



# PLANT

EXPLORING  
THE BOTANICAL  
WORLD

PHAIDON

GUO HONGWEI



*Plant No. 8, 2012*  
Watercolour on paper, 67 x 101 cm / 26 1/2 x 39 3/4 in  
Private collection

The Chinese artist Guo Hongwei brings meticulous order to this watercolour of pressed flowers and foliage, an assemblage that is more than the sum of its parts. At first sight a work of straightforward documentation, the piece is titled so as to suggest that the carefully depicted plants are incidental to the artist's wider purposes; the title of the series from which it comes, *Painting as Collecting*, has the same effect. The son of a renowned calligrapher, Guo grew

up and studied in Sichuan province and now represents a contemporary generation of artists working in Beijing. His understated work is a reduction of the visible world in two dimensions, and seeks to answer a fundamental question posed by illustration: what does it mean for one thing to resemble another? Guo is especially concerned with the functional aspects of art, the natural forms of his subject matter mirrored by precise attention to the artist's mat-

erials and the physical processes of recording. The reality of the plants corresponds with a parallel world of images made actual on paper and gathered together like a series of memories. Similarities in the subject matter reveal the subtleties of individual perception in both the artist and the viewer.