

New Approach in Court Painting in Qianlong Period- Case Study of Ding Guan-Pong

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Abstract

Ding Guanpeng 's "copying of the ancient [paintings]" (mogu 摹古) to a great extent realized the Qianlong Emperor's idea of "combing the likeness in Lang [Shining (Giuseppe Castiglione)'s work] with the style of Li [Gonglin]." Following the Qianlong Emperor's instructions, Ding studied the European painting skills with Castiglione, while at the same time drew inspiration from the examples of Leng Mei to synthesize the painting traditions of the ancient masters with Western painting.

The Painting academy at the court during the Qianlong reign showed a great preference for copying the ancient works in art production. This approach was most manifested in the juxtaposition in one single composition of a variety of motifs, pictorial idioms, and specific styles taken from different ancient paintings. Moreover, European painting techniques were also applied in these cases. Ding Guanpeng's copying of the ancient paintings thus differed significantly from that of the court painters in the earlier periods which often aimed at preserving the form and spirit of the originals. However, Ding took "copying" as a fundamental training process which helped develop his own work. This attitude can be viewed as a continuation of the idea of the "great synthesis" advocated by the "Orthodox" masters during in the late Ming and early Qing period. It also served as testimony to the influence of Wang Hui and Wang Yuanqi in the painting academy at the Qing court.

Keywords: Ding Guanpeng, Court Painting of the Qing dynasty, Court Painting during the Qianlong reign, Sino-Western exchange