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**Canada**

**A Case Study of An Artistically Gifted Chinese Girl: Wang Yani**

**Liqin Tan**

**A thesis**

**in**

**The Department**

**of**

**Art Education**

**Presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts at  
Concordia University  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

**May, 1993**

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## ABSTRACT

### A Case study of An Artistically Gifted Chinese Girl: Wang Yani

Liqin Tan

This is a case study of the development of artistic ability in a gifted Chinese child, in particular, Wang Yani, a painting prodigy. It is probable that this is also the first study, to investigate the relationship between the extraordinary painting ability of such a child and Chinese art teaching methods. It offers a basis for comparing artistic talents in China and the West.

The thesis presents an in-depth analysis of the three main periods in Yani's work: success (age 3 to 6 years), exploration (age 7 to 11 years) and silence (age 11 to 15 years).

The success period reveals her gift for representational means involving brush-ink techniques and the order-formula teaching method to express her childhood innocence.

The period of exploration involves wider themes, ranging from the personalized plot to forms, materials and media. In

addition, her brush-ink technique evolves further.

The period of silence reflects the beginning of adult consciousness. However, she is unable to show an equivalent development in artistic maturity and self-development.

Three factors are important in analyzing Yan's general education: 1) learning methodology, 2) environmental influences, 3) heredity, ( her family and the surrounding social spirit). In addition, her talent is related to three traditional Chinese cultural factors: the order-formula teaching method in art education, the naturalistic ink-charm of rice paper as a medium and the traditional Chinese ethic of hard work.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **A. Painting Prodigies**

Due to the relatively liberal political and cultural climate prevailing on mainland China, the overwhelming desire of many Chinese parents to improve their social status was implemented through the commencement of their children's education at the earliest possible age. The social trends for early childhood education on the part of parents dictated this change in philosophy. At this time, parents were seeking common recognition in terms of education of their children.

As a result of this new development, China, in the last thirteen years, has seen the emergence of a large number of child prodigies in the area of painting and calligraphy. Child prodigies are, however, not limited to one occupation such as painting and calligraphy, as some of these children simultaneously undertake poetry, calligraphy, and painting. An important example is Jin Jin, a 6 year old from Shenyang. Her extraordinary development has aroused the interest of eminent Chinese child psychologists, literary experts, poets and art educators (Xue, 1990).

Despite the concentration on many artistic fields, some children specialize in painting only a specific kind of animal. A good example, is A Xi, a 17 year old from Guangxi

province. He paints cats (Ke, 1988).

Some of the children produce calligraphy comparable to that of their famous predecessors, like four year old Chen Xiao-Yin of Zhu Zhou in Hunan province (Min, 1990).

Some Chinese child prodigies have attracted the attention of North American child psychologists who specialise in the field of child art education. Wang Yani, a 15 years old from Gong Cheng, in Guangxi Province provides a good example. She has gone on numerous exhibitions and tours both at home and abroad (Ho, 1989).

In view of the unfamiliarity of most North Americans with young artistic talent in China, it is my intention here, to explore in detail Wang Yani's works in order to study the development of artistic Chinese child prodigies. It is also my intention to compare my findings with those of similar studies, and to present the lessons that are learned from them. In addition, I will express my opinions, specifically, on the relationship between the development of the painting ability of talented young Chinese and Chinese art education.

#### **B. Brief Biography of Wang Yani**

Wang Yani was born ( May 2, 1975 ), the daughter of a Chinese artist, Wang Shiqiang, in Gongcheng county in the autonomous region of the Zhuang people. This is a minority group in Guanxi province in Southern China. It is said by her father, Wang, Shiqiang, that on her entry into the world she

was greeted by the smell of oil paint that is "inseparable from our profession." (Warg, 1987)

Yani's mother, is a typical Chinese housewife who takes care of the household and provides moral support for her husband, son and daughter, Yani. ( Yani has a brother who is two years her junior (Gotze, 1987 and Ho, 1989)).

It was under her father's guidance that Yani started painting at the age of two. According to Shiqiang by the time she was six, she had already completed over 4,000 paintings. At present, her work numbers more than 10,000 pieces. Her works were exhibited in Shanghai, Guangzhou, Beijing, and Hongkong where they attracted widespread attention from Chinese artists and the general public alike (Jiang and Huang 1984). Following this, there were further exhibitions in



**Figure 1** Yani at Opening of the Exhibition in Canton 1981 (from Gotze, 1987)

Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. She has now commanded attention on the international scene (Ho 1989, Gotze 1987). In addition, she has also aroused the scholarly interest of North American art educators and psychologists.

At home, in China, Wang Yani achieved fame: she is the youngest solo painting exhibitor, the youngest painter to publish a volume of works, and the youngest person honoured by

having one of her designs grace a Chinese postage stamp (Liu, 1987).

### C. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to inquire into and research the development of, and support for the extraordinary artistic painting ability of Chinese children. In order to do so, I will focus particularly, on the work of Wang Yani, which I will conveniently divide into four (4) broad analytical areas:



**Figure 2** Yani on Paint (Gott, 1987)

- 1) Her training, the unique path her learning experience followed and the way in which she learned;
- 2) How her gift for painting developed;
- 3) The differences and similarities between her work and the work of other gifted Chinese children; and
- 4) Exploration of the Chinese artists perception of Yani's work.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

With respect to the critique for Chinese painting, the earliest literature available on Chinese painting tradition was put forward by Xie, H. ( AD.459-532 ) . He did extensive research in ancient Chinese painting which is presented in his work A Criticism of Ancient Painting ( Xie, 1962). In his exposition he enunciated the famous Six Canons of Painting for Chinese Art criticism: *deft brushwork, venerated traditions, well planned space, versatile colours, accurate likeness and life-like spirit.*

Later, Jing, H. (A.D. 903-919), in his famous A Note on the Art of Brush ( Jing, 1974 ) erased the six criteria previously put forward by Xie, instead he mentioned: *Qi* (spirit or essence); *Yun* (charm); *Si* (implication), *Bi* (brushwork), *Mo* (application of ink), and *Jing* (composition). He also listed four requirements for evaluating paintings: *Shen* (spirit); *Mias* (ingeniousness); *Qi* (rarity); and *Qiao* (skilfulness).

A more central development came later with G. Wang (1679) who collected and classified thousands of order-formulae which are used in Chinese painting<sup>1</sup>. He presented this in his work,

---

<sup>1</sup> An order formula is the prescribed sequence of strokes for making an image



The Model of Painting Technique in Jie Zi Garden. In addition, he derived the order-formula in landscape, bird-flower and figure. He also presented an incredible level of detail and numbers of strokes on the way to draw a tree, stone, leaf, and flower. The order-formula of dots, for example, were derived with dozens of topologies, each one has a name and specific use for one kind of leaf or stone. These order-formulae in art education have greatly influenced the generation of artists that followed and are still in use today.

With respect to the investigation of Chinese art, one case study was published by Woo (1981). He used the famous painter, Chi Pai-Shui, in order to investigate Chinese aesthetics and to try to assist Chinese art teachers to explain the subject to Western students. Woo claims that there is a much closer relationship between the life of an artist and his work in China, than that which exists in the West. The Chinese tradition stresses the ethical sense behind the artist's work. Woo, for example, assumes that Chinese artists capture the spirit within the subject and go beyond Western art with its mere depiction of outward form.

With respect to the investigation of Chinese child art, Martin, (1981) wrote an article about the child prodigy Wang Xinhai's drawing. In addition, he interviewed his father. Xinhai, a nine-year-old, was hailed as another Picasso in China. It was evident that he was an excellent painter as he had utilized widely different styles ranging from traditional

Chinese ink-wash to twentieth century styles reminiscent of Walt Disney. His inspirations mostly came from movies, TV, zoo and radio.

In addition, to the article by Martin on Wang, Xinhai, Zu, (1984) did a reportage on Xinhai. He reported that Xinhai was born in an artistic family, and that, at the age of two, his father Wang Tongren, taught him. His father was an artist and professor at The Central Institution of Fine Arts in Beijing, and became Xinhai's first art teacher. Xinhai had great interest and made high demands on himself. Xinhai was reported to have visited 200 mural museum, art exhibitions and artist's families. In addition, Xu asked which TV, movies, and radio stories he listened to, and which children's comic and science books he read. Xinhai replied that it was in the hundred's. The content of Xinhai's drawing is liberal. At the end of his article, Xu asked two rhetorical questions: "Is it necessary to put Xinhai into a formal Fine Arts University? Is it possible for the method used in Chinese University to kill Xinhai's prodigious ability?"

The third child prodigy reported on, was A-Xi (Tan, Wenxi). Ke, (1988) wrote an article about the child. He states that: "A Xi got an education from his father Tan, Zhengrong and the famous artist Li, Logong. This prodigy specialized in cat drawing. He drew ten thousand paintings when he was age 7. The honours he got came from incredible hard work." (P\_\_)

The other child prodigy examined was Yani, who is the

principal case under study in this paper. Jiang (1984), witnessed Yani's paintings and had the opportunity to speak with Yani and her father. He noticed that Yani had mastered some of the most important principles and skills of Chinese art. Jiang also suggested that educators should try to understand the pure spontaneity of children, and that, practice makes perfect.

Wang, (Yani's father, 1987) documented a lot of material concerning Yani's drawing ability, her interest in art and her learning process from age of 2 to 11. According to him, Yani, at age two, showed an interest in the world of art. Wang remarked that he had never even considered giving her instructions or guiding her talent. However, he noticed that monkeys occupy the centre of her childhood world of artistic endeavour and when she discovered that monkeys alone provided insufficient scope for depicting her feelings and desires, she began to explore flowers, portraits, landscapes and birds. He deduced that Yani has a strong imagination, remarkable powers of observation; and an exact memory where her painting are concerned. He also, inferred that, Yani has no definite theme in mind when she takes up the brush. Her pictures reveal the restlessness characteristic of children.

Goldsmith and Feldman's (1988) study of Wang Yani, compares Chinese and Western art. They reported that while Western painting used light and shadow to give the appearance of three dimensional space, the Chinese traditionally attempts

to depict the essence of form. They asserted that Wang Yani's gift was partly a gift inherited from her parents, and also, the result of environmental and cultural support. They claimed further that Yani possessed the mature perspective inherent in child prodigies. After the age of six or seven, Yani's art was less egocentric and showed the characteristic themes of adolescence. They further asserted that the making of a prodigy is a delicate process because the inborn talent of a child may be lost if it is not nurtured by family, friends, teachers and the culture which the child is born into.

Ho, in her (1989) study of Wang Yani's artistic ability demonstrates that Yani clearly exemplifies a case of both nature and nurture. She argued that it is extremely rare to find a child like Yani with so great a range of precocious artistic achievements at such an early age. Yani deftly captures the texture of the monkeys fur and the volume of their bodies. She further asserted that Yani has the extraordinary ability to identify these qualities and to distil their essence in her highly expressive forms.

According to Ho, Yani's landscape is a lyrical interpretation of nature. She is not so much concerned with truthful visual appearance but rather translates her impressions of, and feelings toward nature, into spontaneous splashes of ink, colour washes and loose brushwork. Yani's figure paintings are characterized by a childish simplicity. She has explored and experimented with various techniques in their linear

definition. Yani also adopted the style of the Chinese painting masters, both old and new.

Delbanco (1989) studied monkeys in Chinese art and culture. She claims that monkeys have long inhabited the culture of China and that Yani is remarkable for her invention of purely personal and fresh images of these creatures. In addition, the most vibrant monkey images since the Song belong to Yani. She also shares with the Song masters an intimate knowledge of her subjects. She has succeeded in transforming herself into what she is painting. Yani's brushwork is more abstract than the earlier painters. However, Yani and earlier artists both have captured the moment before action.

Andrews (1989) studied Yani and contemporary Chinese painters and claims that Yani's artistic vocabulary by the age of four was already the language of traditional Chinese painting, and as such, she is in the mainstream of contemporary Chinese painters and is developing her own voice.

With respect to art education, Gardner (1987) observed art classes in China. He claimed that there are five assumptions in Chinese society which influence Chinese art education: "1) Life should unfold like a performance, with carefully delineated roles. 2) All art should be beautiful and should lead to good behaviour. 3) Control is essential and must emanate from the top. 4) Education should take place by continual careful shaping. 5) Basic skills are fundamental and must precede any efforts to encourage creativity." (p.5)

Hou, (1992) in his reportage, conversed with an art teacher who lived in Hong Kong. He talked about art education in Hong Kong, China and other countries. He claims that it is unnecessary for Chinese art education to follow Western footprints. He also suggested that Chinese art educators will have to build a new approach characterized only by Chinese art education.

With respect to Learning method, Zhao and Ge (1988) did a study on How to Learn Chinese Painting by Children. In their study they examined 41 different order-formulae of flowers, animals, trees, vegetables and fruits which is a typical order-formula teaching method book in Chinese art education.

Innovations in teaching method reported by Li (1988). They reported that in the past few years, Ms. Yang, an art teacher at Beijing Teacher's College, and her assistants have conducted a pre-school experimental art class to probe the new method of teaching, giving the children more freedom to draw what they like. It remains difficult however to change the basic conventional concept of art education and to make people understand that art is important to children's development.

General research material on gifted children is presented in Wong (1991). He did a research on the pioneer class in China's Academy of Science and a few interviews with former prodigies. He has studied five hundred prodigies in this class since 1978. Three hundred of these graduated, 70% of them did

graduate studies, one hundred more of them took Ph.D. programs in foreign countries. A few years later, several very young achievers in Chinese education, appeared youngest university student was 11 years old, the youngest Ph.D student was 23 years old, the youngest university teacher was 19 years old and the youngest associate professor was 26 years old. He showed that under 30% of former prodigies experienced the termination of prodigious abilities.

With respect to Western children's art, Fein (1976) did a study of drawing by her daughter, Heidi. Fein made a pictorial chronology of the stages of her daughter's drawing. The series of drawing shows the progression of Heidi's talent for drawing.

In addition, Duncum (1985) did an extensive study of how a number of Western artists learned to draw in childhood. His study is based on biographies, autobiographies and collections of youthful drawing. Duncum claims that all of the artists learned to draw by copying.

In all the literature I researched, I only found one case studies (Pariser 1991) on Chinese gifted children, and few in-depth studies of the factors facilitating the development of Chinese gifted children namely: Chinese teaching methods; Chinese painting techniques and materials; and Chinese aesthetic. However, Chinese art teachers, artists and Western psychologists can work together in future studies.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

The methodological approach adopted in my inquiry is mainly qualitative, involving description, observation, comparison, questionnaires and interviews.

My procedure started with library research and the collection of information on Chinese, and Western artistic child prodigies. In particular, there is detailed presentation of, and evaluations of Wang Yani.

Second, a review of information about Yani and a discussion of various videos, television programs, publications, and exhibitions highlighting child prodigies are looked at.

Third, there is a detailed analysis and comparison of the development of Yani's monkeys paintings with that of her landscapes.

Fourth, there is a thorough examination of the brush-ink technique, colour, calligraphy, composition and Rendering of space, and thematic content of 60 of Wang Yani's works.

Finally, interviews were conducted, in order to see how Chinese artists responded to Yani's work. The interviews were conducted by David Pariser and myself on four artists from Mainland China and Taiwan. The following standard questions were presented to the artists. Their answers are found Chapter 9:



1. Is there anything unusual about the way in which Yani's ideas and technical skills developed?
2. Is there anything unusual or exceptional about Yani's technique?
3. Do you think Yani was helped by an adult? Which picture shows this? why do you think so?
4. What do you think of her calligraphy from age 3 until age 15?
5. Is there a difference in the way which Yani makes animals and landscapes? What is the difference?
6. What do you think are Yani's chances of becoming a significant/important adult artist in China?
7. How would you describe a Chinese child who was unusually good at painting? What do they do? What does "gifted child " mean in term of Chinese painting?

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF YANI'S DRAWING ABILITY AND IT'S DEVELOPMENT

#### A. Introduction

Yani is a typical Chinese painting prodigy, whose development follows quite a distinctive course. She has successively experienced developmental periods of monkey painting at age 3 to 6 years, landscape painting at age 7 to 11 years, and flower-and-bird painting at age 11 to 15 years. Among these three stages the monkey painting stage has been the most important and successful. In terms of the quality of output, landscape paintings illustrate a greater degree of exploration of ideas. However, they are less important than the monkey paintings. The flower-and-bird paintings exhibit a good level of composition, but lack the striking quality of the miscellaneous themes explored in landscape paintings.

Using the brush-ink criteria of life-like spirit, Yani's strongest period of expression occurred from ages 3 to 6; while her works from ages 7 to 11 represent a period of exploration; and from ages 11-15 represent a significant period of uncertainty.

#### B. Monkey Painting and the Period of Success ( Age 3 to 6)

Most of Yani's significant paintings of monkeys were done during this period. As such, these works were instrumental in

her becoming a renown painting prodigy both in China and abroad. Her first book was entitled, Yani's Monkeys (Jiang and Huang 1984). It represents a series of typical monkey paintings. In order to understand the development of Yani's ability it will be necessary to examine this important collection of monkey paintings.

(1). The Combination of Life-like Spirit and Brush-Ink Technique

The highest standard of aesthetics and appreciation in Chinese painting is a life-like spirit. Modern or traditional Chinese painters will not dispute this fact. While some Western art concentrates on capturing expression in three-dimensional space and also, the relationship between light, shadow, and colours, Chinese artists' emphasize the essential connection between life-like spirit and black-white. What the Chinese artists pursue, is not the expression of the truth of the objects, but rather the resonant combination of brush-ink textural qualities and the self-cultivation of the painter. This represents a historic four thousand year-old Chinese legacy. It proved important from the very beginning of Yani's study of painting and it has also served to ensure that her paintings would be of the highest Chinese standard.

Baumgarten (1930), a renowned Western psychologist, suggests that child prodigies display an unusual mixture of child and adult abilities, while Feldman and Goldsmith (1989), after studying Yani's case, claimed that she was a wonderful

phenomenon: a prodigy who gave life to a child's images with the brushwork of a skilled adult. From a Chinese perspective, Yani is considered to have mastered some very important and fundamental Chinese painting skills and also, a few complicated techniques, usually, evident only in the works of adult painters.

Despite the extraordinary level of competence exhibited by Yani, the question is posed as to how much technique she has mastered, as well as whether or not, with that technique, she successfully represents what she wanted to express. In addition, the question is posed as to whether or not her paintings evince a satisfactory life-like spirit?

During the monkey period most of Yani's brush-ink work involved relatively simple and basic brush techniques. However, the life-like spirit captured in her various expressions of the mood of monkeys is not something ordinary children could produce. Thus, her work with monkeys is singled out for praise by Chinese artists.

The landscape paintings of her later period, however, adopt mainly adult techniques, but receive little praise for possessing any life-like spirit. This is so, because the Chinese attitude towards child prodigies is not one of easy approval for their mastery of adult brush-ink techniques, but rather one for a sensitive choice and mastery of the right brush-ink technique for the object painted. In addition, note is taken of the successful expression of the child's life-like

spirit through the object.

In terms of life-like spirit, the paintings of Yani's monkeys during that period represents her best work as she successfully and rapidly utilized simple brush-ink techniques to express a kind of child-like life-like spirit. The movement of her brush is characterized by simplicity and naivete and her ink work is simple as it embodies fewer arrangements of objects as in A Baby Monkey (Figure 3), for example, that was painted by Yani at the age of four. The simplicity of her technique gives rise to a sense of transparency. Charm and brush go hand in hand.



**Figure 3** Wang Yani, age 4, A Baby Monkey (Chang & Huang 1994)

Likewise in We Have Fruit to Eat (Figure 4), painted at the age of seven, the composition covers the entire painting. However, the brush-ink technique utilized here is simple, fluent, and full of variations. As a result, the whole painting appears harmonious, simple and vigorous, embodying a sharp contrast of the light and dark tones of black.



**Figure 4** Wang Yani, age 7, We Have Fruit to Eat (Chang & Huang 1994)

Technically, the theme of the monkey painting seems to have been completed without hesitation using only one stroke of the brush. In sharp contrast to Figures 3

and 4, Close Brothers (Figure 5), which was done at age ten, possessed composition and other obvious similarities to the first painting. This portrays a sense of hesitation in brush-ink, and thus, is not as clear-cut and fluent as the two previously mentioned works.



**Figure 5** Wang Yani,  
age 10, Close Brothers.  
(H., 1989)

In addition, there is also a big difference in the life-like spirit of the two paintings. In the former, the monkey represents a king monkey, full of vigour and vitality, while in the latter, the tiger resembles a cautious kitten. The harmony in the earlier painting between the qualities of childhood innocence and clownishness forms the essence of the monkey. The spirit and childhood innocence of the painter herself constitutes another important factor in the successful expression of the life-like spirit.

In most of Yani's monkey paintings, the monkey's appearance tells us what Yani herself wanted to do. In her expression of the animal, Yani's own childhood naivete, childishness and sense of clowning are embodied with great naturalness and vividness.

At about age 6, Yani mastered a simple brush-ink technique. This is evident in her experimentation and exploration of ink and colour mixtures. An example of this is, Let Me Smell the Flower (Figure 6), in which the vase is painted with

the mixture of third blue and black ink-tone. In this painting the third blue maintains not only the feeling of its original colour but, also, its transparency.



**Figure 6** Wang Yani, age 4, Let Me Smell The Flower (Jiang & Huang 1984)

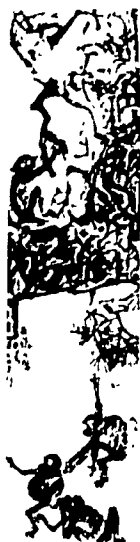
which she previously would have painted bright-red and green colours, she employed a mixture of these colours in mineral white and ink. This is a significant innovation as it makes the colour and the body of the monkey appear more harmonious and unified.

With respect to the method of light ink technique, light ink-wash is employed in Hurry Down (Figure 8). The generally rough texture of the watermark caused by the flowing of the light ink yields a seemingly tough paper-like effect. Yani continued exploring this technique even after her monkey period.

The method of tone harmony appears occasionally in Yani's paintings. This is evident for example in That's All Mine (Figure 7). Among all of Yani's paintings this is my favourite. This is so, because on the faces of the monkey and the little butterflies on



**Figure 7** Wang Yani, age 4, That's All Mine (Jiang & Huang 1984)



**Figure 8** Wang Yani, age 6, *Monkey Down* (Jiang & Huang 1981)

In order to give a clear understanding of Yani's technique, her development, and the degree of mastery she attained in brush-ink technique, I will discuss eighteen of her masterpieces. In this discussion, I will give categories and numbers for her specific mastery of the brush-ink technique. The expression between brush-ink, and the life-like spirit is also sorted according to their size.

The number of Monkeys painted is listed on Table 1 (below).

Table 1, shows the principal brush-ink techniques adopted in most of Yani's monkey paintings from 3, up to age 14. These are: up-right brush, side brush, light and dark stroke, light and dark dot, light and dark line, and light and dark wash.

Yani's development follows a chronological and methodological pattern. Between the age of 3 and 5 she adopted and mastered some relatively difficult techniques, such as, mixture of ink and colour, ink-colour harmony, fly-white and broken-ink'. From age 5 to age 11, she tried some more difficult techniques in monkey paintings, producing both successes and some failures. From age 11, she exhibits little variation and exploration of technique in monkey painting.

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See Appendix A for definition of terms



**TABLE I: TECHNIQUES IN YANI'S MONKEY PAINTINGS**

NAME OF WORKS	A G E	SIZE CM	O R D	Q U T	NO. OF TECHNIQUES																COMBINATION				
					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	E	G	N
THAT'S JUST WHAT HE WANTS	3	33 X 68	A	1	X	X	X	X	X	X															
WHAT A NICE SMELL	4	33 X 34	A	2	X	X	X	X	X	X								X							X
DEAD DRUNK	4	33 X 68	A	2	X	X	X	X	X	X								X							
THAT'S ALL MINE	5	33 X 68	A	1	X	X	X	X	X	X															
5TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION	5	132 X 68	A	39	X	X	X	X	X	X								X						X	
HURRY DOWN	6	132 X 33	A	3	X	X				X															
I HAVE SOME FRUIT	6	132 X 34	A	1	X	X	X	X	X	X															
--- BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION	6	132 X 68	A	58	X	X	X	X	X	X								X							X
WHOSE FLOWERS ARE SO PRETTY	7	131 X 35	A	2	X	X	X	X	X	X															
THE BANANAS HAVE NOT COME	8	133 X 35	A	2	X	X	X	X	X	X															
A HUNDRED MONKEYS	9	31 X 1080	A	10	X	X	X	X	X	X								X							X
GOOD HARVEST	11	34 X 60	A	1	X	X	X	X	X	X								X							X
WOW WHAT A BEAUTIFUL MORNING	10	93 X 43	A		X	X	X	X	X	X															X
MONKEY & CHICKEN	14		A	1	X	X	X	X	X	X								X						X	X
MONKEY & GOOD FISH	15		A	1	X	X	X	X	X	X														X	X

**KEY TO NUMBERS AND LETTERS**

- ORD—ORDER-FORMULA     A1 A2 A3—MONKEY ORDER-FORMULA     QUT—QUANTITY OF MONKEYS     N—NORMAL AND NOT GOOD
- COMBINATION—COMBINATION OF LIFE-LIKE SPIRIT AND TECHNIQUE     E—EXCELLENT     G—GOOD
- 1 UP-RIGHT BRUSH     5 CHARJINK STORKE     9 LIGHT-JINK LINE
- 2 SIDE-BRUSH     6 DARK-WET DOT     10 DARKJINK LINE
- 3 LIGHT-WET STORKE     7 DARKJINK LINE     11 CHARJINK LINE
- 4 DARK-WET STORKE     8 CHARJINK DOT     12 LIGHT-JINK WASH
- 13 DARKJINK WASH
- 14 FLY-WHITE
- 15 MIXTURE OF INK & COLOR
- 16 COLOR INK HARMONY
- 17 BROKEN INK
- 18 PAPER INSTEAD OF BRUSH

Between the age of 4 and 6, groups of monkeys began to appear in her paintings, the number of individual monkeys in a painting ultimately reaches one hundred, by the age of 9.

On the whole, the smaller paintings are better than the large ones. The work in her earlier periods seems to have a good combination of brush-ink and life-like spirit. In the later period, she explored relatively difficult techniques as seen in paintings 20, 22, 23 and 24.

The overall combination of brush-and-ink and life-like paintings at the age from 3 to 6 are Yani's most successful works. Of interest, too, is that most basic techniques Yani mastered are suitable for representing soft rather than hard objects, and for these, wet-ink technique is better. Wet-ink technique requires more water to be mixed with the ink than dry-ink technique. Usually Chinese artists use a soft sheep-hair brush to apply the solution. Thus, the simple and effective wet-ink technique is common throughout her early works.

#### (2). Order-formula Method

In the analysis of Yani's works, brush strokes are always made in the same order and according to the same formula in the monkey paintings she made between the age of 3 and 15. The order-formula is defined by dividing the monkey postures into left, middle and right side as in Table 2.






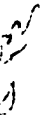

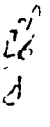


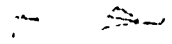

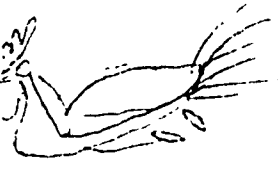

Table 2 shows that the three order-formulae A1, A2, A3

TABLE 2: ORDER-FORMULA IN YANI'S MONKEY PICTURES

A1. LEFT-SIDE		A3 MIDDLE		A2 RIGHT SIDE	
S	ORDER-FORMULA	S	ORDER-FORMULA	S	ORDER FORMULA
1		1		1	
3		3		3	
5		8		5	
11		13		11	
12		20		12	
14				14	
16		24		16	
26				26	
36		45		36	

KEY TO LETTERS: S-TOTAL # OF STORKES AT THIS POINT.

TABLE 3: ORDER-FORMULA IN YANI'S CRANE & ROOSTER PICTURES

C. CRANES		R. ROOSTERS	
S	ORDER FORMULA	S	ORDER-FORMULA
1		1	
3		4	
6		5	
12		10	
24		17	
		22	
		28	
		36	

KEY TO LETTERS

S--TOTAL # OF STORKES AT THIS POINT

are, in fact, one order-formula with three different sets of dynamics. Order-formulae A1 and A3 has around 30 strokes, and order-formula A2 has around 45 strokes. In the analysis of Yani's works using this order-formula, it is easy to conclude that, there is no variation in the order-formula of Yani's monkey painting, there are only some changes in dynamics. This practice was adopted by Yani between the ages of 3 and 15, and provided her with the freedom both to represent various monkey postures, and at the same time, to convey an impression of her inner and outer worlds.

Although, Yani utilized this order formula, she had recourse to another order-formula to paint cranes, roosters, and peacocks (See Table 3) and for work she completed later.

### (3). Thematic Content

In most of Yani's monkey paintings done from age 3 to 6, the plot and connotation are straightforward and natural, and without the symbolism that often occurs in adult works. Her father once remarked that the works of this period recorded her thoughts and feelings of the moment like the pages of a diary (Wang 1987). Yani's works are egocentric narrative drawings. As such, almost every painting conveys a story. Examples of these are, That's just what he wants, What a nice smell, How anxious his eyes are and That's all mine. Similarly, theme, content and feeling do not differ significantly from those of other children her age.

Goldsmith (1989), reached a similar conclusion from her

study of Yani's early works. According to Goldsmith, She expresses common childlike themes in her work, not the issues and preoccupations of adulthood. According to Western theories of psychological development, egocentricity is a word fitting Yani's preoccupation with her own specific interests and actions during this early period. This is a trait common in all children.

#### (4). Composition and the Rendering of Space

There is a great difference between Chinese and Western art in terms of the rendering of composition and space. Westerners emphasize perspective, three-dimensionality and geometrical forms. Chinese artists, on the other hand, explore the scattered perspective, the three types of mountain perspective techniques in landscape (high, level and deep distance), the spacing and exposure of an object, the selection and depiction of momentum of the mountain. In addition, the Chinese artist explores the contrast of dark with light, empty and solid (in ink) and wide with narrow structural spaces.



**Figure 9** Wang Yani, age 3, Tiny Tree (Jiang & Huang 1994)

As is evident in Tiny tree (Figure 9), Yani was not influenced by these traditional compositional concerns. At age 4, however, her emphasis was on conveying a sense of space with attention to the relation between thin and thick, black and light, and empty and solid. After the age of 5, her

concern for the rendering of space has been broadened, as is evident in Gathering plum flowers (Figure 10). The intercrossing of the branches and twigs, the relation of sparsity to density, and black to light in ink bring out the relationship between front and back, giving rise to a feeling of space. A similar technique has been used in the two paintings: Three Roosters (Figure 11) and Three Cranes (Figure 12)



Figure 10 Wang Yani, age 5, Gathering Plum Flowers (Jiang & Huang 1984)



Figure 11 Wang Yani, age 5, Three Roosters (Jiang & Huang 1984)



Figure 12 Wang Yani, age 5, Three Cranes (Jiang & Huang 1984)



**Figure 13** Wang Yan, age 5, *Dancing Happily* (Jiang & Huang 1984)

In Dancing Happily (Figure 13) a dense crowd of monkeys is depicted in the painting, on both the left and right sides. In the middle a few monkeys are

Painted thinly. Thus, the spacing and the themes are effectively depicted against density. Here, the black and light in brush-ink in the density represents the relationships between the front and back.

The rice is for you (Figure 14), was painted at age 5. It is one of the most successful paintings in both its childlike character and sophisticated composition. This is so, because it seems to uphold the composition's ideal as expressed in the adage *in density even wind cannot penetrate and in spacing horse racing can be held*.<sup>3</sup> The density is observable in the rooster at the top of the painting. Beneath the rooster, three times the amount of space is allotted to the rooster. As such, the rooster itself, already occupies space sufficient for horses to run. The rice



Figure 14 Wang Yan, age 5, The Rice Is For You (Jiang & Huang 1984)

**Figure 14** Wang Yan, age 5, *The Rice Is For You* (Jiang & Huang 1984)

<sup>3</sup> Although today this saying is common knowledge among Chinese artists, the idea originated in an ancient Chinese poem and an art critic possibly around the time of the Tang Dynasty



at the bottom of the painting makes the overall composition balanced. Thus, the relationship between calligraphy and the figures depicted in the painting gives uniformity to the life-like spirit of the painting.



**Figure 15** Wang Yan, age 5, Plums in Full Bloom (Jiang & Huang 1984)



**Figure 16** Wang Yan, age 6, I Have Two Gourds Here (Jiang & Huang 1984)

After age 6, the notion of thick and thin, empty and solid, and black and light is more intense in her presentation. This is evident in Plums in full bloom (Figure 15) and I have two gourds here (Figure 16). Here, black and light of the branch are clearly demarcated. The variation in light is also evident in These Flowers are Mine (Figure

17), here the colour of the ink on the leaves of the flower varies in lightness from one leaf to another.

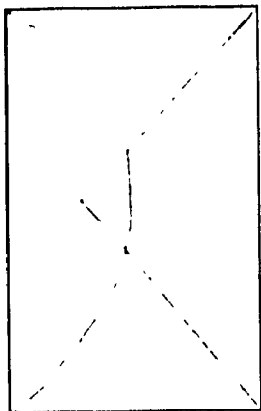
The perspective of Chinese composition is deeply influenced by the spirit of Chinese philosophy. In their management of challenge, the Chinese unlike the west, emphasize endurance not aggression. This ability to endure is called the spirit of the great wall



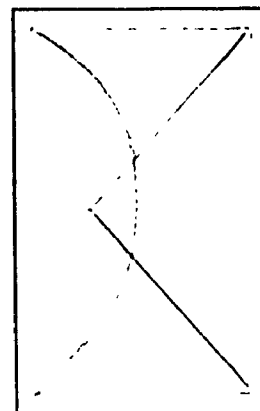
**Figure 17** Wang Yan, age 6, These Flowers are Mine (Jiang & Huang 1984)

(Zie 1984). In addition, inward shin bone (inward content) rather than outward beauty, is also emphasized as a philosophy, in composition. This trait has the effect of making the composition line appear as an inward rather than an outward force. This element of Chinese heritage is reflected in the early period of Yani's works. However, how this thousand year old Chinese cultural legacy was important in influencing the thought-process of a naive child remains a puzzle.

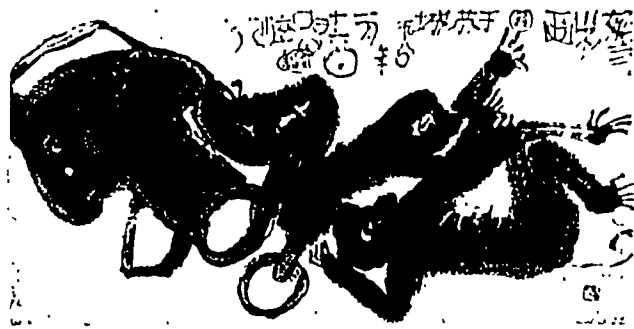
If we take the work That's all mine (Figure 7) which was done at age 5, for example, it is evident that the composition line itself has created a sense of an outward expansion force (Figure 18). However, this force in composition is achieved only by the force of the monkey turning out its tail, and also, by the force of calligraphy, which gives rise to a sort of inward composition line much expressive of life-like spirit (Figure 19).



**Figure 18** The Composition Line of That's All Mine

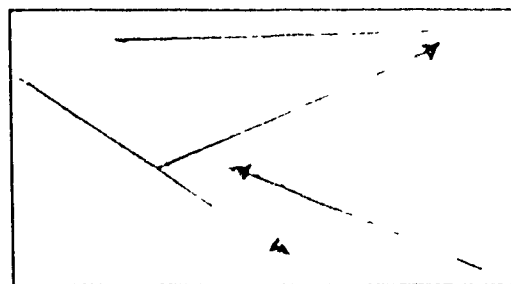


**Figure 19** The Composition Line of That's All Mine



**Figure 20** Wang Yani, age 4, *Dead Drunk* (Jiang & Huang 1981) but with implied meaning -- the seal, the calligraphy and the hands of the monkey are all helping in the retrieval of the composition force line (Figure 21). Other changes can be found in the size of Yani's composition during this period. Small and irregular compositions were adopted when she was 3, as evident in *A Tiny Tree* 16 x 8 cm (Figure 9). After age 4, however, all her compositions become regular. The so-called regular composition is based on how many cuttings were made from the Chinese rice paper that is utilized. The size of her compositions were determined by the size of the painting to be placed on the rice paper itself. Yani's usual composition sizes were now based on the cutting of the 4 chi paper. The most frequently used sizes were 33 x 68 cm, 33 x 132 cm and 68 x 132 cm. At ages 3 and 4 the formats Yani utilized were usually vertical, horizon-

The situation is quite different in *Dead drunk*, which was also done at age 5, (Figure 20). Here, the composition lines intersect and move,



**Figure 21** The composition lines of *Dead Drunk*

tal, or square.

After age 5, however, she strengthened her vertical composition with frequent double cutting of rice paper in the 33 x 132 cm format. At the same time, her painting in the hand scroll format, the traditional composition began appearing with It Is Heaven to be in the Orchard (561 x 68 cm, Figure 22). The format of a whole and a double piece of rice



**Figure 22** Wang Yani, age 5, It is Heaven to be in the Orchard (Jiang & Huang 1984) paper is adopted in works such as Fifth Birthday Celebration, 132 x 132 cm (Figure 23) and In the Forest, (Figure 24). Yani's fifth year is therefore significant as it marks an important period in her development of composition size.



**Figure 23** Wang, Yani, age 5, Fifth Birthday Celebration (Jiang & Huang 1984 )

Although the development of vertical, horizontal and square forms did not negatively influence Yani's progress in expressing life-like spirit or her brush-and-ink technique,

there appears to be an inverse relationship between composition size and brush-ink technique, and the expression of life-like spirit. Quality is compromised as the larger works do not seem as good as the small ones with respect to an overall life-like spirit. The composition of Fifth Birthday Celebration, (Figure 23), for example, conveys a general impression of loose organisation, and in addition, the black component lacks overall unifying arrangement. One plausible explanation for this is that she may have been too young to manage a bigger painting.

#### (5). Colour

The Chinese and Western approaches to colour are quite different. In the West the approach is to use scientific colour system and to regard blue, red and yellow as the frame of reference for colours. On the other hand, the Chinese regard black and white as the sources for all colours, therefore, the study of colour in Chinese painting is biased towards the ink layer rather than to the layers of other colours, and each colour is based on black and white.

An object's colour is always the result of colour and ink, and their expert combination can yield a subtle effect.



Figure 24 *Wind*, 1987, pp. 5, in the book *Wind*, (1987)

However, the procedure is strict and complicated as ink must serve as a foundation to which mineral colours can be later applied. After this, the botanical base can be used and finally the mineral colours can be employed. The mixing of ink and colour forms an intrinsic part of a strict training in meticulous brushwork. Yani was weak in this area for at the age of 3, she began freehand brushwork and did not learn to use a meticulous brushwork. As a result, there could be no effect from such training on her use of colour. Thus, one would therefore expect to see in her work few restrictions in the use of botanical or mineral colours. It is surprising to learn that she had mastered the technique of blending colours with ink at age 3.



**Figure 25** Wang Yani, age 3, That's Just What I Want (China & Hong Kong 1984)

this technique in her work.

Another essential aspect of

In That's just what I wanted (Figure 25), she blended flower blue with ink to produce a natural and transparent effect. Sleeping Under the Gourd, age 4, (Figure 26), the mineral colour, azurite, is blended with ink which creates an impression of moisture in the appropriate place. After age 6 she had more frequent recourse to



**Figure 26** Wang Yani, age 5, Sleeping Under the Gourd (Jiang & Huang 1984)

Yani's colouring development lies in her practice of both pure ink drawings and colour and ink mixed drawings, in the same period. For example, while engaging freely in blends of colour and ink, she concurrently painted many pure ink paintings, such as, How inevitably nice, (age 6, Figure 28). Boneless painting technique also began to emerge when she was 6, for example, the camel in Hurry home (Figure 29) and the deer in Riding on a deer (Figure 27). These efforts were less than a complete successes as their colouring was too light; and lacked depth and vigour.



**Figure 27** Wang Yani, age 6, Riding on the Deer (Jiang & Huang 1984)

The method of colour ink harmony, also appeared occasionally in Yani's works. An example of this is the painting, That's all mine (Figure 7) in which the overall colour is unified in the tone base. Despite this however, Yani's colour preference was biased towards the traditional



**Figure 28** Wang Yani, age 6, How inevitably nice (Jiang & Huang 1984)

versatile colours method<sup>4</sup>.

(6). Summary

a) Yani's Period of Success (age 3 to 6)

During this period, Yani rapidly mastered some basic but effective brush-ink styles, and skills requisite in drawing

<sup>4</sup> See the *Terminology of Chinese Painting Techniques* in Appendix A.

the animals for her paintings. In addition, she successfully represented a pure childish life-like spirit without the symbolic overtones of adult art. The child-like innocence of the monkeys became the principal means to convey this life-like spirit.

Yani, having mastered the basic brush-and-ink techniques, started exploring others, meeting with both success and failure. The brush-and-ink skills she practised and mastered, all fall into the moist category, that is, suitable for representing soft objects.

In the theme, Yani gravitated towards egocentricity, which is not much different from other children of her age. In composition, at the age of 5, she began to use the method of space, traditional in Chinese painting that aims at richness in inward content.

At age 3, we begin to see vertical and horizontal form in her composition. After age 5, her vertical compositions improved ( look at Figure 14 and Figure 16 ) as well as the composition on the whole piece of rice paper, the double rice paper and on the hand scroll.

With respect to colour usage, however, there seems to be no positive relationships between the development in composition size and the development of the life-like spirit in her brush-ink technique. From her early years she showed a



**Figure 29** Wang Yani, age 5, *Hurry Home* (No. 1989)



preference for the versatile colour techniques. At the age of 3 or 4 she was already beginning to blend colour with ink. At age 6 she practised the boneless technique.

b). Monkey Painting

The combination of brush-ink technique and life-like spirit was at its best in Yani's monkey painting from age 3 to 6. In my opinion, monkey paintings at the age of 4 or 5 are her finest work. From age 6 to 9 she embarked on some new explorations of her monkey painting technique, but had limited success. Thus, after age 9, the number of the monkey paintings declined, so no comparison could be drawn between the life-like spirit and brush-and-ink technique of this period with those of the past.

Three order-formulae, A1, A2, A3 (See Table 2), were not significantly different from each other when adopted in Yani's monkey paintings. However, the order form A1 was the one she favoured most. Her use of order-formulae lasted from age 3 to 15. The order-formula itself did not experience any development or change, only elemental changes in the posture and number of monkeys.

The fundamental brush-ink technique of monkey painting is up-right brush, side brush, light and dark stroke, light and dark dot, light and dark line and light and dark wash. They do not vary significantly from the basic technique of Chinese painting. Some relatively difficult techniques, such as, mixture of ink and colour, broken ink and colour ink harmony

were adopted when she was 3 and 4. The number of monkeys Yani painted, went from only a few per picture to many monkeys at age 3 or 4. Groups of monkeys appeared during the late period, age 6. She painted a larger number of monkeys when she was ages 5 and 6. By age 9, hundreds of monkeys appeared in her paintings.

### **C. Landscape and The Period of Exploration: Age 7 to 11**

One only has to take a glance at Yani's work's to see that monkey paintings dominate her work. These are followed in order by landscape painting. Among the 69 works in the show titled Yani The Brush of Innocence in the Asian Art Gallery of San Francisco, 28 monkey paintings were presented. They represent 41 percent of her paintings. Flowers-birds represented only 11% and paintings of other animals 21%. Landscapes represented only 22% and figure painting a mere 5%. This disparity in representation can thus be traced to her compositional concentrations at different periods.

Yani's paintings during her period of exploration (age 7 to 11 ) were mainly linked to landscapes. Flowers-birds, figures and animals were less common. Her concentration on landscape painting is linked to her development during this period. She made a gradual transition from her domination of child-like purity, naivete, and innocence. Though she explored brush-and-ink technique more widely, no technique emerged that was representative of her inward nature and spirit.

(1). The Combination of Life-like Spirit and Brush-ink Techniques.

We may be disappointed when we apply the criterion of life-like spirit to Yani's landscape paintings. This is because she rarely succeeds with the simple brush-ink techniques in landscapes. These same techniques were present in monkey paintings which did represent the life-like spirit.<sup>5</sup>

Chinese landscape painting has a long history and there have been large numbers of famous landscape painters. The resulting reservoir of technique is profound and vast. In recent times, the landscape in Guilin in China has supplied a unique opportunity for Chinese artists of talent. This situation is a challenge to a child like Yani to find her own *métier* and thus to distinguish her own explorations from those of all the other prodigies.

The personalisation which we find in Yani's monkey paintings, is absent in her landscape paintings. She shows no signs of child-like motivation or a personal interest. Her devotion to imitating the works of adults and to exploring brush-ink technique smothered her child-like innocence and the life-like spirit. It is significant that Yani had begun tackling the technical problems of the material itself and

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<sup>5</sup>

*At the same time, a painting prodigy named Huang Dan, in the province of Guang Xi, successfully mastered around the age of 6 several simple techniques of brush and ink to convey the vitality of the pure and vivid landscapes in Guilin (Liu, 1987) (Figure 30)*

exploring the brush-ink technique rather than just telling a story.

One of the techniques explored by Yani was water breaking ink and ink breaking water.<sup>6</sup> Although, this technique was evident at age 4, she made



**Figure 30** Huang Dan, age 6, Mountains (Liu, 1987)



**Figure 31** Wang Yani, age 8, Lion Mountain (Ho, 1989)

limited use of it. Later, she used a lot of light ink and water, covering wider areas and sprinkling the arrangement of different ink, as in Lion Mountain, age 8, (Figure 31). Here, the landscape is one of the most successful of her

representation of life-like spirit. Through the auxiliary effects of its layering of ink, structure of composition, mountain and ink dynamics, it exhibits well and forcefully the momentum of the mountain. In particular, the flowing of ink and water in the painting can be found in the boats at the

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<sup>6</sup> See *Broken Ink in the Terminology of Chinese Painting Techniques*, Appendix A

bottom of the page.



**Figure 32** Wang Yani, age 8, Yun Cai Mountain (Ho, 1989)

Yun Cai Mountain, age 8, (Figure 32) is another example in which she made full use of the water-like brush mark effects on rice paper. Here different layers of ink were painted around water thus successfully producing the brush-ink effect. However, the composition is flawed, as it is not close-knit and lacks beautification. This has the effect of spoiling the mountain chain and its momentum.

A similar technique was applied in the monkey painting, Good Harvest (Figure 33), age 11, yielding a special effect.

Another brave exploration of Yani's is her application of ink with paper rather than brush. If we confine our discussion here, to

the nature of mountains rather than traditional Chinese aesthetic, it is evident that a mountain is an object with a hard nature. Thus, when landscape paintings are



**Figure 33** Wang Yani, age 11, Good Harvest (Ho, 1989)

executed using traditional technique, generally a wolf-hair brush or a brush mixed with wolf-hair and sheep-hair<sup>7</sup> for expressing the hard nature of landscape, multi-layer rubbing and wrinkling of its side brush is used. It must have been no doubt difficult for little Yani to master up to a thousand kinds of fundamental traditional techniques in landscape painting. However, she must have mastered some basic techniques such as, outlining, rubbing, and wrinkling. Yani wanted to skip over this most fundamental technique and paint directly with paper. In a way, paper may not necessarily be less suitable than wolf-hair brush. Yani, however, failed to grasp the most fundamental dry-ink techniques for painting landscape. Consequently, her landscape paintings were very soft, almost cottony. Her own personal nature disposes Yani to paint softly rather than harshly. Thus, there remains a great gap in explanation of this soft tool, plus soft effect and Yani's soft nature and the hard natural objects of the landscape.

Another characteristic of Yani's landscapes is her obvious imitation of some famous adults in their brush work application, ink, colour and composition. This situation is not unusual amongst Chinese painters. Her imitation was creative as it benefitted her brush-ink technique. However, her child-like innocence and vitality was compromised as she

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See the Terminology of Chinese Painting Materials, Appendix A

did not have the adult cultural experiences and behaviour. Failing to match this culture and nature, her work became unclear, and weak. A good example is the blank space in Yun Cai Mountain, age 8, (Figure 32) and You Can Never Finish Painting of Mountains and Rivers in Guilin, age 8, (Figure 78., Appendix D). These appears quite unnatural, "a knife-cutting feeling". It is almost as though the painting has been literally, severed by a knife.

The technique of leaving some blank space is employed by adults to consolidate the relationship in painting between space and the momentum of mountains, and in observation of the principle that, as the poets say, silence tells more than words. This technique is basic to landscape painting, and adults pay careful attention to it. Evidently, little Yani had difficulties in understanding the use of empty space and the relationship between the momentum of the mountain and the empty space. As a result, the space in her painting appears as a white path winding through the mountains. This is quite an unnatural picture.

Another exploration embarked on by Yani in her landscape painting is the selection of a variety of papers other than rice paper. In Early Morning, (Figure 34), and Guilin's Autumn, (Figure 35), both painted at age 7, she replaced rice paper with tough paper.



**Figure 34** *Wang Yani, age 7, Early Morning (1990, 1989)*

This has its disadvantage for unlike rice papers which absorbs moisture and brush mark, tough paper repels moisture, and colour stays on its surface.

The following Table, (Table 4) is organized in the same way as the one for monkey painting. It examines Yani's brush-ink technique and the quality of the life-like spirit in her landscapes. From Table 4, it is evident that the brush-ink techniques in all the other landscape styles are composed of the following characteristics: more wet ink and less dry ink technique.

The wet-ink technique breaks down into light-wet stroke, dark-wet stroke, light-ink line, dark-ink line, mixture of ink and colour, paper instead of brush, wash with a larger light-ink cover, wash with a larger dark-ink cover.

The pattern of exploration for almost the entire collection of these paintings was the mixture of ink and colour, paper instead of brush and wash with a larger light-ink coverage.

From 7 to 11 Yani showed no obvious development or



**Figure 35** Wang Yani, age 7, Guilin's Autumn (Ho, 1989)



TABLE 4: TECHNIQUES IN YANI'S LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS

NAME OF WORKS	A G E	SIZE CM	Q U T	NO. OF TECHNIQUES																COMBINATION									
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	E	G
EARLY MINING	7	34X337	T	X			X		X				X		X		X		X		X		X		X				
GUILIN'S AUTUMN	7	33 X 34	T	X		X			X													X							
LION MOUNTAIN	8	35 X 34	R	X		X			X													X							
MY BEAUTIFUL HOMETOWN	8	34X35	R	X		X		X														X							
YAN CAI MOUNTAIN	8	137X34	R	X		X		X														X							
CLEARING AFTER RAIN	8	34X34	R	X		X		X														X							
YOU CAN NEVER FISH—	8	34X550	R	X		X		X														X							
NO MORE FINISHING	8	33X134	R	X					X													X							
NOON IN THE AUTUMN	8	33X34	R	X		X		X														X							
LITTLE MOUNTAIN	8	33X34	R	X		X		X														X							
AUTUMN IN A HAMLET	9	103X56	R	X	X	X		X		X												X							
PRETTY RIVERBANKS	10	136X34	R	X		X		X		X												X							
A SMALL VILLAGE	10	137 BX34	R	X		X		X		X												X							
A SUNNY DAY	11	70X34	R	X		X		X		X												X							

KEY TO NUMBERS AND LETTERS:

- QUT—QUALITY OF PAPER T—TOUGH PAPER R—RICE PAPER, COMBINATION—COMBINATION OF LIFE-LIKE SPIRIT AND TECHNIQUE E—EXCELLENT G—GOOD N—NORMAL AND NOT GOOD
- 1 UP-RIGHT BRUSH 5 CHAR-INK STORKE 9 LIGHT-INK LINE 17 BROKEN INK 21 ACCUMULATED & COLOR  
 2 SIDE-BRUSH 6 DARK-WET DOT 10 DARK-INK LINE 18 PAPER INSTEAD OF BRUSH 22 A LARGER LIGHT-INK WASH  
 3 LIGHT-WET STORKE 7 DARK-INK DOT 11 CHAR-INK LINE 19 RUBBING & WRINKLING 23 A LARGER DARK-INK WASH  
 4 DARK-WET STORKE 8 CHAR-INK DOT 12 LIGHT-INK WASH 20 DARK-DRY STORKE 24 EMPTY SPACE

progress in her landscape paintings. Nevertheless, there appeared to be signs of continuous exploration and a pursuit of variety. Some basic techniques such as contour and rubbing and wrinkling were not evident in her landscape paintings.

(2). The Method of Representation with No Order-formula

Unlike Yani's monkey paintings, her landscape paintings do not seem to follow any special sequence. Landscape paintings has a ready-made order-formula -- a very complicated one -- provided by Chinese painting tradition, according to the introduction in The Model Painting technique of Jiezi Garden (Wang 1679). Leaves alone have dozens of order-formulae; so do dots. The order-formula of the landscape paintings must be established by recombining these basic creative order-formulae, their mastery requires a significant period of years or decades.










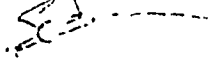






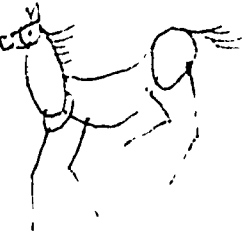

Modern Chinese child prodigies usually bypass this period of hard discipline, settling instead, for some equivalence with the most fundamental techniques and simple order-formulae only for small subjects in the landscape (eg. houses, trees and boats). They create, out of their own personal philosophy, a very simple landscape painting endowed with childish innocence. Examples of this phenomenon can be found in A Xi's landscape painting by dry ink<sup>8</sup> (Liu, 1987) (See Figure 75) and

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<sup>8</sup>

*Some information on painting was obtained from photographs sent by A Xi's father*

TABLE 5: ORDER-FORMULA IN YANI'S HORSE AND OX PICTURES

H. HORSE		O. OX	
S	ORDER-FORMULA	S	ORDER-FORMULA
1		1	
3		3	
9		5	
11		13	
13		14	
14		16	
16		17	
25		18	
30		22	

DESCRIPTION OF LETTERS      S—THE ORDER OF BRUSH STOKES

in Huang Dan's landscape painting by rubbing and wrinkling (Liu, 1987) (See Figure 30).



**Figure 37** Wang Yani, age 8, No More Fighting (Ho 1989)

order-formulae with her animals, for example, a horse order-formula in Horses, age 8, (Figure 79, See Appendix D) and an ox order-formula in Oxen, age 10 , (Figure 36, Table 5). Order-formulae can also be found in her figure painting.

(3). Composition

Yani placed emphasis on the form of the



**Figure 36** Wang Yani, age 10, Oxen (Ho, 1989)

Likewise, Yani, too, drew a kind of landscape without reference to a special order-formula. However, from the very beginning she dispensed with the simplest landscape techniques and the technique for representing hard objects like rocks. As a result, she failed to create traditional Chinese landscape effects.

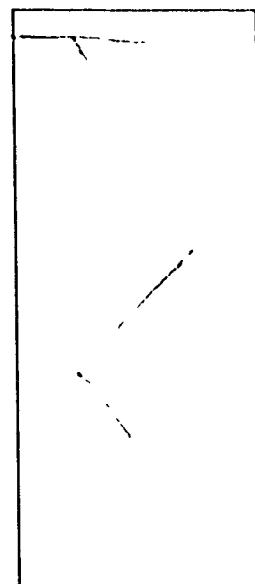
Although Yani did not follow an order-formula in her landscapes, she did adhere to



**Figure 38** Wang Yani, age 10, Pretty River Banks ( Ho 1989 )

drawing itself. This can be determined from the development of her composition. In her landscape composition, the deep and level distances of the three traditional kinds of mountain perspective find a wider and more conscious use than high distance.<sup>9</sup> The Early Morning age 7, (Figure 34), Guiling's Autumn age 7, (Figure 35), Lion Mountain age 8, (Figure 31), and You Can Never Finish a Painting the Mountains and Rivers in Guilin age 8, (Figure 78, See Appendix D) all embody the level distance technique.

No More Fishing, age 8, (Figure 37) and Pretty River Banks age 10, (Figure 38) both embody deep distance, with a small amount of high distance technique found in Yun Cai Mountain (age 8, (Figure 32). But the effect of this technique was well affected by a large application of light ink.



**Figure 39** The level distance line of Pretty River Bank



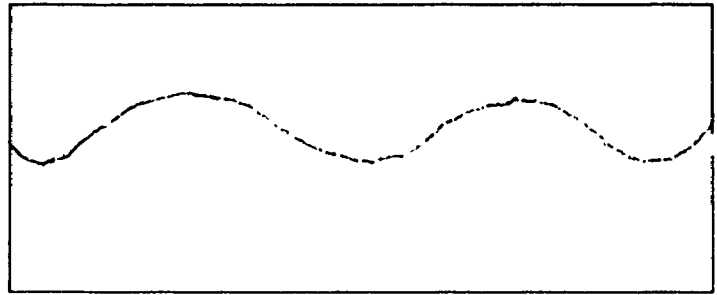
**Figure 40** Wang Yan, age 9, A Hundred Monkeys (Ho, 1969)

<sup>9</sup>

See *Terms for Chinese painting techniques*, Appendix A

In her composition lines, the conscious S and Z forms increased and were formed as in A Hundred Monkeys, age 9 (Figure 40) with the horizontal S form (Figure 41) and the form of Z (Figure 39)

in No More Fishing, age 8, (Figure 37) and Pretty Riverbank, age 10, (Figure 38). By comparison, the S and Z forms were found in



**Figure 41** The Composition Line of A Hundred Monkeys

Yani's early works. Lately, she was more mature and spontaneous in her rendering of density in the technique of brush-ink, empty and solid space, and dark and light. Most of the foreground mountains in her landscape paintings were painted with light ink. Different light ink's were used to represent the far Landscape.

The rendering of the arrangement for the mountains in the painting You can never finish a painting of the mountains and rivers, (age 8, Figure 78, Appendix D) looks very clear and the dark and light component were skilfully controlled, so that everything took its proper place in establishing the relationship between mountains far and near.

Horses age 8, (Figure 79, Appendix D) is a masterpiece in its rendering of the relationship between thick and thin, and empty and solid, in which twelve horses were perfectly arranged with the seven horses on the left appearing dense and

the remaining five horses in the rear appearing faint.

In the composition of Last night I dreamt I saw racing egrets age 11, (Figure 80, See Appendix D), the force line from right to left is strengthened and the technique of deep distance made clearly evident by the alternation of dark and light ink. The disappointment is that the overall brush-ink is too fragmentary and uncouth and is deficient in an integrating life-like spirit.

Her compositions, from age 7 to 11 were on average larger and longer than her monkey paintings. This trend towards variety and the general increase in size of animal paintings,

indicate that she had improved her management of the larger size paintings.

(4). Colour

During this period from age 7

to 11 years, Yani barely ventured on a



**Figure 42** Wang Yani, age 7, The Little Mountain (from Ho, 1989, 1989)



**Figure 43** Wang Yani, age 7, The Little Mountain (from Ho, 1989, 1989)



**Figure 44** Wang Yani, age 8, Little Mountain (from Ho, 1989)

wider selection of bright and sharply contrasted colours some of which she applied directly to paintings even without first mixing them with ink. For example, the figure painting, The Little Mushroom Picker age 7, (Figure 42) and Yani's Party, age 7 (Figure 43) embody the simple use of cinnabar and second-blue. The landscape paintings Little Mountain, age 8, (Figure 44) and Spring, age 9, (Figure 45) displays the effect resulting from blending Indigo with Gamboge.

This use of original colours could give rise to some sharp effect, but the images are too straight-forward, vulgar and inelegant due to Yani's handling of the material. A wider use of the boneless painting technique can also be found during this period.

Another characteristic of Yani's work during this time was her alternation between pure-ink painting and more brightly coloured painting. Colour paintings became more numerous in her work, but pure-ink paintings like What a Nice Place, age 11, (Figure 46) and Last Night I Dreamt Saw The Racing Egrets, age 11, (Figure 80) and so forth, still predominate. In general, both the technique of versatile colours and that of



**Figure 45** Wang Yani, age 9, Spring (Ho, 1989)



**Figure 46** Wang Yani, age 11, What a Nice Place (Ho, 1989)



ink harmony still dominated her work, particularly in the landscape painting where techniques are evident in every painting.

(5). Summary

The period from age 7 to 11 years, is a period of exploration. This was a period during which Yani turned to a wider study of thematic content, from personalized plots to the study of material and medium. However, because she was not well-established in the exploration of forms and material, she failed to find a simple brush-ink technique with which to impart life-like spirit to her landscapes as she had done to her monkey painting. Despite this, however, she made striking progress in her brush-ink technique.

Her principal innovations in brush-ink were in the techniques of mixture of ink and colour, the use of paper instead of brush, wash with a larger application of light and dark-ink and empty space. Although she boldly substituted paper at times for a brush, she still failed to represent the hard landscape with the wet ink technique because of her lack of the most fundamental brush-ink technique for depicting landscape.

The creative imitation of the works of famous adult painters was significant in Yani's work during the period when she adopted the technique of the three kinds of mountain perspective. She skilfully and pleasantly, resorted to composition with S and Z forms and the rendering of thick and

thin, empty and solid space and light and dark. The size of her composition, in general, became larger and larger, at the expense of life-like spirit, composition, and brush-ink.

In the domain of colour, she made continuous use of the techniques of colour and ink mixture and versatile colours. With increasing practice with brighter colours and pure ink paintings, her overall sense of colour strengthened and colours multiplied.

**D. Flower and Bird Painting and the Period of Silence (age 11-15 Years)**

Yani started making pictures of flowers and birds at the age of 4. Progressively, her technique in flower bird painting improved. Her paintings of cranes, lotuses, peacocks, bottle gourds and roosters are masterpieces from her flower bird period, age 4 to 6. The principal characteristics of these pictures is the use of an order-formula and brush-ink techniques, which she mastered and which are instrumental in communicating childish innocence and charm.

After age 7, a few flower bird paintings still turned up. Other obvious tendencies were the re-use of her childhood thematic content and imitation of the composition of flower bird paintings painted by famous painters. From the latter, she learned composition and brush-and-ink handling techniques, changing thereby her own painting style and exhibiting clear traces of the famous painters whom she imitated.

Having explored landscape painting, Yani must have seen the gap between her own preference for soft subjects and the hard landscape painting. Therefore, after age 11, she came back to explore the soft flower bird painting and to make full use of her wet ink technique, even so the number of monkey and landscape paintings diminished.

During this period there were few publications and exhibits of Yani's landscape work. The following analysis is chiefly based on the works kept in different museums after her performances and visits, and therefore may not be as comprehensive as that of the previous two periods.

(1). The combination of life-like spirit and brush-ink techniques.

Between the ages of 11 and 15, what Yani pursued was no longer influenced by childish innocence, but exhibited the composition and brush-ink techniques of adults. However owing to the difference between her nature and that of her cultural background there remained a large disparity between her brush-ink technique and the life-like spirit it was intended to convey. The result was that her work was quite different than what it was when she was 6. In addition, her enthusiastic exploration of brush ink technique disappeared, although what she had already mastered of it survived and was reflected in her handling of different compositions and thematic content.

Quite a number of her later paintings were less elaborate than her earlier ones and have a rough quality to them. The

question posed is, is it that she was fed up with painting or did she pursue the rough effect on purpose? Evidently, the painting Take a Nap (age 11, Figure 47) was painted roughly and wantonly in ink without arrangement and transparency and with complete neglect of the biggest part of the technique she had mastered since the age of 3. Branches were painted with a carelessly dragged brush, and calligraphy appeared more chopstick in style. Strokes lacked vigour and breaking. The poorly combined stems and branches of What a Nice Place (age 11, Figure 46) leave one with a strong sense of wantonness.



**Figure 47** Wang Yani, age 11, Take a Nap (1960)



**Figure 48** Wang Yani, age 6, Gazing at the Moon (1962)

The use of ink is not outstanding and the calligraphy actually spoils the painting. This contrasts sharply to the painting Gazing at the Moon (age 6, Figure 48) with elaborately and carefully painted stems, with a variety of different brush-ink techniques. Perhaps the painting What a

Nice Place (Figure 46) shows that Yani was tired of painting and needed a period of rest from her work in which to enrich herself with culture and develop interests in other fields. It is evident that she should not keep on painting when it proved difficult, since to do so would most certainly contribute to failure.

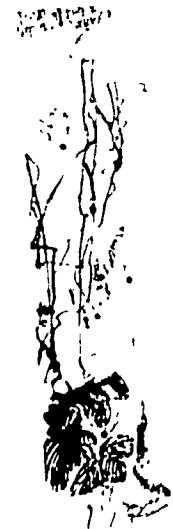
However, Yani did some masterpieces which show her fine technique in wet ink. In Monkey and Chicken age 14, (Figure 49) the two large



banana leaves were skilfully and

**Figure 49** Wang Yani, age 14, Monkey and Chicken (A.C.A. Art Museum's collection, San Francisco)

straightforwardly painted with a clear versatile ink colour, front dark, and back light. However, she used just the point of the brush in Monkey and Chicken creating simple effects without unnecessary ink. Likewise, in How Nice age 11, (Figure 50) the colour of ink for the rotten leaves and gourd was clearly arranged. Table 6 below presents material in order to facilitate the reader's understanding of Yani's brush-ink technique. From the information provided, we can see that, basically, no new exploration of Yani's brush-ink technique occurred, instead, Yani returned to the brush-ink technique of her first and second



**Figure 50** Wang Yani, age 11, How Nice (A.C.A. Art Museum's collection, San Francisco)

**TABLE 6: TECHNIQUES IN YANI'S FLOWER-BIRD PAINTINGS**













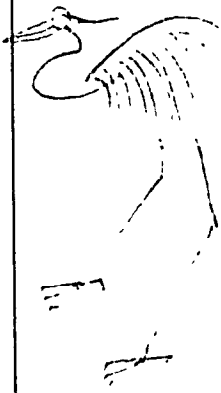
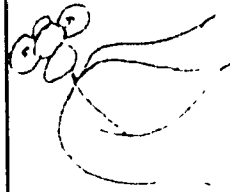

NAME OF WORKS	A G E	SIZE CM	O R D	NO OF TECHNIQUES																COMBINATION									
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	E
OH! IT SMELL SO GOOD	11	138X35		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
NOW NICE	11	133X34		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
WHAT A NICE PLACE	11	122X42		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
LAST NIGHT I DREAM I SAW THE RACING EGRETS	11	154X82	E	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
TAKING A NIP	11	78X42.5		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
A SP...L WORLD	11	82.6X39		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
MONKEY & CHICKEN	14		M C	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
MONKEY & GOOD FISH	15		M F	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
TWO RED BIRDS	15		B	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				

**KEY TO NUMBERS AND LETTERS:**

ORD-ORDER-FORMULA, M-MONKEY ORD, B-BIRD ORD, C-CHICKEN ORD, E-EGRET ORD, F-FISH ORD  
 COMBINATION-COMBINATION OF LIFE-LIKE SPIRIT AND TECHNIQUE, E-EXCELLENT G-GOOD N-NORMAL AND NOT GOOD

- |                    |                    |                   |                           |                           |                            |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 UP-RIGHT BRUSH   | 5. CHAR-INK STORKE | 9 LIGHT-INK LINE  | 12 DARK-INK WASH          | 17. BROKEN INK            | 22 A LARGER LIGHT-INK WASH |
| 2 SIDE-BRUSH       | 6 DARK-WET DOT     | 10 DARK-INK LINE  | 13 DRY-INK WASH           | 18 PAPER INSTEAD OF BRUSH | 23 A LARGER DARK-INK WASH  |
| 3 LIGHT-WET STORKE | 7 DARK-INK DOT     | 11 CHAR-INK LINE  | 14 FLY-WHITE              | 19 RUBBING & WRINKLING    | 24 EMPTY SPACE             |
| 4 DARK-WET STORKE  | 8 CHAR-INK DOT     | 12 LIGHT-INK WASH | 15 MIXTURE OF INK & COLOR | 20 DARK-DRY STORKE        | 25 BONELESS                |

TABLE 7: ORDER-FORMULA IN YANI'S EGRET, GOLDFISH AND CHICK PICTURE

D. EGRET			F. GOLDFISH			K. CHICK		
S	ORDER-FORMULA		S	ORDER-FORMULA		S	ORDER FORMULA	
1			1			1		
10			2			2		
11			5			5		
18			7			10		
30			10			15		

DESCRIPTION OF LETTERS: S-THE ORDER OF BRUSH STROKES

period. Many newly explored brush-ink techniques were little used in this period. However, of those she employed, she seems to have preferred the wet ink and dry ink ones. The larger size of compositions has been popularized and were facilitated by Yani's ability.

## (2). The Method of Representation

With respect to flower bird painting, as with all animals, the order-formula method was used. In this period Yani had been working with egret, goldfish and chicken order-formulae (See Table 7). For monkeys she returned to the order-formula she had mastered at age 3. Even some flowers have order-formulae, as do trees and other vegetation, though to a lesser extent. Obviously there were too many varieties of order formula for Yani to master, and her work became somewhat shaky.

## (3). Composition

Undeniably Yani made some progress in composition notwithstanding the slow development of her brush-ink technique and thematic content. One sees the improvement in her rendering of spaces, and the obviously conscious choices she makes in distribution of dark and light ink in paintings like Monkey and Chicken, age 14 (Figure 49), where for example, two large banana leaves, one graduating from deep black ink to charred ink and the other from light ink to darker, thereby acquire three-dimensionality. Moreover, Yani consciously makes the line of vision of the object extend towards the



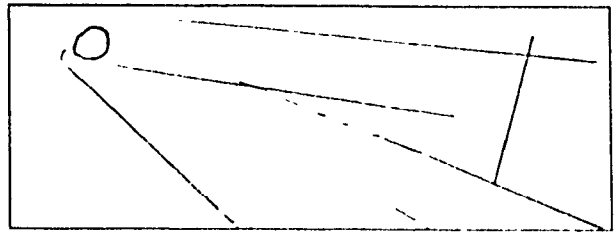
subject. For instance, of the composition line in Monkey and Goldfish, age 15, (Figure 51) goldfish, trees, and rocks travels towards the main subject the monkey (Figure 52). A similar scheme appears in Monkey and Chicken.

Secondly, to keep the overall painting balanced, space is distributed in the painting purposefully and attention is paid to the relationships between large and small, and between light and heavy. At the age of 14, Yani



**Figure 51** Wang Yani, age 15, Monkey and Goldfish (A 14 Art Museum's collection, San Francisco)

is making conscious efforts to position her calligraphy in such a way as to balance the painting, as for example, in Two Red Birds age 15, (Figure 53). Her composition succeeds as a typical adult's composition; the principal items are big and the deep black ink becomes the main part of the painting. A large space is left on the right above the



**Figure 52** The composition line of Monkey and Goldfish



**Figure 53** Wang Yani, age 15, Two Red Birds (A 14 Art Museum's collection, San Francisco)

stem, presumably for the express purpose of providing viewers with much food for thought. The little birds and the small red flowers set off and balance the rest of the painting.

Compositions like those chosen by Yani tend to take up whole sheets of 4 chi rice paper (132 x 68 cm) or 5 chi rice paper (168 x 84 cm), such as Last Night I Dream I Saw the Racing Egrets (Figure 80), Monkey and Chicken (Figure 50) and Red Egret (Figure 54). Meanwhile, the use of double cutting and the quarto of 5 Chi rice paper was increased such as Taking a Nap (Figure 47) and A Small World (Figure 55). All these paintings show growth and reinforcement of Yani's ability to manage the large paintings. The horizontal and vertical composition turned up time and again, while long scroll compositions are infrequent.



**Figure 54** Wang Yani, age 14, Red Egret (Acia Art Museum's collection, San Francisco)

#### (4). Colour

Hardly any variation or development occurs in Yani's use of colour. She still practised the technique of colour and ink harmony but a chief characteristic of this period is the application of loud and vulgar colour. In Two Red Birds, age 15, (Figure 53), for example, birds and flowers sport bright red or even rose colours and the original azurite was used for the bamboo green.

(5). Summary

After exploring a range of techniques from soft to hard object, Yani came back to soft objects. She no longer pursued the brush-ink of child like innocence, striving instead for the adult's presentation of space, size, density, weight, balance, and colour harmony. These attempts failed because a wide gap lay between her and the adult in both knowledge and ability. She failed to explore new brush-ink techniques with the result that the number of techniques she used, diminished. Some works



**Figure 55** Wang Yani, age 17, A Bird World (16, 1990)

where wet ink still predominated, possessed a rough texture. No noteworthy progress occurred in colour. She stuck to the order-formula technique in animal painting.

We lament Yani's adolescence, because she seems to have experienced a decline like most other teenagers in comparison with the creativity normal amongst younger children.

**E. Calligraphy During All the Three Periods**

Chinese calligraphy has always been considered an important part of Chinese painting. From the viewpoint of the literary painters, calligraphy tends to be superior to painting. Apart from its visual value it plays a very important role in summarizing the artistic conception of the painter.

Surprisingly Yani's work evolved towards forms of drawing exhibiting development in colour and brush-ink composition, but her calligraphy did not develop. Yani's calligraphy comparable with that of other children at the age of 3 or 4 since few at this age, with the exception of calligraphic prodigies, have learned this art.

Such a childish handwriting style can be easily accepted at the age of 3 or 4 years. However, when most children reach the age of 5 or 6, their parents are usually just beginning to train them either in handwriting or calligraphy. Therefore, there was a small gap between the calibre of Yani's calligraphy when she was 6 and that of other 6-year-olds. From the very beginning Yani's calligraphy like her painting stressed childish effects, an aim little contemplated by ordinary children, who start with basic writing lessons on the "Type of Character" and "The Usage of Brush". In Yani's calligraphy, there was hardly any putting down or closing up of Chinese characters<sup>10</sup>. So when her childish approach waned, her calligraphy just gave people an impression of "chopsticks" exhibiting no evolution whatever in the frame or shape of the character. Her writing is hard, rough, casual, and unvaried.

However, there was, admittedly, some development in the expressiveness of brush-ink technique in Yani's calligraphy. Although Yani's calligraphy did not change, her use of ink

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<sup>10</sup> See *Terms for Chinese painting techniques*, Appendix A

(light/dark; wet/dry), did change in harmony with the ink style of the painting. Take for example, Three Cranes (Figure 12). Here, the calligraphy is light and moist looking and thus in harmony with the painting's overall ink colour. She also wrote more fluently but placed less emphasis on changes of ink and harmony with the overall painting. Owing to the enlargement of her vocabulary, she could at once more aptly record what she wanted to express and position it in her painting.

#### **F. Summaries of Yani's Technical Development**

Concerning the combination of life-like spirit and brush-ink technique, Yani's development is characterized by her driving success to unsucess. She rapidly mastered some basic but effective styles in brush-ink technique and order formula skills in animal drawing between the ages 3 to 6. At these ages, she was successful in representing a pure childish life-like spirit without the adult symbolic flavours. Unfortunately, she was unsuccessful in finding a simple brush-ink technique although her use of materials and media were facilitated by further development. She was not able to represent the life-like spirit of pre-adolescence during the ages of 7 to 11 years. During the period from age 11 to 15, what she then pursued was no longer representative of the charm of childhood innocence' but rather adult consciousness. This she failed to present.

The development of Yani's drawing ability is closely integrated with her mastery and application of the order-formula method. She used a good foundation based on the combination of the order-formula method and the brush-ink technique. Inverse combination yielded opposite results. She was therefore successful in her monkey painting using the order-formula and she was unsuccessful in applying it in landscape painting.

Comparing Yani's 3 periods in terms of techniques, table 8 shows us that, during the first period 18 brush ink techniques were used, during the second one 19 and during the third one 13 kinds brush-ink techniques were used by Yani. The technique of up-right brush, side brush, light-wet stroke and dark-wet stroke were the basic ones used most during the 3 periods except side-brush, because Yani used the technique of paper instead of brush during this time. At the second period, Yani explored some wet-ink techniques, light-ink line, dark-ink line and a larger dark-ink wash techniques were used 71-79% of the time, mixture of ink harmony, paper instead of brush and a larger light-ink wash techniques were used 93-100% of the time. Yani displayed much fewer techniques during the third period.

The development of Yani's wet-ink technique is characterized by levels of simplicity and completeness. In order to gain more attention from society, Yani did not follow the traditional learning steps to pursue the ink-effects in rice

paper quickly, that is, learning wet-ink after a good grasp of dry-ink technique. As well, standard ways of using the brush were not followed by Yani. From the beginning to the present, Yani applied wet ink techniques directly.

Table 11 below shows that at age 3, light-wet strokes, dark-wet strokes, light-ink lines and a mixture of ink and colour techniques were applied. At age 4, the 'broken ink' techniques appeared. Between the age of 5 and 6 years, the dark-ink line, dark-ink dot and light-ink wash techniques were displayed. After 7, further improvements in wet-ink followed. A larger coverage of light-ink and dark-ink wash were applied in a greater quantity at age 8-11.

Although Yani made a brave exploration of the technique of using paper instead of a brush, she still failed to represent the hard landscape with the wet-ink technique due to her deficiency in applying the most fundamental brush-ink technique in depicting landscapes. Obviously, without fundamental dry-ink technique and instruction in the way to use the brush, the development of Yani's drawing ability was inhibited. As a result, this application of the technique in the development of Yani's dry-ink technique and the way of using a brush appeared regressive.

The development of Yani's composition and space rendering is characterized by inclining small to large size, plane to spatial perception, and simple to multi-level. Thus, the average size of her works grew larger and longer, indicating

improvement in her ability to manage larger size paintings. Unfortunately, there appears to be an inverse relationship between the development of the expression in the composition size and the life-like spirit, and the brush-ink technique.

After age 7, the progress of spatial perception characteristic of Yani's work during the time when she adopted the three types of mountain perspective as the rendering of thick and thin, empty and solid space, and light and dark ink were consciously used and seemed more skilful.

The development of Yani's colours between the ages of 3 to 11 years, was characterized by a multiplication of a variety of her colours. Yani had a preference for using bright, sharp, and vulgar colours. These remained in Yani's patterns during the later period. The Technique of colour and ink mixture and the use of versatile colours continued from age 3 to 15.

Now I present a summary of important findings:

1. Yani rapidly mastered some basic brush-ink techniques and order formula skills during the first period. She was successful in representing a pure childish life-like spirit. Unfortunately, she was not able to represent the life-like spirit of pre-adolescence during the second and third periods.
2. There appears to be an inverse relationship between the development of the expression in the composition size and the life-like spirit, and the brush-ink technique. The



size of her composition, in general, became larger and larger, at the expense of life-like spirit, composition, and brush-ink.

3. Yani bravely explored some wet techniques at second period, obviously, without fundamental dry-ink technique and instruction in the way to use the brush, the development of Yani's drawing ability was inhibited.
4. After exploring a range of techniques for representing soft and hard objects, Yani came back to representing soft objects.

TABLE 8: COMPARING ALL 3 PERIODS IN TERM OF TECHNIQUES

PERIODS	N		TM		NO. OF TECHNIQUES																									
	T	P	PC	TM	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	14	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
SUCCESS	18	15	100%	15	11	14	12	14	10	1	1	10	4	1		1	3	5	8	1	5	1								
			73%	80%	13%	7%	87%	27%	7%	93%	7%	20%	33%	7%	33%	7%	33%	7%	33%	7%	33%	7%								
EXPLORA -TION	19	14	100%	14	1	12	9			1					2	3		2	14	3	3	14	3							
			7%	84%	7%											14%	21%		100%	21%	21%	100	21%							
SILENCE	13	9	100%	9	8	8	9								5	9	5	6	6		1									
			89%	100%	56%	56%	100%	56%	100%	56%	56%	100%	56%	56%	56%	100%	56%	87%	87%	87%	11%									

KEY TO NUMBERS AND LETTERS

- NT-NUMBER OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF TECHNIQUES    NP-NUMBER OF PAINTINGS TO LOOK AT    TM -TIMES OF USING THE NO. OF TECHNIQUE    PC-PERCENTAGE OF USING
- 1 UP-RIGHT BRUSH    5 CHAR-INK STORKE    9 LIGHT-INK LINE    13 DARK-INK WASH    17 BROKEN INK    22 A LARGER LIGHT-INK WASH
  - 2 SIDE-BRUSH    6 DARK-WET DOT    10 DARK-INK LINE    14 FLY-WHITE    18 PAPER INSTEAD OF BRUSH    23 A LARGER DARK-INK WASH
  - 3 LIGHT-WET STORKE    7 DARK-INK DOT    11 CHAR-INK LINE    15 MIXTURE OF INK & COLOR    19 RUBBING & WRINKLING    24 EMPTY SPACE
  - 4 DARK-WET STORKE    8 CHAR-INK DOT    12 LIGHT-INK WASH    18 COLOR INK HARMONY    20 DARK-DRY STORKE    25 BONELESS

TABLE 9: APPEARANCE OF WET INK TECHNIQUES IN YANI'S DEVELOPMENT

NAME OF TECHNIQUES	AGE														
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	14	15			
LIGHT-WET STORKE NO 3	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X		
DARK-WET STORKE NO 4	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X		
DARK-WET DOT NO 6				X					X		X	X	X		
DARK-JNK DOT NO 7				X											
LIGHT-JNK LINE NO 9	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
DARK-JNK LINE NO 10			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
LIGHT-JNK WASH NO 12				X					X	X					
DARK-JNK WASH NO 13					X	X				X			X		
MIXTURE OF INK & COLOR NO 15	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
COLOR INK HARMONY NO 16			X		X			X							
BROKEN INK NO 17		X		X	X	X				X	X	X	X		
PAPER INSTEAD OF BRUSH NO 18			X		X										
A LARGER LIGHT-JNK WASH NO 22										X	X	X	X		
ALARGER DARK-JNK WASH NO 23										X	X	X	X		
BONELESS NO 24										X	X	X	X		

**CHAPTER 5**  
**AN ANALYSIS OF YANI'S EDUCATION, METHOD OF LEARNING AND**  
**ENVIRONMENT**

In the 1970's a multitude of child prodigies emerged in China. In Guang Xi province, Yani's home-town, alone nearly 30 calligraphy and painting prodigies emerged. Their works won various awards and were exhibited at home and abroad. Four of them have even published painting albums (Liu, 1987 p.94-95).

In the meantime, a pioneering class was started by the China Academy of Science for the first batch of prodigies entering University in China's educational history. A few years later, many gifted youngsters emerged across the country: the youngest university student, 11 years old; the youngest Phd student, 23 years old; the youngest university teacher, 19 years old; and the youngest associate professor, 26 years old (Wong 1991).

Studies made by psychologists of prodigies in China and abroad, during this period show that the principal causes of this phenomenon are children's inborn gifts, careful fostering in the family environment, and the opening up of society.

Goldsmith and Feldman, Gifts Well Given, 1989 concluded from their study of Yani that she had three blessings. Her first blessing was to be born with an immense talent and to

have the drive and desire to express her gift. Her second was to be born into the Wong family, which recognized, cherished, nurtured, and sacrificed for her talent. Her third was to have been born at a time when her country was re-examining its educational goals and practices and was eager to understand and learn from powerful early expression of talent like Yani's.

As to why and how a culture which reveres the arts and civilized values can bring Yani's gift into fruitfulness, the psychologists did not do further study. On the basis of my own careful analysis of Yani's works and of Chinese culture, I myself believe that, apart from the above mentioned three factors, another three very important factors are involved in the genesis of prodigies: 1. the nature of Chinese education; its method of teaching by order-formula; 2. the characteristics of prevalent material, the affinity of rice paper for ink; 3. the prescriptions of Chinese ethics -- diligence and hard work.

### **The Three Blessings**

#### (1). Inborn Talent and Artistic Family

An extraordinary innate gift for drawing and being born into an artistic family where this talent is carefully fostered are the two important blessings common to the majority of Chinese prodigies. This is true for instance, of Jinjin in Shenyang (Xue 1990); A Xi in Guangxi (Liu 1987);

Wang Zinhan in Beijing (Xu 1984); Huang Dan in Guanxi (Liu, 1987) and Chen Xiaoyin in Hunan (Min 1990). All these prodigies are from artistic families where from the beginning they were nurtured in an artistic atmosphere.

In general, at the age of two, they received brushes from their parents and began painting or embarked on rigid artistic training. For example, at this age, Chen Xiaoyin practised calligraphy for four hours everyday<sup>11</sup>. Their ability in calligraphy and painting obviously developed earlier than in ordinary children. Meanwhile, the careful education and training provided by their parents accelerated this development. As Jinjin once put it, "My poem and painting all come out of the candle parties my Mama often held for me" (Xue 1990).

Yani too was blessed by this double advantage of innate gift and its nurture by an exceptional family very early on. She was attracted by the fragrance of her father's oil paints, which aroused her strong interest in drawing. As an artist, the father from the very beginning discovered that his daughter had a special interest in animals and the beauty of nature and that, further, she possessed the artist's vision and powers of observation. Accordingly, he offered his daughter a timely training and education. Yani's gift, therefore, is closely related to the education received from

<sup>11</sup> Information obtained from a letter which Chen Xiaoyin's father wrote to me.

her father and to her familial environment.

(2). Social Zeitgeist

1976, the second year after Yanli was born, is an important date in China's modern history when Mao, Zhou, and Zhu, the three chief state leaders passed away in succession. After their deaths a power struggle broke out. As a result, the Cultural Revolution ended and China opened her door to the world. To start with, society proposed reforms and encouraged traditional culture (including the thematic content of the traditional Chinese painting) while absorbing Western Culture. It reassessed the relationship between individual creative values and fame and art for art's sake (not just for political reasons).

Art during the Cultural Revolution had served only political and critical purposes. Inborn talent in drawing could only be used to make political propaganda paintings such as Severely Criticizing Lin Biao and Confucius, (Figure 56) I have Become a Little Red



Figure 56 Severely Criticizing Lin Biao and Confucius

Guard (Figure 57). Childish innocence was totally distorted. Fortunately, Yanli was born and grew up in an entirely different time. She could paint works with traditional Chinese themes and give free expression to her individual creativity

indulging in, for example, her favourite subject, monkeys. She could, as well, if she wished, cultivate personal fame.

Another important social factor in this now relaxed era was the approval now accorded to children's early education. Since the end of the 70's, China had practiced a rigid system of population control, limiting each family to one child. The education of that, necessarily most precious commodity was therefore of great interest to people, a situation that, along with, the traditional Chinese habit of wishing a child to become a dragon<sup>12</sup> led to the early childhood education practices that prevailed from the 70's to the 80's and even up to the 90's in China. The Chinese traditionally tend to favour harmony over variety, so many people wanted to raise especially able children.

When the child prodigies received attention in newspaper and on T.V., many parents, out of emulative zeal, encouraged their own sons and daughters to start careers as painting prodigies. This trend could be compared with similar one in



我戴上了红领巾

Figure 57 Wu Yina, age 10, I Have Become a Little Red Guard

<sup>12</sup> This phrase refers to parents' support of higher education for their children and in the hope of the child one day becoming great person.



the early 70's when children were encouraged to learn musical instruments and dancing. In cities, children generally learned violin and accordion, while in the countryside the flute and Er H (two strings) were popular. The difference is that this musical training was based on Maoist priorities and ideology and was normally confined to schools, the later trend of visual art training stressed the child's ability to master a technique, was apolitical, and was normally carried out within the family and culture palaces.<sup>13</sup>

During the period when visual arts prodigies were a topic of interest to people, different regions and provinces competed with each other with regard to which had the most prodigies. In the Guang Xi provinces and Beijing city, a whole theory of prodigies came to light. People became interested in finding painting prodigies from various walks of life: in the family, school, palace of culture, and so on. Such children took part in competitions and their successes lead to regional feelings of pride. Some prodigies were selected by the state premier for the opportunity to exhibit and perform at home and abroad, and received gold, silver and bronze awards.

### (3). Summary

Yani fortunately was born into an artistic family where her early inborn talent was discovered and fostered with

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*This information is based on the author's teaching experiences from 1973 to 1987 in China*

automatic training. She was also born at a time when Chinese society was becoming a little more liberal and individual creative and artistic values were reasserted and popular approval was forthcoming for early childhood education. Indeed, she was born in Guang Xi province, where interest in artistic children was intense. In short, Yani, the painting prodigy did not just start from nowhere: her artistic production was the consequence, in the main, of three contributing factors or blessings -- inborn talent, the possession of an artistic family, and a favourable social zeitgeist.

### **Three Specific Traditional Cultural Features**

Apart from the three substantial blessings just noted, Yani's talent was also formed from exposure to traditional Chinese culture.

(1). Art Education: The order-formula teaching method

a) A brief introduction

The cream of thousands of years of Chinese art, the result of constant depositing and endless selection, is order-formula method. In the music of the Chinese Peking Opera, for example, each body movement has a fixed order-formula, and in Chinese painting, animals, leaves, and rock all have their order-formulae. Thus, the order-formula teaching method came into being so that people could learn easily, remember easily, and so be capable of carrying on tradition. I myself watched in person a nine-year old pupil perform a love story in Peking

Opera style after being taught by the order-formula teaching method. The libretto, tone, and movement were performed in exactly the right way. You could hardly believe this performance was given by a nine-year old pupil. In fact what he did, was to simply follow the order-formula. God knows if he already had experienced in his heart the love of the opposite sex that the performance was about.

The order-formula concept has been accepted in Chinese art for a long time, particularly in the evaluation of the traditional arts, but the body of order-formula theory is a matter of recent decades<sup>14</sup>. Though the order-formula teaching method emerged side-by-side with Chinese painting arts, no in-depth study has been made of it. From generation to generation people just adopt it as tradition. As a matter of fact, the order-formula teaching method is very popular in art circles and in art text-books in the elementary schools as well. Even special albums have been published for children to follow in Chinese painting, for example, How to Learn Chinese Painting by Children (Zhao and Guo 1988) published by a Beijing art and photography house introduces in all 41 order-formulae, diagrams and explanations for drawing different animals and plants. Although not a single word specifically refers to the order-formula teaching method, it is a typical

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<sup>14</sup>

See my work, "Exploration of the Teaching Method in Art, part of which was published in Study on Education, 1982, China

children's art book based on order-formula teaching method. (Figure 58, 89 and 90).

The most important merit of this order-formula teaching method is that it is easy to adopt, master and produce results with. Thus, instead of besetting its practitioners with difficulties, it encourages and instills confidence, arousing their interest and a new



desire to paint. It can also be assimilated by the young children at an early stage of cognitive development. The biggest problem is that it restricts the mode of thinking and hinders creativity. Traditional theory in Chinese painting recognized this problem and stressed *cuan jin gu* (going into it) and *da chu lai* (break through it). *Cuan* in fact means to go into and study the order-formula; *da* means to break through the restrictions of this order-formula and create a style of one's own. In consequence, whether one can break through this order-formula and create one's own style becomes the chief traditional criterion in the evaluation of a real artist.

b) Yani and the order-formula teaching method.

Yani adopted the order-formula in paintings of a variety

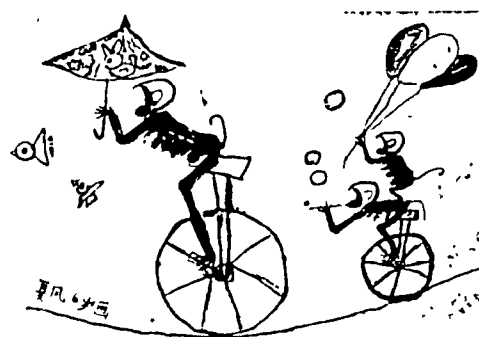
of different animals, among these was the monkey order-formula which she used from age 3 to 15. It is by no means an exaggeration to say that Yani used this order-formula to create and represent fully the monkey world in her heart.

The question is, was this order-formula of Yani's taught or did she discover or create it by herself? Undoubtedly, she was taught. Otherwise, if she was capable of inventing a new monkey order-formula at age 3, why did she not invent any others up to the age of 15? And why did she keep using the same order-formula for chickens, peacocks and cranes that she used at the age of 4? Then who is the person to use this order-formula? Who is her teacher?

Most researchers, such as Goldsmith (1989), Pariser (1990), and Ho (1989), believe this was her father. I completely agree with this point of view. Certainly, Yani was taught and instructed in the order-formula technique by someone. However, Yani's father insisted that he did not teach Yani; nor were any other artists mentioned who might have done so. Her father claims she invented this all by herself (Wang 1987, p.15), a contention that does make the emergence of Yani's technique rather mysterious. For the sake of convenience I shall call this teacher who is unwilling to speak his name, Yani's teacher.

Yani's teacher is an artist with links to both more experimental and traditional art. He/she created the order-

formula for Yani's monkey,<sup>15</sup> and then also created her other animal order-formulae. He or she also taught Yani successfully with the order-formula method and enabled her to master and use the order-formulae in less time than she would have unassisted. The sagacity of Yani's teacher consists in her divergence from the traditional apprenticeship, allowing Yani to skip over meticulous attention to brushwork directly and to start freehand brushwork<sup>16</sup>. The teacher sought every means to produce the first effect of painting, a fresh, inspired touch, and the childish innocence of Yani's heart. He/she was also wise in that his/her encouragement of Yani to paint was accompanied by an insistence that she master some brush-ink techniques, so making full use of the natural and accidental effects possible with ink.



**Figure 59** Xia Feng, age 6, An excellent Performance (Wang, Z. 1987)

He/she taught Yani the technique of creative copying and imitation clearly evident in her works after age 7. Though copying was criticized in the West during the 20's and 30's,

<sup>15</sup> So far I have not found any book or material which presents the same order-formula for monkeys which Yani uses. The only exception occurred in the painting "An Excellent Performance" by Nizeng (age 6 Figure 59) from Hubei Province, picture was published in Selected pictures by Chinese Children Hubei Children's Publishing House, 1987

<sup>16</sup> See Terms for Chinese painting styles, Appendix A

it has always been one of the most important basic-training techniques in China's system of art education, and more recently, new opinions on copying have been appearing in the West. From age 7 to 11, what Yani largely engaged in was just this technique of creative imitation.

Indeed, in this period, she made full use of brush-ink techniques and different order-formulae for animals and vegetation. She didn't hesitate either to imitate the compositions and brush-ink techniques of several different painters, rearranging in components of their picture or creating derivative paintings, as in *A small village* (age 10, Figure 60). Here order-formulae for houses and water, and brush-ink technique and colouring of the trees all were copied from the works of Qi Baishi, Li Keshu and Wu Cheng Shuo, but the composition is invented.

On the other hand, Yani's teacher was wisely abandoning the traditional idea of aloofness<sup>17</sup> and contacted artists and famous painters of different social status and successfully held exhibitions for Yani.

Certainly Yani's teacher carried a clear traditional idea her himself, since he did impose restrictions on Yani's learning, or rather only allowed her to represent the thematic content and the brush-ink of literary painting with all the

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<sup>17</sup> *People are advised not to seek honour and money, to avoid the worldly-wise and vulgar to refrain from self-admiration*

markers of adult mentality and aesthetic standards, maybe Yani herself independently explored other fields. To judge from Yani's works so far published. She has not touched modern Chinese concepts of painting, wider thematic content, or modern western art.

Yani's teacher while demanding a masterly grasp of the order-formula for various animals, did not encourage Yani to abandon order-formulae; at least we see no sign of this up to age 15.

(2). Material: The Ink-Charm of Rice Paper

The majority of Chinese painting prodigies choose brush, ink, rice paper and ink stone, as their medium, the traditional four treasures in the Chinese studio, in Selections of Guang Xi Children's Calligraphy and Painting (Liu 1987 ), 35 out of 41 child prodigies are described as receiving training in Chinese painting, a full 85% who paint Chinese painting engage in calligraphy. Of the 115 works in the Selected Picture by Chinese Children (Wang, Z. 1987) over half were Chinese ink paintings.

All the outstanding Chinese prodigies I have so far studied, paint Chinese ink paintings. Then why are there no prodigies in other fields like oil painting, literary sketch,



Figure 60 Wang Yani, 1987, 19, A, 3111 711, 1987 (Wang, 1987)



and water colour in China? My answer is that, apart from certain cultural residues and aesthetic customs, the Chinese painting medium is one of the chief causes of the prodigy phenomenon. Because both Chinese painting materials and art terminology are easy for them to master, children find it easier to produce excellent results and so readily acquire robust interest in art from the beginning. For example, the rice paper made in China has a special quality which brings out the special virtues of ink-charm. As the saying has it, in splash-ink, free from inhibition; in dark black ink, bright and clear; in light ink, clear in layers; in accumulative ink, dark and vigorous (You 1991). This standard ink charm is one of the first objectives of artists and only by this ink charm can they fully represent life-like spirit in their paintings.

The famous Chinese archaeologist, writer, poet, and calligrapher, Guo Moruo once said, "Rice paper is an artistic creation invented by Chinese working people without which there would be no artistic charm for Chinese calligraphy and painting would be devoid of its artistic nature." (Wei 1991). Throughout Chinese history many artists, calligraphers, writers, poets, philosophers, and politicians cherished rice paper as highly as gold. This esteem for rice paper has been the subject or theme of many Chinese classics.

The manufacturing technique and the inestimable result with its ink-charm are quite mysterious, but the mastery of ink techniques on the rice paper is easily achieved. Anyone

can produce ink-charm to different degrees simply by splashing ink on rice paper. However variation in force, speed, time, temperature, and the amount of water splashed, yield a range of much to be desired accidental effects from ink-charm. Secondly, wet ink and light ink more easily give rise to ink charm effects than dry and dark ink and so on. One could elaborate at greater length on the detail but the gist of what I am saying is that it is these special virtues of rice paper and ink that lay the foundation for Chinese painting prodigies.

Not least of these advantages is that children tend to learn ink and brush painting techniques faster than oil painting techniques. Yani benefited from the Chinese art heritage and made full use of ink-charm effects and used many wet ink techniques.

Secondly, painting on rice paper requires planning. Once you are ready, you must make the painting at one stroke without hesitation or corrections for otherwise the flowing of water or the dryness of the ink will spoil the effect of the painting. Basically, each painting is done in a freehand style which ranges from 10 minutes to half an hour, in execution, special painting takes no more than an hour. The need to work quickly, without corrections on rice paper is also one of the reasons for the order-formula teaching method. This enables the beginner to make quick mastery of the characteristics of rice paper and bring about faster, more

accurate and better results. Therefore the order-formula teaching method and ink charm of rice paper have attracted a large number of Chinese children painters.

### (3). Ethics: Traditional Morality and Hard Training

When I was at the age of 4 and 5, my mother often told me the stories of how an iron stick is made into a needle and of water drops cutting through rock. When I entered school I often got the lesson that no one cares about your ten years of hard study, but once you become famous you will become well-known under heaven. When I took up brush, almost all the seniors would constantly remind me that no writing characters can be hand-written well without a hundred days of effort, practice makes perfect. It is certain that this is the norm for Chinese children receive this kind of education.

The traditional values of hard work, plain living and persistence which have undergone thousands of years of cultural residue are deeply rooted in me and in most Chinese. During her infant days, Yani was inspired by this same spirit of hard training. When she was 6, she already had made four thousand works. It goes without saying that Yani compared with other ordinary children possessed more extraordinary energy, concentration of mind and the spirit of never feeling weariness.

## CHAPTER 6

### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF YANI AND OTHER GIFTED CHINESE

#### CHILDREN: XINGHAI AND A-XI

##### A. Yani and Xinghai - A Comparative Analysis

###### (1). Introduction

Born in 1971, he is 4 years older than Yani, and has, as another painting prodigy enjoyed considerable popularity in Beijing between the years 1980 and 1985. At the age of seven he began painting, and after age nine had his personal painting exhibitions held in Beijing, Lanzhou, and Guangzhou (China) and in the United States, Germany and Italy. In the United States, Baltimore Sun (Martin 1981) newspaper called him another Picasso in China. (Figure 61) As time passed, more reports continued. The Central News studio turned his on-the-spot performance into a film. The reportage of Xinghai carried in the fourth volume of Beijing Art (Xu 1984) received the silver medal for the 1980 Indian International Children Art Works Competition, and was also awarded first prize for the painting competition sponsored by the



Figure 61 Wang Zhen in the U. S. A. 1981 (Baltimore Sun May 16, 1981)

journal of Chinese Children during 1981.

(2). Individual and Social Background

Yani and Xinghai were both born into families where the fathers were painters; one in Gon Chen County, Guilin, and the latter in the Capital of Beijing. The artistic atmosphere influenced them both from a very early age, and as I argue in Yani's case and is clear in Xinghai's case their fathers gave them timely education and training. In terms of official notice, Yani was noticed four years earlier than Xinghai, who became known at age nine. Both were active as Chinese painting prodigies during the 80's. It would therefore appear that an artist's heredity, family and social environment are the main factors explaining their development.

(3). Thematic content

A big difference exists between Yani and Xinghai in the thematic content of painting. Yani has experienced a clear series of thematic changes: from monkey to landscape and then to flower-and-bird, the monkey paintings are her masterpieces embodying childish innocence and charm. Xinghai, on the other hand, went through no clear thematic stages: he began with cats, figures come later, and then he painted fish, landscape, cats and figures at same time.

Around the age of 9 and 10, he made a lot of pictures of children's stories, fairy tales, T.V., cartoons, films and historical stories, offering some indication of his wide thematic content, for example, Standing Cat (figure 62), King

of Dragon Enters Palace (Figure 84), Black Pony (Figure 85), Majestic Appearance (Figure 82), Hundreds of Fish (Figure 66), A Group of Horses (Figure 67), Sleep Touring Guling (Figure 68), Seventh Ranking Official (Figure 69), Rocky Forest Landscape (Figure 83). Xinghai's father once said, His inspiration comes from touring the Zoo, and from listening to ancient stories over the radio. (Martin, B.K., 1981).

Compared with Yani, Xinghai hardly has any involvement in the thematic content of literary painting. Children's thematic content dominates his paintings. He has a wider thematic content and more obvious childish tastes.

#### (4). Method of Representation

Yani's paintings show an order-formula whereas Xinghai's do not . (see the cat paintings Majestic Appearance (age 9, Figure 82) and Standing Cat (age 9, Figure 62)). Though the cat's majesty is depicted, the technique of representation differs totally - one standing, the other climbing, with no fixed order in brush-ink. In his rooster paintings, the technique of representation for each rooster varies from one to another. The Family of the Rooster (age 9, Figure 63) shows the technique of contrast between short black line and wet ink block.



**Figure 62** Wang Zhenyuan, age 9, 'Standing Cat' (Author's Slide Collection)

Gourd and Rooster (age 9, Figure 64) was painted completely with dark black and dark black dry ink with no lines.

The painting Rooster (age 9, Figure 65) was completed using the technique of wet light ink and light and dark black, alternately.

The technique in the painting Hundreds of Fish (age 8-9, Figure 66) has even more varieties, showing different postures and expressions. All sorts of emotions are conveyed by movement of the eyes and swinging tails. Obviously the fish are personalized.

Also, in the painting, A Group of Horses (age 9, Figure 67), fifteen horses are painted, each having different posture and made with a different representational technique.

In Yani's painting of Horses, (age 8, Figure 79) each horse has the same posture and one order-formula (Table 5), the only difference being the technique of brush-ink. Beginning from age six or seven, Yani tried to pursue the method of literary representation, in composition, brush-ink, and thematic content, whereas Xinghai gave free expression to his ideas; what he



**Figure 63** Wang Xinghai, age 9, The Family of The Rooster (Author's Slides Collection)



**Figure 64** Wang Xinghai, age 9, Gourd & Rooster (Author's Slides Collection)

desired to express, he painted.

(5). Techniques of Brush-ink, Composition, Colour and Calligraphy

Both Yani and Xinghai mastered some basic techniques of brush-ink. On the whole, however, the techniques of brush-ink Yani mastered exceed those of Xinghai. At the age of 5 or 6, Yani mastered some difficult techniques, such as colour and ink harmony, where deep black breaks light and light breaks deep black.

While Xinghai possesses fewer techniques of freehand brushwork (basically outlining first and then filling in ink and colour) some freehand techniques of brush-ink are used in animal

paintings as well as in landscape - particularly the use of brush in landscape - where he reveals a more solid foundation than Yani, and where his vigorous brushing characteristics with alternative rubbing and wrinkling appear. His contour method and technique of



Figure 65 Xinghai, page 5, *Eighteen Hundred Years of the Chinese* (1960)



Figure 66 Yani, page 9, *Hundred Years of China* (Author's collection)

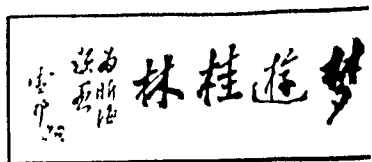


Figure 67 Yani, page 10, *Hundred Years of China* (Author's collection)



rubbing/wrinkling were used in the Rocky Forest (age 9, Figure 83, See Appendix D) and Sleep touring Gui Lin (age 9, Figure 68), which are rarely found in Yani's paintings. From this, it may be concluded that Yani is good at ink use and Xinghai, the brush. While Yani is skilful in wet ink, Xinghai is skilful with rubbing and wrinkling dry ink.

With regard to composition, Yani's work, before the age of five shows no influence of traditional compositions. She followed, after age seven, traditional adult compositions for



**Figure 68** Wang Xinghai, age 9, Sleep Touring Gui Lin (author's slide)

literary paintings. It was at the age of seven that Xinghai began to paint. The representation of various spatial relations were clearly strengthened after the age of eight - for example, The Seventh Ranking Official (age 8, Figure 69), where big and small figures, black and light ink helped create a sense of space. In landscape painting he used the three types of mountain perspective: level distance in Sleep Touring Gui Lin (Figure 68), high distance in Rocky Forest (Figure 83), and deep distance in Moun-

It was at the age of seven that Xinghai began to paint. The representation of various spatial relations were clearly strengthened after the age of eight - for example, The Seventh Ranking Official (age 8, Figure 69), where big and small figures, black and light ink helped create a sense of space. In landscape painting he used the three types of mountain perspective:



**Figure 69** Wang Xinghai, age 8, Seventh Ranking Official (author's slide)

tains and Waters, age 8, (Figure 70).

His other thematic choices, like myth, fairy tales and traditional stories give no indication of any traditional adult composition factor. All are surface decoration



**Figure 70** Wang Xinghai, age 12, Mount Xinghai, Mountains and Water (author's collection)

type of composition, full but in order. In composition, Xinghai often adopts vertical and horizontal forms, which differ from the hand-scroll Yami employs.

As to colour, Yami has a better understanding of black/white relations than Xinghai. At 3 or 4, Yami began to use the technique of ink and colour mixture, with better understanding of colour after eight. Colour and ink mixture find little use in Xinghai's paintings. Instead, the techniques of filling in colour after outlining, plain colour, and the versatile colours were often used to give rise to sharp contrasts.

Although Xinghai's sense of colour improved, we find all sorts of colours in a single painting due to his lack of awareness of colour/ink harmony. For example, in Yami's painting, Yami's Party (Figure 43) all nine figures in the picture were basically painted with orange, while Xinghai's painting, King of Dragon Enter Palace (age 10, Figure 85,

See Appendix D ) shows different colours were used to paint the figure with no awareness of colour tone.

As to calligraphy, Xinghai didn't make much progress. Yet it is obvious that he had some training with simple calligraphy, and that he copied some calligraphy models that may be found behind his use of the brush - giving the sense of putting down, closing up, pressing and breaking<sup>18</sup>.

#### (6). Education and Methods of Learning

In terms of educational environment, Xinghai lives in Beijing, the cultural centre in China. What he sees and hears, of course, is far more than Yani. In addition, his father is a teacher in the Cultural Institution of Fine Arts, regarded as an institute for higher learning. In the last decade, many teachers have advocated modern art, and they arranged the first exhibition for Xinghai at the Central Institution of Fine Arts, with the aim of changing the art teaching method there.

The espousal of modern art has, more or less, influenced the teaching method of Xinghai's father and Xinghai's representation, which is free from traditional technique and adult stagnation. Yani, born in Gong Cheng County, Guangxi Xi province received from the very beginning a rigid traditional education, as is reflected in her paintings.

Yani's teacher is both sagacious and strict: he guided

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<sup>18</sup> Please to see the terms of Chinese painting techniques, Appendix A

Yani with order-formulae, steps and purpose. At the beginning, Xinghai also received basic brush-ink training. And yet, from his painting, we see how the guidance of his teacher was loose, without procedure and order-formulae: he allowed Xinghai's interests and imagination to develop naturally.

(7). Summary

Thus the artist's immediate family and social environment are natural common factors in the respective development of Xinghai and Yani. Yani was trained under the systematic traditional technique of brush-ink and order-formulae, without traditional method of basic training. Her development shows a marked inclination to pursue brush-ink techniques, thematic content, and colour composition of the adult literary style.

Xinghai, on the contrary, had no training in systematic traditional techniques in brush-ink, no solid basic training no order-formula training. He is a prodigy who developed naturally.

Yani went through clear periods of brush-ink use and thematic content whereas Xinghai did not: his development bears the feature of alternating. Yani's thematic content is relatively narrow, namely, the thematic content of literary painting such as monkey, landscape, flower-bird. By contrast, Xinghai covers a wide range of thematic content, from the heavens to the earth, from past to future, and anything else one can imagine.

Yani's method of representation shows a clear

order-formula, while Xinghai's does not. Yani is good with the use of ink, whereas Xinghai excels by brush. Both of them did not progress much in calligraphy and reveal no gift for calligraphy, when they are compared with the calligraphy of children of the same age.

Yani's work has gained more approval: the mature and traditional factors of her work have won approval from traditional painters and society as a whole. Xinghai's works, unfortunately, are only appreciated by artists with modern consciousness and society in general tends to regard him only as a child painter.

## B. Comparison of A-Xi and Yani

### (1). Introduction

Having the original name of Tan Wen Xi, A Xi was born in September 1973, of Mao Nan Nationality. He is a gifted painter in Guang Xi province and enjoys the same popularity as Yani. At the early age of three, he began painting, guided by his father and the famous painter, Mr. Li Luo Gong. Exhibitions were held in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Gui Lin in China, Hongkong, Singapore, the United Kingdom, Finland and other countries and places (Figure 71).



Figure 71 A Xi on Painting (Liu, 1997)

A Xi was awarded first prize at the Finland International Children's Painting Exhibition, in 1976; first prize at the

China Children's Painting Competition in Shanghai, 1979, and the gold medal at the Asian Children's Painting Exhibition in 1981 and 1991 (Ke, W., 1988). The GuangXi Ji Li Publishing House published an A Xi Painting Album (A Xi, 1991).

Meanwhile, the film Son of Nature, based on A Xi was made by Xi An Film Studio. In 1990 he enrolled at the Department of Fine Arts of the Educational Institute of Gui Lin, to aspire to the role of professional painter.

## (2). Social Background and Environment

Both A Xi and Yani were born in an artist's family and received training in a county cultural palace in GuangXi. With regard to nationality both belong to a minority. Both likewise began to paint on rice paper with brushes at the age of three. A Xi became famous after he received first prize at the Finland International Children's Painting Exhibition for his Gui Lin Landscape of 1976. He has since become very active in the forum of GuangXi painting prodigies. A Xi, who is three years older than Yani, became noteworthy two or three years earlier than Yani.

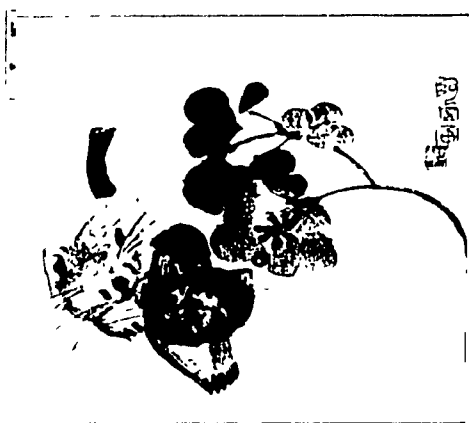
Growing up in an artistic family and benefitting from the opening up of society, are common feature in for the development of both.

## (3). Thematic Content

Strictly speaking, A Xi became famous for his cat painting, and Yani became famous for her monkey painting. From age three to nine, A Xi's themes were cat and landscape

which he developed simultaneously. From age 13 to 16, he began, apart from cat and landscape, to sketch and paint flowers with colour studies (See the questionnaire filled in by his father), which differed from Yani's step-by-step development. From ten recent works which A Xi donated to the Asian Sport Game, his works still have cats and landscape as themes.

As with Yani, A Xi's themes and connotations are influenced by the traditional themes of literary painting. Although he favours cat, fairy tales and short stories in history, most of his paintings still belong to the category of literary painting, like the twig of flowers and two cats in Flower and Cat, age 10, (Figure 72) and orioles, loquat and two cats in We are in Happiness(age 10, Figure 73).



**Figure 72** A Xi, age 10, Flower and cat (Liu, 1987)



**Figure 73** A Xi, age 10, We are in Happiness (Liu, 1987)

After the age of ten, a kind of poetic literary flavour found expression in many of A Xi's thematic works (absent among Yani's works), such as Drunken Cat (age 11, Figure 86,

Appendix D), where a drunken cat lay still on the ground, squinting at the broken pieces of a fallen cup.

This realm of the half drunk and dreaming is the main sentiment of literary style. The painting Snow (age 12, Figure 87, Appendix D) is, another example, having the poetic quality of the literary style, where, apart from houses in the vicinity painted with charred ink, the background sky is full of light ink dots which incline the viewer towards a drowsy state.

Moreover, the calligraphy was also done in light ink, to invite endless reflection.

#### (4). Representational Technique

Like Yani, the cats in A Xi's paintings are done according to an order-formula. From the age of three to 17, his cats have the same order-formula. All other varieties were variations of this order-formula (that is, the Games of Cats, (age 7, Figure 88), where dozens of cats have similar order-formulae). However, A Xi also painted some cats with different order-formulae, like Drunken Cat (age 11, Figure 86 ), where the cat was totally painted with wet dark ink, marking a difference from his usual order-formula. His Three Squatting Cats (age 16, Figure 74 ) which he donated to the Asian Sport Games, were all drawn with lines.



Figure 74 A Xi, age 16, Three squatting cats. (Asian Sport Games, 1974)



The cats that A Xi painted at the ages of 6 and 7 have the nature of decoration and exaggeration (none of which is found in Yani's work). When A Xi was six, the many single cats he painted later took on a new form through omission, and exaggeration, with focus upon physical features, characteristic movement and expression.

(5). Technique of Brush-ink, Composition, Colour  
and Calligraphy

The techniques of brush-ink A Xi mastered are not as varied as those of Yani in terms of wet ink technique. Although many cats were painted with wet ink, the technique is simple, having little variation. Yet the vigour of his strokes of dark and charred ink in landscape paintings as well as his technique of rubbing/wrinkling with charred ink exceed Yani. For instance, the Gui Lin Landscape (age 6 and 7, Figure 75), the technique of rubbing/wrinkling and the contour method were used with moderate boldness, with ink penetrating below the surface. Strokes are vigorous in their appearance, and A Xi exceeds Yani in his dry ink technique.

To speak of composition, A Xi was also influenced by the traditional literary style. His composition, however, is simpler than Yani's. For the most part, his cats are accompanied by twigs flowers, grasses and insects.

Relations within the composition of contrast of thin with thick, dark with light, empty with solid remain simple. Whereas Yani uses various flowers, birds and vegetation to set

off monkey painting against complex compositions - A Xi makes more use of, in landscape painting, level distance and high distance. Yani puts the stress on deep distance and level distance.



**Figure 75** A Xi, *Guilin Landscape* (1907)

Regarding colour, at the age of 4 or 5, A Xi began using the technique of colour and ink mixture. After 7 or 8, the variety of ink use increased, and his sense of colour grew stronger. At about age 11, he employed original colour directly, with results which I find too vulgar and lurid. Like Mountains and Waters of Guilin (age 11, Figure 76), where indigo colour was directly used. His colour use turned more mature after fifteen, comprising elegance and harmony.

On the whole there are many similarities between A Xi and Yani in their development of colour, and few differences.

With respect to calligraphy, like Yani, A Xi's early calligraphy showed no real gift. But after he reached age ten, his work improved. The seal character (a style of Chinese calligraphy often used on seals) and even the shi gu wen, (inscriptions on drum-shaped stone blocks of the Warring States period: 475-221 B.C.) appeared in his characters. This indicated that A Xi then began copying model characters as he practised calligraphy.

After age 15, he made much greater progress: the brush-

ink and the structure of his characters all clearly showed his efforts. (6). Education and Method of Learning.

A Xi received an education similar to Yani, and his instructor was also open-minded, although strict in the way of systematic training: he likewise employed order-formula teaching to help A Xi

paint cat. An order which he used until age 17. With regard to learning, both A Xi and Yani possessed those virtues common to the Chinese people, namely, industry and diligence, for, at the age of seven, A Xi had already produced some 10,000 pictures (Table 11, Appendix C) while Yani drew over 4,000 pictures by the age of six.

However, in learning procedure, Yani changed themes one at a time (monkey to landscape to flower-bird ), while A Xi developed simultaneously in landscape and cat painting, from age 3 to 17.

#### (7). Summary

There are more similarities than dissimilarities between A Xi and Yani. They lived in similar environments and times and grew up in an artistic family. Both received training in traditional Chinese painting and order-formula methods, to which they adhered as adolescents. Diligence and hard work



**Figure 76** A Xi, age 11, Mountains and Water of Guilin (Liu, 1987)

were traits common to both. All their paintings revealed the characteristics of thematic content, brush-ink, literary style compositions. As well, their gifts showed up at a very young age. They rapidly mastered the basic ink and brush Chinese painting and order-formula for cats and monkeys - with which they represented their vision of a child's world.

One difference is that A Xi was able at an early age to use the medium of exaggeration and decoration. He combined the order-formula with the simplicity of brush-ink. After his tenth year, the poetic flavour of literary style emerged in his painting. A Xi's thematic content has always been the simultaneous depiction of landscape and cat painting. This differs from Yani's segmental change in themes development. In brush-ink, Yani goes further than A Xi in wet ink technique, who works better with dry ink.

Yani's composition is complex, having more variation than A Xi's, which is simple and plain. Both artists didn't progress very much in calligraphy, although A Xi, after the age of 10 improved gradually while Yani remained the same.

## CHAPTER 7

### WHAT DO CHINESE ARTISTS THINK OF YANI'S WORKS?

#### A. The Brief Description of Interview with Four Chinese Artist

In order to get more information for our study of Yani, David Pariser, a Professor of Art Education at Concordia University, and I conducted personal interviews, in April 1991, with four artists from Mainland China and Taiwan, who are now living in Canada. These are: Mr. Zhang, Hung, Wong and Han. Mr. Zhang, Songnan (M.F.A.) who was a professor of Central Institution of Fine Arts (Beijing, China). Mr. Hung, Junian (B.F.A.) who was a teacher at the Hunan Theater College (Changsha, China). Mr. Wong, Suibo (B.F.A.) who was a teacher at the Central Institution of Fine Arts (Beijing, China ). Mr. Han, Pei-Yuan (M.D.) who is a executive of Modern Art Research Association of Montreal, and a famous facilitator and organizer specifically of Chinese art in montreal.

First, we showed 25 slides of painting by Yani from ages 3 to 15. Second, we used comparative analysis methods to show the some topic painted at different periods using two slide projectors. We asked the artists to compare the 2 slides and give a detailed analysis. For example, in the section of comparison of monkey pictures, we showed the following slides (Table 10):

**TABLE 10:    SHOWING PAIRS OF YANI'S MONKEY PAINTINGS  
AS PRESENTED TO FOUR CHINESE ARTISTS.**

Left Slides Projector		Right Slide Projector	
<u>Dead Drunk</u>	age 4	<u>Monkey and Chicken</u>	Age 14
<u>That is for Mommy</u>	age 5	<u>Whose Flowers are so Pretty</u>	Age 7
<u>Playing a Game</u>	age 6	<u>Good Harvest</u>	Age 7
<u>I Have Some Fruit</u>	age 6	<u>Monkey and Good Fish</u>	Age 11

We gave 7 painting and calligraphy groups to compare. These were: monkeys, cats, rooster and red-crowned crane, trees, landscapes, calligraphy, and composition.

**B.    Summaries of the Answers**

We summarize the answers which the four artists gave to the 8 questions which we asked. The answers are summarized according to each individual question.

The first question asked was, "Is there anything unusual about the way in which Yani's ideas and technical skills

developed?" In response, Huang thought that her early development was good, and that it later became normal. Thus, according to Huang: "Her early monkeys are the only works that set her apart from other children her age, her later works show normal development"<sup>18</sup>(p.51). Zhong mentioned that she developed normally. According to Zhong: "I think Yani's way of developing is a truly normal way for Chinese children, so many Chinese children are like her."(p.17) Dr. Han, however, was not surprised by Yani's development as a whole, but he did see that certain of her techniques, and certain parts of particular paintings were unusual. He recognized that her development is that of a normal Chinese child, except at a very young age. According to Wong, "I think she has a particularity which is that she persisted with one style from 3-14 years old, this is very good. Most Chinese children though they drew very well when they are younger, stop, or changed to a different style when they were older."(p.37)

The second question asked was, "Is there anything unusual or exceptional about Yani's technique?" Three of the respondents think that Yani's technique in the painting of monkeys was unusual in the early period. The techniques in the other periods are very normal. According to Wong, "You see this part, Good Harvest , (age 11, Figure 33), look at the master's

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*All quotes are from the transcript of our interviews with the artists. Page numbers indicate where in the transcript, the quotes can be found*

painting in technique. It is easy to follow the master's technique. Chinese painting techniques are easy to learn, easy to practise, and easy to look nice." (P. 24-25). The composition in painting The Rice is for You (age 5, Figure 14) is impressive and unusual, Han thought that it showed very unusual skill. However, Zhong suggested that Yani had received help from an adult for this specific work. According to Han, "It is very unusual. The children, for example, the rooster, is an outgrowth of that, even the head of the peacock goes to the edge of the paper, so that creates a tension, in very light space. Seldom would a traditional painter, or an adult do that." (P.60) Zhong's response is the same as question 3 below.

The third question asked was, "Do you think Yani was helped by an adult? Which picture shows this? Why do you think so?" Four of the respondents gave some answer: it is possible, for example, The Rice Is for You, (Figure 14), shows a very unusual composition. Zhong said, "I think it is possible for her to draw a big picture and then for an adult to have helped her to cut it to make a smaller one." (P.15) Professor Panzer asked "why?" In response, Zhong added, "Oh, this kind of thing happens when I was teaching peasants in the countryside in China. I taught them about composition by choosing specific parts of different paintings, although I didn't actually use my hands to draw, I gave them many different ideas of how to chose from one part of the painting." (p.15)



Yani's landscape work entitled Autumn in a Hamlet, (age 9, Figure 81), shows different styles and one remarkable wrinkling and rubbing skill. According to Wong, "It is possible that when she copied the different adult's style afterward she put it in one painting" (P.34). Zhong however affirmed that, "I don't think it is her drawing, perhaps an adult demonstrated for her. Because this landscape is totally different from her style and personality." Each of the respondent's thought that she got teaching, but they didn't know how much. Zhong was definitely sure about this as he remarked, "Certainly, I am one hundred per cent sure she has been taught, but I am not sure whether it was by her father or not." (p.4) In the painting A Tiny Tree (age 3, Figure 9), Hung mentioned that, "This was done to a with adult education and training, she certainly got some form of it." (P.45) Zhong agreed, "This drawing is Yani's own, but she may have received some instruction from an adult, on how to use her brush." (p.17).

The fifth question asked was, "What do you think of her calligraphy from age 3 until age 15?" Wong argued that Yani's calligraphy showed a little progress. The other three thought that Yani showed no development in her calligraphy from age 3 to 14. Zhong said without hesitation: "No development is apparent. She didn't practice calligraphy." (p.13) Wong faltered a little as he said, "I think she has little development. For example, she was trying wet or dry calligraphy to harmonize the relationship between the calligraphy and

painting. "(p.35)

The fifth question posed was, "Is there a difference in the way which Yani makes animals and landscapes? What is the difference?" Here there was unanimous agreement as everyone said yes. They liked her monkey or animal paintings more than her landscapes which were not as good, neither the spirit nor the technique. Huang said that, "the spirit and childish innocence in Yani's monkey paintings is her trademark. But those in her landscapes all disappeared. The technique used in her landscapes are mostly copied from a few famous artists." (p.45)

The sixth question asked was, "What do you think Yani's chances of becoming a significant/important adult artist in China?" Most of the respondents agreed that Yani's early works were more remarkable than her later works and that her current paintings are unremarkable. However, they did not dismiss the possibility that she will become a big artist, it will depend on her development. Huang stated that, "If she can develop in the future, it is O.K! However, it is difficult to say what will happen. It depends. It really depends on her environment, her education. I can't say." (p.51) Wong suggested that, "It is possible, but she has to make big changes if she only continue this way then it is impossible." (p. 59)

The seventh and final question asked was, "How would you describe a Chinese child who was unusually good at painting? What do they do? What does giftedren mean in Chinese paint-

ing?" We did not get a satisfactory answer to this question. The four artist talked about life-spirit which is very important it has been a traditional standard used to distinguish good art from poor art. Therefore, we supposed that people in China possibly use the same standard to judge children and adults who are unusually gifted.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSIONS

#### **A. Findings from the Case Study**

Yani's progress is typical of a talented Chinese child painter. Three main factors account for her fortuitous growth: heredity, family, and the social spirit which surrounded her. In addition, her talent is related to three traditional factors of Chinese culture: the order-formula teaching method in art education, the naturalistic charm of rice paper as a material, and a national ethic of industry and diligence.

I surmise that Yani's teacher is a sagacious, but traditional teacher. He/she made a timely discovery of Yani's drawing ability, and offered careful training. While guiding Yani he/she avoided traditional basic training and made skilful use of rice paper's charms. He/she was instrumental in using the traditional order-formula teaching method and the creative original imitation method, which enabled Yani to obtain surprising effects in a short period of time.

There are three developmental periods for her work: the period of success, from age 3 to 6 years. This period reveals her gift for representation. During this time her gift connoted mainly a quick mastery of order-formula painting of

the monkey and in particular, the basics of brush-ink technique. She used this technique to freely express the charming qualities of her childhood innocence.

A period of exploration marks the second phase (age 7 to 11). She began to explore wider themes; plots become personalized. Mastery of materials and media are facilitated by further development in the brush-ink technique. It is unfortunate that Yani couldn't continue to produce charming images using her hard landscapes as a thematic subject.

A period of silence (age 11 to 15) follows, Yani moved back to the exploration of soft subjects such as flower-bird paintings after having explored hard objects. What she then pursued was no longer the charm of childhood innocence, but rather, adult consciousness. Yet, due to Yani's immaturity, she failed to show comparable competence at the adult level.

Yani's difficulties during her period of adolescence are unfortunate; as with other children, the waning of childhood creativity proved a setback to her phenomenal childhood success.

One of the important features of the development of Yani's drawing ability is her mastery and application of the order-formula for animal painting. The three order-formulae, A1 A2 A3 (p.45) are quite similar. They were used in her monkey painting until age 15. The order-formulae themselves show no variation and development. In her work, variation only occurs in the posture and number of monkeys. Likewise

all kinds of animals such as horses, oxen, chickens, sparrows, cranes, egrets and goldfish respectively have their own fixed order-formulae. Although Yani showed a great tendency to develop her all-around drawing ability, her calligraphy (age 3 to 15) shows a little improvement.

Yani's pictures, which emphasize childish spirit are entirely removed from the Chinese ideas about the relationship of literature, philosophy and the poetry to painting. Adult artists emphasize that neither of the two elements may replace each other, nor can they be compared. Yani's works capture a fully childish, playful spirit instead of a learned one. Her overall technique of representation is removed from adult performance, despite her traditional foundation of brush/ink use, colouring, and composition. However, she has mastered some adult techniques and a few special ones. Yani's paintings still convey a child's naive drawing of outward forms, lacking the symbolic image and literary connotation of adults.

Animal order-formulae are one of the important bases in the drawing for both Yani and A Xi. However, Xinghai didn't use any of the order-formula to paint animals. Thematic content, composition, brush-ink and a literary style were objects of common pursuit. Xinghai's pictures reflect the interests and content of childhood, such as, myths, gossip, television, cartoons, science fiction, fantasy and historical accounts. His composition and technique of brush-ink seem mostly self-taught.

Differences in the respective pursuits of Chinese and Western people naturally effect the evaluation of Chinese prodigies. Western educational psychologists, for example, consider Yani a prodigy who gives life to children's images with the brush of a skilled adult. However, from the Chinese perspective, the solution is not the mixture of childish and adult abilities, nor the number of techniques she has mastered, but how, via this mixture a successful representation of a kind of vivid, childish charm and clumsiness emerges in addition to, life-like spirit.

#### **B. Suggestions for Further Research**

From ancient China there is a saying: "Prodigy at ten, gifted scholar at twenty - and ordinary person at thirty." (Wong, R. 1991) This indicates the developmental history of many talented Chinese children. It is hoped that Yani can avoid this fate and thus, walk toward success. It is important to note how she could do this. First, my instinct, and the results of the studies presented here, suggest that Yani's possible failure may be due to her adherence to the order-formula. In my opinion, this is a key problem. Secondly, Yani's teacher seems too overbearing. His/her effect should be lessened in favour of an approach which gives Yani more voice. Most of China's ordinary children are able to successfully avoid the above tyrannies to self actualization.

The advantages and disadvantages of the order-formula teaching method have not, so far, received much study in China. Abroad, Lowenfeld did not believe in copying or in giving children formulae, nor did European art educator Cizek. However, to date, this teaching method has influenced emergent Chinese painting prodigies. A breakthrough is required in the study of order-formula teaching to make possible a better method of educating Chinese painting prodigies.

I am certain that Yani was taught by someone. The question is who? The answer to this is still a mystery. Her father has denied his involvement and he couldn't point to any teacher. This is difficult for our study. It, perhaps, someday Yani and her father share this mystery with us the results of present and previous studies could be affected as significant conclusions could then be drawn based on the teacher's method. However at present it is impossible for us to believe that the techniques used in part of her works all came from her hand. If we take, for example, the landscape painting, Autumn in a Hamlet (p.155): the mountain is painted very skilfully with adverse rubbing and wrinkling using a vivid model and magnificent energy. This technique is never found in any of her other works. In addition, the calligraphy in her painting, That's just what I want (p.36) exhibits the kind of vivid brushwork not noticeable elsewhere before her 15th year.

A fundamental analytical question is posed throughout the



study: Is it therefore possible for her to consciously master at age three, a method she has not mastered or repeated since that time? David Pariser and I (Pariser and Tan 1991) have also raised this question during our interview with the four Chinese professional artists. Three of them gave the same comment that, the possibility exists for the involvement of adults where, with regard to performance and demonstration a supportive hand is never far.

Any conclusive answer to this inquiry can only be found from further studies and personal interviews with Yani and her father. The question remains why there are so many Chinese prodigies in China, and why the Chinese painting material engenders gifted children. Another question why there are so few gifted Chinese children in the realm of sketches, oil paintings and water colours? This could be the basis for a larger research project.

### **C. Limitations of the Study**

The case of Wang Yani can only be used as an example with which to examine the main characteristics of art education of Chinese child prodigies.

A further, and significant limitation is that, I was not able to conduct interviews with Wang Yani and her father, nor was I able to conduct interviews with the people, the artists and the schools connected with Wang Yani. In addition, Wang Yani has made 10,000 painting works up to now, but I was only

able to conduct an analysis based on about 170 pieces of her work via publications, videos, television programs and exhibitions.

There is also limited information available on how Wang Yani was educated and how she studied. Besides an article in 1988 by her father which mentioned how she started painting when she was young, there is no other information on how she studied. Thus, I could only conduct an objective analysis through what she did in her paintings and based on my 25 years practical experience in Chinese painting and on my 12 years experience in teaching.

#### **D. Implication for Art Education and Teaching**

The examination of Chinese art teaching methods in this thesis, should be beneficial in assisting art teachers to understand the advantage and disadvantage of the order-formula method of instruction. Hence, art teachers could more intelligently select and apply the method they wish to use in Chinese art teaching methods.

The study of Yani's brush-ink technique serves the purpose of assisting art teachers to understand the relationship of the teacher to different Chinese painting techniques, as well as, how such techniques are applied to specific age groups. A question raised is the need to assess the relationship of the teaching method itself to the different Chinese painting techniques and also, how one might approach teaching

normal or gifted children. Thus, with more study, the art teacher should be able to teach children in accordance with their aptitudes, by using a method which accommodates the particular child.

This study on Yani should assist art teachers in thinking about how to help children to reach the unity of life-like spirit and brush-ink technique, instead of only focussing teaching on technique, or of only seeking ink-charms effects- as we have seen with Yani.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Terms of Reference and Definition

#### A. The Basic Names and Terminology of Chinese Art Criticism

##### A1. The Aesthetic Standards of Chinese Painting

Chinese philosophy, literature, ethics and religion permeate the study and aesthetic principles of painting (Li, 1976 and 1987). These principles are:

- a) The Unity of Nature and Humanity. This principle emphasizes the oneness of people with the universe and humanity's return to nature. It underlines the Chinese artist's quest for beauty in the unity of nature with humanity.
- b) The Unity of Form and Emotion. An inter-relationship is thought to exist between external beauty in nature and the development and rhythm of people's lives, therefore, although Chinese aesthetics has a high regard for the standardization and stylization of art forms, it always relates these forms to the expression of emotion, thus preserving a high degree of freedom within a rigid standardized form.
- c) The Unity of Goodness and Beauty. Chinese paintings have always stressed the inspirational effects of art on behaviour, often linking an appreciation of beauty to noble spiritual qualities and virtue, or the practise of morality.

## A2. Characteristics of Chinese Painting

Chinese painting is characterised by many cultural factors which play an important role in the output and painting, itself (Wang, B. 1982). These are:

- a) The Combination of Poetry, Calligraphy, Painting, and Seals. Chinese painting emphasizes the common origin of calligraphy and painting and their fundamental relationship with poetry. There is a common Chinese saying that underscores this: *the scenery lying hidden in poetry and the poetry lying hidden in the picture.*
- b) The Unity of Black and White. Chinese painting has long recognized black and white as being the origin of colour, as much as Yin and Yang are thought to be the source of all things. In Chinese painting the two basic elements of black and white serve as a crucial means of expression.
- c) The Unity of Representation and Non-description. China has been deeply influenced by the Confucian doctrine of the Mean. A Chinese painting aims at a condition intermediate between representation and non-representation.
- d) The Unity of Outward Form and Inner Spirit. This principle consists in, the necessary presence in art, of both spirit and form. Form being the outward means by which spirit is expressed.
- e) The Unity of Unsubstantiality and Concreteness. The

ideal here is to pursue concreteness to the minutest detail and unsubstantiality to the extent that there is without any restrictions. Some parts of a painting are done without inhibitions and disregard or artificial restraints, while others are done in concrete and careful detail.

### A3. Standards for a Critique of Chinese Painting

Life-like Spirit has traditionally been considered by the Chinese as art's highest goal. In the fifth Century, the famous art critic, Xie He (Wang, B. 1982), proposed the following definitional criteria: deft brushwork, accurate likeness, versatile application of colour faithful to the original, well-planned space, observance of venerated traditions, and life-like spirit.

In Jing Hao's book, A Note on the Art of Brush, (AD. 903-919, republished 1974) written in the Fifth Dynasty period, the 10th century, six criteria's are mentioned: *Qi* (spirit or essence), *Yun* (charm), *Si* (meaning/implication), *Bi* (brushwork), *Mo* (application of ink), and *Jing* (composition). In addition to these, he also listed four requirements for evaluating paintings: *Shen* (spirit), *Miao* (ingeniousness), *Qi* (rarity) and *Qiao* (skilfullness). Over the centuries these criteria have had great influence on art criticism and are still in use today.

**B. The Basic Terms and Definition of Chinese Traditional Painting style.**

B1. Landscapes

These are the three main themes of Chinese Paintings.

There are six (6) identifiable styles in landscape:

a) Blue and green landscape - is based on the principle of the prominence of blue and green colours. Works of this type are always of a meticulous style.

b) Light purple-red landscape - is based on the principle of neutrality and concreteness of light purple-red colours.

c) Gold and green landscape - is based on the principle of the sumptuousness of gold outlines with oronide and mineral green.

d) Axe-cuts landscape - is based on the effect of the cuts made by an axe with a brush stroke.

e) Charred-ink landscape - is based on the principle of the strength of charred ink with the brush fairly dry.

f) Mi-dotting landscape - is based on the moisture of the dotting method of Mi Pei (1301-1374). It gives contour and solidarity to mountains and the earth.

B2. figures

The genre of figure painting is characterized by five main themes: beautiful women, portraits, genre painting, historical events or incidents, and Taoist and Buddhist figures.

B3. flowers and birds

The genre of flower and bird painting usually includes bird, flowers, grass, insect and specialized in animal themes.

B4. The basis terms used in Chinese art history

a) Freehand brushwork - are paintings characterized by spontaneous expression and bold outlines.

b) Meticulous brushwork - are paintings characterized by elaborate brushwork and close attention to details.

c) Literary painting - is characterized by the literariness and thoughtfulness of the Literati's brush strokes. It is distinct from academic painting or folk painting.

d) Academic painting - is characterized by the preciseness with respect to forms, rules and customs.

e) Boundary painting - this is measured painting, based on ruled or measured outlines. These are common in architectural representations.

f) Finger painting - is characterized by the use of finger-tips or nails in place of, or in addition to, the brush.

B5. Other Common Terms for Chinese Painting Style

Names for painting are based on the light of the composition and the way in which it is mounted, such as, horizontal, hanging scroll, vertical hanging scroll and hand scroll.

## C. The Basic Names and Terminology of Chinese Painting Materials.

Brush, ink-stick, paper and ink-stone are called the "four treasures" in the studio and they are the main Chinese traditional painting materials used (Choy, K. and Liang, 1986).

### C1. Brush.

There are hundreds of brush names, but basically two kinds of brushes. The soft-hair brushes are mainly made of white sheep-hairs, and the others are of brown-coloured wolf hairs.

a) Sheep-hair brushes. There are three main kinds: 1) *Dou Bi* - a very large brush made of hairs longer than two inches; ii) *Bai Yun Bi* - a sheep hair brush mixed with some other harder hairs; and iii) *Bai Jia Bi* - a brush for line drawing.

b) Wolf-hair brushes There are three main kinds: 1) *Dou Bi* - in very large size; ii) *Lan Zhu Bi* - a brush for wrinkling and rubbing; and iii) *Ye Jin Bi* - a brush for line drawing. The mixed sheep and wolf hair brushes and joint brush are very often used by artists.

### C2. Ink Stick

Ink sticks are of three kinds. The first one is made of tung-oil soot; the second of resin soot; and the third of lacquer soot.

### C3. Rice Paper and Silk

The which is most commonly used is called *Zuan Zhu*. The



best rice paper is made of sandalwood bark in Jing Xian town, An Fei province in China.

Rice paper comes in rolls, or different sheets of many sizes: *Zhang 2* (around 4 metres), *8 Chi* (about 2.6 metres), *6 Chi* (2 metres), *5 Chi* (1.6 metres), *4 Chi* (1.3 metres). The width being half the length. Double cutting of the *4 Chi* rice paper creates pieces 68 x 68 cm or 34 x 132 cm; the quarto becomes 34 x 68 cm and the octavo 34 x 34 cm or 16.5 x 132 cm. The order size of rice paper can be done in a similar way.

Rice paper is also further divided according to the thickness and thinness as called *Miam Lian*, *Jia Lian*, *Dan Xuan* (cigar paper).

The name *Sen Xuan* and *Shou Xuan* are used to denote the character of rice paper. *Sen Xuan* is absorbent as ink diffuses on it as the brush-stroke is made. High quality *Sen Xuan* can produce innumerable ink charm which artists seek themselves. *Shou Xuan* is alum-sized it becomes non-absorbent. It is commonly advised to use this size of paper only for Chinese paintings in the meticulous style as it gives the best results. Another kind of rice paper which is very much more resilient is called *pi-zhi*. It is made from bast fibre of the mulberry tree.

Silk in the ancient fashion is still popularly used at times. The thin *ling* silk has been in use for paintings in the free-hand style. Ready-made alum-sized Chinese pongee has been in use for painting in the meticulous style.

#### C4. Ink-stone

The best ink-stone that is used for painting is produced in Quang-Dong and An Fei Provinces. The texture of the stone is so fine that it is easily applicable to the ink stick.

#### C5. Colours

There are roughly 20 kinds of Chinese painting colours in use. Most of these colours are derived from botanic materials and minerals. The botanic materials include: indigo, gamboge, safflower, red and crimson lake. Mineral products include: red ochre, vermilion, orpiment, azurite, malachite green and flake white. Azurite and malachite green, according to the lucidity and intensity of colour, is further divided into first blue, second blue, third blue, fourth blue and first green, second green, third green and fourth green.

#### 6) Others

Other equipment and materials used in Chinese painting include: artists seals and a seal ink, a water dish, 1-10 colour dishes, an absorbent cotton blanket or absorbent felt blankets.

### **D. The Basic Names and Terminology of Chinese Painting Techniques.**

#### D1. The Way to use the brush.

a) Up-right brush. To employ the central brush it is necessary to point properly with the core of the brush always at the middle of the brush-stroke. It is used for

defining outline or dots and flips.

b) Side-brush. It is employed by slanting the handle of the brush on one side and making the brush-point lie on the brim of the brush-stroke. It is used for wrinkling, daubing and washing.

c) Dragging, pushing and directing. It is used to direct the brush to draw a line from left to right, top to bottom, or vice versa. It may be able to drag the brush-tip to go ahead as though pulling a string or pushing it forward as though moving a stone.

d) Putting down, closing up-lifting, pressing and breaking. Putting down and closing-up are required in some techniques. The brush-top has to keep the inside movement of brush-strokes. It may be light or heavy. Lifting is used to half-lift the brush with only the tip touching the paper to make a swift and thin line. Pressing uses the tip of the brush to make thick, heavy lines. Breaking means stopping the brush for a moment and then changing the direction of the line to break the brush stroke.

e) Wrinkling and rubbing. The brush-side is employed in this process. Both wrinkling and rubbing is done with what are called *thirsty brush and charred ink*. There are hundreds of styles of wrinkling, for example, hemp-fibre and hammer-cutting wrinkles.

f) Outlining and non-outlining Although they are thinly

drawn, the tenacious lines are not only used to delineate the contour of things, but also to suggest texture, anatomy or structure. Many styles of outlining are used, for example, the cat tails, nail heads outline, and the kindling outline.

The non-outlining method is sometimes called boneless. It is used to express forms and structures with soggy brush strokes without employing contour outlining.

g) dotting mural Although this is a singular technique it belongs to the method of non-outline. There are hundreds of dotting styles available, for example, the double leaves, the character dots, the broken dots, and brush dots.

e) flying white: This is a technique in which the hairs of the brush are allowed to separate, so that a stroke is not solid black, but is broken by streaks of untouched ground. It is effected with a half-dry brush.

## D2. The Way to Use Ink.

a) The Five Shades of Ink. - Ink, when diluted with water, can be graduated into many different shades. The five shades of ink are charred, deep, dark, light and pale ink-black. In addition, there may still be many tonal variations in each shade.

b) Wet, Sear and Soggy Ink. - To do a sear stroke you have to make the brush become very dry. More water is

added to effect a soggy stroke and ample water is needed for a wet stroke.

c) Ink Washes. - To prepare an ink-wash it is necessary to use a clean saucer with some water added. First, you have to stir your ink-brush in it until the wash is entirely smooth. Next, you add a little ink or water as necessary to make the right ink colour. Finally, you apply it to a fixed area in the painting.

d) Layers of Ink and Accumulated Ink - To prepare layers of ink and accumulated ink, you use a few layers of charred ink or accumulating ink. Deep black ink differs in texture and colour from over-painting with a few layers of light ink washes, which are called layers of ink.

e) Broken ink - This means that charred ink is broken into light ink washes or the light ink washes are broken into charred ink.

f) Rolled ink - Roll the ink on the paper in quick short brush-strokes.

### D3. The Way to Use Colour.

a) colour washes. - Mix up colours with water and stir with the brush and apply washes within the contour.

b) Wet underpainting, layers of colours, rubbing in colour. - Wet underpainting is applied in bigger areas such as water and sky. A picture can be painted with a few layers of colour. A second layer of colour may be

applied to a colour underpainting which is dry. Rubbing is done with a dry brush using the brush-side technique. It is best used for description of feathers.

c). Colour-ink mixing and colour mixing - Colours can be mixed with different inks to produce hundreds of tints, as well as, the different colours can be mixed together to produce another tint.

d) Colour -ink harmony. - All the colour in a painting must be brought into harmonistic state. In Chinese must be brought into harmony. In Chinese painting the common way to harmony is mixing colours with different ink. Rice paper come in mainly neutral colours to bring all colour into harmony.

#### D4. Other Special Terms. High distance, deep distance, level distance.

These are three different types of mountain perspectives. High distance is the view from the foot of mountains looking up to the peaks. *Deep distance* is the view from mountains or peaks, in front, through to the mountains behind. *Level distance* is the view from near mountains, across, to the distant mountains.

## Appendix B: A Brief Introduction to Art Education Methods in China

China's long history of art education is principally one of master-disciple relationship. In 1902, however, the Jiangjiang Teachers Academy was established to foster the first generation of Chinese art educators. Following this was a correspondence school for Chinese and Western painting created by Zhou Xiang in 1910. These schools constituted the beginning of professional arts training institutions in China. In 1912 Liu Hai-su not only created the first Chinese professional arts school, The Shanghai Art Academy, but became its principal. Today, China has several hundred schools and faculties for fine arts instruction.

The school system, the master-disciple tradition and an intermediate system presently represents China's three pillars of art education. Although the formal school system represents the mainstream instruction and has vast influence, the master-disciple tradition is still very much active. At present it is in the process of undergoing new development.

With regards to children, even though there are quite a number of painting classes for children, most of these are short-term and as a result, the nurturing and shaping of child talent, especially that of child prodigies rests with parents or individual masters and a new type of master-disciple educational system is emerging.

As for adolescents, cultural centres are their base for

the arts. Art coaching classes have now become a necessary route for entering professional art academies. These professional academies, because of their stagnant approaches and stubborn persistence in traditional thinking, have instilled a narrow form of teaching in the school system. This is so, because individual teachers are inclined to act like masters and so limit the transmission of various ideas.

The methods of Chinese art teaching can be divided into traditional and modern. The former is represented in most middle age and older art teachers, while, the latter, is represented in the applications and creations of some younger art teachers.

Chinese art teachers in the younger generation have absorbed a certain amount of Western art education theory which they received during the open period of the 1980's. First, they give more opportunity students to be free and to represent their personality and creativity. This is lowerfeld's influence. Second, they are poised to use western art education theory to break China's traditional system.

At the same time, young Chinese art educator are very conflicted: they are trying to reform Chinese art education, but do not wish to use old-fashioned western ideas. Therefore, young Chinese art teachers are making great efforts to build a new art education programme characterized by the Chinese aesthetic, as well as, at the same time, seeking a combination of the best of Chinese traditional and modern



Western art teaching theory (Hou, D. 1992).

### **The Method of Copying**

This is a teaching method that had been followed in China for several thousand years. The approach to a formal introduction to Chinese painting, is one of imitating hundreds of paintings, and painters and making oneself familiar with the properties of each new material. It also involves the acquisition of proficiency with the tool or tools originally employed on the painting with careful attention to brush stroke technique. All this copying process aims at establishing a solid skill base.

During the Ming dynasty, the publication of the book, The Model of Painting Technique of Jie Zi Garden, (Wang. G., 1679) provided a source of order-formulae for landscape, figure, flower and bird painting for beginners to follow.

### **The Method of Tranquil Mind and Arduous Practice**

This method focuses on having a tranquil mind, repetitive exercises, and achieving perfection through arduous practice. One painting might require repainting for dozens of times before it becomes acceptable. Thus, for example, a single word of calligraphy might well require hundreds of repetitions before becoming a finished product. Under these circumstances, this famous Chinese poem on arduous study might seem like a good motto for art students to emulate:

*My two ears hear not the happenings outside my window.  
My heart and mind are monopolized by the books of the  
sages.  
Although for ten winters I shall remain unnoticed,  
One day achieving status in the exams,  
I shall be recognized universally.*

The spirit of tranquil mind and arduous practice is related to Chinese Confucian culture, as well as, Taoist consciousness doctrine and is rooted in the spirit of the Chinese people.

### **The Method of Order-Formula**

The antiquity of Chinese people and culture has led to various kinds of arts becoming standardized. This process is especially notable in Chinese theatre, painting, poetry, calligraphy, and the martial arts. Recourse in teaching practice to such standardization methods is referred to as the order-formula education system.

Order-formula, in art teaching refers to the use of a specific order of brush strokes to draw a given object. Teaching and learning both have to follow the order step by step. Each step requires a specified implementation of brush ink on rice paper. It is a method resorted to most frequently by children and beginning painters. This is so, because it is easier for the students to grasp. It permits them to attain desired results more readily, hence it is also more likely to arouse their interest in painting. Its disadvantage is that it inhibits creativity.

### **The Method of Reproducing and Memorization**

Chinese landscape painting does not emphasize concomitant observing and painting, on the spot. The artist instead memorizes the forms of scenery and the expressions of people they encounter in the field. The artist does not begin his actual painting until he returns home.

Calligraphy teaching methods, on the other hand, concerned very much with Bei Tie<sup>19</sup>. Student use Bie Tie for memorizing these ancient calligraphic form. This kind of teaching method is related to the fact that Chinese painting stresses being alive in spirit and having a life-like force.

### **The Method of Sudden Enlightenment:**

The idea of sudden enlightenment comes from Chan (Zen). Chan used to be divided into a Southern Sect and a Northern Sect. The Southern Sect emphasized the suddenness of enlightenment, whereas the Northern Sect stressed gradualness. In the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), Dong Qi-chang, a famous thinker and calligrapher, applied the ideas of both sects to the theory of painting. Drawing more from the Southern Sect, the teaching method of sudden enlightenment does not teach concrete techniques. Only certain stories and matters related to painting principles are discussed. It also emphasizes more sensitive and thorough observation before painting.

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<sup>19</sup>

*Ancient inscriptions and calligraphic form.*

### **The Method of Synthesis of the Five Senses**

In general, the popular teaching method of modern art only makes use of the visual and auditory senses. The tactile and olfactory senses have are not utilized in the creative painting process. The achievements of modern psychology attests to the fact that if every organ of sense can be fully aroused, thinking ability and speed of feedback will be improved. Based on this principle, students are asked to touch, test, watch, smell and listen to the object. As soon as the students' mood are excited they are asked to paint pictures.

This teaching method is usually used in landscape and bird-flower painting.

### **The Method of Competitive Reinforcement**

This particular method of teaching emphasizes individual competition. The experiment showed that the effect of individual competition was much better than that of group competition because this method gave full play to individual talent. The individual competition is divided into material composition, technique, colour and calligraphy. Much of the students' skill, style and composition in Chinese painting changes quickly owing to the increase in the student's, learning, interest and strong will-power generated by competition. As a result, mastery of materials and techniques for painting improve.

### **The Method of Musical Empathy**

This method requires students to learn the emotion of music through their personal experience and to transmit their emotion into their inner-most being. Also, the method requires students to transmit their inner-most being to the process of creation.

### **The Method of Self-Discovery**

This method gave children a degree of freedom. In addition, it utilized the children's interests in order to lead them to discover, think, explore and present the object and questions by themselves. As a result, there are advantages to assist children in harnessing their independent thinking, exploration and creative abilities.

### **The Method of Creative Imitation**

Young art teachers in China are of the belief that it is necessary to continue imitation teaching methods and they facilitate the methods which evolve into a creative imitation. As such, students may be asked to utilize model painting techniques, or to use any techniques that is necessary for them to reach the life-like spirit in model painting. As a result, this has prompted students to maintain creativity ever during the copying process.

## Appendix C

**TABLE 11: THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHINESE PAINTING PRODIGIES**  
**Art Education Dept., Concordia university, Canada 1991**

Completed by A Xi's father. Mar. 12, 1991

Name: Tan, Wen xi(A Xi)		Age: 17	Sex: Male													
AGE	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16		
NOP	30	80	400	3600	10800	7200	3600	3600	3600	1800	1800	720	720	360		
SUBJECT	CAT AND LANDSCAPE			CAT AND LANDSCAPE			CAT AND LANDSCAPE			CAT AND LANDSCAPE			FLOWER AND BIRD, CAT, LANDSCAPE, WATER COLOUR DRAWING			

YOUR TEACHERS	PARENTS' OCCUPATION & HOBBY	ORDER-FORMULAE YOU LEARNED	FAVOURITE SUBJECT & STYLE	FAVOURITE ARTISTS	DO YOU STILL PAINT?	ASPIRATION
FATHER AND ARTIST LI LUOGONG	FATHER ARTIST VICE-PROFESSOR MOTHER'S HOBBY LITERATURE	FLOWER & BIRD LANDSCAPE	LANDSCAPE FLOWER AND CAT	QI BAI SHI WU CHANGXUE BADA SHI TAO	A STUDENT AT FINE ARTS DEPT OF GUILIN TEACHERS' COLLEGE	A GREAT ARTIST IN THE WORLD

### KEY TO LETTERS

NOP-NO OF PAINTINGS INCLUDE SMALL COMPOSITIONS DRAFTS & PRACTIC PAPERS  
 SUBJECT-THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR PAINTING SUBJECTS AND CONTENTS  
 ASPIRATION-DO YOU WANT TO BE A ARTIST OR OTHERS IN FUTURE ?  
 ORDER-FORMULAE-SHOWING CHILDREN HOW TO DRAW A SPECIFIC SUBJECT FOLLOWING A SPECIFIC FORMULA BY OPDERS

Appendix D: Paintings by Yani, Xinghai and A-Xi



Figure 77 Wang Yani, age 6, Birthday Celebration (from Jiang and Huang, 1984)



**Figure 78** Wang Yan, age 8, You Can Never Finish Painting of Mountains and Rivers in Guilin (from Ho, 1989)





Figure 79 Wang Yani, age 8, Horses (Ho, 1989)



**Figure 80** Wang Yani, age 11, Last Night I Dream I Saw Racing Egrets (from Ho, 1989)



Figure 81 Wang Yani, age 9, Autumn in a Hamlet (from Ho, 1989)



Figure 82 Wang Xinghai, age 9, Majestic Appearance (author's collection)



**Figure 83** Wang Xinghai, age 9, Rocky Forest Landscape (from author's slides collection provided by Xinghai's father Wang Tongren)



Figure 84 Wang Xinghai, age 9, Black Pony (from author's slides collection provided by Xinghai's father Wang Tongren)

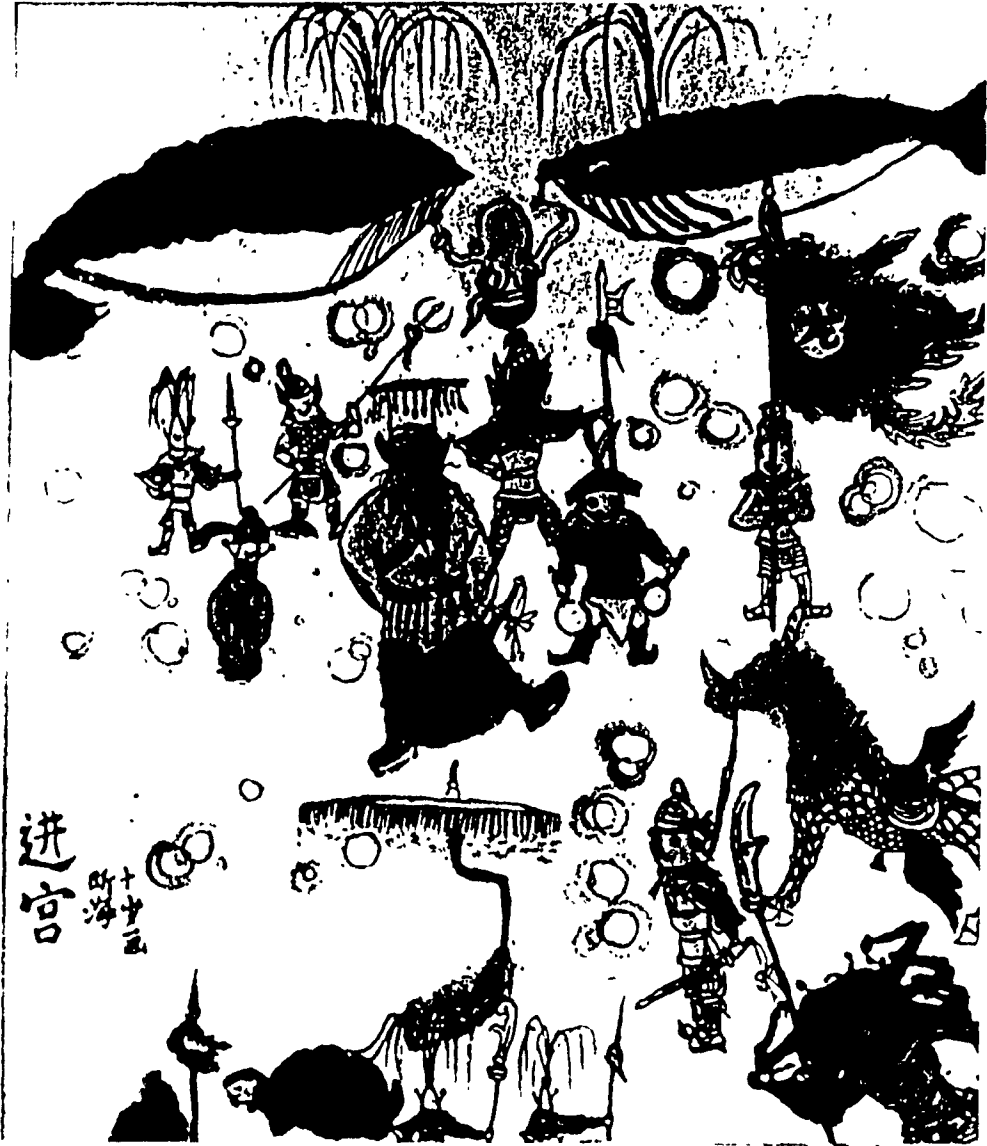


Figure 85 Wang Xinghai, age 10, King of Dragon Enter Palace (author's collection)



Figure 86 Tan Wenzi, age 11, Drunken Cat.  
(from Liu, 1987)



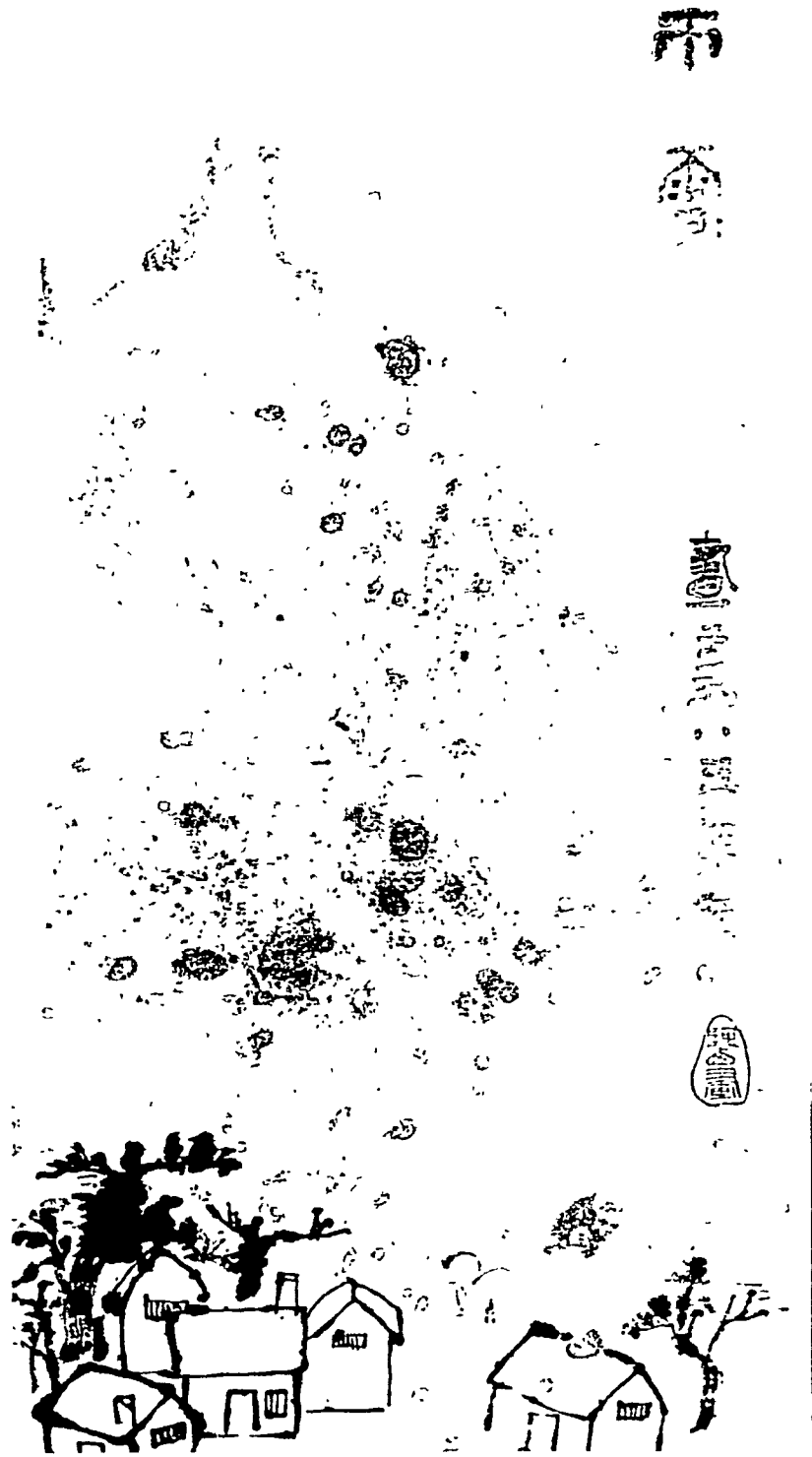


Figure 87 Tan Wenxi, age 11, Snow (from Liu, 1987, p.11)



Figure 88 Tan Wennzi, age 7, Games of Cats (from Liu, 1987, p.8)

Appendix E Order-Formula in Animal Paintings

熊 猫

1. 用叶筋笔蘸淡墨加赭石，先顿笔再画一大半圆为头。
2. 用白云笔蘸浓墨先在头右上方转笔画一圆，再在左上方画一半圆为耳朵。
3. 在头下大小横画两笔为前爪。
4. 在前爪下面面向外各画一大圆为腿。
5. 在两腿之间画两个小圆为身子。
6. 用叶筋笔蘸浓墨点出鼻子和腿，最后加竹笋，再点几个苔点。



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Figure 89 Panda's Order-Formula (from Zhao and Ge, 1988)

天 鹅

1. 白云笔蘸浓墨，先顿笔画成头，再勾出颈和胸。
2. 用大笔侧锋一笔画出身子。
3. 点出尾巴。
4. 用朱膘点出嘴和爪。
5. 涂上水纹和柳条。

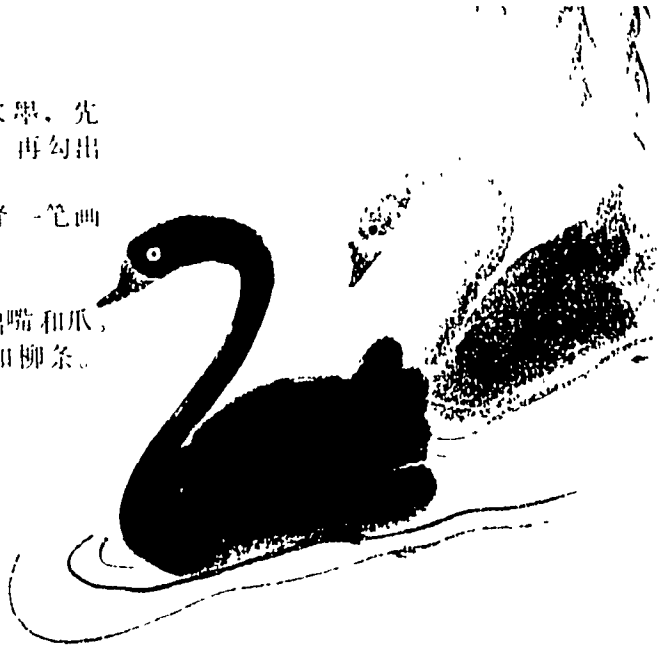
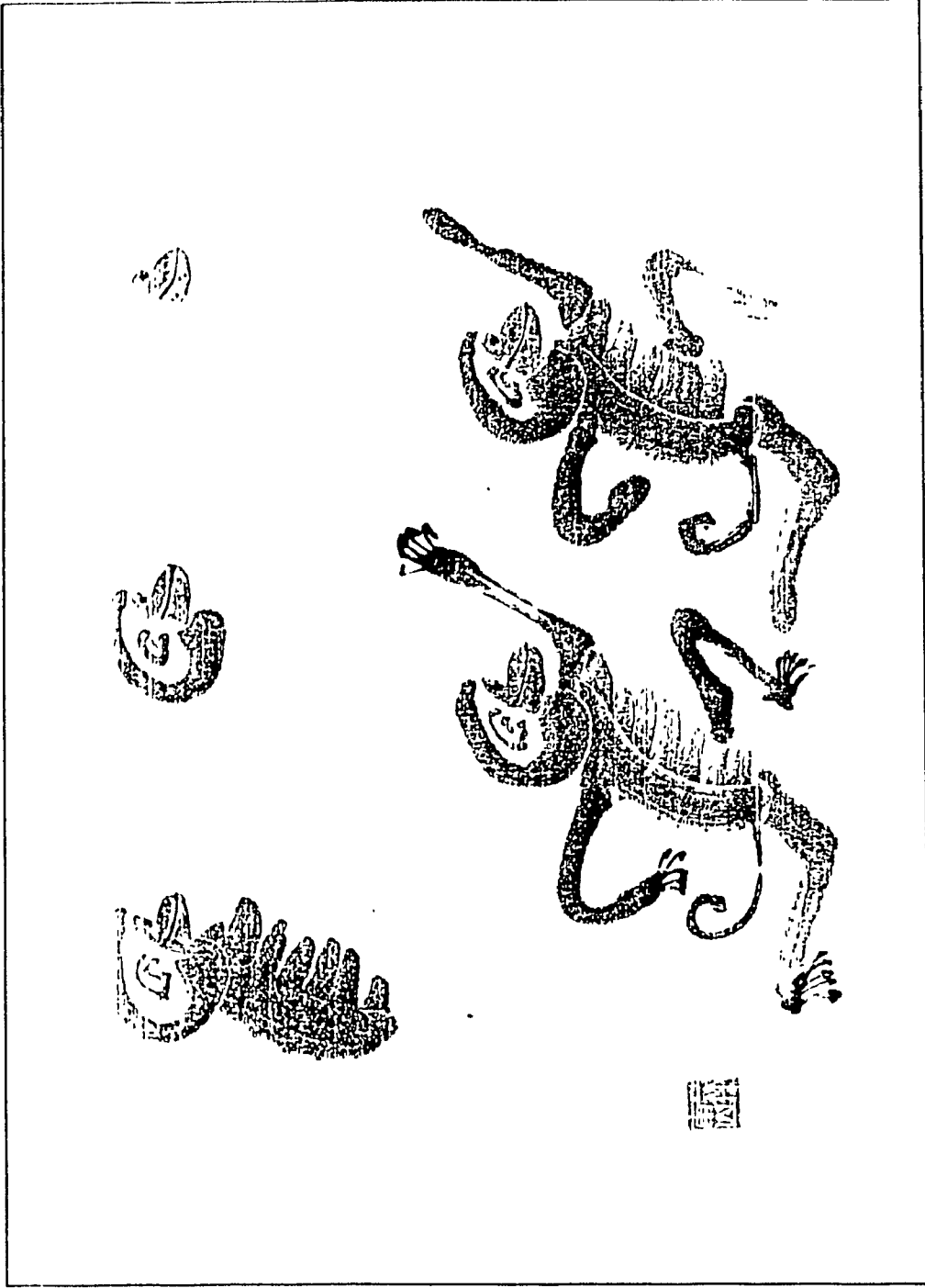


Figure 90 Swan's Order-Formula (from Zhao and Ge, 1988)



**Figure 91** Standard Yani's order-formula of Monkeys (strokes shown in sequence, right to left) Illustration by Author