

**Cai Kui**

A SURVEY EXHIBITION

Cai Kui

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## Introduction

Cai Kui was born Qingdao, China, in 1955. His immersion in visual art began in his youth, and by the age of 17 he was producing murals and completing various interior design projects. Kui graduated from Qingdao University with a BA in 1984, and began teaching there soon after. He went on to complete his MA, in art and design, at Qinghua University, Beijing, in 1987. Cai Kui has been recognized throughout his extensive teaching and painting career, winning numerous awards, including the Silver Prize in the Qingdao Portrait Painting Competition in 1978, and the Gold Prize in the Shandong Oil Painting Exhibition of 1979.

Cai Kui's paintings and critical writing have been published in respected Chinese art periodicals such as Famous Artists, Chinese Oil Painting and Zhuang Shi. Kui has served as Art Councilor at the Qingdao Oil Painting Academy and is a member of the prestigious China Artist's Association.

In October 2015, after 41 years as an art educator, Cai Kui retired as professor in the fashion design department at Qingdao University, China. He now lives in Clarington full-time, and is a member of The Ontario Society of Artists, having participated in OSA member exhibitions.

As an artist Cai Kui's influences are wide-ranging. By the age of 14 he had been exposed to the practice of oil painting and socialist realism through art studies in China. His continuous education and travels would lead him to be influenced by the Fauvists for their raw use of colour, and the Group of Seven for their unique portrayal of the Canadian landscape. Despite being exposed to various practices, Kui would return to his roots with a clear interest in the basic principals of design – formal balance, movement and pattern, together with his skill in Chinese brush painting.

These are evident in the rhythm of his brush strokes and the compositions of his paintings.

Cai Kui's Survey exhibition at the Visual Arts Centre of Clarington celebrates ten years of his artistic life, with works spanning 2005 to 2015.

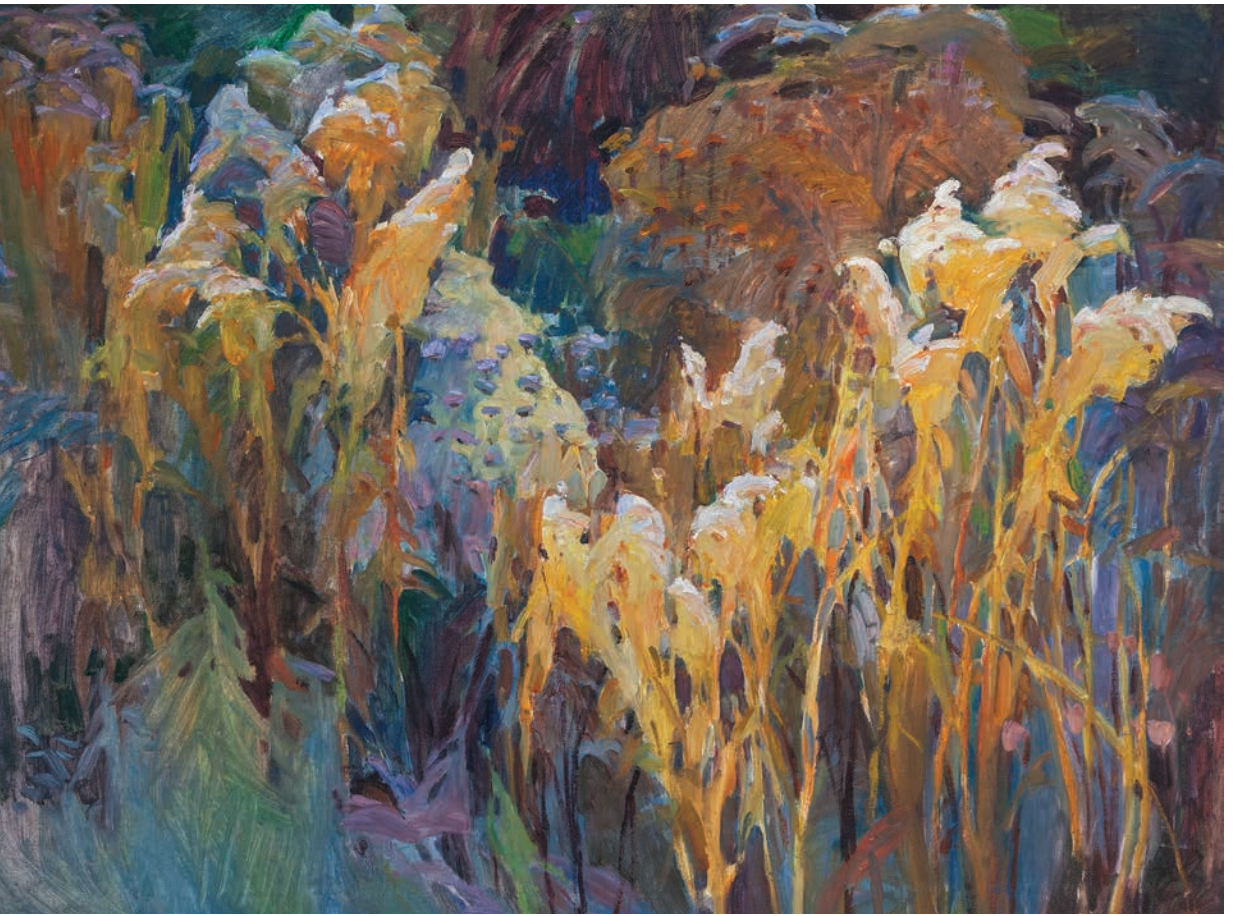
The main gallery space featured 37 oil paintings, executed on canvas and wood panel. All but three of the works in this exhibition are from Canadian subjects. When Cai Kui relocated to Clarington he began to study the Group of Seven and found himself inspired by their connection with nature. This encouraged him to turn his focus to landscape painting. His vital on-site sketches and large canvases are dense with energy and light through the gestural application of brilliant pigment, bold colours, and a very strong command of his brush. In this sense, his landscapes harken back to early 20th century Canada.

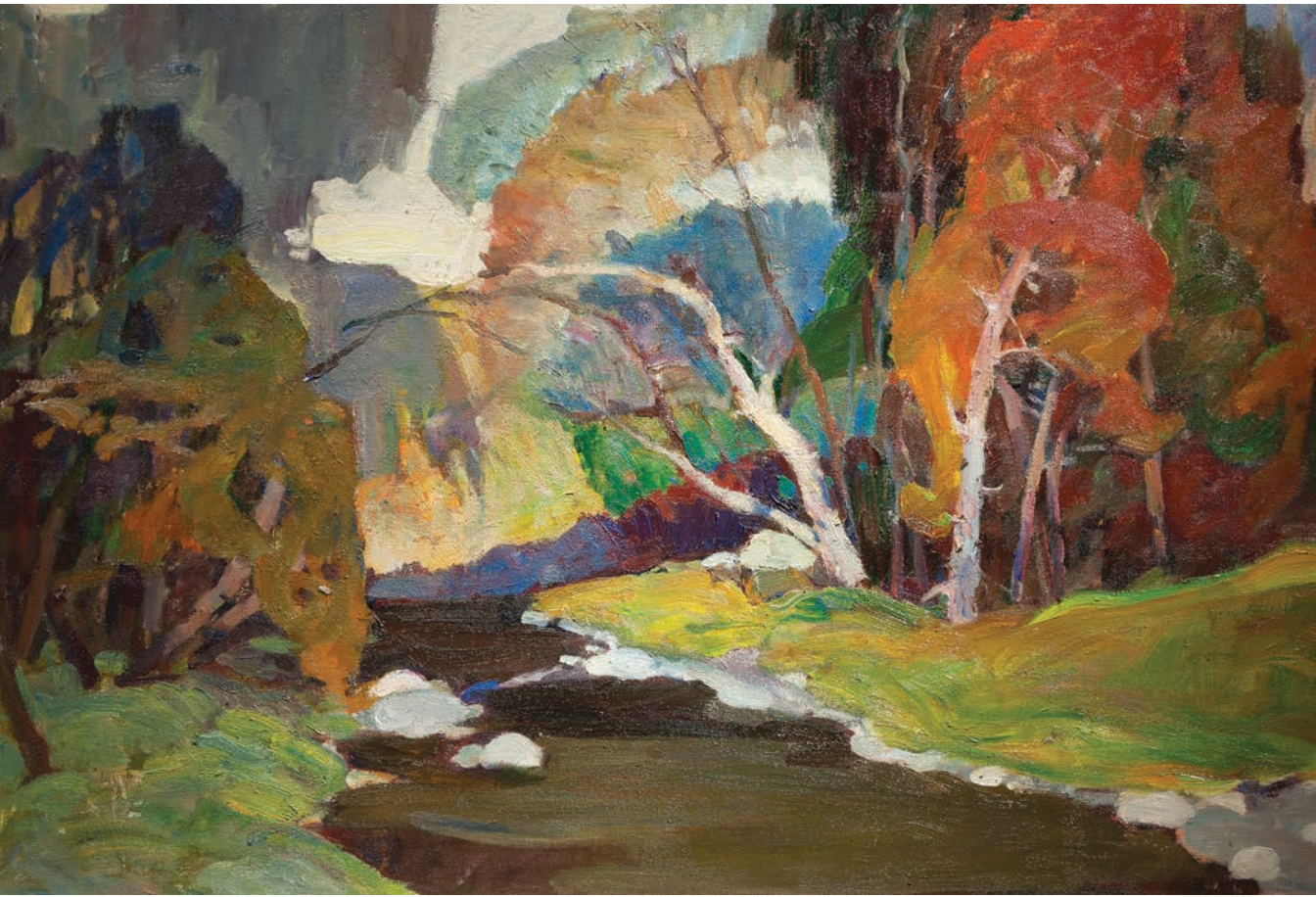
The small gallery housed Cai Kui's figurative work. Again, Kui developed his paintings from studies drawn in situ. Participating in life drawing classes here at the Visual Arts Centre and sessions in his home studio, Cai Kui would work from the live model. His sketches were transformed into larger paintings displaying his skill in representing the human form through a finely balanced formal composition and a strategic use of light. Visitors were treated to a more comprehensive look at Kui's command of the brush in the third-floor loft gallery, where a collection of Chinese brushwork and ink calligraphy on paper were shown.

As part of the VAC's public programming, Cai Kui delivered a free public artist talk, where he openly shared his artistic focus of working en pleine air to produce landscape paintings that challenged visual perceptions. Kui described his interest in various forms of

visual stimuli and their effects on visual sensory, perception and ultimately subject interpretation. Cai Kui chronicled his thought process in the act of creation – his focus on art theory from a humanist perspective, and his attempts to capture the beauty in a landscape not as something created by nature, but instead, something perceived beautiful by humans.

As an artist, Cai Kui's practice is invested in his attempt to use paint as a tool of expression rather than a mechanism of record keeping. His paintings do much more than capture subjects, they explore ideas that he hopes will ultimately resonate with viewers.





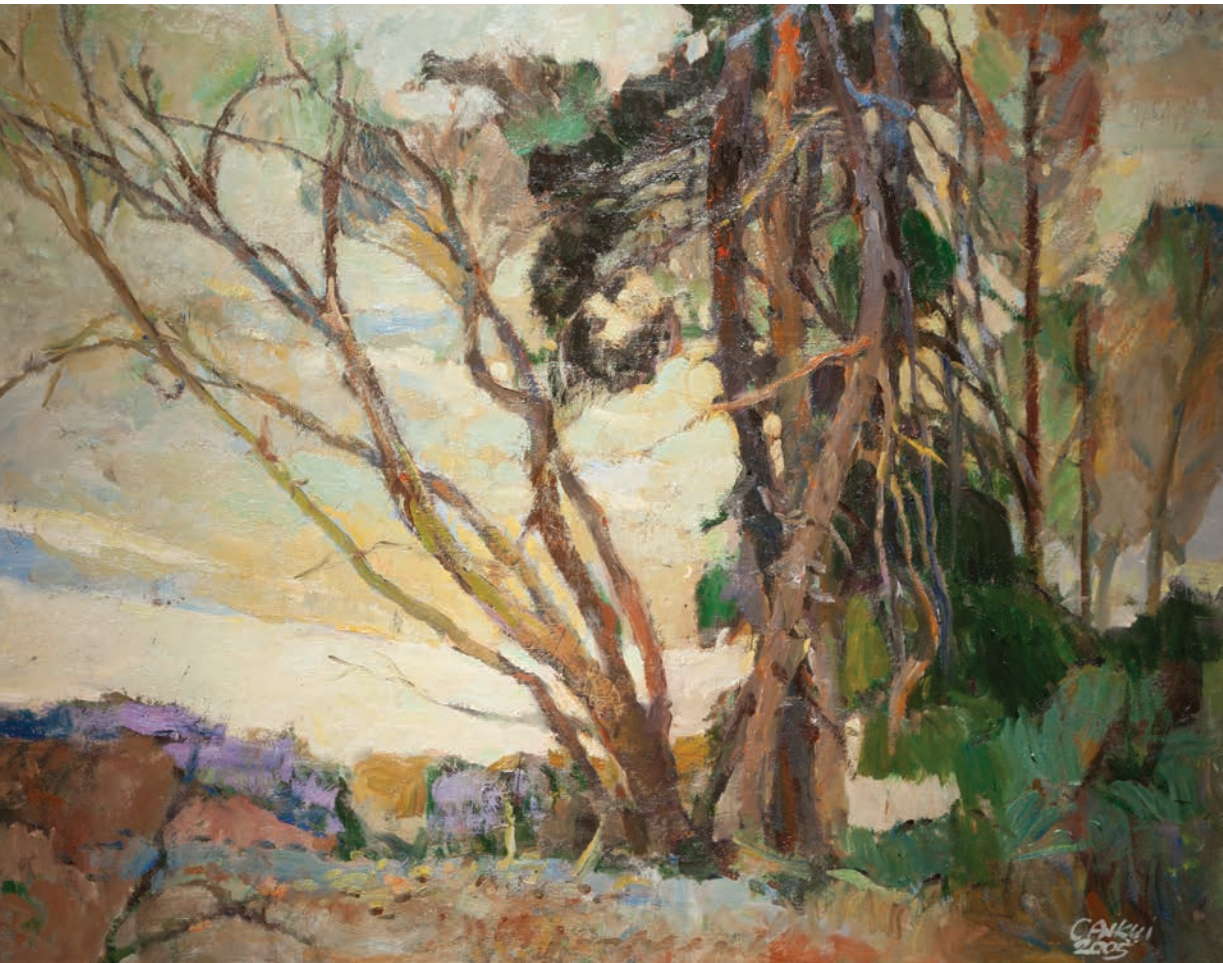
















### **List of Catalogue Works**

cover:

SOLITUDE OF PINE  
2005; 23 × 29 in.

page 4:

FLAMING PHEONIX L  
2013; 36 × 48 in.

page 5:

CEDAR PARK CREEK  
2012; 24 × 28 in.

pages 6–7:

Installation shot

page 8:

SUNSET RED MAPLES  
2012; 29 × 36 in.

page 9:

POPLAR  
2009; 36 × 48 in.

page 10:

SOLITUDE OF PINE  
2005; 23 × 29 in.

page 11:

FLAMING PHEONIX S  
2013; 24 × 28 in.

page 12:

AUTUMN LOTUS  
2014; 40 × 48 in.

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