

余承堯

YU Cheng-Yao

1898–1993

余承堯，福建永春人，原名舜，字承堯，寓有承續堯舜聖德、繼往開來之意。早年在木匠作坊為徒，學習畫工、漆工與雕花技藝。1917年投筆從戎，歷經近30年的軍旅生涯，於1931年晉升陸軍少將，曾任福建省省防軍參謀長，直至1946年退役。因1949年未及帶妻兒來臺，其後遂獨居臺北，亦往返廈門、新加坡，經營運輸和藥材事業，至1954年始隱退商場，自此沉潛於興起於家鄉福建永春的南管音樂、古籍詩文及翰墨丹青。

長年從軍，余承堯始終未減對經典文學、寫詩練字與南管的熱愛。他足跡遍歷18省，飽覽山川勝景，1949年來臺後，常至故宮博物院觀摩古畫，對鎮館之寶——范寬〈谿山行旅圖〉畫出記憶中的山水尤為推崇。1954年起，提筆專注山水創作，以北宋主峰屹立的畫風為宗，並強調作畫須熟悉「地形學」，方能於尺幅之間寄寓千里江山。他經過長期行萬里路「外師造化」，對山勢有深刻的體會與觀察，最終「中得心源」的感想是「尖峰才算是真的山峰」，因此，其畫中多所展現對描繪岩石露頭的偏好與石質趣味，以表現山的峻奇和靈氣畫中有峰峰相連的山脈，也有獨立自成峰。他以深厚的練字功力，運用細密的中鋒為鑿刀，刻劃岩石豐富的凹凸紋理，塊塊堆疊出堅實山體，靈活繪點石綠，表現出樹木饒富生機及草木華滋的山體意象。

本次入藏之〈山水〉，為其青綠山水代表作。畫中主峰由下而上，山岩層疊而起，筆觸細密靈活，山體肌理於青綠暈染間顯得堅實鮮活，覆蓋並浮於岩石表面的青翠蒼綠，皆為余承堯典型風格。相較早期作品空間較為封閉，此幅在交錯布局的山勢中引入溪流、瀑布與村落人家，橘紅屋頂對應裸露岩塊，為山中靈氣注入人間煙火，而山勢走向亦在開闊中營造深邃之感，應屬晚期之作。

余承堯的藝術才華於1960年代始為美術史家李鑄晉所發掘，並於1966、1970及1972年間多次受邀赴美國展覽，為推介中國現代繪畫的重要畫家。代表作如〈山水四連屏〉（1971）、〈山水八連屏〉（1971）及〈長江萬里圖卷〉（1973），展現其創作力最為高峰的時期。其風格獨樹一幟，以縱橫自如的筆墨、壯闊雄渾的山水意象，為當代水墨開創新局，並在中國近現代繪畫史中占有重要地位。令人矚目的是，余氏無師自通，自56歲始執筆作畫，卻能於傳統水墨語境中展現出別開生面的創作能量，其藝術成就為山水畫發展提供了值得深思的新方向。（余思穎）

Born Yu Shun in Yongchun County, Fujian Province, Yu took the style name Cheng-Yao, connoting the continuation of the virtuous legacy of the ancient kings Yao and Shun, and the building of a new era. In his early years, he apprenticed in a carpentry workshop, where he learned drawing, lacquer, and woodcarving techniques. In 1917, he shifted from art to the army, beginning a nearly thirty-year military career. He was promoted to major general in 1931 and subsequently served as Chief of Staff at the Fujian Provincial Garrison until his retirement in 1946. Yu moved to Taipei in 1949 and lived a solitary life, having left his wife and children behind in China. In Taiwan, he engaged in a transport and pharmaceutical business with frequent trips to Xiamen and Singapore. After retiring from business in 1954, Yu immersed himself in Nanguan music, ancient books of poetry, and ink painting, all of which were integral cultural traditions of his hometown in Yongchun County.

Throughout his years in the military, Yu never lost sight of his passion for classical literature, poetry, calligraphy, and Nanguan music. Having traveled through eighteen provinces, he was intimately familiar with the grandeur of China's landscapes, and upon arriving in Taiwan in 1949, regularly visited the National Palace Museum to study ancient paintings. Yu held the utmost reverence for late Northern Song master Fan Kuan's *Travelers Among Mountains and Streams*, an unparalleled treasure in the Museum's collection. In 1954, he began to focus on landscape painting, basing his style on the towering and upright compositions of the Northern Song masters, and emphasizing that a painter must understand topography to evoke a thousand miles of rivers and mountains within the confines of a single scroll. Through years of extensive travel, Yu followed the principle of "learning from nature outwardly and attaining inspiration from within," and ultimately came to the realization that "only the most sharply rising peaks embody the true spirit of mountains." Following this insight, his paintings tended to favor stony outcroppings and varied rock textures to express the ruggedness and vigor of peaks, whether rising together in ranges or standing alone. Drawing on his mastery of calligraphy, Yu used the center of his brush like a chisel to create fine strokes, carving the rich contours of rock surfaces and stacking forms to build solid, monumental mountains. He then skillfully applied dots of vivid malachite green to convey the vitality of alpine forests and verdurous mountain vegetation.

Added to the collection in this cycle, *Landscape* is Yu's representative green landscape. The painting's central peak is formed by layers of rock, rising from the bottom of the paper to the top, and depicted with dense and nimble brushwork. Over the mountain's substantial form and lively textured surface, Yu applied a bright green wash to create a sense of floating vegetation—all features characteristic of his style. Unlike the relatively closed spaces in his earlier works, *Landscape* introduces streams, waterfalls, and villages into intersecting mountain ridges. Rising smoke, along with orange roof tiles set against exposed stone, injects this mountain scene with human presence, and the overall mountain layout creates feelings of depth and expansiveness. This painting is considered part of the artist's later period.

In the 1960s, art historian Li Chu-Tsing discovered Yu Cheng-Yao's artistic talent. In 1966, 1970, and 1972, Yu was invited to exhibit in the United States, where he became recognized as an important artist promoting modern Chinese painting. Representative works such as *Landscape in Four Panels* (1971), *Landscape in Eight Panels* (1971), and *The Yangtze River Scroll* (1973), mark the peak of his creative output. His distinctive style—characterized by unrestrained brushwork and magnificent landscapes—created a new direction in contemporary ink painting and continues to occupy an important position in the history of modern Chinese painting. Remarkably, Yu was self-taught and had only begun painting at the age of 56, yet he demonstrated a unique creative energy within the traditional ink-painting context. His artistic achievements offered a thought-provoking new path for the development of landscape painting. (Sharleen YU)

山水 Landscape

年代不詳 Date unknown

彩墨、紙 Ink and pigment on paper

119 x 49 cm

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