

Arts of Asia Lecture Series Fall 2013  
The Culture and Arts of China: From the Song Dynasty to Contemporary  
*Sponsored by The Society for Asian Art*

**Landscape, Word, and Self-Image in Song-Dynasty Literati Painting**

Professor Peter Sturman, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, January 25, 2013

**Study Guide**

**Part One: Introduction to the Literati and Painting**

**Su Shi** (1037–1101): Scholar, official, poet, calligrapher, amateur painter, and a key figure in the development of literati painting theory during the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Su Shi is one of China's most admired figures. Known in particular for his brilliance as a writer and poet, he was immensely influential in his time, though political fracturing at the court into competing factions resulted in periods of demotion and exile that ultimately cost him his life. *Cold Food Festival Poems Written at Hangzhou* (1082) (National Palace Museum [NPM], Taipei).

**Wen Tong** (1019–1079): Close older friend and cousin of Su Shi, minor official best-known for his bamboo painting, which became the object of much of Su Shi's theoretical musings regarding the role of painting in the life of the scholar-official. *Bamboo* (NPM).

**Cui Bo** (active ca. 1050–75): Professional painter employed by the court particularly well-known for bird-and-flower subjects. His *Magpies and Hare* of 1061(NPM) is one of the great extant works evincing the naturalistic skill evident in 11<sup>th</sup>-century professional painting.

**Part Two: Landscape and the Discourse on Trueness**

**Jing Hao** (active early 10<sup>th</sup> c.): Painter and writer active in the Taihang Mountains (region between Shanxi, Henan, and Hebei provinces in the north). Considered one of the first important painters of landscape in the late-Tang to Five Dynasties Period, his fame largely rests on a text he authored: “Bifa ji,” or “A Note on the Art of the Brush.” This is one of the important early texts on the painting of landscape and related subject matter, told in the context of a charming narrative in which the author meets a mysterious old man in the mountains, who teaches him the secret essentials of painting.

**Guan Tong** (active mid-10<sup>th</sup> c.): A follower of Jing Hao and considered a major figure in the development of the monumental landscape genre. A few extant landscape paintings of the tenth century, including two from tombs and one in the, likely provide a reflection of his manner of painting and an idea of how landscape painting developed during this critical period. *Evening Green on Autumn Mountains* (NPM).

**Fan Kuan** (died ca. 1023): One of the major masters of landscape painting active in north China early in the Song dynasty. Represented today by one of the greatest of all landscape paintings, the monumental *Travelers among Mountains and Streams* (NPM).

**Li Cheng** (919–967): Single most influential landscape painter, called the master of a hundred generations. Active in the north (Shandong province), he was a descendant of the Tang dynasty royal family. *Solitary Temple amid Clearing Peaks* (Nelson-Atkins Museum); *Travelers in a Wintry Grove* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY).

**He Chong** (active ca. 1075): Little-known portraitist who also aspired to an official career. Known today solely for a famous poem Su Shi wrote in payment for He's painting of Su Shi in 1074.

**Meng Haoran** (689–740): Famous Tang-dynasty poet and “poor scholar” known for his verses descriptive of landscape and the subject of a wonderful early painting, *Travelers in a Wintry Grove* (Metropolitan Museum of Art).

**Tang Minghuang** (r. 712–756): Emperor of China during the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, mentioned as the Mounted Escort of Luzhou by Su Shi in his poem for He Chong.

**Part Three: Literati and the Landscape of Exile: The Case of the Ear Picker**

**Wang Qihan** (active 10<sup>th</sup> century): Painter active at the Southern Tang court during the Five Dynasties Period. *Collating Books*, also known as *The Ear Picker*, is attributed to Wang by questionable documentation purportedly written on the painting by the late Northern

Song emperor **Huizong** (r. 1100–1125). Following the painting are important, though cryptic, inscriptions by Su Shi's brother **Su Che** (1039–1112), Su Shi, and Wang Shen.

**Wang Shen** (ca. 1048–ca. 1103): Scholar-official with ties to the royal family, close friend of Su Shi, and a talented painter. Punished for his role in helping to publish Su Shi's poetry.

**Wang Gong** (1048–1104): Scholar-official whose career never gelled due to his close friendship with Su Shi and outspoken character.

#### **Part Four: Landscape as Personal Emblem: The “Lesser Mi”**

**Mi Youren** (1074–1151): Scholar-official active at the end of the Northern Song and early years of the Southern Song. Best known as the son of **Mi Fu** (1052–1107), who was one of the most talented calligraphers in the history of China, an astute connoisseur, collector, and amateur painter. Mi Youren followed in his father's footsteps, though with more emphasis on painting than calligraphy. *Rare and Wonderful Xiao-Xiang Views* (Palace Museum, Beijing); *Distant Peaks, Clearing Clouds* (Osaka Municipal Museum).

**He Lin** (active 12<sup>th</sup> century): Son of the poet **He Zhu** (1052–1125) and a close friend of Mi Youren. Mi's painting *Distant Peaks, Clearing Clouds* of 1134 was painted for He Lin when the two met outside of the imperial precincts in Hangzhou following the New Year's holiday.

**Wu Ke** (active 12<sup>th</sup> century): Scholar-official and writer who is known today only because of the survival of a small collection of his poetry. He was an acquaintance of Mi Youren in the very early years of the Southern Song (ca. 1129-1130).

**Tao Yuanming** (365–427): Famous poet and recluse, much beloved by all later Chinese scholar-officials.

**Zhai Boshou (Zhai Qinian)**, active 12<sup>th</sup> century): Son of the scholar **Zhai Ruwen** (1076–1141), calligraphy scholar, and a close friend of Mi Youren.

**Tao Hongjing** (451–536): Famous Taoist and advisor to the Liang imperial court, also known for his reclusion on Mt. Mao. Called the Prime Minister of the Mountains.

#### **Suggested Reading**

Barnhart, Richard. “Landscape Painting around 1085.” In Willard J. Peterson, Andrew H. Plaks, and Ying-shih Yü, eds., *The Power of Culture: Studies in Chinese Cultural History* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1994): 195-205.

Egan, Ronald. *Word, Image, and Deed in the Life of Su Shi* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1994).

Munakata, Kiyohiko. *Ching Hao's Pi-fa-chi: A Note on the Art of Brush* (Ascona: Artibus Asiae, 1974).

Murck, Alfreda. *Poetry and Painting in Song China: The Subtle Art of Dissent* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center for the Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2000).

Sturman, Peter. “The Donkey Rider as Icon: Li Cheng and Early Chinese Landscape Painting.” *Artibus Asiae*, LV (1995): 43-97.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Mi Fu: Style and the Art of Calligraphy in Northern Song China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).