

Lecture Notes, by James Cahill

Note: The image numbers in these lecture notes do not exactly coincide with the images onscreen but are meant to be reference points in the lectures' progression.

Addendum 2B: *Riverbank*: A Closer Look

See also Lecture Addendum 1B: *Riverbank*: The Controversy

Add2B.1: Attributed to Dong Yuan 董源 or 董元 (d. 962), *Riverbank*, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 220 x 109 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Ex coll.: C. C. Wang Family, Promised Gift of Oscar L. Tang Family, in memory of Douglas Dillon, L1997.24.1.

I argue that this is *not* a Dong Yuan, but a **forgery** by **Zhang Daqian** 張大千 (1899–1983).

Two of Oscar Tang's paintings were shown in Lecture 5:

Image 5.5.8: painting by Yuan Jiang 袁江, dated 1693.

Image 5.5.0: anonymous, 12-century copy after a 9th- or 10th-century work? *Ladies in the Palace*, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The Chinese traditional practice of connoisseurship is very effective for works dating to the Yuan and after, when criteria of individual style and the artist's hand can be applied; however, those criteria do not apply to Song and earlier works. Zhang Daqian exploited this weakness in his fakes.

Some of Zhang's fakes:

Add2B.2: Attributed to Qu Ding (act. ca. 1023–1056), *Summer Mountains*, handscroll, ink and color on silk, 45 x 115 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1973.120.1.

Add2B.3: Zhang Daqian fake, loosely attributed to Yan Wengui 燕文貴 (late 10th–early 11th cent.), *Wind on the River*, handscroll.

Cf. Yan Wengui, *Pavilions and Mansions by the River* 江山樓觀圖 (ca. 1000), handscroll, ink and color on paper, 26 x 135 cm. Osaka Municipal Museum of Art, Osaka, Japan. See also Lecture 7A, image 7.2.1.

The 20th-century forger *cannot* draw in the style of the 10th-century artist.

Add2B.4.1: Anonymous Song, sleeping gibbon on a rock, loosely attributed to Muqi

Add2B.4.2: Zhang Daqian fake, with forged signature of Liang Kai

Add2B.5.1: Zhang Feng 張風 (act. late-Ming, early-Qing), *Portrait of Zhuge Liang*

See CLP 83: 2005 “Themes of Service and Reclusion in Chinese Painting.” Lecture, Berkeley Art Museum. <http://jamescahill.info/the-writings-of-james-cahill/cahill-lectures-and-papers/247-clp-83-2005>

Add2B.5.2: Zhang copy in Japanese private collection

Back to *Riverbank*

Add2B.1: *Riverbank*

Add2B.6: Zhang Daqian, *Self-portrait* (age around 60)

Compare with genuine 10th c. landscapes, seen in Lecture 6:

Image 6.8.1: Attributed to Guan Tong 關同／关同, *Travelers in the Mountains* 觀山行旅圖, hanging scroll, ink and light color on silk, 144.4 x 56.8 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei. (Loehr, 45; CAT 13)

Images 6.10.1 and 6.10.2: *Landscape of the Xiao-Xiang Region* 瀟湘圖／瀟湘图, in the Palace Museum, Beijing. (Siren 163–166).

Space of landscape is clearly readable, the mountaintops clearly visible. In Zhang’s forgeries, however, the mountaintops disappear into mist.

Add2B.7: Zhang’s “Juran” fake, formerly Hong Kong dealer.

Comparing *Riverbank* to known Zhang landscapes of the 1940s and 1950s

Add2B.8: 1949 landscape. Winding river in the background is broken in the middle and continues into the foreground as a winding pathway. Hollow with waterfall, foreground building and figures also similar to *Riverbank*.

Add2B.9: another Zhang landscape with similar parallels to *Riverbank*

Add2B.10: Zhang forgery as shown by my former student to her graduate students. Also seen in Lecture Addendum 1B, image Add1B.1.2.

Add2B.1.1: Detail of *Riverbank*’s top half. The main peak disappears into the mist, ending inconclusively. This is a characteristic not found in any 10th c. landscapes, but can be seen in Zhang’s landscape paintings.

Add2B.11.1: Signed and acknowledged Zhang Daqian landscape in the manner of Dong Yuan, 1947. I thought the parallels here were strong enough to prove my case, but the *Riverbank*

supporters said that because Zhang owned *Riverbank* and studied it, it is not surprising that he imitated its features in his own works.

Add2B.11.2: Detail of top half of 1947 landscape.

Add2B.1.2: Detail of *Riverbank's* top half, with flight of birds highlighted.

Add2B.1.3: Detail of *Riverbank* where winding river becomes winding path.

Add2B.1.4: Detail of pavilion over the water. Earth masses surrounding the building are absolutely unreadable. In the words of Sherman Lee, "confusion everywhere."

Add2B.1.4a: Closer detail of scholar and family within pavilion. Zhang unable to resist dramatizing his figures.

Add2B.12: Compare with Zhang's fake "Juran", *Dense Forests and Layered Peaks* 茂林叠嶂图/茂林叠嶂图 (ca. 1951), hanging scroll, ink and colors on silk, 186 x 73 cm. The British Museum, 1961,1209,0.1.

Add2B.13: Zhang Daqian landscape on paper, based on a Wang Meng, 1955. James Cahill Collection.

See also CLP 16: 1991 "Chang Ta-ch'ien's Forgeries of Old Master Paintings." Symposium, Sackler Museum, D.C. <http://jamescahill.info/the-writings-of-james-cahill/cahill-lectures-and-papers/33-clp-16-1991-qchang-ta-chiens-forgeries-of-old-master-paintingsq-symposium-sackler-museum-dc>

Add2B.1.5: Detail of *Riverbank's* central earth masses. Unreadable and spongy, deliberately blurry brushstrokes to conceal his hand.

Add2B.14: Detail of Zhang forgery attributed to Li Cheng, *Travelers in a Wintry Forest*, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 162 x 100 cm. Metropolitan Museum, New York, 1972.121.

Here are spongy earth masses, without brushwork at all—the same kind of drawing Zhang used in *Riverbank*. See also Lecture 6, image 6.21.

Add2B.1.6: Extreme detail of the lower left of *Riverbank*. Earth shape indistinct, water filled in meticulously, tree stiff.

Add2B.1.7: Compare detail of water in *Riverbank* to detail of water in Zhao Gan's (act. ca. 960–975), *First Snow along the River*, handscroll, ink and color on silk, 25.9 x 376.5 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

Artificially aged silk:

Add2B.15: Zhang Daqian, *Three Worthies of Wu* (20th c.), ink and color on silk, 50.3 x 284.8 cm.

Freer, F1957.15a-b.

Artificial spotting and damage of the silk to make it appear old. Tearing in distinct pattern forming rectangular patches. This pattern seen in many of Zhang's forgeries.

Add2B.16: Zhang Daqian of a supposedly Tang work loosely attributed to Han Gan 韓干/韩干 of *Horses and Grooms*, Musee Cernuschi, Paris.

Tell-tale "brickwork" pattern of artificially aged silk.

Add2B.17: Zhang Daqian forgery of Dunhuang bodhisattva.

Vertical hanging scrolls exhibit horizontal cracking only, as seen in the following:

Add2B.18 and 19: Detail of genuinely old silk from Guan Tong and Fan Kuan landscapes in the National Palace Museum, Taipei.

Add2B.20: Detail of Ma Yuan handscroll. The horizontal cracks indicate that it was most likely cut from larger vertical scroll.

Add2B.21: Ma Lin, *Buffalo and Herdboy*.

Handscrolls on silk exhibit vertical cracks:

Add2B.22: Anonymous, 9th–10th century, *The Scholar Fu Sheng* 伏生受經圖／伏生受经图; Cahill, *Chinese Painting*, p. 18; Siren 90.

Add2B.23: Li Tang handscroll

Zhang Daqian's fakes all display the distinctive pattern of artificially-aged silk:

Add2B.24: Zhang's forgery Zhang Xuan 張萱 (act. 714–742), handscroll showing Emperor Minghuang and his consort, Yang Guifei.

He must have copied it from Hashimoto Kansetsu's own painting of Emperor Minghuang and Yang Guifei.

Back to Zhang Daqian's fakes of old landscapes:

Add2B.25: fake of Guan Tong, *Drinking and Singing at the Foot of a Precipitous Mountain*, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 218 x 90cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 57.194.

Add2B.25.1: Close detail shows similar faked cracking.

Add2B.25.2: Another close detail shows the same.

Add2B.25.3: Detail of pavilion over the water; scholar reclines within. Same flat pattern of water that makes no allowance for the shoreline.

Add2B.25.4: Closer detail of pavilion shows similar artificial rips; architecture and serving boy drawn mediocrely.

Repeat of Add2B.12: Zhang's fake "Juran", *Dense Forests and Layered Peaks*

茂林叠嶂圖/茂林叠嶂图 (ca. 1951), hanging scroll, ink and colors on silk, 186 x 73 cm. The British Museum, 1961,1209,0.1. Same artificial rips in the silk.

Back to Add2B.14: Zhang forgery attributed to Li Cheng, *Travelers in a Wintry Forest*, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 162 x 100 cm. Metropolitan Museum, New York, 1972.121.

Add2B.14.1: Detail of twig branches.

Add2B.14.2: Detail of figure.

And finally, back to *Riverbank*:

Add2B.1.8: *Riverbank* with all patched areas removed. I show this now because all the following images are from the main painting, not the added patches. The following images are also all slides made from 8x10 black and white photographs taken by the Met's photographer and sent to all participants of the 1999 symposium.

Add2B.1.9: Closer and closer details of upper half shows the damning brickwork pattern in the silk.

Add2B.1.10: Closer and closer details of pavilion and water show the brickwork pattern.

Defenders of *Riverbank* may try to argue that the new rips were introduced during remounting. This is absolutely impossible; no mounter remounting an old painting would introduce small rips.

Add2B.1.11: Detail of lower left corner. The would-be signature is on separate silk. Closer detail shows brickwork pattern again.

Add2B.26: *Riverbank* "copy," hanging scroll, ink on silk, smaller than *Riverbank*. I believe this to be Zhang's trial work, collaborating with Meguro Sanji, before executing *Riverbank* proper. Defenders of *Riverbank* see this one as a Qing copy of the original.

Painted in a similar manner to his Juran fakes. Compare with Add2B.7: Zhang's "Juran" fake, formerly Hong Kong dealer. Mountaintop left unresolved. This fake is copied off another landscape in the Freer collection attributed to Dong Yuan.

Add2B.26.1: Detail of upper half. Remains of yellow mounting brocade that was a favorite of Meguro's. We can see the same brocade on *Riverbank* in this photograph where it hangs preposterously next to genuine Song landscapes (an arrangement by Wen Fong and his student Shih Shouchien, director of the National Palace Museum.) Confirms my suspicions that Meguro was Zhang's accomplice.

Add2B.26.2: Detail of back. Brickwork pattern of rips visible.

These images will be made available for future scholarly inquiries.

Add2B.26.3: Closer detail of the top, showing disappearing mountaintop and winding river.

Add2B.1.12: *Riverbank* detail of figure on path. Landmasses rendered more effectively as geological forms and brickwork pattern used more sparsely.

Add2B.26.4: detail of middle from earlier version. Landscape forms consistent to the point of dullness.

Add2B.26.5: area around pavilion. Zhang's indecisiveness over where to locate architecture and features.

Add2B.1.13: *Riverbank* detail of pavilion with figures. From Richard Vinograd's doctoral exam: "suggestive obscurity, supplying those hints of early styles." Tiles incomplete on roof. Rock form has no shape. Figure too conscious and self-aware.

Just as *Supper at Emmaus* was eventually revealed to be a van Meegeran fake, one day, *Riverbank* will be permanently removed from the corpus of Dong Yuan works and correctly attributed to its real author, Zhang Daqian.

I hope that Mike (Maxwell) Hearn at the Met will not be too disturbed by these revelations. He's a good guy and scholar and I hope this does not cause him too much distress. Sorry, Mike, I had to do it.

A former student sent me this link to a Chinese blogger who had some nice things to say about me and my opinion of *Riverbank*. Thank you, Chinese blogger. I do want to correct him/her on one point: Because of the inability of traditional Chinese connoisseurship to deal with Song and earlier paintings (a weakness which Zhang exploited), some Chinese scholars did go wrong with *Riverbank*. However, other Chinese scholars did *not* believe in the painting, but did not come forward with their opinions so as not to embarrass C.C. Wang and other supporters of the painting. I believe that one of these was connoisseur Xu Bangda (1911–2012). And let us not forget that another Chinese scholar connoisseur was the creator of *Riverbank*: Zhang Daqian himself.

I do want to emphasize that traditional Chinese connoisseurship has contributed greatly to the field. Recall in my Freer Medal talk (Addendum 1A), that I was insecure about buying my first Chinese painting until I brought Zhang Daqian to look at it with me. As for C. C. Wang, I am completely sincere about crediting him as the greatest of my three teachers.

My mentors from the National Palace Museum, Taipei:

Chuang Yen (or Chuang Shang-yen/ Zhuang Shangyan) 莊尚嚴, former director of the

National Palace Museum, Taipei.

Add2B.27: Wu Yuanzhi 武元直 (Jin dynasty, fl. 1190–1196), Red Cliff 赤壁圖, handscroll, ink on paper, 50 x 136.4 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

Li Lin-ts'an/Li Lincan 李霖灿 (1913–1999), originally from the National Central Museum in China, but eventually became a vice-director of the Palace Museum in Taichung/Taipei.

Add2B.28: *Waiting for Guests by Lamplight* 秉燭夜遊圖/秉燭夜游图, fan painting, ink and colors on silk, 24.8 x 25.2 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei. Reproduced in Skira 86; *Chinese Art Treasures*, Pl. 61; *Possessing the Past*, pg. 89; *The Lyric Journey*, no. 1.29. See also Lecture 11C, image 11.35.1.

Add2B.29: Anonymous hanging scroll, Shanghai Museum. Li suggested the alternate reading of this painting as “Han Gaozu and his Father.” See also Lecture 9B, image 9.17.1.

Add2B.30: *Emperor Minghuang's Journey to Shu*

C. C. Wang's many contributions to museum collections and scholarly research (including my own):

Add2B.31: Zhao Lingrang (act. ca. 1070–1100), *River Village in Autumn Dawn*, handscroll, ink and color on silk, 24 x 104 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1973.121.2.

Add2B.32: Anonymous, 12th c. copy after a 9th- or 10th-century work, *Ladies in the Palace*, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Add2B.33: Fanlong 梵隆 (monk-painter, active early 12th c., follower of Li Gonglin 李公麟), *Sixteen Arhats*, handscroll, ink on paper, 12 in. high, Freer Gallery. Reproduced in Skira 94, Suiboku 4/54–57.

Add2B.34: Dong Qichang painting in the manner of Wang Wei.

So, Chinese blogger, you need not feel ashamed over Chinese scholarship. It has contributed greatly to our field.

The End.