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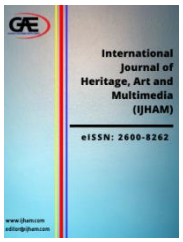

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AESTHETICS AND CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL PAINTING - *SHĀNSHUǏ-HUÀ* (山水画)

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Abstract:

Along with its multiple levels of importance, characterising a Chinese traditional painting in terms of its aesthetic arrangement-composition and visual meaning may be a challenging undertaking; yet, it also presents evolving features and constantly expanded connotations. A 'landscape painting' is cultural (cultivated) rather than natural (innate); it is a cultural interpretation that renews the physical environmental reality. In the visual arts, 'landscape' representation has acted as an emblem, playing a key role in the construction of China's and Europe's identities. Landscape ink-painting on Chinese paper or silk has a long history in China, stretching back over a thousand years, in contrast to Europe, where it evolved and developed considerably later. What is vital in this study is to determine how Chinese ink-painting has remained traditional in comparison to the evolution of western arts. Every civilization has its own aesthetic limits and standards for evaluating the manifestation of beauty through its arts, which impact its pursuit and creation. Chinese philosophers have a fundamentally conceptual understanding of nature that supports their belief in the cosmos' order and harmony. *Shānshuǐ-huà* (山水画), akin to knowledge of the Western 'landscape,' has been a continuous practise and vital feature of Chinese culture since the Song dynasty (960AD-1290AD), one of China's finest creative epochs. This ink-painting tradition is linked to calligraphy methods known as painted poetry. As a result, in Chinese traditional painting, empty space is balanced against the painted area, the artwork keeps the beauty and balance the results; in Western art, figure-ground plays a visual equilibrium. This study analyses fundamental visual knowledge that embraces holistic aesthetic judgement for none-Chinese audiences; the concerns covered provide a flexible way for leading audiences in evaluating many aspects of Chinese ink-painting using their own understanding and imagination.

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Keywords:

Chinese Painting, National Painting, Ink-Painting, Landscape, *Shānshuǐ-huà* (山水画)

Introduction

Overall Synopsis and History of The Chinese Painting Definition of Rural Tourism

It is complex to define the meaning of 'Chinese traditional painting'; nonetheless, we will attempt to offer a basic summary explanation of what the painting known to Westerners as ink-painting on rice paper from China consists of. Ink-painting is widely acknowledged as the foundation stone of Chinese culture with its modern expressions, although seldom drawing freely from its ancient principles (Zhao, et al., 2018, p. 1). There are some ambiguities regarding the category known as 'Chinese traditional painting'. The different forms and ideas within this area preceded the twentieth century. This so called 'traditional painting' utilises in some ways old-style techniques. In general, painters create works using ink and water-based colours on paper or silk, generally picturing landscapes, although there are different types and categories associated to the broad term of 'Chinese traditional painting'. Furthermore, themes are distinct, yet they are variations of early compositions following a strong historical continuity. Some differences might be observed in the details and skill that each artist shares with their viewers, however, the brushstroke is ultimately the medium through which an artist communicates their purposes. It is thought to embody material proof of the genius (artist) which potentially may bring lucrative commodity (Fong, 2003, p. 261). Ink painting is not regarded as a separate art form; rather, it is a subset of the 'brush art', which includes poetry, calligraphy, and subsequently painting in this particular classification. The brushstroke produced in Chinese calligraphy is thought to express the artists ideas of a formal structure or *Hànzì* 漢字 character. *Wèi Shuò* (卫铄 272-349 AD) commonly addressed as '*Lady Wèi'* - 衛夫人, was a Chinese calligrapher of the Eastern Jin dynasty (266-420AD) who established consequential rules about the regular script (*Zhēnshū* - 真書) style of the 'Eight Principles' - *Yǒngzì Bā Fǎ* - 永字八法, influenced by the earlier 'Seven Powers', Qī shì - 七勢; her famous student was *Wáng Xīzhī* (王羲之- c, 303-361 AD) one of the four most notable calligraphers (四贤 - four calligraphers). A politician and general during the Jin dynasty (晋朝. *Jìn Cháo* - c, 266-420 AD), he noted that a calligrapher: '*must always let his ideas precede his brush, only then can he create calligraphy even as the brush ended'* (Fong, 2003, p. 262). The Western definition of '*painting*' is the production of a picture employing colours on a surface called ground or by its own materials and techniques (Krug, 2007, p. 89). Painting, in the context of fine arts, is the expression of thoughts and feelings via the formation of certain visual features such as elements and principles of design that create beauty and aesthetic on a two-dimensional surface communicating a visual language. In his book, "*The Practice and Science of Drawing*", Harold Speed equated painting with drawing (i.e., the expression of form), with the extra difficulty of colour and tone, a brush full of paint (colour) as a tool, some form of 'mass-drawing' must be employed (110). That has been the scenario since the introduction of Chinese art to Western society. The authors navigate between grey realms of interpretation in this work. As such, from now on we will refer to Chinese 'ink-painting' in its wider term. 'Chinese ink-painting' is produced in a plethora of settings, ranging from monochromatic (black-ink) to highly brilliantly coloured. This is due to the viscosity of the black-ink diluted in water. '*Guó Huà*'-国画, or

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'National painting' is translated as painting of the country in term of its uniqueness, it is the categorization used to describe the realm of 'Chinese traditional painting', which is classified as 'work painted with ink-based water, with or without colour, on a ground of Chinese paper or silk'; which itself is considered the highest form of art (Andrews, 1990, p. 556). Chinese painting is presented in two main categories produced in the literati-style known as: a) "*Xiěyì*" - 写意 or "*Shuǐ-Mò*" - 水墨, both are practised by amateur and scholar artists with expressionistic brushstrokes executed as an expression of personal style and creativity; and b) the "*Gōngbǐ*" - 工笔 style meaning 'meticulous', which uses highly detailed brushstrokes with precise lines that represent the shape and form of things in a much more ornamental way. In Chinese culture, it is a widely held belief that an evil person cannot produce a wonderful art. Therefore, it is preferable to know about the time period in which an artist lived in order to fully comprehend the meaning of their work. The term, "*Zhōngguó Huà*" - 中国画 or "*Guó Huà*" - 国画 also helps to distinguish the modern Chinese artworks painted in traditional medium (ink) from the Chinese artworks painted in Western mediums such as oil, acrylics on canvas, this term is usually translated as 'Chinese traditional painting' even when such paintings are not traditional at all (Andrews, 1990, p. 556). The paper presents a visual analysis of four extraordinary Chinese artists: Wú Chāngshuò (吴昌硕,1843/4-1927); Qí Báishí (齐白石, 1864-1957); Xú bēihóng (徐悲鸿, 1895-1953); and Li Keran (*Li K'o-jan*, 李可染,1907-1989). Their works address an empirical technique of analysing their composition, topic-theme selection material selection, and colours employed, specifically ink painting on paper.

Literature Review

There is a substantial literature and publication on 'Chinese traditional painting', 'National painting', or '*Shānshuǐ-huà* - 山水画', covering everything including its various developmental stages to materials and subjects. Nonetheless, the historical approach is used as fundamental reference point for the production and comprehension of this study. The discourse is broadened by offering crucial vocabulary that defined this studied from both, the East and West perspectives examining the subject of "Landscape", which was adopted by numerous notable painters. Finally, the purpose of this paper is to explore why Chinese ink painting techniques, materials, and methods have not changed. The classification system may then be used to comprehend the work of literature, which is available in print or electronically via the internet. This debate may serve as evidence in the realm of fine arts, particularly painting, by raising awareness among institutions, students, instructors, and artists about the endeavor to comprehend these distinct aspects. The authors hope that this paper will serve as a springboard for further research on Chinese, National, Ink painting, or *Shānshuǐ-huà* - 山水画 as part of a continuing effort to foster creative activities in general.

Methodology

This study employs an empirical approach of direct observation on a variety of well-known painters, with a focus on the different techniques, materials, and themes utilized during the creative process. It also centers on clarifying differences and similarities in order to give an acceptable explanation for the artist's work's unchangeability. It is necessary to have a clear explanation and description of the terms used during this research in order to offer a better knowledge of the unaltered feature of Chinese traditional ink landscape painting.

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How the East Encompasses Art Appreciation

Eastern countries, from Persia to China and through to the Greek peninsula have developed their own civilizations characterized by ancient art immersed with the quality of their emotion, spirits and belief. The Greek thinking method rejects the unknown, distrusted what the brain or mind cannot identify. Instead, 'thinking: the development of thoughts' is advanced through intellectualization, fixing in artworks of the natural beauty which was the rationally assumed ideal. Although Greek classical art is built out of sensible observation in the pursuit of beauty, harmony and proportion, it emphasizes the importance and accomplishment of human beings which results in a clear realistic representation using the human form as an object of sensory delight, or in architecture a logical, functional structure sparsely ornamented. Even as those ideals shifted and changed over centuries, they view that perfection does not exist in nature. The Oriental way - as exemplified by Chinese art - is to discount the observed phenomenon, to hunt for the essence of life intuitively apprehended values, in spiritual intimations within the abstract elements of colour and artistic formal organization. Oriental art, which is less obviously humanistic, natural, and intellectual feeds the spirit. Its glories are achieved within the realms of the near-abstract and the contemplatively mystical. It is therefore, richly sensuous. Ancient Chinese philosophers saw the different elements in nature not as separate entities, but as part of a unified whole (Law, 2011, p. 372). Probably the best Western art was born when a wave of influence rushed from the east. As Europe's most profound religion came from Asia, European visual art is at its richest and warmest when the more sober classicism and intellect of the West is combined with more mystical and religious elements. Chinese painting is different due to the fact that it creates an expression of thoughts of peace and a non-secular contemplation. The works are more about the abstract physical appearance and mood than the observable effects and concrete natural details very much appreciated in Western art. Chinese painting speaks best to those who share silence, peace; those who come innocently to understand imaginative expectations.

'Culture' is defined as 'way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs of a particular group of people at a particular time' [Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Culture], it also encompasses religion, arts, food, language, identity commonly known as part of a personal identity of one's own self-conception and self-perception related to nationality, ethnicity, social class, generation, genre or any kind of social group identity. This anthropological definition of culture is sometimes criticized as overly broad failing, to discriminate between those practices that are worthwhile and those that are not, but it remains the general touchstone in the literature. Indeed, 'culture' is often treated as a 'good thing' in the context of the cultural heritage despite the fact that some cultural practices are subject to serious moral objections from the Western view point (Matthes, 2018). The characterization of Chinese culture as group-oriented rather than individual-oriented helps where obligation and duty (to family) are rather more important than individual freedom or personal choice. Willian Watson Sr. (1831-1921), a British artist rightly stresses the different ways of evaluating Western and Chinese landscape painting. While the former is keen on acclaiming the attribute of treating linear perspective as its greatest achievements, the later makes no reference at all to this system employed by Westerners (Milosevic, 2014, p. 9). It is widespread to attribute a unified Chinese cultural identity to the Han dynasty (206 BC to 220 AD), which witnessed the expansion of Confucianism as a foundation for social thinking. This epoch coincides with the Roman Empire's reign in Europe (Wen & White, 2020, p. 2). The Roman Empire had a very clear cultural identity expressed through the Latin language (*Lingua Franca*), religion, law, decorative arts, architecture and philosophy. Chinese traditional painting of 'landscape' is based on an inner interpretation and

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spiritual approach of the inner voice of the artist to depict an ephemeral and ideal setting (view of a land), instead of the European 'landscape' which reproduces an actual view of the observer using principles of linear perspective in a planar setting. Another point to highlight is that in Chinese traditional painting, the tonal contrast (ink) is of primary importance and can be achieved in various ways. These ink value changes can convey types of surfaces, materials, patterns and textures as well as depth and distance (Wallschlaeger, et al., 1992, p. 320). The spatial relationship can be manipulated in a composition by altering the tonal-value relationships between those elements. Another important depth cue that complements the perception of profundity, space and distance is the use of colour contrasts between warm and cool. (Wallschlaeger, et al., 1992, p. 321). During the Renaissance of the 15th century, artists were obsessed by mathematics, however, it was the ancient Greeks who laid the foundation of the Western geometry and the 'Euclid method' was taught until the 19th century. It is impossible to believe that the Greeks overlooked the notion of linear perspective in their early writings, especially because stereographic projection is considered to be special form or subset of generalized perspective (Pipes, 2008, p. 90). As is generally known, linear perspective is the contribution of Western European art during the early 15th century. Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446) is regarded to be as the founding father of Renaissance architecture (Pipes, 2008, p. 90), and changed the way visual space was analysed and understood until the early 19th century, when cubism art emerged to challenge the way space is perceived and understood.

Linear perspective is not a continuous law but rather a moment in the history of the concept of analysing space; it should always be noted that perspective is merely a simulation of reality. Fundamentally, it is based on four facts: 1) the viewer stands at a fixed point for the observation; 2) parallel lines converge to a single point called 'vanishing point'; 3) the picture plane intersects the visual cone; and 4) two planes running at 45* degrees to the picture plane converge at two points on the horizon (Wallschlaeger, et al., 1992, p. 322). Brunelleschi wanted to demonstrate that painting was an instrument of knowledge (Pipes, 2008, p. 90). In Chinese traditional painting, the artist does not paint according to what is observed, but rather his/her inner voice creates an abstract idea of the 'landscape' so the viewer can enter the painting from any point and travel according to their own will and imagination to understand the artists mind, which is the final journey of the viewer. The landscape promotes spiritual reflection and contemplation rather than a visual appreciation (Law, 2011, p. 371). Despite the significant changes through the ruling of the different dynasties, key aspects of Chinese culture have remained remarkably consistent over the two millennia (Meissner, 2006), can be expressed in three points: a) The concept of an Imperial China under dynastic rule, this happens until the Chinese Revolution in the early 20th century; b) the uniqueness and ubiquity of the written language *Hànzi* - 汉字 character; c) the continuous tradition of philosophy, the continuity of the decorative arts, such as poetry, calligraphy, and ink painting. These values have been passed on from generation to generation through education and literature. The topic of this article is placed on 'Chinese traditional painting', with an emphasis on the artistic features and aesthetics of 'landscape painting'. Chinese artists neither developed an anatomical approach to figural representation nor a concept of space as it is characterized in the Western history of linear perspective introduced during the early Renaissance. They (Chinese arts) rarely incorporated skills that had evolved from the Western European method of painting (Fong, 2003, p. 264), and this only began to change after the Chinese revolution in the early 20th century, with the new ways of art education.

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Greek Thought on Landscape Depiction

Plato (427-347 BC) was a student of Socrates and the teacher of Aristotle. Plato's The Republic (*Politeia*, 375 BC), states that the fine arts, like as painting, ought to be censored out of existence since they are only imitating appearances rather than realities (imitating = mimesis). Artists seek to create the most realistic portrayals of people, objects, or settings, whether in theatre, sculpture, or painting, and in doing so, they are effective artisans. Aristotle (384-322BC), on the other hand, considered art as aiming for a knowledge of the essence of life, carefully pondering on the spirit of nature, and developing an idealised image of the subject matter (Wen & White, 2020). With a few exceptions, Chinese painting has followed the 'Aristotelian' road, whereas European arts have followed the 'Platonic' route. Chinese traditional painting, particularly 'ink-painting' of landscapes, has served a significant function as a crucial element in Chinese cultural identity for thousands of years. This raises important problems at the heart of this work, which comprise the body of discussion: Are the painting strokes of the painters forceful and sure, or delicate and restrained? Do artists use a variety of strokes to portray their words in a beautifully ordered manner, showcasing their talent and creativity? Is it thought that colour is more essential than ink? How significant is the void/empty space in the painting? What is the link between poetry, calligraphy, and painting? These are only a handful of the countless concerns that someone could have while seeing a Chinese painting (Figure 1, beneath). Despite the fact that other forms of Chinese traditional painting genres have emerged, 'landscape' continues to have a dominant role within this heritage. The English term "landscape" refers to both the qualities of the land as well as the painting of such scenes [Merriam-Webster. 2021 (n.d.) Landscape]. This ambiguity reflects the Western concept of landscape, which places a premium on its aesthetic components. As a result, the suffix '-scape' is practically identical with 'scope' in phrases like 'landscape,' 'cityscape,' and 'seascape;' arguably the term 'land' is more suitable in this context. *Shānshuǐ-Huà* - 山水画, is a type of 'land,' although 'land' is not only mountains and water in Chinese painting (Figure 1, beneath). It should be pointed out that the synthesis between Western watercolour and Chinese painting in a real sense does not simply mean transliteration of concepts, instead it is based upon careful examination of differences in style, technique and theme, therefore it harvests new observations (Jianping & Keping, 2006, p. 286). Distinguishing characteristics appear in Western arts and Chinese traditional painting. *Móu Zōngsān* (牟宗三, 1909-1995), a Chinese philosopher and translator who graduated from the Peking University and remained outside China for the rest of his life; claims in his communication analysis and philosophical stand to dissolve ambiguities between Western art and Chinese traditional painting, i.e., "to admit!... both pursue the universal truth and both retain their respective singularities" (Jianping & Keping, 2006, p. 286). Huang Gongwang (1269-1354) whose birth name was *Lù Jiān* - 陸堅 was said to be the first to express a feeling of joyfulness in paining where the primary purpose was not a description but a heightened awareness of life energy through the existential pleasure of creation. Through calligraphic brushstrokes, Huang and other scholars-painters stressed "*Xiě yì*" - 写意, or the concept of 'writing of ideas' in painting (Fong, 1971, p. 283).

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Figure 1: Zhàobójū (赵伯驹，1120-1182). Autumn Colours on Rivers and Mountains. c, 1112-1162. Handscroll, Ink and Colours on Silk. 56.6 cm x 323.2.cm. Beijing Palace Museum, China

Source: Wikimedia Commons

The Term "Landscape" in Chinese Painting

In Chinese traditional painting the term, 'landscape' can be referred to as *Fēng Jǐng* 風景, loosely translated as風-wind 景-scene, in all compositional forms, either a vertical or horizontal arrangement (Figure 1, above & Figure 2, beneath). This paradox is a perceptual framework of the immaterial and invisible world, imaginative reconstruction by the artist which derive from the artists memories, feelings, or experiences. Such paintings are non-geographical or non-specific, in the sense that any hill, mountain, or land could have inspired them. Although these paintings are geographically specific due to the title and calligraphy in the form of a poem added, they do not depict a realistic representation as in the Western manner. Toponymic is a general word [Merriam-Webster, (n.d.); Toponymic, 2021]. It might focus on a specific spot or a larger general region, providing a single view as a hang-scroll (vertically or horizontally) or a group of views as horizontal scroll paintings depicting rivers, mountains, temples, gardens, oceans, or intellectual retreats, among other things. When depicting a landscape, the artist has three basic tasks in mind:

1) the artist may attempt to communicate a reasonable accurate view with a believable layout topographically of the place being artistically interpreted;
2) the artist may select specific elements in the layout which is about to be painted for the purpose of aesthetic pleasure; and,
3) the artist may not even want to depict the landscape as it was observed, but to use it as point of departure for artistic inspiration, where the portrayed place will be inscribed with a poetic reflection of its ambience, making not visual or verbal reference to the journey from which the painting resulted (Ganza, 1990, p. 7).

The Chinese phrase *Rén Jiān Xiān Jìng* (人间仙境) is translated literally as 'a fairyland on earth'. It refers to any lovely scenery -landscape- that exists between the realm of mankind and fairies. The artist allowed the observer to uncover the material vitalism of the landscape which allowed the viewer to suspend the visual application of logic in order to understand the power of things and the un-explicable phenomena.

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The ‘void’ which is a component of the composition, is located at the centre of the fourfold (Figure 2, beneath). There is a ‘vacuum’ between mankind and deity. This ‘void’ might be thought of as the ‘negative space’ in Western art, the boundary between figure and ground, utilising language from the design principles taught by Western education institutions. The artist employs a brush and ink on paper or silk to execute and complete the artwork; hence, brushwork or brushstroke with internal energy is an essential part of the development of a painting (Bao, 2018, p. 482).

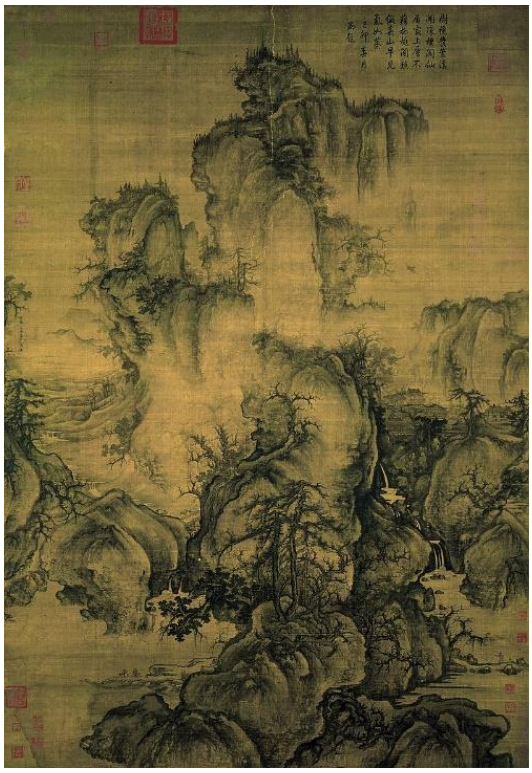

Figure 2: Guo Xi (Kuo Hsi). Early Sprint, 1072. Hang Scroll, Ink and Colour on Silk. 158.3 cm x 108.1 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei

Source: Wikimedia Commons

Definitions of ‘Host’ and ‘Guest’ in Chinese Painting

These concepts are derived from the notion of Chinese visual language and depict the reciprocal interaction between 'components' inside the painting composition. These terms also suggest an underlying sense of order and dominance as key status in terms of the connectedness and interdependence of compositional parts. Traditional Chinese painting methods do not use linear perspective concepts like those seen in European landscape art. Space is expressed in a single picture by combining three distance views, namely 'height,' 'level,' and 'depth.' This is a component of the interrelated chain of events that symbolises Chinese philosophy (Law, 2011, p. 374). Visual organization-composition in Western art refers to the organisational combination of a variety of ideas and concepts that artists utilise to create a work that achieves the intended aesthetic impact. This perception of aesthetic characteristics in relation to composition may differ depending on the artist's background and preferences (Wallschlaeger, et al., 1992, p. 409).

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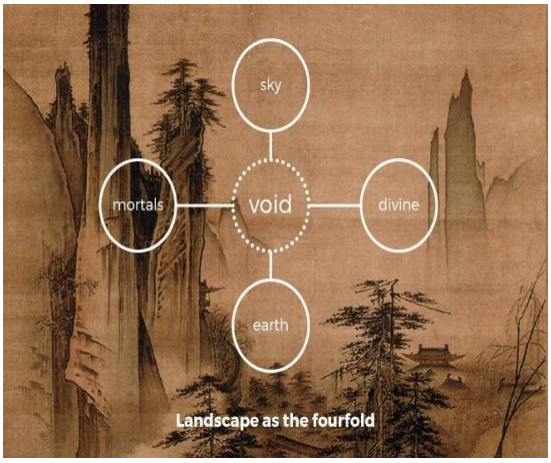
a)  b) 

Figure 3. a) Full image; b) Cropped image. Ma-Yuan (c, 1160-1225). Dancing and Singing-Peasants Returning from Work. Handscroll, Ink and Colours on Silk. Beijing Palace Museum

Source: Wikimedia Commons

In Chinese art, the 'Host and Guest' relationship is frequently indicated by the tallest or most prominent features displayed, which are usually represented as a 'mountain' or a series of 'mountains' on a horizontal rolling handscroll (Law, 2011, p. 373). This element (Mountain) is seldom positioned in the composition's centre; instead, it will assume a prominent position to one side or the other, depending on the artist's desired impact (Figure 3, above). This location is dominant, attracting the observer's attention away from other features, either deliberately or unconsciously. As a result, a feeling of order and organisation is produced. This connectedness holds the composition together, producing the illusion of spatial depth on a two-dimensional surface. The layout of the Japanese garden Sakuteiti (Record of Garden Making), a manual of ideas, provided a visual analogy of this 'host and guest' relationship as follows: "Choose a particularly wonderful stone and put it as the Main Stone" (omo ishi). Then, in accordance with the first stone's request, lay the rest in place" (Fowler, 2013). During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Japan was the most significant source of sociocultural and intellectual trends for China, and it introduced China to numerous Western concepts and technology (Wang, 2011, p. 232).

Discussion and Results

Before delving into what makes Chinese traditional painting so outstanding and distinctive, there are a few things that an outsider should examine before appreciating a work of art. In Chinese traditional painting, what does a landscape depict and mean? What exactly is the connection between poetry, calligraphy, and painting? What are the benefits and drawbacks of vertical scrolling vs horizontal scrolling? What are the differences and similarities between colour landscapes and black-ink landscapes? How crucial is paper quality in the final painting

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outcome? It is often considered that masterpieces of Chinese landscape painting are the product of a cross-pollination of Buddhist and Taoist principles. This hybridization blossomed in the Middle Kingdom's themes of mountain scenery landscapes (Shaw, 1988, p. 183). Ink painting is known as the brush art (*Yòng Bǐ* - 用笔), which loosely translates as "use of the brush," or more properly "drawing with the brush." As Norman Bryson pointed out, artists always choose shapes that allow for the most integrity and visibility of the brush's fundamental strokes (Fong, 2003, p. 265). The excellence of a painting was originally weighted by a hierarchy ranked into four categories: a) *Shén* 神 (spiritual); b) *Qímiào* - 奇妙 (Marvellous); c) *Shèngrèn de* - 胜任的 (competent), and d) *Zìrán*自然 (untrammelled-natural), usually describing the spontaneity and naturalness; These can be translated by the orientation of the Chinese artist towards life, which is moulded by the merging of the three major philosophies: Taoism, Confucianism, and much later Buddhism. Each philosophy promotes harmony and largely discourages-rejects abstract speculation (Nisbett, 2004, p. 12). These philosophical teachings stood for a deep appreciation of nature, the rural life and simplicity. These are religions of wonder, magic and fantasy, and they offer meaning to the cosmos by accounting for the relationship between nature and humans affairs. Taoism is a major source of the healing discipline in China, where physiology was described symbolically by the *Yīn* 阴 - *Yáng* 阳 principle and by the five elements that the Greeks also believed in: earth, fire, water, metal, wood. This explains why magic, incantations and aphrodisiac medication are known as "*Qi* - 气"; which loosely translates as 'breath', 'air' or 'gas' (Nisbett 2004, p. 15). Confucius (551-479 BC) was more of an ethical philosopher than a religious leader (Richey, 2021), concerned with the correct interaction between individuals, in which a rigorous hierarchical order is spelt out. Each of its members has significant relationship pairings (husband-Wife) with each having clear and explicit duties toward each-other. Confucianism, like Taoism, is less concerned with discovering the truth and more concerned with discovering the 'Tao' - the way – to exist in this world (Nisbett, 2004, p. 15). From the first century AD until the present, Buddhism was incorporated from India and Central Asia. Concerns regarding harmony, holism, and the reciprocal effect of practically everything on almost everything else are shared by all three orientations. The three orientations' shared holism also implies that every occurrence is connected to every other event; an important concept is the concept of resonance. An individual resonates in tandem with nature. The world is presented to us as a series of events that are intricately interconnected. Objects and people were linked "not like segments of a pipe, but like rope in a net." The Greeks, on the other hand, would observe a collection of events irrespective of their ties and interrelationships with others. For the Chinese, this intricacy meant that attempting to grasp the thing without understanding its context was hopeless.

Six Principles in the Chinese Painting - (绘画六法, *Huìhuà Liùfǎ*)

These principles refer to achieving excellence in the artwork so that it connects with the creator, nature, and the viewer. The painting technique does not place a strong value on accurately depicting an actual scene or item. The brushstroke in Chinese calligraphy is more of a philosophical or emotional statement than a method of applying ink. They are frequently spontaneous works, resulting from the artist's quick inspiration while viewing magnificent landscape. *Guō Xī* (Kuo-His - 郭熙. c, 1020 - c, 1090) requires the artist to first reflect in contemplation of the topic to be painted. His 'An Essay on Landscape Painting' was immensely significant in defining the trajectory of following landscape schools. 'An artist should empathise with the landscape and monitor it until its importance is disclosed to him,' he stated

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(Sarton, 1936, p. 463). Historically, every Chinese artist's spirit has been imbued with a passion for nature, inspired by Taoism.

These six principles were established by '*Xiè Hè* – (Hsie-Ho - 谢赫), a Chinese historian and a painter who lived during the four dynasties of 'Liu Song' (劉宋, 420-479), the 'Nan' (Southern), 'Qi' (479-502) and the 'Nan Liang' (502-557), and wrote the 'Six Principles of Chinese Painting' (绘画六法 - *Huìhuà Liùfǎ*) (Hu, 2016), in the preface of his book '*The Record of the Classification of Old Painters'* (《古画品录》, *Gǔhuà Pǐnlù*).

Although sometimes referred to as the "Six Cannons", nothing in them suggests the rigidity of the term 'cannon' as in the Western interpretation of the classical Greek arts; the Chinese creative temperament will have nothing to do with such imposing restrictions. For the sexpartite study of Chinese traditional painting, the terms 'principles,' 'conditions,' or even 'laws' are more appropriate. These principles characterise a picture (Lancaster, 1952, p. 100). These principles were not invented by modern art historians, but were composed centuries ago by native scholars who were intimately familiar with the concept behind the practise of painting, and they have been subscribed to by succeeding generations of artists and critics, withstanding the test of application and time (Lancaster, 1952, p. 95).

These, 'Six Principles of Chinese Painting' are expressed in four characters each, a total of twenty-four, a transliteration and literal translation is given. (Figure 4, beneath).

1. "Spirit Resonance" (*Qì Yùn* - **气韵**) or vitality (*Shēng Dòng* - **生动**), it's described to the anxious energy conveyed from the artist into the work, or it might be understood as the overall energy of a work of art. *Xìe Hè* (Hsie-Ho) states that without 'Spirit Resonance', there is no need to investigate beyond. It might be viewed as the first law of the presence of a dynamic consonance which gives the painting the vitality of life itself (Hu, 2016, p. 247). Another explanation offered by Acker, relating it back to *Guǎn zi* -**管子,** is that the "*Qì* - **气**" is the essence of everything that exists. William Acker (b, 1907) emphasises that the "*Qì* - **气**" as the fountain of life energy which could be accumulated, cultivated 'under conscious control' and transmitted between different media from animate things to other inanimate things (Hu, 2016, p. 251).
2. "Bone Method" (*Gǔ Fǎ* - 骨法) describes how the brush is utilised (*Yòng Bǐ* - 用笔). This not only refers to texture or tonal washes and brush stroke, such as hard, strong, solid, structural poised and stiff, but also, but also to the intimate relationship between handwriting and personality. The brush stroke is the vehicle for expression, but it must first create the fundamental structure, the inherent aspects or essence of the thing. During the reign days of *Xìe Hè* (Hsie-Ho), the art of calligraphy and painting were inextricably linked, with each requiring only a brush, ink-water, ink-stone, and paper or silk.
3. "Correspondence to the Object" (*Yìng Wù* - 应物) or the depiction of form (*Xiàng Xíng*- 象形), which would include shape and line, or as *Xìe Hè* (Hsie-Ho) emphasises, the subject that the observer should recognized via the shape and form recorded by the artist. Everything in nature has its own symbolism in China, and the meaning is perceived by the spectator through identifying shapes in a picture.

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4. "Suitability to Type" (*Suí Lèi* - 随类) or the application of colour (*Fù Cǎi* - 赋彩). This relates to the employment of inks to achieve the desired effect, which including the use of layers, washes, value and tones. In contrast to Aristotelian language that 'imitated,' nature is depicted naturalistically in Chinese arts, and colours are utilised in correspondent to those of nature. The 'Southern School' of Chinese landscape painting of the Sung dynasty (960-1179 AD) is impressionistic, but varies from French Impressionism in that it is an intellectual rather than a visual impressionism.
5. "Division and Planning" (*Jīng Yíng* - 经营) or 'placement and arranging' (*Wèi Zhi* - 位置), is associated with or refers to composition, space and depth. The hyphenated form has been employed in the interpretation to emphasise the presence of two ideas: a) to plan; and b) to design. They are both concerned with the action and oriented toward the content of placing them in a logical connection with one another. The dominant characteristic must take precedence over the subordinate feature in order to establish unity in the face of complexity. In Chinese painting words, it refers to the 'host' and the 'guest,' both of whom complement one other; or the skill of producing a picture rather than documenting nature is favourable to an honest composition (Webster, 1940, p.132)
6. "Transmission by Copying" (*Chuán Yí* - 传移) or the copying of models (*Mó Xiě* - 模写), not just from life but also the works of antiquity. In Chinese painting and from the artist's perspective the aim of copying is to absorb ideas, information-knowledge and to acquire the method from the traditional masters. *Xìe Hè* (Hsie-Ho), stated that imitating an old master's painting should not be followed for a lengthy period of time, but just during the training stage (Lancaster, 1952, p. 100).

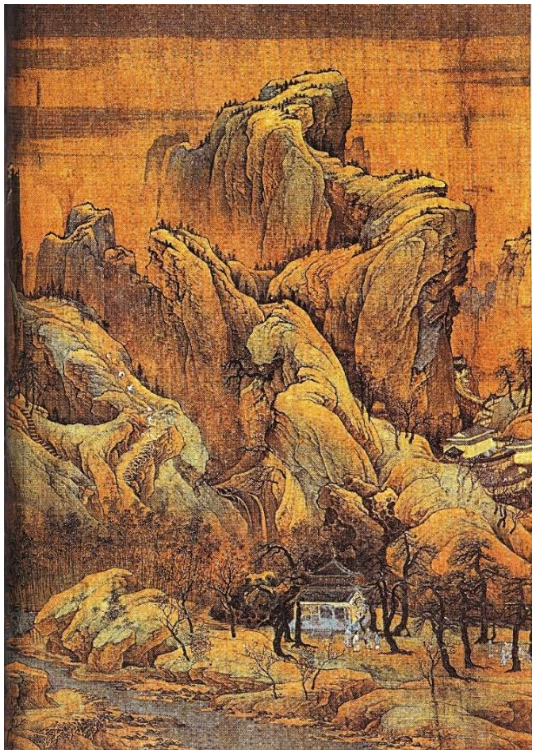

Figure 4: *Zhào bójǔ* (赵伯驹，c,1120-1182). Autumn Colours on Rivers and Mountains. c, 1120-1162. Handscroll, Ink and Colours on Silk (Detail). Beijing Palace Museum, China.

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The craftsman or artisan, student or apprentice is to look for the first five principles in the works of the ancestors, and after observing them for himself, he is to imitate them in order to gain capacity and cultivate his own style. It is critical to remember that the first principle "Spirit Resonance" (*Qì Yùn* - 气韵) or vitality (*Shēng Dòng*- 生动), was fundamental to *Xìe Hè* (Hsie-Ho) and served as a guide to understand the other five principles in their subsequent order. This initial principle breathes life into the picture (Webster, 1940, p. 132). According Alexander Soper (1941), the nature of *Qì* - 气 in Chinese ancient philosophy is as a universal notion that refers to the underlying characteristic of everything that is animate, as vital energy provides life to humans and other sentient being (p. 148). Rendering *Qì* - 气 as physical breath of human beings only revels its most fundamental implications, however translating *Qì* - 气 as 'spirit' appears to reveal its passion-nature and psychological idea (Hu, 2016, p. 251). Another factor to consider is the peculiarities of the Chinese written language in terms of character (*Hànzì* - 汉字) meaning and understanding. In our sense, no words based on English alphabet are utilised. Sentence structure does not exist when an idea is made solely of nouns, adjectives, and verbs. The single Chinese character (*Hànzì* - 汉字) represents an idea without regard to number, gender, tense, case, or part of speech. For example, a character 活 - *Huó*, represent the adjective 'alive' [Merriam-Webster, (n.d). Alive], 'existing', 'non-dead', 'lifeless', 'active', 'movable', and the nouns 'life', 'motion' and 'work' as well as the verb 'to live', 'to have life'. As with a phonetic script, the character does not compel speech (Lancaster, 1952, p. 101). A good composition in Chinese art is more than just a collection of rigid things or stiff objects. Art is a creative process that generates life, and colour is utilised for ornamental purposes rather than for a realistic impact, with both relying heavily on the rhythmical swinging line effect (Webster, 1940, p. 130). There is a strong link between exquisite writing, or 'calligraphy,' and painting. Chinese letters are fundamentally flat, rather than three-dimensional, as in painting. An artist's goal is not to provide a photographic picture of how things seem on the outside. The artist is a creator, and his work is magical. A-symmetry is fundamental in Chinese ink landscape painting; avoiding Symmetrical arrangement is one of the most significant techniques to distinguishing Western and East Asian representations in painting. In Asian art, symmetry may be interpreted as conjuring a balance of elements in which there is no potential for the flow of *Qì* - 气, 'the energy', a living essence of the acquired thing, as previously mentioned. The combination of the opposing, yet mutually dependent aspects of *Yīn Yáng* - 阴阳, generates the fundamental force that powers the cosmos (Lisa, 2020). As previously described, one element holds the germ of another in the Eastern school of thinking, and vice versa. In a continual process of transition, one gives birth to the alternative. This dualism appears to be inseparable from one another. According to the Eastern viewpoint, the concept of a solid, steady equilibrium of two forces leads to stasis, a condition that is essentially dead. Taking a look at Chinese landscape art to grasp and realise that the composition's structure is asymmetrical, with the pieces not being composed haphazardly, but rather meticulously planned. The artists' experience of nature is mediated via their own creativity and sensitivity, therefore finding individual expression is a basic medium of a traditional cultural form. Because the sight and perception framework are not firmly enforced, Asymmetrical works give the spectator a high level of engagement. The spectator is free to move his or her eyes as he or she pleases, discovering points of interest as they roam around the scenery being shown. Chinese painting transports the spectator on an immersive voyage, allowing the eyes to wander beyond the picture plane, expanding the viewer's vision beyond the apparent recognition of reality to seek and locate this harmonious essence. In the Western concept of perspective, symmetry tends to exclude the spectator, placing him or her outside the frame of reference, as

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if, someone gazing at the artwork from the outside. *Jīng Hào* - 荆浩, (c, 855-915), was a Chinese landscape painter and theorist from Northern China, once said: *'One should not take outward beauty for reality. He who does not understand this mystery will not obtain the truth'*, Sung Dynasty (Figure 5, beneath). The goal of a Chinese painter lies beyond the given form-type, their works are inextricably bound to them by their own pictorial representation and painting skill. Therefore, Chinese painting has changed slightly through the centuries (Fong, 1971, p. 287).

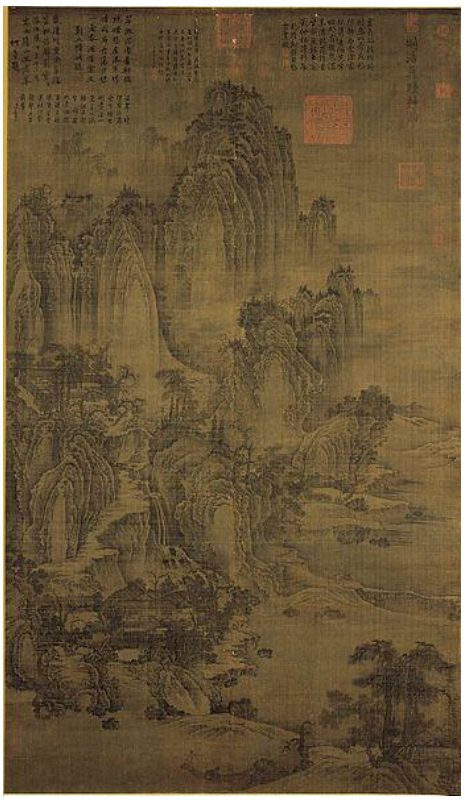

Figure 5: *Jīng Hào* - 荆浩, (855-915). Landscape: Mount Kuang-Lu. Hanging scroll, brush light colour on silk. 185.9 x 106.8cm.

Source: National Palace Museum Taipei

The artist's intention to generate a visual message suggests that an aesthetic message is to be delivered. Thus, in order to properly transmit this message, it is necessary to construct a hierarchy of message formats and process-making (Wallschlaeger et al., 1992, p. 375). The perceptual principles of organisation, such as 'composition' serves as an important purpose by allowing two separate forces to interact with one another. Within a vertically and horizontally oriented format/plane, each format has its own unique energy or emotional weight. Beginning with a vertical format in which the composition is seen as inspirationally uplifting that creates a sense of spatial depth; and horizontal format which creates a ground composition, playing against the energy thrust of upward movement, creating a sense of stability, calmness and languor. In painting, these two forces contribute to the definition of spatial depth by establishing spatial connectedness between the other parts, and the spectator can become an element of the composition itself. However, the perception of aesthetic characteristics in relation to composition may differ depending on the artist's background and tastes

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(Wallschlaeger et al., 1992, p. 409). These former aesthetic traits might be characterised as harmony or completion, relating to "Spirit Resonance" (*Qì Yùn* - 气韵) or (*Shēng Dòng* - 生动), vitality respectively (Figure 2 & 4, above). A short examination of realistic Chinese landscape painting refers to the production of illusionistic space in addition to depicting the main features, which are mountains and trees that closely resemble their ideographic forms. A 'high-distance' view is one in which the visual plane is dominated by vertical objects such as mountains. Additionally, this composition must be filled with horizontal objects to create a panoramic or 'flat-distance' perspective of water, a river, or cities. As a result, both combinations will display the valley landscape known as a 'deep-distance' perspective. Since then, these three compositional schemes have served as the foundation for Chinese landscape painting (Fong, 1971, p. 283). (Figure 3 & 5, above).

Chinese Ink Painting Subjects or Themes

Ink painting has a long history and outstanding heritage in the world of aesthetics as an essential aspect of the ink painting within the Chinese arts and an invaluable asset of Chinese national identity. Flowers, birds, and other motifs evolved from the earliest stage through the Neolithic Age, then through the Wei and Jin dynasties, and eventually from an independent branch in the Tang dynasty to maturity during the Five Dynasties (907-960 AC) [Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, (2008, April 7). Five Dynasties]. Flower and bird art dominated the whole era during the Northern Song Dynasty, whether it was Imperial-court, ornamental or decorative, landscape ink painting, etc., and regardless of the substance, topic, or art-genre, all reached an established stage in the history of Chinese painting (Zhang, 2017, p. 58). This artistic expression is separated into two categories: ornate style and liberal style. To avoid extremes and correctly represent both the exterior forms and the inner soul, a moderate way was taken. The traditional artist may paint with recklessness and disregard the conventions of depiction, but he or she would never make an abstract piece. Whether it's a broad perspective or a close-up, the artist's purpose is to draw viewers into the picture and create a world unto itself. Chinese artists naturally transfer calligraphy methods to painting, and as the sister art, they frequently appear together. They are also paired with poetry and then sealed with a personal imprint. There are three primary topics that are typically depicted:

a) landscape in all of its forms and compositions;
b) birds, insects, and flowers; and,
c) figures.

In General, Chinese artists, want viewers to feel the unlimited expression of his capacity to transmit his inner spirit (Han, 2020, p. 6), whereas European painters want viewers to borrow their vision and gaze at a certain scene precisely as he/she sees it, from a specific viewpoint. Chinese artists do not stick to a particular point of view, they do not want viewers to borrow their eyes but they want viewers to enter their mind (Han, 2020, p. 5). '*All landscape has to be viewed from an angle of totality… to see more than one layer of the mountain at one time... see the totality of its unending ranges*', wrote Shěnkuò (沈括, 1031–1095 AD). The court people, the goodness of their predecessors, and the distinctive literary artistic aim were the driving factors behind the creation of Chinese traditional painting as a whole, and this had an influence on the spread of such artforms across the rest of the kingdom (Zhang, 2017, p. 58).

Flowers in Chinese Painting: This is a subcategory in the bird-and-flowers genre which has become the object of attention and depictions by painters throughout the ages. The artist's aim is not only to portray the outer universal beauty of flowers, but to express the subtle spirit and

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demeanour of their subject. Across the history of art in Western and Eastern cultures, flowers have occupied an important role symbolizing comfort, love and affection. There are six main and auspicious plants in Chinese painting that every artist may engage in reproducing. Plum blossoms are a transitional flower prized by ancient and modern painters for their beautiful appearance, a symbol of good fortune and the coming spring. Orchids, in Chinese painting are known for their elegant and beautiful image, often compared to poetry. Bamboo, is known for its inner strength with a reputation of being a 'gentleman' who is a tough character, with high ambitions and modest and open in spirit. Chrysanthemums, are known for their gorgeous appearance, generally associated with peaceful, reflective, late-life pastimes and moods. Chrysanthemum paintings are commonly given or displayed on the occasions of mature birthdays, signifying wishes for health and long-life (Nelson, 2001, p. 444). Pine trees, are known for their evergreen images. People endow them with a strong will and unyielding character and they are considered a symbol of longevity. Finally, Lotus flowers are regarded as the pure land of the west and the place where souls are conceived. Buddha sits on a lotus flower (Qiyi, et al., 2016).

Animal and Birds in Chinese Painting: are popular topics, and they are frequently depicted with lucky connotations.

Insects in Chinese Painting: commonly called 'plants and insects' are combined with other subjects such as 'fruits and vegetable', 'bird and flowers,' reaching the highest level during the Song dynasty (960-1279 AD). Some of the insects and flowers combined bring auspicious wishes for the family and friends.

Fish in Chinese Painting: Fish, along with feng shui and numerology, are the most prominent subject in Chinese painting, representing good energy and plenty of prosperity in Chinese culture. Fish motif has been explored in Western art from antiquity, mainly as mysterious animals from faraway countries. Carp-koi, goldfish, Mandarin perch, and silurid catfishes are the most regularly depicted fish in Chinese painting, appearing in porcelain, carving, and sculptures (Moyle & Moyle, 1991, p. 20).

Figures in Chinese Painting: 'Portraits' existed in Chinese art much before subsequent popular figures such as landscapes, birds, and flowers. The early figure paintings were either religious or political in nature. Silk and paintings on the walls of tombs and caverns have been discovered dating from the Spring and Autumn period (722-481 BC) to the Warring States period and the Han dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), as well as the Wei and Jin eras (265-420 AD). Unfortunately, paintings on silk and paper are difficult to preserve due to their fragility, therefore practically all authentic works by prominent figure painters of the Jin and Tang dynasties (618-907) such as Gù kǎizhī (顾恺之, c, 344-405) and Wú dàozi (吴道子, c, 685-758) have long ago vanished. In China, some events involving legendary individuals, wise sages, great officials, and kings have not only been written down, but have also been illustrated and passed down through centuries. Painting was primarily employed to help audiences understand the content of a narrative through its actual graphic portrayal. When the written record is interpreted by the painter's hand and intellect, a reciprocal relationship between the picture and text of history and legend is produced.

Imitation and Study Methods in Chinese Painting

Why is mimicking (copying) masterworks still a fundamental technique in Chinese art? …

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The use of tracing ink rubbings and woodblock prints in the disciplines of painting and calligraphy had a significant impact on creative growth and transmission. The legacy of stone and woodblock engraving, in which every artist was taught, supplemented direct copying using grid, pounce, and tracing processes. These engravings were used as printing blocks for ink rubbings on paper, which could then be easily duplicated as models for copying. Tracings and rubbings were key instructional sources for creative training and workshop practise, learning to make progress by silently finding for oneself and competing against himself (Fong, 1971, p. 287). The use of brush and ink is an important aspect of the development of Chinese painting. The brushwork accentuates the variation in thickness and speed, and the rhythm of division, turning, and radius portrays the tactility of the item. In general, the mixture of light and dark in Chinese painting is delicate, because a total contrast of light and dark is not beneficial to portraying the mood of the work. Shadows are not used in Chinese paintings; the light is delicate and exquisite, but not gloomy. This tradition in painting and calligraphy served as a means of developing one's own particular style. Except in the instance of deliberate forgeries, precise duplicates were not viewed as the artist's purpose; rather, artists copied in order to improve technical control and to examine the key aspects of past masters' styles. Individual research led to creative imitations, satire, and the use of allusion. The goal of the plan was to create a fresh unique style that was distinctive of the individual. This process might be surprising, and it is inextricably linked to the advancement of teaching. Painting on paper is created in China as a process of dipping layers that are mounted when completed on a thick backing paper. Scrolls must be remounted over time, and in certain cases, the underlayers must be removed to permit remounting. Where the ink has penetrated, the bottom layers may maintain the image of the original composition. Although the artist's original hand can never be recovered, the tiny lines and dry brushstrokes that are lacking on underlayers are frequently retouched. As a result, underlayer paintings are replicas and are particularly important if the original painting has not survived. This mimetic (copying) process introduces additional difficulties such as workshop practises, numerous copies by the same artist connected to mass production, and the historical periodization of the copying propensity.

Visual Analysis of:

In light of the brief description provided in the preceding sub-titles, it is necessary to examine the following four prominent artists and their works produced in the technique known as Ink based painting "*Zhōngguó huà"* (中国画) or "*Guó Huà*" (国画), in order to distinguish them from modern painters who use oil-based paint. These four artists were born towards the end of the nineteenth or the beginning of the twentieth century, and their lives were shaped by the fast-changing world of the early twentieth century. During a period of unprecedented social and political change, each of the four artists' works reflected their individual styles, which mirrored their ways of connecting the old with the new, merging this old-style of ink painting with new elements and techniques, reinvigorating Chinese traditional ink painting and firmly establishing it in the twentieth century. Here are the following artists:

a) *Wú Chāngshuò* (吴昌硕, 1843/4-1927), a mainland Chinese born in the village of Zhangwu, Zhejiang province, just a few years after the turmoil period following the end of the First Opium war (1839-1842) (Wan, Q. and Kee, Siu Fun [2021, November 2]. *Wú Chāngshuò*. Encyclopedia Britannica); he was a notable seal carver, calligrapher and painter of the early 20th century. He began composing poems and carving seals as a kid at the age of 10. While still studying art and poetry, he passed the 'civil service examination,' a system of testing meant to choose the most studious and erudite individuals for jobs as

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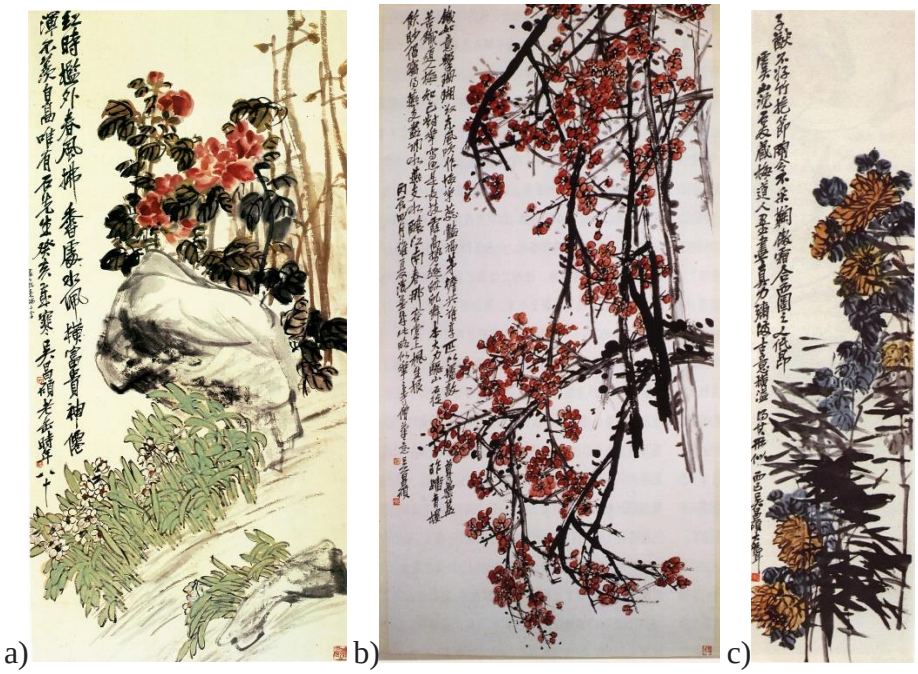
officials in the Chinese government. He authored many books on the subject of seal engraving. *Wú Chāngshuò*, did not start painting until the age of 30, encouraged by a fellow colleague to transfer his calligraphy brushstrokes into painting. He created an explicit direct form of contrast with bold and simple brushstrokes that exhibited a traditional literati-style. He branched into "*Xiě Yì*" - 写意 or "*Shuǐ Mò*" -水墨, both of which are practices by amateur and scholar painters employing expressionistic brushwork as an expression of personal originality (this is one of two traditional styles using a typical Chinese brush and ink on paper). His works look contemporary and relevant to the twentieth century. He was particularly well-known for his paintings of birds and flowers (Figure 6: a, b, c, beneath).



a) b) c)

Figure 6: *Wú Chāngshuò* - 吴昌硕 (1843/4-1927). a) Peonies and Daffodils; b) Plum Blossom; c) Chrysanthemum Flowers and Bamboo. Ink, Colour on Chinese Paper. Unknown Dates. Various Dimensions

He was, nevertheless, an unconventional painter who prioritised self-expression over all other aesthetic concerns. He was labelled as a member of the traditional Shanghai school, which clung to the ancient long-gone dynasty, among other prominent painters like as *Xū Gǔ* (虛谷, 1824–1896), *Pú Huá* (蒲华, 1832–1911), and 'Rèn yí' also known as *Ren Bonian* (任伯年, 1840–1895). In response to commercial needs, this group of painters abandoned the traditional-bound idioms of the 17th and 18th century orthodox masters preserved by the Qing dynasty, which, while losing its formerly unrivalled prominence, continued to dominate ink painting until the 1910s (Wang, 2011, p. 225). *Wú* (吳), however, revived archaic calligraphy techniques (Elkins, 2010, p. 103), these painters are classified as individualists [Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2021, November 15). Qing dynasty]. Shanghai painters employed formal and brighter colour palettes, focusing on aesthetic influence such as 'impact' rather than symbolism or narrative meaning. The increasing presence of foreign literature from Japan and Western nations, such as books, early photography, and advertising, ironically inspired a revived interest

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in traditional ink painting, which was the dominating fashion through the end of the 18th century.

b) *Qí BáiShí* (齐白石, 1864-1957), was one of the most prominent and well-known contemporary painters who accomplished a transformation of the Chinese traditional painting. Despite the decline in popularity of traditional painting following the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, he received the greatest governmental recognition (Olivova, 2011, p. 64). His name still sounds loud and clear in the early twenty-first century, more than half a century after his death (Pingping, 2021, p. 266). He was born into an impoverished family of peasants. He self-taught seal carving and began to grasp the arts such as poetry, painting, and calligraphy at a young age, mostly by his own efforts. He first independently studied the '*Treatise on Mustard Seed Garden'* [《芥子园画传》 Jiè Zǐ Yuán Huà Zhuàn], a printed manual of Chinese painting compiled during the early Qing dynasty (Olivova, 2011, p. 65). He was influenced by the Ming dynasty artist *Xú Wèi* (徐渭) and early Qing dynasty painter *Zhū Dā* (朱耷). *Qí* (齐) is well-known for his works featuring flowers, trees, and small animals, such as birds, mice and shrimp. During the 1900s, when in his forties, *Qí* (齐), made his first journey to Shanghai, where he was significantly influenced by the Shanghai School, which was popular at the time and met *Wú Chāngshuò*, who became another mentor to him and inspired many of his works. Another impact of *Qí Báishí* came around fifteen years later, when Qí (齐), after settling in Beijing got closer to Chén shīcéng (陳师曾).

Figure 7: *Qí Báishí* (齐白石, 1864-1957): Set of Twelve Landscape Paintings 1925. Brush, Ink, colour on Chinese Paper. Each 180 cm x 47 cm

Twelve landscape screens were painted when the artist was 62 years old. Reflecting the painter's interest in depicting varied landscapes, which led him to travel numerous times around his native China (Kinsella, 2017). He theorized that 'painting should be something between likeness and unlikeness'. His diverse output reflects his interest and experience generally focusing on the smaller things of the world. He used heavy ink, bright colours, and vigorous strokes creating works of a fresh and lively manner that express his love for nature. He avoided imitating past artists, preferring to paint the areas he recalled in a highly distinctive, unorthodox approach (Olivova, 2011, p. 75). His landscape paintings outlived his time and have historical significance in shaping modern Chinese landscape art (Pingping, 2021, p. 266). In the works of *Qí Báishí*, can be found three clear common points:
i) the concept of movement in space which is associated with Taoist; the beauty of life is recognised via movement and dynamically perceived;

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ii) the notion of all living beings is identified in the 'flowers and birds' paintings; and,
iii) the concept of content prevailing over form, which is related with Confucian ideals about the significance of spiritual perfection over corporeal perfection, as shown in the genre of 'Mountain and water scenery and shrimps' ink, and the flower and birds' paintings (Pingping, 2021, p. 268).

c) *Lǐ kěrǎn* (李可染, 1907-1989) was a modern painter of "*Zhōngguó huà*" (中国画) or "*Guó Huà*" (国画), and art educator. Considered one of the most important Chinese artists in the latter half of the 20th century, he was also an influential professor at the Central Academy of Fine Arts where he taught a generation of Chinese artists. *Lǐ (李)*, was born in Xuzhou, Jiangsu province as Li Yongshu to illiterate parents, he excelled in art at an early age. *Lǐ (李)* began to learn painting from *Qián Sōnglíng* (钱松龄, 1854-1927) a local painter in his hometown of Xuzhou and was taught to imitate paintings in the tradition of the four Wang's (Four landscape painters named Wang of the early Qing dynasty, 1644-1912). *Lǐ (李)* was forty-two years old when the People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded, and he embraced the chances and challenges that awaited him. All cultural and artistic spheres had undergone a great though complicated historical change (Chen, 1997, p. 92). He graduated from the Shanghai Painting College in 1925 and went on to study Western art at the National Art Academy in Hangzhou. Andre Claudot (1892-1982), a French modernist, was one of his professors, with whom he studied sketching and oil painting. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945, *Lǐ (李)* painted propaganda art. In 1949, the national art academy system, which was founded soon after the formation of the People's Republic of China, absorbed the most major art schools of the time. The new academies maintained a focus on mastering Western methods and blending native and Western approaches (Andrews, 1990, p. 560). On April 1st, 1950, the National Beiping Art Academy, led by the prominent art educator *Xú bēihóng* (徐悲鸿, 1895-1953), was re-established as the Central Academy of Fine Arts (中央美术学院 - CAFA). *Xú* (徐), who having studied in both Japan and Europe, was a supporter of European academic art. *Lǐ* (李) was recruited to teach brush and ink painting at the Beiping National Art College by *Xú* (徐). There he met *Qí Báishí* (齐白石, 1864-1955) and *Huáng Bīnhóng* (黄宾红,1895-1955), two of China's most prominent brush and ink artists of the twentieth century.

Despite his background in oil painting in the 1940s, *Lǐ (李)* switched to the more patriotic and less expensive medium of brush and ink on paper and excelled in literati-style figure painting. *Lǐ* (李) aimed to change Chinese painting by fusing classic literati-style methods with current new Western paintings.

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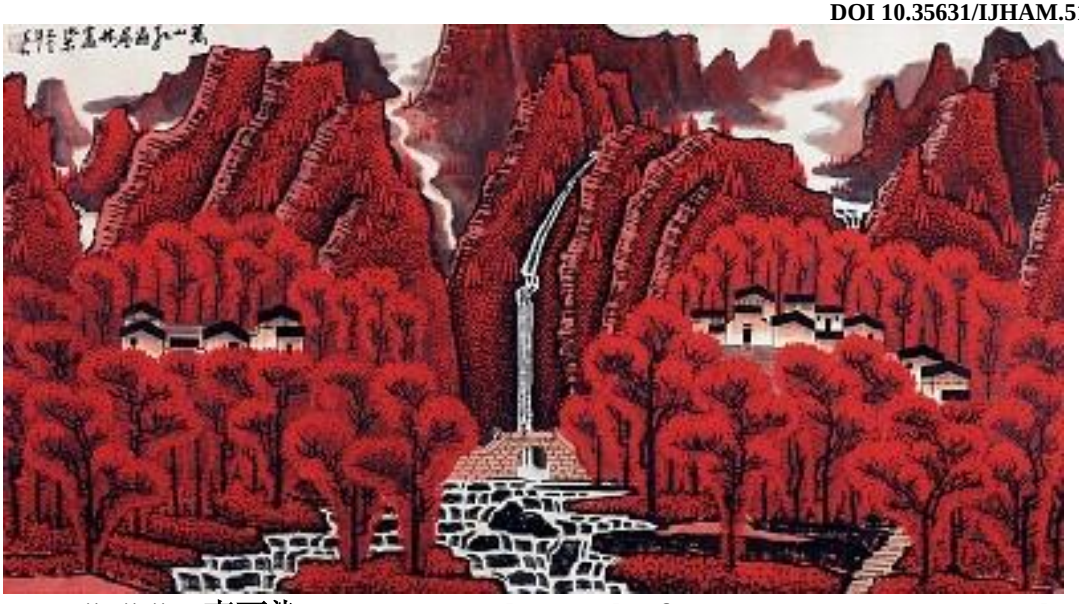

Figure 7: Lǐ kěrǎn -李可染 (1907-1989). Thousands of Mountains in A Crimsoned View. 1964. Chinese Ink and Colour on Paper. 69.5 cm x 45.5 cm. (National Museum of China)

He attempted to modify traditional landscape or 'Homeland' painting by engaging the perspective of Western academic institutions (Chen, 1997, p. 107). His later landscape ink and colour painting took a different turn and evolved into a distinctive "*Xiě Yì*" - 写意 style earning him the title and reputation of one of the most accomplished landscape painters in the traditional medium. In 1986, he defined standards of 'excellence' in landscape painting in a five-word rhymed formula: vivid spirit resonance; implicit with limitless message, rich and pleasant to behold, elegant brushwork and remarkable ink, magnificent and broadminded. His first principle recalled the Six Dynasties tradition of appraising the 'soul' of a painting, which had various meanings and explanations until it was explained as a demand on the temperament and knowledge of painters who should be excellent both in personality and in subsequent painting style of painters in the Ming dynasty (Chen, 1997, p. 108).

Lǐ (李) acknowledges that there was a process in his understanding of tradition. He emphasised the deep intrinsic value of Chinese ink painting (Chen, 1997, p. 110). *Lǐ (李)* wrote:

"I have toyed with ink since I was a child; sixty years have rolled by already. From morning till late in the evening, brush and ink were always with me. In old age, I painted at random but profusely; my brush did not need to touch the paper, but it had the weight of a thousand catties. Only those with clairvoyant eyes and diligence in practices could comprehend" (Chen, 1997, p. 110).

Lǐ (李) was appointed associate professor in the department of Chinese painting at CAFA (中央美术学院), Beijing in 1950. Reflecting the revolutionary spirit of the moment, he wrote his seminal essay titled *'On the Reform of Chinese Painting'* in the Journal of the Chinese Artist Association. He cited the words of Communist Party Chairman *Máo Zédōng* (毛泽东) and urged artists to immerse themselves in the life of regular people. He also advocated for the preservation of relevant components of China's vast cultural and creative history.

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In 1954, *Lǐ (李)* travelled on a sketching journey alongside his fellow colleagues Zhang-Ding (b, 1917) and Luo-Ming (b, 1912) which finally exerted a very profound influence on his art as he was visiting *Huáng Bīnhóng* (黄宾红), who was then China's most senior landscape painter (Chen, 1997, p. 74) and he felt the need to be part of the tradition of Chinese landscape painting that went back to Lǐ Chéng (李成, 919–967) and Fàn Kuān (范宽, c, 960 – c, 1030) (Elkins, 2010, p. 129). In 1979, he led a post-graduate class in landscape painting at the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA - 中央美术学院), it was the first course in China, and in 1981, he was appointed inaugural Director of the Chinese Painting Research Academy (Zhōngguóhuà yán jiù yuan - 中国画研究院), instilling in a generation of practitioners his new landscape painting method of using brush and ink to record the actual landscape. Today, *Lǐ kěrǎn* -李可染, is renowned for his black landscape paintings for which he was severely criticised during the Cultural Revolution, but which he continued to paint in the years until his death in 1989.

d) Xú Bēihóng (徐悲鸿, 1895-1953), whose original name was Xú Shòukāng (徐寿康), was born in Yixing county (宜兴县), Jiangsu Province. In the early stormy decades of the twentieth century, he was hardly the only artist to take up the subject of modernising Chinese art. His answer, historical painting in the nineteenth-century academic style, Classical realism, was one of a kind (Ka, 2004, p. 5). Growing and born in a poor home, this gifted young painter had to overcome adversity to become one of China's most prominent painters of the twentieth century. He began home-schooling in Confucian classics at a young age and learnt to paint from his father, self-taught portrait artist and calligrapher Xú Dázhāng (徐达章). Xú (蔡), became an itinerant professional painter in his early teens and an art teacher before reaching age of 20 (Keung, E. Lai Kin and Wan, Q.L. (2022, January 2). *Xu Beihong).*

Later on, Cài Yuánpéi (蔡元培, 1868-1940), a former Chancellor of Beijing University, noticed his brilliance, leading to a government grant to study in Japan and France at the Ecole Nationale Superieure des Beaux Arts. As a result of residing in a foreign country, the Chinese artist was liberated from family, societal, and cultural pressures. Cài (蔡) was an outstanding proponent of the German aesthetic and one of the most significant people in contemporary Chinese education. He saw art history as an important component of national education, as well as an ideological and sociocultural force to replace religion with art, which gave art an unparalleled role in Chinese history (Wang, 2011, p. 233). Xú Bēihóng (徐悲鸿) was able to reflect upon himself with a degree of objectivity, something he would not habe been able to do at home. Being an immigrant in a new and foreigner place also opened his eyes, causing him to reflect on his own ethnic cultural identity (Ka, 2004, p. 6). In 1950, Xú Bēihóng (徐悲鸿) was appointed the President of the Central Academy of Fine Arts (中央美术学院-CAFA). The nationalistic sentiment and the synthesized style of his painting soon captured the attention of communist leaders such as Máo Zédōng (毛泽东, 1893-1976) and Zhōu' Ēnlái (周恩來,1898-1976). His colleagues carried on his never-ending push for 'realism.' Many people believe that Xú Bēihóng (徐悲鸿) was to be more fortunate than his peers. For better or worse, his impact on the evolution of modern Chinese art is immeasurable. Understanding the entire cultural context of China at the time he rose to the occasion is required in order to comprehend his art and its influence (Ka, 2004, p. 8).

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Figure 8: Xú Bēihóng (徐悲鸿, 1895-1953), Landscape. Ink based water on Chinese paper 1932.

There were two major themes that ran throughout Xu's (**徐)** body of artworks. First, those external influences he encountered while studies abroad such as Western techniques that could be incorporated to advance Chinese painting; and second, the advocacy of realism in art which meant that art should explore what is important in people's lives rather than being rigidly wedded to a particular tradition. Xú Bēihóng (徐悲鸿) mainly studied the shaping, colour application and composition factors of Western traditional painting. He also learned the painting method, colour and materials application and the skill of the impressionist style (Yujun, 2020, p. 211). Due to his strong views on the role of art in Chinese society, he faced a fair share of critics.

Conclusion

Chinese arts are possibly the world's longest continuous painting history, distinguished by an uncommon degree of continuity within that tradition's consciousness. This trait differs dramatically from the Western experience, which saw the collapse of visual arts in late antiquity, followed by the slow rise of painting and its various forms. In China, ornamental arts are immensely significant, and artists in general are held in high esteem; many of the early masterpieces were created in workshops by unknown artists. Textiles, pottery, furniture, and other methods were manufactured over time by imperial factories and utilised by the court as well as disseminated internally and internationally on a large scale to display emperors' riches

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and authority. In contrast, ink wash painting, like the arts of the West, was produced by the artist's own imagination and aesthetics.

Restricting the *Qì Yùn* - 气韵, "Spirit Resonance," to the scope of the painter, the object, or the art, looks arbitrary. The painter absorbs, captures, and interprets the expressive aspects of the *Qì Yùn* - 气韵, "Spirit Resonance," and transmits them to the piece of art as pure aesthetic contemplation during the creative process. This statement demonstrates the artist's unquestionable disposition and talent until the desired outcome is obtained. The *Qì Yùn* - 气韵, "Spirit Resonance" does not represent the formal likeness of the object, but rather cultivates the image in the artist's mind with a sense of life and naturalness and uses his hands to respond to the mind and control the brush, water, and ink until the conception of the images is generated. Finally, Chinese art in the early twentieth century ranged from highly detailed, colourful flower paintings akin to those made for the Qing court to abstract landscapes.

Chinese traditional painting relied on brush, ink and paper, strokes and spacing provides the requisite effects of depth and volume, but the appearance of three-dimensionality was seldom an aesthetic objective, without the production of shadows inside the artwork. Chinese artists avoided the sharp contrasts of light-dark and shade, very much used in much Western art to describe volume and illumination, they generally avoided foreshortening and the vanishing point of linear perspective also is not an aim, despite the fact that such Western devices were known in early twentieth-century China. In Chinese ink and brush painting, physical and spiritual aspects are combined. It also serves as an external symbol of cultural success and the spiritual realm.

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