

Chinese Brush Painting in Miniature



Lim Gek Kheng

Solo Chinese Painting Exhibition 2021

The Gek Contemporary

www.gekart.net

gekminiature@gmail.com

All rights reserved 2021

Cover

Boy on an Ox

Ink and colour on paper, 6.0cm x 4.0cm

Li Keran (1907-1989)

Artist Statement



In 1996, I completed a two-year, part-time course in Chinese Brush Painting at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in Singapore. The next few years saw me continuing to practise weekly until 2001.

Last December I decided to take up my Chinese brush again, to paint, albeit in miniature, for this exhibition to mark the 25th anniversary of my graduation. One never really graduates where Chinese Brush Painting is concerned. It is such a demanding skill to acquire. Painting on rice paper requires great precision of brush strokes and excellent control of amount of water in the brush.

I challenged myself to copy the works of 12 Chinese painters who lived in a period spanning over 500 years - from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) to the 21st century. As Wu Guanzhong is my favourite Chinese painter, I chose to paint four of his works. The other Chinese artist whose work I like very much is Xu Beihong, an expert in painting wild horses. All the 16 paintings exhibited, based on a variety of subjects, present the different styles of their creators. I hope that my reproduction of their works, using ink and colour on rice paper, would give the viewer a flavour of Chinese Ink Painting.

(Note: The titles of most the paintings (except Wu's) are not the original ones given to them in Chinese. I have named them according to the subjects shown.)



Twin Pines

Ink and colour on paper, 4.5cm x 9.0cm

Works of Wu Guanzhong (1919-2010)

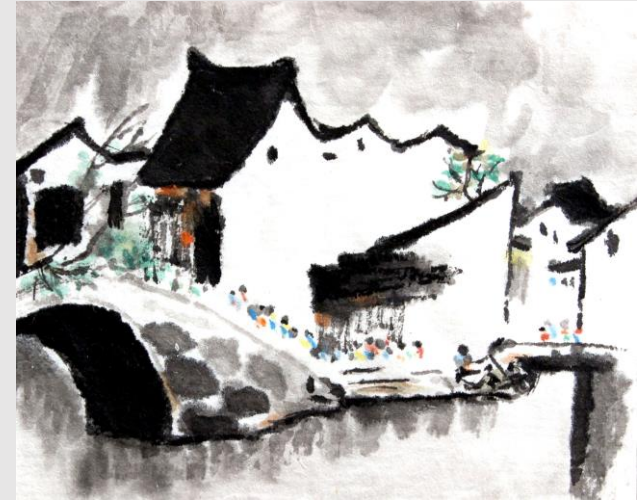
Wu, a contemporary Chinese painter, had held many solo exhibitions around the world, including one at the British Museum in 1992, the first living artist to have an exhibition there. His donation of 113 works to the Singapore Art Museum in 2008 was the largest donation he made to a public museum. In many of his paintings, he synthesized western elements (influenced by his art education in Paris in the 1940s) with traditional Chinese brush painting.

Four of his paintings are reproduced in this exhibition.



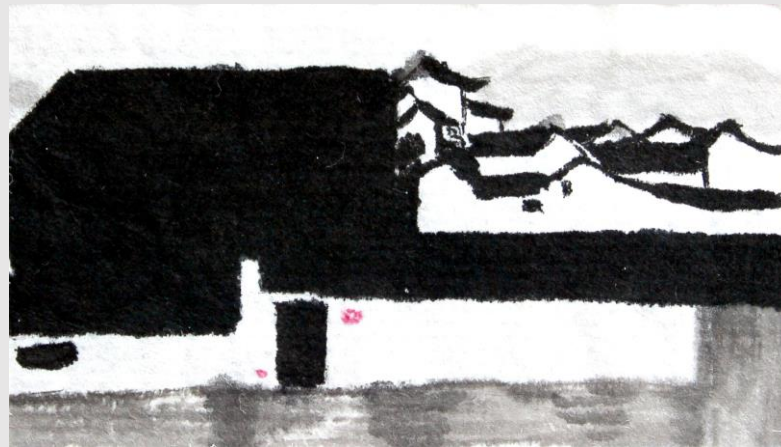
Hometown

Ink and colour on paper, 6.25cm x 6.25cm



Water Village

Ink and colour on paper, 5.5cm x 7.0cm



A Big Manor

Ink and colour on paper, 3.7 cm x 6.25cm



5. Thousands of Cliffs

Ink and colour on paper, 11.5cm x 4.0cm

Wen Zhengming (1470-1559)

Wen Zhengming was born Wen Bi near the present-day Suzhou on November 28, 1470.

He was one of a number of Ming dynasty literati artists who set themselves in opposition to the professional, academy-influenced style favoured in the region of Zhejiang. Wen and other amateur artists of the Wu school (named after the region around Suzhou, where many of them were based) carried on the *wenren* scholar-artist tradition of the preceding dynasties.

Wikipedia

Dong Qichang was a native of Hua Ting (located near modern day Shanghai), the son of a teacher and somewhat precocious as a child.

His positions in the bureaucracy were not without controversy. In 1605 he was giving an exam when the candidates demonstrated against him causing his temporary retirement.

His work favoured expression over formal likeness. He also avoided anything that he deemed slick or sentimental. This led him to create landscapes with intentional distorted special features.

Wikipedia



6. Shady Trees in a Summer Landscape

Ink on paper, 9.5cm x 4.0cm

By Dong Qichang (1555-1636)



7. Landscape

Ink and colour on paper, 7.5cm x 5.5cm

By Shi Tao (1642-1707)

Born in Quanzhou County in Guangxi province, Shitao was a member of the royal house, descended from the elder brother of Zhu Yuanzhang. He narrowly avoided catastrophe in 1644 when the Ming Dynasty fell to the invading Manchus and the civil rebellion. Having escaped by chance from the fate to which his lineage would have assigned him, he assumed the name Yuanii Shitao no later than 1651 when he became a Buddhist monk.

Shitao is one of the most famous individualist painters of the early Qing years. The art he created was revolutionary in its transgressions of the rigidly codified techniques and styles that dictated what was considered beautiful.

Wikipedia

Beihong came from rural Yixing in Jiangsu province. He began studying classic Chinese works and calligraphy with his father, Xu Dazhang, who was a private school teacher, at the age of six, and Chinese painting at the age of nine.

In 1919 he began his study at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He returned to China in 1927.

Beihong was a master of both oils and Chinese ink. Most of his works, however, were in the Chinese traditional style.

He was one of the first Chinese artists to articulate the need for artistic expression that reflected a modern China at the beginning of the 20th century.

Wikipedia



8. Galloping Horse

Ink on paper, 7.5 cm x 5.2cm

Xu Beihong (1895-1953)



9. Sunrise

Ink and colour on paper, 5.5cm x 3.5cm

Feng Zikai (1898-1975)

A native of Shimenwan in Chongde County, Zikai went to school from an early age, the only son of a relatively wealthy and educated family which owned a dye shop.

Zikai draws inspiration from many different sources from Chinese and Western art theory to Buddhism and Confucianism, in order to formulate a philosophy of aesthetics as ethics.

He was a prolific artist, writer and intellectual. Throughout his life, he witnessed the fall of the Qing Dynasty, the rise and fall of the Republican China and the rise of the Chinese Communist Party as well as European and Japanese Imperialism in China. He believed that the failures of the various political systems were symptoms of a greater issue: a lack of compassion for your fellow human and a sense of morality outside the political agendas.

Wikipedia

Beihong enjoyed massive support from art collectors across Asia. Between 1939 and 1941, he held exhibitions in Singapore, India and Malaysia (in Penang, Kuala Lumpur and Ipoh) to help raise funds for the war relief effort in China.

In 1939 he held a group exhibition with fellow Chinese ink painting masters, Ren Bonian and Qi Baishi, showcasing 171 works at the Victoria Memorial Hall in Singapore.

Wikipedia



10. Magpie on Plum Blossom

Ink and colour on paper, 8.5cm x 4.5cm

Xu Beihong (1895-1953)



11. Birds Quarrelling

Ink and colour on paper, 9.0cm x 4.0cm

Jiang Handing (Di) (1903-1963)

Jiang was from Changshu in Jiangsu province, and his original name was Di. When he was sixteen years old, he learned to paint birds and flowers from Tao Songxi and soon afterwards started selling paintings for a living.

After the People's Republic was established, he became a painter in the China Art Academy. Premier Zhou Enlai invited him to make a large painting of plum blossoms for the Great Hall of the People in 1960.

askart.com

Born to a peasant family from Xiangtan, Hunan, Qi became a carpenter at 14 and learned to paint by himself. When he came across the [Mustard Seed Garden Manual](#), that sparked his interest to paint.

He theorised that “painting must be something between likeness and unlikeness, much like today's vulgarians, but not like to cheat popular people”. In his later years, many of his works depicted mice, shrimp and birds.

He was also good at seal carving. In 1953 he was elected president of the China Artists Association.

Wikipedia



12. Shrimps

Ink on paper, 6.0cm x 4.0cm

Qi Baishi (1864-1957)



13. Lotus Flower

Ink and colour on paper, 7.0cm x 4.0cm

Pan Tianshou (1897-1971)

Pan was born in Guanzhuang, Ninghai County, and graduated from Zhejiang First Normal School. He studied Chinese traditional painting with Wu Changshuo and built the foundation of Chinese traditional painting education, becoming one of the most important painters of the 20th Century. He successfully integrated the transitional subjects of flower-and-bird painting and landscape.

He was persecuted during the Cultural Revolution until his death in 1971.

*Wikipedia
China Online Museum*

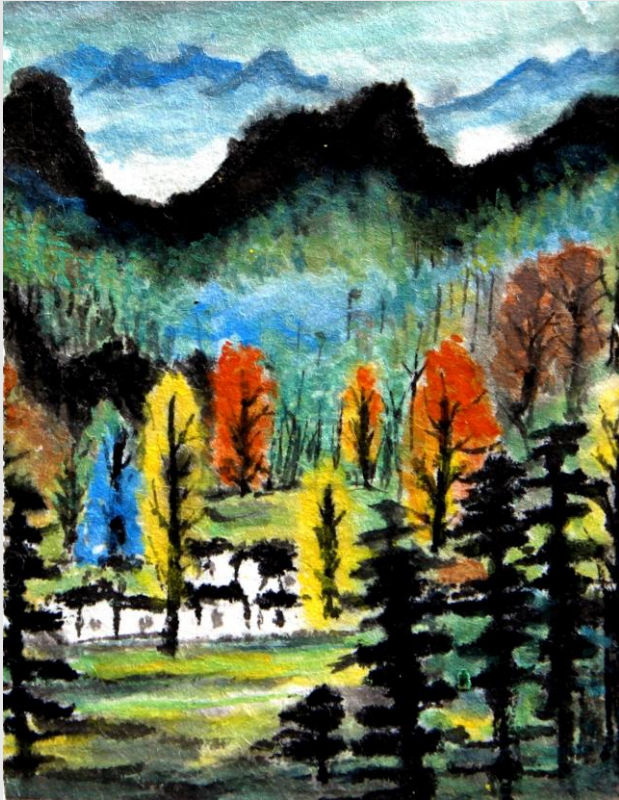
Considered one of the most important Chinese artists in the latter half of the 20th century, Li was also an influential professor at the Central Academy of Fine Arts where he taught a generation of Chinese artists. Although he trained in Western oil painting, he was known for his traditional literati paintings with influence from Qi Baishi and Huang Binhong. Li's paintings are highly valued at auctions, with several fetch hundreds of millions of yuan. His personal auction record was set by *Thousands of Hills in a Crimson View*, one of his most celebrated works, which sold for US\$ 46 million.



14. Boy on an Ox

Ink and colour on paper, 6.0cm x 4.0cm

Li Keran (1907-1989)



15. Mountain Forest

Ink and colour on paper, 5.25cm x 4.0cm

Lin Fengmian (1900-1991)

Lin was one of the earliest Chinese painters to study in Europe. He was also an important innovator in the area of Chinese art education, being one of the pioneers of Chinese modern art.

Fengmian's artworks are featured in museum art collects, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Cernushi Museum in Paris and the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Australia.

Wikipedia

Qingming is the only female artist whose work is featured in this exhibition. She was a professor at the China Academy of Fine Arts.

“My favourite subjects are children, young girls and mothers.”

“In traditional Chinese painting, the figure painting in freehand brush work received little attention. In my view, in doing figure painting one should lay stress on the figure itself, i.e. the image should be like a living being with flesh and blood, having the ability to communicate with the audience.”

Wang Qing Ming, 1993



16. A girl with chicks

Ink and colour on paper, 6.5cm x 4.5cm

Wang Qingming (1933-)

Acknowledgements



Jai Yi

The black lacquer furniture displayed in the gallery is from Jai Yi, a Chinese company manufacturing hand painted miniatures, the subjects of which are mirror in the brush paintings.

Thank you for visiting the Gek Contemporary and hope to see you again Soon.