



# Dreaming of Dreamstones

China's Extraordinary Natural Stone Paintings

**SFA** SCHNEIBLE  
FINE ARTS



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Shelburne, Vermont USA



## **preface**

I am pleased to present this first catalog of our collection and exhibition “Dreaming of Dreamstones – China’s Extraordinary Natural Stone Paintings.” Seventy of our most important contemporary Chinese dreamstone paintings were selected according to their beauty, rarity, quality, and collectable significance. Each painting in this catalog is described in detail in full color and was carefully selected for its unique qualities from among the best Chinese private stone painting collections.

During my travels in China over the past thirty plus years, I would occasionally come across an antique example of one of these natural stone marvels. Once back home, they were enthusiastically received after showing them to family, friends and a few private collectors. Good fortune then happened, and I was introduced to a contemporary stone painting collector in Kunming who candidly opened my eyes and shared his keen knowledge of this relatively new art form. At that time, natural dreamstone paintings Shi Hua were considered a Chinese regional art form- of less importance than water color and oil paintings. Collecting dreamstone paintings was largely isolated to western Chinese collectors living in Yunnan Province. But time has changed all that. Today, interest in Chinese dreamstone paintings is rapidly growing inside and outside of China. American and international collectors have begun collecting them hampered only by lack of research, information, and access to fine examples.

Over the course of dozens of trips to the mainland and through substantial networking and new found friendships, we were able to assemble a considerable body of knowledge that I am pleased to share with you in this catalog’s introductory article: *Dreaming of Dreamstones-Your Guide To China’s Extraordinary Natural Stone Paintings*. Along the way, we were able to acquire some of the finest examples of these treasures from Chinese private collectors. Most of these dreamstone paintings have never been seen outside of Yunnan, let alone outside of the mainland! I am grateful to numerous Chinese collectors and friends who only reinforced my earlier lessons: to buy the best quality you can afford and to learn to trust and use your own eyes! This undertaking owes its existence to good fortune, a supportive family, and expert advice I received from surrounding myself with Chinese dreamstone painting specialists such as Mr. Lian Hua, a Bai businessman and veteran collector, among many others. Thank you to my family, friends and colleagues for helping to make this catalog and exhibition a reality. We believe this catalog will serve as an important landmark on this emerging art category, that it’s existence will positively assist collectors internationally and that it will hopefully lay the groundwork for many more catalogs on this enthralling subject.

*Douglas Schneible*

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## Dreaming of Dreamstones

Your guide to collecting China's extraordinary natural stone paintings

by Douglas Schneible

After spending two decades as a collector and dealer in fine Chinese art, I created this guide to share my knowledge of China's magnificent natural stone paintings with my clients. I wrote this guide because I believe these specimens are extraordinarily beautiful, historically important, represent excellent value, and because there simply is a lack of credible information and published texts on this art category.

My experiences traveling and field collecting art throughout China taught me among other things, to appreciate China's natural beauty and its' abundant natural art forms. From scholar rocks, lingbi, and tai-hu, to root carvings and jade boulders, China is a sacred dwelling place of unique and spectacular surprises. One of my most memorable surprises was discovery of China's natural stone paintings "shih-hua" (literally meaning stone paintings or dreamstones) and often described in the west as dreamstone or landscape painting. I hope you will find this remarkable ancient yet contemporary art form as compelling as I do.



The author, Douglas Schneible, poses with members of his Dali China Bai family...stone craftsmen for over four generations!

*"The lofty peaks are always clad in snows...Yet, high above the clouds the sun still glows"*  
"Grace", from *Lofty Peaks* by Charles M. Beckstead



The soul and rhyme ("shi hun") of Dali stone are precisely the recordings and cultural projections of its creators and viewers.

## Historical roots stretch back 1000 years

The historical precedent for China's natural stone paintings or dreamstones is impressive. Dali Marble traces its roots to ancient China and the golden age of Chinese art, the Tang dynasty, 618-907 BCE. - over one thousand years ago! Emperors past placed great value on Dali marble. In fact the word "Dali" in the Mandarin language is synonymous with "marble." Dali marble was esteemed as valuable tribute, and was a favored building stone for historically important edifices in the Forbidden City and for famous Ming Tomb construction, 1386-1644 BCE. Favored by scholars and collectors since ancient past and pursued by European connoisseurs, these precious marbles have been described by poetic literati as glistening, marvelous, and picturesque! Collectors have revered stone paintings "shih-hua" for centuries, particularly since the Ming dynasty when Dali Marble became a favored asset. In the west during the nineteenth century, the French took particular fancy to these beautiful works of art naming them "pierres de reve".

In recent centuries stone paintings have been used as inlay in furniture such as chairs, cabinets, and beds, and mounted in frames and table screens. Often, the paintings may be embellished with calligraphy- a poem by an artist or poet that is hired to embellish their artwork from observing nature's graphic suggestions. Sales of antique dreamstones have a solid track record. In the past five years we have witnessed fine examples selling as high as \$31,200 in America and over \$150,000 for a dreamstone table screen sold at Hong Kong auction. It has been reported that years ago a Dali collector was paid RMB 4,000,000 (US \$600,000) for a unique Dali figural dreamstone which depicted a monkey! The geographical area surrounding Dali, China was traditionally settled by Bai and Yi minority groups. In fact Dali is the ancient capital of the Bai Kingdom- Nanzhou- and the Kingdom of Dali, that date back to the ninth and tenth centuries. The Bai ethnic minority group is Buddhist and comprises one third of Dali prefecture today. It is this traditional group that for at least four generations still source, cut, and craft stone paintings in present times.



Ancient Dali Kingdom, Yunnan Province, southwestern China, as it looked in 9th-10th century A.D.



Antique dreamstones: inlaid furniture, dreamstone table screen, and framed dream stone wall art;  
Source: *Hall of the Veteran Hermit Scholar Liuywa*

## Created at the dawn of time

China's natural stone paintings are actually 1/8"-1/4" thick slices of marble stone cut from slabs or boulders that have been mined from tens of millions of years old natural deposits found deep in caves or buried in stream beds located high in the mountains. Sometimes large natural boulders that are found can measure six to eight feet in length! These deposits are remarkably unique to Yunnan Province's Dali Prefecture and the Cangshan Mountains- home to special natural stones of uncommon beauty.

However there is a general misconception about what marble is. Marble was at inception and in its most rudimentary form calcium carbonate  $\text{CaCO}_3$ - ancient shell deposits. It became a limestone material that had solidified from igneous or sedimentary rock. As a result of earth's intense heat and pressure, limestone rock re-crystallized into marble- a smooth dense stone. Marble is a relatively medium hard rated stone, a "3" on the Mohs hardness scale.

Through earth's tectonic movements and water seepage, it took millions of years to create spectacular colors in the marble inclusions: "veins" of color created by chemical reactions in the marble from minerals and compounds. For example, green colors are created from the mineral chlorite and red and orange colors result from iron/magnesium compounds. These inclusions have blessed Dali's marble and result in brilliant colors and dynamic landscape-like patterns found only in China's natural stone paintings. Because of these unique geologic circumstances and historically limited production, it is no wonder these wonderful works of art known locally as "Dali Marble" have remained relatively hidden from western collectors' view.



View of Dali Cangshan Massif conceals dozens of hidden marble cave mines





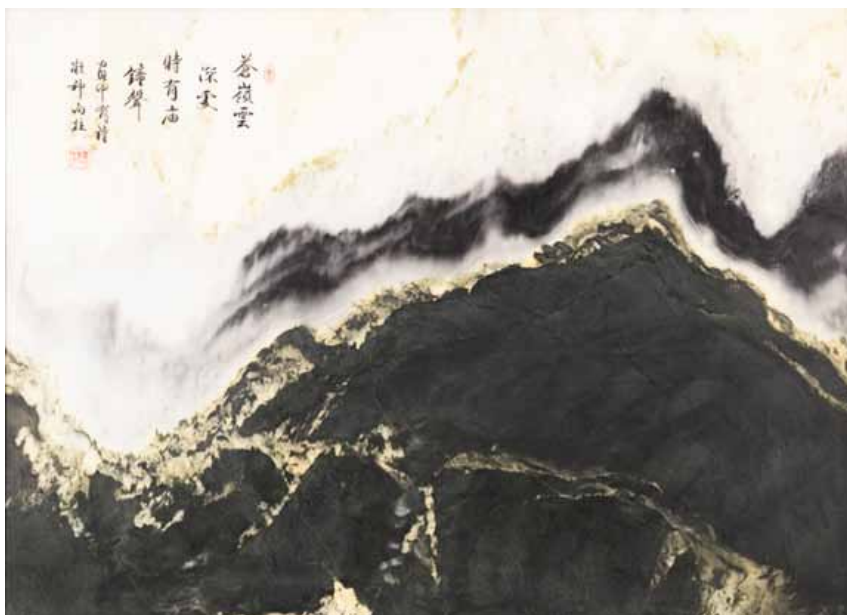
## Nature depicting Nature

Ancient origins buried in folktale tell of how a legendary Jade Goddess, Yunu, dropped her rainbow waistband on Dali's sacred mountains caressing it in a swath of precious marble! On a more earthly plane...

There are nineteen different mountains that comprise Dali's Cangshan Massif. Their Chinese names and translations are: Guan Yin (Bodhisattva), Yun Nong, Cang Lang, Wu Tai (five steps), Lian Hua (lotus), Bai Yun (cloud), He Yun (also cloud), Shuang Yang, Lan Feng, Xue Ren (snow mountain), Ying Le, Zhong He, Long Quan (dragon), Yu Ju or Yunu (jade), Ma Long (horse and dragon), Sheng Ying, Foding (top of Buddhist), Ma Er (horse ear), and Xie Yang (sunset). Dreamstone paintings are prime examples of a favored East Asian historical theme: "nature depicts nature". The soul and rhyme ("shi hun") of Dali stone are precisely the recordings and cultural projections of its creators and viewers. We wholeheartedly praise the beauty of Dali stone for its limitless essence of nature and praise its mystery as embodied by the piercing insights of noble scholars and poets. Formerly esteemed primarily for scholarly contemplation within China, dreamstone paintings as a category of contemporary art lie "asleep" like a slumbering princess awaiting discovery by knowledgeable western collectors and art connoisseurs. Nature depicts nature shrouded in splendid mystery.....like a heavenly dream.



An aerial view of Rocky Mountains



Contemporary Dreamstone Painting, "Double Peaks", 31.5"h x 40"w.  
Translation: "Deep green hill with thick cloud focuses the mind and dreams, year of the temple bell, elegant and beautiful"

## A labor of love

Many years ago on one of my earlier trips I was accompanied up a mountain trail by some of my Bai minority group friends. We trekked up a picturesque Cangshan Massif. It was a glorious climb! Several kilometers up, they led me into one of many secretive cave mines. It was deep in caves like these, literally the belly of the mountain, that fearless Bai miners typically carve out one meter long slabs weighing one to two hundred kilos (200-400 lbs.) after carefully selecting veins of stone with good skin color, from the cave ceiling and walls. To my astonishment, these precious slabs were then mounted one at a time, onto sturdy wooden carrying racks- a kind of transportation yoke. These yokes were then secured to the backs of strong sure-footed donkeys and deftly transported, caravan style, one slab per animal, down the treacherous side of the mountain to roadside access. Why use animal transport and why not modern diesel trucks? Well for one, the treacherous topography of caves prohibits motor access and two, local government has banned vehicle access to mines and mountains to protect natural habitat.

### Divined by Veteran “Stone Sages”

Once exposed, the rough slabs or boulders are examined by seasoned professionals which I call “stone sages”. These are veteran rock men that can “divine” a stone’s contents in hopes that they recognize from studying the outside skin of the stone a wonderful gem on the inside! Precious slabs and boulders are then traded to local Bai cutters, sometimes at surprisingly high prices. Prices vary based upon external visual skin color and condition. These transactions are I am sure, not totally unlike how jadeite pebbles are traded in the South Mandalay Burmese jade markets. Bai family craftsmen, who compete and haggle for these coveted slabs, have high hopes of finding valuable slices of artwork buried within. If a cutter is lucky, these efforts may be rewarded by a precious natural stone slice of exquisite beauty and a unique work of art is born.



A “stone sage,” stone finding expert, explores one hundred meters inside a hidden cave mine- searching for precious veins and slabs that might eventually reveal a slice of exquisite beauty.



Donkey caravan transporting marble slabs from mountain mine- one slab at a time.



Hand cut marble slabs are filled with colorful, twisted striations.

## Bai cutter as artistic creator

Slabs and boulders are transported to the cutters shop. Often this is a family compound containing a Bai extended family residence, workshop, and show room. In the courtyard of my friend's family compound, I found a huge metal rock saw for slicing the slabs. Various hand saws and tools were near by, enabling the cutter to "crop" and trim slices to maximize attractive patterns and desirable shape. After the stone is horizontally sliced open and examined it is bathed in water. If the top surface of the internal remaining piece possesses good color, clarity, contrast and overall attractive pattern, it becomes a "keeper". It is then sliced and peeled from the remaining underlying stone. Additional slices are sometimes carved out of the remaining slab or boulder until patterns diminish. After further evaluation, the design is finished by a "cropping" technique, actually hand trimming the edges with a diamond tipped hand saw. They are then cut into an appropriate size and shape- sometimes horizontally, sometimes vertically and less often into classic round "moon" shapes or infrequently into the shape of an Asian "fan". Each stone painting is hand finished with an application of a special compound of natural and inorganic waxes- substances that protect and permanently reveal color and pattern on the stone surface. Finally, some cutters invite friendly poets and calligraphers to examine and inscribe a stone painting with a descriptive and inspirational poetic message. Each painting is then stamped with the creators' own red seal usually placed to the lower left of the poem. This practice is evolving. Today, some paintings may or may not be suitable for inscriptions on the obverse because of their dark coloration, but may be described, signed and sealed on the backside adding additional information about it's origins.



Giant saw slices through raw stone slabs; the cutter hoping to reveal a precious dream stone painting



A stone painting undergoes a wax finish and polish of special organic and inorganic waxes

A beauty...a polished and wax finished "moonlight" stone painting prior to framing



## Old vs. New

The older stone paintings I have found on my travels date back to the Ming dynasty, 1368-1644 BCE. They were usually small to medium round or rectangular shapes, 6"-12" diameter, and display a fine aged darkish patina. They are sometimes embellished with artistic poetry and a maker's red colored chop mark. Many are inset into simple wooden wall frames or into more elaborate table screens. Dreamstones are inserted into furniture as well. Older examples can sometimes be found in Chinese antique shops and occasionally in western auctions. While I have had the privilege of handling some superb stone paintings dating as far back as the Ming dynasty, I cannot say that older stone paintings as a group represent the most beautiful natural stone paintings I have ever seen.

Often the colors are dark and monochromatic; patterns are quite simple and reflect Zen, literati tastes of the past. Hundreds of years ago, the quality of stone chosen was probably limited by lack of technological access to the most promising caves and mines. Also the stone painting business I am sure was not as lucrative in the past as it is today so there was less financial incentive to find the most promising source material. Nonetheless, antique examples bring with them their important historical context once having rested on scholar's tables and displayed on walls in royal pavilions.



An antique Dreamstone Painting in a contemporary frame, 14" diameter, late Qing to Republican period (1890-1949)



A contemporary dreamstone masterwork! Lian Hua, a Bai businessman, proudly displays his award winning dreamstone masterwork!



# What makes a stone painting a fine work of art?

Contemporary stone paintings on the other hand tend to be more elaborate. They display vivid color, more lively inclusions and patterns, and are often larger in scale. The largest examples I have seen can measure up to two and one half meters in size (eight to nine feet) or more (see photograph). Contemporary paintings generally have better clarity and contrast because of detailed attention from more experienced and specialized Bai miners and craftspeople. In general contemporary stone paintings are more carefully cut, like diamonds, to reveal and maximize the design buried within.

My experience as an art collector and dealer is considerable. Over the past forty years I have collected and dealt in a wide range of artwork ranging from tiny numismatic coins to hand colored photographs, ethnographic art to arts and crafts antiques and Chinese Neolithic painted pottery as well as ancient stone carvings.

It was this valuable experience that laid the groundwork for this guide, and allows me to confidently share my enjoyment and evaluation of China's natural stone paintings with my clients. Couple these experiences with some timely advice I received as a young art collector "buy the best quality you can afford" and "learn to use your eyes to recognize what fine quality is" and I hope you will understand my approach to writing this guide.

So what qualities and conditions distinguish a great stone painting from an average stone painting? From examining literally thousands of stone paintings over the years and buying and selling hundreds of fine examples, I have developed these guidelines. Here is a checklist of qualities that I look for no matter if I am buying for my personal collection or a special painting for a client. I remember them as the 8C's:



A giant contemporary "spring" category dreamstone measuring an awesome 40"h x 104" in width!



A fine contemporary masterwork dreamstone, an "autumn" category stone, "19 Craggs", 17"h x 31.5"w, ex- private Chinese collection

## 1. **First Contact:** Do I like this artwork- does it speak to me?

I find that my first contact with a work of art is relevant to the essence of collecting: do I instantly like it? I find my initial gut reaction is often meaningful and valuable. It is an important first impression that may be quite sublime but usually encompasses all the individual characteristics that follow. While it may not signal a definite “buy me” action, it serves as an important step in separating the wheat from the chaff, and triggers a scribble in my notebook and a reminder to take a “second look” later on.

## 2-3. **Clarity & Contrast:** Does the painting clearly communicate something special? Does it look as good close up as from a distance?

The vast majority of stone paintings that I examine do not have clear, appealing artistic patterns- colorful inclusions created millions of years ago when marble stone came into contact with invasive minerals and compounds. While some colorful patterns may be clear, they may not adequately contrast with the remaining neutral colors of the stone. This lack of contrast may be so poor that the painting registers as a “jumble” of color not unlike some kitchen granite counter tops! Lack of clarity and contrast in my opinion jointly diminishes desirability and marketplace value.

## 4. **Condition & Grading**

We have developed a unique, proprietary grading system for more accurately appraising China’s dreamstone paintings. Based upon our in depth research over the years and careful examination of a considerable body of examples in all categories, we believe grading system will enhance our appraisals and will likely add value to your dreamstone painting collection. While most stone paintings are carefully sliced from raw slabs or boulders, the surfaces of certain paintings might reveal fine inclusions that look like vertical marks. Chinese collectors call these “horse tooth” lines. They occur during formation by mother nature. Older paintings can sometimes suffer from surface gouges damage from poor handling. If surface impediments, “horse tooth” lines or gouges trouble you, then don’t buy the painting. On the other hand if a painting exhibits exemplary clarity, contrast, and color and you love it- “it speaks to you “- than I would vote to buy it and not let sometimes unavoidable, minor condition issues prevent you from owning a great find.



## 5. Category and Color

In China, stone paintings with beautiful patterns are called “watercolor” or “oil painting” marbles. For simplicity, I have divided them into twelve categories:

- 1 **Spring stone** (green, blue and gray) *beautiful dreamstones in a variety of spring scene concepts*
- 2 **Autumn stone** (orange and red) *vivid and colorful*
- 3 **Sichuan Ink and Wash stone** (black and white) *have an unmistakable, classic look of ancient Chinese calligraphy and imported from neighboring Sichuan Province*
- 4 **Sichuan Red Flower stone** (pink and rose) *delicate and colorful stones that remind us of pink chrysanthemums and imported from neighboring Sichuan Province*
- 5 **White and Gray stone** (white and gray) *are known in China as Shui Mo or Chinese painting stone were cut from stone found on ShuangYang mountain in Dali. These captivating compositions might remind us of a long string of white colored, rugged mountain caps from a distance.*
- 6 **Sand Dune stone** (desert tone) *is known in China as “Mu Wen” or “wood pattern” stone, found in Chu Xiong and is distinguished by a look of sand colors and desert dunes*
- 7 **Bamboo stone** (green) *imported into Dali from Southern and eastern China include brilliant green colors formed when chlorite mineral inclusions seeped into the marble stone- these suggest a tropical looking work of art created by mother nature*
- 8 **Moonlight stone** (black, white, and yellow) *The boulders from which these paintings were crafted were once found on Guan Yin mountain and are described by the Chinese as “black stones.” These might resemble reflective night lights that could be seen along a shoreline or village at night glistening from the sky above*
- 9 **Snow Mountain stone** (snow white with black and gray) *are described by Chinese collectors as “green flower” stones- once found on Zhong mountain in Dali. Their snow white and dark colors evoke snow capped mountains and glacial ski trails.*
- 10 **Water-Water stone** (blue-gray, white, and black) *are captivating dreamstones that have the feel of a coastal setting along great bodies of water*
- 11 **Figurative stones** (in the form of people, animals, birds, trees or distinctive objects) *are unique, highly collectable and hard to find*
- 12 **Guangxi regional stone** (red-brown and blue) *are usually long rectangular stone paintings featuring a mountainous background and foreground depicting very fine branches of dark blue black colors imported from Guangxi, an autonomous region in southern China that borders Vietnam*

I am sure with time that new and different color categories will emerge.

# China Dreamstone Categories



Sichuan Ink and Wash  
(black & white colors)



Bamboo stone  
(green colors)



Sichuan Red Flower stone  
(pink and rose colors)



Autumn  
(orange & red colors)



White and Gray  
(gray & white colors)



Guangxi regional stone  
(red-brown and blue)







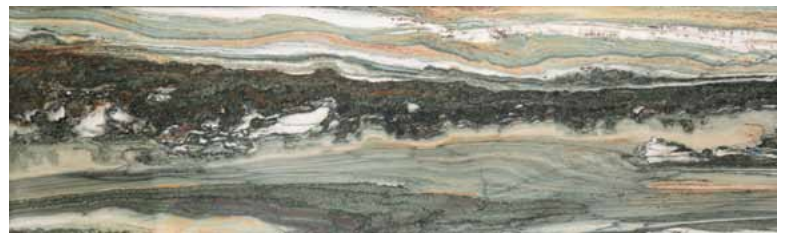
Water-Water stone  
(blue-gray, white, and black)



Moonlight stone  
(black, white, and yellow colors)



Snow Mountain stone  
(snow colors)



Spring  
(green and gray colors)



Sand Dune stone  
(desert tones)



Figurative stone  
(exhibit distinctive images of people, animals, and objects)

## 6. Concepts- designs that look and feel like oil paintings

Stone paintings offer collectors outstanding design concepts and themes to select from. They can “feel” and appear from a far like wonderful impressionistic oil paintings, contemporary photographs, or evoke a serene Zen minimalist experience! Some of the more interesting themes that are fun to collect include: a) landscape patterns such as sunrises and sunsets, mountains, glaciers, forests, and clouds b) waterscapes as represented by rivers, streams, waterfalls, lakes, seas, seashores, lakeshores, a country pond c) Figurative examples prized by Chinese collectors: human forms, gods, ghosts, Buddha, and dragons. They also like animals like dogs, cats, oxen, fish, dragons, or birds and they especially admire and covet paintings of pink chrysanthemum flowers. I have recently come across a relatively rare, small group of stone paintings cut from a scarce black striped stone. The Chinese call them “moonlight” stones – black stones- these remind me of reflective night lights that might be seen along a shoreline or village at night glistening from the sky above. Concept categories are rich in possibility.

## 7. Complimentary frames

Selecting an appropriate frame and matting for your stone painting is a personal choice too. Generally, frame selection is influenced by the type of art you want to frame as well as your home or office’s interior design and wall color. Remember stone paintings are nature depicting nature...stone paintings are mother nature’s work of art. So I lean to simple, natural colors. I like the fact stone paintings are not some thin mass-produced print or lithograph or a contemporary concocted oil painting. Stone paintings are sturdy but not overly hefty. An average sized 15”x 30”, 1/8”-1/4” thick stone painting weighs about 15-18 lbs, so they can be comfortably installed on virtually any wall. In reverence to this natural art form here are some framing suggestions:

A) Framing: 1) simple two dimensional wooden frames without fancy ogee curvature 2) earth colored frames 3) antique rubbed gold or copper colored wooden frames from the Savannah Collection 4) when in doubt, pick a simple “black” frame.

B) Matting: I prefer to double or sometimes triple mat my stone paintings for quality effects and highly recommend natural colored linen mats in neutral colors such as white and ivory.

C) To glass or not to glass! After one of our recent exhibitions, several customers and patrons suggested that we *not* install glass over our beautiful stone paintings. They felt that viewing the natural stone surface up close was preferable without glass covering. We did this on a trial basis and the reception was enthusiastic. One advantage of stone painting art is that it really doesn’t require protection from light or humidity which is always a concern with paper or textile art forms. So to eliminate glass and still hold the stone painting in place inside the exterior frame, we like inserting “fillets”- a kind of thin, inner frame. They possess a “lip” that will hold the stone painting in place in lieu of glass. We found a linen- covered white or black wooden fillet works best and works well with virtually any kind of exterior frame. These linen covered wooden fillets are available in several neutral colors.

D) Simple Arts and Crafts hardwood frames: we have recently commissioned production of a simple Arts and Crafts style hardwood frame for certain types of dreamstone paintings. These are individually crafted, custom fit, and work well without glass. We think they are terrific and you will see some of these used in our exhibitions.



## 8. Care & Installation of your stone paintings

As mentioned above one great advantage of stone painting art is that it really doesn't require protection from sunlight and humidity like the more traditional paper art forms such as oil or water paintings and prints. They can be comfortably installed inside or outside on a covered deck for example without temperature control concerns. Stone paintings are relatively strong and sturdy so glass installation is not a prerequisite though an occasional dusting might be required. Because stone painting surfaces are hand waxed for color maximization and protection we do not advise using any kind of cleanser. Installing them is as simple as mounting any framed work of art. While stone paintings are slightly heavier than your average oil painting (a mid sized 15" x 30" stone painting might weigh 15-18 lbs.) they can be easily installed using standard hardware. But just to be safe we suggest using slightly heavier rated hangers and wire, both available at hardware and big box home centers.

### What makes a dreamstone painting a fine work of art and worthy of a **masterwork** designation?

Having handled, examined, and been exposed to many fine private Chinese stone painting collections, literally thousands of stone paintings over the years, those experiences taught me that evaluating a fine stone painting is not unlike evaluating a fine oil or watercolor once nuances of each type of stone painting are understood. Clarity, contrast, and color are vitally important. The concept should be bold and condition must be considered. Since I have spent countless trips to the mainland networking and making numerous collector friends, it is only by examining and comparing a large body of stone paintings from all my sources, that the finest examples emerge. While personal taste does influence, on rare occasion one finds a stellar work - likely a singular marble slice taken from an unsuspecting raw boulder or slab...a genuine eye catcher and all criteria scream "best in class", a **masterwork**!

### Asleep..... but not for long as demand and values increase

China's contemporary stone painting market is witnessing a revival. In the past decade because of greater international interest in Chinese contemporary and natural "green" art forms and because of wider popularity inside of China, interest and awareness in stone paintings is gathering momentum. Collectors are seeking and demanding more and better quality examples. Sales of antique and contemporary dreamstones have established solid track records in recent years bringing as much as \$31,000 or more a piece at auction. Prices are beginning to increase because of increased demand. On one of my more recent trips, I reliably heard that a wealthy Chinese business owner from Hangzhou recently purchased over one million RMB worth of stone paintings- that's over US \$150,000 worth! He had to hire an especially large truck just to transport his trove back home. This was a staggering sum by any standards and represented a record number of paintings purchased by a single collector! Also I learned after interviewing several Chinese collectors and Bai cutters that they each had sold a painting during the recent past at prices ranging from RMB 100,000 to 128,000. In US dollars that translates to \$15,000 - \$19,200 a piece- record sums paid by domestic Chinese collectors.

## It's still early in the acquisition cycle

Every kind of art has a “cycle”. There are better times to buy and better times to sell. Yet in spite of these factors and because there has been limited western publicity and virtually no western publications, we are still “early” in the collecting and acquisition cycle for stone paintings. However collectors and dealers are beginning to discover them and the marketplace is rapidly changing. Decreasing supply of source material coupled with increasing production and economic costs are critical components that boost prices. Local Chinese Bai cutters are predicting a slow but sure demise to production. In China, inflation is inching back, costs of living are increasing, and another currency revaluation- a devaluation of the U.S. dollar- continues at a steady pace. These events and circumstances serve to limit availability of finest quality dreamstone paintings and are destined to push prices even higher in the future.

## Should “price” influence my choice of a fine stone painting?

Rarity is usually reflected in price but not always. A good Chinese stone painting need not be terribly expensive. While the finest examples can command well over ten thousand dollars apiece, I have sold many attractive paintings in the \$1000-\$2500 price range. So you could consider acquiring fine works of art in a variety of price ranges. Many large urban art dealers, galleries, and auction houses advocate and promote the purchase of the most expensive, highest priced art, necessitated by high overhead expenses. Incentivized to earn commissions (profits) on high volume sales, they cannot afford to sell lower priced works of art, even if they represent good or better value for collectors. Sotheby's auction house for example, seldom auctions items that have a value of less than \$5,000 or \$10,000 per item because of their enormous overhead. Remember that the market is also served by collectors and investors of more modest means. They simply can't afford to spend tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars on one single painting but are still an important market force for more modestly priced paintings.

## Disadvantages to collecting Chinese stone paintings

Of course, like any other kind of art investment there are disadvantages too. Collecting and acquiring Chinese stone paintings may not be for everyone in spite of many positive considerations. If you want to buy just one painting to hang on your wall then by all means do it- especially if you just love it and the painting “speaks to you”! Like many kinds of tangible assets, art is not as liquid as say certificates of deposit or stocks or bonds, so one has to bear that in mind. Also, like buying a home or classic automobile, you have to be selective: buy authentic works of good quality at a fair price, and work with a knowledgeable person who has the expertise and knowledge that is critical to your success, and help you feel comfortable with your choice(s). Collecting Chinese stone paintings is definitely a long range oriented pursuit especially if you are also buying them as an investment. If you think you will eventually want to sell them, I would recommend acquiring stone paintings with a minimum objective of holding them for at least five to ten years. In addition, the art market like any international financial or tangible marketplace is cyclical in nature. There are times when it is best to buy and best to sell.



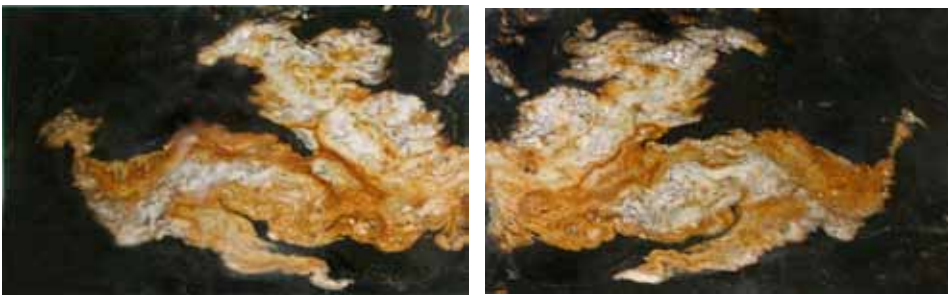
## So what determines value and future appreciation potential for Chinese stone paintings?

Primarily it's the artistic value of the painting- the measure of its worth to collectors, investors, dealers, and museums. And artistic value depends on an art form's popularity, rarity, and condition. Not surprisingly, American antiques are most popularly collected in the United States. China's dreamstone paintings are beginning to enjoy greater popularity by American and international collectors and dealers based upon historical precedent. However the market for these stone paintings is especially growing by leaps and bounds inside China as their standard of living and wealth accumulation continues to rapidly increase (see story above about the one million RMB acquisition). So it will not surprise me when I find that many of the finest Chinese stone paintings that pass through my hands today eventually find their way back to their country of origin in the years ahead. Fine quality stone paintings are only going to get harder and harder to find, rarer and rarer if you will, because of all these factors.

Secondly, its important to understand that new painting production and availability of high quality stone paintings is rapidly diminishing. This is caused by raw material depletion, escalating procurement costs, and increased government regulation. The government owns the mountains and sources. Taken together with local environmental erosion concerns means it is becoming more challenging to find sources of quality raw slabs and boulders. Even the "stone sages" mentioned previously are finding it challenging to make a living! Future new production is therefore in doubt.

So how do these events translate in the marketplace? As supplies of older paintings from older Chinese collections are extracted and absorbed by the marketplace, this factor combined with diminishing new production will undoubtedly cause prices to climb here and abroad especially in China. A third factor that affects appreciation potential is qualitative selection. Buying the best quality you can afford will be one key to enhancing your collection's future appreciation. I am very selective about the quality of paintings I buy for my clients. I estimate that I acquire only one out of every one hundred or so paintings I run across. I try to pick out the finest gems from the collections of mediocre pieces that I am offered. I am so particular that I have been accused of being the "pickiest" buyer my Bai friends have ever witnessed!

Savvy Chinese collectors realize that supply is dwindling and often prefer to hang onto their best examples in hopes of higher future prices. Still many of China's finest stone paintings have yet to be revealed in the west either at exhibition, auction, or through publication. I feel that over the next few years many wonderful dreamstone paintings will be exposed for the first time. Rarity will then be determined more clearly not only by limitations to what has and "might" be found, but importantly about what will be published from old Chinese collections. So these facts point to solid future price appreciation potential if today's collector has the capacity to make acquisitions at this time.



Rare figurative stone paintings like this unusual pair of figurative "Qilins"- Chinese mythical animals carved from "moonlight" stone- these were reportedly being offered for sale by a Chinese collector at RMB 800,000 for the pair (thats currently US \$120,000)!

## Choosing the right art dealer and advisor is as important as selecting the right work of art

Increased interest in fine Chinese contemporary art in recent years has caused a lot of new art dealers to arrive on the scene both on the Internet and in new brick and mortar establishments. Unless you shop carefully, an innocent foray into this art market could wind up costing you plenty. There's literally tons of contemporary art being churned out in China today as I write. The supply seems endless! There was a time in the recent past when any dealer could just contract with any reasonable Chinese artist and promote it in America at high prices to an unsuspecting audience. That has changed. Today's art buyer is and deserves to be much more savvy. That's why you should find a dealer with outstanding credentials: great expertise, reliable service, professional advice, fair prices and guaranteed authenticity.

### Starting out- what to do next

If you find a stone painting that you love and can afford- just go for it! Buy one and live with it awhile. This is how collecting begins...an impulse, a silent whisper, an urge to indulge. If that urge continues you can add more paintings later. I think the next few years will be among the most exciting in Chinese art history! I predict we will see some wonderful Chinese dreamstone paintings become available for the first time including fine examples published for the first time! Limited new production and de-accessioned paintings from old collections will reveal stunning new opportunities for private acquisition. I am confident that collectors, who carefully acquire a fine portfolio of selected Chinese dreamstone paintings today, will reap substantial tangible and intangible rewards in the decades ahead. Rewards, I might add, that will far exceed mere financial gains but include incredible pleasure derived from owning, displaying, and touching some of earth's greatest natural treasures... and sharing them with friends, family, and acquaintances.

For further information, please contact the president of Schneible Fine Arts, Douglas Schneible to arrange for a mutually convenient time to discuss your interests. You may reach him by telephoning the company at **802-279-7601** (Eastern Standard Time) or emailing: [douglas@schneiblefinearts.com](mailto:douglas@schneiblefinearts.com)









# CATALOG

The painting dimensions indicated include “framed” and “site” dimensions. All dreamstone paintings include a complimentary black or dark red colored hardwood frame and English translation of any inscribed Chinese poetry and description.

## Lifetime Guarantee of Authenticity

Each painting that you purchase will be registered in your name and you will receive a certificate of authenticity with a description of your painting along with our lifetime guarantee that your purchase is accurately described. This guarantee never ends.

## **“Bamboo” dreamstone paintings**

*Brilliant and ancient feeling, these light and dark green and black colored dreamstone paintings overlay a white ground. They portray organic almost prehistoric looking flora compositions.*

**Number 1** (top left)

“Trees I”, frame size: 30”h x 15”w; site: 21”h x 8”w

**Number 2** (top right)

“Trees II”, frame size: 30”h x 15”w; site: 21”h x 8”w

**Number 3** (bottom)

“Reflection”, frame size: 29”h x 39.5”w; site: 19”h x 29”w



1



2



3



## “Spring” dreamstone paintings

*Breathtaking green, blue, and a lighter color palette characterize most of these natural dreamstone paintings we have labeled “Spring.” Concepts include mountainous terrain, forests, rivers, valleys, and an occasional waterfall. Some look like water colors- deceiving the eye.*

### **Number 4** (top)

“**Green Valley**”, frame size: 16”h x 46”w; site: 12”h x38.5”w

### **Number 5** (bottom)

“**Calm Waters**”, frame size: 23.5”h x 44”w; site: 12.25”h x 28,5”w



4



5



## “Spring” dreamstone paintings

**Number 6** (top)

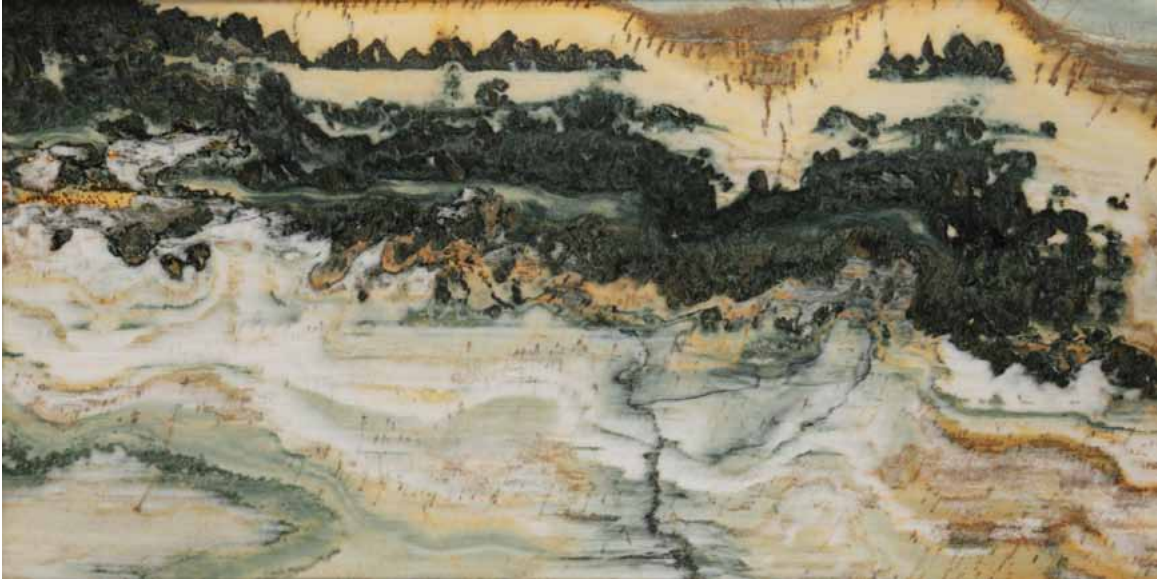
“Nature’s Mosaic”, frame size: 26”h x 44”w; site: 18”h x 34”w

**Number 7** (bottom left)

“Jag Peaks”, frame size: 26”h x 25”w; site: 17”h x 16”w

**Number 8** (bottom right)

“Mountain Fabrication”, frame size: 24”h x 20.5”w; site: 14”h x 11.5”w



6

7



8



“Spring” dreamstone painting

## **A Monumental Masterwork**

*If I could describe only one dreamstone as a museum quality masterwork, this is it. This fine work of art is the largest I have ever seen. It measures over eight feet in length and almost four feet in height. Its gorgeous natural blue and green colors remind me of an expansive, dreamy, and serene shoreline. Worthy of a prominent home, office, or corporate space, it is simply breathtaking.*

**Number 9**

“Swirling Shoreline”, frame size: 40”h x 104”w; site: 32”h x 96”w x 1” thick



9



## **“Autumn” dreamstone paintings**

*“Autumn” dreamstone paintings exhibit vivid, eye popping colors: oranges, reds, and yellow against grounds of both darker and lighter colors. Landscape examples in this category are legendary and can run the gamut of swirling rivers to volcano- like mountain tops, golden desert skies, and sunsets.*

### **Number 10** (top)

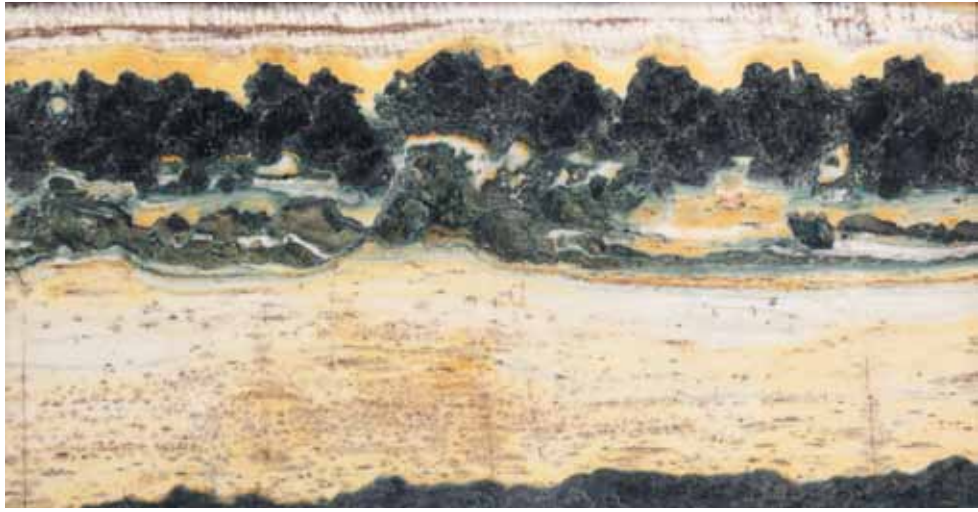
“19 Craggs”, frame size: 30”h x 15”w; site: 21”h x 8”w

### **Number 11** (middle)

“Jade River”, frame size: 21.75”h x 41”w; site: 12.5”h x 31.5”w

### **Number 12** (bottom)

“High Noon Sun”, frame size: 16”h x 24”w; site: 10”h x 18”w



10



11



12

## **“Autumn” dreamstone paintings**

**Number 13** (top)

“Desert Sky”, frame size: 18”h x 24”w; site: 9.5”h x 19.75”w

**Number 14** (middle left)

“Autumn Swirling I”, frame size: 18”h x 33”w; site: 8”h x 23.5”w

**Number 15** (middle right)

“Autumn Swirling II”, frame size: 18”h x 33”w; site: 9.25”h x 23.5”w

**Number 16** (bottom)

“Mountain Range”, frame size: 17”h x 39.5”w; site: 8.25”h x 31”w



13

14



15



16



## “Moonlight” dreamstone paintings

*These are among the scarcest of all Chinese dreamstone painting categories. The Chinese call these “moonlight” stones-black striped stones- because they remind us of reflective moon light and night lights that might be seen along a shoreline or village at night glistening from the sky above. They were sliced from rare, hard-to-find striped boulders once found only along an ancient stream bed on Guan Yin mountain*

**Number 17** (top)

“Monumental Moonlight Panorama I”, frame size: 26”h x 73”w; site: 20”h x 65”w

**Number 18** (middle)

“Monumental Moonlight Panorama II”, frame size: 19.5h x 49”w; site: 15”h x 41”w

**Number 19** (bottom)

“Moonlight Mountain Tops”, frame size: 29”h x 24”w; site: 20”h x 15”w

17



18



19



## “Moonlight” dreamstone paintings

**Number 20** (top left)

“Moonlight Round Zen I”, frame size: 25”h x 25”w; site: 17”d

**Number 21** (top right)

“Moonlight Round Zen II”, frame size: 25”h x 25”w; site: 17”d

**Number 22** (bottom left)

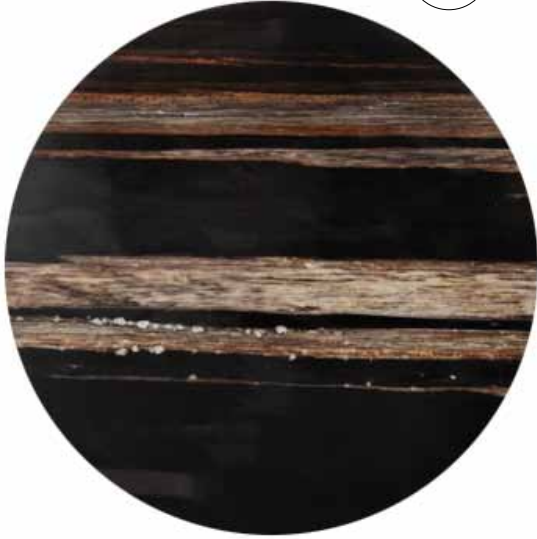
“Moonlight Earth ‘n Sky I”, frame size: 45”h x 25”w; site: 33.5”h x 17.5”w

**Number 23** (bottom right)

“Moonlight Earth ‘n Sky II”, frame size: 45”h x 25”w; site: 33.5”h x 17.5”w



20



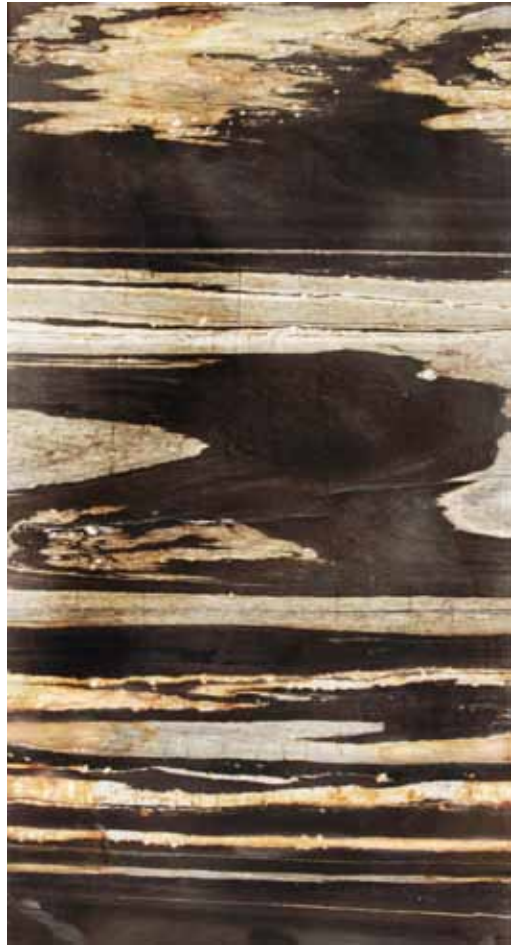
21



22



23



## **“Moonlight” dreamstone paintings**

**Number 24** (top)

“Moonlight Swirling Shores I”, frame size: 20”h x 32.5”w; site: 10.5” x 23”w

**Number 25** (middle)

“Moonlight Dragon”, frame size: 24”h x 55”h; site: 15” x 46”w

**Number 26** (bottom)

“Moonlight Straight Line I”, frame size: 21”h x 50”w; site: 16”h x 42”w

24



25



26



## “Moonlight” dreamstone paintings

**Number 29** (top left)

“Moonlight Small Round I”, frame size: 12”h x 12”w; site: 6”d

**Number 30** (top right)

“Moonlight Small Round II”, frame size: 12”h x 12”w; site: 6”d

**Number 31** (2nd row left)

“Moonlight Small Rectangle I”, frame size: 12.5”h x 19”w; site: 6”h x 11”w

**Number 32** (2nd row right)

“Moonlight Small Rectangle II”, frame size: 12.5”h x 19”w; site: 6”h x 11”w

**Number 33** (3rd row left)

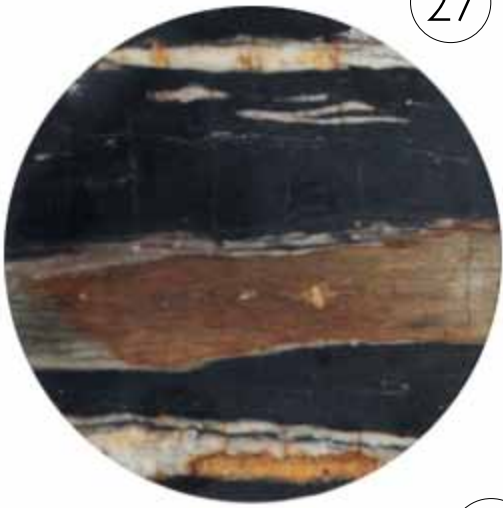
“Moonlight Large Rectangle I”, frame size: 14”h x 20”w; site: 6.5”h x 13”w

**Number 34** (3rd row right)

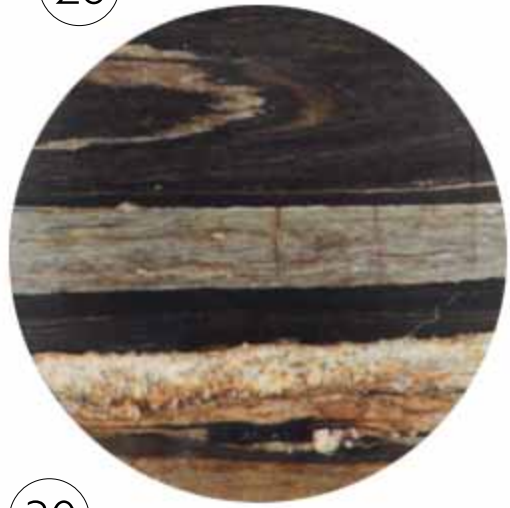
“Moonlight Large Rectangle II”, frame size: 14”h x 20”w; site: 6.5”h x 13”w

**Number 35** (bottom)

“Moonlight Artifact I”, frame size: 25”h x 28”w; site: 16”h x 19”w



27



28

29

30



31



32



33



## “Water-Water” dreamstone paintings

*These captivating and striking natural dreamstone paintings allow you to peer out onto a great body of water. Your eyes detect swirling waves, eddies, rocks, rock bars, and shoals. Mesmerizing.*

### **Number 34** (top)

“Monumental Waves I”, frame size: 35”h x 58”w; site: 28” x 50”w

### **Number 35** (middle)

“Breaking Waves I”, frame size: 27”h x 59”h; site: 20” x 51”w

### **Number 36** (bottom)

“Sea Island I”, frame size: 21.5”h x 39”w; site: 13.5”h x 30”w

34



35



36



## “Water-Water” dreamstone paintings

**Number 37** (top)

“Water Round I”, frame size: 21”h x 21”w; site: 14.5”d

**Number 38** (middle)

“Breaking Waves I I”, frame size: 23”h x 33”h; site: 14.25” x 24.5”w

**Number 39** (bottom)

“Breaking Waves I I I”, frame size: 20”h x 44”w; site: 8.5”h x 33”w





37



38



39

## “White and Gray” dreamstone paintings

*Known in China as Shui Mo or Chinese painting stone, these natural stone paintings were cut from stone found on Shuang Yang mountain in Dali. Captivating compositions, they might remind us of a long string of rugged mountain caps from a distance. These dreamstones are cut from a scarce regional stone yielding notoriously “fuzzy” detailed paintings. To find examples possessing clear, contrasting detail like these are indeed rare finds.*

### Number 40 (top)

“White Mountains I”, frame size: 15”h x 46”w; site: 9.75” x 38.5”w

### Number 41 (middle)

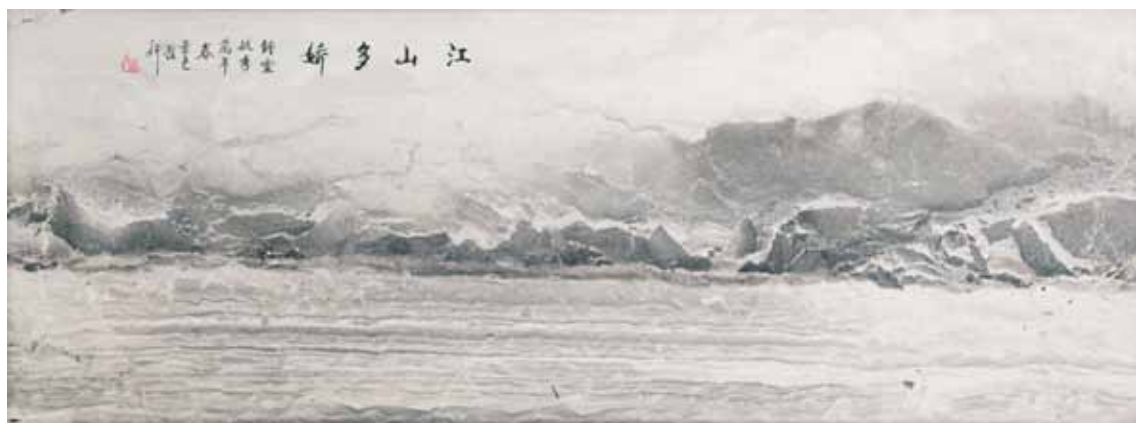
“White Mountains II”, frame size: 17.5”h x 41”w; site: 12” x 33”w

### Number 42 (bottom)

“Sea Island I”, frame size: 15.5”h x 27.5”w; site: 9”h x 20.5”w



40



41



42



## “Red flower” dreamstone paintings

*These delicate and almost abstract natural stone paintings display rose and pink shades of color with white, black and sometimes a bit of green color as ground. They exude an almost tropical feel. Easy to live with.*

**Number 43** (top left)

“Rose I”, frame size: 34”h x 11”w; site: 30h x 8”w

**Number 44** (top 2nd from left)

“Rose II”, frame size: 34”h x 11”w; site: 30h x 8”w

**Number 45** (top 3rd from left)

“Rose III”, frame size: 34”h x 11”w; site: 30h x 8”w

**Number 46** (top 4th from left)

“Rose IV”, frame size: 34”h x 11”w; site: 30h x 8”w

**Number 47** (bottom)

“Rose Abstraction”, frame size: 28”h x 22”w; site: 23”h x 17”w

43



44



45



46



47



## “Ink and Wash” dreamstone paintings

*If you like simple black and white colors with a bit of brown, white, and yellow sometimes included, then these natural dreamstone paintings might appeal to you. They remind us of China’s classic and legendary landscape and calligraphy scroll paintings from the times of Tang, Song and Ming. While unmistakably Chinese in appearance, they tell a pictorial tale of mystic mountain peaks, crevices, and valleys and are great reminders of China’s stunning and artistic past- giving them an almost ancient feeling.*

**Number 48** (top left)

“Vertical Mountain I”, frame size: 51”h x 26.5”w; site: 39”h x 18”w

**Number 49** (top right)

“Vertical Mountain II”, frame size: 48.5”h x 23”w; site: 38”h x 14”w

**Number 50** (bottom)

“Monument to Lofty Peaks”, frame size: 60”h x 80”w; site: 52”h x 72”w



48



49

50



## **“Ink and Wash” dreamstone paintings**

**Number 51** (top )

“High Mountain Butte I”, frame size: 24”h x 24”w; site: 20”d

**Number 52** (bottom left)

“High Mountain Butte II”, frame size: 36”h x 16”w; site: 28”h x 12”w

**Number 53** (bottom right)

“High Mountain Butte III”, frame size: 36”h x 16”w; site: 28”h x 12”w





51

52



53



## “Guangxi” dreamstone painting

*Attractive red brown and blue colors make these pretty gems unmistakable. These usually long rectangular dreamstone paintings feature mountainous backgrounds with foregrounds depicting very fine microscopic branches of dark blue black color. Quite captivating.*

**Number 54** (top)

“Guangxi Splendor”, frame size: 17”h x 36”w; site: 5.5h x 23.5w

## “Sand Dune” dreamstone painting

*Recently discovered and known as “Mu Wen” or “wood pattern” stone, these unique desert sand tone dreamstone paintings remind us of rolling desert sand dunes. Very unusual.*

**Number 55** (bottom)

“Dunes I”, frame size: 18”h x 35”w; site: 13”h x 30”w

54



55



## “Snow Mountain” dreamstone paintings

*The Chinese call these natural stone paintings “green flower” stone- once found on Zhong mountain in Dali. Their snow white and dark colors evoke snow capped mountains and glacial ski trails. Astonishing.*

**Number 56** (top)

“Trails Away I”, frame size: 17”h x 30.5”w; site: 11”h x 25”w

**Number 57** (middle left)

“Jagged Mount”, frame size: 24”h x 24”w; site: 15.5”d

**Number 58** (middle right)

“Zig Zag I”, frame size: 27”h x 29”w; site: 16”h x 18”w

**Number 59** (bottom)

“Double Peaks”, frame size: 31.5”h x 40”w; site: 21.75”h x 31”w



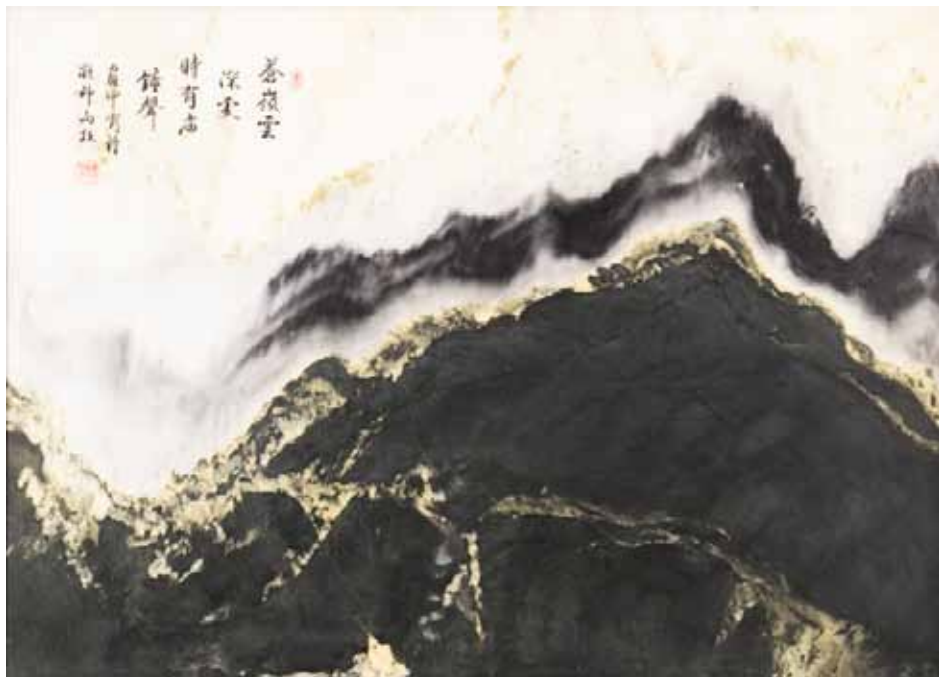
56



57



58



59

## “Snow Mountain” dreamstone paintings

**Number 60** (top)

“Close Up I”, frame size: 16”h x 29”w; site: 7.5”h x 20.25”w

**Number 61** (middle)

“Misty Magnificence”, frame size: 24”h x 32”w; site: 18”h x 26”w

**Number 62** (bottom)

“Monumental Mountain Panorama I”, frame size: 38”h x 74”w; site: 28”h x 64”w

60



61



62



## “Figurative” dreamstone paintings

*Mother nature can be playful. On unique and rare occasion we uncover natural dreamstone paintings that seem unimaginable. Highly coveted, they depict people, animals, birds, trees, plants and other things. Uncanny*

**Number 63** (top with detail)

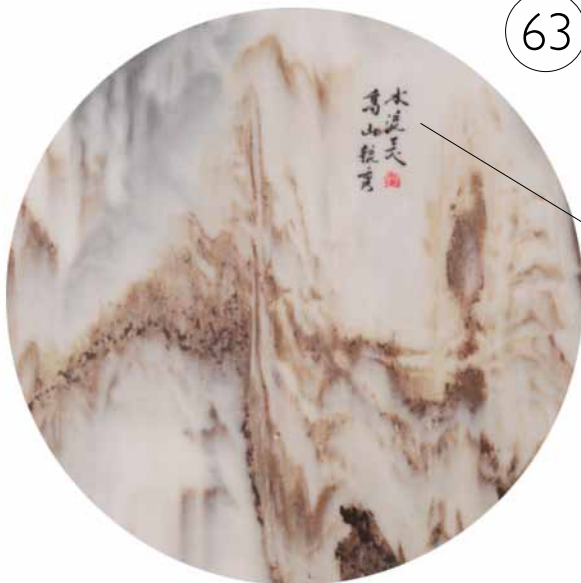
“Buddha in the Skies”, frame size: 20”h x 20”w; site: 12”d

**Number 64** (bottom)

“Love Birds”, frame sizes: 15”h x 15”w; site each: 8”d



63



64



## Small Size dreamstone paintings

**Number 65** (top left)

“Small Round”, frame size: 12”h x 12”w; site: 6”d

**Number 66** (top right)

“Small Square”, frame size: 12”h x 12”w; site: 6”h x 6”w

**Number 67** (middle row left)

“Moonlight Small Round III”, frame size: 12”h x 12”w; site: 6”d

**Number 68** (middle row right)

“Moonlight Small Round IV”, frame size: 12”h x 12”w; site: 6”d

**Number 69** (bottom row left)

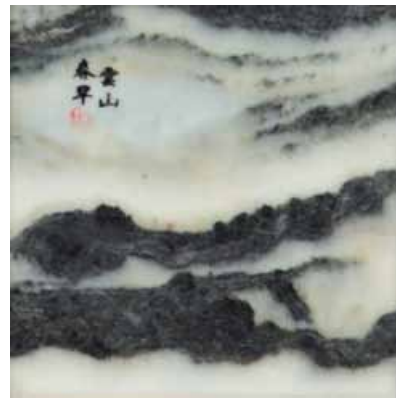
“Fan I”, frame size: 10”h x 13”w; site: 7”h x 9”w

**Number 70** (bottom row right)

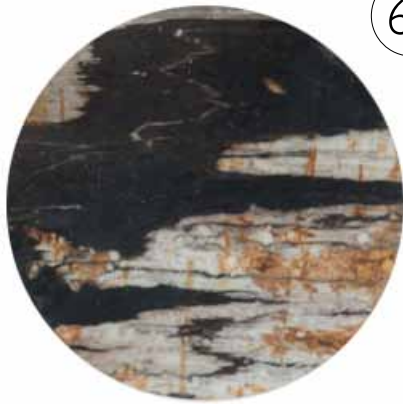
“Fan II”, frame size: 12”h x 12”w; site: 5”h x 8”w



65



66



67



68



69



70



## Frame Styles

All dreamstone paintings include a complimentary black or dark red colored hardwood frame and English translation of any inscribed Chinese poetry and description.

A. Dark Red and Beaded Style

B. Dark Red Ogee Style

C. Arts & Crafts Style

D. Chinese Style

E. Black

## Free Painting Evaluation

If you already own one or a collection of antique or contemporary Chinese dreamstone paintings, we will be pleased to offer you a free evaluation. We can also offer appraisal services for your holdings based upon current market values, research, and our grading expertise. Please contact us at:

**Schneible Fine Arts, 837 Bay Road, Shelburne, Vermont 05482 USA**

**Email: [douglas@schneiblefinearts.com](mailto:douglas@schneiblefinearts.com) or Telephone (802) 279-7601**

A



B



C



D



E



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**Design and Coordination**

Spring Above Marketing  
[www.springabove.com](http://www.springabove.com)

Printed in the United States of America



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