

谷敏昭 Christopher Ku

迴 盪 · 繪 畫

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序言

於悠悠藝術史長河中，繪畫從肖維岩洞壁畫發展至今，一直從未缺席，隨著各地社會文化和歷史沿革，當藝術與其他知識、學術領域作出互動，繪畫所承載的意義也有所不同。近代藝術的生產、傳播、消費藝術的條件無不發生了極端的變化，在藝術浪潮中，跨界和多媒體藝術的出現滿足了日新月異的社會文化需求，面對銳意顛覆制度的概念藝術進入藝術體制，繪畫的角色、身份亦因而經歷權力上的轉換，這種擁有悠久歷史的媒介如何從傳統文化中游離出來，回應時代變遷，演變出當代藝術語言？畫的歷史演進邏輯及其「現代性」的淵源流變的確需要進行深入的探討，谷敏昭畫作中跨地域、跨文化的特性，正好給我們一個契機，去思考當代繪畫的去向。

谷敏昭1957年生於香港，中學時期於台灣學習繪畫，19歲遠赴英國留學。為了繼續專注藝術創作，他就讀於蘇格蘭的基爾藝術學院，並於1990年於倫敦皇家藝術學院獲得碩士學位。其時，繪畫因時局變化而經歷性質和角色上的改變，藝術家在獨特的文化和歷史背景中創作，由此，觀看谷氏的作品，觀者看見的，是一位藝術家如何以繪畫媒介回應喧囂動盪的社會變化，用藝術去創造浩瀚的境界和見度。

學院時期的具像畫

於蘇格蘭基爾藝術學院的四年對谷敏昭不無影響，接受英國純藝術學院的系統性訓練，為藝術家奠下穩健的素描和油畫基礎。師承學院老師西爾維亞·威沙特、亞歷山德拉·弗雷澤、喬伊斯·克萊恩、德里克·阿什比等，畫家出身的他們，傳承予谷敏昭的不僅是藝術家應有的風骨，還有嚴謹的治學態度。這些畫家一生堅持在厚實的繪畫根底上創作，以致日後觀者看到谷氏畫作上的萬千變化，都啟蒙自蘇格蘭藝術學

院扎實的繪畫基礎訓練。然而年輕的藝術家並不自限於此，在接受西歐藝術教育的同時，對於鴨巴甸安逸舒適的氛圍，他隱隱察覺到一絲格格不入的異樣；身處異鄉，對於外來文化，出於一種幾乎與生俱來的感知，藝術家終究抱持一種「不輕信」的懷疑態度，身為中國人，面對東西種族文化衝突，他無法理所當然地享受蘇格蘭北部的優美風光。把這種「異樣」帶進創作，作為「異鄉人」的畫家開始以局外者的視角觀察周遭世界。谷氏具像時期的作品多以嘲諷式的意象去揭示社會對人們的奴役，以畫作對權力所帶來的惡果作出無聲抗議。畫作中荒誕的題材，沉鬱的色調和悲劇氛圍帶有令人不安的警覺，所透露的憂患意識彷彿一直提示觀者應與文明和現實保持距離，掙脫權力對人的束縛。

自然地，谷敏昭在學時期的創作風格與當時相對保守的英國繪畫形成強烈對比，這的確震撼了當時的英國藝術學院，亦令藝術家在學術圈子屢獲殊榮，聲名漸彰。畫作多變的意象和隱喻造成焦慮情緒和壓迫感，似在逼迫觀者反思現代文明生活和資本主義對人性和自然的衝突，這種不安的意識和警醒的狀態在谷氏的早期畫作中一直如影隨形。谷氏的早期畫作反映畫家早於在學時期已能嫺熟運用顏色和形象，把自己的批判思維實踐到畫布上，其獨到的美學觸覺和對駕馭大型作品的的能力，均為日後藝術家抽象畫的轉向做了鋪墊。

英國青年藝術家以外——平行於後現代浪潮的藝術取態

谷敏昭1988年獲得皇家藝術學院的無條件取錄，離開蘇格蘭到倫敦攻讀碩士課程。當時，除了英納斯、安尼施·卡普爾和克里斯·奧菲利外，同期的英國青年藝術家，其中大部分畢業於上世紀八九十年代的倫敦大學金匠學院和皇家藝術學院，包括翠

西·艾敏、查普曼兄弟等，都不約而同曾為谷氏的同學或朋友，彼此在學術上結下不解之緣。

英國青年藝術家因「震撼藝術」而聞名，帶著後現代主義的旗幟，藝術家破格、叛逆的作品於九十年代起，在英國以至全球引起熱潮。是故，後現代思潮催生的概念藝術於當時以一種凱旋姿態主導當代藝術生態。相較新興的概念藝術和多媒體藝術，背負著傳統包袱的繪畫媒介則被批評變得僵化而失去活力，宣稱「繪畫已死」的激進聲音更主張陳舊保守的創作媒介理應被淘汰和革新。其時，英國青年藝術家儼如前衛藝術和時尚的代名詞，通過年輕藝術家的崛起，當代藝術也不再是只存在於藝術家工作室、畫廊和博物館中的高雅文化，而是成為大眾傳媒和公眾廣泛談論的話題，概念藝術和議題藝術以席捲一切的陣勢，成為群眾對當代藝術的普遍理解，而倫敦則成為繼巴黎、紐約之後另一個世界級藝術中心。

當時，「前衛藝術」的發展在英國蔚然成風，嚮往著反叛、破革精神的藝術家紛紛轉投新型藝術的陣地，力求顛覆保守的本土文化。身處倫敦的谷敏昭，可說是置身於時代的風眼中，意識到此等現象帶來的變化，藝術家對當代文化、知識的檢討可謂從未間斷，他認為後現代藝術無疑是其時對守舊勢力和意識型態的反動，它傾聽了弱勢聲音，重提個人差異的敏感性，豐富了美學取態，加強了藝術對多元價值的承受力，可是，「當代藝術」往往把純藝術貼上「資產階級社會產物」、「體制藝術」、「精英主義」、「大敘事」的標籤，但這種觀點忽略的是，純藝術的美學經驗一直具備自足性、組織想像、情感、感官力，和與藝術史長河的銜接的特殊功能，亦一直對抗普及文化壓逼崇高藝術的趨勢，這些都是政治作品無法完成的。

是故，谷氏拒絕跟從大時代的步伐，並堅持以繪畫作為創作主軸。他認為後現代的反思精神和它原初的動力已逐步變弱，後現代知識顯然已經不足以應對當代社會的複雜問題，反之，「文化工業」的破壞令當代藝術處於混淆不清的狀況。全盤否定後現代的意義和貢獻未必可取，但谷敏昭意識到，繪畫藝術必須在這片浪潮中穩住腳步，藝術家倘若不加思考，全心擁抱後現代主義進行創作，只會墮入權力的圈套，唯有隱忍面對潮流更迭，潛伏專注研究繪畫藝術，經歷時間的洗煉和磨礪，方能再次讓繪畫以新的姿態在藝術史上超升。

抽象畫的轉向——形而上的靈性探索

對藝術家來說，繪畫負載的歷史猶如先輩遺訓，可以是薪火相傳的精神延續，也可以是窒礙創新的沉重包袱，這決取於每位藝術家在繪畫陣地中，是否具有棄絕教條主義的勇氣，和開天闢地的創新精神。藝術創作並不應以媒介劃地為牢，谷敏昭雖專注油畫創作，但媒材和物料並未框限畫家的自由。拒絕固步自封，谷氏超越了具像的束縛，透過抽象畫的創作，開拓出一片無邊際的精神聖地。

九十年代初，藝術家開始捨棄慣用的敘事畫模式創作，進而把自己的思考放逐並流浪到荒野中，牙牙學語般重新學習形而上的語言。從在學時期對社會的控訴昇華至靈性探索；從對東西文化衝突的批判昇華至整體人類於天地存在的詰問，他把玄想的疆域延伸至物料和技法的實驗性探索——粉狀塗層令人回想到古老原始的洞穴畫；托印技法顯露東方民間藝術智慧；水性丙烯和油彩碰撞而成的班駁墨跡流露侘寂禪趣；飄浮的符號、圖案、有機物層層透疊彷彿令觀者置身於物我相忘的江湖中……多元的視覺風格以及技法的靈活運用，反映谷氏一方面秉承了傳統繪畫對畫面質感

的嚴謹追求，一方面以陌生的繪畫素材和技法托展藝術的可能。這印證了藝術不必憑藉政治取態去突破藝術史的成規；藝術家亦不必以一成不變的風格去順應藝術史的運作法則。人總仰賴知識去建構或認知世界，但知識和文明卻帶來成見和教條，反過來支配人類的思想，知識構成的體系和權力牢牢禁錮人對世界的想像，物質、戰爭、科技對解開人的生命之謎始終無能為力，反讓人在俗世中泥足深陷。放棄表達既有識見，藝術家的「創世觀」更接近一種無知狀態，他放棄宗教、政治和歷史帶來的條框，以「無知」去作為，不企圖解釋和定義物象，從美的角度重新理解和感受物象的本質。



蘇西的抉擇 Suzy's Choice
布面油畫 Oil on Canvas, 150 x 150 cm, 1990
英國皇家藝術學院 典藏, Acquired by the Royal College of Art, UK

靈性上的覺悟把藝術家的視野提升至更超脫宏觀的層次，抽象畫的突破將谷氏的藝術成就推向另一個高峰。臥遊於藝術家創造的世界，觀者能感受到一種神秘的巨大精神力量，卻似乎無法明瞭其中的意義。谷敏昭曾感嘆，「人類從始至終才真正是宇宙最大的秘密，宇宙裸露真正的軀體，而我們卻取代了宇宙高深莫測的神秘。」，在他眼中，人們愈是企求掌控真理，距

離真理反而愈遠。與其用自己的知識去強求理解作品想表達的意義，倒不如嘗試跟隨畫家的思路，承認人類在宇宙中是如此微不足道，以本真的知覺去感受他的美學境界，或許更能讓觀者接近出世脫俗的境地。

結語

在「全球化」和「多元價值」的大趨勢下，人們以為所有聲音都獲得前所未有的平反，「大同世界」走到新里程碑，「平權」成為世人恪守的真理，當初「高雅 / 低俗藝術」、「精英 / 大眾文化」、「共識 / 異見」的界線至此消失，也不再成為爭議焦點。惟環顧現今世界的政治、社會、文化處境，歐美文化只是以一種更微妙、靈巧的方式把持話語權。藝術制度上的權力傾斜令繪畫一度被評為過時而幾近被邊緣化，面對大眾輿論，在外界壓力和干擾下，藝術家谷敏昭的畫作以奧秘哲思和對崇高藝術精神堅實的信仰，挑戰了其時以政治姿態或介入社會作為前提的主流藝術氣候。藝術家傳奇般的藝術生涯見證了90年代起繪畫藝術的起跌，造就了一段平行於後現代時期的個人藝術史。他不接受主流文化的思想殖民，多年來亦拒絕把作品於商業市場過度曝光。藝術家關注的，終究是創作者應把當代繪畫安放在整個藝術歷史譜系的何等位置，當代繪畫還能如何承接藝術文化發展。

谷敏昭的作品証實繪畫藝術在經歷多個歷史浪潮的洗禮後，原初的精神始終歷劫不衰，亦因考驗再一次得到蛻變的力量，至今迴盪至藝術長河中。至此，他的畫作或許能帶給創作者和觀賞者一些啟示：也許人類只有不斷對生命的定義提出疑問，方能在茫茫天地中砥礪前行，縱然不能得到答案，但我們終究不能放棄反思，始能了解存在的奧秘。

Preface

Since the creation of the murals of the Chauvet Cave, painting has had a prominent place in the history of art. With the social, cultural as well as historical developments of different regions around the world, the *raison d'être* of painting has evolved through its interactions with other fields of knowledge and academic subjects. The conditions for the creation, dissemination, and consumption of art have changed dramatically in the modern era. Amid contemporary artistic trends, the emergence of interdisciplinary and multimedia artforms has been a response to the changing needs of our society and culture. With its intrinsic subversiveness, the introduction of conceptual art into art institutions has propelled a shift in the power dynamic, which has led to a reconceiving of the role and identity of painting. How could an artistic medium with a significant history break free from traditional culture and transform itself into a contemporary artistic language that responds to the times? The logic to the historical development of painting, as well as the changing premises of its “modernity”, warrant further explorations. With their transregional and transcultural character, the paintings of Christopher Ku present a remarkable opening for us to ponder the future of contemporary painting.

Born in Hong Kong in 1957, Ku studied painting during his secondary school years in Taiwan, before he went to the UK to pursue further studies at the age of 19. Persisted in his artistic pursuit, Ku enrolled in Gray's School of Art in Scotland, and he later received a master's degree from the Royal College of Art in London in 1990. It coincided with a period when painting went

through a transformation in its nature and its role, when artists engaged with their art against an unique cultural and historical backdrop. In this light, the viewer sees in Ku's works an artist who employs painting as a medium to respond to tumultuous changes in society, and who creates a transcendent realm and vision in his art.

Figurative Paintings from the Academy Period

The four years that Ku spent at Gray's School of Art had a definite influence on his artistic development; he received systematic training at a British fine arts academy that laid the foundation for his sketching and oil painting. Under the tutelage of Sylvia Wishart, Alexandra Fraser, Joyce Crain, and Derek Ashby, Ku came to grasp the artist's character and a rigorous academic mindset, as he was influenced by these painters who had always worked from a solid foundation in painting. The eclectic styles that we see in Ku's paintings have their roots in the fundamental training he received at Gray's School of Art. The young artist, however, set out to take his



RCA作品-1 RCA Painting-1
布面油画 Oil on Canvas, 240 x 300 cm, 1990

art further. While he was immersed in Western European art education, he also felt a sense of alienation in the serene environment of Aberdeen. Living in a foreign land, the artist was impelled by an almost innate awareness to maintain a sceptical attitude towards a foreign culture. As a Chinese person who was caught in the midst of East-West cultural conflicts, he did not feel entitled to indulging in the beautiful landscapes of Northern Scotland. The artist began to observe the world from the perspective of an “outsider” while instilling the sense of “alienation” into his works. The works from Ku’s figurative period feature



RCA作品-2 RCA Painting-2
布面油画 Oil on Canvas, 210 x 240 cm, 1989

sarcastic imagery that illuminates our enslavement in society, while the paintings are silent protests against the evils of power. The absurd subjects, solemn colours and tragic atmosphere in his paintings are particularly alarming. They reveal a sense of crisis that reminds the viewer to keep a distance from civilisation and reality, and to break free from the hold that power has on people.

It goes without saying that Ku’s artistic style during his academy years was a stark contrast to the somewhat conservative British paintings of the time. It sent shock waves across British art academies, garnering recognition and accolades for the artist in the academic circle. The shifting imagery and metaphors in his paintings evoke feelings of anxiety and oppression, urging the viewer to ponder the impact of modern civilisation and capitalism on humanity and nature. This sense of unease and alarm is pronounced in Ku’s early works. From his early paintings, we can see that Ku had a firm command of colours and imagery during his student years, while he transposed his critical thinking onto the canvas. Ku’s unique aesthetic sensitivity, coupled with his flair for handling large-scale works, paved the way for his subsequent move to abstract paintings.

Beyond the YBA—An Artistic Attitude in Parallel to the Postmodern Tide

Ku received an unconditional offer from the Royal College of Art in 1988 and moved to London to pursue his master’s degree. Apart from Callum Innes, Anish Kapoor, and Chris Ofili, the Young British Artists (YBA) at the time, most of whom were graduates from Goldsmiths, University of London, and the Royal College of Arts in the 1980s and 1990s, including Tracey Emin, Jake, and Dinos Chapman, were classmates or friends of Ku. The young artists developed lasting bonds through their academic exchanges.

The YBA were known for their “Shock Art”.

Under the banner of postmodernism, their unconventional and rebellious works attracted immense attention in the UK and around the world in the 1990s. This saw the rise of conceptual art, which was born of the postmodernist ideology, to a place of prominence in contemporary art. In contrast to conceptual art and multimedia art, painting was seen to carry the burden of tradition, and it was attacked for being dogmatic and stagnant. There were radical voices declaring "Painting is dead", as they argued that conservative artistic mediums should be phased out and revolutionised. The YBA were synonymous with avant-garde art and the *vouge*. With the emergence of these young artists, contemporary art evolved from a high culture that only existed in artists' studios, art galleries and museums into a topic widely discussed in the mass media and among the public. Conceptual art and issue-based art came to define the general awareness of contemporary art, while London established itself as an international art centre after Paris and New York.

The development of "avant-garde art" was gaining traction in the UK at the time. Artists who sought to rebel and revolutionise art turned to this new creative sphere, where they strived to subvert the conservative local culture. Ku, who was based in London, found himself in the epicentre of this revolution. As he was keenly aware of the changes brought on by this artistic movement, Ku never ceased to reflect on contemporary culture and knowledge. As he saw it, the rise of postmodern art was a reaction against conservative forces and ideology of the time. The ideology was

inclusive of voices from the fringe, bringing to light the sensitivity of individual differences. It opened up a broader range of artistic attitudes and inspired a deeper acceptance of diverse values in art. Nevertheless, in the world of "contemporary art", "fine arts" have often been labelled as a "bourgeois", "institutional" and "elitist" "grand narrative". What is overlooked is that the aesthetic experience of fine arts has always thrived with self-sufficiency, collective imagination, emotion, and sensory impact, and it possesses a unique capacity to foster connections with the history of art. It has also resisted the oppression of high art in pop culture, a feat that cannot be accomplished by political work.

Therefore, Ku chose to walk his own path, as he has continued to pursue painting as his primary medium. He believes the spirit of questioning of postmodernism and its initial momentum have diminished over time, and the postmodern theory of knowledge is no longer sufficient to address the complicated issues of contemporary society. On the other hand, the destructive "cultural industries" have left contemporary art in a state of chaos. While one should not dismiss the significance and contributions of postmodernism completely, Ku recognises that the art of painting must keep its footing amid these currents. If an artist embraces postmodernism wholeheartedly in their creative practice, they will fall into the trap of the pursuit of power. Painters should stand firm in the face of changing trends; they should remain devoted to their studies of painting and refine their craft through time. It is only then

that they can revamp and reevaluate their art form in the history of art.

The Turn of Abstract Painting—An Exploration of Metaphysical Spirituality

To an artist, painting can be an embodiment of knowledge and legacies that have been passed down through the generations, or it can be a burden that stifles innovation. It comes down to whether an artist has the courage to forsake dogmatism and the resolve to break new grounds in painting. Artistic creation should not be hindered by the choice of medium. While Ku specialises in oil painting, the painter does not limit his artistic practice to any particular medium or material. Moving beyond the confines of figurative painting, Ku has unearthed a boundless spiritual realm in his abstract paintings.

In the early 1990s, the artist decided to forgo the approach of narrative painting that he was versed in; he let his mind run free to an unknown land where he would relearn the metaphysical language. From his critique of society during his academy period to his spiritual exploration; from his criticism of East-West cultural conflicts to his probe into human existence, he has extended his artistic inquiry to an experimentation with material and technique. It is manifested in the powder coating that mimics ancient cave paintings, the stenciling that resounds with the wisdom of Eastern folk art, the Zen-like wabi-sabi created by the collision of water-based acrylic and oil paint, and the floating symbols, patterns and organic substances that lure the viewer into a realm where the boundary between

the self and the world dissolves. From the eclectic visual styles and techniques in his works, we see Ku's rigorous pursuit of painterly texture in traditional painting, as well as his quest to explore new possibilities in art through the use of unorthodox painting materials and techniques. Further, it is proof that art can transcend the conventions of art history without falling back on political statements, and artists need not adhere to the norms of art history by sticking to a particular style in their creative practices. While humans have always drawn on knowledge to construct their perceptions of the world, knowledge and civilisation have given rise to prejudice and dogmas that dominate human thought. Moreover, our imaginations of the world are often imprisoned by the structures and power produced by knowledge. Material, war and technology have been futile in uncovering the mysteries of human life; rather, they have led us into the depths of mundanity. Forsaking the expression of existing knowledge, Ku's "creationism" is closer to a state of "not knowing" as the artist disregards the rules and laws imposed by religion, politics, and history. From this state of "not knowing", Ku resists the urge to explain or define any object or phenomenon, but rethinks and experiences the nature of objects and phenomena from the aesthetic point of view.

This spiritual awakening elevates the artist's vision to a place of transcendence, while Ku's breakthrough in abstract painting takes his artistic achievements to new heights. While exploring the realm created by the artist, the viewer feels a mysterious and enormous spiritual power, yet the

significance of this power is beyond one's grasp. As Ku exclaims, "Humanity is the greatest mystery in the universe. The universe reveals itself to us in its nakedness, while we have supplanted the mystery of the universe with the mystery of ourselves." To his mind, the harder we try to understand the truth, the farther we drift away from it. Rather than trying to discern the meaning of an artwork, it is preferable to try to understand the artist's thinking and acknowledge the insignificance of humans in the universe—if we experience his aesthetic realm from an authentic perception, it may bring us closer to transcendence.

Conclusion

The sweeping trends of "globalisation" and "diverse values" have led many to think that all voices have been vindicated—that there has been a new milestone in the quest for the "Great Unity", the notion of "equal rights" has become universal truth, and the dichotomies between "high art" and "low art", "high culture" and "popular culture", and "consensus" and "dissent" are no longer points of contention. In light of the world's political, social, and cultural climate today, European and American cultures are holding onto their power of discourse in a more subtle and shrewd manner. At one point, painting was almost marginalised as an outdated art form as the power dynamic was skewed in the art world. In the face of public opinion and external pressures, Ku endowed his paintings with his profound philosophy and his faith in art, which challenged the mainstream art scene that revolved around political statements and

social engagements. Since the 1990s, Ku's extraordinary artistic career has borne witness to the ups and downs in the art of painting; it translates into a personal art history that runs parallel to the postmodern era. He is opposed to the ideological colonisation by popular culture, and he has resisted over-exposure of his works in the commercial market over the years. After all, the artist's concerns should lie in where and how contemporary painting should fit into the broader spectrum of art history, and how contemporary painting can contribute to the development of art and culture.

Ku's work is testimony to how the spirit of painting has prevailed through history and how the art form has evolved through trials. His paintings may offer some insights to both artists and viewers—perhaps it is only by constantly questioning the meaning of life that humans can march forward in the vastness of the world. Even if the answer is beyond our reach, we must never stop pondering the meaning of existence if we are to glimpse its mystery.



迴盪-1 Reverberation-1
紙板複合媒材 Mixed media on cardboard 28.2 x 17 cm 2018



迴盪-2 Reverberation-2
紙板複合媒材 Mixed media on cardboard 27.8 x 17.2 cm 2018



迴盪-3 Reverberation-3
紙板複合媒材 Mixed media on cardboard 28 x 17.4 cm 2018



迴盪-4 Reverberation-4
紙板複合媒材 Mixed media on cardboard 28.7 x 17.2 cm 2018





迴盪-5 Reverberation-5
紙板複合媒材 Mixed media on cardboard 20 x 14.3 cm 2018



迴盪-6 Reverberation-6
紙板複合媒材 Mixed media on cardboard 28.2 x 17.2 cm 2018



迴盪-7 Reverberation-7
紙板複合媒材 Mixed media on cardboard 28.5 x 17.2 cm 2018



迴盪-8 Reverberation-8
紙板複合媒材 Mixed media on cardboard 29 x 17.3 cm 2018



迴盪-9 Reverberation-9
紙板複合媒材 Mixed media on cardboard 28.2 x 17 cm 2018



迴盪-10 Reverberation-10
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 91 x 122 cm 2022



迴盪-16 Reverberation-16
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 91 x 121.5 cm 2021



迴盪-11 Reverberation-11
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 121.5 x 91 cm 2022



迴盪-24 Reverberation-24
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 122 x 91 cm 2021





迴盪-23 Reverberation-23
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 122 x 91.5 cm 2021



迴盪-22 Reverberation-22
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 183 x 121.5 cm 2011



迴盪-21 Reverberation-21
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 99.5 x 150 cm 2011



存在思覺 · 符號系列-1 Critical Existentialism Series · Semiotic Series-1
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 108 x 82 cm 2008-2022



迴盪-12 Reverberation-12
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 121.5 x 91 cm 2022



迴盪-14 Reverberation-14
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 159.5 x 134 cm 2022



迴盪-13 Reverberation-13
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 153 x 153 cm 2012



迴盪-20 Reverberation-20
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 213 x 305 cm 2002-2021







迴盪-15 Reverberation-15
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 153 x 153 cm 2011



迴盪-17 Reverberation-17
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 121 x 91 cm 2021



迴盪-18 Reverberation-18
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 121 x 91 cm 2021



迴盪-19 Reverberation-19
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 121 x 91 cm 2021



迴盪-25 Reverberation-25
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 53 x 38 cm 2020

人類身處的，是一個錯綜複雜，隨時間推移而不斷變化的多元世界，沒有一種理論能恆久適用於現實狀況。靈活、可變的消費主義和國家文化政策與當代文化是同步成長的，國家與市場並未因後現代藝術的出現而被削權，資本家與執政者將之進一步運用到政治層面，在文化政策上作出戰略性的變革。

當國家文化機構聯同畫廊、美術館、收藏家等「收編」了當時意欲「抵制收編」的後現代藝術，也「收編」了大批後現代藝術的信徒。是以，這種意欲抵制強權的後現代文化發展至後期，成為國與國之間軟實力競賽的工具。當初在野、外圍文化成為核心、主導文化，至此，歐美國家再一次把持藝術話語權，領導全球各地跟隨西方當代藝術發展模式。

由此，藝術家深深意識到後現代藝術只是為西方霸權文化增添某種合法性，這種合法性亦進一步壯大其認受性。當時發展處於瓶頸的資本主義已經巧妙地「馴養」了後現代藝術，利用後現代文化特徵再一次優化自身，發展影響全球的「大眾文化」。而後現代藝術過度市場化，亦令其批判性變得折衷而軟弱無力。

Humans exist in a complex and multifaceted world that evolves with time. There is not a single theory that applies to reality on a perpetual basis. Consumerism and cultural policies of countries are changeable, and they have developed in tandem with contemporary culture. The emergence of postmodern art did not undermine the power of countries and the market. Rather, capitalists and those in positions of authority extended this power to the political sphere, making strategic changes to their nations' cultural policies.

When national cultural institutions, art galleries, museums and collectors “incorporated” postmodern art, which represented the quest “resist incorporation” in its inception, into their collections. This act has translated into the “incorporation” of the mass of postmodern art believers. As a result, postmodern culture, which set out to oppose authority, turned into an instrument for various countries in their soft power rivalry. What was once a fringe culture became the mainstream. At present, Europe and the US have once again assumed the power of discourse in the art world, while other regions follow the models of Western contemporary art development.

Consequently, Ku realised that postmodern art exists only to legitimise the hegemony of Western culture, and this form of legitimacy has further strengthened the acceptance of this cultural hegemony. Capitalism broke its own deadlock by propelling itself to the next phase of development by “taming” postmodern art; it utilised the characteristics of postmodern culture to enhance itself, and to develop “popular culture” as we know it today. The critical nature of postmodern art has become futile, since its excessive marketisation has been normalised.





語意構造-1 Semantic Construction-1
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 60.5 x 60.5 cm 2022



語意構造-2 Semantic Construction-2
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 40 x 40 cm 2022



語意構造-3 Semantic Construction-3
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 40 x 40 cm 2022



語意構造-4 Semantic Construction-4
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 40 x 40 cm 2022



語意構造-5 Semantic Construction-5
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 40 x 40 cm 2022



語意構造-6 Semantic Construction-6
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 40 x 40 cm 2022



語意構造-7 Semantic Construction-7
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 40 x 40 cm 2022





語意構造-8 Semantic Construction-8
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 104 x 80 cm 2021



語意構造-9 Semantic Construction-9
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 43 x 43 cm 2021



語意構造-10 Semantic Construction-10
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 43 x 43 cm 2021



語意構造-11 Semantic Construction-11
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 38 x 40 cm 2021



語意構造-12 Semantic Construction-12
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 38 x 40 cm 2021



語意構造-13 Semantic Construction-13
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 36 x 36 cm 2021



語意構造-14 Semantic Construction-14
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 36 x 36 cm 2021



語意構造-15 Semantic Construction-15
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 95 x 91 cm 2021



語意構造-16 Semantic Construction-16
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 36 x 36 cm 2021





語意構造-17 Semantic Construction-17
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 95 x 97 cm 2022



線系列-1 Line Series-1
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 243 x 304 cm 2021





語意構造-18 Semantic Construction-18
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 96 x 96 cm 2022



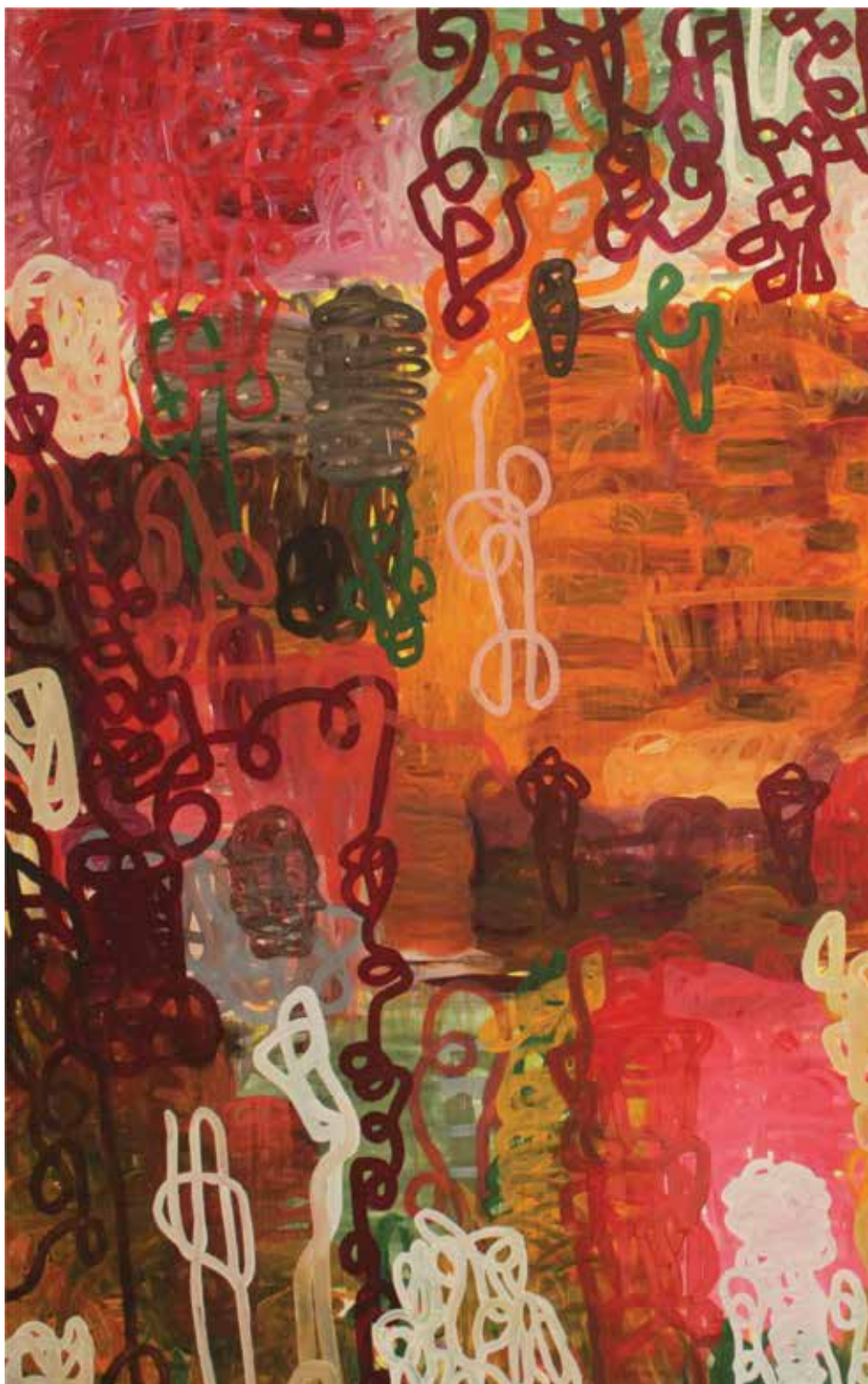
線系列-2 Line Series-2
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 243 x 304 cm 2021



線系列-3 Line Series-3
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 243 x 304 cm 2021



線系列-6 Line Series-6
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 243 x 304 cm 2021



線系列-5 Line Series-5
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 243 x 304 cm 2021







線系列-4 Line Series-4
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 243 x 304 cm 2021



語意構造-19 Semantic Construction-19
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 60 x 50 cm 2022



語意構造-21 Semantic Construction-21
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 60 x 50 cm 2022





語意構造-24 Semantic Construction-24
桌子、複合媒材 Mixed media on Table 104 x 75 x 31 cm 2021



語意構造-20 Semantic Construction-20
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 60 x 50 cm 2022



語意構造-25 Semantic Construction-25
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 100 x 90 cm 2022



語意構造-23 Semantic Construction-23
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 121 x 91 cm 2022



語意構造-22 Semantic Construction-22
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 121 x 76 cm 2022



語意構造-26 Semantic Construction-26
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 100 x 90 cm 2022



語意構造-27 Semantic Construction-27
布面複合媒材 Mixed media on canvas 100 x 90 cm 2022

藝術家有感

隨著一個大時代迅速的改變，「繪畫之死」也意味著以藝術敘述性的現代主義經後現代多年的抨擊已奄奄一息，全盤瓦解。

「戰後」、「80後」、「90後」.....這些名詞似乎明確地意圖劃分人的年齡在時代變遷中的意識及思想的改變，尤爾根·哈伯瑪斯嘗試分析二十世紀的動亂，尋求未來發展的方向，重新辯證改革方案；而狄奧多·阿多諾鼓吹藝術作為激發對資本主義及現代主義之批判；讓·波德里亞導出傳媒、大數據文化對人類及社會將帶來之影響；包曼的《逆托邦》默認「一個更美好的未來」已是虛幻的泡沫，作家阿爾貝·卡繆在絕望與希望間對文明的質疑；弗朗茨·卡夫卡以荒謬形式敘述存在的怪誕；尚一保羅·沙特的《存在與虛無》、伊塔羅·卡爾維諾的《看不見的城市》.....簡而言之，這些作家和哲學家們預言了一個未知的時代的到來，也影響新一代的現代性及其放逐者。

學者、作家、藝術家們對一個時代的指控，帶有代表性的藝術家有法蘭西斯·培根，阿爾伯托·賈科梅蒂，盧西安·弗洛伊德等，在主題及表達手法上，他們終結了一個被推翻的時代。

文化解構從17世紀初由宗教藝術至今從未間斷，後現代浪潮徹底破壞一切曾被建立的文明及文化，終斷了人類對文明及文化的渴望和追求。

80後、90後、00後的一代未必深切地了解現代及反現代的進程，卻身處無法著陸、虛無、荒蕪的時代，羅蘭·巴特和蘇珊·桑塔格對新一代的影響更為直接，或可說我們已到達多年前曾是警世的預言，並非不無爭論。

人類文明周而復始地透過分歧和衝突演進。在歷史的長流中，我們曾見證過藝術思潮的幾道輪迴：文藝復興因矯飾主義的批判催生出巴洛克藝術；浪漫主義背離神權走上人文思考的道路，印象派重新審視古典藝術對真實的定義.....曾經，在東方現代化的過程中，我們跟隨了歐美的軌跡，亦步亦趨，不敢相背；如今，後現代造成的文化斷層令精神信仰崩解，廢墟中一個個「無根」的個體，再也沒有任何可以信賴的參照物。西方世界把精神靈魂埋沒在意識型態的廢墟中，我們依循至此，卻沒有人願意直視問題的存在。此刻，人們又一次站在歷史的分水嶺，面對肢離破碎的知識狀態，唯有脫離依附，由犬儒走向創造，由從屬走向自主，重新建構屬於自己的語境，方能在動盪無常的現況中結束頹垣的困境。

在一個後後現代的時期，意識形態已不被重視，徘徊在古今中外、東西文化間，存在思覺屬於個人的體驗，不需劃地為牢，游盪於時代的裡外四周，我的作品變得像是死後的輪迴，觀望曾經發生的一切，不再有所爭議。後後現代的幽靈，死去而活著，去中心化的漂浮，無重量的輕盈，活在後後現代的存在思覺中，《迴盪·繪畫》--也是此個展的主題。

谷敏昭 2022年

Artist's Note

In an age of accelerated changes, the declaration that “Painting is dead” signifies that modernism, which emphasises the narrativity of art, has crumbled after being the subject of persistent criticism under postmodernism over the past decades. Designations such as “post-war”, “post-80s”, and “post-90s” appear to categorise the shifts in individuals’ consciousness and mindsets based on their age through the times. For instance, Jürgen Habermas attempts to analyse the turmoil of the 20th century, while reexamining possible directions for the future and paradigms for reform. Theodor W. Adorno advocated art as a catalyst to the critique of capitalism and modernism. Jean Baudrillard expounded on the impact of media and big data culture on humanity and society. In his book *Retrotopia*, Zygmunt Bauman contends that “a better future” is merely an illusion. Writer Albert Camus questioned civilisation in the liminal space between despair and hope. Franz Kafka narrated the bizarreness of existence in absurd expressions. Other reflections including Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*, and Italo Calvino’s *Invisible Cities*... These writers and philosophers foresaw the coming of an unknown epoch, and their thinking predicted a new era of modernity and its outcasts.

Scholars, writers and artists are critics of their times. Francis Bacon, Alberto Giacometti, and Lucian Freud were leading artists whose subjects and creative expressions signalled the end of a subverted era.

Since the fall of religious art in the 17th century, cultural dissemination has been an ongoing phenomenon in society. Postmodernism destroyed all established cultures and civilisations; it halted humanity’s desire for, and pursuit of, cultures and civilisations.

The millennials and the Gen Z may not have a deep understanding of modernism and anti-modernism, and they live in a time of uncertainty, nihilism, and emptiness. Roland Barthes and Susan Sontag have perhaps had a more direct impact on the new generation, or perhaps we have fulfilled some of the prophecies from the past—but their theoretical standpoint is not without controversies.



黃窗簾 The Yellow Curtain
布面油畫 Oil on Canvas, 150 x 180 cm, 1988
英國羅伯特·戈登大學之藝術及文化遺產收藏系列 典藏
Acquired by the Art & Heritage Collections, Robert Gordon University, UK

Human civilisation has progressed through conflicts and oppositions. We have seen many reincarnations of art movements throughout history: the Renaissance gave rise to Baroque art

because of the critique of Mannerism; Romanticism drifted away from theocracy and moved towards humanistic thinking, and Impressionism cast a new light on the meaning of reality in classical art. Throughout the modernisation of the East, we followed Western trajectories, and did not dare to stray from it. The cultural fragmentation created by postmodernism has led to the crumbling of faith; individuals exist like “rootless” entities in the ruins and without a spiritual anchor. We have become accustomed to the way our spirits are buried in an ideological wasteland in the Western world, and no one wants to confront this matter head-on. This brings us to a watershed moment of history: living in a state of shattered knowledge, we must break away from dependency, abandon cynicism in favour of creation, and refute subordination in order to achieve autonomy. This is how we could reconstruct the cultural foundation of ourselves, and it is the only way for us to break free from the ruins of turbulent times.

Ideology no longer is the focus in the post-postmodern age. From the antiquities to modern times, and between Eastern and Western cultures, the existential consciousness of humans has always been an individual experience that transcends time and borders. My work is akin to reincarnation; it looks back at everything that has happened, without any contention. The spectre of post-postmodernism is alive in its

death; it floats like a decentralised entity, weightless and free, as it comes to life in the existential consciousness of post-postmodernism. It evokes the “Painting of Reverberation”, which is the theme of this solo exhibition .

Christopher Ku 2022



原野景像 Painting of a Landscape, Oil on canvas 布面油畫, 90 x 120 cm, 1990
英國皇家藝術學院 典藏 Acquired by the Royal College of Art, UK

與谷敏昭訪談

Q：在《迴盪·繪畫》展覽中，看到你不少畫作都運用到粉狀塗層，這種物料在一般油畫創作中比較罕見，為何會有這些嘗試？

A：在創作時，我們已不受物料限制，如相片、錄像、混合媒體，甚至火藥、排泄物、頭髮、昆蟲、動物……因此物料已不再是當代創作的前提，而是視乎表達內容是否能與物料運用建立一個新視覺語境，而最重要的是作品與歷史或當下文化的呼應和對照。這次展覽中，作品運用到的粉狀物料既非東方亦非西方的傳統媒材，但它正正為傳統宣紙和油畫布展開了對話。創作並非一定要從西方裝置藝術，或是東方現代水墨尋找突破，我嘗試以粉狀畫貫通洞穴畫到當代創作物料的可能，而不自限於個別地域文化，新物料的試驗証實藝術思維可以橫跨中西古今文化，正如水墨和油彩都是從歷史走到當代，仍然適用於現今社會一樣。

Q：但看來你感興趣的並不止於物料上的應用，在意象和技法方面，東方托印、剪紙、雙喜圖案這些中國民間藝術對你的創作有何影響？你認為民間藝術可以放置到高雅藝術當中嗎？

A：古時洞穴畫的創作題材環繞著當時人們的生活環境，當代藝術也不例外地反映了人對當代環境的認知。從藝術語言中表達出當代性的議題，藝術不再局限於時代的意識形態，各種議題包括歷史、社會學、科學、哲學、心理學，總而言之凡是人文學科所關注的，都可成為創作靈感而被發掘。曾經，中國剪紙藝術影響了巴勃羅·畢加索和 亨利·馬蒂斯；日本意景啟發了印象派中克洛德·莫內的睡蓮系列和文森·梵高；塞·湯伯利， 弗朗茨·克萊恩等則從東方書法中找到靈感……現代主義把東方文化拿下作為靈感泉源，而中國藝術家又有否

珍視這些悠久流傳的本土文化呢？剪紙、托印這些工藝經常被大眾定格為中國通俗民間傳統而止於此也，但我認為文化象徵著一個地方和民族的修養，把中國民間藝術放到崇高藝術的格局下，這些地域次文化仍可經由藝術梳理而變得高雅。「雅」與「俗」看似對立而不相容，但把這兩種衝突的元素並置，反而會讓畫作變得更耐人尋味。美學經常被宏大的理念所推動，但古今中外出眾的藝術家的創作往往是偏離主流審美的。

Q：衝突、矛盾的元素在你的畫作中經常以不同面貌出現，很多觀眾對你畫作中常見的符碼和記號感到既新奇又不解。這些符號在我們日常生活中非常普遍，但出現在你的創作中似乎另有所指？

A：符號是世間事物經過約化後產生，在人類的溝通過程中被傳遞，我們溝通的基礎是建基於記號符碼系統背後的規則、結構和共同的理解，在一個有形的體制系統如車站、洗手間、各種公共場所，以及知識系統如數學、物理、化學，人們更離不開符號的運用，而符號在現實生活中更是一種比圖像更強而有力的表達方式。符碼、標誌、象徵指向我們想要到達的地方，否則人將迷失於不能掌握的景況及知識中。

可是，符號並不能周全地描述一切，在社會現象、經濟活動、價值系統中，到處是現象與真實、局部與全體、理論與經驗之間的落差，因此弔詭、矛盾、兩難是無處不在的。在創作中，令我著迷的，正正是這些符碼和記號的隱義和迷思。在把各種符碼嵌進藝術處境的再現過程中，符號和對應物間絕對的對應關係隨即被破壞，一個無共識的圖形，在現實中對溝通是無效的，但在藝術中，這些無以名狀的圖形卻能產生美感。過往我在畫作中嘗試破解符

號約定俗成的用途和功能，並將之轉化為美學元素，透過調度符號在各種語境中所產生的歧義，以對事物的定義作出反思。我們依賴符號認識世界的同時，也不自覺被符號體系形成的權力牢困，這其實像一把槍指住人的脊樑般暴力，但人是否必須根據體制法則認識世界？也許只有藝術思維能為人提供別的選擇。例如十字架符號很自然會令人聯想到《聖經》新約中耶穌受難的事跡，但在我畫作中的十字顯然跟宗教故事沒有直接聯繫，這即與人普遍共識和常態存在落差。由於錯置的符號在畫作中指向未知，當人不能理所當然地以常識處理這些弔詭、矛盾的局面，繼而陷入迷思的狀態，觀者即需放棄以既有知識去理解美，這正是開啟智慧之門的契機。

Q：也許超越視野以外的事物才更為關鍵。再觀賞你近期的創作，過往化學符號、昆蟲圖案、雙喜、樹根這些可被辨識的形體也漸漸消失了，畫面所呈現的視覺效果比過往變得更玄虛、恣肆，而且充滿禪意。這又是一個怎樣的演變過程？

A：如同一個人的成長過程，同樣的事物會因自己的成長而有所改變。早期是從寫實主義開始，而化學符號或是昆蟲、雙喜等圖案是脫離形體及實物的過程，也是進一步去理解事物的方式或態度。但人鮮有想到的是，我們看不見的東西並不等於它們不存在，隱而不見的事物反而遠比我們能看見的宏大，也對人類文明的發展更具影響力，就像我們把水拆解為化學元素，但想深一層，水其實比這些化學元素的定義遠遠來得更奧秘。

在近期創作中，這些符號的消失，是因為當我們嘗試去理解生命以及存在的意義時，我們往往依賴現有的知識去理解宇宙的奧秘，而偶然而成的生命如同被人工孕育

出來的牛羊，牠們不會因為飼料來源以及圍柵而得知存在的原因。從宗教的對立面中，我們單從信與不信間無法理解生命存在的原由，以泛濫的知識作為工具並不能向一個未知的宇宙尋求答案，唯有否定一切現有的知識，否定假設性的推論，在一切被接納同時被否定的過程中，我們始能從主觀體系去檢視未知的客觀存在意識。

Q：所以你的《語意構造系列》作品似乎也因為「發掘未知」而變得更隨機、更抽象，這也是取代符號圖案的重要嘗試嗎？

A：在創作的過程中，過度精確、刻意的操控只會帶來反效果，倒不如選擇放手，適度讓意外介入創作，重新考証美的存在，這也是可控的筆觸做不到的盲點。有別於可控的畫筆，每一層水性丙烯和油彩顏料以倒、流、刮的技法形成不受控的流動痕跡，無法預算的視覺效果與漫不經心、無意識的盲繪完全不同，我施展創意和判斷的空間在於，如何在一層又一層顏料變動不居的乾濕效果間判定畫作是否完成，或是該再潑灑另一種顏料，或是再刮一刀，或是傾側畫布讓顏料流動，這些判斷都需經過藝術審美的計算，我用自己美學判斷征服、把玩這些隨機效果，只是這種計算和控制並不發生在「畫」的過程中，而是出自一種概率的控制。概率來源於信息的缺失，有效信息越多，對某一事件發生的把握度（概率）就越大，直至「必然發生」，排除這種必然性引領我到達一個新的創作領域，我也在這些不可預判的模糊性中漸漸創造出一種內在機制和規律，在這裡，隨機和不隨機其實並不相悖，它們只是在不同場合中各自找到其恰當的位置發揮作用。

畫作中的混沌狀態不是純粹的隨機，畫布狹小的邊界讓我們誤認為這些只是偶然效

果，看似任意發揮的美，背後其實存在一個更宏大的力量參與其中，這種力也穿梭在我各個時期的創作風格中。

Q：從你學院時期到近期作品的蛻變過程中，你的風格比起藝術史上我們認識的任何一個藝術家都更多變，你擔心這些風格的轉變會成為觀眾理解「谷敏昭」思想核心的屏障嗎？

A：美學是一種難以言喻的感知能力，往往在畫作中，方能見證畫家們對美學理解的深度。上帝從來不擲骰子，但人每每在擲骰子的過程中發現上帝，我也在畫布上擲骰子。在一個廣義的宇宙運行機制中，每當一種創作風格成為固有的結果，瞬間即成為狹義的表象。詩人阿多尼斯曾說：「我還不是阿多尼斯，我在成為阿多尼斯。」當人能清晰定義自己是誰，他將隨即步入死亡。我並不樂意從個別風格的成功中安頓下來，因此每次把一種風格推進到極限時，我都希望把骰子再擲一次，從自己創造的境界中游離出來，在別的領地中尋找答案，在固有的定義中突破極限。有如希臘神話的西西弗斯一次又一次把石頭推上山的過程，每次我總能從風格的變更中推翻自我，重新體現自由意志。這又近於科學對事物秩序的尋覓，每一種創作風格像各類測量方式的變換，每種方式只能偵測到自然本質的其中一個面向，種種面向固然能夠互為參照，但任何一種面向都不會是絕對的終極答案；這又像是一場遊戲，參加者精準地把握了致勝技巧而獲勝，並不代表能在世界中勝出一切。最終，畫作是無意義的，它只是滿足了藏家和觀者的慾望，在創作的過程中只有創作者才知道那無止盡的深潭，智慧亦從此衍生。在這些創作的變化中，或許能讓我進一步測量知識的輪廓，從而讓自己對生命有更深刻的理解，也是人類演化的必然過程。



踢躑 Tiketie
布面油畫 Oil on Canvas, 150 x 180 cm, 1987
英國羅伯特·戈登大學之藝術及文化遺產收藏系列 典藏
Acquired by the Art & Heritage Collections, Robert Gordon University, UK



RCA作品-3 RCA Painting-3
布面油畫 Oil on Canvas, 210 x 240 cm, 1989

A Conversation with Christopher Ku

Q: In your exhibition, “Painting of Reverberation”, I see that powder coating features in many of your paintings. It is a relatively rare material to be used in oil painting. How did you arrive to this experimental style?

A: When we make art, we are no longer limited by the choice of medium or material, and it can be anything from photography, video, mixed media, gunpowder, excrement, hair, to insects and animals... In this sense, material is no longer the focus in contemporary art. The key question is whether the content of the work and the chosen materials come together to create a new visual context, with a focus on the echoes and contrast between the work and history or the culture it is situated in. In this exhibition, the powder I use is not a traditional medium from the East or West, but it opens up a dialogue between traditional xuan paper and canvas. This shows that an artist does not necessarily have to look for breakthroughs from working with Western art installation or Eastern ink painting. I hope to use my powder paintings to explore the possibilities of application of cave painting in contemporary art, without limiting myself to any regional culture. This experiment with a new material is proof that artistic thinking can traverse ancient and modern cultures of the East and West, just as ink painting and oil painting have existed throughout history and are still relevant today.

Q: But it seems like you are interested in more than just the application of materials. In what ways has your work been inspired by Chinese folk arts such as Eastern

stencil, paper cutting, and the Double Happiness pattern in terms of imagery and technique? Do you believe folk art has a place in high art?

A: The themes of ancient cave paintings revolved around the living environments of people at the time, while contemporary art reflects our perceptions of the world today. Art is no longer bound to the ideology of its time, while we see expressions of contemporary issues through the language of art. That is to say that creative inspiration can be drawn from a variety of subjects of the humanities, such as history, sociology, science, philosophy, and psychology. In the past, Chinese paper cutting influenced Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse; Japanese imagery inspired the works of the impressionists such as Vincent van Gogh and Claude Monet’s water lily series, and Eastern calligraphy influenced artists such as Cy Twombly and Franz Kline. Eastern culture was a source of inspiration for modernism. Do Chinese artists cherish these long-standing cultures?

In China, paper cutting, stenciling, and other crafts are often narrowly defined as folk traditions, but I believe that culture represents the disposition of a region and its people. If we situate Chinese folk arts in high art, I believe these regional cultures can be refined through this artistic convergence. Although the ideas of “elegance” and “kitsch” may seem dialectically opposed to each other, the juxtaposition of these two conflicting elements adds to a painting’s intrigue. The development of aesthetics is often driven by grand ideas,

yet the great works of art from different eras and cultures have tended to depart from conventional aesthetics.

Q: Conflicting and contradicting elements feature prominently in different guises in your paintings. Many viewers are intrigued and perplexed by the recurrent notations and symbols in your work. These symbols are commonly seen in our daily lives, yet they seem to take on a different meaning in your art.

A: Symbols are created by the reduction of meaning, and they are disseminated through human communication. The foundation of our communication is built on the rules and structures of systems of symbols and our collective understanding of them. Therefore, our lives are bound to the use of symbols, as they make more effective expressions of ideas than images in real life. This is especially true when we are dealing with physical systems such as bus stops, washrooms, and other public venues, as well as knowledge systems including mathematics, physics, and chemistry. Codes, signs, and symbols direct us to where we want to go. Otherwise, we will be lost in situations and knowledge that lie beyond our grasp.

However, symbols are not comprehensive representations of things. There are gaps between phenomenon and reality, partial and total, theory and experience in our society, economic operations, and value systems, which result in paradoxes, contradictions, and dilemmas. It is the hidden meanings and myths surrounding these

codes and signs that fascinate me. In the embedding of codes into artistic contexts and their representations, the absolute correlation between symbols and their counterparts is disrupted. In reality, graphics whose meanings are not defined by general consensus are ineffectual for communication; yet, in art, these forms could evoke a sense of aesthetic beauty. In the past, I attempted to decipher the conventional uses and functions of symbols and transform them into aesthetic elements. In combing through the ambiguity of symbols in different circumstances, we reflect on the definition of things.

While we rely on symbols to understand the world, we are also unconsciously imprisoned by the power that symbols have over us. It is as violent as pointing a gun at someone from behind their back. But is it necessary for us to construct our understanding of the world according to the rules of these systems? Perhaps artistic thought is the only alternative for us. For instance, the cross is associated with the crucifixion of Jesus in the New Testament of the Bible, but the cross in my paintings has no direct connection to religious themes, and its meaning deviates from the general understanding and consensus about the symbol. The misplaced symbols in my paintings point to the unknown. When people are unable to relate to these paradoxes and contradictions intuitively, they fall into a state of uncertainty. Hence, the viewers have to discard their preconceptions of aesthetics, which is key to opening a new door to wisdom.

Q: Perhaps what is beyond our horizon is more crucial. Looking at your recent works, I see that tangible shapes that used to feature in your paintings, such as chemical symbols, insects, Double Happiness, and tree roots have gradually disappeared, creating a visual impact that feels more enigmatic, unrestrained, and Zen-like. What is this transformation we are looking at?

A: As with the development of a person, some things begin to change as a person grows. In the early days, I took realism as a starting point. Chemical symbols, insects and Double Happiness capture the process of disassociating from form and substance, and it is an approach or an attitude that one adopts in developing a deeper understanding of things. But what eludes most people is that just because there are things that we cannot see, it does not mean they do not exist. In fact, the things we do not see are more profound than what we can see, and they may have a greater impact on the development of human civilisation. A case in point: water can be broken down into chemical elements, but if you really think about it, the mystery of water lies far beyond the definitions of chemical elements.

These symbols have faded out from my recent works because when we try to understand life and the meaning of existence, we often rely on existing knowledge to unravel the mysteries of the universe. Our lives are happenstances like those of artificially bred cattle and sheep, which do not understand their existence from the

source of their feed and the fence around them. We cannot comprehend the reason for existence by debating the validity of religion, just as we cannot find any answer about the unknown if we look for it from excess knowledge. It is only by refuting all existing knowledge and hypotheses, and through the process of acceptance and negation of things, that we can examine an unknown and objective consciousness from the vantage points of subjective systems.

Q: Your series, “Semantic Construction”, appears to gravitate more heavily towards the random and the abstract in “unearthing the unknown”. Is it also an attempt to replace the symbols in your art?

A: In the creative process, an overt emphasis on precision and control will have a negative impact on the work. We may as well let go and allow accidents to take place, and reexamine the existence of beauty. These are things that cannot be achieved with rigid and controlled brushwork. Unlike controlled brushstrokes, each layer of water-based acrylic and oil paint is applied with the technique of pouring, flowing, or scraping to create spontaneous traces. It is important to differentiate unexpected visual effects from mindless painting or scribbling. My creativity and judgement lies in where I decide if a painting is completed when I scrutinise the morphing shades of dryness and wetness—whether to make a splash using a different kind of paint, or to make another scrape, or to tilt the canvas to the side to let the paint flow. All these judgements are made based on

aesthetic considerations. I use my own aesthetic judgement to play with these unmediated effects, but this kind of thinking and control does not happen during the “painting” process. Rather, it comes from a form of probability control. Probability arises from incompleteness of information. The more valid information there is, the higher the probability of an event occurring—up to the point where it becomes “inevitable”. In eliminating this inevitability, I enter a new creative space where I gradually develop rules and formulas that are intrinsic to this ambiguity. Randomness and certainty are not contradictory in this context, but they have different roles and functions in different settings.

The chaos in the paintings is not entirely random. It is the margins of the canvas that lead us to see these effects as accidental. There is a greater source of power behind this spontaneous manifestation of beauty. It is a force that runs through my artistic styles from different periods.

Q: There are more significant changes to your style from your academy years to your recent works than that of any artist in art history that we know of. Are you concerned that these stylistic shifts might make it difficult for viewers to grasp the essence of “Christopher Ku”?

A: Aesthetics is an inexplicable perception, and the depth of an artist’s understanding of aesthetics is demonstrated in their paintings. God does not play dice, while humans often find God when rolling a dice. I roll dice on the canvas. In the greater scheme of the

universe, whenever a creative style crystallises, it becomes a narrowly defined representation. The poet Adonis once said, “I am not yet Adonis, I am becoming Adonis.” A person dies as soon as they can clearly define who they are. I am not contented with the success of any individual style, so whenever I have pushed an artistic style to its limit, I want to roll the dice again. I want to go beyond the realm I have created and look for answers in other territories, in a quest to break from existing definitions. Like Sisyphus in Greek mythology who pushes the boulder up the mountain over and over again, I subvert myself and embrace my free will in a new light through these changes to my style. It is akin to the scientific search for the order of things: each creative style is a transformation of different measurements, and each approach can only be used for probing into one aspect of nature.

Different aspects may be references for one another, but there is no single perspective that points to an absolute answer. It also resembles a game in which a player wins for having the right skills, but the winner does not always take it all in the real world. In the end, a painting is meaningless; it only speaks to the desires of collectors and viewers. Only the artist is aware of the abyss of the creative process from which wisdom stems. The changes in my art may lead me to further explore the contours of knowledge and arrive at a deeper understanding of life, which is an inevitable process of human evolution.

簡歷

- 1988–1990 英國皇家藝術學院，藝術碩士學位，倫敦
1984–1988 基利斯藝術學院，藝術系榮譽學士學位，亞巴甸
1977–1981 亞巴甸商業學院，美術設計文憑，亞巴甸

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- 2022 迴盪·繪畫（展覽第一節），明畫廊，香港
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2016 福爾摩沙101國際藝術博覽會，台北
2014 二又二分之一周年慶，谷敏昭美術館，高雄
2012 谷敏昭：早期草稿，上下當代藝廊，香港
2011 Between Thoughts and Existence，Blue Lotus 畫廊，香港
慾望·抽離 – 谷敏昭創作個展，谷敏昭美術館，高雄
2008 谷敏昭創作個展，Blue Lotus 畫廊，香港
2004 谷敏昭畫展，漢雅軒，香港
2004 大一藝術設計學院，香港
未完的突破 – 谷敏昭哲學及超現實意念畫展 State-of-the-Arts 畫廊，香港
2003 Beyond Boundaries，牛棚藝術村，香港
2001 時間和存在，Nokia畫廊，藝穗會，香港
2000 Chouinard畫廊，香港
1998 The Quaker 畫廊，倫敦
1997 Noah's Art 畫廊，黎巴嫩
1994 漢麗埃塔別墅酒店，倫敦
哥倫娜達商場，倫敦
1993 洛倫理中心，蘇格蘭
1992 Wine From Paris 有限公司，愛丁堡
Citizens 畫廊，愛丁堡
1989 亞巴甸皇家醫院，亞巴甸

精選聯覽

- 2018 凝 – 兩岸三地藝術家聯展，明畫廊，香港
2017 有所思 – 四人聯展，盈鑾畫廊，香港
2015 存在思覺，香港視覺藝術中心，香港
2014 忱，香港視覺藝術中心，香港
2013 首屆澳門藝術博覽會，澳門
2012 形色線：當代香港繪畫，香港浸會大學顧明均展覽廳，香港
2010 原初的輪廓，G16藝文空間，香港
2009 Summer Delights，Blue Lotus畫廊，香港
Primo Strokes，G16藝文空間，香港
岸：國際文學與視藝展（信和集團主辦），中環廣場、OC畫廊，香港
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- 2008 Fine Art Contemplation, 牛棚藝術村, 香港
- 2005 Your Price – Interact Art Market, 牛棚藝術村, 香港
- 2004 漢雅軒二十年慶, 香港藝術中心, 香港
Art is Life, Life is Art, Para Site 藝術空間, 香港
- 2003 形影不離, 香港藝術學院藝廊, 香港
攜手新世紀: 第三屆中國油畫展, 中國美術館, 北京
- 2002 視藝集觀, 香港大學美術博物館, 香港
空間藝術, 香港文化中心, 香港
舞進新紀元, 沙田大會堂, 香港
香港藝術學院教師展, 香港藝術中心包氏畫廊, 香港
香港大學教師展, 香港大學美術博物館, 香港
- 2001 香港藝術雙年展, 香港藝術館, 香港
- 1996 Absolut Secret, 英國皇家藝術學院, 倫敦
- 1995 德爾菲娜工作室開放·德爾菲娜信託工作室(現稱: 德爾菲娜基金會), 倫敦
- 1994 Journeys West – 英國藝術協會巡迴展, 英國
The Whitechapel Open, Whitechapel 畫廊, 倫敦
- 1993 Studio Work, 亞巴甸城市畫廊, 亞巴甸
- 1992 Scottish Society of Art, 蘇格蘭皇家學院, 愛丁堡
- 1991 Open Shutter, Citizen工作室, 愛丁堡
Aberdeen Annual, 亞巴甸城市畫廊, 亞巴甸
Paper Work 91 · Seagate 畫廊, 鄧迪
- 1990 Behind the Metal Shutter, Citizens 工作室, 愛丁堡
Contemporary View 1990, 亨利·摩爾畫廊, 英國皇家藝術學院, 倫敦
Museum 2000, 德國
Paper Work 90, Seagate 畫廊, 鄧迪
藝術系碩士畢業展, 英國皇家藝術學院, 倫敦
Galerie Zur Alten Deutschen Schule, 瑞士
Into the Nineties, Mall 畫廊, 倫敦
The Decade Ahead, The Scottish畫廊, 愛丁堡
國際當代藝術博覽會, 奧林匹亞展覽中心, 倫敦
- 1989 In The City, Young Unknowns畫廊, 倫敦
第二屆週年比賽, The Square 畫廊, 倫敦
Art Direction, The Art Directors有限公司, 倫敦
Galerie Zur Alten Deutschen Schule, 瑞士
- 1988 藝術系學士畢業展, 基利斯藝術學院, 亞巴甸
藝術年展, 蘇格蘭皇家學院, 愛丁堡
學生藝術展, 蘇格蘭皇家學院, 愛丁堡
亞巴甸週年展覽, 亞巴甸城市畫廊, 亞巴甸
寫生學會展覽, 亞巴甸城市畫廊, 亞巴甸
The New Generation, Compass 畫廊, 格拉斯哥
- 1987 藝術年展, 蘇格蘭皇家學院, 愛丁堡
學生藝術展, 蘇格蘭皇家學院, 愛丁堡
亞巴甸週年展覽, 亞巴甸城市畫廊, 亞巴甸
寫生學會展覽, 亞巴甸城市畫廊, 亞巴甸
藝術與文學, 水果市場畫廊, 愛丁堡
週年展覽, 格拉斯哥藝術皇家學院, 格拉斯哥
- 1986 Rank Xerox 國家精選巡迴展覽, 英國

獎項

- 1993 安達信會計師事務所獎狀，倫敦
- 1991 亞巴甸城市週年展覽 — 高等榮譽獎，亞巴甸
- 1990 英國皇家藝術學院 — 約翰米頓獎學金，倫敦
- 1988 亞巴甸城市週年展覽 — 硯殼石油公司二等獎，亞巴甸
- 1987 蘇格蘭建設代理壁畫比賽 — 優異獎，蘇格蘭
- 蘇格蘭皇家學院年展 — 拉甸馬獎，蘇格蘭
- 蘇格蘭皇家學院學生展 — 一等獎 及 麥吉連金牌，蘇格蘭

成立

2011–2016 谷敏昭美術館，高雄

機構收藏

- Marlow Art Collection，英國
- 亞巴甸皇家醫院，亞巴甸
- 基利斯藝術學院，亞巴甸
- 英國皇家藝術學院，倫敦
- PI Group 有限公司，倫敦
- Museum 2000，德國
- National Electronics Holdings Limited，香港
- Maten扶輪社·黎巴嫩
- The New Cultural Revolution 餐廳·倫敦 (作品長期展於英皇路切爾西及康登鎮分店)

Biography

- 1990 Royal College of Art, MA in Painting, London
- 1988 Gray's School of Art, BA (Hons) 1st Class in Painting, Aberdeen
- 1981 College of Commerce, Diploma in Art and Design, Aberdeen

Solo Exhibitions

- 2022 Painting of Reverberation (Exhibition Phase 1), Illuminati Fine Art, Hong Kong
- Painting of Reverberation (Exhibition Phase 2), Illuminati Fine Art, Hong Kong
- 2016 Formosa 101 Art Fair, Taipei
- 2014 二又二分之一 Anniversary, KU ART Museum, Kaohsiung
- 2012 Early Sketches of Christopher KU, Nexto Contemporary Art, Hong Kong
- 2011 Between Thoughts and Existence, Blue Lotus Gallery, Hong Kong
- Desire, Extraction - Christopher Ku, KU ART Museum, Kaohsiung
- 2008 Christopher Ku Solo Show, Blue Lotus Gallery, Hong Kong
- 2004 Paintings by Christopher Ku, Hanart TZ Gallery, Hong Kong
- First Institute of Art and Design Gallery, Hong Kong
- Unfinished Project, State-of-the-Arts Gallery, Hong Kong
- 2003 Beyond Boundaries, Cattle Depot Artist Village, Hong Kong
- 2001 Time and Being, The Fringe Club - Nokia Gallery, Hong Kong
- 2000 Chouinard Fine Art, Hong Kong
- 1998 The Quaker Gallery, London
- 1997 Noah's Art Gallery, Lebanon
- 1994 Henrietta House Hotel, London
- Colonnade Walk Shopping Centre, London
- 1993 Lochgelly Centre, Scotland
- 1992 Wine From Paris LTD, Edinburgh
- Citizens Gallery, Edinburgh
- 1989 Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, Aberdeen

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2018 Cohesion, Illuminati Fine Art, Hong Kong
- 2017 Links of Thought, Cheer Bell Gallery, Hong Kong
- 2015 Critical Existentialism, Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre, Hong Kong
- 2014 Painted Passion, Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre, Hong Kong
- 2013 The 1st Edition of Art Macao, Macau
- 2012 Form, Colour, Line : Contemporary Hong Kong Painting, Koo Ming Kown Exhibition Gallery, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong
- 2010 原初的輪廓, Ground Sixteen, Hong Kong
- 2009 Summer Delights, Blue Lotus Gallery, Hong Kong
- Primo Strokes, Ground Sixteen, Hong Kong
- Shore: International Literary and Visual Art Exhibition (organized by Sino Group), Central

- Plaza & OC Gallery, Hong Kong
 Figurative and Abstract, Hong Kong Central Library, Hong Kong
 2008 Fine Art Contemplation, Cattle Depot Artist Village, Hong Kong
 2005 Your Price - Interact Art Market, Cattle Depot Artist Village, Hong Kong
 2004 20 Years of Hanart TZ Gallery, Hong Kong Arts Centre, Hong Kong
 Art is Life, Life is Art, Para Site, Hong Kong
 2003 Inseparable, The Gallery of Hong Kong Art School, Hong Kong
 Embracing The New Century - The 3rd Edition of Chinese Oil Painting Exhibition, The National Art Museum of China, Beijing
 2002 A Love of Art, University Museum and Art Gallery, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong
 Space Art Ex, Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Hong Kong
 Dancing in the Millennium, Sha Tin Town Hall, Hong Kong
 The Art School Lecturers Exhibition, Pao Galleries - Hong Kong Arts Centre, Hong Kong
 University of Hong Kong Lecturers Exhibition, University Museum and Art Gallery, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong
 2001 Hong Kong Art Biennial 2001, Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong
 1996 Absolut Secret, Royal College of Art, London
 1995 Delfina Studio Open, Delfina Studio Trust (now called Delfina Foundation), London
 1994 The Whitechapel Open, Whitechapel Gallery, London
 1994 Journeys West - British Art Council's Touring Exhibition, United Kingdom
 Studio Work, Aberdeen City Art Gallery, Aberdeen
 1992 Scottish Society of Art, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh
 1991 Open Shutter, Citizen Studio, Edinburgh
 Aberdeen Annual, Aberdeen City Gallery, Aberdeen
 Paper Work 91, Seagate Gallery, Dundee
 1990 Behind the Metal Shutter, Citizens Studio, Edinburgh
 Contemporary View 1990, Henry Moore Gallery, Royal College of Art, London
 Paper Work 90, Seagate Gallery, Dundee
 Museum 2000, Germany
 Into the Nineties, Mall Galleries, London
 MA Degree Show, Royal College of Art, London
 Galerie Zur Alten Deutschen Schule, Switzerland
 The International Contemporary Art Fair, Olympia Exhibition Centre, London
 The Decade Ahead, The Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh
 1989 In The City, Young Unknown Gallery, London
 The 2nd Annual Competition, The Square Gallery, London
 Art Direction, The Art Directors' Company LTD, London
 Galerie Zur Alten Deutschen Schule, Switzerland
 1988 BA Degree Show, Gray's School of Art, Aberdeen
 Annual Exhibition, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh
 Aberdeen Annual Exhibition, Aberdeen City Gallery, Aberdeen
 1988 Student Annual Exhibition, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh
 Sketch Club Exhibition, Aberdeen City Gallery, Aberdeen
 The New Generation, Compass Gallery, Glasgow
 1987 Annual Exhibition, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh

Aberdeen Annual, Aberdeen City Gallery, Aberdeen
Student Annual Exhibition, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh
Sketch Club Exhibition, Aberdeen Art Gallery, Aberdeen
Art & Literature, Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh
Royal Glasgow Institute Annual, Glasgow
1986 Rank Xerox National Selected Touring Exhibition, United Kingdom

Awards

1993 Arthur Andersen LLP Award, London
1991 Aberdeen Annual Exhibition – Highly Commented, Aberdeen
1990 Royal College of Art – John Milton Scholarship Award, London
1988 Aberdeen Annual Exhibition – Shell Expo Award, Aberdeen
1987 Scottish Development Agency Mural Competition - Runner Up Prize, United Kingdom
1987 Annual Exhibition, Royal Scottish Academy - Latimer Award, United Kingdom
1987 Student Exhibition, Royal Scottish Academy - First Prize & The Maclaine Watters Gold Medal, United Kingdom

Establish

2011-2016 KU ART Museum · Kaohsiung · Taiwan

Institute & Corporate Collections

Marlow Art Collection, United Kingdom
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, Aberdeen
Gray's School of Art, Aberdeen
Royal College of Art, London
PI Group LTD, London
Museum 2000, Germany
National Electronics Holdings Limited, Hong Kong
Rotary Club of Maten, Lebanon
The New Cultural Revolution Restaurant, London(Work in Permanent Display in King's Road, Chelsea and Camden Town Branch)

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