



■ Among the works by Tang Ying-chi at Sun Museum are, clockwise from left: *Waiting at the Foot of the Mountain I*; *Plum Flower Picking Mirage I*; and *The Place V, VI, VIII, III and II*.

Cara Chen

From afar, it's hard to tell that Tang Ying-chi's new series of color-block paintings, created during the pandemic, are actually Chinese landscapes.

But her current exhibition, *The Place: Fantasia of Scenery* at Sun Museum in Kwun Tong, offers a narrative of how the 65-year-old developed the moral pursuit of ancient literati in her creations.

Although the exhibition starts at the entrance with works from the new series, *The Place*, visitors are encouraged to walk deep into the gallery to appreciate Tang's earlier painting studies based on photographic image transference.

The series started when Tang was the artist-in-residence at the visual studies department of Lingnan University in 2010.

Experienced in fabric art and painting, Tang feels the desire of our ancestors for a world of free spirits and self-liberation through art – something that is still a dream in today's world.

"The ancients often projected their emotions and pursuits into their paintings and calligraphy, but it's too difficult for

Yearning for a place

modern people," Tang said. "We are too busy and rational."

So she started an experiment by calling students to project the pictures they took randomly on the canvas and transfer the image onto it by painting. The results were so good that Tang continued using the method for a while.

She found the process calming.

"I never look at the viewfinder when I take a picture," she said.

"So when I select the pedestrians in the picture and depict every detail of the tiny subjects in the picture, I'm always very focused and totally committed."

She likens the engagement she feels during the process to approaching the spiritual state of ancient literati.

Although looking at one lighting spot for a long time and staying focused can be tiring, Tang said she feels comfortable seeing the paintings with a harmonious visual

depiction of realistic characters in conflicting landscapes.

After continuing the project-painting series for more than a decade, she started *The Place* in response to the city's social unrest in 2019, followed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Social events and the public health crisis had brought the city a sense of unease and despair, and people are seeking new places to settle in and imagining another world," Tang said.

In the new series, the projected figures no longer appear.

According to the artist, the viewer embodies the previously projected characters, touring and finding the way around every part of the expressive images, drawn from Tang's

imagination.

Tang depicts a vast and uninhabited place, with sparse and familiar urban structures like roads and bridges, in which viewers can envision the world they yearn for.

She outlines her mountains and forests

with ink and employs different colored blocks with acrylic.

Integrating Chinese and Western painting materials, she enriches her sceneries with the spirit of Chinese landscape paintings.

These landscapes symbolize the places people want to reach in their hearts, so everyone can interpret them differently.

"My work is at first sight just a regular landscape one would expect, far from extraordinary, yet peculiarity jumps at you when you look again," she said.

"It is destined that the impressions will change over time, depending on one's state of mind, or perhaps charms of the place will be lost when people get to know her better."

Although Tang does not like to impose her own interpretation on her audience, preferring instead to encourage them to explore for themselves, she used bright colors for her latest series.

"I wanted to add more life to my works because, after all, we will always live for the better life," she said.

Running until July 10, Tang's exhibition is accompanied by *The Phase: Hong Kong Contemporary Ceramics* exhibition in the same gallery space.



■ Tang Ying-chi