

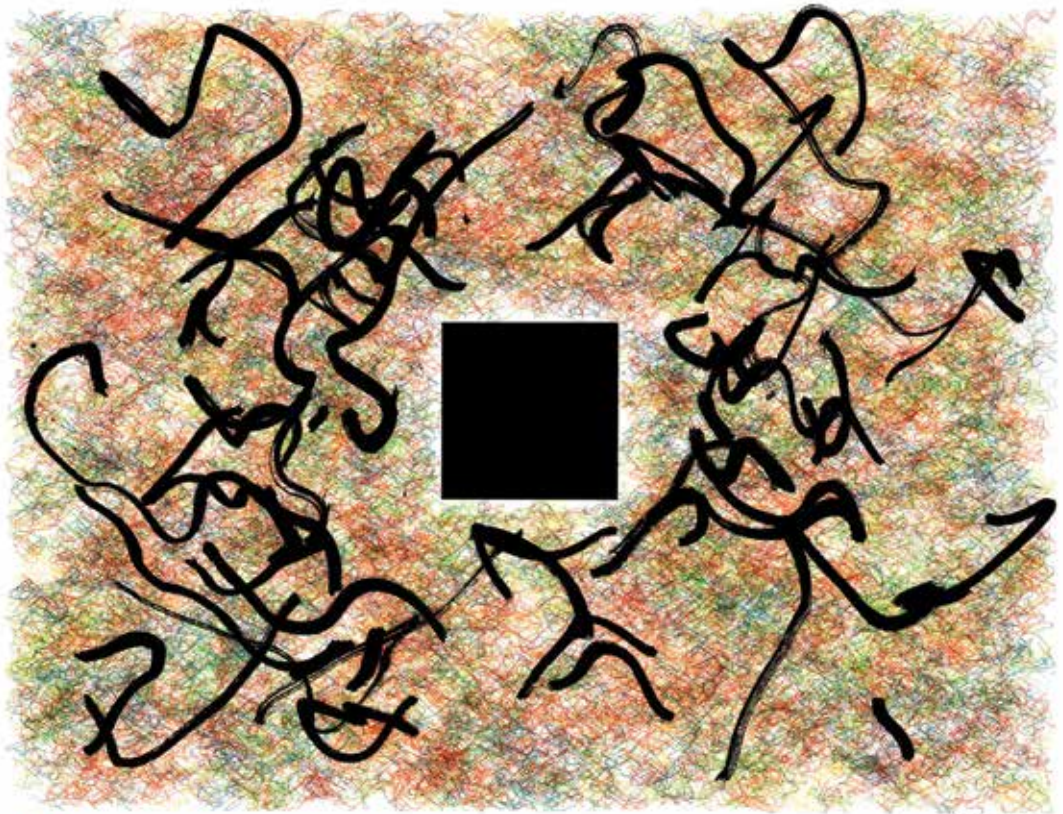
## Lines in Translation: Cross-Cultural Encounters in Modernist Calligraphy, Early 1980s–Early 1990s<sup>1</sup>

This essay considers the impact of cross-cultural encounters within the field of modern calligraphy art in China from the early 1980s to the early 1990s.<sup>2</sup> Against the historical backdrop of the modernization (*xiandaihua*), academization (*xueshuhua*), and purposeful “purification” (*chunhua*) of the arts in the People’s Republic of China from the late 1970s onward, the gradual reopening of art academies post-1976 saw traditional Chinese arts, as formerly pursued by the class of so-called *wenren* scholar-artists, including the genres of poetry, brush writing, ink painting, and seal carving, was to some extent restored and redefined. Here, the initiation of the first calligraphy class for foreign students ever to be undertaken at a Chinese art institution—at the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts<sup>3</sup> (*Zhejiang meishu xueyuan*) in Hangzhou in 1980—can be noted as a pivotal moment with regard to its embeddedness within the broader framework of academized discourses that evolved around the definition and disambiguation of designations like “modern calligraphy” (*xiandai shufa*) and “contemporary calligraphy” (*dangdai shufa*).<sup>4</sup>



Wang Dongling writing calligraphy for Roman Verostko while Andreas Schmid watches, Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts, 1985. Courtesy of Roman Verostko.

Within this context I will discuss works by the Chinese calligrapher Wang Dongling (b. 1945), the American digital artist Roman Verostko (Chinese name Ke Rongmeng, b. 1929), and the German light-installation artist Andreas Schmid (Chinese name Shi Andi, b. 1955),<sup>5</sup> all of whom were active at the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts during the first half of the 1980s. These three cases serve to illustrate and exemplify the shifting landscape of calligraphy discourse during this time as well as its lasting effects on the three artists’ subsequent art production. While Wang Dongling was



Top: Roman Verostko, *Untitled #81*, 1987, algorithmic pen and brush, paper, ink, Hi-DMP multi-pen plotter, 14 pen stalls, artist software Hodos, 45.7 x 60.9 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Andreas Schmid, *Lichtungen (Clearings)*, 2009, light installation with steering mechanism, 21 vertically arranged fluorescent lamps with filtered tubes on transparent acrylic glass cylinders programmed in two cycles, 4 mins., 30 secs., 5 mins., 50 secs. Garden Chamber of the Domnick Collection, Nürtingen, now in the Daimler Art Collection, Berlin. Photo: Volker Naumann. Courtesy of the artist.



appointed as instructor in 1985 for the newly established foreign-student calligraphy class, Andreas Schmid, during his stay in China from 1983 to 1986, in turn was among the small group of foreigners who attended this class. Roman Verostko, moreover,

experienced defining moments as an artist brought about by art-related exchanges in China, notably with Wang Dongling. Manifestations of the 1980s modernist calligraphy movement are readable in their works as an attempt to translate and incorporate new elements of a cultural Other, in this case, particularly, the styles, techniques, and concepts of twentieth-century Western art in a coherent and systematic way, as visible traces indicating the mobility of (culture-) specific aesthetic concepts at given moments in time. Comprehensible as “third texts,”<sup>6</sup> these artworks not only indicate the transmissional routes and flows of cross-cultural exchange, but, also, the trans-/formative processes of cultural production, as well as the production of knowledge and meaning with regard to the premises of defining and evaluating art critically and historically, in both global and local contexts.

In spite of Wang Dongling, Verostko, and Schmid’s current activities among different artistic disciplines and geographical regions, their early-1980s exchanges in art can be said to have triggered mutually effective, fundamental transformations that informed these artists’ aesthetic and



Opposite page: Wang Dongling, *Yi hua (Primordial Line)*, 2013, ink on *xuan* paper, 178 x 96 cm. Courtesy of the artist and INK Studio, Beijing.

Right: Andreas Schmid, *Raum.Zeichnung: Intersection*, 2009, space-related drawing, coloured adhesive tape, acrylics, rope, and drawings on walls, floor, and windows, installation view, Kunstverein Nürtingen. Photo: Cyrill Harnischmacher. Courtesy of the artist.

conceptual approaches to line, space, and time. This is evident particularly in Wang Dongling's abstract (*chouxiang*), or text-less (*feizi/wuzi*), calligraphy, and, in turn, Schmid's minimally composed light-and-space art, both of which found fuller formulation from the late 1990s onward in their respective hallmark styles and formats.



### Some Notes on Chinese Calligraphy in the Twentieth Century

Chinese calligraphy is a form of artistic expression that, technically speaking, can only be performed and consumed by a literate audience acquainted with the Chinese written language; it is therefore considered by many as an exclusive symbol of Chinese culture. This powerful and ambiguous—in the sense that calligraphy is not an innocent art form but can also function as an instrument for social and political manipulation—rhetoric of calligraphy as the essence of Chinese culture is reiterated through the work of contemporary calligraphy artists, including Wang Dongling, who in his essay “On the Essence of Modern Calligraphy” has written: “Chinese calligraphy is the core art of traditional Chinese arts, it is most capable of embodying the essence of Chinese art.”<sup>7</sup>

Though the conception that calligraphy indeed circumscribes a hermetic discursive realm limited to the Chinese-speaking world is to some extent valid, the historical realities of “modern” and “contemporary calligraphy” as art phenomena can in fact be defined as permeated, and even spurred, by cross-cultural encounter and transmission. Throughout the twentieth century, and owing, among other things, to the major campaigns of the Communist government that succeeded in raising literacy rates significantly, calligraphy underwent a gradual yet radical transition from its former existence as an exclusive art possessing “inherent potential . . . to furnish social coherence”<sup>8</sup> among the bureaucratic elite to a widespread manifestation of visual and popular culture in China.<sup>9</sup> In the wake of China's political, cultural, and economic opening up to the rest of the world from the late 1970s onward, the exchange and flow of art concepts gained momentum among art and intellectual circles; in some respects this interaction was a reprisal of the waves of modernization prevalent in cultural circles of the Republican period in China (1912–49), culminating in the May Fourth Movement of 1919.<sup>10</sup> After the 1970s, books on Western artists were published in Chinese and significant works of Western-language art history and postmodern theory were translated. A thirst for knowledge was not only evident in dealings with the non-Chinese world; an intensive interest in and critical reflection upon China's own cultural past developed, giving rise to questions of national identity, the heritage of traditions, and the relationship of China to the West.

With the reopening of art academies that had been closed during the Cultural Revolution, a set of new subjects was introduced to the curriculum,

thus institutionalizing genres of Western art traditions, including oil painting and sculpture, as well as traditional Chinese genres, including the brush-and-ink arts. In light of the widespread endeavour among Chinese artists to rejuvenate and modernize the arts, experimental forms of calligraphy emerged that specifically drew inspiration from Western Expressionism and Abstract Expressionism. Next to Wang Dongling, well-known pioneers of the modernist calligraphy movement include the late Huang Miaozi (1913–2012), and Gu Gan (b. 1942).<sup>11</sup> Gordon Barrass, in the singular English publication *The Art of Calligraphy in Modern China* (2002) that aimed at a systematic and comprehensive discussion of calligraphy in twentieth-century China, has provided the following definition of the modernist Chinese calligraphers emerging in the mid-1980s:

The exponents of Modernism believed that calligraphy would never become a means of creative expression in modern China unless it broke free from the rigorous rules that had constrained it for centuries. Modernist calligraphy, they argued, should unashamedly proclaim itself a form of fine art. They intended, therefore, to be more painterly in their whole approach to calligraphy, including the way they structured their characters, the compositions they created and their use of inks. . . . Instead of being inward-looking, like the calligraphers of the past, they wanted to draw inspiration from other arts, both Chinese and Western.<sup>12</sup>

With calligraphy no longer the symbol of rigid social stratification and exclusion that characterized it throughout most of its history, its relocation from a predominantly political domain to an institutional academic realm and its establishment as an independent practice gave way for the “purification of the art form” as denoted by Yueh-ping Yen<sup>13</sup>—“purification” denoting “pure art” not only in the sense of *l’art pour l’art*, but of an emancipation from its particular enmeshment with political and social control in China’s history. Along similar lines, Wang Dongling claimed in 2004: “Calligraphy has only just attained its complete liberation and broken away from its functional restrictions; entering a category of unrestrained aesthetic appreciation, it thus attains the genuine meaning of a purified nature [*chuncuixing*] of art.”<sup>14</sup> Such a claim must be read also in the context of Wang Dongling’s function as Director of the Research Center for Modern Calligraphy (*Xiandai shufa yanjiu zhongxin*) at the China Academy of Art, the only one of its kind worldwide.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the initiation of the first foreign-student calligraphy class at this art school in October 1980 can likewise be taken as going hand-in-hand with the initial “experimental undertaking of ‘modern calligraphy’” (“*xiandai shufa*” *shiyān*) proclaimed in the same year.<sup>16</sup>

### **Lines in Translation: At the Art Academy, Early 1980s**

Born in 1945 in Rudong, Jiangsu province, Wang Dongling gained a considerable reputation as a talented calligrapher at an early age, and was thus assigned, among other things, to write big character posters (*dazibao*) during the Cultural Revolution. Enrolling at the re-established Zhejiang

Academy of Fine Arts in 1979, he belonged to an initial group of five students nationwide to receive a calligraphy degree in 1981. Appointed then as the teacher of the first foreign-student calligraphy class, Wang Dongling was not only highly motivated to convey to his pupils the principles of calligraphic technique, composition, and style, but was likewise eager to learn more from his students about modern Western traditions of depicting form, handling space and surface, and the use of various materials in art. Western painters including Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline, Jackson Pollock, and Robert Motherwell are named by Wang Dongling, alongside his calligraphy instructors of that time, Lin Sanzhi (1898–1989), Lu Weizhao (1899–1990), and Sha Menghai (1900–1992), as significant role models that guided and informed his artistic output throughout the 1980s.<sup>17</sup> The impact of these role models was to gain particular significance around the turn of 1990, when Wang Dongling spent his first and longest period abroad to date as a visiting professor for calligraphy in the United States, at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and the University of Minnesota, from 1988 to 1992.

Triggered by the encounters taking place within the increasingly active microcosm of his international-student calligraphy class, in the course of the 1980s Wang Dongling’s conviction that Chinese calligraphy must undergo a radical renewal strengthened. In his view, calligraphy should receive not only full acknowledgement as an independent art form in itself—which, throughout history had never been the case due to its unbroken ties to officialdom and politics—but also gain significance internationally on the global stage of visual arts.<sup>18</sup> Works produced by Wang Dongling in the latter half of the 1980s illustrate unorthodox, experimental approaches to writing and new conventions indicating the characteristics of modernist calligraphy; polychrome and over-sized in format, they bear the unhinged, isolated bodies of single written characters, often in combination with other visual or pictorial elements and materials and not the familiar visual unity of sequential text columns executed in monochromatic ink.

Roman Verostko, multi-pen plotter showing Chinese brush mounted on drawing arm executing a brush stroke. 1987, Hi-DMP multi-pen plotter (pen stalls removed for paint brush routine). Courtesy of the artist.



Even after his graduation, and while teaching at the art academy, Wang Dongling continued to attend certain classes. In 1985, he attended a course titled “History of Modern Art in Western Society,” which was given by American artist and art historian Roman Verostko at the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts,

who served as a visiting professor from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Minnesota.<sup>19</sup> Wang Dongling and Verostko’s acquaintance was soon to turn into friendship, bringing the two back together again some years later in the United States. Verostko was one of the earliest artists who, in the 1980s, following thirty years of studies and practice in painting, opened up the computer-based field of algorithmic art, work created using a set of code-driven instructions pre-written by the artist. The Victoria

and Albert Museum in London, which has a number of Verostko's multi-pen plotter drawings in its collection, states in its web archive entry on Verostko's 1990 work *Pathway Series, Bird 2* that the artist "was a member of the 'The Algorists,' a term coined in 1995 to describe a set of artists, who, since the 1960s and 1970s, had been working with a shared interest in the use of bespoke software for generating art using the computer. . . ."20 By 1987, Verostko had developed the first software-driven "brushed" paintings, which were executed with Chinese brushes mounted on a pen plotter. The execution of algorithmic drawings with a pen plotter is still pursued by Verostko today, and he is considered a key figure in the experimental development of this computer-based art form.<sup>21</sup> As is stated in the V&A Collections Archive in its entry on another work from Verostko's *Pathway Series* dating from 1987:

Between 1982 and 1985 Verostko created *The Magic Hand of Chance*, a program that generated visual improvisations on a large PC monitor. He went on to develop his own software to control a pen plotter, adapting the machine to hold multiple pens. An algorithm, or set of instructions, dictates the shape, distribution and colour choice for each line.<sup>22</sup>



Verostko's *The Magic Hand of Chance* corresponds essentially with the system of writing calligraphy, inasmuch as both define a "program" of strictly set rules that precisely dictate aspects of brush movement, stroke order, structural composition, colour tonality, and so on, yet, at the same time, these rules always also underlie the elements of momentary chance and contingency. Indeed, Verostko's stay at the art academy in Hangzhou was, in 1985, the period

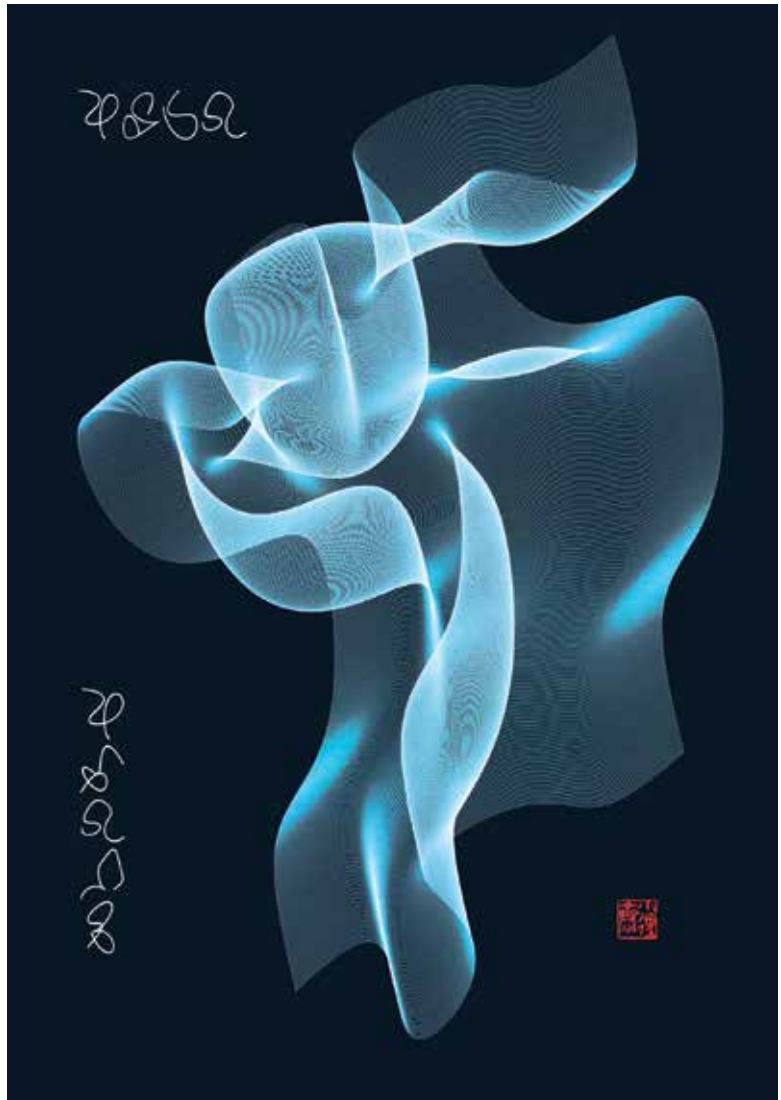
Wang Dongling, seal made for Roman Verostko, inscribed *Xiao jing zhai* (Little Footpath Studio), 1989. Courtesy of Roman Verostko.

in which he finalized the development of his original software program, and Verostko states that Wang Dongling's introduction of Chinese brush traditions directly influenced the software he then created for using a brush with pen plotters. Many of his plotter drawings dating from after 1985 carry a Chinese seal. Among these, the seal with the inscription "Little Footpath Studio" (*Xiao jing zhai*), which was frequently used by Verostko after 1989—to be seen for example in the most recent 2016 work *Presence*—was the one Wang Dongling carved for him in 1989 while he was staying in the United States as a visiting professor himself.<sup>23</sup>

### Lines in Translation: Years Abroad, 1989–1992

His travels abroad from 1989 to 1992 marked Wang Dongling's first and, as yet, longest sojourn outside China. During this time, Wang Dongling's different technical and stylistic backgrounds and sources of inspiration came to the fore, posing both a challenge and an opportunity for him as an artist. Developments that had already begun to take shape prior to this trip now found enhancement, making way for further changes in his future art production.

Roman Verostko, *Presence*,  
2016, print, 70 x 50 cm.  
Courtesy of DAM Gallery,  
Berlin.



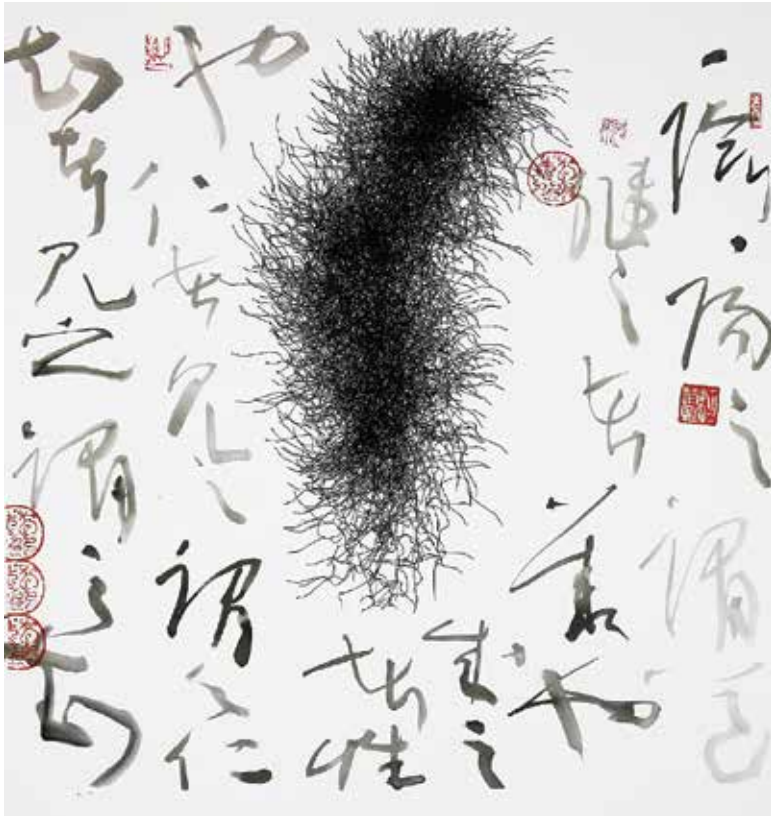
Wang Dongling with his  
calligraphy class at the  
University of Minnesota,  
c. 1990. Courtesy of Weimin Lu.



As documented by Gordon Barrass, Wang Dongling's stay was a rather traumatic experience in the beginning.<sup>24</sup> In addition to encountering the foreignness of his new environment, Wang Dongling did not speak a word of English, and he had few established social networks. Also, the teaching assignments at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and the University of Minnesota proved somewhat demanding. The American students in his calligraphy class were neither knowledgeable about the Chinese language and script nor familiar with holding and guiding a calligraphy brush. However, at the same time that Wang Dongling saw himself confronted with various obstacles, his perspective as a calligrapher received significant new input. He traveled a lot and spent much time in museums where he absorbed famous works of Western art and closely studied their treatment of space, line, and colour. The knowledge and insight he gained through teaching and learning provoked substantial transformations in his approaches to calligraphy, both in theory and practice.<sup>25</sup> As Barrass further indicates, by exploring the connections



between abstract art and calligraphy art, Wang Dongling discovered a way to bridge the gap, or the seemingly untranslatable, culturally specific dimension posed by Chinese calligraphy. All in all, he was convinced that calligraphy, in order for it to survive and reinvent itself within a contemporary context, must become more “painterly.”<sup>26</sup>



Roman Verostko and Wang Dongling: *Untitled*, ca. 1990, pen-plotted algorithmic drawing and calligraphy, ink on paper, 60.9 x 45.7 cm. Courtesy of Roman Verostko.

Wang Dongling, who today still names the aforementioned Western painters as ongoing inspiration, began to develop new types of composition. Less text-oriented and more focused on the conceptualization of singular characters, their meaning and motifs, he laid emphasis on the pictorial shape of Chinese script and experimented with ink effects and various backgrounds. One can reasonably assume that these changes were also ignited by collaborative works produced together with Roman Verostko when Wang Dongling was invited to live with Verostko and his wife at their home in Minnesota for several months. While Verostko first created the algorithmic pen plot drawings, Wang Dongling responded to the drawings with the addition of calligraphic characters that he arranged freely around the pen-plotted structures. An untitled pen plot and calligraphy work executed around 1990, in which Wang Dongling quoted a text passage from the classic *Book of Changes (Yijing)*, shows this interplay between algorithm and hand. More than anything, the interactively created work demonstrates a cross-cultural attempt to combine different media, materials, and methods of producing brush lines—perhaps in search of commonalities; perhaps with an awareness that certain differences will remain and even should be retained. This interaction further bears testimony to the respect and fascination of both artists for one another: of Verostko for Wang Dongling as a master of the ancient Chinese art of calligraphy and of Wang Dongling

Left: Wang Dongling, *Hong yu hei (yi) (Red and Black No. 1)*, 1991, ink and color on paper, 68 x 68 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Right: Wang Dongling, *Xin shang Bijiasuo (Salute to Picasso)*, 1992, ink on paper, 69 x 68 cm. Courtesy of the artist.



for Verostko as a pioneer artist who was able to generate brush strokes in his “studio with an ‘electric brain’” (i.e., *diannao*, the Chinese word for “computer.”)<sup>27</sup>

While Wang Dongling had already produced several “abstract,” that is to say, “no-character” (*feizi*) calligraphies prior to 1989, his experiences abroad seem to have retriggered and reinforced the exploration of this particular approach to calligraphy. In fact, a large number of the artworks he made during the years 1989–92 belong to this category. They display his experimentation with fundamental aesthetics and techniques of Chinese calligraphy, including aspects of tension, rhythm, speed, and constant variation of the brush stroke. Also, an intentional incorporation of Western influences is apparent with regard to composition, style, and the use of colour—and not lastly signified by the very titles of the works themselves: *Red and Black (Hong yu hei)* (1991), referring to Stendhal’s (1783–1842) nineteenth-century novel *Le Rouge et le Noir*, or *Salute to Picasso (Xin shang Bijiasuo)* (1992). Altogether, this productive phase suggests a search for modes of an adequate artistic language that Wang Dongling felt was more compatible with his time and surroundings. In this sense, his abstract calligraphy from this period indicates an adventuring into the potentials of a liberalized form of calligraphic art and a questioning of its conventional definition as an inherently text-bound genre. It can also be considered a process of artistic negotiation necessitated by the circumstances of place and time, as an attempt to transcribe and thus un-alienate the culturally specific phenomenon of Chinese calligraphy.

Following this line of thought, it makes sense that many of Wang Dongling’s works produced around 1990 display a departure from the written word entirely and seem to turn toward, or rather *re-turn*, to painterly elements.<sup>28</sup> Though many works are evidently inspired by Expressionist and Abstract Expressionist traditions, interestingly, the momentum and the gestural quality of the brush line remain largely within the parameters of calligraphic methods. Trained in classical calligraphy, the work *The Historical Records (Shiji)*, 1990 finds, for example, Wang Dongling’s brush moving across the picture plane, alternating between rounded (*yuan*) and angular (*fang*) strokes; between abrupt, darting “reverse-attack” movements (*nifeng xiabi*), and tempered, sluggish ones (*liubi*); between centred (*zhong*)/hidden (*cang*), and slanted (*ce*)/exposed brush tips (*loufeng*); and



applications of both dense and moist (*nong*) tones of swelling ink (*zhangmo*); and a brittle, sweeping brush showing techniques of flying white (*feibai*), denoting the effect that is created when moving the brush with speed, such that the ink line reveals white “traces” where the paper beneath is left untouched. Evidently attempting to connect with stylistic models in the Western tradition, many works are lively and fresh, a quality that is attained through their vigorous and natural or “unintentional” brush momentum, conveying an air of tranquility with their subtly balanced, harmonic compositions and colours. The brush stroke itself is implemented confidently in a bold and elaborate manner. By contrast, some works, with their jagged angles and an emphasis on linear shapes, as with his *Salute to Picasso*, have to some extent an awkward or forced aspect about them. His use of the brush gives the impression that it is searching, probing; as if it is not quite sure whether to go this way or that, appearing slightly lost, or off-track. It seems that the artist is unsure whether to consider this work calligraphy or painting, or something in between. The idea of this brush being displaced is in fact appropriate, inasmuch as the written characters in a work of calligraphy are generally understood as presenting a formal vehicle through which the calligrapher conveys the state of his mind and innermost feelings. Moreover, since traditional calligraphy provides a strict chronological sequence of stroke order, it seems as if the complete absence of a linear narrative framework had in some way pulled away the rug from underneath Wang Dongling’s feet,

Wang Dongling, *Shiji (The Historical Records)*, 1990, ink and colour on paper, 67 x 68 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Wang Dongling, *Tuo ba ji* (*Expanding into the World*), 1990, ink on paper, 101 x 102 cm each sheet. Courtesy of the artist.



his brush now literally “expanding into the world,” as the title of the 1990 work *Tuo ba ji* announces. Here, in turn, the viewer’s temporal experience of a calligraphic artwork is deconstructed, or refigured, inasmuch as the process of time is traditionally grounded in his or her reading of the strict sequentiality of a stroke order.

Beginning in the early 1990s, and further maturing around the turn of the century into the present, the development of Wang Dongling’s by now hallmark format of large-scale calligraphy works, often connoting Daoist and Chan (Zen) Buddhist concepts, shows the fruit of that previous, often restless state of exploring and contesting the constitutive boundaries of the art form. In hindsight, what may have felt to be lost in translation would prove to be an asset, paving the way toward the bold works of the early 2000s, whose spatially dense, layered structures present a rediscovery of the classical black-and-white composition based on monochrome ink, all the while furthering the idiom of abstract or “non-character” calligraphy.

Wang Dongling:  
*Xuanhuang Dark (Heaven)*  
and *Yellow (Earth)*, 2005,  
ink on paper, 145.4 x 366.4  
cm. © Wang Dongling. The  
Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
New York, gift of the artist,  
2013.



### Lines in Translation: Andreas Schmid’s Space-and-Light Art

Returning to the 1980s, and now switching perspectives, we can consider early cross-cultural transmissions in calligraphy art through the lens of a Western-trained artist who had attained the exclusive opportunity to enrol in the foreign-student calligraphy class under Wang Dongling at the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts.<sup>29</sup> As already referenced in the introduction of this essay, one case to be examined is that of Andreas Schmid. Originally from Stuttgart, Germany, Schmid has been based in Berlin since 1987, where he lives and works as an artist and curator for projects primarily in Germany and mainland China. Schmid’s signature format, emerging in the late 1990s, is the large-scale spatial installation, often presented in public, or in publicly accessible spaces, and making use of fluorescent light tubes as graphic linear elements.<sup>30</sup> His ongoing curatorial activities and special interest and expertise in contemporary Chinese art became known in the Western-speaking art world through his co-curating the seminal, internationally acknowledged traveling exhibition *China Avantgarde* at the House of World Cultures in Berlin in 1993.<sup>31</sup>



While Schmid's conceptual and aesthetic approaches to art are informed by the postwar Western avant-garde art, including Minimal art, Conceptual art, and Gestural Abstraction, they are likewise rooted in his intensive studies of Chinese calligraphy and seal carving with Wang Dongling in Hangzhou in 1984 and 1985. After having pursued an education in modern Western oil painting at the State Academy of Fine Arts Stuttgart (Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste Stuttgart), from 1974 to 1981, the beginning of the 1980s saw Schmid searching for new languages of artistic expression and visual representation. He sought inspiration not only through the visual arts, but also through other media and genres and the experimental music of composer John Cage (1912–92) and artist Gordon Matta Clark (1943–78).<sup>32</sup>

Top: Andreas Schmid, *Lichtungen—Brescia (Clearings—Brescia)*, 2013, light installation with steering mechanism, installation view, Krypta San Salvatore, Museo di Santa Giulia, Brescia. Photo: Jürgen Altmann. Courtesy of the artist.

Bottom: Andreas Schmid, *Treibholz (Driftwood)*, 2004/2005, permanent light installation, foyer of the Kunstmuseum Stuttgart. Photo: Andreas Schmid. © VG Bild-Kunst.

The meaning, then, that the methods and concepts of Chinese calligraphy were to have for Schmid's work can, even must, be thought in terms of a mutually transformative relation inasmuch as they define contemporary Chinese calligraphy practice as a field of cultural and artistic translation, in consequence enabling us to see "Chinese calligraphy" with different eyes. Given that painting was the predominant form Schmid was working in at the time, I will introduce first three paintings he made between 1982 and 1983. These examples illustrate the period immediately preceding Schmid's departure for China as well as his first months abroad. This period can be considered transformational for Schmid's approaches to art and visual representation in general, including aspects of handling of space, line, colour, and, in particular, formative to Schmid's later *Raumzeichnungen* (drawings in space) and light-based installations. These works consist of elements that are inherently related to his early foundations in Chinese calligraphy.

Andreas Schmid, *Bewegung IA (Movement IA)*, 1982, oil on canvas, 153 x 178 cm. Courtesy of the artist.



The large-sized 1982 abstract oil painting *Movement IA (Bewegung IA)*, made one year prior to Schmid's departure to China, displays a strong sense of visual coherence and self-containment. Sprays of energy are released in restless gestures of the brush; the opaque, crayon-like use of bright, strongly saturated colours is bold; the shapes and lines are arranged densely, as though they were pulling, pushing, and tugging toward and away from one another, therein creating effects of tension and friction within the composition. Likewise, the large-sized *Moving* (1982–83), executed in Chinese ink, gouache, and oil, can be said to contain an element of restlessness. Here, however, this restlessness has an utterly different quality. What prevails is a subtle sense of unease, and an air of discomfort; something that is altogether absent in its predecessor, *Movement IA*. If *IA* could speak, its voice would be shouting out loud with confidence; *Moving*, by contrast, seems curiously restrained, even vulnerable. Its composition manages to hold itself together



Andreas Schmid, *Moving*, 1983, Chinese ink, gouache and oil on canvas, 178 x 139 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

only through the individual, just visible, thinly drawn lines that loosely connect the pictorial elements into an open fragmented structure. Although *Moving* appears to present a sense of retraction and withdrawal, there exists at the same time an awareness of an undescribed space probing the constitutive function of the void. *Moving* can be read as a response to *Movement IA*; something new, literally, has been set in motion—a new thought, or intuition, a questioning perhaps, of what had been there before—and is now formulating itself through an adjusted relationality of things, perhaps in apprehensive anticipation of soon leaving home for China? In *Moving*, Schmid appears to be shifting and reshuffling his vocabulary, arranging individual pictorial elements and reconfiguring them into a new logical constellation. While the idea of “movement” in the title *Movement IA* implies a self-contained, complete action, the active verb of “moving” in the title of the latter work emphasizes an ongoing, open-ended nature of something in mid-action. The apparent process of reshuffling and reconfiguring parallels the aforementioned experiences of Wang Dongling during his sojourn in the USA, when he sought out new possibilities to articulate Chinese calligraphy art. In Schmid’s case, the formerly vigorous, aggressive application of colour is superseded by wisps of thread-like lines, balancing fragile structures that seem to be suspended in space.

If we interpret *Moving* as a questioning of the confidence to be perceived in *Movement IA*, then another work, made later in 1983 upon Schmid’s arrival in China, can be read as providing a form of interim resolution to issues of form and composition. In this third, untitled piece, executed with Chinese

Andreas Schmid, *Untitled*, 1983, hanging scroll, Chinese ink and gouache on paper, 133 x 60.9 cm. Courtesy of the artist.



ink and gouache on *xuan* paper, novel elements, whose potentiality was already perceivable in *Moving*, are now translated into a new confidence of form, composition, and brushwork. The dynamics of this work convey what could be titled a “third movement” in Schmid’s work—one that appears to move with a light-footed pace and in an easy going manner. Floating lines are soft and fluid, the ink flowing from the brush as if of its own accord. Delicate curves and circular motions define shapes, rather than the sharp angles and zigzags that characterized his earlier work. Still, the tenderly drawn lines, which are combined with gentle blots of ink, remain slightly reminiscent of the thin threads found in *Moving*; their alternation

with stronger brush strokes in turn echoes the boldness of *Movement IA*. Different, however, is that the overall mood of this “third movement” is tranquil and mellow, conveying a condition of being at rest.

Given the dense and tougher texture of oil paint and the hard brittleness of the flat-ended brushes common to Western-style painting, this transformation of movement is, in part, due to the fluid, water-based materiality of Chinese ink and the supple, highly-absorbing hairs characteristic of Chinese brushes. And yet, in spite of Schmid’s making use of materials and techniques that are a convention in Chinese calligraphy—brush and ink, the large-size hanging scroll format, the composition of a vertical alignment of visual elements, the seemingly sequential order of rendering these elements (in allusion perhaps to a one-column calligraphy scroll), and the harmonious treatment of described and undescribed space—works like the untitled one of 1983 are a bit too different from conventional models of calligraphy for them to be defined properly as works of calligraphy.

Evolving over time as a formal, nonfigurative visual system, calligraphy does not serve to “represent” forms and phenomena of the natural world in a mimetic sense, as is the case in pictorial representation.<sup>33</sup> Given the presentational function of Chinese calligraphy as a technique of making-present, the (indivisible) relation of self and world, it is feasible to speak of a phenomenology of Chinese calligraphy in that it “does not imitate the world, but is a world of its own.”<sup>34</sup> Schmid’s discovery of Chinese calligraphy was precisely this “world of its own,” which underwent further exploration after his return to Europe in 1986. This is particularly evident





in the light installations that Schmid has created over the last three decades. His transference and application of genre-specific concepts and aesthetics characteristic of Chinese calligraphy include aspects of rhythm, void, latency, resonance, and change; all of which are essential in order for Schmid's space-and-light art to operate in any meaningful way.<sup>35</sup>

Left and right: Andreas Schmid, *Relation*, 2015, permanent light installation with steering mechanism, composed of 19 LED modules, 6113 cm x 443 cm, view from Kunstmuseum Stuttgart. Courtesy of the artist.

Here, the most obvious and possibly the most significant point of reference to the field of Chinese calligraphy is the function and meaning of the line, especially the implementation of graphic lines as the principal visual element. While Chinese calligraphy traditionally uses brush, water, and ink to create lines, the lines in Schmid's "drawings in space" are created by (natural) light, colour, and shadow. In his minimally composed light-art installations that are created for three-dimensional spaces, both interior and exterior, he moreover makes use of light sources including fluorescent coloured light tubes and LEDs—"strokes" of light that illuminate and fade out repetitively, following pre-set computer-programmed intervals and loops according to algorithms of changing patterns. The viewer is thus surrounded by an ever-changing landscape of appearing and disappearing beams of light, and he or she can sequentially experience various states of brightness and darkness, filled space and empty space, movement and stillness, and, in particular, the transitory states in between. According to Schmid's understanding of each specific space as a resonative body (*Resonanzkörper*) that possesses atmospheric effect, his drawings are not only an expansion into the space, but are also a form-giving element of space itself. Schmid thus describes his working process as an interplay of form and space, and his aim is to stimulate "characteristic tones" and a

“personal rhythm” that resonate with the given conditions in situ: “For me, the decisive requirements for working on a space are listening to and grasping its characteristics.”<sup>36</sup>

Schmid’s conceptual handling of space is very close to established conceptions in traditional calligraphy. Whether it is the two-dimensional field of the writing paper or the three-dimensional field of an interior architectural space, in both cases, linear structures serve to define and order space within a clearly circumscribed area. These areas are initially demarcated by their formal boundaries: in the former case, by the paper edges, in the latter case, by the walls, ceiling, and floor. Through the sequential placement of individual lines within the set boundaries of the area, this systematic build-up of a relational structure line-for-line is carried out according to particular parameters that rely on age-old Chinese conceptions of aesthetic composition. In traditional Chinese calligraphy, the brush moves forward through time and space, continuously weaving together sequences of individual strokes in an uninterrupted flow. The visible chronology of ink traces is readable as an ongoing dynamic reaction to what has immediately preceded, and always in simultaneous anticipation of what is going to come next. To some degree, then, the initial line in a work sets the overall course, or tone, of the piece, and even informs what the very last stroke will look like.

The musical metaphor of the basic tone, or keynote, is useful. Next to the dialectical tension that is continuously maintained between polar elements, such as black-white, void-matter, latency-visibility, absence-presence, potentiality-actuality, open-closed, etc. (as indicated by Chinese aesthetic terminological pairings like *heibai*, *xushi*, *canglou*, *kaihe*, it is this musical quality—or rather tonal quality (that is, *yun*, meaning “resonance,” “tone,” “rhyme,” or “verse,” and referring to the moment of resonance that, according to traditional Chinese aesthetics, is sought to be evoked within the perceiver)—implied by Schmid that bears a relation to traditional Chinese calligraphy theory and is crucial to his space-and-light art.<sup>37</sup> As Schmid elaborates:

During my years in the People’s Republic of China from 1983 to 1986, I studied the nature of the line, for example in classical Chinese calligraphy and the history of calligraphy. The relationship between black and white within a single character as well as the relationship of characters to one another, both graphic and spatial, was the object of my study. But equally important was working through the mental tension in drawing the line. The lines of each individual character act in space, the character itself creates space, just as the sequence of characters within the whole process. Our own thinking is transferred indelibly and directly to the paper. At the same time, writing develops a rhythm of its own. The whole sheet has—by way of writing—a form and a link to content. Furthermore, a

dramaturgy develops, a score of writing. This position goes far beyond the mere writing of a text and is clearly an artistic act. Fascinating for me is a statement, confirmed by practice, that was made by the calligrapher Wang Dongling in November 1983, that the calligrapher can hear the speed with which the brush needs to be moved (“You will hear how fast you need to write.”). Besides technique, a feeling for the precision of the placement on the sheet and in space develops. These experiences find their application in my spatial works in the European context.<sup>38</sup>

Linked with this aspect of resonance, when considering Schmid’s space-and-light installations, is the element of performativity enacted by the beholder in his or her respective experience of the works. He or she is compelled to pursue the gradual fluctuating of the neon tubes as they light up and fade out in sequential movements that can only be comprehended in real time, never at a single glance. For example, for his 1997 work *Open Space (Offener Raum)*, a studio space at Wiepersdorf Castle was prepared



with materials including steel ropes and strings, such that their linear arrangement corresponded with the wandering fields of natural light and shadow throughout the day. Schmid speaks of of this work as a plastic drawing within a three-dimensional space, where individual fragments are connected in a complex time-based composition that can be perceived only when one walks around it.<sup>39</sup> The conscious employment of natural light as part of the composition is particularly evident in the example of *Urbanes Tattoo (Urban Tattoo)* (1998). This installation, which includes a large colour photograph showing the view from a skyscraper into central Shanghai is a kind of collaboration with the light and shadows cast on the floor of the exhibition space by a window, thus creating the illusion of looking down into a street from the window of a high building in Shanghai.



Further, as Schmid states: “[S]ome works undergo, through the conscious inclusion of natural light, a change of expression in time. They are fulfilled only with the

Top: Andreas Schmid, *Offener Raum (Open Space)*, 1997, drawn lines and steel ropes, Wiepersdorf Castle, Brandenburg. Courtesy of the artist.

Bottom: Andreas Schmid, *Urbanes Tattoo (Urban Tattoo)*, 1998, colour photograph, strings, adhesive tape, iron bars, installation view, City Museum Esslingen. Courtesy of the artist.

actions of the beholder in time.”<sup>40</sup> Thus the beholder is, in a performative way, essential to the genesis of the work itself. In the context of traditional Chinese calligraphy, similarly, the beholder is considered to partake in the genesis of the work; that is, by seeking to visually and mentally reconstruct the creative process of the calligraphic work by “reading” the successive narrative of the brush line, stroke for stroke, dot for dot, and column for column. Here, too, the work cannot be consumed with a single glance; its chronological development, marked by a definite starting point and a definite ending point, must be retraced consecutively—in real time. In this sense, Schmid’s well-phrased description of his works undergoing a continual “change of expression in time” also serves to provide an entirely applicable and useful definition for calligraphy art. Moreover, nowhere could the idea of the beholder as partaker/creator through whose actions the work achieves some form of fulfillment be truer than in the context of Chinese calligraphy.

If Schmid’s light installations have today attained refinement, conceptual complexity, and technical precision, works like the aforementioned untitled painting of late 1983 can be read as a threshold that foretold the later transition toward his light-and-space art—which in turn can be considered abstracted forms of calligraphy. Moreover, rather than simply denoting works like the 1983 untitled painting as being “calligraphy-inspired,” Schmid has noted that it is more correct to describe these as “premonitions,” or “presentiments,” foreshadowing “an idea of what calligraphy might mean” to him. Schmid recounts that the 1983 untitled work—the very first one he made upon arriving in China—gave expression to his intuition that “there was something significant in store” for him in China and in studying Chinese calligraphy.<sup>41</sup>



Andreas Schmid, *Durcheilter Raum (Hurried-Through Space)*, 1989, egg tempera on canvas, 87 x 222 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Finally, the painting *Hurried-Through Space (Durcheilter Raum)*, made by Schmid in 1989, can be considered similarly as a threshold work among his larger oeuvre. It can be juxtaposed with Wang Dongling’s 1990 work *Expanding into the World*, the two correlating like a complementary couple. *Hurried-Through Space* shows a poetical interpretation, or abstraction, of a text-written calligraphy. The focus of the brush is on its own movement, on the gestural, self-referential effects of brush and ink; the two abstracted “columns” of writing, as one could imagine them to be, echo each other

harmoniously in their graphic shapes and their well-chosen positions on the otherwise empty paper. Although the composition appears carefully premeditated, the overall impression of the work is that of spontaneity and dynamism. This is largely due to the loose, unforced, seemingly random movement of the brush, and we can retrace in our mind's eye how the brush indeed hurried through the space of the paper on the spur of a moment. The aspect of swiftness that is implied both through the title and the brushwork of this piece may have been inspired by the advice given to Schmid by Wang Dongling while he had been his student: to become attuned to “hearing how fast one needs to write.”

### Lost and Found in Translation?

In conclusion, in light of the far-reaching collective cultural endeavour in China to recover, rejuvenate, and emancipate the arts from the late 1970s onward, the phenomena of cross-cultural encounter and exchange taking place within the art and academic scenes of the early to mid-1980s have been investigated as to their impact on and meaning for the emerging field of contemporary Chinese calligraphy. In this context, the works by calligrapher Wang Dongling, digital artist Roman Versotko, and light-installation artist Andreas Schmid provide exemplary cases that show the emergence of what at that time carried the status of “third texts,” operating beyond the outdated trajectory of calligraphy as an “inherently” and exclusively “Chinese” realm. Though we might be inclined to think that certain dichotomous ways of thinking have long been overcome by now, we still do well in citing art historians like Gao Shiming:

East and west, south and north, developed and developing countries, First World and Third World—these traditional dualist models no longer seem adequate to describe today's world where culture and politics, power and capital, self and Other are intertwined. We need a system for reconfiguration of cultural identity and new mechanisms for knowledge production. This requires the establishment of a new cultural subjectivity.<sup>42</sup>

In face of ongoing heated conservative debates on the meaning and potential of calligraphy art in China, Gao Shiming's claim is truly a pertinent one. It would be welcome to see further research into the history of contemporary calligraphy—a history that is and in fact always has been constituted by cross-cultural flows. Within the discursive field of Chinese calligraphy art, these flows still struggle to be named and evaluated.<sup>43</sup>

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#### Notes

1. This essay is based on the author's paper “Zhuanyi xiantiao: lun 1980 niandai zaoqi Zhongguo ‘xiandai zhuyi’ shufa ji qi kua wenhua yiyi” (Translating the Brush Line: Modernist Calligraphy in Early-1980s China and its Cross-cultural Significance), presented at the Academic Forum of the International Festival of Calligraphy, Hangzhou, 2015 (2015 Zhongguo Hangzhou xiandai shufa guoji luntan), China Academy of Art (Zhongguo meishu xueyuan), Hangzhou, May 8–9, 2015. I am grateful to Andreas Schmid, Roman Verostko, and Wang Dongling for kindly providing me with ample material and information in preparation of this essay. I would like to thank Yang Piaopiao of Freie Universität Berlin, for her much appreciated help concerning questions of translation.

2. For a concise historical overview of the development of calligraphy in and outside of China after 1949 with special regard to its exhibition history, see Lu Dadong, "Zhongguo 'xiandai shufa' dashi nianbiao" (Chronology of significant events within "modern calligraphy" in China), in *Zhongguo xiandai shufa lunwen xuan* (Selected essays on modern calligraphy in China), ed. Wang Dongling (Hangzhou: Zhongguo meishu xueyuan chubanshe, 2004), 353–73; and "'Shu fei shu' yu xiandai shufa sanshi nian dashi ji" ("Writing Non-Writing" and a record of thirty years of significant events within modern calligraphy), in *Shu fei shu: wenxian—Writing Non-Writing: Documents*, eds. Xu Jiang et al. (Hangzhou: Zhongguo meishu xueyuan chubanshe, 2015), 226–38. The singular Western-language publication aiming at a systematic and comprehensive discussion of calligraphy in twentieth-century China is Gordon S. Barrass, *The Art of Calligraphy in Modern China* (London/Berkeley: British Museum Press/University of California Press, 2002).
3. Initially founded as the National Academy of Art (Guoli yishuyuan) in 1928, the academy was renamed the China Academy of Art in 1993.
4. For a disambiguation of "modernity" and "contemporaneity" in Chinese calligraphy in the context of the here-discussed calligrapher Wang Dongling, see, for example, Guan Huaibin, "Wang Dongling yu xiandai shufa de 'dangdai xing' jiangou" (Wang Dongling and the construction of "contemporaneity" in modern calligraphy), in *Wang Dongling shufa yishu—The Way of Calligraphy: Wang Dongling's Work*, ed. Xu Jiang (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2001), 48–57.
5. For Wang Dongling's biography as well as a recent comprehensive publication of his works, see *Shu fei shu: Wang Dongling—Writing Non-Writing: Wang Dongling*, ed. Wang Dongling (Hangzhou: Sanshang dangdai yishuguan, 2015). For Verostko's biography, selected artworks and writings, and further documentaion, see <http://www.verostko.com/>. For Schmid's biography and work projects as well as artist statements, selected interviews, and articles, see <http://www.andreasschmid.info/index.html/>.
6. This refers to the journal *Third Text: Third World Perspectives on Contemporary Art & Culture*, whose editorial of the first issue launched in 1987, titled "Why Third Text?," programmatically announced: "*Third Text* represents a historical shift away from the centre of the dominant culture to its periphery in order to consider the centre critically"; see *Third Text*, no. 1 (Autumn 1987), 3–5. Here, editor Rasheed Araeen further stated that "It is imperative to abandon the models of binary oppositions which impose fixed ordering systems, and according to which cultural practices are classified in terms of Same and Other. And it is to this end that considerations of art cannot be separated from questions of politics," and concluded: "Without recognizing the hierarchical structure underpinning definitions of cultural difference, however, it is impossible to account for the almost total exclusion of non-Western artists from the history of modern art." *Ibid.*, 4.
7. The original Chinese of this quote is "Zhongguo shufa shi Zhongguo chuantong yishu de hexin yishu, zui neng tixian Zhongguo yishu jingshen." Wang Dongling, "Xiandai shufa jingshen lun" (On the Essence of Modern Calligraphy), in Wang Dongling ed., *Zhongguo xiandai shufa lunwen xuan* (Selected Essays on Modern Calligraphy in China), 320–326, 320.
8. Lothar Ledderose, *Mi Fu and the Classical Tradition of Chinese Calligraphy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 33.
9. As investigated by Yueh-ping Yen in *Calligraphy and Power in Contemporary Chinese Society* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005).
10. For a study of the politically and ideologically contested field of art during this period, especially the traditional literati arts, see Aida Yuen Wong, *Parting the Mists: Discovering Japan and the Rise of National-Style Painting in Modern China* (Honolulu: Association for Asian Studies, 2006).
11. A discussion of these two artists is given in Barrass (2002), 172–81, and 182–93, respectively.
12. *Ibid.*, 29.
13. Yen (2005), 158.
14. The original Chinese of this quote is "Shufa cai huode wanquan de yishu jiafang, tuoli shiyong de shufu, jinru shenmei ziyou de fanchou, cong'er dadao zhenzheng yiyi shang de yishu de chunquixing," in Wang Dongling ed., *Zhongguo xiandai shufa lunwen xuan* (Selected Essays on Modern Calligraphy in China), 322.
15. There do, of course, exist other academic institutions in China that promote research on contemporary calligraphy within their curricula, yet there is no other individual institution designated (solely) as a research center for "modern" or "contemporary calligraphy."
16. As proclaimed by a group of Wuxi- and Suzhou-based artists, see Lu Dadong, "Zhongguo xiandai shufa' dashi nianbiao," (Chronology of significant events within "modern calligraphy" in China), 356.
17. As recounted by Wang in personal interviews with the author on October 27, 2010, and July 1, 2011.
18. *Ibid.* See also Barrass, *The Art of Calligraphy in Modern China*, 165.
19. The syllabus of the course can be accessed at [www.verostko.com/china/images/EngSyllZhej1985.pdf/](http://www.verostko.com/china/images/EngSyllZhej1985.pdf/).
20. V & A Collections Archives, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O499689/pathway-series-bird-2-drawing-roman-verostko/>.
21. For Verostko's most recent pen-plotted algorithmic works, see the Digital Art Museum (DAM) website: <http://www.dam-gallery.de/index.php?id=49&L=1/>.
22. V & A Collections Archives, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O239973/pathway-series-drawing-roman-verostko/>.
23. "Little Footpath Studio" was the alternative name Wang Dongling gave Verostko's "Pathway Studio" in Minnesota. In an e-mail message containing an image of the seal, Verostko elucidated that Wang had carved it while staying with him in 1989, writing: "This is my Pathway Studio Seal carved by Wang in an old style. You will recognize that it is a 'Little' Pathway Studio. He understood that the program driving my 'electric brain' was titled 'Hodos,' the Greek word for 'Path' or 'Way.' I told him that I chose this term as a modest Western term that alluded, in my mind, to the Eastern concept of 'Tao.' The term 'Pathway' refers especially to path of the ink pen as it draws, searching for a 'form,' seeking its 'way.' Wang chose 'Little' path and the appropriate classical term for studio [*zhan*]." Roman Verostko, e-mail message to the author, November 14, 2010. For images of Verostko's various seals, see <http://www.verostko.com/seal.html>.

24. Barrass, *The Art of Calligraphy in Modern China*, 166. It may be noted here that it seems symptomatic that Barrass's publication (as mentioned, the only one of its kind in Western language) is a rare, if not the only one in which Wang Dongling's artistically formative sojourn outside China is thematized in some detail. While publications on Wang Dongling's art have been amassing increasingly over the past two and a half decades, it was already remarked in the introduction that the issue of cross-cultural aspects in Wang's art are hardly considered, which appears a major omission in light of the significant impact these aspects can be seen to have had and continue to have in his context.
25. See *ibid.*, 166–67.
26. See *ibid.*, 167.
27. As Verostko states: “[A]s a *shufa* master, Wang introduced me to Chinese brush traditions that influenced the software I then developed for using a brush with pen plotters. Later, as a visiting artist in the U.S., Wang lived in our home and became fascinated with the brush strokes executed by the plotter”; see <http://www.verostko.com/seal.html>.
28. Wang, who likewise had a background in painting, initially intended to become a painter and not a calligrapher. The bachelor's program in painting he had enrolled in Nanjing University in 1963 was unusual in that it devoted much of its focus on calligraphy. “In retrospect, Wang feels that this was his first step on the road to becoming a calligrapher.” Barrass, *The Art of Calligraphy in Modern China*, 163.
29. Schmid was in fact the second person from Germany who received an artist scholarship from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) for art studies in the People's Republic of China (the first person being Angelika Obletter in 1980/1981), and the calligraphy class he attended in Hangzhou comprised of no more than five students. As recounted in a personal interview with the author on April 11, 2016
30. Next to the work *Relation* (2015), further examples are *Transit: Gleisdreieck Berlin* (2012) and *Colorfield Chemnitz* (2009/2010); see [http://www.andreasschmid.info/kunst\\_raum.php?wid=75&l=en/](http://www.andreasschmid.info/kunst_raum.php?wid=75&l=en/) and [http://www.andreasschmid.info/kunst\\_raum.php?wid=28&l=en/](http://www.andreasschmid.info/kunst_raum.php?wid=28&l=en/) respectively.
31. The exhibition, which was curated together with Hans van Dijk and Jochen Noth, traveled on to the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, and the Brandts Klædefabrik, Odense, between 1991 and 1993. Schmid's most recent exhibition project, curated together with Thomas Eller, was *Die 8 der Wege: Kunst in Beijing*, which took place in the Uferhallen, Berlin, from April 30 to July 13, 2014.
32. As asserted by Schmid in a personal interview with the author on April 3, 2011.
33. Contrary to common belief, the proportion of Chinese written characters that can be identified as pictograms, meaning visual structures that, in an iconological sense, imitate the visual appearance of the things that they signify, today comprises less than five percent of the entire corpus of recorded written characters. See Richard C. Kraus, *Brushes with Power: Modern Politics and the Chinese Art of Calligraphy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 15–18.
34. This refers to philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1908–1961) assertion that “Painting does not imitate the world but is a world of its own”; see *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: The World of Perception*, trans. Oliver Davis (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 97. On the presentational function of Chinese calligraphy, see, for example, Wen C. Fong's essay “Chinese Calligraphy as Presenting the Self,” in *Chinese Calligraphy*, eds. Ouyang Zhongshi et al. (New Haven and London and Beijing: Yale University Press and Foreign Language Press, 2008), 1–31.
35. For explanations of his approach to “drawing with spaces,” see Schmid's essay “Präzision und Offenheit: Mit Räumen zeichnen,” <http://www.andreasschmid.info/texte.php?l=de&id=7/> (n. pag.). For an English-language translation of excerpts from this essay, see “Präzision und Offenheit: Drawing with Spaces” <http://www.andreasschmid.info/texte.php?l=en&id=7/> (n. pag.). The essay was originally published in *Minimal Concept: Zeichenhafte Sprachen im Raum*, ed. Christian Schneegass (Amsterdam/Dresden: Akademie der Künste, 2001), 87–94.
36. Schmid, “Präzision und Offenheit,” n. pag.
37. On the musical dimension in the context of traditional Chinese aesthetics, see Kenneth DeWoskin, “Early Chinese Music and the Origins of Aesthetic Terminology” in *Theories of the Arts in China*, eds. Susan Bush and Christian Murck (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 187–214.
38. Schmid, “Präzision und Offenheit,” n. pag.
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.*
41. As elucidated in an interview with the author on April 11, 2016. It is noteworthy to mention that Schmid was “pre-educated” in terms of East Asian calligraphy already prior to his three years of studies abroad. In 1982, Schmid visited the exhibition *Worte des Buddha: Kalligraphien japanischer Priester der Gegenwart, Sammlung Seiko Kono, Abt des Daian-ji, Nara* (*Words of the Buddha: Calligraphies by Contemporary Japanese Priests, Seiko Kono Collection, Abbot of Daian-ji, Nara*), curated by Roger Goepfer (1925–2011) at the Museum of East Asian Art in Cologne, April 24 to June 20, 1982. It was the revelatory event of seeing this exhibition which initially sparked Schmid's interest in East Asian calligraphy.
42. “A Be-Coming Future: The Unweaving and Rebuilding of the Local,” *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art* 8, no. 5 (September/October 2009), 29–37, 31.
43. As the presentation of the paper on which this essay is based incidentally showed; see n. 1. I am therefore all the more thankful for Zheng Shengtian's initiative in approaching me at the conference and suggest an essay submission to this journal.