

Preface

The Portraits of the Ming and Ching Officials represent the governmental culture of China and also embody the moral spirit of the Chinese people. The portraits record the facial and generic features of government officials and their families before and after the invention of camera. The clothes, shoes and hats, accessories and styles in the paintings further supplement the lack of actual items and show the beauty of the highly advanced material culture of China. The painting techniques for the portraits naturally and vividly blend the painting techniques of Chinese and Western portraits. Facial painting techniques include contour style, straining, surrealistic, photographic realistic drawing, and a mix of cultural identities. However, such important cultural assets have been ignored. Therefore, through this Exhibition, the general public, artists, teachers, and students can deeply appreciate the beauty of Chinese portraits, calligraphic art, colors, clothing and accessories, statues and systems, and the art of human characters and virtues.

Chinese painting theory has had records regarding portraits for a long time. The Mustard Seed Painting Collection has compiled the secrets of famous paintings from different painters in various dynasties. Before Ming Dynasty, the Chinese portraits used mostly lines for the composition. The lines were delicate and beautiful but lacked dimensions. Later paintings were impacted by the Western shading realistic, scumbling, and staining painting techniques, and fully caught the physical and spiritual characteristics of the subjects. The Ming Dynasty and Ching Dynasty saw the full development of the portraits. Drawing for oneself or one's ancestors was a serious and honorable task and people often hired expensive painting masters to do the work. The masterpieces vividly portrayed the spiritual features and fine characters of the subjects. The subjects range from a single person to ancestors of six or seven generations, and sometimes even fifty generations. Although many of the paintings are more than 100 years old, the subjects still look very much alive and the stroking techniques were extremely sophisticated and lavish. These paintings are such works of art.

The Ming Dynasty and Ching Dynasty are not too long ago from now and the art works, real-life items, and historical materials from the two dynasties are plentiful and have been kept in good condition. Therefore, this Institute is grateful for the kindness of Mr. Ho, Kuo-ching, Chairman of the Ho Chuang-shih Calligraphy Foundation, Mr. Chang, Chien-fu, Director of the Chinese Collectors' Institute, Mr. Shen, Yi-cheng, professor of the Fine Arts Dept. of National Taiwan Normal Univ., and Mr. Chen, Hung-meng, a famous painter and seal sculptor in lending us a variety of their fine collections, which comprise of about 150 pieces of portraits of officials.

This Exhibition is intended to promote an environment of art research and attract more people to appreciate fine arts through art shows, guided tours, seminars, and publications. We wish to combine the efforts of domestic scholars and experts in this field with such activities as guided tours, series of lectures, calligraphy demonstrations, and art camps. We will do our best to attract more people to the Exhibition, hoping that teachers would bring their students and parents would bring their children to the Exhibition for enjoying the feast filled with imagination and creativity on the portraits paintings.

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