

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**The Hong Kong Jockey Club Presents –
A World Within: The Art and Inspiration of Irene Chou
Opens at the Asia Society Hong Kong Center**

***The first thematic solo exhibition of New Ink art pioneer since the artist's passing
On Major Display From September 25, 2019 To January 5, 2020***

(Hong Kong, September 18, 2019) Asia Society Hong Kong Center (ASHK) will unveil its new exhibition ***The Hong Kong Jockey Club Presents – A World Within: The Art and Inspiration of Irene Chou*** at its Chantal Miller Gallery on September 24, 2019, with the opening ceremony at The Hong Kong Jockey Club Hall of ASHK. The Exhibition will be open to public for free commencing September 25, 2019 to January 5, 2020.

Exclusively sponsored and presented by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust (the Trust), the exhibition is the first major solo presentation of Irene Chou (1924-2011) worldwide since the artist's passing and is the third installment in ASHK's 20th Century Chinese Female Artist Series. The exhibition brings together over 40 major paintings across Chou's fifty-year career, and traces her artistic trajectory and historical significance at the forefront of Hong Kong's New Ink Art Movement.

The accompanying "Jockey Club Art Education and Female Empowerment Series" of docent tours, educational talks and activities will be free for the public to enjoy throughout the Exhibition's tenure at ASHK. Through supporting these activities, the Trust hopes to provide a further dimension to the appreciation of Irene Chou's work and enrich people's lives by helping to make arts and cultural activities attractive and accessible for all.

Ms. S. Alice Mong, Executive Director of ASHK, said, "We are very proud to present Irene Chou in the third installment of our 20th Century Chinese Female Artist Series. The Series focus on the often under-represented and under-appreciated talents and works of modern Chinese women artists. This exhibition not only appreciates the contribution of Irene Chou as an artist but also focuses on the nexus between Art and Mental Wellness and the power of arts to express and to heal. We hope this exhibition will raise the awareness of mental health and highlight the positive energy of the Arts.

Display of Career-Spanning Works

A World Within is curated as a thematic journey that invites the audience to venture into Irene Chou's artistic universe. Structured into four main sections, the exhibition begins with "Discovering the Meaning of Art," which features Chou's early experimental works from the 1950s to 1960s, including mixed media collage and abstract ink landscapes, with other works from across her career that employ the motif of the color red. Titled after Herbert Read's *The Meaning of Art* (1931), which is one of the books that had the deepest influence on the artist, the first section explores how Chou's exposure to Western art history, theory and technique inspired her to expand from the Lingnan style and experiment with self-expression which helped form her own visual language. The second section, "Her

World Within,” features Chou’s paintings of the 1970s and 1980s, wherein she reinvented ways to manipulate dot, line, plane and ink wash through the influence and friendship of New Ink art pioneer Lui Shou Kwan (1919-1975), and gradually developed her signature spiritual motif, the sphere. The third section, “Duality and Balance,” features works from the 1980s and 1990s that focus on Chou’s search for harmony between opposites, influenced by Daoist and Buddhist philosophy, to express her genuine self through art. The final section, “A World in Motion,” features works of the 1980s to 2000s that culminate in Chou’s most dynamic late style, and explores her lifelong interest in capturing motion through ink painting as well as the impact of qigong and a devastating stroke in 1991 on her art-making.

This career-spanning presentation demonstrates Irene Chou’s innovative visual language; the significance of a female voice in making Chinese painting speak to a modern world; and the power of art to heal and reinvent the human spirit. Once standing at the edge of Hong Kong’s New Ink Art Movement, Irene’s most innovative and experimental artworks come back to spotlight after the artist’s death for ten years, providing a valuable chance for the public to trace the historical development of Hong Kong contemporary art. Presenting a variety of works, the exhibition includes works from Hong Kong Museum of Art, University Museum and Art Gallery of The University of Hong Kong, Art Museum of The Chinese University of Hong Kong and private collections.

A bilingual exhibition catalogue, will be published on the occasion of Asia Society Hong Kong Center’s eponymous exhibition on view and with the essays by Dr. Eva Man Kit Wah (Director and Chair Professor of the Academy of Film, Baptist University of Hong Kong), and André Chan (Independent Curator). A range of community and educational programs entitled the **“Jockey Club Art Education and Female Empowerment Series”** will be offered to children, students, families, and the general public. It includes masterclass, workshops, film screening sessions and guided tours. This exhibition is curated by Joyce Wong, the curator of ASHK and academically advised by Prof. Kao Mayching.

For more information on the Exhibition and its accompanying educational programs, please visit the Exhibition website at <https://asiasociety.org/hong-kong/exhibitions/hong-kong-jockey-club-presents-world-within-art-and-inspiration-irene-chou/>.

About the artist

Born and raised in Shanghai during the tumultuous years of the Second Sino-Japanese War and Chinese Civil War, Irene Chou (1924-2011) received bilingual modern education and attended the prestigious Shanghai St. John’s University. Chou worked as a journalist for Peace Daily upon graduation and only began practicing art formally in the 1950s after she moved to Hong Kong. She first studied under the Lingnan School master Zhao Shao’ang, before learning ink painting from Lui Shou Kwan in the 1960s. Under the influence of Lui’s innovative teaching and friendship, Chou developed a highly original abstract visual language informed by modern themes, Western techniques and art movements as well as her unique outlook on life. The artist suffered a stroke in 1991 that nearly ended her career; however, she was able to recover mobility through her qigong practice. Irene Chou’s artistic trajectory is marked by many distinct phases, and her painting was rejuvenated with new life and virtuosity after her stroke and relocation to Australia.

The artist’s achievements are recognized by her numerous awards, such as the Pacificulture Asia Museum Fine Art Award in 1972, Hong Kong Urban Council Award in 1983 and Hong Kong Artist of the Year Award in 1988. Chou was also widely exhibited internationally, consecutively included in the London Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition in the 1970s, and was chosen to represent Hong Kong in the First Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art held at the Queensland Art Gallery in 1993.

About The Jockey Club Art Education and Female Empowerment Series

A range of community and educational programs, entitled “The Jockey Club Art Education and Female Empowerment Series”, will be offered to children, students, families, and the general public. These will range from public lectures on providing deeper knowledge of the artworks in the exhibition and raising awareness on mental health policies, services, and technologies today. There will also be a family fun day under the theme of “Happiness and Wellness”; an art open-call inspired by themes related to ***A World Within***; an open studio where the public can enjoy a day of art making and master classes with local or overseas artist(s) to help participants experience the impact of art on their mental wellness and emotion, etc. In addition, a range of educational tools will be available including Teacher Resource Guides, Student Worksheets and Visitor Education Leaflets.

Meanwhile, to enhance community access, Asia Society will implement a variety of Art Access Opportunities during the exhibition period, to allow visitors of all ages, abilities, and requirements to experience the exhibition. Provision of a tactile-audio interaction system in the gallery will also allow visually impaired and elderly with limited vision to enjoy the exhibition. Apart from gallery-guided docent tours, special tours will be arranged for people with disabilities and special needs. There will also be specially designed tours for primary and secondary school students. All lectures from the public lecture series will also be posted online to allow access to a wider audience.

For more information, please visit the Exhibition website at <https://asiasociety.org/hong-kong/exhibitions/hong-kong-jockey-club-presents-world-within-art-and-inspiration-irene-chou>

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About The Exhibition

The Hong Kong Jockey Club Presents – A World Within: The Art and inspiration of Irene Chou

September 25, 2019 – January 5, 2020

Free admission

Venue:

Chantal Miller Gallery,
Asia Society Hong Kong Center,
The Hong Kong Jockey Club Former Explosives Magazine,
9 Justice Drive, Admiralty, Hong Kong

Tuesday – Sunday: 11am – 6pm

Last Thursday of the month: 11am – 8pm

Closed on Mondays, Christmas Day and New Year’s Day

Last admission: 30 minutes before closing

About Asia Society Hong Kong Center

Asia Society Hong Kong Center is a locally funded, independent non-government organization which was established in 1990 by a group of Hong Kong community leaders. It is affiliated with Asia Society in New York which was founded in 1956 by John D. Rockefeller III to promote mutual understanding and to strengthen partnerships between Asia and the US in a global context.

Asia Society Hong Kong Center is dedicated to providing educational platforms that present balanced perspectives and promote critical understanding of topics that are relevant to Hong Kong, Asia and the region's role in the world. Across the fields of arts and culture, education, business and policy, it seeks to provide insights, generate ideas and promote collaboration to address present challenges and create a shared future. Its home in Admiralty at the former Explosives Magazine of the old Victoria Barracks, made possible under Private Treaty Grant from the government, was the result of careful conservation, restoration and adaptive re-use which transformed the heritage site into a cultural, artistic and intellectual hub in 2012 to offer a broad variety of cultural and education programs to the community.

Media Enquiry

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Highlight:



The Hand 1950s
Mixed media on xuan paper
57 x 119 cm
Private collection



My Inner World 1976
Ink and color on xuan paper
169.7 x 77.5 cm
Collection of Hong Kong Museum of Art



The Universe Lies Within I 1996
Chinese ink, color and acrylic on hemp paper
150 x 208 cm
Private collection



The Universe VI c.1998
Ink and mixed media on hemp paper
76 x 213 cm
Private collection