

East Islip, N. Y.

The Islip Art Museum is proud to present **The Majesty of Tibet, a solo exhibition by Yu Hanyu** . The exhibit opened on January 15 at Islip Art Museum, a leading contemporary art museum located in Historic Brookwood Hall, 50 Irish Lane, East Islip, NY.

Yu Hanyu, a prominent figure in Chinese landscape painting and calligraphy, is the director of Ben Yuan Academy of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy in Beijing, one of the country's leading private art schools. His work has appeared in numerous prestigious exhibitions in China. His personal and masterful use of the line is the foundation that gives these works their unique voice--fusing traditional and contemporary language. Yu Hanyu established a visual patois that brings the ancient art form into the 21st century – without losing touch with its ancestry. He says: "... my paintings build upon the foundational methods of traditional Chinese ink painting, but also incorporate influences from other styles, such as the bold use of color associated with painting in the West, combining all these styles in my own way, I can create a new way of painting. That's my goal. These new skills are actually basic, traditional skills given new life."

Based in Beijing, Yu Hanyu is recognized as both a master of the genre and an experimental visionary. His ink paintings are the culmination of his many trips to the mountainous regions of Tibet's Qinghai Plateau and the wide peaks of Shangri-La, with glacial waterfalls. Born in 1964, Yu graduated from Hubei Institute of Fine Arts in Wuhan and the China Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing. He travelled to Tibet more than 50 times in 13 years, often in arduous conditions. His style of painting depicting the jagged convergences of nature suggest the struggle against the elements while communicating the struggle within nature's fierce forces of creation. Yu does not paint from photographs or images, although his works reference ancient history in the landscape genre: the almost psychedelic colors of early Dunhuang cave murals fused with Tang era chromatic lushness and Northern Song snows using a brush and ink technique. He combines artistic tradition into abstraction to achieve his expression. In some ways, his paintings could be termed expressionist. The brushwork itself is both medium and object while the scenery achieves continuity of both landscape and the artist's inner thoughts. Yu's wild Himalayan volcanoes of ice leads the viewer to feel the energy of the moment of creation and destruction. Yu's calligraphy is highly celebrated for its originality. His ability to demonstrate the cursive running style of Chinese calligraphy represents his understanding of natural force and energy. This same flow is shown the massive works of art in the Islip Art Museum both in the Hallway and in Gallery Two.



The viewers are in awe of the vast size of these pieces and many visitors have commented that the artwork evokes the scale of the environment from which they were created. His use of line gives his works their own voice. His paintings are a magnificent fusion of traditional and contemporary language.

Some of the paintings are in black and white, and some in vivid color – most likely based on the artist's mood and further reinforces the influence of Western abstract expressionists and impressionists. Each piece is titled to describe the scenery depicted and conveys the artists' emotions and his relationship with the inspiring scenery. Yu Hanyu's impressionistic voice gives his work a raw emotional depth. This added layer to the paintings' literal depictions is what makes these pieces so contemporary and unique coming from a Contemporary Chinese artist.

The Islip Art Museum is proud to host this exhibition to enable the community at large to witness the grandeur of Yu Hanyu's artwork. Though there are cultural, geographical, and language barriers between the audience of the Islip Art Museum and Yu Hanyu, one can understand the respect for tradition as well as the emotion infused in these works. They create communication and understanding between the visitors to this exhibition, and the artist.

*The New York Times* named the Islip Art Museum “the best facility of its kind outside Manhattan.” In the 42 years of its existence, the Museum has evolved into the leading exhibition space for contemporary art on Long Island. The Museum produces at least six major exhibitions annually. Eight exhibits are in in the Museum Store Gallery, and more than 50 artists each year.

In the Islip Art Museum Ballroom and Hallway, the viewer can compare the stark differences in the landscapes of Tibet versus Long Island. Like the recent history of the U.S., China is experiencing a time of rapid growth, and an inescapable encroachment of industry into natural spaces. By venturing into the vast wilderness of the Himalayas he gives us the opportunity to compare the raw nature of the pieces to natural places and the developed landscape of Long Island. The viewer gains respect for the rugged terrain depicted in Yu’s artwork and can compare the natural landscapes and flat land of Long Island and feel the differences as well as understanding the similarities in our human experiences.

Yu Han Yu’s works are deeply rooted in Chinese traditional culture but are known for their breakthrough contemporary style. Tibet is Yu Hanyu’s muse. Taken by its beautiful scenery, he has been repeatedly drawn to the landscapes of snow-covered plateaus like the China Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and Shangri-La in Yunnan. These areas are extremely remote, snowy plateaus that are dangerous to get to. Yu Hanyu traversed the sacred mountains of Tibet to discover his creativity. In this sacred mountainous area where it is said “the ancients never set foot”, Yu Han Yu trekked a long distance, sketching and photographing to achieve a unique style of landscape painting which completely differs from that of his predecessors and other contemporary artists. It is in the pristine and harsh environment of the Tibetan Himalayas that Yu Hanyu came into his own in developing a distinctive style of landscape painting.

In Gallery Three one can view photographs of the panoramic mountains and clouds.





These photographs, taken with a German camera from the 1800s, allow us to get lost in the scenery while also viewing a video of his experiences, sketching, creating, and “living” in moment of expression. With the musical background, one can just imagine how Yu Hanyu was able to gain the expressionist technique.

Walking through the other galleries at the Islip Art Museum, one can feel the atmosphere created by Hanyu’s artistic creations. “There is a sense of peace, tranquility, and awe”, said a recent visitor to the museum. His method of layered Chinese ink paintings combining ink and colored paint, with layers of gold and green, and charcoal, create bold and expressionistic paintings. Yu Hanyu brings traditional Chinese painting into a contemporary light by using traditional painting mediums such as rice paper and heavy ink to create an oil paint-like effect, and by using these techniques to create abstract, emotional, and evocative images.

Reading, writing, painting, and traveling are the root of Yu Hanyu’s life. He says when he is creating, he is his most authentic self, and feels at his best when he is improving his skills, comprehending truth, refining life, and purifying his spirits through artistic endeavors.

*“I’ve always wanted to bring Traditional Chinese Painting to the world! It is one of the reasons I focus so very much on color. I chose Tibet’s snow-capped mountains glaciers to be the theme not only because Tibet has not been painted in this way before but also because Tibet has transfixed me like it has the rest of the world. Therefore, I feel the artistic style and thematic content fall together perfectly - the artistic style is unique and modern, the theme is beautiful and global - together it is perfectly poised to make a global impact.”*

Yu Hanyu’s solo exhibition is at the Islip Art Museum from January 15- March 30, 2019. The Opening reception is February 9, at 1 PM. Please join us for this opening to meet Yu Hanyu and see his calligraphy demonstration and partake in a Lunar New Year Celebration with music and dance and special Chinese refreshments.

#### **Gan Yu – Curator**

Gan Yu is currently the Professor of Art at Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts and project manager of Harvard Chinese Art Media Lab and was a postdoctoral fellow at the Department of History of Art + Architecture, Harvard University. He is also the Co-Director and the Dean of Academic Studies of Ethan Cohen Kube. Gan Yu received his Ph.D. in Chinese Painting from China Academy of Art in Hangzhou, China and his M.A. in Studio Art from Minnesota State University. He has curated or co-curated exhibitions and academic events in both the US and China at Harvard University, Rhode Island School of Design, Yale University, State University of New York, China Academy of Art, and Ethan Cohen Fine Arts. Dr. Gan Yu’s courses, lectures and workshops of Chinese Brush Art at various institutions including Harvard University Art Museum, The Art Students League of New York, Department of History of Art + Architecture, Harvard University, City University of New York, Minnesota State University, Shanghai University, Islip Art Museum, Hammond Museum, and Katonah Museum of Art. Dr. Gan Yu has had solo exhibitions at University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Art

Gallery, Minnesota State University-Mankato Art Gallery, Yale University and Hammond Museum. Dr. Gan Yu has also exhibited in groups at many museums and galleries, such as Ethan Cohen Fine Arts of New York, Asia Art Miami, The National Art Museum of China, Hong Kong Museum of Art, Shanghai Art Museum, China Academy of Art Museum, St. John's University Art Gallery, Ethan Cohen Fine Art of New York and many others. He is the project manager of Harvard Chinese Art Media Lab and a postdoctoral fellow at the Dept of History of Art + Architecture, Harvard University.

#### **Mary O'Malley – Co-curator**

Mary O'Malley is an America-born ceramic artist from Long Island, New York. She received a BFA from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia in 2007 and MA from the Royal College of Art Ceramics and Glass program in 2016. Upon receiving her MA, Mary became a founding member of arts education group Collective Matter. CM's project portfolio includes a six-month Tate Exchange residency which culminated at the Tate Modern, the creation of a workshop and residency program alongside Turner Prize winning arts architecture group Assemble in South East London, and a creative learning space on the grounds of Contemporary Sculpture Fulmer in Buckinghamshire, UK. Alongside these projects they've been invited to present on their ideas and ethos at NCECA, the inaugural ceramics triennial *Breaking Ground* in Jaipur, India, and Ceramic Art London. Mary has been invited to the Jingdezhen Ceramic Institute in Jiangxi, China as an inaugural resident in their international school, has been twice awarded American Craft Council Awards of Excellence, and will be artist-in-residence at Western Carolina University this spring. Her work has been exhibited internationally in group shows at institutions such as Christie's, the Saatchi Gallery in London, Art Miami, and MUDAC in Switzerland. Her work can be found in private collections internationally, and has been acquired by the JingDeZhen Ceramic Institute, Waskowmium Collection, and the 21c Hotel group. Mary currently splits her professional practice as artist, educator, and curator between her London and New York studios. [www.collectivematter.co.uk](http://www.collectivematter.co.uk); tw: [@OmalleyCeramics](https://twitter.com/OmalleyCeramics)

#### **Stephanie Lee – Co-curator**

Stephanie S. Lee studied in Busan Art High School in South Korea and earned a BFA in Graphic Design at Pratt Institute. She studied Korean Folk Art painting in Busan National University and received MS at Pratt in Museums & Digital Culture with Advanced Certificate in Conservation and Digital Curation. She is currently working at the Godwin-Ternbach Museum.

As an artist, Lee displayed at Scope Art, Spectrum Miami Art Show, Fountain Art Fair and Affordable Art Fairs. And her work has been featured in the Wall Street Journal, Asia Week and the book 'Chaekgeori: The Power and Pleasure of Possessions in Korean Painted Screens.'

As a founder of KoreanFolkArt.org and a teaching artist at the Flushing Town Hall, Stephanie teaches Korean Folk Art painting to the public. She has given talks and workshops at Newark Museum, Charles B. Wang Center, Flushing Town Hall, and public schools in NY and NJ. In addition, she's working as a freelance exhibition designer to curate and design exhibitions at public venues such as museums and libraries.