

武昌城下漢江
淝城外戶傳
黃鶴樓古事
今亦見江雲江
州句生如珠



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以古为新：晚明的艺术与影响

Seeing the New in Antiquity:
Later Ming Art and Its Influence

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序：从文物收藏热谈晚明与现代

何创时书法艺术基金会董事长 何国庆



图1 明代家具

第一次接触到明朝的文化，是在我旅居温哥华期间，参观几家高档的家具店时。看到店里陈列的欧式家具，多样新颖的设计很受消费者欢迎。有趣的是，他们总会特别介绍明代家具，将之作醒目的展示，而且总是由专人介绍。明代家具所特有的单纯造型、简约的设计、苍劲的线条，完全符合欧美人士喜爱的“极简主义”风格，也启发了现代设计家的灵感（图1）。我突然发现，明代家具在外国人眼中是异常现代，异常高级的艺术品。这次的体验，让我深刻感受到明朝文化所散发的高雅气质。

第二次经验是在成立“何创时书法艺术基金会”时。我们举办了“明末清初书法展”¹，内容包括了高僧、忠烈、遗民、名臣、书家、文人等书法，从此我们收藏了一些晚明人物的作品。

第三次是在千禧年（2000年），听到国外记者访问美国著名历史学家史景迁²（Jonathan D. Spence, 1936 ~）时的情景。当被问及“你最希望活在人类历史的哪个时空”时，史景迁的答案居然是“中国晚明的苏州”。这个答案很出人意料，晚明的中国人如果能听到这番话，也许会引以为傲了。



图2 昆曲《牡丹亭》

第四次经验来自名作家白先勇改编策划的汤显祖（1550～1616）昆曲《牡丹亭》³的演出及其所引起的“昆曲风潮”。2001年联合国教科文组织公布昆曲为“人类口述和非物质文化遗产”⁴。《牡丹亭》分别在台北和苏州演出，我都有幸躬逢其盛。这次公演的策划非常成功，名之为“青春版”，吸引了很多年轻观众。原本我想，这些年轻族群可能只是一时的热情与好奇来观看剧目，对遥远的过去不会有多少兴趣。在苏州简陋的演出场地，我甚至担心他们是否坐得住、看得完。然而，事实证明了我的错估。演出结束后，全场观众起立鼓掌，久久不肯离去，大家真的都被《牡丹亭》感动了。这种 standing ovation 的场景，似乎只会出现在欧美音乐大师的演出中。眼前的这一幕，令我惊奇、动容。思索起来，《牡丹亭》（图2）之所以感人，在于它的某些场景在现代人看来觉得极其熟悉，几无时代落差，揭示了不同时代、不同种族的人类艺术共同情感。

最近一次的晚明经验是北京奥运的开幕盛典“开运金鼓”。它的本来身份是起源于晚明万历时期，至今已有四百多年历史，流行在华北大平原的沧州任丘大鼓。⁵前一阵子看到了台湾文物收藏家徐政夫先生珍藏的一件名为“上元灯彩”的晚明风俗画手卷。这件作品描绘晚明南京元宵节的景象，可以见到商贾百工交易的情形，也看到了城市平民过日子的场面，一幕幕活生生的场景呈现了晚明城市的繁荣。

与此繁盛的市民生活相对的是晚明政治的腐败、国家的衰弱，史家论及晚明，总认为它是一个“天崩地解”、“纲纪凌夷”的时代，犹如世界末日一般。其后的甲申剧变⁶，庞大的明帝国灭亡，更证明了此一观点。然而，晚明时期由于经济起飞，加上西方传教士引进各类新思潮及阳明心学的风行，“普罗大众”的心灵得到彻底的解放，人们开始追求新兴娱乐的享受，举凡戏曲、音乐、宗教、书法、绘画、收藏、科技、文学等，都在万历年以后发展到前所未有的高峰。

在文化的发展进程中，士绅中的知识分子扮演了极重要的角色。不同于历朝，晚明的知识分子不再单纯依循传统的“读书—考试—做官”这条路，而开始有了多样性的选择。对他们而言，读书是必要的，否则难以成为具有文化素养的人。但是他们不再像过去那样仅以出仕作为生命的依归，他们可以成为收入丰厚的职业书画家，可以成为徜徉山林受人景仰的“隐士”，也可以投身教育，进行民间讲学。晚明社会的多元化，造就了文人的多样性格，也丰富了他们在文艺领域的创造性。

在改朝换代的时刻，生命现象的复杂面总显得更加扑朔迷离。有人选择殉国，有人隐居山林，成为“遗民”，有人甚至连“遗民”也不当了，遁入空门为僧。任何选择都只是一念之间，在这个没有明天的时代，“出”或“入”都是生命的难题。然而，也正是如此，每个人都善尽了一份应尽的责任，完成了自己的生命历程。

说到晚明的“物”，亦是呈现多样的复杂性与时代性。每当读到晚明的闲赏书籍，一幕幕映入眼帘的市民生活景况，总有似曾相识的亲切感，时空交错三百年的人们，仿佛生活在同一空间。研究晚明文化的毛文芳教授说到她个人的经验：“有时才读到高濂(1573 ~ 1620)《遵生八笺》⁷‘饮饌服食笺’中各类食品汤点的制法，翻开报纸就有大篇幅傅培梅精致食谱跳入眼中；有时白天才读到李渔(1610 ~ 1680)《闲情偶寄》⁸‘声容’篇的‘选姿’、‘修容’、‘治服’等篇章，教导明代女子化妆、扮饰与姿仪，晚间电视广告便响彻美容瘦身的宣言。还有插花、养鱼、棋艺、书画鉴赏、室内装潢、庭园设计、生活百科常识。……”⁹由此可见我们的祖先们也是很“新潮”，一点也不古板的。

在文学史的发展上，现代有影响的作家周作人(1885 ~ 1967)认为，晚明的文学是1919年五四新文学运动的源头，并说：“假如从现代胡适之(1891 ~ 1962)先生的主张里面，减去他受到西洋的影响，那便是(晚明)公安派的思想 and 主张了。”¹⁰这样的说法在20世纪初即被提出来，可谓是真知灼见，很能体现出晚明思潮中的现代况味。美国历史学家史景迁对于晚明文学曾有这样的描述：“明朝的太平盛世到了17世纪就已结束；不过当时的文化生活依然斐然耀眼，举世难有与之相匹者。

假若我们臚列 16 世纪末欧洲的非凡之士，我们也可以轻易在同时的中国找到足堪比拟的俊彦翘楚。论题材的丰富，中国没有一位作家能与莎士比亚（Shakespeare）相比；但是在 1590 年代，汤显祖正在写作隽永慧黠的青年爱情故事，以及刻画家族亲情、社会冲突的戏曲，其内容之细腻，情节布局之复杂，足以与《仲夏夜之梦》（A Midsummer Night's Dream）或《罗密欧与朱丽叶》（Romeo and Juliet）相媲美。像塞万提斯（1547 ~ 1616）的《堂·吉珂德》（Don Quixote）已是西方文化里的经典，中国虽然没有出现可与之相提并论的作品，不过在 1590 年代却出现了一部以宗教探寻、神怪冒险为素材的小说《西游记》。……即使不作进一步的文化模拟，同一时期中国的随笔作家、哲学家、自然主义诗人、山水画家、宗教理论家、历史学家、医学家，也都创造了无数的传世名作，其中有许多至今仍被视为人类文明的瑰宝。”¹¹

就我所知，晚明的居家格言也深深地烙刻在现代人的脑海中。例如：朱柏庐（1617 ~ 1688）的《治家格言》¹²、袁了凡（1535 ~ 1608）的《了凡四训》¹³、洪应明（明万历年间人）的《菜根谭》¹⁴，仍有大家朗朗上口的句子，作为现代人居家处事的行事南针，更有人将它们作为现代企业管理的宝典。

晚明另一项值得大书特书的现象，在于它的科技发展到中国历史上前所未有的新高点，是一个整合传统与消化西学的关键时期，有很多观念甚至是走在西方前头的。例如，朱载堉¹⁵（1536 ~ 1611）于明万历十二年（1584）年出版《律学新说》，将乐律学理论系统化，不只对谱曲有所帮助，且对乐器的制作大有裨益。西方在朱著半世纪以后才逐渐发展出十二平均率，使得钢琴等乐器的发展成为可能。在乐学领域，晚明是领先西方的。在声学上，宋应星¹⁶（1587 ~ 1633）在《论气》中对声的发生、传递、干扰和接收都作了阐述，而当时的西方对此类问题尚一无所知；宋著《天工开物》是一部关于中国生产技术的划时代巨作，举凡饮食、衣服、燃料，以及造船、造纸、制陶、采矿的技术法则和原料产地，都有详细记载。徐光启¹⁷（1562 ~ 1633）的科学成就亦是多方面的，徐著《农政全书》从地理、气候、育种等各方面详述了中国农业生产的经验与技术，而他与来自欧洲的基督教耶稣会传教士利玛窦（1552 ~ 1610）一起翻译的《几何原本》、《泰西水法》等，也成为向中国人介绍西方科学的先驱。徐霞客¹⁸（1586 ~ 1641）作为中国最著名的旅行家及地理学家，由其手稿所编辑成的《徐霞客游记》，不但对其所到之处的风土人情、水文地貌、气候及农业等皆有极为详细的记载，更对石灰岩地貌做了详细的考证，并重新考察长江源头，是珍贵的地理学专书。而李时珍¹⁹（1518 ~ 1593）的

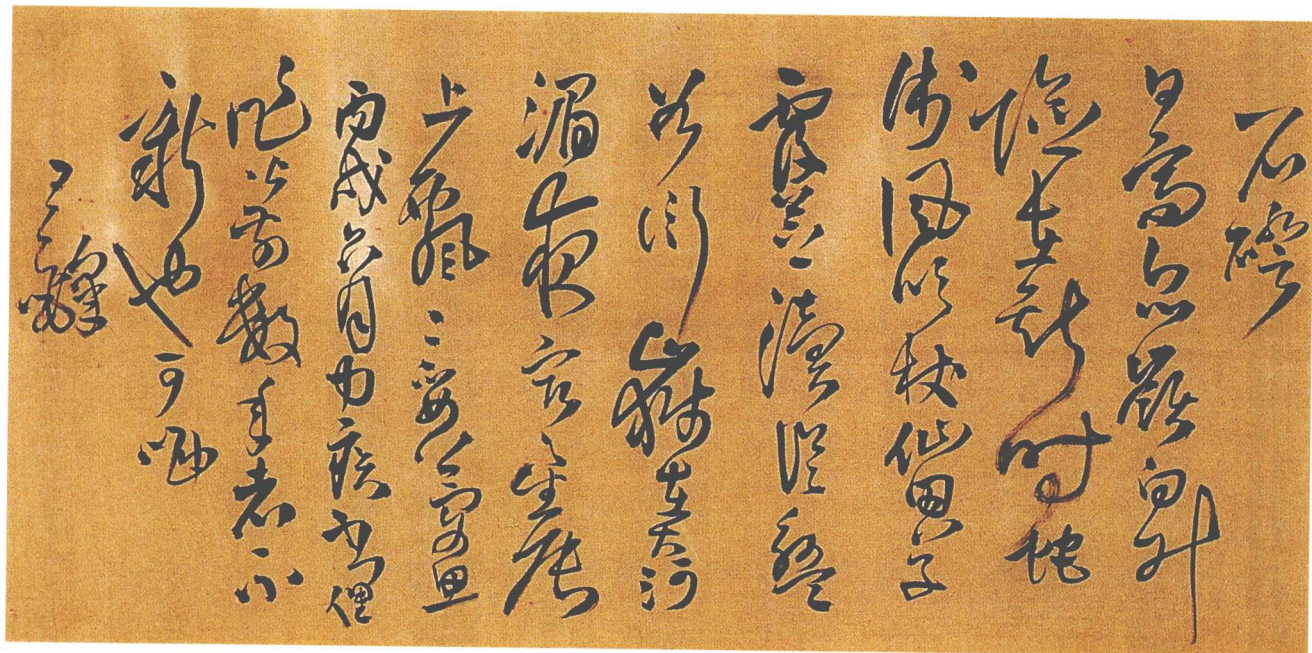


图4 王铎《草书自书诗》，局部，1646年作，手卷，绫本，26×237厘米，私人收藏

《本草纲目》是大家最耳熟能详的一部名著，被喻为“东方药学巨典”，是几千年来中国药学的总结。从17世纪起，李著就被翻译成日本、德国、英国、法国、俄国等多种语言文字，影响之巨大不言而喻。

最后，再谈到我最为关注的书法与绘画艺术，晚明时期在中国书法史上可说是另一座高峰，我们所熟知的王铎²⁰（1592～1652）（图4）、张瑞图²¹（1573～1641）、倪元璐²²（1593～1644）、董其昌²³（1555-1636）（图5）、黄道周²⁴（1585～1646）等人，都具有个人的强烈面貌，大抵都不同程度地受到个性解放思潮的影响。作为书法“姐妹艺术”的绘画，此时吴门画派²⁵已进入衰弱期，代之而起的是董其昌的“华亭派”²⁶，也包括赵左（1573～1644）的“苏松派”²⁷、沈士充（16世纪到17世纪间）的“云间派”²⁸以及莫是龙²⁹（1537～1581）、陈继儒³⁰（1558～1639）等大名流。画种的复杂远胜于书法，可谓名家辈出，各擅胜场，这也影响了后来的“金陵画派”³¹、“黄山画派”³²、明末“四王四僧”³³、“变形主义”画家³⁴，创造了中国绘画史上灿烂的一页。

我在研究晚明现象时，时有像在文物收藏时挖到宝物的感觉。手头上有件原来看似不起眼的古董，而在换个方向研究后发现它原来是件宝物。在《剑桥插图中国史——西方人眼中的中国文明奥秘》³⁵中，我读到一段文字，颇有启发，甚有同感，书上说：“相对肯定地看待明朝的唯一方式，大概就是自下而上地观察它。皇帝的专断行为，贬低了高官们的身份，损害了他们的权益，但很少影响到那些自行其是的村民和市镇居民。中国的人口在增长，商业化、印刷术的发展，精英们

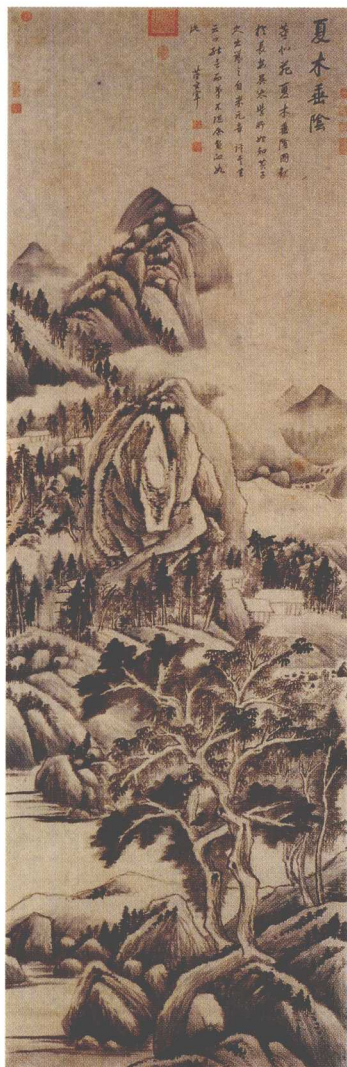


图5 董其昌《夏木垂荫》，约1635年作，立轴，水墨纸本，321×102.3厘米，台北“故宫博物院”藏

在地方日益提高的领袖地位和对社区生活的介入，又都强化了中国民众之间的联系，让人们更强烈地分享共同历史和认同感受。……政府不能控制一切，未必全然是坏事。”这段叙述让我感觉到，从“上”（王朝政治）看明朝是不光彩的，但只要换个角度从“下”看明朝，也就是从人民生活的角度看它，明朝是非常精彩的，这也印证了黄宗羲（1610～1695）在《明夷待访录》中所言“天下之治乱，不在一姓之兴亡，而在万民之忧乐”。以前看1840年以来的中国近代史，总觉得身为中国人很可怜，被列强欺侮到如此不堪。直到认识了晚明这么精彩的人、事、物后，才深深体认到原来中国在十六七世纪时，“地球村”的观念已经开始形成，“全球化”也正热烈进行着。我曾经在上海拜访明史专家复旦大学的教授樊树志（1937～）先生，并拜读了他的大作《晚明史》³⁶，他提到一个重要的概念：“16世纪下半叶至17世纪的晚明时期，正处在新航路发现后的‘全球化’起步阶段。这个阶段，中国在全球经济中占有重要的地位，

除了邻近国家传统的朝贡贸易之外，遥远的欧洲国家如葡萄牙、西班牙、荷兰等国以及它们在亚洲与美洲的殖民地，都卷入了与中国的远程贸易，而且都毫无例外地处在贸易逆差之中，占世界产量三分之一甚至更多的白银源源不断地流入中国。”在晚明时代，我们被当做高度开发的国家，是全球化的核心，受到其他各国的关注，如此说来我们还是系出名门哩！只可惜到了清朝，一连串锁国政策（例如将天主教及传教士们赶出中国），以及满汉之分造成的族群问题，断送了中国现代化的黄金时刻。这些景象就如同明朝的衰亡，执政者所造成的错误，不是平民百姓所愿意见到的。

还是史景迁，他在《追寻现代中国——最后的王朝》中评价晚明文化现象时客观地说道：“16世纪末，明朝似乎正是国力鼎盛之时，其文化与艺术成就璀璨夺目，城市与商业生活繁荣富庶，中国人在绘画方面的技巧与丝绸、瓷器的制造能力，令当时欧洲人望尘莫及。”

如何解读晚明？对史家来说一直是个难题。在早期中国内地学者的笔下，晚明是一个“资本主义萌芽的时代”；在黄仁宇（1918 ~ 2000）看来，这个时候是明代财政管理衰败的关键期；在费振锺（1958 ~）眼里，晚明是“明代文人集体堕落”³⁷的最盛期。长期关注晚明的一些现象，我知道，对于这样一个复杂多变的时代，我们所知太有限了。正因为所知有限，也因为晚明特有的时空魅力，我在收藏的方向上着力于晚明文人士画的收藏。一个人有一个故事，一群人就有千百个故事，透过对这些晚明书画的研究，我认识了许多精彩绝伦、可歌可泣的故事和人物，愈是耙梳史籍，愈是引发我对晚明文化产生敬慕与认识。

晚明研究有着太多有待解决的问题，近年来由于各种跨领域的科技整合研究成果普遍被发表，我们对于晚明的面貌更能全面地掌握。晚明有着太多有趣的人、事与物，我认为，当下正是重新解读晚明、认识晚明的最佳时机。我希望有一天能邀集同好一起来办个“晚明大展”，从书画、文房、出版、瓷器、园林（图6）、家具、服饰等各方面来重新建构晚明的文化生态，将这一段辉煌的历史呈现给这个时代，作为我们送给这一代人的礼物，让他们也能够从晚明的氛围中吸取文化的养分。



图6 明代苏式园林之一，拙政园小飞虹

- 1 “天下兴亡匹夫有责的时代——明末清初书法展”由何创时书法艺术基金会主办，于1996年10月5日至1997年3月23日在台北何创时书艺馆展出。
- 2 出生于英国的历史学家，主要研究领域为中国历史。因景仰司马迁，故为自己取了“景迁”的中文名。史景迁是很有影响力的汉学家之一。
- 3 明朝剧作家汤显祖的代表作之一。《牡丹亭》描写杜丽娘与柳梦梅的爱情故事。
- 4 2001年5月联合国教科文组织在巴黎宣布第一批“人类口述和非物质遗产”代表作名单。中国的昆曲艺术入选，成为首次获此殊荣的19个国家之一。
- 5 据考证，沧州任丘大鼓最早的起源之一，是受到梁红玉击鼓抗金兵的故事启发而来的，当时是用来抵御外侮，鼓舞士气之用。现在则成为当地逢年过节时家家户户同欢的庆祝活动。
- 6 公元1644年李自成攻克北京，统治中国276年的明王朝正式灭亡；吴三桂引清军入关，迅速摧毁起义军与江南残存的南明小王朝势力，从此开始了满人对中国的统治，那年正好为甲申年。
- 7 高濂，字深甫，号瑞南，浙江钱塘（今浙江杭州）人。明代戏曲作家。《遵生八笺》是高濂笃志养生，参访隐士名医之作，全书分为“清修妙论笺”、“四时调摄笺”、“却病延年笺”、“起居安乐笺”、“饮馔服食笺”、“灵秘丹药笺”、“燕闲清赏笺”、“尘外遐举笺”八笺，本书为中国古代养生学的主要文献之一。
- 8 李渔，原名仙侣，字笠鸿，谥凡，号笠翁，浙江兰溪人。明末戏曲作家与戏剧理论家。《闲情偶寄》是研究生活乐趣的专著，讲述从住室庭院、室内装饰到妇女梳妆美容、饮食养生等各种消愁解闷之道。
- 9 毛文芳：《晚明闲赏美学》，台北：学生书局，2002年版序。
- 10 语见1932年周作人在辅仁大学讲授《中国新文学的源流》讲稿。《中国新文学的源流》，南京：江苏文艺出版社，2007年版。
- 11 语见史景迁《追寻现代中国》第一册，第一部《最后的王朝》。上海：上海远东出版社，2005年版。
- 12 朱柏庐，名用纯，字致一，昆山人。明代著名理学家、教育家。所著《朱柏庐治家格言》世称《朱子家训》，被后人尊奉为治家之经，清至民国年间一度成为孩童启蒙必读课本之一。
- 13 袁了凡，原名黄，字坤仪，江苏吴江人。《了凡四训》是作者结合自身经历与毕生学问修养，为教育自己子孙而作的家训。
- 14 洪应明，字自诚，号还初道人。《菜根谭》是作者晚年所写的语录体的说理劝世之作，为论述修身、处世、待人、接物、应对的格言集。
- 15 朱载堉，字伯勤，号句曲山人，自号狂生、山阳酒狂仙客，河南沁阳人。明代著名律学家（有律圣之称）、历学家、数学家。
- 16 宋应星，字长庚，江西奉新人。明代著名科学家、诗人。英国汉学家李约瑟称他为“中国的狄德罗”。
- 17 徐光启，字子先，号玄扈，谥文定，上海人。中国明末科学家、农学家、政治家、中西文化交流的先驱之一。
- 18 徐霞客，名弘祖，字振之，号霞客，江苏江阴人。明地理学家、旅行家和文学家。
- 19 李时珍，字东璧，晚年自号濒湖山人，湖北黄冈蕲春人。
- 20 王铎，字觉斯，号嵩樵，又号痴庵，别署烟潭渔叟，河南孟津人。
- 21 张瑞图，字长公，又字无画，号二水，别号果亭山人、芥子、白毫庵主、白毫庵主道人等，福建晋江人。
- 22 倪元璐，字汝玉，号鸿宝，浙江上虞人。
- 23 董其昌，字玄宰，号思白，又号香光居士，上海松江人。“华亭派”的主要代表人物。
- 24 黄道周，字幼玄或幼平，又字螭若、螭平，号石斋，福建漳浦人物。
- 25 自元代以来，江南苏州一带成为文人荟萃之地。许多著名画家云集苏州。据史料记载，当时苏州有150余人，占明代画家总数的五分之一。苏州史称“吴门”，作为具备共同地区特征的画家群因地理之便形成了吴门画派。吴门画派的领袖沈周同他的学生文征明、唐寅，再加上仇英，合称“吴门四家”。
- 26 “华亭派”又名“松江派”，以顾正谊为创始，以董其昌为代表。董其昌深谙古法，所画用笔洗练，墨色清淡，风格古雅秀润，代表了“华亭派”的风格，与“吴门画派”精具体具的风格形成对照。
- 27 赵左，字文度，生卒年不详，活跃于明代后期，上海松江人。擅山水，初学宋旭，后师法董源、黄公望、倪瓒等，与董其昌交善，画法亦相互影响，并为其代笔。创立苏松派。
- 28 沈士充，字子居，上海松江人。擅山水、人物。山水师法宋懋晋，兼师赵左，其画在当时有一定影响力，于松江派中另创云间派，追随者颇众。
- 29 莫是龙，字云卿，更字廷韩，号秋水，又号后明，上海松江人。
- 30 陈继儒，字仲醇，号眉公、麋公，上海松江人。
- 31 清康熙、乾隆年间，今南京地区出现一群引人注目的画家，以龚贤为首，其次为樊圻、高岑、邹喆、蔡泽、李又李、武丹。另外还有人把施震、盛丹、王概等人列为八家，世称“金陵画派”。
- 32 黄山画派，是指清朝初扎根今安徽黄山，潜心体味黄山真景，描绘黄山神妙绝伦的风景名胜，在山水画史上独辟蹊径，勇于创新的一个不同籍贯的山水画家群。
- 33 “四王”指清朝初期的四位著名画家：王时敏、王鉴、王原祁和王翬，他们在艺术思想上的共同特点是仿古，把宋元名家的笔法视为最高标准。“四僧”，指明末清初四个出家为僧的画家：石涛、朱耷、髡残和渐江，均擅长山水画，直抒胸臆，反对摹古，在艺术上不为旧法所困。
- 34 变形主义指的是用不合比例、扭曲畸变、形态迂怪的方法绘画。代表画家有陈洪绶、丁云鹏、崔子忠、吴彬等。
- 35 尹佩霞：《剑桥中国插图史——西方人眼中的中国文化奥秘》，香港：果实出版社，2001年版。
- 36 樊树志：《晚明史》，上海：复旦大学出版社，2005年版。
- 37 费振钟：《堕落时代：明代文人的集体堕落》，台北：立绪文化出版社，2002年版。

PREFACE: THE MODERNITY OF LATER MING ART AND CULTURE: FROM A COLLECTOR'S POINT OF VIEW

By Gary K. C. Ho

Chairman of Ho Chuang-Shih Calligraphic Arts Foundation

The first time I encountered Ming Culture was on a trip to Vancouver many years ago, where I visited some high-quality furniture stores. The stores were dominated by ornate and complex European furniture, so it was interesting to see Ming furniture in the mix (fig. 1). I later learned that these pieces brought prices at the very highest end of the auction market, especially when professionally presented with strike marks. But in contrast to 16th century European furniture, Ming furniture seems perfectly at home in a modern setting. Its refined modeling, subtle design and vigorous lines made it a fundamental influence for minimalist designers, who recognized that putting a Ming piece in some pivotal position could create sublime effects. Seeing these pieces for the first time led to a lifelong fascination with the temperament and culture of the Ming dynasty.

The second encounter was the *Exhibition of Calligraphy in the Late Ming and Early Qing Dynasty*, which was mounted when the *Ho Gallery of Calligraphic Arts Foundation* was established. The exhibition contained the works of people across the full spectrum of Ming culture: eminent monks, martyrs, adherents, high-ranking officials, professional calligraphers and scholars. I have since developed a passionate interest in collecting works of late Ming calligraphy.

The third encounter was in 2000, when I heard an interview between a Western reporter and American historian Jonathan Spence. When the reporter asked him when and where in history he would want to live, he replied, "in Suzhou in the late Ming dynasty." Coming from such a respected scholar, I couldn't help feeling a sense of pride.

And the fourth was seeing Tang Xianzu's 汤显祖 *Peony Pavilion* directed by Pai Hsien-Yung 白先勇, and being part of the Kun Opera tide that followed it (fig. 2). In 2001, UNESCO recognized Kun Operas as Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. I feel fortunate to have attended the classic performances of the *Peony Pavilion* in Taipei and Suzhou. The performances became widely popular, as did a youth version, which brought thousands of teenagers flocking to the opera. I initially thought it was just an esoteric fad, but seeing audiences on their feet, in tears, after these performances really moved and surprised me. I think it resonates because the scenes are

familiar to people today, tinted and amplified by a different time in history. The Japanese scholar Aoki Masaru called Tang Xianzu the oriental Shakespeare and, coincidentally, both dramatists died in 1616. But Tang Xianzu was more than a dramatist. In keeping with the Ming passion for the cultivation of sensibility across all art forms, he was also a groundbreaking theatrical director, historian, paleographer and the author of more than 2200 poems. And as if that were not enough, he was also a respected official whose ideas about the treatment of criminals, expressed in a letter to the emperor, had a lasting impact.

Once you are attuned to Ming culture, you see it everywhere. For example, I was in the Pudong airport in Shanghai and saw GaoLian's 高濂 (1573-1620) *Zunsheng Bajian*, Li Yu's 李渔 *Xianqing Ouji*, Wen Zhenheng's *Superfluous Things* and Jicheng's *Yuanzhi* in the bookstore. I have come to realize that the lifestyles and aesthetic perspective of people today are much more attuned to the late Ming dynasty than the world of Shakespeare. And that is as true in West as it is in the East Asia.

Ming influence has only risen with revival of China's economy. The 'Lucky Golden Drum' performance in the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony clearly expressed late Ming dynasty sensibilities. It was a grand spectacle, earsplitting and overpowering, like the Big Drum in Renqiu, Cangzhou that was created in the Wanli period of the late Ming dynasty. It is said that the idea came from Liang Hongyu's 梁红玉 (1102-1135) story about how she defeated the Jin army by banging her drum. Giant drums were used to intimidate enemies, while inspiring advancing troops. Today, the drum commemorates its historical use as a weapon of war in celebrations and festivals. During the Olympic Games, China brought this primordial Ming drumbeat, amplified by electronic and optical science, to the world.

A few days ago, I saw a genre painting scroll from the late Ming dynasty titled *Illuminations in Shangyuan*, which was collected by antique collector Jeff Hsu 徐政夫, and vividly captures Shangyuan's prosperity at that time. In depicting the Lantern Festival in Nanjing, it provides a glimpse into late Ming street life: bargaining tradesmen, reveling crowds, fortune-tellers, storytellers, tourists, and servants set among buildings, gardens, restaurants, and stalls. You can even spot experts examining and discussing antiques in a market, just as they do today.

In spite of the sense of well-being captured in Ming artworks, the late Ming dynasty is generally portrayed as a period of turbulence and confusion, with its doom in 1644 at the hands of the Qing hanging over its head. In spite of the government corruption and incompetence that eventually brought the dynasty down, the culture remained vibrant throughout these years, nourished by a robust economy and new ideas introduced by western missionaries. People in the cities became increasingly cultured, avidly pursuing new forms of education and entertainment-drama, music, calligraphy, painting,

collection, science and literature. In all artistic and intellectual endeavors, the late Ming was a time of unprecedented innovation and advancement.

In contrast to previous dynasties, scholars in the late Ming dynasty had a great deal of intellectual freedom. They were not bound to age-old Confucian traditions and its regimen of classics, examinations and bureaucracy, so they could explore new ways of thinking and new cultural pursuits. Ming artists also began to reflect and draw from a broader spectrum of society, from wealthy professional painters to recluse scholars and poets.

These free-thinking intellectuals, whose ranks included top officials, exerted considerable political influence. During the Wanli period, the Donglin academy—the local academy in the lower Yangtze region—provided pointed commentary on events that brought it into conflict with the imperial bureaucracy. Subsequently, Fushe, the patriotic literature organization led by Zhang Pu (1602-1641), took up the mantle of Donglin, and continued opposition to the court eunuchs.

After 1644, life became more complicated and confusing. In keeping with imperial tradition, some chose to follow the Ming emperor into death or die fighting for a lost cause. Others, including artist-officials, became “officials of two regimes,” and went on as before, but with diminished status and a sense of personal shame. And even the monks in their mountain retreats bemoaned the coming of the Manchu Qing, who were inherently suspicious of their new subjects. It made every opinion treacherous and, with a momentary slip, you were either ‘in’ or ‘out.’ For many, it was an era without hope, and it is admirable and surprising how many of these intellectuals and artists continued their work in the shadow of their fallen world.

Like the furniture, utensils in late Ming dynasty are notable for their sophistication and sense of modernity. But there is something uniquely intimate about them. These were things that were handled and used in everyday life. Holding them, 350 years seems to melt away and their lives become tangible in our time and space. When Professor Mao Wenfan 毛文芳 conducted research on late Ming culture, she found many of Fu Peimei’s exquisite recipes in periodicals from the time, reflecting an opulent and complex culinary culture. It corroborates the description of Ming lifestyles and manners recorded in GaoLian’s *Zunsheng Bajian*, covering (in addition to cooking) subjects like ‘posing’, ‘personal care’, and ‘dressing’ which told Ming women how to make themselves acceptable to society. Television shows like *Xianqing Ouji* and countless commercials carry on these traditions. The cavalcade of cosmetics, beauty treatments, Ikebana, fish culture, chess, painting, calligraphy, upholstery, garden design and other enticements would be perfectly familiar to our Ming ancestors. We are really not that different.

Along with the arts, the late Ming era was a golden age for literature, which Jonathan

Spence describes as flourishing to the end of the 17th century, reflecting a vibrant cultural life. There was no single literary figure in China to match Shakespeare's achievement, but there were many sparks of brilliance. In the 1590s, Tang Xianzu wrote a drama about young love entangled in clan conflict, whose plot structure and characterizations are strikingly similar to *Romeo and Juliet*. *Journey to the West* became China's version of *Don Quixote*. The Ming era also gave rise to what would be called "self-help" books in the West today. In fact, Zhu Bailu's 朱柏庐 (1617-1688) *Mottos on Family life*, Yuan Liaofan's 袁了凡 (1535-1608) *Four Mottos of Liaofan*, Hong Yingming's 洪应明 *The Way of Plain Living* (in the Wanli period in the Ming dynasty) still guide many people's daily lives today. And the era produced poetry, essays, philosophical treatises and imaginative works that are among the treasures of world civilization.

Another area of unprecedented development in the late Ming dynasty was in science and technology. By integrating traditional and foreign knowledge, Chinese inventors 朱载堉 generated significant advances. For example, *New Ideas on Phonology* by Zhu Zaiyu (1536-1611) created systems for understanding and organizing sound that became important to musical composition and instrument design, ultimately making instruments like the piano possible. In the related field of acoustics, Song Yingxing's 宋应星 *On Qi* expounded on sound's occurrence, propagation, interference and reception at a time when these concepts were little known in the West. *Tiangong Kaiwu*, another epoch-making book, broke new ground in industrial technology, outlining the production process for food, clothing, fuel, shipbuilding, paper making, ceramics, mining and more. A book by Xu Guanqi 徐光启 (1562-1633) called *The Complete Treatise on Agriculture* collected and built upon China's long history of agricultural production, considering the effect of geography, climate, breeding methods and so on. Xu Xiake's accounts of his extensive travels in China contain prototypes for a range of scientific fields: geography, anthropology, geomorphology, hydrology, climatology, horticulture and geology. He was one of the first to closely examine limestone to consider its formation, and he investigated the source of the Yangtze River in *Xu Xiake's Travel Notes*, recognized as the original and authoritative geographical monograph on China. And there were enormous advances in medicine. Li Shizhen's 李时珍 (1518-1593) *Compendium of Materia Medica*, a groundbreaking masterpiece, summarizes Chinese pharmacology over thousands of years. It has been translated into Japanese, German, English, French and Russian since the 17th century and its influence is impossible to measure.

As impressive as all these achievements are, to my mind the greatest of all were the works of late Ming painters and calligraphers. With calligraphy in particular, this period represents the peak of the artform's development. Artists like Wang Duo 王铎 (1592-1652, fig.3), Zhang Ruitu 张瑞图 (1573-1641), Ni Yuanlu 倪元璐 (1593-1644), Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555-1636, fig. 4) and Huang Daozhou 黄道周 (1585-1646) all created masterpieces that are recognized around the world for their power and beauty—works that express a time of passion and individuality. Ming painting saw the waning of

the classical Wu school and its replacement by artists working in a range of new styles: Dong Qichang's Huating school, Zhao Zuo's 赵左 Susong school, Shen Shichong's 沈士充 Yunjian school, and those of famous artists like Mo Shilong 莫是龙 and Chen Jiru 陈继儒. These artists influenced the Jinling school, the Huangshan school, the Four Wangs and the Four Monks at the end of Ming dynasty, as well as the Transfiguration school. The late Ming is unquestionably a brilliant chapter in the history of Chinese painting.

I have found that my research into Ming relics and artworks constantly changes my view of the era and opens up new avenues of inquiry. To me, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, is a vast storehouse of treasures reflecting all strata of society. It said that the only positive viewpoint on Ming dynasty culture is from the bottom of society up rather than the top down. The arbitrary behavior of the emperor, and the court's insulation from the military and civic realities faced by officials became a daily insult. During this period, the population was growing, business and typography were developing, and elites were gaining status in local communities. A civic culture that existed beyond the reach of the imperial court gained strength. Traditional divisions in Chinese society, dictated by proximity to imperial power, started to dissolve into a culture shared by more people. With a secular culture emerging outside the realm of government control, the art of the time became more personal and egalitarian, less a matter of creating objects to gain favor among courtiers. The Ming dynasty shines from below, not above. It confirms what Huang Zongxi 黄宗羲 (1610-1695) said in his *Mingyi Daifang Lu*: the blossoming or decay of the world never depends on one family, but on all of the people in the world. In an age when Western military advances offer nations unprecedented power, it is important to recognize that power derives from culture far more than from weaponry. The "global village" always defeats the emperor in the end, and I believe that the idea of a linked society outside of official power circles took root in the Ming era. *The History of late Ming Dynasty*, by professor Fan Shuzhi 樊树志 in Shanghai, expressed the view that the period from the late 16th century to the 17th century began a process of global sea trade between China and neighboring countries and with England, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands and their colonies in Asia and America that continues today. As is the case today, these nations all maintained trade deficits with China. In the Ming era, more than one third of the world's silver was absorbed by China.

Sadly, the Qing dynasty, with its autocratic politics and rage for control, unraveled the cultural glory of the Ming period and sent China into a cultural malaise from which it is just now starting to recover. Where the Ming embraced and integrated Western ideas (if not the Westerners themselves) the Qing were isolationists who banned Catholicism and other Western influences in the name of the "common people."

The Ming dynasty presented a particularly difficult problem for many historians supporting the rise of socialism. On one hand, this era represented an early form

of economic vitality and cultural freedom that lent power to a civic culture outside imperial control. But, as expressed in the work of Ray Huang, the free economy of the time—a kind of early capitalism—caused imbalances that led to weakness and corruption in financial management and political control. Fei Zhenzhong saw the Ming era as a period of intellectual elitism and collective degeneration.

In my view, attempts to reinterpret the Ming era to support contemporary ideologies misrepresent its complexity and richness and exhibit a basic misunderstanding of life at that time. In building my collection, I try to take the Ming period on its own terms, with a particular focus on literati calligraphy and painting. The more I read of the era, the more appeal its culture has for me.

And there is so much more to learn. Although recent cross-disciplinary studies have revealed much about the panorama of late Ming culture, there are still many avenues for further research. It is this combination of inherent interest and new territory to explore that makes this such an exciting field of study. My hope is to assemble a comprehensive exhibition and symposium someday that attempts to reconstruct the cultural ecology of the late Ming dynasty, including painting and calligraphy, literature and philosophy, gardens (fig. 5), furnishings, fineries and other riches. We can then present this treasury as a gift to this generation, from which they can draw cultural sustenance.

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