

The Fan Chang Tien Chinese Ink Painting For the Prevention of Dementia Research Study

The Mind-Science Centre at the National University of Singapore, Department of Psychological Medicine is delighted to announce that we will be exhibiting 25 original Chinese ink works by the late Singapore pioneer Chinese ink painter Fan Chang Tien, and have been generously donated by his daughter, Mrs Teresa Yao, and her husband, Mr Paul Yao. The ink paintings depict a variety of flora, fauna and figures, and embody the beauty and values that he professed throughout his artistic career.

The net proceeds from the sale of the artworks will support original research on Chinese ink painting for the prevention of dementia at the Mind-Science Centre. We aim to raise SGD\$500,000 to kick start this rigorous, evidence-based study, which will examine the long-term benefits of Chinese ink painting as an intervention and run concurrently in Singapore and in Shanghai, China.

In Honour of Fan Chang Tien



Fan Chang Tien (范昌乾) is an artist true to the tradition of Chinese painting, belonging to the lineage of the Shanghai school of Xieyi painting, studying under the masters Wang Geyi, Wang Yiting, Pan Tianshou and others, who were disciples of Wu Changshuo, the renowned master of the Shanghai School of Painting.

Fan Chang Tien arrived in Singapore from China in the 1950s, bringing with him a fresh dimension of Xieyi painting. He is widely credited with inspiring a new direction and development for Chinese ink painting in Singapore teaching successful artists such as Ling Cher Eng (1940-1995), Nai Swee Leng, Lim Kay Hiong, Chua Ek Kay (1947-2008), Tan Oe Pang and Chen Kezhan.

His favourite subjects of bamboo and orchids are often depicted to express the values that he identifies with – the bamboo stands for fine gentlemanly qualities such as humility and integrity while the orchid that emits an elegant fragrance, embodies refinement and goodness. In honour of his work and values, the Fan Chang Tien Chinese Ink Painting for the Prevention of Dementia Research Study has been established to explore the benefits of Chinese ink art in the improvement of physical and mental health in the elderly.

Fan Chang Tien Chinese Ink Painting for the Prevention of Dementia

A Community-based Intervention Study in Singapore and Shanghai, China



Chinese ink art dates back over 3,000 years. As a cognitive activity, it involves concentration, planning, visual memory and eye-hand coordination, and is an excellent form of brain training. In its very nature, it is an act of mindfulness practice and involves the appreciation of Chinese philosophy and Chinese traditions of aesthetic perception—all of which help to preserve of mental resilience and wellbeing.

The learning and practice of Chinese ink art is believed to benefit the brain through various mechanisms. Through a rigorous, well-designed research study, the Mind-Science Centre hopes to demonstrate the value of Chinese ink painting in the

prevention of dementia – a highly disabling condition in late life. With positive results, we will look to integrate Chinese ink painting as a dementia prevention activity into the community and look to scale at a national level.

Dementia is now on the rise with over 30 million dementia patients worldwide, which could reach 130 million by 2050. Local data suggests that this condition affect up to one in ten senior Singaporeans. Since dementia is the most expensive disease to manage due to costly, supervised long-term care, it is a critical for the society to find ways of prevention before it become a true 'tsunami'. In Singapore, we have tested the effects of several non-drug approaches and have accumulated valuable experiences. China has the largest number of people with dementia worldwide and is facing severe challenges with respect to dementia care, including poor awareness of dementia in the public, inadequate knowledge of dementia for medical professionals and caregivers, an underdeveloped dementia service system, and high costs of dementia care. To address these challenges, China is taking action to increase dementia awareness and education among the public and care providers, and develop policies, services and resources for dementia care.

The proposed collaboration would be with the Mind-Science Centre, the National Gallery of Singapore, the Shanghai Mental Health Centre and the Shanghai Jiao Tong University—forming the first such evidence-based collaboration in mental health between Singapore and China. The joint study will focus on 60 at-risk subjects from each country or 120 in total who will undergo a 3-year study using Chinese ink painting as a key intervention. Subjects will be taught the practice of Chinese ink painting by experienced artists from both countries and then regularly tested for cognitive and physical improvement. The projected start date is July 2018.

Dr Feng Lei, the Principal Investigator of the study at the Mind-Science Centre, is known for his extensive work in dementia prevention. His work on interventions such as choral singing and separately diet studies with Chinese tea and other Asian brain foods have demonstrated remarkable improvement in the elderly with mild cognitive impairment. The study will involve outstanding clinicians and scientists from multiple disciplines such as Professor Kua Ee Heok (psychiatry, NUS), Professor John Suckling (brain imaging; University of Cambridge), Professor Barry Halliwell (oxidative stress, A*STAR), Professor Roger Foo (genetics and epigenetics, NUS and A*STAR), Dr Anis Larbi (immunology, A*STAR), Dr Martin Zhang (Alzheimer's pathology and biomarker, Harvard University).

About the NUS Mind-Science Centre

The Mind-Science Centre (MSC) is an academic research centre at the Department of Psychological Medicine under the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine. The Centre aims to be a knowledge center of excellence for psychological research, education and service with a non-drug approach. It will be unique in its distinctive Asian focus and combines the best tradition of Western scientific empiricism with Eastern philosophical thoughts. The Centre's research is tailored to the local context with community-based translational programmes that will be scaled nationally.

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