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Hong Zhu An: Ascetic Serenity

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Embracing a greater harmony and the attainment of universal ideals, Singaporean artist Hong Zhu An's new works created in collaboration with Singapore Tyler Print Institute (STPI) bring into view a landscape of Zen and serenity. During his three-week residency, Hong explored papermaking from its most basic components, producing over 40 artworks that capture transient states and feelings, transcending language and cultural barriers.

In an age of globalization, Hong's works convey a modern sensibility anchored in the rich history of his Chinese roots. He combines spontaneous actions with an air of discipline – sketching and pondering before grabbing handfuls of wet pulp and applying them with swift vigorous strokes. These masterful strokes, like those manifested in Dragon I and II, are a translation of energy rather than figurative or verbal idioms. Just as they exude a quintessential Chinese ethos integral to his heritage, the artist rejects not the influences of the 21st century, but rather reconciles the two into a visual language that has become his own.

Works like Memory and Tranquility further reveal the sensitivity of the artist. Resilient and poignant, these portray a delicate line running horizontal or vertical across a dense field of color, communicating emotion and states of mind through its character and direction – while the horizontal line conveys a sense of calm or repose, the vertical line communicates a feeling of loftiness and spirituality, extending upwards beyond human reach, as if heaven-bound. Like Man's solitary journey to find his own place in the universe, their singularity and minuteness brings one into awareness of the vastness of space that surrounds them.

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“Throughout his entire residency, Hong was so involved in the process that his energy – both creative and spiritual – becomes crystallized in the work itself,” describes Emi Eu, Director of STPI. Having traversed continents, it can be said that the artist draws this energy from cultural ebbs and flows that permeate geographical and ideological borders of East and West. Combined with a vision that remains distinctly Chinese, these works embody a vacation from the material world, a destination where time slows and stops, a spiritual resonance that follows the union of one's inner being and the greater cosmos.

Trained at the Shanghai Art and Craft Institute, Hong (b.1955, Shanghai) has been a full time artist in Australia in Singapore since 1993. Based in Singapore now for over a decade, he has received numerous accolades throughout his career, including the UOB Painting of the Year 'Grand Award'. His works have been collected by major institutions such as the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, the Tel Aviv Museum of Art and the Singapore Art Museum.

Hong Zhu An will have an exhibition at the STPI Gallery of Singapore, free of admission. This exhibition starts August 25 and runs through September 22, 2012.

Source: <http://www.stpi.com.sg/>

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