

50th Anniversary

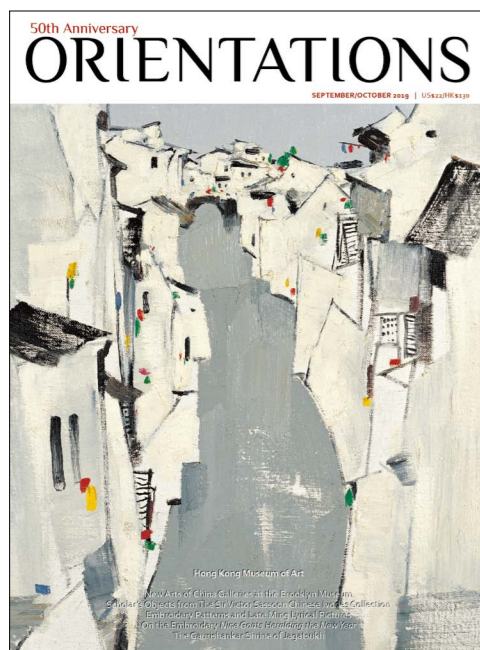
ORIENTATIONS

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2019 | US\$22/HK\$130



Hong Kong Museum of Art

New Arts of China Galleries at the Brooklyn Museum
Scholar's Objects from The Sir Victor Sassoon Chinese Ivories Collection
Embroidery Patterns and Late Ming Lyrical Pictures
On the Embroidery *Nine Goats Heralding the New Year*
The Gaurishankar Shrine of Jagatsukh



COVER: Waterway
By Wu Guanzhong (1919–2010), 1997
Oil on canvas, 73 x 60 cm
Collection of Hong Kong Museum of Art
Donated by Mr Wu Guanzhong
and his family (FA2002.0012)
(see p. 86)

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This issue celebrates the reopening of the Hong Kong Museum of Art, closed since 2015 for a major renovation and expansion project. The revamped museum will boast additional exhibition space and five extra galleries, with designated spaces for large-scale contemporary works. It will also make the most of its waterfront location, with a new glass facade and cladding that echoes the waves of the adjacent harbour. Home to over 17,000 artworks in four main categories—20th and 21st century Chinese painting and calligraphy, Chinese antiquities, China trade art, and modern and Hong Kong art—the new museum will place renewed emphasis on its Hong Kong art collection with a dedicated gallery. Eve Tam introduces the museum’s history and reopening while Maria Mok, Raymond Tang and Sunny Tang discuss some of the celebratory exhibitions and important recent donations.

Also unveiling new galleries this autumn is the Brooklyn Museum. Its new Arts of China galleries will showcase both historical works and new acquisitions of contemporary art, some works specially commissioned for the museum to dialogue with its ancient artefacts. Assistant curator Susan L. Beningson presents highlights. Meanwhile, project curator Wenyuan Xin shares some of the scholar’s objects from The Sir Victor Sassoon Chinese Ivories Collection, acquired by The British Museum last year.

We continue with two articles on Chinese embroidery. Lecturer Rachel Silberstein explains how the late Ming embroidery pattern book *A Collection of Snipped Rosy Clouds* expressed women’s artistic erudition, and assistant curator Luwen Hu looks at the artistic influences on the National Palace Museum’s Yuan dynasty gauze embroidery *Nine Goats Heralding the New Year*.

Finally, Gerald Kozicz introduces the Gaurishankar shrine of Jagatsukh in India’s Kullu valley, one of the oldest intact architectural structures in the area.

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Xu Bing in the Brooklyn Museum art storage looking at a Chinese Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) fish jar with curator Susan L. Beningson, September 2014 (see p. 95)

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From Grassland to Garden— On the Embroidery *Nine Goats Heralding the New Year*

Luwen Hu

This article examines the composition of the gauze embroidery *Nine Goats Heralding the New Year* (hereafter *Heralding the New Year*), now in the collection of the National Palace Museum in Taipei (Fig. 1). This textile had entered the collection of the Chinese imperial palace by at least the 18th century. On the basis of its spatial structure and style, it was most likely made during the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368).

The title of the embroidery derives from the Chinese idiom *Jiu yang kai tai* 九陽開泰, a lesser-known version of the common idiom *San yang kai tai* 三陽開泰. Briefly, *jiu* means 'nine' (while *san* means 'three') and *yang* signifies 'the sun', a homonym of the Chinese word for 'goat' (*yang*)—hence there are nine goats in the composition; *kai* conveys 'heralding' and the word for 'fortune' is pronounced *tai*—a crown prince was called *taizi* in ancient China, which is why the boy in the centre of *Heralding the New Year* is wearing an imperial dragon robe. According to Maggie Bickford, the textile was intended to be hung from the winter solstice for 81 days, to express the hope for an early spring (Bickford, 1999, pp. 142–44 and 2005, pp. 355–60). 'New Year' in the title refers to the lunar New Year, when the Spring Festival is held in China—a time associated with good fortune.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art is home to another interesting textile, named *Welcoming Spring* (Fig. 2), which is similar in style to *Heralding the New Year*. Bickford discovered that the images

in the two embroideries match, which led her to suggest that they were once the right and central panels of a larger work, respectively (Bickford, 2005, p. 360). This author has had the opportunity to view the two textiles in person. Both feature the same workmanship, with each motif first formed from encroaching satin stitch and then outlined in couching. Identical colours are used for almost every detail of the various motifs, such as the plum blossoms and camellia flowers, and the gauze of the ground has the same structure in both works. Based on these observations, we can conclude that the two embroideries were made by the same workshop and at the same time.

The rich colouration and dense compositions of the textiles are especially notable. These two distinctive features are quite different from most Chinese paintings, and the figures' attire also reveals the influence of Mongol culture, suggestive of intercultural communication. However, this does not imply that *Heralding the New Year* was imported from the west. The textile was undoubtedly made in China; but was it shaped by the Central Asian style or by another influence? And what is the relationship between *Heralding the New Year* and the Chinese artistic tradition?

The 'traditional painting mode' is a principal topic in the study of Chinese painting. In the past, most Chinese painters tended to use a combination of traditional visual images to create the setting of



Fig. 1 *Nine Goats Heralding the New Year*
China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368)
Silk embroidery on silk gauze, 217.1 x 64.1 cm
National Palace Museum, Taipei
(GuSih00024)



Fig. 2 *Welcoming Spring*
China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368)
Silk embroidery on silk gauze, 213.4 x 63.5 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1981 (1981.410)

a painting. In his classic work *Ten Thousand Things*, Lothar Ledderose used the circa 13th century painting set *The Ten Kings of Hell* to illustrate how the Ningbo ateliers created pictures (Ledderose, 2000). Artists did not produce artworks merely from their imagination; rather, they referenced the 'drafts' and 'draft sketches' of painting masters and ateliers (Cahill, 1994, pp. 99–116). The most effective method of addressing their audience was, unarguably, to use visual language derived from the painting tradition. As such, 'representation' was never the ultimate concern, and they found the most meaningful way to complete an image was to combine different motifs. Hence, in contemplating the origins of *Heralding the New Year*, this author will discuss the schemata used in designing the textile based on images from traditional Chinese painting, in order to understand the compositional elements of the work.

Heralding the New Year depicts three boys under a tree in a garden. Since this design bears a resemblance to paintings from the 'children playing' (*yingxi* 嬰戲) tradition in Chinese art, we will begin by reviewing the historical development of this motif, and will subsequently make a comparative analysis.

Children have been depicted in paintings in China since the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE). In extant artworks from the period, except in case of narrative need in didactic theme pictures, children are commonly represented in 'family scenes' (*jiating tu* 家庭圖). For example, a child is included in a depiction of the legend of Fuxi and Nüwa, considered the primogenitors of humankind, in the upper right corner of a wall in the Wu Family Shrines (in Shandong province) (Fig. 3); the child in the depiction represents their descendants, and hence they constitute the primordial 'family'. One of the stone carvings found at Hejiagou in Suide county, Shaanxi province, also describes the daily life of a mother and son (Li, Kang and Zhao, 1995, p. 179). The ancient concept of 'family' is further developed in *The Admonitions Scroll*, which is traditionally attributed to Gu Kaizhi (344–405) (Fig. 4). Although this work may in fact be a later copy, this author believes the copyists would have referred to an earlier work, and it can therefore be regarded as an early example. In the grouping on the scroll, apart from the children in the background, who are studying, there are a child in the arms of a concubine and another two at the centre of the triangular composition. One of the boys in the centre is frowning because he dislikes having

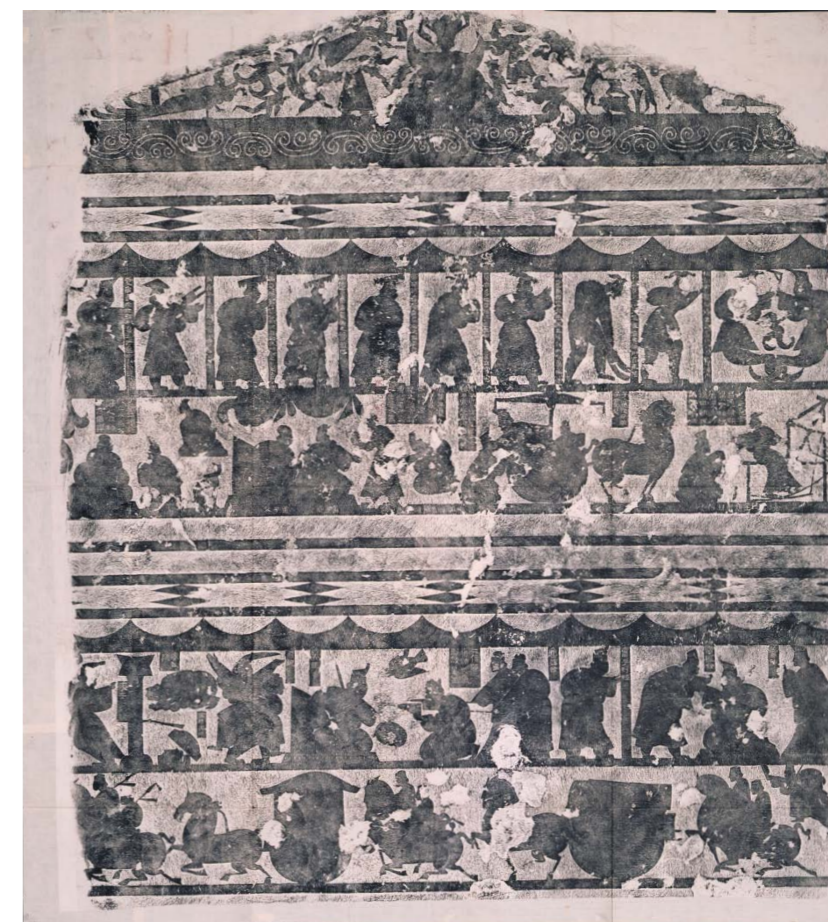


Fig. 3 West wall of Stone Chamber 3, Wu Family Shrines, Shandong province, with Fuxi (right) and Nüwa (left) in the upper register on the right China, Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), 25–220 Stone rubbing, ink on paper, 157.4 x 138.4 cm
Princeton University Art Museum, Far Eastern Seminar Collection (2002-307.36)
(Photograph: Bruce M. White © 2019)
(© 2019 Princeton University Art Museum/Art Resource NY/Scala, Florence © Photo SCALA, Florence)

Fig. 4 *Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies (The Admonitions Scroll)* (detail)
Traditionally attributed to Gu Kaizhi (344–405), China, 5th–7th century
Handscroll, ink and slight colour on silk, 24.37 x 343.75 cm
The British Museum (1903,0408,0.1)
(Image © The Trustees of The British Museum)





Fig. 5 *In the Palace* (detail)
After a work attributed to Zhou Wenju (act. 942–61),
China, Song dynasty (960–1279), before 1140
Handscroll, ink and slight colour on silk, 28.5 x 168.6 cm
The Cleveland Museum of Art
John L. Severance Fund (1976.1)

his hair combed by his mother. The painter has ingeniously captured the pose and facial expression of this central boy, suggesting that he is there not only to present the motif of 'family', but also to serve as the scroll's focus. The boys' position in the compositional structure indicates that the painter sought to give prominence to them over the other family members. In this period, however, children featured only as a component of 'family scenes', and were not depicted independently.

In the Tang dynasty (618–907), there was also an abundance of visual materials containing images

related to children. While children and women (who did not necessarily represent the children's mother—they could also be concubines or maidservants) appeared together in earlier family paintings, during the Tang these two motifs separated from the family theme and became a new type of painting, called the 'son-woman painting' (*zi nü hua* 子女畫). Compared to the early family scenes, the 'son-woman painting' placed greater emphasis on depicting the children's upbringing. One example of this type is *In the Palace*, which, again a copy of an earlier work, primarily depicts an idealized version of ladies in a palace (Fig. 5). The section illustrated here shows women teaching a child to walk, stressing the family's role in child-rearing, which is consistent with the scene from *The Admonitions Scroll*. Wen Fong also emphasized this aspect in his discussion of the 12th–13th century work *Palace Ladies Bathing Children*, presently in the Freer Gallery of Art (Fong, 1992, pp. 21–22).

The actual theme of 'children playing' developed only in the Song dynasty (960–1279). Although the 'family scene' and 'son-woman painting' still existed in this period, in paintings of 'children playing', as well as of the 'knick-knack pedlar' (*huo lang* 貨郎) and 'herding' (*fang mu* 放牧), children now became the protagonists. The most famous master of 'children playing' paintings in this period was Su Hanchen (act. mid-12th century). Yun-ru Chen analysed two works typical of his oeuvre, *Children Playing in an Autumnal Garden* (Fig. 6) and *Children at Play in Winter* (Fig. 7), and concluded that these two masterpieces were constructed from the themes 'figures under a tree' (*shuxia renwu* 樹下人物) and 'garden scene' (*tingyuan jing* 庭園景) (Chen, 2011). In addition to these two pictorial modes, 'playing' is of course another feature of 'children playing' paintings. In *Children Playing in an Autumnal Garden*, a brother and sister are playing the game 'milling the jujube' (*tui zao mo* 推棗磨), and in *Children at Play in Winter*, two children are playing with a kitten. Though the categories of games are different, they are both 'children playing' paintings because they feature children at play.

Now that we understand how 'children playing' paintings are constructed, the next step is to analyse the relationship between *Heralding the New Year* and the 'children playing' tradition. The 'children playing' theme includes several motifs. First, it always represents a scene in a (traditional courtyard) garden, perhaps because of its origin—the scenes in



Fig. 6 *Children Playing in an Autumnal Garden*
By Su Hanchen (act. mid-12th century),
China, Song dynasty (960–1279)
Hanging scroll, ink and colour on silk, 316 x 111 cm
National Palace Museum, Taipei (Guhua838)



Fig. 7 *Children at Play in Winter*
By Su Hanchen (act. mid-12th century),
China, Song dynasty (960–1279)
Ink and colour on silk, 328.6 x 109 cm
National Palace Museum, Taipei (Guhua190)



Fig. 8 *Facsimile of Wei Yan's Painting of Herding*
By Li Gonglin (1049–1106), China, Northern Song dynasty (960–1127)
Handscroll, ink and colour on silk, 46.2 x 429.8 cm
Palace Museum, Beijing (Xin87176)
(Photograph: Sun Zhiyuan)
(Image provided by the Palace Museum)

family images and 'son-woman paintings' also took place 'indoors'. In *Heralding the New Year* a rockery is depicted, which suggests a garden. Secondly, *Heralding the New Year* features an immense pine tree, which shows an obvious connection to the 'figures under a tree' tradition, another intrinsic element of 'children playing' paintings. Since *Heralding the New Year* portrays three boys under a tree in a garden, it is definitely close to the tradition of the 'children playing' painting. But an important difference between *Heralding the New Year* and a 'children playing' painting is that the key point—playing—is missing, which is why it is so hard to classify this textile. The central boy of *Heralding the New Year* is riding a goat, whereas in a 'children playing' painting, the child would be riding a bamboo horse or even a *qilin* (a hooved animal with a single horn in Chinese mythology)—but never a goat. It follows that the goat and the child riding it must come from another pictorial mode.

Motifs such as streams and goats, which feature in *Heralding the New Year*, do not exist in 'children playing' paintings. Also, its ground is divided into several parts, each containing figures—a spatial structure that is entirely different from that of a 'children playing' painting. These features provide another signpost for tracking the sources of *Heralding the New Year*: it is clearly related to the 'riding a goat' (*qi yang* 騎羊) theme, which in turn comes from the tradition of paintings of 'herding'.

'Herder paintings' can be subdivided into several types, such as 'goat-herding' (*mu yang* 牧羊), 'horse-

herding' (*mu ma* 牧馬) and 'cattle-herding' (*mu niu* 牧牛). There are subtle differences between each type in terms of symbolic meaning, but they all belong to the same pictorial mode.

Today, the most important 'horse-herder painting' is widely held to be *Facsimile of Wei Yan's Painting of Herding*, by Li Gonglin (1049–1106) (Fig. 8). In this great work a hill is covered by hundreds of horses, with a lake in the background. Another outstanding piece classified as a 'herder painting' is *Herding in Rivers and Mountains* (Fig. 9). Here, a herd of cows is grazing in a pasture. The scene is divided by water into three parts (foreground, middle ground and background), from right to left. The overall perspective quite closely resembles *Facsimile of Wei Yan's Painting of Herding*, as both depict spacious landscapes from an elevated perspective. A noteworthy point is that the background in herder paintings is often formed of hills and lakes.

A significant hanging scroll in this category is *Herding in the Autumn Forest* (Fig. 10). This work is traditionally attributed to Liu Songnian (1174–1224), although it may in fact be from the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). Nevertheless, the scroll contains clues to the pictorial mode of goat-herder paintings. Here, the ground is divided into two. In the foreground are four sheep, while in the background, two shepherd boys are seated under some trees, playing with a cricket. The composition of *Herding in the Autumn Forest* is quite similar to that of *Heralding the New Year*. A comparable depiction can also be seen in *Wintry Trees and Sheep* (Fig. 11). Sheep or goats,

shepherds, hills, streams, lakes and grass are all components of 'herder paintings'.

Auspicious imagery always includes some traditional symbols or metaphors of language or custom. The primary concern of the artist who created the *Heralding the New Year* textile appears to have been how to place a 'crown prince' and 'goats' together in one scene. Clearly, it would have been insufficient merely to depict the boy herding.

If we take a closer look at the figures and note their gorgeous clothing, we are unlikely to conclude that they are shepherd boys. However, the central boy is riding a goat, giving the impression that he is a shepherd boy herding rather than a patrician boy enjoying himself in a garden. Nevertheless, because a crown prince was a child of the imperial family, the artist was obliged to depict him in the context of the 'children playing' tradition and not as an ordinary shepherd boy on the grassland, with the inclusion



Fig. 9 *Herding in Rivers and Mountains*
By Qi Xu (act. 11th century), China, Northern Song dynasty (960–1127)
Handscroll, ink and colour on silk, 47.3 x 115.6 cm
Palace Museum, Beijing (Xin176133)
(Photograph: Sun Zhiyuan)
(Image provided by the Palace Museum)



Fig. 10 *Herding in the Autumn Forest*
Traditionally attributed to Liu Songnian (1174–1224),
China, Ming dynasty (1368–1644), 15th century
Hanging scroll, ink and colour on silk, 96.3 x 46.6 cm
National Palace Museum, Taipei (Guhua1832)

of elements such as 'figures under a tree' and camellia flowers and rockery from the 'garden scene' underlining the main protagonist's status.

If the 'figures under a tree' and 'garden scene' motifs are featured in association with the 'crown prince', originating in the pictorial mode of 'children playing', then the stream and hills come from the 'herder painting' tradition, which inevitably features goats. While most researchers do not regard *Heralding the New Year* as a 'herder painting', in the upper right section of *Welcoming Spring* is a feature that clearly comes from this tradition: a boy using a staff while attending his goats (see Fig. 2). The connection between *Heralding the New Year* and the herder painting tradition is thus reinforced by the boy's action.

The painter could not merely place the goats in a garden—goats are always associated with streams, which are unrelated to *Jiu yang kai tai*. The stream is a concept that comes from the art historical tradition. When the designer of *Heralding the New Year* added goats to the picture, he intuitively incorporated the pictorial mode of a herder painting. This could be the result of Chinese painters' training at the time, which always involved copying masterpieces or draft sketches. According to the herder painting tradition, when children and goats were to appear in a painting, streams and hills must be depicted alongside them.

In conclusion, the designer of *Heralding the New Year* combined the pictorial modes of the 'children playing' and 'herder painting' traditions, which is why *Heralding the New Year* has such a complex spatial structure. The rockery, pine tree, bamboo, plum blossoms and camellia flowers are all indications that the work depicts a scene within a garden. However, the ground is divided into separate tracts and is traversed by streams. This structure conveys the sense that the scene is taking place in a grassy pasture rather than in a garden.

On the other hand, the spatial structure of *Heralding the New Year* is similar to Ilkhanid painting, a 13th–14th century Persian miniature tradition from Central Asia, which features 'converging or overlapping diagonal planes within the landscape' (Komaroff, 2002, p. 183). In addition, most Ilkhanid paintings are polychrome. Thus, we can argue that the two related textiles not only combine two distinct Chinese painting modes but integrate two distinct cultural styles. However, the precise mechanism whereby the Ilkhanid style influenced Chinese textiles is beyond the immediate scope of this paper.

To sum up, the scene in *Heralding the New Year* indicates the time of year and demonstrates how the designer blended different traditions to present the abstract concept of the auspicious event in *Jiu yang kai tai*. Being a combination of elements, the embroidered textile differs in appearance from classical Chinese paintings; nonetheless, *Heralding the New Year* shows a considerable degree of understanding of the visual schemas of traditional Chinese painting, and works effectively to embody the image of *Jiu yang kai tai*.

Luwen Hu is assistant curator in the Department of Antiquities at the National Palace Museum. She earned her MA in art history from National Taiwan University. This article is based on her Master's thesis, 'Picture-Idea of Auspicious Images—The Establishment and Transformation of Kai Tai Pictures' (National Taiwan University, 2015), the research for which was presented at a workshop at SOAS, London, in 2014. The author would like to thank Shih Shou-chien, Shih Ching-fei and Lu Hui-wen for their guidance and support in the preparation of this article.

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Fig. 11 *Wintry Trees and Sheep*
Artist unknown, China, Yuan dynasty
(1271–1368), mid-14th century
Hanging scroll, ink on silk, 112 x 48.3 cm
Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler
Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC
Gift of Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer (F1970.33)