



Found! A Pair of Doves— and More ...

In 1999, James Cahill, a leading international authority on Chinese painting, descended into the storerooms of the University of Pennsylvania Museum's Asian Section to view the painting collection. As he writes in a recent article in *Orientalism Magazine*, he did not have high hopes, "in the face of reports of earlier visits by specialists in the field who had gone through the same works and found nothing of interest" (p. 62). In the event, however, he uncovered about a dozen noteworthy paintings in ink and color on silk scrolls that had gone unnoticed for half a century. Six months later, Roderick Whitfield, Percival David Professor of Chinese and East Asian Art at the University of London, found in the storage area another, much earlier work, "A Pair of Doves" (illustrated here). It and two of the paintings identified by Cahill were on display at the Museum March 14–29, 2001. Cahill spoke about five of the paintings that date to the Ming and Qing dynasties (AD 1368–1911) at the UPM's Elizabeth Watts and Howard C. Petersen Annual Program on March 14th.



"A Pair of Doves"

Roderick Whitfield writes of this scroll painting in *Orientalism*, "The elements of the scene are simple and commonplace, yet drawn with a delicate sensibility and accurate in more than just detail" (p. 58). He dates it to ca. 1060, by comparisons to contemporary works, noting particularly the composition in which the rocks, offset to the right, anchor the scene, as well as stylistic details such as the way the rocks are constructed of "a number of overlapping planes, darkest at the farther edges" (p. 60) and the crisp drawing of the leaves in double-outline technique. He attributes the work to the painter Yi Yuanji, whose name appears on the rock. Whitfield concludes his art historical analysis by writing, "The [UPM's] beautiful painting is unquestionably a Northern Song painting of the mid-eleventh century, finely tuned to contemporary taste in subject matter and rendering, and bearing a signature that at the very least is not at all implausible, regardless of whether it was inscribed by the artist or by a slightly later hand, and that at best may provide another work to add to the very limited repertory of attributions to Yi Yuanji" (p. 61).

Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk
UPM C119; H., 1.58 m

Citations are from articles by James Cahill and Roderick Whitfield in the February 2001 issue of *Orientalism Magazine* (Vol. 32, no. 2). This special issue is entitled "Chinese Art in the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology" and marks the "first occasion in sixty years that the Chinese collection at the [UPM] has been published." Copies can be purchased by calling 215-898-4040.