

The Artist in  
Chinese Fine Brushwork  
Guo Ruyu



Guo Ruyu

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# LIFE

## STATE OF ARTS

Wang Xiping



Eryou Shanfang (Eryou Mountain House)

Renowned Chinese painting artist, Guo Ruyu, was born to a family that earned their living reproducing ancient pictures using block printing techniques. Ruyu's scholarly father, Guo Shijiong, set up the family business, a book-shop named "Eryou Shanfang" in Qing Shiqiao, an old street in Chengdu, the provincial capital of Sichuan province, China.

The majority of ancient books were printed using the block printing technique from the Tang Dynasty (681-907 A.D.) to Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.). The use of this technique also extends to the Ming (1368-1644 A.D.) and Qing (1644-1911 A.D.) dynasties. In modern times, a renaissance of printing ancient books using block printing techniques has occurred in Chengdu. Guo Shijiong was one of the earliest private publishers to be established in contemporary China. He built workshops in Chengdu and even opened workshops in the neighboring county of Pixian. In the winter of 1941, Guo Ruyu was born in "Eryou Shanfang", a place filled with the savory fragrance of wood. It was inevitable that "Eryou Shanfang" would have a significant influence on Guo Ruyu's professional pathway to the arts. In Chengdu, ancient books printed in "Eryou Shanfang" were highly regarded for their lasting fragrance of ink, smooth paper, and clear

formats. In the countryside, Ruyu's father was also highly respected. He often drew flower-bird pictures and composed couplets, which he then gave to his neighbors as gifts. Ruyu was subtly influenced by what he saw and heard, encouraging his eventual engagement in the arts.

In the early years of his life, Ruyu devoted much of this attention to aesthetic things, such as creeks, woods, fields, gardens, and crops. Being intimately aware of his natural surroundings was one of the most influential learnings of Ruyu's life. During his childhood, he is said to have found some painting brushes, dyes and illustrations in old books, and indulged in copying practice and doodling until he felt crazy with euphoria.

His comprehension for lines and his control for shapes, which were evident during his childhood practice, have influenced Ruyu throughout his career. Even to this day, the gesture of hanging arms and his manner of paying subtle yet deep attention to each line still deeply impresses people. It is through his unique ability to identify and control details that he expresses his genius in drawing.

At the age of 16 years, after a successful entrance examination, Ruyu was admitted to the Chengdu Fine Arts School. Chinese painting is an exquisite art form, involving the delicate interaction between person, brush, ink and paper. The movement of the hand and brush on paper is synergetic. Through the interlocution between the hand, brush, ink and paper spiritualism is experienced and understood. When his hands touched brush, ink and paper at his young age, Ruyu



began his journey on an artistic life course.

During the course of this artistic life, Ruyu has achieved a profound understanding for the roles of lines in Chinese painting. As lines in Chinese paintings have been refined over thousands of years, their diversity and expressive power has been dramatically enriched. Only through viewing perfectly combined lines that produce sculpted shapes with abstract beauty can their expressive force be truly perceived. The combination of three elements, subjective "emotion", imaginative "shape", and expressive "line", is the ultimate objective to which Chinese freehand and fine brushwork aspire. A shape is derived from the soul of its creator, the shape is built on lines, and a "sense" is expressed by the shape. Carefully managing the relationship between these three elements is the essential part of understanding Chinese fine and free brushwork. In the discourse of painting, every artist attempts to find a way through which humanity and spiritualism can be drawn into their works, simultaneously.



## Keep on Exploring His Way Further and Wider

The 1980s was an era when Chinese artists were able to stretch their artistic arms and embrace creativity. At that time Ruyu's creative inspiration blossomed, like a flower at the beginning of spring. I have seen one of Ruyu's early works entitled "Comes Spring at Deer Field". It is this particular work that caused Ruyu to reach the summit of Chinese painting. This was the first time he attended the national painting exhibition. From a current perspective, "Comes Spring at Deer Field," is far removed from Ruyu's present works. The piece depicts a scene in which a girl holds a fawn and divulges her own story to the wet grassland. That scene has deeply impressed me as it signifies how to face love. It is with this kind of inspiration, of love, that Ruyu was capable of dousing the fiery scenes of the "Chinese Cultural Revolution: (1966 to 1976).

When a wave of so-called "new-style artists" appeared on the Chinese painting scene, a phase of misdirection occurred in Chinese painting. During this time, the spirit, skills, and values traditionally associated with Chinese painting were abandoned. Essentially, this class of "new-style artists" ignored artistic conceptions. They were influenced by the superficiality of modern culture and engaged in imitation. Their painting styles were confused and disordered. Chinese arts, synonymous with Chinese ideology and culture in the last century, were seen essentially as victims of societal, cultural and economic transformations. It is in this context that we put our hopes and expectations for Chinese painting in Ruyu.

"Hibiscus Carp" was an important series of work for Ruyu as it established him as a famous identity in the arts. It also demonstrated his inimitable and free style of drawing. Hibiscus is the nickname of Chengdu. During the Wudai-Houshu Dynasty (907–960 A.D.), hibiscus was planted widely in Chengdu. They blossom in September and their form resembles a brocade. In a poem of Du Fu (one of the leading poets

in the Tang Dynasty), he wrote: "missing the past wanders and feeling like dreams, there is boundless water in the city of Hibiscus". The name for Chengdu originates from the phrase "city of Hibiscus." A big ground screen of "Hibiscus Carp", which has been exhibited in the People's Convention Hall (in Beijing) and later displayed on Chinese Xuan paper (a high quality paper good for Chinese painting and calligraphy), marked Ruyu's ultimate success and perfection in the field of freehand and fine brushworks.

We can argue that any artistic creativity is realized from an artist's unique sense and expression. Ruyu's works are extensively characterized by Chinese philosophical and mathematical theory. "Five elements" and "five colors" in the oriental world explain the particular language in his painting. He uses lines to better represent traditional mathematical relations and modern plane intersections to structure and assemble his paintings. Such a use of lines reflects his special interests in traditional mathematical theories and eastern mythology.

In the contexts of social transformation and the implementation of the open policy in China, western culture and arts swamped the country. Scholars and artists working in the cultural and artistic field began to rethink traditional ways, and in turn they rediscovered them. Chinese artists had suffered from a long period of stagnation before their views about art opened and the wings of their thoughts stretched freely in the 1980s. Ruyu's artistic creativity was cultivated in this cultural soil. His artistic works were based on his understanding of Chinese classical culture, philosophy and aesthetics. The symbolic imageries in Ruyu's art are original innovations with fantastic and mysterious characteristics.

## Poetic Flavour of Jiu Ge (Nine Songs)

In the new century, spiritualism and enlightenment has played an increasingly significant role in Ruyu's artistic creativity. During this period, characters and beasts in his painting are presented in colorful displays and exhibit exaggerated transformations. He gives people an arrangement that might be lines, colors, or letters. An illusion impressed on spectators is that some ordinary things become abnormal after analyses, invoking people to reconsider art. In this way, Ruyu presents a unique, vivid and bright world for us through his works.

Ruyu is a talent with arbitrary passions and views. The quantity of his paintings has astounded people. The novelty of his creativity has been praised and the profound implication of his works widely appreciated. When we contemplate his many works, we cannot help but be awed. His "Poetic flavour of Jiu Ge" revealed the artist's potential and accumulations on content, forms, language and innovation of art. His work appears dreamlike and illusionary. In this painting, clouds fall from the sky; the beast seems like a leopard or dragon; and the legendary goddess of Mountain Wu appears. He differentiates his "goddess" from others drawn by other famous contemporary Chinese artists, such as Xu



Beihong and Fu Baoshi. The goddess possesses a tender squinting glance in Beihong's realistic paintings, while it is a dolorous goddess that we see in Baoshi's visionary paintings. Ruyu's "Poetic Flavour of Jiu Ge", created from the poem of "Jiu Ge" (by Qu Yuan) and with an impressionistic and pleasurable drawing style, is much closer to the original poem achieving the mystery, chaos and miracle indicted by Qu Yuan (339–278 B.C.).

Consequently, he has captured in his drawing the essence of beauty, or romantic genius that is often difficult to touch upon. This masterpiece draws poetry, painting and calligraphy together in harmony. The passion for life, sympathetic response for the cosmic, attention and cares for the physical world appear vividly in Chinese Xuan paper. Moreover, there are strong visual effects, rhythm and flections, as shown in a series of his works, including "Flocks of Lion," "Herding and Returning," and "Pelican." All these, without exception, bring forth the splendid movement of lines and colors. They symbolize the transition of his painting from a realistic style to a virtual style. In essence, this transformation embodies a new cultural conception.

In the 1980-90s Ruyu's works were highly praised in Chinese society. His paintings were selected by the Culture Ministry of China to participate in an exhibition tour of Europe. His trip to Europe undoubtedly broadened his artistic horizons. In my opinion, the best outcome from his trip to Europe was that the Chinese artist looked at China for the first time through different eyes. Having experienced life and the artistic culture in Europe, he could now reflect upon his homeland with a greater knowledge of the outside world, and thus found greater meaning for his artistic creativity.

It is obvious that Ruyu utilizes the enchantment embodied in Chinese painting to the greatest extent in a modality language. He uses some similar or coincidental rules between ancient Chinese painting and western modern painting in the modality language to break down those rigid taboos typically seen in traditional Chinese painting.

I once observed some grotto and rock paintings from the Neolithic age, and was surprised by their stylistic succinctness and conciseness. A picture with a few lines and color splashes can suitably and profusely express the merry scenes of humans and animals. Even some modern maestros, including Van Gogh, Cezanne, Matisse and Picasso, have attempted to source inspiration from the arts of children and the arts in Africa and the Oceanic region. As stated in the "Classifications of Painters" by Zhou Tang in the Qing Dynasty, "shape is endless but its spirit is available." The so-called spirit means theurgy, which has been taken as the supreme state since the Ming and Qing dynasties in China. This abstract state is superior to reality.

At the turn of the new century, Ruyu has maintained a sensitivity and keenness for the arts. To a great extent, such a sensitivity and keenness mirrors the fate of Chinese painting in the 20th century. He does all that he can in an attempt to exist. He bravely seeks out innovations to develop. The most deferential quality of Ruyu is that he provides artworks not only with mature configuration but also with symbolized meanings.







## Distinct and Elegant Colors

What impresses people most about Ruyu's works is colour. Colour has a charming force that makes the heart convulse. In his paintings, colours are pure rather than beguiling, rich rather than vulgar. Colours in his paintings convey a visionary force. His blending of colours is imitable of nature. For instance, yellow and purple arranged in pairs, red and green conciliatory, black and white in harmony. Colours mingle together harmoniously, like poetry and music, creating a charming and gentle world.

His art has the ability to transcend physical boundaries. This state is determined by his understandings of eastern philosophy and aesthetics. Only in China is there such a virtual and silent realm, just as a chord without string or music without sound. Here all languages are useless. We can only feel with our heart and mind. Poetry can express all inherent spiritual content. The poetic state is the soul of Chinese painting. This is exactly what Ruyu has identified as the essence of Chinese painting.

Ruyu has never followed the steps of the old painters or simply collected their pieces. He respects tradition but does not confine himself to it. To him tradition is a river, which picks up tributaries in its ceaseless flow and enriches its life in the discourse of endless change. It is in this circumstance of peace that he continually strives for his ideal of art. The spirit of humanity shown in traditional Chinese paintings is retained in his paintings. His paintings sharply contrast to some of the works of modern artists, which are characterized by flippancy and fanaticism.

His fine and free brushwork is capable of flowing liberally and wandering widely in all circles. "Plum Blossom", being transcendent and refined, embodies unlimited vitality. "Picture of Appreciating Lotus" is serene and noble. The holiness and fervency of the lotus is romanticized in a glittering and translucent world. "Lotus and Little Birds," with brushes singing and inks dancing, among the different shades, density and spacing, brings the driving force of wind and bright sunshine to people. "Rays in Autumn" is hazy mist and rain. The autumn wind blows, turning the mountain forest yellow and the stone brown. This painting produces a sense of peace. "Picture of Playing Polo" is full of the vigor of life. This piece is of a similar style to "Ode to Joy," brimming with the joy of ceremonial praise.



Ruyu's art is revelatory. With the conscience of an artist he feels life and society, observes and contemplates nature. He rediscovers the lengthy distillation of art in the tradition of his own nation. He develops his own art with skill and ease in a wider artistic world that encompasses the East and the West. He presents to the world with his infrequent passion, uncommon literary talent, and outstanding creativity.

He depicts details of any subject in his paintings very successfully. "Detail" reflects fine understandings of people to the essence of the world. This is equivalent to "impressionistic sculptures" in Chinese painting. Depicting details is subjective because it is humankind's interpretation of nature. In other words, "detail" is a disclosure of the artist's emotions. If the particular frame of mind were lost, with feelings and details gone, art would be as pale as a piece of paper.



## Imago Sculpts

Ruyu's work has the capacity to bring people to a tranquil yet illusionary world. This ability is evidenced in his character or flower-bird paintings, such as "Picture of Making up in the Morning", "Picture of Boating on Reedy Water", "Under the Apple Trees", and "Listen to Oriole under the Willow". Sharing the twitter stealthily, I was brought

to a moment, feeling the heartrending vacant sound when the twirling dress of an elegant lady collides with her decorative jewelry.

Character paintings drawn by Ruyu are poetic. For instance, "Tea Shop" is placed in such surroundings, which emerge a vivid and clear picture about the folk-custom at the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Republic of China. Tea is a kind of spiritual enjoyment for Chinese literati. It may help people cultivate good temperament, and improve the level of civil morality. I think his mental state when he was making the series of works, "Tea Shop", was just like that said in "Treatise on Tea" of Ning Huizong. That saying reads: "tea is such a thing that can dispel and cleanse the stagnancy. It is rather insipid and quite neutralized. It is not mediocre persons or children can know and understand. If the tea is diluted, it makes a person simple; and if the tea is strong, it makes a person calm. It is not the favor for persons who are in a hurry".

Ruyu's "Pictures of Hundreds of Buddhism Characters" raises Chinese character painting to a new level. In the expressive manners of his painting state, his work is detached from the concept of "being with ego" and "without ego." He shifts between "describing a scene" and "creating a scene." He is trying to break down the patterns of literati's traditional paintings, which were refined, sparse, bright and carefree. His works are understood to be representing the spiritual content with loftiness and grandness. The combination of integration, abstraction, exclusion, consolidation, development and translation for traditional esthetic laws enables his works to be emerged and have characteristics of oriental representation and style of vast and mighty, bold and generous quality, with strong modern tinges.

Ruyu has a predestined relationship with Buddha. This relates to a fancy Tangka of Buddha's figure found in Eryou Shanfang. Because Eryou Shanfang has completely vanished with the ravages of history, it is extremely difficult to find any trace of that Tangka of Buddha's figure. Fortunately, that Tangka of Buddha's figure was located again after passing through many places. Today in the sanctum of Ruyu only this Tangka of Buddha's figure tells people the story of honor and disgrace, rise and fall that Eryou Shanfang experienced.

Since Buddhism spread to China, it has united with traditional Chinese culture and gradually developed as important part of Chinese culture. It

reached its peak by the Sui (581–618 A.D.) and Tang dynasties. Most famous artists in Chinese history were specialised in Buddha paintings. For example, Cao Buxing in the Three Kingdom (220–280 A.D.) dynasty, Gu Kaizhi and Wei Xie in the Jin dynasty (265–316 A.D.) are three famous Buddha artists based in the Sichuan province. Cao Zhongda in the Beiqi Dynasty (550–557 A.D.) and Wu Daozi in the Tang Dynasty innovatively created their own unique Buddha painting skills, which have been acclaimed as “Caoyi Qushui” (which can be interpreted as cloths in Cao's paintings look like emerging from the water) and “Wudai Dangfeng” (which can be interpreted as ribbons in Wu's paintings look like wind) in later ages.

Chengdu is a city whose history could easily be disregarded by the imprudent. The “wonderful and best temple in the world”, Daci Temple, as praised by Su Shi (1037–1101 A.D.) is located in Chengdu. Daci Temple is a Buddha temple with a great reputation in the history of Chengdu. According to historical records, during the flourishing ages of the Tang and Song dynasties the temple contained 96 yards, 8524 rooms and many thousands of clergy. On the wall were 1215 pieces of all kinds of Buddha Ru Lai's figures, 262 figures of Tianwang (King Tian), Mingwang (King Ming) and Da Shengjiang (Manito General), and 114 figures of protean Buddha in sutra. Master artist Wu Daozi, in the Tang Dynasty, perhaps created many frescos in this temple. When the emperor Xi Zong in the Tang Dynasty visited Chengdu the then national artist Chang Zhongyin drew a picture in this temple for the emperor and his attendants of civil and military ministers (more than one hundred persons). That painting has since become an unprecedented work of mass mural sketching. Mural paintings in Daci Temple were mainly drawn by the famous masters of the Tang and Song dynasties. Dunhuang paintings (in Gansu province) are a national treasure in China. However, Dunhuang paintings were made by civilian drawers. Therefore, they are relatively inferior in quality, in terms of both the skill of the drawers or the breadth of painted themes, and reputation of the Tang and Song mural paintings in Daci Temple. According to the book “Recordation for Painting Information,” authored by the famous painting critic Guo Ruoxu, about half of the famous painters nation-wide, since the late Tang Dynasty to the early Song Dynasty, left their masterpieces in Chengdu. Although these works have been lost in the historical flames of wars, they still

moisten Chengdu's landscape.

Nurtured by the cultural contents of Chengdu and rich Buddha art, Ruyu found an ideal form in which limited colors can be changed freely. He applied this form to works such as “Pictures of Hundreds of Buddhism Characters,” drawn on the base of black and white. As can be seen from the painting “Picture of Mountain Monk Playing Chess,” “thatching is built in the depth of white clouds; Buddha is shown to release souls from suffering of all flesh.” As a typical characteristic of oriental impressionism, his rational spirit and instinctual sense arrive at a virtual state of the spirit and soul in his works: “Dari Buddha Rulai,” “Haimu Guardian Warriors of Buddha,” “Wenshu Bodhisattva” and “Eighteen Arahants” etc. One can feel the existence of spiritual power under the sturdy thoughts and force of vision.

## Oriental Verve

If art only aims to amuse its audience's eyes or minds, it will not have the capability to enhance people's spiritual state. I do not expect that I only enjoy the experience of finding the scenery pleasing to my eyes and mind. I hope I can probe into more abstruse things behind his works.

The style is the man. Similar to Ruyu's pure, modest, simple and contracted personalities, there are many spiritual contents in his works that affect people. Whatever they are – characters, flowers, birds, mountains, or waters – he tries his utmost to reveal the beauty of simplicity, purity and vigor contained in their bodies in a simple, clear and bright way. His paintings reflect the strong driving force of life, making us realize the profound morality behind his works. The concerns about “reality” and “presence” comprise the brilliant core of all his works, rather than the painting itself.

Tradition is a persistently creative and flowing course. It is the endless creative spirit that nurtures tradition. If we only rolled in the past paintings such as characters in the Jin and Tang dynasties, mountains and waters in the Song and Yuan (1271–1368 A.D.) dynasties, flowers and birds in the Ming and Qing dynasties, our attentions to modern life would be gloomy. Ruyu's works are close to modern life. His concerns for the human society are reflected in his all works.

Modern art is not confined to a narrow realm, seeking for general



commonness and abstract humanity. Rather, it is a kind of art with multi-dimensional freedoms, seeking independency and integrity. Individuality is what the real modern artist is concerned about. Artists can only truly and deeply represent their own essence for life, and in turn their art works will be appreciated by spectators. When spectators face works of art, they will feel the existence of the spirit that accompanies it.

Artists depict their views of life in their paintings using brush and ink. In this way, they transform the forms of aesthetics into the expressions of humanity. In modern society, we face a world with many options, desires and matters. Nothing is easy. We are used to being free and thus restriction is not easy. We are used to being talkative and thus keeping silent is not easy. We are used to joking and thus seriousness is not easy. When tradition is lost, culture becomes imperfect, and art becomes superficial. In this instance, who is capable of wielding and driving his brush and ink again to catch up with the achievements in arts in the Tang and Song dynasties? It is lucky that we can find a real understanding of the life, vision and interlocution from the thoughts concerning the universe, life, art and philosophy through Ruyu and his paintings.

Ruyu's ideal, in his lifetime, is to probe and establish a new Chinese art framework, through learning advanced western cultures and concepts. Such an ideal can only be built on the premise of the understanding and comprehension for the structure and tradition of native culture. His integrated thought regarding the driving force of painting development with multiple categories of arts is invaluable and uncommon in Chinese painting circles. Accordingly, his thought of originality and creativity with the unrestricted, individual style will undoubtedly be a profound and predominant example in establishing Chinese modern art.

Looking backward, during Ruyu's artistic life over the last half a century, he has marched toward his own independent and special painting language, in which different cultural connotations and artistic spirits have been merged together. Different conceptions about culture at different times have been clearly deducted. History has moved into a new century. Hereto I wish to cite a few words from a book “Discussions on Yi Province” of He Yudu in the Ming Dynasty to summarize Ruyu and his arts life. “For literati and scholars in the Shu Kingdom (Sichuan province), once one appears, he will be a model of a generation and be a leader of hundreds of diverse fields.”



"Rose and parakeet"  
50 x 180cm  
2006





*"Futucheng Discussing on Daoism"*  
Fan Face  
1998



*"Arhat"*  
Fan Face  
1998



*"Mountain Birds"*  
130 x 93cm  
2006



*"Lotus Pond and Little Ducks"*  
68 x 45cm  
2006

龍生雲海  
 鳳鳴落雨石

沈鵬

"Cranes"  
 66 x 66cm  
 2006





*"Rose and Dragonfly"*  
33 x 33cm  
2006



*"Dragonfly Longing for Potpourri"*  
33 x 33cm  
2006





*"Lions"*  
105 x 105cm  
1994

It is obvious that Ruyu utilises the enchantment embodied in Chinese painting to the greatest extent in a modality language. He uses some similar or coincidental rules between Chinese ancient painting and western modern painting in the modality language to break down those rigid taboos typically seen in traditional Chinese painting.



*"Back Under The Moon"*  
70 x 60cm  
1991



## Introduction to Traditional Chinese Painting

Traditional Chinese painting refers to a type of painting that has been developed throughout Chinese history. It uses the unique Chinese brush, ink and other materials in drawing and painting. Chinese painting has established itself as a unique form of painting in the world, representing an important genre within oriental paintings. It has also incorporated the tradition of Chinese painting with the innovations of painting in the new age. In terms of the content of expressions, Chinese painting can be divided into three categories: "figure painting," "landscape painting" and "flower-bird painting." In terms of painting techniques, it falls into two classes: "fine brushwork" and "free sketch."

Chinese painting has its specific characteristics which distinguish it from Western paintings. Traditional Chinese painting does not emphasise focal points or perspectives in drawings, nor the change of color and light on the objects. It focuses more on the expressions of the artists' inner world, rather than the imitation of the shape of an object. Chinese painting is an art of expression that pursues the principle of "using shape to present the mind" and the sense of "making a balance between the like and the unlike."

The characteristics of Chinese painting are also distinct due to its artistic techniques: classification, composition, utilization of stroke and ink, and application of color. The "fine brushwork painting" is known for subtleness, applying color layer by layer and drawing objects exquisitely. Compared with the "fine brushwork painting," the "free sketch" reveals the characteristics of objects through bold and simple strokes, and expresses the painter's emotions. It is a kind of highly epitomized painting, adopting the artistic conception of "less the better". With accuracy and skills, the painter uses his brush in an integrated way so that the brush fully conveys the ideology of the artist.

Chinese painting has its specific characteristics in composition of a picture and utilization of stroke, ink and color. Its picture composition does not strictly follow the golden principle of the Western painting. Rather, it arranges pictures in a horizontal or vertical scroll, with a disproportioned length and width of the painting. In doing so, it can represent special conceptions of art and the subjective sentiment of an artist.

Another distinction between Chinese and Western painting can be observed in the



Two Cranes / Free Sketch



Two Cranes / Fine Brushwork Painting

use of perspective. "Perspective", a terminology in painting, is a technical method by which the objects can be displayed on a plane correctly, showing spatial or three-dimensional relationships. For instance, the nearer an object, the bigger its image is compared to objects behind it, and vice versa. Hence "perspective" is also called the "near-far principle". Western painting usually employs the focal point or perspective of an object, working like a camera with a fixed standing point. The picture is determined by space, and only contains those that can be photographed by lens. In contrast, Chinese painting does not necessarily have one fixed standing point, confined within a fixed visual scope. It can shift the standing point according to the painter's feeling and needs. This enables artists to draw all the visible and invisible objects into their pictures. This method is known as the "cavalier or multi-point perspective".

"The Flowers and Birds in Four Seasons", created by Guo Ruyu, provides a successful example in employing the methods of "cavalier or multi-point perspectives". This work illustrates the change of natural sceneries during the four seasons. This four-meter long masterpiece contains different flowers and birds that feature different seasons and localities. In addition, regardless of the section one observes, the proportions of objects are similar to each other. Such is not a style shown in Western painting. This unique method in perspective was created by ancient Chinese artists according to the necessity of content and artistic presentation. It has been also widely used in contemporary Chinese paintings.

The employment of strokes and ink is an important element of Chinese painting. The employment of strokes concentrates on the variation of the degrees of thickness, speed, pause, transition, and smoothness to fully present the objects. Generally speaking, the starting and ending strokes need strength. The wrist should be raised erectly, and the progression of the brush should be smooth. The ending stroke cannot be weak. When operating the brush, gentle strength makes a floating stroke, while heavy strength leads to a blunt stroke. If the hand moved too fast, the stroke would not appear solid enough. However if the movement is too slow, the strokes will be stagnant. Should the side of the brush be used, the stroke would be thin. If the central part of the brush were used, the stroke would appear rigid. The employment of the brush allows a curved stroke to look like a bow and a straight to look like a ruler.

With respect to the employment of ink, Chinese painting employs the techniques of scrape, spot and dye. Ink also needs to be mixed with water to a desired degree to display objects appropriately. In general, the effectiveness of the ink utilization in Chinese painting lies in the





Water Lily / Fine Brushwork Painting



Water Lily / Free Sketch

combination of thick ink and thin ink. If a painting were full of thick or thin ink, it would lose the soul of the art. Thick and thin ink rely upon each other. Thick strokes should be brilliant but not stagnant, while thin strokes should be clear but not gloomy. The importance of ink is also related to use of color. Since ancient times, ink has not been employed simply as the color black. As ink is soluble in water, the water-ink ration blends color to different degrees, creating bright or faint colors such as gray or light gray. Painting is created with different shades of ink harmoniously. These all highlight the flexibility required in handling the brush in Chinese painting. As Chinese painting and calligraphy bear many similarities in terms of tools and the operations of strokes, people take it for granted that calligraphy and painting have the same origin. Yet they also have some differences. The operation of strokes in calligraphy is known for its diversification[SS9], especially in cursive style. The employment of ink in painting is more central in Chinese painting than in calligraphy. How to use stroke and ink involves the generalized Chinese painting techniques. It is not only a means of creating images, but also has an independent aesthetic value of its own.

Chinese painting also has a unique way of applying color. The paints are usually made from the powder of natural minerals or animal shells. It can resist the wind and sunshine over a long period of time. Paint is usually applied horizontally to the drawing paper. Painting pursues the effect of original color on the objects, and hence rarely has variations in light and shade.

The characteristics of Chinese painting, traditional Chinese painting in particular have been discussed above. These characteristics have also evolved with time, along with artistic contents and forms. In modern times, with the introduction of Western painting into China, Chinese painting has absorbed lots of western artistic techniques. As a result, the expressive power of Chinese painting has been greatly enhanced.



## Guo Ruyu: Overview

Guo Ruyu, who styled himself Zhiguanga and literarily named as Zhiyu, was born in Chengdu of Sichuan province, China in 1941. He graduated from the Chengdu Fine Arts School in 1961. He is an eminent painter and former Director of the Creativity Research Institute of the Academy of Poetry, Calligraphy and Art of Sichuan Province. He is well-regarded as one of the first-class artists in China. He holds membership in the Chinese Artists Association. He is Director of the Fine and Free Brushwork Painting Academy of Chengdu, and Deputy Chairman of the Flower-Bird Society of Sichuan Province. Ruyu's specialty is in the fields of Chinese traditional painting, encompassing flower-bird, character, landscape, and modern watercolor paintings. His work is characterised by originality and innovations. He has cultivated a unique painting style in traditional Chinese realistic painting. His work reflects the physical environments and human's life of the real world. His modern watercolor drawings have merged traditional Chinese painting, mural painting, folk arts and modern Western arts. His work was highly praised during the exhibition in Seattle and Los Angeles in the United States and in Singapore. The arts realm and collectors have paid close attentions to his work. Newspapers and periodicals both in China and overseas have introduced Ruyu's artistic achievements and published his work frequently. These media include Collecting World and Arts Circle in Hong Kong; Lecture and Arts Circle in Taiwan; West Chinese Paper and Seattle Post in the United States; Chinese School Students in Singapore; China Calligraphy and Painting, Arts, and Jiangsu Art Pictorial Monthly in China, and so forth.



The Flowers and Birds in Four Seasons 392 x 40cm 2005

Artistic activities:

1973, participated in the National Arts and Crafts Exhibition.

1974, participated in the 4th National Fine Arts Exhibition.

1975, participated in the International Handicrafts Exposition in London, UK.

1978, participated in the Chinese Painting Tour Exhibition in Japan, North Korea, West Germany, Italy, Spain and etc., which was organised by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries.

1980, created the best-known work “ Hibiscus Carp ” for the Sichuan hall in the People's Congress Hall.

1982, won the “ Chinese Baihua Award ” for outstanding arts and crafts.

1984, participated in the International Exposition in Paris, France.

1986, held Individual Painting Exhibition in Chengdu.  
participated in the Chinese Modern Brushwork Painting Exhibition.  
participated in the Chinese Arts and Crafts Exhibition.  
participated in the International Exposition in Takenami, Japan.  
His works were collected by the Chinese Museum of Fine Arts and Crafts, and were collected by the Sino-American Culture Centre of San Francisco,

USA.

1987, held the Individual Painting Exhibition in Washington State, USA.  
His work “ Plum Blossom ” was collected by Mirokunosato Modern Chinese Art Museum of Japan; and his painting “ Landscape ” was collected by Fukuyama Castle Museum of Japan.

1988, held Individual Painting Exhibition in Seattle, USA.

1990, held Individual Painting Exhibition in M-burg, Germany.

1991, held Individual Painting Exhibition in Singapore.

1993, held Individual Painting Exhibition in Austria and Belgium.

1993, his painting “ Running Horse ” was auctioned off by Bradford Auction, USA.

1994, his painting “ Flocks of Crane ” was auctioned off by Bradford Auction, USA.

1996, held Individual Exhibition of Fan Painting in Chengdu and Guangzhou, China.  
published books Fan Paintings of Guo Ruyu and Pictures of Hundreds of

Buddhism Characters.

1998, held Individual Painting Exhibition in Seattle, USA.  
participated in the Invitation Exhibition of the Chinese Painting Academy.

1999, participated in the Chinese Traditional Paintings Exhibition of the Young and Primary Aged Artists from Sichuan Province, Hong Kong.  
published Selected Paintings of Flowers, Birds and Characters of Guo Ruyu.

2001, participated in the International Arts Invitation Exhibition in Louvre, Paris, France.  
participated in the Invitation Exhibition in Brittany, France.

2002, participated in National Chinese Painting Exhibition: Sentiments of Lands in West China; and won an award for excellence in this exhibition.

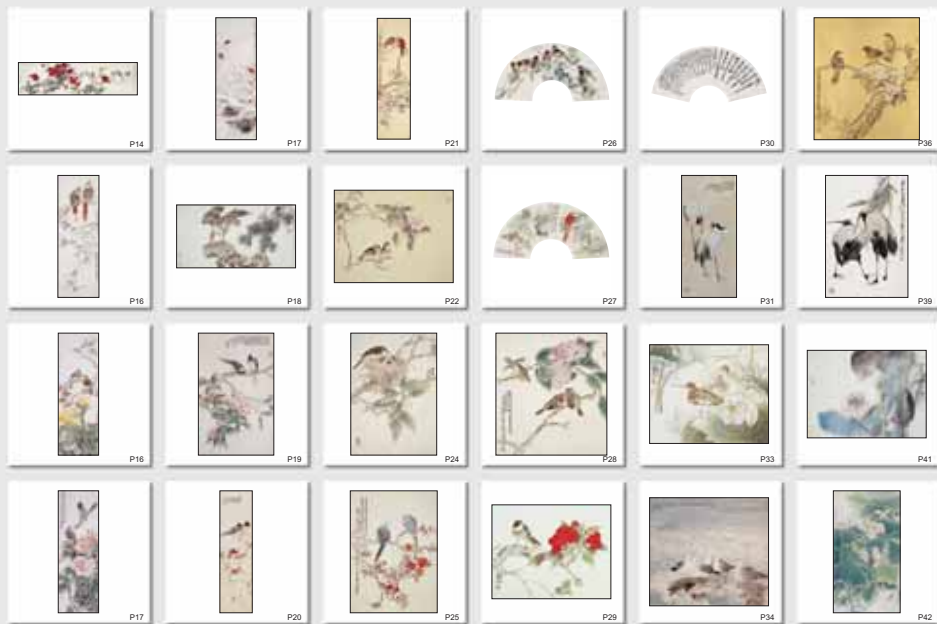
2003, published Selected Paintings of Flowers and Birds in Brushwork of Guo Ruyu;  
participated in The 2nd National Chinese Painting Exhibition.  
nominated as Director of the Sichuan Oriental Painting Art Academy.

2004, participated in National Art Exhibition for marking the 100th Anniversary of Deng Xiaoping's Birth, and won an award for excellence.  
published Learning to Outline Flowers and Birds (Tianjin Fine Arts Publishing House), and Chinese Contemporary Competent Painting Artists - Guo Ruyu (Publishing House of the Chinese Academy of Art).  
appointed as Professor at Chengdu Art Institute.

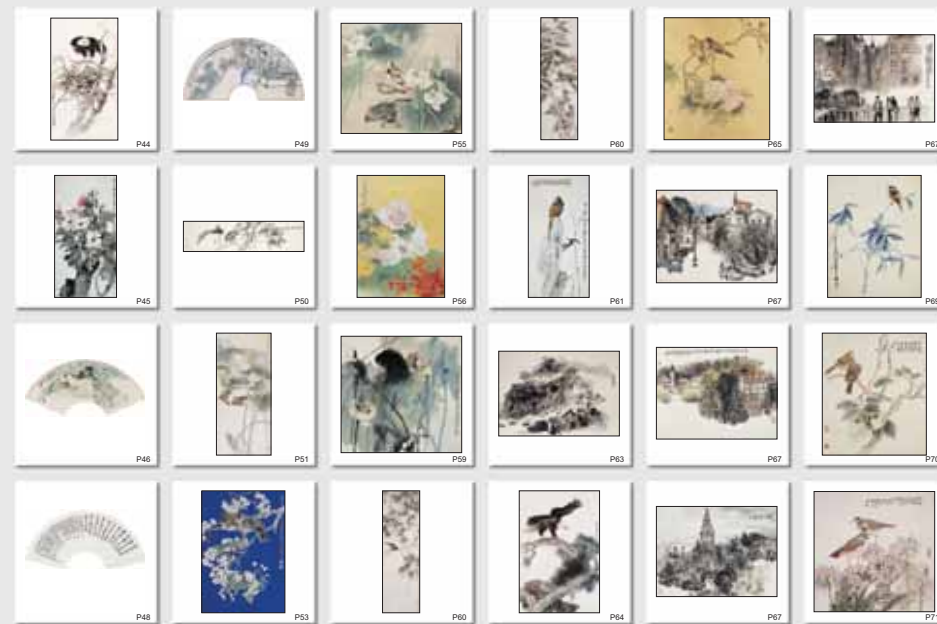
2005, participated in auctions by some large-sized auction agencies including Sungari Auction Company and Beijing Hanhai Auction Company, China.  
published The Records of Chinese Artists: Volume of Guo Ruyu (Huayi Publishing House), and Techniques of Outlining Flowers and Birds in Fine Brushwork of Guo Ruyu ( People's Fine Arts Publishing House, Tianjin).

2005, Chanlin Qingyun: Buddhism Paintings Exhibition of Guo Ruyu.





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P16	Flowers & Birds in Autumn 秋花菊禽 133 x 33cm 2006	P24	Fox 嘯 40 x 33cm 2004	P33	Water Lily & Two Simps 荷花雙鸛 45 x 50cm 2003
P17	Peony & Birds 牡丹聚禽圖 133 x 33cm 2006	P25	Peach Blossom & Parrots 桃花鸚鵡 68 x 50cm 2006	P34	Seagull 海鷗 85 x 90cm 2006
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P18	Buteo Regalis 松鷹 96 x 176cm 2006	P27	Flower & Bird / Fan Face 花鳥合璧 2003	P39	Two Cranes 雙鶴圖 68 x 50cm 2001
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**International Arts Publishing, LLC**

1503 SE Morgan Rd.  
Vancouver, WA 98664, USA

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\$39 U.S. \$50 Canadian

ISBN 0-9743293-6-3



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