

## Introduction of Tai Xiangzhou

**Tai Xiangzhou** was born in Yinchuan, China in 1968. He started studying calligraphy with Hu Gongshi from a young age and then followed Master Feng Qiyong. Tai graduated with a Doctorate from Academy of Arts & Design, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China. He is an influential academic artist in the contemporary art field. Tai's PhD dissertation entitled *Observations of Astronomical Phenomena—the Concept of Landscape Painting and its Structure* has been highly admired by renowned art historian, professor Fang Wen, who wrote the preface as an encouragement. In recent years, this work is becoming increasingly influential in the art history world, nationally and internationally.

Tai has long concentrated on rejuvenating the idealistic forms of traditional Chinese landscape painting. His dedication to the origin and development of "Mountain and Water Representation" (Shan Shui Tu Xiang) has attracted attention from prominent eyes in the field of art. His artworks are largely based on his artistic ideologies. His earlier works faithfully harmonizes with traditional landscape painting from Song Dynasty (960-1279). From 2013 and on, with plentiful researches Tai has done for his doctoral dissertation, he further expands his perspectives of art creations into cosmology, astrology, and how they intertwine with the aesthetics of painting. His reputed series *Genesis*, *Celestial Tales*, and *Cosmic Symphonies*, can be found in the collection of the university museums of Harvard, Princeton, and Yale. Because of their ability to invite viewers and readers to interact with them corporeally, ritualistically, Tai's artworks and scholarly writings are frequently discussed in art history classes at distinguished universities.

In 2015, as part of the celebration of its 140-years anniversary, The Art Institute of Chicago purchased Tai's *Celestial Tales 2014.1*, marking the first work the museum has ever bought from a living artist. The work can be found in the publication *Paintings at the Art Institute of Chicago: Highlights of the Collection*. In addition, Tai's work has been exhibited and collected by the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M Sackler Gallery, Washington D.C.; Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, MN; Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO; Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY; Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, CA; Nasher Museum of Art, Duke University, Durham, NC; Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Houston, Texas; Arthur M. Sackler Museum of Art and Archaeology at Peking University, Beijing, China; Oklahoma State University Museum of Art, Stillwater, OK; Exhibition Gallery of Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau, Macau; Zhonghua Book Company, Beijing, China.

## Commentary on Tai Xiangzhou

“Dr. Tai’s article Perception and Structure: Analysis of Chinese Landscape Painting in Image and Form reveals the deep system of antiquarian cosmology and traditional landscape art,” said **Fong Wen, Jr. professor at Taiwan Academia Sinica, and previously Professor at Princeton University and Asian Department Head at Metropolitan Museum of Art**, “He traces back along the vicissitudes of landscape forms, simultaneously using images to articulate the essence of Chinese painting. In his writing, he analyzes the philosophical transitions of cosmic dimensions detected by landscape artists from previous generations. According to traditional cosmology, he discovers the birth of landscape image and form from the sky and the stars, interpreting the correspondence between the stars/cosmology and the lands/geology, elaborating the reflection of traditional philosophy on Chinese landscape painting. Likewise, he discusses the relationship between materialization and skills through traditional Chinese painting materials.”

“Tai is a friend of mine,” said **Zhu Liangzhi, the Head of Research Center for Aesthetics and Aesthetic Education at Peking University**, “when I first saw his works, I was hallucinated into a world created by masters from Song Dynasty. He revives the spirit of Chinese art that was born thousands of years ago. The co-existence of tranquility and liveliness communicates deeply with the viewers. No painter has been as dedicated as he is in terms of admiring and absorbing the legacies of masters Dong Yuan, Fan Kuan, Li Cheng, Guo Xi, Xu Daoning. He is living his own art with the essence of Song Dynasty tradition and his own exquisite ink skills. He also likes Chinese philosophy from the bottom of his heart, and we often talked about Laozi, Zhuangzi, and I Ching. I agree with him that Chinese landscape painting exists on the basis of traditional cosmology. Ink landscape has become the idealistic form of Chinese painting merely because they absorb and store people’s powerful and unconstrained spirit and the wish to achieve idealism. Tai knows the core of this cosmic dimension, and he materializes that core romantically through his landscape painting. Song Dynasty aesthetics perfectly nurtures his artistic developments.”

“Tai’s work is exceptionally figurative within the Eastern aesthetics,” said **Pi Daojian, a Chinese prominent art critic**, “when seen as originating from traditional ink painting culture, his works sometimes are mistaken as pursuing abstraction. But I see his works as being notably maximalistic, keeping an intimate yet lukewarm relationship with the tradition. He is an artist worthy giving utmost attention to at this moment.”

“Tai’s style is high-fashioned.” said **Toshiaki Minemura, Japanese art theorist**, “It is an extremely valuable style that rarely wastes any brushstroke. Even though he sometimes pushes too much on the representation, he would improve quickly with

his extreme talents. I wish he keeps developing the spirit of innovation, and becomes one of the most prominent artists in the history of art.”

### **The Reasons to Choose Tai Xiangzhou:**

1. In the field of ink painting, Tai Xiangzhou has attracted extensive attention worldwide and is one of the artists who has the largest number of works collected by global major museums. Until now, Tai’s work is in the collection of more than fifteen important museums, academic institutions and galleries.
2. Tai’s Painting *Celestial Tales 2014.1* has been included in the new publication *Paintings at the Art Institute of Chicago: Highlights of the Collection* by James Rondeau, the President and Director of the Art Institute of Chicago. “This year (2017), out of 300,000 artworks in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, I selected 100 most representative paintings, which are from different cultures around the globe, to present and publish in this book.” said James Rondeau. “This book is also the teaching material I used in the SAIC. Chinese artist Tai Xiangzhou’s masterpiece *Celestial Tales 2014.1* is the only contemporary Chinese ink painting I included in this important catalogue. As an art museum with important painting collection, the Art Institute of Chicago pays more attention to the roles that the artists play in the art history and their contributions to the painting itself.”
3. As recommended by art historian and professor Fong Wen, Tai’s doctoral dissertation “*Perception and Structure: Analysis of Chinese Landscape Painting in Image and Form*” (published by Zhonghua Book Company, 2011) has become a must-read for Western scholars to study and research on Chinese art history, which will provide a great support for Tai’s paintings to be introduced into the art history.
4. Tai’s work is often used as teaching material to present and study in Art History class in distinguished western universities. Many institutions have used it during teaching and academic activities, including School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Princeton University Art Museum, Harvard Art Museum, Yale University Art Gallery, Nasher Museum of Art, Duke University, East Asia Library, Stanford University.
5. Tai Xiangzhou has a solid foundation on traditional Chinese paintings from Song and Yuan Dynasty. At the same time, his creative series of paintings *Genesis*, *Celestial Tales* and *Cosmic Symphonies* are not only based on traditional ink painting styles, but also embrace contemporary art practice, which corresponds to his academic research in his doctoral dissertation. The

factors all above have supported Tai Xiangzhou's positive prospect and irreplaceable historical role.

6. Tai Xiangzhou's work is always represented by global renowned galleries, including Paul Kasmin Gallery, Tokyo Gallery, Alisan Fine Arts and Ink Studio. His work has been featured in the Art Basel Hong Kong since 2013. These galleries have further recommended his work to other renowned museums, academic institutions and private collectors.
7. Tai Xiangzhou's work has gradually drawn extensive attention from related organizations in China. During 2017 BRICS summit in Xiamen, his monumental work Celestial Tales - Xuan Ji Yu Heng, which was commissioned by the summit for the main venue, has been highly praised.