

## Journey With Art Afar: The Art of Master Au Ho-Nien

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“Journey with Art Afar” a famous verse written by ancient artist Su Dongpuo, works as the best footnote for the long art career of Chinese painter Master Au Ho-Nien. Let us begin by entering Master Au’s ink-painting world by looking at how he painted Mt. Hua in mainland China. Master Au goes along the trails from the North Peak side to Peak Canglong, looks over to the West Peak, and draws this mountain-and-water painting. First, he draws the pine tree nearest him. Because the emphasis of the painting is to be placed on the mountain, Master Au draws the contour of the pine tree with large, rough strokes instead of using smaller, more detailed strokes. He makes brief brush movements, without much thought. The pine tree trunk is immediately shaped.

The construction of Chinese painting should be directed by Chinese humanistic spirit. From Chinese philosophy, literature, and poetry, we can touch Chinese humanistic spirit and melt it into the production of Chinese watercolor paintings.

Master Au Ho-Nien was born to an intellectual family in Guangdong Province in 1935. He received a solid education in Chinese culture when he was young, which laid a solid foundation for his literature and art career.

I have loved nature since I was young. Because of (my) family, I had the opportunity to be exposed both to Chinese and Western culture. I was very interested in Chinese culture.

Whenever I could see the family-collected Chinese paintings, I would spend a lot of time finding out from which dynasty a painting was and what trends were shown in paintings from different dynasties.

Master Au uses scattering strokes to create loosely scattered dots for a rough view of pine needles. At the same time, he draws rocks with light ink and large strokes. In ancient times, trees were described as autumn fur, winter bone, summer shade, and spring blossom; with his conceptual painting method, Master Au expresses the uprightness, toughness, and strength of the pine trees on Mt. Hua that have been baptized by wind, frost, snow, and rain.

Since I make frequent trips to Mt. Hua, I incorporate new scenes, new ideas, and new feelings into my paintings. Therefore, the paintings are not static. Every time I paint, I am filled with ideas and I paint in a free and natural way.

When he was 17 years old, Master Au studied art with Zhao Shaoang, Master of the Lingnan School of Painting in Hong Kong. Under the guidance of this famous artist and with his own persistent effort, Master Au soon showed his excellence in painting. From the age of 20, he has been invited to show his paintings around

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A special lecture and demonstration “Calligraphy and Poetry in Chinese Painting” by Master Au Ho-Nien (Master Au’s comments appear in italics).

Au Ho-Nien Museum, University of Indianapolis Opening Celebration, August 26, 2004.

the world. He became a young star and attracted attention in the painting world.

After the pine tree is complete, Master Au draws scenes in the medium distance. He starts with the mountaintop in light ink. Then he draws steep mountain slopes with straight-dragging strokes. Stroke by stroke, the shape of the mountain is revealed. Here, Master Au drags the dry brush to shape the mountain while using charcoal-black strokes to show the toughness and strength of the rocks. Master Au's fluent brush movements hint at the time that he has invested in painting through the years.

Because this painting is done on site, Master Au is familiar with the characteristics of the mountain.

Extensive traveling to famous mountains and rivers can sharpen our eyes, make us broad-minded, give us production impetus, and solidify our paintings.

After drawing the mountain shape with watery strokes and light ink, Master Au draws valleys and rocks with dark ink and more dragging strokes. The unique combination of wet and dry strokes with free brush movements well reveals the fogginess as well as the magnitude of Mt. Hua. Master Au also draws a winding and narrow staircase among the rocks and draws bushes with dark ink.

When we draw, we need to emphasize what is important, deemphasize the minor parts, and let the important and the minor scenes be united into a coherent one.

When he was 35 years old, Master Au was invited to teach at the Fine Arts Department of the National Chinese Culture University in Taiwan. He began his teaching career and was involved many times in the preparation of and as an evaluator for national art exhibitions. In the past 46 years, Master Au has stepped on four continents—Africa, America, Asia, and Europe—and given individual exhibitions at the invitation of museums and universities from several countries. He received an Honorary Doctor of Philosophy degree from the Wonkwang University in Korea in 1994, an Honorary Doctor of Arts degree from the University of Indianapolis in 1995, an Honorary Doctor of Philosophy degree from National Chung Hsing in Taiwan in 2013, and an Honorary Doctor of Art degree from the Chinese University of Hong Kong in Hong Kong in 2016. In 1990, Master Au received the International Communication Service Award from the Government Information Office as thanks for his substantial contributions in introducing Chinese ink-brush painting to other countries. Master Au is also the first Chinese artist to receive a Special Award granted by the French National Society of Fine Arts at the Grand Palais Museum of Paris.

Art can best reveal a person's personality and subjective world. My art reveals my persistent love of nature, the effort of embracing nature, and my personal understanding of nature.

After a winding and narrow staircase appears in the painting, Master Au temporarily stops drawing the medium-distance scenes. He moves to the top of the painting to quickly create the rough shape of the mountain in the far distance with light ink and straight-dragging strokes. Then, he uses turning and rolling strokes to show the waving shapes of Peak Canglong. Master Au's masterful dragging and dry strokes reveal the magnificent power of the mountain. His determined and quick drawing of contours together with brief decorations presents precisely the characteristics of the nature that he is painting.

The book of *Mountains and Waters* has a record of Mt. Hua. The book describes it as "square as a lotus". This is a very creative understanding. Facing real mountains and waters, we should think about why ancient people described and praised them the way they did.

The addition of the mountain in the distance brings the painting alive. However, more interesting is that Master Au uses a wide brush fully soaked with watery ink to quickly spread the ink over the painting. As a result, the originally sharp lines seen on the mountain become blurry and the painting becomes foggy, from which viewers can sense the beauty of the nature expressed by the ancient poets.

Art production should be the specific presentation of an artist's subjective feeling. Chinese paintings, of course, are such a presentation made by Chinese artists. Chinese paintings carry the spirit of Chinese literature and philosophy left over through hundreds of years. We Chinese artists grow in such a humanistic spirit. As a matter of fact, artists from different generations have all been working toward this direction of endeavor. Water and ink are the media for creating a watercolor.

The use of water should not be neglected.

By looking at Master Au's way of composing the painting by using dragging strokes as we are seeing now and his way of coloring with watery strokes, we can see his precise control of the amount of water and his experienced brush movements. By using different tones, Master Au has very effective control of the empty space. Therefore, his painting is vivid and leaves room for imagination.

As a matter of fact, space with no ink deserves equal attention so that space with and without ink can have a close interplay. This is exactly what we see in one of the oldest Chinese drawings—TaiJi. Here, the tangible and intangible, black and white, tightly embrace each other. The control of empty space is what all artists should pay attention to when painting.

By now, the painting is nearly complete. Master Au comes back to the pine tree in the foreground, and with a small brush and skinny lines, draws two people facing one another. This pale corner suddenly gains weight. Adding two people also implies the magnitude of the high mountain and makes the painting come alive in addition to bringing a humanistic atmosphere to the painting, making viewers' think of the pleasure of traveling in mountains and forests. The painting contains a very good interplay between strong and dark strokes and light and weak strokes.

Finally, Master Au writes a poem for the painting to end the process:

Clouds float at dusk in the mountain as square as a lotus. I watch the Mt. Hua of the fall season from my hotel.  
After visiting the temples and gods in the mountain, I am reproducing them on this paper with ink.

The painting expresses well what the book of *Mountains and Waters* recorded: This mountain looks as square as a lotus. When we look closely at this painting, we would agree with Master Zhang Daqian's comment: "Once Ho-Nien wields his brush, he seems to have the power of a creator in control of all the manifestations of nature". The composition and the tones of the painting leave us a visual image of the magnificent mountain and convey a sense of poetry and the conceptual empty world of Zhuang Zi. The painting shows a harmonic coexistence of humans and nature.

We should melt the world in our mind into the real mountains and rivers through strong and weak strokes to create a perfect picture. This picture should not only depict the real world but also the world in the artist's mind. This is the essence of Chinese painting.

Japanese critic Zhiying Qiandai said, "Au's work has well expressed Chinese people's pride and dignity in recent history".

### Reviewing a Masterpiece

A picture of *A Recluse Living in a Mountain* is one of Master Au's favorite mountain-and-water paintings,

in which he revealed his natural feeling when he drew it. When we look more closely at it, we can discover the realization of Master Au's intention.

It is mandatory that an artist guide the viewer's eyesight to the center of visual interest in every piece of art. This most important part could appear in the foreground, medium distance, or in any corner. If an artist can adequately control the application of strokes and ink, he can guide the viewer's eyesight to the center of visual interest with the hint of strokes and ink and dexterous composition, no matter where the viewer starts viewing the painting.

Take this painting as an example. I used very strong strokes and dense ink to show in the foreground an old tree leaning toward the center of the painting. The way the tree root climbs, the direction the treetop points toward, and the artist's use of strokes and ink have all made the viewer move his eyesight up left so long as he starts viewing the painting from this part. If you start viewing the painting from this rock, the shape of the rock that leans forward would also guide your eyesight to move to the left. Suppose a viewer starts viewing the painting from this steep mountain slope; the sliding line of slope would naturally lead the eyesight down to the center. If a viewer starts viewing it from the top part, the high mountain seems to have a sense of bowing forward and would make you, in a way, look at the scenes close to you. Even if you look at the empty space, you probably feel its power. The empty space seems to be tightly connected to the places where there are strokes and ink. Through the cooking smoke, the viewer's eyesight would be naturally led from the empty space to the central part. If a viewer starts viewing from this part, there seems to be a road on which you can walk toward the center. What is the center of visual interest of this painting? A recluse living in a mountain. This person is sitting there quietly. Viewers, then, would naturally cast their eyesight toward him to get a sense of what being a recluse is like. This is why I have painted this painting.

Apart from painting with brush and ink, an artist could also incorporate a poem—either your own poem or an ancient poem—into a painting so that the viewer can better understand the meaning of the painting via what is revealed in the poem. This painting contains a poem of my own:

The only thing I want to do in the mountain is be a recluse. What else can I do?  
I enjoy the quietness of living in the mountain,  
And the slow cooking smokes climbing up in the dense forest. I hold my knees by the window,  
Trying to compose a good poem while looking at the valley. I am tired of the life in the crowded city,  
And I have already got silver hair.

### A Concluding Remark

“Master Au's landscape paintings depict nature in reality with diversified Chinese ink wash methods and express humanistic spirit in art. A poet, calligrapher, and painter, Master Au assimilates ancient and modern arts, integrates Eastern and Western philosophies, and paves a way for future generations of artists in Chinese painting. It is our distinct honor that the University of Indianapolis is closely associated with Master Au and has his presence on our campus”.

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Video Production: Lee and Lee Communications Ltd., Taipei, Taiwan

Program Design: Au Ho-Nien Museum, University of Indianapolis

Journey with Art Afar from Taiwan to America—*Enhancing Cultural Understanding via Art*\*

The following paper was presented at *The CAPS International Conference: How to Strengthen U.S.-Taiwan Relations*, October 28-29, 2007, California, USA.

(\*The original paper was revised from a keynote speech presented by the author at the *International Conference “One Hundred Years of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy”* at the National Chinese Cultural

University in Taipei, Taiwan, on May 22, 2007.)



The paper was updated on December 1, 2016.

### **Introduction**

It is the author's privilege and honor to be invited to attend this international conference on how to strengthen U.S.-Taiwan relations. Art has no international boundaries, and through art, we are able to bring people and cultures closer together. The purpose of this paper is not to describe the history of one hundred years of Chinese ink wash painting or to critique Chinese landscape painting. This paper aims to describe how we can strengthen U.S.-Taiwan relations via art.

The author is speaking here as a layperson who is profoundly interested in Chinese art and on behalf of the Asian Programs at the University of Indianapolis, where the author has taught for 43 years. Since the establishment of Asian Programs in the early 1990s, the author has been promoting the idea of enhancing

international understanding through art. Throughout the years, the author has introduced art of various forms (Chinese painting, music, calligraphy, textiles, and ceramics) from both Taiwan and Mainland China to the University of Indianapolis; communities in Indianapolis, Chicago, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C., to both overseas Chinese and Americans. Today, the author will single out the work of Master Au Ho-Nien as an example to illustrate how we can promote cultural understanding between Taiwan and the U. S. through Chinese art.

I have known Master Au, an internationally renowned Chinese artist who resides in Taiwan, for more than 30 years, and he has become a good friend to me, my family, and the University of Indianapolis. Through Master Au's numerous visits to the University of Indianapolis and my participation in many of Master Au's art exhibits in China, Taiwan, Greece, Hong Kong, and America, I began to learn about Master Au as an artist, educator, person, and most of all, a cultural ambassador in art.

The University of Indianapolis has been extremely fortunate to have Master Au as its closest friend from Asia. Master Au began his relationship with the university during the early 1990s and received an honorary doctor of arts degree from the University of Indianapolis in 1995. It was an honor for our university when Master Au accepted our degree. Since 1991, the author has had the privilege and honor of working with and serving Master Au as a friend, colleague, translator, student, and admirer of his art. This paper aims to summarize the projects we have endeavored to work together on in the past three decades.

With Master Au's unselfishness, generosity, energy, and, most of all, vision of introducing the spirit of Chinese painting and the characteristics of the Lingnan School of Painting to the West, Americans in the U.S. are beginning to appreciate and enhance their understanding of the essence of Chinese ink painting and facets of Chinese culture and philosophy. It is Master Au's journey with art a far that brought us, the East and West, together. His art has blessed us with a sense of humanity and an understanding of how the East and the West can be blended together through art.

### **Art Exhibition as a Medium to Share Lingnan School of Painting with U.S. Communities**

While the author was accompanying his university's former president, Dr. G. Benjamin Lantz Jr., to visit former president Yu-Sheng Chang of the Pacific Cultural Foundation in 1990, President Chang asked President Lantz and me if we would be interested in hosting an exhibition tour of Master Au Ho-Nien's paintings in North America from April to June 1991. With the knowledge that Master Au is one of the leading artists in Chinese painting today, we did not have any hesitation in accepting the invitation for the university to serve as one of the four locations for the exhibition tour (The other three locations were the National Arts Club in New York, New York; Boston University Arts Gallery in Boston, Massachusetts; and Holtzman Gallery, Towson State University in Towson, Maryland).

The two-week exhibition at the Leah Ransburg Gallery at the University of Indianapolis marked the beginning of our long and close friendship with Master Au and our commitment to bring Asian art to our campus, community, and region. The most acclaimed art critic of the *Indianapolis Star* newspaper, Steve Mannheimer, wrote, "Alternately bold and exquisite, energetic and demure—and always, somehow, both—Chinese art has remained for Westerners an endless source of awe, delight and allure". Two current shows "The other show was the Art of the Yixing Potters: The K. S. Lo Collection, Flagstaff House of Museum of Tea Ware, and Hong Kong at the Indianapolis Museum of Art". In Indianapolis demonstrate that grand attraction, as well as the subtle, perhaps inscrutable uses to which the artistic momentum of

centuries can be applied to contemporary cultural diplomacy”. Mannheimer commented on Master Au’s work,

Western eyes should have no trouble tuning in to Au’s mist-draped mountains, galloping horses, soaring eagles, flowering peonies, and historical characters, all rendered in tense calligraphy counter pointed by serene, soft spreads of ink stain. (May 5, 1991)

The Former Chair of the Art Department at the university and a highly recognized painter in the U.S., the late Dr. Gerry Boyce, had sent me a note after the exhibit was over. He said,

Thank you so much for the catalog of Au Ho-Nien’s paintings. I visited the exhibit on three occasions and each visit was more rewarding than the one before ... Thanks too for serving as a liaison in getting the materials to our campus. Hopefully that display will stimulate our faculty and friends to pursue aesthetic interests in the non-Western traditions.

In 2005, Master Au joined the 10 most renowned contemporary Chinese artists in the world in an art exhibit in Shanghai. One of the most reputable Chinese art critics, Xie Chun-yan, called Master Au “the Treasure of the Lingnan School and someone who protects the essence, the key essentials of the Lingnan School”. Xie and Au traveled together to New York for Master Au’s joint art exhibit, the Huangshan Exhibition, in 2004. Xie wrote about his perception of Au’s work. According to Xie, the Lingnan School of Painting has consistently focused on reflecting real life, and “among Au Ho-Nien’s sketches of real life, there are quite a few paintings that are filled with life, rather than with death. Nature will always be the artists’ strength, and cannot become our excuse for mediocrity”. Xie praised Au Ho-Nien by saying, “Au Ho-Nien is a well-rounded individual who enjoys poetry; he is diligent in his calligraphy, with impressive skills. His well-rounded nature has managed to eradicate any possible traces of mediocrity”.

The University of Indianapolis invited Master Au to have a follow-up solo art exhibit at the university’s new gallery. “It is an exceedingly high honor for our university to have this portfolio of exquisite paintings by Master Au Ho-Nien exhibited on our campus at the Art Gallery of the Christel DeHaan Fine Arts Center, from April 15 to May 10, 1996”, said the exhibit catalog foreword by the former president, Dr. G. Benjamin Lantz Jr. “Because the works of Master Au have graced the very finest galleries of the world, we are especially delighted to share his magnificent paintings with our community, state, and nation”.

Viewers from Chicago, Minneapolis, Columbus, Kansas City, Louisville, and Indianapolis came to the opening reception. Admirers and Master Au’s former students in America would not miss the occasion to meet this great master and to have the opportunity to glance at one of the greatest works of the contemporary Lingnan School of Paintings. One of the well-known Lingnan artists in the Chicago area, Master Hoi-Chiu Chan, led an entourage of his students to Indianapolis to video the entire exhibit.

Former president Lantz further wrote,

As a teacher, scholar, and painter, Master Au has distinguished himself as a unique ambassador of cultural exchange by translating the rich heritage of China into an artistic language which relates to, but transcends, barriers of culture and nations. His worldwide acclaim affirms the distinctive style of the Lingnan work which seeks to draw upon traditional Chinese themes and synthesizes them with the techniques of modern and Western painting to produce works of subtle but stunning appeal.

Knowing that the University of Indianapolis has an international branch campus in Athens, Greece, an idea came to the author. (The Athens campus was closed in 2013). He invited the Athens Municipal Cultural

Center (via UINDY-Athens) and the ROC Taipei Economic and Culture Office (TECO) in Athens to co-sponsor an art exhibit in 1998 with us. The author shipped 25 of Master Au's large framed paintings by air from Indianapolis to Athens. (Those paintings had been shipped to Indianapolis from Taipei). Master Au joined the author in Athens for the opening reception. After the Athens exhibit, the *World Journal* in Long Island planned to host Master Au's exhibit, so the author shipped the returned paintings from Athens to Indianapolis, and then to New York. At the end of the exhibit in New York, those paintings were shipped to Master Au's residence in California.

To everyone's surprise, Madame Kiang Kai-shek, at age 95, visited the exhibit in person with Master Au as her escort. Madame Kiang had admired Master Au's work for almost half a century. Though the outing was a rare occasion considering her health and age, it was no surprise that Madame Kiang applauded Master Au once again just as she had praised him many years before. The following year, Master Au and Madame Kiang, along with two more artists, had a joint art exhibit at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco. The author was honored to visit the exhibit, and Master Au interpreted his work for the author.

The *World Journal* senior reporter Huling Chen, who had reported Master Au's art exhibits over the years on more than 10 occasions, wrote, "Master Au stresses that artists are responsible for the future of our history and cultural heritage. Artists must share their accomplishments with society". Master Au's paintings have been collected and exhibited by at least ten prestigious museums in the East and West including the British Museum in England, the Hong Kong Heritage Museum in Hong Kong, the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, the San Diego Museum, and the Beijing Chinese Museum, and the Macao Museum of Art.

There is no way to figure out how many of Master Au's paintings are in the homes of Western collectors. One collector in Rochester, New York, called the author one day, saying, "Please let Master Au know that I have collected his paintings for more than 20 years. Please keep me posted where and when his next art exhibit will be in America". In 2001, the Millennium International Touring Exhibition of Lingnan Art included two locations in North America. One exhibit was at the Community Exhibition Hall, Confucius Plaza in New York City, and the second one was held at the Dr. Hin-Shiu Hung Art Gallery, Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto. Exhibiting artists from the U.S. included Fong Liz-Kang, Ng Fong Yuen, Steve Ng, Shin Pang Chiu, Shum Wuan Fung, Lee Wai-Lin, Eva Mun Wa Chau, Polly Kam Ping Chan, Chao Hua Huang, Guo Xiong Mak, Chiu Yuk Man, Leeann L. Hsu, and Kan Kwok Fan. Ho Pak-lee, Yip Kam Fong, Gan Siu-Mui, and Koo Mei of Canada were also featured. Master Au, Nigel N. C. Szeto, Ng Yuet Lau (Carol Chiu), Chau Hang, and Bonnie Kwan Huo, among others, represented the most prominent Lingnan artists from both Taiwan and Hong Kong. Since 2001, Master Au has had countless art exhibits in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China, including a grand exhibit in 2015 in Taipei to celebrate his 80th birthday.

The Lingnan School of Painting truly has been embraced and recognized by art lovers not only in Asia but also in North America. Master Au has exhibited his artwork actively in the past 40 years on four continents—Africa, America, Asia, and Europe. The University of Indianapolis had the pleasure and honor to co-host Half a Century of Chinese Paintings by Au Ho-Nien at the Pacific Heritage Museum of San Francisco from February 9, 2001 to February 9, 2002. Our university's former president Dr. Jerry Israel, his wife, Dr. Carol Israel, and the author had the honor to participate in officiating at the opening of this magnificent art exhibit. In his preface to the exhibit catalog, Dr. Israel wrote, "The master's dynamic calligraphy imparts still

another important dimension to his work. In equal parts delicate and bold, they be speaking a lifetime of study and practice yet emerge with a natural and beautiful inevitability”.

One of the highlights of the exhibit at the Pacific Heritage Museum was a special event, Art Talk: Two Artists on Chinese Painting, sponsored by Asian Programs on September 8, 2001, at the Pacific Heritage Museum. Hong Kong’s famous artist Bonnie Kwan Huo addressed a comment she encounters frequently all over the world: “I love Chinese painting, but I really do not know much about it”. Master Au Ho-Nien joined her at this special event, speaking on how an inspiration, image, or feeling translates into paper and how an artistic idea is realized to become a successful work of art.

The museum auditorium was packed with Chinese, Americans, and international visitors in the Bay Area. Bonnie Kwan Huo quickly briefed them about the history of Chinese paintings from ancient times through the different dynasties to today. She also explained to the audience what to look for in a good Chinese painting; the importance of appreciating “brush and ink”; how brushwork has character, training, emotion, strength, and placement; and how ink has color, value, melody, and life. Bonnie Kwan Huo concluded her presentation by explaining how Chinese painting is seen as an experience with nature, the inner world, the spiritual state, visual enjoyment, and the global possibilities of Chinese paintings in the 21st century.

On the same stage, Master Au lectured (translated by Bonnie Kwan Huo) on the characteristics and spirit of Chinese paintings. Master Au concluded his presentation by saying, “What the artist tries to express in his painting is not something superficial or temporary, but something beyond image, something deep and soul-stirring, something as immortal as the humanistic spirit itself”.

In 2003, Asian Programs and the Art Department arranged for Bonnie Kwan Huo to include the University of Indianapolis as part of her touring exhibition Chromatic Concerto. She came to campus not only for the solo art exhibit, but also to give a special lecture on Tea in Chinese Culture. In addition, Bonnie collaborated with the music department for an evening event entitled An Eastern Harmony of Music and Art, in which Japanese composer. Task her Saito of Myazakyi University, Japan, and Bonnie did a talk show on painting and music together. The campus was showered with Bonnie’s creative artworks (a blend of the Lingnanink wash “Shuimo” and innovative modern Western watercolor), a fascinating presentation on tea-drinking culture in China, and the inspirational talk on Chinese painting. We were dipped in Bonnie’s *Dreamscape*, a painting with ink and color on paper. The blending of “Shuimo” from the East and watercolor from the West in a painting was simply amusing, amazing, and awesome. Viewing Bonnie’s art is like being embraced by the universe’s affection; it is so grand and so deep.

The concept of the music of art continued. Subsequently, Asian Program shad a very successful Valentine’s Day concert on February 14, 2007, with the theme, which was given by Bonnie, *Plaisir d’Amour* (Joy of Love). Artist Master Au, along with the Indianapolis Opera Ensemble (Nathan Bick, Angela Keeton, Samuel Spade, Jenny Searles, and Dana Jones Milan); Prof. Mei Wu and Yinou from Music College, Shanghai Normal University; and the University of Indianapolis faculty (soprano Kathleen Hacker, pianist Jacklyn Chan, and reader Billy Catchings) gave the audience an enchanted evening with the enriched music and painting from East and West.

### **The Au Ho-Nien Art Lecture Series and Publication**

There are many ways to disseminate knowledge and scholarly information. In 2000, Asian Programs created the Au Ho-Nien Art Lecture Series. It aimed to bring artists from Asia and other parts of the world to

give special lectures on art. The program has been partially funded through the University's Lecture and Performance Series Committee and Asian Programs. Artists including Chang Housing, Charles Liu, Nigel N. C. Szeto, Ng Yuet Lau (Carol Chiu), Bonnie Kwan Huo, Sesin Jong, and Master Au Ho-Nien have visited the campus and the Indianapolis Community since 2000. These renowned artists all have graciously taken the time and energy to fly across the Pacific Ocean to support Asian Programs' mission of introducing Eastern art and philosophy to both the University of Indianapolis and the larger Indianapolis Communities. The invited artists not only held demonstrations but also delivered special lectures: Chinese Ethnic Minority Oil Painting, Tea in Chinese Culture, the Beauty of Chinese Women through the Dynasties, the Spirit and Characteristics of Chinese Painting, Symbolism, Chinese Characters, and Chinese Painting. In 2008, the lecture series featured Dr. Sesin Jong's ink and color calligraphy and painting with a special lecture, Huangshan Encounter (Happy Gathering at Mt. Huang) and the use of color in Chinese Painting.

Asian Programs not only hosts and organizes lectures and demonstrations on the university campus, but also reaches out to the Indianapolis community and other major cities. In addition to the Art Talk: Two Artists on Chinese Paintings lecture event in San Francisco in 2002, Asian Programs collaborated with the Chicago Chinese Culture Center and the Art Institute of Chicago in 2006, and later with the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institute, and the Library of Congress in Washington, DC in the winter of 2007. The Director of Culture Division of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Washington, DC, Margaret Meng-yang Liu Li, was instrumental in making the contacts for us for the events in Washington, DC.

We were graciously hosted at a state dinner in Master Au's honor at the Twin Oaks mansion by the former representative from ROC to America (ambassador) Dr. David Lee. It was not to any guest's surprise that the ROC government hangs a large painting of Master Au's *White Plum Blossoms* on his living room wall. It has been on that wall for almost 20 years.

The author accompanied Master Au across the Indiana border to present special lectures on the "Chinese Written Characters and the Transformation to Painting". (The author served as the translator in all of Master Au's demonstrations and lecture presentations in North America). Wherever Master Au demonstrates and speaks, he always receives standing ovations from both Chinese and Western audiences. Audiences of close to 400 at the Music in Art concert program on February 14, 2007, were impressed by Master Au's genius strokes on a painting of a well-known Chinese folk tale. Master Au composed the painting while opera singers sang love songs from the East and West. Simply stated, "Master Au is a Master indeed!"

The greatness of Master Au is that he is admired not only by other artists but also by art students. Student Amanda Hanley said,

It was very interesting to see how Master Au creates his paintings. I am an art major, so it was very cool to be able to watch him and see how he paints. I thought it was very nice of him to actually show us how he paints and explain the process to us.

Another student, Sarah Luken, commented,

His intelligence and imagination are brought to the surface through his art. The ability he must correlate the Chinese symbols of words into these vast paintings is unprecedented. Although language can separate cultures, it can also bring them closer together, as in this situation. Master Au's impeccable painting skills were a pleasure to enjoy. It is very rare to find and watch an artist in three qualities—calligraphy, painting, and poem—and I am overjoyed that I could have such a privilege.

### **Publication**

The University of Indianapolis Press was established in 1991 and institutionalized in 2004. As stated on the University of Indianapolis Website (Retrieved from <http://www.uindy.edu/univeristypress>):

The University Press Executive Director and the Board selected several appropriate symbols for potential use in the University Press logo. The Publications Office selected one of these and designed a logo for the Press. The logo incorporates an image of a pine tree in the form of a stylized detail from a work by world-renowned painter Master Au Ho-Nien, a longtime friend of the University.

In many Asian cultures, the evergreen is symbolic of perseverance, wisdom, and rejuvenation. Because of the Press's genesis in publishing material that focuses on Eastern cultures, the logo is particularly apt. Because trees are the source of the paper used by a press, the image is appropriate in Western cultures as well. The circle encompassing the tree image connotes unity in many cultures, and in a nod to the Press's commitment to promotion of international understanding, it is meant to suggest the concept of a globe.

As the former executive director of the University of Indianapolis Press, the author would like to express his sincere gratitude to Master Au for his generosity in granting the press the right to use the symbol of a pine tree from one of the paintings he has donated to the Au Ho-Nien Museum. Over the years, before the University Press was institutionalized, we have also had permission from Master Au to use his paintings for book covers. The University of Indianapolis Press distributes its publications both nationally and internationally. We appreciate Master Au's support for our publications and also acknowledge that this is another way of embracing Master Au's work and the Lingnan School of Painting in a cultural setting different from where it originated.

In 2006, the University of Indianapolis Press had the privilege to publish an art book on Chinese painting entitled *The Happy Brush*. The author, Chau Hang, the Lingnan School of Painting artist himself, is the founder. He is the most prominent Lingnan School artist, as well as Professor Chao Sao-an's grandson. Both Bonnie Kwan Huo and Master Au studied painting with Master Chao Sao-an in Hong Kong. Bonnie Kwan Huo, a renowned international Lingnan artist, did the English translation for the book. The book also included several articles by Master Au Ho-Nien that were translated by both Bonnie and the author. The publication of this book on teaching Chinese painting in a fun way is not only a celebration of Chau Hang's accomplishments as an artist and an art educator, but also is an extension for us to embrace Lingnan art in the West.

### **The Au Ho-Nien Museum: Journey With Art Afar**

The University of Indianapolis and its Asian Programs initiative were proud to announce the Au Ho-Nien Museum in Schwitzer Student Center in 2004. The center serves as the vibrant heart of campus life, and the museum's presence in this facility ensures maximum visibility of the works of the world-renowned artist, Master Au Ho-Nien. Students, faculty, staff, visitors, and community members are able to view the collection of 45 of Master Au's paintings free of charge, reinforcing the university's commitment to promoting awareness of cultural diversity. The museum is set in the 6,000-square-foot lower level of Schwitzer Student Center with open seating areas and two large conference rooms. The uniqueness of this museum can be described in three words: open, free, and living. The museum is listed in the *Indianapolis Star's* Sunday newspaper as one of the city's museums for public enjoyment. The author edited the colorful museum catalog, and it was published by the University of Indianapolis Press. Bonnie Kwan Huo translated the inscriptions and poems in each of the

paintings in this collection. In the catalog, former president Dr. Jerry Israel acknowledged the following:

It is a great honor for the University of Indianapolis and its Asian Programs initiative to bring the exquisite artwork of our good friend Master Au Ho-Nien to our campus, which is now the home of the Master Au Ho-Nien Museum. The collection graces the Schwitzer Student Center on the University campus. ... It is a testament to the stunning quality and execution of his work that the subject matter and themes, though often thoroughly Chinese, are instantaneously translatable to viewers worldwide, in effect bridging East and West.

We have been most fortunate over the years in having had several opportunities to introduce this consummate artist to our campus family and to the community at large. The author's predecessor in the office of University President, Dr. G. Benjamin Lantz, and Dr. Phylis Lan Lin, Director of Asian Programs and Presidential International Ambassador at the University, met Master Au in Taipei in 1990. Master Au has been invited for several art exhibits and special lectures on our campuses in Indianapolis and Athens, and Dr. Lin has been invited to attend numerous Chinese painting seminars in Taipei, Hong Kong, San Francisco, and Beijing, sponsored by the Au Ho-Nien Foundation and other organizations. She has also, on behalf of the University of Indianapolis, participated in the officiating of Master Au and other Lingnan artists' art exhibit openings in Asia and San Francisco. Further, Asian Programs established the Au Ho-Nien Art Lecture Series in 2000, which brings artists to campus to present lectures on Chinese arts. The author is grateful to Dr. Lin for her important role in making this museum happen.

In an interview with *Reflector* staff writer Katy Yeiser in February 2004, former president Israel said,

Any art's purpose is aesthetic. It is part of the human experience to surround ourselves with the stimulation of beautiful pieces of art done by gifted and talented people. It lifts us up as human beings. It is hoped that our students and many viewers from other schools will be inspired by such beautiful artwork. Art is one of the very important vehicles for expressions of ideas and thought. I hope the display of Master Au's work will contribute to the liberal arts education at the university.

The museum serves many functions. It ties in with the university's focus on international outreach and collaboration. As a senior faculty member at the university, teaching here since 1973, one of the author's dreams is to promote the idea of internationalization and globalization of the university. For years, the author has put his efforts into bringing his students, faculty, and staff to the world and at the same time bringing the world to them.

After visiting the museum in 2006, student Amanda Wendlinger wrote,

I realize now how lucky we are for the University of Indianapolis to be a home for Master Au Ho-Nien's paintings. He has brought culture to our school. He has allowed us to learn from his talents. We should take his paintings and embrace the knowledge that we can learn from them.

The impact of the museum on students is shown in different ways and on different levels. Kristina Rodarte wrote as a freshman in 2006,

My favorite painting was the tiger. I like this because the painting really stood out from the others. The tiger's bright orange body demanded attention. The tiger shows pride, and seeing him at the top of the rock shows his power and embodiment of that pride.

The painting was entitled *Tiger Roar*, and Master Au had inscribed, "The roar of the tiger dares to reachashig has the mountain and the moon". Ms. Rodarte continued,

Seeing the Au Ho-Nien Museum for what it really is was quite the experience. I never had imagined the importance and cultural meaning of the paintings on the walls that I see every Thursday. Now, I know their significance not only to the world of art but also to the university. The culture behind the paintings shows our commitment to learning about others and being a diverse school.

In addition to the collection of Master Au's paintings in the museum, reprint paintings from Master Au's annual calendar were framed and hung in many offices. The university environment is blessed to embrace Master Au's art. We have been cultivated by the beautiful paintings that surround us in our daily campus living. "For Au Ho-Nien, the creation of the museum is another step toward international understanding", says S. L. Berry, the Arts and Entertainment writer of the *Indianapolis Star*. Master Au told Berry, in an interview assisted by the author's translation,

In the last three centuries, the East looked to the West. But in the 21st century, it is time for the West to look to the East. If we can bring the two together, perhaps we can have a whole world.

Interviewed by *World Journal* reporter Huiling Chen, Master Au also pointed out that the 19th century East was threatened by the military might of the West. The East tried to learn and pattern after the West. Although the East was profoundly affected by the sociopolitical concepts as well as science from the West, Master Au suggested that Easterners should not lose their ethnic confidence and Westerners should start looking toward the East.

Through the author's bridging, Master Au has had a relationship with the university for almost 20 years. Master Au and the author began the idea of developing a museum at the university almost two decades ago. At the museum opening ceremony, Master Au noted,

I am a farmer and I have reached the time for harvesting my produce. I need to find a farmhouse to store my harvest. I trust Dr. Lin, and I trust the University of Indianapolis. I have found the farmhouse for my storage.

In an interview with reflector reporter Katy Yeiser, the author stated:

I think it is very desirable and appropriate. Schwitzer Student Center is the hub of our University and the Museum is accessible not only to students, University faculty and staff, but also to the community. The uniqueness of this museum is that it is an open museum. It is open to the public without charge. It is unique because it extends throughout classrooms and conference rooms in Schwitzer's lower level and is exposed to community and student traffic. The police office is located on the lower level as well. It provides additional security for the collection.

It is unthinkable not to have a museum on campus. It can be used as a classroom for art education, it can be used as a classroom for our liberal arts education, and it can also be used for sheer appreciation of beauty. There are so many purposes that can be accomplished.

Vice President for Institutional Advancement Mike Ferin, who went to Taipei with the author to participate in the opening of the Lingnan Museum at the Chinese Culture University in 2005, considered our museum "a breathing and living museum". We both recognize that the museum is a reflection of the various cultures represented by the international student body and the university's attention to cultural awareness.

In most of Master Au's paintings, he includes his own poems, created either before or after the completion of the paintings. Several of those poems in many ways connect with his Confucian scholarship, with humanism, and with his love of nature. Master Au is a cultivated man, and he exemplifies this "man of literature" (literati) spirit in his painting. In his paintings, Master Au strives to evoke visual harmony with nature by playing with delicate patterns and using a well-adjusted balance of light and shade. His paintings possess a personalized

quality of liveliness, elegance, and sublimity. The late master of Chinese painting Mr. Zhang Ta-chine said, "Once Ho-Nien wields his brush, he seems to have the power of a creator in control of all the manifestations of nature".

Indeed, the museum is part of the Asian Programs international and cultural initiative. Art is one of the best means for international communication. The museum will enforce our university's commitment to cultural diversity. Most of all, the museum allows us to have the greatest opportunity to enjoy the Lingnan School of Painting, a school that claims to have integrated East and West through tradition and modern ideas of Chinese ink wash painting.

In the process of establishing the museum, the author had to go through many channels and university committees to acquire space and permission. We also have prepared an agreement with the Au Ho-Nien Foundation. The author is a layperson in art. He has consulted with Master Au and art-installation specialists in every process in setting up the museum, including shipping, framing, hanging, cataloging, lighting, labeling for each painting, photography of the paintings, and preparing the poster and catalog. A bronze bust of Master Au was shipped by air from Guangzhou, where a well-known Chinese artist's sculpted it. A special wooden stand with marble top was custom-made to fit the height and weight of the bust. Museum brochures are available by the stand.

Asian Programs conducts guided tours of the museum on request. Visitors include school children, college students, artists from nearby cities, and the public at large. The museum has become a major attraction for thousands of visitors to the university's campus every year. During the year, many workshops, meetings, and classes take place in the museum area. While engaging in activities of various sorts, the participants often indulge in the museum collection, experiencing the enriched culture from the East. "Master Au is a cultural ambassador from Taiwan who has established so many friendships with American viewers through his very talented art expression".

One of the most exciting and innovative events that has taken place in the museum area was the collaboration between the Indianapolis Opera and Asian Programs in April 2006. The event merged Chinese art and live opera, combining a presentation on Chinese painting with live selections from the production of Puccini's *Turandot*, which was set in Beijing in ancient China. The Music of Art program began with the author's introduction to the museum. Next, Professor Michael Sells of Butler University discussed *Turandot*, and the principal cast members from the Indianapolis Opera performed selections from the opera, accompanied by Maestro James Caraher.

"In the story", said the Indianapolis Opera flyer,

set in ancient China, Princess Turandot has been promised by her father, the emperor, to the first suitor who can answer three riddles posed by her. Many have lost their heads in the attempt. Prince Calaf, in disguise, accepts the princess's challenge and succeeds in his quest, but when Turandot is reluctant to fulfill her bargain, he poses his own challenge to her, leading to a thrilling climax.

The event was well received, and the idea of having a Music of Art Program was born. The follow-up event took place in February 2007.

"Now, with the establishment of the Master Au Ho-Nien Museum", said former president Dr. Jerry Israel,

We have created great opportunities for art education, promoted the values of art and culture, reinforced the university's commitment to diversity, and enhanced the aesthetic qualities of our campus.

President Beverley Pitts of the University of Indianapolis was as supportive to the establishment of the museum as the two former presidents Israel and Lantz were. President Pitts held a reception and dinner at her home to welcome Master Au when he paid his sixth visit to the university in 2006. Master Au did a demonstration, surrounded by community leaders, administrators, faculty, and staff, at President Pitts's home after dinner. The audience held its breath while carefully observing as Master Au exercised his magic brush on rice paper. Their admiration for Master Au's beautiful painting, *Two Egrets under the Willow Trees*, was beyond expression.

On February 8, 2007, the author accompanied Master Au to the Library of Congress in Washington, DC for video interview sessions. The video materials were acquired by the Archive of Folk Culture in the American Folk Life Center. The four-hour interviews in the morning and afternoon focused on Master Au's biography, the art and tradition of Chinese painting (origin and history, styles, and aesthetics), Master Au's paintings, relationship of painting with other arts (poetry and calligraphy), and current appraisal (universities and programs, evaluation and pricing, authentication and forgery). At the end of the interview sessions, Master Au did a painting on *Han ShanTze*. Dr. Nora Yeh was the interviewer and the author did the English translation.

The Library of Congress displayed Master Au's publications, including those from the University of Indianapolis Press, in the library. The inclusion of the interview tapes in the Library of Congress archive is high recognition of Master Au's esteemed career and his contributions to Asian art in America.

While in Washington, DC, Master Au was invited by the Asian Cultural History Program and Taiwan Heritage Project at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History to give a special lecture and demonstration on Chinese language and painting. It was titled "Twin Arts, One Origin" and held on February 9, 2007. A similar presentation was made at the Whit tall Pavilion of the Library of Congress on February 8, 2007. Those were Master Au's first public appearances in the Washington, DC area, and he received standing ovations from both Chinese and Western audiences.

Finally, at a personal level, Bonnie Kwan Huo, the author's mentor, art consultant, and a Lingnan artist who knows Master Au well, wrote in 2006 about the author's professional relationship with Master Au:

Phylis is a devoted friend of Au Ho-Nien. I have not known any friendship purer and deeper than theirs. She was the one who visualized and realized the Museum for him, acts as the curator of his museum, and promotes him worldwide. She does not do it for a profit, but for passion, and oftentimes even has to contribute to the expenses. I respect these two minds greatly, and marvel at the astonishing achievements they have made together in the global promotion of Chinese art—An ambassador of art and friendship.

The author hopes he has adequately conveyed the facets and stages of development in bringing an artist and his work from Taiwan. It was a "journey from afar". Through Master Au's work, we are able to bridge the East and the West and to enhance friendship between Taiwan and the U.S. through the medium of art. With support from all directions, our campus will continue to be graced by the beautiful paintings of Lingnan artists, and cities across the United States will forever appreciate the art of China. Such success was possible through the collaboration and support of artists, such as Master Au Ho-Nien, Bonnie Kwan Huo, Carol Chiu, Nigel N. C. Szeto, Charles Liu, Hoi-Chiu Chan, and Chau Hang, and community leaders, such as Paul Mao, Margate Liu Li, and the University of Indianapolis sharing with the author a common vision, that art brings us together. Friends from afar and home make it possible for us to embrace a culture that makes all of us more human.

Since 1994, Master Au Ho-Nien has had received seven honorary doctoral degrees from universities in

Korea, United States, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China, and six Au Ho-Nien art museums have been established in the United States, Taiwan, and China. Indeed, Master Au Ho-Nien is one of the most recognized, accomplished, and acclaimed Chinese artists and educators in the world. It is the author's privilege and honor to represent the University of Indianapolis in introducing Master Au and his art through this humble paper "*Journey With Art Afar*". In conclusion, the author would like to reiterate the vision and mission of establishing Au Ho-Nien Museum on a university campus:

This museum is unique. It is in an open and public space in our student center, a hub of activity for the university. My vision for the museum is that it will become a focal point on campus, a regular stop for campus tours, a subject for student research and discussion, a location for symposia and other academic and social events, an inspiration to our faculty and staff, a place for conversation, a sanctuary for reflection and simply a source of enjoyment for all the community.

It is a dream come true to establish the museum in concert and as a tribute to Master Au, a living legend who recognizes our vision at the University of Indianapolis of bridging the East and the West. This museum becomes an inviting, natural part of our campus life and of the fabric of our university.

Art knows no national boundaries. The author's hope is that the museum will serve as a bridge between our two cultures (Chinese and American), East and West, and an enticement for viewers to learn more about China's rich and diverse heritage.

I also hope that the university will host similar occasions in the future, opening its doors to other collections of art from Asia, Africa, Europe, the Americas, and any other ethnic or national tradition. I envision a day when the campus is bustling with events inspired and brought together by our collections (....) a day when art and world culture are woven even more tightly into the fabric of the university campus.

The author's simple assumption is that "to know Chinese painting is to know Chinese culture and one of the best ways to understand Chinese culture is through the appreciation of Chinese art in general, and painting in particular. Art is a medium for international cultural understand and relations"—Au Ho-Nien Museum Opening Remarks by Phylis Lan Lin, 2004.

Phylis Lan Lin, Ph.D.

Professor Emerita

Formerly Associate Vice President for International Partnerships &

Curator for the Au Ho-Nien Museum, University of Indianapolis

August 2018

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2016 & 2018



Master Au Ho-Nien (1935- )

Museums

Lingnan Museum of Art, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan

Au Ho-Nien Art Center, Chinese Cultural University, Taipei, Taiwan

Au Ho-Nien Art Museum, University of Indianapolis, Indianapolis, Indiana, U.S.A.

Au Ho-Nien Art Museum, Anhui Museum, Anhui, China

Beijing Au Ho-Nien Art Museum, Beijing, China

Shanghai Au Ho-Nien Art Museum, Shanghai, China

Honorary Doctoral Degrees

Honorary Doctor of Philosophy, Wonkwang University, Korea, 1994

Honorary Doctor of Arts, University of Indianapolis, U.S.A., 1995

Honorary Doctor of Philosophy, National Chung Hsing University, Taiwan, 2013

Honorary Doctor of Literature, Fu Jen Catholic University, Taiwan, 2014

Honorary Doctor of Arts, National Taiwan University of Arts, Taiwan, 2014

Honorary Doctor of Literature, National Dong Hua University, Taiwan, 2016

Honorary Doctor of Literature, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, 2016

The Art of Master Au Ho-Nien

(國畫大師歐豪年)

By Phylis Lan Lin, Ph.D., Professor Emerita, University of Indianapolis, USA.

A special lecture and demonstration, “Calligraphy and Poetry in Chinese Painting”, by Master Au Ho-Nien (Master Au’s comments appear in italics).

Au Ho-Nien Museum, University of Indianapolis Opening Celebration, August 26, 2004.