The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting

Chieh Tzǔ Yüan Hua Chuan, 1679-1701

A facsimile of the 1887–1888 Shanghai edition with the text translated from the Chinese and edited by

MAI-MAI SZE

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(Dotting foliage)

Dotting like mouse tracks (shu tsu tien) in the form of a plum blossom,¹ a method Mei(-hua) Tao-jen (Wu Chen) liked to use.

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¹ Mei kua (plum blossom), a term for dots in groups of five, like the petals of a plum flower. Wu Chen (1280–1354), monk of the Plum Flower, was a master of the Yuan period, noted for calligraphic brushwork; he excelled in painting bamboos.
The (Buddhist) priest Chü-jän as well as (the Taoist monk) Mei Tao-jen (Wu Chên) often painted this kind of ancient cypress (ku po).
Another example of a main peak as a mountain
Brushstrokes like raveled rope (*chieh so-ts'en*)

This is an example of the brushstrokes for modeling called "raveled-rope strokes." Only Wang Shu-ming used this type of brushstroke, and the result was beyond description. He also combined it with *p'i ma-tsun* (brushstrokes like spread-out hemp fibers) and *fan t'ou ts'en* (brushstrokes shaped like alum lumps). Many painters have tried to copy this style but they did not really grasp the method and produced brushstrokes which were stiff and angular. These make up one group of brushstrokes for modeling (*ts'en*).

1. *Shên ts'ai chüeh lun* (divine portion surpassing the ordinary).
ROCKS

Brushstrokes like entangled brushwood.
(huan ch'iao ts'un)

Thus far I have given examples of the brushstroke methods of several of the masters. Now I shall give a few more, in much the same manner, but without identifying them with particular painters. This manner of presentation needs a slight modification, since the brushstrokes like entangled brushwood and the similar ones like entangled hemp fibers mark a change in brushstroke methods; they should not be considered as style or method, and should be treated as exceptions. They were used by the masters only occasionally, and in such a way that it is impossible to identify them with the style of any one master.
(Boats on a lake)

(This kind of scene is suitable when the waters are calm—for instance, on the lakes of the Ku River, in Chekiang. The scene depicts the lull before loading the cargoes of wine that will encourage the composing of poems.)

Rowing boats

A scene among the reeds in the moonlight in which one seems to hear the paddling of oars.

1. Text from the original editions.