

Honorary Fellow A Citation

Professor Ng Yuet-lau

The Chinese character *hua* (畫) means 'to paint' (as a verb) or 'painting' (as a noun). In ancient Chinese Oracle Script, it meant to paint and is represented by a pictographic symbol, in which the upper part of the character, *yu* (聿) (or written as *yin* (尹)), represented a device symbolizing a brush in hand; and the lower part was a symbol for literary flair. Wang Renyu, a man of letters during the Five Dynasties, once made this remark on Li Bai, a Tang Dynasty poet, 'When Li was young, he dreamt of a brush the tip of which was decorated with flowers. The prophetic dream later turned out that Li became an eminent poet well-known throughout the country, and the poems he wrote are like being decorated with flowers, so beautifully composed as if they were, to his readers, all dream work.' The Chinese expression, 'flowers sprouting from the tip of the brush' can be regarded aptly as an explanation of the character *hua*, and a Chinese painting appraised thus has indeed reached the highest level of achievement within the genre.

Professor Ng Yuet-lau is a member of the China Artists Association, President of the Lingnan Art Association, President of the Ling Ngai Art Association, an executive member of the Hong Kong Artists Association and Vice-Chairman of the Lan Ting Society. She is the beloved student of Professor Chao Shao-an and Professor Huang Junbi. Today, Professor Ng is widely acclaimed as one of the third-generation masters of the Lingnan School of Painting.

Professor Ng's ancestors came from Chikan, a town of the City of Kaiping in Guangdong Province. Born in Guangzhou, Professor Ng's love for art started at a very young age. Under the influence of her father, she studied the painting albums of Mr Xu Beihong, and paid regular visits to museums and art galleries. Such upbringing inculcated in her the desire to learn to paint. Her interest in art was further strengthened by the many occasions when she was asked to assist her teachers in producing paintings during her secondary school days. In the seventies of the last century, when Professor Ng had the first encounter of viewing and appreciating the works of Professor Chao, she was greatly stunned and deeply moved. She sighed, 'This could not be the work of a human hand.' So, she asked Professor Chao for permission to become his student, and had since been following his footsteps in art. Later, Professor Huang Junbi came to Hong Kong and Professor Ng had the opportunity to learn from him traditional brushwork, which triggered her interest in landscape painting. Having the fortune of studying under two great masters, Professor Ng learnt the quintessence of the painting of birds and flowers from Professor Chao, and inherited the artistic legacy of landscape painting from Professor Huang. From these two eminent mentors, Professor Ng came to appreciate the essence of creativity and the philosophy of life. Her enlightenment has since formed and honed the unique character of her paintings.

Professor Ng's paintings are inspired and informed by Nature, and emphasize colouration and the charm of the Chinese ink. Her landscape paintings boast a broad and open configuration, while displaying numerous changes. They compose an ethereal aura and a thorough understanding of the physical aspects within, blending all into one harmonious whole. The brush strokes, the perspective, and the light and shade of her paintings draw immense admiration from viewers. Her paintings of birds and flowers are exquisite and often executed with a warm and genteel colour scheme. The works exhibit quality texture, and also emanate harmony in artistic conception. One could say that Professor Ng's works have intrinsically incorporated the properties of Nature with impression from the Artist into painting. Professor Chao once passed the following comment, 'The artists who could blend the style of the Lingnan School with Modernism are Koo Mei and Ng Yuet-lau. Koo skilfully deploys composition to bring out the atmosphere, while Ng uses lines for the same effect.' Professor Ng uses exceptional brush strokes to create the traditional dream-like atmosphere in paintings. Her works often feature a satisfying use of imagism, a careful execution of lines and strokes, a disciplined composition, and in harmony with contemporary art. Simply put, the viewing of Professor Ng's paintings is an enjoyable aesthetic experience.

During the warfare between Chu and Han factions towards the end of the Qin Dynasty, Kuai Che, a counsellor at the time, once lamented that, 'Timing is difficult to grasp but easy to lose hold of. Opportunity, once gone, will never return.' The idea is for one to grasp the opportunity as it comes and cherish time. Kuai's advice has been the personal motto of Professor Chao, who expands it as follows: 'All are illusionary, but art portrays reality. Time will wait for no one, and so spend your days wisely.' Being a student of Professor Chao, Professor Ng has a profound understanding of this motto, and devotedly follows the Master's art endeavours with all her heart, mind and capabilities. She earnestly learnt the brushwork of Professor Chao through appreciating his masterpieces for 10 years, during which she engaged in painting night and day, and whenever Muses called, initiated herself into the Master's realm of art. To such ends, she has also taken to outdoor sketching, believing in learning from Nature. She also advocates viewing and learning from fine paintings that have come her way. She is very good at making the most of the special properties of *xuan* paper, bold to innovate, and uses ink splashing and colour splashing judiciously. Her works often feature Western elements to underscore the contemporaneity of the paintings. She has ushered in a personal and unique kind of brushstroke that shows the shades and texture, which now comes to be known as the 'Yuet-lau Brushstroke'. She is certainly a worthy follower

of the glorious tradition of the Lingnan School, and her works have opened up a pioneering avenue to innovative painting. Her art journey is in full consonance with Professor Chao's advice: 'Time will wait for no one, and so spend your days wisely.'

Professor Ng plays an active role, and has attained great success, in the art circle. Since 1986, she has not only held solo exhibitions in major universities in China and overseas, her masterpieces have also been selected for the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th national art shows. Her works are also much sought after by various art galleries, museums and private collectors. This includes the Great Hall of the People, Beijing Jingxi Hotel, Diaoyutai State Guest House, Hong Kong Heritage Museum, Dr Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall, Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, China Academy of Art, Beijing Central Academy of Fine Arts, Peking University, Tsinghua University, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, City University of Hong Kong, Trinity College Dublin, The University of Dublin, University of Indianapolis, and National Museum of Singapore. For her outstanding achievement in art, she was awarded the 'Certificate of Recognition' by the Canadian Prime Minister and the Town of Richmond Hill, Toronto in 2013. The following year, she was listed among 'The World's One Hundred Outstanding Chinese', and was also honoured with the title of 'The World's

Outstanding Chinese'. In her motherland, she was conferred 'Honorary Citizenship' by the Shaoguan Municipality. The numerous honours showered upon her clearly indicate the magnitude of her contributions to, and accomplishments in, art, with worldwide accolade.

Professor Ng spares no effort in promoting the Lingnan Art. To nurture young talent in the art field, she has taken up the following posts: Visiting Professor of the Foshan University, Visiting Professor of the Xiamen University, Lifelong Professor of Shaoguan University, and Artist-in-Residence at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Besides teaching, she also holds concurrent posts in the following institutions: Advisor of the Asia Research Program of the University of Indianapolis, Advisor of the Calligraphy and Painting Association of Fudan University, the Permanent Honorary Curator of the Art Museum of the City of Kaiping, etc. She has left her footprints all over the world, all for the promotion of art.

Professor Ng forged ties with The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) as early as 2004. That year, the CUHK Art Museum staged an exhibition displaying the calligraphy and painting items donated by Professor To Cho Yee and his wife, which included the works of Professor Ng. In 2013, Professor Ng and her son, Professor Philip Chiu of the Faculty

of Medicine at CUHK, staged a Lingnan Art Exhibition at the University Library on campus in a group of four. Later on, she volunteered to tutor autistic children, stimulating their interest in painting through creation in art. As a result, a number of paintings thus produced were displayed in an exhibition entitled: 'The Talent Within: Painting Exhibition of Autistic Teenagers' that she co-organized with CUHK in 2015. Professor Ng is an Honorary Fellow of S.H. Ho College, and in that capacity has given her time and effort generously to teach painting to the students of the S.H. Ho College. She has also organized student painting and sketching tours to mainland China. In 2016, she joined Professor Chiu again to hold another exhibition named 'Lingnan Images—Paintings by Professor Ng Yuet-lau and Professor Philip Chiu' at S.H. Ho College, as another occasion to promote the arts and culture of the Lingnan genre. On that occasion, she gifted to S.H. Ho College her painting entitled 'Inspiring Young Minds in a Home-like College'. The theme of the painting features a hawk leading its nestling hawks back home, i.e., the College campus. The message behind is: 'Enlighten the young ones, and pass on the torch'. Both the painting and its message draw great appreciation and praise from the staff and students of the College and the University at large.

Mr Chairman, Professor Ng Yuet-lau is devoted to Chinese paintings. She promotes

art and has acquired the best of both Chinese and Western style paintings to create her own style enhancing accessibility of her pupils with the Art World. Her brush radiates rays of splendour. Her paintings give us a glimpse of both the Present and the Past. To describe her artistic prowess as 'flowers sprouting from the tip of the brush' is not far off the mark. Professor Ng adheres to the principle of 'spend your days wisely'. Over the years, she has nurtured many young people, especially students of the University, in their artistic formation. She gives selflessly and toils with both mind and body. Mr Chairman, it is my great pleasure to present to you Professor Ng Yuet-lau for the Honorary Fellowship.