

# Hong Kong Museum of Art

## Collections Policy and Strategy

### Strategic Framework

The Hong Kong Museum of Art has the mission to reflect the development and cultural identity of Hong Kong art as well as the accomplishments of our local artists. Hong Kong art thus naturally forms the primary focus of the museum's collection policy. At the same time, however, as Hong Kong is part of China, the scope of the museum's collection also extends to cover the artistic and cultural heritage of other parts of China, in particular Guangdong and South China. Through research, exhibitions and promotional programmes, the museum aims to enhance the general public's awareness of and interest in art and culture, foster cultural exchange and promote Hong Kong art on the international horizon.

Western art is not covered by the museum's collection policy, but is presented in a variety of thematic exhibitions on classical, modern and contemporary art that draw on international sources and thus offer the public opportunities to appreciate the cream of art and culture of human civilization.

The museum's current collections number over 14,000 works of art. Information and images of collection items are regularly available at our website for the public to access online. We also welcome members of the community to make appointments to visit our Resource Centre for research and study purposes.

#### **Next →**

- Hong Kong Art Collection
- Chinese Antiquities and Historical Pictures Collections
- Chinese Fine Art and Xubaizhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy

# **Hong Kong Art Collection**

## **Mission**

To preserve and collect works by Hong Kong artists with a view to reflecting the identity of local art and culture, its hereditary relationship with mainland China and its diversity and characteristics in the international arena.

## **Scope of the Collection**

### **1. Collection of Hong Kong Art from the 20th Century to the Present**

Features 20th century and contemporary art works by Hong Kong artists in various media and styles and dealing with different subject matters with the aim of reflecting the development of local art. [→ More](#)

### **2. Systematic Collection of the Masters**

Features representative works by local masters that reflect their stylistic development at different stages of their careers, their accomplishments and their contributions to the local art scene. [→ More](#)

### **3. Thematic Collection**

Features works that explore specific themes, for example focusing on the New Ink Painting movement or Pop Art, and thus reflect the unique vision and cultural significance of these themes in the Hong Kong context. [→ More](#)

### **4. Collection of Works by Mainland and Overseas Chinese Artists**

Features representative works by mainland and overseas Chinese artists who have close ties with Hong Kong in order to reflect the diversity of modern and contemporary Chinese art. [→ More](#)

### **5. Collection of Works by Budding Artists**

Features works by up-and-coming artists, such as the entrants and award-winners of the Hong Kong Art Biennials, with the aim of revealing the new faces and future development of Hong Kong art. [→ More](#)

- *As of April 2007, the Hong Kong Art Collection features 3,800 works by Hong Kong artists.*

## **Chinese Antiquities and Historical Pictures Collections**

### **Mission**

To preserve and collect Chinese antiquities of all centuries and historical pictures of the 18th and 19th centuries with a view to reflecting the development of Chinese art and the culture of all China's dynasties and the historical and cultural identities of South China and Hong Kong in the 18th and 19th centuries as well as the history of this region.

### **Scope of the Collection**

#### **1. Collection of Chinese Ceramics**

Features all types of Chinese ceramics from the Neolithic period to the 20th century with a view to reflecting the development of this internationally acclaimed Chinese art form.

[→ More](#)

#### **2. Collection of Chinese Bronzes, Carvings and Crafts**

Features ancient Chinese bronzes, sculptures, carvings and decorative crafts with the aim of reflecting the development and significance of Chinese arts and crafts.

[→ More](#)

#### **3. Thematic Collections**

Feature thematic collections of Chinese ceramics and crafts, such as Chinese bamboo carvings, Shiwan ware, Chinese glass and Chinese tea ware in the custody of the Flagstaff House Museum of Tea Ware, with a view to exploring the development and distinctive features of these distinctive art forms.

[→ More](#)

#### **4. Collection of Historical Pictures**

Features Chinese trade paintings and works by foreign artists who came to China in the 18th and 19th centuries with the aim of exploring the development of trade, cultural interaction and the historical and cultural ambiance of South China during that period.

[→ More](#)

- *As of April 2007, the Chinese Antiquities and Historical Pictures Collections include over 5,600 exhibits.*

# Chinese Fine Art and Xubaizhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy

## Mission

To preserve and collect Chinese painting and calligraphy of different periods with a view to reflecting the development and the unique features of these important Chinese art forms as well as the accomplishments of the masters of different centuries.

## Scope of the Collection

### 1. Xubaizhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy

A unique and important collection of Chinese painting and calligraphy donated by the late collector Mr Low Chuck-tiew. Dating from the Tang dynasty (618-917) to the 20th century with strong focus on the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) Dynasties, the works in the collection illustrate the historical development of Chinese painting and calligraphy as well as the distinctive accomplishments of various masters and schools.

[→ More](#)

### 2. Collection of Guangdong Painting and Calligraphy

Features Ming (1368 – 1644), Qing (1644 – 1911) and modern and contemporary Guangdong painting and calligraphy with the aim of locating Guangdong masters and major Guangdong schools in the historical context of Chinese painting and calligraphy and Hong Kong art.

[→ More](#)

### 3. Collection of 20th Century Painting and Calligraphy

Features 20th century and modern and contemporary masterpieces by mainland Chinese artists with a view to reflecting the development and new visions of Chinese painting and calligraphy in the 20th and 21st centuries.

[→ More](#)

- *As of April 2007, the Chinese Fine Art Collection houses over 5,200 works of art.*

# **Assessment Criteria of the Hong Kong Museum of Art**

## **Assessment Criteria for Collection**

1. Artistic merit
2. Historical value
3. Relevance to current collections
4. Authenticity
5. Physical condition
6. Price
7. Durability
8. Display value
9. Educational value
10. Reputation of the artist

## **Assessment Criteria for Public Programme Proposals**

1. Concept and idea
2. Artistic/historical/cultural merits
3. Educational value
4. Uniqueness of the subject
5. Public appeal
6. Technical and financial feasibility
7. In line with the museum's vision and mission

## Hong Kong Art Collection

### 1. Collection of Hong Kong Art from the 20th Century to the Present



Yee Bon (1905 – 1995)

#### **Horse Racing**

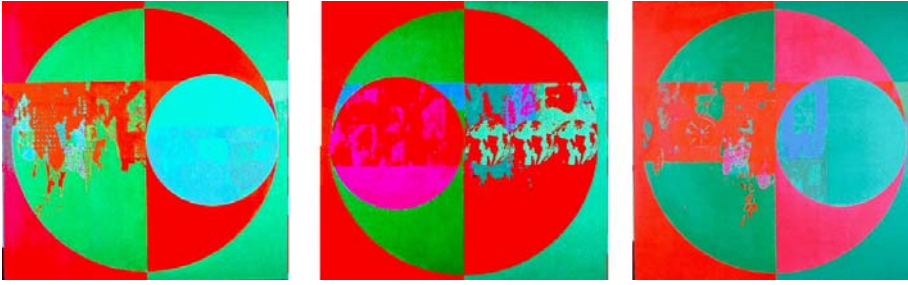
Oil on canvas

48 x 89 cm

AC1989.0059

A prominent Hong Kong artist in the 1950s, Yee Bon exerted a profound influence on the early post-war development of art in Hong Kong. He excelled in oil painting and had a particular fondness for painting landscapes, figures and still lifes, but in his later years he was also engaged in ink painting.

Devoting himself to creating works in oil throughout his career, Yee Bon advocated the blending of Western art with oriental elements, giving his works both a rich ethnic mood as well as a modern touch. Yee's landscapes and portraits from different periods fully reflect the changes in his creative work that resulted from living in different environments. The painting *Horse Racing* depicts a favourite activity of Hong Kong people. Full of motion, the composition, choice of colours and manipulation of light and shades is clear proof of the artist's excellent painting technique and his distinctive personal style.



HON Chi-fun (b. 1922)

**Bath of Fire**, 1968

Oil and silkscreen on canvas

AC1968.0009

A renowned Hong Kong artist, Hon Chi-fun is known for works that present a unique and sophisticated blend of Western techniques, Oriental philosophies and Chinese motifs. Hon has continued to develop his very personal style throughout his artistic career. In the 1970s and 80s, circles and squares became icons of Hon's works, which also frequently touched on philosophical issues relating to life and death, nature and the universe.

A distinguished piece of work created at the dawn of Hon's changing styles, *Bath of Fire* features a combination of techniques and elements that he had adopted previously. The poems, images and letters, added to the picture by silk-screen printing, are a revelation of the artist's past and dreams. The contrasting colours of red and green shine through, the ample width of the picture expands the viewer's horizon, while the text, written from top to bottom, offers a different perspective. All these components contribute to a dazzling visual effect. *Bath of Fire* can be considered a miserable trip to hell. When it was finished, the artist would head off on in a new artistic direction.

## 2. Systematic Collection of the Masters



Luis Chan (1905 – 1995)

**Dreamland (section)**, 1979

Handscroll, ink and colour on paper

38 x 1591 cm

AC1980.0026

One of Hong Kong's leading artists, Luis Chan painted for more than 60 years but was particularly active in Hong Kong art circles in the 1930s. Excelling at oil paintings, watercolours, collages, ink paintings and drawings, he was famous for his unique style characterized by abstract configurations and a rich palette that convey a sense of childhood fantasy as well as his personality and his view on life.

Chan's creations are neither traditional Chinese landscapes nor modern foreign abstract paintings. His unique style, as seen in his scenery and portraits, was developed by combining a variety of elements. One of Chan's last masterpieces, the painting *Dreamland* is an illustration of his dream world. Imaginary figurines, changing from extraordinary forms into big fish, animals or even an island, turn this dream world into a beautiful long scroll of landscape paintings featuring special compositions and a bright palette.



Cheung Yee (b. 1936)

**Fortune 12**, 1976

Wood relief, double sided

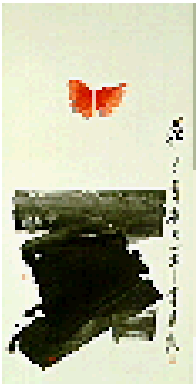
274.5 x 274.5 x 15 cm

AC1978.0003

An acclaimed Hong Kong artist, Cheung Yee is a master of a diverse range of artistic creations. His sculptures and prints possess a strong personal style with a unique vocabulary that borrows archaic Chinese motifs such as ancient oracle bone scripts, tortoiseshell as well as primitive art.

This double-sided openwork relief sculpture is modelled with four totem poles. Each tortoiseshell is carved with round holes that look like limpets and almond-shaped holes that represent the indentations, while the traces left by the eating, wriggling worms link up the various voids front and back. This representative work conveys an archaic and mythical aura with a touch of both solemnity and dynamism.

### 3. Thematic Collection



Lui Shou-kwan (1919 – 1975)

**Zhuang Zi**, 1974

Ink and colour on paper

139 x 70 cm

AC1976.0059

Trained in traditional Chinese painting and well versed in Chinese philosophy and art, Lui Shou-kwan later continued to enrich his artistic understanding by learning from Western art and critically examining Chinese painting traditions. The result was his groundbreaking Zen paintings, which launched the New Ink Painting Movement in Hong Kong.

In this painting, Lui has used a broad brush to apply ink to the lower half of the work, creating an abstract space with the huge patches of ink and horizontal overlapping strokes. Above the upper centre of the frame, a patch of red represents a butterfly. The theme of the painting is derived from the classic *Zhuang Zi: Qi Wu Lun*, in which the master Zhuang Zi becomes a butterfly in a dream and begins to speculate philosophically, evocatively wondering whether “Zhuang Zi became a butterfly in his dream or a butterfly became Zhuang Zi in its dream”. Lui borrowed Western art’s abstract vocabulary but combined it with the aesthetics of ink painting, thus pointing Chinese painting in the direction of modernism.



Wilson Shieh (b. 1970)

**The Duo Clubs**, 2002

Ink and colour on golden cardboard

AC2004.0045

Basing his artistic creation on the traditions of Chinese fine-line painting, Wilson Shieh combines conventional painting skill and modern art concepts in his works to reveal a unique sense of humour. With a penchant for adding details such as customs and different hairstyles to his models, he allows the viewer to study the background of the era, the protagonist's status and identity and other elements.

*The Duo Clubs* reflects a period of time in the 1980s when British pop and rock music was dominant and when the artist was still in his formative teenage years. Several interesting pop duos came to the fore in Britain at that time, and Shieh found that their uniqueness lay not just in their music but also in their imagination and even the glamour of their appearance. A handsome, charismatic vocalist backed by a less glamorous but brilliant musician was the formula for the line-up, which has always been controversial, as it hints at an ambiguous sexuality. A combination of comic-book style, traditional Chinese fine-line figure painting and pop culture, this work is representative of the identity contemporary Hong Kong art.

#### 4. Collection of Works by Mainland and Overseas Chinese Artists



Xu Bing (b. 1955)

**A Book from the Sky**, 1987-1991

Mixed Media

Installation Area: 1500 x 850 x 400cm

Painting: 298 x 96 cm

AC2000.0045

A leading Chinese artist on the international scene, Xu Bing is well versed in using characters to show cultural discrepancies and contradictions and has sparked a great deal of discussion and comment among art critics.

Xu has been fascinated by Chinese book-binding techniques and the structure of Chinese characters since a very young age. During the post-Cultural Revolution period, he designed and carved more than 4,000 imaginary Chinese characters, which he then made into movable wooden blocks. *A Book from the Sky* is hand-printed on vertical scrolls in a traditional Chinese stitch-bound format. Xu chose to pattern all his characters on the classical style used for printing, so the characters themselves look very similar to traditional Chinese logographs. They are, however, entirely meaningless in terms of their linguistic function. Although *A Book from the Sky* makes use of Chinese printing techniques and materials, it is displayed in the form of a large-scale installation. The work powerfully merges both Chinese and Western elements, while also questioning the Chinese language tradition.



GU Wenda (1955 - )

**United Nations Series – China Monument: Temple of Heaven, 1998**

Mixed media, installation

300 sq. m.

AC2006.0057

Gu Wenda is an internationally acclaimed Chinese artist currently living in New York, USA.

Part of Gu's global installation art project: "United Nations Series" (1993 – 2004) that comprises 22 monuments, this particular work is the 12th in the series and is made with human hair collected from more than 30 hair salons in China and the USA. Gu has reorganized these discarded hair strands with gum adhesive to create calligraphy scrolls that are pervious to light. The text on the scrolls looks like Chinese, English, Arabic and Indian, yet in fact it is a "pseudo script" created by Gu to reflect the divides that exist between people, societies and cultures. In the centre of the installation are mock Ming-style tables and chairs. On each of the chairs is a screen playing a video of clouds drifting across a blue sky while musical notes are played on Chinese *bian zhong* bells. Gu's aim is for the audience to feel the sensational and expressive feeling of flying in the sky, so that they can break away from in-built personalities and rediscover their own roots. He also hopes people can relate to the land of serenity within us: Utopia.

## 5. Collection of Works by Budding Artists



Joyce Hsu (b. 1973)

**Naboon Dragonfly**, 2002

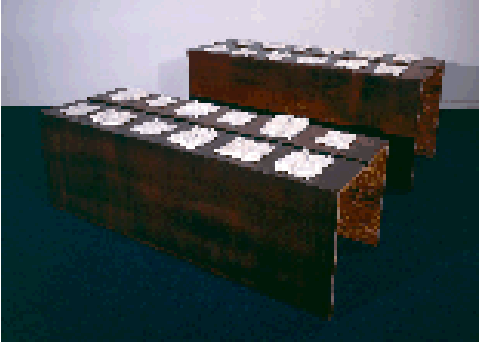
Wood, plastic, motor and light

300 x 300 x 300 cm

AC2004.0070

A Canadian Chinese artist who lives in San Francisco, Joyce Hsu was an award-winner at the Hong Kong Art Biennial.

This work illustrates both human vulnerability and our strong desire for control. To imagine for ourselves the ability to control all these objects that we presume will protect us from harm while wanting them to be our good companions can be a very empowering experience. The ugliness of our thirst for power is blurred by the cuteness and childishness of our appearance, yet under these adorable disguises dwell our desires and weaknesses. The dichotomy of playfulness and danger that is parodied here is the common thread that ties these objects together.



Sara Tse (b. 1974)

**Attire**, 2002

Porcelain and Metal, a set of 28 porcelain and 4 metal tables

300 x 300 x 300 cm

AC2004.0083

Born in Hong Kong and a 1977 graduate of the Fine Arts Department of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Sara Tse was one of the award-winners at the Hong Kong Art Biennial. She likes to use everyday objects to convey her themes because they transmit a private sense of warmth.

In this work, real objects (clothes) were “re-cast” by soaking with slip (liquid porcelain clay). This produced porcelain shells of the objects, which were consumed in the firing process. The work of art gives the impression of a delicate craft but has undergone only a simple process, with the artist using this method to explore the subtle link between traditional and modern art techniques.

## Chinese Antiquities and Historical Pictures Collections

### 1. Collection of Chinese Ceramics



#### **Stem cup with lotus design in *doucai* enamels**

Mark and period of Chenghua (1465 – 1487), Ming dynasty

Height: 8 cm Diameter of mouth: 6.1 cm

C1981.0018

The use of *doucai* enamels began in the Xuande period of the Ming dynasty, but the technique was brought to maturity in the Chenghua period. The term *doucai*, literally “contesting colours”, refers to the coexistence of underglaze and overglaze decorations on the same work. The design would first be outlined or partially painted in cobalt blue pigment, and then the entire vessel would be coated with a transparent glaze and fired at a high temperature. Next, coloured enamels would be applied over the surface of the glaze to complete the design, before the vessel was fired a second time at a lower temperature.

The exterior of this stem cup is decorated with a lotus design, where the petals and leaves are outlined in underglaze blue and filled in with overglaze red, yellow and green. The base of the splayed stem is hollow and bears a six-character mark of the Chenghua period inscribed in underglaze blue in two columns of regular script. With its well-balanced form, its thin, light porcelain body and its finely painted decoration, this stem cup ranks among the finest *doucai* enamelled wares of the period.



**Horse in sancai glaze**

Tang dynasty (618 – 907)

Stoneware

Height: 57.7 cm

C1978.0074

This model of a horse in *sancai* (three-coloured) glaze is typical of *sancai* ware of the Tang dynasty. It is portrayed with a strong muscular body, a small head and long neck, all distinctive features of Tang horses. The horse's hair is tidily brushed and decorated with three floral designs which are unfortunately now lost. These decorations indicate that this type of horse was kept by Tang courtiers. The green glazed saddle is modelled in a manner that imitates a rug, while the halter is further decorated with yellow floral designs and patterns shaped like apricot leaves. Judging from the brilliant *sancai* colours and the exquisite decorations, we can conclude that this model is a representation of the most superior type of horse of the Tang dynasty.

Most of the horses kept by Tang nobles and courtiers were imported from Central Asia and known as Ferghana horses. They are associated with the kind of horses that were imported from the Western Territories during the Han dynasty.

## 2. Collection of Chinese Bronzes, Carvings and Crafts



### **Bronze *gu* wine container with animal mask and *kui*-dragon design**

Late Shang, c. 11th century BC

Bronze

Height: 29.7 cm    Diameter: 16.7 cm

C1981.0011

Wine vessels rank among the most common type of bronzes cast in the Shang period, and this bronze *gu* is a fine example. With a wide trumpet mouth on a hollow, splayed foot and a slender waist that is easy to hold in the hand, the upper section from the mouth to the neck is decorated with a vertical blade-shaped plantain design and a band featuring a snake pattern. The main motif is an animal mask depicting a *taotie*, a ferocious mythical creature that is a common motif on Shang bronzes. Cast on the waist and splayed base, the mask is symmetrically divided by raised flanges. The background is filled with fine incised lines of *leiwen*, or thunder patterns. This complex and dense decorative style is typical of the late Shang period, as are the raised flanges, which serve the dual purpose of hiding the casting marks and accentuating the sense of solemnity evoked by the vessel.



**Carved black lacquer bowl stand with dragon amid cloud and wave design**

Song dynasty (960 - 1279)

Lacquer

Height: 7.5 cm      Diameter: 15.2 cm

C1997.0008

Known as the bowl stand, this item was used to support a tea bowl. It has a wooden body that was painted with many layers of lacquer tree sap until a certain thickness was achieved, and it was then carved with decorative motifs to create a relief effect in a technique known as carved lacquer. Carved lacquer ware can be further divided into categories according to their colours, for example carved red lacquer, carved black lacquer and carved polychrome lacquer.

This bowl stand, with a wide tray and a high platform, gives a strong sense of stability. It is decorated with the motif of a *chi* dragon emerging over the waves of the sea, a popular design on carved lacquer ware of the Southern Song. In general, carved lacquer ware of this period features relatively thin lacquer layers, and this work is no exception. Plain vessels such as bowls, dishes and boxes made up most of the lacquer ware of the Southern Song. Quite apart from its highly precious carved lacquer decorations, this bowl stand is thus an exceptionally rare form.

### 3. Thematic Collections



#### **Vase with carved auspicious motif in painted enamels on white ground**

Mark of Guyuexuan

Late 18th to early 19th century

Glass

Height: 13 cm

C1989.0049

This white glass vase is decorated with four panels, each featuring different animals and flowers: a phoenix, the sun and peonies; a bat, a pine tree and a deer; a pine tree, a crane and peonies; and a quail and chrysanthemums. Although the colour has faded, the mark of Guyue Xuan in regular script can still be seen on the base.

All decorative motifs carry auspicious meanings. The Chinese word for the phoenix is *fenghuang*, for peonies *mudan* and for the sun *taiyang*. Taking one character from each of these words, we can form the phrase ‘dan feng chao yang’, which means ‘the phoenix welcoming the sun’ and symbolizes brightness and good fortune. In the second motif, the bat, the pine tree and the deer represent happiness, wealth and longevity. The pine tree and the crane in the third motif are symbols of longevity, while peonies signify wealth. In the fourth, the quail is *anchun* and the chrysanthemum *juhua* in Chinese: again, picking one character from each we can form the homophone of ‘*an ju*’, which has the extended meaning of ‘living in peace and contentment’.

This vase has been made with impeccable skill. The motifs have first been carved in high relief to enhance their texture, then polychrome enamels have been applied to the surface. Exquisitely implemented, the painting work is heightened by the rich, bright colours.



**Bamboo toad carved in the round**

Mark of “Zhu Ying”

16th / 17th century

Height: 2.8 cm      Length: 4.9 cm

C1985.0164

This bamboo toad carved in the round, with the two-character mark of “Zhu Ying” in relief on its belly, belongs to the work of Zhu Ying, a renowned bamboo carver who was active in Jiading, Suzhou in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Specializing in high relief work and carvings in the round, the members of the Zhu family (the father Zhu He, his son Ying and grandson Zhizheng) were reputed to be the greatest bamboo carvers of the time, with Zhu Ying particularly renowned for his carvings of toads, immortals and mountains. This work makes clever use of the natural effects of the gnarled protrusions of the bamboo root for the eyes and the markings of the creature, while the form of the root is ideal for transformation into the toad’s natural posture. All of these features demonstrate the artist’s complete mastery of his medium.

#### 4. Collection of Historical Pictures



Artist unknown

**Foreign Factories in Guangzhou,** c. 1820

Oil on canvas

35 x 37 cm

AH1964.0114

During the Qing dynasty, foreign traders in Guangzhou were confined to a district outside the city walls to the south of the old city, where riverside premises were leased to them as residences and offices by the *Hong* merchants. The district was known as the “Foreign Factories” or the “Thirteen *Hongs*”.

This is a typical export painting by a Chinese painter depicting the front view of the factories from across the river that was favoured by most Chinese artists. The composition is also typically Chinese: the foreground is reserved for the river bustling with small boats, with the upper portion and almost half of the canvas left for the sky, while the Foreign Factories are painted in-between the two, rendered in minute detail with fine brushstrokes but a rather unconvincing perspective.



Youqua (attributed)

**Victoria City,** 1854

Oil on canvas

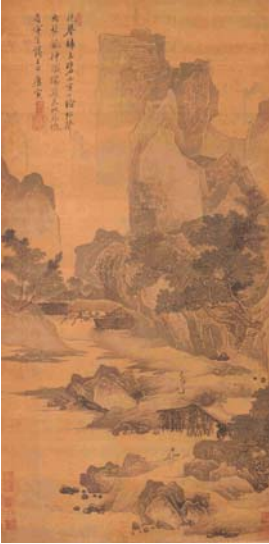
57 x 100cm

AH1964.0160

Little is known about the life of Youqua, an export painter who was active from the 1840s to the 1880s, except that he set up workshops in Canton and Hong Kong under the name “Yeehing”. He is recognised for his port views, landscapes, still lifes and flowers. This outstanding China trade painting attributed to him is both an extremely faithful record of Hong Kong in the 1850s and a painting of high artistic merit. Hong Kong was beginning to emerge as an important trading port at that time, and some of the major buildings that had been completed by then are shown here: St. John’s Cathedral, Bishop House and Flagstaff House. The thatched shed in the middle shows Government House in the final stages of its construction.

## Chinese Fine Art Collection

### 1. Xubaizhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy



Tang Yin (1470 – 1523)

#### **Returning home with a *qin***

Hanging scroll, ink and colour on silk

74.5 x 37.5 cm

XL104

A pupil of Shen Zhou and Zhou Chen, Tang Yin also studied the Academic style of the Song masters such as Li Tang, Liu Songnian and Ma Yuan, as well as the Four Masters of the Yuan period. Acclaimed as one of the Four Great Masters of the Ming period, Tang was also very friendly with Wen Zhengming, Zhu Yunming and Xu Zhenqing, and together they were known as the Four Gentlemen of Wu (the region around what is now Shanghai and Suzhou).

A very talented artist, Tang Yin succeeded in combining the characteristics of literati art with those of works by professional painters by merging the two main streams of the North and the South Schools in landscape painting.

This painting reflects the Academic style, where the composition is particularly well knit. Here, there is also a zigzag element to the composition with which Tang creates the appearance of distance. The towering mountains in the background recall typical landscape paintings of the Song period, while the method used to depict the rock surfaces originated in the “axe-cut” technique of Ma Yuan and Xia Gui (also from the Song period). Also noteworthy are Tang’s brushstrokes, which show both strength and dexterity.



Shitao (1642 – 1707)

**The Pagoda of Changgan Monastery, 1699**

Hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper

230 x 99 cm

XL054

Born Zhu Ruoji, and later also known as Dadizi and Monk Kugua, Shitao was a descendant of a Ming aristocrat and as such had no other choice but to become a monk after the demise of the Ming dynasty. While living in Anhui, he struck up a friendship with Mei Qing, and they exerted a significant influence on each other's styles. Settling in Yangzhou in his old age, he became friends with Zhu Da. Acclaimed as one of the Four Monks during the early Qing dynasty, Shitao did not limit himself to one technique, and his style exhibits a bold ingenuity.

This work reflects the diversity of the techniques that Shitao was a master of: his use of wet and dry brushes shows a wonderful balance, a clear indication that he was equally at home with both the pretreatment of paper with water to diffuse colour and the use of heavy strokes. Indigo and washed ochre are used here to bring out the lushness of the vegetation and the damp atmosphere of the mountain. Although Shitao was influenced by the ancient masters, he was nevertheless able to find something new in what was old. The rocks in the painting have very peculiar shapes, probably inspired by what he had seen on his travels to famous scenic sites. Free and straightforward and without any restraint, Shitao's brushstrokes moreover reveal a kind of forthright innocence.

## **2. Collection of Guangdong Painting and Calligraphy**



Su Renshan (1814 – ca. 1850)

### **Travellers in the Mountains**

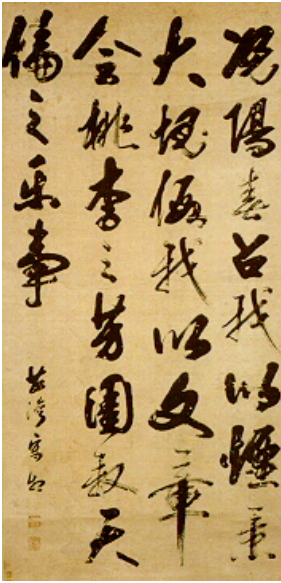
Hanging scroll, ink on paper

Ink and colour on silk

125 x 60 cm

FA1973.0023

Though praised by some modern art historians as “a genius of painting through the ages”, Su Renshan found little favour with his clansmen thanks to his eccentric personality. Yet it was this personality that shaped his artistic style. He began his career by enthusiastically studying woodblock-printed painting manuals, because his circumstances at the time made it difficult to gain access to original works. *Travellers in the Mountains* is representative of his meticulous style: with no colouring, it reveals a close relationship with woodblock prints. In later years, Su also developed a more spontaneous style, while continuing to paint works of great detail.



Song Xiang (1756 – 1826)

**Preface to Taoliyuan (Plum and Peach Garden) by Li Bai in Running Script**

Hanging scroll, ink on paper

176.8 x 81 cm

FA1982.0040

Calligraphers from the Guangdong region have always been renowned for their attempts to break through traditional boundaries and establish their own artistic styles. Inspired by the pioneering Chen Xianzhang, the well-known Guangdong calligrapher of the mid-Ming dynasty who invented and personalized a new writing tool, using straw to create his own brush, Song Xiang of the early Qing dynasty continued this trend, boldly executing works with brushes he made from bamboo leaf or sugar cane. Song also followed the cursive script calligraphic styles of Li Yong of the Tang dynasty and Mi Fu of the Song dynasty. In this work, Song transcribes the poem *Preface to Taoliyuan* (Plum and Peach Garden) composed by the Tang poet Li Bai. His lines are filled with a vigorous strength and rhythm, and though Song may not necessarily have used personalized brushes to finish this work, the heroic attitude of the calligrapher is revealed through the composition and fluency of this hanging scroll.

### **3. Collection of 20th Century Painting and Calligraphy**



GAO Jianfu (1879 – 1951)

#### **Sepia**

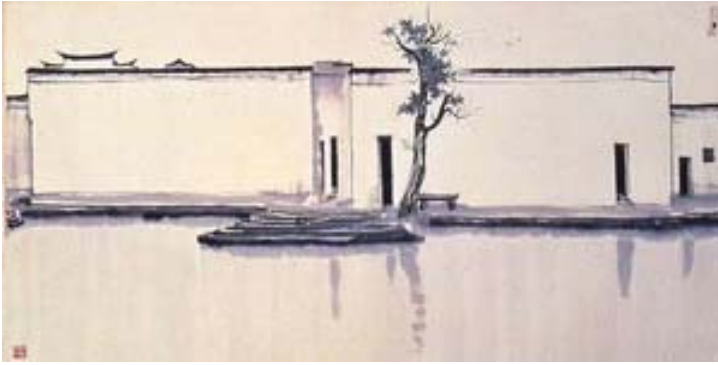
Hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper

135 x 69 cm

FA1978.026

Regarded as the founding pioneer of the Lingnan school, Gao Jianfu was renowned for his keen perception and consummate technique, which is on show here in this exceptional work of art.

Using an ink-wash technique, the artist has allowed the ink to diffuse into a nebulous mass. By ingeniously adding a few tentacles and outlines here and there, he has turned it into a vivid scene of a shoal of sepia, or cuttlefish, trying to escape capture by shooting ink into the water. And rather than painting in great detail, he has allowed the diffused ink to dominate, thus adding meaning to something merely incidental. The result is a unique and dynamic picture that uses minimal strokes to optimal effect, providing the viewer with unlimited space for imagination. The subject of the painting also demonstrates once again the revolutionary philosophy of the Lingnan school: anything – just anything – can be used in art.



Wu Guanzhong (b. 1919)

**Two Swallows**, 1981

Horizontal scroll, ink and colour on paper

68.5 x 137.4 cm

FA2002.0006

Born into a peasant family in Yixing, Jiangsu, Wu Guanzhong had an attachment to this area – where scenic canals criss-cross the land – that provided him with a constant source of inspiration. Before putting brush to paper, he would study the object and reduce its principal features to abstract elements that nonetheless perfectly represented the scenic beauty of Jiangnan.

*Two Swallows* is one of Wu's most representative works. With its simple representation of a real-life scene, it offers an excellent example of how Wu captured the attraction of the Jiangnan region. The black roof tiles, the white-washed walls, the tree and the pair of swallows in the distance are composed in a stunning harmony and simplicity. In flight, the swallows break the stillness and add movement and life to this beautiful scene. The white space, crisp lines and sparse use of geometric forms all reflect the artist's sharp eye for simple forms.



Huang Yongyu (b. 1924)

**Lotus of the *Qiushui***, 2004

Vertical scroll, ink and colour on paper

149 x 83 cm

FA2004.0003

The lotus holds a special significance for Huang Yongyu, who was born in Fenghuang County, Hunan Province. A mischievous child who was always getting into trouble, his punishment, meted out by his grandmother, was to be pushed in a small wooden basin out into the dense lotus growth deep in the lotus pond. With nothing to do in the basin, Huang Yongyu would spend his time observing what was happening around him. To this day, Huang loves painting this subject that is so reminiscent of his childhood days, and he has also taken to growing them. During the Cultural Revolution, he seized every opportunity to hide himself in lotus ponds and draw the flowers. Since the completion of his home in Beijing – the Hall of Ten Thousand Lotuses in Xuxinzhuan, Tongxian – in the summer of 1998, the man who loves the lotus and to draw them can now constantly enjoy the company of his favourite flower.

Huang Yongyu explains: “In paintings, [the lotus] has a complex form. It is quite charming. Its diverse growing environment can be associated with a variety of sentiments. The flower can be robust or delicate. There are different ways of presenting it. Therefore, it can be adapted to different modes of expression.” *Lotus of the Qiushui* was painted specially for the Hong Kong Museum of Art during the event *Huang Yongyu at 80: An Art Exhibition*, which was held at the museum in 2004/05.