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Aesthetic Resonance and Its Contemporary Significance: A Study of the Preface to the Hua Shan Painting Atlas

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Abstract

The statement “My heart takes my inner self as its master, my inner self guides my eyes, and my eyes learn from Mount Hua thus guiding the depiction of the landscape in my painting,” from *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua*, is often considered a maxim for imitating nature. This summary of painting theory is based on the aesthetic sensation thought in *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua*. Wang Lv uses the generative principle of constancy and change as the philosophical foundation of aesthetic sensation, then he analyzes and summarizes the process of aesthetic sensation through the integration of form and meaning. Wang Lv’s refinement and advancement of traditional Chinese aesthetic sensation thought has certain guiding significance for contemporary Chinese painting creation.

Key Words

Wang Lv, *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua*, the aesthetic sensation, Chinese painting creation

Introduction

Chinese painting theory has a long tradition of written prefaces, such as Zong Bing’s *On the Creation of Landscape Paintings*, Cao Zhi’s *Preface to a Picture Ode*, and so on. These all demonstrate exquisite aesthetic implications. According to Peng Feng’s research, Wang Lv (styled Andao) painted Mount Hua twice, and *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua* we see today should be the preface written by the author for the second painting of Mount Hua. Its original name should be *The Preface to the Repainted Mount Hua* (referring to the handwritten version).¹ In discussing the constancy and change of mountain shapes, Wang Lv outlines the intrinsic connection between heaven, earth, and humanity, establishing the internal basis for the occurrence of aesthetic sensation. Throughout *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua*, there is a continuous switching and selection between the subject and object of the patriarchal clan rules, and it is usually considered a classic work of illustrating the application

of the patriarchal clan rules to Mount Hua (i.e., the objective entity). Most of it engages in theoretical discourse and explores the origins of painting techniques from the perspective of “unity of form and spirit,” focusing on the object-oriented approach. Wang Lv does not truly advocate a single-line approach to imitation from heart to eyes to Mount Hua. When presenting his meaning, the author obscures the object-subject relationship between heart, eyes, and Mount Huashan, dissolving the subjective-objective cognitive approach from the inside out. Without fully understanding Wang Lv’s subtle meaning, it is impossible to truly grasp the essential meaning of *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua*. At present, there are rich research results on Wang Lv’s works, which are relatively comprehensive and detailed. However, there are not many research results that analyze his painting theory from the ideological roots of traditional literati. Therefore, this article attempts to explore the intrinsic connection between thoughts and painting theories based on the fundamental principles of constancy and

change in the *I Ching*.

1. The Philosophical Foundation of Aesthetic Sensation in *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua: The Generative Path of Constancy and Change*

During the Yuan Dynasty, marked by the invasion of alien tribes, literati often adopted the identity of recluses, using painting as a means to express their feelings and find solace. In the creation of landscape painting there was a prevalent imitation of masters such as Dong Yuan, Ju Ran, Jing Hao, and Guan Tong, making “imitating the ancients” a prominent characteristic of Yuan Dynasty landscape painting. Building upon the development of Yuan Dynasty landscape painting, the early Ming Dynasty saw the ruling class strengthen feudal centralized control over politics, ideology, and culture. The artistic circles of the early Ming still exhibited characteristics of rigor and reverence for the ancients. The practice of Neo-Confucianism by figures like Liu Ji and Song Lian during this period formed a cosmological view based on the theory of Yuanqi. Against this backdrop, Wang Lv’s generative thinking of constancy and change in his *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua* might have emerged from his reflection on the artistic trends of the Yuan and Ming dynasties and his profound understanding of the Neo-Confucian thought of the early Ming. Wang Lv was not only a renowned painter of the Ming Dynasty but also a famous physician. In his work *A Study on the Principles of Shanghan Lun*, he discussed the issues of constancy and change in diseases. *The Ming History: Biography of Wang Lv* records him saying “*Shanghan Lun* is the foundation for all later scholars, and no one has been able to surpass its scope.” Moreover, the *Yellow Emperor’s Inner Canon* states that before Zhang Zhongjing, *Shanghan* was generally understood as a primarily hot condition, with descriptions focusing on constancy rather than change. It was Zhang Zhongjing who first systematically differentiated between cold and heat patterns within this category. However, even his groundbreaking work required further elaboration. Therefore, Wang Lv thoroughly addressed both constancy and change in his *A Study on the Principles of Shanghan Lun*.² Wang Lv’s philosophical concepts of constancy and change were not only evident in his medical theory and practice but also had a profound reflection in his artistic theories.

Dong Qichang pursued medical studies under Wang Lv for three years without succeeding in fully reaching

the boundaries of his medical skills, subsequently embarked upon a journey to Mount Hua where he engaged in artistic creation to satirize the shallow scholars of his time who were occupied with official affairs by day, and would merely pen personal annotations by night.

However, this anecdote also reveals the reason for Wang Lv’s excursion to Mount Hua—Wang Lv sought to find the path of medicine within the path of painting, engaging in cross-disciplinary thinking between medicine and painting. This leads to the understanding that Wang Lv’s integrated perception of constancy and change became the fundamental basis for his discussions on medicine, painting, and writing.

In *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua*, when discussing the nature of mountains, Wang Lv proposes three states: constancy, change, and the layering of change. The first stage is constancy, where he briefly describes the common forms of mountains and provides noun explanations and detailed interpretations for different appearances. For example, a large and tall mountain is called Song; a small and tall one is called Cen; a narrow and tall one is called Luan—these are the most common mountain shapes. The second stage is change, primarily discussing how the various forms of mountains are not purely singular but are full of diverse changes based on their normal state. The third stage is the layering of change, which refers to the even deeper, multi-layered changes and blending that mountains undergo on the basis of change, ultimately presenting the final result—the final appearance of Mount Hua as we see it.

Wang Lv aimed to clarify the true state of “mountains being mountains.” His three states of mountain forms might very well be an adaptation of the philosophical theory of “beginning (shi), maturity (zhuang), and ultimate (jiu)” from traditional Chinese *I Ching* studies. This can be directly understood as the developmental process of things from beginning to maturity and then to the ultimate stage. Shi corresponds to the constancy state of mountains, zhuang corresponds to the change state, and jiu corresponds to the final result of the layering of change state. Within the philosophical system of the *I Ching*, the development and evolution of things follow a rule. For Wang Lv, the three states of constancy, change, and the layering of change of mountains comprehensively summarize all the states of mountain forms in nature. Not only did Wang Lv use these three states to summarize the forms of mountains in nature but, importantly, as a painter, he was able to integrate his insights into the appearance of Mount Hua into the generative philosophy of beginning, maturity,

and ultimate, indicating his profound grasp of the truth of Mount Hua. Therefore, he could view the marvelous scenery of Mount Hua before him with a dialectical mindset of constancy and change. Furthermore, Wang Lv points out “If they have already emerged from the layering of change, how can I treat them with the constancy of constancy?”³ Although mountain forms have countless change states, Wang Lv still understood them within the framework of constancy. These subjective understandings reflect his comprehension, meaning that after various changes it ultimately returns to constancy. Wang Lv regarded constancy as the original state of mountain forms and change as the generative path of art. Regarding the generative path, Mou Zongsan offered his perspective: “In the growth of things, change and stability exist concurrently. Stability underpins successful change, and change leads to ultimate completion. The shift from change to stability constitutes a whole process, from beginning to end.”⁴ Clearly, the generative philosophy of constancy and change constitutes the fundamental spirit of Wang Lv’s artistic theory. Therefore, Wang Lv could exclaim, “I must therefore discard the old and embrace the new.”⁵ It highlights Wang Lv’s moves away from viewing the inherent forms of objective things through a subject-object dichotomy, instead integrating the existence of Mount Hua through a unified approach of object-subject and “heaven-humanity shared empathy.” Only by placing Mount Hua within the vast, ever-changing, and dynamic cosmic transformation can its infinite life-giving power truly emerge, allowing one to reach the source level that “those who merely copy” cannot attain from the ancients. In summary, the generative path of constancy and change that Wang Lv adhered to embodies the philosophical spirit of “life-giving transformation is what is meant by the *I Ching*,” reflecting not only his authentic reflections on the structure of Mount Hua but also laying a philosophical foundation for the occurrence of aesthetic sensation.

The entire creation process of *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua* also deeply aligns with the three developmental stages of constancy, change, and the layering of change. Wang Lv conducted in-depth study and exploration of the styles of Ma Yuan and Xia Gui, dedicating nearly half of his life to it. At the same time, he also highly summarized and praised the style of Ma Yuan, Xia Gui, and others: “The painting is executed in a style that’s both loose yet not vulgar, and detailed yet not overly fussy. It possesses a refreshing, transcendent charm, free from any base or gloomy quality. Despite its small size, it captures a profound and vast sense of depth and scenery.”⁶ For thirty years he devoted himself

to the style, reaching a level of such deep familiarity that it became unforgettable. This stage represents the process of imitating the ancients, where the skill has been mastered to a point of stable, natural proficiency.

Upon ascending Mount Hua to collect medicinal herbs, sketch, and compose poetry, Wang Lv drew nourishment from the real mountains and landscapes of nature. The climbing process itself involved significant life-threatening dangers, fraught with peril and excitement, so his perception of nature inevitably differed from that of ordinary people. The states of “spiritual meeting” and “tacit understanding” during his travels are recorded in the preface where he immersed his body and mind in nature, achieving a state of subject-object fusion akin to the realm of “a happy excursion by Zhuangzi.” The resonance between the external natural world and the inner spirit inevitably condenses into an intangible force, manifesting on his brush. Although the sketch drafts were destroyed by him, it can be reasonably inferred that they likely included some of Ma Yuan’s and Xia Gui’s style, as well as fresh interest brought by sketching, which were interwoven. However, his pursuit of nature corresponds to the stage of constancy and change.

After completing the sketch drafts, he remained unsatisfied and continued to seek inspiration and insight everywhere in life, constantly absorbing ideas. Finally, after suffering from both illness and pain, he exhausted his energy to complete the work. According to historical records, the painting was not yet satisfactory, and he often wanted to redo it. However, his spirit was weakened. Whenever he tried to draw, he would feel dizzy and had to close his eyes, gather his energy. After a short while, he would get up, and that feeling came back again. This happened several times a day, leaving him exhausted and worn out. Fortunately, after nearly half a year, the painting was finally completed.⁷ This shows the effort he poured into *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua* was something ordinary people could hardly fathom. As the saying goes, “In life’s final moments, people might show unexpected kindness.” It can be inferred that *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua* likely incorporated his pure reflections on life and in-depth contemplation on the source of art. Under these circumstances, he writes the profound and milestone-like *The Preface to the Repainted Mount Hua*. *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua*, now passed down, shows Wang Lv’s brushwork is not entirely the established techniques of Ma Yuan and Xia Gui, nor is it a purely representational depiction of Mount Hua. Instead, it is the result of multiple factors: existing techniques, exploration through sketching,



Figure 1. Ma Yuan, *Plum Stones and Ducks by the Brook*, ink and color on silk, 26.7×28.6cm, Palace Museum, Beijing.



Figure 2. Wang Lv, *Hua Shan Landscape Scroll*, folio 28, ink and color on silk, 34.5×50.5cm, Palace Museum, Beijing.

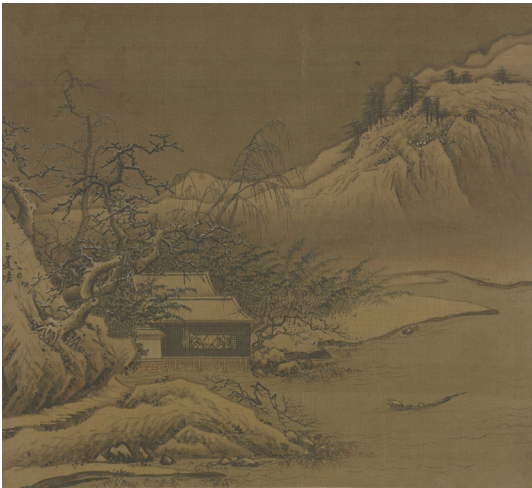


Figure 3. Xia Gui, *Snow Pavilion Conversations*, ink and color on silk, 28.2×29.5cm, Palace Museum, Beijing.



Figure 4. Wang Lv, *Hua Shan Landscape Scroll*, folio 28, ink and color on silk, 34.5×50.5cm, Palace Museum, Beijing.

life experiences, the drive for innovation, bursts of inspiration, and reflections on life's philosophy. This can be said to be the layering of change stage.

2. The Process of Aesthetic Sensation in *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua: The Principle of Mutual Integration between Form and Meaning*

It is precisely based on Wang Lv's understanding of the dialectical unity of constancy and change in natural landscapes that he further deepened his recognition of the correlation of induction, integration, and mutual construction between the forms of object and the intentions of subject in the process of aesthetic creation.

In ancient Chinese artistic thought, Xunzi was one of the earliest to analyze aesthetic induction in music. This kind of thought was widely reflected in later theories of music, literature, and painting. For example, Ma Rong in the Han Dynasty deepened the music induction theory of previous generations. In his *Fu on Flute*, he stated: "With a gaze that is distant and wild, tears and traces of suffering flowing freely, one can connect with the spiritual realm, touch the essence of things, and express the soul's deepest meaning."⁸ From this, it can be seen that depicting an implied meaning cannot be achieved without the process of communicating with spirits as its support. Liu Xie, in *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons: Ming Dynasty poetry*, proposed the

aesthetic induction thought that: “When we encounter things, they trigger our natural emotions, which we then express spontaneously, such as through poetry.”⁹ And Zong Bing also emphasized in *Preface to a Picture Ode*: “the aesthetic induction model that true resonance elevates the spirit, revealing profound truths.” As time evolved, the thought of aesthetic induction in the artistic and literary theories of various eras also showed different characteristics. Wang Lv’s *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua* precisely inherited the theoretical essence of traditional Chinese aesthetic induction thought, presenting the occurrence process of aesthetic induction in the mutual integration of form and meaning. It is well known that since the discussion of the “ruler of form” in *The Huainanzi*, form has always been highly valued by painters and theorists throughout the ages. However, meaning is the greatest characteristic of Chinese art, with image, flavor, and interest being specific manifestations of this characteristic. In short, the integration and verification of form and meaning are indeed the core constituents that enable the continuity of traditional Chinese art. Since the rise of literati painting in the Northern Song Dynasty, artists have often shown a tendency to value meaning over form, for example, the phrase by Ouyang Xiu in the Song Dynasty “The essence of Chinese painting lies in capturing spirit, not form,” and Ni Zan’s advocacy in the Yuan Dynasty “Painting should not aim for likeness, and a few strokes are enough to convey the idea,” etc. Nevertheless, form is indispensable in the generation of imagery, as it interacts and resonates with the field of vision of the creative subject’s meaning, together constructing a completely new artistic realm.

The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua begins with “Painting uses form to express spirit, but without spirit, how does the form convey its true meaning?”¹⁰ Wang Lv raises the interpenetrating relationship between meaning and form through questions, indicating that the author’s profound attention and in-depth reflection on the subject-object relationship are introduced in the opening sentence of the text. The issue of the subject-object relationship has been a subject of intense interest and deep thought for art theorists throughout the ages. For instance, Zhang Zao in the Tang Dynasty proposed “Learning from nature, the essence of art comes from within one’s heart and spirit,” Su Shi in the Song Dynasty advocated “The painter can achieve a state, becoming one with the bamboo they are painting,” and Wu Zhen in the Yuan Dynasty stated “Painting conveys meaning, and color consistency is not always necessary,” all of whom provided theoretical insights into the subject-object relationship in creation,

but they had different emphases and understandings regarding aesthetic subject and object.

Based on this, Wang Lv criticized those copiers who merely imitate the works of the ancients: “Those who focus solely on copying often believe mastering the medium is enough, but as time passes, their reproductions become increasingly distorted, losing both the form and the intended spirit.”¹¹ In his view, copying the works of ancient masters in terms of form is not entirely unwarranted, but it is even more of a superficial understanding in grasping meaning, failing to achieve the desired effect. Objectively, for the study of Chinese painting, learning from ancient masters and learning from nature are equally important. However, in understanding Wang Lv’s view of “not imitating ancient masters but learning from nature” in terms of the effectiveness of acquiring form, it seems more reasonable. He did not truly negate the study of the ancients; this can be glimpsed from his praise for the paintings of Ma Yuan and Xia Gui, among others.

Peng Feng has proven that in *The Preface to the Repainted Mount Hua*, with the sentence “If Mount Hua does not make me, then I am not me.” This corresponds to the sentence in *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua* we see today: “If one does not recognize the form of Mount Hua, how can one depict it?” This article will not elaborate on Peng Feng’s explanation of the relationship between the two. According to Xue Yongnian, there is another way to punctuate the sentence. It indicates the induction relationship from the objective thing’s grand power to the subject’s thinking, the subject-object induction relationship is thus established, and a mode of perception is centered around material as its foundation. It emphasizes that after the bidirectional interaction between the subject and object, the mutual penetration of heart and material represents the subject’s compliance with the object. However, we believe that the reason why Wang Lv realized that studying the works of the ancients cannot truly achieve the symbiosis and mutual construction between form and meaning is that, in his view, it could not yet fully reach the realm of ultimate beauty in resonance with the grand transformation of the universe. Only by returning to the hills and streams of nature can the mind be truly reflected. Wang Lv mentioned: “When my spirit is calm in the empty hall, silently facing it, the thoughts that arise are beyond words.”¹² It’s the requirement for the aesthetic subject, which is a necessary condition for the formation of meaning. In the process of storing and preserving meaning, form has transcended the form of the object, and the key to form and meaning lies in the sudden emergence at the moment.¹³ The form of Mount

Hua as an objective thing does not necessarily have to exist on the silk, but after mutual induction with the subject's meaning, it can make the new image exist: "The Dao can be perceived in every aspect of daily life, from quiet moments to busy activities."¹⁴ Everywhere in life can become a place for the co-construction of form and meaning. The form and meaning in different places are precisely the conditions that eliminate the daily characteristics of the external world, the state of being before the existent; this state is neither a subject-centered heart-based induction nor a thing-centered induction with the thing as the core, nor an equilibrium induction method inclined towards the mutual interaction and exchange between the form of the object and the meaning of the subject. This method emphasizes the dynamic balance between the subject's compliance with the object and the object's assimilation of the subject. The relationship between the subject and object is no longer one of correspondence but one of fusion.

Wang Lv sought to transcend the barriers of time and space in the mortal realm through a balance of form and meaning. He aimed to grasp the dynamic realm of life by capturing the form of the object and conceiving the meaning of the subject. However, many artists still lack a corresponding understanding and mastery of the true form of the object, wavering between "limiting the ancients" and "learning from nature." Wang Lv's answer is "Simply follow the principles of things, and that is enough."¹⁵ In his view, the key lies in obtaining "the principle of the ancients" and "the principle of nature." Only by facing nature directly and uniting form and meaning to integrate the principle of the ancients and the principle of nature in the ethereal atmosphere of the universe can one find the right path to artistic creation. This is why he exclaimed "And yet, the shape of a mountain is not the same." Therefore, it is not difficult to see that Wang Lv's emphasis on the courage to face the true mountains and rivers is a transcendence of the thought of opposition between subject and object, establishing a connection with the cosmic power between subject and object. Although he summarizes the path of learning from nature through the heart to material, the overall theme of the work still revolves around the balance and interaction between the heart and the material. In conclusion, *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua* do not simply emphasize the importance of learning from objective true mountains and rivers. He uses Mountain Hua as a lead, connecting the integrated relationship between the heart and the material with the aesthetic category of form and meaning.

The unity of form and meaning is an important propo-

sition in Chinese painting. It is relatively easy to pursue either one alone, but it is very difficult to balance both. For most people, it is a lifelong exploration topic. *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua*, achieving the unity of form and intention, is the result of his tireless pursuit. Specifically, he completed this unity step by step and over time. First, through sketching, he used a practical aesthetic view to feel the basic appearance of Hua Mountain. Then, through his travels, he experienced the spiritual temperament of Hua Mountain. Finally, through a moment of artistic inspiration, he organically combined the two.

Mountain Hua is known as the origin and foundation of Chinese civilization, and is characterized by its towering grandeur, magnificence, and unique beauty. The lines in *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua* are very prominent—the lines are decisive, powerful, and completed in one breath, effectively conveying the spiritual temperament of Hua Mountain. The mountain bodies are mostly exposed and less hidden, and the large areas of white space in the picture effectively set off the tenacity of the mountain stones and the heavy sense of volume. The miscellaneous trees and small grasses dotted between the stone cracks are also drawn with strong and upright strokes, echoing the high mountains and large stones and setting off the towering grandeur of Hua Mountain. The use of the Cun painting technique is not extensive, mainly using a kind of technique which means the strokes are short, rapid, and oblique, forming a strong contrast between the small blocks and the long lines of the mountain contours. This is different from the inherent model of Ma Yuan and Xia Gui. On the one hand, it implies the creative view of "discard the old and seek the new," and on the other hand, it is a clear footnote to "emerge from nature" and "the law is in Hua Mountain." Today, there are research results comparing *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua* with Mountain Huashan.¹⁶ From this, we can see that *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua* is not a pure reproduction of the real landscape, nor is it water without roots or trees without sources. Instead, it relies on the form of Hua Mountain, writing with form and returning to the spirit with form. In other words, it takes the form of the foundation and the interest as the sublimation. This shows a highly unified state in Wang Lv's painting thoughts and painting practice.

All in all, Wang Lv deeply recognized the holistic and mutually constitutive relationship between the aesthetic subject and object. This aesthetic and creative philosophy, centered on resonant harmony, can only arise when the subject enters a realm where the cons-



Figure 5. Actual View of Hua Shan (Part 1), photographed by the author of this article.

Figure 6. Wang Lv, *Hua Shan Landscape Scroll*, folio 2, ink and color on silk, 34.5×50.5cm, Palace Museum, Beijing.

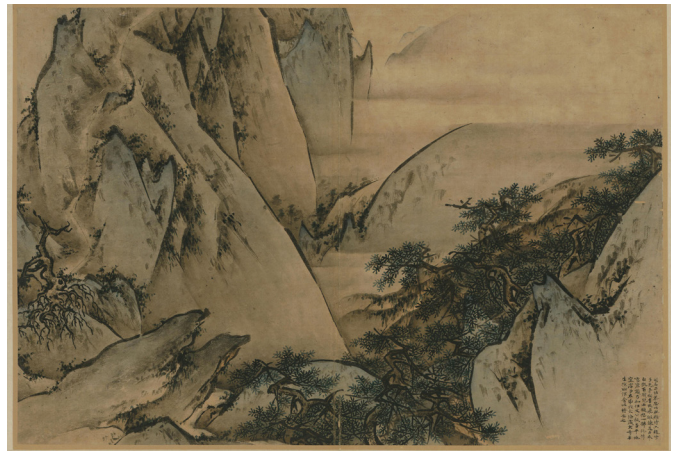


Figure 7. Actual View of Hua Shan (Part 2), photographed by the author of this article.

Figure 8. Wang Lv, *Hua Shan Landscape Scroll*, folio 17, ink and color on silk, 34.5×50.5cm, Palace Museum, Beijing.

tancy and the change coexist. If painters merely live in the everyday, average state of decline, the rich aesthetic attributes of nature are difficult to manifest.

3. Contemporary Value of *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua*

Although *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua* concisely outlines Wang Lv's theory of the interaction between the mind and the object, the phrase "My heart takes my inner self as its master, my inner self guides my eyes, and my eyes learn from Mount Hua, thus guiding the depiction of the landscape in my painting" has echoed throughout the history of Chinese painting, significantly influencing and guiding subsequent art theorists and creators. Contemporary creators of Chinese painting, influenced by Western

rationalist notions of the subject, often attempt to approach their work through a dichotomy between subject and object, completely severing the intimate relationship between the two. This inevitably leads to two outcomes.

First, it results in the scientific reproduction of objects. Some uninformed contemporary creators, influenced by the Western philosophical separation of subject and object, imitate Western artistic methods without critical thought, abandoning the imitation within the study and the experience during immersion in nature. If one creates by striving for photographic realism in framing, they may lose sight of both the essence of the object and the awareness of their inner world. For instance, some creators revere Andy Warhol as a cultural hero, imitating his artistic methods, maximizing his selfless replicative capability, and treating artistic creation merely as a means to satisfy materialistic

gratification. This inevitably deepens the gulf between mind and material, leading to the mistaken belief that this mechanical reproduction of objective objects constitutes the truth of artistic creation. As Gu Ping stated, “replacing ‘painting from life’ with ‘copying masterpieces’ and ‘gaining inspiration through observation’ is the greatest misstep in artistic heritage.”¹⁷ Furthermore, with the recent advancement of technology, the traditional methods of creating Chinese painting works are increasingly subject to strong intervention by modern technology. Reports of robots painting and writing characters are frequent, and in the context of Chinese painting, soulless robotic creators attempt to challenge human spirituality and discernment. This new creative approach replaces the traditional modes of “bamboo in the eyes,” “bamboo in the heart,” and “bamboo in the hands,” lacking both inner sentiment and external observation as well as the profound depth of artistic creation. How is such work different from Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain*? Therefore, to preach the core role of Mountain Hua through logical reasoning, and to neglect one aspect, is certainly not Wang Lv’s original intention. Some critics argue “Wang Lv initially highly admired the court painting style of Ma Yuan and Xia Gui in his early years, but later placed great emphasis on sketching from life and cherishing nature, while rejecting the excessive focus on brushwork and ink at the expense of firsthand experience and sketching of natural landscapes in literati painting.”¹⁸ It makes sense that Wang Lv’s balanced stance between imitating and observing in nature not only highlights his intention to represent artistic genuineness, but also reflects his emphasis on the cultivation and development of the relationship between mind and object. In the Ming Dynasty, master painters such as Shen Zhou, Qiu Ying, Wen Zhengming, Dong Qichang, and Chen Hongshou all conducted profound and unique research and imitation of the brushwork and ink of the ancients. Their works were neither detached from the nourishment of the traditional heart source of brushwork and ink, nor neglected the influence of the natural landscapes. It is clear that artists, including Wang Lv, were well-versed in the path of artistic resonance. Through the method of visual recognition and mental memorization, they refined a holistic truth, constructing a new realm of life. “When this realm is full within the heart of the aesthetic creator, the spirituality of external scenes also becomes integrated with the subject, continuously reaching new heights within the structure of the painting. The life of the object and the inner nature of the subject achieve an interwoven state, and truth also allows for the reconstruction of a unified subject-object relationship in

the work, similar to the subject’s relationship with the world.”¹⁹

It also results in the arbitrary expression of subjective emotions. Some contemporary creators, while understanding that the scientific reproduction of nature is not the ultimate goal of Chinese painting, disregard the relationship between the form and intention of natural objects, and arbitrarily impose their subjective whims into the creation of Chinese painting. They even define the profundity of their works with new names. It cannot be denied that such creators aim for innovation, and their work also demonstrates active thinking about the potential development of Chinese painting. However, their arbitrary expression of subjective emotions often comes at the expense of casually discarding the form of the object, rather than re-creating the form beyond the object. For example, some contemporary creators frequently engage in splashed-ink techniques and frequently construct new images and ink, treating their emotions as the ethereal and profound aspects of the mind. The traditional spirit of brushwork and ink and cultural cultivation are absent from their works; this undoubtedly sets a poor example. Wang Fu of the Ming Dynasty had already criticized such phenomena: “Contemporary artists, either with a few strokes claiming elegance and simplicity, or with excessive complexity in a clumsy manner, often say they don’t seek resemblance, yet they fail to understand that the ancients not seeking resemblance meant achieving likeness through dissimilarity. How can such artists with inappropriate handling of simplicity and complexity be compared to the ancients?”²⁰ These creators, with their one-sided pursuit of meaning and using their ways, may superficially appear to be inheriting and applying Shi Tao’s concept of “Using my unique approach,” but in reality, it represents a partial understanding of his view. Shi Tao’s exclamation was premised on the traditional connotation of “Oneness in Painting” and the painstaking practice of “searching through all the marvelous peaks to make preliminary sketches” from nature. We should approach Shi Tao’s assertion comprehensively and cautiously; the arbitrary expression of subjective emotions is not the essence of his advocacy. To some extent, Shi’s advocacy of “Using my unique approach” is precisely the concentrated expression of the theory of resonance between mind and object that Wang Lv emphasized. “Through the continuous mutual illumination and unveiling in aesthetic interaction, one reaches a state of clear and radiant enlightenment.” In this state, human feelings and the laws of things are thus fully expressed. Shi Tao described this process of subject-object synthesis



Figure 9. Wang Lv, *Hua Shan Landscape Scroll*, folio 9, ink and color on silk, 34.5×50.5cm, Palace Museum, Beijing.

in creation as ‘spiritual encounter’ and ‘material transformation.’”²¹ Regarding his landscape paintings, he did not engage in the random piecing together or forced application of objects. The fundamental motivation for his creation was the pursuit of the principle of the ancients and nature.

Furthermore, the well-known landscape painting masters such as Huang Binhong and Pan Tianshou, whom we are familiar with, possessed both profound research and diligent imitation of traditional scholarship and painting as well as spiritual insight into natural landscapes, and were well-versed in the generative principles of constancy and change. For Huang Binhong, the formal structures of ancient landscape paintings and the physical reality of natural phenomena did not hinder his pursuit of entirely new imagery. The richness of his works inevitably stems from Huang’s extraordinary understanding of the resonance between mind and object, based on the fundamental unity of heaven, earth, and human. Similarly, in Pan Tianshou’s paintings of the Yandang Mountains, it is evident that the Yandang landscapes he painted are no longer the actual Yandang scenery. Seeking change within the constant, he

reconstructed a powerful spiritual map through the fusion of subject and object in shared perception. This is neither a scientific reproduction of objects nor an arbitrary expression of subjective emotions. As Hao Wenjie stated in his article, “Expression emphasizes the active role of the creator in aesthetic creation, negating the rigid realism of mechanical imitation theory.”²² Even in their paintings and teaching materials, what is presented is neither merely what is touched by the eyes or what is arbitrarily fabricated by the mind. We can see a new schema where form and meaning are integrated in their paintings. This must be attributed to their profound understanding of “My heart takes my inner self as its master, my inner self guides my eyes, and my eyes learn from Mount Hua, thus guiding the depiction of the landscape in my painting” and their great insight into returning from the truth of Hua Mountain to the truth of the heart. Only in this way could masters like Huang Binhong and Pan Tianshou create profound works of landscape painting with deep artistic conception.



Figure 10. Wang Lv, *Hua Shan Landscape Scroll*, folio 23, ink and color on silk, 34.5×50.5cm, Palace Museum, Beijing.

Conclusion

The conceptualization and creation methods rooted in the mind have always been crucial. Entering the realm of the cosmic source and experiencing life through resonance is not only the starting point of our creation but also the foundation for determining the level of a work. Wang Lv, living at the turn of the Yuan and Ming dynasties, effectively inherited the aesthetic sensation thought from traditional philosophy. In *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua*, he outlined for us a life realm where all things are contained within the self. Simultaneously, the thoughts presented in *The Prefaces of the Painting Atlas of Mount Hua* open our understanding of the theoretical implications of “My heart takes my inner self as its master, my inner

self guides my eyes, and my eyes learn from Mount Hua, thus guiding the depiction of the landscape in my painting.” There is no doubt that it will play a significant role in the creation of contemporary Chinese painting.

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論《華山圖序》的審美感應思想及其當代價值

劉家俊，黃中

摘要：《華山圖序》中的“吾師心，心師目，目師華山”多被視為師法自然的至理名言。事實上，這一總結性的畫論宣言是以《華山圖序》中的審美感應思想作為依據的。王履以“常”與“變”的生成之道，作為《華山圖序》審美感應的哲學根基，憑藉“形”與“意”的互融之理，對《華山圖序》審美感應的發生過程進行了分析和總結。王履對中國傳統審美感應思想的提煉和推進對當代中國畫創作具有一定的指導意義。

關鍵詞：王履；《華山圖序》；審美感應；中國畫創作