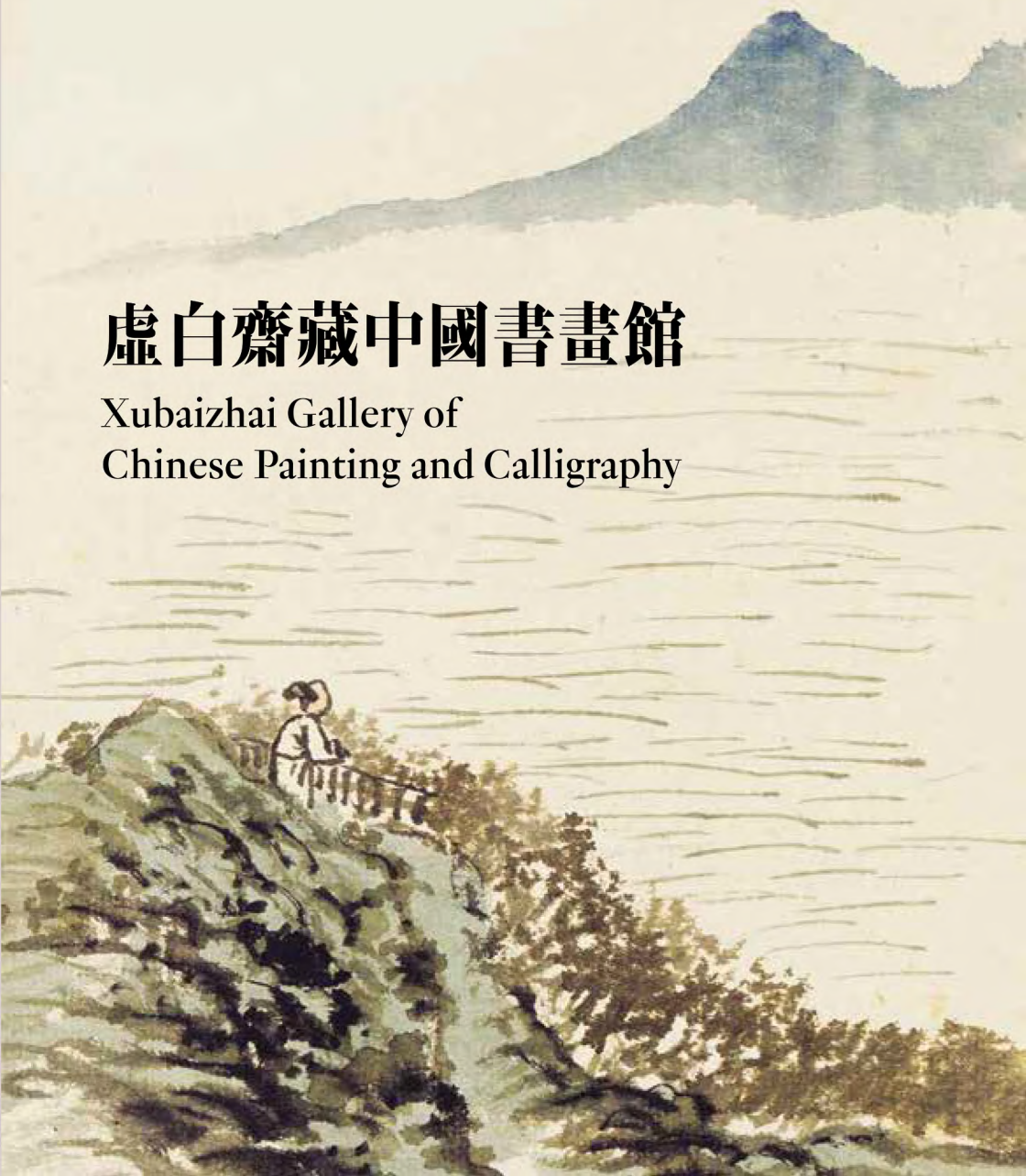


HKMOA

虛白齋藏中國書畫館

Xubaizhai Gallery of  
Chinese Painting and Calligraphy



# 虛白齋藏中國書畫館

## Xubaizhai Gallery of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy

1992年9月26日，香港藝術館「虛白齋藏中國書畫館」落成開幕，專門展示書畫收藏家劉作籌先生所捐贈的一批珍貴書畫。

On 26 September, 1992, the Hong Kong Museum of Art celebrated its inauguration of the Xubaizhai Gallery of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, designed to display the significant collection of traditional Chinese fine art donated by renowned collector Mr Low Chuck-tiew.



劉作籌像

Statue of Low Chuck-tiew

## 劉作籌簡介

### Brief Introduction to Low Chuck-tiew

劉作籌（1911 – 1993），字君量，一作均量，出生於中國廣東潮安縣，幼年曾於故鄉龍湖市的小學修業一年，於九歲隨母至新加坡與父團聚，小學畢業後赴上海接受教育，1936年畢業於暨南大學經濟系，隨後回新加坡從商，助父掌理家族業務。二次大戰後，劉先生受新加坡四海通銀行之聘，於1949年赴香港出任分行經理一職，直至1986年退休，仍留居香港。於1993年回新加坡掃墓期間仙遊。

Low Chuck-tiew (1911-1993) was born in the Chao'an prefecture of Guangdong province. He received primary education in the municipality of Longhu for a year before joining his father in Singapore with his mother when he was nine years old. Following education in Singapore, he pursued further education in Shanghai, obtaining a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Jinan University in 1936 and returning to Singapore to assist his father to manage the family business. After the war, in 1949 Mr Low arrived in Hong Kong as manager of Four Seas Communications Bank Ltd. He retired in 1986 and continued living in Hong Kong until 1993 when he passed away while visiting the Low ancestral grave in Singapore.

## 養志

### Nurture of the Heart

劉父劉正興先生酷嗜收藏文物，常與友好在家中品評討論書畫文玩。由於耳濡目染，劉先生自小受傳統中國文化薰陶，對詩文書畫藝術產生濃厚興趣。1926至36年間，劉作籌在上海求學，期間跟隨花鳥畫家謝公展（1885–1940）及山水畫家黃賓虹（1865–1955）習畫。經黃氏循循善誘，劉先生建立了對書畫鑑別的知識。

Mr Low's father, Low Chia-heng was an avid collector and connoisseur of Chinese antiquities, thus nurtured his son's interest in collecting Chinese painting and calligraphy. While pursuing his education in Shanghai between 1926 and 1936, Low Chuck-tiew became a student of the renowned bird-and-flower painter Xie Gongzhan (1885 – 1940) and landscape painter Huang Binhong (1865 – 1955), further contributing considerable influence on Low's connoisseurship of Chinese painting and calligraphy.

## 蒐藏

### Collection of Treasures

二次大戰期間，劉氏家族所藏文物於盟軍空襲時燬於一旦。1949年，劉先生到港工作，看見大批中國古文物因內地政治動盪而流落香港，且不斷流散海外。為使這些國寶留存海內，劉先生開始有系統地大力蒐藏；經年累月，漸漸建立了一個重要且享負盛譽的中國書畫珍藏。

During the final stage of the Second World War, the Low family art collection was disastrously destroyed in the allied bombing of Japanese occupied Singapore. In 1949, Mr Low arrived in Hong Kong where he witnessed large quantities of Chinese art relics brought by refugees fleeing political turmoil in China. Many art treasures were sold locally and then exported overseas. Anxious to keep these national treasures within the Chinese community, he started conscientiously collecting to assemble a systematic collection of significant art pieces. Over decades, he accumulated one of the world's most important collections of Chinese painting and calligraphy.

## 惠贈

### Donation to the Public

1989年，劉氏把其收藏捐贈予香港藝術館，冀能將之公諸同好，發揮其於藝術鑑賞及美學教育上的最佳作用。這批書畫珍品涵蓋5世紀之六朝至20世紀的作品，其中明清二朝之主要流派，如「吳門畫派」、「松江畫派」、「四僧」、「正統畫派」和「揚州八怪」等大家的傑作尤為齊備。除此之外，亦包括20世紀大師如吳昌碩（1844–1927）、齊白石（1864–1957）、黃賓虹（1865–1955）及徐悲鴻（1895–1953）等人的傑作。

劉先生之所以鍾情於明清交替時期的畫作，他自己有這樣的解說：「此百餘年間，人才飄舉雲興，書畫爭奇競秀，心寫意造，妙極自然，是為中國藝術之又一高峰。」可見其慧眼之卓識，同時亦道出了這批書畫的歷史和藝術價值。

In 1989, Mr Low donated his considerable art collection to the HKMoA. In giving the collection to the Museum, he hoped to preserve his collection and make it available for public display and appreciation in order to maximise its educational value. This collection comprises several hundred Chinese paintings and calligraphy works dating from the Six Dynasties to the twentieth century. A particular strength of the collection lies in the Ming (1368 – 1644) and Qing (1644 – 1911) dynasties featuring representative works by masters of the "Wu School", the "Songjiang School", the "Four Monks", the "Orthodox School" and the "Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou". Masterpieces of the twentieth century by such masters as Wu Changshuo (1844 – 1927), Qi Baishi (1864 – 1957), Huang Binhong (1865 – 1955) and Xu Beihong (1895 – 1953) are also represented in the collection.



Mr Low himself explained his special preference for works of the seventeenth century, "For over a hundred years during this period, an extraordinary outburst of talented artists produced many superb masterpieces of painting and calligraphy. Those works created from their inner mind achieved a perfect vitality and captivating charm. Thus, another brilliant period in the history of Chinese art emerged." With clarity of vision and knowledge, Mr Low illumined the importance of developments during the transitional period of the Ming and Qing dynasties, which highlights the historical and artistic value of his collection.

## 齋名由來

### Origin of the Xubaizhai Collection

劉氏藏品中有清代書法家伊秉綬（1754 – 1815）隸書題額「虛白」一幀，劉氏取其「虛室生白」、心境清靜之意，名其室為「虛白齋」，而收藏亦曰「虛白齋藏中國書畫」。

Low Chuck-tiew designated his collection of painting and calligraphy the "Xubaizhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy" after an appellation taken from a favourite calligraphy plaque, written by the Qing calligrapher Yi Bingshou (1754 – 1815).



伊秉綬 (1754 – 1815)  
隸書「虛白」題額  
1811  
水墨紙本橫幅  
35.5 x 91.5 厘米

Yi Bingshou (1754 – 1815)  
Calligraphy in clerical script  
1811  
Horizontal scroll, ink on paper  
35.5 x 91.5 cm

# 藏品主要流派 Major Schools in the Collection

明代中期 (15至16世紀)

Mid Ming period (15th – 16th century)

吳門畫派

The Wu School

吳門泛指位處江南的蘇州和附近一帶地區。元代以降，蘇州成為文人畫文化中心。明代中葉，「吳門畫派」在這裏冒起，並在畫史上扮演了承先啟後的角色。畫派的領袖人物沈周 (1427 – 1509) 和文徵明 (1470 – 1559) 奠定以「吳門畫派」為首的文人畫傳統。他們的家族淵源和社會關係吸引了不少文人雅士參與雅集，舞文弄墨，令「吳門畫派」於15世紀主導蘇州以至江南地區藝壇。

16世紀中，蘇州尚有不少活躍的職業畫家，如唐寅 (1470 – 1524) 及仇英 (約1494 – 約1552)，主要繼承了南宋院體畫的風格，時有表現文人畫的意趣。二人與文徵明論交，晉身蘇州士人圈子，與沈周、文徵明合稱「明四家」。

文徵明 (1470 – 1559)

長林消暑圖

1540

水墨設色絹本立軸

147.2 x 61 厘米

Wen Zhengming (1470 – 1559)

Cooling off the hot summer

1540

Hanging scroll, ink and colour on silk

147.2 x 61 cm



The Wu area of Suzhou and its vicinity was a centre for literati painting towards the end of the Yuan dynasty (1279 – 1368). The Wu School of painting emerged in mid Ming dynasty and played a significant role in passing on the prevalent literati style of painting. Shen Zhou (1427 – 1509), leader of the school, in association with Wen Zhengming (1470 – 1559) fostered a collective identity for early Ming literati painting under the designation of "Wu School" style. Both Shen and Wen came from prominent Suzhou families. They attracted a large group of learned men who assembled at elegant gatherings to exchange views and produce poetry, painting and calligraphy for mutual appreciation. Under those circumstances, the "Wu School" style of painting came to dominate Suzhou, and indeed the whole of Jiangnan during the fifteenth century.

Coexisting with the "Wu School" style in Suzhou were professional painters such as Tang Yin (1470 – 1524) and Qiu Ying (ca. 1494 – ca. 1552), who derived their techniques mainly from Southern Song academy style to some extent imbued with scholar-amateur tradition. Friends of Wen Zhengming, both Tang and Qiu were active in the scholarly circles of Suzhou and together with Shen Zhou and Wen Zhengming are esteemed as the "Four Masters of the Ming dynasty".



唐寅 (1470 – 1524)  
抱琴歸去圖  
無紀年  
水墨設色絹本立軸  
74.5 x 37.5 厘米

Tang Yin (1470 – 1524)  
Returning home with a *qin*  
Not dated  
Hanging scroll, ink and colour on silk  
74.5 x 37.5 cm

## 明代後期 (16至17世紀)

Late Ming period (16th – 17th century)

### 松江畫派

The Songjiang School

明代後期，畫壇領袖董其昌 (1555 – 1636) 帶動了松江地區 (今上海市) 的繪畫發展，形成「松江畫派」，繼蘇州「吳門畫派」後成為主流。「松江派」一詞最初是蘇州人對松江畫風的通稱，這裏所指的「松江畫派」乃一統稱，包含「松江派」及其他支流，以董其昌為代表，其他畫家包括孫克弘 (1532 – 1611)、陳繼儒 (1558 – 1639)、趙左 (約1570 – 1633後)、沈士充 (活躍於約1607 – 1640) 等。董其昌所處的時代正值「吳門畫派」末流，他着力追求秀潤的筆調情趣及抽象化的造型，又倡議山水畫「南北宗」論，借佛門禪宗的「南北宗」分別比作文人畫家與職業畫家的分野，從而推崇南宗諸家為摹仿對象，提倡不單純摹仿，更應取法傳統為創作規範，形成仿古新風，以繼承文人畫正脈。

趙左 (約1570 – 1633後)

秋江漁隱圖

1615

水墨設色紙本立軸

188 x 62.5 厘米

Zhao Zuo (ca. 1570 – after 1633)

Fishing on autumn river

1615

Hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper

188 x 62.5 cm





During the late Ming dynasty, Dong Qichang (1555 – 1636), a native of Songjiang (within present-day Shanghai), became the most influential figure in Chinese painting and calligraphy. Led by Dong, the Songjiang School of painting finally eclipsed the “Wu School” and became the driving force steering development of the main painting style that followed. The term “Songjiang School” was named by Suzhou counterparts to represent the painting style flourishing in the Songjiang region. Centred on Dong Qichang, other artists included Sun Kehong (1532 – 1611), Chen Jiru (1558 – 1639), Zhao Zuo (ca. 1570 – after 1633) and Shen Shichong (act. ca. 1607 – 1640). During Dong’s lifetime,

the “Wu School” was coming into decline and he sought to reinvigorate scholar-amateur traditions and establish aesthetic canons. Corresponding to the distinction of Northern and Southern Schools of Chan Buddhism in China, he designated Northern and Southern Schools of Painting with respective distinctions of professional and amateur artists. Dong considered painters of the Southern School models for the continuance of individualistic literati painting whilst forming new styles, not mere imitation, combining veneration of past masters with a creative and forward looking initiative and creating a place for the artists within tradition.



董其昌 (1555 – 1636)  
山水行書合冊  
1610  
水墨金箋及紙本十對開冊 (選頁)  
各39.5 x 32 厘米

Dong Qichang (1555 – 1636)  
Landscapes and calligraphy in running script  
1610  
Album of ten double leaves (selected),  
ink on paper or gold-flecked paper  
Each 39.5 x 32 cm

## 清代初期 (17世紀)

Early Qing period (17th century)

### 四僧

#### The Four Monks

弘仁 (1610–1664)、髡殘 (1612–1673)、朱耷 (又稱八大山人) (1626–1705) 和石濤 (1642–1707) 四位畫家處於明清交替的紛亂時代，經歷坎坷。他們因不同原因都曾落髮為僧，後世稱之為「清初四僧」。四僧抗清意識強烈，以明遺民身份縱情於名山大川、詩詞書畫之中。他們的作品師法自然，既汲取前人技法，又有所突破創新，自成一格。弘仁作品以山水為主，筆法受元代倪瓚(1306–1374)影響，線條簡練，表現蕭疏枯淡之景；他亦喜畫梅花，脫俗清逸。髡殘能詩，擅書畫，描繪山水筆致蒼潤，章法嚴謹。八大山人山水花鳥皆精，造型清奇古怪，用筆寫意淋漓。石濤擅畫山水、人物、花果，筆墨恣肆，構圖奇特，意境深遠。基於各人的遭遇，四僧在作品中表現出強烈的情感，寄托亡國心志並抒抑鬱，具有鮮明的個性和藝術特色。

朱耷 (1626–1705)

荷花水鳥圖

無紀年

水墨紙本立軸

117 x 52.5 厘米

Zhu Da (1626–1705)

Lotus and mallard

Not dated

Hanging scroll, ink on paper

117 x 52.5 cm



Four artists, namely Hongren (1610 – 1664), Kuncan (1612 – 1673), Zhu Da, alias Bada Shanren (1626 – 1705) and Shitao (1642 – 1707) lived through the chaotic transition from Ming to Qing dynasty. For various reasons, these four artists become monks upon the fall of Ming dynasty, thereby designated the "Four Monks" in Chinese art history. With strong anti-Qing sentiments, the Four Monks withdrew from society and immersed themselves in pilgrimage and artistic creation. Modelling their works after nature, they emulated techniques of preceding masters while developing their own styles. Hongren's landscapes were inspired by Ni Zan (1306 – 1374) of the Yuan dynasty, using simple lines to evoke a solitary mood. Fond of plum trees, his depictions of the subject are delicate and engaging. Kuncan excelled at poetry, painting and calligraphy. His landscapes of intricate composition endow a sense of solemnity. Bada Shanren specialised in landscape and bird-and-flower painting, often with a subtly cynical inflection. He was known for his assured free form and swift strokes, with numerous subjects of peculiar form. A master of landscape, figure and bird-and-flower painting, Shitao applied bold and unconstrained brushwork to meticulous layouts, resulting in evocative scenes. Based on their different experiences and characters, the works of the Four Monks are distinctive in terms of individuality and artistic characteristic, reflecting the sorrow of being leftovers of the Ming dynasty and their wills while living in chaos.



石濤 (1642 – 1707)  
 翠蛟峰觀泉圖  
 無紀年  
 水墨紙本立軸  
 114.5 x 38 厘米

Shitao (1642 – 1707)  
 Viewing the spring at the Cuijiao Peak  
 Not dated  
 Hanging scroll, ink on paper  
 114.5 x 38 cm

## 正統畫派

### The Orthodox School

清代初期湧現了一批以「仿古」為創作核心的畫家，他們主要繼承了明代晚期由董其昌所提倡的「南北宗」論，奉「南宗」為繪畫正統，以之為仿效對象。這批以「仿古」為創作核心的畫家包括號稱為「四王」的王時敏(1592–1680)、王鑑(1598–1677)、王翬(1632–1717)和王原祁(1642–1715)，加上吳歷(1632–1718)及

惲壽平(1633–1690)合稱「清初六家」。他們是清初畫壇的代表人物，十分重視歷代繪畫的傳統，着力研摹宋元名蹟，故對傳統有深刻的理解。由於康熙(1654–1722)、雍正(1678–1735)及乾隆(1711–1799)諸帝推崇，此派畫家在清初載譽甚隆，從學者眾，並且影響深遠。



王翬(1632–1717)、惲壽平(1633–1690)

山水花卉冊

1685–1686

水墨紙本及水墨設色紙本八開冊(選頁)

各21.8 x 29.8厘米

Wang Hui (1632–1717) and Yun Shouping (1633–1690)

Landscapes and flowers

1685–1686

Album of eight leaves (selected), ink or ink and colour on paper

Each 21.8 x 29.8 cm



Early Qing dynasty saw the emergence of a group of artists who focused on the revitalisation of traditional style as formulated by Dong Qichang in the late Ming dynasty. Later known as the "Orthodox School", members include the "Four Wangs", namely: Wang Shimin (1592 – 1680), Wang Jian (1598 – 1677), Wang Hui (1632 – 1717) and Wang Yuanqi (1642 – 1715). Together with Wu Li (1632 – 1718) and Yun Shouping (1633 – 1690), these are collectively known as "Six Masters of Early Qing". Advocates for the revival of archaic styles among the painters of the Southern School, they sought to reinvigorate traditional painting techniques through the style of earlier masterpieces, integrating the descriptive landscapes and calligraphic brushwork of the Song and Yuan dynasties. Imperial favour, bestowed upon them during early Qing dynasty by emperors Kangxi (1654 – 1722), Yongzheng (1678 – 1735) and Qianlong (1711 – 1799), institutionalised the "Orthodox School" and extended the influence of their art through to the twentieth century.



王原祁 (1642 – 1715)  
仿黃公望山水圖  
1714  
水墨設色絹本立軸  
96.3 x 53 厘米

Wang Yuanqi (1642 – 1715)  
Landscape in the style of Huang Gongwang  
1714  
Hanging scroll, ink and colour on silk  
96.3 x 53 cm

## 清代中期 (18世紀)

Mid Qing period (18th century)

### 揚州八怪

The Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou

清代中期，位處江蘇的揚州由於得鹽運之利而變得富庶，各種畫科及不同流派的畫風都得到全面的發展，其中以「揚州八怪」最為矚目。雖名「八怪」，但眾說不一，被歸入「揚州八怪」的畫家達15人，包括華岳（1682－1756）、高鳳翰（1683－約1749）、李鱣（1686－約1760）、金農（1687－1763）、鄭燮（1693－1765）、李方膺（1697－1756）、邊壽民（1684－1752）、羅聘（1733－1799）等。這些畫家大多是來自揚州以外的地區，當中有很多都是文人畫家，並同時以賣畫為職業。他們的作為異於常規，在畫風上又與當時流行的「正統畫派」迥然不同而自抒個性，故曰「怪」。雖然他們的畫作多取材自普通常見的文人題材，但往往在作品中表現出對社會的深刻體會，使作品的內涵更為豐富。畫家為了投合揚州社會的時尚喜好，其作品內容、技巧等甘於諧俗，深受市場歡迎，可謂雅俗共賞。

鄭燮 (1693 - 1765)  
墨竹  
無紀年  
水墨紙本立軸  
125.9 x 44.4 厘米

Zheng Xie (1693 - 1765)  
Ink bamboo  
Not dated  
Hanging scroll, ink on paper  
125.9 x 44.4 cm



During mid Qing dynasty, Yangzhou, a city of Jiangsu province, prospered in the boom of the salt industry in surrounding provinces. The painting market flourished, corresponding to the rise of wealthy merchants. Among the different stylistic approaches, the "Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou" was a favourite of local patrons. Loosely defined under the term coined in the late nineteenth century for these unusual artists of the eighteenth century who had strong personalities at variance with the conventions of their own time, although the term became a description more of their artistic style rather than social eccentricities.

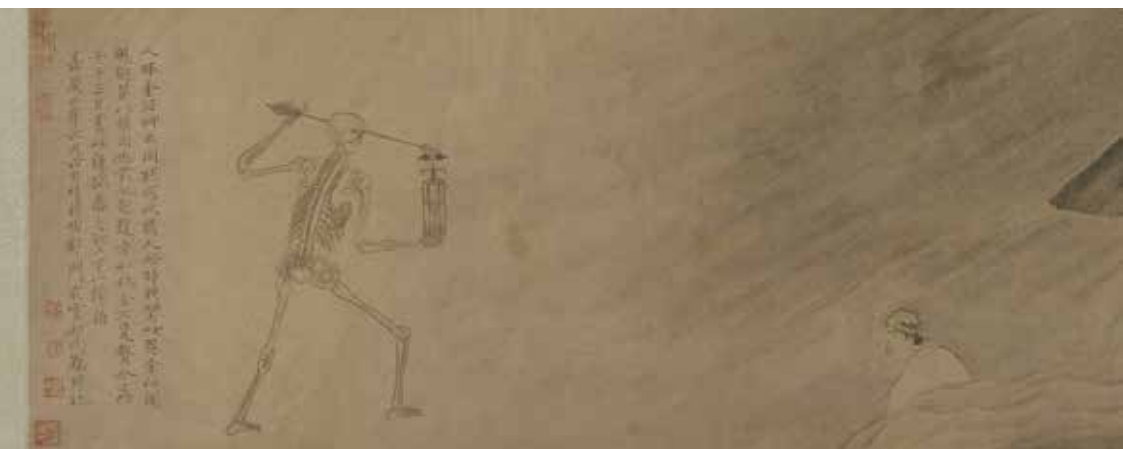
In total, there are altogether 15 artists under the term, including Hua Yan (1682 – 1756), Gao Fenghan (1683 – ca. 1749), Li Shan (1686 – ca. 1760), Jin Nong (1687 – 1763), Zheng Xie (1693 – 1765), Li Fangying (1697 – 1756), Bian Shoumin (1684 – 1752) and Luo Pin (1733 – 1799). Many of these artists were initially scholar-painters who followed literati tradition in their artistic pursuits. They became professional painters to sell their works in order to earn a living. In stylistic terms, paintings by the "Eight Eccentrics" differ greatly from those of the "Orthodox School"; rejecting orthodox painting conventions, they focused instead on a more expressive and individualist style. Conventional subjects were given a new dimension of latent meaning by the artists who lived close to the common people and were familiar with the social problems of and suffering of the people. The poignant subject matter of these unusual artists appealed to the

new rich merchants of Yangzhou, wishing to establish the literati tradition of art collecting and appreciated the bold and expressive style with which the Eccentrics transformed traditional subjects.



金農 (1687 – 1763)  
獨馬圖  
1761  
水墨紙本立軸  
120.5 x 57.5 厘米

Jin Nong (1687 – 1763)  
The lone horse  
1761  
Hanging scroll, ink on paper  
120.5 x 57.5 cm



羅聘 (1733 - 1799)

鬼趣圖

1797

水墨設色紙本手卷

26.7 x 257.2 厘米

Luo Pin (1733 - 1799)

Ghost amusement

1797

Handscroll, ink and colour on paper

26.7 x 257.2 cm







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# 虛白齋通識小錦囊

General Introduction to Xubaizhai

一切由「虛白」說起……

It all begins with Xubai...

## (一) 虛白之意

「虛白小齋在人境」、「室虛堂敞生白光」  
——劉作籌(1911—1993)

「虛室生白」語出《莊子·人間世》：「瞻彼闕者，虛室生白，吉祥止止。」比喻心無雜念就能悟出「真理」，生出智慧；也常用作形容清澈明朗的境界。劉作籌藏有一幀清代嘉慶年間(1796—1820)書法家伊秉綬的隸書橫額「虛白」，他取其「虛室生白」、心境清靜之意，名其室為「虛白齋」。

## (二) 書法家伊秉綬

伊秉綬(1754—1815)字祖似，號墨卿，晚號默庵，為福建汀州人(今之福建寧化)，因此人稱「伊汀州」。他於乾隆年(1736—1795)中進士，任刑部主事，遷員外郎，曾任惠州知府，揚州太守等官。為人善詩文、精書法，尤好篆隸，筆風勁秀，冠絕一代。

## (三) 何謂隸書

中國書法可分為篆、隸、草、行、楷五種書體，而「虛白」橫匾是以隸書寫成。隸書相傳是秦人程邈(生卒不詳)發明，他改變篆字筆劃的圓滑均勻而求平正，隸書就這樣產生。

隸書的最大特色就是橫劃中的起筆有如蠶頭，收筆有如雁尾，字形扁方，給人飛揚之感。到了漢代(公元前206年—公元220年)公文書信上多用隸書書寫，東漢(25—220)刻碑也是多用隸書。隸書的出現，結束了近兩千年的古文字，亦開啟了日後以美化為目的的書法藝術新紀元。

伊秉綬題書「虛白」二字結體方正扁平，筆劃粗幼勻稱，用筆圓渾凝練，氣勢宏大；又以平直橫劃取代「蠶頭雁尾」，反映書法家既師法古人又不拘傳統，為隸書的風格帶來變革。

## (四) 伊麵始祖——書法家亦是發明家

伊麵的發明，有傳與伊秉綬有關。伊秉綬任官在職，喜歡宴遊酬唱，常設席招呼賓客，府中家廚窮於應付，伊秉綬靈機一觸，命廚師以麵粉雞蛋渾和，製成麵條捲曲成團，晾乾後再油炸，儲存備用，吃時加沸水快煮即熟，加入配料成為一碗爽滑可口的麵條，方便宴客。此法一經傳出，人們紛紛仿效，由於是伊府傳出，因而得名。



### (1) Definition of *Xubai*

*An empty studio amidst the hustle and bustle;  
a chamber illuminated by spaciousness and  
emptiness*

— Low Chuck-tiew (1911–1993)

The phrase “emptiness illuminates the chamber” was first recorded in *In the world of men* by Zhuangzi, “Look at that closed chamber, in which brightness is born from emptiness. Fortune and blessings come again and again.” Metaphorically, it means that if you clear your mind, you will find truth and cultivation. It is also used to describe an ultimate realm of purity. Low Chuck-tiew owned a plaque written by renowned calligrapher Yi Bingshou from the Jiaqing period (1796–1820) of the Qing dynasty. Low named his studio Xubaizhai after his beloved plaque, featuring the characters *Xubai* in clerical script for a tranquil state of mind evoked by the empty chamber.

### (2) Yi Bingshou the Calligrapher

Yi Bingshou (1754–1815), who used the names Zusi, Moqing and Mo’an in later years, was a native of Tingzhou (now Ninghua), Fujian, thus also known as Yi Tingzhou. A successful candidate of the highest imperial examinations during the Qianlong period (1736–1795), he was appointed superintendent of the Board of Punishment and subsequently promoted to the post of Vice Director. He was also the Prefectural Magistrate of Huizhou and Yangzhou. A talented poet and writer, he was also a master of calligraphy specialising in seal and clerical scripts. Earning fame with his vigorous yet elegant style, he was a leading figure of his time.

### (3) About Clerical Script

There are five scripts of Chinese calligraphy, namely seal (*zhuan*), clerical (*li*), cursive (*cao*), running (*xing*) and regular (*kai*) scripts. The *Xubai* plaque was written in clerical script, a form of calligraphy said to be a creation of Cheng Miao during the Qin dynasty in the third century BCE who transformed the round and symmetrical strokes of seal script into a flat regular form that was easier and quicker to write, thereafter named *lishu*, clerical script.

“Silkworm head” and “wild goose tail” are iconic features of clerical script. Characters are flat in a square form giving a sense of elegance. By the Han dynasty (206BCE–220CE), most official documents and correspondence were written in clerical script, while monuments were also carved in clerical script during the Eastern Han period (25–220). The appearance of clerical script marked the end of the archaic script that had been used for nearly two thousand years. It also opened up an artistic direction for calligraphy afterwards.

The characters of the *Xubai* plaque by Yi Bingshou are regular and flat. The strokes are of even thickness. Rendered with a concealed-tip brush movement, the bold strokes have magnificent strength. The traditional silkworm head and wild goose tail of clerical script are replaced by straight horizontal strokes, reflecting the calligrapher’s eclectic concept of modelling after ancient masters while breaking conventions, thus making revolutionary change to the clerical style.

### (4) Calligrapher as Inventor — Creator of Yifu Noodles

Yifu noodles are said to be a creation of Yi Bingshou who enjoyed feasting with the literati and poetic discourse when he was a government official. He hosted dinners so often that his cook ran out of new dishes. Then an idea came to Yi. He asked his cook to mix flour with eggs to make noodles and roll them into a cake. The cake was fried until crisp and put in the larder for future use. To serve, all that required was to add boiling water and other ingredients to make a bowl of delicious noodles. This convenient dish was perfect for entertaining guests and many people copied his recipe. After its origin, it was named Yifu noodles.