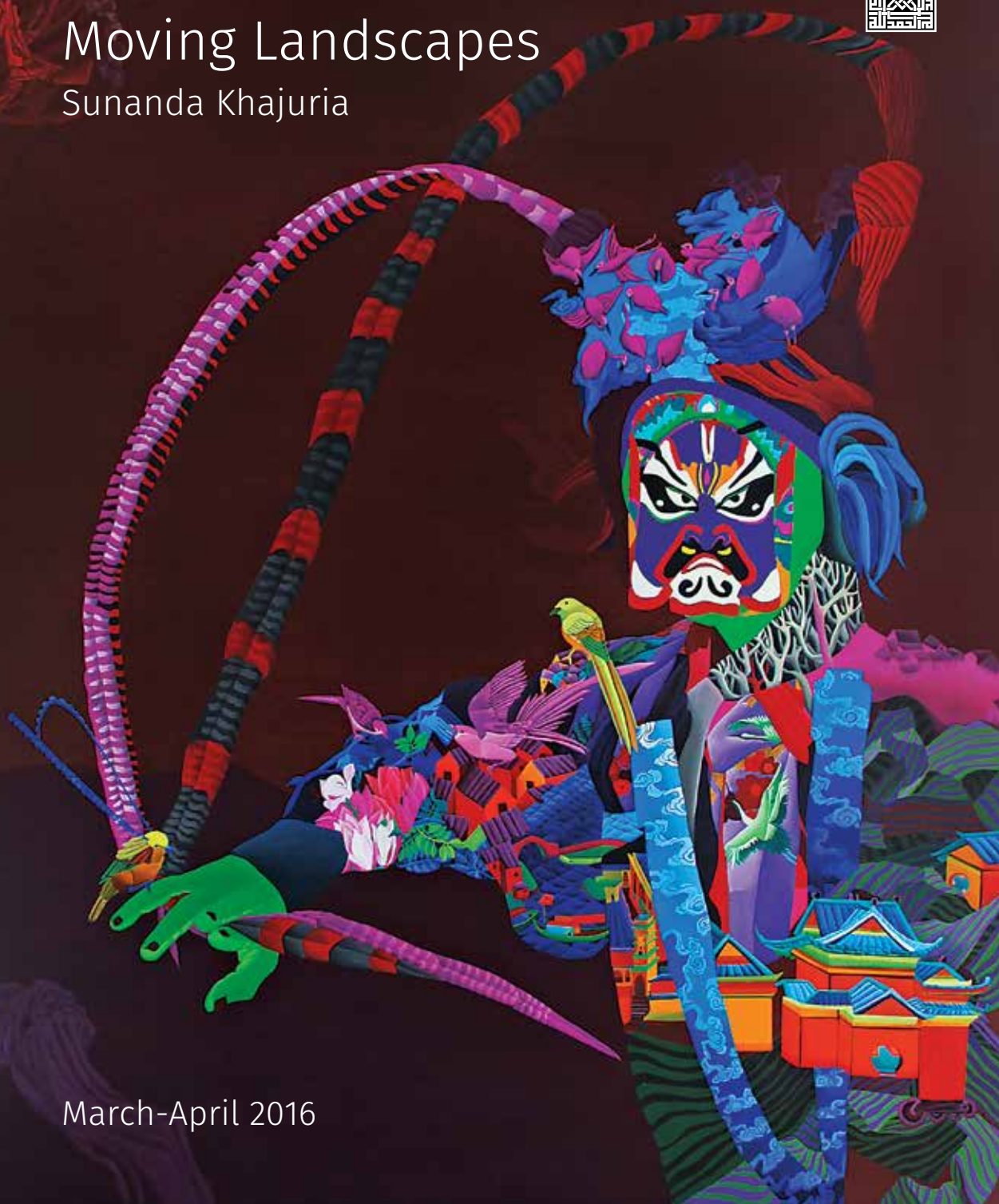




Moving Landscapes

Sunanda Khajuria



March-April 2016



Front Cover:
Singing Cloud, 2014
Acrylic on canvas
60 x 48 in (125 x 153 cm)



In the Waiting Room-1, 2015
Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Paper
48 in dia (34 cm)

In the Waiting Room-2, 2015
Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Paper
48 in dia (34 cm)

Moving Landscapes

Recent works of Sunanda Khajuria

Memory as that freshly chopped green labyrinth has always lured us into its complex maze of remnants of the past, leading us through channels of thought in multiple directions towards uncharted territory. Unaware of the fragmented nature of the maze, we move along enamored.

Sunanda Khajuria draws her imagery from both the terrains of ethereal memory as well as of actual, physical landscape. One is particularly intrigued by her employment of green as a deliberate choice of



Fly by Night, 2014
Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Paper
19 x 14 in (50 x 35 cm)

color that invokes both corporeal and emotional resonances, allowing her to move freely between the planes of both experiences. The color green has been a dominant presence in Sunanda's earlier paintings, and continues to exert its presence through this exhibition as well. What is new and quite startling is that her recent works are now inspired by Chinese traditional painting techniques that are clearly a result of her intrinsic passion for travel. This new suite of works is, in fact, inspired by Chinese 'Mountain Paintings' in which 'traveling' is considered an important part of the experience. Executed with unprecedented freshness and finesse, myriad colours burst forth as emotions are layered with myths, legends and poetic meditations, presenting us with a rich tapestry of complex work.

The current solo at Art Heritage entitled 'Moving Landscapes' reflects on the constant movement of life that sets Nature in motion. Objects and often figures are shown as floating, untethered and defying gravity, evoking a spiritual rhythm that holds the universe in balance. Seen in a perpetual state of flux Sunanda's world exudes a mesmerizing quality of nostalgia, that addresses subtle and intricate layers of the viewer's consciousness.

In this exhibition she presents two categories of work-- Acrylic on canvas and Chinese ink and natural pigments on silk. In both categories Sunanda deploys methodologies acquired from this distant land, gracefully expressing the nuances of its cultural particularities. As an Indian artist Sunanda displays her accomplishment by subtly arranging landscapes and portraits in her signature style, combined with Chinese motifs and styles alien to her, claiming them as her own.

In 2009 Sunanda travelled to China for the first time for the Red Gate Art Residency. For a person born in Panthal, a small hamlet in the mountainous

region of Jammu in India, it was not easy for her to cope with a foreign land. She was homesick. As she began to look more closely at the new culture, exposing herself to Chinese traditions in painting she no longer felt alienated in a strange environment. For a conventional painter with a Fine Arts background, it was a new experience for her to work in ink and natural pigments. For over two years she patiently mastered both traditions of Chinese ink painting as well as the use of natural pigments on silk. The relaxed and meditative requirements of this practice allowed her to understand a new process. Learning the Chinese language, her exposure to Chinese poetry, myths and legends became more organic. All these aspects of the culture began to have a bearing on her work.

Contemporary Indian art, like the art of many countries, has developed to become an amalgamation of practices based on the profuse use of mixed media along with cutting edge technology. Sunanda enters this complex arena with her own agenda, not to derail anything, but to try to make sense of painting's winding technical and formal path. Using sophisticated painterly techniques and a stellar visual language, Sunanda brings back the role of the brush, that has taken a backstage position in Contemporary art worldwide, and reasserts the practice of painting and the patient process it demands, as her chosen medium. Therefore, for Sunanda her stay in China provides her with a unique opportunity to learn new painterly skills. Growing them back, she strengthens her earlier ones, and as a result, approaches the art of painting with a renewed sense of vigor and confidence.

Ever since the arrival of Photography onto the scene in late 18th century, followed by the more recent arrival of Digital Art, the relevance of painting in the making of images has been



Tale of a White Snake, 2014
Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 48 in (125 x 153 cm)



Who am I?, 2016
Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 48 in (125 x 153 cm)



Longings for Home, 2015
Acrylic on canvas, 32 X 38 in (81 x 97 cm)

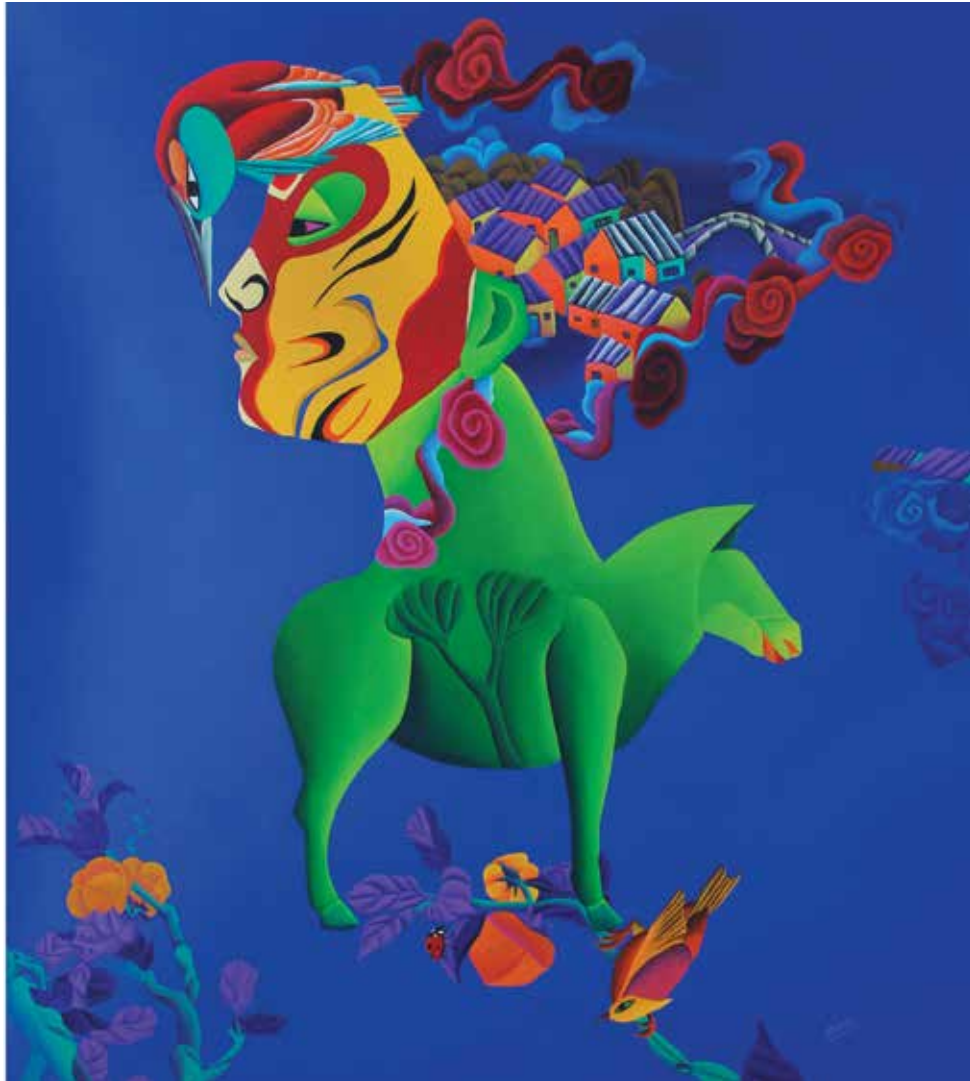
open to question. Nevertheless, one sees a return to traditional forms of image making, in terms of techniques and styles among several contemporary Asian artists, including N.S. Harsha, Varunika Saraf, Sudarshan Shetty and Attiya Shaukat. The attempt here is to engage with the medium itself and if possible, return to the basics of art practice by investigating its very nature. Simultaneously there is a growing emphasis on creating 'thematic' work. Sunanda's attempt is similar—through the new painterly techniques she has acquired, she explores her warm inscriptions of memories and longings as potent themes.

The entire suite of works in this exhibition are connected to one another like a rosary, where the sophisticated themes of spiritual realization are dealt with by a lighter, playful touch, in a landscape that is rendered poignantly. It is a surreal landscape that awaits us with neatly composed frames replete with composite figures. Portraits of women, layered with architecture, landscapes, mountains and symbolic objects merge smoothly with the background. Sunanda's attempt is to alternately release and contain the body in these works, evoking a dialectic.

In her painting *If I had Wings* we see a debate between a human figure, seated on an aeroplane and a swan. A bird in a corner witnesses the discussion. Surrounded by delicate clouds, the human wishes to gobble up the objects of his desire--- which are more often than not, alien to him. His face is painted like that of an actor in the Peking Opera. The painting foregrounds a desire to travel and fly as freely as a bird and absorb the new delights it offers.



Golden present in the Garden, 2014
Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 48 in (125 x 153 cm)



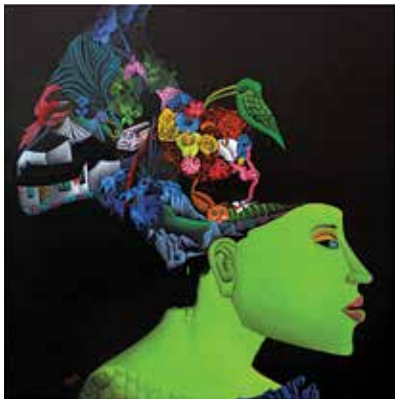
Making Memories, 2015
Acrylic on canvas
32 x 38 in (81 x 97 cm)



Last Summer, 2015
Acrylic on canvas
30 x 30 in (75 x 75 cm)



Cold Mountain, 2014
Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 48 in (125 x 153 cm)



Night Excursion, 2013, Acrylic on canvas,
24 x 24 in (60 x 60 cm)



Between Us Now, 2015
Acrylic on canvas, 30 x 30 in (75 x 75 cm)

Another important cluster of works are portraits of Chinese women. These women are depicted in profile, wearing traditional Chinese costumes. They are mostly executed in green colour, denoting their proximity to Nature. Emphasizing their role in society as homemakers, Sunanda delves into their world, assembling various symbolic objects like houses, mountains, architecture, etc. around them, that become familiar props in Sunanda's individuation and reconstruction of the woman's role in societal structures.

A range of greens, browns and dark shades form an integral part of Sunanda's backgrounds, performing the role of a backdrop that highlights the slow drama that unfolds carefully within the rectangular borders of the canvas. This is evident in *Singing Cloud*, an ode to the traditional Chinese Opera, where the actor wearing a mask, emerges from the right side of the frame with all the paraphernalia attached to the performance. The borders of the painting act as a curtain from behind which he emerges, allowing the actor to practically step out of the frame and walk towards us. Moving away from mirror-like representation, a plethora of volatile objects and animals dance out from the actor's body--- some birds in flight, others still, objects move--- defying gravity. This painting will appeal to those who are interested in performativity. It reveals an artistic project of immense value to understand identity, performance and experience.

Another important work titled *Moving Landscape* features a figure in a dance-like posture that resembles the Indian *tribhanga* posture manifested in classical Indian sculptures. Here perhaps in a self-referential gesture, the figure wears a rainbow hued cummerbund--reminiscent of an artist's palette. The background is magenta and the figure of the protagonist is depicted in the characteristic green, surrounded by mountains, clouds, animals, houses-- some floating, others grounded. Ramanujan* has observed that reflexivity takes many forms: awareness of the self and other, mirroring, distorted mirroring, parody, family resemblances and so on. The self-reflexivity here is in the artist using the text to reflect on her own context-- a mirror towards her personal journey, the landscapes traversed and

experiences gained, the memories acquired and forgotten-- an artist in constant motion.

In *Singing Cloud* too the iconography is reflexive of these travels. The costumes, the constellation of birds and landscapes, different terrains are worn by the actor/artist or are attributed to her in a self-reflexive manner. The collection of flora and fauna on these costumes manifest a potent universe of signifiers, indexing the travels of the past, present and dreaming of future sojourns in search of an identity.

Invoking local legends and symbols in *Tale of the White Snake* Sunanda renders a vertical composition signifying the ascendancy towards the steep climb up a mountain. The legend is about a white snake, but here the viewer also finds the rooster from the Chinese zodiac system--- Sheng Xiao, and icons related to the location. In *Longings for Home* a female figure with a strange totemic horse- headgear, appears above the architectural terrain. The perspective here is unique, allowing the protagonist to no longer be a marginal figure, she emerges from a space in which clear traces of tiled rooftops and water bodies are found. Calm in her stance, she appears composed while holding a bunch of flowers.

The settings in which Sunanda portrays her protagonist are characterized by a measured use of allegory, in which the female is set amidst shifting landscapes and myriad symbolic objects. Hence, all Sunanda's works are part of a larger self-reflexive model relating to all others, where one journey becomes the inspiration for another, one work becomes the context for another. Highlighted against the background of all the others, Sunanda consolidates the woman herself as the landscape.

The second group of works are the outcome of a process of creating paintings with natural



Nostalgia, 2015
Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 48 in (125 x 153 cm)



Am I Invisible, 2014
Acrylic on canvas, 32 x 38 in (81 x 97 cm)



In the Waiting Room-3, 2015
Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Paper
14 in dia (34 cm)



In the Waiting Room-4, 2015
Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Paper
14 in dia (34 cm)

pigments on silk. These require utmost patience in their practice, processing and mounting. Unlike the Acrylics, this series is typified by a light colored background and the emphasis is on capturing details through brushwork. Here too human figures are in constant interaction with animals and amidst an animated environment of floating objects. Sunanda has developed these details through delicate brushstrokes mastered

through her intensive training in Chinese calligraphy. Elegance, subtlety and lightness are achieved by the use of silk. Sunanda's style here is determinedly restrained.

Premjish Achari, 2016

*A.K. Ramanujan, *Where Mirrors are Windows: Towards an Anthology of Reflections*, 2012.



I am a Kite, 2014
Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Silk, 19 x 14 in (50 x 35 cm)



A Bird's Paradise, 2015
Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Silk, 19 x 14 in (50 x 35 cm)



Silent One, 2015
Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Silk, 19 x 14 in (50 x 35 cm)



Dream of A Dragonfly, 2015
Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Silk, 19 x 14 in (50 x 35 cm)



Sunanda Khajuria

Born 1979

Education

2012: Chinese Painting, China Academy of Art, China
 2011: Chinese Language, China Academy of Art, China
 2005: M.F.A. (Painting), College of Art, New Delhi
 2002: B.F.A. (Painting,) Inst. of Music & Fine Art, Jammu.

Solo Exhibitions

2014: "Airway to Heaven" Shangyuan Art Museum, Beijing, China
 2012: "The Night Excursion" Museum of Contemporary Art, Hangzhou, China
 2008: "World of Dream" Art Heritage Gallery, New Delhi, India

Group Exhibitions

2015: "Lost identity", Shangyuan Art Museum, Beijing, China
 2015: Duet Show, Indigo Blue Art Gallery, Singapore
 2015: Group Show, Art Heritage Gallery, New Delhi
 2014: Multipoint exhibition in Oravska Gallery in Dolny Kubin, Slovak
 2013: "The Black Frame Project" Indigo Blue Art Gallery, Singapore
 2013: "She Views Herself " Curated by Doris Kloster, Paris, Beijing, New York, and Geneva
 2012: Duet Show, Huan Tie Times Art Museum, China
 2011: "She Views Herself " Curated by Doris Kloster, Paris, Beijing, New York, and Geneva
 2011: Huan Tie Times Art Museum, China
 2011: Duet Show, Gallery 8, China
 2011: "Museum Collection-3" Art Konsult Gallery, New Delhi, India
 2010: "Picture Wallah" Secher Cott Art Gallery and Auction House, Denmark
 2010: "Seven Women Artists" Art Heritage Gallery, New Delhi
 2009: Open Studio Exhibition, Red Gate Art Gallery, China
 2009: Duet Show "Joie de Vivre" Ganges Art Gallery, Kolkata, India
 2007: "Cross Currents -2", Art Heritage Gallery, New Delhi

Symposiums/Art Camps

2015: International symposium, Russia
 2013: International Art Symposium, Slovakia
 2008: Art Camp, Italy
 2008: Art Camp, Russia

Awards

2013: Multipoint International Art Symposium, Slovakia
 2007: Bundanon Residency Art Award, Australia
 2005: Certificate Award, (M.F.A.) College of Art, New Delhi
 "Woman and War" Red Cross Society Art Award, ICCR

Art Residencies

2015: Shangyuan Art Museum, Beijing, China
 2014: Shangyuan Art Museum, Beijing, China
 2012: Huan Tie Museum Art Residency, Beijing, China
 2009: Red Gate Art Residency, Beijing, China
 Art and Culture Outreach Residency, Hong Kong
 2007: W.H.A.T. Art Residency, Tanzania
 2006: Bundanon Art Residency, Australia

Scholarships

2010-12: Chinese Government scholarship for Advance Research
 2005: AIFACS, New Delhi
 2003: National Scholarship, Ministry of H.R.D. India
 2002: Lalit Kala Research Grant, New Delhi
 Auction
 2014: Art Tact, China
 2012: Art Bull India, India
 2011: Art Bull India, India

Art Fair

2011-13: Indian Art Summit/fair, Art Konsult Gallery, India

List of Works

1. Nostalgia, 60" x 48", Acrylic on Canvas, 2015
2. Singing Cloud, 60" x 48", Acrylic on Canvas, 2014
3. Tale of the White Snake, 60" x 48", Acrylic on Canvas, 2014
4. Cold Mountain, 60" x 48", Acrylic on Canvas, 2014
5. Golden Present in the Garden, 60" x 48", Acrylic on Canvas, 2014
6. If I Had Wings, 60" x 48", Acrylic on Canvas, 2015
7. Moving Landscape, 60" x 48", Acrylic on Canvas, 2015
8. To Touch the Sky, 32" x 38", Acrylic on Canvas, 2015
9. Am I Invisible, 32" x 38", Acrylic on Canvas, 2015
10. Making Memories, 32" x 38", Acrylic on Canvas, 2015
11. Movements in Time, 32" x 38", Acrylic on Canvas, 2015
12. Longings for Home, 32" x 38", Acrylic on Canvas, 2015
13. Frozen Day, 30" x 30", Acrylic on Canvas, 2015
14. Last Summer, 30" x 30", Acrylic on Canvas, 2015
15. Who am I, 60" x 48", Acrylic on Canvas, 2016
16. Between us Now, 30" x 30", Acrylic on Canvas, 2015
17. Fly by Night, 19" x 14", Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Silk, 2014
18. Sky so High, 19" x 12", Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Silk, 2015
19. Daddy's Little Girl, 19" x 14", Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Silk, 2014
20. Walking Home, 19" x 14", Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Silk, 2015
21. Me and My Little Friend, 19" x 14", Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Silk, 2015
22. Journey to the East, 19" x 14", Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Silk, 2015
23. I am a Kite, 19" x 14" Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Silk, 2014
24. Embrace my Dream, 19" x 14", Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Silk, 2014
25. Dream of A Dragonfly, 19" x 14", Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Silk, 2015
26. A Bird's Paradise, 19" x 14", Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Silk, 2015
27. Silent One, 19" x 14", Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Silk, 2015
28. The Birth of Spring, 19" x 14", Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Silk, 2015
29. At the End of the Rainbow, 19" x 14", Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Silk, 2014
30. Prayer of the Woods, 19" x 14", Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Silk, 2014
31. In the Waiting Room- 1, 14" round, Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Paper, 2015
32. In the Waiting Room-2, 14" round, Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Paper, 2015
33. In the Waiting Room-3, 14" round, Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Paper, 2015
34. In the Waiting Room-4, 14" round, Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Paper, 2015
35. In the Waiting Room, 10" x 7" Book, Natural pigment and Chinese ink on Paper, 2015



If I had Wings, 2015
 Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 48 in (125 x 153 cm)

Next Page: *Moving Landscape*, 2015
 Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 48 in (125 x 153 cm)

