

# Analysis on the Rare Chinese Women Landscape Artist

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**Abstract:** This research puts light on the art practices of the rare Chinese women landscape artist in three-generation. Chinese landscape ink painting is known as the soul of the Nation's heritage of China. But the question is why there are few women landscape artists has often been discussed in Chinese landscape art history. Chinese landscape is an art genre traditionally practiced and dominated by male artists. The latest group exhibition at various museums and galleries exhibition proofed that Chinese women's artist has also performed an important role in the development of Chinese landscape painting. Women artist choose landscape painting as their subject or concept due to various ideal reason such as some want to represent their apparent beauty, representation respect or love to study of the nature, some want to discover unique aesthetic but contemporary women artist wants to use a landscape as a conceptual or as a symbolic language with the combination of new aesthetics, medium or concepts. Women's landscape painting can be found since early time, still they are not in the mainstream of the art world and have not noticed by serious people. The history of Chinese traditional art has a lack of enough records and archives about the practice of Chinese women landscape artists. However, this paper mainly discussed the challenges and main reasons for the lack of Chinese women landscape artists in history.

## 1. Introduction

As a nation with an ancient civilization and long history, China has deep-rooted culture and tradition of art. In fact, Chinese landscape painting has now become rare art treasure in the Chinese art world. "Landschap" is the Dutch word for landscape, it refers to region or place [1]. The Chinese term for "landscape painting" known by "Shanshui Hua" which is made up of two characters "Mountain" and "Water". Chinese landscape painting is accompanying the philosophy of Daoism or Taoism, which emphasizes the relationship between human beings and nature, harmony with the natural realm and the vastness of the energy of the cosmos. Mountains, rivers, waterfalls, trees are the basic elements of the Chinese landscape painting. Always mountains found as the heart of the Chinese landscape painting [2]. Behind these surreal landscapes has a very secret, philosophical meaning. Chinese landscape painting is not only a unique landscape in the art world, but also carries the deepest nourishment and meaning of Chinese artistic spirit. Chinese landscape painting has been presence in Chinese art world since thousands of years, but its acceptance as an art forms started to rise through the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907). In Song Dynasty, Chinese landscape painting became a beloved activity between the upper-class scholars or officers.

In history of traditional China, the women don't have equal rights same as male, Chinese society has been controlled by male and male centered. During the Ming Dynasty, women have relatively very low status inside the family and society. Women in ancient China did no longer celebrate in the status, either social or political. Women in the Ming Dynasty were not treated and respected well. At that time, married women were property, which is belonged to their husbands. Development of Tang Dynasty was a reflected in various area of philosophy, politics, culture, art, social, and most significant in regarding of women social status. Women of Tang Dynasty have been got encouragement for open liberal thoughts [3]. In the Tang Dynasty women were quite liberated,

reason because of that time there was a female Empress, who ruled in her own right, but during the Song Dynasty and after that, it was not more possible. With the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, few developments can be found for women. The feature of women became most important and used to be showed in each creative area such as with many books, songs, and poetry written about woman expression. Traditional Chinese culture was run by Confucian thoughts which were effected women status very critically. When communism started in China along, Chinese women started to have a more freedom same like western women. During, this time many women tried to move another country for studies and work. There, they learnt about how to stand on their own feet and they understand value of women independence, which was not a part of Chinese culture during this period. Now time is entirely transformed, women artist can express their thoughts or can choose subject of art very liberally for creation. Chinese women artist already proved that they are very creative, expressive and imaginative same like a male artist [4].

## **2. Impact of Chinese Philosophy on Women**

Confucianism placed their impression on China during the times of the Qin dynasty, and along with it, this religion has stunted the growth of gender impartiality, leaving women fighting for their rights. Within the society of classic Confucian ethics, women were treated as smaller beings, completely lower to their male counterparts. The “woman’s way (Dao)” was to expect the roles of wife and mother. The main feature appropriate to these roles was once obedience, first to her father, then to her husband, and eventually to her grown son. According to the Confucian configuration of society, women at every level were to occupy a position worse than men. Under Confucianism belief, everyone has a role in society and was to behave consequently. For hundreds of years, girls and women in China never got the chance to schooling because of the Confucian belief that males are more respected than females, which therefore leads to the thought that women shouldn’t work. The main way of philosophy about women in the earliest Chinese philosophy was based on the concepts of Yin and Yang. Women were yin, men were yang. In I Ching it is said, “one Yin and one Yang are called Tao”. In yin yang theory, the two forces balance each other but not in exactly equal ways. The natural relationship between both yin and yang is the cause that men lead and women follow. The concept of Yin and Yang was also generally used in every field such as traditional Chinese medicine, architecture, arts, politics, and other fields. But this structure of principles was functional to human being and many traditional Confucian ethical dogmatics are developed from it, things became not so optimistic especially for women and their equal rights [5]. It is said that Yin characterizes the character of women, and Yang signifies the character of men. In the relationship between men and women, women should be always impassive, suffering, and weak. The situation also destined that the women normally had no voice in social matters. Her field and value of thoughts are limited inside the family.

The Buddha was the first religious Guru, he donated this religious liberty to women. Before the Buddha, women’s duties had been controlled to the home or inside the door, women were not even permitted to enter any temple. During the Buddha’s time, women’s condition in society was very minor. The Buddha was criticized by the usual establishment when He gave this liberty to women. Yet the Buddha allowed women to prove themselves and to show that they too had the capacity like men to attain the supreme position in the religious way of life, but this freedom was just like freedom for religious practice. Buddhist nunneries provided alternative powers not only for those women who chose not to marry but also for widows, which was very limited by Confucian social boundaries. Nearby the period of the Song dynasty in 960-1279, China practiced a renewal of Confucianism in the rise of Neo-Confucianism. For women, the birth of Neo-Confucianism meant a rebirth of many of the principles designed to keep them subservient to men [6]. Despite purposes or superficial appearances, Neo-Confucianism essentially relieved women in becoming more independent from the male-dominated Chinese society. The chairman “Mao” famously said that line in regarding of women freedom and equal rights in Chinese society “Women hold up half the sky,” it means women

are also has rights same like male. He made reforms to confirm that Chinese women had the equivalent rights as men.

### **3. Development and History of Chinese Women Landscape Artist**

Sui and Tang Dynasty is known as the first period of cultural development and economic prosperity in Chinese history. Especially in the Tang Dynasty women were prominently liberalized, and women's thinking became optimistic and independent. The prosperity of freedom provides us a many great poetry, writing and other art forms created by women artist. Women started to contribute in many indoor-outdoor activities including art and culture. According to historical records, although there were not many women landscape painters in the Tang Dynasty, but other painting subjects were still involved such as in figure painting and bird-flower painting. One of the reasons is that landscape painting itself developed late, contrasting figure painting, which appeared earlier because of it has different approach and special function [7]. Since the end of the Ming Dynasty, due to the recovery of urban economy and the new trend of social thoughts, women's paintings have achieved extraordinary development. There were developed a various artistic technique, such as meticulous writing, freehand brushwork, heavy color techniques, and ink painting. Albums, scrolls, and fans are also available in this time as the forms of artwork. Compared with male artist women were less innovative and creative, but their creative dedication was very high with the true feelings of expression, and elegant style, therefore women world of painting and calligraphy that was totally different from the male painter's expression. In earlier stage of Ming and Qing dynasty has very less women landscape artist because women need to care of the family, they cannot move to outside from the home. Under such circumstances, women have relatively few opportunities for travel to the mountains and rivers, this is the also one of the cause of rare landscape painting creation. But beyond that they focused on other subjects of traditional ink art. During this period, women's painting appeared self-conscious, many women began to express their approaches by painting, some expressed their aspirations by painting, and even many women painted for self-entertainment. Song and Yuan Dynasty is not only the peak period of male painting, but also an important turning point of female painting, and the subject matter has begun to be more widely involved.

In the history of development of Chinese women landscape painting "Yutai painting history" book is very remarkable which is written by Tang Yuyu, this was the first book which was totally dedicated for the women art practice. According to the identity of the women artist, this book was divided into four categories: Gong Yi, Ming Yuan, Ji Shi, and Ming Yu. It recorded more than two hundred women artists from the history of the Sui Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty. It can be shown the difference between the women artist, the choice of the painting subject and content. Documentation presented many woman artists preferred to paint a flower, tree, bamboo, bird and other subject, but very less choose landscape as a subject for painting [8]. The History of Yutai Painting presented the women artist's identity, position and creation in present time, particular in landscape painting in its manifestation and development in the process of experiencing a lot of whether the composition or color, brush and other changes inside the women landscape painter's style.

## **4. Chinese Women Landscape Artist**

### **4.1. Ming and Qing Dynasty**

Huang Yuanjie was known for her simple and creative landscape paintings. She is the author of a collection of poems such as "Nanhua Pavilion Ancient Poetry" Collection. Her painting was influenced by Yuan and Ming dynasties style. Qiu Zhu was a one of the Ming Dynasty woman artist and the daughter of Qiu Ying. She learned traditional ink painting from her father. She was good at painting especially in landscapes and flower painting. Ma Shouzhen (1548-1604) is well recognised for landscapes painting which was combined with calligraphy. Her brushwork is delicate, and gently utilized of monochromatic ink methods. Hao (1595 – 1634) was good at the creation of flowers and insects painting. Flower and bird paintings are the most popular expressions of woman painters in

that time because it was easy to paint at home [9]. Wang Duanshu (1620-1700) and Chen Shu (1660-1736) was a painter of the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, also known for her landscape paintings. Liu Ruyi (1618-1664) was one of the ten most famous woman painters of the Ming Dynasty and in the early years, she was a famous monk in Nanjing. "The Moon and the Willow" is her one of the famous painting, where she expressed the real expression of Chinese ink painting. "Eight Great Courtesans of the Ming Dynasty" painted by Xue Susu (1564-1637) the famous woman artist. But, she was specially mentioned for her figure paintings, which included many Buddhist subjects. Lin Xue a young woman was living in the West Lake in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties also painted landscapes. Lin Xue has many outstanding skills in various ink painting techniques. Guandao Sheng (1262–1319) was a Chinese poet and painter who was born in Huzhou and was once the wife of Zhao Mengfu, a renowned scholar and artist often viewed the greatest artist of the before Yuan period [10].

#### **4.2. Modern Period**

Modern era paintings created between 1860s to the 1970s. Women's painting is gradually maturing from the germination of the early 20th century to today. After experiencing different life destinies, women artist is still engaged in the creation and development of Chinese landscape paintings. He Xiangning (1878-1972) was born in Hong Kong. She is a typical representative of modern woman landscape painters in China. Li Qiujun (1899-1973), first learned fine brushwork landscape and then trained in green landscape painting. Qian Ziyun (1926-1996) works has participated in national and international art exhibitions many times, such as Soviet Union, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong. Zhou Si Cong (1939-1996) was one of the most important and influential artist in modern Chinese painting circles, and also a leading figure of Chinese female artists. She is mainly a figure painter, but she also like to paint typical historical style Chinese landscape paintings. Fang Zhao Lin frequently tried to combine Chinese and Western painting methods to create new ones. Pan Su (1915-1992), she was the wife of the famous collector Zhang Bojun [11]. In the early years, she learned flowers -birds and turned to learn mountains and rivers. She often used the blue which symbolizes belief and strength as the sky, the green which symbolizes vitality and prosperity. Luo Fang was born in Changsha, Hunan, in 1937. Luo Fang studied in the Fine Arts Department of Taiwan Normal University in 1957, under the masters of Wu Yuxiang and Huang Junyi. She devoted herself to the study of landscape paintings, focusing on the new type of sketching and painting innovation. Fu Yiyao (1947) started cultural exchanges between China and Japan through her art practice. Liu Wenjie (1959) is a modern also known for landscape painting in China. She was born in Jinan, Shandong Province in 1959.

#### **4.3. Contemporary Period**

The contemporary art form is produced by very recent artists in the second half of the 20th century. The contemporary women artist has many global influences, culturally very diverse and technically very developed. These groups of Chinese women landscape artists tried to combine various aesthetics, methods, concepts, ideas and subjects all together with traditional Chinese ink landscape painting. Nowadays Chinese women artists as a whole, have an innate instinct to create an impact within their own social community whether it is large or small. Women artists are also giving a same contribution to the development of Chinese landscape art the same as a male artist. Luo Ying was Born in Hangzhou in 1973, her classical ink landscape paintings techniques and styles of brushwork inspired from far back as the Song dynasty landscape painting techniques. According to her "Chinese landscape ink painting is the identity of our Nation's culture of China. Beijing based artist Peng Wei was born in 1974 in Chengdu. Mostly she used many combines verity of mediums and concept including Chinese traditional ink painting, installation, video and photography. But she known for outstanding ink painting with different approaches and styles, she always tried to merge traditional Chinese painting with her personal concept. The use of classical theme or Chinese traditional motif on her artwork, artist aims to refuse the decline of Chinese' cultural heritage to age of modernization or globalization. Zhou Hongbin is an experimental artist, she also known as a photographer and

sculptor, she was born in Fujian province in 1978. She transformed the traditional elements and contents of Chinese classical Shan Shui means landscape painting into contemporary art form. Her artworks depicted the surrounded environment or nature with a surrealistic and dreamy, liminal quality. Wang Zhibo is a brilliant young woman artist who specialized in the oil painting and sometimes she used natural man made interior and exterior through the combine medium or objects. She was born in 1981, she studied the oil painting from China Academy of Art in Hangzhou. Her subject of artwork contained a landscapes, gardens, clouds and water but in representational or symbolic language, not same as a traditional depiction of Chinese landscape painting. Her artworks are of balanced combination of eastern and western culture. Hung Liu's artworks are a comparison between past and present in the terms of history and memory, while Chen Qiulin captures the vanishing of a familiar landscape with self-expression [12, 13].

## 5. Conclusion

Women are underestimated in the art world because social barriers and orthodox believes since centuries. The voice of women artists is now being to start the change with the importance of self-expression and identity in the art world. We are seeing that these artists are creating a specific, positive progresses in the creative field that has been ruled by always male for centuries. Chinese women artist has played a significant role in the development of Chinese traditional art especially landscape art genre. Presently many Chinese women artist are motivating a traditional Chinese landscape painting. They consider that Chinese traditional landscape painting represents the Chinese culture and tradition, its better way of expressing the mood and feeling of literary, having bigger imaginary space. A number of Chinese women artists are doing a very huge experiment with Chinese landscape art same like a male artist.

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