



Left: before-treatment triage photograph showing damage to a painting by I-Hsiung Ju; right: Senior Conservation Assistant Jillian Wilcox treating the painting in the lab. For more images from this treatment—including before, during, and after photos—visit [ccaah.org/news](http://ccaah.org/news).

### A COLLECTION OF LATE 20TH CENTURY CHINESE INK-DYE PAINTINGS UNDERGOES A DRAMATIC TRANSFORMATION

In fall 2017, CCAHA's Senior Conservation Assistant Jillian Wilcox was part of a triage team that received a collection of badly damaged paintings by Chinese American artist I-Hsiung Ju. The artist's daughters, Helen and Doris, contacted CCAHA after the paintings were salvaged from a devastating house fire. To further complicate things, the artwork had remained wet and exposed to the elements for about a month before the family could access it.

"I thought, this is going to take a miracle," Jillian admits. "I also immediately thought how heartbreaking it must be for the daughters to see their father's artwork so damaged."

Born in Xiangsu, China, in 1923, I-Hsiung Ju studied painting in the Philippines before immigrating to the United States in 1968. The next year, he was an artist-in-residence at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia, where he eventually became a tenured art professor. Throughout his career, Ju developed a style that synthesized contemporary and ancient techniques, interpreting present-day American landscapes in the style of traditional Chinese brush painting. Ju retired in 1989 and continued to paint until his death in 2012.

Before she started the treatment, Jillian carefully mapped out every step she would take, beginning with spot tests to determine which surface cleaning techniques would work best.

"Unlike more common surface cleaning, soot and ash require a completely different approach, especially on a soft surface that was also water damaged. After the front was surface cleaned, only then could I lay it face down to start the backing removal of the multiple layers of severely distorted and punctured mat board and the dry mount tissue."

The treatment also required the careful removal of adhesive, as well as humidification and flattening. In some areas, there were significant punctures and material losses (pictured) which needed to be filled and toned to match the original artwork. For Jillian, repairing these losses was one of the most satisfying parts of the process.

"This was one of my most rewarding treatments, and fun once I was finished. I was extremely pleased with the results and learned a great deal from this particular treatment. This project became more personal knowing what heartbreak this fire caused. I hoped the family could again see this exquisite work and not the damage."