

Addendum B Talking head

Postlude B: Authenticity and Dating

We decided to add another postlude, dealing in a more detailed and serious way with questions of authenticity and dating than I was able to do in the lectures proper. Those of you who want to read and learn more about this big problem, and who want (very properly) to find out what others than myself have to say about it, so as to know what the arguments on the other side are, so to speak, can read the various writings listed at the end of the handout for this lecture. My own article on the subject, titled "Chinese Art and Authenticity," is included in a volume edited by Jason Kuo titled *Perspectives on*

Connoisseurship in Chinese Painting, ~~also listed on the handout,~~
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Postlude: Notes on Judging Priority and Authenticity

Examples from Previous Lectures:

- Nymph of Luo River: two versions, Liaoning and Beijing. Comparisons: pair of mid-air goddesses. Boats, three versions, with Freer Gallery. Issues of priority, closeness to hypothetical original. Do figures occupy space, do their clothes define their three-dimensionality? Do details of the boats "make sense" as representations of some real thing? (Misguided argument: artists of early period, or "cultivated" Chinese artists generally, weren't concerned with effects of space and "realistic" depiction, so your criteria are mis-chosen. Wrong, I reply: even when they are using most individual, eccentric, "anti-realist" styles, they are still painting good pictures in these senses. This is, with me, an article of faith, proven correct by many years of looking at good and bad Chinese paintings.)

- Attrib. Zhou Wenju, "The Double Screen", two versions: Freer, Beijing. Latter credited as "generally deemed to be older of two" on new Freer website <http://www.asia.si.edu/SongYuan/default.asp>. Arguments to contrary for Freer version being older, closer to original (see also Thomas Lawton, *Chinese Figure Painting*, p. 36: "Most significantly, the 'tremulous brush' technique in which the four principal figures are executed is less mannered, suggesting that the Freer version is the earlier work." (Note mistaken extension of right side-piece of inner screen in Freer version: addition?) Not so much question of more or less "realistic" here, but special intent of artist: drapery drawing, deliberate ambiguity in rendering of pictorial spaces.

- Attrib. Muqi, "Hibiscus/Rose Mallow" (*furong*): original in Daitokuji sub-temple, Soken'in; similar "Peony" (*mudan*) in copy scroll, National Palace Museum, Taipei. (I mistakenly discussed these in Lecture 12 as though they were same flower.) Brushwork, ink values, etc.; copy accommodates to literati taste in "disciplined" brushwork, un-evocative image, etc. Other more likely to represent real Muqi, work of artist whose paintings were rejected by critics of time for "bad brushwork" etc. Their "bad" = our (or at least my) good.

- Shrike, from Anon. (Li Anzhong?) "Birds in Thicket of Blossoming Plum and Bamboo," NPM, Taipei; vs. "Li Anzhong" fan ptg, "Shrike," CAT 34. Bird rendered as integrated, rounded body vs. flat pattern. Compare:

sparrow, from scroll with Cui Bo signature; Emperor Hui-tsung? "Five-colored Parakeet." What invalidates purported work by Academy master may validate work ascribed to imperial amateur . . . ?

- Attrib. Xia Gui, "Winter Landscape," NPM, Taipei; vs. "Gao Keming," "Xiao Zhao" copies. In original: readable, textured surfaces, volumetric masses, sense of space, scale of human-presence details, etc. Copies lose these qualities, badly. (Simple cases.)

- Anon. Tang (loosely attrib. to Han Gan), "Horses and Grooms", Musée Cernuschi, Paris: forgery by Zhang Daqian. Cf. forged "Vermeers" including "Supper At Emaus" by Han von Meegeren, Dutch forger, recent. Rendering of space within which figures are set. "Convincing" treatment of materials to show age, in forgeries: van Meegeren was very good at this. Often unreliable. (Case of "Dunhuang" Bodhisattva, Zhang fakes no. 7 in my list on my website: analysis of materials sometimes helpful, sometimes misleading--long footnote telling about careful technical examination of this work in Kyoto art laboratory confirming its genuineness as Tang painting, in Wen Fong, "The Problem of Forgeries in Chinese Painting," in *Artibus Asiae* XXV, 1962). Scientific/technical analysis can go badly wrong; often can prove work is inauthentic; never? can prove conclusively that it's authentic? Can only make it highly likely.

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(Added note: Let me just say—since I am avoiding talking about the best-known, most discussed case of highly problematic dating and attribution in recent times—a painting bought for a major museum which purports to be by a great early master, but which I firmly believe to be a modern fabrication by Zhang Daqian—if my colleagues recognized and respected the methods I have been outlining here, the controversy would immediately be ended; the painting in question would immediately be recognized as the recent forgery that it is, impossible as an early landscape painting by a major master.)

- Fan Kuan, "Traveling Among Streams and Mountains," vs. attrib. to Fan Kuan, "Sitting Alone By the Stream." How features of style that begin as representationally effective within a visually descriptive system turn into non-descriptive conventions, elements of a school manner, in the hands of followers.

(- Zhao Lingrang, section of "River Landscape with Willows and Cottages," dtd. 1100. vs. Li Anzhong, "Cottages in a Misty Grove in Autumn," dtd.