

42. Zong Yuanding [Tsung Yuan-ting] (1620-1698)

“Cat and Butterflies by Garden Rock and Rose Bush” 1678

Hanging scroll, ink and color on paper

117.2 x 45.0 cm. (46 1/8 x 17 3/4 in.)

Inscription:

“During mid-Summer of the year 1678, painted by Zong Yuanding.”

Artist’s seals:

Zong Yuanding and one other



A vertical garden rock, its base fringed by grasses and rising beside a rose bush, supports an orange and black cat that gazes up at two butterflies fluttering above. Replete with auspicious connotations, the composition emphasizes the cat, *mao*, which is phonetically similar to *mao* meaning octogenarian, while the *tie* of butterfly is close to *tie* meaning a person in their seventies. Together the pair visually express the wish that the recipient should live to be 70 or 80, hence the popularity of the theme among professional artists.

Zong Yuanding was born in Xinghua, Jiangsu province, and became a student of Wang Shizhen (1634-1711). Although Zong was skilled in painting landscapes, it was his paintings-from-life done after the Yuan master Qian Xuan that earned him lasting fame.