



John L. Ng

*Traditional Chinese Brushes In Contemporary Settings*

April 2016 Valley Cottage Library

John is an amateur brush painter in the Chinese traditions. That is, he simply *amare* what he does. He was born in a small village of southern China to a family of peasant farmers.

Before long, John and his family immigrated to the New World. During these formative years, he embraced Christianity as his faith and life. In time, he responded to God's call to professional ministry. John was a parish cleric and seminary professor before he retreated to a more contemplative sunset space.

At sunset, John picks up a bamboo brush again, as if for the first time. Most mornings he enters his solace of solitude for quietude in painting. He convalesces with five quiet friends: water, brush, ink, paper and imagination. It is in this introspective stillness of dipping black ink and smearing it on rice paper that he enjoys his solace.

John's smudges are a philosophical consonance between fidelity to traditions and aesthetic spontaneity. Three ancient approaches guide his brushes. *Naturalism* - 自然主義: every stroke reflects the subject's naturalness. And every impression represents a natural harmony between divine grace and human imperfection. *Impressionism* - 印象主義: every stroke is a subjective impression of its subject. Reflecting his philosophical, and theological, bent, he paints what he feels from what he sees. *Minimalism* - 極簡主義: every stroke seeks simplicity, where clean lines endeavor towards a minimal expression.

Chinese brushes on rice paper are traditionally mounted on scrolls. But adhering his master's counsel that the ancients must recognize the present, John's traditional brush works are presented in contemporary contextures. Needless, each contexture also reflects a minimal simplicity. The art pieces are presented in plain black frames. Some are matted and others flow freely on plain background. They also serve a natural setting, as suggested by the paper's flaws, wrinkles and jagged edges.