

Analyzing *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* from a Pictorial Perspective

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Abstract: From the perspective of iconography, this paper presents an in-depth analysis of *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, a classic work of traditional Chinese landscape painting. This work has been highly respected since the Tang Dynasty and is regarded as one of the important representatives in the history of Chinese painting. Its rich connotation and artistic value have always been the focus of scholars' research. The thesis aims to deeply interpret the historical and cultural connotations and artistic symbolism embedded in *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* through the iconographic method, from the levels of ex-iconography, iconography and iconographic analysis, to reveal its important position and value in Chinese traditional art. Adopting the iconographic method, the analysis is divided into three main levels. First, through pre-imaginative analysis, we focus on the physical facts and visual representations on the surface of the work; second, we use imaginative analysis to explore the information of the specific objects in the work and explore their connections and themes; and finally, we carry out imaginative analysis to reveal the deeper historical and cultural connotations and symbolic meanings of the work. Through in-depth iconographic analysis, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* demonstrates the core values of traditional Chinese landscape painting, presenting a fusion of natural landscapes and humanistic emotions. It is not only a work of art, but also a vivid expression of traditional Chinese culture and aesthetics. The findings of this dissertation will contribute to a better understanding of the profound historical and cultural connotations embedded in *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, as well as its important position and value in the history of Chinese art.

Keywords: Iconography; *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*; HuangGongwang

1. Background of *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*

Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains was created by Huang Gongwang in 1347 A.D., during his hermitage in the Fuchun Mountains back in Songjiang. The whole picture uses light ink and elegant, the mountains and water are arranged sparsely and densely, the ink is thick and light, dry and wet, showing a dark autumn scene in the Fuchun Mountains. It took about seven years to complete the painting from composition and brushstrokes to completion. In order to paint this picture well, he worked tirelessly all day long, running on both sides of the Fuchun River, observing the wonder of the changing smoke and clouds, and savoring the victory of the river and mountain fishing beach. Huang Gongwang depicted landscapes with his pale, refined and free-changing brushwork and beautifully moving mood, expressing the inner life of landscapes through the ups and downs of rocks and the changes in brushwork and ink.

In the Yuan Dynasty, the Han intellectuals have been difficult to obtain the traditional path of "learning and excellence", they put their time, energy and thoughts and emotions in literature and art, and this trend of thought is closely related to the landscape painting, has become one of the important areas of this emotional support. Especially at the end of the Yuan Dynasty, the winds of war rose, and more literati escaped from Shida and lived in semi-seclusion, slowly forming the "literati painting" of the Yuan Dynasty.

2. Iconographic Interpretation of *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*

Pictorialism was first proposed by the French scholar Marais in the second half of the 19th century, and the most

influential researcher was Panofsky. In his book *The Meaning of Visual Art*, he argues that there are three levels of interpretation of works of art: pre-imaginative, iconographic and iconographic three stages of progressive analysis of images, aiming to seek the social background behind the images through the images. The first level, the pre-imaginative stage, aims at accurately describing the various elements presented in a work of art, rather than focusing on explaining the interrelationships between these elements. It involves basic information about the physical characteristics and visual representation of the work, including form, line, color, material and technical approach. The second level of iconography builds on the previous stage by integrating the specific information obtained, attempting to explore the connections between these elements, and aiming to reveal the "theme" of the work of art. This stage involves the intellectual interpretation of the image of the work of art, including descriptions of the identity of the characters, the storyline, the historical context, the traditions, and the conventions of the particular mode of representation. The third level of the iconographic stage serves as the final stage in the analysis of the artwork, revealing the deeper historical and cultural connotations of the image by synthesizing the information from the first two stages. This stage aims to dig deeper into the historical and cultural meanings behind the artwork, to go beyond the surface phenomenon and better understand its deeper meaning.

2.1. Pre-photographic Analysis of the Content, Color Composition and Originality of the Picture

Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains adopts an ingenious four-part layout, in which Huang Gongwang divides the entire picture into four separate scenes: the moonlit river, the

encroachment of the Fuchun River, the eagle soaring, and the fisherman's delight. Each part of the picture is carefully arranged, including the main body, the secondary body and the background, creating a richly layered and spatially measured effect. The overall composition is unified and harmonious, making it easy to see at a glance, but also highlighting the unique scenes and situations presented in each image.

Analyzed from the perspective of lines, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* employs a variety of line techniques, such as the combination of dots and lines, harmonic lines, and changes in brushwork. These lines shape a rich, diverse and vibrant landscape and countryside scene. The artist's brushstrokes are very flexible, ranging from fine to strong, from bold to detailed, and various techniques are skillfully applied to give the whole picture a dynamic sense of beauty. In the overall composition, the lines add a sense of spontaneity on the basis of the "work-brush" style, outlining a natural and smooth form, and complementing each other with reality, which greatly enhances the aesthetic value of the painting. For example, the lines of the mountains, leaves, and clouds in the painting are smooth and beautiful, showing the beauty of simplicity. In terms of the use of color, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* mainly adopts the colors of light ink painting, light gray, light green, rouge and snow white. The whole picture shows the characteristics of freshness and lightness, mild hues and dullness and subtlety. This freshness and nature of interlocking shades and distinct layers is particularly attractive, and the use of color is founded on a precise grasp of the objects and a rigorous depiction of light and shadow and materials. For example, the light-colored river water in the painting subtly reflects the background colors of the sky and mountain peaks, demonstrating the artist's superb ability to depict the weather. In terms of light

and shadow, the artist breaks through the limitations of brushstroke landscape painting, emphasizing the strength of the ink lines and the lightness of the ink, while light and shadow become the comprehensive symbols that sustain this expression. He adopts the theory of I Ching and combines techniques such as the contrast of light and darkness in dabbing and coloring into his own unique style. For example, the moonlight dabbing on the leaves and weeds creates a serene aesthetic of clear, unobstructed moonlight, while creating a night scene by the river. The eagle in the painting is flying in the white clouds, and the contrasting light and shadow technique creates a mysterious atmosphere and enhances the dynamic and visual effect of the picture. In terms of brushstrokes, the artist advocates the characteristics of far-reaching temperament, clear elegance and spirituality. His brushstrokes are rich in variations and have a profound influence on expressing the mood and imagery of the whole painting. Observing the localization, one can see the diversity of the brushstrokes, ranging from thick and heavy to delicate, presenting a rich texture and form, while maintaining a sense of authenticity and depth.

From the perspective of painting style and genre, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* presents the qualities of the blending of brushstrokes and writing, and the combination of form and spirit, while integrating the realism of Song Dynasty landscape painting and the realistic features of Yuan Dynasty landscape painting. The work is based on the Fuchun River, with the landscape and the river reflecting each other. The picture is divided into four parts: landscape, poetic scene, nature, and calligraphy and painting, presenting a rich and colorful picture that highlights the aesthetic standards and cultural connotations of traditional Chinese landscape painting.



Figure 1. The first half of the scroll - The Remaining Mountains Collection of Zhejiang Museum

2.2. The Intrinsic Value of the Painting Analyzed by Image Journalism

Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains was painted by Huang Gongwang for Zheng Simarouboubou, with the Fuchun River in Zhejiang Province as the background. The whole picture uses light and elegant ink, the arrangement of mountains and water is sparse and dense, and the ink is thick and light, dry and wet, showing a dark autumn scene, which is known as one of the "Ten Famous Heirloom Paintings of China". Before the Yuan Dynasty, in which Huang Gongwang lived,

the landscape part of Chinese painting gradually ceased to be the background of portraits and began to become independent. To the Yuan Dynasty, landscape painting began to go out of the court, away from the Song painting from the strict, from the boundaries of reality, began to pursue the freedom to create imagery. From the pine, from the virtual quiet, so that landscape painting reached a new realm.

In the painting, the river meanders, the green hills are stacked with verdant mountains, and the tranquil village and distant mountains reflect each other, showing the magnificent natural scenery. The landscape in the painting is a blend of the natural landscape of the south of the river, reflecting the

Chinese literati's admiration for the natural landscape and their pursuit of natural beauty.



Figure 2. The second half of the scroll, “Useless Poetry Scroll,”
Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan

At the same time, the riverside village blends with the landscape, highlighting the harmonious coexistence of humanity and nature. Observing the natural elements in the work, the way and position in which the landscape elements

such as mountain peaks, rivers and trees are depicted suggest the author's intention. The height of the mountain peaks, the twists and turns of the rivers, and the lushness of the trees may imply the magnificence of the natural landscape and the vigor of life. These elements may form a harmonious unity or present a specific atmosphere in the picture. As a typical Chinese landscape painting, this work emphasizes the traditional Chinese aesthetic pursuit of “distant mountains like diadem, near water with smoke”, focusing on the creation of the mood and the guidance of the viewer's state of mind, reflecting the Chinese literati's reverence for nature and their desire for a peaceful and elegant life. The behavior and expressions of the figures in the images and the way they interact may represent specific cultural meanings or themes. The figures may be engaged in specific activities, and the types and numbers of flora and fauna may suggest a particular scene of life or cultural symbolism. This painting emphasizes the mood of landscape painting, and through the technique of “chiaroscuro”, it not only shows the natural scenery, but also conveys a sense of nature and contemplation on the philosophy of life. The use and change of light and shadow in the works may present different moods and atmospheres, thus giving specific meanings to the works. The variations of light and shadow can create a unique atmosphere of the work. With its rich meaning and far-reaching cultural connotations, this painting is not only a vivid depiction of the landscape of Jiangnan, but also a classic work in the tradition of Chinese landscape painting, representing the celebration of natural beauty and the pursuit of spiritual mood in traditional Chinese culture. The literati of the Yuan Dynasty were in a time of great suffering, and they incorporated art forms such as calligraphy and classical literature into their paintings, representing their unique insights into nature, life, and humanity. Through the analysis of the pictorial chiaroscuro, the depicted natural landscapes, the activities of the characters, and the elements of color and light are intertwined with each other, perhaps suggesting the author's unique perception of nature and life, and at the same time reflecting the aesthetics and expression of emotions advocated by traditional Chinese landscape painting.



Figure 3. Partial - Woodcutter in the forest, carrying a load of burdens



Figure 4. Partial -A walker on the bridge, relaxed and at ease

2.3. Graphology Reveals the Historical and Cultural Connotations and Symbolism of the Painting

After the preliminary interpretation of *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* through the first two stages, it becomes an important task to explore the deeper historical and cultural connotations and symbolism of its images. Behind this work lies a rich historical and cultural essence, carrying the ancient literati's reverence for natural landscapes and their extreme pursuit of mood. The aesthetic emotion it presents is embedded with the far-reaching and vast heritage of traditional Chinese culture.

Huang Gongwang's artistic achievements are closely related to the background and traditional culture of the era in which he lived. The Yuan Dynasty was an important period in Chinese history, and the cultural and political environment of this period had a profound impact on Huang Gongwang's artistic creation. During the Yuan dynasty, Chinese culture and society underwent many changes, especially the political and social changes under the Mongol rule. Chinese culture during this period, although influenced by foreign peoples, also showed a pluralistic and integrated situation. The context of the era in which Huang Gongwang lived shaped his perception of traditional culture and his approach to artistic expression. His achievements in the field of landscape painting are mainly reflected in his perfect combination of "work" and "writing". He inherited the realistic technique of Song Dynasty brushwork landscape painting, and at the same time incorporated the expressive techniques of writing, making his works more imaginative and abstract. This style of painting both respects tradition and makes a breakthrough, demonstrating his innovative and aesthetic pursuit of traditional techniques. Huang Gongwang's painting *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* demonstrates his unique understanding of natural scenery and his pursuit of landscape mood. He expressed his admiration for nature through the use of brush and ink, and incorporated traditional Chinese aesthetics into his work. His depiction of natural landscapes is not only a reproduction of external scenery, but also contains the realization and expression of humanistic spirit and aesthetic feelings.

Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains is not simply a landscape scene, but also a symbol of the pursuit of the Chinese literati's state of mind. The landscape in the painting is not only a reproduction of the natural landscape, but also

implies the ideal scene of the Chinese literati's pursuit of spiritual support. At the same time, the work embodies the aesthetic and emotional expression advocated by traditional Chinese landscape painting. Through the depiction of natural landscapes, it conveys the ancient Chinese literati's admiration for nature and their desire and pursuit of spiritual fulfillment. As an outstanding representative of traditional Chinese landscape painting, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* has an important traditional artistic value. It carries colorful historical, cultural and aesthetic connotations and represents the development and inheritance of the tradition of Chinese landscape painting. This work has an important position in the history of traditional Chinese culture. It is not only an artistic expression, but also a true portrayal of the state of mind and emotional pursuit of the ancient Chinese literati, as well as a wonderful chapter in the succession of Chinese landscape painting in traditional culture. Through in-depth iconographic analysis, The historical and cultural significance and traditional artistic value conveyed by *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* has become more significant and far-reaching. It is not only a work of art, but also the essence of traditional Chinese culture and aesthetic concepts, which contains rich historical connotations and cultural significance, and is a precious treasure in traditional Chinese art.

3. Conclusion

Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains is a precious legacy of Chinese landscape painting, which, with its rich mood and profound cultural connotations, demonstrates the ancient Chinese literati's reverence for natural landscapes and their pursuit of mood. This work transcends the depiction of natural landscapes, blending admiration for natural beauty with yearning for humanistic spirit, highlighting the unique charm of traditional Chinese aesthetics. The composition and use of colors of the landscape in the picture not only present the reality of the natural scenery, but also convey the author's perception and contemplation of the beauty of nature, demonstrating the pursuit of the soul by traditional Chinese culture. In this paper, we use three levels of iconography to explore and analyze *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* and explore its intrinsic value. From the way of expression and painting techniques to the intrinsic value of the images, and then to the connection between the artist and the traditional culture and the background of the times, we can have a more

comprehensive and deeper understanding of the deeper significance of this painting. Therefore, applying iconographic research methods to art works can help us better understand the meaning of art works as well as their external manifestations, and also enable us to think about and understand the works from a deeper level. Graphics can not only help us to better appreciate and understand art, but also bring us closer to art, constantly inspire people to think about nature, life and beauty, and pass on the profoundness of Chinese culture.

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