

James Cahill and the Study of Chinese Painting*

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To pay tribute to the memory of James Cahill (1926-2014), professor emeritus of art history at the University of California, Berkeley, it is imperative that we reflect on how significantly he remapped the long history of Chinese painting from a global, verbal, and visual perspective. For over half a century, the popularity of his teaching and writing validate that Chinese painting, previously seen as either an exotic visual practice or a native art tradition, has become relevant and inspiring to both experts and the general public worldwide.¹ Therefore, 'with a distinguished company of pioneer predecessors, colleagues, and students,' Cahill elevated Chinese art scholarship to 'a point where it is recognized as a respectable branch of art history'.²

The secret of Cahill's accomplishments in the field of Chinese painting studies³ lies in a cross-contextual paradigm,⁴ in which he has not only challenged and thereby enriched the extant scholarly traditions in China, Japan, and the West, but also broadened the discipline of the humanities in general with the advancement of art historiography.

I

In his 2005 article 'Visual, Verbal, and Global (?): Some Observations on Chinese Painting Studies', James Cahill put a question mark after the global issue, indicating that at that time he had not yet embarked on the unprecedented enterprise that he would single-handedly accomplish in his final years—a series of

* The author would like to thank Miss Yi Zhang, Professor Jerome Silbergeld, and Professor Heping Liu for reading the manuscript and suggesting improvements.

¹ Gao Shiming, 'Ta shi Zhongguo yishushi chengwei yimen shijie xuewen (He made the history of Chinese art a learning for the world)', in *Xinjingbao (The New Beijing Newspaper)*, February 23, 2014.

² James Cahill, Preface to *The Compelling Image: nature and style in seventeenth-century Chinese painting*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982.

³ Due to limitation of space, the footnote for Cahill's writings cited below is omitted.

Reference can be found in his chronologically arranged bibliography at <http://jamescahill.info/home-1/bibliography> (last accessed 29 May 2014)

⁴ Cao Yiqiang, 'Kua yujing zhijian (A cross-contextual reference)', a preface to *Fengge yu guannian: Gao Juhuan Zhongguo huihuashi wenji (Style and Idea: an Anthology of James Cahill's Writings of Chinese Painting)*, edited by Fan Jingzhong and Gao Xindan, Hangzhou: China Art Academy Press, 2011, 6-13.

video-recorded lectures titled *A Pure and Remote View: Visualizing Early Chinese Landscape Painting*.⁵ Considering the contribution that this enterprise is currently making to the teaching of Chinese painting in the digital age - particularly when the online course is becoming part of the way art history is taught in America, China, and elsewhere around the globe - everyone who is interested in this subject will become more appreciative of the studies that Cahill embodied.

In a deeper sense, Cahill's online survey of the history of Chinese painting reiterates the major question about a comprehensive history in the past as well as in today's scholarly world.

Before the cross-contextual approach was adopted in the field, the paradigm of art historiography in China underscored the intellectual functionality of painting in a self-reliant society. Zhang Yanyuan's *Lidai minghua ji* (*Record of the Famous Paintings of Successive Dynasties*, prefaced 847), for example, set a precedent by saying that painting is part of the *zhengshi* (Orthodox Historiography) of imperial Chinese dynasties.⁶ 'Now,' Zhang argues, 'painting is a thing which perfects the civilizing teachings (of the Sages) and helps (to maintain) the social relationships. It penetrates completely the divine permutations (of Nature) and fathoms recondite and subtle things. Its merit is equal to that of (any of) the Six Arts (of Antiquity), and it moves side by side with the Four Seasons. It proceeds from Nature itself and not from (human) invention'.⁷ As a result, the unchallenged position of *shiguan wenhua* (the Official-Historian Culture) in the imperial era secured the structure for historical narratives of art, for few writings on the history of painting could swing away from Zhang's paradigm.⁸ Not until the early twentieth century did the study of paintings explore paths outside that convention. By merging into the modern scholarly practice (Sinology, art history, archaeology, anthropology, psychology, sociology, etc.) in Asia and the West, pioneers such as Chen Shizeng, Teng Gu and Huang Binhong, to name just three, re-examined their tradition within a cross-contextual paradigm. In other words, the study went beyond its border, along with the emergence of a global market for Chinese painting.

⁵ It was published, along with another series titled *Gazing into the Past: Scenes from Later Chinese and Japanese Painting*, by the Institute of East Asian Studies at UC Berkeley, USA, at ieas.berkeley.edu/publications/aparv.html, and officially linked to the website of the China Art Academy Library in Hangzhou, China, at <http://61.130.6.245/Lecture/>.

⁶ It differs from Giorgio Vasari's *Lives* (first edition in 1555, second in 1568), despite the fact that both combined a biographical approach to the history of art within a theoretical framework.

⁷ William Acker, *Some T'ang and pre-T'ang texts on Chinese painting, translated and annotated*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1954, 61.

⁸ Zaixin Hong, 'Gudai huaxueshi de chaowending jiegou — *Lidai minghua ji qianxi* (The super-stable structure of ancient painting historiography — a preliminary study of *Record of the Famous Paintings of Successive Dynasties*)', *Xin Meishu* (*New Arts*), 3, 1987, 44-47.

Modern Western art historiography, on the other hand, developed new methods in an expanding horizon. Cahill's cross-contextual approach in his *Pure and Remote View* series derives from his incomparable experience, in his own words, as a student of three great teachers, namely, Max Loehr, Shūjirō Shimada, and Wang Chi-chien (C. C. Wang), who represented the great scholarly traditions of Germany/America, Japan, and China respectively. Thus began his career from the mid-twentieth century as a curator, collector, connoisseur, writer, and particularly, as a professor at Berkeley. His *Chinese Painting* (1960), one of the Skira series of Treasures of Asia, is still a favourite text for lovers of Chinese painting. His book series on later Chinese painting history addressed critical scholarly debates, eventually replacing Osvald Sirén's multi-volume *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles* (1956). The goal that he set for the Chinese painting studies was to let 'art enter history through the history of art' (1976, 152),⁹ thereby providing us with a visual avenue to reconstruct China's past.

The study of Chinese painting in the West, which Cahill inherited and developed to an unprecedented stage, is neither a mere translation of Chinese art historiography, nor a repetition of any Western practices. Rather, it reflects on and thereby develops several scholarly traditions.

Cahill insisted on his critical view despite the prevalence of other theoretical discourses in academia. For instance, he emphasised the tension and counter-balance between canon and anti-canon in his disagreement with Edward Said's 'Orientalism'. The Japanese and Western appreciation of *chanhua* (Zen painting), Cahill argued, is by no means a discourse initiated by Westerners for the purpose of negating the orthodox literati painting tradition. On the contrary, the cross-contextual difference signifies a variety of tastes and helps lead to a better understanding of the diversity of visual culture in China, Japan, and elsewhere in the world. Had the Ashikaga Shogun and Zen monasteries in Japan not imported paintings by Muxi and Yujian, among other monk painters who were denounced by the Song-Yuan collectors,¹⁰ the *chanhua* of that era would have been eradicated.

A big-picture thinker, Cahill's scholarly inquiries were adventurous. As was the case with Sir Ernst Gombrich, Cahill and his works also became a target for criticism. Cahill observed, this happened 'because Sir Ernst clearly addressed some major questions'.¹¹ Unlike most people who 'usually ignore or avoid' such questions,

⁹ 'Style as Idea in Ming Ch'ing Painting' in Maurice Meisner and Rhoads Murphy, *The Mozartian* eds., *Historian: Essays on the Works of Joseph R. Levenson*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976, p.152.

¹⁰ Ironically, as Cahill and other scholars noticed, ironically, such famous painters as Shen Zhou, Xu Wei, and Bada Shanren in Ming-Qing China alluded to *chanhua* in their painting practice. The author thanks Professor Silbergeld for reminding him of the complexity of the issue in question.

¹¹ "Some thoughts on the history and post-history of Chinese painting", *Archives of Asian Art*, LV, 2005, 18.

Cahill's open-mindedness and independent thinking exemplified the characteristics of a leading scholar.¹² Based on his comprehensive study of Chinese painting styles, Cahill deliberated on some of the universal issues in art history which were raised by his Western colleagues. These deliberations are thought provoking, especially to Chinese readers. Cahill drew on a broad-spectrum stylistic development of Chinese painting in his millennium paper titled 'Some thoughts on the history and post-history of Chinese painting' delivered at Princeton,¹³ in which Ernst Gombrich's famous claim was re-examined. According to Gombrich, only ancient Greco-Roman and Renaissance Italian artists had made the continuous effort in approaching the illusionistic world and achieving representational accuracy. Cahill argued that Gombrich appeared to have neglected a comparable development in China. In other words, when Western art historians applaud the expressionistic accomplishments of later Chinese literati painting, they ought not to ignore the fact that before then, from the tenth to eleventh centuries, Chinese painters had successfully conquered the illusion of a three-dimensional space in the representational art. Discussion of such an important issue led to the investigation of many other topics in art history.¹⁴

Diachronically, readers can see how a comprehensive dynastic history of Chinese painting could be composed and challenged by comparing Xia Wenyan's *Tuhui baojian* (Picture-Painting as Precious Mirror, self-prefaced 1365) with Cahill's later Chinese painting history series beginning with *Hills beyond a River* (1976).¹⁵ Synchronically, readers can view Cahill's scholarship as part of East Asian Studies in the West in the present day context of globalisation. These developments in turn challenge Chinese readers to rethink their own art historiographical tradition. Furthermore, regardless of art students' nationality, art history, just like history, to borrow David Lowenthal's idea, is also a 'foreign country'.¹⁶ What Chinese readers

¹² An anecdote illustrates his extraordinary character: all those who, like the author, are familiar with Cahill's office at Berkeley, will never forget his voluminous unpublished lectures and manuscripts put on a bookshelf against the wall at the right side of the room. All are welcome to read with one condition: they shall make comments, suggestions, or criticism on them. They are now also all posted online. This generosity demonstrates Cahill's acknowledgement of his limits and his willingness to listen to different views.

¹³ See note 11, 17-37.

¹⁴ For the discussion of Cahill's hypothesis of the 'end of history' around the thirteenth century, China from a perspective of world art, see a review article by Huang Xiaofeng, 'Zhongguo huihuashi de 'zhongjie' —Gao Juhan de Zhongguo huihua shiguan jiqi yinfa de zhenglun (The 'end' of Chinese painting history? —James Cahill's view on Chinese painting history and the controversies it addresses)', *Zhongguohua yanjiu* (*The Study of Chinese Painting*), 1, 2007, 116-125.

¹⁵ For example, Jerome Silbergeld takes issue with Cahill's assumption of 'The Yuan Revolution', see 'The Yuan 'Revolutionary' Picnic: Feasting on the Fruits of Song (An Historiographic Menu)', *Ars Orientalis*, 37, 2009, 9-31.

¹⁶ David Lowenthal, *The past is a foreign country*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

can take away from Cahill's works - through translations if necessary - is that the international efforts in the field have opened up new perspectives into Chinese art historiography. Cahill believed that younger generations will be inspired 'to restore the strengths of a newly-revived narrative, Gombrich-style art history'. His vision was for students from China to look at Chinese painting beyond their national pride. In other words, from a global perspective, Chinese painting belongs to the world.

II

James Cahill is the most original and most prolific author in the field. Students from around the world have benefited from his vision of *xueshu weigong* (scholarship for everyone) in the past half century, especially because his website <http://jamescahill.info> gives access to all of his papers and lectures, both published and unpublished.

This vision is best illustrated in Cahill's dynamic dialogue with Western and Eastern art historians. The congenial and independent spirit of Berkeley is where Cahill, a native of the town, drew his inspiration. His lifetime contributions to the history to Asian art won him the honour of becoming the College Art Association Distinguished Scholar in 2004 and he received the Charles Lang Freer Medal in 2010. Since the 1960s, the Department of the History of Art has included such great art historians as Michael Baxandall, Svetlana Alpers, T. J. Clark and James Cahill, to name just a few, whose writings and methodology of social art history have revolutionised the field. In conversing with these colleague-intellectuals, Cahill was always aware of both new and recurring issues within the discipline. With a foundation in the systematic study of canonical and non-canonical Chinese painting, Cahill tirelessly delved into the major questions of art historiography.¹⁷

Marxist theory, for example, played a critical role in the social history of art throughout the twentieth century, but the unstable political climate in mainland China since the mid-1940s obstructed the opportunities for students there to foster an independent school or methodology in the study of Chinese painting. Thanks to Cahill's teaching and writing, which bore no label at all relating to Marxism, this situation gradually changed. In 1981, he organised an exhibition of the Anhui Painting School at Berkeley derived from his seminar, with a catalogue titled *The Shadow of Mt. Huang: Painting and Prints of Anhui*. This effort directly inspired his colleagues at the Anhui Literature and Art Research Institute in Hefei, China, to

¹⁷ Suggestions of Western parallels can be found in Cahill's reference to Francis Haskell's *Patron and Painters* (1980) in helping edit *Artist and Patron: the Social and Economic Aspects of Chinese Painting*. Co-edited with Chu-ting Li, Wai-kam Ho, and others, it derives from the proceedings of the 1980 international symposium on the Eight Dynasties Chinese Painting held at Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, USA, and published in association with University of Washington Press, 1989.

organise the symposium on the Mt. Huang Painting School, with a special exhibition, three years later. From the late 1980s onward, Cahill invited scholars and museum experts from mainland China to his seminar on 'The Daily Life of Chinese Painters', which combined the strength of Chinese colleagues, who were skilful in delving into the Chinese written records on the subject, with the Berkeley approach to the social history of art. The fruits of such an international cooperation included *The Painter's Practice: How Chinese Painters Lived and Painted in Traditional China* (1994), which offers, for the first time, a thematic survey of the social components in the creation of Chinese painting. Its four chapters discuss the need 'to adjust our impression of the Chinese painter', 'painter's lives', 'painter's studio', and 'painter's hand'. By applying a more historically grounded approach to understanding 'how Chinese painting was made', Cahill refuted the type of mysticism towards Chinese painting that haunted both Western and Chinese narratives. As he points out in the preface to *The Painter's Practice*, the restoration of historic reality does not 'intend to devalue the creativity of Chinese painters, but to be more appreciative of their artistic achievement through the understanding of their daily life'.

Cahill's incredible memory for actual art objects through his collection of Chinese and Japanese painting featured in his analysis of Chinese painting style, and bridged the gap between the two art traditions, namely, artistic creation and art collection. However, when he emphasised the importance of 'visual argument' and warned about the risk of doing 'artless studies of art',¹⁸ he ran into the danger of negating what Chinese painters were urged to pursue — 'xiangwai zhi yi (meaning beyond the image)'.¹⁹ It is not just about the unfolding of aesthetical discourse, but about the refinement of a certain pattern of art creation and collection observed in Chinese visual culture. By shifting his research approach to art more as historical documentation than as objects of aesthetic value, Cahill went the extra mile in testing the effectiveness of different methods. In his application of the social history to the art theory conceived by the literati artists, Cahill might have drawn oversimplified conclusions. In that direction, the study of the external factors of artworks requires as much textual evidence as possible, and the explosion of databases of primary materials in digital form is revolutionising this research. Scholars around the world are making thorough studies according to the newly available literature. For example, in his case study of Nian Xiyao's *Shixue (Of Perspective)*, Cao Yiqiang extended Cahill's inquiry of the East-West discourses to the eighteenth century.²⁰ Responding to Cahill's study of artists' daily life, Qianshen Bai made case studies on the accumulation and cashing of 'cultural capital' by

¹⁸ See note 9, p. 146.

¹⁹ Cf. Zhang Qianyan, *Xiangwai zhi yi: Zhouyi yixiangxue yu Zhongguo shuhua meixue* (Meaning beyond the Image: The Study in Imagery of the Book of Changes and Aesthetics of Chinese Calligraphy and Painting), Beijing: Zhongguo shudian Press, 2006.

²⁰ Cao Yiqiang, 'An Effort without a Response: Nian Xiyao (?-1739) and His Study of Scientific Perspective', *Yishushi yanjiu* (The Study of Art History), 4, 2002, 103-134.

literati painters inside the elite circles.²¹ On the issue of art consumption, Heping Liu innovatively explored the role of eunuchs in the artistic life of the Northern Song Court.²²

An influential author, Cahill differed from some experts, particularly in China, in his ability to reach out to a greater readership thanks to his eloquent writing style, which was clear, animated, and highly readable. Without deploying jargon that could only be understood by experts, he established, for Chinese students, a whole set of vocabulary in writing about Chinese painting. Beyond the English world and towards the later years of his life, Cahill was delighted to see all of his major books translated into Chinese and published first as a deluxe edition in the traditional Chinese characters in Taiwan, and more recently as *Gao Juhan shuxi* (*The Series of James Cahill's Books*) in the simplified Chinese characters, in Beijing. He was particularly satisfied with the Beijing edition since it is illustrated with more colour plates and is more portable and affordable, which is vital for a general readership. It is worth noting that art history students in today's China, especially at the graduate level, are improving their foreign language skills: they are able to access an ever-expanding range of primary historical documents and image banks of Chinese painting; they are provided with more opportunities to take part in international cultural exchanges; they are well versed in both classical and contemporary theories of art history; and they are becoming more aware of visual culture studies. It is under such a changing landscape that they can learn more from Cahill's writings as a vehicle for dialogue with any aficionado of Chinese art. Indeed, from a verbal perspective, writings about Chinese painting can go beyond the ivory tower.

III

Painting experts in China have methodologically exercised two specialties in their tradition: one is textual verification, the other brush-centred connoisseurship. This tradition has claimed dominance over the course of the past millennium. To modern day museum professionals in particular, both specialties are revered as the core of Chinese discourses, associated with a sort of national pride. However, students of Chinese painting study, partly due to the openness created by the higher art educational reform, partly due to Cahill's example and promotion, have gradually become conscious of thinking visually from different viewpoints.

Brush-centred connoisseurship is vital to the Chinese discourse, not only useful to discern the internal relationship between the painting and calligraphy of an accomplished literati artist, but also to distinguish the unique individual

²¹ Qianshen Bai, *Fu Shan's world: the transformation of Chinese calligraphy in the seventeenth century*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003.

²² Heping Liu, 'Empress Liu's Icon of Maitreya: Portraiture and Privacy at the Early Song Court', *Artibus Asiae*, 63: 2, 2003, 129-190.

personalities of the established masters from those imitators (copiers, forgers, etc.). However, there is a catch. James Cahill warned that both the strengths and limitations that apply to such a visual approach must be carefully scrutinised. In the past, collectors from the elite society utilised this approach in dealing with literati art, which overshadowed the art historiographical narrative of the last six centuries. Nonetheless, the same methodology may not be as effective when dealing with non-literati painting, especially those by court painters prior to the Mongol regime, or those by urban artists during the Ming-Qing era, not to mention those by the Zen masters in the Song-Yuan China.

Meanwhile, Cahill demonstrated extraordinary vision, courage, and strength in challenging the text-centered pedagogy. He never stopped challenging the extant practices and theories made both by others and even by himself. Full of controversies, he made his 'visual arguments' from *The Compelling Image* (1982), to *The Lyric Journey: Poetic Painting in China and Japan* (1996), to *Pictures for Use and Pleasure: Vernacular Painting in High Qing China* (2011) through his invented criterion or classifications, which distinguish his works from the existing art scholarship. That love for controversy is part of his originality, especially when dealing with visual issues.

When considering Chinese painting, Cahill held firm views on an even more universal methodological issue. Unlike others, he never played down the value of directly touching works of art. The visual excitement of first-hand experience, primarily of the original works that he saw and personally photographed, was conveyed to his audience when he analysed the multiple-layer space found in 'the flying garment' from the Western Han tomb (dated 168 BCE) excavated in Changsha, China, in 1972-74. Fortuitously, he was among the first group of Westerners allowed to view and to photograph it in the Palace Museum (Beijing) where the unearthed silk paintings were inspected for conservation. In this he was like Gombrich, who wrote his classic *Story of Art* entirely on the original masterpieces that he had personally encountered. Certainly, the Gombrich and Cahill style of art history - with a long-range narrative, one not limited to discrete periods - has been controversial. Instead of a single *Story of Art*, to use Gombrich's book title, we have a proliferation of multiple *Stories of Art*.²³ In any case, in his video lecture series, Cahill taught us - particularly students in and from China - how to build up such important visual literacy.

Those who knew Cahill well enough would tell how they benefited from Cahill's unfathomed memory for images of Chinese painting and his generosity of sharing this gift with everyone who needed it. Keeping in mind the slide collections and photo archives in American art schools, universities, and research institutes, Cahill cared deeply that the same facilities be made available in China. In addition to donating his personal library to the China Art Academy in the spring of 2013, he

²³ James Elkins published a book under the same title, *Stories of Art*, New York: Routledge, 2002.

included his personal collection of 13,000 slides, which are to become part of digitised 'image bank' of Chinese painting, with the goal of establishing a Centre for the Study of Visual Arts in China.

Among all the 'visual arguments' that Cahill made, none is more provocative than the thesis of his *Compelling Image*. One of the most fundamental issues in art history, the relationship between 'nature' and 'style', as shown in the subtitle of the book, echoes what Jing Hao of the Five Dynasties said about the second pair of *liuyao* ('Six Essentials in Painting'), i.e., a relationship between 'si' (thought) and 'jing' (scene). Painters constantly adjust and modify the inherited stylistic patterns or type-forms in their observations of nature. The social environments in which painters live change how they adapt and renovate these patterns. For instance, in this book, Cahill put Wu Bin's landscapes, along with his contemporaries—famous and forgotten together—in the art circles of the tumultuous seventeenth century, and demonstrated the astonishing nature of their imagery and the extraordinary social drama which they were enacting. Derived from his 1970 article 'Wu Bin and his landscape paintings', Cahill dedicated the third chapter of the book to Wu Bin whom he insightfully rescued from the dust of historical misjudgement. One of the book's most controversial 'visual arguments' considers the role of European influence and the response made by Chinese artists such as Wu Bin, Zhang Hong, and Gong Xian, among others. Moreover, Wu Bin established his eccentric landscape style by reviving Northern Song monumental painting. However, for traditional Chinese mindsets, such visual evidence lacks reliability. One scholar of Chinese literature tried to refute Cahill's 'visual evidence,' mainly by murmuring that few written documents survive pertaining to the dynamic East-West dialogue of the time.²⁴ Instead of relying on textual evidence to explain the 'full variety' of Chinese painting, Cahill focused more on visual materials in reconstructing the context of 'how Chinese painting was created'. He was, as he asserts in his preface to *The Compelling Image*, 'less concerned here with what Ming-Qing history tells us about the paintings than with the reverse: what Ming-Qing paintings, seen in its fully dynamic complexity, tells us about the age, its intellectual tensions, and its adjustments to such profound cultural wrenches as the introduction of Western ideas by the Jesuits and the conquest of China by the Manchus'. Such a persuasive statement evokes what Michael Baxandall says about his intention in writing *Painting and Experience in the Fifteenth Century Italy: a primer in the social history of pictorial style* (1972). 'I want', elucidates Baxandall in a conversation with a Chinese friend, 'to 'instill' in social historians a positive message—we shall not only consider the art style as the theme of art research, but consider it as the historical evidence of a culture, and thereby enrich the

²⁴ See Cheng Pei-kai, 'Mingmo Qingchu de huihua yu Zhongguo sixiang wenhua—ping Gao Junhua de Qishi hanren (Painting and Chinese thoughts and culture in the late Ming and early Qing era—Review of James Cahill's *Compelling Image*)', *Jiuzhou Xuekan* (Chinese Culture Quarterly), 9, 1986, 152-173.

documentation on which we so often have to rely'.²⁵ Implementing Baxandall's thoughts from *Patterns of Intention: on the historical explanation of pictures* (1985), Cahill later stopped using the term 'influence'. He preferred to see the term as the Chinese artists appropriating, of their own volition, what seemed useful to them from the European pictures they were able to see.

On March 31, 2011, Cahill conveyed a personal view on his scholarly establishments as he signed for the author *The Compelling Image* with the following line: 'This is Hong Zaixin's copy of my best book—I can't write like this anymore'.²⁶ In reading the autograph, the author recalls his Chinese colleague's insightful observation twenty years ago: 'In the twentieth century the best book about Chinese painting is *The Compelling Image*'.²⁷ As far as the visual argument is concerned, this view is not far from the truth.

As art historians entered a 'post-history' stage, where the global relationships among countries have been dramatically intermingled in the new millennium, Cahill remained active in expanding the realm of visual culture studies. He continued to give heed to the functions of painting as they are affected by the demands of various social classes. He challenged the monopoly of the taste of Chinese literati in his late writings. His *Pictures for Use and Pleasure*, for instance, reopens the case for those professional artists who had long been neglected in the Chinese art historiography.²⁸ Related, are his studies of *meiren* (paintings of beautiful women), and his investigation of Hua Xuan's 'Eight Beauties' (1736) helps reconstruct its audience and define its commercial functionality. By analysing its special format and intriguing contents, Cahill demonstrated how such paintings were typically used for the decoration of brothels and taverns, and in most cases were not favoured by literati collectors. Fortunately, despite being excluded by Chinese connoisseurs, such genres were exported to the West in the early twentieth century and became reevaluated in the global market. An exhibition titled *Beauty Revealed: Images of Women in Qing Dynasty Chinese Painting* that Cahill co-organised with Julia White at Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive in the fall of 2013 celebrated such a triumph.

²⁵ Cited from Cao Yiqiang: 'Bakesendere tan Oumei yishu yanjiu xianzhuang (Baxandall on the current situation of art history studies in Europe and America)', in *Yitu de moshi* (Patterns of Intention) by Baxandall, trans. by Cao Yiqiang, Hangzhou: China Art Academy Press, 1997, Appendix, 166-7.

²⁶ Cahill autographed it in Honolulu, Hawaii, right before the AAS workshop on his video-lecture series.

²⁷ Fan Jingzhong made the observation as he chaired a panel on East and West artistic exchange of the seventeenth century in the symposium of A New Understanding of Ming-Qing Painting by China-American Scholars, Beijing, December 23, 1994.

²⁸ Like Robert Hans van Gulik, who broke down inhibitions in the study of Chinese social history in his *Sexual life in the pre-modern China* (1961), Cahill puts *chungong* (erotic painting), previously a very taboo 'visual theme', into a consumer system of Chinese visual culture.

Like *The Compelling Image* and all his art scholarship, Cahill's final contributions to the field, such as the *A Pure and Remote View* video lecture series, centre upon the visual argument, which continues to teach us 'on what to see, where to look, and how to infer ideas and meaning through pictorial form and techniques'.²⁹ The issues which Cahill explored from a visual perspective convincingly show a promising dimension of the field.

A distinguished art historian of our time, Cahill studied Chinese painting by using a cross-contextual approach. His astute interpretations and persuasive narratives are now mostly accessible online and translated back into Chinese, generating the ripple effect at a historic moment in the rise of Asia in the twenty-first century. They are not only critical in unpacking more universal issues in the study of world art, but also significant at a time when art history is replacing aesthetic education to become more institutionalised in China's higher educational arena (including the establishment of the Professor James Cahill Memorial Library, paired with the Sir Ernst Gombrich Memorial Library, at the China Art Academy in Hangzhou), in concurrence with the booming market, both domestic and international, for Chinese painting.

Cahill stood out in the long and diverse practices of art historiography. Continuing the Eastern and Western traditions pioneered by Zhang Yanyuan and Giorgio Vasari respectively, he conveyed a keen sense of history, resonating what a sixth century Chinese painter once meditated upon: 'the solitudes and silence of a thousand years may be seen as in a mirror by merely opening a scroll'.³⁰ In remapping the history of Chinese painting from a perspective of global, verbal, and visual, James Cahill left behind him an enduring legacy by epitomising a 'great dialogue' between himself and Chinese painters through word and image across the ages.

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²⁹ The citation presented by the College Art Association to Cahill's *Compelling Image* at the time of the award ceremony is reprinted on its back cover, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1982.

³⁰ Xie He, *Gu hua pin lu* (Old Record of the Classifications of Painters), in William Acker, *Some T'ang and pre-T'ang texts*.1954, p. 3.

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