

# The "Imitation Complex" in Paintings of Wang Yuanqi

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**Abstract:** "Pre-imitation" is the main way to learn traditional Chinese painting, and it carries learners' importance and attitude towards learning traditions. Wang Yuanqi, one of the four kings in the early Qing Dynasty, studied painting and inherited family studies. Under the influence of Wang Shimin and Wang Jian, he liked to copy masterpieces from the Five Dynasties to Yuan Dynasty, and finally formed a unique style of painting. This article discusses Wang Yuanqi's own way of copying from the aspects of writing, copying, and creating new ideas, and intends to explore the characteristics of his painting art.

**Keywords:** Wang Yuanqi, imitation, art

## 1. Introduction

Wang Yuanqi was one of the "Four Kings" in the early Qing Dynasty in ancient my country. His painting inherited his family studies. Influenced by Wang Shimin and Wang Jian, he particularly liked paintings in the Song and Yuan dynasties, especially the imitation and research of Huang Gongwang's works in the Yuan Dynasty. He also systematically summarized his paintings. In the end, he formed his own unique style of painting and created the Loudong Painting School.

## 2. Pro write

Throughout the ages for thousands of years, Chinese culture has always had a strong advocacy of ancient paintings and a tendency to "original complex" in the inheritance of Chinese culture, which can be traced back to the exclusive confucianism of the Han Dynasty [1]. As we all know, the concept of ritual and music in confucianism has a core view of ancestor worship, which is similar to totem worship. It is a huge system formed after generations of accumulation and inheritance.

Imitation has always been a relatively important category in painting. If only from the original meaning of words, imitation generally refers to imitation and antique. In the Southern Dynasty, Xie He put forward the theory of six methods in "Paintings", and listed "transfer, transfer and copying" as one of the six methods, which shows the importance of imitation in painting. Therefore, it is not difficult for us to understand that imitation is an important way to learn from previous experience and to learn excellent traditional culture. Chinese literati have always emphasized "nothing and no history" [2]. This shows that every stroke of our painting is based on the summary of the predecessors and has its origin.

The word copy is often misunderstood as limiting people's imagination. Copying seems to allow us to passively accept cultural knowledge, restraining the growth space of painting, and it is impossible to express infinite space with limited pen and ink. Behind the seemingly passive, the requirements are actually very strict. It is the process of the painter learning his skills. In the process of imitation, the artist is required to forget the concrete image of the object and to experience his feelings. Don't all of our things, including skills, culture, politics, and ideas, have been learned from generations to generations in this way and passed on and carried forward? Then, when we study the paintings of the predecessors, we mainly study the traditional thinking mode and aesthetic orientation, which is the essence of the painting practice. From the "Gaogu" proposed by Mi Fu in the Northern Song Dynasty, to Zhao Mengfu's advocacy of "Fagu" and "preserving ancient meaning" in the Yuan Dynasty, to Dong Qichang's proposal of "Take the ancients as teachers" in the Ming Dynasty, and then to "Four Kings" with the same nostrils as the ancients "Exiting one's breath" all express the emphasis on tradition and

the attitude of learning.

The Qing Dynasty where Wang Yuanqi lived was the last dynasty of China's feudal dynasty. The Qing court took strict precautions against literati. The Daxing literary prison of the Kang, Yong, and Qian dynasties often caused a series of tragedies due to literal manslaughter. But Kang and Qian seemed to be more tolerant of painters. Whenever there are important battles and related activities, special painters are ordered to paint them in detail.

It is not difficult to see from the ruler's attitude towards Wang Yuanqi that in fact, the ruler adopted a gentle, gentle and loose policy towards literati and intellectuals. At that time, the literary prison was not regarded as a policy to suppress anti-Qing intellectuals. If the literati and the ink guest have a little dissatisfaction in the text, or through other means of dissatisfaction with the dynasty, hatred of the ruling class, or expressing some language that may be bad for their rule, they may be conquered by some interested people make a fuss. During this period, some people used to check the words in the article and pick up the bad words as a kind of credit. Therefore, with the exception of a very small number of incidents, most of them are caused by some people's chasing after others, leading to tragedies, which is purely injustice.

Wang Yuanqi was twenty-eight years old, and was admitted as a Jinshi in the 9th year of Kangxi. He has served as the examiner of the Shuntian Township Examination and served as the county magistrate for four years. He has written to the court for tax reduction and exemption many times during his tenure. He has outstanding political achievements and deep popular support. Later, he was specially assigned to work in the South Study Room, serving as a Bachelor of Attendant, Zhan Shi, and Zhan Shi, mainly responsible for the compilation of "Peiwenzhai Calligraphy and Painting Book" and so on [3]. In the early Qing Dynasty, Wang Shimin and Wang Jian were mainly paintings by Lingu people. Wang Yuanqi's paintings were taught by these two people. The style of painting was basically the same as them, especially the copying of Huang Gongwang's paintings during the Song and Yuan Dynasties. Wang Yuanqi's paintings were excellent, and he was loved and trusted by the emperor at that time. "The king is like a tiger." Wang Yuanqi, who is next to the ruler, also knows this truth. Whether it is painting or essay, he believes that the rules are better, and confucianism has penetrated into his essence.

Although Wang Yuanqi's early works were relatively good, they were not favored by people of the time because of too many copying elements. The reason why he became one of the four kings in the early Qing Dynasty, perhaps what the rulers fancy is that he is well-behaved and abides by confucianism. On the one hand, the ruler can have a certain warning effect on the world through the paintings of Wang Yuanqi, and serve as an example to the literati and ink scholars who work at the same work. At the same time, they can also guide the people's thinking direction by appreciating his paintings. Therefore, there were many people who studied his style of painting at that time, and gradually formed the "Loudong School", which belonged to the orthodox school at that time. What is orthodoxy? It is beneficial and helpful to the ruling class, leading the trend of an era, and gaining the approval of the ruler is orthodox. This is also part of the reason for Wang Yuanqi's depression, and he has to paint in order to cater to Shangyi. On the other hand, Wang Yuanqi's accumulation of techniques in his youth has not reached a high level, unable to create a painting of his own independently, and cannot be broken by the limitations of technique and thought. Although his paintings are excellent, they are blindly ancient and lack their true feelings. His copying is also mainly to learn the techniques of the ancients, but he failed to learn the spirit of the painting.

Imitation does not mean copying, imitating ancient paintings, nor blindly cloning the consistency of their paintings, and does not require a template to be carved out. Expressing one's own emotions, learning the techniques of the ancients, showing the contemporary spiritual outlook, jumping out of the thinking of the ancients with the board of the ancients, and original creations from the heart are the foundation of the writing.

### 3. High imitation

"High imitation" is a deliberate imitation, which is close to the genuine product and has a high "gold content." For a long time, people have a bit of a deviation from the concept of high imitation calligraphy and painting. Most people think that high imitations are fakes and fake paintings. In fact, it is not the case. If there is no high imitation, how to reflect the value of real paintings. There is black, there is white, and it is pure white because of the black color. High imitations of calligraphy and painting originated in the Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties. Printing had not appeared

before that period. Calligraphy and painting lovers accumulated calligraphy skills and painting foundation by copying authentic works, just like the Zhang family. During the Eastern Jin Dynasty, the works of Wang Xizhi, Wang Xianzhi and his sons were very popular, and many people used fonts from other people, and a large number of high imitations appeared. Especially in the Tang Dynasty, the "Two Kings" calligraphy was loved by the emperor, and the trend of learning "Two Kings" was formed in China, and there were more and more high-quality imitations. In fact, high imitation technology also has its own process of change. The earliest manual copying requires proficiency in operation techniques, excellent technical requirements, and certain requirements for the mastery of the immediate target technique. Gao Fang is actually a process of "hands-on" with masters. Through temporary painting, he can experience the painting mood of the ancients. This may be even more fun than words.

The "antique" of the Four Kings is a self-deduction in traditional techniques, with its cognitive initiative and creative initiative [4]. "Wang Yuanqi's Antique Landscape Album" is now in the Tianjin Museum. This 12-open landscape album was copied by Dong Yuan, Jing Hao, Guan Tong, Mi Fu, Zhao Lingrong, Li Cheng, Zhao Meng, Ni Zan and Huang. Song and Yuan masters such as Gongwang, Wu Zhen, Gao Kegong, Wang Meng, etc. The political career Wang Yuanqi and the art of painting are mutually exclusive. On the one hand, he has made achievements in politics. On the other hand, he has made further research on the "antique" of painting, which eventually prompted him to temper his skills in imitation and be creative and innovative in imitation, gradually exceed one's own will.

#### **4. Innovation**

Wang Yuanqi's paintings are not limited to antiques, they are more ancient. Mainly manifested in the following aspects:

##### **4.1 Composition**

Dong Qichang, a great painter and calligrapher of the Ming Dynasty, believed that "everything that paints landscapes must be clearly separated, and the division of strokes is the outline of the outline. There is a distinction between a painting and a paragraph, and if it is clear, the painting is more than half of the thoughts." The composition is the most important element of Chinese landscape painting. The quality of the composition is the key to the success or failure of a painting. Later generations said that Wang Shimin inherited Dong's mantle and accepted this view in its entirety. While Wang Yuanqi learned from Wang Shimin, he was naturally influenced by this view. It's just that Wang Yuanqi is different from Wang Shimin. He didn't accept it entirely, but on this basis, he gradually had his own ideas, inherited and developed more [5]. Therefore, the structure in paintings of Wang Yuanqi is still mainly ancient, there are many composition methods, and various composition rules have certain requirements. The composition form can be selected according to the needs of the screen. For example, his painting "Songxi Mountain Pavilion" uses method of Wang Meng to draw clouds in the mountains. The pine forest mountain pavilion is full of mountain ranges. The composition of the whole work is composed of four corners and the center, forming an irregular ellipse. "Floating Mountains and Warm Cui Tu" can be described as a fine piece of Wang Yuanqi's works. Its magnificent composition and exquisite depiction have already seen its unique skill.

##### **4.2 Pen and ink**

Wang Yuanqi has learned from many people in the field of painting, and on the basis of inheriting the mantle of Dong Qichang and Huang Gongwang, his brush and ink techniques are integrated, antique "and new ideas", forming a unique painting style.

The infinite changes in brush and ink are pursued by painters of various dynasties. The ink color reflects the weight of the brush strokes, and the ink color expresses the texture. For example, Wang Yuanqi's "Antique Landscape Pictures" mainly imitated Huang Gongwang's brushwork, with elegant brushwork. Although his paintings have a certain basis in pen and ink, they generally seem quite satisfactory.

Wang Yuanqi believes that the independence of brush and ink is the essence of painting. What he values is not the specific scenery in the painting, but the aesthetic value of brush and ink in depicting hills and gully, that is, the performance of brush and ink in the painting. For example, the shade of pen and ink. The beauty of interest brought about by the change of ink color is an important content of the expression of landscape painting. Wang Yuanqi's use of brush and ink in landscape paintings is more

visualized, and the use of ink to explore the beauty of structure is also a sublimation of the structure of the combination of water, trees and mountains in Chinese landscape paintings. When Kangxi visited the South Study Room, he once ordered Wang Yuanqi to paint on the spot. The reward poem goes: "Draw pictures and keep them for future generations to see." Wang Yuanqixi used a dry pen to burn the ink and used the pen to calm down.

### 4.3 Color

Chinese painting is very particular about the use of color. As an artist in Chinese painting, Wang Yuanqi believes that the use of color is as important as composition and brushwork. He once said: "The method of coloring in a painting is no different from using ink. As far as heat is concerned, color is not taken, but breath is taken. Therefore, there is color in ink, and ink in color here [6]." The coloring of Wang Yuanqi's paintings is also more unique, sometimes red and green are used, and sometimes only light ochre is used for baking and dyeing. "Early Spring in the Mountains" is a shallow crimson work painted by Wang Yuanqi, whose brushwork is based on Huang Gongwang. Paint small bridges, flowing water, mountain dwellings, peaks and mountains, and spring scenery. The mountain rocks are stained with ochre, partially green and earth red, which enhances the mottled feeling of the color. "Flowers and Willows in Jiangcun Village" is one of Wang Yuanqi's more classic works. The whole painting is colored on paper. It depicts the flowers and willows on the spring river and the rural cottages. It borrows a little from Zhao Danian's painting method. The beauty is full of vigor and personal characteristics. "The Collection of Chinese Paintings" once commented on Wang Yuanqi's use of color: "Yu Dazhi is light and crimson, especially unique, familiar and not sweet, raw and not astringent, light and thick, solid and clear, the air of the scroll is full of ink outside."

In traditional Chinese painting, the painter shows its characteristics due to the difference in color. The color looks simple, but it contains a lot of contrast relationships, such as the contrast of black and white, the contrast of warm and cold colors, and so on. The color harmony in the pursuit of the unification of the picture is a summary of experience drawn from copying a piece of predecessor's work. Wang Yuanqi and his predecessors' color skills are not limited to those of the predecessors. They pay attention to colors but are not limited to colors. They use the configuration of colors to express the feelings hidden in the painter's heart; those who can go in and those who come out have formed themselves distinctive artistic characteristics.

## 5. Conclusion

As one of the four kings in the early Qing Dynasty, Wang Yuanqi was able to make antiques and create new ideas, forming a unique painting style, which can be attributed to his "imitation" complex. After mastering certain painting skills, he can continue to copy ancient paintings. It is not easy. There may be two reasons: On the one hand, he is a literati and official, staying beside the ruler for a long time, influenced by the social environment at that time, as a painter serving the ruling class, limiting his imagination. On the other hand, his copying is to learn from the strengths of others, to maximize his strengths and avoid weaknesses in the shortest time and space, to lay a solid foundation for his own creation, and ultimately to form his own style. Wang Yuanqi's ability to go in and out the spirit is worth learning for future generations. Zheng Banqiao once said "Seven points to learn, three points to throw"; Li Keran also once said "Use the greatest courage to enter, and use the greatest courage to fight out." "These all indicate that imitation is a process that learners have to go through, and imitation is of great significance to learners.

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