



CHINA
2000
FINE
ART

Reinventing Nature with a Sense of Perfection

An Ho renders flowers with brushwork suggestive of the Song dynasty. Details are drawn with near-miraculous refinement; a sense of order and clarity prevails in every composition. Her enchanting performance derives from minute and patient observation that lies behind the visual truthfulness of individual elements. She understands how flowers and grasses grow and bend, blossom and fade. The meticulous rendering of the purple bearded iris—from its ruffled petals to the fuzzy 'beards' on the lower falls—is mirrored in her treatment of the red slipper orchid, Chinese bellflowers, and yarrow. This precision extends to the surrounding creatures: a longhorn cottonwood borer beetle with bold black-and-white markings, a striped whiptail lizard with its signature greenish-blue tail, and a common whitetail dragonfly with its characteristic checkered wings. Associated with flowers are ideas and emotions, an intellectual content within the painting itself, an essence that is the very spirit of nature, An Ho's floral universe.



An Ho (1927-2017)
Iris and Butterfly
2004
Ink and color on silk
26 x 17.63 in. (66 x 44.7 cm)
[frame size: 34.5 x 26 on.]
Signed An Ho with
one seal: An Ho zhiyin



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An Ho (1927-2017) | Flowers and Dragonfly | 2004 | Ink and color on silk | 26 x 15.63 in. (66 x 39.6 cm)
[frame size: 34.5 x 24 in.] Signed An Ho with one seal: An Ho zhiyin

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An Ho (1927-2017) | Rock and Red Slipper Orchid | 2004 | Ink and color on silk | 31 x 17.5 in. (78.7 x 44.4 cm) [frame size: 39.5 x 26 in.] Signed An Ho with one seal: An Ho zhiyin

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An Ho (安和, 1927-2017), also known as Wen-ying, was born in Beijing, China. Her father was chief editor for several newspapers, and her mother, a painter of flowers. Both parents were senior members of Sun Yatsen's revolutionary movement. Her maternal grandfather served as Vice-Governor of Manchuria province from 1949 until his death in 1970. In 1944, in Nanjing, An Ho was introduced to Pu Ru (1896-1963), who took her as his student and protégée. She studied with him for seventeen years, initially in China and then in Taiwan, guided by his belief that in the practice of Chinese painting equal emphasis should be placed on the artist's mental attitude and the quality of the work of art. His teaching method cultivated personal character as the basis for advancing in the skillful use of brush and ink. An Ho began by reading the Chinese classics, practicing calligraphy, and imitating the most important paintings of the Tang (618-906 A.D.) and Song dynasties (960-1279 A.D.). She researched painting techniques that had been forgotten over the centuries, revitalized this art form that had always been considered a pinnacle of Chinese art, and became the sole living practitioner of these ancient artistic styles.

In 1952 An Ho's work began to be noticed by the Chinese art world. In 1954 one of her paintings received the Gold Medal in the Second Asian Games Art Exhibition held in the Philippines. In 1962 she was nominated to membership in the Society for Chinese Painting. Her works have been exhibited in China, Taiwan, Germany, Italy, France and the United States. In 1971 in Taiwan An Ho had her first one-person show, including over 100 paintings. In 1977 she won her first critical acclaim in the United States through one-person shows at St. John's University and the Art Institute of New York. In 1983 she was elected to the Chinese Cultural Association, and in 1994 she became the first woman artist to be given a one-person show in Taiwan's National Historical Museum. The show broke all of the Museum's attendance records. Her paintings are in the permanent collections of several museums and private collections in both the Far East and the West.

An Ho moved with her family from Taiwan to Atlanta, Georgia, in 1977. Later, she moved to Upstate New York. An Ho passed away in December 2017.

More detailed images and An Ho's Memories of Pu Ru follow on the next pages



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An Ho's Memories of Pu Ru

One morning my father took me to meet my teacher Pu Ru. When I first saw him, he was wearing a dark-color robe and was very polite. My father was very strict about following the right teacher: "If you pick the wrong teacher, it will ruin your life. The best teacher must be virtuous, well-educated and brilliantly skilled in art." He showed Pu Ru my terrible painting and I was very nervous about what he would say. After a few minutes, Pu Ru said to my father: "It's not bad; your daughter is very talented." He was very serious. Father and I were speechless and we knelt down in front of teacher to thank him. I would never forget that moment.

When teacher moved to Taipei, he asked my parents to let me stay with him in his little Japanese style log cabin to begin a strict training program. His teaching method was unique. "To learn to paint one needs to read poetry and literature, maintain

high personal standards, practice calligraphy, and study paintings." I spent many years copying masterpieces of the Tang dynasty, which helped progress the foundation for my technique. Later, I became interested in landscape painting and acquired a high respect for the skills developed by the Song masters. These works have deeply touched my heart and inspired feelings that linger in my mind.

Every morning, I swept the garden and prepared breakfast for Master Pu Ru. When his wife went out, I took lessons until she returned. At night teacher's friends would meet with him to chat, draw, and listen to music until midnight.

Most people think my teacher is very serious, but he has another side. He also has a sense of humor, and loves animals and sports. He likes to draw comics, tell jokes, give nicknames to visitors, and is interested in weird stones and toys. When my father was really sick, my teacher sold two paintings to help my family.

Pu Ru has a Confucian spirit; though born of wealth, he was always humble. In August of 1963, my family and I went to visit Pu Ru in Taipei. He had cancer. When he saw me, he smiled, opened his cabinet, and showed me his work. He taught me more even as he was dying. He held my hand before he died and tried to write something but didn't have enough time. I'll never forget that moment.

