

## *A Stroke in Time: An Artist's Memoir*

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### **Abstract**

As a teaching artist for almost three decades, Prof. Kong Ho recalls his art experience in the form of a memoir. This paper explores his retrospective study into his transcendental paintings and why he chose to write a personal memoir. This paper is divided into two parts. In the first part, Ho presents the reasons behind writing a narrative memoir derived from his art making story and nostalgic feelings. The second half of this paper discusses the influence of a Taoist-Buddhist perspective on his art as well as the tracing of his art awakening experiences. Ho's insights into his spiritual art and the meaning of writing a personal memoir are unique because he presents them as academic artistic research. The aim of this artistic research is meant to highlight the value and impact of a personal memoir on an individual's artistic endeavours. An artist's memoir should be a true story written by a practicing artist. Like an artist's statement which elaborates the intent or content of individual artist's work. The memoir presents the inner thoughts and aims of the artist. The narrative aspect of memoir is drawn directly from the memory of individual. This paper will also examine how individuals constantly reconstruct their memories when writing a memoir.

Keywords: Memoir, art writing, artistic research, spiritual painting

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## **An Artist's Memoir**

*A Stroke in Time* is a memoir based on my past and present practiced-based or artistic research projects in painting. The idea of this monograph begins with a reworked account of my studio art terminal degree Master of Fine Arts thesis, *A Reconciliation of Self and Nature*. Next I move onto a first-person artist's statement or manifesto, and finally I casually ruminate about symbolic influences in my art. Usually, an artist's statement is a personal statement about a specific artwork or a series of artworks of an artist, while a manifesto is about the theory or philosophy of art of an individual artist. In most of academic papers, the first person is avoided in respect to egotism and non-academic practice. From my point of view, writing about personal experiences is as difficult and rigorous as any academic research paper. It is hard to understand oneself because of our own subjectivity and bias. Everyone has a tendency to think highly of oneself and to show the best of oneself to the others. Following this line of reasoning, Mashey Bernstein and George Yachisin (2001) said: "On the face of it, nothing should seem easier than writing about your own work, but ironically, finding the right words to explain your art can be daunting" (p. 31). *A Stroke in Time* does not mean to be comprehensive, but instead offers a new perspective for people wishing to perceive and interpret my past, present and future art ideologically. My ultimate intention in writing this memoir is to bring to light my never articulated Taoist-Buddhist perspectives, nostalgic feelings and bicultural background as it is woven within my art. By exploring my beliefs, feelings and attitudes about art through words, I am able to explain what my art means to me and what my art can mean to informed viewers. I also hope that my interpretation of my art may influence other artists explore their own work.

As Bill Roorbach and Kristen Keckler (2008) explained: "A memoir is a true story, a work of narrative built directly from the memory of its writer, with an added element of creative research" (p. 13). They also stressed, "Memoir arises in and exists only because of the first-person singular: the *I* remembering" (p. 13). However, my memories can be faulty and my recorded images can be faint. In writing a memoir, I know that I constantly reconstruct my memory a tiny bit differently every time I recall it. Memoir is not an autobiography, which is similar to a resume or curriculum vitae recording the data of an individual but not a life experience or the story of an individual. I believe that the truth of a memoir can go beyond being just autobiography and reveal the distilled life behind my art. Instead of using third-person to write my artistic memoir, I prefer to use first-person, I to represent "I".

## **Taoist-Buddhist Perspective**

As an art teacher for almost three decades, I am still searching for a concise description for meaning of teaching art practice and studio art making. I understand that students can be taught if they are willing to learn. Learning requires change in an individual's mindset just as personal growth involves transformation both physically and mentally. It seems like a contradiction that giving up what one already knows about oneself is necessary to have a better understanding of oneself. According to the quoted phrase of Shunryu Suzaki (1904-1971), edited by Trudy Dixon (2011): "In the beginner's mind are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few" (p. 2). I painted this phrase, as shown in Figure 1, as part of the first community mural, titled *Fisher Hall Mural: Marriage of Art and Science*, done by my students and I in the

University of Pittsburgh at Bradford (UPB) when I was teaching there sixteen years ago. I intentionally omitted the space between the words and added "abc" letters at the front of the phrase. This was painted on one of the puzzle modules of the mural. The reason was to let viewers to find the meaning behind the mural unconsciously during their contemplation. My bicultural background and interest in Chinese philosophy, especially Taoist, Buddhist and Confucian thoughts, influenced me to cite this Zen Buddhist phrase in this mural with the theme of searching for the truth in art and science.



Figure 1: Kong Ho. *Fisher Hall Mural – Marriage of Art and Science* (Detail view). 2002. Acrylic on wall, 8'3"H x 20'1"W.

According to Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* about self-mastery, "Knowing others is intelligence; knowing yourself is true wisdom. Mastering others is strength; mastering yourself is true power" (as cited in Espiritu, 2016, p. 10). It is very true that it is not an easy task to write about one's life experience because each person thinks that there should not be any problem in understanding oneself but actually there is. Quoted from Lao Tzu about Tao, "The Way that can be walked is not the eternal Way" (as cited in Addiss and Lombardo, 2007, p. xi) emphasizes that in order to know ourselves, we have to give up what we know about ourselves first. I still remember my struggle in finding my art direction in the graduate school at Texas Tech University (TTU) in Lubbock, Texas during the early 90s. I felt that the Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) program would offer me the time and space needed to search for the meaning behind my motivation to make the type of art that I felt compelled to produce. I knew that I was not seeking a certificate to be an artist or a credential to teach at the college level after graduation. It proved daunting to leave the comfort zone of my geometric abstraction painting style and to search for another way to express myself. I had been quite successful with my geometric abstract paintings in Hong Kong before starting to study my M.F.A. in the United States in 1991.

## Interest in Science and Design

My geometric abstraction style evolved in relation to my interest in mathematics, which developed from my high school science major background. I was fascinated to use a compass and a ruler to draw circles, straight lines or other geometric forms, especially during my study of geometry. I was against my parents' encouragement to choose a professional career, such as accounting, because I preferred fine arts. That is why I selected it as my major during my undergraduate study at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). At that time, I was more interested in studying graphic design than fine arts, but the CUHK only offered the fine arts program. So I was majoring in fine arts with a concentration in painting. However, I was still longing to study graphic design. Graphic design was a very popular subject at that time. I was fascinated by all graphic design drafting tools, such as technical pens, T-squares, circle templates, rulers, triangles, compasses, cutters, tapes, color wheel, etc. After graduation, I took up a low-paid graphic design job while my other lucky peers got high-paid public school teaching positions. I was interested in exploring the professional design field in Hong Kong because it seemed exciting. After two years working as a graphic design at the community cultural center, I switched jobs to work as an art instructor in the Architecture Department of the University of Hong Kong. Practicing both fine art and graphic design was not difficult because both fields are related. I had to apply what I learnt from my undergraduate art degree plus the practical experience from my self-taught graphic design to teach my courses. I taught basic design, color theory, sketching and watercolor painting for almost three years.

Working in the academia introduced me to graphic expressions and exploration into architectonic forms. Moreover, I grew up in Hong Kong, a city filled up with high-rise buildings, narrow streets, tight sidewalks and jammed public spaces, so I could relate to architectural concepts. My past living environment in Hong Kong was not a green one. Everything was a cement grey color. Living in a cement jungle featuring modern curtain-wall constructions and old residential buildings formed my unique perception of my environment. My childhood sky came in geometric patches formed by the surrounding perimeters of jammed high-rise buildings.

Another big leap in my work came when I decided to go to further study my M.F.A. at Texas Tech University (TTU). Two of my graduate school art professors metaphorically pushed me to the edge of the cliff in terms of making me question my art pursue during my graduate study at TTU. During the critiques, they kept asking me some puzzling questions, such as the following: Why do I like geometric abstraction? Is it because it is easier to paint an abstract painting than a realistic expression? Is my affection towards geometric abstraction based on the marketability of this kind of appealing work? Why do I want to study M.F.A.? At that time, I didn't understand why they liked to torture graduate students like me. Later, I realized their intention was to push me to think about the meaning of my art and to challenge myself to seek other possibilities for expressing myself through my work. After I completed a breakthrough painting *After Rain Comes Airy Green*, shown in Figure 2, my professors were almost shocked to see the change I had made in my style of expression. This was because I had gone from subtle geometric abstraction to dynamic realistic expression coupled with painterly drips and expressive splashes.

After this painting, I started a new series of large-scale paintings, titled “Reconciliation Series”, based on my Chinese heritage, Taoist-Buddhist beliefs,

Romantic disorder and Symbolist spirituality. In *After Rain Comes Airy Green*, I painted a spiral form emerging from a flat circular Chinese jade "bi" disc. The circular historical forms and geometrical lines were still there but they were coupled with expressive splashes and blue washes. The center orange-red spiral form was rendered in high contrast. The dark shadow and reflective light under the spiral generated a strong three-dimensional distance from the flat turquoise background. The success of this painting was not about achieving a trompe l'oeil or realistic look for the symbolic ancient spiral-jade disc, but the acceptance of transience and imperfection as well as the conceptual possibilities it suggested, which for me conjured up a Zen aesthetic notion of imperfect, impermanent and incomplete knowing. The fresh airy-scented feeling after the heavy rain in Lubbock, Texas, reminded me of the turquoise green seawater surrounding Hong Kong in some way, and I wanted to strengthen that aspect of my work.



Figure 2: Kong Ho. *After Rain Comes Airy Green*. 1992. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 60"H x 60"W.

According to Wayne Belonoha (2009) claimed Master Daisetz Tartaro Suzuki has said: "Before Zen men are men and mountains are mountains; during Zen study things become confused; after enlightenment men are men and mountains are mountains, only one's feet are a little off the ground" (p. 90). My breakthrough experience at graduate school "enlightened" my usual way of thinking so that I could reach beyond the external differences between abstract and realistic expression. Personal style or following a school of expression only represents a certain momentary look and thinking of an artist, but in the long run, it may only be a link in the artist's evolution of skill and content. The appearance of my artworks may change from time to time, but the philosophical content of my art remains the same; the manifestation of my

Taoist-Buddhist transcendental thoughts and my nostalgic feelings. After more than fifty years of life experiences, I am beginning to understand that everything means more than its literal form suggests and change that is inevitable. All things may be manifestations of the same truth or Tao. I have started to appreciate things for what they are, and I understand that some remarkable moments in my life are both impermanent and eternal.

### **In-Between Experiences**

After graduate school, I created a different series of scroll paintings, titled *In-Between*, which was mainly about "I", in the other words "self-identity". As an artist with a disability, I preferred not to mention it in my work. I preferred people to admire my "ability" in art rather than feeling pity on me for my "disability". It was not because I had low self-esteem when I was young but I was just not ready to accept the real situation of my disability at that time. Buddhist thought of awakening is less about transcending a person's intellect and more about seeing things as they actually are, realizing and accepting what is so. This "In-Between" series, including ten 9 inches high by 30 inches wide scroll paintings, offered me an opportunity to face my disability and ego. This series of scroll paintings covered almost thirty years of my life history through a nonlinear visual narrative. Starting from a spontaneous ink splash crossing the canvas, I developed my scrolls to incorporate my Chinese name, my childhood pictures, anatomy images of feet, DNA helix shapes, flying kites, toy planes, a burning common blackbird (detail view shown in Figure 3), an eagle, a black horse, a cow skull, and other images that for me symbolized flying, running, escaping, and my loss of mobile ability. These ten scroll paintings were unified by random splashes and drips across the symbolic images and pixel-like gridded background. I strived to convey my personal experience and perception of the four-dimensional world—time and space—around me within a two-dimensional expression. My scroll paintings depicted the in-between feelings of living in two worlds and with two identities. My sentimental longing for a new life experience in Texas resonated with my wistful attachment to my Chinese background in this video. At the same time, the bittersweet feelings of my video echoed the sentiments of my scroll paintings and reverberated the tension between freedom and control.



Figure 3: Kong Ho. *In-Between* (Detail view). 2000. Acrylic on canvas, 9"H x 300"W.

To see oneself is not easy, it requires distance and time. Study abroad for three years helped me to step-back a great distance from my Chinese culture and personal background. This gave me an opportunity to see myself in a broader view or a new perspective. I believe that I am the only person who can define who I am and so I must search for my own path. I am the only one to make meaning of my own life. I share the words of Lao Tzu: "When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be" (p. 77). Creating this *In-Between* series was more than an art therapy for me because it gave me an opportunity to express my personal perception of the world and myself. This in turn enabled me to reflect Taoist-Buddhist thoughts: to have compassion towards myself and others; and to share something others may care about.

### **Escapism**

There is a quote by Lewis Carroll (1832-1898), "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there" (as cited in BrainyQuote.com). This quote suggests that in order to learn about oneself, one must be willing to give up what one knows about oneself. I could not imagine what my art would be after graduation. I gave up my favorite symbolic subject matters—spiral forms and jade discs—to death butterflies and skulls after I returned to Hong Kong in 1994. I painted a series of allegorical inkblot paintings with the motifs of butterflies and animal skulls and showed in a solo art exhibition, titled *Flights of Fancy*, in 1999. I was surprised to see my art change from colorful appealing spiral-jade paintings to dark death butterfly-skull artworks. I painted *Blue Diadem & Owl Skull*, shown in Figure 4, during the 1997 Hong Kong Handover, the official transferring sovereignty from United Kingdom to mainland China. A lot of Hong Kong people migrated to Canada,

Australia and Singapore before 1997 because of worry about the loss of individual, political, and religious freedom. Having been raised in a small island like Hong Kong, the desire to escape from the tiny jammed city appealed to many Hong Kong people. At that transitional time, most Hong Kong people found it impossible to leave because they did not possess enough money or they did not have professional knowledge to migrate to other countries. In *Blue Diadem & Owl Skull*, I intended to use inkblot technique to print the symmetrical butterfly image onto the wood surface, like a pinned dead butterfly sample. The inlaid gold leaf hindwings at the top center, and the half carved left forewing at the bottom center symbolized the immobility or trapped feeling. The grey owl skull suggested the message of Western escapism—disenchantment with materialism—in my work. The owl skull and colorful inkblot butterfly might not only represent the chase for freedom from the materialistic world, but they also signify the Taoist-Buddhist thought of transcending oneself from earthly controls.



Figure 4: Kong Ho. *Blue Diadem & Owl Skull*. 1997. Acrylic & gold leaf on wood, 36"H x 36"W.

It is my intention to use first-person to rewrite my thesis or write my artistic memoir to have a better understanding of the intent or content of my art and the articulated path to self-realization and enlightenment. Also, through retrospect of my art endeavor, I explore the possibilities to access to memory, access to ideas, access to the unconscious, access to meaning that is both satisfyingly personal and invitingly universal, which readers may care about and value.

### **Transient Luminosity**

Through my paintings, I explore the visual relationships of the transient phenomena and nostalgic feelings to include recurring rippling patterns, contrasting color schemes, and other visual and symbolic connections between luminosity and

moments. I transcend the phenomena and moments into a unique conceptual expression or illusionary luminosity of a particular time and space based on my artistic preferences and interpretations. My interest in luminosity and transitory beauty is influenced by Buddha's enlightenment experience. According to the description by Baas (2005) about Buddha achieved enlightenment just before dawn:

He was sitting on the ground under a tree with its head in the heaven and its roots in the earth. Enlightenment occurred when he saw the bright morning star rising, just as the full moon was about to set. It is a mental image of extraordinary luminosity and beauty. (p. 211)

According to the Taoist-Buddhist perspective, the transient nature of being can be seen in natural phenomena, such as the cyclical nature of any species that goes from life to entropy. The beauty of a luminous life evokes a melancholic sense of the transience of being and leaves fragments of memory. My transcendental paintings still feel timeless to me whenever I reconnect with them, but they take on a slightly intangible almost ethereal quality when I contemplate them. In my recent painting *Luminosity of Eternal Peace*, shown in Figure 5, I explored the inner luminosity within a transient phenomenon and timeless moment. In the beginning of 2016, I started a new series of painting, titled "Luminosity Series". In this series of work, I reexamined the subject matter of the lotus and bisected nautilus shell. The blossoming moment when an illuminated pink lotus emerges from the melancholic blue spiral background is the general subject matter. I found myself increasingly drawn to the center cadmium yellow light carpel and surrounding stamens of this blooming lotus.

The stamens symbolized the mind liberated from earthly limitation. The reflection of the blue sky turned the lotus pond to turquoise blue than green on a particular morning. The rippling line patterns merged with the veins of lotus petals and turned part of the nautilus shell chambers into lotus petals. The visual styles of this painting based on evolving spiral forms and the timeless moments had its starting point in the real world. On the other hand, the same realistic starting point that grounded this painting in the center of compelling make-believe illumination also transforms the content of this painting before the viewer's eyes into pure visual patterns, colors and visual relationships.



Figure 5: Kong Ho. *Luminosity of Eternal Peace*. 2016. Acrylic on canvas, 24"H x 24"W.

### **Intuition and Reasoning**

Painting without preliminary composition studies allows me to explore directly colors, values and light; and to apply my intuition to direct my images toward a composition that finally feels "right" and matches my associated memories. I believe my intuition is a flare to illuminate certain hidden patterns or orders beyond the surface. Through my observation and analysis, I understand the form, structure, and context of certain objects or phenomena. This intellectualized knowledge forms a slippery boundary to my understanding of the world. Similarly, my conscious awareness helps me to be aware of the reality, but my unconscious mind guides me to understand the hidden meaning of a being. A quote from *Tao Te Ching*: "Those who seek knowledge, collect something every day. Those who seek the Way, let go of something every day" (as cited in Taoistic.com, chap. 48), reveals the truth that to know is to change what already known.

The pink lotus in another recent painting *Tantalizing Lotus Dreamscape*, shown in Figure 6, appeared more dominant in the center of the composition while the blue nautilus shell almost dissolved into the rippling line pattern background. The fully open lotus with its cadmium yellow carpel and stamens became the center of focus in this painting. Some of the veins of the lotus petals transformed into the rippling line patterns and became unified with the bisected nautilus shell background. The illusionary three-dimension space formed by the controlled depiction of lotus dissolved into infinite evolving ripples on the surface of an imaginative lotus pond.



Figure 6: Kong Ho. *Tantalizing Lotus Dreamscape*. 2016. Acrylic on canvas, 24"H x 24"W.

In my *Consciousness of Light*, shown in Figure 7, I intended to capture the transient luminosity of morning light shining on the lotus petals in a symbolic sense rather than a realistic expression. The hidden bisected nautilus shell less visible and merged with the rippling line-pattern background. The effect is like the stained glass glowing light or the comet's brilliant light spreading through the chapel or the sky. Part of the rippling lines not only resembles the veins of the lotus petal, but they also suggest the radiating rays of sunlight shining through stained glass windows or the emitted beams of light flowing from the comet's tail. The fully opened lotus with the golden yellow carpel and stamens placed in the center of the pictorial space are augmented by the brilliant effect of transient luminosity. The powerful visual vibrations from the central lotus expand outward and beyond the square pictorial border to reach the infinite of space-time where timeless moments stand still.



Figure 7: Kong Ho. *Consciousness of Light*. 2016. Acrylic on canvas, 24"H x 24"W.

### ***Wabi-Sabi* Aesthetics**

In retrospect of my previous undergraduate abstract geometry series, my graduate "Reconciliation Series," my transitional "Spiral Series", and my latest "Luminosity Series," all reflect *wabi-sabi* aesthetics and Taoist-Buddhist influences. I am still fascinated by natural simplicity, asymmetrical relationship, spontaneous expression, and melancholic serenity, even though the appearances or the chosen subject matter of my artworks change from time to time. However, the ingenuous integrity and simplicity of timeless nature of space-time was remained the same throughout my art endeavors over the past 30 years.

My recent, and still ongoing series of paintings is inspired by my bicultural life experiences in Asia and America together with a personal reflection of Taoist-Buddhist philosophy. I have created my ongoing series of artworks based on my nostalgic feelings of past moments and places. Nostalgic images always seem stained and faded into sepia toned snapshots with a vignette boarder. Psychologically, reminiscence may not always suggest a miserable present or gloomy future. On the other hand, personal memory sometimes may stir up downhearted remembrance. The visual power of an image, no matter if it is an old photograph or an object, can arouse the tactile feeling of an existence, which connects me to my sentimental past.

The passing of time may ease the burden of my wistful longing for the distant past and lost memories. However, the full sense of the loss or absence always remains incomplete in my memory. Also, my recalled images do not have the look of sepia colored places placed within a vignette. My memories are fluid and always changing like multi-layered paintings. I intend to use my complex symbolic art to trace the evolving and revolving memories that frequently materialize in my non-sepia nostalgic images. Specific identities pertaining to the objects and images found in my

living environment can be seen to reverberate my cultural identity through my utilization of transformed visual language.

Alan Searleman and David Herrmann (1994) stated, "Research suggests that our memory about a physical environment is more like a sketch than a photograph. In other words, our memory for the environment typically contains gaps of information [missing] from the original scene much like a hastily made sketch would" (p. 199).

Writing my memoir is like revisiting my life experience. Like rereading a book, rewatching a movie, re-engaging with an old photograph, a sketch or a painting; brings back the lost memories of my sensory experiences. A sketch is usually a rough or unfinished artwork with a wabi-sabi sense of beauty, which filtrates the details in a completed painting or a clear photograph to reveal the genuine intent or feeling of an artist. The beauty of imperfect memory is the reengaging experience offered by the missing intervals of real-life experience. My art is about sharing the experience of transitional being, a sense of the bitter-sweet—the time in-between—a feeling of the loss for the past that left behind, and the excitement of the new journey in my life.

### **Romanticism and Symbolism**

In retrospect, my previous artworks and bicultural lived experience, including Western art theories, along with formalist theory, expression theory and cognitive theory adds another dimension to my work. I am able to examine the meaning and context of my art related to the Western art movements, such as Romanticism and Symbolism; plus the Asian philosophies of Taoism and Zen Buddhism because of this historical training. The transitoriness of my semi-abstract or semi-expressive paintings plays a role in emphasizing the Romantic disorder, inspiration, subjectivity and impermanence that these works encompass. I intend to create a sense of transiently inspired beauty without order in a seemingly unsettled in-between expression of representation and abstraction. As Bass (2005) explained, "[Romanticism] was eclipsed in France by Realism and then Impressionism, but artists' interest in the concept of impermanence continued" (p. 15). Sensory perception of impermanence, one of three Buddhist marks of existence, allows me to revisit the sense of serenity and to conceptualize emotive responses while expressing it in the form of art. If my art can bring about a sense of serene melancholy and a spiritual longing, then my art has succeeded. I agree with the cognitive theory or pragmatic philosophy of John Dewey (1859-1952). In the words of Cynthia Freeland (2001), "Dewey's pragmatist view of art emphasized art as a form of insightful cognition, employing a language-like structure" (p. 116). Creating art or writing an artist's statement, manifesto, or a memoir helps me to express my thoughts and ideas in a way that can be comprehended by my audience, which enriches both viewers and myself. Through exhibitions and publications, I transmit or interpret my feelings, emotions, thoughts and ideas to the audience. At the same time, interpreting and analyzing my art helps not only to explain my art but it also enables me to better see and respond to my art.

The transcendental quality of my art is partially related to Symbolism—an indirect expression of spiritual reality, as in the words of Bass (2005):

By the late 1880s Romanticism had begun resurfacing as Symbolism—the attempt to evoke through art a spiritual reality paralleling physical reality. Symbolist art was fueled in part by syncretism, a melding of religious beliefs and symbols from a variety of sources, including Asia. (p. 16)

The impact of Buddhist emphasis on the present moment is revealed in my Symbolist art. According to Freeland (2001), “Tolstoy believed an artist’s chief job is to express and communicate emotions to an audience” (p. 104). Without my personal sensory experience, I can’t transmit my feelings and ideas through my art to others. I use symbols, such as butterfly, lotus, nautilus shell, and jade disc, to represent and express my nostalgic feelings, Taoist-Buddhist beliefs, philosophical thoughts and bicultural context through visual language to communicate with an audience. I expect audience to recreate the similar feelings or thoughts through their self-discovery experience when they meditate on my art. Creating art enable me to go through the process of self-realization and to examine my perceptual awareness of the world around me.

## **Conclusion**

My art begins as a cognitive experience and ends up as meditative object. Writing a memoir of my art gives me an opportunity to reflect on my art and explore new possibilities for my future art as well as expand my perceptual awareness. In my latest painting *Evolution of Light*, shown as Figure 8, I merged a white water lily with a light pink lotus to form the transformation of these two seemingly alike and yet opposite flowers. The obvious difference between two flowers is not the center carpel but the leaf. Also, the lilies bloom in bright sunlight and some species of lotus bloom at night or under gloomy circumstances. The leaves of water lily are floating on the water, whereas the leaves of lotus are rising above the water. I intended to express my feelings towards these two symbolic flowers and the illumination emitted from them. By bringing parts of lotus-water-lily into focus, but submerging other parts beneath a swirling nautilus pattern, I was able to create a painting, which is intended to be as much about the unpainted and unseen parts of the whole, as it is about what I have chosen to obviously represent.



Figure 8: Kong Ho. *Evolution of Light*. 2016. Acrylic on canvas, 24"H x 24"W.

Writing this memoir of my art is more about writing my vision in art—from where my art was in the past and present to where it is headed. My nostalgic feeling may seem an attachment to the past nevertheless it is rather about departure from the past to the progressive future.

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