



CHEN WEN HSI (Singaporean, 1906 - 1991)

陈文希

Blue Mountain

蓝山

signed in Chinese with one seal lower right

c. 1970s – 1980s

ink on paper

182 x 97 cm

220 x 121 cm (with frame)

Provenance

Important institutional collection, Singapore



33 Auction is proud to present a big and exquisite Chen Wen Hsi artwork, *Blue Mountain* in the November 17, 2024 sale.

“Ink Master Chen Wen Hsi is best remembered in Singapore as one of the pioneer artists who helped shape the early development of Singapore’s modern art history. Chen was also a member of the group of artists who made a historic trip to Bali in 1952. This was the trip that set the foundation for the Nanyang style of painting.

A keen observer of nature, an animal lover, his favoured subject matters include landscapes, figures, birds and animals, still-life studies and abstract compositions. He was proficient in both traditional Chinese ink and Western oil paintings and experimented with a variety of styles including Fauvism and Cubism”. Source: Singapore Art Museum/ *Convergences: Chen Wen Hsi Centennial Art Exhibition, 2006.*

Chen used masterful brush strokes to compose minimalist and dramatic compositions such as *Blue Mountain*. After it was acquired from the artist, this artwork disappeared from public view for decades and is now finally back in the spotlight.

Although Chen’s most representational subject of animal life-sketching conveys fun and joy of his acute observation, this landscape series is dedicated to depicting the spirit and essence of nature on a macro horizon. Chen created similar artworks in about the last years of his life through fusing various styles and concepts.

The existing literature and publications point to the *Blue Mountain* series as the scenery in Hualian, Taiwan. *Blue Mountain* is not to be confused with the Blue Mountains in New South Wales in South Australia. We see in *Blue Mountain* that Chen has combined his lifelong knowledge of various Western and Eastern concepts into the artwork without abandoning the classical forms of Chinese ink painting.

Chen combined dry-texture brushwork, cubism color planes, negative spaces and captured the magnificence and vastness of the scene. As such this exquisite artwork becomes an abstraction of the mountain with a great visual appeal. Chen also paid close attention to the sense of mass and movement to depict the air and flowing water, traditionally interpreted as the “spirit” of nature in literati paintings. By varying the thickness and angle of strokes, Chen masterfully depicted the contrast between the mist, waterfalls, and the steep mountain. Chen lyrically said, ***“There is poetry in painting, and painting in poetry”.***