and travelled to several other university museums in the U.S.; and

v) the 1975 exhibition, titled ‘Xianggang xiandai shuimohua zhan’ (Exhibition of Modern Hong Kong Ink Paintings), hosted by the National Museum of History in Taiwan, in which Liu Shou Kwan participated as both an exhibitor and a member of the selection committee.

Apart from the above exhibitions, the issuing of a special feature called ‘Hong Kong Ink Painting’ by Xiongshih meishu 雄獅美術 (Lion Art), a popular Taiwanese art magazine, in January 1975 also helped spread Lui Shou Kwan’s influence in the
Chinese modern art world. Yet in regard to Lui’s art teaching alone, the case which best illustrates his success is no doubt the achievements that his students earned at the ‘Contemporary Hong Kong Art Biennial Exhibition’ (the ‘Biennale’) over the past years. The Biennale, originally known as ‘Exhibition of Contemporary Art’, was first presented by the City Hall Museum & Art Gallery as a bi-yearly event in 1963. The objective of this exhibition was to feature alternately praiseworthy works by both children and adults (fig. 187). In 1975, the exhibition was changed into an open art competition-cum-exhibition by the Museum. As the only official art competition in Hong Kong, the Biennale was complemented with the granting of the Urban Council Fine Arts Awards and selective acquisition of the winners’ works by the Museum. Since 1975, a great number of Lui Shou Kwan’s students were granted awards in the Biennale, some of whom even managed to win gold medals. Their striking success in this competition as well as their dominant presence in other exhibitions which the Museum held at home and abroad led to the formation of a phenomenon, where new ink paintings appeared as the most representative form of modern art in Hong Kong.

The new ink painters, as Lui Shou Kwan’s students generally came to be dubbed, naturally rejoiced in their performances in the Biennales. The awards they received from the Museum, however, were viewed with suspicion by not a few traditional and conservative artists and art critics alike. Among them, there were practising artists.

471 See ‘Xianggang shuimo teji’ (Special Feature on Hong Kong Ink Painting), Xiongshih meishu, no. 47 (1975), pp. 5-55.
473 The awards were given out under six art categories, namely painting (Western media), painting (Chinese media), prints, sculpture, Chinese calligraphy, and mixed media. See C. S. Tam, 'Introduction', in Hong Kong Art: 1970-80, Hong Kong, Urban Council, 1981, p. 10.
who also taught Chinese painting but had not earned a name for their works or for their teachings. While they were already disappointed that they did not receive the fame they thought they deserved, they turned irreful upon seeing the ‘rapid’ rise and success of the new ink painters. As the profile of Lui and his students increased in the early 1970s, their previously private and mild criticisms grew swiftly into open, acute accusations. In the history of Hong Kong art, there is no artist like Lui Shou Kwan who has ever achieved such a deep respect from his students and yet provoked such animosity from his fellow artists and art critics. The fierce controversies evoked around Lui and his students constitute part of his artistic legacy and call for some explanation.

Controversies Surrounding Lui Shou Kwan and His Students

Lui Shou Kwan’s detractors were made up of a wide stratum of artists and art critics. They included traditional painters like Lau Ping Hang 劉秉衡 (Liu Bingheng, 1915-2003) and Zhao Ke 趙可 (1907-?), and art critics such as Tam Shek Wing 談錫永 (Tan Xiyong) and Tam Sau Mok 譚秀牧 (Tan Xiumu). Among Lui’s critics were also his old acquaintances, for instance, King Chia Lun 金嘉倫 (Jing Jialun, b. 1936) and Lin Jen Tung 林健同 (Lin Jiantong, 1911-1994). Moreover, there were those who dared not disclose their real names but chose to attack Lui Shou Kwan under the guise of a pseudonym. Generally speaking, the animosity of Lui’s detractors was born out of their anger at his unceasing criticism of his contemporary art scene, of which they were a part. Their hostility became most evident after Lui was conferred with a M.B.E. by the Hong Kong-British administration in 1971 and when his students started to gain notice on the official art scene around that time. The platforms
from which they carried out their attacks consisted of newspapers (e.g., *Ming Pao Daily* 《明報》, *Zili wanbao* 《自立晚報》) as well as art, literary and cultural magazines (e.g., *Ming Pao Monthly* 《明報月刊》, *Nanyang wenyi* 《南洋文藝》, *Nanbeiji* 《南北極》, *Wenxue yu meishu* 《文學與美術》, *Wenmei yuekan* 《文美月刊》, *Xiongshih meishu*) which were issued in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Lui’s death in 1975 did not put a stop to the controversies that were levelled against him. His previous forthright criticism of his fellow artists’ works and teachings had sown such deep rancour among them that harsh criticisms continued to be vented on him until the early 1990s, in some of the above newspapers and magazines as well as in other Hong Kong publications (including *Wenhui bao* 《文匯報》, *Sing Tao Daily* 《星島日報》, *Express* 《快報》, *Wah Kiu Yat Pao* 《華僑日報》, *Waibian* 《外邊》, and *City Magazine* 《號外》).

Of the many criticisms that Lui Shou Kwan’s opponents levelled against him, the one which was most oft-repeated surrounds the influence which they believed Lui had secured at the Museum under the support of John Warner, Wucius Wong and Laurence Tam. Wong and Tam were especially vulnerable to criticism since their closeness to Lui made it easy to accuse them of being Lui’s accomplices. Lui’s opponents, pouncing on the privileged support they assumed he had at the Museum, often accused him as the ‘mastermind’ behind the selection of art works to be included in the Museum’s exhibitions, notably the Biennale.\(^{474}\) They complained that it was only because of Lui’s favouritism and the endorsement he received from the Museum curators that the new ink painters emerged as the most outstanding group of

\[^{474}\text{It is worthy to note that ten students of Lui Shou Kwan were awarded a prize in the 1975 Biennale, and other members from the One Art Group also won top prizes in the following five Biennales.}\]
artists of the time and thereby diminishing the importance of other artists. A critic who called himself Liu Fengji 刘逢吉, for example, said Lui Shou Kwan gave the public an impression that he was an art official because he was awarded a M.B.E. by the government and possessed the power to evaluate the works by other Hong Kong artists. Moreover, Liu alleged that in making an all-out effort to promote ink painting, Lui constantly rejected the works of those whose ideas differed from his.475 Another critic, Shi Shangqing 石尚青, even used the tart expression ganjin shajue 超盡殺絕 (meaning ‘ruthless banishment and killing’) to describe this hypothesized behaviour of Lui Shou Kwan.476 A perusal of other charges that were raised against Lui reveals that almost every art exhibition with which he was associated had been an object of attack. Those under criticism included the Museum’s 1962 inaugural show ‘Hong Kong Art Today’, a few exhibitions in the 1970s and 1980s which involved Lui,477 as well as the two Biennales held respectively in 1987 and 1994.

Artistically, Lui Shou Kwan had been criticized for making his students too technique-oriented and leading them to produce works that were mere unreflective bricolages of Western styles. Those who made such criticisms condemned Lui as the main offender in developing a kind of jejune, abstract type of Chinese painting in

475 See Liu Fengji, ‘Tan Lui Shoukun de hua – xie zai “Lui Shoukun de shijie” jinianzhan hou’, (A Discussion of the Paintings of Lui Shou Kwan – Written in the Wake of His Retrospective ‘The World of Lui Shou-kwan’), Nanbeiji, no. 81 (1977.2.16), pp. 92 and 94. Similar accusations against Lui Shou Kwan as that brought by Liu continued to appear in other critics’ writings. However, none of them was able to provide adequate evidence to corroborate their claims.

476 See Shi Shangqing, ‘Xianggang huatan he shuimo weiji’ (The Painting Scene of Hong Kong and the Crisis of Ink-and-Water [Painting]), Nanbeiji, no. 29 (1972.10.16), p.56.

477 Examples included Yishujia siren zhan (Exhibition of Four Hong Kong Artists, 1970), Qishi niandai Xianggang qingnian yishujia zhan (Young Artists of Hong Kong 1970), Taigang shuimo dazhan (Exhibition of Ink Paintings from Hong Kong and Taiwan, 1972), and Shuimo de niandai (The Era of Ink Painting, 1985).
postwar Hong Kong. To them, the new ink paintings were vapid and decorative, even commercialized, and were neither Chinese nor Western.⁴⁷⁸ Ruan Tong 魯彤 was one of these critics. In an article published two years later after Lui’s death, he made it a point that the ‘accomplishments’ of the Biennales were largely restricted to having established the status of the abstract ink painters whose works, in his eyes, could neither be called Chinese nor Western given that they were like Western commodities dressed in Chinese garb.⁴⁷⁹ Years later, another critic who disguised himself under the pseudonym, Linghu Wushuang 令狐無雙, also denounced the nondescript nature of the new ink paintings, claiming that they looked Western to the Chinese, yet un-Chinese to Westerners, and hence their authors could only teeter between traditionalism and modernism, East and West, without knowing exactly where to go.⁴⁸⁰ There were some cases in which Lui’s detractors might reproach the new ink painters for concentrating too much on traditional subjects, such as mountains, rivers and clouds, which they considered ‘nostalgic’ and without any engagement with urban subject matter.⁴⁸¹ In accord with this reproach, they further condemned Lui and his students for ignoring the social and political situation of China and the frictions of

⁴⁷⁸ One might wonder if their criticisms had anything to do with the charges that the mainland authorities had brought against their artists, such as Huang Yongyu (b. 1925), for creating so-called ‘black paintings’. The articles that I have reviewed for my study indicate that there was no such connection since their contents revealed not a slightest hint at those ‘black paintings’.


⁴⁸⁰ See Linghu Wushuang, ‘Xianggang xiandai shuimohua gaiguan dinglun’ (Final Judgment of Modern Ink Painting), City Magazine, no. 143 (1988), p. 97. Linghu Wushuang might be Liew Come Tong, a Hong Kong-based painter from Taiwan, who was highly critical of the new ink painters. In fact, it was Liew who gave me a copy of the article under discussion during my interview with him on 31 August 2005.

⁴⁸¹ For a more recent example of such a criticism, see David Clarke, ‘Between East and West: Negotiations with Tradition and Modernity in Hong Kong Art’, in Art & Place: Essays on Art from a Hong Kong Perspective, Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 1996, p. 69.
the modernizing lived world of Hong Kong. A few hardened critics even blamed them for consciously producing depoliticized, hence, inoffensive works. They claimed that their works tied in with the government’s conciliatory cultural policies whose aim was to win and control the public feeling towards the colonizer. Just a few years ago, Matthew Turner, an expert of Hong Kong design history, advanced an idea that the modern outlook of Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s was actually ‘designed’ by the Hong Kong colonial government ‘through the adoption of contemporary fashion and architecture, media and cultural events, as well as festivals and exhibitions’. He claimed that all such ‘designed’ policies were meant ‘to curb early stirrings of political aspiration’ and defuse the dissent of Hong Kong people, especially after the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in Mainland China and the 1967 riot in Hong Kong. On the New Ink Painting Movement, Turner made the following observation which he admitted as partial and anecdotal observation:

Local art, where it had a platform, had to steer a circuitous route between the Scylla and Charybdis of East and West; hence the bloom in graphic forms of ‘New’ ink painting, alongside calligraphic renderings of Abstract Expressionism. These ‘movements’ were articulated by a curatorial triumvirate of Hong Kong modern art made up of the critic and dealer Nigel Cameron, the civil servant, painter and Director of the Museum of Art Laurence Tam, and ex-civil servant, educator and painter Wucius Wong. Together, they were able to insinuate some interesting, as well as bland work into such gaps they could carve out within the prevailing ethos of a de-politicised culture.483

483 Quoted from ibid., pp. 26-27.
Turner's perception of the 'depoliticized' nature of the new ink paintings and their authors' possible collaboration with the colonial government was in keeping with that which had been held by some sceptical minds back in the 1970s. In a 1977 private forum on abstract ink painting, unnamed participants were reported to have likewise inveighed against the works of Lui Shou Kwan and the new ink paintings as empty, illusory, and standing too aloof from worldly affairs.⁴⁸⁴ One of them was cited to have concluded at the end of the forum thus:

Abstract paintings of Hong Kong matched very well with the government's cultural policy. Although the Hong Kong government tried to adopt an indifferent or detached attitude towards Chinese culture, it wanted to make use of its relatively backward parts to produce what was called the 'Oriental flavour' to decorate the society and to attract tourists as well as foreign currency. Abstract ink painting was just able to carry out this 'mission'.⁴⁸⁵

Is it fair to subject Lui Shou Kwan to all the above criticisms? In my view, the criticism over Lui's excessive focus on technique in his art teaching was ill-informed, since anyone who had attended his lectures or studied his writings seriously would know that he saw technique only as secondary to artistic creation. Rather than claiming that he was technique-oriented, one might better say he was future-minded. Lui's futurist orientation was the reason underlying his passion for delivering public art courses and cultivating young artists. Lui did, however, often call for new form (zaoxing) in art because he trusted that the creation of new form would allow an artist to have something novel and important to donate to the future. That said, Lui never

⁴⁸⁵ Quoted from ibid., p. 21.
lost the feeling that it was the artistic legacy of ink painting in Chinese civilization which he as a Chinese could most significantly contribute to the rest of the world. Moreover, he deemed that this mission could be entrusted to those who had received proper art training. This answers why he should believe in a system, and not so much in personal talents.

Concerning Lui Shou Kwan’s ‘conspiracy’ with the colonial government to promote modern abstract ink painting as a way to avert social and political unrest, even his harshest critics have to admit that this inculpation is difficult to prove. How could the colonial government convince its people from the Urban Council and the Museum, tasked with a responsibility for the arts and culture, to join hands to carry out its ‘designed’ policies? As it is, none of Lui’s opponents has been able to provide concrete evidence to substantiate their argument. It is perhaps even more difficult to verify how those colonial officials could have persuaded outside organizations (e.g., the Hong Kong Art Club which had a large membership and the Society of Hong Kong Artists of which Lui was a co-founder) to collude with them in organizing various cultural and artistic events, for instance, the Hong Kong Arts Festival, to counteract the socio-political disturbances then besetting Hong Kong. Considering Lui’s case alone, it is hard to believe that he as an artist with strong nationalist sentiments would succumb to the political demands imposed on him from above, despite his advisory role at the Museum. Convincing evidence has to be presented if one argues that the official support to abstract ink painting was a strategy for diverting people’s attention from social and political troubles.

As for the charge over Lui Shou Kwan’s and his followers’ deliberate distancing from politics, one might note that it was not yet a common practice among Hong Kong
artists to occupy themselves with politics in the 1960s and 1970s. There is no reason to suppose that because Lui and his students did not respond explicitly to social and political realities in their works, they were not affected by them. None of Lui’s critics has paid any notice to the fact that his political antipathy in fact stemmed from his past experiences in a war-stricken China. As has been argued, Lui never wanted his work to become an instrument of any kind of propaganda. It would, therefore, be misleading to regard him as an artist who purposely created officially sanctioned work in order to ‘please’ the colonial authority. Although many of his abstract and semi-abstract paintings were void of social and political connotations, some of his Hong Kong landscapes did point to the post-agricultural transformation of the city after the war; moreover, his Zen paintings also made a timely response to the then Zen boom in America. Where he did not wish to see his works fall victim to politics or any kind of ideology, neither did he want to restrict the creative paths of his students. He made it clear in his teachings that ink painting was only an option, amongst others, that his students could choose to pursue, but he had no desire to coerce them into practicing it just because he had selected it as the mode for his own expression.486

There is no suggestion in Lui Shou Kwan’s and his students’ writings that he was ever a peremptory teacher. True, many of his promising students did ultimately choose to follow his example to practice ink-based painting and, like him, built up strong hopes to arrive at their own unique styles. However, there were also those who had from early on made up their minds or would later shift to pursue other visual art forms, such as print and design (e.g., Kan Tai Keung 鞍兆強 (Jin Daiqiang) b. 1942), calligraphy (e.g., Ip Hoi; Jat See Yeu 稽仕堯 (Zhai Shiyao), 1935-2009), mixed-media (e.g., Leung Kui Ting 梁巨廷 (Liang Juting), b. 1945) and installation

486 See Lui Shou Kwan, Lectures on Ink Painting, p. 137.
art (e.g., Choi Yan Chi; Kwok Meng Ho 郭孟浩 (Guo Menghao), b. 1947). Today, some of them are still active practitioners of their chosen fields.

There are some elements of truth, however, in those criticisms concerning the ‘quick’ success of the new ink painters in the Biennales. Obviously, when some of these new ink painters entered the competition, they had not yet reached a point where they could exert their potential and capacities to their fullest. That they could finally seize the valued prizes might be due to the fact that their works looked fresh or sufficiently innovative to distinguish them from many other conventional entries; or they might have provided the promise of positive developments which made them appear to be the sound choices for the judges to give out the awards. Lui Shou Kwan was one of six adjudicators who were invited to sit in the selection panel of the 1975 Biennale. Plausibly, the final results of this Biennale were in certain measure subject to his artistic judgment. Lui, however, only served in the selection panel of the Biennale just that once since he died later that year. As such, he should not be held responsible for the ‘easy’ success of his students in the subsequent Biennales.

Nevertheless, it was in the nature of Lui Shou Kwan’s work to divide critical opinion, provoking the extremes of censure and admiration. Consequently, there were on one hand Lui’s opponents who blamed him for monopolizing the Hong Kong art scene and homogenizing the style of Chinese painting, there were on the other hand Lui’s admirers who extolled him as one of the city’s greatest painter-teachers. Despite all the trenchant criticisms that he bore, Lui’s artistic achievement continued to win

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487 The other five judges were Bonnie Chan, Chung Wah Nan, Günther Hollmann, Clifford Shun Wah and S. C. Chuang. All the names can be found in the exhibition catalogue of the 1975 Biennale.
approval from his former students and a number of art professionals and art historians over the last three decades. For his adherents and some liberal-minded cognoscenti, Lui's syncretic approach in painting positively epitomized Hong Kong's characteristically 'mixed' culture. Although among them there were some who might not agree to all the ideas he had put forward, they invariably affirmed his impressive impact in the early postwar era and concurred that he had made real and tremendous contributions to the development of modern art in Hong Kong. As early as in the mid-1980s, Michael Chen (Chen Zanyun), then Galleries Director of the Hong Kong Arts Centre, had passed this remark: 'With the arrival of Lui Shou Kwan ... an important page in the evolution of local painting was turned. Lui, with his Chan (Zen) paintings which fused an Abstract Expressionist approach with the spirit of Chinese philosophic thinking, was one of the crucial figures in the history of Hong Kong painting.'

Two decades later, Mok Kar Leung (Mo Jialiang), Professor and presently Chairman of CU's Fine Arts Department, likewise stated that 'Lui forged open a new page in the history of Hong Kong art with his reformation of ink painting. His influence and contribution is undisputed. The importance of Hong Kong ink painting in the development of modern Chinese painting is also incontestable.' Official recognition of Lui Shou Kwan's work was sustained, too, by Christina Chu (Zhu Jinlian), previous Chief Curator of the Hong Kong Museum of Art, and her successor, Tang Hoi Chiu. The preface which Chu wrote for the catalogue of Lui Shou Kwan's 2002/2003 posthumous solo exhibition and the

488 Quoted from Michael Chen, 'Ten Years of Hong Kong Painting', in Ten Years of Hong Kong Painting: An Exhibition to Mark the 10th Anniversary of the Hong Kong Arts Centre, Hong Kong, Hong Kong Arts Centre, 1987, unpaginated.

489 Quoted from Mok Kar Leung, 'Zhongguohua yu Xianggang shumo yishu' (Chinese Painting and Hong Kong Ink Art), in Hong Kong • Water • Ink • Colour: Exhibition of Chinese Paintings 2009, Hong Kong, Hong Kong Arts Development Council, 2009, p. 278.
article by Tang which was compiled in the same catalogue, disclosed both of their appreciation of the artist’s lifelong artistic endeavour.\textsuperscript{490} Besides, a few art historians including Li Chu-tsing, Wan Qingli and Lü Peng, as well as the mainland art critic Shang Hui 尚輝 also openly acknowledged Lui’s artistic achievement in their writings.\textsuperscript{491} Inasmuch as the divided opinions over Lui’s work resulted in an unprecedented polarization of the Hong Kong art scene, the contentious views have yet all gone into the making of him as a pivotal figure in the history of postwar art in Hong Kong.

Liu Shou Kwan lived only a brief span of fifty-six years, albeit long enough for him to create memorable work. As an artist, he fulfilled his goal of reviving the long stagnant creative power in Chinese painting through his personal work. As an art teacher, he accomplished his objective of mobilizing a new generation of artists to seek their own ways, inspiring them to become masters of their own art. Few artists of his time had dedicated themselves with such indomitable industry to the art of painting and art education. Looking back, one might argue that Lui’s devotion to artistic reform was not without a sense of heroism. Yet, it was this reformist zeal that

\textsuperscript{490} See Christina Chu, ‘Introduction’ (pp. 6-8) and Tang Hoi-chiu, ‘The Way of Ink Painting – The Origin and In Search of Zen’ (pp. 9-14), both in the exhibition catalogue of \textit{Lui Show-kwan – New Ink Painting}, a posthumous one-man show of Lui staged by the Hong Kong Museum of Art between 2002 and 2003.

helped him to scale new heights in his career and open new vistas in the development of modern art in Hong Kong. Lui once said to his students:

My personal ability is limited. I am also aware that I don’t have many days ahead of me. But I do hope that by offering you a comprehensive and proper guidance grounded on my own exploration, I could inspire you all to continue working hard to improve and expand [the art of Chinese painting]. If only you could embrace a pure heart and confront the art of your country selflessly, one day you should be able to overcome any difficulty and solve any problem that may come along. This is my conviction.492

Lui Shou Kwan died of a sudden heart attack at his home on 26 September 1975. He did not see his ideal art school built; nor did he leave a true successor since none of his students had his unique background or acquired as solid an understanding of the tradition of Chinese painting. Lui’s artistic flowering ended too soon with his premature death. Nonetheless, he made a lasting impact and his work has stood the test of time.

492 See The Manuscripts of Lui Shou Kwan, p. 301.
Appendix I

Information of the exhibitions pertinent to Lui Shou Kwan is mainly gathered from:

1) Lui Shou Kwan's diary marked 1962-64;
2) 'Art Exhibition of Lui Shou Kwan', in Contemporary Chinese Artist: Lui Shou-kwan, Modern Edition, no. 4 (1963), pp. 64-65;
4) Li Zunyi, 'Appendix 1', in Xianggang xiandai shuimohua wenxuan (Anthology of Hong Kong Modern Ink Painting), Hong Kong, Xianggang xiandai shuimohua xiehui, 2001, pp. 189-195;
5) 'Lui Shou-kwan (1919-1975): Brief Chronology', in Lui Shou-kwan – New Ink Painting, Hong Kong, Hong Kong Museum of Art, 2003, pp. 246-247; and
6) other past exhibition leaflets, pamphlets, and catalogues related to the art of Lui Shou Kwan.

One-man Shows

1954
Hong Kong Cultural Works Gallery, Hong Kong Hotel, Hong Kong

1957
British Council Library, Hong Kong
Hong Kong Pacific Club, Hong Kong

1959
Atherton Gallery, Menlo Park, California, U.S.A.

1960
Arnold Finkel Gallery, Philadelphia, U.S.A.
Stanford Research Institute, California, U.S.A.

1961
Parkinson Court, University of Leeds, U.K.
Atherton Gallery, California, U.S.A.
Mansard Gallery, U.K.
Hop Hall, Liverpool, U.K.
Heal's, London, U.K.
University of Leeds, U.K.
1962
Gray Art Gallery, West Hartlepool, County Durham, U.K.
Public Art Gallery, Dewsbury, U.K.
Public Art Gallery, Brighouse, U.K.
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University, Oxford, U.K.
Queen's University, Belfast, Yorkshire, U.K.

1963
Sino-American Cultural and Economic Association, Taipei, Taiwan
Museum and Art Gallery, Letchworth, U.K.
Municipal Art Gallery, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, U.K.
Rumbold Gallery, Midhurst, Sussex, U.K.
Midhurst Gallery, U.K.
Haig Hall Museum & Art Gallery, Wigan, Lancashire, U.K.
Commonwealth Institute, London, U.K.
Commonwealth Institute, Kensington, U.K.
Guildford House, Surrey, U.K.
Torquay Gallery, Devon, U.K.
Municipal Art Gallery, Rochdale, U.K.
Commonwealth Gallery, Edinburgh, U.K.
Municipal Art Gallery, Wolverhampton, Staffordshire, U.K.
Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal, U.K.
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University, Oxford, U.K.
Municipal Art Gallery, Gateshead, U.K.
Atherton Gallery, Menlo Park, California, U.S.A.

1964
Mandarin Hotel, Hong Kong
Luz Gallery, Manila, Philippines
Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal, U.K.
City Art Gallery, Bristol, U.K.
Lillie Art Gallery, Glasglow, Scotland, U.K.
Municipal Art Gallery, Darlington, County Durham, U.K.
Central Library, Battersea, London, U.K.
City of Nottingham Museum and Art Gallery, Nottingham, U.K.
Victoria Street Gallery, Nottingham, U.K.
Bangor Art Gallery, Bangor, North Wales, U.K.
Municipal Art Gallery, Oldham, Lancashire, U.K.
Municipal Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, U.K.
City Hall Museum & Art Gallery, Hong Kong

1965
Hastings Museum and Art Gallery, Hastings, U.K.
New Metropole Arts Centre, Folkestone, Kent, U.K.
Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal, U.K.
National Library, Manila, Philippines

1966
Fermoy Art Gallery, Lynn, U.K.

1967
Sally Jackson Gallery, Hong Kong
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University, Oxford, U.K.
Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, U.K.

1968
Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea, U.K.
Portsmouth City Art Gallery, Southsea, U.K.

1969
Newport Museum and Art Gallery, Newport, U.K.
The Royal Edinburgh Hospital, Morningside, U.K.

1970
Hugh M. Moss Ltd., London, U.K.
County College of Morris, Randolph, U.S.A.

1971
C.J.L. Gallery, Hong Kong

1973
Covent Garden Art Gallery, London, U.K.
1974
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University, Oxford, U.K.

Group Shows

1948
National Art Exhibition, China

1950
‘Appreciating the Art of Painting from Lingnan’, Hong Kong
‘Paintings and Calligraphy by Renowned Artists from South and North China’, Hong Kong

1956
Works of Hong Kong Chinese Artists, a travelling exhibition in Southeast Asia
Hong Kong Artists’ Exhibition, Hong Kong Club, Hong Kong

1957
First Group Show, Hong Kong Artists’ Association, Hong Kong Club, Hong Kong
The Seven Artists’ Association Exhibition, St. John’s Cathedral Exhibition Hall, Hong Kong
Second Bingshen Art Club Members Exhibition, Bingshen Art Club, Hong Kong
Chinese Painting & Calligraphy Appreciation Exhibition, Hong Kong
Hong Kong Arts Festival, Hong Kong

1958
Hong Kong Arts Festival, Hong Kong
The 5th Exhibition in Ueno Municipal Art Gallery, Tokyo, Japan

1959
Joint Exhibition with Students, St. John’s Cathedral Exhibition Hall, Hong Kong
Third Bingshen Art Club Members Exhibition, St. John’s Cathedral, Hong Kong.
First Hong Kong Artists Association Joint Exhibition, Hong Kong Club
Taiwan Art Exhibition, Taiwan
1960
Hong Kong Arts Festival, Hong Kong
‘First Hong Kong International Salon of Paintings’ organized by the Modern Literature and Art Association, St. John’s Cathedral Hall, Hong Kong
Second Group Show of the Society of Hong Kong Artists
Fourth Bingshen Art Club Members Exhibition, St. John’s Cathedral Hong Kong.

1961
The 5th International Exhibition of Art, Tokyo, Japan
Hope Hall, Liverpool, U.K.

1962
‘For School Exhibition’, presented by the London Education Department, U.K.
Christmas Show, Midhurst Gallery, U.K.
‘Hong Kong Art Today’, opening exhibition of the City Museum & Art Gallery, Hong Kong
‘Second Hong Kong International Salon of Paintings’, organized by the Modern Literature and Art Association, City Hall Museum & Art Gallery, Hong Kong
First Saigon Biennial Art Exhibition, Saigon, S. Vietnam

1963
‘Third Hong Kong International Salon of Paintings’ organized by the Modern Literature and Art Association, City Museum & Art Gallery, Hong Kong

1964
New Metropole Arts Centre, Folkeston, U.K.
‘Mixed Exhibition of Asian Artists’, Bear Lane Gallery, Oxford, U.K.

1965
The 8th Sao Paulo Biennial, Brazil
Drian Gallery, London, U.K.
‘Chinese Modern Painting Exhibition’, Museum of Art, Rome, Italy
1966
M.I.T., Boston, U.S.A.
Brandis University
Somerset Hills Gallery, Morristown, New Jersey, U.S.A.
10 Gallery, Philadelphia, U.S.A.
Subscription Rooms, Stroud, Gloucestershire, U.K.
Fermoy Gallery, King’s Lynn, U.K.

1967
'Music and Fine Arts in Hong Kong 1967', City Hall, Hong Kong

1968

1969
'Trends in Twentieth-Century Chinese Painting', Stanford Museum, Stanford University, U.S.A.
'Contemporary Hong Kong Art', City Museum & Art Gallery, Hong Kong

1970
Triennial Art Exhibition, Delhi, India
'Hong Kong Art' exhibition, Hong Kong Pavilion of Expo 70, Osaka, Japan
Open Exhibition, Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield, U.K.
'Four Hong Kong Artists', City Museum & Art Gallery, Hong Kong
'Exhibition of Chinese Ink Painting', Taiwan and Hong Kong

1971
'Art Now • Hong Kong', London, Edinburgh, Manchester, and Bristol, U.K.
'Contemporary Chinese Ink Painters', Lee Nordness Galleries, New York, U.S.A.

1972
'Chinese Ink Painting Exhibition', City Hall, Hong Kong
'1972 Contemporary Hong Kong Art', City Museum & Art Gallery, Hong Kong
Hong Kong Artists Exhibition, Pacifaculture-Asia Museum, Pasadena, California, U.S.A.
Hong Kong Artists Exhibition, Evansville Museum, Indiana, U.S.A.
1973
'Five Contemporary Chinese Artists', Mavis Chapman Gallery, Sydney, Australia
'Shui-mo: An Exhibition of Hong Kong Art', Excelsior Hotel, Hong Kong

1974
'First Exhibition of Contemporary Hong Kong Art', Hong Kong Arts Festival, Furama Hotel, Hong Kong

1975
Contemporary Hong Kong Artists Exhibition, Hong Kong Arts Festival
'Co-exhibition of Hong Kong Artists', Hong Kong St. John Ambulance headquarters, Hong Kong
'Exhibition of Modern Hong Kong Ink Painting', National Museum of History, Taipei, Taiwan

Other Exhibitions (with details missing)
South-East Asian Art Exhibition
Lisbon International Art Exhibition
Exhibition of works by famous international artists in Brazil
Hong Kong University Annual Art Show
South Korea International Art Exhibition
Art Exhibition of Contemporary Chinese Painters, sponsored by Chinese Cultural Council, Hong Kong
Art show at Chatham Galleries, Kowloon, Hong Kong
Art show at Luz Gallery, Philippines
Mixed exhibition of Asian artists at Bear Lane Gallery, Oxford, U.K.

Posthumous One-Man Shows

1976
'The World of Lui Shou Kwan', Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong
Talbot Rice Arts Centre, Edinburgh, U.K.

1980
Gallery Eighties, Toronto, Canada
1982
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University, Oxford, U.K.
Satori Gallery, San Francisco, U.S.A.

1984
‘Paintings by Lui Shou-kwan 1919-1975’, presented by Arts Promotion in association with Société Générale, Hong Kong

1985
‘Hong Kong in Ink Moods’, Fung Ping Shan Museum, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

2002-2003
‘Lü Shoukun – New Ink Painting’, Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong
Appendix II

‘The Cradle of New Chinese Ink Painting Movement’:

Summary of Exhibitions and Related Educational Activities

Exhibitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibition</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Exhibition</td>
<td>Hong Kong City Hall</td>
<td>2006 December 7 to December 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Exhibition</td>
<td>Wah Yan College, Kowloon</td>
<td>2007 January 4 to January 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Exhibition</td>
<td>University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>2007 March 7 to March 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Exhibition</td>
<td>Good Hope School</td>
<td>2007 March 26 to March 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>5th Exhibition</td>
<td>Chinese University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>2007 October 2 to October 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>6th Exhibition</td>
<td>Children’s Palace II, Guangzhou, China</td>
<td>2007 October 27 to December 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Exhibition</td>
<td>Hong Kong Museum of Art</td>
<td>2008 July 14 to July 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Exhibition</td>
<td>Children’s Palace, Changning District, Shanghai, China</td>
<td>2008 September 20 to October 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th Exhibition</td>
<td>Children’s Palace, Dongcheng District, Beijing, China</td>
<td>2008 October 31 to November 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th Exhibition</td>
<td>Chinese Cultural Centre Museum, Vancouver, Canada</td>
<td>2009 January 24 to March 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th Exhibition</td>
<td>Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto, Canada</td>
<td>2009 April 25 to May 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th Exhibition</td>
<td>Richard Charles Lee Canada·Hong Kong Library, University of Toronto Libraries, Toronto, Canada</td>
<td>2009 June 5 to June 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13th Exhibition</td>
<td>Hong Kong Institute of Education</td>
<td>2010 November 29 to December 30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Related Educational Activities

A. ‘New Ink Painting Teaching Experience Exchange’
   A forum held in conjunction with the 1st exhibition, on 9 December 2006 at Hong Kong City Hall

B. ‘The Learning and Teaching of New Chinese Ink Painting’
   A lecture by Tam Chi Sing, Laurence in conjunction with the 2nd exhibition on 4 January 2007 at Wah Yan College, Kowloon

C. ‘New Ink Art Movement—Its Development and Repercussions’
   A forum held in conjunction with the 5th exhibition on 2 October 2007 at the Chinese University of Hong Kong

D. ‘The Cradle of New Chinese Ink Painting Movement – An Attempt for Whole-Person Education’
   A lecture by Tam Chi Sing, Laurence, Organized by Min Chiu Society on 9 October 2007 at Library in Min Chiu Society, Hong Kong
E. ‘New Ink Art Teaching Method—Its Origin, Contents, Performance and Development’
A lecture by Tam Chi Sing, Laurence, and a forum on same subject for art teachers and educators
Organized by Research and Training Centre for Science and Education, Bao-An, China
on 13 October 2007 at Zheng-An School of Bao-An District, Shenzhen, Guangdong province, China

F. ‘The Cradle of New Chinese Ink Painting Movement—A General Survey’
A forum held in conjunction with the 6th exhibition on 27 October 2007 at Guangzhou Children’s Palace II, Guangzhou, China

G. ‘Cultural Perspectives and Creativity of Chinese Ink Painting’
A symposium held in conjunction with the 7th exhibition for Hong Kong in-service Visual Arts teachers
Organized by Education Bureau of Government of Hong Kong S.A.R. and Hong Kong Museum of Art
on 14 July 2008 at Hong Kong Museum of Art

H. ‘Workshops on Learning and Teaching of Chinese Ink Painting’
6 full-day workshops held in conjunction with the 7th exhibition for HK in-service visual arts teachers
Organized by Education Bureau of Government of Hong Kong S.A.R. and Hong Kong Museum of Art
on 15-21 July 2008 at Hong Kong Museum of Art and Hong Kong Education Bureau Headquarters

I. ‘The Cradle of New Chinese Ink Painting Movement—Theory and Practical Survey’
A symposium held in conjunction with the 8th exhibition on 18 September 2008 at Shanghai Children’s Palace, Shanghai, China

J. ‘The Cradle of New Chinese Ink Painting Movement and Art Education in China Today’
A forum held in conjunction with the 9th exhibition on 31 October 2008 at Beijing Children’s Palace, Beijing, China

K. ‘New Method of Teaching Chinese Ink Painting’
A lecture by Tam Chi Sing, Laurence, in conjunction with the 10th exhibition on 24 January 2009 at
Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Vancouver, Vancouver, Canada

L. ‘Ink Painting and Art Education’
A seminar held in conjunction with the 12th exhibition, jointly presented by Asian Institute, Richard
Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library, University of Toronto, and Wah Yan College Kowloon
Alumni Association of Ontario. On 5 June 2009 at Richard Charles Lee Canada-Hong Kong Library,
University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

M. ‘The Inheritance of Art Education in China’
A seminar held in conjunction with the 13th exhibition, jointly presented by Wah Yan College, Kowloon
and the Hong Kong Institute of Education. On 29 November 2010 immediately after the opening of the
exhibition at the Hong Kong Institute of Education.
Brief Biography of Lui Shou Kwan

1919  Born in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, China

1938  Graduated from Chi Yung Middle School, Hong Kong

1942  Married Mui Sin Ping

1946  Graduated with a B.A. degree in Economics from the Guangzhou University, China
Organized a show titled ‘Painting Exhibition for the Guangdong Flood Charity Fund’ in Guangzhou, China

1948  Settled in Hong Kong with his family
Opened ‘The Swan’ café in Wanchai, Hong Kong

1949  Jointed the Hong Kong and Yaumati Ferry Company as an inspector

1951  Started experimenting with Western modern art styles
Started writing articles and reviews on both Chinese and Western art for newspapers and magazines

1954  Joined the Hong Kong Art Club

1956  Co-founded the Chinese Art Club (later renamed the Hong Kong Chinese Art Club)

1957  Co-founded the Society of Hong Kong Artists
Co-founded the Seven Artists Club
Joined the Bingshen Art Club
Set up the New Art Painting Studio
Started exhibiting topographical paintings of Hong Kong

1958  Started teaching adult art classes at the Chung Shan Middle School, Hong Kong, until 1962
Started taking private students
1959  Invited as honorary adviser to the Modern Literature and Art Association
Began exhibiting in the U.S.

1961  Began exhibiting in the U.K.

1962  Appointed honorary adviser to the City Hall Art Gallery & Museum
Began creating the Zen Painting series
Opened Chinese painting classes at the Chatham Galleries, Kowloon

1966  Resigned from the Hong Kong and Yaumati Ferry Company
Taught Chinese ink painting at the Department of Architecture of
The University of Hong Kong until 1973
Taught ink painting courses at the Department of Extramural Studies of
The Chinese University of Hong Kong until 1975

1968  Conducted painting activities with students in an art room at Wah Yan
College, Kowloon, every Sunday until 1971
Invited as honorary adviser to the In Tao Art Association

1969  Started teaching Chinese painting courses at the Department of Extramural
Studies of The University of Hong Kong until 1974

1970  Invited as honorary adviser to the One Art Group

1971  Awarded a M.B.E. by the Hong Kong-British administration for his
distinguished contributions to the development of art in Hong Kong

1972  Published *Lectures on Ink Painting*

1975  Passed away on 26 September due to a sudden heart attack
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354


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363


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**Video**

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### Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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Chen Zanyun  
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chen  
誠
chufa  
出法
chuangzao  
創造
Chunshui huayuan  
《號外》
cunfa  
戳法
Dai Jin  
戴進
Dakuitang  
大奎堂
dangdai shi  
當代史
Dao  
道
Daoxin  
道信
dejian ziwo, zhuangzao lixin  
得見自我，創造立新
Deng Feng  
鄧芬
Deng Haizhao  
鄧海超
Deng Xiaoping  
鄧小平
Ding Yanyong  
丁咸鈞
Dingxi  
定西
diwenbi  
底紋筆
Dong Yingjie  
董英傑
Dong Zhongshu  
董仲舒
Dao guang  
道光
Dong Yuan  
董源
Dongshan Liangjie  
董山良傑
Dunhuang  
敦煌
dunwu  
頓悟
Ershi shiji Zhongguo yishushi  
《20 世紀中國藝術史》
Fahang  
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Fan Kuan  
范寬
Fang Huang zhi zheng  
方黃之爭
Fang Rending  
方仁定
Fang Zhaolin  
方召鶴
Fayan  
法眼
feibai  
飛白
Feng Boji  
馮伯綖
Feng Hanbo  
馮翰泊
Feng Youlan  
馮友蘭
Foshan shuyuan  
佛山書院

371
Four Wangs:

1) Wang Shimin  
2) Wang Jian  
3) Wang Hui  
4) Wang Yuanqi

Fu Baoshi  
Fulinglou  
Fulinglou ji  
Fulinglou zhu  
Fung Ping Shan

gaijin  
gailiang  
gaijin shajue

Gao Jianfu  
Gao Meiqing  
Gao Minglu  
Gao Qifeng  
Gao Yan

geming

Gong Xian  
Gu Mei  
Guan Shanyue

Guangdong gaodeng shifan xuetang  
Guangdong huaren lu  
Guangdong wenxianguan  
Guangdong wenwu  
Guangdong wenwu zhanlanhui  
Guangdong xiandai huatan  
Guangdong xiandai huaren zhuan  
Guangdongsheng shitang zhuanmaiju  
Guangxu  
Guangzhou meishu xueyuan  
Guangzhou yishu bowuguan  
Guanyin  
Guihai hezuoshe  
Guo Menghao

Kwok Meng Ho
guocai

guohua

Guohua de yanjiu

Guohua tekan

Guohua yanjiuhui

Guohua yanjiuhui tekan

Guomin xinwen

hao

Han Zhixun  Hon Chi Fun  韓志勤
Hanfeizi  韓非子
Hanshan  Kannon  寒山
He Qingji  Oscar Ho Hing Kay  何慶基
He Qiyuan  Ho Chat Yun  何漆園

Hezi you Minchi huaiju shi

Hong Zaixin  洪再新
Hongren  弘忍
Hongxue  鴻雪
Hongxuezhai  鴻雪齋
Hu Gentian  胡根天
Hu Shaonan  胡紹南
Hu Shi  胡適
Hu Shih  胡適
huadao

Huafeng

Huang Binhong  Wong Po Yeh  Huang Pin-hung  胡文生
Huang Bore  Huang Po-je  黃保仁
Huang Dade  黃大德
Huang Junbi  黃君璧
Huang Shaoqiang  Huang Shao-ch'iang  胡少強
Huang Xiaogeng  黃小庚
Huang Zunxian  黃遵憲
Huangbo  Huang-po / Obaku  黃檗
Huanglung  黃龍
Huike  慧可
Huineng  慧能

Huishan pingyuan tujuan

Ji Xianlin  季羡林
Jiaqing  燕慶

Jiezhiyuan huapu

373
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Liang Yuwei
Liang Yū-wei
licheng jinxing
Lin Fengmian
Lin Jen Tung
Lin Liang
Lin Mu
Lin Zhenhui
Lin Zhuang
Ling Mei
Linghu Wu-shuang
Lingnan huapai yanjiushi
Lingnan Huizuo
Lingnan jindai huaren zhuanlue
Lingnanhua zhenglue
Lingnanpai
Linji
Liu Bingheng
Liu Boduan
Liu Fengji
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Liu Kuo-sung
Liu Haisu
Liu Hai-su
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Liu Xi-lin
Liu Zongyuan
liuji
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Liurongsi
lixue
Lu Dinggong

李耀屏
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梁巨廷
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梁啓超
梁漱溟
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立誠書院
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嶺南畫派研究室
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嶺南派
臨濟
劉秉衡
劉伯端
劉逢吉
劉國松
劉海粟
劉景堂
劉曦林
柳宗元
六籍
《六祖壇經》
六榕寺
理學
盧鼎公
Lu Guanhai  
Lu Yanshao  
Lu Yougang  
Lu Zhenhuan  
Lu Zishu  
Lü Canming  
Lü Chaozun  
Lü Peng  
Lü Shoukun  
Lü Zhanlu  
Lü Zhenhuan  
Lü Yougang  
Lü Yanshao  

Lu Yen-shao  
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Lü Chin Lo  
Lü Shou Kwan  
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Lu Zhou  

Lü Ziwei wenyi  
Lun xiangdai Zhongguo meishu  

Ma Yuan  
Mao Zedong  
Maruyama-Shijō School  

Mei Qianping  
Meiji  
Mengshilou  

Mengzi  
Mencius  

Mo Jialiang  
Mok Kar Leung  
mogufa  

Mou Zongshang  
Mu Xi  

Nanbeiij  
The Perspective  

Nanguo yishushe  
Nanxuezhai  

Nanyue Huairang  
Nian Zhu  

Ouyang Qu  

paibi  

Pan Dawei  
Pan Tianshout  
P'an T'ien-shou  

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Pan Yaochang  
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Pan Zhizhong  

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Pan Zhizhong  

376
<table>
<thead>
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</table>
Sun Zhongshan  Sun Yat-sen  孫中山
taijiquan  Tai Chi Chuan  太極拳
Tao Lengyue  陶冷月
Tan Haichao  Tang Hoi Chiu  鄧海超
Tan Xiumu  Tam Sau Mok  譚秀牧
Tan Xiyong  Tam Shek Wing  譚錫永
Tan Xueheng  譚學衡
'Tan Zhezhongpai de hua'  （談折衷派的畫）
Tan Zhicheng  Laurence C.S. Tam  T'an Chih-ch'eng  譚志成
Tang Zunyi  唐君毅
Tanxu  俠虛
Tongmenghui  同盟會
tongxing tongjue  同覺同行
tongxing tongzheng  同行同證
Waibian  Art Currents  《外邊》
Wan Qingli  萬青力
Wanfosi  萬佛寺
Wang Hongyi  黃鴻儀
Wang Jiqian  Wang Chi-ch'ien / C. C. Wang  王季遷．紀千．己千
Wang Jiyou  王季友
Wang Runsheng  王潤生
Wang Wei  王維
Wang Wuxie  Wang Wei  王無邪
Wang Yachen  汪亞塵
Wang Yilun  王益論
Wang Zhaoming  汪兆銘
Wang Zhaoyong  汪兆鏞
Wang Zhuxu  王竹虛
wei wangsheng ji juexue,  爲往聖繼絕學、
wei wanshi kai taiping  爲萬世開太平
Weiyang  湖仰
Wen Qixiu  溫其球
Wenhui bao  《文匯報》
Wenmei yuekan  《文美月刊》
Wenwuguan  文物館
Wensue yu meishu  《文學與美術》
Wu Changshuo  吳昌頤
Yunmen
‘Yusengji’
yuzhou
yuzhou shi wuxin
zaocixing
Zeng Youhe  Tseng Yu-ho / Ecke, Betty
Zhai Shiyou    Jat See Yeu
Zhang Daqian  Chang Ta-ch‘ien / Chang Dai-chien
Zhang Guchu
Zhang Hong     Arnold Chang
Zhang Ling
Zhang Mu
Zhang Shaoshi
Zhang Shaohua
Zhang Yanyuan
Zhang Yi       Cheung Yee  Chang I
Zhao Haogong   Chiu Ho
Zhao Ke        Chao Shao-ang
Zhao Wuji      Chao Wu-chi / Zao Wou-ki
Zhe yi dai     《這一代》
Zhejiang
Zheng Chunting
Zheng Jiazheng
Zhengjue lianshe
Zhenxiang huabao
Zhezhongpai
zhi
Zhiwei
Zhiyong zhongxue
Zhong Hanqi    Chung Hon Kee
Zhongguo huaxue yanjiuhui
Zhongguo jinxiandai meishushi
Zhongguo xianandai huihua shi
Zhongguo zuojia xichui
Zhongguohua yu xiandai Zhongguo
Zhongyong

381
Zhou Dunyi
Zhou Layun        Chou, Irene        Chou Lü-yün
Zhu Jinlian       Chu, Christina
Zhu Qi
Zhu Wanzhang
Zhuang Shen
zhuangfen
zhuangshui
Zhuanzhou mengdie
Zhuanzi
"Zhuanzi de rensheng jiushi yishu"
Zhuanzi zizai
Zhulin chanyuan
zi
Ziti wanbao
ziju
zixing
List of Interviews

All the following interviews, in person or by telephone, were conducted by the author.

The names of the interviewees are arranged in alphabetical order according to their surnames and under the captions of place names.

In Hong Kong

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chan Yim Man</td>
<td>24 November 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen Jianzhong</td>
<td>6 February 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheung Shu Sheng</td>
<td>4, 29 March 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheung Shu Sun</td>
<td>15 June 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choi Yan Chi</td>
<td>3 June 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chui Tze Hung</td>
<td>4 January 2007; 4 November 2010 (telephone); 16 November 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chung Shek Chuen</td>
<td>25 November 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarke, David</td>
<td>6 January 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He Baili</td>
<td>30 March 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho Kwok Wing</td>
<td>9, 13, 20 September 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon Chi Fun</td>
<td>3 January 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huang Dade</td>
<td>9 September 2005; 1 March 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui Lai Ping</td>
<td>30 June 2005; 22 July 2005; 6 and 19 September 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui Suet Bik</td>
<td>4 March 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ip Hoi</td>
<td>2 November 2007; 30 July 2008; 10 September 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kan Tai Keung</td>
<td>28 February 2006; 17 March 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King, Alice</td>
<td>7 February 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koo Mei</td>
<td>21 August 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lai, T. C.</td>
<td>27 September 2005; 21 October 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee Ching Man</td>
<td>12 March 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee Kwok Wing</td>
<td>20 September 2005; 9 October 2009 (telephone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liew Come Tong</td>
<td>31 August 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liu Guosong</td>
<td>5 August 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lo Koon Chiu</td>
<td>4 December 2005; 8, 15 December 2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tam Chi Shing, Laurence  4 July 2006; 29 December 2006; 3 January 2007; 7 January 2010
Wong, Alan  7 July 2008
Wong Pok Man  30 March 2006
Wong, Solomon  5 November 2010 (telephone)
Wong, Wucius  11, 31 May 2004; 16 March 2005 (telephone)
Yeung Wai Bong  12 January 2005 (telephone)
Yuen Hung Shu  15 August 2003; 17 December 2004

In Brisbane, Australia

Chou, Irene  1, 2 September 2004; 8 June 2005
Wong, T. S.  6, 7 June 2005

In Guangzhou, China

Huang Dade  2 July 2005

In Vancouver, Canada

Chui Yung Sang, Paul  11 August 2006
Koo Mei  10 August 2006
Lam Chan Fai, David  11 August 2006
Lui Chin Lo  18 July 2006 (telephone); 16 February 2007 (telephone);
             28 August 2008 (telephone)
Mui Sin Ping  9 August 2006

In Macau

Wong, Alan  6 August 2008
List of Illustrations

Medium, dimensions, and location are given when known.

Fig. 1
Book cover of *Guangdong wenwu* (Guangdong Cultural Relics), 1940.

Fig. 2 and Fig. 3

Fig. 4
Front cover of *The True Record* by Gao Qifeng, no. 3 (1 July 1912).

Fig. 5
Guohua yanjiuhui at Liurongsi (Six Banyans Monastery), Guangzhou, China.

Fig. 6
The first issue of *Guohua tekan* (Chinese Painting Magazine), 1931.

Fig. 7
Pan Dawei’s photographs of the female nude (his daughter), early 1920s, Hong Kong.

Fig. 8
Fang Rending’s manuscript on Lingnanpai’s plagiarism (detail). Courtesy of Mr. Huang Dade.

Fig. 9
Lui Shou Kwan and his siblings in front of the municipal government of Guangzhou, late 1940s. Courtesy of Mr. Lui Chiu Chun.

Fig. 10

Fig. 11
Book cover of *Fulinglou ji* (Anthology of the Tower of the Restored Soul), 1952.
Fig. 12
Hongxuezhai before renovation, c. 1946.

Fig. 13
Hongxuezhai after renovation, c. 1947.

Fig. 14
Lui Tsan Ming performing his Buddhist ritual at Fulinglou, late 1940s.

Fig. 15
Lui Tsan Ming with Venerable Xuyun and other members of the Committee for the Protection of Buddhism at Liurongsi (Six Banyans Monastery), Guangzhou, 20th March 1949.

Fig. 16
Graduation photo of Lui Shou Kwan, 1946.

Fig. 17

Fig. 18
Images of Yu Xing’s Flowers, Birds and Animals after Liu Yongnian (d. 1741) used by Flora Kay Chan in her M.Phil. thesis.

Fig. 19

Fig. 20
Images of Xia Gui’s The Remote View of Hills and Streams used by Flora Kay Chan for comparison in her M.Phil. thesis.

Fig. 21
Fig. 22
Anonymous, *Boundless Territory* (details). Ink on silk, 46.5 x 1,635 cm. Collection of Liaoning Provincial Museum

Fig. 23
Lui Tsan Ming, Couplet, 1947.

Fig. 24

Fig. 25

Fig. 26
Lui Shou Kwan, Guanyin, 1948.

Fig. 27
A fan-shaped landscape painting by Lui Shou Kwan, c. late 1940s.

Fig. 28
Anonymous, Guanyin, 17th-18th century. Ink and colour on silk, 131.7 x 56.2 cm. Collection of National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.

Fig. 29
Lui Shou Kwan painting in his office at the Kowloon City ferry terminal, 1961.

Fig. 30
Lui Tsan Ming and Venerable Yuexi in conversation. Courtesy of Mr. Lui Chiu Chun.

Fig. 31
A 1961 newspaper cutting in Lui Tsan Ming’s diary showing his transcription of Venerable Yuexi’s verbal teaching on Zen. Courtesy of Mr. Lui Chiu Chun.

Fig. 32
Lui Tsan Ming relating Venerable Xuyun’s life in a memorial held at Po Kok School, Hong Kong, on 25 October 1959.
Fig. 33
A record of names published in *Wah Kiu Yat Po* (13 June 1963) showing those who had attended Lui Tsan Ming’s wake on 12 June 1963.

Fig. 34
Lui Shou Kwan with family and friends at the Lingnan Club, early 1950s.

Fig. 35
Dong Yingjie playing *taijiquan*.

Fig. 36
Chi Sing Wah playing *taiji* sword. Courtesy of Mr. Lui Chiu Chun.

Fig. 37
Choi Sing Wah teaching Li Zhuomin *taijiquan* in his living quarters at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Courtesy of Mr. Lui Chiu Chun.

Fig. 38

Fig. 39
Lui Shou Kwan’s copy of a Song painting, with touch up by Lui Tsan Ming, 1949. Ink and colour on paper.

Fig. 40

Fig. 41
Lui Shou Kwan and family in his 1954 one-man show held at the Hong Kong Cultural Works Gallery, Hong Kong Hotel, Hong Kong. Courtesy of Lui Shou Kwan’s family.

Fig. 42
A painting displayed in Lui Shou Kwan’s 1954 one-man show.

Fig. 43
A painting displayed in Lui Shou Kwan’s 1954 one-man show.
Fig. 44
A painting displayed in Lui Shou Kwan’s 1954 one-man show.

Fig. 45
Lui Shou Kwan, *Sunset at the Five-storeyed Tower, Guangzhou*, 1953. Ink and colour on paper, 94.3 x 44.4 cm. Collection of Hong Kong Museum of Art.

Fig. 46
A painting by Lui Shou Kwan in the style of Lingnanpai displayed in his 1954 one-man show.

Fig. 47
Gao Jianfu, *The Five-Storeyed Building, Guangzhou*, 1926. Ink and colour on paper, 80 x 42 cm.

Fig. 48
Untitled work by Lui Tsan Ming done in the manner of Lingnanpai, 1951.

Fig. 49
Untitled work collaborated by Lui Tsan Ming with Zhao Shao'ang, 1951.

Fig. 50
Untitled work collaborated by Lui Tsan Ming with Yang Shanshen, 1951.

Fig. 51

Fig. 52

Fig. 53
Lui Shou Kwan, *Chicago - A Rainy Scene by the Lake*, 1954.

Fig. 54
Handwritten note by Lui Tsan Ming specifying the types of photographs he wanted his friend to provide him with for his painting. Courtesy of Mr. Hui Lai Ping.
Fig. 55

Fig. 56

Fig. 57
Lui Shou Kwan and Luis Chan on a sketching tour in 1954. Courtesy of Lui Shou Kwan's family.

Fig. 58

Fig. 59
A page of Lui Shou Kwan’s manuscript of *The Meaning of Art* (completed 1956).

Fig. 60
A page of Lui Shou Kwan’s manuscript of *The Meaning of Art* (completed 1956).

Fig. 61
The envelope containing Lui Shou Kwan’s manuscript of *The Meaning of Art*, on which Lui left a few words stating that the whole manuscript was completed at the Kowloon City ferry terminal on 31 July 1956.

Fig. 62

Fig. 63

Fig. 64

Fig. 65
Fig. 66
Lui Shou Kwan, *Hoi Sham Temple*, 1956, 30 x 70 cm. Collection of Gold Peak Industries (Holdings) Ltd., Hong Kong.

Fig. 67
Lui Shou Kwan, *Hong Kong Landscape*, 1954. Ink and colour on paper, 39 x 85 cm.

Fig. 68

Fig. 69

Fig. 70

Fig. 71
Huang Bore on a hiking tour with two members from the Yong Club. Courtesy of Mr. T. S. Wong.

Fig. 72

Fig. 73

Fig. 74

Fig. 75
Fig. 76
Lui Shou Kwan, *Victoria Peak*, 1960. Ink and colour on paper, 23.2 x 37.2 cm. M. K. Lau Collection, Hong Kong.

Fig. 77

Fig. 78

Fig. 79
Lui Shou Kwan, *Mountain Retreat*, 1963. Ink and colour on paper, 56.3 x 46.8 cm. Collection of Mr. Leung Kui Ting.

Fig. 80

Fig. 81

Fig. 82

Fig. 83

Fig. 84
Lui Shou Kwan's works on view in his retrospective at City Hall Museum & Art Gallery, 1964. Courtesy of Mr. Kan Tai Keung.

Fig. 85
Lui Shou Kwan, *Abstract*, 1961. Ink and colour on paper, 47.8 x 14.3 cm.
Fig. 86

Fig. 87

Fig. 88
Lui Shou Kwan, *Abstract Painting*, 1963. Ink and colour on paper, 44.7 x 46.7 cm. Collection of Mr. Leung Kui Ting.

Fig. 90
Untitled work by Lui Shou Kwan, 1951. Ink and colour on paper, 148 x 47 cm. Collection of Lui Shou Kwan’s family.

Fig. 91
Untitled work by Lui Shou Kwan, 1951. Ink and colour on paper, 94.5 x 118.5 cm. Collection of Lui Shou Kwan’s family.

Fig. 92
Untitled work by Lui Shou Kwan, 1951. Ink on paper, 45.5 x 93.5 cm. Collection of Lui Shou Kwan’s family.

Fig. 93
Untitled work by Lui Shou Kwan, 1951. Ink on paper, 62 x 142 cm. Collection of Lui Shou Kwan’s family.

Fig. 94
Lui Shou Kwan with his friends discussing art with Bernard Childs, an abstractionist artist from Paris, at Lui Tsan Ming’s place in February 1961.

Fig. 95

Fig. 96
Fig. 97
Sir William MacTaggart, president of the Royal Scottish Academy with Eric Newton, adviser of the Commonwealth Institute, and Donald Bowen, assistant curator of the Commonwealth Institute, at the preview of Lui Shou Kwan’s one-man show at the Commonwealth Institute, London, on 2 May 1963.

Fig. 98
Sign plate of Lui Shou Kwan’s one-man show at the main entrance of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University, U.K., in November 1962.

Fig. 99
Lui Shou Kwan’s paintings displayed at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University, U.K., in November 1962.

Fig. 100

Fig. 101

Fig. 102
Lui Shou Kwan, *Lonely Boat*, c. 1962. Ink and colour on paper, 78.5 x 44.2 cm.

Fig. 103

Fig. 104
Lui Shou Kwan in front of his paintings in the ‘Hong Kong Art Today’ exhibition held at the City Hall Museum & Art Gallery in June 1962.

Fig. 105
Lui Shou Kwan in front of his paintings in the 1960 Hong Kong Arts Festival.
Fig. 106
Lui Shou Kwan and his mother Choi Sing Wah in his one-man show at the City Hall Museum & Art Gallery in 1964.

Fig. 107
Lui Shou Kwan being awarded the medal of M.B.E. by Sir David Clive Crosbie Trench, the 24th Governor of Hong Kong, in 1971. Courtesy of Lui Shou Kwan’s family.

Fig. 108
Lui Shou Kwan’s diary dated 22 May 1964.

Fig. 109

Fig. 110

Fig. 111
Lui Shou Kwan, Zen, 1971. Ink and colour on paper, 139 x 69.5 cm.

Fig. 112
Lui Tsan Ming in front of the buddha statuettes housed inside Wanfosi (Ten Thousand Buddhas Temple). Courtesy of Mr. Lui Chiu Chun.

Fig. 113
Front cover of the exhibition catalogue of Lee Kwok Wing’s 1975 one-man show at Universite Paris-VII.

Fig. 114

Fig. 115
Lui Shou Kwan, Zen Painting I, 1965. Ink and colour on paper, 94.5 x 45 cm. Collection of Hong Kong Museum of Art.
Fig. 116

Fig. 117

Fig. 118

Fig. 119

Fig. 120

Fig. 121

Fig. 122

Fig. 123

Fig. 124

Fig. 125
Lui Shou Kwan, *Beyond All Thoughts*, 1970. Ink and colour on paper, 180 x 97 cm.
Fig. 126

Fig. 127
Cover of the 1996 symposium on ‘Post-1949 Chinese Painting’ arranged by the Department of Antiquities of the British Museum.

Fig. 128
Cover of the exhibition catalogue for a joint show held in Germany. The exhibition featured a total of 110 works by several generations of artists who had worked and lived in Hong Kong.

Fig. 129

Fig. 130

Fig. 131

Fig. 132

Fig. 133

Fig. 134

Fig. 135
Fig. 136

Fig. 137
Alan Wong, *Sign*, 1962. Ink and colour on paper, 228.6 x 213.4 cm.

Fig. 138
Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen Painting*, 1964. Ink and colour on paper, 135 x 69.5 cm. M. K. Lau Collection, Hong Kong.

Fig. 139
Undated sketches of Lui Shou Kwan’s Zen paintings.

Fig. 140
Undated sketches of Lui Shou Kwan’s Zen paintings.

Fig. 141

Fig. 142
Photo of Earthrise over the lunar horizon taken from the orbiting Command Module by the American astronauts (NASA photo ID AS11-44-6552).

Fig. 143

Fig. 144

Fig. 145

Fig. 146
Fig. 147

Fig. 148
Bankei Yōtaku, *Enso*. Ink on paper, 28.5 x 54 cm. Private collection.

Fig. 149
Hakuin Ekaku, *Enso*. Ink on paper, 33 x 52.5 cm. Private collection.

Fig. 150

Fig. 151

Fig. 152

Fig. 153
Lui Shou Kwan, *In Search of Zen*, 1969. Ink and colour on paper, 137.6 x 68.6 cm. Collection of Dr. Desmond Robinson.

Fig. 154

Fig. 155

Fig. 156
Fig. 157

Fig. 158

Fig. 159

Fig. 160

Fig. 161
Letter of Lui Shou Kwan to Laurenc Tam, in which Lui gave advice to Tam on his writing of a dissertation for a master degree in art history. Courtesy of Mr. Laurence Tam.

Fig. 162
Letter of Lui Shou Kwan to his student, Hui Suet Bik, then an 18-year-old high school student. In the letter, Lui explained to Hui why he should have evaluated the Western movie, *The Singer, Not the Song*, differently from her. Courtesy of Ms. Hui Suet Bik.

Fig. 163
A 1968 lecture note written by Lui Shou Kwan for his students who enrolled in his ink painting course offered by the Department of Extramural Studies of The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Fig. 164
Lui Shou Kwan’s work in the style of Shitao (c. 1642-1707), 1967. Ink and colour on paper. 44.5 x 81 cm. Collection of Lui Shou Kwan’s family.

Fig. 165
Lui Shou Kwan’s copy of a landscape painting by Wu Li (1632-1718), 1967. Ink and colour on paper. 57.5 x 121 cm. Collection of Lui Shou Kwan’s family.
Fig. 166
Lui Shou Kwan’s 1968 copy of Juran’s (active c. 960-985) *Seeking the Dao in Autumn Mountains* (original 77.2 x 156.2 cm, collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei). Ink on paper. 82 x 184 cm. Collection of Lui Shou Kwan’s family.

Fig. 167
Lui Shou Kwan’s 1968 copy of Fan Kwan’s (c. 950-1026) *Travellers among Mountains and Streams* (11th century, original 103.3 x 206.3 cm, collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei). Ink on paper. 79 x 178 cm. Collection of Lui Shou Kwan’s family.

Fig. 168
Lui Shou Kwan’s work in the style of Hongren (1610-1664), 1968. Ink on paper. 60 x 120 cm. Collection of Lui Shou Kwan’s family.

Fig. 169

Fig. 170
Lui Shou Kwan’s work in the style of Huang Binhong (1865-1955), 1969. Ink and colour on paper. 83 x 153 cm. Collection of Lui Shou Kwan’s family.

Fig. 171
Lui Shou Kwan’s 1967 copy of Wang Meng’s (c. 1308-1385) *Dwelling in the Qingbian Mountains* (1366, original 42.2 x 140.6 cm, collection of the Shanghai Museum). A total of 2,377 words were inscribed by Lui on this work. Ink on paper. 48 x 181.5 cm. Collection of Lui Shou Kwan’s family.

Fig. 172
Lui Shou Kwan’s note to his student, Lee Wai On. The note tells that Lui had paid the tuition fees for Lee and his wife in 1968 and he was now returning the receipt to them in case they wanted to apply for certificates of attendance from the Department of Extramural Studies of The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Courtesy of Ms. Lee Ching Man (Lee Wai On’s wife).
Fig. 173
Lui Shou Kwan’s work in the style of Wu Li (1632-1718). 46 x 148 cm. This painting was done by Lui in the year 1967 for his student, Laurence Tam, who was in the process of writing his Master Degree thesis on Wu Li.

Fig. 174
Lui Shou Kwan, John Warner, and Lee Kwok Wing at an exhibition preview in the City Hall Art Gallery & Museum, early 1960s. Courtesy of Lui Shou Kwan’s family.

Fig. 175
Leaflet of the First International Salon of Paintings organized by the Modern Literature and Art Association in 1960.

Fig. 176
Wucius Wong, Wintry Mountain, 1971. Mixed water media on paper, 184 x 95 cm.

Fig. 177

Fig. 178
Irene Chou, Enigma Variations (4), 1973. Ink and colour on paper, 183 x 95 cm.

Fig. 179
Ng Yiu Chung, Mountain Scenery IV, 1970. Ink and colour on paper, 184 x 95.5 cm.

Fig. 180
Ko Kwok Cheung, A-Go-Go Dance, c. 1968-69. Painting with ink and a dish on paper, 50 x 45.5 cm.

Fig. 181
Lee Kim Ching, Tip of the Peninsula, c. 1970-71. Ink on paper, 61.5 x 46 cm.

Fig. 182
Dorothy Swan at the opening of the Chatham Galleries in 1962.

Fig. 183
The interior of the Chatham Galleries.
Fig. 184

Fig. 185
The interior of Sara Larkin’s Salon Hong Kong.

Fig. 186
One of the three folios of the ‘Art Now • Hong Kong’ exhibition presented by the City Museum & Art Gallery in 1971. This folio was the first official publication on New Chinese Ink Paintings.

Fig. 187
Judges in the course of selecting works which were sent for the ‘1972 Exhibition of Contemporary Art’. Picture from The China Mail, 8 May 1972.
Fig. 1  Book cover of Guangdong wenwu (Guangdong Cultural Relics), 1940
Figs. 2 (top) and 3 (bottom) Details of Yan Zhong’s *Hushan pingyuan tu*
Ink and colour on silk, 30.5 x 512 cm
Fig. 4 Front cover of Zhenxiang huabao (The True Record) by Gao Qifeng, no. 3, 1 July 1912

Fig. 5 Guohua yanjiuhui at Liurongsi (Six Banyans Monastery), Guangzhou
Fig. 6  First issue of *Guohua tekan*  
(Chinese Painting Magazine), 1931

Fig. 7  Pan Dawei's photographs of the female nude (his daughter), early 1920s, Hong Kong
Fig. 8  Fang Rending's manuscript on Lingnanpai's plagiarism (detail)

Fig. 9  Lui Shou Kwan (bottom row, first left) and his siblings in front of the municipal government of Guangzhou in the late 1940s
Fig. 10  Book cover of *Lü Zhiwei wenyi*  
(The Literary and Artistic Work of Lü Zhiwei)  
c. early 1960s

Fig. 11  Book cover of *Fulinglou ji*  
(Anthology of the Tower of the Restored Soul)  
1952
Fig. 12  Hongxuezhai before renovation, c. 1946
Lui Tsan Ming and Choi Sing Wah
(second row from bottom, first and second right)
Lui Shou Kwan and Mui Sing Ping
(third row from bottom, second and fifth right)

Fig. 13  Hongxuezhai after renovation, c. 1947
Lui Tsan Ming (top row, first left) and
Choi Sing Wah (top row, second left) and their grandchildren.
Fig. 14 Lui Tsan Ming performing his Buddhist ritual at Fulinglou, late 1940s

Fig. 15 Lui Tsan Ming (first row from bottom, third right) with Venerable Xuyun (first row, fifth right) and other members of the Committee for the Protection of Buddhism at Liurongsi (Six Banyans Monastery), Guangzhou, 20th March 1949
Fig. 16  Graduation photo of Lui Shou Kwan, 1946
Fig. 17  Lui Shou Kwan, *Dawn*, 1948
Ink and colour on silk, 43 x 257 cm
Fig. 18 Images of Yu Xing’s *Flowers, Birds and Animals after Liu Yongnian* dated 1741

Used by Flora Kay Chan in her MPhil thesis as a comparative example with Lui Shou Kwan’s *Dawn* (1948)
Fig. 19  Lui Shou Kwan, *The Yangtze River of Ten Thousand Li*, 1948
Fig. 20 Images of Xia Gui’s *The Remote View of Hills and Streams* used by Flora Kay Chan for comparison in her M.Phil. thesis.

Fig. 21 Dai Jin, *Summer in Mt. Xi* (details)
Ink and colour on paper, 50 x 2,073 cm
Fig. 22  Anonymous, *Boundless Territory* (details)
Ink on silk, 46.5 x 1,635 cm

Fig. 23  Lui Tsan Ming, *Couplet*, 1947
Fig. 24 Lui Tsan Ming, *Myriad Mountains and Streams*, 1949
Ink and colour on paper, 53.5 x 31.8 cm

Fig. 25 Lui Tsan Ming, *Birds in a Lotus Pond*, 1957
Fig. 26  Lui Shou Kwan, Guanyin, 1948

Fig. 27  A fan-shaped landscape painting by Lui Shou Kwan, c. late 1940s
Fig. 28  Anonymous, Guanyin, 17th-18th century  
Ink and colour on silk, 131.7 x 56.2 cm

Fig. 29  Lui Shou Kwan painting in his office at the Kowloon City ferry terminal, 1961
Fig. 30  Lui Tsan Ming (left) and Venerable Yuexi (right) in conversation

Fig. 31  A 1961 newspaper cutting in Lui Tsan Ming’s diary showing his transcription of Venerable Yuexi’s verbal teaching on Zen
Fig. 32  Lui Tsan Ming relating Venerable Xuyun's life in a memorial held at Po Kok School, Hong Kong, on 25 October 1959

Fig. 33  A record of names published in Wah Kiu Yat Po (13 June 1963) showing those who had attended Lui Tsan Ming's wake on 12 June 1963
Fig. 34  Lui Shou Kwan with family and friends at the Lingnan Club, early 1950s. Among those being photographed included:
Mui Sing Ping    (first row, first left)
Choi Sing Wah    (first row, first right)
Lui Tsan Ming    (second row, first left)
Li Shek Peng     (second row, second left)
Luis Chan        (second row, fifth left)
Zhao Shao’ang    (second row, third right)

Fig. 35  Dong Yingjie playing taijiquan
Fig. 36  Choi Sing Wah playing *taiji* sword

Fig. 37  Choi Sing Wah teaching Li Zhuomin *taijiquan* in his living quarters at The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Fig. 38  Lui Shou Kwan, *Landscape*, 1955  
Ink and colour on paper, 23 x 57 cm  
With an inscription by Liu Boduan

Fig. 39  Lui Shou Kwan’s copy of a Song painting,  
with touch up by Lui Tsan Ming, 1949  
Ink and colour on paper
Fig. 40  Lui Shou Kwan, *Contemplating the River*, 1955
Ink and colour on paper, 63 x 23 cm

Fig. 41  Lui Shou Kwan and family in his 1954 one-man show held at the Hong Kong Cultural Works Gallery, Hong Kong Hotel, Hong Kong
Fig. 42  A painting on display in Lui Shou Kwan's 1954 one-man show

Fig. 43  A painting on display in Lui Shou Kwan's 1954 one-man show
Fig. 44  A painting on display in Lui Shou Kwan’s 1954 one-man show

Fig. 45  Lui Shou Kwan, *Sunset at the Five-storeyed Tower*, Guangzhou, 1953
Ink and colour on paper, 94.3 x 44.4 m
Fig. 46  A painting by Lui Shou Kwan in the style of Lingnanpai on display in his 1954 one-man show

Fig. 47  Gao Jianfu, *The Five-storeyed Building, Guangzhou, 1926*  
Ink and colour on paper, 80 x 42 cm
Fig. 48  An untitled work by Lui Tsan Ming done in the manner of Lingnanpai, 1951

Fig. 49  An untitled work collaborated by Lui Tsan Ming with Zhao Shao’ang, 1951
Fig. 50  An Untitled work collaborated by Lui Tsan Ming with Yang Shanshen, 1951

Fig. 51  Lui Shou Kwan, *The Seagulls*, 1953
Fig. 52  Lui Shou Kwan, *Shenzian Fish*, 1953

Fig. 53  Lui Shou Kwan, *Chicago - A Rainy Scene by the Lake*, 1954
Fig. 54  A handwritten note by Lui Tsan Ming specifying the types of photographs he wanted his friend to provide him with for his painting.
Fig. 55  Book cover of Lui Shou Kwan's
A Study of Chinese Painting, 1957 edition

Fig. 56  Book cover of Lui Shou Kwan's
A Study of Chinese Painting, 1963 edition
Fig. 57  Lui Shou Kwan (first left) and Luis Chan (first right) on a sketching tour in 1954

Fig. 58  Lui Shou Kwan, *Landscape*, 1964, 94 x 183 cm
Fig. 59  A page of Lui Shou Kwan’s manuscript of
The Meaning of Art (completed in 1956)
Fig. 61 The envelope containing Lui Shou Kwan's manuscript of *The Meaning of Art*, on which Lui left a few words stating that the whole manuscript was completed at the Kowloon City ferry terminal on 31 July 1956.
Fig. 62  Lui Shou Kwan, *Waves*, 1956
Ink and colour on paper, 25 x 47 cm

Fig. 63  Lui Shou Kwan, *Midday Sun*, 1956
Ink and colour on paper
Fig. 64  J.M.W. Turner, *Snowstorm*, 1842
Oil on canvas, 91.5 x 122 cm

Fig. 65  Graham Sutherland, *Sun Setting Between Hills*, 1937
Fig. 66  Lui Shou Kwan, *Hoi Sham Temple*, 1956
Ink and colour on paper, 30 x 70 cm

Fig. 67  Lui Shou Kwan, *Hong Kong Landscape*, 1954
Ink and colour on paper, 39 x 85 cm
Fig. 68  Lui Shou Kwan, *Tin Hau Festival at Fat Tong Mun*, c. 1961
Ink and colour on paper, 59 x 120 cm

Fig. 69  Lui Shou Kwan, *Lion Rock*, 1957
Ink and colour on paper, 55 x 69 cm
Fig. 70  Huang Bore, *Below Victoria Peak*, 1958
Ink on paper, 54 cm (w)

Fig. 71  Huang Bore on a hiking tour with two members from the Yong Club
Fig. 72  Huang Bore, *Pu Tai Island*, 1957. Ink and colour on paper, 34 x 66 cm

Fig. 73  Lui Shou Kwan, *Aberdeen*, 1961. Ink and colour on paper, 23 x 38 cm
Fig. 74  Huang Bore, *Landscape of Pu Tai Island*, 1959
Ink and colour on paper, 61 x 94.5 cm

Fig. 75  Lui Shou Kwan, *Wanchai at Night*, undated
Ink and colour on paper, 35 x 71 cm
Fig. 76  Lui Shou Kwan, *Victoria Peak*, 1960
Ink and colour on paper, 23.2 x 37.2 cm

Fig. 77  Lui Shou Kwan, *Race Course, Happy Valley*, 1958
Ink and colour on paper, 38 x 92 cm
Fig. 78  Lui Shou Kwan, *Landscape in Hong Kong*, 1961
Ink and colour on paper, 23 x 94 cm

Fig. 79  Lui Shou Kwan, *Mountain Retreat*, 1963
Ink and colour on paper, 56.3 x 46.8 cm
Fig. 80  Lui Shou Kwan, *Landscape in Hong Kong*, 1962
Ink and colour on paper, 27 x 84 cm

Fig. 81  Lui Shou Kwan, *Mountain 2*, 1962
Ink and colour on paper, 46 x 38 cm
Fig. 82  Lui Shou Kwan, *Mountain View*, 1964
Ink and colour on paper, 180.4 x 97.7 cm
Fig. 83  Huang Binhong, *Stanley*, 1947
Ink on paper, 97 x 34 cm

Fig. 84  Lui Shou Kwan's works on view in his retrospective at City Hall Museum & Art Gallery, 1964
Fig. 85  Lui Shou Kwan, *Abstract*, 1961
Ink and colour on paper, 47.8 x 14.3 cm

Fig. 86  Lui Shou Kwan, *Abstract Landscape*, 1958
Ink and colour on paper, 64 x 132 cm
Fig. 87  Lui Shou Kwan, *Abstract Landscape*, 1963
Ink and colour on paper, 69 x 54 cm

Fig. 88  Lui Shou Kwan, *Abstract Painting*, 1963
Ink and colour on paper, 44.7 x 46.7 cm
Fig. 89  Lui Shou Kwan, *Abstract (3)*, 1963
Ink on paper

Fig. 90  An untitled work by Lui Shou Kwan, 1951
Ink and colour on paper, 148 x 47 cm
Fig. 91  An untitled work by Lui Shou Kwan, 1951
Ink and colour on paper, 94.5 x 118.5 cm

Fig. 92  An untitled work by Lui Shou Kwan, 1951
Ink on paper, 45.5 x 93.5 cm
Fig. 93  An untitled work by Lui Shou Kwan, 1951
Ink on paper, 62 x 142 cm

Fig. 94  Lui Shou Kwan with his friends discussing art with Bernard Childs, an abstractionist artist from Paris, at Lui Tsan Ming's place in February 1961
Fig. 95  Zao Wou-ki, *Fire*, 1954-55
Oil on canvas, 130 x 195 cm

Fig. 96  Alan Wong, *Poetic Landscape*, 1962
Ink on paper, 56 x 77 cm
Fig. 97  Sir William MacTaggart (left), president of the Royal Scottish Academy with Eric Newton (centre), adviser of the Commonwealth Institute, and Donald Bowen (right), assistant curator of the Commonwealth Institute, at the preview of Lui Shou Kwan's one-man show at the Commonwealth Institute, London, on 2 May 1963

Fig. 98  Sign plate of Lui Shou Kwan's one-man show at the main entrance of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University, U.K. in November 1962
Lui Shou Kwan’s paintings on display at the Ashmolen Museum, Oxford University, U.K., in November 1962

Fig. 99

Letter to Lui Shou Kwan from Donald Bowen, assistant curator of the Commonwealth Institute, London, dated 5 June 1963

Fig. 100
Fig. 101  Lui Shou Kwan and his mother Choi Sing Wah in his one-man show at the City Hall Museum & Art Gallery in 1964

Fig. 102  Lui Shou Kwan, *In Search of Zen*, undated
Ink and colour on paper, 150 x 81 cm
Fig. 103  Lui Shou Kwan, *Lonely Boat*, c. 1962
Ink and colour on paper, 78.5 x 44.2 cm

Fig. 104  Lui Shou Kwan, *Distance*, 1964
Ink and colour on paper, 91 x 51 cm
Fig. 105  Lui Shou Kwan in front of his paintings on display in the 'Hong Kong Art Today' exhibition held at the City Hall Museum & Art Gallery in June 1962

Fig. 106  Lui Shou Kwan in front of his paintings in the 1960 Hong Kong Arts Festival
Fig. 107  Lui Shou Kwan being awarded the medal of M.B.E. by Sir David Clive Crosbie Trench, the 24th Governor of Hong Kong, in 1971.

Fig. 108  Lui Shou Kwan’s diary dated 22 May 1964
Fig. 109  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen #0-68*, 1964
Ink and colour on paper, 179 x 97 cm

Fig. 110  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen Painting*, 1964
Ink and colour on paper, 179 x 96 cm
Fig. 111  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen*, 1971
Ink and colour on paper, 139 x 69.5 cm

Fig. 112  Lui Tsan Ming in front of the buddha statuettes housed inside Wanfosi (Ten Thousand Buddhas Temple)
Fig. 113 Front cover of the exhibition catalogue of Lee Kwok Wing’s 1975 one-man show at Centre de Publication Asie Orientale, Universite de Paris – VII

Fig. 114 Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen Painting*, 1962
Ink and colour on paper, 92 x 46 cm
Fig. 115  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen Painting I*, 1965
Ink and colour on paper, 94.5 x 45 cm

Fig. 116  Lui Shou Kwan, *Work*, 1963
Ink and colour on paper, 180 x 97 cm
Fig. 117  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen Painting*, 1963
Ink and colour on paper, 92 x 46 cm

Fig. 118  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen Painting – Lotus*, 1972
Ink and colour on paper, 68 x 137 cm
Fig. 119  Lui Shou Kwan, *Lotus*, 1974  
Ink and colour on paper, 180 x 97 cm

Fig. 120  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen Painting*, 1970  
Ink and colour on paper, 153 x 83 cm
Fig. 121 Lui Shou Kwan, *Lotus (Zen Painting)*, 1969
Ink and colour on paper, 139 x 69 cm

Fig. 122 Lui Shou Kwan, *Purity*, 1970
Ink and colour on paper, 180 x 97 cm
Fig. 123  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen Painting*, 1974
Ink and colour on paper, 53 x 60 cm

Fig. 124  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen #0-76*, 1964
Ink and colour on paper, 135 x 69 cm
Fig. 125  Lui Shou Kwan, *Beyond All Thoughts*, 1970
Ink and colour on paper, 180 x 97 cm

Fig. 126  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zhuangzi*, 1974
Ink and colour on paper, 139 x 70 cm
Fig. 127  Lui Shou Kwan’s *Zhuangzi* as the poster image for a two-day symposium on ‘Post-1949 Chinese Painting’ held at the British Museum on 24 and 25 September 1996.

Fig. 128  Lui Shou Kwan’s *Zhuangzi* as the cover of the exhibition catalogue of a joint show held at Ostasiatische Kunst Museum in Cologne, Germany, in 1996. The exhibition featured a total of 110 works by several generations of artists who had worked in Hong Kong.
Fig. 129  Lui Shou Kwan, *Work*, 1969
Ink and colour on paper, 122 x 61 cm

Fig. 130  Lui Shou Kwan, *Work*, 1974
Ink and colour on paper, 122 x 83 cm
Fig. 131  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen Painting*, 1969  
Ink and colour on paper, 151 x 82.1 cm

Fig. 132  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen #147*, 1964  
Ink and colour on paper, 95 x 45 cm
Fig. 133  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen #166*, 1964
Ink on paper, 95 x 45 cm

Fig. 134  Adolf Gottlieb, *Blast II*, 1957
Fig. 135  Pierre Soulages, *Painting*, 1953

Fig. 136  Franz Kline, *Painting*, 1952
Fig. 137 Alan Wong, *Sign*, 1962
Ink and colour on paper, 228.6 x 213.4 cm

Fig. 138 Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen Painting*, 1964
Ink and colour on paper, 135 x 69.5 cm
Fig. 139  Undated sketches of Lui Shou Kwan's Zen paintings

Fig. 140  Undated sketches of Lui Shou Kwan's Zen paintings
Fig. 141 Lui Shou Kwan, *Painting No. 2*, 1969
Ink and colour on paper, 120.5 x 59.5 cm

Fig. 142 Photo of Earthrise over the lunar horizon taken from the orbiting Command Module by the American astronauts (NASA photo ID AS11-44-6552)
Fig. 143  Liu Guosong, *High Noon Festival No. 2*, 1969  
Ink and colour on paper, 114 x 70 cm

Fig. 144  Liu Guosong, *The Earth, Our Home*, 1971  
Ink and colour on paper, 152 x 77 cm
Fig. 145  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen Painting*, 1970
Ink and colour on paper, 152 x 83 cm

Fig. 146  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen Painting*, 1969
Ink and colour on paper, 151 x 82.5 cm
Fig. 147 Lui Shou Kwan, *Work*, 1970
Ink on paper, 153 x 83 cm

Fig. 148 Bankei Yotaku, *Ensō*
Ink on paper, 28.5 x 54 cm

Fig. 149 Hakuin Ekaku, *Ensō*
Ink on paper, 33 x 52.5 cm
Fig. 150  Nantembō Tōjū, *Ensō*
Ink on paper

Fig. 151  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen Lotus A69-9*, 1969
Ink and colour on paper, 150 x 81 cm
Fig. 152  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen #S-23*, 1969
Ink and colour on paper, 152 x 83 cm

Fig. 153  Lui Shou Kwan, *In Search of Zen*, 1969
Ink and colour on paper, 137.6 x 68.6 cm
Fig. 154  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen IV*, 1970  
Ink and colour on paper, 152 x 83 cm

Fig. 155  Lui Shou Kwan, *Lotus in Zen*, 1970  
Ink and colour on paper, 148 x 80 cm
Fig. 156  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen VII*, 1970
Ink and colour on paper, 151 x 82.5 cm

Fig. 157  Lui Shou Kwan, *Abstract Zen*, 1969
Ink and colour on paper, 149 x 81 cm
Fig. 158  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen #T-62*, 1969
Ink on paper, 152 x 83 cm

Fig. 159  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen #T-94*, 1970
Ink and colour on paper, 152 x 83 cm
Fig. 160  Lui Shou Kwan, *Zen Painting*, 1971
Ink and colour on paper, 333 x 185 cm
Fig. 161  Letter of Lui Shou Kwan to Laurenc Tam, in which Lui gave advice to Tam on his writing of a dissertation for a master degree in art history
Fig. 162  Letter of Lui Shou Kwan to his student, Hui Suet Bik, then an 18-year-old high school student. In the letter, Lui explained to Hui his view on the Western movie, *The Singer, Not the Song.*
Fig. 163  A 1968 lecture note written by Lui Shou Kwan for his students who enrolled in his ink painting course run by the Department of Extramural Studies of The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Fig. 164  Lui Shou Kwan’s painting in the style of Shitao (c. 1642-1707), 1967
Ink and colour on paper. 44.5 x 81 cm
Fig. 165  Lui Shou Kwan’s painting in the style of Wu Li (1632-1718), 1967
Ink and colour on paper. 57.5 x 121 cm
Fig. 166  Lui Shou Kwan’s 1968 copy of Juran’s (active c. 960-985) *Seeking the Dao in Autumn Mountains* (original 77.2 x 156.2 cm, collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei) Ink on paper. 82 x 184 cm
Fig. 167  Lui Shou Kwan's 1968 copy of Fan Kwan's (c. 950-1026) *Travellers among Mountains and Streams*  
(original 11th century, 103.3 x 206.3 cm  
collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei)  
Ink on paper. 79 x 178 cm
Fig. 168  Lui Shou Kwan’s landscape painting in the style of Hongren (1610-1664), 1968
Ink on paper. 60 x 120 cm

Fig. 169  Lui Shou Kwan’s chrysanthemum painting in the style of Wu Changshi (1844-1927), 1969
Ink and colour on paper. 83 x 153 cm
Fig. 170  Lui Shou Kwan’s landscape painting in the style of Huang Binhong (1865-1955), 1969
Ink and colour on paper. 83 x 153 cm
Fig. 171  Lui Shou Kwan’s 1967 copy of Wang Meng’s (c. 1308-1385) *Dwelling in the Qingbian Mountains*  
(original 1366, 42.2 x 140.6 cm  
collection of the Shanghai Museum)  
A total of 2,377 words were inscribed by Lui on this work.  
Ink on paper. 48 x 181.5 cm
Lui Shou Kwan's note to his student, Lee Wai On. The note tells that Lui had paid the tuition fees for Lee and his wife in 1968 and was now returning the receipt to them in case they wanted to apply for certificates of attendance from the Department of Extramural Studies of The Chinese University of Hong Kong.
Fig. 173  Lui Shou Kwan's 1967 painting in the style of Wu Li (1632-1718), 46 x 148 cm. This painting was done by Lui for his student, Laurence Tam, who was in the process of writing his master degree thesis on Wu Li.

Fig. 174  Lui Shou Kwan (right), John Warner (middle), and Lee Kwok Wing (left) at an exhibition preview in the City Hall Art Gallery & Museum, early 1960s
Fig. 175 Leaflet of the First International Salon of Paintings organized by the Modern Literature and Art Association in 1960

Fig. 176 Wucius Wong, *Wintry Mountain*, 1971
Mixed water media on paper, 184 x 95 cm
Fig. 177  Laurence Tam, *Landscape I - Grottoes*, 1970
Ink on thin mat cardboard, 108 x 79 cm

Fig. 178  Irene Chou, *Enigma Variations (4)*, 1973
Ink and colour on paper, 183 x 95 cm
Fig. 179  Ng Yiu Chung, *Mountain Scenery IV*, 1970
Ink and colour on paper, 184 x 95.5 cm
Fig. 180  Ko Kwok Cheung (F. 2 student), *A-Go-Go Dance*, c. 1968-69
Painting with ink and a dish on paper, 50 x 45.5 cm

Fig. 181  Lee Kim Ching (F. 2 student), *Tip of the Peninsula*, c. 1970-71
Ink on paper, 61.5 x 46 cm
Fig. 182 Dorothy Swan (middle) at the opening of the Chatham Galleries in 1962

Fig. 183 The interior of the Chatham Galleries
Fig. 184  Sara Larkin in her Salon, c. 1973

Fig. 185  The interior of Sara Larkin’s Salon Hong Kong
Art Now • Hong Kong

ink painting I

LEUNG KUI TING
LIU SHOU KWAN
NG YIU CHUNG
LAURENCE TAM
WONG PO YEH
WONG WANG FAI

city museum & art gallery hong kong

Fig. 186  One of the three folios of the ‘Art Now • Hong Kong’ exhibition presented by the City Museum & Art Gallery in 1971. This folio was the first official publication on New Chinese Ink Paintings.

Fig. 187  Judges in the course of selecting works which were sent for the ‘1972 Exhibition of Contemporary Art’. Nearly a thousand entries were received by the City Museum & Art Gallery that year. Picture from The China Mail, 8 May 1972.