Xuezhai Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy

2/F, Hong Kong Museum of Art

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SIX MASTERS of the Early Qing Dynasty

Exhibitors Introduction (Volume 4)

Acknowledgements

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Cover: Wang Yuanji Landscape after the style of Huang Gongwang 1714 Xuezhai Collection
Introduction

The early Qing dynasty (1644–111) saw the emergence of a group of artists who focused on the revitalization of the traditional style as formulated in the theory of the Northern and Southern Schools of Painting by Dong Qichang (1555–1636) in the late Ming dynasty (1368–1644). In his eulogy of the past masters, he considered painters of the Southern School as exemplary models for emulation. His invocation of orthodoxy and celebration of antiquity gave ascendancy to the "Six Masters" championed by the "Four Wangs", namely Wang Shimin (1592–1680), Wang Hui (1632–1717) and Wang Yuanqi (1642–1715). Together with Wu Li (1612–1718) and Yan Shouping (1633–1690), they are collectively known as the "Six Masters of Early Qing".

They assumed a position of supremacy in the early Qing period. The influence of their art spread far and wide, through to the twentieth century. The repercussion of the immensely popular orthodox style was that creativity was stifled and this kind of orthodoxy was soon resisted by artists with a sense of independence.

The exhibits are selected mainly from the Xuhaisuib Collection and supplemented from local private collections.

Wang Shimin, a native of Taicang, Jiangsu province, attained a Metropolitan Graduate (jiaji) in 1601 and was promoted to the post of Vice-Minister of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices but retired after the fall of the Ming dynasty. His family's rich collection and his passionate interest in traditional styles drove him to attain a consummate mastery of the techniques of the Song (960–1279) and Yuan (1271–1368) masters, particularly the landscape style of Huang Gongwang (1269–1354). He started to paint at a very young age and was closely associated with Dong Qichang and Chen Rù (1538–1639) from whom he received direct tutelage. He and his contemporary Wang Jian were ardent advocates for the revival of archaic styles in the early Qing dynasty. Wang Shimin was credited as one of the founders of the "Loudong School of Painting".
在创作中，Wang Shimin宣称他模仿了Dong Yuan（? - 962）的风格。然而，他也结合了Song和Yuan时代的绘画元素。画中的山景是墨迹纹理的风格，而山峰的远近关系则与Song朝的山水画风格相类似。山峰的中部到端部的画法是与Song朝的山水画风格明显的不同。Wang Shimin的绘画展示了他对这两种风格的融合，但他并没有完全效仿Dong Yuan的风格。这证明了Wang Shimin在绘画上的独特性。

Wang Shimin 仿古山水册 (图2a & 2b)

仿古册的形式在清朝初年特别流行，以「仿古」、「적이」为题的作品自明清以来即流行。清代董其昌对这些作品有深刻的认识。仿古并不只是单纯地模仿传统，而是一般人对之误解；相反，它成了作者以表现自己的创新精神的一种手段。

王翚仿古山水册的正反两面有不同，正面上方有「仿宋元名帧笔意」，其余四面均没有著录。但每面均存有收藏家董其昌、董邦达等的题跋。以第五页（图2a）为例，山石的结构及笔墨均有黄公望《仿古山水册》之趣味。图2b为附页，上部有黄公望的题跋。另三面则为黄公望的补题。另外，第一页则以淡彩山水，前景松树的造型及山峦的形态，与前页的松石之「牛毛皴」明显有雷同之影子。故此，这在「仿古」的名下，但仍有对传统的变革。

Wang Hui and Yun Shouping 仿古山水册 (图3a, 3b及3c)

王翚，字石谷，号耕烟散人。出身士大夫家，幼时即喜绘画，尤好仿效宋元山水画。王翚的画技，业受其师授之画古名作画。他一生画过数万幅山水画，而以宋元画山水画成就最高。他的画风，画风工致，色彩丰富，画面优美，以中年作品最为精彩。与吴历同有「山水派」之誉。与恽寿平私交甚笃，常切磋书画。
Yun abstained from participation in the civil service and devoted himself to painting. He travelled extensively in the areas around Jianguo, Zhejiang and Fujian provinces and was acquainted with the painters Wang Hui, Zha Shibiao (1615 - 1698) and Cheng Sui (1605 - 1691). Although he excelled in painting landscapes, Yun switched in middle age to paint flowers and birds, adopting Xu Xi (act. 11th century)’s minge (“bodiless”) method of bird-and-flower painting. By emphasizing painting from life to capture the inner spirit of the subject, his works show a sense of freshness and simple elegance. Many painters followed his style of painting, which became known as the “Changzhou School of Painting”.

This album combines four landscape paintings by Wang Hui and four floral paintings by Yun Shouping. According to the inscription, Wang finished his paintings before Yun, but the collector of the album intentionally enhanced the value of the album by inviting Yun to inscribe Wang’s paintings so as to associate Yun’s later works with Wang’s paintings.

In leaf 2 (fig. 3a), Wang created his own style by using different techniques simultaneously, combining the “small axe-cut texture stroke” and “raindrop texture stroke” techniques to add grain and texture. In another leaf by the same artist (fig. 3b), the composition is simple and clear and his brushwork is light, dry and elegant. According to Wang’s inscription, this painting recalled his happy days of fishing with Yun Shouping.

In the four leaves by Yun, there are five species of flowers painted in the minge (“bodiless”) method: they are peach blossoms, red orchids, chrysanthemums, wax plum blossoms and mandina ("heavenly bamboo"). In leaf 3 (fig. 1c), Yun depicts the wax plum together with mandina, a common winter floral arrangement in the Jiangnan area. He applied red to the mandina, yellow to the wax plum flower and blue to its leaves. Such application of colour is similar to the use of the three basic colours in the West. However, the bright colours are not exaggerated so that he conveys a sense of natural elegance and subtlety in the literary taste.

Wang Hui was a native of Changzhou, Jiangsu province. Born into a literati family, he started to paint in his early years and was especially keen on painting landscapes in the style of Huang Gongwang. Later, he was introduced to Wang Shimin by Wang Jian. Under the direct tutelage of these two older Wangs, he had the opportunity to study different collections of masterpieces from successive dynasties and travelled extensively with Wang Shimin. Ultimately, he developed consummate skill and great versatility in his painting. He attained fame with Wu Li as an important figure of the “Yiyan School of Painting”. Wang had also befriended Yun Shouping.

Yun Shouping was born to a prominent family in Changzhou, Jiangsu province.
王雋《仿王維山居積雪》(附 4)

Wang Hui  Mountain dwelling covered with snow after Wang Wei  (fig. 4)

此畫師承「王雄山居積雪」。王維（701 - 761），詩文、畫畫頗豐。晚年退隱華山，常以此為題材，繪製了很多慕魯山雪的山水作品。

此圖乃仿習山居集雪之冬景，為了表現出冬日陰暗的景象，天空及湖泊均用淡墨渲染。再山峰露出之處則用以橙或淡白以表現積雪，與後
染成暗灰色的背景相輝鋌的對稱。後壁托出
白茫茫之雲氣中，山石以簡約的皴法，以表現
雲界大地的效果。沿岸土坡之伸延及層疊交疊，
生有夢幻之風格，漢幅前方的樹叢，以深淺不同
的墨色表現其乾枯的枝葉。山腳處有一茅舍於竹
林中，從竹藤之茂密及側旁土坡之點點翠綠，可
知作者常畫雪景。茅舍中有一樹構格喻的人
物正在烹茶賞雪，又有一盡懷抱之，賦予畫境
中的幾分冬日生趣。

In the inscription, Wang Hui claimed that he painted after Wang Wei (701 - 761)'s style. Wang Wei was a famous poet and landscape painter in the Tang dynasty (618 - 907).

To express the gloomy scenery of winter, Wang Hui left the piled mountains in reserve and depicted the background sky and the river in heavy wash and uneven ink tonalities to bring out the contrast. The slightly spreading slopes and elongated bare trees are also painted with some white colour and fewer strokes to indicate the snow. At the foot of a mountain, he meticulously depicted a figure tasting tea in a pavilion surrounded by bamboo beside the lake, as well as a servant farming nearby. The light green was in the bamboo and the farmfield indicate the arrival of spring, thus presenting a scene of peaceful winter life yet full of vitality.

吳歷《湖山秋曉圖卷》(圖 5)

Wu Li  Autumn morning in the mountain lake  (fig. 5)

吳歷，字漬山，號墨井道人，桃溪居士，江蘇常熟人。傳系天主教、康熙年間（1662-1722在位）来自意大利羅馬，然因事留滯澳門，後成為神父，
並於上澳一帶傳道。從學於王鏊及時敏，故早年著作多受王鏊畫風影響，
工畫清風。吳歷上溯東晉、巨然（自唐於約900 - 約986）及「元四家」，
兼及「南北宗」各家，作畫面貌多樣化，尤擅長王蒙山水，於細細
中求神厚。

此卷為吳歷自澳門歸來後所作。全卷構景緊密，段景致互相呼應，
而後一氣呵成，應為觀察大自然寫生之作，此卷原以此以大片山頭及河岸
作景，山石結構近王家之緊密風格，用筆以乾燥細膩之「毛筆」；當中
之雲嶺結構亦含有所公共風的風味。樹叢茂密，則以數株枯樹，表現秋風將
入冬的涼意。畫中段給有小橋樓閣，疑惑的山間小路，又有石橋水塘，
未段之河岸有數截石橋及渡頭，表示有活動體，增添了分層級。這些
雖然以水墨為主，然墨色濃淡之間，墨墨疏密不均，而此卷多用焦墨，亦
為晚年理智畫作之代表作。

Wu Li was a native of Changshu, Jiangsu province. He converted to Catholicism in his middle age. He had planned a journey to Rome but was detained in Macao for many years. Later, he was ordained as a Jesuit priest and began preaching in the area near Shanghai. Wu studied painting under both Wang Jian and Wang Shemin. His early paintings were characterized by meticulous ink and brush techniques, yet his later style emitted a sense of simple elegance. Apart from studying the styles of Dong Yuan, Juran (act. 960 - ca. 986) and the "Four Masters of the Yuan Dynasty", his interest extended to the painting styles of both the Northern and Southern schools of painting, enabling him to attain a diversity of modes. He was particularly noted for painting landscapes in the style of Wang Meng, one of the "Four Masters of the Yuan Dynasty", whose influence was expressed through Wu Li's densely textured rocky masses and compact composition.

Wu Li finished this handscroll when he returned to Shanghai in his later years. The scroll is precisely composed, depicting a section of realistic scenery that might have been directly sketched from nature. At the commencement of this handscroll, he combined the styles of Wang Meng and Huang Gongwang, employing the intensive "on-hair texture stroke" of Wang Meng to build up the piled mountains and the coastal area. An atmosphere of late autumn and early winter is conveyed by his depiction of withered trees in a woodland. He also added some flat-capped ledges, in the style of Huang, to enrich the composition. Although the handscroll
此作品在構圖佈局和筆法上都顯著地師法倪瓚（1306～1374）的風格。構圖採用倪瓚典型的“一河兩岸”式佈局，前景雖有坡地疏林，以屋舍數買代
替了倪瓚的亭子，後面大片留白作水。簡河遙望對岸，則見遠處山色景
物，此外，題款又以倪瓚獨特的“折帶皴”和乾點皴帶出前景坡地和遠山疊嶂，構成的“折帶皴”由近及遠地伸展開去，使畫中產生平遠的感
覺。在畫法方面，繪有不同形式和姿態的高樹下樸，濟承倪瓚疊嶂的風
致。然而，畫面更顯樸樸樸樸，配合遠方小樹，為此畫增添畫趣。

Yun Shoupeng adopted the typical “one river, two banks” composition of Ni Zan (1306 – 1374). In the foreground a slight slope is scattered with sparse trees but Yun has replaced Ni Zan’s lone pavilion with several huts. Behind the slope is a large empty space representing the river. Across the river, in the distance, are mountains and sandbank. Yun Shoupeng has employed Ni Zan’s unique “folded belt texture stroke” to paint the slope in the foreground and the cliffs in the background. The composition renders a deeper perspective to the viewer. The six tall trees of different species are also reminiscent of Ni Zan’s style. But the tree leaves look moister than those in Ni Zan’s painting, and at the same time echo the bushes shown afar, thus adding a sense of natural richness to the painting.

王原祁，《仿黃公望山水圖》(圖 7)

Wang Yuanqi Landscape after the style of Huang Gongwang (Fig. 7)

王原祁，字默京，號蘇台、江蘇太倉人，太倉文人。王時敏孫。康熙九年
(1670) 进士，官至戶部左侍郎，人稱“王司農”。供奉內廷，奉勅官名
畫，充《賦文齋書畫冊》纂修官。幼年即親得王時敏及王原祁授業，臨
摹家藏名跡，尤摹黃公望深得三昧。與王時敏、王原祁合稱“董李派”。

Wang Yuanqi was a native of Liaocheng, Jiangsu province, and the grandson of Wang Shimin. He was a Metropolitan Graduate (*jinhua*) in 1670 and promoted to the post of Left Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Revenue. In 1705, he was appointed editor-in-chief of the imperial encyclopedic work, *Prienzchau shihkuan* (A Register of Calligraphy and Painting of the Peiwen Studio). As a youth, he had received direct tuition from Wang Shimin and Wang Jian and thus became heir to the Orthodox painting tradition. He assiduously copied masterpieces from his family’s collection of old paintings and calligraphy, forging an individual style after the masters of the Five Dynasties (907 – 960) and the Yuan dynasty. His landscapes, much indebted to the brushwork of Huang Gongwang, were painted with layers of dry brushstrokes. In his later years, his landscape style was imbued with a sense of archaic bluntness and forceful simplicity. He had an extensive following and was regarded as one of the leaders of the “Loulou School of Painting”.

Wang Yuanqi’s understanding of Huang Gongwang’s composition, brush techniques and depiction of objects were gained through Dong Qichang and his grandmother Wang Shimin. The tips of the few tall trees in the foreground are connected with the hillside in the centre of the picture. The circuitous mountains lead the viewer to the dominant mountain peak in the background. Wang Yuanqi named this ink-up technique *langezi* (“dragon veins”). He deliberately left blank space between mountains to represent the steam of clouds, ensuring that the composition is not too compact. This variation from the style of the master makes Wang Yuanqi’s landscape powerful and distinctive.