Chinese Painting & Calligraphy

Overview

Artist
Yang Hui

Title
A Branch of the Cold Season

Dynasty
Ming dynasty (1368-1644)

Period
15th century

Format
Inscriptions And Seals

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Inscription

Mr. Hong Suchu (Hong Chun, 15th c.) is about to take a trip to Qimen (Fujian). His friend, saddened by his departure, has painted a picture of A Branch of the Cold Season, as a present for him. This is not only an expression of their inseparable friendship, but also a sincere wish [for the top honor in examination] that someday Mr. Hong will win the prize of the ‘Earliest Spring’ and be ‘champion of all flowers.’ May Mr. Hong treasure it!
Yang Hui's A Branch of the Cold Season: An Early Ming Ink Painting of Flowering Plum

Mimi Gardner Gates

In Flowering-Plum village at the foot of Luofu Mountain,
The flowering plums' bones are of jade and snow, and their souls of ice.
In their multitude the blossoms seem moonlight hanging from the trees,
In their brightness they are alone with Orion on the horizon at dusk.

By Su Shi (1037–1101)

Ubiquitous in Chinese painting, poetry, ornament, and in nature, the flowering plum (mei hua梅花), is uncontested as China’s favorite blossom. Over the centuries it has acquired a wealth of meaningful associations, not only foretelling the welcome coming of spring but also identified with understated elegance, the fragility and transience of female beauty, and the solitary enjoyment of nature by the noble recluse, detached from worldly pursuits. These are but two of many concepts which over time became indelibly associated with the blossoming plum.

While the blossoms are short-lived, the aged branches and hoary trunk suggest longevity, an auspicious association which also accrued to the Three Friends of the Cold Season. Joined with evergreen pine and bamboo, the flowering plum constitutes the Three Friends of the Cold Season (suthan sanyou 梅蘭竹菊), which, in addition to longevity, symbolize the integrity and high-mindedness of the Confucian scholar and his ability to endure adversity in difficult times.

Not only Chinese but also Japanese and Korean artists have expressed enthusiasm for the flowering plum, its auspiciousness and distinctive beauty.
Wen Zhengming
文徵明

Title
Poem for the painting "Sunset over the Jin and Jiao Mountains"

Dynasty
Ming dynasty (1368-1644)

Period
16th century

Format
Handscroll

Medium
Ink on paper

Inscriptions And Seals

Essay

Questions For Thought

Comments

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Bibliography