We know that the practice of inscribing poems on paintings was widespread in Chinese painting of the Ming and Qing dynasties. A special and often overlooked instance of that practice was the inscription of poems from centuries earlier as part of the newly completed painting (poetry from the Tang period was the favorite choice). Such inscription holds particular interest for what it shows about the intersection of verbal and pictorial arts as well as the aesthetic interplay of past and present. What sorts of effects were the artists who inscribed ancient poems on their paintings trying to achieve? Although sometimes what they do seems merely gratuitous, other times their act of adding an earlier poem to their work gives it new layers of meaning or aesthetic effect that the painted images alone could never convey. It may even alter the way we perceive the earlier poem, turning it in a new direction that the poet and earlier readers could not have imagined. The existence today of digitalized databases of poetry allows us to identify ancient poems that the painter may have deliberately left unidentified, and thus opens the possibility of new insight into this often arcane artistic practice. This talk examines the many ways that ancient poems interact with the paintings to which they were added in Ming-Qing times by the artists themselves.

Ronald Egan is currently Chair of the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at Stanford University. He received his Ph.D. in Chinese literature from Harvard University. His research focuses on Chinese literature, aesthetics, and cultural history of the Tang-Song period, as well as on text and image studies (poetry and painting) of the later imperial period. His publications include books on the literary works and lives of Ouyang Xiu and Su Shi, the latter entitled *Word, Image, and Deed in the Life of Su Shi*. He has also published a general study of Song dynasty aesthetic thought, entitled *The Problem of Beauty: Aesthetic Thought and Pursuits in Northern Song Dynasty China*. He is the translator of selected essays in Qian Zhongshu’s *Guanzui bian*, which appeared as *Limited Views: Essays on Ideas and Letters by Qian Zhongshu*. His most recent book is a study of the works and reception history of Li Qingzhao, entitled *The Burden of Female Talent: The Poet Li Qingzhao and Her History in China* (Harvard University Press, 2013; Chinese translation by Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 2017). He is a past president of the American Oriental Society.