



Literati Gathering  
New Work by Wang Tiande

雅集—王天德新作展

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## Director's Preface

I have been working with Wang Tiande since NanHai Art's 2014 group exhibition *Contemporary Ink*. From the beginning of this collaboration, I found that Tiande is an extreme perfectionist, which was also reflected through the exquisite presentation of his solo exhibitions at the Suzhou Museum and the Palace Museum in Beijing respectively. I cannot say the collaboration has always been smooth, due to his extremely stringent self-imposed demand for quality, yet the final work is unparalleled.

Aside from noticing this personal characteristic, I have a few thoughts on his art. First, Wang Tiande's work is highly identifiable. It stands out in almost every circumstance. Second, Tiande has fully mastered this unique artistic language of his own creation through years-long experiment and persistence, and brought it to the level of nearly perfection. The new work selected for the current exhibition best manifests this virtuoso manipulation. Third, his work resonates with the aesthetics unique to China's art tradition, while being contemporary and refreshing. If I were allowed to use only one word, I would describe Tiande's work as "elegant". This literati taste is ancient, but never looks old in Tiande's work. Even an uninitiated viewer of classical Chinese artworks can appreciate this elegance in contemporary settings.

I am grateful to Prof. Kuiyi Shen for his comprehensive and in-depth introduction of Wang Tiande's art, and for coming up with the exhibition title – *Literati Gathering*. I would also like to thank J. Sanford and Vinie Miller for loaning us two Wu Hufan paintings from their excellent Lijin Collection to facilitate this artistic dialogue between the artist and previous masters. As many distinguished art historians, curators and collectors gathering for the second Asia Week San Francisco Bay Area, I hope this exhibition will be an occasion for a wonderful "literati gathering".

*Edward Gui*  
August 2016



## Literati Gathering: New Work by Wang Tiande

Kuiyi Shen

Any discussion of Chinese artistic practice today, and particularly of work based in the concepts and medium of ink, must include the name Wang Tiande. As contemporary art finally made its way to China in the 1990s, Wang created a series of conceptual ink installations that broke through our conventional ideas about how to use the ink medium. At the beginning of the new millennium, he again found a new visual language, replacing the brush with a stick of burning incense to destroy his ink traces, leaving negative images in the paper, and thus created his unique artistic style.

More recently he has used the title *Digital* to create several series of work based on a two-layered, binary structure. These pieces usually take compositional elements from landscapes and calligraphy, referring selectively, and freely, to the paintings and writings of past masters. Actually, however, in Wang Tiande's landscapes, his concerns differ from those of many Yuan and Ming literati artists who constructed natural landscape images suitable for spiritual wandering. Wang intends to create a larger, virtual, space in which modern people can communicate with nature and simultaneously dialogue with the ancients through deconstructing language and painting. At the same time, within this space, he examines his own situation in the world and attendant perplexities. Usually his works are comprised of two layers, one negative and one positive. On the undermost layer of *xuan* paper he uses traditional painting compositions and brushwork to render landscapes and inscriptions. On the uppermost surface, of *pi* paper, he burns through the paper with incense sticks to create another layer of landscape and calligraphy images, but in negative space. The two layers overlap but are intentionally mismatched, with the lower layer only hazily visible through the upper, except in the burned-out voids, thus causing the entire painting surface give rise to an illusion of spatial depth. This dislocation of space also creates a dislocation of time, which allows us, in the present day, to share a space for communication and dialogue with the literati masters of the past. Actually, in the under layer, Wang Tiande does not completely adopt the compositions of Yuan and Ming landscapes or their inscriptions, but

intentionally disassembles or appropriates them. Therefore, only the general artistic tenor and formal technical language of the ancient masters is sensed through the semi-transparent surface layer. The vagueness and uncertainty created by the semi-transparent surface stimulate the viewer's imagination and desire for exploration. In this upper layer, the original ink strokes of the landscape and inscription have completely disappeared, along with the ashes of burning incense. This process of burning reminds us of Nirvana, while implying our own confusion about tradition and our anxiety for the present. The gaps burnt into the upper sheet of paper by the incense sticks open the space for us to engage in a direct dialogue with the literati-style landscapes on the bottom layer. Through the multi-layered field, Wang Tiande creates a virtual space where we seek the past and explore ourselves.

In the past few years, Wang Tiande has combined rubbings from stone steles he found at Suzhou's East Mountain with his burned incense landscapes to create a new *Houshan* series. These steles, carved with different scripts, recorded the cultural history of Suzhou and also have very high artistic and historical value. The practice of making rubbings, a traditional method of preserving and disseminating historical texts and images since the Song dynasty, reached its peak in the epigraphic movement associated with textual studies of the middle Qing period and became an essential tool for archaeological research. However, in Wang Tiande's work, the text of the rubbing has no direct relationship with the content of his painting. The rubbing here is more like a symbol of History, a reference that adds another layer to his painting, both physically and conceptually. Now, in our dialogue with the past, we have another witness, this marker of the past, to remind us to respect historical truth. The juxtaposition of Wang's incense-burned landscapes with his rubbings creates a strong contrast of the virtual and the real. It also increases the contemporaneity of the landscape. Wang Tiande believes "For some things, full display is unnecessary. The value system of traditional landscape painting is obvious. We need not deny it. It exists. But our lifestyle and artistic discourse must be contemporary. These two layers,

put together, will produce a new aesthetic experience." Wang Tiande not only can skillfully handle the space of the picture plane, his sensitivity to virtual space and refined construction can be seen in his recent exhibition design and installations. This elegant atmosphere perhaps results from his understanding and adaptation of literati art of the past.

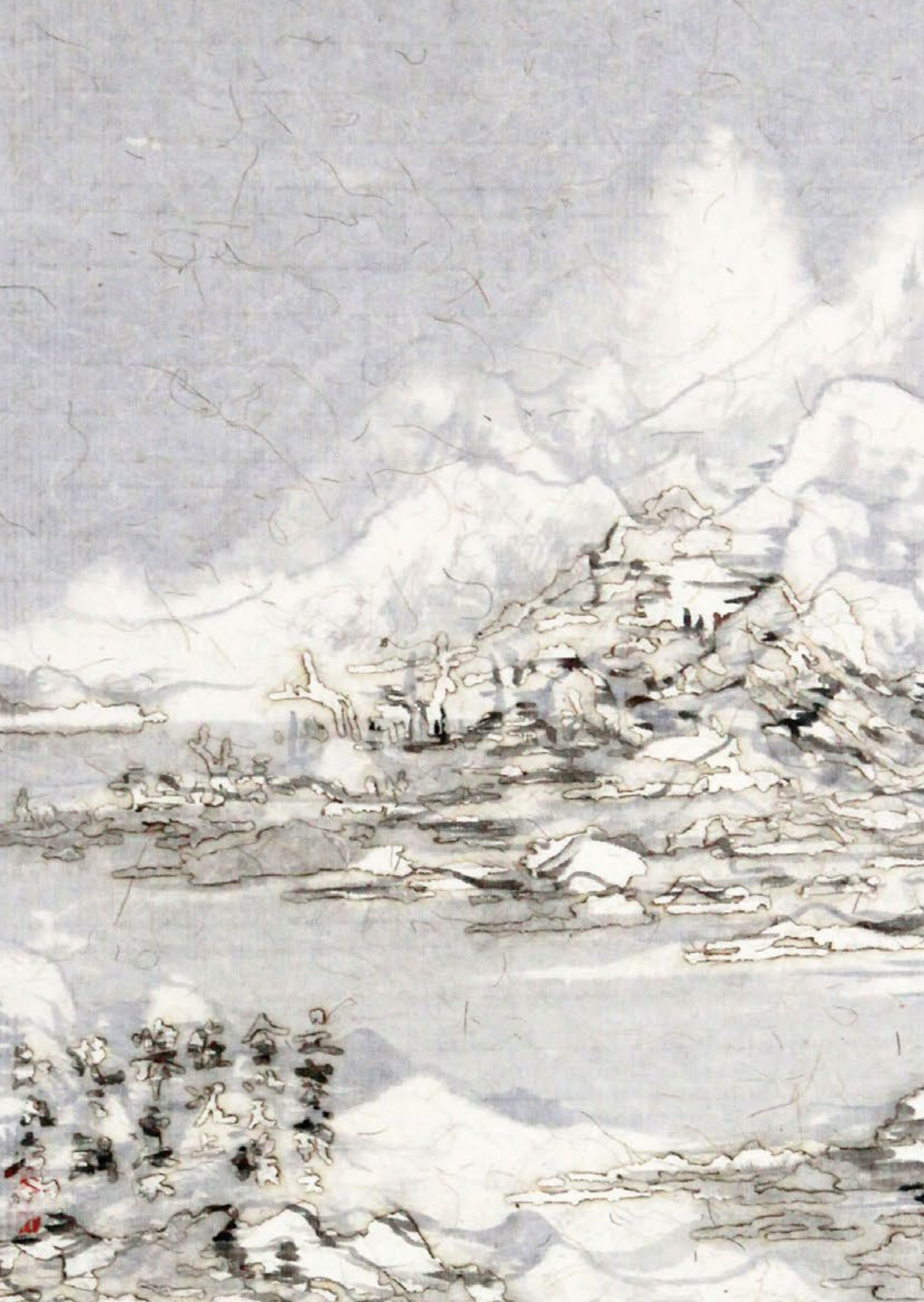
For this *Literati Gathering*, Wang Tiande specially created several works which directly dialogue with paintings and calligraphy of the modern Chinese landscape master and famous connoisseur Wu Hufan (1894-1968). Wu Hufan was born in an elite Suzhou family. His grandfather, Wu Dacheng, a high official of the Qing court, was also one of most important collectors and calligraphers of the nineteenth century. When he was young, Wu Hufan studied painting with the renowned Suzhou master Gu Lingshi. Later he developed his own style, based on the study of his family's rich collection of classical paintings and calligraphy. The Lijin Collection has generously lent two of Wu's paintings to this exhibition. *Pine Landscape* is Wu Hufan's work in the style of Cao Zhibo (1272-1355). Cao Zhibo was a literati painter and good friend of Yuan dynasty master Huang Gongwang. Huang praised Cao Zhibo's painting as "having the resonance of [Tang dynasty poet-painter] Wang Wei (701-761)." In this painting, Wu Hufan synthesizes aspects of Yuan literati landscape with Tang and Song blue-green style and Ming Wu school brushwork, an accomplishment that shows his broad knowledge of the history of Chinese painting and his stylistic innovation. *Autumn Mountains*, according to Wu Hufan's inscription, is an imaginary reconstruction of a recorded painting by the Yuan master Huang Gongwang (1269-1354). This painting combines the elegantly restrained and subtle brushwork of Yuan literati painting with the dramatic, even fantastic, compositions often seen in the 1930s landscape revival, lending the work an immediate sensory appeal. Wu Hufan was a staunch defender of Chinese traditional art practice, but also a man of the modern world.

In a tribute to the Wu school artists, Wang Tiande's *Houshan* series

linked his own work with the cultural and historical background of Suzhou. Suzhou, famous in imperial times for its beautiful natural scenery and network of canals, is still called the Venice of the East. It was also a magnet for literati culture. Wang Tiande here uses the brushwork of the Wu school, demonstrating, with no doubt, his admiration for literati painting, but on the other hand his choice to burn away the ink composition on the upper layer of each composition also reveals the contemporary artist's engagement with history and questioning of today's environmental change. What do we expect to see from those virtual spaces created by Wang Tiande? Here, appropriation or adaptation created new meaning and value.

Wang Tiande is constantly working through new artistic problems in the most thoughtful ways. If you don't see him for a while, you may be surprised by his new ideas. This time, his dialogue with Wu Hufan, through the dislocation of time and space, puts us, his audience, in a double discourse of history and the present, and brings together a unique literati gathering.

**Kuiyi Shen** is Professor of Art History in the Department of Visual Arts and Director of the Program in Chinese Studies at the University of California, San Diego. His current research focuses on modern and contemporary Chinese art and Sino-Japanese cultural exchange of the early twentieth century. His publications include *A Century in Crisis* (Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1998), *Between the Thunder and the Rain* (Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, 2000), *The Elegant Gathering* (Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, 2006), *Chinese Posters* (Prestel, Munich, 2009), *Blooming in the Shadows* (China Institute, New York, 2011), *The Art of Modern China* (University of California Press, 2012), which was awarded the 2013 Book Prize in Humanities by the International Convention of Asia Scholars, and *Light before Dawn* (Asia Society, Hong Kong, 2013). He is a recipient of fellowships and awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, Social Science Research Council, Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Stanford University, and Leiden University.



Plates



賞大秋山圖  
行年記以年工  
金先春曉年  
并秋夜有長  
石在也南  
畫師自題  
清美觀





Wu Hufan (1894-1968)

*Autumn Mountain*

38 x 14 in.

Ink on paper (hanging scroll)

Courtesy of the Lijin Collection: Vinie & J. Sanford Miller

*previous spread*

Wu Hufan (1894-1968)

*Pine Landscape*

27 x 12 in.

Ink on paper (hanging scroll)

Courtesy of the Lijin Collection: Vinie & J. Sanford Miller

1.  
*Houshan Revolve MOTH 0516*, 2016  
Xuan paper, ink, burn marks  
79 7/8 x 20 1/2 in.







2.  
*Houshan Revolve MOTH 0533, 2016*  
Xuan paper, bast paper, ink, burn marks  
17 5/16 x 72 13/16 in.

*previous spread*

3.  
*Houshan Revolve MOTH 0527, 2016*  
Xuan paper, ink, burn marks  
72 13/16 x 18 1/16 in.



4.  
*Houshan Revolve MOTH 0417, 2016*  
Xuan paper, bast paper, ink, burn marks  
14 1/8 x 65 11/16 in.

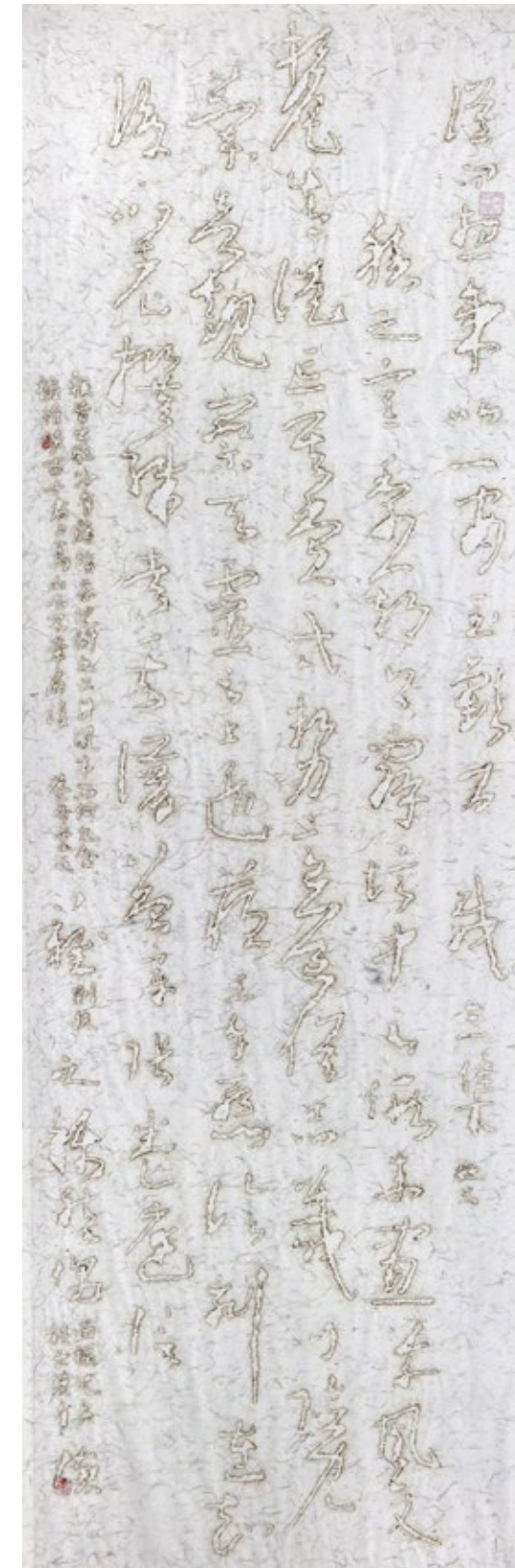
*previous spread*

5.  
*Houshan Revolve MOTH 0470, 2016*  
Xuan paper, ink, burn marks  
62 3/16 x 22 13/16 in.





6.  
*Houshan Revolve MOTH 0470 (mini)*, 2016  
Xuan paper, ink, burn marks  
35 3/8 x 11 3/4 in.



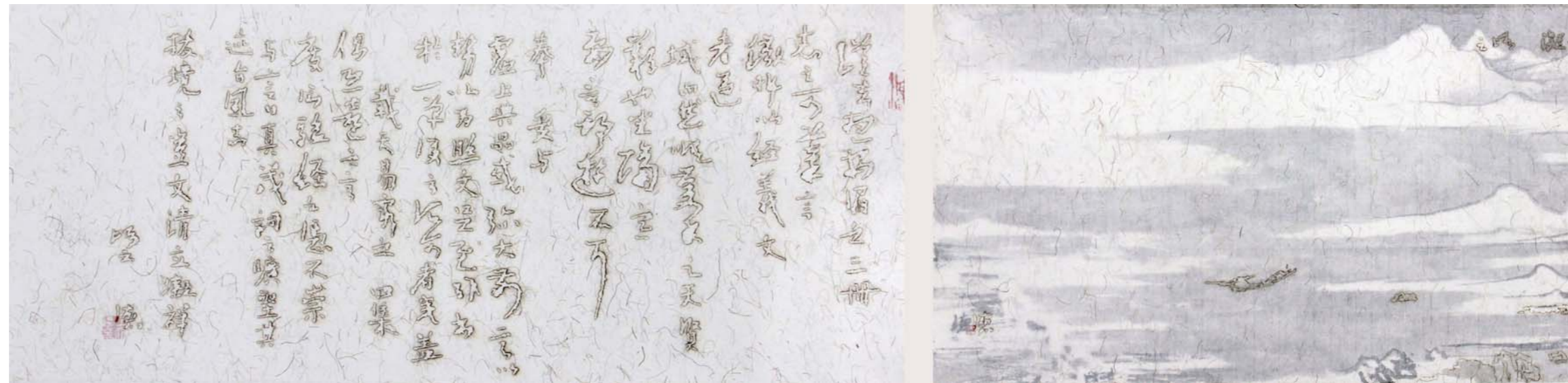
7.  
Houshan Revolve MOTH 0471, 2016  
Xuan paper, ink, burn marks  
62 3/16 x 22 13/16 in.





江山如此多娇  
引无数英雄竞折腰  
惜秦皇汉武  
略输文采  
唐宗宋祖  
稍逊风骚  
一代天骄  
成吉思汗  
只识弯弓射大雕  
换了人间











9.  
*Houshan Revolve MOTH 0173, 2016*  
Rubblings, xuan paper, ink, burn marks  
83 7/16 x 22 13/16 in.

10.  
*Houshan Revolve MOTH 0278*, 2016  
Rubbings, xuan paper, ink, burn marks  
67 7/8 x 34 7/16 in.





11.  
*Hou Shan Revolve-No16-MST192*, 2016  
Rubbing, xuan paper, ink, burn marks  
26 3/8 x 21 5/8 in.





12.  
*Hou Shan Revolve-No16-MST193*, 2016  
Rubblings, xuan paper, ink, burn marks  
26 3/8 x 21 5/8 in.



13.  
*Houshan Revolve MOTH 0079, 2016*  
Rubbings, xuan paper, ink, burn marks  
23 7/8 x 21 3/4 in.

14.  
*Houshan Revolve HFT 026-1*, 2015  
Xuan paper, ink, burn marks  
72 5/8 x 15 1/16 in.



15.  
*Houshan Revolve HFT 026-2*, 2015  
Xuan paper, ink, burn marks  
72 5/8 x 15 1/16 in.

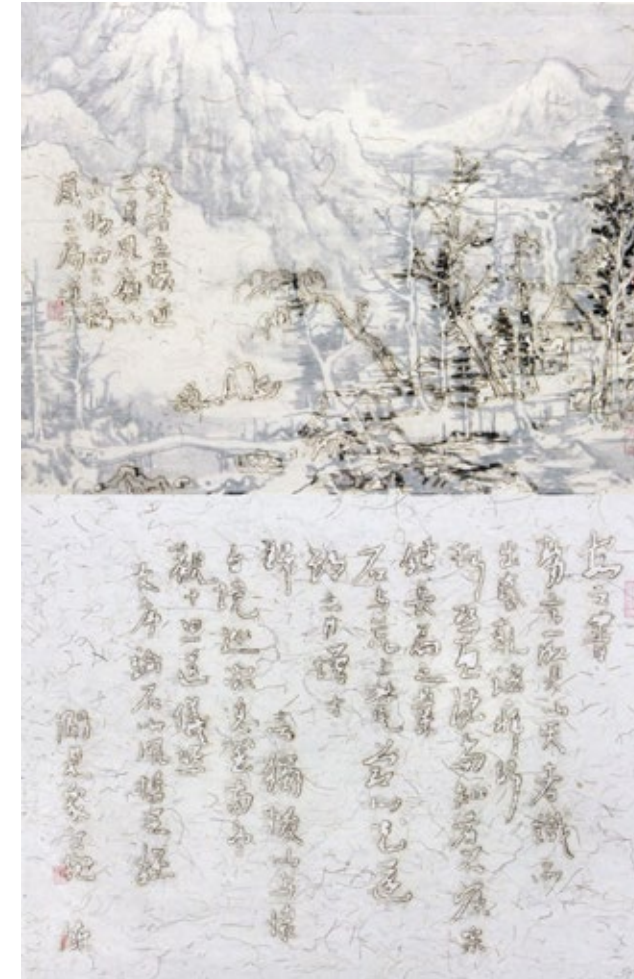


16.  
*Houshan Revolve HFT 026-3*, 2015  
Xuan paper, ink, burn marks  
72 5/8 x 15 1/16 in.



17.  
*Houshan Revolve HFT 026-4*, 2015  
Xuan paper, ink, burn marks  
72 5/8 x 15 1/16 in.





18 - 25.

*Hou Shan Revolve-No16-APC.0180, 0181, 0183, 0184, 0186, 0187, 0188, 1089, 2016*

Xuan paper, ink, burn marks

30 3/16 x 18 5/16 in. each leaf

*next eight spreads*

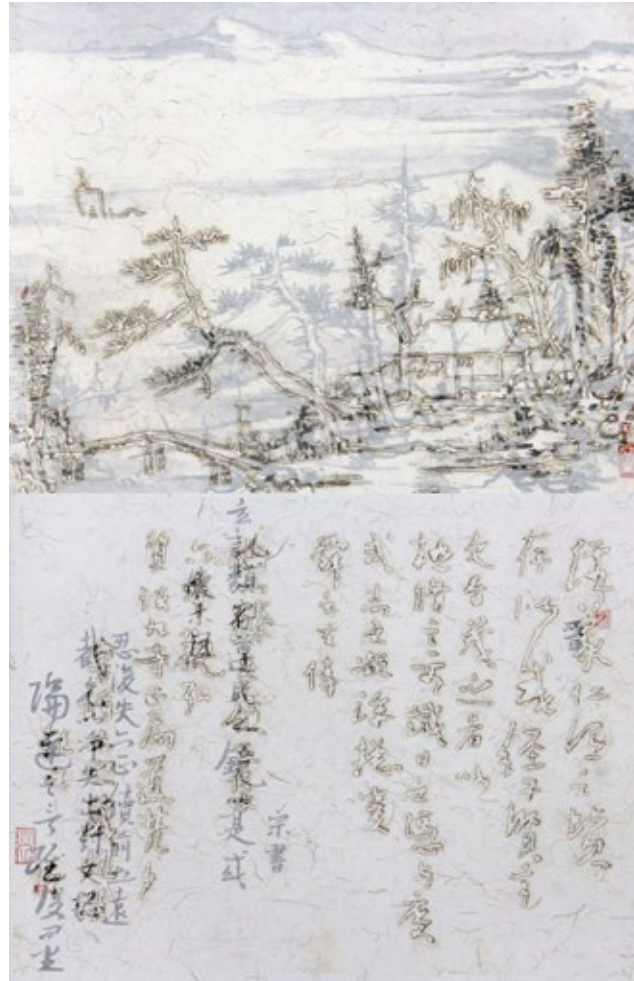
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Wang Tiande 王天德

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## Biography

Born in Shanghai in 1960, Wang Tiande graduated from the Chinese Paintings Department of Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts (now China Academy of Art) in 1988 and later on obtained his doctorate degree from its Calligraphy Department. He is now a professor of art at Fudan University in Shanghai.

Wang Tiande has been continuously exploring the language of ink and its potential for spiritual expression. His work often takes its source in classical landscapes and calligraphy, but replacing the brushes with sticks of burning incense, and executing his images in a unique artistic language. He creates an expansive virtual space in which contemporary people can engage in dialogue and interchanges with both nature and the ancients, imbuing the landscape with a certain contemporaneity.

Wang Tiande's works are in the collections of the National Art Museum of China, Shanghai Art Museum, Suzhou Museum, Shenzhen Art Museum, Guangdong Art Museum, Hong Kong Museum of Art, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Spencer Museum of Art, the British Museum, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, as well as major private collections in Asia and the West.

### WANG TIANDE

Born in 1960. Lives and works in Shanghai, China  
Professor, Fudan University, Shanghai, China

### EDUCATION

Graduated from Chinese Painting Department, Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts (now China Academy of Art), Hangzhou, China  
Ph.D, Calligraphy Department, China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China

### SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 *The Palace*, The Palace Museum, Beijing
- 2014 *KAI MEN*, Today Art Museum, Beijing  
*Hou Shan*, Suzhou Museum, Suzhou
- 2012 *Gu Shan*, Sanshang Art, Hangzhou, China  
*Gu Shan*, Nou Gallery, Taipei  
*International Ink Painting Exhibition*, National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei
- 2011 *3,720*, Chambers Fine Art, New York, USA  
*Boat*, New Gallery 99, German
- 2010 *3,720*, Chambers Fine Art, Beijing, China  
*Shuang Shuang*, University of Sidney, Sidney, Australia
- 2009 *Up/Down: Wang Tiande Art Project*, Spencer Museum of Art, Kansas, USA
- 2008 *Wang Tiande: One Meter Seventy-Three*, Contrasts Gallery, Shanghai, China  
*Wang Tiande Solo Exhibition*, Xerxes Fine Arts, London, England
- 2007 *Made by Tiande II*, Chambers Fine Art, New York, USA  
*Shan (Mountain) & Shui (Water)*, Alisan Fine Art, Hong Kong  
*Wang Tiande Solo Show*, Han Art, Montreal, Canada
- 2005 *Redolent of Incense*, Yishu Space, Vancouver, Canada
- 2004 *Made by Tiande*, Chambers Fine Art, New York, USA  
*One-man Show*, Galerie 99, Germany
- 2003 *Wang Tiande: Ink for the 21st Century*, Alison Fine Art, Hong Kong

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2014 *Cotemporary Ink*, NanHai Art, Millbrae, USA  
*Within & Without*, Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University, Stanford, USA

2013 *Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA

2012 *Chinese Modern Art Exhibition*, British Museum, Britain  
*New Ink Painting*, Saatchi Gallery, Britain

2011 *Red Flag: Contemporary Chinese Art in Montreal Collection*, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal, Canada  
*Word: Mainland China Contemporary Art Exhibition*, Huashan1914 Creative Park, Taipei  
*Fei Du*, Xunyao Chinese Art & Culture Museum of Chengdu, Chengdu, China

2010 *Create Something Out of Nothing*, Hong Kong Central Library, Hong Kong  
*New Ink*, Mingyuan Art Center, Shanghai, China  
*Memories of the Past: Contemporary Chinese Ink Painting*, Transylvania University, Kentucky, USA

2009 *Ink Not Ink: Contemporary Chinese Art*, Drexel University, Philadelphia, USA  
*Ink Reaction*, Harvard University, Cambridge, USA  
*Paper!Paper!*, Chambers Fine Art, New York, USA

2008 *Net: Re-imagining Space, Time, and Culture*, Chambers Fine Art, Beijing, China  
*Chinese Minimal Art 30 Years*, La Caixa Forum, Barcelona, Spain  
*The Transforming Marks of Ink*, The Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, Germany  
*New Ink Art*, Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong

2007 *Extension Deduction Permeability—Ink, Pure World*, Kyo Po Pen, Tokyo  
*China Onward*, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark  
*FUN: Taipei Calligraphy Biennial*, Taipei Fine Art Museum, Taipei

2006 *Brush and Ink: The Chinese Art of Writing*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA  
*The Calligraphy Field*, Heng Lu Art Museum, Hang Zhou, China  
*60's Vision Documents*, Today Museum of Art, Beijing, China

2005 *The 2nd Chengdu Biennale*, The International Museum of Chengdu, Chengdu, China  
*Contemporary Ink Art of Korea and China*, Seoul Municipal Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea

2004 *Contemporary Chinese Art*, Dublin Contemporary Art Museum, Dublin, Ireland  
*Modern Times of Shanghai*, Museum Villa Stuck, Germany  
*Contemporary Art from Shanghai*, Museum Villa Stuck, Italy

2003 *An Opening Era*, National Art Museum of China, Beijing, China  
*Art of East Asia: 20th Century Art Painting Exhibition of China*, Golden Palace, Paris, French  
*Dots and Beyond*, National Art Museum, Malaysia

2002 *East & West—Contemporary Art of China*, Home of Artist in Vienna, Austria  
*Variations of Ink*, Chambers Fine Art, New York, China

2002 *Guangzhou Triennial*, Guangdong Art Museum, Guangzhou, China

2001 *Ink Color*, National Art Museum of China, Beijing, China  
*20 Years of Experimental Ink Paintings*, Guangdong Art Museum, Guangzhou, China

2000 *Art of Chinese New Time*, Liu Haisu Art Museum, Shanghai, China; Jiangsu Art Museum, Nanjing, China  
*The 2nd International Ink Art Biennale of Shenzhen*, Shenzhen, China

1999 *Inside Out: New Chinese Art, P.S. 1.*, New York, USA; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, USA; Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, Monterey, Mexico; Tacoma Art Museum and Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, USA

1998 *Shanghai Biennale*, Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai, China  
*Looking Back on Chang'an: the Invitational Exhibition of Modern Ink Painting Collection*, Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai, China

1997 *Ink Art—Group Exhibition of Chinese Art*, Shanghai Library, Shanghai, China  
*Exhibition of Contemporary Chinese Artists*, Hong Kong Convention Center, Hong Kong  
*Exhibition of Shanghai Artists*, St. Petersburg, Russia

1996 *Shanghai Ink Painting Exhibition*, the Art Museum of Arizona University, Arizona, USA  
*Homeland Revisited: the Exhibition of Contemporary Chinese Experimental Ink Paintings*, the Gallery on the Rim, San Francisco, USA  
*Exhibition of Contemporary Chinese Painting from Shanghai Art Museum*, Frankfurt, Germany  
*Reality, Today and Tomorrow: '96 Chinese Modern Art Exhibition*, Beijing, China

1995 *Ink and Art—Abstract Art of Modern China*, Ghent, Belgium

1993 *The 1st National Chinese Painting Exhibition*, National Art Museum of China, Beijing, China  
*Shanghai Modern Art*, Yokohama Art Gallery, Yokohama, Japan  
*Shanghai-Taipei Modern Chinese Ink Painting*, Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai, China

#### SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Suzhou Museum, Suzhou, China  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA  
Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong  
British Museum, London, Britain  
Today Art Museum, Beijing, China  
Guangdong Art Museum, Guangzhou, China  
Shenzhen Art Museum, Shenzhen, China  
Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence, USA  
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal, Canada  
UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, USA

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