





SILENT POETRY

Chinese
Paintings
in
the
Douglas
Dillon
Galleries
by
Wen
Fong
and
Maxwell K.
Hearn

The
Metropolitan
Museum
of Art

This publication is dedicated to Phyllis Dillon, whose love of and devotion to Chinese painting have done so much to make the Museum's collection outstanding.

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On the cover: Detail of *Finches and Bamboo*, by Emperor Hui-tsung (see figure 7)

Director's Note

One of the most challenging aspects of The Metropolitan Museum of Art's master plan for the permanent installation of its collections has been the strengthening of its woefully inadequate holdings in Chinese painting. Although it is acknowledged as one of the world's great artistic traditions, Chinese painting has never been an easy subject to master for Americans, so involved in the art of the West. Only a very few notable collections of Chinese painting have been formed in the United States, each one largely a result of unusual opportunities and special interests. The holdings of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, are the legacy of commercial trading ventures between New England and the Far East during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., embodies the interests of Charles Freer, whose passion for Chinese painting grew out of his earlier love of Japonisme as expressed in the art of Whistler. During World War II and in the following decades, the devotion and exceptional knowledge of two connoisseur-directors, Laurence Sickman and Sherman Lee, enabled the Nelson Gallery and Atkins Museum, Kansas City, Missouri, and the Cleveland Museum of Art to acquire outstanding collections of Chinese paintings.

At the Metropolitan Museum, however, early efforts to collect Chinese painting were half-hearted, and the artistic traditions of Asia have remained until recently largely underrepresented

in the Museum's encyclopedic collections. It is therefore with a keen sense of personal pleasure and satisfaction that I have witnessed—in fewer than ten years—the growth of the collection of Chinese paintings at the Museum into one comparable in quality, if not yet in quantity, to the Metropolitan's famed holdings in such other fields as European painting.

The force behind this remarkable achievement has been the Honorable C. Douglas Dillon, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, whose wisdom and farsightedness have given tremendous impetus to the creation of a wing for the comprehensive exhibition of Far Eastern art at the Metropolitan. He not only underwrote the construction of the new Chinese painting galleries that bear his name but also made substantial contributions of works of art. His generous support of the Department of Far Eastern Art and his fruitful collaboration with its staff, including the authors of this text—Professor Wen Fong, Special Consultant for Far Eastern Affairs, and Assistant Curator Maxwell K. Hearn—has resulted in a remarkable record of progress that sets an enviable example. Most importantly, the establishment of the Douglas Dillon Galleries of Chinese painting around the Astor Court will undoubtedly, during the coming years, have a major impact on the study and appreciation of Chinese art and culture in the United States.

Philippe de Montebello
Director



Since the opening of the Douglas Dillon Galleries of Chinese painting in June 1981, it has been possible for visitors to The Metropolitan Museum of Art to study Chinese painting in its full richness and complexity. A knowledge of the works on view in the installation adds tremendously to the enjoyment and understanding of Chinese paintings, twenty-eight of which are published here, many for the first time. These works of art, mostly recent acquisitions and promised gifts, date from the eighth to the eighteenth centuries. Their subject matter, diverse in origin and inspiration, includes human figures, religious images, animals, landscapes, birds, flowers, and dragons. The artists, coming from various social and regional backgrounds, include a reigning emperor, a Taoist pope, Buddhist and Taoist clerics, court and professional painters, scholar-artists, and poets. Together their works represent most of the major styles in a thousand years of Chinese painting.

A unique characteristic of Chinese painting is its close relationship to writing. Not only is brushwork the common technique for painting and calligraphy, but, in the course of time, the pictorial and verbal modes of expression became integral to and inseparable in individual works of art. According to the fifth-century scholar Yen Yen-chih, painting, defined as a visual language "representing nature's forms," was but one of three graphic systems of communicating ideas—the other two being the written language, defined as "representing concepts," and symbolical diagrams (such as the magical hexagrams of the *Book of Changes*), which "represented nature's principles." Implicit in these definitions is that painting, like the written word and the magical diagram, is based on graphic conventions. Nowhere is this belief more clearly demonstrated than in the seventeenth-century *Mustard-Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, which codifies the ancient form types and brush formulas into established ways of drawing trees, rock-texture patterns, faces, drapery patterns, birds, flowers, bamboo, and orchids. Yet, just as words must carry meaning and symbols must be magically efficacious, painting, when touched with genius, must equal or surpass nature's creation.

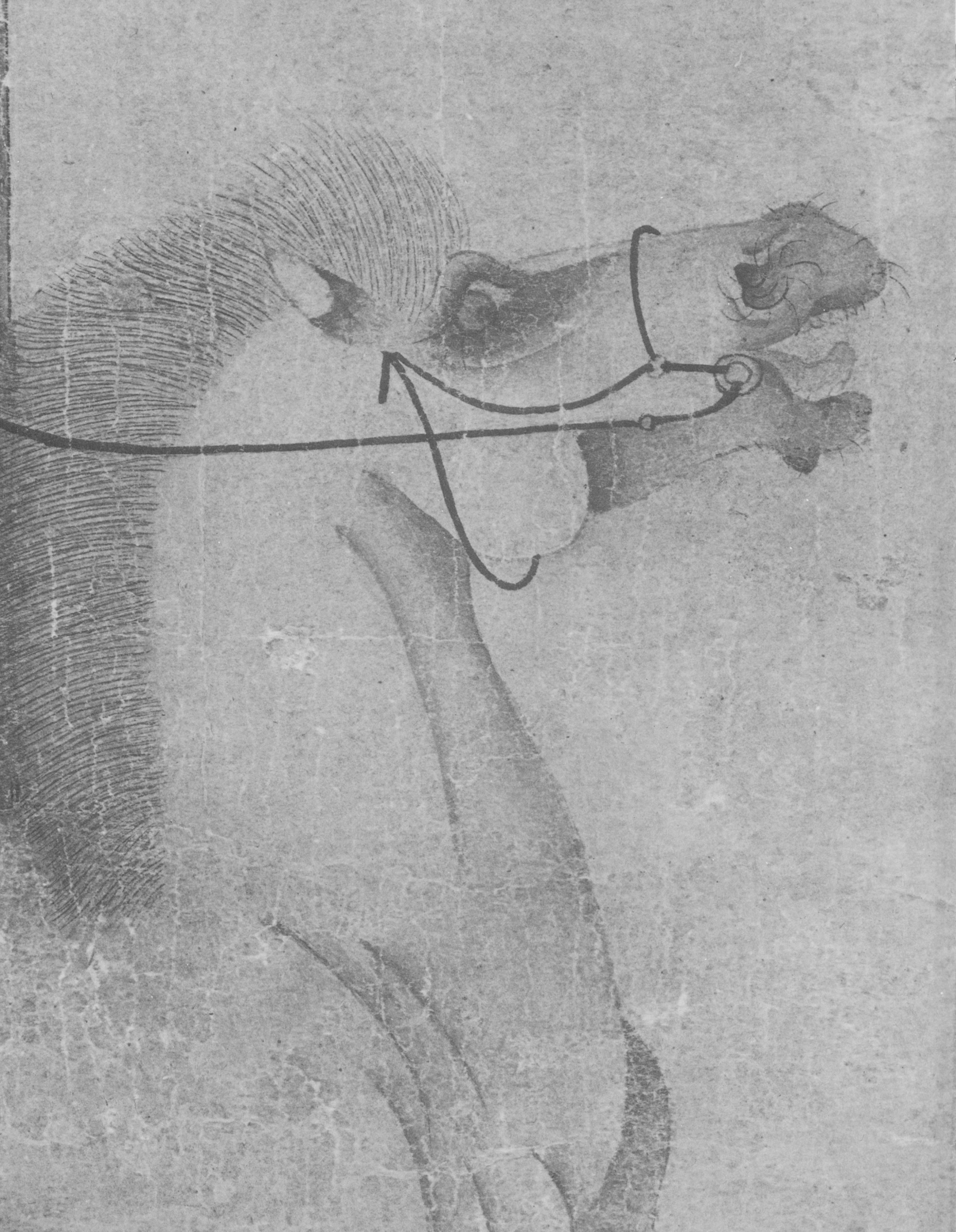
The common tool for both Chinese writing and painting is a brush made of animal hairs—goat, horse, rabbit, weasel, or mouse whiskers, in ascending order of stiffness—which has been perfected over the centuries. The Chinese brush, tapering to a point, has been described by Laurence Sickman as "the most sensitive and richly potential instrument for painting ever devised." With the tip of the pointed brush the artist makes fine lines, and saturating the brush with ink, he covers broad areas with ink wash.

Because the Chinese perceive the universe as consisting of contrasting and complementary Yin and Yang qualities and substances, brush and black ink—in their infinite line-and-surface, bone-and-flesh, thin-and-thick, and dry-and-wet relationships—can represent just about everything in a monochrome world. In fact, the remarkable qualities of the black inks—which, used in their purest state, produce a lustrous black and, diluted with water, a full range of translucent grays—have been a vital factor in determining the nature of Chinese painting.

Calligraphy, the art of writing ideographs with a brush, imitates nature's rhythms and movements and is regarded by the Chinese as a purer, if not higher, form of artistic expression than painting. A superbly executed brushstroke not only is a kinesthetic movement of great beauty and joy, reflecting the artist's delightfully balanced finger, wrist, and arm actions, but also comes straight from the writer's belly and mind—thus the Chinese refer to calligraphy as an artist's "mind print." In making thickening-and-thinning, twisting-and-turning lines—simultaneously pushing down and pulling back for heightened tension and internal movement within each stroke—the painter's calligraphic brushwork can be infinitely expressive in an inimitably personal way. Thus, as the later Chinese painters turned more and more from formal representation to self-expression, they increasingly sought abstract and expressive qualities through calligraphic techniques.

Historically, Chinese pictorial representation developed after the late sixth century B.C., first as monumental decoration for public buildings, ceremonial bronze vessels, and grave furnishings, where figural and mythological illustrations in flat, two-dimensional forms served ritual and didactic purposes. After the introduction of Buddhism from India and Central Asia, religious subjects provided a powerful stimulus for figural representations from the fifth century A.D. onward, with an

(1) *As Chinese painters turned away from formal representation to self-expression, they increasingly integrated calligraphic techniques into their works. By the seventeenth century, landscape painting was based completely upon calligraphic abstraction. In The Sixteen Lohans (see also figures 51–53), Tao-chi (1642–1707) drew the veins of the rocks in the "lotus-leaf-vein" pattern. Holding the brush upright and keeping the tip "hidden" in the center of the stroke, he built up the forms using movements of his entire arm and his body. Maintaining a continuous rhythmic motion, he created brush patterns that breathe and flow with a powerful compositional force.*



increasingly three-dimensional and plastic figural art reaching its apogee in the eighth and ninth centuries in T'ang China. Landscape emerged first as a background for figures, becoming an independent subject in the late ninth and early tenth centuries. Gradually, landscape developed a unified compositional structure, culminating in the successful creation of illusionistic depth by the end of the thirteenth century. As the landscape painter improved his representational skills, he became involved, as the poet did, with the problem of probing the meaning and beauty behind nature's physical phenomena. Leading critics toward the end of the Northern Sung period, in the late eleventh century, were fond of describing poetry as "formless painting" and painting as "wordless poetry," and they theorized that there should be "painting in poetry, and poetry in painting."

To make a philosophical generalization, the major achievements of Sung dynasty (960–1279) and Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) painting, represented by the monumental landscapes and miniature bird-and-flower works of the Northern Sung professional and court painters, and the individualistic, calligraphic brush drawings of the Yuan scholar-artists, seem to reflect two Neo-Confucian schools of thought, that of principles (*li-hsueh*) and that of the mind (*hsin-hsueh*). The former, which emphasizes "the investigation of things leading to the extension of knowledge," implies the objective study of things within the universe, while the latter, believing that "the universe is the mind, and the mind the universe," seeks the realization of what is already within oneself. By spurning formal realism, the scholar-artists of the Yuan and later periods sought not to lay bare the "truth" of the universe, but rather to confront the personal psychological realities behind appearances. Having conquered illusion structurally during the Yuan period, Ming dynasty (1368–1644) landscape painters emphasized surface abstractions, and the early Ch'ing masters of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries developed calligraphic abstractions through an orchestration of lines and forms in abstract space. In their quest for self-expression, scholar-artists from the fourteenth century on learned to

blend pictorial, calligraphic, and poetic modes in single works of art. By referring to painting as "silent poetry"—and recalling essayist Han Yü's (768–824) words, "when injustice occurs, one sings out"—scholar-artists during the Yuan, Ming, and Ch'ing periods, especially when the times were difficult, used painting not only as a means of self-expression, but also as a psychological self-defense against an increasingly turbulent and menacing world.

During the T'ang dynasty life in China was brilliantly cosmopolitan. Chinese political and cultural institutions were at their apogee, and during this era Chinese influence had its greatest impact on Korea and Japan. The capital Ch'ang-an (modern Sian) was a center for foreign trade. Merchants following the caravan routes from Byzantium, Arabia, Persia, and Central Asia brought their exotic wares to its appreciative inhabitants.

Among the most highly prized foreign tributes to the imperial court were the war-horses of Arabia and Central Asia, which were larger, faster, and more powerful than the native ponies. The most splendid of these animals became personal mounts of the emperor.

Night-shining White, a painting of the favorite charger of Emperor Hsuan-tsung (reigned 712–56), is possibly the only surviving work of the leading horse painter of the eighth century, Han Kan (active ca. 740–56) (figures 2,3). The fiery-tempered animal, with its wild eye, flaring nostrils, and prancing hooves, epitomizes Chinese myths about "celestial steeds" that "sweated blood" and were dragons in disguise. Although the horse is tethered to a sturdy post, *Night-shining White* radiates supernatural energy. At the same time it presents an accurate portrayal of a strong, restless animal.

That the subject of this painting is a white horse obviously explains why the artist has not used any color. But the uncompromising achievement would indicate that Han Kan, like all Chinese painters a master of the brushline, might naturally prefer only brush and black ink, restricting color, if present at all, to areas of lesser importance. This method, called *pai-hua*, or "white painting," had a long history before T'ang times, as is evidenced by its appearance in Buddhist caves of the first half of the sixth century. When the Indo-European concept of *chiaroscuro*, known to the Chinese as "receding-and-protruding painting," was introduced into China through Central Asia, Chinese artists, rejecting its shaded colors, responded by developing their own three-dimensional mode of monochrome painting with a modulated thickening-and-thinning line. The great eighth-century figure painter Wu Tao-tzu (active ca. 720–60) was said to have done his large

(2) *The swept-back mane, rolling eye, and flaring nostrils convey the fiery temperament of Night-shining White, favorite charger of the emperor Hsuan-tsung (reigned 712–56). Attributed to the leading horse painter of the eighth century, Han Kan (active ca. 740–56), this work shows sensitive contour lines reinforced by pale ink-wash modeling in a style known as pai-hua, or "white painting" (see also figure 3).*

於古閑空無而今果識韓獨
嘶霜月白特立朝風寒骨
志凌雲氣無心懷錦鞍丹書
曹霸老畫肉也應難
乾隆丙寅仲冬後題



(3) Night-shining White, probably the best-known horse painting in Chinese art, was much admired by critics and collectors. It bears a formidable pedigree of written appreciations and collectors' seals, including an inscription by the last Southern T'ang emperor Li Yü (reigned 961–75)—who wrote the title on the right-hand margin—as well as more than twenty other inscriptions of the ninth to the twentieth centuries. Celebrated pictures frequently bear numerous collectors' seals, colophons, and inscriptions by later admirers on a variety of subjects—from information about the artist to an analysis of the work, to poems it has inspired. For the connoisseur, these notations not only increased the value of the work but greatly enhanced its aesthetic appreciation. Handscroll. Ink on paper, 12 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 13 $\frac{3}{16}$ inches. Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1977. 1977.78

室外正書字跡肥時

此今秋題仇英畫之句也頃得韓幹是固覺筆力更生一頭地幅亦
所資古潤可愛因書於右嘉平哉生明又識

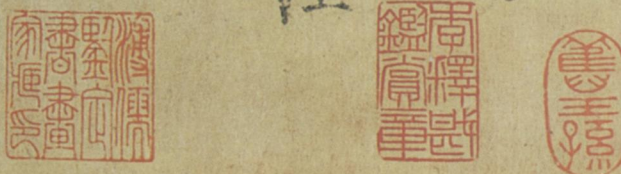
古稱照夜白馬裏泰山
韓絲絡為誰老沙場空
賁寒駿寧煩贈榮良識
不迴鞍翼北羣原夥由
來伯樂難丁丑春月
御題疊前韻

南唐押署所識物

多真吳人吳說

韓幹畫照夜白

紹興戊午鄉林向子謹
同觀于凝香閣



Buddhist images on temple walls with such forceful thickening-and-thinning strokes that they needed neither shading nor colors to be complete.

Since most T'ang pictorial art exists only as wall decoration, *Night-shining White* gives us an unparalleled opportunity to observe how a great T'ang artist was able to achieve on paper a fully plastic and lively image of a prancing horse through the elegant economy of only a sensitive brushline and subtle ink shading. The power of Han Kan's drawing lies in the quality of his line, which is supple and incisive, defining the sculpturelike forms. In nature "flat" lines do not exist: a crease in a horse's neck or below its chest, for instance, represents the intersection of two planes. A true contour line drawn by the artist must suggest the curving surface of a form. Han Kan's brushline precisely, almost tactually, describes the bulging contours of the horse's powerful body and the creases of its quivering muscles. Such effective drawing, a unique achievement of T'ang painting, is the product of a mind that visualizes forms in organic, three-dimensional terms. The brushline is beautiful because, in its sensitive modulation, it describes the forms beautifully.

Furthermore, Han Kan's intuitive grasp of foreshortening and of animal locomotion has enabled him to achieve naturalism with form types for the horse that had been in use since the Ch'in and Han dynasties (221 B.C.–A.D. 220). Archaic representations were merely flat silhouettes, a form found even in sculpture. In the Han *Flying Horse* that toured the United States in 1974–75, the two sides of the horse are seen as symmetrical halves, with both right legs extended forward and both left legs swung backward in an unnatural gait, reducing movement and expressiveness to rhythmic abstraction. Although Han Kan followed basically the same linear conventions in depicting his horse—smooth, round hindquarters and strict profile head with an open mouth—it is now conceived in the round as a well-integrated, organic entity. The animal's hooves are in proper synchronization: with left-front and right-rear legs touching the ground at the same time. Thus Han Kan was able to go beyond traditional form types to create a superbly articulated, personality-charged animal that was much emulated by ensuing generations of artists but never equalled.

Landscape painting began to emerge as a preeminent art form at the end of the T'ang dynasty. Painters, escaping the turmoil and destruction that took place during the collapse of the dynasty, retreated to the mountains and countryside, where they found spectacular scenery and inspiration. The reclusive artists of the ensuing Five Dynasties (907–60) and the

early Northern Sung dynasty (960–1127) sought to capture the "truth" of creation by investigating the "principles" of nature in landscape painting. They developed a monumental style of great power and simplicity that conveys the vastness and multiplicity of creation itself. Such painters as Fan K'uan (active ca. 990–1030) and the great early Northern Sung masters created works that would be admired and copied for hundreds of years.

In Northern Sung landscape, as in the landscapes of centuries before, the principal elements are mountains and trees, which are portrayed by an extensive repertoire of systematically developed form types. In archaic representations these closely resemble their ideographic forms: *shan* (山) comprising three peaks, a "host" flanked by two smaller "guest" peaks; and *mu* (木) describing forked branches and anchoring roots. By Northern Sung times, different kinds of rock surfaces were described by clearly defined systems of texture strokes or dots; and the trees were shown as a mixture of deciduous hardwoods and coniferous evergreens, with the leaves represented by a variety of foliage formulas—outlined patterns of circular and pointed leaves contrasting with ink-dotted or needle patterns. A Northern Sung landscape, conceived part by part, is read rather than experienced: it has a great intellectual sense of scale but lacks physically described space and recession. The result is a conceptual landscape that represents no mere retinal image of nature but a vision of the macrocosm.

Landscape in the Style of Fan K'uan, a large hanging scroll of the twelfth century, repeats some of the conventions of the earlier master (figures 4–6). Here, for instance, is the strict ordering of the composition into stages: in this case three, indicated by a boat landing at the foot of a tree-covered bluff in the foreground; travelers headed toward a temple retreat in the middle distance; and mountain peaks rising in the background. The angular rock faces of "raindrop"-texture dots and the scrubby foliage on the peaks are also hallmarks of Fan K'uan. Fan's mountain forms reflect the geological traits of the rocky peaks of the southern Shensi region of northern China, where such foliage grows in layers of wind-deposited

(4) *This hanging scroll by a Northern Sung artist dates from about 1120 and depicts a landscape of mountains and trees that evokes the style of the early eleventh-century master Fan K'uan (active ca. 990–1030). Neither a realistic portrayal nor a romantic personal vision, it emphasizes the vastness and complexity of nature. Ink and pale colors on silk, 64 7/8 x 40 7/8 inches. Gift of Irene and Earl Morse, 1956. 56.151*



(5) Trees are one of the principal elements of Landscape in the Style of Fan K'uan. Here, silhouetted against the mist, great deciduous hardwoods with their massive trunks display a variety of conventionalized foliage patterns—outlined round and pointed leaves and ink dots. In a Northern Sung landscape, mountains, the other principal element, and trees contrast and complement each other according to Yin and Yang concepts in various relationships of high and low, hard and soft, light and dark—to create infinite change, variety, and interest in a timeless landscape.





soil on the tops of barren cliffs. In this scroll the rock surfaces are described by angular, nervously charged contour strokes and pointillistic dots. Following the Fan idiom as well are the trees, a mixture of the outlined foliage patterns of tall hardwood species in the foreground and ink-dotted evergreen motifs in the middle distance.

The mountain forms of the Metropolitan's scroll are superimposed in overlapping silhouettes, a compositional device typical of the twelfth century. There is no receding ground plane to link or hold the major elements; only the mist that curls through the valleys unites them. Individual motifs are organized on an additive basis, and the landscape is seen, or read, motif by motif. The mist-filled chasms and valleys seem to run in a vast and boundless space. By the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, landscape elements became physically integrated, but description of spatial recession was achieved in the later paintings only with the loss of the ability on the part of the artist to suggest infinite space.

Quite the opposite of the dramatic scope of the landscape is the tranquil microcosm shown in the exquisite handscroll *Finches and Bamboo* (figure 7). The painting is signed with a cypher of the late Northern Sung emperor, Hui-tsung (reigned 1101–25), a rapacious collector and artist and calligrapher of great talent, who did more than any other ruler to foster the Academy tradition in China. The exacting style and high standards of his Academy were inspired by the emperor's own devotion to the fine art of painting. The meticulous attention paid to the depiction of the natural world found a striking parallel in the Sung Neo-Confucian epistemology asserting that "the investigation of things leads to the extension of knowledge." The ultimate goal of the Academy was not just a fine miniaturist technique, but the careful study of "principles" of nature through painting.

In *Finches and Bamboo* we look into the private world of a pair of birds communing peacefully on a spring day. The bamboo leaves, their tips browned by a harsh winter, have regained their lush jade-green hue, and pink tendrils sprout from each branch. The springy stalks provide secure perches for the birds: the sleek male on the lower stalk, tail and wing tips pulled back, is attentive to the female, who is rather aloof but enjoying his attention. Although close examination reveals that the birds are drawn in conventional form types and brush patterns, the intent is clearly to achieve a lifelike representation—even the dots of lacquer in the birds' eyes are meant to add life. But the painting is more than just a faithful reproduction of nature's outward appearances. By showing growth, change, and potential movement, it communicates profound insight into the workings

of the natural universe. By comparison, an Audubon print or nature photograph seems only a frozen image.

Hui-tsung bequeathed not only his own artistic achievements and that of his Academy but also a descriptive catalogue of his painting collection, *Hsuan-ho hua-p'u* (*A Manual of Painting During the Hsuan-ho Reign*, 1119–25; with a preface dated 1120), which evidences the richness and diversity of Sung painting. Divided into ten sections, it lists subjects ranging from Buddhist and Taoist images to history and didactic pictures, to such specialized genres as architecture, foreign tribes, landscapes, animals, birds, flowers, bamboo, fish, and dragons. The Sung period was rich in the decorative arts, such as screens and other furnishings, and in ornamented buildings, which were embellished in early Sung times mainly by professional painters, who also turned out more intimate works for patrons and collectors.

In the eleventh century, when scholar-officials had replaced China's hereditary aristocracy as the dominant force in government and cultural life, a new class of artist appeared. As men of letters, most scholar-officials were trained poets and calligraphers, and as many of them were connoisseurs and collectors, they dabbled in painting. In emphasizing the cultivation of the inner self, the scholar-artists saw painting, calligraphy, and poetry as means for personal expression. Turning away from the minutely descriptive mode of such works as *Finches and Bamboo*, avant-garde critics of the late Northern Sung began a search for a radically different, more personally expressive style. Some two centuries later, this scholar-painting aesthetic became the accepted credo of the leading artists of the Yuan period.

In 1127 Hui-tsung's northern capital was sacked by the Chin Tartars, and the emperor was carried off, only to die later in captivity. His ninth son, who was proclaimed Emperor Kao-tsung (reigned 1127–61), escaped and established the Southern Sung court at Lin-an (Hangchow) in 1138. A Southern Sung artist drew the Museum's free-hand copy of a tenth-century handscroll by Chou Wen-chü two years after the move to the new capital (figures 8,9). Chou, a Southern T'ang (937–75) court painter, was patronized by

(6) *In Landscape in the Style of Fan K'uan the rock surfaces are described by nervous, angular contour strokes and mottling dots, softer versions of Fan K'uan's "raindrop" dots. Superimposed in overlapping silhouettes, the mountains are unified by a mist-filled atmosphere that creates the illusion of space, a device that dates this scroll to the twelfth century.*





(7) An accomplished painter as well as an active patron of the arts, the emperor Hui-tsung (reigned 1101–25) established a new level of naturalism through the exacting standards he set for artists of the Sung Painting Academy. Whether illustrating a line of poetry or making a study from nature, capturing the spirit of the subject was valued above mere literal representation. The emperor's Finches and Bamboo exemplifies his fastidious taste: the minutely observed finches and stalks of bamboo are exquisitely composed and elegantly rendered. The tiny birds are imbued with the alertness and sprightly vitality of their living counterparts. Detail of handscroll. Ink and colors on silk, 11 x 18 inches overall. John M. Crawford, Jr., Collection. Purchase, Douglas Dillon Gift, 1981. 1981.278



Emperor Li Yü (reigned 961–75), an artist and poet who trained his palace ladies to sing and act out his lyrics. The original painting showing these women in the palace was done in full color.

In making his copy the twelfth-century artist chose the “plain drawing” (*pai-miao*) style of Li Kung-lin (ca. 1049–1106), the foremost scholar-painter of the late Northern Sung period, whose nephew had commissioned the picture. A great antiquarian and noted calligrapher, Li studied and copied many ancient works, distilling and transforming them in a neoclassical, pure drawing style. Unlike Han Kan’s subtly modeled “white painting,” in which lines describe contours, Li’s style is a strictly linear technique with elegant calligraphic brushstrokes that are in themselves individually beautiful.

Working in this style, the artist has not tried to reproduce the original exactly. He has expanded and transformed it, giving it a fresh understanding. Such a transformation involves both imitation and re-creation. The copyist first tries to capture the larger motifs and the obvious brush mannerisms as well as other readily identifiable elements, such as hairdo and costume. But to give life and energy to his work, he makes subtle changes more in keeping with the aesthetic and visual structure of his own time and his own personality.

In the Palace is not a later painting in an ancient style but an ancient work reincarnated in a later vernacular. Concentrating on line, the painter eliminated all suggestions of a setting in space—which might be expected in a tenth-century handscroll—and the well-conceived figures appear against a void. The drapery folds are drawn in the type of strongly calligraphic line admirably characterized by Sung critics as “iron

wire.” This style displays a self-conscious pre-occupation with brushline: perfectly centered (the brush tip carefully kept at the center of the brushstroke) and taut, the lines become almost independent of the forms they describe. Here, rather than modeling the forms, the brushlines kinetically recreate the rhythms of the folds. Yet, despite their freedom, they are cohesive and well integrated, suggesting the movement and structure of the body underneath.

In a similar spirit of reviving China’s ancient heritage, Emperor Kao-tsung sponsored a number of painting and calligraphy projects that extolled the virtues and legitimacy of his “dynastic revival.” The largest of these was the illustrating of the more than three hundred poems of the *Shih-ching*, or *Classic of Odes*, as arranged and interpreted by the Han commentators Mao Heng and Mao Ch’ang. The *Six Odes Starting with “Wild Geese,”* illustrated by Ma Ho-chih (active ca. 1130–70), was part of this ambitious program (figures 10, 11). The *Six Odes* reflect a new archaizing approach to painting taken by the Academy under the personal direction of the emperor.

(8,9) *The artist of In the Palace, a twelfth-century copy of a lost work by Chou Wen-chü (active ca. 940–75), has eliminated color and all suggestion of setting to concentrate on line, turning each brushstroke into an expressive entity, as in calligraphy. This strictly linear technique, known as “plain drawing,” can be contrasted to the contour lines and subtle shading of the earlier Night-shining White (figures 2, 3). Details of handscroll, before 1140. Ink on silk, 10½ x 57½ inches overall. Purchase, Douglas Dillon Gift, 1978. 1978.4*



Ma's "orchid-leaf" brushline, a stylized version of the classic thickening-and-thinning stroke, clearly derives from the scholar-painting tradition of Li Kung-lin. Ma's archaistic, unrealistic, and deliberately calligraphic drawing style is ideally suited for the *Odes*, long regarded as one of the foundations of Chinese civilization and thought.

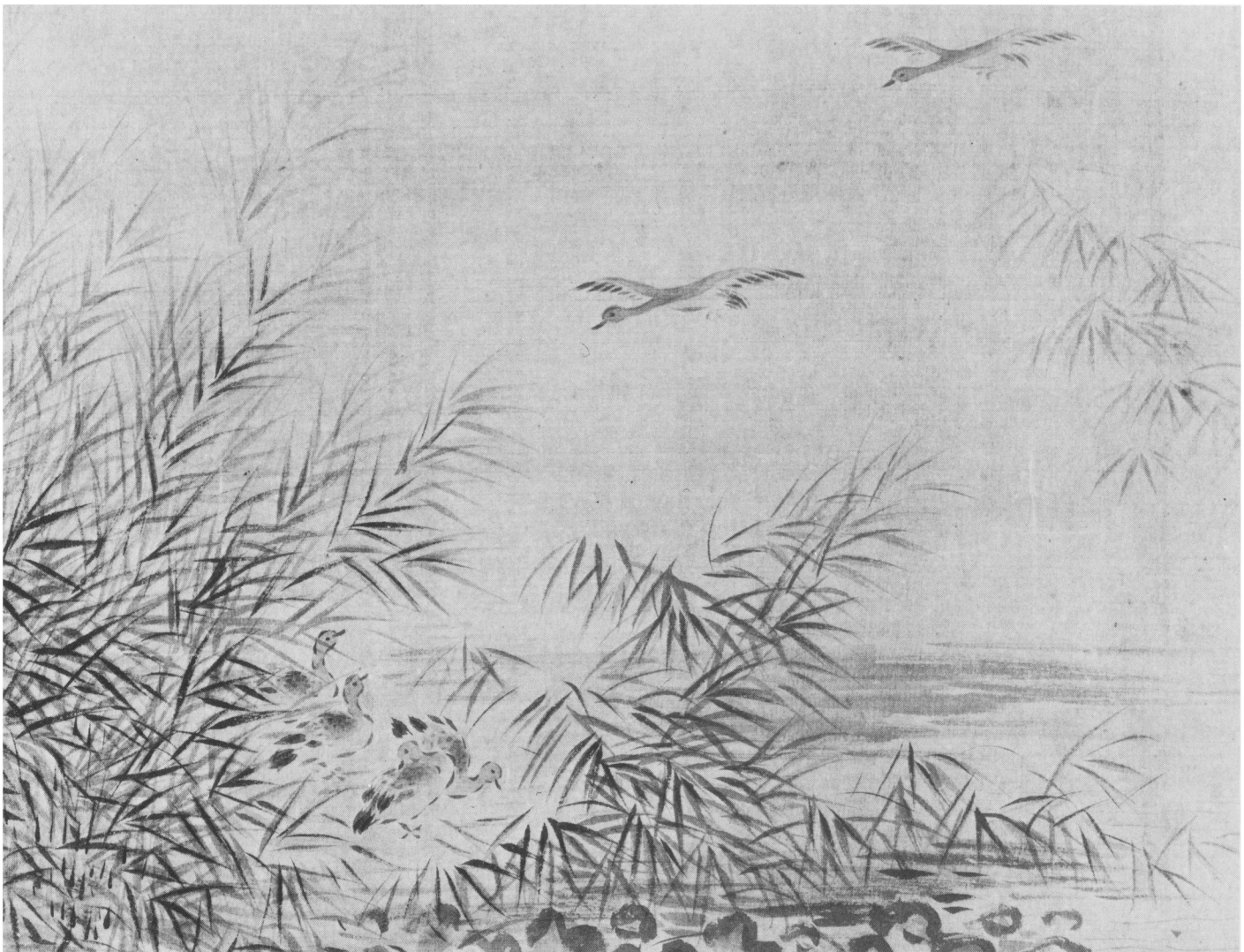
Avoiding the narrative or descriptive approach, he has infused his drawing with lyrical expression. In *Wild Geese*, illustrating a poem describing the misfortunes of the homeless and poor before the Chou king Hsuan (reigned 827–780 B.C.) gathered them in and housed them, Ma depicts a pair of geese flying eagerly to their goslings hiding in the reeds. To suggest their unhappy condition, the brushstrokes of the reeds around the young birds are disorderly and abrupt; and to show their helplessness, the lines describing the goslings are timid, almost quavering. In contrast, the parent birds are beautifully groomed, and their very graceful and tender presence seems to spell hope and relief.

In *Courtyard Torches*, an impressive scene of courtiers assembled for an audience, Ma drew

figures, trees, and architecture with an undulating brushstroke in a particularly expressive calligraphic style.

(10) *Emperor Kao-tsung* (reigned 1127–61) sponsored a series of handscrolls that transcribed and illustrated the *Classic of Odes*, thought to have been compiled by Confucius. For his illustration *Wild Geese* Ma Ho-chih (active ca. 1130–70) used an archaistic, simplified style in keeping with the great antiquity of the *Odes*. Detail of handscroll. Ink and colors on silk, individual scene 10 x 30½ inches overall. Edward Elliott Family Collection. Lent by Douglas Dillon. L. 1981.15.1

(11) In *Courtyard Torches* courtiers assemble for an early morning audience, and according to the poem from the *Odes*, "The night nears dawn." This verse is said to refer to the concern of King Hsuan (reigned 827–780 B.C.) about the punctual arrival of his ministers. Ma Ho-chih's undulating "orchid-leaf" brushline imparts a stylized rhythm to the scene. Detail. Individual scene 10 x 25½ inches overall.







As we have seen in *In the Palace*, one artist's style may become the subject of another artist's composition in a free adaptation, a tradition largely unfamiliar in Western art. This combination of documentation and interpretation causes peculiar problems of stylistic analysis and attribution. *Literary Gathering at the Liu-li Hall* is another copy of a work by the tenth-century master Chou Wen-chü, this one by a thirteenth-century painter (figure 12). In the Palace Museum, Peking, there is an earlier, cut-down version (only the left half of the composition remains) entitled *Literary Gathering*; Emperor Hui-tsung, writing on the painting, ascribes it to the eighth-century painter Han Huang (723–87). This attribution is unlikely because the costumes—particularly the men's hats—the chair, and the hairdo of the servant boy are in the style of the tenth century, and the drawing of the drapery is in the “tremulous brushline” known to have been used by Chou Wen-chü. By comparing the two paintings, which are very close in composition but differ in drawing style, we may conclude that both are copies of an original by Chou.

The original composition, which is the earliest known example of a popular theme in Sung painting, a literary meeting in a garden setting, commemorated the famous parties hosted by the eighth-century poet Wang Ch'ang-lin at his residence in Chiang-ning (Nanking), at which he entertained his poet friends and held poetry competitions. Furniture and writing implements have

been moved outdoors, where the scholars and a Buddhist monk attended by servants gather and converse amiably. One scholar, leaning against a garden rock, is laboring over a poem. The figures, furniture, rocks, and tree are arranged horizontally, recalling other tenth-century compositions.

In the Metropolitan's *Literary Gathering*, Chou's tenth-century style has been transformed by the thirteenth-century artist. While the hats are Southern T'ang versions of earlier T'ang headgear, the faces have a late Sung look, typical of many of the Buddhist paintings now preserved in Japan. Compared to the late T'ang faces, they are more schematic; the individual brushlines are more rapid and more automatic in feeling. In contrast to faces of the late Ming dynasty (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), however, they are solidly and three-dimensionally conceived. The drawing of the faces begins with the nose, around which the eyes, eyebrows, mouth, and ears are built to convey a definite sense of bone structure and volume. The eyelid has a double curvature that rises to suggest the bulging eyeball underneath. Chou Wen-chü's “tremulous brushline” has become for the thirteenth-century artist a virtuoso performance, in which the elegant fluttering lines, at once playful and confident, are well integrated. The hooks and curves representing creases and pockets in the drapery show an extravagant realism matched only by the best late Southern Sung Academy figure painters.

Somewhat apart from but clearly reflecting the



mainstream of pictorial development are Buddhist paintings, which flourished during the Sung period. Throughout Buddhism's early history in China, the ascetic aspects of the religion—the practice of celibacy and self-deprivation—came into conflict with the Chinese family system and social values. The form of Buddhism that won wide popular acceptance by the Chinese was the less esoteric and less demanding Pure Land sect, which preached universal salvation through meritorious work and frequent invocation of the names of the Amitabha Buddha, lord of the Western Paradise, and his Paradise deities. The large, imposing hanging scroll represents the compassionate Amitabha welcoming newborn souls into the Western Paradise (figures 13, 14). Such images of the Western Paradise deities were made by commercial studios for private worship in the home. Many Buddhist paintings of the Sung and Yuan periods are preserved today in Japan, whose merchants and pilgrims during the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries imported them, mainly from Ning-po, a port city in Chekiang Province. A scroll like the Metropolitan's appears in a lohan painting made in Ning-po between 1178 and 1184, now owned by the Zen Buddhist temple Daitokuji in Kyoto.

Typical of Buddhist images, the figure is well drawn in a conservative vein. The face and hands, rendered firmly in a three-dimensional manner, are modeled by a pink, flesh-tone shading, reminiscent of the imported *chiaroscuro* technique of the fifth and sixth centuries. The drapery

is executed in the "scudding-cloud and running-water" pattern, which, having originated in the Indo-European Gandharan style, was frequently used by Chinese painters to recall the Indian origin of the Buddha. The modulated lines of the drapery recall the legendary thickening-and-thinning brushstrokes of Wu Tao-tzu. Compared to the expressive strokes of *In the Palace*, however, these seem tame and almost reduced to a formula. The brilliant colors are typical of popular

(12) *Poetry competitions and literary discussions were often painted by artists of the Sung (960–1279) and later periods. Literary Gathering at the Liu-li Hall, a thirteenth-century copy of a work by Chou Wen-chü (see also figures 8,9), commemorates a meeting hosted by the poet Wang Ch'ang-lin (active ca. 713–41). Here, seven scholars and a Buddhist monk admire books and scrolls and converse. Two servants stand by, while a third grinds ink on an inkstone. Although the artist has transformed Chou's tenth-century drapery style into a series of complex rococo meanders, the lines never degenerate into two-dimensional pattern; independently, or in conjunction with pale shading, they graphically describe the folds and creases of the garments. Hand-scroll. Ink and colors on silk, 12¾ x 49 inches. Gift of Mrs. Sheila Riddell, in memory of Sir Percival David, 1979. 1979.49*

(13) By the twelfth century, the most popular form of Buddhism in China centered on the Amitabha Buddha, shown here welcoming souls into his Western Paradise. Standing on lotus pods, Amitabha manifests his superhuman character through his idealized body and gestures. His raised left hand, with thumb and finger forming a circle, betokens wisdom and compassion; the right hand is lowered in the gesture of almsgiving or wish-granting. His elongated earlobes are those of an Indian prince and signify his stature as a universal ruler; the cranial protuberance, red bald spot, and halo are signs of enlightened wisdom. Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk, 53½ x 23 inches. Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1980. 1980.275

(14) While the forms are seen as elegant linear patterns, they are also rendered three-dimensionally. In the detail of Amitabha's hand, fine outlines and flesh-toned shading combine to provide a convincing illusion of the fleshy palm and fingers around which the nails are gently curved.







Buddhist paintings of the period. Such intensity of color is the result of a layer of foundation paint on the back of the silk surface—applied before the pigments on the front—which was discovered when the painting was remounted.

A very different type of Buddhist painting is *Meeting Between Yao-shan and Li Ao*, inscribed by the well-known Ch'an priest Yen-ch'i Kuang-wen between 1254 and 1256, when he was abbot of the Ling-yin Temple in Hangchow (figures 15, 16). Antidogmatic and iconoclastic, Ch'an, or Zen (in Japanese), Buddhism shared with Neo-Confucianism and philosophical Taoism a concern for the cultivation of a tranquil and detached mind free of material involvement. Just as the Ch'an master shunned formal learning in favor of intuitive understanding, the Ch'an painter avoided careful drawing and bright colors in favor of a spontaneous, more elusive brush and ink-wash style.

This scroll depicts the famous encounter between the Neo-Confucian scholar Li Ao (active ca. 840) and the Ch'an master Yao-shan. Meeting the renowned master, the scholar was disappointed by his unresponsiveness, and remarked, "Seeing your face is not as good as hearing your name." Whereupon the master replied, "Would you distrust your eye and value your ear?" Then, pointing up and down, the master indicated that the ultimate reality is in what you can see, such as "the clouds in the sky and water in my vase." On the painting Yen-ch'i Kuang-wen's colophon reads:

All moments of enlightenment come in a flash,
Why distrust your eye and value your ear?
Just as between the water and the clouds,
Don't say there is nothing there.

The drawing of this scroll is in a style so pale that it has been nicknamed "ghost painting." A relaxed and spontaneous combination of line and ink wash, this style was said to have been evolved by a late twelfth-century Ch'an master, Chih-yung. While the forms are vividly volumetric and real, the artist is attempting to express an idea that denied both form and technique. Compared to Li Kung-lin's simplified "plain drawing," the loose brushlines seem shapeless and to critics of classical calligraphy, even "uncultivated." Yet the great Ch'an works of the thirteenth century were a unique expression of a religious ideal. Later Ch'an-style paintings, increasingly rough and eccentric, show interesting but empty brushwork.

(15) *Meeting Between Yao-shan and Li Ao depicts the encounter between the Ch'an (Zen in Japanese) master Yao-shan and the Confucian scholar Li Ao (active ca. 840), who is shown at the left. The Ch'an sect of Buddhism disparaged elaborate rituals and iconography in favor of a more personal approach to enlightenment. "Encounter" paintings and their accompanying poems challenged the viewer with a conundrum, the answer to which led to the realization that the ultimate reality is simply that which one perceives. Hanging scroll, before 1256. Ink on paper, 12¼ x 33½ inches. Edward Elliott Family Collection. Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1982. 1982.2.1.*

(16) *Yao-shan, at the right, is portrayed in the spontaneous, elusive brush and ink-wash style favored by Ch'an painters, who shunned careful drawing and bright colors. Capturing the fleeting vision with a minimum of technique, the Ch'an painting style essentially denies all form and technique.*



In 1227 the armies of Genghis Khan succeeded in driving the Chin Tartars from Yen-ching (Peking). In 1234 the Mongols captured Pien-ching (K'ai-feng) and destroyed it completely. Thirty-seven years later, Genghis's grandson, Kublai Khan, established the Yuan dynasty and, sweeping south, overcame the last Southern Sung emperor. Until 1368, the Mongols imposed their rule upon the Chinese, who never before had been completely conquered.

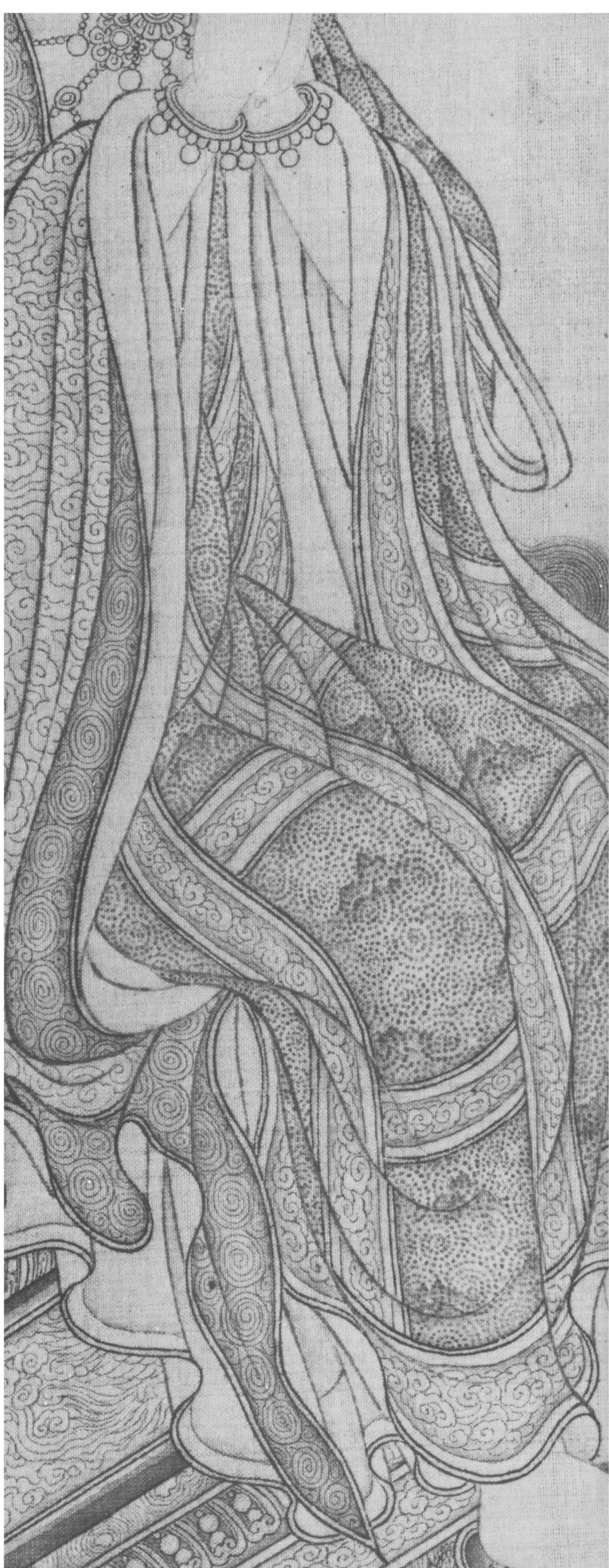
China under the Mongol conquest became an amalgam of Han Chinese, Mongol, Khitan, Jurchen Tartar, Central Asian, and Tibetan cultures, yet Chinese art and culture not only survived but also flourished. Developing new traditions as well as carrying on and rediscovering old ones, Yuan painters worked in a wide range of styles.

Among the early Yuan masters, Wang Chen-p'eng (ca. 1280–1329) was the leading exponent of "plain drawing" in both figural and architectural painting. His newly discovered *Vimalakirti and the Single Doctrine* was done, according to the artist's inscription, in 1308 in the Yuan palace at Peking at the behest of Jen-tsung (reigned 1312–20), then the heir apparent (figures 17–19). Wang further notes that his model was a composition by a Chin painter, Ma Yun-ch'ing (active ca. 1230), which was itself a copy of a work by Li Kung-lin. The Palace Museum, Peking, owns a scroll attributed to Li that appears to be the work of Ma Yun-ch'ing and the acknowledged model for Wang's *Vimalakirti*.

The handscroll depicts a passage from the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, a Buddhist scripture, in which Vimalakirti, a layman, and Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, engage in a theological debate. According to the sutra, Vimalakirti proved the more subtle by remaining silent when asked to explain the ultimate meaning of the Buddhist law. The principal figures, seated on daises and facing each other, are surrounded by an audience of bodhisattvas, lohans, attendants, and guardians.

Wang's scroll is evidence of the powerful influence of Li Kung-lin's art in later Chinese painting. Li painted many religious subjects, working mostly on paper in handscrolls or other intimate formats. Unlike other religious paintings, such as murals or icon paintings on silk, Li's "plain-drawing" works, rich in psychological interpretation, were done to the scholar-painter's taste and

(17) In this detail of Wang Chen-p'eng's *Vimalakirti* (figure 18), an alert lion and a young boy attend the Bodhisattva of Wisdom. In describing the billowing folds of the garments, the artist has carefully centered his brush tip for perfect control.







therefore acceptable to connoisseurs as fine art. Wang's drawing also shows the influence of a leading calligrapher and painter of the time, Chao Meng-fu (1254–1322), who transformed Li's "plain drawing" by applying the "seal-script-style" calligraphic technique, whereby each stroke is rigidly centered with the brush and made to look even and round. The result is a totally uniform and flowing line, in the "iron-wire" style. Wang's achievement was his ability to use this perfectly controlled line to represent convincing, organic figural forms, rather than letting it turn out merely abstract patterns.

The brushline and the ink wash, representing contrasting and complementary Yang and Yin principles in painting, were developed by Chinese painters both together and as separate disciplines. Just as Li Kung-lin reduced drawing to its linear essence, the Southern Sung landscape painters transformed the complicated Northern Sung landscape idiom of Fan K'uan and his followers into a simplified, powerfully evocative ink-wash style. *Beneficent Rain*, the only surviving work by the thirty-eighth Taoist pope, Chang Yü-ts'ai (died 1316), uses a drenching, ink-suffused style to create a dramatic nighttime scene of four dragons, China's mythical rainmakers, stirring up a tidal wave in an electric storm (figures 20, 21).

(18) This detail of the handscroll by Wang Chen-p'eng (ca. 1280–1329) illustrates a debate between Vimalakirti, a layman who achieved supreme enlightenment, and Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom. According to the text, Vimalakirti proved the more subtle by remaining silent when asked to explain the meaning of the Buddhist Law. Seated on elaborate daises, the principals are surrounded by bodhisattvas, lohans, and guardians. Inscriptions by the artist indicate that the scroll was drawn in 1308 for Emperor Jen-tsung (reigned 1312–20) and that it was prepared for his approval prior to the execution of a color version. Ink on silk, 15½ x 112 inches overall. Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1980. 1980.276

(19) Lohans are ascetics and holy men who practiced austerities and sought individual salvation. Included as representatives of the earlier Hinayana sect in the later Mahayana Buddhist pantheon, lohans remained popular in Chinese art perhaps because of their distinctly human qualities. The lohan with his head bowed and hands clasped resembles a kindly mendicant monk more than an ascetic.



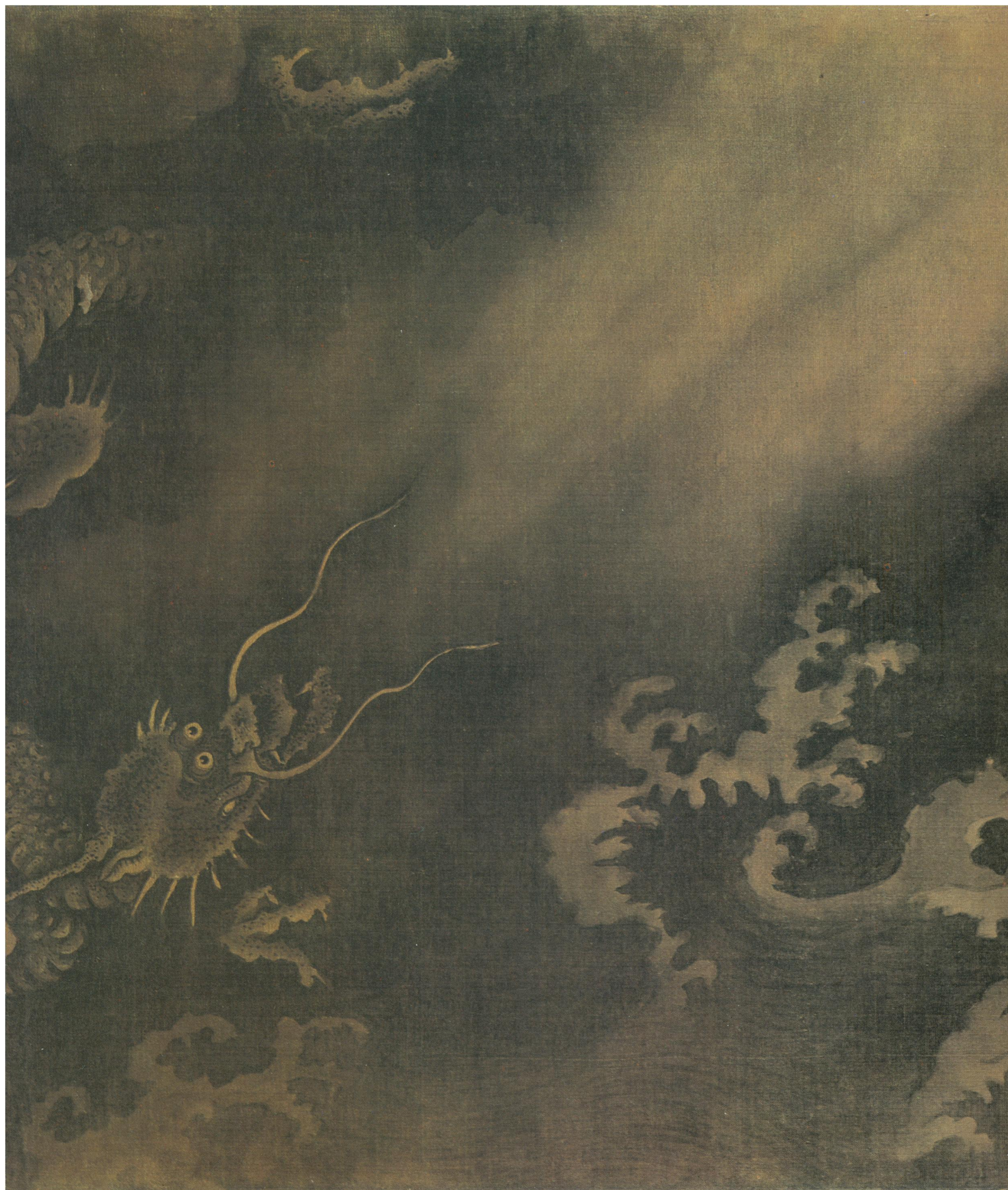
This painting is closely related to the celebrated *Nine Dragons*, a handscroll by Ch'en Jung, dated 1244, now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, which bears a colophon by Chang Yü-ts'ai's son, the thirty-ninth pope. One of Ch'en Jung's own inscriptions expresses his satisfaction that the scroll had found its proper resting place in a "Taoist abode"; this abode was, no doubt, Mount Lung-hu (Dragon-Tiger Mountain), in Kiangsi Province, where Ch'en Jung served as magistrate.

During the Yuan period the Cheng-i ("Orthodox Unity") Taoist Church, residing at Dragon-Tiger Mountain, cast an enormous spell of influence, as the Mongols, who believed in divination and shamanistic practices, found the more popular aspects of this religion—such as prognostication, alchemy, and the pursuit of immortality—and the established Taoist church organization useful in aiding their control over southern China. The popes of Dragon-Tiger Mountain and their disciples were repeatedly summoned to the Yuan capital to be honored. Chang Yü-ts'ai received special commendations from the Mongol court for inducing rain and for subduing a "tidal monster" that had plagued the eastern coast. No doubt his powerful dragon painting added to his aura as a religious leader and rainmaker.

The scholar-painting aesthetic, which for nearly two hundred years had emphasized the importance of art as a means of self-expression, gained overwhelming acceptance with the political upheavals of the Mongol rule. Excluded from meaningful government service—the traditional goal of the scholar—southern intellectuals "retired" to paint, compose poetry, and practice calligraphy, many of them to Chiang-nan, in southeastern China. In response to their unfamiliar circumstances, Yuan scholar-artists turned away from the objective reality of Sung painting, combining painting, poetry, and calligraphy in works that express their alienation and unhappiness.

(20) *Auspicious creatures associated with water and clouds, dragons in China symbolize the flux of nature's elemental forces. Chang Yü-ts'ai (died 1316), the thirty-eighth Taoist pope, was celebrated for inducing much needed rain and subduing a "tidal monster"; he also gained a reputation as a painter of dragons. This detail of Beneficent Rain, his only extant work, depicts one of these mysterious beasts as it weaves and cavorts through a storm-racked scene of churning clouds and wind-whipped waves. Handscroll. Ink on silk, 10⁵/₈ x 106³/₄ inches overall. Lent by Douglas Dillon. L.1981.15.13*









(21) In Sung dynasty texts, the dragon is described as having the head of an ox, muzzle of a donkey, eyes of a shrimp, horns of a deer, body of a serpent covered with fish scales, and feet of a phoenix. This dragon, one of four in Beneficent Rain, clutches a pearl symbolic of its supernatural powers.

Invariably accompanied by thunder and rain, dragons move like lightning and whirlwinds—all-powerful yet totally unpredictable. According to the Han dynasty philosopher Wang Fu (flourished ca. A.D. 120–60): "When it is about to rain, dragons sing out, making sounds like the beating of bronze basins. Their saliva can exude multitudinous fragrances; their breath forms clouds, which they use to conceal their bodies, so that they cannot be seen." To create a murky, turbulent atmosphere Chang Yü-ts'ai relied primarily upon freely applied, graded ink washes.

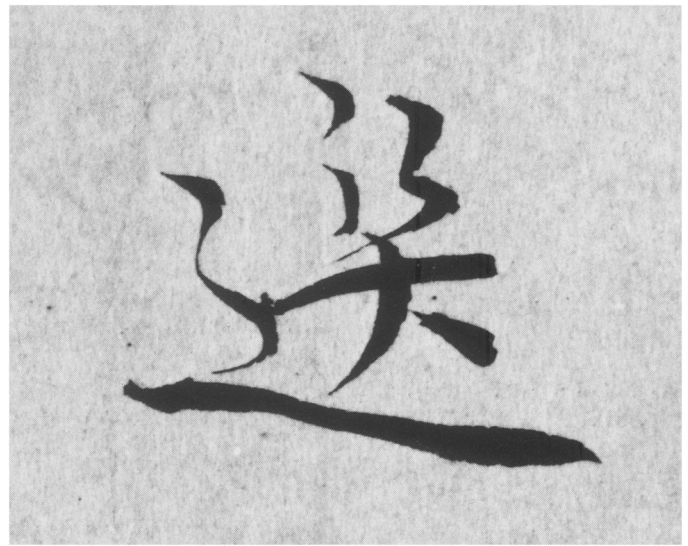


Pear Blossoms, by Ch'ien Hsuan (ca. 1235–after 1301), a leading artist who chose to live as a “leftover citizen” in Chiang-nan, at first resembles, and may even be derived from, late Southern Sung Academy flower paintings (figures 22–24). But his poem, inscribed to the left of the image, makes it clear that the real subject is not pear blossoms but his profound sorrow at the destruction of Sung civilization:

All alone by the veranda railing, teardrops
drenching the branches,
Though her face is unadorned, her old
charms remain;
Behind the locked gate, on a rainy night, how
she is filled with sadness,
How differently she looked bathed in golden
waves of moonlight, before darkness fell.

Unlike Hui-tsung's *Finches and Bamboo*, which demonstrates a commitment to an accurate rendering of nature, *Pear Blossoms* and the faded beauty it represents are expressions of the artist's personal feelings. To create a mood of cool detachment reflecting his state of mind, Ch'ien drew in a fine calligraphic line and used flat, schematic patterns in elegant pale colors. The tender lyricism of the poem is echoed in his calligraphy, and its brushstrokes repeat the languid, twisting movement of the pear-branch leaves.

Here painting, poetry, and calligraphy are completely integrated into a single work. Moving away from objective representation and traditional symbolic and allegorical conventions, the subtly interwoven literary and pictorial images, purposely vague but evocative, defy simple explication. Since no one will read the poem in quite the same way, each will supply his own mental images; and though an actual flower is shown, one has to guess at the artist's motivation and feelings. Thus the viewer is involved in the painter's

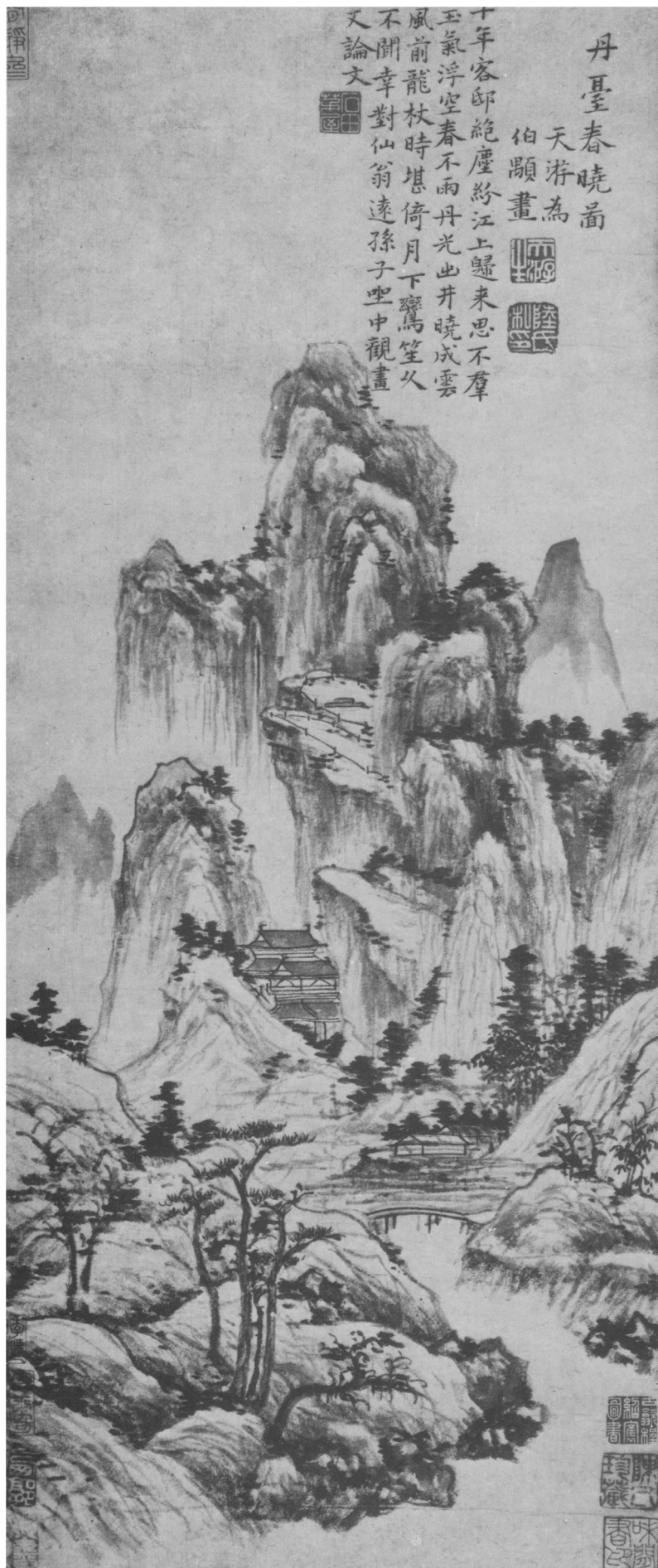


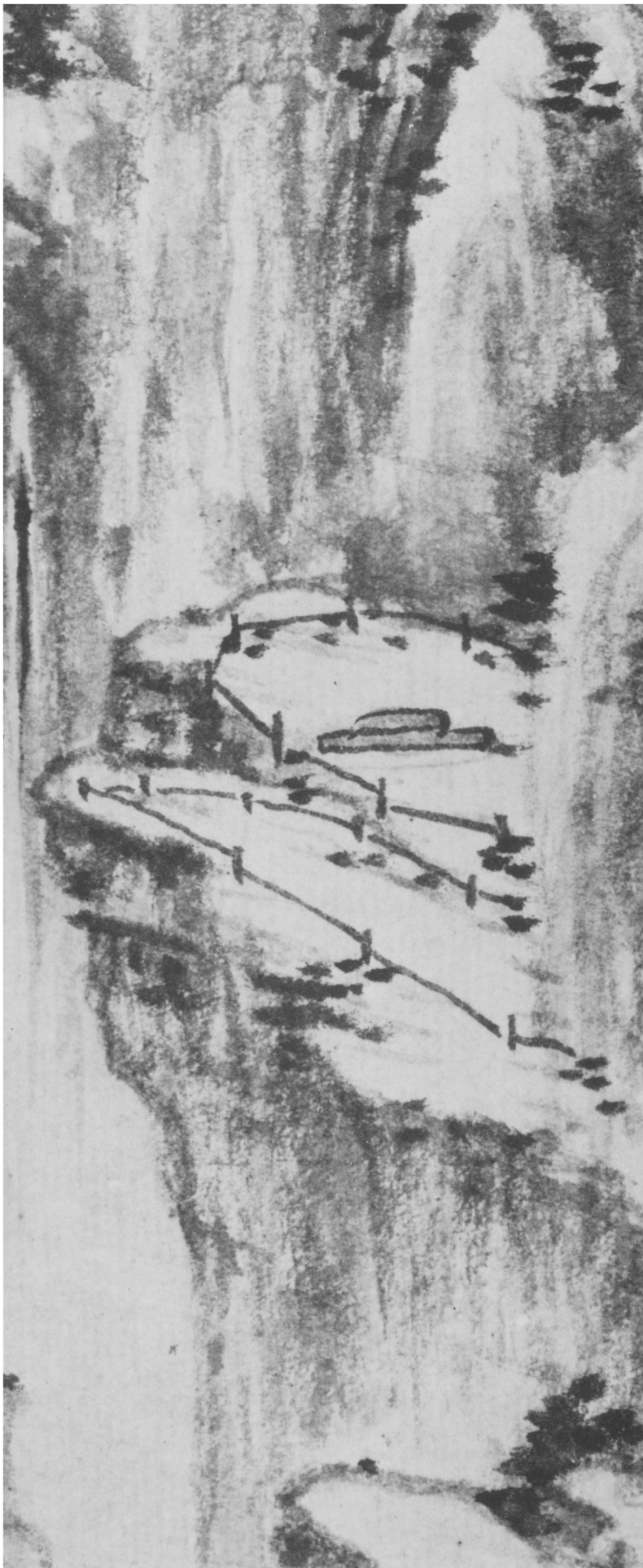
artistic consciousness and is compelled to explore himself and his own experience.

(22) After the Mongol conquest of 1279, Yuan scholar-artists, excluded from traditional roles in government, turned away from the objective reality of Sung painting to express their alienation and unhappiness. In his poem inscribed on *Pear Blossoms*, Ch'ien Hsuan (ca. 1235–after 1301) compares the flowering pear to a sequestered beauty who has survived the fall of the Sung dynasty. The cool pastel colors and flat schematic branches create a mood reflecting the artist's detachment. Handscroll. Ink and colors on paper, 12½ x 37½ inches. Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1977. 1977.79

(23,24) The graceful curves of the artist's signature embody the lyrical qualities of the poetry, as do the languidly twisting leaves—demonstrating the intimate relationship between the poetic, calligraphic, and painterly modes of expression.







In landscape, as well as in flower painting, the subject became first, and foremost, the artist's inner feelings and second, and less important, the actual scene set down by the artist. A lonely recluse living in the mountains sees and paints not a real mountain, but the mountain of his mind. *Spring Dawn over the Elixir Terrace* by Lu Kuang (ca. 1300–ca. 1371) epitomizes this new kind of landscape art (figures 25, 26).

Lu Kuang fled his native Soochow to escape the rebellions against the Mongol government that broke out in Chiang-nan in the late 1350s. He painted *Spring Dawn* after returning to the Lake T'ai area, following the establishment of the Ming dynasty, for his Taoist friend Po-yung. Created to celebrate their reunion after long years of war and separation, it depicts a Taoist temple, at daybreak, nestled in a mountain ravine, and is accompanied by Lu's poem expressing his feeling of joy and contentment at seeing his old friend:

For ten years I wandered, homeless and away
from worldly entanglements;
Now, returning home by the river, I see things
differently from most others.
Jadelike vapor floating in the sky, it is spring
but no rain,
Elixir rays emitted from a well turn into clouds
at dawn.
Standing in the wind I lean on my dragon
staff,
I have long missed hearing your mouth-organ
music by moonlight.
I am happy to be with the venerable immortal,
and away from the military strategists;
We sit looking at paintings and talk about
literature.

Lu Kuang has treated his painting as the "writing of ideas," using calligraphic brushstrokes to "write out" his feelings; but to communicate his thoughts to a friend, he incorporates a poem into his painting. Often, in late Yuan works, there is a preface that may explain the reason for the painting. The poem that follows, like the image, is a

(25,26) *In Spring Dawn over the Elixir Terrace, Lu Kuang (ca.1300–ca.1371) built up brushstrokes in layers to fuse foreground, middle ground, and far distance into a convincing illusion of receding space. As expressive as poetry, Lu's animated brushwork exemplifies a new kind of landscape painting in which the subject becomes the artist's feelings. The platform on the escarpment (right) represents the Elixir Terrace, where a Taoist adept might practice mind and body control to refine his "inner elixir." Hanging scroll. Ink on paper, 24 1/8 x 10 inches. Edward Elliott Family Collection. Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1982.1982.2.2*

甲申年三月十日張翥寫

松齋



楊雲龍松齋
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甲申年三月十日張翥寫

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lyrical expression of what the artist sees and feels, concentrating more on the essence of the experience rather than the details of the scene. These verbal images provide clues to the true meaning of the artist's "mind landscape." On this spring morning, for instance, Lu Kuang saw "jadelike vapor floating in the sky. . . . Elixir rays emitted from a well turn into clouds." The mood is both content and optimistic. The imagery possibly refers to the concept of "internal alchemy"—the regulation within the body of thoughts and *ch'i*, or "breath," to refine one's "inner elixir"—a concept that evolved during Yuan times when the earlier practice of laboratory alchemy had largely died out. Thus it may be said that Lu's *Spring Dawn* was also an exercise in the "internal alchemy" that would bring harmonious resolution to the hard and restless life of a wanderer.

If Lu's work is compared to the twelfth-century *Landscape in the Style of Fan K'uan*, it can be seen that the visual structure of landscape painting had changed by late Yuan times. Lu Kuang's calligraphic brushwork is very different from the descriptive style of the Northern Sung. The loosely directed kinesthetic strokes build, layer upon layer, until the landscape forms emerge. Yet they are not just energized, abstract brush patterns; they represent an illusionistic technique of fused brushline and ink wash that suggests blurred forms in atmospheric space. Lu Kuang's landscape forms are physically connected, organic masses. All the elements of near, middle, and far distance are fused, parts of an integrated vision that extends along a continuous, receding ground plane. Thus, despite the open disregard for form likeness as expressed by such an influential scholar-painter as Ni Tsan (1301–74), late Yuan landscape painting shows a fully realized, realistic spatial structure.

Spring Clouds over a Pine Studio is another example of a late Yuan scholar-painting with a

(27,28) Painted about the same time as *Elixir Terrace* (figure 25), *Spring Clouds over a Pine Studio* by Chang Yü (1333–85) has a similar composition, a diagonally receding stream connecting a foreground bank topped by tall trees to a distant temple complex, and both are concerned with the theme of a scholar's life in seclusion. But in contrast to the understated monochrome brushwork of Lu Kuang, Chang Yü's rich ink washes and daubs of blue green manifest a more effusive sensibility. The impressionistic ink-dot idiom and soft ink washes tinged with color recall the style of the artist Mi Fu (1052–1107). Hanging scroll, dated 1366. Ink and colors on paper, 36 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 12 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Gift of Douglas Dillon, 1980. 1980.426.3





realistically receding mountain vista (figures 27–29). It was painted by Chang Yü (1333–85), a poet who exhibits surprising skills as an artist in this work, his only known one, which is dated 1366, when he was living in Soochow. Painted in the horizontal “Mi-dot” idiom, it may have been inspired by *Spring Mountains and Pines*, now in the Palace Museum, Taipei, which is attributed to Mi Fu (1052–1107), for whom this technique is named. The composition of a scholar’s thatched studio hidden in a pine grove by a stream became popular in late Yuan painting as a symbol of the scholar’s condition—a life in reclusion. The poet’s lyrical sentiments are expressed through the subtle use of ink wash and pale colors and the suggestion of dense, moisture-filled clouds dissipating after a spring shower. This landscape, painted two years before the establishment of the Ming dynasty, shows the reclusive poet in a tranquil state of mind. He accepted an appointment to serve the Ming court in 1371, but in spite of his loyal services, he was driven to suicide by the founder of the dynasty because of his earlier association with a political rival.

The Chinese regained control from the Mongols under the leadership of the first Ming emperor, Chu Yuan-chang (reigned 1368–98), a capricious and vengeful man who was deeply suspicious of the independent and often arrogant scholars of the South. Some thirty thousand persons died as a result of one of his persecutions, and several painters—aside from the ill-fated Chang Yü—died in his service, deliberately put to death as a

(29) In the fourteenth century scholar-painters preferred to work on paper, which, because of its texture and absorbency, offered a responsive medium for energized calligraphic brushwork (see figures 25, 26); the more conservative court and professional painters continued to work on smooth nonabsorbent silk in a descriptive ink-wash style. *Spring Clouds over a Pine Studio*, by the scholar-painter Chang Yü, is a rare and successful example of this soft atmospheric style on paper. This detail is devoted to a subject popular in late Yuan painting, a thatched hut by a stream, symbolizing the scholar’s villa or retirement cottage.

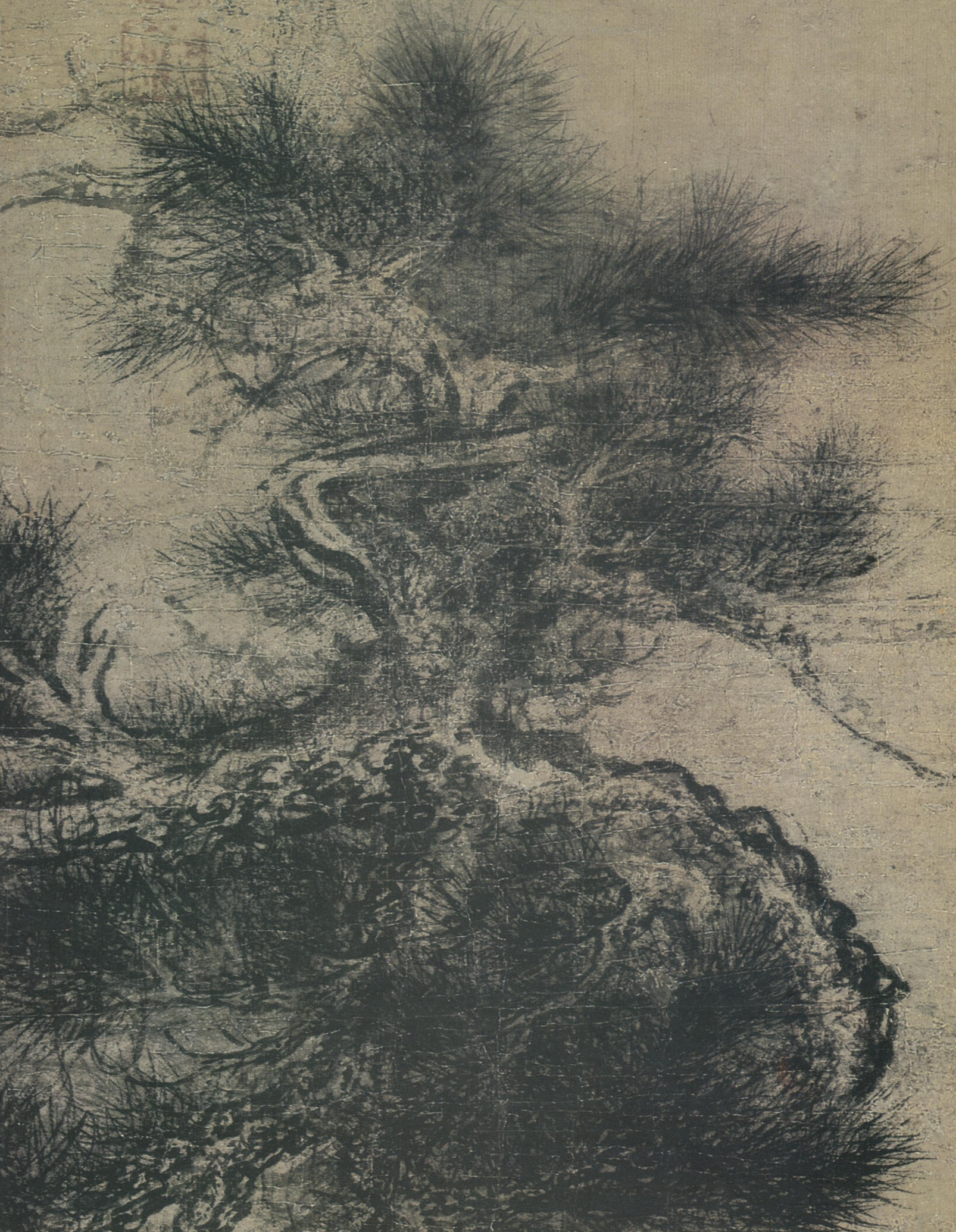


warning to others against unbridled behavior.

In this period of political and cultural restoration, painting was valued for its originality only when it was presented in the guise of tradition. *Dragon Pine* by Wu Po-li (ca. 1400), a Taoist priest of the Shang-ch'ing ("Upper Purity") Temple on Dragon-Tiger Mountain, bears an appreciative colophon by Chang Yü-ch'u (1361–1410), the forty-third pope, himself a distinguished scholar (figures 30, 31). More than just a work by a cultivated Taoist clergyman of the time, Wu's *Dragon Pine* is a painting of extraordinary power and expressiveness. The intense animation of the tree recalls a description by the tenth-century painter Ching Hao of "a gigantic pine tree, its aged bark overgrown with lichen, its winged scales seeming to ride in the air. In stature, it is like a coiling dragon trying to reach the Milky Way." Wu's calligraphic brushwork—a round, centered stroke applied to fine absorbent paper, with just the right amount of ink given up by the twisting brush—creates a lively textured effect that heightens the three-dimensional quality of the drawing. The writhing and surging, serpentlike tree, its many "claws" and "whiskers" darting out and swaying against the sky, seems supernaturally alive. The painting is more than a symbol of the Taoist "perfect being" or of Dragon-Tiger Mountain itself; it is a vital metaphor of the cosmic union of all the Yin and Yang forces—brush versus ink, ink versus paper, movement versus inertia, push versus pull.

At the imperial court taste was more conservative, and court painters were encouraged to return to the descriptive ink-wash idiom of the Southern Sung Academy. Typical of this genre is *Autumn Landscape with Herons and Ducks* by Lü Chi, a professional painter from Chekiang Province summoned to the court at Peking during the Hung-chih period (1488–1505) (figures 32, 33). In *Autumn Landscape* Lü combines masterful

(30,31) Resembling a dragon in its whiskerlike needles and serpentine trunk, this majestic pine is the work of a Taoist priest Wu Po-li (active ca.1400). According to Taoist geomantic beliefs, vital energies collect at the base of a mountain by a stream—the location of this tree. Nurtured by these forces, the pine may symbolize a sage, or "perfect being." Green all winter, it is also symbolic of the virtuous man in adversity. Wu's individualistic brushstrokes—scumbled bark texture, dragged outline strokes of the rocks, and sharp, sooty needles—add a personal intensity to the painting. Hanging scroll. Ink on paper, 47¼ x 13¹³/₁₆ inches. Edward Elliott Family Collection. Lent by Douglas Dillon. L.1981.15.2







realism of drawing in the birds and flowers, with virtuoso brushwork and ink wash in the rocks and trees, creating a dashing display of brilliant techniques. The brushwork, however, applied with a wet brush on nonabsorbent, slick silk, is flat and lacks the internal tension and dynamism of Wu Po-li's calligraphic strokes.

On a comparable work by Lü, now in the Palace Museum, Taipei, Shen Chou (1427–1509), a prominent scholar-painter of Soochow, inscribed the following remark: "Master Lü depicts life with his hand, while this old rustic contemplates on things in his mind." This comment, contrasting the "hand" and the "mind," a somewhat distorted view of the old Neo-Confucian argument of objective nature versus subjective mind, pointed up for the Ming scholar-artists what they saw as the difference between the works of the "professional artisans" and those of the "scholar-amateurs" and laid the foundation for the theoretical separation of the so-called Northern and Southern schools of painting in the late Ming period. Led by Shen Chou, the southern artists of Soochow sought to express themselves through the more personal idioms of the Sung and Yuan masters. The analogy between painting and calligraphy became complete. Just as calligraphers expressed themselves through the styles of past great masters, Shen Chou and his followers practiced the styles of Sung and Yuan masters, simplifying them into identifiable and repeatable brush patterns, which became a language for "writing out" their feelings. Valuing personality in a work over technical skill, the Ming scholar-painters aimed for mastery of performance rather than for laborious workmanship.

Although the Ming capital moved north to Peking in 1421, the Yangtze delta region remained the empire's economic and cultural center. The commercial hub, as well as the artistic capital of the area, was Soochow, located in the Wu region.

(32,33) Unlike Yuan scholar-artists, who preferred the absorbent qualities of paper, Lü Chi (active ca. 1488–1505), a court painter, worked with rich colors on silk in the descriptive ink-wash idiom of the Southern Sung Academy. His *Autumn Landscape with Herons and Ducks* is self-conscious in its conception and brush manner and lacks the intensity of scholar-artist works such as *Dragon Pine* (figure 30). Lü Chi may have established a workshop to meet the demand for his paintings; the authority of this scroll, however, is verified by the lively drawing of the birds, virtuoso brushwork and washes of trees and rocks, and in the fine signature and seal. Hanging scroll. 58¼ x 21½ inches. Dorothy Graham Bennett Fund, 1980. 1980.414



Lying near the northeastern shore of Lake T'ai and on the Grand Canal near the point where that main north-south waterway crosses the Yangtze, Soochow had a temperate climate and enjoyed great agricultural and commercial wealth, which encouraged members of the upper classes to lavish their resources on cultural and artistic activities. Soochow, or Wu school, painters upheld the ideal of scholars of moral integrity, pursuing a life of the arts in retirement. Although many carried out this lifestyle to exquisite perfection, others suffered great personal hardships.

T'ang Yin (1470–1524) was an extraordinarily talented mid-Ming Soochow painter who, disgraced as a scholar, was forced to become a professional artist. Forfeiting all chances of an official career after being involved in an examination scandal in 1499, T'ang turned to selling painting and poetry for his livelihood and died in poverty. The brilliantly executed *Moon Goddess Ch'ang O* is a poignant reminder of T'ang Yin's dashed dreams for success in the official examinations—symbolized by the cassia branch held in the goddess's left hand (figures 34, 35). (The word “cassia” [*kuei*] is a pun on “nobility” [also pronounced *kuei*]). T'ang's poem, in bold calligraphy, reads:

She was long ago a resident of the Moon
Palace,
Where phoenixes and cranes gathered, and
embroidered banners fluttered in heavenly
fragrance.
Ch'ang O, in love with the gifted scholar,
Presents him with the topmost branch of the
cassia tree.

A frequent visitor to Soochow's notorious pleasure quarter, T'ang Yin may have painted this glamorous figure—a portrait perhaps—for a favorite, whom he regarded as a goddess condemned to mortal sufferings.

(34,35) *The flat, oval face and elegant fluttering drapery folds of Moon Goddess Ch'ang O, by T'ang Yin (1470–1524), reflect the Ming emphasis on beautiful calligraphic line rather than three-dimensional form. Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on paper, 53¼ x 23 inches. Gift of Douglas Dillon, 1981. 1981.4.2*



Pictorially, T'ang's *Moon Goddess* derives from the Chou Wen-chü tradition of palace ladies, as seen in *In the Palace*. This palace lady, fully made up with a powdered face, rouged lips, finely penciled eyebrows, and lacquered coiffure, and gorgeously dressed and decorated, is a symbol of the frailty and transience of human existence. It seems inevitable that T'ang Yin would compare his own destroyed career with that of the tenth-century poet-emperor Li Yü, who, losing his throne, told of "shedding tears before [his] palace ladies."

Structurally, T'ang Yin's figure is visualized in flat lines, two-dimensional shapes, and surface movements. Compared to faces in the twelfth-century copy of Chou Wen-chü's palace ladies, Ch'ang O's is an animated mask, with graceful and expressive drawing on a flat surface and with a smooth, egglike facial contour, indicating no flesh and bone behind it. The elegant drapery folds ripple and flutter in dreamlike perfection, yet the figure is absolutely flat and weightless. Although today we admire T'ang Yin also as a fine landscape painter, popular acclaim during his lifetime was based on such figure paintings as *Ch'ang O*.

Other Wu painters, adamantly refusing to sell their works for gain, were forced to be content with a penurious existence, often when living in remote mountain areas. Some, such as Lu Chih (1496–1576), nevertheless executed paintings to barter for small favors. Lu's *Planting Chrysanthemums* was presented to his friend T'ao in exchange for some rare chrysanthemum cuttings (figures 36, 37). Lu cultivated flowers at his home below Chih-hsing Mountain, on the shore of Lake T'ai, to which he had retired in the early 1550s. He evokes the beauty of autumn in his poem inscribed on the painting:

(36,37) A superb colorist, Lu Chih (1496–1576) captures the luminous clarity of autumn in *Planting Chrysanthemums*. Combining restrained earthen hues and monochrome ink tones in his loosely brushed contour lines, Lu creates a mesh of color that allows the paper to show through, thus incorporating it into the very fabric of the mountains. Rising in the tall narrow format, the peaks appear almost transparent, creating a dreamy landscape in keeping with the artist's own simple, sheltered lifestyle. At the right a scholar watches a boy tending chrysanthemums, while a gentleman and servant carrying flowers approach the gate. Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on paper, 42 x 10¾ inches. Edward Elliott Family Collection. Lent by Douglas Dillon. L.1981.15.5









I hear you have opened up a T'ao path near
the ocean,
Where clouds of leaves and frost-covered
blossoms vie in wondrous splendor.
I too have built a new residence at Chih-hsing
Mountain;
May I share some of your autumn colors
along my eastern hedge?

The first two lines allude to the well-known story "Peach Blossom Spring" by T'ao's illustrious namesake T'ao Ch'ien (365–427), who told of a fisherman stumbling upon a hidden utopia redolent with blossoming peach trees; in the last two lines, the painter suggests that he has planned his own utopian retreat and refers to the growing of chrysanthemums, a passion he shared with T'ao Ch'ien. Awash in soft colors, the crystalline mountains rising from mist in Lu's painting evoke perfectly the dreamlike Peach Blossom Spring, a hermit's paradise.

Structurally, although the Yuan painters were concerned with the problems of creating depth and recession and the treatment of forms in space, the Ming painters turned, more and more, to problems of surface abstraction through surface pattern and stylization. Compared to Lu Kuang's solidly built mountain forms, which move magisterially in space, both Lü Chi's and Lu Chih's mountains look paper-thin, and they are consciously cut and framed by the picture borders in an increasingly attenuated format. Lu Chih's ethereal mountainscape, with peaks superimposed along its narrow, vertical picture plane, seems to exist in its own time and space. Like fissures in a moonscape or crackles in glass, the abstract brushstrokes are beautifully held together by their own tension and apparently seamless internal structure.

In contrast to Lu Chih's ascetic existence, some Wu painters led the rich and cultivated life of a gentleman-scholar of means. Born to a wealthy family, Ch'en Shun (1483–1544) was free to pursue the

(38,39) *In Summer Garden* Ch'en Shun (1483–1544) uses bold brushstrokes and vibrant color to suggest a refreshing oasis in the midst of sultry summer weather. Various strokes describe spiky twigs, waxen magnolia petals, or tissue-thin pomegranate blossoms. Foliage is swiftly rendered with black veins over daubs of blue wash, yet each leaf cluster springs naturally from the branches. The vitality of Ch'en's brushwork is readily apparent in the detail of the lower left corner. The seals are those of two collectors. Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on paper, 126½ x 39¼ inches. Lent by Douglas Dillon. L.1981.15.17



life of a scholar-artist, frequently finding inspiration at his garden estate near Soochow, where he entertained his friends and painted for them while he was intoxicated. *Summer Garden* is of a grand scale (more than 10 feet high), appropriate for a large pavilion or reception hall in a sumptuous garden, and shows a profusion of lotus blossoms and other blossoming trees growing near a tall Lake T'ai rock, a feature of most Soochow gardens (figures 38, 39). A superb still life executed in bold calligraphic brushwork, Ch'en's painting shows flowers brilliant with color and very lifelike. On it the artist has written a poem:

In steamy summer the days are unbearably long,
With a linen kerchief and a palm-leaf fan, I
mount my rattan couch;
When the flowers' shadows meet with a cool
breeze from the water,
Where else would you find such a heavenly
White Jade Hall?

By the late Ming period, toward the end of the sixteenth century, Wu school paintings began to show signs of fatigue. Scattered bursts of new creative energy appeared in late Ming works that experimented in new forms, often glorying in eccentricity. Wu Pin (active ca. 1583–1626), who

began painting in his native Fukien Province, later moved to Nanking, where he served as a court-appointed painter specializing in landscapes and Buddhist subjects. A lifelong devotee of Buddhism, Wu, in Nanking, joined an order of untensured monks affiliated with the Ch'an Buddhist Ch'i-hsia Temple. In *The Sixteen Lohans* (in Sanskrit, *arhats*, or "saints"), dated 1591 and one of Wu Pin's earliest extant works, he uses an eccentric archaism that was to influence many late Ming figure painters and wood-block artists (figures 40–42). In Chinese popular literature, mendicant monks, conjurers, and even mysterious beggars often turned out to be disguised "living lohans," or Buddhist holy men, capable of magic and miracles; and when government corruption and ineptitude imperiled social order, as it did in late Ming times, superstitious messianic beliefs became more widespread. The theatrical nature of Wu Pin's lohan figures also suggests that he may have been inspired by popular religious dramas or festival performances. Combining an "iron-wire" outline technique with brilliant colors, Wu portrays these weird and deliberately repulsive figures as mysterious messengers from another world. Reveling in eccentricity and attentive to its own inner voice, the art of Wu Pin represents a fin-de-siècle



rebellion in painting style.

Striking out against what he called “sweet” and “vulgar” tendencies in late Ming painting, the great theorist and painter Tung Ch’i-ch’ang (1555–1636) prescribed as a cure a return to the basic tenets of the scholar-painters, artists following ancient models and applying the principle of calligraphy to painting. In defining an ancient, “orthodox” heritage in landscape painting, Tung proposed the creation of a “Great Synthesis” (*Ta-ch’eng*) of Sung and Yuan styles, to be practiced as complementary calligraphic brush idioms. The chief desideratum in landscape painting, according to Tung, was brushwork rather than representation: “If one considers the wonders of brush and ink, true landscape can never equal painting.”

In an album, *Eight Landscapes*, dated 1630, Tung demonstrates how he interprets—“imitates” or “reproduces,” as he says—the whole spectrum of Sung and Yuan styles in a set of contrasting brushstroke methods, which can also be used for depicting actual landscape (figures 43, 44). Tung took as his point of departure the works of the Yuan master Ni Tsan, whose paintings were conveniently regarded as calligraphic abstractions of earlier Sung styles. In the first two leaves, he shows—in what he regards as the early and late

styles of Ni Tsan’s art—an “earthen” landscape with round, parallel (“hemp-fiber”) brushstrokes,

(40, 41) *Wu Pin* (active about 1583–1626) developed a distinctive “primitive” style through the eccentric archaism of his figure drawing. He specialized in depictions of lohans, ancient Indian holy men who, the Chinese believe, have remained in the world to guard the Buddhist Law and protect the faithful. In *The Sixteen Lohans*, an early work dated 1591, *Wu Pin* has already achieved a highly personal style. His figures, rhythmically arrayed against a blank background in the classical manner, are conventional in their strong outlines, but *Wu* has transformed them into whimsical, iconoclastic, and even grotesque images intended both to shock and to amuse. The lohans are shown according to a Buddhist scripture, *Fa-chu-chi* (Record on the Duration of the Law), living in their mountain abode and attended by their disciples while awaiting the advent of the Future Buddha, *Maitreya*. Details of handscroll. Ink and colors on paper, 12¾ x 163½ inches overall. Edward Elliott Family Collection. Lent by Douglas Dillon. L.1981.15.6





(42) Traditional lohan images evolved from two basic types: seated, representing the contemplative aspect of saintly life; and standing, or walking, representing the active aspect. Seated figures include the ancient image of an ascetic meditating in a cave or under a tree (figure 40), as well as the later "patriarch portrait" of a holy man "enthroned," seated in a chair. Standing images show the lohans as mendicant monks traveling or performing miraculous deeds. In this detail of Wu Pin's *The Sixteen Lohans*, the figure riding on wheels over the river, followed by an attendant, derives from the legend of Bodhidharma, the first Ch'an patriarch to come to China, crossing the Yangtze River on a reed. The humorous attitudes suggest the influence of popular theater.



contrasted with a “rocky” landscape with angular, oblique (“folded-ribbon”) brushstrokes. Then, proceeding with the round method, he recreates the styles of the late tenth-century southern masters Tung Yuan and Chū-jan, and with the angular method, the styles of the early tenth-century northern masters Ching Hao and Kuan T’ung. In the remaining two leaves, he combines the round and angular techniques to create scenic compositions. On one of them, *Chimney Smoke Mingled with Evening Mist*, painted mostly in Ni Tsan’s “rocky” style, he wrote the following poem (figure 44):

Chimney smoke mingled with evening mist,
Hidden in the distance is a pavilion
under pine trees;
In the pavilion is a quiet recluse,
In solitude he recites the *Vimalakirti Sutra*.

The composition shows neither chimney smoke, nor mist, nor a man in a pavilion. Only the beginning of a mountain path beckons to the viewer to search for what is “hidden in the distance.” Thus the painting and the poem extend each other—with the painting providing a visual setting for the poetic image, and the poem helping to fill out the image in the viewer’s mind. Furthermore, Ni Tsan’s distinctive brush idiom of sparse trees and angu-

lar rocks brings to mind the lonely “pavilion under the pine trees,” his favorite compositional motif.

In a colophon dated 1630, written opposite the last painting of the album, Tung remarks that he has painted for fifty-two years and that he has not been able to establish his own distinctive style. Although this comment reveals a poignant truth about Tung’s painting, it in no way diminishes his tremendous contribution to later Chinese art. It was Tung’s genius to bring painting out of stagnant, late Ming decorative conventions and back to basic principles upon which it could rebuild in order to extend its potential. During the second half of the seventeenth century, when painting once more displayed vastly expanded aesthetic horizons, not a single painter of any importance, regardless of his affiliation and inspiration, escaped indebtedness to the teachings of Tung Ch’i-ch’ang.

In 1644, the Manchus, a tribal people on the northeastern frontier of the Ming empire, captured Peking, overthrew the Ming and established the Ch’ing dynasty, which lasted until the founding of the Chinese Republic in 1911. Under the K’ang-hsi emperor (reigned 1662–1722), the early Ch’ing world was one of reconstruction after late Ming fragmentation. Orthodox painters aimed to recapture the former glories of traditional painting by studying and copying ancient models. By infusing old conventions with renewed energy, painters attempted to achieve a true correspondence (*ho*) to ancient models. On the other hand, some artists scorned the new orthodox conservatism. The so-called individualist masters often painted in a free, emotion-filled calligraphic manner. Because of their loyalty to the fallen Ming dynasty, they expressed a strong sense of dislocation and alienation in their works. Avoiding the rationalism and methodology of the orthodox painters, the individualists preferred to derive

(43,44) *Tung Ch’i-ch’ang (1555–1636), the most important theorist of his day, sought to redirect painting from late Ming decorative conventions through the revival of ancient models. In his album Eight Landscapes, dated 1630, Tung reinterpreted selected Sung and Yuan styles, using the works of the Yuan master Ni Tsan (1301–74) as his primary reference. In Leaf One (above) Tung echoes Ni Tsan’s soft, or “earthen,” style, with its rounded, parallel brushstrokes. In Leaf Seven (right) he combines the master’s soft and “rocky” styles, using mostly angular, oblique brushstrokes. Ink on paper, each leaf 9 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 6 $\frac{5}{16}$ inches. Edward Elliott Family Collection. Lent by Douglas Dillon. L.1981.15.7*

烟連宿霽

中有靜者單

淨名經

玄宰



their art directly from nature and to express it through more personal artistic means.

Both approaches in painting had been anticipated by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, who believed that a scholar must "read ten thousand books and travel ten thousand miles." Tung wrote: "A painter must imitate ancient masters. . . . Advancing one more step, he must adopt nature as his teacher. . . . The transmission of the spirit depends on the form. When there is total accord between the form, the heart, and the hand, each forgetting the other's separate existence, and when the spirit is lodged in a painting, there will be nothing that does not look well in a painting!"

The 1650s through the 1670s saw the burgeoning of artistic talents. Many men who would have otherwise studied for the imperial examinations and entered government service saw their educational careers disrupted by the fall of the Ming dynasty. Three of the six great orthodox masters, Wang Hui (1632–1717), Wu Li (1632–1718), and Yun Shou-p'ing (1633–90), lacked degrees. Beginning in the 1650s, a remarkable group of young artists, among them Wang Hui and Wu Li, gathered around the venerable orthodox painter Wang Shih-min (1592–1680) in T'ai-ts'ang, Kiangsu Province. A grandson of a former Ming prime minister, Wang Shih-min had been tutored in his youth by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, who had also helped him to form a wonderful collection of Sung and Yuan paintings. Twenty-four of these masterpieces were recorded in reduced copies in an album appropriately entitled *Within Small See Large* (*Hsiao-chung hsien-ta*), which is now in the Palace Museum, Taipei. This album was a prime source of Sung and Yuan models during the 1670s and 1680s—for Wang Hui, Wu Li, and others lucky enough to have access to it.

In a small hanging scroll, probably done in the 1670s, Wu Li carefully copied one of Wang Shih-min's small album pictures, *Travelers Among Streams and Mountains*, after Wang Meng (ca. 1308–85), a late Yuan master (figures 45–47). According to Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's inscription on the painting, Wang Meng's composition was, in turn, based on a work by the tenth-century painter Tung Yuan. Therefore, in order to imitate Wang Meng successfully, Wu Li had to strive to recreate Tung Yuan. Such a commitment on the part of an artist to a total mastery of his artistic heritage was typical of the orthodox masters, who were convinced of the unity and timelessness of the Tao, or "Way," of painting. As if reinforcing the strength of his commitment to the past, Wu Li's rival Wang Hui devised a seal, used on a number of his paintings, which reads: "I travel up and down from the past to the present."

Wu Li himself wrote: "To paint without Sung and Yuan styles as a foundation is like playing chess

without chess pieces. Facing the empty board, where does one begin?" The chess pieces, for the Ch'ing painters, are the recognized brush formulas. For instance, Wang Meng is said to have followed Tung Yuan's "hemp-fiber" texture method; but he added to it a controlled energy, shown by round, dense, curling brushstrokes and by stippled texture dots. In a painting by Wu Li in Wang Meng's style, therefore, the basic pictorial vocabulary is the texture pattern of dense, curling brushstrokes and stippled dots. In calligraphic painting, as in calligraphy, although every form is built up of a recognized set of brushstrokes, the execution of these forms is, each time, a new and unique personal performance. Even though Wu Li's *Travelers Among Streams and Mountains* follows closely a given composition, the brushwork grows on paper, stroke after stroke, with the "momentum" and "force" (*shih*) of each form building up and being carried into the next in one continuous "breath" (*ch'i*). Throughout the performance, there is continuous interaction between the brush, the ink, the paper, and the observed form, with the painter constantly responding and adjusting to each newly realized brushstroke.

In such a work, we experience the force of the painter's conviction and his exaltation before his model. As the model comes into his consciousness, the painter creates a picture that is more than a copy or a landscape: it is a composition that "breathes" with "life" (*sheng*) and "motion" (*tung*). "True landscape can never equal painting," as Tung Ch'i-ch'ang wrote.

What Tung bequeathed to painting was a systematized calligraphic formula transformed into a

(45) *In this detail of Travelers Among Streams and Mountains by Wu Li (1632–1718), a mountain inn, of buildings and courtyards, serves as a resting place for weary men and animals. The structures on pilings, upstream, permit a fine view of the water. A detail such as this allows us to savor every brushstroke. Each line is distinctive, yet so naturally integrated into the whole that Wu Li's painting is read as a complex fabric of different patterns and ink tones. The silvery, dry-ink texture strokes, set off by sooty black dots, vibrate with a gentle, rhythmic energy that is the artist's hallmark (see also figures 46, 47).*







pictorial language, which enabled the early Ch'ing masters to create a new pictorial structure. Rather than describing three-dimensionally conceived mountain forms placed firmly in receding spatial planes, as in an original Yuan landscape, Wu's shows a dynamic orchestration of lines and forms in abstract space. Individual brushstrokes are now the sole conveyors of life and energy; they grow and expand continuously until the whole forms a great flowing pattern of undulating movements, which Wang Hui called the "dragon vein" (*lung-mo*). In addition to superb brushwork, Wu Li demonstrates a genius for using ink; within different grades of gray, he creates a luminous, atmospheric quality for his landscape.

Wang Hui spent years as a guest and retainer in Wang Shih-min's household, painting and copying ancient works of art. In the 1660s and 1670s, he mastered the calligraphic idioms of the late Yuan artists, summing up his approach to painting as follows: "I must use the brush and ink of the Yuan to move the peaks and valleys of the Sung. . . . I will then have a work of the Great Synthesis." In the 1680s he became increasingly interested in recreating the monumental landscape style of the Northern Sung. In *The K'ang-hsi Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour*, Wang Hui successfully applies his monumental style to the occasion, which was one of the proudest moments of the Ch'ing empire (figures 48–50). After years of unrest caused by the dangerous Rebellion of the Three Feudatories in the southern provinces, the country was at peace. Taxes were lowered, waterways were under construction, and people felt prosperous and secure. To consolidate Manchu rule, the

(46,47) *Wu Li proved one could transform ancient brush idioms into a new and personal style. Following a small sketch by Wang Shih-min (1592–1680), which preserves, in turn, a fourteenth-century composition by Wang Meng (ca. 1308–85), Wu Li's Travelers Among Streams and Mountains evokes the spirit of the earlier master's style without attempting to reproduce it. Each rock, tree, and building has been recreated through Wu Li's kinesthetic brushstrokes, which pile up and coalesce into a vibrant flowing pattern of undulating landscape forms. Hanging scroll. Ink on paper, 23½ x 10¹¹/₁₆ inches. Edward Elliott Family Collection. Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1981. 1981.285.6*

K'ang-hsi emperor made six grand tours of the South. After his second journey in 1689, Wang Hui, then the most celebrated painter in the South, was summoned to court to supervise the creation of the *Southern Inspection Tour*, a series of twelve handscrolls recording the event. As head of the project, Wang Hui designed the series, breaking down the journey into twelve major episodes; he painted most of the landscape himself, but left the figures, architectural drawings, and more routine work to his assistants.

The Museum's scroll, the third in the set, shows the route of the emperor and his entourage from the city of Chi-nan to Mount T'ai, in Shantung Province, a distance of about thirty miles, which the party covered on February 5 and 6, 1689. Along the length of the scroll, which is more than forty-five feet, soldiers, porters, and officials in the advance party wend their way on horseback and on foot through the countryside, up winding mountain paths, and through peaceful villages on the route to Mount T'ai—the "Cosmic Peak of the East"—where the K'ang-hsi emperor was to conduct a heaven-worshipping ceremony. People turn out in masses to greet the imperial procession as it passes in a blaze of splendor and martial pageantry. As the advance party makes preparations at the foot of the mountain, the multiple peaks rise to a joyous crescendo: heaven seems to smile upon the Manchu Son of Heaven.

Ironically, this magnificent achievement of Wang Hui's proved detrimental to his reputation in the eyes of both his contemporaries and later art historians. For the latter, this great imperial commission of the 1690s marked the end of a prodigiously successful career: these imposing narrative scrolls belonged to the realm of

(48) The K'ang-hsi Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour was commissioned by the emperor (reigned 1662–1722) in 1691 to commemorate his seventy-one-day journey from Peking to Soochow, Hangchow, Nanking, and return. Executed under the supervision of Wang Hui (1632–1717), the project took three years to complete. Wang Hui laid out the composition on twelve oversized handscrolls and painted the landscapes; his disciples painted the animals, figures, and buildings. The Metropolitan's scroll, the third in the set, records the journey through Shantung Province, culminating in the arrival at Mount T'ai (figures 48, 50). Detail of handscroll. Ink and colors on silk, 26¹¹/₁₆ inches x 45 feet 8¹/₂ inches overall. Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1979. 1979.5













public art rather than to that of creative self-expression. As for Wang's contemporaries, many of them living bleak lives as "leftover citizens" of the fallen Ming dynasty, they did not share his official exuberance in celebrating the new dynasty.

Tao-chi (1642–1707), born Chu Jo-chi, a scion of the Ming imperial family, escaped death in his youth by taking refuge in the Buddhist priesthood. In 1662 he became a disciple of a powerful Ch'an master, Lü-an Pen-yueh. In the late 1660s and 1670s, while he was in seclusion in temples around Hsuan-ch'eng, near the Yangtze Valley, Anhwei Province, he trained himself to paint. In his earliest major extant work, a large handscroll entitled *The Sixteen Lohans*, dated 1667, the young painter, then twenty-six, has drawn possibly the most effective figures since the Yuan period (figures 1, 51–53). Unlike Wu Pin's lohans (figures 40–42), which by comparison seem to be merely grotesque caricatures, Tao-chi's are carefully observed, showing such thoroughly human qualities as humor and curiosity. This is a rare religious subject for Tao-chi, known for his brilliant visionary landscapes. Iconographically, it is based on traditional lohan compositions, inspired by writings in the *Fa-chu-chi* (*Record on the Duration of the Law*), in which sixteen guardian lohans were ordered by the Buddha to live in the mountains to wait for the coming of

(49,50) *The earliest visit by a Chinese emperor to Mount T'ai was made by the First Emperor of Ch'in (reigned 221–210 B.C.), who reportedly marked the event by planting a group of pines near the summit. Thereafter, on several politically sensitive occasions, Chinese rulers ascended the sacred peak to perform rituals giving thanks to heaven for peace and prosperity. In figures 48 and 50, dignitaries of the city of T'ai-an, at the foot of the mountain, are gathered around an altar anxiously awaiting the arrival of the K'ang-hsi emperor. On the morning of February 6, 1689, the emperor and his party were carried in sedan chairs to the summit. To depict the heroic mountain scenery (overleaf) Wang Hui used the style of Fan K'uan (see figure 4); the minutely drawn figures, painted with the best azurite blue available to only the imperial workshop, were done by his assistant Shang-kuan Chou (1664–1743).*



Maitreya, the Future Buddha. In this scroll four lohans receive the present of a rare pup from two "mountain men," three lohans read sutras, one is seated and accompanied by a tiger, four play with a dragon, two walk with a mythological animal called a *ch'i-lin*, and two are seated in chairs. Stylistically, the immediate sources of Tao-chi's figures and landscapes are late Ming painters, such as Wu Pin. In a colophon at the end of the handscroll, Mei Ch'ing (1623–97), a close friend of

Tao-chi's, comments that Li Kung-lin was the ultimate model of the "plain-drawing" style, but that he himself had never seen an original work by Li. Neither, apparently, had Tao-chi. Instead of the typical late Ming flat "iron-wire" drawings and abstract surface patterns, however, Tao-chi's energetic calligraphic brushwork enlivens his forms with palpable "breath" and momentum. But the faces of Tao-chi's lohans are merely formulas; when compared with those by Wang Chen-p'eng

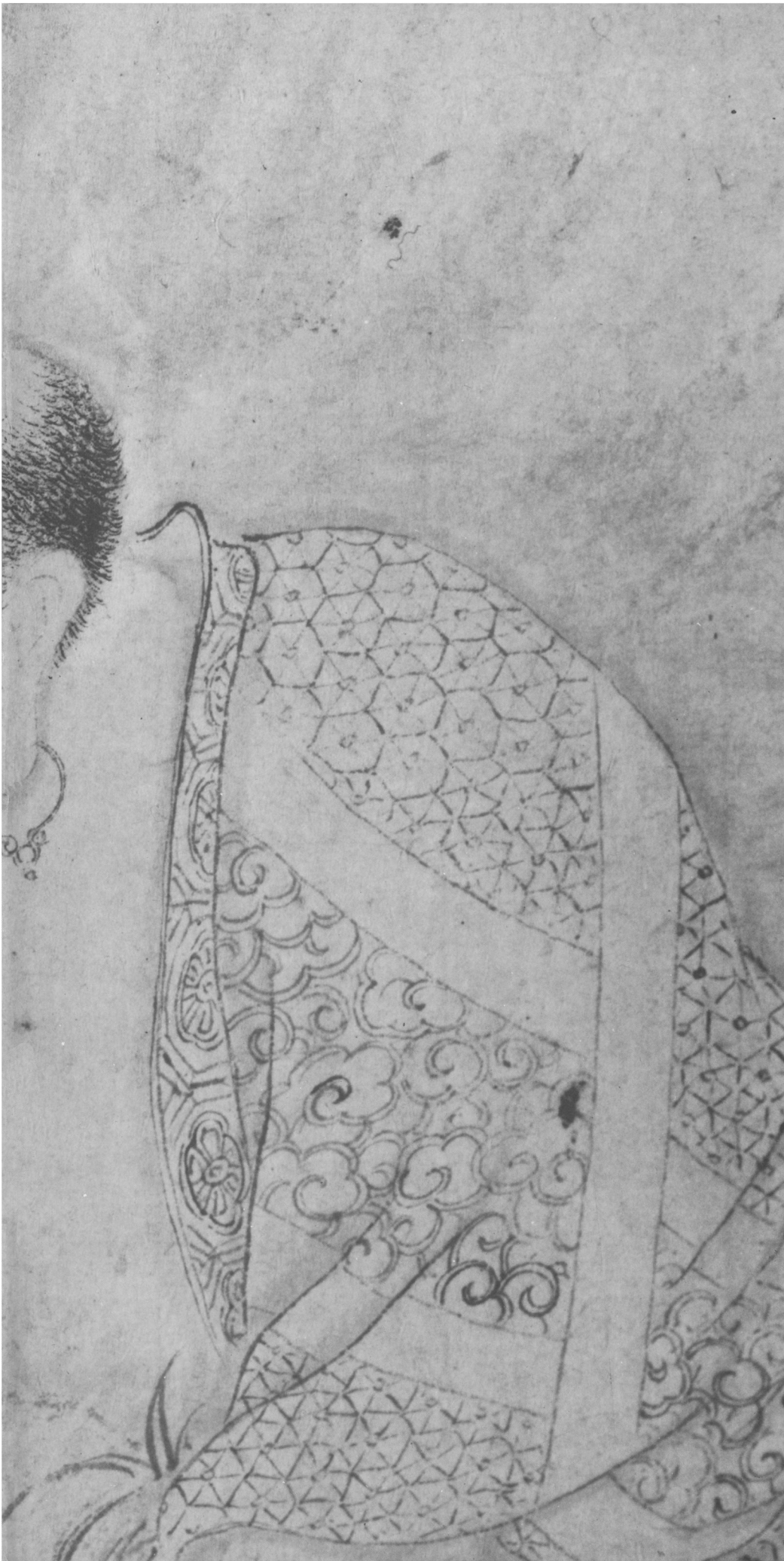


in his *Vimalakirti* (figures 17–19), they lack a sense of bone structure and solidity. Yet Tao-chi is able to make his faces seem human and individual. In two cases, a large mole seen through the hair adds a touch of realism to his portrayal.

(51) Completed in 1667 when Tao-chi (1642–1707) was only twenty-six, *The Sixteen Lohans juxtaposes finely drawn figures with a boldly conceived landscape of spidery trees and*

massive rock outcroppings. Referring to himself in his inscription as the spiritual “son” and “grandson” of two eminent Buddhist masters, Tao-chi displays the discipline and drive of a true devotee in this painting, which took a year to complete. In this section of the nearly twenty-foot-long handscroll, the “dragon-tamer” lohan releases a dragon from a vial while three other lo-hans look on. Ink on paper, 18½ x 236 inches overall. Lent by Douglas Dillon. L. 1981.164





(52) Tao-chi's brushstrokes show an extraordinary delicacy and sensitivity to realistic detail. Each hair, whisker, and eyelash appears to grow naturally, although often the brush barely grazes the paper. The dry, textured contours of the rocks and sprightly strokes of grass are equally appropriate to the gritty or smooth surfaces they describe. Here, the intense concentration of the lo-han and his mountain-sprite companion is given a spiritual quality by the radiating halo-like ink-wash strokes behind them. At the same time, their unusually foreign facial features are treated with considerable humor and affection.



The key to Tao-chi's innovative style is his dynamic calligraphy: in the central portion of the handscroll, where the powers of the dragon are displayed, the "iron-wire" rock contours and tree branches are swept up in the vortex of the dragon-made whirlwind, like tumbleweeds in a desert storm. The bold rock-contour brushstrokes—dubbed "lotus-leaf-vein drawing" by late seventeenth-century critics—that turn Wu Pin's flat, stylized patterns into massive and powerful

boulders are Tao-chi's own invention. "The beards and eyebrows of the ancients do not grow on my face," he wrote in his treatise on painting. And, he noted in one of his later albums: "This style is no style. I merely use my own style."

Kung Hsien (1619?–89), a friend of many prominent figures at the Southern Ming court in Nanking, fled the city when it fell to the Manchus in 1645. Returning to Nanking in the mid-1650s, he gradually came to terms with life under the



new dynasty. Yet his poems and paintings continued to express his bitterness over the devastation of his homeland.

In the album *Sixteen Ink Landscapes with*

(53) Two favorite lohans were the "dragon tamer" and the "tiger subduer," who mastered nature's elemental forces. In this section of *The Sixteen Lohans* two holy men and attendants walk with a

mythological beast called a ch'i-lin—a variation on the "tiger-subduing" theme that appears elsewhere in the scroll. The rocks, rendered in flat patterns by Wu Pin (see figure 40), have become a dynamic conception of the "bones" of nature through Tao-chi's energized brushstrokes. The swirling rock veins intertwined with grass and foliage are done with a single, centered stroke that anticipates what Tao-chi would later call "one-stroke" painting.



Poems, dated 1688, a year before his death, the recluse-painter compares his favorite haunts in and around Nanking with the abodes of the immortals (figures 54–56). As a teacher and author of several painter's manuals, Kung perfected a brushstroke and ink-dot technique that enabled him to achieve incredible density and translucency, creating both power and lyric beauty. In these remarkable works, Kung expresses grief and sorrow with extraordinary intensity and attains new heights in painting with words and images.

In *Brambles and Orchids*, a thoroughly prickly yet harmonious composition in bristly and intertwined brushstrokes and dots, the painter uses orchids to symbolize gentlemen of principles; the lowly brambles represent sycophant collaborators who sold their services to their Manchu overlords:

On the mountainside thorny brambles mix
with fragrant orchids;
The orchids, with their pervasive fragrance,
hide among the bramble clusters.
The brambles, as firewood, will be picked up
by the woodcutters,
Leaving behind the orchids to survive the cold
winter.

Kung knew that although the gentleman-recluse's art would endure, he would find it difficult "to

survive the cold winter" that he had so willingly chosen.

On a leaf entitled *Which God Is Being Worshipped in That Temple?*, Kung, who believed in neither sages nor gods, writes:

On the glimmering bluff by the river's shore,
Which god is being worshiped in that ancient
temple?
Please, Your Excellency, what merit have you
achieved on this earth?
I believe you were a drunken poet of former
times.

The dense rock and foliage patterns, built with short, staccato brushstrokes and dots, seem to echo the anger and bitterness of the poem.

On a dramatic but bleak mountaintop, where the bare and silent peaks and the wind-bent pine trees seem to date back to the time of creation, Kung writes:

Where heaven was opened by an ax splitting
the peaks,
The marks of the ax remain where the green
moss grows;
I'd like to ask the old pine tree at the top of
the cliff,
If it had met and witnessed some ancient
sages?



We hear the lonely hermit carrying on a monologue with heaven and earth, asking for testimonies of sages from a utopian age.

Just as each poem establishes its own mood, each image has its own brush vocabulary and therefore an individual structure and feeling. Basing his brushwork on the systems taught by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, Kung was able to treat these album leaves as a series of isolated compositions, matching painting and poem perfectly. Kung's landscapes are often spectacular, yet they give little indication of real time or space. They are truly "silent poems," providing images and moods, with calligraphic brushstrokes serving as alphabets for a new poetic pictorial language. As poem after poem creates a context for a whole range of the artist's anguished emotions, the successive pictorial images, some dark but often tender, provide stunning visual settings for the poet's soliloquy.

(54–56) During the last decade of his life Kung Hsien (1619?–89) transformed the dense ink-dot style of his middle years into an integrated drawing and dotting technique in which every brushstroke is charged with its own energy. In these three leaves from his album *Sixteen Ink Land-*

scapes with Poems, dated 1688, Kung exploits the ambiguities of light and dark, solid and void, manipulating the density of his brushstrokes to create dramatic highlights and contrasts: in Brambles and Orchids (left) pale wispy arcs of orchid leaves are juxtaposed with spiky brambles; in Which God Is Being Worshipped in That Temple? (above) a clump of dark trees is played against the light areas of river and sky; and in Where Heaven Was Opened (overleaf) spindly pines are superimposed across sheer cliff faces. Kung's calligraphy is animated by a similar combination of vigorous brushstrokes and contrasting tones. Ink on paper, each leaf 13¹⁵/₁₆ x 20⁹/₁₆ inches. Gift of Douglas Dillon, 1981. 1981.4.1,a,c,l

兩峰中劈與天開
弄跡猶存長綠苔
借四巖廟頭老松樹
為時曾見古白來





Notes

Page 5 Laurence Sickman, *Chinese Calligraphy and Painting in the Collection of John M. Crawford, Jr.*, exh. cat., New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, 1962, p. 18.

7 See Wen Fong, "Ao-t'u-hua or 'Receding-and-Protruding Painting' at Tun-huang," in *Proceedings of the International Conference on Sinology*, Academia Sinica, Taipei, forthcoming, section on History of Art.

10 "The reclusive artists. . ." See Wen Fong, *Summer Mountains: The Timeless Landscape*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1975.

15 *Finches and Bamboo*. See *Chinese Calligraphy and Painting in the Collection of John M. Crawford, Jr.*, no. 15, pp. 75–77.

15 For discussion of another section of the scroll *In the Palace* and full bibliography, see *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting: The Collections of the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, and the Cleveland Museum of Art*, exh. cat., Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art, 1980, no. 16, pp. 27–29.

18 A seventeenth-century Japanese sketch (42.61) in the Metropolitan Museum collection has detailed notes on colors.

18 See Richard Barnhart, "Li Kung-lin's Use of Past Styles," in *Artists and Traditions*, ed. by Christian F. Murck, Princeton, 1976, pp. 51–71.

18 "In a similar spirit. . ." See Wen Fong, *Sung and Yuan Paintings*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1973, pp. 29 ff.

18 See Julia K. Murray, "Sung Kao-tsung, Ma Ho-chih, and the Mao Shih Illustrations of the Classic of Poetry," Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1981.

22 See Xu Pangda, "The Relationship Between 'Figures in the Liu-li Hall' and 'Literary Gathering'" (in Chinese), *Meishu yanjiu* 2 (1979): 71–74.

23 See Wen Fong, "Five Hundred Lohans at the Daitokuji," Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1956, vol. 2, pl. XX.

26 Chih-yung. See Shujiro Shimada, "Mōryōga," 2 parts, *Bijutsu kenkyū*, nos. 84 (December 1938) and 86 (February 1939).

32 Hsien-chi Tseng, "A Study of the Nine Dragons Scroll," *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America* 11 (1957): 16–39.

54 Wu Pin's archaism. See Wen Fong, "Archaism as a 'Primitive' Style," in *Artists and Traditions*, pp. 89–109.

55 See Wen Fong, "Tung Ch'i-ch'ang and the Orthodox Theory of Painting," *The National Palace Museum Quarterly* 2, no. 3: 1–26.

60 Wu Li, *Mo-ching hua-pa*, in *Hua-hsueh hsin-yin*, ch. 4, p. 45b.

63 See Wen Fong, "Wang Hui, Wang Yuan-ch'i and Wu Li," in Roderick Whitfield, *In Pursuit of Antiquity*, exh. cat., Princeton, The Art Museum, Princeton University, 1969, pp. 185–86.

69 "In the late 1660s. . ." See Wen Fong, *Returning Home*, New York, 1976, pp. 18 ff.

69 "Iconographically. . ." See Wen Fong, *The Lohans and a Bridge to Heaven*, Washington, D.C., 1958, pp. 27 ff.

74 See Richard Edwards, "Tao-chi, the Painter," in *The Painting of Tao-chi 1641–ca. 1720*, exh. cat., Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, 1967, p. 48.

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