

書苑

流芳園典藏書法作品展

袁志海題



A GARDEN OF WORDS

THE CALLIGRAPHY OF LIU FANG YUAN

PART 2

INTRODUCTION

Words are everywhere in Liu Fang Yuan. Names adorn rocks and buildings; poetic couplets frame entryways and vistas. Since 2007 The Huntington has commissioned more than thirty contemporary artists to create the original works of calligraphy—artful brush writings in ink on paper—that served as the models for these inscriptions. The artists include professional calligraphers and avid amateurs, scholars and physicians, a Chinese painter living in New York and a New York photographer residing in China.

These artists' works demonstrate the tensions that lie at the heart of calligraphy. Although calligraphy is crafted with the simplest materials (brush, ink, and paper), its visual forms are myriad. Though written according to rigid rules, it enables sophisticated forms of self-expression. Though rooted in three thousand years of tradition, it remains fertile ground for experimentation in the present.

This exhibition provides four foundational perspectives for contemplating calligraphy: its content, its materials, its forms, and its futures. A short description accompanies each work; biographies of the artists are available here and on the exhibition webpage; two videos provide further insight into their practices and approaches. As you view these inscriptions, we hope that your eyes—and mind—will be opened to new ways of appreciating the garden of words that flourishes outside.

AESTHETICS

Calligraphy is perhaps most easily appreciated as a dance-like art of line. Imagine the brush as a dancer that rises and falls, twists and turns in space, leaving lines of ink on the paper as indexes of its motion. Individual brushstrokes are like dance steps: viewers might note their sense of lightness or heaviness, smoothness or roughness, fluidity or hesitation; and they might appreciate the ways in which the calligrapher subtly varies the form of strokes that are repeated in the same character. Viewers might assess the balance of each character's structure like the posture of a dancer—balance either stable or dynamic; structure either symmetrical or asymmetrical, loose or compressed. Ultimately, viewers might trace the implied line woven among the characters in an inscription, paying special attention to its rhythm—which may be regular, syncopated, or completely free.

Historically, however, calligraphy was often read in physiognomic terms. Readers looked for the “bones,” “flesh,” and “sinews” of a calligrapher's characters, drawing inferences about the writer's personality or mental state. Indeed, a common idiom claims that “characters are like the person [who brushed them].” This belief in the identity of characters and character led many commentators to conceive of calligraphy's simple lines as a medium of imaginative communion that linked calligrapher and viewer, past and present.



BAI QIANSHEN

(born 1955, Tianjin, China; active China and United States)

Studio for Lodging the Mind, 2018

Handscroll, ink on paper; calligraphy written in running-regular script

B2018.8.1

Brushed on paper flecked with gold and silver foil, Bai Qianshen's characters seem to lilt through space. Bai writes with a saturated brush whose wet ink bleeds slightly into the paper, obscuring harsh lines while still conveying a sense of dance-like motion. Further, Bai rounds the heads and tails of his strokes to imbue his characters with a sense of pleasing softness. Within the aesthetic unity of his brushwork, however, Bai pursues subtle variation, filling the inscription with liveliness. For example, each of the inscription's seventeen dots has a unique form—and each one seems to be endowed with its own personality.

A historian and practitioner of calligraphy, **BAI QIANSHEN** currently serves as the first director of the School of Art and Archaeology at Zhejiang University. He previously taught at Boston University, where he led an innovative graduate program combining study of the history and practice of calligraphy. His English-language publications include *Fu Shan's World: The Transformation of Chinese Calligraphy in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003) and essays on the eccentric painter and calligrapher Bada Shanren (ca. 1626–1705). *Shu fa* (Calligraphy), the most popular journal of calligraphy in China, named Bai one of the top ten calligraphers of 2004.

CONTENT

Chinese calligraphy is, simply, the art of writing *hanzi*, or Chinese characters.

Every character is composed of a series of strokes written in a standard order. The left side of a character is generally written before the right, the upper part before the lower. Collectively, these strokes communicate meaning—and, often, pronunciation. A small number of characters pictographically mimic what they signify; for example, *shan* 山, which means “mountain,” presents the abstracted form of soaring peaks. Other characters function as ideographs, conveying ideas without directly depicting them. Most commonly, characters link semantics and phonetics: one component suggests its general sense; another indicates its pronunciation.

In the works displayed in this exhibition, characters are joined to record the names of garden landmarks or to transcribe poetic couplets. These inscriptions are read according to historical convention: horizontal placards are traced from right to left; vertical writings, from top to bottom; couplets, from the right column to the left. However, content is only one dimension of calligraphic art. Inscriptions can also be enjoyed purely as graphic, even abstract, artworks.



XUE LONGCHUN

(born 1971, Gaoyou, Jiangsu Province, China; active China)

***Cloudy Forest Court*, 2018**

Handscroll, ink on paper; calligraphy written in clerical script
B2018.12.1

There is something curious about Xue Longchun's characters. His lines are uneven—their heads comically enlarged, their tails impossibly distended. Some strokes, such as the uppermost horizontal in the right-hand character (*yun* 雲, "cloudy"), begin heavily saturated with ink but end in chaotic desiccation. Seemingly continuous strokes, such as the verticals in the middle character (*lin* 林, "forest"), paradoxically expand, bend, and break in midmotion. But there is a method to this eccentricity: his assemblage of unexpected, even contradictory traits ultimately creates a sense of dynamic balance. The heaviness of the left side of the left character (*yuan* 院, "court"), for example, anchors the exaggerated reach of the final stroke, which sweeps to the right.

XUE LONGCHUN earned his doctorate in the history of calligraphy from Nanjing University of the Arts and currently serves as a professor in the School of Art and Archaeology of Zhejiang University in Hangzhou. His research has been published in both Chinese and English, including in the catalogue for *Out of Character: Decoding Chinese Calligraphy* (San Francisco: Asian Art Museum, 2012), the most important exhibition of calligraphy in the United States in recent decades. Xue is also an accomplished practitioner of calligraphy in his own right and has shown his work in a number of major exhibitions in China.

STROKE ORDER



THE CONTENT OF CHARACTERS

Chinese characters convey meaning and sound in a variety of ways. This inscription exemplifies several of the most common means by which characters communicate.

YUN

“Cloudy”

Pictograph/Phonetic Ideograph

Originally, *yun* 雲 simply depicted a “cloud twisting in the sky.” The upper “rain” 雨 element was added to distinguish it from a similar character. Today, *yun* can be understood as conveying both meaning (“a phenomenon related to rain”) and sound (“a character pronounced like *yun* 云”).

LIN

“Forest”

Pictograph

Lin depicts a “grove” or “forest” of two trees (木+木).

YUAN

“Court”

Phonetic Ideograph

Yuan combines a semantic component depicting “mounds” 阝 and the sound component “wan” 完—hence its meaning, “a space surrounded by walls and pronounced like *wan*.”

MATERIALS

Writing calligraphy requires only three basic materials: an animal-hair brush, some soot-based ink, and a sheet of paper or silk. In combination, these materials can create an almost infinite variety of visual effects. Experimenting with the softness of the brush, the diluteness of the ink, and the smoothness of the paper allows a calligrapher to imbue the same character with an entirely different spirit. Particular brushes, inks, and papers are also sometimes conventionally associated with the writing of individual script types and with specific contexts of display.

Before a work is considered complete, the artist signs their name in ink and impresses one or more seals that have been dipped in an oily red paste. The work is then mounted on thick backing paper and surrounded with a silk border. The mounting provides an aesthetic frame for the calligraphy and protects it as it is rolled and unrolled for storage and display.

BRUSH

A calligraphy brush is composed of an animal-hair tip embedded in a shaft of bamboo or lacquered wood (or even jade or ivory). The tip typically consists of four layers: an inner core of long, stiff hairs that give structure; a mantle of shorter hairs; a small open space that serves as a reservoir for ink; and an outer layer of longer, flexible hairs that sensitively transcribe the motion of the artist's hand. By adjusting the pressure with which the brush contacts the paper, the calligrapher can create both wiry lines and dramatic dots. Shafts of various lengths and tips of varied hairs are employed to write different scripts.

INK

Although some contemporary calligraphers use synthetic bottled ink, many still employ ink sticks. These small tablets are composed of soot produced from pine wood or various tree oils that is bound with a glue (often derived from boiled animal hides) and formed in a mold. The ink stick is ground against a soft inkstone with a small quantity of water and/or bottled ink to create a dense black liquid that flows smoothly but does not run.

PAPER

Chinese calligraphers use paper composed of fibers derived from various plants, including both trees and grasses. Xuan paper, made primarily from the bark of the blue sandalwood tree (*Pteroceltis tatarinowii*), is particularly prized. Its consistent surface absorbs ink evenly, while its soft, flexible fibers allow it to hold ink even after repeated washing—for example, during mounting and conservation. Papers are often treated with solutions of alum sizing (potassium aluminum sulfate) to create a smoother, less absorbent surface better suited to precise, detailed brushwork.

SEAL

The red marks that adorn the works of calligraphy in this exhibition are known as seals. Each mark is produced by a stone—or sometimes a piece of metal, wood, or ceramic—engraved with the artist's name, sobriquet, or a phrase of particular personal meaning. The engraved seal is dipped in a red paste consisting of cinnabar, castor oil, and Chinese mugwort (*Artemisia argyi*); it is then impressed on the paper with great pressure. Historical works of painting and calligraphy often bear the seals of collectors or viewers who have admired the object.



LO CH'ING [LO CH'ING-CHE]

(born 1948, Qingdao, Shandong Province, China; active Taiwan)

Strolling in the Moonlight, 2007

Hanging scroll, ink on paper; calligraphy written in running script
B2007.19

Textually invoking a moonlight stroll, Lo Ch'ing's characters visually suggest a shadowy figure walking beneath a celestial (or extraterrestrial?) body above. The artist has chosen to write on thin paper composed of long, loosely aggregated fibers that quickly absorb and disperse ink. Lo has further diluted the liquid so that it will spread chaotically after he brushes the simple strokes of the characters; consequently, the individual brushstrokes are partially obscured by bleeding halos. In the lower character (*yue* 月, "moon"), in particular, loose paper and dilute ink combine to create the impression of an indeterminate being, whose ambiguous body stands in contrast to the comparatively clear form that floats above.

A poet, painter, and calligrapher, **LO CH'ING** long served as the chair of the English Department at Mingdao University in Taiwan and the director of the school's Tiemei Art Center. He previously held a distinguished professorship at National Taiwan Normal University. He is widely published, and his award-winning works of poetry have been translated into eleven languages. Lo's paintings and calligraphy have been collected by such museums as the Ashmolean Museum (Oxford), the British Museum, the National Art Museum of China (Beijing), the St. Louis Art Museum, and the Taipei Fine Arts Museum.



TERRY YUAN [YUAN ZHIZHONG]

(born 1954, Shanghai; active United States)

***Terrace that Invites the Mountains*, 2007**

Hanging scroll, ink on paper; calligraphy written in running script
B2007.6

Brushed on smooth, evenly textured paper, Terry Yuan's characters manifest a remarkable range of visual effects. In certain passages, Yuan has so saturated his brush with ink that it partially bleeds into the paper, creating the halo-like effect visible around the upper strokes of the bottom character (*tai* 臺, "terrace"). However, while the wet ink of the lowermost horizontal of that character had yet to suffuse the paper, he quickly pulled his brush upward to create the dramatic vertical bridge that links to the character's final dot. Thanks to the paper's slight resistance to quick bleeding, that bridge is formed of ink that has dried with almost three-dimensional presence.

As a child in Shanghai, **TERRY YUAN** studied painting and calligraphy under Liu Haisu (1896–1994), one of the most important painters and art educators in twentieth-century China. Yuan subsequently studied with the avant-garde calligrapher Aoyagi Shirō in Japan. Since 1992 he has taught Chinese calligraphy in the Los Angeles area and has exhibited his works throughout the United States and Asia. His calligraphy has been collected by institutions in both the United States and Asia and was also featured in the film *Rush Hour 3*. He currently lives with his family in Arcadia, California.



TANG QINGNIAN

(born 1956, Beijing; active United States)

A chamber's elegance depends not on its size; flowers' fragrance lies not in their number (after a couplet by Zheng Xie, 1693–1766), 2018

Pair of hanging scrolls, ink on paper; calligraphy written in running script

B2018.6.7a–b

Tang Qingnian's inscription is written on "raw" Xuan paper, untreated with alum sizing. The paper has quickly absorbed the artist's ink, creating the halo-like effect around each character. The artist imbues his running script with further softness by rounding the beginning and ending motions of many strokes, as exemplified by the second and fourth characters of each line. However, Tang balances this gentleness with the blunt tails and flaring diagonals of characters such as the first and last of the left column. He adapts this bold brushwork from seal and clerical scripts. Such a combination of scripts—particularly of running and clerical—is characteristic of the style of Zheng Xie, the eighteenth-century poet-painter who composed the couplet that Tang has inscribed.

A graduate of the Central Academy of Art and Design in Beijing, **TANG QINGNIAN** first entered the art world as a critic and editor for the influential magazine *Meishu* (Art Monthly) during the mid-1980s. Notably, he served as a member of the organizing committee for the seminal *China Avant-garde* exhibition held in Beijing in February 1989; the show became an international news sensation after it was twice shut down by government forces. Since relocating to the United States in 1991, Tang has worked in a variety of media, including graphic design, painting, sculpture, and video. He was the 2019–20 Cheng Family Foundation Visiting Artist in Liu Fang Yuan.

THE ELEMENTS OF AN INSCRIPTION

Whereas brush, ink, and paper are the physical tools with which a work of calligraphy is produced, various kinds of writing constitute its textual materials. This couplet includes the fullest complement of such materials—a main inscription, the artist's signature, the date the work was executed, multiple artist's seals, and a notation concerning the source of the main inscription.

SIGNATURE AND DATE

"Written by
Qingnian in
early summer
2018"

SEAL 2

"Old Tang"

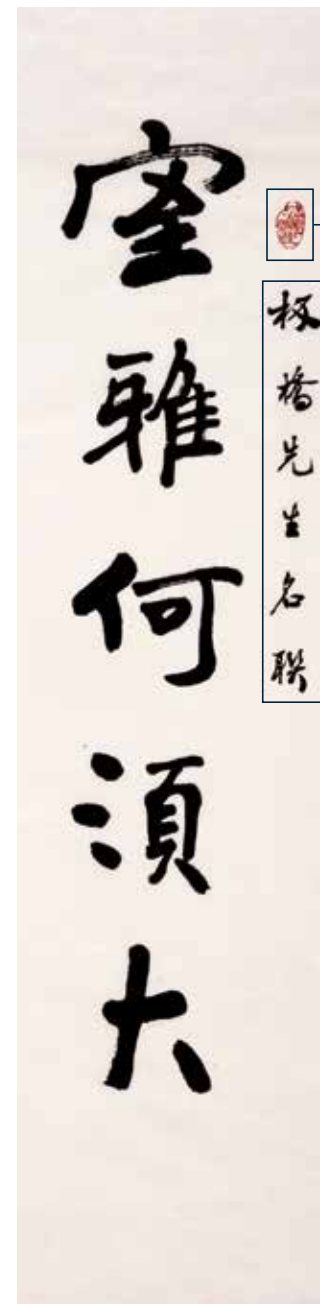
SEAL 3

"Qingnian"



MAIN TEXT 2

"Flowers' fragrance lies
not in their number"



SEAL 1

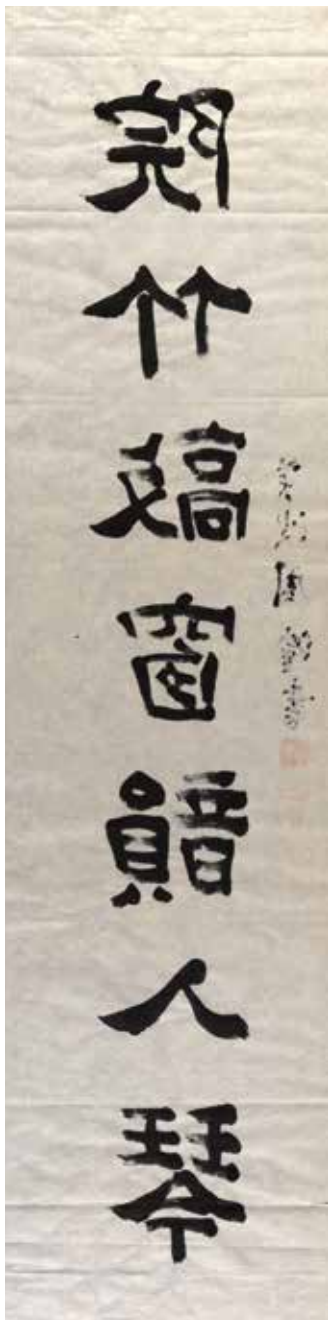
"Eye-filling
splendor"

SOURCE

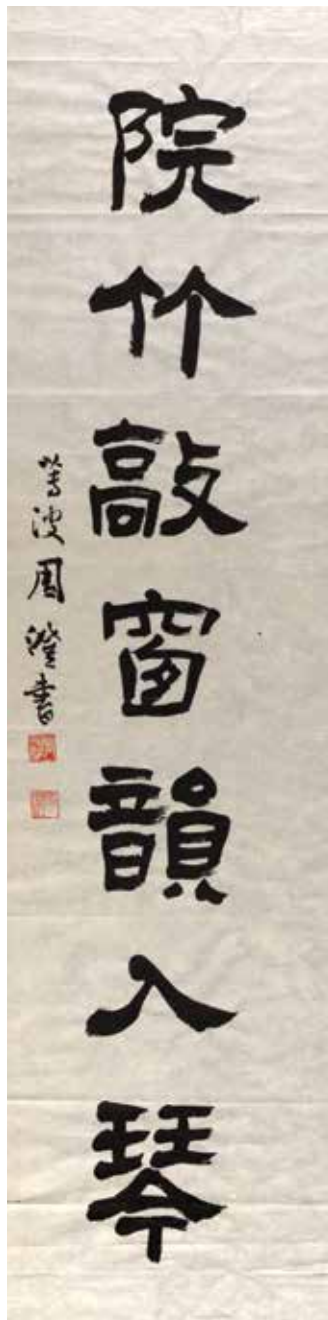
"A famous
couplet by Mr.
Plank Bridge
[Zheng Xie,
1693–1766]"

MAIN TEXT 1

"A chamber's elegance
depends not on its size"



VERSO



RECTO

CHOU CHENG

(born 1941, Yilan County, Taiwan; active Taiwan)

The bamboo in the courtyard taps on the windows, its rhythm entering the zither

(after a couplet by Zeng Guoquan, 1824–1890), 2018

One of a pair of hanging scrolls, ink on paper; calligraphy written in clerical script
B2018.4.3b

Viewed from the front, Chou Cheng's inscription simply appears to have been executed in saturated ink applied by a brush that moved smoothly over the surface of the evenly textured paper. The verso of the scroll tells a more nuanced story. The interplay between heavily inked dots and mottled lines reveals when, and with how much pressure, Chou applied his brush to the paper or moved it across the surface. Note, for example, the top horizontal of the third character (*qiao* 敲, "taps"), which appears smooth and saturated on the recto. The verso, however, reveals that the stroke began with a small, distinctly articulated head. Chou then pushed his brush horizontally, pausing slightly just beyond the stroke's midpoint as he prepared to lift his brush to create the "flying white" effect that concludes the stroke.

Best known for his work as a painter and art educator in Taiwan, **CHOU CHENG** is also a well-regarded poet, calligrapher, and seal carver. He has shown his paintings and calligraphy throughout Asia, the United States, England, and Canada. In 2003 he became the first contemporary Taiwanese artist to exhibit his works at the Palace Museum in Beijing. Today, he serves as an advisor to multiple arts organizations in Taiwan, and he is artist-in-residence at Tamkang University in Taipei.

FORMS

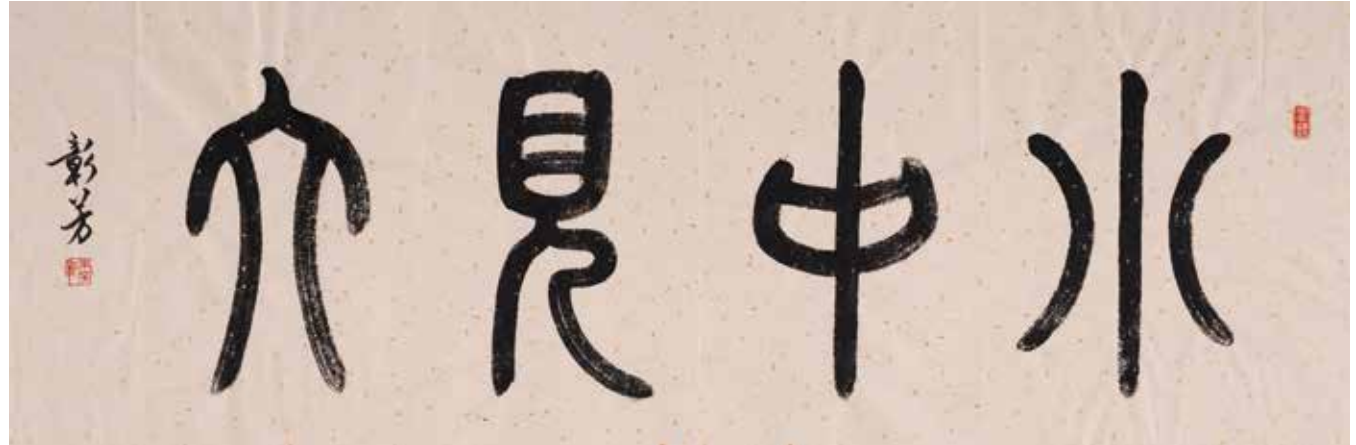
Five basic types of calligraphic scripts are generally recognized today: seal, clerical, regular, running, and cursive. Each has its own standardized visual features and particular contexts of use.

Both in the past and in the present, calligraphers typically begin with the study of regular script. After mastering its highly precise brush movements, they may turn to the dynamic abbreviation of running or cursive scripts, or they may study the archaic forms of seal and clerical scripts. They gain important experience by methodically copying the works of earlier artists. Fusing their study of various script types and of individual calligraphers' works, they develop their own unique style.

Scholarly gardens such as Liu Fang Yuan typically are filled with inscriptions in running script, an informal, personal form of writing. Seal and clerical scripts are often used to showcase an artist's (or garden owner's) extraordinary personality or erudition. Highly formal regular script and abstract cursive script are found less frequently in gardens.

SEAL SCRIPT

Named for its common use on seals, seal script derives from the earliest forms of Chinese writing—brush-written characters engraved with a stylus in bone, clay, bronze, or stone. When writing seal script, calligraphers generally strive to maintain even lines, smooth curves, and a balanced, often symmetrical structure. To achieve these effects, they write with an upright brush manipulated more slowly than for other scripts. The strokes themselves are constructed differently. For example, a seemingly continuous horizontal line may actually be written in two motions: from left edge to center, and then from right edge to center. Because of its antiquity, seal script can confer a sense of gravitas; its dramatic visual difference from other scripts, however, has often provided calligraphers with the impetus to experiment.



GRACE CHU [CHU CHANG-FANG]

(born 1959, Taipei, Taiwan; active United States)

Seeing the Large in the Small, 2018

Handscroll, ink on paper; calligraphy written in seal script
B2018.23.1

Brushed in dry ink on smooth, foil-flecked paper, the unmodulated lines of Grace Chu's characters manifest a remarkable range of visual and textural effects. Each of Chu's brushstrokes transitions from inky saturation to chalky dryness. Certain passages—such as the right side of the second character (*zhong* 中, “in”), whose thin, mottled ink struggles to adhere to the paper—even suggest granitic veneers. Such effects depend on Chu's careful control of her brush, whose tip remains perfectly centered in every stroke. Such precision is clearly visible in the rounded ends of her strokes, where she has twisted her drying brush hairs in a final flourish, creating an effect of charcoal-like granularity.

A native of Taiwan, **GRACE CHU** studied accounting at Feng Chia University before immigrating to the United States in 1993. Chu is an avid practitioner of both Chinese and Western painting, and she has a particular passion for Chinese calligraphy, which she has studied with Terry Yuan. She has frequently shown her work in exhibitions in Los Angeles, Shanghai, and Taipei. Having served as president of the Los Angeles Nan-Feng Art Association from 2014 to 2016, Chu is now a member of the Chinese Calligraphy and Painting Society of U.S.A. and serves on the executive council of the Chinese Painting Institute (United States branch).



XU SHIPING

(born 1969, Zhangjiagang, Jiangsu Province, China; active China)

***Cultivated Elegance*, 2018**

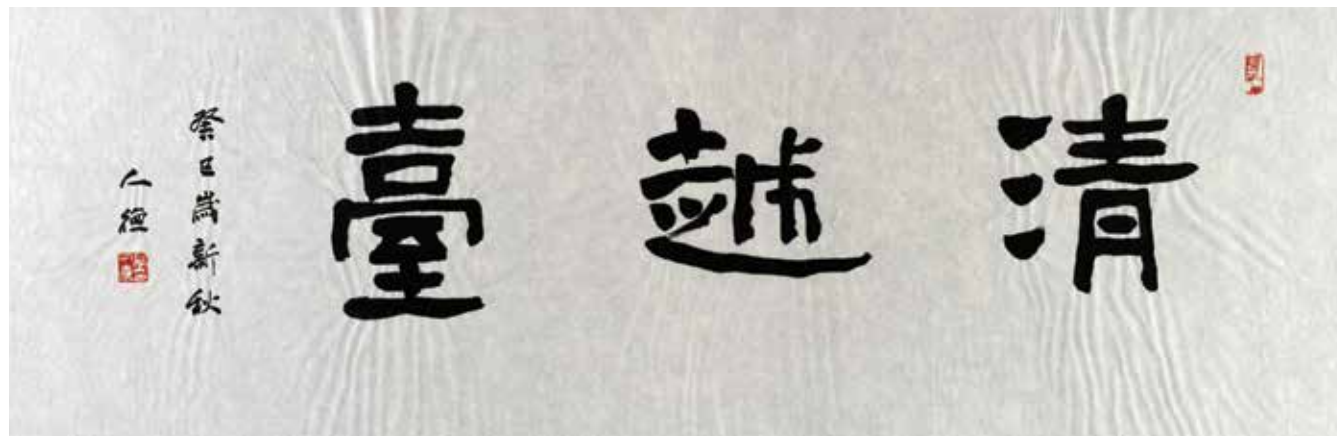
Hanging scroll, ink on paper; calligraphy written in seal script
B2018.10.2

The archaic dynamism of Xu Shiping's characters speaks to the transformation of seal script over several millennia. Xu particularly looks to the work of Wu Changshuo (1844–1927), who was renowned for his synthesis of earlier styles. For example, the asymmetrical structure of Xu's upper character (*bo* 博, "cultivated") draws from Wu's adaptations of "greater" seal script used on ancient stone and bronze vessels. Such models also underlie the dramatic contrasts between the large heads and thin tails, rounded tips and blunt ends, saturated dots and scratchy horizontals of that character's strokes. The comparatively even strokes and balanced structure of the lower character (*ya* 雅, "elegance") incorporate elements of "lesser" seal script, a standardized form of writing developed during the Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE).

Born the son of Xu Boqing (1926–2010), a well-known calligrapher and collector of Chinese art, **XU SHIPING** has been immersed in calligraphy since childhood. Beginning in the late 1980s, the younger Xu began exhibiting his own calligraphy publicly in China. He subsequently moved to New York to study painting and calligraphy with C. C. Wang (1907–2003), the influential artist and collector who trained a generation of painters and connoisseurs of Chinese art in the United States. Today, Xu teaches calligraphy at Soochow University in his home province of Jiangsu.

CLERICAL SCRIPT

Clerical script may have been developed by governmental scribes in the last few centuries before the Common Era. Charged with drafting vast numbers of documents, they required a form of writing that could be executed more quickly than seal script. Clerical script is distinguished by the comparatively broad, horizontal composition of the characters and by the wide, exuberant ends of certain strokes, particularly diagonals. To create these tense lines and flared finishes, calligraphers must dramatically vary the pressure that they apply to the brush tip. Much like seal script, the archaic visual drama of clerical script has long inspired calligraphic play.



HUA RENDE

(born 1947, Wuxi, Jiangsu Province, China; active China)

Clear and Transcendent Terrace, 2013

Handscroll, ink on paper; calligraphy written in clerical script
B2013.1.8

Since the eighteenth century, clerical script has served as a medium for remarkable formal experimentation. Hua Rende's inscription is filled with such visual play. His every quivering line and quaking dot is rendered (typically with an upright brush) to suggest infinite variation and to create unexpected interest. For example, each of the work's horizontal strokes begins and ends in an unpredictable manner. Some bear bulbous round heads. Others conclude in blunt square tails. A few strokes even taper into wavering flourishes. Despite this stroke-focused dynamism, the characters themselves are endowed with a comparatively stable, balanced structure. In this tension between stroke and structure, variation and stability, a distinct visual allure is created.

One of China's foremost practitioners and historians of calligraphy, **HUA RENDE** long served as Director of Special Reference Collections at Soochow University Library. He has published on a range of topics in the history of calligraphy and has extensively exhibited his own works. An English-language catalogue of his work, *Reflections on Forgotten Surfaces: The Calligraphy of Hua Rende* (Walla Walla, WA: Donald H. Sheehan Gallery, Whitman College, 2005), includes an essay by Bai Qianshen, whose work is also featured in this exhibition.



BETH TUAN [CHANG HUNG-MEI]

(born 1947, Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, China; active United States)

Sailing toward autumnal light, we are first to catch the moon; listening to vernal rain, we make no waves (after a couplet at Yaobi Shanfang, Tiger Hill, Suzhou), 2013

Pair of hanging scrolls, ink on paper; calligraphy written in clerical script

B2013.1.7a–b

At first glance, the exaggerated width, bold horizontals, and flaring diagonals of Beth Tuan's characters appear typical of classical exemplars of clerical script. However, the dramatic curves and distortions that she introduces to certain strokes suggest her incorporation and adaptation of other models. For example, the downward stroke near the middle of the final character of the left line (*bo* 波, "waves"), which typically would be rendered as a left-curving diagonal, is bent almost like a bow, primed to spring into action. Further, Tuan brushes the ending hook of that character's upper horizontal as an exuberant finial that punctuates the visual drama of the inscription as a whole. Collectively, this combination of classical forms and unexpected details imbues Tuan's characters with a distinctive personal style.

Born in China and raised in Taiwan, **BETH TUAN** immigrated to the United States in 1970 after graduating from college. Since 1993, she has studied calligraphy with Terry Yuan in the San Gabriel Valley. An avid practitioner of all script types, she has shown her works in international exhibitions in Macau and Taipei, as well as in the biennial exhibition of works by Terry Yuan and students, held alternately in Los Angeles, Taipei, and Shanghai. From 1997 to 2015, she participated in the annual Japanese Calligraphy Competition in America (organized in Los Angeles), where she was awarded a first prize in 2000.

REGULAR SCRIPT

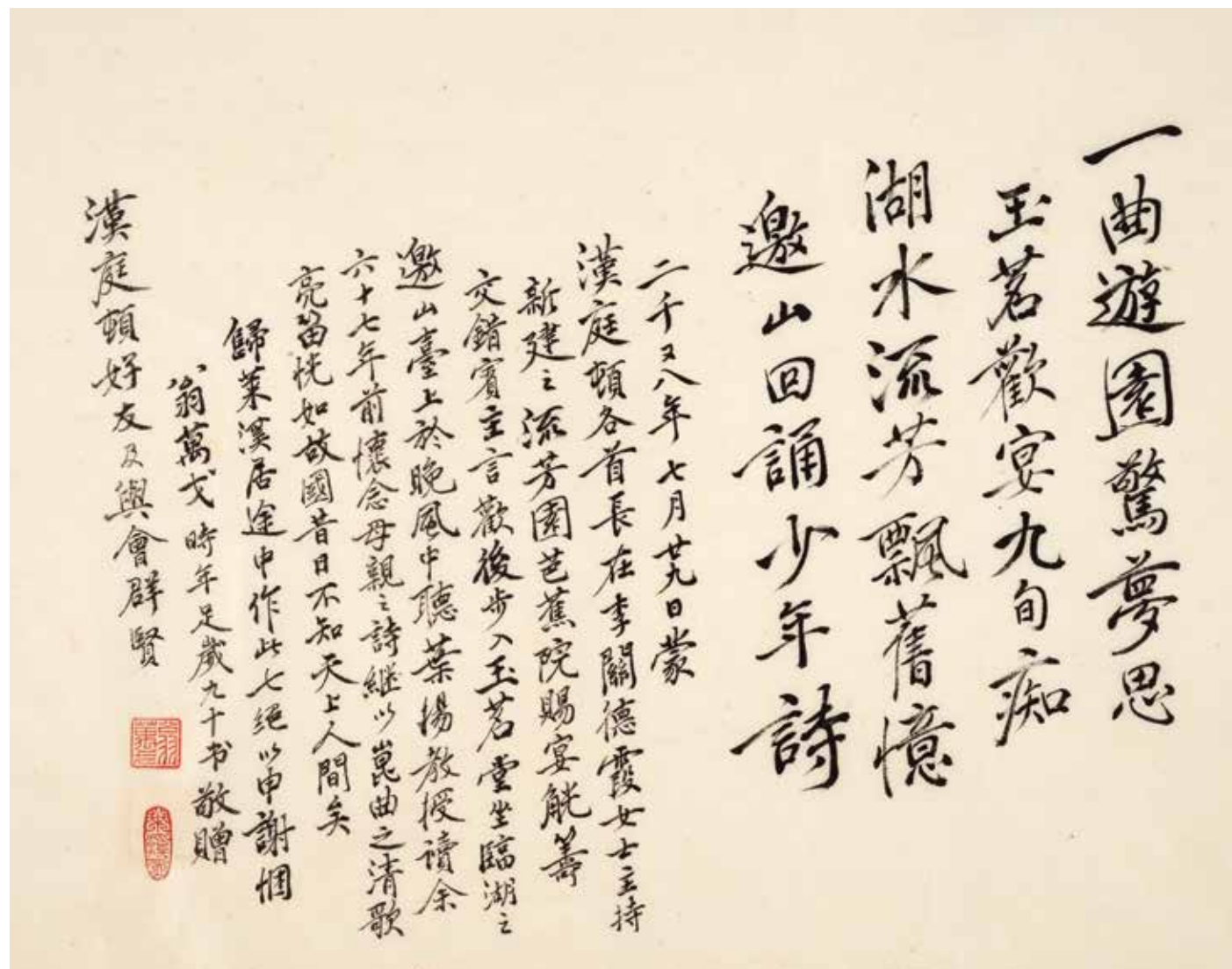
Likely the last script type to have reached its mature form, regular (or “standard”) script provides the foundation for the typefaces employed in most publications and digital applications today. Its characters are generally square in composition, the left side anchoring the right. Its lines are moderately, but not dramatically, modulated. Each stroke begins and ends with distinct brush movements that create implied connections to the preceding and following strokes. The resultant characters are highly legible and comfortably balanced but imbued with an internal energy. When written by hand, regular script is usually reserved for formal contexts, such as transcribing scriptures or inscribing the name of an important building; consequently, it is rarely used in the informal space of a garden.

WAN-GO H. C. WENG

(born 1918, Shanghai; active United States)

Commemorative Poem for Liu Fang Yuan, 2008

Handscroll, ink on paper; calligraphy written in small regular script
B2008.1



The lengthiest inscription in the exhibition, this poem and colophon by Wan-go Weng commemorate the celebration of his ninetieth birthday at Liu Fang Yuan in 2008. His exquisite characters combine elements of both regular and running scripts. Despite their small size, almost every stroke is precisely articulated, their heads and tails rendered with perfect precision. Only rarely (as in the first character of the third line, *hu* 湖, “lake”) does Weng choose to speed his brush, abbreviating strokes to create visual variety. Further, Weng writes his characters at an unusually dramatic angle, almost allowing them to take flight from the paper. This inscription will one day adorn an entrance to the garden.

TRANSLATION

Roaming the garden arouses dreamy thoughts;
in the Jade Camellia, they celebrate this dotard of ninety years.
Fragrances flow over lake waters, carrying memories of the past;
at Invites the Mountains, a poem of my youth is recited.

On July 29, 2008, the heads of The Huntington, led by Ms. June Li, held a boozy banquet in the Plantain Court of the newly constructed Liu Fang Yuan. After hosts and guests exchanged cheerful words, we walked into the Hall of the Jade Camellia and sat overlooking the lake on the Terrace that Invites the Mountains. In the evening breeze, we listened to Professor Yang Ye recite a poem that I wrote in memory of my mother sixty-seven years ago, as well as pure arias of the Kun opera tradition. The light lingering just like in days past in my homeland, I knew not whether we were in the heavens above or the mundane world of mortals.

Returning to my home on Lyme Creek, I wrote this seven-character quatrain in sincere thanks.

Inscribed and respectfully presented by Wan-go Weng, in his ninetieth year, to his good friends at The Huntington and to the assembled worthies who attended the gathering.

As a child, **WAN-GO H. C. WENG** was immersed in classical Chinese culture. His great-great-grandfather Weng Tonghe (1830–1904)—who served as an imperial tutor—had amassed a significant collection of Chinese painting, calligraphy, and books that the younger Weng studied closely. Since leaving China in 1938, he has made his home in the United States, working as a scholar, poet, artist, and author. He was a pioneer in the production of documentary films about Chinese culture, and he served as one of the original members of the advisory committee for Liu Fang Yuan.

RUNNING SCRIPT

Running (or “semi-cursive”) script refers to a variety of calligraphic forms, ranging from characters that are almost illegibly abstract to others that differ little from regular script. Strokes within a character may physically connect to one another, their beginnings and ends less distinctly articulated than in regular script. Individual characters, however, remain physically separated from one another. It is often thought that artists can most clearly express something of their personality in running script. Such a script is, then, what a calligrapher might use when signing their name or when writing a letter. The script is frequently employed in informal contexts, such as inscriptions of the names of garden features.



FU SHEN

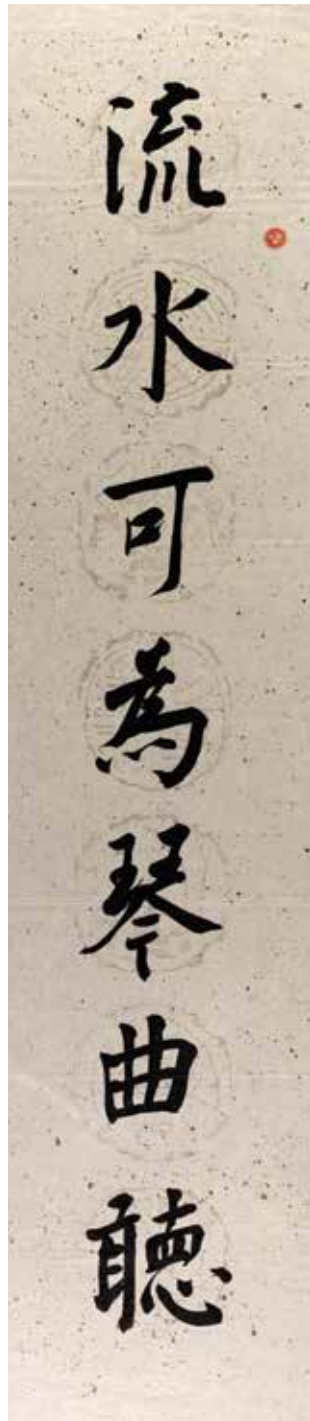
(born 1937, Shanghai; active Taiwan, United States, and China)

Court of Assembled Worthies, 2018

Handscroll, ink on paper; calligraphy written in running script
B2018.7.1

On a sunny August afternoon in 2018, the eighty-one-year-old Fu Shen visited The Huntington to execute this inscription in a spontaneous display of calligraphic bravura. Despite—or perhaps *to spite*—his failing constitution and tremulous limbs, Fu held his brush with unshaking confidence and manipulated it with absolute precision. Thanks to his dramatic incorporation of “flying white” effects (most visible in his diagonals and hooks), his characters palpably pulse with internal energy. Fu draws inspiration for the structure of his characters and the drama of their strokes from the works of Huang Tingjian (1045–1105), a renowned poet and calligrapher who was the subject of Fu’s doctoral dissertation.

Among the most admired historians and practitioners of calligraphy alive today, **FU SHEN** was born in Shanghai and immigrated to Taiwan in 1950 with his family. As an undergraduate at Taiwan Normal University, he studied painting, calligraphy, and seal carving. Subsequently, he earned a PhD in art history from Princeton University, later teaching and curating at Yale University and the Freer Gallery of Art. Since returning to Taiwan in 1994, he has published widely on the history and connoisseurship of calligraphy and exhibited his own works worldwide. In 2017–18, his paintings and calligraphy were the subject of an important retrospective at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco.



BAI QIANSHEN

(born 1955, Tianjin, China; active China and United States)

Flowing water can be listened to like the tune of a zither; a fine mountain should be seen as an image in a painting, 2007

Pair of hanging scrolls, ink on paper; calligraphy written in running-regular script
B2007.40a–b

Brushed on foil-flecked paper decorated with designs inspired by circular roof tiles, Bai Qianshen's characters rest lightly, seemingly ready to spring into the air. Bai achieves this sprightliness by writing his horizontal strokes at a consistent, upward angle; by subtly varying the boldness and modulation of his lines; and by introducing slightly eccentric spatial rhythms into the structure of his characters. For example, in the final character at left (*kan* 看, "seen"), he creates a dynamic balance between the compressed upper component and the exaggerated lower radical, and he complements the bold central horizontal with a leftward diagonal ending in a hair-thin flourish.

A historian and practitioner of calligraphy, **BAI QIANSHEN** currently serves as the first director of the School of Art and Archaeology at Zhejiang University. He previously taught at Boston University, where he led an innovative graduate program combining study of the history and practice of calligraphy. His English-language publications include *Fu Shan's World: The Transformation of Chinese Calligraphy in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003) and essays on the eccentric painter and calligrapher Bada Shanren (ca. 1626–1705). *Shu fa* (Calligraphy), the most popular journal of calligraphy in China, named Bai one of the top ten calligraphers of 2004.



CURSIVE SCRIPT

Cursive (or “draft”) script emerged as a quickly written variant of seal and clerical scripts when these scripts were being formalized. Over time, standardized methods of simplifying the structure of all characters were developed; consequently, cursive script remains legible to those trained in it despite its seemingly chaotic abstraction. The flexible compositional conventions of cursive writing allow calligraphers to vary the size and form of characters, filling the paper with visual drama. Its formal exuberance—lightning-like lines, dramatic dashes and dots, endless verticals that drain the brush of its ink—stimulates the imagination of viewers. One premodern poet, for example, memorably likened cursive script to “whirling winds and driving rains, blowing fetter-free; falling flowers and flying snow, stretching endlessly!”

MICHAEL CHERNEY [QIU MAI]

(born 1969, New York; active China)

Flowery Grove, 2018

Hanging scroll, ink on paper; calligraphy written in cursive script
B2018.3.1a–b

Written with a brush heavily laden with ink, Michael Cherney’s characters are a study in the drama of wetness and dryness, stillness and motion. The first stroke of each character begins with an exaggerated head created by the quick transfer of ink to paper; in the lower character (*lin* 林, “grove”), excess ink solids have even dried into lacquer-like ridges. As Cherney’s brush began to move, its outer hairs quickly dried, leaving behind the scratchy traces known as “flying white.” In the right-hand vertical of *lin*, the different rates at which sections of the brush tip dried have created an almost illusionistic effect—as though the left half of the stroke is illuminated, while the right remains hidden in shadow.

Born to a Jewish family in New York, **MICHAEL CHERNEY** is perhaps better known to the art world as Qiu Mai, the sobriquet that he has adopted for his artistic practice that bridges China and the United States. A photographer, calligrapher, and book artist, his work thoughtfully responds both to Chinese literati practices of painting and calligraphy and to contemporary American practices of photography (and even music). Today, he lives in Beijing, and his work has been exhibited throughout the world and collected by such institutions as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Princeton University Art Museum.



TANG QINGNIAN

(born 1956, Beijing; active United States)

Relaxed talk and languid laughter are fit for bamboo and rocks; fine days in spring and autumn pair with cups and goblets (after a couplet by Jin Nong, 1687–1763), 2018

Pair of hanging scrolls, ink on paper; calligraphy written in cursive script
B2018.6.5a–b

Barely legible at first glance, Tang Qingnian's dynamic strokes read instead as abstract ink play. In both scrolls, however, Tang employs patterns of formal consonance and contrast to unify his composition. In the right-hand scroll, for example, the saturation of the first character (*yan* 言, "talk") is mimicked by that of the last (*shi* 石, "rocks"), while the heaviness of each is offset by the wiry lines and open structures of its immediate neighbor (*xiao* 笑, "laughter," and *zhu* 竹, "bamboo," respectively). In the second scroll, the exaggerated looseness of the second (*qiu* 秋, "autumn") and fifth (*gong* 共, "pair with") characters—which are barely held intact by their horizontals—creates unexpected visual resonance between characters whose conventional forms are decidedly different.

A graduate of the Central Academy of Art and Design in Beijing, **TANG QINGNIAN** first entered the art world as a critic and editor for the influential magazine *Meishu* (Art Monthly) during the mid-1980s. Notably, he served as a member of the organizing committee for the seminal *China Avant-garde* exhibition held in Beijing in February 1989; the show became an international news sensation after it was twice shut down by government forces. Since relocating to the United States in 1991, Tang has worked in a variety of media, including graphic design, painting, sculpture, and video. He was the 2019–20 Cheng Family Foundation Visiting Artist in Liu Fang Yuan.

FUTURES

Calligraphers have long sought to invigorate their tradition by seeking past models outside of the conventional canon. After internalizing these archetypes, they are able to introduce unexpected new forms into their medium. The final works in this exhibition exemplify three approaches by which the artists who have contributed to Liu Fang Yuan seek to transform calligraphy for the future while respecting the past.

Some artists employ painterly techniques that violate the norms of calligraphic practice but recall the archaic origins of Chinese characters in pictographic writing. Others take inspiration from script types that have fallen out of favor in order to imbue their calligraphy with an eccentric, and unexpectedly contemporary, spirit. Several subtly transform the appearance of their characters, ensuring that visual form resonates with semantic meaning—a historical practice, albeit a rare one.

Together, the calligraphers of Liu Fang Yuan all draw from the past to write the gardens of the future.



ZHU CHENGJUN

(born 1946, Zhenjiang, Jiangsu Province, China; active China and United States)

World in a Wine Pot, 2018

Handscroll, ink on paper; calligraphy written in seal script
B2018.2.1

Zhu Chengjun's "wine pot" (*hu* 壺) cannot help but make one smile. Zhu derives the structure of his character from early seal script, but he dramatically transforms its wiry, symmetrical form into a playful embodiment of the spirit of the vessel. His lines quiver as though inebriated of their own substance. His central circle barely meets in the middle, like a belt straining around a beer-filled belly. And similar to a drunkard's mismatched socks, the two halves of Zhu's upper horizontals are rendered in contrasting sizes and degrees of saturation. His "world" (*tian* 天), on the other hand, stands in comparative stability, soberly anchoring its wine-soaked companion.

Since the age of sixteen, **ZHU CHENGJUN** has devoted himself to the study of calligraphy and Chinese painting, first learning from masters in his home province of Jiangsu. Before immigrating to the United States in the 1990s, he taught calligraphy and painting in local art academies and served as a member of many municipal, provincial, and national arts organizations. Today, he lives and works in both Beijing and Southern California. His works have been widely exhibited in China and the United States, and he has served as a lecturer at colleges and art academies throughout both countries, as well as in Finland, Spain, and Thailand.



LO CH'ING [LO CH'ING-CHE]

(born 1948, Qingdao, Shandong Province, China; active Taiwan)

Though rooted in the mud, how could the lotus be sullied? Its subtle fragrance spreads with ever greater purity, 2007

Pair of hanging scrolls, ink on paper; calligraphy written in clerical script

B2007.37a–b

Approaching his couplet with a painter's eye for composition, Lo Ch'ing playfully highlights formal and structural similarities among his characters. For example, he exaggerates the symmetrical structure of many characters to create the sense that a grid underlies them all. Similarly, he emphasizes the three-dot "water" component (氵) that occurs in five of the ten characters, generating a visual rhythm that unifies the work. However, these visual structures exist only to be violated for comedic effect: the top of the middle character at right (*qǐ* 豈, "how") seems about to topple over, as though tipsily asserting its independence from the others.

A poet, painter, and calligrapher, **LO CH'ING** formerly served as the chair of the English Department at Mingdao University in Taiwan and the director of the school's Tiemei Art Center. He previously held a distinguished professorship at National Taiwan Normal University. He is widely published, and his award-winning works of poetry have been translated into eleven languages. Lo's paintings and calligraphy have been collected by such museums as the Ashmolean Museum (Oxford), the British Museum, the National Art Museum of China (Beijing), the St. Louis Art Museum, and the Taipei Fine Arts Museum.



WANG MANSHENG

(born 1962, Taiyuan, Shanxi Province, China; active United States)

***Treading the Void*, 2018**

Handscroll, ink on paper; calligraphy written in a combination of seal and clerical scripts

B2018.5.3

Wang Mansheng's inscription could only have been written in the late twentieth or twenty-first century. The unadorned, archaic form of his characters derives from the styles of writing employed in documents brushed on strips of wood or bamboo (common materials used for inscriptions prior to the advent of paper) in the last centuries BCE, which have been excavated in ever-increasing numbers since the 1970s. Neither seal, fully clerical, nor fully cursive, such inscriptions combine the relatively smooth, even lines of "lesser" seal script with the simplified character structure (as well as the occasional flared strokes) of clerical and early cursive scripts. Having extensively studied such writings, Wang has internalized their forms and now introduces them as ancient calligraphic models for the future.

A native of Shanxi Province, **WANG MANSHENG** graduated in 1985 from the Chinese Department of Shanghai's Fudan University, where he majored in classical literature. He subsequently worked for over a decade as an editor, director, and producer at China Central Television in Beijing. Since moving to the United States in 1996, he has devoted himself to reinterpreting classical Chinese painting and calligraphy. His work has been shown and collected worldwide, including in China, Japan, Hong Kong, Europe, and the United States. He resides with his family in the Hudson River Valley outside of New York City.

← N



■ WOODEN PLACARD 木匾

● TILE PLACARD 磚匾

◆ CARVED STONE 石刻

▲ COUPLET 楹聯

Please use this map to explore the wooden placards, carved tiles, and engraved stones created from the inscriptions in this exhibition. You may be surprised at how different the calligraphy appears when viewed in the garden.

請在流芳園內使用此地圖去探索以本展覽書法作品為底本製成的匾額、楹聯以及磚石刻題字。您可能會驚訝於園林之中展現的書法作品竟顯得如此不同。

# 編號	CALLIGRAPHER 作者	TITLE 標題
1	BAI QIANSHEN 白謙慎	Studio for Lodging the Mind 寓意齋
2	XUE LONGCHUN 薛龍春	Cloudy Forest Court 雲林院
3	CHOU CHENG 周澄	The bamboo in the courtyard taps on the windows, its rhythm entering the zither 院竹敲窗韻入琴
4	TANG QINGNIAN 唐慶年	A chamber's elegance depends not on its size; flowers' fragrance lies not in their number 室雅何須大，花香不在多
5	LO CH'ING 羅青	Strolling in the Moonlight 步月
6	TERRY YUAN 袁志鍾	Terrace that Invites the Mountains 邀山臺
7	XU SHIPING 徐世平	Cultivated Elegance 博雅
8	GRACE CHU 朱彰芳	Seeing the Large in the Small 小中見大
9	HUA RENDE 華人德	Clear and Transcendent Terrace 清越臺
10	BETH TUAN 張宏美	Sailing toward autumnal light, we are first to catch the moon; listening to vernal rain, we make no waves 延到秋光先得月，聽殘春雨不生波
11	FU SHEN 傅申	Court of Assembled Worthies 集賢院
12	BAI QIANSHEN 白謙慎	Flowing water can be listened to like the tune of a zither; a fine mountain should be seen as an image in a painting 流水可為琴曲聽，好山須作畫圖看
13	TANG QINGNIAN 唐慶年	Relaxed talk and languid laughter are fit for bamboo and rocks; fine days in spring and autumn pair with cups and goblets 言笑放懷宜竹石，春秋佳日共壺觴
14	MICHAEL CHERNEY 秋麥	Flowery Grove 華林
15	ZHU CHENGJUN 朱稱俊	World in a Wine Pot 壺天
16	LO CH'ING 羅青	Though rooted in mud, how could the lotus be sullied? Its subtle fragrance spreads with ever greater purity 汙泥豈能染，香淡遠益清
17	WANG MANSHENG 王滿晟	Treading the Void 凌虛



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