

November 14, 2025

Fifty Shades of Ink:

Ink Paintings from the AGGV Collection

December 6, 2025-

April 26, 2026

Curated by Dr. Heng Wu
AGGV Curator of Asian Art

Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

1040 Moss Street

Victoria, British Columbia V8V 4P1

250.384.4171 aggv.ca

See aggv.ca for details

Media Contact:

Sandra Hudson
tel. 250-216-1380
media@aggv.ca



The Art Gallery of Greater Victoria Presents: Fifty Shades of Ink: Ink Paintings from the AGGV Collection

Opening on December 6, the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria presents, *Fifty Shades of Ink: Ink Paintings from the AGGV Collection*, curated by AGGV Curator of Asian Art Dr. Heng Wu. This exhibition draws from the Gallery's rich collection of Asian ink paintings to celebrate the expressive possibilities of the medium. Also on view are historical ink sticks and ink stones, offering insight into the material and cultural heritage behind this timeless art form.

"Ink has five shades" (墨分五色) is a foundational principle in the tradition of Chinese ink painting. First articulated in the 9th century by the artist and art historian Zhang Yanyuan, this idea has shaped both the creation and appreciation of ink art for over a thousand years. It reveals the expressive power of ink, which, through the subtle interplay with water and the dynamic engagement of the brushstroke, can unfold into works rich in depth, texture, and tonal variation. In the hands of a skilled artist, the shifting shades of ink become vessels of emotion and vitality, transcending color to reveal a polychrome world within monochrome.

"Every ink painting begins long before the first brushstroke. Ink sticks and ink stones are the tools that make the medium itself possible. Made from soot and animal glue, the ink stick is ground with water on the stone to produce liquid ink. The density, tone, and fluidity of that ink depend on the artist's control over the pressure, rhythm, and duration of grinding," said Wu. "Originating in China over two thousand years ago, this method spread across East Asia alongside the arts of calligraphy and brush painting. Over time, both ink sticks and ink stones developed into art forms of their own, valued for their craftsmanship as much as their function. Their varied shapes, carved designs, and subtle textures reflect the same sensitivity to material and process found in ink painting itself."

On December 6, from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm, to celebrate the opening of *Fifty Shades of Ink: Ink Paintings from the AGGV Collection*, the public are invited for a special conversation held in Mandarin that delves into the enduring art of ink painting and its relevance today. Moderated by Dr. Heng Wu, the event brings together three local artists, Xuan Yongsheng, Li Zhenjun, and Su Jiangang, who will share their perspectives on the evolving language of ink, the balance between tradition and experimentation, and the ways contemporary artists continue to engage with this timeless medium. This conversation will be recorded and available on the AGGV website with English subtitles at a later date.

Gallery Admission is free on Saturday, December 6, from 10:00 am-5:00 pm thanks to Feel Free – Free Gallery Days, generously sponsored by TD Bank Group.

The Art Gallery of Greater Victoria is located on the traditional territories of the ləkʷəŋən peoples, today known as the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations. We extend our appreciation for the opportunity to live and learn on this territory.