

Artist Biography & Statement- Chun-chiang Shih

Chun-chiang Shih was born in Taiwan. In 1987 he received his Diploma in Fine Arts and then commenced teaching in an art studio for four years, and migrated to Australia in 1988. He graduated at the School of Arts, ANU, with BA Honours in 1997. And two years later completed his MA degree in painting (1999).

Amongst his other artistic activities, Chun-chiang has concentrated on two themes: the "hand", and "tea". Because of the role of tea & the hand in the cultures of both the East and the West, he has sought to explore avenues of expression that might assist towards the greater understanding between our two peoples and their cultures. Throughout his artwork generally, there may be observed gradual changes in both the choice of subject matter and the manner of its depiction whereby current events in the world have tended to be imbued both figuratively and creatively as a kind of commentary upon the various issues that affect us all in our daily lives.

Themes evolving around the tea-cup and the hand have served to function as material representations common to our two cultures: tea with its assumed powers of prophesy – as in the reading of tea-leaves when seeking such solutions that it may offer as to the future – and the hand wherein there may be found residing therein, evidence of the personage: his character, occupation, future aspirations, and suchlike; as well as the ability of the hand to express figuratively and creatively through the medium of various art-forms, so many aspects of the world outside the mind of the individual within. Just how these various themes may serve to depict aspects of the ever-changing passage of the world outside, or the ever-increasing concern in the mind of the individual – be it the artist himself, or a viewer who may ponder upon the messages in the finished product – cannot they be but a purely personal interpretations?

In recent years Chun-chiang's paintings have progressed into several other themes. The "hand" continues, however, to play an inter-connecting role, and whether accompanied by a teacup, or saucer (or even two or more of both), they find their place now in a variety of landscapes and sea-scapes. In the skies considerable attention has been placed upon depictions of the ever-changing shapes of clouds; while birds, singly or in flocks, fly helter-skelter, or soar serenely above the earth's surface below. Marine life, too, often plays a part in the total composition, whilst on the land topographical details: hills, rivers, lakes, trees, etc. are blended in to form a pleasing canvas. It is upon such a medley of backgrounds wherein the hand with its various gestures either holds or balances cups or saucers with these in numerous stances.

Both the tea-cup and the hand serve to function as material representations common to the two cultures: tea with its assumed powers of prophesy – as in the reading of tea-leaves to seek such solutions it may offer as to the future – and the hand wherein there may reside evidence of the personage: his character, occupation, future aspirations, as well as the ability of the hand to express figuratively and creatively through the medium of various art-forms, so many aspects of the world outside the mind of the individual within.