

*Chinese Masters
of the
17th Century*

Victoria Contag



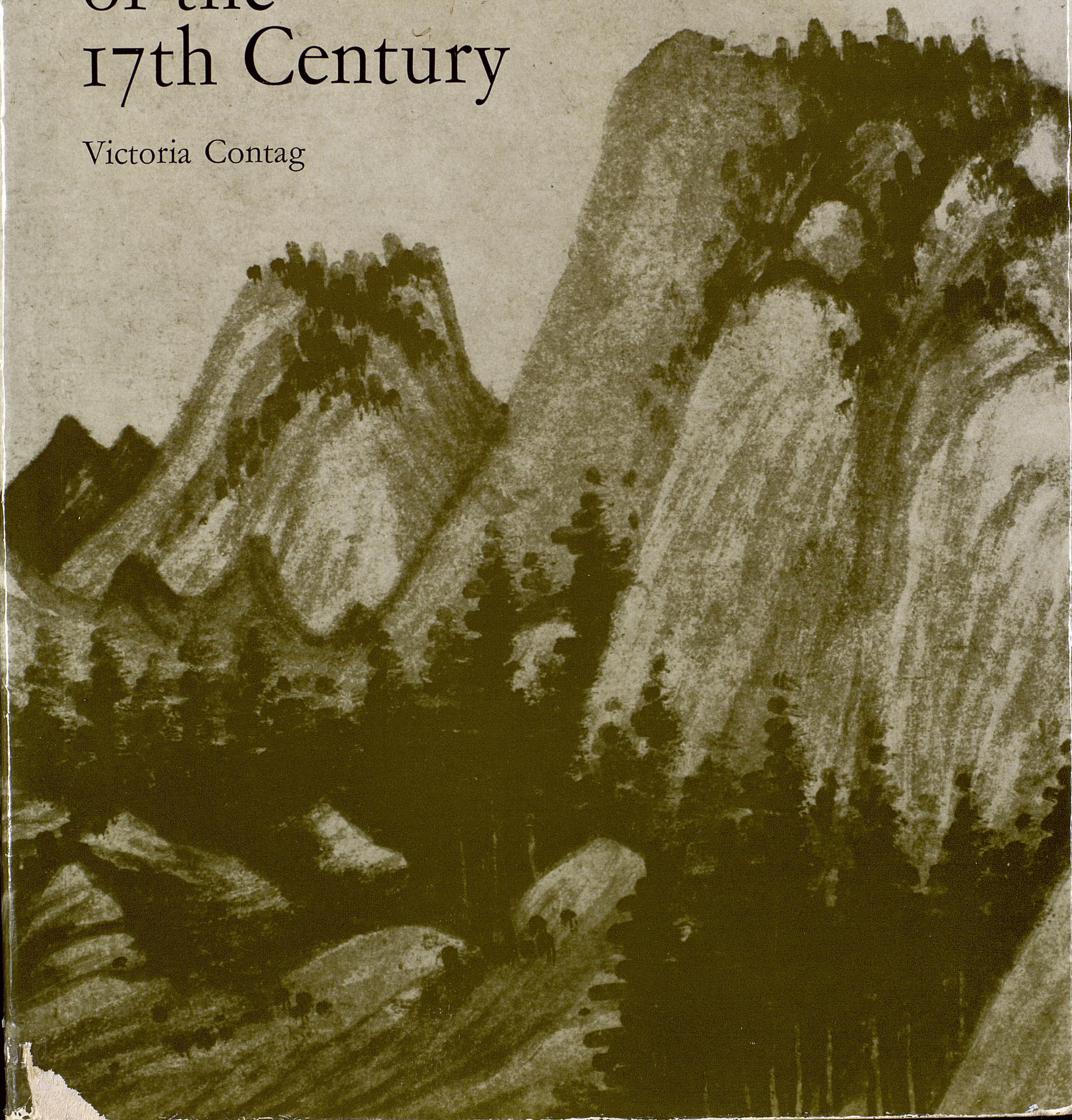
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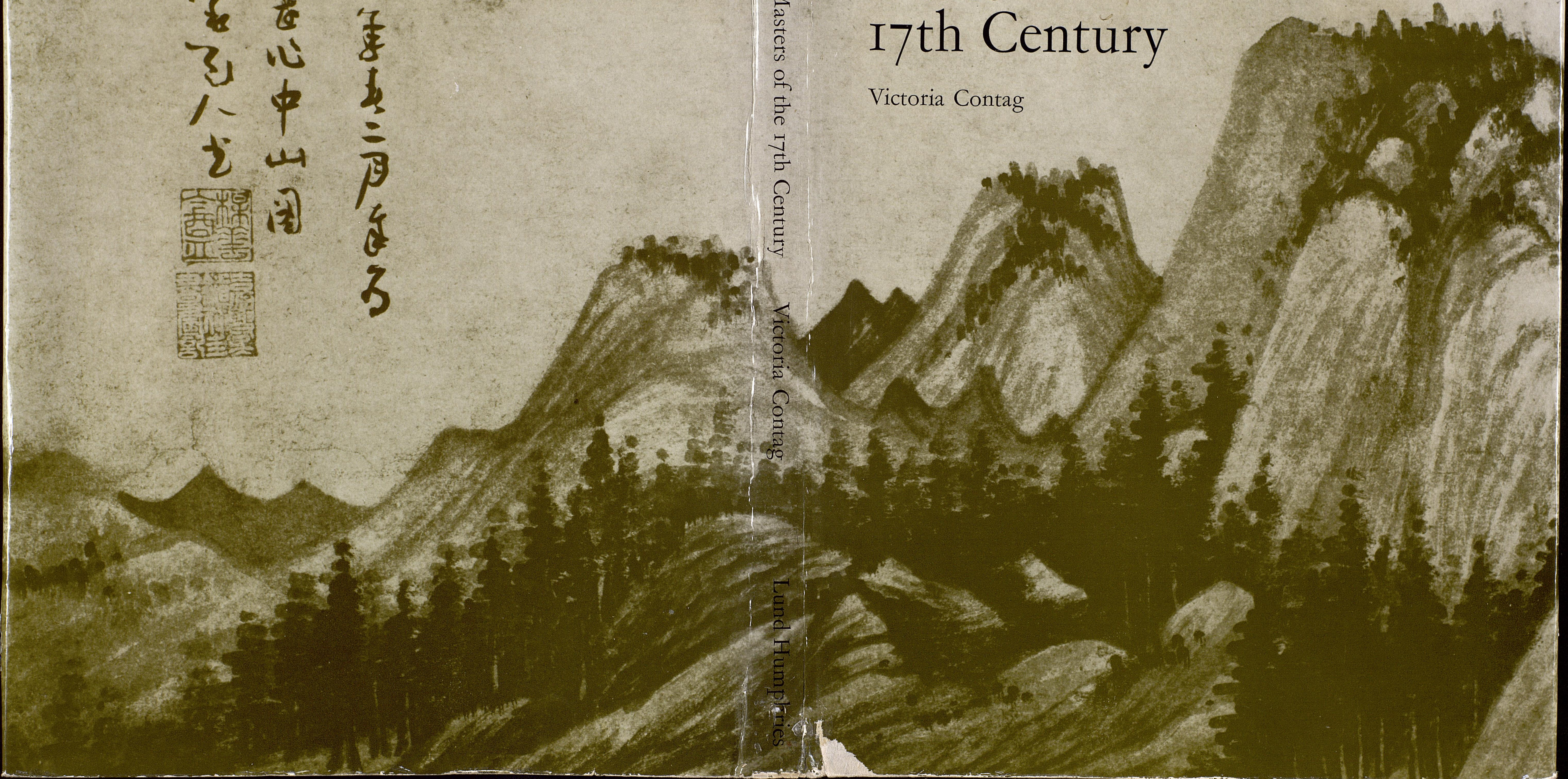
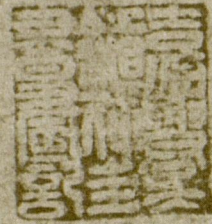
Victoria Contag

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至元二年春二月五日

百久卷心中山图

松石道人



Chinese Masters of the 17th Century

by Victoria Contag

Translated by Michael Bullock

There has been a renewal of interest in the West in the delightful landscape painting of the Chinese artists of the seventeenth century. This was the period that saw the work of the six Ch'ing masters, modelled stylistically on paintings dating from the fourteenth-century Yüan dynasty which they were able to observe in collections, as well as the work of important individualists such as Chu Ta and Mei Ch'ing.

The author, during her researches in China between 1934 and 1946, was able to photograph the most famous pictures of the seventeenth century and their fourteenth-century models, now quite inaccessible to the West. The best reproductions are included in this book, together with other famous paintings from the Palace Museum, Taipei, and leading American galleries.

For the first time all the inscriptions shown on the pictures have been translated, together with other texts by the same masters enunciating the principles that guided them. Thus the conception of painting held by the Chinese cultured painters of this period is deduced from their own statements.

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Lund Humphries London

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PLATE 53 Wang Shih-min (1592-1680). Album leaf in the style of Mi Fei (signed with the seal: No-chai-mo-hsi). Height c.40 cm

The 18th Century Yangchow School of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy

March 2, 1983–July 17, 1983
University Art Museum
University of California, Berkeley

"The place to be in the mid-eighteenth century, if one were a poet or a painter or simply a devotee of elegant living, was Yangchow. In this city on the Yangtze River, the lower terminus of the Grand Canal, salt merchants made huge fortunes and spent them on pleasure. A new social mobility allowed them to associate more easily than before with men of the gentry and scholar class. The result was a new, rich, and enthusiastic group of patrons for the scholarly arts—poetry, calligraphy, painting. Painters were attracted to Yangchow by this market for their works, by the brilliant company, and by the aesthetic and other enjoyments to be had in the lantern-lit pleasure boats that plied the canals at night, bearing entertainers of all kinds."

James Cahill
Fantastics and Eccentrics in Chinese Painting

Dear Fernando,
A few turkeys, but
you would have
enjoyed this.
R

Thus, Professor Cahill set the scene for a discussion of Yangchow painting in the catalogue which accompanied a 1967 exhibition in New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. His words apply equally well to our current exhibition, *The 18th Century Yangchow School of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy*, which features works by "The Eight Eccentrics of Yangchow" (Huang Shen, Cheng Hsieh, Hua Yen, Li Fang-ying, Wang Shih-shen, Chin Nung, Lo P'ing, and Li Shan) as well as by Cha Shih-piao, Ts'ai Chia, Kao Feng-han, Ch'en Tsuan, Ch'ien Tu, and I Ping-shou.

The current exhibition brings together works from the University Art Museum collection as well as those on extended loan to the Museum. The exhibition is further enhanced by paintings and calligraphy from The Jeannette Shambaugh Elliott Collection at The Art Museum, Princeton University. We are grateful both to Mrs. Elliott and to Princeton for lending these works to our exhibition.

The 18th Century Yangchow School of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy has been organized for the University Art Museum by Professor Cahill and Susan Teicholz, Associate Curator of Exhibitions and Asian Art. They join me in thanking Designer Nina Hubbs, Registrar Jack Coyle, Editor Cathy Curtis, Designer David Holbrook, Curatorial Secretary Eve Vanderstoel, Graduate Student Shelley Carnes, and the installation staff for their valuable assistance. We also wish to thank the anonymous donor who has so graciously contributed to the production of this brochure.

James Elliott
Director, University Art Museum
University of California, Berkeley

Introduction

This exhibition follows on the University Art Museum's *Shadows of Mt. Huang* of 1981, although it is less ambitious in its scope. Where "Shadows" presented the Anhui School of painting in the seventeenth century, this one is devoted to the Yangchow School in the eighteenth. The city of Yangchow, located north of the Yangtze River not far from Nanking, had succeeded the southern Anhui cities as a center of the salt trade and other mercantile activity for this region. Great fortunes were made there by the merchants and dispensed lavishly on building estates and gardens, patronizing drama and music and singing girls, as well as assembling libraries, holding literary parties, and entertaining scholars and poets, calligraphers and artists. Anhui School painting, with its more austere landscapes rendered in dry linear style, had represented the traditional values of gentry-literati "high culture" toward which the merchants aspired; the more entertaining subjects and striking styles of Yangchow School painting, by contrast, may reflect (among other things) a growing self-confidence in the patrons, a willingness to assert their own tastes and convey their preferences to the artists they supported.

The tendencies toward popularization in Yangchow School painting are manifested in several aspects of it. Subjects are more everyday, down-to-earth: flowers and fruits, vegetables and fish, such as one could see in the local marketplace; genre scenes, beautiful women and children; bamboo and orchids and blossoming plum branches, ever-popular themes besides being items in the scholar-amateur's repertory. Compositions tend to be bolder, colors more brilliant, ink more rich and freely splashed, brushwork less constrained by traditional disciplines. Such popularizing tendencies had normally been associated in the past with somewhat commercialized and (in the view of critics) lower-level varieties of painting, produced more for profit than for self-expression. In eighteenth-century Yangchow it would be mistaken to construct the alternatives in that way. Affluence and the spread of education had increased the number of learned and cultured men until the traditional career of officialdom could absorb only a small fraction of them, so that many others were forced to turn their artistic and literary talents to earning their livings. Artists in this situation were so numerous, in fact, that they no longer incurred the old stigmata attached to professionalism. A kind of individualistic self-expression was, in fact, an important element in the stock-in-trade of these painters, part of what they offered to their patrons.

A late nineteenth-century writer distinguished eight "eccentrics" or "strange masters" among the Yangchow artists, and the

term *Yang-chou pa-kuai* or "Eight Eccentrics of Yangchow" has been widely current ever since, even though there is no agreement on which eight should be included in it. The artists do not, in any case, form a coherent group, even to the degree that regional schools in the previous century (the Anhui masters, the Eight Masters of Nanking) had been. Some of them were from other regions such as Fukien (Huang Shen, Hua Yen) or Shantung (Kao Feng-han), and their periods of activity range from the early decades of the century for some to the end for others (Lo P'ing lived and painted until 1799).

The "oddness" or "eccentricity" (*kuai*) of their works has also been called into question by some recent, revisionist writers who maintain that these painters are only continuing the scholar-artist lineage. But although they may seem only mildly quirky, at most, to us, we should try to understand them in their Chinese context and recognize the rule-breaking departures that both fascinated and disturbed Chinese critics: subjects hitherto ruled out as disharmonious (such as Hua Yen's "Brush Fire with Animals Fleeing," no. 3, or Chin Nung's and Lo P'ing's pictures of ghosts, not represented here); odd compositions that push the objects into corners, as in some of Li Fang-ying's plum-blossom pictures; brushline that wanders freely over the surface, and other manipulations of brush and ink that violate old traditions. Painting now approaches, more than before, the character of calligraphy as surface design and record of brush-movements; some of the Yangchow artists (as the present exhibition also reveals) were accomplished calligraphers and incorporated freely-written inscriptions into their pictures.

For all of these practices the Yangchow masters could cite as illustrious (and perilous) precedent the late works of the greatest of the seventeenth century Individualists, Tao-chi or Shih-t'ao, who had spent most of his last years (1687–1708) in Yangchow, and who was still revered and imitated there. None of the Yangchow painters, in the end, was of the stature of Shih-t'ao, and their "oddness" is often entertaining and decorative rather than deeply affecting. But their best works—some of which are in this exhibition—stand as the most original creations of the eighteenth century, and among the most attractive from the late period of Chinese painting.

James Cahill
Professor, History of Art
University of California, Berkeley



Chin Nung (1687-1764). *Plum Branch*. Dated 1760. Hanging scroll; ink on paper. 56¼" × 15". University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley 1975.36. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Roger Spang, Millbrae, California.

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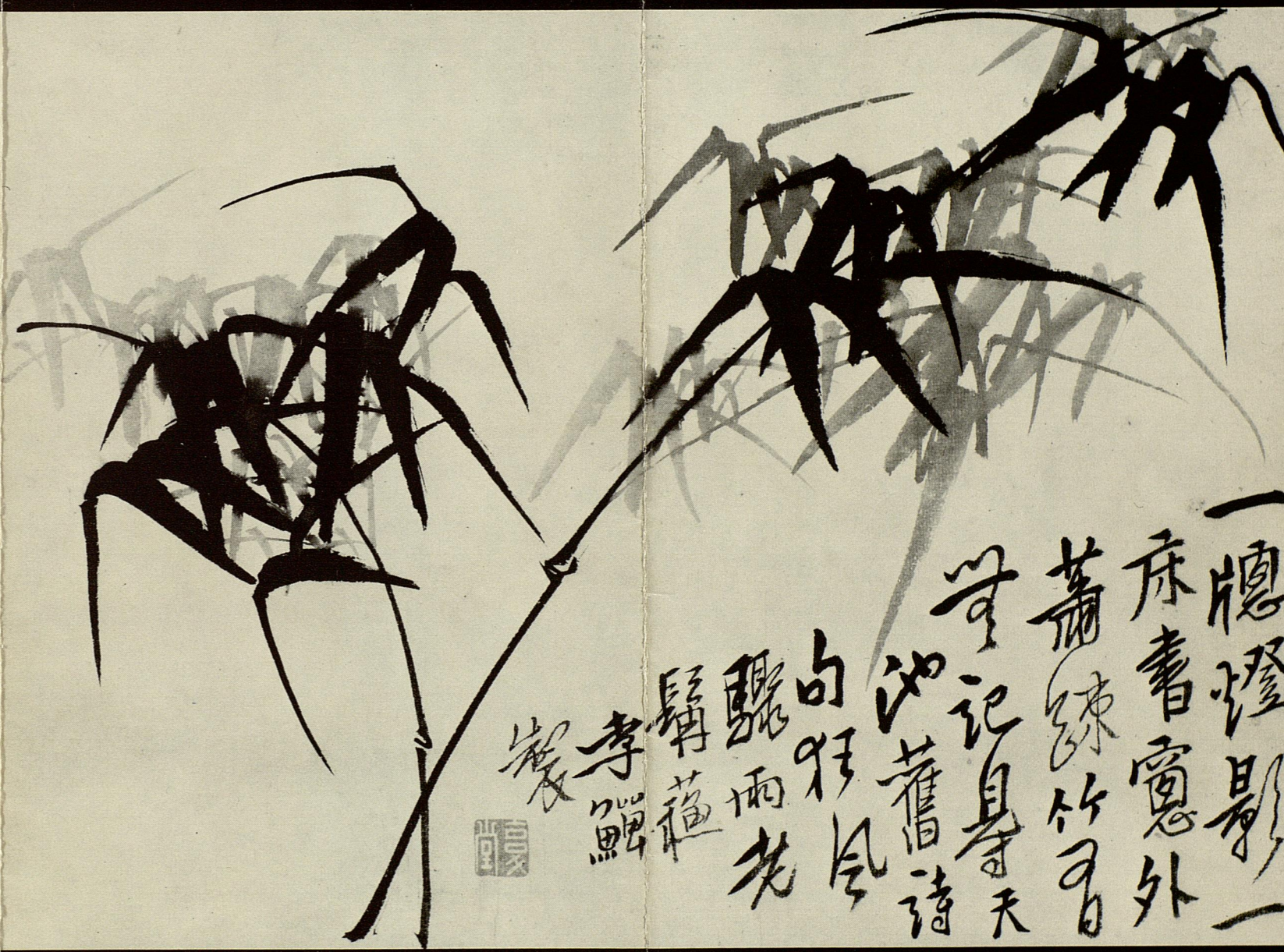
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Li Shan (1686-ca. 1764). *Orchids and Bamboo*. Leaf from an album of six leaves; ink on paper. 12¾" × 18⅞" each leaf. The Art Museum, Princeton University, The Jeannette Shambaugh Elliott Collection.

The 18th Century Yangchow School of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy





The 18th Century Yangchow School of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy

March 2, 1983–July 17, 1983
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Checklist of the Exhibition

1. Cha Shih-piao (1615–1698). *Poem by Cha Shih-piao*. Hanging scroll; ink on paper. 55 $\frac{1}{8}$ " \times 28 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Lent by The Art Museum, Princeton University, The Jeannette Shambaugh Elliott Collection.
2. Ts'ai Chia (ca. 1680–ca. 1760). *Three Blind Musicians*. Hanging scroll; ink on paper. 23" \times 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". University Art Museum 1975.9. Gift of Mrs. Edward M. Shelton, Belvedere, California, in honor of James Cahill.
3. Hua Yen (1682–1756?). *Brush Fire with Animals Fleeing*. Hanging scroll; ink and colors on paper. 21" \times 20 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Extended loan: Ching Yüan Chai Collection.
4. Hua Yen (1682–1756?). *Landscape*. Hanging scroll; ink and light color on paper. 47" \times 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Extended loan: Ching Yüan Chai Collection.
5. Kao Feng-han (1683–1749). *Flowers, Rocks, Trees*. Album of eight leaves; ink and colors on paper. 8" \times 12 $\frac{1}{8}$ " each leaf. University Art Museum 1979.29.6. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Eugene C. Gaenslen, Jr., Burlingame, California.
6. Kao Feng-han (1683–1749). *Flowers, Bamboo, Rocks, Landscapes*. 1733. Album of twelve leaves; ink and colors on paper. 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ " \times 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ " each leaf. Extended loan: George J. Schlenker Collection, Piedmont, California.
7. Kao Feng-han (1683–1749). *Flowers and Calligraphy*. 1738. Album of fourteen leaves; ink and colors on paper. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ " \times 17 $\frac{1}{4}$ " each leaf. Lent by The Art Museum, Princeton University, The Jeannette Shambaugh Elliott Collection.
8. Attributed to Kao Feng-han (1683–1749). *Poem by Kao Feng-han*. After 1744. Hanging scroll; ink on paper. 51 $\frac{1}{8}$ " \times 16 $\frac{3}{8}$ ". Lent by The Art Museum, Princeton University, The Jeannette Shambaugh Elliott Collection.
9. Wang Shih-shen (1686–1759). *Branch of Blossoming Plum*. Hanging scroll; ink and light colors on paper. 44 $\frac{1}{2}$ " \times 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Extended loan: Ching Yüan Chai Collection.
10. Li Shan (1686–ca. 1764). *Flowers and Rock*. 1726. Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper. 47 $\frac{3}{8}$ " \times 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". University Art Museum 1976.23. Gift of Dr. Eugene C. Gaenslen, Jr., Burlingame, California.
11. Li Shan (1686–ca. 1764). *Cicadas and Willow*. Hanging scroll; ink on silk. 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ " \times 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Extended loan: Ching Yüan Chai Collection.
12. Li Shan (1686–ca. 1764). *Flowers*. Two album leaves mounted as one hanging scroll; ink and colors on paper. 11 $\frac{1}{8}$ " \times 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ " each leaf. University Art Museum 1976.24. Gift of Dr. Eugene C. Gaenslen, Jr., Burlingame, California.
13. Li Shan (1686–ca. 1764). *Bamboo*. Album leaf; ink on silk. 11" \times 16". Extended loan: Ching Yüan Chai Collection.
14. Li Shan (1686–ca. 1764). *Flowers, etc.*, 1735. Album of eight leaves; ink and colors on paper. 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ " \times 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ " each leaf. Extended loan: Ching Yüan Chai Collection.
15. Li Shan (1686–ca. 1764). *Flowers*. 1738. Album of eight leaves; ink and colors on paper. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ " \times 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ " each leaf. Extended loan: George J. Schlenker Collection, Piedmont, California.
16. Li Shan (1686–ca. 1764). *Orchids and Bamboo*. 1754. Album of six leaves; ink on paper. 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ " \times 18 $\frac{1}{8}$ " each leaf. Lent by The Art Museum, Princeton University, The Jeannette Shambaugh Elliott Collection.
17. Chin Nung (1687–1764). *Bamboo and Calligraphy*. 1750. Hanging scroll; ink on paper. 37 $\frac{1}{4}$ " \times 15 $\frac{1}{8}$ ". Lent by The Art Museum, Princeton University, The Jeannette Shambaugh Elliott Collection.
18. Chin Nung (1687–1764). *The Calamus*. 1759. Hanging scroll; ink on paper. 63 $\frac{3}{8}$ " \times 14". Lent by The Art Museum, Princeton University, The Jeannette Shambaugh Elliott Collection.
19. Chin Nung (1687–1764). *Plum Branch*. 1760. Hanging scroll; ink on paper. 56 $\frac{1}{4}$ " \times 15". University Art Museum 1975.36. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Roger Spang, Millbrae, California.
20. Chin Nung (1687–1764). *Blossoming Plum*. Album of six leaves; ink and light colors on paper. 8" \times 10" each leaf. Extended loan: Ching Yüan Chai Collection.
21. Huang Shen (1687–1766). *Old Man with Basket of Fungi*. 1722. Hanging scroll; ink and light colors on paper. 46" \times 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ ". Extended loan: Ching Yüan Chai Collection.
22. Huang Shen (1687–1766). *Landscape with Figures*. Two album leaves: a) ink on paper; b) ink and light color on paper. 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ " \times 14" each leaf. University Art Museum 1976.22ab. Gift of Dr. Eugene C. Gaenslen, Jr., Burlingame, California.
23. Huang Shen (1687–1766). *Beggars, etc.* 1730. Album of twelve leaves; ink and light colors on paper. 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ " \times 17 $\frac{1}{4}$ " each leaf. Extended loan: Ching Yüan Chai Collection.
24. Huang Shen (1687–1766). *Figures and Flowers*. Album of six leaves; ink and light colors on paper. 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ " \times 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ " each leaf. Extended loan: Ching Yüan Chai Collection.
25. Cheng Hsieh (1693–1765). *Orchids and Bamboo*. Handscroll; ink on paper. 11 $\frac{1}{8}$ " \times 74 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Extended loan: George J. Schlenker Collection, Piedmont, California.
26. Cheng Hsieh (1693–1765). *Couplet*. 1747. Pair of hanging scrolls; ink on paper. 46 $\frac{7}{8}$ " \times 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ " each. Lent by The Art Museum, Princeton University, The Jeannette Shambaugh Elliott Collection.
27. Li Fang-ying (1695–1754). *Blossoming Plum*. 1748. Album of twelve leaves; ink on paper. 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ " \times 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ " each leaf. Extended loan: Ching Yüan Chai Collection.
28. Li Fang-ying (1695–1754). *Orchids, Blossoming Plum, Flowers*. 1753. Four album leaves; ink on paper. 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ " \times 16 $\frac{1}{8}$ " each leaf. Extended loan: Ching Yüan Chai Collection.
29. Li Fang-ying (1695–1754). *Branch of Flowering Plum*. 1754. Hanging scroll; ink on paper. 63 $\frac{1}{2}$ " \times 27 $\frac{1}{16}$ ". University Art Museum 1967.14. Gift of Elizabeth Hay Bechtel, University of California, Berkeley, Class of 1925.
30. Ch'en Tsuan (active 1730s–1740s). *Branch of Flowering Plum*. Fan painting; ink on paper. 13" \times 24 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Extended loan: Ching Yüan Chai Collection.
31. Ch'en Tsuan (active 1730s–1740s). *Flowers, etc.* 1735. Album of eight leaves; ink and colors on paper. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ " \times 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ " each leaf. Extended loan: Ching Yüan Chai Collection.
32. Lo P'ing (1733–1799). *Portrait of the Artist's Friend I-an*. 1798. Hanging scroll; ink and light color on paper. 47" \times 17 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Extended loan: Ching Yüan Chai Collection.
33. Lo P'ing (1733–1799). *Girl Beneath Blossoming Plum Branch*. Small hanging scroll; ink on paper. 29 $\frac{3}{4}$ " \times 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Extended loan: Ching Yüan Chai Collection.
34. I Ping-shou (1754–1815). *The Fragrance of Antiquity*. 1811. Horizontal hanging scroll; ink on paper. 15 $\frac{3}{8}$ " \times 48 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". Lent by The Art Museum, Princeton University, The Jeannette Shambaugh Elliott Collection.
35. Ch'ien Tu (1763–1844). *Boating on West Lake*. 1822. Hanging scroll; colors on paper. 34 $\frac{1}{2}$ " \times 16 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Lent by The Art Museum, Princeton University, The Jeannette Shambaugh Elliott Collection.



Chin Nung (1687–1764). *Bamboo and Calligraphy*. 1750. Hanging scroll; ink on paper. 37 $\frac{1}{4}$ " \times 15 $\frac{1}{8}$ ". The Art Museum, Princeton University, The Jeannette Shambaugh Elliott Collection.

About the author

The author, Victoria Contag, first studied history of art at the University of Vienna. This was followed by studies in the Chinese language at the China Institute in Frankfurt am Main, Berlin and Hamburg. For several years, after taking a doctorate in Sinology, she worked at the Museum of Oriental Art in Berlin, under Professor Kummel, where she translated inscriptions on Chinese paintings. Professor Contag was asked to join the committee responsible for an exhibition of modern Chinese painting in Berlin which was organized by the Chinese Government. Following this exhibition, in 1934, Professor Contag was invited to Peking. To protect the most valuable works of art of the Palace Museum in Peking from damage during the Sino-Japanese War, many of them were brought to Shanghai and kept in the strong-room of the Bank of China. In Shanghai the author joined the committee of famous Chinese scholars who revised the catalogue and the valuation of the pictures in the Imperial collection. Together with one of the Palace Museum's advisers, C. C. Wang, Professor Contag visited the private collections of Chinese pictures from the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties. This enabled her to make the necessary researches for her book *Seals of Chinese Painters and Collectors* which was published in 1940 (by the Commercial Press) in Shanghai. The close contact with Chinese scholars over several years afforded her an opportunity to study Confucian education, which led to her book on Confucian philosophy. In 1946 Professor Contag returned to Germany where, until 1968, she taught Chinese language and Chinese philosophy at the University of Mainz.

The most important works by Victoria Contag are *Die sechs berühmten Maler der Ch'ing Dynastie* (Leipzig 1940); *Seals of Chinese Painters and Collectors* (an enlarged edition of the book originally published in Shanghai, Hong Kong 1964); *Die beiden Steine* (Braunschweig 1950); *Zwei Meister chinesischer Landschaftsmalerei* (Baden-Baden 1955); *Konfuzianische Bildung und Bildwelt* (Zurich 1964).

至元二年正月五日

百久卷心中山图

松石山人

