

Chinese Art

6. The Qing Dynasty – Part 1

*Pinyin spelling mostly approximates to English pronunciation apart from, notably,
Q = "ch" in cheap. X = "sh" in sham. Zh = "j" in jasmine. Z = "ds" hands. C = "ts" as in tsar.*

Names are given with surnames first

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Conquest and Consolidation

The Manchu rule over China was not so disruptive as was feared. Nurhaci (1559 – 1626) had unified the Jurchen tribes north of the Great Wall to form the Manchu state, establishing the capital at Mukden in 1625. To replace the clan system of ruling, Nurhaci turned to Chinese administrative methods, which he admired, and imported Chinese officials to help him establish a strong central government. Nurhaci's dynasty was called the Qing from 1636 (one of his sons chose the title). Despite raiding Northern China for goods and to demonstrate power, Nurhaci had great respect for Chinese culture.

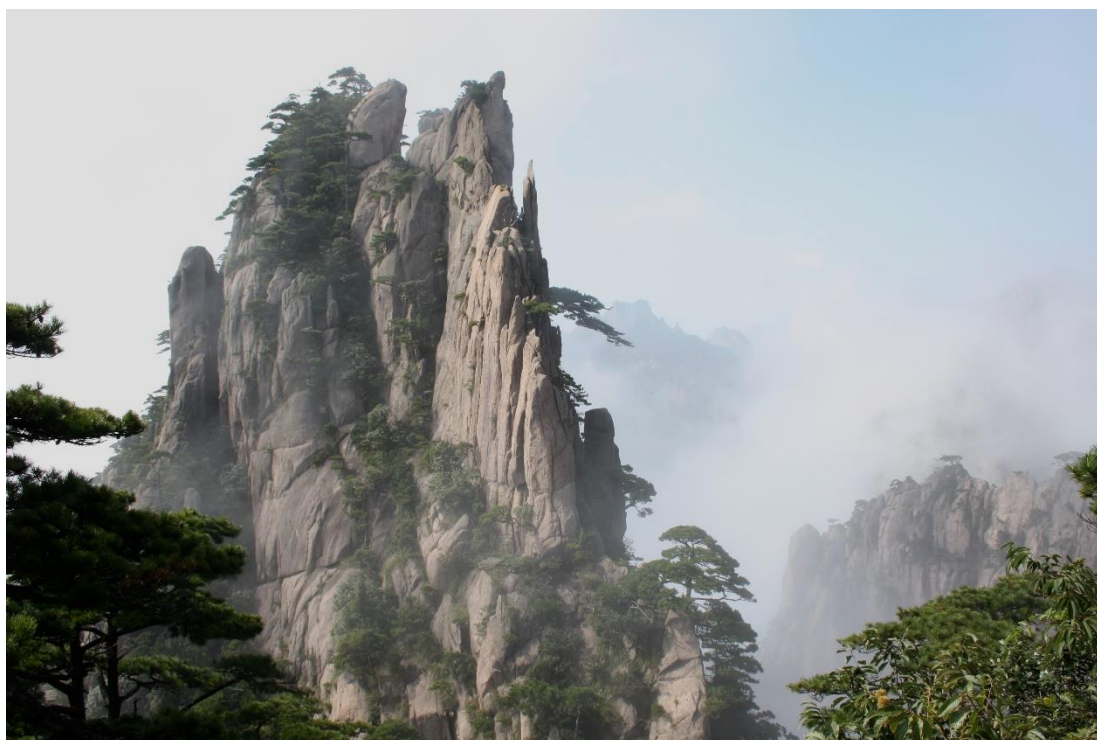
This respect for China may have prompted the Ming to seek help from Nurhaci's son, Dorgon, to rid them of Li Zicheng's rebel forces. If so, the Ming government was in for a shock. After defeating the rebels, instead of returning home with the thanks and tribute of a grateful people, Dorgon marched on Beijing pronouncing:

“... all those who are able to shave their heads¹ and surrender, opening their gates to welcome us, will be given rank and reward, retaining their wealth and nobility for generations. But if there are those who resist us disobediently then, when our Grand Army arrives, the stones themselves will be set ablaze and everyone will be massacred.”

This edict, paraphrased as “*off with your hair or off with your head*”, alarmed the South and, as against the Mongols, resistance to the new regime was centred there, successively at Yangzhou, Nanking, in Jiangxi and Fujian. So while Dorgon retained his father's respect for Chinese administration and kept the essential elements of Ming rule, welcoming the services of former Ming officials (mainly from the North), Qing rule was not established in the South until the last Ming claimant was pursued into Burma and executed there in 1662. The Manchus were challenged with arms. From about 1646 Zheng Chenggong (known in the west as Koxinga) led a resistance movement using sea-power with which the Manchus were unfamiliar along the coast of Fujian. In 1659 he led a large naval force up the Yangzi and besieged Nanking but the local Chinese gentry offered no support and the attack was abandoned. In retaliation, the Qing forced the Fujian coastal population to abandon their homes and re-settle 10 miles inland.

Ming Loyalists

Hongren (1610-1663)



View of Huangshan, World Heritage Site, Southern Anhui

¹ Adopting the Manchu hair style - shaving the head at the front and growing a long pig tail – was taken as an outward sign of acceding to Dorgon's rule.

Some Ming loyalists committed suicide when the Manchu conquest began, for example high official and painter Ni Yuanlu (1593-1644), some were executed and others became monks. A group of loyalists withdrew to Anhui, inspired by the fabulous mountain scenery and strange pines of Huangshan (Yellow Mountains). A Buddhist temple was founded there in the early 17th century, making the area more accessible, and by the 1650s a scenic trail with temples offering lodgings was available for pilgrims.

Hongren was born in southern Anhui and studied to become an official. His home was over-run by Manchus in the autumn of 1645 and he fled to Fujian where the Southern Ming was established. When that fell, he became a monk. Hongren returned home in 1651, living in several monasteries in Huangshan until his death in 1664. He did not paint until 1656, the year after his Chan master's death.



Hongren, *Landscape in the Manner of Lu Kuang*, 1658

Hongren admired the Yuan master Huang Gongwang and like him studied nature itself rather than the works of old masters. In a poem, reflecting on his trips around Huangshan, Hongren acknowledges his art is inferior to that of Huang Gongwang:

*I dare say that nature itself has been my painting teacher;
I have roamed alone with my walking stick the myriad valleys and cliffs.
Much as I admire the Recluse of the Fuchun Mountains [Gongwang]
No passage in my painting will ever enter his bamboo fence.*

Perhaps this is the reason why Hongren's painting shown here does not use Huang Gongwang's name but that of a minor Yuan master who was a follower. Yet there is no mistaking that Hongren has built up the central mass in a similar way to that in Gongwang's *Stone Cliff at the Pond of Heaven* (1341) [Part 3].

Hongren was the most famous painter of the Anhui School, a style in which washes are rarely used and forms are rendered with lines. This style may have originated in woodblock printing – an activity in which southern Anhui was one of the leading centres from the late 16th century.

Hongren's most famous painting, *The Coming of Autumn*, epitomises the Anhui style, inspired partly by the dry, sparse landscapes of Ni Zan. The work has the same sense of withdrawal - a distancing from the conflict sweeping over South East China – but is not so gloomy. A little house is included in the valley protected by powerful rocks and cliffs; a calm oasis. But, Hongren's quatrain at the top suggests that even with the distance, the clamour was occasionally felt:

*With season's change comes lonely desolation,
But in my wooden shack I live at peace.
A mountain wind sometimes blows off the stream,
Bringing chill harmonies of clashing branches.*



Hongren, *The Coming of Autumn*, 1650s

After the fall of Beijing and the capture of the Ming emperor, a Southern Ming administration was set up at Nanking under the Prince of Fu in June 1644. Manchu forces set out to suppress this remnant, but first had to overcome resistance centred on Yangzhou 30 miles northeast of Nanking on the other side of the Yangtze River. Yangzhou fell in May 1645 and for the next 10 days the Manchu commander ordered the killing of residents in a massacre that took hundreds of thousands of lives.

One of the artists who continued the Anhui style was **Dai Benxiao (1621-1693)**, the son of an activist who served the Southern Ming Prince of Fu at Nanking. When the prince was captured, Benxiao's father entered a Buddhist monastery and starved himself to death. Benxiao seems to have escaped the notice of authorities by wandering around Northern China, enjoying the famous mountains there. He returned home in the 1680s. His paintings, inspired by his experience of the mountains, including Mount Huang, were often imaginary landscapes of stone arches and bridges writhing up towards the heavens.

While not belonging to the Anhui School, **Mei Qing (c 1623 – 1697)** was also inspired by the Huangshan landscape. He came from a family of distinguished scholars, but his early adult years were disrupted. In 1642 his family left their home to elude Manchu troops, and had to move again in 1649. Mei Qing travelled widely and spent two periods in Huangshan. He is best known for his association with Shitao (whom we will meet soon). The two artists were friends and collaborated in paintings showing the scenery of Huangshan.



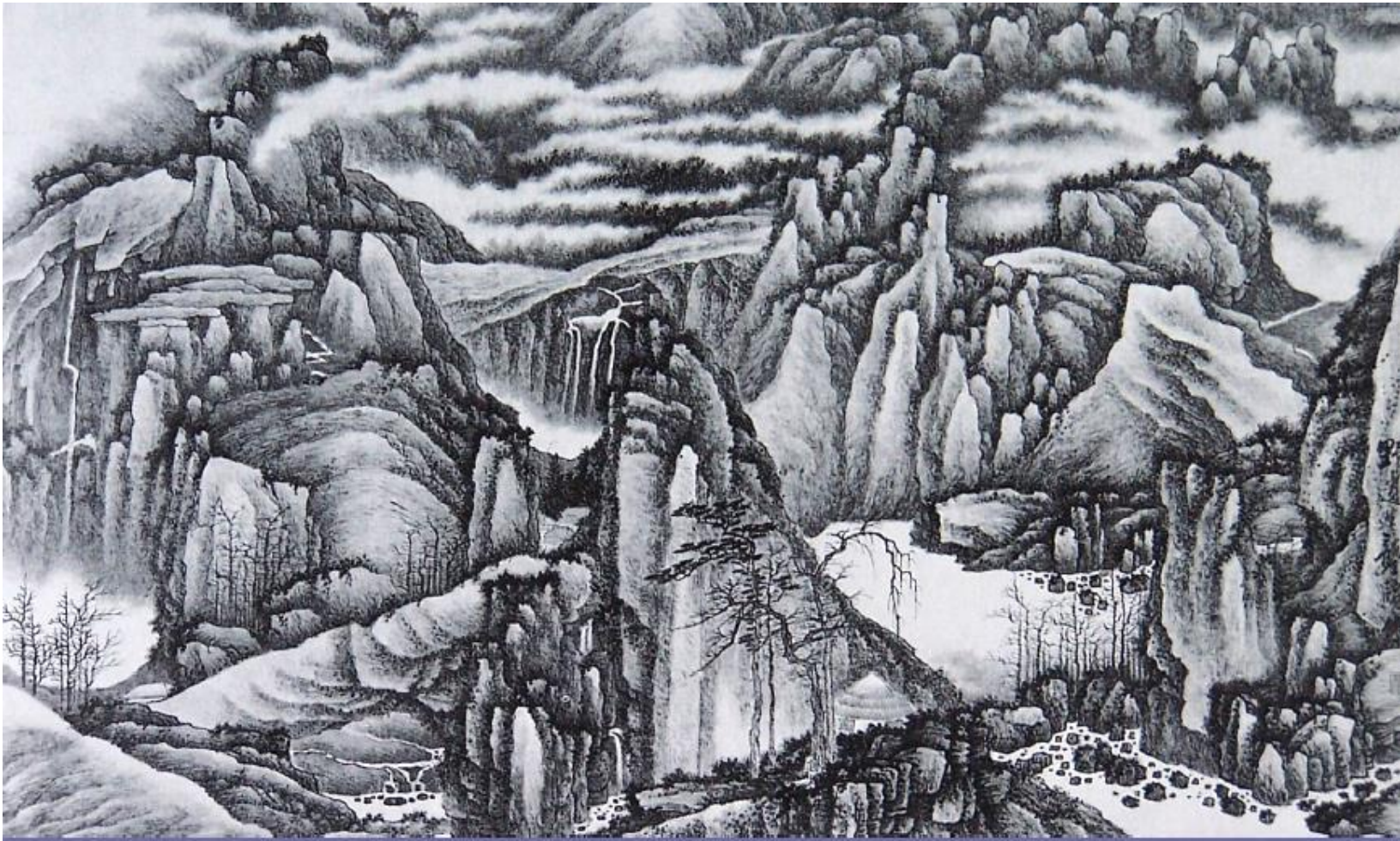
Dai Benxiao, *The Strange Pines of Mount Tiantai*, 1687



Mei Qing, Leaf from Album *The Complete Views of Mount Huang*, 1672

Gong Xian (1618-1689)

Although born a commoner in Kunshan in Jiangsu Province, Gong Xian spent his early years in Nanking, and was associated with a society of scholars that become a powerful Ming political force in the 1640s. A month after the Yangzhou Massacre, Manchu forces approached Nanking. The Southern Ming Prince of Fu fled south and the city surrendered quickly. Because of this rapid acquiescence, the Manchu were less harsh and Nanking continued its culture and painting thrived. Yet Gong Xian, whose wife had died that year, felt in danger not just from the invading forces but also from vindictive political enemies. He went on the run, full of anxiety. In 1668 he acquired a small plot of land near Nanking and settled there. His most famous work (only two feet high) was painted soon afterwards, perhaps reflecting Gong Xian's views of how the Manchus had treated his country.



Gong Xian, *A Thousand Peaks and Myriad Ravines*, c 1670 (ink on paper)

Arthur Waley wrote:

"He saw nature as a vast battlefield strewn with sinister wreckage. His rivers have a glazed and vacant stare; his trees are gaunt and stricken; his skies glower with a sodden pall of grey. Many of his pictures contain no sign of man or of human habitation; he once said that mankind had no existence for him. Such houses as he does put into his pictures have a blank, tomb-like appearance; his villages look like grave-yards."

Gong Xian's wrote about his landscapes, suggest an internal world, even a retreat:

"You may say that this is a visionary world, but it has its own Way (Tao) and is, while you look at it, just the same as the real world ... The world has many wondrous and inaccessible places. If these are not transmitted by artists, people will grow old and die beneath their windows without ever being able to see them. But it is not necessarily a matter of these very places actually existing in the world – anything that exists in the minds of artists also exists in the world ... paintings by other artists are all of places where people have gone. They cannot paint places where no one has ever gone. This painting of mine greatly resembles a place where no one has ever gone – or at least, where people do not ordinarily go."

As is clear from this painting Gong Xian was a master of shades of ink from silvery grey to deepest black; the darker tones built by repeated layers of ink, rocks modelled with short dry strokes with accents in wet black ink. His brushstrokes vary and are clear, but appear utterly natural.

Later in life his landscapes are more monumental and calmer, suggesting Gong Xian had found some peace.

In *Wintry Mountains*, his inscription reads:

Farmers, cowherds, fishermen, and woodcutters—where do they make their homes? In huts thatched with yellow reeds among mountains and streams. Work completed, they return together and get drunk, Jugs and cups filled with wine; there is no need for credit.

Gong Xian lived in poverty as, although his paintings brought some income, they were not greatly popular. He produced instruction books for students with practical advice on brushwork, composition, and how to draw rocks, trees and buildings. His landscapes have two qualities and he spoke of them in an inscription:

A composition should be stable and calm but it has to be also strange. If it has no strangeness there is no value in its stability. Stability without strangeness is the work of a commonplace hand; strangeness without stability, of an immature hand ... if you can combine utmost strangeness with utmost stability, that is the highest achievement of painting ... If the ink and brushwork are correct but the hills and ravines are commonplace there will be nothing [in the picture] that can lead one off on journeys of the imagination."

This is an echo of the original purpose of landscapes. Gong wanted his scenery to be; *"unfamiliar, even startling but also believable."*



Gong Xian, *Wintry Mountains*, 1680s

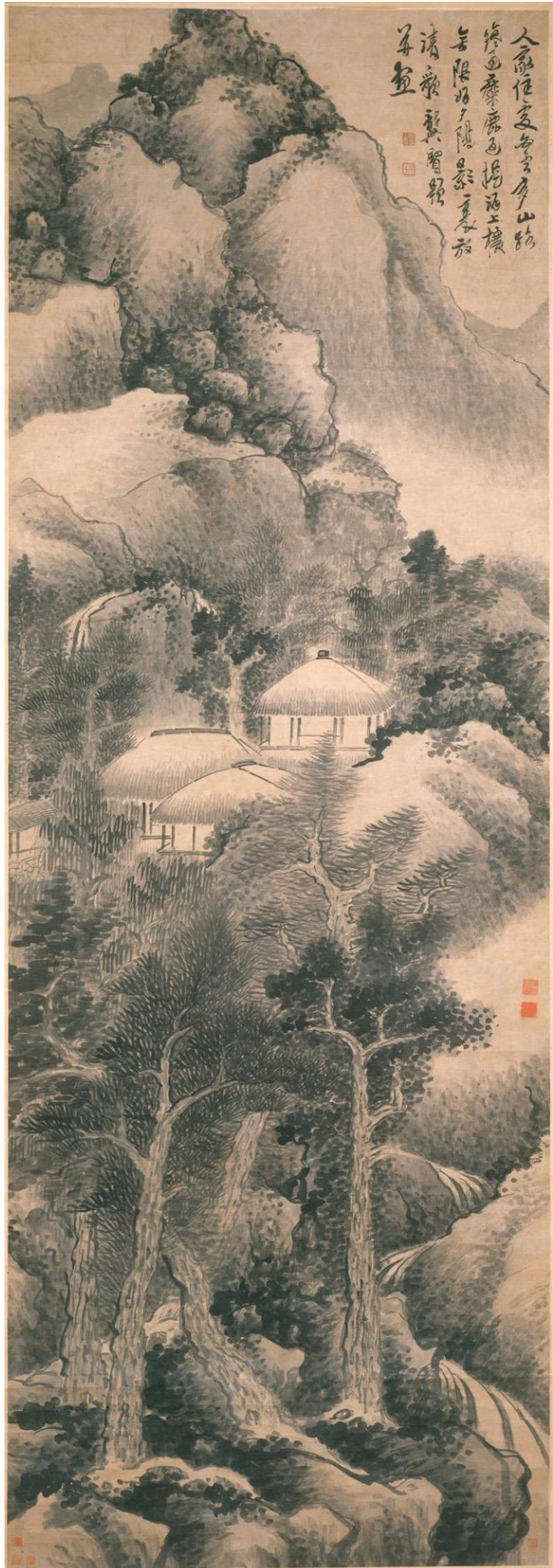
One of his later paintings, *Dwelling Among Mountains*, is an exhibition of his brushstrokes and handling of light and shade.

Gong Xian's poem reads:

*Where I dwell is often in the clouds,
And only deer use this mountain path.
Taking wine up to the pavilion is my greatest
pleasure;
Singing aloud in the shadow of the setting sun.*

Gong used shading: he told his students that upper surfaces of rocks should be left white and the undersides black: "*white is where light strikes, black the shadow.*"

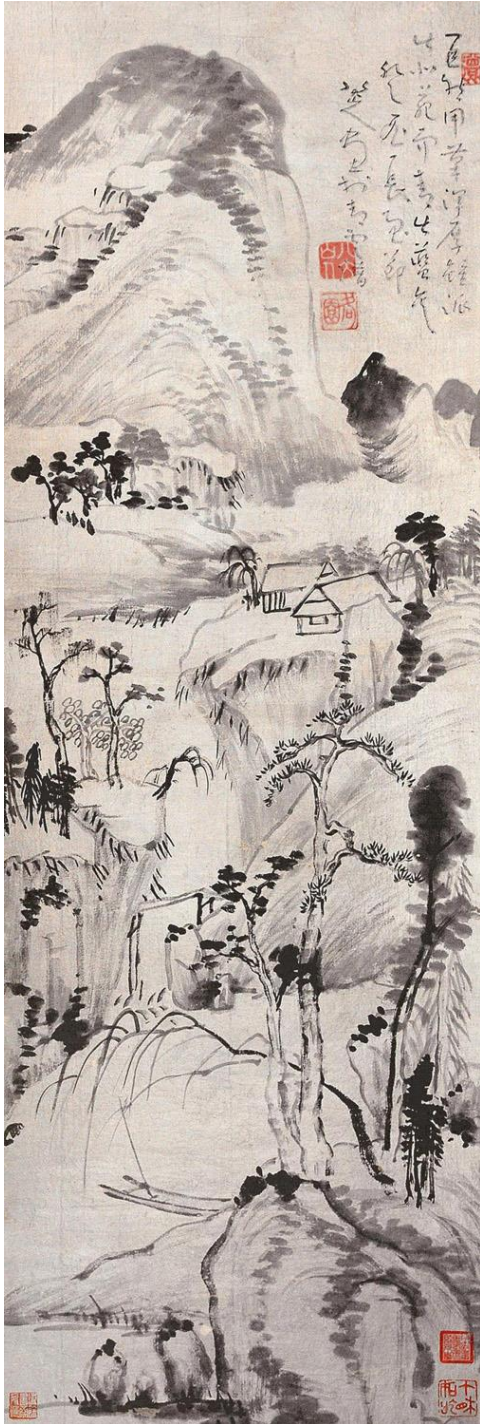
Gong Xian took pupils while living largely in isolation, rarely leaving his house and garden. One of his pupils was Wang Gai, who published the famous five-volume *Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* in 1679.



Gong Xian, *Dwelling Among Mountains and Clouds*, 1685

Zhu Da (also known as Bada Shanren or Pa-ta Shan-jen, 1626-1705)

Zhu Da was a distant descendant of the Ming imperial house. On the rise of the Manchus and the death of his father which followed soon afterwards, he fled his native city of Nanchang in 1644 to the nearby mountains of Fengxi and found refuge as a Buddhist monk in a Chan monastery (he may have become a Buddhist before 1644). After the death of his mentor, Zhu Da took to traveling and painting. Like the Chan eccentrics before him, his brush work appeared free and careless but was sure and confident. Zhu Da studied the old masters but even his dashing landscapes were carefully composed; contrasts of shapes (in the foliage of trees) and tones (between trees and rocks).



Zhu Da, *Landscape in Juran Style*, c 1660s



Zhu Da, *Autumn Landscape*, 1670s

Zhu Da is noted for his paintings of birds and flowers. Some are swiftly rendered in a bravura style. His genius for composition is also evident in these deceptively simple works. The empty spaces of the corners of the two paintings provide skilful balances, and the shapes and tones are echoed (leaves and stems, birds with rock and tree).



Zhu Da, *Two Birds*, 1660s



Zhu Da, *Peonies from Album of Sketching from Life*, 1659

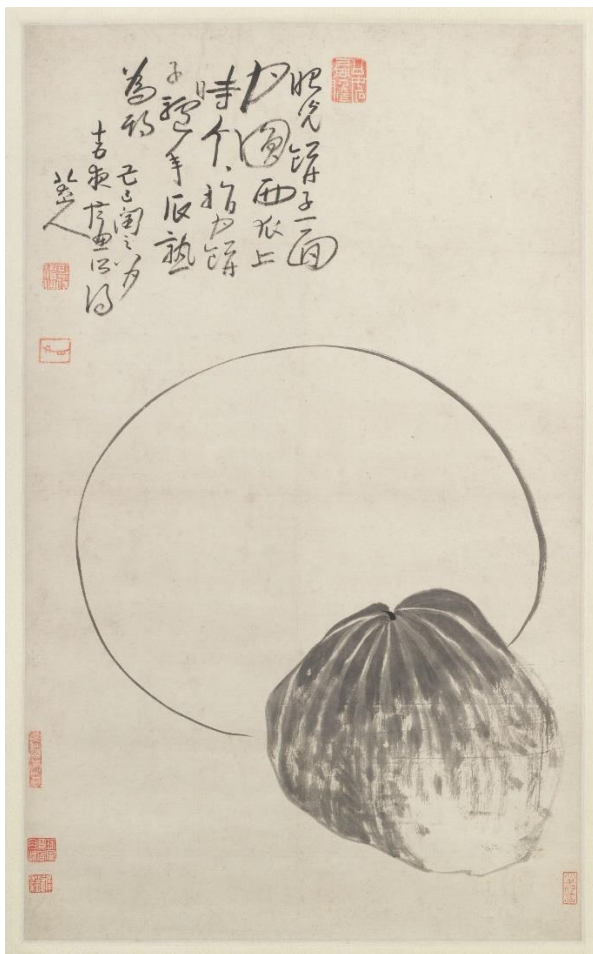
Zhu Da remained pained by the presence of the Manchus in his homeland for the rest of his life. In 1680, frustrated with the success of the invader under the Kangxi emperor, Zhu Da:

“tore up his monk’s robe, burned it and ran back to the provincial capital, where he behaved like a madman among the stalls in the market. Wearing a linen cap on his head, a long garment with a high collar trailing behind him and worn out shoes, he ran about in the market, dancing and waving his sleeves with the boys running after him making a great noise, laughing and gaping at him. No one knew who he was until a nephew of his recognised him and took him home with him, where after a long time, he got better” (Shao Changheng, 1637-1704)

Zhu Da embarked on a decade of outright dissent in his paintings. In his *Album of Flowers and Insects* spring flowers are accompanied by observations reflecting his deep loathing for young Chinese officials who collaborated with Kangxi, mocking them as prostitutes. Summer flowers bear facetious advice to the emperor on how to rule.



Zhu Da, leaf from *Album of Flowers and Insects*, c 1681



Zhu Da, *Moon and Melon*, 1689

The inscription on *Moon and Melon* reads:

*A Ming cake seen from one side,
The moon, so round when the melons rise.
Everyone points to the mooncakes,
But hope that the melons will ripen is a fool's dream.*

Mooncakes are eaten during the Mid-Autumn Festival. The poem alludes to the successful insurrection that brought the downfall of the Mongol rule of China in the fourteenth century. Mooncakes were carried by those Yuan rebels as signs of their political allegiance.

The melon is a symbol of loyalty to the preceding dynasty. Zhu Da, however, holds little hope for the overthrow of the Manchu regime. Rebels may rise but hopes that their movement might ripen and bear seed are forlorn.

Not long before this work was painted, a rebel plot grew in Zhu Da's birthplace of Nanchang in the late summer of 1688 but the new governor quickly put it down. Zhu Da may have seen the failure as the death knell for Ming resistance.

From 1685, Zhu Da signed his name Bada Shanren (Man of Eight Great Mountains). Shao Changheng who wrote of the 1680 incident, met Zhu Da in 1690:

“One day, he suddenly wrote the character ya [dumb] very large and attached it to his door. From this moment on he never exchanged a word with anyone, but he liked laughing and enjoyed drinking even more. If anyone invited him to drink he would draw in his throat, clap his hands and laugh uproariously . . . When drunk he often used to break out into plaintive sobbing and weep bitterly. In his innermost being he was at once wildly ebullient and melancholy; he was also unable to relax and seemed like a river bubbling up from a spring that is blocked by a large stone or like a fire smothered with wet wool . . . he would start raving at one moment and fall silent the next . . . if some considered him a crazy intellectual, others found him sublime.”

Zhu Da's anger over the Manchu occupation did not abate in old age. Late in life he favoured hanging scrolls to albums. Nonetheless, Zhu Da's eccentric birds continued to echo his feelings. Two proud eagles glare angrily over a landscape filled with foreign creatures, keenly watching for opportunities to attack. As one might imagine Zhu Da, they have ruffled feathers and look ill-used. The subdued ducks look weary and forlorn, taking cover under a towering lotus.



Zhu Da, *Two Eagles*, 1702



Zhu Da, *Lotus and Ducks*, c 1696

Shitao (born Zhu Ruoji and also known as Daoji, 1642-1707)

Shitao was a member of the Ming royal house. His father, Zhu Hengjia Prince of Jingjiang, announced himself Ming emperor in his fiefdom of Guilin in 1644. His was arrested by the Manchus, transported to Fujian and executed along with his followers. The young boy, Shitao, had been taken into hiding by a family friend, and so escaped the same fate. As a youth, Shitao joined a Buddhist community on Mount Lu but he was no recluse and never a real monk. During the 1650s and 1660s he wandered the Yangtze River area visiting famous mountains and living in monasteries. In the late 1660s he settled in south Anhui province and stayed there until 1680. His self-portrait as *Mister Shi* foreshadows his painting career – relaxed, independent and surrounded by nature.



Shitao, *Master Shi Supervising the Planting of Pine Trees*, 1674



Shitao, leaf from *Eight Views of Huangshan*, 1670

While staying in Anhui province, Shitao visited Huangshan and, like his contemporaries, was moved to paint the scenery. But his scenes embody the response of someone in the picture; “the solitary climber stopping to look out over the river are not stock figures but embodiments of the artist’s own remembered experience, and to some extent images of himself (Cahill).”

In 1680 Shitao gave away all his paintings and moved to Nanking where he stayed until 1687. Whilst there he came to know Gong Xian, whose style may have influenced the heavy and wet ink blotches in Shitao's *Ten Thousand Ugly Inkblots*.



Shitao, *Ten Thousand Ugly Inkblots* (detail), 1685

The inscription on this handscroll is important as a statement of Shitao's approach to painting;

*Ten thousand dots of ugly ink, to make old Mi [Mi Fu] drop dead of vexation.
Lots of stringy, flaccid strokes to make Dong Yuan fall sown with laughter.
The distance does not work; there's no sense of landscape's windings and turnings.
The foreground is too cluttered; all you see are a few rude shapes of houses.
Emancipate your mind's eye, once and for all, from conventional moulds,
Like the immortal who rides the wind, his flesh and bones etherealized.*

As the last two lines suggest, Shitao thought close study of masters and models of the past stifled originality. Shitao's ideas were developed further during his stay in Peking from 1690 to 1692 where he saw the work of Orthodox painters at the Qing court of emperor Kangxi. Shitao had been presented to Kangxi in 1684 at Changgan Monastery during the leader's first Southern Tour.

While in Peking, Shitao seems to have reconciled himself with the Manchu dynasty. He also collaborated with the best of the Orthodox artists, Wang Yuanqi, painting the bamboo and orchids to Yuanqi's earth banks and rocks. Shitao's inscription on the right reads:

*'In the midst of captivating wind and dazzling snow, casually connecting the touches (of ink), how could the forms fail to create something clear and enjoyable?
So I have completed a winter tree but the flowers of spring can also be discerned;
I have also added this calligraphy to draw a smile and a nod.*

Wang Yuanqi commented:

"One surely must praise Shitao as the best painter from south of the Yangzi; there are certain aspects in which neither I nor Wang Hui [another Orthodox artist] are his equal."

In 1697 Shitao left the Buddhist order, established a studio in Yangzhou, became a professional and developed his theory of painting which he published in 1700.



Shitao and Wang Yuanqi, *Bamboo and Rocks*, 1691



Shitao, *Peach Blossom Spring* (part of the scroll with inscription omitted), ca 1705-7

Peach Blossom Spring could stand as an allegory of Shitao's painting journey. The fable on which the work is based was written by Tao Yuanming in 421 about a fisherman who haphazardly sails into a river in a forest of peach trees, lands and fights his way through a narrow gorge to discover, by chance, a land where the people lead an ideal existence in harmony with nature. The tale represents in Chinese culture an unexpectedly fantastic place off the beaten path; a wilderness of great beauty. The fisherman can be seen, his boat tied up on the shore, just emerging from the gorge to find utopia.

Shitao had seen the schools of painting at Anhui and Nanking, and works of the old masters and the inheritors of Dong Qichang's mantle at Peking. Passing by these artistic way-points he arrived at his wilderness of great beauty – population, one. Shitao emphasised the importance of developing one's own method and laughed at those who slavishly followed the old masters:

Before the ancient masters established methods, I wonder what methods they followed. After the ancient masters have established their methods, people nowadays are not allowed to go outside the methods of the ancients. As a result, for hundreds and thousands of years people could not surpass the ancients. If we only learn from the superficial aspects of the methods of the ancients, and not from the mind of the ancient masters, we could not surpass the ancients. What a pity!

Copying the ancients, I will become the slave of so-and-so masters or schools and not making use of so-and-so schools or masters for my own use. Even if one closely resembles such painters, he only eats their leftover [spoiled] soup or broth. What good is it to me? ... Thus, they only know of the ancients but not of themselves. I am what I am because I have an existence of my own. The beards and eyebrows of the ancients cannot grow on my face, nor can their lungs and bowels be placed in my body ... Though on occasion my painting may happen to resemble that of so-and-so, it is he who resembles me, and not I who wilfully imitate his style.

The painting utopia which Shitao discovered after the journey of his middle decades, and wrote about in his theory of painting, is founded on the liberation from conventional methods or slavish imitation:

'Men are tied to artificial rules, which become obstructions and limitations. Thus, the perfect man has no method. It does not mean that there is no method (or it is without method). No-method is the method which is the perfect method, springing from the act of creation ... The art or method of painting originates from the mind'.

The atmospheric effects of *Peach Blossom Spring* are a hallmark of Shitao; mist, fog, the haze of twilight all appear in his works, enhanced by his calligraphy.



Shitao, *Double Ninth Festival Landscape*, 1705

This same contrast can be seen in the spring scene from the *Bitter Melon* album. The soft washes of ink and colour which evoke twilight are enhanced by the strikingly bold inscription, as well as the gold highlights;

*Spring grasses are green;
Spring river has green waves.
Spring breeze lingers playfully;
Who will not sing about this?*

In *Spring Breeze*, the sharp, well-defined calligraphy forms a contrast with the splashy painting of the foreground.

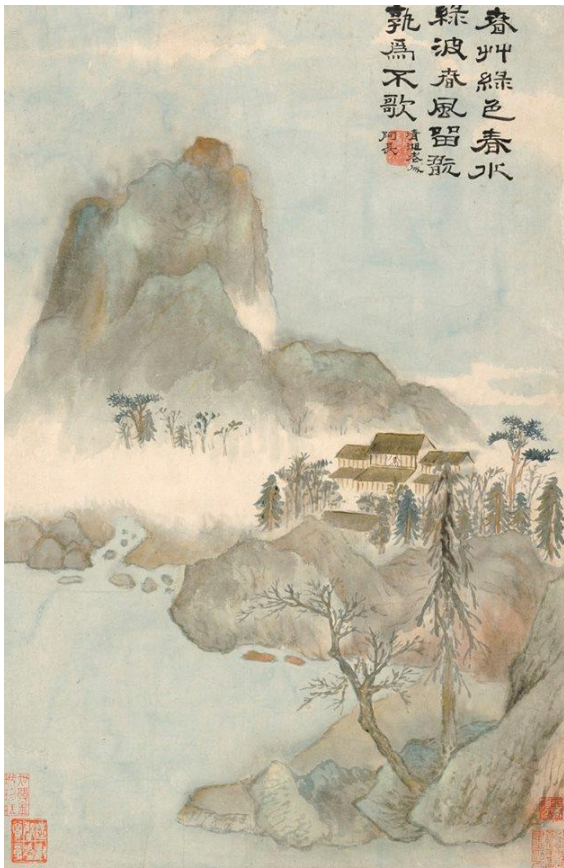
The *Double Ninth Festival* landscape was painted for a Mr Cangzhou, an old friend, who visited Shitao unexpectedly on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month to show the artist his new poems. His boat is clearly visible through the fog, perhaps representing the light and life he is bringing to Shitao's house. The festival is normally celebrated by climbing a mountain. Shitao inscribed a poem on the upper right:

*This old man used to get excited about climbing on high
But my sinews have decayed with the years, and I no longer have my freedom.
I've put away my walking stick and have a wine jar for company,
The outside gate undisturbed, the chrysanthemums autumnal.
What a surprise to see one of my scattered old friends!
To look over his new poems dispels my melancholy.
"Can jade-coloured waters and hoary mountains still be obtained?"
Take my gift of a picture to take with you on your travels.*

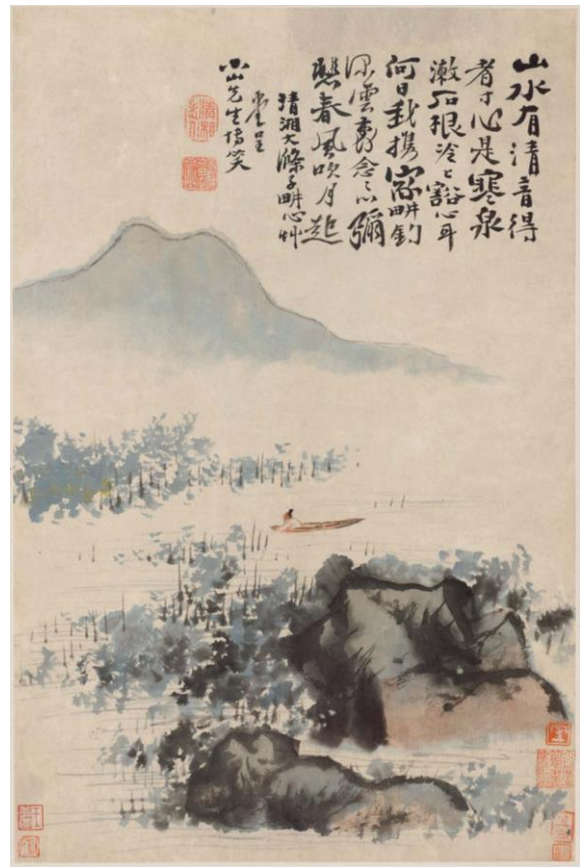
Shitao added:

... When you were young, I was already in my prime; but suddenly, you are a man and I am old. The passage of time plays tricks on people; like mist or the moon, it cannot be trusted. The future is like a cloud or traces of decaying grass—how can one fathom it?

Shitao's inscription is strong and bold, a contrast to the delicate misty scene.



Shitao, *Verdant Ripples on the River in Spring* from the album *Wonderful Conceptions of the Bitter Melon*, 1703



Shitao, *Spring Breeze, Moonlight from Album for Liu Shitou*, 1703

Shitao used large coloured dots. They can be seen in the mist and forms over the water on the left of *Peach Blossom Spring*. Blue and pink dots are used to produce the effect of light and dark, and to contrast with delicate washes in *Lotus*.

Shitao also used these large dots in surprising ways, such as the strange and original *Beneath the Cliff*. To complement the tangled dark veins of the mountain are dots of pale blue, green and pink-brown. Equally inventive are the wet dots used to build up the blossoms in *Riverbank* which bears as an inscription an extract from the poem *Parrot Island* by Li Bo.

*The mist parts and the fragrant breeze from the orchid leaves is warm;
The riverbanks are lined with peach blossoms, rising like a brocaded wave.*

In 1701 Shitao worried that his paintings were not so good now they were being produced for the market, but it would be hard to imagine purchasers being disappointed in the examples given here.



Shitao, *Lotus*, 1707



Shitao, *Man in House beneath a Cliff Landscape Leaf from Album for Daoist Yu*, 1690s



Shitao, *Riverbank of Peach Blossoms* from the album *Wilderness Colours*, c 1700

Kuncan or Shiqi (1612-1673)

Kuncan became a Buddhist monk in 1638 and, although not strictly regarded as a Ming loyalist, suffered during the Manchu invasion – retreating for months into the Hunan wilderness – and came to know most of the leading Ming loyalists. He referred to as one of the Four Monks of the Qing dynasty (with Shitao, Zhu Da and Hongren). Kuncan became abbot of the Bull Head Monastery in Nanjing, and remained there for the rest of his life. He was simple, detached and of high moral character. Yet his landscapes are crowded and restless.



Kuncan, *Temple on a Mountain Ledge*, 1661

Kuncan saw some of Wang Meng's work and he adopted some of the Yuan Master's twisting and thrusting animation. However, there seems little doubt that Kuncan was painting rocks, trees and mountains as he remembered them from his walks, and despite the complicated brushstrokes and intricate details, the overall impression is one of serenity.

Temple on a Mountain Ledge shows some of the buildings of his monastery. Kuncan painted them again in 1664.

Kuncan signed this work with his pen name, "Stone Daoist", and it is because of this that he is linked by Chinese art historians with Shitao (which means "Stone Wave") – the pair being known as "The Two Stones".

The inscription, like those on many of Kuncan's paintings, refers to a physical journey but alludes to the Chan Buddhist's quest for enlightenment:

*I walk on the worldly paths of famous mountains.
I follow the clouds before me with great regard.
The void, the mist, and the mountains of Creation;
high and lofty peaks, like watch towers with dignified majesty,
arranged haphazardly like small bamboo,
flying off to distant places like the immortals,
join a multitude of valleys.
The gourd and the rain hat are united as one.*

Wooded Mountains bears a longer inscription:

*I gaze at the hills and valleys
As the quiet moon hangs over the precipice.
Crisp air and rising mists,
I will not shut the door against them.
Suddenly startled, I reach for my staff
And leap up as if from a dream.
[Hearing an] old gibbon cry,
I get up and stare into the light.*

*All day I travel along the paths made by
gibbons
Excited by hidden and perilous sites.
Distant mountain peaks and nearby cliffs
Are arranged in their heavenly order.
The sky appears magnificent,
As floating greenery caresses my face.
The sun descends as if drawing nearer to me,
Decorating the sky with its utmost beauty.*

*I want to go for farther,
But my legs are bruised and scratched.
The bony rocks appear chiselled,
The pines look as if they had been dyed.
Sitting down, I feel like a small bird,
As I look out at the crowd of peaks gathered
before me.
Having ascended the heights to the brink of the
abyss,
I hold fast and ponder the need to sincerely
face criticism.
Wherever a road ends, I will set myself down,
Wherever a source opens, I will build a temple.
All this suffices to nourish my eyes,
As well as to rest my feet.*

*So with a piece of rattan paper from [Shan]xi
[Zhejiang],
I paint this scene which is infused with qi.*



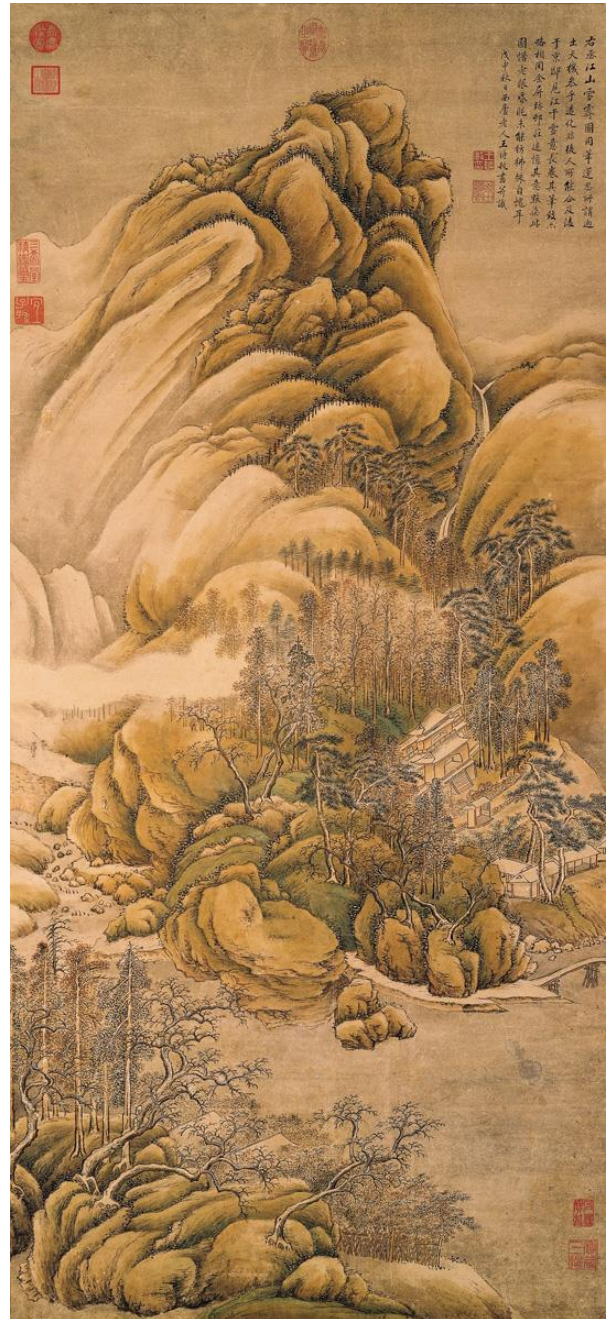
Kuncan, *Wooded Mountains at Dusk*, 1666

Six Masters of the Orthodox School

Zhu Da, Shitao and Kuncan are regarded as the great Individualists of the early Qing. At a lower level came the six artists who continued (or at least attempted) Dong Qichang's synthesis – the Orthodox School. **Wang Shimin (1592-1680)** was important in transmitting the late Ming Orthodox style to the Qing. He inherited his grandfather's collection of paintings, many from the Song and the Yuan, and was taught by Dong Qichang, from whom he learned that the composition of a painting was far more important than the theme – everything tightly knit and contributing to the whole. After serving as a government official for many years, Wang Shimin retired to a quiet life of painting and writing, so many of his works date from later years. Like Dong Qichang, Wang Shimin admired Huang Gongwang. His landscapes in this manner are among his best: repeated strokes and the build-up of masses linked together suggesting nature's power and coherence. Wang Shimin did not always follow Dong Qichang's strictures to avoid atmosphere and sentimentality, but he followed the old masters. His painting after Wang Wei is a good example. Even in this, however, can be seen an odd writhing central mass reminiscent of Dong Qichang.



Wang Shimin, *Landscape in the Style of Huang Gongwang*, 1666



Wang Shimin, *After Wang Wei's "Clearing of Rivers and Mountains after Snow"*, 1668

Wang Shimin taught **Wang Jian (1598-1677)**, who came from the same town and was a close friend. Wang Jian graduated the provincial exams in 1633 and served as a prefect. He painted landscapes after old masters. His *Drifting Mists and Distant Peaks* follows Huang Gongwang who said, "*Mountains and rivers natural and powerful, grasses and trees lush and moist.*" Jian uses wet strokes and alternating and repeated washes in blue and green to give a sense of nature's vitality. Jian's lines of trees and winding ridge of landscape all lead to the dominant peak, which is made up of the same forms at its peak as those used in the foreground spit of land: a composition of which Dong Qichang would have approved. Like Shimin, Wang Jian retreated from the world. One of his inscriptions says: "*For a whole year I have not trodden the gates and streets of the town.*"



Wang Jian, *In Imitation of Huang Gongwang's "Drifting Mists and Distant Peaks"*, 1660s

Wang Hui (1632-1717)

Wang Shimin and Wang Jian are linked with two younger artists who share their surname – known together as the Four Wangs. The first, Wang Hui, was from a poor family which had a tradition of painting. Despite few resources, by the time he was a young man Wang Hui had become a gifted artist. He was spotted by Wang Jian and adopted as a pupil by Wang Shimin. Wang Hui mastered a range of styles and there were rumours that before he was famous he produced works in the style of Yuan masters (together with signatures) which were so convincing that they later formed part of the Imperial Collection. An album of 10 leaves painted for his teacher Wang Shimin in 1674 (now in The Met) shows Hui's interest in masters other than those of the Yuan. It contains the inscription, above a scene after Wang Wei:

"[Wang Shimin] gave me a blank album and asked for some paintings. At the time I was traveling in [Yangzhou] and was not able to comply. This spring I received an urgent letter from him so I quickly did these small scenes after various masters. Your disciple's embarrassing brush and ink is not worthy of entering your collection. Done by a rainy window on [March 5, 1674]. Your pupil, Wang Hui of Yushan."



Wang Hui, *Mountain Village after Snow*, after Vice Minister Wang Wei, from album *Landscapes after Old Masters*, 1674.

The leaf after Zhao Mengfu has the inscription:

*When spring comes, peach blossom waters are everywhere;
If this is not an immortal's spring, what place is?*



Wang Hui, *Following Zhao Mengfu's methods of using colours*, from album *Landscapes after Old Masters*, 1674.

Although master of many styles, Wang Hui's mature style uses a variety of dots to produce pattern and emphasis, not just to represent vegetation and foliage, as in the two album leaves above. Another feature is the use of tree trunks to give vertical accents (as in the middle ground of the leaf following Zhao Mengfu).



Wang Hui, *Landscape (The Forest under the Frost)*, 1677

Wang Hui had an extremely successful career in the lower Yangtze Valley which coincided with the consolidation of the Qing Dynasty under the Kangxi emperor (reigned 1662-1722). Kangxi brought the south to heel by suppressing the Three Feudatories rebellion. A year after that, in 1684, he embarked on the first of six Southern Inspection Tours. These long excursions, particularly the first two tours, aimed to show the power and reach of the Qing emperor, as well as providing the means for accurately surveying Southern China. When Kangxi sought a painter to record his second Southern Inspection Tour of 1689, Wang Hui was chosen as the best in the realm.

Wang Hui was immensely prestigious by the time he arrived in Peking in 1691, where he directed professional painters to produce 12 highly detailed scrolls commemorating the tour. These hand-scrolls are majestic in size; only about 27 inches high but extremely long. Handscroll 3 which shows the journey made by Kangxi from Jinan to Mount Tai is a little under 46 feet long. Handscroll 9 is 73 feet long. Wang Hui's style is seen in the landscapes – professional painters produced figures, buildings and bridges.



Wang Hui and others, *Kangxi Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour: Handscroll 3* (detail), 1698

Of course, this was not the sort of work of which a literatus could be proud and Wang Hui made sure his status as a scholar-artist was clear, in contrast to his team of professionals. He refused to lodge in that part of the palace compound where the picture was worked on (where his team lived) instead staying as a guest with one of the high officials in charge of the project. He declined to paint more pictures for the court but stayed in Peking where he had many patrons for his art. His landscapes for an album with Yun Shouping (see later) repeat the skilful use of dots and tree trunks.



Wang Hui, *Autumn Landscape in the method of Fan Kuan*, a leaf from a collaboration with Yun Shouping, *Album of Flowers and Landscapes*, c 1680s

Wang Yuanqi (1642-1715)

Wang Yuanqi was recognised by the other three Wangs as the best of the four of them. Yuanqi was born in the same year as Shitao but had a very different background and life. He combined art with an official career. Indeed, he did not start his painting seriously until he got his doctoral degree in 1670. Yuanqi became the curator of the imperial collection and supervised the publication in 1708 of the *Album on Painting and Calligraphy in the Peiwen Studio*. He rose to a high position in court and was appointed vice president of the Board of Finance in 1712. Kangxi summoned Wang Yuanqi to paint in his Southern Study in the palace. Wang's *Ten Views of West Lake* [no decent copy available] show the emperor's favourite scenery in Hangzhou with landmarks singled out by their names being inscribed in gold ink. Some names were given by Kangxi during his Southern Tour of 1699. In contrast to Shitao communing with nature, Yuanqi is depicted in a garden of potted plants surrounded by the artefacts associated with cultivated learning. As Mae Anna Pang notes Wang Yuanqi chose to be shown in the casual attire of a scholar, rather than the robes of high office.



Yu Zhiding, *Portrait of Wang Yuanqi*, 1707

“No painting can serve better to illustrate both Wang’s orthodoxy and his individual achievement than his Wangchuan Villa scroll of 1711 (Cahill).” The elegant Wangchuan Villa in the picturesque hills on the outskirts of the Tang dynasty capital, Chang’an (modern Xi’an), is one of the most famous gardens of ancient China. The rambling estate with spectacular scenery was the retreat of the poet, musician, and landscape painter Wang Wei [Part 1], who delighted in painting it many times. One of Wang Wei’s depictions was preserved in a stone engraving of 1617. Wang Yuanqi obtained a rubbing from this engraving in the autumn of 1710 and used it as the basis of his composition. In the inscription Yuanqi traces Wang Wei’s following among later painters to the Four Great Masters of the Yuan who he says;

“all followed Wang Wei’s ideas, each inheriting the lamp and flame and becoming a great master of the Orthodox tradition ... During the three hundred years of the Ming dynasty only Dong Qichang re-established the proper traditions. My late grandfather [Shih-men] personally inherited the mantle from Dong.”

Yuanqi uses Dong’s method of depicting rocks and ridges, but uses Wang’s composition. Combining different stages in the Orthodox line of artists was an acceptable practice. The opening of the scroll shows the Hua-tzu Hill and the Meng-cheng Hollow, with the ruin of an old walled enclosure. Wang Wei told the story of ascending the Hill at night-time, describing the sounds of the village below and the moonlight. Chang Hung painted this scene in 1625 and it conveys the poetic and descriptive content of Wang Wei’s text – trees and hills are set in real space and seen indistinctly as if in moonlight, including men pounding rice and a barking dog in the village. All this is anathema to Yuanqi, whose version is strictly Orthodox – composition abstract, no sentimental atmosphere. He aimed not to reflect Wang Wei’s poems. In the inscription he writes: *“I did it using my own ideas, and thus avoided falling into the artisan painter’s kind of formal resemblance [Chang Hung] ... Although some may think my work clumsy and inferior, I believe it has captured some of Wang Wei’s idea of painting in poetry and poetry in painting.”*



Wang Yuanqi, *Wangchuan Villa (detail)*, 1711



Chang Hung, *The Hua-tzu Ridge*, 1625

Wang Yuanqi wrote:

"In painting one need pay attention only to the qi or dynamic movement and the compositional framework. It is not necessary to try for beautiful scenery ...the artist must first decide on the qi, then make divisions of the surface as a framework, then lay out sparse and dense areas, then distinguish the darker and lighter places".

This is very much as Dong Qichang laid down, and Yuanqi also repeats the great master's use of colour.

"Some of his pictures have an interplay between warm and cool colours and patches of brilliant tone that are strikingly modern. Outward likeness seems to have concerned him not at all. The broad areas of white, whether they be lakes or clouds assume intricate shapes that are integral parts of the composition (Sullivan)."

An example of this can be seen in one of the leaves of an album Yuanqi painted while in mourning for his father. The blues and greens form a pattern of warm and cold, as do the dots of pink lotuses and the yellow orioles above the top of the tree in the right foreground. The large white patches help to produce a satisfying surface.



Wang Yuanqi, *Lotuses and Willows Among Mountain Fields* (from Album; *Landscapes in Imitation of Song and Yuan Artists*), 1697-1699

In *Wangchuan Villa*, Wang Yuanqi combined Dong Qichang and Wang Wei. Yuanqi uses the styles of two of the Four Great Masters of the Yuan masters in one landscape below: Ni Zan is clear in the foreground; Gongwang can be seen in the towering mountains. Yuanqi again alternates warm and cool colours – even painting a blue tree trunk here and there – and mirroring orange foliage in the foreground and background. His use of colour is more striking in his version of Huang Gongwang's *Autumn Mountains*. This is much less dense than the original [Part 3] but has many similar features including simple distant peaks.



Wang Yuanqi, *Landscape after Ni Zan and Huang Gongwang*, 1699



Wang Yuanqi, *Imitating Huang Gongwang's "Autumn Mountains"*, 1700s

The monochrome painting of a snow scene, while forgoing colour (a rarity for Wang Yuanqi), again produces a rhythmic surface of repeated forms.



Wang Yuanqi, *In Imitation of the Brush Idea of Li Cheng*, 1700

Yun Shouping (also called Yun Nantian, 1633-1690)

The Ming resistance drew thousands of loyalists to Fujian, among them the father of Yun Shouping. Living in partial obscurity in the Suzhou-Hangzhou region, far from the capital, Yun Shouping supported himself and his father with painting and calligraphy. He loved landscapes but stopped painting them because he felt he could not compete with his friend Wang Hui. Yun Shouping developed his manner, out of a local style, of painting flowers and plants.



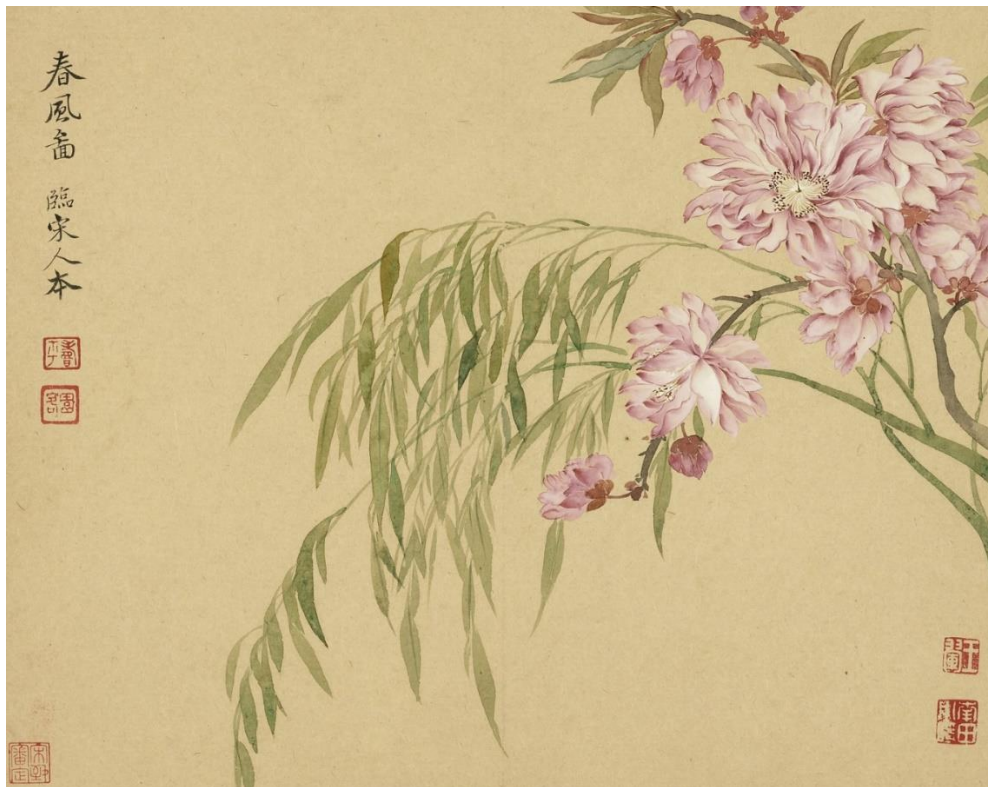
Yun Shouping, *Magnolias, Album of Flowers and Landscapes (with Wang Hui)*, c 1680s

He used the boneless technique, based on washes, with a fine eye for detail. His *Peonies* show how well he controlled wet washes to create the elegant petals of the flowers. Yun Shouping avoided serving the Qing court, but his style was introduced there by scholar-officials and became the orthodox manner for flower paintings.



Yun Shouping, *Peonies*, from *Album of Flowers and Landscapes* (with Wang Hui), c 1680s

Yun Shouping was inspired to paint *A Spring Breeze* when he saw pink peach blossoms alongside willow. The lead white produces brilliant blooms, beautifully contrasted against the delicate willow leaves. The composition is wonderful; evocative of the spring air gently warming the plants.



Yun Shouping, *A Spring Breeze*, from *Album Imitating Antiquity*, 1690s

Yun Shouping's painted flowers in a way that makes them seem natural, capturing their *qi*, as if they were out in the garden, rather than an academic still life (as, for example, we will see soon with Castiglione).

"Many of Yun Shouping's flower studies are highly realistic, and the painting of petals and the turn and twist of the leaves reveal keen observation. His albums in which different flowers are shown on each page, combined with his free, strong calligraphy, are among the most universally appealing painting of the Qing Dynasty (Sullivan)."



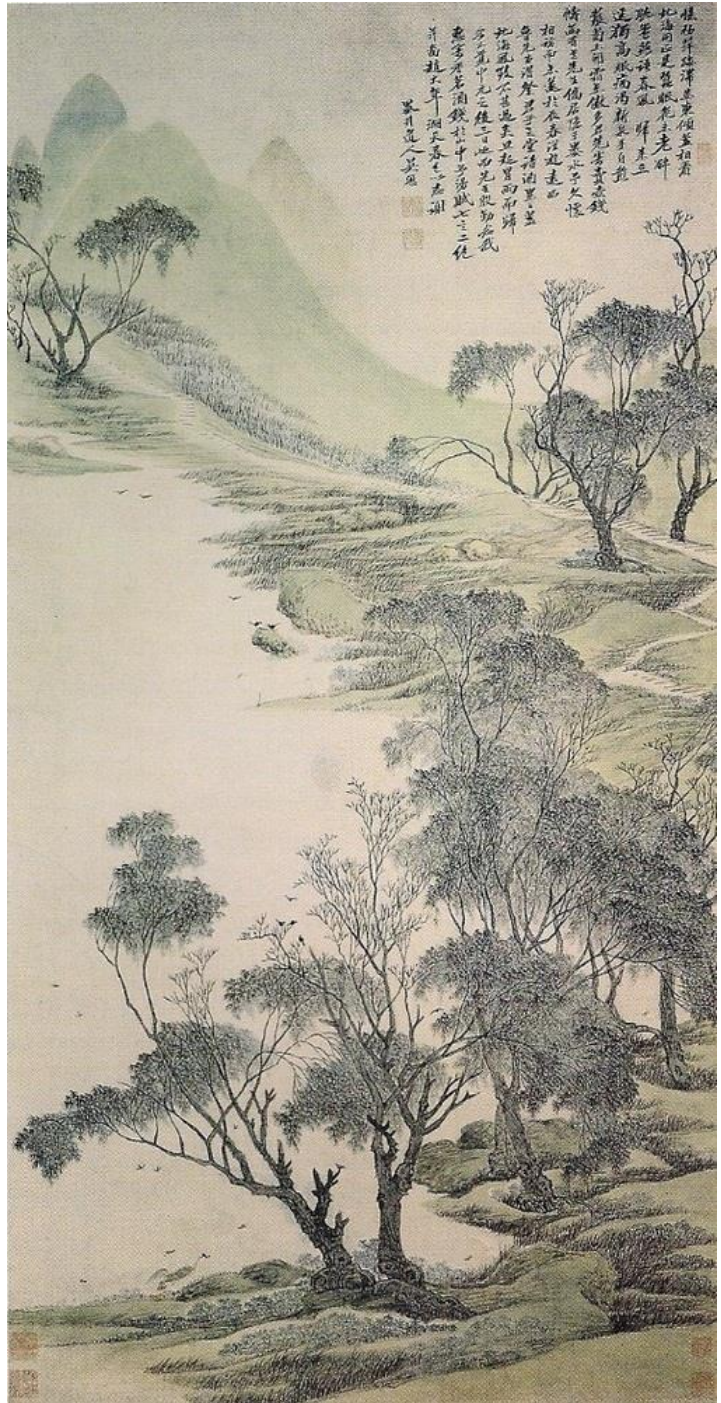
Wu Li, *Green Mountains and White Clouds*, 1668

Wu Li (1632-1718) was taught to paint by Wang Shimin and Wang Jian, and was a close friend to Wang Hui. The landscapes Wu Li painted seem to be either tall narrow scenes or filled with intricate twisting mountains.

The collapse of the Ming dynasty prompted some intellectuals to look for new directions. Into his middle age, Wu Li often visited a Buddhist convent in Suzhou, but by 1675 he was deeply interested in Catholicism through his contact with Jesuit priests operating out of Macao [Part 5]. He seems to have been baptised in the 1670s. He was fascinated too by Jesuit art.

His art is said not to have been influenced by Western techniques. His *Green Mountains* is clearly a Chinese work and pre-dates his contact with Jesuits. His *Spring Comes to the Lake* is Chinese in composition – one of Li's narrow horizontal landscapes – but the detail of the tree trunks and foliage seem more Western.

When Wu Li was 50 his wife died, and he decided to join the Jesuits in Macao. After seven years of study he was ordained a priest in 1688, and was sent to Jiading Catholic Church (now in Shanghai) in 1691. He spent 30 years as a missionary in Jiangsu, travelling from village to village, often in disguise to spread the word of Christ.



Wu Li, *Spring Comes to the Lake*, 1676

Imperial Court

Wu Li was not alone in being influenced by the Jesuits. Kangxi had put an end to the Three Feudatories rebellion, which had been rumbling on for 8 years, by personally taking charge of military strategy. One of the decisive factors in his victory was the artillery designed by Father Verbiest, the Jesuit missionary who was President of the Tribunal of Mathematics. Kangxi employed Jesuits with skill in mathematics, architecture and painting. The court painter **Jiao Bingzhen (active 1689 – 1726)** studied perspective under the Jesuits. In 1689, Kangxi chose Jiao to create a new version of the 12th century compendium *Pictures of Tilling and Weaving* (widely disseminated then to encourage virtue and industry). The 46 paintings were published in a woodblock edition of 1696.



Jiao Bingzhen, *Pictures of Tilling and Weaving (yuzhi gengzhi tu)*, leaf from Book of Woodblock Prints (Hand-coloured), 1696

Kangxi sent Joachum Bouvet, a Jesuit missionary in China, to Paris to hire skilful westerners for the Peking court. There Bouvet convinced Giovanni Gherardini (1655 – c 1729) to travel east and serve the Qing household as a painter. Gherardini landed in Canton in 1699, worked on commissions for Kangxi and was the first professional artist to train Chinese students in European techniques. He mentored Jiao Bingzhen, whose later album of landscapes seems almost a demonstration that Jiao had learnt his lessons.



Jiao Bingzhen, *Landscape*, Leaf 2 from album, early 18th century

Kangxi commissioned Jesuits to survey his realm. The resulting maps used latitude and longitude grid lines (which Chinese maps did not) and were produced in woodblock prints (1717 and 1721) and in a copperplate edition (1719) by Matteo Ripa. The maps were kept secret in China, but Ripa took copies to Europe, presenting England's George I with a copperplate edition in 1724. From these copies Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville produced maps of China in 1735.



Dutch version of Kangxi's Jesuit map of China

Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766)

Giovanni Gherardini did not like the missionary lifestyle in China. He escaped from the Jesuit living quarters, moved into the residence of a Qing court official and left China abruptly in 1707. Kangxi wanted another artist to train Chinese apprentices. Probably concerned about Gherardini's behaviour, Kangxi stipulated that the European artist would be attached to the Jesuit order and expected to stay in China for the rest of his life. The Milanese Jesuits chose the accomplished painter Giuseppe Castiglione and sent him to Peking in 1715. Kangxi sent him to be an artisan in the Palace Enamelling Workshop but Castiglione soon mastered the Chinese academic manner and created a synthetic style blending Chinese medium and technique with Western naturalism, aided by a subtle use of shading.

His earliest dated work was for the new emperor Yongzheng on his ascension. Yongzheng was less impressed by the Jesuits than his father, and addressed their mission:

The converts you make recognise only you in time of trouble. They will listen to no other voice but yours. I know that at the present time there is nothing to fear, but when your ships come by the thousand then there will probably be great disorder [a prescient view in light of the 19th century] ... The emperor, my father [Kangxi], lost a great deal of his reputation among scholars by the condescension with which he let you establish yourselves here. The laws of our ancient sages will permit no change and I will not allow my reign to be laid open to such a charge. (Rowbotham)"

Castiglione, hoping to mitigate the emperor's stance painted *Auspicious Signs* to show Heaven's approval of Yongzheng's rise. The work shows lucky omens appropriate to the start of a new reign; divided or doubled ears of millet, dual-blossom lotuses. Such omens were included centuries before in Song Emperor Huizong's collection of auspicious phenomena. The rice is combined with other flowers and leaves which form an elaborate pun. The word for vase sounds similar to that for peace; that for rice (*dao sui*) puns on year (*sui*) while the word for lotus sounds like in succession. In the Qing dynasty such punning use of motifs, predominantly botanical, were common notably in New Year and birthday pictures.



Giuseppe Castiglione, *Gathering of Auspicious Signs*, 1723

Evidently Castiglione managed to banish some of the new emperor's hostility. A German Jesuit in Peking wrote:

It can be said that his works have succeeded in winning the Emperor's favour, for he has on various occasions benignly praised the artist and sent him gifts, even to a greater extent than his dead father."

Perhaps the artist's most famous painting was done in Yongzheng's reign. *One Hundred Horses*, supposedly representing Qing court officials and their temperaments, shows how well Giuseppe married Western and Chinese techniques. Reflections in water and shadows on the ground appear, but not to their full extent. Shading is muted, but the horses are fore-shadowed. On the other hand, some of the trees could almost be painted by Li Cheng and the mountains in the background are rendered in a Chinese style.



Giuseppe Castiglione, *One Hundred Horses in a Landscape*, 1728

His *Cranes* also have short shadows at their feet. The painting has wonderful areas of light, which help to pick out the rose and the iris. The realism was fascinating to the Qing court. But the work has a symbolism too – the nearest crane looking, seemingly with the care of a parent for her young, at the two chicks who have yet to learn to fly. The same light and dark can be seen in *Golden Pheasants in Spring*. The Chinese flowering crab apple in full bloom with a male and a female bird, along with auspicious spirit fungus, typically Chinese rocks and bamboo are used to convey good fortune and longevity.



Giuseppe Castiglione, *Pair of Cranes in the Shade of Flowers*, mid-18th century



Giuseppe Castiglione, *Golden Pheasants in Spring*, 18th century

Castiglione became a favourite at court, especially under Qianlong [to be met in Part 7], and was known as Lang Shining with which he always used to sign his paintings. He worked for over 50 years in Peking as a painter of enamelled metalwork, a mural decorator, painter in oils, on silk and paper and as a designer of European style gardens. Castiglione also designed the Summer Palace for Qianlong.

Castiglione's use of colour, light and shade, modelling and linear perspective, appeared exotic and fascinating but he did not affect the general trend of Chinese art. Zou Yiqui, a court artist under Qianlong noted for his flower paintings who admired some aspects of Castiglione's work commented:

"The Westerners are skilled in geometry, and consequently there is not the slightest mistake in their way of rendering light and shade and distance. In their paintings all the figures, buildings, and trees cast shadows, and their brush and colours are entirely different from those of Chinese painters. Their views stretch out from broad in the foreground to narrow and are defined mathematically. When they paint houses on a wall, people are tempted to walk into them [Castiglione had painted illusionistic murals in churches in Beijing in the 1720s]. Students of painting may well take over one or two points from them to make their own paintings more attractive to the eye. But these painters have no brush-manner whatsoever; although they possess skill, they are simply artisans and can subsequently not be classified as painters."

Emperor Qianlong agreed with this. Although he had the usual Chinese delight in possessing foreign objects from an alien tradition, he was confident of their inferiority to real Chinese art which expressed the self and personality through the brushwork.

Female Artists

Chen Shu (1660-1736)

Chen Shu was born into a once-distinguished family which over the centuries had produced many notable scholars and officials. However, her father was not among them. Her mother, a traditionalist, forbade Shu to abandon needlework for the brush, but undeterred one day Chen Shu made a copy of a famous painting hanging on the wall of her father's study. For this she was beaten, but a god intervened in a dream of her mother's; *"I have given your daughter a brush. Some day she will be famous. How can you forbid it?"*

Chen Shu married into the Qian family, which took pleasure in expensive entertaining. To defray those costs Chen Shu pawned her clothing and sold her paintings. Qian Chenqun, her eldest son, was close to her. Chen Shu painted her young son studying by lamplight while she sat weaving. The poem he wrote to accompany this picture hints at their relationship:

*Hard at work by the latticed flame, the night
lamp glowing bright,
From the child by her knee, the sound of
reading echoes the sound of her wheel.
While her hands are busy with the needle, her
ears hear his recitations.
You know my kindly mother is my teacher too*

Qian Chenqun received an appointment to the Hanlin Academy. As Chen Shu had been widowed 3 years earlier in 1718, he took his mother with him to Beijing. Qian Chenqun frequently presented Emperor Qianlong with paintings by his mother; 23 were in the imperial collection according to catalogues compiled in 18th and early 19th centuries. The emperor received her works with pleasure and wrote on many in his enthusiastic lack of restraint.



Chen Shu, *Beautiful Scenery for the New Year*,
1735

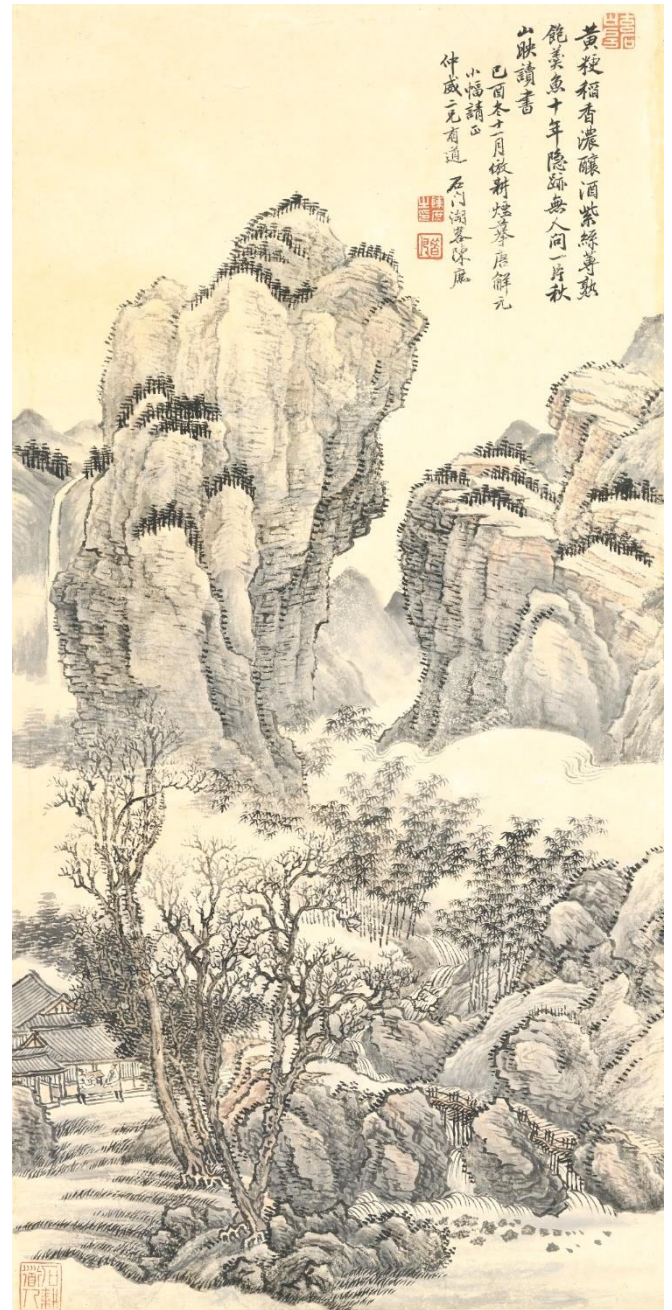
Some of Chen Shu's paintings are of popular subjects, of which *Beautiful Scenery* is an example: a piece to celebrate the New Year with auspicious objects. The rock symbolizes longevity and with the narcissus and dahlia form a wordplay for the expression, "Heavenly immortals offer longevity." The lily, persimmon, spirit fungus, and apple which surround the base of the pot are metaphors for "All things as you wish" and "Peace as you wish."

However, Chen Shu was a notable landscape painter. She travelled twice from her home in Zhejiang to join her son at his post in Beijing, and painted a picture on a boat on Lake Gan in Zhejiang. Just like male literati, Chen Shu practiced imitating the methods of the ancients in texts such as the *Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, and she copied old master paintings which she saw.

She particularly enjoyed the styles of Wang Meng and Tang Yin. *Reading Books* is a version of a small work by Tang Yin. Chen Shu stayed in Beijing with her son for three years, but returned home in 1724. Her inscription on *Reading Books* suggests she spent life largely on her own:

*When the yellow rice paddies are fragrant and thick, wine is fermented
And the purple threads of brasenias are boiled in porridge with fish.
For ten years all traces have been hidden, no one has come calling,
And in this sliver of autumn mountain reflections I sit and read.*

Six years after painting this, Chen Shu's health had deteriorated and she needed her son to look after her. Rather than have him leave his duties, she decided to travel to him in 1735 so he could look after her in her old age, but the trip to Beijing took a serious toll and she died late in the spring of the following year.



Chen Shu, *Reading Books in Autumn Mountain*, 1729

Yun Bing (active 1670-1710)

Yun Shouping had led the revolution of flower painting. His most illustrious follower was one of his descendants, Yun Bing. She is best known for her gorgeous nature studies. She was famed for her boneless style (following Yun Shouping). The *Flower Study* below is an elegant example; the only lines on the delicate blue and green leaves are the veins. Yun Bing's husband Mao Hongdiao, although educated, did not present himself as a candidate for office but instead built a small pavilion where the couple lived "chanting poems and painting until they grew old". Much of their livelihood came from Yun Bing's painting.



Yun Bing, *Flower Study*, 17th century

Yun Bing's *Flowers of the Twelve Months* is a famous work, and shows her wonderful boneless style. Associating specific flowers with months was an old practice. The Book of Rites has a calendar in which a flower or plant is mentioned for each month. In the early 17th century, a list of vase flowers for each month was codified.



Yun Bing, *Flowers of the Twelve Months (April: Herbaceous Peony)*, 17th century



Yun Bing, *Flowers of the Twelve Months (May: Lilies and Pinks)*, 17th century

She also painted an album of *Flowers and Insects*. Insects have a long history in Chinese art and literature, dating back to the Book of Rites. One of the agricultural songs includes insects in its description of the seasonal progress of daily life:

*In the fifth month the locust moves its legs,
In the sixth, the grasshopper shakes its wings.
In the seventh, the cricket is in the fields,
In the eighth, it moves under the eaves,
In the ninth, to the door,
And in the tenth, under the bed.*

Unlike the *Flowers of the Twelve Months*, this album has inscriptions composed and made by Yun Bing on each leaf. A female descendant, poet and painter Yun Zhu (1771-1833, poet and painter) wrote:

"She was my paternal aunt ... At the age of 13 she could already paint ... She was especially skilled at flowers and plants, birds and animals. With her application of colour and brushwork she transmitted the methods of Yun Shouping. Upon completing a work, she would quickly add a brief poem."

The soft-edged colour washes of the album are fragile but capture the look of nature in warm, moist Jiangnan. Yun Bing's works, like those of her ancestor Yun Shouping look natural. The roses, campanula, rock and beetle could be a scene from the garden, and the pink-shaded hydrangeas entwined with yellow squash flowers feel exuberant.



Beetle, Roses and Campanula

*Month after month, blown by the wind, but never exhausted –
These exquisite flowers are for painters' eyes alone.*



Gardenias and Azaleas

*For miles around the fragrance o'erfills the valley:
The Snow of July is sealed in every branch.
Blown this side and that of the jade railing-
No immortal's visage can be fairer, I guess.*



Hydrangeas and Squash

*Putting down my needles and thread, and in a languid mood,
How I'd love in my autumn boudoir to indulge in kicking
embroidered Snowballs!*



Butterflies and Rose

*Butterflies sporting in the gentle breeze come to the edge of
the grass;
For months on end, they send forth the message for all flowers
to open.*



Yun Bing, *Flowers and Insects: Blossoming Plum and Camellias*, 17th century

*Despite the snow, before spring's coming, they endure through the cold;
 In dark yellow or light pink, they display their beauty by the riverbank.
 Highborn, unimpassioned – the immortal shares nothing in common with the vulgar sort:
 Now emblazoned in a painting, they are for the delight of all human eyes.*

Yun Bing led a family enterprise, more than 40 artists surnamed Yun from Changzhou established reputations which secured them places in the written record, 12 were women, two being Yun Bing's sisters. They were closely associated with the men and women of the Ma (**Ma Quan**) and Jiang (**Jiang Jixi**) families. Yun Bing, Ma Quan and Jiang Jixi are three of the most important flower painters of the Qing and their works carry the Yun Shouping tradition into the century following his death.

Ma Quan (1640 – 1730s)

Ma Quan is linked to Yun Bing: her father Ma Yuanyu studied sketching from life with Yun Shouping. Reports of Feng Jinbo (18th century) and Wu Dexuan (1767-1840) mention Quan:

Ma Jiangxiang, whose name was Quan, was a native of Changshu. In her late years her reputation grew, and those who came from all around offering silk and gold in the hope of obtaining a painting became increasingly numerous. Usually she had several maidservants, all of whom were ordered to mix pigments. Many ladies and gentlemen of the Qinquan [Changshu region] sought her instruction. At the time Yun Bing of Wujin was painting and famous for her boneless method. Jiangxiang was known for her outline-and-colour technique. People of the Jiaigan called them a pair of incomparables."

Coloured Flower shows Ma Quan's outline and colour technique.



Ma Quan, *Coloured Flower*, 17th century

The Gazetteer of the Jiangnan Region says something of Ma Quan's married life:

Gong Chonghe and his wife Ma Quan were both skilled at calligraphy and painting. Those who sought their works valued them like jade. The family was poor, so the couple went to the capital, where they supported themselves by painting. When her husband died, she returned to their native place, to spin hemp, dip her writing brush, and drink cold tea [a simile for enduring hardships], living as a faithful widow."

Butterflies were a favourite subject for Ma Quan. Her paintings of them are about fragrance. Butterflies, drawn by the scents, cluster around flowers. Beautiful ladies were sometimes portrayed surrounded by butterflies to suggest they possess the aroma and allure of flowers. This work shows that Ma Quan used the boneless style too. In her late years Ma Quan went blind and a maidservant named Zhen (surname lost) painted in her stead. Qian Zhang also served as a ghost painter, and another Changshu woman, Qian E, made copies of Ma Quan's bird and flowers that were so good they were mistaken for originals.



Ma Quan, *Flowers and Insects* (detail from handscroll), 1723

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