

# The Chinese Pictorial Art, Its Format and Program: Some Universalities, Particularities and Modern Experimentations<sup>1</sup>

By Nelson I. Wu

THE ACADEMIC GAME of asking oneself "What is the difference between a Chinese painting and a Western painting?" or "What makes a Chinese painting Chinese?" is a useful one on which a beginner may cut his teeth. He learns to accept the ink-bamboo as a respected tradition and quickly becomes concerned about perspective or the lack of it. It helps him acquire an understanding of what the Chinese painting is trying to do, and an appreciation for the problems it has, as well as the considerable accomplishments it has so proudly achieved. Soon, however, this very exercise will bring on the realization of its own meager importance. The student will quickly recognize that all pictorial expressions have the same building blocks: line, area, color, space, movement, and all the other privileges and limitations that are, part and parcel, the birthright of a two-dimensional art. These components in their analyzed form, simple and pure, are *universalities*, behaving like musical tones, favoring no particular culture or tradition and belonging to all.

With this second and more analytical look at painting comes the revelation one did not seek: Just as there is no pure race, there is rarely such a thing as a thoroughbred painting, be it Zen or Academic, Northern or Southern School, Kano or Tosa, traditional or modern. Everywhere one encounters eclectic art. I often think that each important work of art is a museum of styles, and every artist of consequence a walking incarnation of a host of ghosts of ancient masters plus his own soul. Earth-shaking creative events look important because they crown the pinnacles of long, collective efforts. At the right time, and the right place, an artist becomes great because he has done the right thing. The right thing, considered alone, may seem a small ripple in the historical currents. But the ripple could be the crest of a surging river that breaks the dike and changes the course of a waterway.

Thus, when a painting is examined again, now for the third time, one looks beyond the general properties of the art of painting and discerns the accumulative and collective efforts in each tradition. Here indeed, he sees characteristic differences among traditions, and feels in each its developmental inertia. Each tradition has its

<sup>1</sup>This article is developed from portions of a paper entitled: "Form and Meaning: Universality and Particularity in the Visual and Verbal Language," which

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aspirations and finds its own ways to achieve them. The same objective world appears in the eyes of different groups as vastly dissimilar visions, and experimentations based on different ideologies are devised to depict them. And, as traditions develop and seek their next solutions, they zigzag, they deviate, and lo, new directions now fascinate new seekers! In the meantime, enough telltale *particularities* developed by each tradition will reveal to the viewer the goals, the problems and solutions each experimentation had. In the wake of history, there are usually visible differences in meaning and purpose to separate paintings into various families of styles: *even* Chinese and Western.

From differences to similarities and back to a new set of differences, we progress to a deeper and more fundamental appreciation of the efforts of the creative artists, without prejudice for or against. Of course, this is not all there is to be appreciated in painting, nor is it the only way or the best way to approach it. But it does open up possibilities for restudying works we are familiar with as well as gaining control over unfamiliar compositions.

The late Etienne Balazs once asked me how long it usually would take a Western student to become confident in his appreciation of Chinese painting. He wondered whether his students of Chinese history and literature had been taking too long to learn their subjects. My answer to him was: "Five years plus or minus for a student of art, but fifteen years or perhaps more for a student of literature." (A distinguished Japanese professor of Chinese literature once startled a gathering at a Western university by suggesting "two hundred years," and then turned to a colleague and whispered: "I meant never.") This is because the universalities of the visual art—line, color, etc., are elements of a universal language. The student begins his "reading" of painting easily and needs to make special effort only to deal with the particularities, the special cultural imprints. When it comes to these particularities, the visual arts are just as enigmatic and therefore esoteric as literature. And the nationality of the audience has little to do with it: Japanese students are reading modern translations of *The Tale of Genji*, and modern Chinese scholars line their studies with reference works in Western languages and in Japanese to help them better understand Chinese.

In a painting, however, reading only the universalities, there is instant satisfaction. "The Yellow Gourd" by Ch'i Huang 齊璜, more popularly known as Ch'i Pai-shih 齊白石 (1863-1957), delights us all, whatever our cultural background, with its sound and disciplined structure as well as its apparent ease of execution (Pl. 107, p. 192). The picture has comfortable proportions in terms of format, thus affording us an uncomplicated reading of the composition, as the eyes take in the entire picture at one glance. Indeed, having grasped the structure of the pictorial surface, one wanders from the gourd to the leaves to the twisting vine and the vibrantly progressing calligraphy, or the other way around, enjoying the ceaseless movement. Whatever one's cultural background, to his eyes the luminous lemon yellow color would appear to want to push forward, but the moist and heavy black leaves, with a tendency to recess, are holding the yellow gourd in place. In this tension, the surface of the painting is dynamically established. On it the vine and the calligraphy are like athletes or dancers performing. At times they may appear to be below the surface, and suggest depth; and at other times, they almost lift themselves up from it and

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Plate 104  
ONE DAY IN THE  
FUTURE [THE  
BROTHERS] WILL  
LOOK AFTER EACH  
OTHER,  
by Ch'i Huang.

soar. But the solid, opaque, and brilliant vermillion rectangle of the seal pinpoints and stabilizes the pictorial surface and reconfirms the birthright of painting as a two-dimensional art.

In another composition with two chicks, Ch'i Huang demands a cultural and a moral endorsement of certain Chinese values of the audience in addition to a biological participation (Pl. 104). The brownish loop, resembling a broken rubber band, between the two little birds, represents an earthworm. The depiction of all images here is deliberately simple so as not to cloud the meaning. For even though we have here in the center of the composition the worm of contention, the fight is not the subject of this painting. The artist gives the title of this work in four bold characters: "*T'a-jih hsiang-hu*" 他日相呼, meaning "one day in the future [the brothers] will look after each other," no doubt alluding to two famous lines in *The Book of Odes*: "*Hsiung-ti ni yü ch'iang, wai yu ch'i wu,*" 兄弟鬪於牆，外禦其務[梅]<sup>2</sup> "brothers may fight within the walls of the courtyard, but they will fight [shoulder to shoulder] against invaders from outside"; a simple biological response to this painting therefore would be inadequate.

A third example involves much more than the subject matter of a narrative. It evokes emotional and physical responses to man's deep-rooted feelings for life and

<sup>2</sup>*Shih-ching* 詩經, IV, "*Hsiao-ya*" 小雅, Decade of Part II, Book I, Ode IV; B. Karlgren, 164.  
*Lu-ming* 鹿鳴, *Ch'ang (T'ang)-ti* 常棣. See J. Legge,

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Plate 105  
LONGEVITY,  
by Ch'i Huang.

death, makes a poetic reference to a fish and plays on the pronunciation of a Chinese word. The painting is that of a catfish, but is entitled "Longevity" (Pl. 105). The word for catfish is *nien* 鮠, and *nien* is also the pronunciation for the word 年 meaning "year," "age," or "life as measured in terms of years." Thus the body of the twisting and swimming catfish is made into a double image: It is not only that of a long and powerful fish, but also that of a long and vigorous life. The almost translucent body of the fish is of the color of the semi-translucent muddy water. The happy fish is in its element. That grandfatherly face sports two wavy whiskers, and there is a twinkle in his eyes. He is healthy, enjoying himself, and not above reminding us of his presence that has been toughened by age. That toughness is in the stiff back fin which demands respect and is the only uncompromising and hard form of the entire organic, pliable body. Its hardness is more menacing and stiffer than seen in the strength of the calligraphy of the title, written in two bold, large characters: "*Ch'ang nien*," or "Long *nien*." Now, is it "Longevity" or "A Long Catfish"?

The rest of the calligraphy must be considered in two parts. The first part echoes the other ink images of the fish, the eyes and whiskers, announcing the age of the artist as ninety-one when the work was done, and flowing more at ease, albeit not without some calculated awkwardness. Beginning with the word "*sui*," 歲 meaning "age," a transformation takes place, and the strokes become more

angular as the artist signs his name.

Once the particularities attributable to a culture are discovered, their significance seems to grow more and more. Here, even the simple matter of a date has its share to contribute to it. Although dated, still we cannot be sure whether this painting was indeed done when the artist was ninety-one years old as it says. Ch'i Huang believed what a fortune-teller had predicted: that he was to meet with grave misfortune in 1937 when he would reach the age of seventy-five. At that advanced age, the misfortune could easily spell death. So, in order to escape this fate, he adapted the established procedure known as *man t'ien kuo hai* 瞞天過海, "Fooling the Heaven to cross the sea," to carry him over the dangerous age of seventy-five and to miss his appointment with the heavenly messengers of death who were to come to collect him. The detailed procedure to achieve this I wish I knew. At any rate, Ch'i Huang started in 1937 to refer to his age as seventy-seven, two years older than he really was, and signed his works accordingly.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps he also celebrated his "seventy-seventh" birthday in grand style and did other things to camouflage his true age. As a result he successfully "fooled" Heaven. Since he had no seventy-fifth year, the year in which he was to die, he did not die. He lived twenty more years and died in 1957 at the advanced age of ninety-six. Or was it ninety-four? The same delightful confusion therefore must also surround the date of this painting, "Longevity."

AS BIOLOGICAL BEINGS, people everywhere, now as well as in the past, are very much alike: we perceive colors within the visible spectrum, between the ultraviolet and the infrared; and sound, anywhere between 12 and 20,000 vibrations per second, etc. These biological limits unite us in our common arena of artistic creation.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, it is the cultural particularities that separate us. Thus while red and white have their universally definable properties, white is the color for wedding in the traditional West, but is used for mourning in China, a country whose traditional color for wedding is red, the color that denotes danger in the West. Time further complicates the cultural differences. As modern Chinese have accepted much of the Western ways and marry in white, the so-called "red and white events," meaning the weddings and funerals, have become "white and white events." So, particularities are by no means permanent features in a society. Perhaps ever since the beginning of civilization, man has been adding meaning to simple biological functions. And, revolutions of all categories, political or artistic, are always discernible on the graphs

<sup>3</sup>Hu Shih 胡適, *et al*, *Ch'i Pai-shih nien-p'u* 齊白石年譜, The Commercial Press, Shanghai, 1949, pp. 36-37.

<sup>4</sup>I stated the significance of limitation in greater detail: "The true artist, having learned its potentialities, accepts its limitations and thus excels in that art. Knowing completely what the green color can do, and having all the green colors in the world at his disposal, the bamboo painter created the best picture of the green bamboo with ink alone. The poet accepts the limitations of the meter to set his verse free, and the architect makes invisible the solid of his stone and reveals the majesty of his space. The potentialities of

a medium enslave even the greatest master, but a sudden realization of the special limitations transfigures his art. Once the limitation of a medium is identified, more than half of the task is done. Therefore, to our special blindness, we credit the art of painting; and to our special deafness, we credit the art of music. After having fallen from omnipotence, man created art. As silence died, poetry was born. So, let us sing!" Nelson Wu, "Ravana's Struggles," *Art and the Craftsman: The Best of the Yale Literary Magazine, 1836-1961*, J. Harned and N. Goodwin editors, The Yale Literary Magazine and Southern Illinois Press, 1961, p. 272.

of history by a drastic dip to the level of natural or biological existence and values. There the process of developing new particularities no doubt will begin again.

What will happen then, if the process is reversed, and accumulated cultural incrustations are removed? After thousands of years of evolution, the written language of China has become an esoteric communication system. The latest so-called "simplified" style is at times enigmatic even to the learned Chinese scholars. But certain "words," especially the nouns, of the ancient Inscribed Oracle Bones style, which pictorially describe the natural forms of animals, objects, etc., can still be easily identified by us today, whatever our cultural background. This style of writing, in use over three thousand years ago during the Shang dynasty, creates no obstacle, and is virtually forever modern. A similar joy of communication may be experienced with certain petroglyphs in the caves on the Hawaii Islands, in the American Northwest, with Arnhem Land drawings of Australia, or the Ice Age engravings on the fjord cliffs of Norway.<sup>5</sup> Like all art forms, these images are stylized, but not too far removed yet from nature. While over the years Chinese calligraphy has become esoteric by inbreeding and for the sake of efficiency, abstract, Chinese painting has remained this side of total abstraction. Perhaps the energy that has been directed toward developing the many imaginative styles of calligraphy, as well as "ink-play" in painting, has partially satisfied the Chinese appetite for abstract art. This seems very likely the case especially when we consider the fact that almost all Chinese painters practice calligraphy, and calligraphers dabble in painting. Therefore, we should do well by turning our attention back for a moment to the stylized images thus established in the Chinese painting tradition.

The gourd, the chicks, the fish, and even more important, the leaves and the vine, are all characteristically idioms of Chinese painting. Elsewhere, we see the other familiar idioms, the mountains, rocks, trees, waterfalls. But soon we will realize that all nature images are not admissible to artistic representation. There is clearly a selective process that separates what is *ju-hua* 入畫, "admissible to painting," from what is not (*pu ju-hua* 不入畫). For example: Old or matured men are admissible, and we see them everywhere in painting, but old women are less so, Young women are, but young men, especially when representing the image of young manhood like those glorified in classical Greek sculpture, are not. Nature always is a favorite object, but not without discrimination. The Chinese painting tradition is perhaps the only one that classifies its artists and production by categories of images. Of natural images, for example, bamboo and orchids are so important that they each merit a special classification. (Apples feature prominently in Western still-life, but one does not think of Cézanne as an "apple-painter.") Stylized and conventionalized mountain-and-water, figures, Taoist and Buddhist priests and deities, horses, flowers and feathers, insects and fishes, and architectural structures are all established idioms. Together they define certain particularities that are characteristic of Chinese painting. The horse in the ink-play manner, even when it is done with oil on canvas, still has something Chinese about it, and today there is no lack of such hybrid art. On the

<sup>5</sup>Nelson Wu, "The Ideogram in the Modern Dilemma," in *Art News*, November, 1957, pp. 34-37, 52-53. And, Johannes Maringer and Hans-Georg Bandi in

execution of a plan by Hugo Obermaier, *Art in the Ice Age*, Praeger, New York, 1953.

other hand, a horse by Giuseppe Castiglione, better known by his Chinese name Lang Shih-ning 郎世寧 (1688-1768), even as it dazzled and inspired eighteenth-century China, remains outside of the mainstream of the Chinese tradition.

There is absolutely no narrow-minded chauvinism in these observations. As has been said earlier, there is no thoroughbred art. However, by watching closely the cultural particularities, one finds himself on the trail of the Chinese tradition's historical inertia, and may want to speculate to what goals the modern artist should direct his efforts in order to contribute to the Chinese painting tradition, and what possible contributions that tradition may make to the modern art world.

MILESTONES OF THE HISTORY of Chinese painting mark the specific times when an artistic image, be it a figure style or a landscape convention, established itself as a classic idiom and excelled in a special mode, not unlike the case with calligraphy. Modern artists naturally want to add new idioms to the vocabulary of their painting. Modern images, for instance, automobiles and airplanes, have been introduced to Sung and Ming landscapes of mist and snow scenes, but, as to be expected, no new milestone resulted.<sup>6</sup> Instead, the effort almost caused the Chinese tradition to lose its identity and thus its right to a future.

Obviously, staying with the old idioms and accepting their dated concepts is no solution. Feng Tzu-k'ai 豐子愷 warned his students over thirty years ago that they should not be painting robed old men sitting by the waterfall anymore, because they couldn't have seen such a sight, except in ancient paintings.<sup>7</sup> Today traditional landscapes in all well-known period styles are still being done and taught in schools, just as traditional poetry and calligraphy are being produced and admired. I admire many of these myself, and wish more good ones had been produced. But this has nothing to do with my earnest longing for a new era in Chinese painting. Much can be said about the relationship between direct personal experience and artistic expression, both pro and con. There is nothing intrinsically good or bad in an artistic style; we have to take it for what it is. Besides, much of our aesthetic cultivation is an indirect experience, at least at first. A taste for the various traditional Chinese theatrical styles, *K'un-ch'ü* 崑曲 or *Ching-hsi* 京戲, is usually acquired and induced; and it takes time to cultivate such an appreciation. Poetry is more remote from life than painting because of the medium, language, and calligraphy even more so, to the point of becoming abstract. An appreciation for all these arts thus needs to be induced with different degrees of intensity: from the relatively low requirement for painting to the highest for calligraphy. This does not in any sense rank the arts. In

<sup>6</sup>It is still difficult to assess the achievement of these experiments and to predict any future course except to say that unless new idioms are successfully created, Chinese painting as a tradition may not survive. Many are working along the direction of introducing modern machinery, architecture, clothing, etc. into conventional landscape today. Early pioneers that come to mind include the Cantonese artists Kao Chien-fu 高劍父, Kao Ch'i-feng 高奇峯, and Kuan Shan-yueh 關山月. For some more recent examples of large scale experimentation sponsored by government or otherwise encouraged by it, see Fu Pao-shih 傅抱石

et al, *Shan-ho hsin-mao* 山河新貌 (*New Looks of [Our] Mountains and Waters*), Kiangsu People's Publications, 1962; and *China Pictorial*, VII, 1964 among many other official publications. Note also the almost uniform "comfortable" proportions of width and height of format.

<sup>7</sup>Personally, I think his own is among the more successful experiments. For a few examples of figures in new landscape by Feng Tzu-k'ai, see Bradley Smith and Wango Weng, *China A History in Art*, Harper and Row, New York, 1972, pp. 282-283.

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fact they should not be pitted against each other and compared, but should be regarded as different avenues to revelation in art. However, each has its own imagined ideal form to guide it, and in its concepts of perfection we get a glimpse of the culture's aspiration. In tangible terms, that aspiration is equal to the total sum of all the particularities.

To the Chinese, it is good to see quality poetry, calligraphy and painting, or *shih-shu-hua* 詩書畫, congregate in one artist; and it is auspicious indeed to integrate the artist and the individual, culminating in symbolizing the *wen-jen* 文人, the "cultured human being." (I hope that I may be forgiven for retranslating this much discussed term.) The concept of *wen-jen* has suffered too long from many abuses and its association with the term, *wen-jen-hua* 文人畫, its standardized translation, "literati painting," and the unwanted elitist affiliation as well as class stigma. It should not have anything to do with birth, wealth, and station in life. Nor can low birth, poverty and misfortune rob anyone of his cultured human being status. In its pure and isolated form, the concept of *wen-jen* is perhaps the most important message from the Chinese tradition to our modern world. And today, the modern world seems ready to understand it. It was only yesterday when China was overwhelmed by the West's efficiency, its division of labor, and emphasis on expertism. Now the toiling performer of modern wonders, wherever he may be, longs to be an integrated man.

PRIVATE ART IS DEAD! More and more we hear people say this. "Almost all artists paint with the museum in mind, or at least a large audience [in mind]," Esley Ian Hamilton, a student in my introductory course wrote in a recent examination. "The Chinese painter could pour out his talents for the delectation of one person only, and even that person could not see the whole thing at once."<sup>8</sup> This kind of revelation is widespread among my students. Some marvel at the Chinese formats of the hanging scroll, the handscroll and the album as if they were sheer magic. Others find it maddening to be allowed to see only a portion of a handscroll at a time in museum

<sup>8</sup>Esley Ian Hamilton, examination essay written for the Art of China, India, and Japan," Washington the course Art and Archaeology 342, "Introduction to University, May 10, 1976.

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*b*

*a*

Plate 106 RIVER CITY AND FISHERMEN VILLAGES.  
Handscroll by Wu Yung-hsiang. Sections a, b, c, d.

displays. In either case, the time seems more ripe than ever to consider what the particularities of these formats mean. Having done that, the issue of private art versus public art perhaps may be brought back for more discussion.

The Chinese formats have a wide range of measurements and proportions. Shapes close to the so-called “golden rectangle” indeed exist in large numbers. The height and width of album leaves are usually not drastically proportioned. All three works by Ch’i Huang illustrated here are in comfortable formats that permit the entire composition to be taken in at one glance. Three important points should be kept in mind: First, the biologically comfortable proportions are the universalities in this issue, not important in defining the Chinese ideals. Second, it is remarkable that the format, which exists *before* the painting, should even become an issue. But being *pre-painting*, it is a fundamental issue.<sup>9</sup> Third, the very fact that it *is* an issue is one of the particularities that says something about the aspiration of the culture that has made it so.

The drastic proportions of the height and width of the hanging scrolls and the handscrolls make sure that the entire composition is impossible to be taken in at one glance. It is good form for a viewer to go near a hanging scroll, stoop, stand up, back away and move forward again, taking a long time to go through the painting. It is normal practice to unroll a handscroll a section at a time to read it—pausing, enlarging and narrowing the portion being viewed, going forward and backward when feeling the urge. As the viewers of these formats, albums included, take time to appreciate the art, they add the element of time to it and make painting a temporal art that must exist in time like music, the dance, and poetry. As the viewing progresses, and a special time-space reality is created by virtue of his timing, the viewer, or each viewer if he is in the company of several others, creates his own world in which he is alone with the painting. The impossible happens. The ancients who have seen the same painting are now with him in this reality, and together they leave messages to be deciphered by the future. Colophons testify to these, in spite of

<sup>9</sup>Similar to the situation as related to in *Lun-yu* plain ground.” See James Legge, tr., *Confucian Analects*, p. 157. The ground could mean the silk on which the painting is done.  
論語：“*Hui-shih-hou-su*” 繪事後素。“The business of laying on the colours follows [the preparation of] the

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the fact that like all good things they often fall victim to self-indulgence.

The simple matter of format also has a vigorous and imaginative presence. It is the format that provides the stage for the performance of *chang-fa* 章法, structural configuration and program. *Chang-fa* is like the invisible soul, depending upon its incarnation to reveal its existence. A few modern artists experimented with it, but what they did is not as easily noticeable as the automobile in snow, or the airplane in the mist.

“*Chiang-ch'eng yü-ts'un*” 江城漁村, *River City and Fishermen Villages*, is a long handscroll, 33.25 cm *h* x 694 cm *l*, deceptively conventional in appearance; it does not particularly play up the city or the villages, although it has them among other sceneries (Pl. 106). The title here is not unlike those of the works by the early Cubists that serve to clarify the obvious and conceal the real intent of the artist. This undated work was probably done in the very early 1940's when the artist, Wu Yung-hsiang 吳詠香 (1912-1970), was at her prime.<sup>10</sup> This composition, under the guise of the traditional idioms and brushwork, is a bold experimentation of *chang-fa*, and is ingeniously programed. In the opening section when the first two or three inches are revealed, there is from top to bottom nothing but more or less horizontal lines lightly drawn in moist light color, a serene scene of stability. From this stillness an entire landscape drama of movement and change is to emerge.

A hasty viewer may not notice this by unrolling the scroll too quickly and too

<sup>10</sup>The year in which Wu Yung-hsiang, my late sister, was born is usually given as 1913. Recently this was corrected in a biography published in three installments in *Chuan-chi wen-hsueh* 傳記文學. (Ch'i Sung 齊綏, “*Nü-hua-chia Wu Yung-hsiang chuan*” 女畫家吳詠香傳 in *Chuan-chi wen-hsueh*, XXV/3 (148), Sept. 1974, pp. 33-41; XXV/4 (149), Oct. 1974, pp. 54-62; and XXV/5 (150), Nov. 1974, pp. 83-90. Hereafter, this work will be referred to as Ch'i, *Biography*.)

It was considered lucky and good by some northern Chinese that the woman in marriage be three years older than her husband. My sister and her husband,

Ch'en Chun-fu, an established painter in his own right, had a long and obstacle-strewn course of love, and her age, five years his senior, was the last one they had to surmount. To modify the impact the considerable age difference might have on their friends and “to please the parents of both families,” for the wedding they changed their ages. She reduced her age by one year, and he increased his also by one year, to make the difference the auspicious three years. See Ch'i, *Biography* (148), p. 34; Michael Sullivan, *Chinese Art in the Twentieth Century*, University of California Press, 1959, p. 97, gives the year of Wu's birth as 1913.

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RIVER CITY AND FISHERMEN VILLAGES.  
Sections e, f, g, h.

much at once, thus missing the opening statement of the artist's intent. Few, however, can fail to appreciate her much more elaborate introductory passage that extends some 90 centimeters to the left, a comfortable stretching of the viewer's arm. This passage is like an overture of a musical composition, lightly but carefully introducing the elements and the themes of the work. The life and flow of the water, which we may liken to the music of the string instruments; the presence of man, the woodwinds; the mass and the great weight of the mountains, the bass drums; the jagged progression of the mountains, the punctuation of the percussion instruments, are all here, ready to be introduced, one by one. Having made the image of the human presence a part of the landscape, she sets things off to a forward movement (in this case, to the left) by placing two boats and their passengers at a slight diagonal. Following the rising inertia of this diagonal, she brings the seemingly docile mountains into view and quickly dismisses them, leaving them rumbling like muffled thunders in distant clouds. It is not their time to perform yet.

The principal composition that follows is in four movements. They are, if we may name them while fully aware of the inadequacy of such simple appellations, *The Traveler*, *The Mountain*, *The Water*, and *The Fantasy*. These venerated images are traditional ones, but their thematic treatment, first developed individually and then put into a sequence, is experimental and exciting.

The first movement begins with an invitation to the viewer to come down to earth. Hovering over the two boats, he has been a spectator. The people in the boats do not even look at him. There is no place for him to land, only water below. While his eyes are still focused on the far horizon, having been led there by the receding mountains, the scroll unrolls; sneaking up on him, a path appears at the bottom edge of the handscroll to provide him an entrance into the painting. Wu Yung-hsiang seems to enjoy using this kind of ploy to splice together major passages of the composition. She varies her applications, but each time she takes the viewer first in one direction and then surprises him from another.

It is difficult to decline the invitation to set one's foot down on the path which has been thrust right under the viewer's nose. Stationed at this point is a fisherman who, with his boat, comprises the first image, facing right, the direction of the arriving viewer who begins here to play also the role of a traveler. This is one of the

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RIVER CITY AND FISHERMEN VILLAGES.  
Sections i, j, k.

greatest joys offered by the temporal art of a scroll. As the viewer follows himself into the painting, he doubles the pleasure and surprises by maintaining both statuses. What is more, while he identifies himself with other travelers in the painting, or with other images provided by the artist for self-identification purposes, sometimes a horse, other times a tree, etc., he never forgets that he has all the time remained the viewer. Therefore, for him now to see the fisherman and to enter between his boat and the first trees, he is to come into a human settlement, not just arrive at land's edge. As the unrolling on the left side and the rewinding on the right continue, and before the first line of calligraphy comes into view, and as the first few inches of the scroll are rolled up, the composition suddenly seems to complete itself. The newly revealed piece of land forms a triangular area anchoring down the left end and balancing nicely the expanse of space to the right. But the traveler soon realizes that the picture does not end here. The human habitation is not for him to visit; the gate to the yard and the house is shut, the scholar inside is not expecting any guests—his back is turned to the gate and his mind is deeply involved in the book he is reading—even the dog, as if sensing that no guest is expected by its master, barks at the unfamiliar footsteps! So, this is not the end but the beginning of a journey. Following the road, the traveler goes on and around to the backside of the dwelling. Here the beginning of the colophon appears and assures him that much is waiting for him ahead.<sup>11</sup>

When the road re-emerges, an amazing thing happens. It was only a moment ago when the entire height of the scroll was occupied by images: the distant mountains at the top, the river in between, and the trees and houses in the foreground. Now the top half is empty. If one rolls up both ends and frames his scenes into small vertical strips, he will see that the images dance up and down along a narrow trail which at times occupies no more than a few centimeters of the format at the bottom ledge. This restricted passageway is where the painter wants the

<sup>11</sup> Here the architecture, the person, and the dog convey the same message—that the traveler should move on—via three different avenues. The gate and the fence, separating the road and the interior of the

yard, shut out the traveler spatially. The scholar, reading, rejects him mentally. The dog makes a contact in sound to communicate across the visual and mental separation, but the message is "Move on."

traveler to be. She puts other travelers on the path, at one of the narrowest places, for the visitors to her painting to identify themselves with. The two figures seem to be aware of their passive function, so they, too (like the old scholar), ignore the visitors and only talk to each other. But all the while they serve very well the purpose of just being where they are. As the theme develops, the viewer becomes part of it. He enjoys reading the pictorial space with his feet, and wants to be as sure-footed as he can so that he will not slip off the painting! But how long must he stay with this restricted space?

As his eyes and his feet are concentrating on the few centimeters of ground below, and as he is about to step onto the footbridge, the next movement of the composition already lies in wait for him. Filling up the format to within a few centimeters of the top is the subject of this second movement, the Mountain.

The empty top part of the scroll, which suggests the continuation of the river, is taken up by a poem in the handwriting of the Manchu Prince, P'u Ju 溥儒 (1896-1963), and dated 1944.<sup>12</sup> The positioning of this long poem shows great sensitivity to the composition of the scroll. The calligraphy begins just as the road has reappeared from behind the cottage, thus picking up the narrative. The mental landscape in the poem, and the abstract forms of the calligraphy parallel the journey on foot below, until they come to the land's end, where a footbridge at once separates and connects the first two movements of the composition.

The low level and the narrowness of the land before the bridge serve two purposes: they set us up for the surprise of the height of the mountain, and confine us in a shallow space so that we can better appreciate the expanse and the depth in the second movement. As the great masses lumber forward, carrying along the travelers (some of them have found the going strenuous, and have acquired donkeys), the world in the picture opens up. More mountains come into view, and even more appear through the misty sky to show their peaks on the far horizon. Suddenly we have a vast panoramic scene with all the avatars of the mountain on display! As the landscape expands, we even find that a city nestles in the security of the mountain's lap. But the city is not the theme here; after having given the scene its scale, it is soon dismissed.

Water, the theme of the third movement, re-enters the picture almost as quickly as the mountains established themselves in the previous movement. It is the mist that obscures the mighty mountains, the vapor that lifts their great weight and separates them from their roots, and the sea of moist air that floats them away like so many chunks of drifting ice. Here even color is in danger of being completely bleached away by water. This third movement thus provides a contrast both to what has gone before and to what is to come. At the height of the water's presence, it is the void between solids, the pause between statements, the silence that gives meaning to, and is made meaningful by, the music before and after. We see it in the river, the harbor, the rice field, where the farmers are moving more water into their paddies using their foot-pump. Even more is coming down from the sky.

Now, something different is in the air. It is the wind that is blowing *against*

<sup>12</sup>Thus, 1944 sets the upper limit for this work. Sullivan, *op. cit.*, p. 95, gives P'u Ju's year of birth as 1887. Here I follow Liu Shao-t'ang 劉紹唐, ed., *Min-*

*kuo jen-wu hsiao-chuan* 民國人物小傳, *Chuan-chi wen-hsueh tsa-chih-she* 傳記文學雜誌社, Taipei, 1975, vol. I, pp. 225-226.

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our faces, confronting the movement of the scroll. The trees are bending to the right. What ominous message does this bring?

Wedging into the two mountain ranges is a fantastic contortion of jagged rock formations. The unbelievable shapes reaching up from below, coming down from high, defy gravity as they intertwine. Their compositional meaning is not really clear unless one keeps in mind what has gone before. These twisted forms mark the beginning of the fourth movement, which makes its entrance in yet a new stance. The transitions between sequences in this work have been rich in variation. There was a shift from high to low between the overture and the first movement, from low to high between the first and the second, and an overlap between the second and the third. Here, the fourth movement comes in between the distant and the foreground mountains, and halts the forward momentum. Then, as if offering the travelers a chance to reflect, the tortured mountain provides a lookout for them to review the landscape leading to this point, before beginning the journey through the nightmarish world of toppling mountains and sliding forests. Dreams are usually short, and a crescendo must not be held long, and so, peace resumes. The unstable, the diagonal, give way to horizontals again. The lines still have a few gnarled places not yet straightened out, but both the foreground land and the distant mountains are ready to settle down, their horizontality recalling the opening statement.<sup>13</sup> The human images here are all facing the direction we have come from. The last figure, a stooping old man, sums up the composition and serves as a final punctuation. The road, however, goes on, already suggesting a possible new journey on the other side of the hills.

The handscroll is a wonderful format for private art. The viewer in the privacy of his meditation participates in the creation of the landscape—observing, remembering and anticipating. For this reason, a handscroll of this type should not be opened to its full length so that everything is revealed all at once, as we have done here in order to reproduce the entire work. The reader is asked to exercise proper control over his framing of the scenes. After all, who wants to listen to all the movements of a symphony at the same time?

<sup>13</sup> Leaving some of the internal tension unresolved, such as the gnarled lines not all straightened out, to complement the parallel horizontal lines at the beginning of the scroll, is to preserve the *shih* 勢, the potential. *Shih* can be likened to the potential in a wound-up spring: there is energy poised and emotion unresolved. I have made up a story to illuminate the point with particular regard to the ending of this scroll: Once a scholar became very intrigued by this scroll, and he deciphered one hidden meaning after another as he went along the composition. As tension mounted inside him, his power of observation and ability to penetrate deeper into the meaning of the design increased also. He was sure that something ominous would happen to him or to the scroll, as all the energies that were being liberated by the perfect communication between himself and the masterpiece must have an effect somewhere. When he came toward the end of the scroll, he fully expected that it would end in a peaceful scene represented by a restful group-

ing of horizontal lines, just as the scroll had begun. Instead, there were the unresolved gnarled lines wanting to be straightened out. Although he felt somewhat less than completely satisfied, he was too thrilled and tired to pursue the matter further. He was relieved, too, that no calamity had befallen him or the ancient treasure because of his deciphering all the artistic secrets. He rolled up the scroll, put it in its box, and left it on his table, still feeling the tension and excitement from looking at it. Exhausted, he put his head down on the table to nap for awhile, and promptly fell asleep. In his sleep, he thought he heard a long slow sigh of relief. There was no one else in the room, and the sound seemed to have come from the box. As if driven by some invisible force, he hurriedly opened the box, took out the scroll, and unrolled it impatiently all the way to the end. There, at the concluding section, the gnarled and kinky lines had just straightened themselves out.

WHAT WE HAVE described is a mid-twentieth century experimentation. Behind it, there was a mid-fifteenth century handscroll of comparable length attributed to the Ming dynasty painter, Tai Chin 戴進, with a title: "*Chiang-shan ta-kuan*" 江山大觀, or "A Grand View of Rivers and Mountains," inscribed in seal style by Chou T'ien-ch'iu 周天球 (1514-1595).<sup>14</sup> Wu Yung-hsiang saw the Ming work and was inspired by it. Fascinated by the possibilities it suggested, she re-arranged the composition, changed many of the details, and produced the scroll we have just seen. Previous to this she had spent three years, between 1937 and 1940, at the Chinese Painting Institute in the Palace Museum in Peking studying the former Imperial painting collections housed there. A major part of her time was devoted to making faithful copies of treasured scrolls by ancient masters.<sup>15</sup> She soon earned herself a name for the skill and quality of her reproductions. With the Tai Chin scroll, however, the situation was different. Working for herself and with a special intention in mind, she did not make a copy. Her purpose is best revealed by a quick check against the Tai Chin scroll, and by comparing a number of details in the two compositions. In the opening section of the Ming painting there are many boats; two of them must be the models for the two in Wu's overture. But there are many other boats of different types going in different directions in the Tai scroll. Moreover, the mountain-water relationship in the earlier work does not exhibit orchestrated characteristics, but progresses rhythmically: water-mountain-water-mountain, many, many, times from the beginning to the end. As correctly observed by Ch'eng Hsi 程曦, the Tai Chin scroll parades a number of traditional landscape styles. There are the Ma-Hsia 馬夏 School techniques as well as the Mi Family 米家 mountains.<sup>16</sup> This was not an uncommon practice, and it became more popular in the late Ming and early Ch'ing times. By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when eclecticism was in vogue, painters would routinely compose, for instance, an eight-leaf album in eight different historically well known styles. Tai Chin's scroll did not go that far. It exhibits mostly the Chekiang manner Tai Chin had a share in making famous, but the juxtaposition of different styles is nevertheless very noticeable. This feature would have confused Wu's underlying abstract structure had she copied indiscriminately. So, she eliminated two mountain ranges and wide stretches of water to develop her own composition.

The most fundamental difference between the two scrolls lies in the viewpoints the two artists have adopted. The Tai viewpoint is high—the viewer looks down not only at the boats, but also at the flight of birds that are seen against the surface of the water below. Two mountain ranges come rushing toward the viewer, and pass underneath him. Wu Yung-hsiang excluded all these and moved a group of distant mountains from further down the scroll and placed them at the beginning to create the overture. She took out the boats that travel in the opposite direction to insure a

<sup>14</sup>Ch'eng Hsi 程曦, *Mu-fei-chai ts'ang-hua k'ao-p'ing* 木犀齋藏畫考評: *A Study of Some Ming and Ch'ing Paintings in the Mu-fei Collection*, Hong Kong, 1965, pp. 7-8. The whereabouts of the Tai Chin scroll was unclear throughout the World War II years. I was most pleasantly surprised to find it in Professor Cheng Te-k'un 鄭德坤's collection when I visited him in Cambridge, England in 1959 and recognized it as the model my sister had told me about. I am grateful to

Professor Cheng for the set of photographs he later sent me.

<sup>15</sup>Ch'i, *Biography* XXV/4 (149), p. 55. At the last count in 1972, six of these long scrolls were still in existence. They all were among the works my sister kept apart never to sell.

<sup>16</sup>Ch'eng, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

good forward momentum, and added the narrow path to connect the plot of land on which the cottage stands with the footbridge area. She did all this to create the first movement, which describes the human presence and establishes the theme of the journey as soon as the visitor lands.

The landing of the visitor in Wu's work marks the basic difference in attitudes. Tai Chin's high viewpoint keeps the viewer a *viewer*, and his landscape a grand *view* of rivers and mountains. Wu's lower viewpoint, once established, manages to hold the viewer's sympathy with the travelers in the painting, and facilitates his identification with them even when they are far away. Thus, while the last sections of both scrolls contain essentially the same scenes, these different attitudes remain clear in each. The most important change Wu has made occurs at the landing. The Tai Chin scroll has a stable and complete scene outside the cottage gate. An old man holding a staff occupies the space here and he is complemented by the fisherman and his boat. There is no entrance into the painting, and no visitor can come here to crowd the scene. Wu put the entrance here and made the scene dynamic. She vacated the area of the old man, and the space became inviting. The concept of a path she introduced here remains a strong image throughout the entire composition. At the end of the scroll, where the path goes around the hills, the viewer is reminded of the entrance once again.<sup>17</sup>

BOTH IDIOM AND FORMAT challenged the Chinese painter anew after the Second World War. This challenge took place in a much enlarged geographic arena, as the uprooted Chinese roamed all over China or became transplanted far and wide. In this new situation, Chinese painting, which for hundreds of years had been like flowers cultivated in private greenhouses, shed its shyness, forgot its delicate nature, and went public. Sponsored by political or economic forces or both, as a means of communicating with the multitude, the new public art sought its audience among like minds. Whether it took the form of posters, murals, or pictures framed behind glass in homes, it communicated with the masses, and is experiencing an unprecedented, rapid growth. Political persuasions aside, wherever we find it, as public art, it has adopted the format that fits its purpose.<sup>18</sup> Although not necessarily always the golden rectangle, its comfortably proportioned height and width make communication quick, easy and complete. Everything else being equal, a format like this requires less active participation on the part of the viewer as he frames his scenes, and thereby involves his own mind less. Indeed, many can gather in front of a wall painting and receive the same message. (If they do not, then in some way the work must have failed.) But as far as the message is concerned, it doesn't matter whether it extols farm production on a wall in Peking or vows devotion to traditional values in the unchanging landscape hanging in a Hong Kong apartment.

Formats of private art, the long, narrow hanging scrolls, handscrolls, and

<sup>17</sup>Cf. Ch'eng, *ibid.* To my knowledge, the Tai Chin scroll has never been reproduced anywhere else but in this catalogue. Although only two short sections are shown here, they illustrate quite clearly how the entrance was created and the background mountains were moved to the earlier section of the scroll and

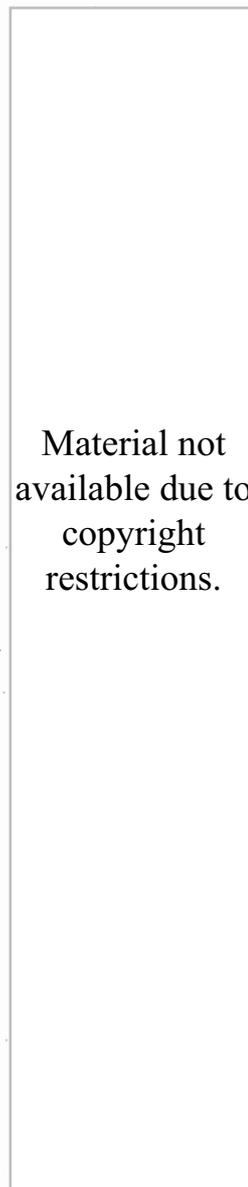
made part of the overture.

<sup>18</sup>See *Shan-ho hsin-mao*, etc., cited in Note 6. For other examples, see *Chin-pai-nien Chung-kuo ming-chia hua-hsuan-chi* 近百年中國名家畫選集, Vols. *chia* 甲, (1973); and *i* 乙, (1974), Taipei.

planned and programed albums, difficult to mount and impossible to frame under glass, have thus fallen into disuse. The dwindling number of craftsmen who can still mount a good handscroll are faced with the increasing difficulty of finding a dependable supply of good materials, appreciative customers, and interested apprentices to carry on their trade. The modern admirer of traditional Chinese painting is also handicapped by the changing situation. Formats of drastic proportions are not only difficult to mount and maintain, but also expensive and inconvenient to reproduce.<sup>19</sup> We, who have arrived too late to know this private art form in its heyday, must frequently make our acquaintance with its public reincarnations, the reproductions, museum exhibitions, and catalogues. Great scrolls are popularly known only by a few sections, and albums, by a leaf or two. Little wonder that when these monuments of Chinese art are discussed, the emphasis would often be on details or on “*pi-mo*” 筆墨, brush stroke texture and ink tone, instead of on the movement and meaning of the entire work. But, in the hands of truly creative artists, these old formats still shine brightly in a difficult time for Chinese painting, reward the painter richly with the excitement of experimentation, and promise the tradition a future worth working for.

“*Hui-hsuan*” 迴旋, an expression which I can only paraphrase as “Hovering and Circling,” is the title of just such a work<sup>20</sup> (Pl. 108). Its painter, Ch'en Ch'i-k'uan 陳其寬, born in 1921 in Peking, earned his B.S. degree from the National Central University in wartime Chungking, and his M.S. from the University of Illinois in architecture, taught at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and now, an internationally known architect, living in Taiwan, is just such an artist. He never studied Chinese painting under any famous master, nor has he copied ancient masterpieces. But after having watched a painter friend

Plate 108 HOVERING  
AND CIRCLING, by  
Ch'en Ch'i-k'uan.



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<sup>19</sup> Although Wu Yung-hsiang's works have been much reproduced, no long scrolls of hers have been published for the same reasons. For her “public” paintings see *Wu Yung-hsiang chiao-shou hua-chi* 吳詠香教授畫集, *Collection of Professor Wu Yung-hsiang's Paintings*, Ch'en Chun-fu, Taipei, 1973.

<sup>20</sup> Water-color on paper, 22.5 cm. x 184 cm.; a

respectable ratio of approximately 1 : 8. Ch'en has done at least one other scroll with the same theme. I often think of this type of landscape as painting without borders. Each is a strip taken out of nature. See Plate 7, “Vertigo,” in Catalogue: *Exhibition of Paintings by Chen Chi-kuan* [sic], The Hong Kong Arts Centre, Hong Kong, 1974.

*Format and Program*

diligently and over a long period of time produce many a bird perching on many a branch, he finally asked: "When will you really begin to paint? If you won't, I shall." Thus, the interesting start of his painting career, in the early 1950's.

"Hovering," painted in 1967, had the benefit of some fifteen years of imaginative experimentation. In it, his art has matured and become an effective form of communication to convey what words cannot express about his new world, his existence, his fascinations and puzzlements. But, what has happened to his format? It is now even impossible to classify this! Is this a hanging scroll or a handscroll? It must be a frustrating question to some, but one really shouldn't worry about such matters when confronted with a delightfully refreshing work like this. Perhaps in this disturbing unorthodoxy lies its loyalty to the venerated tradition. The artist has evoked the spirit of the drastic proportions, and succeeded in creating a work that is full of details to draw the viewer close and surprise him as he rides the movement of the composition. Observing, memorizing, and anticipating, in the best tradition of the scrolls, horizontal or vertical, the viewer participates. Here is an inexhaustible amount of visual fascination that does not depend upon literary narrative to hold the viewer's interest. Like good poetry, this painting, employing only the simple vocabulary of natural forms, creates a mood to permit an

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HOVERING  
AND  
CIRCLING,  
Sections  
*a, b, c*:  
horizontal  
riverscape.

infinite variety of responses from different kinds of audiences.

There are surprises after delightful surprises. Before unrolling, we can see that this is a hanging scroll. But the beginning section clearly shows a horizontal composition of a river landscape, making us wonder if we have been mistaken in our assumption. Several things seem wrong here. Either the painting has been mounted upside down, or it is not going in the expected direction. It seems to be going from left to right! All of these seeming paradoxes, and more to come, must not be dismissed as gimmicks intended to entertain us. They are instead repeated annoyances to nag us out of our complacency, so that we recognize our own new world as revealed to us by the artist. Only when we are forced to discover that nothing is familiar do we realize that indeed, nothing around us is familiar anymore. Therefore, as we accept this, and turn the scroll around, ready to read it from left to right, we wonder what earth-shaking reason the artist had in mind to justify such tactics. Here in the top corner is a seal of the artist, but it lies on its side, at 90° to the horizon! However, as the fascinating river scene and its many dramatic mountain ranges reassure us that the painting is indeed right side up, we decide that the seal may have been an error. But then the earth begins to move and carries the mountains, the houses, the fields, and the river with it. We seem to lose our gravity and stability and find our-

d  
e  
f  
g  
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HOVERING  
AND  
CIRCLING,  
Sections  
*d, e, f, g*:  
vertical  
mountains.

selves on the verge of falling into the painting, or falling from the sky. Somehow I find it very true to the Chinese manner that we should experience in painting the overwhelming sensation of flight without bothering to create an idiom for airplane. But as the land below heaves and falls away, twists and turns, we realize that we are the ones who are hovering and circling. Judging from the stilted houses in the painting, the architecture is more that of southern Asia than China. But, with so many unfamiliar experiences in such a short time, it is now difficult to work up an enthusiasm to resolve the question of whether it is the landscape or the viewer that has been *transplanted*. Still, the land continues to agitate, and we continue to hover, eyes glued to it. There is no end, nor beginning, to this scroll. As it is with all great artistic achievements, its rich undeclared meaning will outlive us.

The handscroll finally becomes a hanging scroll when it is fully extended and ready to go on the wall. We now see three seals, all right side up. And the verticality of the mountains at the bottom finally allows us a much needed rest after our dizzy journey. But returning to life on earth, we only find our immediate world more puzzling.

AN ALBUM MAY be a collection of unrelated individual leaves, or a programmed sequence of images to be read with regular cadences. In the latter case, an alert viewer reading an album from cover to cover, aided by the memory of what he has seen and in anticipation of what is to come, transforms the comfortably proportioned rectangular leaves to a scroll, horizontal or vertical, making it much more than the sum of all the leaves it contains. The format of the album, therefore, has indeed drastic proportions! Conversely, a folding screen or a set of *p'ing-t'iao* 屏條 (an arrangement of vertical scrolls),<sup>21</sup> are like giant albums fully opened up. In these arrangements the drastic proportions of the individual panels or scrolls are neutralized. But, as members of a set, they together present a composition in a comfortably proportioned format. However, not all albums have borders around the leaves. A *che-tzu* 摺子 has the outward appearance of an album, but cannot be classified as a *ts'e-yeh* 冊葉, which means literally "album leaves". Instead, as a format, a *che-tzu* is a scroll folded in zigzag fashion. To the painter, a *che-tzu* is versatile and convenient to carry on trips. He can also get to any section of a long composition instantly without having to unroll each time from the beginning as in the case with a scroll. After the work is completed, a *che-tzu* may be mounted as a handscroll, and indeed many have been so preserved. Taking into consideration the characteristics of all the formats discussed here, it seems then the unique challenge of the true album is in the cadences and the controlled rhythm they suggest. The cadences that struggle not to yield the secrets of the composition all at once are the limitations as well as the inspiration of the album.

I discussed this matter with my old friend, Ch'en Ch'i-k'uan, when he visited me in 1968. It was after a small dinner party following an exhibition of his works at my home. All the guests had left. We talked about how difficult it had become to

<sup>21</sup>For an illustration of such an arrangement, see *the Connoisseur*, Roma, 1958, p. 19. R. H. van Gulik, *Chinese Pictorial Art As Viewed by*

Plate 109  
 THE CRANE,  
 by Ch'en Ch'i-k'uan.  
 Sections a, b, c.

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c

have long handscrolls mounted. But albums, and especially *che-tzu*, are still available from Japan, I said. The conversation suddenly became spirited. I urged Ch'en to try his hand on one. He thought about it for few short moments, and then took the small album I placed in front of him and opened it up on the dining room table to its full length. In less than twenty minutes he returned the album to me, and I knew I had in my hands a masterpiece—a breakthrough! By a stroke of genius, he had managed to cooperate fully with the format, thus benefited from it, and yet brilliantly broken all its limitations. Because of his respect for the cadences, he was rewarded with a beautiful and lively rhythm in his work. But, showing even greater respect, he had gone further and challenged his format. As a result, his crane soars high into the sky, its body and wings disappearing above the leaves with only the dangling legs still in the album. And, as the great bird glides, it fills three double-leaves! There is limit-

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f

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*b*

*a*

less imagination and joy in these powerful forms. Here is one *che-tzu* that shall never be mounted as a scroll and stripped of its cadences.

I am a writer, and I know how writers react to the interpretations of their work by their readers and critics. I have interpreted Wu Yung-hsiang's own favorite long handscroll, and Ch'en Ch'i-k'uan's magnificent, dynamic landscape. It is time to let the readers of this article have their own adventures in this untitled album which we shall call "The Crane" (Pl. 109). However, it must be difficult for anyone not to identify himself with the birds, big and small, old and young. Especially when the Great Crane, points his beak at the end of his long and graceful neck at the sky, we contemplate flight with him. And when his velocity approaches the speed of sound, and as his great mass expands, we transcend our physical limitations. But in the end, we return.

The album, as a format, its cadences and all, will never be the same again.

THE CRANE: Sections d, e, f.

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*e*

*d*

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*j**i*

A SEVENTH PAINTING should be discussed here in this article. But such a plate there shall never be. Wu Yung-hsiang, my late sister, plagued by poor health all her life, died in 1970 at age 58 in Taipei. On her deathbed she told a painter friend and student: "I still have a painting to do. It's a new painting, a very, very new painting." What she said has become well known, and most interpret it to mean that this hard-working painter, inventive and resourceful all her life, had only her work on her mind when she died.<sup>22</sup> I think differently. My sister and I talked about the future of Chinese painting at great length whenever we could be together. She was an ingenious

<sup>22</sup>Ch'i, *Biography*, XXV/5 (150), p. 90.

THE CRANE: Sections k, l.

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*l**k*

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h

g

THE CRANE: Sections g, h, i, j.

and ambitious artist accustomed to excel, and never needed me to urge her to try out any new ideas. She had enough ideas of her own. She had taken a keen interest in the development of Western art when she was a student, but it was near the end of her life that she ventured out of her traditional Chinese environment for the first time and came to the United States with my family. On this trip she had her first exposure to the myriad expressions of modern Western art. Most of the time she was uncomfortable with them, but was attracted nevertheless. Yet she had to decide how she could best utilize her energy and time. We argued about this. I encouraged her to take a vacation from what she had been doing so successfully, and begin something new. If she had been her early self of her student days, she would have agreed to try. But the pressure of daily life and the demand for her paintings finally persuaded her to stay with her established ways. Just for a little longer, she would say; just for this one next exhibition. But her mind, I knew, was already on the new.<sup>23</sup>

So, this article will have no seventh painting. Yet I sincerely believe that so long as our artists continue to experiment and do their part as individuals, and so long as there is always "a new painting, a very, very new painting" on their minds, there will be a future for a painting tradition that is particularly Chinese.

<sup>23</sup>There is a lengthy quotation from her diary in the third installment of *Biography* (*ibid.*, p. 87). In it my sister told of her depression and the thoughts that converged on and burdened her mind. "I often feel lonely and sad, especially when lying awake after midnight. I think of my ambition as a youth, my energies and time invested in copying the ancient paintings, what a waste it now seems! The winds in the field of painting are swiftly changing directions! And, my

health is deteriorating! . . . My second younger brother [she is referring to me], with his air of superiority, mercilessly criticizes me. . . ." Of the six of us, three brothers and three sisters, we two were always the closest. I still find it difficult to speak of her in the past tense. I am sure some day when we will be together again, we will enjoy arguing the future of Chinese painting anew.