

# Analysis of “Crazy Aesthetics” of Painting in Ming Dynasty

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**Abstract:** After the long-term ethnic confrontation and the havoc that occurred during the Southern Song, Liao, Jin, Xia, Mongolian, and Yuan Dynasties, the rulers of the early Ming Dynasty once devoted themselves to the revival of the long-decayed Royal Academy of Painting and intended to reproduce the grand occasion of the former academy-style painting, to enjoy being the royal family. For a period of time, the painting in the early Ming Dynasty was shrouded in the retro style of academy style painting. From the perspective of region and time, the academy-style painting system represented by Liu, Li, Ma, and Xia in the Southern Song Dynasty was undoubtedly the most easily accepted and learned painting style from the psychological and cognitive levels of painters in the early Ming Dynasty. However, from the mid-Ming Dynasty, the painting style of the Zhejiang school gradually became wild, and its painters often regarded themselves as "immortal drunk", and their brush and ink language were indulgent and unruly, like a golden snake dancing wildly. Pursue the ink splash effect mixed with ink and wash, and even show the sense of power and speed of sweeping and swaying freely like a performance in front of people. And its form also began to be rude and frugal, resulting in the slander of "mad monster" and "crazy evil school". The "madness" of the painters during this period was not an accidental case, but an artistic phenomenon that was precisely opposed to the Wumen literati painting school that began to occupy the mainstream of the painting circle in the middle of the Ming Dynasty. The artistic pursuit and the aesthetic tendency of the orthodox social mainstream thinking. Under the unprecedented strengthening of centralization during the Ming Dynasty and the ideological control of the eight-legged scholars, the art world was full of "madness". This phenomenon makes people think about the two-way interaction between the times and art, and whether mainstream art can reflect mainstream consciousness. form? Between "cult" and "orthodox", who can better express the demands of an era? I hope to have a preliminary discussion here.

**Keywords:** Zhejiang school; landscape painting; freehand brushwork; Ming Dynasty society; brush and ink

## 1. Introduction

The academy-style painting in the early Ming Dynasty, as the starting and transitional stage of the painting in the whole Ming and Qing Dynasties, was led and completed by the painters of the Zhejiang School. From the perspective of geographical location and historical development sequence, Qiantang, Yongjia, Kuaiji, Shanyin, and other places are important distribution centers for paintings in the Southern Song Dynasty and Yuan Dynasty. The selection of painters is either from folk painters (such as Zhao Yuan, Sheng Zhan, Zhou Wei) or the remnants of the previous dynasty (such as Xu Ben, Zhang Yu, etc.) or the scholar class (such as Wang Meng, Wang Fu, etc.) The backgrounds are different, so the various class contradictions contained in the social order in the early Ming Dynasty were more or less concentrated in the painting creation of this period through the subjectivity of individual art; On another level, Nanjing was established as the capital in the early Ming Dynasty, and a large number of Han people moved south during the Southern Song Dynasty and the Mongolian and Yuan Dynasties. The economy and culture of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Fujian were relatively prosperous. At that time, court painters mainly came from Zhejiang and Jiangsu, but Jiangsu was originally Zhu Yuanzhang's old rival at the end of the Yuan Dynasty. The base of the warlord Zhang Shicheng, Jiangsu painters is mostly influenced by Zhang Shicheng. Therefore, under Zhu Yuanzhang's character of "hungry guessing is easy to kill" and the policy of "suspicious people use them, and people should be suspicious when they are hired", Jiangsu painters are either "sit at the desk and obey the law" or At the same time, the Ming Dynasty also opened the "first" for the highest ruling class to directly "act" on the painter. For a time, all the painters from Jiangsu in the palace were in danger, while the painters from Zhejiang and Fujian were in danger. Painters gradually occupied the main body of the painting academy in the early Ming Dynasty.

## 2. The dissimilation of Court-painting language with the extroversion of painters emotion of The Zhejiang stylistic

In the early Ming Dynasty, the most notable feature of Zhejiang-style landscape painting in terms of form was the development of freehand brushwork and lyricism. Compared with the Song and Song Dynasties, the literati painting of the Yuan Dynasty developed to the Ming Dynasty. The function of entertainment has been greatly increased, and the contingency and improvisation elements in the creation have been improved, which in turn has led to the rapid development of the freehand brushwork technique of painting in the Ming Dynasty. The painters of the Zhejiang School tried their best to reconstruct the brush and ink language of the Southern Song Dynasty's landscapes, and to a large extent developed the strong, pungent, and slightly unrestrained brush and ink of the Southern Song Dynasty to a new level. It can be said that the painters of the academy at this time were conscious He expresses the expressive power of the brush and ink itself, and intentionally highlights the form of the brush and ink as an independent picture image, infiltrating and expressing more of his subjective consciousness and personal complex.

In terms of form, the broad brushstrokes of Ma and Xia in the Southern Song Dynasty highlighted the texture of the rocks, and the wedge-shaped strokes of different lengths were used to depict the rocky structure of the mountains, and the whole area was covered with ink and wash to highlight the yin and yang to the back of the lining. The scene of cloudy, sunny, rainy, snowy, smoky, and hazy clouds appears to increase its sense of vastness. It can be said that this expression has both shaped the physical structure, creating a spatial atmosphere and lyricism. On this basis, to meet the needs of the rulers of the early Ming Dynasty to express the "prosperous mountains and rivers", the academy-style (former Zhejiang school) painters further selected the whole territory composition of Guo Xi and Li Cheng of the Northern Song Dynasty and also used Guo and Li Zhi's muddy water and scrolls. Techniques such as cloud and chapped enhance the effect of the mutual penetration of water and ink in the picture to achieve the effect of ink mixing.

This point can still be fully demonstrated in the courtyard paintings of the early Ming Dynasty, such as Ding Yefu, Sun Junze, Chen Junzuo, and others, as well as some works by Dai Jin Gongzhi, which still do not lose the condensed and rigorous brushstrokes used in the courtyard paintings of the two Song Dynasties. Often mistakenly identified as Ma, Xia, and even Guo and Li of the Northern Song Dynasty. However, starting from the mid-Ming Dynasty, the brush and ink techniques of the Zhejiang School painters tended to be modeled, to the point where Wang Chen, Ni Duan, Li Zai, and others were "Beijing", the level of their modeling creation and the degree of skill training did not rise. Instead, it has made great breakthroughs in lyrical expression and improvisation. For example, Wu Wei was "drunk and summoned... ordered to take a picture of the pine wind. Wei knelt through the ink and smeared it with his hands, and the situation was tragic and tragic." "Every wine is in full swing, swiping freely, and it is completed in an instant, and the brush is like swiping..."<sup>[1]</sup> and so on, although there are few historical records of the painters of the Zhejiang school, the inscriptions are sometimes lacking, and the examples of painting after drinking cannot be cited, but it can also be seen from their names: Zhong Qinli: "Old God of the World", Zheng Wenlin: "Dian Xian", Chen Zih: "Jiu Xian", Xue Ren: "Ban Xian", Zhu Yueji: "Cloud Immortal", Russell: "Ink madness", Wang Zhao: "You can drink a few buckets of wine", Song Dengchun: "Alcoholic addict", Du Jin: "Ancient madness", Guo Xu: "Qing mad Taoist"... It can be said to be immortal mad drunkenness Everything is there. There are many records of various cases of borrowing wine to become art in history, such as Li Bai, Zhang Xu, Wu Daozi, etc., but they can be concentrated in the same art group in the same field in the same period, which is a major feature of Zhejiang painters. Under the influence of alcohol, the swaying and unrestrained venting seem to have become a major "pattern" that can best represent the expression of Zhejiang style's landscape brush and ink.

In terms of picture form expression, this "pattern" is first reflected in the processing of contour lines and structural lines. The Zhejiang School and the subsequent Jiangxia School stored the Song Dynasty landscape paintings in the "fading" in the stains and blocks. The contour line and the structure line of the style are fully drawn out, and the lifting range of the brush at the structure and the turning point is increased so that the line produces a sense of unstoppable vibration that is similar to drunkenness as if the brush stroke is peeled from the rock mass. and fell out of the screen. The same is true for chapped rubbing. The flickering and jumping chap line carries a kind of restless and restless emotion. Every time it wants to break through the shackles of structure and shape, it rushes in front of the viewer, forming a movement with its rhythm. Here, The brush was directly developed to the belly of the pen or even further up, and the ink in the pen was spread on the silk surface at one time, and the silk surface did not absorb water, so the painter followed the flow of the ink on the silk. The hills and ravines are formed by filling

mountains and digging water. In addition, to make the expression of this type of ink mixed with water more vivid, the theme of "wind, rain, and snow" has increased in the proportion of the number of creations, and the techniques of splashing and breaking the ink and splashing with large brushes have been widely used. Among them, Du Zhesen affirmed in his "Outline of the History of Traditional Chinese Painting", "(Dai Jin) ... very vividly depicts the scene of violent wind and rain, so that the viewer can not only see its momentum but also seem to be able to smell it. Sound can be called a painter who pioneered real-image wind and rain painting." [2]. This almost exaggerated brushwork force, to a certain extent, jumped out of the original or supposed appearance of landscapes in the Southern Song Dynasty, and strongly demonstrated the conflict between the individual painting language and the traditional form carrier, which made the works of the Zhejiang School appear more and more in the middle and late period. The form of pen and ink that cannot be harmonious and lost the support of formal language eventually flows into the "hard, flat, bald, and clumsy" [3] that has been criticized.

### **3. The expansion of the theme selection and the diversification of the painting language——take Xu Wenchang 's Flower And Bird painting as an example**

Coincidentally, since the mid-Ming Dynasty, the freehand language of flower and bird painting has also developed rapidly and comprehensively, greatly surpassing the previous generation in terms of subject matter and form innovation. In terms of themes, in addition to plum, orchid, bamboo, chrysanthemum, and other traditional literati painting themes since the Song and Yuan Dynasties, pomegranate, loquat, grapes, crabs, pumpkins, lentils, and other human fruits and vegetables and dairy ingredients have also become popular among flower and bird painters during this period. The objects of expression are not uncommon in the writings of the Zhejiang and Wu factions. In terms of brush and ink form, the previous Zhejiang school style flower-and-bird painting provided sufficient preparation for the development of boneless, especially the ink and wash small freehand flower and bird paintings, from Sun Long, Li Zai, and Xia Zhi in Yongle and Xuande years to Jingtai, Chenghua, and Hongzhi. Zhu Zuo, Lin Liang, Lu Ji, and later Wang Zhao, etc., we can see that the academy-style painters can not only enrich the subject matter and content with precise shapes in flower and bird painting, but also in the pure ink and wash freehand flower and bird sketches. In terms of creation, the formal language of brush and ink and the ability to control materials can be said to be increasingly rich and mature. As a result, the formal language of ink and wash freehand brushwork in this period has been greatly expanded from the field of flower and bird painting.

When Xu Wei appeared, he pushed the freehand brushwork of ink painting to the peak, and his wild and unrestrained personality was rarely matched even among the previous Zhejiang schools. His legendary life history, his multiple personalities that are flying off the edge of madness, and his in-depth understanding of the fickle world and human feelings are also unattainable by other painters of the same period. Comprehensive training in opera, literature, military, and other aspects is rare even among the calligraphers and painters of the Ming Dynasty. As for the faction he inherited, later generations disagree. After a long-term comparison of Xu Wei's works with his contemporaries, Mr. Pang Ou, a researcher at the Nanjing Museum, said in his book "White Yang Qingteng and the Genetic Code of His Works" that "the academy-style Zhejiang style landscape painting techniques are rapidly changing. The use of brushes, vigorous line processing, and bold and dripping ink are all closely related to Xu Wei's freehand flower painting method, especially Xu Wei's so-called splashing ink technique. In the composition method of interposed questions and subsections of broken branches and flowers, Xu Wei has been influenced by Chen Chun step by step." [4]. In Xu Wei, we can see a series of genres and schemas integrated by Wumen Shen Zhou, Wen Zhengming, and later Chen Chun since the Zhejiang school of the freehand landscape painting style of ink and wash. However, it would be too much to say that Xu Wei's "following steps" in the schema were influenced by Chen Chun, because for Xu Wei, a non-professional painter, innovation and breakthroughs in modeling and composition were not his main focus. In terms of people and self-pleasure, Xu Wei is undoubtedly the latter, and his works with a large number of repeated themes and forms also fully demonstrate that in terms of composition and modeling, he is more "bringing" for my use, no matter what he is. What others created is still what he created before. What he wants to emphasize is the use of cursive writing in paintings and splashing ink to express emotions.

Although it is said that Xu Wei's paintings "are mostly based on methods and few teachers", and his teachers and friends are often also "Wu" and "Zhe", both his temperament and the style of brush and ink are similar to the style of the Zhejiang school, but the painters of the Zhejiang school are different. Borrowing wine to pretend to be mad, using idiots to flaunt his laziness, and showing off the strength of his brush and ink to catch people's eyes and ears; while Xu Wei is in a situation where he has to go crazy,

indulge in not spit and unpleasant, and use his pen and ink to spread the barriers in his chest, borrowing Poetry and prose are temporarily expressed in the throat of his throat. The fluttering of his paintings and the wildness of his cursive script are the same as his madness and his intoxication. There is no pretense, no arrogance, and no pretense at all. It is purely a last resort. , while walking in the realm where there is nothing and nothing, floating and unstoppable. It can be said that the Zhejiang people have feigned three generations, in exchange for a Xu Wei. Xu Wei has not woken up for a long time and asked for the Samadhi in Mo...

#### 4. Conclusions

Looking back and looking at the entire Ming Dynasty, from the four major cases in the early Ming Dynasty (Hu Weiyong case, Guo Huan case, Kongyin case, Lanyu case) killing hundreds of thousands of people to the Battle of Jingnan, from the abolition of the prime minister to the establishment of the cabinet, from the ban on the three provinces. When he came to Bagu, he was highly authoritarian politically, and academically dominated by Confucianism. From the middle Ming Dynasty, when the East and West factories and Jinyiwei disrupted the imperial government, to the late Ming Dynasty, when the eunuchs were in charge of internal and external troubles, the power class not only broke the old tradition of "no punishment to the doctor", but also carried out a direct purge of the defenseless scholar-official class! As a result, before the officials of the Ming Dynasty left their homes to go to court, their families once sent them off with a "mourning ceremony". It can be said that the high degree of centralization of the political system reached an unprecedented level in the Ming Dynasty.

However, under such a high-pressure system, a large number of such "geeks" emerged in the Ming Dynasty painting circle. It is said that "art is the mirror of the times", which is true, but we must know that the appearance of a "mirror" is exactly the opposite of what is seen. The spirit of an era can be displayed in a centralized manner through artistic works, but the artistic creation of any era can be divided into mainstream and "non-mainstream", but which one is closer to the real demands of the era? The Song Dynasty was poor and weak, but it created the most magnificent landscape painting in the history of China; Mengyuan and Yuan swept across Europe and Asia, and the most representative of this period was the dry and quiet literati landscape. The central authority of the Ming Dynasty was highly centralized, and of course, it produced the exquisite and exquisite "Honour Paintings" of the early academies and the moderate and elegant literati paintings of the Wumen and Songjiang schools. However, the falling ink of the Zhejiang school's "crazy monster" and Xu Wei's "floating" brushstrokes were also the most conspicuous and prominent symbolic images of that era.

From this, we seem to be able to feel the duality of art's reflection of the times, that is, it can highlight the mainstream ideology of society from the front, and at the same time, it can also reflect the most urgent cultural and psychological demands of an era from the opposite side. . Mainstream art and "non-mainstream" art bring a dual aesthetic perspective to an era. Just as in the Song Dynasty there were the mainstream masterpieces of Jing, Guan, Guo, Li, Dong, and Ju, there were also "non-mainstream" literati ink operas by Su Shi, Wen Tong, and Mijia and his son; Mao, Cao Zhibai, Shang Qi, Hu Tinghui, etc. imitate the fine craftsmanship of Song Shanshui, and there are also the elegant and quiet of Ni and Huang-ti. The scholars of the Ming Dynasty were under the shackles of the overall high-pressure politics and ideology. They could not get rid of their emotions in social reality and political life, so they released them through artistic forms. Through the degree of release, we can conversely infer the degree of repression of his spirit. From the responsibilities of the Zhejiang-style painters and Xu Wei and even later, we seem to be able to see the mental distress and confusion of the intellectual class of the Ming Dynasty as a whole. The "crazy" art form also precisely reflects the "crazy" oppression of the people by the society of an era.

#### References

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