

Journey with Art Afar—Embracing Lingnan Painting in America

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Introduction

It is my privilege and honor to be invited to attend this international conference on “One Hundred Years of Chinese Inkwash *Shui Mo* Painting.” 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 inkwash painting or to critique the Lingnan School of Painting. This paper aims to depict how we in the West (the U.S.) have the opportunity to embrace the Lingnan School of Painting

through our encounter with the greatest Lingnan artist in contemporary Chinese society—Master Au Ho-nien.

I am speaking here as a layperson who is profoundly interested in Chinese art and on behalf of Asian Programs at the University of Indianapolis, where I have taught for thirty-four years. I have known Master Au for almost twenty 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, and America, I began to learn about Master Au as an artist, educator, person, and most of all, as a cultural ambassador in art.

The University of Indianapolis has been extremely fortunate to have Master Au as our closest friend from Asia. Master Au began his relationship with the University during the early nineties 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, I have 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 together in the last two decades.

With Master Au's unselfishness, generosity, energy, and, most of all, his vision of introducing the spirit of Chinese painting and the characteristics of the Lingnan School of Painting to the West, many of us in the U.S. are beginning to appreciate and to enhance our understanding of the essence of Chinese ink painting and facets of Chinese culture and philosophy. It is Master Au's journey with art afar 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 accompanying our 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 in April-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 (the other three locations are 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) for the exhibition tour.

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, Hong Kong* at the Indianapolis Museum of Art] in Indianapolis demonstrate that grand attraction, as well as the subtle, perhaps unscrutable 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."

Just recently in 2005, Master Au joined the ten 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 number of 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 me. I invited the Athens Municipal Cultural Center (via UIndy-Athens) and the ROC Taipei Economic and Culture Office (TECO) in Athens to cosponsor an art exhibit in 1998 with us. I shipped twenty-five of Master Au’s large framed paintings by air from Indianapolis to Athens. Master Au joined me in Athens for the opening reception. After the Athens exhibit, the *World Journal* (Chinese Newspaper) in Long Island planned to host Master Au’s exhibit, so I shipped the returned paintings from Athens from Indianapolis to New York.

To everyone’s surprise, Madam Kiang Kai-shek, at age 95, visited the exhibit in person with Master Au as her escort. Madam 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 Madam Kiang applauded Master Au once again just as she had praised him many years before. The following year, Master Au and Madam Kiang, along with two more artists, had a joint art exhibit at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco. I was honored to visit the exhibit, and Master Au interpreted his work for me.

World Journal senior reporter Huling Chen, who had reported Master Au’s art exhibits over the years on more than ten 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 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. 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 me one day, saying, “Please let Master Au know that I have collected his paintings for more than twenty 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.

The Ningnan 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 last fifty years on four continents—Africa, America, Asia, and Europe. The University of Indianapolis had the pleasure and honor to co-host the “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 I 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 bespeak a lifetime of study and practice yet emerge with a natural, 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 don’t 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 brush work 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 gave 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 Taskshe 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 Lingnan inkwash *shui mo* and innovative modern Western water color), 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 *shui mo* from the East and water color 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 “Music of Art” continued. Subsequently, Asian Programs had a very successful Valentine’s Day concert on February 14, 2007, with the theme, *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 Kathlen Hacker, pianist Jacklyn Chan, and reader Billy Catchings) gave the audience an enchanted evening with the enriched music and painting from the 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 aims 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 on an annual basis. A proposal was submitted to the committee to seek funding to partially cover visiting artists' lodging. Artists including Chang Housing, Charles Liu, Nigel N. C. Szeto, Ng Yuet Lau (Carol Chiu), Bonnie Kwan Huo, 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 community and the larger Indianapolis community. The invited artists not only held demonstrations but also delivered special lectures on such topics as Chinese Ethnic Minority Oil Painting, Tea in Chinese Culture, the Beauty of Chinese Women through the Dynasties, the Spirit and Characteristics of Chinese Painting, and Symbolism, Chinese Characters, and Chinese Painting. Next year's (2008) lecture series will feature Dr. Sesin Jong's ink and color calligraphy and painting with a special lecture on "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, it 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 with the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institute, and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. in winter 2007. The Director of Culture Division of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Washington, D.C., Margaret Meng-yang Liu Li was instrumental in making the contacts for us for the events in D.C.

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 the living room wall. It has been on that wall for almost twenty years.

I accompanied Master Au across the Indiana border to present special lectures on the "Chinese Written Characters and the Transformation to Painting." I served as the translator in all of Master Au's demonstration and lecture presentations in North America. Wherever Master Au demonstrates and speaks, he always receives standing ovations from both the Chinese and Western audiences. Audiences of close to 400 at the most recent 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, "A Master is a Master indeed!"

The greatness of Master Au is not that he is admired 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 has to 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 Web site (<http://www.uindy.edu/univeristyopress>), "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 executive director of the University of Indianapolis Press, I would like to express our 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 different culture setting from where it originated.

In 2006, the University of Indianapolis Press was privileged to publish an art book on Chinese painting, entitled *The Happy Brush*. The author, Chau Hang, a Lingnan artist himself, is the founder. He is the most prominent Lingnan School artist and 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 whose works are "hybrids of traditional and abstract and Eastern and Western aesthetics, enhanced by natural energy, simple beauty, inner harmony, and modern sensibility," did the English translation for the book. The book also included a number of articles by Master Au Ho-nien that were translated by both Bonnie and me. The publication of this book on teaching Chinese painting in a fun way is a celebration not only for Chau Hang's accomplishments as an artist and an art educator, but also 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 the 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 forty-five 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 the 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 newspapers as one of the city's museums for public enjoyment. I 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. Former President Dr. Jerry Israel acknowledged the following in the museum catalog:

It is a great honor for the University of Indianapolis and its Asian Programs initiative to bring the exquisite art work 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. My 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. I am 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’s 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 ideas of a 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 my dreams is to promote the idea of internationalization and globalization of the University. For years, I put my efforts into bringing our 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 inscribed, “The roar of the tiger dares to reach as high as the mountain and the moon.” The student continued, “Seeing the Au Ho-nien Museum for what it really is was quite the experience. I never have 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 taken from Master Au’s annual calendar were framed and hung in many offices. The University environment is so 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 & Entertainment writer of the *Indianapolis Star*. Master Au told Berry, in an interview assisted by my translation, “In the last three centuries, the East looked to the West. But in the 21st century, it’s 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 the Westerners should start looking toward the East.

Through my bridging, Master Au has had a relationship with the University for almost twenty years. Master Au and I 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 the *Reflector* reporter, Katy Yeiser, I stated, “I think it’s 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’s 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’s 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 me to participate in the opening of the Lingnan Museum at the Chinese Culture University in 2005, considered our museum “a

breathing, 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 many of his poems, created either before or after the completion of his paintings. Several of those poems in many ways connect with his Confucian scholarship, humanism, and 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-chien said, “Once Ho-nien wields his brush, he seems to have the power of a creator in control of all the manifestations of nature.”

I humbly have felt that 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. And 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 inkwash painting.

In the process of establishing the Museum, I had to go through many channels and committees to acquire the space and the permission. We also have prepared an Agreement with the Au Ho-nien Foundation. I hand-carried many art works donated through the Au Ho-nien Cultural Foundation from Taipei, San Francisco, and Hong Kong. I am a layperson in art. I have 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, photographing 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 sculpted the piece. 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 schoolchildren, college students, artists from nearby cities, and the public at large. The Museum also has become one of the major attractions 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.

One of the most exciting and innovative events that took 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 my introduction to the museum. Next, Professor Michael Sells of Butler University discussed *Turandot*, and the principal cast members from the Indianapolis Opera production performed selections, accompanied by Maestro James Caraher. A reception followed.

“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 is 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, I accompanied Master Au to the Library of Congress 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 autobiography, the art and tradition of Chinese painting (origin and history, styles and aesthetics), Master Au’s paintings, relationship with other

arts (poetry and calligraphy), and current situations (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 I performed 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 a living proof of the highest recognition of Master Au's esteemed career and his contributions to Asian art in America. While in Washington, D.C., 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/demonstration on Chinese language and painting: "Twin Arts, One Origin," on February 9. A similar presentation was made at the Whittall Pavilion of the Library of Congress on February 8. Those were Master Au's first public appearances in the D.C. area, and he once again received standing ovations by both Chinese and Western audiences.

Finally, at a personal level, Bonnie Kwan Huo, my mentor, art consultant, and a Lingnan artist who knows Master Au well, wrote about my professional relationship with Master Au. "Phylis is a devoted friend of Au Ho-nien. I have not known any friendship more pure and deep 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" (Bonnie Kwan Huo, 2006).

In conclusion, this is just the first chapter of a journey with art afar. With the 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 never end their appreciation for the art of China. It was through the collaboration and support of artists like Master Au Ho-nien, Bonnie Kwun Huo, Carol Chiu, Nigel, N. C. Szeto, Charles Liu, Hoi-Chiu Chan, and community leaders such as Paul Mao, Margate Liu Li and the University of Indianapolis, who share with me a common vision—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. Allow me to join you in saluting the "one hundred years of Chinese inkwash *shui mo* painting."

5-29-07

In Indianapolis