

LACMA FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EXHIBITION: MING MASTERPIECES FROM THE SHANGHAI MUSEUM

ON VIEW: MARCH 3–JUNE 2, 2013

LOCATION: HAMMER BUILDING, LEVEL 2

LACMA PRESENTS TEN PAINTINGS FROM THE MING DYNASTY, MOST OF WHICH HAVE NEVER BEEN SHOWN IN THE UNITED STATES

MING MASTERPIECES MARKS LACMA'S FIRST EXHIBITION EXCHANGE WITH THE SHANGHAI MUSEUM



(IMAGE CAPTIONS ON PAGE 3)

(Los Angeles–February 13, 2013) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *Ming Masterpieces from the Shanghai Museum*, featuring ten early Ming dynasty court paintings executed in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries all from the permanent collection of the Shanghai Museum. *Ming Masterpieces* marks LACMA's first exhibition exchange with the Shanghai Museum as part of an ongoing partnership and explores the role of imperial patronage in Ming dynasty painting, the uses of paintings as political propaganda, Daoist themes of transcendence, and the revival of Song dynasty (eleventh through the thirteenth centuries) painting styles in the early Ming period. The exhibition is organized by Stephen Little, head curator of Chinese and Korean Art at LACMA.

Ming Masterpieces provides a unique opportunity to view iconic examples of Chinese painting from this period, a largely unrepresented area within U.S. institutions. The exhibition helps position LACMA as a major resource for the study and display of Chinese paintings. Under the guidance of

Christina Yu, assistant curator of Chinese and Korean Art at LACMA, the museum reinstalled its permanent galleries for Chinese art in 2011. Chinese art will continue to feature in the museum's exhibition program with two more special exhibitions planned for 2014.

Exhibition Background

Daoism is an ancient Chinese philosophy focused on balance and harmony with nature. In the second century A.D., Daoism transformed into a religion that combined the cosmology of *yin* and *yang* and belief in a vast pantheon of gods, goddesses, and immortals with sophisticated rituals and the cultivation of various forms of alchemy. Fundamental to Daoism is the concept of the Dao ("road" or "way"): the origin of all things, simultaneously empty and full. According to Daoists, all things are made of energy called *qi*, and matter and energy are considered to be the same thing. Daoism has influenced almost every aspect of Chinese culture, including cooking, medicine, military strategy, and even Chan "Zen" Buddhism. The paintings featured in this exhibition provide a window into this fundamental Chinese philosophy and worldview.

All ten paintings are exhibited in one gallery and highlight the stylistic connections between pieces produced for the imperial Ming dynasty court and those painted by independent professional artists working in the cities of Beijing, Nanjing, and Kaifeng. One featured painter, Wu Wei, came from a family of scholar officials in central China. An artistic genius, he served during the reigns of three Ming emperors and is represented in the exhibition by *Playing the Zither in a Pine Valley*. In addition to his skill in art, he was widely recognized for his scholarship. *Ming Masterpieces* also features artist Du Jin, who became a professional painter after failing the highest of the civil service examinations. He was an eccentric personality who worked both in Beijing and Nanjing. Despite the enormous fame he enjoyed during his lifetime, he was largely forgotten by the seventeenth century and his surviving works are rare. Du Jin's *An Autumn Grove* is featured in the exhibition.

Five of the ten artists featured in *Ming Masterpieces* were court painters in the Forbidden City (the imperial palace), Beijing, while the other five were professional painters whose works were stylistically and thematically related to those of the leading court masters. The painters worked during

the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and are considered contemporaries to the European Renaissance masters, including Sandro Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, and Michelangelo.

Credit

This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Sponsored by

Beijing Xia Jingshan Culture Development Ltd.

Additional funding was provided by the American Friends of the Shanghai Museum.



American
Friends of the
Shanghai Museum

About LACMA

Since its inception in 1965, LACMA has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography—and represent Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today, the museum features particularly strong collections of Asian, Latin American, European, and American art, as well as a contemporary museum on its campus. With this expanded space for contemporary art, innovative collaborations with artists, and an ongoing *Transformation* project, LACMA is creating a truly modern lens through which to view its rich encyclopedic collection.

Location and Contact: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard (at Fairfax Avenue), Los Angeles, CA, 90036 | 323 857-6000 | lacma.org

Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 11 am-5 pm; Friday: 11 am-8 pm; Saturday, Sunday: 10 am-7 pm; closed Wednesday

General Admission: Adults: \$15; students 18+ with ID and senior citizens 62+: \$10

Free General Admission: Members; children 17 and under; after 3 pm weekdays for L.A. County residents; second Tuesday of every month; Target Free Holiday Mondays

Image captions (page 1):

(Left) Du Jin, *An Autumn Grove*, Ming dynasty, 15th-early 16th century, Shanghai Museum

(Center) An Zhengwen, *The Yellow Crane Tower*, Ming dynasty, 15th century, Shanghai Museum

(Right) Li Zai, *The Daoist Adept Qin Gao Riding a Carp*, Ming dynasty, 15th century, Shanghai Museum

Press Contact: For additional information, contact LACMA Communications at press@lacma.org or 323 857-6522.

#