

# Two Pioneers of Nativist Ink Painting in Taiwan: Yuan Chin-Taa and Hung Ken-Shen\*

阮圓 / 美國布蘭戴斯大學藝術系及東亞系教授  
Aida Yuen Wong/ Professor, Fine Arts and East Asian Studies, Brandeis University

## 摘要

本文以臺灣藝術家袁金塔（1949 年生）和洪根深（1946 年生）為研究主體，兩位透過各自獨特的水墨語彙表現出臺灣藝術與文化的混合性，藉由作品對於現代生活的去人性化提出強烈批判。研究同時提出兩位藝術家數十年的創作過程中的主要畫作，探討「鄉土運動」以及「鄉土寫實主義」在臺灣現代藝術中所扮演的角色。

關鍵詞：水墨畫、臺灣、現代主義、鄉土寫實主義、鄉土運動、高雄、環境汙染、邊緣性

國立台灣美術館  
National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts

\* This essay would not have been possible without the support of the two artists. I would like to thank Professors Yuan Chin-Taa and Hung Ken-Shen for receiving me in 2015 and 2016 and for sharing valuable resources since then.

收稿日期：112年8月3日；通過日期：112年10月13日。

## Abstract

This essay focuses on Yuan Chin-Taa (Yuan Jin-Ta 袁金塔, b. 1949) and Hung Ken-Shen (Hong Gen-Shen 洪根深, b. 1946), whose ink language, each in its own way, embodies the artistic and cultural hybridity of Taiwan. Permeating Yuan Chin-Taa's and Hung Ken-Shen's oeuvres is a fierce criticism of the dehumanizing aspects of modern life. The study presents key paintings by the two artists over the course of several decades, in relation to the Native Soil Movement and the role of nativist realism.

**Keywords:** Ink oainting, Taiwan, Modernism, Nativist Realism, Native Soil Movement, Kaohsiung, environmental pollution, marginality

In the 1970s, Taiwan faced the loss of its United Nations seat, leading to the withdrawal of diplomatic recognition by many countries, including the United States, which had been a steadfast supporter of the Republic of China (R.O.C.).<sup>1</sup> As Taiwan grappled with growing international isolation during this period, the Native Soil Movement (*xiangtu zhuyi* 鄉土主義) emerged as a powerful cultural phenomenon. Spearheaded by Chen Ying-Chen (Chen Ying-Zhen 陳映真, 1937-2016), Hwan Tzun-Ming (Huang Chun-Ming 黃春明, b. 1935), and other writers, nativism prioritized local history and experiences to redefine Taiwanese identity. Visual artists contributed as well, though their activities are less well known. With the notable exception of the sculptor Ju Ming (Zhu Ming 朱銘, 1938-2023) and the self-taught folk painter Hung Tung (Hong Tong 洪通, 1920-1987),<sup>2</sup> whose works were broadly publicized, nativist artists have often been perceived as less trail-blazing compared to their literary counterparts.<sup>3</sup> Those specializing in ink painting, strongly tied to Chinese tradition, may appear to have had limited involvement. However, a deeper look shows that ink practitioners also produced diverse and groundbreaking responses to the new nativist consciousness.

1 American support included substantial aid given to Taiwan from 1951 to 1965, "a total of almost \$1.5 billion in economic and \$2 billion in military assistance," which contributed to an average annual growth in GNP of more than 8 percent during this period, higher than that of the United States and the second highest in Asia after Japan. For a retrospective of Taiwan's economic success published at the end of the aid period, see Mark A Plummer, "The Other China," *Current History* 51, no. 301(1966): 165-171, 178. On how U.S. aid reinforced the island's military development to counter potential invasion from communist China, see Chiang, Min-Hua, "The U.S. Aid and Taiwan's Post-War Economic Development, 1951-1965," *African and Asian Studies* 13, nos. 1-2(2014): 100-120.

2 Sheng Kai, "Taiwanese Art and the Nativist Movement in the 1970s," In *General History of Taiwanese Visual Art*, ed. Pai Shih-Ming, (Taipei: Taiwan Art History Association, 2021), pp. 94-100.

3 Hsieh Tung-Shan, "Taiwan xiangtu meishu de zhi yu liang," *Taiwan meishu* 107, no. 1(2017): 9.

A precursor to the Native Soil Movement was the “local color” paradigm of the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945).<sup>4</sup> The colonizers encouraged artists active in Taiwan, both Japanese and Taiwanese, to portray local landmarks, scenery, and people. These images were meant to advertise the fecundity of the colony, while including some urban components in many cases, signale the civilizing advances made by the rulers. Artists who best delivered these messages were duly acknowledged at official exhibitions in Japan and Taiwan. After World War II, when the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang or KMT) assumed control of the island, Chinese-style ink-and-color landscapes alluding to mainland sites (or their stylized variants) swiftly displaced the colonial repertoire to take center stage. These came to be considered *guohua* 國畫, or “national painting,” a term inherited from early Republican China. This dominant paradigm occasionally assimilated local scenery such as sections of the Cross-Island Highway, touted by the KMT as a great infrastructural achievement promoting territorial unification. Among the most renowned *guohuajia* (*guohua* artists) were Huang Chun-Pi (Huang Jun-Bi 黃君璧, 1898-1991), Pu Hsin-Yu (Pu Xin-Yu 溥心畬, 1896-1963), and Chang Dai-Chien (Zhang Da-Qian 張大千, 1899-1983). Besides them, there were at least fifty to sixty *guohuajia* actively working in the ink medium, many of whom had ties to the KMT cultural elite. *Guohua* groups made up of both men and women, such as the Chinese Painting Society (Zhongguo huayuan 中國畫苑), the Renyi Painting Society (Renyin huahui 壬寅畫會), the Seven Friends Painting Society (Qiyou huahui 七友畫會), and the Six Couples Painting Society (Liuli huahui 六儷畫會), regularly met to exchange ideas and exhibit works.

These organizations, in concert with the government-sponsored exhibitions, consolidated a network of *guohua* activists who practiced a range of styles. Pu Hsin-Yu and his disciple Chiang Chao-Shen (Jiang Zhao-Shen 江兆申, 1925-1996) were admired for their classical erudition and command of Ming and Qing brush techniques. Huang Chun-Pi and Fu Chuan-Fu (Fu Juan-Fu 傅狷夫, 1910–2007) developed unique approaches to impart realism to classicizing vistas. First Lady Soong May-Ling (Song Mei-Ling 宋美齡, 1897-2003), one of Huang’s disciples, fashioned well-orchestrated landscapes that bolstered her reputation as China’s informal cultural diplomat. Fu Chuan-Fu, who regularly rendered the crashing waves he observed along Taiwan’s coastlines, evidenced an emergent interest in local sites among postwar émigrés from the mainland.<sup>5</sup> Chang Dai-Chien, who visited Taiwan several times

4 For discussions of local color in colonial Taiwan, see Yuko Kikichi, ed. *Refracted Modernity: Visual Culture and Identity in Colonial Taiwan*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2007).

5 Liu Su-Chen, “Fu Juanfu haitaohua zhi kongjian xiansuo,” In *Jinian Fu Juanfu jiaoshou xiandai shuhua yishu xueshu yantaohui lunwenji*, eds. Chen Zhong-Heng and Lin Shu-Fen (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan yishu daxue and Guoli lishi bowuguan, 2007), pp. 69-85.

before settling there in 1978, raised *guohua* to a new level with his flamboyant splashed-ink and splashed-color paintings.<sup>6</sup> Standing somewhat apart from this group was Lin Yu-Shan (林玉山, 1907-2004), a decorated artist under the colonial system who successfully transitioned his style, synthesizing Chinese *guohua* and Japanese-style gouache painting.<sup>7</sup> A salient feature of Lin’s postwar style was the incorporation of drawing from life, a method that survived the intense politicization of *guohua*.

In a speech delivered by Liu Shih (Liu Shi 劉獅, 1910-1997) and published in the journal *Xin yishu* 新藝術 (*New Art*) in 1951, Japanese-style paintings (*tōyōga* 東洋画) came under severe criticism as being distortions of the “national” style. Liu argued that it was “laughable” to worship “other people’s ancestors”.<sup>8</sup> This speech is widely recognized as a seminal text that helped initiate what later came known as the “orthodox *guohua* debate.” Defenders of *tōyōga* styles, however, countered these criticisms by suggesting that their alleged Japanism, characterized by a rich use of color and an emphasis on detailed representation, actually had its roots in Chinese traditions. Wang Pai-Yuan (Wang Bai-Yuan 王白淵, 1902-1965), for instance, linked these styles with the theoretical lineage of the “Northern School,” known for its polychromatic and fine-brush techniques. He accused newcomers from the mainland of ignoring “close observation of nature” and lacking individualism due to their excessive reliance on formal prototypes.<sup>9</sup>

This essay focuses on two prominent figures representing a nativist approach: Yuan Chin-Taa (Yuan Jin-Ta 袁金塔, b. 1949) and Hung Ken-Shen (Hong Gen-Shen 洪根深, b. 1946). Both born in Taiwan, they completed their studies in the 1970s at the National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU), which holds the distinction of being the island’s first tertiary institution to establish an art department back in 1949.<sup>10</sup> Originally founded to train secondary school

6 Studies on Chang Dai-Chien are numerous. For an overview in English, see Shen C. Y. Fu, *Challenging the Past: The Paintings of Chang Dai-chien*, with major contributions and translation by Jan Stuart. Exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution in association with the University of Washington Press, 1991).

7 Aida Yuen Wong, “Taiwan shuimohua: Lin Yushan zhi Zhong Ri zhezong,” trans. Zhang Xizhi, In *Jielu Fusang: Liu Ri huajia de zhongguohua gailiang 1905–1937*, ed. He Xiangning meishuguan, (Guangzhou: Lingnan meishu chubanshe, 2018), pp. 180-193.

8 Anonymous. “Yijiu wuling nian Taiwan yitan de huigu yu zhanwang (zuotan jilu),” *Xin Yishu* 《新藝術 (New art)》 1, no. 3 (January, 1951): 54.

9 Wang Pai-Yuan, “Dui ‘guohua’ paixi zhizeng yougan (xia),” *Lianhebao* (8 October, 1959): 8.

10 Two years earlier, the school, then known as Provincial Taiwan Normal College, had established a major in painting and crafts 圖畫勞作. In 1955 the school was designated a university and was renamed again in 1967 with the status of a “national” university. A number of other colleges and universities would establish art departments beginning in the 1950s. For a summary of key founding dates and institutions, see Wang Yau-Ting, *Sishi nianlai Taiwan diqu meishu fazhan yanjiu zhi er guohua shanshuihua yanjiu yanjiu huibian (yanjiu baogao zhanlan zhuanji)* (Taipei: Taiwan shengli meishuguan, 1993), pp.48-50.

teachers, the department has nonetheless produced numerous influential artists, educators, and art writers who are now considered part of the canon. Yuan and Hung, taught by Huang Chun-Pi and Pu Hsin-Yu during their time as students at NTNU, possessed a solid foundation in classicism. However, they embarked on creative journeys that diverged from tradition, drawing inspiration from their personal histories, socio-political events, and local ecological concerns to develop new artistic approaches.

Even before the lifting of martial law in 1987, Yuan and Hung had been integrating personal and local experiences in their *guohua*. Yuan's works are an admixture of rural iconography, Chinese classical texts, and pop art, whereas Hung's are filled with dark commentary on urban life. Particularly noteworthy is Hung's southern subjectivity centered around the city of Kaohsiung in the southwest of the island. In literature, nativism has revealed its dual assertions of "Taiwanese consciousness" and "Chinese consciousness," and the choice between these perspectives depends on the specific historical, political, and cultural context in which the writings are situated.<sup>11</sup> The same holds true in the realm of art. Artists like Yuan and Hung skillfully employed ink, a Sinitic medium, in conjunction with other elements to convey their individual concerns within the broader framework of nativist artistic expression.

## 1. Return to Native Soil and New Realism

Yuan Chin-Taa was born in the southern county of Changhua 彰化 in 1949, the year the sovereignty of the island was turned over from Japan to the KMT. At the time, creating art in Chinese styles was a form of cultural legitimization for the exiled regime and a way to compete with Mao Ze-Dong's Communist Party, which had taken control of mainland China. Yuan's generation grew up being taught to regard the mainland as their "motherland" and to prepare for an eventual reconquest. Yet Taiwan is the only home Yuan has ever known. At the same time, any Japanese or non-KMT allegiances that the islanders might have espoused were ruthlessly suppressed by the one-party regime under Chiang Kai-Shek 蔣介石 (R.O.C. President, 1950-1975). At NTNU, he completed four years of foundational training in Western-style art and *guohua*. He recalls a turning point in his development: While on a sketching trip to Yang Ming Mountain 陽明山, Yuan witnessed his *guohua* teacher adding stock motifs of a Chinese pavilion and a scholar with a topknot and walking staff that were absent from the actual scenery. Indeed, the only buildings in sight were modern villas, high-rises, and some



Fig. 1 Yuan Chin-Taa, *A Straw Rain Cape* (*Suoyi* 蓑衣), 1976, ink and color on paper collage, 85 × 170 cm. (Reproduced with permission of artist; published in Yuan Chin-Taa, *Daoyu Taiwan: Xiangtu xieshi zuopin xuan*, exh. cat. [Taoyuan: Changliu meishuguan, 2010], p.26.)

traditional courtyard houses.<sup>12</sup> Unlike those unsuspecting classmates who took artifice for good taste, Yuan found the alterations off-putting. What good was sketching *en plein air* if it just reaffirmed old conventions?

Upon graduating in 1975, Yuan could now start on his own quests. The first inspirations came from the familiar countryside. He explains:

I have a vivid memory of my mother growing papayas, sponge gourds, and grapes in the yard. We would eat our meals under the vines in the heat of the summer. With food in our mouths, we basked in the scenery of verdant leaves, ladybugs, butterflies, and scarab beetles. Naturally, they became subjects of my art creations later on.<sup>13</sup>

The mid-1970s were a time of considerable iconographic reorientation. Before then, personal experiences had been considered too trivial for *guohua*. But as a consequence of the Native Soil Movement, all kinds of everyday subjects acquired legitimacy. *A Straw Rain Cape* (*Suoyi* 蓑衣, 1976) takes as its central motif a rustic raincoat hanging outside a farmhouse (Fig. 1). The setting is the Pinglin 坪林 district in Hsin-tien 新店, a regional hub of rice, tea, and citrus production about 8 kilometers southeast of Taipei. As a student, Yuan had visited the area four times. His inscription speaks of "the richness of antique feelings" (*guyi angran* 古意盎然), though in this instance the antiqueness has nothing to do with classical Chinese models. Instead, it alludes to the well-worn rain gear and the peasant abode lived in for generations. Yuan captured the various objects in painstaking detail, making skillful use of the watercolor techniques learned at NTNU. Termed "nativist realism" (*xiangtu xieshi* 鄉土寫實), it was an approach that Yuan embraced until around 1980. Railroad trains, oxcarts, temples, and other local sights, some of them done in Chinese ink and color, complete this cycle<sup>14</sup>.

A subtle departure from academism in *A Straw Rain Cape* is its surface. The earth-toned wall is made of joss paper, a material used in popular rituals such as ancestral sacrifices. The cape, door boards, and soil derive their hue from their substrate of yellowish *xuan* paper (*xuanzhi* 宣紙), the brick wall from a grayish variety. Textural

11 Lin Yao-Fu, "Language as Politics: The Metamorphosis of Nativism in Recent Taiwan Literature," *Modern Chinese Literature* vol 6, no. 1-2 (Spring and Fall 1992): 7-22.

12 Yuan Chin-Taa, "Wei 'Xiandai Zhongguohua' tanlu: Wo de diyiye shinian," *Wosi wohua: Yuan Jinta meishu wenxuan 1977-2010* (Kaohsiung: Zhengxiu keji daxue yishu zhongxin, 1985), p.28.

13 Yuan Chin-Taa, email to author, July 13, 2017.

14 Yuan Chin-Taa, *Daoyu Taiwan: Xiangtu xieshi zuopin xuan*. Exh. cat. (Taoyuan: Changliu meishuguan, 2010).

articulations, such as those on the door and rough stone wall, were created by rubbing ink on paper that had been overlaid onto woodblocks or by pressing inked sheets against one another. In Taiwan, imprinting for pattern transference is commonly called *tuoyin* 拓印. *Tuoyin* in combination with collage had been attempted by modernist ink painters such as Liu Kuo-Sung (Liu Guo-Song 劉國松, b. 1932) and Chuang Che (Zhuang Zhe 莊喆, b. 1934) as early as the 1960s. But unlike the typical collage in Taiwan or in the West, which tends to expose overlapping areas to bring tension to the edges and animate the figure/ground relationships, Yuan's work reveals a less painterly approach. Here the seams are nearly imperceptible, because the pieces of paper as paint substitutes are made to fit snugly into their assigned compositional space. Even if this kind of clean edges was just a phase in his artistic evolution, the craftsman-like quality would periodically reassert itself in Yuan's later works. *A Straw Rain Cape* heralds a lifelong play with materials. Over the years Yuan has tried drafting paper, newspaper, American paper towels, baby diapers, and, since 2010, hand-crafted sheets made from the pulp of Taiwanese plants. He appreciates the warmth, naturalness, and simplicity of this most basic material, as well as its recyclability.<sup>15</sup> Ecology and nativist aesthetics have become closely intertwined, especially in the new millennium.

One year before *A Straw Rain Cape* was finished, reproductions of Andrew Wyeth's (1917-2007) paintings had appeared in Taiwan's *Artist Magazine* (*Yishujia zazhi* 藝術家雜誌). Against the abstract tides of post-war American art, Wyeth, with his stark realism, stood out. His ochre-toned portraits of rural Pennsylvania and mid-coast Maine are essays on the rugged hillsides, ramshackle houses, twisted brambles, and weathered fields of rural America. Taiwanese readers had first been introduced to his work, including his iconic *Christina's World* (1948), in the inaugural issue (February 1971) of *Lion Art Monthly* (*Hsiung shih meishu* 雄獅美術), another key journal that helped spread the Native Soil Movement. Under the stewardship of editor-in-chief Chiang Hsun (Zhang Xun 蔣勳, b. 1947), *Lion Art Monthly* promoted nativism across the arts and reported on relevant developments in photography, architecture, music, drama, dance, and literature.<sup>16</sup> Yuan Chin-Taa and many fellow nativists found inspiration in Wyeth's poignant portraits of rustic simplicity that are rich with patinas. The Taiwanese art world, in pursuit of global modernism, had also gone through an abstract phase in the 1950s and 1960s, when expressivity took precedence over pronounced

15 Yuan Chin-Taa, *Buzhi zheyang: Wo de shuimo, zhiyi, duomeicai zuopin* (Changhua: Zhanghua wenhuaju, 2013), pp.5-7.

16 On the rise of nativist realism and Wyeth's influence in Taiwan, see Yuan Chin-Taa, "70 niandai xiangtu xieshi huihua de yanjiu," In *Wosi wohua: Yuan Jinta meishu wenxuan 1977-2010* vol. 1. (Kaohsiung: Zhengxiu keji daxue yishu zhongxin, 2010), pp.310-524.

representationalism. But by the latter half of the 1970s, some of the leading artists steeped in this manner, including Liu Kuo-Sung, Chuang Che, and Fong Chong-Ray (Feng Zhong-Rui 馮鍾睿, b. 1933) of the Fifth Moon Group (Wuyue huahui 五月畫會, est. 1957), had moved abroad. With the R.O.C.'s removal from the United Nations General Assembly, Taiwanese began to distrust American partnerships and contemplate the varied layers of imposed identity. Wyeth, being an outlier in modern American art, was one exception that opened up stylistic and iconographic possibilities for the Taiwanese nativists. In an essay in *Artist Magazine*, Yuan Chin-Taa explained his aspirations for local expression:

Paintings from Taiwan had always been unable to grow independently; our artists had never been able to establish our own "Taiwanese style." External influences such as cross-strait relations with China, Oriental-style painting (*tōyōga*) from Japan, and Western painting all exerted a strong impact on us, and we have lost ourselves.....[In view of this,] I try to use "Taiwan" as my main subject.<sup>17</sup>

In the 1980s the nativist trend soared along with Taiwan's economic successes. The upsurge in commercial and industrial activities the island in the ranks of the "Four Little (Asian) Dragons." All-around self-confidence demanded commensurate artistic expressions. Yuan's contemporaries Chen Tung-Yuan (Chen Dong-Yuan 陳東元, b. 1953) and Hsieh Ming-Chang (Xie Ming-Chang 謝明錫, b. 1955) similarly adopted the stylistic attributes of nativist realism in watercolor such as detailed renderings of village houses and farmers.<sup>18</sup> Others such as Li Ch'i-Mao (Li Qi-Mao 李奇茂, 1925-2019) and Koo Chung-Kuang (Gu Chong-Guang 顧重光, b. 1943) deployed the Chinese ink-and-color medium to similar effect. As artists became adept at communicating pride of place through native scenery, the logical next step became how to get beneath the surface to bring out deeper concerns.

During that decade, Yuan moved into his second, more allegorical phase when, in an attempt to bridge the rural/urban divide, he began transforming village subjects into social commentary. He coined the term "images of ecology" (*shengtai tuxiang* 生態圖像) to describe the general human subjection to and complicity with societal forces. He saw Taiwan's economic achievements as a veneer that disguised the suffering of the common people. In *Pressed with Work* (*Mangpo* 忙迫, 1988), the picture plane is swarmed with black and red ants scampering in a spiral toward the central void (Fig. 2). These creatures, intimately tied to

17 Yuan Chin-Taa, "Chuangzuo zishu: Guanyu wo de xiandai huajuan zhizuo," *Yishujia* (July 1995). (Reprinted in Yuan Chin-Taa, *Wosi wohua*, pp.46-48.)

18 For a succinct view of the Native Soil Movement, see Hsiao Chong-Ray, "Xiangtu yundong yu xiandai yishu shenghuohua," in *Zhanhou Taiwan meishushi 1945-2012* (Taipei: Yishujia chubanshe, 2013) pp.115-143.

the soil, here stand for the troubling state of contemporary life: hectic, conformist, with people dashing towards an empty goal.

In the same period, Yuan developed one of his signature eschatological motifs, seen in *Dolls* (*Ren'ou* 人偶, 1985) (Fig. 3). The motif is based on the paper-and-bamboo effigies used in sacrifices to the deceased, of the type that could be bought in Taipei's Guling Street (Guling jie 牯嶺街). The actual specimens usually come in bright colors with gold accents. But for this composition, Yuan opted for a muted tone created by newsprint and ink. The figures are ghostly; some are faceless. Commemorations of the dead need not be morbid, but dark emotions are palpable in this case. The motif first emerged when Yuan's mother was severely ill and losing her faculties. As the youngest of her sons, he had a particularly close bond with her. The figures in *Dolls* symbolize messengers to the netherworld and represent the intermediate zone between the living and the dead.<sup>19</sup> Yuan would reprise this iconography, sometimes adding colors, to convey the variety of half-humans in society who put on various guises to satisfy their vanity and their lust for money and power.<sup>20</sup>

Shuttling between watercolors and the Chinese ink-wash medium in his early career, Yuan would eventually come to prefer the latter for non-literal representations. He regards *guohua*'s traditional emphasis on formalistic brushwork and imaginativeness a virtue. But he is reluctant to forego altogether the specifics of places, objects, and people. He takes inspiration from Qi Bai-Shi (齊白石, 1864–1957), who said, “In painting, the marvelous lies between verisimilitude and non-verisimilitude” (*Zuohua miaozai si yu busi zhijian* 作畫妙在似與不似之間).<sup>21</sup> Yuan believes that the subtlety and technical sophistication of ink-wash painting can be put in service of nativism. At the same time, he has identified eight inadequacies of traditional *guohua*, which he laid out in a 1985 article published in *Lion Art Monthly*: (1) Pictorial creation has lost its connection to contemporary life. (2) The content is too homogeneous and lacks diversity. (3) Painters emphasize technique over concept and emotion. (4) Old pictorial signs are not sufficiently revitalized through new artistic language and theory. (5) There is a need to delve into the nature of painting as its own pure and independent medium. (6) Art and science should relate to one another, and knowledge should be

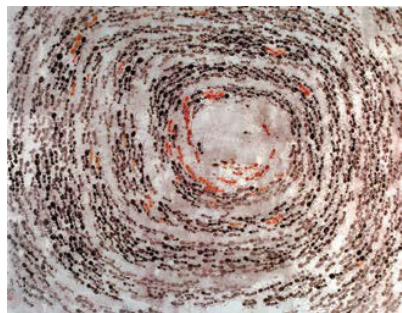


Fig. 2 Yuan Chin-Taa, *Pressed with Work* (*Mangpo* 忙迫), 1988, ink and color on paper, 138 × 78 cm. (Reproduced with permission of artist; published in Yuan Chin-Taa, *Daoyu Taiwan: Xiangtu xieshi zuopin xuan*, p.101)



Fig. 3 Yuan Chin-Taa, *Dolls* (*Ren'ou* 人偶), 1985, ink and mixed media, 78 × 99 cm. (Reproduced with permission of artist; published in Yuan Chin-Taa, *Daoyu Taiwan: Xiangtu xieshi zuopin xuan*, p.82.)



Fig. 4 Yuan Chin-Taa, *Perished Ashes* (*228 Incident*) (*Huifei yanmie* 灰飛煙滅 / *Er er ba shijian* 二二八事件), 1992, ink and mixed media, 300 × 300 cm. (Reproduced with permission of artist; published in Jiang Mei Siang ed, *Shengtai, shishang, xiaofei: Yuan Jin-taa zuopinji* [Taoyuan: Changliu meishuguan, 2008], p.124.)



Fig. 5 Yuan Chin-Taa, *Musical Chairs* (*II*) (*Huanren zuo* 換人座), 1997, ink and mixed media, 167 × 91.5 cm. (Reproduced with permission of the artist; published in Jiang Mei Siang ed, *Shengtai, shishang, xiaofei: Yuan Jin-taa zuopinji*, p.59.)

derived from scientific results. (7) Professional ethics among painters are subpar. (8) Art education is deficient; it should encompass philosophy, science, history, social studies, and more. Yuan has strived to rectify these issues, especially the first three, through his own practice.<sup>22</sup>

One of Yuan's largest and most mournful tableaux is *Perished Ashes* (*Huifei yanmie* 灰飛煙滅, also known as *228 Incident* (*Er er ba shijian* 二二八事件, 1992) (Fig. 4). Taking its title from a line in Su Shi's (蘇軾, 1037-1101) “Remembering Your Charm at the Red Cliff” (*Niannujiao: Chibi huaigu* 念奴嬌：赤壁懷古), this ink and mixed media work reads like a visual epitaph for the anonymous victims of the violent persecution by the KMT during and in the wake of the February 28 Incident (228 Incident) of 1947. The hands and feet in the picture are printed in repetition on newspaper reports about shootings and on cigarette packages (a reference to the incident's trigger—the arrest of a cigarette vendor). Roused by the arrests on that fateful day, protesters staged massive demonstrations against the repressive and discriminatory tactics of the KMT, which ended with the rounding up and execution of many intellectuals and professionals. As many as 28,000 are estimated to have died. *Perished Ashes* is an indictment of KMT brutality: the repeated hands and feet recall corpses in a morgue, and the small red accents here and there suggest bloodstains. Having spent the early 1980s in New York where he received his MFA from City University, Yuan has carried forward pop art influences in his lurid colors and seriality while investing these elements with an emotional charge.

Telling local stories is only part of Yuan's larger humanistic goals. In the past two decades Yuan has dealt with such topics as pornography, phone sex, and political corruption. He frequently adopts the grid format to emphasize recurrence, multiplicity, and the endemic nature of social ills. A favorite layout entails empty chairs arranged in several rows and columns, with playing card designs on the seat backs (Fig. 5). Aces, kings, queens, and jacks symbolize the politicians and big shots who play musical chairs and gamble with the people's welfare. The surface is smeared with ink as a gesture of protest—nativist art is not all bucolic and celebratory. Yuan not only does not shy away from disturbing themes, he places them front and center.<sup>23</sup>

More recently, Yuan has turned to ceramics and handmade paper to

<sup>19</sup> Yuan Chin-Taa, interview with author, October 15, 2015.

<sup>20</sup> Such works include *The World of Mortals* (*Renjian* 人間, 1988) and *Profile of Human Beings* (*Zhongsheng xiang* 眾生象, 1997), reproduced in Yuan Chin-Taa, *Daoyu Taiwan*, p.90, 167.

<sup>21</sup> On Qi Bai-Shi's aesthetics as the artist described them orally, see Zhang Ci-Xi, *Guohua dashi Qi Baishi de yisheng*, ed. Cai Deng-Shan. (Taipei: Xinrui wenchuang chubun, 2019).

<sup>22</sup> Yuan Chin-Taa, “Wei ‘Xiandai Zhongguohua’ tanlu,” pp.28-29.

<sup>23</sup> Jiang Mei-Siang, ed, *Taiwan yinji: Yuan Chin-Taa zuopinji I, shengtai guanhuai yu shehui shengsi*. Exh. cat. (Taoyuan: Changliu meishuguan, 2009), pp.58-59.

reconceptualize ancient Chinese texts, such as the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經), the *Classic of Tea* (*Chajing* 茶經), and the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* (*Shanhaijing* 山海經), in sculpture and installations. A recurrent motif is fish, which according to the modern scholar Wen Yi-Duo (聞一多, 1899–1946) stands for carnal love in the *Classic of Poetry*. Yuan takes his cue from Wen by pairing the old poems with pictures of kissing fish, lips, and naked torsos. Because Taiwan is shaped like a fish (and a leaf), Yuan employs the shape to suggest the island’s drifting geopolitical state. The cheery, brightly colored fish-leaf paintings from the late 1990s to the mid 2000s belie a sense of precariousness.

*A New Reading of the Classic of Tea* (*Chajing xin jie* 茶經新解, 2014) is an assemblage of inscribed and illustrated sheets of handmade paper surrounded by straw, a rural reference. The original *Classic of Tea* by Lu Yu (陸羽, eighth century) of the Tang dynasty was the first known treatise on the beverage, containing information on its origin, benefits, storage, quality, serving utensils, and more. This ancient text, which is not widely read by contemporaries in the first place, undergoes an intriguing update. Alongside the humorous and misshapen motifs so typical of his pieces, Yuan incorporates allusions to Taiwanese-grown teas, such as Ali Mountain Oolong, Oriental Beauty (*dongfang meiren* 東方美人), and Wenshan Pouchong (*wenshan baozhong* 文山包種). *A New Reading of the Classic of Tea* also prompts reflections on the over-reliance on pesticides. The paper used in this piece, one of Yuan’s favorites, is made from the pulp of local plants, a renewable resource. A large section of his studio is now devoted to paper making. Since around 2000, Yuan has completed various projects in collaboration with the Suho Memorial Paper Museum and Taiwan Paper, a paper producer in Puli 埔里 that recycles plant fibers such as bitter vine that have been cut down by the Forestry Bureau.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to making art, Yuan Chin-Taa has served on juries for the National Art Exhibition, the Taiwan Provincial Art Exhibition, the Taipei Art Award, and the Kaohsiung Art Award, among other competitions. He is also a member of the acquisition committees at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, the Cultural Affairs Bureau of Yilan County, and the Yingge Ceramics Museum. He has received numerous awards and exhibited both nationally and internationally. An active creator for some five decades, Yuan is also a respected art educator. Between 1999 and 2002, he chaired the Department of Fine Arts at NTNU.

24 On Yuan’s recent works on paper, see Jiang Mei-Siang, ed, *Yuan Chin-Taa Livres d’Artistes et Installations de Papier*, exh. cat. (Taoyuan: Changliu meishuguan, 2017) .

## 2. Kill Ink and the Marginality of Kaohsiung

Another major figure in nativist art is Hung Ken-Shen, whose portentous images draw on local phenomena. A native of the Pescadores (Penghu 澎湖) archipelago off the main island of Taiwan, Hung has happily kept a distance from the premier art center of Taipei for the greater part of his career. In 1972, two years after graduating from NTNU, he moved to Kaohsiung, a city better known for its heavy industries than its artistic life. Hung Ken-Shen’s philosophy of “kill ink,” or *shamo* 殺墨, an iconoclastic posture and a pun on the word “desert” 沙漠 (also pronounced *shamo*), points to Kaohsiung’s marginal status.

The marginality of Kaohsiung is more cultural than economic. This city, which faces the Taiwan Strait, is a major transport junction between the Pacific and Southeast Asia. In addition to shipbuilding, Kaohsiung is responsible for a large portion of Taiwan’s heavy industrial and petrochemical production. It has suffered serious pollution as a result. A climate group reported in 2021 that the average life expectancy of its residents is the lowest among Taiwan’s six special municipalities, and that the “city’s infant mortality rate and lung adenocarcinoma incidence rate in the past 10 years were the highest”.<sup>25</sup> Hung Ken-Shen’s predominantly grim chromatic scheme, which ties several interconnected themes together, certainly relates to the environmental degradation of his adopted hometown.

In the history of art in Taiwan, the southern part of the island has been peripheralized as a “frontier,” a “silent region,” according to Hung. Not until 1994 was the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts established, the first professional institution to promote modern and contemporary art in the city and in the south. Hung not only campaigned hard for the building of the museum,<sup>26</sup> but had earlier co-founded the Federation of Southern Artists (Nanbu yishujia lianmeng 南部藝術家聯盟) (in 1980) and the Modern Painting Association of Kaohsiung (Gaoxiong xiandaihua xuehui 高雄現代畫學會) (in 1987). The latter has increased the profiles of regional, especially emerging, artists and encouraged diverse approaches.<sup>27</sup> Another of his major contributions is a book on Kaohsiung’s artistic developments from 1970 to 1997 titled *Winds and Clouds on the Frontier* (*Bianchui fengyun* 邊陲風雲, 1999). This is a substantial chronicle of the events and key figures in the southern art world.

Hung Ken-Shen began exhibiting in the 1970s, starting with ink-and-color abstractions of natural and urban landscapes. Passages of light and dark, ink and color, dry and wet

25 Climate Group Call for Cleaner Kaohsiung Air, *Taipei Times*. April 5, 2021.

26 Hung Ken-Shen, *Bianchui fengyun: Gaoxiong-shi xiandai huihua fazhan jiji (1970–1997)*, p.82.

27 Hung Ken-Shen, *Bianchui*, pp.68-69.

commingle to create dynamic compositions. These early works anticipate his later deployment of somber tonality and radically reduced empty space. He yearned for relief from a society he described as “monolithic and impoverished” (*dandiao pinfa* 單調貧乏), “nervous and oppressive” (*jinzhang yapo* 緊張壓迫).<sup>28</sup> Hung’s landscapes from this decade tend to have a very high or a low horizon line as well as almost geometric shapes akin to circles, trapezoids, triangles, and so forth, creating a constructed, claustrophobic effect. But there is always at least one nugget of open space wrought from the white of the paper, which Hung says he spent the greatest amount of energy to get just right; he calls it the “eye” (Fig. 6). This is where he tries to focus the viewer’s gaze, and offers a “tranquil resting place for the human soul suffering from the noisy [surroundings]”.<sup>29</sup>

These pictures, which verge on the metaphysical, would later yield to more down-to-earth themes. While rural subjects were prevalent in nativist art, Hung Ken-Shen quite early on branched out to urban ones, depicting cobblers, street idlers, common laborers, and the like. In *Winds and Clouds on the Frontier*, Hung observes that artists in Kaohsiung during the 1970s did not madly plunge into a collective nostalgia for native-soil subjects, and preferred more individualistic experiments.<sup>30</sup> This can be seen in his own portraits from the late 1970s of ordinary people: young students on a lunch break on the street, a woman taking a nap, and so forth. These images register his solid command of figural representation and a sparing application of the collage technique of mid-century modernism.<sup>31</sup> Though highly varied in terms of postures and perspectives, they form a coherent body of nativist studies. Hung characterized the move from abstraction to realism as going from “release” (*fang* 放) to “reserve” (*shou* 收).<sup>32</sup> By that he meant consciously reining in spontaneity so the mind can be put to watching and absorbing the world around it.

A unique image from the portrait series that was well ahead of its time features a figure in tattered clothing lying facedown on the ground. Made when martial law



Fig. 6 Hung Ken-Shen, *At a Loss* (*Changran huaigu* 悵然懷古), 1977, ink and color on paper, 68 × 70 cm. Private Collection. (Reproduced with permission of the artist; published in Hong Keng-Sheng, *Hong Gen-shen caimo huaji* [Kaohsiung: Hung Ken-Shen, 1980], p.36.)



Fig. 7 Hung Ken-Shen, *For freedom in life, there is no fear of broken bodies and fractured bones* (*Formosa Incident*) (*Fenshen suigu hun bupa, yaoliu ziyou zai renjian* 粉身碎骨渾不怕，要留自由在人間), 1979, ink on paper collage, 70 × 50 cm. Collection of the Hung Ken-Shen Art Museum 洪根深美術館, Penghu 澎湖, Taiwan. (Reprinted with permission of the artist)

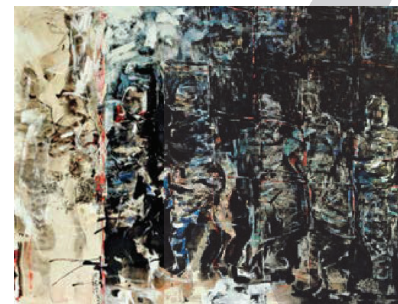


Fig. 8 Hung Ken-Shen, *Five Persons* (*Wu ge ren* 五個人), 1989, ink, acrylic, and paper on canvas, 112 × 145 cm. Collection of Taiwan Soka Association 台灣創價學會. (Reproduced with permission of artist; published in Chuangjia yiwen zhongxin weiyuanhui bianjibu ed, *Shengming yixiang de ningwang: Hong Genshen xiandaihua zhan*, Exh. cat. [Taipei: Jiyi yinshua yishu guoji gufen youxian gongsi, 2012], p.25.)

was still in effect, it bears a long, slogan-like title: *For freedom in life, there is no fear of broken bodies and fractured bones* (*Fenshen suigu hun bupa, yaoliu ziyou zai renjian* 粉身碎骨渾不怕，要留自由在人間) (Fig. 7). The added fragments of tan-colored paper reinforce the flatness of the picture plane, canceling out recession or any facile concepts of illusionistic space. (Hung often signed his name on these incidental shapes.) The subject is a fallen freedom fighter from the infamous “Formosa Incident” (*Meilidao shijian* 美麗島事件), also known as the “Kaohsiung Incident” (Kaohsiung Incident 2001). On the evening of December 10, 1979, Human Rights Day, leaders of an opposition “party without a name” staged a celebration/protest in Kaohsiung. A dissident magazine, *Formosa* (*Meilidao*), had been clamoring for the end of totalitarianism. The police intimidated the crowds with tear gas, and mayhem ensued. Newspapers reported that more than ninety civilians and forty policemen were injured in the confrontations. Major figures tied to the magazine were arrested, eight of whom were later tried in military courts and given long prison sentences. The Formosa Incident was the first public protest against the KMT since the 228 Incident, and marked the surfacing of an underground democratic movement in Taiwan. It also exposed long-festering wounds caused by tensions between different groups of people, tensions that were not limited to the conflicts between the *waisheng* 外省 (Mainlander) and *bensheng* 本省 (Taiwanese) populations.

Over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, Hung Ken-Shen’s relatively legible figures morphed into eerie apparitions that are thickly textured. Hung typically employs ink and acrylic, which he is able to push across the canvas by first increasing their viscosity with gesso and resin. White bodies began appearing in these works after his father sustained serious injuries in a car accident in 1981; the sight of him wrapped in white bandages from head to toe left a strong impression on the artist.<sup>33</sup> Hung Ken-Shen’s palette for this iconography, which started out as a vaguely clinical white-and-blue combination, would eventually evolve into a mélange of white, black with bruise-like purplish and bluish undertones, red, and touches of other accent colors. This has been his default color scheme since the late 1980s. The wrapped bodies call attention to collective trauma (Fig. 8). Hung Ken-Shen’s series from 1989 to 1992, *Black Sentiments* (*Heise qingjie* 黑色情結), shares its title with one of his poems about the gloom of martial law, under which there was “no color on the palette” and

28 Hong Keng-Sheng, “Jiaolü yu kewang: ‘Bian’ shi dui chuantong de jianzhi, shi huihua chuangzuo de dongle,” in Hong Keng-sheng, *Hong Gen-shen caimo huaji* (Kaohsiung: Hung Ken-Shen, 1980), p.22.

29 Hong Keng-Sheng, “Jiaolü yu kewang,” p.111.

30 Hung Ken-Shen, *Bianchui fengyun*, pp.36-38. According to Hung, some southern artists did join the Native Soil fever in the 1980s, scouting villages for subjects.

31 Chuangjia yiwen zhongxin weiyuanhui bianjibu ed, *Shengming yixiang de ningwang: Hong Genshen xiandaihua zhan*, exh. cat. (Taipei: Jiyi yinshua yishu guoji gufen youxian gongsi, 2012), pp.11-16.

32 Chuangjia yiwen zhongxin weiyuanhui bianjibu ed, *Shengming yixiang de ningwang*, p.12.

33 Chuangjia yiwen zhongxin weiyuanhui bianjibu, ed, *Shengming yixiang de ningwang*, p.21.

“no sunflower” (Taiwan’s emblem of hope).<sup>34</sup> His preference for ink, or other black equivalents, represents a “critical stance; [black] is a symbol of negation, a reflection of societal doubts, of urban pollution, and tragic emotions.”<sup>35</sup>

Taiwan’s economic growth up to this period had largely been built on the expansion of manufacturing, and the island gained notoriety as “a haven for highly polluting industries such as electroplating, dyeing, and petrochemicals.”<sup>36</sup> The pollutants spread all the way into the rural areas, but Kaohsiung gained special notice as the site of the first major environmental protest when in 1982, after years of no response from the government, residents took it upon themselves to vandalize polluting factories.<sup>37</sup> The sooty atmosphere of Hung’s paintings mirrors the turbid environment, leveling the formal and representational aspects of ink. However, because “in his mixed media works especially, only little ink is used,”<sup>38</sup> Hung does not see himself as an ink painter, or even a modern ink painter, preferring the title “post-ink painter” instead.<sup>39</sup> In Taiwan today, contemporary artists identified with the ink aesthetic do not necessarily work with Chinese ink exclusively or even at all. “Ink” may be construed as a shorthand for a variety of black media and attitudes.

In 2012, Hung’s first retrospective was held at the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts and titled *Ink Killer (Shamo)*. He elaborates on the meaning of this aggressive term: “Truth is not conceptual. If we carry certain preconceived ideas around with us, we will lose sight of the true essence. This is why we must ‘kill’ old, ossified ideas in order to reveal the real nature. In other words, killing the Buddha is the only way to really see the Buddha, and ‘killing ink’ is really the way to ‘save the ink.’”<sup>40</sup> Like Yuan Chin-Taa, Hung still identifies with aspects of Chinese culture and aesthetics. He sees the black idiom as quintessential to this tradition, one that must be shocked to remain

34 Hung Ken-Shen, “Heise qingjie,” in *Qiuhe chikuang: Hong Genshen shicao* (Kaohsiung: Since Well Technology, Ltd. 2007), p.115.

35 Hung Ken-Shen, *Bianchui fengyun*, p.110.

36 David C Schak, *Civility and Its Development: The Experiences of China and Taiwan* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2018), p.127.

37 Schak, *Civility and Its Development*, p.127.

38 Chuangjia yiwen zhongxin weiyuanhui bianjibu Ed, *Shengming yixiang de ningwang: Hong Genshen xiandaihua zhan*, p.22.

39 Chuang Ming-Ch’i, “Dabian zhuyi yu fangpi zhexue: Tan Hong Genshen heiyaya de zuopin,” in *Hung Ken-Shen yishu nizhuao*, ed. Wu Shou-Che et al., (Kaohsiung: Zhengxiu keji daxue yishu zhongxin, 2004), pp.152-153.

40 Chang Jung-Kuei et al., *Shamo: Hong Genshen chuanguo yanjiu zhan*, exh. cat. (Kaohsiung: Gaoxiong shili meishuguan, 2012), p.37.

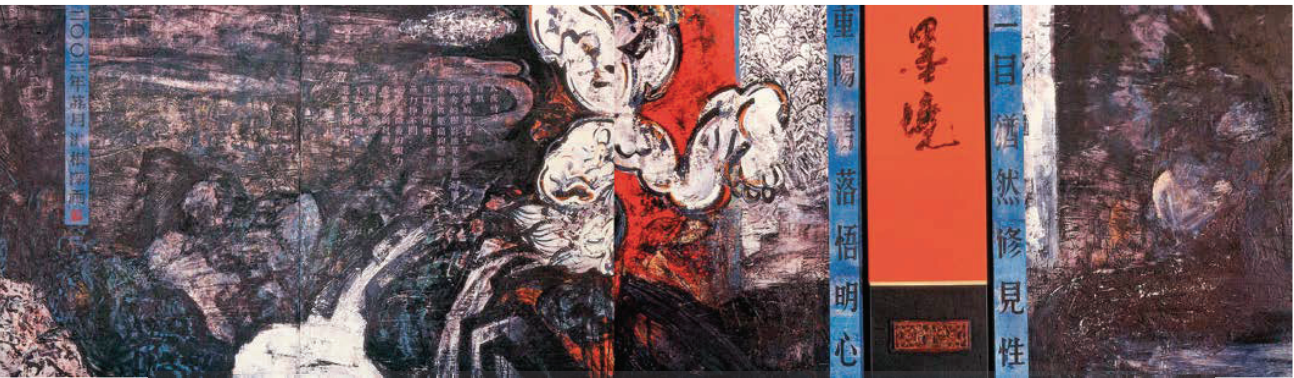


Fig. 9 Hung Ken-Shen, *The Realm of Ink (Mojing 墨境)*, 2003, gesso, resin, ink, silk, and acrylic on canvas, 162 × 568 cm. Collection of Taiwan Soka Association 台灣創價學會. (Reproduced with permission of artist; published in Chuangjia yiwen zhongxin weiyuanhui bianjibu Ed, *Shengming yixiang de ningwang: Hong Genshen xiandaihua zhan*, p.40.)

relevant. In *The Realm of Ink (Mojing 墨境)*, 2003), the lumpy, twisting figure at the center is reminiscent of Francis Bacon’s (1909-1992) grotesque anatomies (Fig. 9). The figure divides the picture into two sides:

The left side of the painting seems to be an image of madly rushing water, which provides a sense of rhythm to the painting. On the right side, meanwhile, there is an image of a calligraphy work in the large hanging scroll format flanked by a conventional calligraphy couplet. The two characters for “The Realm of Ink” are written on the painted hanging scroll. The calligraphy couplet, written in the Song font on a blue background, reads, “One glance yet to cultivate your manifest nature. Sun and blue sky to enlighten the heart.”<sup>41</sup>

This message calls to mind neo-Confucian landscapes and the belief that immersing oneself in nature elevates the spirit, yet the painting’s macabre black and red tones return us to Hung’s grittier world. The title *Mojing* is a pun on “sunglasses” 墨鏡, the eye protection Hung has needed since suffering a retinal detachment.<sup>42</sup>

Kaohsiung native and fellow artist Chuang Ming-Ch’i (Zhuang Ming-Qi 莊明旗, b. 1955) summarizes Hung Ken-Shen’s art as “Shitism” (*dabian zhuyi* 大便主義)—not to denigrate

41 Chuangjia yiwen zhongxin weiyuanhui bianjibu, ed, *Shengming yixiang de ningwang: Hong Genshen xiandaihua zhan*, p.41.

42 Lee Cheng-Ming, “Cong xiandai shuimo de gaige dao xinmo wufa de shijian: Shixi Hong Genshen de zhuangzuo zhuanzhe,” in *Hung Ken-Shen yishu nizhuao*, ed., Wu Shou-Che et al., (Kaohsiung: Zhengxiu keji daxue yishu zhongxin, 2004), p. 174.

it but to elucidate Hung's inclination to take myriad ideas and process them like the digestive system. What comes out does not reveal everything that has gone in, suggesting and erasure artificial boundaries between traditions and present identities.<sup>43</sup> In the poem "Going to the Toilet" (*Ruce* 如廁, 2003), Hung compares life to contemplating in front of a wall (a Zen motif) while listening to the sounds of something dripping (*diandian didi* 點點滴滴); when the dripping ends, there is nothing left worth attaching to.<sup>44</sup> Hung's painting *Shit Aesthetics* (*Dabian meixue* 大便美學) features a figure sitting on a toilet, presumably defecating (Fig. 10). The gridded background and the triangular frame around the body impart a geometric order. Is it about a universal yearning for relief? If a religious reference may be inferred, can it be a borrowed symbol of Buddhist detachment associated with the defiled body to convey the transcendent meaning of *shamo*—that to kill ink is to seek life so that a desert may become an oasis?<sup>45</sup>

### 3. Conclusion

In *Imaging and Imagining Taiwan* (2012), Bi-yu Chang and Henning Klöter underscore the "messiness" of Taiwanese identity and the futility of seeking an "ultimate origin and a true self."<sup>46</sup> To do justice to this elusive subject, one must consider lived experiences, taboo subjects, and the many stages of reinvention. This essay supports Chang and Klöter's thesis that Taiwanese identity is fragmented and unstable, and its politics a continuous process of re-presentation and repositioning. The presumably "Chinese" medium of ink painting is also anything but neat and bounded. The orthodox *guohua* (national painting) debate in the 1950s helped foster a multiplicity of styles.<sup>47</sup> From the latter half of that decade on, many ink artists began to grow restless and resistant to the dogged pursuit of traditionalism based on the mastery of age-old brush strokes and other manners passed down through centuries. Some artists found viable solutions in novel techniques, while others explored new subjects related to Native Soil scenes and social criticism. Taiwan's fragile identity since the 1970s has provoked introspection, which has in turn brought about a more holistic outlook. Nativists who



Fig. 10 Hung Ken-Shen, *Shit Aesthetics* (*Dabian meixue* 大便美學), 2010, ink, acrylic, and paper on canvas, 162 × 130 cm. Collection of National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts 國立臺灣美術館 (Reproduced with permission of artist; published in Chuangjia yiwen zhongxin weiyuanhui bianjibu Ed, *Shengming yixiang de ningwang: Hong Genshen xiandaihua zhan*, p.40.)

care about the individual are concurrently keen to speak for the collective.

Nativist art is revisionist in nature and pluralistic in style. In the context of Taiwan, it is especially difficult to situate. As Rey Chow writes, the "tendency toward nativism as a form of resistance" is commonly used "against the dominance of Western colonial culture," but current postcolonial theories have yet to fully grapple with such a tendency when the target of resistance is one's own government.<sup>48</sup> In Taiwan, that government was for a long time the KMT. Nativist attempts to reassert cultural agency in the postcolonial context no longer involve the simple rejection of colonialism *viz* imperial powers of the past (Japan and America). Rather, they address a sense of being mismanaged or forced into a union with an overpowering other and its cultural prescriptions. Yuan's social satires and Hung's tortured poetics are some of the ways that resistance has been expressed. Further studies must take into account other pioneers such as Hong Rui-Lin (洪瑞麟, 1912-1996), who spent decades painting while also working as a coal miner (*Taiwan Today* 2021);<sup>49</sup> or Shiy De-Jinn (Xi De-Jin 席德進, 1923-1981), a mainland émigré who painted many lush watercolors of rural Taiwan and wrote a book on its folk arts, covering shadow puppetry, paper cutting, and furniture among other topics.<sup>50</sup> Younger artists and those working in non-painting media are too numerous to cite here. Amidst the backdrop of increasing Taiwanese nationalism and the ongoing tension stemming from China's threat to take over the island's sovereignty, nativism is expected to remain a central and vigorously debated theme in Taiwan's art.

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