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PRESS RELEASE

For release 12/15/03
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MASTERWORKS OF CHINESE PAINTING:
IN PURSUIT OF MISTS AND CLOUDS
January 17-March 14, 2004

"It is like clouds and mists passing before my eyes, or the songs of birds striking my ears. How could I help but derive joy from my contact with these things? But when they are gone, I think no more about them. In this way, these two things [painting and calligraphy] are a constant pleasure to me, but not an affliction."

Su Tung-P'o, 11th-century statesman, poet, and connoisseur on collecting
Translation by James Cahill

Masterworks of Chinese Painting: In Pursuit of Mists and Clouds features distinguished Chinese paintings amassed over nearly 50 years by the preeminent scholar and UC Berkeley Professor Emeritus James Cahill and the Cahill family. This extraordinary collection represents virtually every period of Chinese painting over the last 900 years.

The exhibition consists of works from the Sung, Yüan, Ming, and Ch'ing dynasties, including major figure paintings and a selection of bird-and-flower paintings. The greatest strength, however, is the landscape paintings. Considered the highest category of painting in China, the landscape embodies the ideals of the Confucian scholar. In this area do we find the most daring experiments, the greatest developments, and the most intense art historical scrutiny. *Masterworks of Chinese Painting* presents hanging scrolls, hand scrolls, and album leaves, ranging from a delicate early 13th-century hanging scroll by the court painter Ma Yüan (Ma Yuan; fl. 1190-1230) depicting a quiet detail of mountain scenery to a bold mid-17th-century hanging scroll by the innovative Ming figure painter Ch'en Hung-shou (Chen Hongshou; 1598-1652), reinterpreting a poignant encounter in Chinese history. The exhibition also includes a monumental mid-15th century landscape by Tai Chin (Dai Jin; 1388-1462), a major painting by the 16th century Wu School painter Wen Cheng-ming (Wen Zhengming; 1470-1559), and several works by Kung Hsien (Gong Xian; 1618-1689), the foremost of the Individualist painters based in 17th century Nanjing.

Professor James Cahill began collecting Chinese paintings in 1955 while on a Fulbright fellowship in Japan, where he was completing his dissertation on 14th-century Yüan painting. There a noted Japanese scholar bestowed on him the name Ching Yüan Chai, which roughly translates as “Studio of One Who Is Looking Intently at the Yüan Dynasty.” “Collecting depended my understanding of Chinese painting ... forcing me to make judgments of quality and authenticity,” noted Professor Cahill. He used the collection as an opportunity to explore areas of connoisseurship and as a tool for teaching others about these same disciplines. Professor Cahill and family members passed on key works from the collection to the University of California at Berkeley, where he taught for over thirty years (1966-1995). James Cahill’s son Nicholas Cahill, an associate professor of art history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, has lent several works to this exhibition.

The University of California Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive organized this traveling exhibition; the curator is Julia M. White, curator of Asian Art at the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

FUNDERS:

The Elvehjem Museum of Art is open Tuesdays-Fridays 9am-5 pm; Saturdays and Sundays 11 am-5 pm; closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission to galleries and educational events is free. The museum is located on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is accessible to wheelchairs from the Murray Street (north) entrance. Parking is available at the city of Madison’s Lake Street and Frances Street ramps, university lot 46 on Lake Street between Johnson and University Avenue, university lot 47 on Johnson Street between Park and Lake streets. Evening and weekend parking is also available under Grainger Hall with entrance on Brooks Street between University Avenue and Johnson streets. The Elvehjem Museum of Art will provide sign language interpreters for associated programs by three-week advance request to Anne Lambert, Curator of Education, weekdays, 608 263-4421 (voice). Information is also available by visiting our Web site at www.lvm.wisc.edu