

**WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY**

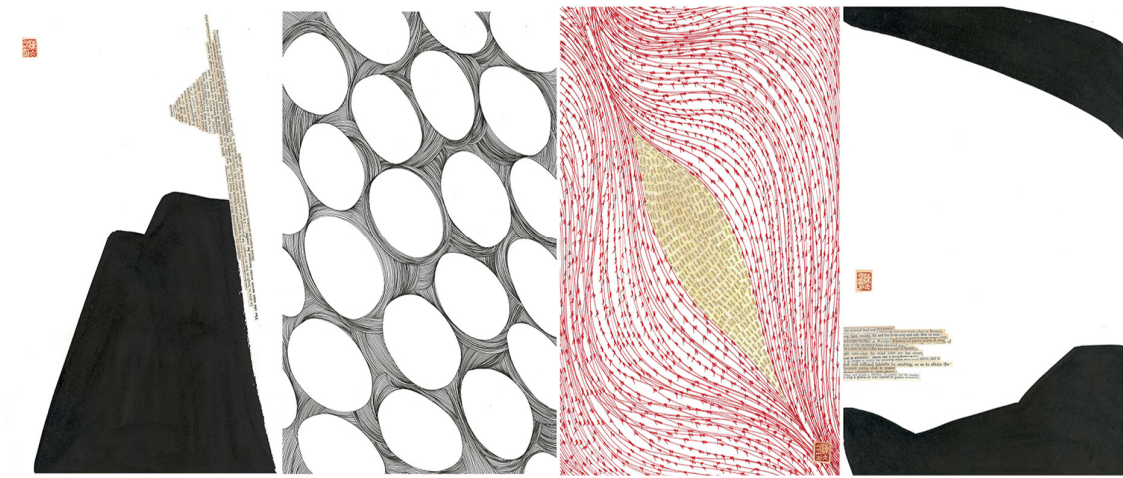


Australia-China Institute
for Arts and Culture



As We Journey Through Life

Bingbing Chen



Exhibition Period

25 Feb 2019 - 8 May 2019

Venue

EA.G.03, Australia-China Institute for Arts and Culture Gallery,
Parramatta South Campus, Western Sydney University

Gallery Opening Hours

Monday - Thursday 10.00am - 3.00pm

Friday 11.00am - 3.00pm

For more information, please visit westernsydney.edu.au/ACIAC

As we journey through life:

A reflection on the work of Bingbing Chen

As we journey through life, from childhood to young adults and beyond, we become increasingly aware of the reality that there are many moments in which we are not prepared for the challenges that confront us.

Sometimes these moments are of personal difficulties or perhaps tragedy: the failure for a career to materialise the way we desire or, even more confronting, the death of a friend or loved one. Other times, there is a more global nature to this realisation: that our very actions contribute to anthropocentric climate change that threatens our very planet, large-scale pollution or possibly mass displacement of people in vulnerable communities. While contributing to such phenomenon, as individuals, we often feel helpless to stop such events from occurring no matter how personally inspired we are to act.

The result is a growing gap between the realities of adulthood and the childhood enchantment of the world we feel and the sense of endless possibilities for the future we are encouraged to pursue by our parents and teachers.

It is in such moments that we often look for meaning in our lives: in a world characterised by the promises of youth but compromised by the toils and tribulations of adulthood, we often wonder what is the point.

It is these moments that have often been the focus of philosophers and artists.

For philosophers, such as the existentialist Søren Kierkegaard, our life is one in which we search for authenticity in or world that disorients and confuses us – a world that often feels meaningless and absurd. For Kierkegaard, this is no easy journey, for it is one filled with fear and anxiety:

“Standing on a cliff, a sense of disorientation and confusion cloud you. Not only are you afraid of falling, you also fear succumbing to the impulse of throwing yourself off. Nothing is holding you back. Dread, anxiety and anguish rise to the surface.” (Kierkegaard, S. (1957) *The Concept of Dread*, Princeton University Press)

These moments have also been the focus of artists such as Edvard Munch most notable in the series of artworks known as *The Scream* (first exhibited

in 1893). The works show a lonely figure with a painful and agonised expression holding his head – capturing a sense of disorientation, fear and isolation.

Bingbing Chen's latest exhibition captures this feeling but with a sense of subtleness reflective of her own personal philosophy – one reflective of her heritage.

One notable example in Chen's exhibition is the image of the eggshell. The metaphor of the egg is a powerful one. We cannot think of eggshells as offering protection – they must be cushioned and carefully handled – but also protect the most cherished of contents.

While Chen sees our lives in this way, it is childhood that is her focus here. Children, like eggs, are cushioned but to survive, we must realise that as we grow that our world is often hostile, challenging and occasionally threatening. Despite the fragility of our youth, we must grow to be resilient and tenacious if we are to confront the many challenging elements of life.

This creates a complex relationship between parents and their children – with parents wanting to shield their children from the challenges of life to ensure they enjoy their years of play – while also preparing them for the trials ahead. Despite the countless books on parenting, each parent and child's journey is an individual one – even within the same family.

Within this frame, Chen's work is simultaneously optimistic and concerned.

Chen recognises that we all grow up with dreams and ambitions – something that she presents in her growing plants from seedlings and mountain peaks – but she also reminds us that many of these do not materialise. When these dreams do not materialise, we risk being captured by what could have been or become bitter and regretful, like disfigured trees.

But Chen's optimism also comes through as she brings to our attention that a life of meaning often grows out of the soil of uncertainty. We will face challenges but our hearts and spirits will bloom when we remain determined and achieve what we desire despite the many setbacks.

In life's journey, the philosopher and the artist have always danced an intimate routine – reminding us of the challenges of meaning and authenticity in a chaotic world. Chen joins this routine and takes us on a journey of fragility, hope and optimism.

Professor James Arvanitakis
Institute for Culture and Society
Western Sydney University

As We Journey Through Life

Artist Statement

I've always known life could be a long, long way.
Before embarking on the journey of life, we need to master some skills.
Painting is the only skill I've mastered, a good one for that matter.
But of course, observing and analysing the world is an extra skill that I have.
And I hope that, armed with these skills,
I hold a sword that can cut worldly hypocrisy.
Some people are good at the belles lettres;
Others are better at musicality.
They're but different skills, or different languages
for the communication of what hits us inside.
For a long time, I groped in the darkness for my language,
and I explored in the field of arts for a skill
that could help convey what I feel to be the meaning of our existence.
My observations tell me things change, new rules apply,
and little stays the same.
Your world is oftentimes not my world,
and my world of lines and colours is replete with its own logic.
My world does not need an explanation by science,
and it does not necessarily work in accordance with your reason.
With my language, I'm fearless and reckless, and I can't stop jumping;
I feel myself blooming like a flower and bursting like a balloon.
Let me open a door,
and fill the world with my parallel lines, and plait them whenever necessary.
My lines are like rail tracks and they also constitute a network,
Extremely complex and full of strength;
they make a powerful world and they feel omnipotent.
This is the world of art that I pursue.



Bingbing Chen

Feb 2019

Artists Biography

Bingbing Chen

1980 Born in Fujian Province, China

2003 Graduated from Fujian Normal University, China, with a Bachelor's Degree in Fine Art (oil painting)

2005 Settled down in Sydney

2005 Graduated from Shillington College, Sydney, majoring in Graphic Design

2005-2012 Worked as a freelance visual designer for various media companies in Sydney

2012 Established Bingbing Art Studio in Sydney

2013 Solo Exhibition "Bingbing's World" at Xiamen Townhall Art Gallery, China

2014 Participated in Chippendale New World Art Prize Group Exhibition, Sydney

2014 Participated in and winning a prize at City of Ryde International Women's Art Prize and Exhibition, Sydney

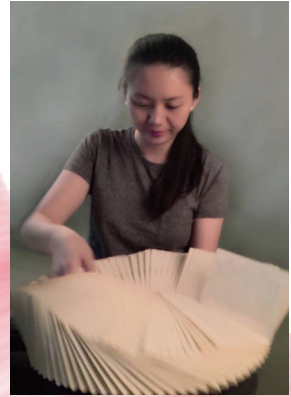
2016 Solo Exhibition "Paradise of Illusory hope" at Fuzhou 1H Art Space

2017 Solo Exhibition "Paradise of Illusory Pleasure" at Fujian Normal University

2018 Curator & Exhibiting Artist of "Dazzling Arts Australia Group Exhibition", Sydney

2018 Participated in "The Three Perfections" exhibition at the Australia-China Institute for Arts and Culture, Western Sydney University

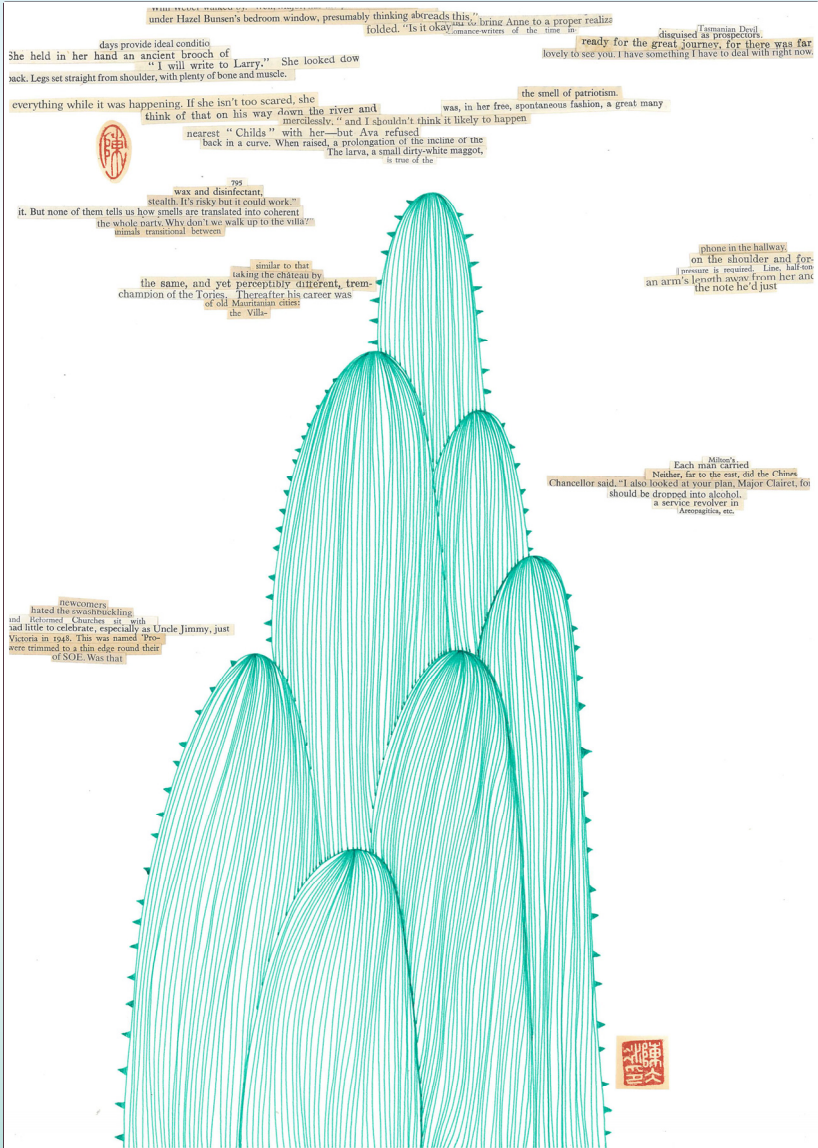
2018 Appointed Art Director of Australia Fujian Association

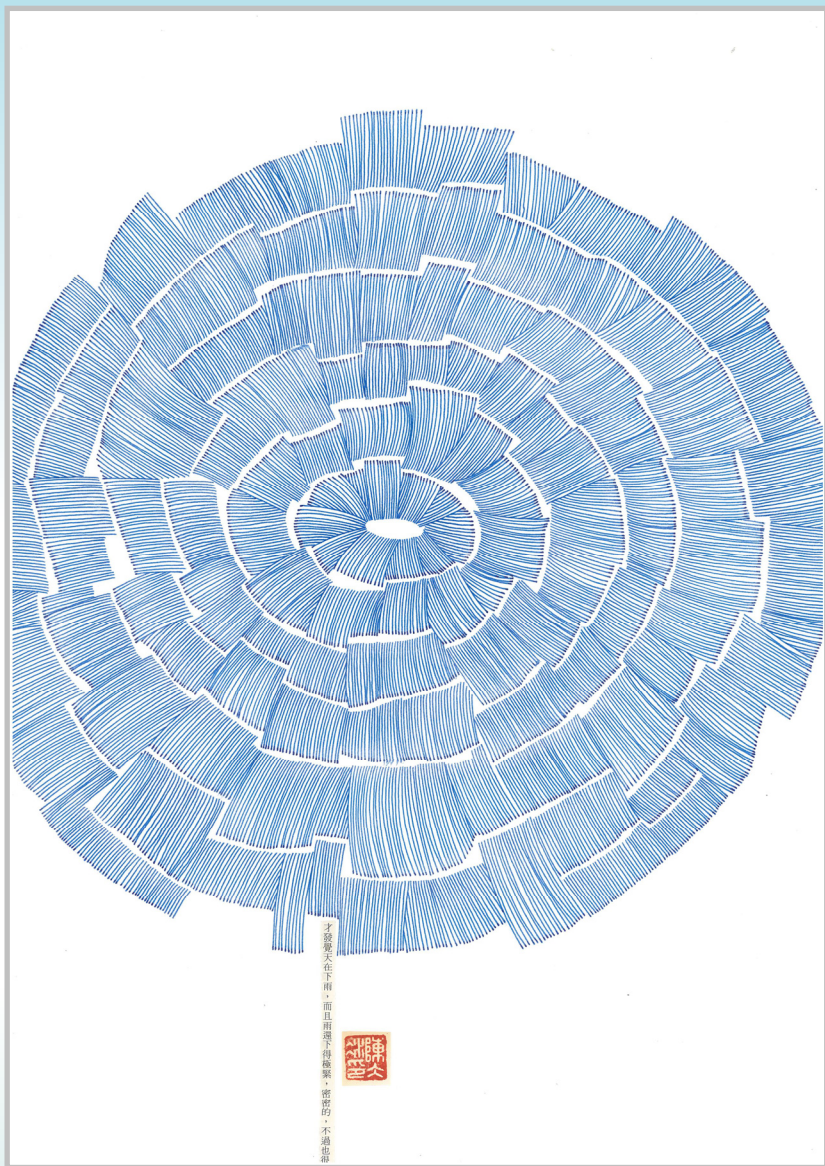


Freshness 清

530mm * 430mm

Rising mountains that are covered with lush greenery and surrounded by light clouds form the classic ideal of a clean world filled with life and hope. The fresh air and energy drive natural growth. Keeping these natural resources help keep our ideal world.

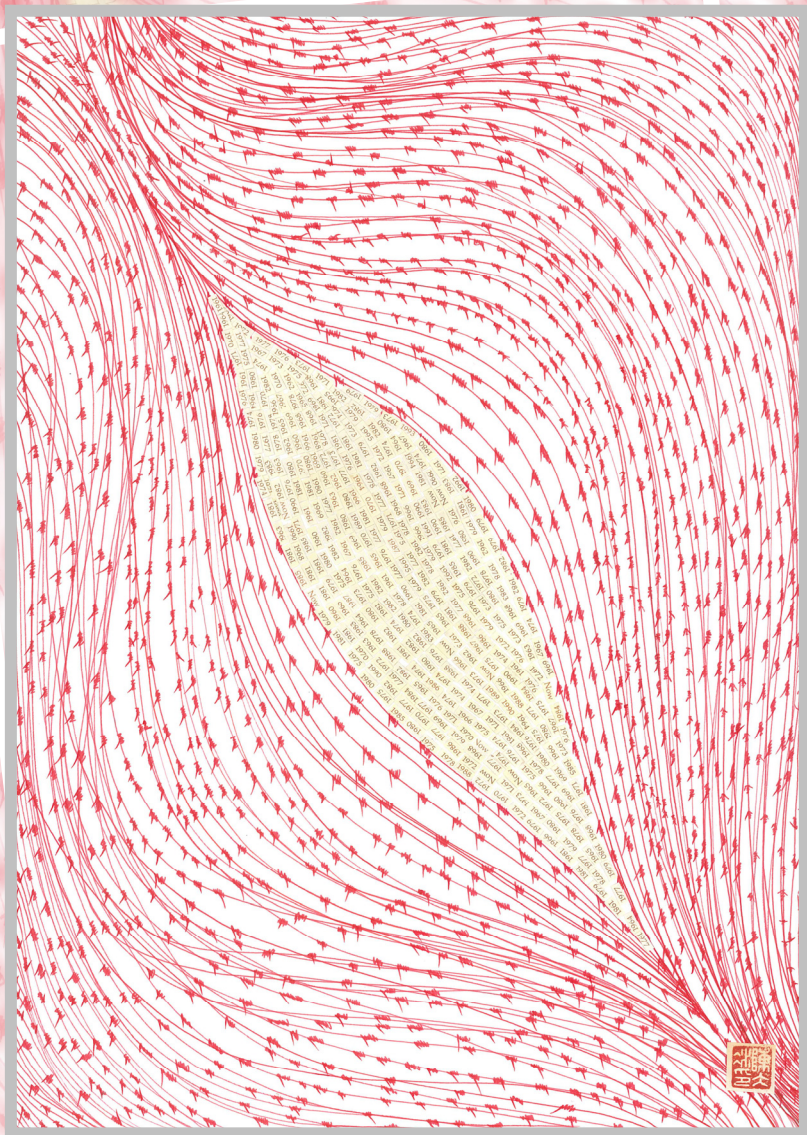




Completeness 团

530mm * 430mm

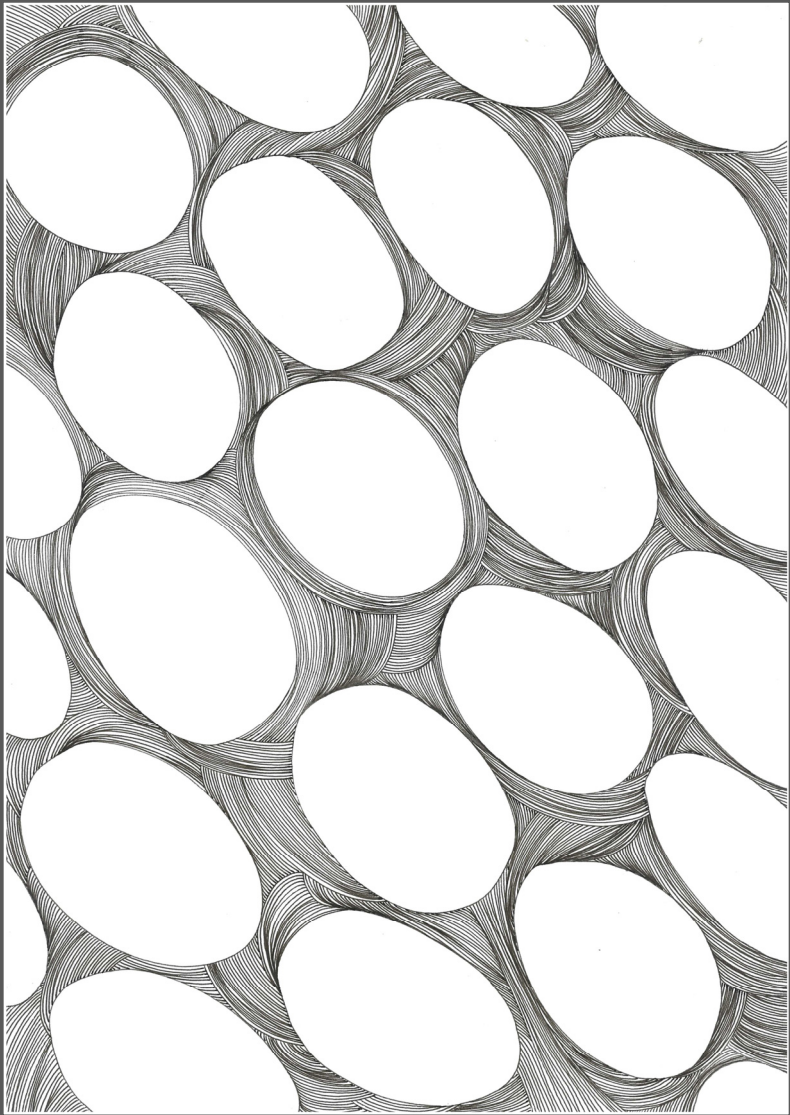
The beauty of the circular shape lies in the sense of protection that its completeness offers. Whether it be the traditional granary top or an umbrella, the round shape affords shelter from rainwater. One is blessed when there is protection against the many challenges that life has in store.



Thorns 棘

530mm * 430mm

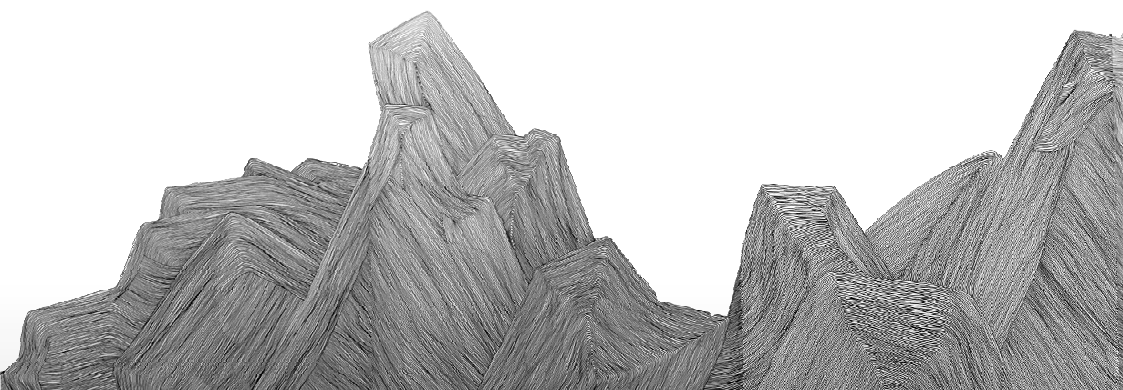
Imagine you are one of the people representing in the middle of the canvas: You are surrounded by endless thorns. Survival means the possibility of wounds inflicted by the prickly thorns around you. This captures the real world we must all confront – a world with endless challenges.



Shells 壳

530mm * 430mm

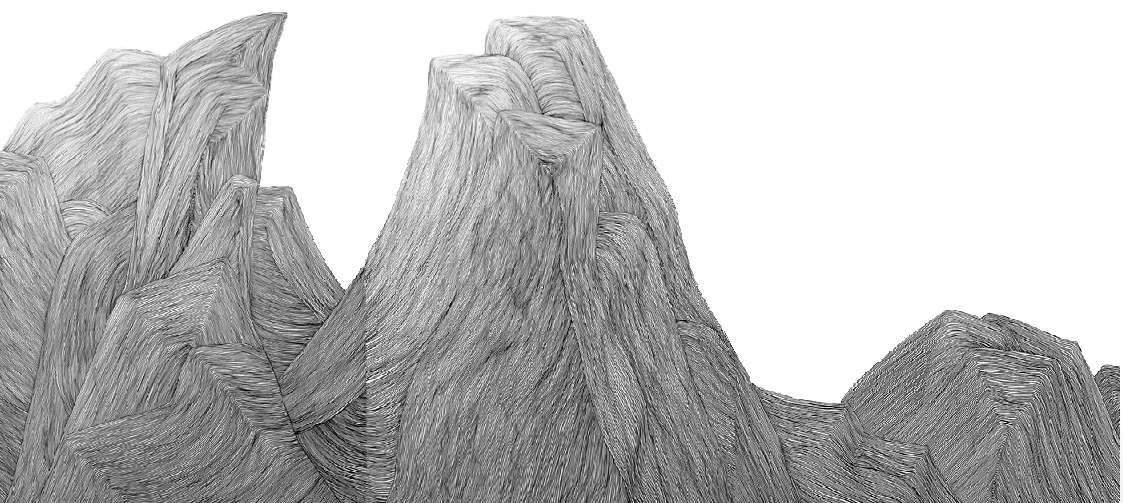
The shells of eggs hardly constitute protection. Their safety depends on both cushioned storage and careful handling. For eggs to survive, they must realise that our world is often hostile and challenging. Growing up and learning to be resilient and tenacious alone can help us confront the many challenging elements of life.



Mountain Range

Size of Each Panel: 850mm *

Traditional Chinese paintings of mountain ranges present the
The mountain ranges in this painting, however, are complete
show only lines that betray the texture of the hard earth that



s 脉 (6 panels)

* 650mm (including frames)

e beauty of trees as well as the shape of the earth and rocks.
ly bare. Robbed of their greenery, these monotonous shapes
is oppressively lifeless.



The Way to Accomplishment 得

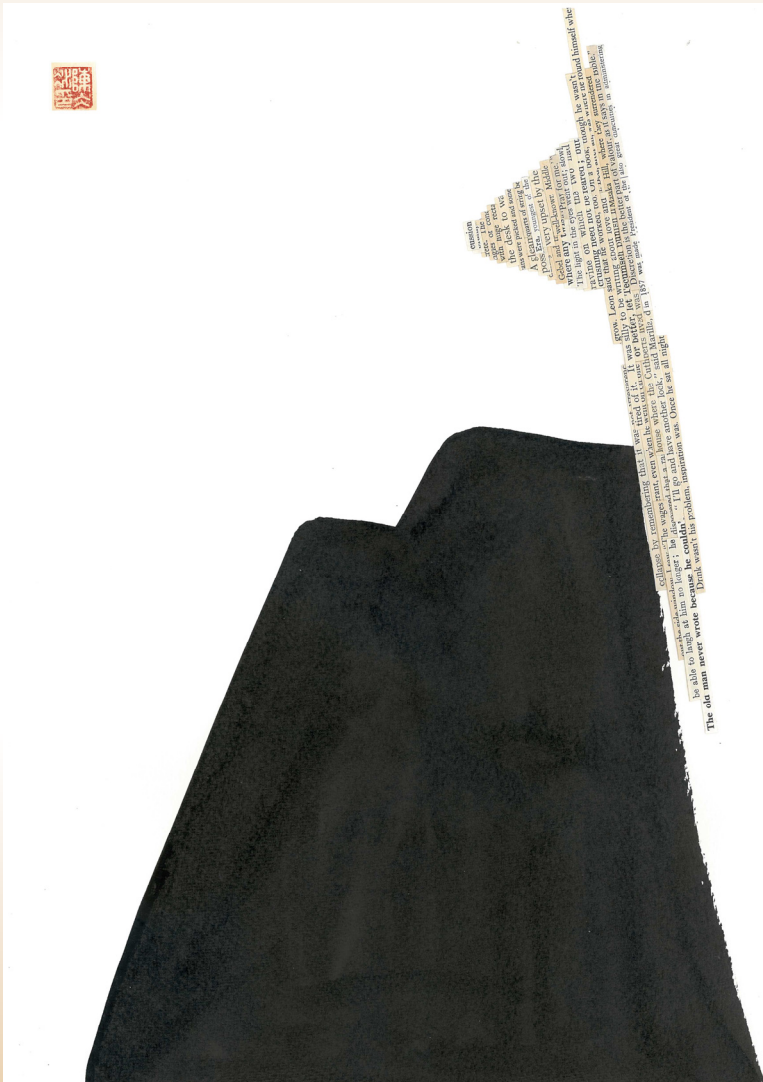
530mm * 430mm

The tree of life often grows out of the soil of uncertainty. Getting to the top requires us to conquer tortuous roads, winding and roller-coaster experiences. If you follow your heart, however, you will bloom with accomplishment.

Xing and Qi (1) 形气 (1)

530mm * 430mm

The “Xing and Qi” series tap into the ancient Chinese philosophy about Yin and Yang. According to this cosmology, the material energy, which created our universe, is referred to as Qi – and whose organisation formed many things including humans. This painting uses Chinese ink to present a conceptualised image of Yin. The English pieces on top form a kind of overriding force ready to crash on it, and the Qi that we do not see existing in the empty space keeps the balance.

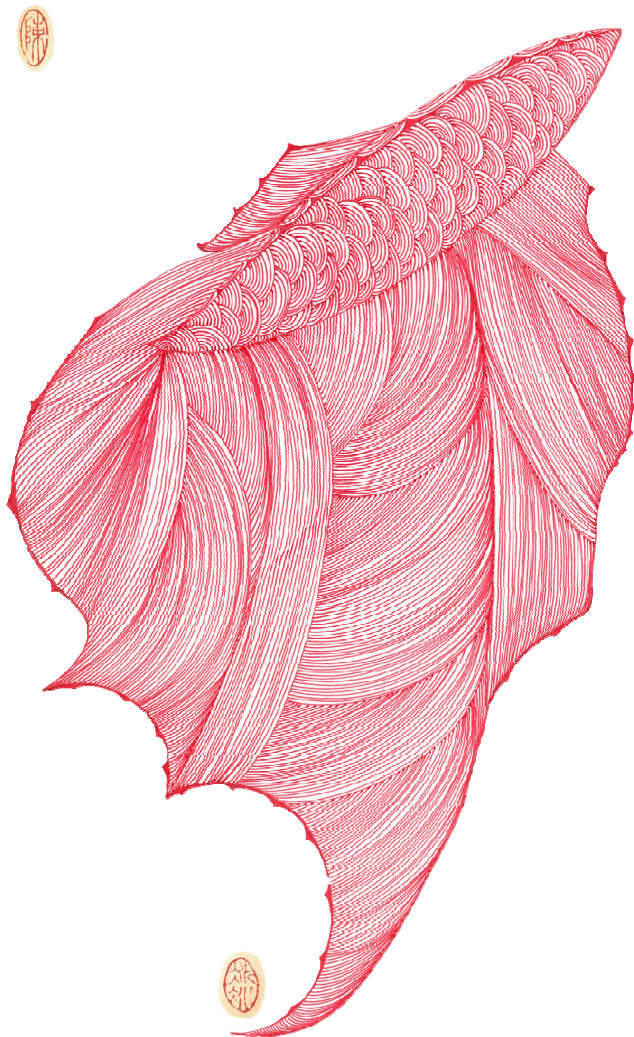




Xing and Qi (2) 形气 (2)

530mm * 430mm

This painting uses Chinese ink to present a conceptualised image of Yang. The two objects on both ends of the canvas are poised to close the gap but the space forms a Qi field which balances the power.



Spirituality 灵

530mm * 430mm

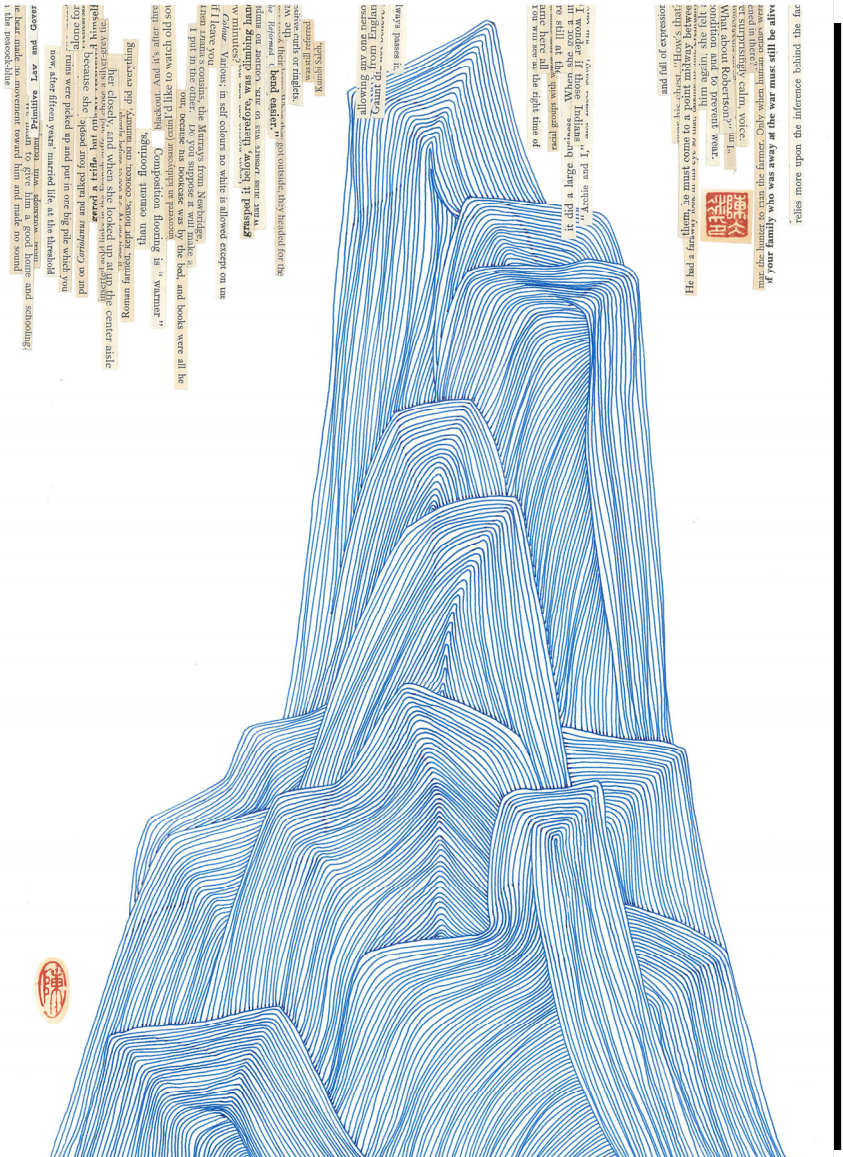
Though the movements of a swimming fish can be captured on an artist's canvas, the beauty and spirituality of the fish can only be seen in its natural environment. When many of our Earth's living creatures become endangered, such beauty may disappear and simply become objects of nostalgia.

Smog 霾

530mm * 430mm

The dense lines depict a mass of black air that covers up the entire northern hemisphere. This stifling material is everywhere around us, covering every continent and choking all cities and villages alike. It fills our lungs and threatens our lives.





Viewing 览

530mm * 430mm

Towering mountains command love and adoration for their beauty. However, the forlorn shape of a mountain without the greenery can only inspire feelings of sadness, awe and sublime regret. The history of human intervention in natural environment often takes away the richness of our mountains.

Seeking 覓

530mm * 430mm

We all grow up with dreams and ambitions. Many of these do not materialise and the unachieved dreams and ambitions are like seedlings – growing inside us until they become unshapely trees. They are not beautiful and they can become a barrier to preventing us from seeking new aspirations – but how we respond shapes who we become.



另一方面做他做人之道，亦不結怨之情，非常複雜。

一些幻想，調劑平凡的日子，也是很應談的。

「方說做小人道，夾着個小情，非常複雜。」

兩人的事業失色，當然為他止他更用功更精進更求進。

誰不認為自身受之於天。

「就是這件最難得的，或難得。」

「我的故事，是不一樣的。」

不幸若好時光一去不返，不該大也。

做朋友的先決條件是要有雙好耳朵。

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