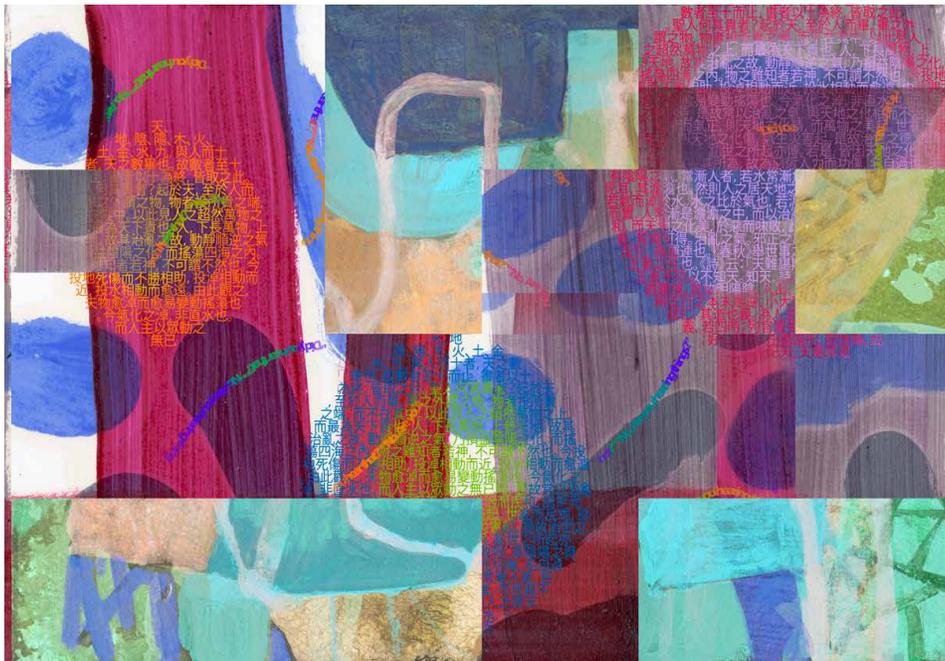


Walking River

Helena Hadala · Deng Ming-Dao · John Abram



2016—2021

In the universe, there are things that are known, and things that are unknown, and in between, there are doors.

--William Blake

The Vision

Walking River is a collaborative vision between Canadian composer John Abram, Canadian visual artist Helena Hadala, and American writer-artist Deng Ming-Dao. Our plan is to create a distinctive interdisciplinary project that will stream together words, images, and sound. The unifying element for this complex multi-faceted project is thirty-six poems written by Deng Ming-Dao. The poems, created in response to one-word titles selected by Helena Hadala, explore personal and transpersonal boundaries. This collaboration cuts across many borders: the limits of time, distance, nationality, gender and separate personalities merge to create a synthesis of image, word and sound. As French poet Stéphane Mallarmé wrote, "Poetry should make air and silence hang around a word." It is our express aim to explore and extend this mystical power of words through visual imagery and evocative music, and to forge a creative work that opens new doors of perception.

The Plan

- 36 words
- 36 poems
- 36 visual images
- 36 musical compositions

The Process /Visual Images

Deng Ming-Dao and Helena Hadala started their exchange in 2016. Helena intuitively selected a word and sent it to Ming-Dao; he wrote a poem in response and sent it back to her. They continued this process until they completed 36 poems. The next step was to create 36 visual images in response to these poems. Helena and Ming-Dao created separate visual images independently by combining painting and drawing techniques in combination with digital elements in Photoshop. The individual images were scanned and exchanged simultaneously via the Internet. Ming-Dao designed a unique grid using a computerized version of the I Ching to generate an objective visual hybrid in the final step. Each grid, with a constant of 24 sections was digitally superimposed onto both images. This Yin Yang approach shaped a hybrid of our individual images and is presented without any editing. In these illustrations, Ming-Dao's images are on the left, Helena's are on the right, and the hybrid with superimposed grid is in the center. This experimental interchange of numerous layers creates a unique fusion of styles, augmenting each poem with a rich visual vocabulary, and providing layers that can be used in various platforms for installation or animated for a video component.

Audio Component

John Abram, so far, has composed 12 short pieces of music (approximately 2 minutes apiece) based on each poem. He is in the process of completing the full suite of works. Included is an audio sample of 10 compositions.

Walking River is intended to be a work of new media, unlimited by a single form, and taking full advantage of today's technology to break through old limitations. Like a moving river, this project is an exploration of new formats, new forms, collaboration, and flexible engagements with different audiences.

Installation concept:

The visual images and poetry will be printed onto a substrate such as dibond, Plexiglas or wood. A four-panel cube will be constructed presenting poetry on one side, the individual images by Helena and Ming-Dao on two opposing panels, and the hybrid image on the fourth panel. The seamless presentation of these cubical forms will allow the observer to view the images and text in the round. Constant dimensions of the modular units become sculptural elements and can be arranged in various ways to suit the parameters of the available space. Audio component would be presented as an ambient sound track.



Miniature model of installation concept

Computer based installation concept:

Depending on space considerations, *Walking River* can be configured as a computer based installation. This unique time-based presentation will be displayed on four LCD panels arranged in the center of the room. The poems, individual images and composites organized in a single right-angled format will be virtually constructed and deconstructed and dynamically change in tune with the sound. The visual images, with their multiple layers achieved through the exchange between Ming-Dao and Helena, will generate a dynamic 72-minute computer based presentation at a complimentary pace to John's music.



5 Patience

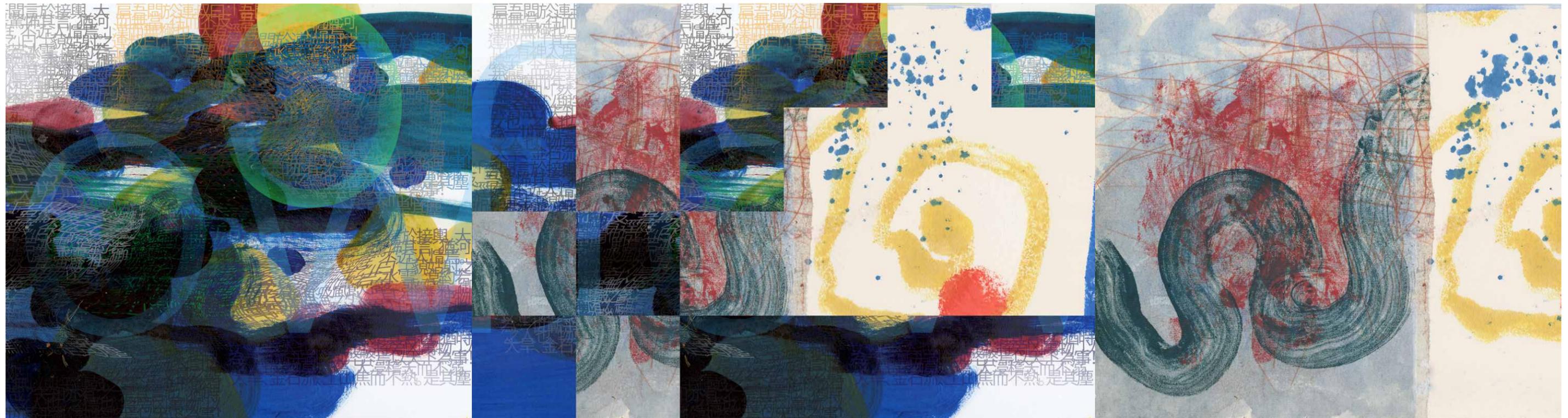
All along the black eaves
frost and dew cling.
Then each trace dries
in its own time.

All along the black eaves
rainwater beads.
Then each drop falls
in its own time.

All along the black eaves,
icicles hang.
Then each one melts
in its own time.



Walking River
Patience John Adams
b. 1959



7 Flow

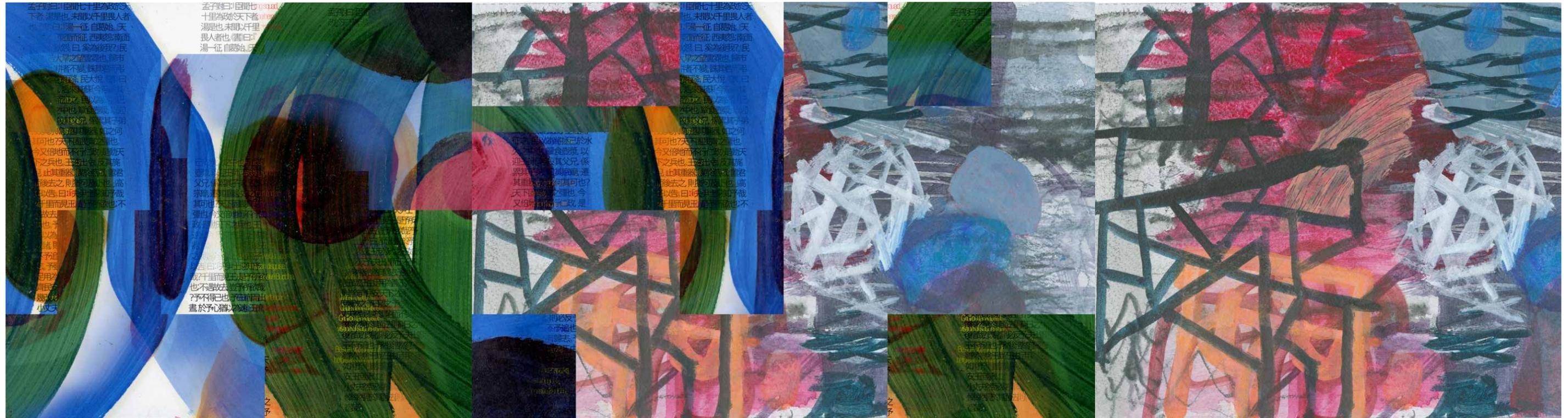
No one can lift the ocean
 that will slip through a child's fingers.
 No one can push the stream
 that tumbles down the mountainside.
 No one can mold a lake
 that faithfully takes any shape.
 No one can lead a river
 that explorers follow for direction.
 We tip water into our mouths,
 our bodies already half-water.
 We wash, cook, and clean,
 rinsing away waste.
 Water, red and blue, runs in us,
 we who are walking rivers.
 And still we say we don't know how.



Walking River
 Flow

John Adams
 1977

 This is a page of a musical score for the piece 'Walking River' by John Adams. It features multiple staves of musical notation, including treble and bass clefs, and various dynamics such as *p* (piano) and *f* (forte). The score is written in a modern, rhythmic style characteristic of Adams' work.



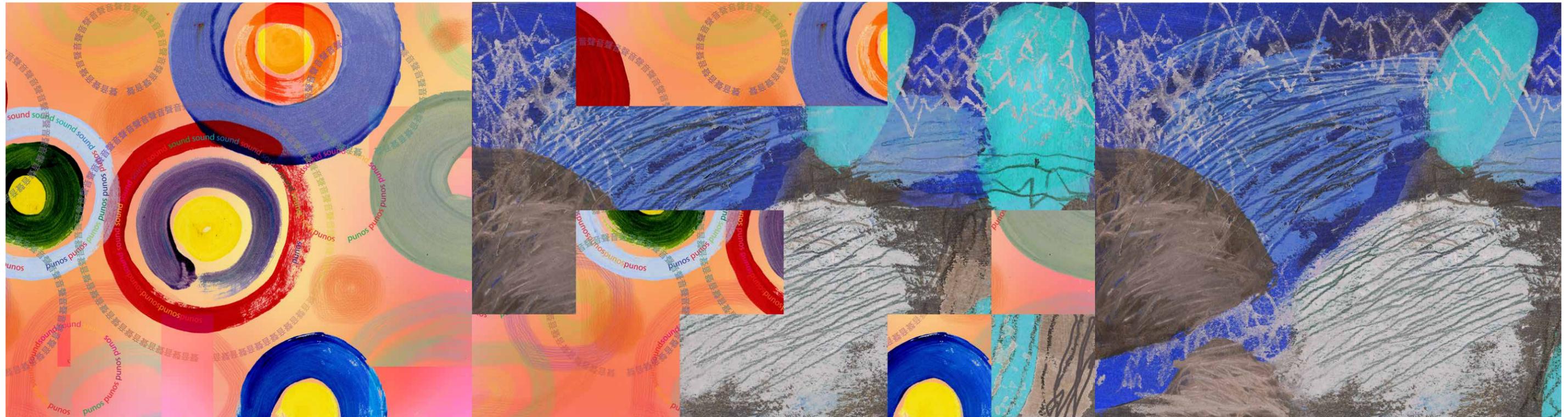
14 Mask

Blindfold for the firing squad,
 emblem of the superhero,
 glitter of the masquerade ball,
 face of a suspicious wife.

Window to dive into the seas,
 shield for the welder sparks,
 fun Halloween disguise,
 head of impassive Buddha.
 Mesh oval of a fencer,
 Cage of the baseball umpire,
 Gridiron faceguard,
 visage of sudden death.

Be sure you put yours on first
 before assisting others.





20 Sound

The beginning:
only silence.
Life: always starts
with a child's cry.

Death, so final:
awful silence.
Mourning goes on
with endless wails.

In between, we
make love, we argue,
we tell our jokes,
shout out anger.

We hear the wind,
waves smash the shore,
doors swing open,
windows bang shut,

we talk on phones,
and listen to
radios and
televisions.

But when night comes
so does silence,
and in the dark
we kneel to pray,

so that our words
will become seeds
sown in stillness —
to grow new life.



