

VICTORIA YAU: NEAR THE EDGE OF YOUR SOUL

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“It seems familiar to you
because it is always there
near the edge of your soul.”

(Victoria Yau, *A Glimpse*, 2006)

This excerpt from *A Glimpse* (2006), one of Victoria Yau's many meditative writings, reads like a parable unfolding the underlying gesture of her life's work: not to represent the natural world, but to inhabit its spirit.

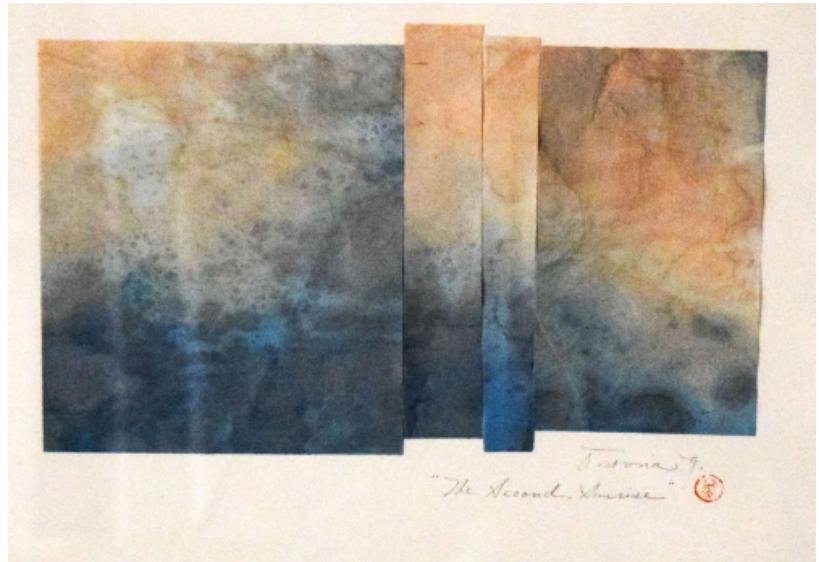
Born in the Year of the Rabbit in politically tumultuous Shanghai, Victoria Yau (1939-2023) was a painter, poet, and philosopher.

As an early figure of Asian American abstraction, Yau bridged worlds, merging not only traditional Chinese ink painting and Western post-war modernism, but also Eastern and Western philosophical lineages.

Water, for Yau, served as both medium and message. Its multiform nature permeates her variegated experimentation with ink, watercolor, and acrylic. Like the water that recurs throughout her work, creation and loss were part of a continuous flow. Despite producing over 700 works over a prolific six-decade career, the majority were lost in a devastating studio flood. Fewer than 300 pieces remain.

In her final years, Yau contended with Parkinson's disease, a paradoxical condition for an artist whose works and writing practice so deeply explored bodily presence and perception. Like the cycles reflected in her paintings, she passed away during the Year of the Rabbit, shortly after the Lunar New Year.

During her lifetime, Yau's work was exhibited at the *Smithsonian, the Art Institute of Chicago, Taipei Museum of Art, the American Academy of Design, and the Illinois State Museum*, among other institutions across the U.S. and Asia. Her voice has reemerged through recent exhibitions at *Stanford University* and *Pen+Brush*, as well as a major acquisition by *Northwestern University's Block Museum. The Evanston Art Center*, where she was a fixture, mentor, and local icon, will host a [retrospective from April 5 to 13](#), coinciding with the dedication of the Maker Lab for Digital Media room in her honor.



Victoria Yau, *The Second Sunrise* (c1992), watercolor collage, 17.25 x 22.25"

Qualia Contemporary Art is honored to present over six decades of Victoria Yau's visionary practice as her place in the art historical canon is fully established.