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Threads and Trajectories in “Asian” Communication

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i A Note from the Editor
Jonalous S. Labor, PhD

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Cover Design

“Calligraphic Portals”

For centuries, Imperial China would conduct rigorous examination to gather the Middle Kingdom’s brilliant minds who will serve the Emperor. This Imperial Examination ran for a long period of time testing the knowledge, endurance, and rigor of the candidates who shall serve in the hierarchy to be conduits of edicts, organization, and, much importantly, social cohesion of those “under heaven.” Though the rigorous ended at the start of the 20th century, when China emerged as a fraught republic from the excesses of empire, this system of channels and mediation are very much in place through different iterations in the 21st Century. Such practice and demand for expertise and knowledge is not just found in Imperial China, but across different courts through kingdoms across time. Writing is but one portal for communication as many Asian cultures rely on aurality. Be it scribbled or sung, words are uttered from select knowledgeable culture-bearers to emerge and fortify cultures. Communication is formed to shape and corral nation and overlaps with other nations. This sort of operation is reflective on the calligraphic traditions of Asia, be it to the millennia scholarly flows of Chinese writing, the tremulous but sure strokes of Japanese scripts, to the simplified and accessible building blocks-like configuration of Korean Hangul, to the Sanskrit Devanagari script, even with the ancient Tagalog writing system of Baybayin which is gaining a second life through the internet exchange between the Philippines and the diaspora who seek a definite mode of identification. The cover is not a reflection of Asian writing systems but of the overlapping and connective nature of present-day Asian communication which is the largest bloc of exchange of messages and transmission between cultures that seek similarity and demand borders in a communication mesh that is essentially nebulous. The main image is a swathe of movement of information like flows of calligraphy travelling through pixels, neon lights, and data. Yet, amidst the flurry of strokes, flows, is a solid corner involved in tradition, history, and culture. In some strokes in Chinese calligraphy, the scribe switches between a clean linear slope to stop, not just to pause but in some cases, to create a point of emphasis. The weight of the line is anchored before the calligrapher moves on to the next character, to the next message, to the next portal.

About the Artist

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