Dream Moon
Dream Moon 01
Size: 230 x 380 mm
Mixed water-based media on silk
簪髻

落障

XWBSly

2015
The Rhythm of Time: The Dream Moon and The Artist

“Creating art is my way of observing, understanding, and communicating with nature.”

— Josh Yu (artist’s statement for the Dream Moon series)

In Dream Moon, his 2012-14 series of paintings, Josh Yu meditates on an illusory nature. His subject is the contemplation of the land, both real and fantastic. This series consists of over one hundred circular silk fans painted with landscape and nature scenes, some realistically rendered and others more abstractly painted. Here, Yu engages the broad consummate appeal of the mist-shrouded mountainscape, the romance of the meteorological drama, or the up-close presentation of natural elements such as a flowering branch. In these paintings, he weaves together the beautiful background with the detailed foreground, usually dividing each composition between some figurative natural form contrasted to an abstract treatment of the land or nature. Compulsively painting the image of nature, Yu relentlessly explores the configuration of the landscape as metaphor.

The predominance of landscape in Chinese painting and culture cannot be overstated. It is a major and persistent thread in most of the history of Chinese painting. What Yu brings to the dialogue is a dense portrayal of the land as an imagined place with each painting suggesting a different emotional state. This series could easily be seen as mirrors to a dreamscape since the fan shape resembles the outline of a hand mirror. Rather than the reflection of the face, the viewer sees, instead, a metaphoric state. The subject here is the land as a mindset, an expression of temperament, or of disposition. Thus, the mostly abstract styling corresponds with the broader representation of the inner life. Tsung Ping, writing in the fifth century on landscape painting in his “Preface to Landscape Painting,” commented that “Landslapes have a material existence, and yet reach also in a spiritual domain.” The mystery, mysticism, and grandeur of the land all captivate the artist.

One of the fascinating features of the various series in which the artist works are the variations between figuration, naturalism, and abstraction. Typically, he combines at least two into a particular group of works. In this series, he combines two or three in each of the individual paintings. The high horizon line is not a typical feature in Chinese landscape painting, though it does exist. Yu employs it as a way to picture and reveal as much of the natural environs as possible.

One of the recurrent features in this series is the visual correlation between mountain ranges and rock surfaces. In the Ming Room of the Astor Court at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, there are two nineteenth-century wall panels with stone paintings, which contrast actual slabs of veined marble with renderings of the landscape. The import of the mountain and the rock in Chinese landscape painting are undisputed as central concepts and themes. The scholar-artist would exhibit rocks in his garden, where he

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3 The installation of these panels is relatively recent, since the Astor Court was opened in 1981. These two panels were donated to the museum in 1995. One of these panels is visible right of center in the photograph of Gallery 218 on the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s website http://www.metmuseum.org/visit/museum-map/galleries/asian/218, (accessed December 5, 2014).
would spend endless hours of meditation and introspection, observing the furrows and ridges. In writing about the garden of the Astor Court, Alfreda Murck and Wen Fong describe: "A 'good' rock reminds the viewer of the drama of mountains visited and stimulates the imagination with repeated examination." Viewing them, in the real or in the art, becomes a source of pleasure, for meditation and reflection as evident in Yu's paintings.

A small selection of works from this series shows the unusual style Yu employs of combining abstraction alongside naturalism and figuration. Dream Moon 1 is an image of a blue and white mountainscape with a sharp, geometric angled shape above the center. There are slightly blocky rhomboid configurations stacked tightly and asymmetrically with dark gray, blue, and black veining. Throughout the composition along those lines, small black marks are evident, suggesting trees dotting ridges of the land. At the top center, the dark patch looks like a glowing difficult sky, either darkened by clouds, night, or mood. In contrast, in Dream Moon 7, Yu places an energetic white area in the foreground with pink sections on either side with a border of small bushes and trees. The foliage is rendered as small whirls with specks or as spots, activating the whole scene.

In Dream Moon 3, Yu offers a close-up, monochromatic view of two plum blossom branches. This image, composition, and treatment are a significant variation on the use of the fan as a field. It is a marked contrast to the other images, which are mostly full views of a landscape with mountains. The detail of the more than twenty-five individual flowers is intense and detailed. Each flower is rendered just slightly differently from the others. Some cup, others lie more neutrally, while still others are inverted. There are renderings of partial flowers and individual petals, as well as buds. The branches twist and turn as they descend from the upper right towards the center. The background is a layered series of gray washes. The variety offers the viewer a diverse array, enabling the deliberation and reverie. The phases of the flower recall the changes of seasons, the different states of life. In the lower left quadrant, there is a moon, an orb like a globe suggesting the cosmos.

Yu persistently explores the singular theme of moonlight to ruminate on the role of the dream in fantasy and reality. The circular form of the fan echoes the shape of the moon. But the land and nature he images are of this world or its imaginary parallel cast onto the surface of the moon. The moonlight, though bright, comes with the cover of darkness, which invite a time of deliberation and withdrawal. Yu gives the viewer his imaginings of a place of refuge from the longings for connection that the artist finds by communing with nature.

4 I use the masculine pronoun because the Chinese scholar was almost always male.
6 Though the artist does not title the individual works in the series, I am labeling them with numbers for clarity in this discussion.

Anne Swartz, Ph.D.
January 7, 2015
时代的韵律：梦月和艺术家

“艺术创作是我观察、理解，以及和自然交流的途径和方法。” — 余震谷 “梦月”系列自叙

余震谷在2012~2014创作的“梦月”系列组画里，我们可以感觉到他完全沉思沉醉于一个自己创造的，充满虚幻的自然境界之中。

他的绘画主题是对真实和梦幻境地的深情注视。这个系列包括了101把画在绢上的团扇，它们所呈现的风景和自然山水，有真的写实的，而更多的则是抽象的描绘。在这里，余创造了许多云雾围绕，充满浪漫气氛的山水风景，或拉近距离所见的自然元素，譬如花朵盛开的一支独秀等等。在这些作品里，可以看到他把美丽的背景细节和前景透视融合相叠，画面中的构图着眼于把一些比拟的自然形式和大地景色作抽象处理，以造成视觉上的对比。余虽然强调绘画自然意象，但始终坚持探索山水景观的现代表现语言和多种元素重新组合的隐喻。

对山水画在中国绘画和文化中的重要优势的强调，不能被认为是夸大。山水画在整个中国绘画史里，一直是一个重要和持续的主流。余呈现给我们的是通过每幅画面中刻意描绘的意象风景，来表达不同的情绪状态。因为团扇和我们手镜外形非常相似，所以在这系列中我们也容易看到镜中的梦境。那不是观众所能看到的表面的真实反射，相反，那些景致是一种处于借景隐喻的比拟状态。大地山河在这里作为绘画主题，那是表明一种心态，也是显示一种气质，或是坦诚性情的视觉表达。因此，大多数抽象的造型和内涵在心灵的呼唤是的一致的。崇平，在他为五世纪山水画，“山水画前言”中指出：“山水画具有物质的具像存在，但也可以同样升华到精神的领域高度。”大地的神秘，玄想和壮观，深深地吸引着艺术家们的不断努力探索，追求创造出新。

这组作品的迷人处之一，是艺术家的创造融合形式，变化于以景比喻，自然主义，和抽象主义之间。他把那些多种表达的方法融洽的组合在一起。在这系列中，每件作品他都结合了两到三项不同的风格类型，使之使人耳目为之一新。画面中高高的水平线，那不是中国绘画构图的典型特征，但它又确实存在于自然，余采用它作为一种表现手段，来显现和揭示尽可能多的，以及丰富多彩的自然环境，并努力将之浓缩于团扇之上，以达到小中见大的特别效果。

在这系列画中，一个经常能见到的现象，那就是山脉和岩石的表面在视觉上的相互关联。在纽约大都会博物馆的阿斯特庭院的明堂里，墙壁上有两幅十九世纪的石板画挂件，可见到真实的大理石纹理和中国山水画
皱皱绘画之间的对比，非常的相类似。对山岚和岩石的精心描绘，在中国画中的重要性是无可争议的核心概念和理论。文人艺术家会在自己的花园里展示石块，在那里他们可以花费无休止的时间，通过观察欣赏石块表面的形状和纹理，来进行内心深处的沉思和反思。在写到有关阿斯特庭院时，艾福莱克·阿克和文佛描写到：“一块‘好’的石头，会让观者时时回味起曾经云游过的，名山大川的美景和经历，每每的检视，细细的把玩，从而激发人们的充分想象能力。”欣赏石头，不管在现实生活中还是在艺术作品中，都成为了一个体验沉思和冥想的快乐源泉，以及形象载体。这在余的绘画中是显而可取，屡见不鲜的。

从这系列绘画中选几幅画来举几个例子，显示余的不同寻常的，结合抽象表现，自然主义，和借景喻义于一体，的绘画风格。梦月#1是一个锋利的，几何形状的山峰占据在画面的中央上方的蓝和白的山景画。一些块状菱形石块堆叠紧密，加上一些不对应的深灰色，蓝色和黑色纹理。在沿着这些线条的组成中，一些小黑点痕迹明显的是在建议用树木来点缀地面。在画面中间的上方，深色的色块看上去像在注视艰难的天空，也许那些被加深的色块是云朵，是夜晚，抑或是沉重心情之流露？作为对比，梦月#7，余在画面的前景中描绘出了一个充满活力的白色区域，并在粉红色部分的两侧添加了一些小灌木和杂树丛。那些树叶呈现出点状或斑点状小漩涡，以此激活了整个画面的生气和动感。

在梦月#3里，余描绘了一个两三单色的梅花树枝的特写景致，这形象、构图和处理都和使用团扇作为载体的其它大部分绘画，有着重大的不同。和其它的画面相比较，大部分都是充满了山岳的山水景致。那不超过25朵，但充满细节描绘的梅花，每朵花的渲染略有不同。一些含苞待放，一些花瓣盛开，自然的俯仰前后各有其姿。一些则从右上方优雅的垂下到画面的中间。该作品给观者提供了多样化的新的视觉角度和效果。通过面对花开花落的思考和遐想，来感叹大地四季的轮换和交替，以表达人生历程的不同状态和情感。在画面的左下象限，有个月亮，有个月球，它们寄寓着宇宙的无限永恒。

余持续的探索单一月光主体，来沉浸于梦境中虚幻和真实的角色交替的漩涡之中。团扇的圆圆与月亮相仿。但是大地和自然在他的想象的世界里，与想象的相同以投射到月亮的表面。月光虽然明亮，不免会被乌云暂时遮盖。它需要时间深思熟虑，以待云开雾散。在这个展览的作品里，余满足了解观众的艺术家所想象中的，能通往世外桃园的方法和途径，那就是亲近自然，与自然交流。

安·思沃丝 博士
2015年1月7日
Dream Moon 03
Size: 230 x 380 mm
Mixed water-based media on silk
Dream Moon 07
Size: 230 x 380 mm
Mixed water-based media on silk