



## An Intercultural Experience in European Art and Decorative Design by Chinese Students in Italy

Sha Ha

School of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou University  
Guangzhou (Canton), China

Maria Rosa Franzin

Via Belzoni, 9, Padova 35121, Italy

### ABSTRACT

The paper describes the encounter with European art and decorative design by a group of 17 Chinese art loving students during their 2019 summer vacations. According to a '*cooperative learning*' strategy, the students had been subdivided into four groups, under the guidance of four Chinese teachers, each one responsible for a single group, and the assistance of an Italian artist and an expert teacher herself. During the period of two weeks the students visited historical buildings and museums in the art cities of Venice, Padua, Florence and Rome. In the evening, in the presence of their teachers, they took part to collective discussions on the meaning and impact on them of the most significant art works they encountered during the day. They also took part, in Padua, in an animated '*active learning*' session in Jewelry Design. That intercultural experience turned out to be very stimulating for those students: part of them included the study of classical art/decorative design in their high school curricula.

**Key words:** Active and Cooperative Learning, Fine arts, Classical Art and Decorative Design.

### INTRODUCTION

Many centuries ago, the Greek, philosopher Plotinus (204/5-270 A.D.), in his *Enneads* (Taylor, 2017) introduced the idea that the beauty of art is a reflection of a higher spiritual beauty and, some few centuries later, the Chinese writer, historian and art critic Xie He (479-502 A.D.) enunciated in his book, entitled "*The Record of the Classification of Old Painters*", the '*six principles of painting*', whose most important one was the *spirit resonance* (Dillon, 2013).

In present times, the art philosopher Arthur C. Danto (1924-2013) observed that '*an artwork which is merely a square of primed canvas, or a sculpture which consists of a box of undistinguished carpentry*' possesses an '*aboutness*' which needs interpretation (Danto, 1981), and the Semiotic scholar Umberto Eco (1932-2016) added that '*each work of art is substantially open to a virtually infinite number of possible readings, each of which leads the work to relive according to a perspective, a taste, a personal performance*' (Eco, 1989)

Italy and China possess an extremely rich cultural tradition, dating back several millennia. Because of that, in present times many art-loving Chinese students are eager to come into contact with Italian art. (Goncalves, 2016).

According to official statistics (QQ news 2022), a total number of 37000 students in Guangdong Province (which includes Guangzhou) were applying for the 'Art College Entrance Exam' in 2022, an increase of 1000 students over 2021. Nationwide, among the 25 provinces with data, 22 provinces have increased the number of candidates for the examination, 15 provinces have increased by more than 10%. About one third of them adopting a "westernizing" art style.

Purpose of the present paper is to describe the intercultural experience undertaken by a group of 17 Chinese Junior High School, art loving, students (6 boys and 11 girls, in the age range of 13 to 16 years), who visited for two weeks the art cities of Venice, Padua, Florence and Rome during the Summer 2019, in the frame of a '*Summer School in Italian Art*', organized in Guangzhou (Canton, Guangdong Province, China).

In the weeks preceding their visit those students took part in a series of seminars, where the main characters of Italian art had been illustrated. The '*cooperative learning*' strategy to be followed during the visits (Keyser, 1982) consisted in the adoption of the following measures: 1) subdividing the students into four groups of 4 to 5 people, each group under the guidance of a reference teacher; 2) granting to each group of students the permission to focus their attention, during their visit of museums, churches, public palaces, on whatever artwork they would find most interesting; 3) inviting the students to write a daily *travel diary* concerning that artwork and 4) taking part in the evening, in the presence of the teachers, in collective discussions, concerning the interpretation of the artworks on which they focused their attention. An '*active learning*' session in *Jewelry Design* was also foreseen, which would take place in Padua, under the guidance of the already mentioned Italian artist and art teacher.

The paper is subdivided into the following sections: Section 1: Introduction; Section 2: Italian itinerary (2.1: Venice, 2.2: Padua, 2.3: Florence, 2.4: Rome); Section 3: An active learning experience in Jewelry Design; Section 4: Conclusions.

A References section and an Appendix, concerning the main aspects of classical Chinese painting, conclude the paper.

### ITALIAN ITINERARY

For the selection of the itinerary, with the permission of time and traffic factors, we mainly considered the importance of the cities and sites, as well as the diversity of art styles covered by the itinerary. The Italian artistic heritage encountered by the Chinese students was not limited to *Renaissance*: it spanned from the *Byzantine*, *Romanesque* and *Gothic* styles of Italian medieval monuments, to the Western painting of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, exhibited at the *Guggenheim Collection* in Venice and the contemporary art at the '*Maxxi Museum*' in Rome. The students' full immersion into the world of Italian fine arts during the short period of two weeks could appear, at a first sight, as an act of pedagogical sadism towards young students, but the following words of the art critic and poet T.S. Eliot (to be found in his essay about Dante's poetry), come to our defense, once we replace the words '*poem*', '*poetry*' with the more general term of '*artwork*':

*"It is better to feel encouraged to give yourself a cultural preparation because you enjoy a poem, rather than believe that you enjoy the poetry as a consequence of the acquisition of a cultural preparation." (Eliot, 1932).*

The *Cooperative Learning* strategy adopted in the visit to museums, churches and ancient palaces helped the students focus their attention on artworks they liked the most.

## **Venice**

Venice is built on more than 100 small islands, connected by countless bridges and crossed by a large waterway, the *Grand Canal*, which is surrounded by majestic palaces. In a few square miles of stone and brick buildings, canals and bridges, noticeable fragments of the spiritual and artistic history of the European continent can be admired, from the gorgeous Byzantine mosaics of the *St Mark's Basilica* to the *Flamboyant Gothic* exterior of the neighboring *Duke Palace*, its *High Renaissance* interior, the *Baroque* architecture of 'Our Lady of Health' Basilica and the elegant *Palladian* seat of the 'Cini Foundation', a center of learning for the history of Venetian Arts, which occupies a great part of an ancient Benedictine Cloister. The students visited also the *Venice Academy Galleries*, the *Peggy Guggenheim Collection* of 20th-century paintings, and an Artistic Glass factory in the neighboring *Murano Island*.

### ***The Academy Galleries***

This Fine Arts museum shows the historical development of the Venetian school of painting from the 14th to the 18th century: among its many artworks, let us recall the great *Polyptych of Mary's crowning*, by Paolo Veneziano (1300-1365), the *Contarini Madonna* by Giovanni Bellini (1430-1516), the *Cycle of Saint Ursula* by Vittore Carpaccio (1465-1520), the *Madonna of the Orange* by Cima da Conegliano (1459-1517), the *Storm (La Tempesta)* by Giorgione (ca. 1470-1510). In other halls are exposed the works of the Venetian masters of *High Renaissance*: the *Compassion* (1534-38) by Titian (1488/90-1576), *Adam's Temptation* by Tintoretto (1518-1594), the *Feast at Levi's House* by Paolo Veronese (1528-1588), and others.

### ***The Peggy Guggenheim Collection***

This fine collection of 20th century paintings was assembled in 1948 by the American art collector Peggy Guggenheim (1898-1976). It is located inside the unfinished "*Venier dei Leoni*" baroque palace, on the Grand Canal. It contains several famous artworks from the 20th century, as Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Marcel Duchamp (1887-1965), Marc Chagall (1887-1985), Rene Magritte (1898-1967), Alexander Calder (1898-1976), Salvador Dali (1904-1989), Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) and Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966).

## **Padua**

The ancient city of Padua was settled, some centuries B.C., by the *Paleo-Venetians*, an Indo-European nation of uncertain (possibly *Illyrian*) origin, which inhabited the Italian North-East since the Iron Age (8th century B.C.). The imposing *Romanesque* building of the ancient Justice Palace (*Palazzo della Ragione*), erected between 1172 and 1219, surrounded by the *Herbs Square* and the *Fruits Square*, and the *Astronomic Wall Clock*, designed in 1383 by the Astronomy professor Giovanni Dondi Dell'Orologio, characterize the historic city center. The 14th century was the golden period of the city state of Padua, ruled by the *Carraresi* family. The city hosted the Florentine artist Giotto di Bondone (1267-1337), the innovator of European painting and, one century later, the Florentine sculptor Donatello (1386-1466), invited to

Padua by the new city rulers, the Venetians: Donatello's equestrian statue of *Gattamelata* (a famous general of the Venetian army), cast in bronze, stands in front of the Gothic "*St Anthony Basilica*", dating back to the 13th century.

### ***The Scrovegni Chapel***

The *Scrovegni Chapel* is a small church from the early 14th century, which contains a *fresco* cycle by Giotto and his team, 38 murals illustrating the life of Jesus' mother, Mary, and her son, painted on the two side walls. On the wall opposing the entrance to the church, there is a triumphal arch, on which is depicted the *Annunciation* to Mary by an angel and, above them, the image of Jesus with angels and saints. On the entrance wall there is a large fresco of the *Last Judgement*. In the lower part of the lateral walls, monochrome panels depict the personification of the *Seven Virtues* (*Prudence, Fortitude, Temperance, Justice, Faith, Hope, Charity*) and, opposing them, that of the *Seven Vices*. On the vaulted ceiling, a starry sky, with holy images of saints and prophets, dominates the scene. The frescoes in the Scrovegni Chapel have been always considered an important milestone in the development of western painting.

### ***The University of Padua***

Founded in 1222 by the initiative of the city's *Guilds of Students* and the *Guild of Teachers*, the University of Padua is one of the oldest higher education institutions in Europe. Over the centuries, to the former juridical and theological studies were added Medicine, Astronomy, Grammar, Rhetoric, and Philosophy. The *Bo' Palace*, the present seat of the University's Rectorate, was built in 1547 by the Renaissance architect Andrea Moroni (ca.1490-1560), who also planned the building in town of the *University Botanical Garden*, as well as the *Santa Giustina Basilica*. During the 15-17th centuries the University greatly contributed to the European '*scientific revolution*', through the outstanding research work of the anatomist Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564), the anatomist and botanist Gabriele Falloppio (1523-1562) and the astronomer, physicist, and mathematician Galileo Galilei (1564-1642). The *Anatomical Theatre*, built inside the *Bo' Palace* by the anatomist Hieronymus Fabricius d'Acquapendente (1533-1619), is worth to be mentioned.

### ***The Botanical Garden***

The *University Botanical Garden*, built in 1545 (thoroughly renovated in 2014), is the oldest in Europe. The Chinese students visited it in the morning of their second day in Padua and in the early afternoon they actively participated for several hours in a *Jewelry Design* session, as illustrated in Section 3.

### ***The Benedictine Abbey of Praglia and its Laboratory of Ancient Books Restoration***

This Praglia Abbey was founded in 1080 at the feet of the Euganean Hills, some 12 kilometers from Padua. The Abbey's church, dedicated to the *Assumption of Mary* (*Santa Maria Assunta*), was designed in 1490 by the *Early Renaissance* architect Tullio Lombardo (1460-1532). The convent's 16th-century library has been converted into a repository for the *National Monument Library* of Italy, and currently houses approximately 120,000 ancient volumes. The Abbey hosts a laboratory for the restoration of ancient books (handwritten sheepskin parchments included). The Chinese students visited the Abbey and attended a lesson and a demonstration in book restoration in the afternoon of their third day of staying in Padua.

## **Florence**

Florence was established in 59 B.C. by Julius Caesar. During medieval times it became a flourishing city-state, which earned its wealth from the wool trade and banking. In the 13th century it was the birthplace of Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), the author of the *Divine Comedy*, and of the painter Giotto di Bondone (1267-1333), who frescoed in Padua the *Scrovegni Chapel*. Thanks to the munificence of its rulers, the *Medici*, during the second half of the 14th century the city became the melting pot of an extraordinary group of artists, who gave birth to *Renaissance*.

### ***The Uffizi Galleries***

The “*Uffizi Galleries*” is an art museum containing a large collection of Florentine *Renaissance* paintings. The treasures of the gallery include *Sandro Botticelli's Spring (La primavera)* (the late 1470s - early 1480s) and *The Birth of Venus (La Nascita di Venere)* (mid-1480s), Leonardo Da Vinci's *Annunciation (L'Annunciazione)* (1472-75) and the *Three Kings' Worship (L'adorazione dei Magi)* (1481-82), Michelangelo's *Holy Family (La Sacra Famiglia)* (1503/04), Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (1532-34), Raphael's *Self-portrait* (1504-06) and *The Virgin of the Canary (Madonna del Cardellino)* (1506).

### ***The Pitti Palace and the Boboli Garden***

The *Pitti Palace*, erected in 1487, is one of the most magnificent *Renaissance* buildings of Florence, erected in 1487 and expanded in the 16th century. It hosts the “*Palatine Gallery*”, which contains many works of famous *Renaissance* artists, including Giorgione (*The ages of man*), Titian (*Christ the Redeemer, Mary Magdalene*), Raphael (*The Virgin of the Chair* and *The Lady with a Veil*), Caravaggio (*Sleeping Cupid* and *Fra Antonio Martelli*), Peter Paul Rubens (*The Holy Family*). Behind the courtyard, there is a wide garden, where the students relaxed after their visit to the museums.

## **Rome**

Rome, founded during the 8th century B.C. by the Indo-European tribe of *Latins*, became over the centuries the capital city of a powerful empire, which stretched from Britannia to part of Central Europe, North Africa and the Near East, including Egypt, Syria and Palestine. With the advent of Christendom and the fall of the western part of the empire in 476 A.D., the Bishop of Rome (the *Pope*) became the spiritual heir of the Roman Emperor, administering the *Church State*, which included the city of Rome and a strip of territory stretching from the Tyrrhenian to the Adriatic Sea. In 1870 the newly established Kingdom of Italy conquered the Church State and, in 1929, made an agreement with the Pope, according to which a small enclave in Rome constituted the independent *Vatican State*, ruled by the Church. To it belong the *St Peter Basilica*, the *Sistine Chapel*, the *Vatican Museums* and the *Popes' Palaces* in Castel Gandolfo.

### ***St Peter Basilica***

The *St Peter Basilica*, which hosts the body of the first Bishop of Rome, was built during the *High Renaissance* and the *Baroque* periods by initiative of several Popes, starting with Julius II, to replace a previous church built the Emperor Constantine, in the 4th century A.D. Several architects participated in its building: among them Donato Bramante (1444-1514), Antonio da Sangallo the Younger (1484-1546), Raphael (1483-1520), Michelangelo (1475-1564), Carlo Maderno (1556-1629) and Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680). The Basilica has a *cruciform plan (Latin cross)*, while the early designs were for a centrally planned structure, with a central

space dominated by one of the largest domes in the world, with a diameter of 41.43 meters and maximum height of 136.57 meters from the floor to the top. This dome was initiated by Michelangelo in 1547 and brought to completion by Giacomo della Porta (1532-1602) and Carlo Fontana (1634/38-1714). The Swiss-Italian architect Carlo Maderno elongated the Basilica through a nave with huge, paired pilasters and a decorated facade with a spacious entrance hall, with columns. Bernini let a great baldachin be built over the main altar, supported by four twisted, bronze columns. He also designed a huge double columned gallery embracing St Peter Square, with an Egyptian obelisk in the middle and two great fountains at the sides.

### ***The Sistine Chapel and the Vatican Museums***

Michelangelo painted the greatest part of the “*Sistine Chapel*”, where the Pope is elected by a secret ballot of high clergy bishops, the *cardinals*, between 1508 and 1512. He painted the ceiling with figures of *Prophets*, the *Creation, Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden* and the *Great Flood*. Between 1535 and in 1541 he painted also, on the western wall (besides the altar) the *Second coming of Christ on the day of the Last Judgment*, as described in the *Revelation of St John*. High on the wall is the figure of Christ, with the saints clustered in groups around him. At the bottom left of the painting the dead are raised from their graves and ascend to be judged. To the right are those who are assigned to Hell and are dragged down by demons.

Pope Julius II (1443-1512) established in the early 16th century the “*Vatican Museums*”, a museal complex comprising the *Pinacoteca (Picture Gallery*, which contains masterworks of Italian artists from the 12th century to *High Renaissance*), the *Pio-Clementine Museum* (which contains the papal collections of classical Greek and Roman sculptures) the *Gregorian Egyptian Museum*, the *Gallery of Geographic Maps*, the four *Raphael Rooms* with 16 artist’s frescoes, among which *The School of Athens*, *The Donation of Constantine* and *The Vision of the Cross*, composed from 1509 to 1520.

### ***The “Maxxi” Museum of Contemporary Art***

The “*Museum of Contemporary Art*”, also called *Maxxi*, was designed in 2010 by the star architect Zaha Hadid (1950-2016). It lights the static atmosphere of the Roman historical center with its dynamic design and contains works which entranced the young Chinese visitors.

### ***Castel Gandolfo***

Half an hour's drive from Rome leads to Castel Gandolfo, a quiet Italian town, perched on the Albano Hills and overlooking the Albano Lake, surrounded by lush olive groves and vineyards. This place was, until recently, the Pope's summer residence: the *Apostolic Palace* (a 17th-century Renaissance building designed by Carlo Maderno), the adjoining *Villa Barberini* and other buildings (the *Pontifical Astronomic Observatory* included), belong to the Vatican State and enjoy extraterritorial rights.

### ***An active learning experience in Jewelry Design***

As for their *Decorative Design* session in Padua, it took place in Padua by initiative of an expert Italian *Jewelry Design* lady professor. It lasted an entire day: in the morning the student visited in her company the University Botanical Garden, taking pictures of a great variety of flowers and plants at their will and, in the early afternoon, they met again the Italian professor, in the premises of a municipal educational center, to take part in the Jewelry Design session, which

lasted over three hours. That experience made each student the enthusiastic creator of his own artwork.

The following is a report by the Italian art teacher who organized that *Jewelry Design* session: *"In the morning of their second day in Padua, with the Chinese students we visited the Botanical Garden complex. While there, they took pictures of the ancient building, its modern additions and its magnificent garden, with flowers and leaves of the most varied species of plants and trees. Art and nature joined, offering the right solicitation for the theme in jewelry design that would be proposed to them in the afternoon. After a lunch break, the students met at the working tables in the rooms of a sociocultural center provided by the Municipality of Padua and actively participated for several hours to a lesson in Jewelry Design. In the initial phase of the lesson, I asked the students to pay attention to my indications for a good display of their graphic elaborations, underlining the fact that in any case, whether in a classroom or in a workshop, this operational methodology of the design process should be constantly followed:*

- 1. analyze the images you collected during the visit to the Botanical Garden; choose the image you like the most*
- 2. pay attention to the shape of the subject, the color and the context in which it is inserted*
- 3. focus your attention on the subject, imagining it in different colors from the original, so as to make your interpretation more personal*
- 4. follow the compositional lines of the form, to discover the geometry it contains"*

Another important indication was that the student should take into account the combination of aesthetic needs and the constraints imposed by the structural components, that is, check the feasibility of the conceived object.

Following this path, the students were able to develop an appropriate modular form and create a cardboard model, having been provided with the materials to be used (drawing pads, drawings and colored pencils, white cardboard, glue, brass / copper wire, tweezers), freely expressing their observation skills. They went from drawing to coloring; some of them utilized the tempera technique. A module born from the shape of a particular leaf, a large-sized flower, or the shape of an old tree, could give rise to several elements, necessary to create the model of a decorative art object. Redesigned in cardboard, a module (made up of two overlapping layers, spaced with small pieces of rubber tubing to render the three-dimensional of the object) would be finally reproduced in several copies, joined by metal wire, to produce the chosen necklace or bracelet, at the ends of which the hook was formed with the pliers for closing.

The teacher followed each of them, giving them indications individually, in such a way as to make her/him able to obtain different models, testing a variety of possibilities. necklaces, brooches, or bracelets. The teaching method was the same followed at school during a regular lesson. The teacher was amazed at seeing the total commitment of these occasional students in creating their final art objects. Throughout the afternoon, the students remained focused on their intense work. In this way various very well characterized models were produced. The presentation of the works followed, each one describing his chosen path, from the choice of the subject to the final phase. The young Chinese students tried their best to communicate with the teacher in English, and their communication difficulties had been always overcome by the better translation of other companions and also by the exhibition of the drawings, that spoke the language of the image. (Figures 1-3).

At the end of that intense ‘active learning’ session the Italian art teacher declared the following:

*“I have always been convinced that young students are a resource of ideas and productive fantasies, just give them directions and let their creativity free. I confirmed this a few years ago with my work in a class at the Beijing Institute for Fashion Technology and for having taught more than forty years at the P. Selvatico School of Art in Padua.”*



**Figure 1**

**Figure 2**



**Figure 3**

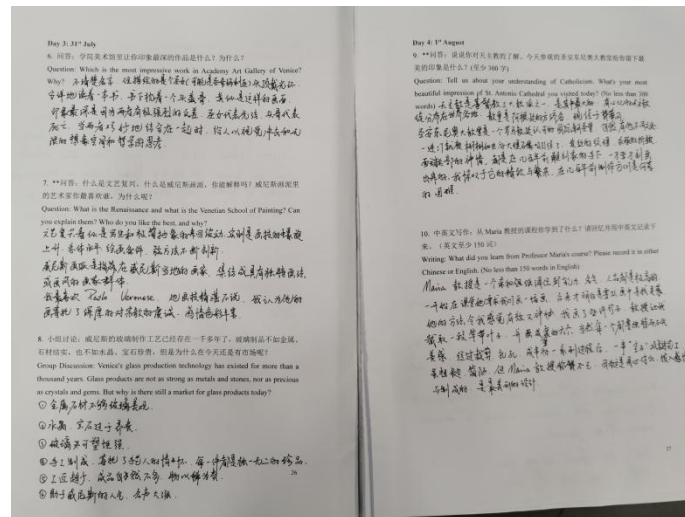


Figure 4  
Figures 1-3: At the Jewelry Design session  
Figure 4: The student's diary

## CONCLUSIONS

The *cooperative learning* strategy put into practice by the teachers who guided the young Chinese visitors was very successful as evidenced by the animated, collective evening discussion among students and teachers and by the texts of their travel diaries. It was hard for them, if not impossible, to express with adequate words the reason for their choices. Among the Italian classical painters, they appreciated the most the *Cycle of Saint Ursula* by Vittore Carpaccio, exhibited in the “Academy Galleries” in Venice, as well as Giotto’s frescos of the “Scrovegni Chapel” in Padua, Botticelli’s *Spring* and *The Birth of Venus* in the *Uffizi Galleries*. As for architecture, they were greatly impressed by the geometrical structure of the facade of *St Anthony Basilica* in Padua, the ornate facade and the dome of Florence’s Cathedral and the Giotto’s bell tower, the grandiose dome of *St Peter’s Basilica* and the colonnaded *St Peter Square* in Rome, with the Egyptian obelisk in the middle of the square. As for sculpture, Michelangelo’s ‘*Pietà*’ in the interior of St Peter Basilica and the *Trevi’s Fountain*, where sculpture and architecture join together.

The first contacts of those students with western contemporary art at the “MAXXI Museum” in Rome, elicited also greatest interest in them. This art was easier to be understood by them. The same was true for the *Jewelry Design* session.

The *active learning* session in Jewelry Design met in enthusiastic favor of all students, without exceptions: it was, without any doubt, the most successful event of their Italian visit. This was confirmed by the great interest and enthusiasm they showed in visiting afterwards the “*Silver Section*” of Palazzo Pitti, in Florence, where several artworks of their Italian professor were also exhibited. One student later wrote her feelings about the session (Figures 4 ):

*“Professor Maria is friendly and modest, and her teaching method makes me feel mysterious and effective. In class, we were asked to draw the plants we visited in the botanical garden. It was not until later that I realized that it was for us to find inspiration..... A string of gem necklaces was finally completed. Although rough and*

*crude, Professor Maria praised it very much because it was made with my heart and feelings, and it was the most beautiful design."*

Back to China, some of the students decided to attend drawing and painting lessons in their hometown, in view of their admission to Art High Schools.

## References

- Danto, A. (1981). *The transfiguration of the commonplace- A philosophy of Art*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, U.S.A.
- Dillon, M. (2013). *China: A Cultural and Historical Dictionary*. Routledge, Abingdon, U.K.
- Eco, U. (1989). *The Open Work*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, U.S.A.
- Eliot, T.S. (1932). *Selected essays, 1917- 1932*. Faber & Faber, London, UK.
- Gia, K (2021). 合作学习在艺术设计教学中的运用分析 (Application of cooperative learning in art design teaching). *Inspection(大观)*. Vol 5, p121-122, P.R. China
- Gombrich, E.H. (1972). *The Story of Art*. 12<sup>th</sup> Edition, Phaidon Press Ltd, New York, U.S.A.
- Goncalves, S. (2016). We and They. In: S. Goncalves and S. Majhanovic (Eds): *Art and Intercultural Dialogue*, 3-23. Sense Publishers, Rotterdam, The Netherlands.
- Keyser, M. (2000). Active learning and cooperative learning: Understanding the difference and using both styles effectively. *Research Strategies* 17(1):35-44.
- QQ news. (2022). <https://xw.qq.com/cmsid/20220607A0270900>
- Taylor, T. (2017). *Collected Writings of Plotinus-The intelligible beauty*. Volume III of the Thomas Taylor Series. Philaletheians, U.K

## APPENDIX: SOME ASPECTS OF CLASSICAL CHINESE PAINTING

China has a very old, continuous tradition in painting: it dates back to the Stone Age, to the 10th millennium B.C., where it mostly consisted of simple pottery and sculptures. It later developed into architecture, sculpture, bronzes, mural and paper painting, decorated ceramics, carved lacquer, decorated silk textiles, and others. As for painting, the writer, historian and art critic Xie He (谢赫)(479-502 A.D.) in his book "*The Record of the Classification of Old Painters*" defined the "Six principles of painting" (绘画六法, *Huìhuà Liùfǎ*) (Dillon, 2013): the most important principle was 'Spirit resonance' (气韵生动 *Qìyùn shēngdòng*). The other 5 elements that define a painting are:

1. "Bone Method" (*Gufa* 骨法) or the way of using the brush (*Yongbi* 用笔). This refers not only to texture and brush stroke, but to the close link between handwriting and personality. In his day, the art of calligraphy was inseparable from painting
2. "Correspondence to the Object" (*yingwu* 应物) or the depicting of form (*xiangxing* 象形), which would include shape and line
3. "Suitability to Type" (*suilei* 随类) or the application of color (*fucai* 赋彩), including *value* and *tone*
4. "Division and Planning" (*jingying* 经营) or placing and arrangement (*weizhi* 位置), corresponding to composition, space and depth
5. "Transmission by copying" (*chuanyi* 传移) or the copying of models (*moxie* 模写), not only from life but also the works of antiquity

Two main techniques characterized traditional Chinese painting: 'Gongbi' (工笔 *meticulous painting*) and 'Shuǐ-mò' (水墨 *water and ink*). The first was a careful realistic painting, on paper or silk, done with a brush dipped in black ink or colored pigments on paper scrolls, usually illustrating figural or narrative subjects, which first developed during the Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.). 'Shuǐ-mò', on the contrary, was a black ink wash painting using various tonalities (going from deep black to silver gray) and shading (achieved by varying the ink density): it developed first during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.). In both cases, the main subject was 'landscape painting'. A special position is reserved for 'Buddhist wall painting', as practiced in the *Mogao Caves*, near the ancient oasis town of Dunhuang (on the western edge of the Gobi Desert) from the 4th to the 14th century A.D. Beginning with the 'New Culture Movement', in the early 20th century, Chinese artists started to adopt western styles. With the advent of the People's Republic, in 1949, they were encouraged to follow 'social realism' in their works but, after the 'Hundred Flowers Campaign' (1956-57), traditional Chinese painting experienced a significant revival, which continued after the period of 'Cultural Revolution' (1966-1976). The artist Wu Guanzhong (1919-2010) is widely recognized as the founder of modern Chinese painting, combining in his artworks the Chinese tradition with western *Impressionism*.