

1998

Art of the Scholar-Poets: Traditional Chinese Painting and Calligraphy

University of Richmond Museums

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarship.richmond.edu/exhibition-brochures>

 Part of the [Asian Art and Architecture Commons](#), [Fine Arts Commons](#), [Painting Commons](#), and the [Printmaking Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

University of Richmond Museums. *Art of the Scholar-Poets: Traditional Chinese Painting and Calligraphy*, April 1 to May 09, 1998, Marsh Art Gallery, University of Richmond Museums. Richmond Virginia: University of Richmond Museums, 1998. Exhibition Brochure.

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the University Museums at UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Exhibition Brochures by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu.



*Art of the Scholar-Poets:
Traditional Chinese Painting and Calligraphy*

April 1 to May 9, 1998, Marsh Art Gallery, University of Richmond

Introduction

Chinese culture developed one of the world's most enduring artistic traditions, literati painting, based upon a unique idea about the purposes of art. The art of the scholar-poets is centered in calligraphy and poetry, which the literati learned at an early age as part of their basic education. Painting was done with the same tools as poetry and calligraphy — brush, ink, and paper — and it was an easy step to express poetic sensibilities in visual as well as verbal form. Most literati, either government bureaucrats or teachers, were not dependent upon their art for their living which allowed them a freedom to express themselves in the arts without worries about commercial success.

The exhibition explores the Chinese literati tradition of expressing perceptions of nature and personal feelings through calligraphy, painting, and poetry from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries in the formats of hanging scrolls, fans, handscrolls, and albums. The works are arranged in the favored themes of the literati: bamboo, landscapes, figure, and calligraphy.

Organized by the Marsh Art Gallery, the exhibition was curated by Stephen Addiss, Tucker-Boatwright Professor in the Humanities and Professor of Art History, University of Richmond. The exhibition brochure essay, panels, and labels were developed by Dr. Addiss' students as part of an art history course on Chinese painting and calligraphy. The students were: Scott Allen, Sean Drummond, Ann Griffin, Mark Karau, Blythe King, Sarah Mendelson, John Nixon, Liz Rhymers, and Beth Rose. For help with translations, we would like to thank Jonathan Chaves (Wen Cheng-ming and Ch'eng Hsieh), Julia Curtis (brushpot), and Stephen Little (Hsiao Yung-ts'ung). Our thanks also go to the lenders to the exhibition.

The exhibition is made possible with the generous support of the Rouse-Bottom Foundation and the University of Richmond Cultural Affairs Committee.

Richard Waller

Director, Marsh Art Gallery, University of Richmond

Bamboo

*After the rain, the mountain is quiet
with only the stream-sound accompanying
the voice of the bamboo.*

*The cool breeze flows around you on four sides —
it's rare to have this quietude.*

— *Chiang Chao-shen*

Considered a “gentleman” because it stays green through the hardships of winter, bends but does not break in the wind, and offers shade in the heat of summer, bamboo has

long been a favored literati subject. Sometimes it is depicted as though one were in the midst of the bamboo, as in the album leaf by **Kuei Chuang** (on the cover), and other times as though viewing the bamboo from the window of a rustic hut. Whether painted in a formal style in the anonymous early fifteenth-century scroll on silk, or in a more relaxed manner by **Chiang Chao-shen** in 1972, this subject requires four basic kinds of brush-strokes, one each for the culms, the nodes, the twigs, and the leaves. It is then the art of the painter to create a composition that brings forth the “spirit resonance” of the living bamboo.

Landscapes



Hsiao Yun-ts'ung
(1596-1673),
Page from
*Wonderful Verses
Without Sound*,
n.d., album of
twelve leaves and
title page, ink on
paper, 7 5/8 x
5 1/2 inches

The most popular of all literati subjects is landscape, which can be shown in many styles of brushwork that call forth different perspectives, seasons, and moods of nature. Each artist presents a view of the harmony between humanity and the outer world, but each depicts this harmony in his own way, from the brooding depths of **Kung Hsien** to the dry spaciousness of **Hsiao Yung-ts'ung** and **Yang Pu**.

The fact that the “foreign” Manchus took over China midway through the seventeenth century, when many of these works were painted, must have influenced artists such as **Cha Shih-piao** towards more abstract, seemingly withdrawn styles, which seem to penetrate the inner forces of nature rather than celebrating its beauty more directly. By the time these works were painted, Chinese artists already had a tradition of hundreds of years of landscape depictions, so homage to earlier masters was common, as seen here in works by **Wu Li** and **Wang Chien**. However, the use of the flexible Chinese brush meant that each artist expressed his own personality, as well as his own vision of nature. For this reason, landscape has remained the most popular subject in Chinese painting for a millennium.

Calligraphy

Calligraphy is a direct form of artistic expression, featuring not only the meaning of the words, but even more important is the writing — the moment of execution and action itself. Ts'ai Yung noted in the second century, "If a person wishes to write, he must first release what is in his heart." This is true through all five main Chinese scripts: *seal script*, with its highly structured sense of balance; *clerical script*, with its strong use of strokes that flare out at a diagonal; *regular script*, with each stroke clearly separated; *running script*, where the brush moves more quickly and freely; and *cursive script*, with characters done in continuous brushwork.



Wen Cheng-ming (1470-1559), *Poem on Gold Fan*, n.d., hanging scroll, ink on gold paper, fan: 6 1/4 x 18 inches

Ch'en Lai lived in Nanjing (the "city of stones"). His seven-character four-line poem, in elegantly elongated seal script, speaks of his longing to return to his beloved city as he listens to the typical rural sounds of newly woven cloth being pounded to make it soft:

*At the mountain wine shop it turns chilly
as I lean on the bamboo tower,
autumn of half-moonlight illuminating the stars.
All night long, from people's houses come
the sounds of falling blocks;
when will the traveler's dream ever reach those stones?*

In comparison with the formality of Ch'en Lai's calligraphic style, the Langzhou scholar-artist Jin Jiang has found a free and personal manner of using the ancient seal script. This single column work, done in 1988, says:

The Yellow River comes from beyond the sky.

For his calligraphic scroll, the writer and collector Chou Liang-kung has chosen regular script, seemingly straightforward in style but with his own personal accentuations. His poem, in eight lines of seven characters each, praises the beauty of T'ang Dynasty ladies walking over the ice:

*Peach roots and leaves don't rush to flower;
they're so beautiful that even the waves
don't want to move.
Flowers break out of the frost with dew,
T'ang ladies come from the moon with the wind.
Hearts in the Milky Way [Silver River] would freeze;
a coward may think the jade mirror is cracked.
When the sun sets, the jade hairpin cannot be seen,
but the jingling of jewelry can be heard
in the white clouds.*

Wen Cheng-ming was one of the most celebrated literati masters of the Ming Dynasty, excelling in poetry, painting, and calligraphy. Here (illustrated above) he has written his eight-line poem, seven characters per line, in columns of alternating six and three characters, thus adjusting to the narrowing ribs of the fan. His eloquent running-cursive script flows serenely over the gold background:

*At Pine Pavilion, flying snow
at dawn how very thick!
I think I see Mount Lanka
jutting high, 10,000 peaks!
We leave the town, and gently float
our little silver boat,
cross the lake and go to view
the jade hibiscus blossoms.
They try to perch on ancient ruins,
these sand birds, all confused;
they never change their hoary visage,
pine trees in the gully.
At sunset, where it can be seen,
the Cloud Gate mountain peak?
— Mist breaks up, I now pick out
that heaven-climbing dragon!*

In contrast to the gracefully curving nature of Wen Cheng-ming's calligraphy, Wang To favored a more angular and rough touch, sometimes called "Northern Style" as opposed to the more fluid "Southern Style." This calligraphy is on silk, allowing the ink to fuzz and flow into interesting textures over the course of the extremely tall hanging scroll. The text is a discussion of the wondrous calligraphy of the T'ang Dynasty master Ou-yang Hsun.

Ch'eng Hsieh was considered one of the notable eccentric artists of the eighteenth century, with special gifts in poetry, calligraphy, and bamboo painting. Here he has mixed clerical, regular, running, and cursive scripts into his own quirky and yet powerful style:

*Outside the city, where is the foliage most lush?
By the decorated walls where the setting sun
filters through the pine forest.
A single note seems to come from the pure
sounding-stone, and the sky seems like water,
at evening on the river the reflection
of the moon is like frost.
The monks are calm at this remote place,
and I often visit,
floating like a cloud from my government office;
I am pained when I must depart.
On the trellis are grapes like ten thousand pearls,
the autumn wind must have remembered
how this old man loves to eat them.*

Checklist

All the works in the exhibition are on loan from private collections. Dimensions of the image are followed by dimensions of the object; all are in inches, height precedes width.

BAMBOO

Artist Unknown (early 15th century)
Bamboo and Rock, n.d.
Hanging scroll, ink on silk,
54 1/2 x 28, 93 x 29 3/8

Kuei Chuang (17th century)
Album of Bamboo Paintings, 1647
Album of twelve leaves, ink on paper,
11 3/8 x 14 1/4, 13 1/8 x 17 1/2

Chiang Chao-shen (1925-1996)
Bamboo and Rock, 1972
Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper,
38 1/2 x 13 5/8, 74 x 19 1/4

LANDSCAPES

Hsiao Yun-ts'ung (1596-1673)
Wonderful Verses Without Sound, n.d.
Album of twelve leaves and title page, ink on paper,
7 5/8 x 5 1/2, 10 5/8 x 8 1/4

Kung Hsien (1619-1689)
*Dwelling in Seclusion Amid Rivers
and Mountains*, 1682
Handscroll, ink on paper,
12 1/2 x 368, 15 1/4 x 375

Kung Hsien (1619-1689)
"Pavilion by Lake Side," Landscape Fan, n.d.
Hanging scroll, ink on paper,
7 1/4 x 23 1/4, 47 x 26 7/8

Yang Pu (17th century)
Literati Album, 1655
Album of twenty leaves, ink on paper,
10 1/2 x 7 1/4, 13 5/8 x 18 1/2

Cha Shih-piao (1615-1698)
Landscape on Gold Fan, 1659
Mounted fan-shape painting, ink on gold paper,
6 3/4 x 20 1/2, 14 3/4 x 23 7/8

Cha Shih-piao (1615-1698)
Summer Landscape after Tung Yuan, 1677
Hanging scroll, ink on paper,
37 5/8 x 13 3/4, 84 x 22 1/4

Wu Li (1632-1718)
Landscape after Tung Yuan, 1660
Hanging scroll, ink on paper,
16 3/4 x 13 1/4, 62 x 20

Wang Chien (1598-1677)
Landscape after Wang Meng, 1660
Album of eight leaves, ink and colors on paper,
13 x 9 3/8, 15 5/8 x 22

FIGURE

Yen Ts'ang (17th century)
T'ao Yuan-Ming, 1663
Matted fan-shape painting, ink and colors on gold paper,
6 x 19 1/2, 15 x 25

Artist Unknown (17th century)
Brushpot, 1688
Porcelain with blue underglaze,
5 1/2 x 4 1/2 x 4 1/2

CALLIGRAPHY

Ch'en Lai (18th century)
Poem in Seal Script, n.d.
Hanging scroll, ink on silk,
57 x 19, 83 x 24 3/4

Jin Jian (b. 1928)
Calligraphy in Seal Script, 1988
Hanging scroll, ink on paper,
39 3/4 x 12 1/2, 73 3/4 x 15 7/87

Chou Liang-kung (1612-1672)
Poem in Regular Script, n.d.
Hanging scroll, ink on paper,
77 1/2 x 17 1/2, 93 x 23 3/4

Wen Cheng-ming (1470-1559)
Poem on Gold Fan, n.d.
Hanging scroll, ink on gold paper,
6 1/4 x 18, 43 x 24 1/8

Wang To (1592-1652)
Praising Ou-yang Hsun, 1641
Hanging scroll, ink on silk,
96 x 18 3/4, 104 1/2 x 24 5/8

Cheng Hsieh (1693-1765)
A Country Temple, n.d.
Hanging scroll, ink on paper,
62 x 34 3/4, 86 x 43 5/8

Cover: Kuei Chuang, Page from *Album of Bamboo Paintings*
Brochure Design by Sarah Mendelson (WC'98)

Printed ©1998 Marsh Art Gallery, University of Richmond, Virginia 23173