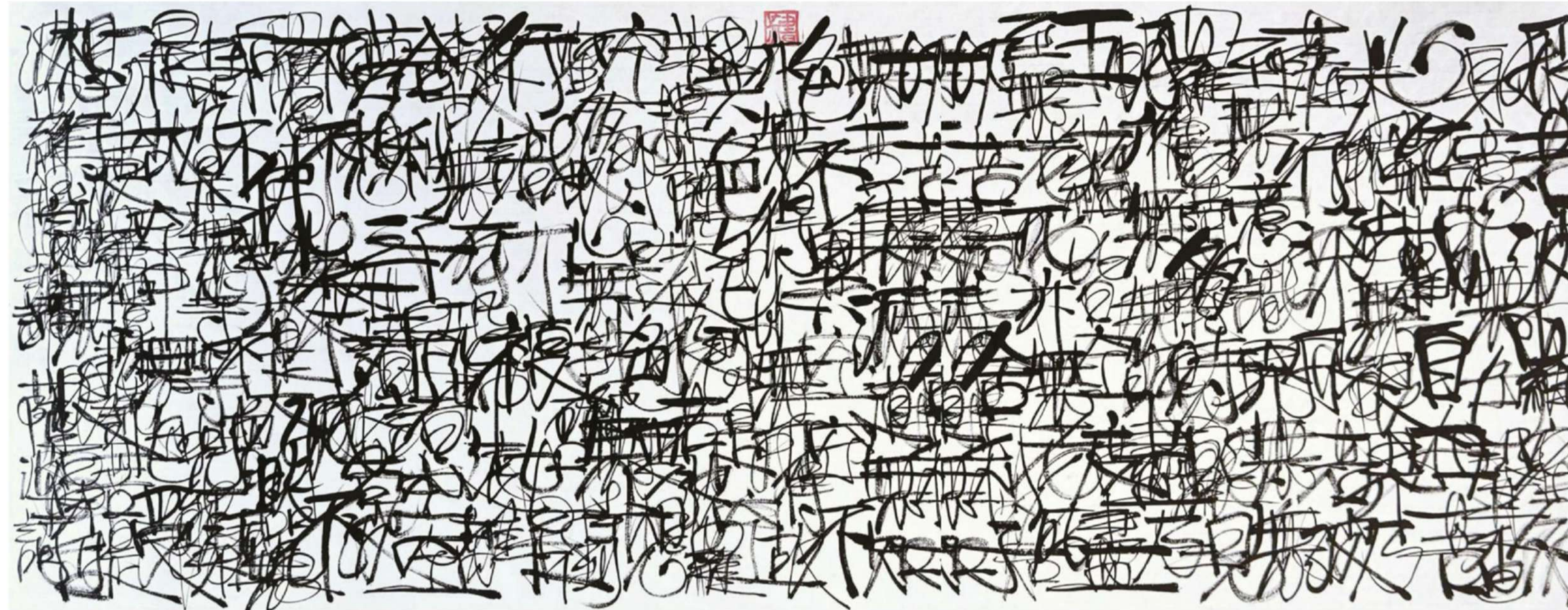


*The Perfect of Wisdom; Heart Sutra (2019)*



**How has practicing Chinese calligraphy and spending time with your grandfather shaped you?**

In many ways, it feels like fate. Calligraphy found me, and through it, I've found my purpose: to bridge the past and present while creating a timeless connection with people across cultures.

**This isn't a favourite question among artists, but what's a stand-out piece in your career that defined you?**

Rather than a single piece, I believe it's the calligraphy style I've developed, River-stroke, that defines me. This style represents my artistic identity and gives me complete freedom to express myself and my emotions. The essence of River-stroke lies in its continuous flow, where a single brushstroke never leaves the paper, forming streams of lines that merge into a larger river of ideas and expressions. It's a celebration of movement, unity, and infinite possibilities, pulsating with energy and brimming with emotion, capturing the rhythm of life in every stroke.

**Would you say that River-stroke is a result of timeless connection?**

What makes River-stroke especially meaningful to me is how it bridges two worlds: it honours the traditional calligraphy techniques passed down by my grandfather while breaking artistic boundaries to create something deeply personal and modern.

# RIVER FLOWS IN YOU

A doyen of traditional Chinese calligraphy with the genius to create his own stroke, Jameson Yap is a titan unto himself, and his art speaks to the soul.

Words: SWAROOPINI NAIR

For over two millennia, Chinese calligraphy is art beyond words—a graceful fusion of ink and brush where each stroke transcends language. Visual poetry, to understand the works of a master is to understand the poetic fusion of movement and meaning. After all, each stroke is a testament to centuries of artistic evolution.

Malaysia-born yet internationally renowned, Jameson Yap is an artist who

found his calling through this medium of traditional Chinese calligraphy. The reason he stands out? Yap has both evolved and paid respect to the artform over the years. His creations transcend languages, cultures, and religion as he modernises calligraphy for the present-day audience, all while creating his own strokes—known as River-stroke—that was shared at the Vancouver Art Gallery, where his work debuted on the international stage.

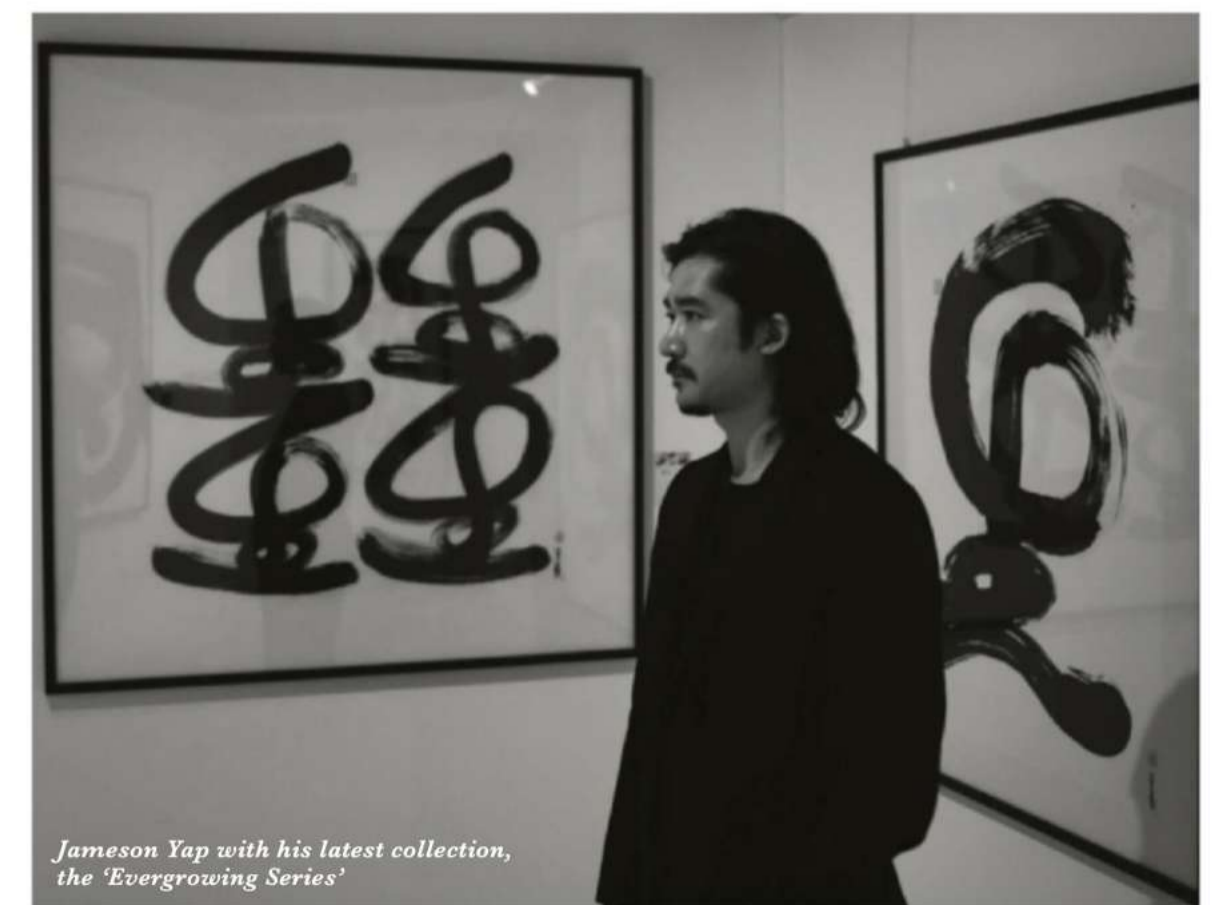
In an exclusive interview, PRESTIGE gleans insight into his art process, the thought and deliberation that went into creating his own form of calligraphy, as well as his latest art series, 'Evergrowing', inspired by his travels through Japan. Articulate in his thought yet inspired in his words, Jameson Yap is well on his way to becoming a national treasure, and we look forward to watching his rise there.

**Calligraphy is a rich yet laborious artform, what drew you to artistically move towards that medium?**

I would say Chinese calligraphy chose me rather than the other way around. My journey began at the age of five, under the guidance of my grandfather. Learning calligraphy with him wasn't about the art initially—it was about spending time with him. He would tell me stories about his life and his deep respect for the craft, and those moments became our shared ritual.

At first, it was his devotion to preserving tradition that inspired me, but as I grew, my relationship with calligraphy evolved. For my grandfather, the practice was a way to honour heritage and maintain its authenticity. For me, it became a way to break boundaries. My vision extends beyond tradition—I aim to make calligraphy universal, a form of expression that transcends language.

Even for those who don't understand Chinese characters, I want the strokes to evoke emotion, and to tell a story that resonates universally.



*Jameson Yap with his latest collection, the 'Evergrowing Series'*

*The River-stroke Series - Heart Sutra (2023)*



**Your recent art series, 'Evergrowing', has such a beautiful backstory, having been inspired by the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage in Japan. Can we expect more of this trajectory in your upcoming work?**

Absolutely! My art is always deeply intertwined with personal experiences and moments that resonate profoundly with me. The 'Evergrowing' series is a reflection of that, and this approach continues to shape my creative trajectory.

Currently, I'm immersed in developing a new series set to debut in the first half of 2025. This project ventures into uncharted territory for me—bronze sculptures. While calligraphy remains at its heart, this new medium transforms the essence of my work into a three-dimensional form, as if the strokes themselves have grown and evolved into something tangible.

What excites me even more is that this series will be unveiled simultaneously across several countries in Asia, Canada, and Europe, offering a truly global perspective. For Malaysia, the unveiling will take place at the Eslite Spectrum in The Starhill KL, where I hope it resonates with both new and familiar audiences.

Pieces like 'Heart Sutra' and 'Fang Shia' are emblematic of this fusion of heritage and innovation, serving as milestones in my journey. To me, River-stroke is more than a style—it's my voice as an artist, a reflection of who I am and the values I hope to share through my work.

**Was it difficult to not only learn traditional Chinese calligraphy, but to then create your own technique from it?**

Traditional Chinese calligraphy, or shūf, is a practice of discipline, precision, and deep reverence—a foundation that takes years to truly embody. Creating River-stroke was a journey of trial, error, and introspection. While some viewed my deviation from tradition with scepticism, I stayed rooted in the core principles of calligraphy, allowing them to guide my evolution. Calligraphy isn't just about creating something beautiful—it requires depth in culture, heritage, and even the right flow of each character. Only then can you craft a piece that not only looks harmonious, but also feels profoundly right.

The hardest battles were often internal—overthinking and self-doubt can stifle creativity. Meditation became my anchor, helping me quiet the noise and trust my instincts.



*Boundaries Series - Fang Shia; Let go (2022)*



*Seated in front of more works from the 'Evergrowing Series'*

**What advice would you give to other artists looking to grow the same way you did?**

Be yourself, be honest, and stay true to your voice. Don't let self-doubt or fear of criticism hold you back—create with intention, not with concern for how your work will be perceived. Growth takes time, and patience is key, especially when the path feels uncertain.

When inspiration wanes, step back and find balance. Know why you're creating, and let that truth guide you. Show gratitude to those who support you—staying grounded keeps you connected to what truly matters.

*Jameson Yap's 'Evergrowing Series' and other artworks will be on display at Eslite Spectrum Bookstore, The Starhill, throughout the first quarter of 2025.*