

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Williams College Museum of Art Presents
*Masterworks of Chinese Painting: In Pursuit of Mists
and Clouds*

September 10 – December 4, 2005

Williamstown, MA— Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) presents *Masterworks of Chinese Painting: In Pursuit of Mists and Clouds*, a stunning panorama of distinguished Chinese paintings from the Ching Yüan Chai Collection, which represents virtually every period of Chinese painting over the last 900 years. The exhibition features seventy-five hanging scrolls, hand scrolls, and album leaves from the collection of Sung, Yüan, Ming, and Ch'ing dynasties, amassed over nearly fifty years by preeminent scholar of Chinese art James Cahill.

Along with major figure paintings and a selection of botanical and animal subjects, the exhibition features a number of exceptional landscape paintings. Considered the highest category of painting in China, landscape painting embodies the ideals of the Confucian scholar and has inspired Chinese painting's most daring experiments and greatest developments. The landscape paintings featured in the exhibition display remarkable depth and focus, revealing an intimately observed living universe.

Among the paintings in *Masterworks* are a delicate early-thirteenth-century hanging scroll by the court painter Ma Yüan depicting a quiet detail of mountain scenery. This image contrasts with the innovative Ming figure painter Ch'en Hung-shou's bold mid-seventeenth-century hanging scroll, which reinterprets a poignant encounter in Chinese history. The exhibition also features a monumental fifteenth-century landscape by Tai Chin, a major painting by the sixteenth-century Wu School painter Wen Cheng-Ming, and

several works by Kung Hsien, the foremost of the Individualist painters based in seventeenth-century Nanjing.

Professor Cahill began collecting Chinese paintings in 1955 while on a Fulbright fellowship in Japan, where he was completing his dissertation on fourteenth-century (Yüan) painting. While there, a Japanese scholar bestowed the name "Ching Yüan Chai," a name which roughly translates as "Studio of One Who Is Looking Intently at the Yüan Dynasty." Professor Cahill has likened his pursuit of Chinese paintings to the eleventh-century poet Su Tung-p'o's allusion to mists and clouds that pass before one's eyes but whose pleasures long endure. In his teaching, Professor Cahill used the Ching Yüan Chai collection as a primary resource; he has often said that the paintings themselves are the best teachers.

This exhibition was organized and circulated by the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive and guest curated by Julia M. White, curator of Asian Art at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. The exhibition is made possible by Dorothy Dunlap Cahill, Hsingyuan Tsao and James Cahill, Nicholas Cahill, and Sarah Cahill, and by an anonymous donor. Major support is provided by United Commercial Bank, the Shenson Foundation, and Jane R. Lurie. Partial funding provided by the Linen Fund of the Department of Asian Studies, Williams College.

Related Events

Scarlett Jang, Williams College Professor of Art and a former student of James Cahill, will present a noon-time lecture Thursday, October 13 from 12:10 to 12:50 pm.

James Cahill, creator of the Ching Yüan Chai collection, will give two lectures. On Wednesday, November 16, he will deliver "Adventures of a Scholar-Teacher Collecting Chinese Paintings," concerning both how it was possible to acquire good Chinese paintings on a professor's salary and how Professor Cahill used his collecting as a tool in teaching. This lecture will be followed by a reception. On Thursday, November 17, Professor Cahill will present "Passages of Felt Life: Paintings for Women in Ming-Qing China?" In this lecture, Professor Cahill will argue that certain Chinese paintings from the 17th-18th century were designed for an audience of women, and will distinguish this mode of collecting with the collecting of male connoisseurs. Both lectures will be presented at 4:00 pm at WCMA.

The Williams College Museum of Art is open Tuesday through Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and on Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m. Admission is free and the museum is wheelchair accessible. Contact: Suzanne Augugliaro, Public Relations Coordinator, 413.597.3178.

Publicity Images Available

Publicity images for Masterworks of Chinese Painting: In Pursuit of Mists and Clouds and other current exhibitions are available for use.