

OPEN PARAMETERS-LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY'S
CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY AND PAINTINGS FROM THE ZHOU CEZONG DONATION

by

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ABSTRACT

OPEN PARAMETERS-LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY'S
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The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2023
Under the Supervision of Professor David Pacifico

Open Parameters—late nineteenth and early twentieth century's Chinese calligraphy and paintings from the Zhou Cezong donation explores the diversity of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Chinese calligraphy and painting, which has long been denigrated as a reflection of cultural stagnation. However, here is demonstrated its resilience and splendor, bringing the overlooked subjects to the forefront of twenty-first-century scholarship. This exhibition also challenges the long-established terms of “traditionality” and “modernity” used to define Chinese *fin de siècle* art: instead of seeing them as mutually exclusive concepts with fixed characteristics, this exhibition redefines them as fluid categories influenced by the late Ming literati and Western modernization.

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To
my parents Zeng Wenhua and Zhang Suhan,
Yang Longqiang and Liu Wen,
my wife,
and Vivian and Sam

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Open Parameters: late nineteenth and early twentieth century's Chinese calligraphy and painting from Zhou Cezong's donation offers an examination of sixteen of the finest Chinese calligraphies and paintings from the UWM Special Collections. This catalogue is more than a traditional catalogue of selected works. Drawing upon past accomplishments as the inspiration, it offers a methodological framework by providing in-depth information in diverse directions, arguing the significance of the individual works, questioning the established views, connecting art and politics, evoking the Chinese literati's untrammelled spirit, and showing the pluralistic nature of *fin-de-siècle* art. Publishing in conjunction with the exhibition, this catalogue hopes to provide a foundation for developing rich and diverse educational and public programs in the service of a broad audience.

This catalogue is a tribute to Professor Zhou Cezong (1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow, for their incredible generosity in donating these great Chinese artworks to the UWM Special Collections. From 1945 to 1947, Professor Zhou served as secretary and speech writer for China's President Chiang Kai-shek. He received his PhD in political science in 1955, and was a research fellow and associate at Harvard from 1956 to 1963. At the University of Wisconsin-Madison he contributed greatly to the Department of East Asian Languages and Literature, serving as chairman from 1973 to 1979. As a scholar, poet, calligrapher, and an expert on the Chinese May Fourth Movement, he was a man of great passion and intelligence. Besides his scholastic pursuits, he seized the opportunity to amass an incredible collection of Chinese calligraphy and painting, admired then as well as today.

These personal collections are mostly related to *fin-de-siècle* Chinese art, which might have been what motivated Professor Zhou to undertake his research. In his publication, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Harvard University Press, 1960), he indicated that while economic conditions and ideological interplay might be the major elements in defining this movement, other factors such as historical background, political setting, social psychology, and personal leadership were also very influential. On this score, artistic development and its open parameters during that period might belong to these “other factors” which inspired him to reappraise the accomplishments of May Fourth Movement.

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Lastly, allow me to pay homage to my father, Zeng Wenhua (1935-2017). His extraordinary perseverance and integrity, which are the spirits of untrammelled Chinese literati, have always been the incentives in my life. When he began to teach me how to grab a Chinese writing brush when I was five years old, none of us knew that one day I will have this honor to present this exhibition in the United States. My mother Zhang Suhan's love and care always inspire me to push the limits of myself. I am extremely grateful to my wife Huang Jinyan and our two adorable children, Vivian and Sam. While I am inundating myself in the interminable struggle with this publication, they show their love, patience, and support to me.

INTRODUCTION

According to Wen C. Fong, “Few moments in Chinese history can have been as tumultuous and complex as that between the late Qing (1840-1912) and the early years of the Republic, a time during which China was continually threatened by foreign domination and internal rebellion, and Chinese intellectuals, artists, and writers seemed to have lost their traditional moorings.”¹ This instability became a hotbed for inclusive cultures, as the intellectuals gained more opportunities to re-evaluate the old and interpret the new.² Showing both a relentless exploitation of the Chinese traditions and an eager adaptation of Western inventions, the diversity of late Qing’s art prompts us to deconstruct the previously prevailing binaries between traditionality and modernity.³ Most importantly, it motivates us to understand how open the parameters of cultural discourse were and how accommodating the Chinese cultural repertoire was at that crucial historical moment.⁴

¹ Wen C. Fong, *Between Two Cultures: Late-Nineteenth-and Twentieth-Century Chinese Paintings from the Robert H. Ellsworth Collection in The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001), 24.

² Mary C. Wright, “A Review Article: The Pre-Revolutionary Intellectuals of China and Russia,” *The China Quarterly* 6 (Apr.-Jun.) (1961): 175-178. The social instability stimulates the cultural efflorescence can also be seen at the end of Han Dynasty (202 BC-220 AD). The Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove was emerged when the government began to decay. See Donald Holzman, *The Place of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove in Chinese History* (Kyoto: Kansai Asiatic Society, 1955), 4-6.

³ David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849-1911* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 15. Wen C. Fong, *Between Two Cultures: Late-Nineteenth-and Twentieth-Century Chinese Paintings from the Robert H. Ellsworth Collection in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 24.

⁴ Nanxiu Qian, Grace S. Fong, and Richard J. Smith, “Introduction: Different Worlds of Discourse: Transformations of Gender and Genre in Late Qing and Early Republican China,” in *Different Worlds of Discourse: Transformations of Gender and Genre in Late Qing and Early*

This cultural repertoire could be reflected through the visual and material nature of Chinese calligraphy and painting housed in UWM Special Collections. The current exhibition presents sixteen artworks (eight calligraphic works and eight paintings) with various styles ranging from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries in order to demonstrate the little-appreciated intellectual and artistic liberalism of that period. Though some artworks do not belong to this period, they show great connection to the *fin-de-siècle* art. The calligraphy in this exhibition is meant to be viewed simultaneously as narrative-as-image, which, when joined with the paintings, can support my thesis that the profusion of various genres signaled the beginning of Chinese artistic modernization, which can be shown, for example, in the calligraphies of Luo Zhenyu, Shen Zengzhi, and Zheng Xiaoxu (see below, in Luo Zhenyu, Shen Zengzhi, and Zheng Xiaoxu's entries).

The common understanding of Chinese history sees anything related to late Qing as formulaic and moribund. For instance, in literature, according to the May Fourth paradigm (May Fourth Movement was an intellectual revolution and sociopolitical reform movement in China in 1917-1921), the late Qing fiction was merely the end of the old tradition and the beginning of Western influence, following a singular path of evolution.⁵ However, in David Der-wei Wang's prominent research on late Qing fiction, this May Fourth paradigm was lopsided and problematic. Rather than seeing late Qing's literary inventions as only an end to revamp the decaying traditions or absorb the Western influences, Wang noted they had developed their

Republican China, ed. Nanxiu Qian, Grace S. Fong, and Richard J. Smith (Boston: Leisen, 2008), 7.

⁵ Wang, *Fin-de-siècle Splendor*, 1.

“complex matrix of incipient modernities.”⁶ For Wang, the crucial burst of Chinese modernity emanated from the late Qing, and its fiction “demonstrated a strong inclination” to create something original and different.⁷

Similarly, the political achievements of the late Qing are also neglected. Until the 1980s, the general premises of the historiography was that the late Qing reform era could only be seen primarily as a “transitional” period between the death of the “traditional” Confucian imperial order and the enlightened embrace of “modern” ideas in the May Fourth movement. For example, historians tended to portray the initial phase of the late Qing reforms as an unsuccessful hundred-day attempt in 1898’s *Wuxu Bianfa*. They also contended that these fruitless reforms were followed by a decade of half-hearted, ineffective “New Administrative Policies” that the alien Manchu regime shamelessly inaugurated to prop itself up.⁸ However, politics did witness a tremendous improvement in late Qing, which began with Emperor Jiaqing (1760-1820) who tolerated more of what his predecessors had expressly forbidden---the unauthorized public censure of the throne. Though Hong Liangji (1746-1809, Figure 1)’s open challenge to the imperial policy was unprecedented, Emperor Jiaqing still pardoned Hong and even blamed himself for punishing literati criticism.⁹ In Emperor Daoguang (1820-1850)’s reign, Feng Guifen (1809-1874, Figure 2) advocated a technologically oriented school curriculum with foreign-

⁶ Wang, 1.

⁷ Wang, 5-8.

⁸ Tang Zhijun 汤志钧, *Wuxu bianfa shi* 戊戌变法史 [The history of hundred days’ reform] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1984).

⁹ Benjamin A. Elman, *Classicism, Politics, and Kinship: The Ch’ang-chou School of New Text Confucianism in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley & Los Angeles & Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), 287-289.

language training.¹⁰ In 1887, mathematics was added as a subject for the civil service examination; in 1899, economics. Six years later, the Qing court abolished the millennium-old examination entirely. In late Qing, though the Empress Dowager Cixi (1835-1908, Figure 3) was vilified as a monster of corruption and dissipation, she had been instrumental in facilitating the institutionalization of the government.¹¹ According to Yu Yue (1821-1907, see below, in Yu Yue's entry), the distinguished scholar of late Qing, Cixi was a very diligent, tolerant, and considerate person.¹² Pamela Crossley, in her seminal research related to late Qing's history, observed that Cixi rarely rejected any progressive programs, and had the sincere intention of implementing deep reforms.¹³ Likewise, the history of the 1911 revolution has always been written with Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) and revolutionaries at the center, while the constitutionalists played a subordinate and basically negative role. However, according to Liang Qichao (1873-1929), although revolutionaries and constitutionalists adopted different approaches, both of them were committed to creating a new republic.¹⁴ As a matter of fact, though the revolutionary party was successful in toppling the empire, it could not have attained this success without the foundation laid by the previous massive constitutional movements,

¹⁰ Feng Guifen 冯桂芬, *Gai keju yi* 改科举议 [Proposal for reforming the civil examinations], in *Jiaobinlu kangyi* 校邠庐抗议 [Essays of protest from Studying-the-Zhou Cottage] (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2002): 37-39.

¹¹ Pamela Kyle Crossley, *The Manchus* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 173.

¹² Yue 俞樾, *Chunzaitang chidu* 春在堂尺牍 [The letters written in Spring is still Existing Studio] (Nanjing: fenghuang chubanshe, 2020), 919.

¹³ Pamela Kyle Crossley, *Orphan Warriors: Three Manchu Generations and the End of the Qing World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 169-179.

¹⁴ Zhou Jiming and Hu Xi, "Conflict and competition: A new perspective on late Qing politics," in *China: How the empire fell*, ed. Joseph W. Esherick & C. X. George Wei (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 79.

which had a broader social base.¹⁵ The efforts made by constitutionalist leaders such as Duanfang (Figure 4), Liang Qichao (see below, in Liang Qichao's entry), Zheng Xiaoxu (see Zheng Xiaoxu's entry), Zhang Jian (Figure 5), and Tan Yankai were instrumental in the movement and the revolution.

The art in this period has also been denigrated as stagnant and unimaginative. Similar to German paintings of the same period, the *fin-de-siècle* Chinese art languished in obscurity in both China and the Western world.¹⁶ Many critics and art historians agree that the end of the Qing dynasty marked an overall decline in Chinese art.¹⁷ For instance, in his famous monograph *The History of the Qing's Painting*, Xue Yongnian contended that the slavish imitations of ancient masters undermined the creativity and individuality of the late Qing artists.¹⁸ Moreover, the art made by the *Yilao* ("old leftovers", referring to those who remained loyal to the previous dynasty, such as Li Wentian, Zhao Erxun, Shanqi, Chen Baochen, Liu Chunlin, Wang Kaiyun, Fan Zengxiang, Zhu Xiaozang, Jiang Shifen, Lin Shu, and Chen Sanli, who had their works in our UWM Special Collections) are ruthlessly dispatched to historical oblivion. Derogatorily termed as the *yilao*, the Qing loyalists inevitably had their reputations entangled with the degenerate images of the fallen regime. They were cast as scheming and reactionary figures,

¹⁵ Zhou & Hu, 79.

¹⁶ Peter Paret, *German Encounters with Modernism, 1840—1945* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹⁷ Chu-Tsing Li, "The Artistic Theories of the Literati," in *The Chinese Scholar's Studio: Artistic Life in the Late Ming Period---An Exhibition from the Shanghai Museum*, ed. Chu-Tsing Li, James C. Y. Watt (New York: Thames and Hudson; Published in association with the Asia Society Galleries, 1987), 16.

¹⁸ Xue Yongnian & Du Juan 薛永年 & 杜娟, *Qingdai huihua shi* 清代绘画史 [The history of the Qing's painting] (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 2000), 2.

aiding and abetting the former imperial household in overturning the Republican government and regaining political power. Because of this political collusion, their artistic creations are often mocked as obsolete and trite, unable to catch up with the trend of artistic modernization (Figure 6).¹⁹ However, the *yilao*, who were the symbol of traditional cultivated literati, did not only commit themselves to traditional scholarly learning, but also triggered the transformation of modern China (see below, in Luo Zhenyu, Shen Zengzhi, and Zheng Xiaoxu's entries).

Actually, Kwang-Ching Liu (1921-2006) suggested that there were enough cases of success in China's *fin-de-siècle* modernization to justify their being considered as precursors of considerable economic development in the China of the early twentieth century.²⁰ The modernization in this period, according to David Wang, was "both decadent and de-cadent" in literature.²¹ For me, I see more than decadence and de-cadence, as there was a strong current of rhythmic cadence pulsating throughout the era. Therefore, the arts in late Qing were open, modern, cacophonous, and blossoming to a wide range of genres: for calligraphy, the Model-book School, Stele School, and Model-cum-Stele School, and *jinshixue* (Antiquarianism) and *qiwxue* (the study of three-dimensional antiquities) coexisted in harmony; for painting, the Orthodox School, *Jinshi* (metal-and-stone) School, Literati Painting School, Western Painting

¹⁹ Cheung Wai-yee 张惠仪, "Yilao shufa yu xinchutu shufa cailiao-ershi shiji Zhongguo shufa fazhan de qiji" 遗老书法与新出土书法材料-二十世纪中国书法发展的契机 [The *yilao*'s calligraphy and the newly-excavated calligraphic materials-the opportunity of calligraphic development in the twentieth century], *Meishushi yanjiu jikan* 美术史研究集刊 19 (September 2005):163-208. Cheng-hua Wang, "Luo Zhenyu and the Formation of *Qiwu* and *Qiwuxue* in the First Decade of the Republican Era," in *Lost Generation: Luo Zhenyu, Qing Loyalists and the Formation of Modern Chinese Culture*, ed. Yang Chia-Ling and Roderick Whitfield (London: Saffron Books, 2012), 35.

²⁰ Li, "The Artistic Theories of the Literati," 12.

²¹ Wang, *Fin-de-siècle Splendor*, 4.

School, and vernacular painting school also contributed to the boom in *fin-de-siècle* art. The cornucopia of various genres signaled the beginning of Chinese artistic modernization. The artists were neither crippled by their Confucian past nor intimidated by modern ideas. Rather, they were able to reassess China's own historical legacy and to draw upon new resources to grapple with China's new geographical and cultural circumstances. This is similar to turn-of-the-century German painting, which encompasses both tradition and modernism, and therein demonstrates the "Spirit of the Age."²² Indeed, in that cultural milieu, almost every intellectual seems to have been some kind of a reformer, whether recommending a greater acceptance of Western technologies and political practices, or aiming to strengthen the state through a return to ancient principles of Confucian governance.²³ In this sense, the art in this period could not be simply situated "between two worlds" as it is often portrayed, instead, it was a world unto itself--one of cultural vitality and experimentation that was crucial to the development of modern Chinese art.²⁴

The cacophonous harmony, or vital cadence of artistic expression was derived from the late Ming period (1573-1644). In philosophy, Wang Shouren (1472-1528)'s rebellion against the orthodox Zhu Xi school of thought overwhelmed the officialdom. In literature, the rise of the Gong'an School defied the dominance of tradition and moved into the field of popular fiction and drama. In politics, the rise of the Donglin movement and the radical attacks on the court rankled the intellectuals. Most significant was the formation of the Fu She as an organization to fight for

²² Paret, *German Encounters with Modernism, 1840—1945*.

²³ Shana Brown, *Pastimes: From Art and Antiquarianism to Modern Chinese Historiography* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 34.

²⁴ Qian, Fong, and Smith, "Introduction: Different Worlds of Discourse: Transformations of Gender and Genre in Late Qing and Early Republican China," 7.

clean and honest politics. In religion, the phenomenon of “three teachings” (Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism) syncretism led to a pluralism of the cultural movement. Within this syncretism, the more common ground the “three teachings” shared, the more they undermined orthodox norms and values. In this context, a reliance on established conventions and dichotomies such as public/private, orthodox/heterodox, conformist/nonconformist, and even masculine/feminine, is not a viable methodology.²⁵ Even in the pursuit of private life, many urban residents challenged the restrictions of ethical taboos and underwent major changes in their attitudes about life due to their yearning for sexual desires, resulting in their advocacy for the principle of “pleasures first” instead of the traditional principle of “ethics first.” It was such changes that led to the gradual spread of the “luxurious and lustful” trend during the late Ming Dynasty.²⁶ The emergence of these different voices in different areas of society contributed to a new cultural environment in this era.²⁷

The strong sense of iconoclasm inherent in this new environment motivated the literati to go to extremes. The decisive change came about when Li Zhi (1527-1602) extended the ethics taught by Wang Shouren, which was based on “individual conscience” as opposed to any given standards of behavior. Li pushed this position to the point of belligerent nonconformity and was outspoken in his attack on established rules and conventions. He called for “the heart of the child,” which was a “pure truthfulness removed from all falsehood, the germinal thought that lies

²⁵ Sufeng Xu, “The Courtesan as Famous Scholar,” *T'oung Pao* 105, Fasc. 5/6 (2019): 607-608.

²⁶ Xiang Gao, “The rise of a new tradition: Changes in values and life styles in late Ming China,” *Frontiers of History in China* 5, no. 1 (2010): 11.

²⁷ Li, “The Artistic Theories of the Literati,” 18.

at the basis of all motivation.”²⁸ James C. Y. Watt suggested that Li’s influence permeated the entire spectrum of Chinese thought, ushering in an era of self-expression never known in Chinese society.²⁹ When Ming fell to Qing’s military force, Wen Zhenheng (1585-1645), one of the most famous literati in the Ming dynasty, attempted to drown himself in protest. Though rescued, he still refused to live under the Manchu emperors, and starved himself to death. There was no absence of figures who chose paths of martyrdom in the late Qing period. After witnessing the vast devastation inflicted by Taiping Rebellions in the cultural heartland of Jiangnan, Dai Xi (1801-1860), one of our Special Collections’ authors, refused to work with rebellions and committed suicide. When international forces captured Beijing in August 1900, Wang Yirong (1845-1900), who was the first to recognize the scratching on tortoise bone as remnants of China’s earliest known writing (see below, in Luo Zhenyu’s entry), drowned himself with his wife and daughter-in-law.

This iconoclasm was immediately evident in the arts of painting and calligraphy---from the last decade of the sixteenth century to the end of the Ming dynasty, the concept of *Qi* rather than *Zheng* (the unbalanced rather than the balanced) was in the ascendent.³⁰ In the late Qing, the pursuit of *Qi* was transformed into the pursuit of modernity-cum-traditionality. That is to say, the belief in individual value in the late Ming allowed the followers in the later Qing to find

²⁸ James C.Y. Watt, “The Literati Environment,” in *The Chinese Scholar’s Studio: Artistic Life in the Late Ming Period---An Exhibition from the Shanghai Museum*, ed. Chu-Tsing Li, James C.Y. Watt (New York: Thames and Hudson; Published in association with the Asia Society Galleries, 1987), 3.

²⁹ Watt, 3.

³⁰ Jao Tsung-I, “Painting and the Literati in the Late Ming,” in *Proceedings of the Symposium on Paintings & Calligraphy by Ming I-min*, ed. Cheng Te-k’un, Jao Tsung-I, and J.C.Y. Watt (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1975), 404-409.

modernity from the traditionality as an artistic ideal, which is represented by the calligraphy of Kang Youwei (1858-1927, Figure 7), Shen Zengzhi (1850-1922, see below, in Shen Zengzhi's entry) and Zheng Xiaoxu (1860-1938, see Zheng Xiaoxu's entry). For them, China's search for "modernity," was not simply a matter of appropriating the new; it was also a matter of finding the proper place for inherited ideas and value. In this view, then, "traditional" values might have "modern" applications. Therefore, the long-established terms such as "traditionality" and "modernity" can no longer be seen as mutually exclusive concepts with fixed characteristics, but rather as fluid categories that existed in the vast crucible of cultural choices---choices made available by the archeological excavations of the time.

Worth mentioning are the two important artists in the late Ming who created a kind of cultural nostalgia and political iconoclasm for the late Qing's successors. Dong Qichang (1555-1636, Figure 8, see Yuan Mei's entry) and Fu Shan (1607-1684, Figure 9) were the prominent trendsetters for Chinese artistic modernism. Dong Qichang's influence on both calligraphy and painting in the Qing period was immense. By setting the tone of art schools with his theoretical assertions, he specified and schematized proper models for artists and desiderata for collectors, and thus obliging, or at least strongly inducing, the artists to alter their styles accordingly. His art-historical theory of Northern and Southern binary on cultural phenomenon is a trope in Chinese epistemology (though he showed an unstinting penchant for the Southern School, which called for spontaneity, plainness, and naturalness of the art). His theory inspired Qing literati-official Ruan Yuan (1764-1849) to categorize past calligraphers into a southern, Model-book School (*tiexue*) characterized by elegant small-size writing models from Wang Xizhi (303-361, Figure 10) to Dong Qichang; and a northern, Stele School (*beixue*) based on models of monumental writing found on engraved bronzes, steles, and cliffsides (Figure 11). Inspired by

Ruan, Kang Youwei, in his *Guang yizhou shuangji* or Extended Paired Oars for the Boat of Art (1891), sanctified the Stele School as the new calligraphic orthodoxy, and indicated that *xiongqiang* (energetic, masculine, strong, and virile) was the most beautiful of Chinese art. According to Aida Yuen Wong, Kang's endorsement was "more than an artistic goal," instead, "it was a conviction that the whole country of China needed to stand up to political adversaries."³¹ In this sense, Dong's aestheticism was appropriated by Kang to form a nationalistic rhetoric.³¹

Fu Shan was a much more important figure in inspiring Kang and other late Qing calligraphers to study ancient steles. His powerful dictum "I would rather [my calligraphy] be clumsy and not dainty, awkward and not charming; I would prefer deformities to slipperiness, spontaneity to premeditation," exhibited his strong individuality and anti-traditionalism. He abhorred the slavish imitations of the Model-book School artists as "the clay made from models, without any flavors (see Model-book writing example in Figure 12, and compare it to the similar style shown in Figure 11)."³² For him, the naturalness and unpremeditatedness in the seal and clerical scripts was like the writing of children, without any mannerism: "lacking form and rules of characters, showing a sudden strangeness, exhibiting a sense that cannot be united or separated, and intermingling the topsy-turvy, sparse, and dense."³³ Most importantly, he built an alignment between this artistic pursuit and moralistic rectitude. For him, premeditation, craftiness, and fastidiousness were the symbols of "dogs and rats," which could only be seen as

³¹ Aida Yuen Wong, *The other Kang Youwei: calligrapher, art activist and aesthetic reformer in modern China* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 23.

³² Fu Shan 傅山, "Shuanghongkan shulun" 霜红龕书论 [Frost-Red-Niche calligraphic comments], in *Mingqing shulun ji* 明清书论集 [The collected calligraphic comments of Ming and Qing dynasties], ed. Cui Erping 崔尔平 (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2011), 563.

³³ Fu, 566.

slaves without any independent thinking.³⁴ The connotation of liberation in his sayings was getting more and more apparent in the late Qing, when Chinese literati felt unable to cope with the challenge of a modernizing world and the onslaught of the West. Antiquarianism, which was tinged with a nostalgia for a more secure and prosperous era, or more broadly, a mightier two-thousand-year Chinese history, was badly needed in a period when all institutions of the empire were questioned, and the purpose of education was challenged (see below, in Luo Zhenyu's entry).³⁵

Besides this late Ming nostalgia, the process of Westernization was also the catalyst for late Qing's openness. According to Tu Wei-ming, in order to buffer the Western impact as both a cultural encroachment and military threat, "the grammar of action" which was defined in terms of wealth, power, and democracy, was picking up momentum on the intellectual scene.³⁶ This sense of urgency propelled the literati-scholars to undertake a comprehensive post-mortem on the entrenched cultural and spiritual ideologies; and seek social reconstruction and institutional changes to solve the problem.

In view of the unrecognized splendor of late Qing's arts, it behooves us to present this small exhibition as an effort to trace the artistic itineraries of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century which have yet to be fully recognized by the discourse of modern Chinese art history. These itineraries are interpreted by David Wang as "repressed modernities." Therefore,

³⁴ Fu, 565.

³⁵ Lothar Ledderose, "Aesthetic Appropriation of Ancient Calligraphy in Modern China," in *Chinese Art: Modern Expressions*, ed. Maxwell K. Hearn & Judith G. Smith (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), 242.

³⁶ Tu Wei-ming, "Iconoclasm, Holistic Vision, and Patient Watchfulness: A Personal Reflection on the Modern Chinese Intellectual Quest," *Daedalus* 116, no. 2 (Spring, 1987):77-78.

the purpose of this exhibition is to recalibrate and reconstruct the *fin-de-siècle* art which has been unduly denied, displaced, diminished, and derided by modern art historians.³⁷

In 1998, Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen curated the landmark exhibition and catalog *A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth-Century China* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1998) which traced the development of Chinese art throughout the turbulent decades of the twentieth-century. Three years later, *Between two cultures: late-nineteenth-and twentieth-century Chinese paintings from the Robert H. Ellsworth collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* was curated by Wen Fong. In this exhibition, Fong placed his weight in the context of political and economic incursion by the West. The dichotomous terms such as tradition and modernity were used to characterize the intricate array of artistic forms and development of Chinese pictorial art. In 2007, *New Songs on Ancient Tunes: 19th-20th Century Chinese Paintings and Calligraphy from the Richard Fabian Collection*, was presented by the Honolulu Academy of Arts. Fabian's San Francisco collection is one of the most important of its kind outside of China, and the concerted efforts made by scholars were represented in the publication of a voluminous catalogue. The systematic categorization of different types of painting and calligraphic genres allowed audiences to grasp the panoramic vista of *fin-de-siècle* art as well as understand the layered nuance of Chinese artistic styles. Expanding upon the work of these scholars, the present catalogue argues that the Chinese last Qing art can no longer be condemned as out-of-date for failing to share primacy within the framework of global art history; rather, it can be seen as offering an equally rich response to the modern condition by interweaving “traditional” and “modern” or “Chinese” and “Western” into a broader perspective.

³⁷ Wang, *Fin-de-siècle Splendor*, 9.

Not all previous exhibitions related to Chinese *fin-de-siècle* art were presented without any question or challenge. The question of authenticity is the biggest issue. The poor quality of those artworks, such as the weak brushwork, awkward inkwork, mismatching seals, or anachronistic paper material, raised my suspicion about their authenticity. The forgeries that appeared in those exhibitions bring a problematic issue to the art historians and connoisseurs, as most of them have tended to accept the judgement made by museums and collectors without bothering to investigate the authenticity of the artworks themselves. Forgeries are a distorted representation of the past; and the research based on them could be misleading. According to Gilbert Bagnani, “an unintentional *suggestio falsi* may be just as reprehensible as an intentional *suppressio veri*.”³⁸ In 2008, the Brooklyn Museum discovered that a third of the Coptic sculptures in its collection were modern fakes. Instead of hiding the items away, the museum staged an exhibition about the research behind the revelation, noting rather pointedly that ‘a comprehensive study has yet to be undertaken’ of Coptic sculpture across the globe.³⁹ Admitting its complex history of collection and exposing it under rigorous academic studies is commendable, as it also indicates the ethical standard of one agency. But what is the standard to differentiate a forgery from a genuine work? Why and how are forgeries made? What kind of specific skills are required to produce forgeries? What is the connection between collector and forger? These questions prompt us for future investigations.

³⁸ Gilbert Bagnani, “On Fakes and Forgeries,” *Phoenix* 14, no. 4 (Winter, 1960): 237.

³⁹ <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/coptic>.



Figure 1 Hong Liangji, 1746-1809, *Liangji Hong's small-seal-script poem couplet*, cs000029, The mid-Qing Dynasty, Paper, Two scrolls, 14 x 62 in. each, Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.



Figure 2 Feng Guifen, 1809-1874, *Guifen Feng's fan calligraphy*, cs000097, Paper, 13 x 23.8 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.



Figure 3 Empress Dowager Cixi, 1835-1908, *Good Fortune and Longevity*, 2011.87.2, 1902, Ink and color on silk, 49 3/8 x 24 1/2 in. (125.41 x 62.23 cm) (image)64 1/4 x 36 1/8 in. (163.2 x 91.76 cm) (overall, without roller), Minneapolis Institute of Art, GIFT OF YANG AND HELEN H. WANG.

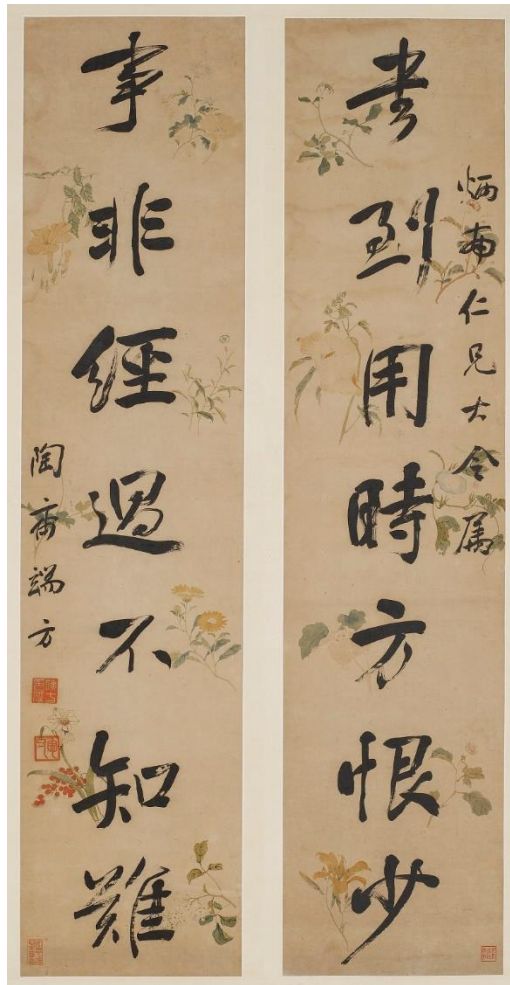


Figure 4 Duanfang, 1861-1911, *Couplet in running script*, F1997.64.1-2, Pair of hanging scrolls; ink on woodblock-printed paper, H x W (image, each): 128 x 29.5 cm (50 3/8 x 11 5/8 in), Freer Gallery of Art, given by Robert Hatfield Ellsworth in 1997.

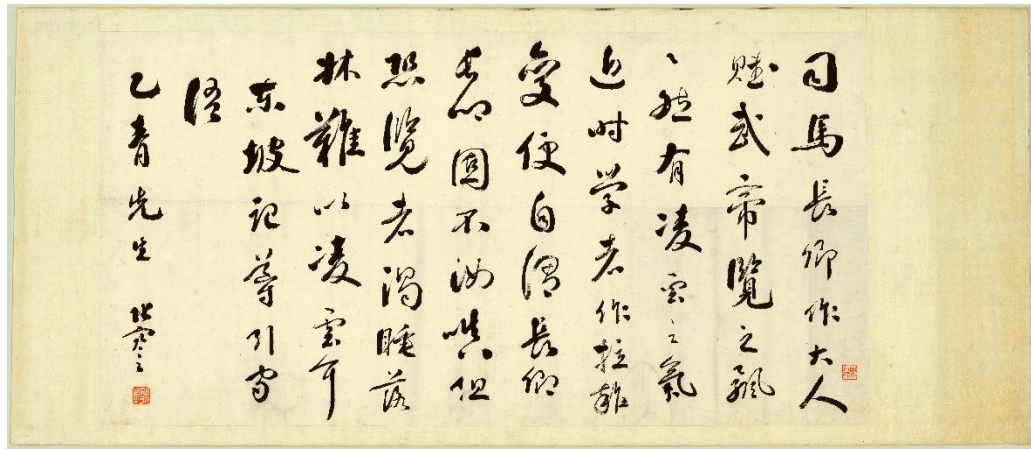


Figure 5 Zhang Jian, 1853-1926, *Jizhi Zhang's calligraphy banner*, cs000060, The late-Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China, Paper, 63 x 27 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.

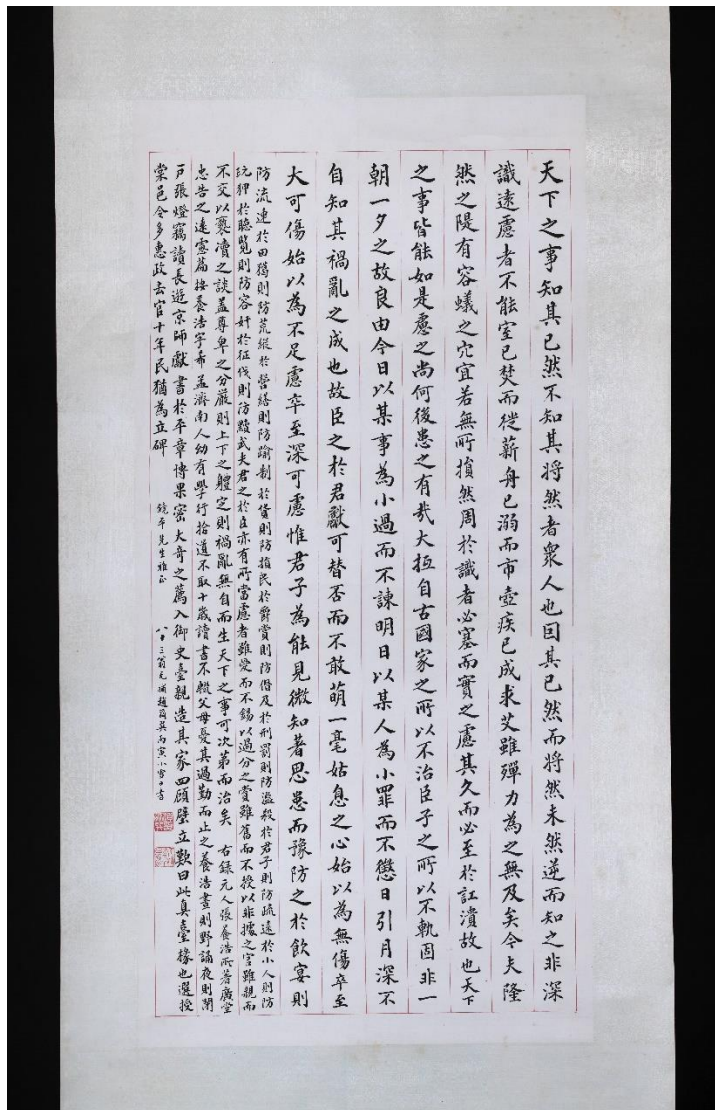


Figure 6 Zhao Erxun, 1844-1927, *Erxuan Zhao's regular-script hanging scroll made at his eight-three years old*, cs000050, 1927, paper, 22 x 77 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.

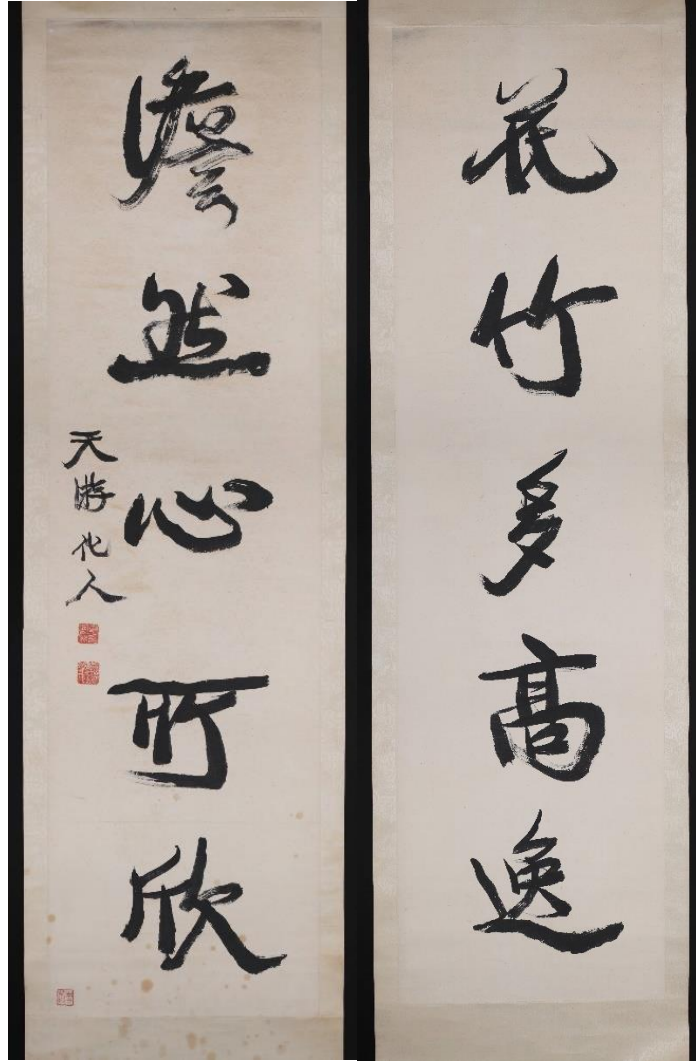


Figure 7 Kang, Youwei, 1858-1927, *Youwei Kang's calligraphic couplet hanging scroll*, cs000114, Paper, Two scrolls, 13 x 67 in. each, Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.



Figure 8 Dong Qichang, 1555-1636, *River and Mountains on a Clear Autumn Day*, 1959.46, 1624-27, Handscroll, ink on Korean paper, 38.4 x 136.8 cm (15 1/8 x 53 7/8 in.), The Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase from the J.H. Wade Fund.

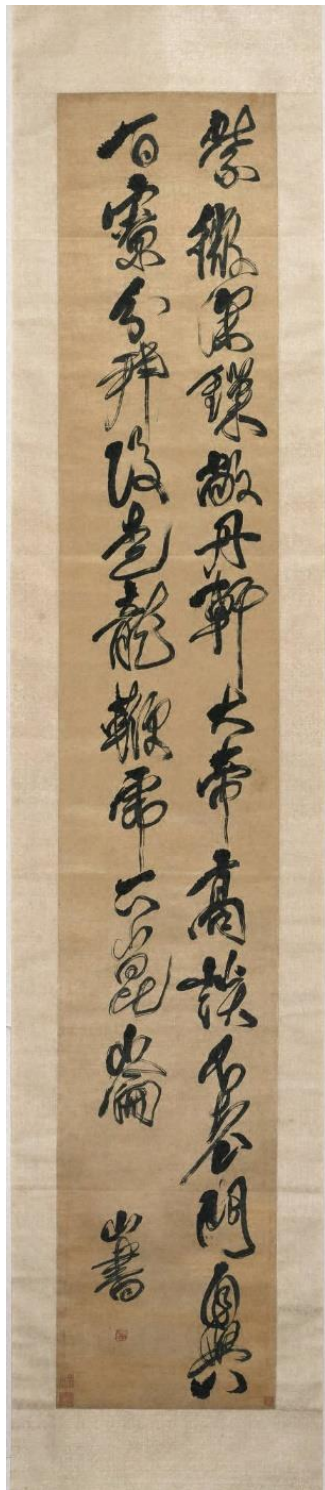


Figure 9 Fu Shan, 1607–1684/85, *Poem on the Heavenly Emperor*, 1988-99, undated; ca. 1670s, Hanging scroll; ink on silk (satin), Calligraphy: 284.5 x 47.1 cm. (112 x 18 9/16 in) Mount: 378 x 69.3 cm (148 13/16 x 27 5/16 in), Princeton University Art Museum, Bequest of John B. Elliott, Class of 1951.

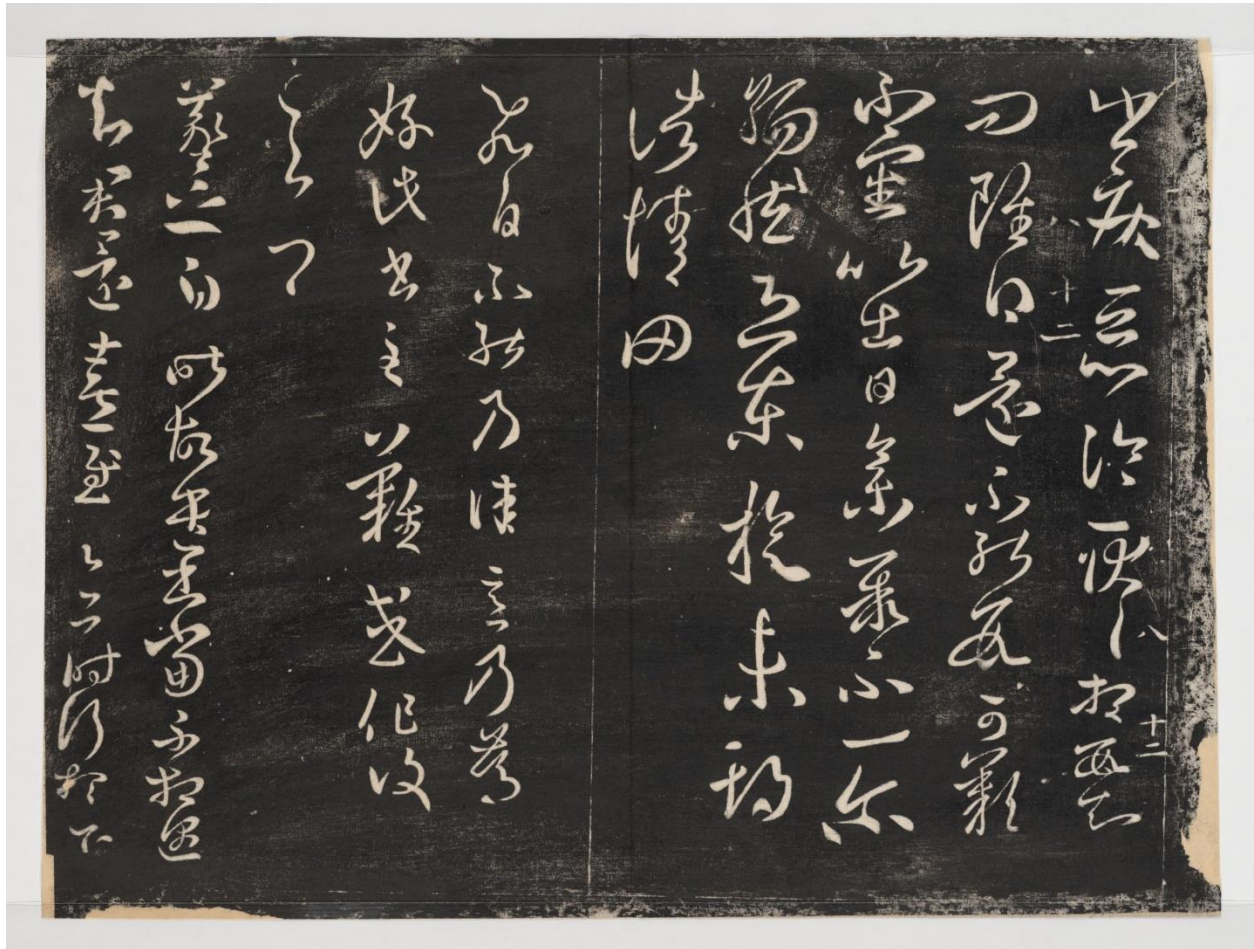


Figure 10 Wang Xizhi, 321-379, *Stele of "Chunhua ge fa tie"*, (Model-Letter Compendia of the Chunhua reign)-- 8th. volume: 3rd. volume of Wang Xizhi's calligraphy models; Chunhua mi ge fa tie; Chunhua ge mi ge tie; Chun hua fa tie; Chunhua ge tie; Guan tie; Ge tie; Su wang fu ben Chunhua ge fa tie; Lanzhou Chunhua ge tie; Ming ta su fu ben; Xi'an ben; Guan zhong ben; Chunhua ge fa tie di ba (Wang Xizhi), W306565_12, 19th cent.-early 20th cent., rubbings, 26.5 x 35.5 cm, Harvard University, Fine Arts Library, Chinese Rubbings Collection.

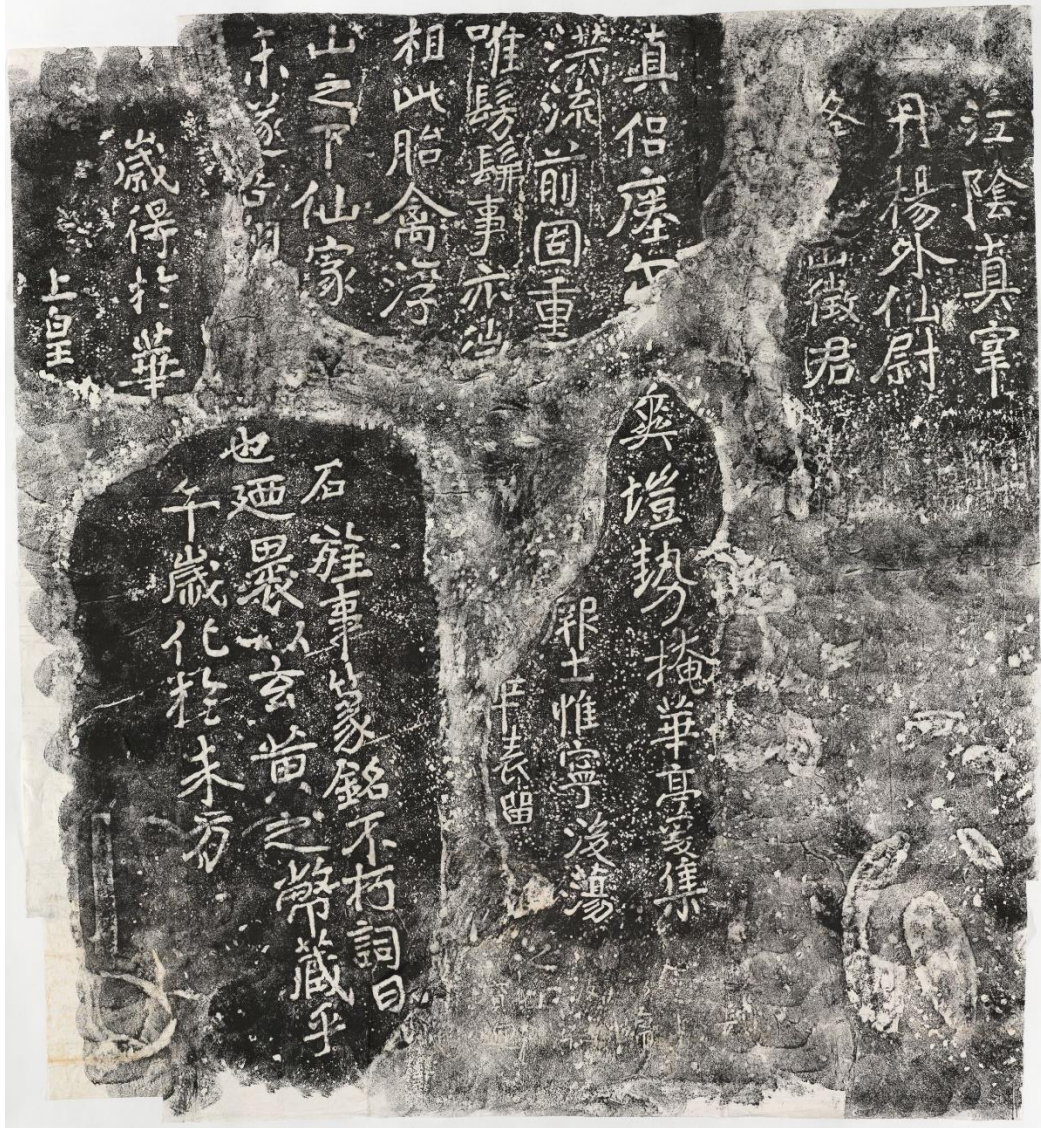


Figure 11 *Yi he ming*, W295339_1, Rubbing from replica of stele of "Yi he ming" -- a tombstone of crane, Inscription written by Huayang Zhenyi (a man active in Southern Liang Dynasty, 502-557), Calligraphy by Shanghuangshanqiao (a man active in Southern Liang Dynasty, 502-557), rubbings, 170 x 161 cm, Harvard University, Harvard College Library Harvard-Yenching Library, Chinese Rubbings Collection, Horikoshi, Yoshihiro, Japanese, associated name, donor.



Figure 12 Zhang Jian, 1853-1926, *Jian Zhang's fan calligraphy of Writing Arts of Sun Guoting*, cs000133, undated, Paper, 13.3 x 25 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.

CALLIGRAPHY

1. Yuan Mei

Having established himself as one of the greatest poets of his era, a prodigy in scholarship, and a formidable literary critic, Yuan Mei (1716-1798) chafed at official life, and took early retirement at the age of thirty-three, devoting his life to hedonistic pursuits and writing, and heralding the cultural modernization of late Qing period.

Yuan is first well known for his controversial writing of short tales of the strange and supernatural. Written in a climate of political and moral conservatism nurtured by suffocating Confucian orthodoxy, these tales of ghosts, sex, betrayal, revenge, litigation, transvestism, homosexuality, and corruption provide a rich tableau of daily life in China. He sniffed at the prudery and moralism propagated by the court and orthodox Confucian scholars of his time, determined to expose their hypocrisy. While the Confucian-inspired orthodox scholars found the supernatural an immoderate anathema, he glorified it as a scintillating source of inspiration. Written with the goal of amusing both himself and his readers, the tales were written with a rapier wit and a strong sense of mystery, covering life, death, lust, and crime.⁴⁰

Perhaps feeling that he had not yet done enough to ridicule puritanical society, he began to accept women as students.⁴¹ His poetry-writing classes were held in his own home, the *Sui* Garden (The Garden of Contentment). Having women students come to his house was thought particularly scandalous, since young women from well-to-do families were typically

⁴⁰ Yuan Mei, *Censored by Confucius: Ghost Stories by Yuan Mei*, ed. and trans. Kam Louie and Louise Edwards (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 1-8.

⁴¹ Yuan Mei, *Yuan Mei's Manual of Gastronomy: Recipes from the Garden of Contentment*, trans. Sean J.S. Chen (Massachusetts: Berkshire, 2019), xxii-xxiii.

educated in their own homes and most certainly not in the company of men from outside their immediate families.⁴² Yuan's publication of the poetry written by these female students further compounded the affront to conservative social practice, for it took the products of the inner female realm into the public male domain.

During his employment in the court, Yuan had developed quite a reputation for loose living. Swooned over by women, he was also known for his preference for boy actors. He had them for decades, and brought them with him on his journeys.⁴³ His depiction of sexual pleasure is similarly challenging because it rejects the compulsion to impose moral judgment on people's sexual activities.⁴⁴ His stories show that he clearly regarded love and sexual pleasure as part and parcel of human nature, to be celebrated rather than denied or restricted. The diversity of sexual practices in Qing China, and their acceptance by the public, is another recurring theme in his writings.⁴⁵

Besides these sexual inclinations, his many poems and essays celebrate the joy of living one's life as one chooses, without having to imitate or be restricted by the teachings of the ancients. The most singular and significant feature of Yuan's style is its perverse and indulgent streak, almost literary hedonism, which ensured that his work stood apart from that of his contemporaries. Lo and Shultz write of his poetic style, "Countering the prevailing demand that

⁴² Yuan, *Censored by Confucius: Ghost Stories by Yuan Mei*, 1-8.

⁴³ Yuan, *Yuan Mei's Manual of Gastronomy*, xxii.

⁴⁴ Yuan, *Censored by Confucius: Ghost Stories by Yuan Mei*, 3.

⁴⁵ Arthur Waley, *Yuan Mei, eighteenth century Chinese poet* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1956), 82.

poetry must be didactic ... Yuan held that the function of poetry is to delight."⁴⁶ Yuan's *joie de vivre* is reflected also in his love of good food. Known as a premier gourmet in Chinese history, he wrote many recipes for his favorite dishes.⁴⁷ Whenever he tasted a standout dish at a friend's home, he would send his cook over to learn how to make that dish, and then he recorded the procedure, alongside his comments.⁴⁸ His *Recipes from the Garden of Contentment* was so popular that he even made a fortune by selling the recipes. According to Nicole Mones, the Garden of Contentment "is now a symbol, a memory, and over two hundred years later, nowhere is the place more vividly recalled than in the world of Chinese food."⁴⁹ The recipes are the representation of Yuan's enduring and kaleidoscopic contribution, in which he saw cuisine not merely as a kind of sensory pleasure, but as a philosophy and a principle.⁵⁰

His attitudes toward pleasure put him at odds not only with many of his Confucian peers but also with his Buddhist friends. Encouraged by Peng Shaosheng (1740-1796) to attack Buddhism, Yuan Mei wrote disdainfully of the Buddhist goal of relinquishing all desires: "... what makes a live man different from a dead one is precisely that he is capable of enjoying such pleasures." "What you are asking me to do, is to behave as though I were dead, when in fact I am not dead."⁵¹

⁴⁶ *Waiting for the Unicorn: Poems and Lyrics of China's last Dynasty 1644-1911*, ed. Irving Yucheng Lo and William Shultz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 191.

⁴⁷ Jonathan Spence, "Ch'ing," in *Food in Chinese Culture*, ed. K. C. Chang (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 259-294.

⁴⁸ Yuan, *Yuan Mei's Manual of Gastronomy*, xix.

⁴⁹ Yuan, *Yuan Mei's Manual of Gastronomy*, xxiii.

⁵⁰ Yuan, xxiii.

⁵¹ Arthur Waley, *Yuan Mei, eighteenth century Chinese poet*, 82.

In his will he made fun of religious rites and Buddhist monks:

When I die, I would be exceptionally pleased if you would tell your sisters to come mourn for me. I would really loathe religious chanting and vegetarian rites in the wake. If you come to weep for me, I would be greatly moved. But if the monks disturb my spirit by banging their wooden fish drums, I will make a hasty exit with my hands placed firmly over my ears. Would you feel at peace knowing that this had happened?⁵²

The Yuan couplet (Figure 1.1) was derived from Dong Qichang's Model-book School style (Figure 1.2). In the early Qing period, Emperor Kangxi (r. 1662-1722) was passionately fond of Dong's calligraphy. He wrote:

The calligraphy of Dong Qichang from Huating is a natural talent. Its fresh loftiness and graceful quality have not been attained by others. Its elegant manner, often revealed through unintentional touches, is like thin clouds gathering and dispersing, or a refreshing breeze blowing, revealing a natural taste. His character structures derive from the style of the Jin Dynasty, because he repeatedly copied the *Chunhua Getie* (Model Calligraphies from the Imperial Archives of the Chunhua Era, see Figure 11 in the Introduction). He learned the method of moving his wrist from the *Lantingxu* and *Shengjiaoxu* (Wang Xizhi's calligraphies); thus, in turning the brush, the brush tip is hidden and the brushwork is archaically forceful, which looks clumsy but is actually ingenious.⁵³

Yuan was also influenced by the Emperor Kangxi's writing (Figure 1.3), as both of them showed a great similarity to follow Dong's forceful yet elastic strokes. But due to the difference of their status, Emperor Kangxi's writing is more powerful and sublime; Yuan's more flexible and elegant.

While Yuan's time was ahead of the *fin-de-siècle* period, he was one of the representatives of Model-book School advocates. Zhu Youran (1836-1882, Figure 1.4), Wang

⁵² Yang Tao 杨涛, *Yuan Zicai waizhuan 袁子才外传* [The unofficial biography of Yuan Mei] (Taipei: Shijie wenwu chubanshe, 1992), 247.

⁵³ *The Century of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang 1555-1636, volume 1*, ed. Wai-kam Ho, coordinating editor, Judith G. Smith (Kansas City, MO.: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 121.

Yixue (? Figure 1. 5), and Hong Jun (1839-1893, Figure 1.6) followed suit, and showed great allegiance to Dong's orthodoxy. Since most of these followers limited themselves to Dong's style, none of them could surpass Dong's brushwork. Therefore, the artistic value of the Model-book School gradually declined. Two hundred years after Dong's death, he was severely lambasted by Kang Youwei and other reformers for the inherent weakness and blandness of his writings.⁵⁴ As Kang noted:

Though he enjoys great fame, Dong Qichang was like a Taoist monk who was devoid of any food, therefore his writing looks impoverish and restrained. If he met a majestic general who could reach his hands to the sky by standing on the precipice, and have the capacity to change the result of the combat, he would bind his feet and will not dare to descend to the mountain (to challenge the general).⁵⁵

Kang's attack on Dong and the orthodoxy, which was inextricably linked to his political agenda, symbolized Chinese literati-reformers' ambition to use art as a tool for modernization.

⁵⁴ *The Century of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang 1555-1636, volume 1*, 123.

⁵⁵ Kang Youwei 康有为, "Guang yizhou shuangji" 广艺舟双楫 [Extended Paired Oars for the Boat of Art], in *Mingqing shulun ji* 明清书论集 [The collected calligraphic comments of Ming and Qing dynasties], ed. Cui Erping 崔尔平 (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2011), 1390.

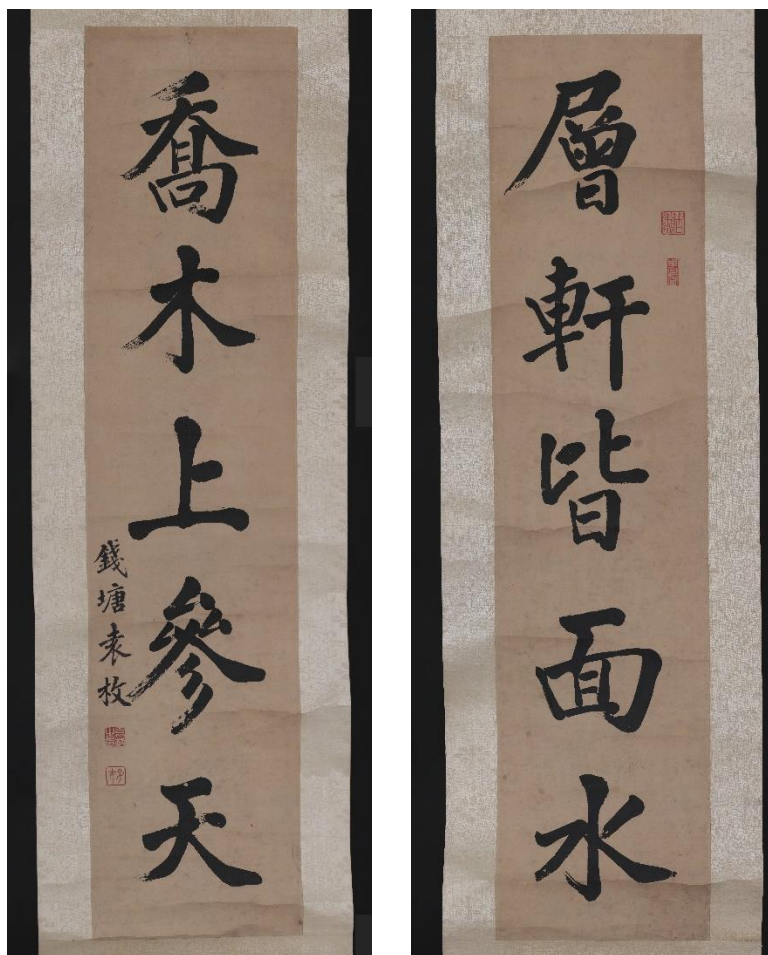


Figure 1.1 Yuan Mei, 1716-1798, *Mei Yuan's calligraphic couplet*, cs000011, The mid-Qing Dynasty, Paper, Two scrolls, 6 x 25 in. each, Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou,Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.



Figure 1.2 Dong Qichang, 1555-1636, *Transcription of the "Prose-poem on Promenading in the Back Garden" by Xie Tiao (464–499) and "Zuoyouming" by Cui Yuan (77–142)*, 1998-127, 1616, Album of 15 leaves with 8 leaves of colophons, ink on paper, Calligraphy: 23 x 14 cm. (9 1/16 x 5 1/2 in.) Leaf: 31.5 x 37.4 cm. (12 3/8 x 14 3/4 in.) Album: 31.8 x 18.5 x 2 cm. (12 1/2 x 7 5/16 x 13/16 in.), Princeton University Art Museum, Bequest of John B. Elliott, Class of 1951.

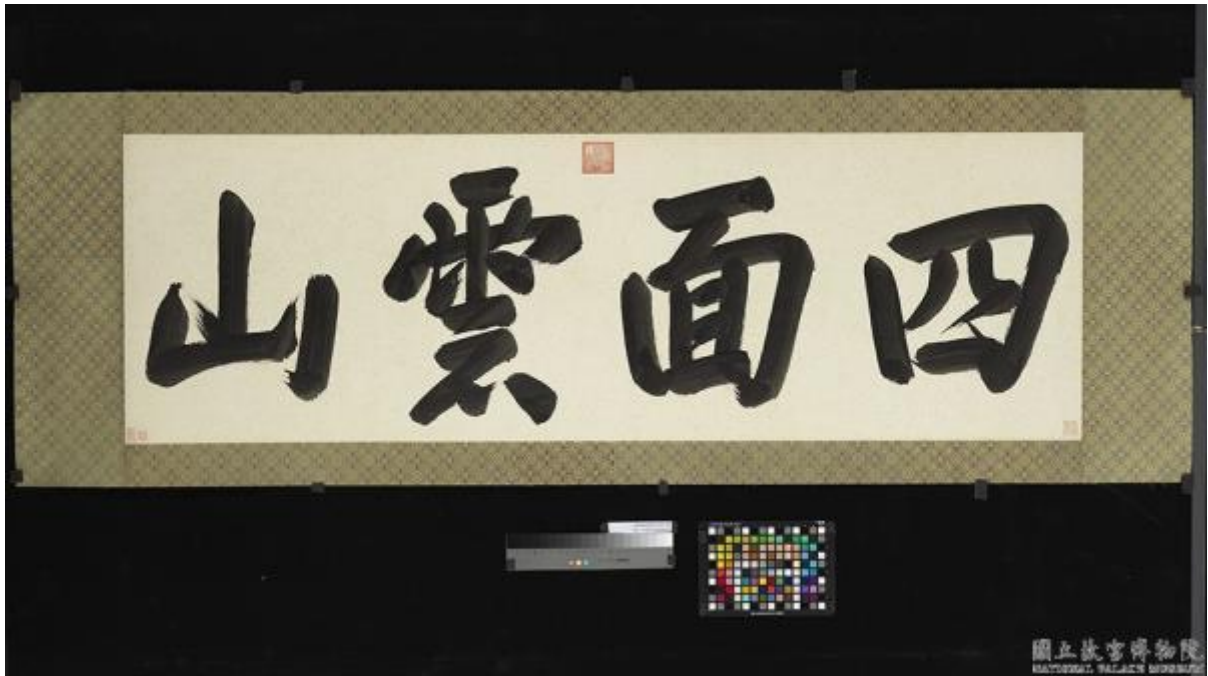


Figure 1.3 Aixinjueluo Xuanye (Emperor Kangxi), 1654-1722, *Qing Kangxi regular script four-sided cloud mountain lens*, Cultural relics unified number: Book purchase 001475N000000000; Work number: Book purchase 00147500000, Paper, 64.6 x 200.8 cm, National Palace Museum.

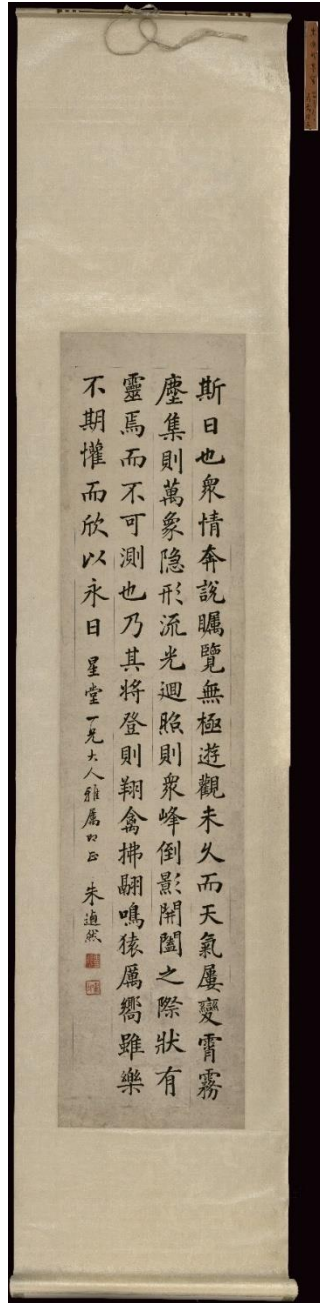


Figure 1.4 Zhu Youran, 1836-1882, *Youran Zhu's calligraphy hanging scroll*, cs000112, paper, 80.5 x 17 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.



Figure 1.5 Wang Yixue, *Wang Yixue Wang's fan calligraphy*, cs000135, silk, 13.1 x 24.2 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.

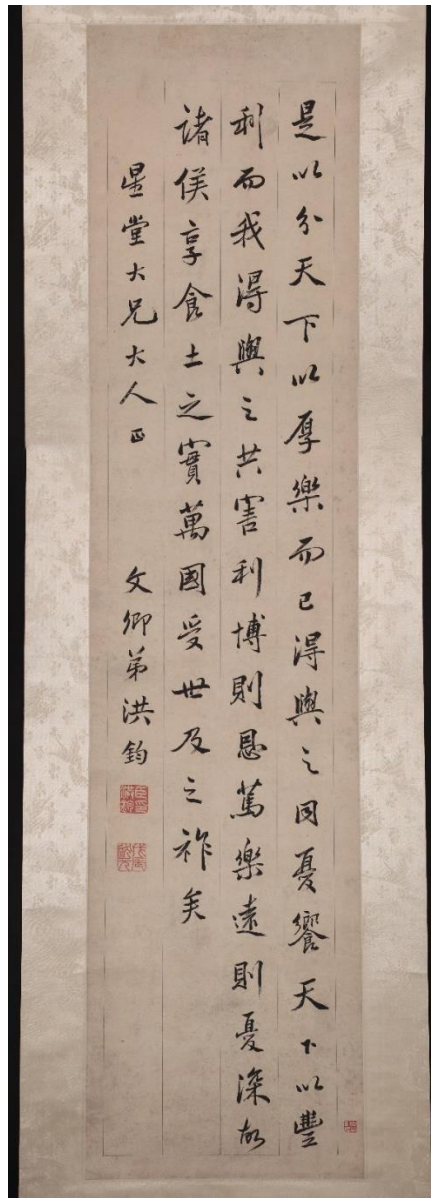


Figure 1.6 Hong Jun, 1839-1893, *Jun Hong's calligraphic hanging scroll*, cs000022, The late-Qing Dynasty, Paper, 17 x 80 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.

2. Tiebao

For the Chinese, there is always a strong relationship between art and morality. An artist with a grand personality produces grand art, likewise, an artist with a mean personality produces abominable art. The Chinese notion of *renpin*, or “personality of the men” is extremely important to understanding the aestheticism of Chinese art. In judging calligraphy and painting, the highest criterion is not whether the artist shows good technique but whether he has or has not an admirable personality or righteous integrity. Mencius said, “As for righteous integrity, it is exceedingly great and strong. If nourished by uprightness and not injured, it will fill up all between heaven and earth.”

In choosing Yan Zhenqing (709-785) over other masters in Chinese calligraphic history, the artists in different dynasties were much influenced by Yan’s reputation for high moral integrity (Figure 2.2). Yan was a heroic defender of Tang’s territory against the rebel force in the mid-750s. He died as a martyr at the hands of the rebel general Li Xilie (?-786) in 785. Huang Tingjian (1045-1105) was the most enthusiastic advocate of Yan’s calligraphy, as he said: “This example of Yan Zhenqing’s writing is extraordinary and monumental, elegant and towering: it contains all the superior style, spiritual power and bony structure of the Wei, Jin, Sui and Tang [masters].” He even equated Yan to Two Wangs (i.e., Wang Xizhi and Wang Xianzhi, who were ranked as the most influential artists in Chinese art history) as his most powerful endorsement.⁵⁶

The late Ming and early Qing iconoclastic artist Fu Shan (1607-1684) also used Yan as his model. He decried Zhao Mengfu (1254-1322, Figure 2.3) and Dong Qichang (Figure 1.2)

⁵⁶ Robert E. Harrist, JR. & Wen C. Fong, *The Embodied Image: Chinese Calligraphy from the John B. Elliott Collection* (Princeton, N.J.: Art Museum, Princeton University in association with Harry N. Abrams, 1999), 270.

because they were not “gentlemen” and their arts were “superficial and vulgar.” By contrast, Yan “bore a spirit in his chest,” so “his brush could press down barbarians.”⁵⁷

Another reason contributing to the popularity of Yan’s writing was because of civil service examinations. Many literati since the mid-eighteenth century have been enthused to adopt this bold and magisterial style in their examination papers. Liu Yong (1719-1805), Qian Feng (1740-1795), He Shaoji (1799-1873, Figure 4.3), Yu Yue (1821-1907, see Figure 4.2), Weng Tonghe (1830-1904), Yang Shoujing (1839-1915), Zheng Xiaoxu (1860-1938, see Figure 7.3), and Tan Yankai (1880-1930, see Figure 6 in Introduction), and Tan Zekai (1889-1947), were all faithful practitioners of Yan’s style.⁵⁸ Kang Youwei’s extant writings in his metropolitan examination was an indication of his undiluted passion to learn Yan’s writing.⁵⁹

The style of this Tiebao calligraphy (Figure 2.1) is in line with Yan’s weighty intensity (Figure 2.2), exhibiting a highly-controlled handling of the brush. Most of the brushwork was “hidden” and “protected” within a rounded contour, exhibiting an unbreakable energy and structural self-restraint. It indicated Tiebao’s ambition to eschew surface beauty in the quest for deeper feelings of indelible calmness and sublime strength. The whole work demonstrated a sense of unhurried cohesion.

⁵⁷ Fu Shan 傅山, “Shuanghongkan shulun” 霜红龕书论 [Frost-Red-Niche calligraphic comments], in *Mingqing shulun ji* 明清书论集 [The collected calligraphic comments of Ming and Qing dynasties], ed. Cui Erping 崔尔平 (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2011), 563. See also Qianshen Bai, Christine Tan and Cary Y. Liu, “Fu Shan’s ‘Selections from the Zuozhuan’ Calligraphy Album,” *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University, The Bequest of John B. Elliott* 61, (2002): 21.

⁵⁸ Zhang Hongjun 张红军, *Tianxin laifu: Kang Youwei shufa yu wanqing shufa bianqian* 天心来复: 康有为书学与晚清书法变迁 [Heavenly heart to recover: the turn of Kang Youwei’s stele theory and the change of calligraphy in the Late Qing Dynasty] (Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chubanshe, 2020), 103.

⁵⁹ Zhang, 145, 216.

The passion to study Yan as a calligraphic exemplar continued to prevail in art arenas throughout the late Qing and the Republic era (and even in current Chinese society), as represented by Weng Tonghe (Figure 2.4) and Tan Yankai's writing. The irregular size, uneven spacing, and slanted composition created a rhythmic change and cacophonous harmony in the overall structure of the work, signaling the unrivalled representation of Yan's writing. Tan Yankai's little brother Tan Zekai (1899-1947, Figure 2.5) also practiced Yan's writing, but it looks rigid and formulaic, and his audience may have difficulty finding relief from the phalanx of his dense characters.

Tiebao's calligraphy was also influenced by Mi Fu (1051-1107)'s style, which was famous for the speedy movement and flexible usage of the brush. Mi's calligraphy showed a diametrically opposite character from Yan's: the style was spontaneous and the brush work was swift (Figure 2.6). He studied the art of Two Wangs, but he harbored an independent spirit unyielding to convention and authority. Mi followed Two Wangs' style by stressing elegance, strength, and free-flowing rhythmical movement. However, perhaps driven by the finest artistic sensibility of his time (the art of the Song dynasty in which Mi lived has always been regarded as the apotheosis of Chinese culture), he refashioned Two Wangs' gentility and elegance into a bold expressive style, "as exhilarating as sailing in a wind or riding a horse into battle," in the words of Su Shi (1037-1101). In Mi's belief, intuition and whim were crucial to artistic creations, and this spontaneity helped him get closer to the value of being "untrammled," "plain and light," and "natural."⁶⁰ This expressive style is possible partly due to Mi's virtuosity in using his brush. He said he "daubed characters," and bragged he could write with "eight sides of the brush,"

⁶⁰ Lothar Ledderose, *Mi Fu and the Classical Tradition of Chinese Calligraphy* (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1979), 57-59.

which indicated he could not only utilize all the physical properties of the brush tip to great extent, but also extended the space of his paper to a three-dimensional scope. He also held the brush lightly to allow ample room for flexibility and intuitive shifts of speed and pressure.⁶¹

Influenced by Dong Qichang, many artists in the Qing had an avid interest in studying Mi Fu. In Jiang Chenying (1628-1699, Figure 2.7) and Bao Jun (1797-1851, Figure 2.8)'s scrolls, Mi's free-flowing elegance can be easily discerned. However, this elegance was different from Mi's original flamboyance, as it had been schematized and standardized by Dong. It is safe to say that Mi's style in these artists' hands was a regurgitated edition of Dong's rendition. In this sense, their writing is not so much Mi's as Dong's.

Tiebao's brushwork was also in line with Mi's expressive style, but was independent from Dong's interpretation. His pliant swiftness and the ethereal beauty resulted from the rhythmic lowering and lifting of the brush. Su Shi said Mi used the brush like a sword. This is apparent in some vertical strokes of Tiebao's work. Slashed down the paper with dash and verve, the brush creates a feeling of impetuosity and freedom (see the last stroke of the third character in the second column). Moreover, though the spacings between the four columns are quite even, they have a tendency to jump out of tectonic parallelism, showing relevance to Mi's spacing in Figure 2.6. For instance, the fifth character of the first column (read from right to left) “夕,” and the fifth and sixth characters of the third column “漫漫” would be called out of balance because both of them are contracted to the second column, creating a horizon mass and unit in the writing, and thereby contrasting with the verticality of the scroll (Figure 2.9). Indeed, the viewer

⁶¹ Harrist & Fong, *The Embodied Image*, 274. Ledderose, 58.

of this work is immediately struck by the changes of spacing, character sizes, ink tonality, and the agitated dried-up brush.

However, Mi's expressiveness erred on the side of speediness and therefore ran the risk of weakness. According to Huang Tingjian, Mi's calligraphy was too rash and not solid enough.⁶² In addition, his speed would often result in sharply slashed angular brush lines, which might be seen as careless and flippant. Therefore, Tiebao's incorporation of Yan's sublimity, firmness, and roundness was in stark contrast to the swift and flippant brushwork inherent in Mi's writings.

⁶² Harrist & Fong, *The Embodied Image*, 275.

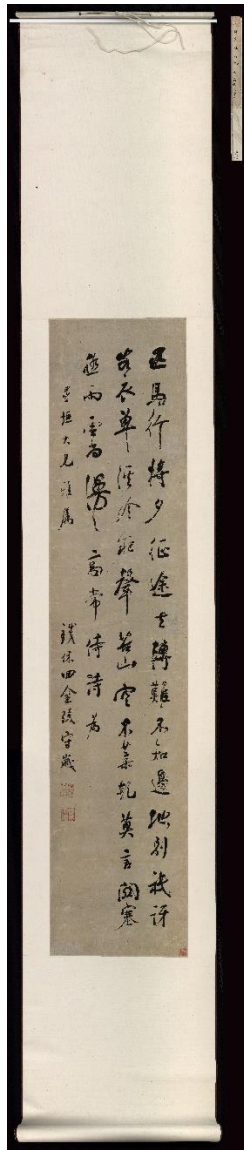


Figure 2.1 Tiebao, 1752-1824, *Tiebao's calligraphy hanging scroll*, cs000015, The mid-Qing Dynasty, Paper, 92.8 x 16 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.

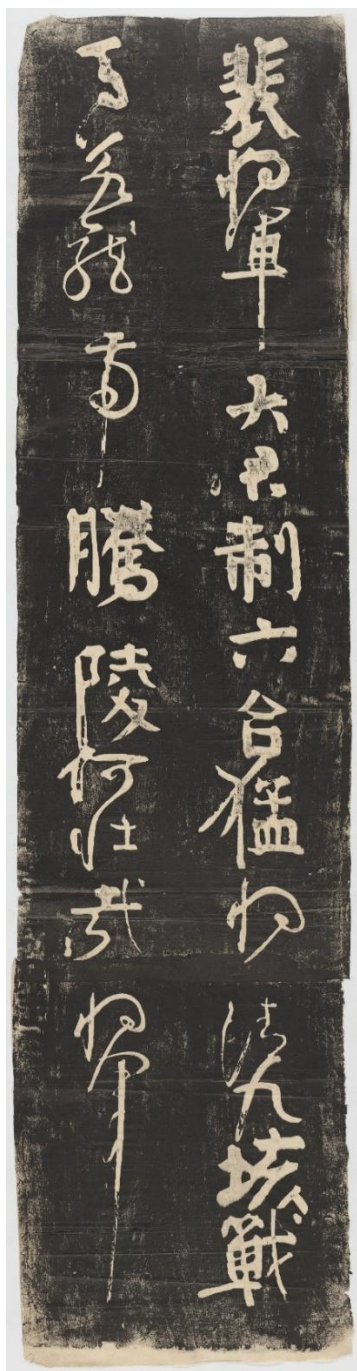


Figure 2.2 Yan Zhenqing, 709-785, *Pei jiang jun shi*; *Zeng Pei jijang jun shi*; *Song Pei jijang jun shi*, W298215_1, rubbing, paper, ink, intaglio, 119 x 30 cm, Harvard University, Harvard College Library Harvard-Yenching Library.

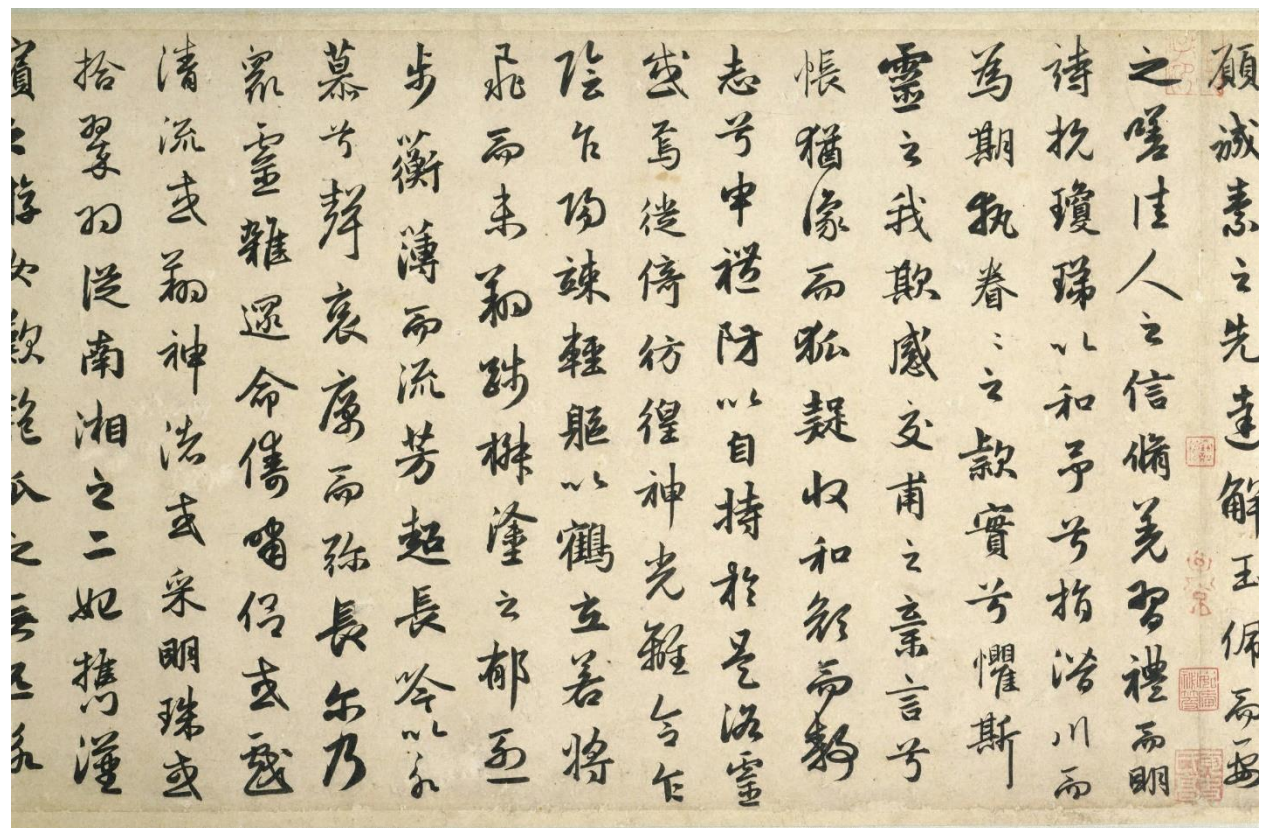


Figure 2.3 Zhao Mengfu, 1254–1322, *Rhapsody on the Luo River Goddess* (*Luoshen fu* 洛神賦), 1998-118, undated; ca. 1298, ink on paper, Calligraphy: 25.8 x 234.5 cm. (10 3/16 x 92 5/16 in.), Mount: h. 26.9 cm. (10 9/16 in.), Princeton University Art Museum, Bequest of John B. Elliott, Class of 1951.

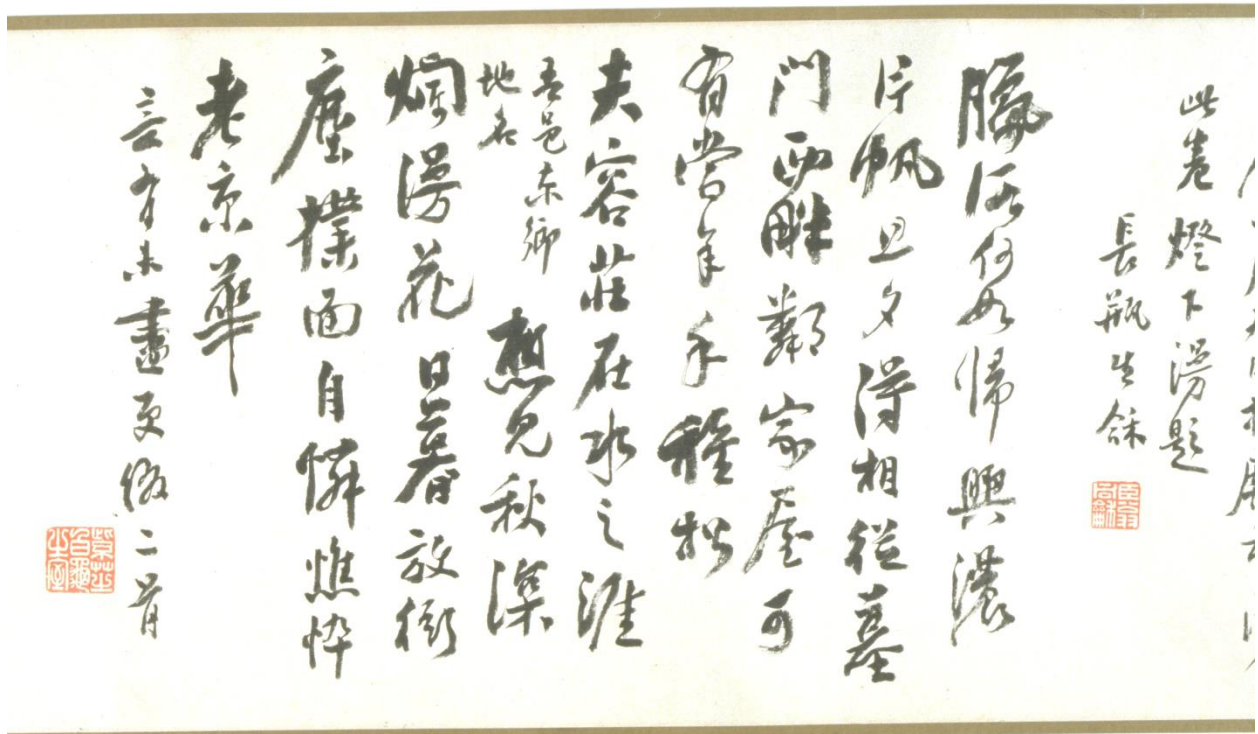


Figure 2.4. Weng Tonghe, 1830-1904, 1961/1.173, 17 of 17, one of the colophons in Shen Zhou's *Pine and Hibiscus*: Shen Zhou, 1427–1509, *Pine and Hibiscus*, 1961/1.173, 1489, handscroll, ink and color on paper, 9 5/16 x 32 5/16 in. (23.6 x 82 cm), University of Michigan Museum of Art, Museum purchase made possible by the Margaret Watson Parker Art Collection Fund.

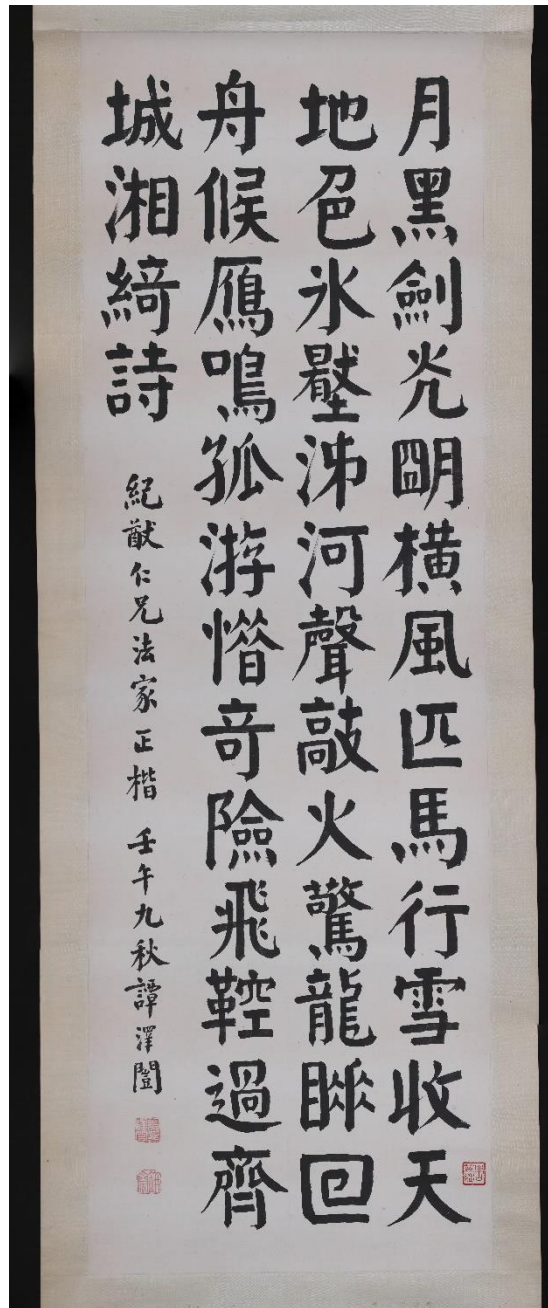


Figure 2.5 Tan Zekai, 1889-1947, *Zekai Tan's standard script hanging scroll of Kaiyun Wang's five-character poem*, cs000039, 1942, paper, 20 x 82 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.

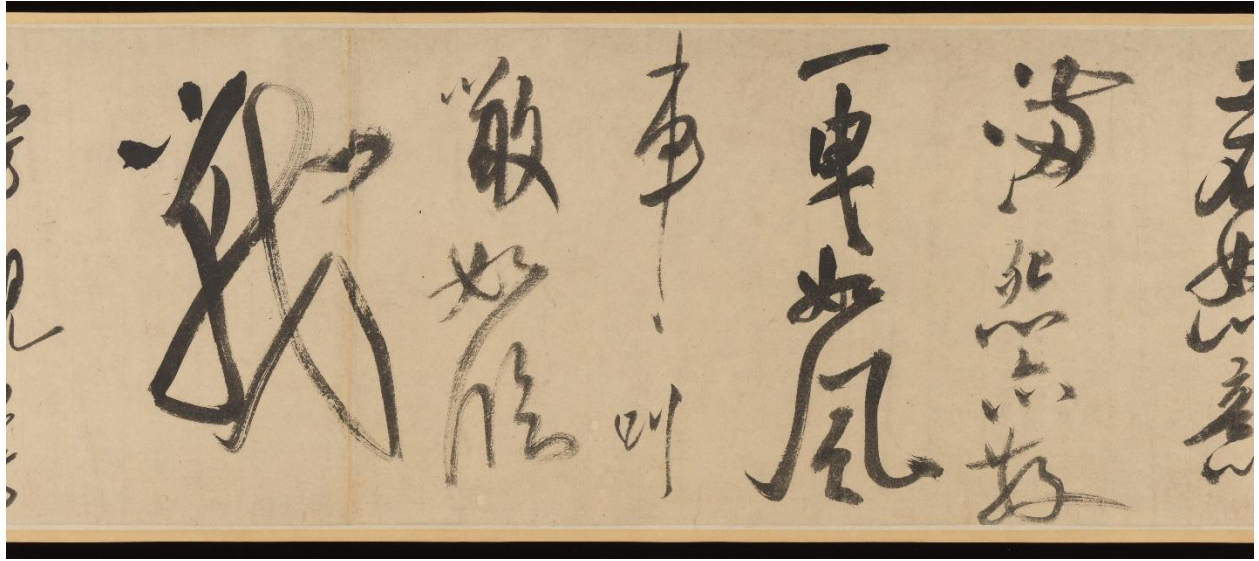


Figure 2.6 Mi Fu, 1051–1107, *Poem Written in a Boat on the Wu River* 草書吳江舟中詩卷, 1984.174, ca. 1095, Handscroll; ink on paper, 12 1/4 in. x 18 ft. 3 1/4 in. (31.1 x 556.9 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of John M. Crawford Jr., in honor of Professor Wen Fong, 1984.

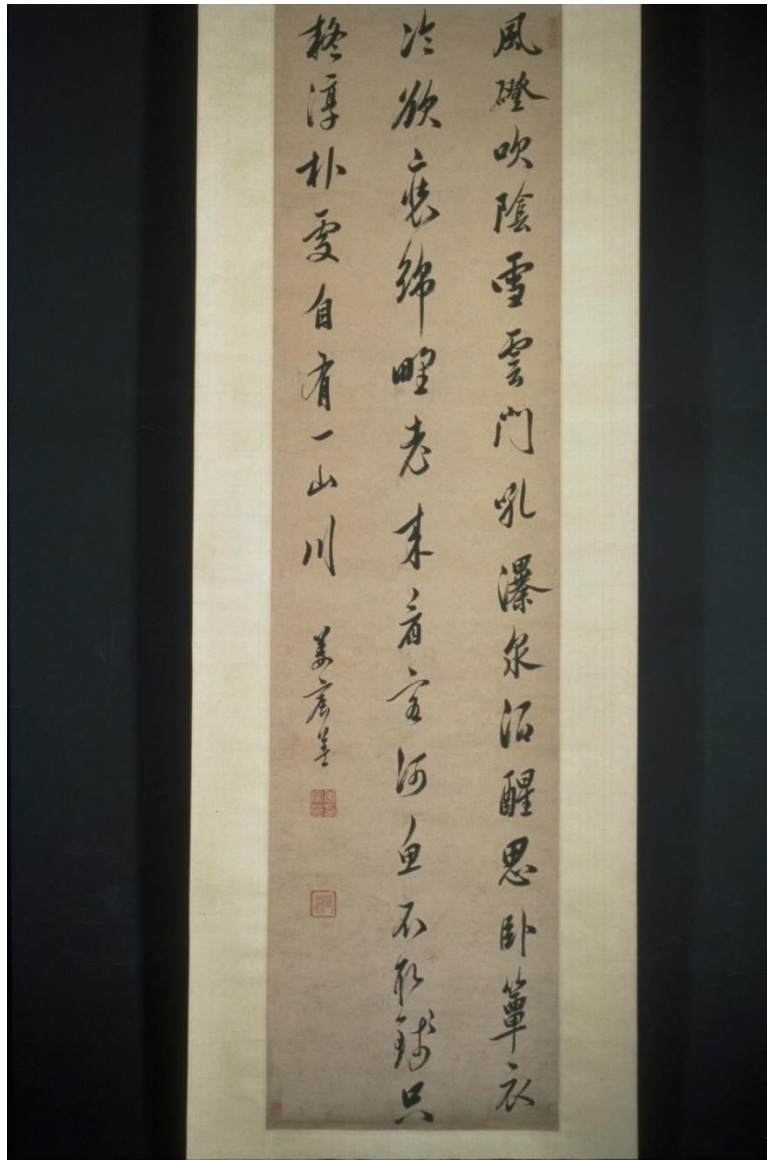


Figure 2.7 Jiang Chenying, 1628-1699, *Calligraphy, Running Script*, 1980/2.207, ink on paper, hanging scroll, 57 ¼ in x 15 in (145.41 cm x 38.1 cm), University of Michigan Museum of Art, Gift of Sarah and Otto Graf, supplemented by the Margaret Watson Parker Art Collection Fund.

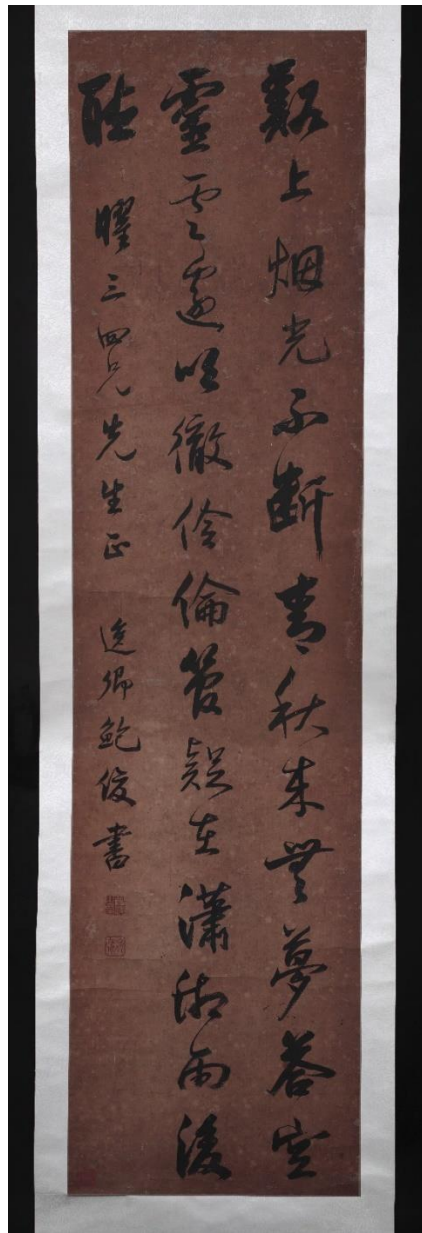


Figure 2.8 Bao Jun, 1797-1851, *Yiqing Bao's poetry calligraphic hanging scroll*, cs000057, Paper, 20.3 x 94.3 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.

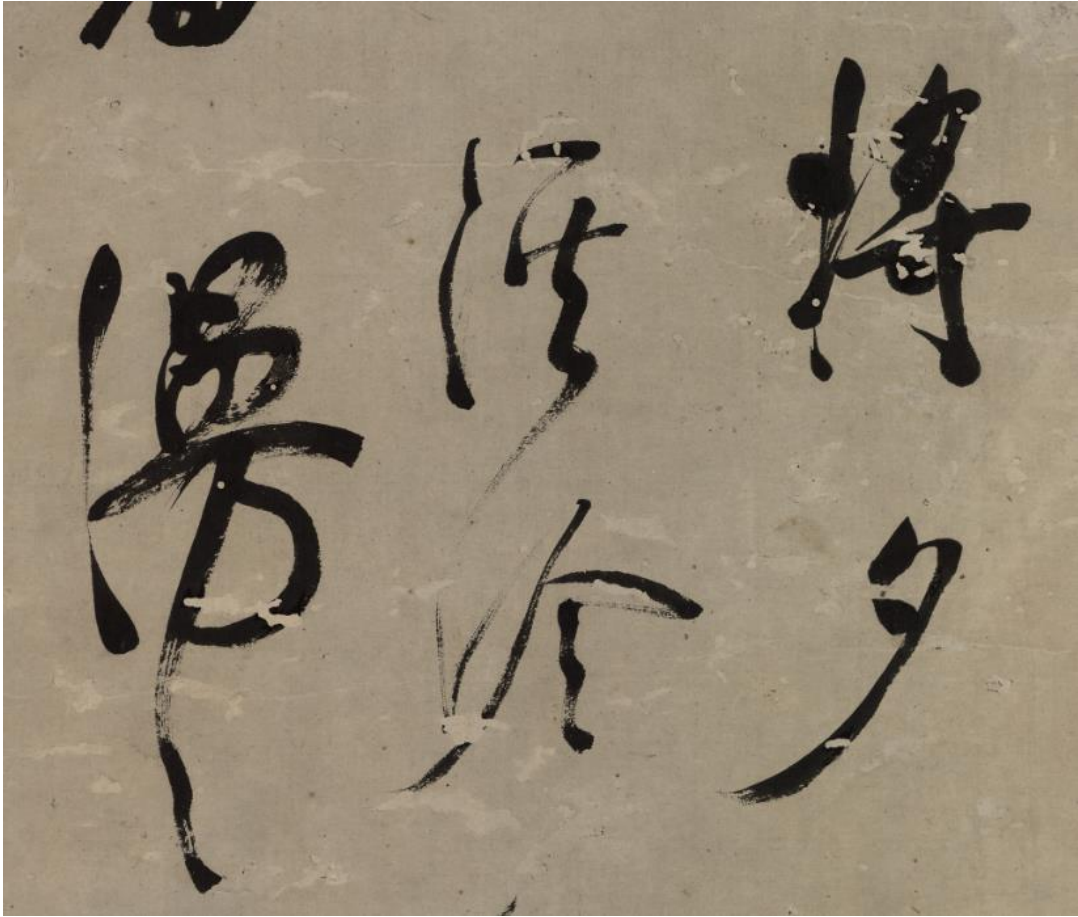


Figure 2.9 detail of Figure 2.1.

3. Liang Qichao

The Stele School was the mainstream artistic form in the late Qing period, which synchronized with the political modernization. In Ruan Yuan (1764-1849)'s *On Northern and Southern Schools of Calligraphy*, he overturned the authority of the southern Model-book School, and demonstrated that the essence of Chinese calligraphy was to be found in the stele inscriptions of the Northern Dynasties. Ruan's theory has been a source of inspiration for calligraphers ever since.

To learn stele writings, the first step was to gather a collection of rubbings. Weng Tonghe (1830-1904, see Figure 2.4) indicated this kind of collecting was *la dolce vita*. Shen Zengzhi (1850-1922, see below, in Shen Zengzhi's entry) correlated collecting activities to one's self-cultivation. He said,

My office in Anhui was damp, so the books were eaten by book-worms. Surprisingly, this rubbing of *Cao Ke Bei Stele* was intact [from the worms]. The paper and ink showed their indissoluble camaraderie, and stayed with me to weather the chilliness of the winter. My spirit has been in communion with this rubbing. Alas, where can one find an old literatus such as me who is willing to devote his declining age to this kind of simple yet pure life?⁶³

In a similar vein, Liang collected more than 1,284 rubbings in his life, literally covering most of the stele writings, and all major script styles from the Shang Dynasty (1600 BC-1046BC) to his time.⁶⁴ In one of his poems, he articulated this passion by saying that even though he was overwhelmed by his tremendous political and family commitments, he never abandoned his rubbings and books, and studied them with alacrity.⁶⁵ Sometimes he wrote

⁶³ Zhang, *Tianxin laifu*, 94.

⁶⁴ Jin Yufu 金玉甫, *Liang Qichao yu zhongguo shufa* 梁启超与中国书法 [Liang Qichao and Chinese calligraphy] (Zhengzhou: Henan meishu chubanshe, 2010), 138.

⁶⁵ Jin, 138.

comments on these rubbings. Most of these comments were related to the provenance of the steles, the transmission of the rubbings, the collation of the texts, the creation time of the steles, the corrections of previous comments on these steles, the recording of his life related to the appreciation of these rubbings, and the research of the calligraphic styles.⁶⁶

Since he was engrossed in the study of ink rubbings of stone inscriptions, his writings exhibit a unique flavor of antiquity. The characters in Figure 3.1 show a broad form rendered in strong wedge-shaped strokes that were inspired by the engraved inscriptions of the Northern Wei (Figure 3.2). Most of the brushwork was created with bold centered-tip strokes, with plump contours and blunt ends. Even in his semi-cursive writing, he abandoned the common Model-book School's elegance and leisure, and chose to hide the sharpness of his brush tip in order to produce rounded strokes that represented engraved lines. By revealing an awkward restraint and archaic plainness, he captured the boldness of carved strokes and their rough, weathered appearance (Figure 3.3). Characterized by inner tension, subtle countercurrents, and lingering involvement, the strokes are "rounded" and the effect, aided by the layered ink, is a lightened ease and a clean-cut spontaneity.

In the late nineteenth century, Western culture wrought a radical transformation to the Chinese traditional view of polity. Liang played a central mediating role in the intellectual movement which closed the gap between Western thought and Chinese tradition, heralding the Chinese intellectual's search for ideological reorientation in the twentieth century. In 1903, he met U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt and Secretary of State John Hay in Washington. At that time, Liang was a wanted fugitive of the Qing court and had spent five years in exile. During their *tete-a-tete*, John Hay prophesied that China was destined to be a great power, which has

⁶⁶ Jin, 142-148.

come to fruition in the past few years. It is important to note that John Hay's clairvoyance was not unfounded; it was based, at least partially, on the unremitting efforts of Liang and his followers.

Liang also ingeniously extended his mediating role in politics to Chinese calligraphy with a modernist's view. While recognizing the beauty and history of Chinese art, he opened his eyes to the civilizations of the world, and compared them with Chinese calligraphy. For instance, he encouraged calligraphers to create some artworks that could rival Plutarch (46-119)'s *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans*, "By using the grand and untrammelled style, the ancient's deeds and contributions would be passed to hundreds of generations. When one sees this, he/she would exalt and dance, being stimulated by the ancient's spirit, blood, and tears, and nourishing his/her own verve, perseverance, and passion."⁶⁷ Some of these comments were indicative of his acute perceptions of global history. In one comment, Liang asked calligraphers to emulate the spirit exhibited in Edward Gibbon (1737-1794)'s *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*--- "[Calligraphers should] bear great ambition to praise and criticize the nature of the race. [They need to] point out what is good and what is bad; why some eras were booming, whereas others declined. This would allow later generations to contemplate and know what they should do and what they should not do."⁶⁸

With this great global perception in mind, Liang culled from Chinese art history, and found writings in the Six Dynasties which could represent the untrammelled spirit of Chinese art, and therefore meld his political stance with artistic aestheticism. For him, the calligraphy created

⁶⁷ Jin, 36-37.

⁶⁸ Jin, 36-37.

in the Tang Dynasty, albeit sublime and beautiful, originated from writings in the Six Dynasties. In addition, most of the writings in this period were created by anonymous calligraphers, thereby precluding any possibility for forgeries (as most of the forgeries tended to emulate the famous masterpieces). This anonymity is *ipso facto* an authentic representation of *zeitgeist*, artistic innovation, and calligraphic evolution. Moreover, most of the famous rubbings from the Tang steles were reprinted and recurred *ad infinitum*, so the original flavor of these rubbings was elusive. By contrast, the bulk of the steles from the Six Dynasties were unearthed during Liang's time, most of which were well preserved, and could therefore allow connoisseurs to get vivid impressions of the original writings.⁶⁹

One important detail to focus on is the content of this couplet, which was closely linked to Liang's understanding of Buddhism. According to the inscription written by Professor Zhou Cezong on the first scroll (Figure 3.4), Liang's mentor Kang passed away in March 1927; later in June, Wang Guowei (Liang's soul mate, 1877-1927) drowned himself in the Summer Palace. Liang was obviously traumatized by the succession of his friends' deaths; and he was admitted to the hospital at the end of that year (approximately when this couplet was created). He never recuperated and passed away a year later. Confronting the deaths, Liang's dolefulness is discernable in the content of this couplet: "Though the day and night alternate, the spring orchids and autumn chrysanthemums will express their elegance in perpetuity. However, our lives are just like the bright moon and the white dew, which will vanish in a trice." The lamentation and sorrow about the shortness of life was representational of the setbacks in his political career. After living through the *wuxu bianfa* (Hundred Days' Reform) and Xinhai Revolution, and after jousting with some of the most important political figures in the country, Liang was disillusioned

⁶⁹ Jin, 35.

about political movements.⁷⁰ In 1918, he decided to “forsake everything,” and “refuse to hear anything related to politics.”⁷¹ He “vomited blood for some days,” and then changed his interests to Buddhism and academic study.⁷² According to Tang Wenquan, Liang tried to seek the essence of Oriental and Occidental civilizations from Buddhist scriptures in order to “liberate his mind.”⁷³ During this exploration, he embraced the notion of nirvana and reincarnation. He believed death would not terminate one’s life; instead, the spirit of this life would still exist in the universe.⁷⁴ This existence indicated the eternality of life. Thus, though he regretted the shortness of his life, Buddhist doctrine promised him that his lifetime endeavors would be perpetuated. Similarly, though the content conceded the ephemerality of life, his artistic style, which was so self-possessed and sublime, acted as a self-proclamation of his imperishable achievements.

⁷⁰ Tang Wenquan 唐文权, *Tang Wenquan wenji* 唐文权文集 [The collected essays of Tang Wenquan] (Wuhan: Huazhong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2013), 380.

⁷¹ Tang, 380.

⁷² Tang, 380.

⁷³ Tang, 381.

⁷⁴ Tang, 381.



Figure 3.1 Liang Qichao, 1873-1929, *Rengong Liang's (Qichao Liang) calligraphic couplet*, cs000008, 1927, Paper, Two scrolls, 79.9 x 19 in. each, Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.

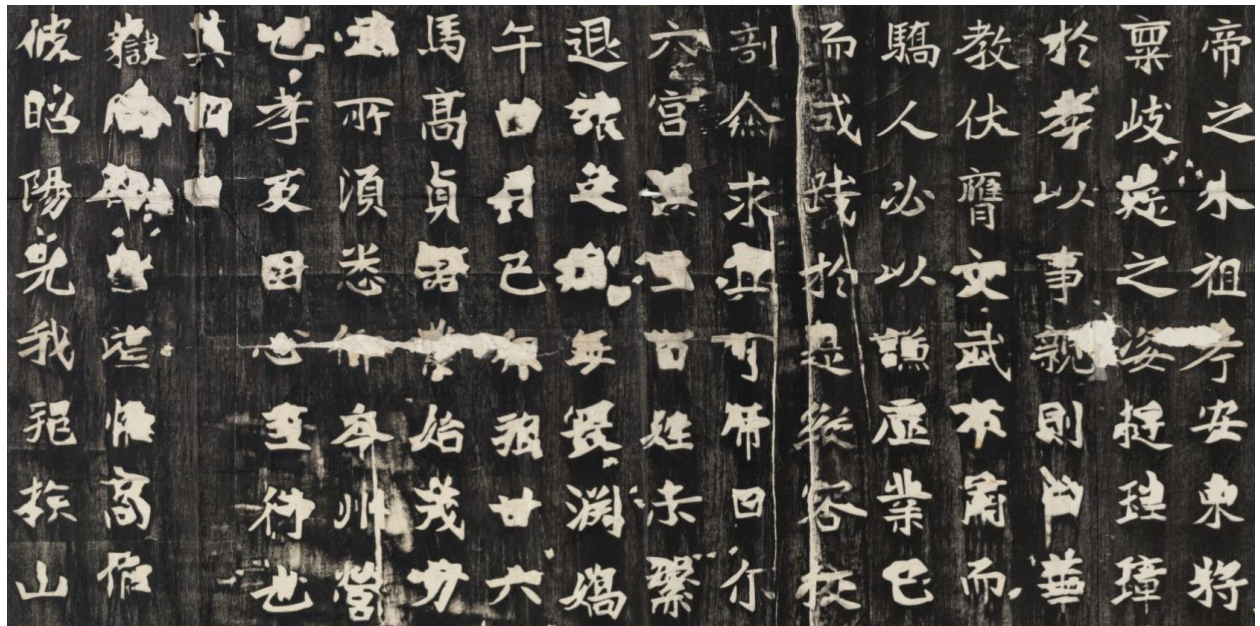


Figure 3.2 *Gao Zhen bei* ; *Yingzhou ci shi Gao Zhen bei* ; *Bei Wei Gao Zhen bei*, W294857_1, Northern Wei Dynasty, 523, rubbing, paper, ink, intaglio, 166 x 87 cm, Harvard University, Harvard College Library Harvard-Yenching Library.

青言雙法師者法門之
 領袖也勇操貞敏早悟
 三空之心長契神情先
 覺四忍之行松風明月
 未足比其清華仙露明
 珠詎能方其朗潤故以
 智通無累神測未形起
 六塵而迥出負千古而
 無對凝心內境悲正法
 之該遺極憲主門慨深
 久之訛謬思歎分條拈
 理廣彼前聞載傳續真
 嗣若後學是以翹心淨
 志注遊西域乘危遠遊
 杖策孤征積雪飛途
 關失地驚砂夕起空外
 迷天萬里山川撒煙霞
 而迹影百重寒暑躡霜
 兩而前蹤談重芳程求
 深於達周遊西宇十有
 七年宗應道都詢衆正
 教雙林以水味道滄風
 麻菴驚峯瞻奇仰異承
 至之於先聖受真教於上
 賢探賢妙門精窮與業一
 乘五律之道馳探於心四
 藏三篋之文波濟於口
 海爰自所歷之國攝持三
 藏要文凡六百五十七部
 詳布中夏宣揚厥業引惹
 聖於西極注法雨於東垂
 聖教歎而復全若生罪而
 遂福濕火宅之乾缺共拔
 迷途朗愛水之昏波同
 臻彼岸是知惡因業障善
 以緣昇之障之端惟人
 所託聖夫桂生焉嶺堂
 露方清法貝花蓮出深波
 飛塵不能行其葉

癸丑五月五日書於
 思和齋之
 任以自謙

Figure 3.3 Private Collection

按秋菊春蘭英華靡絕乃梁劉孝標答別後秣陵沼書中句此所春秋
語任公自甲子以迄勤於書法多習北刻楷體廿廿歲書集詞聯書始
原有為病卒六月五日國維句沈任公感痛逾恒此所似畧露情志隨

Figure 3.4 Zhou Cezong, 1916-2007, the colophon on Figure 3.1 (right scroll).

4. Yu Yue

As a poet, antiquarian, calligrapher, historian, and teacher, Yu Yue (1821-1907) embodied an approach to Chinese culture that was deeply rooted in antiquity. He was an outstanding scholar of the late Qing and was well known for his writings on ancient philosophy, ritual, and the Confucian classics.⁷⁵ He refused to join any narrow scholarly faction. Therefore, though he adopted the Old-Text classics as the core curriculum, he did not indiscriminately exclude the New-Text classics. He complimented New-Text scholar Kang Youwei when he saw Kang's *Confucius as a Reformer*. Moreover, he cultivated a catholic interest in studying *zhuzi* (pre-Qin philosophers). This interest was instrumental in the revival of the various schools of pre-Qin thought in the late Qing, which, in accordance with Liang Qichao, was the key to intellectual emancipation.⁷⁶

Similarly, by integrating Model-book and Stele School styles, Yu showed great passion for artistic eclecticism, thereby pushing Chinese art towards the track of modernization. Yu was first proficient in Stele School research. This accomplishment was recognized by the great connoisseurs of his time. Duanfang (1861-1911), the most influential collector of Chinese art in the late Qing, once asked him to write comments and colophons on *Stele on Heavenly Augury*.⁷⁷ In his calligraphy, he eschewed clear-cut brushwork in favor of an insistent series of short strokes, either straight or slightly curved, leading to rough contours and equally rough textures.

⁷⁵ *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, ed. Arthur W. Hummel (Taipei: Ch'eng-Wen Publishing Company, 1967), 944.

⁷⁶ Young-tsu Wong, *Search for Modern Nationalism: Zhang Binglin and revolutionary China, 1869-1936* (Hong Kong; New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 6-7.

⁷⁷ Yu Yue, *Chunzaitang chidu*, 88.

Different from other stele calligraphers, who favored forceful brushwork by pressing the writing brush to the bottom or cutting the tip of the brush, Yu only used the tip of the brush in his writings, which is the typical practice of Model-book School. Therefore, it is clear that he was influenced by the Model-book School. In Figure 4.2, he follows Yan Zhenqing's typical Model-book style (see above, in Tiebao's entry) in the semi-cursive writing, while exhibiting sublimity and also showing the dexterity. Therefore, it is axiomatic that Yu intermingled Model-book and Stele School in his own writing.

It seems that naturalness and non-individuality are the biggest characteristics of his writings. As a protégé of Zeng Guofan (1811-1872), he knew Zeng had great admiration for He Shaoji (1799-1873)'s calligraphy (Figure 4.3), which was well known for artistic individuality. He Shaoji's calligraphic style was connected to his *huiwan* writing technique. To adopt *huiwan*, the artist's wrist should turn awkwardly inward to grasp the brush (like giving a thumbs-up pose), a posture that He likened to that of an archer shooting. *Huiwan* restricted brush movement yet produced controlled, tensely powerful strokes that appeared to be engraved in stone. The practice of this technique was laborious. According to He, whenever he copied ancient inscriptions, "the energy travels through my body to [my fingers]." "While I am not yet half finished, my clothes are soaking wet with sweat!"⁷⁸ For Yu, He's practice conveyed a strong sense of artificiality and smacked of mannerism. Also, Yu had seen Kang Youwei's expressive calligraphy; and he was well aware of his student Wu Changshuo (1844-1927, Figure 4.4)'s ingenuity in combining seal and cursive writings into a unique personal style. However, Yu was not swayed by their strong sense of individuality. What he pursued was a pure naturalness and plainness; this is why he uttered his opprobrium to his student Zhang Binglin (1869-1936, Figure

⁷⁸ Harrist & Fong, *The Embodied Image*, 370.

4.5) when he knew the latter was engaging in the dissemination of anti-government rhetoric and a plot to overthrow the government. For him, politics, calligraphy, and academic studies should all be based on conventional practice. Rebellion, individualism, and iconoclasm were alien to him.

In this sense, we might categorize Yu as a conservative scholar. Zheng Xiaoxu once criticized him for being a pedantic scholar who was behind the times, and for his hostility towards Westernization and the reform movement.⁷⁹ Indeed, Yu prided himself on his Confucian orthodoxy and made no compromises with Westernization. In his letter to Li Hongzhang (1823-1901, Figure 5.5), written during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, he attributed the origin of this peasant uprising to the preaching of Western missionaries in China.⁸⁰ The solution to this uprising, of course, was to “prevent any missionary work, repatriate missionaries, and demolish all churches.” He proposed even more radical ideas to Li, suggesting he outlaw any civilian contact with foreigners (civilians in treaty ports were the only exception).⁸¹ Further, in one of his poems, he viewed the ideas proposed by reformers as merely “presumptuous heresy,” and he feared that “the Way might expire.”⁸² In his other letter to Weng Tonghe, the leading advocate of the reform, he indicated the difficulty in implementing the reform and self-strengthening movements; and he deemed practicing Westernization in China as “whimsical.”⁸³ He tended to

⁷⁹ Aymeric Xu, “Neither Traitor nor Nationalist – Zheng Xiaoxu’s Intellectual Trajectory,” *GLOBAL INTELLECTUAL HISTORY* 7, no. 5 (2022): 913.

⁸⁰ Yu Yue, *Chunzaitang chidu*, 408.

⁸¹ Yu, 408.

⁸² Yu Yue, *Chunzaitang chidu*, 925.

⁸³ Yu Yue, *Chunzaitang chidu*, 817.

justify the whole existing order by praising the monarchy, the rule of the literati-elite, and the civil service examination system, which, in his own words, “surpass Tang and Song Dynasties (these two dynasties have been regarded as the pinnacle of Chinese ancient society).”⁸⁴ In these letters, Yu rallied to the defense of Chinese traditions and Confucianism, claiming that the traditional teachings of China were superior to those of the West, and sanctifying the status quo.

Yu’s conservatism was actually reflected in his artworks in Figure 4.2. Though it captured Yan’s spirit very well, it lacked Yan’s rich variations in the dimension, balance, speed, and weight of the characters (Figure 4.6), Yu’s writing seemed to follow a schema of equal space, bearing resemblance to the Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799)’s writing, which was often criticized for lack of originality and variation (Figure 4.7).

Yu was also a renowned eremite. *Quyuan jushi*, “the recluse of *Quyuan* Garden” was his pseudonym; *Youtai xianguan*, “a widower and quasi hermit’s residence” was the name of his studio. There is a pond in *Quyuan* garden; and there is a boat named *Xiaofumei* in the pond. In the preface of his *Xiaofumei xianhua* (Idle talk on the plum raft), he said “In my *Quyuan*, there is *Quchi*, with a small plum raft, only large enough to fit two people sitting knee to knee. On summer days, my wife and I would sit there. So I have recorded the items of our talk and made this volume [for publication].” Yu’s choice to be a recluse was significant during an era of transformation and modernization, and indicative of the tenacity of the Chinese literati.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Yu, 817.

⁸⁵ Rania Huntington, “Memory, Mourning, and Genre in the Works of Yu Yue,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 67, no. 2 (December 2007), 265-266.

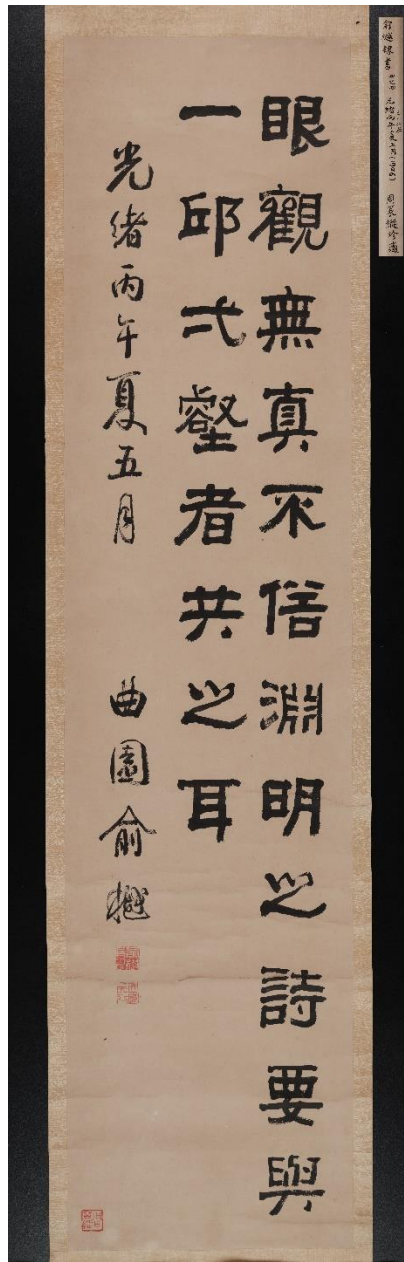


Figure 4.1 Yu Yue, 1821-1907, *Yue Yu's clerical writings*, cs000019, The mid-Qing Dynasty, Paper, 92.8 x 16 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.

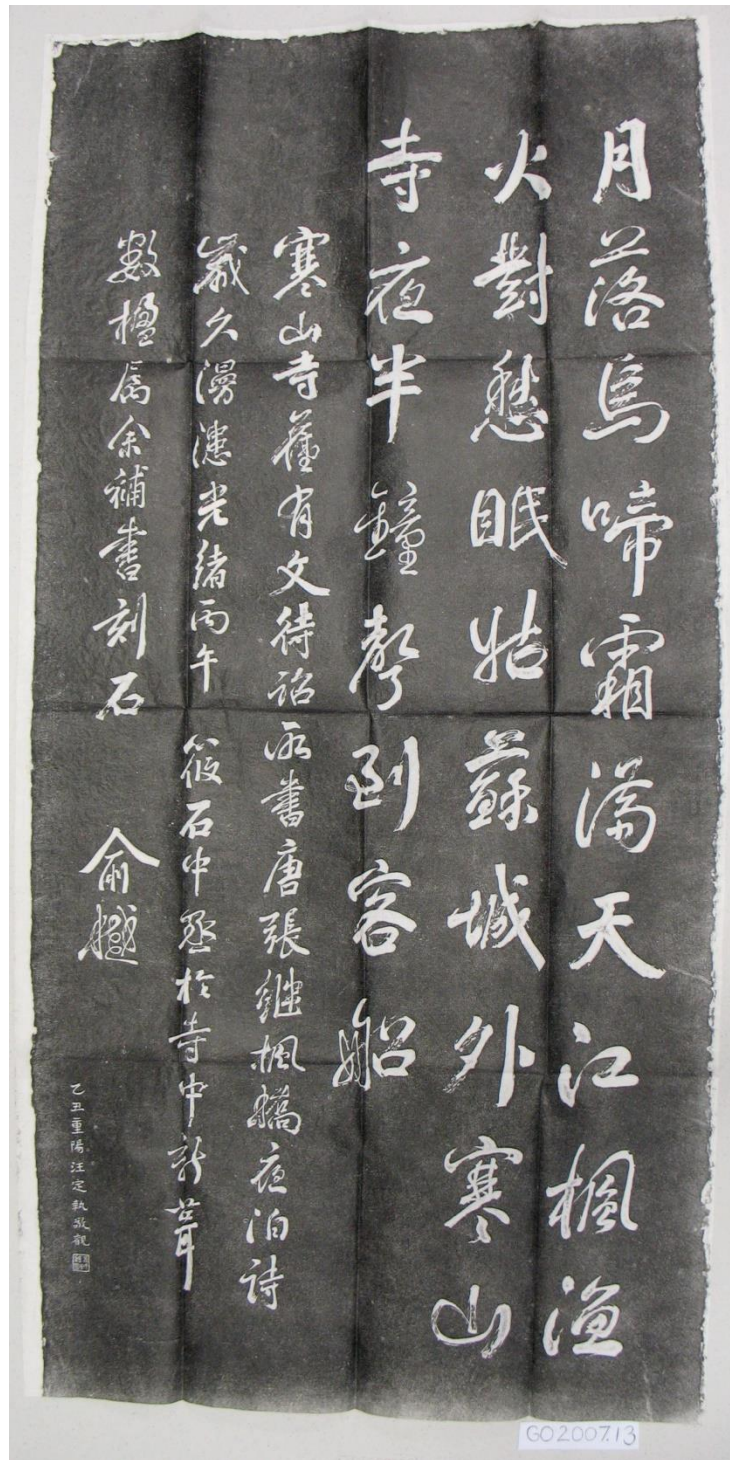


Figure 4.2 Yu Yue, 1821-1907, *Rubbing from "The Forest of Steles"*, of a text by Yu Yue, 2007/2.7, 1906, Rubbing, ink on paper, 52 5/16 in. x 26 5/16 in. (132.8 cm x 66.8 cm), University of Michigan Museum of Art, Gift of Laurence and Nancy Goldstein.

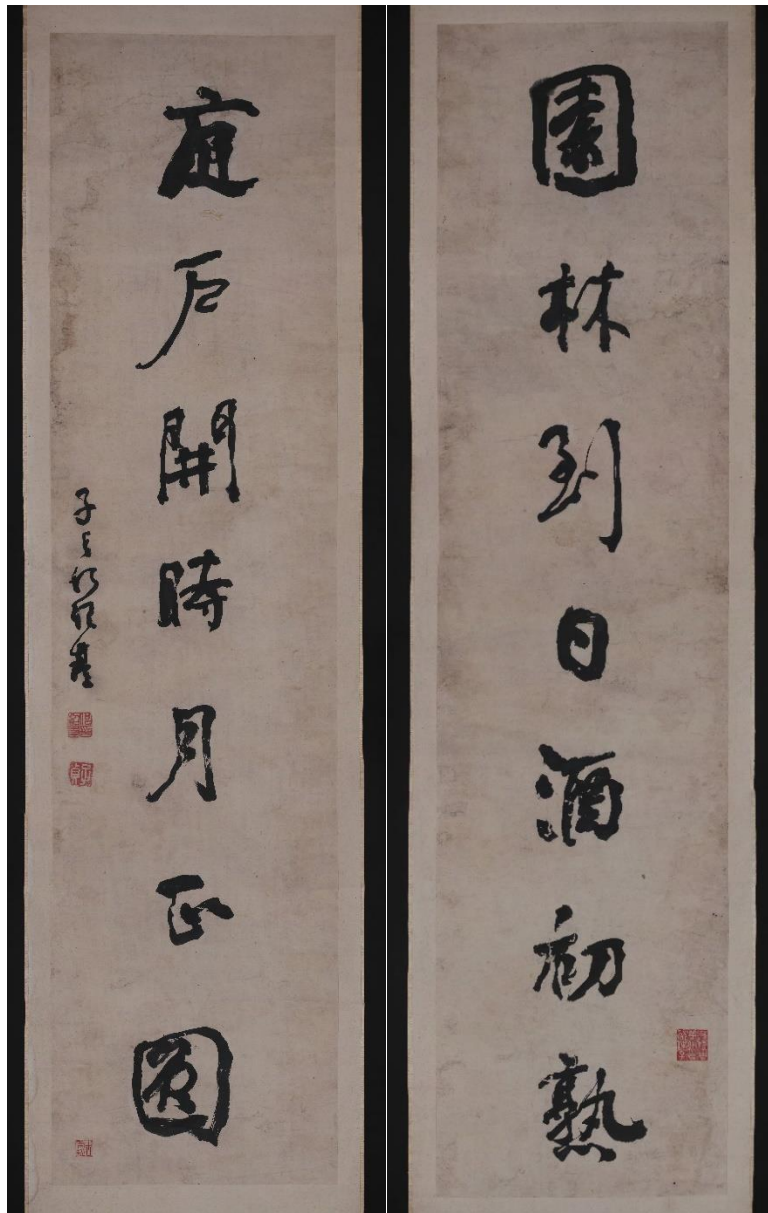


Figure 4.3 He Shaoji, 1799-1873, *Shaoji He's running script couplet*, cs000061, The late-Qing Dynasty, Paper, Two scrolls, 13 x 67 in. each, Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.

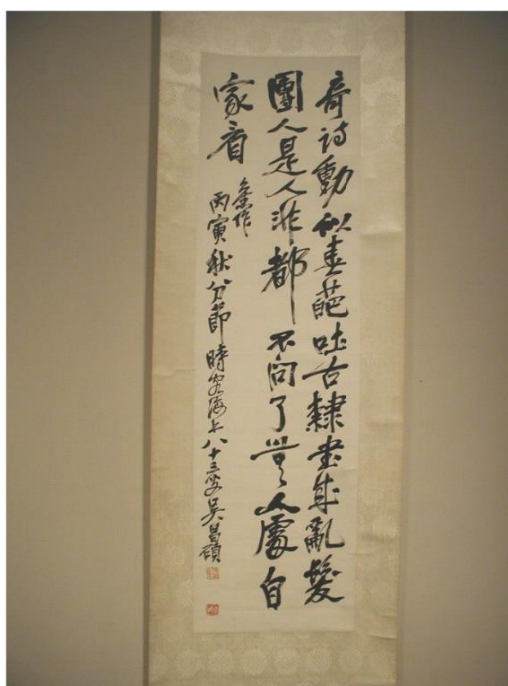


Figure 4.4 Wu Changshuo, 1844-1927, *Calligraphy in Running script (Xing shu)*, 2001.140.22, 1926, Hanging scroll, ink on paper, without mounting: 42 x 11 3/4 in. (106.7 x 29.8 cm), with rollers: 21 7/16 in. (54.5 cm), with mounting: 18 1/8 in. (46 cm), Yale University Art Gallery, The Clyde and Helen Wu Collection of Chinese Painting, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Clyde Wu.

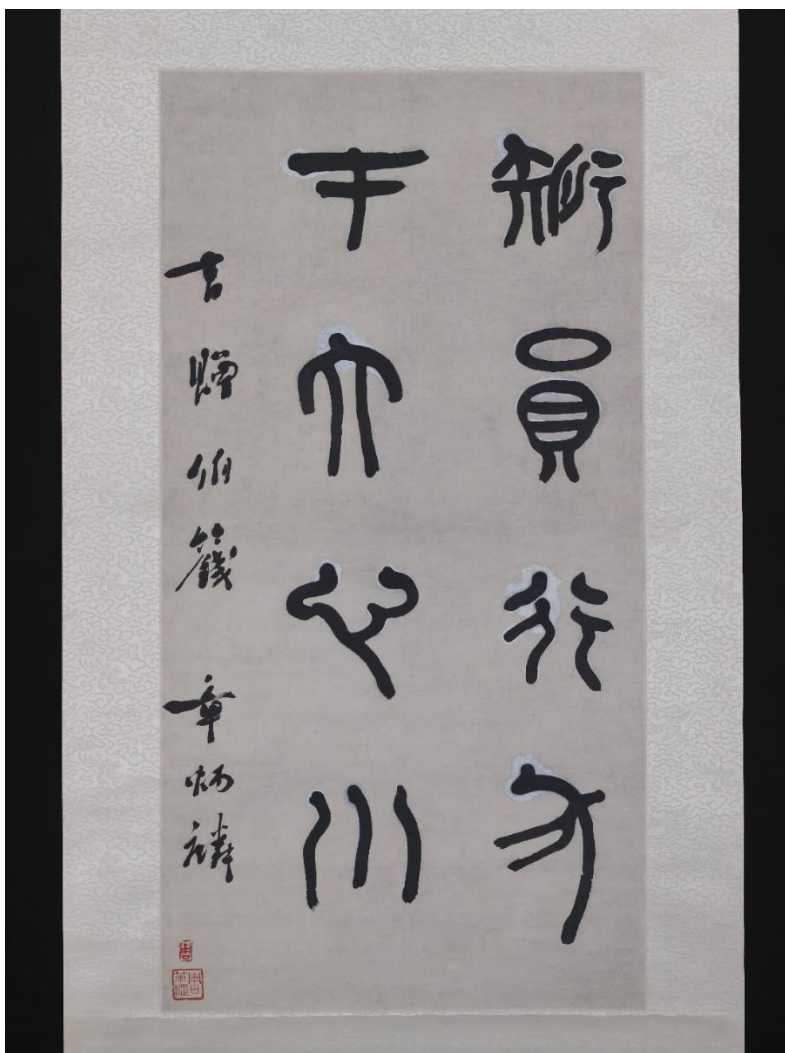


Figure 4.5 Zhang Binglin, 1868-1936, *Taiyan Zhang's seal-script calligraphic hanging scroll*, cs000062, The Late-Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China, Paper, 20.5 x 71.8 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.

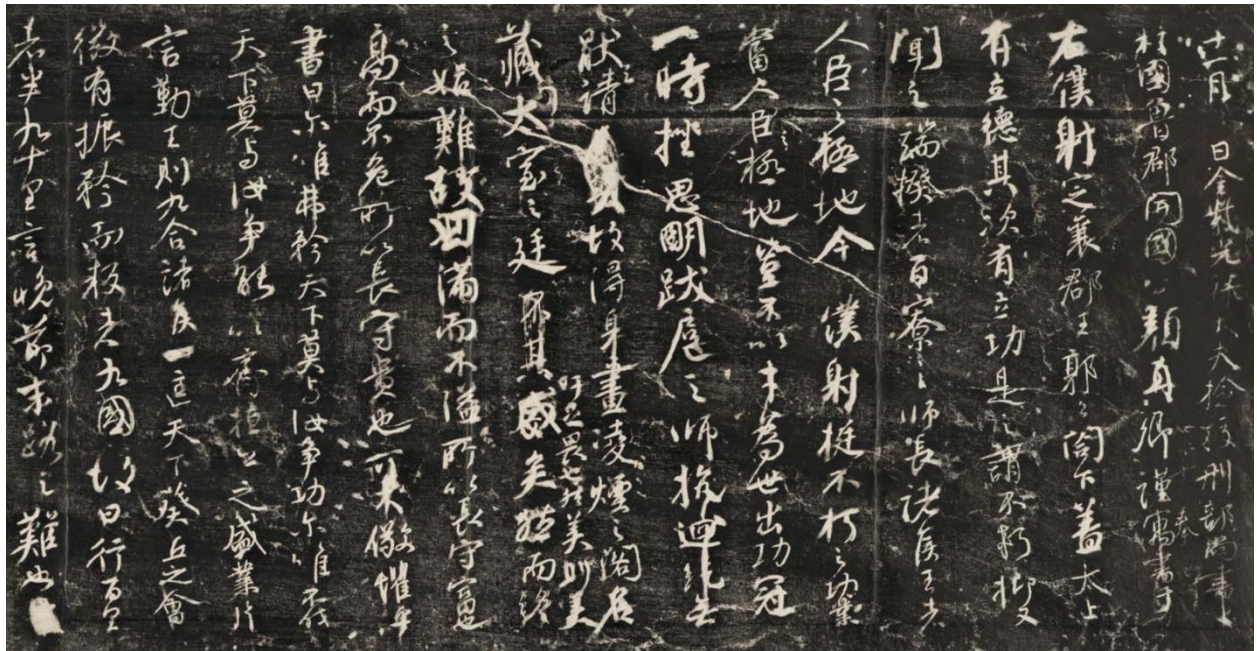


Figure 4.6 Yan Zhenqing, 709-785, *Zheng zuo wei tie*; *Zheng zuo wei gao*; *Lun zuo tie*; *Yu Guo Puye shu*; *Yu Guo Yinbi shu*, W277208_1, 764, rubbing, ink, paper, intaglio, 71 x 108 cm, Harvard University, Fine Arts Library.

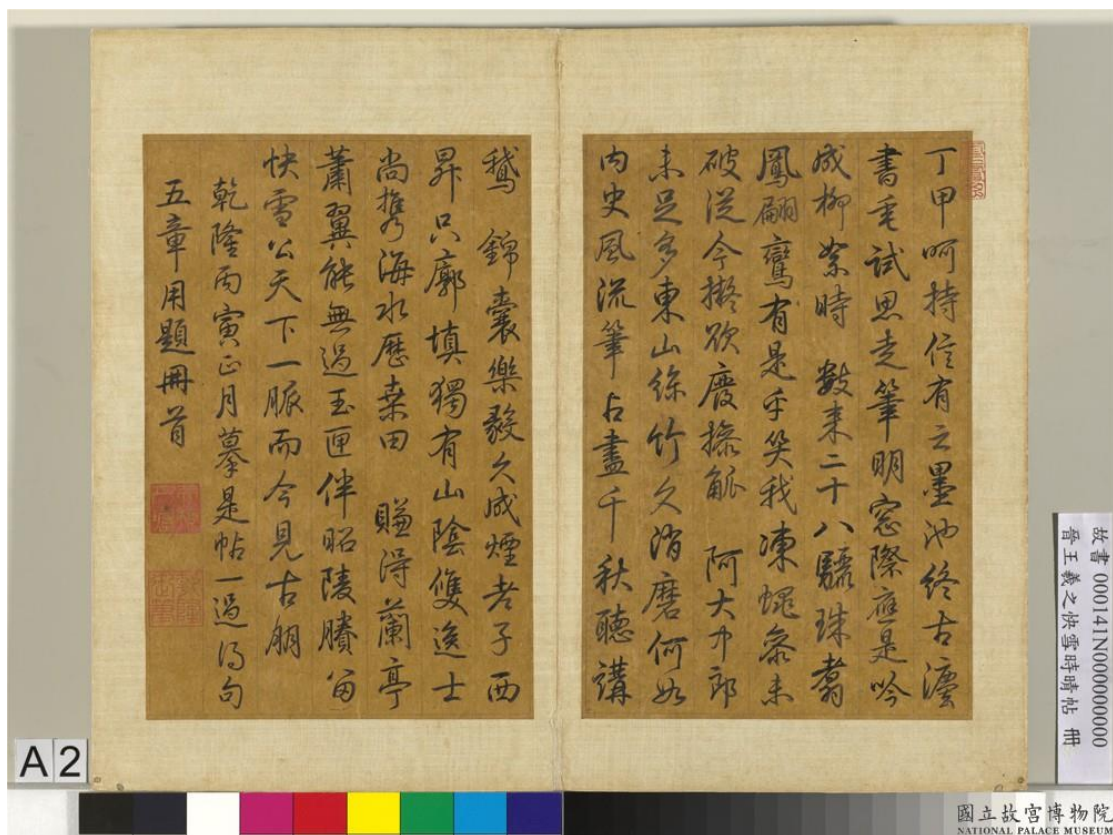


Figure 4.7 Aixinjueluo Hongli (Emperor Qianlong), 1711-1799, Wang Xizhi of Jin Dynasty, Qing Dynasty, *Qianlong Painting Landscape*, Cultural relics unified number: Old Book 000141N0000000000; Work number: Old Book 00014100002, 1746, Paper, 22.1 x 34.3 cm, National Palace Museum.

5. Yang Shoujing

As one of the most famous bibliophiles in Chinese history, Yang Shoujing (1839-1915)'s collection bears witness to the destiny and circulation of Chinese rare and antiquarian books. In 1880, he was appointed as a diplomatic attaché to Japan. He was amazed to find a number of Chinese ancient books, which had been lost at home, that were still preserved in Japanese libraries. Through acquisition and exchange, he shipped back a large collection of Chinese rare books (more than 30,000 fascicles in his first year alone⁸⁶), reclaiming Chinese intellectual heritage and asserting its superiority against encroachment and appropriation of the emergent Japanese national rhetoric. Compared to ancient bibliophiles, he was not a rich person, so he had to “scrimp and save,” selling his calligraphy to support both his acquisitions and his family.⁸⁷

Apart from being an enthusiastic book collector, Yang was known for his scholarly achievements in geography, epigraphy, and bibliographical studies.⁸⁸ During his time, the study of geography was appealing to Chinese scholars, who hoped to establish relevance in a rapidly changing world. According to Fa-ti Fan, the urge to define the space of the nation was of paramount importance at a time that witnessed the disintegration of the Qing Empire and growing regionalism.⁸⁹ Yang's study of geography, in Luo Zhenyu's opinion, was equivalent to

⁸⁶ Shana J. Brown, “Modern Antiquarianism and Sino-Japanese Rivalry: Yang Shoujing in Meiji Japan,” in *The Role of Japan in Modern Chinese Art*, ed. Joshua A. Fogel (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2013), 71.

⁸⁷ Cuncui shuju bianji 存萃学社編集, *Yang Shoujing yanjiu huibian* 杨守敬研究汇编 [The collected essays related to Yang Shoujing's research] (Hong Kong: chongwen shuju, 1974), 81.

⁸⁸ Song Zhaolin 宋兆霖, *Lin su guan hai: yuan cang Yang Shoujing tu shu te zhan* 邻苏观海: 院藏杨守敬图书特展 [The bibliophile Yang Shoujing and his guanhaitang library of rare editions and antiquarian books] (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 2014), 4-5.

⁸⁹ Fa-ti Fan, “Nature and Nation in Chinese Political Thought: The National Essence Circle in Early-Twentieth-Century China,” in *The Moral Authority of Nature*, ed. Lorraine Daston &

Wang Niansun (1744-1832), Duan Yucai (1735-1815)'s philology and hermeneutics, and Li Shanlan (1810-1882)'s mathematics, which comprised “the three unsurpassed studies of the dynasty.”⁹⁰

But Yang was more famous among his Japanese contemporaries for his expertise in Chinese Stele School and *jinshi* study. Yang was dubbed “the founding father of modern Japanese calligraphy.” In 1870s, Yang brought thousands of ancient stele rubbings (especially those of the Northern dynasties) as well as his artistic concept to Japan, therefore facilitating Japanese calligraphical modernization. During his stay in Japan, he exchanged thoughts and knowledge on the art of stele and *jinshi* with artists like Miyajima Seiichiro (1838-1911), Kusabe Meikaku (1838-1922), Iwaya Shi (1834-1905), Matsuba Seeka (1823-1881), and had enormous impact on the development of calligraphy of the Meiji era.⁹¹ His arrival sparked the Japanese to understand the original simplicity and virile strength of the steles of the Six dynasties, which became the *deus ex machina* to revolutionize Japanese calligraphy.⁹² When China and Japan were drawn into a new wave of modern technologies, social values, and Western concepts, such antiquarian concepts had distinct political ramifications. For these artists, studying the past was an effective way to endorse modern reform. In addition, the possession, study and inheritance of

Fernando Vidal (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 427.

⁹⁰ Cuncui shuju bianji, *Yang Shoujing yanjiu huibian*, 44

⁹¹ Song, *Lin su guan hai*, 15.

⁹² Liu Zhengcheng & Chen Chuanxi 刘正成 & 陈传席, *Zhongguo shufa quanji*. 73. *Qingdai bian. Yang Xian Zhang Yuzhao Xu Sangeng Yang Shoujing juan* 中国书法全集. 73. 清代编. 杨岷张裕钊徐三庚杨守敬卷 [The collected works of Chinese calligraphy, volume 73, Qing Dynasty, Yang Xian, Zhang Yuzhao, Xu Sangeng, and Yang Shoujing] (Beijing: rongbaozhai chubanshe, 2012), 59.

ancient artworks offered both sides an advantage in proclaiming cultural prominence. Ironically, according to Shana Brown, this stele and *jinshi* passion, which originated with Chinese antiquarians, ultimately gave their Japanese contemporaries greater opportunities to assert cultural dominance over the Asian continent and influence the discourse of modern art history.⁹³

By the same token, Yang's expertise was widely recognized by his Chinese friends. Duanfang esteemed him as a mentor, and once invited him to authenticate *jinshi* collections and write hundreds of comments on the rubbing collections.⁹⁴ Immediately after the outbreak of the Wuchang Uprising in October 1911, Li Yuanhong (1864-1928), who was the leader of the New Army and the military governor, worried that the mutiny and social disorder might pose a threat to Yang's collections of rare books and *jinshi*. Therefore, he put the following notice as a governmental protection in front of his residence:

Any civilized countries in the world would cherish and protect their classics, paintings, and publications as the great honor to the country. Our gentry-scholar Yang Shoujing had collected more than tens of thousands of books. All our compatriots should strive hard to protect [them]. Anyone who dares to vandalize or pilfer his collection, as soon as it was validated, will be penalized. Gentry Yang is an erudite scholar. All compatriots should revere him, so [let's work together] to preserve the ancient books and esteem the indigenous talent.⁹⁵

Educated by the traditional civil examination, Yang was well versed in Model-book School calligraphy (Figure 5.1), especially Yan Zhenqing's sublime and strong style (Figure 2.2). In addition, he sought a style of brushwork integrating both angular and rounded strokes, beautiful and rich in meaning, with universal appeal. This "untamed aura" was within Mi Fu's oeuvre (Figure 2.6): some characters would tilt toward left and right, creating an unbalanced

⁹³ Brown, "Modern Antiquarianism and Sino-Japanese Rivalry," 71-72.

⁹⁴ Cuncui shuju bianji, *Yang Shoujing yanjiu huibian*, 71, 73, 85.

⁹⁵ Cuncui shuju bianji, 51-52.

shifting and angular visual effect of the composition, yet he maintained a balanced unity in the entire work. However, compared to Mi's writing, Yang's strokes are thicker, rounder, and much more robust. This quality showed his indebtedness to the stele style. Most notably, the unbalanced tilt that existed in some of his characters might have been inspired by North Wei (386-535)'s stele *Shi men ming* ("Stele recording recounting Baoxie Plank Road and re-opened Shimen," Figure 5.2), which was acclaimed for its precarious and spontaneous composition. For instance, the first and third characters on Yang's right scroll "飛" and "何" are suggestive of *Shi men ming*'s "崩" and "戴," showing a strong tilting and suspenseful situation between different elements within a character (Figure 5.3).

His writing is exemplified by the Chinese couplet. Originally the couplet was commonly used as an apotropaic token and commemorative device in ancient China on either side of doorways, shrines, and altars. The crucial characteristic of a couplet is the symmetrical balance of characters, such as the uniformity of number and the correspondence of syntax. The propensity for uniform numbers can be best illustrated in this Yang couplet, as each of the two scrolls (read from top to bottom, right to left) has five characters. The preference for the correspondence of syntax can be seen in Li Wentian's couplet (Figure 5.4). The first four characters of the right (upper) scroll, *bi* (verdant) *zhang* (hill) *qian* (thousand) *ling* (ridge), share the same syntax as their counterparts on the left (lower) scroll, *qing* (clear) *liu* (rivulet) *wan* (ten thousand) *gu* (valley). Here, the characters of each scroll can be related horizontally by the rules of poetic prosody, grammatical syntax, morphological roots, phonetic criteria, or literary

content.⁹⁶ Therefore, either from the external visual symmetry or from the inherent syntactic correspondence, Chinese couplets always follow the convention of harmony.

As an artistic form, calligraphic couplets were very popular in society. Scholars, officials, emperors, literati, all used this artistic format as tests of wit and artistry. During a gathering, the host would first compose the content of the upper scroll, then the guests would be invited to compose the responding contents of the lower scroll. These guests needed to take time to consider the syntactic and semantic correspondence of their response. This process could be time-consuming and mentally taxing. This is why in the lower scroll of Li Hongzhang's couplet (Figure 5.5), he said "I do not feel I have little talent and less leaning until caught unprepared in writing responsory poems."

⁹⁶ Harrist & Fong, *The Embodied Image*, 366.

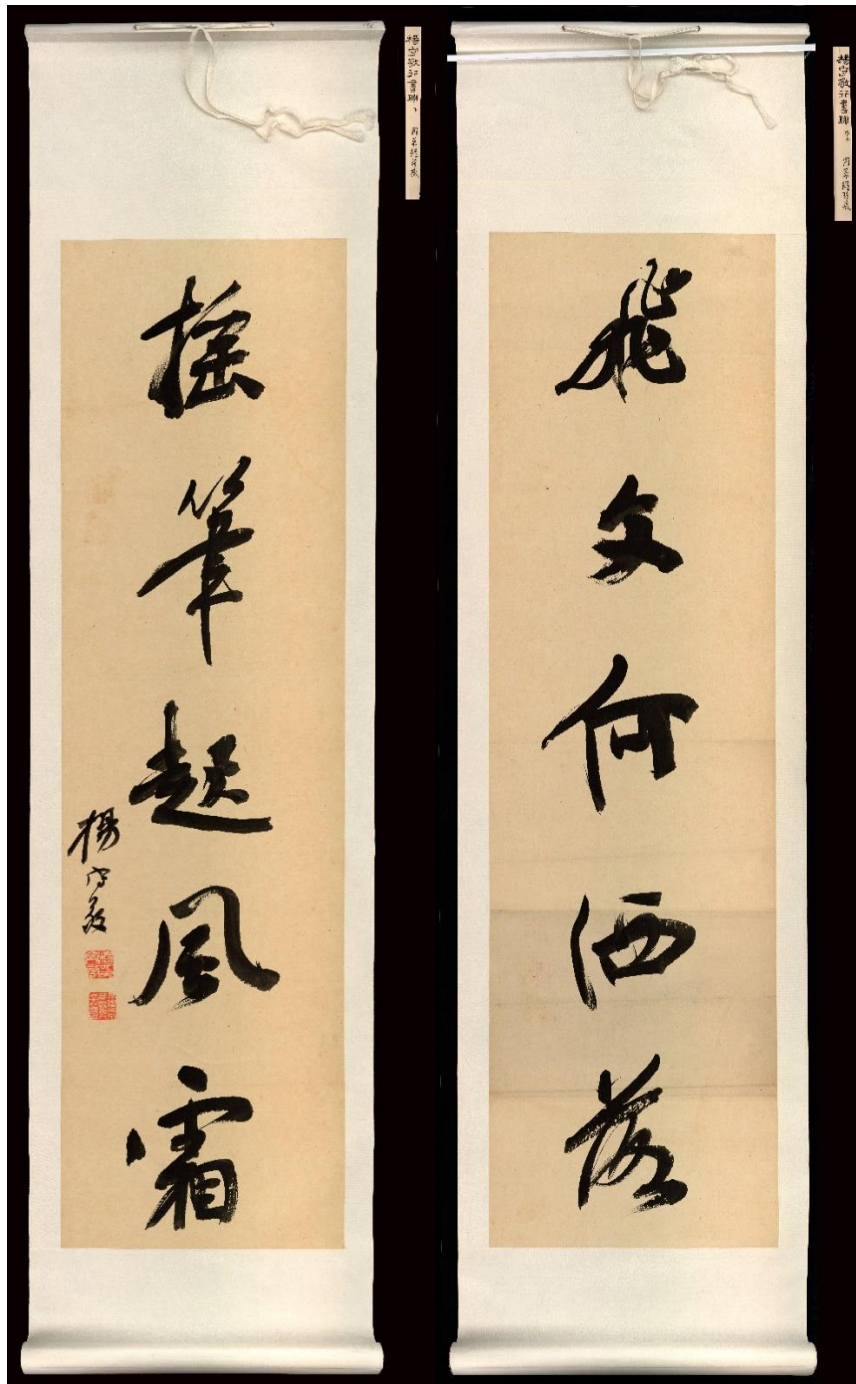


Figure 5.1 Yang Shoujing, 1839-1915, *Shoujing Yang's couplet in running script*, cs000003, The late-Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China, Paper, Two scrolls, 56.3 x 14.5 in. each, Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.

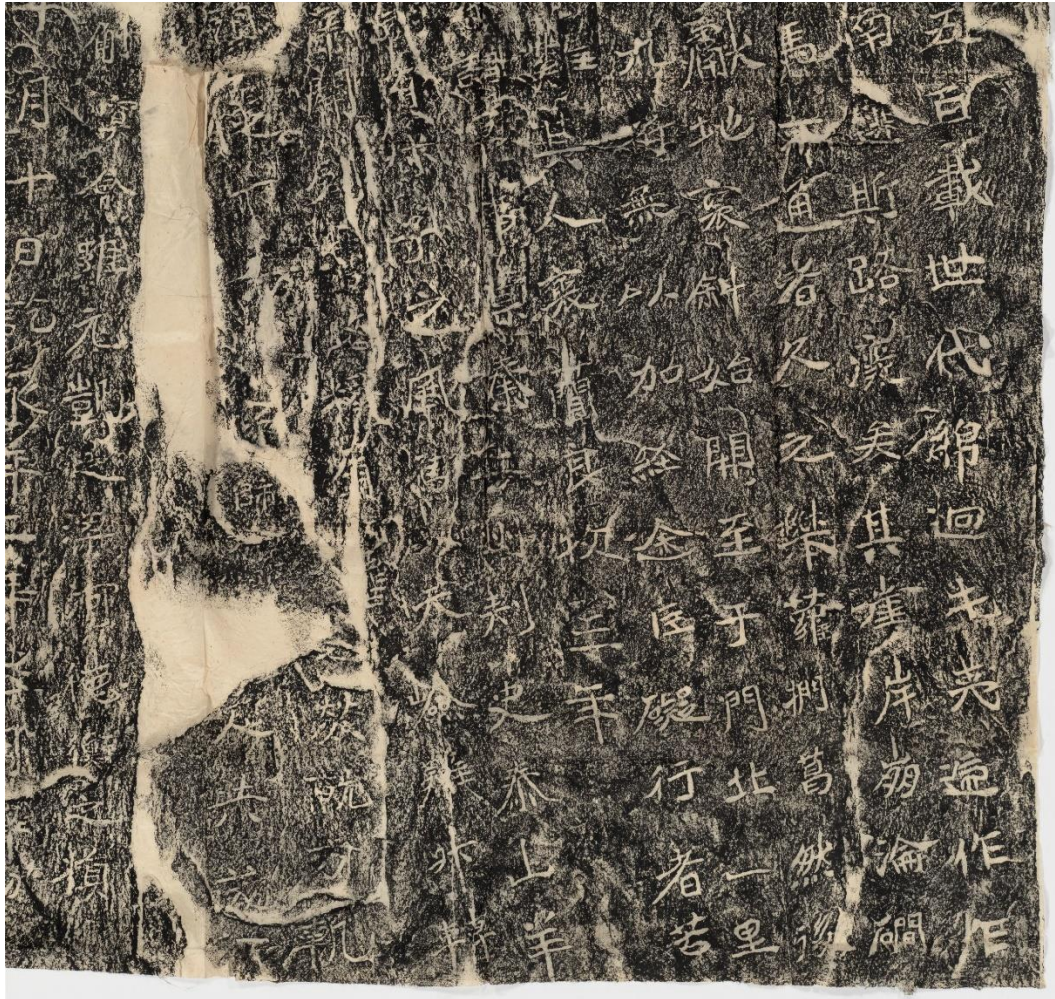


Figure 5.2 Wang Yuan, *Stele recording rerouting Baoxie Plank Road and re-opened Shimen; Shimen shi san pin; Shi men ming; B= bottom right, W278930_2, 509, rubbing, ink, paper, intaglio, 170 x 210 cm, Harvard University, Fine Arts Library.*

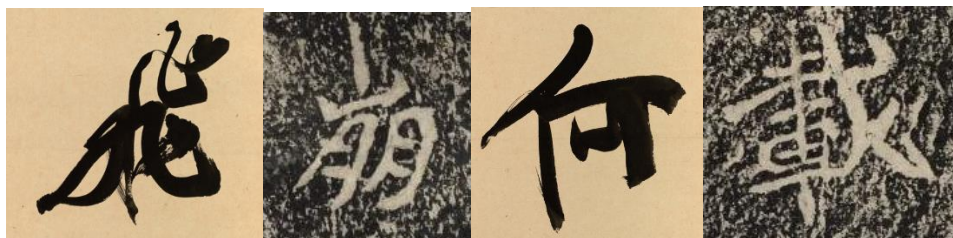


Figure 5.3 a: from Figure 5.1

Figure 5.3 b: from Figure 5.2

Figure 5.3 c: from Figure 5.1

Figure 5.3 d: from Figure 5.2



Figure 5.4 Li Wentian, 1834-1895, *Wentian Li's couplet*, cs000005, The late-Qing Dynasty, Paper, Two scrolls, 82.5 x 16 in. each, Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.

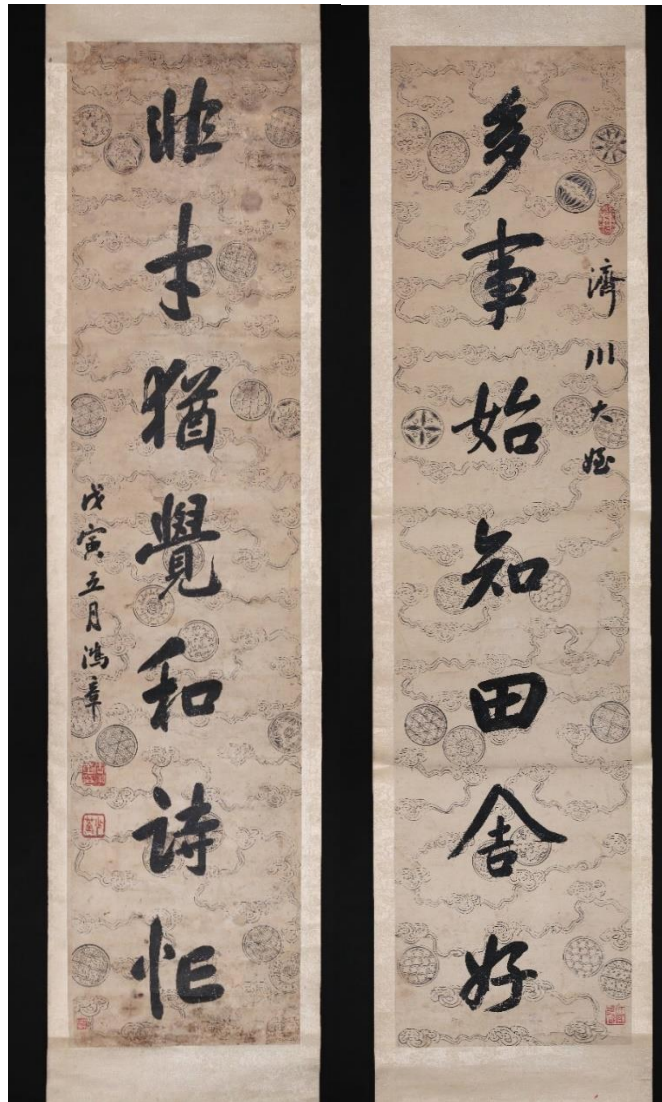


Figure 5.5 Li Hongzhang, 1823-1901, *Hefei Li's seven-character calligraphic couplet*, cs000048, The late-Qing Dynasty, Paper, 13.5 x 64 in. each, Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.

6. Luo Zhenyu

Even though he was a *yilao* (loyalist to Qing after the abdication of the last emperor Puyi) and died in Puyi's service in Manchukuo, Luo Zhenyu (1866-1940) was a distinguished scholar of Chinese archeology in the late Qing and early Republican period. He was a polymath specializing in ancient bronzes, stele, oracle bones, wooden slips, manuscripts, government documents, calligraphy and painting. The sinologist Wang Guiwei (1877-1927) once said “three hundred years of Qing philology began with Gu Yanwu (1613-1682), and culminated in Luo Zhenyu.”⁹⁷ Indeed, Luo was a very significant figure in promoting the transition from *jinshixue* to *guqiwuxue* study.

Jinshi study or Antiquarianism is a way to understand the past through a systematic investigation of material artifacts and one-of-a-kind inscriptions.⁹⁸ For millennia, Chinese rulers preserved important texts by recording them on durable surfaces like the interiors of bronze vessels, like *ding* (tripods). By the Warring States period (476-221 BC), these texts were collectively referred to as “bronze and stone” inscriptions, or *jinshi*.⁹⁹ Stele School also belongs to *jinshi* study.

According to Lu Dalin (1046-1092), studying ancient vessels will allow a scholarly understanding that “meets the intent of the ancients, perhaps reaching back to the original context of their creation, supplementing what is missing or lost in the classics and their

⁹⁷ Shana Brown, *Pastimes: From Art and Antiquarianism to Modern Chinese Historiography* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 103.

⁹⁸ Brown, 2.

⁹⁹ Brown, 2-3.

commentaries, and correcting the errors of various scholars.¹⁰⁰ In the late Qing, the burst of enthusiasm to *Jinshi* study was animatedly chronicled by the political reformer Kang Youwei (1858-1927).

Luo's writing (Figure 6.1) was based on his *jinshi* study of small seal script, which was invented and schematized by Li Si (284 BC-208 BC), the Grand Councilor of the First Emperor of Qin. After Qin united the country, the leaders discarded the various scripts and promoted small seal script as standardized writing. This writing style can still be seen on the numerous bronzes or stone inscriptions of the First Emperor's edict. For instance, Figure 6.2 was written by Li Si to record the First Emperor's tour to *Taishan* Mountain in 219 BC and to praise his achievement. Though this stele was scorched by fire in the Song Dynasty and only a few stone fragments with characters remain, it still had a powerful influence over future generations. Luo's seal script was greatly indebted to it, showing the similar symmetrical structure with smooth, even lines executed with balanced movement.

Traditional *jinshi* was mainly a study of ancient characters inscribed on bronzes and stones. Therefore, when they studied from ancient objects, most calligraphers did not consider the shape, texture and decorative details of the objects to be as important as the inscription. In other words, most *jinshi* calligraphers only saw what were originally three-dimensional bronzes and stele as two-dimensional rubbings incorporating characters and a few decorations.

It was Luo who postulated a new form of scholarship, *guqiwuxue*, which is a study of all sorts of ancient tools, vessels, weapons, instruments, and other miscellaneous items used in daily

¹⁰⁰ Lu Dalin 吕大临, *Kaogu tu (wai wu zhong) 考古图(外五种)* [The Picture of Archeology: five categories] (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2016), 2.

or ritual life with a three-dimensional perspective.¹⁰¹ Since then, *guqiwuxue* carved out its own niche in the academic world, mostly connected to archaeology and art history, with research methods and scholarly purpose. Based on his understanding of the antiquities, he attempted to correct the mistakes in ancient texts by the evidence he found in the antiquities themselves. This understanding inspired his colleague Wang Guowei (Figure 6.3) to propose his famous “method of double evidences” ---in addition to the time-honored, text-oriented tradition that shaped people’s understanding of Chinese history, antiquities from archaeological discoveries provided another avenue for investigating Chinese history. Therefore, Luo’s *guqiwuxue* highlighted the process of a scholarly trajectory from paleography to archaeology, thereby directing a new trend of cultural modernization.

Besides encouraging systematic studies of three-dimensional objects, Luo also made a substantial contribution to the preservation of rare research materials, and made them available to the public through publications. Luo’s collection and publication bestowed new meaning on several categories of antiquities that had traditionally been less appreciated by collectors, or even excluded from the lists of collectible and researchable objects.¹⁰² For example, starting in 1907 he began to collect funerary objects, which were deemed inauspicious in traditional Chinese mores.¹⁰³ His collection of materials was primarily for their historical and art-historical value,

¹⁰¹ Cheng-hua Wang, “Luo Zhenyu and the Formation of *Qiwu* and *Qiwuxue* in the First Decade of the Republican Era,” in *Lost Generation: Luo Zhenyu, Qing Loyalists and the Formation of Modern Chinese Culture*, ed. Yang Chia-Ling and Roderick Whitfield (London: Saffron Books, 2012), 47.

¹⁰² Wang, 42.

¹⁰³ Brown, 108.

regardless of societal taboos.¹⁰⁴ He also was praised for saving the Grand Secretariat archives from the pulp factory, and publishing its most valuable items.¹⁰⁵ Safeguarding history with his research, Luo could be seen as the guardian of Chinese cultural patrimony.

The DunHuang materials, discovered in 1907 in the Mogao cave temple by explorer Marc Aurel Stein (1862-1943), consisted of tens of thousands of Tang Dynasty books and manuscripts, including the earliest dated, printed book in the world. The French sinologist Paul Pelliot (1878-1945) also traveled to Dunhuang soon thereafter and shipped some five thousand items to Paris. These discoveries and purchases were unknown to many Chinese scholars. In 1912, Stein's friend Édouard Émmanuel Chavannes (1865-1918) sent a copy of slips to Luo. Luo immediately invited Wang Guowei to collate, edit, and interpret those slips, which became the famous monograph entitled *Liu Sha Zhui Jian* (The Lost Wooden Slips Excavated in the Flowing Sands) published in 1914.

Inspired by Luo's passion to research and publicize the antiquities, many of his contemporaries in publishing circles were active in the first decade of the twentieth century in collecting and republishing rare Chinese books. Zhang Yuanji (1867-1959, Figure 6.4) began to use modern printing technology as a tool to increase the copies of classical texts in circulation and hence preserve Chinese culture, while at the same time resisting the seemingly overwhelming wealth and appetite of foreign collectors.¹⁰⁶

In 1921, while Luo was “divorced from worldly affairs and returned to the woods” as a recluse, he created one hundred and fifty couplets by using the characters of the oracle bones and

¹⁰⁴ Brown, 108.

¹⁰⁵ Brown, 180.

¹⁰⁶ Brown, 207, 47-51.

published Collected couplets from *Yinxu* Characters.¹⁰⁷ The contents of these couplets were created by himself, conveying a great sense of leisure, auspice, joviality, and prosperity. For instance, “The moon looks beautiful in the sky; the wind blows from the water;” or “When the great rain falls, tens of thousands of trees are blessed; When the year reaches harvest, a hundred fruits are sweet.”¹⁰⁸ The couplet in our UWM Special Collections reads: “the eight sides (i.e., everywhere) have nothing bad to happen so I am happy to return home as an old man; the world now has many talents.” Luo’s devotion to scholastic reclusion was self-evident in this context.

This UWM couplet first appeared in the Collected couplets from *Yinxu* Characters (Figure 6.5), which was a much more careful study of the writing style about oracle bones: the strokes end with sharp points; and the width of the stroke and size of the character have undergone rich variations---this is a faithful representation of the knife cutting on the turtle scapula (Figure 6.6). It was highly possible that Luo copied this couplet from his own published book. However, in this couplet, Luo skipped the variations of the oracle bone writings, and chose a standardized formula which appeared in Li Si’s seal writing. This practice was diametrically opposed to Dong Zuobin (1895-1963)’s rendition of oracle bones. Dong was also an archeologist and leading expert of oracle bones study. The oracle bone writings under Dong’s hands were similar to the original writings on oracle bones, exhibiting the striking harshness and sharpness of the brushwork (Figure 6.7).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Luo Zhenyu 罗振玉, *Yinxu wenzi jilian* 殷墟文字集联 [Collected couplets from *Yinxu* Characters] (unknown publishers and years), 2.

¹⁰⁸ Luo, 21 & 17.

¹⁰⁹ Luo, 16.

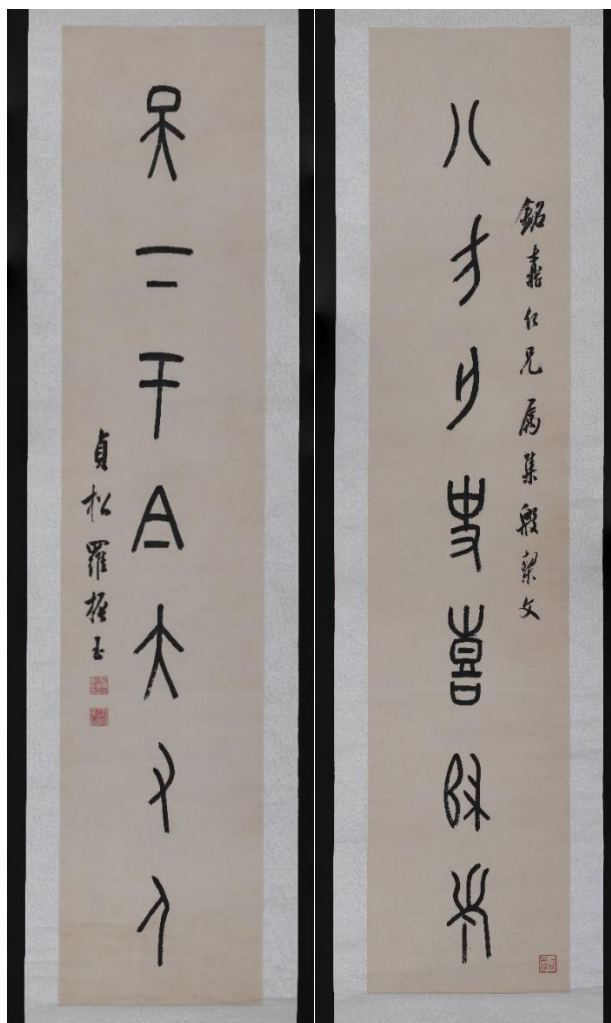


Figure 6.1 Luo Zhenyu, 1866-1940, *Zhenyu Luo's oracle-bone-script calligraphic couplet*, cs000 038, Two scrolls, 14.25 x 70 in. each, Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, C ezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.

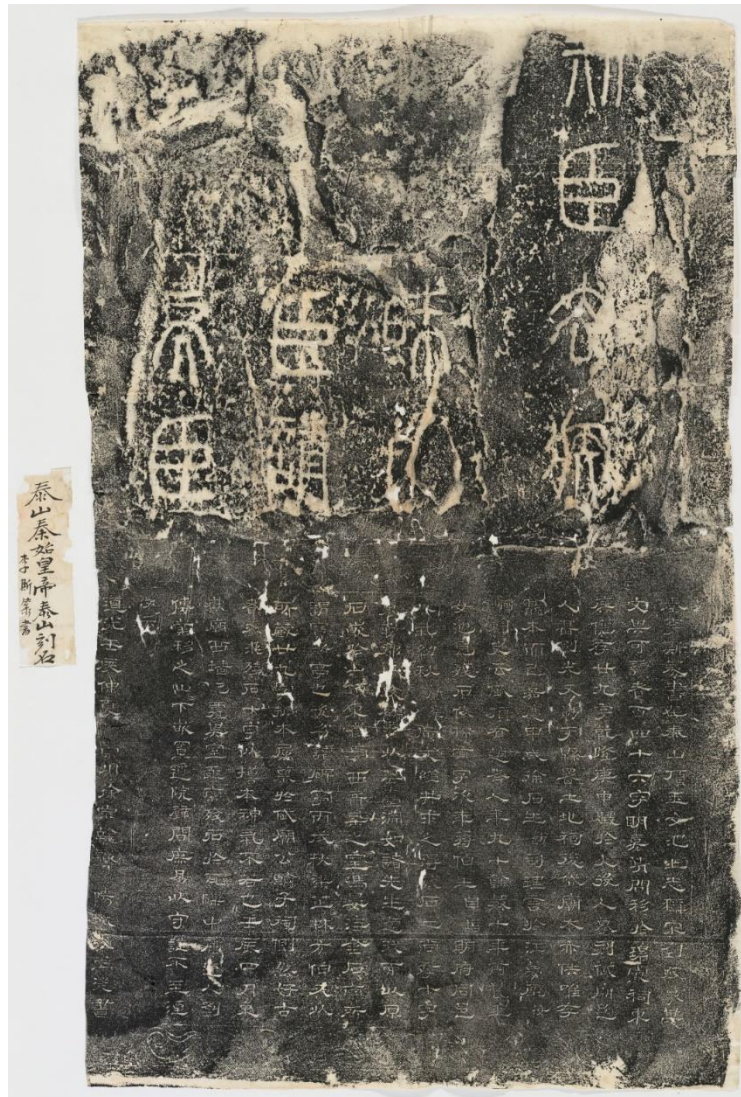


Figure 6.2 Li Si, 280? -208 BC, *Tai Shan ke shi*; *Tai Shan Ke shi can zi*, W293299_1, 219B.C., rubbing, ink, paper, intaglio, Harvard University, Harvard College Library Harvard-Yenching Library.



Figure 6.3 Wang Guowei, 1877-1927, *Calligraphy in running style*, side 2, 1980/1.226, 1912-1980, folding fan, ink on paper, 1 in x 13 1/8 in x 1 1/8 in (2.54 cm x 33.34 cm x 2.86 cm), University of Michigan Museum of Art, *Museum Purchase made possible by the Richard K. Beardsley Memorial Fund, supplemented by the Friends of the Museum of Art.*

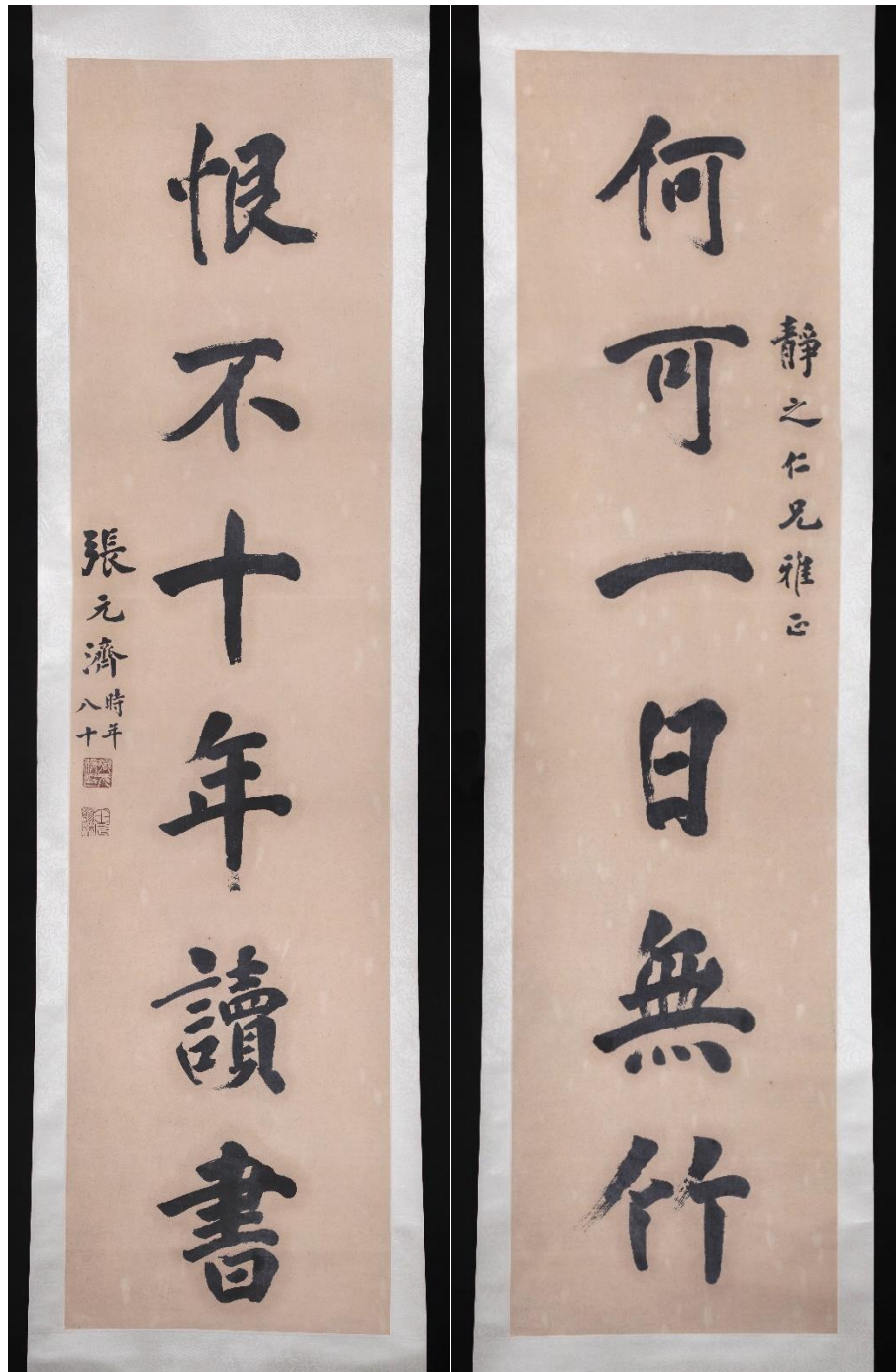


Figure 6.4 Zhang Yuanji, 1867-1959, *Yuangji (Jusheng) Zhang's six-character standard scripts couplet*, cs000049, Early Republic of China, Paper, Two scrolls, 18 x 74 in. each, Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.

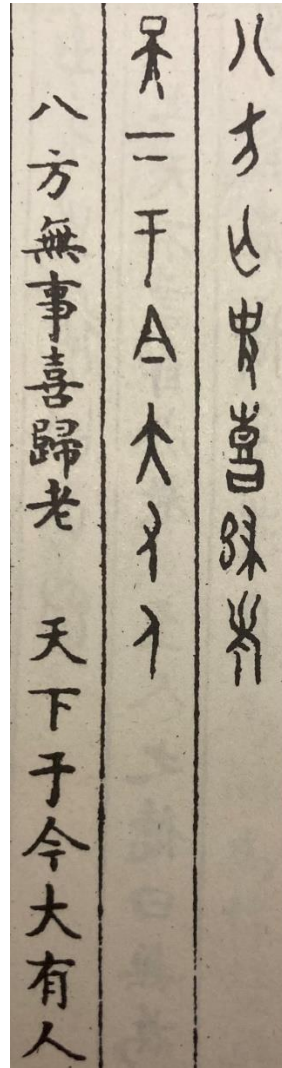


Figure 6.5 from Luo Zhenyu 罗振玉, *Yinxu wenzi jilian* 殷墟文字集联 [Collected couplets from *Yinxu Characters*] (unknown publishers and years), 17.

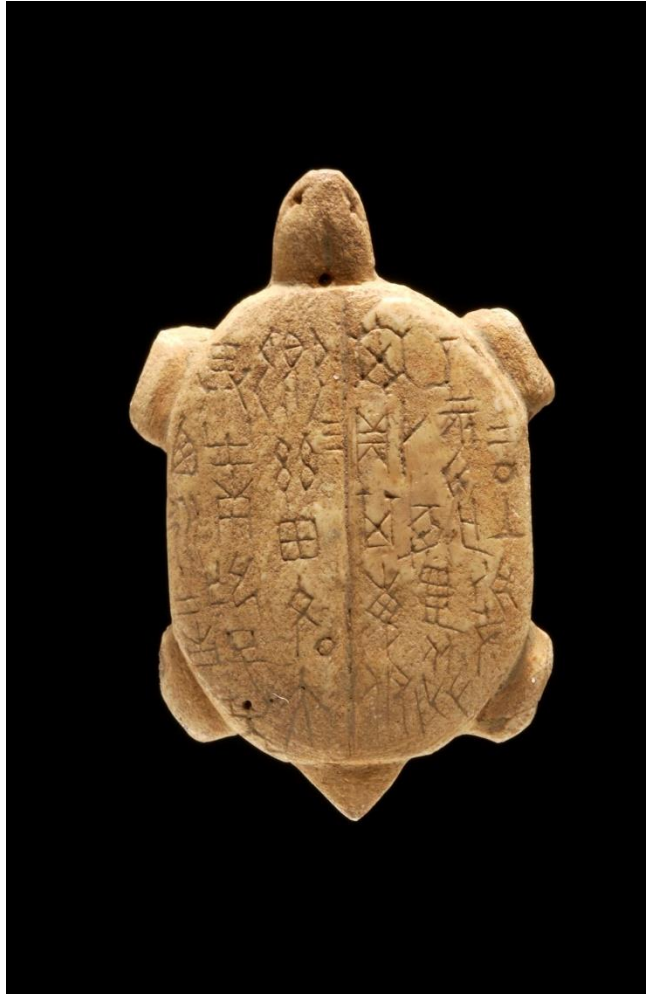


Figure 6.6 *Oracle Bone*, c. 1200-1050 BC, A.1909.384.1724, Turtle plastron, Ox bone, National Museums Scotland, Couling-Chalfant Collection.



Figure 6.7 Dong Zuobin, 1895-1963, *Calligraphy*, 2001/1.354.1 & 2001/1.354.2, 1946, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 5 ft. 2 1/2 in. x 9 3/16 in. (158.6 x 23.2 cm), University of Michigan Museum of Art, Gift of Marybelle B. Hanna.

7 Zheng Xiaoxu

Zheng is known for his collaboration with the Japanese in Manchukuo (1932-1945), where he served as the figurehead of its State Council and a key architect of its professed ruling ideology. His vision for an inclusive, developmental state in Manchuria marked the convergence of several prominent intellectual trends in early twentieth-century East Asia.¹¹⁰ According to Hua Rui, Zheng had developed a very sophisticated theory about China's modernism by combining radical late Qing constitutionalism, post-First World War pacifism, and a misinterpreted version of Italian fascism.¹¹¹

Despite his loyalty to the falling Qing dynasty and his allegiance to Japan in order to realize his political goal later in his career, he was one of the most active reformers pushing a constitutional monarchy in late Qing's history. He was also a prophet in promoting opportunities for international trade with other countries on an equal basis. After reading Adam Smith (1723-1790)'s and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903)'s theories of society, he became a "capitalist" ahead of his time, arguing that China should insist upon an open-door policy and transform itself into a world market. "Wealth and strength" stimulated his continual quest for commercialization and industrialization throughout of his political career.¹¹²

Zheng's ambition for political modernization influenced his artistic experimentation. In 1889, he studied with Weng Tonghe, who was Emperor Guanxu (1871-1908)'s teacher and one

¹¹⁰ Hua Rui, "Writings of Manchukuo's Prime Minister Zheng Xiaoxu," in *Translating the Occupation: The Japanese Invasion of China, 1931-45*, ed. Jonathan Henshaw, Craig A. Smith, and Norman Smith (Vancouver & Toronto: UBC Press, 2021), 50

¹¹¹ Rui, 50.

¹¹² Xu, "Neither Traitor nor Nationalist," 913-914.

of the most supportive figures in the Hundred Days' Reform.¹¹³ Influenced by Weng's artistic taste, Zheng regarded Yan Zhenqing's calligraphy as the model. In one of Zheng's early calligraphies (Figure 7.3), created probably around 1900, he exhibited a distinctive, rounded, and powerful stroke with a well-knit, balanced structure, which originated from Yan's style. In addition, he imitated Yan's round brush by adopting "hiding" and "protecting" movements of the brush tip (according to ancient calligraphic theorist Cai Yong, calligraphers should "hide the head" and "protect the tail" of the brushstroke¹¹⁴). However, because the turn and thrust is limited, the image is static and frontal, confined to a flat linear schema, and showing rigidity and lassitude.

Immediately after the Xinhai Revolution in 1911, Zheng spent time in Shanghai with companions such as Chen Sanli (1853-1937, Figure 7.4), Shen Zengzhi (1850-1922, see below, in Shen Zengzhi's entry), and Wu Changshuo (1844-1927, Figure 4.4).¹¹⁵ During this period, he maintained an eclectic interest in ancient calligraphic rubbings, such as those from stone inscriptions, epitaphs, Buddhist votive stelae, and cliff engravings created in the Han (202 BC-220 AD) and Northern Dynasties (386-581).¹¹⁶ The first of UWM Zheng's collection in Figure 7.1 is the epitome of his inclusive studies of the stelae. For instance, the longest horizontal stroke of "寺" (Figure 7.5 a) denotes a dramatic thinning-and-thickening brush movement, which is

¹¹³ *Jingxiandai shufa shi* 近现代书法史 [The modern Chinese calligraphic history] (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 2009), 213. For Weng's role and this downfall in the reform, see: Luke S. K. Kwong, *A Mosaic of the Hundred Days: Personalities, Politics, and Ideas of 1898* (Cambridge and London: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University), 160-165.

¹¹⁴ *Lidai shufa lunwen xuan* 历代书法论文选 [The essays of Chinese calligraphy in different dynasties] (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1981), 6.

¹¹⁵ *Jingxiandai shufa shi*, 214.

¹¹⁶ *Jingxiandai shufa shi*, 214.

akin to the brush style of the horizontal line in “下” (Figure 7.5 b) from *Stele on Ritual Implements in the Confucian Temple* (dated 156). According to Yang Shoujing (see above, in Yang Shoujing’s entry), this stele has an eccentric instability concealed in level-headed stability; and a strict denseness hidden in elegant sparseness.¹¹⁷ Zheng’s “寺” is the symbol of this contradictory yet complementary paradox. Similar traits can be found in its counterpart *Bai Ju Gu Ti Zi* created after 512 (Figure 7.6). By studying the stele which feature spontaneity and *elan*, Zheng’s previous flat schema has been transformed with some contrasting variations in a sense of two-dimensionality, bringing vitality to the work. Nevertheless, rigidity still permeates, and ruggedness is also his Achilles’s heel, indicating a smidgen of strenuousness, which is at variance with the Chinese artistic standard of naturalness.¹¹⁸

After *Liu Sha Zhui Jian* was published in 1914, Zheng became enchanted by the calligraphic value of these slips, contending that with the finding of these slips, the secrecy of calligraphy would be thoroughly revealed.¹¹⁹ Generally speaking, compared with standardized clerical writing (Figure 7.7), the characters on these slips were rendered with much more undulation and flexibility (Figure 7.8), sometimes disregarding axial balance and austere sublimity. By turning and flicking the brush in a silent pirouette on the paper, the slip writer constantly changed speed and direction, suggesting a strong foreshortening and movement in space. This untrammelled style significantly enlivens Zheng’s artistic idiom, which is shown in Zheng’s second collection in UMW (Figure 7.2). For instance, in character “書” (Figure 7.9 a),

¹¹⁷ Zhu Renfu 朱仁夫, *Zhongguo gudai shufa shi* 中国古代书法史 [The history of Chinese ancient calligraphy] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1997), 95.

¹¹⁸ Lin Yutang, *The Importance of Living* (New York: John Day, 1937), 376.

¹¹⁹ *Jingxiandai shufa shi*, 215.

the slanting angle and the flaring, wavelike motion of the second horizontal stroke bears uncanny resemblance to those of the first horizontal stroke in “薄” in *Liu Sha Zhui Jian* (Figure 7.9 b).

The brush is fully articulated in a vivacious spontaneity, carrying a natural three-dimensionality.

In these three works, Zheng shows the audience his experimentation with mimetic representation. In the first phrase (Figure 7.3), his imitation of Yan was restricted by insipid flatness and slight flexure. After 1911, his exploration of ancient stele rubbings (Figure 7.1) gave his work a contrasting vitality, though the rigidity still lingered. For the final phrase (Figure 7.2), the pristine style of the wooden slips provided him with a fresh impetus and awakened his vivacity, creating an organic relationship with the image. *Liu Sha Zhui Jian* was a very important catalyst, pushing his experimentation to a successful end.

E. H. Gombrich once made a similar-style comparison with a group of ancient Greek statues. Naming them as the representation of a “Greek miracle” illustrating the advancement of Western European civilization, he indicated that archaic pictorial art began with restricted frontal schema, and then moved gradually to more natural appearances.¹²⁰ This phenomenon can be equally applied to Zheng’s work, which can be seen as a gradual accumulation of corrections due to his observation of ancient artworks.¹²¹

Wen C. Fong proposed the possible reason for this phenomenon. He noted that the disillusionment of the ancient literati with Chinese politics drove them to “turn away from the world of human affairs” and to seek spiritual solace in the pursuit of artistic and literary

¹²⁰ E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), 118. Wen C. Fong, *Art as History: calligraphy and painting as one* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 114-120.

¹²¹ Fong, *Art as History*, 116.

expression. This reluctance to express themselves in politics led to the efflorescence of Chinese art and civilization. Zheng is a prime example of this phenomenon. After 1911, he lived Shanghai as a loyalist to the defunct Qing Dynasty until February 1924, when he went to the Forbidden City to serve as the teacher of Puyi (Chinese last emperor, 1906-1967).¹²² In these thirteen years, he moved his passion from politics to arts, which enabled him to carry out his artistic experimentation. Thus, the artistic style in the early Republic could not be simply described as “between tradition and modernity” as it is often portrayed; instead, it was a style unto itself---a strong cultural vitality and experimentation that was crucial to the development of modern Chinese art.

From these analyses, we can hypothesize the time of creation of these two couplets. Figure 7.1 was firstly created, written between 1900 to 1914, foretelling the coming of a more mature style in Figure 7.2. Importantly, these analyses give us a good example of how Chinese connoisseur could use brushstroke and structure as evidence to evaluate, authenticate, and date artwork.

¹²² Rui, “Writings of Manchukuo’s Prime Minister Zheng Xiaoxu,” 50.



Figure 7.1 Zheng Xiaoxu, 1860-1938, *Xiaoxu Zheng's seven-character couplet in running-standard script*, cs000004, The late-Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China, Paper, Two scrolls, 67.5 x 17 in. each, Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.

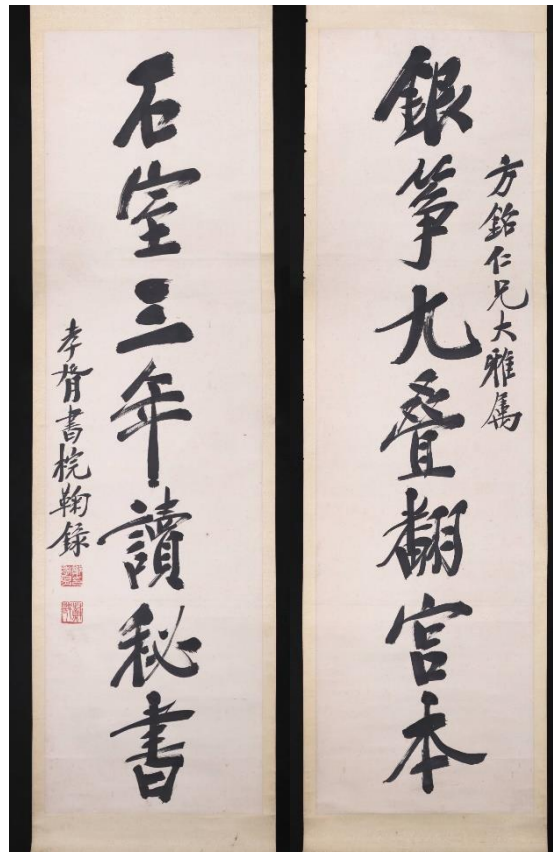


Figure 7.2 Zheng Xiaoxu, 1860-1938, *Xiaoxu Zheng's seven-character calligraphic couplet*, cs000054, The late-Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China, Paper, Two scrolls, 17.5 x 66.1 in. each, Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.

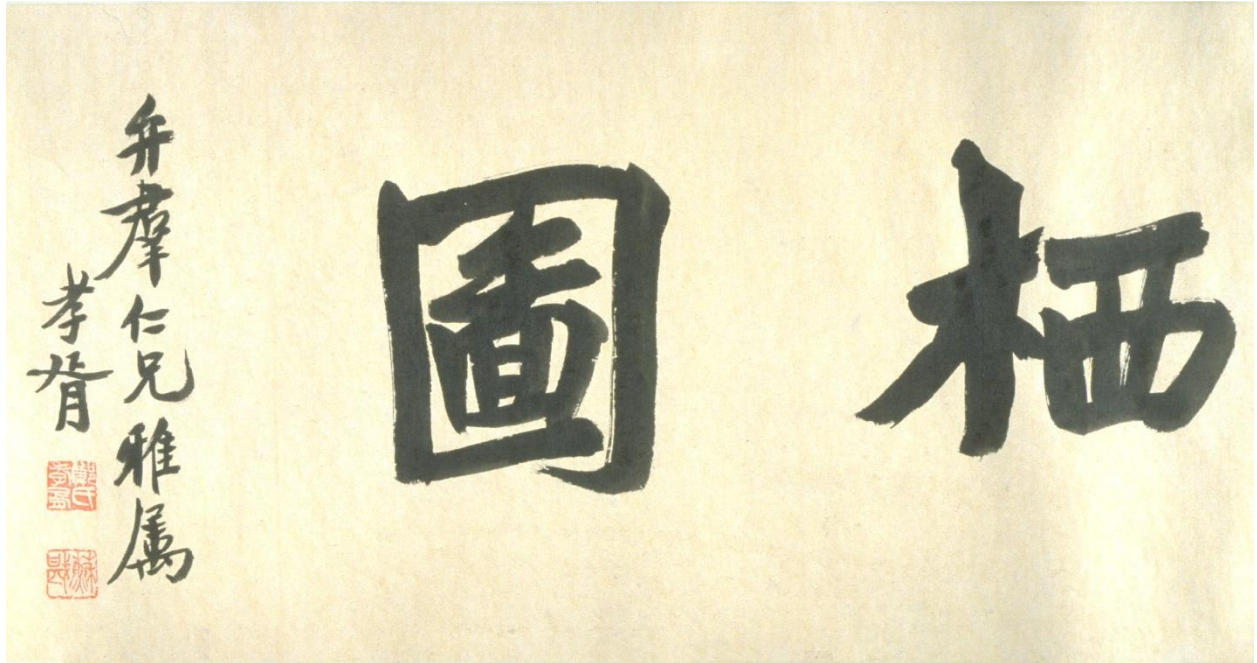


Figure 7.3 Zheng Xiaoxu, 1860-1938, 1981/1.308, 2 of 9, the frontispiece in Lu Hui's *The Small Cloud Dwelling*: Lu Hui, 1851-1920, *The Small Cloud Dwelling*, 1981/1.308, 1909, Handscroll, ink and color on paper, 10 1/8 in x 58 11/16 in (25.72 cm x 149.07 cm), University of Michigan Museum of Art, Museum purchase made possible by the Margaret Watson Parker Art Collection Fund.

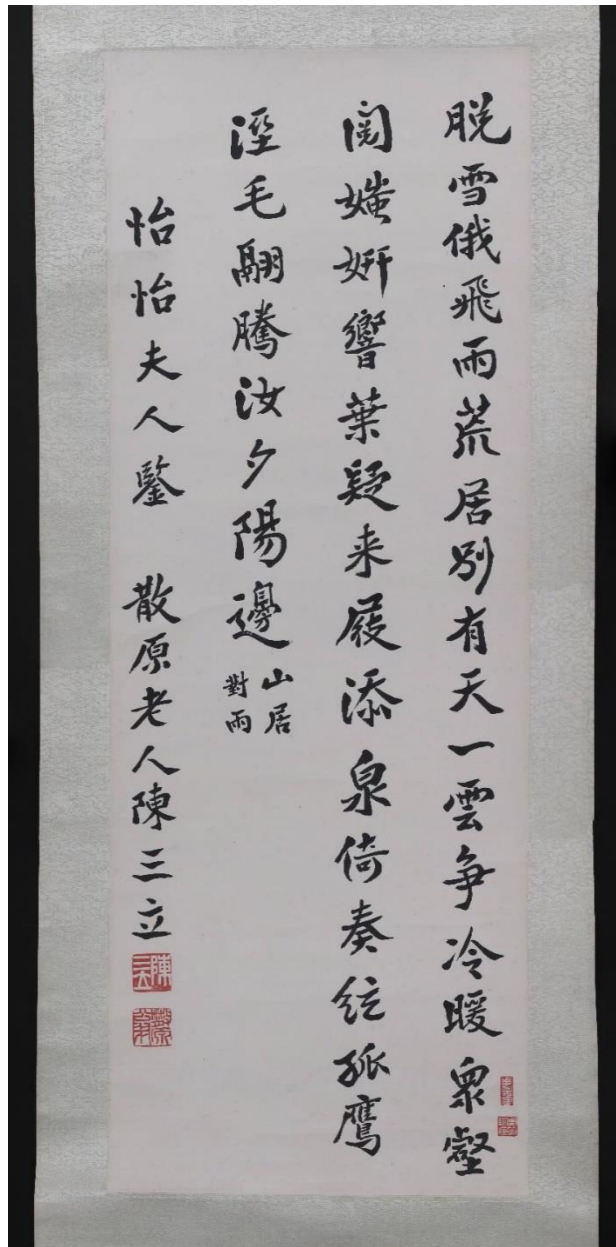


Figure 7.4 Chen Sanli, 1852-1937, *Sanli Chen's holographic calligraphy hanging scrolls*, cs000102, Paper, 15 x 76 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.



Figure 7.5 a: from Figure 7.1

Figure 7.5 b: *Li qi bei*, 156, Hsin 37, Rubbing, Stelae inscriptions, Height 31.7 cm, Width 18.3 cm, University of California Berkeley Library Digital Collections, Chinese Rubbings Collection.

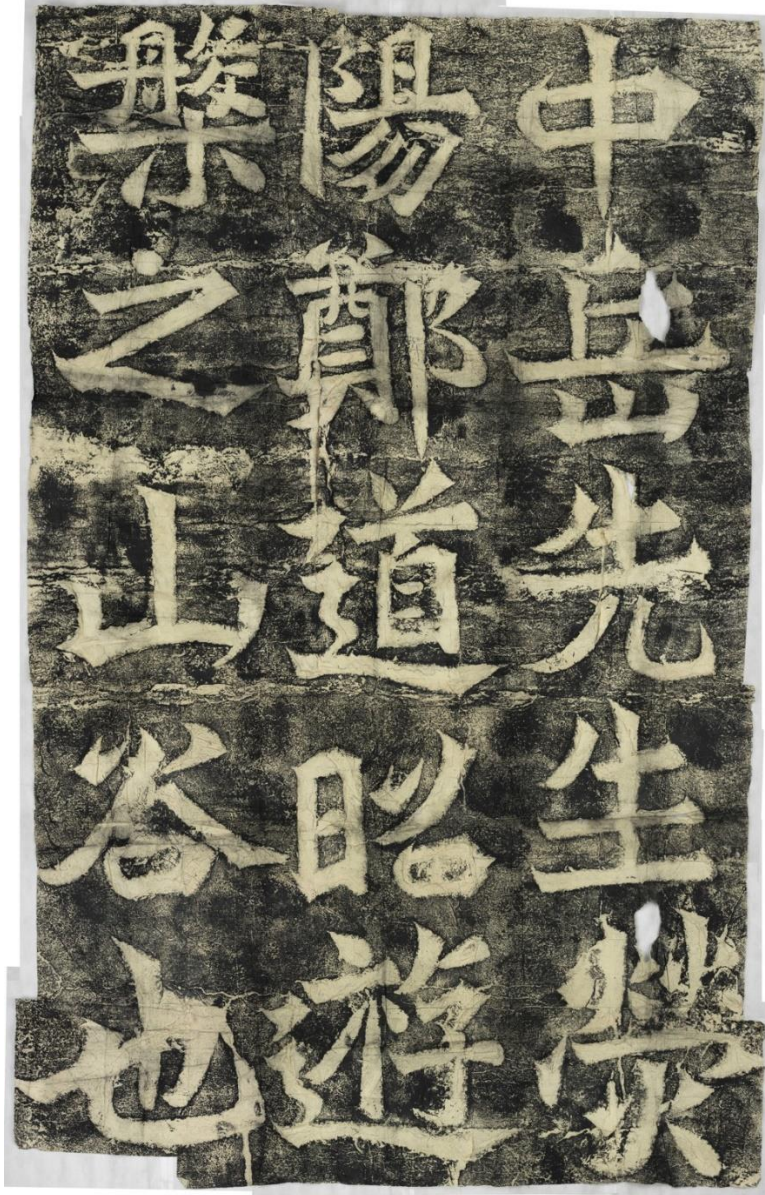


Figure 7.6 *Baiju gu ti zi*, after 512, Hsin 147.3, Rubbing, Inscriptions on Rock and Stone, Height 173 cm, Width 104 cm, University of California Berkeley Library Digital Collections, Chinese Rubbings Collection.

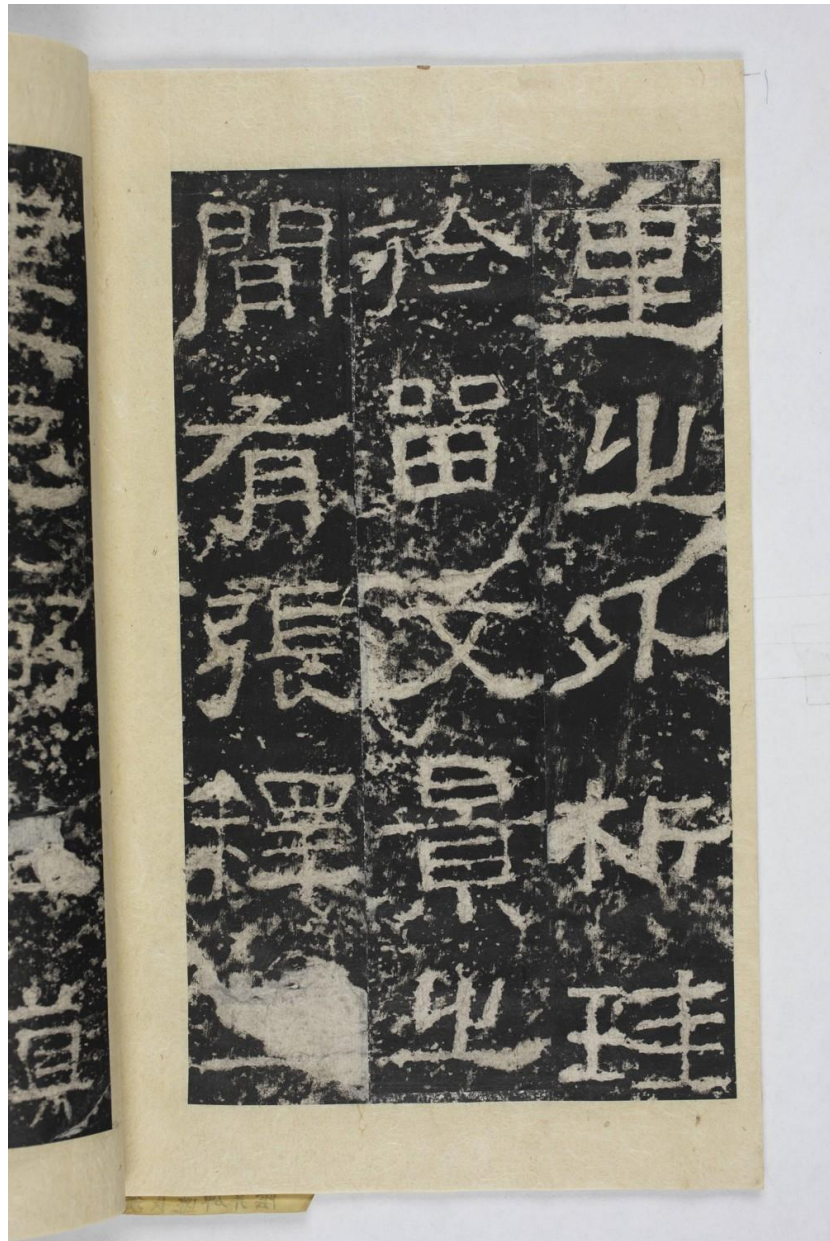


Figure 7.7 *Zhang Qian bei*, 186, Hsin 65, Rubbing, Stelae inscriptions, Height 26.5 cm, Width 18 cm, University of California Berkeley Library Digital Collections, Chinese Rubbings Collection.

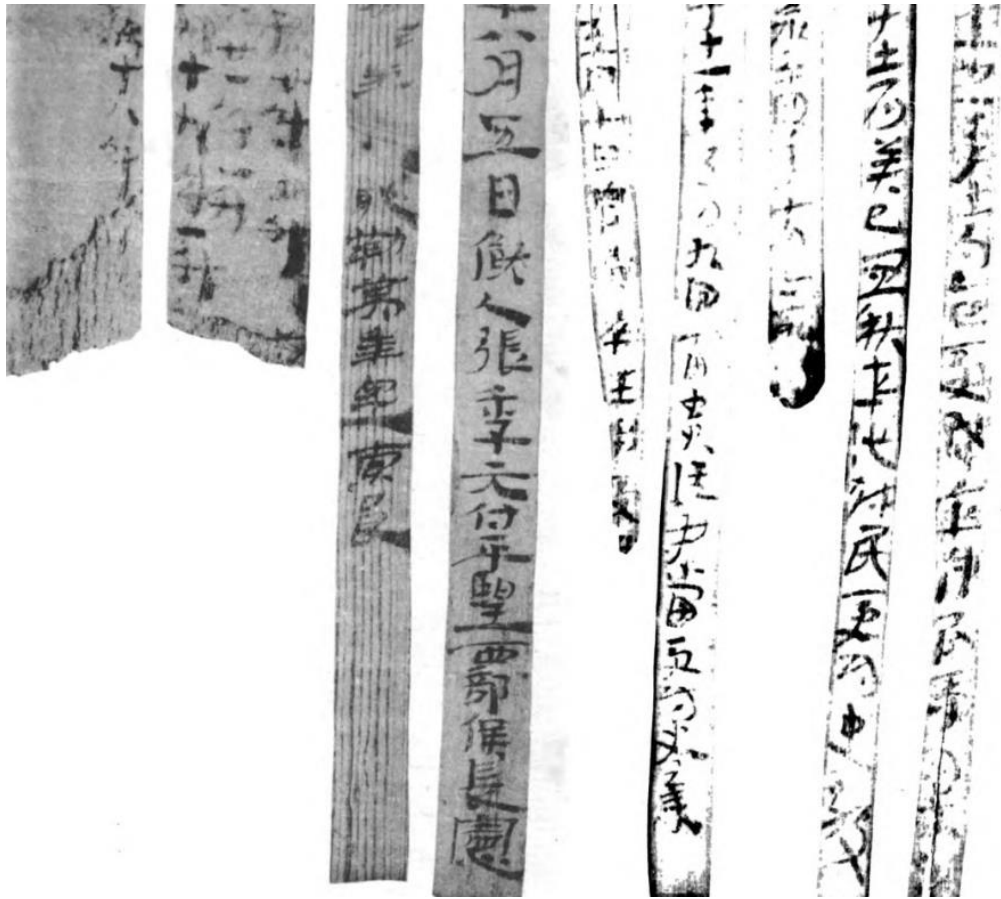


Figure 7.8 from Luo Zhenyu 罗振玉, *Liu Sha Zhui Jian* 流沙坠简 [The Lost Wooden Slips Excavated in the Flowing Sands] (Shangyu: Luo shi chen han lou, 1914), 46.

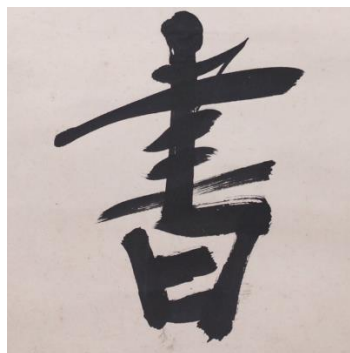


Figure 7.9 a from Figure 2.

Figure 7.9 b from Luo Zhenyu 罗振玉, *Liu Sha Zhui Jian* 流沙坠简 [The Lost Wooden Slips Excavated in the Flowing Sands] (Shangyu: Luo shi chen han lou, 1914), 65.

8. Shen Zengzhi

Although Chinese artists acknowledged that they must eventually develop a style of their own, they have to spend years copying masters' works. Actually, freedom of the brush is not easily won. A calligrapher needs to study ancient archetypes, and work within a framework of many rules. First is the essential fact that there is a prescribed sequence of brush movements. In every calligraphic work, each stroke and character must follow one another in a specified order that everyone must adhere to.¹²³ Only within this framework can calligraphers create their personal style.

After Luo Zhenyu and Wang Guowei published their famous monograph *Liu Sha Zhui Jian* (The Lost Wooden Slips Excavated in the Flowing Sands) in 1914, Shen spent a lot of time studying the writing of the wooden slips, and tried to model his work within the ancient framework. This effort can be seen from his scroll in our UWM Special Collections (Figure 8.1). The stiffness of his “無” brushwork is similar to the writing in the bamboo slip: the brushwork rarely shows any rhythm or variation, and it looks rather like a withered stick, devoid of elasticity and variation (Figure 8.2 a, b). It seems that Shen was restricted by his faithfulness to ancient masterpieces. One year later, however, in his other work (Figure 8.3), which is now in the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art, he exhibits tremendous improvement from the previous restrictions. The same character “無” is now rendered with unbalanced status: the lower part is pushed leftward, the brushwork is characterized by swirling three-dimensionality and flaring torque (Figure 8.2 c).

¹²³ Lothar Ledderose, *Ten Thousand Things: Module and Mass Productions in Chinese Art* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 196.

Throughout of his career, Shen preferred using angular momentum in his brushwork, to drive each stroke and to form a character. The oblique, angular, and dashing brush force gives a brash and imperious quality to his art. The calligraphy seems strikingly modern as an attention-grabbing gestural work. To look at this kind of artwork is to immediately see the artist at work: splattering the ink on the paper, thrusting the brush with various speed, orientation and cadence, rendering characters with unexpected form. Here, the existence of the accidental and unpremeditated is of great importance: one stroke might lead quite surprisingly to another (this idea also applies to Chinese painting, see below, in Yao Hua's entry). For instance, in Figure 8.4, the lower part of character “箬” shows a strong shove to the right. Obviously, the author's mind did not plan this. However, this exaggerated right-inclination does not appear without rhyme or reason. It must still follow rules and principles. On top of this character, the focal point of “真” has been pushed to the left. Therefore, “箬” right inclination is a direct response to “真” left inclination. The famous calligraphic aesthetician Zhang Huaiguan (ac. 727-759) claimed that cursive writing should “take spiritual atmosphere and structural force as its substance (*ti*), and take changing of phases as its function (*yong*).” By connecting *ti* and *yong*, the writings will be “similar to the gathering and dispersing of clouds and mist which, in an instant, form the shapes of dragons and tigers or any powerful spirits, and fly and move with increasing force.”¹²⁴ Zhang's comment could be applied to Shen's calligraphy, as his untrammelled brushwork flows through every changing aspect of his scroll, and adjusts itself to any unexpected scenario, therefore creating a strong visual effect for the audience.

¹²⁴ *Lidai shufa lunwen xuan*, 155.

Shi is a very prominent feature in Shen's writing. In *Jiushi* (Nine Forces), the seminal writing of the second-century calligrapher theorist Cai Yong (133-192), *shi* was defined as force, momentum, or tendency, and became one of the most important aesthetic terms in Chinese calligraphy criticism. Francois Jullien explicated this term by saying that *shi* is related to "the invisible, subjective, and cosmic energy pervading and operating through the activity of calligraphy."¹²⁵ In a similar manner, Mathias Obert indicated the notion of *shi* could be interpreted as "impulse and *gestalt*."¹²⁶

The vibrant trace of *Shi* is supposed to be expressed throughout the whole composition of one calligraphic work. First, according to Cai, for any movement of writing within one character, "the upper part should respond to the lower part, while the lower part should carry on from the upper part." (九势) For instance, in the character "到" (Figure 8.5)," the momentum of the brushwork pushing from the top to the bottom is overwhelming; however, there is a hook at the bottom, flicking upward with great tension, which works as the counterbalance to respond to the force from the top. Second, for the movement between one character and another, *Shi* could be achieved, in Zhang Huaiguan's analysis, "through the integration of two characters into one, by focusing on the lowering-lifting, separating-gathering between different characters."¹²⁷ In Figure 8.6, although the two characters do not connect with each other, "the blood vein" (*xuema*) of the brushwork is not cut off, and the spiritual air and momentum is still carried through the whole

¹²⁵ Francois Jullien, *The Propensity of Things: toward a history of efficacy in China* (New York: Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books, 1995), 76-78.

¹²⁶ Mathias Obert, "Chinese Ink Brush Writing, Body Mimesis, and Responsive-ness," *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 12, no. 4 (2013): 533.

¹²⁷ *Lidai shufa lunwen xuan*, 160.

writing, integrating two characters into one. Finally, to the overall configuration of the work, Xie Jin (1369-1415) contends that not only should each character be related to another, but also the columns should correspond to one another, making a balance of height, slope and space. For Xie, the arrangement of the whole work is similar to the arraying of a military force.¹²⁸ In Figure 8.1, the first character of the first volume (“斜”) tilts to the left, while the first character of the last volume (“衣”) tilts to the right. The contrapposto within the columns amplifies the momentum, or *shi*, in the artwork, and creates a tensioned yet balanced axial plane.

The same principle of *shi* is applicable to painting. Dong Qichang indicated that seeking the sense of *shi*, or momentum in the structure is very important. He believed that creating a landscape painting by simply piling up small rocks and gradually moving them to form a mountain is “one of the worst mistakes.” “When an ancient master worked on a large scroll, he made only three or four large ‘dividing’ and ‘uniting’ segments and in this way created a whole composition. Although each “dividing” and “uniting” segment contains many small details, the principal aim is to grasp the momentum [*shi*] of the forms.”¹²⁹ Here, Dong indicated that the invisible momentum is the overriding feature of the painting. Instead of getting bogged down in the specific details, the artist needs to envision the broad picture, incorporating *shi* as the guiding principle. That is to say, for Chinese art, the invisible momentum or spirit is much more important than the visible details.

¹²⁸ Pan Yungao 潘运告, *Mingdai shulun* 明代书论 [Ming Dynasty Texts on Calligraphy] (Changsha: Hunan meishu chubanshe, 2002), 8.

¹²⁹ *The Century of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang 1555-1636, volume 1*, 20-21.

Qi Baishi's *Pine and Bamboo* is an excellent demonstration of this idea (Figure 8.7). The big luscious bamboo leaves, though moving in different directions and varying in different ink tonalities, correspond to each other with great harmony, extending *shi* from the top to the middle of the painting, similar to the harmonious correspondence in the creation of a character. Moving to a larger view of the painting, these bamboo leaves contrast with the pine needles in the background: the dichotomy between dense and sparse, heavy and light, black and white, creates a coherent artistic symphony, and engenders movement through spiritual consonance. This consonance is evocative of the "blood vein" inherent in Shen's characters. Finally, as regards the overall composition, the huge tree trunk on the bottom right and the slender pine branches on the top left coexist to create a contrasting effect. Further, the strength of the trunk (and the bamboo stalk) contrasts with the delicacy of the pine twigs. Vice versa, the curvature of the big trunk transmits a sense of voluptuousness, whereas the needles on the pine twigs exhibit sharpness and stiffness. Here, *shi* could be achieved through the contrast within the large elements of the painting, similar to the *yin-yang* combination in Chinese culture (see below, in Zhao Yuantao's entry).

Just as Shen studied the writings from *liu Sha Zhui Jian*, Qi's capacity to build pictorial momentum had a strong connection to the masters' works. Qi was a devotee of Wu Changshuo's art. In Figure 8.8, Wu used the same juxtaposition to create *shi* to enliven his composition. Inspired by Wu's style, Qi expanded his configuration by adding more elements and showing more tension and variations. Like Qi, Shen might also have developed his calligraphic style from Wu's painting. Shen and Wu were close friends (the stamp in Shen's writing was engraved by Wu, see Figure 8.9); and they often discussed art. They knew the concept of *shi* very well, and applied it to their own creations. Though Shen's genre is calligraphy whereas Wu's is painting,

they shared the same understanding of the key concept of Chinese art. This is why the Chinese always like to trace calligraphy and painting to the same root (“*shuhua tongyuan*”).

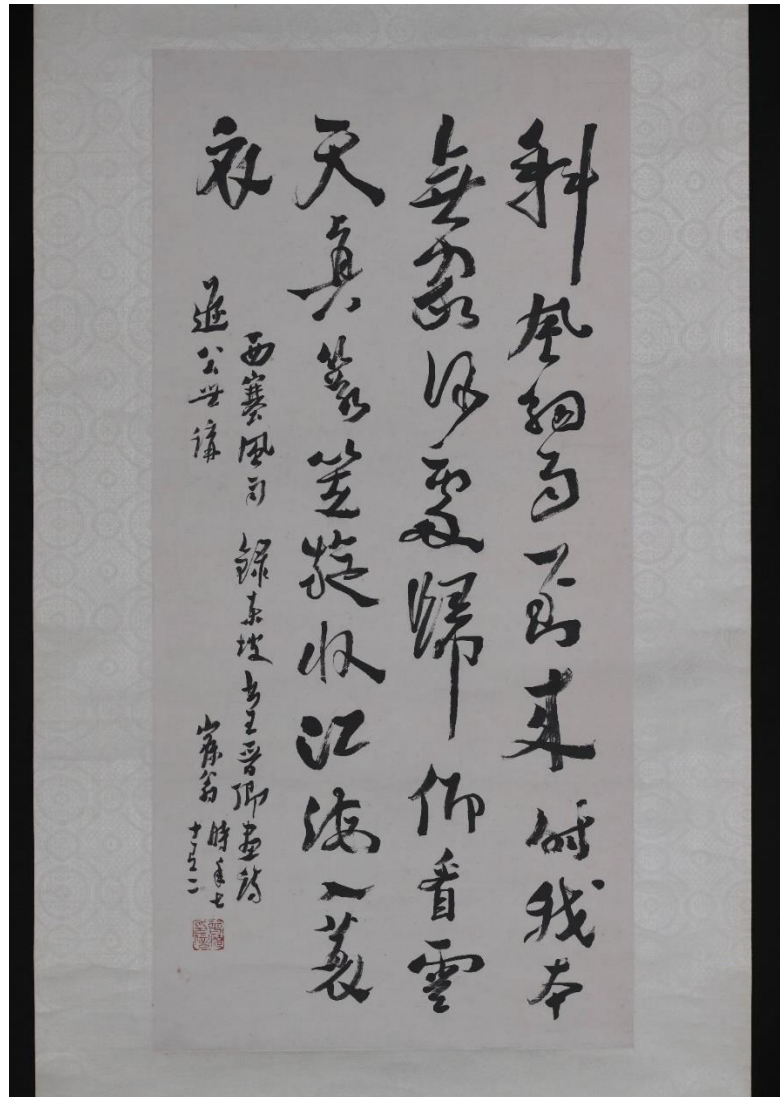


Figure 8.1 Shen Zengzhi, 1850-1922, *Zengzhi Shen calligraphic hanging scroll*, cs000037, 1921, Paper, 24 x 85 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.



Figure 8.2a from Figure 8.1

Figure 8.2b from Luo Zhenyu 罗振玉, *Liu Sha Zhui Jian* 流沙坠简 [The Lost Wooden Slips Excavated in the Flowing Sands] (Shangyu: Luo shi chen han lou, 1914), 65.

Figure 8.2c from Figure 8.3

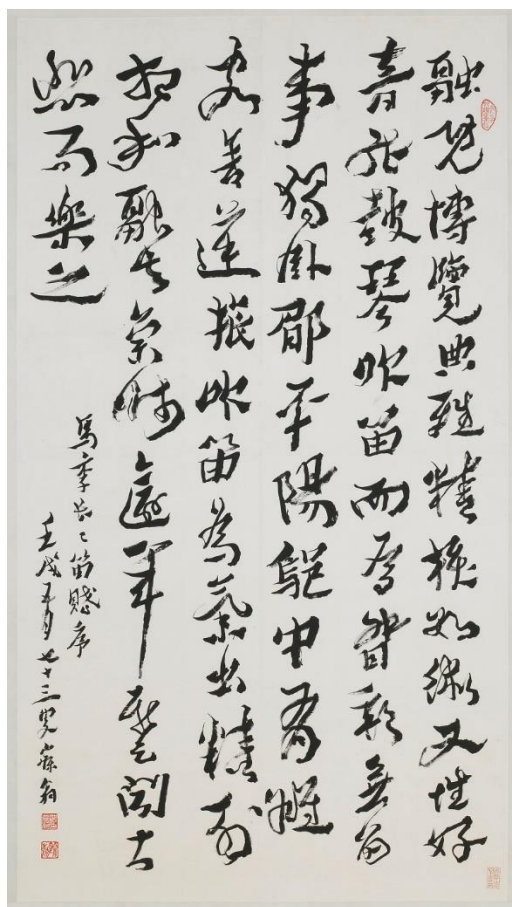


Figure 8.3 Shen Zengzhi, 1850-1922, *Excerpt from the Preface to the Rhapsody on the Long Flute in running script*, F1998.184, 1922, Hanging scroll; ink on paper, H x W (image): 142.6 x 78.1 cm (56 1/8 x 30 3/4 in), Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Collection, gift of Robert Hatfield Ellsworth in honor of the 75th Anniversary of the Freer Gallery of Art.



Figure 8.4 from Figure 8.1

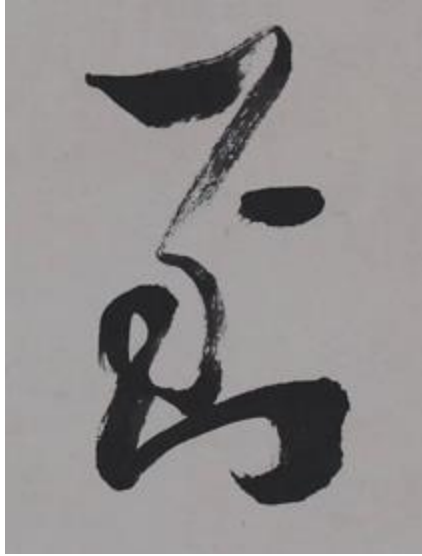


Figure 8.5 from Figure 8.1

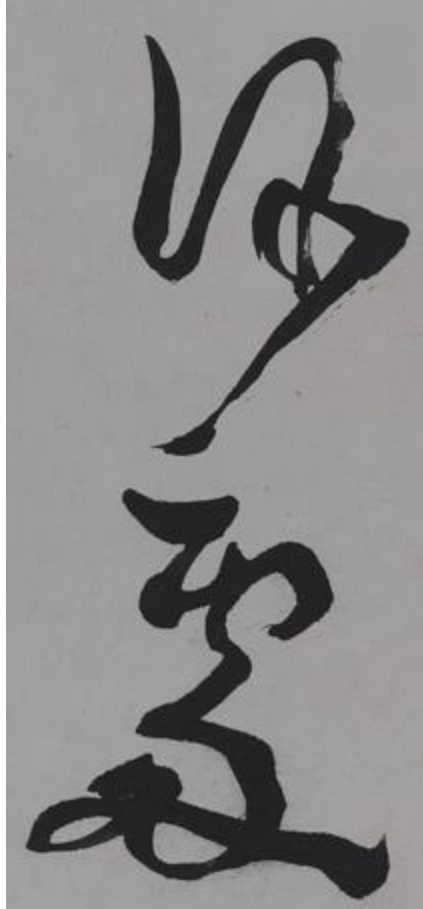


Figure 8.6 from Figure 8.1



Figure 8.7 Qi Baishi, 1864-1957, *Pine and Bamboo*, 1949/1.191, circa 1930, ink on paper, 94 in x 21 in (238.76 cm x 53.34 cm), University of Michigan Museum of Art, Gift of Katsuzumi Sotokichi.



Figure 8.8 Wu Changshuo, 1844-1927, *Bamboo and Rock after Zheng Xie*, 2004.12.4, 1919, Ink on paper, 60 3/16 x 17 15/16 in. (152.88 x 45.56 cm) (image) 75 13/16 x 23 3/4 in. (192.56 x 60.33 cm) (without roller), Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Ruth and Bruce Dayton.



Figure 8.9 from Figure 8.1

PAINTING

9. Wu Qinmu

The New Culture Movement (1919), which is often called the May Fourth Movement, launched a total attack on Chinese tradition and a fervent endorsement of Western-style science and democracy.¹³⁰ Distressed by the continued intrusion into Chinese territory by colonial powers, the unfulfilled desire for effective governance, and the haunting awareness of foreign businesses in the Chinese economy, the patriot-reformers blamed Chinese traditional culture for their distress.¹³¹ Chen Duxiu (1879-1942), one of the key founders of the Communist Party, insisted that the Chinese people needed to get rid of the old to achieve the new; and called for a thorough revolution in Chinese art.¹³² Particularly censorious to the orthodox paintings of the Qing Dynasty (1636-1912), Chen contended that this style had a pernicious influence because its artists were satisfied to imitate and copy ancient masterpieces rather than creating their own unique styles.¹³³ The styles of the Four Wangs (Wang Shimin (1592-1680, Figure 9.2), Wang Jian (1598-1677, Figure 9.3), Wang Hui (1632-1717, Figure 9.4), and Wang Yuanqi (1642-1715, Figure 9.5), which was based on imitation of ancient models, bore the brunt of this criticism (Kang Youwei shared a similar opinion. Indeed, Four Wangs remains a beleaguered artistic

¹³⁰ Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen, *The Art of Modern China* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2012), 45.

¹³¹ Andrews and Shen, 43.

¹³² Andrews and Shen, 43-44.

¹³³ Andrews and Shen, 44. Wang Pengjie 王鹏杰, *Minguo huihua sixiang shilun* 民国绘画思想史论 [An intellectual history of painting under the republic of China] (Jinan: Shandong meishu chubanshe, 2020), 31.

coalition in modern Chinese art historiography).¹³⁴ Nevertheless, some artists in this period, such as Wu Qinmu (1894-1953, Figure 9.1), enjoyed great freedom to practice orthodox painting, and remained committed to studying the Four Wangs heritage, regarding it as a useful example of Song (960-1279) and Yuan (1271-1368)'s earlier paintings.¹³⁵

Wu's affinity for the Four Wangs, Song, and Yuan paintings came from his experience as a house guest of Pang Yuanji (1864-1949), the most prodigious collector of Chinese painting in the early twentieth century.¹³⁶ His collection was famous for its overall high quality, chronological and encyclopedic comprehensiveness, and monumental scale.¹³⁷ Pang was a businessman with little time to devote to his hobby, so he brought in artist-experts to help him acquire, evaluate, repair, and manage his collections.¹³⁸ Working in Pang's residence for several years, Wu had an opportunity to imitate most of the art in Pang's great collections, which contained many of the Four Wangs' works.¹³⁹ Wu's landscape painting in our UWM Special

¹³⁴ Lang Shaojun 郎绍君, "Siwang zai ershi shiji" 四王在二十世纪 [The four wangs in the twentieth century], in *Qingchu siwang huapai yanjiu lunwenji* 清初四王画派研究论文集 [The collected thesis related to four wangs paintings in the early Qing dynasty], ed. Duoyuan bianji bu 朵云编辑部 (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1993), 835-867.

¹³⁵ *Wu Qinmu huaji* 吴琴木画集 [The collected paintings of Wu Qinmu] (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2003), 6.

¹³⁶ *Wu Qinmu huaji*, 6.

¹³⁷ Katharine P. Burnett, *Shaping Chinese Art History---Pang Yuanji and His Painting Collection* (New York: Cambria Press, 2020), 27.

¹³⁸ Burnett, *Shaping Chinese Art History* 34-35. *Wu Qinmu huaji*, 5.

¹³⁹ Burnett, *Shaping Chinese Art History*, 57. Pang Yuanji 庞元济, "xuzhai minghua lu" 虚斋名画录 [Record of famous paintings in the Xu Zhai collection], in *Zhongguo lidai shuhua yishu lunzhu congbian* 17 中国历代书画艺术论著丛编 17 [The collected thesis of Chinese arts in different dynasties], ed. Xu Juan 徐娟 (Beijing: zhongguo dabaike quanshu chubanshe, 1997), 21, 26, 29.

Collection shows his continuation of the Four Wangs' linear tendency. For instance, the gentle and repetitive striation of "hemp fiber" texture strokes in the central mountain, as well as the juxtaposition of sparsity and denseness of the remote mountains (Figure 9.6a), are reminiscent of Wang Hui's painting in Figure 9.6b.

After mastering the Four Wang's painting skills, Wu followed their path by studying ancient models directly. Pang's extensive collection provided him with many great examples. One of these was Dong Yuan (active mid-10th century), canonized as the patriarch of orthodox masters (South School) by Dong Qichang (1555-1636).¹⁴⁰ In Wu's *Wisteria and Ancient Wood* (Figure 9.7), the structure and detail were inspired by Dong Yuan's work as recorded in Pang's *Antique Famous Chinese Paintings* (Figure 9.8). It seems that Wu's painting looks much more complete and beautiful; by contrast, some details in Dong's original appear incomplete and awkward. Take the central tree branches as an example (see red circles in two pictures) ---Wu's branches are dense and realistic, whereas Dong's branches are sketched with succinctness and simplicity. Likewise, the connection between trees and promontory on the left side of Dong's painting (see blue rectangle) is rough-hewn, lacking some degree of clarity. Wu does a better job of clarifying the connection in the same area.

Nevertheless, upon closer examination, Dong's work outshines Wu's imitations for at least two reasons. First, in terms of structure, Dong's clear division of near (embankment & tree), middle (promontory), and far (mountain) gives viewers a feeling for the towering grandeur of the landscape with strong three-dimensionality, in as much as the three divisions are arranged with depth and order. The simple brush of the tree (see red circle), which is silhouetted against

¹⁴⁰ *The Century of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang 1555-1636 volume I*, 44.

the misty emptiness of the background, emphasizes the grandness and quietude of the towering monolith. This three-dimensionality and grandness is missing in Wu's imitation---every component is enlarged and therefore the entire landscape is brought forward and closer to the viewers, losing the sense of depth and dizzying height.

Second, in terms of detail, the zigzag path on the top right of Dong's painting (see purple triangle) matches the serpentine tree branches in the near and middle planes, thus softening the stiffness and imposing dignity of the mountains. It also creates the illusion of a dragon winding through the unfathomable mist. In contrast, in Wu's painting, he replaces Dong's zigzag trail with a perpendicular waterfall in the top right, which corresponds to the upright tree trunks in both near and middle ground. The overall perpendicularity extending from foreground to background makes the painting look monotonous, and compresses everything in the same plane. Therefore, Wu's imitation, though seemingly created with more detail and completion, lacks three-dimensionality in structure and vibrancy in detail. To put it another way, while Dong's brush conveys a sense of simplicity (or even awkwardness), it expresses one's true feeling on viewing real mountains. However, Wu's art is mostly based on monotonous repetition, simply piling image upon image, without thinking about the overall effect and variation. Subsequently, Dong's three-dimensional work was unfortunately supplanted by Wu's one-dimensionality; and his simple yet powerful strokes replaced by a complex yet lifeless design. This problem stems from Wu's imitation of the Four Wang's art, which has always been criticized for its mechanical brushwork and repetitious motif (Figure 9.2---Figure 9.5). To some extent, this justifies Chen's attack on the paintings of the orthodox school.

This criticism is not new. As early as the 9th century, Zhang Yanyuan (circa 815-after 875) observed that there are three periods in painting: in the High Antiquity, the brushwork is

simple, and the themes are plainly expressed, so the effect is straightforward and elegant; in the Middle Antiquity, complex, elaborate, and ornate details are pursued; in Recent Times, painting has a blaze of splendor, with completeness as its goal.¹⁴¹ For Zhang, the splendor and completeness in Recent Times is a regrettable degradation from the art of High Antiquity, which is characterized by simplicity and naturalness. Zhang showed his opprobrium to the painters in his time (i.e., “Recent Times”) by denigrating them as artisans who know only how to depict reality without communicating the spirit, or “Spiritual Resonance (*qiyunshengdong*, see below, in Yao Hua’s entry)” of the image. Zhang’s comment can be applied to an analysis of Dong and Wu’s paintings: Dong was the symbol of High Antiquity, creating his painting with spiritual communion to nature, leaving enough space for the audience to feel the painting and to enjoy its inherent leisure, mystery, elegance, and slow movement. Wu was a modern day representative of the artists of Recent Times; though executing his works with intricacy and completeness, he failed to fully grasp the essence and spirit of nature.

¹⁴¹ Zhang Yanyuan 张彦远, *Lidai minghua ji* 历代名画记 [The record of famous ancient paintings] (Shenyang: Shengyang jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001), 123. Wu Hung, “Introduction: Patterns of Returning to the Ancients in Chinese Art and Visual Culture,” in *Reinventing the Past: Archaism and Antiquarianism in Chinese Art and Visual Culture*, ed. Wu Hung (Chicago: Center for the Art of East Asia, University of Chicago, 2010).



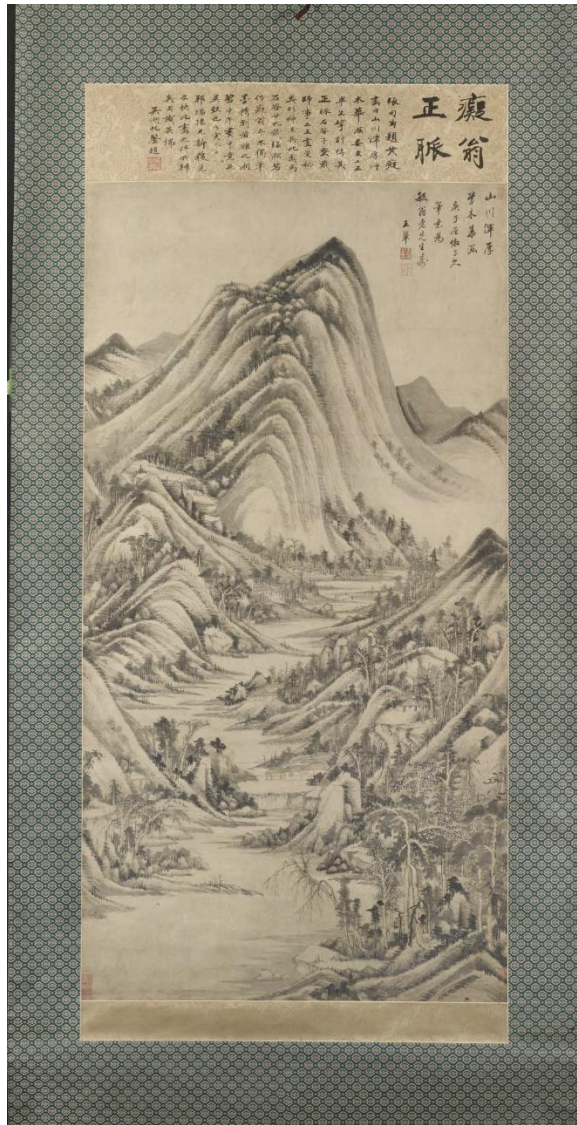
Figure 9.1 Wu Qinmu, 1894-1953, *Qinmu Wu's landscape painting hanging scroll*, cs000074, The late-Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China, Paper, 85.6 x 23.6 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.



Figure 2. Wang Shiming, 1592-1680, *Landscape in the style of Huang Gongwang*, 1980.426.2, Qing dynasty (1644–1911), Hanging scroll; ink on paper, Image: 53 x 22 1/4 in. (134.6 x 56.5 cm), Overall with mounting: 87 3/4 x 28 1/4 in. (222.9 x 71.8 cm), Overall with knobs: 87 3/4 x 31 in. (222.9 x 78.7 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ex coll.: C. C. Wang Family, Gift of Douglas Dillon, 1980.



9.3 Wang Jian, 1609-1677/88, *Landscape in the style of Huang Gongwang*, 1972.278.4, Qing dynasty (1644–1911), Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper, Image: 45 5/8 x 22 1/8 in. (115.9 x 56.2 cm), Overall with mounting: 103 1/4 x 29 in. (262.3 x 73.7 cm), Overall with rollers: 103 1/4 x 32 1/2 in. (262.3 x 82.6 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Earl Morse, 1972.



9.4 Wang Hui, 1632-1717, *Landscape in the Style of Huang Gongwang*, y1969-70, 1660, Hanging scroll; ink on paper, Painting: 174 x 89.6 cm. (68 1/2 x 35 1/4 in.) Calligraphy: 21 x 89.6 cm. (8 1/4 x 35 1/4 in.) Mount: 358 x 120 cm. (140 15/16 x 47 1/4 in.), Princeton University Art Museum, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Earl Morse, in honor of Wen C. Fong, Class of 1951 and Graduate School Class of 1958, and Constance Tang Fong.



9.5 Wang Yuanqi, 1642-1715, *Landscape for Zhanting*, 2011.574, dated 1710, Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper, Image: 37 1/2 × 18 1/2 in. (95.3 × 47 cm), Overall with mounting: 92 5/8 × 25 1/4 in. (235.3 × 64.1 cm), Overall with knobs: 92 5/8 × 29 in. (235.3 × 73.7 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Marie-Hélène Weill and Guy A. Weill, 2011.



Figure 9.6a from Figure 9.1



Figure 9.6b from Figure 9.4



Figure 9.7 Wu Qinmu, 1894-1953, private collection, unknown size, undated.

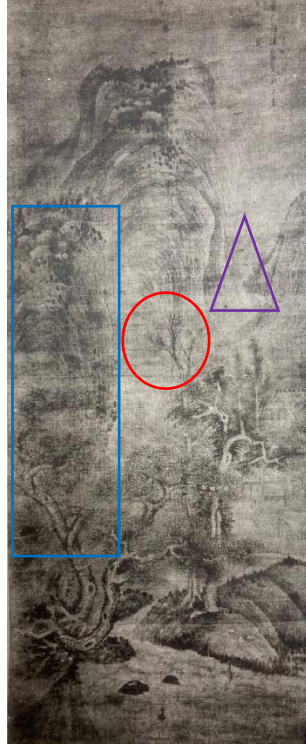


Figure 9.8 Dong Yuan, ac 937-962, *landscape painting*, from Pang Laichen 庞莱臣. *Tang wudai songyuan minghua* 唐五代宋元名画 [Antique Famous Chinese Paintings in Tang Dynasty, Five Dynasty, Song Dynasty, and Yuan Dynasty] (Shanghai: no publisher information, 1916), item 8, no page number.

10. Yao Hua

The theory of literati painting arose in the eleventh century among a group of scholar-artist-critics associated with the great poet and statesman Su Shi (1036-1101). It held that paintings by amateur artists, men of the scholar-official class who were learned in the classics and expected to devote themselves mainly to scholarship and government service, were superior to works by the technically trained professional painters.¹⁴² Dong Qichang further codified the hierarchy of genres that prioritized literati painting (See Figure 9 in the Introduction). Three hundred years later, Cheng Hengke (1876-1923) reinstated the significance of literati painting in his essay “The Value of Literati Painting,” which offered an important counterargument to slavish Westernization and to the attack on Chinese tradition during the May Fourth period (see above, in Wu Qinmu’s entry).¹⁴³ Based on the domination of literati painting in Chinese art history, James Cahill (1926-2014) proposed the following formula which he indicated as an “unchallenged equation:” scholar-amateurism= brushwork= calligraphy= self-expression= disdain for representation= high-mindedness= high quality.¹⁴⁴

From this equation, we first know that the literati do not treat painting and calligraphy as a *métier*; rather, they see them as having a sense of amateurism. Dong Qichang was not so much a painter as he was an amateur, or a “scholar-painter.” The professional painter is usually despised as an “artisan.” While not illiterate, these painters usually did not belong to the accepted families of officials and literati whose wealth made it possible for them to paint for their own

¹⁴² James Cahill, *Pictures for Use and Pleasure: Vernacular Painting in High Qing China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 1.

¹⁴³ Andrews and Shen, *The Art of Modern China*, 47.

¹⁴⁴ Cahill, *Pictures for Use and Pleasure*, 5.

pleasure and self-knowledge, rather than for the entertainment of the public and for profit.¹⁴⁵

This amateurism was the dominating factor in Chinese art, especially in the age of idealism when reality was subject to the mind's dictates.

One of the crucial criteria of amateurism is to paint "beyond representation." Su Shi made an often-quoted statement saying that judging a painting by its realism is like children's naivety. Su's disapproval of realism is like Plato's condemnation of mimesis. Plato equated the very mastery of mimesis with the skills of the puppeteer, "only good for entertaining children."¹⁴⁶ In Yao Hua (1876-1930)'s peonies (Figure 10.1), the image was created unlike the peonies we see in nature---they seem to be mutilated into pieces; the leaves are disconnected; the petals and stamen are sketched to a kinesthetic tracery of image, and the spatial depth is compressed. All these elements force the audience to forget about formal likeness and to become aware of the rhythms, patterns, and variations created by the brushwork. Similarly, in Chen Hengke's *Old Tree* (Figure 10.2), the grotesque tree trunk and the gigantic rock coalesce to take up most of the pictorial space, but lack any division, spatiality or lifelikeness. However, the strong variations of ink tones and bold application of brushwork bring dynamism to the painting, working as a self-reference to indicate the author's panache and verve, which is more important than the authentic representation of the object.

The haphazard and overcrowded composition in Yao and Chen's work is reminiscent of Dong Qichang's landscape painting. Compared with other masters who interrelated elements of a pictorial group in a harmonious and leisurely way, Dong rarely had any interest in mutual

¹⁴⁵ Sherman E. Lee, "The Literati Tradition in Chinese Painting," *The Burlington Magazine* 108, no. 758 (May, 1966): 254.

¹⁴⁶ Ernst Hans Gombrich, *The Preference for the Primitive: episodes in the history of Western taste and art* (London; New York: Phaidon, 2002), 14.

interaction. His art is more of a “construct” based on an assembly of schemata with his own understanding, with little or no pretense of being anything like reality. In Figure 10.3, the deciduous foliage is situated close to the coniferous plants, which is abnormal in nature; the whole painting is filled with rows of discrete elements, which have nothing to do with each other. Actually, the painting is quite abstract and akin to modernism. As Cheng-hua Wang states, Dong and his followers built up abstracted images in order to “express a resonance between the human world and the Cosmic Way.”¹⁴⁷ Therefore, in close examination, there is a constant sense of tension, vitality, and even friction in Dong’s paintings. They were criticized as unnatural, unbeautiful, and full of awkwardness, but another way of understanding is to see them as the birth pangs of a new modernism.

It is worthwhile to say that though literati paintings eschew realism and mimesis, they are by no means devoid of verisimilitude. Actually, the key to understanding Chinese art does not lie in verisimilitude, but in “spiritual resonance (*qiyun shengdong*),” which captures a more profound effect of the painting. Seeing Yao’s fans, the audience can immediately feel his broad washes and free, wet passages, very much like dewdrops before they evaporate. The effect is startlingly blunt. But this bluntness contains a refined spirit, which is animated and alive in temperament. Through the ages, the Chinese have accorded prime significance to this concept in the judgment of calligraphy and painting, particularly when technique and draftsmanship seem wanting.¹⁴⁸ Zhang Yanyuan (circa 815-after 875) says:

Ancient paintings could leave behind verisimilitude and esteem bone-breath, and seek images outside of verisimilitude. This idea is difficult to convey to the vulgar folk.

¹⁴⁷ Cheng-hua Wang, “WHITHER ART HISTORY? A Global Perspective on Eighteenth-Century Chinese Art and Visual Culture,” *The Art Bulletin* 96, no. 4 (December 2014): 381.

¹⁴⁸ Aida-Yuen Wong, “A New Life for Literati Painting in the Early Twentieth Century: Eastern Art and Modernity, a Transcultural Narrative?” *Artibus Asiae* 60, no. 2 (2000): 302.

Paintings today manage to achieve verisimilitude but their spirit resonance is unvitalized. If paintings are conceived with spirit resonance in mind, verisimilitude [naturally] emerges therein... If the spirit resonance is inadequate, verisimilitude has no substance, the brush is weak, and colors are not applied purposively, this is not what one will call marvelous...Painters today are good at coarse recreations of physical features, achieving a likeness of form and neglecting spirit resonance; their paintings have colors but no brush method. How can these be called paintings?¹⁴⁹

In this regard, being “Animated and Alive” or having “spiritual resonance” is the *sine qua non* of verisimilitude. Spirit and verisimilitude are not mutually exclusive, but the former always prevails over the latter.

But how to achieve “spiritual resonance?” Spontaneity might be the answer. The images in Yao and Chen’s paintings appear extraordinarily spontaneous and do not seem to have premeditated the exact shapes in detail. Such a mode of depiction favors inner momentum (*shi*) over outer appearance, echoing Shen Zengzhi’s writing (Figure 8.1 & Figure 8.3). The great monk-calligrapher Huaisu (725-785) in the Tang dynasty set a great precedent. In his famous *Autobiography* (Figure 10.4), the monk wielded his brush in a “rapid, uninterrupted flow of darting, looping brush movements.”¹⁵⁰ Without planning the shapes in advance, he let his characters evolve under his brush spontaneously. At each stage this artwork could be called an experiment. Unlike the premeditatedly-designed artworks such as bronze vessels, lacquer dishes, and books, the *Autobiography* cannot be duplicated or reproduced. Every creation is only one individual.¹⁵¹ Likewise, if Yao was asked to create one more peony painting, the brushwork, effect, or even the style of the flowers might have a totally different image.

¹⁴⁹ Wong, 302.

¹⁵⁰ Wen C. Fong, James C.Y. Watt; with contributions by Richard M. Barnhart...[and others], *Possessing the Past: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art: Distributed by H.N. Abrams, 1996), 118.

¹⁵¹ Ledderose, *Ten Thousand Things*, 195.

This seemingly incomplete, intuited nature of splashed Ink has led many commentators to view *Autobiography* as embodying or pictorializing the principles of Zen Buddhism. In Yao's painting, we see similar unrestrained inkwork. According to Yukio Lippit, this unrestrained feature is "the index of an enlightened artistic subject and somehow illustrative of *satori*, or spiritual awakening, at the very moment of its happening."¹⁵² In Chan terms, there is no distance between the mind and the brushstroke, so immediacy and spontaneity could only emerge from an enlightened mind. Yao was a devout Buddhist practitioner, therefore, his art manifests the concept of spontaneous enlightenment. The simplification of form, strong contrast of ink tones, loose brushstrokes, and rapid execution, helped him "sit and see the *paramita* boat," which was an alternative way of saying he was attempting to attain enlightenment (In Sanskrit, *paramita* means reach the other shore). In this sense, the desire to infuse Buddhist overtones into painting is another important feature of Chinese literati art.

Last but not least, showing the mastery of calligraphic skill is another prominent feature of literati painting. The virtuosity of Dong's art resided in the sense of calligraphic tension generated through the counterplay of oppositional aesthetic tendencies. The sharp dried brushwork in his rocks, which can be seen in the cursive writing, is often tempered with large "rounded" ink wash which typically appears in the writings of clerical scripture (Figure 10.3). Likewise, the variations of calligraphic stroke and rhythm are palpable and even noticeable in Yao's peony. The color and brushwork in this painting were mostly applied in a planar rather than linear manner, prioritizing wash over stroke. This planar washing creates rounded and solid brushwork, resembling the strokes in clerical writing. For instance, the round tip of the stem

¹⁵² Yukio Lippit, "Of Modes and Manners in Japanese Ink Painting: Sesshū's "Splashed Ink Landscape" of 1495," *The Art Bulletin* 94, no. 1 (March 2012): 50.

(Figure 10.5, see the red circle) was created like the beginning point of the character “右(Figure 10.6, see the red circle),” which is quintessential clerical writing and comes from Yao’s own collection, now housed in the Library of Congress.



Figure 10.1 Yao Hua, 1876-1930, *Hua Yao's fan painting of peony and lotus*, cs000087, The late-Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China, Silk, fan, 11.8 x 21.3 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.



Figure 10.2 Chen Hengke, 1876-1923, *Old Tree*, 1949/1.198, circa 1920-1923, ink and color on paper, 22 15/16 in x 13 1/16 in (58.26 cm x 33.18 cm), University of Michigan Museum of Art, Gift of Katsuizumi Sotokichi.



Figure 10.3 Dong Qichang, 1555-1636, *Invitation to Reclusion at Jingxi*, 1990.318, 1611, Handscroll; ink on paper, Image: 10 1/4 x 36 7/16 in. (26 x 92.6 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Wan-go H. C. Weng, 1990.

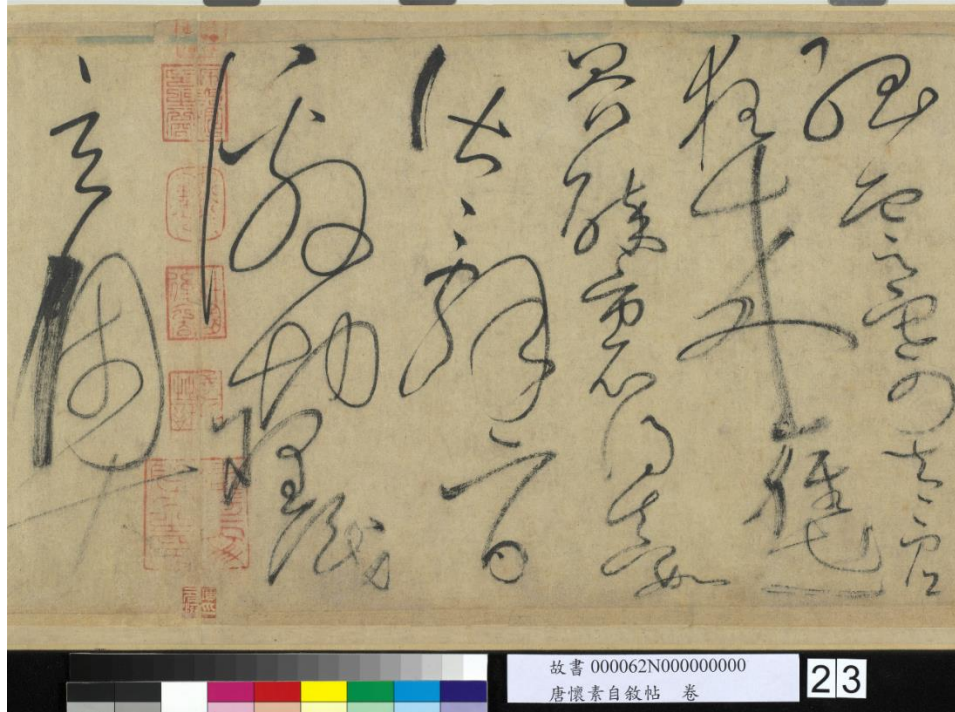


Figure 10.4 Huaisu, 725-785, *Autobiography*, Cultural relics unified number: Old Book 000062N0000000000, Work Number: Stories 00006200000, 777, Paper, Lead the head 30.5 x 136.5 cm, front water barrier, 30.8 x 10.2 cm, this page 28.3 x 755, back water 31 x 10.2, smear 30.3 x 608.7, National Palace Museum.



Figure 10.5 from Figure 10.1

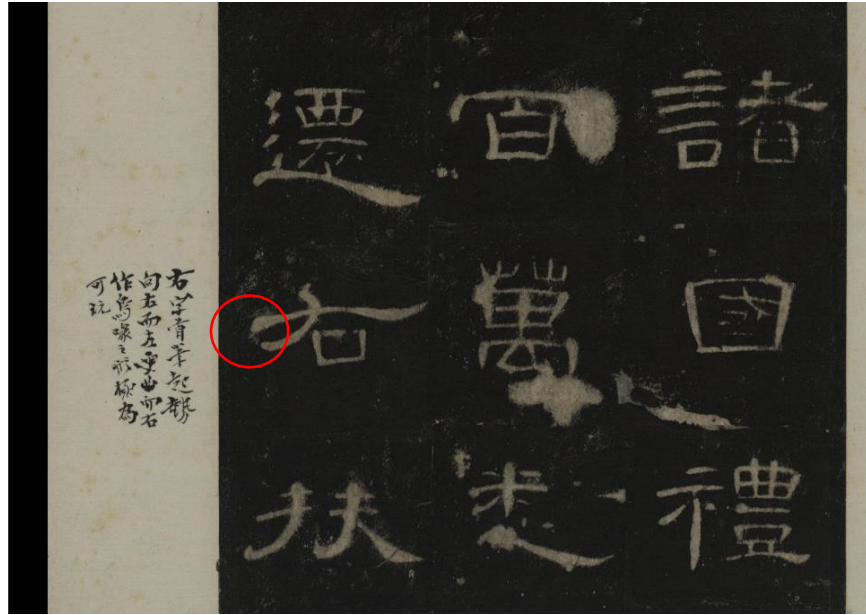


Figure 10.6 Yao Hua, 1876-1930, *Cao quan bei* (image 4), 2021667485, 169-184, rubbing, 25 x 11.5 cm, Library of Congress, World Digital Library.

11. Zhao Yuantao

This fan is a good representation of Chinese literati painting. The poem in this painting reads: “The hermit’s shack is surrounded by mountain haze. A trail in the deep forest slides down along the hill. The empty mountain allows me to forget the heat in June, as bamboos serve as a green window screen, blocking the heat of the sun.” On the right of the painting, it shows a view of a rugged rock shading a thatched cottage, from which a master oversees a bamboo grove and the smoky contour of foliage in the valley (Figure 10.1). The master has, as the poem suggests, sufficient leisure at his disposal. On the opposite side, the other master sits close to the window, and seems unconscious of the cascading waters below. His hut is partially hidden by boulders and surrounded by trees. The boulder on his left rises to the right, echoing the rock in the distance. This visual resonance creates a strong tension for the audience. In the background, the slender pinnacles, rendered in soft grays, rise above the scene. The perpendicular feature of these pinnacles stabilizes the visual tension, and creates a sense of mystery in the painting.

In the overall image of this fan, the tensed intricacies, twisted texture, and touch of dissonance are balanced by a quiescent calm and pleasing visual effect, which mimics Tang Yin (1470-1524)’s oeuvre (Figure 10.2). The light, brisk, cursive brushwork coupled with the ink washes in Tang and Zhao’s paintings effectively give the illusion of a convoluted appearance. Further, Zhao’s painting is punctuated by small dots, very much like the mossy dots found in Tang’s paintings. However, the colors in Zhao’s work are brighter than Tang’s, thereby toning down the grittiness of Tang’s style. The unspoken leisure from the usage of color stays in one’s mind longer than the visual image itself.

In this work, the mountain is imposing, the rocks are leisurely-arranged, the waterfall is close to the bamboo and pine trees, the stream splashes and flows, the water is clear and bright,

the bamboos are enveloped in mist, clouds and mist appear and vanish, pine branches grow crooked, the foot of the mountain descends into the clouds--- all of this embodies literati elegance in the opinion of Wen Zhenheng (1585-1645, see above, in the Introduction), a scholar who stressed the importance of “antiquity (*gu*)” and its association with “elegance (*ya*),” and representing the highest cultural refinement which he called “superfluous things.”¹⁵³ As Wen says,

It is necessary to seek purity and elegance in courtyards and entrances, a clear decoration of rooms and shelters, to bear in a scholar's heart the complete solitude of kiosks and terraces, human refinement in pavilions and secluded studies. It is also necessary to cultivate splendid trees and bizarre bamboo shoots. Bronzes and rocks, scrolls and books, must be arranged. In this way, those who reside and dwell here will forget to return [to the outside world]; those who wander around here will forget their weariness.¹⁵⁴

To depict these “superfluous things” in a well-defined aesthetic manner, Wen called for an elegant correspondence between the interior of the artist and his external environment.

The pursuit of elegant elements in painting is *de rigueur* for Chinese literati-painters. In Qian Du (1763-1844)'s *Dream Journey to Mt. Tiantai* (Figure 10.3),¹⁵⁵ the crescent-shaped stone bridge arches across the waterfall with a quaint feeling; the twisting and variegated foliage moves with great order and leisure in response to the serpentine terrain; the densely-grown pine trees put the adjacent cloud into stark relief; the dwellers of the cottage indulge in their own worlds ignoring the cascading sounds of the waterfall---these components are echoed in Zhao's

¹⁵³ Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991). Craig Clunas, *Fruitful Sites: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China* (London: Reaktion Books, 1996).

¹⁵⁴ Maurizio Paolillo, “Forging the Garden: The “Yuanye” and the Significance of the Chinese Garden in the 17th Century,” *East and West* 53, no. 1/4 (December 2003).

¹⁵⁵ This painting was also inspired by Tang Yin's painting, see <https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1975.75>.

painting as well as Wen's saying. In addition, the mountain peaks and humps, appears in rows, overlapping each other. Further below, the forests and clouds are seen appearing here and disappearing there. Thus, the total scene conveys to the viewer a sense of great spatial expanse, and connotes a feeling of Shangri-la.

Another feature of literati painting is the combination of painting, calligraphy, and poetry. A literati-artist will not restrict himself to mere painting; he will also acquire knowledge from books. Therefore, literati paintings often contain a surfeit of written components---verses, essays, long and short notes, all reflecting emotional bonds, moral research, or friendly interactions, and often in specific contexts. For the Chinese literati, the correspondence between these three arts was an idealistic way for them to express their talents holistically. In a poem, one can enjoy the rhythm and choice of words; in a painting, one can see how the object is depicted, and how the brush was used; in calligraphy, one can follow the lines, movement, and vitality of the brushwork. In a sense, they enhance each other and create a powerful yet subtle totality of the work.

Zhao's fan is a good example of this combination. The associative function of the poetry works in the mind of the viewer by serving as a reminder of the painting. Likewise, the painting is a silent poem, amplifying the meaning of the lyrics. Plus, the elegant semi-cursive calligraphy conveys leisure to the overall effect, thereby signaling the tranquility of a hermit, and accentuating the theme of the image.

Composing a poem in one's own painting with great calligraphy is always regarded as one of the highest standards in Chinese literati painting. The key factor in this combination lies in the poetry, or broadly speaking, the literary prowess or scholastic learning of the author. Dong Qichang discussed the importance of learning to a literati artist:

There are Six Canons for the painter. The first is “spirit consonance should be lively and vitalizing.” But spirit consonance is not something that can be learned. We already know it when we are born, for it is endowed by heaven. There is, however, something that a painter can learn. Let him read ten thousand volumes and walk ten thousand miles. All these will wash away the turgid matters of the mundane world and help form the hills and valleys within his bosom. Once he has made these preparations within himself, whatever he sketches and paints will be able to convey the spirit of the mountains and rivers.¹⁵⁶

Void is the other noticeable feature of literati painting. The various forms of trees, landscape and buildings, merge into the void and emerge from it. Such emptiness is critical for a painting to gain an aura of *je ne sais quoi*, which does not necessarily assist in an accurate portrayal, but conveys a much more important meaning to the work. For literati painting, the painter should not merely portray the tangible, the concrete, and the visible image, but should also pay attention to the vacant, the elusive, and the invisible. In Taoist ontological search for origins, void is a state of non-being or nothingness before the creation of heaven and earth.¹⁵⁷ It is an intermediary or reciprocal link between the opposite poles of nature, or transitional elements of phenomena. This dynamic aesthetic and cosmological relationship underlying the void enlivens the philosophical systems of Chinese art.¹⁵⁸ In calligraphy, void bridges floating spheres and winding lines, and helps to integrate the temporal and spatial elements in a work. In painting, the void appears in the mountains, waters, or clouds, embodying the “unifying action of breath-spirit.”¹⁵⁹ We can say void in painting is similar to *yin*, or passive elements. But its

¹⁵⁶ *The Chinese scholar's studio: artistic life in the late Ming period: an exhibition from the Shanghai Museum*, ed. Chu-Tsing Li, James C.Y. Watt...[and others] (New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson: Published in association with the Asia Society Galleries, 1897), 197 & 29.

¹⁵⁷ *Eiko & Koma: time is not even, space is not empty*, ed. Joan Ruthfuss, with texts by Suzanne Carbonneau...[and others] (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2011).

¹⁵⁸ François Cheng, *Empty and Full: The Language of Chinese Painting*, trans. Michael H. Kohn (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1994).

¹⁵⁹ Richard Wilhelm, *The I Ching, or Book of Changes*, trans. Cary F. Baynes (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1967).

function is not passive at all. It will break rigidity and stereotypes and is even more significant than active fullness (*yang*). François Cheng writes: “Emptiness introduces discontinuity and reversibility into a given system and thus permits the elements composing the system to transcend rigid opposition At the same time, emptiness offers ... the possibility of approaching the universe at the level of totality.”¹⁶⁰ Of course, void could not be achieved without the visible expression of *yang*. The twisting trees, cascading waterfall, or active figures, when commingled with empty clouds and water, invite viewers to pass through a space that is both this-worldly and other-worldly, unmeasurable and measurable, interchanging between heaven, earth, and man, and even the cycles of birth, death, and rebirth. Here the concrete objects or brushwork are invigorated by an invisible force, at the same time, the nebulous body is metamorphosed into a planar existence; altogether they reveal an eternal and ethereal beauty of Chinese art.

Void was still practiced by Chinese literati-artists in the Republican age. In Qi Baishi’s *Solitary Bird Perched on a Banana Plant* (Figure 10.4), the huge empty unpainted space on the top of the painting is saturated with strong meditational, spiritual and poetic connotations of a philosophical and religious world-view. This is influenced by the polarization of *yin and yang*, typical of Daoism and Chan aesthetic traditions. He Qing compares Western painting to waves of a tumultuous river in flood, irradiated by the bright sun; and Chinese painting to a lake with calmly splashing waves, drenched in distant moonlight. He notes: “Chinese painting is affected by the atmosphere or artist’s inner silence, as well as the silence of nature, which all intertwine,

¹⁶⁰ Cheng, *Empty and Full*, 36.

synchronize and elevate into the cosmic and metaphysical silence.”¹⁶¹ Indeed, the void in Qi’s painting conjures up a mysterious and metaphysical meaning, embodying the universe’s dialectical tensions on a contrasting plane.

¹⁶¹ He Qing, *Images du silence: Pensée et art chinois* (Paris: Harmattan, 1999), 11.



Figure 11.1 Zhao Yuantao, unknown date, *Yuantao Zhao's fan painting with pine and bamboo landscape*, cs000085, 1942, Paper, 13.4 x 24.8 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.



Figure 11. 2 Tang Yin, 1470-1523, *Mount Hua*, John L. Severance Fund 1969.116, 1506, Hanging scroll, ink and light color on paper, Painting: 116.4 x 41.4 cm (45 13/16 x 16 5/16 in.); Overall with knobs: 213.5 x 66.7cm (84 1/16 x 26 1/4 in.), The Cleveland Museum of Art.



Figure 11.3 Qian Du, 1796-1820, *Dream Journey to Mt. Tiantai*, Gift of Jean-Pierre Dubosc 1975.75, 1814, Handscroll, ink on paper, Overall: 29.8 x 72 cm (11 3/4 x 28 3/8 in.), The Cleveland Museum of Art.

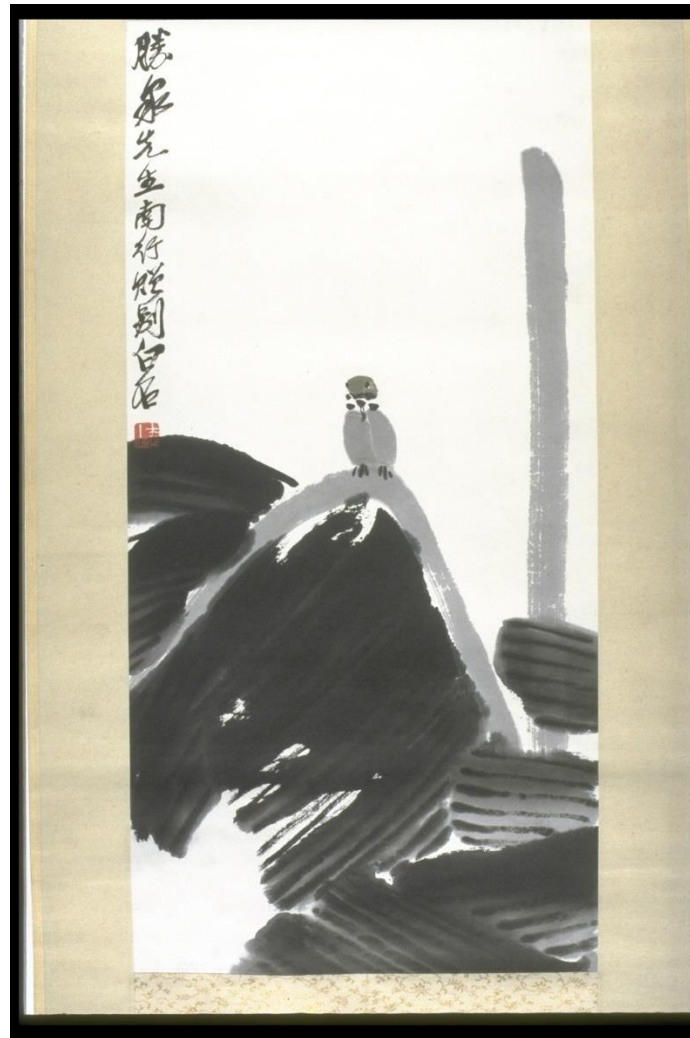


Figure 11. 4 Qi Baishi, 1864-1957, *Solitary Bird Perched on a Banana Plant*, 1949/1.196, circa 1920, ink on paper, 60 in x 21 in (152.4 cm x 53.34 cm), University of Michigan Museum of Art, Gift of Katsuizumi Sotokichi.

12. Wang Kun

In 1909, Wang Kun (1877-1946) founded the *Yu Garden Calligraphy and Painting Philanthropic Association* in which artists would donate their artwork for sale in order to help refugees and homeless people.¹⁶² Our UWM Special Collection authors, Wang Zhen (1867-1938, see below, in Wang Zhen's entry) and Zhang Shanzi (1882-1940, Figure 12.2), were members of this association.¹⁶³

The ink tonality of this Wang Kun (Figure 12.1)'s painting is simple and subdued. The landscape is desolate. The patches of ochre suggest autumn. It is neither graceful nor alluring, and most of its motifs are commonplace: the elements that would suggest culture and civilization---convoluted rocks, cultivated plants, and elegant buildings, which had been shown in Zhao Yuantao (see the above entry)'s and Lin Shu's paintings (Figure 12.3) ---are entirely absent. The thatched cottage, and the path that leads to it---all aspects of a human presence---are humble. The tree appears unkempt on a low-lying path. The fisherman on the boat or the recluse in the cottage are merely hinted at. The bamboo leaves are coarsely brushed in, without the typical crisp slashing strokes. Therefore, this painting is different from literati painting, presenting the world of a painter who obviously was not among the privileged.

In the inscription, Wang stated his painting was a direct emulation of the work of Xi Gang (1746-1803). Xi was not only a famous seal engraver of the "Eight Masters of Seal in

¹⁶²Zhang Ting & Lin Yanhui 张婷 & 林艳慧, "Wuyuanji haipai huajia Wang Kun huihua jiqi yingxiang" 婺源籍海派画家汪琨绘画及其影响初探 [The preliminary research of Wang Kun (who comes from wuyuan)'s art and its influence], *Wenwu jianding yu jianshang* 文物鉴定与鉴赏 13 (2019): 07-022.

¹⁶³ Zhang & Lin, 10.

Xiling,” but was well known for his application of stele writings to paintings.¹⁶⁴ The blunt, rugged qualities of the brushwork in Figure 12.4 reflect his mastery of seal carving. From the blunt tree trunks to the iron-stick-like twigs, one senses a chiseled or carved quality, as if the artist wielded his brush like a knife cutting into stone. This quality was achieved through the usage of a well-worn brush. Such a tool prevents incisive modeling of motifs and leads to rough contours that become a powerful force of their own, similar to the writing on bronze, cliff or stone. It seems that the author made an attempt to mask any technical finesse, shying away from elegant brush style. Yet the parts come together with great harmony, without exhibiting any overt planning.

Before the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, one of the special characteristics of Chinese painting was its exploration of ways to convey a consciousness of antiquity.¹⁶⁵ By incorporating images of ancient bronzes, archaic jades, ancient stele, stone monuments, or rubbings into their paintings, Chinese artists tended to connect archaeological themes to humanistic pursuits.¹⁶⁶ For instance, in Ren Yi (1840-1896)’s *Zhong Kui* (the legendary Demon Queller, Figure 12.5), the upright position of the three bronze vessels seems to be as important as the figure---not only do they correspond to the imposing perpendicularity of Zhong’s posture, but also amplify his sublimity and righteousness.

¹⁶⁴ Han Tianheng & Zhang Weiyu, *A History of Artistic Innovations of Chinese Seal Engraving Schools*, trans. Ye Rulan (New York: SCPG Publishing Corporation, 2018), 047. “Xi Menquan zhun” 奚君蒙泉传 [Xi Menquan biography], in *Xileng wu bu yi yi zhu* 西泠五布衣遗著 [The posthumous works of five recluse from Xiling], ed. Ding Bing (Hangzhou: Qiantang Ding shi, 1880), unknown page.

¹⁶⁵ Chuang Shen, “Archaeology in Late Qing Dynasty Painting,” *Ars Orientalis* 24, (1994): 83.

¹⁶⁶ Shen, 83-104.

It is more common for late Qing artists to use the brush style of antiquity in their paintings. Displaying brushwork of the *jinshi* or “Metal-and-Stone” is a great indication of the scholastic accomplishments of a learned man. At that time, the proliferation of antiques among the educated provided artists many opportunities to study and depict such antiques in a realistic manner. Ancient artifacts were no longer of interest merely because they were ancient, rare, and visually pleasing; rather, they were regarded more seriously as inspirations to study and to art.¹⁶⁷

Wu Changshuo (1844-1927) was the most important figure to promulgate *jinshiqi*, or a “Metal-and-Stone Flavor” in painting.¹⁶⁸ He had a taste for the lush colors of flowers, and he accentuated his work by the use of awkward, heavy, and emphatic outlines, which impart a sober, antique patina. In Figure 12.6, the brush lines of the branch, veins, and pomegranate are painted with centered and rounded strokes, derived from his study of seal (Figure 12.7) and clerical script (Figure 7.7 and Figure 10.6). Refinement is cast aside, and skill is hidden.

Similarly, many paintings in this era embraced the historical trend to antiquarianism. Zeng Xi (1861-1940) is another representative of the *Jinshi* Painting School. Especially adept at seal and clerical script writings, he became a leading figure in artistic circles and is known as the mentor of the prominent Chinese modern artist Zhang Daqian (1899-1983). His calligraphy is modeled after ancient inscriptions on metal, stone, and bamboo slips. His painting shows the similar effect of antiquity. In figure 12.8, the palette is restrained, and the composition exhibits a subtle tremor. Most noticeably, the blunt and angled contours are reminiscent of the branches in Wu’s pomegranate, conjuring up the bold yet awkward quality of ancient stele inscriptions.

¹⁶⁷ Shen, 83-104.

¹⁶⁸ “Innovation within Tradition: Shanghai Scholar-Painters of the Early Twentieth Century,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 58, no. 3 (Winter, 2001): 15.

Now let us focus on the iconographic motifs and stylistic symbolism in Wang's landscape painting.

The iconography in Wang's work is very common in Chinese landscape painting: huge boulders are scattered in the front, deciduous (or conifer) and withered trees are commingled in the middle, and thatched huts are wedged in the trees. Where does this iconography come from? One extant engraving of Wang Wei (701-761)'s *Wangchuan Villa* (Figure 12.9), a depiction of the artist's private garden retreat, gives us some clues to the origin, and most importantly, it may disclose the symbolism of this motif.

Wang Wei is a very famous poet, painter, musician, hermit, and Buddhist of ancient China.¹⁶⁹ His artistic style has been effusively praised by Su Shi (1037-1101) and Dong Qichang. Su contended that "there is painting in his poetry and poetry in his painting," a statement that became a cornerstone and ideal for Chinese literati art.¹⁷⁰ Dong canonized the divisions of Northern and Southern Schools in Chinese art history by putting Wang on a pedestal as the patriarch of the Southern School, who attached importance to an artist's sudden awakening (or *satori*), and whose work took precedence over the punctilious paintings executed by the professionals of the Northern School.¹⁷¹ Therefore, his works, especially *Wangchuan Villa*,

¹⁶⁹ *Laughing Lost in the Mountain: Poems of Wang Wei*, trans. Tony Barnstone, Willis Barnstone, and Xu Haixin; critical introduction by Willis Barnstone & Tony Barnstone (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1991), xvi.

¹⁷⁰ Wai-kam Ho, "The Literary Concepts of 'Picture-like' (Ju-hua) and 'Picture-idea' (Hua-i) in the Relationship between Poetry and Painting, in *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy, and Painting*, ed. Alfreda Murck and Wen C. Fong (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991), 359.

¹⁷¹ Joseph R. Levenson, "The Amateur Ideal in Ming and Early Ch'ing Society: Evidence from Painting," in *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 325-326.

generated the greatest interest among connoisseurs and artists since the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127).¹⁷² It is said that this painting had been designed as a table decoration and remarkably, as a pattern for tattoos in the tenth century.¹⁷³ Therefore, it is not surprising that his iconography was still being copied by people living one thousand years later.

However, according to Lothar Ledderose, that Wang appeared to be the progenitor of Chinese literati art is due not so much to his stylistic innovations, as it is due to his immortalization of Wangchuan Villa, which became the model dwelling for the literati class.¹⁷⁴ This begs the question what specific symbolism did Wang hope to immortalize through this painting? Perhaps his copious poems give us a hint.

To quote from Wai-lim Yip's words, Wang is "the quietest poet in Chinese and perhaps in all literary history."¹⁷⁵ If a single element in nature is synecdochic of the whole human situation, then Wang's recitation for an empty mountain, rain, a voice, and a white cloud, which are ubiquitous in his poems, is symbolic of his quest for eremitic seclusion.¹⁷⁶ If we rethink Su's praise related to Wang's superb treatment of textual-image symbiosis, it might be reasonable for us to extrapolate the symbolism of Wang's artistic motif (boulder, tree, or hut), from his poetic

¹⁷² Robert Harrist, *Painting and Private Life in Eleventh-Century China: Mountain Villa by Li Gonglin* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), 71.

¹⁷³ Harrist, 71.

¹⁷⁴ Lothar Ledderose, "The Earthly Paradise: Religious Elements in Chinese Landscape Art." In *Theories of the Arts in China*, ed. Susan Bush & Christian Murck (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 179.

¹⁷⁵ Wei Wang, *Hiding the universe; poems*, trans. Wai-lim Yip (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1972), 6.

¹⁷⁶ *Laughing Lost in the Mountain: Poems of Wang Wei*, xv, xvii, xviii, and Iiv.

equivalent (mountain, rain, voice, or cloud): at first glance, they both try to convey a pastoral quietude; but the implicit undertone of both focuses on eremitic meditation to achieve transcendence. The historical resonance of this eremitism from Wang's time to modern China is made possible by the representation of his iconographic motifs (and poetic lyrics). When a Chinese literati-scholar finds it unattainable to balance his official life and seclusion, he would probably do well to follow Wang's stylistic choice and paint a continuous sequence of hills, rivers, lakes, and humble abodes. These quiescent images, along with Wang's plain syntax, provide a reverie for the Chinese literati, helping them to undertake an ecstatic journey of release and exultation, and to transcend life and death, which remains a primary theme in Chinese art.

Therefore, even Wang belongs to the Stele Painting School; his art still shows a connection to literati painting.

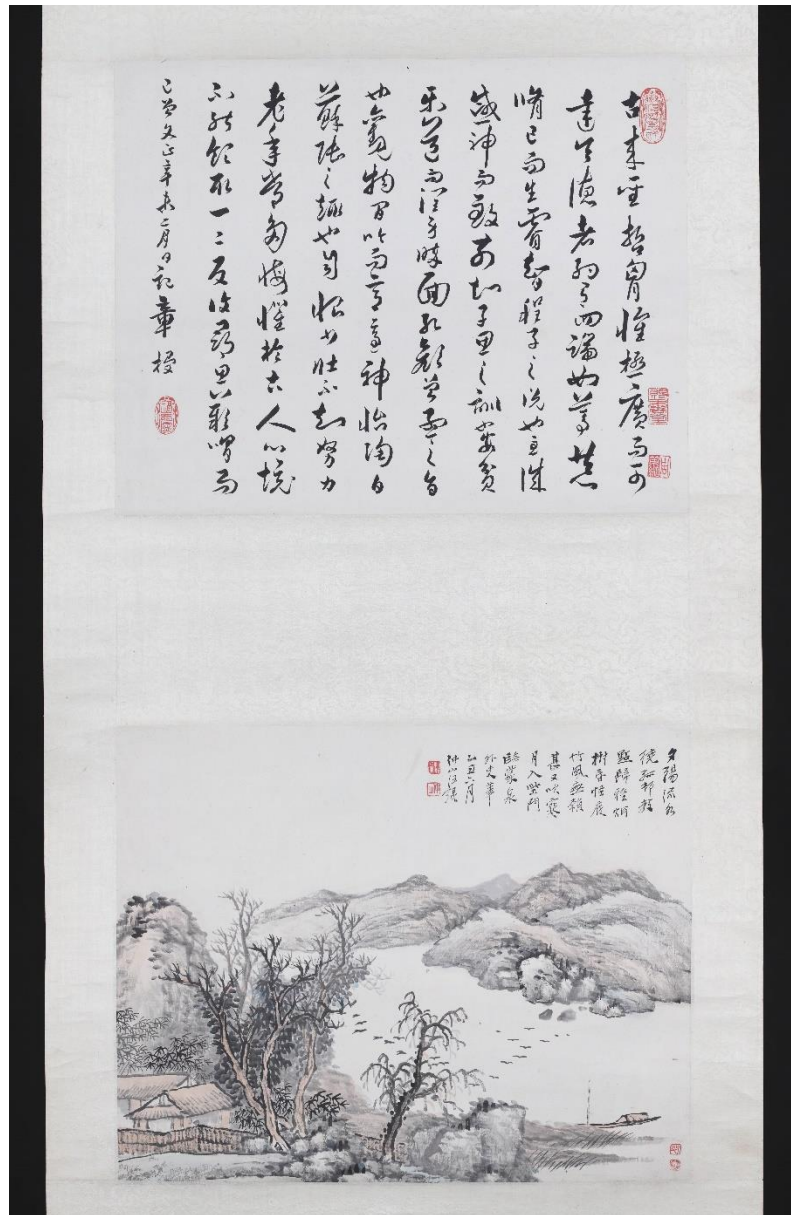


Figure 12.1 Wang Kun, 1877-1946, *Zhongshan Wang's calligraphic and painting hanging scroll*, cs000115, 1925, Paper, 18 x 66 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.



Figure 12.2 Zhang Shanzi, 1882-1940, *Shanzi Zhang's hanging scroll with groups of tigers*, cs000111, 1930, Paper, 18 x 81 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.



Figure 12.3 Lin Shu, 1852-1924, *Qinnan Lin's landscape painting of Chao Lake*, cs000110, The late-Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China, Paper, 18 x 73.3 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.



Figure 12.4 Xi Gang, 1746-1803, *Studies of trees*, 1902,0606,0.52.16, 1796, Paper, Album leaf, Height: Height: 17.80 centimetres, Width: Width: 38 centimetres, The British Museum, donated by: Sir Augustus Wollaston Franks.



Figure 12.5 Ren Yi, 1840-1896, *Zhong Kui*, 2002.208.2, dated 1883, Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper, Image: 67 5/8 x 36 3/4 in. (171.8 x 93.3 cm), Overall with mounting: 120 x 40 5/8 in. (304.8 x 103.2 cm), Overall with knobs: 120 x 44 1/2 in. (304.8 x 113 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Cécile and Sandy Mactaggart, 2002.



Figure 12.6 Wu Changshuo, 1844-1927, *Pomegranates*, 98.169.1, 1927, Ink and color on paper, wood, 13 7/16 x 20 7/8 x 7/8 in. (34.13 x 53.02 x 2.22 cm) (open), Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Ruth and Bruce Dayton.

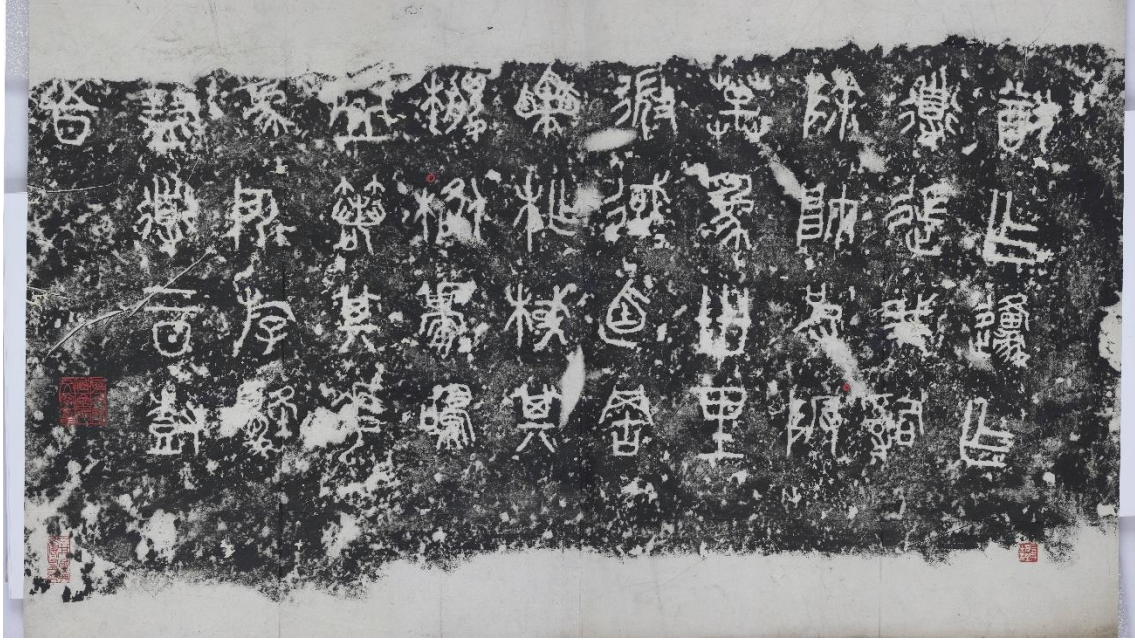


Figure 12.7 *Shi gu wen* (Stone Drum), 475-221 B.C, Hsin 3, Album leaf, Inscriptions on Rock and Stone, Height: 46.3 cm, Width: 58.6 cm, University of California Berkeley Library Digital Collections, East Asian Library, Chinese Rubbings Collection.



Figure 12.8 Zeng Xi, 1861-1930, *Ink Landscape*, 1980/2.202, 1923, ink on paper, 35 1/16 in x 18 3/4 in (89.06 cm x 47.63 cm), University of Michigan Museum of Art, Gift of Sarah and Otto Graf, supplemented by the Margaret Watson Parker Art Collection Fund.



Figure 12.9 Wang Wei, ca. 699-ca.759, *Wangchuan Villa* (stone engraving by Shen Guohua, after engraving by Guo Zhongshu, 910-977), 2002-350, Ming dynasty, 1368–1644, Handscroll; ink rubbing on paper, Titlepiece: 30 x 103.cm. (11 13/16 x 40 13/16 in.) Image: 30 x 496.7 cm. (11 13/16 x 195 9/16 in.) Colophons: 30 x 334.2 cm. (11 13/16 x 131 9/16 in.) Mount: h. 36.3 cm. (14 5/16 in.), Princeton University Art Museum, Far Eastern Seminar Collection.

13. Chen Banding

In the previous entries, we have mentioned the bane of the Four Wangs' paintings: their works are exquisitely refined, but in "imitation of the ancients," with no originality. Think what would happen in Western art if artists nowadays unanimously "painted in the manner of," or modeled themselves on a famous painter like Cézanne.¹⁷⁷ Into this picture came Shitao (1642-1707), an individualistic artist who avowedly abjured repetitious imitation, and boldly embraced creativity and subjectivity. According to Liu Haisu (1896-1994), Shitao's creativity came from a simple presentation of his intuition, feelings, and personality, rather than a complex analytical representation of nature. This is analogous to Western Post-impressionism's ideology, in that both Shitao (Figure 13.2a) and Cézanne (see Figure 13.2b) adopted similar intuitive strokes to depict the remote mountains, although Shitao precedes the latter by two hundred years.¹⁷⁸ In Jonathan Hay's opinion, Shitao's subjectivity stems from the interplay between his desire for independence, his adaptation to self-consciousness, and his betrayal of doubt.¹⁷⁹ For Shitao, the most powerful manifesto of his expressionism is "I am I, and in me there is only I!"¹⁸⁰

At the time of Shitao's birth, the Ming regime was teetering. Having royal blood, he was saddened by this dynastic *melee*. He sought refuge in religion, embracing monastic life at the age

¹⁷⁷ Lin Yutang, *The Chinese Theory of Art* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1967), 137-138.

¹⁷⁸ Liu Haishu 刘海粟, "Shitao yu houqi yinxiangpai" 石涛与后期印象派 [Shitao and the postmodernism], in *Liu Haishu yishu lunwen* 刘海粟艺术论文 [The artistic monographs of Liu Haishu], ed. Zhu Jinlou & Yuan Zhihuang 朱金楼&袁志煌 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1987), 71.

¹⁷⁹ Jonathan Hay, *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 24.

¹⁸⁰ Joseph R. Levenson, "The Amateur Ideal in Ming and Early Ch'ing Society: Evidence from Painting," in *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, ed. John K. Faibank (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 333.

of fourteen. He was regarded as a rebel in art, displaying a range of styles different from those of the orthodox school. Two hundred years later, when the Manchu rulers became increasingly inept *vis-à-vis* Western powers, a sense of disillusionment raised a revolutionary spirit in Chinese artists. As Shitao's devotee, Wu Changshuo (1844-1927) inherited his rebellious spirit, showing a similar disregard for traditions. Indeed, comparing Wu and Shitao's painting (Figure 13.3 and Figure 13.4), one can see that tension always guides their paintings: the strong diagonal composition, the visual contrast between black and white, dense and sparse, and the intersection of verticality and horizontality, all provide a tinge of uneasiness to the audience. In addition, they both prefer to leave an unpainted space at the bottom of the paper, either implying the misty atmosphere of a splashing waterfall or a dense cloud, giving a strong sense of three-dimensionality and mystery. The difference, however, lies in their brushwork. Shitao was a practitioner of Zen Buddhism.¹⁸¹ This Buddha-nature gives his brushstroke an otherworldly quietude. By contrast, Wu was influenced by an archaeological spirit, and the culture of *nouveau riche* at that time. By introducing *jinshiqi* (Metal-and-Stone flavor) to painting, he created "a bitter flavor of ginger and cinnamon," achieving an effect very like the mark a chisel makes on stone, creating something new, and gaining the attention of the public.¹⁸²

Wu's artistic bravura passed to his *protégé* Chen Banding (1876-1970). Chen studied painting and seal engraving with Wu during the 1910s. They shared many similarities in their art. For instance, in seal engraving, they both knew how to create interaction between lines and space, which animated their compositions (Figure 13.5a and Figure 13.5b). Differing from the

¹⁸¹ Hay, *Shitao*: 239.

¹⁸² Andrews and Shen, 79.

seals created by earlier seal engravers. who focused on even spacing and a static balance between lines, the characters on their seals achieved three-dimensionality and freedom.

Influenced by Wu, Chen also followed Shitao as a model. Chen's indebtedness is epitomized in our UWM Special Collection (Figure 13.1). First, from a calligraphic perspective, Chen inherited Shitao's flamboyant clerical style, as they both liked to end their strokes with a sharp upward flick (see Figure 13.6a and 13.6b). Chen even picked up Shitao's idiosyncratic design for radicals. For instance, in Figure 13.7a, the left radical of his 門 is written as 戶 instead of 冂, which is an unusual practice in writing, but is not uncommon in Shitao's works (Figure 13.7b). Second, in painting, Shitao's artistic idioms such as the angular and twisted outline of the rock (Figure 13.8), the tenacious tree trunks with the round lichen spot (Figure 13.4), and the serrate-shaped shrubs, are all reflected in Chen's painting.

By synthesizing Wu Changshuo and Shitao's style into his own, Chen forged a unique visual rhetoric. In this UWM special collection, the energy-laden brushwork and the free application of ink wash cross over the contours of rocks. At the bottom slope, the faint washes of malachite green are applied over ink passages. The tint of ocher leaves a touch of warmth and a hint of an autumnal hue. Strikingly, on the top of the painting, the clouds rise and fall as they move and dip into the valleys, in a display that is scintillatingly mercurial, while emphasizing the air and land's rich moisture.

The mercurial nature of the clouds is linked to the philosophical-religious theme of the painting. In the middle of the painting, the famous Buddhist layman, Vimalakirti (*Weimojie*), and the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, Manjusri (*Wenshu*) are having their legendary conversation.

According to *Vimalakirtinirdesa Sutra*, Vimalakirti is an illustrious scholar, a faithful follower of

the Buddha, and a brilliant debater. The Buddha, on hearing that Vimalakirti was ill, sent his chief disciple Manjusri, to inquire after his health. A debate followed between the Sage and the Bodhisattva, but Vimalakirti's comprehension of the Buddha's doctrine was so extraordinary that Manjusri was easily defeated.¹⁸³ Here, Vimalakirti sits frontally on a dais, leaning comfortably on an elbow rest, and is depicted as a traditional Confucian scholar. Manjusri is shown as an ordinary woman with no identifying attributes of bodhisattva. A reddish tinge on her face is indicative of her rueful disquiet, as she has been embarrassed by the acerbic wit of the layman-sage.

The debate between Vimalakirti and Manjusri was represented in Chinese art as early as Gu Kaizhi (344-406)'s time. The sheer number of translations and commentaries on this debate which appeared between the third and seventh centuries, and the frequency of the theme of Vimalakirti in the wall paintings and sculptures of Dunhuang and Longmen Grottos are testimony to its popularity.¹⁸⁴ In Wang Zhenpeng (ac. 1280-1329)'s *Vimalakirti and the Doctrine of Nonduality* (Figure 13.9), Vimalakirti shows his eloquence and wit from his bristling beard and piercing eyes. The gossamer-like winding brush lines which resemble floating silk threads facilitates the metaphysical significance of Buddhist doctrine "Emptiness is form, and form is emptiness."

The iconography illustrated in this painting is probably that of the "thunderous silence" related in their debate. Manjusri asked Vimalakirti to express his idea of Non-duality but

¹⁸³ Emma C. Bunker, "Early Chinese Representations of Vimalakīrti," *Artibus Asiae* 30, no. 1 (1968): 28.

¹⁸⁴ Richard B. Mather, "Vimalakīrti and Gentry Buddhism," *History of Religions* 8, no. 1 (Aug., 1968): 60.

Vimalakirti kept silent. Then Manjusri admiringly exclaimed, “Well done, well done! The Dharma of Non-duality is truly beyond letters and words.”¹⁸⁵ Here, Vimalakirti’s silence reminds his audience of the Buddhist teaching that the nature of all things is emptiness (*wanwujiekong*) and Non-duality is always paradoxical. As the Heart Sutra indicates, only by understanding this emptiness can one see through delusions and finally get to nirvana. Indeed, Non-duality declares an intimate conjunction between what appears to be fundamentally opposed—in Buddhism, emptiness and form, nirvana and samsara; in Christianity, the conjunction of divine power and human weakness, and of “dying with Christ” and “walking in newness of life,” or of the eternal divine Word and the suffering flesh of a human being.¹⁸⁶

Another topic of this conversation is whether women could attain enlightenment. Early Buddhist doctrine stated that lay people and women could not achieve enlightenment. Vimalakirti teaches us that those distinctions like gender are only relevant in this world – so the ban on lay people and women attaining enlightenment is not from the universe or Buddha, but from society itself. Anyone can attain enlightenment, if they are able to let go of their preconceived notions. After Vimalakirti sutra was published, several sequels followed advocating for the role of women in Buddhism and stating that anyone could become enlightened. It was, perhaps, the first time a major religion supported gender equality.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Helen E. Fernald, "A Note on the Chinese Stela of 551 A.D.," *The Museum Journal* XVIII, no. 1 (March, 1927): 111-114.

¹⁸⁶ Joseph S. O’Leary, “Nonduality in the Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa: A Theological Reflection,” *The Eastern Buddhist* 46, no. 1 (2015): 64.

¹⁸⁷ <https://www.girlmuseum.org/visit-of-manjushri-to-vimalakirti/>.

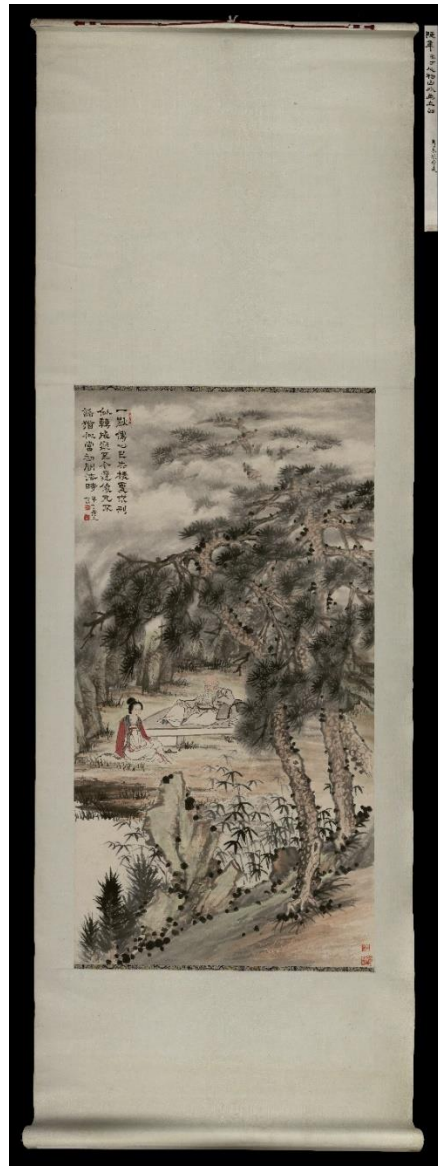


Figure 13.1 Chen Banding, 1877-1970, *Nian Chen's (Banding Chen) character and landscape painting hanging scroll*, cs000076, The late-Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China, Paper, 77.7 x 27.5 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.



13.2a Shitao, 1642-1707, *Landscapes*, 1989.363.154a-h, ca. 1690s, Album of eight leaves; ink and color on paper, 8 1/4 × 12 3/8 in. (21 × 31.4 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of John M. Crawford Jr., 1988.

13.2b Paul Cézanne, 1839-1906, *View of the Bay of Marseille with the Village of Saint-Henri*, 1963-116-3, 1883, Oil on canvas, 25 15/16 × 32 inches (65.9 × 81.3 cm), Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Mr. and Mrs. Carroll S. Tyson, Jr., Collection, 1963.



Figure 13.3 Wu Changshuo, 1844-1927, *Mountain scene with traveler*, F2014.8.42a-c, 1920, Ink on silk, H x W (image): 141 × 41.7 cm (55 1/2 × 16 7/16 in), Smithsonian National Museum of Asian Art, Freer Gallery of Art, Gift of Toshio and Yuka Fujikura in memory of Tome Fujikura.



Figure 13.4 Shitao, 1642-1707, *Hermitage in Mount Lu*, 1980.426.4, Qing dynasty (1644–1911), Hanging scroll; ink on paper, Image: 37 5/16 x 19 11/16 in. (94.8 x 50 cm), Overall with mounting: 76 1/4 x 26 in. (193.7 x 66 cm), Overall with knobs: 76 1/4 x 29 1/2 in. (193.7 x 74.9 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Douglas Dillon, 1980.



Figure 13.5a Chen Banding, from Figure 13.1

Figure 13.5b Wu Changshuo, from Figure 13.3

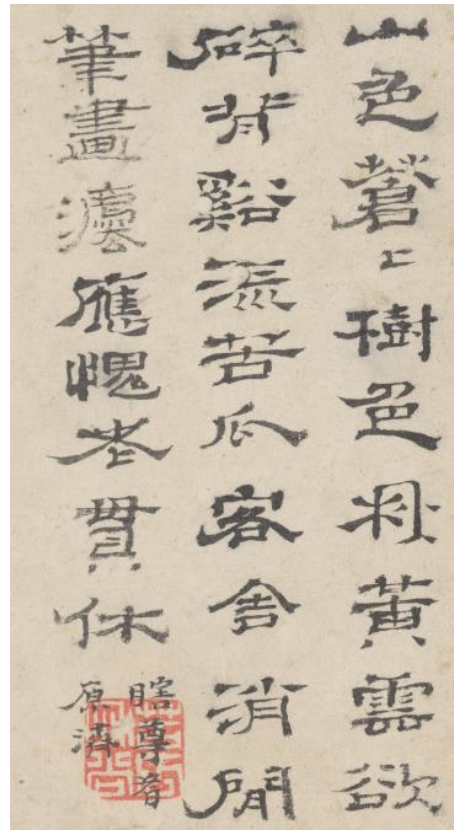
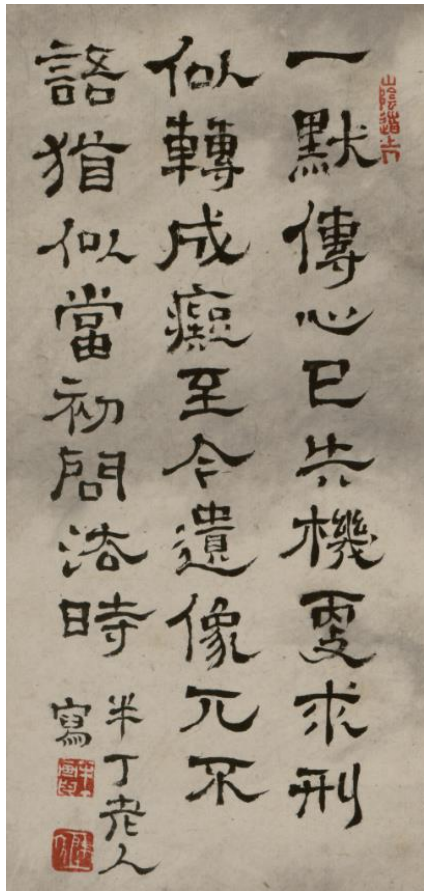


Figure 13.6a Chen Banding, from Figure 13.1

Figure 13.6b Shitao, 1642-1707, *Returning Home*, 1976.280a–n, ca. 1695, Album of twelve leaves; ink and color on paper, Image (each): 6 1/2 × 4 1/8 in. (16.5 × 10.5 cm), Each leaf with painting: 8 5/16 × 5 5/16 in. (21.1 × 13.5 cm), Each double leaf unfolded: 8 5/16 × 10 5/8 in. (21.1 × 27 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, From the P. Y. and Kinmay W. Tang Family, Gift of Wen and Constance Fong, in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Dillon, 1976.

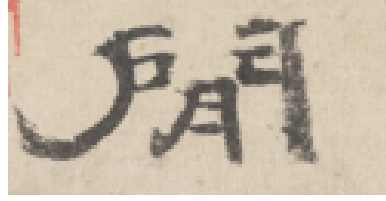
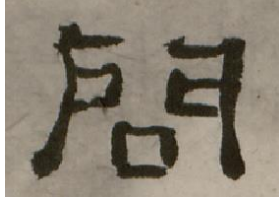


Figure 13.7a Chen Banding, from Figure 13.1

Figure 13.7b Shitao, from Figure 13.6b

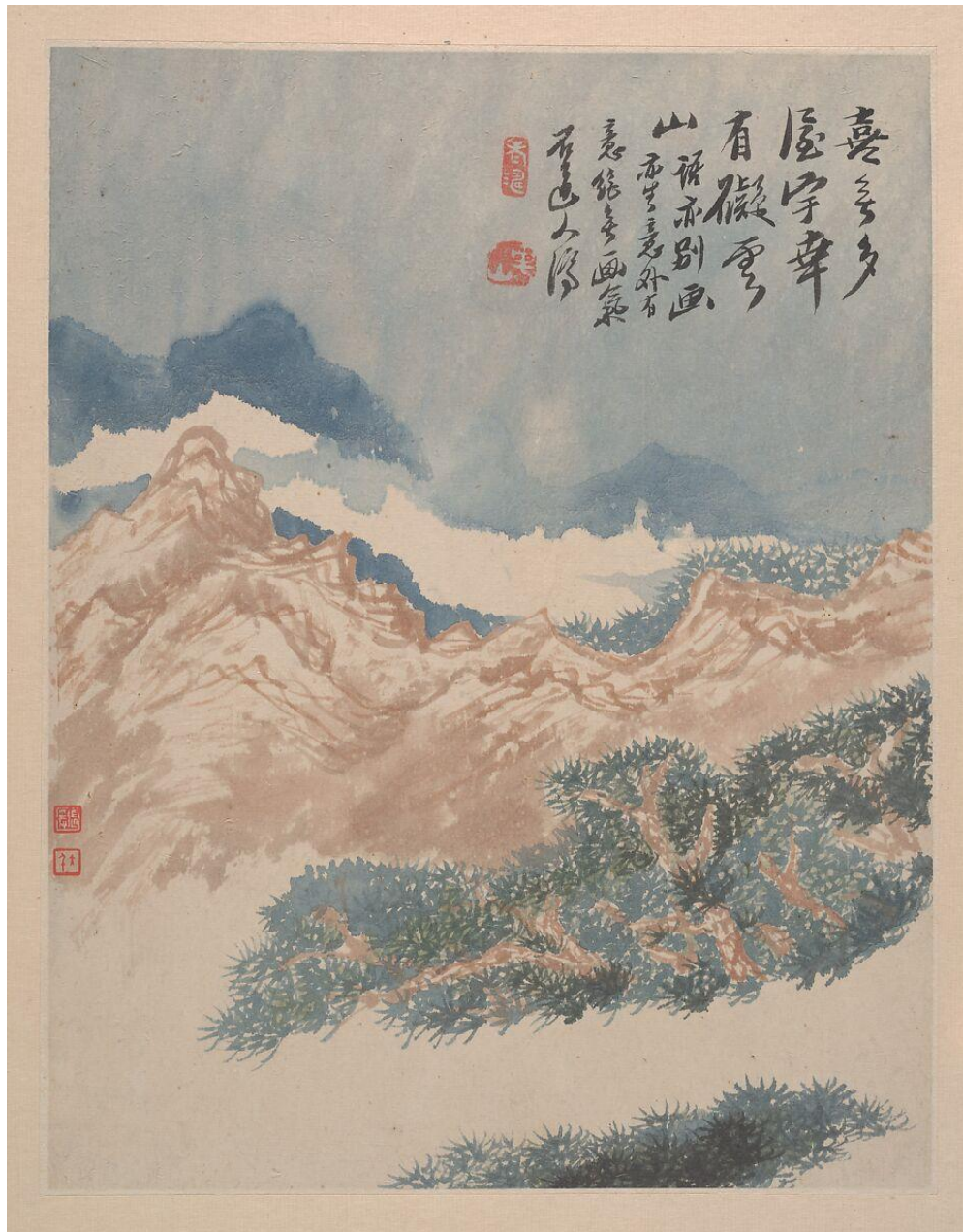


Figure 13.8 Shitao, 1642-1707, *Wilderness Colors*, 1972.122a-1, ca. 1700, Album of twelve paintings; ink and color on paper, Image (each leaf): 10 7/8 x 9 1/2 in. (27.6 x 24.1 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Sackler Fund, 1972.



Figure 13.9 Wang Zhenpeng, active ca. 1275-1330, *Vimalakirti and the Doctrine of Nonduality*, 1980.276, Handscroll; ink on silk, Image: 15 7/16 x 85 15/16 in. (39.2 x 218.3 cm)
Overall with mounting: 15 13/16 in. x 29 ft. 4 5/8 in. (40.2 x 895.7 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1980.

14. Wang Zhen

In November of 1922, Albert Einstein (1879-1955) visited Shanghai. One night, he was invited by Wang Zhen (1867-1938) to have dinner in the latter's villa.¹⁸⁸ Einstein indicated that though he had seen many great Chinese paintings that day, he was especially impressed by Wang's artistic works.¹⁸⁹ The UWM Special Collection has one of Wang's figure paintings (see Figure 14.1), which was created in the early winter of 1922. We might hypothesize that this very painting may have been appreciated by Einstein during that banquet, and subsequently brought here to the United States.

His biographer, Wang Zhongxiu (1940-2020), described Wang's life as a mirror, which reflected not only the arts, but also business, philanthropy, and the revolution of Modern Chinese history.¹⁹⁰ He was a successful compradore (professional middle-man who facilitated business between foreigners and locals) for the Sino-Japanese steamship company *Nisshin Kisen Kaisha*. He was also the president of the Shanghai Chamber of Agriculture, Manufacture, and Commerce, a board member of a bank, and a leader of almost two dozen professional and charitable organizations. Throughout his life, he focused primarily on disaster relief, aid to refugees, support for needy women and children, medical aid, education, and the promotion of Buddhism.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Wang Zhongxiu 王中秀, *Wang Yiting nianpu changbian* 王一亭年谱长编 [The Biography of Wang Yiting] (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2010), 267-270.

¹⁸⁹ Wang, 268

¹⁹⁰ Wang, 762.

¹⁹¹ Andrews and Shen, *The Art of Modern China*, 52. Wang, 22, 151, 74, 208, 72.

¹⁹¹ Wang, 759.

Wang was also an important leader during the Xinhai Revolution.¹⁹² Knowing that the court was going to repress revolutionary forces, he ordered his allies to fight back.¹⁹³ On January 15th, 1912, on behalf of Shanghai's business circle, he telegraphed Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) to congratulate him on being the temporary president of the Republic of China.¹⁹⁴ A month later, he resigned from his post as minister of industry and commerce in Shanghai, feeling that the country was sufficiently stable and there were capable people at the helm.¹⁹⁵ A year later, he disowned his membership in the Guomingdang government after the defeat of the Second Revolution.¹⁹⁶ From his understanding, only the masses suffered when infighting took place. Though he acted as an intermediary between the different sects of warlords to convince them to stop the disputes, the country was still split asunder.¹⁹⁷ Thus, he retreated into a secluded life and refused to talk about politics for the remainder of his life.¹⁹⁸

We can see his yearning for seclusion in his artistic creations. In one of his self-portraits (created in 1914), he was dressed as a monk, the symbol of seclusion *per se*.¹⁹⁹ To the right of his portrait, he wrote the following inscription: "I think I did not fully pay the Vexatious Debt of my last incarnation, so I am driven from pillar to post working hard in this life. I have tasted acidity,

¹⁹² Wang, 84, 85.

¹⁹³ Wang, 87.

¹⁹⁴ Wang, 93.

¹⁹⁵ Wang, 93.

¹⁹⁶ Wang, 129.

¹⁹⁷ Wang, 129.

¹⁹⁸ Wang, 129.

¹⁹⁹ Wang, 140.

pungency, and the Flavor of Vicissitude---by combining this experience, I do not think I will be far away from Tao... The Stoic Monk.”²⁰⁰ Here, he called himself the “Stoic Monk” who practiced asceticism by renouncing the extravagance and temptation of life. However, he was not tonsured as a real monk, hence found himself between this-worldliness and other-worldliness.

Nevertheless, the yearning for seclusion was always in his mind. Eight years later, when he created the painting in our Special Collections, he adopted an allegorical method to depict this reclusive life. The last two lines of the inscription “Picking up the chrysanthemum while gazing at South Mountain, the minor magistrate was going to resign from his post in Pengze,” was the symbol of seclusion in Chinese history.²⁰¹ In 405, Tao Qian (365-427), one of the most famous poets in China, was put in charge of the Pengze county. After eighty days in the post, he resigned and returned to his out-of-the-way dilapidated house, and kept a chrysanthemum patch by the eastern fence of his property. According to Xiaofei Tian, as for the picking of the chrysanthemum, “later readers not only regard this as Tao Yuanming (i.e., Tao Qian)’s hallmark image but also consider the flowers blooming in the chilly season as a natural symbol of the poet’s ability to preserve moral integrity in adverse circumstances.”²⁰² Therefore, Tao’s retirement became foundational for the tradition of seclusion that followed.²⁰³ It also became one of the most famous painting themes in Chinese art: the quality of “Tao-ness” intrigues so many

²⁰⁰ Wang, 140.

²⁰¹ For seclusion, see Xiaofei Tian, *Tao Yuanming and Manuscript Culture: The Record of a Dusty Table* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 24. Michael D. K. Ing, “Things Endure While We Fade Away: Tao Yuanming on Being Himself,” *Philosophy East and West* 69, no. 2 (April 2019): 400.

²⁰² Tian, 24.

²⁰³ Ing, “Things Endure While We Fade Away: Tao Yuanming on Being Himself,” 405.

Chinese literati that they affiliate themselves with the Tao-like chrysanthemum-holding images. For instance, in Lu Zhi (1496-1576)'s *Traces of Tao Qian* (Figure 14.2), the man sits alone on a rocky hillside, leans comfortably back against a pine tree, and holds up a chrysanthemum as he gazes off into the distance. It is often said this is a portrait of Tao, and indeed the figure is modeled on a familiar generic Tao Qian portrait; as the inscription indicates, however, the man is in fact Lu Zhi himself.²⁰⁴ Similarly, In Figure 1, Wang impersonates Tao, gazing far away with a chrysanthemum attached on a walking stick. But unlike Tao's alacrity to choose the rustic obscurity as his inner utopia, Wang's drooping eye has a pessimistic weariness, working as a self-parody suggesting his perennial tug-of-war between engagement and withdrawal.

Wang was a talented painter. By the 1890s he preferred a technically refined figure style that was almost identical to that of Ren Bonian (1840-1896, see Figure 12.5), the famed figure painter who had also instructed Wu Changshuo. After Wu Changshuo took up permanent residence in Shanghai in 1911, Wang began to study from Wu, who distinguished himself from Ren by abandoning Western techniques in favor of the Chinese literati idiom which uses a much bolder, freer style manner.

Figure 14.1 reflects Wang's virtuosity by incorporating Ren's Western influence and Wu's stele brushworks in his work. Firstly, Ren's art is famous for its Western realism and "boneless" style (an ink-wash manner which conveys form and volume without the usage of outlines, see Figure 16.5). In Figure 14.3, he adopted this unstructured skill to depict the leaves of the lotuses. The bold and abbreviated ink display the panoply of tones of the plant, suggesting

²⁰⁴ Susan E. Nelson, "Revisiting the Eastern Fence: Tao Qian's Chrysanthemums," *The Art Bulletin* 83, no. 3 (Sep., 2001): 454.

Ren's familiarity with Western architectonic structure. In Wang's painting, the coloristic modeling of the headdress and robe exhibits the similar striking volume and *chiaroscuro*, an unmistakable Western convention from Ren's brush. Secondly, influenced by Wu (Figure 14.4), Wang infused the calligraphic components into the creation of his paintings. The brushwork of the outlines of Wang's robe recalled the syncopation of wet and dry in Wu's painting (Figure 14.5a & b): the thick, water-saturated, and blunt lines are derived from Stone Drum (*Shi gu wen*, Figure 12.7), exhibiting a carefully measured sublimity of the seal script; most impressively, the dry, scratchy, and swirling traces come from Huaisu's "crazy cursive" script writing (Figure 10.4), showing a flamboyant corporeal gesture and a fleeting, uninterrupted, and intoxicated flow of emotion. In this sense, Wang takes the display of brushwork to its utmost, until it borders on calligraphy.



Figure 14.1 Wang Zhen, 1867-1938, *Zhen Wang's painting hanging scroll with Qian Tao's plucking chrysanthemums and facing Mount South*, cs000073, 1922, Paper, 22 x 85.8 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.



Figure 14.2 Lu Zhi, 1496-1576, *Traces of Tao Qian*, Cultural relics unified number: Old painting 001255N00000012, Work number: Old painting 00125500012, 1523, Paper, Painting leaf: 34.2 x 23.8 cm; calligraphy leaf: 34.2 x 23.8 cm, National Palace Museum.



The Art Institute of Chicago. Not for publication.

L29882.jpg

Figure 14.3 Ren Yi, 1840-1896, *Mandarin Ducks and Lotus*, 1943.137, 1892, Hanging scroll; ink and colors on paper, 149.8 × 40 cm (58 15/16 × 15 3/4 in.), Art Institute Chicago, Gift of Florence Ayscough and Harley Farnsworth MacNair Collection.



Figure 14.4 Wu Changshuo, 1844-1927, *Peonies*, 1968,0722,0.1,1924-1925, Paper, hanging scroll, Height: Height: 141.30 centimetres (image) (image), Height: Height: 263 centimetres (scroll including roller and hanging cord) (scroll including roller and hanging cord), Width: Width: 40 centimetres (image) (image), Width: Width: 66 centimetres (scroll including roller) (scroll including roller), The British Museum.



Figure 14.5a Wang Zhen, from Figure 14.1



Figure 14.5b Wu Changshuo, from Figure 14.4

15. Zhou Xun

In Yao Hua and Zhao Yuantao's entries, we see that the great body of Chinese painting theory and criticism is heavily biased in favor of the literati artists and their works. By contrast, the vernacular paintings, which are created by artisans and professionals, and show a realistic and folk depiction of scenes from everyday life, are often denigrated. Literati artists practiced painting as a leisure pastime and a form of self-cultivation, not for material gain. This standard served as a potent barrier to exclude professional artists who accepted commissions and produced pictures to satisfy their clients' needs.²⁰⁵ This genius-foil dichotomy is similar to Linda Nochlin's argument comparing women artists' low standing to their male counterparts' esteem.²⁰⁶ Indeed, Chinese painting as it survives today has been, in fact, severely censored by the elite, the male educated class, who have exercised control over its transmission, deciding which paintings should be preserved and passed down through collections, and which others deserved to be neglected and lost.²⁰⁷

Vernacular paintings were created over centuries by studio artists working in the cities. They were executed in the polished "academic" manner of fine-line drawing and colors, usually on silk, and were valued for their interesting imagery and their lively and often moving depiction of subjects, which answered the needs and desires of those who acquired and hung them.²⁰⁸ They were intended not so much for pure aesthetic appreciation as for hanging on particular occasions

²⁰⁵ Cahill, *Pictures for Use and Pleasure*, 3.

²⁰⁶ Paris A. Spies-Gans, "Why Do We Think There Have Been No Great Women Artists? Revisiting Linda Nochlin and the Archive," *The Art bulletin* 104, no. 4 (2022): 70-71.

²⁰⁷ Cahill, *Pictures for Use and Pleasure*, 2.

²⁰⁸ Cahill, 3.

such as New Year's celebrations and birthdays, or for serving particular functions, such as setting the tone in certain rooms of the house or illustrating a story. Therefore, the subjects were likely to be drawn more from daily life and popular culture than from the revered classics and histories.²⁰⁹ Popular deities and legendary figures as well as historical scenes are often seen in these paintings. Figural subjects, such as this painting from the UWM Special Collections, were among the central repertory (Figure 15.1).²¹⁰ Most often than not, they were made for hanging and viewing in the pleasure districts of the cities, such as restaurants and brothels.²¹¹ Therefore, the subjects in these paintings might be mildly or outright erotic, and thus transgressed into an area forbidden to serious writers and painters.²¹² Vernacular paintings would not be praised because they failed to "rise above the mundane world," so the traditional Chinese connoisseur would consign them to the realm of the trivial or vulgar.²¹³

However, in James Cahill's extraordinary research, since vernacular painters were required to satisfy the needs and desires of their clientele, and since these desires were so diverse and flexible, they enjoyed considerable freedom, and they used it to explore the real world around them far more freely in their works than their prestigious contemporaries could do, thus

²⁰⁹ Cahill, 3.

²¹⁰ Cahill, 14.

²¹¹ Cahill, 16.

²¹² Cahill, 4.

²¹³ Cahill, 8.

conveying the real feelings of the people portrayed, and exploring human relationships in more than the stiffest and most moralistic ways.²¹⁴

Paintings of these common types greatly increased in volume and variety during the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In that period, Chinese society was profoundly transformed from one that was basically agrarian to one increasingly urban and mercantile. In the new society, a growing urban middle class, affluent and eager to adopt a more sophisticated lifestyle, provided a vastly expanded market for the works and services of vernacular art, literature, and entertainment.²¹⁵ The functionality of these paintings made them tangible components of family wealth, which could be pawned or resold. However, in the long run, they were unlikely to enter the art market or to be acquired by serious collectors. Thus, the likelihood of their long-term preservation was very small, and they cannot be easily found in museums.²¹⁶ Here lies the paradox of vernacular paintings: though they were produced as the most popular paintings in Chinese society, they are the least likely to be treasured and preserved.

In the late nineteenth century, new elements of style were drawn from European pictorial art to vernacular painting. European art offered new ways of organizing complex compositions, by placing the elements of the picture on a convincingly receding plane. Optical illusions such as foreshortening and bird's-eye view encourage the viewer to explore these spaces visually and to see the further rooms or rear gardens. Chinese painters quickly and artfully turned these elements to their own special purposes. This includes the shading in the folds of dresses and in

²¹⁴ Cahill, 4-5.

²¹⁵ Cahill, 6.

²¹⁶ Cahill, 15.

architectural elements, such as pillars and stone steps, which represent the thickness of walls.²¹⁷

This realism faced insurmountable institutional odds, in which literati paintings were the only ones capable of traditional canonical acclaim.²¹⁸

However, literati painting does not preclude the possibility of lifelikeness, which I have mentioned in Yao Hua's entry. In his inscription, Dong Qichang refers to the brushwork of one artist's later work by saying "In his younger years he was meticulous and refined, but as he grew older his work became mellow. Now mellowness is superior to refinement, but without refinement, how can one achieve mellowness?"²¹⁹ Actually, the lifelikeness in this UWM Special Collections brings it close to the audience, conveying a sense of leisure, carefreeness, and elegance, and thereby showing a sense of mellowness.

Worth mentioning is the theme of this artwork, which is closely related to the "elegant gathering" of Chinese literati. In 1088, a group of sixteen famous statesmen, literati, and artists gathered in the Western Garden of Wang Sheng (1036-1093), the imperial son-in-law. The famous artist Li Gonglin, a member of this gathering, is said to have immortalized the meeting in a painting known as the "Elegant Gathering in the Western Garden." This handscroll painting made in the Song Dynasty, depicts the sixteen gentlemen placed in four groups: Wang Shen, Cai Zhao, and Li Zhiyi gathered around a table watching Su Shi write (Figure 15.2); Su Zhe, Huang Tingjian, Chao Buzhi, Zhang Lei, and Zheng Jinglao clustered around Li Gonglin who was

²¹⁷ Cahill, 77-78.

²¹⁸ Cahill, 19.

²¹⁹ Sewall Jerome III Oertling, "Ting Yun-p'eng: A Chinese Artist of the Late Ming Dynasty," PhD diss., (The University of Michigan, 1980).

shown painting an illustration of Tao Qian's prose-poem "The Return (Figure 15.3a&b, also see above, in Wang Zhen's entry);" Qin Guan seated listening to the music played by Chen Jingyuan (Figure 15.4) while Wang Qinchen watched Mi Fu inscribe a rock (Figure 15.5); and the Buddhist Master Yuantong discoursed on Nirvana with Liu Jing (Figure 15.6).²²⁰ This meeting became one of the most frequently depicted figure-painting subjects in Chinese art (Figure 15.7). Later, the title of *yaji*, or "elegant gathering," began to be associated with groups of like-minded men who engaged in any kind of literary and artistic enjoyment.

The "elegant gathering" depicted in this UWM work by Zhou Xun derived from Figure 15.3a&b. In the original version, the five guests are placed apart. Their costumes and headdresses signify withdrawal. The setting is elegant and secluded: the table made from precious stone is a symbol of the literati status; the well-trimmed banana trees planted around are the sign of their reclusion. However, in Zhou's work, this elegance and seclusion was transformed into coarseness and tension. The central figure who is wielding the brush but without writing anything down on the paper is an official (who is distinguished by his special hat), showing a business-like simplicity. The table is white without any adornment. The terrain is barren, as plants are rare. The inherent business-like coarseness is indicative of the "Self-strengthening Movement" predicament: though it advocated reforms and entrepreneurship, it somehow failed because of its unsatisfactory outcome. The scene is also narrowed down into a tiny space, conveying a sense of tension. The tension is emphasized by the background: the spume of the white-capped wave which is making a huge swirl toward the rising sun is painted on the screen. While waves and rising sun symbolize prosperity and fortune, they also connote a

²²⁰ Ellen Johnston Laing, "Real or Ideal: The Problem of the "Elegant Gathering in the Western Garden" in Chinese Historical and Art Historical Records," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88, no. 3 (Jul. - Sep., 1968), pp. 419-435.

clashing noise and *angst*. The noise is suggestive of the seething tension in society, which faced unprecedented pressure from internal crises and external encroachment. In this sense, vernacular painting is strongly connected with the social-political context, not only suggesting the customs and experiences of daily life, but also making an oblique reference to the rise and fall of the dynasty.



Figure 15.1 Zhou Xun, ? *Yaji* (Elegante Gathering), Silk, Frame, Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by Marilyn J. Luan Lindert of Elkhart Lake, WI.



Figure 15.2. Anonymous, *Elegant Gathering in the Western Garden* (Wang Shen, Cai Zhao, and Li Zhiyi gathered around a table watching Su Shi write), Cultural relics unified number: Old painting 003661N000000000, Work number: Old painting 00366100000, Song Dynasty (960-1279), Paper, Painting: 47.1 x 1104.3 cm, frontispiece 15.5 & 14.5 cm, colophon, 123.6 cm, National Palace Museum.

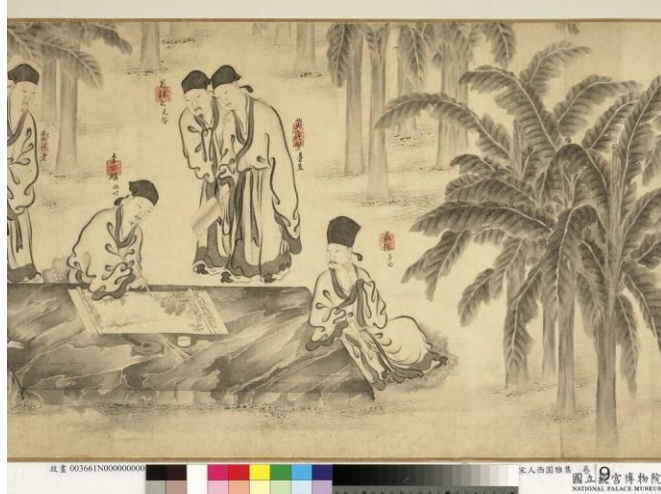


Figure 15.3a Anonymous, *Elegant Gathering in the Western Garden* (Su Zhe, Huang Tingjian, Chao Buzhi, Zhang Lei, and Zheng Jinglao clustered around Li Gonglin who was shown painting an illustration of Tao Qian's prose-poem "The Return"), Cultural relics unified number: Old painting 003661N000000000, Work number: Old painting 00366100000, Song Dynasty (960-1279), Paper, Painting: 47.1 x 1104.3 cm, frontispiece 15.5 & 14.5 cm, colophon, 123.6 cm, National Palace Museum.

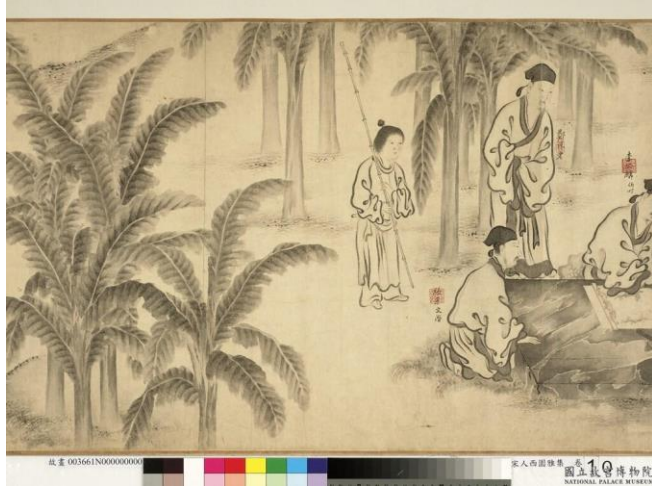


Figure 15.3b Anonymous, *Elegant Gathering in the Western Garden* (Su Zhe, Huang Tingjian, Chao Buzhi, Zhang Lei, and Zheng Jinglao clustered around Li Gonglin who was shown painting an illustration of Tao Qian's prose-poem "The Return"), Cultural relics unified number: Old painting 003661N000000000, Work number: Old painting 00366100000, Song Dynasty (960-1279), Paper, Painting: 47.1 x 1104.3 cm, frontispiece 15.5 & 14.5 cm, colophon, 123.6 cm, National Palace Museum.



Figure 15.4 Anonymous, *Elegant Gathering in the Western Garden* (Qin Guan seated listening to the music played by Chen Jingyuan), Cultural relics unified number: Old painting 003661N000000000, Work number: Old painting 00366100000, Song Dynasty (960-1279), Paper, Painting: 47.1 x 1104.3 cm, frontispiece 15.5 & 14.5 cm, colophon, 123.6 cm, National Palace Museum.



Figure 15.5 Anonymous, *Elegant Gathering in the Western Garden* (Wang Qinchen watched Mi Fu inscribe a rock), Cultural relics unified number: Old painting 003661N000000000, Work number: Old painting 00366100000, Song Dynasty (960-1279), Paper, Painting: 47.1 x 1104.3 cm, frontispiece 15.5 & 14.5 cm, colophon, 123.6 cm, National Palace Museum.



Figure 15.5 Anonymous, *Elegant Gathering in the Western Garden* (Buddhist Master Yuantong discoursed on Nirvana with Liu Jing), Cultural relics unified number: Old painting 003661N000000000, Work number: Old painting 00366100000, Song Dynasty (960-1279), Paper, Painting: 47.1 x 1104.3 cm, frontispiece 15.5 & 14.5 cm, colophon, 123.6 cm, National Palace Museum.



Figure 15.7 Anonymous, *Elegant Gathering in the Western Garden*, y1947-220, Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), undated, Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk, Painting: 176 x 91 cm. (69 5/16 x 35 13/16 in.) Mount: 316 x 100.9 cm. (124 7/16 x 39 3/4 in.), Princeton University Art Museum, Gift of DuBois Schanck Morris, Class of 1893.

16. Ji Yue

Zhong Kui, the legendary Demon Queller or ghostbuster (Figure 12.5), is a subject of folk tales, and therefore not an appropriate theme for the literati gentry.²²¹ However, he was a very popular figure in vernacular paintings. According to legend, the Tang emperor Minghuang (r. 712-756) fell ill and had a nightmare in which he was being plagued by evil demons. A grotesque warrior appeared, slaughtered the evil demons, and cured the emperor of his illness. The warrior introduced himself as Zhong Kui, a student who had failed his civil examinations because of his unprepossessing looks and subsequently committed suicide. In memory of Zhong, the emperor asked Wu Daozi (710-760), the most prominent artist of that time, to paint an image of this ghostbuster (Figure 16.2).²²² Since then, paintings of Zhong have become auspicious images, and variations of this theme continued to develop in later dynasties.²²³

The name of this work in the UWM special collection, *Goodbye to Penury* (Figure 16.1), comes from a renowned eponymous essay by Han Yu (768-824), the leader of Classical Prose Movement. This essay is associated with the Chinese custom of preparing a bowl of gruel and casting off old clothes on the last day of the first lunar month of the year in order to persuade the Demon of Penury to leave. In this essay, Han “plaits willow wands to make a cart, binds straw to make a boat, furnishes both with cereals, harnesses oxen to the cart, attaches a sail to the boat,”

²²¹ Ju-his Chou, with contributions by Anita Chung, *Silent poetry: Chinese paintings from the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art* (Cleveland, OH: Cleveland Museum of Art, 2015), 88.

²²² Stephen Little, “The Demon Queller and the Art of Qiu Ying (Ch'iu Ying),” *Artibus Asiae* 46, no. 1/2 (1985): 22-23.

²²³ Patricia Berger, “Luo Ping's early Ghost Amusement scroll: literary and theatrical perspectives,” in *Eccentric visions: the worlds of Luo Ping*, ed. Kim Karlsson, Alfreda Murck, and Michele Matteini (Zürich : Museum Reitberg Zürich, 2009), 194.

then “bows three times” to the demon, in order to send it off. In Ji’s painting, Han, who impersonates Zhong under the umbrella, clasps his hands together and offers his thanks to the statuette of the Demon of Penury which is placed on the plate with the willow and cereal, as he prepares to send it away.

In *Goodbye to Penury*, the Demon of Penury was embodied by five small demons. These five demons show darker psychic forces of mankind, aiming at a broader moral regeneration. According to Han, the five small demons represent intellect, learning, penmanship, fate, and friendship respectively. Because the scholars are so committed to these five things, they could never get rich. The existence of these five small demons is the very reason for the poverty of scholars. The five demons are:

The first demon is called Penury through Intellect: self-assured, hating the round (i.e., sophistication or worldliness) and appreciating the square (i.e., uprightness), scornful of lying and cunningness, and unwilling to hurt others. Next is called Penury through Learning: disdainful of scholarship and fame, probing into the esoteric and minute, drawing open-mindedly from any school of thought, grasping the motions of the divine. The third is called Penury through Penmanship: not focusing on one skill, straying into the odd and absurd, ignoring current concerns, aiming only to amuse oneself. Next is Penury through Fate: the exterior appearance belies the real interior, the face is ugly though the heart is fair; the last to get the credit, but the first to get the blame. The last is Penury through Friendship: one bruises the flesh, knocks the bone, disembowels the body, in order to treat friends with utter sincerity, but only succeeds in making oneself an enemy.²²⁴

Here, Han satirizes the unfairness of society. Though scholars have great courage to choose “square,” moral, sincere, and independent life, they are the ones that are vulnerable to poverty. Being plagued by these five small demons, Han was determined to send them away. But before he comes to the end of his soliloquy, the five demons in concert “goggle their eyes and

²²⁴ *Tangsong badajia-Han Yu wenji* 唐宋八大家-韩愈文集 [The literary works of the eight great prose masters of Tang and Song dynasty], ed. Zhang Minglin 张明林 (Beijing: Zhongyang minzhu daxue chubanshe, 2002), 293.

stick out their tongues (look at the face of the demon who is upholding a plate on top of his head, Figure 16.1), stagger and fall about, clap their hands and stamp their feet, and burst out laughing.” The five demons then give Han a thought-provoking repartee: “You know our name and all our doings, so driving us away is not smart. Consider how short a man’s life on earth is. We are creating a name for you that will survive for a hundred generations,” “Even though you are demoted to this [terrible] place, we still stay with you [to help you elevate your morality].” “Only by overcoming the difficulties of the time can you be in communion with the divine.” Showing resignation, Han had no alternative but to bring the demons home again.

This lively banter between an unsuccessful literatus and apparitions can be seen much more like a self-proclamation than a self-satirization, which affirms that Chinese literati would not conform, and choose to “overcome the difficulties of the time” even when they are inflicted with woe and injustice. This untrammelled iconoclasm had a strong possibility of striking a chord with many literati *manqué* in the Qing dynasty when civil examination was the only tool for them to attain a successful career. The resignation on Han’s face indicates a common malaise shared by these literati; but the untrammelled spirit embodied in the five demons reassures them that their achievements will be recognized eventually in the long annals of history. Therefore, vernacular painting likes to use historical scenes or the experiences of common life as sobering reminders of morality.

Immediately after Wu Daozi, the images of the Zhong Kui proliferated among artists, and a number of key variations began to emerge. The Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) has been described as “the greatest epoch of Zhong Kui representation.”²²⁵ The two most famous paintings are the

²²⁵ Wen C. Fong, *Beyond representation: Chinese painting and calligraphy, 8th-14th century* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 429-443.

handscrolls by Gong Kai (1222-1307) in the Freer Gallery of Art, and Yan Hui (active 1270-1310) in the Cleveland Museum of Art (Figure 16.3). Both handscrolls depict Zhong Kui being carried in a procession of demons. While in both of these works Zhong Kui is depicted as a threatening deity, Gong Kai has gone a step further and portrayed him as a truly hideous ghoul (Figure 16.4). Cleveland's Zhong Kui has bulging eyes with an intense stare as the iris is pushed forward to the very edge of the face and he has a low nose with flared nostrils (Fig 16.5), but the Zhong Kui in our Special Collections looks just like a normal literatus, humble and genteel, meek and mild, with a sour facial expression (Figure 16.1). The group of ghosts in Cleveland looks ferocious; the acrobatic figures are wonderfully fashioned with muscles clearly articulated and well shaded, in an array of dynamic postures and actions, and bursting with energy. Their wry twists and exaggerated posturing is impressive. However, the ghosts in our collection are less active and have a less distinctive muscle-bound appearance. Some of the ghosts look cute and dainty, especially the two ghosts close to Zhong Kui, as their squat faces make them silly, and therefore, more attractive. The scene is enlivened with a sense of playfulness and humor.

The painting skills between the Cleveland and UWM's versions of Zhong Kui are also different. The Cleveland scroll, as Sherman Lee has pointed out, is "a masterpiece of modeling in which the artist's 'boneless' brushwork suggests form by manipulating light and shade (*chiaroscuro*), modified by rapidly brushed sharp details and accents."²²⁶ Yan Hui used the adjacent washes to reinforce a sense of folds in the drapery. However, this "boneless" washing is missing in our collection, so the shadings is quite dull and unnatural. In terms of the brushwork,

²²⁶ Sherman E. Lee, "Yen Hui: The Lantern Night Excursion of Chung K'uei," *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* XLIX, (February, 1962): 39. Sherman E. Lee, "Yan Hui, Zhong Kui, Demons and the New Year," *Artibus Asiae* 53, no. 1/2 (1993): 217.

the lines of drapery in Cleveland tend to be varied in accordance with the gestures and movement of the body; however, the brush lines in our painting do not show such variation. They look like barbed wire which exhibits a hard, blocky style in the angular profiles, thereby creating a neatness normally signifying professionalism.

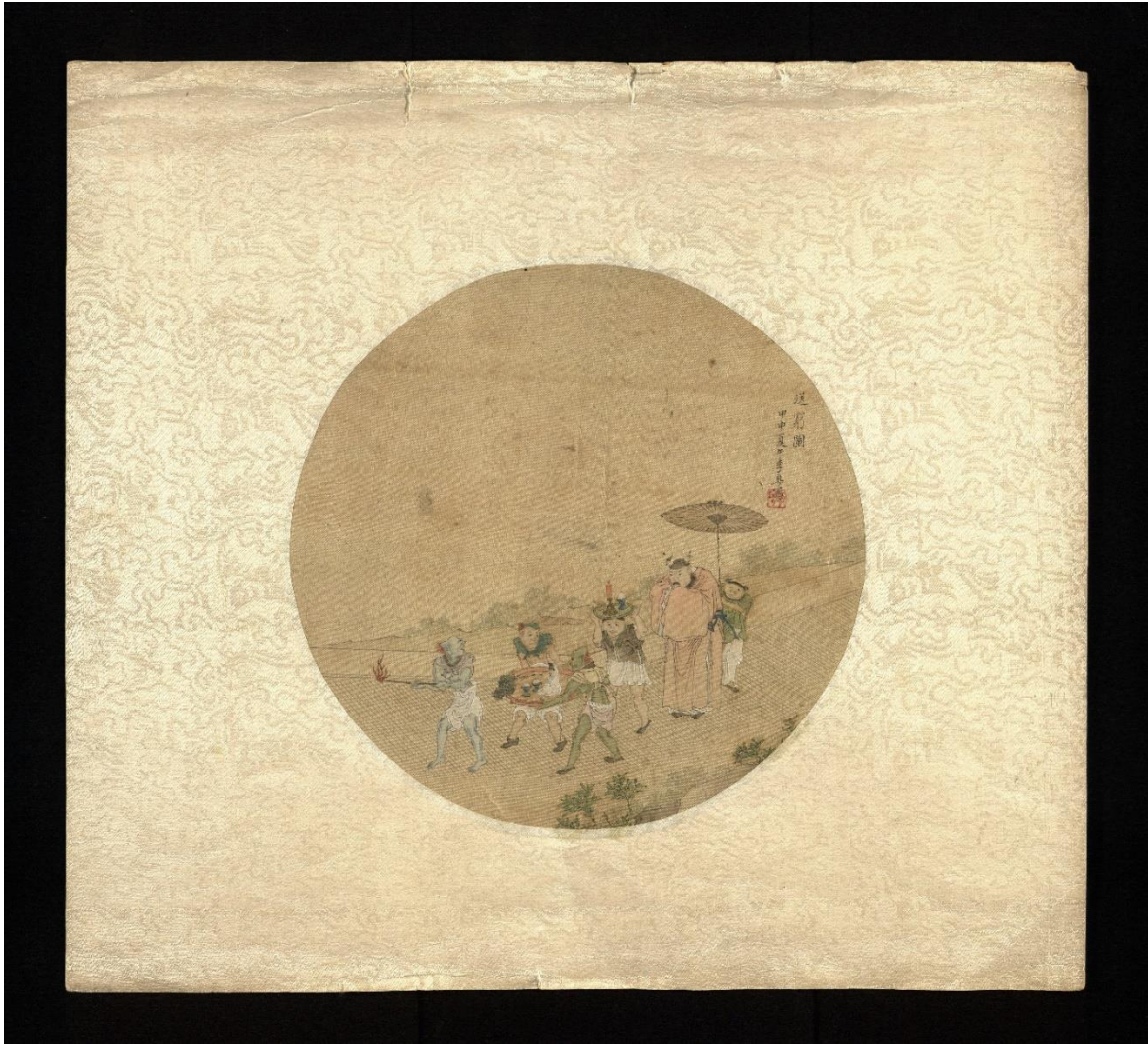


Figure 16.1 Ji Yue, ?, *Yue Ji's fan painting of Sending-off Poverty*, cs000120, Unknown dates, Silk, Fan, 15.7 x 17 in., Special Collections, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Donated to the UWM Libraries by UW-Madison Professor Tse-Tsung Chow (Zhou, Cezong, 1916-2007) and his wife Nancy Wu Chow.



Figure 16.2 Totoya Hokkei, 1780-1850, *Wu Daozi Painting Zhong Kui (the Demon Queller)* in *Red Ink*, 1933.4.1842, Edo period, 1823, Ukiyo-e woodblock printed "surimono" in "shikishiban" format; Ink, color and metallic pigment on paper, Paper: H. 21.1 cm x W. 18.8 cm (8 5/16 x 7 3/8 in.), Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Gift of the Friends of Arthur B. Duel.



Figure 16.3 Yan Hui, active 1270-1310, *The Lantern Night Excursion of Zhong Kui*, 1961.206, Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), Handscroll; ink and slight color on silk, Image: 24.8 x 240.3 cm (9 3/4 x 94 5/8 in.); Overall: 25.7 x 904.4 cm (10 1/8 x 356 1/16 in.), The Cleveland Museum of Art, Mr. and Mrs. William H. Marlatt Fund.



Figure 16.4 Gong Kai, 1222-1307, *Zhongshan Going on Excursion*, F1938.4, late 13th-early 14th century, Ink on paper, H x W: 32.8 x 169.5 cm (12 15/16 x 66 3/4 in), Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery.



Figure 16.5 Yan Hui, from Figure 16.3.

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