



# Made in China

By: Hugh Merrill

Todd Weiner Gallery, January 4th - February 26th, 2013



Hugh Merrill's six-week residency at Guanlan Original Printmaking Base in Shenzhen, China, resulted in his *Made in China* exhibition. The work was presented in January and February, 2013, at the Todd Weiner Gallery in Kansas City, MO. This body of work explores the relationship between commercialism and culture, and considers how form influences perception. Merrill's ongoing interest in Americana interfaces with the palette of advertising, traditional Chinese brush forms, and detailed organic and structural elements to form a multi-faceted discussion of cultural crossing points.

Guanlan Original Printmaking Base is located near Hong Kong, in the hometown of famous printmaker Mr. Chen Yanqiao. Yanqiao was a pioneer of the Chinese New Woodcut Movement in the 1930s, which formed the foundation for contemporary print practice in China. The movement depicted common hardships, instead of idealistic propaganda, and gave a voice to the common people. The base was established by these organizations: Shenzhen Bao'an District People's Government, Shenzhen Federation of Literary and Art Circles, and the China Artists Association.

Together, they built a national printmaking facility based on several principles: production, exhibition, collection, research, training, and market development of China's creative print industries. They host an international residency program, inviting artists from around the world to participate in a technical and conceptual dialogue on printmaking. Hugh Merrill sees the base as a striking contrast with his daily work with students and disadvantaged children. He says:

*"Going to the Guanlan arts residency is like becoming a monk who has taken a vow of silence, for few of the Chinese artists or staff speak English. Rather than this being a problem, it was a relief. It created an atmosphere of calm intensity."*

Merrill developed several new series during his stay: drawings, collages, etchings, woodblocks and lithographs. Many of these pieces appeared in the *Made in China* exhibition. Since the base was opened in 2008, artists from over 30 countries have participated in the program. Currently, they are receiving about 8,000 visitors each month.

When Merrill returned in October of 2012, he carried with him a portfolio of preliminary mixed media works that he manipulated with computer programs, including Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator. Merrill's creative process begins with the development of digital images, which are usually scans. The files are printed on paper in varying sizes, at different locations.

The prints are then re-worked through various processes: erasing, sanding, drawing or painting. The resulting image is then re-scanned and the digital process is continued until the artist feels they have reached a stopping point.

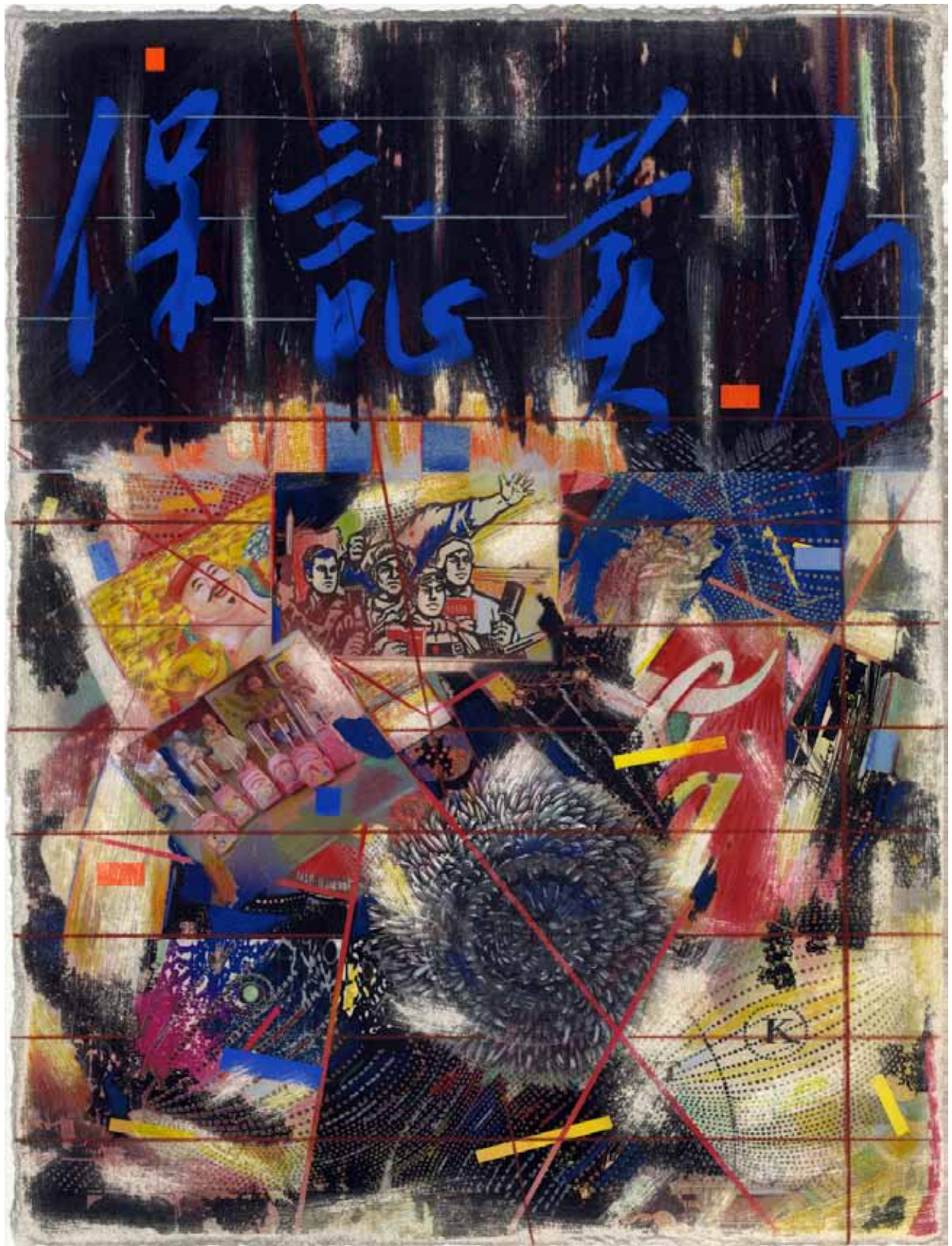
At times the images are printed as large-scale works that are also hand-worked. All of the images in the exhibition are flexible. They can continue as monoprint sequential investigation or function as unique images. The files are also suitable as traditional fine art printed editions. Noted Chinese American artist Hung Liu uses a similar process to create her paintings.

The works are a combination of abstract and representational layers of meaning and image. A master Chinese calligrapher was asked to write out a series of texts, gathered from everyday items, in traditional brush calligraphy. The ten phrases eventually used include: wash in cold water, whitening protection, ultra-thin, and active ingredient.

These elements became the calligraphy used for emphasis in each of the works. The combination of graphic image, abstraction, and traditional Chinese writing responds to the complexity of the relationships Merrill experienced while in China. The personal, commercial, and cultural contrasts present in the work reflect their introspective nature.

The works are monotypes that replace a traditional plate with a digital file. The historical definition of a monoprint is a single impression of an image made from a re-printable matrix. Examples include: a metal plate used for etching, a stone used for lithography, or a wood block used for relief prints. Rather than producing an edition of multiple copies of a single image, only one impression is produced, either by painting or the application of collage directly onto the matrix.

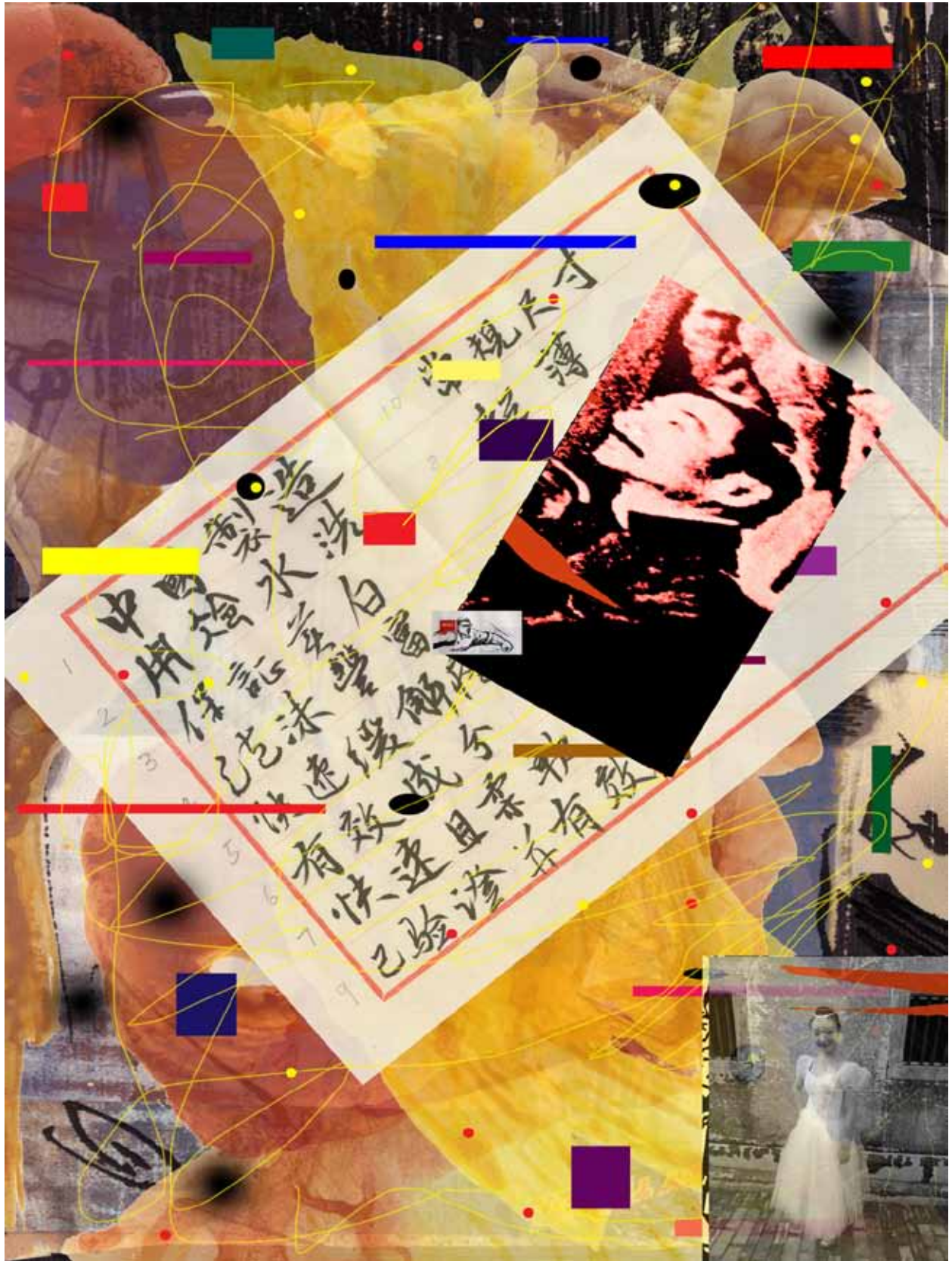
—Adelia Ganson



*Active Ingredient #1, 30"x40"*



Active Ingredient #2, 30"x40"



China Doll, 30"x40"



*Doré Skies, 30"x40"*



Ultra Thin, 12"x16"





flexible fitting.  
 The kathak, or carrying basket of the Havasupai, is well shown in engraving, Fig. 1. This kathak is woven in the same style as the water bottles of the Havasupai, and from the horse hair loops a broad carrying band of long raw hide is brought across the forehead. This method of carrying is common with all the Indians of the southwest. It was noticed that there are two loops each side. The carry-



FIG. 216. HAVASUPAI DOLLING BASKET.



FIGS. 218, 219, 220. MANUFACTURE OF SPIRALLY COILED WEAVES.

The band goes from the one on the left around the head to the one on the right, and thus the kathak is held steadily and kept from swinging to and fro as would be the case if but one lug were used.  
 Most of the Arizona and New Mexico tribes, having to travel over stretches of almost waterless desert, use water bottles made of woven basketry. These are manufactured by the Havasupai, Zuni, and the Pueblo of Nevada and Utah. Those of which Fig. 216 is a type are made by the Zuni. One of the most valued water bottles of my collection is a very old one, made and purchased at Zuni.  
 Fig. 217 is a water bottle basket, originally labeled by Dr. James Henshaw of the National Museum as a Walpi basket. But there is no such thing as a Hoji villas. It is made of horse hair.



FIG. 221. METHOD OF MAKING HAVASUPAI WATER BOTTLES.

basket, into which, after pouring her liquid, uncooked food, she dropped heated rocks, and thus conveyed fire into her pot, instead of her pot to the fire.  
 Some of the Havasupai use the boiling basket, and only a late as 1899 I had the pleasure of eating delicious green corn mush.



FIG. 222. PUEBLO INDIAN CARRYING MUSH.



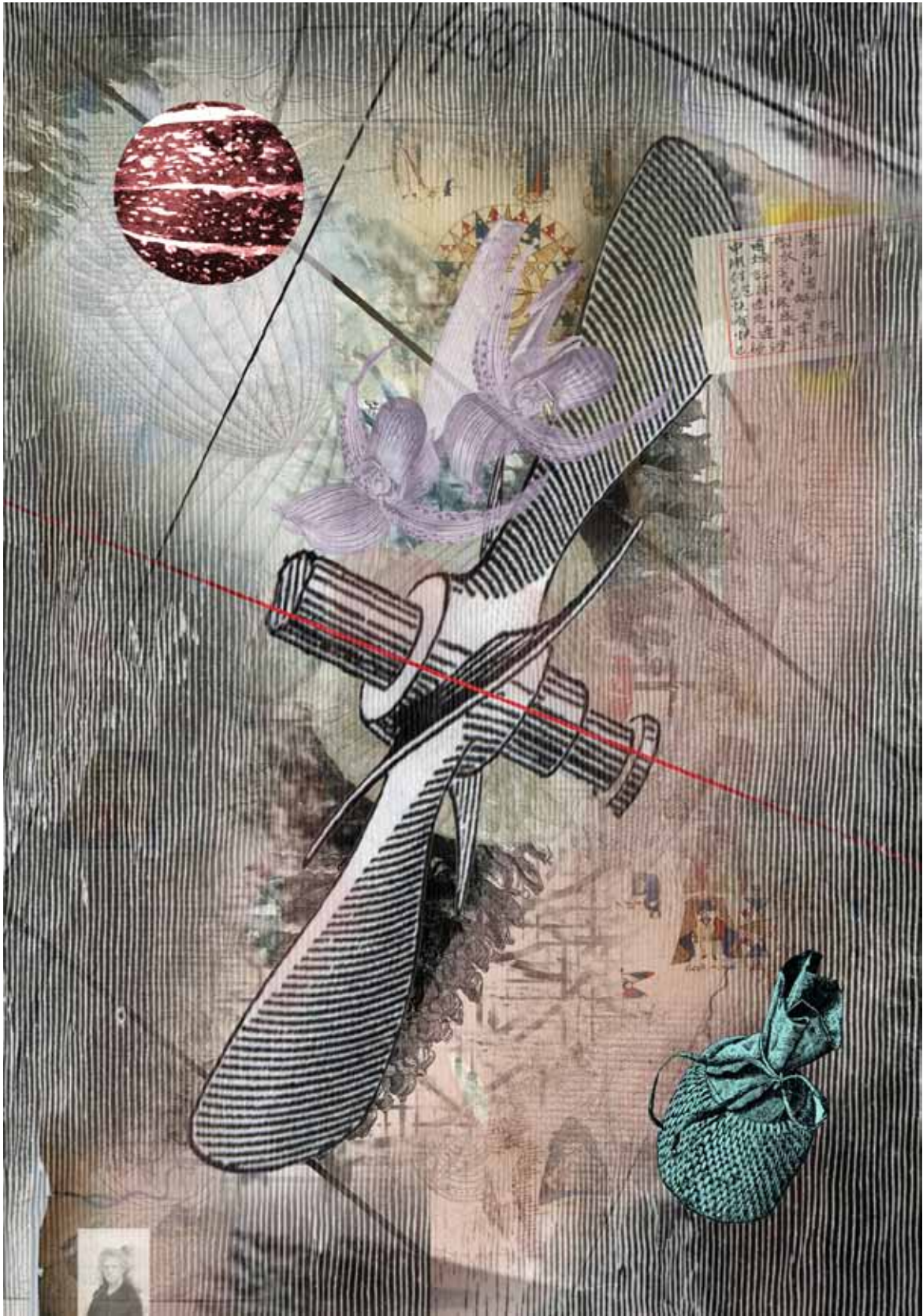
FIG. 223. PUEBLO INDIAN CARRYING MUSH.



FIG. 224. PUEBLO INDIAN CARRYING MUSH.



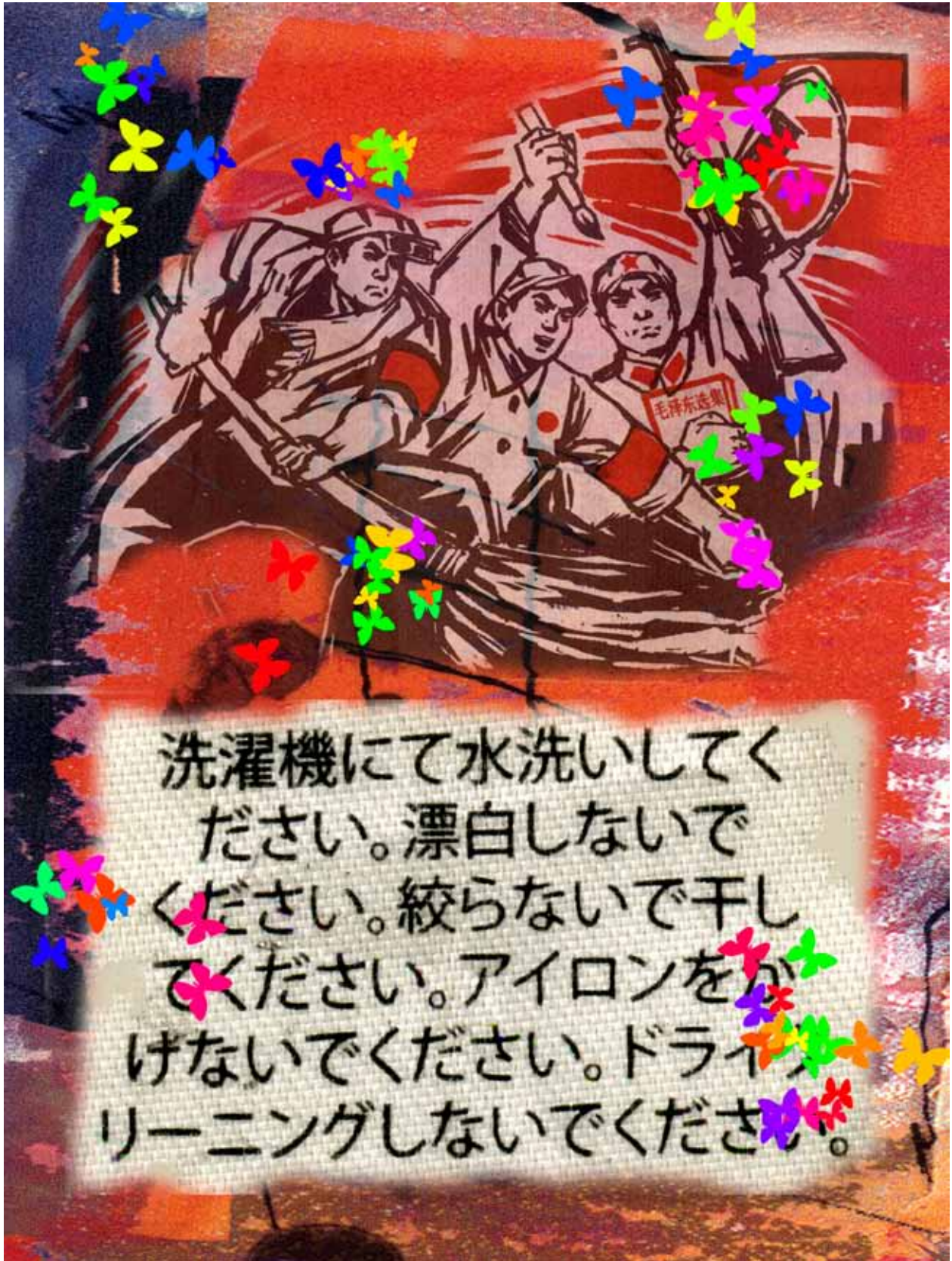
Active Ingredient #3, 12"x16"



*Baal's Dream, 12"x16"*

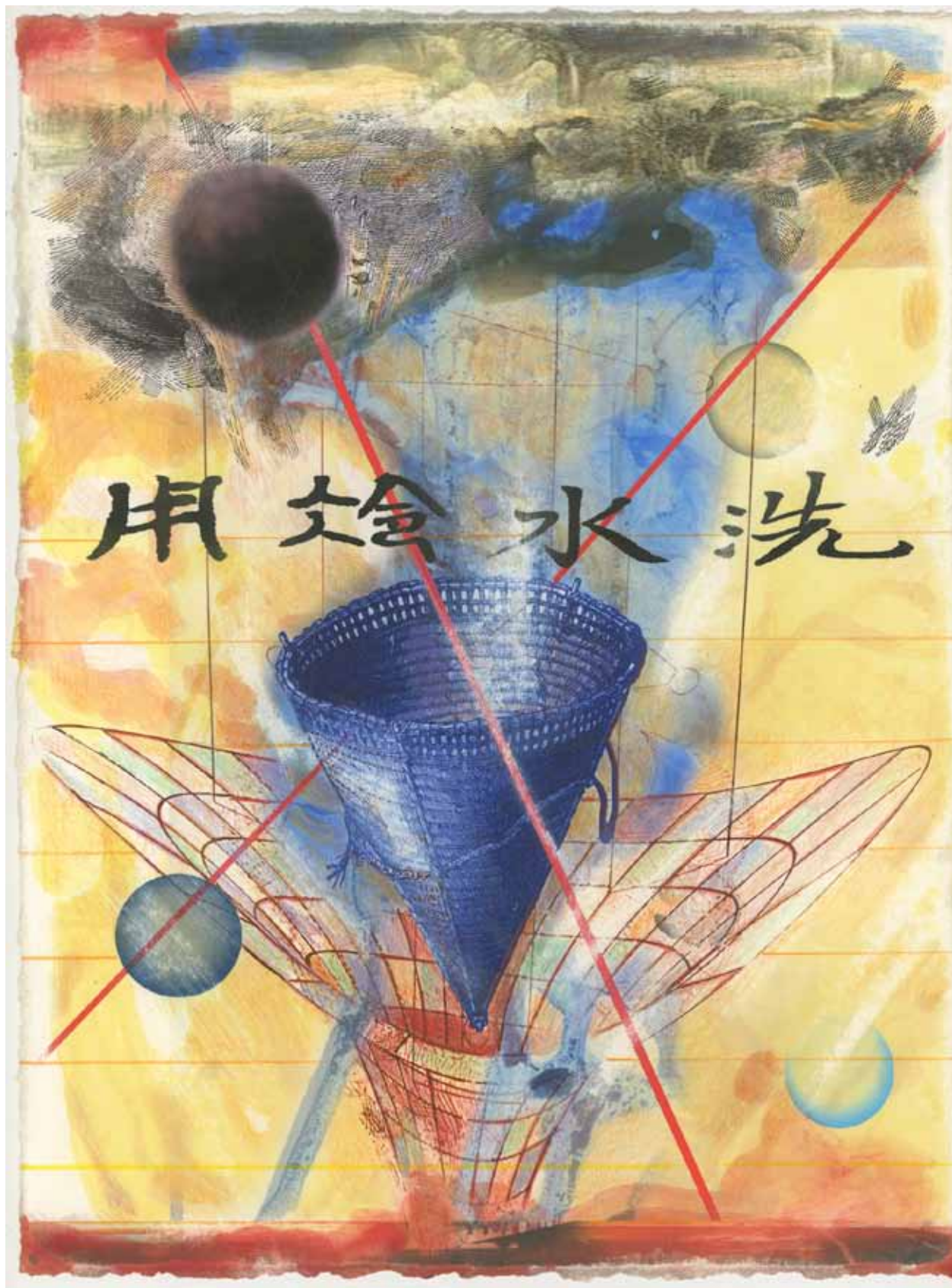


Basker/Shell, 12"x16"



洗濯機にて水洗いしてください。漂白しないでください。絞らないで干してください。アイロンをかけるしないでください。ドライクリーニングしないでください。

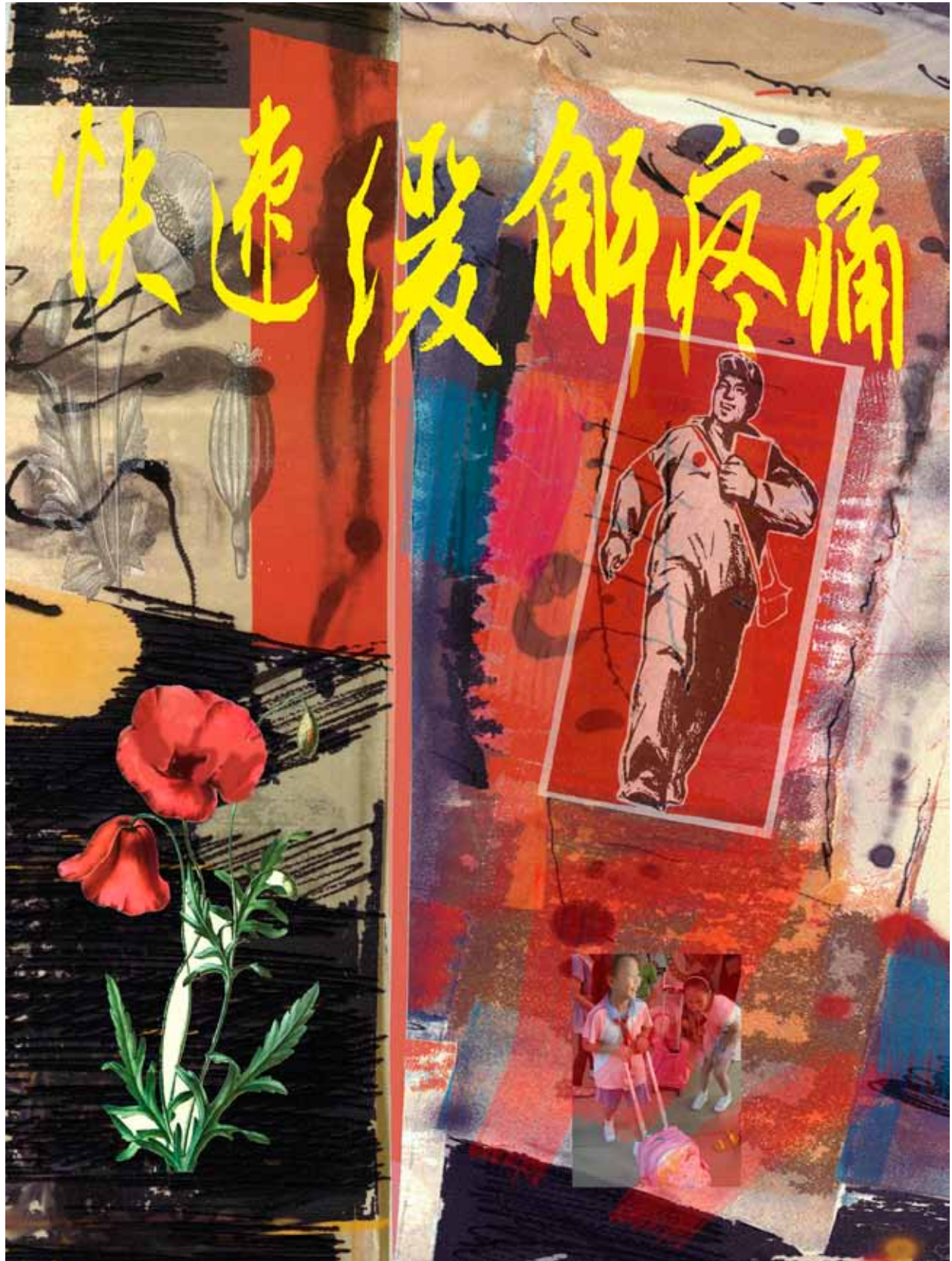
Directions, 12"x16"



*Kabwash, 12"x16"*



*Made in China, 12"x16"*

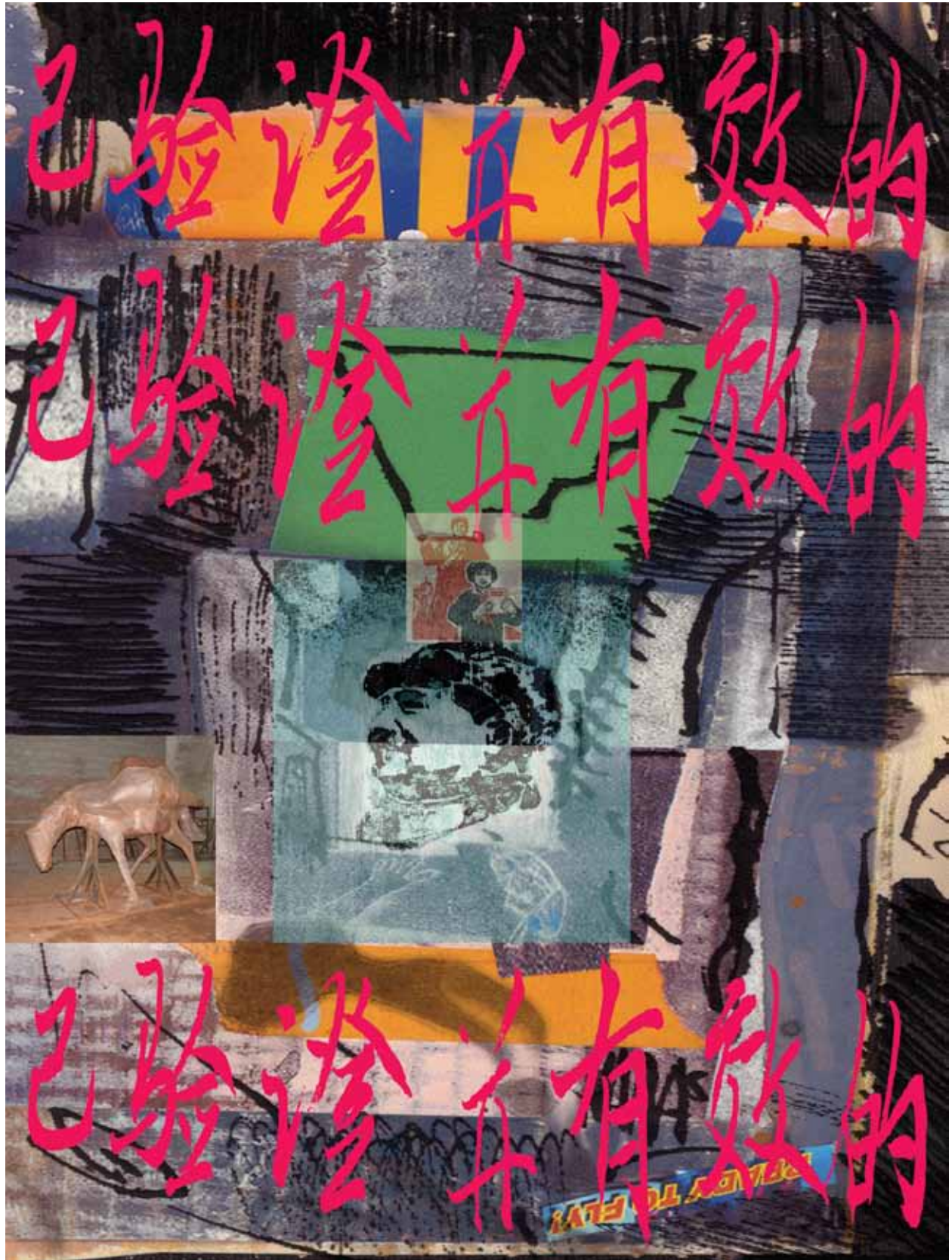


*Pain Relief, 12"x16"*

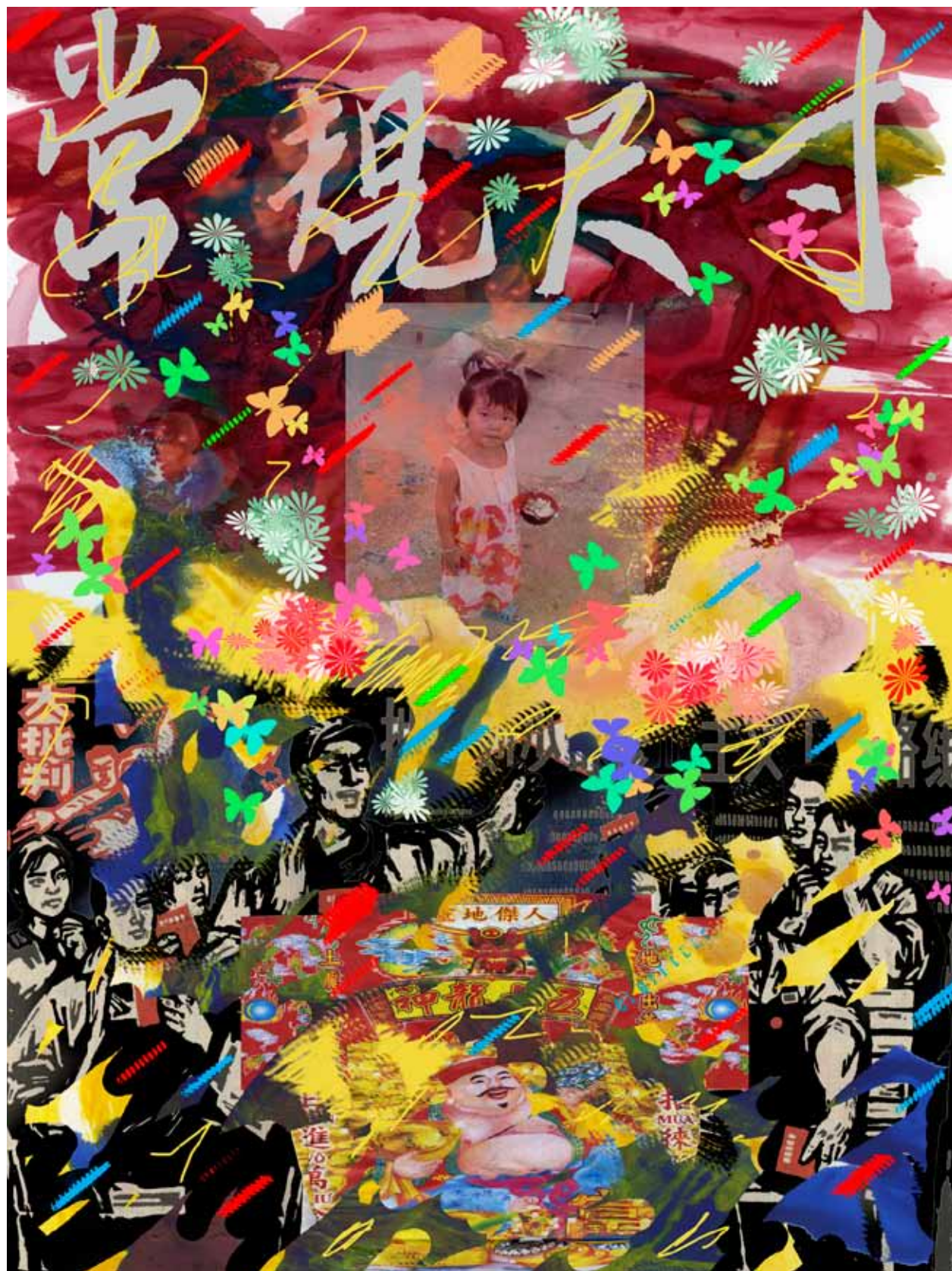




Proven Effective #1, 12"x16"



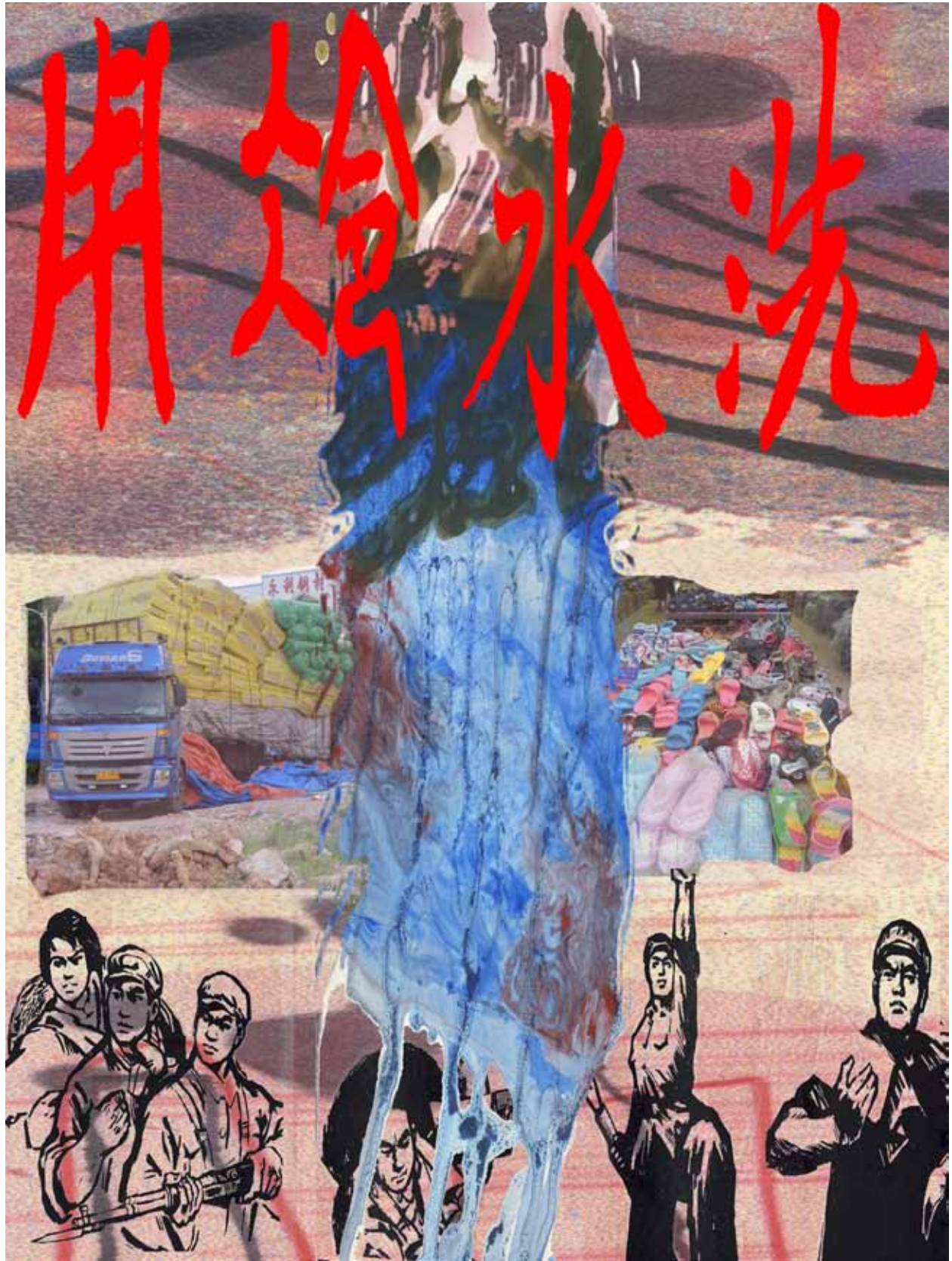
Proven Effective #2, 12"x16"



Regular Size, 12"x16"



Ultra Thin, 12"x16"



*Wash in Cold Water, 12"x16"*



The view from Guanlan Original Printmaking Base in Shenzhen, China.



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