

Ong Bun Han

Ong Bun Han, 81 years old, was born to a poor family in Zhejiang, a coastal province of China. When his parents died when he was five years old, he was brought to Fujian province to live with another family. In the early 1930s, he migrated to the Philippines and worked in his uncle's grocery while studying on the side. After school, he worked as an education director at the San Juan Chinese Elementary School and, by 1955, started to engage in business by founding the Extraco Taxi Company and further setting up the Far Ocean shipping company in 1978.



After his retirement in 1990, he turned to teaching t'ai chi, writing a column in a Chinese newspaper, and learning the calligraphy of Wang Xi Zhi, a great calligrapher of the Jin Dynasty.

The artist has led an active community life, contributing much in the field of arts, culture, and sports. In sports, he was a head of the development section for the capital region of the Philippine National Ping-pong Association, the international liaison officer of the Philippine National Bicycle Association, and is also the honorary chairman emeritus of the Oriental Sports Club. He has also contributed to culture and sports exchanges between the Philippines and China. Ong was president of the Overseas Chinese Sports Association of Quanzhou, Fujian

province and the honorary vice chairman of the Wushu Association of Zhejiang province.

Ong's calligraphy is highly regarded and his collections have been shown in exhibitions in countries such as China, Japan, and South Korea.

Artistic Characters and Rules of Calligraphy

- Every Chinese character is built up in its own square with a variety of structure and composition.
- There are drawings of only three basic forms: the circle, the triangle, and the square.
- For each character there is a definite number of strokes and appointed position in relation to the whole. No stroke may be added or deleted for a decorative effect.
- Strict regularity is not required.
- The pattern should have a living movement.



Mo Yuan
Destiny with Calligraphy

"Mo" means "ink," while "Yuan" means "destiny." As a whole, "Mo Yuan" means "destiny with calligraphy," showing artists' enthusiasm for calligraphy.

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Flow of the Gentle Ink

Storytelling in
calligraphy by

Ong Bun Han

王文漢翰墨飄香書法展

8 March – 10 May 2008

Chinese Calligraphy

Chinese calligraphy is a special art with a long history. The earliest evidence of the Chinese script was found on the so-called oracle bones—tortoise shells or shoulder blades of animals. The characters were pictographic and represent concepts.



Oracle bone shard

Questions regarding the weather, the yield of crops, or the outcome of battles were carved on these oracles bones. These were then thrown into the fire, and the oracle was interpreted according to the cracks that were formed by the heat.

Oracles evolved into ancient seals made of metal, jade, stone, ceramics, bone, and ivory where calligraphic forms were carved in relief. These seals gave official validation of authority to show power and stature, and later literati seals reflected symbols of the intellectuals of the period.



Ming dynasty seal

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Vernacular literature in China took shape as an art form during the Yuan Dynasty (1279 – 1368), although the oldest works date from the Zhou Dynasty (circa 11th century – 256 B.C.). The most famous of these writings were the thoughts of Confucius (551 – 479) collected by his disciples into a book called *Lunyu* (Analects). Many artist-poets in the succeeding dynasties of China would produce poems in the lyrical and epic style, writing them on paper and silk. To be able to read and write poetry was part of the elementary education of the higher social classes.



Confucius

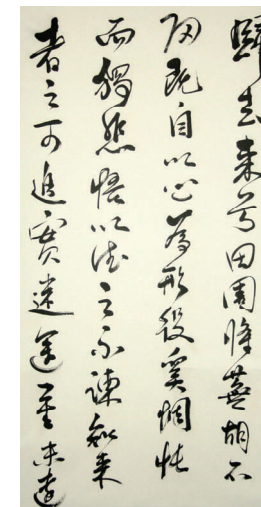
Calligraphy is now highly regarded as an art form. It is considered to be the most ancient and condensed of abstract arts. Scholars praise calligraphy as having the beauty of image in painting, the beauty of dynamism in dance, and the beauty of rhythm in music.

It uses Chinese characters to communicate the unique and individual spiritual world of the artist. Through the medium of form, way of handling the brush, presentation, and style, calligraphy as a work of art conveys the moral integrity, character, emotions, aesthetic feelings, and culture of the artist.

The Poet of the Fields

The collection of works exhibited by Ong Bun Han pays homage to Tao Yuan Ming (365 – 427), a great poet during the Eastern Jin Dynasty, a pre-Tang dynasty. Tao was known as the “Poet in the Fields.” Dissatisfied by the politics of his time, he resigned and returned to his home village and lived there for the next 23 years until his death.

All of the parts are from *Returning Home*, one of the most famous poems of Tao written upon his retirement. In this piece of writing, he notes his thoughts while traveling home to the pleasures of living in the village while further expressing that he had no desire



to collude with dirty politicians. The poet wished to maintain his independent personality and dignity. The poem also reflects the philosophy of Taoism, submitting to the will of heaven and being content with one's lot.