

# **Inspirational 75**

## **art magazine**



**hua liu**

**nenad gojkovic**

**brandy lynn magill**

**keiko yamamoto**

**marie louise elshout**

**nobxhiro mido**

**serse luigetti**

**shan re**



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**Cover:** Untitled [digital elaborations from handcut paper, collage] by Serse Luigetti

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**hua**

**liu:**

**interview**







# **hua liu:** interview

## ***What was your route towards becoming a visual artist?***

**hl:** I learned traditional Chinese painting since childhood and entered Hengyang Pharmaceutical Company at the age of 16 to work on advertising design and illustration. I was enrolled into the Chinese Painting Department of Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts in the autumn of 1978. After graduation in 1982, I taught in the Art Department of Hengyang Normal College. In 1993 I resigned from teaching job to become a professional artist. I worked on landscape design in Zhongshan City, Guangdong Province for several years. In the meantime, I began to write on the aesthetics of landscape design. The result was the publication of my two books "Creative Details in Modern Garden Design" and "Into the New Landscape". In 2001, I immigrated to Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, and have since absorbed myself in researching, writing, and photographing Classical Chinese Gardens. Of course, I've never stopped creating paintings, including abstract ink and wash since I resided in this ancient city with 2500 years of history and celebrated for its private gardens. All these past experiences combined make me a visual artist, not just a painter in its narrow sense.

## ***Your creative work encompasses painting, sculpture, landscape design, photography. Is there one discipline that comes first for you?***

**hl:** Among painting, photography, landscape design, and sculpture, painting is, of course, the most important to me, especially my abstract ink painting. Because ink is a classic of Eastern art, particularly in China, where brush and ink enjoy a long history and have influenced the development of art in neighboring countries such as Japan and Korea. For me, abstract ink painting is not solely an art form but also a way to express my thoughts and emotions in life. Many of the inspirations, concepts, and elements of my abstract ink creation came from other art disciplines. Or we can say they are interrelated. For example, I've gained rich artistic feelings from photographing the rockeries in Chinese Classical Gardens as well as from Western sculpture art. I applied what I got from them to create abstract ink works.







# **hua liu:** interview

## ***What is it about the classic Chinese garden that so intrigues you?***

**hl:** Classical Chinese Gardens are landscapes for the dwelling of immortals whereas Japanese gardens are landscapes created for the practice of Zen, both are places to purify one's soul. I love gardens and designing gardens. For me, Suzhou Gardens are a comprehensive embodiment of classical culture. Different from words and paintings, gardens are spatial entities of ancient culture, allowing me to intuitively feel the wisdom of the ancient Chinese, and I've been fascinated by it. Such fascination led me to photograph Suzhou Gardens in 2001. During the past 22 years, I've entered various gardens as much as 2,500 times. Such a wonderful accumulation of experience has transformed into a vital and unique value of my artworks.

## ***What consistently inspires you in the world around you?***

**hl:** This question brings me back to a faraway place, even to my childhood. When I first learned to paint, I began to observe the world. Thanks to my love for sketching, I was curious about everything in life, and with that, I developed a constant desire and urge to paint. What inspired me to create art is naturally the art itself, and I am overwhelmed and deeply touched by the outstanding works of the world's great artists. When I saw the ink of the Chinese artist Bada Shanren of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), I seemed to be able to walk into the tragic scenes of the era he depicted; when I was in the Orangerie Museum in Paris and stood in front of Claude Monet's "Water Lilies", I felt my soul was freed from my body; when I was in Vatican and went to the Sistine Chapel of the Vatican Museum, I looked up at Michelangelo Buonarroti's "Genesis" high up in the ceiling, my eyes filled with tears.

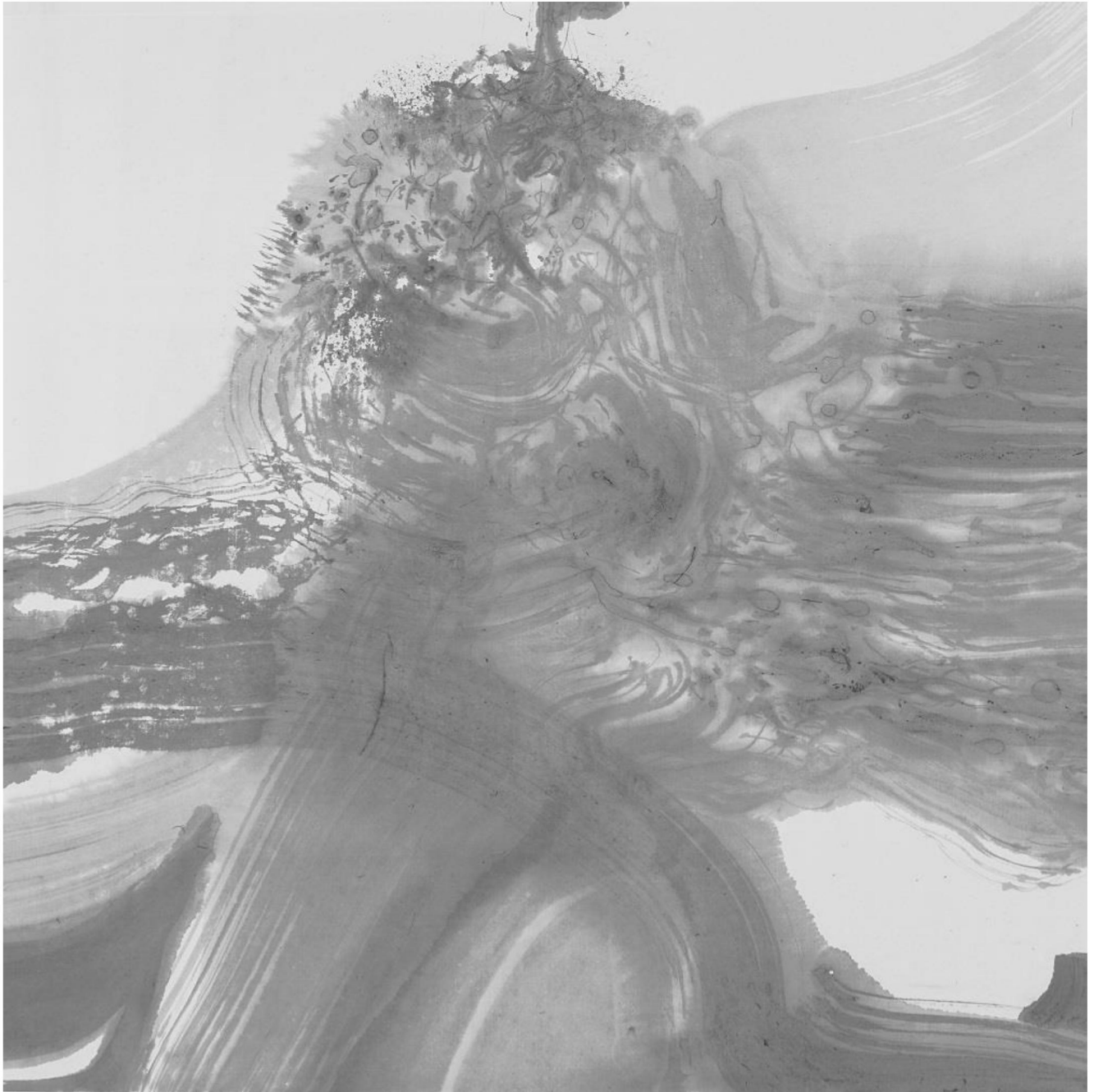
## ***Are your work projects planned in advance, or is there more of an element of spontaneity in the process?***

**hl:** Frankly speaking, I don't have a long-term plan for my work projects, but all work projects are coherent. Usually, I look at the specifics to plan the next one after finishing one project. However, due to the rapid development of China's economy and the fact that everything in life is so changeable, my planned work projects are often interrupted by unexpected situations. For example, in early 2020, I was ready to go to Japan to photograph and study Japanese gardens and make some preparations for my abstract ink and wash screen paintings. I had my visa, air









# **hua liu:** interview

tickets, and hotel accommodations all ready. Unfortunately, the covid-19 pandemic control turned all these hopes into nothing, but once I have a project to work on, I will do everything possible to make it successful. Before the pandemic, I finished writing and editing of a new book manuscript on classical gardens in Suzhou. This project took more than three years to complete.

## ***How would you like others to view and interpret your work, if at all?***

**hl:** I believe that every artist wants his or her work to resonate with the thoughts and emotions of the viewer. In other words, to appreciate his or her work in the way the author himself or herself expresses the connotation of the work. But this is almost impossible for abstract art paintings, even for realistic figurative paintings, people's understanding and feelings are different when they appreciate them. That is, people will have different views on the same work at different times, perhaps this is the charm of art. Nevertheless, some people call my abstract ink and wash Rorschach ink, and I agree. Because I do draw on the flow of my subconscious mind when I paint my ink and wash works. Recently, I've been recording my dreams daily and writing poems for my abstract ink works, making my poetic interpretations of different works, which is very interesting and exciting.

## ***Are you working on anything specifically at the moment?***

**hl:** My latest project is to use my abstract ink brushwork approach to paint some colorful works. The brush technique of ink painting is the essence of traditional Chinese painting, and I'll make a modern innovation of this technique in my abstract ink. If I combine it with Western colors to constitute a special form, the outcome may be fantastic and surprising.

## ***Do you have any upcoming exhibitions, shows or events that you'd like to mention – on or offline?***

**hl:** There is no exhibition activity at the moment. To be exact I have only participated in one exhibition, namely the Singapore International Art Fair 2014. To realistically show one's work in China, an artist needs to run a complex network of contacts, which is something I am not capable of, nor am I willing to waste time and effort on. So for many years, I've been posting my works online for people to see and enjoy, and I think the Internet is the most economical and convenient platform to display my works.









# **hua liu:** interview

## ***And where can you be found online?***

Instagram: @abstractmeetgarden

Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCj5uHIVBMExasPYiV-yCCLA>

(My Ink Painting Artworks )

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCye1XeyW-RwSVIFDmYwANZA>

(Classical Gardens of Suzhou Works)

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## **Artwork:**

Page 5: abstract ink No.1 and rice paper, 2016

Page 6: Suzhou classical garden photography No.1, 2015

Page 8: abstract ink No.2 and rice paper, 2015

Page 9: abstract ink No.3 and rice paper, 2015

Page 11: abstract ink No.4 and rice paper, 2016

Page 12: abstract ink No.5 and rice paper, 2016

Page 14: Suzhou classical garden photography No.2, 2012

Page 15: Suzhou classical garden photography No.3, 2015