



contemporary chinese ink

Pang Heng Khan & Liew Siow Ching



Pang Heng Khan



The art of Chinese calligraphy unites the aesthetics of written language and visual form. Its long and continuous tradition runs through the heart of Chinese culture. Pang Heng Khan, a specialist of this art form, uses his experience in the medium to re-evaluate the calligraphic tradition, finding here an expression of Chinese cultural identity in its changing modern context. What is unified and refined is treated to contradiction and questioning. In his paintings, the clear masterful stroke of the calligrapher is blurred - the artist expresses his sense of the confusion of being overseas Chinese, and how this relates to Chinese cultural tradition. He places elements like the dragon emblem and other icons flat against his calligraphic compositions, the comfort of the familiar jostling with the welling expressiveness of black ink. The customary 'dui lien' which adorn the doorways of many Chinese houses are used as a symbolic structural element, guarding the entranceway to the household, to meaning and identity. In his recent work, he transcribes the work of famous Chinese poets through the centuries, juxtaposing the different calligraphic styles belonging to each poet and period of the verses used. He takes his place in a tradition of copying the masters' classics, but by condensing them into single compositions, invites us to explore the meaning of the tradition itself. Using as keys the very elements that constitute tradition and the preserved values that go with it, he unlocks the possibilities of traditional form to express a modern state of mind, a contemporary fluidity of culture.

Untitled

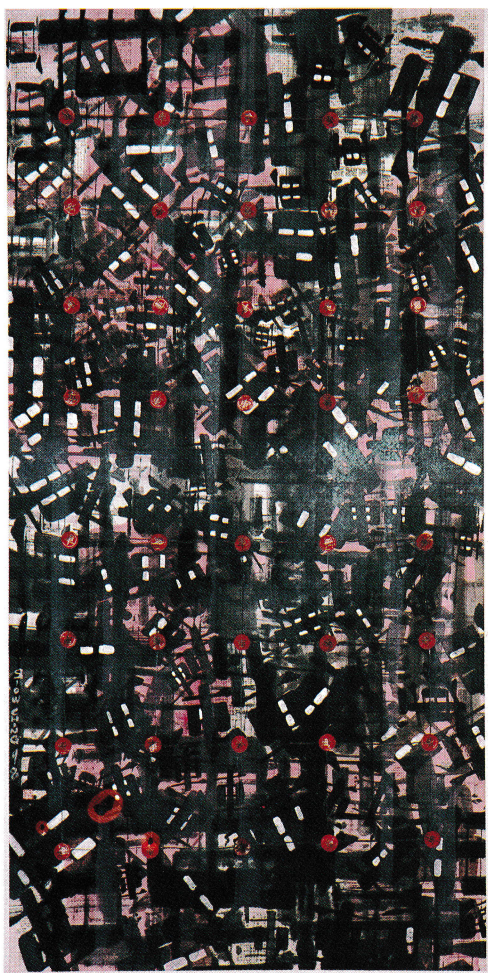
1996

Mixed media on rice paper

180cm x 48cm

Liew Siow Ching

Moving away from the familiar territories of the poetry of the natural and the lessons of the past, Liew Siow Ching uses the Chinese ink and brush medium to explore their antithesis – the forms, textures and meanings of contemporary urban living. She focuses on two central elements – high-rise apartments and cars in traffic. In the 'Flourish City' series, in a wonderful play on the origins and use of calligraphy, she turns the Chinese character for 'car' ('che') into its real pictorial expression. The uniform character, varying only in size, multiplies to fill her compositions, heading in myriad directions, effectively bringing across the density and pace of a city's movements. The overlaying / underlying patterns of this congested cityscape are commented on in the subtle imprint of grid structures deriving from the Chinese chess-board, or lit tenement windows. In her more recent series of work, inspired by high-rise apartment living, she takes the birdcage as a poetic metaphor for the upper-storey flat, with its grilled doors and windows, one stacked upon the other pell-mell, creating a fragile community of unseen inhabitants, crowded, Babel-like, brought to life by the accidental colours of curtains, clothes-lines, potted plants. Working within the parameters of rhythmic and spatial harmony traditionally exacted by Chinese ink and brush, while applying a witty yet direct sense of metaphor in her interpretation of forms, Liew Siow Ching achieves the rare feat of capturing the dynamics of modern urbanity in a traditional medium, creating a unique aesthetic out of the contorting effects of our brave new life.



Flourish City VI

1998

Mixed media on rice paper

183cm x 91.5cm

Pang Heng Khan (born 1969 Malacca)

Education

1992 Diploma in Fine Art, Malaysian Institute of Art, Kuala Lumpur (majoring in ink painting)

Awards

1994-96 Honorable Mention, The Philip Morris Art Awards, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

1992, 1994 Talent Prize Award, Maple Leaf Award, International Oriental Wash and Ink Art Exhibition, (Canada Institute Of Chinese Art)

1989 National Talent Prize, 'New Artist Award' (Top Art Gallery)

Exhibitions

1988 Singapore / Korea Calligraphy Exchange Exhibition, Singapore

1989 Malaysia / Korea Calligraphy Exchange Exhibition, Malaysia

1992 Seoul 92, International Modern Calligraphy Exhibition, Korea

1994 Contemporary Ink Painting, MIA Kuala Lumpur

Bakat Muda Sezaman, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

7 Space, Gallery MIA, Kuala Lumpur

The City Contemporary Society and The Urban Environment Exhibition, Architecture Club, Kuala Lumpur

1995 The Young Ones, Nanyang Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

1996 Contemporary Ink Painting Research Society, 2nd Art Exhibition, Gallery MIA, Kuala Lumpur

1997 4th International Chinese Calligraphy Exchange & Exhibition, The Calligraphy Society of

Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, China, Taipei and Chiyodaku Hitotsubashi

Malaysian Drawings, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

Other

1992-96 Lecturer, Malaysian Institute of Art, Kuala Lumpur

Liew Siow Ching (born 1971 Johor Bahru)

Education

1997 Diploma in Fine Art, Malaysian Institute of Art, Kuala Lumpur (majoring in ink painting)

Awards

1997 Honorable Mention, The Philip Morris Art Awards, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

1999 Major Award, Malaysian Young Contemporary Ink Painting, Kuala Lumpur

Exhibitions

1997 Diploma Show, MIA Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

1997 Bakat Muda Sezaman, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

1999 Malaysian Contemporary Art Exhibition, Beijing Museum of Art, China



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