



LIVING COLOUR

Malaysian born Hock-Aun Teh's work is calligraphy with a combative style

A visit to Wasps artists' studios on King Street in Glasgow is always an interesting excursion. The smell of oil paint, the paintings stacked up in the corridor and the dog running around in the chaos all remind me of the reasons I decided to go into this business. On this occasion, I was meeting an artist I'd heard much about, Hock-Aun Teh. As his name suggests, Hock-Aun isn't from Scotland. He was born in Malaysia and his upbringing is essentially Chinese – a heritage that is key to his art

To the western eye, his work could be, at first glance, considered to be abstract expressionist, but it is the eastern influence of calligraphy (considered the highest of all arts in China), which gives it meaning. When confronted by one of Hock-Aun Teh's works you are immediately hit with an energy force, like calligraphy, where the student is instructed to use their whole body to draw the characters. His art is a release of energy, a positive flow of life from his body. It is the marrying of the spontaneity of expressive freedom found in the most highly-prized calligraphic works of the Tang dynasty and the hi-tech materials and colours of western art.

Hock-Aun works on paper as his predecessors did in China. However he first tears the edges of the paper "to release it from the constraints of the square" and to let the energy flow freely. He then fills this "white cloud" of paper with the fastest drying acrylics he can

find. His work demands total commitment: he paints in one session, like the calligraphers, each piece being a creation of the instant; once begun there is no going back. His work is also very disciplined, each brush stroke is thought through and produced consciously and with commitment; however they are executed with a speed and concentration few of us are able to achieve. Another key aspect of

Hock-Aun's work is martial arts (he is a 6th dan black belt.) While learning the skill of calligraphy as a child in his village in Malaysia his grandfather introduced him to Kung Fu.

Both painting and martial arts have a profound effect on Hock and form the basis of his philosophy of life. In

western culture we consider painting a character on to paper – or, indeed, the art of Kung Fu to be purely technical pursuits. However, for Hock-Aun they belong to a spiritual and ethical domain.

He now practices a new system, tukido, which he developed himself. Like his painting it is more flowing, more in touch with inner energy, requiring absolute concentration and performed at high speed. Hock Aun Teh is quite possibly the most positive person I have ever met. He doesn't allow negativity to exist in his work or life and this life force can be seen in his painting. ■

Hock-Aun Teh's work is available in London through Davies and Tooth, or through Pivotal Art in Scotland.

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