

ASIAN ART MUSEUM
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News



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EXQUISITE NATURE: 20 MASTERPIECES OF CHINESE PAINTING (14th–18th c.)

Rare lyrical Chinese paintings from the 14th–18th centuries displayed in a new exhibition

SAN FRANCISCO, March 19, 2015—The Asian Art Museum presents masterpieces of classical Chinese painting by some of China's most influential painters from the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties in a new exhibition on display through Nov. 1, 2015. *Exquisite Nature: 20 Masterpieces of Chinese Painting (14th–18th c.)* highlights key aspects of Chinese culture through the medium of ink. Broad in subject, style and geographical representation, the works present variations on popular themes such as landscape, bird-and-flower motifs, animals and glimpses of everyday life. Together, these works illustrate a range of ink techniques that are fundamental to traditional Chinese painting. Organized by the Asian Art Museum, *Exquisite Nature* is curated by associate curator of Chinese Art Li He.

The exhibition features one of the most original landscapes, *River Pavilion, Mountain Colors*, by the acclaimed painter Ni Zan (1301–1374), a leading advocate of Chan (Zen) philosophy and ink painting. He practiced a style of painting that was distinctly personal, elegant, solemn and simple, which drew him far from the academic approach common during his time. For a comparative study of Ni Zan's style, the museum will juxtapose his celebrated painting with a monumental landscape that is accompanied by a scroll showing handwritten critiques by 17th- and 18th-century masters. This comparison illustrates a range of academic techniques that would become a major development in Chinese painting in contrast to Ni Zan's style.

Other works on view in *Exquisite Nature* further highlight central characteristics of ink art created for imperial courts and the educated elite. Close viewing reveal time-honored techniques such as light ink washes that represent water, elaborately detailed brushwork depicting flowers, and thickly built strokes that form rocks—painting methods practiced for thousands of years. For example, “100 cranes among pine trees” is an unusually large work portraying cranes in pine forests on mountain summits. Painted by Zou Yigui (1682–1772), it exhibits the artist's deft rendering of precise details, as well as his elegant brushstrokes and surface texture. The birds—white, with a red crest and black

River Pavilion, Mountain Colors, 1368, by Ni Zan (Chinese, 1301–1374). Hanging scroll; ink on paper. Lent from the Tang Family Collection, R1989.99. Image © Asian Art Museum, San Francisco.

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around the neck—are hidden behind rocks and trees, but still appear to move in intimate response to one another.

The Asian Art Museum is grateful to the Tang family for the loans and donations of rare artworks in this exhibition, enabling the museum to deepen its collection of classical Chinese painting.

The exhibition will be located in the Chinese Painting Gallery on the second floor of the Asian Art Museum.

ABOUT THE ASIAN ART MUSEUM

The Asian Art Museum—Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture is one of San Francisco's premier arts institutions and home to a world-renowned collection of more than 18,000 Asian art treasures spanning 6,000 years of history. Through rich art experiences, centered on historic and contemporary artworks, the Asian Art Museum unlocks the past for visitors, bringing it to life while serving as a catalyst for new art, new creativity and new thinking. www.asianart.org

Information: 415.581.3500 or www.asianart.org

Location: 200 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102

Hours: The museum is open Tuesdays through Sundays from 10 AM to 5 PM. From Feb. 6 through Sept. 11, 2014, hours are extended on Thursdays until 9 PM. Closed Mondays, as well as New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

General Admission: FREE for museum members, \$15 for adults, \$10 for seniors (65+), college students with ID, and youths (13–17). FREE for children under 12 and SFUSD students with ID. General admission on Thursdays after 5 PM is \$5 for all visitors (except those under 12, SFUSD students, and museum members, who are always admitted FREE). General admission is FREE to all on Target First Free Sundays (the first Sunday of every month). A surcharge may apply for admission to special exhibitions.

Access: The Asian Art Museum is wheelchair accessible. For more information regarding access: 415.581.3598; TDD: 415.861.2035.

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