



CHINA
2000
FINE
ART

Liu Dan (劉丹 b. 1953)

Lingbi Rock

2024

Ink on paper

19.7 x 43.3 in. (50 x 110 cm)



The inscription is quoted from the foreword written by Huang Jing (黃經), a friend of the author, Lin Youlin (林有麟, 1578-1647), in the 《素園石譜》 (Suyuan Shipu, Suyuan Stone Catalogue)

Transcription:

《禹貢》「鉛松怪石」列在職方，當時第識土宜，表方物，不在瓌瑤翫好之數。自政和主人量土綉木，窮致園林，於是嚴身湖骨，搜剔彌工。然其所輦而致者，以千金之值、萬夫之力，而不足當艮嶽枝蓮之用。至若玲瓏半巒，蒼翠盈握，屏几可設，懷袖堪攜者，則又時遁跡金堂玉案之外，以供高癯介癖之目，流傳圖繪，色色超絕，遂使好事之家賤琅琚而輕拱璧，一時嗜尚薰結。苟不得其人，雖復質欺敦鼎，潤滴芙蓉，要為長物耳。今觀雪浪遺銘，伏流飛霰，方寸之膚而有奔激之勢。寶晉所藏三十六峰，壇池小有之天。石理奇秘，固逾鬼工，然非兩公妙手正氣，吞吐磅礴，有與石而俱存者，何劇千古乎？吾友仁甫氏耽古博識，詞藻雲湧，雖生長朱門而賦性整潔，霞心石面，時欲分枕漱之緣。近復繕工寫圖，上自南唐秘府之珍，下及窮遐怪竇，斷青寸紫，無不收彙。以至古賢吟諷，單字小篇，皆輯為譜。覽者神遊目奪，如從壺中見天地，如從款識辨商周法物。斯亦陁陀之正史，名蹟之別乘已。夫物必有尤好因而癩。即如冷拳孤鐵出之冰崖乳谷之中，有何色味可灸？然而巧偷豪奪，昔人所嘆。湖口九華，終歸烏有；而古人寄託之遠、結嗜之近，皆在吾一展中也。有斯譜也，唯能空諸所有，沒古人寶護秘惜所終不能有者。畢函襲而席斷，乃為得其神理而遺糟粕，誠斯道也。仁甫於文師坡仙，於畫師南宮父子，而未嘗屑屑形似。承用此意閱斯譜者，其亦可以和仁甫學古之神矣。

甲辰年春寫靈璧石金陵劉丹於北京。

鈴印：劉丹印



CHINA
2000
FINE
ART

Translation:

The article "Yu Gong" listed the lead, pine, and unusual rocks of Qingzhou in the national geographic book. It was only to record that different lands are suitable for different crops and different places have different specialties. It does not mention that these unusual rocks are rare treasures. Since Emperor Huizong of Song built mountains with earth and stone, constructed magnificent houses, and landscaped royal gardens, he has been more diligent in searching for large scholar rocks. Although a lot of money and manpower were spent on transporting stones, what was obtained was only a corner of this huge project. As for the small and exquisite unusual stones, which are shaped like mountains, and are green in color and can be held in hand, can be placed on the small table indoor, or can be carried and hidden in the sleeves, they are often not in the halls of the royal family and nobles. They are in the collection of scholar rock appreciators. These scholar rocks have been passed down and painted into pictures, each of which is outstanding and unique. For a time, rock admiration became a trend, and jade was ignored. However, if scholar stones are not obtained by people who know how to admire them, even if they are harder than thick cauldrons and as beautiful as hibiscus, they can only be regarded as redundant things. Now look at the poem carved by Su Dongpo on the "Snow Wave Stone" marble basin, and then look at the snow waves flying like snow on the Snow Wave Stone. It can be said that there is a surging and turbulent atmosphere within the tiny microcosm. Looking at the "Baojinzhai Yanshan" handscroll by Mi Fu, there are thirty-six peaks, altars, and pools in one stone, which seems to be the cave of the immortals on the Qiuchi Mountain. The texture and beauty of these rocks could hardly be fully illustrated in paintings, even by the most skilled artists. However, if it were not for the ingenious hands of Su and Mi, the splendor of these rocks could not be passed down for thousands of years.

My friend Lin Youlin is a history enthusiast. He is eloquent. Despite his wealthy background, he is modest and kind, and committed to being a high-minded individual. Recently, he hired painters to draw scholar rock diagrams for his stone catalogue, which includes scholar rocks from the collection of the last emperor of the Southern Tang to the scholar rocks produced in remote places, and to the various kinds of precious stones. Poems about rocks written by ancient sages, and selected articles on scholar rocks are all compiled into the catalogue. Captivated, the reader's spirit navigates the world within the book, as if seeing heaven and the earth through the small opening of a flask, or identifying artifacts of the Shang and Zhou dynasties from inscriptions. Though not conforming to the definition of an official history book, this catalogue represents a remarkable achievement.

Everything must have its own special qualities for people to develop a fondness towards it. What is unusual about a piece of scattered iron ore, from a valley under an ice cliff filled with stalactites, that makes it worth cherishing? However, once a stone is appraised as a treasure, someone may try to steal it, which is what the ancients whined about. Li Zhengchen of Hukou's scholar rock, "Huzhong jiuhan (nine peaks in a pot)," was eventually lost. After admiring the scholar rocks in the catalogue, when I close the book and stand up slowly, I learn and internalize the ancients' lofty ideals and their admiration for the things around them. With this catalogue, one does not need to own a single cherished scholar rock, and thus does not have the pain of losing what you once had, like the ancients. To finish reading the book is to bid farewell to vulgarity. This is the truth of getting to the essence by discarding the dross. Lin Youlin's writing was learned from Su Dongpo, and his painting was learned from Mi Fu and his



CHINA
2000
FINE
ART

son, but he never cared about the similarity in form. If the reader uses this point of view to read this catalogue, he can echo Lin Youlin's view of learning from the ancients.

In the spring of the year Jiachen (2024), Jinling* Liu Dan painted the Lingbi rock in Beijing.
Seal: Liu Dan yin

*Jinling, a former name of the city of Nanjing, in where Liu Dan was born.



Liu Dan, one of the most exceptional artists of his generation, was born in Nanjing, Jiangsu, in 1953. He studied the Confucian classics, poetry, painting, and calligraphy with his grandfather at an early age. After the Cultural Revolution, Liu studied traditional painting under Ya Ming (1924–2002) at the newly reopened Jiangsu Academy of Chinese Painting, Hangzhou, from 1978 to 1981. In 1981, the U.S. Embassy arranged for Liu and his American fiancée to leave China and settle in Hawaii where they married. There, he studied Western Art and developed



CHINA
2000
FINE
ART

his distinctive synthesis of photo-realism, classical Chinese painting, and metaphysics. Liu Dan moved to New York in 1992 where he met Ai Weiwei, Xu Bing and other prominent expatriate artists from China. Liu Dan avoided mass culture, conceptualism, and political activism, taking the road less traveled by choosing to research further a philosophical approach to his artistic process. In 2006, after fourteen years, he returned to China to begin mentoring a younger generation of artists interested in engaging with China's artistic heritage.

Beginning in 1980s, Liu became intrigued by rocks. To him, "rocks are the stem cells of nature, a symbolic microcosm of the material world." Traditionally Chinese scholars and artists utilized rocks as models of mountains in their urban gardens, in their landscape paintings and as a of poetic and philosophical metaphor. Through the meticulous study of a single rock, Liu attempts to see the macrocosm of the universe from a particular microcosmic vantage. He transforms a tangible object into an aesthetic meditation on the nature of form and creation. His objective is for his audience to use the rocks he paints as aesthetic keys to renew their imaginative engagement with the world.

Liu Dan's work was featured in *Art and China after 1989: Theater of the World* at the Guggenheim Museum (2017-2018) and in 2019, his work was part of the Centre Pompidou's ongoing exploration of non-Western modernities following upon its 2014 exhibition *Modernités Plurielles*. His work was also featured prominently in *Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China* at the Metropolitan Museum (2014) and in major group shows at the China Institute Gallery in New York (2006, 2014), the British Museum in London (2012), the Musée Guimét in Paris (2012), the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2011), the Princeton University Art Museum (2009), the Israel Museum in Jerusalem (2008), the Louisiana Museum of Art in Denmark (2007), the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University (2006), the 6th Shanghai Biennale (2006), the Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai (2004), the Art Institute of Chicago (1999), and the Yale University Art Gallery (1999).

Liu Dan has also had major solo museum exhibitions at the Minneapolis Institute of Art (2016), the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford University (2016), and the Suzhou Museum (2013), the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst in Berlin (2005), and the San Diego Museum of Art (1999), the Contemporary Museum in Honolulu (1993) and the Honolulu Academy of Arts (1989).