

饒宗頤：明季文人與繪畫

Painting and the Literati in the Late Ming

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This article is a partially abridged translation of Professor Jao Tsung-i's paper delivered at the Symposium on Painting and Calligraphy by Ming I-min 明遺民, i.e. those who remained loyal to the Ming cause after the fall of the dynasty in 1644. The symposium and its accompanying exhibition were held at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in August-September 1975. In analyzing the art of this critical period of Chinese culture, Professor Jao, Professor of Chinese Literature at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, pointed out that the works of Ming I-min are characterized by their scholarly spirit 士氣, their free imagination and their "uncommon" artistic expression. Among the painters of the late Ming there was hardly a professional; they were scholars skilled in various arts, poetry and other literary studies and their versatility was in a way the basis of their skill as painters.

Introduction

The literati of the Ming period were almost all skilled in painting and calligraphy. It has for some time been assumed that the practice of painting and calligraphy among the literati first became prevalent in late Ming times. Teng Shih 鄧實, for example, attributes the beginning of the fashion to the example of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang 董其昌. However, many literary figures at the beginning of the dynasty, such as Liu Chi 劉基, were well versed in the art of painting.

The Categories of "hua-shih" (畫士) and "shih-hua" (士畫)

From late Ming times, various artists and critics have attempted to group painters into categories. Ku Ying-yuan 顧凝遠 in his *Hua-yin* 畫引 singled out Tung Ch'i-ch'ang as the grand innovator. The rest were categorised as: (1) Scholarly master painters, such as Shen Chou 沈周, Wen Cheng-ming 文徵明 and T'ang Yin 唐寅; (2) Literati painters, such as Ch'en Ch'un 陳淳, Lu Chih 陸治 and Hsü Wei 徐渭; (3) Painterly painters, (Chou Ch'en 周臣 is one of four in this category); (4) "Contemporary" literati painters (Li Liu-fang 李流芳 and Chung Hsing 鍾惺 are among the five in this category). The term "Painterly Painters" (*hua ming-chia* 畫名家) probably referred to professional painters as opposed to the literati.

In the album of works by contemporary painters dedicated to Chou Liang-kung 周亮工 (recorded in the *Shih-ch'ü San-pian* 石渠三編) is a long colophon by Kung Hsien 龔賢 on the painters of the early Ch'ing. In it he divided the painters of his time into two streams and three classes. The three classes were: the "masterly" (能), the "inspired" (神) and the "sublime" (逸), in ascending order of merit. The masterly and the inspired were grouped in the "main stream" and the sublime was

regarded as the "other stream". (Then he went on to qualify his statements by saying that the sublime class of painters, because they were really beyond classification, should really be called true masters of painting (畫士). He also warned against a too strict division of painters into the literati and painterly schools, and criticised the habit of connoisseurs of calling any painting of high artistic merit a "literary painting" and also the practice among the less discerning of using the term "scholarly painting" as a form of damning praise. Of the painters of Nanking, Kung Hsien regarded K'un-ts'an 髡殘 and Ch'eng Cheng-kuei 程正揆 as the two leaders among the few who belonged to the sublime class. Again, only a few belonged to the inspired class, and the rest were seen as masterly.

In the inscription in an album of landscapes recorded in the *Hsü-chai Ming-hua Hsü-lu* 虛齋名畫續錄, Kung Hsien discussed the rules (法) of painting: "According to Hsieh Ho 謝赫 of Nan-ch'i 南齊 there are six rules in painting. In my opinion, there are only four essentials (*iao* 要). The first is the brush (*pi* 筆), the second is ink (*mo* 墨), the third 'mountains and valleys' (*ch'iu-huo* 丘壑) and the fourth is 'life' (*ch'i-yün* 氣韻). The brush should be handled with authority, the ink should be rich, the mountains and valleys should be stable. If these qualities are all present, there is life in the painting. The authoritative brush should be tempered with delicacy. If it is wielded with strength and no delicacy, the painting is withered. Richness of ink does not imply a wet brush. Mountains and valleys are just another way of saying "composition"; the composition should be balanced, but then it must have elements of the unexpected without which the balance achieves nothing. Mere balance is the characteristic of the non-gifted painter, while the unbalanced painting is produced by the hand of an amateur. Now there are two streams of painting, the professional and the scholarly. The professional painting is balanced and the scholarly painting lacks balance. It is surely better to be amateurish than to be uninspired. If one combines strength and delicacy, delicacy with richness, richness with the unbalanced, and the unbalanced with the balanced, then one would reach the highest peak of achievement in painting. And who can accomplish this but the supremely gifted person who is skilled through dedicated study? In a painting by such an artist exists poetry and order, and the vibrancy of life. Truly, painting is no mean art."

From the passages quoted, it can be seen that Kung Hsien rated the sublime as the highest category in painting and named only two artists worthy of a place in this class. He also regarded the element of the unexpected in a painting as the mark of creativity and rated innovation above technical competence.

In the opinion of the author, Kung Hsien's theory of the four rules of painting represents an advance on the six rules theory of Hsieh Ho. It points out the inter-relationship of the different aspects of artistic creation.

Chou Liang-kung records Fang Heng-hsien 方亨咸's comments on Kung Hsien's theory: "Pan-ch'ien (Kung Hsien)'s discussion on scholarly paintings and professional painters is both true and well argued. It makes one feel that Hsieh Ho's theory is incomplete. My only comment is that it is perhaps not right to rate the sublime above the inspired. For the inspired painter the hand perfectly reflects the movements of the mind, brush and ink becomes one, and the whole work defies analysis. The painting is individual and completely unified in its every aspect. The sublime on the other hand transcends and is removed from the world of common convention.

It is unfettered like the heavenly horse galloping in the sky. It also has its place in the order of things. The *Ch'an* (禪) masters would call it the divine tradition outside orthodoxy or "the meeting on the other peak". The inspired is in the state of a Tathāgata and the masterly is but a pratyeka Buddha. In the military world, Sun-tzu 孫子 and Wu Ch'i 吳起 were the inspired and Ch'eng Pu-shih 程不識, who commanded with absolute discipline, was the masterly, while the relaxed General Li Kuang 李廣 was the sublime. The inspired is the ultimate of the masterly and there is no single way to achieve it. Therefore, the inspired is in a class above the masterly and the sublime. It should not be discussed on the same level as the others, far less being considered as inferior to any. Perhaps for Kung Hsien the inspired represents only the complete mastery of rules. In any case, painting is a (rarefied) and cultured activity. If one is not well read and is unrefined, one will always remain an artisan however much time and effort one puts into the practice of painting. This is why the discerning person differentiates between the refined and the vulgar. There is surely no cause for us to consider all paintings by scholars sublime."

Thus Fang Heng-hsien's point of view is markedly different from that of Kung Hsien and the difference depends on the interpretation of the term "inspired".

According to Fang I-chih 方以智, the division is between the "artisan's brush" and the "scholar's brush", neither of which is the middle way. He says: "According to the world's opinion, the artisan's brush is impeded by rules, and the scholar's brush is impeded by the lack of impediment. This dilemma must be resolved before the natural process of creation can run its course."

There is thus considerable difference among the views of late Ming painters on the relative merits of the three classes of painting, but there is general agreement on the superiority of the "literary" over the "artisan".

Tao-chi 道濟 wrote in an album of old trees painted for Ming-liu 鳴六 and dated 1694 (reproduced in *The Paintings of Tao-chi*, p. 108): "These men painted from the fundamentals, without inheriting it from the family—noble painters such as Pai-t'u 白禿 (K'un-ts'an), Ch'ing-ch'i 青溪 (Ch'eng Cheng-kuei) and Tao-shan 道山 (Ch'en Shu 陳舒), elegant painters like Mei-huo 梅壑 (Cha Shih-piao 查士標) and Chien-chiang 漸江 (Hung-jen 弘仁), dry and lean painters like Kou Tao-jen 垢道人 (Ch'eng Sui 程邃), eloquent painters like Pa-ta Shan-jen 八大山人 (Chu Ta 朱耷) of Nan-ch'ang 南昌, expressive painters like Mei Ch'ü-shan 梅瞿山 (Mei Ch'ing 梅清) and Hsüeh-ping-tzu 雪坪子 (Mei Keng 梅庚), these are all painters of our generation who have understood. I alone have failed, and so my paintings are clumsy and devoid of meaning. Those who know would simply laugh."

This passage was written in the thirty-third year of K'ang-hsi, twenty years after Kung Hsien's colophon quoted above. It is certain that by this time, the question of the literary painter and the artisan was no longer considered crucial.

Painters and Writers

The literati of the late Ming were mostly versed in all the literary arts as well as in painting and calligraphy, but their achievements in these diverse activities were not equal. The following are examples of literary figures who also painted and painters who also wrote:

- (a) Essayists who painted: Hou Fang-yü 侯方域, Wang Ssu-jen 王思任.

- (b) Poets who painted: Chung Hsing 鍾惺, Ch'eng Chia-sui 程嘉燧.
 (c) Dramatists who painted: Ch'i Chih-chia 祁豸佳.
 (d) Painters who wrote poetry: Ch'eng Sui, Hu Tsung-jen 胡宗仁, Yün Ke 惲格, Wu Li 吳歷, Chiang Shih-chieh 姜實節.
 (e) Calligraphers who painted: Hsing T'ung 邢侗, Ni Yuan-lu 倪元璐, Huang Tao-chou 黃道周.*

The Relation between Style in Poetry and in Painting

Nearly all painters of the late Ming wrote poetry, and many true poets were accomplished painters. Poetry is the expression of one's nature and temperament, and differences in temperament and experiences give rise to differences in style. Temperament is determined at birth, but learning is a consequence of application. Talent is innate and knowledge is acquired. The power of expression varies with the individual but the artistic form is learned through exercise. In short, poetic style is formed as a result of the interaction between nature and practice, and the same can be said of style in painting. Thus one often finds parallels in the styles of poetry and painting, and the cause is none other than similarities in temperament, taste and inclinations.

It is not possible to discuss all the painters of this period, but those who are represented in the Chih-lo Lou 至樂樓 Collection may be categorised as follows:

- (1) Gifted Painters: These are not specialists in painting but their talents are much in evidence and there is a refreshing quality to their painting. Their compositions are often unexpected and different from common productions. Such painters are: Yang Lung-yu 楊龍友 (Wen-ts'ung 文從), Chang Ta-feng 張大風, Huang Hsiang-chien 黃向堅, Fu Shan 傅山, Cha Chi-tso 查繼佐.
- (2) Masterly Painters: These are true painters who are well trained in the technique of painting. In spite of differences in style they can all be grouped in the same category. Such painters are: Ch'en Hung-shou 陳洪綬, Lan Ying 藍瑛, Hsiao Yün-ts'ung 蕭雲從, Ku Fu-chen 顧符稹, Wen Tien 文點.
- (3) Monkish Painters: Their paintings are prompted by moments of inspiration and not by any desire to represent reality. The works originate from the spirit and assume forms which are entirely individual. Such painters are: Wu-k'o 無可 (Fang I-chih), Tan-tang 擔當, K'un-ts'an, Chien-chiang (Hung-jen), Shih-t'ao 石濤 (Tao-chi), Pa-ta (Chu Ta).

According to the differences in learning, experiences, personal vision and skill with the brush and ink, the styles of these painters can be grouped into the following eight types:

- (i) The closed and complex. Mountains and peaks are juxtaposed and the imagination is given free rein, e.g. Wu Pin 吳彬, Kung Hsien.
- (ii) The open and sparse. A few brush-strokes suggest a rarefied landscape, e.g. Ch'eng Chia-sui, Pa-ta (Chu Ta).

*Following this classification, the original article quoting extensively from critics to show the nature of their art.—TRANS.

- (iii) The dry. The texture strokes are rendered with a dry brush but the representation is complete, e.g. Ching Sui, Tai Pen-hsiao 戴本孝.
- (iv) The moist. There is no impending storm but the atmosphere is saturated with moisture, e.g. Cha Shih-piao, Tan Ch'ung-kuang 笪重光.
- (v) The rich and ornamental. Technically brilliant and all six methods of painting are employed, e.g. Lan Ying, Wang Chien 王鑑.
- (vi) The quiet and leisurely. All clichés are done away with and the statement is personal and direct, e.g. Shao Mi 邵彌, Shen Hao 沈顥.
- (vii) The full and rounded. The vertical brush is used to achieve a simple charm, e.g. Tsou Chih-lin 鄒之麟, Ch'eng Cheng-kuei.
- (viii) The finely-balanced. The expression is powerful though it lacks apparent design, e.g. Huang Tao-chou, Ni Yuan-lu.

Lui Hsieh 劉勰 in his *Wen Hsin Tiao Lung* 文心雕龍 discussed literary styles under eight categories. I have used his approach as a model for my discussions, but I do not wish to imply that these are the only eight styles in painting or that the painters mentioned are restricted to one particular style. Of all the painters of the late Ming, Shih-t'ao was the most versatile. Most of the others developed individual styles to an extreme and disregarded the "golden mean". In this way they all found original expressions.

When we study the poetry of these masters, we can often observe the relationship between their artistic and the literary styles. It was said that when Li Liu-fang painted, he "opened up an infinite vista with a few dots and washes" (*Keng-tzu Hsiao-hsia Chi* 庚子消夏記) and that his poetry "seemed casual, but revealed the depths of his being" (*Lieh Ch'ao Shih Chih* 列朝詩集). The poetry of Chung Hsing is profound and finely balanced, so are his paintings. Li Jih-hua 李日華's short poems are most elegant and greatly enhance his paintings. Ch'ien Ch'ien-i 錢謙益 said that Li's poetry was "made known through his paintings and not obscured by them". Hsü Fang 徐枋's brush work is orthodox and regular and so is his poetry, there being no trace of extravagance. Hung-jen's paintings are dry and lean, coldness emanates from his rocks. Similarly his poetry has the penetrating quality of fragrant snow. Fu Shan's poetry and calligraphy are completely unbridled and his paintings are like those of a madman. The poems of Chu Ta are like riddles, and his paintings are often allegories. Thus the poetry of painters is made of the same stuff as their painting and derives characteristic styles from highly individual personalities. Their poetry and painting explain each other. More examples can be given, but the ones mentioned will suffice.

Painting as Poetic Illustration—a few Examples

Paintings illustrating poems were popular among artists of this period. At times, early poetry also provided the themes. The following are a few examples:

- (i) Tai Pen-hsiao: an album of landscapes on the poems of Tu Fu 杜甫.
(Lu Hsin-yuan 陸心源, *Hsü Hsiang-li Kuan Kuo-yen Lu*
續穰梨館過眼錄)
- (ii) Fu Shan: Painting on a poem by Li Shang-yin 李商隱. (*Hsü Hsiang-li Kuan Kuo-yen Lu*)
- (iii) Shao Mi: Album on T'ang poems. (*Hsiang-li Kuan Kuo-yen Lu*)

- (iv) Kao Chien 高簡: Album on T'ao Ch'ien 陶潛 poems. (Chih-lo Lou Collection)
- (v) Yeh Hsin 葉欣: One hundred paintings on poetic lines of T'ao Ch'ien. (*Tu-hua Lu* 讀畫錄)
- (vi) Cha Shih-piao: Album of eight leaves illustrating poems by Fang Heng-hsien. (*Ku-kung Shu-hua Lu* 故宮書畫錄)

Among the illustrations of contemporary verse, those by Tao-chi on the poems of Huang Yen-lü 黃研旅詩集 (in the Chih-lo Lou Collection) are well-known.

Literary Writings as Source Material for Art History

In the collected works of late Ming and early Ch'ing literati are often found poems and inscriptions addressed to contemporary artists. These writings provide valuable information for the history of painting.†

Conclusion

Literati of the Ming period eschew the artisan's brush. They wish to be scholars who paint rather than masters of painting. To them, nature is their garden, brush and ink their diversion, literature their outpouring and painting the gift among friends. Artistic activity is the means of expression of friendship. He who inscribes repays the painting with a poem, and he who paints uses (substitutes) the painting for a poem. Painting and poetry assuage longing. Wang Shih-chen recorded a poem by the painter Sung Chueh 宋瑤: "When I came, the prunus was still lean and it was not yet time for the blossoms. After we parted the weeping willows were sprouting golden shoots. Should you think of me, look at my painting, you will see that westwards beyond the plank bridge is where I live." To see the painting is to see the painter, and the use of the painting rises above a common feeling of friendship. Thus the best of paintings are often painted for best friends, and if the best friend is himself a painter then the painting would be better still, and its meaning even more profound, because it is painted for someone who understands. Ch'eng Sui inscribed on a painting dedicated to Cha Shih-piao: "Could I but share the enlightenment of my Mei-huo, who has found it in painting." Such words are not lightly spoken even among friends. As it is said in *Wen Hsin Tiao Lung*, "the message in music is hard to understand, and it is hard to meet someone who does. Perhaps it may be a thousand years before one finds such a person." The Ming scholar painted not for gain but for those who understood. This is what Chang I 張怡 in his preface to Chou Liang-kung's *Tu-hua-lu* meant when he talked of "finding meaning in it" and "the communion of spirits".

†In the original article, examples are quoted from the writings of Yü An-ch'i 俞安期 on Ting Yün-p'eng; Huang Tsung-hsi 黃宗羲 on Wei Hsueh-lien 魏學謙; Ch'üan Chu-wang 全祖望 on Huang Tao-chou; Ch'ien Ch'ien-i on Yang Wen-ts'ung; P'eng Sun-i 彭孫怡 on Ch'en Hung-shou; Shen Shou-hung 沈受弘 on Yün Ke; Wang Shih-chen 王士禛 on Ku Fu-chen; Fang Shou 方授 on Hsiao Yün-ts'ung; Yün Ke, Huang Shih-chai 黃石齋 and Li Yin-tu 李因篤 on Ch'eng Sui; Tang Yen-sheng 湯燕生 on Hung-jen; Ch'ien Ch'ien-i on Shen Hao, Wang Shih-chen and Ch'eng Chou-liang 程周量 on Tai Pen-hsiao; and the inscriptions of Ta Shan 大汕 on his own paintings.—TRANS.