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Ho Ho Ying, Initiator of Modern Art
[excerpt]

The history of humankind is all about the struggle between tradition and innovation.

Most people are comfortably carried along in the powerful flow of habit and conservative notions, drifting with the tide. It is highly uncertain that they would come ashore, excavate the mud and sand, clear the weeds, and carve a brand new path. The hope of success is only in sight if there is a wise and brave one who raises his arms and shouts, and swims against the tide.

In the category of art, there is also a distinction between being conservative and innovative. The former entails holding on to old beliefs and repeating the same creeds, like the feudal bureaucrats who kept using the same methods. The latter uses wise thinking and seasoned skills to create new art that is in line with social progress and the trend of the times.

Ho Ho Ying (何和应) is an active developer of new art.

Not only does Ho Ying immerse himself in the study of art theories and explore drawing techniques, he also scours the feats of history to understand how evolution and change came about, using these as references for future development.

Ho Ying’s artistic style is formed by gleaning nourishment from the pioneers of abstract art such as Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Joan Miró, and American abstract expressionist Jackson Pollock. Yet, Ho Ying’s works do not resemble the art of these masters. He would usually layer liquid pigments like the criss-crossing leaks that streak down a wall, and in so doing connect flat blocks of colour together. The contact between, and coming together, of line and surface demonstrates the harmonising of movement and stillness. It also displays restraint. The kneading together of line and surface shows the harmonising of movement and stillness. It also displays the restraint of strength. Separately, through the appropriate blending of colours of various temperatures and densities, and the flexible arrangement of spaces that are dense and sparse, the image leaps easily from the second dimension to the third, displaying a subtle sense of depth.

Ho Ying’s character is passionate, optimistic, firm and generous. All these are evidently reflected in the compositions, tones and brushwork of his art.

Abstract painting is no longer a tool for describing any certain object. Thus, all images in the natural world and the various objective realities in society no longer have a place in these paintings. Painting exists only for itself. Apart from the most basic elements such as colour, line, and brush technique, attention has to be paid to structure, rhythm and momentum. Structure relates to the principle of architecture and the profound mystery of Chinese calligraphy. Rhythm is closely linked to literary art and music. As for momentum and methodology, these originate from the creator’s self-cultivation and the potential that social culture affords. In short, many conditions need to be fulfilled in order to accomplish an excellent piece of abstract artwork.

Ho Ying graduated from the Faculty of Chinese Language at the Nanyang University (南洋大学). To a person who is devoted to art, enrichment of wisdom is very important. Isn’t it true that one only needs to put a little more effort into practising one’s techniques in order to reach a higher realm? Great artists such as Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Georges Braque spent a large amount of time daily practising their sketching skills, besides freely creating their works. While there are some who think that this process is unnecessary for modern art, these people are simply trying to justify their absurdity.

In 1964, Ho Ying initiated and formed the Modern Art Society (现代画会) with a group of artist friends who shared a similar objective — to promote the creation of avant-garde art and to improve the common perception towards the appreciation of new art. He held the post of chairman for ten years and made an exceptional contribution.
Ho Ying, Initiator of Modern Art

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