



Artist: Hau Kwei Wong 黃孝達
Clearwater Abode 清水居
2016
ink and color on paper
160 x 70 cm

Ink at its dawn - when traditional meets modernity

Being Wong's reside for years, he has spent enormous time observing and being with the seacoast of Sai Kung. "Clearwater Abode" is one of the pieces from Wong's "Clear Water Bay Series", the collection puts the glorious coast on different stages - dusk or dawn or rainstorm or sun-drenched, impressing the audience with a showcase of his skilfulness in ink and brushwork while bringing out its diverse beauty in his perspective. Although the collection features different sceneries, they represent the same lingering charm of the coast, advancing from traditional ink paintings that a collection of work typically comes from a panoramic view of a same angle and object.

"Clearwater Abode" is a depiction of the sunrise reflected on a waveless water surface - sparkles of sun rays glistening and shimmering in gentle ripples of the smooth and milky sea, with a rock offshore slicing the mellow waves and diffusion of lights as foreground and middle-ground. The vividness of the peaceful seascape immersed audience with the serenity of the morning, perpetuating the heavenly lustrousness of dawn.

Wong is renowned for depicting realism in the form of traditional ink and brushwork in a contemporary approach and showing traces of modernity. "Clearwater Abode" is "contemporary" in many aspects: seacoast is not a typical theme in Chinese traditional ink paintings, let alone with the use of narrow and long, straight scroll. To balance the vertical banner, he used a remote perspective and horizontal composition, and the seals are also intentionally arranged in the vertical centre as a feature to "break" the horizontal lines, as well as showing his personal belief of "paintings and seals are inseparable" in Chinese ink painting, distinguishing himself from traditional artists. Also, the perspective is only a partial portrayal of a whole scene which enhanced its modernity as it differs from processing the whole space - a traditional landscape artist's approach.

He used contrasting configuration and tonal difference to bring out the "void" and "real" elements in the piece, highlighting sunlight and the rock as the focal point of the work and creating a strong visual impact. Wong depicted the presence of the sun by the use of negative space, as to preserve realism of the sunlight, he avoided sketching but filled up the shades of where rays cast by dots and short strokes - an indirect way of depiction. He successfully visualizes a water surface reflected with spotted gleams and a sparkling sunrise. As he believed if everything is obviously drawn, the creation would loose its ornamental value and artistic taste.

Shadings are enhanced by adding additional layers of ink washes and colors for a stronger emphasis and strong spatial division of the painting, spicing up the abstractness and making a clear distinction between different spaces - leaving a more contemporary impression. He also deviated his work from a complex composition, by arranging layers neatly and orderly with the variation of colors to indicate the separation of space, which strikes his uniqueness in the expression of substantial feeling and added personal perspective into the painting.

Wong borrows the concept of sketching and stresses on the subtleness of light and shade and the interaction of tonal differences. The piece is based on life drawing and sketches drawn on the spot, with photos taken to preserve an accurate visual record of the moment. His consistency of

depicting realistic landscape is a way to evoke one's resonance and intimacy from daily sceneries, imposing a dialogue with the audience and conveying his artsy feeling, also fulfils his personal belief of learning from nature and develop one's distinctiveness.

Wong used meticulous, short, delicate strokes and dots as an account of detailed water ripples, which is added in a repeated and exquisite horizontal manner with a pursuit of an overall harmonious composition. The technique he used is similar to "pointillism" in Impressionism art, without the complication and varying strokes of "calligraphic" brushwork as favoured in the traditional ink paintings, he unifies the whole structure and forms a consistent and pleasing whole - conveying a calmness and poetic imagery with an echoing to all the elements under the frame of realism. Also, the endless and orderly repeated ripples filled up the edges, suggesting a vast and boundlessness scenery expanded out of the frame, fascinating audience with the visual tension of an outer "universe". Suggested by scholars, his brushstroke and style may have been an inevitable reminiscent of his textile background, which may subconsciously become his signature style.

Wong's fidelity in conveying precision and details in his works and his faith in taking inspiration and learning from reality are strongly reflected in his paintings. His creation is free from traditional burden, with a genuine concern of expressing without limitations - a blend of conventional ink and contemporary flavor - like Hong Kong itself. His contribution has fuelled ink with new modern dynamics and boundless possibilities, adding diversity to the invigorating future of ink.

Reference:

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