

COLLECTION OF PAINTINGS OF LIN LIANG AND LU JI

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《林良吕纪画集》 Album of Paintings of Lin Liang and Lu Ji

发行人：刘建平 Publisher: Liu Jiangping

责任编辑：刘 正 刘建平 Editor in Charge: Liu Zhen & Liu Jiangping

前 言：庄嘉宜 Preface: Zhuang Jiayi

英文翻译：吴立志 Translator: Wu Lizhi

装帧设计：黄维中 刘 正 Package Designer: Huang Weizhong & Liu Zhen

版面设计：刘 正 Layout Designer: Liu Zhen

技术编辑：李宝生 Technical Editor: Li Baosheng

摄 影：冯炜烈 等 Photographer: Feng Weilie & Others

出版发行：天津人民美术出版社 Published: Tianjin People's Fine Art House

制版印刷：北京新华彩印厂 Print: Beijing Xinhua Color Printing House

经 销：新华书店天津发行所 Distributed: Tianjin Distribution Station of Xinhua Bookstore

开 本：787×1092mm 1/8 Format: 787×1092mm, 1/8

1997年6月第一版 First Edition: June, 1997

1997年6月第一次印刷 First Print: June, 1997

ISBN 7-5305-0686-2/J·0686

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林良和吕纪的花鸟画艺术

庄嘉怡

林良和吕纪是明代宫廷中的著名画家，均擅长作花鸟画，可称得上是双星闪耀。他们的艺术在中国古代绘画史上占有相当重要的地位。但是有关林良和吕纪生平记载的材料却并不丰富，这是由于到了明朝，文人绘画已经开始大为流行，而供职宫廷的画家一般被视为画匠，社会地位不高；同样因为审美趣味和标准的不同，对于宫廷绘画的评价也相对较低。所以在当时就没有人专门为这些画家撰写比较详尽的传记，以致到今天我们仍然不能准确地考证出林良和吕纪这两位画家的生卒年月，对他们在宫廷中作画的情形也知之不多。在谈及林良和吕纪的绘画艺术成就之前，我们先根据简单而零星的材料来分别叙述一下他们的生平与艺术活动概况。

画史中记载“林良，字以善，广东人，官锦衣卫指挥”[1]，“弘治间以荐入，供事仁智殿”[2]；在广东的地方史料中，有关林良的记载还稍为多一些：“林良，字以善，扶南堡人。少聪警，充布政司奏役，能作翎毛，有巧思，始未知奇也。布政使陈金假人名画，良从旁疵谪商评。金怒，欲挞之，良自陈其能，金试使临写，惊以为神。自此腾誉缙绅间。”“后拜工部营缮所丞，直仁智殿，改锦衣镇抚。”[3]从以上的几段材料中可以得知林良的籍贯以及早年在家乡的若干情况。史料中所说的陈金是正统十二年（公元1447年）的进士，景泰六年（公元1455年）任广东布政使，至天顺元年（公元1457年）卸任。林良遇到陈金只能是在陈金任职广东的这两三年中，如果当时林良的年龄以20岁计算，那么他可能生于正统元年（公元1436年）前后。不过以上史料中有关他于弘治（公元1488—1505年）间入宫的记述，尚有误差，其主要的艺术创作活动应该是在天顺（公元1457—1464年）、成化（公元1465—1487年）年间。史料所记林良在宫中的职务有“锦衣镇抚”和“锦衣指挥”两种说法，这也正好说明了他在宫中职务升迁的事实。明代的宫廷画家均归御用监管辖，并授以锦衣卫武官的职务，其最高级别为锦衣都指挥，以下依次为锦衣指挥、锦衣千户、锦衣百户和锦衣镇抚。林良在宫廷中绘制了许多花鸟画作品，享有很高的声誉，所以地位不低。林良的儿子，继承父业，据明·朱谋壘所著之《画史会要》一书记载：“子郊，字子远，世其业”，也“擅水墨翎毛，弘治七年（公元1494年）诏选天下画士，郊中第一，授直武英殿锦衣卫镇抚”。[4]父子先后供奉内廷，在历代宫廷绘画史中是常见的。

林良的绘画艺术，以花鸟画为主，不过根据史料记载，他早年曾经跟随岭南地区的知名山水画家颜宗学过山水画，又跟随另一位画家何寅学过人物画，但是这两项终究未能超过他在花鸟画方面的成就。明代李梦阳作诗称赞林良的花鸟画云：“百余年来画禽鸟，后有吕纪前边昭；二子工似不工意，吮笔决眦分毫毛；林良写鸟只用墨，开缣半扫风云黑；水禽陆禽各臻妙，挂出满堂皆动色。”[5]从前人的评论中可知，林良的花鸟画具有两种面貌，一种是“画著色花果翎毛极其精巧”[6]；另一类是“放笔作水墨禽鸟树木，遒劲如草书”。[7]目前存世的林良作品，大部分是后者。所见作品均是水墨淋漓酣畅，几乎不施色彩，虽写意挥洒，却仍然十分注重物象的造型，并无潦草“不求形似”的缺点，显得

尤为生动活泼。

北京故宫博物院所藏《灌木集禽图》卷，是林良花鸟画的代表作之一。此图为纸本水墨淡设色画，描绘众多禽鸟飞翔穿插于灌木林树间，构图疏密得体，笔墨灵活多变，在狭长的手卷形式内展现了广阔的视野，安排了丰富的内容，使观者在咫尺方寸间感受到自然界的博大；画幅除去黑白外虽然几乎没有其他色泽，但仍然给人有五光十色多彩斑斓的感受；《双鹰图》轴（广东省博物馆藏）是林良又一件精彩的作品。此图画雪景中两只目光炯炯的老鹰，蹲立在巨石上。鹰的羽毛用粗笔淡墨一片片画出，没有明显的轮廓线，毛茸茸的质感却很强，而鹰的眼、嘴和爪，线条明确清晰，下笔坚硬有力，令人产生尖削锐利的感觉。整个天空用淡墨加少许花青满涂，但又似乎不经意地使笔下留出若干斜长条状的飞白，借以表现满天纷飞的雪花，使画面充实而富于动感。这幅作品充分显示了作者的笔墨功力。类似的作品还有北京故宫博物院收藏的《双鹰图》轴、广东省博物馆收藏的另一幅《双鹰图》轴、台北故宫博物院收藏的《双鹰图》轴、《秋鹰图》轴等。此外林良还经常画芦雁、喜鹊、孔雀等禽鸟，都各具情态，生动有趣。

林良在其作品上除去名款外，就不再书写别的文字了，这对于了解他作品的创作过程以及与其相关的情况是不利的，但是这一点也正体现了他宫廷画家的身份，因为历代的宫廷画家几乎都不在作品的画面上多写其他的文字。

与林良齐名的吕纪，“字廷振，四明人（今浙江宁波）”[8]，“号乐愚”[9]，生卒年月不详。吕纪“初学边景昭花鸟，袁忠彻见之，谓出景昭上，馆于家，使临唐宋以来名画，遂入妙品，独步当代”[10]，后“以荐入供奉仁智殿，至锦衣指挥”。[11]吕纪有二从子吕高和吕棠，均能传家法。[12]吕纪入宫供奉的时间应在成化年间（公元1465—1487年），而极盛于弘治年间（公元1488—1505年）。比吕纪略晚的杭淮在其《双溪集》中有诗云：“吕纪昔在宪宗朝，指挥直入明光殿，金盘赐予出金银，落笔天颜生顾盼”；吕纪入宫之初的成化年间，林良的绘画正风靡宫廷，所以吕纪入宫后早期的作品风格颇近林良。

吕纪存世的作品比林良略少，其绘画风格可以分为两大类。一类是以水墨为主，略施淡彩，用笔较为豪纵；另一类则是设色浓丽，用笔工致，具有富丽的宫廷装饰趣味。从时间上看，他最初在家乡学的是边景昭的画风，工整细致；进入宫廷后受林良绘画的影响所画多为水墨淡彩一类的作品，而后又回复到工笔重彩的风格。吕纪画风的变化，尤其是由水墨淡设色画转为工笔重设色画，更直接的原因看来是为了适应不同皇帝的不同口味，具体说来就是弘治皇帝朱祐樘的欣赏口味不同于他的父辈成化皇帝朱见深，从而造成了吕纪绘画风格的前后区别。

《残荷鹰鹭图》轴（北京故宫博物院藏）是吕纪水墨淡设色画的代表作。此图是一幅描绘自然界的生灵生存搏斗的富有情趣的作品。画面上一只苍鹰飞掠长空，从高处俯冲而下，锐利的目光紧紧盯住一只在水塘边觅食的鹭鸶。鹭鸶扑腾双翅，张嘴尖叫着，匆匆窜入荷塘芦苇中，企图躲避苍鹰的利喙和尖爪。画幅的下半部作者用错落纷披的笔法画出一片东倒西歪的芦苇和残败的荷叶，荒凉肃杀，更增加了一股动荡不安的情绪，将内含的悲剧气氛渲染得十分成功。史料中记载吕纪“应诏承制，多立意进规”[13]，这类图画中有何含意，似尚可作进一步的研究。《残荷鹰鹭图》在绘画风格上比较接近林良作品的面貌，故可以认定是画于成化年间，属于吕纪早期的作品。而《桂菊山禽图》轴（北京故宫博物院藏），则是吕纪工笔重彩的代表作。此图用笔工整细腻，“应物象形”，一丝不苟，描绘具体；色彩富丽堂皇，“随类赋彩”，十分鲜艳。图中所画的动、植物，也都具有一定的吉祥、祝福的含意，符合宫廷装饰美化的需要。这幅作品，

画风完全不同于《残荷鹰鹭图》，应当是画于弘治年间，属于吕纪中晚期的佳作。史料上记载有吕纪“尝戏画雌鸡壁间，而生雄谷谷绕其侧弗去”[14]，类似的故事还见于对五代时西蜀的宫廷画家黄筌的赞誉：“（黄筌）又画四时花鸟于八卦殿，鹰见画雉，连连擎臂”。[15]吕纪的此类作品似可以印证上述文字的记载。吕纪传世作品中还有一幅唯一的人物画，便是北京故宫博物院收藏的《南极老人图》轴。在这幅优美的作品中吕纪所画是一位民间传说中的人物南极仙翁。南极仙翁又称寿星，是长寿的象征。图中的南极仙翁站立着对空拱手，身边依傍着一只梅花鹿。从图像看来，这件作品应当是为人祝寿而画的。明朝的吴承恩在其神怪小说《西游记》的第七回中，对南极仙翁曾有如下描述：“云霄中间现老人，手捧灵芝飞霭绣，长头大耳短身躯，南极之方称老寿。”吕纪笔下的南极仙翁与文学作品中的形象颇为吻合，这大概并不是巧合，而是文学艺术及绘画作品中对南极仙翁形象的共识。至于吕纪在画幅署款的格式方面，与林良一样，除去姓名（有时加上籍贯）之外就不再写别的文字了。

在中国花鸟画的发展历史中，素有“黄家富贵，徐熙野逸”[16]的说法。“黄家”指的是五代西蜀至北宋初的画家黄筌和他的两个儿子黄居寀、黄居宝，他们先后供奉宫廷，擅画珍禽异兽，风格富贵华丽；后者指的是徐熙、徐崇嗣父子，他们也是五代南唐至北宋初人，所画大多为野生花卉及习见之禽鸟，画风野逸素雅。由此形成了花鸟画中的两大流派。此后花鸟画的发展就是在这两大流派的基础上不断地演进变化，逐渐呈现出了多姿多彩的格局。一般说来，宫廷绘画中更多的是富贵的画风，而在民间则是野逸的画风流行。但是也不尽然，大凡一种画风流行之后，便会对周围及以后产生影响，于是花鸟画中富贵和野逸这两种画风就在演进中又不断地相互渗透和融合，它们之间的界线也逐渐不是那样分明了。我们从明代宫廷画家林良和吕纪的作品中就可以明显地看到这种既有区别又有相互渗透和融合的现象。

明代的宫廷绘画是隔元代而远学宋代的风格，这是研究中国古代美术史中大家达成的共识之一。明朝的弘治皇帝就曾将供奉宫廷的画家王谔喻之为“今之马远”[17]；“（明代）院体一派，是承南宋赵、李、刘院体一派而下的”[18]；“（明代）画院中的风格主要是在南宋画院马远、夏圭的传统支配之下，画家都有自己的专长，或山水，或花鸟，或人物，但同时也往往有多方面的才能。兼擅各种题材的画家在画院中并不罕见，而这也是南宋画院的传统”[19]；“这些（明代）宫廷人物画家为数虽然不少，也承袭了宋代院体画作风”。[20]

林良和吕纪二人的画风虽然有所区别，但是追根溯源，还都是宋代院体的风格。林良继承的是南宋画院梁楷的水墨减笔画，画风非常淡雅，运笔较为纵逸；而吕纪则继承了北宋宣和画院设色浓丽的画风，色彩鲜艳厚重，画法规矩工整。从前边所引的史料来看，吕纪此类绘画是非常写实和十分逼真的。这是中国古代宫廷绘画的主要传统，林良的画风在宫廷中仅为个别现象，属少数派，所以明代弘治年间吕纪的这类绘画风格很快便取代了林良画风，从而占据了明代宫廷花鸟画的主流。

另外从林良和吕纪的籍贯还引出了一个有趣的问题。吕纪是四明（今浙江宁波）人，林良是南海（今广东广州）人。他们正好是南宋政权在元军铁骑攻击下，溃退路线的起点和终点。南宋小朝廷从临安（今浙江杭州）撤离南逃，经闽而至粤，随行官员、宫人十余万众，其中必定包括了不少宫廷画院的画家。人员一路遗撒，使宋代画院的绘画风格，也得以在浙、闽诸地民间代代相传。到了明代，这些传两宋画院风格的画家又应运而生，成为了明代宫廷绘画的主干力量。

- [1] 明·朱谋㙔《画史会要》卷四。
- [2] 清·徐沁《明画录》卷六。
- [3] 《广州府志》卷五九。
- [4] 清·汪兆镛《岭南画征略》卷一。
- [5] 同 [1]。
- [6] 清·姜绍书《无声诗史》卷二。
- [7] 清·韩昂《图绘宝鉴续编》。
- [8] 明·李开先《闲居集》序。
- [9] 《宁波府志》卷三一。
- [10] 明·徐象梅《两浙名贤录》卷四九。
- [11] 明·王世贞《艺苑卮言》。
- [12] 《浙江通志》。
- [13] 明·何乔远《名山藏》。
- [14] 同 [10]。
- [15] 宋·郭若虚《图画见闻志》卷二。
- [16] 同 [15]。
- [17] 同 [10]。
- [18] 潘天寿《中国绘画史》，商务印书馆，1936年，上海。
- [19] 王逊《中国美术史》，上海人民美术出版社，1989年，上海。
- [20] 李浴《中国美术史纲》（下卷），辽宁美术出版社，1988年，沈阳。

Art of Flower and Bird Paintings of Lin Liang and Lu Ji

Zhuang Jiayi

Lin Liang and Lu Ji were the famous painters in the imperial court of the Ming Dynasty, respectively being adept in producing paintings of flowers and birds, who could be called double art stars shining in the sky. Their arts have occupied a very important position in the Chinese ancient history of painting. But the materials of their life accounts recorded are not very much since, up to the Ming Dynasty, the paintings by man of letters were prevalent and the artist who was holding office in the imperial court was regarded as an artisan – painter without having an important position in the social status. Since there were various aesthetic tastes and standards, the evaluations on the court paintings were relatively low. Therefore, there was no one specialized in composing comparatively detailed autobiographies for these painters. Up to now, we have still not found out the exact dates of birth of these two artists and known much about the circumstances of their drawings in the imperial court. In accordance with the materials pieced together, I would like to give an introduction to their biographical lives as well as their art activities respectively before commenting on the achievements which Lin Liang and Lu Ji have made in the art of painting.

Recorded in the history of painting, “Lin Liang styled himself Yi Shan, born in Guangdong, and had the official title of Jinyiwei Zhihui” [1], and “he was recommended during the years of Hongzhi to hold office in the Hall of Renzhi” [2]. In the Guangdong local historic materials, there is a little more information about Lin Liang: “Lin Liang styled himself Yi Shan, born in Funanbao. He was smart and quick – witted when he was young. He served in a department of a provincial administrative government. He was good at painting birds with ingenious composition, whose unusual talents were unknown to others at the beginning. Chen Jin, the president of the government, borrowed a well – known painting for self – appreciation. Standing by the side, Lin gave critical comments on the faults of the painting. Chen gave way to unbridled fury and wanted to torture him. Lin made a self – statement about his painting ability. Chen was so much startled about his miraculous work in which he tested his talent at once. Since then, he was very quickly promoted.” “Later, he entered directly into the Hall of Renzhi under the instruction of the Ministry of Works, conferred upon Jinyi Zhenfu.” [3] Given the above mentioned materials, it can be known where Lin Liang’s place of birth was and what he did in his early years at his home town. Chen Jin, who was mentioned in the historic materials, was a successful candidate in the highest imperial examinations on the twelfth year of Zhengtong (AD 1447), and, later, on the sixth year of Jingtai (AD 1455), he was appointed as President of Guangdong Province and relieved of his office on the first year of Tianshun (AD 1457). It is only during such two or three years when Chen Jin was holding office that Lin Liang could encounter him. If it was counted twenty years for his age at that time, Lin Liang might be born in about the first year of Zhengtong (AD 1436). Nevertheless, there is an error in the above mentioned historical record as to the time of his entrance to the palace during the years of Hongzhi (AD 1488—1505). His main activities of art creation should be carried out during the years of Tianshun (AD 1457—1464) and the years of Chenhua (AD 1465—1487). In the historical materials, there are two statements that Lin Liang had ever held two positions in the imperial court

—“Jinyi Zhenfu” and “Jinyi Zhihui”, which only goes to prove the fact that he was promoted in the imperial court. The court artists of the Ming Dynasty were respectively under jurisdiction of the imperial supervisor who was in charge of the imperial uses for the emperor and were conferred on the title of Jinyiwei Wuguan, among whom the highest rank was Jinyidu Zhihui, and the following in order were Jinyi Zhihui, Jinyi Qianhu, Jinyi Baihu and Jinyi Zhenfu. Having produced a large amount of works of flowers and birds in the imperial court, Lin Liang enjoyed a very high prestige and, therefore, occupied a quite high position. The son of Lin Liang succeeded his profession. In accordance with the record in the book of *Compendium of Painting History* written by Zhu Moyin of the Ming Dynasty, “Zi Jiao styled himself Zi Yuan and carried out his father’s profession”, and he also “was adept in feather patchwork of ink and wash. He was granted the title of Jinyiwei Zhenfu, serving in the Hall of Wuying since he ranked first in the examination for the selection and enrollment of court painters in the seventh year of Hongzhi (AD 1494)” . [4] It is quite common in the court painting history of the successive dynasties to see that the father and son concentrated in the imperial court.

Lin Liang’s art of painting gives priority to the paintings of flowers and birds. Nevertheless, in accordance with the recorded history, he had, in his earlier years, followed Yan Zhong, a famous painter of landscape in Lingnan Area, learning landscape painting, and then studied the figure painting under another painter, He Yin. But, his achievements on these two aspects have never surpassed the accomplishments he made in the scope of his paintings of flowers and birds. “There were Lu Ji earlier and Bian Jingzhao later, During the past hundred years of bird paintings; From the two painters indifferent techniques but different meanings, Show their brushwork with their staring eyes; Only with Chinese ink did Lin Liang create birds, Which were sweeping the cloud black upon the silk opened; Exquisite and vivid birds in water and on land, Were adding glitters and vitality to the room.” [5] This is a poem composed by Li Mengyang of the Ming Dynasty to praise Lin Liang’s paintings. It can be learnt from the comments by the predecessor that Lin Liang’s paintings of flowers and birds have two characteristics. On one hand, he “produced flowers and feathers in colors with ingenious craftsmanship.” [6] On the other, he “created birds and trees in Chinese ink as if he wrote grass script with an energetic hand .” [7] At present, a large amount of his compositions which have been preserved belong to the latter. The works can be seen the delicacy of lines and beauty of form without application of any colors. Although his works are done with ease and verse, the importance is attached to the modeling of an object, which becomes vivid and vigorous, without any fault of “seeking no similarity in form” in haste and carelessness.

The scroll of *Birds in the Bush*, which is being kept in Beijing Palace Museum, is one of Lin Liang’s representative paintings of flowers and birds. This is a paper scroll of painting in light shade of ink and wash. It depicts many birds are flying in the scrub forest. Its composition is very appropriate in density, being applied by the brush and ink in flexibility and diversity. A wild sphere of vision is spreading from such a narrow hand scroll in which the rich content is arranged, which makes the onlooker feel the vastness of nature in such a small compass. Although the painting is done only in black and white without any other color and luster, it also gives the feeling of a riot of colors in brightness. The scroll of *Double Hawks* (kept in the Museum of Guangdong Province) is another of Lin Liang’s masterpieces. In this painting, the two hawks with flashing eyes are squatting on a huge rock in snow. Their feathers are patched in light ink by a thick brush, which express the strong downy feeling without any obvious outlines. Their eyes, olecanons and talons are outlined explicitly and precisely with vigor and force of a brush, which make the onlooker feel keen and acute. The whole sky is covered with light ink added with a little of cyanine, but some hollow strokes in oblique narrowness are left to express the snow flakes flying about in the sky, which makes the tableau sub-

stantial and touching. This piece of work fully evinces the creator's craftsmanship of brush and ink. Some other similar compositions are *Double Hawks* kept in Beijing Palace Museum, *Double Hawks* kept in the Museum of Guangdong Province, *Double Hawks and The Hawk in Autumn* kept in Taipei Palace Museum, etc. In addition, Lin Liang often composed birds such as wild geese in reed, magpies and peacocks etc., which are of temperament, vividness and interest.

Lin Liang did not write anything else on his paintings besides his signature, which may not be advantageous to understand his creative process and other relative information concerning his works. But, on the other hand, it shows his position as a court artist, since other court artists in the successive dynasties never put down anything else on their works.

Lu Ji, who enjoyed the same reputation with Lin Liang, "styled himself Ting Zhen, born in Siming (now Ning Po in Zhejiang Province)." [8] His nickname was a "Happy Fool" [9] with unknown date and place of birth. Lu Ji "started learning to paint flowers and birds from Bian Jingzhao. Looking at his paintings, Yuan Zhongqie sensed that he was above Jingzhao. Therefore, he invited Lu Ji as a tutor at home. Since Lu Ji had imitated the famous paintings of the Tang and Song Dynasties, his paintings were becoming fine works of art, an unparalleled giant among dwarfs at his time." [10] Later he "was recommended to hold office in the Hall of Renzhi, and promoted to Jinyi Zhihui" . [11] Lu Ji had two sons to learn from him, Lu Gao and Lu Tang, who could respectively have passed down his father's artistic skills. [12] The time for Lu Ji to serve in the imperial court should be during the years of Chenhua (AD 1465 – 1487), whose paintings were very prevailing during the years of Hongzhi (AD 1488 – 1505). Hanghui, who was later than Lu Ji, wrote in his poem of *Collection of Double Brooks*: "Lu Ji directly went into the Hall of Mingkuang as Zhihui, serving the Emperor Xianzhong. A plate of gold and silver were bestowed to him, for the emperor beamed with delight upon his brushwork." At the beginning of the years of Chenhua when Lu Ji went into the palace, Lin Liang's paintings were sweeping the imperial palace, and, therefore, the style of Lu Ji's drawings at the early time in the court was quite similar to Lin Liang's.

Lu Ji's works preserved in the world are fewer than Lin Liang's, whose painting style can be divided into two categories. On one hand, by means of a vigorous and unrestrained brush, Lu Ji creates his painting mainly of ink and wash with somewhat light colors. On the other hand, the painting is drawn in gaudy colors with fine brushwork, which has the pattern of splendid and imposing ornaments in the imperial court. As far as the time concerned, it is the artistic style of Bian Jingzhao— fine brushwork and close attention to detail—that he started learning at his home town. After entering the palace, he is much influenced by Lin Liang's artistic technique — ink and wash work with light colors. And then he picks up the style of fine brushwork in heavy colors again. It seems that the direct reason for him to change his drawing style, especially from the style of ink and wash with light colors to that of fine brushwork with heavy colors, is to cater to the different tastes of the different emperors. Straightly speaking, the appreciative taste of the Emperor of Hongzhi, Zhu Youtang, was not the same with that of his father, the Emperor of Chenhua, which has brought about the differences in Lu Ji's painting style early and later.

The scroll of *The Hawk and the Egret in the Ruined Lotus* (kept in Beijing Palace Museum) is one of Lu Ji's representative compositions of ink and wash with light colors. This is a very interesting painting which depicts the two beings in nature are fighting for survival. In the picture, sweeping past in the sky and downthrusting, a goshawk is staring with the sharp eyes at an egret which is looking for food by the lotus pond. Flapping its wings and screaming, the egret is scurrying off into the reeds, trying to escape the sharp

— pointed peck and cute talons. On the down part, the painter draws a patch of dilapidated reeds and ruined lotus leaves with a technique of scattering and batching, a scenery of desolation and awful killing. All of these add a fit of emotional turbulence, which has successfully highlighted the atmosphere of the inclusive tragedy. Recorded in the history of painting, Lu Ji “was summoned to the palace to paint and made a new approach without going beyond the emperor’s taste.” [13] What significance implying in this kind of paintings needs to be farther studied. The painting style of *The Hawk and the Egret in the Ruined Lotus* is quite closer to that of Lin Liang’s works, and therefore, it can be determined that it was drawn during the years of Chen-hua, belonging to the earlier works of Lu Ji. The scroll of *Birds in Osmanthus and Chrysanthemum* (kept in Beijing Palace Museum) is Lu Ji’s representative composition in heavy colors. This painting is done by the fine brushwork, “whose form was drawn to the real” and neglected no detail consciously and meticulously. The colors are “applied to each different creature,” splendid and imposing. In the picture, the animal and plant do have the implication of certain lucks and blessings, which accord with the requirement of the decoration and beautification of the imperial court. The painting style of this painting is totally different from that of *The Hawk and the Egret in Ruined Lotus*, which must have been done during the years of Hongzhi, belonging to the masterpiece Lu Ji made in his mid-later period. Recorded in the history of painting, Lu Ji “painted a hen on a wall for fun, around which the alive cocks were playing while crowing.” [14] As to such a story, it can be seen from the words of praise to Huang Quan, who was a court artist of Xishu of the Five Dynasties: “(Huang Quan) drew flowers and birds in the four seasons on the Hall of Bagua. A hawk was flapping its wings repeatedly towards it when seeing a pheasant painted on the wall.” [15] Lu Ji’s such composition can corroborate the above written record. There is only one figure painting among Lu Ji’s compositions handed down from the ancient times, that is, the scroll of *The God of Longevity*, which is being kept in Beijing Palace Museum. In this fine piece of work, Lu Ji painted a figure in the folk legend — an old immortal of longevity. An old immortal is also called the God of Longevity, which is the symbol of having a long life. In the painting, an old immortal is standing, cupping one hand in the other to the sky with a sika by his side. It can be seen that this painting is created for somebody so as to congratulate his birthday. In the seventh chapter of *Travel to the West*, which is a novel of gods and spirits, Wu Chenen of the Ming Dynasty has made the following delineation to an old immortal: “In the skies appears an old man, whose hands are cupping glossy ganoderma in the floating mist. With a long head, large ears and a short body, he is called the God of Longevity in the Area of the South”. An old immortal under Lu Ji’s brush tallies with the figure in the literary works. This is not a mere coincidence, but it is the common understanding from the works of literature and art. In regard to the writing in the painting, Lu Ji wrote nothing but his signature (sometimes adding his place of birth) as Li Liang did.

In the developing course of the Chinese painting of flowers and birds, there is always a statement that “The paintings of the Huangs are in rich and bright colors, and Xu Xi’s are in wildness”. [16] “The Huangs” refer to the artists, Huang Quan and his two sons — Huang Jucai and Huang Jubao during the time from Xishu of the Five Dynasties to the beginning of the Northern Song Dynasty. They were early or late serving in the imperial court, adept in drawing rare fowls and strange animals with the style of applying rich and heavy colors. The latter refer to Xu Xi and Xu Zhongci, the father and the son. They were also living in the period from the Southern Tang of the Five Dynasties to the beginning of the Northern Song Dynasty. They mostly paint wild flowers and birds with the style of wildness, simplicity and elegance. Thus, they form the two schools in the paintings of flowers and birds. And later, it is on the basis of these two schools that the painting of flowers and birds is developing and changing constantly, which gradually brings about colorful and various styles. Generally speaking, the paintings for the imperial court are of the style of majestic

splendors and those prevalent among the folk people are of the style of wildness. But, it is not always the case. Once a style is fashionable, it will impose great influence upon the surroundings as well as upon the following. Therefore, the two styles of splendor and wildness in painting flowers and birds are infiltrated and harmonized with each other in its evolution, which gradually results in the fact that there is not very clear and obvious distinction between them. We can clearly see from the works of Lin Liang and Lu Ji, the court artists of the Ming Dynasty, that there is a phenomenon of both distinction and correlative infiltration and combination.

It is the common understanding out of the research upon the Chinese ancient history of the fine arts that the court painting of the Ming Dynasty is adopted the style of the Song Dynasty, segregating the Yuan Dynasty. The Emperor of Hongzhi of the Ming Dynasty has once called Wang E, an artist serving in the imperial court, "Today's Ma Yuan." [17] "(the Ming Dynasty) The school of the Academy inherited the school of Zhao, Li and Liu of the Southern Song Dynasty." [18] "(the Ming Dynasty) The style of the Imperial Art Academy was mainly under the dominance of Ma Yuan and Xia Gui and each artist had his own speciality in painting landscape, or flowers, or birds, or figures. But at the same time, they did have gifts in many ways, and it was not rarely seen in the Imperial Art Academy that an artist was good at painting various themes, which was the tradition of the Imperial Art Academy of the Southern Song Dynasty." [19] "Although there were not many such court artists of figure paintings (the Ming Dynasty), they did follow the painting style of the Academy of the Song Dynasty." [20]

Though there is difference between the styles of Lin Liang and Lu Ji, their styles, traced to their sources, are still those of the Imperial Art Academy of the Song Dynasty. Lin Liang inherits the fine brushwork of ink and wash, whose style is very simple and elegant, and the brush movement is unrestrained and running. On the other hand, Lu Ji inherits the painting style of applying heavy colors from the Xunhe Art Academy of the Northern Song Dynasty, whose painting technique is standard and neat with bright and colorful pigments. From the above quoted historical materials, Lu Ji's paintings are very realistic as well as true to life, which is the essential tradition of the court painting in the ancient China. Li Liang's style is an exceptional case in the imperial court, belonging to the minority. Therefore, during the years of Hongzhi, Lu Ji's painting style takes over that of Li Liang, occupying the mainstream of the court paintings of flowers and birds in the Ming Dynasty.

In addition, there is an interesting story drawn from Lin Liang's and Lu Ji's places of birth. Lu Ji was born in Siming (now Ning Po in Zhejiang Province) and Li Liang was born in Nanhai (now Guangzhou in Guangdong Province). They were the points of start and termination of the precipitate retreat line of the regime of the Southern Song Dynasty, while they were attacked by the cavalry of the Yuan. The small imperial court of the Southern Song Dynasty retreated from Linan (now Hangzhou of Zhejiang Province) to the South, through Fujian Province to Guangdong Province. There were over a hundred thousands of entourage and court servants, among whom there must be a lot of court artists of the Art Academy. While they were on the way of retreating, the painting style of the Art Academy of the Song Dynasty was passed down from generation to generation among the folk people of the Provinces of Zhejiang and Fujian. Up to the Ming Dynasty, these artists who had the painting style of the Imperial Art Academy of the Song Dynasty emerged as the times required, who became the mainforce of court paintings of the Ming Dynasty.

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