



張琴好友 梅山

**GUANTING LI:** Harmonies

12 April 2025 – 24 May 2025



LAURINE · DIGGINS · FINE · ART



**Spring 2024**  
 colour ink on rice paper  
 96 x 47 cm

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**H**armonies brings together a selection of figurative and landscape paintings by Guanting Li, inspired by both Chinese and Western art traditions and experiences. These atmospheric paintings ask the viewer to quietly consider and contemplate the depictions of transcendent harmony.

Li's art is anchored in the history and traditions of Chinese painting with an elegant use of calligraphic line. Under the tutelage of master painter Mr Liu Wenxi (whose portrait of Mao Zedong has been used on Chinese currency since 1999) and mentor Ms Chen Guangjian, a highly influential contemporary female painter in China, Li absorbed the lessons of depicting nature, people, and daily life, distilling the subjects to a core essence.



**Beholding the flowers in the garden, my mind is drifting away with the cloud 2015**  
 colour ink on rice paper  
 134 x 78 cm



**Everlasting Fragrance 2022**

black ink on rice paper  
82 x 97 cm

*Young koala snuggled into its mother, soft fur against the Eucalypt bark and tangle of leaves, all rendered in marks of ink on rice paper.*

After graduating from Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts in 1989, Li rose to the position of Director of the Art Department at Xi'an Chinese Painting Academy and further served as Director of the Institute of Chinese Culture and Arts at Xi'an International Studies University in 1991. He continues to promote the Xi'an style of painting dating back centuries, with a focus on calligraphy, ink wash and fluid brush work, with subjects drawn from the surrounding landscape, history, and culture.

Over 20 years ago, Li moved to Australia and the impact this has had on his art can be seen in his response to a different landscape, particularly the natural bushland of his studio in the outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Indeed, it is less the exposure to Western art, and more his immersion in the bush landscape and his appreciation of Australian flora and fauna, especially the numerous birds which are found around his studio, which has had the greatest impact on his evolving style. Looser, more gestural brush strokes and a freer use of colour allowed Li to develop his distinctive style, a fusion of eastern and western inspirations.

The innovative integration in Li's painting, parallels his interest in fostering exchanges between Chinese and Western art communities. In 2007, Li established the Australian Artists Association and the Australian National Arts Academy, as platforms for artistic collaboration and founded the Australian based magazines, *Chinese Fine Arts and Global Fine Arts*.

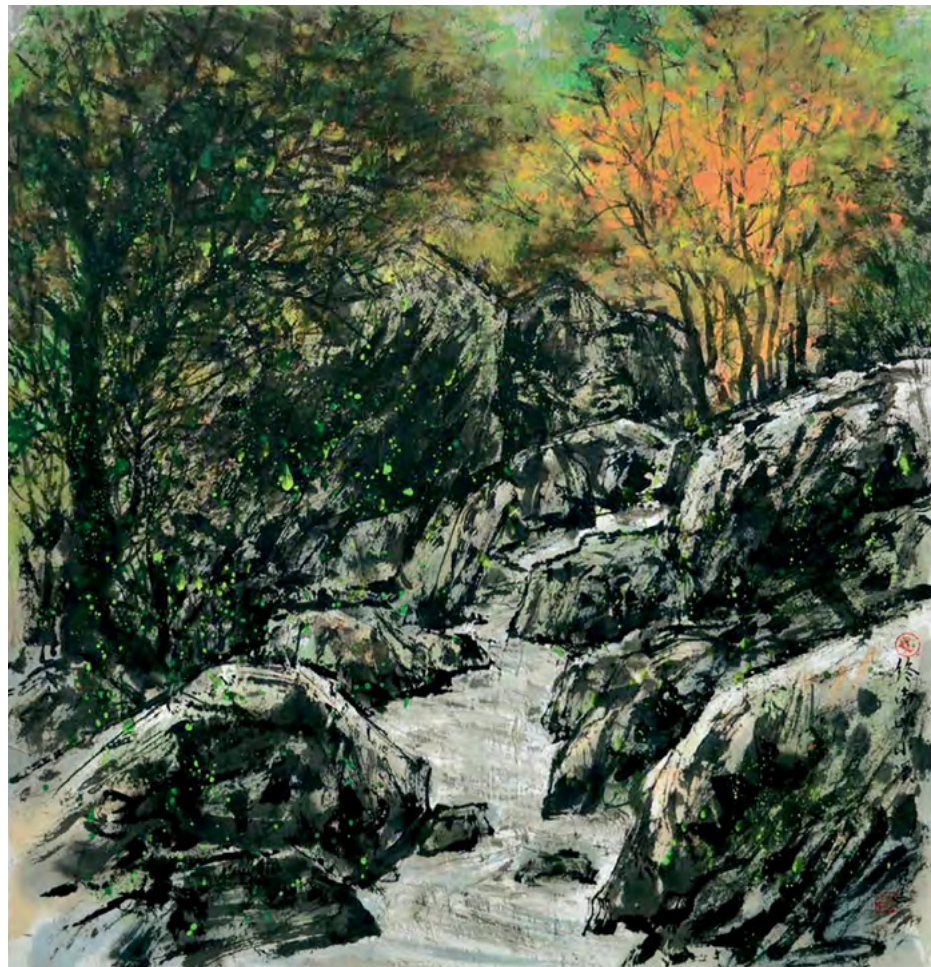


**Koalas 2016**

black ink on rice paper  
134 x 67 cm



**Pond Lotus tied to the passing  
Autumn 2016**  
colour ink on rice paper  
133 x 33 cm



**Murmuring Water 2014**  
colour ink on rice paper  
94 x 83 cm

Li continues to exhibit in China and has lectured at College of Arts, Yan'an University, Shuimoshalong Arts Salon and Zhuhai University and maintained many followers. He is represented in numerous significant collections, including the Famen Temple in Shaan Xi Province. Apart from a few group shows, and showcases at council galleries including Glen Eira and Manningham, Li has rarely exhibited in Australia. This survey exhibition presents an opportunity to view a selection of work painted over a period of ten years. Although Li has branched out into explorations using charcoal or acrylic, these exhibited works from domestic to grand in size, are all ink on rice paper and presented either framed or in a scroll format. Li mixes his ink from natural materials, using traditional colours and also brighter hues he finds more relevant since moving to Australia. His most recent work continues his desire to bring his unique vision to the tradition of Chinese painting, keeping it relevant and thriving in today's world.

For Li, creating art is akin to a meditation, a daily worship and this aura of devotion and consideration shines through the paintings. This is especially so of his large-scale detailed narratives exploring religious themes of gods, goddesses, Buddhism and nature, some over 10 meters long. His chosen medium is unforgiving, it requires great deliberation before



**Lucky Snow 2025**  
colour ink on rice paper  
68 x 46 cm



**Visiting Friends with Guqin (extended) 2024**  
 colour ink on rice paper  
 228 x 75 cm



**Torpor 2022**  
 colour ink on rice paper on scroll  
 175 x 94 cm



**Pink Lotus 2025**  
 colour ink on rice paper  
 134 x 66 cm



**Reminiscent of the Chibi Battle 2017**  
 colour ink on rice paper  
 134 x 67 cm



**Mountain Hiking 2015**  
colour ink on rice paper  
67 x 134 cm



**Isle of Palms in Australia 2016**  
black ink on rice paper on scroll  
22 x 144 cm

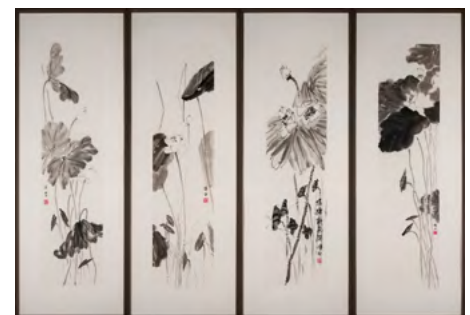


**Green Pine Tree and Famed Scholar 2015**  
colour ink on rice paper  
40 x 25 cm

applying brush to paper, the sweep and dab of ink irreversible and unchangeable. There is great skill in allowing the blank of the paper to be incorporated in the composition. Li also expresses a variety of textures with ink and his assortment of brushes; the young koala snuggled into its mother indicative of this skill, depicting soft fur against the Eucalypt bark and tangle of leaves, all rendered in marks of ink on rice paper.

Li expresses the aim of his painting is to “convey a sense of life’s energy” and to capture the joy that he finds in the beauty of nature. Many works exude a quiet presence balanced with a real sense of vitality. A spiritual tranquillity in harmony with the vigour of life. The opportunity to slowly contemplate Li’s paintings rewards the viewer, stirring emotions and uncovering new perspectives. We might admire the technique of ink on paper; noticing the difference between a thin precise line and more expressive strong broad strokes; or the use of colour, sometimes a subtle touch, sometimes perhaps symbolic and other times seemingly a bright celebration; or reflect on the subject depicted – the grandeur of the natural landscape or the rapport of human figures; or muse on the purpose of the paintings themselves and consider the artist’s intent and our response as viewer.

In many works, we find a connection between heaven and earth, an other worldly realm,



**Lotus 2022**  
black ink on rice paper  
134 x 34 cm (each, 4 panels)

*“spiritual tranquillity in harmony with the vigour of life.”*

particularly in the paintings where the human figure is rendered as an almost insignificant spectator to the majesty of nature such as in *Visiting Friends with Guqin (extended)*; *Mountain Hiking and Waterfalls in Clouds*. There is a rhythm in the strokes and an important use of space, often literally the white space of blank paper. This space also allows room for stories to unfold.



**Sketch in Mt Zhongnan Slipping By 2015**  
colour ink on rice paper  
176 x 92 cm



**Port Douglas 2015**  
black ink on rice paper  
67 x 134 cm



**Lofty Mountains 2018**  
colour ink on rice paper on scroll  
245 x 122 cm

Other works celebrate flora and fauna in a more straightforward style, birds sheltering together in a shrub; koalas on a branch; flowers in a vase; the rich colour of autumn leaves; streams running over rocks; delicate lotus petals – perceptive observations of the harmonious beauty of landscape. Li also depicts figures, often in traditional Chinese costume, building a peaceful relationship between groups of figures or their natural surrounds - elegant females from the Tang Dynasty, such as *Pink Lotus*; or an interaction of figures demonstrating social rituals like *Go Playing* or may extend to have a philosophical teaching or moral significance; as in *Torpor* or *Beholding the Flowers in the garden, my mind is drifting away with the clouds*. Many of the works are essentially about atmosphere, creating both an impression of place and a reaction of calm for the viewer. There is a sensation of accord between a subject of beauty and serenity, invoking a contemplative response; a harmony of artwork and viewer.

The artworks in the exhibition are a harmonious fusion of east and west; of the traditional and contemporary; of calligraphic black line and colour, both subtle and strong; a mix of quietness and the sublime. These strands all come together in Mr Li's painting, in a scale of harmonies.

– Ruth Lovell

With thanks to Guanting Li, Philip Chu and Maggie Ho

**Waterfalls in Clouds 2025**  
colour ink on rice paper  
143 x 44 cm



**Blue Pot 2016**  
 colour ink on rice paper  
 67 x 122 cm



**COVER:**  
**Visiting Friends with Guqin 2016**  
 colour ink on rice paper on scroll  
 147 x 123 cm



**Go Playing 2016**  
 colour ink on rice paper  
 40 x 40 cm

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 Tues – Friday 10 am – 6 pm  
 other hours by appointment