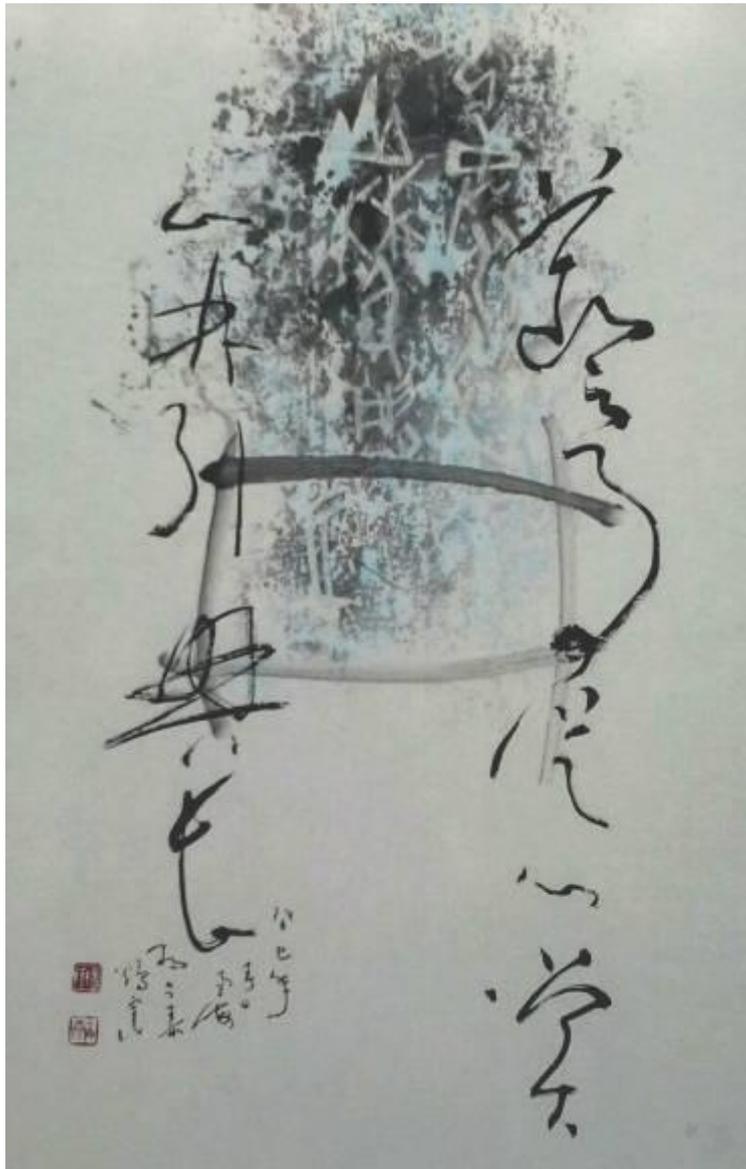


Permutations in Tradition

Yong Cheong Thye's Calligraphic Innovations

18 – 27 September 2015



镜框 草书 艺事從心赏山林引兴长 90 cm x 60cm

About the Artist

Born in Singapore in 1946, Yong Cheong Thye is an acclaimed Singapore artist who specialises in both traditional and contemporary Chinese calligraphy. He had collected top prizes in nationwide calligraphy competitions and his works have been exhibited in various countries including Canada, China, Switzerland, France, Japan and Nepal. He is an active spokesperson for the Chinese Calligraphy Society of Singapore; and is a former Vice-Chairman for the Federation of Art Societies and the *Shicheng* Calligraphy & Seal Carving Society.

Yong's love affair with Chinese calligraphy flourished in his early years. He was introduced to the art form in primary school, during which Chinese calligraphy lessons were part of the school curriculum. Chinese calligraphy continued to exert an important influence in his formative years as his secondary school principal was a dynamic calligrapher who placed much emphasis on the art form.

Shortly after graduating from the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in 1966 where he studied Western art, Yong finally went on to expand his profound interest in Chinese calligraphy under the Master Calligrapher, Mr. Tsue Ta Ti. It was also during this period that he developed an immense passion for the oracle bone script (甲骨文), which was one of his late teacher's favourite scripts.

Having dedicated himself to the art form for over thirty years now, Yong's knowledge and mastery of Chinese calligraphy span across its varying forms and traditions. His ability to produce deft and elegant brushworks in different scripts – oracle bone, clerical, standard and cursive – is in itself a laudable feat by traditional standards. With this exhibition, the artist has achieved yet another milestone through an interesting and groundbreaking series of calligraphy that bespeaks creativity, elegance and finesse.

About the Exhibition

Permutations in Traditions illuminates the erudite aesthetics of Chinese calligraphy in refreshingly innovative formats. Proceeding from *Ancient Inspirations* – Yong's successful exhibition in 2013 – the works in this exhibition continue to reflect his fluid use of calligraphic writings to generate an intriguing blend of traditional ideograms with juxtaposing structural contours. Other interesting inclusions are intricate works of calligraphy on woodcarvings, ceramic vases and canvases.

More remarkably, Yong is one of the rare few calligraphers in Singapore well-versed in the oracle bone script. The oracle bone script (甲骨文) is one of the oldest forms of Chinese writings, and the earliest variant of Chinese calligraphy. Its use dates back to between 1500 to 1000 BCE. During this period, writings were

etched onto turtle shells and animal bones, which were subsequently used for divination by the royal court of the Shang Dynasty, giving rise to the name “oracle bones”. Often described as “pictographic”, the characters in the oracle bone script are thought to be stylised drawings of objects they had been devised to represent.

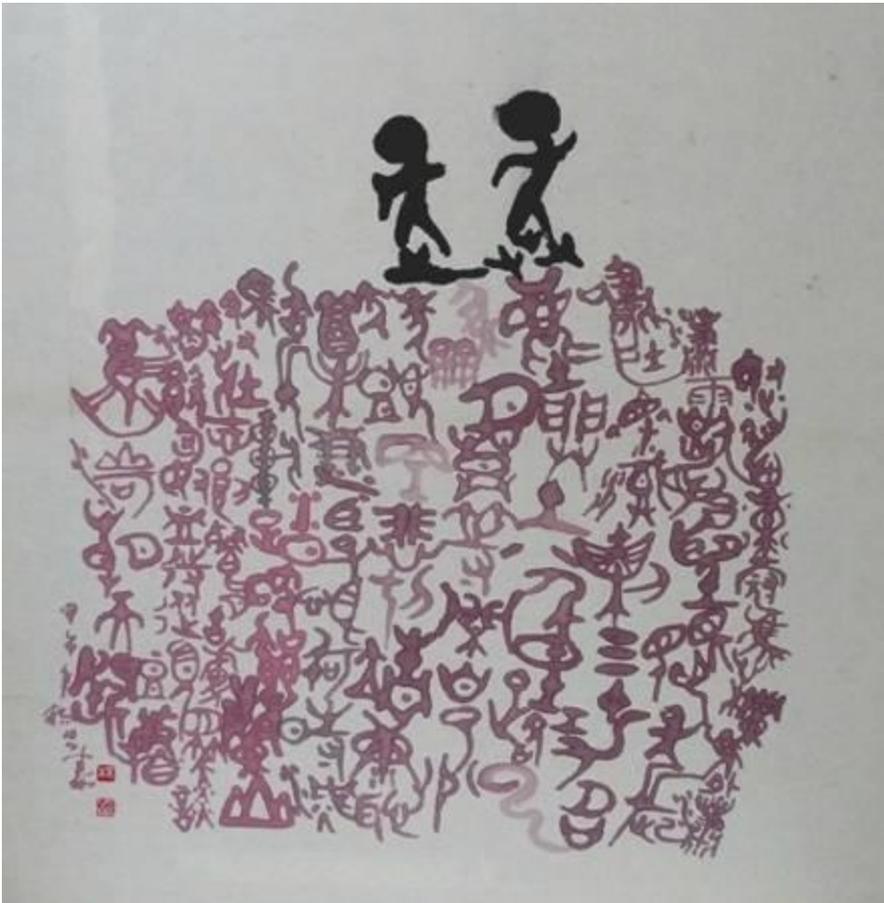


軸 甲骨 自天降康与人無競如川方至受福既多 226 cm X 25 cm

Apart from the oracle bone script, Yong’s mastery of other styles such as the bronze script (金文), cursive script (草书), clerical script (隸书) and walking script (行书) are also apparent across the works in this exhibition. In addition to being a prolific calligrapher, Yong is also adept at producing seal carving designs and the stamps that signed off all his works are mostly products of his own craft.

The bronze script originated from the Zhou dynasty around 1000 B.C., during which inscriptions on bronze ware evolved. Inscriptions were also executed on stone carvings. The bronze script would later be increasingly recognised as the *Dazhuan* (大篆). The work below, 奔走, is enchanting in its imagist effect.

The lines from the famous *Tang* poem, 满江红, is rendered fluidly in *Dazhuan*; the script is characterised by round, curvaceous strokes; “奔走” which roughly translates to “to walk promptly” is personified through the two human-like characters at the top, which resemble two humans in walking motion. The work straddles between traditional and contemporary aesthetics with the traditional writing being rejuvenated by an unconventional play of arrangement.

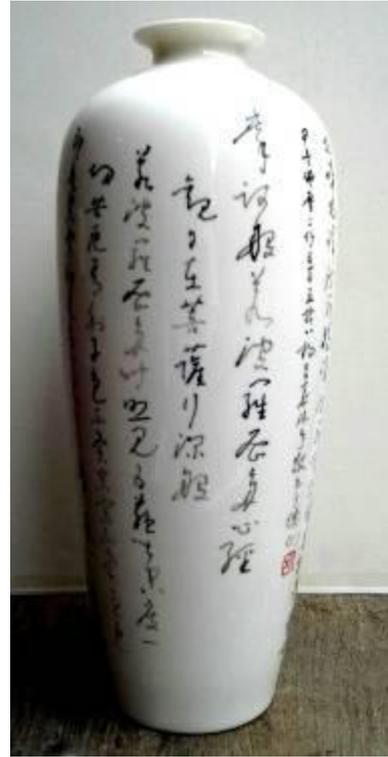


镜框 金文 奔走 岳武穆满江红江詞 怒髮冲冠 71cm X 71cm

The cursive script, also referred to as the “grass script” (草书), is a relatively modern style of writing in Chinese calligraphy. The official use of the cursive script, which comprises a quick and fluid style, can be traced back to the *Han* dynasty, around mid-200 A.D.. Below are examples of Yong’s execution of the Buddhist scripture, *Heart Sutra* (心经) in cursive script on ceramic vases.



YCT 068 瓷瓶 草书 心经 高 50cm



YCT 069 瓷瓶 草书 心经 高 40cm

Though Chinese calligraphy is one of the most ancient art forms, Yong's masterful and innovative treatment proves that its scholarly traditions are not impervious to modern improvisations; there is always room for new forms and interpretations, which are important in enriching the complex discourse of this amazing art form.