

THE
CAT
AND THE
TAO



KWONG KUEN SHAN

Timeless and elegant, *The Cat and the Tao* is a rich selection of sayings and quotes from the ancient Chinese masters that weds the inspired creativity of *The Tao of Pooh* with the spare beauty of calligraphic art. Artist and author Kwong Kuen Shan has combined the quiet power of eastern philosophy with the serene and playful beauty of her cat paintings, creating a book sure to comfort and move readers with its infectious appreciation for the wisdom of both. Her exquisite watercolor-and-ink paintings portray a variety of cats in settings ranging from the garden to the pond to the windowsill, each scene bringing to life the specific Taoist or Confucian text that accompanies it.

With special, masterfully stroked Chinese characters and authentic seals whose meanings are explained and interpreted on the facing page, *The Cat and the Tao* is an inspired combination of art and thought. Readers can experience the enchanting world of Kwong Kuen Shan's paintings while encountering meditations on the benefits of

(continued on back flap)



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The Cat and the Tao

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KWONG KUEN SHAN

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The author would like to thank the following for their kind permission to reproduce the paintings in this book:

Darley Anderson, Malcolm Johns, Ingrid Pieters, Zena Robson and others who wish to stay anonymous.

Thanks also to the people who kindly allow her to paint their cats and use the paintings in this book.

DEDICATION

To my senior cat, Healey, who cured me of cat phobia.

To my junior cat, Joseph, who keeps up the good work.

And to my husband, Christopher,
without whose support and immense patience
this book would not have been possible.

INTRODUCTION

I suffered from cat phobia. I never had a cat until six years ago. My first cat adopted me. Healey belonged to my ex-neighbour. They moved away taking all their cats with them. Healey returned four times to the land where he was born and brought up. The fourth time my husband and I felt we had to keep him on humanitarian grounds.

For a year he was kept outside and fed out in all weather. I could not bring myself to touch him, let alone allow him into the house. I knew the fear was irrational. I froze every time he was near me. Quietly and patiently he changed all that. I have had more cats since.

At the time I was developing a new painting project and something was missing in the plan. One day while gardening I saw Healey sun-bathing between me and the stone buddha, our garden gnome. He curled around the buddha, looking relaxed and happy. I found the missing element.

What seemed to be a good idea at the time landed me on a very steep learning curve. I had no knowledge of cats. I had never painted them before. An amazing journey began. I started observing and studying cats; my own cats, Healey, Rocco and Joseph; other people's cats, stray cats. I was totally charmed by their elegance, agility, resilience, and above all

their independence and mental toughness. I wanted to capture all these in the only way that I know, the Chinese way. It took me two years to produce enough sketches to work from, but now I have an ever expanding cat album. They are painted in Chinese styles with Chinese tools, materials, techniques and perspective. I have exhibited these paintings several times.

I painted the pictures in this book using both the meticulous and freestyle techniques. The meticulous method involves detailed drawing and refined elaboration, while the freestyle uses deceptively simple and economical brush strokes to capture the character and spirit of the subject. It is not concerned with detail.

My understanding of cats continues to develop and my affection for them to grow. I want to do more with these lovely creatures who share our lives. I want to share my appreciation of them with others, for them to see my vision of cats! I want to add an extra dimension to my cat album, and I have drawn on my knowledge of Chinese literature to achieve this.

I studied classical Chinese literature, history, and calligraphy as a child growing up in Hong Kong. This contact continues. While my husband reads English books, I read my collection of old and new Chinese books: Confucius's teaching, *300 Tang Poems*, *Dreams of the Red Chambers*, Zen, Sun Tzu's *Art of War* and contemporary Chinese literature. So many of the wise say-

ings in these classic texts cry out to be linked with a painting, to illustrate and be illustrated, to illuminate and inspire. I have had a wonderful time seeking out the best match for each picture, and then translating them into English.

Many books have been published on cats. I have tried to do a different kind of cat book. My paintings of cats should depict them in action, at rest, when they are aloof or tough, philosophical or just themselves, though never humble! My hope was to combine feline character and wisdom with appropriate oriental philosophy and teaching, to point out the Way towards some answers to man's quest for respite from everyday stress.

When I speak of the Tao, I do not mean Taoism as such, and I am not talking about Taoism in this book. Tao is used here in the generic sense, meaning the way to wisdom and inspiration. It means a direction for a journey from beginning to end. It refers to the way we search for the truth, the way we conduct ourselves. It means observing the law of nature, living in harmony with other living things, and distinguishing what is important to life from what is accessory.

The texts in this book are selected from ancient Chinese proverbs, poems, and sayings of great teachers: Confucius, Lao Tse, Chong Tse and Sun Tzu. Their teachings have played a major part in shaping Chinese

thought for centuries. They have handed down templates for life which can be used by anyone in any circumstances. The choice of quotes in this collection is based on their sympathetic resonance with the paintings, and personal taste. I translated them all from the original Chinese. Ancient Chinese literature is very condensed, very crisp, and a great deal is contained in a few words. There is no standard English version, and I have tried hard to preserve the vision, the truth and essence of the original text. I hope I have succeeded in sharing with you their meaning and wisdom.

I hope you will enjoy my book, and if it inspires you, so much the better!

KKS 2002



To know is to recognise what you understand
and what you do not understand.

CONFUCIUS

THE UNSPOKEN



These days the world's events are strange:
They say this and they say that.
There is no point arguing.
I am better off dozing.

ANON

SPRING DREAMS

Chinese characters: on a nice day like today we should be singing and drinking wine.

Oval seal: I paint what I like | Rectangular seal: The Way

Round seal: Han and Tang Dynasties | Square seal: Kuen Shan

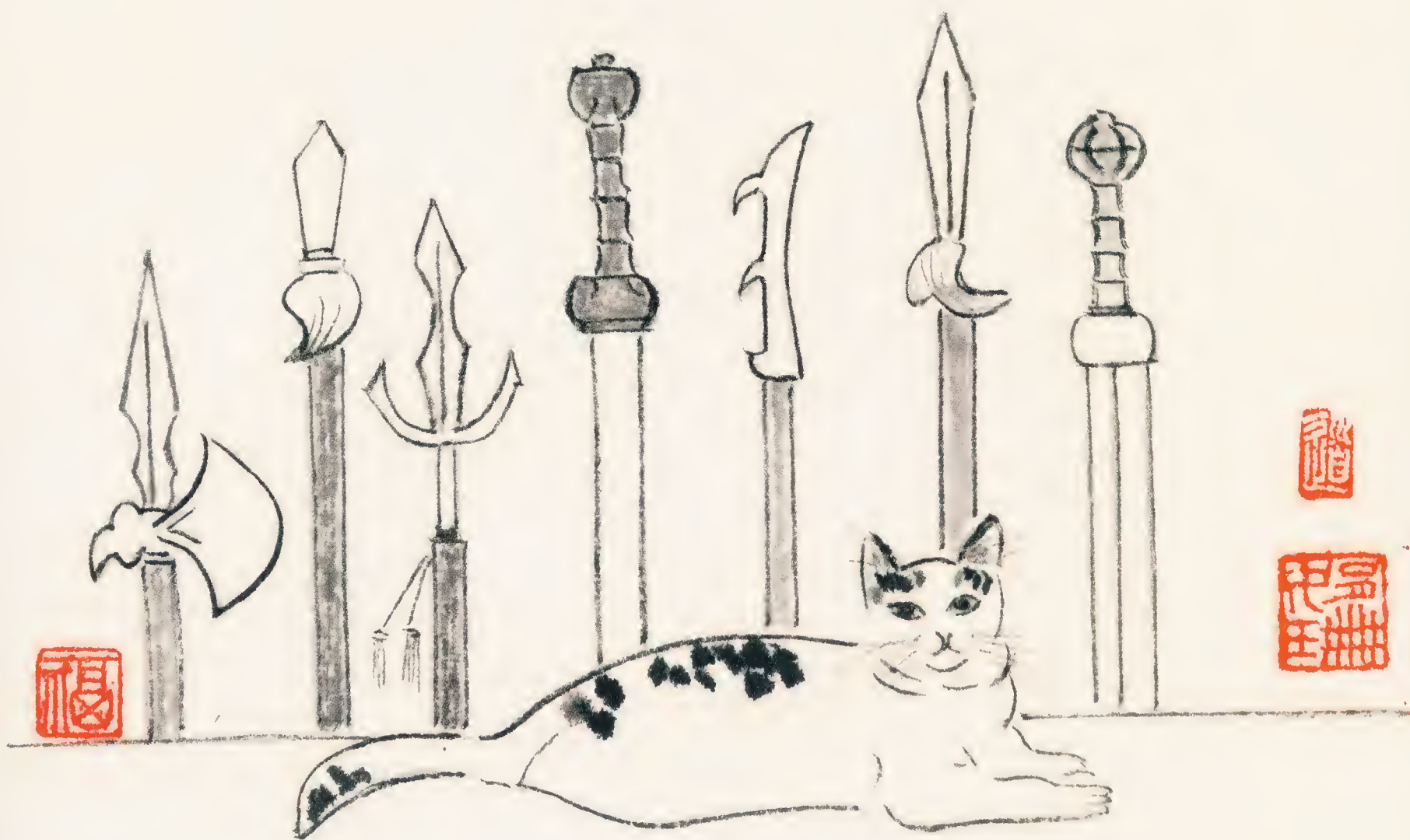
白日歌須縱酒



A man of great character and strength:
fire cannot burn him,
water cannot drown him,
the severest weather does not damage him,
wild beasts cannot rend him,
not because he is invincible,
but because he knows safety from danger,
he is calm and decisive even facing great risks,
he knows when to go forward, when to retreat,
nothing can harm such a man.

CHONG TSE

THE KUNG FU CAT



Do not exhaust a friend's kindness and loyalty
– this way friendship is sustained.

CHINESE PROVERB

MONTY AND MIZOO



廣興堂

To find out what a person is like, there are seven ways:
Ask him a difficult question, observe his talent for analysis
Speak to provoke him, observe his attitude
Ask him how he goes about solving difficult problems,
 judge his intelligence
Let him deal with a difficult situation, observe his courage
Get him drunk, observe his nature
Tempt him with gold, observe his integrity
Give him instructions to complete a task, assess his
 trustworthiness.

THE ART OF WAR BY SUN TZU

SAFFRON



Seize the opportunity when it arises
Once missed, it may be lost forever.

FENG MENGLONG

JOSEPH



To know what is going on takes sense;
To know what to do about it takes wisdom.

CHINESE PROVERB

ON THE WINDOW



From day to day he knows what is lacking
From month to month he does not forget what
he has learnt
This is a person who is truly inspired by learning.

CONFUCIUS

THE STUDIO



I do not value those who broadcast others' failings,
 subordinates who slander their superiors, those
 who are brave but lack manners, those who are
 decisive but lack consideration.

CONFUCIUS

A MAGNOLIA BRANCH

Chinese calligraphy: It's not me | Oval seal: My painting | Rectangular seal: The Way
 Small square seal: Blessing | Square seal: Kuen Shan



I do not bully the weak, nor do I fear the powerful.

ZUO QUINING

JOSEPH AND THE FISH



The ears and eyes are not made to think
and are easily affected by outside influences
The mind thinks, and if it thinks, it arrives at the truth.

CONFUCIUS

AUTUMN SERENADE



A great talker uses few words.

MENCIUS

BLUE EYES

✓



He who is over-courteous is tiring
He who is overcautious is fearful
He who is brave beyond reason is dangerous
He who is straightforward beyond consideration offends.

CONFUCIUS

HEALEY

Chinese characters: lost in low cloud | Round seal: Han and Tang Dynasties
Oval seal: My painting | Small square seal: Moon in water | Large square seal: Kuen Shan
Qing Dynasty pottery motif

為不如此



無和



Do not take it to heart when you lose,
Do not show it on your face when you win.

GAO BOGONG

BIJOU



Three types of friendship are beneficial:
they are friendships with the honest, the
sincere and the well-informed.

Three types of friendships are damaging:
they are friendship with flatterers, with
hypocrites and with the argumentative.

CONFUCIUS

GOOD COMPANIONS

Chinese characters: good companions | Oval seal: My painting
Small round seal: Insight | Large round seal: Predetermined encounter
Square seal: Kuen Shan

好伴



The roughest roads are not found across rivers
and mountains, but in people's hearts.

BAI JUYI

WHEN HOME CALLS



A wise man pays special attention to nine areas:
 He sees with clarity; he hears distinctly;
 He speaks sincerely; his countenance is gracious;
 His manner is courteous; at work he strives for respect;
 When in doubt he seeks information;
 When angry he thinks of the negative consequences
 of his anger;
 When he sees possible gain and profit he reflects on
 ethics and integrity.

CONFUCIUS

FACE TO FACE

Chinese characters: our true selves | Small long seal: The Way | Small round seal: Insight

Large round seal: Predetermined encounter | Square seal: Kuen Shan

Ming Dynasty pottery motif

山眞面目 盧



緣

A friend who truly knows you is always with you.

CHINESE PROVERB

TWO BROTHERS



兄弟



Only the very knowledgeable and the very ignorant
do not shift their ground.

CONFUCIUS

THE BIRD TABLE



A wise man seldom fails because he anticipates problems.

FENG MENGLONG

HOMER

Seal: I have done it all, I need strive no more



The usefulness of wisdom lies in the right application.
A wise man may fail because he considers too much,
while a fool may succeed by acting correctly only
once at the right moment.

FENG MENGLONG

CHING CHING

人迷



People rage, I do not.
Rage makes you ill, rage can kill,
rage wastes energy, rage sacrifices peace.

ANON

ZEN

得意的天



Those who do not attempt everything accomplish something.

MENCIUS

FIRST CATCH

Seal: Kwong Kuen Shan



I do not value those who steal ideas and believe
themselves clever.

I do not value those who boast and believe
themselves courageous.

I do not value those who reveal the secrets of others
and believe themselves honest.

ZI GONG

THE DISCIPLE

Chinese characters: life's little stories | Oval seal: My painting

Small square: Moon in water | Medium square: Meditation

Large square seal: Kuen Shan

生活小 故事

九八年春



The less you know, the more confident you are.

CHINESE PROVERB

THE SNOWMAN



River dwellers know the way of the fish,
Mountain dwellers know the song of the birds;
River dwellers live off the river,
Mountain dwellers live off the mountain.

CHINESE PROVERB

BY THE RIVERBANK



Prompt decision often succeeds,
Hesitation often fails.

LU XUOXUN

LOTUS



The virtuous man is never alone,
he has many like-minded friends.

CONFUCIUS

BUMPER HARVEST



A wise man sees his own faults,
A courageous one corrects them.

CHINESE PROVERB

SCENTING SPRING



Three men bring trouble on themselves:
The ignorant man who follows his judgement,
The stubborn man who follows his will,
The contemporary man who wants to
re-create the past indiscriminately.

CONFUCIUS

SCARECROW



The advantage of being tiny:
Like a blade of grass looking up at a tree,
Like a stream looking out on the ocean,
Like a light in a village hut looking up
at the stars in the sky;
Because being tiny,
I can see what is great.

ANON

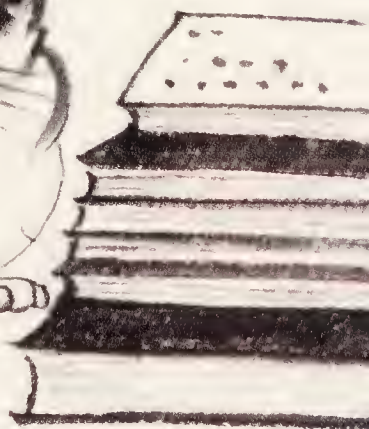
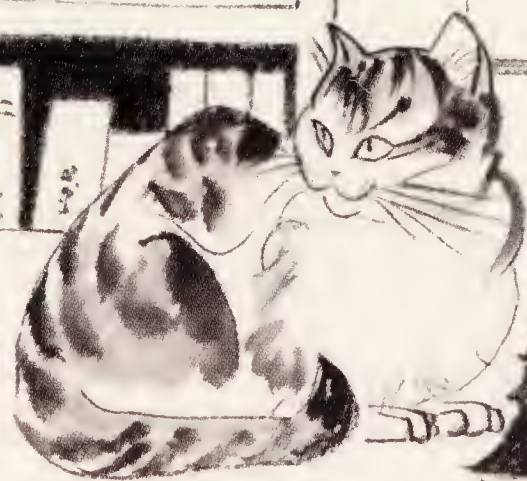
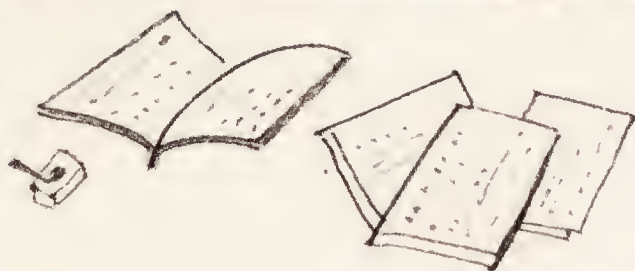
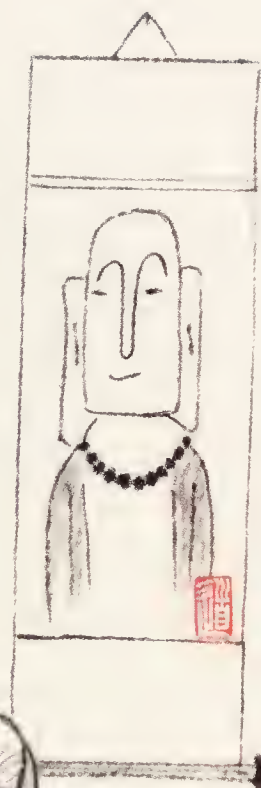
GROWING UP



Ancient scholars studied for self-fulfillment;
Today's scholars study for fame.

CONFUCIUS

THE STUDY



An intelligent person understands others,
A brilliant person understands himself.

CHINESE PROVERB

GIZMO



You are more likely to succeed if you know your strengths and weaknesses, your place in society and your worth to others.

FENG MENGLONG

CHING CHING AND THE WASP



A broad-minded person finds even a
small space accommodating.

CHINESE PROVERB

THE COURTYARD

Chinese characters: I find my own happiness

Round seal: Insight | Rectangular seal: The Way | Square seal: Kwong Kuen Shan



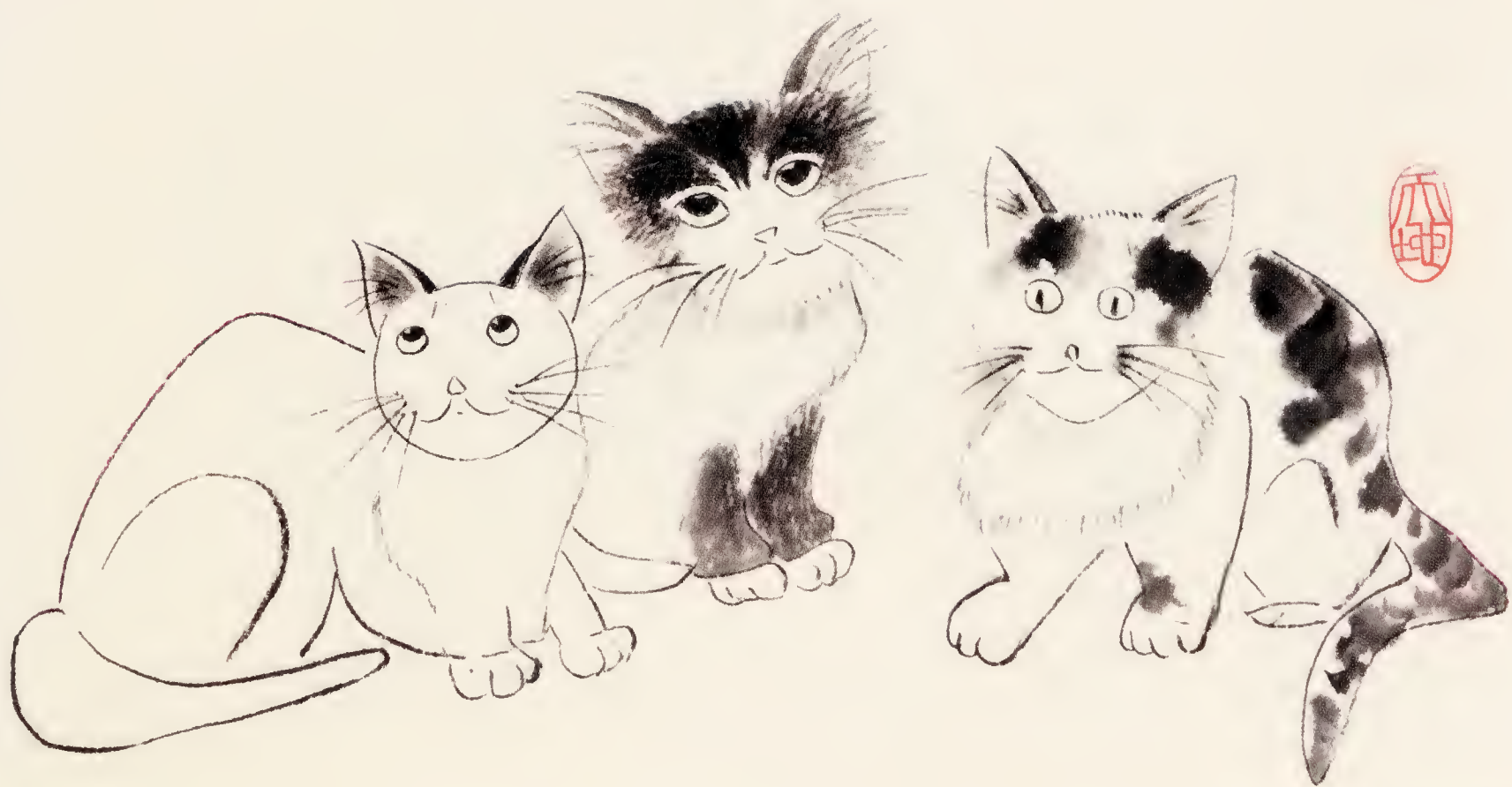
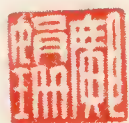
自得
其樂



When I walk with two companions both would be my teachers:
I would choose the good traits and follow them, and would try
to correct in myself the faults I see in them.

CONFUCIUS

THREE FRIENDS



To be self-sufficient is to be happy,
To have no demands is to have no worry.

ANON

DO NOT DISTURB

Chinese characters: the joy of leisure | Oval seal: Follow fate | Small round seal: Insight

Large round seal: Han and Tang Dynasties | Square seal: Kuen Shan

Ming Dynasty pottery motif

安然樂

九八年春
山居



I beg you do not love your golden dress,
Rather value your youth.
Collect sweet blossoms while you can,
Do not wait till the branches are bare.

CHINESE POEM

BLACK VELVET



The wise man exercises his vigilance
where no one can see him – in his heart.

CONFUCIUS

AH MING



To judge a man, compare his words with his deeds.

LIU XIANG

BENSON



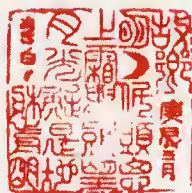
A COLLECTION OF SEALS

Reading from left to right and then top to bottom, the seals translate as follows:

1. Kuen Shan
2. Meditation
3. Kwong Kuen Shan
4. Heaven and earth
5. There is a light, next to my bed.
Is it frost, white on the ground?
I look up, it is the moon.
I lie back, and think of home.

TANG POEM BY LI PO

6. My painting
7. Predetermined encounter
8. Phoenix
9. Heart of Zen



A COLLECTION OF SEALS

Reading from left to right and then top to bottom, the seals translate as follows:

1. I have done it all, I need to strive no more
2. Insight
3. Follow fate
4. The Way
5. Han dynasty subject: Kwong Kuen Shan
6. Blessing
7. Kuen Shan
8. Moon in water
9. Han and Tang Dynasties



EXPLANATORY NOTES ON SEALS

Seals you often see on Chinese paintings are Chinese characters carved from jade, ivory, soapstone or wood. They are pressed into cinnabar paste and then pressed in a suitable position on the painting to reproduce the characters. There are two main types of seals. One is the name seal which bears the name of the painter. The other is the 'mood' or 'leisure' seal which bears characters to reflect the mood, inspiration or philosophy of the painter.

KKS 2002

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

KWONG KUEN SHAN grew up in Hong Kong, where she studied classical Chinese and Chinese calligraphy. She later studied Chinese brush paintings and has been painting, exhibiting, and teaching her art for several years. She lives with her husband in Abergavenny, England.

cattao00kwon

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simplicity, the rewards of friendship, the tenets of living our lives with humanity—and, of course, the invaluable lessons to be learned in both mischievousness and stillness, qualities which no creature exemplifies better than the beloved cat.



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“To know what is going on takes sense;
to know what to do about it takes wisdom.”

CHINESE PROVERB



The Cat and the Tao is a timeless treasure that artfully fuses the elegant and playful beauty of cats with the quiet power of ancient Chinese wisdom in a book sure to touch lovers of cats, art, and eastern philosophy.

ART/BODY, MIND, AND SPIRIT

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