

10A talking  
head

Lecture 10A, Birds & Flowers, pre-Huizong  
(Before dedication to Ellen Laing).

This will be the first of two lectures on Chinese bird-and-flower painting through the Song dynasty—this one taking us up to around the time of the Emperor Huizong in the late Northern Song; the next one, 10B, <sup>will be</sup> on Huizong-period and Southern Song bird-and-flower painting.

In one respect, these lectures have been inconsistent—well, more than one, but one I want to speak about briefly. I announced near the beginning that they would be heavily visual, without trying to deal seriously with questions of meaning and function, what the ptgs meant to the people who made and used them, how they functioned in different times and different contexts. Well, I've followed that generally; but I've also spent quite a lot of time talking about the philosophical system that I take to underlie Chinese landscape painting in the different periods. I believe I have things to say about that which aren't general knowledge, and landscape painting is the principal theme of this series. But I won't try anything of the kind for bird-and-flower painting. There are rich textual sources, in Chinese and in modern scholarship, about the symbolism of these subjects, and how pictures of them could carry symbolic significance. But that isn't a matter on which I feel I have original things to say, so I leave it alone. About the stylistic development of this kind of painting, on the other hand, I can definitely contribute a whole new account, which is what follows.

10A. Bird-and-Flower Painting, up to Hui-tsung:

(Dedicate this one to Ellen Johnston Laing, valued colleague, good friend, co-chair of my 1977 delegation; prolific, wide-ranging scholar; did fine work on early bird-and-flower ptg. Not same as mine, but all the better. At mtgs of Association for Asian Studies in Philadelphia in late March, session on March 25<sup>th</sup> honoring her, also reception with more papers on March 27 evening; I can't be there, but ...)

Back to T'ang, for stylistic-development account:

(What follows is based on a lecture given at Kyoto National Museum in 1982, see on my website CLP 6B). Attempt to construct a style-history for b&f ptg using ptgs that had recently appeared in mainland China, from which I had made slides.

Hasn't been done; Ellen Laing wrote valuable article on early b&f ptg in tombs etc.; good writing on Hui-tsung & his Academy. But: one of our best specialists recently wrote that in her view, ptg attrib. Huang Ch'üan (which we'll see below) belongs by style in time of Hui-tsung. When even first-class scholar can write that, we obviously need to attempt, at least, a Gombrich-style developmental account. That's what I'm about to do.

Requires looking at close-up detail images of kind this series offers, which is why it hasn't been done: distinctions I will bring out seen only in such

detail images.

- 10.1.1-3 Flower, bird, and animal details from stone engravings and tomb ptgs in tombs of Princess Yung-t'ai, Princes I-te and Chang Huai, early 8<sup>th</sup> cent.

- 10.2.1-4. Details from T'ang wall ptgs.

Much of T'ang ptg is art of outline & color; this is generally true of b&f ptg also. Stone engravings, wall ptgs, exhibit use of birds & plants as decorative elements, estab. outdoor, garden setting for fig. Bird in flight: distinguished by type, color. ("Hoopoe bird!")

- Hunting hawks: heavy outlines. Drawing heavier in wall ptgs, to be seen from distance.

- 10.3.1. "Lady with Flying Bird." Fragment of painting from Astana, Turkestan. 8<sup>th</sup> cent. Same: outline + heavy mineral color.

- 10.4.1-7 Details from "Palace Ladies w. Flowering Headdresses" handscroll in Liaoning Museum, shown in Lecture 4A. 9<sup>th</sup> cent. in date?

Strong outlines + washes of color for flowers, bird, insects. (Woman at far left holds butterfly.) Ptg of peony on fan held by girl. Magnolia flowers at end of scroll: shaded color on blossoms.

Crane: linear outline of feathers and other parts, w. strokes of heavy color w/in these. Seem to shade from one side of feather to other, making them appear slightly turned oblique to picture plane, relieving flatness of design.

- 10.5.1. Crane named “Wind Dancer”, from set of “Six Cranes,” supposed to be copy by Emp. Hui-tsung after work by Huang Ch’üan, great 10<sup>th</sup> cent. master, ptd in 944 for ruler of Shu state. From old reproduction book. Authenticity uncertain, but striking parallel. Crane supposed to be dancing, spreading wings as if catching wind.) Argument: Huang Ch’üan may have inherited T’ang trad., based on literary sources.)

- 10.5.2. “Two Cranes and Bamboo,” attrib. to Huang Ch’üan, Ming copy? Purported “Hui-tsung” insc. Osaka Municipal Museum.

Huang Ch’üan, working in Shu state (present Szechwan) in 5 Dynasties, inherited T’ang traditions. Specialist in flower & bird ptg. Among many ptgs attrib. to him, most important is:

- 10.6.1-8. short handscroll in Palace Museum, Beijing, w. brief insc. said to be by Huang Ch’üan, saying he painted it for his son Huang Ch’ü-tsai, who was also an artist. Instructional ptg, giving models for various birds and insects. May be OK, but whether or not by Huang Ch’üan, early & valuable. Repertory of models for students, similar to:

(-10.7.1-3. For comparison, taxonomical ptg: Anon. “T’ang,” 100 Horses scroll. Palace Mus., Beijing.) Both ptgs spread out their images laterally over the surface, render them in clear outline manner, quasi-encyclopedic method of differentiation and classification. Process important to ptg of this time. Think back to Chao Kan scroll of fishermen, how it provides visual catalog of devices used by fishermen, spread out over surface. Horse ptg: based on long observation of horses, how they move, how they lie down and turn their heads and interact.

(etc. through details of Huang Ch’üan scroll; discuss as in lecture.)

Insects: wasp, depicted accurately, as though illustrating entomological treatise. All outline-and-wash.

Birds: something new: in addition to bounded (outlined) shape & color, fine strokes of ink rendering texture of their plumage. Not coincidental that this is around same time texture-stroke system being dev. In LS ptg.