

ESKENAZI

ESKENAZI SHOWS FIRST EXHIBITION DEDICATED TO OBJECTS FROM THE SCHOLAR'S STUDIO

Room for study: fifty scholars' objects
31 October to 29 November 2019, London



From 31 October to 29 November 2019, Eskenazi will show the first exhibition at the gallery devoted solely to objects from the Chinese scholar's studio. Presenting a wide selection of intimate objects from rocks, paintings and furniture to bronzes, brushes and brushpots, the exhibition celebrates the culture of the Chinese scholar who occupied a unique position under imperial rule at the top of country's hierarchical society for over 1,000 years. Highlights can be viewed [here](#).

From the Tang dynasty (618 to 907 AD), court officials were tested on their academic knowledge with a large emphasis on the arts. By the Song Dynasty (960 to 1279 AD), a golden period in China's history, the bureaucracy of government was entirely made up of highly educated scholar-officials who were selected through an exacting civil examination system and who looked back in reverence to the teachings of their ancient ancestors, particularly Confucius. The 'Four Accomplishments' became associated with scholar-gentlemen; painting, poetry, weiqi (a strategy game similar to chess), and playing the zither.

The objects considered necessary to the scholar's studio served either by being vehicles for contemplation or practical utensils, in many cases fulfilling both purposes. The studio would include at the very least furniture for the practice of painting and calligraphy, together with necessary accoutrements such as brushes, brush rests, brushpots, scroll weights, washers and inkstones. This equipment was made in a large variety of materials including porcelain, bronze, bamboo and stone, with forms ranging from the humble and simple to the precious and ornate. For the purpose of pure contemplation, nature was brought into the studio in the shape of rocks and roots.

A leading highlight of the exhibition is an exceptional 17th century rectangular table made in the late Ming Dynasty from *huanghuali*, a prized and precious rosewood. The Ming dynasty was the height of furniture production in China; artisans created pieces with elegant simplicity using ingenious and sophisticated designs for corner joints and without any need for nails or glue. This table was formerly owned by the renowned collector Sir Joseph Hotung and was more recently on loan to the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Cologne from 2003 to 2018.

In their quest to draw inspiration from the natural world, the Chinese scholars would often bring interesting rocks and roots into their studio. Scholars' rocks represented a microcosm of the universe and were used for contemplation and inspiration. A highlight of the exhibition is an example in Lingbi stone measuring 30.5cm in. height. Originating in modern day Anhui province, Lingbi stone has been noted in local gazetteers since 1117 and remains highly sought after to this day. A rare item to incorporate both rocks and roots is a large rootwood and stone tripod stand from the Qing dynasty (19th century); the body of the stand is formed from shaped roots which twist and turn in openwork form, having captured and incorporated a piece of rock.

Another notable highlight is a finely carved Ming dynasty lacquer brush and cover from the 16th or early 17th century. An inscription includes a poem by Lu Lun (739-799 AD), together with the name Huang Ruheng (1558 - 1626) who presumably owned the brush. A late Ming calligrapher and poet who was a native of Hangzhou, Huang Ruheng held an official post in Jiangxi. His style of calligraphy was said to have been inspired by Song masters, including that of Su Shi, and some of Huang's calligraphy was included in the Ming dynasty painting and calligraphy album, *Tangshi Huapu* (Paintings of Tang Dynasty Poems).

Chinese ink paintings in the exhibition include *Figure Resting Under Pine Trees*, painted on silk and dated to the Yuan or early Ming period (14th century). Depicting a gentleman dressed in loose robes, holding a staff and seated on a rock beneath three tall, gnarled pine trees, it has previously been attributed to 'the hand of Sheng Mao' (active c. 1310 - 1360) by the artist, collector and connoisseur Wang Jiqian (1907 - 2003). The exhibition will also include ink paintings by Li Huayi (b. 1948) and Zeng Xiaojun (b. 1954), both of whom reflect the scholarly tradition through contemporary ink painting.

The exhibition coincides with the 22nd edition of *Asian Art in London* (31 October to 9 November 2019), the annual event that unites London's Asian art dealers, major auction houses and societies in a series of selling exhibitions, auctions, receptions and seminars.

Eskenazi Ltd is widely recognised as one of the world's leading galleries for Chinese works of art and its exhibitions are always eagerly awaited for the rarity and beauty of the objects offered. The family business was founded in Milan in 1923 and the Eskenazi name has since become synonymous with expertise in this area. Giuseppe Eskenazi, who has been head of the business for over fifty years, has an unrivalled reputation for his knowledge and love of the subject and clients have included over eighty of the world's major museums as well as private collectors. Visit www.eskenazi.co.uk for further details.

Location: Eskenazi Ltd, 10 Clifford Street, London W1S 2LJ

Opening hours during exhibition:

Monday to Friday	09.30 - 17.30
Saturday, 2 November	10.00 - 18.00
Sunday, 3 November	10.00 - 18.00
Monday, 4 November	09.30 - 20.30
Saturday, 9 November	10.00 - 13.00
Saturday, 16 November	10.00 - 13.00
Saturday, 23 November	10.00 - 13.00

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