

Chinese Landscape Painting

Confucius said in the “Analects”, “The wise delight in water, the benevolent delight in mountains”.

Chinese landscape painting became an independent style in the Sui and Tang Dynasties, and gradually matured during the Five Dynasties and the Northern Song Dynasty. Jing Hao of the Five Dynasties absorbed the magnificent and precipitous presence of the Northern landscape. In his paintings, “paintbrushes and ink were used, showing a soakage effect of water and ink”. The hooks and cracks are sturdy and steep, displaying a lofty, circular and mountainous presence, and that is the earliest form of Northern landscape painting. On the other hand, Dong Yuan was obsessed with the graceful rivers and mountains of the South. A quiet, innocent far-reaching artistic concept is formed in the overall composition, using hemp-fibre texture strokes to summarise the undulating mountains in a very good manner, and that is deemed as the earliest form of Southern landscape painting. Fan Kuan of the Northern Song Dynasty is the quintessence of the practice and exploration of Chinese landscape painting. Having lived in the regions of Shaanxi, Mount Hua and the Zhongnan Mountains for a long time, he was observant about the tiny, subtle changes in the clouds and mist, and the breeze and moon. He paid attention to the concept of opposite scenery, and was therefore able to fully express the powerful presence of the towering and precipitous mountains, and the bleak and desolate scenery of the old trees and flourishing forests.

Landscape is endowed with divine characteristics by the Chinese culture, constructing aesthetic connotations of Chinese landscape painting that interpret mountains as the moral conduct and water as the personality. From the perspective of materials and techniques, Chinese landscape painting has formed an aesthetic ideal of “presenting a soakage effect of water and ink” in landscape painting. From the spiritual perspective, it advocates the concepts of “fawning over nature by shape” and “a great tone has a soft sound, and a great image has no form” in landscape painting, establishing the philosophical ideal that “The great beauty of the universe is silent” in the development of Chinese landscape painting.

A night of rain at the mountain, cascades from the rocks Through interpretation by paintbrushes and ink, the imposingness and vigour of nature are transformed into a loft visual experience, which in turn stimulates people’s awe of the landscape since ancient times – beholding a high mountain with admiration.

Autumn of Danxia Great mountains and waters arranged by the thick ink can be considered as the usual style of the painter. This work not only has a real depiction of nature, but more importantly, it also has a monumental feeling of great mountains. That patch of golden autumn hue has enveloped the picture with a layer of warm tone.

Verdant Shennongjia An ancient, long process of geographical changes and a relatively isolated natural environment have contributed to the rich reserves of natural resources in the whole area of Shennongjia. The painter explored this place many times, and was deeply astounded by its boundless verve.

Golden Autumn of Xiajiang Since ancient times, Xiajiang in autumn has always been a splendid scenery that attracts men of letters to linger over. In the painting, the “lofty mountains and flowing water” imply an ideal state of life. “Golden Autumn” also symbolises fruitfulness and harvest, on which the painter has projected his insights into life and his wonderful aspirations.

Waterfalls against the cliffs By using water as the veins of the mountains, not only do “the mountains survive with water”, but “the mountains are also in high spirits because of the water”. This is also an artistic concept of landscape that the painter spends his whole life trying to achieve.

Landscape of Guilin The painter has achieved an intense dynamic effect when painting the graceful landscape of Guilin, placing the swarming peaks among the oncoming mountain ranges and stacking up numerous stalagmitic peaks for surges and shifts, similar to racing dragons and galloping elephants, which emphasise the motions, growth and rush of the high and far mountains, demonstrating the vitality of nature.

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