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News



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Traces of the Past and Future: Fu Shen's Paintings and Calligraphy

**Asian Art Museum offers postmodern masterclass in
Chinese cultural history**



San Francisco, November 28, 2017 — Dreamy hills enshrouded in clouds, familiar poems in a twisted script, conversation caught only in snatches, a universe captured in a brushstroke. From December 5, 2017 through September 4, 2018, the Asian Art Museum invites visitors to ***Traces of the Past and Future: Fu Shen's Paintings and Calligraphy***, a postmodern masterclass in Chinese cultural history.

Spanning decades, ***Traces of the Past and Future*** is an exhibition that features 18 works in landscape painting, calligraphy and glazed ceramics by the highly regarded art historian, educator and artist Professor Fu Shen. Copying the scrolls of old masters and the handwriting of emperors, Fu slyly annotates his artworks with poetically fragmented commentary, using classical aesthetics as a springboard into his own psychology. Most of the works on view are borrowed from a private collection in Taiwan. This intimate exhibition is a rare opportunity to explore the fascinating evolution of Fu's taste and technique.

Remote view of streams and hills, in the style of Xia Gui, 1962, by Fu Shen (Chinese, b. 1937). Hand scroll; ink on paper. Collection of National Palace Museum, Taipei. © Fu Shen. Photograph courtesy of Eros Zhao. (Detail)

“There is so much history embedded in Chinese art that it’s sometimes hard to appreciate for the uninitiated,” explains Li He, Asian Art Museum associate curator of Chinese art. “By working at the intersection of landscape, calligraphy, poetry, ceramics and even memoir, Fu Shen personalizes these sometimes rarified traditions and makes them approachable and accessible.”



Fu is celebrated for bringing out the painterly, figurative qualities of calligraphy and weaving his own narrative into ethereal depictions of mountains and sky. “It’s a bit like a jazz musician riffing,” says Fan Zhang, senior associate curator of Chinese art, “drawing on melodies of the past to create art that is profoundly modern.”

Born in Shanghai in 1937, Fu moved to Taiwan in 1950, where after attending university he worked at the National Palace Museum, Taipei. Later, at Princeton University, Fu earned a doctorate in art history, and he taught at Yale and served as curator of Chinese art at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Washington, D.C. In 1994, Fu retired to Taiwan to focus on his calligraphy, though he is currently a professor at several universities and visiting scholar at the National Palace Museum, Taipei, and the Palace Museum, Beijing.

This studious, peripatetic life, which seems to mirror many of the critical events of the 20th century, finds focus and reflection in Fu’s dry commentary on his own artwork.

“*Traces of the Past and Future* represents what, for a certain generation, it means to be Chinese today,” says Asian Art Museum Director Jay Xu. “As a scholar, Fu Shen has steeped himself in ancient culture, mastered classical arts that were significant at different points during thousands of years of Chinese history, and over the course of decades of study, practice and discussion, realized his own distinct voice.”

A 20-minute film from 2017, *Fu Shen: Traces of the Brush* by Eros Zhao, accompanies the exhibition, and will have a world premiere public screening on December 10 at the museum. Fu Shen will attend, as will distinguished curators and scholars of Chinese art, including Jay Xu, Asian Art Museum; Mimi Gardner Gates, Dunhuang Foundation, San Francisco; Mike Hearn, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Kungshin Chou, National Palace Museum, Taipei; Jan Stuart, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, D.C.; Richard Barnhart, Yale University; Lothar Ledderose, University of Heidelberg; Qianshen Bai, Boston University and Marilyn Wong Gleysteen, among others.

The Asian Art Museum will be the only venue for *Traces of the Past and Future: Fu Shen's Paintings and Calligraphy*.

Exhibition Organization

Traces of the Past and Future: Fu Shen's Paintings and Calligraphy is organized by Eros Zhao in collaboration with the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. Presentation is made possible with the generous support of Yanan Xu, Amy O'Dowd, and MDSUN in Los Angeles, California.

About the Asian Art Museum

The Asian Art Museum—Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture is one of San Francisco's premier arts institutions and home to a world-renowned collection of more than 18,000 Asian art treasures from throughout Asia spanning 6,000 years of history. Through rich art experiences, centered on historic and contemporary artworks, the Asian Art Museum unlocks the past for visitors, bringing it to life while serving as a catalyst for new art, new creativity and new thinking.

Exhibition Hours: Tuesdays through Sundays from 10 AM to 5 PM. Closed Mondays.

General Museum Admission: FREE for museum members, \$15 for adults, \$10 for seniors (65+), college students with ID, and youth (13–17). FREE for children under 12 and SFUSD students with ID. General admission is FREE to all on Target First Free Sundays (the first Sunday of every month).

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