

Trad. attrib. to: Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (ca. 345–406)
Title: *Nymph of the Luo River*
《洛神圖》
Luoshen tu
Dynasty/Date: Southern Song dynasty, mid-12th to mid-13th century
Format: Handscroll
Medium: Ink and color on silk
Dimensions: 24.2 x 310.9 cm (9-1/2 x 122-3/8 in)
Credit line: Gift of Charles Lang Freer
Accession no.: F1914.53
Provenance: John C. Ferguson (1866–1945)
Ex-collection Duanfang 端方 (1861–1911)

Literary subject: Illustration of the rhapsody, or prose-poem (*fu* 賦), *Luoshen fu* 洛神賦 (The Nymph of the Luo River), by Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232).¹ The original poem contains 168 lines, while the current painting only illustrates the text starting at about line 111. Judging from this and comparison with other recorded and extant versions of the composition, it is apparent that a little more than half the painting is missing from the front of the scroll, and probably one scene from the rear as well.²

Outside label slip: Duanfang 端方 (1861–1911)

Six characters, running script; plus seven characters, smaller running script 顧虎頭《洛神圖》。希世之珍，匋齋題。

The Nymph of the Luo River, by Gu Hutou [Gu Kaizhi]. A rare treasure of the world; written by Taozhai [Duanfang].

Front mounting silk: Yellow silk brocade with phoenix-and-cloud motif. With signed inside label. Two (2) collector seals.

Dimensions: 24.0 x 11.1 cm

Inside label slip: Liang Qingbiao 梁清標 (1620–1691)

Ten characters, standard script.

顧愷之《洛神圖》。蕉林珍玩。

The Nymph of the Luo River, by Gu Kaizhi. Treasured and enjoyed by Jiaolin [Liang Qingbiao].

Painting: One continuous piece of silk. No artist signature or seals.

Back mounting silk: Yellow silk brocade with phoenix-and-cloud motif. Four (4) collector seals.

Dimensions: 24.0 x 11.1 cm

Colophons: (8) – Two colophon papers.

Sheet 1: separately mounted, with one colophon

Dimensions: 24.1 x 61.2 cm

1. Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555–1636)

8 columns, running script.

內府所藏，大都無前人題跋，蓋進御時剪去，恐有國諱或不盡作莊語故耳。此朱成國時，尚方給以代官俸者。卷首有『顧愷之《洛神圖》』標目，展轉至予手失之；乃李伯師家藏，『洗玉池』、『隴西』圖款可辨也。顧長康畫，海內惟此卷與項氏《女史箴》，真名畫之天球、赤刀也。董其昌題。

The reason most paintings in the [Ming] imperial collection have no inscriptions or colophons by earlier writers is that they were cut off when [the scrolls] became imperial property for fear they might contain taboo words or expressions that were not altogether respectful. During the time of Zhu Chengguo [1516–1572], this painting was given by the commissariat in lieu of official salary.³ The title at the beginning of the scroll [reading], “*Nymph of the Luo River*, by Gu Kaizhi,” had been lost by the time [the painting] passed into my hands; however, the seals *Xiyuchi* and *Longxi* from the personal collection of Li Boshi [Li Gonglin] can [still] be distinguished.⁴ Of all the paintings by Gu Changkang [Gu Kaizhi] within the four seas, only this scroll and the *Admonitions of the Instructress* in the collection of Mister Xiang [Yuanbian, 1525–1590]⁵ are truly precious relics of famous painting.⁶ Inscribed by Dong Qichang.

Signature: 董其昌
Dong Qichang

Date: none

Seals: none

Sheet 2: continuously mounted with two unused sections of paper; one colophon and six s

Dimensions: 24.1 x 129.9 cm

2. Yang Shoujing 楊守敬 (1839–1915)

10 columns, running script.

此卷畫之高名，不待贊嘆；顧無唐宋人題識，香光所鑒自不誣。然余考張懷瓘《畫斷》所載虎頭畫約三十通，無《洛神圖》；裴孝源《貞觀公私畫史》所載十七卷，亦無之；《宣和畫譜》所載九卷有《女史箴》亦無此圖。然則香光所指內府，並唐宋而言之，而《貞觀畫史》卻有晉明帝《洛神賦圖》，豈本為晉明帝而或傳為虎頭耶。卷首有梁蕉林題籤，亦指為愷之，後人固無庸異議矣。光緒丁未三月，宜都楊守敬。

The great fame of this handscroll painting does not attend my commendation, and of course Xiangguang [Dong Qichang] was not mistaken in his expert opinion as to why there are no Tang or Song dynasty inscriptions [on the scroll]. However, according to my research, the *Nymph of the Luo River* does not appear among the thirty paintings by Hutou [Gu Kaizhi] recorded in Zhang Huaiguan's *Judgements on Paintings* [early to mid-8th century]. Neither is it among the seventeen paintings [by Gu] recorded in Pei Xiaoyuan's *Records of Paintings in Public and Private Collections during the Zhenguan Reign Period* [preface 639], nor is the painting among the nine scrolls [by Gu] recorded in the *Imperial Catalogue of the Xuanhe Era* [preface 1120], which includes his [painting] *Admonitions of the Instructress*. Nevertheless, when Xiangguang referred to imperial collections he was surely speaking about those of the Tang and Song



dynasties, and since the *Records of Paintings during the Zhenguan Reign Period* does record a painting called *Painting of the 'Rhapsody on the Nymph of the Luo River'* by Emperor Ming of the Jin dynasty [reigned 323–25], could it not be that this painting was originally by Emperor Ming, but somehow [erroneously] transmitted as having been done by Hutou?⁷ At the beginning of the scroll, a label slip by Liang Jiaolin [Liang Qingbiao] also attributes the painting to [Gu] Kaizhi, so later people most assuredly would have seen no need to express a different opinion. Third lunar month in the *dingwei* year of the Guangxu reign period [April 13–May 11, 1907], Yang Shoujing from Yidu.

Signature: 楊守敬
Yang Shoujing

Date: 光緒丁未三月
Third month of the *dingwei* year in the Guangxu reign period [April 13– May 11, 1907]

Seals: (2)
Yang Shoujing yin 『楊守敬印』 (square intaglio)
Linsu laoren 『鄰蘇老人』 (square relief)

3. Li Baoxun 李葆恂 (1859–1915)

1 column, running-standard script.

光緒三十又三年十一月十二日，義州李葆恂觀。

Viewed by Li Baoxun from Yizhou on the twelfth day of the eleventh month in the thirty-third year of the Guangxu reign period [December 16, 1907].

Signature: 李葆恂

Li Baoxun

Date: 光緒三十又三年十一月十二日

Twelfth day of the eleventh month in the thirty-third year of the Guangxu reign period [December 16, 1907]

Seals: none

4. Inukai Tsuyoshi 犬養毅 (1855–1932)

2 columns, running script.

明治戊申正月拜觀，日本備中犬養毅。

Respectfully viewed by Inukai Tsuyoshi from Bitchū, Japan, first month of the *boshin* year in the Meiji reign period [February 2–March 2, 1908].

Signature: 備中犬養毅

Inukai Tsuyoshi

Date: 明治戊申正月

First month of the *boshin* year in the Meiji reign period [February 2–March 2, 1908]

Seals: none

5a. Nonomura Kinsaku 野野村金作 (late 19th–early 20th century)

2 columns; running script.

明治四十三年將暮時，野野村金作拜觀。

At the close of the forty-third year in the Meiji reign period [late 1910], respectfully viewed by Nonomura Kinsaku.

Signature: 野野村金作
Nonomura Kinsaku

Date: 明治四十三年將暮時
At the close of the forty-third year in the Meiji reign period [late 1910]

Seals: none

5b. Odagiri Masunosuke 小田切萬壽之助 (1868–1934)

1 column, standard script.

小田切萬壽之助敬觀。

Reverently viewed by Odagiri Masunosuke.

Signature: 小田切萬壽之助

Odagiri Masunosuke

Seals: none

5c. Jissoji Sadahiko 實相寺貞彦 (late 19th–early 20th century)

1 column, running-standard script.

實相寺貞彦同觀。

Viewed at the same time by Jissoji Sadahiko.

Signature: 實相寺貞彦
Jissoji Sadahiko

Seals: none

6. Huang Yilin 黃以霖 (1856–1932)

1 column, standard script.

宣統二年二月，宿遷黃以霖觀。

Second lunar month of the second year in the Xuantong reign period [March 11–April 9, 1910],
viewed by Huang Yilin from Suqian [Jiangsu Province].



Signature: 黃以霖

Huang Yilin

Date: 宣統二年二月

Second lunar month of the second year in the Xuantong reign period

[March 11–April 9, 1910]

Seals: none

Collector seals: (19)

1. Early half seals and damaged seals – (7)

Attributed to Li Gonglin 李公麟 (ca. 1049–1106) – (2) – fake or not his

Longxi ji 『隴西記』 (gourd-shape relief; right half)⁸ – painting, left edge *Xiyuchi* 『洗玉池』 (square relief; right half)⁹ – painting, left edge

Zhao Ji, Emperor Huizong of the Song dynasty 宋徽宗趙佶 (1082–1135; reigned 1101–1125)

– (1) – fake

Double-dragon design (circle relief; left half)¹⁰ – painting, right edge

Undeciphered early seals (partial or damaged) – (4)

One damaged seal (illegible) – painting, lower right



One half-seal, right half (illegible) – painting, left edge

One half-seal, right half (illegible) – painting, lower left

One half-seal, right half (illegible) – painting, lower left

2. Geng Jixun 耿繼訓 (mid-17th century) – (7)

Chang yi zisun 『長宜子孫』 (square intaglio) – painting, left – (1/2)

Zongjia zhonggui 『宗家重貴』 (square intaglio) – painting, left – (1/2)

Yunjian cishi Geng Jixun yin 『雲間刺史耿繼訓印』 (square relief) – painting, left – (1/3)

Yunjian cishi Geng Jixun yin 『雲間刺史耿繼訓印』 (square relief) – back mounting

silk/colophon 1 join, bottom – (2/3)

Chang yi zisun 『長宜子孫』 (square intaglio) – colophon 1, left – (2/2)

Zongjia zhonggui 『宗家重貴』 (square intaglio) – colophon 1, left – (2/2)

Yunjian cishi Geng Jixun yin 『雲間刺史耿繼訓印』 (square relief) – colophon 1, left – (3/3)

3. Liang Qingbiao 梁清標 (1620–1691) – (4)

Jiaolin Yuli shi tushu 『蕉林玉立氏圖書』 (square relief) – front mounting silk

Guan qi daliu 『觀其大略』 (square intaglio) – front mounting silk

Hebei Tangcun 『河北棠村』 (square relief) – painting/back mounting silk join, middle

Jiaolin 『蕉林』 (square relief) – back mounting silk/colophon 1 join, top

4. Wanyan Jingxian 完顏景賢 (died 1927) – (1)

Jingxian cengguan 『景賢曾觀』 (rectangle relief) – back mounting silk, lower right

Traditional Chinese catalogues: (6)

Li Baoxun 李葆恂 (1859–1915). *Haiwangcun suojian shuhua lu can'gao* 海王村所見書畫錄殘稿. Beijing: Privately published, 1916. 1:2a–3b.

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Notes

¹ For the Chinese text together with Tang-dynasty commentaries, see *Liuchen zhu Wen xuan* 六臣註文選, 2 vols. (Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1972), vol. 1, 19:351–54. For English translations, see: David R. Knechtges, trans., *Wen xuan: or Selections of Refined Literature*, comp. by Xiao Tong (501–531), vol. 3 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 355–65; or Burton Watson, trans., *Chinese Rhyme-Prose* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 55–60.

² For discussion of the Freer painting see Thomas Lawton, *Chinese Figure Painting* (Washington DC: David R. Godine, in association with Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1973), 18–29. According to research by Chen Pao-chen 陳葆真, at least seven other early versions of the composition are currently extant. In addition to the Freer scroll, four of these versions are traditionally attributed to Gu Kaizhi, the two oldest of which are more complete than the Freer scroll and similarly date to the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279). The Freer Gallery of Art also owns a sixteenth century version of the *Nymph of the Luo River* done in the *baimiao* (ink outline) style associated with Li Gonglin (ca. 1049–1106), which includes the missing beginning and end portions of the composition. See Chen Pao-chen, *The Goddess of the Lo River: A Study of Early Chinese Narrative Handscrolls*, Ph.D. dissertation (Princeton: Princeton University, 1987), 3 (for list of extant scrolls) and 283–85 (on the Freer version); and “Chuanshi Luoshen fu gushihua de biao xian lei xing yu feng ge xi pu” 傳世〈洛神賦〉故事畫的表現類型與風格系譜 (The Representational Modes and Stylistic Lineages of Narrative Paintings on the *Goddess of the Lo River*), in *Gugong xueshu jikan* 故宮學術季刊 (The National Palace Museum Research Quarterly) 23.1 (Autumn 2005): 175–223. For additional discussion of various versions and their dating, see Xu Bangda 徐邦達, *Gu shuhua wei'e kaobian* 古書畫偽訛考辨, 3 vols. ([Nanjing]: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1984), 1:21–27 (esp. 24–25, on the Freer scroll) and 3:23–55 (plates).

For discussion of the sixteenth-century version of the composition in the Freer collection (F1968.12/F1968.22), see Thomas Lawton, *Chinese Figure Painting*, 30–33; and Xu Bangda, *Gu shuhua wei'e kaobian*, 1:27.

³ This refers to Zhu Xizhong 朱希忠 (1516–1572), who was the seventh member of his family to bear the title Duke Chengguo 成國公, inheriting the rank from his father in 1536. He was a favorite of both the Jiajing emperor (reigned 1522–66) and Longqing emperor (reigned 1567–72). As Grand Preceptor (*taishi* 太師) and especially later as the concurrent controller of palace revenues (*ling houfu* 領後府), Zhu played an important role in the imperial palace, and in a scheme designed to enrich the treasury, he evidently conspired with court eunuchs to sell portions of the imperial collections that were of little interest to either emperor. In his colophon, Dong Qichang refers to *zhefeng* 折俸 the practice of making partial payment of government salary in goods rather than rice or silver, which was evidently part of this overall endeavor. For brief biographical information about Zhu Xizhong, see Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 (1672–1755) et al., comps., *Ming shi* 明史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 106:3100–02 and 145:4087.

⁴ In this passage, Dong Qichang mis-wrote one of the characters in Li Gonglin's courtesy name, Boshi 伯時, for which he mistakenly wrote 伯師. Despite this minor inaccuracy, the name clearly refers to Li Gonglin, and since the two characters in question are homonyms, the discrepancy may merely represent a natural human error.

⁵ Once belonging to the great Ming dynasty collector Xiang Yuanbian 項元汴 (1525–1590), the *Nüshi zhen* 女史箴 (Admonitions of the Instructress) handscroll, also attributed to Gu Kaizhi,

is now in the collection of the British Museum. See Shane McCausland, ed., *Gu Kaizhi and the Admonitions Scroll* (London: British Museum Press, 2003) and *First Masterpiece of Chinese Painting: The Admonitions Scroll* (New York: George Braziller, 2003).

⁶ According to the chapter “Guming” 顧命 (Testamentary Charge) contained in the ancient *Shujing* 書經 (Classic of History), the term translated here as “precious relics” actually names two such objects, the *tianqiu* 天球 (celestial jade chime) and the *chidao* 赤刀 (red knife), which were formally displayed in the royal residence along with other treasures-of-state after the death of King Cheng of the Zhou dynasty 周成王 (reigned 1115–1079 b.c.e.) and during the investiture of his heir. See Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893–1980), ed., *Shangshu tongjian* 尚書通檢, reprint of 1936 volume in Harvard-Yenching index series (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990), 21 (42/0312–13 and 0327–28); and James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics* (London: Oxford University Press, 1893), vol. 3, part 2, 554.

⁷ Emperor Ming of the Eastern Jin dynasty 晉明帝 (317–420) was named Sima Shao 司馬紹 (299–325; reigned 323–25). He is recorded in early catalogues as an accomplished painter of historical and literary themes; however, none his works survive, nor are any existing compositions reliably attributable to him. One seventh-century text records a painting under his name with the title *Luoshen fu tu* 洛神賦圖 (Painting of the Rhapsody on the Nymph of the Luo River), and a note indicates the scroll along with two others had been recorded in a Liang dynasty (502–557) source. See Pei Xiaoyuan 裴孝源 (early to mid-7th century), *Zhenguan gongsi huashi* 貞觀公私畫史 (pref. 639), 4a, in *WSKQS*.

⁸ At the left edge of the painting is a gourd-shape relief half-seal reading *Longxi ji*. In his colophon, Dong Qichang (1555–1636) attributes this seal to Li Gonglin (ca. 1049–1106); however, there is no known association between the seal and Li, either as an artist or as a collector. In fact, a very similar, but not entirely identical, gourd-shape relief seal appears four times on a handscroll painting of birds, insects, and turtles attributed to the Five Dynasties artist Huang Quan 黃筌 (903–968), currently in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing, but it is not presently known to whom this seal belonged. See Gugong bowuyuan 故宮博物院, *Gugong bowuyuan cang huaniaohua xuan* 故宮博物院藏花鳥畫選 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1965), plate 1.

⁹ The reading of this damaged half-seal is provided by Dong Qichang in his colophon above. While the text cannot be made out with certainty, it does *not* appear to support such a reading.

¹⁰ On the inauthenticity of the seal on the Freer scroll, see Zhang Heng 張珩 (1914–1963), *Muyanzhai shuhua jianshang biji* 木雁齋書畫鑒賞筆記, 13 vols. (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2000), vol. 2, 290. For two genuine full examples of Emperor Huizong's double-dragon seal, see: Wang Yaoting 王耀庭, “Zhuang Gu Kaizhi *Nüshi zhen tu* huawai de jige wenti” 傳顧愷之《女史箴圖》畫外的幾個問題, in *Guoli Taiwan daxue meishushi yanjiu jikan* 國立臺灣大學美術史研究集刊 17 (September 2004): 43 (photos 7-1 and 7-3); or English translation: “Beyond the „Admonitions“ Scroll: A Study of its Mounting, Seals, and Inscriptions,” in Shane McCauseland, ed., *Gu Kaizhi and the Admonitions Scroll* (London: The British Museum Press, 2003), 207 (photos 7.1 and 7.3).