

HARVARD'S ARTHUR M. SACKLER MUSEUM PRESENTS EXHIBITION OF 20TH-CENTURY CHINESE INK PAINTINGS FROM THE COLLECTION OF CHU-TSING LI

Exhibition is the first to present an overall, comprehensive picture of the development of modern and contemporary Chinese ink painting



Liu Guosong, *Wintry Mountains Covered with Snow*, 1964. Hanging scroll; ink on fibrous paper, 85.4 x 55.8 cm. Chu-tsing Li Collection. Digital photography by Ken Howie.

CAMBRIDGE, MA (July 10, 2007)—The Harvard University Art Museums present *A Tradition Redefined: Modern and Contemporary Chinese Ink Paintings from the Chu-tsing Li Collection, 1950–2000* on view **November 3, 2007 through January 27, 2008** at the Arthur M. Sackler Museum. This traveling exhibition of 63 works, drawn entirely from the collection of Chu-tsing Li—the finest and most comprehensive collection of its kind in the West—is the first to survey Chinese ink paintings produced during the second half of the 20th century. In examining this five-decade period, the exhibition demonstrates the dramatic evolution of Chinese ink painting in recent times and lays a foundation for understanding the international-style work that is being created in China today. In addition, the exhibition illustrates

parallel lines of development in different geographical areas by artists active in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and abroad, thereby bringing to light differences in style and technique from one area to another. Many of these paintings have not previously been exhibited in the West.

Robert D. Mowry, Alan J. Dworsky Curator of Chinese Art, Harvard University Art Museums, co-curated the exhibition with Janet Baker, Curator of Asian Art, Phoenix Art Museum; and Claudia Brown, Professor of Art History, Herberger College of the Arts, Arizona State University, and Research Curator for Asian Art, Phoenix Art Museum. All three curators did

their graduate work in Chinese painting at the University of Kansas, studying with Chu-ting Li. “Our research on Professor Li’s collection of modern and contemporary Chinese ink paintings provides an unprecedented view of the new artistic directions that Chinese ink painters explored between 1950 and 2000,” said Mowry. “Since the majority of the works in the Li collection were acquired directly from the artists, the authenticity of the paintings is above question; thus, this exhibition, and particularly its catalogue, will serve as a standard by which authenticity can be measured.”

A Tradition Redefined features works by artists who have reconsidered numerous aspects of classical Chinese painting and who have in various ways synthesized elements of Western modernism with Chinese abstraction. In the early 20th century China experienced a drive to modernize; as part of that phenomenon, young Chinese painters, tired of the sanctioned styles and codified brushwork of their predecessors, eagerly began to explore Western styles. These experiments of China’s first generation of modern artists were cut short by evolving historical circumstances including Japanese invasions from the 1930s through World War II, the Chinese Civil War (1927–50), and the rise of competing governments in Beijing and Taipei. Mainland China’s postwar focus on reshaping its economy, government, and society in the Communist model meant that artists were actively discouraged from exploring foreign artistic styles. Artists working in Taiwan and Hong Kong, by contrast, were free to experiment with foreign idioms, so that painting styles followed different lines of development from one geographical area to another. Contemporary Chinese artists continue to struggle with a balance of traditional and international styles, all the while maintaining a reflection of their own inner personality and continuing the powerful legacy of their Chinese ancestry.

The exhibition at the Sackler Museum includes 51 paintings grouped into five categories: *Tradition Uprooted* includes works by established artists who were displaced following the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. *Tradition Abstracted* features artists active in Taiwan after 1949 who sought to combine Western modernist elements with traditional Chinese abstraction. *Tradition Embraced* refers to artists working outside mainland China who actively sought to perpetuate and expand traditional Chinese ink painting styles. *Tradition Reasserted* groups the work of those artists from the PRC who adapted their styles

and subject matter to values of the Communist republic but reasserted aspects of traditional painting. *Tradition Transcended* presents paintings by artists whose idiosyncratic works are beyond categorization—individualist rather than either strictly modernist or traditionalist.

A Tradition Redefined carries forward the work begun with last year's exhibition and brochure *The New Chinese Landscape: Recent Acquisitions* (Aug. 12–Nov. 12, 2006) and continues to commemorate forty years of growing awareness in this country of modern and contemporary Chinese painting. *The New Chinese Landscape* presented works by five living artists, and borrowed its title from the first exhibition of contemporary Chinese painting to tour the United States (1966–68), which was organized by Chu-ting Li and Thomas Lawton, an American scholar of Chinese art.

“The research and presentation of this exhibition continue to underscore the Art Museum's active involvement in Asian art, both classical and modern,” said Thomas W. Lentz, Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard University Art Museums. “We thank Chu-ting Li for his loan of these paintings—for his generosity and his belief in our teaching and research missions—and are pleased to offer this exhibition and catalogue in his honor.”

Chu-ting Li

Professor Chu-ting Li is one of the pioneers in the study of modern and contemporary Chinese ink paintings. His interest in art began while he was studying for his BA in English literature at Nanjing University in the early and mid-1940s. He befriended Michael Sullivan, a young architect from Cambridge University who taught English at Nanjing University but who also offered an introductory course in Western art history. Sullivan and Li shared many of the same interests, and the two attended exhibitions and visited with artists, becoming friends; through this association, Chu-ting Li became interested in art history and, almost by coincidence began his first contacts with modern and contemporary art.

Li came to the United States in 1947; after completing his MA in English literature at the University of Iowa in two years, he switched to their art department to study northern Baroque painting. In 1955 Li completed his PhD at Iowa, where he then taught classes in Baroque

painting and was urged to teach modern and Asian art as well. Preparation for these new courses awakened a deep interest in both fields, and he subsequently immersed himself in the history of Chinese painting. Best known for his studies of classical Chinese paintings, particularly paintings of the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), he was also developing a second specialty in modern and contemporary Chinese painting by visiting artists and studying their work first-hand. At this time, Li began to acquire contemporary works and to form lifelong friendships with artists.

After ten years of teaching at Iowa, Li in 1966 moved to the University of Kansas, Lawrence, where he established a doctoral program in Chinese art. He was Judith Harris Murphy Distinguished Professor of Art History until his retirement in 1990. In 1975 he offered the first course in modern Chinese art taught in the West—perhaps the first course in this subject taught anywhere; he wrote most of his best-known works on classical Chinese paintings and on modern and contemporary Chinese art while at Kansas.

As an art historian well-trained in both Eastern and Western art, a specialist in Chinese painting, and an acclaimed author of scholarly works on modern Chinese painting, Li has been in a perfect position to assemble a collection of modern and contemporary Chinese ink paintings. His collection ranks among the finest and most comprehensive in the West; though wide ranging, it is particularly strong in works created during the second half of the 20th century.

Featured Works

The majority of the works in the Chu-tsing Li collection were acquired directly from the artists who created them, and many of the paintings include personalized dedications to Professor Li and his wife Yao-wen Li. Liu Guosong, a pioneering artist who founded the Fifth Moon Group, the first modern painters' society in Taiwan, features prominently in *A Tradition Redefined* with five works, including the abstract ink scroll *Wintry Mountains Covered with Snow* (1964), which was exhibited this past spring in a retrospective show of Liu's paintings at the Palace Museum, Beijing, and the dramatic painting with collage *High Noon* (1969). Zhao Shaoang, a renowned painter, poet, and calligrapher, is represented by an ink and color horizontal scroll entitled *Baoguo Temple on Mount Emei* (1959), which depicts a Buddhist pilgrimage

destination on one of China's sacred mountains. Other important works include self-taught Yu Chengyao's hanging scrolls of complex landscapes *Deep Ravine*, *Rushing Torrent* (early 1960s) and *Zephyr at Huangshi* (1988); Lu Yanshao's political work *Electric Power Station in a Mountain Village* (1976); the ink and color scrolls *Clearing after Snow* (1983) and *Rugged Hills of North America* (1989) by Wan Qingli, a painter, connoisseur, teacher, and respected scholar of Chinese painting; and Chen Qikuan's playful *Monkeys* (probably 1989). Please also refer to the enclosed illustrated list of selected works. A small, companion exhibition, *Downtime*, which is also on view through January 27 in the Sackler's second-floor Asian galleries, features four contemporary ink paintings from the Sackler's permanent collection.

Credits

A Tradition Redefined is co-organized by Phoenix Art Museum and the Harvard University Art Museums. Phoenix has received generous support for the exhibition from the David Woods Kemper Memorial Foundation and the Blakemore Foundation. For its part, Harvard has received generous support for the exhibition and catalogue from the Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne and the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, and from Joel and Lisa Alvord, Winnie and Michael Feng, Dorothy Tapper Goldman, the family of Earle Jen-Shyong Ho, James M. Kemper, Jr., Marilyn J. Stokstad, Jacqueline B. and Alan L. Stuart, Martha Sutherland and Barnaby Conrad III, and Gilbert and Stephanie Zuellig.

Catalogue

A fully-illustrated catalogue accompanies the exhibition and includes essays by the exhibition's three co-curators: Robert D. Mowry, Janet Baker, and Claudia Brown, as well as by artist and independent scholar, Arnold Chang. Chun-yi Lee, ink-painter and graduate student in the history of Chinese art at Arizona State University, Tempe; and Melissa Moy, assistant curator of Chinese art, Harvard University Art Museums, also made important contributions to the catalogue. In addition to a color illustration of each work in the exhibition, photographic details of signatures and impressed seals are reproduced at actual size along with transcriptions of the seals and English translations of inscriptions. A brief biography of each artist represented in the exhibition is also included. The catalogue is published by the Harvard University Art Museums and distributed by Yale University Press.

Dates

The exhibition premieres at the Harvard University Art Museums, from November 3, 2007 through January 27, 2008, after which it will travel to Phoenix Art Museum, where it will be on view June 28 through September 14, 2008. Other venues include the Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, FL (October 11, 2008 through January 4, 2009), and the Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, Lawrence (February 11 through May 24, 2009).

Exhibition Programming

Gallery Talk

Arthur M. Sackler Museum
485 Broadway, Cambridge, MA
Free admission

Saturday, December 15, 11:00 a.m.

Melissa Moy, assistant curator of Chinese art

M. Victor Leventritt Symposium

Chinese Painting: The Twentieth Century and Beyond

November 2–3, 2007

Arthur M. Sackler Museum, lecture hall

485 Broadway, Cambridge, MA

Free and open to the public

Exhibition opening, lecture, and reception: Friday, November 2

5:00 p.m., preview of the exhibition

6:00–7:00 p.m., special remarks, Marilyn J. Stokstad, University of Kansas, Lawrence;
and keynote lecture, Claudia Brown, Arizona State University, Tempe

6:30–8:00 p.m., reception

Symposium: Saturday, November 3

9:00 a.m., coffee

9:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., welcome and symposium

Presented in conjunction with *A Tradition Redefined: Modern and Contemporary Chinese Ink Paintings from the Chu-tsing Li Collection, 1950-2000*, this symposium will examine pivotal points in the development of Chinese painting over the last 100 years, with a special focus on the last half of the century.

Speakers include: Julia F. Andrews, Ohio State University, Columbus; Arnold Chang, artist and independent scholar, New York; Melissa Chiu, Asia Society Museum, New York; William C. Kirby, Harvard University; Chu-tsing Li, University of Kansas, Lawrence; John M. Rosenfield, Harvard University; and Chüan-ying Grace Yen, Academia Sinica, Taipei.

The Harvard University Art Museums

The Harvard University Art Museums are one of the world's leading arts institutions, comprising the Fogg Art Museum, Busch-Reisinger Museum, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Straus Center for Conservation, Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, HUAM Archives, and the U.S. headquarters for the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis.

The Harvard University Art Museums are distinguished by the range and depth of their collections, their groundbreaking exhibitions, and the original research of their staff. As an integral part of the Harvard community, the three art museums and four research centers serve as resources for all students, adding a special dimension to their areas of study. The public is welcome to experience the collections and exhibitions as well as to enjoy lectures, symposia, and other programs.

For more than a century, the Harvard University Art Museums have been the nation's premier training ground for museum professionals and scholars and are renowned for their role in the development of the discipline of art history in this country.

Location and Hours

The Fogg Art Museum and the Busch-Reisinger Museum are located at 32 Quincy Street, Cambridge. Adjacent to them is the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, located at 485 Broadway. Each museum is a short walk through Harvard Yard from the Harvard Square MBTA station.

Hours: **Monday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.; Sunday 1:00–5:00 p.m.;** closed on national holidays.

General admission is \$9; \$7 for senior citizens; and \$6 for students. Paid admission includes entrance to all three Art Museums, including study rooms, public tours, and gallery talks.

Admission is free for Harvard University ID holders, Members of the Art Museums, Cambridge Public Library cardholders, and visitors under 18 years of age. Admission is free to all on Saturdays before noon. More detailed information is available at 617-495-9400 or on the Internet at www.artmuseums.harvard.edu.

The Harvard University Art Museums receive support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

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For more information about this exhibition or the Harvard University Art Museums, please contact:

Jennifer Aubin, Public Relations Coordinator
Harvard University Art Museums
tel 617-496-5331; fax 617-496-9762
jennifer_aubin@harvard.edu

Elizabeth Chapman
Resnicow Schroeder Associates
tel 212-671-5159
echapman@resnicowschroeder.com