

CHINA'S 8 BROKENS

PUZZLES OF THE TREASURED PAST



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立致通顯
介第而
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光緒
慶春本昌跪

司馬忠先生

恒和銀號



Museum of Fine Arts Boston



2017.27 *Untitled*, Chinese, 1911. Ink and color on paper. 68.6 x 132.1 cm. Anonymous gift in memory of William W. Mellins.

China's 8 Brokenens: Puzzles of a Treasured Past

Curator Nancy Berliner
Wu Tung Curator of Chinese Art
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Number of objects Approximately 40

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China's 8 Broken: Puzzles of a Treasured Past



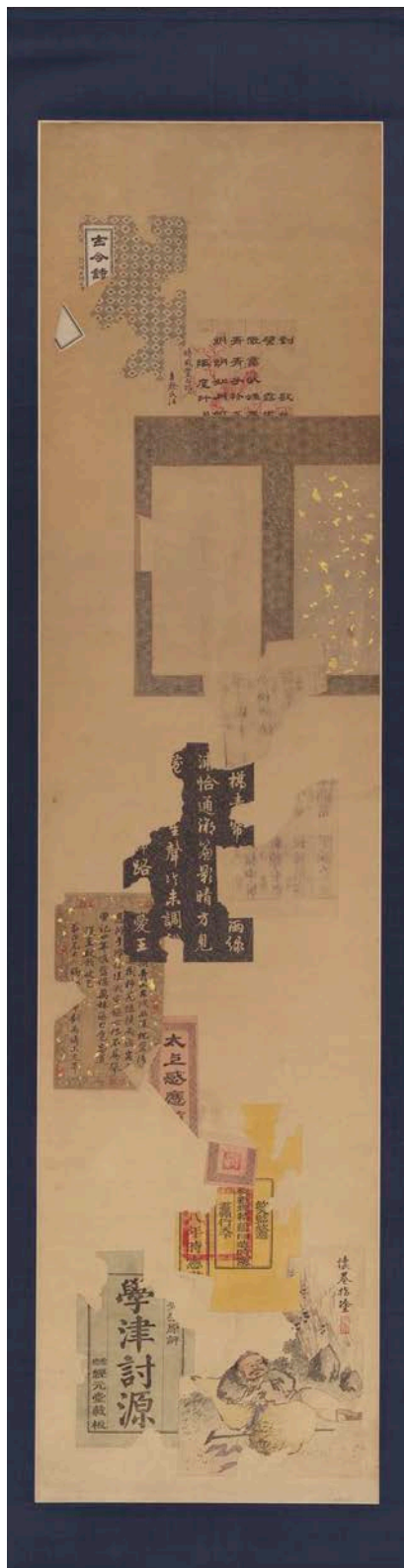
2014.1967 Yuan Runhe, *De Que Tu (Obtaining Flaws)*, 1926. Ink and color on paper; mounted fan painting. 30.5 x 56 cm. Anonymous gift in memory of William W. Mellins.

This is the first exhibition dedicated to *bapo* (or “eight broken”) painting, an innovative artistic genre that emerged in China during the mid-19th century. Eight is a lucky number in Chinese culture, and “broken” refers to the damaged cultural ephemera hyper-realistically depicted in the paintings—worm-eaten calligraphies, partial book pages, burned paintings, remnants of rubbings and torn-open letters. They are usually arranged in a haphazard, collage-like composition, created with Chinese ink and colors on paper or silk. When *bapo* emerged, this unexpected imagery was radically distinct from classical Chinese landscape and figure painting, and became popular among an aspiring urban middle class delighted by its visual trickery and sophistication.

After 1949, the art form was largely forgotten, but has recently been rediscovered by contemporary artists and collectors. The rediscovery of *bapo* has prompted curators to now decipher the puzzle of the meaning of the images. This exhibition presents some of the finest examples of *bapo* paintings dating back to the 19th century, as well as a contemporary work by artist Geng Xuezi. They are interspersed with three-dimensional decorative and functional objects that display *bapo* imagery. A publication will accompany the exhibition. (November 2018)

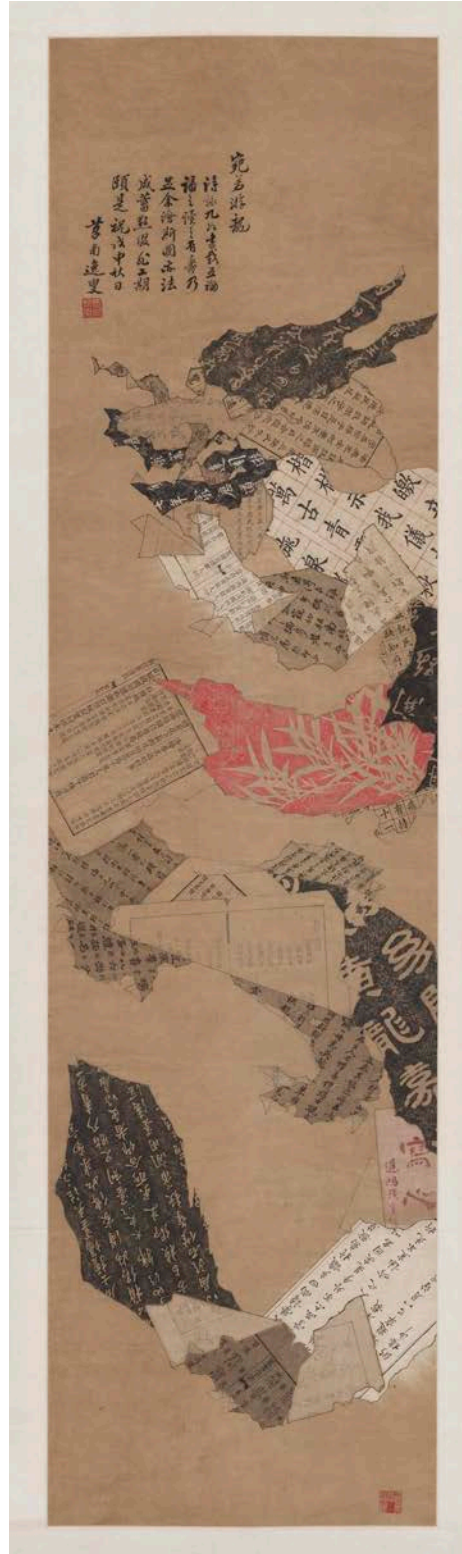
Final object checklist pending approval.

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2013.577 *Duan Jian Can Pian (Broken Bamboo Slats and Damaged Sheets)*, Chinese, about 1880. Ink and color, and gold on paper. 127 x 33.3 cm. Anonymous gift in memory of William W. Mellins.

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2017.6.1 Zhu Wei, *Dragon*, late 19th–early 20th century.
Ink and color on paper. 226.1 x 54.6 cm.
Anonymous gift in memory of William W. Mellins.

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2014.1963 Sun Mingjiu, *Bai Sui Tu (One Hundred Years)*, 1892. Ink and color on silk; round fan mounted painting. 49.5 x 40 cm. Anonymous gift in memory of William W. Mellins.

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2017.21 Chen Zhenyuan, *Untitled*, 1935. Ink on paper. 167 × 58.5 cm.
Anonymous gift in memory of William W. Mellins.

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2017.22.1 Li Chengren, *Untitled*, 1938. Ink on paper, one of four. 83.6 × 28.3 cm. Anonymous gift in memory of William W. Mellins.

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2017.30 Liu Lingheng, *Lotus Summer of the Xinhai Year*, late 19th–early 20th century. Ink on paper. 193 × 77.3 cm. Anonymous gift in memory of William W. Mellins.

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2017.19 Chen Bingchang, *Untitled*, 20th century. Ink and color on silk. 64.6 × 61.1 cm. Anonymous gift in memory of William W. Mellins.

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