A Few Interpretations of the Works of Contemporary Landscape Painter Song Wenzhi in Art Teaching

Yifeng Qu

Jianghan University, Wuhan, Hubei, China.

How to cite this paper: Yifeng Qu. (2023). A Few Interpretations of the Works of Contemporary Landscape Painter Song Wenzhi in Art Teaching. The Educational Review, USA, 7(8), 1193-1197. DOI: 10.26855/er.2023.08.028

Received: July 28, 2023
Accepted: August 25, 2023
Published: September 21, 2023

Corresponding author: Yifeng Qu, Jianghan University, Wuhan, Hubei, China.

Abstract

Song Wenzhi is one of the most representative painters of the new Nanjing School of Painting. Song Wenzhi’s landscape paintings have their own unique style, his works are based on traditional painting, ink painting pay attention to the use of pen and ink, splash color painting pay attention to the use of virtual and real. Chinese traditional paintings pay attention to the combination of ink and pen, poetry, painting and seal, also pay attention to express their own feelings and their own understanding and expression of artistic conception. Chinese ink-splashing painting has been appreciated by literati painters since the Tang dynasty. Song Wenzhi used the wet painting method of Western watercolor painting for reference. He used mineral pigments such as stone blue and stone green to make the color flow naturally on the drawing board. At the same time also draw lessons from the Chinese fine brushwork of the water, color of the painting method. This article starts from the analysis of the techniques of Song Wenzhi’s works, from the use of paper, pen, ink, structure, color, to the completion of the work. It explains the completion process of the work and analyzes the expression form and connotation of the artistic conception.

Keywords

Density, virtuality and reality, void, splash color

Song Wenzhi is one of the representative painters of the eight contemporary New Jinling artists, and his works are among the most imitated in recent years. Song Wenzhi’s works were selected for the 80th edition of the art class of students in grade seven. These works were published like Selected Works of Song Wenzhi, Selected Landscape Paintings of Song Wenzhi, Collected Paintings of Song Wenzhi, etc.

1. Biography of Song Wenzhi

Song Wenzhi, a native of Taicang County, Jiangsu Province, studied at the Suzhou Art College, served as a teacher in Taicang middle and primary schools, a teacher at Anting Normal in Shanghai, a painter and vice-president of the National Painting Institute of Jiangsu Province, vice-chairman and professor of the Jiangsu Branch of the Chinese Artists Association, director of the Cultural and Historical Museum of Jiangsu Province, professor at Nanjing University, vice-president of the National Painting Institute of Jiangsu Province, and a first-class artist (Song Wenzhi, 2021).

His representative works include The Great Change in the Mountains and Rivers, The Spring Dynasty in the South of
the Yangtze River, and The Light Boat Has Passed Ten Thousand Mountains. He has published Selected Works of Song Wenzhi, Selected Landscape Paintings of Song Wenzhi, and Collected Paintings of Song Wenzhi.

2. Materials

Paper used: raw Xuan paper is commonly used, occasionally over-skinned paper and old burlap paper with dense fibre tissue is also used. Generally, the paper used is “net leather” or “special net” (special net leather) produced in Jing County, Anhui Province. From the mid-1980s onwards, he pioneered the use of Japanese “lenses” for his boneless and colorful landscape paintings. In recent years, Song Wenzhi has also chosen to use “lens” paper produced in China (Li Yuanyuan, 2020).

With ink, he generally does not use stale ink or ink that has been left in the inkstone for a long time or ink that has been left overnight. When he is painting, the ink is always made from fresh water and used as it is. Even if it is necessary to use a little ink for a large painting, an ink spindle is needed to sharpen it again.

Brush: Song Wenzhi used to paint with hard-bristle brushes, such as “wolf’s hair” and “mountain horse”. Variations in sparseness and intensity, dryness and wetness of the picture.

3. Techniques

3.1 Thick ink breaks up light ink

Song Wenzhi’s works often begin with a side chap of the mountain in light ink, and then, in accordance with the arrangement of the rock structure, he uses a thicker ink to organize the main structure and outline lines on the traces of the light ink chap while still wet. In this way, he uses the thick ink to break up the light ink, and the thick and light are set against each other, resulting in rich layers and clear priorities.

The light ink chops are loosely structured, while the thick ink hooks are strong and richly layered.

The sheep’s hair brush is soft and has a high water content, so Song Wenzhi generally uses it when applying color hues and painting boneless, colorful landscapes. The inscription is inscribed with a soft and stiff brush.

3.2 Variations in brush and ink

In the course of his work, Song pays attention to the various variations in the use of brush and ink, with unpredictable lifting and pressing, staccato and reversal.

The strokes are often accompanied by chops, alternating between the center and the side.

3.3 Ink and landscape paintings with color

His ink and color landscape paintings are usually done in ink before the color is applied. In the process of applying color, care is taken to make the ink and color reflect each other and the ink and color are one.

The three colors most used in ink and wash landscapes are blue, garcinia and ochre, sometimes using phthalo blue with a little ink instead of blue. Sometimes mineral pigments such as lapis lazuli and lime green are used, often thinned with water, and applied lightly, and occasionally with a little heavy color in places.

Song Wenzhi’s process of applying color is more regular and basically follows the procedure of applying color three times. First: dyeing, rendering all the areas that need to be dyed in place to obtain the big effect of the picture. The second coat of dye: deepen and thicken the darker areas such as the foot of the mountain, the depression, the shade, and the reflections to reflect the sense of space and volume of the mountain and river scenery. Third: dots, with heavier colors or inks on the tops of the hills and chaffing with dry brush dots and lice on the transitions.

3.4 Splashed landscape paintings

Song Wenzhi’s method of painting is the opposite of ink and wash coloring: he first splashes color on the screen and attach importance to the variations in intensity and shade.

The textural structure of the rock form is then sorted out according to the shades of color, and trees, houses and sails are added as embellishments to the picture.

Then paint the distant mountains and clouds in the same way, completing the picture in one go as you go. The splash method of landscape painting is color-based, with the same color usage and use of ink, with the ink divided into five colors: burnt and thick, heavy and light, and even finishing the structure of the rocks mostly with mineral pigments so that the colors are thicker and heavier. Occasionally a little ink is used, mainly to strengthen the image.
3.5 Painting with light violet

Lightly reddish-red landscapes are traditionally painted in ink and wash, with the mountains colored with light ochre in the chapped areas. Ochre is combined with a lot of water, and a little color is enough. Another layer is added after the layer of color has dried. The paper can be sprayed with a little water and then colored, and the hills can be colored with a little light floral green.

3.6 Imitation of ancient landscape paintings

Mountains: dry brush predominant: painted in the style of Wang Meng in the Yuan dynasty, with dry brush predominant. Start with a small to medium sized wolf-hair brush, dip it in water and mix the ink in a small dish, dip the nib in a little bit of strong ink, the ink in the belly of the brush is light and the pen contains not too much water, to scrape the pen in the side of the dish, then draw from the bottom end of the picture, from near to far, gradually drawing away.

Stones: start with a reverse-edge brush, outline the stone, use a medium-edge brush and a side-edge brush, chap, rub and dab to bring out the texture of the stone. When the darker parts of the stone are deepened, chalk it again, twice. And it is necessary to add variations in intensity.

Tree: Draw the branches first. There is also a priority in drawing trees, with the top tree being the main one, drawn first, followed by the second and third trees. A few trees should not be too loose, leaving ample space for the scene behind the painting.

The trees at the front are mainly colored with heavy ink, while the trees at the back are mainly light ink, showing the relationship between the front and the back with thick and light ink, and using the ling chap as the dark side without painting the pine scales too full.

After the tree trunk is painted, the remaining ink on the brush is lighter and less watery, which is just right for complementing the stone, and the light dead brush shows the texture of the stone.

Leaves pine needles and twigs are painted with less ink, or no ink, let it fade naturally, a stroke until there is no more ink, then add ink, so that a stroke will have a change in the thickness of the leaves. After the tree has been fleshed out, the pine needles are then dabbed with a dry brush to create a sense of pale hair, making them muddy and thick, but not covering them off, so that the brush strokes can be seen.

Hillside: use lighter ink and drier water on the brush for a looser and more general painting. Focus on the relationship between sparseness and density and concentrate on the big changes.

Feel free to add accompanying scenery as you paint, for example, it is available to add a house in the margin under the tree.

Hillocks: first outline the general structure of the hill, chap the hill to show the texture of the overgrown grass. Trees are then added along the contour of the hill - side to meet the clump of trees on the slope in front. If the rocks in the close-up scene appear thin, use ink to dot the moss on the rocks in the close-up scene, spreading the brush slightly when dotting the moss so that it is loose and free.

The distant scenery: the remote peaks embody a wider space, with broad brush strokes to draw out the structure of the large peaks so that they meet and form a whole, slightly chapped and moistened with light ink to create light and darkness, leaving a gap to show the flow of clouds in the mountains.

Closing: Dots of moss. Heavy ink is used to dot the moss on the turn, on the hill, on the trees, and on the flawed areas to make them stand out. You can also use lighter ink to add layers of moss to the picture.

Always use a lighter ink for the line where the roots of the stone meet the water. This is the reflection part. Add pavilions, boats and bushes in the open areas of the close up and add some gravel and water plants to the nearest water.

The painting should be in harmony in terms of intensity, dryness, density, and spatial relationship between the front and back.

4. Study and copying

The New Jinling School’s creative philosophy: “one hand reaches out to tradition, the other to life”, with life drawing and landscape painting becoming its core content.

4.1 Study of the “Four Kings”

The “Four Kings”: Song Wenzhi was born in Lou Dong (Taicang), Qiu Ying, one of the “Four Families of Ming”, was born here, and three of the “Four Kings” of the early Qing Dynasty (Wang Shimin, Wang Jian and Wang Yuanqi) were also from Taicang. His teachers, Zhang Shiyuan and Wu Hufan, were both heirs of the “Four Kings”, and Song
Wenzhi had a comprehensive study of the light-red method of the “Four Kings”.

4.2 The image of literati paintings

Song Wenzhi’s landscape paintings are based on the Four Kings and influenced by Zhu Qizhan, Fu Baoshi, Qian Song Yan and Li Keran, and are concerned with the use of brush and ink and the beauty of image in literati painting.

Later, Song Wenzhi often went to Shanghai to seek advice from his fellow countrymen Zhu Qizhan and Lu Yanshao of Jiading, and was introduced by Lu Yanshao to Wu Hufan as his teacher. He saw authentic works of Song and Yuan painters in the Wu family and from then on began a deeper pursuit, namely the study of Huang Gongwang, Wang Meng, Wu Zhen, Dong Yuan, Ju Ran, Li Cheng, Fan Kuan and others, blending ink, water, colour and line into one.

The ink, water, colors, and lines are integrated.

5. Green and blue splashes

In the mid-1980s, Song Wenzhi pioneered a new technique of painting landscapes without bones and splashes of color. This new landscape painting is vividly colored, agile and transcendent, combining various elements of blue-green and heavy-colored landscapes, lightly reddish-red landscapes and boneless painting, and incorporating a modern aesthetic sense, with many episodic natural textures and unique effects in its rigor.

Drawing on the topographical techniques of printmaking and the methods of watercolor painting, he gave this new technique of landscape painting a unique artistic life of its own in Chinese painting.

5.1 Splash color on thick ink

First use light and heavy ink to outline, chafe the structure, shape, and wait for the ink to dry, then color heavily where there is strong ink: triple green, triple green, phthalo blue, dry and paint on some details, trees, etc.

5.2 Wet painting in watercolor

Wetting the paper and using ink and color on wet paper is the wet painting method in watercolor. Thick ink, dabs of triple green and triple green, and shaking the board to allow the ink and color to flow naturally, creating a unique texture. After drying, deal with the details, add houses, trees, etc.

5.3 Dry and wet combination in landscape painting

Dry and wet combination in landscape painting with three blue and three green over and over again, dry and then replenish where needed, half dry, dry and then add ink and use ink to break the color. To create a sense of thickness in the stone, a combination of wet and dry is adopted.

5.4 Traditional Chinese meticulous landscape paintings are painted by means of blue and green landscape paintings, which need layers of rendering

Song combines elaborate-style painting with splashes of color, dabbing and dyeing. After using colors on a large area, he partially dabs it with ink or color, and in some works he uses the methods of painting in elaborate style such as clashing colors and water, and a combination of dabbing, unified dyeing, and color joining. A clash is the addition of other colors before one color dries, and a clash is the addition of water before one color dries (Wan Xinhua, 2016).

6. The use of void

(1) About the use of water. The “water” in Song Wenzhi’s picture is shown without a single ink, forming a vacancy, as if the empty space of the picture, and permeable holes, which makes the picture full of virtuality and reality.
(2) About the use of trees. The main trunks of the trees in Song’s paintings feature void, with the auxiliary trunks treated in a pale, almost blank, light reddish color. The formation of air permeable holes embodies the combination of virtuality and reality.
(3) About the use of mountains and rocks. Stones or waterfalls, or white clouds are used to form a blank space, so that the picture has a dynamic beauty, static mountains and flowing clouds and water, which shows the dynamic and static combination. There is movement in the stillness, and stillness in the movement.

In conclusion, Song Wenzhi’s landscape paintings are characterized by both Chinese painting techniques and styles, as well as learning from the splashes of color in Western watercolor painting, forming his own unique style that is wor-
References


Wan Xinhua. From “Tong Jiang Fang rafting” to “Clear dawn on Taihu Lake”—a study on the theme painting of Song Wenzhi's construction (I) “Works of art” 2016.
