

The New York Times

Published May 12, 1996

CHU, Charles Chi-Jung

Show of Three Perfections: Poetry, Painting and Calligraphy

By Carolyn Battista

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Charles Chu eyed the painting "The Wu Gorge," by Lu Yi-fei. "I like the flow of the brush, because it's so free," he said. He also admired a landscape by Yu Chien-hua, with its inscription beginning, "A westerly breeze rises in the mountains . . ."

Born in Hopeh, China, in 1918, Mr. Chu has long had American citizenship, but for even longer he's loved the art that he calls "an everlasting part of Chinese culture." At the New London Art Society and Gallery, he smiled at painting after painting. "When I see these, I feel so peaceful," he said.

Twenty-nine Chinese paintings, dating from the mid-16th century, but most of them contemporary, are at the gallery. Nearly all are in the literati style, with beautifully worded, beautifully wrought inscriptions. Such work, Mr. Chu said, combines "poetry, painting and calligraphy -- what we call 'the three perfections.' "

The paintings are from the Chu-Griffis Art Collection, 130 Asian works that belong to Connecticut College. Mr. Chu, an artist himself, is the curator of the collection. He's also professor emeritus of Chinese at the college, where he is known as someone who regularly invited people -- even strangers -- to lunch and gave money to needy students.