

CHU-GRIFFIS ASIAN ART COLLECTION & READING ROOM



In 1985 Charles Chu, professor emeritus of Chinese, and Hughes Griffis, a New London attorney and patron of the arts, conceived a plan to build a collection of Asian art and calligraphy that could serve as a resource not only for Connecticut College but for the entire region. Professor Chu concentrated his collecting in the area of his expertise: traditional Chinese *literati* painting featuring landscapes and depictions of birds, flowers and animals.

Today the Chu-Griffis Collection consists of 196 paintings, 50 pieces of calligraphy and 200 Japanese woodblock prints. Prominent artists in the collection include P'u Ju, Ch'i Pai-shih, Fu Pao-shih and Chang Ta-ch'ien. The collection is housed in Special Collections and is exhibited in the library and on the second floor of Fanning Hall. The curator of the collection is Qiang Ning, who holds an appointment in the Department of Art History.

Opened in 2001, the Charles Chu Asian Art Reading Room was made possible through the generosity of John and Heidi Niblack, and Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro. The room was designed by Schwartz/Silver Architects and serves as a quiet reading space, lecture room, gallery for the Chu-Griffis Collection, and reference library for Asian art.

THREE THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ASIAN ART COLLECTIONS AND READING ROOM:

- Most of the paintings in the Chu-Griffis Collection were acquired by donation from alumni and friends and colleagues of Professor Charles Chu. The Chu-Griffis Asian Art fund is used for building the collection, providing for preservation, and bringing in guest artists.
- The Chu-Griffis Collection is featured in three to four exhibitions a year, including a student-curated exhibition every May. Professor Qiang Ning has sought to bring in exhibitions each year from outside the College, often featuring contemporary Chinese art styles rarely seen in exhibitions of Asian art.
- The Charles Chu Asian Art Reading Room is a popular venue for film screenings, lectures and symposia, and is typically used two to three times per week. The room can accommodate as many as 100 people for lectures.

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