



春回大地

侯寧的樂居世界

The Return
of Spring

◇ 2.29-3.29

Silicon Valley Asian Art Center

◇ 3777 Stevens Creek Blvd., 400M,
Santa Clara, CA 95051

Art World
of Ning Hou
In Locke

◇ www.artshu.com
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Silicon Valley Asian Art Center

Spring of Spring in Locke
www.artshu.com



侯寧在加州樂居畫室

Ning Hou at the studio in Locke, California

Photo by Shu Jianhua

今年的春天很蒼白，也很憂傷，
但還是春天。
春天就是甦醒。

沒有開幕，
歡迎你來。
今年的二月有二十九號。

《詩經》里歌吟，
樂土、樂國、樂郊，
有黍、有麥、有苗。
為什麼沒有花？

過了一千年，
陶淵明告訴我們：
快樂的土地才開花。

Pale and sad, this Spring remains Spring.
Spring is awakening.

There is no opening,
but you are welcome to visit.
On February 29th.

It sings in the Book of Poem,
There are happy realms, happy lands, happy plains,
There are millets, wheats and rice shoots.
Why no flowers?

A thousand years later,
Tao Yuanming told us,
Flowers bloom on happy lands.

序言

春天就是甦醒。「甦醒」的「甦」已簡化為「苏」，看不出原來的形意之美了。字典上說「甦」是「蘇」的異體字。我喜歡這個異體字，因其直顯了生命的重啟。

今年的春天與以往的都不一樣。原因大家都能體味到，那就是中國武漢爆發、影響全球的大疫。病毒的兇猛肆虐和奪命之速，令人驚恐，使慣信於技術發達、社會昌明、爭論人工智能邊界何在、甚至開始討論火星移民的我們，仿佛掉進了時光邃道，來到中世紀和黑死病，有人甚麼發生了宿命式的惶恐：病毒會不會是作為地球的免疫系統，來吞噬號稱是地球主人的人類？

這種悲觀是多餘的。但反思人類與自然的關係、沉思我們生命的意義是必須的。

今年是硅谷亞洲藝術中心投入運營的第十六年。十六年來，我們在本場做了數以二百計的展覽，還與其他機構合作在舊金山、洛杉磯、佛羅倫薩、杭州、沈陽、上海、北京等做了三十多場展覽。在這麼繁密的展覽中，也讓我們逐漸體會到藝術作品的生命力，不僅與藝術技巧密切相關，更重要的是，取決於藝術家自己的生命態度。我記得2009年7月首次舉辦侯北人先生畫展《大塊丹青》，侯老站在長白山夕照的畫作《血染雪山紅濺》前對我說的：「我一生的情，都在這幅畫里。」我也記得2012年聽到胡宏述教授說他把1995年首次個人畫展名為《我的心，我的血》時的悸動……

這次庚子大疫直接催化了我們的這種認知。如果藝術抽去了創作者生命的情懷，而把商標性的符號和空洞的形式理解為風格去宣揚和兜售，那就是對藝術的褻瀆。生命的態度應該成為我們衡量藝術家和藝術品的標尺。

承蒙中國駐舊金山總領事館任發強副總領事的推薦，硅谷亞洲藝術中心從2017年開始連續舉辦了三次隱居加州三角洲樂居鎮的油畫家侯寧的畫展：《獨行》（2017）、《樂居》（2018）和《西體中用》（2019），得到很大的反響。今年這般時節，我們又特別推出新展。

1983年侯寧得到鄰居和導師劉海粟先生（1896-1994）的鼓勵，從上海到舊金山藝術學院（今舊金山藝術大學）深造抽象畫，取得碩士學位，1989年留校擔任素描、人體寫生、抽象和寫實諸科教授，深受學生愛戴。當他得知有一位優秀的學生因為首次個展因故未能舉辦而抑郁上吊自殺身之後，他深為震動，又主動向學院提出為高年級學生開設一門“藝術作為一種職業”新課程，為將要走向社會的青年藝術家們探討藝術和人生的關聯。從1993年開始，他選擇並移居加州首府薩加緬度南郊三角洲流域的由華人勞工

在1915年興建的村落樂居鎮，把這個果園四布、河柳依依的荒僻的加州歷史文化小鎮作為自己的桃花源，每日創作不輟，經常夜雨後的清晨在門外的梨園、蘋果園和杏林中支起畫架，對景創作大幅油畫。本次展覽海報上的大幅《梨園》右上方枝頭滾落一小塊厚實顏料，就是畫到午後驟雨忽來時雨滴打落了顏料在畫布上滾停所致。地氣、繁花、春播、秋收、牛群、雞鳴、狗吠……伴隨着湯湯河水給了侯寧不竭的靈感。

去年深秋，我和幾位朋友去樂居看侯寧的新作，新雨落葉瑟瑟有聲中，我們一起在他畫室後面的中餐館喝酸辣湯，侯寧忽然放下湯匙，伸出右手，張開五指，說：「據醫學家說，我們每根手指上都有十三根運動神經，一手五指，就有六十五根神經，拿畫筆時，這六十五根神經就把筆和我們的腕、臂、骨、血、肉、經、絡最終與氣、情、意相連。而一枝上好的油畫筆，會有二百五六十根毫毛，那麼，如果我們能傾心全力，我們的心血和感情就能通過六十五根神經再通過二百五六十根筆毫，在畫布上留下痕跡。」

這樣的痕跡意味着什麼呢？

是為序。

硅谷亞洲藝術中心 舒建華

2020年2月23日

Preface

Spring is awakening. I like the traditional character “甦”, because it demonstrates the reset of life.

This Spring is different. The reason is the world-spreading coronavirus from Wuhan, China. The speedy infection rising and fatalities is so frightening that we, who believed in technology, talked about the boundary of AI, even started to think about immigrating to Mars, suddenly fell into the time tunnel and came to the Black Death in Mid Ages. Someone asks in panic: “Is coronavirus probably the immune system of the earth eating human beings, the self-called master of the earth?”

This kind of pessimism is unnecessary. However, we are obliged to rethink about the relationship between human beings and the nature and the meaning of our lives.

It's been sixteen years since the founding of the Silicon Valley Asian Art Center. We have held over 200 exhibitions at our gallery and cooperated with other facilities on 30 exhibitions in San Francisco, LA, Florence, Hangzhou, Shenyang, Shanghai and Beijing. From so many exhibitions, we have gradually felt that the liveliness of art work, not only relates to artistic technique, but also and more importantly, depends on the artists' attitude toward life. I remembered in July 2009, in the first exhibition we held for Hou Beiren, he stands in front of the The Sunset of Changbai Mountain, telling me: “My love of the whole life is all in this painting.” I also remembered in 2012, how touched I was

when hearing Prof. Hu Hungshu telling me he named his first one-man show in 1995
My Heart, My Blood.....

The coronavirus catalyzes such cognition in us. If the artists' passion of life is eliminated from art, the promotion of styles of trademarked symbols and empty forms is desecration of art. The attitude toward life should become the ruler when we evaluate artists and artworks.

Thanks to the Deputy Consul General of the Consulate General of PRC in San Francisco Mr. Ren Faqiang's introduction, The Silicon Valley Asian Art Center has held three painting exhibitions of Hou Ning: Maverick (2017), Le Ju/Locke (2018), When East Meets West (2019), all of which received great repercussions. At this unusual moment, we present a new exhibition.

In 1983, Hou Ning was encouraged by his neighbor and mentor master Liu Haisu (1896-1994) to come study abstract painting at Academy of Art University in San Francisco (AAUSF) from Shanghai. He obtained a master degree and started to teach at AAUSF in 1989. He was very popular among students. When he heard a student's suicide from depression of the cancellation of his first one-man show, he was deeply shocked. He started to offer a new course of "Art As A Profession" to senior students to discuss the relation between art and life. He relocated to Locke, CA in 1995, a small town built by Chinese labor on the delta south to Sacramento. He takes this orchard covered remote town as his retreat and painted everyday.

He always sets up his easel in the night rain drained pear, apple or apricot orchards outside his house in the morning and paints large oil painting from them. There is a chunk of oil paint on the upper right corner of the painting Pear Orchard on the poster of this exhibition, which was knocked down on the canvas by the sudden afternoon rain. The earthy spirit, blooming flowers, spring planting, autumn harvest, herd of cows, crowing chicken, barking dogs, along with the running river bring inexhaustible inspiration to Hou Ning.

Last late autumn, few friends and I visited Hou Ning in Locke. In the chilly autumn rain, when we were drinking spicy-sour soup in the Chinese restaurant behind his studio, Hou Ning suddenly put down his spoon, stretching out his right hand and spreading all five fingers, said: “According to medical scientists, there are thirteen motor nerves on each finger. We have five fingers, so there are sixty-five nerves in total. When holding a brush, these nerves connect the brush and our wrist, arm, bones, blood, muscle, channels and collaterals and ultimately our spirit, emotions and sense. A fine oil brush has about 250 hairs, so if we devoted all of our heart, our effort and emotion could go through the sixty-five nerves and 250 hairs to leave some trace on the canvas.”

What does such trace mean?

This is the preface.

Shu Jianhua
Curator, Silicon Valley Asian Art Center
February 23, 2020

(English translation by Xinru Xu)



1 Apple Orchard

106"X130"
269X330cm

\$137,800



2 Cherry Blossom

67"X 80"
170X203cm

\$53,600



3 Pear blossom

61"1/2X65"
156X165cm

\$50,000



4 Yellow Iris

80"X 61"
203X154cm

\$48,800



5 Wheat Field

50"X75"
127X190cm

\$41,200



6 Pear Orchard in spring

61"X 80"
154X203cm

\$48,800



7 Cherry Orchard Blossom

54"X79"
137X200cm

\$42,600



8 Wild sunflower

58"X103"
147X261cm

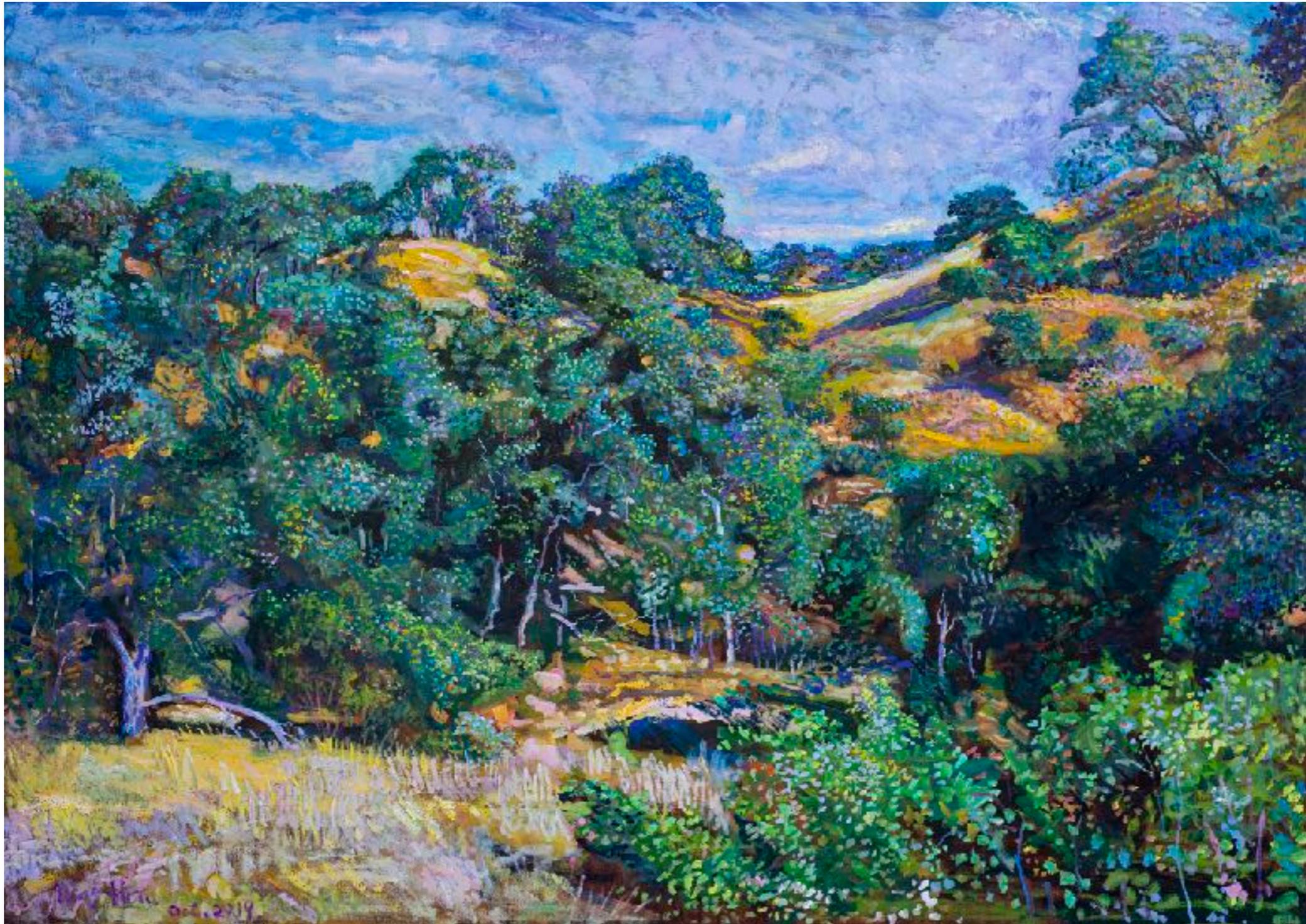
\$59,700



9 Sunflower field

80"X 61"
203X154cm

\$48,800



10 California Foothill

51"X72"
129X183cm

\$40,300



11 Alameda Foothill

41"X90"
104X228cm

\$40,500



12 Corn Field

51"X29"
129X73cm

\$23,600



13 Florida Marina

42"X48"
106X122cm

\$30,200



14 Asia Iris

48"X42"
122X106cm

\$30,200



15 Red Iris

24"X48"
61X122cm

\$19,500



16 Delta Cow

36"X40"
97X102cm

\$23,000



17 Strawberry

36"X37"
91X94cm

\$21,300



18 Aspen tree in Colorado

48"X54"
122X137cm

\$38,000



19 Pear flower

35"X50"
89X127cm

\$26,200



20 Hyson

48"X59"
122X150cm

\$36,800



21 Barn & Horse

49"X 62"
124X157cm

\$36,400



22 Tomato & Garlic

20"X30"
51X76cm

\$11,400



23 Haystack

20"X 30"
51X76cm

\$11,400



24 Delta Live Boat

24"X 28"
61X71cm

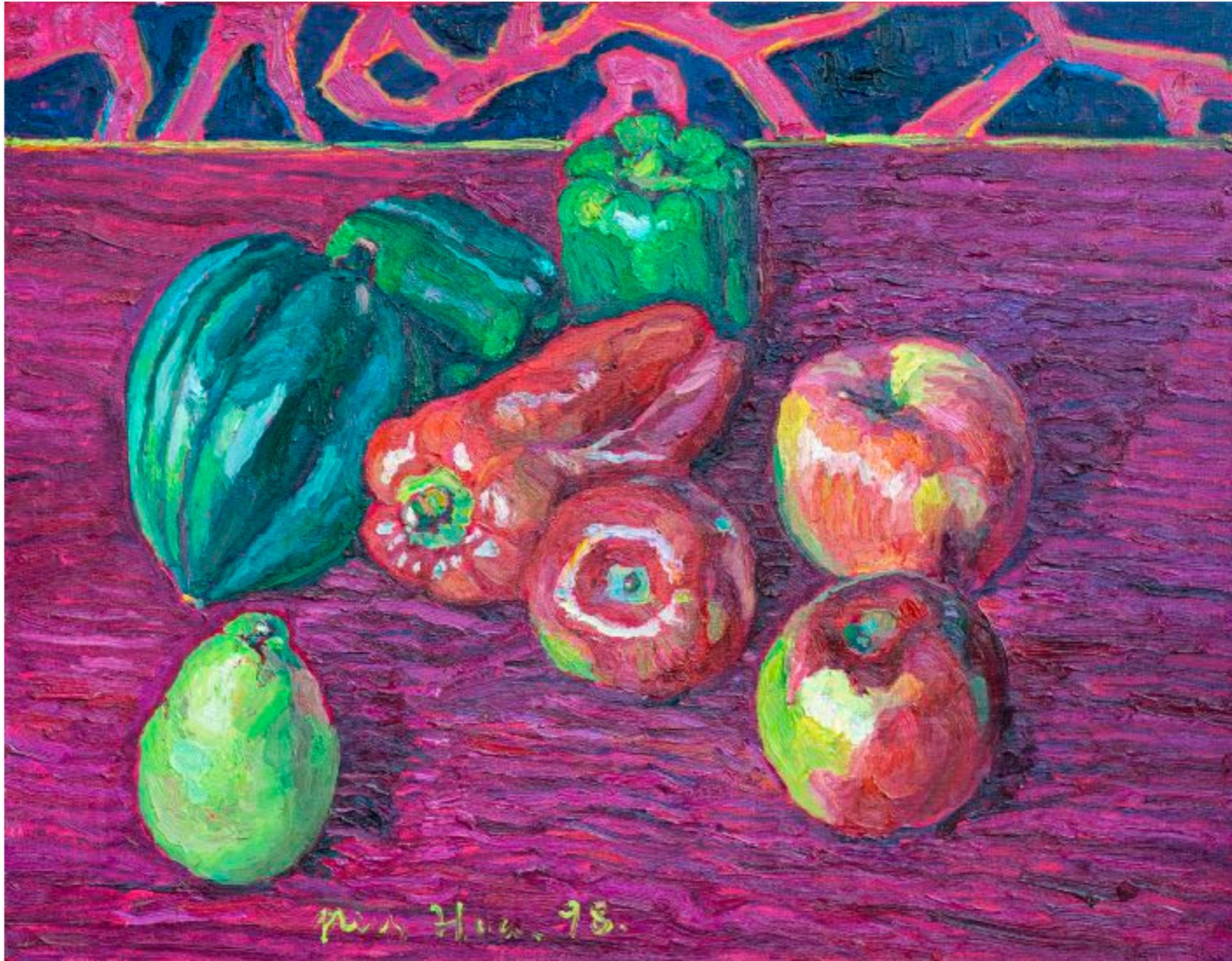
\$19,500



25 Orchid and Peony

24"X36"
61X91cm

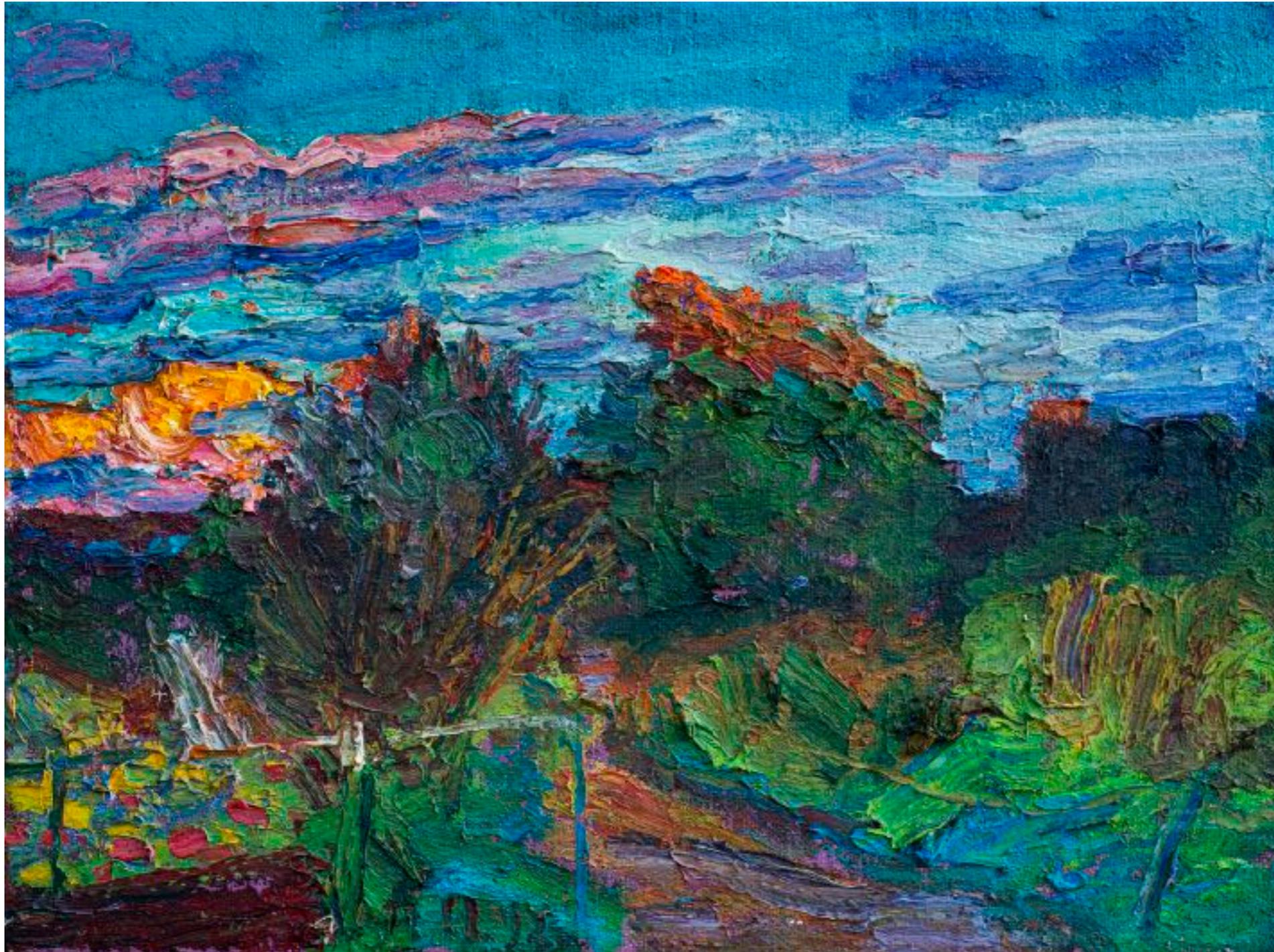
\$15,500



26 Apple & Pepper

22"X28"
56X71cm

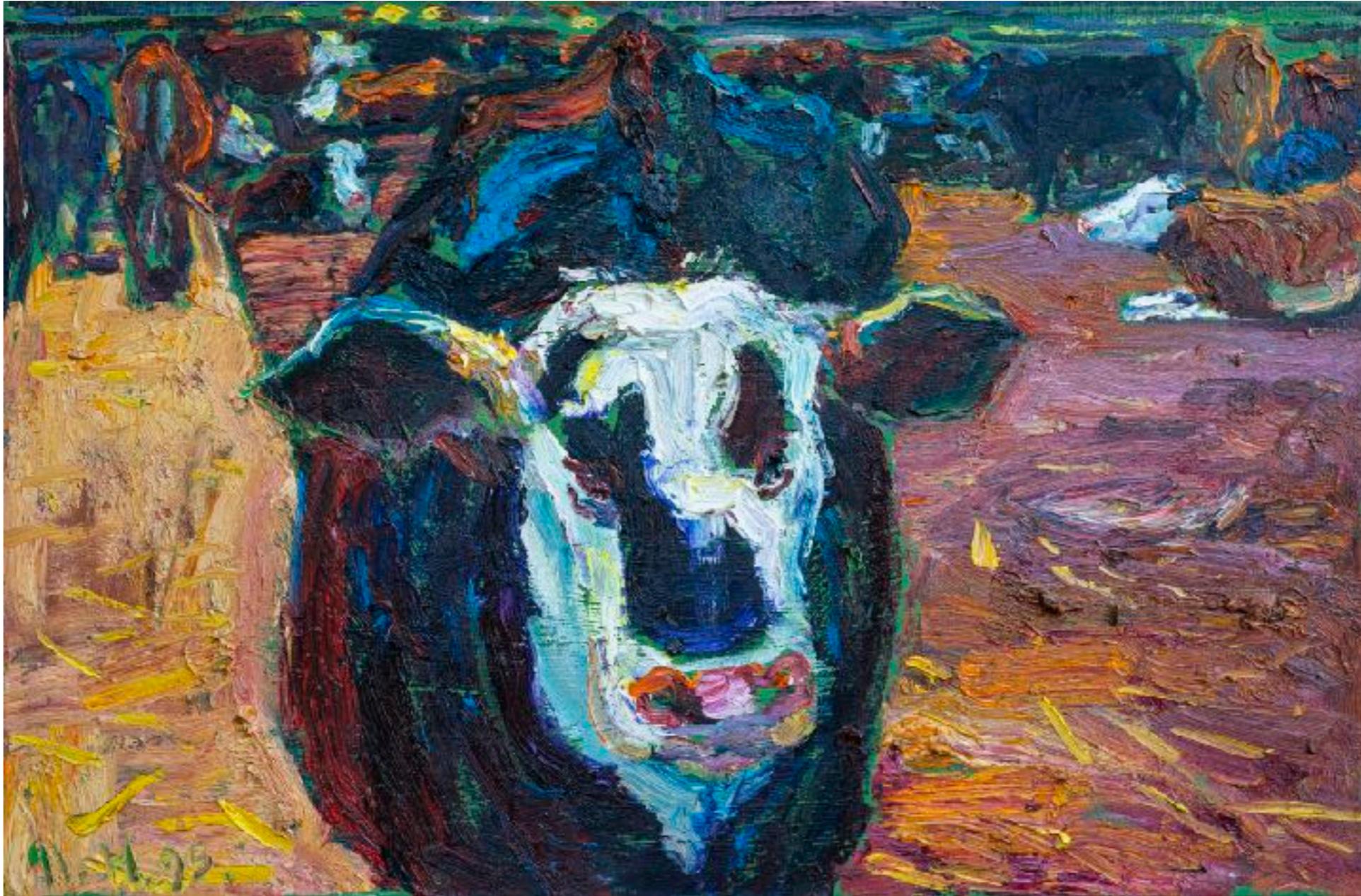
\$11,700



27 Locke Garden

11"X14"
28X36cm

\$5,000



28 Cow

20"X 30"
51X76cm

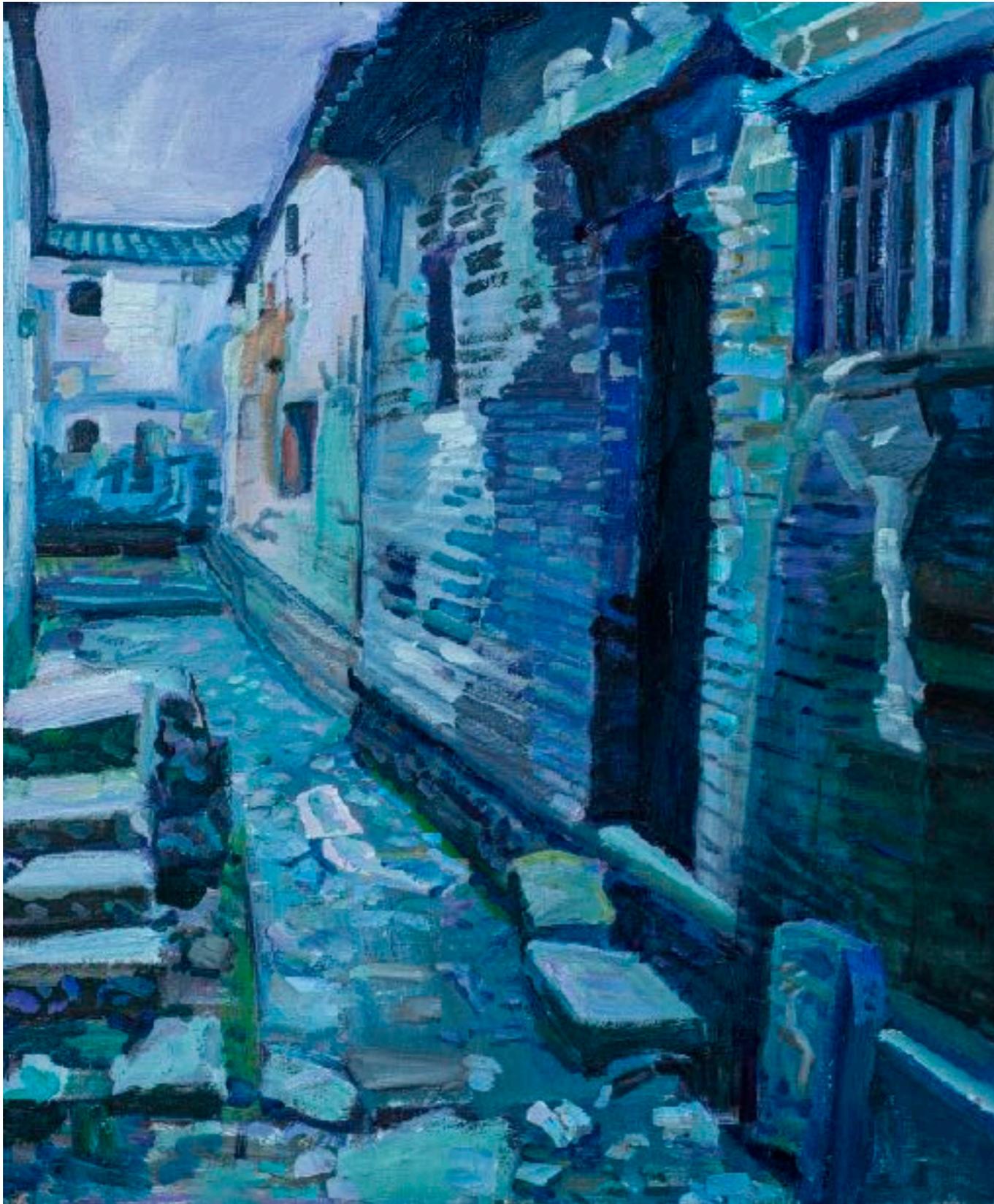
\$11,400



29 Wild sunflower

24"X30"
61X76cm

\$12,900



30 Old Chinese Alley

33"X27"
84X68cm

\$16,000



31 Blue Iris

39"X32"
99X81cm

\$19,900



32 Pear blossom

30"X38"
76X96cm

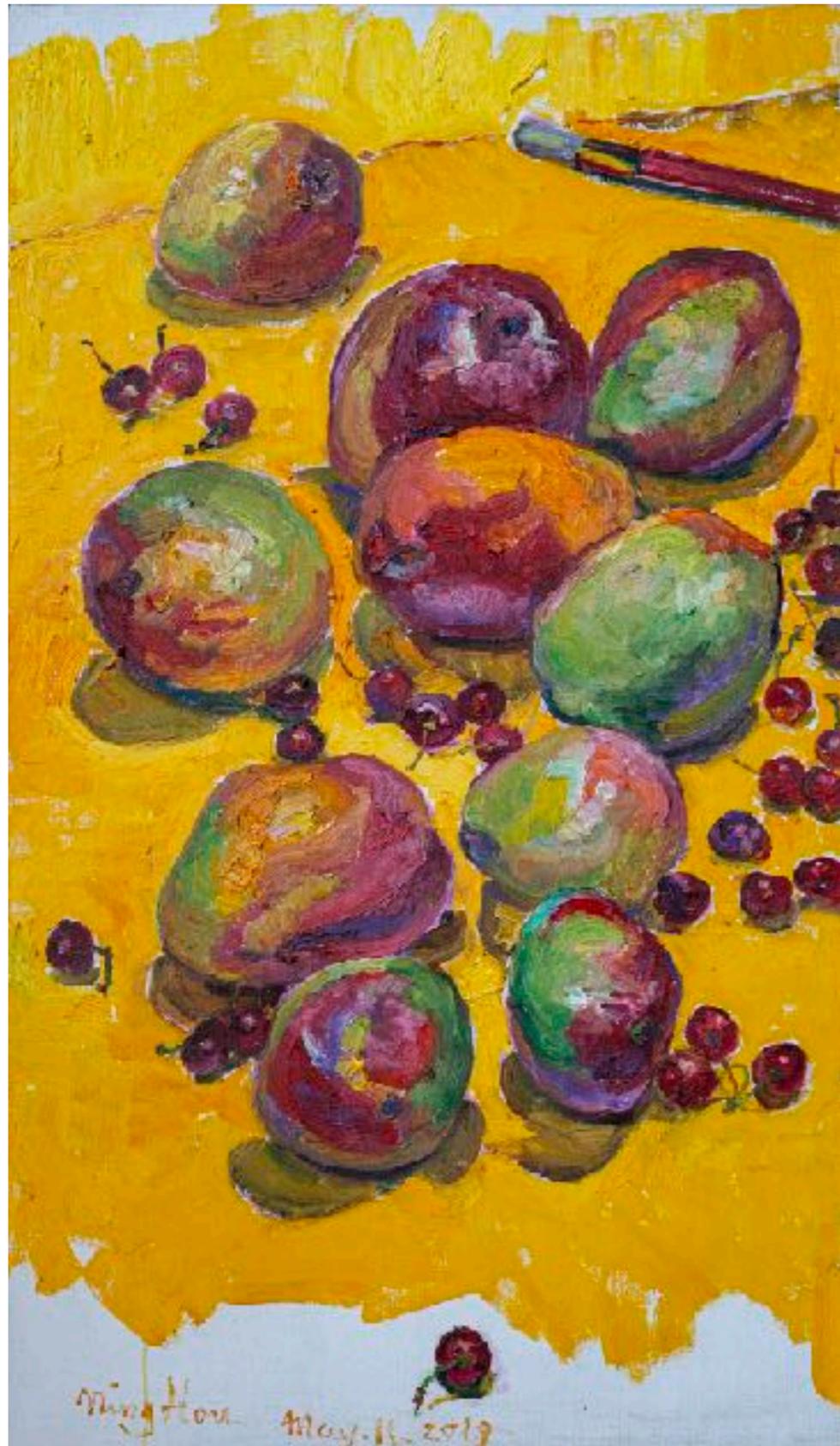
\$19,300



33 Sacramento River Sunrise

22"1/2X39"
57X99cm

\$16,000



34 Mango

45"X25"
114X64cm

\$19,100



35 Barn Bridge

31"X35"
79X89cm

\$22,000



36 Valley

24"X27"
61X68cm

\$11,600



37 Tulip

24"X16"
61X41cm

\$9,800



38 張家界Zhangjiajie

14“X8”
36X20cm

\$8,000



39 Pear Orchard

15"X 192"
38X488cm

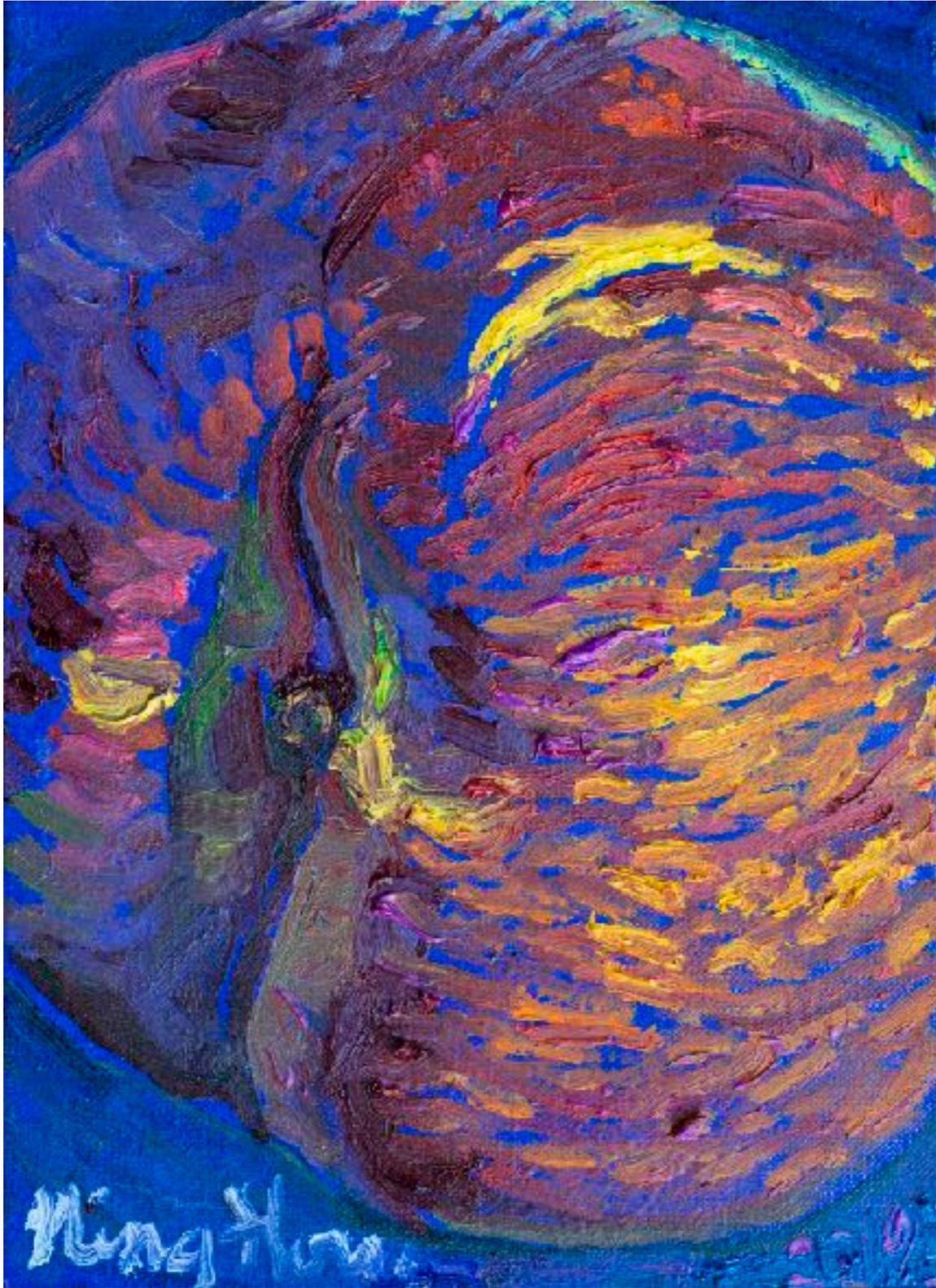
\$45,000



40 Vineyard in Fall

10"1/2 X 14"
27X36cm

\$6,000



41 Peach

11"X8"
28X20cm

\$6,000



42 Pear Orchard in spring

49"X80"
124X203cm

\$43,100



43 Captain's Boat

36"X40"
91X102cm

\$30,000



44 S. F. Bay

40"X36"
102X91cm

\$30,000



45 Sunflower

60"X78"
152X198cm

\$70,000



46 Pear Orchard

80"X90"
203X229cm

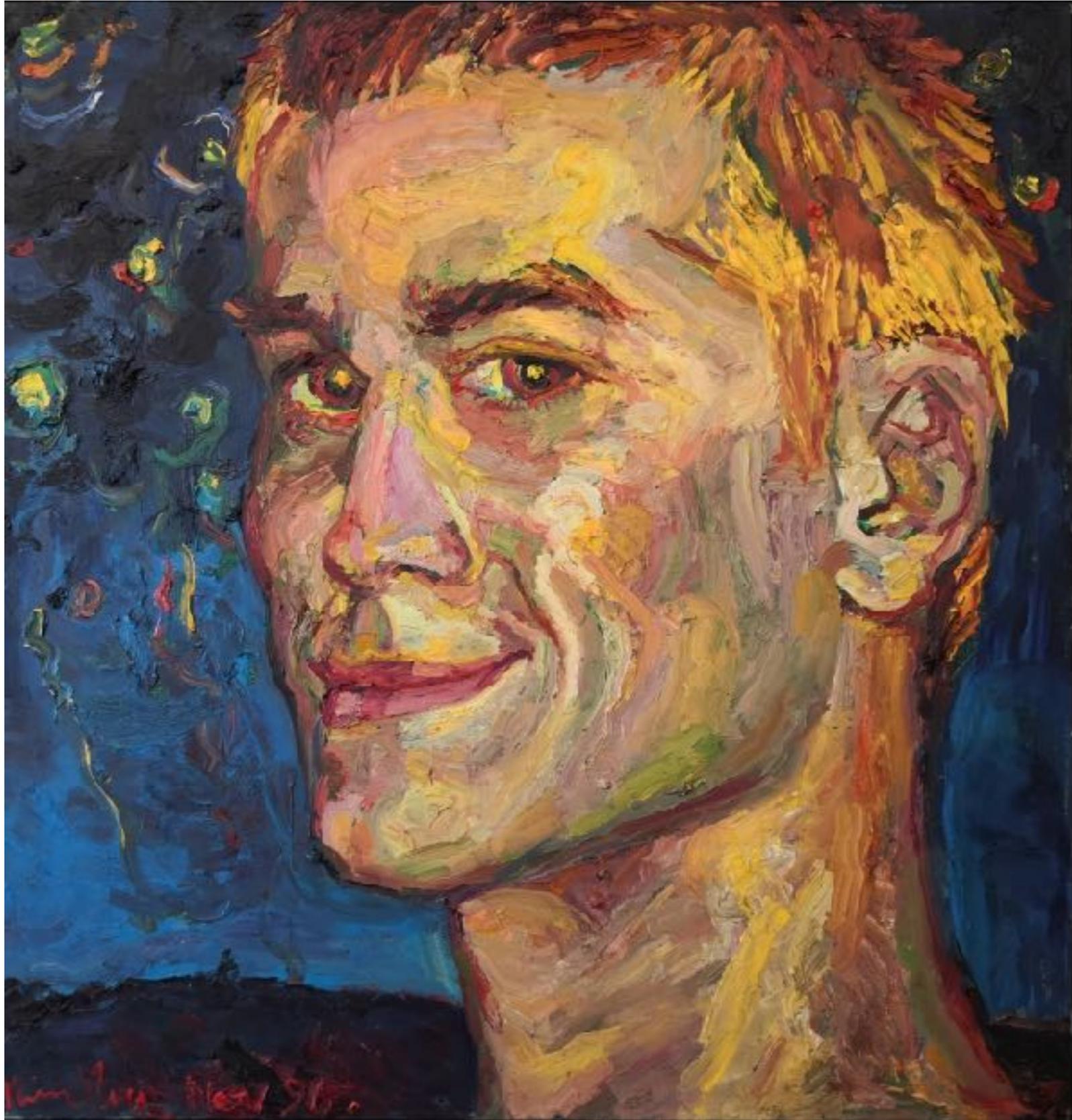
\$80,000



47 Pear blossom

61"X65"
155X165cm

\$50,000



48 Jefe

42"X40"
106X102cm

NFS



49 Apricot Blossom

40"X54"
102X137cm

\$30,200

NING HOU

From the age of six, Ning Hou showed an affinity for painting. But it wasn't until he was taken to visit an exhibition during his teen years that he first witnessed art in the flesh. Having only encountered paintings in textbooks up to that point, the boy was enthralled by the layering and texture of the paint. “I wanted to touch them,” he remembers. He spent his visit ricocheting between masterpieces and lobbing questions at anyone who might have the answers to them. What's that technique called? What was this artist's intention? What makes that piece significant?

But there was one question that fascinated Ning Hou above all the rest: What was it about these featured works that spanned the generations? “Today's art, on the surface, looks so different from the past,” he remarks. “But the content is still the same. There's still one subject.” He realized life was that unifying theme, linking people across neighborhoods, across oceans, even across decades. “Not many people can live over a hundred years old,” Ning Hou says. “In human civilization, that seems like a long time...but it's still very short when compared with the universe.”

Ning Hou's next step was instilling life (or soul) into his work. “I learned that soul is not myself,” he says. “It's not my Chinese culture either.” Instead, he finds “soul” by channeling what he calls *chi* (or life force). It's a discipline he hones through practiced concentration. “You can't think of something else while you're painting,” he explains. For instance, while painting city scenes during his years in San Francisco, Ning Hou carried only his supplies because public transportation necessitated traveling light. Without a chair, he was forced to kneel on the uneven ground of San Francisco's infamous sloped hills while capturing the city on canvas one color at a time. Despite a great deal of back pain, Ning Hou was delighted to find that these experiences heightened his ability to stay attentive to his work.

But how is an intangible concept like life portrayed on canvas? Ning Hou enjoys exploring the subject of life in all its forms, portraying people as well as animals (which might explain why he owns five dogs and nine cats). Even his landscapes discuss life. “I would say any green leaf or pink color represents a freshness,” he explains. He also reflects on the fact that there’s an element of the natural world that is required to achieve life: “Earth is just like other stars in the galaxy...but the difference is water.” Humans, animals, and plants are all completely reliant on this source.

When Ning Hou isn’t painting, he’s teaching. Over the years, he’s lectured on a number of subjects, including art history, abstract painting, finger painting, and, perhaps most surprisingly, anatomy. Although his expertise in the field of anatomy is not completely unexpected, considering his fascination with life and the fact that both his parents were prestigious doctors. “The best part is teaching people to deliberate—to find their own feelings toward their subject. Not my feelings. Not the style.”

He also enjoys coaching his pupils in how to regard their paintbrushes from a new perspective. He does this by pointing out that these tools are each comprised of “250 hairs bonding together as one brush.” This unity, he explains, is a network just like the nervous system which connects the nerves in his students’ fingers that are sensing the brush with the rest of their bodies—even with their hearts.

With his zeal for life, Ning Hou has weighty ambitions for the future. Someday, his goal is to present a painting to the White House. “It will be 187 feet long, 10 feet high,” Ning Hou describes. “You’ll see 365 events that have happened in the last 90 years in 187 countries. It’ll be so detailed you’ll have to use a magnifying glass to find my brushstrokes.” With such a mindset, what can hinder this confident soul from achieving his vision?

Ning Hou’s oil paintings will be on view at the [Silicon Valley Asian Art Center & Narx Gallery](#) from February 24 to March 21, 2018.

Written by [Johanna Hickie](#)

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