

A PASSION FOR
TRADITION

抗心 希古

THE ART OF LI YANSHAN

李研山的藝術

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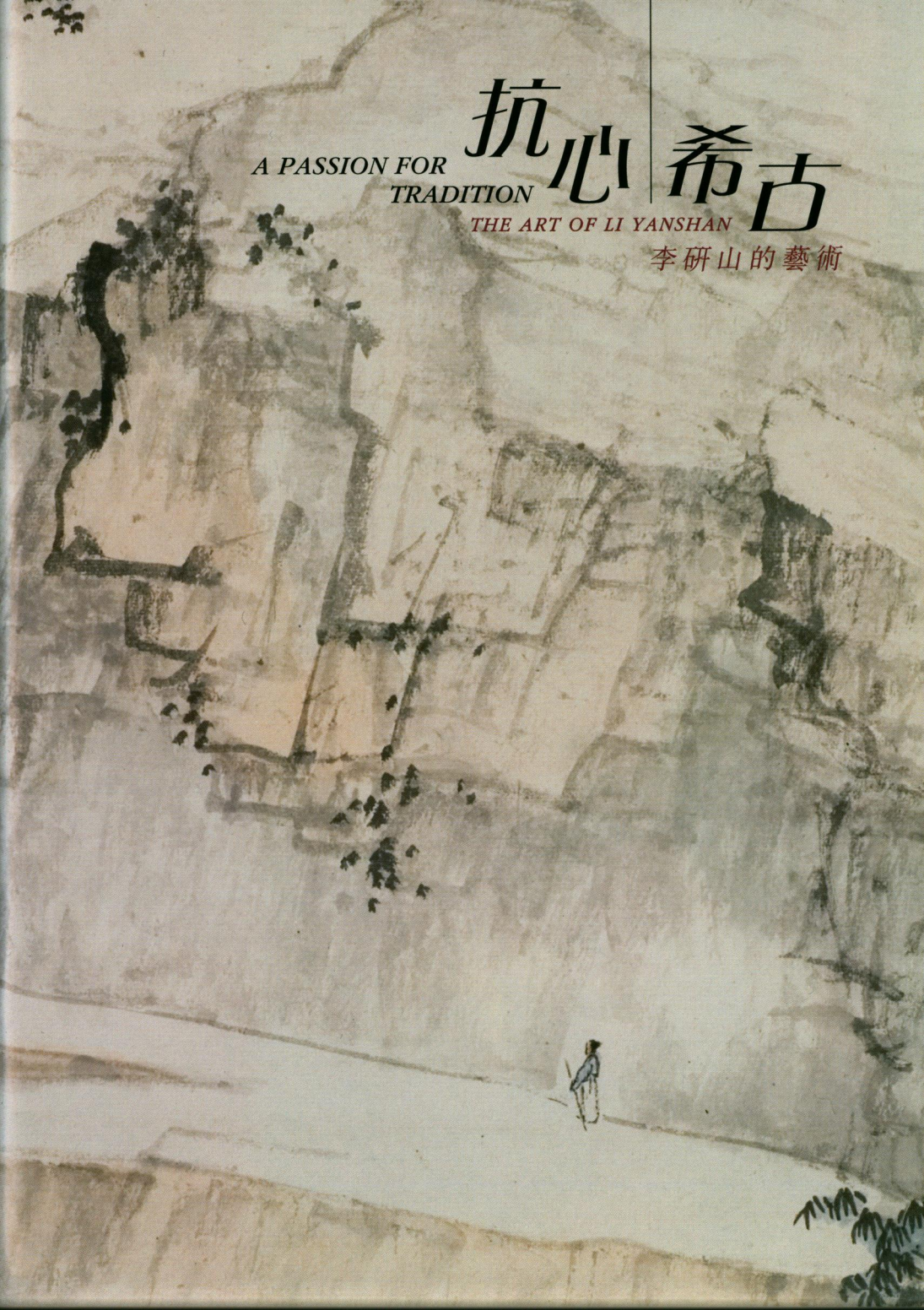


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研山初師事嶺南老畫家潘至中（齰）君，至中授徒愈數百人，而有研山之天才者，及稱為畢生僅見，故至中賞許為必有出藍之成就。

~~顧澹明~~

Pan He, the elderly Lingnan painter who gave Yanshan his first painting lessons, considered the young man to be the most talented among the hundred or so students he had taught all his life and expected him to surpass even his teacher in accomplishment.

~~Gu Danming~~

研山之畫，秀骨天成，有烟客（王時敏）之蒼莽，
圓照（王鑑）之韶秀，實五嶺而南第一人也。

~~余紹宋~~

*Yanshan's painting has an inherent refinement to it.
Reminiscent of Wang Shimin's intensity and Wang Jian's
elegance, he is truly a leader among Lingnan painters.*

~~Yu Shaosong~~



研山挺生嶺表，早遊上京，本其少小寢饋婁東法乳之淵源，進而摩沙唐宋元明之真蹟，盡窺祕奧，豁然貫通。於是初則取石田之雄奇，合衡山之靈秀為一變；繼而尋究元人野逸之趣，而鼓盪其豐神為二變。心悟手從，孜孜罔懈，蓋已三十年於茲矣。比及近歲，更肆力董巨，山川草木，渾厚華滋，化之於毫素，歸之於自然。

~~陳芷町~~

A native of Guangdong and a student in Beijing, Yanshan built on his foundation in the Four Wangs and uncovered the secrets of the painting tradition through studying the masterpieces of the Tang, Song, Yuan and Ming. In other words, he started out availing himself of Shen Zhou's robustness and Wen Zhengming's ethereality and proceeded to seek enrichment from the untrammelled Yuan masters. For thirty long years, he has been tirelessly training his hand and mind in this way. More recently, he has exerted himself to emulating Dong Yuan and Juran and has returned to Nature for the majestic landscape and verdant lushness from under his brush.

~~Chen Zhiding~~

「抗心希古」取自李研山（1898 - 1961）的印語，語出嵇康詩句「抗心希古，任其所尚」。後世引用為志操高尚，與古人相期許。這不僅是他晚年思想的總綱，其實早在壯年，其友儕以古之曠士視之，便已道明其人其畫，均體現出一種守望傳統，不惜遺世獨醒的堅定意志。故其作品多仿古、臨古，而晚年在香港過着隱居生活，人品與畫藝，都展現出一種與古人相會的強烈意願。

是次展覽展出逾百幅李研山的山水、花鳥精品，這批難得的作品乃由李氏後人完整保存，並慷慨借展。展覽共分六個部分：穗苑交遊、蘇井桃李、抗筆天涯、意與古會、君子言志及自有我在。

李研山是近現代廣東畫壇舉足輕重的人物，1930年代，他是廣東國畫研究會的骨幹成員，同時又是廣州市市立美術學校的校長，深遠影響粵、港兩地的藝術發展。展出的作品與文獻充分反映其藝術人生及其與粵、港兩地藝壇的交流。

“A passion for tradition”, message engraved on one of Li Yanshan’s (1898 – 1961) seal, alludes to Ji Kang’s poem “exalts the virtues by emulating the ancients”. In Li’s friends’ eyes, he was so resolved to emulate the ancients that he seemed to be a hermit straight from the past. True to this spirit, this exhibition predominately displays works that Li copies and imitates the past masters’ styles. The hermitic life of Li can be felt most strongly from his later year works, which at the same time highly reflected his strong desire to be one of the ancients that he so admired.

The exhibition features over 100 items of Chinese paintings of landscape and flower-and-bird by the late Guangdong master Li Yanshan on loan from the Li family. The exhibition will be divided into six sections namely, The Guangzhou Years; The Teaching Years; The Drifting Years; Vocabularies from the Past; Discourses from the Heart and A Presence to Endure.

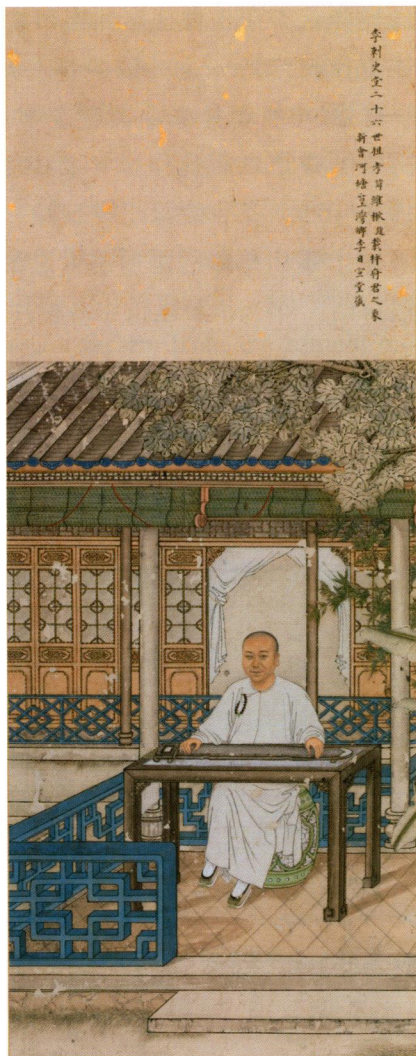
Li was one of the core members of the Guangdong Chinese Painting Research Society and the principal of the Guangzhou Municipal College of Fine Arts in the 1930s. He developed his unique style by studying various traditional paintings in particular the works of Yuan and Ming masters. The exhibits and documentations well reflect Li’s art and life and his times in both the Guangdong and Hong Kong art scene.

李研山出身廣東的書香門弟，少年時代就讀廣州的新式學校廣府中學，在愛好詩文書畫的父親李載枰（？ - 1928）及潘飭（1873 - 1929）的薰陶下，他對傳統畫學產生了深刻的認同感和濃厚的興趣。中學畢業後，李研山考入北京大學修讀法律系，於1925年回粵後參與由潘飭等傳統派名家主持的國畫研究會。

李氏早期作品秉承了父親及潘飭的風格，他十七歲時所繪的父親肖像（圖一），已準確表達人物與背景建築物之間的比例，畫中几案樑柱，皆作陰陽明暗渲染，杆欄與人像均立地見影。李氏刻意加入光影和立體感等的寫實元素，體現其改良傳統國畫的意圖。青年時代，他喜愛明代吳門畫派文徵明（1470 - 1559）式的清秀典雅，這亦是李氏早期風格的特色。

Born to a prestigious family in the Guangdong province, Li Yanshan was sent to Guangzhou, the provincial capital, to be educated under a modern curriculum at the Guangzhou Middle School. Greatly influenced by his father Li Zaiping (? - 1928), a lover of art and literature, and his art teacher Pan He (1873 - 1929), he developed a strong passion for Chinese painting. Upon graduation, he was admitted to the Peking University to study law. After returning to Guangdong in 1925, he joined the Chinese Painting Research Society led by eminent traditionalist painters such as Pan He.

Stylistically, Li's early works show borrowings from both his father and Pan He. Young as he was, he had already unraveled the secrets of proportion and shading as is evident in the figure against the background architecture in the portrait (Fig. 1) he painted of his father at the age of 17. His intention to reform traditional Chinese painting also speaks for itself in the light and dark shadowing and sense of volume that he employed to add a realistic touch to his work. The tradition, however, was still very much in his heart, especially the refined elegance typical of Wen Zhengming (1470 – 1559), an exponent of the Wu School of painting prevalent in the Ming dynasty.



圖一 《父親畫像》
Fig. 1 *Father's portrait*

1930年代李研山曾任廣州市市立美術學校（市美）校長，李氏晚年課徒畫作時常鈐一方「蘇井亭」印，此亭遺蹟就在市美舊址。抗日戰爭爆發，他隻身來港與畫友李鳳公（1884 – 1967）在灣仔設立「鳳研樓」畫室以課徒作畫。從1939到1941年之間，漂泊於港澳兩地。1939年的《深杏樓深燈夜讀圖》（圖二）卷中的山中小樓，其環以恬靜園林、遠山縹緲的隱遁避世之情，與當時烽火臨境的現實世界形成強烈對比。李氏欲於亂世中尋得片刻安寧的渴望，於此不言而喻。

During the 1930s, Li was at one time president of the Guangzhou Municipal College of Fine Arts. When the war of resistance against Japan broke out, he fled to Hong Kong by himself and opened the studio Feng Yan Lou with his painter friend Li Fengong (1884 – 1967) in Wanchai for giving painting lessons. From the period between 1939 and 1941 when he was active in both Hong Kong and Macao, there is *Midnight reading in Apricot Studio* (Fig. 2) of 1939, in which the reclusive world represented by the serene garden and distant mountains is a far cry from the tumultuous reality at the time, fully revealing the painter's yearnings for peace, albeit momentarily through his painting.



圖二 《深杏樓深燈夜讀圖》

Fig. 2 *Midnight reading in Apricot Studio*

另外，1939年的《曲江池館圖》（圖三），是李氏前期風格的代表作。畫中園林的題材和構圖承自吳門畫派，而景觀則取自嶺南園林；用筆上更巧妙地結合了元代各家的特色，如近景的石山用王蒙（1308 – 1385）的「牛毛皴」，方折的石岸用倪瓚（1301 – 1374）的「折帶皴」，遠處的坡岸則用黃公望（1296 – 1354）的「披麻皴」，還有那些帶古意造型的柳樹、竹林、梧桐和芭蕉，均滲透着錢選（1239 – 1301）和趙孟頫（1254 – 1322）的意趣。此時，李氏已成功將古法與實景融合，從而建立自己的面貌。

Li's style during this period is well exemplified by the painting *Poolside Studio* (Fig. 3) produced in 1939. The composition and the garden theme are adapted from the Wu School of painting of the Ming while the setting is inspired by the typical Lingnan garden. As for brushwork, it is an ingenious hybrid of the hallmarks of various Yuan masters: Wang Meng's (1308 – 1385) "ox-hair texture strokes" in the rocks in the foreground, Ni Zan's (1301 – 1374) "folded belt texture strokes" in the angular rocky banks, Huang Gongwang's (1296 – 1354) "hemp-fibre texture strokes" in the distant slopes, and the archaic willows, bamboos, Chinese Parasols and banana trees reminiscent of Qian Xuan (1239 – 1301) and Zhao Mengfu (1254 – 1322). There is no doubt that Li had brought to maturation his attempt to blend archaic interpretation with real landscape for a style that is truly his own.



圖三 《曲江池館圖》
Fig. 3 *Poolside Studio*

1942年至1952年是李研山一生最漂泊的十年。1946年李研山回到新會，並以從茂名徒步回鄉時沿途所見的景色轉化入畫，繪成《青山無恙圖》(圖四)，此畫充分表現李氏對和平再臨，還鄉團聚的喜悅心情，更呈示其經多年鍛練的筆墨功夫。由抗戰前開始發展，融入黃公望、沈周(1427 - 1509)的風味，乾筆勾勒皴擦山石，濃淡相和的苔點渲染和率筆勁豪風格，至此已臻成熟。

The ten years between 1942 and 1952 caused Li Yanshan to drift from one place to another. It was not until 1946 that he could finally head home to Xinhui. His jubilation at the restoration of peace and reunion with his family found expression in the painting *A land untarnished* (Fig. 4). A visual documentation of the sceneries seen on his homeward trek from Maoming, the work is also a celebration of his mastery of brush and ink after years of honing since the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War. The vigour and robustness arising from the dry-brush texture strokes and the tonally apt dots and washes are largely indebted to Huang Gongwang and Shen Zhou (1427 - 1509).



圖四 《青山無恙圖》
Fig. 4 *A land untarnished*

結茅離市塵幽心幸有託開門盡松楸
 到枕管邱壑山色陰晴好林光早晚各景
 園四時佳於秋更勿畧坐輪囷石竿意豈在
 魚環行忘溪橋遠羨願穿草屨薜蘿吾儕
 久未當不約莫似桃源漁叟尋路即錯
 此留春山之別徑也予向構一堂於其間每
 春秋時焚香煮茗將高息而當晨風月如
 月戶而窗或登眺或憑欄不知身世在塵蒙
 矣爾曰洞天圖之曰招樾夫隱君同志
 一峯老人黃公望畫并題

一峯老人秋山招樾園增不可得見偶讀
 車士頌夏錄詩清新黃公真是神仙中人
 因鈔題語以示景仰
 癸巳九月六夜陰平李研山在龍安室



圖五 《秋山招樾圖》

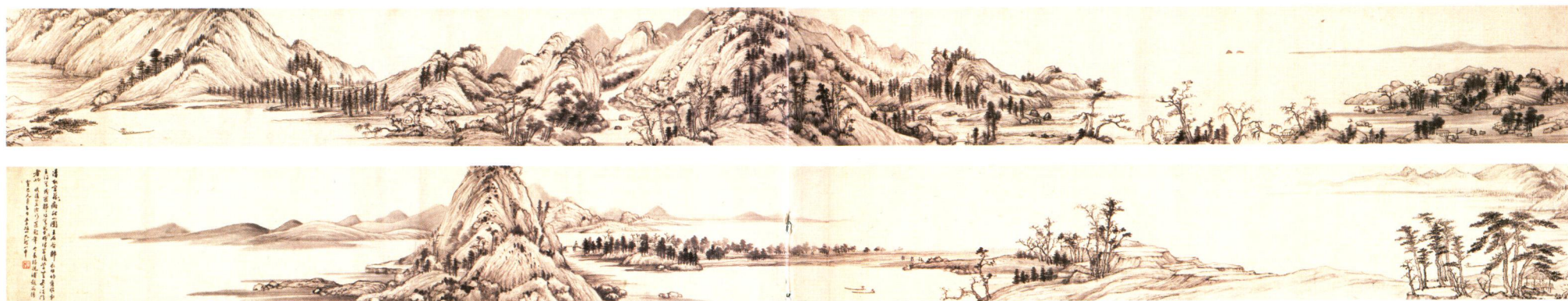
Fig. 5 *Reclusive life in the autumn mountains*

1948年李氏重臨香江，經歷了八年抗戰及大陸政權的易手，李研山對流落海隅體會甚深，同時，更有一種視香港為避世之鄉的心態。1952年的《秋山招隱圖》（圖五）便是他讀到黃公望隱居富春山小洞天詩後，心生嚮往而作。1953年，李研山始安頓於九龍鑽石山下元嶺村一所平房石屋。畫家此後題畫亦多署「九龍山居」，漂泊生涯，至此亦告一段落。

In 1948, Li returned to Hong Kong, a city where the displaced found refuge from first the eight years of resistance warfare and then the changeover of political regime on the Mainland. Furthermore, it was an ideal place for living in seclusion. Clues for this inclination of Li's can be found in the 1952 painting *Reclusive life in the autumn mountains* (Fig. 5), which was inspired by a poem by Huang Gongwang about shunning the mundane world in the Fuchun Mountains. In 1953, Li set up home at a bungalow in Ha Yuen Leng, Diamond Hill. From then on, the painter began signing his works with "dwelling in Kowloon hills", signifying the end of his drifting years.

李氏透過觀摩大量古代名蹟，系統地研究中國繪畫的歷史進程並深入了解不同畫家與流派的風格關係。從1950年至1954年之間，李研山花了巨大的精力臨摹一批陳仁濤（1906 – 1968）的金匱室藏畫，並將所學融入自己的創作之中。李氏尤對元人的作品特別重視，先臨摹黃公望《富春山居圖》（圖六）、倪瓚《枯木竹石圖》、吳鎮（1280 – 1354）《巒光送爽圖》，並以王蒙的茂密牛毛皴寫成的《夏日山居圖》（圖七）。

Thanks to the access to ancient masterpieces in abundance, Li was able to study systematically the developments and styles of different schools of painting and individual painters. Between 1950 and 1954, he painstakingly copied a selection of paintings in Chen Rentao's (1906 – 1968) Golden Chest Studio collection and reinvented their merits in his own works. Among the ancient masters, Li held those of the Yuan in highest regard, producing in succession *Copy after Huang Gongwang's Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* (Fig. 6), *Withered trees, bamboo and rocks* by Ni Zan, and *Copy after Wu Zhen's The glow of the autumnal dales*. As for his own creations informed by the copying, there is *Retreat in the summer mountains* (Fig. 7) in Wang Meng's hallmark ox-hair texture strokes.



圖六 《臨摹黃公望富春山居圖》

Fig. 6 Copy after Huang Gongwang's *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*



圖七 《夏日山居圖》

Fig. 7 *Retreat in the summer mountains*



圖八 《仿弘仁山水》

Fig. 8 *Landscape in the style of Hongren*

李研山為追求更雄健率放的用筆，亦從沈周乃至明末清初的遺民畫家入手，受弘仁（1610 – 1664）與石濤（1642 – 1707）兩家影響尤深，《仿弘仁山水》（圖八）、《秋澗飛瀑圖》及《臨清湘老人迢迢谷訪戴本孝圖》均滋養了李氏晚年的率筆風格。

To add vigour and robustness to his brushwork, Li sought inspiration from Shen Zhou and loyalist painters active in the interim years straddling the Ming and the Qing. His unrestrained late-year style was particularly indebted to Hongren (1610 – 1664) and Shitao (1642 – 1707) as attested in *Landscape in the style of Hongren* (Fig. 8), *Stream and waterfall in autumn* and *Copy after Shitao's Visiting Dai Benxiao in Tiaotiao Valley*.

歷代文人畫家均好賦予物件豐富的文化內涵以借物寄意，而竹在眾多植物之中尤受文人所鍾愛，李研山亦最愛寫竹，晚年更肆力鑽研，並欲編撰一套竹譜，惟未成事而身故，教人惋惜。李研山的寫竹風格參照並結合了歷代名蹟，他並非獨寫墨竹，亦寫雙勾設色（圖九）。

Iconography has always been employed by Chinese painters to meet their expressive needs. Among those drawn from the plant kingdom, the bamboo has never failed to endear itself to literati painters from any given period. Li Yanshan was no exception especially in his late years. He would have a manual of bamboo painting completed if not for his death. Like what he did with the landscape, Li approached bamboo painting in light of the history of the genre and with reference to available masterpieces. His repertoire covers not only ink bamboo but also outlined ones in colour (Fig. 9).



圖九 《竹石圖》

Fig. 9 *Bamboo and rocks*



交而於地望相相獨也
 如鳳在者桂草木之性
 竹有凌雲之志
 玉有潤玉之顏
 松有蒼翠之色
 柏有蒼翠之色
 聖日年題

圖十 《凌雲鳴玉圖》

Fig. 10 The metaphor of bamboo

從李氏遺下的筆記中發現他曾細心的抄錄元代畫竹名家李衍（1245 – 1320）的《畫竹譜》、《墨竹譜》及張退公（活躍於十三世紀後期）的《墨竹記》，他不僅細心揣摩李衍觀察竹的真實生態的心得及畫竹的技法論述，並從中體會古代文人對竹所投射的道德觀及寄托的精神意志。所以，畫竹不獨是為了表現物態，更透露畫者心態。李氏的墨竹，貼近元朝人畫家自然淡樸，優雅清秀的風格。1960年的《凌雲鳴玉圖》（圖十）上的一段跋語：「竹有凌雲之志、鳴玉之韻，宜與松柏並肩而無愧色。」正是李氏借竹自況。

From the notes kept by Li, it is known that he had meticulously copied two manuals on bamboo painting by the seminal Yuan master Li Kan (1245 – 1320) and another one by Zhang Tuigong (act. ca. late 13th century) from the same period. While diligently studying the realistic forms of the bamboo as observed and captured by the former, he also delved into the moralistic and spiritual qualities that literati from the past saw in the plant. Stylistically akin to the unadorned portrayals of the Yuan masters, his bamboo paintings are as much about divulging his outlook on life as formally representing the plant. In fact, he identified himself so much with the bamboo that he inscribed thus on *The metaphor of bamboo* (Fig. 10) of 1960: “Aiming for the sky and sounding like the noble jade, the bamboo is worthy enough to join the ranks of pines and cypresses.”



圖十一 《春風山亭圖》
Fig. 11 *A pavilion caressed by spring breezes*

李研山晚年有一方印語作「有我在」的小閑章，乃出自石濤《畫語錄》：「我之為我，自有我在。」李氏此時已能與古人異代接武，展現出自己的獨特面貌，能無愧地說出「有我在」。

李研山晚年創作充分流露出一種淡然及退隱的況味。1958年《春風山亭圖》（圖十一）和《九龍海濱閒眺圖》（圖十二）便是佳例。《春風山亭圖》畫面以北宋大山中立的豐碑式構圖為主幹，近景配以松林山亭，仰望前面峭峻的峰巒上，依山長滿紅艷的野杜鵑。李氏居處附近以獅子山腰到紅梅谷的一帶尤為多見，故其以春山杜鵑入畫，實就地取材之作。至於《九龍海濱閒眺圖》則以昔日東九龍一帶海灣風光為藍本，當年的海島灘岸景觀，可能就是把從油塘遠眺維港東隅調景嶺、將軍澳一帶的景致。這兩幅畫中，李氏除了取材實景外，亦成功地融入了古畫的意趣。《春風山亭圖》猶如北宋山水圖式的現代版本，而《九龍海濱閒眺圖》的丘陵灘岸風貌、粗樸率放的披麻皴及苔點，更是元代黃公望《富春山居圖》的延伸以及重新演繹。

A leisure seal used by Li in his late years is “Here I am”, alluding to the early Qing painting master Shitao’s saying “Here I am because I am but what I am”. Confident that he had succeeded in forging a link with the ancient masters while projecting his own personality, the painter took pride in proclaiming “Here I am”.

The elderly artist’s contentment with his reclusive life permeates his late-year works. One good example is *A pavilion caressed by spring breezes* (Fig. 11) from 1958. In the monumental composition borrowed from the Northern Song, a pavilion in the shelter of pine trees is dwarfed by precipices ablaze with azalea. The wild flower grew in profusion from

midway up the Lion Rock to Hung Mui Kuk. Living in the vicinity, Li was simply painting what he saw in the spring year. Another illuminating example is *Panorama of the Kowloon seashore* (Fig. 12). Also from 1958, the painting captures the eastern shore of the Kowloon Peninsula. The fishing villages in the east of the Victoria Harbour are probably those in Tiu Keng Leng and the Junk Bay seen from Yau Tong in old Hong Kong.



圖十二 《九龍海濱開眺圖》

Fig. 12 *Panorama of the Kowloon seashore*

In both paintings, Li has succeeded in blending archaic charm and appeal with real landscapes such that *A pavilion caressed by spring breezes* is practically a modern rendering of a Song landscape while *Panorama of the Kowloon seashore*, with its hills and shores in unrestrained hemp-fibre texture strokes and moss dots, comes across as a reinterpretation of *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* by Huang Gongwang of the Yuan.



畫以人重，人以畫傳。士欲習畫，先求養志，養志不純，習之無益。養志者，為學畫第一義，亦為畫道之極則。

原習畫之道，雖以自運為極軌，而臨摹古本，亦學問之喫緊處也。

~~李研山~~

Painting matters for the person behind it and the person is revealed through painting. This is why purifying one's nature is a prerequisite for learning painting. Learning will arrive at nothing if one's nature is not purified to perfection. Purifying one's nature is the first essential step towards learning painting and at the same time the ultimate fruition of the art of painting.

Copying ancient masterpieces to acquire the necessary knowledge is also an important key to painting although the ultimate goal is to achieve originality.

~~Li Yanshan~~

千百年來，珍視和捍衛傳統似乎已經成為中國文人生命的基因，甚至亦演變成一種內省的使命。只是，在過去百年，中國的知識分子對於傳統，曾提出前所未有的反思和批判，傳統曾幾何時被視為「無一是處」，不禁讓人感慨。百年倏忽而過，當如今社會大力呼籲保存文化、重視傳統之際，回看當時曾接受過先進教育的李研山，在這樣的歷史條件下，卻反過來堅守傳統，在當時人眼中，可說是反潮流之舉；然而，正是他的背景，使我們相信，李研山選擇走上傳統之路，是一個極為清醒的決定。回首前塵，更隱隱然看到李研山的抉擇，透現出超越時代的眼光和智慧。

For thousands of years, preserving the tradition was a priority for the Chinese literati to the extent that it seemed to have acquired the proportions of an ingrained calling or even culture. It is a sad thing that the same tradition should have been brutally attacked and denounced by the intelligentsia in the past century or so. More recently, however, the tide has turned. This time, there is a loud clamour for preserving our cultural heritage and for reviving our great tradition. Unfortunately, Li did not live to see this. He was going against the current and majority inclination during his time, but it was a well considered choice for him to embark on a traditional path despite his modern education. With hindsight accorded by history, we know that it was this vision and wisdom that has put Li Yanshan ahead of his time.



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九龍尖沙咀梳士巴利道十號

香港藝術館四樓 中國書畫展覽廳

查詢電話：(852) 2721 0116

網址：http://hk.art.museum

Chinese Fine Art Gallery

4/F, Hong Kong Museum of Art

10 Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon

Enquiries: (852) 2721 0116

Website: http://hk.art.museum

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工作小組

香港藝術館總館長

鄧海超

編輯及展覽策劃

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博物館研究見習員

周麗珊

平面設計

二級技術主任 (設計)

張偉明

封面

《青山無恙圖》1946 (局部)

Production Team

Chief Curator (Hong Kong Museum of Art)

Tang Hoi Chiu

Editorial and Curatorial

Curator (Xubaizhai)

Szeto Yuen Kit

Assistant Curator I (Chinese Fine Art)

Wong Nga Kwan, Cherry

Assistant Curator I (Xubaizhai)

Tang Man Leung, Raymond

Assistant Curator II (Chinese Fine Art)

Mak Wing Man, Hilda

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Designer II

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