

Constructing Diaspora in Postwar Taiwanese Modern Art: A Case Study of Fong Chung-Ray's Abstract Painting

Chen, Mei-Ching*

Assistant Professor, Department of Art Industry, National Taitung University

Abstract

Modern art in Taiwan after World War II largely continued the New Art Movement and local themes from the Japanese colonial period, while also integrating ink painting traditions brought by diasporic artists from mainland China. Between the 1950s and 1970s, new perspectives on modern Taiwanese painting began to take shape. Influenced by the diasporic experience of landing in a new place, émigré artists adopted strategies of “vertical inheritance and horizontal transplantation,” merging Chinese ink techniques with Western abstraction to localize modern art. Focusing on Fong Chung-Ray 馮鍾睿 (1934-), this study uses literature and visual analysis to examine the diasporic painter's involvement in the Fifth Moon Group and the Ton Fan Group, as well as shifts in his creative approach across two phases of displacement and relocation. Fong's abstract paintings are characterized by breaking with tradition, material innovation, and meditative practice, through which he articulated a distinct aesthetic shaped by cross-cultural mobility. Guided by an experimental spirit, Fong continuously explored new materials, abstract languages, and expressive methods that transcended cultural and temporal boundaries. Through Fong's case, this study argues that diasporic experiences and cross-cultural practices are crucial for understanding postwar modern art in Taiwan. Fong's work demonstrates how multiple identities and artistic fluidity profoundly influenced the trajectory of Taiwan's art history, providing insight into the broader dynamics of cultural exchange and local adaptation in the postwar period.

Keywords: postwar, modern art, abstract painting, diaspora, settlement experience

* Assistant Professor, Department of Art Industry, National Taitung University.

**This article presents partial findings from a National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) General-Oriented Research Project entitled "Continuing the "Translation" of Discrete and Reconstructed Narratives: The Study of Post-war Mainland Artists Who Crossed the Sea to Taiwan and Their "Modern Art" Production (1/2)" (Project No. NSTC 114-2420-H-143-005-). The author would like to express sincere gratitude to the three anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and constructive guidance, which have significantly strengthened the rigor and scholarly quality of this article.

I. Preface

At Art Basel Hong Kong 2025¹, Asia Art Center presented an exhibition titled “The Aura of Modernity: Taiwan’s Artistic Modernization in the 1950s and 60s.” Among the featured works was *2017-1-9* (Fig. 1) by Fong Chung-Ray, a member of the Fifth Moon Group and a Chinese artist based in the United States, whose creative career has spanned more than seven decades. The painting embodies an inner dialogue between abstraction and Eastern culture, creating a multilayered visual narrative. In this piece, Fong employs a calligraphic style imbued with childlike spontaneity, while integrating the intrinsic meanings of written language to reveal a multilayered sensory imagery embedded within the abstract composition², as well as the fragmentary semantic implications that lie concealed beneath the profusion of blue and white brushstrokes. The objective of Asia Art Center in presenting this exhibition was to examine and trace the development and trajectory of modern art in Taiwan through the works of representative postwar artists, including members of the Ton-Fan Group and the Fifth Moon Group, such as Chu Wei-Bor 朱為白 (1929–2018), Chuang Che 莊喆 (b. 1934), Fong Chung-Ray 馮鍾睿, Lee Shi-Chi 李錫奇 (1938–2019), and Yuyu Yang 楊英風 (1926–1997). The exhibition also highlighted Taiwan’s unique position during the Cold War as a frontier of the Free World. At a time when abstract painting was sweeping across the global art scene, Taiwanese artists responded to external pressures and local cultural environments by seeking not only to challenge the established frameworks of traditional artistic thought, but also incorporating and highlighting the distinctive qualities of classic Eastern culture within the avant-garde idioms of modern art.

¹ Art Basel Hong Kong 2025 was held from March 28th to 30th at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC). With more than half of the participating galleries coming from the Asia-Pacific region, the fair has clearly become an important platform driving the flourishing development of art across the region. The Taiwanese galleries participating this year included Asia Art Center (1982–), Tina Kang Gallery, TKG+ (2009–), Liang Gallery (1993–), Lin & Lin Gallery (1992–), Each Modern (2018–), PTT SPACE (2020–), YIRI ARTS (2014–), IYIUN Art & Culture (2016–), Mind Set Art Center (2010–), and Soka Art (1992–). Source: Art Basel / compiled by the editors of Art Emperor, “Art Basel Hong Kong 2025 Announces More Highlights! The ‘Kabinett’ Sector Will Present Three Projects, a Record High,” *Art Emperor*, <https://artemperor.tw/focus/6389> (accessed April 10, 2025).

² The exhibition described Fong Chung-Ray’s work as follows, “Fong Chung-Ray, influenced by Chinese calligraphy and Buddhism, integrated Chinese characters into abstract compositions, crafting textures through collage and layered colors.” Source: “Art Basel Hong Kong 2025 | The Aura of Modernity: The Enlightenment Era of Taiwan’s Artistic Modernization,” *Asia Art Center*, <https://asiaartcenter.org/art-fairs/35/overview/> (accessed July 10th, 2025).



Figure 1. Fong Chung-Ray, 2017-1-9, acrylic on canvas, 2017, 167.5 × 127 cm. Image source: Pan An-Yi, *Transcending Fragments: Fong Chung-Ray's Artistic Journey* (Taipei: Asia Art Center Co., Ltd., 2022), p. 282.

Drawing on Walter Benjamin's (1892–1940) concept of the “aura,” Asia Art Center invites viewers to approach the artworks through the cultural and historical memories they embody, as well as “to reflect on the artists’ thoughts at the time of creation, offering insights into the origins of modern art in Taiwan.”³ For artists such as Fong Chung-Ray, whose lives are marked by “diaspora and settlement experience,” “aura” signifies not just the exploration of uniqueness within an artwork, but moreover encompasses the ways in which artists reconstruct cultural and historical memory through the process of migration and settlement, shaping expressions rooted in personal experience and subjective identity. Accordingly, Fong’s seventy-year commitment to abstract painting represents not merely a formal exploration, but also a visual practice of reconstructing both selfhood and cultural identity. The dynamic tension and structural rhythm generated through Fong's use of color, line, and materiality embody his acute observations of the external world, transformed into pictorial expressions that convey a distinctive cultural imagery and aesthetic sensibility. This is precisely what Walter Benjamin sought to illuminate through his concept of “aura.” It arises from the artist’s singular experiences of migration and settlement, serving as compelling testimony to the authenticity and local historical character of postwar Taiwanese modern art.

³ Asia Art Center (@asiaartcenter), Instagram, https://www.instagram.com/asiaartcenter/p/DHVhrGESgHI/?img_index=4 (accessed July 10, 2025).

For the artists who crossed the Taiwan Strait in 1949, the “settlement experience” of making a home in exile carried enduring questions of personal identity and cultural memory. Accordingly, the artistic languages that these artists embedded within their artworks as a means of expressing their deeply felt nostalgia for their homeland warrant careful exploration and critical examination through a more rigorous and nuanced perspective. In the preface to his book *Diaspora*, Taiwanese scholar of contemporary literature Lee You-Cheng 李有成 begins with the “diasporic experiences” of both Han Chinese and Indigenous peoples to investigate the relationship between diaspora, literary production, and cultural production, as well as their significance in the contemporary world⁴, further inaugurating a scholarly project that explored the literary dimensions of diasporic experience from the perspective of creative agency. While Lee reflects on the autobiographical nature of literature and cultural criticism, this study instead treats the works of émigré painters as a kind of autobiography, through which their artistic journeys may be reconstructed, thus seeking to uncover the emotions and ideas that respond to questions of personal identity and cultural memory.

This article focuses on Fong Chung-Ray, a painter shaped by the experience of diaspora, examining how he helped open a new chapter in modern art on the “new homeland” of postwar Taiwan through his distinctive mode of settlement. After emigrating to San Francisco in 1975, he continued to develop a pictorial language of abstraction that reflects the spirit of its time in both form and meaning. The integration of Eastern and Western traditions can be regarded as the central concern of Fong’s abstract painting, while “breaking with tradition,” “material innovation,” and “meditative practice” became the defining principles of Fong Chung-Ray’s artistic practice.⁵ In 2014, American art historian Mark Dean Johnson⁶ wrote an essay for Fong Chung-Ray’s exhibition at the Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco, characterizing the artist’s

⁴ Lee You-Cheng, *Diaspora* (Taipei: Yunchen Culture, 2013).

⁵ “Fong Chung-Ray - A Retrospective,” accessed July 7th, 2025, <https://galeriedumonde.com/exhibitions/38-fong-chung-ray-a-retrospective/overview/>.

⁶ In 2008, Mark Dean Johnson published *Asian American Art: A History, 1850-1970*. This book examines the lives and artistic practices of artists of Asian descent who were active in the United States before the 1970s. It includes scholarly essays by ten leading researchers, along with biographical entries on more than 140 artists, accompanied by an extensive collection of artwork reproductions and documentary materials. The volume offers diverse interpretive perspectives by conducting in-depth and wide-ranging research on Asian American artistic production, an area that has historically been overlooked and underexamined. The book seeks to unpack the complexity of Asian American art and to demonstrate its significant place within the history of American art. Gordon H. Chang, Mark Johnson, and Paul Karlstrom, eds., *Asian American Art: A History, 1850–1970* (Stanford, CA: Stanford General Books, 2008).

retrospective at the age of eighty as “between modern and contemporary.”⁷ As a cross-cultural artist shaped by the experience of diaspora, Fong’s decades of artistic development have involved far more than the adaptation, fusion, or translation of artistic methods from different cultural traditions. Rather, by taking the spiritual and philosophical essence of Eastern culture as the primary subject of his work, he sought out meaningful connections with abstract art, while developing a contemporary artistic vision distinguished by his personal cultural identity and local character.

Fong’s paintings originate in the tradition of Chinese ink landscape painting, yet he employs the language of abstraction to convey profound landscape imagery and poetic resonance. As Johnson observes, **“although formally abstract, the paintings incorporate Buddhist scriptures and poetic inscriptions, allowing them to be understood simultaneously as Chinese painting and as an extension of modern abstract art.”**⁸ Here, abstraction becomes Fong’s means of translating his inner vision into landscape. Concurrently, he sustains and reinterprets his identification with his cultural heritage through the medium of traditional Chinese ink wash paintings. His artwork reveals highly deconstructed and reconstructed spatial imagery and narrative structures, within which his profound homesickness is kneaded, textured, brushed, and inscribed into multilayered and landscape-like imagery. Johnson’s critique offered a highly favorable assessment of Fong’s work. For a Chinese artist who emigrated to the United States and continued creating abstract paintings over several decades, the challenge of reinterpreting the influences of one’s culture from a transcultural perspective remains an issue that is at once profoundly contemporary and enduringly classical.⁹

II. The Production and Practice of Postwar Modern Art: The Fifth Moon Group and Fong Chung-Ray

In 1961, at the invitation of Liu Kuo-Sung 劉國松, Fong Chung-Ray joined the Fifth Moon Group (五月畫會), of which had been established nearly four years prior. He participated in the 5th “Fifth Moon Group Exhibition” that same year, from which he and his fellow group members commenced an ongoing artistic practice founded upon dialogues between traditional ink wash painting and abstract art.¹⁰ From the outset of

⁷ Mark Dean Johnson, *Fong Chung-Ray at Eighty: Between Modern and Contemporary*, accessed July 1st, 2025, https://yishu-online.com/wp-content/uploads/mmproducts/uploads/2014_v13_06_johnson_m_p074.pdf.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

Taiwan's postwar avant-garde art movement, the Fifth Moon Group attracted the attention of British Chinese art historian Michael Sullivan. Contemporary art historian Lin Yi-Hsin 林逸欣, in her article *Collecting China: A Series on Modern British Collectors, Part VIII—Michael Sullivan*, examines Michael Sullivan's travels in Taiwan and Hong Kong between 1966 and 1984, citing Sullivan's observations on the changing Taiwanese art scene, **"there we encountered a remarkable anti-orthodox revolution in art. Even in the face of official opposition, Liu Kuo-Sung 劉國松, Chuang Che 莊喆, and the artists of the Fifth Moon Group enthusiastically carried forward an artistic movement."**¹¹ Such perceptive observations and critical assessments of artistic developments aptly capture the historical emergence of Taiwan's postwar avant-garde art movement. Sullivan's perspective as an outside observer also underscores the diversity of artistic expression that characterized the development of Taiwanese art, while affirming its significance as an integral part of the broader history in the development of global modernism.¹²

In 2024, following an extensive renovation, National Museum of History reopened and presented the special exhibition "Fifth Moon and Ton-Fan: The Birth of Modernist Art Movement in Taiwan," curated by Taiwanese art historian Hsiao Chiung-Jui 蕭瓊瑞. In the accompanying documentary, Liu Kuo-Sung 劉國松 explained the origin of the name "Fifth Moon Group." He noted that artists had not actively participated in the cultural reforms associated with the May Fourth Movement, thus hoping that unfinished aspirations of that earlier movement may continue and be fulfilled through exhibitions organized in Taiwan. By holding their exhibitions in "May," the artists declared their commitment to reforming art through bold innovation, creative freedom, and an experimental avant-garde spirit.¹³ At a time when exhibition venues were scarce and traditional painting dominated, artworks shown in the Fifth Moon exhibitions were met with considerable criticism and were even dismissed as "meaningless scribbles." Nevertheless, the

¹⁰ After joining the Fifth Moon Group in 1961, Fong Chung-Ray (馮鍾睿) began participating in its exhibitions. From the group's 5th exhibition in 1961 through its 13th exhibition in 1973, he participated in a total of 13 group exhibitions.

¹¹ Lin Yi-Hsin, *Collecting China: A Series on Modern British Collectors, Part VIII—Michael Sullivan. Strolls through Art History* <https://arthistorystrolls.com/2017/12/15/收藏中國：近代英國藏家系列之八—邁可蘇立文/>. Accessed July 10, 2025.

¹² The curatorial narrative and exhibitions of the Guimet Museum discuss the artistic stature and historical significance of the leading artists of the postwar Fifth Moon Group and Ton-Fan Group.

¹³ The first Fifth Moon exhibition (oil paintings) was held in the assembly hall of Zhongshan Hall from May 10th to 12th, 1957. Participating artists included Li Fang-Zhi (1933–2020), Kuo Yu-Lun (1929–2001), Kuo Tung-Jung (1927–2022), Liu Kuo-Sung, Cheng Chiung-Chuan (1931–2024), and Chen Ching-Jung (1934–). Chu, Yu-Lin, *The Dawn of Modern Art in Taiwan: Revisiting the National Museum of History's Special Exhibition 'Fifth Moon and Ton-Fan*. ARTouch, Artist Magazine. <https://artouch.com/art-views/art-exhibition/content-133272.html> (accessed July 11, 2025).

encouragement of faculty members such as Liao Chi-Chun 廖繼春 (1902-1976) and Sun To-Tzu 孫多慈 (1913-1975) from the Department of Fine Arts at National Taiwan Normal University provided vital support for the younger generation of artists, inspiring them to pursue new directions in modern painting.

The members of the Fifth Moon Group ventured into the uncharted territory of modern art, advancing through continual experimentation and exploration. Propelled by both internal and external forces, they gradually developed distinctive artistic vocabularies while engaging with the West, ultimately forging modes of artistic expression that were uniquely Taiwanese. Art historian Chen Man-Hua 陳曼華, whose research focuses on postwar Taiwanese modern art, observes in her essay *"Fifth Moon," "Ton-Fan," and the Waves They Set in Motion* that the limitations of postwar art education, together with young painters' dissatisfaction with the conservative mainstream art establishment, prompted them to critique existing conventions and organize independent exhibitions. Founded in conjunction with its inaugural exhibition in May 1957, the Fifth Moon Group ultimately adopted the long-term artistic goal of "integrating Chinese and Western artistic traditions" as the defining direction of its creative development.¹⁴

The development of postwar modern painting in Taiwan was fundamentally characterized by innovations in "concept" and "form." By aligning itself with Western abstract art, it gave rise to the movement known as "New Painting (新派繪畫)," which became one of the most significant artistic directions of the period. In the Preface to *Transcending Fragments: Fong Chung-Ray's Artistic Journey*, the Chinese-American contemporary art historian Shen Kui-Yi 沈揆一 observes that the evolution of modern art in Taiwan was profoundly shaped by both domestic and international conflicts. Owing to war and shifting geopolitical circumstances, the emergence of modernist avant-garde thought and practice was delayed until the late 1950s, when young artists began organizing themselves into independent painting societies:

The modernist movement that took hold in Taiwan during the 1950s and 1960s represents an important chapter in the history of modern art. The first wave of Chinese modernist art, which emerged almost simultaneously with international artistic developments, was initiated in the 1930s by a group of young artists in Shanghai and Guangdong. However, the movement was abruptly cut short by the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. It was not until more than a decade after the war's end that the establishment of the Fifth Moon Group and

¹⁴ Chen, Man-Hua, "Fifth Moon," "Ton-Fan," and the Waves They Set in Motion. In *Fifth Moon and Ton-Fan: The Emergence of Taiwan's Modern Art Movement*, edited by Hsiao Chiung-Rui, 45–50. Taipei: National Museum of History, 2024.

Ton-Fan Group reignited desires for a more active role in international art developments.¹⁵

Driven by artists from diverse cultural backgrounds, this wave of modernism began in the 1950s, sweeping across the latter half of the twentieth century. The modernist pursuit of imagery and meanings rooted in “Eastern culture” is further articulated in Yu Kwang-Chung’s 余光中 1962 essay *The Unadorned Fifth Moon* (樸素的五月), published in *Wen Xing* magazine. After viewing the preview exhibition of the Modern Chinese Paintings Touring Exhibition to the United States, Yu analyzed the ways in which Western abstract art had absorbed Eastern cultural influences. He observed that a new generation of young artists had begun to explore ways of integrating the classical and the modern, cultivating a mode of thinking grounded in dialogue between the two:

It is heartening to see that, after wandering abroad for so long, these young painters have finally begun to feel a sense of homesickness. They have grown weary of Shangrila and Montmartre, of Provence and the Bauhaus. They are now attempting, with the renewed sensibility and techniques acquired through modern art, to explore what it means to live as a Chinese soul in the twentieth century. In their paintings, East and West are drawing ever closer. Admittedly, true integration remains some distance away, but once the direction has been established, the prospects for success become much greater. Abstraction is at once the most fashionable and the most classical of artistic languages. The task before our talented and ambitious young painters is to strip the fashionable of its immaturity, preserve the classical from stagnation, and ultimately fuse the two into one.¹⁶

For the young artists who participated in the development of modern art in postwar Taiwan, one of the greatest challenges was to discover an artistic language and methodology of their own amid the diverse and often competing schools and styles of Western art. Confronted with the ways in which Western abstraction had drawn upon and appropriated Eastern ink painting and calligraphy, they came to a deeper understanding that only by mastering the cultural substance and distinctive qualities rooted in their own heritage, and integrating Eastern culture as “essence (體)” with Western culture as “application (用),” could they forge a distinctly Taiwanese path toward modern art.

Many postwar Taiwanese modern artists arrived on the island bearing experiences of displacement and upheaval. Among them were numerous adolescents who came to

¹⁵ Pan An-Yi, *Transcending Fragments: Fong Chung-Ray's Artistic Journey* (Taipei: Asia Art Center, 2022), p. 10.

¹⁶ Yu Kwang-Chung, *The Unadorned Fifth Moon*. “Wen Hsing” (No. 56), June 1962, p. 70.

Taiwan with the Nationalist military during the Chinese Civil War, without receiving any formal academic or studio-based artistic training. For these artists, Taiwan became the place where their artistic development first took root. As they entered the formative stages of their artistic careers, Abstract Expressionism was flourishing internationally. Through imported journals, exhibition catalogues, art books, and the overseas experiences of earlier-generation artists, they were able to learn the latest developments in Western contemporary art. In their own practices, they embraced experimentation, exploring different media, techniques, and artistic ideas in search of forms of expression and visual languages that resonated with their individual sensibilities. Such efforts infused Taiwan's postwar modern art movement with a continuous vitality! As Yu Kwang-Chung 余光中 observed, **"the task at hand for our talented and ambitious young painters is ... to integrate the two into one."** The mission entrusted to this postwar generation of artists continues to unfold even today, profoundly shaping both the development of Taiwanese modern art and the writing of its history.

Born in the 1930s, many artists who experienced wartime displacement and later settled in Taiwan underwent what may be described as a "diasporic" settlement experience before establishing themselves on the island.¹⁷ Their artistic formation generally followed two principal paths: formal academic training and private studios. Among the most influential organizations was the Fifth Moon Group, founded in May 1957 (named after the *Salon de Mai* in Paris). The group also inherited the reformist spirit of the May Fourth Movement and the New Culture Movement. Encouraged by Liao Chi-Chun 廖繼春, a professor in the Department of Fine Arts at what was known as Taiwan Provincial Normal College at the time, the group sought to challenge the conservatism of Taiwan's art establishment while responding to the growing influence of international modernism. In a review meeting following the Four-Person Joint Western Painting Exhibition, Liu Kuo-Sung 劉國松 proposed establishing an artists' association together with the other exhibiting artists Kuo Tung-Jung 郭東榮, Kuo Yu-Lun 郭豫倫, and Li Fang 李芳枝. This exhibition model directly challenged young Taiwanese painters to reconsider how modern painting might articulate their own cultural subjectivity. Consequently, they

¹⁷ "Diaspora" assumes diverse cultural expressions and meanings of identity across different generations of migrants. In *Two Trees Make a Forest*, Jessica J. Lee defines the concept of "water" to illustrate the role of the Taiwan Strait in the wave of migration that followed 1949, "*water*, noun: a colorless, odorless liquid composed of hydrogen and oxygen; *river*: the Taiwan Strait is both a turbulent frontier and a corridor for migration." Writing as a descendant of migrants and drawing upon her expertise as an environmental historian, Lee embarks on a journey of return and belonging by tracing the interconnectedness of Taiwan's natural environment, ecology, and biodiversity. Through this exploration, she seeks both her family's origins and her own sense of home. Translation quoted in Jessica J. Lee, *Two Trees Make a Forest: Travels Among Taiwan's Mountains and Coasts in Search of My Family's Past* (Taipei: Faces Publishing, Cité Publishing Ltd.; distributed by Cite Publishing Holding Group, 2022), 139.

turned to the cultural origins of their own lived experience, seeking dialogue with inherited visual forms and symbols, and gradually developed artistic methods and pictorial languages capable of responding to modern art while remaining rooted in their own traditions.

Among the members of the Fifth Moon Group, Fong Chung-Ray 馮鍾睿 developed a distinctive approach to engaging with traditional culture. Between 1970 and 1972, he traveled throughout Europe and the United States to observe the environment and trends within the art scene firsthand, including the Hard-edge painting at the height of its popularity, the waning influence of Abstract Expressionism, and the emergence of Photorealism, yet he maintained an artistic position firmly grounded in his own cultural heritage.¹⁸ In an interview with Pan An-Yi 潘安儀 in 2018, Fong reflected on the meaning of modernity in a way that closely corresponds to his understanding of “essence (體)” and “application (用)” in art creation, **“theoretically speaking, to live in the present age while remaining completely infatuated with the past is unreal; to live in this environment while merely imitating others is equally unreal. Thus, what is modernity, after all?”**¹⁹ Seen in this light, from the early development of his abstract paintings, through his encounters with emerging Western artistic movements, to his present-day practice, Fong has consistently regarded Eastern culture as the “essence (體),” as in the cultural foundation. As for “application (用),” he has adopted an attitude of “adapting in accordance with changing condition.”²⁰ Today, Fong employs collage as an integral component of his painting process, creating artworks that articulate the multilayered dialectical and evolving relationship between Eastern and Western cultures and their respective traditions of painting.

In the overview for Fong Chung-Ray’s 2018 solo exhibition titled “Enlightenment 1998–2018: Fong Chung-Ray,” Galerie du Monde employed the term “making” to characterize the experimental mode of artistic production that Fong has continuously developed:

As a member of the influential postwar art collective the Fifth Moon Group, Fong Chung-Ray pioneered abstract art in Taiwan by synthesizing the essences of Eastern and Western artistic traditions. Even after more than six decades of painting, he has remained committed to innovation, continually exploring new media, techniques, and artistic directions. His practice has evolved from early oil

¹⁸ Pan An-Yi, *Transcending Fragments: Fong Chung-Ray’s Artistic Journey*, p. 125.

¹⁹ Fong Chung-Ray, *Modernity, Abstraction, and Myself*. *Wen Hsing*, vol. 16, no. 2 (June 1965), p. 50.

²⁰ Pan An-Yi, *Transcending Fragments: Fong Chung-Ray’s Artistic Journey*, p. 126.

painting to the distinctive acrylic abstractions for which he is now renowned. In the process, he developed an innovative painting technique that combines acrylic paint with polyester film, paper, and frottage. This approach to “making” art parallels the Abstract Impressionist emphasis on “spontaneous emergence” as well as the Zen Buddhist notion of “sudden enlightenment (頓悟),” where intuition and inner perception are central to the creative process. Fong’s works not only reflect the interplay between humanity and nature, the internal and the external, but also convey a metaphysical and mysterious spiritual force.²¹

Throughout Fong Chung-Ray’s long artistic career, materials and tools have served not merely as vehicles of artistic expression but as essential mediators through which he directly and authentically articulates his inner impulses and creative vision. The concept of “making” aptly reflects an experimental, laboratory-like mode of creation. Through the active exploration of materials and processes, Fong constructs a visual language that responds to his observations of the external world and his inner psychological needs. By harnessing the expressive potential of materiality itself, he creates images imbued with a distinctly humanistic sensibility while evoking abstract landscapes rooted in the imagery of nature.

III. Abstract Landscape within the Dual Settlement Experience of Diaspora and Immigration

The contradictory experiences of diaspora and settlement have shaped the inescapable trajectory of Taiwan’s postwar migrant communities. For those whose lives were set upon the path of displacement wrought by war, it was not only the first generation of migrants who remained haunted by the enduring sorrow of exile and separation from their homeland. Even artists several generations removed have continued to revisit that irretrievable notion of “home” embedded within the diasporic experience through diverse artistic media and modes of seeing. A compelling example is

²¹ “Enlightenment 1998–2018: Fong Chung-Ray.” Galerie du Monde. <https://galeriedumonde.com/zh/exhibitions/14-fong-chung-rayenlightenment/overview/> (accessed June 30, 2025). Since 2015, Galerie du Monde has organized several solo and group exhibitions featuring Fong Chung-Ray. These include the solo exhibition *Fong Chung-Ray* (2015); three Fifth Moon Group exhibitions held between 2016 and 2017; Art Basel Hong Kong (2017); and the solo exhibition *Enlightenment: 1998–2018* (2018). Since then, the gallery has continued to present Fong’s works in a variety of exhibitions and art fairs. At Art Basel Hong Kong 2025, Fong was presented as a leading Chinese abstract artist and as a representative figure of Taiwan’s postwar modern art. During the Fifth Moon Group period, he developed a distinctive language of Taiwanese abstract painting that engaged with and assimilated international artistic currents, establishing himself as one of the key artists in the history of Taiwan’s modern art.

Taiwanese filmmaker Huang Pang-Chuan 黃邦銓 (b. 1988, Kaohsiung), whose film *Return* (2017) won the Grand Prize in the Lab Competition at the 2018 Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival. Through the cinematic editing of family photographs, Huang constructs a tactile visual language that weaves together memories of family and history, particularly those surrounding Chinese migration to Taiwan and the February 28 Incident.²² The film's enduring power lies in Huang's position as a third-generation descendant of Chinese immigrants seeking to fathom his first-generation migrant grandfather's longing for his homeland through a cinematic language that traverses generations, places, and languages, one that oscillates between recognition and an almost speechless flow of images.

In the film's voice-over narration, Huang deliberately omits historically specific terminology, allowing what begins as a deeply personal family story to resonate as a reflection of the shared human condition. His narrative strategy likewise transforms the linguistic barriers encountered by migrants and the displacement caused by war into experiences of universal significance that transcend national boundaries. Moreover, the film enriches the narrative power of the visual image through the rhythm of moving images and the expressive use of sound (including narration, musical score, and diegetic audio). These multiple layers of sound enable viewers to perceive the cultural differences and shifting boundaries of identity embedded within the experience of migration. Filmed on Super 8 camera, *Return* ultimately leaves viewers with a fundamental question of "where is life headed?" It is a gentle yet profound inquiry into the human condition under the experience of diaspora. Huang further seeks to soften the potentially negative interpretations often associated with "diaspora." By interweaving film stock, memory, and travel, *Return* constructs what may be described as a structure of feeling, inviting viewers to contemplate the essential meaning and value of human existence.

For Fong Chung-Ray, whose life has been marked by the experience of "two exiles," "diaspora" has become the means to probing the fundamental nature of both life and artistic creation. "Diaspora" also functioned like a seed carried across borders, first taking root in Taiwan, where the initial form of his artistic practice emerged, before flourishing in the United States, where it reached full maturity. Recent retrospective exhibitions affirmed the longevity of his artistic career, while demonstrating the enduring relationship

²² The old photographs used in *Return* were mostly taken with the high-specification, high-performance film camera Canon EE Demi 17. Huang Pang-Chuan attempts to use the unique and irreversible materiality of film photography to present something imbued with warmth, resembling an anthropological report or field investigation. By allowing life stories and memories originating from his own family to become attached to static film images and to re-emerge through development, he transforms them into moving frames with a fluid narrative quality, revealing family memories that exist between "reality" and "imagination." See "【TIDF】 Interview with Taiwanese Competition Director: Huang Pang-Chuan's *Return: Developing Memories on the Journey Home*," <https://docs.tfai.org.tw/zh-hant/note/5705> (accessed July 10th, 2025).

between his practice and the traditions of Chinese culture. They establish that the continually changing cultures in which he lives shaped the development of his art. The artistic practice that emerged from his “diaspora” remained firmly anchored in traditional Chinese culture, which served as the enduring wellspring of both his creative inspiration and his sustained artistic inquiry.

In 2015, Galerie du Monde presented “Fong Chung-Ray: A Retrospective 2015,” an exhibition featuring thirty-three works created between 1965 and 2015. The accompanying exhibition essay highlighted Fong’s artistic credo, “vertical inheritance and lateral transplantation,” which advocates building upon the foundations of traditional Chinese culture while seeking new variations for the development of contemporary abstract art. In the artworks produced between 1964 and 1975, Fong integrated abstract aesthetics into ink painting as a means of expressing his inner emotions and ideas.²³ Throughout a creative career spanning nearly seventy years, his artistic focus gradually shifted from the representation of external phenomena toward an exploration of the inner life. Fong Chung-Ray’s artistic practice reveals the genealogy of modern and contemporary abstract painting as it has evolved through its engagement with and reinterpretation of cultural elements from both Eastern and Western traditions across changing historical contexts.



Figure 2. Fong Chung-Ray, 64-51, 1964, ink on paper, 60 × 119 cm. Image source: Pan An-Yi, *Transcending Fragments: Fong Chung-Ray’s Artistic Journey* (Taipei: Asia Art Center Co., Ltd., 2022), p. 109.

After immigrating with his family to San Francisco in April of 1975, Fong’s artistic practice was reshaped by the practical constraints of his new environment and the availability of materials. He began using canvas as his primary artistic material, partly

²³ “Fong Chung-Ray: A Retrospective,” Galerie du Monde, <https://galeriedumonde.com/zh/exhibitions/38-fong-chung-ray-a-retrospective/overview/> (accessed July 20, 2025).

because mounting ink wash paintings was difficult in the San Francisco area and because traditional ink wash was less compatible with Western interior décor. Instead, he employed acrylic paint to recreate the fluid and atmospheric effects of ink wash, combining canvas with the versatility of acrylics to develop a distinctive body of work that evoked Eastern imagery through a contemporary medium.²⁴ The transition from cotton paper, xuan paper, and ink to the more structurally resilient canvas, as well as acrylic paint's capacity to produce diverse visual effects, brought new challenges and expanded expressive possibilities to his more than five decades of artistic practice. During the early phase of this period (1975–1984), Fong sought to capture the expressive qualities of ink painting through acrylic on canvas (Fig. 2). Beginning in 1984, he adopted collage techniques to construct compositions with greater material density and richly textured surfaces (Fig. 3). After 1988, he increasingly integrated Buddhist philosophy and contemplative perception into his work, using collage to create pictorial spaces that evoke states of spiritual realization (Fig. 4). Subsequently, he developed the technique of “reverse rubbing,”²⁵ which created greater freedom and spontaneity in the act of painting. This process not only enriched the visual complexity of the picture surface but also enhanced its narrative force (Fig. 5). In recent years, his *Weathered Wall* series (Fig. 6) has further extended these experiments with reverse frottage, producing richly textured surfaces that convincingly evoke the patina of aged and timeworn walls.

²⁴ Pan An-Yi, *Transcending Fragments: Fong Chung-Ray's Artistic Journey*, p. 139-141.

²⁵ Pan An-Yi uses the term “reverse rubbing” to describe Fong Chung-Ray's practice of transferring onto the canvas patterns that he had already designed and drawn on plastic sheets. This method also provided the elderly artist Fong Chung-Ray with the opportunity to create small-scale images (partial sections) first, then assemble these individual images into the overall composition of a larger-scale work, thereby producing large-format paintings. Pan An-Yi, *Diaspora and Integration: The Artistic Journey of Fong Chung-Ray*, pp. 167–169.



Figure 3. (left) Fong Chung-Ray, 1989-37, 1989, ink on paper, 122 × 91 cm. Image source: Pan An-Yi, *Transcending Fragments: Fong Chung-Ray's Artistic Journey* (Taipei: Asia Art Center Co., Ltd., 2022), p. 159.

Figure 4. (right) Fong Chung-Ray, 91-22, 1991, mixed media, 122 × 152.2 cm. Image source: Asia Art Center, "Fong Chung-Ray, 91-22," <https://asiaartcenter.org/artists/91-fong-chunggray/works/11676-fong-chung-ray-91-22/> (accessed July 10, 2025).



Figure 5. Fong Chung-Ray, 2017-3-8, 2017, mixed media on canvas, 182.8 × 365.7 cm. Image source: Pan An-Yi, *Transcending Fragments: Fong Chung-Ray's Artistic Journey* (Taipei: Asia Art Center Co., Ltd., 2022), p. 171.

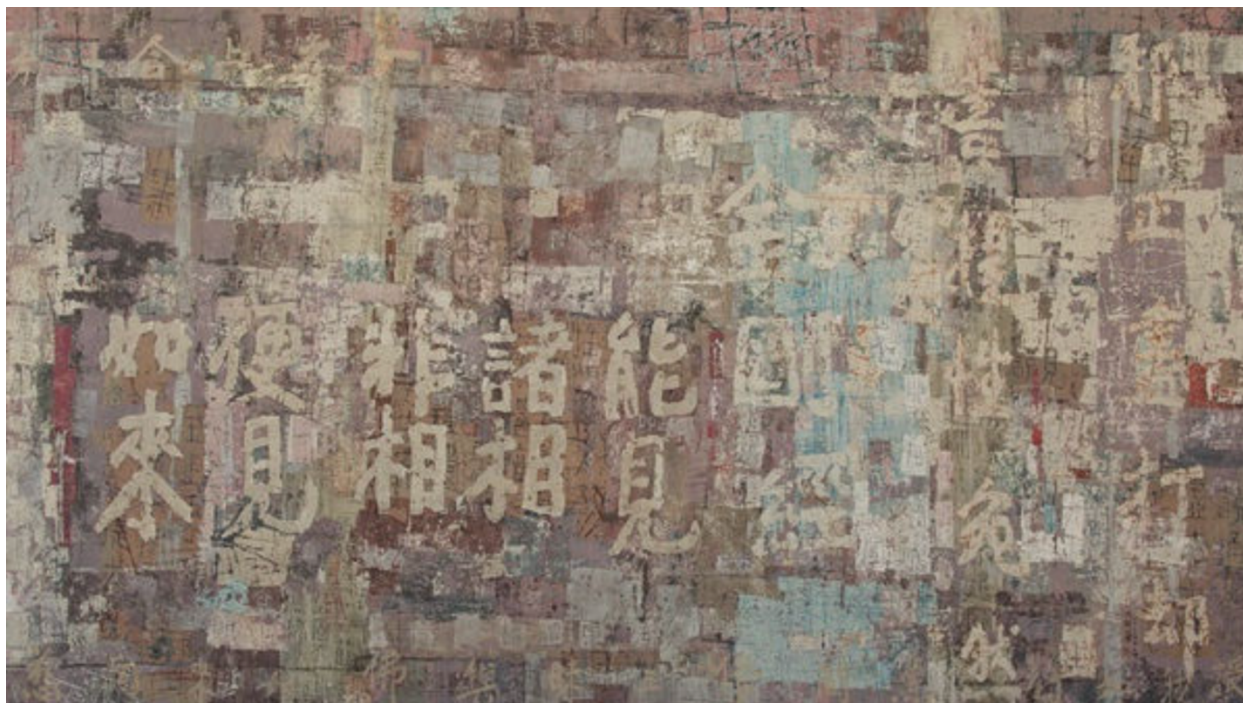


Figure 6. Fong Chung-Ray, 2016-9-4, 2016, mixed media on canvas, 203 × 362.5 cm. Image source: Asia Art Center, “Fong Chung-Ray, 2016-9-4,” <https://asiaartcenter.org/artists/91-fong-chung-ray/works/11461-fong-chung-ray-2016-9-4/> (accessed July 10, 2025).

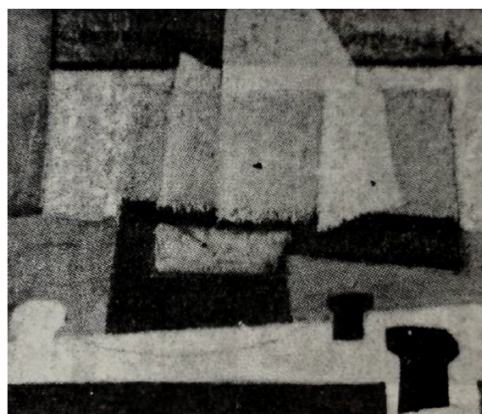


Figure 7. (left) Fong Chung-Ray, *Lush Colors* (薈彩), 1958. Image source: Pan An-Yi, *Transcending Fragments: Fong Chung-Ray's Artistic Journey* (Taipei: Asia Art Center Co., Ltd., 2022), p. 61.

Figure 8. (right) Fong Chung-Ray, 1967-38, 1967, ink on paper, 54.5 × 93.5 cm. Image source: Asia Art Center, “Fong Chung-Ray, 1967-38,” <https://asiaartcenter.org/artists/91-fong-chung-ray/works/11432-fong-chung-ray-1967-38/> (accessed July 10, 2025).

At the beginning of his artistic career, Fong Chung-Ray underwent a brief period of exploration in representational painting before turning towards abstraction in the late

1950s (Fig. 7). After seven or eight years of experimentation in oil painting, he shifted his primary focus to ink wash around 1965 (Fig. 8). Following his immigration to the United States, the multiple transformations in his choice of media, techniques, and artistic content through the two experiences of diaspora and subsequent resettlement reveal how Fong has placed the development of postwar Taiwanese modern art within a global art-historical framework, positioning modern Taiwanese painting as an essential trajectory in the broader narrative of global art history. Furthermore, from the perspective of local art history, Fong Chung-Ray's immigrant experience gradually attracted the attention of scholars in Asian American art history.²⁶

1. Abstract Painting as a Link Between Diaspora and Modernity

Since the ancient Greek and Roman periods, frequent wars meant that people living in city-states were often displaced and forced into states of migration and exile. Thus, the phenomenon of “diaspora” has existed throughout history. The English term *diaspora* derives from the Greek word *diasperien*: *dia* meaning “across” or “through,” and *-sperien* referring to “the scattering of seeds.” According to *Diaspora and Homeland Imagination : Essays in Literary and Cultural Studies*, “**diaspora has historically referred to communities who have left their homelands and dispersed across different regions.**”²⁷ Following World War II, around the period when the Nationalist government relocated to Taiwan, large numbers of migrants crossed the Taiwan Strait and settled on the island amid the political uncertainty. Therefore, behind every migrant lies a personal “story,” and for those artists who crossed the sea and became involved in Taiwan's postwar modern art movements and transformations, their prolonged experiences of migration and artistic creation brought diverse and enriched dimensions to the development of Taiwanese art. In particular, the landscape of “modern art” established by groups such as the Fifth Moon Group and the Ton-Fan Group has become a significant area of inquiry for understanding contemporary Taiwanese art and its engagement with global art discourse as of today.

²⁶ This inference is based on American art historian Mark Dean Johnson's research in *Asian American Art: A History, 1850–1970*, which examines the lives and artistic practices of artists of Asian descent. Although Fong Chung-Ray is not among the artists discussed in this book, his immigration to the United States and his development of abstract painting after settling in San Francisco correspond closely to the criteria of the artists studied and written about by Johnson. Gordon H. Chang, Mark Johnson, and Paul Karlstrom, eds., *Asian American Art: A History, 1850–1970*.

²⁷ Li You-Cheng and Chang Chin-Chung, *Diaspora and the Imagination of Home and Nation: Essays on Literary and Cultural Studies* (Taipei: Vanguard Publishing, 2010), p. 13.

In a 2014 interview with the French gallery Galerie Sabine Vazieux, Fong Chung-Ray reflected:

I had come across the paintings of Franz Klein (1910–1962) and Jackson Pollock (1912–1956). Looking back now, I realize that the histories of artistic development in the East and West did not follow the same path. Their progressions were different, and so were their styles. But by the time of the New York School, they had also begun to lean toward the East, while we were also moving forward. That was the moment when the two paths came closest. Klein’s calligraphic works, for example, were indeed influenced by calligraphy.

I had my own theory at that time, with two essential conditions. One is that the artwork must be “good” in terms of formal structure and arrangement; the other is that it must be different.²⁸

Fong emphasized that the essence of ink wash painting lies in its spirit rather than being confined by the limitations of its tools and materials. Therefore, the path of developing the spirit of ink wash painting is broader than the path defined merely by the use of ink and brush. In an interview for his 60th-anniversary retrospective exhibition “Abstract Evolutions: Sixty Years of Paintings by Fong Chung-Ray,” Fong described his studio as a laboratory of a scientist, where he experimented with new methods and materials. In his view, painting is much like playing the game of Go, “whether a piece is placed here or there will change the entire feeling of the painting completely.”²⁹ He further stated that **“the completeness of an artwork lies in the interaction between spirit and material.”**³⁰

During the several decades in the United States, Fong Chung-Ray’s artistic forms and visual language have undergone multiple transformations. In a 2024 exhibition interview with the University Museum and Art Gallery of the University of Hong Kong, Fong discussed his perspective on the contemporaneity of his artistic practice in relation to traditional Chinese theories of painting, specifically the Six Principles of Painting proposed by Xie He 謝赫 of the Southern Qi dynasty in *A Critical Discourse on Ancient Paintings*. He stated:

An artist’s studio is like a scientist’s laboratory, where one experiments with new methods and materials, developing their applications. If something proves effective through experiment, one continues to develop it further. Painting is like

²⁸ Interview transcript. University Museum & Art Gallery HKU, “Abstract Evolutions: Sixty Years of Paintings by Fong Chung-Ray,” accessed July 10th, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8mq8uEwB4w>.

²⁹ Ibid 28.

³⁰ Ibid 28.

playing the game of Go; whether a piece is placed here or there will change the entire feeling of the painting completely. Similarly, if you move a particular section, the form immediately changes. That is how transformation occurs. The completeness of an artwork comes from the interaction between spirit and material. “Material” refers, for example, to carving stone in sculpture or applying colors in painting. However, every material possesses its own character, and one must discover the nature of each material, then integrate one’s own feelings and perceptions with it. A painting must work both when viewed from a distance and when examined up close. This is because the Chinese emphasizes “spirit resonance and dynamic vitality,” with which it concerns the “overall view.” After applying “spirit resonance and dynamic vitality,” “structural use of the brush,” and “spatial arrangement and composition,” view the work from both near and far. Finally, to “color according to the categories, we no longer apply color according to established conventions, but let the feeling guide our use of color.”³¹

In his approach to abstract painting, the interplay and contemplation of “essence (體)” and “application (用)” have always remained central to Fong Chung-Ray’s creative philosophy. For Fong, artistic techniques, aesthetic conception, materials, and even the expression of content are all shaped by changes and influences from the external environment, thus developing an integrated creative model that synthesizes Eastern and Western cultures.

2. The Contemporary Spirit of Abstract Painting

As early as the 1950s, when modern art was beginning to emerge in Taiwan, Li Chung-Sheng 李仲生 (1912–1984) had already identified the serious problem that contemporary Chinese painting had “lost its sense of contemporaneity.” In his essay *Postwar Avant-Garde? Li Chung-Sheng’s Modern Painting Strategy and the Methodology of Postwar Taiwanese Art*, Pai Shih-Ming 白適銘 discusses the necessity for modern art to embody a sense of “contemporaneity”:

Regardless of subject matter or technique, modern art must clearly express a sense of ‘contemporaneity,’ that is, ‘the spirit of its time.’ It must move away from a direct dependence on the objects of representation (such as landscapes, figures, or still life) and transcend a state of merely imitating their external appearances. At the same time, the pursuit and expression of ‘contemporaneity’ and ‘the spirit of its time’ is the primary driving force that enables modern art to

³¹ Ibid 28.

continuously advance and develop. Ancient art is like 'silent ruins,' and people of the modern age should not be satisfied with copying or merely recounting the thoughts and forms of life of their predecessors. Rather, their understanding and appreciation of art should evolve in accordance with the times.³²

From the perspective of "contemporaneity," Pai Shih-Ming examines how Li Chung-Sheng's holistic discourse on modern art was rooted in responding to and connecting with the historical trajectory of Western classical art. Through this approach, Li developed a concept of "Taiwanese modern painting" that embodied both the spirit of its time and local cultural characteristics. This perspective simultaneously echoed a methodology and artistic strategy for modern painting grounded in traditional Chinese culture:

In my opinion, the painting we need today should include the following conditions: First, it must possess a sense of contemporaneity. On one hand, contemporaneity means that European painting techniques should serve as the foundation of our study; on the other hand, we must not neglect the characteristics of the Chinese nation and the colors of our own land. Second, we must conduct profound research into ancient art, discovering valuable resources from the treasures of the past, so as to create new art. However, we must not allow ancient art to become a constraint.³³

The sense of contemporaneity in Fong Chung-Ray's artworks during the late 1950s and early 1960s was indeed grounded in European painting techniques as a foundation for artistic expression. Art historian Pan An-Yi 潘安儀 points out that Fong's creative production during this period was primarily influenced by European art movements. In his early pieces from 1958, there was still no evident influence of Abstract Expressionism. Beginning in the 1960s, his works began to display styles that were closer to Abstract Expressionism; however, they still did not fully reflect the Abstract Expressionist style associated with the New York School.³⁴ Fong's artistic practice demonstrated a strong sense of contemporaneity while also responding to the gradual shift toward abstraction in Taiwan's art scene during the late 1950s. Through sustained creative exploration, he discovered his own methods and visual language of abstract expression by returning to Eastern cultural ideas and experimenting with innovative uses of materials and media.

³² Pai Shih-Ming, *Postwar Avant-Garde? Li Chung-Sheng's Modern Painting Strategy and the Methodology of Postwar Taiwanese Art* (Issue 95, January 2014), p. 14.

³³ Quoted in Pai Shih-Ming, *Postwar Avant-Garde? Li Chung-Sheng's Modern Painting Strategy and the Methodology of Postwar Taiwanese Art*, p. 14.

³⁴ Pan An-Yi, *Transcending Fragments: Fong Chung-Ray's Artistic Journey*, p. 83.

The gradual development of Fong Chung-Ray's modern artistic practice was largely shaped after he joined the Fifth Moon Group, where he worked alongside fellow members in pursuing the artistic transformations that had continued since the beginning of the 20th century. This resulted in a style of painting that integrated Eastern artistic traditions with modernist thought. Fong sought to establish the fundamental concepts and philosophical foundation of his art in the Eastern ideas of "Zen" and "Tao," creating abstract paintings that possessed distinctive local characteristics while embodying the spirit of the times.³⁵ Fong Chung-Ray's commitment to artistic creation was also the result of a historical "inevitability." In Liu Kuo-Sung's article *The Painter with "No Alternative": Fong Chung-Ray* published in the *United Weekly*, he recalled that **"whenever someone asked him why he painted, he would always answer, 'it is not that I want to paint; I simply have no choice but to do so.'"**³⁶ Fong's motivation for creation stemmed from an "inner necessity." His continual dissatisfaction and search for fulfillment in the creative process drove him to explore different media and materials in pursuit of appropriate artistic approaches. Liu Kuo-Sung believed that Fong's freedom from limitations imposed by materials and tools allowed him to more fully express his inner needs. Moreover, his personal experience of displacement brought about by the upheavals of war was transformed into works imbued with a positive and affirmative significance. Fong's understanding and absorption of modern art did not result from imitation, but rather emerged through years of repeated experimentation, reflection, assimilation, and transformation. He is opposed to complete Westernization and rejects the direct transplantation of Western painting styles, instead leans toward returning to the essence of his own cultural heritage, carefully examining and distilling its deeper meanings, while integrating Western modernist concepts of painting. Through this process, he created artworks that responded to his inner necessity while expressing the spirit of contemporaneity.

Drawing upon the concepts of "modern painting," "new painting," and "abstract painting," Fong Chung-Ray gave "modern painting" a definition imbued with contemporaneity and used "new painting" as a corresponding term for "abstract painting":

It is difficult to arrive at a precise definition. We can only say that "new painting" is a form of painting unconstrained by conventional formal limitations, one that allows artists to express their ideas and creativity freely on the pictorial surface. Admittedly, this description may sound rather vague. To illustrate,

³⁵ Ibid, p.85.

³⁶ Liu Kuo-Sung, *The Painter with "No Alternative": Fong Chung-Ray*, *United Weekly* (Taipei, June 5, 1965), "Art Forum," p. 4.

paintings typically began with the careful observation of subjects in the past. A portrait was expected to resemble its sitter, and whatever was depicted was expected to faithfully resemble its object in a thoroughly realist approach. However, “new painting” is fundamentally different in that the artist need not strive for photographic likeness when depicting a person, for that would serve little purpose. Instead, with only a few seemingly simple brushstrokes, of which may appear to a layperson or to an adherent of realism as little more than random marks, the artist transforms creative thought into visual form. Those versed in art are then able to appreciate the profound artistic conception embodied in the piece.³⁷

Furthermore, Fong Chung-Ray further explained that the appreciation of “new painting” should begin with an “intuitive aesthetic,” followed by a careful appreciation of the artwork’s composition and colors. Moreover, by placing the viewers’ own perspectives at the center of the creative process, viewers may construct an aesthetic realm uniquely their own.

3. Landscape Imagery in Abstract Painting

The abstract landscape imagery in Fong Chung-Ray’s works can be traced back as early as his 1958 painting *Lush Colors* (薈彩) (Fig. 7). Pan An-Yi believes that Fong’s creative practice during this period had already demonstrated an understanding and application of abstract painting concepts and new artistic techniques:

Fong Chung-Ray transforms a wharf scene into abstracted colored forms; a diagonal line along the bottom fifth of the painting divides the wharf and the sea, and the dark hues of the ropes on the docks contrast with the brightness of the iron columns. On the ground, the dim field appears to be a shadow; both the sails and the surface of the water are rendered in sharply geometric blocks, creating the context for abstraction. Although the full range of colors cannot be clearly understood through these black and white prints, we can still grasp the artist’s heightened sensitivity to hues, his balanced control of color fields, and his skill in activating geometric patterns, all areas in which he seems quite familiar.

³⁷ Lai Chin-Po, *Interview with Fong Chung-Ray: On How to Appreciate Modern Painting*, *United Daily News* (Taipei, August 10, 1969), p. 20.

Fong had the courage to experiment with new techniques, and in the late 1950s he and other important artists were collectively promoting abstract styles in Postwar Taiwanese art.³⁸

Fong Chung-Ray's understanding of new techniques and concepts in abstract painting, as well as his knowledge of Western art history, was primarily established through art books and exhibition catalogues of twentieth-century art, the visual aesthetics of Hollywood cinema, and the knowledge of modern painting introduced through the American Cultural Center in Kaohsiung in 1956. As a result, by the time of the inaugural United Art Exhibition in 1958,³⁹ he was already producing artworks with highly abstract visual languages. The rich and vibrant color fields and geometric forms expressed in his 1958 work *Lush Colors* (薈彩) may also reflect his visual experiences of the coastal landscapes of southern Taiwan with its intense tropical sunlight. Pan An-Yi points out that the distinctive quality of Fong's works lies in **"awakening the intuitive sensations that exist within the inner self and expressing them through a feast of colors and forms."**⁴⁰ *Lush Colors* was likely rooted in an actual natural landscape; however, Fong transformed his inner intuitive responses into a "transformation" of form and color to articulate an intensified state of environmental perception

Fong Chung-Ray's early abstract paintings were influenced by a range of artists associated with rational and synthetic abstraction, including Swiss-German artist Paul Klee, German-American artist Lyonel Feininger, German-born American artist Hans Hofmann, German artist Will Faber, and Spanish painter Enric Planasdura. In his early abstract works, Fong demonstrated a preference for intentional expressions through symbols (including written characters) and blocks of form, as well as a meticulous approach to developing the surface texture and material quality of the painting.⁴¹

Before exhibiting his abstract paintings in the United Art Exhibition with, Fong Chung-Ray had already received professional art education and training in art history through the Fine Arts Department of the Political Warfare Cadre Academy.⁴² He acquired

³⁸ Pan An-Yi, *Transcending Fragments: Fong Chung-Ray's Artistic Journey*, p. 60.

³⁹ At the time, he was serving in the Recreation Corps of the Kaohsiung Naval Headquarters, holding the rank of Navy lieutenant.

⁴⁰ Pan An-Yi, *Transcending Fragments: Fong Chung-Ray's Artistic Journey*, p. 63.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 63.

⁴² Fong Chung-Ray studied in the Fine Arts Division of the Political Cadre College from 1952 to 1953 (the program at the time lasted one year and six months). During his studies, he was taught by Liu Shih, who was then director of the Fine Arts Division (whose style leaned toward classical realism and who encouraged

a fundamental understanding and study of Western art history starting from the Middle Ages and developed a particularly strong interest in the evolution of modern art after Impressionism. Fong's aspiration to become an artist began to take shape after he became a second lieutenant art officer, when he had more free time for creative work. During the 1961 Four Seas Art Exhibition,⁴³ Fong exhibited his work *Awakening* (Fig. 9). The mysterious atmosphere created in the painting resembles a desolate and barren landscape. In May of that year, prior to the Four Seas Art Exhibition, Fong Chung-Ray, along with his fellow soldier and artist friend Hu Chi-Chung (1927–2012), were invited to join the Fifth Moon Group and participated in the Group's fifth annual exhibition that year.



Figure 9. Fong Chung-Ray, *Awakening*, 1961, exhibited in the 4th “Four Seas Exhibition.” Image source: Pan An-Yi, *Transcending Fragments: Fong Chung-Ray's Artistic Journey* (Taipei: Asia Art Center Co., Ltd., 2022), p. 69.

In 1965, Chuang Che, a fellow member of the Fifth Moon Group, published an article titled *The Paintings of Fong Chung-Ray* in the *United Weekly*. In the article, he

propaganda painting), as well as by several off-campus instructors who had a profound influence on him. These included watercolor instructors Chao Chun-Hsiang (1910–1991) and Ma Pai-Sui (1909–2003), Li Chun-Sheng, who primarily taught composition, Fang Hsiang (1920–2003), who taught woodcut techniques, and Chueh Ming-Te (1918–2002), who taught sculpture. Compared with the school's internal curriculum, which focused on “propaganda painting” and “war painting” as the primary directions of artistic training, Fong Chung-Ray benefited more from the guidance of the off-campus instructors. During this period, he also studied *Introduction to Aesthetics* under Yu Chun-Chih (1912–1975) and was inspired by the transformations that occurred after Impressionism. Pan An-Yi, *Transcending Fragments: Fong Chung-Ray's Artistic Journey*, p. 43.

⁴³ The exhibition took place from June 23rd to 25th, 1961, at the same venue as the previous exhibitions—the News Building on Hengyang Road, Taipei City. According to the exhibition materials, the first group exhibition was titled “Joint Exhibition,” the second was titled “Navy Youth Joint Painting Exhibition,” the third was titled “Four Seas Exhibition,” and the fourth was likewise titled “Four Seas Exhibition.” Therefore, it was not until the fourth exhibition that the term “Four Seas Art Association” was used for the first time to refer to the collective of artists who organized these joint exhibitions. See Pan An-Yi, *Transcending Fragments: Fong Chung-Ray's Artistic Journey*, pp. 53–71.

described the overall artistic significance of Fong's works with the phrase "simple and unadorned". From Fong's experimental painting processes of using coarse burlap sacks, cement, canvas, diluted oil paints applied through splashing techniques, to artworks created by dipping a brown brush into ink and sweeping it across rough paper, each stage revealed the most natural expression of his inner essence. The landscapes in Fong's works resemble a piece of undeveloped "wasteland":

He pays attention to the overall structure, accumulating fragmented and seemingly disorderly brushstrokes into fields of form, combined with heavy black areas created through broad brush applications, followed by earthy yellow and dark green tones. It is like looking down upon a barren land from a high vantage point. Yes, a wasteland. There is no noise in his paintings, nor conflict, towering mountains, flowing waters, drifting clouds, or mist. What exists is the still and stable earth, as well as the growing ground where wild grasses flourish. No one can predict what will eventually grow from this land. With farmer Fong Chung-Ray's character and wisdom, we hope that he will continue to cultivate this field until the day he can quietly harvest its fruits. Perhaps it will be a field of wheat! (For, after all, he is a northerner!).⁴⁴

What Fong reveals in his artworks is an "externalized landscape" that originates from his personal inner necessity. Within this land that Chuang Che referred to as a "wasteland," Fong Chung-Ray draws upon the unique experience of establishing himself in a new environment through the condition of diaspora, conveying his inner state of mind through brushwork and the use of color. At the same time, his paintings incorporate the contemporary significance of literati landscapes from his homeland, as well as a reinterpretation of his present circumstances and lived experience.

IV. Classical Language and Contemporary Consciousness

Sixty-five years after Fong Chung-Ray represented the Republic of China at the 5th São Paulo Biennial in Brazil in 1959, National Museum of History commissioned Taiwanese art historian Hsiao Chong-Ray 蕭瓊瑞 to curate the exhibition "Fifth Moon and Ton-Fan: The Birth of Modernist Art Movement in Taiwan." A research publication and catalogue with the same title were made alongside the exhibition. In the publication, the section introducing Fong Chung-Ray carries the title "Classical Nostalgia." It presents an assessment of Fong's artistic career spanning more than seventy years, offering an

⁴⁴ Chuang Che, *The Paintings of Fong Chung-Ray*, *United Weekly* (Taipei, May 29, 1965), 藝苑 "Art Forum," p. 4.

interpretation of his oeuvre that embraces both classical traditions and modern painting perspectives:

Born in Henan, Fong Chung-Ray graduated from the Department of Fine Arts at the Political Warfare Cadre Academy in Taipei. Together with Hu Chi-Chung 胡奇中 and others, he co-founded the Four Seas Painting Association and joined the Fifth Moon Group in 1961. While initially focusing on oil painting, he later experimented with incorporating ink wash media and paper collage techniques, allowing abstract landscape imagery to emerge through variations in paper, ink, and layers of color. After moving to the United States, he further explored the use of acrylic paints, plastic films, and other mixed media, creating artworks that demonstrate spontaneous effects within a sense of composure and restraint. Through these experimental approaches, he integrated Eastern symbols into distinctive abstract compositions, developing a unique visual language of his own.⁴⁵

For an artist who has long expressed creative ideas and emotions through abstract painting, Fong Chung-Ray continuously approached his practice with an experimental attitude and spirit, introducing various media that could be integrated and placed in dialogue with one another. Through this process, he created abstract landscape paintings with distinctive personal characteristics, works that convey rich visual imagery and embody the quality of “spirit resonance and dynamic vitality,” proving equally compelling whether viewed from a distance or at close range.⁴⁶ An Eastern classical painting context and philosophical perspective became the enduring foundation of Fong Chung-Ray’s artistic practice. Through the interaction between observations of the external environment and inner emotional responses (the interaction between spirit and material) he continually transformed and developed diverse pictorial spaces and visual imagery.

⁴⁵ Hsiao Chong-Ray, *Fifth Moon and Ton-Fan: The Birth of Modernist Art Movement in Taiwan*, p. 152. The statement in the cited passage regarding the establishment of the “Four Seas Art Association” is explained in greater clarity and detail in Pan An-Yi’s 2022 publication, *Transcending Fragments: Fong Chung-Ray’s Artistic Journey*. The name “Four Seas Art Association” did not first appear until the fourth edition of the “Joint Exhibition,” when it was included in the exhibition introduction. Therefore, the association was not established at the outset of the exhibitions; rather, it gradually emerged as an artistic organization and a named group through successive exhibitions and media promotion. In fact, the organizational name “Four Seas Art Association” appeared only in the introduction to the fourth exhibition. The first three exhibitions each had their own titles: the 1st “Joint Exhibition” (May 17th–20th, 1958), the 2nd “Joint Exhibition” (May 1st–4th, 1959), the 3rd “Four Seas Exhibition” (June 17th–19th, 1960), and the 4th “Four Seas Exhibition” (June 23rd–25th, 1961).

⁴⁶ Through his use and experimentation with materials, Fong discovered the distinct qualities of each material, while incorporating his own personal sensibility as an artist to achieve the “spirit resonance and dynamic vitality” and expressive depth characteristic of painting.

In 1959, Fong Chung-Ray participated for the first time in the 5th São Paulo Biennial in Brazil. Before submitting the artworks for the exhibition, Ambassador Lee Di-Jun 李迪俊 (1901–?) of the Republic of China Embassy in Brazil clearly stated in a telegram dated January 31st, 1959:

Submissions of radically avant-garde works in Chinese painting, oil painting, and woodcut printmaking were promptly invited (for example, the artworks exhibited in the Young Artists Joint Exhibition of the Navy, published in issue no. 116 of *Chinese Pictorial*, were very much in keeping with the artistic preferences promoted by the exhibition). ...Radically avant-garde painting is still in its infancy in our country and cannot yet compete with that of the West. To the best of the Museum's knowledge, among Chinese artists working in Europe, only Zhao Wu-Ji 趙無極 has established a recognized position within the European and American art worlds through his engagement with avant-garde painting. The government might therefore consider approaching him and inviting him either to participate in competitive exhibitions or to present a special solo exhibition, thereby enhancing the international standing of our nation's modern art.⁴⁷

Among the works presented in the Navy Young Artists' United Art Exhibition, only Sun Ying 孫英 (dates unknown) exhibited paintings in a realist style, while Hu Chi-Chung, Fong Chung-Ray, and Qu Ben-Le 曲本樂 (1934–) all participated with abstract works. It is therefore understandable that Ambassador Li Di-Jun's telegram made no mention of Sun Ying, as his artworks fell outside the scope of the avant-garde artistic orientation under discussion. At the time, Ambassador Lee Di-Jun learned about the development of modern art in Taiwan through exhibition information published in the official *Chinese Pictorial* (中華畫報, issued in Taipei) and *Chinese and Foreign Pictorial* (中外畫報, issued in Hong Kong). Pan An-Yi believes that because Ambassador Lee had access to publications providing firsthand coverage of modern art in Taiwan, thus was able to quickly and accurately identify works that aligned with the artistic tastes of the São Paulo Biennial at that time.⁴⁸ At the beginning of Fong Chung-Ray's artistic career, participation in international art exhibitions enabled him to rapidly enter Taiwan's modern art circle and establish himself as an artist recognized for his abstract painting. After approximately seven or eight years of creating abstract oil paintings, he shifted toward using ink wash as a medium for abstract expression, gradually developing creative tools and a personal style

⁴⁷ "Lee Di-Jun's Telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (January 31st, 1959)," *São Paulo Art Exhibition Case*, "Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives," archival reference no. 020-090502-0023. Cited in Chen Man-Hua, "Western Influences in Taiwanese Modern Art: A Study Centered on Exchanges in the Americas during the 1950s and 1960s," *Taiwan Historical Research*, vol. 24, no. 2 (June 2017), p. 149.

⁴⁸ Pan An-Yi, *Transcending Fragments: Fong Chung-Ray's Artistic Journey*, p. 79.

suited to conveying his inner thoughts, most notably the use of a palm-leaf brush. After joining the Fifth Moon Group, Fong further explored the group's pursuit of pictorial expressions such as the use of empty space (留白), the stylistic characteristics of Tang-dynasty yipin (逸品, untrammelled style) painting, and related pictorial traditions. After 1963, his artistic practice entered a mature phase.

In the interview text prepared for the exhibition "Abstract Evolutions: Sixty Years of Paintings by Fong Chung-Ray" organized by the University Museum and Art Gallery of the University of Hong Kong in 2024,⁴⁹ Fong clearly articulated the spiritual qualities and philosophical origins underlying his abstract painting practice:

Traditional Chinese literati painting emphasizes the expression of personal emotions rather than the accurate depiction of objects before one's eyes. Fong Chung-Ray's artistic practice may have emerged from this tradition and developed toward abstraction. He places importance on revealing personal inner experiences and his understanding of the relationship between heaven, earth, and all things. His painting style is grounded in profound philosophical thought, and he excels at transcending the superficial representation of objects, allowing forms to be simplified while their spirit emerges through his brushwork. This artistic vision is entirely aligned with the spirit of literati painting, infusing his artworks with infinite layers of meaning.⁵⁰

Based on the transformation of personal emotions and ideas within the tradition of literati painting, Fong Chung-Ray adopted an abstract visual language to transform his inner perceptions. Through the diverse applications and expressive possibilities of materials, he broke beyond the limitations of realistic and figurative imagery, revealing the inherent qualities and individuality of each material. At the same time, through the dynamic expression of bodily movement, he enabled pictorial elements derived from the

⁴⁹ In a short introductory text promoting this exhibition, Galerie du Monde positioned Fong Chung-Ray's artistic practice within the framework of global art development, "Fong Chung-Ray's works combine traditional Chinese art with Western modern art. This cross-cultural artistic form allows viewers to experience the intersection and collision of Chinese and Western cultures in his paintings. Centered on abstract art, his works employ unique techniques and visual languages to introduce diverse artistic traditions, methods, and themes to international audiences, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture while bringing a new perspective to the global art world."

"Retrospective at UMAG, University of Hong Kong," accessed July 1st, 2025, <https://galeriedumonde.com/zh/news/440-fong-chung-ray-retrospective-at-umag-university-of-hong-kong/>.

⁵⁰ University Museum & Art Gallery HKU, *Abstract Evolutions: Sixty Years of Paintings by Fong Chung-Ray*.

Chinese painting tradition to enter into dialogue with Western abstraction, thereby developing a mode of contemporary abstract landscape distinguished by the spirit of its age and its own unique artistic character.

Fong Chung-Ray's abstract painting embodies a rich reconfiguration of Eastern and Western cultures. Through the pure elements of form and color, he recreated the imagery of natural landscapes while expressing an abstract painterly rhythm and aesthetic sensibility. This also reflects the creative pursuit and attitude sought by the younger generation of postwar abstract painters as they encountered new painting movements and contemporary artistic currents.⁵¹ In his pursuit and expression of abstraction, Fong sought qualities close to those of traditional Chinese literati painting. By connecting the language of Chinese painting with the vocabulary of Western abstraction, and through experimentation with different scales of painting and diverse materials, he developed an abstract artistic character and depth that was not purely Western in nature. Fong Chung-Ray's commitment to abstract painting as his artistic vocation was largely influenced by his early experience of being limited by realistic and figurative modes of expression, which could not fully convey his personal emotions and thoughts. He therefore turned to abstraction as a means of translating and expressing his inner ideas and feelings. Throughout his long career in abstract painting, he integrated the artistic principles of Chinese literati painting, using abstraction as a vehicle to express the artist's own thoughts and philosophy.

The development and origins of literati painting (文人畫) were closely connected to the realistic style of painting and its methods of creation. Even during the period when Chinese painting attained the height of representational realism, there emerged tendencies that departed from the faithful depiction of natural reality. This can be understood through the discussion by British art historian Michael Sullivan in *The Arts of China* regarding the emergence and development of literati painting. Sullivan states, “the

⁵¹ In its exhibition interview commentary, the University Museum and Art Gallery of the University of Hong Kong attributed contemporary significance to the abstract paintings of Fong Chung-Ray, considering him an important figure in the continued development of abstract art, “abstract art's essence lies in its non-representational and non-objective modes of expression. Artists often move beyond the limitations of realism, flexibly employing color, form, and composition to convey emotions, ideas, and perceptions, rather than focusing on the depiction of identifiable objects or scenes. This aesthetic spirit can be seen in Fong Chung-Ray's creative approach. Like other Chinese artists who emerged in the mid-20th century, Fong focused on expressing personal perspectives and inner worlds while engaging in various experimental explorations of visual forms. This generation of artists further advanced the development of abstract art by skillfully integrating elements of traditional Chinese painting into modern abstract practices.” See University Museum & Art Gallery HKU, “*Abstract Evolutions: Sixty Years of Paintings by Fong Chung-Ray*.”

realistic tradition of the Northern Song continued into the Southern Song Academy of Painting, and its influence on professional painting continued through the Ming and Qing dynasties, as seen in the landscapes of painters such as Yuan Jiang 袁江 of the Qing period. However, by this time, realism had already become a fixed formula: **painters no longer observed nature directly with their own eyes, instead painting according to inherited visual memories and established conventions.**⁵² Within this dominant development of academic painting, artists such as Su Shi 蘇軾 proposed that **“the purpose of painting is not to reproduce nature, but to express emotions and convey meaning.”**⁵³ The ideal of contemporary landscape painters was primarily to **“reveal the artist’s own thoughts and spirit to friends.”**⁵⁴ Through the concept of “borrowing form to express meaning (借形寄意),” artists used actual natural forms and objects as vehicles for personal emotions and ideas, expressing the creator’s inner feelings and thoughts within the painting. Therefore, the essential expression of literati painting lies in its attention to the artist’s individual character and unique temperament, as in the “spirit and bearing (氣度)” of the literati. Through his study of the development and transformation of literati painting, Sullivan concluded that **“literati painting transformed into a philosophy (thinking) of art.”**⁵⁵ External natural phenomena and inner consciousness could be integrated into a coherent system of thought through “intuition,”

When Fong Chung-Ray’s abstract painting adopted Western abstraction as a new mode of expression, the essential content embedded within it remained the spiritual temperament pursued by Chinese literati painting. To discover a shared language of dialogue between different cultural systems and artistic forms, artists must continually engage in the harmonization, comparison, dialectical examination, and synthesis of creative materials and ideas to discover artistic forms and visual languages that respond to their own historical moment. Thus, the concept of “the studio as laboratory” became an ideal creative space for abstract artists such as Fong. Within his studio (laboratory), he brought various materials collected from external nature and society into a realm of personal spiritual expression. Tangible objects with physical substance became mediums for conveying emotion, undergoing a concrete and complete process of transformation, reconstruction, and reinterpretation into artistic language, thereby articulating the essential content of art. Therefore, after Fong Chung-Ray began engaging with

⁵² Michael Sullivan and Shelagh Vainker, revised edition; translated and proofread by Fong Yu-Heng, *The Arts of China* (New Taipei City: Yijuan Culture, 2025), p. 288.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 289.

Buddhism,⁵⁶ “enlightenment (悟)” (awakening) became a mode of contemplation through which he interpreted deeper personal spiritual meanings. During his early encounter with Western abstract painting and the development of his artistic philosophy in the late 1950s, Fong had already created *Awakening* (1958). In this piece, he constructed a desolate space filled with a hazy and subtle atmosphere through **“multiple layers of accumulation and a flying-white (飛白) technique similar to calligraphy.”**⁵⁷ The landscape within the painting appears enveloped in an invisible and mysterious aura. The artwork reflects the transformation and movement of his inner state of mind, while demonstrating his mastery of a new abstract visual language and the unfolding of his personal artistic philosophy. In other words, while developing a new form of painting, Fong integrated both an “external search” and an “internal search” as creative approaches, expressing an autonomous and subjective will toward abstract painting.

V. Conclusion: A Localized Model of Artistic Production Shaped by the Dual Experiences of “Displacement (Crossing the Sea)” and “Diaspora”

The artists who crossed the Taiwan Strait in the postwar era brought with them diverse “paths” of longing for their homeland. On the unfamiliar soil of Taiwan, or what gradually became a new homeland, their unwavering commitment to artistic practice, together with the introduction and development of new artistic ideas, contributed to the emergence of a rich and multifaceted narrative of modern art in Taiwan. Although their innovations often invited criticism and controversy, they also profoundly expanded the possibilities of Taiwanese modern art. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, the artists who joined the Fifth Moon Group and the Ton-Fan Group were in the formative years of their creative lives. The consciousness of “diaspora” that arose from the coercive experience of “displacement (crossing the sea)” became a defining tone of their artistic practice and their pursuit of modern art. The experiences of “displacement (crossing the Taiwan Strait)” and “diaspora” prompted a distinct process of cultural negotiation among this generation of young Mainlander artists as they engaged with emerging global artistic currents. Taiwan's artistic milieu consequently became a “contact zone” in which artists shaped by trans-Strait migration and the diasporic experience, together with local artists, confronted, negotiated, and responded to international artistic developments. Through the lived experience of “displacement” forced migration across the Taiwan Strait and the “diasporic” consciousness that emerged in the wake of political regime change, most artists responded to Western artistic movements by drawing upon the formal

⁵⁶ Fong Chung-Ray regards Buddhism as a philosophy.

⁵⁷ Pan An-Yi, *Transcending Fragments: Fong Chung-Ray's Artistic Journey*, p. 69.

vocabularies and cultural traditions of Chinese art, reworking these inherited elements to create and reinterpret new artistic imagery.

In contemporary diaspora studies, Peter Brooker proposes separating the concept of diaspora from the idea of a real or imagined common “homeland.” Drawing on poststructuralist thought, he instead argues that diasporic communities should be understood as dynamic networks that lack both an original homeland and an essentialized identity. What they share, rather, is a history of “continual change, ongoing migration, and settlement.”⁵⁸ Brooker further cites the British cultural theorist Stuart Hall on “diaspora,” who argues that “cultural identity” is founded on “positioning” rather than “essence,” as **“diasporic identities are those constantly producing and reproducing themselves through transformation and difference.”**⁵⁹ Likewise, British sociologist Paul Gilroy contends that **“the concept of diaspora provides a powerful means of critiquing essentialist notions of identity by emphasizing ‘innovation and change.’”**⁶⁰ From this perspective, Fong Chung-Ray’s cultural identity and his creative artistic innovations may be understood through the lens of movement and transformation. The richness of his artistic forms and visual language is closely tied to his two experiences of diaspora and resettlement. The distinctly Eastern cultural character that permeates his artwork is not a simple preservation of inherited traditions, but a form of cultural representation reshaped through displacement (both in form and in content). Consequently, the Eastern cultural elements in his paintings differ from those of his original homeland. Through the lived experience of displacement, diaspora, and resettlement, they emerge as a form of identity in transformation, a “continuity” that is sustained precisely through change.

Viewed from the positive and productive dimensions of “diaspora,” Fong’s artistic practice after settling in Taiwan may be understood as a process of reconstructing and transmitting Eastern culture. Between 1956 and 1975, his art focused on exploring the Eastern cultural qualities inherent in abstract painting. As he searched for a personal artistic vocabulary and creative methodology, he critically examined the relationship between Western abstraction and Eastern culture, helping to establish the abstract

⁵⁸ Peter Brooker, translated by Wang Chih-Hung and Li Ken-Fang, *A Glossary of Cultural Theory* (2nd edition) (Taipei: Chuliu Publishers Co., Ltd., 2003), pp. 111–112.

⁵⁹ Transcribed from Peter Brooker, translated by Wang Chih-Hung and Li Ken-Fang, *A Glossary of Cultural Theory* (2nd edition), p. 112. The original text is from Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity: Community, Culture*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), pp. 222–237.

⁶⁰ Peter Brooker, translated by Wang Chih-Hung and Li Ken-Fang, *A Glossary of Cultural Theory* (2nd edition), p. 112. The original text is from Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993).

imagery and cultural foundations of Taiwan's modern art. During this phase, his artistic inquiry and modes of expression moved closer to an exploration of the essential qualities of Eastern culture, while his choice of artistic materials likewise shifted to the traditional media of ink wash and xuan paper. From the perspective of an artist whose life and career traversed geographical boundaries and generations, Fong Chung-Ray's "settlement experience" the United States in 1975 marked the beginning of a new phase in which his artistic practice became firmly established in a new cultural environment. During this period, he continued to employ abstraction as the primary mode of expression while articulating elements of Eastern culture. Yet the works of this phase moved beyond the mere incorporation of cultural motifs, drawing ever closer to the expression of the inner spirituality of Eastern culture, pursuing a heightened state of inner awareness and contemplative tranquility.

The dual experiences of diaspora and resettlement added further complexity to Fong's artistic development, leading him to move fluidly between different modes of expression and cultural affiliations. As Pan An-Yi observes, **"oscillating between two cultural traditions, sometimes he was more inclined towards one, but he would fall back on his cultural origins, which are all part of a normal emotional and artistic journey. It was precisely through such continuous dialogue and this journey of constant negotiations, meditation, experimentation, and unremitting fine-tuning that Fong discovered the creative trajectory for his latest period of works."**⁶¹ From this perspective, "return" (understood as an ongoing process within movement itself) enabled Fong's work to continually interrogate the relationship between the individual and the culture of the homeland. His settlement experience in Taiwan, combined with the transformative force of modern art, brought about both the introduction of new cultural influences and the partial disappearance of inherited traditions, ultimately giving rise to a hybrid cultural formation. His "resettlement" in the United States represented a second movement of displacement. In the evolution of his artistic media, compositional strategies, spatial organization, and use of color, one can discern new artistic forms and meanings emerging through the interplay of cultural transfer and cultural adaptation.

The "cultural production of diaspora" is a defining characteristic of Fong Chung-Ray's "cross-cultural artistic practice," through which he gradually extended and transformed the legacy of traditional Chinese culture. At the same time, the cultural tensions generated by the "cultural production of diaspora" continued to shape both his artistic practice and intellectual thought. Through the dissemination of "diaspora" and the diffusion of "culture," Fong's art extended the trajectory of postwar Taiwanese modern art beyond its original geographical and cultural boundaries into broader global contexts. In doing so, it created new opportunities for the history of Taiwanese art to be

⁶¹ Pan An-Yi, *Transcending Fragments: Fong Chung-Ray's Artistic Journey*, p. 156.

situated within the wider framework of global art history, endowing it with renewed significance for the contemporary era and securing its place within the larger narrative of world art history.