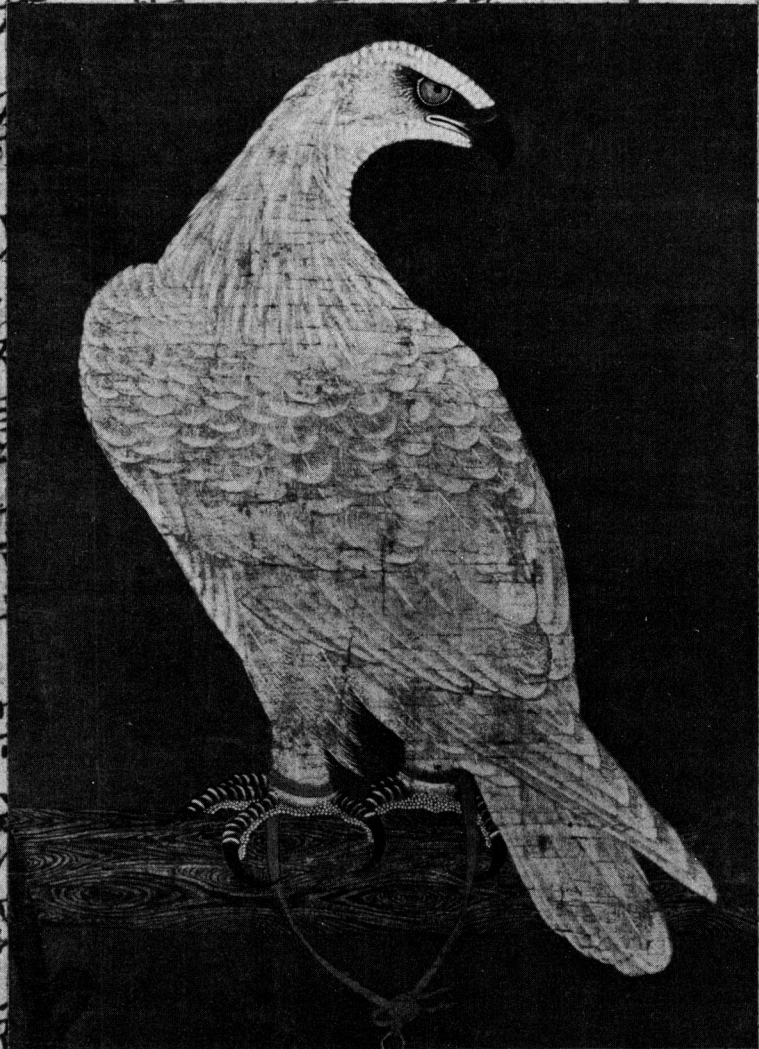


雲鬢翠飾侍立自然富貴風韻乃晉卿之家姬
 霄纏絡紅綠相間下有火石案陳設古器瑤琴
 旁道帽紫衣右手倚石左手執卷而觀書者為
 兼蕉篔簹
 李伯時
 潛道中
 人坐于
 服擔阮
 觀者為王仲至前有鬚頭頑童捧古硯而立後
 於青谿深處茂密中有袈裟坐蒲團而說無生
 側駐者為
 老後有童
 禿谷跪而
 上榻據橫卷



CHARLES CONDER

Only seven years of Charles Conder's life were spent in Australia, but these were vital years in the formative period of his youth, between the ages of fifteen and twenty-two. In 1890 he returned to England, the land of his birth, and in London and Paris he attained international reputation. During his years in Australia he met and formed active association with Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton and Frederick McCubbin, sharing with them the excitement of a new approach to the painting of Australian landscape. Their objective was mainly centred on the securing of Australian atmosphere, light and colour. They worked direct from Nature with special regard for breadth of effect. Mutual influence and interchange of ideas came naturally to this band of pioneers; so much so that quite a few of their early pictures might almost have been painted by any one of them. But individuality inevitably told. As they matured, Roberts continued to experiment. McCubbin found vent for his interest in sentiment, Turner and Impressionism. Streeton gained greater dexterity and power of representation. He became the most pictorial of the band. Conder alone, and this was well evident in his work before he left Australia, found deeper regard for colour and design considered as aesthetic necessities. He changed from using colour with excited, realistic intention, as the others used it, to regarding it as a vehicle for harmony. It seems now that he must have looked at Nature and accepted her hints as to colour suggestion, and then turned to his palette and explored its resources with a view to the creation of a personal expression of what he felt. The fundamental difference of his result to that of his friends' pictures can be seen in several of his works owned by The National Gallery of Victoria. Streeton in his Hawkesbury River "Purple Noon" picture, used his blue in rivalry with that of Nature. An equivalent blue to that which he saw in Nature was his aim. The blue in Charles Conder's "Cove on The Hawkesbury", bequeathed to the Gallery in 1944, by Mary Helen Keep, tells a different story. Conder sought a blue which would harmonise with the other colours of his picture, and also satisfy his desire for richness. The same intention is even more noticeable in The Felton Bequest work of his maturity "Blue Waters of Algeciras". Here, the turquoise variations of sea and sky, are an harmonic delight in relation to the pinks, browns and reds of the dresses of his figures. Not many works in the Australian section have comparable quality. A less sensitive artist than Conder, working with such ideas in his mind, might easily have painted pictures which were merely decorative. Conder, however, knew he had to preserve his respect and regard for Nature, at the same time as he developed his creative will and knowledge of the resources of his medium. When both intentions were in conjunction he secured a quality even closer to Nature than that achieved by those who sought to match her charms.

ARNOLD SHORE.

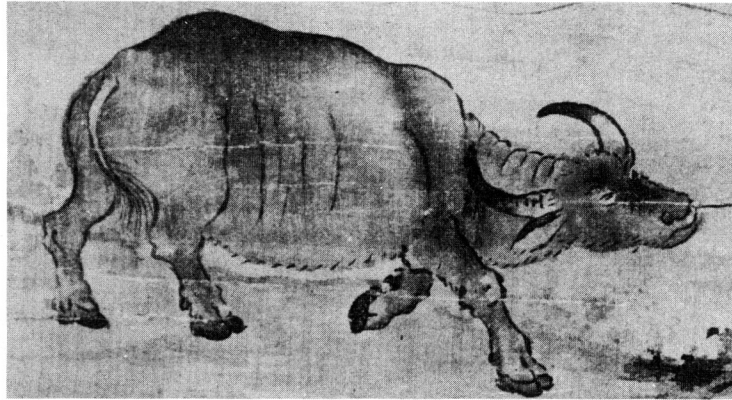


CHARLES CONDER — BEACH, MORDIALLOC, 1890, Oil on panel, 12 in. x 30¼ in. Purchased.

The Cove on the Hawkesbury shows the rich tonality as well as the narrow upright format often used by Conder during his Sydney period. Beach, Mentone, is a narrow horizontal panel which also appears in the work of Stréeton; its high key and linear detail closely resemble the practice of the Heidelberg painters.



CHARLES CONDER —
COVE ON THE HAWKESBURY,
Oil on panel, 14 in. x 8¼ in.
Mary Helen Keep Bequest.



I. LANDSCAPE WITH WATER BUFFALO, *detail.* Felton Bequest.

CHINESE PAINTING

To the Chinese, painting and calligraphy are their greatest arts. Those of us who have not studied the art of this great people as a whole may find this surprising; for whereas their superb ceramics have interested the western mind for several centuries, their treasured paintings are its recent discovery.

Chinese painting until recently has been largely judged by 18th and 19th century export examples, executed by relatively unskilled artists for a western taste known to delight in "Chinoiserie", highly decorative or grotesque. The works of their great masters remained hidden in careful Chinese and Japanese possession, only to be brought forth singly for some discerning Oriental eye. For the Chinese do not delight in the largesse of our galleries and great homes, where all is displayed at all times. The distraction of too much is well known to them, so that a single work is often shown. Then at a special time, quietly and simply, the masterpiece is entered by the mind, and the emptiness so cunningly left, filled by the imagination at the suggestion of the drawn motif.

The great quality of Chinese painting lies less in the traditional technique which gives it flavour than in its superb design. This quality seems inherent in the Chinese mind; yet fundamentally it differs in no sense from that found in great art of any country or period. Particularly remarkable is its restraint in the proportion of decorated to undecorated space, and its superb sense of placing. With these qualities is a sensitive, fluent line expressive of movement, and a fine colour sense often sparingly used. Indeed for colour, graded washes of Chinese ink may suffice.

Yet the Chinese can be supreme technicians. In painting their technique is strongly conditioned by calligraphy. For in the written character they learn the brush control essential for their art; and the finely written character is itself an exquisite thing to the trained Chinese eye. So by practice in writing they learn a masterly technique, and often the scholar and poet becomes the painter.

With each stroke the greatest precision must be exercised, as on the absorbent surface of their paper or silk no erasure is possible. Once a stroke is committed it is irrevocable. It follows that the artist must know exactly what he is to do beforehand. This need is the basis of the Chinese insistence on long contemplation before execution. The representation must be thought about in all its aspects, and without copying Nature, its essentials swiftly depicted. An economy of line or mass is thus achieved, which if at times appearing casual, is in fact the product of much thought and practice. A strong sense of movement or vitality may thus be given comparing favourably with that achieved by the finest summary drawings of the west.

The Chinese quality itself results from the use of traditional symbols of representation. The face, a hand, a tree, a mountain, each is represented in a certain way which persists from



2. QUAILS IN MILLET FIELD, Pien Wen-Chin, Huan-tse period,
4 ft. 4½ in. x 1 ft. 6¾ in. Felton Bequest.



3. LANDSCAPE WITH WATER BUFFALO, Tai Chin, Ming Dynasty,
5 ft. 7 in. x 2 ft. 8½ in. Felton Bequest.

age to age. Yet each symbol, like hand writing, has a distinct quality for each artist, just as have the characters of the poem which he so carefully places on his painting.

There are other characteristics of Chinese painting such as the absence of cast shadows, although shading may be sparingly used. In their perspective lines may converge, but not to mathematical vanishing points; and sometimes the foreign eye may be disconcerted by a divergence of lines where convergence is expected. The resemblance to the perspective of mediaeval art is often striking.

Landscape is one of their greatest subjects. This was employed in the T'ang period (618-906 A.D.) although little painting of this time now exists. Yet on literary grounds many Chinese scholars consider it their greatest era of painting. We have little to judge it by, for the T'ang capital was devastated time and again and its priceless collections perished. Religious art fared no better, and with the periodic persecutions of Buddhism the great religious frescoes of Wang Wei and others were destroyed with the monastic buildings and monuments. One however in the far west survives to yield a series of interesting paintings, although not by the great masters, the remarkable rock caves of Tun Huang.

T'ang art shows an almost Elizabethan sense of colour and opulence of form derived from its contact with the west and the Hellenic tradition. In the Sung period (960-1279) China became more isolated and introspective. This resulted in a simpler and more severe art. We are on more secure ground as regards painting from this time; for many of their masterpieces have been preserved in Chinese and Japanese collections. Although the authenticity is often uncertain there is yet a body of probably authentic work which permits study.

Buddhism, an import from the west, now gained a contemplative form in accord with the spirit of the age. Later in the Sung period northern China lay under the heel of the nomads. The distressed scholar then found some peace in a mental, and often physical escape from the situation. In contemplation of Nature at its most tremendous he obtained that sense of the infinite so close to the mystical experiences in which man seems to shrink to a particle before vast mountains and vistas. This spirit of depersonalization lay behind the mysticism of the new Buddhist movement, and as well that of indigenous Taoism. So the Sung landscape artist might portray his mood by great heights and tremendous distances in which aerial perspective was admirably conveyed by receding ranges and mist-filled valleys painted in ever diminishing tones. The relation of man to this manifestation of the infinite might be set by the small foreground figure of some brooding sage.

In the early years of the Mings (1368-1644) this landscape tradition continued. But a native dynasty now securely ruled China; contact with the west was more open, and the decorative and extroverted aspects of T'ang art gained the interest of the intelligentsia. Although the literary tradition persisted genre often took the place of the sage.

Through the Felton Bequest committee this Gallery has recently acquired two fine landscapes by the important early Ming masters Tai Chin and Shen Chou. Tai's painting is a monochrome on silk with slight touches of colour strongly in the Sung tradition (Fig. 3). It is seen from the high view point of much Chinese landscape, and shows fine aerial perspective. But now the sage has given place to the contorted figure of a herd-boy with a reluctant buffalo (Fig. 1). The detail of this group shows well the Chinese capacity to render the human figure when he so chooses.

The substitution of genre in the everyday scene is in accord with the Ming spirit. Although even before, the horizontal scroll often showed the countryside and its inhabitants engaged in their occupations. But it must be observed that Tai Chin, although a court painter between 1430 and 1450, and the founder of an important school of painting, was unacceptable to the Chinese scholar of the day. For was he not a professional painter, who sold his works and delighted in genre! The literati accordingly did not allow him to have merit, and indeed observed with some satisfaction that he died poor. His value was only recorded later.

Shen Chou, the founder of the rival school, won their highest approval; for he eschewed genre, followed the scholastic tradition, was a model of filial piety, and did not sell his paintings. In our fine recent acquisition the sage still represents the human element in contrast to the infinite. Its style is not unlike Tai's, but distance is not conveyed by receding tones. It is executed in ink on paper with slight colour.

In contrast to these almost monochromatic styles is another older form dating from the T'ang period. In it bright colours such as green, blue and gold are used, and the outline is often tightly drawn so that the picture has great precision and detail. This contrasts with the more suggestive and elusive style of the previous type. Both however were at times employed by the one artist, and are used even to the present day which does not lack fine artists.

The Chinese, like the English, delight in the wayside, and trees, blossom, birds, insects, beasts and fishes find a prominent place in their art. This is exquisitely shown in Sung painting, which often reveals a profound, and detailed observation of Nature. The style however extended into the Ming period and later. Its qualities are shown in three paintings from the Kent collection attributed to the Sung and Yuan dynasties, although as at all times the Chinese painter has been a great copyist, such attributions are always doubtful. The painting of the white captive eagle here shown is a good example of the style (detail on cover).

The "bird and flower" style is again well shown by a recent Felton acquisition which has been reproduced in Japan. Pien Wên-chin, the artist, a famous "flower and bird" painter was summoned to the court by the Emperor Yung Lo (1403-1424), and there received an appointment. He again served in the artistically great reign of Hsuan Tê (1426-1435). This particular work, a study in colour on silk of quails and millet, is considered representative of his style (Fig. 2). Its colours are subdued, although some fading has taken place over the centuries.

Such restrained colours as these became more brilliant later in the Ming period, when strong decoration as known to us by that of their highly coloured porcelains, became the mode. The brilliant manner continued and extended in the reign of the great Ch'ing Emperor Kang Hsi (1662-1722). Although many connoisseurs find less satisfaction in these joyful and highly decorative designs than in the quiet Sung style which provokes so different a mood, they have considerable merit; and no doubt give pleasure to a larger, if less esoteric group than the earlier work.

Although no large painting of this period is reproduced, an ink drawing by Wang Yuan-ch'i of the Kang Hsi reign deserves study (Fig. 4). This notable painter and man was also the editor of the great Encyclopaedia of Painting and Calligraphy, a compilation of one hundred volumes. Much of his work is said to be overloaded and restless, but this drawing with its slight touches of colour shows splendidly the ferocious spirit of the warrior about to draw his sword.

The collection also contains examples of portraiture of the later periods, a few religious paintings, and several studies of the horse, so greatly admired by the Chinese. The National Gallery Collection of paintings, although as yet small, forms a good introduction to Chinese art in that form to which they give their greatest veneration.

LEONARD B. COX



4. A WARRIOR, Wang Yuan-ch'i, Manchu Dynasty.
3 ft. 8 in. x 1 ft. 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.
Felton Bequest.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS TO THE ART GALLERY INCLUDE:

OIL PAINTINGS

Ruins Near Bathurst	Jean Bellette	Purchased
Landscape, Grampians	Arthur Boyd	Purchased
Albury Station	Russel Drysdale	Purchased
Still Life	Justin O'Brien	Purchased

WATERCOLOURS

Abercrayon, Wales	Charles Bush	Purchased
Old Mill, Rossett	Phil Waterhouse	Purchased
Landscape with Figures	Paul Nash	Felton Bequest
Still Water, Terrigal, N.S.W.	John Loxton	Purchased
Landscape	Arnold Shore	Purchased

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Supervisor Hector Williamson

Assistant Art Instructor V. Murray Griffin
National Gallery Society June Curtis

The following publications and reproductions are on sale at the Swanston Street entrance:

Catalogue of the Gallery (5/-). Catalogue of Selected Masterpieces with 30 illustrations (1/6). Gallery Guide (1/-). Six large coloured reproductions of the following pictures: Buvelot, Waterpool at Coleraine; Roberts, Shearing the Rams; Lambert, Sergeant of the Light Horse; Cameron, Durham Cathedral; Pissarro, Boulevard Montmartre; Sisley, Hills behind St. Nicaise; Monet, Vetheuil (25/- ea.). A selection of small reproductions of varying sizes including Christmas cards.

Cover design in this issue is a detail from a sheet of Chinese script from the collection of Dr. Leonard Cox; and White Captive Eagle, detail from painted scroll, attributed to Sung Dynasty, 4 ft. 4 in. x 2 ft. 3¼ in., Kent Collection.