



Chuang Che © Vazieux Art Gallery

# China : the pioneers of abstraction

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Group exhibition  
January 21 to February 27, 2021

## ***China : the pioneers of abstraction***

At the end of the 1940s, in the troubled political context of the Chinese civil war and the subsequent seizure of power by Mao Zedong, over a million Chinese left the mainland to seek refuge in Taiwan. In the new world that opened to them, the artists gradually discovered the abstract art of the schools in New York and Paris.

Abstraction became a means for them to become part of the international modernist movement, while expressing their deep cultural roots. At the crossroads of the East and West, they created a unique art that led to the regeneration of twentieth-century Chinese painting.

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**Chuang Che  
Fong Chung-Ray  
Hsiao Chin  
Hu Chi-Chung  
Hsiao Ming-Hsien  
Tsai Hsia-Ling**

## Presentation

Sabine Vazieux

As a specialist in post-War abstract painting in Europe, my knowledge of Chinese painting during this period was limited to two major painters associated with the School of Paris: Zao Wou-Ki and Chu Teh-Chun.

The beauty of their works, in which the East was represented expressively suggested that there were other Chinese painters who had followed the same abstract approach.

During my research, I subsequently discovered a whole group of abstract artists who were unknown in Europe. The beauty and originality of their work inspired me to take my research yet further. What began as mere curiosity developed into a real passion that led me, over a five-year period, to encounter these artists who live around the world.

Enthusiastic about my interest in their work, they warmly welcomed me into their studios. Their confidence, talent, generosity, and contagious dynamism enabled me to devote myself entirely to the exhibition project that I had promised to bring to fruition.

I am delighted to have been able to bring together this collection of works discovered around the world and to pay tribute to these artists by giving them the place they so rightly deserve in the history of art.



Chuang Che  
*Untitled*

1981, Oil and acrylic on canvas,  
153 × 128 cm

# Chuang Che

1934 (Chine, Pékin | China, Peking)

Chuang Che comes from a family of scholars. His father was a well-known calligrapher and curator of the Palace Museum in Peking. In 1948, he played an active role in the transfer of the Palace Museum's works to Taipei. Chuang Che was fourteen when this important event took place. Throughout his career, traditional Chinese painting has remained an inexhaustible source of inspiration.

In 1954, Chuang Che entered the Department of Fine Arts at the Taiwan Provincial Normal University, where he met Chu Teh-Chun, who was a teacher there.

Having discovered Western art and keen to explore new forms, he joined the Wuyue Group (Fifth Moon Group) in 1958, in which he played a major role.

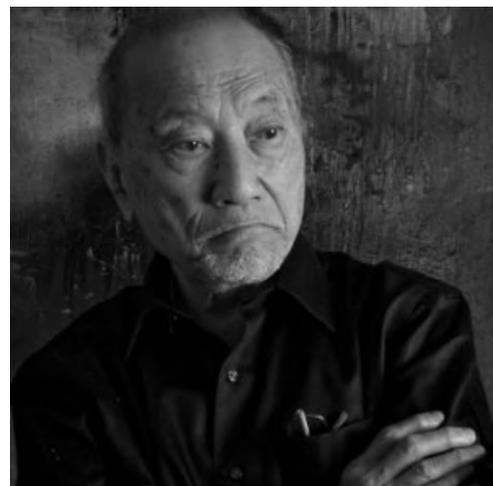
In 1966, he received an endowment from the Rockefeller Foundation that enabled him to make his first trip to the United States, providing him with the opportunity to study Western art in greater depth.

The following year, he was selected to take part in the Carnegie International Exhibition in Pittsburgh, along with other artists such as Zao Wou-Ki, Chu Teh-Chun, and Richard Lin. He visited Europe in 1968 and spent six months in Paris, where he met up with Zao Wou-Ki, with whom he had already engaged in correspondence on the subject of abstraction after Zao Wou-Ki's trip to Asia in 1957. He also met up with Chu Teh-Chun, and then went to Spain, where he also met Antoni Tàpies.

In 1973, he moved to the United States and settled in Michigan, fascinated by its grandiose landscapes and seasonal variations. The omnipresence and beauty of this natural environment led Chuang Che to explore existential matters, which complemented the aesthetic and philosophical characteristics of the painting of the great masters of the North Song Dynasty. These new landscapes marked an aesthetic turning point in his work. Henceforth, he adopted a freer approach, using much larger formats that were enriched with new colors.

Chuang Che invented the Third Way, a unique artistic concept that sought to merge Asian and Western aesthetics: 'Like two rivers flowing alongside each other, these two traditions of painting will eventually merge into the sea'.

In his abstract landscapes he combined bright colours, a turbulence of forms, a sense of transparency, and various paint effects. From this improbable chaos arose a perfect harmony, filled with joy and melancholy, from which emanates a sense of boundless freedom.



## Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2020 "Chuang Che Anniversary Solo Exhibition: As Lofty as a Mountain 1960-2019", Asia Art Center, Taipei
- 2017 (Group) "From China to Taiwan: Pioneers of Abstraction (1955-1985)", Museum of Ixelles, Ixelles, Belgium
- 2015 "Effusive Vitality: CHUANG CHE Retrospective Exhibition", Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei
- 2012 "Holistic View · Microscopic Vision", Asia Art Center, Taipei
- 2010 Solo exhibition, David Findley Jr. Gallery, New York
- 2008 "Green Rock and Splendid Cloud", Asia Art Center, Taipei
- 2007 "Deep Ridge VS Remote Way", National Art Museum of China, Beijing
- 2006 Chuang Che Solo exhibition, Asia Art Center, Taipei
- 2005 "Taiwan Modern Art: 2005 Record of Kuandu Heroes", Kuandu Museum of Fine Art, Taipei  
National University of the Arts, Taipei  
"Primal Form - An Exhibition of Chuang Che's Painting", National Museum of History, Taipei
- 2002 "International Exhibition of Abstract Art of Overseas Chinese", Art Commune, Hong Kong  
Guangdong Art Museum, Guangdong  
He Xian Chine Art Museum, China  
Special Invitation for Taiwanese Artist at Fall Paris Salon  
Alice King Gallery, Hong Kong
- 2001 Han Art Gallery, Quebec  
Galerie Madelaine Lacerte, Quebec
- 2000 456 Gallery, New York
- 1998 Cork Gallery, Lincoln Center, New York
- 1996 Horwitch-Newman Gallery, Scottsdale
- 1994 Haeneh-Kent Gallery, New York
- 1993 Alice King Gallery, Hong Kong
- 1990 Yung Han Gallery, Taipei  
Lung Men Gallery, Taipei  
Robert Kidds Gallery, Detroit, Michigan  
Davidson Gallery, Seattle, Washington

## Public Collections

- Centre Pompidou, France  
Museum Cernuschi, France  
National Museum of History, Taipei  
Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei  
Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio  
The Detroit Art Museum, Detroit  
Hong Kong Art Museum, Hong Kong  
Art Museum, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan  
Taiwan Provincial Science Museum, Taichung  
Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai  
Guangdong Art Museum, Guangdong  
Art Museum of China Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing



Fong Chung-Ray

*Untitled*

2017, Oil on canvas,  
107 x 181 cm

# Fong Chung-Ray

1933 (Chine | China, Nanyang)

At the age of fourteen, Fong Chung-Ray was obliged to leave his family and go into exile, due to the Chinese Civil War. During this period, he enlisted as a lieutenant in the navy. As the army moved to different locations and various political events occurred, he settled in Taiwan in 1949.

His passion for art and inquiring mind led him to take an interest in Western abstract art, which he discovered through reading journals and books, which were available in the American Library in Taipei.

In 1957, he founded the Four Seas Artists Association with his friend, Hu Chi-Chong. During this period, he experimented with abstraction and used new Western techniques, such as painting with oils on canvas. In 1961, he became a member of the Wuyue Group (Fifth Moon Group) and participated in many exhibitions. In 1963, on the advice of Liu Guosong, a painter and the Group's theorist, he abandoned painting with oils on canvas and returned to the traditional Chinese technique of ink painting.

Fong Chung-Ray then invented a brush made from palm tree fibers, which added a highly personal touch and a rougher quality to his sweeps of color.

The abstract ink works from this period, with their blend of subtle coloring, dynamic strokes, wet sweeps of color, and poetry, were rooted directly in the tradition of the Chinese master landscape painters.

In 1971, he was awarded a Rockefeller Foundation grant that enabled him to travel to Europe and the United States. When he settled in San Francisco, in 1975, he began to work with acrylic paints.

Initially, his work focused on abstract landscapes, but he gradually moved away from this movement when he turned to Buddhist spirituality. This fresh source of inspiration resulted in a more abstract approach, related to temporality, which he studied in the sacred texts.

The effects of time on materials and an exploration of the technique of collages and imprints have become fundamental aspects of his artistic approach. By going beyond the formal representation of nature, Fong Chung-Ray has revived the spiritual essence that emanates from the paintings by the great old masters and invites the viewer to contemplate.



## Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2019 "Wakes of Time", Galerie Sabine Vazieux, Paris, France  
 2017 (Group) "From China to Taiwan: Pioneers of Abstraction (1955-1985)", Museum of Ixelles, Ixelles Belgium  
 2018 "Enlightenment: 1998-2018", Galerie du Monde, Hong Kong  
 2017 "The Eternal Abstract: Fong Chung-Ray", Asia Art Center, Taipei, Taiwan  
 2015 "Fong Chung-Ray - A Retrospective", Galerie du Monde, Hong Kong  
 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", Modern Art Gallery, Taichung, Taiwan  
 2014 "Between Modern and Contemporary", Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco, San Francisco, USA  
 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", Modern Art Gallery, Taichung, Taiwan  
 2013 "Fong Chung-Ray: A Retrospective", Silicon Valley Asian Art Center, Santa Clara, USA  
 2011 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", Modern Art Gallery, Taichung, Taiwan  
 2008 "Fong Chung-Ray Recent Paintings 1997-2008", Modern Art Gallery, Taichung, Taiwan  
 2004 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", Modern Art Gallery, Taichung, Taiwan  
 1992 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", The Allrich Gallery, San Francisco, USA  
 1990 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", Carmel Gallery of Modern Art, Carmel, USA  
 1987 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", Landell Galleries, Carmel, USA  
 1986 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", M.M. Shinno Gallery, Los Angeles, USA  
 1984 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", M.M. Shinno Gallery, Los Angeles, USA  
 1983 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", Gallery New World, Carmel, USA  
 1982 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", Triangle Gallery, San Francisco, USA  
 1979 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", M.M. Shinno Gallery, Los Angeles, USA  
 1978 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", Triangle Gallery, San Francisco, USA  
 1975 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", Bank of America World Headquarters Gallery, San Francisco, USA  
 1974 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", National Museum of History, Taipei, Taiwan  
 1973 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", Galerie Marianne Schreiber, Munich, Germany  
 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", Arizona Commission on the Arts, Arizona, USA  
 1972 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", Downtown Gallery, Hawaii, USA  
 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", Lee Nordness Gallery, New York, USA  
 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", San Diego Art Museum, San Diego, USA  
 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", American Culture Center, Hong Kong  
 1968 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", Ju Bao Pen Gallery, Taipei, Taiwan  
 1967 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", Hai-Tien Art Gallery, Taipei, Taiwan  
 1965 "Fong Chung-Ray Solo Exhibition", The National Taiwan Art Museum, Taipei, Taiwan

## Public Collections

Centre Pompidou, France  
 Museum Cernuschi, France  
 Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), USA  
 Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University, Boston, USA  
 Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, UK  
 Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, United States  
 Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland, USA  
 Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio, United States  
 de Young Museum, San Francisco, United States  
 Denver Art Museum, Colorado, USA  
 Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China  
 Hawaii Cultural Foundation, Hawaii, USA  
 Kaohsiung Art Museum, Kaohsiung, Taiwan  
 M+, Hong Kong



Hsiao Chin

*Untitled*

ca.1980, Ink on paper,  
60 x 90 cm

# Hsiao Chin

1935 (Chine | China, Shanghai)

Hsiao Chin grew up in an artistic environment. His father, a musician, was considered a pioneer in the field of contemporary Chinese music. He transmitted his passion for music to his son and this played a fundamental role in his approach to abstraction.

In 1949, he left China with his uncle and moved to Taiwan, where he stayed for a short period.

In 1952, Hsiao Chin joined Lee Chun-Shan's famous studio on Antung Street in Taipei, where he was trained by the master for several years. It was at that point that he discovered Western painting and studied abstraction.

In 1956, he actively participated in founding the Ton Fan Group and that year he was awarded a grant that enabled him to study art in Spain.

Despite the fact that he was living in Europe, Hsiao Chin was a very active member of the Group. At a time when information about Western contemporary art was still very limited in Taiwan, he regularly sent articles that were published in the Taipei United Daily News. He also regularly wrote to the artists and organised and held collective Ton Fan exhibitions in Europe and the United States, particularly in New York, Stuttgart, and Turin.

In 1959, he settled in Milan, where he founded the Punto Group 17 and became friends with Lucio Fontana. In 1963, in Taipei, he held an unprecedented exhibition of the work of Western artists, such as Antoni Tàpies, Lucio Fontana, and Piero Manzoni, which attracted the attention of the Taiwanese artistic community.

He lived in the United States between 1967 and 1972. He taught painting in various prestigious schools and met artists such as Mark Rothko and William De Kooning. In 1973, Hsiao Chin returned to live in Milan.

Eastern philosophy, Tibetan Buddhist art, calligraphy, and abstraction are endless sources of inspiration in his work. Hsiao Chin has managed to bring together these diverse influences and establish a unique oeuvre in which colour, light, energy, and the tension created by the technique coexist in perfect harmony.



## Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2017 (Group)From China to Taiwan: Pioneers of Abstraction (1955–1985)", Museum of Ixelles, Ixelles, Belgium  
 2015 National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung, Taiwan  
 2010 Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Kaohsiung, Taiwan  
 2006 National Art Museum of China, Beijing, China  
 2005 Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangdong, China  
 Museo Civico, Villa Colloredo Mels, Recanati, Italy  
 Palazzo Acquaviva, Scuderie ducali, Atri, Italy  
 Zhongshan Museum of Art, Zhongshan, China  
 2004 Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai, China  
 2003 Towards the Spiritual World, Series anthological exhibitions.  
 2002 Oberdan Space, Milan, Italy  
 Mudima Foundation, Milan, Italy  
 1998 Institut Mathildenhöhe (retrospective 1958-1998), Darmstadt, Germany  
 1995 Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, Taiwan  
 1994 Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, China  
 China Academy of Fine Arts, Hangzhou, China  
 1992 Taiwan Museum of Art (retrospective 1955-92), Taichung, Taiwan  
 1990 Ente Regionale Studio Universitario, Macerata, Italy  
 1988 Studio Marconi (antologica 1959-88), Milan, Italy  
 1986 Nikolaj, Comune di Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark  
 1985 Università di Messina and Libreria Hobelix, Messina, Italy  
 The Hong Kong Institute for Promotion of Chinese Culture, Hong Kong  
 Galerie Punto, Valencia, Spain  
 Museum Waterland, Pumerend, Netherlands  
 Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, Taiwan  
 1979 Pinacoteca Comunale, Macerata, Italy  
 1978 National Museum of History and Lung  
 Men Art Gallery, Taipei, Taiwan  
 Galeria Kandinsky, Madrid, Italy  
 1968 Lisson Gallery, London, UK  
 Pavilions in the Parks, London, UK  
 Studio Exhibition, Boothby,  
 Brampton, Cumbria, UK  
 1967 Lisson Gallery, London, UK  
 Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park, London, UK  
 1966 (Group) Pia Pizzo, Signals Gallery, London, UK  
 1965 All'Insegna del Pesce d'Oro, Milan, Italy  
 (Group) Signals Gallery, London, UK

## Public Collections

Museum of Modern Art, The Metropolitan  
 Museum & The Public Library, New York, U.S.A.  
 Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome, Italy  
 National Art Museum of China, Beijing, China  
 Staatsgalerie – Stuttgart, Germany  
 Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia  
 Städtisches Museum, Leverkusen, Germany  
 Detroit Art Institute, Detroit, U.S.A.  
 Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada  
 Städtisches Museum, Bochum, Germany  
 Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld, Germany  
 Museo de Arte Moderno, Barcelona, Spain  
 Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne, Switzerland  
 Centro Storico d'Arte Visiva dell'Università di Parma, Italy  
 Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, Taiwan  
 National Museum of History, Taipei, Taiwan  
 Galleria Civica di Cagliari, Italy  
 Museo Civico d'Arte Moderna, Modena, Italy  
 Palazzo dei Diamanti, Ferrara, Italy  
 Galleria Civica e Università di Macerata, Italy  
 Randers City Museum, Randers, Denmark  
 Fogg Museum of Art, Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A.  
 Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong  
 National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, UK  
 Museum of Modern Art, Skopje, Macedonia  
 Galleria Civica, Marsala, Italy  
 Galleria Civica, Gibellina, Italy  
 Rose Art Museum, Waltham, Mass., U.S.A.



Hu Chi-Chung

*Painting 6701*

1967, Oil and sand on canvas,  
89 x 116 cm

# Hu Chi-Chung

1928 (Chine | China, Zhejiang) – 2012 (États-Unis | United States, Los Angeles)

Hu Chi-Chung came from a humble family that lived in a small mountain village, where he divided his time between fishing and hunting. He became interested in art at an early age; he drew in the sand, as he had no paper. He left his village and family when he was only thirteen years old.

In 1948, during the war, he decided to go to Shanghai and enlist in the navy. Two years later, when he was still in the army, Hu Chi-Chung left mainland China and settled in Taiwan. During this period, he began to paint regularly.

In 1954, a work-related trip to the United States had a decisive effect on his art. During the trip, he visited the de Young Museum in San Francisco and discovered the Impressionists and the abstract work of Willem de Kooning. The discovery of these genres marked a turning point in his pictorial approach and led him towards abstraction.

In 1957, he founded the Four Seas Artists Association with his friend, Fong Chung-Ray, and then joined the Wuyue Group (Fifth Moon Group) in 1961. He experimented with various techniques, which included, in particular, the addition of sand to his oil paints.

In 1967, he was selected to take part in the Carnegie International Exhibition 11 in Pittsburgh, along with other artists such as Zao Wou-Ki, Chuang Che, Chu Teh-Chun, and Richard Lin.

He emigrated to the United States with his family in 1971 and settled in California, in the famous Carmel Village.

His art, which borders on abstraction and combines bright colours, solar disks, and terrestrial forms, depicts dreamlike landscapes suffused with joy and vitality.



## Selected Solo Exhibitions

2017 "Hu Chi-Chung Solo Exhibition", Galerie du Monde, Hong Kong

(Group) "From China to Taiwan: Pioneers of Abstraction (1955-1985)", Museum of Ixelles, Ixelles, Belgium

Art Basel Hong Kong, Presented by Galerie du Monde, Hong Kong

1991 "Hu Chi-Chung Solo Exhibition", Contemporary Gallery, Taipei, Taiwan

1989 "Hu Chi-Chung Solo Exhibition", Ming Ren Art Gallery, Kaohsiung, Taiwan

1986 "Hu Chi-Chung Solo Exhibition", National Museum of History, Taipei, Taiwan

1978-80 "Hu Chi-Chung Solo Exhibition", The Naples Art Gallery, Naples, Florida, USA

1975 "Hu Chi-Chung Solo Exhibition", Eric Galleries, Inc., New York, USA

1974 "Hu Chi-Chung Solo Exhibition", Zantman Art Galleries, Palm Desert, California, USA

1973 "Hu Chi-Chung Solo Exhibition", The Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego, San Diego, California, USA

1972-96 "Hu Chi-Chung Solo Exhibition", Zantman Art Galleries, Carmel, California, USA

1971 "Hu Chi-Chung Solo Exhibition", Laky Gallery, Carmel, California, USA

1969 "Hu Chi-Chung Solo Exhibition", Solo Exhibition, Yu Fong Gallery, San Francisco, California, USA

1967 "Hu Chi-Chung Solo Exhibition", S.H Mori Gallery, Chicago, Illinois, USA

"Hu Chi-Chung Solo Exhibition", The Provincial Museum, Taipei, Taiwan

1964 "Hu Chi-Chung Solo Exhibition", the Club Room of the Grand Hotel, Taipei, Taiwan

1958 "Hu Chi-Chung Solo Exhibition", Press Building, Kaohsiung, Taiwan

1956 "Hu Chi-Chung Solo Exhibition", Kaohsiung, Taiwan

## Public Collections

National Museum of History, Taipei, Taiwan

M+ Collection, Hong Kong



Hsiao Ming-Hsien

*Totem A*

1963, Encre sur papier,  
137 x 35 cm

# Hsiao Ming-Hsien

1936 (Taiwan, Nantou)

Hsiao Ming-Hsien grew up in the countryside and drew his first sketches in appreciation of the beauty of nature.

In 1952, he enrolled in the Department of Fine Arts in the National Taipei University of Education 15, where he met Hsiao Chin, who encouraged him to join Lee Chun-Shan's studio. During his time in the studio, his discovery of abstraction introduced him to a different approach to painting and opened up other avenues.

In 1955, he became the youngest of the eight founding members of the Ton Fan Group.

His work received a prize at the São Paulo Bienal in 1957. This distinction was both an encouragement for him and for contemporary Taiwanese art, which had gained international recognition. During this period, he discovered the work of Paul Klee, in which he found similarities with ancient Chinese oracular characters that he is particularly fascinated by.

In 1964, his interest in French painting led him to settle in Paris, where he lived for five years. Curious to learn more and integrate into Parisian artistic circles, he enrolled at the École des Beaux-Arts.

In 1969, he flew to New York, where he took part in several exhibitions. In 1973, he settled for good in New Jersey, where he worked as a painter in a famous porcelain studio.

His expressive and spontaneous style is closely related to his love of classical music, which he always listens as he works, creating in his painting a veritable sense of rhythm that echoes the music.



## Selected Group / (Solo) Exhibitions

- 2017 From China to Taiwan: Pioneers of Abstraction (1955–1985), Museum of Ixelles, Ixelles, Belgium
- 2012 Da Xiang Art Space, Taichung, Taiwan  
National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan
- 2007 National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan
- 2005 National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan
- 1999 Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai, China  
National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan
- 1997 Modern Art Center, Taichung, Taipei, Kinmen, Taiwan
- 1996 G. Zen 50 Art Gallery, Kaohsiung, Taiwan
- 1971 (Solo) Rexamere Gallery, Stamford, New York, U.S.A.  
(Solo) Empire National Bank Offices, Orange County, New York, U.S.A.  
Annual Art Festival, Sands Point Long Island, New York, U.S.A.  
The 36th Annual Exhibition, Cooperstown, New York, U.S.A.
- 1963 Museum Leverkusen, Leverkusen, Germany
- 1962 Contemporary Chinese Artists Exhibition, Milan, Italy
- 1957-1963 Ton Fan Exhibition, New York, Italy, Germany, Austria and Spain
- 1960-1961 International Exhibition of Malerei Wolframs, Eschenbach, Germany
- 1960 (Solo) Green Gallery, Middletown, New York, U.S.A.  
(Solo) Galleria Numero, Florence, Italy  
The 1st International Modern Arts Salon, Hong Kong, China
- 1959 The 5th Biennial de São Paulo, Sao Paulo, Brazil  
The 1st Biennial of Young Artists, Paris, France
- 1958 The 1st Exhibition of Asia's Young Artists, Tokyo, Japan
- 1957 The 4th Biennial de São Paulo, Sao Paulo, Brazil
- 1957-1964 The 1st to 8th 'Ton Fan' Exhibitions, Taipei, Taiwan

## Public Collections

- Taipei Museum of Fine Arts Taiwan
- National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung, Taiwan
- Museum of Modern Art in Barcelona, Spain
- Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje, Slovenia
- Museum of History in Taipei, Taiwan



Tsai Hsia-Ling

*Senza titolo*

1958, Huile sur toile  
60 x 60 cm

# Tsai Hsia-Ling

1935 (Chine | China, Suzhou)

Tsai Hsia-Ling was born to a family of learned doctors. As a child he developed a passion for the fine arts and calligraphy.

In 1949, he left China and settled in Taiwan, where he trained in the fine arts and mathematics at the National Taipei Normal University.

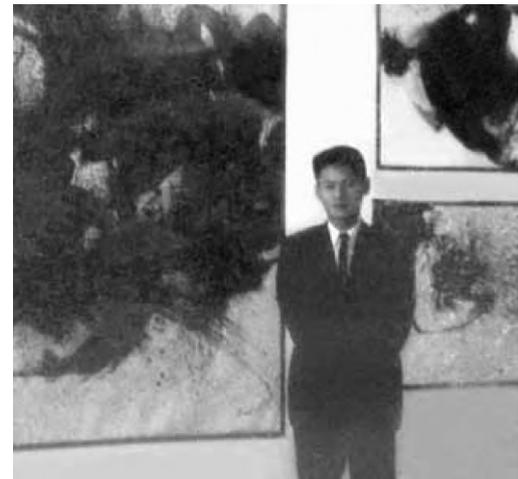
In the 1950s, he frequented the intellectual and artistic elite, and was inspired by the great masters, choosing as his mentors Zao Wou-Ki, Chu Teh-Chun, and Lee Chun-Shan. He was part of a circle of artists that explored painting and modernism and here he met Hsiao Chin, Ho Kan, and Li Yuan-Chia. He was invited by his comrades to be part of the Ton Fan avant-garde movement.

Initially, Tsai Hsia-Ling's oeuvre was inspired by his profound attachment to Chinese culture — philosophy, calligraphy, and ink — and the influence of the Western contemporary art movement. His use of the ink technique naturally led him to adopt the movements involved in action painting, in which he freely allowed his body to interact with the canvas.

Between 1958 and 1960, he took part in exhibitions held by the Ton Fan Group in Taipei and abroad. As of 1959, Tsai Hsia-Ling held solo exhibitions, particularly in Florence. His travels took him to Germany in 1961, where he lived until 1968, when he moved to France.

It was at this time that, inspired by the philosophy of Yi King, he became involved in multidisciplinary studies: painting, sculpture, architecture, philosophy, mathematics, music, dance, the natural sciences, and so on.

His creative process brings together his roots, his mathematical knowledge, and various artistic disciplines, and like the world he sees his creative work as a process of perpetual development. He considers this form of art as the ideal way to reflect the world.



## Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2017 From China to Taiwan: Pioneers of Abstraction (1955–1985), Museum of Ixelles, Ixelles, Belgium
- 1972 Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, U.S.A.
- 1971 Salon Grands et jeunes d'aujourd'hui, Paris, France
- 1970 Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France
- 1969 Galleria Banco, Bolzano, Italy  
Galleria Numero, Florence, Rome, Prato, Italy
- 1965 Galleria Grattacielo, Lugano, Switzerland
- 1964 Galerie Senatore, Stuttgart, Germany  
Museum of Art Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, U.S.A.
- 1963 New Art Gallery, La Jolla, San Diego  
Galleria Numero, Florence, Italy  
Museum Leverkusen, Leverkusen, Germany
- 1962 Museum Leverkusen, University Missina
- 1961 Galleria Grattacielo, Lugano, Switzerland  
Galerie Nächst St. Stephan, Vienna, Austria  
Palazzo Pretorio Prato, Italy  
Museum of Art Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, U.S.A
- 1960 News Daily Press News Building, Taipei, Taiwan  
1st Hong Kong International Salon of Paintings, St John's Cathedral, Hong Kong  
(Solo) Galleria Numero, Florence, Italy
- 1959 National Taiwan Art Hall, Taipei, Taiwan  
(Solo) Galleria Numero, Florence, Italy
- 1958 News Daily Press News Building, Taipei, Taiwan

## THE AESTHETIC ENCOUNTER AND FUSION BETWEEN THE EAST AND WEST

Sabine Vazieux

The exhibition 'De la Chine à Taïwan : Les pionniers de l'abstraction' ('From China to Taiwan: the pioneers of abstract painting') retraces for the first time the origins and evolution of twentieth-century Chinese abstract painting, which began in the 1950s.

Aside from the works, it also explores the fabulous and epic careers of these Chinese artists, who were obliged to leave their homeland and seek refuge in Taiwan.

In China, during the eight years of the Japanese invasion (1937–1945), the populations sought refuge in the country to escape from the hardships of war. These years of oppression and suffering were followed by the defeat of the Kuomintang and the rise to power of Mao Zedong in 1949. Over a million Chinese left the mainland to live in Taiwan, to where Chiang Kai-shek's government-in-exile had moved.

The young artists were displaced and followed the army or their parents to Taiwan. Mostly from comfortable families, they were separated from their families and friends on the mainland and often left their property behind. This younger generation, which was left in turmoil and never knew peace, was not allowed to return home and had no other solution but to take their fate into their own hands.

In 1950, the United States, fearing a conflict with mainland China, protected the island and introduced Western culture. The artists soon discovered Impressionism and the abstract art of the New York school in the magazines and books in the American Library in Taipei.

Chiang Kai-Shek's political regime was committed to perpetuating Chinese traditions, but the young painters rejected this conservatism and embraced Western culture. In this context of change, new schools of art sprang up.

The teachers had been through the same trials and experienced the same upheavals. Chu Teh-Chun lectured on art at Taiwan Provincial Normal University (between 1951 and 1955) and Lee Chun-Shan taught students in his studio on Antung Street in Taipei (from 1950 to 1955).

Although they were quite different, both teachers shared a knowledge and great interest in Western art. They encouraged their young students to develop their own style and their teaching methods broke away from an ancestral Chinese tradition that advocated scrupulously copying the master's works, leaving little room for individual creativity.

In 1956 and 1957, the two most important avant-garde Taiwanese movements were formed: the 'Ton Fan Group', founded by eight of Lee Chun-Shan's pupils and the 'Wuyue Group', also known as the 'Fifth Moon Group', some of whose members were followers of Chu Teh-Chun.

Given the government's opposition to avant-garde art, the two groups had to keep a low profile and sometimes were even obliged to hold exhibitions outside the country.

In the 1960s, the Rockefeller Foundation awarded travel grants to artists who wished to familiarise themselves with the West. There was increasing interchange and some of the artists decided to move to Europe or the United States. The journey to Europe took one month and three boats were required to travel from Hong Kong to Marseille. Many artists subsequently embarked on this long voyage.

On mainland China painting was restricted to social realism, while in Taiwan, for the first time, Chinese artists were fascinated by the contemporary Western avant-garde and sought to be a part of the international contemporary movement.

This approach was quite unprecedented. Until that point, the pre-war Chinese painters who had travelled to Paris to study art had sought their inspiration in nineteenth-century European realist painting. Although they were divided into two distinct groups, the artists shared the same fascination for Abstract Expressionism, which bore similarities with their own culture.

Post-war Western abstract art — which was inspired by nature and sought spontaneity in the brushstrokes and equilibrium between the painted and empty spaces — included every element present in Chinese painting. The artists soon assimilated this abstraction, which became the ideal approach for expressing their deep roots.

Whether they adopted a minimalist approach or drew their inspiration from nature, the Taoist and Buddhist philosophies lay at the heart of their work. Minimalist art combined with Chan Buddhism or Taoism, which advocated simplicity through the use of minimal colours and forms.

Nature interpreted through the prism of abstraction echoed the tradition of the Northern Song landscape painters, according to which the formal appearance of things must disappear and give way to the essence and spiritual breath.

Abstract Expressionism, which requires spontaneous gestures and expressive lines, was combined with cursive calligraphy and the instant illumination sought by Chan Buddhism. The artists soon adopted this language, with which they were familiar, and entirely refreshed it.

Vazieux | Art Gallery Paris  
5 bis rue du Louvre 75001 Paris  
+33 (0)1 48 00 91 00/ +33 (0)6 60 05 14 57  
Tuesday to Saturday from 11am to 6pm  
contact@vazieux.com  
www.vazieux.com