

12A Talking  
Head

12A, Jin Painting; Chan Painting, Muqi

After a look at several paintings done in the north under the Jurchen or Jin dynasty during the Southern Song period, we will spend the rest of this twelfth and last lecture looking at Chan or Zen painting, mostly done in the late Southern Song period.

Now, the very concept of Chan ptg is anything but unproblematic. Quite a few Chinese art scholars question whether there is any such thing. And of course, as always, there is no final answer to this: Chan painting is a concept, not a clearly definable body of work, and those who choose to deny the concept can do so. I firmly believe in it, and you will see why. Among the doubters is one of my former students and one of the best Chinese art specialists active today: Marsha Weidner. Her article "Fit For Monks' Quarters; Monasteries as Centers of Aesthetic Activity in the Later Fourteenth Century" (reference in my handout) is a fine and valuable study of, among other things, how paintings were produced and appreciated in Buddhist monasteries in the Yuan period and later. I'm questioning here only her doubting, as she does near the beginning of her article, of the very existence of a Chan or Zen painting, made in China, that was rejected in its home country and preserved only in Japan. If she is right and there was no such painting, what am I going to be talking about for the next two hours or more?

or what follows.

But such doubting is common today: also done by Greg Levine, the very good scholar who teaches Japanese art history in my old department at Berkeley, and who ends his essay in the *Awakenings* catalog with these sentences::

“Difficult to come at head on, therefore, Zen Art seems at its clearest today when imagined as a field of converging and colliding objects, notions, and interpretations in which the visual is open to debate. Authenticity, adaptation, interpretation, and performance—this is arguably what zen Art has always been and perhaps what it will always be.”

Oof—again, if that is what Zen art is, what am I going to spend the next two hours talking about? I differ from those people in believing Chan painting can be defined, and art-historically traced, much more clearly than either of them admits, and I’ll attempt to do exactly that, for better or worse, even venturing onto the great unanswerable question of “What is Zen?” while you look for a long time at Muqi’s famous little picture of six persimmons.

12A\*<sub>1</sub> 12B

Lect.notes.12: The Late Sung: Ch'an Masters

Picture of me, in 1958, in Taichung. Explain why I put it on. End of series. (Implications of image). But also: working then on problem of relat. of Chan ptg w. literati ptg. . . etc.

Chin ptg (in north, during So. Sung):

- 12.1.1-7 "Streams & Mts. w/o End," long handscroll, Cleveland Art Museum; subject of early (1967), important study by Sherman Lee and Wen Fong. Eclectic work of 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> cent.

- 12.2.1-3. "Summer Mountains." Met. Mus., NY. (1973.120.1) Loosely attrib. to Yen Wen-kuei follower named Ch'û Ting; this is guess. Really (I think) another Chin work from 12<sup>th</sup> cent. or so, fine as that. See Wen Fong, *Summer Mountains*.

- 12.3.1-5 *Emperor Hsûan-tsung's Flight to Shu*. Met. Mus., NY. Beyond Representation 26-31.

Continuations of literati ptg into So. Sung period (more under Chin than under So. Sung in Hangchou): hard to trace, not enough genuine work.

Wang T'ing-yûn (1151-1202) (return)

- 12.4.1-5 "Secluded Bamboo and Withered Tree" Handscroll, Fujii Yurinkan, Kyoto. Skira 96.

Read: colophon by T'ang Hou (14<sup>th</sup> cent.), Skira 95.

Li Chung-lüeh (*chin-shih* 1179, d. 1205).

- 12.5.1. Landscape. Nelson Gallery, K.C.? Lyric 1.10, p. 19. These two can be taken to represent literati ptg at its best & worst. Can imagine literati of time praising this as having real poetic quality, as opposed to those dull Academy ptgs ...

Important reference and reading for Ch'an painting:

- Helmut Brinker and Hiroshi Kanagawa, *Zen Masters of Meditation in Images and Writings*. Zurich, 1996. Major publication. Contains history of Ch'an/Zen; "Zen Aestheticism and Theory of Art," "Zen symbols and Metaphors," etc. Careful studies of many kinds of Zen ptg.

- Helmut Brinker, *Zen in the Art of Painting*. London and New York, Arkana, 1987. Shorter, easier to read.