Labels in order of exhibits (going clockwise, starting from the northeast entrance of the Mayer gallery)

(Main introductory label):

The Hall of Self Reliance:
Chinese Painting and Calligraphy from the Simon and Rosemary Chen Collection

This exhibition introduces a collection of Chinese art recently donated to the Chazen by Madison residents Simon and Rosemary Chen and members of their family. Most of the works are twentieth-century paintings and calligraphy done in traditional styles and media, with a few earlier pieces. The collection was started by Simon's father, Hoshien Tchen (Chen Hexian, 1893–1988), who worked at the Field Museum in Chicago after emigrating from China. The name of the collection, "Hall of Self Reliance" (*Qiu Ji Tang*), comes from a treasured nineteenth-century heirloom, Zhao Zhiqian's inscription of the two large characters, *qiu ji* (literally, "seek within oneself"), displayed in the case at the center of the opposite wall. Another older work, *Fish, Flowers, and Rocks*, a late seventeenth-century painting by Zhu Da (Bada Shanren), is on view upstairs in Gallery VIII, along with additional twentieth-century scrolls.

In China, it is often said that writing and painting originated together, and that a scholar naturally acquires the ability to paint from writing with a brush. While professional painters are thought to labor over realistic depictions (*xie sheng*), scholar-artists can simply "write the idea" (*xie yi*) using graphic conventions to convey meaning. The paintings shown here represent various styles and subjects, including landscapes, flowers, figures, and animals. Many works are inscribed with lines of poetry or a dedication to the recipient, evoking an amateur tradition in which artists freely gave works to their friends.

Calligraphy is considered the highest form of visual art in China. Chinese writing has evolved many different scripts to represent roughly the same set of characters (which correspond to units of meaning, unlike phonetic symbols in the roman alphabet). The scripts range from the deliberate and somewhat pictorial "oracle-bone" and "seal" scripts of antiquity to the more quickly written and abstract "regular," "running," and "cursive" scripts of recent centuries. A calligrapher may choose any one of these to suit the purpose or context of the writing.

In the early twentieth century, Chinese painters who studied in Japan and Europe brought back foreign styles and subjects that challenged traditional ink painting. Some artists painted more forcefully in Chinese media by introducing realistic or atmospheric techniques they had learned abroad. Others revitalized ink painting by studying ancient masterworks to recover their methods. After the 1911 revolution and founding of the Republic, virtually everyone agreed that the visual arts should be central to building a modern nation. Government-sponsored exhibitions fostered national identity and figured in international diplomacy. Many prominent political figures valued aesthetic cultivation and could express themselves in beautiful calligraphy.

Soon after the People's Republic was founded in 1949 in mainland China, artists came under Communist Party direction, following Mao Zedong's dictum that art should serve the revolution. Many were later denounced or sent to the countryside during purges and political movements, such as the Cultural Revolution of 1966–76. After Mao's death in 1976, restrictions on artistic expression gradually loosened, although the control structure nominally remains in place. Artists in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and foreign countries were unaffected by policies on the mainland.

While planning this inaugural exhibition of the Chen collection, we have been able to give students in two upper-level Art History courses the chance to examine original artworks while studying the complex

history of recent Chinese art. As the Chazen expands its holdings of Asian art, the Chen collection will become an important part of future gallery displays. Thus, students and general visitors alike may continue to enjoy and learn from these visually intriguing and culturally meaningful works.

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Yu Zhiding (attributed)
Chinese, 1647–1713
A Ming Emperor on Horseback
Ink and color on paper
Gift of Simon and Rosemary Chen and family, 1.2007

The slip pasted along the edge of this unusual painting identifies it as Yu Zhiding's copy, dated 1706, of a portrait of the Ming dynasty's Yongle emperor (r. 1403–24) by Gong Yong (fl. late 14th–early 15th c.). However, the depiction differs markedly from formal portraits of that emperor in the National Palace Museum, Taiwan. Chinese rulers were not portrayed as isolated figures on horseback until the mid-eighteenth century, when Jesuit missionary artists at the Qing court introduced this European form. This painting may reproduce only a portion of an original composition representing an imperial pleasure excursion or hunting party.

The use of bright blue pigment for the sky is rare in Chinese painting and usually associated with depictions of auspicious phenomena or deities. The Jesuit painters at the Qing court helped expand the function of this vivid color. However, the fairly realistic modeling of flesh tones on the man's face was a European technique that Chinese portraitists had adopted by the early seventeenth-century. The modified chiaroscuro contrasts with the more linear treatment of costume and setting.

Yu Zhiding was a central figure in developing a genre of portraiture in which a realistic-looking sitter was placed amid possessions and landscape that reflected his interests or worldly attainments. Although a southerner from Yangzhou, Yu spent most of his career in the Qing capital at Beijing, combining a minor court appointment as an officer of protocol with a flourishing practice of privately commissioned portraiture. For certain patrons he also copied ancient paintings, particularly works from the Song dynasty (960–1279).

Very little is known of Gong Yong, to whom the label attributes the original portrait. Standard later sources state that he was called to court service after the Yongle emperor moved the Ming capital from Nanjing to Beijing in the early fifteenth century.

Luo Pin
Chinese, 1733–1799
Two Buddhist Immortals, Hanshan and Shide, from a stone erected in 1799
Rubbing, ink on paper
Gift of Simon and Rosemary Chen and Family, 2005.64.3

According to some legends, Hanshan ("Cold Mountain") was an eighth- to ninth-century poet who lived austerely in the mountains of southeastern China, and Shide ("Picked Up") was an orphan and kitchen servant in a Buddhist monastery. Long joined in popular lore as master and apprentice, or sometimes as older and younger brother, the two eccentrics and their unconventional behavior signify freedom from the cares of the world. They were often depicted, unkempt and laughing, in the rough and abbreviated brushwork associated with Chan (Jap., Zen) Buddhism in China and Japan.

This rubbing comes from a stone tablet erected in the Hanshan Temple just west of Suzhou, where Hanshan and Shide were said to have lived for a time. The stone was carved in the late eighteenth century to reproduce a painting by Luo Pin, an acclaimed professional artist and Chan Buddhist monk in nearby Yangzhou. Believed to be one of Luo's early works, the undated painting is now in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City.

Luo Pin's inscription begins by transcribing a famous poem allegedly composed by Hanshan and Shide to express their carefree outlook, and he ends by commenting that Hanshan and Shide were also avatars of the *bodhisattvas* (attendants of the Buddha) Samantabhadra and Manjusri. The slightly archaic style of Luo's regular-script calligraphy is influenced by that of Zheng Xie (see the rubbing in the adjacent table case). At lower left is a note stating that the stone was carved by one Tang Renzhai of Suzhou.

Chang Daichien (Zhang Daqian; original name Zhang Yuan)
Chinese, 1899–1983

Landscape, Done in the Eight Virtues Garden, 1963
Dedicated by the artist to Hoshien Tchen
Ink and color on paper
Gift of Drs. Margaret T. Chen and Clinton Young, 2005.64.57

Old Plum Tree and Blossoms, 1946
Folding fan mounted flat, ink and slight color on paper
Lent by Simon and Rosemary Chen, IR2007.4.4

Calligraphic Inscription, Text of a poem by Du Fu, 1946
Folding fan mounted flat, ink on paper
Lent by Simon and Rosemary Chen, IR2007.4.5

Well-known from his worldwide travels and exhibitions, Chang Dai-chien (his preferred spelling) was an ambitious and productive artist—and at times a notorious forger. A master of self-promotion, he made the twentieth-century revival of traditional Chinese painting his mission and saw himself as the modern-day counterpart of Dong Qichang (1555–1636). This enormously influential official, calligrapher, painter, and theorist inspired the formation of the "orthodox" school, which dominated landscape painting from the late seventeenth century onward. Although Chang Dai-chien left the mainland after 1949, never to return, he continued working from within China's own traditions to reinvigorate Chinese painting.

Starting from childhood in Sichuan and continuing in Shanghai and Japan, Chang Dai-chien gained exceptionally broad and thorough artistic training. He mastered not only the "orthodox" canon of earlier paintings and calligraphy, but also the styles of several innovative seventeenth- and eighteenth-century painters and calligraphers. In the early 1940s, Chang spent two years copying early Buddhist paintings at

the Dunhuang caves in northwest China, a little-known repository of religious art that represented long-forgotten traditions of Chinese painting. The breadth of his artistic studies enabled Chang to work simultaneously in many traditional styles and genres, and to claim ancient precedents for his own innovations.

The two paintings on display here represent some of the most satisfying combinations of Chang's own ideas with motifs inspired by his study of seventeenth-century masters. The delicate white flowers blooming on a gnarled old branch in *Old Plum Tree and Blossoms* are conventional symbols of renewal and the New Year, but Chang refreshes the familiar motif by alluding to Chen Hongshou (1598–1652), whose textural contrasts and expressive distortions often verged on the grotesque. *Landscape, Done in the Eight Virtues Garden* evokes the lyrical style of Shitao (1642–1707), an individualist master who was much admired in the early twentieth century, and to whom Chang devoted extensive study.

Painted in an appealing mixture of inktones and pale color washes, Chang's *Landscape* shows two gentlemen-wanderers gazing at a distant peak from a promontory, loosely based on Shitao's *Waterfall on Mount Lu*. However, Chang did the painting in Brazil, where he lived from 1954 to 1968. He built a home near Sao Paolo and named it the Garden of Eight Virtues (*Badeyuan*) after the persimmon trees he planted there. (Chang said that the persimmon's eight good qualities were longevity, abundant shade, no birds' nests, no insects, beauty after a frost, delicious fruits, leaves suitable for practicing calligraphy, and leaves also good for brewing a tonic to cure a stomachache.)

Chang's idiosyncratic calligraphy exhibits energetic thrusting strokes, and the characters often have a pronounced tilt, making his style easy to recognize. His dedicatory inscription on *Landscape*, written predominantly in running script, mixes in archaic forms of common characters, such as those giving the date at the top of the rightmost line. On the fan *Old Plum Tree and Blossoms*, he transcribed a lyric-poem (*ci*) on plum blossoms by the minor Song poet Zhao Yifu (1189–1256), perfectly balancing the pictorial motifs with the cursive script. The other fan, a companion piece written just weeks later, bears Chang's running-script transcription of a poem by Du Fu (712–770) about seeing early plum blossoms in Sichuan.

Mi Nanyang
Chinese, b. 1946
Calligraphic Inscription, Bosom Friends, before 1989
Hanging scroll, ink on paper
Gift of Simon and Rosemary Chen and Family, 2005.64.36

A contemporary calligrapher in Beijing, Mi Nanyang traces his ancestry to Mi Fu (1051–1107), a great Song calligrapher, connoisseur, and art critic who promoted the scholar-amateur aesthetic. But Mi Fu would not have been familiar with the script that Mi Nanyang chose here, called oracle-bone script (*jiagu wen*), which originally was used to record divinations during the thirteenth to eleventh centuries BCE. Discovered only at the end of the nineteenth century, oracle inscriptions were incised onto the hard surfaces of ox scapulae (shoulder bones) and tortoise plastrons (underside shells). Twentieth-century calligraphers appreciated the pictorial quality of the scratchy, angular characters and promptly adapted them for brush writing. Because it requires special training to read oracle-bone script, Mi Nanyang provided a running-script translation in smaller characters before his signature.

The text that Mi chose for this hanging scroll is a well-known couplet from Wang Bo's (650–676) farewell poem, "Seeing Off Magistrate Du, Departing for Office in Shuchuan" (*Song Du Shaofu zhi ren*

Shuchuan):

> If there is someone in the world who understands you,
> Then even at the ends of the earth, it is as though he is nearby

Wu Jingheng (later known as Wu Zhihui)
Chinese, 1864–1953
Calligraphic Inscription in Large Seal Script, Wedding Congratulations, 1925
Dedicated by the artist to Hoshien Tchen and Linsie Chao
Ink on red paper
Lent by Simon and Rosemary Chen, IR2007.4.2

This monumental inscription celebrates the marriage of Hoshien Tchen (Chen Hexian) to Linsie Chao (Zhao Lingxian) in 1925. Because red is the preferred color for auspicious occasions, Wu Jingheng used a reddish sheet of paper decorated with speckles of gold foil. His archaic seal script is based on the distinctly pictorial characters that were cast into ancient ritual bronzes. To imitate the rounded appearance of lines incised in soft clay molds and transferred to metal in the casting process, Wu kept his flexible brushtip in the center of each stroke, producing deliberate and visually powerful characters. As the faint grid beneath the text shows, each one occupies the same amount of space, no matter how many individual strokes it contains. Such features make seal script ideally suited for celebratory or commemorative writings that are intended for display.

A prominent anarchist, revolutionary, reformer, and educator, Wu Jingheng was a passionate advocate of Chinese language reform to encourage the spread of literacy. In 1913 Wu directed an important conference on unifying the spoken language and adopting phonetic symbols to replace written characters. Closely associated with Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925), Cai Yuanpei (1868–1940), and Li Shizeng (1881–1973), Wu joined the Central Supervisory Committee of the Nationalist Party in 1924 and played an important role in ending the party's alliance with the Communists against the warlords. As one of the "Nationalist Elders," he is better known by the name Wu Zhihui.

Along with Li Shizeng, Wu was instrumental in establishing the "Frugal Scholar" work-study program that enabled Hoshien Tchen and Xiao Yu (included in this exhibition) to study in Paris. From 1921 to1923, Wu directed the newly founded Institut Franco-Chinois in Lyon. After returning to China, he helped to inventory the collections of the Beijing imperial palace in 1924, leading to the opening of the Palace Museum in 1925. It was just at this time that he wrote the congratulatory inscription for Hoshien Tchen. The text reads:

> Harmonious cries resound in the splendid residence
> Your glory spreads to the upper school.

At left, a note in smaller regular script expresses congratulations on the union of the Zhao and Chen families.

Gao Qifeng
Chinese, 1889–1933
Tiger Sitting Under the Full Moon

Ink and color on silk
Gift of Victor T. Chen, 2005.64.58

Gao Qifeng and his older brother Gao Jianfu (1878–1951) represent the pioneering generation of the Lingnan School, which takes its name from their home in the southern province of Guangdong. Both received their initial training in traditional painting methods from Ju Lian (1828–1904), a Cantonese artist specializing in colorful bird and flower paintings. Drawn into the movement to revitalize Chinese painting for the modern age, the Gao brothers went to Japan in the early 1900s to study techniques to enhance realism, such as chiaroscuro modeling and atmospheric effects. There they also mastered the hybrid Nihonga style, which combined Japanese and European elements and treated a wider range of subjects than those depicted in Chinese paintings.

Although tigers occasionally appear in earlier Chinese paintings, Gao Qifeng made them a major theme of his artistic practice, as did his contemporary Zhang Shanzi (see nearby hanging scroll). However, the two painters approached the subject quite differently. Gao typically positioned a single powerful beast close to the picture plane, contrasting its portrait-like size and detail with an atmospheric setting. Zhang's tigers tend to be smaller and more stylized, and the landscape background is more fully depicted.

Here a tiger rests in a misty grove of reeds under the full moon, which is defined by bare silk left in reserve by the pale inkwash around it. Alerted to something outside the picture frame, the beast raises its head and gazes intently, ears cocked. Over a subtly modeled orange wash that depicts the tiger's furry coat, calligraphic inklines suggest its stripes, and tiny strokes of white fill out its fine hairs and whiskers. Gao's careful observation and painstaking detail vividly capture a realistic moment.

The undated painting is signed simply "Qifeng," but Gao's accompanying seal bears an unusual legend, *Qifeng bu si*, which may be translated as "Qifeng is not dead," "Qifeng is not dying," or even "Qifeng will not die" (Chinese verb tenses are often ambiguous). However, the artist died of tuberculosis when he was only forty-three.

Au Honien (Ou Haonian)
Chinese, b. 1935
Striding Tiger, datable to 1974
Dedicated by the artist to Simon Chen
Ink and color on paper
Gift of Simon and Rosemary Chen and Family, 2005.64.34

Au Ho-nien (his preferred spelling) is considered the leading master of the third generation of the Lingnan School, which combined traditional Chinese painting methods with foreign techniques of shading, perspective, and atmosphere. After moving from Guangdong to Hong Kong in 1952, Au studied painting under Zhao Shao'ang (1905–1998), the most prominent disciple of the Lingnan founder Gao Jianfu (1878–1951). In 1968, Au moved to Taiwan and became professor of art at Chinese Culture University (*Zhongguo wenhua daxue*), while building his international reputation by participating in exhibitions worldwide.

Au Ho-nien's tiger may be compared with the adjacent example by Gao Qifeng. Both tigers are portrayed in a fairly realistic manner using similar techniques, but Au's painting shows the beast roaring ferociously and striding through an ambiguous landscape. Loosely defined by gestural brushwork of varying tones

and textures, the setting is an exuberant display of inkplay, more abstract than Gao's atmospheric scene.

Although no date is written on the work itself, Au Ho-nien painted it on commission for Simon Chen in 1974, a year of the tiger.

Zhang Shanzi (original name Zhang Ze)
Chinese, 1882–1940
Three Tigers in Landscape, 1934
Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper
Lent by Simon and Rosemary Chen, IR2007.4.1.2

Best known for his many depictions of tigers, Zhang Shanzi first learned to paint from his mother, Zeng Youzhen (1860–1936), an accomplished artist of flower painting. Much older than his more famous brother, Chang Dai-chien, Zhang Shanzi studied economics and painting in Japan from 1901–1907, where he joined Sun Yat-sen's anti-Qing revolutionary movement. While in Japan he also developed great admiration for the paintings of Shitao (1642–1707), whose characteristic use of pale vegetable colors and varied tones of ink is evoked in Zhang's landscape here.

Compared with his rather freehand treatment of the landscape setting, Zhang's depiction of the three tigers is more painstaking and naturalistic, showing well-observed anatomy and realistic foreshortening. During the mid-1930s, when he did this painting, Zhang kept a tiger as a pet and used the nickname "Mad About Tigers" (*Huchi*). According to his inscription, he painted this work at the Summer Palace in Beijing, suggesting that he was so familiar with tigers that he could paint them without a model.

After the Japanese invaded China in 1937, Zhang Shanzi painted tigers (and sometimes lions) as patriotic symbols of a powerful China. While visiting the United States in 1940, he was invited to the White House by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, to whom he presented *China Roars*, a massive painting of ferocious tigers dashing forward. The work may have inspired the nickname "Flying Tigers," used by the American air squadron who fought in southwest China under Claire Chennault.

The tiger also is one of the twelve animals of the Chinese zodiac, and every twelfth year is designated a year of the tiger. This painting was given to Simon Chen by his sister because he was born in a year of the tiger. In 1998, the most recent year of the tiger, the Beijing government issued a series of commemorative coins based on Zhang Shanzi's tiger paintings.

Xiao Yu (Siao Yü)
Chinese, 1893–1975

Couplet in Cursive Calligraphy, before 1960
Pair of small hanging scrolls, ink on paper
Gift of Vivian T. Chen, 2005.64.62.1–2

Flowering Old Plum, 1955 or earlier
Dedicated by the artist to Hoshien Tchen for his son Simon

Ink and color on paper
Gift of Simon and Rosemary Chen and Family, 2005.64.21

Xiao Yu grew up in the Changsha area and was a school friend of Mao Zedong, who later became the leader of the Chinese Communist Party. More attracted to libertarian ideals, Xiao joined the Republican government's "Frugal Scholar" work-study program to study in France. In Paris, he began his lifelong friendship with Hoshien Tchen, the recipient of works that are exhibited here. After Xiao returned to China, he served in educational or arts-related posts under the Republic. When the Communists gained control of the mainland, he went abroad again and made his living as a Chinese teacher in France, Switzerland, and Uruguay. In Montevideo he also managed the Sino-International Library Collection, consisting of a large number of old books and artworks sent there by Li Shizeng (1881–1973) to protect them from confiscation by the People's Republic.

As an artist, Xiao Yu was the quintessential scholar-amateur, whose painting techniques were based on training in calligraphy. *Flowering Old Plum* represents a favorite subject of amateur painters, because the elements of a plum tree were easily reduced to graphic conventions that could be "written" like characters. Here, the formulaic outlines of individual blossoms are enlivened by Xiao's addition of red pigment to the normally monochrome subject. Xiao's inscription, carefully integrated into the composition, recounts how Hoshien Tchen had written him in Montevideo to request a painting of red plum blossoms for his eldest son. Xiao did not make a new painting but inscribed one he had done earlier, commenting that the red flowers resembled red beans, which symbolize "thinking of each other."

Next to *Flowering Old Plum* are two narrow hanging scrolls that form a couplet and are meant for display as a pair (called *duilian*). Displaying his facility as a calligrapher, Xiao Yu wrote the main text in large running script, whose bold and sweeping strokes fluctuate dramatically in thickness. It reads:

> In the hundred years of man's life, leisure is hard to obtain,
> Best friends in the world become even closer as they age.

In smaller script, Xiao explains that he had come upon this quotation some fifty years previously and admired it, but only now was writing it for a friend. However, he did not believe that either of them needed to worry about obtaining leisure, because both were happily occupied with work that they enjoyed. And, it was better to be busy than idle.

Huang Junbi (Huang Chün-pi)
Chinese, 1898–1991
A Bend in the Clear Stream, 1966
Dedicated by the artist to Hoshien Tchen and Linsie Chao
ink and color on paper
Gift of Vivian T. Chen, 2005.64.64

Beneath a misty mountain range, a stream zigzags through autumnal trees and past a secluded dwelling. Although the peaceful scene evokes traditional Chinese landscapes that portray the humble huts of hermits in the countryside, Huang Junbi painted this work while visiting New York. The first of his two inscriptions, at right, gives the title and date, an autumn day in 1966. His second note, written in Chicago, dedicates the picture to Hoshien Tchen and his wife Linsie. The gift was in appreciation for Tchen's help arranging Huang's trip to the United States to exhibit his work at the Field Museum in Chicago and at St.

John's University in New York.

Originally from Guangzhou (Canton), Huang Junbi learned to paint from Li Yaoping (1880–1938), who encouraged him to master a variety of traditional methods by copying the works of esteemed earlier painters. After becoming an art-teacher himself, Huang taught first in Guangzhou, then in Nanjing and Chongqing, China's wartime capital. From 1949 to 1971, Huang headed the Art Department at Taiwan Normal University (*Taiwan Shifan daxue*), where he trained many leading members of the Taipei art scene. He also personally instructed Soong Mei-ling (Mme. Chiang Kai-shek), who became an accomplished artist.

Throughout his life, Huang Junbi strongly advocated using traditional media and approaches to landscape painting. Like the influential seventeenth-century master Dong Qichang, Huang placed equal emphasis on studying the works of great artists and experiencing the beauty and power of nature. Among Huang's favorite models were the late seventeenth-century monk-painters Kuncan (1612–1673) and Shitao (1642–1707), from whom he learned to blend dry brushstrokes with pale color washes in his own compositions. In his later years, he made trips to several continents to study impressive scenery, especially waterfalls, supplementing what he had seen during wartime travels in western China.

Au Honien (Ou Haonian)
Chinese, b. 1935
Returning from Herding, 1974
Ink and color on paper
Gift of Simon and Rosemary Chen and Family, 2005.64.33

Like his *Striding Tiger* (included elsewhere in this exhibition), Au Ho-nien's *Returning from Herding* juxtaposes gestural brushstrokes with the pale washes that are characteristic of the southern Lingnan School. Here he has added a poem to complement his painting, which depicts a bucolic scene of herdboys tending water-buffaloes at a stream beneath the willows. The combination of poetry, calligraphy, and painting all by the same artist evokes the scholar-amateur ideal of achieving "three perfections" in a single work.

Although the Lingnan School originated as a modernizing movement in the early twentieth century, after the Communist revolution of 1949, its artists became more closely identified with the preservation of traditional Chinese painting. By the 1950s, when Au Ho-nien began studying in Hong Kong with the second-generation Lingnan master Zhao Shao'ang (1905–1998), Lingnan painters were more likely to turn to time-honored themes than to experiment with contemporary subject-matter. However, the atmospheric washes introduced by the school's founders, Gao Jianfu (1878–1951) and Gao Qifeng (included elsewhere in this exhibition), remained an identifying feature of the Lingnan style.

Au Ho-nien has written that an artist must guide the viewer's eye to the center of interest in the composition. Here, the structural forces within the scene direct attention to the lower center, where a herdboy rides a water-buffalo trailed by a calf. Another water-buffalo looks up from the water, and a second herdboy watches from his perch on the bent trunk of a willow. Although inspired by earlier depictions of herdboys and water-buffalo, which were popular in the Southern Song period (1127–1279), Au has created a fresh and charming variation on the time-honored theme.

Gao Yihong (original name Gao Chongyao)
Chinese, 19081982
Peonies Blooming in Luoyang during the Third Lunar Month, 1972
Dedicated by the artist to Simon and Rosemary Chen
Ink and color on paper
Gift of Vivian T. Chen, 2005.64.70

For many centuries, poets and painters have celebrated the fragrant peonies of Luoyang, the ancient capital of several dynasties, located in modern Henan province. Peonies have long been associated with the aristocracy and their depiction considered auspicious for advancing in social position. The luxuriant spring blooms have also provided a popular subject for paintings on seasonal themes.

Rather than depicting the peonies and rocks with minute naturalistic detail, Gao Yihong's calligraphic techniques infuse his painting with energy and vitality, achieving self-expression as well as representation. Disciplined by lifelong study of various scripts and styles, his brushwork creates harmony between painted forms and inscriptions. Here, his running-script text echoes the wiry lines that form the veins of the subtly colored peony leaves. Artists and critics who advocate the ideals of scholar-amateur painting often discuss pictorial forms with the vocabulary of calligraphy.

Gao Yihong grew up near Hangzhou and was a member of the prestigious Xiling Painting and Calligraphy Research Society, a group of artists committed to preserving and improving traditional methods. After moving to Taiwan, he helped form the Association of Seven Friends in Painting (*Qi you hua hui*), a group of emigré artists who were concerned about transmitting the philosophy and discipline of traditional Chinese painting to later generations.

Xie Zhiliu
Chinese, 1910–1997
Hibiscus, 1980
Ink and color on paper
Gift of Vivian T. Chen, 2005.64.72

Xie Zhiliu is well-known for his connoisseurship and art-historical scholarship, in addition to his flower paintings. From an early age, he gained the skills to become a scholarly artist, practicing calligraphy and composing poetry, as well as learning to paint by copying works by old masters. Although he served in the government under the Republic, Xie did not leave China in 1949. Instead, he accepted a request from the People's Republic to head the Shanghai Cultural Relics Protection Committee, and he authenticated paintings and calligraphy for the Shanghai Museum. Later, Xie served on a team of experts who evaluated works for other institutions in China, and eventually foreign collections as well.

Painted in 1980, *Hibiscus* evokes the flower paintings of the Ming artist Chen Shun (1483–1544), who sometimes used color washes without ink outlines to create forms. Like Chen, Xie Zhiliu created texture and depth by layering wet colors on top of one another. The splashy freedom Xie achieved in the leaves is balanced by the finer detail he gave to the flowers. The complete life cycle of the hibiscus flower is portrayed, from small buds to luxuriant blossoms. At upper right, Xie inscribed a cyclical date and his cipher-like signature, accompanied by two seals.

Yu Yunjie
Chinese, 1917–1992

Chickens and Bamboo, 1980
Dedicated by the artist to Simon and Rosemary Chen
Ink and color on paper
Gift of Simon and Rosemary Chen and Family, 2005.64.30

Spring at Lake Tai, before 1980
Oil on canvas
Gift of Simon and Rosemary Chen and Family, 2005.64.48

A Scene in Guilin, before 1980
Oil on canvas
Gift of Simon and Rosemary Chen and Family, 2005.64.29

Like many artists in mainland China, Yu Yunjie learned to paint in both Western and Chinese manners. He learned traditional painting from Huang Junbi (1898–1991) and Xu Beihong (1895–1953). After studying Western drawing and painting at the Suzhou Fine Art School, Yu was selected to join a class at the Beijing Central Academy of Art that was taught from 1955–57 by Konstantin Maksimov(1913–94), a Soviet Socialist Realist painter. Yu's career was blighted by the Anti-Rightist campaign of 1957, but he eventually became a teacher at the Shanghai Fine Art School. His students there included Chen Yifei (1946–2005) and Chen Danqing (b. 1953), who later went on to achieve international fame.

Oil painting has played an important role in twentieth-century Chinese painting from the time art academies were founded. Western media and techniques formed the main curriculum at newly established art academies, while traditional media and styles of painting, called *guohua* (national painting), initially were not taught there. Later, Western modes of painting were more easily adapted to the Maoist dictum that art should serve the revolution. Even though the arts are now less politicized than in the Mao era, oil painting remains important.

The three paintings exhibited here suggest something of Yu Yunjie's range. The two oils depict famous scenic places in two very different parts of China, the rugged karst peaks along the Li River in Guilin, in the southwest, and serene Lake Tai, near Suzhou and Wuxi in the east. By contrast, Yu's playful depiction of a rooster, hen, and two chicks in traditional Chinese media reflect the influence of Xu Beihong and Qi Baishi (1863–1957) who established standard approaches to such humble yet charming subjects. Enlivened by touches of red color, the chickens are formed from broad freehand strokes of dilute inkwash, just like the bamboo in the background.

Chickens and Bamboo is inscribed to Simon and Rosemary Chen, who sought out the artist on a visit to Shanghai in 1980. During the 1940s, Simon had been classmates with Yu's older brother at Shanghai's Jiaotong University.

Chen Lifu
Chinese, 1898–2001
Calligraphic Inscription, Save Our Nation Through Revolution, 1983
Dedicated by the artist to Hoshien Tchen
Ink on paper
Gift of Vivian T. Chen, 2005.64.65

Like the wedding congratulations displayed on the adjacent wall, this inscription was written for a celebratory occasion. Jointly signed by Chen Lifu and his wife Sun Luqing, the piece commemorated Hoshien Tchen's ninetieth birthday in 1983, and the gold-speckled red paper is appropriately festive. The regular-script calligraphy evokes the bold and upright manner of Yan Zhenqing (709–785):

> The goal of revolution to save the nation is to perform benevolent acts.
> A constant heart and self-possession enable you to enjoy a long and happy life.

Chen Lifu was a major figure in the conservative wing of the Nationalist Party, initially rising to prominence as the personal secretary to Chiang Kai-shek. From the mid 1920s through 1949, he wielded great influence in the Republican government and served as Minister of Education during the Second World War. Although ardently anti-Communist, he was dismissed from his positions in 1950, after Chiang Kai-shek's government moved to Taiwan. For nearly twenty years, Chen and his family lived in the United States. In 1969 he returned to Taiwan and lived out the rest of his long life as one of the "Nationalist Elders" (*yuanlao pai*).

Xu Beihong (Hsu Pei-hung; Ju Péon)
Chinese, 1895–1953
Horse, 1929
Dedicated by the artist to Hoshien Tchen
Ink on paper
Lent by Simon and Rosemary Chen, IR2007.4.9

Xu Beihong was one of the most renowned and influential painters and art educators of the twentieth century. Motivated by his belief that Chinese painting was in decline because expression was valued over formal likeness, Xu sought to invigorate and modernize traditional ink painting with scientific elements drawn from European art. After starting his career in Shanghai, Xu went to Japan (1917) and later France and Germany (1919–27) to study the techniques of academic realism, developing skills of careful observation and sound draftsmanship to combine with Chinese methods of brushwork. Unlike other Chinese artists who studied in Europe, Xu disdained the contemporary avant-garde styles of European art, which he felt had nothing to contribute to the improvement of Chinese painting.

In Paris, Xu became acquainted with Hoshien Tchen, for whom he later "playfully brushed" (*xibi*) and inscribed this quick sketch of a horse. The horse's momentary pose, flicking its tail and turning its head while raising one hoof, is captured with a few broad strokes of the brush. Impressionistic and seemingly spontaneous, Xu's technique recalls the splashed-ink paintings associated with the Chan (Jap.: Zen) meditational school of Buddhism during the tenth through fourteenth centuries. However, Xu's experience in studying horse anatomy grounds his sketch with an underlying realism.

Horse is an early example of the subject for which Xu Beihong is probably best known today, although he painted a wide array of figures, animals, and nature themes over the course of his career. During the Second World War, Xu developed the portrayal of noble stallions into a symbol of China's national resistance and indomitable spirit. His work masterfully combines Western methods of foreshortening and perspective with Chinese media and dynamic brushwork.

Cen Xuegong
Chinese, b. 1917
An Autumn View of the Three Gorges, 1980
Ink and color on paper
Gift of Simon and Rosemary Chen and Family, 2005.64.31

Wu Yifeng (original name Wu Li)
Chinese, 1907–1998
Emei is Sichuan's Best, 1984
Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper
Gift of Vivian T. Chen, 2005.64.67

Hu Dingyu
Chinese, b. 1934
Road of Pearls [Night Scene in the Three Gorges], 1979
Oilbased color woodblock print on paper, ed. 1/20
Gift of Simon and Rosemary Chen and Family, 2005.64.55

These three works portray the magnificent scenery of China's interior, including the famous series of gorges along the Yangzi River and Mount Emei in Sichuan province. After the Japanese mounted a large-scale invasion of eastern China in 1937, the Republican government and many of the elite moved westward up the Yangzi River from Nanjing to Chongqing (Chungking). The dramatic landscapes of western China inspired the artists who relocated inland, such as Fu Baoshi (1904–65) and Li Keran (1907–89), starting a trend that has continued in recent decades.

The Manchu artist Cen Xuegong is considered the founder of the contemporary Three Gorges school of painting, although he was born in Inner Mongolia. In 1944 he graduated from the Art Department of National Central University, located by that time in Chongqing, where he studied with Xu Beihong and Huang Junbi (included in the present exhibition). Having lived in Sichuan for over fifty years, Cen has made countless visits to the gorges, which extend some 200 miles between Chongqing and Yichang (in Hubei province). His autumn view of Qutang gorge matches a couplet by the Tang poet Du Fu (712–756), which Cen transcribed above the towering peaks suffused with red. Cen has held numerous prestigious positions in national and provincial institutions, and the Chengdu Art Academy celebrated his ninetieth birthday last summer with a retrospective exhibition.

In *Road of Pearls (Night Scene in the Three Gorges)*, the woodblock artist Hu Dingyu offers a moonlit view of spectacular cliffs that loom over a narrow river channel. Instead of the sailing junks depicted by Cen Zuegong, Hu incorporates modern technology into the scene: his boats are motor-powered, and the beacons marking the rocky shoreline shine with electric lights. Using thinned oil pigments and multiple printing blocks, Hu has created a nocturnal landscape that is atmospheric and luminous.

A native of northern Zhejiang, near Shanghai, Wu Yifeng graduated with the first class in traditional

painting at the Shanghai Art Training School in 1926. After traveling to Chengdu with one of his teachers, the eminent landscapist Huang Binhong (1865–1955), Wu settled there in 1932. About one hundred miles south of Sichuan's capital city is the magnificent Mount Emei, long considered a sacred mountain and now a UNESCO World Natural Heritage site (since 1996). Wu Yifeng's painting depicts some of the Buddhist monasteries and Daoist temples that perch on its precipitous bluffs. An accomplished poet, calligrapher, and seal-carver, Wu inscribed his own poem at the top, because "Mount Emei is the most beautiful place in Sichuan." In August, Wu Yifeng will have centennial exhibitions at several museums in China, including the China National Gallery (*Zhongguo Meishuguan*) in Beijing.

[Works inside freestanding table cases:]

Zhao Zhiqian
Chinese, 1829–1884
Calligraphic inscription, SelfReliance
Horizontal hanging scroll, ink on paper
Gift of Simon and Rosemary Chen and Family, 2005.64.18

Zhao Zhiqian was perhaps the most influential scholar-artist of the nineteenth century, proficient not only in calligraphy but also in seal-carving and flower painting. His distinctive style of writing owed much to his study and collection of rubbings from the forceful but often anonymous inscriptions carved on ancient stone tablets. Here, he contrasts two large characters written in the archaic seal script with a smaller text in dynamic running script. In literal translation, the large characters say "Seek within oneself," a reference to the Confucian teaching that a superior man relies on himself and does not blame others if he fails to achieve his aims. The Chen collection, the "Hall of Self-Reliance," takes its name from this treasured work, and family members have considered its advice as their motto.

Although Zhao Zhiqian is sometimes included among the artists of the early Shanghai School, and he played a role in the development of its bold and colorful painting style, he actually never resided in Shanghai. A native of Shaoxing, Zhejiang, Zhao devoted much of his life to studying for and taking the civil service examinations in order to become an official. Despite failing the highest exam three times, he was able to purchase an appointment in 1872 and served in various offices in Jiangxi province until the end of his life. His bureaucratic duties greatly reduced the time he could devote to artistic activities. Although this work is undated, his signature does not include mention of any official position, so it probably predates 1872.

Zheng Xie (Zheng Banqiao)
Chinese, 1693–1765
Calligraphic Inscription, Muddled is Hard to Obtain, 1751
Rubbing, ink on paper
Gift of Simon and Rosemary Chen and Family, 2005.64.4

One of the most noted calligraphers of the eighteenth century, Zheng Xie spent much of his life preparing for the several levels of civil service examination necessary to obtain an official appointment. However, not long after he finally achieved his ambition to enter government service, he fell afoul of powerful local families and lost his job as county magistrate. He took early retirement and returned home to the prosperous city of Yangzhou, where he devoted the rest of his life to the scholarly arts, particularly the

study of ancient forms of script. Zheng's prestige as a retired official heightened the appeal of his calligraphy and ink paintings of rocks, bamboo, orchids, and chrysanthemums. To avoid being overwhelmed with requests for his works (which a scholar-amateur was supposed to give away freely), Zheng notoriously posted a price list to discourage casual requests. For this action, as well as for the playful, even quirky sensibility of his art, he is included among the "Yangzhou Eccentrics," a loosely defined grouping used by later writers to characterize the city's eighteenth-century art scene.

This rubbing reproduces an inscription that Zheng Xie wrote during the brief period he served in office, but its unorthodox sentiment accords well with his image as an eccentric:

> [To be] muddled is hard to obtain. To be intelligent is difficult, and to be muddled is difficult; but it is even more difficult to change from intelligent to muddled. . . .

By one account, Zheng wrote the piece while seeking ancient stone inscriptions on a nearby mountain. Caught by nightfall before he could descend from the mountain, he stopped at a humble hut, the dwelling of a recluse scholar who called himself "Muddled Old Man." When Zheng noticed his giant, beautifully carved inkstone, the man asked him to write something to carve on the back of it. Zheng wrote the four large characters and added a seal that bragged of his successes in the civil-service examinations. Thereupon, the old man wrote a verse revealing that he too had passed the exams and once was a high official. The smaller text below the four large characters was Zheng's response.

Xiao Yu (Siao Yü)
Chinese, 1893–1975
Sails Returning Home from a Distant Shore
Ink and slight color on paper
Lent by Simon and Rosemary Chen, IR2007.4.3

A native of Changsha, Hunan, Xiao Yu began a lifelong friendship with Hoshien Tchen in the early 1920s, when both were students in Paris, continuing after they returned to serve the Chinese Republic. When the Communists gained control of the mainland in 1949, Xiao went abroad again and taught Chinese in France, Switzerland, and Uruguay.

A highly accomplished calligrapher, Xiao was an amateur painter and favored the styles and themes associated with scholar artists of earlier periods. This simple landscape, with a broad lake bordered by triangular hills, is reminiscent of paintings by Shen Zhou (1427–1509), Wen Zhengming (1470–1559), and later members of the "Wu School" in Suzhou. These Ming artists used calligraphic brushwork and muted colors to portray the scenery of Lake Tai, near Suzhou, often to commemorate outings and more extensive travels by friends and associates. Xiao Yu tweaked the standard compositional scheme by depicting several boats sailing toward shore, where a few buildings and a bridge suggest the outskirts of a settlement. His four-character title, in elegant "clerical" script, reads *Sails Returning Home from a Distant Shore*.

Although this painting is undated, it is similar to another one that Xiao Yu did for Hoshien Tchen, dated 1957, while the artist was living in Montevideo, Uruguay.

Qu Qijia
Chinese, 1873–1940
Autumn Landscape / *Calligraphic Inscription*, 1935
Dedicated by the artist to Hoshien Tchen
Twosided folding fan, ink and slight color on paper / ink on paper
Lent by Simon and Rosemary Chen, IR2007.4.6

Qu Qijia is noted primarily as a bibliophile and calligrapher. The landscape that appears on one side of this fan is painted in a refined, detached version of the "orthodox" style appropriate for a scholar-amateur artist. However, the picture is unsigned and bears only an unidentified seal, giving the art-name Jintu, which may belong to someone else. It was common in the early twentieth century to use calligraphy and painting by different people on the two sides of a folding fan.

A native of Changshu, Jiangsu, Qu Qijia belonged to a family that was famous for its large collection of old books, which had been maintained for four generations. He compiled several catalogues of the collection, which was known as the Pavilion of the Iron Zither and Bronze Sword (*Tieqin tongjian lou*), and to which his signature and seals on this fan refer.

In 1915 Qu founded the Changshu County Library and became its first director. Later, he served as a member of the National Congress in Beijing, but he quit in 1923 and returned to the South when Cao Kun (1862–1938) became president. In 1924, worried about the safety of his family's book collection amid an upsurge of warlord fighting, Qu moved the most precious volumes to the comparative safety of Shanghai, where some were later reproduced in the important reprint series *Sibu congkan.* Qu's will instructed his sons to give the books to the public if it became impossible to keep the collection together and safe. After the founding of the People's Republic, his sons donated or sold most of the books to the government, and they are now in the National Library of China in Beijing.

Zhao Erdai (Chao Er-dai; original name Zhao Tonghe)
Chinese, 1916–1995

Landscape with Boats, 1973
Ink and color on paper
Gift of Vivian T. Chen, 2005.64.73

Red Pavilion in the Rain, 1973
Ink and color on paper
Gift of Vivian T. Chen, 2005.64.74

Perhaps best known as a painter and poet, Zhao Erdai also practiced calligraphy, seal-carving, sculpture, and photography. The two landscapes exhibited here typify his simple, lyrical technique, in which he contrasts broad areas of pale inkwash with dark, wet strokes and touches of pale color. One painting is a bucolic depiction of boats moored near a fishing village below rolling hills, perhaps inspired by the scenery of Taiwan's coast. The other composition, which borders on abstraction, suggests a red-roofed pavilion on a wooded hill, with a view of a distant plateau or cliff.

Zhao Erdai was born in Zhenjiang, Jiangsu, and was brought up in Shanghai and Suzhou. After obtaining a university degree in public administration, he went to work for the Republican government in Fujian

province, moving to Taiwan in 1949. Until he retired from government service in 1971, Zhao's artistic pursuits were confined to his spare time, exemplifying the amateur ideal of the Chinese scholar-official. After retirement he devoted his full energies to the arts and achieved an international reputation. In the last decade of his life, he left Taipei and settled in rural Magong in the Penghu Islands (also called the Pescadores), between Taiwan and the mainland.

As a child, Zhao did not speak much, and his scholarly family nicknamed him "slow-witted" (*dai*). Later on he adopted this epithet as his art name, calling himself "Erdai" because he was the second (*er*) son. The seal he impressed on both of these paintings contains a further play on this nickname, showing the character *dai* written twice, in an archaic form that resembles a person throwing up his hands. Zhao's signature line gives the date simply as "the sixty-second year," meaning since the founding of the Republic, which corresponds to 1973.

Yu Youren (Yü Yu-jen)
Chinese, 1879–1964
Calligraphic Inscription, Poem Written While Visiting Mount Lu with Wang Jingwei (1883–1944), 1930s (before 1938)
Dedicated by the artist to Hoshien Tchen
Folding fan, ink on paper
Lent by Simon and Rosemary Chen, IR2007.4.8

Yu Youren is best known today for systematically classifying the elements of cursive-script calligraphy (*caoshu*), culminating in his 1937 publication of *Standards for Cursive Script* (*Biaozhun caoshu*), a classic reference book. For this folding fan, however, he wrote in an informal combination of regular and running scripts (*xingkai*), drawing on his early interest in the monumental style of epitaphs carved on ancient stone tablets.

In addition to being a noted calligrapher and poet, Yu Youren was the first president of Shanghai University (founded in 1922) and a high official in the government of the Republic of China. From 1930 until his death in 1964, he served as the president of the Control Yuan (*Jiancha yuan*), one of the five branches of government, which supervises the others.

You Youren composed this poem to commemorate a visit to Mount Lu, long famed for its Buddhist monasteries and magnificent waterfall. Until the Japanese invasion drove the Nationalist government out of Nanjing, high officials enjoyed vacationing in the scenic region, which was southeast of the capital in Jiangxi province.

Yu Youren's companion on this trip was Wang Jingwei, who had once hoped to succeed Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925) as head of the Nationalist Party. Although Wang was a prominent official in the Nanjing government during the 1930s, he abandoned it after the move to Chongqing and became head of a Japanese puppet regime in Nanjing. Although Yu Youren did not date his transcription of the poem on this fan, which he dedicated to Hoshien Tchen, he probably wrote it before the capital moved to Chongqing and undoubtedly before Wang turned traitor.

Tang Chen

Chinese, dates unknown
Autumn Landscape, after Gao Kegong, 1948
Folding fan, ink and slight color on paper
Lent by Simon and Rosemary Chen, IR2007.4.7

Folding fans are elegant and practical accessories that have been enormously popular in recent centuries as formats for painting and calligraphy. Pasted to a frame of flat sticks secured with a pin, the paper's small size, curved shape, and three-dimensional folds challenge the artist to create a compact yet harmonious design. Sometimes, the painting or calligraphy is later removed from the frame and remounted flat for preservation.

While creating a breeze, this fan also would also inspire its user to think of the cool season because it depicts autumnal trees growing by a mountain stream. The large trees in the foreground lead the viewer's eye across the stream, toward a cluster of humble dwellings in a clearing at left. Half-hidden by the large boulders surrounding it, this peaceful hamlet in the wilderness prompts the user to daydream about withdrawing from the world and living in harmony with nature. In times of political or social strife, this eremitic ideal was particularly appealing to Chinese artists and viewers. Extending the escapist mood, Tang Chen inscribed a poetic couplet:

> Many green mountains are outside my gate, but I ignore them;
> On the long days of autumn, I just read my books.

Tang's inscription also notes that he was following the idea of Gao Kegong (1243–1310), a northern landscapist of the early Yuan dynasty (1279–1367). The composition on the fan does resemble Gao's famous handscroll *Evening Clouds on Autumn Mountains*, a fragment of which is now in the Beijing Palace Museum. However, instead of imitating Gao's characteristic use of wet dots and washes to compose forms, Tang Chen's brushstrokes are more defined and varied, and he complements them with pale vegetable colors. His fan is a fine representative of later "orthodox" painting.

Very little is known of Tang Chen's biography. He may be a Qing artist recorded as a native of Nanhui, which is now part of Shanghai. Tang's signature identifies his home as Yushan, which is nearby in Jiangsu province.

[Upstairs in the Asian Gallery]

Zhu Da (also called Bada Shanren)
Chinese, 1626–1705
Fish, Flowers, and Rocks, 1692
Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper
Gift of Drs. Margaret T. Chen and Clinton Young, 2005.64.56

Zhu Da was born into a branch of the Ming royal clan in Nanchang, Jiangxi, shortly before the dynasty fell. When the Manchus conquered China and persecuted Ming "remnants," he became a Buddhist monk, perhaps as much for safety as for religious reasons. After the death of his sect's lineage master, Zhu left monastic life and supported himself with his painting and calligraphy. Nonetheless, the rough and spontaneous mode of ink painting associated with Chan (Jap., Zen) Buddhism, which he encountered as a monk, continued to influence his monochrome works, such as this one. During the 1690s, when he painted it, he was also exploring ways to use different kinds of calligraphic brushstrokes to create pictorial forms.

Zhu Da used numerous alternate names throughout his adult life, some of which suggest strong feelings of despair or conflict with contemporary social realities. After 1684 he called himself Bada Shanren ("man of eight great mountains"), the name that appears on the great majority of his surviving works. Typically, as here, he ran the four characters together to form a cipher for his signature, which contrasts with the clear separation of the four characters in the lower of the two seals that follow his inscription.

This painting contains some of Zhu Da's hallmark motifs, such as the glowering fish that swims in an ambiguous space, and the dark dots that seem to jab at the rocks and ground. Deliberately challenging the viewer, Zhu's compositions rarely depict naturalistic scenes or display commonly recognized symbolism. Instead, his inventive designs display his superb control of brush and ink, creating a rich variety of textures and tonalities. Enigmatic private symbols appear in many of Zhu Da's paintings, leading some writers to suggest that he painted to express his inner torment, even madness. Less bizarre or unsettling than some works, this painting apparently depicts chrysanthemum flowers and a spray of bamboo emerging from a rocky overhang, and a moody fish swimming toward the base of some dark rocks below.

Wang Geyi (original name Wang Xian)
Chinese, 1897–1988
Narcissi and Rocks, 1931
Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper
Gift of Vivian T. Chen, 2005.64.63

The leading modern master of the Shanghai School, Wang Geyi became proficient in painting, calligraphy, and seal-carving at an early age. After serving for a few years as a middle-school art instructor in his hometown of Nantong, Jiangsu, Wang moved to Shanghai in 1923 to study with the renowned Wu Changshuo (1844–1927). Wu had been instrumental in modernizing traditional Chinese flower painting, by combining bold forms and rich colors with the powerful brushwork inspired by studies of ancient writings on stone and metal. After Wu's death, Wang Geyi pursued a successful career as a professor of art in various universities and art academies. His works were also included in exhibitions of Chinese art sent to Europe in the early 1930s. Wang remained in China after the 1949 revolution, and except during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), he enjoyed official recognition as a venerable artist.

Like Wu Changshuo, Wang Geyi typically painted garden plants and rocks, accompanying the pictorial forms with poetic inscriptions in uniformly dark calligraphy. In this work, a large tilting rock in inkwash counterbalances the diagonal line of colorful narcissi, whose ink outlines are filled in with bright mineral pigments. The dynamic masses are stabilized by Wang's blocky inscription at upper right, written in a combination of running and cursive script. His signature includes his given name, Wang Xian, and Geyi, his style name, which he would later more often use alone.

Mi Nanyang
Chinese, b. 1946
Calligraphic Inscription, Long Life as a Crane, circa 1983
Hanging scroll, ink on paper
Gift of Simon and Rosemary Chen and Family, 2005.64.37

Mi Nanyang is a contemporary calligrapher in Beijing, whose family claims descent from Mi Fu (1051–1107), a great calligrapher, connoisseur, and art critic at the Northern Song court. Following the

example of his famous ancestor, Mi Nanyang is proficient in a variety of ancient and modern scripts, which he learned by copying famous ancient inscriptions and model texts. The two monumental characters here are written in running script, in which some individual strokes are run together rather than kept separate. By using a large brush and allowing it to dry out slightly, Mi has created the streaky effect known as “flying white” (*feibai*). Evoking the idiosyncratic style of Mi Fu’s contemporary, Huang Tingjian (1045–1105), the lines are rough and quavering. Instead of glib sophistication, the writing conveys a sense of struggle and individuality, qualities appreciated by late eleventh-century scholar-artists.

The crane is one of many symbols traditionally used to express wishes for long life, both verbally and visually. In addition to the two characters, which literally translate as “crane longevity,” one of Mi Nanyang’s seals contains a picture of a crane. Appropriately, this piece was given to Hoshien Tchen to mark his ninetieth birthday.