

## **Tang Hou's *Mirror of Painting* and Reshaping Knowledge on Painting History in the Middle Yuan Dynasty**

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### **Abstract**

The present study involving documentary sources and surviving artworks attempts to grasp the mediating role of scholars in connoisseurship and collecting activities during the Mongol Yuan dynasty via an examination of Tang Hou's *Mirror of Painting* and explore the interaction between painting history knowledge and painting activities. The time and place of this book ranges from Zhao Mengfu to Ke Jiusi and shows how second-generation Jiangnan scholars such as Tang Hou took part in the process of shaping painting history knowledge in the middle Yuan dynasty. The focus of this study deals with an analysis of the contents in Tang Hou's *Mirror of Painting* for comparison with the origins of painting history, which shows that it was closely based on such earlier books on painting history as *Xuanhe Painting Catalogue* and also included additions for works that the author had seen. Tang Hou paid attention to the appearance of new painting styles, reflecting his awareness about the knowledge of painting history in the middle Yuan.

The study here first deals with objects that Tang Hou had seen, confirming this occurred between 1300 and 1330 in Jiangnan and Dadu. What follows is a further analysis of the origins of and adjustment to painting history knowledge in Tang Hou's book and how revisions were based on the objects that he had seen. As for landscape painting, Tang Hou proposed a "three new landscape styles" (Dong Yuan, Li Cheng, and Fan Kuan) grouping and described new trends in "colored landscapes" and "Mi cloudy mountains." In terms of birds-and-flowers subject matter, Tang Hou focused on developments in ink flower painting as he sought in his book to group Wang Tingyun and Zhao Mengfu

together, indicating a more tolerant attitude toward cultural inclusiveness with the Jin dynasty in the north. Besides having contact with Zhao Mengfu and Ke Jusi, Tang also interacted with Zhang Yu and Zhang Jing in art circles of Jiangnan, a relationship that is reconstructed in the study. In short, *Mirror of Painting* can be referred to as an important medium for painting history knowledge for the study of new trends in painting history during the middle Yuan dynasty.

**Keywords:** Tang Hou's *Mirror of Painting*, *Xuanhe Painting Catalogue*, colored landscapes, Mi cloudy mountains, ink flowers, ink bamboo, Zhao Mengfu, Ke Jusi

(Translated by Donald E. Brix)