The Literati Exchange

Wu School Painting and Calligraphy Works from the Xuebaizhai Collection

Exhibition Introduction (Volume 10)
書畫酬唱引言

除了畫徵的始創人沈周（1427－1509）和他的門人外，這個繪畫的領域主要由其學生文徵明（1470－1559）的家族所構成，而一些來自蘇州當地甚至附近地區的畫家亦著名於文徵明門下。於同是活動於蘇州的畫家陸蠡（1470－1523）與仇英（約1494－約1532）二人則有些不同，他們雖與沈周及文徵明合稱「吳門四家」或「明四家」，而他們和「吳門畫派」畫家也有密切的交往，不過一些學者認為他們二人不屬「吳門畫派」，他們主要承繼了南宋院體畫的風格，但盡顯個人的才情及創意，使他的作品具有很高的文人氣質。於成化、弘治時期，沈周則是位職業畫家，而他亦選取了文人畫的題意，可見文人畫家與職業畫家之間也有互相交流及影響的情況。

「吳門畫派」所涉及的藝術領域多以自身的生活環境出發，因而有很多諸如園林、飲酒、遊歷、送別等與文人閒息生活息息相關的題材。是次專題賞識吳門畫派的丹青作品，呈現這些藝術家們的生活情懷，與及他筆下作品見證他們之間的深厚情誼。

園林饒賞

園林是吳門畫家開創生活為主體的表現方式，在園林的設計和佈置中都體現了藝術家們的審美意趣，而造園是園林之本，風景一泥塑的沾染。此外，園林亦是文人相聚的場所。文徵明在《寒林雪竹圖》（冊頁）中展示了文人於園林中的各種活動，當中也安排了其景觀風趣的石碑和布置了各種植物，引發無限诗意。作為「吳門畫派」第二代畫家的文伯仁（1502－1575）及文彭（1498－1573），他們的《園林十五景》（冊頁27）、《園林十景》（冊頁20）及《園林圖》（冊頁38）將園林中常見的太湖石演繪為書畫的奇峰峻嶺，於此而展開的園林氣氛恰合十分和諧。

茶會及茶具是江南傳統的風俗，除了文人墨客外，他們亦是文人生活中的一種雅事。文人們藉著飲茶與友客僧林丘壑各抒己見，增進了彼此之間的友情。由於這一風雅，吳門畫家亦多以茶會及茶具作為繪畫或書法的題材。文徵明的《煮茶圖》（冊頁11）記載了文人們的茶會，書畫（活躍於十六世紀末至十七世紀初）的《洗茶茶具圖》（冊頁37）表現了文人間共聚品茗的閒情生活情態。

歷史紀録

文人繪畫畫中山川，總會興趣細看其風俗、風景、所感的情緒，籍以寄託畫家的主觀情懷，或是以寫實手法描繪實景。沈周的《春遊圖卷》（冊頁3）正是在遊歷吳江之後創作的。沈周在這次旅行中亦創作了一件作品《萬壽壽川卷》，從其旅行中所見（書畫現藏日本東京國立博物館），與此相類的有陸治（1496－1576）的《草書大宴歌》（冊頁20）和《大宴圖卷》。陸治於一五三三年作了一幅《書畫大宴圖》，送給顧佐，書畫借祠堂一地及許多吳中歷史文化，這幅書畫其實應該與他翌年所作的《大宴圖卷》合為觀賞的畫作，畫作為顧佐著名收藏，現藏於蘇蘇州留世史博物館》。《大宴圖卷》描繪了祠堂「風流亭子」、「一塵千載」的景色，而這幅書畫表達了他個人的理想。
結語

如上所述，明代的蘇州地區生活環境優裕，因而孕育出藝術家們
磊礪和安祥的生活態度，他們能盡情遨遊名山大川，棲遲園
林，並強調書畫創作的恬靜功能，而他們所表現的處世方式、生
活情趣和藝術境界等均與宋元時代有很大的差距。這就了「吳門
畫派」開宗創始的藝術條件。「吳門畫派」雖曾一度在明代中期
勢力壯大，但到了明代晚期，繼承「吳門畫派」風格的畫家逐漸
轉移於表面的形式。而董其昌（1555－1636）的出現才再度把文人
畫帶向另一高峰。

撰文：郭慶桑
The Literati Exchange: Introduction

The Wu area, referring to Suzhou and its vicinity, is not only well known for its beautiful scenery, but is also a center of cultural activities in the Jiangnan region (south of the Yangzi River). The "Wu School of Painting" emerged during the mid-Ming (1368 – 1644). It played a significant role of passing on the already prevalent literati style of painting through a closely-knit network of mentoring of family members and students. Their close relationship, common artistic aspiration and social activities provided a pretext for much of their works. As a result, a large number of their works are visual records of gardens,旅行ogue, farewell scenes, etc.

Apart from Shen Zhou (1427 – 1509), the innovator of the school and his students, many followers of the school come from the family of Wen Zhengming (1470 – 1559). Others are from Suzhou and the neighboring districts. Tang Yin, (1470 – 1523) and Qiu Ying (circa 1494 – circa 1552) were also active in Suzhou. Although they are collectively known as the "Four Masters of the Wu District" or the "Four Masters of the Ming Dynasty" together with Shen Zhou and Wen Zhengming, they are not considered members of the Wu School by some scholars. The difference lies in the fact that they derived their styles mainly from the Southern Song academy style which is a different source of inspiration with the Wu School who represent the scholar-amateur tradition. However, since they were close friends of the members of the Wu School, their art is imbued with the styles of the scholar-amateur tradition through their friendship and interaction with the latter.

Artistic Subjects of the Wu School of Painting

Many of the subjects of the Wu School's paintings derived from the living environment like gardens, scenery around Suzhou, or everyday activities like literary exchanges and gatherings, travel to the mountains and rivers, bidding farewell, etc. This thematic exhibition gives us some impressions of the leisurely life styles and close associations within the Suzhou literati circle through the works of the Wu School selected from the Xuhaizhai Collection.

Scenes of Gardens

The garden is one of the most popular manifestations of the leisurely life of the scholars. Their ideal of the garden and aesthetics behind is revealed through the design and composition of the garden. It is also an ideal place for holding literati gatherings. Wen Zhengming's Cooling off the hot summer (exhibit no. 6) (fig. 1) reveals a corner of Wen's ideal garden and shows the various outdoor activities of the literati artist. Different kinds of plants and rocks are displayed in the garden to arouse poetic association. Wen Boren (1502 – 1575) and Wen Peng (1498 – 1573) belong to the second generation of the Wen family. Their work Fifteen views of the garden (exhibit no. 27) (fig. 2) depicts the composition of the Suzhou garden. Shen Hao (1586 – after 1661) of the late Ming dynasty laid out the rock from Lake Tai – a common element of the garden – into an essential component of the landscapes in his album Landscapes (exhibit no. 38).

Brewing Tea

Tea gathering or tea drinking is a popular activity in the Jiangnan region. Apart from sustaining health, drinking tea can also enhance the friendship among people. It constitutes part of the literati life style, and scholars usually share the joy of drinking tea with friends amidst mountains and rivers. Therefore, drinking tea is a common subject in the painting of the Wu School. Wen Zhengming's calligraphy Poem on brewing tea in running script (exhibit no. 11) records the tea gathering activity of the scholars, and Qian Gong's (active late 16th to early 17th century) Washing an inkstone and brewing tea (exhibit no. 37) is a visual representation of the joy of tea drinking among friends.
Record of Travel

Scholars are often inspired by the scenery of their travel and this is usually recorded in painting or poetry. Shen Zhou’s work *Spring outing* (exhibit no. 3) was executed after his trip to River Wu. He also produced another painting as a visual record of the scenery seen along River Wu during his trip (now in the collection of the Tokyo National Museum, Japan). The calligraphy of *The Song of the Great Land of Wu* in cursive script (exhibit no. 20) and the corresponding painting (now in the Charles A. Drennowitz Collection at the Museum Rietberg in Zürich, Switzerland) produced by Lu Zhi (1496 – 1576) also record the scenery of a specific place – the Stone Lake. In 1555, Lu Zhi produced the calligraphy as a gift presented to Jinggaun. Upon the request of Jinggaun, Lu produced a painting on the same subject the next year. The painting depicts the tranquility of the Stone Lake, and his aspiration is recorded in the calligraphy.

Bidding Farewell

Bidding farewell is also a common scene commemorating friendship among scholars. In *Spring outing*, Shen Zhou expressed his longing to meet his friend again after a brief reunion, and his Farewell by a stream at the end of the year (exhibit no. 1) (front cover) represents a similar theme. Shen Zhou’s cousin is departing to assume the post of a district magistrate, and the painting depicts the farewell scene of Shen Zhou with his cousin. Shen also wrote a poem on the painting as advice and encouragement given to his cousin.

Exchange of Poems

Scholars like to exchange poems or paintings within their social circle. The exchange of poems on *Fallen flowers* initiated by Shen Zhou and copied by Wen Zhengming is a typical example (exhibit no. 8). This is a collaborative work among mentor, student and friends. Wen had copied and produced many scrolls of the sixty *Fallen flowers* poems, and some of them are accompanied by paintings (exhibit no. 9) (fig. 3).

Incorporation of Poetry and Painting

It is a common practice for artists to inscribe poems on paintings. The content of the poems often coincide with the subjects of the paintings. Fan Xun (1736 – 1799) of the Qing dynasty (1644 – 1911) had observed that the practice of inscribing poems on paintings was initiated by Su Shi (1037 – 1101) and Mi Fu (1052 – 1107) of the Song dynasty (960 – 1279), and this practice matured during the Yuan (1271 – 1368) and Ming dynasties. This observation revealed that the incorporation of poetry in paintings was already an established practice during the Ming dynasty. In Lu Zhi’s two scrolls of calligraphy and painting of *The Song of the Great Land of Wu*, Lu expressed his aspirations to be free and to transcend worldly concerns through a number of allusions to past history and to legends of the Wu region. Other examples of combining poetry and painting in this exhibition include Chen Ch’u’s (1483 – 1544) *Flowers* (exhibit no. 14) (fig. 4), Shen Zhou’s *Spring outing* and Wen Zhengming’s *Poems on fallen flowers*, etc.

Conclusion

Nurtured by the surrounding beautiful environment and the wealth amassed in Suzhou, the art of the Wu School is characterized by the lofty pursuit and artists developed a leisurely attitude towards life. They enjoyed traveling and building gardens, and they reflected their leisurely attitude in painting and calligraphy. The artistic ideal and attitude on life characterized the Wu School is different from their predecessors in the Song and Yuan dynasties. However, the Wu School gradually lost its impetus during the late Ming dynasty, and it is Dong Qichang (1555 – 1636) who brought the development of literati painting to a new height.

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