Ch'en Yuan-hsi (1st half 19th c.)　　陳元熹

"Landscapes" 1851　　山水（一對）

Pair of hanging scrolls, ink on silk
Each 102.5 x 30.7 cm.

Inscriptions:

(right-hand scroll)
"For ten years I have not been to Stone City (Nanking),
Yang-tzu (Jetty) and Mount Chung can only be recalled as I do now;
How can we find again the house of Po-hsiu,
and, on facing couches in wind and rain, live long in happiness?

During the fourth lunar month of the first year of the Hsien-feng reign-era (1851), painted and inscribed by Ch'en I-chou."

(left-hand scroll)
"For long seized by a will to travel the seas,
by chance I met one with a heart for crossing streams;
Circling the square pool in a single skiff,
fragrantly the autumn waters deepen.

By a rainy window with nothing to do, I chanced upon the translator, Master T'ao Yuan-yang, who brought this (material) and requested paintings. I thus did these small scenes to make him smile as I aim for correctness. From Mount T'ang in Chekiang province, a descendant on my mother's side of Chung-kuan, Ch'en I-chou."

Artist's seals:

Ts'ang-chu-ming-shan Ch'uan-chih-ch'i-jen ("Having collected all the famous mountains I transmit them to people"); *Hua-hsia Wo* ("Sleeping beneath flowers"); *Chieh-yu Shih* ("Bordered by rocks")

Tall mountains arranged in serried ranges provide the general setting for both scenes but the artist also contrasts the enclosed valleys in the vicinity of a monastery with tall pagoda on the right with the expansive river and lake scene on the left. The general shapes of the peaks and the compositions are distantly related to monumental works of the Northern Sung era but the more immediate influence was derived from the style of Wang Hui (1632-1717) and his host of followers. The simple rock and mountain forms are here arranged in rhythmic vertical sequences that are enlivened and enriched by countering groups of short horizontal strokes applied in bursts of quick staccato energy. This convention, found often in works by such Japanese Nanga painters as Nakabayashi Chikutō (1776-1853), was associated especially with the style of the Sung master Mi Fu, one of the preeminent members of the literati school.

Ch'en Yuan-hsi, *tzu* I-chou, was born in Ying-wu, Chekiang province. Many of his inscriptions, including that on one of the present pair of paintings, show that Ch'en lived and worked in Nanking and Suchou in Kiangsu province during his later years. Known today primarily as a painter, Ch'en was also a very successful merchant-trader who traveled often to Japan from about 1827 until the middle of the century.

While residing in Nagasaki Ch'en associated with such other Chinese visitors as Chiang Ta-lai (1744-1839 or later) and with such Japanese literati artists as Hidaka Tetsuō (1791-1871), who became Ch'en's pupil. The present pair of paintings represent the latest known works by Ch'en and show that he remained in Nagasaki at least until 1851, having arrived very late the previous year on a ship from Nanking.