

Like a Fresh Breeze on the Face
George Ho - The Artist and Person I Know

By Jean Liao

A fisherman from Wuling, following a stream, lost track of the distance he had traveled. Suddenly he came upon a grove of peach trees in full blossom, lining both banks for several hundred paces. There were no other trees, and the fragrant grasses were fresh and bright. A thick bed of petals fell on the ground. Marveling at the splendor before him, the fisherman went forth, hoping to reach the source of the grove...

Reaching the end of the grove, he found the source of the stream. There was a hill with a small opening in it, from which light seemed to issue. The fisherman left his boat and entered the opening. At first, it was narrow and difficult, allowing passage by only one person at a time. After advancing a few dozen steps, it suddenly opened out into a broad open space.

The land was level and spacious. Houses were arranged in orderly rows. There were good fields and fine ponds, mulberry trees, and bamboo groves. The paths and byways interlaced with each other, and the sounds of chickens and dogs could be heard.

—Tao Yuanming, *Peach Blossom Spring* (Eastern Jin Dynasty)

I have known artist George Ho for nearly 30 years. Such a long acquaintance is rare and worth cherishing. What I mean by “rare” is that we have remained in regular contact over these three decades, and I have continued to follow his creative output and certain aspects of his life. And sometimes he shows up at the gallery. Apart from some gray hair, he remains largely unchanged in appearance - still the fresh-faced, slightly reserved man whose self-discipline and inner rigor are visibly apparent. In my mind, he retains a flawless image. Yet it took me 30 years to come to understand his work in a new light. Perhaps my observations of George Ho are overdue, yet not too late.

I. In Tibet: On Color

In 1998, having been introduced by his mother, Madam Shu-Chau Wang Ho, George Ho and I joined a delegation together to Tibet. Over the course of 12 days, we encountered many aspects of the Tibetan cultural landscape and Tibetan Buddhism. We also met a spiritual leader. What remains most vivid in my mind are the saffron and yellow robes of the monks, and the dim red

candlelight and pervasive aroma of butter tea inside the temples.

Years later, upon viewing George Ho's work, I seemed to glimpse once again the colors I had seen in Tibet; hues of red, yellow, and brown, imbued with warmth and tranquility. The core spirit of his art had been brewing for quite some time: a spiritual pursuit for a new age - uncontentious, joyful, and harmonious.

I recall the words of George's mother, Madam Shu-Chau Wang Ho, who noted his exceptional feel for color. When she spoke those words, I pictured the vast spaces and blue skies of Tibet in my mind's eye, Sanskrit chants of sutras in the temples, and the flickering shadows of candles filtered through the smoke of incense.

II. In Beijing: About Sound

In 2014 the artist held a solo exhibition titled **Space of Wonder** at the Li-Space Gallery in Beijing. It truly was a wondrous arrangement, as the artist's works formed an arc in the space, the long works hanging from the ceiling, with multiple crystal singing bowls placed beneath them.

Ho performed live at the exhibition opening with the performance artist and vocalist Mia Hsieh. His deep, resonant voice blended with her mellifluous tones to create a captivating musical dialogue. Some audience members wept, while others cheered. While I had always known he had a fine voice, in the ambiance of the gallery, his otherworldly chants felt cleansing to both body and mind, while also challenging our ways of perceiving the world. In that moment, my understanding and imagination of Ho's art underwent a transformation.

I have attended every one of George's exhibitions. I rarely ask artists, "What's on your mind?" or "What is it that you are trying to express?" He continues to be the author of the artistic world he pursues. Free from outside influence, his world thus remains pure and ethereal.

III. In Taipei: On Space

In 2022, George Ho presented an exhibition titled **The Invitation from Simultaneity** at Beyond Gallery in Taipei. His exhibition titles are never conventional, often presenting autobiographical reflections or theological conundrums. He has his own answers, and viewers must find their own meaning within the scope of their understanding.

In **The Invitation from Simultaneity**, he engaged playfully with space, suspending seven large works (240cm tall by 200cm wide) from the ceiling of the spacious gallery. The lightweight polyester canvases swayed gently in the air-conditioned space. As viewers wove through the installations, the experience shifted - taking on a playful mood. George Ho had changed, having found a new mode of dialogue with his audience and the artistic intent that he seeks to convey.

As viewers moved through the space, pausing here and there, or meandering lightly, the long, hanging pieces fluttered gently. My mind was transported to Tao Yuanming's *Peach Blossom Spring*, and the works became like flowing streams or mountain faces; viewers were both boats and explorers entering the realm... For the first time, I felt that I truly resonated with Ho's work, bringing sudden insight into his artistic vision. I felt moved by the experience.

Having known George Ho for nearly three decades, and observing him from the sidelines, his works have not changed significantly in terms of forms of expression. However, he boldly embraces changes in materials and forms of presentation. What remains unchanged is the artist's passion for artistic expression - day after day, year after year, his perseverance is admirable.

IV. George Ho and the Spirit of the Times

One day in 2025, while chatting with ACC board members Ms. Yang Chou Shu-hua and Ms. Rita Chang in the gallery, the conversation shifted as Ms. Yang shared a comment made by her granddaughter about the artworks hanging in her living room. Her final verdict: of all the works on display, George Ho's was the nicest and most pleasant to look at. This information is

noteworthy in a twenty-first century increasingly shaped by younger generations, whose preferences should not be underestimated in the evolution of the art market.

I was immediately reminded of the role of Labubu, the wildly popular designer toys from China's Pop Mart. These unusual creatures with very large eyes and sharp teeth exude a disarming cuteness, and have sparked worldwide enthusiasm and even triggered buying frenzies. Much of Labubu's overnight success can be attributed to its appeal among youth and celebrities. Labubu's creator, Hong Kong illustrator Kasing Lung, is the winner of numerous international awards, lending his work with Labubu additional artistic credibility.

George Ho's works are harmonious and clean in color, soothing and serene in expression, and free of criticism or moralizing. As a sincere artist, he expresses the ideals he wishes to convey through painting, in pursuit of the essence of a happy life. Perhaps this, in fact, reflects a fundamental truth about life that deserves renewed attention. It may take some time, and in a fragmented world in disarray perhaps Labubu offers people temporary solace, but what humanity ultimately needs is enduring tranquility.

George Ho pursues his own boundlessness through his personal faith. He often asks, 'What else is possible?' Behind his self-encouragement, and his demand to know 'what else is possible?' lie higher standards of expectation and pursuit to hold himself to. As times change, artists also grow. And we look forward to seeing how George Ho continues to evolve going forward.

V. Visiting the Studio - On Life and Art

In July 2025, I visited George Ho's studio - not only to preview the works in his upcoming exhibition, but also to get reacquainted with the studio after quite some time had passed.

When he titled his 2025 exhibition **Curiosities of Gifting and Receiving**, I was very intrigued. His exhibition titles are always intertwined with aspects of his life. He emphasized that between giving and receiving lies a reciprocal

process - not a one-way transaction. By releasing preconceived ideas, one may enter into a deeper dialogue with the artwork and access higher energies.

Among the works featured in this exhibition, the series titled *The Alchemy of Time* stands out in particular to me. Of note are the arresting use of color and composition, especially the inclusion of gold leaf (24k), which elevates the energy of the piece and opens new interpretive possibilities. An essential element of the universe, gold is recontextualized to strip away negative associations in the minds of viewers to transcend material evaluations and affirm its spiritual significance.

The studio itself is richly adorned with bone china, miniatures, assorted antiques, and Japanese screens. Among the dazzling array of items in the collection are quite a few works featuring gold detailing. Testament to exquisite craftsmanship, they have naturally had an impact on Ho's creative thinking, contributing to his increasingly refined artistic expression.

A visit to George Ho's studio offers greater understanding of his work. More importantly, it allows greater insight into his pursuit of a spiritually enriched life. Such a visit need not be long in duration to leave one uplifted.

As I departed the studio, George's paintings and Tao Yuanming's *Peach Blossom Spring* mingled together in my mind, like a gentle breeze. That evening at dusk, Taipei was bathed in golden light...