AUTHENTICITY AND THE COPY: ANALYZING WESTERN CONNOISSEURSHIP OF CHINESE PAINTING THROUGH THE WORKS OF ZHANG DAQIAN

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the Interdisciplinary Studies Program: Asian Studies
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts

March 2014

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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Title: Authenticity and the Copy: Analyzing Western Connoisseurship of Chinese Painting through the Works of Zhang Daqian

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Degree awarded March 2014

THESIS ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines conflicting attitudes regarding artistic authenticity and differing approaches to connoisseurship vis-à-vis the field of Chinese art and its reception in Europe and North America. Although this thesis examines both Chinese and Western approaches to the copy and highlights different cultural methods, this argument is not Chinese versus the West. This thesis displays how concepts are combined in the Western art field to reach differing conclusions about a painting's authenticity. Specifically, this thesis analyzes the art of Chinese painter Zhang Daqian (1899-1983) and the debate surrounding *Along the Riverbank*, a painting in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection attributed to 10th century Chinese painter Dong Yuan (c. 934- c. 962). Many believe this painting is one of Zhang's forgeries. The controversies surrounding Zhang's art and forgeries reveal diverging conceptions of art education and methods of determining authenticity and the complexities of evaluating Chinese art in non-Chinese academic contexts.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen lies the suburb of Dafen. Within its mere four square kilometer borders, Dafen produces an estimated sixty percent of the world's cheap oil paintings and exports around thirty-six million dollars worth of paintings.[1] Dafen's eight to ten thousand painters produce around five million oil paintings a year.[2] But it is not just the sheer volume of production that draws curious onlookers from around the globe, rather it is that fact that Dafen is famous for its paintings which copy famous works and harboring artists who are interested in pursing the creation of 'original' works. Despite the curiosity that many feel towards the idea that professional and academically trained painters would choose to work as copy artists, most Dafen painters are proud of their work. Whereas many critics in the West (Europe and North America) would describe Dafen's Van Gogh paintings as "fake," a "knock off" or "pirated," the Chinese do not see these works as negative, and describe them as original replicas rather than mass produced copies.[3] These original creations, as they are described in Dafen, are judged by the quality of the copy rather than the content of the work; a near identical copy will sell for more money than a poorly reproduced work where the colors do not match. Despite the fact that most of these paintings are bought by Western customers, the West is generally still puzzled by this copying phenomenon. The fact that this small town in China so openly accepts the copying of works and is met with

[1] Martin Paetsch, "China's Art Factories: Van Gogh From the Sweat Shop," *Speigel Online International*, http://speigel.de/international/china-s-art-factories-van-gogh-from-the-sweatshop-a-433134.html. (Accessed 4/16/2013), 1.

[2] Ibid., 2.

[3] Ibid., 7.

such success raises interesting questions about the role of the copy and its place within artistic discourse. If these works are knock offs or fake as they have been described, why are they so readily accepted and consumed?

The issue of authenticity in art, as well as, the struggle to identify and categorize copied works has been seen throughout art history and art connoisseurship. Western, meaning European and North American, connoisseurs' attempts to reconcile conflicting interpretations of copied paintings can be readily viewed in studying Chinese painting. This paper will examine conflicting attitudes regarding artistic authenticity and differing approaches to connoisseurship vis-à-vis the field of Chinese art history and Chinese art's reception in the West. Although this paper will examine both Chinese and Western approaches to the copy and highlight different cultural methods, it should be understood that this is not a Chinese versus the West argument. Rather, this paper hopes to display how these concepts are combined in the Western art field to reach differing conclusions about a painting's authenticity and the role of copied works in art discourse. Specifically, this paper will analyze the art and copies of famous modern Chinese painter Zhang Daqian (1899-1983), and the debate surrounding *Along the Riverbank*, a painting in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection attributed to tenth century Chinese painter, Dong Yuan (c. 934- c. 962). Many people believe *Along the Riverbank* to be one of Zhang's many forgeries. The controversies surrounding Zhang's art and alleged forgeries reveal diverging conceptions of art education, formal analysis, and methods of determining authenticity, as well as the complexities of evaluating Chinese art in non-Chinese academic and museum contexts.

Before embarking on a critical analysis of these differing approaches to Chinese painting, it is important to understand that Chinese connoisseurship is perhaps one of the most difficult fields in art history. Generally, connoisseurs are faced with the arduous task of creating guidelines or a rulebook for dating and correctly placing art pieces in their historical timeline. In order to create a clearer understanding of the historical progression of art, a standard measuring stick for determining how art fits within history is a necessary aspect for dating. However, this lineage is also a critical factor in the teaching and base for connoisseurship and artistic knowledge. Although this task is often a struggle for art historians across all fields, no where is the task of developing a historical lineage more fragmented or challenging than in Chinese art history. Faced with a host of problems, connoisseurs of Chinese art struggle to simultaneously create an art lineage while still lacking the strong historical background to facilitate this task. The crucial and perhaps most detrimental factors in this struggle are the issues surrounding authenticity and copying. Traditionally, Chinese and Western views and teachings on how to approach forgeries, the philosophical implications of copying, and also their opinion on the place of copying within the art historical lineage are so different, that the task of forming a more cohesive lineage and cohesive approach to studying these paintings has become a constant struggle within the field. Because the field of Chinese connoisseurship is relatively new to Western scholars, the development of set guidelines to understand and interpret these materials lacks general consensus.[4] Broadly speaking, the Western study of Chinese painting only developed in the early twentieth century and lacks the historical depth of methods to evaluate European artworks. What deepens the

[4] Karen Lang, "Afterword: Chinese Brushwork and the Well-informed Eye." *Perspectives on Connoisseurship of Chinese Painting,"* Jason C. Kuo ed. (Washington D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2008), 181.

issues surrounding Chinese connoisseurship is the already difficult task of interpreting aesthetic differences and similarities between historical time periods. These aesthetic qualities, difficult to successfully determine in any context, are especially troublesome in the youthful and controversial field of Chinese art history. Interpreting brushwork, composition, calligraphy, and inscriptions all contain a host of problems that are in general due to personal perception combined with the inability to come to a consensus on how these fields should be approached.[5] The connoisseur is thus tasked with possessing a tremendous amount of training in history, as well as understanding of scientific methods of dating a painting such as examining seals or imperial stamps designed to show patronage, inscriptions on the paintings, and a detailed study of the painting's materials; all the while understanding how these determinates indicate a painting's period style.[6] This process of dating works based on knowledge of a period's style while simultaneously expanding upon the knowledge needed to date the paintings creates a circular and confusing rift that highlights the difficulties the connoisseur faces and displays how vital it is that a consensus is reached to determine the process for dating Chinese painting.[7] Overall, the ability of the connoisseur to formulate a hypothesis on a painting's historical lineage is dependent on visual and technical evidence that is vastly complicated by the differences between Western acceptances of or combining of Chinese

[5] Little, 215-216.

[6] Jason C. Kuo, "Reflections on Connoisseurship of Chinese Calligraphy and Painting," *Perspectives on Connoisseurship of Chinese Painting*, Jason C. Kuo ed. (Washington D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2008), 26-7

[7] Judith G. Smith and Wen C. Fong ed. *Issues of Authenticity in Chinese Painting* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York: 1990, 8.

connoisseurship techniques, painting practices, and most importantly the role of copying and authenticity.[8] This struggle is readily visible in the art and life of Zhang Daqian.

[8] Lang, 194.

CHAPTER II

THE CASE STUDY INVOLVING ZHANG DAQIAN

A master of traditional Chinese painting, the paintings and forgeries of Zhang Daqian have severely limited connoisseurs' ability to create a more cohesive historical lineage. The works and life of Zhang Daqian exemplify the difficulties over authenticity, forgery, and intent. Zhang's art has challenged Western connoisseurs ability to adapt to incorporating a more fluid view of copying and authenticity, and showcases the great variety between Western connoisseurs' utilization of traditional Chinese teachings in their study of Chinese paintings. Born in 1899 in Sichuan province in western China, Zhang began painting at age nine.[9] Zhang quickly became known as one of the "most technically skilled and versatile" of the traditional painters of China.[10] Besides being a talented innovative painter in his own right, Zhang has been recognized by many as one of the last great literati painters and a master of traditional Chinese painting.[11] Zhang's early training in Japan became a critical aspect of his later success with forgery.[12] Zhang, like many Chinese painters, believed that in order to become a successful Chinese painter in his own right, he had to copy the works of great masters such as Shi Tao (1642–1707), Dong Yuan (934 – ca 962), and Ni Zan (1301-1374). Zhang produced copies for a number of reasons including admiration for a master, learning and testing his skill, and to

[9] T. C. Lai, *Three Contemporary Chinese Painters: Chang Da-chien, Ting Yin-yung, Ch'eng Shih-f* (Hong Kong: Swindon Book Company, 1975), 4.

[10] Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen, *The Art of Modern China,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 247.

[11] Richard F. Strassberg, *Master of Tradition: The Art of Chang Ta-ch'ien* (Pasadena: Pacific Asia Museum, 1983), ix. Examples of Zhang's innovation's can be seen in his splashed ink pieces; one of which entitled *Spring Dawns upon the Colorful Hills* recently sold for $4,466,667 US dollars.

[12] Shen, 20.

make a profit by tricking connoisseurs into thinking his work was actually the work of a master.[13] For example, he became such an expert on copying masters' works, especially those of Shi Tao, that his friends and art connoisseurs were fooled into believing that it was Shi Tao's actual work and not Zhang's.[14] Zhang took great satisfaction in pointing out when his forgeries were presented as the works of the masters. He took great pride in the fact that he was so skilled at creating forgeries that even the greatest art connoisseurs in the world were fooled. For example, at a 1968 conference at the University of Michigan Museum of Art, held in conjunction with an exhibition of Shi Tao's work, Zhang, a conference invitee, delightedly pointed out that a number of "Shi Tao's" works were actually his own forgeries.[15] A number of these instances exist in which an excited Zhang interrupted large exhibitions and conferences on Chinese masters to exclaim that many of the works were not those of the master but actually pieces created by him. Zhang was not just a master at mimicking one artist, in fact, his mastery of a wide range of different artists has made isolating his personal involvement in forgery all the more difficult.[16]

Despite the success of connoisseurs in determining some works to be forgeries of Zhang, his mastery of re-creation means that many of his works may remain hidden under a master's name, potentially for many years to come. Nowhere is this idea more clear than in the debate over the piece currently attributed to Dong Yuan entitled *Along the Riverbank* what many consider, if authentically created by Dong, to be the *Mona Lisa*

[13] Ibid., 35.

[14] Lai, 18-9.

[15] Shen, 36.

[16] "New Asian Art: A Synthesis of East and West," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 58, no. 3 (Winter 2001), http://www.jstor.org/stable/3269185. (accessed October 21, 2012), 46.

of Chinese paintings. Hotly debated for years, the best instance displaying the speculation surrounding the painting was the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art's (here after referred to as the Met) symposium held on December 11, 1999 in order for the key figures in the debate to present their cases.[17] The debate was separated into two groups, those who believe the piece to be a modern forgery (most likely by Zhang) and those who argued the piece is from the 10th century. James C. Cahill led the group that argued *Along the Riverbank* is a forgery and was seconded by Sherman Lee.[18] Cahill received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1958 and taught at UC Berkeley from 1965 until his retirement in 1995; he passed away in February of 2014.[19] Cahill was well versed in Chinese art and spent most of his career examining and categorizing Chinese landscape paintings. Cahill has experience in analyzing and distinguishing Zhang's forgeries. Cahill claims that *Along the Riverbank* is "a modern fabrication produced by the painter and collector Zhang."[20] His analysis comes from years of experience with other works by Zhang as well as extensive research on the piece in question. Cahill claims that the longer he spends time with the work, the more certain he is that the piece was created by Zhang and not by Dong Yuan. This is because Cahill and his "camp" often make the claim that while analyzing and studying the piece, the innate feeling they got was that the piece was off in some way, which points to its forged nature. His second,

[17] "Metropolitan Museum Holds Chinese Art Symposium: Focus is 'Riverbank' painting attributed by Museum to Dong Yuan," *Chinagate*, http://www.thecityreview.com/symposium.html.

[18] Holland Cotter, "On Trial at the Met: The Art of the Connoisseur," *The New York Times* (December 5, 1999) http://www.nytimes.com/1999/12/05/arts/art-architecture-on-trial-at-the-met-the-art-of-the-connoisseur.html?src=pm&pagewanted=1, 1.

[19] "People/ Faculty, Emeriti, James Cahill," History of Art Department, Berkely. http://arthistory.berkeley.edu/person/1781230-james-cahill.

[20] Ibid.

Sherman Lee also practiced many of the techniques of this 'camp" and also argued that *Along the Riverbank* was a modern day forgery. Lee received his Ph.D. in art history from Western Reserve University (now Case Western Reserve) in 1948. He worked as the director of the Cleveland Museum of Art from 1958 to 1983. He passed away at age 90 in 2008.[21] In contrast, the second group led by Wen C. Fong and seconded by Maxwell K. Hearn claim that the work is indeed a genuine piece by Dong Yuan.[22] Both Fong and Hearn were curators at the Met's Asian art department and their personal reputation as well as that of the museums was on the line during the debate. Fong received his Ph.D. from Princeton in 1958 and served as a professor of Chinese art history at Princeton from 1954 until his retirement in 1999.[23] Fong served as Special Consultant and then Consultative Chairman of the Department of Asian Art at the Met from 1971 to 2000.[24] Hearn received his Ph.D. from Princeton and has worked at the Met since 1971. He recently was promoted to Dillon Curator for Chinese Painting and Calligraphy in 2011.[25] Fong and Hearn supported their position with documentation and solid analysis of the piece, which, in their opinions, points to the genuine attributes of the

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[21] Bruce Weber, "Sherman Lee, Who Led Cleveland Museum, Dies at 90," *The New York Times* (July 11, 2008) http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/11/arts/design/11lee.html.

[22] Cotter, 1.

[23] "Faculty: Emeritus Wen Fong," *Princeton Faculty, https://www.princeton.edu/artandarchaeology/faculty/wenfong/.*

[24] Ibid.

[25] "James C. Y. Watt to Become Curator Emeritus After Decade Leading Department of Asian Art and Distinguished 25-Year Tenure at Metropolitan Museum of Art," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (January 11, 2011) http://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-museum/press-room/news/2011/james-c-y-watt-to-become-curator-emeritus-after-decade-leading-department-of-asian-art-and-distinguished-25year-tenure-at-metropolitan-museum-of-art.

piece. Two scholar referees, Robert E. Harrist Jr. and Jerome Silbergeld mediated the debate and offered a summary of opinions.[26] Harrist received his Ph.D. from Princeton in 1989 and currently services as a professor of Chinese art history at Columbia University.[27] Silbergeld received his Ph.D. from Stanford in 1974 and currently teaches as a professor of Chinese art history at Princeton University.[28]

Along the Riverbank measures 87 by 42 7/8th inches, and if genuine, would be among the tallest of all early Chinese landscape paintings in existence today; this is in comparison to pieces such as the Song landscape scroll *Travelers Amid Streams and Mountains* by Tan Kuan, which measures 81 1/4th inches in height.[29] Those invested in the piece as a 10th century creation by Dong Yuan argue for the piece's one thousand year old age, but those who argue it is a modern day fabrication argue that the piece could not have existed before 1950, stating that there is no evidence of the piece in any book, catalog, art show, or even any scholarly mention of it before the 1950's. Careful analysis of the painting's brushstrokes, style, scientific data, and images attempt to shed light on the accurate date of the painting's creation but much is determined by interpretation, subjectivity, and opinion. Understanding the factors that effect Western connoisseurs seeking to understand Chinese painting and create a comprehensive method for studying it: attempting to incorporate Chinese practices, weighing the value of authorship in

[26] Cotter, 2.

[27] "Department of Art History and Archaeology: Robert J. Harrist Jr.," Columbia University, http://www.columbia.edu/cu/arthistory/faculty/Harrist.html.

[28] "The Department of Art and Archaeology: Faculty: Jerome Silbergeld," Princeton University, https://www.princeton.edu/artandarchaeology/faculty/jsil/.

[29] Wen C. Fong, "*Riverbank,*" *Along the Riverbank: Chinese Paintings from the C.C. Wang Family Collections,* Maxwell K. Hearn and Wen C. Fong ed. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 6.

painting, the definition of authenticity and how it applies within the Chinese context, and finally the struggle with Chinese copying has greatly divided the field of Western connoisseurship in art history [Figure 1].

The schism over how to study this painting and what conclusions about *Along the Riverbank* can be reached highlights the conflicting attitudes regarding the incorporation of techniques into the Western study of Chinese painting. The debate over *Along the Riverbank* reveals two very different approaches: one defined by a more rigid, scientific study of the painting and one based on the more fluid interpretation of the painting backed by personal opinion and years of intensive study. Generally, this division within the field can be defined in more detail as the value of brushwork and aesthetic components of art in determining the authorship and academic value of the piece versus the incorporation of more Chinese ideas of interpretation of a piece based on some innate inner force or expression. This innate force reveals itself to the well-trained connoisseur in studying a piece and aids in process of determining authorship. This group understands that studying brushwork and documents is an important factor in artistic study, but they have moved away from the purely scientific approach of the first group and into what can be considered a more forgiving and versatile method of study that in many ways melds more easily with the Chinese version of connoisseurship. This group utilizes the Chinese practice of feeling the inner nature of the painting that arises out of the knowledge of the technical aspects of Chinese painting and gives the connoisseur an innate understanding of what the painting and the artist is trying to convey. Laying out differences in art education, formal analysis techniques, and the role of interpreting brushwork as they arise within the debate over *Along the Riverbank*, will all work to showcase the divide between

Western connoisseurs over how to study Chinese painting and what Chinese techniques should or should not be incorporated to facilitate the analysis of these works.

Figure 1: *Along the Riverbank,* attributed to Dong Yuan. Ink and color on silk (221 x 109 cm)

CHAPTER III

THE EXAMINATION OF *RIVERBANK*

Scrolls and Silks

The use of scientific data to date a piece is the most basic way that an art connoisseur can approach analysis. Using this data can often reveal the age of the piece and eliminate much of the struggle surrounding dating a piece using personal interpretation. However, dating a piece using formal analysis is not always so simple. For instance, Zhang Daqian often utilized ancient materials to create his modern day fabrications.

Scientific research on *Along the Riverbank* provides only inconclusive results regarding either the true antiquity of the piece or Zhang's skill in acquiring antiquated materials to use in forged pieces.[30] Tests like carbon dating would only provide inconclusive results because aged silk would not give an accurate carbon dating test. The Met also claims that carbon dating the silk would cause major damage to the painting.[31] However, the Met did subject the painting to thread counts of the silk and digital enhancements, which shed light on the structure, and microscopic nature of the silk, but lacks definitive scientific conclusions.[32] Both sides of the debate have analyzed the silk data with very different conclusions on its age and what this means for the authenticity of the piece, but this as well, does not provide conclusive evidence. One of the most significant factors that continue to play a major role in modern day connoisseurs'

[30] "Metropolitan Museum Holds Chinese Art Symposium: Focus is 'Riverbank' painting attributed by Museum to Dong Yuan."

[31] Holland Cotter, "On Trial at the met: the Art of the Connoisseur," (*The New York Times*, December 5, 1999).

[32] Silbergeld, "Three Paradigms for the Consideration of Authenticity in Chinese Art," 84 and 86.

inability to determine Zhang's forgeries is his collection and use of materials. Zhang collected old scrolls to use in his fabricated pieces but he also learned to recreate old materials. Zhang learned how to take new silk and paper and make them look old and stained by light and age by using practices with smoke, incense, and dust.[33] For example, *Three Worthies of Wu*, a work now attributed to Zhang, has a number of factors that render the work "old" but are actually modern day fabrications [Figure 2]. There are a number of black ink spots on the scroll that are meant to imitate spiders' droppings that have been washed away.[34] The silk of the painting has also been rent into square fragments to imitate ancient silk but under microscope reveal a lack of decay, which proves that the silk is not as old as its mimicked qualities suggest.[35]

Figure 2: Zhang Daqian, *Three Worthies of Wu*. Ink and Color on silk (50.3 x 284.3 cm

[33] Shen C. Y. Fu, *Challenging the Past: The Paintings of Chang Dai-qien* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 20.

[34] James Cahill, "Chang-Ta-Chi'en's Forgeries: Chang Ta-ch'ien's fakes, *The Writings of James Cahill* http://jamescahill.info/the-writings-of-james-cahill/chang-ta-chiens-forgeries/211-chang-ta-chiens-forgeries. (Accessed 4/16/2013), 5.

[35] Ibid.

The analysis the Met has done on the silk of the painting has also been a crucial piece of evidence in arguing the authenticity of *Along the Riverbank*. The silk in *Along the Riverbank* is argued by connoisseurs to match silk from other early paintings, such as *Summer Mountains* from the mid 11th century, due to its pain weave and dense structure of weft and warp threads of nearly equal diameter.[36] The threading of the silk is in marked contrast to confirmed forgeries by Zhang Daqian including *Dense Forests and Layered Peaks* and *Two Gibbons*. The two forgeries have uniform thickness of their weft, or horizontal, threads across the entire painting; this is in contrast to *Along the Riverbank*, who's weft threads vary and indicate that successive spools of thread were used in the creation of the silk.[37] The dark hue of the silk also, according to Hearn, labels *Along the Riverbank* as an ancient work and not a modern day fabrication. The piece shows no indication of having been dyed or colored artificially. Instead, the dark color of the piece resembles that of a piece that has naturally aged and darkened.[38] Finally, Hearn examines the mounting and remounting evidence present in *Along the Riverbank* to point to its authenticity. Hearn argues that *Along the Riverbank* has undergone at least three remountings and the earliest mounting, probably done around the Song Dynasty, is still visible in the in-filled silk near the top of the painting [Figure 3].[39]However, Cahill argues that *Along the Riverbank*'s silk material was fabricated to look ancient through

[36] Ibid., 99.

[37] Ibid., 100.

[38] Ibid., 104.

[39] Ibid., 108.

tearing and spotting, and that the way the pigment lies on the silk nods to its modern day creation.[40]

Figure 3: Evidence for *Riverbank's* remounting or the modern damaging of the silk.

[40] James Cahill, "Chang Ta-Ch'ien's Forgeries: Chang Ta-Ch'ien's Fakes, 7.

Seals

Zhang also employed seal carvers to improve his already astounding skills at forgery. Seals are utilized in China as markers that collectors use to show their ownership and patronage. In general, older works will have more seals because they have passed through the hands of many since the time of their creation. These seals are individualized to each collector and tracing the different seals can often point to the age of the painting. Zhang often succeeded in tricking those who study seals by photographing genuine seals and having them perfectly recreated to mark his work as authentic originals of masters; it was thought that Zhang created up to nine hundred and seventy fake seals.[41] However, the study of seals can provide key evidence for the authenticity of a piece. For example, Richard Barnhart's analysis of *Along the Riverbank's* seals and state of preservation led him to the conclusion of the painting's 10th century date. The seals on the painting, according to Barnhart, are from the mid 13th century to the late 14th century, indicating the age of the painting and the number of hands it passed through in its thousand-year history.[42] Hearn also argues that the seven seals of *Along the Riverbank* mark the piece as 10th century. Hearn identifies two of the seals as those of the Southern Song prime Minister and collector Jia Sidao (1213-1275) and marks the piece as belonging to an early date [Figure 4].[43] Others would argue that these seals could be copies by Zhang.

[41] Ibid., 38.

[42] Fong, "Riverbank," 7.

[43] Maxwell K. Hearn, "A Comparative Physical Analysis of *Riverbank* and Two Zhang Daqian Forgeries," *Issues of Authenticity in Chinese Painting*, Judith G. Smith and Wen C. Fong ed. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 110.

Figure 4: Details of seals on *Riverbank*.

Another example of Western connoisseurs utilizing their knowledge of seals and other methods of formal analysis to successfully discover a forged piece is the recent discovery of *Dense Forests and Layered Peaks* as a Zhang Daqian forgery [Figure 5].

Dense Forests and Layered Peaks, Attributed to Juran

Figure 5: Zhang Daqian, *Dense Forest and Layered Peaks*, attributed to Juran.

Zhang's forgery was originally a work accredited to Juran, a 10th century artist. Thought to have been painted by Zhang as early as 1951, Zhang himself went so far as to claim the piece as authentic in his quest to fool the world. The time of the work's creation coincides with Zhang's study of Juran and Dong Yuan during the late 1940s and his creation of many works by these two artists, both forgeries and honest copies.[44] The seals on the forgery of *Dense Forests* seem legitimate but a close study of the painting's calligraphy reveals eerily similar caricatures to other works by Zhang, a key factor in determining its forged nature.

Documentation

Another procedure used to identify a Zhang forgery is to understand when the painting was acquired or discovered. Zhang tended to produce works of forgery during times of personal hardship because he knew that his success at making copies would bring him money. For this reason pairing the known times of financial hardship in Zhang's life with the sudden discovery of an ancient work can sometimes shed light on the question of whether or not the piece is a Zhang reproduction.[45] For example, art historian Hironobu Kohara argues that there is no documented evidence to prove that *Along the Riverbank* existed before October of 1948 and states that the production of the painting is somewhere between 1949 and 1957.[46] He draws from a number of sources to argue this point, the first of which is that the piece is never mentioned until 1957 in Xie Zhiliu's book, *Tang Wu Dai Song Yuan Mingji* or *Famous Paintings Surviving from the*

[44] Ibid., 192.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Hironobu Kohara, "Notes on the Recent History of Riverbank," *Issues of Authenticity in Chinese Painting*, Judith G. Smith and Wen C. Fong ed. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 69.

Tang, Five Dynasties, Song, and Yuan.[47] He also argues against those who state that the famous artist Xu Beihong obtained the painting sometime around 1938, stating that its whereabouts prior to this date and the nature of how Xu obtained it are unclear at best and provide flawed evidence for its early existence.[48] He also points to the fact that those who argue for the painting as a genuine 10th century piece state that Zhang Daqian gave the piece to Xu Beihong in 1938, further muddling the timeline of the piece and making many question whether it was not Zhang himself who magically "discovered" the piece, claimed it was an ancient work, and gave it to Xu Beihong.[49] Hironobu also points to *Along the Riverbank*'s absence from a 1944 exhibition of paintings from the collection of Zhang Daqian entitled *Old Paintings and Calligraphic Works from the Zhang Daqian Collection*. The Sichuan Artists' Association hosted an exhibit from Zhang's collection of 170 works dating from the Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, but *Along the Riverbank* was suspiciously absent.[50] Hironobu points to a number of instances in which the documentation and evidence of *Along the Riverbank*'s existence is seriously limited or altogether absent, which he claims points to its modern day creation date. Cahill also uses documentation, some of which he considers falsified, and missing references of the work throughout history to make his claim of *Riverbank's* falsification and that it could not have been created before the 1950s.[51] Although the creation of old materials may dupe a connoisseur, it is the use of genuinely old materials and methods that can fool

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., 76.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., 65.

[51] Cotter.

even a scientific test on the piece. Some connoisseurs argue that this is the case in *Along the Riverbank*; the materials may be old, but the work itself is not. However, others argue that the use of formal analysis reveals that the piece is genuine or authentic.

CHAPTER IV

DEFINING AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity

Before highlighting the differences between practices in connoisseurship and copying in greater detail, an important question must be answered: what is authenticity and what does it mean or how is it important to the field of connoisseurship within art history? Generally speaking, something authentic in the art field is a work with an accurately defined author, period, and cultural context.[52] However, not only is defining these aspects much more difficult to actually achieve, the art connoisseur is often faced with a dichotomy of authenticity that further complicates the simple definition of authenticity as who, what, when, and where. Cahill perhaps best summarizes the complications that arise in thinking about what authenticity means when he writes,

> When we speak of 'authenticity' we mean two separable but related things. An object can be authentic by being genuinely what it is presented as being- for instance, the work of a certain master or from a certain period; or else by being the product of authentic or genuine impulses: the maker is not trying to fool us or make his creation seem what it is not.[53]

Thus the connoisseur is faced with a major dilemma arising from these distinct but often inseparable categories. When dating a historical piece, the question must ultimately be asked: Is this work what it is said to be? In other words, is it from the stated period of time, genre, or artistic influence that is being represented within the work? Answering this question is the most critical aspect of the connoisseur. If the connoisseur can correctly judge the aspects represented within the painting as genuine, the work can be

[52] Brown, 140.

[53] James Cahill, "Chinese Art and Authenticity," *Perspectives on Connoisseurship of Chinese Painting*, Jason C. Kuo ed. (Washington D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2008), 36.

placed within its historical time line. This will greatly add to the knowledge base for the art of that time and facilitate the answering of these questions of authenticity for future scholars and art pieces. If, however, the art connoisseur fails to correctly authenticate the work because of the lack of knowledge on the period, or more controversially, because the work is falsely representing a particular time period, a serious problem arises. Art connoisseurs have come to the understanding that correctly authenticating Chinese paintings are of paramount importance to the furthering of the field and the creation of a stronger historical timeline.[54] Chinese connoisseurship is a serious field in itself, but it is also closely tied to the monetary values that correctly dating a painting can create. The ability to correctly date a piece not only aids the field as a whole, but also greatly affects the buying and selling of a *correctly* dated work.[55] An authentic, rare work of a very early date is worth much more in the market than a more "common" piece. The art market desires the rare and the old, and art connoisseurs face pressure to determine the correct date and author of a piece from markets and fields outside of that of pure scholarship. Thus, determining whether the piece is authentically representing itself is of vital importance; if the piece cannot be correctly dated, it cannot be used within the historical lineage, and it is also worthless from a monetary standpoint to the collectors who wish to obtain ancient art pieces.[56] The first part of Cahill's definition, the authenticity of a painting as defined by its genuine representation of its parts often trumps the second aspect of authenticity, what can be referred to as the originality factor.

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[54] Lang, 188.

[55] Ibid., 48.

[56] Jerome Silbergel, "Three Paradigms for the Consideration of Authenticity in Chinese Art," *Perspectives on Connoisseurship of Chinese Painting*, Jason C. Kuo ed. (Washington D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2008), 83.

Originality

Originality, in the case of determining authenticity, is often pushed to the background in connoisseurship in favor of determining the period and style of a work. But its importance in understanding the loaded meaning of authenticity cannot be overlooked. Originality as authenticity can be most simplified to mean, "not forged," but even this definition carries a host of questions.[57] What does it mean to forge something? Most Western scholars agree that a forged piece is any one that copies or mimics another piece. However, this definition simply does not satisfy because it leaves so much gray area. What does it mean to truly copy something? If it is simply the act of taking from another for one's own work, then where is the line drawn? If images and ideas can be copied, then can period styles or techniques that are typically markers for artistic movements and time periods also be copied and borrowed? If the line for what is forged or copied is not clearly defined, which is no easy task, how can connoisseurs say what is and is not copied? Even the most exact of copies will be filled with mistakes and artistic choices that will affect the outcome of the piece and will lead to the inability to create an exact replica of what is being copied.[58] If even the most exact of copies is riddled with artistic influences from the period and interpretations of examining the painting, can the copy have artistic value and authenticity because of its unique impulses? If the copy is unique in its own right, it can be studied as a reflection of the period it was copied in and

[57] Ben-ami Sharfstein, *Art Without Borders: A Philosophical Exploration of Art and Humanity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 98.

[58] "Chinese Art and Authenticity," 38.

the interpretation of artists from that period on works and styles of the past. Thus, even studying a copy can be of value to the connoisseur in adding to the knowledge about the period of their repertoire. Herein lies the real issue for Western connoisseurs attempting to study Chinese painting. The West has trouble accepting copied or forged paintings into their own scholarship.[59] Although the Chinese consider authenticity as a factor in connoisseurship, it is not given the same prominence or importance as in the West. Where the Chinese see authenticity as a piece of the puzzle, Western connoisseurs see authenticity as the primary factor in understanding a piece.

Because the monetary pressure on Western connoisseurs is so great, the difficulties between the West and China in terms of the originality factor of authenticity is often overlooked in favor of the strict and straightforward determinate of authenticity separate from the vague notions of originality of expression. The history of Chinese painting is riddled with these "imitations and forgeries" and the West must discover these pieces before the works can be fully analyzed or appreciated.[60]

[59] Sharfstein, 103.

[60] Lang, 181.

CHAPTER V

ART EDUCATION IN CHINA AND THE WEST

Art Education

Art education, or the teaching of how to do art and study art, is crucial in understanding why so many difficulties arise in determining whether a piece is authentic and how it should be historically dated. Generally, the West is thought to teach the study of art through the strict study of measurable factors such as scientific dating to determine a piece's authenticity. Markers clearly determine the parameters that connoisseurs use to define all aspects of a piece of artwork from date and style, to the artist and his influences. In *Perspectives on Connoisseurship of Chinese Painting,* John H. Brown argues that Western connoisseurs set out to define the who, what, and where of a piece by using evidence discovered from the alleged methodical examination of a work of art.[61] Connoisseurship in the West thus refers to the task of correctly identifying these aspects that mark a painting for what it is such as: period style, the age of the materials, and the historical data of the piece to place it within its historical lineage.[62] The use of strict and measurable guidelines, ideally, gives the connoisseur validity and merit. By claiming that the parameters for defining an artwork's identity are unaltered checkmarks, factors that are uninfluenced by the piece being examined; the connoisseur is contained within a scientific field of thought that can exist without doubting the connoisseur's credibility in defining a piece. Although, generally, the claim to an unchanging and scientific approach to identifying works is effective on the surface, a deeper examination of what the

[61] John H. Brown, "Connoisseurship: Conceptual and Epistemological Fundamentals," *Perspectives on Connoisseurship of Chinese Painting* Jason C. Kuo ed. (Washington D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2008), 138.

[62] Ibid.,137.

connoisseur examines when identifying a piece reveals holes in this supposedly strict scientific approach. The use of true scientific parameters such as carbon dating, the testing of materials, and the use of paper work, such as proof of ownership through the years, in creating the art's lineage does provide hard evidence for the connoisseur's judgment.[63] However, this scientific data tends to easily bump against, and muddle with, the harder to define practices of aesthetic judgment of the piece in placing it within its historical lineage. Although a scientific approach is desired and arguably needed in accurately dating a work of art, it is nearly impossible to separate the study of a work of art from the indefinable characteristics often associated with the perception of the viewer.[64] Because placing and dating a work is so dependent on the use of perception and personal opinion of a work, the claimed scientific nature of connoisseurship can become radically invalidated. Because the job of the connoisseur is wholly dependent on the use of personalized methods and training in approaching a work, the field of historical dating is faced with the dilemma of gaining credibility and merit without a truly scientific approach.[65] The West typically is reliant upon a long tradition of studying the development of painting and the changes in period style to elevate the problems that personal interpretation causes, but the more strict study of paintings has not been as common in Chinese art history. Thus, differences in opinion and the influence of personal methods of interpretation are more common in the Western study of Chinese paintings.

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[63] Alan Priest, *Aspects of Chinese Painting* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), 42.

[64] Richard E. Spear, "What is Original," *Perspectives on Connoisseurship of Chinese Painting* Jason C. Kuo ed. (Washington D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2008), 121.

[65] Brown, 142.

However, in Chinese art education every aspect of analysis and approaching aesthetic interpretation is linked to the brushstroke.[66] Painting in China can be defined as the art of the line; the Chinese connoisseur is deeply concerned with the nature of brushwork over that of composition and representation of form.[67] To the Chinese, it is from the use of line and stroke that that expression and description are formed and, thus, it is here, that the Chinese connoisseur begins his study.[68] Sticking with the study of brushwork as a means for understanding the artist and the artistic intention is an extension of the training for Chinese painters, one that is centered on the study and proper execution of brushwork. For thousands of years, Chinese traditional painting can be traced through this measurement of brushwork quality and changes. Ink and brush are the key factors in painting and the reflection upon these two aspects of Chinese work form the fundamental characteristics of artistic criticism.[69] For example, Chinese critics can be recorded as analyzing the strength of a painting based on the "weakness, hesitation, and inability to move the brush with sufficient ease at will," all three which muddle the painting and greatly decrease its value and strength of execution.[70] Words that mark a painting as successful are also measured in terms of how the brush comes in contact with the silk to create lines. These phrases include "uninterrupted flow, the spontaneity, and

[66] James Cahill, *New Dimensions in Chinese Ink Painting* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 11.

[67] Ibid., 3.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid., 10.

[70] Kuo-Jo-hsu quoted in Osvald Siren, *The Chinese on the Art of Painting* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press,1963), 81.

agility with which it (the brush) transfers the thoughts and sentiments of the painter."[71] Only through the beauty and expressiveness of the brushstroke can quality artistic representations be formed.[72] The perspective of brushwork as the foundation of excellent painting in China developed out of the appreciation of correct line, form, and stroke that is also essential to the teaching of traditional Chinese painting. Connoisseurs and artists are taught that the appreciation for a successful piece is tied closely with the strength of line and this is reiterated through the strict methods of enforcing artistic training through the application of correct brushstrokes. [73]

Copying

Before the study of paintings can be undertaken, Chinese art education begins with understanding how pieces were painted; this means practicing painting the works of masters and copying their techniques. Before a student can even begin copying, one must undergo intense training in gripping the brush, elasticity of hand movements with the brush, how to dip the brush correctly into the inkwell, and only then can he press the brush to paper.[74] After the student has mastered control of himself, he can then begin the long process of understanding the way that the ink and brush comes in contact with silk, how different amounts of pressure or ink affect the brushstroke, and how fluidity of the stroke motion can be achieved.[75] Once this process begins, it is critical that the student copy others' works to learn how those in the past accomplished a mastery of brushwork

[71] Ibid., 80-1.

[72] Raphael Petrucci, Translated by Frances Seaver, *Chinese Painter: A Critical Study* (New York: Brentano's Publishers, 1920), 25.

[73] Ibid., 88.

[74] Josef Hejzlar, *Chinese Watercolors* (London: Octopus Books, 1978), 38.

[75] Ibid.

that can be added to one's repertoire, and aid them in later creating their own personal style. The ability to draw upon the rich tradition of Chinese ink painting and calligraphy is a crucial aspect of becoming an accomplished painter in one's own right, so the practice of copying is widely accepted within Chinese painting culture.[76] This acceptance has been in existence for thousands of years. For example, look to the following quote from Shen Kua (1030-1094): "In studying calligraphy, copying can frequently catch formal likeness, but in general one takes pieces of earlier calligraphy and by looking at them closely reaches a state of complete absorption (ju-shen)."[77]

There are, in general, three categories of copying when applied in an academic setting. The first, *Lin*, is a close copy of the work that may even include tracing of the master's work and attempts to closely follow the work at hand. The second method is called *Fang*, or free hand imitations, which allows for greater personal interpretation when copying a work. The third and last form of copying is called *Zao*. Similar to *Fang*, it allows for creative interpretation but instead of interpreting the painting at hand, it uses the style the painting was done in to create a different work instead of replicating the original.[78] Zhang, himself a skilled copier at all three forms and explained in his own words the value of copying, 'If you want to learn painting, you must first become skilled at making detailed copies of ancient masterpieces, the time spent making stroke-by-stroke copies will result in familiarity with the hope to make all kinds of outline and texture

[76] Cahill, *New Dimensions in Chinese Ink Painting*, 12.

[77] Shen Kua quoted in Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting: Sushih (1037-1101) to Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555-1636), (*Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 50.

[78] James Cahill and Jerome Silbergeld, "Chinese Art and Authenticity," *Bulletin of American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 53, no. 1 (Autumn 2001). http://www.jstor.org/stables/3824253 (accessed October 21, 2012), , 34-5.

strokes and allow the understanding of all the rules and methods of paintings."[79] In this regard, it is important to recognize that the more painters and painting techniques studied, the wider diversity of skills to master and apply to work. The style of the brush, the quality of stoke and created line, and the spreading of ink and distinction of the line are all factors that formulate the teaching of young artists to become successful traditional painters.[80] Because form and line execution is of vital importance to both the creator and student of Chinese traditional art, the practice and repetition of creating lines and strokes until one can perfectly execute them, as well as understanding completely how the selection of, action, and completion of a particular line was formed in studying a painting is the foundation of Chinese teaching. The Chinese believe that only through copying and imitating those artists who have come before and mastered the valued brush strokes, can a thorough examination of the painting be undertaken, true understanding of the work be achieved, and a overall understanding of what is being conveyed in the painting be accomplished.

This education is typical of the traditional Chinese painters and exemplified by Zhang's artistic upbringing. Practicing Chinese painters must completely immerse themselves in conquering tradition in order to later establish a personal style or expression; this can only be accomplished by copying those who have come before. The more established and immersed a painter is, the more variety they will be able to copy and incorporate into their own works. For example, Zhang's variety is so complex that he has been known to adapt an 18th century Japanese woodblock to create an 8th century

[79] Zhang Daqian in Ibid., 34.

[80] Petrucci, 22.

Chinese painting that is nearly indistinguishable from the works of masters at that time.[81] Another example of Zhang's ability to adapt styles to create desirable and missing pieces can be seen in his *Sheer Peaks and Deep Valley* signed as Wang Shen. This piece is an adaption of Chen Hong-shou's (1598-1652) *Mountain of the Five Cataracts* [Figure 6]. Not only is this piece mimicry of another artist's style it is falsely signed as another artist. Thus Zhang's mastery of brushstroke and form allowed him to adapt and adjust paintings using traditional teaching practices to create an entirely new style. Tracing the entire work or tracing the outline can produce exact copies and the details are then filled in with one's own hand, while free copies are not traced but instead copied as freehand replicas of the original work.[82] Free copying refers to working in the style of a particular artist, using the methods and practices utilized by a particular artist or group of artists but not creating an exact replica of their work.[83] An example of this free copying style can be seen in Zhang Daqian's piece, *Copy of a Song Dynasty Landscape*, which mimics the style of Song dynasty landscape painting [Figure 7].

Figure 6: Zhang Daqian, *Sheer Peaks and Deep Valley*, Signed as Wang Shen.

[81] Cahill, "Chinese Art and Authenticity," 52.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid., 53.

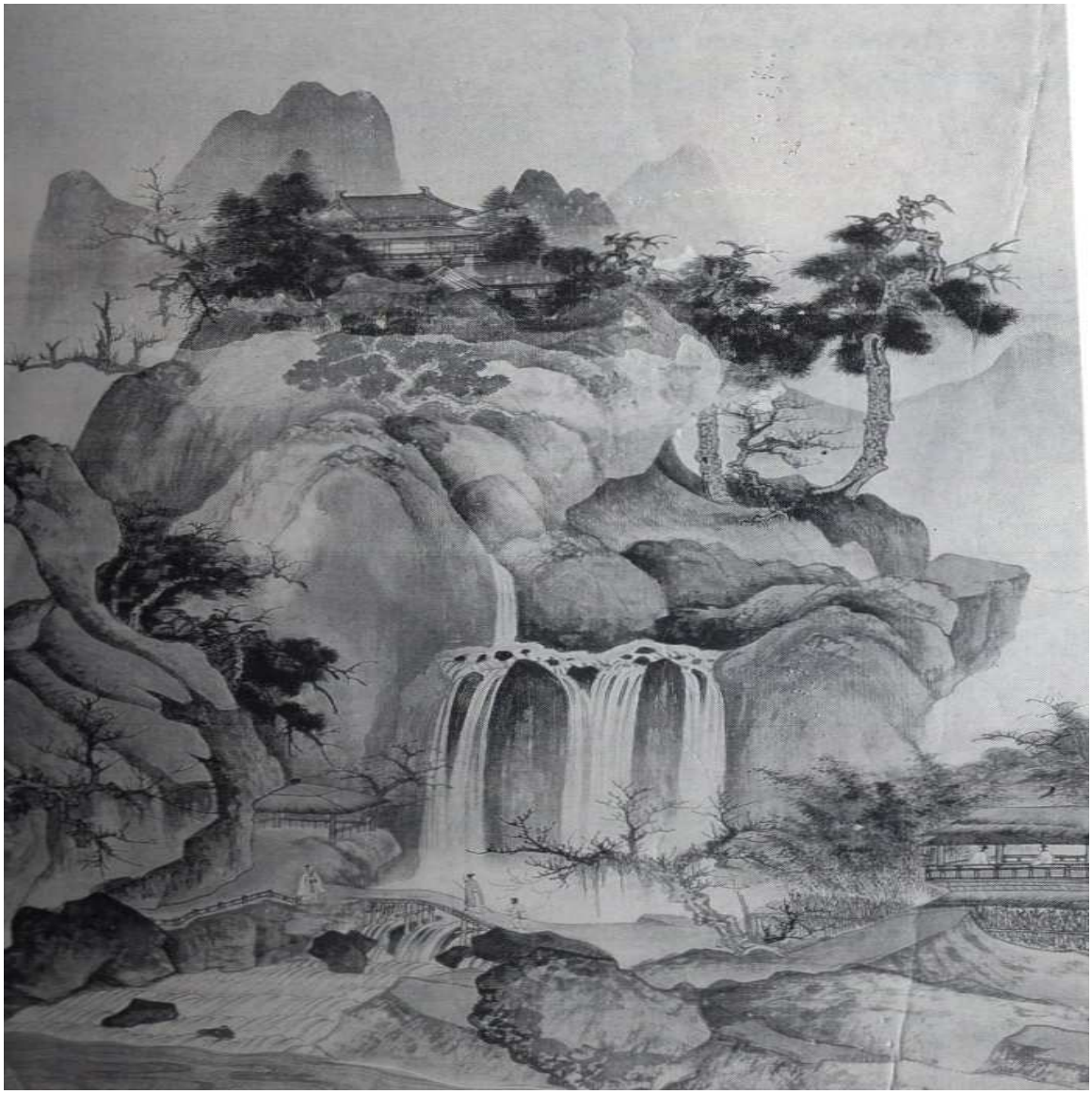

Figure 7: Zhang Daqian, *Copy of a Song Dynasty Landscape.* Hanging Scroll; ink and color on silk.

Copying is a source of controversy between the Chinese study of Chinese painting and the same study by the West. As previously discussed, the Chinese value copying and replicas as valuable aspects of artistic schooling and as pieces that can be appreciated and discussed. The West, by contrast, does not value copied pieces in the same way. For one, the idea of authenticity in the West is closely tied to the original idea and those works

that borrow heavily from others are, across Western connoisseurship, not as highly valued. Secondly, the entire field of Chinese connoisseurship in the West is based upon the connoisseurs' ability to distinguish a piece's date and artistic time period for the development of knowledge within the field and for the monetary value an ancient and genuine piece holds to the art world. The general attitude toward copied works in the West is a direct reflection of the economic and cultural value it presents, thus copied works lack both the desired originality factor as well as the cultural or academic significance that is desired by the Western audience.[84] Because of this desire to only find the original and eliminate all copied or forged pieces, Western connoisseurs focus heavily on the paintings' documents, signatures, seals, and overall aesthetics to determine the time period of the piece.[85] Being able to identify forged elements such as seals and inscriptions and separate the false from the genuine is also a key factor in the West's judgment of Chinese painting.[86] Often, elements of the painting or even the painting itself are genuine, but if the connoisseur is unable to recognize this and focuses only on an added signature or inscription, the authenticity of the painting can be overlooked. For this reason, the West's understanding of Chinese painting and the desire to identify only genuine and ancient paintings is further complicated by the Chinese acceptance of copied or altered works.

[84] Spear, 89.

[85] *Chinese Painting: XI-XIV Centuries*, 4-5.

[86] "Reflections on Connoisseurship of Chinese Calligraphy and Painting," 9-10.

Another challenge to the West in dealing with China's acceptance of copied pieces is the careful examination of the technical execution of the work itself.[87] Understanding brushwork, technique, the development of aesthetic qualities throughout Chinese history, and the mastery the artistic displays are all crucial elements in a Western connoisseur's ability to correctly date a piece and differentiate copied works from genuine works. However, because the knowledge of brushwork history is still relatively young it is often difficult for the Western connoisseur to distinguish between a copied work and those works that are simply lesser works by an ancient artist.[88] The lesser works could be the experimentation of the artist with new techniques, a damaged piece, or simply a piece with elements that have yet to be associated with the particular time period. All of these are factors that the connoisseur must be aware of and determine if they are a factor with the knowledge always in mind that nearly all works in Chinese have been copied and repeated throughout history. Above all, it is the West's issue with copying in contrast with the Chinese general acceptance of the practice that greatly complicates the Western connoisseur's ability to cast judgment on a piece while also gaining knowledge and understanding of the field in general.[89] Copying is also the factor that most affects the other elements that a connoisseur utilizes to determine the authenticity of the piece. If the piece is not genuine or is presented as a genuine piece, how can the other aspects be judged or understood correctly?

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[87] Brown, 154.

[88] Ibid.,153.

[89] Shen C.Y. Fu, Marilyn W. Fu, Mary G. Neill, and Mary Jane Clark, *Traces of the Brush: Studies in Chinese Calligraphy*, 17.

Inner Nature

The second aspect of the execution and study of Chinese painting is closely associated with the development of brushstroke and line. The Chinese believe that the precise development of correct lines to create forms and ultimately express a work reveals the inner nature of the piece and the way the painter felt when creating the painting. These aspects can be described as the psychological attributes and attitudes of painters and their paintings that are somehow expressed through the execution of line and form.[90] Expressiveness through line and form, as it is argued by scholar-artists states, "that since the mind of the artist is implicit in the forms he creates, the subtle workings of that mind are conveyed to anyone who sees the painting and is sensitive enough to grasp its importance."[91] This means that connoisseurs and scholars who have a unique grasp on the subtle aspects of line selection and rendition can glean through minute details, the inner mind of the artist and the meaning behind his expression. This idea of execution of line and form as a means to express some deeper human emotion is perhaps best expressed by a statement by Emperor Hui-Zong (1082-1135) in which he commented, "They [the paintings] serve to evoke human thoughts. They not only capture the appearance of created things, but also transmit their essential spirit. They take hold of one's mind, as if one had come to the very place and were gazing at the thing itself."[92] The brush, then, is vital for creating an image and expression that is absent of flaws or hesitation in order to create a "contemplative experience" for the viewer, but is one that

[90] Siren, 73.

[91] James Cahill, *Chinese Painting: XI-XIV Centuries* (Crown Publishers: New York), 7.

[92] *Chinese Painting: XI-XIV Centuries,* 13.

can only be truly experienced and appreciated with the intensive study of brushwork and form.[93] It is said that to know and understand a Chinese painter's style was to know the man himself, that his personality would reveal itself through his artistic expression.[94] Chinese painting is not merely the understanding of where, how, and when the art was made; it is about understanding the development and decisions behind the piece to experience some deeper meaning and or connection with the work and artist.[95] This experience is at once tied to the knowledge about the painting itself and separate from it; the innate nature of the work is both dependent on one's study of the painting as well as one's ability to open the mind and create a willingness to experience what the artist was feeling and experiencing when the painting was created. Thus, the study of Chinese painting is not about the outer qualities or scientific understanding of a painting, although some of these ideas are crucial to the study of traditional Chinese painting. Most Chinese art historians and connoisseurs believe that painting should, "serve to reveal the personal nature and feeling of the artist."[96] Given this theory that the study of Chinese art is more than just the examination of brushstroke and instead about identifying a relationship between the viewer and the invisible hand or nature of the artist, we begin to understand why traditional Western connoisseurship often struggles when dealing with Chinese art.

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[93] *China and California: The Impact of 19th and 20th Century Chinese Art and Culture on California,* An Exhibition prepared by students in art 189, Museum Methods and Connoisseurship (Davis: University of California, 1966), 6.

[94] Bush, 11.

[95] Ibid.

[96] *Chinese Painting: XI-XIV Centuries,* 2.

Because mastering of copying is such a crucial step in the training of traditional Chinese painters, imitated works crop up throughout Chinese art history.[97] It is argued that copying is so prevalent in China that at least one third of all scrolls ascribed to famous masters of the Ming and Qing dynasties are copies.[98] If such recent works are scattered with copies, there is no calculating how many accredited older works are copies as well. Copyists however, also create mimicked pieces because they wish to appreciate and transmit the work that has been done before them.[99] In China, appreciation for works of art is so high that even transmitted or recreated works are valued for the skill and history they are representing, even indirectly. Artists who copy another's works are said to be paying homage to the original artist and keeping the spirit of the art and the past alive.[100] Thus, copied art crops up so frequently in China because both artistic training and appreciation is centered on remembering, respecting, and recreating what has come before. Despite its frequency, most copied works are labeled as such, and easily identified or appreciated as both replicas and original renditions. Copyists usually note in the work that the piece is a rendition of the original through signatures or seals, but some painters attempt to match the original exactly by also mimicking the seals and signatures that mark the painting's time period and artist [See Figures 6 and 7].[101] This practice makes the painting harder to correctly identify but is done because the demand for original

[97] Scharfstein, 105.

[98] Van Gulik, 401.

[99] Robert E. Harrist Jr., "Replication and Deception in Calligraphy of the Six Dynasties Period," *Chinese Aesthetics: The Ordering of Literature, the Arts, and the Universe in the Six Dynasties*, Edited by Zong-qi Cai (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 42.

[100] Scharfstein, 295.

[101] Ibid.

works and well-executed copies is high. Even replicated works are of some value to many Chinese collectors if they are executed well enough, and this value encourages artists to create copies of past artists' works to turn a profit, for both legitimate copies and deceiving replicas.[102] It is when these copied works are unlabeled or falsely labeled as something they are not that they become a problem. Chinese connoisseurs are not opposed to copies, but they are opposed to bad copies, those copies that are meant to trick the viewer without revealing that it is in fact a copy.[103]

Defining the different approaches to art education allows for a study of how Western connoisseurs adapt the Chinese views of examining brushwork or interpreting the works' inner nature. Brushwork is arguably the common denominator which ties all traditional Chinese paintings together and provides a strong base of review in which the defining characteristics of a painting can be determined.[104] Although there is overlap between those who incorporate the inner nature of a piece in their analysis and those who rely on more standard practices in the tools they use for determining authenticity in Chinese pieces, the different outlooks can lead to very different conclusions.

Nowhere are these challenges the West faces in studying Chinese painting more visible, and the division between connoisseurs more apparent, than in the controversy over the Met's piece *Along the Riverbank.* The piece has created controversy and anger throughout the art world because accurately determining its author and authenticity has widened the divide between Western connoisseurs and highlighted the vast differences in

[102] Van Gulik, 375.

[103] Ibid., 399.

[104] Van Gulik, 376.

Western and Chinese study of Chinese art history. The Western connoisseur, in studying Chinese painting, has come to understand the importance of interpreting brushwork in their own study but this study is often at odds with their scientific approach because the Chinese history of brushwork development is hinged upon the copying of other's works to understand the inner nature of a piece.[105] The use of these ideas in analyzing a piece is visible in the debate over *Along the Riverbank.*

[105] Brown, 141.

CHAPTER VI

STYLES OF CONNOISSEURSHIP

Focus on Brushwork

The Western connoisseur's analysis of brushwork is often accompanied by key words such as line, form, tonality, color, texture, and spatial organization.[106] For example, Fong writes:

> When a copyist or a forger imitates or appropriates an ancient style, he easily captures its basic form elements or motifs and compositional patterns, but in combining such elements or motifs to create a new effect or to find the solution to a new problem, he inevitably creates formal relationships and visual structures more characteristic of his own style.[107]

In this example, Wen Fong argues that the combination of form, line, and brushwork composition altogether reveals the period of the piece because the artist's own training seeps into the work he is creating. Although this example makes it seem like these words are common enough to the field of connoisseurship in art history, Western connoisseurs differ radically on how to use these ideas in construction with how they interpret the importance of Chinese brushwork, both individually and in looking at the Chinese study of brushwork as a whole.

Analyzing Zhang's forgery of Shi Tao is crucial to understanding how difficult distinguishing the genuine from the forged or copied works and how art historians attempt to incorporate this study of brushwork into their own analysis of works to facilitate this process. Zhang's attempt at tricking the entire art world with his forgeries has become such a success that almost every newly discovered work coming out of China

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[106] Ibid., 143-4.

[107] Jerome Silbergeld, "The Referee Must Have a Rulebook: Modern Rules for an Ancient Art," *Issues of Authenticity in Chinese Art*, Judith G. Smith and Wen C. Fong ed. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 150.

must be examined for Zhang's signature styles of forgery. Zhang extensively forged Shi Tao's works, so much so that examining these forgeries are some of the best teaching tools in learning the forgery styles of Zhang. Although Zhang has claimed at an art exhibition that he leaves an identifying mark on the back of his Shi Tao forgeries, determining his other forgeries is not always so easy.[108] Still, these identifiable marks are good reference points in studying Zhang's forgeries.[109] Having these self-proclaimed copies to compare to originals is essential for connoisseurs and collectors in understanding Zhang's forgery techniques. It reveals, "Idiosyncrasies in brushwork and coloring that Zhang could not suppress even when trying to recall exactly the manner of an ancient master."[110]

For example, *Dense Forests and Layered Peaks is* a key example of one of Zhang's forgeries. Zhang's forgery was originally a work accredited to Juran, a 10th century artist [Figure 8]. As mentioned in Chapter 3, this work it is said to have been painted by Zhang as early as 1951, Zhang himself went so far as to claim the piece as authentic in his quest to fool the world. The time of the work's creation coincides with Zhang's study of Juran and Dong Yuan during the late 1940s and his creation of many works by these two artists, both forgeries and honest copies.[111] The use of light and dark, a flatter landscape appearance, and the harsh contour lines reveal the work as more modern than the Late Song dynasty it is attributed to, but also reveals Zhang's personal

[108] Lai, 23.

[109] "Paintings after Shit Tao's 'Wilderness Colors,'" Zhang Daqian (Chinese, 1899-1983), *The Metropolitan Museum of Art.*

[110] Shen, 37.

[111] Ibid., 192.

style in creating landscapes.[112] Fong argues that Zhang's brushwork in *Dense Forests* can be described as something taken directly from a copybook and represent "well-worn Juran brush idioms."[113] He states that the use of these copy book techniques such as "round calligraphic hemp-fiber texture strokes and large round moss dots" render the picture flat and uninspiring and reveal that Zhang is the true artist of the work.[114] Fong also draws attention to the painting's depiction of "light shining externally from one direction," which Fong argues dates the piece as a twentieth century work and reveals Zhang's western influences.[115] *Dense Forests and Layered Peaks* is a great example on how connoisseurs read the stylistic elements of a work to date a work.

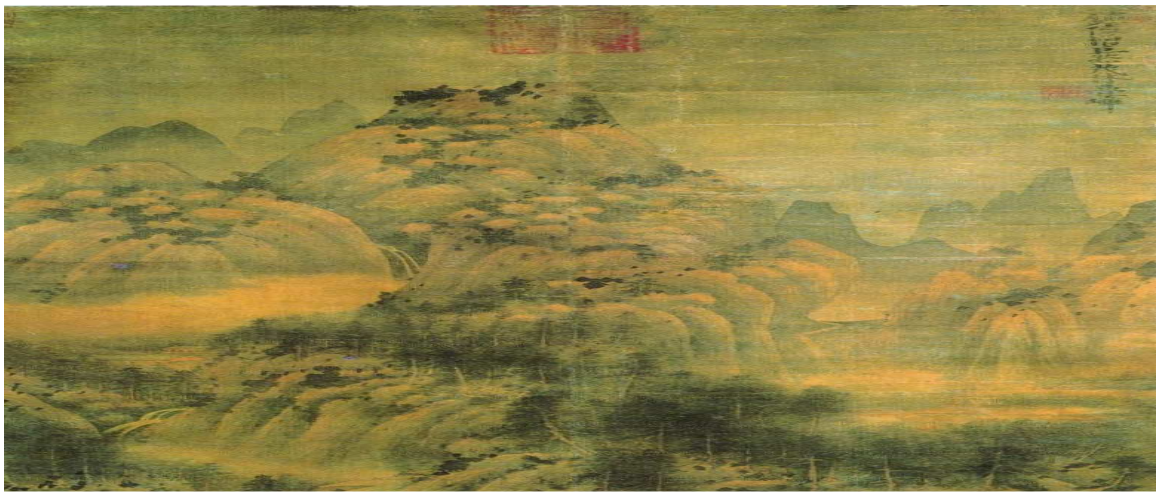

Figure 8: Close up of Zhang Daqian, *Dense Forests and Layered Peaks*, attributed to Juran.

Those who approach the painting by relying mainly on the combination of brushwork, style, and form to date the piece generally argue that *Along the Riverbank* is

[112] Ibid., 191.

[113] Wen C. Fong, "Riverbank: From Connoisseurship to Art History," *Issues of Authenticity in Chinese Painting*, Judith G. Smith and Wen C. Fong ed. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 277.

[114] Ibib.

[115] Ibid.

an authentic 10th century piece. Those who fall on the genuine 10th century painting side of the debate, such as Fong and C.C. Wang argue that the brushstroke execution is too perfectly rendered to be anything other than what it is, a work by Dong Yuan. They claim and argue against those who state that the piece is a forgery, that there is no possible way that Zhang, or any other forger, could execute 10th century brushwork so perfectly and that even if he tried, his own modern techniques would factor into his work and manifest themselves in the painting, something advocates of a Dong Yuan painting just do not see.

Stylistically, those who focus on brushwork and the combination of line and form as a key determinant in the authenticity of the work argue that *Along the Riverbank* expresses the 10th century style of jiangshangaoyin landscape, which was popular in the southern Tang courts at the time the piece was allegedly painted.[116] Although they concede that the piece may not be from Dong Yuan's hands, the fact that the painting so closely matches this style clearly dates it as authentically 10th century.[117] Although advocates of the piece's authenticity broadly generalize *Along the Riverbank's* style, looking closely at the nature of the brushstrokes and formation of the painting overall expands on their argument. The group that focuses on brushwork as the primary criteria for determining authenticity state that, "nearly every stroke of the artist's brush is visible in the finished work," and thus provides a multitude of examples for understanding and accurately dating the piece.[118] For example, Shih Shou-Chien examines the rock formations of the piece to argue for its early date. He argues that the variety of rock

[116] Shih Shou-Chien, "Positioning *Riverbank*," 144.

[117] Ibid., 127.

[118] Little, 208.

formations painted in the work including peaks, ranges, caverns, and cliffs align with descriptions and paintings from the time period.[119] This includes descriptions by 10th century painter Jing Hao (870-930) in his work Bijaji or *A Note on the Art of Brush* [Figure 9].[120]

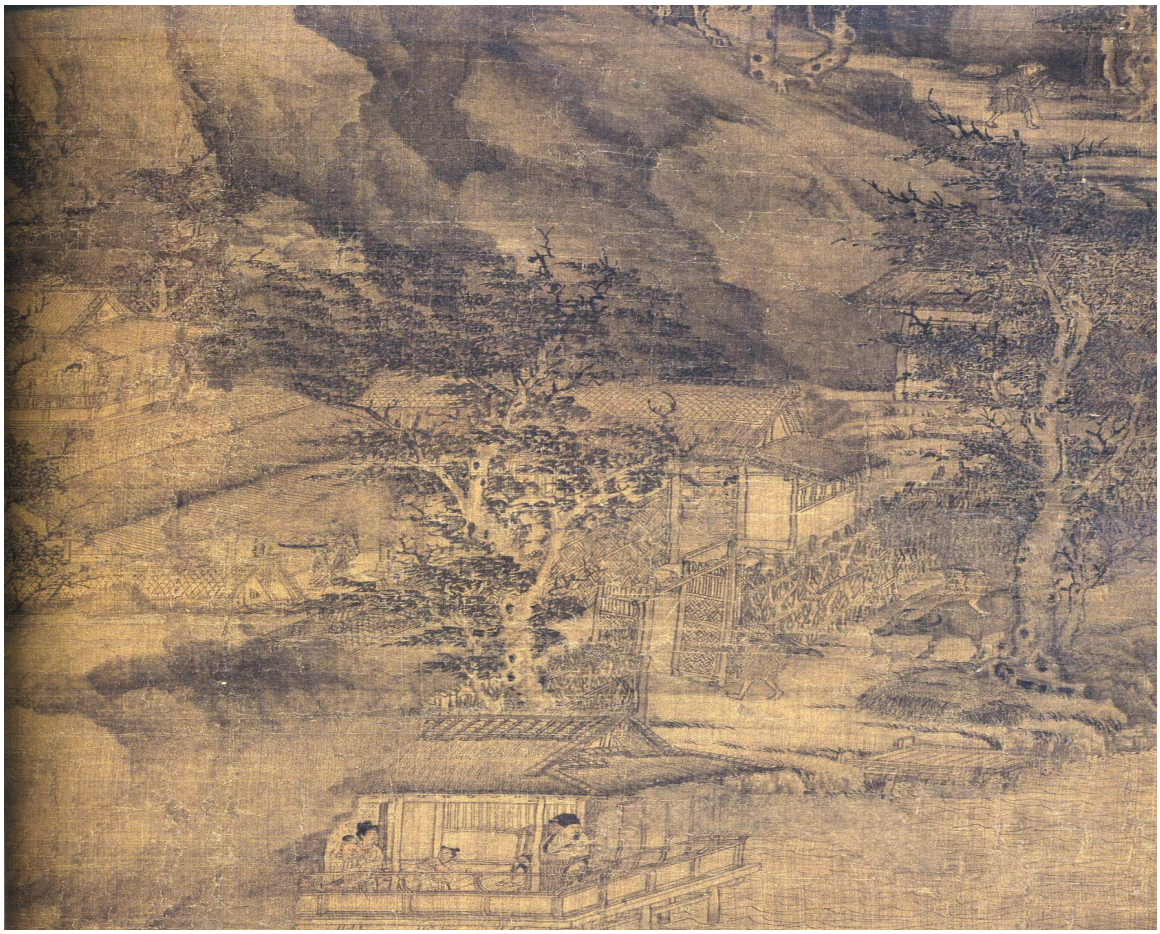

Figure 9: Examples of Rock formations in *Riverbank.*

Fong also points to brushwork details within *Along the Riverbank* to argue its authenticity. Fong looks to the landscape elements of the work to point to its genuine nature. Fong states that organization of the landscape matches with other landscape

[119] Shih Shou-Chien, 126.

[120] Ibid.

formations from the 10th century. He points to the way "the sloping curves from two sides of the mountain path form a series of interlocking V-shaped space pockets twist and turn into distant space," as a compositional element seen often in Tang and early Song paintings.[121] Fong argues that this V-pocket style draws the viewer from the banks of the river up to the mountains and into the distance, a conceptual approach that is typical of the era and not a modern day stylistic element, as others have argued [Figure 10].[122] Fong argues that Chinese painters from the 3rd to the 6th century experimented with landscape elements to create space techniques of "sometric perspective based on direct observation, using diagonal lines that are either parallel to each other or fan out, without converging toward a vanishing point."[123] This technique allows the painter to experiment with how different brushstrokes and landscape elements draw the viewer's eye to create a unique perspective. Fong has also looked at the lighting of *Along the Riverbank* to justify its tenth century date. Fong states that *Along the Riverbank's* lighting matches with other pieces from the period such as *Early Spring*; he demonstrates that light in traditional Chinese pieces, unlike that of European works, does not emanate from a fixed source but instead emanates from within forms [Figure 11]. The altering of light and dark patterns created by the brushwork's textured strokes, ink wash, and convex and concave patterns points to the piece's lack of an external light source and reflects the typical stylistic approach to lighting in China during the time.[124]

[121] Fong, "Riverbank: From Connoisseurship to Art History," 271.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Ibid., 266.

[124] Ibid., 274-5.

Figure 10: Interlocking V's in upper portion of *Riverbank.*

Figure 11: Guo Xi, *Early Spring* (1072). Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk (158.3 x 108.1 cm)

Other connoisseurs have looked to different brushwork elements to argue for the authenticity of *Along the Riverbank* including the work's comparison, stylistically, to other pieces from the 10th century. Richard Barnhart compares *Along the Riverbank's* stylistic elements with those of other works by lesser 10th century masters and concludes that the attributes of the painting indicate that *Along the Riverbank* is a genuine 10th century piece.[125] Still others have argued that the seemingly confusing structure and inconsistencies in the scene are also attributes of the painting's 10th century date and is Dong Yuan's experimentation with atmospheres, rather than a reflection of the forger's inability to correctly recreate the scene.[126]

Overall, those in favor of a more traditional approach to analyzing a piece do not often rely on immeasurable factors in determining the authenticity of a Chinese piece and instead approach the work through more clearly defined means. They argue that because the copyist struggles to exactly recreate the work he is mimicking, the sporadic nature of his brushwork as well as his artistic period will be revealed through a close study of the work's line and form.[127] The mistakes in interpreting the work that is being copied will be visible in the lightness of some strokes or the excess pressure of others and those thoroughly familiar with techniques will understand these as mistakes in the work that reveal the forgery for what it is.[128]

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[125] Fong, "Riverbank," 7,11.

[126] Silbergeld, "The Referee Must Have a Rulebook: Modern Rules for an Ancient Art," 160.

[127] Van Gulik, 399-400.

[128] Ibid., 400.

Incorporating Inner Nature

The second idea that is connected closely to brushwork, but can also function independently of it, is the Chinese concept of the inner nature of the piece and its ability to express the author's inner self or true intent through the construction of the work**.** This unexplainable idea does not mesh comfortably with the Western connoisseur's more scientific approach to interpreting Chinese painting. The incorporation of Chinese concepts of revealing the inner nature of a piece through the close study of brushwork can be seen in the debate over *Along the Riverbank.* The group that believes that the understanding and intense study of brushwork can reveal the inner nature of the piece that a mere scientific approach cannot provide can be characterized by the work done by Cahill. Cahill argues for an emphasis on brushwork based on its "pictorial integrity" and the information that a close study of brushwork provides, but he also argues that the feeling a connoisseur gets when examining a piece is vital in interpreting the work at hand.[129] This group, led by Cahill, carefully studies brushwork as a factor for determining authenticity but they appreciate the immeasurable factors such as the artist's hand and goal in painting the picture as equally valuable in determining the characteristics of a piece that aid in determining authenticity.[130] In contrast to Wen Fong and others who strictly analyze brushwork as a measurable and scientific category in studying a piece, Cahill and others study brushwork as an aspect of the painting that provides the viewer with an immeasurable feeling of the authenticity of the piece. Although this group looks to a detailed analysis of brushstrokes as evidence for their conclusions, it is a close analysis of the piece in context with the immeasurable factors the piece provides that

[129] Lang, 182.

[130] Lang, 183.

supports their conclusion. This group of connoisseurs base their analysis and conclusions on the more "Chinese" and fluid method of analysis, one that believes that a deep understanding of those scientific and measurable aspects of study such as brushwork, reveals the innate nature of the piece and the artist's intent in creating it. By combining a detailed study of the piece with the feeling the piece gives the viewer, connoisseurs of this group argue that the correct analysis of any piece can be determined.

Throughout the symposium regarding the authenticity of *Along the Riverbank*, Cahill's more fluid and feeling-based group of connoisseurs argued that a close examination of the piece reveals inconsistencies and idiosyncrasies that leave the viewer uncomfortable and aware of the painting's forged nature.[131] Before and after the 1999 symposium held by the Met, Cahill has adamantly proclaimed that *Along the Riverbank* is full of mistakes and ambiguities that reveal it as a fake, one created by Zhang to deceive.[132] Cahill, like others in the group, argues that analyzing the painting will give the viewer a feeling that the painting is not genuine because so much of the painting is inconsistent with the time it was supposedly created.[133] He relies on what can be considered as vague notions of ambiguity to find authentic traces within the painting, and in the case of *Riverbank* these traces are missing.[134] Cahill, along with others, argue that *Along the Riverbank* cannot be read as a cohesive 10th century picture; one example he points to is the way in which the river winds into the distance in the upper part of the

[131] To study this in greater detail than presented in this paper please see James Cahill's video on his and other's view of *Along the Riverbank* in http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NfTG4Gv9rA.

[132] Silbergeld, "The Referee Must Have a Rulebook: Modern Rules for an Ancient Art," 151.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Silbergeld, "Three Paradigms for the Consideration of Authenticity in Chinese Art," 73.

painting and suddenly turns into a path with people walking on it [Figure 12].[135] Besides analysis of evidence such as documentation and silk, this group relies on the brushwork and composition of the piece as a measurement of its period style and structure, much like the first group, but they also argue that their understanding of Chinese works gives them the innate knowledge to perceive the work and their feelings towards the piece lead them to the conclusion that it is forged.

Art historian Richard Vinograd argues that "over the whole painting there hangs an air of suggestive obscurity," stating that the painting is filled with hints of earlier styles that allows the viewer to fill in the gaps with images of earlier landscape styles but is lacking in overall quality to satisfy as a painting from the 10th century.[136]

Figure 12: River winding into the distance in *Riverbank.*

[135] James Cahill. "The Case Against *Riverbank:* An Indictment in Fourteen Counts," 17.

[136] James Cahill, "The Case Against *Riverbank*: An Indictment in Fourtenn Counts," *Issues of Authenticity in Chinese Painting,* Judith G. Smith and Wen C. Fong ed. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 16.

Likewise, Robert E. Harrist Jr. uses terms such as "visual ambiguity" when referring to the landscape of *Along the Riverbank,* arguing that although it is arranged compositionally like other 10th century pieces with "the foreground embankment, diagonally thrusting rocks on the other side of the river, and the buildings beyond," the rolling fields of the landscape itself renders the viewer confused about when the piece was created.[137] Sherman Lee concludes that *Along the Riverbank* is "a modern pastiche all too familiar to many of us and unworthy of serious consideration by our serious colleagues," by closely examining the composition of the water in the painting [Figure 13].[138] He states that unlike the composition of water in other 10th century pieces that is "flowy," the water in *Along the Riverbank* has a washboard pattern that is difficult for the viewer to comprehend and has no place within a "10th century" work.[139] During the symposium, Cahill laid out his claim that *Along the Riverbank* was a forgery in fourteen counts "using stylistic analysis, he finds what he considers to be technical tics and flaws that both preclude a 10th century date and correspond to characteristics of

[137] Robert E. Harrist Jr., "Connoisseurship: Seeing and Believing," *Issues of Authenticity in Chinese Painting,* Judith G. Smith and Wen C. Fong ed., (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 305.

[138] Ibid., 294.

[139] Sherman Lee, "*Riverbank*: A Recent Effort in a Long Tradition," *Issues of Authenticity in Chinese Painting,* Judith G. Smith and Wen C. Fong ed., (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 81.

Figure 13: Water details in *Riverbank*

Zhang's work."[140] Specific points in Cahill's fourteen counts of falsification against the piece include: the unfinished quality of the upper right hand corner of the painting that marks it as not a 10th century work, strokes that correspond with the visual ambiguity of Zhang, similar characteristics in *Riverbank* to other works by Zhang in the same period, lack of distinctive forms that characterize 10th century brushwork, composition with animated forms that marks the work as one created after the 10th century, the dramatic and sophisticated lighting in the painting, the use of figures in the work is atypical to paintings of the 10th century, the suspicious quality of the signature and seals on the

[140] "Metropolitan Museum Holds Chinese Art Symposium: Focus is 'Riverbank' painting attributed by Museum to Dong Yuan," *Chinagate*, http://www.thecityreview.com/symposium.html.

painting, and the fact that there was no mention of *Riverbank* and no copied works of the painting identified until its discovery in the 1950s.[141]

Cahill states that the drama of the work is achieved through extreme transitions between light and dark that creates an unexplained luminosity.[142] This dramatic lighting is, to Cahill, not naturalistic and gives an unnatural glow to the painting that renders the viewer confused and does not remind one of a 10th century piece.[143] Cahill also describes the painting's brushwork as "fuzzy" thus revealing the true artist's inability to mimic the 10th century style and hesitation in creating certain elements of the work [Figure 14].[144] Cahill states the painting is "sloppily executed by 10th century standards," and "essentially unreadable."[145] Cahill's analysis of brushwork is also seen in his focus on the extensive amount of fog he sees in the work. He argues that although fog is present in some 10th century landscape paintings, it is restricted to small areas; this is in stark contrast to *Riverbank* in which fog spreads extensively from the upper right-hand corner, which Cahill argues creates an ambiguity in distance and renders the painting unreadable.[146] Finally, Cahill points to the dramatic landscape, which he states is similar to 10th century works, but is unfamiliar in the severity of which it lunges diagonally across the painting.[147] In all of the above mentioned points, Cahill calls on his knowledge

[141] "Metropolitan Museum Holds Chinese Art Symposium: Focus is 'Riverbank' painting attributed by Museum to Dong Yuan," *Chinagate*, http://www.thecityreview.com/symposium.html.

[142] Cahill, "The Case Against Riverbank*:* An Indictment in Fourteen Counts," 39.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Wen C. Fong, "Riverbank," 21.

[145] Silbergeld, "The Referee Must Have a Rulebook: Modern Rules for an Ancient Art," 162.

[146] Cahill, "The Case Against "*Riverbank*:" An Indictment in Fourteen Counts," 16.

[147] Ibid., 33.

of other Zhang pieces, art created during and after the 10th century, and even methods such as documentation and seal inspection to make his claim that the piece is a Zhang recreation and not one from the 10th century.

Figure 14: The dramatic lighting and "fuzzy" upper right-hand corner of *Riverbank*

Cahill and others who believe the work to be a Zhang forgery admit that this forgery by Zhang is one of his best and employs nearly all of his talents as an artist to create the masterpiece. These connoisseurs state that the brushstrokes and styles in this painting can be found separately in all of Zhang's works, but it is in *Riverbank* that a culmination of Zhang's styles and talents are truly represented.[148] These art historians also claim that the difficulties in defining the work as Zhang's arise from his nearly flawless execution of 10th century brush strokes at such a high level that most

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[148] "Metropolitan Museum Holds Chinese Art Symposium: Focus is 'Riverbank' painting attributed by Museum to Dong Yuan," *Chinagate*, http://www.thecityreview.com/symposium.html.

connoisseurs “will immediately, and somewhat unconsciously, associate this stylistic feature with an earlier date.”[149]

[149] Ibid.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Despite the fact that both groups are analyzing the same painting and in some instances using the same techniques, these art historians and connoisseurs have come to radically different conclusions on the authenticity and age of *Along the Riverbank*. One of the reasons for this is because in order to accurately recreate the timeline of Chinese art history, an understanding of the development of artistic styles must be traced but examples of early works are scarce.[150] Over one thousand years of artistic development must be reconstructed, and to this date, this has yet to be accomplished. The schism between connoisseurs over the best way to analyze works that are highlighted in the above debate over *Along the Riverbank* can be seen as a response to the difficulties in studying art pieces with very few examples. Reconciling Chinese ideas regarding a more fluid approach to copied works and their understanding of paintings through the inner spirit of the work with the stricter categorizing and analysis of brushwork has further highlighted the divide between these two groups of connoisseurs and the conclusions they reach when analyzing works. Connoisseurs tend to work within their own perspectives and training, and the divide between how connoisseurs read paintings has grown as the pieces available to analyze remains stagnant.[151] Understanding these difficulties makes the debate over *Along the Riverbank*'s date even more important. As Cahill states, "much hangs in the judgment of *Riverbank*… to admit [it] into the small canon of believers

[150] Wen C. Fong, "*Riverbank*," 6.

[151] Harrist, 294.

signed, early Chinese paintings would allow us- or oblige us- to rewrite our histories."[152] Truly, if *Riverbank* were to be recognized as a genuine 10th century work, the amount of information about early paintings would be greatly increased. As Barnhart writes, "Its [*Along the Riverbank*'s] importance to the history of Chinese landscape painting can scarcely be overstated."[153] The confirmed dating of *Along the Riverbank* would prove to have a significant impact on the field of Chinese art. An authentic painting would provide a great contribution to the understanding of early Chinese art while dating the work as a modern day fabrication would challenge conceptions of what makes valuable art and what deserves to be appreciated.[154] Should *Along the Riverbank* be held in such high esteem if it does prove to be a modern day copy, perhaps by Zhang? And regardless of the previous answer, what is a modern rendition worth and how should it be appreciated? These are just a few of the questions that arise when challenging the authenticity of *Along the Riverbank*. One thing that proves to be true is that regardless of the final identification of the artist and date of *Along the Riverbank*, the continued study of this work will increase the knowledge and understanding of Chinese landscape paintings.[155]

Although the identity of the true creator of *Along the Riverbank* remains a mystery, the surrounding debate reveals a great deal about the problematic nature of the field of Chinese art history, especially within Western contexts. This piece's controversies continue to raise the stakes in understanding and examining Chinese works of art. The 1999 symposium at the Met highlighted the difficulties the field continues to

[152] Wen C. Fong, "*Riverbank*," 12.

[153] Silbergeld, "The Referee Must Have a Rule Book: Modern Rules for an Ancient Art," 154.

[154] Wen C. Fong, "*Riverbank*," 288.

[155] Silbergeld, "The Referee Must Have a Rule Book: Modern Rules for an Ancient Art," 152.

face and the improvements that must be made in the techniques of examining works to garner a closer study of Chinese works. Chinese paintings in general have challenged conceptualizations of authenticity and originality. Western art historians, connoisseurs, and museum professionals have been challenged by Chinese paintings to think beyond the rigid guidelines set for Western art and to seek new definitions of what makes art important and relevant. A more fluid acceptance of the copy continues to impact approaches to connoisseurship and intensifies divisions between art connoisseurs over how to analyze Chinese landscape paintings.

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