

# 蕭勤

## HSIAO Chin

1935–2023

蕭勤生於上海，父親蕭友梅創辦了上海音樂學院，此亦為中國第一所高等音樂學府。由於父母早逝，1949年蕭勤隨姑父赴臺，建中夜間部畢業後報讀省立臺北師範學校藝術師範科，入李仲生畫室受到其現代教學法啟發，與夏陽、吳昊等人創辦臺灣第一個抽象繪畫團體——東方畫會。

1950年代末期蕭勤獲西班牙政府獎學金，先是入讀馬德里的皇家美術學院，後轉赴巴塞隆納發展，續於義大利米蘭舉辦個展，之後漸於國際藝壇嶄露頭角。1971年，他離開美國返回米蘭定居，這階段的他因紐約經驗而更深入反思東方文化傳統，從禪宗與老莊思想切入，而非僅追隨西方以物質能量建構畫面的方式。這樣的轉折，使他自1970年代中後期起，進入「禪」和「炁」的創作階段。

在「禪」系列中，蕭勤以淡雅色調、大幅留白及偶發筆觸構成畫面，重點不在描繪禪的概念本身，而是透過禪的啟示照見內心，讓本性自在流露，臻於自然無為的境界。與此同時，亦發展「炁」系列，以寬闊筆觸揮灑象徵宇宙精炁的力量——生命之源。蕭勤認為，唯有在「無我」的狀態中，方能使精炁自然顯現，讓形而上的宇宙能量導入畫面。至1980年代中期，更進一步融合「禪」與「炁」的語法態度，開展「宇宙風景」系列，將抽象哲思轉化為具象的天象意象，如陣雨、彗星、混沌初開或宇宙誕生，藉以闡釋「沒有空間的空間」之想像，並揭示宇宙中蘊藏的無窮能量。

創作於1984年的〈大天空〉，正是此階段的重要作品。畫面以排筆反覆、規律地刷上寬度和色彩一致，但長度卻各異的平行線條，這種以斷續線段建構的畫面，是蕭勤1980年代常見的手法。他徒手揮灑的筆觸保留飛白，使畫面在偶然性中形成疏密交錯的節奏，並在方向、韻律上暗示炁中能量運行的動勢。若將「禪」系列的大片留白比作虛空，則此作的留白僅出現在帶狀及圓形色塊之間，彷彿廣闊間隙般的呼吸節奏，與筆觸中飛白相互交織，營造出多層次的視覺張力。作品中圓點的結構不若早年嚴整，而呈現鬆弛、柔軟的姿態，呼應他於1960年代龐圖運動中所提出的核心觀念：點既是「始」，亦是「終」，象徵紛擾世界中的純粹性。藉由線條、圓點、飛白和留白之間的互動，〈大天空〉構築出能量循環、凝散的韻律，意向無窮無垠的宇宙。

蕭勤認為，「人」是在無限宇宙中的有限存在，而藝術家則是精神的先知與思想的代言者，應在哲思探討及生命領悟上先於眾人，並以創作承載、傳遞宇宙的能量和智慧。他一生風格多變，實則以藝術作為持續研究宇宙能量的方式，其表現形式雖歷經轉換，卻始終回歸於「尋求人與宇宙相連」的終極關懷。〈大天空〉不僅標誌他在1970至1980年代之間藝術語法的轉折，更以筆觸中的偶然及氣韻的流動，具體映現對宇宙能量恆常運行的體悟。

（陳慧盈）

Born in Shanghai, Hsiao Chin was the son of Hsiao Youmei, founder of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, China's first institution of higher learning devoted to music. Due to his parents' untimely deaths, Hsiao moved to Taiwan with his uncle in 1949, attended the night program of Taipei Municipal Chien Kuo High School, and after graduating, enrolled in the art education program at the Taiwan Provincial Normal School (today's National Taipei University of Education). He also studied at Lee Chun-Shan's painting studio, where he was inspired by Lee's modern teaching methods and co-founded Taiwan's first abstract painting society, the Ton Fan Group, with fellow artists including Hsia Yan and Wu Hao.

In the late 1950s, Hsiao received a scholarship from the Spanish government to study at Madrid's Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando. Next, he moved to Barcelona and then Milan, Italy, where he held solo exhibitions and gradually came to prominence on the international stage. In 1971, after a period in the United States, he returned to Milan and, due to his time in New York, started reflecting on traditional Eastern culture more deeply. Drawing from Chan Buddhism and the Taoist philosophies of Laozi and Zhuangzi, he departed from the Western mode of pictorial composition based on material energy. Beginning in the mid to late 1970s, Hsiao entered a creative phase centered on the concepts of *Chan* and *Qi*.

For his *Chan* series, Hsiao employed quietly elegant hues, large swaths of blank canvas, and spontaneous brushwork to compose paintings. His emphasis was not on portraying the concept of Chan itself, but on revealing his inner world through the insights Chan offers, and allowing his true essence to flow freely to attain a state of natural effortlessness. At the same time, he was developing his *Qi* series, using broad brushstrokes to evoke *Qi*—the vital cosmic energy that animates all life. Hsiao believed that only in the Buddhist state of non-self could this transcendent energy of the cosmos be manifest and channeled into painting. By the mid 1980s, he took the further step of fusing the formal and conceptual languages of *Chan* and *Qi* to create his *Cosmic Landscapes* series, in which abstract philosophical thought is transformed into concrete celestial imagery, such as rain showers, comets, and the primordial chaos of the universe. These works articulate his vision of a “space without space” and reveal the inexhaustible energy inherent in the universe.

Painted in 1984, Hsiao's *Big Sky* is an important work from this phase of his artistic development. Repeated rhythmic strokes made with a broad brush create parallel lines of uniform width and color, but each with its own length, a technique often seen in his 1980s paintings. By wielding the brush freely, Hsiao created the *feibai* effect, characterized by white streaks and jumping pigment that create a rhythm of density and openness within the painting, suggesting the vital energy of *Qi*. While expanses of empty space in his *Chan* series evoke the void, in *Big Sky* they appear only between bands and circular areas of color, which creates a breathing-like rhythm across vast intervals, and interwoven with *feibai* brushstrokes, produces a multilayered visual tension. Dots in the painting appear loose and soft, unlike the rigid structure of his earlier works, thus echoing the core concept of the 1960s Punto Movement: the dot symbolizes both beginning and end, as well as purity within a chaotic world. Through the interplay of lines, dots, *feibai*, and blank space, *Big Sky* constructs a rhythm of energy circulation, condensation, and diffusion that suggests the boundless universe.

Hsiao believed that humans are finite beings within an infinite universe, while artists serve as spiritual prophets and mediators of thought. They should be more attuned to truth and to life's insights than others, and use their creations as vehicles for transmitting the energy and wisdom of the universe. Although Hsiao's artistic style evolved over his lifetime, he consistently regarded art as a means of exploring cosmic energy. Despite variations in form, he invariably returned to his enduring concern: the search for connections between humanity and the universe. *Big Sky* not only marks a turning point in his formal and conceptual languages during the 1970s and 1980s but, with its spontaneous and fluid brushwork, also embodies his understanding of the eternal flow of cosmic energy. (Chen Hui-Ying)

大天空 Big Sky

1984

壓克力顏料、畫布 Acrylic on canvas

128.5 x 202.5 cm

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