

PICTORIAL RENDITION
OF CHINESE IDIOMS
IN ORACLE BONE
INSCRIPTION

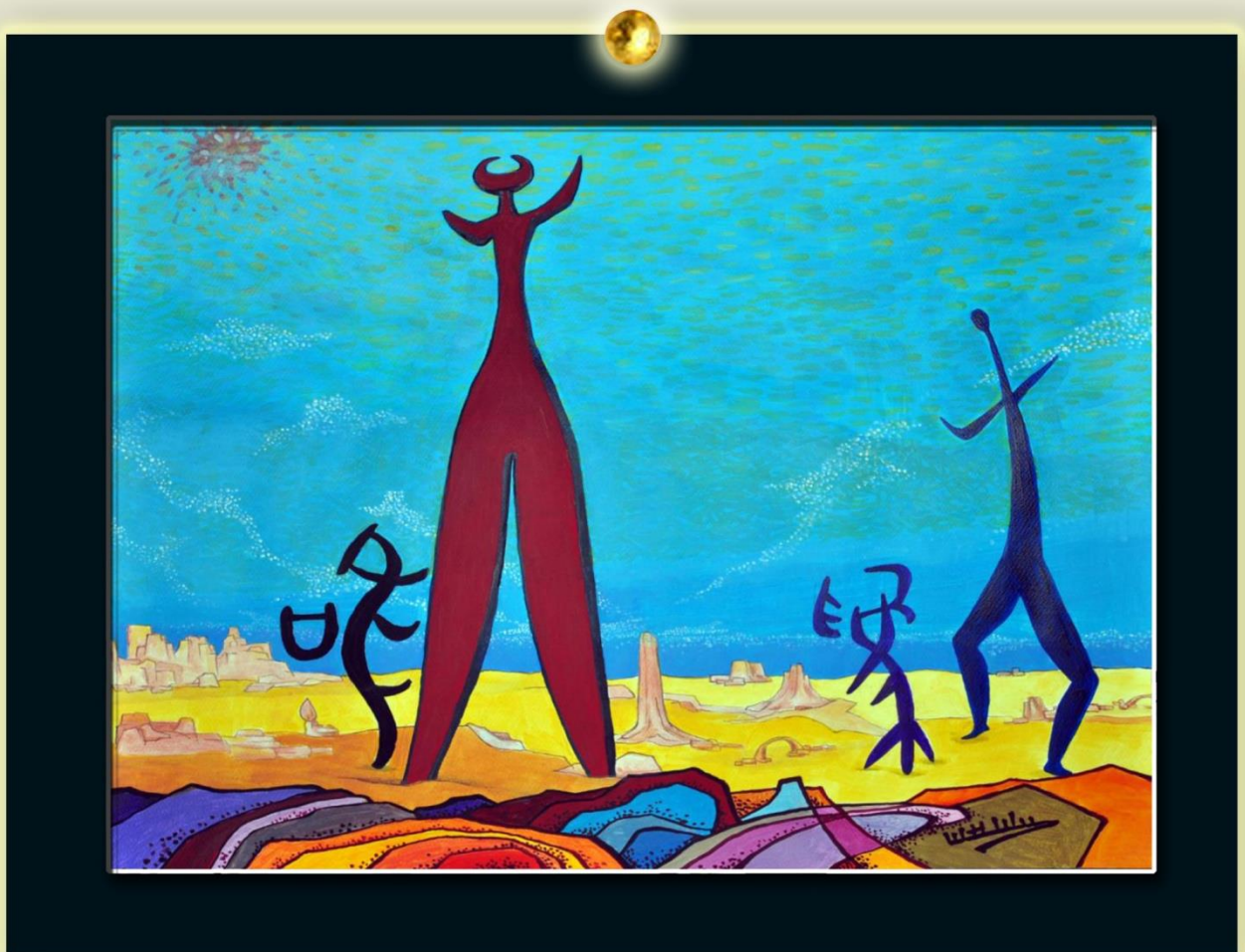
甲骨文成語畫集

WU-HSIEN WU



Pictorial Rendition of
Chinese Idioms in Oracle Bone
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前言

幾年前在研究中國書法史的過程中,發現中國文字的結構非常精美,尤其殷商時期的甲骨文那些象形符號更深深地吸引了我。

中國的書法和繪畫從古至今都是融成一體的。經過意符文字(ideograph)到宋元以後各種雅緻(elegant)的書體和書畫家,雖受各自的主觀美感及個性之影響,但書法即畫法是大家共同的認知。誠如元代畫家趙孟頫所說《寫竹還於八法通》《方知書畫本來同》等書畫同源的論述。

象形甲骨文的特點就是書畫合一。畫中有形,由形成字,因字有意。因甲骨文文字造型稚拙簡樸有趣,激起我創作的靈感。自二〇〇九年起將甲骨文綴成句,文字符號經過誇張變形與畫合一,在協調或對比的色彩中展現出主題的意義。首先畫了《明月三五年年有餘》及《美酒十千》等十幅作品刊載於第一本畫集¹。意猶未盡,再陸續創作共有四十幅畫作,今專集刊出,以就教於諸方家



¹吳聞咸畫藝 The Art of Wen-Hsien Wu, 2010. Publisher Blurb.com

Preface

Several Years ago in the process of studying the history of Chinese calligraphy, I discovered the beauty of the structure of Chinese written scripts. I was especially drawn to the Oracle Bone Inscription (OBI), those pictographic symbols used during the Yin-Shang period (1766-1122 BCE).

From time immemorial, Chinese calligraphy and painting have always been interconnected, each inspiring the other. From the age of ideographs through post Song-Yuan era, elegant writing styles have been created by many renowned calligraphers. It is universally acknowledged that these two art forms share the same techniques although they are influenced by individual personality and subjective esthetics. Statements by Zhao Mengfu (1254-1322) of the Yuan Dynasty: *“to paint the bamboos one must return to the eight fundamentals of calligraphy”* and *“I came to the realization that writing and painting are actually the same”* further confirm this view.

The distinct characteristics of the pictographic OBI are its syncretism between images and writings. Images contain forms, forms become words, words convey meanings. Morphologically, the simple, basic yet esthetically attractive forms of OBI sparked my creative imagination. Since 2009 I have strung OBI into idioms. Through artistic exaggeration I transformed word-symbols into images, at the same time conveyed thematic meanings with the aid of complementary or contrasting colors. My first 10 OBI paintings: *“Bright Moon on the 15th, Yearly Abundance”* and *“Abundance of Vintage Wines”* and others were included in my first book². Still, the urge to create more propelled me on. It resulted in a total of 40 paintings in this publication.

Wen-Hsien Wu
Berkeley, CA, USA, October 1, 2013

²吳聞咸畫藝 The Art of Wen-Hsien Wu, 2010. Publisher Blurb.com.

談藝術符號與吳聞咸的甲骨文繪畫

二十世紀德國哲學家恩斯特·卡西爾(Ernst Cassirer)在他的名著“人論”中提出了：“我們應當把人定義為符號的動物”及“藝術可以被定義為一種符號語言”。繼其後美國美學家蘇珊·朗格(Susanne K Langer)進一步闡述了符號藝術的觀點，她說明：“藝術是人類感情符號的創造”。表明“藝術作品做為一個整體來說，就是感情的意象，這種意象就是藝術符號。藝術的本質作用就在於他能把情感形式用符號表現出來”，這些藝術符號的理論為現代美學開闢了一個新的途徑，深深的影響了現代美術的發展，尤其是抽象主義。

中國殷商的甲骨文，是現知的華夏最古老的文字，從生活經驗中集結出來的符號，非但具備後來許慎在“六書”中所謂的象形、會意等漢字結合，也構成一種優美的造型符號。自晚清以後成為中國書法藝術真、草、隸、篆之外的另一種書體。

一九五〇年代趙無極先生首先把甲骨文字應用在其早期的油畫作品中，成為一種抽象符號的創作元素，獲得極大的反響。現觀聞咸的甲骨文作品，是以具象的觀念來使用這些文字符號，他集字成句經由象形會意來申述其義，通過誇張變形再藉題發揮，以圖示情。其造型樸實稚拙，色彩鮮明對比，塑造了自己獨特的畫風。如他的作品“百花齊放”畫面佈滿繽紛的彩色花朵，襯托出變形的甲骨字符，似字也似花，互相輝映；“奇花異草”則是由甲骨文的字符組成兩個卡通般的人物，在紅綠相間的草木環繞下注視著一株不知名的花樹，充滿詼諧和童趣；“名揚四海”又變形為大船和海洋，天空是一幅世界地圖，

Art Symbol and Wen-Hsien Wu's Oracle Bone Inscriptions Inspired Paintings

The 20th century German philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945) in his famous work *An Essay on Man* stated that man is a symbolic animal (*animal symbolicum*) and art may be defined as a kind of language of symbols¹. Following his path, the American esthetician Susanne K. Langer (1895-1985) further stated that "Art is the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling"². In other words, the work of art in a broad sense is the expression of emotion. This form of expression is art symbol. The basic functional ability of art is to use symbols in conveying human emotions³. This theory of art symbol opened up a new way of thinking in modern esthetics and profoundly influenced the development of modern art especially Abstractionism.

In China, the Yin-Shang Oracle Bone Inscriptions (OBI) can be regarded as the oldest written language known to date. It is a symbol distilled and took shape from living experience. At that time, the inscription already possessed not only the characteristics of pictographs and ideographs in the construction of Chinese characters, as later noted in Xu Shen's (ca. 58-ca.147) *Six Calligraphy Style* but also evolved into an elegant and stylized symbol. Since the late Qing Dynasty, the inscription has been recognized as a writing script in addition to the *regular, cursive, clerical* and *seal* scripts.

In the 1950's Mr. Wuji Zhao (1921-2013) was the first artist who used OBI in his earlier oil paintings. In these paintings, the inscription-induced abstract symbol used as his creative element touched off a great deal of excitement in the art world. Now, to look at Wen-Hsien Wu's OBI inspired art work, we see his use of a realistic approach to deal with the OBI symbols. Wu strung words into idioms; expressed their meaning emotions

¹ cf. Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (Yale University Press, 1944)

² cf. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (Harvard University Press, 1942)

³ See above

右上角補一飛人，極具巧思；"小雨遊魚出"用色淡雅，構圖簡約，小雨兩字符飄於灰藍的天空，魚兒遊於深藍的水中，透露著幾分禪意。諸多畫作經他匠心獨運，把字符、語意、畫境相互結合交融，表現出他對現實生活的體驗和內心深處的觀念。通過吳聞咸的作品，更讓我們看到他把古老的甲骨文符號與其豐富的想像力建構成一個他自己多彩多姿的符號世界。

于兆漪於新澤西州 2013 年十月

using exaggeration, reconstruction and elaboration in the images. His simple and guileless forms and the use of bright contrasting and complementary colors have created a unique style of his own. In "*Hundred Flowers in Bloom*", the array of colorful flowers are shown against the transformed OBI symbols. Flowers and inscription become undistinguishable yet mutually enhancing. In "*Rare Flowers and Grass*", two cartoon-like characters are created from OBI symbol. Among colorful flowers and grass, they gaze at a nameless flowering tree evoking a sense of naivete, humor and childlike joy. "*Reputation Spreading Beyond Four Seas*" brings us to a huge ship at sea. The sky is a world map with an ingeniously inserted flying man at the upper-right corner symbolizing reputation". In "*Fish Swimming in Drizzling Rain*", Wu used subtle, misty colors and simple composition. The two characters for "light rain" floating on a grayish blue sky, while fish swimming in dark blue water hinting the spirit of Zen. In Wu's works, he interweaves OBI symbols, meaning of the idioms and creative sentience to express his life experience and inner feelings. We can also see how he has combined the ancient OBI with his rich imagination to create a multi-colored and multi-faceted symbolic world of his own.

Heshi Yu

New Jersey, October 2013

23. 泰山觀日出 Watching Sunrise on Tai Mountain
24. 同進一樽酒 Sharing an Urn of Wine
25. 幽谷春光好 Beautiful Spring in the Hidden Valley
26. 水漲船高 The Boat Rises with the Tide
27. 月下老人 Matchmaker
28. 文酒之會 Meeting of the Literati
29. 壺中別有天地 Another World in the Urn
30. 小雨游魚出 Fish Swimming in Drizzling Rain
31. 一氣哈成 Accomplishment in One Breath
32. 眉來眼去 Flirting
33. 如魚得水 Like a Fish Taking to Water
34. 天作之合 Heavenly Match
35. 老馬識途 Old Horse Knows the Way
36. 名揚四海 Reputation Spreads Beyond the Four Seas
37. 楓林秋色 Autumn Colors of a Maple Forest
38. 奇花異草 Rare Flowers and Grasses
39. 百花齊放 Hundred Flowers in Bloom
40. 壺中乾坤 The Universe Is in the Vessel

Color Plates

1. 明月三五, 年年有餘 Bright Moon on the 15th, Yearly Abundance
2. 美酒十千 Abundance of Vintage Wines
3. 自得山中樂 Finding Pleasure in the Mountain
4. 天高秋月明 Bright Autumn Moon in Clear Sky
5. 唯天為大 Only the Sky Is Big
6. 玉井觀魚 Viewing Fish in Jade-colored Pond
7. 春在雪山中 Spring Is in the Snowy Mountain
8. 山水喜相逢 Happiness Is When the Mountain Meets the Creek
9. 得酒相逢樂 Wine Makes Reunion Jolly
10. 東風春自足 Spring Breeze Brings Contentment
11. 如月之恆 Eternally Bright Moon
12. 于今飲酒多 Drink and Be Merry
13. 教學相長 Teaching Is Learning
14. 德高望重 One with Great Virtue and Respect
15. 雲從白鳥去 Cloud Is Following the White Birds
16. 聞香下馬 Aroma Leads to Dismount
17. 學如登山 Studying Is like Going Uphill
18. 杏林高手 The Elite Healer from the Apricot Grove
19. 秋林紅葉 Red Leaves of the Autumn Forest
20. 妙手回春 Rejuvenated by Superb Healer
21. 田家有至樂 Farmers Possess the Utmost Happiness
22. 對酒延明月 Drink to the Bright



明月三五夜，年年有餘

Bright Moon on the 15th, Yearly Abundance



美酒十千

美酒十千
Abundance of Vintage Wines



自得山中樂

自得山中樂

Finding Pleasure in the Mountain



天高月明

天高秋月明
Bright Autumn Moon in Clear Sky





唯天為大

唯天為大 Only the Sky Is Big



丰凡艺术

玉井觀魚

Viewing Fish in Jade-colored Pond



朝中研山下

春在雪山中

Spring Is in the Snowy Mountain



山喜相逢

山水喜相逢
Happiness Is When the Mountain Meets the Creek



樂逢酒得

樂逢酒得

Wine Makes Reunion Jolly

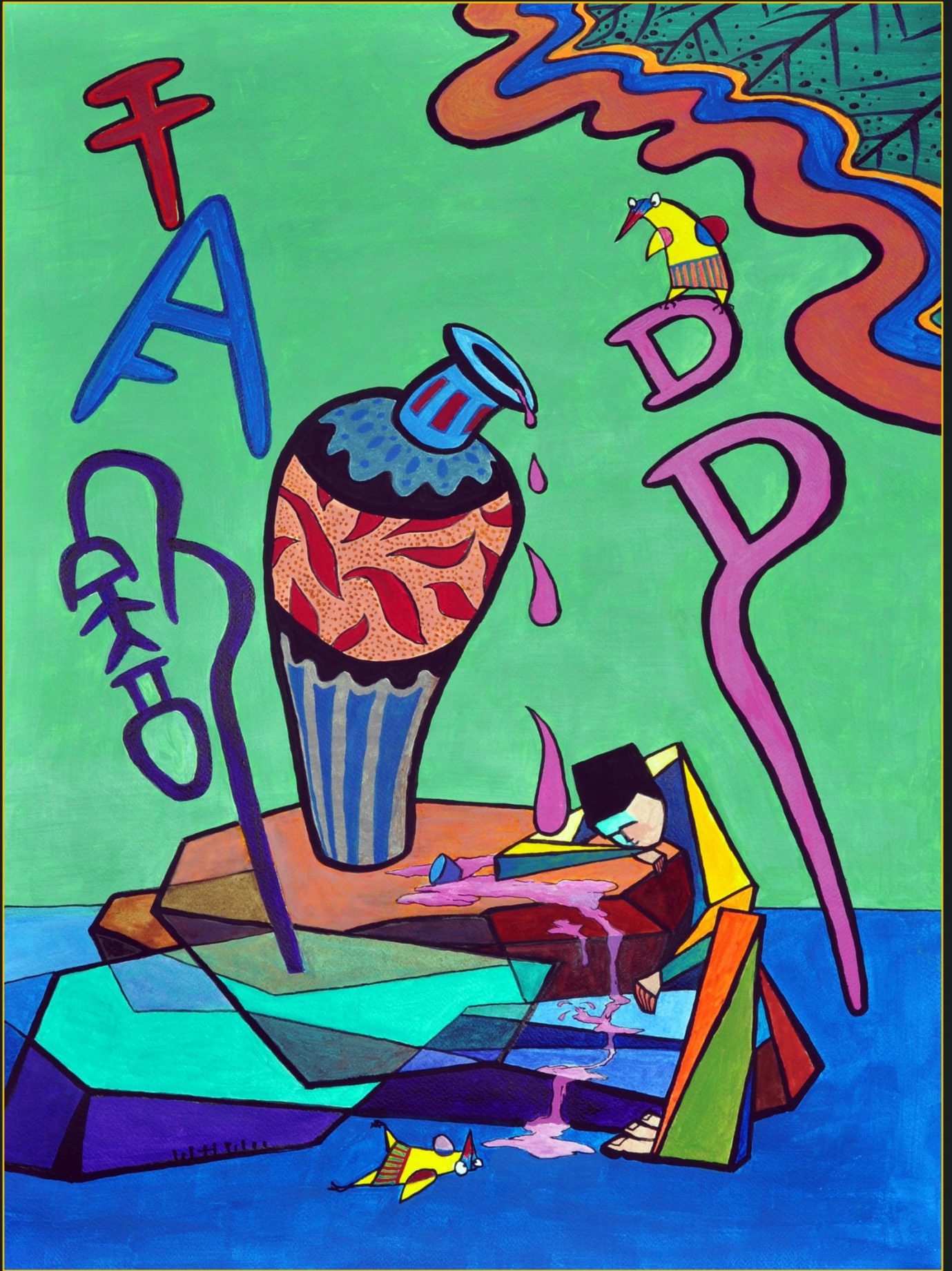






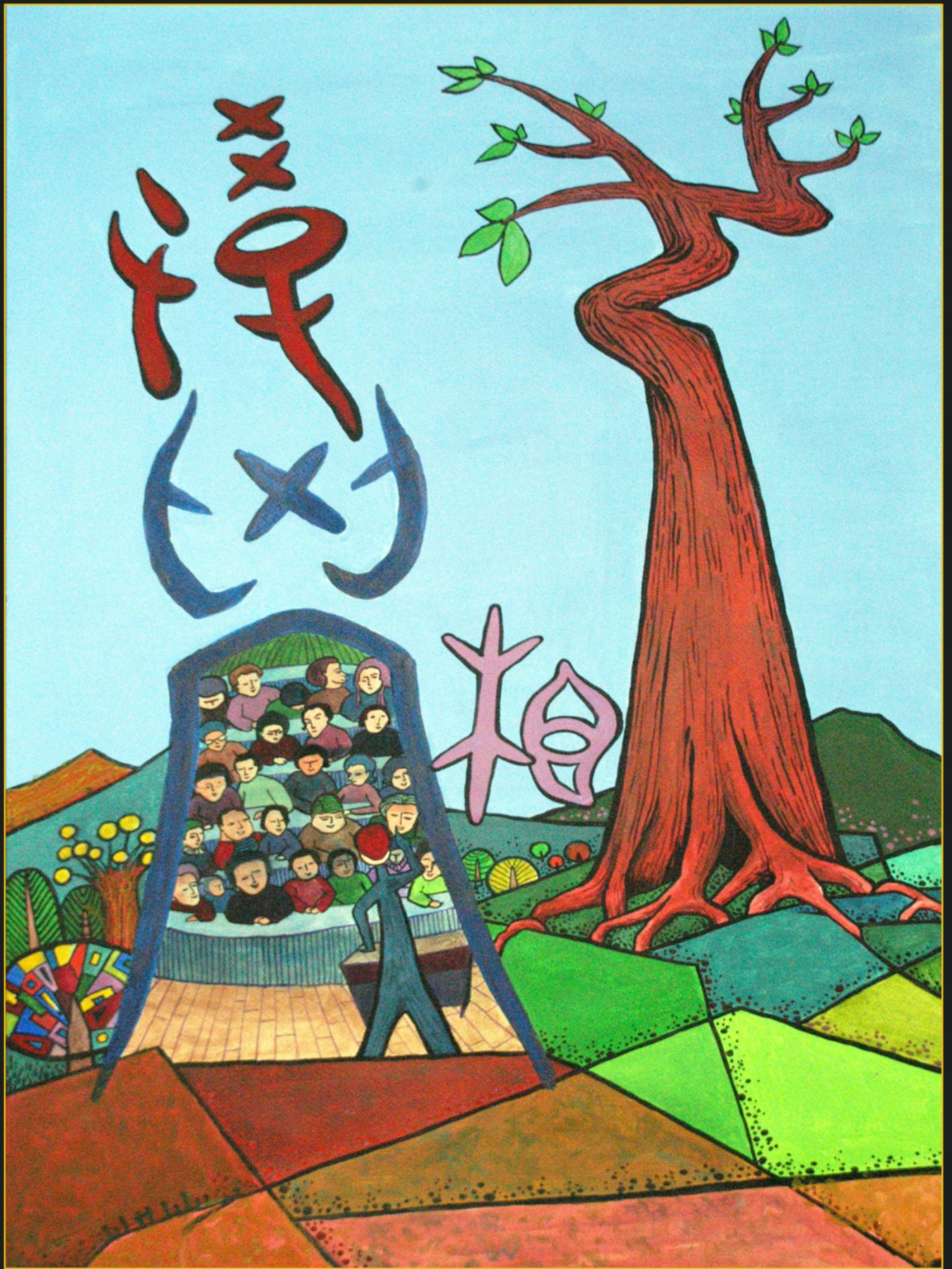
如月之恆

如月之恆
Eternally Bright Moon



于今飲酒多

于今飲酒多
Drink and Be Merry





德高望重

德高望重
One with Great Virtue and Respect





雲從白鳥去

雲從白鳥去 Cloud Is Following the White Birds





香·一·季

聞香下馬 Aroma Leads to Dismount



學如登山

學如登山
Studying Is like Going Uphill



杏林高手

杏林高手

The Elite Healer from the Apricot Grove













田家有至樂 Farmers Possess the Utmost Happiness



對酒延明月

對酒延明月

Drink to the Bright Moonlight



泰山觀日出

泰山觀日出

Watching Sunrise on Tai Mountain



台盛一酒

同進一樽酒
Sharing an Urn of Wine



2010

幽谷春光好

Beautiful Spring in the Hidden Valley



水漲船高

水漲船高
The Boat Rises with the Tide



月下老人

Matchmaker







壶中别有天地

Another World in the Urn



六集年會也

小雨游魚出

Fish Swimming in Drizzling Rain





画米画杰

眉來眼去
Flirting



如魚得水

如魚得水
Like a Fish Taking to Water



天作之合

天作之合
Heavenly Match





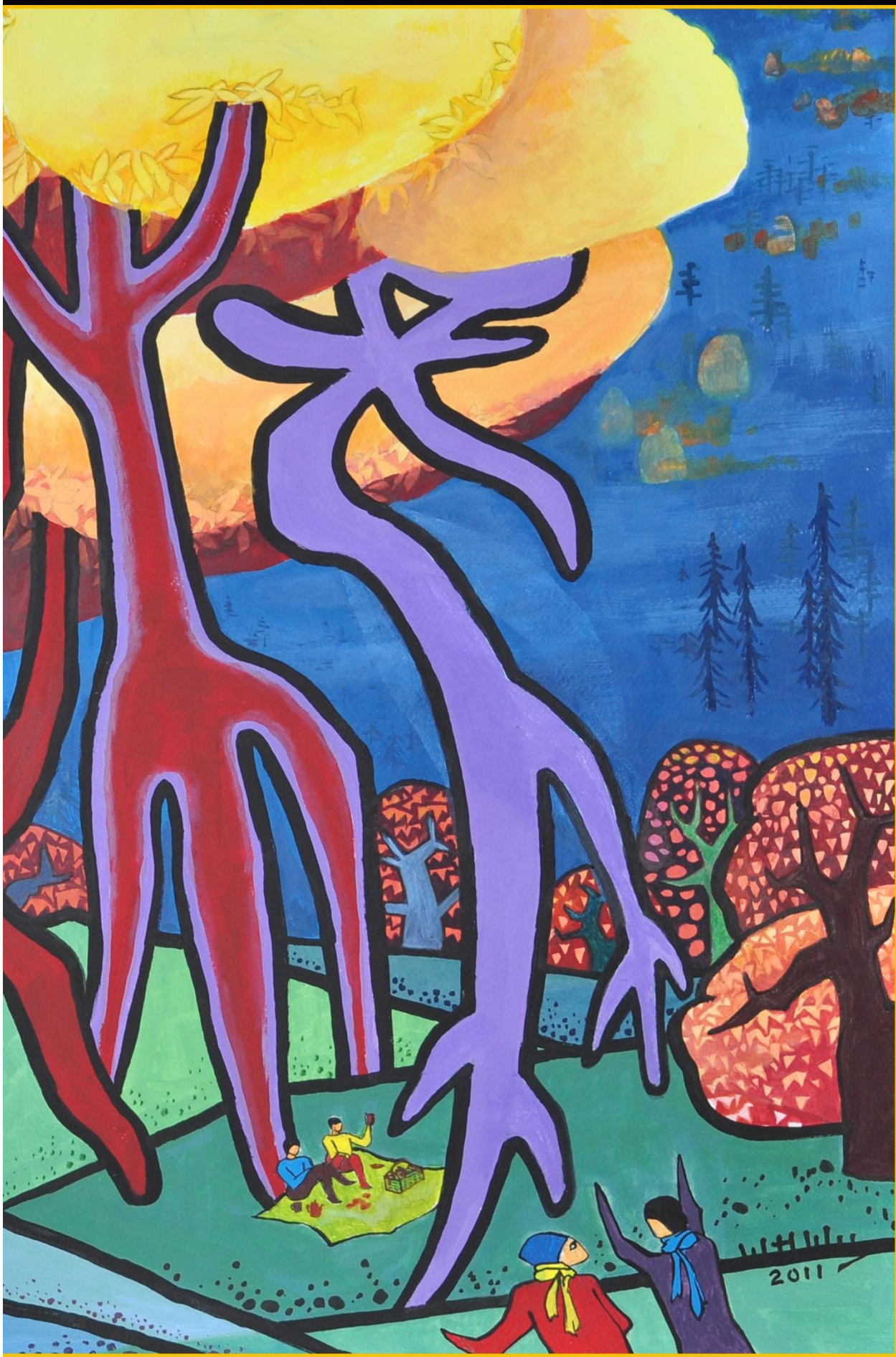
老馬識途

老馬識途 Old Horse Knows the Way



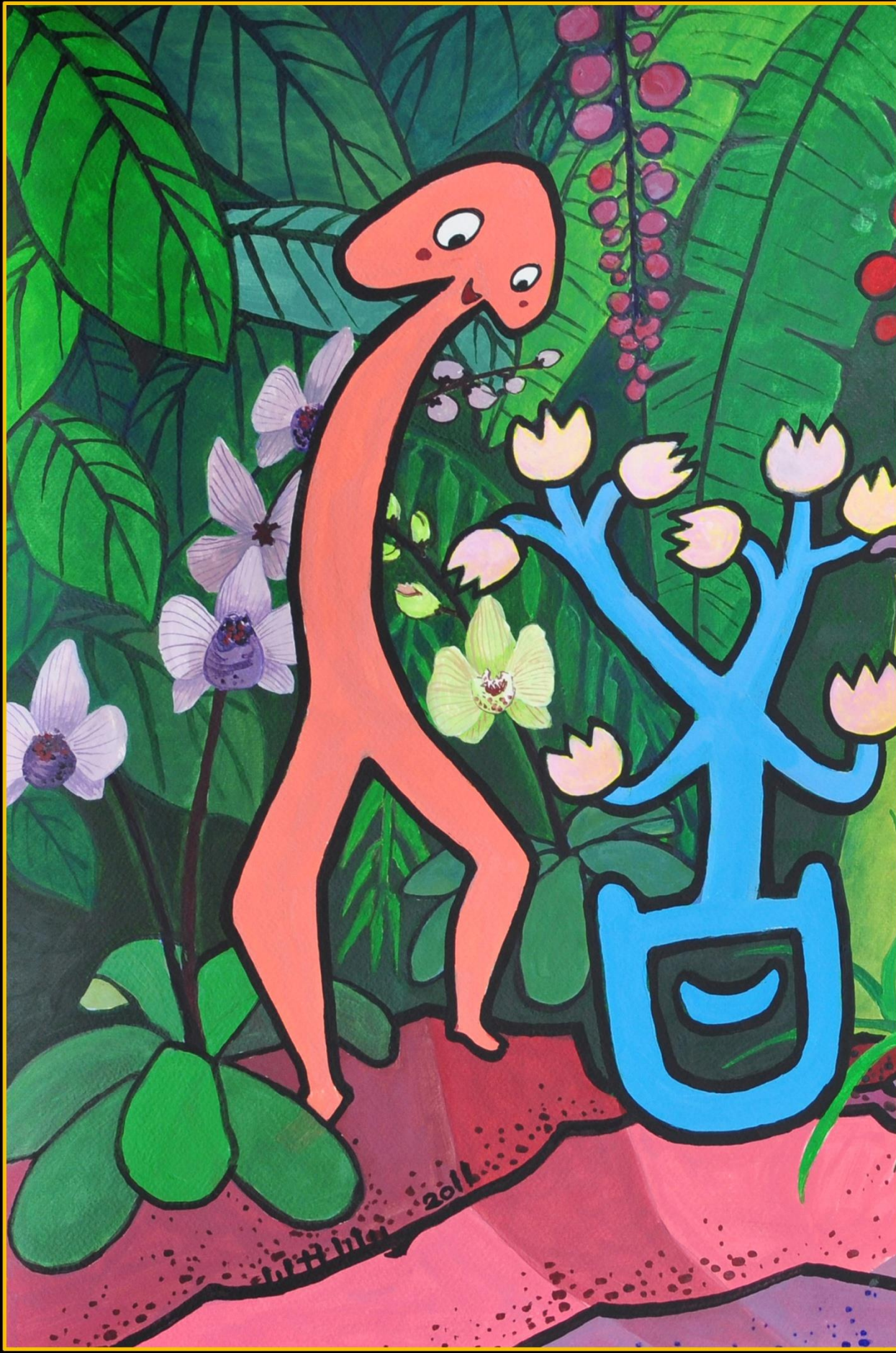






楓林秋色

楓林秋色 Autumn Colors of a Maple Forest







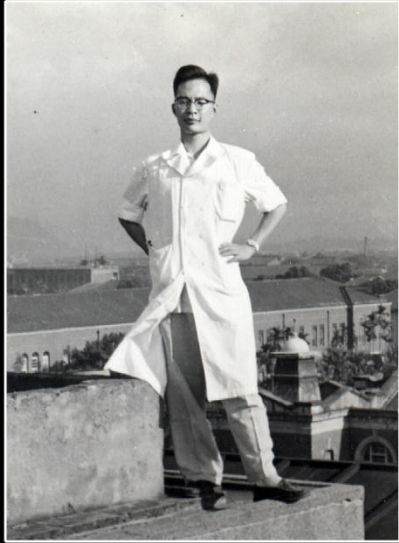






壺中乾坤

壺中乾坤 The Universe Is in the Vessel



About the Artist

Wen-Hsien Wu, MD, MS, a recent resident of Berkeley, California, originally from Shanghai, China, aside from establishing himself as a renowned academician in science and medicine, has also developed great passion for the arts. However, it wasn't until after the completion of his medical education in Taiwan that he began studying formally traditional Chinese painting in 1958 and it wasn't until 1991 when he was able to resume painting on a regular basis. For the past two decades Wen has departed from his early traditional Chinese brush and ink style to light, form, color, abstract and expressionistic water color and acrylic paintings, blending techniques from eastern and western styles. He also does traditional Chinese calligraphy and seal carvings which are integrated into his artworks.

During Wen's extensive travels throughout the world and within the United States, Wen has created over 1900 sketches. Most of his paintings are final products from these sketches. He developed an innate style as shown in a series of paintings based on "city scenes" in another of his art book, "The Art of Wen-Hsien Wu". In this book, he completed his series of paintings of Oracle Bone Inscription.

Wen Wu's works have been extensively exhibited in juried shows and have won many awards.



Wen-Hsien Wu, MD, MS, was born in Shanghai, China. Since his retirement in 2005, he has devoted his time and energy to art after a long and illustrious career in academic medicine.

This book includes 40 color plates integrating the oldest written language, Oracle Bone Inscription, meaning of selected Chinese idioms and interpretive visual images.

In 1958, Wen-Hsien graduated from the National Taiwan University Medical School. He was a Tenured Professor at New York University Medical School, the Anesthesiology Chief at the Veteran's Hospital in Manhattan, and Chairman and Professor of Anesthesiology and Pharmacology at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

Some of his notable achievements include developing a new radioimmunoassay methodology to measure nanogram quantities of the posterior pituitary hormone, establishing an independent interdisciplinary pain management center (1981) incorporating acupuncture and He-Ne laser irradiation in Western methods of pain control, and confirming short-term analgesia and long-term antidepressant effects of Qi Gong. From 1989-1998, he systematically introduced pain medicine to the medical professionals in the PROC and Taiwan.



Wen-Hsien Wu, MD, Sun-Hoo Foo, MD and Chi-Tung Yang, MD are schoolmates of National Taiwan University Medical School. It is karma that they met in New York City unexpectedly. Both of them are so enthused by Wen-Hsien's talent and creativity that they decided to produce together this art book to capture his imagination and achievements. The artwork shows Wen-Hsien's evolving into an outstanding and unique artist.

Phyllis Liu, BA, MS.Lib, also alumnus of National Taiwan University, is instrumental in the editing and translation of the text.

Wen-Hsien's example shows us that with dedication and passion, anything could be accomplished.



甲骨文成語畫集（中英雙語版）

Pictorial Rendition of Chinese Idioms in Oracle Bone Inscription
(Bilingual Edition of English and Chinese)

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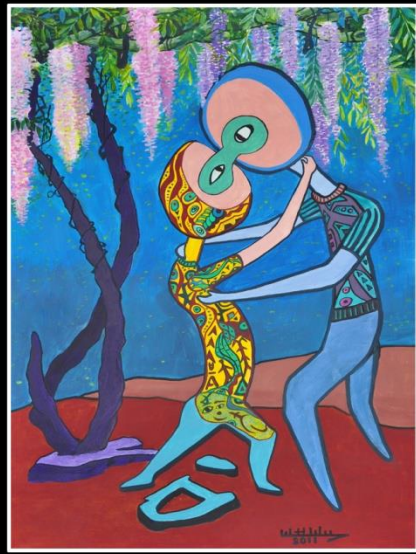
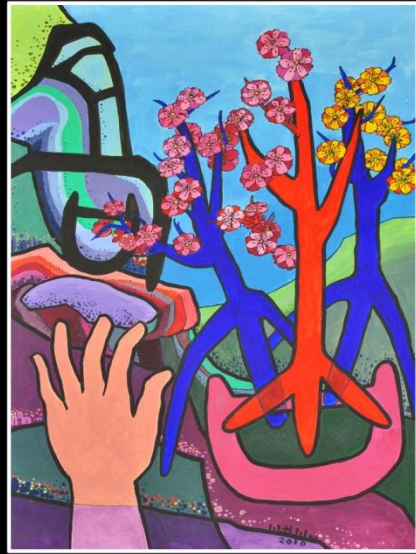
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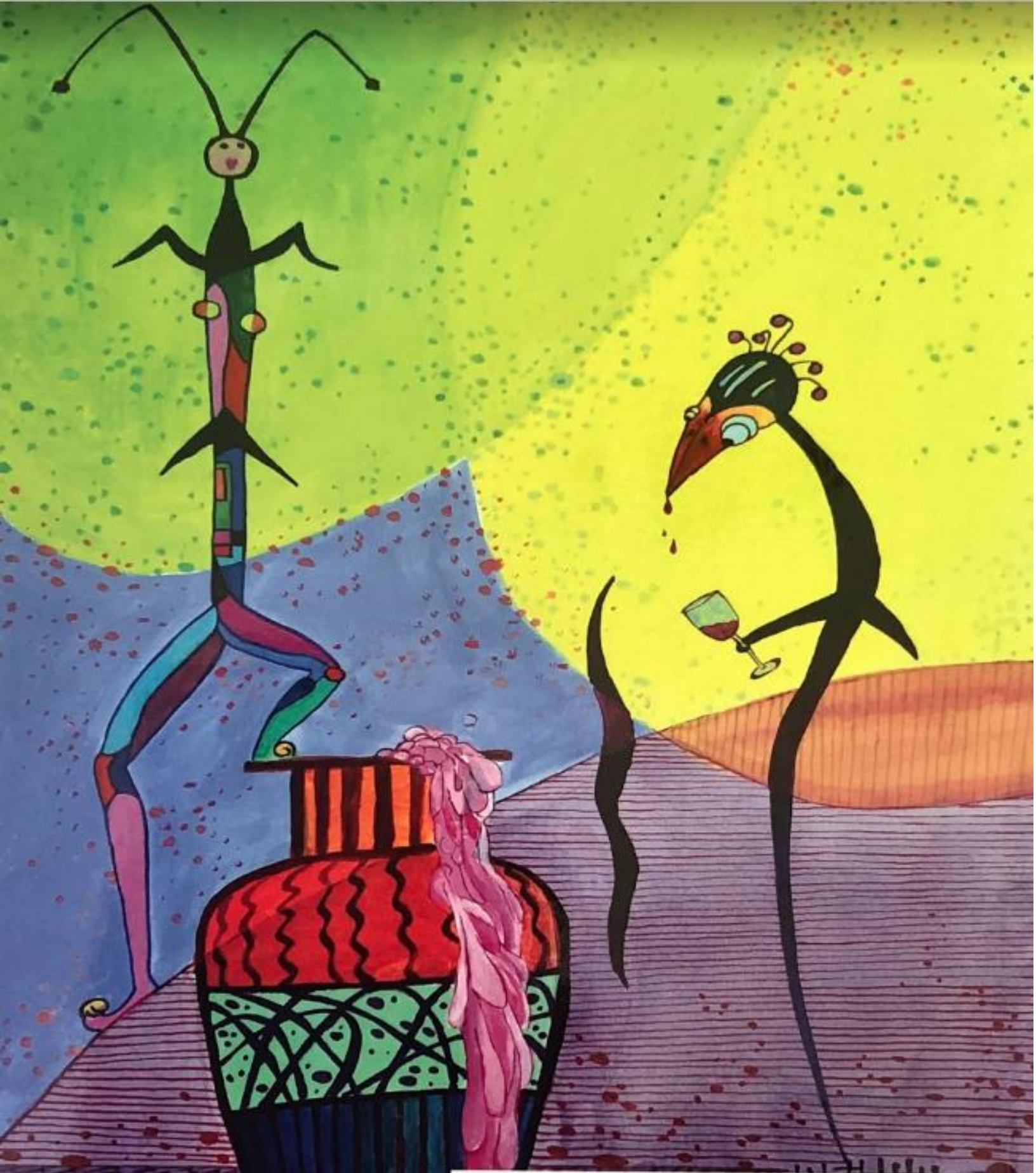
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