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## **Back and forths between Chinese painting, calligraphy, and poetry by the Taiwanese contemporary artist Lo Ch'ing**

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### **Abstract :**

The Taiwanese artist Lo Ch'ing, born on the Chinese mainland in 1948, practices ink painting and calligraphy, while modernizing it by using bright colors and incorporating other aesthetic experiences to it. We can detect some influence of the European painters René Magritte, Paul Klee or Jean Dubuffet on him. This artist, who is also a poet, shows great sensitivity to the written word: he tries to play in an inventive way with the association of writing and picture, which is so natural in Chinese culture. He feels free to partially break traditional rules of calligraphy and give it a pictorial aspect, but it never gives up the legibility of writing, while emphasizing its iconic and energetic dimension. Through a humorous approach in his art, he makes us reflect on the contemporary world and on our existence and environment and creates a universal language.

**Keywords:** Chinese ink painting; calligraphy; writing and image; postmodernism; humor; Taiwanese art

How can you be a Chinese scholar-painter nowadays, after so many political and social upheavals? Born in 1948, the painter and poet Lo Ch'ing 羅青 never doubted the need to perpetuate an art from a bygone era, that of the literati elite, which was disintegrated after the Revolution of 1911. A native of Hunan, born in Qingdao, Lo Ch'ing came at the age of one to Taiwan in 1949 with his parents in the wake of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government. He was educated in Chinese classics as well as in Western humanities. He was initiated to classical ink painting in court tradition with Pu Xinyu 溥心畬 (1896-1963), an imperial Manchu family member. Having studied English literature at the Fu Jen university, he got a Master of Arts in compared literature from the University of Washington in Seattle in 1974, after publishing his highly regarded first poetry collection, *Six Ways of Eating a Watermelon* (吃西瓜的方法 *Chi xigua de fangfa*) (1972). His experience abroad has encouraged him to engage a dialogue with the past and foreign cultures. I would like to analyze the way this artist, who deliberately opted for a modernized ink painting, reinvents with humor the so-called "triple perfection" (三絕 *sanjue*) of ancient literati (painting, poetry, and calligraphy).

## A scholar-painter of the new era

Obviously, Lo Ch'ing is willing to perpetuate the literati tradition. Convinced of the relevance of ink painting, he applies to it the global concept of postmodernism derived from the Western academic discourse in order to revitalize it. This strange combination of Chinese traditional and Western contemporary aesthetics results from his personal development. Lo Ch'ing strives to create an art which could be called "neo-literati painting". His practice builds on ancient literati art in several aspects, while finding its way on the international artistic scene.

Another specificity brings Lo Ch'ing closer to ancient scholars: he is not the only contemporary painter to claim himself as their heir<sup>1</sup>, but he is one of the few to practice together painting, calligraphy, and poetry. The long tradition of associating poetry and painting, already advocated by the poet Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101), but which was actually practiced only from the Yuan Dynasty on by Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1234-1322), is familiar to him, as a keen collector of ancient works. Thus, he has opted for a parallel, sometimes joined, practice of both arts. He intends to surpass, in his poetry, the poetic modernist movement close to hermeticism of Lo Fu 洛夫 (1928-2018), and in his painting, the pictorial abstraction of Liu Kuo-sung 劉國松 (1932-). Thus, his poetry is characterized by a simple and prosaic language, while his painting has a narrative dimension, even sometimes a political and social content, far from the pure formal research of the painters of Fifth Moon group led by Liu Kuo-sung in the 1960s. His teachers, who were very traditionalist, expected him to write classical poetry, but Lo Ch'ing preferred from the outset to express himself in a more modern literary style, more immediate, more able, according to him, to translate his feelings and ideas. Turning to a resolutely modernist poetry, he realized that he had to adapt his pictorial style.

He decided to draw a portrait of the world as he observes it around him, by intermingling traditional motifs and contemporary issues. In accordance with traditional Chinese painting, a system of signs very similar to that of writing and which did not promote any idea of representation, one discovers in Lo Ch'ing's works a codified language which is enriched and refreshed. Besides the conventional motifs of traditional painting, he adds more modern ones, which create a surreal atmosphere reminiscent of Magritte: roads, cars, planes, railways, electric wires, mobile phones, flying saucers... Lo Ch'ing sometimes turns his eyes to the future by addressing in his works science-fiction or ecology. He also turns it to the past, as evidenced by his series called "Conversation with the great masters", where he "calls" several great classical painters whose style has inspired him. His teacher Pu Xinyu 溥心畬 (1896-1963) was already using color, but he had a different, much more moderate approach. Under the brush of Lo Ch'ing, there is an explosion of bright colors that can at first bewilder the amateur of classic painting. Above all, in order to face the harsh reality of the world, he imbues his work a sense of humor.

## Writing and painting

Chinese painting, in order to convey an idea of humor, uses funny characters who reveal the truth in a roundabout way. At the end of the Ming Dynasty, painters like Wu Bin 吳彬 (1573-1620), Chen Hongshou 陳洪綬 (1598-1652), and Ding Yunpeng 丁雲鵬 (1547-1628) liked to express humor through the figure of an arhat (a human being who has gained

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<sup>1</sup> The exhibition *Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China* (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014) gives a good overview of the many ink painting and calligraphy artists in China, from Liu Dan and Xu Bing to Yang Yongliang and Wang Tiande.

insight into the true nature of existence and has achieved *nirvana*) with varied expressions, as Lo Ch'ing explains in his latest book<sup>2</sup>.

In his *Grudging arhat* (賭氣尊者 *Duqi zunzhe*) (28 x 20 cm, 1985), Lo Ch'ing obviously draws inspiration from Chen Hongshou (fig. 1). For him, as for the painters of old, “poem and painting are the two perfectly reversible sides of the same vision of the world”<sup>3</sup>. He expresses the same ideas through one or other of these two media and associates them when he places a calligraphic inscription on a painting. His poetry, nurtured by modernism, which was the main trend in the 1960s, escapes from that school's influence to handle with subtle imagery and contrived scenes, giving a new impetus to poetic experimentation. He explores a profound philosophical framework the dualism between concrete reality and human imagination. His poetry, written in a lucid language accessible to everybody and in a provoking, playful tone, clearly differs from the Taiwanese poetry of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, which rather inclined to a serious approach. Lo Ch'ing refuses any ready-made description of reality and relies on an abstract conceptual framework, using objects that are ideas, most like the poetry of Wallace Stevens. The objects range from the clichés of Chinese poetry (moon, mountain...) to the bizarre: telephone, lights... Reading a poem is often akin to puzzling-out a riddle. Lo Ch'ing “is perhaps best known in both media for his playful, often zany, attitude toward established forms”<sup>4</sup>.

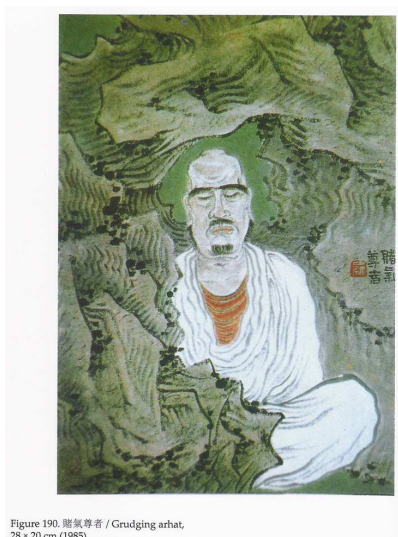


Figure 190. 賭氣尊者 / Grudging arhat.  
28 x 20 cm (1985)

Fig. 1. *Grudging arhat* (賭氣尊者), 28 x 20 cm, 1985.

Let's have a look at the poem which the same title as the painting. It perhaps inspired the painting, although it was written four years earlier.

### The Arhat of Battling Anger

With hatred  
He isolates all the smothering anger hidden in him  
Squeezing from the left pressing from the right  
Squeezing pressing it into a little  
Weird-shaped strange-formed pebble

<sup>2</sup> Lo Ch'ing, 當代藝術市場結構 *Dangdai yishu shichang jiegou* (The contemporary art market structure), Taipei, Jiuge 九歌, 2019, p. 85-90.

<sup>3</sup> Léon Vandermeersch, « L'écriture en Chine », in Anne-Marie Christin (ed.), *Histoire de l'écriture : de l'idéogramme au multimédia*, Paris, Flammarion, 2001, p. 67-86, here p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> Michelle Yeh & N.G.D. Malmqvist (ed.), *Frontier Taiwan: An Anthology of Modern Chinese Poetry*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2001, p. 298.

And then spits them from his mouth into a string  
Just like a cement truck  
Spits them out to form a solid stone grotto  
Layer upon layer he wraps around himself  
King upon his throne<sup>5</sup>

We obviously find elements of the poem in the painting, as if it were the final scene: in a grotto, a king is sitting on his throne. This combination is an integral part of the tradition and is revived by Lo Ch'ing, who rarely inscribes the poem on the painting itself. There is a physical separation, leading to two different creations on a different medium, neither explanation nor illustration of each other. Independent, however, they communicate with each other. The title and signature in the form of the red seal appear on one side, in a fairly traditional way.

Lo Ch'ing proclaims to be influenced by postmodernism. Copies, but also play and humor, which are connected with postmodernism, are also an inherent part of the Chinese pictorial tradition. That is why he allows himself to draw freely for example here from the style and spirit of Chen Hongshou. He points out that it much more difficult to be humorous in landscape paintings. He reminds us that traditional Chinese painters expressed their temperament and thought through landscapes. But indirectly reflecting reality is also a specificity of humor. A painting entitled *Myriad of Stars and Banana Leaves* (萬點星光大葉搨 *Wan dian xingguang da yeshan*) (68 x 137 cm, 2018) depicts huge banana trees under a starry sky above tiny light-flooded houses (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. *Myriad of stars and banana leaves* (萬點星光大葉搨), 68 x 137 cm, 2018.

He tries again to make us smile through the incongruity of these disproportionate trees<sup>6</sup>. At the same time, he reflects his experience of life in contemporary society. Lo Ch'ing evokes in his way what Ellul calls the “technician system”<sup>7</sup>. Technological innovations, however, are not always presented as negative by Lo Ch'ing, as its many nocturnal landscapes communicating a strange sense of beauty. The idea hardly seems new, if you think of the many moonlit landscapes of the Chinese and especially Japanese and Korean traditional painting, but the lampposts and well-lit houses, as well as the contrast between shadow and light, are unusual. Actually, his artistic vocabulary also echoes Western painters like René Magritte and Paul Klee. The inscription on this painting, the title written

<sup>5</sup> Joseph R. Allen, *Forbidden Games and Video Poems: The Poetry of Yang Mu and Lo Ch'ing*, University of Washington Press, 1993, p. 221.

<sup>6</sup> *Dangdai yishu shichang jieyou*, op. cit., p. 85-90

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Ellul, *Le système technicien*, Paris, Cherche Midi, 2012 (1977).

in small characters, as well as the seal, fully respect tradition, in which “painting and writing are closely intertwined” according to Anne-Marie Christin<sup>8</sup>.

One of his humorous paintings shows the moon hidden by coal in the sky, trying to express the idea of pollution with humor. This ecological awareness is obvious in another work entitled *The poem you have in yourself is becoming a cloud* (胸內詩成雲 *Xiong nei shi cheng yun*) (unknown dimensions, 1992) (fig. 3). Here, the inscription is unconventional. Under the title written in a calligraphic style close to the traditional seal script we can see a mountainous landscape, where lush black forests strewn with red spots cover the two mountains at the forefront, which refer to what the painter calls our “post-industrial era”. A pavilion stands between two mountains, while bluish peaks appear in the distance. A haze, or rather a black smoke strangely comes out of one of the two mountains. A poem is inscribed inside this plume of smoke.

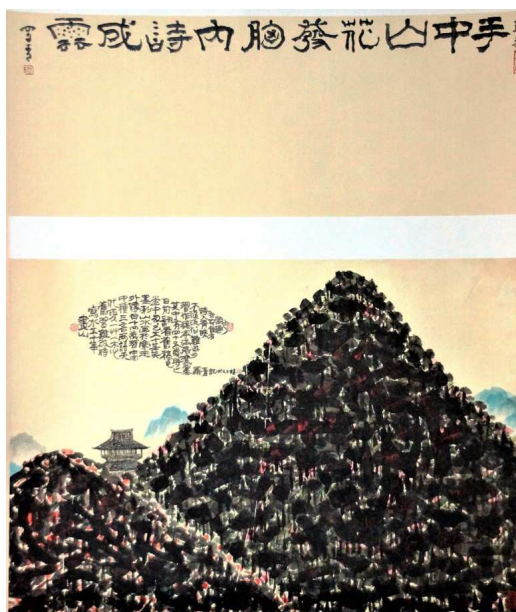


Fig. 3. *The poem you have in yourself is becoming a cloud* (胸內詩成雲), unknown dimensions, 1992.

Many series ask serious questions with a light tone. The series “Where is the recluse?” suggests that ancient scholars no longer fit contemporary lifestyles. In *No recluse, please!*, (1990, 140 x 69 cm), at the edge of a road that occupies half of a diagonal composition, a weathered wooden sign urges travelers to get out of there: “Forbidden to recluses”. Despite the convenience of modern transport, isolated walkers or hermits are not welcome. The road, which refers to speed, also means changing rhythms of life in our hectic time, where no one can engage in contemplation and meditation in front of nature anymore.

In a large painting called *Combat of words in the empty mountain* (空山文字鬥 *Kong shan wenzi dou*) (2012, 192 x 479 cm), writing is used once again in an unusual way. A man made up of Chinese characters suggesting how much he is inhabited by literature and poetry tries to catch ancient Chinese books, a modern book, as well as a mobile phone, a brush, a pen, a fan, a paper plane, flying over him, which are as elusive as the objects in Miro’s paintings (fig. 4). Does Lo Ch’ing want to allude to the intellectual desert of the years of the Cultural Revolution? He says he appreciates the work of Chinese artist Xu Bing 徐冰 (1955-), who created fake characters in his famous installation *The Book of Heaven*, because of its implicit political content<sup>9</sup>. He sees it as a denunciation of the Cultural Revolution, as meaningless as the characters invented by Xu Bing. Lo Ch’ing uses

<sup>8</sup> Anne-Marie Christin, « Pour une sémiotique visuelle: les leçons de l’idéogramme », in Nathalie Preiss & Joëlle Raineau (ed.), *L’image à la lettre*, Paris-Musées & Des Cendres, 2005, p. 253-273, here p. 258.

<sup>9</sup> Interview of Lo Ch’ing, 10 June 2015.

a concept essential to the understanding of his work, a concept peculiar to classical poetry, the *xing* 興, which is based on associations of ideas or evocative images, to reinvent painting by integrating a juxtaposition of images. Thus, he tries to better reflect the temporal and geographical tension that characterizes our age by associating ancient and contemporary objects.



Fig. 4. *Fight of words in the empty mountain* (空山文字鬥), 192 x 479 cm, 2012.

This playful dimension is to be found in many other paintings by Lo Ch'ing. In *The Cypress of the Old Palace Fishing the Old Rising Sun* (2002, 137 x 69 cm), the branch of the tree imitates the arm of a fisherman in a very decorative composition with tortuous forms and a strong contrast between red and black tones. This motif could also be an allusion to the political situation (the declining red sun of communism) in Beijing, represented by a cypress around the Forbidden City. This political interpretation is confirmed by another work entitled *The Cypress Palace that I did not see in 1970* (1970), where the silhouette of the tree is visible against a red sky: the artist wants to show that his destiny was different from that of the painters of the continent, facing Maoist whims.

Another specificity of postmodernism, according to Fredric Jameson, is “the subject’s death, the end of individuality, the eclipse of subjectivity in a new anonymity”<sup>10</sup>. Is this the meaning Lo Ch'ing wants to give to his series of “self-portraits” where he never appears? In any case, he ponders subjectivity and identity through a humorous staging of his self, which is represented in his paintings in the form of seals.

Some paintings, such as *The Rising Sun* (旭日 出生 *Xuri chusheng*) (1969), where the same seal rises above the roof of a house built at the foot of a hill, defy all logic. The author plays with the spectator because the sudden emergence of the seal is as improbable as the transformation of a circle into a square.

The artist remains invisible in his paintings, being faithful to the Chinese pictorial tradition, where the human being appears insignificant, compared to the greatness of nature, while introducing in its own way the Western notion of self-portrait. The use of the seal, which is a graphic image of the artist’s name, seems to echo the figures represented by the painter, who “recognizes the arbitrary nature of the signified things” according to Craig Clunas<sup>11</sup>. Seals, which usually make the blank areas of the image a “place of memory”, become here elements of the composition among others<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Le postmodernisme ou la logique culturelle du capitalisme tardif*, Paris, ENSBA, 2011, p. 256.

<sup>11</sup> Craig Clunas, *Art in China*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 219.

<sup>12</sup> Anne-Marie Christin *Poétique du blanc : vide et intervalle dans la civilisation de l’alphabet*, Paris : Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 2009, p. 59.

In another painting entitled *UFO in China (self-portrait)* (不明飛行物在中國 / 自畫像 *Bu ming feixingwu zai Zhongguo: zihuaxiang*) (69 x 69 cm, 2006), the seal appears at the meeting point of two vertiginous cliffs seen from below, forming two triangles connected to an angle, represented in front of a dark blue starry night sky, as if Lo Ch'ing was in danger of falling any time in this awkward position (**fig. 5**). Does the artist want to indicate that he gets lost and no longer recognizes this place? Is the reference to a UFO a question about the future of the world? Or does it mean that China has become so alien to him that he feels himself as someone coming from another planet?

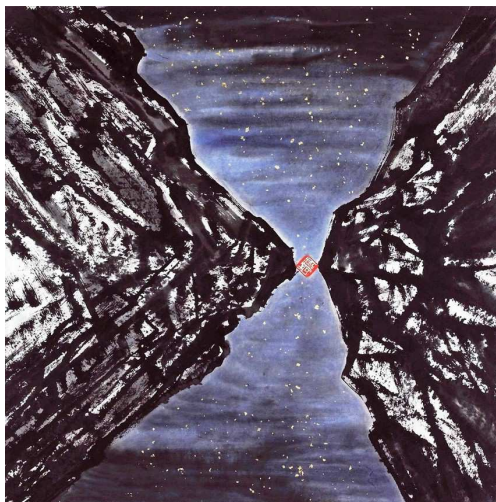


Fig. 5. *UFO in China : self-portrait* (不明飛行物在中國 / 自畫像), 69 x 69 cm, 2006.

### Calligraphic creations

The practice of calligraphy accompanies his practice as a painter. Having started studying painting at the age of thirteen, Lo Ch'ing was persuaded by his teachers of the need to learn calligraphy for an essentially practical reason: to be able to sign his works and add a comment in line with tradition.

As shown by Paul Manfredi, Lo Ch'ing developed a syncretic visual-verbal aesthetic by founding what he calls the school of “Contingent Revelation calligraphy” (妙悟書法 *Miaowu shufa*), applying a notion of in-between to the phenomenology of the artistic artwork<sup>13</sup>. He defines the “Contingent Revelation calligraphy”, as emerging

1. Between the Chinese character and its meaning;
2. Between the point, stroke and surface of the calligraphic work, and further, between the strokes, the characters that are part of it, the words that are part of it, the sentences that are part of it, surface of the calligraphed work, between lines, between characters, between words, between lines, between lines, between text and paper;
3. Between the lines, between the black dots, between the black surfaces, between density and lightness, dryness and humidity, between ink and color;
4. Between the interior and the exterior of the work, between the calligrapher and the spectator, between the old and the modern, the local and the foreigner;
5. Between the literary, the visual art and design, the written and the musical, fine arts, design, between writing and music, theater, cinema, dance and movement, between writing and sculpture or architecture;
6. Between the agrarian and the societal; the industrial, the postindustrial.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Manfredi, *Modern Poetry in China: A Visual-Verbal Dynamic*, Cambria Press, 2014, p. 76.

This aesthetic manifesto demonstrates his desire to modernize literati art in order to respond to this “strange and random collage combination of agricultural, industrial and postindustrial one which is like a broken mirror caught in a whirling vortex of kaleidoscopic changes accelerated by the prevailing internet technology.”<sup>14</sup>



Fig. 6. *Grotesque* (醜怪), unknown dimensions, 2009.

It is interesting to notice that writing and painting can be treated in the same way. In *Grotesque* (醜怪 *Chouguai*) (unknown dimensions, 2009), they could easily be exchanged (Fig. 6). A rock, composed of an assemblage of red, blue, green or white colored hues surrounded by thick black lines reminiscent of the style of the French painter Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985), reminds of these strange stones that Chinese literati appreciated so much: they were in their eyes miniaturized mountains and concentrated vital energy according to Taoism. That is why the notion of ugliness and strangeness suggested by the title has a positive meaning. The rock is perched on a narrow pedestal also consisting of black lines and color, forming the two characters of the painter's name: Lo Ch'ing. The boundary between writing and painting is blurred.

In the eyes of Lo Ch'ing, calligraphy, indeed, is an in-between art, an art of form and non-form, both verbal and visual, which rests on a harmony of the written characters and their strokes. Thus, the second drawn line will have to correspond to the first, as well as the last one, according to the principle of the “unique brushstroke” formulated by Shitao 石濤 (1641-1720). According to Lo Ch'ing, calligraphy can communicate the most sophisticated Chinese ideas to everyone, even to those who can't read Chinese. Calligraphy represents life and energy rather than natural forms. To write the character “one” (一), an horizontal line, we must have in mind the rapid movement of clouds in the sky. To draw a vertical line, one should think of a vertiginous cliff. Lo Ch'ing claims a total freedom in calligraphic styles, which he mixes like Zheng Banqiao 鄭板橋 (1693-1765), as well as for the stroke order. His style is drawn on a variety of sources, including the artist Xu Sangeng 徐三庚 (1826-1890), who himself was inspired by archaic writing on stone and bronze. This gives the calligraphy of Lo Ch'ing a rich historicity. He thinks that modern technology allows us to override the principles established by Cang Jie 倉頡, the mythical

<sup>14</sup> See *Window Landscapes*, an essay by Lo Ch'ing:  
<http://loching.com/%E7%BE%85%E9%9D%92%E5%8F%B0%E5%8C%97%E8%A6%96%E7%AA%97%E5%B1%B1%E6%B0%B4%E7%95%AB%E5%B1%95%EF%BC%9Alo-chings-windows-landscape-show.html> (read on 25/07/2019).

inventor of Chinese characters. In the past, all the inscribed papers had to be burned, proving the sacredness of Chinese writing. According to Lo Ch'ing, stroke order and directions can now break the rules. However, he wishes to preserve the linguistic dimension of calligraphy, which differs from abstract painting because it conveys a message. For him, pure abstraction is a limit that should not be crossed<sup>15</sup>.

Under the brush of Lo Ch'ing, the characters often look almost pictographic, as if they were returning to their primitive form, like for example the word “landscape” (山水 *shanshui*), in *Spring landscape* (春山水 *Chun shanshui*) (69 x 67 cm, 1997) (**fig. 7**): the “mountain” character 山 is colored in blue, while the character “water”, written with a few dynamic lines revealing the use of the flying white technique where the brush lifts slightly to let see the white paper in the middle of the line evokes a fast flowing river. Several seals have been affixed in an unusual way on the ink lines. The route seems inspired by the Sigillary calligraphic style called “Great Seal” (大篆 *da zhuan*), which dates back to the 9th century BC.

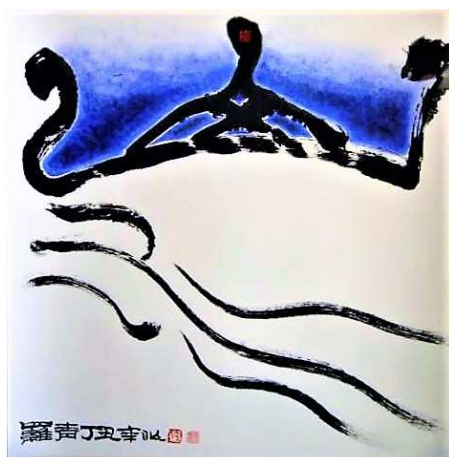


Fig. 7. *Spring landscape* (春山水), 69 x 67 cm, 1997.

We find the same feeling of freedom and sense of well-being in the natural world in two other calligraphies, *Wind* (風 *feng*) (69 x 70 cm, 2017) and *Flinging* (甩 *shuai*) (69 x 70 cm, 2017) (**fig. 8 et 9**). Both consist of only one character. Painting usually represents the wind by showing its effects on blowing trees, on a churning sea, on floating clothes. Here, the wind is suggested in an original manner by a character drawn with a single fluid line derived from cursive calligraphy. The impression of fluidity, movement and air flow is strengthened by transverse and oblique blue sinuous lines. In the second one, the central stroke of the character 甩 *shuai* is extended until a cluster of small inscriptions punctuated by red seals, which are the date and the signature of the artist. The Chinese character 甩 *shuai* strongly suggests a kite flying towards the blue sky: this image enhances the semantic value of the character.

<sup>15</sup> Interview of Lo Ch'ing, 10 June 2015.



Fig. 8. *Wind* (風), 69 x 70 cm, 2017.



Fig. 9. *Flinging* (甩), 69 x 70 cm, 2017.

Lastly, an amazing calligraphic work still deserves our attention. It consists of black and white shapes on a red background, which could again remind of the tangled elements of Jean Dubuffet, or Paul Klee: *Mirror* (鏡 *jing*) (69 x 70 cm, 2017) (**fig. 10**). In this strange amalgam of repeated shapes, we can identify the character 鏡 *jing*, but we can also detect some wide-eyed faces that are looking at us. Does the artist intend to represent himself in a mirror? This proliferation of characters makes us feel uncomfortable or threatened. We have the feeling that the character is watching us, as the philosopher Georges Didi-Huberman suggests in his book *What we see, what is looking at us*<sup>16</sup>. We see how through the strength of the written sign alone, the painter raises questions about himself and ourselves.

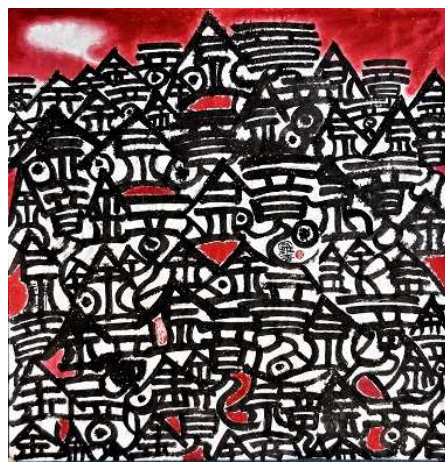


Fig. 10. *Mirror* (鏡), 69 x 70 cm, 2017.

## Conclusion

Lo Ch'ing “is constantly experimenting with the limits of the materials and genres, in ways that defy not only native aesthetic conventions but also international ones.”<sup>17</sup> The heritage of Chinese civilization appears to him as an available “resource”, or as a means of awakening a cultural consciousness rather than an instrument of affirming an essentialized

<sup>16</sup> *Ce que nous voyons, ce qui nous regarde*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1999.

<sup>17</sup> Michelle Yeh & N.G.D. Malmqvist (ed.), *Frontier Taiwan: An Anthology of Modern Chinese Poetry*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2001, p. 298.

cultural identity in a nationalist perspective<sup>18</sup>. Convinced of the value of this heritage, Lo Ch'ing is intellectually and sentimentally attached to it, while infusing it with other artistic styles. He explores the limits of painting, poetry and calligraphy with humor, using seals in an unusual way. He opens new paths for them, determined to reflect the most contemporary concerns. With artists like Gao Qifeng 高奇峰 (1888-1933), Xu Beihong 徐悲鴻 (1895-1953), Feng Zikai 豐子愷 (1898-1975), or, in Taiwan, Yu Cheng-Yao 余承堯 (1898-1993), Liu Kuo-sung 劉國松 (1932-), and Yü P'eng 於彭 (1955-2014), Chinese painting of traditional style has already ventured on the ground of modernity. In turn, Lo Ch'ing tries to reflect his personal experience and to reveal his feeling and thoughts about contemporary China. He stimulates us to think about the world around us while making us laugh and manages to create a universal language.

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## Illustrations :

- Fig. 1. *Grudging arhat* (賭氣尊者), 28 x 20 cm, 1985.
- Fig. 2. *Myriad of stars and banana leaves* (萬點星光大葉搨), 68 x 137 cm, 2018.
- Fig. 3. *The poem you have in yourself is becoming a cloud* (胸內詩成雲), unknown dimensions, 1992.
- Fig. 4. *Fight of words in the empty mountain* (空山文字鬥), 192 x 479 cm, 2012.
- Fig. 5. *UFO in China : self-portrait* (不明飛行物在中國 / 自畫像), 69 x 69 cm, 2006.
- Fig. 6. *Grotesque* (醜怪), unknown dimensions, 2009.
- Fig. 7. *Spring landscape* (春山水), 69 x 67 cm, 1997.

<sup>18</sup> François Jullien, *Il n'y a pas d'identité culturelle*, Paris, L'Herne, 2016, p. 51-56.

Fig. 8. *Wind* (風), 69 x 70 cm, 2017.

Fig. 9. *Flinging* (甩), 69 x 70 cm, 2017.

Fig. 10. *Mirror* (鏡), 69 x 70 cm, 2017.

**Biography:**

Marie Laureillard, Associate Professor of Chinese language and civilisation at the Lumière-Lyon 2 University in France, member of the Lyons Institute of East Asian Studies and vice-president of the CEEI (Center for Writing and Image), is specialized in modern art and literature history, semiotics, and cultural studies of China. She has published *Feng Zikai, a Lyrical Cartoonist: Dialogue between Words and Strokes* (Paris, L'Harmattan, 2017) and co-edited *Ghosts in the Far East in the Past and Present* (Paris, Presses de l'Inalco, 2017) and *At the crossroads of art collections, Asia-the West from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the Present* (Paris, Hémisphères, 2019). She is currently working on cartoon journals from the Chinese Republican period (around 1930) and on Taiwanese art since the 1920s.

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