

The rise of art's sophistication and importance in china's ming dynasty



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Painting is a process and art which involves smearing colorful paints on a surface or surfaces in a manner that creates meaning (Ta-kung 455). In most cases, the meaning that is communicated through painting is open to anyone looking at the painting. However, sometimes paintings have been used to showcase sophisticated works of art which requires literary skills to understand the intention of the painter. Such paintings may require technical knowhow or certain religious experience for the reader to accurately interpret the intention of the painter. This brings us to the point that painting can be used for various purposes i. e. academic, social and religious purposes among others.

The art of painting has a long history. In fact painting can trace its origin back to the time of man's evolution. Historians say that man painted the walls of his shelter with pictures of animals such as elephants, lions and leopards among others. The evidence of such paintings has been found on the walls of caves, cliffs and on rocks. The argument of the historians is that the pictures of the wild animals would scare away other animals which would come to attack man in his residential place. This is a sure test that no art of painting goes without communicating a meaning.

Since then painting was not left behind even after evolution of man. Just like man's evolution, the art of painting has also evolved through various periods. The change has been on the type of materials used in painting and the sophistication of the designs painted (Ta-kung 500). The reason for painting has also evolved from merely scaring animals to representation of sophisticated designs of houses and other works of art. The field of painting

remains one of the most thrilling areas of art which shows the uniqueness of human beings.

Development of Art in China during the Ming period

In china, the art of painting not only owns a good history but also owns value. As early as 15th century, the art of painting had gained enough popularity in the Far East especially in China (Scarce 416). The art of painting was so popular in the region that painting artists were held with high esteem in the community. This popularity of painting is usually attributed to religious leaning that was accorded to this noble art. People believed that the art of painting was not just a normal art like any other. It was an art that was initiated and guided by religious forces.

One of the most remarkable periods in the history of Chinese painting is the period of Ming. It is during this period that the Ming Dynasty also received a lot of recognition and honor. The period was characterized by a lot of art activities including painting and poetry among others. It is also during this period that schools of art such as Wu School of Art existed. Such schools were held with greatness and the people who taught or learnt in them received the same portion of honor and greatness.

Wen Cheng- Ming who contributed a great deal in Chinese literati painting was also born during this period. Other personalities who dominated the arts arena during this period included Shen Chou (who was Cheng's mentor), Huang Kung-Wang and Kao K'o-Kung among others (Watson 416). The art of painting was studied and practiced and studied by different groups of people. Although Wen and his friends' works were associated with the Ming

Dynasty, they also borrowed some skills from others who had gone ahead of them and others who were allied to the Juan Dynasty. This attitude of readiness to learn enabled the artists to acquire more knowledge and become more skillful. There were two major styles of art that existed in China: professional painting and the literati painting. Wen Cheng loved and practiced literati painting.

Ming's Contribution to Literati Painting

Wen Cheng-Ming was born in 1470 and lived until 1559. He joined the literati wing of painters who did traditional painting. In most cases the themes in literati paintings were representations of traditional beliefs and practices. Wen pursued this art at the Wu School of literati painters. He made great contribution in the field of Chinese painting art called literati painting. He usually referred to as a great artist who existed in the period of middle and late Ming. His works of painting are still living and have continued to attract the eyes of many who love the art of painting. One unique characteristic of his painting is the strictness with which he associates his work to religion.

Wen uses the art of painting to works to highlight and emphasize the precepts and values of Confucianism which was the dominant religion of the Chinese at the time he lived. The religion emphasizes on integrity and truthfulness in the academic field (Scarce 417). Such was the practice at the school of traditional painting.

Another theme that dominated traditional writing was the respect for all life forms. Confucianism confers respect on all living things and discourages the killing of living things. This precept of the Confucians was propagated by

Wen Cheng in his works of art (Loehr 45). For instance his most popular paintings were pictures of grass and leaves in the natural environment. In addition, the arts of work of Wen were solely on landscape paintings. This is manifestation of the inward love that he had for the living things. This love was such intimate because it was grounded on religious believes.

During his childhood, Wen's life was influenced by the life of his mentor Shen Chou who was one of the great artists of the Ming period. He must have been introduced to the art of traditional writing by Chou. However, Wen's life that was much spent together with his mentor did not impact on his preference of painting. For instance, his paintings did not owe any resemblance to the painting of Shen Chou.

Wen is also known for his emphasis on scholarly writing among the literati painters. His interest and determination for scholarly writing is seen when he serves as an administrator at Han-lin Academy. He also proceeds with scholarly painting when he joins the Wu School of traditional painters as the head. Wen's scholarly work of art has earned him the image of being more knowledgeable than his mentors (Ta-kung 535). His paintings appear to be more explicit and artistic than fellow traditional painters of his time.

Wen's works of art are not only appreciated by Chinese people but also people from other countries. Other places where his works have been enjoyed include Europe and America among others. For instance, the Scottish royal museum bought some Chinese works of art which included Wen's painting.

Following Wen Cheng Ming's argument it is important to notice the integral role of art in day to day life of humans. The role of art in communicating societal themes is not restricted to the Chinese culture in the 15th and 16th century. It is also applicable in our society. Human beings are artistic and cannot be separated from arts. I know that one may find it difficult to understand that all human beings are artistic after a long discussion of Chinese traditional painting. It is therefore important to mention that art is not only painting, but includes all kinds of human creativity.

We also notice that art is used to represent various feelings that are necessary for human wellness. For instance religion has played an important role in human life over the years. But religious beliefs of people are represented and communicated within and across generations through a people's work of art. Even in the contemporary society, the religious activities and components such as songs and dances are representation of people's art. Sometimes art is mistaken to be the traditional ways of doing things. This is not true.

Conclusion

The power of art should not be underrated. Art influences a person's mind. It is this property of art that has been utilized by advertiser to woo people into buying certain goods that otherwise they could not have bought. They do artistically work which are appealing and attractive to the eyes. This does the trick of humbly coaxing people into making decisions that otherwise they would not make. Art is therefore a strong power that no human being can resist.

One can use art to communicate his or her inward feelings. For instance, people have used songs to express their emotional feelings (Sickman 43). Drawings and pictures have also been used in the contemporary society to express peoples view. Art is also used to give illustrations and explanation. Writers of books have included diagrams and photographs to express the message that is being expressed by the writer. Work of art also helps in entertainment. Paintings and pictures are pleasing to look at and brings a sense of refreshment. Generally, the study of Chinese art shows that art has been and will continue be part of human life.