

董陽孜

MOVING
INK

TONG
YANG
TZE



English

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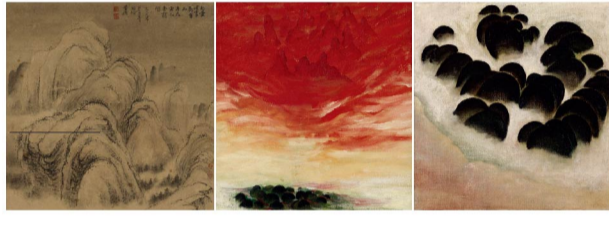
GALLERIES 1A 1B 2B

About Tong Yang-Tze

Tong Yang-Tze was born in Shanghai in 1942 and moved to Taiwan at the age of 10. From 1962 to 1966 she attended the fine art department at National Taiwan Normal University, and advised by calligraphers such as Tai Ching-Nung, Ting Nien-Hsien, Chang Lung-Yan and Fu Shen. After graduation she earned a master's degree in oil painting and ceramic art from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in the United States (1966–1968). In 1970 she moved to New York City, where she worked as an independent graphic designer, receiving the Cover Design Award at the US National Design Exhibition in 1972. During this period she began participating in art and calligraphy exhibitions, both in the United States and Taiwan. Returning to Taiwan in 1977, she has continued to exhibit widely both at home and abroad to this day. In the 1960s and 1970s, she initially imitated rubbings of classical stone inscriptions, favoring the standard script of Yan Zhen-Qing and the Wei Dynasty Stele, and later the running and cursive scripts of such masters as Su Dong-Po and Huang Ting-Jian. Assimilating compositional aspects of Western painting, she has created an aesthetic that blends modern art and traditional calligraphy. Her powerful, uninhibited brushstrokes and the structural arrangements of her characters are in a class of their own, with distinctive writing and interpretation that conjure a new mode of "textual art."

About the exhibition

"Moving Ink" is the first solo retrospective exhibition of the artist Tong Yang-Tze, organized in thematic sections. It presents her 50-year journey of textual art, which is grounded in calligraphy and blends Chinese and Western elements.



Left: Landscape (1968 | 30.5×30.5 cm) Middle: Oil Painting (1968 | 40.6×40.6 cm)
Right: Oil Painting (1971/1972 | 30.7×30.5 cm)

The exhibition is presented in six sections. First, it presents several of Tong's Western-style paintings from her years at university and graduate school (Section I), and her imitations of classic calligraphy masters (Section II). Section III considers her experiments and explorations in transcending the brush-and-ink composition of traditional calligraphy, which she began in the late 1960s. These included writing on square pieces of paper, in response to current trends in spatial forms and contemporary culture; placing different kinds of scripts side by side or blending different scripts; moving beyond traditional calligraphy's structures and arrangement of

words in orderly columns; assimilating compositional elements from Western modern art; and integrating the meaning of characters with their form and style. The result was a form of textual art that is both calligraphy and painting, and resonates with the viewer both emotionally and cognitively.

In general, thick ink yields a sense of tranquility, thin ink expresses elegance, and a high degree of variation in ink intensity creates a feeling of dynamic change. Starting with her experimental period, Tong Yang-Tze's writing tended more and more toward this dynamic effect, expressing a fluid, musical tempo and a sense of motion. Even though she is well-known for her vigorous, forceful style, she is also masterful in the use of a delicate brushstroke and light application of ink. This form of expression rich in variation is highlighted in Section IV. Researching and elaborating on various calligraphic techniques diverging from the methods of traditional calligraphy, she gained a highly acute sense of the dots and lines in Chinese characters, endowing them with form and meaning, and transforming her texts into visual poems in which the dots and lines have their own distinct rhythms.

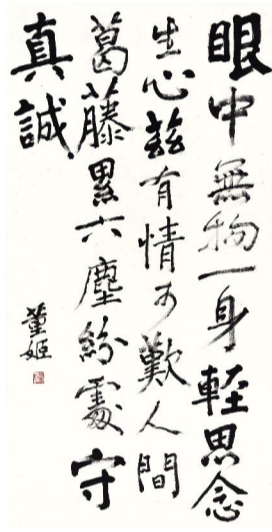
The early calligraphy of Tong Yang-Tze began with imitations of ancient stone inscriptions, including heavily running the standard script of Yan Zhen-Qing and the Wei Dynasty Stele. Later she added the running and cursive scripts of Su Dong-Po and Huang Ting-Jian, internalizing this long-term study and refinement into her creative vocabulary. Some of her cursive texts have an abstract aesthetic treatment that may be hard for some viewers to read, and this may lead them to focus on the form, structure, motion and cadence of the writing. Yet although she has experimented with breaking down, simplifying or reconstructing Chinese characters, she has never stripped the words of their meaning, insisting on preserving the denotative integrity of all the characters she writes. Her texts place a premium on the size and shape of the paper and the arrangement of spatial structure (use of blank space). Different brushstrokes, lines, and even whole characters interplay and influence one another, either dense or sparse, big or small, smooth or rough, in motion or still, intermixing and overlapping, as the lines and rhythms produced by the motion of the brush form many silent musical compositions.

Influenced and inspired by modern art, Tong Yang-Tze is attentive to the relationship between her works and the surroundings in which they are displayed. When she was first living in New York in the 1970s, she became keenly aware of the ways in which modern artworks were displayed in art museums. To present textual art on the walls of the "white cube" of a modern architectural structure, she began writing on two pieces of paper placed side-by-side and hanging her works unframed. Beginning around the year 2000, she began to place numerous pieces of paper side-by-side to form grand-scale texts (Section V). These bold and imposing works wrap around the viewer, so that the viewer must walk along the breadth of the works to "experience" them, achieving greater bodily participation and a more public nature than traditional calligraphy.

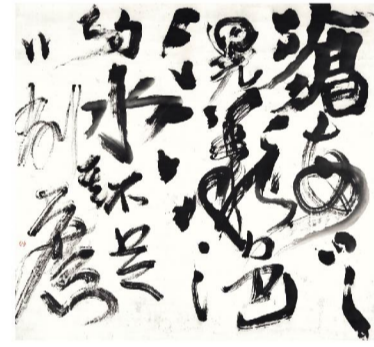
The final section (section VI) presents seven series of reiterations, different works that use the same words, created at different times for different reasons. These sets of works highlight the distinctive quality of her textual art, as each rendition is unique, not repetitive. (Translated by Brent Heinrich)

About "Moving Ink"

"Moving Ink" begins with movement—the idea of bodily energy in action, the image of ink in motion. It refers to the artistic voyage that Tong Yang-Tze has made with brush and ink for the past 50 years. "Moving Ink" attempts to present the artist's unique expressive force and will, the substantive potency she has amassed, and the endless creativity of her images. But more than motion, "Moving" also means "touching the human spirit."



Without a care in the world, the body is light; but those who hold past friendships dearly to their heart are ones of affection. Regretfully too many ties bind us to man's world; sincerity becomes our only anchor in this mortal coil. (1972 | 144×73 cm)



Taking a spoonful of water from the surging sea cannot reduce its immensity. (1973 | 81×86.5 cm)



The mountain rain is imminent; in the pavilion, the wind swirls about everywhere. (2006 | 180×776 cm, 180×97 cm / each, set of 8)



Understanding your heart (1998 | 66×68 cm)

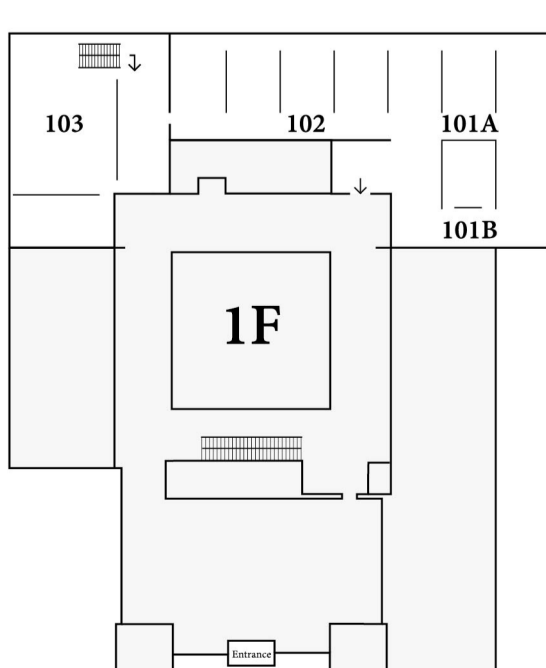
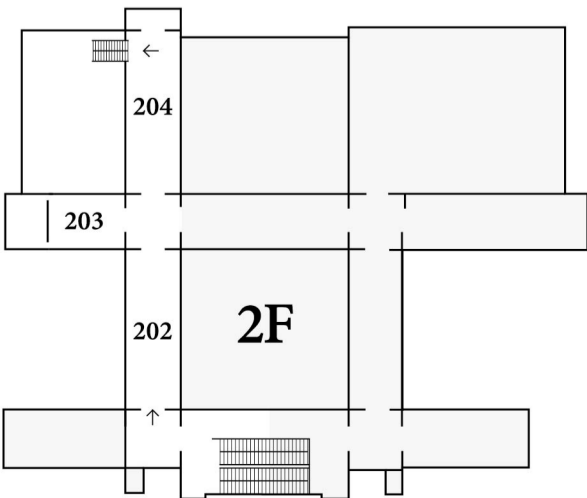
Don't ignore one's conscience. (1997 | 66.3×134.6 cm)

Vast as the misty sea (1997 | 138×254 cm)

About "Modern Calligraphy"

The term "Modern Calligraphy" became popular after World War II, signifying the use of brush and ink writing as an art medium. It is not strictly defined, but is broadly used to distinguish recent innovations from traditional calligraphy. Traditional calligraphy is an art grounded in culture, based on Chinese characters, a unique "one time only" expression stressing a wide spectrum of creative expressions, structure, and composition. Modern calligraphy, meanwhile, encompasses a wide spectrum of creative expressions, from the simplification of characters, to the abstract deconstruction of brushstrokes, to a variety of spatial arts and art forms. If the traditional functions of calligraphy were communication and teaching, employed in such contexts as education, rituals and religion, then the first step of modern calligraphy was to eliminate its traditional, practical means of achieving this defunctionalization was to eliminate its readability—for example, making the characters wildly expressive, transforming them into graphic images, depicting only portions of characters, or otherwise impeding their legibility. This is one of modern calligraphy's strategies to become non-(traditional)-calligraphy. Nonetheless, when traditional calligraphy evolved from the standard script to cursive, this too was a process of structural simplification. The standard script is an introspective, slow form of writing, while the cursive script is rendered in a single motion, achieving vibrant expression at a brisk, fluid pace—as soon as the writing slows down, it is no longer cursive. First, complexity is simplified; second, tempo is accelerated. Minimization of detail, speed dovetail with the tone of contemporary life. And at different points in history, the seal (*zhuān*), clerical (*lǐ*), standard (*kǎi*), running (*xíng*) and cursive (*cao*) scripts of traditional Chinese calligraphy all evolved mature forms of brushstroke, application of ink, and composition. They remain present in the everyday environment of contemporary society, interacting with the evolution of art, transforming, finding new applications, and expanding the boundaries of traditional calligraphy.

- | 202 | I. Western Paintings / II. Imitations of Masters
- | 203 | III. Experiments and Explorations
- | 204 | IV. Liberation of Form
- | 101A, 102, 103 | V. Grand-scale Texts
- | 101B | VI. Reiterations – Comparisons of Repeated Texts



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