

Pigments and Coloration in the Paintings of Giuseppe Castiglione

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Abstract

Ming and Qing Dynasties, especially from Kangxi's reign, saw the arrival to China of many missionaries and, with them, a number of elements and materials of Western crafts and arts. Among such imports, the enamel and painting pigments used inside and outside the court have been a subject of academic interest and discussion. As the use of a new material or new pigment may bring a new look to artwork, a study into the relationship between coloration and pigments of an artwork may lead to a better understanding of changes in the aspect of artistic styles. Despite a number of previous studies on the application of such pigments with literature researches, mainly through the Crafts Archives of the imperial workshops, further conclusion has been difficult to reach without physical examination of actual examples.

Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766), a.k.a. Lang Shining, was an Italian missionary born in Milan. He arrived in China in 1715 during Kangxi's reign in Qing dynasty and served as court painter for Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong in the next 51 years. Castiglione was a key person in eastern transition of western painting in Qing dynasty. In addition to Western perspective and shadowing techniques, Castiglione also adopted a different coloration from that of traditional Chinese paintings. The impact of pigments is a subject that can not be ignored in a study related to the eastern transition of western painting and the Sino-Western cultural exchanges. What exactly are the differences between his usage of pigment and that of traditional Chinese paintings? Having studied Western painting in his early years, Castiglione was certainly fairly familiar with materials used in Western painting since seventeenth century. Did he apply pigments imported from the West to his court works? Were any of the pigments used for enamel as well? To answer these questions, it is essential to scientifically identify the pigments actually used in his paintings.

In order to identify the pigments applied in Castiglione's works and to apprehend his coloration techniques, in this study, several non-destructive analytical techniques, including multi-spectral imaging, XRF and Micro-Raman spectroscopy, etc., are employed to investigate a number of Castiglione's paintings. In addition, the application of pigments in the

Qing court in eighteenth century is furthered explored based on the analytical results and literature reviews.

Key words: Giuseppe Castiglione, pigments, coloration, Raman microscopy, X-Ray
Fluorescence (XRF)