

## **Invoking Memories of Annual Festivals: A Study of Pu Ru's Zhong Kui Images**

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### **Abstract**

Through investigating and analyzing Pu Ru's Zhong Kui works and tracing the three categories of folk Zhong Kui, literati Zhong Kui, and the contemporary/social Zhong Kui images, this paper attempts to clarify the social function of the paintings, the painter's life experiences of relevant annual festivals, and his personal artistic cultivation interwoven in the contexts of these images. This paper argues that the Zhong Kui images contain elements of collective culture as well as Pu Ru's personal and distinctive life experiences. As these images were being passed down and evolving through different dynasties, they integrated the divine and the humane, the high-brow and the low-brow, which influenced the lives of people. In fact, Zhong Kui images are closely connected to Pu Ru's past life experience in the palace. Originally, these memories were sealed away. However, as he needed to sell paintings for a living, Pu Ru chose to depict the subject of Zhong Kui. In the process of painting, the past memories were connected to Zhong Kui images, and the act of creation became autonomous. With the stimulation of cyclical experiences of annual festivals, painting Zhong Kui images repeatedly invoked in Pu Ru the personal memories of his childhood and the collective cultural imagination as well.

**Keywords:** Pu Ru, Zhong Kui, cultural memories, invocation, annual festivals