

**ZEN INFLUENCES OF MONOCHROME EASTERN PAINTINGS ON
THE ART WORKS OF CUBAN ARTISTS TOMÁS SÁNCHEZ,
LEANDRO SOTO, AND RUBÉN FUENTES**

PHD THESIS (SPANISH SUMMARY)

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We begin at chapter **1**, an introduction to the formulation of the hypothesis, we mention the history and current status of the topic, as well as a presentation of the contents. At chapter **2**, we expose a detailed discussion of the methodology, based on the seven characteristics of Zen painting discovered by Shinishi Hisamatsu. These characteristics are: 1 - Asymmetry, 2 - Simplicity, 3 - Austere Sublimity or Lofty Dryness, 4 - Naturalness, 5 - Subtle Profundity or Deep Reserve, 6 - Freedom from Attachment, and 7 - Tranquility. At the **2.1** the essential elements of philosophy and practice of Zen Buddhism and Taoism are established, as well as its direct influence in the context of the seven characteristics.

At chapter **3**, we analyze four Chinese artists and three Japanese artists as examples of the seven characteristics of Zen painting. Some biographical information of the painters is exposed, especially that connected with the artistic production and the practice of Zen. At the **3.1** we study the first two principles of Chinese painting by Hsie He, they are important to understand the Chinese traditional painting's aesthetic: 1 - Circulation of the *ch'i* produces life movement, 2 - Brush creates structure. We see these first two principles, as fundamental to the traditional Chinese painting, *ch'i* or life energy, is not found in the external appearance of objects, this *ch'i*, is transmitted through the structural brushstrokes in which the opposites yin-yang are involved.

We analyze how these principles are linked with characteristics of Zen painting such as Simplicity, Naturalness and Tranquility, as well as with the expression of the Formless Self. Thus in **3.2**, we enter into the analysis of the art works of two Chinese painters of the Southern Song Dynasty who embodied and shaped the Zen aesthetic: Mu Xi and Liang Khai. At the **3.3**, we explore the art works of Shitao and Zhu Da and, with the help of the seven characteristics. In Shitao we also analyze fragments of his theoretical texts, and the formulation of the concept of the single brushstroke. At the **3.4**, we see the art works of the Japanese painter Sesshu Tōyō and we analyze three fundamental styles: one more detailed and soft, another of thick lines, hard and more energetic, and a third one, synthetic and spontaneous called *hatsu boku* or splashed ink. At the **3.5** we study the Japanese painters Hakuin Ekaku and Sengai Gibon and its relationship with the Zenga style, literally: Zen painting. In Hakuin Ekaku we analyze some art works of calligraphic character, that helps us to understand the influence of Western artists in Zen aesthetics. In Sengai Gibon we see absolute freedom and spontaneity on the brush stroke, at a high level of simplicity and freedom from attachment even arriving to total abstraction.

The **4** is a support chapter, an introduction to some Western works of the twentieth century where the seven characteristics of Zen painting are evident. So we see both European and American artists, the analyzed painters are: Hans Hartung, Pierre Soulages, Jean Degottex, Henri Michaux, George Mathieu, Fabienne Verdier, Mark Tobey, Robert Motherwell, Franz Kline, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Cy Twombly, Brice Marden, Antoni Tapies, and Fernando Zobel. This section **4** allows a gradual entry to the Cuban painters.

At the **5** we study the mainly monochromatic paintings of Tomás Sánchez and Leandro Soto on the light of Zen painting's characteristics. We also expose an aesthetical link with the Chinese and Japanese paintings analyzed in previous chapters. At the art works of Tomás Sánchez we can see a better relationship with the Simplicity, the Austere Sublimity or Lofty Dryness and the Subtle

Profundity or Deep Reserve, while at the art works of Leandro Soto, we appreciate more the Asymmetry, Naturalness and Freedom from Attachment. Excerpts from an interview with each of the artists, are a corroboration of the above criteria.

Finally, chapter **6** is dedicated to art works by the author of this thesis, in which the seven characteristics are found. It is introduced with an explanation of the practice of *sumi-e* ink painting, which is summarized in three stages of the practice: 1 - beginning full of illusions, ingenuity and a certain arrogance, 2 - intensive practice of rules and discipline, 3 - forgetting about oneself and overcoming the rule. Then we show thirty-three art works in which Asymmetry, Simplicity, Austere Sublimity or Lofty Dryness, Naturalness, Subtle Profundity or Deep Reserve, Freedom from Attachment, and Tranquility are found. We can also see a progression from realistic paintings to an abstract synthesis. These art works are grouped into four series: *Astonishment in front of the great*, *Astonished in front of the small*, *Landscape on three brush strokes*, and *Splashed ink*.

At chapter **7** we explain the conclusions in order to corroborate the initial hypothesis. At the **8** the bibliography is divided into Main Bibliography, within we find books, catalogs, web sites and PhD theses that are directly related to the subject of Zen painting and to the analyzed Cuban artists. Secondary Bibliography, includes texts that have served as philosophical support the subject of Zen Buddhism and Taoism. Finally at chapter **9**, you may find a list of the images that appear along with the thesis and with all available information.