

On the Peach Blossom Spring Imagery in Several of Qiu Ying's Blue-and-Green Landscape Paintings

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Abstract

Qiu Ying's reputation as one of the Four Ming Masters, along with Shen Zhou, Wen Zhengming and Tang Yin, is well established in Chinese art history and continues to this day. His literati-style works have a delicate and elegant style, but it is his mastery of exquisite fine brushwork that sets him apart from other painters in the Wu School. After Zhou Chen, Qiu Ying dominated the scene in the Jiangnan region for twenty years, demonstrating the importance of his art in the development of Chinese painting from the 1530s to 1552.

The present article explores three of Qiu Ying's blue-and-green landscape paintings: "*Thatched Hut in the Peach Blossom Village*," "*Realm of Immortals at the Peach Blossom Spring*," and "*Jade Caves and Immortal Springs*." They show that in his later years, Qiu Ying combined Zhao Boju's blue-and-green style of coloring with imagery of the Peach Blossom Spring to create an imagined "hermitage" way of life. "*Thatched Hut in the Peach Blossom Village*" depicts an ideal setting for seclusion like the Peach Blossom Spring for Xiang Yuanqi, the eldest brother of the famous Ming collector Xiang Yuanbian. In the other two works, Qiu employs imagery similar to the Peach Blossom Spring to represent realms of the immortals. His method of depicting the cave entrance into the realm of immortals in both paintings is expressed in a way akin to Wu School portrayals of the Cave of Zhang Gong, representing a portal from the mundane world into a realm of the immortals. The peach trees and flowing stream lead to an opening, through which the viewer steps into a place of immortals. Progressing up the mountains to storied pavilions hidden amid clouds, the imagery of the Peach Blossom Spring is thus integrated with the theme of fairy mountains and storied pavilions. Figures in the paintings also play the zither to communicate with the realm of immortals in the cave. The treatment of mountain rocks in "*Realm of Immortals at the Peach Blossom Spring*" and "*Jade Caves and Immortal Springs*" is similar to that in "*Thatched Hut in the Peach Blossom Village*," with all three paintings belonging to the artist's later blue-and-green style.

Keywords: Qiu Ying, Xiang Yuanqi, Peach Blossom Spring, fairy mountains and storied pavilions, blue-and-green coloring