



**M**uch like the growth of the World Wide Web itself, Yahoo co-founder Jerry Yang's passion for art has been an evolution of sorts. It started out with a definite whimper—not a bang—when he was a child in Taiwan, forced reluctantly to study calligraphy in school. Yet as time went on, it grew to take on a much broader role, especially when he married Akiko Yamazaki 21 years ago. Together, they pledged that the three areas of interest they would delve deeper into as a couple would be philanthropy, wine and art.

Nowadays, just as the web has become indispensable, so too has art in Yang's life. "We don't think of ourselves as collectors," says Yang, now founding partner of Palo Alto's AME Cloud Ventures investment firm. "It's not 'Oh, don't touch that' at our house. We try to live with art. We don't collect something because it's valuable or famous. We collect something because we like it." And do both of them have to be equally enamored of a piece before they purchase it? "Well, there's a boss. And it's not me," Yang says with a chuckle, as he glances at his wife sitting beside him on a sofa in his office.

Yang and Yamazaki may not consider themselves collectors. But their Peninsula home says otherwise, with its decor of Chinese calligraphy and ink paintings, Song dynasty ceramics, and Ming dynasty furniture. Now, the public has an opportunity to view part of that impressive collection up close

## STROKES OF GENIUS

With a just-opened show at Stanford, Jerry Yang and Akiko Yamazaki share their personal passion with the public.

By Carolyn Jung // Portrait by Angela DeCenzo



and personal at the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University ([museum.stanford.edu](http://museum.stanford.edu)). 墨境 *Ink Worlds: Contemporary Chinese Painting from the Collection of Akiko Yamazaki and Jerry Yang* runs through Sept. 3. It is the first exhibit at the Cantor devoted solely to one of China's oldest art forms.

The husband and wife previously showed part of their collection publicly, when a selection of their Chinese calligraphy pieces was exhibited in 2012 at San Francisco's Asian Art Museum, before traveling to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. Last year, the couple pledged \$25 million to the Asian Art Museum, where Yamazaki is board chair. That financial gift, the largest in the museum's history, will go toward an expansion project that will include the Akiko Yamazaki & Jerry Yang Pavilion exhibition space. The Cantor exhibit

From left: "China Park #3: Wind and Rain," an ink on paper by Gu Wenda; Akiko Yamazaki and Jerry Yang in Yang's Palo Alto office.



marks the first time, however, that their collection has been shown on the campus from which they both graduated with engineering degrees. “I see this exhibit as both an honor and a model,” says Susan Dackerman, director of the Cantor. “It’s a great honor to show a collection by former students, and it provides an amazing model for the students here now to think about what they can do in the future in terms of collecting art, learning about history and other worlds, and bringing it all back to Stanford to share.”

The exhibit came about after Richard Vinograd, a Stanford professor in Asian Art, approached Yang and Yamazaki about allowing his students to curate a show. For the past year, more than a dozen of them labored to select the pieces and write essays about each one, as well as the explanatory labels on the museum walls. “It’s less about our art than it is about showcasing these students,” Yang says. “It’s their story, their eye and their themes.” Of the 46 pieces that make up the exhibit, 39 are from Yang and Yamazaki. They include some very personal pieces that were commissioned by the couple to mark significant family milestones, such as birthdays and anniversaries.

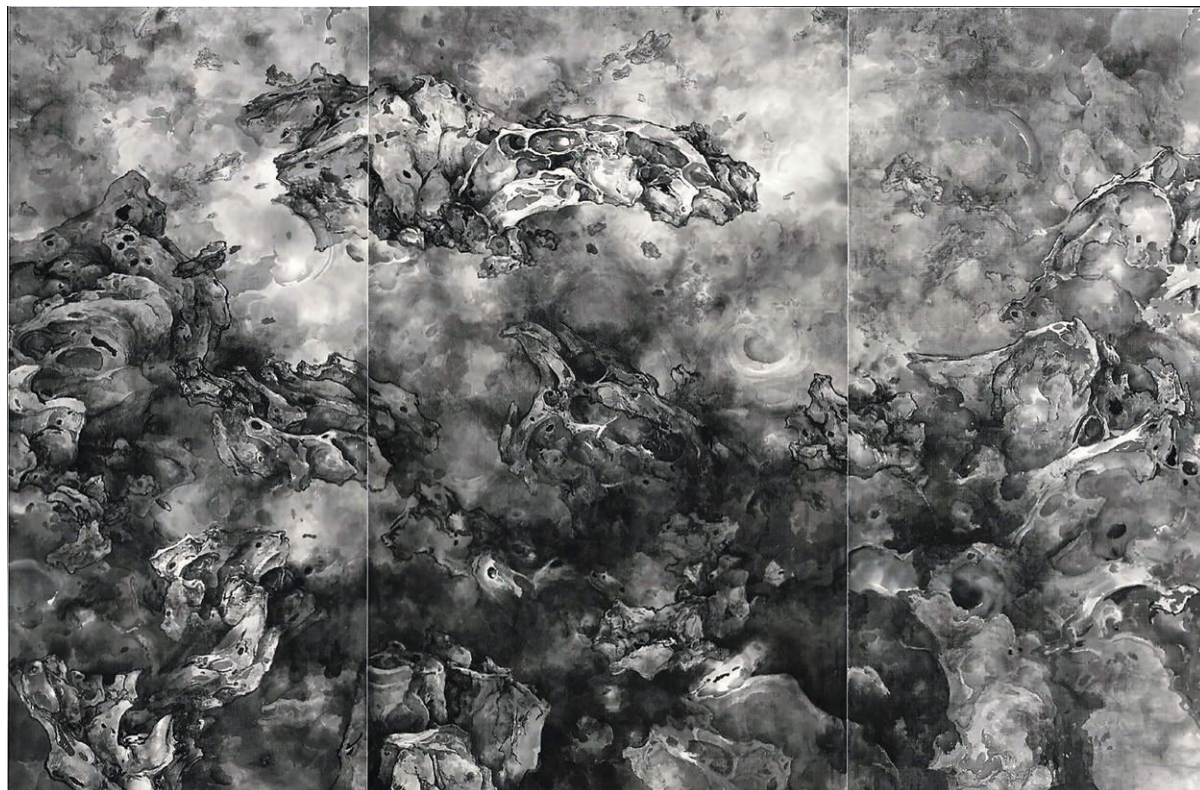
How did art first gain such a foothold in their lives? “We never had an interest in

art early on, but I was approached to be a board member of the Asian Art Museum,” says Yamazaki, pointing a knowing finger at her husband and adding: “I think they really wanted you. But he pawned it off on me. So the museum was instrumental in getting us started in all of this. It really helped expand our horizon and expose us to world-class art.” They purchased their first contemporary Chinese ink painting in 2001. “Clouds with Moisture” by Li Huayi, which is part of the Cantor exhibit, is a misty mountain landscape with a phantasmal quality to it that Yamazaki was drawn to immediately. Yang admits it took a little longer for him to appreciate it. But the more he studied it, the more he admired just what it took to create something so extraordinary with just a simple brush dipped into ink.

In the incessant, tech-driven world of Silicon Valley, he hopes people hit pause long enough to appreciate the beauty in this decidedly low-tech form that has managed to endure through the ages. “This is a personal collection, so people will find it relatable,” he says. “It also has a dynamic, engaging element. And, if anything, it will take people away from their daily grind.” If but for a moment—yet one that can clearly enrich a lifetime, as Yang and Yamazaki now know so well. ■



Clockwise from top: “Chan Painting” (1970) by Lu Shoukun; “Untitled” (1995) by Irene Zhou; and “Celestial Chaos, No. 2” (2014) by Tai Xiangzhou.







# Silicon Valley

MODERN LUXURY

## THE HOME DESIGN ISSUE

Nature Meets Modern Architecture  
New Builds Where Even the Stairs Are Art  
One Enormous House—Dozens of Designers

Plus  
A Yahoo Founder Takes His Art Collection  
Public, VIP Dining in the Valley & More