

10A talking
head

Lecture 10A, Birds & Flowers, pre-Huizong
(Before dedication to Ellen Laing).

This will be the first of two lectures on Chinese bird-and-flower painting through the Song dynasty—this one taking us up to around the time of the Emperor Huizong in the late Northern Song; the next one, 10B, ^{will be} on Huizong-period and Southern Song bird-and-flower painting.

In one respect, these lectures have been inconsistent—well, more than one, but one I want to speak about briefly. I announced near the beginning that they would be heavily visual, without trying to deal seriously with questions of meaning and function, what the ptgs meant to the people who made and used them, how they functioned in different times and different contexts. Well, I've followed that generally; but I've also spent quite a lot of time talking about the philosophical system that I take to underlie Chinese landscape painting in the different periods. I believe I have things to say about that which aren't general knowledge, and landscape painting is the principal theme of this series. But I won't try anything of the kind for bird-and-flower painting. There are rich textual sources, in Chinese and in modern scholarship, about the symbolism of these subjects, and how pictures of them could carry symbolic significance. But that isn't a matter on which I feel I have original things to say, so I leave it alone. About the stylistic development of this kind of painting, on the other hand, I can definitely contribute a whole new account, which is what follows.

10A. Bird-and-Flower Painting, up to Hui-tsung:

(Dedicate this one to Ellen Johnston Laing, valued colleague, good friend, co-chair of my 1977 delegation; prolific, wide-ranging scholar; did fine work on early bird-and-flower ptg. Not same as mine, but all the better. At mtgs of Association for Asian Studies in Philadelphia in late March, session on March 25th honoring her, also reception with more papers on March 27 evening; I can't be there, but ...)

Back to T'ang, for stylistic-development account:

(What follows is based on a lecture given at Kyoto National Museum in 1982, see on my website CLP 6B). Attempt to construct a style-history for b&f ptg using ptgs that had recently appeared in mainland China, from which I had made slides.

Hasn't been done; Ellen Laing wrote valuable article on early b&f ptg in tombs etc.; good writing on Hui-tsung & his Academy. But: one of our best specialists recently wrote that in her view, ptg attrib. Huang Ch'üan (which we'll see below) belongs by style in time of Hui-tsung. When even first-class scholar can write that, we obviously need to attempt, at least, a Gombrich-style developmental account. That's what I'm about to do.

Requires looking at close-up detail images of kind this series offers, which is why it hasn't been done: distinctions I will bring out seen only in such detail images.

- 10.1.1-3 Flower, bird, and animal details from stone engravings and tomb ptgs in tombs of Princess Yung-t'ai, Princes I-te and Chang Huai, early 8th cent.

- 10.2.1-4. Details from T'ang wall ptgs.

Much of T'ang ptg is art of outline & color; this is generally true of b&f ptg also. Stone engravings, wall ptgs, exhibit use of birds & plants as decorative elements, estab. outdoor, garden setting for fig. Bird in flight: distinguished by type, color. ("Hoopoe bird!")

- Hunting hawks: heavy outlines. Drawing heavier in wall ptgs, to be seen from distance.

- 10.3.1. "Lady with Flying Bird." Fragment of painting from Astana, Turkestan. 8th cent. Same: outline + heavy mineral color.

- 10.4.1-7 Details from "Palace Ladies w. Flowering Headdresses" handscroll in Liaoning Museum, shown in Lecture 4A. 9th cent. in date?

Strong outlines + washes of color for flowers, bird, insects. (Woman at far left holds butterfly.) Ptg of peony on fan held by girl. Magnolia flowers at end of scroll: shaded color on blossoms.

Crane: linear outline of feathers and other parts, w. strokes of heavy color w/in these. Seem to shade from one side of feather to other, making them appear slightly turned oblique to picture plane, relieving flatness of design.

- 10.5.1. Crane named “Wind Dancer”, from set of “Six Cranes,” supposed to be copy by Emp. Hui-tsung after work by Huang Ch’üan, great 10th cent. master, ptd in 944 for ruler of Shu state. From old reproduction book. Authenticity uncertain, but striking parallel. Crane supposed to be dancing, spreading wings as if catching wind.) Argument: Huang Ch’üan may have inherited T’ang trad., based on literary sources.)

- 10.5.2. “Two Cranes and Bamboo,” attrib. to Huang Ch’üan, Ming copy? Purported “Hui-tsung” insc. Osaka Municipal Museum.

Huang Ch’üan, working in Shu state (present Szechwan) in 5 Dynasties, inherited T’ang traditions. Specialist in flower & bird ptg. Among many ptgs attrib. to him, most important is:

- 10.6.1-8. short handscroll in Palace Museum, Beijing, w. brief insc. said to be by Huang Ch’üan, saying he painted it for his son Huang Ch’ü-tsai, who was also an artist. Instructional ptg, giving models for various birds and insects. May be OK, but whether or not by Huang Ch’üan, early & valuable. Repertory of models for students, similar to:

(-10.7.1-3. For comparison, taxonomical ptg: Anon. “T’ang,” 100 Horses scroll. Palace Mus., Beijing.) Both ptgs spread out their images laterally over the surface, render them in clear outline manner, quasi-encyclopedic method of differentiation and classification. Process important to ptg of this time. Think back to Chao Kan scroll of fishermen, how it provides visual catalog of devices used by fishermen, spread out over surface. Horse ptg: based on long observation of horses, how they move, how they lie down and turn their heads and interact.

(etc. through details of Huang Ch’üan scroll; discuss as in lecture.)

Insects: wasp, depicted accurately, as though illustrating entomological treatise. All outline-and-wash.

Birds: something new: in addition to bounded (outlined) shape & color, fine strokes of ink rendering texture of their plumage. Not coincidental that this is around same time texture-stroke system being dev. In LS ptg.

- Sparrow: fine hatching of soft strokes that replace, or enhance, the color washes of T'ang style. Advance in naturalism, maybe kind of thing that earned for Huang Ch'üan the reputation for *hsieh-sheng*, "drawing from life." But all this remains w/in firm outlines.

Huang Ch'ü-ts'ai, Huang Ch'üan's third son: b.933, was Han-lin *tai-chao* under Hou-shu state in (modern) Szechwan. 965: came to Sung along with ruler of Hou-shu, became Han-lin *tai-chao* under No. Sung. Various honors. "Inherited family style."

- 10.8.1-4. Ascribed to him, old and fine: "Partridge with Sparrows in a Thorn Bush." NPM. CAT 16. No signature, but convincing attribution made in Hui-tsung catalog, this ptg (w. Hui-tsung insc. & seals etc.) recorded there.

Composition: seen also in tomb ptgs of time: rock-and-plants w. birds for main middle-ground group; and single large bird in front of this. Individ. birds match well enough Huang Ch'üan's . . . etc.

-10.9.1-5. Ptg of "Rabbits and Sparrows, w. Bamboo and Flowering Plants," from Liao tomb near Shenyang—showed other one, *Daoist Retreat*, in Lecture 5. Datable to roughly 3rd quarter of 10th cent. (etc., as in lecture: compositionally comparable to Huang Ch'ü-ts'ai etc.) Sparrows: outline + color, ink strokes for markings, heavy white pigment over it. Jumping ahead, to continue w. sparrows:

- 10.10.1-4 Attrib. to Ts'ui Po, handscroll in Palace Mus., Beijing, w. his sig. Not reliable; essentially anon. work. (We will see major, reliable work by him later, signed, dtd. 1061.) But why ascribed to Ts'ui Po? He was virtuoso, ptg in a freer, looser manner than his predecessors, giving birds & animals in his pictures more animation.

(etc.--show details.) Same presentation of variety of ways to depict sparrows as horse scroll: liveliness & diversity achieved in old way. Bird hangs upside down; another in flight w. wings outspread (old motif)

- Detail of birds: some use of white pigment, washes of brown, strokes of ink for markings, fine strokes for soft plumage. But these are no longer confined w/in firm, clear boundaries; washes & brushstrokes make up substance of bird, simultaneously defining its 3-dim form and describing its surface patterns. This new mode brings about great increase in sense of liveliness, lifelikeness; approximates better the way a bird is perceived by the eye: not set off from surrounding space, tactilely soft but also softened by mvt, by atmosphere, by immediacy of perception. Another

major dev. In portrayal of birds, which we can provisionally credit to Ts'ui Po, or at least to his period, No. Sung.

- 10.11.1. Album leaf from So. Sung period, attrib. to Sung Ju-chih, 13th cent. Academy master. "Young Sparrows in a Basket" Fine work of late Sung, whoever ptd it. etc. Wonderful example of how new way of rendering, with images of birds made up of unbounded brushstrokes, greatly enhances the immediacy and animation of the picture. Anecdotal event: young birds excitedly awaiting return of mother w. worms? (etc.--typical of So.Sung Academy, as we'll see.)

- 10.12.1-6. Returning to 10th cent. ptg found in Liao tomb: foreground, with rabbits; flowering plants.

Rabbits: fine strokes for fur w/In outlines again. Relatively crude, compared to Huang Ch'üan. Lilies: At some points, heavy mineral color gives substance to the forms, which stand out from the silk. Pigments applied over line drawing, obscures it; this may suggest new reading for term *mo-ku*, usually rendered as "boneless style," i.e. "w/o bones," color only with no outlines or ink structure. Instead, I proposed in my old lecture, it may mean "sunken bones" since character *mo* also has that meaning. (Shimada was much taken w. this argument.)

- 10.13.1. Fragment of T'ang ptg from Turfan region: hand of Bodhisattva holding flower. Traces of ink drawing of flower can be seen below and at the tip of the petals; elsewhere it is concealed by the heavy color pigment.

Most difficult problem in early b&f ptg: identifying style of Hsü Hsi.

He is other major flower ptr of 10c, always paired w. Huang Ch'üan, judged by most superio to him: *hsieh-sheng* (Huang Ch'üan) vs. *hsieh-i* (Heü Hsi). Concentration on this problem, and arguments abt it made by literati critics, has blocked serious study of early b&f ptg: I once said, in talk on methodology, .. etc. See Bush&Shih 126-7, Shen Kua on these two, etc.

- 10.14.1-5. Bring back: "Bamboo, Old Tree, and Rock" in Shanghai Mus. attrib. to him, already shown (twice). Not properly b&f ptg, but relevance to Hsü Hsi justifies introducing it again here.

Ptg distinguished by penetrating realism. Brushwork so subservient to description that one can scarcely speak of brushwork at all—as if came

into being thru some magical process, w/o human hands. (Like what Svetlana Alpers writes abt Dutch still-life ptg.) Combination of reserve tech., light leaves & stalks etc. set off agst darkened ground, & reverse, dark brushwork agst. lighter silk—artists shifts from one to other imperceptibly, w/o calling attn. to it. Colleague suggests resist tech., but this doesn't go very far in accounting for what we see . .

Details: reveal extraordinary effect of this manner of rendering by light & dark: one is unconscious of artist's hand, being instead absorbed into the subject: eroded rock, lacelike, tattered leaves. (Read my further discussion on how this might relate to recorded ptgs by Hsû Hsi in my lecture, on website as CLP 6B.)

Appears to be unsigned; inscription (seen by Wai-kam Ho) written upside-down in archaic script on tree: "This bamboo is worth more than 500 pieces of gold."

Hsû Hsi recorded as having ptd "thicket of bamboo; and as having played down, or eliminated, color.

If we try to imagine how his colored ptg may have looked, ptg such as this may give clue:

- 10.15.1-2. Fan ptg (not attrib. him), Peonies. Shading, 3-dim rendering of leaves and blossoms. Ptg is later, but ...

- 10.16.1-8. Attrib. Chao Ch'ang, early No. Sung, from Szechwan. But Hsü Pang-ta suggests it should be by close follower of Hsû Hsi, because it agrees in style w. descriptions of Hsû's ptg. I'll show it, but don't agree. (Attrib. to Chao Ch'ang not made until late Ming period, Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, who "pulled name out of the air." No relationship. Hsü Pang-ta's suggestion of Hsû Hsi's style to be taken more seriously; but doesn't seem plausible to me. Drawing doesn't suggest hand of major master at all: rather weak, tending to flatten forms i/o describing them sensitively—leaves turning in space treated conventionally. Not much sense of life & growth. Grasshopper better: maybe ptd by some specialist in butterflies & insects.

As we come to late No. Sung, must take into account: effect of literati ptg theory on b&f ptg. Briefly. Refer to Lyric Journey, opening. Problem of Hui-ch'ung (monk-artist, ca. 965-1017). Cf:

- 10.17.1-3. Anon., No. Sung? Landscape with Geese and Other Birds. Palace Museum, Beijing. Lyric J 1.3.

- 10.18.1-8. Liang Shih-min, early 12th cent., “Fine Snow on Reedy Sandbanks,” handscroll. Title by Hui-tsung. Palace Museum, Beijing. Lyric J 1.4. Reliable work by artist active in Acad. under Hui-tsung, who was high official, amateur ptr. Poetic ... cf. Chao Ling-jang etc. Title written by Hui-tsung. He is praised in *Hsûan-ho hua-p’u* for ptg that is “refined & delicate, not careless; disciplined, not loose.” Distinguishing from literati ptg? Poetic, in way Hui-tsung admired.

Lots of space, not much happening: bamboo growing by rock at opening (“delicate, not careless,” compared w. Su Shih’s?), a few ducks & reeds, other birds, spits of land, lots of water.

- Ending: w. his signature, deference to Hui-tsung.

This part of lecture ends here; second part will treat major dtd. work by Ts’ui Po, then Hui-tsung and his Academy masters, later So. Sung Academy b&f ptg. Download and read: my lecture, on which this was largely based, but with more discussion etc., as CLP 6B on my website; also opening pages of Lyric Journey on these same ptgs & problems.

10A-B
old

LS.Lect.Notes 10: Bird-and-Flower Painting

- - Flower, bird, and animal details from tomb ptgs in tombs of Princess Yung-t'ai, Princes I-te and Chang Huai.
- † - Details from "Palace Ladies w. Flowering Headdresses" handscroll in Liaoning Museum, showed in Lecture 4A. 9th cent. in date?
- - Crane, from set of "Six Cranes," supposed to be copy by Emp. Hui-tsung after work by Huang Ch'üan, great 10th cent. master, ptd in 944 for ruler of Shu state. Authenticity uncertain, but striking parallel. Crane supposed to be dancing, spreading wings as if catching wind.

Huang Ch'üan, working in Shu state in 5 Dynasties, inherited T'ang traditions. Among many ptgs attrib. to him, most important is:

- † - short handscroll in Palace Museum, Beijing, w. brief insc. said to be by Huang Ch'üan, saying he painted it for his son Huang Ch'ü-tsai, who was also an artist. Instructional ptg, giving models for various birds and insects. Early and valuable, whether or not by Huang Ch'üan. Repertory of models for students, similar to:

- † - Anon. "T'ang," 100 Horses scroll. Palace Mus., Beijing.

(etc. through details of Huang Ch'üan scroll; discuss as in lecture.)

- - Huang Ch'ü-ts'ai, his third son: ptg ascribed to him, old and fine: "Partidge with Sparrows in a Thorn Bush." NPM. Attribution made in Hui-tsung catalog, this ptg recorded there. Much in common w. Huang Ch'üan: (etc.)

- † - Ptg of "Rabbits and Sparrows, w. Bamboo and Flowering Plants," from Liao tomb near Shenyang—showed other one, Daoist Retreat, in Lecture 5. Datable to roughly 3rd quarter of 10th cent. (etc., as in lecture: cf. to Huang Ch'ü-ts'ai etc.

- † ○ - Ts'ui Po. Handscroll in Palace Mus., Beijing, w. his sig. Not reliable; essentially anon. work. But why ascribed to Ts'ui Po?

- - One reliable work by him survives: famous "Hare and Magpies," dtd. 1061, signed & dtd., in NPM. CAT 23, Skira 72, 3000 108.

(Bring back sparrow from Huang Ch'ûan scroll for comparison)

- † - Album leaf from So. Sung period, attrib. to Sung Ju-chih, 13th cent. master. Fine work of late Sung, whoever ptd it. etc.
- † - Returning to 10th cent. ptg found in Liao tomb: rabbits; flowering plants. So-called "boneless" style. (etc., through discussion of this. Really "sunken bones"...
- † - Fragment of T'ang ptg from Turfan region: hand of Bodhisattva holding flower. Traces of ink drawing of flower can be seen below and at the tip of the petals; elsewhere it is concealed by the heavy color pigment.

(Leaving out: "Chao Ch'ang" scroll in PM, Beijing.)

Problem of Hsü Hsi: other major flower ptr of 10c, always paired w. Huang Ch'ûan, judged by most superior: hsieh-sheng vs. hsieh-i. Concentration on this problem, and arguments abt it made by literati critics, has blocked serious study of early b&f ptg: I once said, in talk on methodology, .. etc.

- † - Bring back: "Bamboo, Old Tree, and Rock" in Shanghai Mus. attrib. to him, already shown (twice). (Talk abt it: lecture p. 11-12. Inscription.)
- Effect of literati ptg theory on b&f ptg: p. 14. Briefly. Refer to Lyric Journey, opening. Continue w. look at So. Sung Academy.
- ? - Signed fan ptg by Chang Mao, late 12c Acad. artist, in Beijing PM. Quote sentence at top of p. 16: "We are approaching here that end-point of preciousness in which ptg of the late Sung academy virtually refines itself out of existence."
But some ptgs of more robust and traditional kind were still being ptd by academy artists; will end w. them.

○ - Li Ti. Large ptg in Beijing PM. Only signed work of this size -Hawk about to swoop onto a pheasant. Cf. 3000 122: another.

† - Several signed album leaves by Li Ti. Two chicks.

† - Lin Ch'un, another b&f specialist active in late 12c academy. Small bird on branch of peach tree.

† - another signed leaf by him: close-up scene of grape vine w. insects. (bottom of p. 18).

○ Attrib. to Chao Ch'ang, early Sung, but late Sung Acad. ptg: "Branch of Wild Crabapple." Siren 140 (bad). Also: "Branch of White Jasmine." Skira 139.

- Ma Yuan, signed ptg of wild roses, PM Beijing. Line drawing (p. 17 middle)

○ - "Apricot Blossoms," "Peach Blossoms." Pair of album leaves, . One signed. Couplets inscribed by Yang Mei-tzu. T&V 7.34, Possessing Pl. 79-80, Lyric J 1.33. Couplets read: "Meeting the wind, they offer their artful charm;/Wet by the dew, they boast their pink beauty" and "Over a thousand years they transmit their seeds;/ Each spring they begin anew to spread their blossoms."

+ - *Plum Tree and Ducks by a Stream*. Signed. Sogenga 18. Cf. *Bamboo and Ducks by a Stream*, Cleveland Museum. Eight Dynasties 54.

○ - Ma Lin, Branches of Blossoming Plum, Beijing PM.

+ - Orchids, alb leaf, CCW col. Quote Soper, as on bottom of p. 17.