

Nature Journeys

Summary and Props

OLLI Tour - Summer 2018

- **Introduction:** Welcome to Nature Journeys! Today we'll journey through nature in historical China, focusing on how Chinese artists capture "the inner spirit" of both the landscape and the Chinese people. We'll explore Enchanted Mountains, an exhibition showcasing Mia's holdings of 500 years of Chinese landscape paintings. Two points illustrate the importance of understanding Chinese landscape painting:
 - **Landscape painting was born in China, many centuries before it was "born" in Europe.**
 - **The landscape painting tradition has long been admired as one of the greatest cultural achievements of the Chinese people.**

Object 1: Sarcophagus of Prince Yuan Mi, 524, Unknown artist, China, Black limestone, 46.23.1A-D G208

- Introduction
 - Knowledge of early Chinese painting comes from burial sites, where paintings were preserved on silk banners, lacquered objects, and tomb walls and were meant to protect the dead or help their souls to get to paradise. This sarcophagus illustrates the role landscapes played in paintings and sculpture prior to the Tang Dynasty (before 6th century CE).
- **Factoids**
 - **The sarcophagus**
 - Yuan Mi (pronounced Me) was the grandson of Emperor Xianwen (r. 466–499 CE).
 - Buddhist, Confucian, and Daoist imagery intermingle within a landscape setting. Along each side of the sarcophagus, amid trees and mountains, five scenes illustrate the Confucian virtue of filial piety, or respect for one's parents, elders, and ancestors. The banners cite the title of the scenes. Daoist and Buddhist imagery is prominent in the heavenly scene above: immortals riding on dragons, phoenixes, and birds. The head end bears a scene including a bridge leading over a lotus pond to a gate flanked by two guardians, clearly Buddhist imagery.
 - The carving on the sarcophagus is in the form of "vignettes". Modern day art historians refer to these as "space cells". A 9th century critic described it as "trees and rocks used to show off a setting by encircling it."
 - **Confucianism and filial piety**
 - The great philosopher Confucius (551-479 BCE.) considered love and respect for others to be the essence of humanity.
 - Confucius first set down the golden rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."
 - Confucius defined the relationships among people which are fundamental to social order and emphasized reverence for elders and ancestors in these relationships.
 - **Taoism**
 - Taoism is an ancient tradition of philosophy and religious belief that is deeply rooted in Chinese customs and worldview.
 - Dao, translated as the Way, is the path to achieving a state of enlightenment resulting in longevity or even immortality.
 - **Buddhism**
 - Buddhism, originated in the sixth century BCE in what is today Nepal. It was brought to China during the latter part of the Han dynasty (ca. 150 CE) and took over a century to become assimilated into Chinese culture.
 - **History of Chinese landscape painting**
 - The earliest of all Chinese paintings are found on ceramic wares (more than 3000 years ago).
 - Artists from the Han (206 BCE – 220 CE) to the Tang (618–906 CE) dynasties mainly painted the human figure preserved on silk banners, lacquered objects, and tomb walls. Many early tomb paintings were meant to protect the dead or help their souls to get to paradise.

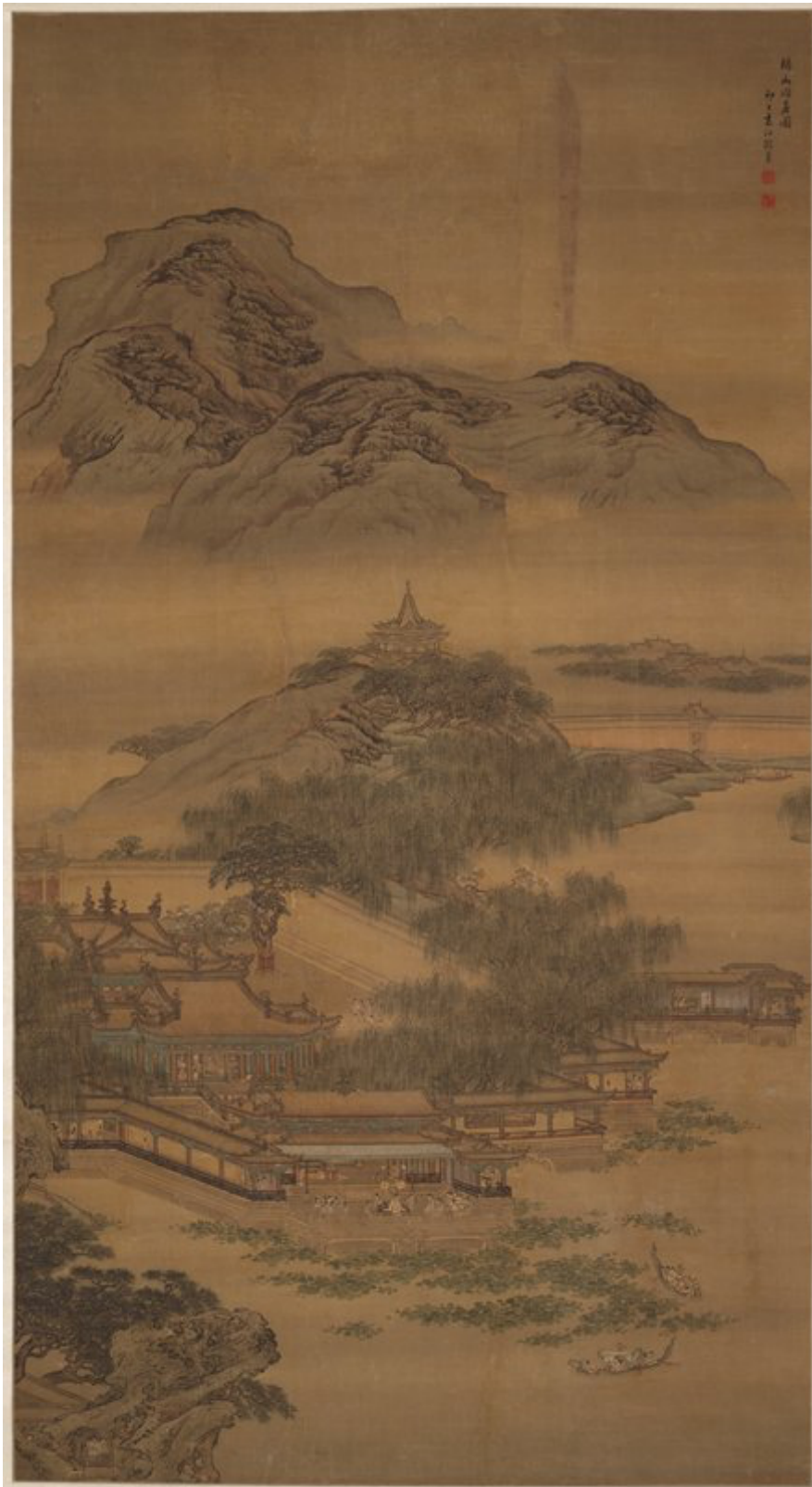
- Wall paintings were an early form of painting, preserved today in cave temples, temple buildings, and tombs.
- By the beginning of the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE), the tradition of landscape painting had advanced little, partly because of the ever-increasing demand for Buddhist icons and partly because artists were still struggling with the most elementary problems of space and depth. But during the Tang dynasty these difficulties were mastered.

Object 2: Landscape with Summer Villa, c. 1730, Yuan Jiang, Ink and light colors on silk, 73 x 30 3/4 inches, 62.70.10, G203

- Introduction
 - Let's start by exploring this large landscape from early 18th century. With this scroll we'll begin to explore Chinese landscape paintings.
- Engagement
 - The Chinese artist does not paint his subject while observing it; he may walk in the woods, looking at the trees and mountains, and then return to his studio to paint what his mind's eye remembers. He sees with his spirit or, as the Chinese say, his **'heart-mind'**. (The ancient Chinese believed the heart was the center of human cognition.) For each of the paintings we explore today, let's take a moment with each to describe the "inner spirit" the artist has captured.
- Factoids
 - **This painting**
 - Mount Li, a branch of the great Qinling mountain range (pronounced KIN-ling), is located north of present-day Xi'an. Situated in an area that had been a center of politics for over 1,000 years, its cultural significance is enormous.
 - At the height of its splendor, numerous pavilions and verandas connected its foothills to its peak, allowing rulers from various dynasties to visit its palaces and escape the intense heat of summer.
 - At the foot of the mountain is the necropolis of the first Emperor Qin Shi Huang, comprising his mausoleum and the Terracotta Army.
 - Mount Li is renowned for its Huaqing Pool, the hot spring used as imperial baths by the emperor and his concubines.
 - Yuan Jiang, a court painter of the Yongzheng reign (1726–35), was best known as a painter of architectural settings. His professional training is readily apparent in his precise and detailed yet lyrical rendering of this rambling villa, its tiny inhabitants, and surrounding lush water foliage.
 - **History of Chinese landscapes**
 - Like Chinese culture, the history of Chinese painting is a long and continuous one. **Three important Chinese inventions — the pointed brush, silk, and paper — can be traced as far back as the late Bronze Age (at least 2,500 years ago).**
 - Wall paintings were an early form of painting, preserved today in cave temples, temple buildings, and tombs. Written records describe paintings on palace walls and in humbler dwellings.
 - **Landscape painting was born in China as early as the 4th century CE**, where it was combined with Taoist and Confucian imagery, as we saw on the sarcophagus. **It became popular as a standalone genre in the late Tang Dynasty (618-906 CE) and flourished during the Song dynasty (960-1127 CE).** As a counterpoint, **landscape painting in the Western art tradition appeared in 15th-century Italy, developed into an independent subject in 17th-century Holland, and became enriched in 19th-century France and England. Landscape painting was popular in China 500 years before it becomes popular in the Western world.**
 - During the Tang dynasty, figure painting flourished at the royal court.
 - By the late Tang dynasty (10th century CE), landscape painting had evolved into an independent genre that embodied the universal longing of cultivated men to escape their quotidian world to commune with nature.
 - **Many critics consider landscape to be the highest form of Chinese painting.**
 - **The time from the Five Dynasties period to the Northern Song period (907-1127) is known as the "Great age of Chinese landscape".**
 - By the Tang dynasty **the criteria for good painting** had been established. One of the main objectives was **capturing the qi, or life force, of the subjects. The purpose was not to reproduce exactly the appearance of nature.**
 - **Characteristics of Chinese landscape paintings**
 - **The most commonly used term for landscape is shanshui (SHAN shoo-eee), "mountain-and-water pictures". These paintings typically include monumental mountains, thundering waterfalls, and banks of rising mist.** Drawing an analogy between the earth and the human body, the Chinese have referred to mountains as the 'bones', to water as the 'blood' of the earth. Both elements are considered inseparable constants in Nature.

- Chinese landscapes are painted in five distinct formats.
 - **Hanging scrolls**
 - The mounting of a hanging scroll included a heavy paper backing plus a decorative surrounding fabric frame, often elaborated into several panels of differently colored, patterned silks.
 - Generally, the height of the hanging scroll paintings ranged from 2 to 6 feet, although some 10 foot giants existed.
 - This format tended naturally to stimulate designs that took advantage of its verticality,
 - **Screens** - Not included in this exhibit; here's an example of one of Mia's.
 - **Handscrolls**
 - **Fans**
 - **The album leaf**
- Materials
 - In China, painters and calligraphers were traditionally scholars. The four basic pieces of equipment they used are called the **Four Treasures of the Scholar's Studio: paper, brush, ink, and inkstone.**
 - Traditionally, paper was invented in the early 2nd century CE, but there is evidence it was much earlier. **Paper was made by mixing finely chopped mulberry bark and hemp rags** with water, mashing it flat, and then pressing out the water and letting it dry in the sun. Chinese paper is classified into different degrees of weight and size used. The paper is highly absorbent, and the weight degree dictates the quantity of ink used for strokes on the paper. Different papers produce different results.
 - Chinese painting uses **water-based inks and pigments** on either paper or silk grounds.
 - **Black ink comes from lampblack**, a substance made by burning pine resins or tung oil.
 - **Colored pigments are derived from vegetable and mineral materials and include indigo, azurite, malachite, lead white, and cinnabar and iron oxide.**
 - Both are manufactured by mixing the pigment source with a glue base, which is then pressed into cake or stick form; using a special stone, the artist must grind the ink back into a watery solution immediately before painting.
 - The brush used for painting is very similar to the one used for calligraphy. The Chinese brush is conical shaped, generally made of soft and springy animal hair that is gathered into a bulging bulb tapering to a pointed tip. The bulging bulb holds the liquid ink as a central reservoir. As the brush is held in a vertical position, the tip would be the part first touching the paper.
 - **Well-aged silk ages to a golden-tan hue while paper retains its white color.**
 - Most Chinese paintings have small red impressions in a stylized script called **seals (or "chops") which indicate either who executed the painting or who owned it.**
- Process
 - **Chinese artists do not create a preliminary sketch on a separate piece of paper.** The drawing is directly painted on the paper or silk and often no model is needed. The subject comes from the artist's memory, embedded deep within his mind from long years of study and observation of nature and people. This is amazing since the artist is working with ink. Each stroke of the brush is a defining move. It has to be precise because it cannot be erased, corrected, nor improved. This tradition is very different from the West, where landscape artists sometimes do sketches beforehand, perhaps transfer their sketch to their support material (canvas or paper), and make corrections to paintings, at times, by overpainting.
 - In Chinese art, the major form in a composition is referred to as the **"host," and the "guests"** play a secondary role, mainly to balance that major point of interest. However, the guests are not insignificant. In a landscape, the mountain form would be the host, whereas a waterfall, trees, a hut, travelers, would all be considered as the guests, the subordinate objects. In a composition, the first step is to decide where, in the picture plane, to plant the host, which often will be the action line; then, where the rest of the forms, which carry lesser weight, should be arranged to balance or render contrast to the main form." (Da-Wei 1990, p.69)

- So, using a brush filled with ink, an artist will first “draw” **the outlines/“the bones”** of the “host”, typically the major mountain or mountain range. Once that is in place, he/she will “draw” in the outlines of the secondary objects, carefully considering balance and harmony. Following this, the outlined objects are enhanced with ink washes (in some areas, several layers to achieve the desired tone) and with brush strokes. Some scrolls do not make use of the outline brush strokes; these are referred to as “boneless”, meaning no outlines. In this case, the artist would start with a light wash to establish the placement of the “host”, followed by a light wash to place the “guests.” Enhancement work would follow as in the first example.
- Note that these outline brush strokes vary significantly to express the spirit/the inner life of the objects depicted: thicker/thinner, lighter/darker, wetter/dryer. In general, paintings by literati (amateur scholar/painters) show more variety in their brush strokes than do professional/court painters. (Literati considered themselves much more expressive than professional/court artists.)
- **Sacred mountains**
 - **The worship of great mountains as embodiments of mysterious power was a major element of ancient Chinese culture.** Such sacred mountains were originally deemed dangerous, **places where heavenly and earthly spirits mingled** with ferocious animals and monsters. Eventually they were seen as the **dwelling places of divinities and were believed to protect and exert control over China’s physical and sacred realms.**
 - In ancient times mountains were places of authority and fear, ruled by dark forces and faithfully worshipped. One reason was the value of the mountains to human existence as a spring of welfare and fertility, as the birthplace of rivers, as a place where herbs and medicinal plants grew, and as a source of materials to build houses and tools.
 - They were believed to be pillars separating heaven from earth.
 - Since the early periods in Chinese history, they have been the ritual sites of imperial worship and sacrifice by various emperors. The first legendary sovereigns of China went on excursions or formed processions to the summits of the Five Great Mountains. Every visit took place at the same time of the year. The excursions were hunting trips and ended in ritual offerings to the reigning god.



Mount Li



**An Incident on the Hunt, late 17th-early 18th century
Chinese Screen**



Stormy Landscape with Fishermen at Sea, 17th century
Zhou Chen
Ink and color on gold-flecked paper; 98.66.3



Riverside Retreat, c. 1250
Xia Sen
Ink and color on silk; 99.67.3



Pastoral Landscape, 1638
Claude Gellée (called Le Lorrain) (luh-rah-n)

Claude was the supreme master of the ideal landscape and the founder of the modern landscape tradition.



Object 3: Landscape with Scholar Viewing a Waterfall, 1722, Cai Jia, Ink and color on paper, 113 1/16 x 41 1/16 inches, 2002.94, G203

- Introduction
 - Let's continue discovering how Chinese artists captured the spirit of their country's landscape ... and of the inner landscape of their heart and mind.
- Engagement
 - In Chinese landscape paintings emphasis was placed on the spiritual qualities of the painting and on the ability of the artist to reveal the inner harmony of man and nature. What spiritual qualities does this painting evoke for you?
- Factoids
 - **This painting**
 - Barely perceptible in the rocky foreground, a scholar sits meditatively transfixed by a rushing waterfall. High above the twisted knot of contorted trees sheltering him, great vertical shafts of rock pierce layers of clouds to reach unimaginable heights. Every aspect in this composition is painted in meticulous detail; look closely to see how the artist used different strokes to create texture, delineate forms, or add color. This scene represents one of the most popular subjects in Chinese painting, the so-called watching-waterfall theme. The persistence of such imagery is easily explained by its underlying philosophies. Both Confucianism and Daoism draw an analogy between the natural qualities of water and the moral qualities of the perfect gentlemen—endurance, stability, sharpness of mind, and flexibility to adapt in the best way to a changing environment.
 - Note that this is **one of the largest Chinese hanging scrolls in Mia's collection**. It was likely created for an aristocrat or the royal family, someone with a house with tall walls.
 - **Brushstrokes in Chinese landscape paintings**
 - Many Chinese paintings relied so heavily on line that, from the Western perspective, they might better be referred to as drawings or sketches which concentrate on the primary figures rather than on creating a total environment. Chinese painting usually uses described lines, painted by a brush of visible width and thus having its own two-dimensional shape, an inner surface area and outer edges. Moreover, lines were usually painted with black ink and color was commonly limited to interior areas.
 - **Brushstrokes, the methods of using brush and ink developed in the practice of calligraphy, were the artists' means to their ends. They developed a rich variety of texture strokes.** The rhythmic movement of the arm and wrist are part of the rhythmic vitality of a painting or a character. Brush strokes provide the “bone” of the painting.
 - A vocabulary of brushstrokes can be found here: http://education.asianart.org/sites/asianart.org/files/resource-downloads/Chinese%20Brushstrokes%20Vocabulary%20%28AAM%29_0.pdf
 - **Use of blank space in Chinese landscape paintings**
 - **Areas of the white paper – voids – are always to be found in Chinese painting and calligraphy. They are not unfinished, empty, or yet-to-be-filled-up spaces.**
 - Voids contribute immeasurably to the suggestive quality of Chinese painting.
 - Even closer to the Tao than the solid mountain was the **ephemeral mist**, known as the ch'i or the “**life-breath**” of the Tao, coursing through the veins of the mountain, congealing into pools of water, and dispersing into place atmosphere.
 - Ink and paper can be treated like yang and yin, drawing matter from the void like a conjurer. The very process of creation and destruction is suggested here, the lingering clouds threatening to dissolve the mountains once again and draw them back into their fold.
 - **The aesthetic values underlying Chinese landscape paintings reach back to ancient Confucian and Taoist thought.**
 - **Social order under Confucianism and landscape paintings**
 - Confucianism
 - Confucianism built on an ancient religious foundation to establish the social values, institutions, and transcendent ideals of traditional Chinese society. Confucianism was part of the Chinese social fabric and way of life; to Confucians, everyday life was the arena of religion.

- Confucian rituals included actions beyond the formal sacrifices and religious ceremonies to include social rituals: courtesies and accepted standards of behavior — what we today call social mores. He saw these traditional rituals as the basis of human civilization, and he felt that only a civilized society could have a stable, unified, and enduring social order. **People acting rightly could reform and perfect the society.**
- The imperial family and other notables sponsored the publication of morality books that encouraged the practice of Confucian values: respect for parents and ancestors, loyalty to government, and keeping to one's place in society.
- Confucianism, which became prominent during the first century BCE, established a rigid social and political hierarchy and a love for harmony, order, and regulation. Social rank was distinguished by laws that dictated such things as the size and height of residences and the clothing and colors that could be worn by each class and status.
- Confucianism, nature, and landscape paintings
 - For the Confucians, **nature, as experienced in the mountain wilderness, exhibited the perfect order of the universe, after which man should pattern his social existence.**
 - Landscape paintings illustrate the specific parallel between mountains and pine trees and the social hierarchies of court.
 - For paintings intended for a government office, the high mountains and unified scenery might have conveyed a sense of authority and good administration, while providing an imaginative respite from bureaucratic life.
- **Depiction in and use of landscape paintings in Taoism**
 - Taoism
 - Taoism is an ancient tradition of philosophy and religious belief that is deeply rooted in Chinese customs and worldview; it is at least 2,000 years old.
 - **Dao**, usually translated as **the Way**, may be understood as **the path to achieving a state of enlightenment resulting in longevity or even immortality.**
 - The Tao is not God and is not worshipped. Taoism includes many deities, who are worshipped in Taoist temples; they are part of the universe and depend, like everything, on the Tao.
 - Among other things, **Taoism promotes achieving harmony or union with nature.**
 - The Taoists saw in nature the ultimate mystery and harmony of existence. **The holy man for them was the immortal; the one who was so in tune with the universe that he could live forever, dwelling in the mountains, existing on dew and crushed jade.**
 - Daoists speak of a harmony among all aspects of nature, and say "**Heaven and earth and I live together.**" The harmony in nature is illustrated in the balance between such things as water and mountains.
 - As early as the fourth century, the Taoists presented the high priests with the **180 precepts** of Lord Lao for **how to live a good and honest life. Twenty of these precepts focused explicitly on the conservation of nature, while many other precepts were indirectly aimed at preventing the destruction of nature.** Respect for nature has been a key component of Taoism from the very outset and, in its own right, explains why the Five Great Mountains are considered sacred. In addition, Taoists consider mountains as a means of communication between heaven and earth and as the place where immortality can be found.
 - People seeking to understand the secrets of the power of nature, the Dao, often contemplate those paintings when they cannot go the countryside and view an actual mountain or waterfall.
 - In many, if not most, landscape paintings, humans have a place. They are participants in the natural scene, but they do not dominate it.
- Role of water in Taoism
 - **Taoism employed water as a chief metaphor.** Water is omnipresent, embracing all living things with no trace of partiality or ulterior motives. It is the great mediator between contrasts, forever seeking balance.
 - Continuously dissolving and solidifying, it attains an infinite number of fresh manifestations of unity by way of perpetual transformation.
 - Water, in flowing downhill, adapts to the turns and twists and declivities it encounters, often taking odd paths or being momentarily interrupted, but always proceeding.

- In Taoist philosophy, likewise, the individual follows his individual “Tao” or “way”, never allowing the vicissitudes of life to overcome him.



Single-Line Calligraphy [center of a triptych of single-line calligraphies], 1690
Gaoquan Xingdun, Ink on paper



The Use of Void in Landscape Paintings

Da-Wei stated that “Areas of the white paper – voids – are always to be found in Chinese painting and calligraphy. They are not unfinished, empty, or yet-to-be-filled-up spaces. For, these voids are not actually empty. In fact, they are an integral part of a painting or calligraphy.” The painters will think it can inspire viewers to think and imagine.

Landscape Paintings and Confucianism

“A great mountain is dominating as chief over the assembled hills, thereby ranking in an order arrangement the ridges and peaks, forests and valleys as suzerains (feudal lords) of varying degrees and distances. The general appearance is of a great lord glorious on his throne and a hundred princes hastening to pay him court.... A tall pine stands erect as the mark of all other trees, thereby ranking in an ordered arrangement the subsidiary trees and plants as numerous admiring assistants. The general effect is of a nobleman dazzling in his prime with all lesser mortals in his service. (Brush and Shih, Early Chinese Texts on Painting.)”

Taoists Seek Harmony with Nature

"Heaven and earth and I live together."

The superior qualities of water are to be emulated by man: It follows its own course and always fills the bottom level, equivalent to the wise man being true to himself and maintaining a low profile. Water is the emblem of the unassertive. Taking the path of least resistance, always yielding, its effectiveness is unsurpassed.

Object 4: Landscape After Huang Gongwang, 1752, Wang Yu, Ink and color on paper, 107 1/16 x 50 3/16 inches, 2000.206, G203

- Introduction
 - This painting illustrates Chinese landscape artists' use of perspective.
- Factoids
 - **This painting**
 - This monumental composition pays tribute to the famous Yuan dynasty scholar-painter Huang Gongwang (1269–1354). It is an attempt to combine two of Huang's preferred compositional methods in one landscape. One of them is pingyuan, or "level-distance" perspective, defined as looking from a place in the foreground into the far distance across a flat landscape. The other is gaoyuan, or "high-distance," in which the viewer is placed at the bottom of a grand mountain looking up toward the summit. The painting shows a panoramic level-distance view. The spectator's eye is carried back into the depth of the composition through clearly marked stages. A rolling outline closes the high peaks in the background to demonstrate the "high distance."
 - **Use of perspectives in Chinese landscape paintings**
 - **To represent the three dimensional world on the two dimensional surface, the artist has to use systems of illusion that create the impression of space, of depth, and of movement.**
 - Human beings in nature see only to the extent of the capability of our eyes, which can recognize objects within a finite range of sizes, distances, and colors under suitable illuminations. When we see from one position, we cannot see from another position. When we see at this moment, we cannot see at a previous moment or a forthcoming moment. We are trapped in space and in time, and our experience of this material world outside ourselves is based on fragmentary information gathered here and now, there and in the past, and sorted out to make sense. Our limitations contrast greatly with nature, which stretches well beyond space and time.
 - **The perspectives utilized in Chinese paintings differ from traditional Western paintings. Western artists paint from direct observation of nature while Chinese artists paint from the "heart-mind".**
 - Before the late 19th-century, **Western landscape painting** was focused on the faithful expression of visual reality and scientific understanding of nature in art. **Nature was presented as though viewed on a stage or through a window. This resulted in the use of linear perspective, atmospheric perspective (with distance, lines blur and color becomes grayer/bluer, due to the atmospheric impurities), and the separation of vertical planes through overlapping, uniform light sources, and cast shadows.** Linear perspective was commonly used until the age of Post-Impressionism and Cubism.
 - The definition of visual authenticity in Chinese landscape painting is not equal to the physical reality that is represented in Western art. Here the visual truth reflects a spiritual and ideological state to comprehensively perceive the various aspects of nature, rather than a scientific exploration based on a visual instant. **The ancient Chinese art theorists believed the external depiction of a subject – the likeness, is not the essence to create a master piece. Rather, the artwork needs to reveal a kind of eternal spirit that goes beyond the subject itself – a spirit to express a profound state of life** (Shi 2014, pp. 2-3. Trans. Yuping Li).
 - In Chinese paintings, Linear Perspective is replaced with "**Floating/Multiple Perspective**".
 - In the 8th century, Chang Tsao made the following statement, since regarded as the supreme guideline in Chinese painting: **My external mentor is Nature; my internal source is the heart-mind.** Chinese artists paint from their 'heart-mind'. As such, they are not constrained by time and space, by the capability of their eye to see from just one vantage point.
 - **"Floating Perspective" is a technique which displaces the static eye of the viewer.** Inconsistent ground planes and multiple points of view were the rule in Chinese landscape painting. The artist used varying points of view in order to create a panoramic vision of nature.
 - **Techniques to suggest spatial recession**
 - **Overlapping placement.**

- Up is back.
- **The larger the object, the closer it seems to the viewer; however, the natural proportions may give way to ones reflecting their relative social status.**
- **The Chinese developed three personal points of view:**
 - the "level distance" perspective, where the spectator looks down from a high vantage point;
 - the "deep distance perspective," where the spectator's vision seems to penetrate into the landscape;
 - the "high distance" perspective, where the spectator looks up.
- **These are aesthetic choices by two different cultures.** The Italian Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci criticized Chinese art in the 16th century for its lack of perspective and shading, saying it looked "dead" and had "no life at all." The Chinese, for their part, criticized oil painting brought by the Jesuits as being too lifelike and lacking expression. In other words, for the Chinese, scientific rendering wasn't important capturing the spirit/the essence/the chi was. (Note the chi is the generating life force, the vital breath.) Faithful adherence to the outer appearance produces a high degree of realism but this might be done at the expense of the inner spirit. The Chinese artist, seeing appearance only as a means of achieving spirit, tends to place spirit above appearance, to the extent that appearance is transformed to near abstraction.
- Under the Qianlong Emperor (r. 1736–95) the finest craftsmen were recruited to serve in the palace workshops, including a number of European Jesuit missionaries whose representational techniques were particularly admired by the Qing emperors. Chinese court painters soon mastered the rudiments of Western linear perspective and chiaroscuro modeling. A key figure in establishing this new court aesthetic was the Italian Jesuit Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766), who lived in China from 1716 until his death in 1766.
- **Originality and copying**
 - Huang Gongwang rejected the landscape conventions of his era's Academy but is now regarded as one of the great literati painters. Art historian James Cahill identified Huang Gongwang as the artist who "most decisively altered the course of landscape painting, creating models that would have a profound effect on landscapists of later centuries." One of Huang Gongwang's strongest influences was his technique of using very dry brush strokes together with light ink washes to build up his landscape paintings. He also wrote a treatise on landscape painting, *Secrets of Landscape Painting*.
 - What is regarded as fake in the West is often treated with great reverence in China. **Even great Chinese masters copied works of their predecessors right down to their signatures and seals.** Chiang Dai-chen, regarded by many as China's greatest 20th century artist, was an expert forger who sold thousands of paintings attributed to classic painters. The wide availability of counterfeit goods and indifference to copyright laws today show the notions of individualism and individual ownership remain weak in China.
 - Michele Cordardo, the director of the Central Conservation Institute in Rome, was invited to China to work in Xian. He told *The New Yorker*, "**The Chinese have a different sense of the value of original and copy...The Chinese...have a tradition of conserving by copying and rebuilding.**"

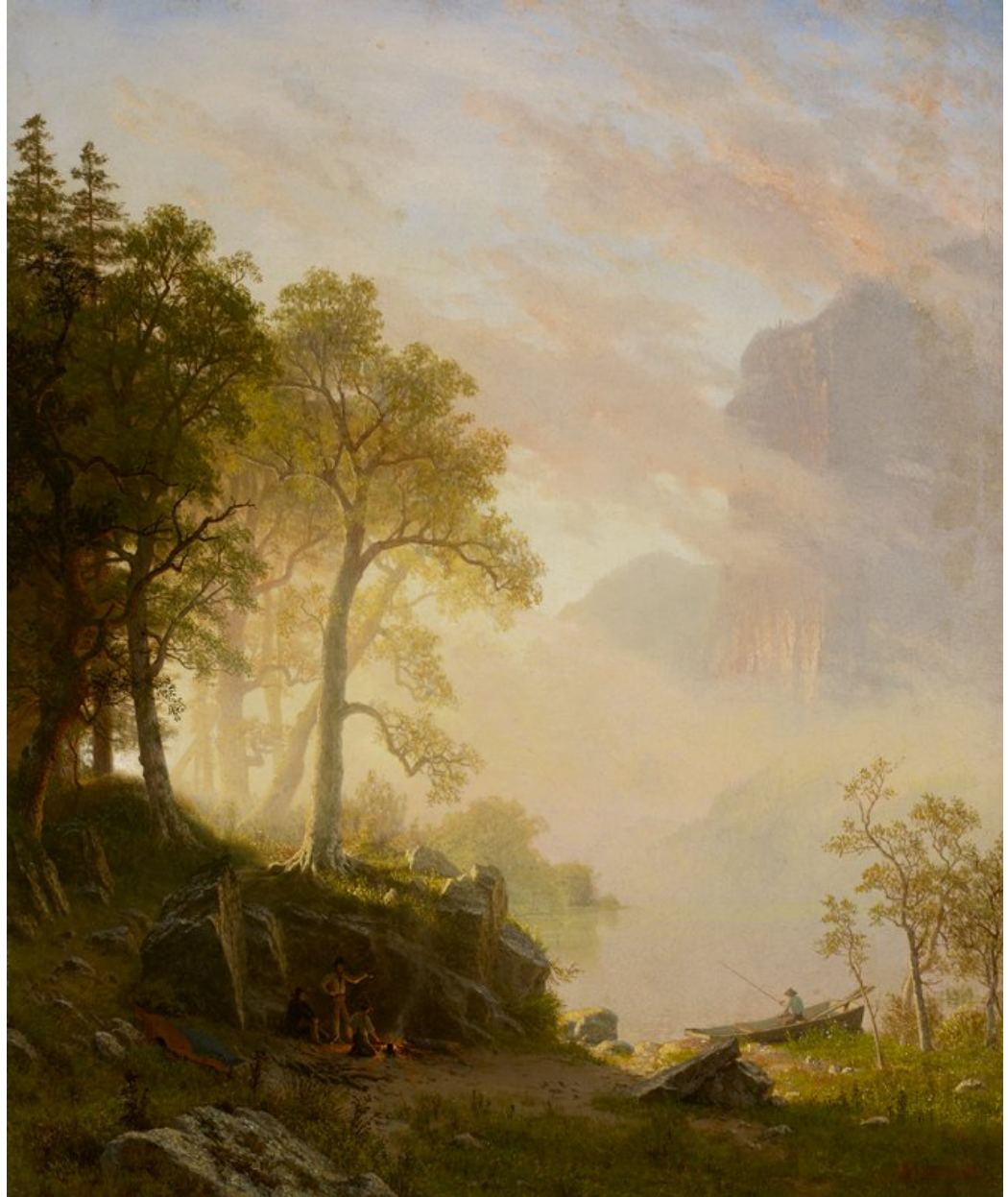


First Users of Linear Perspective – Filippo Brunelleschi & Masaccio



Masaccio – The Tribute Money c.1426-27 Fresco, The Brancacci Chapel, Florence

The Merced River in Yosemite, 1868
Albert Bierstadt



Perspective - A Cultural Aesthetic Choice

The Italian Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci criticized Chinese art in the 16th century for its lack of perspective and shading, saying it looked "dead" and had "no life at all." The Chinese for their part criticized oil painting brought by the Jesuits as being too lifelike and lacking expression.

Re: Adoption of Linear Perspective - the Qing Dynasty

While some court painters adopted these techniques of Western perspective and shading, others felt it was "mere technicality." "The student should learn something of their achievements so as to improve his own method. But their technique of strokes is negligible. Even if they attain perfection, it is merely craftsmanship. Thus, foreign painting cannot be called art." — Zou Yigui (1686-1772)

Object 5: Boy Leading an Ox Along the Farm Path, late 13th century, Unknown artist, China, Ink and color on silk, 97.83.1, G203

- Introduction
 - One of the foundations of Chinese “spirit” which we have not yet explored is Buddhism. Let’s turn our attention next to another form of Chinese landscapes to see how Buddhism sparks the spirit.
- Factoids
 - **Fans**
 - The fan was used to help cool people for more than 2,000 years. Early fans were usually made of feathers. The fan was popularized during the Han Dynasty when the simple bamboo fan and the cattail-leaf fan were invented. Later, a silk fan in the shape of the moon, called a “round fan,” became the favorite of young ladies. From the Song Dynasty on, fan painting became an independent art form.
 - Painted fans came in two major forms. The screen fan consisted of a single piece of silk, round or ovoid in shape, kept rigid by a circular outer frame attached to a bamboo or wooden handle. Fifth century inventories included calligraphic inscribed fans that were probably of this type, and painted fans must also have existed by then. Large ceremonial versions of the screen fan, with long handles, were common through the Tang period. The greatest age of fan painting, implying the screen-type fan, was the 12th and 13th century. This small-scale format provided an ideal vehicle for the refined and gentle taste of this period, sometimes expressed minimally with suggestive washes of ink, sometimes with exquisitely miniaturized detail.
 - A second type of fan was the curved folding fan which did not become popular in China until the 15th century.
 - Fans have been found in ancient tombs (more than 2,200 years old) so, although we don’t know why, we do know they were considered important personal property. By the time of the Tang dynasty, at the latest, fans were used to symbolize high status and taste among the aristocracy, both men and women. Ladies would use them as a prop for grace and beauty, while scholars would idly fan themselves to demonstrate their deep thoughts. Historically, using a painted fan has always brought the air of sophistication.
 - Fans are also used in Chinese folk dancing, a style creatively known as Fan Dancing.
 - If beauty isn’t enough, the Chinese decided to give their folding fans a deadly twist. While there’s some debate whether the original War Fan was invented in China or Japan, both countries adopted the steel-edged fans for close combat situations. War fans combined the portability of hand fans, made of iron or wood with heavy ends and razor sharp ribs.
 - **Buddhism in China**
 - Buddhism, a cultural system of beliefs and practices based on principles of compassion and non-attachment, originated in the sixth century BCE in what is today Nepal. It was brought to China by Buddhist monks from India during the latter part of the Han dynasty (ca. 150 CE) and took over a century to become assimilated into Chinese culture.
 - One of the key forces of Buddhism’s success was Daoism. To help the Chinese comprehend Buddhist concepts, Buddhists borrowed ideas from Daoism via the Chinese language. Both Buddhism and Daoism benefited from this exchange. Daoists expanded their ideas about the cosmos and ways to structure their monastic orders. Buddhists gained a lexicon that made it easier to teach their tradition.
 - Over time Buddhism became a popular force in the lives of the Chinese, from the common people to the emperor himself. In fact, by the sixth century, Buddhism rivaled Daoism in popularity and political influence. It was during this time, and over the course of the next three centuries, that major schools of Chinese Buddhism formed. Two schools that retain their influence today are Pure Land Buddhism and Chan (Zen in Japan) Buddhism. Even in mainland China, where religion is often suppressed by the government, there are practitioners of these two schools of Chinese Buddhism.
 - **Chan Buddhism centered around the practice of meditation and personal disciplines designed to bring one to sudden enlightenment, or direct apprehension of the ultimate truth.**
- Chan Buddhist instructional tale: "Ten Scenes with an Ox"

- The essence of Chan Buddhism is that **all human beings are Buddha, and that all they have to do is to discover that truth for themselves.**
- One of the most engaging of Chan Buddhist instructional tales is the "**Ten Scenes with an Ox**", a Southern Song invention. The story of an ox-herding boy in search of his lost charge is an analogy for discipline and enlightenment as the wayward ox, standing for the self, is found, roped, and led home. Appealing as genre scenes, the fifth scene, of the ox being led by the boy (religious training), and the sixth scene, of the boy riding the ox toward home (the two as one), are often repeated apart from the set.
- Ten Bulls or Ten Ox Herding Pictures is a series of short poems and accompanying drawings used in the Zen tradition to describe the stages of a practitioner's progress toward enlightenment, and his or her return to society to enact wisdom and compassion.
- The calf, bull, or ox is one of the earliest similes for meditation practice.
- The well-known ten ox-herding pictures emerged in China in the 12th century.
- We are the herdsman (worldly self) who is searching for the elusive ox (our true nature; the Buddha within) in the wilderness.



Chinese Folded Fan



Scholar's Mountain Retreat Amongst the Pines, 17th century, Zou Zhilin, Ink and color on gold-flecked paper, 98.66.8

Alternative Object 5: Gathering Herbs, 1612, Xie Daoling, Ink and color on paper, 99.67.6, G203

- Introduction
 - We've seen how Taoism and Confucianism influenced Chinese landscape paintings. Now let's expand that influence to include Buddhism.
- Engagement
 - What's going on in this painting? What do you see that makes you say that?
 - How is this painting similar to ones we've explored? How is it different?
 - Based on our discussion so far, how would you describe the relationship between humans and nature?
- Label
 - Attended by a servant carrying a basket of herbs, a scholar pauses on a bridge beneath a pine tree and gazes upward toward his destination, a monastery visible in the mists of a distant valley. Gathering herbs was a favorite scholarly pastime, as it provided an excuse to interact with nature, which in itself could be a meditative process. More significantly it was a practice pursued by both Daoists and Buddhists, reflecting the idea of sacred mountains as places where potent alchemy could be practiced and meditative refuge achieved. The mountains also offered the opportunity to encounter immortal beings and therefore a path to transcendence.
- Learning objectives for this piece
 - Buddhism's effect on Chinese landscape
- Factoids
 - Buddhism, which arrived in China around the first century C.E., had some affinity with Daoist concepts of harmony with nature, transience of earthly life, and transcendence of suffering. Buddhist art had several functions: the creation of statuary and images to invoke the presence of the Buddha in temples and shrines; spiritual education through imagery, drama and poetry; and as a meditative discipline.
 - Chan Buddhist (known in Japan as Zen Buddhism) centered around the practice of meditation and personal disciplines designed to bring one to sudden enlightenment, or direct apprehension of the ultimate truth.
 - Chinese artworks were individual interpretations of a common substrate of knowledge and beliefs.
 - Furthermore aesthetics and art criticism in China have been developing in parallel with pictorial art since its very early appearance. Thus we possess a huge number of texts trying to describe art purposes and techniques, to fix rules for the evaluation of paintings, to comment on an artist's competence and intentions.
 - The most important art critic of this period was Xie He, who in his 'Classified Record of Painters of Former Times' (Gu huapin lu, about 550) codified the famous 'Six Principles' of general painting. They are settled in order of importance, and the first principle can be translated as 'spiritual resonance'.
 - Originally 'spiritual resonance' probably meant that a successful painting needs, more than anything else, to capture the 'spirit' of the depicted. Briefly, the vital force (qi) that animates the natural world should animate the painting as well. And conversely, the art piece should have a spontaneous adherence to natural world, showing no affectation. We could maybe make reference to the Western notion of 'inspiration', but there is more: the principle of spiritual resonance involves a sentiment of belonging to the cosmic unity, and we notice a dialectic between natural macrocosm and artistic microcosm.
 - The theme of nature in Taoism evolved from a quest for naturalness, spontaneity, and primordial harmony with nature and from physical isolation in the mountains for advanced, solitary yogic or alchemical pursuits, to refresh themselves, meditate, seek alchemical herbs and immortals, engage in refined pastimes, and attain freedom and contentment of spirit.

- For the Taoists, mountains are the homes of spirits and immortals who can aid, bless, and instruct the immortality-seeking mountaineer. It was usually a Taoist meditating in its mountain locale to whom a spirit revealed an alchemical formula or the location of a medicinal herb. Therefore, Taoist sages ventured into the mountain landscape to gather alchemical herbs and ling-chia fungi to prepare their life-prolonging elixirs and to encounter mountain-spirits and immortals.
 - The Buddhist monks and lament shared this attitude toward the landscape and considered it to be an integral part of their spirituality. Mountain excursions supplemented traditional Buddhist moral and meditative disciplines as a source of spiritual cultivation.
 - Both Taoists and Buddhist believed in attaining spiritual elevation through contemplation of a landscape and that communing with nature was a way to commune with the souls of sages who had ben inspired by the same mountains and rivers in the past. The idea that an image can transmit this essence came from Buddhism. Combining these cultural streams, landscape paintings enabled countless people over the centuries to experience spiritual elevation by imaginatively wandering through the vast, numinous landscapes of China.
 - The mountains were one of the places that Buddhist hermits sought enlightenment, “cosmic revelation in the mountains.”
 - The ideals of Chan Buddhism later frequently found expression in a special kind of art, typically composed of broad surfaces of ink monochrome that suggest the sudden, intuitive, and individual awareness—without the secondary aid of either teacher or sacred text—that comes to the Chan devotee in moments of illumination.
- Closure
 - Chinese artworks were individual interpretations of a common substrate of knowledge and beliefs.



Object 6: Landscape in the Style of Mi Fu, 14th century, Attributed to Gao Kegong, Ink on paper, 42 x 15-5/16 inches, 2001.7.3, G203

- Introduction
 - Chinese landscape painters can be classified into two groups: professional and court painters and scholar/painter or literati. Next let's explore how the literati spirit infused landscape paintings.
- Factoids
 - **Ink wash in Chinese landscape paintings**
 - In addition to the linear brush stroke technique so prominent in most Chinese paintings, artists used a second basic manner of applying pigments or ink — not in thick, extended lines describing contours and edges but in **broad strokes that defined a surface area, known as a “wash” of ink or color**. This tended to disguise individual motions of the brush, blending many strokes together in order to unify a given area. A soft-haired brush was used for the application of a wash, a large one if the area was large, and often the brush was held at an angle to expose a greater amount of its surface to the silk or paper.
 - The layered ink wash, known as “broken ink”, technique involved washes applied layer upon layer, carefully controlled in placement and coordinated in tone, with darker layers usually applied upon lighter layers. This technique permitted the modeling of seemingly solid forms and the achievement of rich, naturalistic effects.
 - The landscape tradition used only a little color, if any, a single delicate shade or two scattered about the work or limited to minor details.
 - Chinese artists were as greatly concerned with tonality/value as they were unconcerned with hues. Artists and connoisseurs regularly asserted that “if you have ink, you have all five colors,” and they largely validated this assertion with their successful exploration of black ink alone.
 - “This is **the aim of the traditional Chinese painter: to capture** not only the outer appearance of a subject but its inner essence as well—its energy, **life force, spirit**. To accomplish his goal, the **Chinese painter more often than not rejected the use of color**. Like the photographer who prefers to work in black and white, the Chinese artist regarded color as distraction. He also rejected the changeable qualities of light and shadow as a means of modeling, along with opaque pigments to conceal mistakes. Instead, he relied on line—the indelible mark of the inked brush.”
 - **Colophons**
 - A colophon (mark or inscription) on the mounting of this painting written by renowned painter and calligrapher Wang Wenzhi (1730–1802) attributes it to the important Yuan artist Gao Kegong. (Eminent artists were often invited to write colophons to authenticate or simply to increase the value of the works.)
 - Colophons, or inscriptions, are one of the more striking features of Chinese paintings that are unfamiliar to western audiences. Early narrative paintings in the Chinese tradition often displayed text in banners next to the figures depicted; portions of the associated narrative text were also frequently found interspersed with sections of the painting. Beginning around the 11th century, however, **poems and painted images were designed to share the same image space**.
 - Although this practice was common at court, it was with **the scholar painters that the practice of writing on the painting surface became firmly established**. Literati painters also appended notes concerning the circumstances of creation of particular paintings. These writings, added after the painting was completed, could be mounted together with the painting but on another piece of paper or silk (as was the case with hand scrolls) or even invaded the picture surface itself (as in the case of the album leaf or the hanging scroll). The content of these inscriptions typically included the appreciative comments of later viewers and collectors and constituted a major source of enjoyment for connoisseurs, who felt a connection to art aficionados and scholars of the past through their writings.
 - **Literati/Scholar-Artists**
 - By the late Tang dynasty, landscape painting had evolved into an independent genre that embodied the universal longing of cultivated men to escape their quotidian world to commune with nature. As the Tang dynasty disintegrated, the concept of withdrawal into the natural world became a major thematic focus of poets and painters. Faced with the failure of the human order,

learned men sought permanence within the natural world, retreating into the mountains to find a sanctuary from the chaos of dynastic collapse.

- During the early Song dynasty, visions of the natural hierarchy became metaphors for the well-regulated state. At the same time, images of the private retreat proliferated among a new class of scholar-officials. **These men extolled the virtues of self-cultivation—often in response to political setbacks or career disappointments—and asserted their identity as literati through poetry, calligraphy, and a new style of painting that employed calligraphic brushwork for self-expressive ends.** The monochrome images of old trees, bamboo, rocks, and retirement retreats created by these scholar-artists became emblems of their character and spirit.
- Under the Mongol Yuan dynasty, when many educated Chinese were barred from government service, the model of the Song literati retreat evolved into a full-blown alternative culture as this disenfranchised elite transformed their estates into sites for literary gatherings and other cultural pursuits. These gatherings were frequently commemorated in paintings that, rather than presenting a realistic depiction of an actual place, conveyed the shared cultural ideals of a reclusive world through a symbolic shorthand in which a villa might be represented by a humble thatched hut. Because a man's studio or garden could be viewed as an extension of himself, paintings of such places often served to express the values of their owner.
- The Yuan dynasty also witnessed the burgeoning of a second kind of cultivated landscape, the "mind landscape," which embodied both learned references to the styles of earlier masters and, through calligraphic brushwork, the inner spirit of the artist. Going beyond representation, scholar-artists imbued their paintings with personal feelings. By evoking select antique styles, they could also identify themselves with the values associated with the old masters. Painting was no longer about the description of the visible world; it became a means of conveying the inner landscape of the artist's heart and mind.
- During the Ming dynasty, when native Chinese rule was restored, **court artists produced conservative images** which revived the Song metaphor for the state as a well-ordered imperial garden, while **literati painters pursued self-expressive goals** through the stylistic language of Yuan scholar-artists. Shen Zhou (1427–1509), the patriarch of the Wu school of painting centered in the cosmopolitan city of Suzhou, and his preeminent follower Wen Zhengming (1470–1559) exemplified Ming literati ideals. Both men chose to reside at home rather than follow official careers, devoting themselves to self-cultivation through a lifetime spent reinterpreting the styles of Yuan scholar-painters.
- Morally charged images of reclusion remained a potent political symbol during the early years of the Manchu Qing dynasty, a period in which many Ming loyalists lived in self-enforced retirement. Often lacking access to important collections of old masters, loyalist artists drew inspiration from the natural beauty of the local scenery.
- **The literati or scholar-artists were gentlemen, poets, and scholars first and painters only second;** and lest they be taken for professionals, they often claimed that they were only playing with ink and that a certain roughness or awkwardness was a mark of unaffected sincerity. By choice, they painted in ink on paper, deliberately avoiding the seduction of color and silk.
- The work of these scholar-painters was always original, not because they strove for originality but because their art was the sincere and spontaneous expression of an original personality.
- Dong Qichang's biases aside, **the work of the professional and court painters is academic, eclectic, precise, and decorative; that of the scholar-painters, calligraphic, personal, subjective.**
- The Ming dynasty was approaching its downfall, and men of integrity were once again withdrawing from public service into obscurity. Amateur painters found comfort and reassurance in the belief that they were the elite, upholding the Confucian virtues, while painters and scholars in the service of the emperor were prostituting their talents.
- Literati painters
 - **Scholar-official painters most often worked in ink on paper and chose subjects—bamboo, old trees, rocks—that could be drawn using the same kind of disciplined brush skills required for calligraphy.** This immediately distinguished their art from the colorful, illusionistic style of painting preferred by court artists and professionals. Proud of their status

as amateurs, they created a new, distinctly personal form of painting in which expressive calligraphic brush lines were the chief means employed to animate their subjects. Another distinguishing feature of what came to be known as scholar-amateur painting is its learned references to the past. The choice of a particular antique style immediately linked a work to the personality and ideals of an earlier painter or calligrapher. Style became a language by which to convey one's beliefs.

- Integrating calligraphy, poetry, and painting, scholar-artists for the first time combined the “three perfections” in a single work. In such paintings, poetic and pictorial imagery and energized calligraphic lines work in tandem to express the mind and emotions of the artist. Once poetic inscriptions had become an integral part of a composition, the recipient of the painting or a later appreciator would often add an inscription as his own “response.” Thus, a painting was not finalized when an artist set down his brush, but it would continue to evolve as later owners and admirers appended their own inscriptions or seals. Most such inscriptions take the form of colophons placed on the borders of a painting or on the endpapers of a hand scroll or album; others might be added directly on to the painting.
- The key distinction between scholar-amateur and professional painting is in the realization of the image: through calligraphic abbreviated monochrome drawing on paper or through the highly illusionistic use of mineral pigments.
- They viewed painting, like calligraphy, as an extension and expression of the man, not the depiction of things or nature, although nature -- and especially landscape -- remained the vehicle for this expression.
- Critics of the time called literati paintings spontaneous and intuitive and contrasted them to paintings by court and professional painters, which he characterized as being practiced, skillful, and belabored.

吾家藏有高房山墨戲真蹟邊關之上香光
 題云中有靈氣隨飛龍其元氣淋漓與此相似



山川作雲為天下雨
 嘉慶五年春香光畫此景
 嘉慶五年春香光畫此景
 嘉慶五年春香光畫此景

觀此山如雲山置身雲海之
 上竹人必覺豁然時在六月
 嘉慶五年春香光畫此景

有蒼潤之氣似紙欲濕元人大家其法
 為此筆法太史以為其高房山墨戲相似
 必有神見而云此也
 嘉慶五年春香光畫此景

Ink vs. Color - An Aesthetic Choice

Confucius deplored the court robes of his time as decadent for they had abandoned the pure colors, red and blue, in favor of mixed colors, purples and off-reds.

Taoists warned that “the five colors will blind the eye” to true perception.

Beginning in the 8th century, color was sometimes eliminated from painting as a means of bringing out the inner essence or spirit of the objects depicted.

The Chinese language reinforced this negative attitude toward color, as the written word for it also meant “beauty”, “passion,” “lewdness,” and “anger. “

In Chinese color theory, black contains all colors; thus theorists believe that people can conceive all colors in the various tones of ink. After ink paintings came to dominate Chinese painting in the 14th century, the painting of ink bamboo became so common that the story was told of an eccentric artist who enjoyed painting bamboo in red, much to the surprise of his audience. When one disbelieving onlooker was asked what color bamboo should be, his answer was, “Black, of course.”

Object 7: The Gathering at Orchid Pavilion, 1673, Qian Gong, active late 17th century, Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), Ink and color on paper, Loan, X2010.76, G218

- Introduction
 - Now that we've explored a painting done by a scholar-artist or literati, let's see how it differs from one painted by a professional or court artist.
- Factoids
 - **The painting**
 - This scene refers to an event that occurred in 353 CE during the **Spring Purification Festival**, an ancient bathing ritual. It was also a day for people to go for an outing by the water, where they would enjoy themselves at a picnic, pluck orchids, and rid themselves of any bad luck.
 - Wang Xizhi, together with 41 other renowned scholar-officials, gathered at Lanting in Shaoxing, Zhejiang province. They engaged in a drinking contest: wine cups were floated down a small winding creek as the men sat along its banks; whenever a cup stopped, the person closest to the cup was required to empty it and write a poem.
 - Wang Xizhi (303–361) was a Chinese writer and official who lived during the Jin Dynasty (265–420), best known for his mastery of Chinese calligraphy. Wang is generally regarded as the greatest Chinese calligrapher in history, and was a master of all forms of Chinese calligraphy, especially the running script. Furthermore, he is known as one of the Four Talented Calligraphers in Chinese calligraphy.
 - **Hand scrolls**
 - The hand scroll was a hand-held, intimate, easily stored and transported alternative to the more imposing wall and screen paintings of early times.
 - It seems to have developed naturally out of the form in which written documents were kept in the Chou period, on thin, vertical bamboo slips that were bound together in right-to-left sequence and rolled up for storage. The continuous-narrative form taken by Buddhist illustrations transmitted from India may also have contributed. The earliest use of hand scrolls was for writing, and painting in this format probably originated with illustrations to written texts. Early illustrated examples included those laid out with alternating passages of text and illustration, as well as others in which the text appeared below, the painting above, each without interruption.
 - Hand scroll paintings ranged from **less than 3 feet to more than 30 feet in length**; the majority were between 9 and 14 inches high. Paintings were mounted on a stiff paper backing; those of greater length were often painted on several sections of silk or paper joined together. At the left was attached a round wooden roller about which the scroll was wound when not in use and which was occasionally decorated with a knob of ivory or jade. At the right was a semi-circular wooden stave which kept the scroll properly stretched from top to bottom.
 - Hand scrolls are not intended to be hung or mounted on walls, but rather are meant to be stored in boxes and periodically taken out to be looked at. Ceremony and anticipation underlie the experience of looking at a hand scroll.
 - The first hand scrolls, dating back to the Spring and Autumn period (770-481 BCE), appeared in ancient books and documents and were made mostly from bamboo or wood strips bound together with chord. Beginning in the Eastern Han Period (25-220 A.D.) silk and paper were commonly used.
 - **The painting was viewed from right to left**, as one reads in Chinese, unrolling a bit at a time from the roller and transferring the excess to a loose roll temporarily maintained around the stretcher on the right. **About one arm's length was exposed at a time for viewing.**
 - Usually, a title sheet was inserted at the beginning and a long roll of paper was placed at the end of the scroll. The end roll kept the painting from having to be coiled so tightly around the roller, for better preservation, and inscriptions were written on it by the artist and by later owners and viewers. These calligraphic inscriptions consisted of appreciative and historical notes, often adding considerable interest and significance to the work as a whole.
 - The great distinction between the hand scroll and all other formats is its considerable length and its sequential exposure of the painting, allowing the artist to control and pace of visual events and to manipulate the viewer's response with shifts in subject matter and treatment.

- **The hand scroll format, among the greatest of Chinese contributions to the art of painting, comes as close as any pre-modern device to the effect of the motion picture, in which the sequential development and pacing of events are of the essence.**
- **Court/professional painters**
 - Court and professional artists who painted in a precise lineal style with added mineral color.

Object 8: Jade Mountain Illustrating the Gathering of Scholars at the Lanting Pavillion, 1784,
Unknown artist, China, Light green jade, 92.103.13, G210

- Introduction
 - Now that we've seen the Spring Purification Festival illustrated on a hand scroll, let's take a quick look at it in jade.
- Factoids
 - The theme represented on this jade boulder, the largest piece of jade carving outside of China, refers to an event that occurred on March 3 in the lunar calendar of 353. Wang Xizhi (303-361), a scholar official and one of the most esteemed Chinese calligraphers of all time, together with 41 renowned scholars and officials, gathered at Lanting or Orchid Pavilion in Shaoxing (in present-day Zhejiang province), celebrating the Spring Purification Festival. The scholars engaged in a drinking contest: Wine cups were floated down a small winding creek as the men sat along its banks; whenever a cup stopped, the man closest to the cup was required to empty it and write a poem. In the end, 26 of the participants composed 37 poems. Wang Xizhi was asked to write an introduction to the collection of these poems. Written in semi-cursive script and known as Preface to the Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion (transcribed on the top of the mountain by the Qianlong Emperor), it is the best known and most copied calligraphic work in art history. While the mountain image alone is enough to convey a close association between the jade sculpture and many painted landscapes, the Qianlong Emperor's seal and poem carved at the top on the other side of the boulder reinforces the idea of the jade mountain as a three-dimensional landscape painting.
 - The MIA's jade mountain originally belonged to a set of four commissioned by the Ch'ing emperor Ch'ien Lung (1736-95). The remaining three are still on view in Beijing. Carved in 1784, the MIA's was the smallest of the group, but is the largest carved jade in the West, weighing **640 pounds**. In contrast, the largest of the set tips the scales at 7 tons! This jade mountain depicted the story of the legendary emperor Yu, who stemmed the floods. It took ten years to complete the carving. The four formed an iconographic group which depicted the most revered Chinese legends.
 - Jade mountains became popular during the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties influenced by changing tastes and the new availability of large blocks of jade mined from mountain quarries of Chinese Turkestan. **Prior to this period, there was no tradition of carving miniature mountains, so the artisans took painting as their inspiration.** It was a challenge to make what was long a two dimensional motif of a vast mountain and turn it into dramatic three dimensions. This translation of the sublime landscape into a solid image echoes the Chinese interest at this time in the miniature, controlled landscape of private gardens filled with artfully corroded rocks, pools, and bonsai trees.

Object 9: Finger Painting, from an album of ten, 1684, Gao Qipei, Ink and color on paper, 99.176.1-7, G218

- Introduction
 - For our final object we'll explore paintings which weren't created with a brush. Let's take a look.
- Factoids
 - Albums
 - In China, **the album format is more intimate than the hanging scroll or hand scroll formats. Chinese painting albums usually consist of up to twelve folded pages, with wood or brocade-covered card covers.**
 - The albums are relatively small and often include paintings as well as calligraphy. The paintings and calligraphy usually work together, sometimes with a poem on one page and a small painting illustrating it on a facing page. The paintings might be by one artist or a group of different artists, who perhaps joined together to dedicate their works to a friend for a special occasion.
 - The album first emerged as a format for painting during the Sung Dynasty. Its origins lay in bookbinding processes that developed with the woodblock printing of texts, emerging in the Tang and becoming widespread in the Sung. The form was primarily a matter of convenience: when literature was mounted in scroll form, material toward the end of a text could only be reached by unrolling the scroll from the beginning, which became a lengthy process in the case of a longer scroll. By taking the same continuous stretch of silk or paper and folding it together in accordion manner rather than rolling it up, it was possible to open it immediately to any section of the text. The particular format that emerged was shaped by the way that Chinese printed pages were made — on single, large blocks of wood, rather than individual, moveable characters — and the the size block that proved most convenient for cutting and handling, which became standard in the Sung period. The size block produced a horizontal sheet that was folded down the middle and mounted on heavy paper backing, accordion-style, as a double-paged album leaf. In painting, single-paged facing leaves, often pairing calligraphy and painting, also become common, sometimes mounted individually in a so-called “butterfly” binding. Leaves were usually combined in groups of 8, 10, 12, 16, 20, or 24. The album leaf had the further advantage of eliminating the continual wear imposed upon the silk or paper, ink and pigments, by the constant rolling and unrolling of a scroll.
 - The album leaf provided the artist with a small-scale format for the presentation of a single, unified scene, without the extensive demands of the hanging scroll and long hand scroll. The album quickly became a popular format among artists of the Southern Sung period, as tastes turned from the monumental style of Northern Sung to a more lyrical and intimate mode. The album also became popular among the scholar-amateurs, beginning in the late Northern Sung, who preferred small, casual study-sketches to the grand and highly polished professional styles and for whom the album carried literary associations.
 - Gao Qipei (pronounced Gao Key-PEE-Eye)
 - Artist Gao Qipei (1660-1734) was born in the north of China. He was a high-powered civil servant under emperors Kangxi (1662-1722) and Yongzheng (1723-1735) of the Qing dynasty. His bureaucratic work left Gao plenty of time to devote to painting. In his twenties he was clearly searching for a style of his own. He found it by using his fingers rather than a brush, an idea that came to him in a dream. He applied paint with his fingertips and hand, and used a single nail for thin lines. At first Gao also used a brush, but he eventually abandoned this altogether as he perfected his manual skill. What makes Gao's finger-painted landscapes so remarkable is their spontaneity.
 - Qing Dynasty (1644–1911/12) Individualists
 - The Manchu conquest did not produce a dislocation of Chinese social and cultural life in the same way the Mongol invasion had done. On the contrary, even before their conquest, the Manchus began imitating Chinese ways, and the Qing rulers, particularly Kangxi (1661–1722) and Qianlong (1735–96), were well-educated men who were eager to enlist the support of Chinese scholars. They were extremely conservative in their political and cultural attitudes; in artistic taste, their native love of extravagance (which the Chinese viewed as barbarous) was tempered, ironically, by an equally strong conservative propensity. The art of the Qing dynasty, even the

painting of many of its finest eccentrics and the design of its best gardens, is similarly characterized both by lavish decoration and ornate effects as well as by superb technique and conservative taste.

- Under the Qing Dynasty, traditional forms of art flourished and innovations were made at many levels and in many types. High levels of literacy, prosperous cities, a successful publishing industry, and the Confucian emphasis on cultivation all fed a lively and creative set of cultural fields.
- The early Qing dynasty developed in two main strands: the Orthodox School and the Individualist painters. Both approaches followed the theories of Dong Qichang but stressed different aspects.
- The Six Masters of the early Qing period were a group of major Orthodox artists whose art was generally conservative, cautious, subtle, and complex, in contrast to the vigorous and vivid painting of their individualist contemporaries.
- Receiving no patronage from the Manchu court and leaving only a minor following before the latter half of the 19th century was a different group of artists, now frequently referred to as “**Individualists**.” Collectively, these artists represent a triumphant, if short-lived, moment in the history of literati painting, triggered in good part by the emotionally cathartic conquest of China by the Manchus. **They shared a rejection of Manchu political authority and the choice of an eremitic, often impoverished lifestyle that obliged them to trade their works for their sustenance, in spite of their allegiance to amateur ideals.** Stylistically, just like their more orthodox contemporaries, they often revealed the influence of Dong Qichang’s systematization of painting method; but, unlike the more conservative masters, they pursued an emotional appeal reflective of their own temperaments.
- During the early Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), painters known as Individualists **rebelled against many of the traditional rules of painting and found ways to express themselves more directly through free brushwork.**

Twentieth Century Chinese Landscape Paintings

- **The first decades of the twentieth century marked the end of the insular, tradition-bound Qing empire (1644–1911) and the forceful entry of China into the modern age. Foreign influences, largely restricted to a handful of ports and missionary initiatives during much of the nineteenth century, now flooded into China in an irresistible tide. Indeed, the massive influx of Western ideas and products constituted the most important factor defining China’s culture during the twentieth century.**
- China’s defeat in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894–95) spurred a movement for reform among members of the scholarly class with the ideal of marrying “Chinese essential principles with Western practical knowledge.” During its final years, the Qing dynasty did launch a number of initiatives aimed at modernization, but its efforts were too feeble and too late. Advocates for radical change, particularly the revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925), were able to capitalize upon growing dissatisfaction with Manchu rule to topple the Qing dynasty. **The founding of the Republic of China in 1912 brought about an end to two millennia of imperial rule.** During the next two decades, the young republic struggled to consolidate its power: initially by uniting central military and political leadership after the misguided attempt by Yuan Shikai (1859–1916), the first president, to establish himself as emperor; and second by bringing together China’s diverse regions, after wresting control over certain areas from local warlords. **In the arts, a schism developed between conservatives and innovators, between artists seeking to preserve their heritage in the face of rapid Westernization by following earlier precedents and those who advocated the reform of Chinese art through the adoption of foreign media and techniques.**
- As exemplified by Fu Baoshi (1904–1965) and Zhang Daqian (1899–1983), both of whom studied in Japan and traveled abroad late in their lives, **some influential artists created hybrid styles that reflected a cosmopolitan attitude toward art and a willingness to modify inherited traditions through the incorporation of foreign idioms and techniques.** Zhang, who became a leading connoisseur and collector, based his diverse painting styles on the firsthand study of early masterpieces, while Fu, an academic, learned about earlier works from reproductions and copies.
- **With the founding of the People’s Republic of China on October 1, 1949, cultural activities came under the control of the state. Seeking to reform traditional painting to make it “serve the people,” the Communist government mandated that artists pursue a “revolutionary realism” that would celebrate the heroism of the common people or convey the majesty of the motherland. Taking the Socialist Realism of the Soviet Union as orthodoxy, Chinese painters found a model among their own countrymen—emulating the Western-derived academic realism of Xu Beihong (1895–1953). Painting from life rather than copying ancient masterpieces became the principal source of inspiration for most artists. But excessive bureaucratic oversight and the shifting demands of politics often had a detrimental effect. The Communist party’s effort to encourage plurality and free expression under the Hundred Flowers Movement of 1956–57, for example, was soon cut short by the antirightist purge of 1957; while the Great Leap Forward, of 1958–62, and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of 1966–76, although intended to bring society into conformance with the party’s progressive ideals, actually led to the persecution of many well-known artists and had a stultifying impact on creativity.**
- Although Chinese painting today bears the influence of ideas and techniques from the West, it remains a distinctly different kind of art, maintaining the essence of its tradition. That essence rests in the persistent employment of brush and ink on absorbent paper, with monochromatic linear elements and voids, and in artists’ preference for subject matter derived from nature. Less apparent but perhaps more deeply rooted is the adherence to a specific attitude towards nature. This attitude accounts for the development of a unique landscape vision distinguishing Chinese painting from that of other cultures.

Gao Jianfu: A Solitary Temple in the Autumn Mountains



Liu Haisu: Clouds in the Yellow Mountains



Zhu Dequn: Vivid Runoff



Splashed-Color Landscape by Zhang Daqian, 1965



Chinese Dynasties

Shang Dynasty 1523-1028 BCE

Zhou Dynasty 1027-256 BCE

Qin Dynasty 221-206 BCE

Han Dynasty 206 BCE - 220 CE

Six Dynasties 220-586 CE

Sui Dynasty 581-618 CE

T'ang Dynasty 618-906 CE

Five Dynasties 907-960 CE

Song Dynasty 960-1279 CE

Yuan Dynasty 1280-1365 CE

Ming Dynasty 1368-1644 CE

Qing Dynasty 1644-1912 CE

Alternative object 5: Thatched Huts Among Ridges in Winter, 1649, Lan Ying, Ink and color (azurite and malachite?) on silk, 72-1/16 x 26-13/16 inches, 2001.5.1, G203

- Introduction
 - Have you ever wanted to get away from it all? So have the Chinese and here's one way they did it!
- Factoids
 - **Ethos of eremitism**
 - Unlike any other culture or country, China has fostered hermits and eremitism throughout its long history, especial among its most educated and erudite classes.
 - Because only the affluent and educated had the opportunity to pursue reclusion based on moral principle in ancient China, concepts of reclusion were tied directly to political and social factors affecting the moral individual. Renunciation of office, power, and security, undertaken voluntarily, was precisely the proof of integrity that distinguished the solitude of a shaman, peasant, or woodcutter living in a remote mountain or in a far-away village from the reclusion of an urban and literate official.
 - The conscious and unambiguous choice for eremitism first appears in ancient China in the works attributed to Confucius.
 - The idea that office could be refused despite qualifications and ambition, or that office-holders would not feel morally obliged to exercise their talents on behalf of corrupt others, is a radical political and social idea. The notion that anyone of the requisite family, articulate, educated, groomed for public service, should disdain power, prestige, and material comfort is still a concept difficult for most people to understand. Though there was risk and insecurity in severing oneself from a political regime, the alternative was ignominy, banishment and material hardship for those who spoke up. To speak up would have been motivated by either naiveté, foolishness, misjudgment, or high moral purpose, but there was nothing political to be gained by it.
 - Confucius went further in proposing that, as one source puts it, "it is the moral nature of the individual, properly cultivated and self-regulated, that can be the only source of ethical value and social order." The moral individual, not motivated by ignorance, fear of punishment, or promise of reward, is the necessary foundation for a just society, but also the foundation for a philosophy of eremitism.
 - Confucius concludes that a perspicacious and flexible view of the world would not only yield the individual a moral insight superior to that of other methods or interpretations but would also offer practical insight into what to do. What to do meant how **to judge present circumstances and decide about participating or not participating in dangerous situations such as court life or official service. "Worthy men shun the world," says Confucius** in the Analects (14.37).
 - By the late Tang dynasty (618-906), landscape painting had evolved into an independent genre that embodied the universal longing of cultivated men to escape their quotidian world to commune with nature. Such images might also convey specific social, philosophical, or political convictions. As the Tang dynasty disintegrated, the concept of withdrawal into the natural world became a major thematic focus of poets and painters. Faced with the failure of the human order, learned men sought permanence within the natural world, retreating into the mountains to find a sanctuary from the chaos of dynastic collapse.
 - **Use of blank space in Chinese landscape paintings**
 - Areas of the white paper – voids – are always to be found in Chinese painting and calligraphy. They are not unfinished, empty, or yet-to-be-filled-up spaces.
 - Voids contribute immeasurably to the suggestive quality of Chinese painting.
 - Even closer to the Tao than the solid mountain was the **ephemeral mist**, known as the ch'i or the "**life-breath**" of the Tao, coursing through the veins of the mountain, congealing into pools of water, and dispersing into place atmosphere.
 - Ink and paper can be treated like yang and yin, drawing matter from the void like a conjurer. The very process of creation and destruction is suggested here, the lingering clouds threatening to dissolve the mountains once again and draw them back not their fold.

Retreat though Landscape Paintings

Guy Xi declared that it is the virtuous man above all who delights in landscapes. Why the virtuous man particularly? Because, being virtuous (in other words, a good Confucian), he accepts his responsibilities to society and the state, which tie him down to the urban life of an official. He cannot “seclude himself and shun the world: he cannot wander for years among the mountains, but he can nourish his spirit by taking imaginary journeys through a landscape painting into which the artist has compressed the beauty, the grandeur, and the silence of nature, and return to his desk refreshed.

The Use of Void in Landscape Paintings

Da-Wei stated that “Areas of the white paper – voids – are always to be found in Chinese painting and calligraphy. They are not unfinished, empty, or yet-to-be-filled-up spaces. For, these voids are not actually empty. In fact, they are an integral part of a painting or calligraphy.” The painters will think it can inspire viewers to think and imagine.

Good reference: *The Tao of Chinese Landscape Painting — Principles & Methods* by Wucius Wong