



Riding the World and Wandering the Mind: On Wang Xin's *Diamond Pine*¹

Contemporary Chinese ink art encompasses a spectrum of practices, including painting, calligraphy, installation, video, sculpture, and performance. Faced with the enduring tradition of ink, how should contemporary artists respond and move forward to create distinctive works for this era? What defines ink? Does it possess inherent styles? Such deliberations remain a concern for artists, historians, and critics alike. Undoubtedly, painting remains the indisputable medium of ink art. It is inevitable to engage with tradition in the practice of Chinese painting; essentially, copying the works of predecessors is fundamental to the learning process.

Consequently, for some contemporary artists to achieve a breakthrough and create work that is truly contemporary, they believe a complete severance from tradition is necessary. Yet, to other artists, the profound historical depth of Chinese painting is not a burden to be lifted but rather a foundation for contemplating transformation. The unique and enduring tradition of painting serves as an inexhaustible muse. These artists are in search of a balance: a seamless connection to tradition that simultaneously offers fresh perspectives. In the ink series *Diamond Pine*, Wang Xin exemplifies this exploration, transcending the deliberate pursuit of change and novelty.

Wang Xin was born in Xingtai, Hebei province, in 1964. In childhood, he studied calligraphy and painting with the renowned local master Huang Gengzhuo (b. 1946). Like many modern calligraphers and painters, Wang began his training with the *Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, which served as a crucial foundation for his artistic development. While copying master paintings, his teacher also highlighted the importance of understanding nature. He was encouraged to do *plein air* sketching

Fig. 13
Wang Xin 王新
Diamond Pine No. 38: Sublime Action Without Attachment (detail)
金剛松 38 號・妙行無住 (局部), 2024
Ink on Xuan paper 宣紙水墨
313.5 × 124 cm

Fig. 14

Wang Xin 王新
Trees and Rocks after the Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting
 臨《芥子園畫譜》樹石畫法, 2021
 Ink on Xuan paper 宣紙水墨, 60 × 80 cm

of trees shedding their leaves during autumn and winter to observe and capture the spirit of nature. He built a solid foundation by integrating these observations with his textual learning.

Subsequently, Wang enrolled in the Chinese Painting Department at the Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts, where he received more systematic training and began his professional artistic journey. Graduating with distinction in 1991, he promptly held a solo exhibition at the Art Museum of the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute. It was exceptionally rare for a recent graduate to secure a solo exhibition. The showcase was a profound recognition for the fledgling Wang Xin. Thereafter, Wang travelled the world, immersing himself in diverse cultures to broaden his horizons and trace various sources of inspiration. His journey spanned China, Europe, and America, where he showcased his extensive understanding of ink painting through solo and group exhibitions on various international stages, garnering considerable acclaim. Notable group showcases include the Shanghai Art Fair (2001), Leiden International Art Exhibition (2008), and China—Korea group exhibition (2009), and the solo shows *Mysterious Glory* at the Bahá'í Centre in New York (2017) and *Thatata* at the Japan-China Center Friendship Art Museum (2017).

Having dedicated decades to ink painting, Wang is currently a National First-class Artist and serves as an instructor for master's courses in Fine Arts and Calligraphy at the Communication University of China. In spring 2026, *Reimagining the Diamond Pine: Ink Art of Wang Xin* was organised by the University Museum and Art Gallery, The University of Hong Kong, showcasing work from his *Diamond Pine* series. I would like to take this opportunity to share a few reflections on the exhibition.

Brushwork, Ink, and Form

Wang Xin's monochrome ink works typically portray solitary pines or trees set among rocks. Seldom featuring intricate backgrounds, they radiate an aura of serenity and ethereality. *Diamond Pine No. 5* depicts an overhanging pine clinging precipitously to a cliff face, its trunk and branches cascading down in an extraordinary stance—vigorous yet infused with a subtle lightness, conveying an air of breathtaking peril. Both the craggy cliff and pine boughs are depicted





Cat. no. 3
Diamond Pine No. 3: Without Cessation and Annihilation
金剛松 3 號・無斷無滅, 2024
Ink on Xuan paper 宣紙水墨, 160 × 70 cm
Collection of The University of Hong Kong, University Museum and Art Gallery
香港大學美術博物館藏品



Cat. no. 1
Diamond Pine No. 38: Sublime Action Without Attachment
金剛松 38 號・妙行無住, 2024
Ink on Xuan paper 宣紙水墨, 313.5 × 124 cm



Cat. no. 14
Diamond Pine No. 47: The Nature of Forms Is Formlessness
金剛松 47 號・相即非相, 2025
Ink on Xuan paper 宣紙水墨, 194 × 34 cm