

# 書契新迹

## 何思為書法展

卑詩大學亞洲中心

一九九七年一月十八至廿六日

### NEW TRACES OF ARCHAIC SCRIPTS

An Exhibition of  
Chinese Calligraphy by

**Ho See - fai**

Asian Centre, University of British Columbia

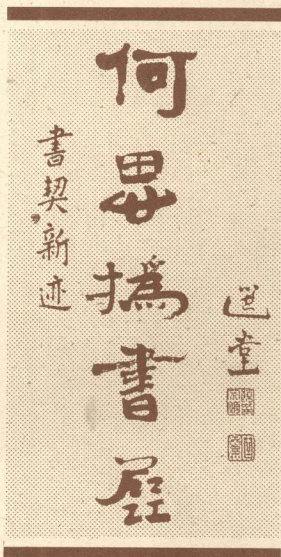
1871 West Mall, Vancouver, B.C., Canada

January 18-26, 1997.



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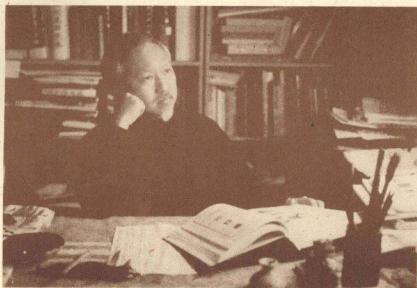
順德梁銘珣同如館存  
一九九七年一月



多元文化萬歲  
Long Live Multiculturalism  
135 x 23cm

封面題字：  
饒宗頤教授  
謝琰

Cover:  
Calligraphy by  
Professor Jao Tsung-i  
and Tse Yim

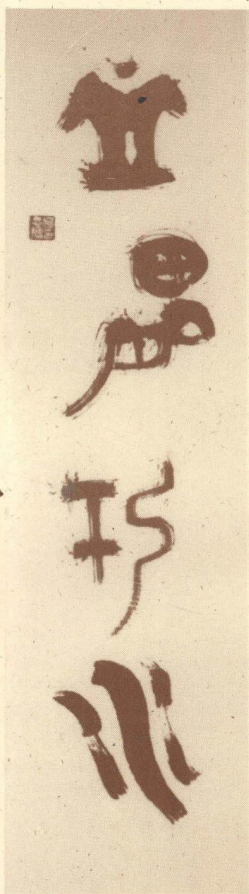
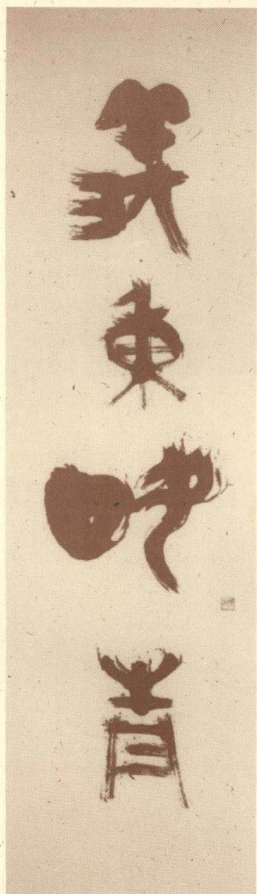


## 何 思 搗

一九三八年生於澳門。澳門東亞大學文學碩士。六十年代，隨謝熙先生學習書法。擅甲骨文及隸書。何氏亦為著名詩人，常以自撰詩文為書法作品內容。一九八九年自香港移民加拿大。

## Ho See-fai

Ho See-fai was born in 1938. He graduated from the University of East Asia in Macau with a M.A. degree. During the 1960's, he studied calligraphy under Hsieh Hsi. He specializes in oracle-bone and clerical script. Often he writes his own verses and use them as text for his calligraphy works. In 1989 he immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong.



血濃於水 義重如情 Four character couplet  
122 x 28 cm x 2



# 學書·論書·展書

——寫在我的首次個人書法展前夕

個展前夕思潮起伏。待到心境平靜，執筆作記，分三部份：從師學書雜憶；個人書觀隨想；關於這次書展。

## I

從小愛書法。童年在澳門，正值抗戰，學寫字沒有筆，用別人從賭館拿出來的鉛筆頭。沒有紙，到“白鴿票”舖去討，說：“媽媽要買白鴿票”，就取得印有“天地玄黃”的票紙了。

小學時有“尺牘”課，課文印的全是手寫行草，筆飛墨舞。憑記憶，是秀雅的“王字”。書法課中我臨的是柳公權《玄秘塔》。同學們有臨歐、顏、趙，以至成親王、黃自元、陸潤庠的。我迷上了書法。一次發高燒病臥在床，用手指劃空，母親大驚：“阿搗，你在做什麼？”她以為我神經錯亂呢。

高小時何榮祿老師要我們幾個“留堂”，學大字。每人一枝提筆，一張白報紙，第一課，十個字，行書：“努力崇明德，隨時愛景光。”何老師擅榜書，澳門街上的招牌，不少是他的手筆。

中學時的楊敬安老師鬚髮眉毛皆白：少年時從學於梁鼎芬，得梁書的勁逸。他說，梁老師教溥儀時，常常帶他進宮，叫他站立一旁，陪“皇帝”讀書。我每次到楊老師家喝工夫茶，欣賞他收藏的書畫，也是站立一旁，從來沒有坐過。陶俊棠老師獨身，寫一手歐體行書，稜角森嚴，與其外型相配，我常向他請教文字學，在他的臥室翻閱他古文字學的論文稿。

大學裏隨饒宗頤教授學習，饒師博學。我學會從批評的角度俯視、透視文學藝術，視野擴闊。移民到這裏後，無親炙機會，只能靠通信，求教學術上、書法上的問題了。

一九六一年，廿三歲，年少無知，受了一次感情重創。我把精神全部轉移到書法，拜謝熙先生為師，逢星期日渡海，到“文緣館”上課。楷書開始，繼而隸書、行書，寫千字文。自定時間表，每天練字，寫“書法日記”，還打算為書法而獨身。第一次學寫對聯，自擬對文是：“拔劍迎仇欲，揮毫養我傷”。謝師婉轉勸慰，書法內容不宜頹廢。他對我特別關懷，學費加了，不加我的。學了幾年，介紹我接件，寫小幅，為一些書香之家的木刻書櫥寫墨稿等等。長篇小字還叫我代筆。又鼓勵我參加全港青年書法比賽。

謝師於一九八三年逝世，年八十七。病重臥院時還堅持練字，手顫抖拿不穩筆，叫女兒捉著他的手教他寫。這件事，令我流了不少眼淚。出殯日，扶靈的是八位學生，我被派在左邊，隔一層棺木，我扶著謝老師的右手。

藝術品應具時代精神。有一年，香港大會堂同期有兩個書法展：一個代表了中國大陸，一個代表了日本。我看了很感失望。書法的時代精神何在呢？抄錄今人豪邁的詩詞就成了嗎？那是該詩詞本身的，不是書法藝術的。另外是書家的個人風格和感情。重覆歷史，重覆前人，只是不肖子孫。書法似乎也不能表達我內心深處的感情。於是我放棄了書法，全心投入文學。

後來閱歷深了些，覺得當前的書法沒能體現時代精神以至書家的個性和感情，責任不在書法。劉熙載說：“秦碑力勁，漢碑氣厚，一代之書，無有不肖乎一代之人與文者。”韓愈說張旭“天地事物之變，可喜可愕，一寓於書。”這都證明，問題只在我們自己。於是重拾舊歡，書法與文學並進。

近年才醒悟，為什麼文學領域中我最愛詩，藝術領域中我最愛書法，也許因為：最藝術的文學，是詩，而最文學的藝術，是書法。詩與書法，都是在邊界線上，我是個在那裏徘徊的邊緣人。

我尊重傳統。古人的藝術表現了他們的時代，他們獨特的個性和感情。更有我們難以企及的技巧。時代不同，氣質性格不同，臨仿古代大師，不可能全似。有人窮一生之力去做，實在是浪費。應該著重學習其技巧，以及以技巧表現時代、個性、感情的方法；並非求形似，或者沒有實質依據的所謂“神”。

我勇於創新。自覺有不可估量的潛力，因為主要營養來自書法以外，那是不可估量的廣大深邃的寶藏；但創新絕不能拋棄書法的根本。

書法的根本是什麼？是用筆，即是筆法。書法中的章法、結字、用筆，是三個層次。遠看是看章法，近看是看結字，細看是看用筆。若以戲曲為喻，大致相當於節拍、唱腔和音色。（當然，章法複雜過節拍，而結字似乎簡單過唱腔）用筆，相當於音色，最細緻，是氣質、個性的表現。歌者可貴在獨特的音色，書者可貴在獨特的用筆。書法與繪畫最似，書法的章法、結字以至墨法，都可在繪畫中找到相對應的東西，但細緻多姿的用筆，是書法所獨有。輕視用筆，就離開了書法的核心。裝潢是外殼。

最近有人問我為什麼愛寫古文字。我想：書法史上，當一種書體或風格成熟後，後繼者往往循原來的方向走，整齊之，規範之，導致過熱。相對來說，古文字還沒那麼定型，不但有發展前途，更可選擇發展方向。古人評書，常以楷、草而有篆、隸意為高，原因也許在此。走回起點去，可以另選一個方向出發。如果不是秦始皇統一了中國，統一了文字，現代的漢字不會是現在這個樣子。

我們可以攀過古人（不是跨過、跳過、掠過），開創由我們自己選擇的書法史。

此地去年有“翰墨因緣”現代中、日書法聯展，我展出一古隸作品，自以為「此古隸渾厚如鑄，或得自乃師。自西漢刻石啟步，涉簡帛，棄篆籀，窺探殷金的原始狀態」，就是回到上古去創新。我還說，「此作淡墨水量，具現代水墨畫韻致」，卻是直接向現代藝術吸取營養了。

原來我們可以同時朝復古和前衛這兩個完全相反的方向行進，達到創新的目標。

### III

謝熙先生生於一八九六年，今年滿百歲。兩年前，我曾向留港同門建議辦一個紀念展。可惜事與願違。今年冬，我出版了自己的書法集，把這“家課”作為獻禮。同時準備個展。

展品大部份是甲骨文，也有狂草和別的書體。首先感謝這片心胸廣闊的大地和它的多元文化政策，使我能接觸到各種不同的文化。為了使中國書法能為不懂漢字的人士欣賞，我著意於連中國人也覺得難懂的兩種書體：最古的甲骨文，最新的狂草。前者具圖象，近於原始繪畫；後者是恣意抒情的線條，近現代抽象畫。兩種書體分處兩極，卻同樣超越了文化的界線。感謝美麗的卑詩省大自然，讓我在甲骨、古隸的用筆、結字上有所師法。我有一對聯：“靈動臨松風；剛圓學雪杉”，指此。感謝卑詩大學的贊助，提供亞洲中心這寬敞舒服的展覽廳。感謝亞洲圖書館，這全加拿大中文圖書最豐富的地方，使我在遠離亞洲的這七年裏，有足夠的中文圖書參考，助長了我的書法。

這次展出的兩個長篇，《心經》和《正氣歌》，在中國書法史上，是第一次用甲骨文書寫。既然孕育、出生於此，在此地的高等學術機構作首次展示，是最恰當的了。

感謝亞洲圖書館的謝琰兄，這次展覽全賴他的推薦和統籌，熱情細緻，好像在辦他自己的個展。

這次個展，是我學書幾十年來的首次。我記起來了，個展應該在三十一年前就舉行的。當時我得了香港青年書法冠軍，YMCA 男青年會要為我辦一個個展，我覺得果子未熟不應採下來，一口拒絕。我是謝老師最乖、最聽話的學生，這麼多年來，就只有那一次令他不悅。現在這遲來的個展，算是補償吧。

何思濤 一九九六年冬暮，溫哥華。



# 覓古求今——何思搗的書風

甲骨文在一八九九年在河南省安陽縣小屯村發現，歷經清末，直至到現在，幾近一百年。由於中外學者的努力，耕耘，研究，甲骨學已成為古文字學領域中的一門新興學問。甲骨文發現後也引起了書法界的嚮往，開創了甲骨文書法。自二十年代迄今，許多書法家以甲骨文為一種新書體，嘗試創作，但書法家書寫甲骨文時卻面臨兩個難題：（一）如何解決文字不敷用之弊？（二）怎樣用毛筆來表現甲骨文刀刻的原有精神？解決了這兩個障礙，書法家才能利用甲骨文作為創作的媒介。

目前十多萬片甲骨文，重複的字不算，已經認識清楚的只有一千左右。以現有認識的甲骨文，這種上古文字實不足夠書寫古典詩文及現代文句之用。不敷使用時，書寫者則要自己仿造。仿造時應該根據或揣摩古人的原則去進行。一個沒有受過古文字學嚴格訓練的人，面臨仿造，不知從何入手。

甲骨文雖然是中國最早的文字，但它也是中國最新的書體，其他書體，如篆、隸、草、楷、行比它後期，卻早已成熟定型。各種書體有其獨特用筆方法，以隸書為例，寫隸書使用逆入平出等筆法，書寫者有規矩可循。又有歷代出土碑刻，如禮器，曹全，張遷等碑，足以為學習範本。到清中葉，隸書名家輩出如鄧石如的隸書參以篆法，將隸書的藝術提昇到新的層次。後學隸書者，有蹊徑可尋，容易入手。甲骨文是一個完全新的藝術領域，從事以甲骨文為創作媒介的書者，沒有範本依傍，沒有一定的標準。唯一足以參考的是出土文字。至於用筆，結體，布局，難以凭藉。書寫甲骨文如探險，探險者只有一張簡圖，而無指南針，全靠自己嘗試，探索，找到自己的方向。書法家要在甲骨文書法有所成，需具備豐富古文字知識，和開拓創新的精神，缺一不可，因此涉獵者多，而深入者少。

何思搗是少數書法家能夠深入甲骨文書法領域的一個，他從中學時代已對文字學發生興趣，進入大學時，從古文字學者饒宗頤教授遊。茲後，他對古文字，尤其是甲骨學的研習從未間斷，累積了豐富古文字學的知識。

今次，他在卑詩大學亞洲中心舉行的個人書法展覽——書契新迹，展出的四十六件作品，其中甲骨文佔有半數以上。最矚目的兩件作品，一是唐玄奘法師所譯的般若波羅蜜多心經。另一件是宋文天祥作的正氣歌。般若波羅蜜多心經簡稱心經。它只有二百六十字，而言約義豐，概括了大乘佛教中心思想，深入民間，為諸經之冠。自唐代懷仁法師集王羲之行書心經面世後，書法家一直奉為學習行書的圭臬，流傳廣遠。後世許多書法家以各種書體寫心經，而獨缺甲骨文。何思搗敢於創新，以甲骨文寫心經和正氣歌，是前人未經嘗試過，算是中國書法史的創舉。



何思搗書寫心經時，面臨文字不敷使用，與文字重複如何處理的雙重困難。不敷使用的字，他利用古文字學知識，借用或參考接近甲骨文時期的其他上古文字，如陶文，金文，玉文，石文等，依據古人的原則，精神去仿造。甲骨文是一種尚未成熟的書體，造型沒有統一，同一字有多種寫法，書者選擇何字，全凭自己的判斷。他分三種方法去處理重複的字。（一）從多種現成不同造型的字樣，凭他主觀的審美眼光去挑選最佳的幾個造型，互相交替去使用。（二）如果多種不同的造型只有一個最合適的式樣，則採用該式樣，在書寫時，線條有長短，疏密，輕重之變化。（三）為了顧及整張作品的美觀與調和，若原字不美，則進行美化，甚至棄而不用，另外仿造一個合適的字。

何思搗特別注意整篇布局的調和，以「多元文化萬歲」這張作品為例，他選擇造型簡單的甲骨文去寫，不參入繁複的結體的字樣，顧及字與字之間的協調，營造出一張簡潔清新的作品。此外，他求整體作品的變化，但他不會為變而變，否則同一個字，體態懸殊，失諸自然。

解決了文字處理的難題後，書寫者還要抉擇怎樣利用毛筆去求甲骨文刀刻原有的精神。何思搗參考，分析，總結前人的經驗後，決定自闢途徑，去寫具有現代精神的甲骨文書法。自秦以來毛筆是主要書寫的工具，而不是刻刀，毛筆的彈性最能寫出剛柔，輕重，濃淡，變化多端，有生命力的線條。表現力遠勝尖銳的刻刀。何思搗從事書法藝術數十年，掌握了毛筆的性能，故能運筆自如。他寫甲骨文時，又兼顧刀刻的效果。他書寫甲骨文時，行筆有逆入鋒出，有首尾露鋒，顯出圓頭尾尖或兩端尖銳的形態，他把「含蓄的筆意與銳露的刀痕融合」，創造他理想的現代甲骨文。

書法是藉著文字為媒介，達成創作的目的，文字催生了書法，一張書法的藝術並不決定在內容的文意。但感人的文辭可以加深觀賞者對書法家的思想和情感的了解。何思搗是一個善於利用文字的書法家。他除了書法創作也寫詩，文學與書法兩者兼修。他自己分析：「為什麼文學領域中我最愛詩，藝術領域中我最愛書法，也許因為，最藝術的文學是詩，而最文學的藝術是書法。」他喜歡用書法寫自己的文句。書契新迹展出的聯句，全是他自撰。內容有去國懷鄉的傷感，「燕安新大陸，夢斷古長城。」，有綜合他書法創作師造化的經驗，「靈動臨松鼠，剛圓學雪杉。」，有勾勒溫哥華景色，「春燕逐微雨，秋林幻彩虹。」，有時他捕捉他的小貓形態，「淋漓搗水墨，伶俐我貓狸。」，描寫他自己家的花園即景，「意花忻並蒂，胡蝶舞雙飛。」，管窺他居家生活的情趣。每聯均有序文，為觀賞者作一個指引，文筆雋永，風格頗近姜白石詞的小序，他的短序用小行草寫在甲骨聯句的兩旁。有時他大膽布局，試看「坐馳無繫馬，飛入多彩林。」一聯，「坐馳」及「飛入」，二字相連，是沿用古甲骨文「合文」的特點，造成特別視覺效果。他又

將聯句的位置稍向左右移動，整字行產生了動感，如雨水從屋簷沿壁涓涓流下，搖曳生姿，將屋漏痕筆法引申到章法裏。小行草的短序安放在聯句的兩邊，作為邊緣，使左右跌宕的聯句不致超踰規範。遠觀整張作品布局，聯句與小序的排列，長短參差，錯落有致。近看駘蕩的行草，配以蒼渾的甲骨文，相映成趣。細讀文字，引發觀賞者自由聯想，走進何思搗內心的世界，與作者的情懷互相交溶，主客的心聲相通。

書契新迹的展品，除了甲骨文外，何思搗也書寫其他古文字，如金文，石鼓文，而古隸則佔多張。古隸開創於秦朝，體制尚未成熟，他獨具慧眼，選擇古隸作為創作的媒介。古隸如甲骨文一樣，給予他創作高度的自由。他書寫古隸，不必囿於清人寫隸逆入平出的筆法，和雁不雙飛的成例，為了表現古隸的書風，他取法於天然樸拙的漢石刻，竹木簡，帛書，以至金文，而捨去經過人為整理平正端方的小篆，今隸。何思搗嘗試以水墨畫的技法用淡墨，漲墨去寫寬闊凝重的線條，樸實無華的造型，以求表現古隸渾厚高古的書風。他自評一九九五年參展翰墨因緣的一張古隸聯句作品，「鵬翅映湖色，客心繫國魂。」「具現代水墨畫韻致。」

從事書藝者最終目的是走出自己的路，何去何從是書者的抉擇。何思搗選擇古文字作為他創作的媒介，古文字體制尚未成熟定型，一方面，它給予書寫者高度自由發揮他的創作，但另一方面，因為它體制不健全，書寫者往往無所適從。何思搗勇於創作，善於選擇，他要走一條前人很少走過的漫長崎嶇的道路。他自信他能克服困難。誠然，他的技法精純，對於書法的運筆，結體，布白均能應付自如，而且他精通各種書體，這些都是他創作具備的條件，他的創作是由傳統為起點，不斷嘗試，改進，蛻化。因此他的作品變有所本。加上他擁有敏銳的觀察力，文學家的感性，開拓者的精神，和嚴肅的態度去求真，從古代書契，現代藝術汲取營養，故此他寫出來的古文字，迥異前人，不與時同，有他自己的風格，具有現代氣息。

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## STUDYING CALLIGRAPHY, DISCUSSING CALLIGRAPHY AND EXHIBITING CALLIGRAPHY

*Written prior to my first solo calligraphy exhibition*

Prior to my solo exhibition, I was disquieted by thoughts surging in my mind. It was not until I calmed down that I was able to pick up my pen to compose this essay which consists of three parts: reminiscences of the study of calligraphy with my teachers, some random thoughts on calligraphy and the preparation of the present exhibition.

### I

I have loved calligraphy since I was a child. I spent my childhood in Macao when China was waging a war of resistance with the invading Japanese army. When I first started to write, I had no brush, so I used pencil ends gathered by others from the casinos. I wrote on unmarked lottery tickets. If I ran out of paper, I went to lottery ticket outlets to beg for some more. I would say, "My ma wishes to buy lottery tickets." Thus, I obtained lottery tickets printed with the characters "heaven, earth, black, yellow."

When I was in elementary school, there were lessons in letter writing. The text used was printed in running-cursive script which appeared to be written by a flying brush with ink dancing on the paper. I remembered that it was after the elegant style of Wang Hsi-chih (303-365). In calligraphy class, I chose to copy *Yuan Pi Pagoda* by Liu Kung-ch'uan (778-865). Other students copied works by Ou-yang Hsun (557-641), Yen Chen-ch'ing (709-785) and Chao Meng-fu (1254-1322). Even works by Yung-hsing, the first Prince of Ch'eng (1752-1823), Wang Tzu-yuan (fl.1868) and Lu Jun-hsiang (1841-1915) were chosen. I was fascinated by calligraphy. Once I was having a high fever lying sick in bed, I wrote in the air with my finger. My mother was so alarmed that she cried, "Ah Fai, what are you doing?" She thought that I was suffering from a mental disorder.

During my later years in elementary school, Master Ho Jung-lu kept a few of us after school, so that we could learn to write large characters. Each one of us was given a big brush, and a piece of newsprint. In the first lesson, we learned to write a ten character couplet in running script, "Strive to respect the highest virtue. One should treasure time, whenever and wherever one can." Ho was noted for his large character calligraphy. Many store signboards in Macao were written by him.

Master Yang Ching-an, with his white hair and beard, was my high school teacher. In his youth, he studied under Liang Ting-fen (1859-1919), who was a tutor of P'u-yi (1906-1967), the last emperor of China. His calligraphy was influenced by the strength and gracefulness of Liang's work. He recalled when Liang was teaching P'u-yi, Liang took him along to the palace, asking him to stand aside and be a study companion to the emperor. Every time I visited him, we sipped concentrated tea. At the same time, I viewed his collection of paintings and calligraphy. While I was with him, I remained standing, and never took a seat.

Master T'ao Chun-t'ang, a bachelor, was an accomplished calligrapher noted for his cursive script modelled after Ou-yang Hsun. His writing was angular and profound, like his appearance. I asked him to teach me etymology, and often we examined his research papers on paleography in his room.

Professor Jao Tsung-i taught me during my university years. He is a learned man who taught me how to criticize literature and art from an overall perspective and how to examine them in depth. My horizon was broadened. After I immigrated to Canada, I no longer had the opportunity to study under him. We discussed problems on Chinese studies and calligraphy only through correspondence.

In 1961, when I was an innocent young man of twenty-three, my feelings were badly wounded. I channelled all my energy into studying calligraphy under Master Hsieh Hsi. Every Sunday, I crossed the harbour to take lessons in his studio, Wen Yuan Kuan. I first learned to write the standard, then the clerical, script. Later, I advanced to the running script using *Thousand Character Essay* as my model. I set my own time-table and practised everyday. I also kept a calligraphy study journal and even considered remaining single so that I could spend more time on calligraphy. Moreover, it was the first time that I attempted to compose a couplet. My first one read, "Drawing the sword, I meet the sinful lust. Wielding the brush, I nurse my wound." Master Hsieh friendly persuaded me that text with depressed sentiment might not be a good choice for calligraphy. He paid special attention to me. When he increased his fee, I was exempted. After a few years of studying, he recommended that I accepted commissioned works, which included some small size pieces or drafts used for engraving characters on wooden bookcases in the homes of collectors. He even permitted me to write, for him, lengthy works in small characters. Furthermore, he encouraged me to participate in the Hong Kong Youth Calligraphy Competition.



Master Hsieh died in 1983 at the age of eighty-seven. When he was seriously ill in hospital, he insisted on practising calligraphy. His hand trembled so much that he could not hold the brush steadily. He ordered his daughter to grasp his hand and guide him to write. I shed a great many tears over this incident. On the day of his funeral, I was one of his eight students who served as pall-bearers. I was assigned to the left of the coffin. Separated only by a piece of wood, I felt as if I was holding his right hand.

## II

An art work should reflect the spirit of its time. Some years ago, there were two calligraphy exhibitions held simultaneously at the Hong Kong City Hall. One showed the works of artists from China, another from Japan. After viewing them, I was disappointed. Where was the spirit of the time found in calligraphy? I wondered. Was just copying heroic contemporary poems or lyrics sufficient to manifest the spirit of the time? If so, that was because the text itself, not the calligraphy, accomplished the task. Furthermore, when a calligrapher claimed that one displayed one's style and feelings by copying historical works or duplicating works previously done by others, one only proved that one was an unworthy heir to the tradition. Calligraphy could no longer fulfill my need to express my deep feelings. Thus, I gave it up and devoted myself entirely to literature.

It was only years later, after gaining much experience that I realized if contemporary calligraphy failed to manifest either the spirit of the time or the personality and feelings of a calligrapher, the fault lay with the artist, not the art. Liu Hsi-t'ai, (1813-1881) once commented, "Steles of the Ch'in dynasty (221-207 B.C.) were forceful, whilst those of Han dynasty (202 B.C.-220 A.D.) rich in spirit. No calligraphic work that was considered representative of its period, would not resemble the human and literary spirit of its time." Han Yu (768-824) depicted the wild-cursive script of Chang Hsu (711-756): "In observing the change of events and things in the world, he might be joyous or alarmed, and he sought refuge in calligraphy." These examples indicated that the problems facing us are intrinsic. Thus, I returned to my first love, pursuing both calligraphy and literature.

Of late, I realize why, of all literary forms, I love poetry most, and why calligraphy is my most favoured among all art forms. Perhaps, it is because the most artistic literary form is poetry and the most literary art is calligraphy. Both poetry and calligraphy stay in the fringes of their own fields, overlapping each other. I stroll to and fro around these rims.

I respect tradition. The ancient ones manifested, in their art, the spirit of their time and the uniqueness of their personalities and feelings. They also possessed such highly artistic skill that we might find difficult to attain. Different times reflect different spirits and characters. Even if one spends one's lifetime to copy the works of great masters of the past, one may not achieve complete likeness. Indeed, it is a waste of time and energy. One should, however, pay more attention to studying the skill of the masters and use it as a means to express the characteristic and feelings of the present time. Learning from the past is neither seeking the likeness of form nor searching for an intangible spirit.

I dare to create and I feel that my potential is unlimited. My resources, which are rich and inexhaustible treasures, lie beyond calligraphy. But, to create, one should never discard the basic.

What is the basic of calligraphy? It is use of the brush, that is, brush method. Other components of calligraphy are overall composition, and structure of characters. They can be viewed from three different perspectives. One learns about the overall composition by standing at a distance from the work. On closer examination, one studies the structure of the characters, and upon scrutinizing, one appreciates the use of the brush. If one compares calligraphy to singing, overall composition is equivalent to rhythm, structure of characters to the style of a singer, and use of the brush to tone colour. (Of course, overall composition is more complex than rhythm, and the structure of characters is simpler than the style of a singer.) Use of the brush requires a very refined touch and it reveals the personality and character of the writer. The most precious gift a singer possesses, is the tone colour of his or her voice. Similarly, control of the brush is the calligrapher's greatest gift. Calligraphy and painting closely resemble each other. In calligraphy, overall composition, structure of characters, and even use of ink can find their own counterparts in painting. But the refined and graceful use of the brush can only be found in calligraphy. To belittle brush method is to abandon the very essence of the art. Mounting just constitutes an outer shell.

Recently someone asked my why I prefer to write ancient characters. I pondered. In studying calligraphy history, one realizes, that after a script or a style is fully developed, its followers often continue to travel the old route in the same direction. They standardize and regulate its forms, causing it to be oversaturated. On the contrary, ancient characters have no standardized forms. Not only they can be further developed, but also, their development can take a different direction. When ancient ones criticized calligraphy, they considered works done in standard or cursive script superior, if some elements of seal or clerical script were found. In other words, one can return to the starting point and choose another direction to move forward. Had Ch'in Shih-huang-ti (259 - 210 B.C.) not unified China and standardized the language, Chinese characters of today would have taken different forms.

We can climb over the ancient ones (but not stride over, leap over or sideswipe) to choose our way of reshaping the history of calligraphy.

I participated in Karma of the Brush, a contemporary Chinese and Japanese calligraphy exhibition last year. One of my works was written in the ancient clerical script. I commented on it, "This work appeared to be so wholesome and solid that it seemed to have been cast out of metal. Perhaps, I was influenced by my teacher." In creating my own style, I was inspired by the stone inscriptions of the Western Han dynasty (206 B.C. - 23 A.D.), slightly influenced by the writings on the bamboo or wooden strips and silk. However, I dismissed the small and large seal script and searched for the primitive forms of bronze inscriptions of the Shang dynasty (1766 - 1122 B.C.). I further remarked, "It was done in diluted ink with water marks akin to the style of contemporary water ink painting." I absorbed my nourishment directly from contemporary art.

Indeed, we can move simultaneously in two totally opposite directions towards restoration and the avant-garde to reach our goal of creating,

### III

Master Hsieh Hsi was born in 1896. He would be one hundred years old this year. Two years ago, I proposed to my fellow students in Hong Kong to organize an exhibition in commemoration of his 100th birthday. Regrettably, it did not materialize. This winter, I shall be publishing my book entitled *Ho See-fai Calligraphy and Anthology of Poems* and I wish to dedicate my "homework" to him. At the same time, I am earnestly preparing my forthcoming exhibition.

The majority of works in the exhibit will be in the style of oracle-bone inscription. Other scripts, such as the wild-cursive script, will also be included. First, I am grateful to this broad-minded land of Canada with its multicultural policy which enables me to have contact with many different cultures. In order to facilitate viewers who do not read Chinese, I have purposely selected two scripts which native speakers of Chinese may find challenging to read, namely the most ancient oracle-bone inscription and the newest wild-cursive script. The former is pictographic, akin to primitive painting, the latter is composed of unrestrained and expressive lines, similar to contemporary abstract painting. Two different scripts occupy two separate poles, and yet they both cross the boundaries of other cultures.

Thanks to the natural beauty of British Columbia, my brush work and structure of characters are inspired when I write oracle-bone inscription and ancient clerical script. I once wrote a couplet, "The agility of a squirrel inspires my brush movement. The roundness and strength of my writing are gained by studying the cedar," which summarized my learning experience. I am indebted to the University of British Columbia for the sponsorship of my exhibition and for providing me with a spacious auditorium to display my works. Thanks also to the Asian Library for its rich Chinese collection. Even during my seven year absence from Asia, I have sufficient Chinese materials to sustain my growth in calligraphy.

Two lengthy works, *The Heart of Prajna Paramita Sutra* and *Song of Honour*, will be shown in this exhibition. It is the first time in Chinese calligraphy history that they are written in the style of oracle-bone inscription. Since the idea of writing them in the most ancient script was generated and subsequently they were completed in Vancouver, it is befitting that their premiere should take place in a local higher education institution.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to Tse Yim of the Asian Library. It is due to his recommendation and support that this exhibition has materialized. He works with enthusiasm and pays close attention to details, as if he were preparing for his own show.

Since I began to study calligraphy several decades ago, I have never held a solo exhibition, this one being the very first. Now I recall that my first solo exhibition should have taken place thirty-one years ago when I won the first prize in the Hong Kong Youth Calligraphy Competition. The Y.M.C.A. (Young Men's Christian Association), the sponsor, offered to organize an exhibition of my works. I felt that when the fruit was not ripe, it should not be picked. I declined their offer. I was the most well-behaved and obedient student of Master Hsieh. It was the first and only time in all these years that I displeased him. I hope that this belated exhibition serves as compensation for his displeasure.

Ho See-fai, Vancouver, late winter of 1996.

Translated by Tse Yim.



The art of Chinese calligraphy enjoys a long and rich tradition which is perpetuated by those practicing it. A Chinese calligraphy practitioner begins his study under the guidance of a master. His first lesson is to learn how to use the brush effectively. The Chinese writing brush is a versatile and flexible tool. Guided by an accomplished calligrapher who applies pressure to the brush and varies its speed when he is writing, it can produce live lines with different length, thickness and various ink tones. Concurrently, the beginner copies works of the great masters. In general, he starts with a model written in standard script. By mastering the basic strokes of the script, he learns to control the brush properly. Once he gains greater dexterity in handling the brush, he can advance either to archaic scripts such as the seal and clerical script or to more free flowing styles of the running and cursive scripts. After many years of practice, the practitioner acquires the basic skills of Chinese calligraphy. He is ready for further development. At this stage, he is facing the greatest challenge of his career, that is, to develop his personal style. Many students of calligraphy who metamorphose eventually into creative artists, are trained in this classical mode. Ho See-fai is no exception.

Ho's study in calligraphy can be traced back to his early school days when he took lessons from several of his teachers. It was not until at the age of twenty-three that he studied calligraphy in earnest under Master Hsieh Hsi (1896-1983) whose influence left a profound impact upon Ho's personal and artistic life. Under Hsieh's guidance, he emerged into a competent calligrapher. Not only he acquired the technique in using the brush, he also mastered the various scripts of Chinese calligraphy, namely, the seal, clerical, standard, running and cursive. He even won the first place of the Hong Kong Youth Calligraphy Competition in 1965. His initial success gave him the incentive to elevate his calligraphy to a new artistic level. He wanted to create.

Ho believes that an art work should reflect the spirit of its time. Some years ago, he was dissatisfied with the practice of many present day calligraphers who simply copied some contemporary heroic poems or lyrics and regarded their works to fulfill such a purpose. Furthermore, after studying the history of Chinese calligraphy, he concludes that "after a script or a style is fully developed, its followers often continue to travel the old route in the same direction. They standardize and regulate its forms, causing it to be oversaturated and fossilized." He decides to seek another direction and walk a different path.

Oracle-bones were first discovered in China in 1899. In a span of less than one hundred years, the study of oracle-bone inscriptions has emerged as a branch of scholarship in the field of paleography. Since its discovery, many calligraphers were thrilled by its pictographic incised writings. Moreover, as the latest discovered form of writing, its characters are not standardized, nor does it observe a strict code of calligraphic convention, thus it offers the calligrapher a greater freedom for expression. Ho See-fai chooses oracle-bone inscriptions as a medium to develop his calligraphy.

As early as the 1960's, Ho experimented to imitate the incised script by using a piece of bamboo with which to write, but failed to capture the spirit of a carving knife. With its capacity of producing live lines, he turned his attention to the writing brush as the tool to create an oracle-bone style of calligraphy. A master of the brush, Ho devised a technique that enabled him to produce forms which on one hand embodied the subtlety of a brush and on the other resembled the sharpness of a carving knife.

Despite great effort by scholars to expand the knowledge of oracle-bone inscriptions, there were only approximately 1,000 characters fully deciphered to date. The first problem Ho confronted in using oracle-bone script to write classical texts or modern verses, is the short supply of characters. As a young university student, Ho studied under the renown paleographer, Professor Jao Tsung-i. Since his graduation, he has continued to pursue the study of paleography. Equipped with his sound knowledge of oracle-bone inscription, he is able to imitate ancient script when needed.

To imitate a character, Ho makes reference to stone, bronze or other ancient inscriptions and borrows their designs. He may have constructed several forms of the same character, so that they can be used interchangeably when the same word appears more than once in the text. Alternatively, he may use a single character throughout the text, if it is the only aesthetically acceptable form. In each case, he varies its length and thickness of lines. As a result, several flexible designs are produced. Furthermore, when a character does not have the proper aesthetic appeal, he will construct a new character to meet his need.

His success in solving the problem of using oracle-bone script in writing classical texts is evident in his solo calligraphy exhibition, *New Traces of Archaic Scripts*, held in the Asian Centre, University of British Columbia. Out of the forty-six of his exhibits, more than half of them are written using the oracle-bone script. Two works stand out distinctively. One is the *Heart of Prajna Paramita Sutra* (exhibit 22) translated by Hsuan-tsang (596-664), popularly known as the *Heart Sutra*. The other one is *Song of Honour* (exhibit 24), a patriotic poem composed by Wen T'ien-hsiang (1236-1282), prior to his execution by the Mongols who conquered China in 1280.



The Heart Sutra consists of only two hundred and sixty words, yet it embodies the essence of Mahayana Buddhism. It is the most popular Buddhist sutra among the populace. Since the appearance of the Heart Sutra in running script, based on samples of calligraphy of Wang Hsi-chih (303-365) early in the T'ang dynasty (618-907), it has gained popularity as a standard model for the study of the style. Since then, the sutra has been copied in all calligraphic scripts except for the oracle-bone. Ho See-fai fills the void by copying the Heart Sutra and Song of Honour with the oracle-bone script. He is the first calligrapher in Chinese calligraphy history to accomplish this undertaking.

Like a painter, Ho pays close attention to the composition of his works. Sometimes, he aims at achieving overall harmony in the composition. For instance, in Long Live Multiculturalism (exhibit 23), he chooses simple characters throughout the text without introducing any complex design. On other occasions, he ventures to create a special visual effect. The couplet, "I ride on a maneless horse, flying into a colourful forest." (exhibit 18), is a prime example. He changes the positions of some characters in the column either slightly to the right or to the left. The shifting of the characters suggests the rhythmic movement of rain drops falling along the wall, darting towards the left, and pausing to the right. At once the whole work seems to come alive. Shooting the Suns (exhibit 26), based on a Chinese legend, demonstrates how Ho incorporates ingeniously the written text into his overall composition. In ancient time, there were ten suns which burned the grass and trees. The legendary Emperor Yao commanded his archer Hou I to shoot down nine suns, leaving only the present one to give light and warmth to the earth. Ho presents the myth in two panels. In the lower portion of the right panel, he writes in large seal script, the character "she" (to shoot) which is a pictograph of a hand holding a bow and arrow pointing towards the sky. A cluster of ten suns appears on the upper part of the left panel. The overall impression is that the archer is aiming at the suns, ready to shoot, looking more like a painting than a calligraphic work.

Calligraphy, however, cannot exist without words and words give birth to calligraphy. Besides being a calligrapher, Ho is also a poet. He is at home in calligraphy as well as in poetry. He once self-analyzed why he loves both art forms, "It is because the most artistic literary form is poetry and the most literary art is calligraphy." The majority of his works shown in the New Traces of Archaic Scripts are in the form of couplets. The parallelism of a poetic couplet is required to have matching syntax between the two lines. Each character matches its counterpart in the opposing line as noun with noun and verb with verb, but these matched pairs must be antithetical in tone.

The artistic level of a calligraphic work is not determined by the meaning of the text. The text, however, is used to initiate a creative process which evokes boundless imaginations or arouses emotional depth of the viewer. By studying the text, a viewer finds his way into the inner world of the calligrapher. Ho is fond of composing his own text for his calligraphic works. In addition, he usually annotates his works. Written in running script, the annotations are placed along the main text column serving as borders. Visually the smaller, graceful running script makes a striking contrast to the rustic simplicity of the larger oracle-bone inscriptions. When a viewer savours, "I settle down peacefully in a new continent. My dream of the ancient Great Wall is abruptly interrupted." (exhibit 17), he shares with Ho's longing for the old country, or "The agility of a squirrel inspires my brush movement. The roundness and strength of my writing are gained by studying the cedar." (exhibit 6), he learns from the calligrapher's creative experience. Reading "A spring swallow darts through the fine rain. An autumn wood is transformed into a colourful rainbow." (exhibit 3), he rediscovers the natural beauty of Vancouver. He even catches a glimpse of Ho's homelife when he depicts his Scottish cat and weedy garden.

The ancient clerical script which originated in the Ch'in dynasty (221-207 B.C.), is also favoured by Ho. As an ancient script in its formative stage, and like the oracle-bone script, it offers him a great freedom to create without the restriction of its code of calligraphic convention. In searching a new form, he seeks inspiration from the unembellished simplicity of the stone and bronze inscriptions, or wooden and bamboo strips. Contemporary ink water painting also influences Ho in his technique. By manipulating the ink, he displays a variety of ink tones and forms in his works. When he participated in Karma of the Brush, a joint exhibition of contemporary Chinese and Japanese calligraphy held in Vancouver in 1995, one of his works, was done in ancient clerical script. He observed that it appeared "so wholesome and solid that it seems to have been cast out of metal, and it was done in diluted ink with water marks akin to the style of a contemporary water ink painting." Ho was pleased with what he created.

Originality is the soul of creativity. Ho, an original thinker and creative artist, strives to quest for his own style. Since he immigrated to Canada seven years ago, he has benefited from the policy of multiculturalism which enables him to make contact with other cultures in Vancouver. The influence of these cultures has broadened his horizon, enriched his knowledge and sharpened his sensitivity. Moreover, it acts as a catalyst for finding new expressions in his calligraphy. Rigorously trained in the traditional school of Chinese calligraphy and inspired by contemporary water ink painting, Ho now creates a new form which originated from the archaic scripts utilizing modern expressions.

Tse Yim

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## 展出作品目錄

### 甲骨文

1. 晨望美洲月 夜觀商代星 115 x 26cm x 2
2. 圖文依物我 刀筆會古今 106 x 26cm x 2
3. 春燕逐微雨 秋林幻彩虹 107 x 26cm x 2
4. 水深魚自樂 車好我同行 112 x 29cm x 2
5. 白樺思舊友 黃柳立新鄉 117 x 27cm x 2
6. 靈動臨松風 剛圓雪雪杉 109 x 27cm x 2
7. 貓行初雪地 我愛墨梅花 115 x 27cm x 2
8. 意花忻並蒂 胡蝶舞雙飛 111 x 27cm x 2
9. 火革百千里 和平五十年 118 x 27cm x 2
10. 絕嶺擒羆鹿 通衢逐虎狼 110 x 26cm x 2
11. 淋漓搗水墨 伶俐我貓狸 112 x 26cm x 2
12. 陰霾侵夕柳 野矢射天狼 110 x 26cm x 2
13. 烏天灑瑞雪 白夜慶元宵 113 x 28cm x 2
14. 詠詩雲影夜 伐木海湄冬 112 x 27cm x 2
15. 霜花凝夜永 鴿羽漫車輕 110 x 27cm x 2
16. 育黍成藝術 幼樺現荒場 109 x 28cm x 2
17. 燕安新大陸 夢斷古長城 116 x 26cm x 2
18. 坐馳無繫馬 飛入多彩林 113 x 26cm x 2
19. 宜求現代 不步前人 81 x 13cm x 2
20. 五言聯卅二對·雙扇面 18.5 x 54cm x 2
21. 何思豪 菩薩蠻 詠雪雁 122 x 35cm
22. 般若波羅蜜多心經 35 x 128cm
23. 多元文化萬歲 135 x 23cm
24. 文天祥 正氣歌 八屏 126 x 34cm x 8

### 金文

25. 臨佳父癸尊銘文 90 x 63cm

### 大篆

26. 射日 雙屏 109 x 30cm x 2
27. 血濃於水 義重如情 122 x 28cm x 2

### 石鼓文

28. 中原歸獵馬 古困憐鳴禽 126 x 20cm
29. 柳樹黃花盈古道 角弓彤矢射夕陽 118 x 32cm

### 女書

30. 天閒人永 心安神寧 90 x 17cm x 2

### 隸書

31. 櫻紅柳綠 鯨躍鸛飛 118 x 28cm x 2
32. 尋梅深雪 躍馬長虹 106 x 27cm x 2
33. 漢碑臥案 秦月推心 74 x 36cm
34. 大同世界 獨立精神 35 x 68cm
35. 青主寧醜拙 墨卿隱鋒芒 100 x 43cm
36. 仁義沙丘鶴 羞慚木石人 108 x 60cm
37. 飲馬長城窟行 95 x 61cm

### 行書

38. 芳草思暉照 慈烏學母飛 68 x 20cm x 2

### 行草書

39. 何思豪 沁園春 加拿大雁 130 x 68cm
40. 何思搗 雨中送蘆荻 130 x 35cm

### 草書

41. 無心成候鳥 隨意落飛沙 66 x 17cm x 2
42. 疾風草 34 x 57cm
43. 張旭 桃花谿 144 x 30cm

### 行草·狂草

44. 蘇軾 水調歌頭 兩幅 144 x 30cm x 2

### 狂草

45. 杜甫 聞官軍收河南河北 144 x 30cm

### 四體書 四屏

- 46a. 詩經·燕燕(甲骨文) 126 x 34cm x 4
- b. 古詩十九首之九 庭中有奇樹(隸書)
- c. 杜甫 客至(楷書)
- d. 李清照 如夢令(行草)

# LIST OF WORKS EXHIBITED

## Oracle-bone inscription

- |   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Five character couplet   | 115 x 26 cm x 2  |
| 2. Five character couplet   | 106 x 26 cm x 2  |
| 3. Five character couplet   | 107 x 26 cm x 2  |
| 4. Five character couplet   | 112 x 29 cm x 2  |
| 5. Five character couplet   | 117 x 27 cm x 2  |
| 6. Five character couplet   | 109 x 27 cm x 2  |
| 7. Five character couplet   | 115 x 27 cm x 2  |
| 8. Five character couplet   | 111 x 27 cm x 2  |
| 9. Five character couplet   | 118 x 27 cm x 2  |
| 10. Five character couplet  | 110 x 26 cm x 2  |
| 11. Five character couplet  | 112 x 26 cm x 2  |
| 12. Five character couplet  | 110 x 26 cm x 2  |
| 13. Five character couplet  | 113 x 28 cm x 2  |
| 14. Five character couplet  | 112 x 27 cm x 2  |
| 15. Five character couplet  | 110 x 27 cm x 2  |
| 16. Five character couplet  | 109 x 28 cm x 2  |
| 17. Five character couplet  | 116 x 26 cm x 2  |
| 18. Five character couplet  | 113 x 26 cm x 2  |
| 19. Four character couplet  | 81 x 13 cm x 2   |
| 20. Thirty-two five character couplets<br>written on two fans     | 18.5 x 54 cm x 2 |
| 21. Snow Geese to the tune of Bodhisattva Aliens<br>by Ho See-hoo | 122 x 35 cm      |
| 22. The Heart of Prajna Paramita Sutra                            | 35 x 128 cm      |
| 23. Long Live Multiculturalism                                    | 135 x 23 cm      |
| 24. Song of Honour by Wen Tianxiang (1236-1282).<br>Eight panels  | 126 x 34 cm x 8  |

## Bronze inscription

- |  |            |
|--|------------|
| 25. Copy of casting to the style of bronze<br>inscription on a wine vessel | 90 x 63 cm |
|--|------------|

## Large seal script

- |                                      |                 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 26. Shooting at the Suns. Two panels | 109 x 30 cm x 2 |
| 27. Four character couplet           | 122 x 28 cm x 2 |

## Stone-drum inscription

- |                             |             |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| 28. Five character couplet  | 126 x 20 cm |
| 29. Seven character couplet | 118 x 32 cm |

## Woman script

- |                            |                |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| 30. Four character couplet | 90 x 17 cm x 2 |
|----------------------------|----------------|

## Clerical script

- |   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| 31. Four character couplet                            | 118 x 28 cm x 2 |
| 32. Four character couplet                            | 106 x 27 cm x 2 |
| 33. Four character couplet                            | 74 x 36 cm      |
| 34. Four character couplet                            | 35 x 68 cm      |
| 35. Five character couplet                            | 100 x 43 cm     |
| 36. Five character couplet                            | 108 x 60 cm     |
| 37. Watering Horses at a Long Wall Hole.<br>Anonymous | 95 x 61 cm      |

## Running script

- |                            |                |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| 38. Five character couplet | 68 x 20 cm x 2 |
|----------------------------|----------------|

## Running-cursive script

- |   |             |
|---|-------------|
| 39. Canada Geese to the tune of Spring in Qin Garden<br>by Ho See-hoo | 130 x 68 cm |
| 40. Farewell to Lu Di on a Rainy Day<br>by Ho See-fai                 | 130 x 35 cm |

## Cursive script

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| 41. Five character couplet                            | 66 x 17 cm x 2 |
| 42. Sturdy Grass Withstands High Wind                 | 34 x 57 cm     |
| 43. The Peach Blossom Valley<br>by Zhang Xu (711-765) | 144 x 30 cm    |

## Running-cursive/Wild-cursive script

- |  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| 44. Remembrance in Mid-Autumn to the tune of<br>Barcarole Prelude by Su Shi (1036-1101).<br>Two panels | 144 x 30 cm x 2 |
|--|-----------------|

## Wild-cursive script

- |  |             |
|--|-------------|
| 45. Recapture of the Region North and South<br>of the Yellow River<br>by Du Fu (712-770) | 144 x 30 cm |
|--|-------------|

## Four scripts in four panels

- |  |
|--|
| 126 x 34 cm x 4  |
| 46. a. Swallows from Book of Odes. Anonymous.<br>oracle-bone script  |
| b. In the Courtyard There Grows a Strange Tree<br>from the Nineteen Old Poems. Anonymous.<br>clerical script |
| c. Receiving a Guest by Du Fu (712-770)<br>standard script   |
| d. Madrigal to the tune of As in a Dream<br>by Li Qingzhao (1081-1143)<br>running-cursive script             |