



萬姿千態似深禪一度看來
 一面直雨浚可傳傾國色風前
 照眼賞音人香攜滿袖留影
 品入瑤臺不聚塵寄語東君
 分次第莫教蜂蝶亂爭春

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STUDIES IN CONNOISSEURSHIP

*Chinese Paintings from the Arthur M. Sackler Collection
in New York and Princeton*

The Winnipeg Art Gallery

April 15 – May 28, 1978



Tao-chi, *Graded Ink Landscapes*, Leaf 8, "A Segment of Fu-ch'un". Ta-Feng-t'ang Collection.



RIGHT: Chang Ta-Ch'ien, *Tao-chi Landscapes*, Leaf F, "View of Fu-ch'un".
COVER: Tao-chi, *Album of Flowers and Portrait of Tao-chi*, Leaf D, "Peonies".



Kung Hsien, *Landscapes*, Leaf A, "The Yellow Leaf Village".

The delicate and changeable balance between an artist's dedication to tradition and the value of his individual creativity is at the heart of the history of Chinese painting. For centuries these two aspects have co-existed as dual forces. Their relationship can be seen not only in comparing paintings of different artists and eras, but in the subtle harmonies within single pictures. This exhibition of works from the Arthur M. Sackler Collection provides a rare opportunity to examine the many ways in which artists could manipulate the visual vocabulary of the past to create new works. The process of simultaneously building upon and transforming traditional examples continues to this day. Twenty-four artists who painted between the 14th and 20th centuries are represented in this exhibition.

More than forty paintings, both scrolls and album leaves, by Tao-chi (1641-c.1710) are the core of the present exhibition. As both a transmitter of ancient ways and an originator who was himself emulated as a great master, Tao-chi stands out midway through the time span of this selection of painters. He also marks a pivotal point on the scale between artistic aspirations based on the past and independent stress upon expressive inventiveness.

From ancient times, the Chinese have revered tradition and the authority of antiquity. This has been a fundamental influence in their painting, as in their culture generally. Therefore, looking to the works of past masters as models for new paintings has always been an admirable practice in China. Whether this meant making a close copy, or using the historical example loosely as the basis of a free inter-

pretation, the Chinese tradition has recognized the value in the many possible ways of imitating great masterpieces. Through faithful copying, an artist learned the qualities which constitute an exceptionally fine work of art. A command of historical styles also provided a sure framework for personal expressiveness and innovation. The practice of emulating master painters was not seen as an indication of lacking originality, nor was it accepted as an excuse for lifeless repetition. Quite the contrary, an artist was judged according to the harmonious inventiveness with which he introduced his own visual and spiritual interpretation into his work while blending it with the finest attributes of his revered model from the past. This balance brought out the best in both aspects of the painting, and resulted in a new image still linked to the valued tradition.

In developing a new version of an ancient painting, the artist had virtually every element of the painting at his command. Modification is seldom a sign of error in copying. Instead, it usually indicates creative choice by the painter. To achieve his expressive aim, an artist often altered the example of his model by changing its size and proportions, or by adding, removing, or rearranging human figures and other features of the scene. He could also introduce new colours, or change the shades of ink. Above all, each artist gave each of his paintings its unique character by controlling the subtle, but very important, effects of the brushwork.

The essence of Chinese painting is found in its most basic component, the quality of the individual brushstroke. No matter how grand the picture, this is true of every kind of

painting in China — landscapes, figures, flower and animal pictures, and the calligraphic inscriptions incorporated into so many scrolls and leaves. The artist's handling of his brush is the origin of his work's expressive feeling. It unifies even the most complex of paintings. At the same time, variations in brushstroke can bring out the subtle distinguishing characteristics of different features represented in a scene. This gives these paintings much of their visual richness. Because of its great importance, the treatment of brushwork has long been among the chief focal points in appreciation of Chinese painting by collectors and connoisseurs.

As with the traditions which governed painting in general, styles and techniques of brushwork often combined practices established in the past with an admiration for novelty and freedom in the sweep of ink. The two approaches need not conflict, and in many paintings their co-ordination is the source of the work's best qualities of refinement and originality. Through generations, artists had introduced new strokes into their own works which, because of their particular effectiveness, were emulated by others. Gradually these innovations were admitted into the canon of revered styles of brushwork. Specific styles eventually were designated by a title suggestive of their unique qualities, and became associated with the objects represented in paintings to which their effects were best suited. For example, the names 'axe-cut', 'sesame seed', and 'tangled-hemp' tell us a good deal about the appearance of the strokes they identify. All these types of brushwork were used especially for shading landscapes. Other strokes would be devoted

primarily to painting bamboo or detailing the texture of trees.

Within the guidelines which gradually developed concerning the uses of the brush, the individual artist was free to borrow what he chose from tradition while experimenting with new techniques to suit his own expressive aims. The fluidity of ink on the brush allowed a great range of subtle variation. Short, sharp forms could be achieved, as could smoothly sweeping, transparent ones. Much of a painting's feeling comes from the relative darkness or density of its brushwork. A close look makes it evident that most Chinese paintings are literally built up from outlines, patterns, and areas of shade consisting of dozens of separate brushstrokes which individually and together exhibit the visual qualities at the heart of the picture. The tradition itself included an almost infinite number of stylistic possibilities, and each painter's creativeness led the way to still more. Here again, the specific balance of continuing tradition and personal inventiveness is central to judging the success of each painting in this exhibition.

Annie Storr
Art Educator

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EXHIBITED ARTISTS BY DYNASTY

Yuan Dynasty (1280-1368)

Ma Wan (ca. 1310-1378)

Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)

Wen Cheng-ming (1470-1559)

Hsu Chen-ching (1479-1511)

Ch'iu Ying (ca. 1494-1552)

Ch'ien Ku (1508-1578)

Sheng Mao-yeh (active ca. 1615-1640)

Lan Ying (1585-1664)

Wan Shou-ch'i (1603-1652)

Chang Chi-su (active ca. 1620-1670)

Ch'ing Dynasty (1644-1911)

Hung-jen (1610-1664)

Cha Shih-piao (1615-1698)

Fan Ch'i (1616-1694)

Kung Hsien (ca. 1618-1689)

Tao-chi (1641-ca. 1710)

Hua Yen (1682-1765)

Chiang Chi (active 1706-1742)

Hung-li (1711-1799)

Ch'ien Tu (1763-1884)

Wang Hsueh-hao (1754-1832)

Ch'en Chao (ca. 1835-1884)

Ku Yun (1830-1896)

Modern Era (1911-Present)

Li Jui-ch'i (ca. 1870-ca. 1940)

Chang Ta-ch'ien (born 1899)

RECOMMENDED READING

Cahill, James. *Chinese Painting*. Lausanne: Skira, 1960).

Cahill, James, ed. *The Restless Landscape: Chinese Painting of the Late Ming Period*. (Berkeley: University Art Museum, 1971).

Contag, Victoria. *Chinese Masters of the 17th Century* (Rutland, Vt: Charles E. Tuttle, Co. Inc., 1970).

Fu, Marilyn and Wen Fong. *The Wilderness Colors of Tao-chi*. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1973).

Fu, Marilyn and Shen. *Studies in Connoisseurship: Chinese Paintings from the Arthur B. Sackler Collection in New York and Princeton*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University, 1976).

Sickman, Laurence and Alexander Soper. *The Art & Architecture of China*. (Harmondsworth, Middx.: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971).

Exhibition Curator: Rosa Ho

Research: Cathy Stewart

Design: Darlene Toews

Typesetting: Evelyn Seida

Below: Ch'ien Ku, *Scholar under Banana Plant*.

