

Art | Music

# Sound Waves from Contemporary Music Become Traditional Chinese Landscapes in Du Kun's Scroll Paintings

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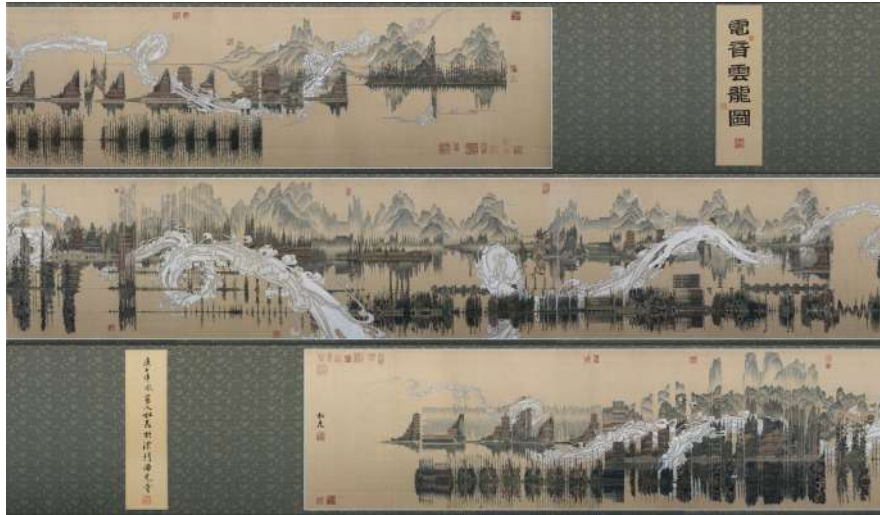
GRACE EBERT



Detail of “登楼 / Going Upstairs” (2021), scroll, ink and color on silk, 50 × 600 centimeters (painting), 51 × 836 centimeters (scroll), 62 × 11 × 12 centimeters (camphor wood box)

“Playing music is my only hobby,” says artist Du Kun, who pairs his longtime passion for the auditory art form with the traditional Chinese landscapes his father taught him to paint as a child. This compilation takes shape in his sprawling, layered scenes that follow lush groves and steep rock formations across silk scrolls stretching nearly nine meters. Each one of the natural features is the artist’s translation of a sound wave, which turns an eccentric array of tracks into wide, serene landscapes.

In a short video detailing his multi-faceted process, Du (previously) strums an acoustic guitar and taps percussive beats that he then digitally manipulates to form arched bridges or a whimsically rendered cloud that blows the length of the scroll. He combines multiple instruments and tracks for greater perspective and depth than a single recording would provide, rendering rich works that transform sung melodies into birds and clouds or the repetitive rhythms of electronic music into segmented architecture.



“电音云龙图 (Cloud Dragon in Electronic Noise)” (2020), scroll, ink, and color on silk, 70 × 860 centimeters (painting), 75 × 1172 centimeters (scroll), 82 × 11 × 12 centimeters (camphor wood box)

There’s an implied conversation between the visual and audio elements, Du says, describing how he uses “the mood of the painting as an initial guiding foundation to break away from the conventional routines of music arrangement.” Painting styles typically associated with the Song Dynasty and contemporary audio converge in the works in a seamless mix of time and sensory experiences, which he explains:

*‘ By using painting to influence music, the elements of music are transformed into these landscape paintings, becoming a new kind of music score. This series of works bring traditional Chinese paintings and modern music together, where ‘static’ and ‘noise’ are simultaneously present in the works—causing mutual influence, interdependency, and translation with one another. Just like two people who speak different languages but find a special way to communicate with each other. ’*

The works shown here are part of Du’s solo exhibition titled Scores of Landscapes, which is on view in-person and virtually at Mizuma Gallery in Singapore through July 18.



Detail of “登楼 / Going Upstairs” (2021), scroll, ink and color on silk, 50 × 600 centimeters (painting), 51 × 836 centimeters (scroll), 62 × 11 × 12 centimeters (camphor wood box)



“临江听筝 (Listening to the Guzheng While Overlooking a River)” (2021), ink and color on silk, 27 × 150 centimeters (painting), 33 × 180 centimeters (silk), 39 × 186 × 5 centimeters (framed)



Details of “三远即兴 (Sanyuan Improvisation)” (2021), ink and color on silk, 19 × 136 centimeters (painting), 25 × 180 centimeters (silk), 30 × 186 × 3 centimeters (framed)



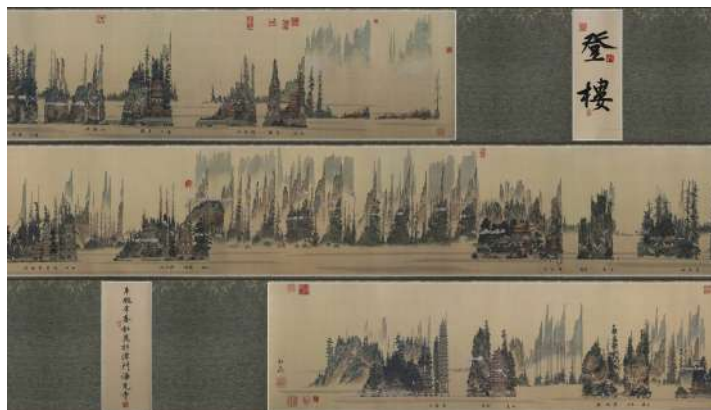
“三远即兴 (Sanyuan Improvisation)” (2021), ink and color on silk, 19 × 136 centimeters (painting), 25 × 180 centimeters (silk), 30 × 186 × 3 centimeters (framed)



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