

# The evolution of art and technology

## Q&A with Calvin Hui, co-founder of 3812 Art Enterprise

The world of Chinese contemporary art has grown tremendously over the past decade. No longer defined simply by the smiling faces of Yue Minjun, the genre today features a diverse range of multifaceted artists. Yet as with other industries, technology is starting to have a significant impact, transforming how art is appreciated, collected, shared and even created. With Chinese contemporary art gaining a wider audience, it is also drawing greater interest from investors, looking to diversify their investments through art.

We recently had the opportunity to sit down with Mr. Calvin Hui, co-founder of 3812 Art Enterprise and 3812 Gallery, to learn more about what one of the leading Asian contemporary art curators is up to and his thoughts on Chinese contemporary art and how he sees the genre developing in the future.

**Q. As an acclaimed art curator, you have many years of experience in promoting modern and Chinese contemporary art. Can you share with us on how you got into art curation?**

*I started collecting art pieces in the early 2000s, initially out of interest then as a hobby. Over time, I found that the value of my art was appreciating, so I decided to study art pieces, artists and the market in greater detail to build up my knowledge of art as an investment.*



*Art not only brings pleasure but can also be a worthwhile investment. When I started collecting art, the market in Hong Kong and Asia was not as vibrant as it is today. As I*

*developed my knowledge and gained experience, various media agencies began to approach me for my thoughts and views on art collections and investment. Gradually, I became more and more immersed in my new career. I became a gallery owner, art fair organiser, and served as a consultant, curator, writer, promoter and collector of art. Being involved in all facets of the industry allowed me to establish a unique position within the art world. I also had the privilege to be an art consultant for several large corporations and an advisor in the boards for several government organisations.*

*Though I am currently based in Hong Kong, we also have galleries in London as well as operations in Shanghai, Taipei and Singapore. I often travel around the world to seek new ideas, obtain inspirations and make sure that I stay in touch with international market trends. With the global coronavirus pandemic restricting travel this year, I have spent the past few months enjoying my hometown more and developed a new business plan around technology and art.*

**Q. We note that you have concentrated your interest on Chinese contemporary art and specifically ink art. Is there a specific reason why you have focused on this genre?**

*I have always had a passion for Chinese contemporary art. Though its popularity has grown tremendously over the past decade, knowledge of the genre's works and artists remains limited beyond the audience within the art community. I want more people to share my passion in this genre, so I am developing a comprehensive art ecosystem for Chinese contemporary art which integrates art with technology. Hopefully, this will make it more accessible and easily understood by the general public.*

*I want to foster a cultural understanding of Chinese contemporary art with our defined notion of "Eastern Origin and Contemporary Expression". By establishing international dialogue and exchanges between artists, academics, collectors and the general public through our thoughtfully curated art programmes, I believe that we can highlight and promote the cultural identity that is essential in the understanding and appreciation of Chinese contemporary art. Hong Kong, with its Chinese*

*cultural heritage and western influences, provides as an ideal starting point for these interactions.*

*As for the genre, I see "Eastern Origin in Contemporary Expression" and "More than Ink" concepts becoming more and more relevant. Launching the world's first A.I. ink artist through INK NOW and our gallery, has expanded the horizons of Chinese contemporary art and I believe that the integration of art and technology is the future.*

**Q. I think our readers would be interested in the investment perspective of art. As art is very subjective, how do you value it objectively? What exactly gives value to a certain piece of art?**

*Art is a special type of investment. Understanding its unique nature and its differentiation from other types of investments is vitally important. To me "artistic value" comes first. But knowing your artist is equally important and proper due diligence on the artist is essential.*

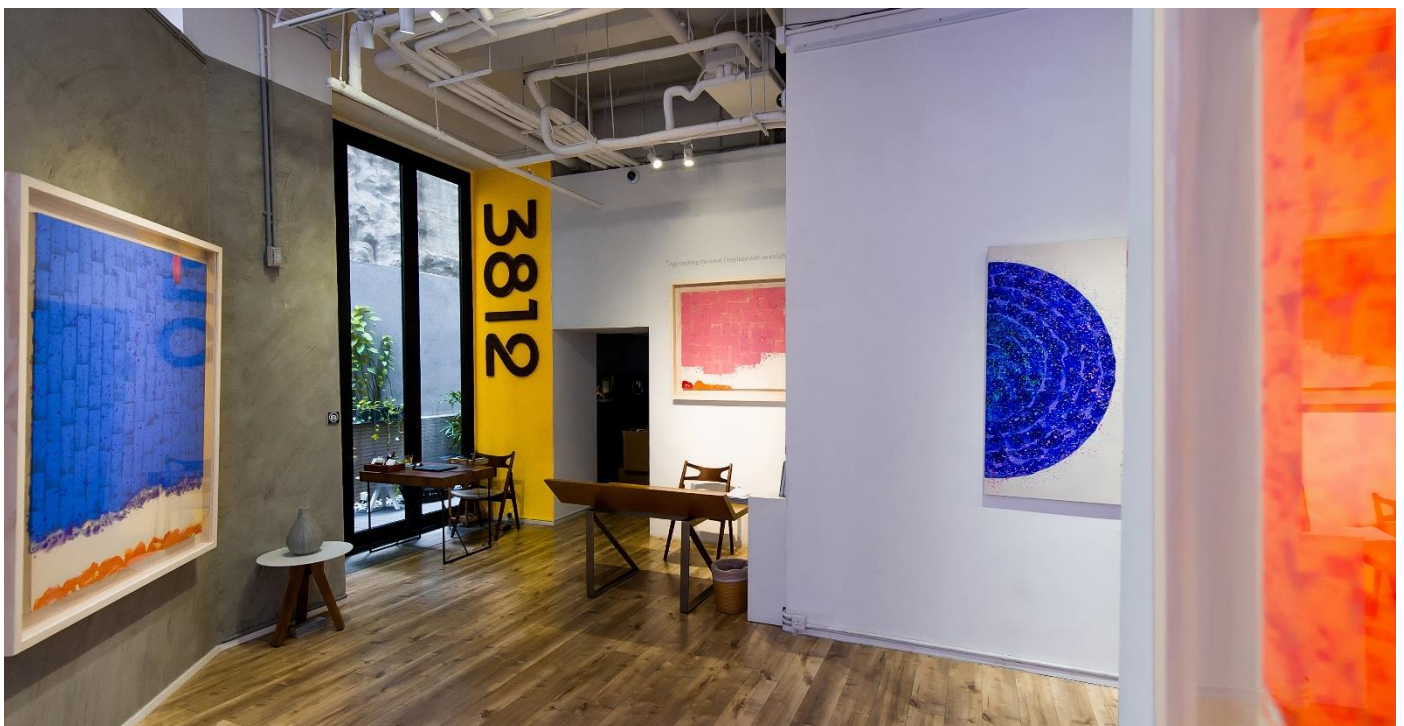
*There is a tendency for people to rely on the results of the auction market to value an art piece. To me, this is not sufficient since there is no set formula to objectively value art. But by considering the academic depth, content, aesthetic, rarity, condition, context and accessibility of an art piece, we can gain insights that help us value art. Still, while these factors may help us determine the "objective value" of an art piece, at the end of the day it is the feeling of pleasure and joy that the audience and collectors have when they look at a piece that makes that piece of art valuable. Put simply, the art market can be complicated!*

**Q. The global hunt for yield has led to more people looking into alternative investments, such as art. Market research has shown that art investments can be resilient during periods of economic downturns and a great diversifier within investment portfolios. Why is art able to deliver these levels of return? What is the risk entailed in art investment?**

*At our galleries we conduct comprehensive valuation and risk management processes to ensure that we offer our clients the most valuable art pieces to add to their investment portfolios. Depending on the background of the art and the artist, levels of return will vary. But we are seeing very robust returns as art has become more recognised and appreciated. Even during the coronavirus pandemic, art has been able to maintain and even increase in value as galleries and auction houses have quickly adapted to online platforms.*

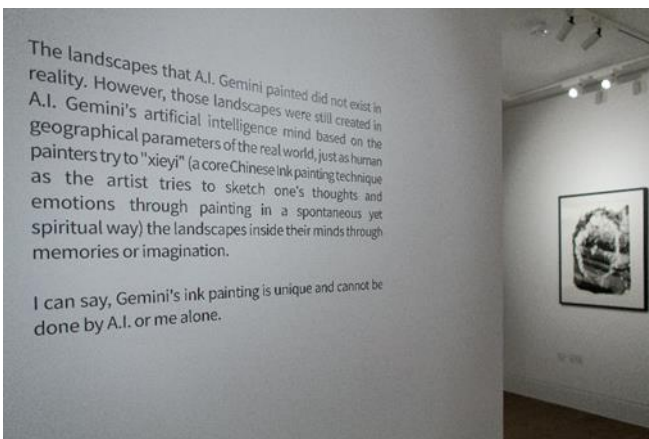
*Still, art is an alternative investment class, which means that the risks entailed are different from traditional investments. Art investments, for example, typically require longer holding periods as liquidity in the market can vary. To minimise these risks, investors can diversify their investment portfolio by collecting pieces from both emerging and established artists.*

**Q. Technology is disrupting every industry in the world. How do you view the future of art and technology? How are you preparing your business to embrace the digital world of art?**



*From a business point of view, the pandemic has pushed the entire art industry to further embrace technology and digitalisation. Last year we started to build an online viewing room for our gallery with e-commerce features allowing us to host online exhibitions and conduct sales. Moving forward, it will be exciting to see how digitalisation can enhance the collector's experience and how virtual space can inspire us to develop a more diverse art program in our physical spaces. But one thing is clear, the future of art will be both online and offline.*

*From an artistic perspective, I believe that the application of technology in art creation will be a new trend and may be the future of art. These pieces will surely raise questions on what is art? Is an ink painting drawn by artificial intelligence art? When I launched the INK NOW platform in late 2018, one of the first artists that we featured was Victor Wong, inventor of A.I. Gemini, the world's first artificial intelligence ink art robot. This was the genesis of a new genre, where art meets technology, that I refer to as TECH-iNK.*



*With INK NOW and TECH-iNK, we are trying to invent history by bringing a new dimension to a century old medium. I believe that artists should be ahead of time, continuously questioning reality and bringing new inspirations to the world. To me, the most exciting part is that we are still at the early stages of exploring how we can integrate technology with art. TECH-iNK will open a new door to the future development of ink art. Perhaps it may be called a new revolution of Chinese art.*

**Q. How do you see the future of Chinese contemporary art in Hong Kong and in the Western world? What are your plans to drive the art scene globally to capture the opportunities?**

*The Hong Kong market will remain at the cutting-edge and as the centre of art trading in Asia. Western galleries have traditionally promoted and sold western art to*

*Chinese collectors through Hong Kong. Occasionally, these galleries have also sold pieces by Chinese artists that have been profiled in the West. Over time however, I believe that Chinese collectors will learn and develop their own tastes based on the growing awareness of their cultural identity and cultural understanding. I strongly believe that the Chinese market is vast enough to develop its own aesthetic tastes and define its own value.*

*With our unique positioning and having operations in Hong Kong, London and other cities across Asia, I am confident that we will be able to develop the world's largest eco-system through the integration of technology and ink art, which also captures the growth of the millennial generation in China and globally.*

Calvin Hui is an acclaimed cultural entrepreneur, art advisor, collector and curator based in Hong Kong. Recognised as one of the leading figures in the Chinese art market, he has been active in promoting modern and Chinese contemporary art over the years, with a focus on promoting ink art. He is a co-founder of 3812 Gallery, recognised as one of Hong Kong's foremost galleries dealing in Chinese contemporary art.

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