

“Creativity in art corresponds to a means, to a very useful experience for achieving a reawakening of consciousness and for reaching a dignified state of self-awareness. I use the *medium* of painting and sculpture in the way others use philosophy, meditation, mysticism, religion, and so forth.”
(Hsiao Chin, 2005)

Hsiao Chin. A Collection

Opening: 23 May 2017 at 18.00

Exhibition dates: 24 May - 15 September 2017

A large retrospective dedicated to Hsiao Chin presents the Fondazione Marconi's collection of the Chinese master's works in its entirety.

Born in Shanghai in 1935, Hsiao Chin completed his studies in Taiwan. After founding the first abstract art avant-garde in China with the Ton-Fan group, he arrived in Europe with a scholarship.

He went first to Spain, to Barcelona and Madrid, where he met Joan Miró and Antoni Tàpies, then on to Paris, and finally in 1959 to Milan, where he got to know the exponents of the art avant-garde, among them Lucio Fontana, Piero Manzoni, Roberto Crippa and Enrico Castellani, to name only a few.

Although the climate of experimentation and research that pervaded Milan in those years became superimposed on his Eastern culture, Hsiao Chin never forgot the teachings of his master, the painter Li Chun-Shan, and over the course of time his extensive reading led him to deepen his knowledge of Oriental philosophies and to always consider his artistic career as a constant spiritual quest.

Evident in all his work are references to the principles of the philosophical Taoism of Lao Tse (570-490 BCE), based on the duality of the elements – the continuous alternation and recomposition of the fundamental balance of the *yin* and *yang*, at once opposite and complementary.

Never impervious to new experiences, yet again in the name of abstract art, in 1961 Hsiao Chin founded the group *Punto*, joined by Antonio Calderara and Dadamaino among others, and later in 1978, the international art movement Surya.

During his time in New York (1967-1971) he met with personalities of the calibre of Mark Rothko, Willem de Kooning, Robert Rauschenberg, Roy Lichtenstein and Sam Francis. This led to a new direction in his painting, echoed in the titles of some of his works from the time, which indicate his move towards American Minimalism and to a type of Hard-edge painting that is almost Constructivist in style.

After his years in the US, Hsiao Chin returned to Milan, resuming with even more vigour and enthusiasm the successful partnership with Giorgio Marconi and his gallery that had begun in the early 1960s. In fact, the Milanese gallery owner has held many solo exhibitions of Hsiao's work over the years.

This tribute is yet another testimony of Marconi's long friendship with the artist, who was among the first to become an integral part of the long history of Studio Marconi.

Over two hundred works are on show, including gouache and ink on rice paper – a favoured material – dominated by references to the principles of the Tao and to Chinese calligraphy; acrylic on canvas, permeated by the search for harmony between full and empty, white and colour, meditation and gesturalism; radiant solar compositions, characterised by intense colours emanating from a central core; works dedicated to the natural elements; the “great threshold” paintings; and works on the Tiananmen Square massacre.

On the one hand Hsiao Chin's paintings may suggest a written page in which the artist calls upon Eastern symbolism, creating a message of subtle signs, almost ideograms, that alternate with geometric shapes evoking atavistic and shared meanings (circles, squares, spirals...), yet on the other, his bold

choice of colours bursting with energy, his frenetic and radiant brush strokes, or those more fluid and calibrated, appear “Western”, with an occasional glimpse of a Rothko, a Matisse or a Malevich... In fact, it is not easy to define whether Hsiao Chin’s Western visual language actually translates an inherently Chinese message. Certainly, depending on the perspective from which one considers his work, different interpretations arise, and the successful bonding of an oriental matrix with gestural expressiveness defines the power and distinctive character of his art.

“A viewer from East or West will admire his work in a different way, if only because a certain degree of familiarity, or lack of familiarity, with the ideograms and calligraphic styles will make a difference. Yet representatives of cultures far apart will eventually find themselves involved in an experience that enables everyone to access it on their own terms.” (A. Tagliaferri, in *Hsiao Chin*, Cambi, Milan 2009)

Hsiao Chin’s work therefore perfectly integrates the spiritual practices of the East and the artistic experimentation and art of the West; this for him is a path of growth and knowledge, and ultimately a spiritual journey through time and space, which transcends any geographical or cultural limits.

“Today the question of whether my art is Chinese or global is no longer important to me. I try to go beyond these boundaries, with the intention of creating new works that are not conditioned by techniques and ideas.” (Hsiao Chin, 2016)

Biographical notes

Hsiao Chin was born in Shanghai in 1935. After his first art studies, in 1956 he was involved in founding the Ton-Fan group of abstract painters. A scholarship established by the Spanish government enabled him to travel to Madrid and Barcelona, where in 1957 he held his first solo exhibition and a collective show dedicated to the Ton-Fan group. At the end of the 1950s he moved to Milan, where he began to exhibit regularly at Giorgio Marconi’s gallery. In 1961, together with Antonio Calderara, he founded the movement *Punto*, joined by artists of the international avant-garde. His work merges elements of Eastern culture and spirituality with his profound knowledge of Western artistic modernity. With results closer to the style of *colorfield abstraction*, his paintings are expanses of fluid colour arranged into vibrant, incorporeal surfaces animated by energy from within the fields of colour.

After long periods in London, Paris and New York, Hsiao returned to Milan in 1971 and began to devote himself to teaching, first at the Istituto Europeo di Design, then at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera. In 1988 Studio Marconi gave him his first major retrospective. The following year he began a series entitled *From the Beijing Spring to the Tiananmen Massacre*, inspired by the dramatic events of 1989, whereas the *Great Threshold* cycle, which he began in 1990-91, arose from a reflection on life and death after the loss of his daughter Samantha.

Among his major exhibitions in recent years have been retrospectives in Taichung (1992), Taipei (1995), in Milan (2002) at Spazio Oberdan, Fondazione Mudima, Giò Marconi and the Lattuada gallery; at Beijing National Museum of Art (2006) and at the Bovisa Triennale in Milan (2009).

In 2011 the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts and the Musée d’Art Moderne et d’Art Contemporain in Liège held a large exhibition of his work. In 2012 he exhibited at Taipei Fine Arts Museum, and in 2013 at the Fondazione Marconi with the exhibition *Hsiao Chin. Works on Paper*.

He has since continued an intense programme of exhibitions in Italy and abroad.

Among these has been: *Hsiao Chin. Un Viaggio attraverso l’universo*, at Galleria Robilant & Voena, Milan, the solo show at the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung (Taiwan) in 2015, and *Hsiao Chin. The Universe Energy* at Die Galerie, Frankfurt in 2016.

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Monday - Friday 10-13, 15-19 from 12 June to 15 September 2017

Summer closure: 1 August - 1 September 2017

Free entrance

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