

**Two Masters, Two Generations, and One Vision for Modern Chinese Painting:  
Paintings by Gao Jianfu (1879-1951) and Lui Shou-kwan (1919-1975) in The Chinese  
University of Hong Kong and the University of Oxford**

**6 highlights**

**01**

**Gao Jianfu**

**Courting Death**

1940

96x43 cm

Gao Jianfu painted this work in response to the full-scale Sino-Japanese war in 1940. Three moths are attracted to the oil lamp, the dish of which features the emblem of Guomindang: the white sun against a blue sky. It symbolizes the defeat of the Japanese army by the Chinese. In addition, Gao inscribed the lyrics of 'Yue Ou', a song by the Guangdong writer Zhao Ziyong to affirm his belief.

**02**

**Gao Jianfu**

**Autumn Memories**

1936

131x41cm

The painter captures reeds in the wind with his expressive brush, especially a shadowy reed field at a windy night with an overwhelming full moon. In the moonlight are two insects, one above the other, resting on a fluttering reed. The upper one, clutching at the stalk but looking to the left, is about to hop to elsewhere. In traditional Chinese paintings insects appear by and large in still life painting of potted plants, yet Gao Jianfu has broken new ground.

**03**

**Gao Jianfu**

**Crab-claw Narcissus**

1907

27x36cm

The subject of this painting, withering narcissus, is so rare to find in traditional Chinese paintings. The withered blossoms, the weakened curvy leaves, and the dried branches all together reveal the narcissus' beauty while withering. Gao Jianfu is keen on Buddhism, perhaps this is a reflection of the Buddhist's perception of the ever changing world. This is one of the paintings Gao did shortly after studying in Japan, and from this work one may tell that his painting style is about to change.

**04**

**Lui Shou-kwan**

**Dwellings Among Hills**

1961

37.5x89cm

By the time of Lui Shou-kwan artists no longer strive for realistic representations of what they see, but they opt for expressing their inner feelings. For instance, Lui uses a few very bold strokes in ink to represent the massive mountains in the foreground, while the fuzzy, vibrant tinted patches in the background denote the swirling fog. The cluster of houses at the center pulls together the visual elements of this painting. It should be viewed in a distance for its rustic simplicity, and closely for the subtle details in color.

**05**

**Lui Shou-kwan**

**Chan Painting**

1969

180x96.5cm

The peach red dot in a few strokes and the broad radiating strokes in dark and light ink are a lotus bud and lotus leaves. Black and white with a little red makes up the transcending composition, hence, it is titled 'Chan' by the artist.

**06**

**Lui Shou-kwan**

**Stonecutters' Island**

1961

29.8x85cm

Lui Shou-kwan is best known for his abstract painting, as a matter of fact he is capable of making realistic representations like this sketch of Stonecutters' Island. He has been looking at the island from the south, from a boat sailing on the Victoria Harbour, or afar from Conaught Road west of Hong Kong Island. He uses only lines and dots to depict layers of mountains sparsely covered with vegetation. At that time this British army station with a few lodges and power stations looked very mysterious. Stonecutters' Island became part of the mainland after land reclamation in the 1990s. This sketch of the island records the land history of Hong Kong.