

Annex A: *Fan Chang Tien: Rhythm of the Southern Brush* Sections and Key Artworks

Moving South (艺履南渡)

The exhibition opens with **Moving South**, a prelude that traces the artistic lineage and training that shaped Fan's practice. Fan trained in Shanghai in the 1920s under Zhu Wenyun and Wang Geyi, both disciples of Wu Changshuo, a leading figure of the Shanghai School. From Zhu, he developed a sharply articulated and lyrical approach to brushwork, while Wang's quick and decisive strokes further shaped his command of brush and ink.



Fan Chang Tien. *Bamboo*. c. 1953. Chinese ink and colour on paper, 133 × 33.5 cm. Private collection.



Fan Chang Tien. *Scholar Admiring the Landscape*. 1954. Chinese ink and colour on paper, 143 × 34 cm. Private collection.

As Fan moved south, he carried these artistic foundations with him, continuing to paint and teach while developing his practice through new encounters. He spent nearly nine years in Bangkok, a pivotal period in his artistic development beyond China. *Bamboo* (c. 1953) offers a direct connection to this period, bearing an inscription by renowned Chinese artist Zhang Daqian that praised Fan's talent: "With nature's own creative power truly in his hand...". The work was also shown at Fan's 1956 exhibition in Bangkok, offering a glimpse of the recognition he had gained by this stage of his career. *Scholar Admiring the Landscape* (1954) further reflects his continued engagement with the landscape tradition during his time in Bangkok. Together, these works reveal how Fan built on his training and gained recognition beyond China, setting the stage for his later contribution to Singapore's ink art scene.

Nurturing the Self (修己如竹)

The exhibition's next section delves into Fan's commitment to the scholar-artist ideal of self-cultivation through art. For Fan, being a scholar-artist meant cultivating moral character alongside learning, artistic skill, and intellectual depth, evident in both his life and practice. This philosophy is expressed through traditional literati subjects such as bamboo, plum blossoms, orchids, and chrysanthemums, known as the 'Four Gentlemen' (四君子), which are associated with qualities of righteousness, integrity, resilience, purity, and humility.



Fan Chang Tien. *Four Hanging Scrolls of Ink Bamboo*. 1979. Chinese ink on paper, 138 × 34 cm each. Collection of Yang Jia Yuan.



Fan Chang Tien. *Young Bamboo and Rock*. 1973. Chinese ink on paper, 135.4 × 34 cm. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Among them, bamboo was a particularly important subject for Fan and a means through which he expressed the values he sought to uphold. In *Four Hanging Scrolls of Ink Bamboo* (1979), Fan's inscription expresses his preference for painting bamboo over pursuing wealth or status, while also referring to his place in the "southern land". The work connects his scholar-artist identity and values with the new cultural environment in which he lived and worked. *Young Bamboo and Rock* (1973) brings together two traditional literati subjects, with the rock symbolising strength and bamboo embodying unwavering moral principle. Together, the works show how painting became a means for Fan to both express and cultivate the principles that guided his art and life.



Fan Chang Tien. *Red Bamboo with Banana Leaf*. 1982. Chinese ink and colour on paper, 70 × 50 cm. Private collection.

While deeply grounded in tradition, Fan also experimented with established subjects in response to the environment around him. *Red Bamboo with Banana Leaf* (1982) offers a visually distinctive counterpoint to his more traditional ink works. His use of red and inclusion of the tropical plantain demonstrate Fan's experimentation with traditional subject matter and engagement with his local environment.

Rejoicing in the Everyday (即景生趣)



Fan Chang Tien. *Coconut Palm and Mynahs*. 1973. Chinese ink and colour on paper, 121 × 60.5 cm. Gift of Chan Kok Hua, from Qiu Zhai's Collection. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.



Fan Chang Tien. *Kampong Scene with Cyclist*. 1964. Chinese ink and colour on paper, 140 × 32 cm. Collection of Yeo Eng Koon. Promised gift.

This section explores how Fan found vitality and inspiration through his observations of nature and everyday life in Singapore. In *Coconut Palm and Mynahs* (1973), familiar local flora and fauna reflect his growing rootedness in Singapore and how his established ink practice expanded to encompass the sights of his new home. Singapore's everyday landscape is also featured in *Kampong Scene with Cyclist* (1964), one of only two known works by Fan depicting local landscapes and scenery. Together with an inscription referencing the south, the work offers a glimpse of how his immediate surroundings became part of his artistic world.



Fan Chang Tien. *Untitled (Geese)*. 1964. Chinese ink and colour on paper, 140 × 35 cm. Gift of Paul Yao Swee Yui. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Fan's observations of nature also became a means of reflecting on human experience. In *Untitled (Geese)* (1964), birds appear amid reeds and coconut palms, their overlapping forms creating a more abstracted composition that reveals Fan's brief experimentation with abstraction during this period. Through the pairing of image and poetry, Fan drew parallels between animal behaviour and human experience, using his observations of the natural world to explore everyday life and emotion.

Wandering through Nature (心游丘壑)



Fan Chang Tien. *Watching the Waterfall*. 1956. Chinese ink and colour on paper, 143 × 69 cm. Private collection.



Fan Chang Tien. *Four Hanging Scrolls of Landscape*. 1978. Chinese ink on paper, 137 × 35 cm. Collection of Yang Jia Yuan.

Fan's *shanshui* (landscape) paintings allowed him to journey imaginatively beyond his immediate time and place, finding contemplation and inspiration in the natural world. *Watching the Waterfall* (1956), an early work associated with Fan's time in Bangkok, connects his physical journey southwards with the imaginative possibilities of *shanshui*. Its inscription captures his poetic response to the natural world, describing a cascading waterfall that “roars in the mountain forests regardless of season”. *Four Hanging Scrolls of Landscape* (1978), one of Fan's rare sets of hanging landscape scrolls, similarly evokes the vastness of the natural world as a space for contemplation and retreat.



Fan Chang Tien. *The Gathering of Poets*. 1971. Chinese ink and colour on paper, 59.6 × 119.8 cm. Private collection.

Fan also reinterpreted traditional literati conventions through the world around him. In *The Gathering of Poets* (1971), the traditional motif of a literati gathering is reimagined with contemporary details, including figures drinking coffee and reading newspapers. These details bring ideas of learning, intellectual exchange, and community into a modern setting, showing how Fan brought tradition into dialogue with contemporary life.

Tending the Garden (艺圃耕耘)

The exhibition's final section explores Fan's lifelong commitment to education and mentorship, alongside his wider philanthropic and community contributions. Like a "gardener", Fan nurtured a generation of artists, grounding them in traditional Chinese ink painting while encouraging them to develop their own artistic voices. This section brings together works by some of his students, including Ling Cher Eng, Low Eng, Nai Swee Leng, Tan Oe Pang, Lim Kay Hiong, Lee Soo Chee, Chen KeZhan, and Chua Ek Kay.



Nai Swee Leng. *Durians and Sparrows*. 2009. Chinese ink and colour on paper, 135.2 × 72 cm. Collection of the artist.



Tan Oe Pang. *Fish and Lotus*. 2000. Chinese ink and colour on paper, 155.2 × 58.5 cm. Gift of George Quek Meng Tong. Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

Among them are 2025 Cultural Medallion recipient Nai Swee Leng and Tan Oe Pang, who studied under Fan at Whampoa Secondary School and later at his private Su Lan Studio. Nai's *Durians and Sparrows* (2009) and Tan's *Fish and Lotus* (2000) show how their shared foundations in traditional Chinese ink painting developed in different directions, with Nai continuing in the tradition and Tan taking a more modernist approach. Together, their works illustrate how Fan's

teachings were carried forward and reinterpreted by his students, contributing to the development of ink art in Singapore. The section also features video interviews with both artists, offering personal insights into their experiences as Fan's students and his legacy as an educator.



Fan Chang Tien. *Bird under the Banana Leaf*. 1987. Chinese ink on paper, 34 × 45 cm. Private collection.

The exhibition then concludes with *Bird under the Banana Leaf* (1987), one of Fan's final works, made while he was in hospital just days before his passing. Its depiction of a familiar local subject with loose brush strokes, accompanied by an inscription reflecting his circumstances, speaks to Fan's steadfast dedication to his artistic practice. A detailed timeline tracing his journey down southward brings the exhibition to a close, situating his life and practice within the broader journey explored throughout the exhibition.