



巴里彩染：魏高文近作展  
Acrylic-Batik-Crayon Paintings  
by Janet Echelman

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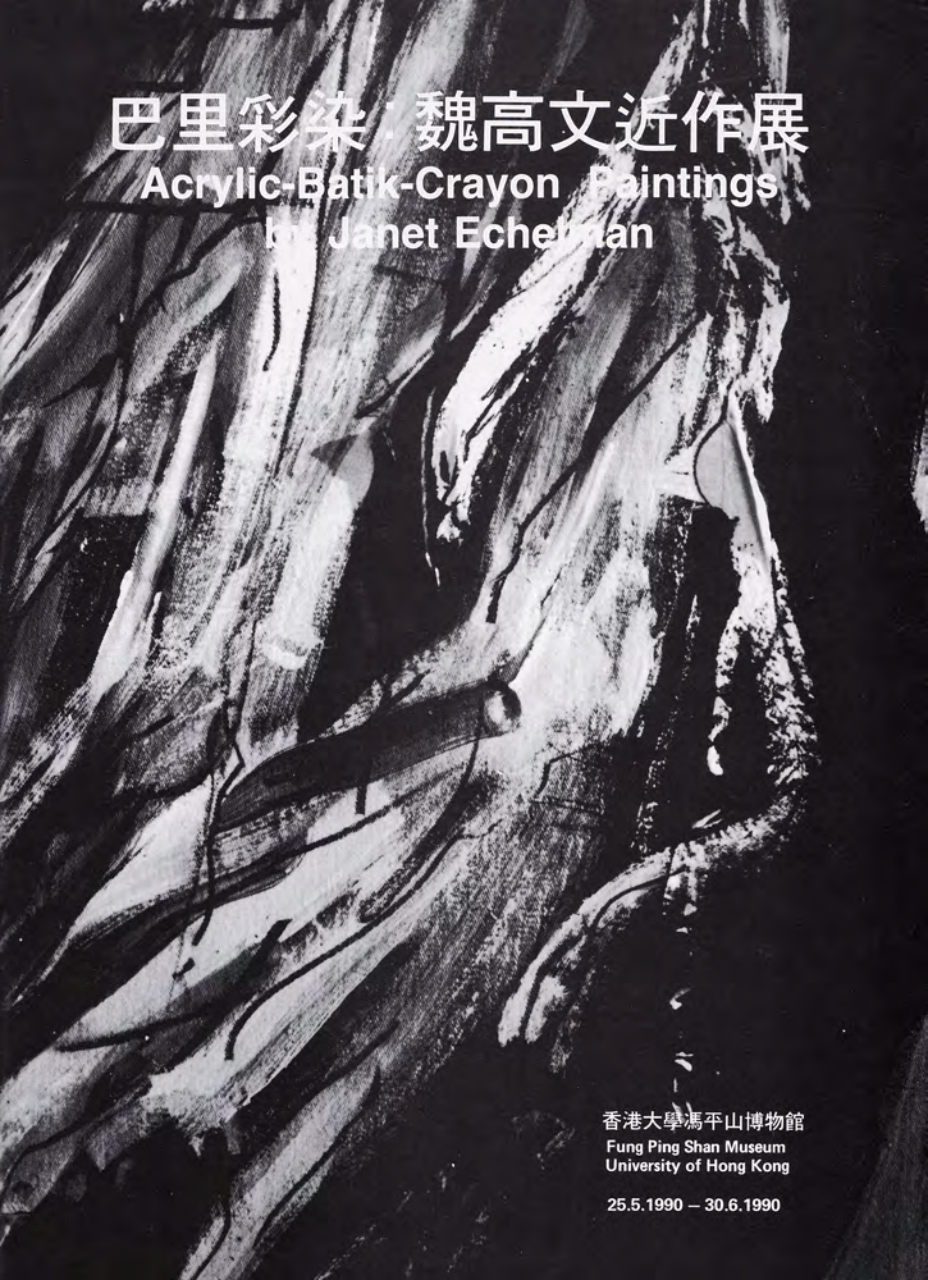
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Cover: Tree Through a Fish-eye Lens (detail)



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Acrylic-Batik-Crayon Paintings

by Janet Echeverran

香港大學馮平山博物館  
Fung Ping Shan Museum  
University of Hong Kong

25.5.1990 - 30.6.1990

**魏高文**是多姿多采的藝術家，對音樂、電影、繪畫等均有心得和相當的造詣。她在大學唸書時，隨老師遊歷多國，當時對亞洲藝術產生非常濃厚的興趣。畢業後，回到亞洲，分別在香港和印尼巴厘島學習中國書法、繪畫、印尼的蠟染和其他傳統工藝，並決定專心從事繪畫創作。

魏高文早期的繪畫，往往為迎合顧客的品味，而局限了寫作題材。而近期的發展，她不再受市場束縛，她認為她的作品是要取悅自己，而不是去討好觀眾或畫評家。她嘗試融匯東方和西方、傳統和現代藝術。她用中國畫筆、印尼染料、西方畫具和顏料等，揉合中國書法和印尼蠟染技巧，在大型帆布上創作她的混合素材作品。

魏高文的作品很受巴厘島的薰染，因為那裏是天然藝術工作者的樂園。巴厘島還未受到繁鬧都市生活所污染；島上不單保存着純樸美麗的自然景色，並可欣賞到民族音樂、舞蹈、皮影戲、木雕等傳統的印尼藝術。因此，她住下來，努力作畫，在這瀟灑藝術氣氛的環境下，繼續創作。

這次展出的全部是魏高文於一九八九至九〇年間在巴厘島完成的大型作品。這展覽顯示出一位年青的美國女畫家，如何利用東西方藝術素材和技法，建立她在畫壇上獨特的風格。

#### **劉唯邁**

馮平山博物館館長

Bali surrounds me.

From my porch, sky and moon reflect off flooded ricefields.

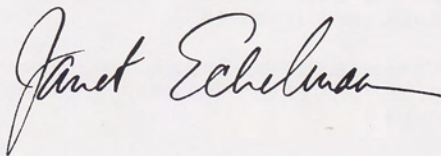
Voices of a thousand ancestor temples filter through my bamboo blinds.

The grass roof whispers.

A small, honey-colored boy flies his kite into my garden.

His face is all eyes, teeth, gums .....

These are some of the image which enter into my being  
and return in the forms you see here.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Janet Echelman". The signature is written in a fluid, cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.



**JANET ECHELMAN** has walked in the footsteps of many generations of Western travelers who have found Asia irresistible and who have settled there for a time. Janet was so transfixed by Bali's images, its landscape and craft techniques — she found them so unique and compelling that she knew she had to explore them. Her recent paintings are a personal testament to new possibilities of eastern and western elements.

Recently, on a trip to New York, Janet said she couldn't imagine producing these paintings anywhere but in Bali. She found that Bali was a place where she could work in privacy and without distractions, where she could paint with the kind of intensity she requires. Yet her strongly gestural paintings appear to have more in common with the international art scene typified by New York than with Ubud or even Hong Kong.

When Janet was a third year college student at Harvard, she visited Bali and fell in love with it. She vowed to return and paint there. A few years later she did return, and studied batik techniques with great diligence and achieved a mastery in a short time. Subsequently, during a Rotary fellowship in Hong Kong, she studied Chinese brush painting techniques that put her in touch with one of Asia's oldest and most respected ways of image making. Moreover, during her subsequent stays in Bali her experiences as film maker, director, cinematographer and editor made her unusually well-equipped to combine her version of these newly acquired techniques of batik, collage and brushing into her own visions. The energy Janet Echelman paints in her expressionist works and in which she collages batik is remarkable — worthy of kudos.

**Joan Lebold Cohen**  
December 1989

## JANET ECHELMAN

talks with writer **Eve Faber** in Hong Kong, November, 1989.

"To me, it seems that the only manifestation of the sublime is in nature. Living in the city, the only time you really stop and think of something in a spiritual way is when you see a tree, a mountain, or the sea."

When artist Janet Echelman left her native town of Tampa, Florida in February, 1989 to return to Bali, she said "I have some new ideas. I'm going in a new direction."

The results of her explorations can be seen in Ms. Echelman's exhibition, her third one-person show in Hong Kong. These 14 works in acrylic, batik and crayon, on large canvasses ranging from six-and-a-half to eight-and-a-half feet in size, search the essence of nature: its force, its shapes, its rhythms and its mystique. Included are two works painted as a response to the Tiananmen Square massacre.

Ms. Echelman's exhibits show many changes in her work since her last exhibition at the University of Hong Kong in September, 1988. She has a new technique: she now paints directly onto the canvas, applies pieces of batik-dyed material which are, at times, painted over, scraped away and marked with crayon — a reversal of her former technique of dyeing the canvas first and then applying paint.

This development has led to freer forms and bolder strokes, and has provided another dimension for the artist to express both conscious and sub-conscious images in her own exciting and vibrant style.

Ms. Echelman's landscapes are dotted with living organisms — sometimes portrayed in undefined shapes and forms which contain much humour, sometimes brought out in a confusion of clashing colours which can make the viewer feel uncomfortable.

But making the viewer feel comfortable by portraying easily identifiable images is not the artist's intention.

It is rather a desire to communicate her inner feelings: of what she sees, what she understands and her confusion about what she does not understand that can be seen and felt in her art.

Tuning in to an abstract artist's world and understanding the relationship with what he/she sees is not an easy task; indeed, abstract art demands much more from the viewer than realism. But is it necessary for an artist to make his/her work accessible to the viewer? As the viewer, you are the judge.

For Ms. Echelman "the artistic cycle is only complete when a painting is viewed". With this in mind viewers should not dismiss what they do not understand but should look upon the work as a challenge, to be read like a text.

More than any other fine art form, abstract art is an extremely personal portrayal of inner feelings and interpretations of outer images. Knowing the artist helps the viewer understand the works more than any other person's opinions — the following interview throws much light on the paintings at this exhibition.



EF: *"What is an artist?"*

JE: "An artist is an individual who separates him/herself from society in order to express development, understanding of life, or their own personal life. It is often a difficult life ..... certainly not a life one would choose. Most of the artists I admire are people who lived on the edge of society and human sanity, and most went over the edge – for example, Van Gogh, Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock.

I don't feel I will fall off the edge of the cliff of sanity; I have a firm enough footing on the ground that I can lean over the cliff, take a little peek and use what I see in my paintings."

EF: *"How do you work?"*

JE: "On my own. I keep a pen and paper by my bed because, sometimes, my ideas just pour out ..... I get up in the morning with my mind bursting with images: my dreams ..... fragmented images of my dreams; the impressions of what I see around me. The form and composition are absolutely from my own consciousness or sub-conscious. What comes out is a synthesis of all the various influences that my mind has been exposed to. For example, from my study at Hong Kong University I use Chinese calligraphy in my work, from my study of traditional batik-making in Java and Bali I use traditional fabric pattern stamps; from my American training I bring in gestural action painting. But even though I borrow from a few cultural inheritances, my natural instincts guide the transformation that occurs in its own time and in its own way – therefore the final result is always a product of my own mind."

EF: *"Who do you paint for?"*

JE: "Myself – although I made the two Chinese paintings in this exhibition for the people in Hong Kong.

I went through a very important decision-making period about the middle of this year. At the beginning I was painting lousy paintings ..... and I thinking a bit about the market. I was very much aware of making a living and selling my works, so I thought about who would buy, about whether my paintings would fit in their living rooms. The result was that all my paintings were lousy. Then I came to the point when I said to myself – and I think all artists who live from their work have this problem – where I made a strong decision that my paintings would only be for myself. Other people could look at them, but the only person I'm trying to please is me. And that's why I'm making them; I'm not trying to please art critics. The size of my paintings, and the colours that I use go against the advice of my gallery owner in America. For example, she said 'don't use yellow'. but if yellow feels right to me when I'm painting, it just flies out. These were very important decisions because, since then, that is when these strong paintings came out ..... and they are a lot more honest."

EF: *"Your works show the effect of many processes: of colour developing, of lines merging, of forms taking shape, of the dialogue between the artist and the artwork."*

JE: "Maybe I'm interested in process because the only certain thing I know is that nothing is certain and we are constantly changing – therefore everything and everyone is in the state of process.

I am able to concentrate more fully on the process of growth and change by living in Bali, which I would not be able to do if I lived in a city with all its distractions."

EF: *"Where do you live?"*

JE: "I am living on my own, in a village, in the middle of a rice field, in the middle of nature, powerful nature, with the loud sounds of frogs, crickets, the wind and exotic equatorial greenery. I love living in Bali because of what it feeds me. I enjoy the sense of being there: walking down the street and through the rice fields. I enjoy the rhythm of life there: the way the sun rises there, the nature ..... the shape of the river valleys ..... and I enjoy the people and the mental interaction I have, because they think so differently to my culture ..... and I enjoy the music and the dance and ..... the whole spirit of the place expressed through creative means."

EF: *"Why Bali?"*

JE: "Because to the Balinese, being a painter is the most regular thing, most of them are painters, I'm not doing anything extraordinary there. And in Bali, high art is wholly integrated with life. Aesthetics begin with the brightly colored offerings of flower petals and rice each day. Music, dance, shadow puppetry performances — these are all part of Balinese life, and everyone participates in some way."

EF: *"If you didn't paint, how else would you express yourself?"*

JE: "Since the age of five I have had a significant means of expression. I was a musician until I was seventeen — I played the piano with the Florida orchestra — and since I have left school I've always worked as a full time artist, that is: my main occupation has been the expression of my ideas in visual form.

I studied film-making at Harvard University, where I graduated in Visual and Environmental Studies. My films are one hundred per cent documentary, that is, the film looks at the world under a magnifying glass. In 1987 I made a film about the relationship between my mother, my grandmother and me."

EF: *"And the film was chosen for the Harvard Film Archive Permanent Collection?"*

JE: "Yes, it was. But actually, the medium I most enjoy expressing myself through is painting. I find such pleasure in paintings because they radiate life 24 hours a day. I think paintings are physical objects. Film is not alive unless it is being shown."

EF: *"Some people may say that it's a little egocentric to check out of Western society, find yourself an idyllic spot in the world and express yourself?"*

JE: "Yes, it's all quite self-indulgent and egoistic — here I am, discovering myself and making paintings for myself ..... I feel I am very fortunate to be able to lead the life I am leading — but I don't feel that I have to justify anything to anyone. I feel that I have a life that is supposed to be expressed through my art. I don't question this fact, it just is. This is my life."

**JANET ECHELMAN** is a well-educated, sophisticated artist. Her aesthetic curiosity has encouraged her work to include experimentation that she is sensitive to in her exotic adventures. The result is a successful worldly innocence producing surprises.

**Robert Rauschenberg**  
February 1990

### List of Exhibits

- 1. Becoming Fire**  
Acrylic paint and oil crayon on canvas  
122 x 244 cm
- 2. Bird of Paradise**  
Batik collage, acrylic paint and oil crayon on canvas  
193 x 122 cm
- 3. Anima**  
Batik collage, acrylic paint and oil crayon on canvas  
193 x 122 cm
- 4. If a Lie is Repeated a Thousand Times . . .**  
Chinese paper, acrylic paint and oil crayon on canvas  
122 x 244 cm
- 5. Xidan Democracy Wall**  
Chinese paper, acrylic paint and oil crayon on canvas  
122 x 244 cm
- 6. Skyward**  
Acrylic paint and oil crayon on canvas  
122 x 244 cm
- 7. Night Spirit**  
Batik collage, acrylic paint and oil crayon on canvas  
244 x 122 cm
- 8. Arboretum**  
Acrylic paint and oil crayon on canvas  
122 x 244 cm
- 9. Batik Net**  
Batik collage, acrylic paint and oil crayon on canvas  
122 x 244 cm
- 10. Arctic Red**  
Acrylic paint and oil crayon on canvas  
122 x 244 cm
- 11. Tree Through a Fish-eye Lens**  
Batik collage, acrylic paint and oil crayon on canvas  
122 x 244 cm
- 12. Flying Mouse on Roller Skates**  
Vinyl-flooring, acrylic paint and oil crayon on canvas  
122 x 244 cm
- 13. What Walks on 4 Legs in the Morning, 2 Legs in the Afternoon, and 3 Legs in the Evening?**  
Oil and acrylic paint on canvas  
122 x 244 cm

## 展品目錄

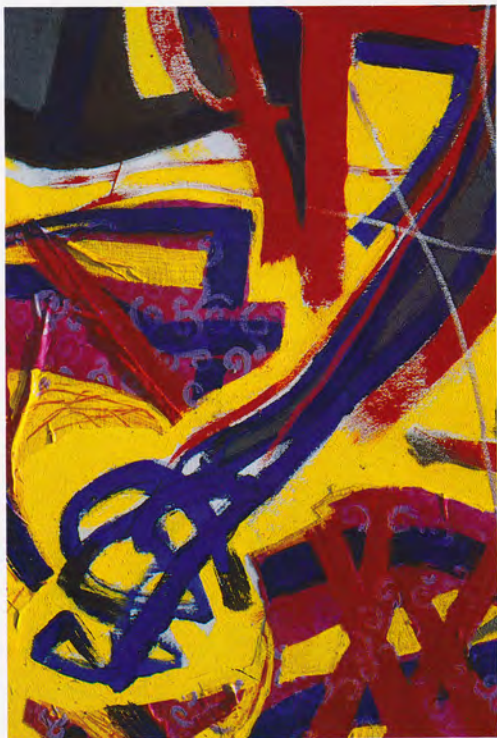
- 1. 爐**  
塑膠彩、粉彩、帆布  
122×244厘米
- 2. 天堂鳥**  
蠟染拼貼、塑膠彩、粉彩、帆布  
193×122厘米
- 3. 靈**  
蠟染拼貼、塑膠彩、粉彩、帆布  
193×122厘米
- 4. 謊言說上一千遍……**  
粗紙、塑膠彩、粉彩、帆布  
122×244厘米
- 5. 西軍民主牆**  
粗紙、塑膠彩、粉彩、帆布  
122×244厘米
- 6. 直上雲霄**  
塑膠彩、粉彩、帆布  
122×244厘米
- 7. 午夜精靈**  
蠟染拼貼、塑膠彩、粉彩、帆布  
244×122厘米
- 8. 植物園**  
塑膠彩、粉彩、帆布  
122×244厘米
- 9. 蠟染網**  
蠟染拼貼、塑膠彩、粉彩、帆布  
122×244厘米
- 10. 北極紅**  
塑膠彩、粉彩、帆布  
122×244厘米
- 11. 超廣角鏡下**  
蠟染拼貼、塑膠彩、粉彩、帆布  
122×244厘米
- 12. 飛鼠滑翔**  
乙稀基、塑膠彩、粉彩、帆布  
122×244厘米
- 13. 早用四足、午用二足、晚用三足來行走的是什麼？**  
油彩、塑膠彩、帆布  
122×244厘米



Detail 局部



1. Becoming Fire 熾



Detail 局部



2. Bird of Paradise 天堂鳥



3. Anima 靈



Detail 局部





Detail 局部



4. If a Lie is Repeated a Thousand Times . . .

謊言說上一千遍……



Detail 局部



5. Xidan Democracy Wall

西單民主牆



Detail 局部



6. Skyward 直上雲霄



7. Night Spirit 午夜精靈



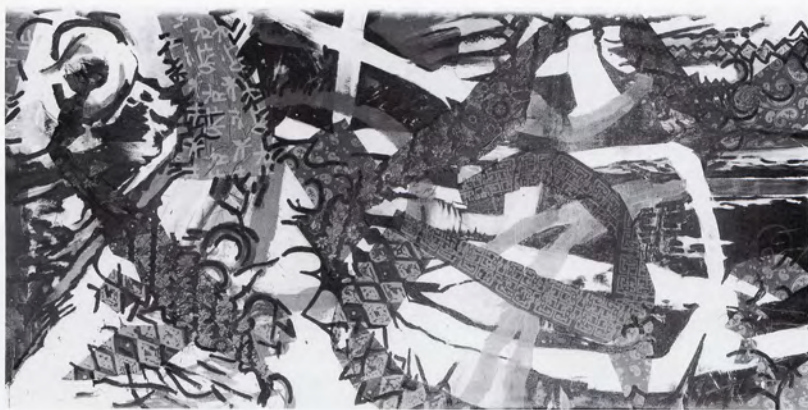
Detail 局部



Detail 局部



8. Arboretum 植物园



9. Batik Net 蠟染網



10. Arctic Red 北極紅



11. Tree Through a Fish-eye Lens 超廣角鏡下



12. Flying Mouse on Roller Skates

飛鼠滑翔



13. What Walks on 4 Legs in the Morning, 2 Legs in the Afternoon, and 3 Legs in the Evening?

早用四足、午用二足、晚用三足來行走的是什麼？



## JANET ECHELMAN

### EDUCATION

- 1983-1987 HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
A.B., Magna Cum Laude. Major in Visual and Environmental Studies, minor in History. Elizabeth Agassiz Carey Award for Academic Achievement. Senior Project Award, chosen for *Harvard Film Archive Permanent Collection*. Studied privately with Austrian painter Paul Rotterdam, and film-maker Ross McElwee.
- 1987-1988 UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG  
*Rotary Graduate Scholarship, Fellowship for International Understanding*. Studied Chinese calligraphy and landscape painting. In residence with art studio.
- 1985-1986 INTERNATIONAL HONORS PROGRAM  
Traveled one year with Harvard Professors to study and compare art and anthropology in: Japan, Bali, Australia, India, Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, France, and England.

### EXHIBITIONS: ONE-PERSON

- 12/89 - 2/90 Barbara Mann Performing Arts Hall, Florida  
*Batik Collage: New Works from Bali by Janet Echelman*
- 9/88 - 10/88 Department of Fine Arts Gallery, University of Hong Kong  
*Recent Work from the Bali Studio: Acrylic Paint on Dyed Canvas*
- 1/89 - 3/89 University of South Florida Art Museum at One Tampa City Center, Florida  
*Recent Work from the Bali Studio: Acrylic Paint on Dyed Canvas*
- 5/88 - 6/88 Fringe Club Gallery, Hong Kong  
*Recent Works by Janet Echelman*
- 5/85 - 6/85 Mather House Gallery, Harvard University, Boston  
*Recent Paintings by Janet Echelman*

### EXHIBITIONS: GROUP

- 3/88 - 10/88 Five locations in Hong Kong, Kowloon, and the New Territories  
(traveling exhibition)  
*Phillippe Charriol Foundation: 1988 Modern Art Competition Winners*
- 5/87 - 6/87 Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Main Gallery, Harvard University  
*Theses and Senior Tutorials*

Janet Echelman first travelled to Bali in 1986 and has maintained a studio in Ubud since 1988.

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