

Hong Kong Museum of Art receives over 350 Chinese painting and calligraphy artworks from Chih Lo Lou (with photos)

The Hong Kong Museum of Art today (July 19) announced that Chih Lo Lou Art Promotion (Non-profit Making) Ltd has generously donated its private collection of 355 Chinese painting and calligraphy artworks to the museum for its permanent collection. Of the donated works, the most outstanding pieces comprise Chinese painting and calligraphy artworks from the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, rare treasures well known among the international art and museum community. The donation attests to the collector's recognition of the museum's efforts to conserve art treasures and promote historic arts. Furthermore, it recognises Hong Kong's leading role in the preservation of Chinese art and cultural heritage as well as its status as a hub for cultural exchange between the East and the West.

Chih Lo Lou Art Promotion (Non-profit Making) Ltd was established by the late Mr Ho Iu-kwong (1907-2006) in 1985 with a mission to preserve Chinese painting and calligraphy and promote the art and cultural heritage of China. His studio was named Chih Lo Lou, meaning "bliss", for the pleasure that one derives from appreciating ancient masterpieces, and alludes to a Chinese saying that it is blissful to perform good deeds. The collection is one of the three major private collections of ancient Chinese painting and calligraphy in Hong Kong.

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, attended the Chih Lo Lou Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy Donation Ceremony today at Government House and presented a certificate of appreciation to Chih Lo Lou Art Promotion (Non-profit Making) Ltd, which was represented by its Chairman, Mr Ho Sai-chu. Mrs Lam also commended the selfless and passionate dedication of the late Mr Ho Iu-kwong – the original owner of the Chih Lo Lou Collection of Chinese painting and calligraphy – in preserving Chinese cultural heritage.

The donated works span from the Song dynasty to the 20th century, with late Ming and early Qing paintings and calligraphy being the most numerous, and chronicle the aesthetics of different times and regions. The collection comprises works by members of the Four Ming Masters, including Wen Zhengming and Tang Yin, and their followers. Among others, the works reflect the supremacy of the Suzhou art circle; Lan Ying during the late Ming dynasty; and the Songjiang School of painting led by Dong Qichang, who advocated the theory of the Northern and Southern schools of painting and established a proprietary orthodoxy followed by Wang Shimin and Wang Hui of the Four Wangs of the early Qing dynasty. In addition, the collection also includes innovative and individualistic works by Hua Yan and Jin Nong, members of the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou during the mid-Qing dynasty.

The collection is being donated unrecompensed by the Ho family to the Hong Kong Museum of Art for permanent preservation and exhibition. When the museum reopens at the end of 2019, a dedicated gallery named the "Chih Lo Lou Gallery of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy" will be established for permanent display of the collection. A curator and a supporting team will organise exhibitions and undertake research and educational initiatives to promote Chinese art through the collection. Hong Kong residents and art enthusiasts from around the world will be able to visit and appreciate this remarkable collection of Chinese painting and calligraphy and reflect on, as well as empathise with, the vision and dedication of the late Mr Ho.

The most significant and prestigious artworks in the collection are those by the Ming loyalists in the Qing dynasty, which depict their lofty aspirations and noble integrity. The patriotic and principled Ming loyalists coped with their desolation by immersing themselves in travel, painting and writing. Their virtue and nobility still shines from the artworks they left behind. Mr Ho Iu-kwong held high regard and admiration for artists of this period. He also insisted that the artist's temperament should take precedence over the artwork's quality, and thus resolved to collect only works by artists of irreproachable character. The Chih Lo Lou Collection of Chinese painting and calligraphy includes works by members of the Four Monks, namely Bada Shanren and Shitao; also Cheng Sui and Dai Benxiao of the Huangshan School; Cantonese loyalists Kwang Lu and Li Suiqiu; and also Huang Daozhou, Fu Shan, Yang Wencong, Chen Hongshou and Gong Xian.

Holding the belief that we should all contribute to society, Chih Lo Lou donated its invaluable collection to the Hong Kong Museum of Art for permanent exhibition and education purposes. This generous act not only justifies Mr Ho's tireless mission in preserving traditional Chinese art and culture, but also continues his philosophy of recognising Chinese noble virtue. Chih Lo Lou has published more than 40 publications and organised international academic symposia on Chinese art and literature, sparing no effort in advocating traditional Chinese art and culture. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Hong Kong Museum of Art and the Art Museum of the Chinese University of Hong Kong have each organised well-received exhibitions and international academic symposia related to the Chih Lo Lou Collection in the past.



