

中国画家·古代卷

CHINESE PAINTERS: VOLUME OF ANCIENT TIMES

WEN ZHENGMING

苏州博物馆◎编 故宫出版社

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文徵明（1470-1559），初名璧，字徵明，四十二岁起以字行，更字徵仲，先世为衡山人，故号衡山居士。出生于长洲官宦世家，早年困顿场屋，屡试不售，五十四岁以岁贡生荐试吏部，授翰林院待诏。三年后即谢病归，优游于艺文之中，主持吴中风雅三十余年。诗受法于都穆，文受业于吴宽；学书于李应祜，学画于沈周。其书法诸体皆能，远法晋唐，小楷、隶书，颇负盛名，行书得《圣教》遗意，大字则多仿黄庭坚。绘画尤长于山水，上师宋元，构图平稳，笔墨秀润，兼擅花卉、兰竹、人物等。家刻有《停云馆帖》，著《甫田集》三十五卷。

吴门画派盟主文徵明

单国霖

十六世纪上半叶，吴门画派进入了全盛时期，文徵明是继沈周之后吴门画派的核心人物。他继承了沈周的创作宗旨，进一步将文人画新潮推向深度发展，并由于他高洁端直的人品、广泛深厚的艺文修养、谦和敦厚的性格，为朝野人士所敬重，声誉隆高。他的绘画和书法艺术传承不绝，直接嗣承他书画风格的亲属就有子文彭、文嘉、侄文伯仁，学生陈淳、陆师道、陆治、钱穀、侯懋功、朱朗、周天球等人，私淑者更是众多，形成了以文徵明为核心的庞大画家队伍，后人称之为“吴派”。

文徵明（1470—1559），初名璧，字徵明，后以字行，更字徵仲，号衡山居士，长洲（今江苏苏州）人，出身于官宦家庭，父亲文林曾任南京太仆寺丞、永嘉知县、温州知府等职。他自幼接受良好的教育，九岁拜师吴宽学习诗文，十九岁向李应祯学习书法，二十岁从沈周学画。他的诗出入柳宗元、白居易、元稹之间，“传情而发，娟秀妍雅”，与祝允明、唐寅、徐祯卿被誉为“吴中四才子”。他曾期望通过科举进入仕途，然后从二十五岁至五十三岁，十次应试都未中举。五十四岁时被江苏巡抚李充嗣荐举，以岁贡入京，待诏翰林院，参预修纂《武宗实录》。在京四年，他不惯朝廷礼仪的约束，厌恶应制文字的乏味，经历了嘉靖初“大礼议”案的政治风波，目睹官场争斗之险恶，决然辞职南返。回到家乡后，潜心于诗文书画等艺事。

吴门画派继承了元代文人画“遣兴移情”的创作思想，沈周曾谓：“山水之胜，得之目，寓诸心，而形于笔墨之间者，无非兴而已矣。”（自题画卷跋《珊瑚网》卷十四）但随着社会时代环境的变迁，文人画的内涵也相应发生着变化。元末文人山水画流行隐居乐道、草堂雅集、林泉丘壑等主题，以传导寄情山野的高逸之志和清虚超脱或躁动不安等情绪，境界多为淡逸寥寂。文徵明的绘画主题，除了描绘高士的隐逸生活外，还把视野扩大到文人生活的各个方面，如庭园雅居、文人集会、赋诗饮酒、赏花望月、品茶听泉、游山览水、访友送别等，更注意文人生活的现实性和具体性。同时在意境上，也摆脱了元人一味以淡逸空寂为高的程式，而赋于平和明朗的气氛。在一定程度上是明代中期社会趋于安定繁荣、文人生活宁静安适的社会现实的折射，是当时文人理想精神的物化形态。

文徵明的绘画，擅长山水、人物、花卉、兰竹各科，尤以山水著称。他长期活动在吴中和江浙地区，对自然景物有着深切的感受，他创作了许多实景山水画，更为广泛生动地描绘江南的湖光山色和名胜佳地。例如《石湖清胜图卷》（1532年），描写苏州西郊石湖景色，山麓逶迤伸入湖面，越城桥和行春桥右接山麓，左连堤岸和小岛，长堤上树木葱郁，行人漫步，湖中帆影点点，传写出石湖烟波万顷、水天一色、碧岫浮空的秀媚明丽景色。此外，《吴中胜概图卷》、《江南春图卷》、《灵岩山图卷》等作品，都以自然景物为蓝本，注入清雅、温馨的情感，情景交融，引人入胜。

表现文人居住环境和文人雅事活动的题材，在文徵明的作品里得到进一步的扩展和深化。书斋庭园类的代表作品，如为官至尚宝卿的白悦（贞夫）所绘的《洛原草堂图卷》（1529年），树木茂密，溪流迂曲，筑草堂水轩，文士们或堂内晏坐，或水边漫步，或水轩观景，生动地写出清幽之环境和文士徜徉于青山绿水间的怡然心境。又如《浒溪草堂图卷》（1535年），系为沈天民写所居草堂，绘水溪边柏树荫下座落草舍数间，室内文

士晤谈，童子烹茶，桥上有行客，河中行小舟，一片江南田野农家风光，表现出沈氏“城居而不忘桑梓之意”的理想居地意境。此外还有为户部尚书王玮《句曲山房图卷》（1541年）、为武城县令吴俦所绘的《沧溪图卷》（1544年）等，这些作品，都以充满情感的笔墨，传写出士宦、文人书斋庭园的清幽景致和高雅的生活情趣。

在文徵明的笔下，文人游冶、赏景、交游、雅集、送别等文化活动和风雅精神得到充分的表现。如《人日诗画图卷》，写弘治十八年（1505年）人日（正月初七）文徵明与文友朱存理、吴次明、钱同爱、门生陈淳及其弟陈津同集于文氏停云馆，谈晤饮茶甚欢，于是乘兴各自赋诗抒怀，文徵明诗中有“寂寞一杯人日雨，风流千载草堂诗”之句，正道出了至友雅集的怡然心情。又如《惠山茶会图卷》，写正德十三年（1518年）二月十九日清明，他与蔡羽、王守、王宠等七人游览无锡惠山煮茶品茗的情景。苍松翠柏，丛竹围绕泉亭，诸人有的围井论画，有的山路闲步，童子忙着支炉煮茶，生动地再现了“天下第二泉”的秀美景色和文人雅集的情景。又此外，《中庭步月图轴》（1532年）、《林庭燕坐图轴》（1555年）、《水亭诗思图轴》（1558年）等作品，俱以抒情的手法，多方面地表现文人优游于山林泉石和艺文交往的生活情景，传导出文人的情愫和理想。

在文徵明的作品里，也有一些以文学名篇为主题的画幅。如早年的《豳风图轴》，署款“文壁”，以《诗经·豳风十月篇》为题，借题表现山村农耕的景象。山峦皴染缜密，笔力浑厚；晚年所作的《桃源问津图卷》（1554年），除画出一洞口象征为桃花源境地外，画面并无世外桃源的神秘景致，全是山野农村的风物。《赤壁赋图卷》（1558年），突出赤壁夜游的空濛寂静。他对名篇的诗意都作了自己的诠释，注入了世俗生活的情感。

陈继儒在《妮古录》里归纳文徵明学习传统的过程说：“文待诏自元四大家以至子昂、伯驹、董源、巨然及马、夏间三出入。”他的早期作品中，含有较重的师法前人技法的痕迹，如学王蒙的《仿黄鹤山樵山水图轴》（1502年）、取法黄公望的《天平纪胜图轴》（1508年）、追宗董源的《豳风图轴》等。中晚年时期，进一步广收博览，在主宗赵孟頫、王蒙、黄公望的同时，兼学李唐、马远、吴镇等家，他错综古人，又融入对自然的体察、感受和内心情思，逐步形成自己的艺术风格。正如其子文嘉所说：“性喜画，然不肯规规摹拟，遇古人妙迹，惟览观其意，而师心自诣，辄神会意解，至穷微造妙处，天真烂漫，不减古人。”

文徵明山水画以浅绛和细笔水墨山水为主体，被称之为“细文”。这两种画法渊源同一，取赵孟頫之婉约、黄公望之松秀，又从王蒙的细密演变成简约的形式。其浅绛设色运用色彩分面法，以重赭分浅赭，青色分成花青、墨青和汁绿等多层色阶，呈现色彩明度的微妙变化，产生流光溢彩的生动效果。即使是水墨单色，墨色的浓淡干湿，也有丰富的层次，加之点叶、夹叶、勾叶的画法层出不穷，互相参差错落交织，造成空间的深度感。文徵明的细笔山水，笔法工细松秀而不板滞，色彩明洁而无富艳气，墨气清润而不混浊，具有俊逸秀润的风神，成为“文派山水”的主体风格。《洛原草堂图卷》（1529年）《寒林晴雪图轴》（1531年）、《句曲山房图卷》（1541年）、《江南春词图卷》（1544年）、《林庭燕坐图轴》（1555年）等，都体现出了他的浅绛和细笔山水的艺术特征。

文徵明另有一类粗放简疏风格的作品，被称为“粗文”，则发扬了宋元水墨写意画的长处，融书法笔意于画中，水墨酣畅。同时兼取马、夏刚健险侧的笔法，于秀逸中含雄健，作品颇有豪放的气势。代表作品如《双柯竹石图》（1531年）、《虞山七星桧图卷》（1532年）等。他于二米的泼墨山水也颇为推重，屡有仿米之作。如《云山图轴》，署款“文壁”，图上并有沈周、唐寅题识，应是他四十岁之前所作。勾皴线条粗率，以横笔点苔，淡花青渍染远山，墨气淋漓，是他粗笔山水的别格。

文徵明的写景和抒情山水画，图式结构追求平实均衡的形式感，很少作重山复水、峰回路转、境界深邃的景色。即使是景物繁复的山水，也力求布景平衡，后景和前景同样清晰，呈现出一种视觉直观的平面感。境界以平和宁馨为主调，体现出他温厚儒雅的人品气质。

文徵明的老师沈周在发展水墨山水的同时，于青绿山水倾注了颇多的心力，创作出《东山携妓图轴》、《桐荫策杖图轴》、《落花图卷》等一系列带有新意境和新技法的青绿山水作品，开拓了明季改革青绿山水画传统的途径。这一事业由文徵明继续下去，他在更加广博的传统滋养根基上，融入自己的才情和艺术意趣，努力改造传统，拓展技法，建立起新颖的青绿山水画风格范式，为振兴青绿山水作出了贡献。

他的青绿山水画宗法元赵孟頫，兼取南宋赵伯驹、赵伯骕技法，综合陶熔，形成笔法工细松秀、设色浏亮明丽的风格。他的青绿山水有小青绿和重青绿两种风貌，小青绿山水以赵孟頫为宗，笔法简略疏放，率意而朴拙，设色以赭色为主，略敷浅石绿，石绿和赭石的色调过渡自然混融，表达出一种清旷高逸的意境，代表作品有《浒溪草堂图卷》（1535年）、《木泾幽居图卷》（1537年）、《赤壁赋图卷》（1558年）等。

另一种重青绿山水画法，具有工整细劲和色彩盈满的特点。主要继承赵伯驹、赵伯骕的造型、笔墨和设色方法。典型之作有《惠山茶会图卷》（1518年），此图山石骨体以线条勾斫为主，略加干墨短笔细皴，岩石和山坡罩染较重的石青石绿，夹染少许赭石，松树和草亭遍染赭石，全图色彩亮丽。这是他师承宋人之法而加以改造的变格之作。《花坞春云图卷》（1532年），亦为重青绿山水，只是勾廓皴染较简略，青绿设色浓重。而作于晚年八十一岁的《万壑争流图轴》（1550年），布景更为繁复，山峦重叠，呈层层向上叠积之势，溪流迂曲，树木茂密，文士溪边行游晤谈，将文人游冶活动置于青山绿水明艳的环境中，增强山水的世俗情趣。全图用笔缜密苍劲，色彩厚重沉凝，气格雄浑，已成为文徵明白创的青绿山水新格调。

文徵明偶作人物，主要学习李公麟流畅劲挺的线描技法，又融入元人的简洁洒脱，如他四十八岁时所画的《湘君湘夫人图轴》，就有高古清逸的气息。到他晚年，如八十岁所作的《老子像轴》（1549年），线条趋于细劲简练，造型注重刻划老子静穆沉思的神情。

他的花鸟画多以竹、菊、兰、玉兰为主要题材，很少画禽鸟。这类作品，追求书法的笔墨趣味，画兰花如写行草，秀拔潇洒；写竹如书八分，沉着浑厚，画石多用干笔，时露飞白。《双柯竹石图轴》（1531年）、《兰竹图册》等，即充分体现他融入书法性笔意的艺术特征。他画花卉多用勾花点叶法，或没骨设色法，上承沈周，下启陈淳、周之冕，推进了文人花鸟画的发展。

明代中期，吴中书坛有号称“吴中四家”者，即为祝允明、文徵明、王宠、陈淳四人，而影响最深最广的为文徵明。他在青年时向李应祯学习书法，后来遍学晋、唐、宋各家，兼善篆、隶、楷、行、草诸体。他的小楷最为人称道，时有“小楷名动海内”之誉。他楷书取习钟繇、智永、虞世南、欧阳询、褚遂良各家，早年体态略扁，起笔尖细，如《小楷铁崖诸公花游唱和诗卷》（1514年）；中年后用笔趋于劲健，形姿端整；至晚年结体匀整，笔法圆润苍厚，流露出儒雅温纯的气格。他的小楷师法钟繇者，结体平正谨严，笔法劲利，有隶书笔意。以师法二王为主者，结体变化较多正中寓奇，笔法秀劲灵动。

文徵明的行草书，早年师法苏轼、宋克，风格清劲文秀；中岁后以学习王羲之为主，汇以苏、黄、米和赵孟頫的笔意，结体平中寓奇，清逸姿媚，兼施劲拔和圆婉的笔法，刚柔相济，风格古健遒伟。《行书咏文信国事四首卷》署款“文璧”，应是他50岁以前中年时所书。书体清瘦秀劲，含有王羲之俊逸的意韵，又参入其师李应祯劲峭的笔法，加之咏文信公（文天祥）的诗，写得忠愤沉痛，不同于他平素诗之清婉俊逸，为难得的诗书俱佳的杰作。此外，《行书自书诗卷》（南京博物院藏）有较浓重的王羲之遗韵，写得清新俊逸，据卷后王同愈考，此卷应作于正德己卯（1519年），是他五十岁中年时之书。至晚年，行笔愈为老劲娴熟，如行书《张一川小传册》（1559年）。中年后他写大字，转取黄庭坚体，笔致变为方劲挺拔，字势开张恢宏，追求奔放豪迈的气势，然不免有峻刻之气，如晚年所书《自书诗卷》（辽宁省博物馆藏）。

明代擅隶书者不多，文徵明是写隶书的高手。他取习魏晋的《受禅表》、《上尊号奏》等碑，字体方正，挑拔平硬，表现一种凝重端庄的美。如书于七十八岁的《四体千字文卷》（1547年）反映了他在篆隶书方面的深厚功力。

王世贞《艺苑卮言》中评文徵明书法道：“于整栗遒劲中，不失虚和舒徐意致。”即指出文徵明行草书，严整、肃然的结体与用笔，与飘逸柔婉的笔法和舒放自然的行气相结合，于遒劲中具有含蓄蕴藉的风神，体现出文人的“士气”，同时又适度增以婉美之意，使文人书法的高雅趣味显得平易近人，以适应当时平民审美的需求。因而，文徵明的行书风格靡行一时，从学者众多，影响波及江、浙、闽一带，成为流播甚广的文派书风。

Wen Zhengming, chief of Wu School Painting

Shan Guolin

In the first half of the 16th century, the “Wu School Painting” ushered in its heyday, and Wen Zhengming succeeded Shen Zhou as its torch bearer. In line with Shen Zhou’s major artistic philosophies, Wen Zhengming pushed the tide of literati painting to a new height. Moreover, his nobility, integrity, artistic accomplishments, humility and courtesy brought him enormous respects from high-rank officials in court. His painting and calligraphy skills were passed down through those who emulated his artistic styles, most of whom were friends and relatives, such as his sons, Wen Peng and Wen Jia; his nephew Wen Boreng; and his students, Chen Chun, Lu Shidao, Lu Zhi, Qian Gu, Hou Maogong, Zhu Lang and Zhou Tianqiu. And those who emulate him in private were enumerable. All his students and emulators added up to a prominent group of painters centering round him, and later called “Wu School”.

Wen Zhengming (1470-1559), name Bi, style name Zhengming, later changed Zhengzhong, and name Zhengming, sobriquet Heng Shang recluse. He was born in a an official’s family in Chang Zhou (now Suzhou, Jiangsu), his father Wen Lin once took official positions such as Tai Pu Si Cheng(Secretary of the Court of Imperial horse-raising), magistrate of Yong Jia county and magistrate of Wen Zhou prefecture. Wen Zhengming was well-educated since his childhood; he started to study poetry and literature under Wu Kuan (1435-1504) at the age of nine, calligraphy from Li Yingzhen (1431-1493) at nineteen, and painting from Shen Zhou (1427-1509) at twenty. Wen Zhengming’s poetic style was usually compared with those of Liu Zongyuan (773-819), Bai Juyi (772-846)and Yuan Zhen (779-831), “imbued with affections, gracious and elegant”, and his poetic achievements earned him an honorable title as one of the “Suzhou Four Wits” along with Zhu Yunming (1460-1527), Tang Yin (1470-1523) and Xu Zhengqin (1479-1511). He was once ambitiously in the hope of entering officialdom via Imperial Exam, however, ten times of attempts from the age of twenty-five through fifty-three all ended up with disgraceful failures. At the age of fifty-four, he was recommended by Li Chongsi, Grand Coordinator of Jiangsu, and took a post in the Ming Capital as a Sui Gong (tribute student), and later worked as a Dai Zhao in Han Lin Yuan (Imperial Academy), mainly responsible for the compilation and editing of *Official Biography of Wu Zong*. During his four-year stay in Capital, Wen Zhengming felt confined by court etiquettes and despised the rigid and dull official literary works. In the “Debate on Grand Etiquette”, a political turmoil under Jia Jing’s early reign, he witnessed cold-blooded power struggles and vicissitudes of officials’ lives, which prompted him to abandon his post resolutely and retreat to home in South. After that, he devoted himself to his beloved art creations, like poetry,

painting and calligraphy.

The “Wu School Painting” succeeded the artistic philosophy of “Maneuvering Mood and Spirit” in Yuan-Dynasty literati paintings, Shen Zhou once claimed that, the beauty of mountains and waters is first caught by eyes and absorbed by hearts, then takes shape under brush and ink, all out of nothing but right mood and spirit (quoted from inscription on Shan Hu Wang roll No. 14). However, the connotations of literati paintings also evolved with social and cultural changes. In late years of Yuan dynasty, popular themes in landscape literati paintings covered Taoist reclusive life, thatched cottage and literary gatherings, landscape, spring and hills. These are meant to convey a noble pursuit of freedom in mountains and waters, as well as a sense of void, transcendence or restlessness with a touch of reclusive mood. Wen Zhengming’s paintings also depicted reclusive lives of hermits, while turned his attention to a broader scope of literati lives, for example, gardens and studies, literary gatherings, poem writing and wine drinking, flower and moon appreciation, tea-tasting and listening to the spring, touring mountains and waters, visiting friends and bidding farewell, all recorded literati lives in a more realistic and specific manner. Meanwhile, sentiment-wise, Wen Zhengming’s works break away from Yuan-dynasty painters’ sole pursuit of the cherished reclusive mood, and create an air of peacefulness and clarity. His works, in some way, reflect a peaceful and comfortable literati life in a stable and well-being mid-Ming society, and represent an ideal state of mind that takes its form in art works.

A highly skilled painter with an extensive repertoire, Wen Zhengming was accomplished in landscapes, figure paintings, flowers, orchids and bamboos, among which the landscape is the most well-known. His footprints were mainly confined in the region covering today’s Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces; nevertheless, his special affections for the natural beauty enabled him to create a large number of landscape paintings depicting real scenes, which vividly recreated the beautiful scenery and places of interest in the region. Take *Refreshing Scenery of Shi Hu Lake* (1532), it is a recreation of scenery on Shi Hu lake, which lies in west suburb of Suzhou. In this landscape painting, the mountains extend a zigzag into the lake, while the Yuecheng Bridge and Xingchun Bridge connect the mountain on the right side, and connect bank and small island on the left. Pedestrians are roaming on the bank and the lake is dotted with sails. Other works, such as *Delightful Scenery of Suzhou, Illustrating the Ci Poem “Spring in Jiangnan”*, and *Scenery of Mount Lingyan*, all used natural sceneries as blueprint, the deep affections, infused with remarkable painting skills, made the picture even more enchanting.

Themes pertinent to literati residence and gatherings were further expanded and explored. *Landscape with Thatched Cottage Dedicated to Bai Yue* (1529), a masterpiece of Wen Zhengming’s studio theme, was dedicated to Baiyue (style name Zhengfu), then an official with a title of Shang Bao Qing. In the thatched cottage and the pavilion by a stream surrounded by dense trees and grasses, literati were seen sitting squarely in the cottage, or walking by the waterside, or appreciating the sights in pavilion. The tranquil surroundings and literati’s relaxed mood were perfectly presented. *Landscape with Thatched Cottage Dedicated to Shen Tianmin* (1535) depicted a rural landscape in Jiangnan, where

literati were chatting while the young servant was preparing the tea in a cypress-shaded cottage, which put forward Gentleman Shen's ideal of "being a town dweller in reminiscence of rural joy". Other works, such as *Landscape dedicated to Gentleman Wuchou* (1544) and *Cottage in Mount Gouqu* (1541), which were drawn with affectionate touches, portrayed a sense of tranquility from literati's studios and officials' residences and the joy of life.

Under Wen Zhengming's highly skilled Chinese brush, literati's spiritual world is fully unveiled through the depiction of literati activities, such as their excursions, sight-seeing, visits, gatherings and farewell. *Literary Gathering on the Seventh Day of the First Lunar Month* (1505) is a portrait of a gathering in Studio of Moored Clouds (Tinyun Guan), where Wen Zhengming, together with Zhu Cunli, Wu Ciming, Qian Tongai, Wen's student Chen Chun and Chen's younger brother Chen Jin, gathered for tea-tasting and each wrote a poem to mark the joyful event. One stanza from Wen Zhengming's poem reads "tasting a cup of tea on the seventh day of the first lunar month, poems in thatched cottage will remain glamorous over the next thousand years," perfectly expressing the delight of literati gatherings. *Tea Gathering at Mount Hui* (1518), is a portrait of a gathering held on February 19th (13th year under Zheng De's reign), recording a group of 7 gathered for tea-tasting on Mount Hui in Wuxi including Cai Yu (?-1541), Wang Shou, Wang Chong (1494-1533), etc. Around the densely pine-and-cypress-shaded and bamboo-surrounded "The Second Spring under Heaven", some scholars were exchanging painting skills, some roaming along the paved hill path, while the young servant were making tea. Other works, such as *Stroll in the Moonlit Courtyard* (1532), *Sitting in the Shaded Bower* (1555), and *Musing on Poetry in Waterside Pavilion* (1558), all depicted scenes of literati's visits and interactions, and expressed their affections and ideals.

In some of Wen's works, the themes are recreations of traditional literary works. *Illustrating an Ode in the Tune of the Ancient State of Bin*, one of his early works with a signature Wen Bi, found a theme in the *Book of Odes, Chapter of Bin Tune in October*, portraying a plowing scene in mountainous countryside with dense lines and heavy strokes. *Illustrating "Land of Peach Blossom Spring" (Taohuayuan Ji)* (1554), a work in Wen's late years, delineated a typical countryside scene except for a tiny entrance to the legendary wonderland. *Illustrating "Rhapsody on the Red Cliff"* (1558) highlighted the illusiveness and tranquility during a visit to the red cliff. Suffice it to say, Wen Zhengming illustrated classic literary works with a deep affection for daily life.

In *Ni gu Lu*, Chen Jiru (1558-1639) deciphered how Wen Zhengming formed his styles: Wen assimilated style from those of Yuan Dynasty Four Masters, Zhiang, Boju, Dong Yuan, Ju Ran and Ma Yuan & Xia Gui. In Wen's early works, techniques used by ancient painter can be traced, for instance, *Landscape in the style of Wang Meng* (1502) modeled after Wang Meng (1308-1385), *Landscape of Mount Tianping* (1508) is an emulation of Huang Gongwang (1269-1354) and the technique in *Illustrating an Ode in the Tune of the Ancient State of Bin* can attributed to Dong Yuan (?-962). In his mid-and-late ages, Wen Zhengming had possessed a vast knowledge of his predecessors' techniques. Modeling after Zhao Mengfu, Wang Meng and Huang Gongwang and combining with styles of Li Tang, Ma Yuan and Wu Zhen as such, he was able to blend old painting traditions with his own

observations of the nature, inner feelings and emotions, and finally forged a unique artistic style. As Wen Jia, his son, put it, "(He) is born to paint, but never compromise with tradition. Whenever he encounters a remarkable work, he studies it, meditates on it and learns it. Then, he will innovate and paint his own with equal subtlety."

In most of his landscape paintings, Wen Zhengming applied blue-light and thin strokes, which are generally called "Xi Wen" (thin strokes). In fact, these two painting styles originated from one source. He modeled after Zhang Mengfu's subtlety and Huang Gongwang's elegance, and transformed Wangmeng's thin and dense strokes into pure simplicity. His blue-light style used color changes to highlight different subjects, from deep red to light red, from flower blue, ink blue to leaf green. The subtle change of colors made the final effect dazzling and vivid. The use of monochrome ink, wet or dry, light or deep, created a rich sense of layers. Leaves, dotted, overlaid or outlined, brings a visual depth in space. Wen's thin-stroke landscape paintings, famous for their elegant but not-dull strokes, bright but not-extravagant colors, and pure but not-turbid ink, represented the main style of "Wen School Landscape". *Landscape with Thatched Cottage Dedicated to Bai Yue* (1592), *Frozen Grove on a Clear Day after Snow* (1531), *Cottage in Mount Gouqu* (1544), *Illustrating the Ci Poem "Spring in Jiangnan"* (1544), *Sitting in the Shaded Bower* (1555), fully exemplified this style.

The other style, characterized with simple and sparse strokes, is known as "Cu Wen" (broad strokes). This style retains characteristics of Song and Yuan freehand ink paintings, and borrows certain bold styles in calligraphy. Wen also followed Ma Yuan and Xia Gui's masculine and solid strokes, as a result, his elegant paintings radiates with overwhelming masculinity. *Double Oak Trees, Bamboo and Stones* (1531), and *The Seven Junipers* (1532) best exemplified this style. Out of special preference of Mi Fu (1051-1107) and Mi Youren's (1074-1153) splash-ink landscapes, Wen Zhengming emulated the father-and-son painters occasionally. *Misty Mountains*, with a signature of "Wen Bi" and inscriptions of Shen Zhou and Tang Yin, is a Wen's work finished before he reached 40. What made "broad strokes" outstanding are primitive textures and lines, horizontal strokes and pale flower blue ink-washed far mountains.

In Wen's expressive landscape paintings, the structure is carefully balanced, rare is seen the deeply-hidden or overlaid landscapes such as winding paths along the mountains. Even in landscape paintings with abundant subjects, he sought balanced layout, and painted the background subjects with equal care, thus his paintings usually created a flat and direct visual effect. The peaceful and tranquil artistic concept conveyed his humble and elegant character.

As an adept painter of landscape paintings, Shen Zhou, the tutor of Wen Zhengming, innovated blue-and-green landscape paintings. His new artistic concepts and techniques used in works such as *Illustrating Touring to Dongshan*, *Walking under Shades of Chinese Barberry Trees*, *Scroll of Falling Flowers*, brought about a new era of transition for blue-and-green landscape painting in Ming dynasty. Wen Zhengming developed Shen Zhou's style and infused his own talents and interests with a broad traditional cultivation. He innovated traditional styles, experimented new techniques, and

contributed to the popularity of blue-and-green landscape paintings with refreshed stylistic forms.

Wen Zhengming modeled after Zhao Mengfu, and partly emulated Zhao Boju and Zhao Bosu for blue-and-green landscape paintings. The result was a combinations of his predecessors, that was, elegant and neat in strokes and bright and lucid in color. His blue-and-green landscape paintings consisted of small and deep blue-and-green paintings. The small blue-and-green landscape paintings followed Zhao Mengfu's style, sparse and simple, free and plain. Ocher red was widely used in this type of paintings, which was then tinged with light stone green. The natural blend of ocher red and stone green expressed a sense of loftiness and transcendence. *Landscape with Thatched Cottage Dedicated to Shen Tianmin* (1535), *Landscape of Secluded Dwelling Dedicated to Zhou Ziyu* (1537) and *Illustrating "Rhapsody on the Red Cliff" (Chibi Fu)* (1558) best exemplified this style.

The deep blue-and-green landscape painting is featured as neat and exuberant in strokes, rich and bright in color, most of which was modeled after Zhao Boju and Zhao Bosu's style, strokes and coloring. *Tea Gathering at Mount Hui* (1518) is a typical work, in which mountain rocks were outlined with broad strokes, texture was enhanced with short strokes, rocks and slopes were ink washed with stone blue and green tinged with tiny ocher red, pine trees and thatched pavilion were ink washed with ocher red. *Spring Clouds over Sunken Flower-bed* (1532) was also deeply blue-and-green ink washed and simply outlined and ink-washed. Painted at the age of 81, *Fast-flowing Waters in Steep River Valley* (1550) depicted a scene where among overlaid rolling mountains, zigzagging streams and abundant trees, scholars gathered to chat or roamed by the riverside. In this landscape painting, exquisite and bold strokes, deep and solemn color defined Wen Zhengming's new blue-and-green landscape style.

Wen Zhengming emulated Li Gongling (1049-1106) in his figure paintings, where he applied sketch technique, combined with simple freehand technique in Yuan dynasty. *Portrait of Goddess of Xiang River*, finished at the age of 48, was imbued with a sense of history and grace. *Portrait of Laozi* (ca.571-471BC) (1549), a work in Wen's late age, is characterized with bold and simple lines and a solemn gesture highlighting Laozi's meditative mood.

Themes of his flower-and-bird paintings were largely confined to bamboo, chrysanthemum, orchid and narcissus, while bird was a rare subject. In pursuit of a complemented pleasure in calligraphy, orchids were painted with elegance and exuberance, resembling running script; bamboos, still and solemn, were more like calligraphy; rock paintings, finished with dry brush, flashed blanks. *Double Oak Trees, Bamboo and Rock and Leaf of Orchids and Bamboo* fully exemplify Wen Zhengming's calligraphy-in-painting artistic style. His common use of delineated flowers and dotted leaves, or "boneless" strokes, which were learnt from Shen Zhou and later taught to Chen Chun and Zhou Zhimian, prompted development of literati flower-and-bird paintings.

In Mid-Ming dynasty, Zhu Yunming, Wen Zhengming, Wang Chong and Chen Chun were hailed as "Four Calligraphers of Suzhou", among whom Wen Zhengming was regarded as the most influential

one. Since his youth, Wen Zhengming learned calligraphy from Li Yingzhen, and later modeled after masters in Jin, Tang and Song dynasties for seal script, regular script, official script, running script and cursive script. Extremely adept at lesser regular script, Wen Zhengming was titled as “a master of lesser regular script over the country”. His regular script, modeling after Zhong You (151-230), Zhi Yong, Yu Shinan (558-638), Ouyang Xun (557-641), and Chu Suiliang (596-658), firstly retained flat structure and started with thin and sharp strokes, e.g. *Responding Poems on a Group Excursion in the Style of Yang Weizhen* (1296-1370) in *Lesser Regular Script* (1514). Since middle age, Wen Zhengming contrived bold strokes and neat structures, and converted to tight structure and smooth strokes in late years. His lesser regular script, which modeling after Zhong You, appeared exquisite and careful in structure and bold and exuberant in strokes, resembling official script in style. His emulation of Wang Xizhi (303-361) and Wang Xianzhi (344-386), were exquisite in detail and dynamic in maneuvering the Chinese brush.

Wen Zhengming’s running & cursive script assumed an elegant and bold style, which was first influenced by Su Shi (1036-1101) and Song Ke (1327-1387) at his early age; later, after emulating Wang Xizhi, as well as Su Shi, Huang Tingjian (1045-1105), Mi Fu and Zhao Mengfu, his style transformed to be unique in plain structures, dynamic and exquisite in bold and smooth strokes. *Four Odes to the Life of Wen Tianxiang* (1236-1283) in *Running Cursive Script*, signed Wen Bi, must be a work finished before he reached fifty. Thin but exuberant structure, a graceful trace of Wang Xizhi, sharp and bold strokes of Li Yingzhen, a poem in praise of Wenxin Gong (Posthumous title of Wen Tianxiang) (1236-1283), all combined to make a masterpiece. Self-composed Poems in Running Script (collection of Nanjing Museum) resembled Wang Xizhi, and was later confirmed by Wang Tongyu that the scroll was finished in 1519 (16th year under Zheng De’s reign) when he was fifty. *Biographical Sketch of Zhang Yichuan in Running Cursive Script* (1559) symbolized his mature and skilled strokes in his late life. Since midlife, Wen Zhengming turned to prefer bigger characters. Modeling after Huang Tingjian, He maneuvered long and square strokes, admired grand characters and pursued free spirits, like *Self-composed Poems in Running Script* in his late years. (collection of Liaoning Provincial Museum)

Outstanding as he was among his contemporary official script calligraphers, Wen Zhengming acquired square and solid style from emulating inscriptions on tablet, such as *Petition on Coronation and Petition from General Gongqing. Thousand Character Classic in Four Scripts* (1547), a work finished at seventy-eight, can fully prove his accomplishment in official script writings.

In *Yi Yuan Zhi Yan* (an art critical book), Wang Shizhen commented on Wen Zhengming’s calligraphy, “a bold and neat style, never in lack of a sense of harmony and smoothness”. Simply put, in Wen Zhengming’s running & cursive script, orderly and solemn structure and strokes, combined with free and natural style, embodied a subtle but powerful spirit, which can be deemed as the “spirit of scholars”; meanwhile, proper elegance in it rendered literati calligraphy more approachable and suitable for popular aesthetic tastes. Little wonder that Wen Zhengming’s running script gained instant popularity, and finally rippled across Jiangsu, Zhengjiang and Fujian regions in the name of Wen School of Calligraphy.

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绘画

