

**THE TEXTUAL MODE OF AUTUMNAL IMAGERY  
OF CLASSICAL CHINESE PAINTING  
FROM THE BOHDAN AND VARVARA KHANENKO  
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART COLLECTION**

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The article studies the semiotics of inscriptions on works of classical Chinese painting. The case study was performed on seven artworks from the Bohdan and Varavara Khanenko National Museum of Art (herein the Khanenko Museum). To analyze the image-text relationship in classical Chinese painting the author applies the contemporary Western multimodality theory and the traditional Chinese criteria for evaluating an artwork regarding its harmonious combination of painting, poetry and calligraphy. Special attention is paid to the linguistic phenomena of polysemy and homophony, which often underlie the symbolism of Chinese art. Quotations from classical poetry on artworks analyzed regarding associations they evoke in audience based on their intellectual, emotional and sensory experiences. Extralinguistic factors, namely the influence of philosophy and religion on forming the Chinese artistic tradition and the history of the collection of Chinese art in the Khanenko Museum are also considered. The interpretation of extralinguistic factors and the application of various approaches to the analysis of works of Chinese classical painting allow concluding that in the works from the museum collection the text mode plays an important role in conveying the authors' messages encoded in symbolism of images. The semantics of the image mode and text mode mutually complement, creating meanings more complex than the original meaning of the image that serves as an anchorage of the image-text system. The curator's translation and commentary overcomes cultural barriers and effectively engages the audience in interacting with the artworks. The semantics of classical Chinese painting verbalized as a curator's narration transform into the textual mode. Museum programs for different audiences, in particular people with sensory impairments, have the potential to convey decoded meanings not only in the form of curatorial lectures, but also in more avant-garde modes of presentation.

**Key words:** Chinese language, classical Chinese painting, classical Chinese poetry, multimodality, semiotics, cross-cultural communication, autumn.

**ТЕКСТОВИЙ МОДУС ОБРАЗІВ ОСЕНІ У ТВОРАХ КЛАСИЧНОГО  
КИТАЙСЬКОГО ЖИВОПІСУ З КОЛЕКЦІЇ НАЦІОНАЛЬНОГО МУЗЕЮ  
МИСТЕЦТВ ІМЕНІ БОГДАНА ТА ВАРВАРИ ХАНЕНКІВ**

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Статтю присвячено семіотиці написів на творах класичного китайського живопису. Цільове дослідження виконано на вибірці з колекції Національного музею мистецтв імені Богдана та Варвари Ханенків (тут і далі – Музей Ханенків). Вибірку звужено до семи творів, об'єднаних темою осені. Для аналізу зв'язку між зображенням і текстом

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на творах класичного китайського живопису автор послуговується як сучасною західною теорією мультимодальності, так і традиційними китайськими критеріями оцінювання мистецького твору з погляду гармонійного поєднання в ньому живопису, поезії та каліграфії. Особливу увагу приділено лінгвістичним явищам полісемії та омофонії, що часто лежать в основі символіки китайського мистецтва. Цитати з класичної поезії, що фігурують у написах на багатьох творах живопису, розглядаються з погляду асоціацій, які вони мають викликати у глядача на основі його інтелектуального, емоційного й навіть сенсорного досвіду. Ураховано також екстралінгвістичні фактори, як-от вплив філософсько-релігійних учень Китаю на формування його мистецької традиції та історія колекції китайського мистецтва в Музеї Ханенків. Інтерпретація екстралінгвістичних факторів і застосування різних підходів до аналізу творів китайського класичного живопису дає змогу зробити висновок, що у творах з музейної збірки текстовий модус відіграє важливу роль у розумінні повідомлень глядачам через символіку зображень. Семантика модусу зображень і семантика модусу тексту можуть взаємно доповнювати одна одну, створюючи нові смисли, значно складніші за початковий смисл зображення, що є опірним елементом у системі зображення – текст у класичному китайському живописі. Переклад і коментар куратора щодо образів та їхніх значень долає культурні бар'єри й ефективно залучає аудиторію до взаємодії з мистецькими творами. Семантика твору класичного китайського живопису, прочитана куратором, вербалізується й перетворюється на модус тексту. Музейні програми, пристосовані для різних аудиторій, зокрема людей із сенсорними порушеннями, мають потенціал транслювати розшифровані смисли не лише у вигляді кураторських лекцій, але й у більш сміливих формах представлення, що можуть залучати менш традиційні модуси.

**Ключові слова:** китайська мова, китайський класичний живопис, китайська класична поезія, мультимодальність, семіотика, міжкультурна комунікація, осінь.

### Introduction

Researching and representing traditional Chinese paintings in museum collections outside China has always been challenging yet rewarding. This article proposes a case study of a group of artworks in the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum of Art (herein the Khanenko Museum) in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Both research and representation can benefit from applying various analytical approaches to the same object. Following the Kress and van Leeuwen classification of text and image relationship, we will consider the multimodal aspect of the artworks, focusing on the textual mode of an image-text system [Kress, van Leeuwen 2021]. An original Chinese system of evaluation of images, poetry, and calligraphy will also be taken into account [Murck, Fong 1991].

The group of paintings from the museum's collection is narrowed down to pieces featuring an autumnal theme in both images and accompanying texts. This subject was chosen because of all the seasonal themes revealed in the Khanenko Museum collection its nuances are represented the most extensively. These nuances reflect extralinguistic factors, namely philosophical and religious ideas that made contemplating seasonal changes an important part of Chinese culture. These ideas and practices are fully reflected in traditional arts.

The sophisticated imagery of the painting, accompanying poetry, and other texts inscribed on paintings can be translated into the curator's narration for a non-Chinese audience. This translation of imagery makes the messages from the artworks' authors relevant to contemporary audiences, facilitating diachronic communication through the artworks. This paper aims to reveal the maximum number of messages encoded in each painting and to go in-depth with the nature of these messages.

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Lecture programs at the Khanenko Museum allow sharing the text and image analysis findings with the museum's patrons. A curator's talk is also a multimodal event since it implies showing images, commenting, and interacting with the audience [Kress, van Leeuwen 2021]. This brings us back to the modes of image and text. Yet broadening the modes of the said programs is also worth considering. The readings of sensory experiences suggested by images and text may be represented using other modes: i.e. the olfactory stimuli mentioned in an inscription on a painting may be proposed directly as an olfactory sample. The findings of this analysis will be evaluated from the point of view of relevance to inclusivity programs.

**Extralinguistic factors. Specifics of the Chinese cultural tradition**

Inscription is an important part of a traditional Chinese painting. It is often regarded as one of the “three perfections” 三絕 sānjié of a painting. Historical accounts associate this synergy of mediums with three talents of Zheng Qian 鄭虔 who was active in the times of Tang dynasty as described in Extensive records of the Taiping era (978) by Li Fang 李昉 (925–996) [太平廣記. 畫三. 鄭廣文]. In creating an artwork, one should seek perfection in all three of mediums: the image, accompanying verse, and inscriptions. This system doesn't contradict the contemporary Western developments in the field of multimodality. It just suggests a shift in hierarchy: while Western scholars of the late 20<sup>th</sup> – early 21<sup>st</sup> century consider the font size as one of the text features [Kress, van Leeuwen 2021], the Chinese tradition emphasizes that the visual features of the text are independent characteristics, an entity comparable to a mode in the Kress and van Leeuwen theory. In this regard, European scholars would call the text-image relation of Chinese painting counterpointing.

It is also widely known that many famous paintings were inspired by poetry [Bush 2014]. The mutual relay of senses encoded in painting and poetry got them a name of “sister arts” [Pan 1996].

However, we would like to claim that the purpose of the paintings mounted as hanging scrolls influences the hierarchy of a text-image relation within a painting. Here it is valid to apply the term “ideological analytical dimension”. These are sociocultural and historical factors influencing the production and distribution of multimodal creations [Serafini 2015]. Hanging scrolls, no matter how sophisticated in imagery or style, are interior decor first and foremost. Seen from a certain distance, they attract the viewer with the biggest element of the whole composition. If the image is bigger than the text, then the image is perceived as an anchorage for further semantic developments reflected in texts within a painting. And vice versa: an image smaller than the text may be perceived as an illustration secondary to the text. This way, the information value of a painting is dictated by the placement of elements [Van Leeuwen, Kress 1995].

In Chinese painting, the textual mode includes inscriptions within a painting or on colophons, and characters of seal prints. However, images, especially homophony-based visual metaphors can be verbalized and thus translated into texts.

Another prominent feature of Chinese painting is the colossal influence of religious and philosophical ideas on genres and styles of painting. Synaesthesia of seasons, their governing spirits, and spatial projections into the material world was first mentioned in the Hainanzi chapter Tianwenxun 淮南子. 天文训 (Western Han, 206 BCE–9 CE). The Taoist teaching not only influenced the scientific approaches of ancient scholars but also instilled a synaesthesia-like perception of time and space in various aspects of life [Jiajia, Haosheng 2022]. The Confucian attitude of vigorously creating and using metaphors was reflected in literature [Yu 1981]. These phenomena gave momentum to developing even

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more sophisticated imagery tightly associated with seasons. The five elements system, along with Confucian metaphors and Buddhist parables are considered extralinguistic factors that influence the process of watching nature and perceiving the course of human life. These observations later resulted in various artistic creations. The amalgamated results of these influences are revealed in each unique image-text system of a painting.

Another feature of Chinese painting is its temporal development. Even after the author(s) had completed their work by marking a painting with their seal(s) [Li T. Y. 1962], the new generations of the painting's owners might add their colophons and seal prints thus adding to initial artistic messages and increasing the historical value of an artwork.

These important extralinguistic factors and the historical settings in which the artworks were created and existed should also be considered in analyzing the messages of these artworks' author(s). Various modes, mediums, and symbols of Chinese traditional painting turn contemplating works of art into reading their encoded messages by recognizing the textual and pictorial clues [Hearn 2008].

As this case study will reveal, the meanings created may go far beyond the meanings engrained in a principal image. They may reverberate multiple times with the object of a painting, thus creating complex counterpointing among modes and semantics.

#### **The Khanenko Museum Chinese painting collection**

Before proceeding to the analysis itself it is important to provide a note on the history and specifics of the Chinese paintings collection at the Khanenko Museum. It shall disclose some extralinguistic factors that testify to the temporal existence of the artworks and their role in cross-cultural communication.

The Khanenko Museum possesses a big and diverse collection of Asian art items. The Chinese art collection, representing the elitist material culture like bronze vessels and paintings on silk, along with folk customs such as New Year pictures, constitutes a significant part of the museum's Asian collection. Within this array of miscellaneous artefacts, there are 350 scrolls and folios of traditional Chinese paintings of all significant genres and styles [Bilenko, Lohvyn 2017].

The history of Chinese painting in the Khanenko Museum collection dates back to May 1914. One of the museum founders, a lawyer and philanthropist Bohdan Khanenko bought two scrolls of Chinese paintings at an auction held at Hotel Druod in Paris on the 8th of May, 1914. At that point, the museum was a private collection of the Khanenko family.

It took a few decades and many changes in the practices of the establishment until the arrival of new Chinese paintings at the state-run Soviet museum based on the Khanenko collection, then called The Museum for Eastern and Western Art (1936 to 1999). In the 1950s, the museum started selecting Chinese artworks for its collection to implement the cultural collaboration following the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Alliance, Friendship and Mutual Assistance. From 1955 to 1959, the museum collection grew significantly thanks to the arrival of 343 items of Chinese paintings from the Jaspas collection. Some other donations and museum purchases from 1955 to 1965 increased this number by 20 more items of Chinese painting.

The Jaspas collection was formed in the 1930s–1940s in Shanghai by the French diplomat André Stéphane Jaspas (1893–1956) and his spouse, artist Thais Jaspas (born Filippovich, 1912–1986). It covers all principal genres, styles, and techniques of traditional Chinese painting. There are imitations of famous masters from the Song to Ming dynasty, like *Village Children Misbehaving at School* 村童鬧學圖 after Qiu Ying 仇英 (1494–1552) (inventory number 343 ЖБ) and two variants of *Elegant Gathering in a Western Garden* 西園雅集圖 (inventory numbers 254 ЖБ and 281 ЖБ).

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The collection also included works by artists active in the 1930s–1940s, contemporaries of the Jaspas family: Wang Yachen 汪亞塵 (1894–1983), Wang Zhen 王震 (Wang Yiting 王一亭) (1867–1938), Xu Beihong 徐悲鴻 (1895–1953). Quite a few artworks carry inscriptions by authors for “Mister Yashibo” (雅士伯先生) which was the Chinese name of André Jaspas and “Missis Yashibo” 雅士伯女士 (sometimes “Yashiba” 雅士巴女士) for Thais Jaspas.

As we can see, most Chinese paintings arrived at the Khanenko Museum via European collectors. The “European tastes” could influence the choice of some particular artworks. Nevertheless, this “European taste” or “European eye” did not stop the paintings rich in image-text reverberations from entering the museum’s collection.

In this article, the Ukrainian titles of paintings are used as stated in the museum inventory, followed by the English and Chinese titles. It is worth noting that many titles of paintings listed in the inventory in the Ukrainian language have changed in the process of translations from Chinese into French, then from French into Russian, and eventually from Russian into Ukrainian. Thus, the Ukrainian titles are translated into English literally, to convey the meanings of these results of multiple translational iterations.

#### **The case study of seven traditional Chinese paintings in the Khanenko Museum collection**

Talking about the current state of the Khanenko Museum Chinese art collection, its paintings show all seasons through a lens of natural phenomena and society: whether observing specific holidays or engaging in industrial activity.

The autumnal theme was chosen because of its richness in intellectual, emotional and sensorial imagery.

In the pictorial mode, hints of seasonal changes in nature may be more or less obvious.

In the first artwork considered, the autumnal theme is conveyed using red, orange, and brownish hues for tree leaves colours. This painting is 9 ЖВ Птах на осінньому клені A bird on an autumnal maple by Li Zi 麗孖 (dates unknown, probably active in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century), ink and colours on silk, 30.5 x 38.5 cm, acquired from the Jaspas collection. This Ukrainian name of the Chinese painting is descriptive. It was given by the museum researchers at the time of its acquisition. Of all seven paintings chosen for this case study, only this artwork has an almost square format. Others are elongated vertical rectangles.

This tableau of the “birds and flowers” genre is executed in the “meticulous brush” style. The artist rendered a small bird (most probably a Japanese titmouse, *Parus minor*) on a maple tree (*Liquidambar formosana*) branch. It is autumn when the colour of the leaves makes the tree look the most spectacular. The black-and-white bird contrasts with the bright surroundings as a harbinger of the future monochrome look of natural scenes.

The most obvious textual mode of this painting is the poetic inscription (題畫句 tíhuàjù) which is a seven-character line verse (七絕 qījué) written in regular script (楷書 kǎishū) in a gracious way. It is followed by the artist’s name and place of creation along with an intaglio seal (百文). The verse says 莫想常留霜樹中 “Do not expect to stay in a frost-covered tree”. 霜樹 shuāngshù literary means “frost-covered tree”. Trees covered in frost were first mentioned in a poem by Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770) 秋興八首·其一 and appear in some other classical poetry. 霜樹 is also a synonym for a “maple tree, *Liquidambar formosana*”. There is a pun based on the polysemy: this very species is depicted in the painting. It will soon be frost-bitten to reflect the other meaning of the 霜樹. A nod to a sensory experience, like feeling autumnal chills, also deepens the viewers’ engagement with the artwork. This way the text-image relation becomes much more complex than the initial anchorage tied to an image.

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The keyword 霜樹 suggests both the intellectual and sensorial experience. The seal reads 千心畫 “thousand [pieces of] calligraphy”. The poetic name 心畫 for calligraphy derives from Yang Xiong’s “Fayan” 楊雄法言, the Confucian classics of the Western Han. This wording has to add to the impression of refinement.

The painting is not mounted in a traditional way but pasted onto a thick sheet of paper. On its back, there is an inscription in pencil: 雅士巴女士留念/周芽遠贈/一九五二年一月五日 “A souvenir for Mrs. Yashiba. A gift from Zhou Yayuan. January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1952.” There is a certain discrepancy between the season depicted and the season when the artwork was given as a gift. However, it still makes sense considering that in the early 1950s, Thais Jaspas decided to repatriate to the USSR. The painting could be a farewell gift, and the inscription could hint at a departure. A small easy-to-carry format could also be chosen for the purpose of travel.

Anchored in a depiction of autumnal nature, this piece communicates sensual, emotional, and intellectual experiences through its textual mode.

Besides showing obvious seasonal symbols, other paintings bear more intricate hints that need more explanation by going in-depth with biological cycles.

A good example of an intricate layering of senses is the painting 373 ЖБ. It is listed in the museum inventory as Куріпка під хризантемами (1849 р.), A partridge under a chrysanthemum [bush] (1849?) following the French name in Jaspas collection catalogue entry. The tableau is signed 馨園桂森 Xin Yuan Gui Sen. It is executed in ink and colours on silk; measures 82 x 43 cm. As stated above, it was acquired from the Jaspas collection. The depicted bird looks similar to a partridge or quail. It stands at the foot of a massive garden rock and lush chrysanthemum bushes. The bird turns its head back and slightly upwards looking at a young grasshopper sitting on top of the rock. The whole picture is executed neatly, in a decorative way: it is another creation of the “birds and flowers” genre, “meticulous brush” style. Following the traditional composition rules, the author’s inscription and two name seals balance the space at the top left. The inscription suggests the place and time of creation. It is a fine example of a regular script (楷書 kǎishū). For a counterbalance, across the tableau in its bottom right corner, there is a print of an intaglio leisure seal (白文閒章 báiwén xiánzhāng) in the shape of a pebble. This way, texts serve as elements of an image. However, their primary role is still the textual one.

As we learn from the author’s inscription, the painting was created 中秋月上 “in the middle of autumn” or “during the month of the Mid-Autumn Festival”. Here, again, the polysemy is present. Its purpose may be to “mask” the exact day of creating this painting.

The chrysanthemum is a well-known symbol of autumn for its biological feature, i.e. late blooming. Its bitter fragrance is one of the autumnal manifestations. However, in China, it is also one of the four symbolical gentlemen able to stand their ground in hardships. Another symbolical meaning of the chrysanthemum is suggested by a pure linguistic factor which is homonymy. The chrysanthemum is a symbol of longevity since 菊 jú in 菊花 júhuā for “chrysanthemum” sounds close to 久 jiǔ for “long, permanent” [Williams 2006].

Small insects breed fast and in high numbers making excellent symbols of fecundity. Quails and partridges symbolize fertility too since they produce lots of eggs. The linguistic background for the auspicious symbolism of a quail is no less important than the biological one: the bird’s name 鶉 chún is a homophone of 安 ān for “peace” and 春 chūn for “spring” (also associating with the Spring festival), thus symbolizing a “peaceful spring” or “peaceful New Year” [Williams 2006]. Even if the depicted bird is a partridge 山鶉, it is still a positive symbol. Quails were used in Northern China as fighting birds for entertainment, Hence,

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these images translated as a text create an auspicious formula of “noble spirit, longevity; bravery; fecundity, peace”. At first sight, this message just suits the occasion of the Mid-Autumn celebration.

Yet it is too early to conclude that the image mode is exhausted in the ideas it provides. The depicted insect is currently in the stage of a nymph, which is an intermediate step in its development. In the further step, let’s consider the proportion of an insect to the flowers and stone. It follows the scale of a human figure to mountains and forests in traditional Chinese landscapes. While traditional gardens were miniature copies of the great nature [Li W. 2012], this painting proposes a new scale of miniaturization: a scene from the garden’s corner stands for a vast landscape. Could a grasshopper nymph be a metaphor for a young inexperienced human in the big world? If so, the quail watching a grasshopper symbolizes not positivity but a hazard.

At the same time, some text present in the painting is distant from the idea of perils. Contrary to the pictorial metaphors, a seven-character inscription on the pebble-shape irregular seal print is quite carefree and hedonistic: 美人琴書共一船 “A beautiful lady, a cither, [and] books [are aboard] the same boat”. The characters are written in seal script (篆書 *zhuànshū*). These words are a paraphrase of a quote from白居易 Bai Juyi’s poem 自喜 “Happiness of being alone” 鶴與琴書共一船 literary “A crane is aboard on the same boat with books and a cither” which later became an idiom that stands for a tranquil attitude and satisfaction with life. In poetry, a boat was often mentioned as a usual travel medium in the landscape. Mentioning the boat in this seal inscription could suggest one more hint that a “secluded corner in a garden” shown in the painting stands for an infinite landscape.

It is interesting to reconstruct the idea behind substituting 鶴與 with 美人. Changing a noun + conjunction for a noun does not affect the grammaticality of the phrase. On a semantic level, if of all polysemy of 美人 (a beautiful woman; a person of talent and high virtue, a sovereign; a court lady) “a beautiful woman” is chosen then there are two ways of understanding the line. The mentioning of a beautiful woman may be a summary of the previous line of Bai Juyi’s poem: 身兼妻子都三口 “Our family is just three people: my wife, my concubine, and I”. Yet the whole message may be understood as choosing entertainment over self-refinement.

It may be right to conclude that the semantics of all messages in the painting, both pictorial and verbal, are intentionally ambivalent. The amount of messages encoded in images and texts is almost equal. Considering the number and sophistication of suggested senses, the term “counterpointing” would be just right to describe the image-text system of this artwork.

Another chrysanthemum is featured in a painting 437 ЖВ Хризантема (1943) Chrysanthemum (1934) by Wu Zaoxue 吳藻雪 (1880–1951), ink and colours on paper, 80 x 28.5cm. This piece was acquired from Mr. Volodymyr Zibert on July 30, 1965. As in the case of 9 ЖВ, the descriptive name was given by the museum’s researchers. It is a fine example of *guohua* (國畫 *guóhuà*) painting. From the pictorial point of view, one may notice a parallel with the “Chrysanthemum [growing] at the base of a wall” 牆根菊花圖 by a well-known Shanghai-school artist Wu Changshuo 吳昌碩 (1844-1927). The chrysanthemums flowers are rendered with many warm hues, conveying the impression of bursts of colours against monochrome background. The flower depicted using the finest brush strokes is the one placed against the rough gray garden rock for more contrast. These all testify the artist’s talent and skills.

In the upper left corner of the tableau, there is a semi-cursive 行書 *xíngshū* inscription: 牆根鞠花可沽酒用杜浣花句寫以/續之先生一嘆. “[I am] exchanging the chrysanthemums

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growing under the wall for wine. Writing in the manner of Du Fu I got my teacher's sight as his only apprise." It is followed by the date of creation, which is the first day 元日 of the "year 36" (1943) and the artist's signature and a leisure seal.

There is an obvious interplay of brush strokes in painting and calligraphy. The first line of a verse is a rephrase of a line 牆根菊萼好沽酒 "Exchanging chrysanthemums growing under a wall for wine" in the last quatrain of a poem 贈崔立之評事 (Dedicated to the secretary Cui Lizhi) by the Tang dynasty poet Han Yu 韓愈. The rephrase follows the tone pattern (平仄韻腳 *píngzèyùnjiǎo*) of the original. However, the message of the following lines is intentionally juxtaposed to the lyrical mood of the original poetry. It is self-deprecatory to demonstrate courtesy. Anchored in the colourful image of chrysanthemums the image-text message of the painting may read as the author's awareness of ideal creations of the past, yet a self-criticizing approach to his own achievements. Here the season of creation and the depicted season differ. This makes us assume that the seasonal flower was chosen to convey the lyrical mood rather than be an auspicious seasonal emblem.

There is a notion of Mid-Autumn in a *guohua* (國畫 *guóhuà*) painting 293 ЖВ Місяць кризь листя бамбука, Moon [shining] through bamboo leaves (1934) by Zhu Wenyun 諸聞韻 (1895–1939), ink on paper, 137 x 34 cm, acquired from the Jasper collection. This author became famous for his monochrome depictions of bamboo, and the work in the museum collection is a fine example of his mastery of the subject. Bamboo is another symbol of a gentleman, the one who bends but not breaks [Williams 2008].

The inscription in semi-cursive script (行書 *xíngshū*) states that the painting was created at the time of the Mid-Autumn Festival or in the middle month of autumn: 秋仲. The first line of the inscription reads 月移竹影上窗紗 "The Moon moves bamboo shadow along the window screen". It is a paraphrase of a single-phrase verse by an anonymous author of the Song dynasty 月移疏影上窗紗 "The Moon moves a clear shadow along the window screen". The original quote follows the pattern of "maladjustment of tones" 失調名 *shīdiàomíng*, and so does the paraphrase written on the museum scroll.

There are also three seal prints on the painting. In the bottom right corner, there is a leisure seal executed in relief (朱文閒章 *zhūwén xiánzhāng*) that has two characters 淨心. This Buddhist term for "clear mind/intentions" is also a part of an idiom 淨心修身 (to have an untroubled heart and behave morally). The first written occurrence of this word is in a poem 入攝山棲霞寺詩 Entering the mountain of Qixia Temple by Jiang Zong 江总 (519–594): 淨心抱冰雪, 暮齒逼桑榆 "With a tranquil heart I embrace the wintry cold. In my old age, I send farewell to last beams of the sun over tree tops". This quote suggests stoicism rather than seasonal specifics but is still important for the artwork's wholeness. It may also refer to autumn as a metaphor for old age.

Although the image serves as an anchorage for the text, the textual mode of the painting is not less informative than the pictorial one.

An embodiment of autumnal ideas is a cassia tree and its flowers, as depicted in 153 ЖВ Кішка під корицею, A cat under a cassia tree. The piece is signed 存伯 and is attributed to Zhou Xian 周閒 (1820–1875) whose adult name 字 *zì* was 存伯. The picture is created with ink and colours on paper and measures 181 x 45 cm. It comes from the Jasper collection. The tableau features a black cat sitting under bushes of white and orange chrysanthemums, a garden rock and a towering cassia tree. The latter is the floral symbol of the eighth month [Jiao 2011]. An inscription in rather big characters in semi-cursive script 行書 *xíngshū* runs along the right margin of the image: 忝庵先生耄壽/大貴圖 "Wishing long years of life to Mr. Wu An. A picture of a great treasure". Cassia makes numerous allusions to a legendary

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cassia tree growing on the Moon, and idioms and auspicious phrases like “cutting a cassia tree” 折桂令 that stands for passing the imperial examinations. Famous for its tiny yet fragrant flowers, cassia is a symbol of high virtues and modesty [Williams 2008]. The inscription 大貴圖 “A picture of a big treasure” suggests a pun based on the homophony of 貴guì for “precious; valuable; noble” and 桂花guìhuā for “cassia; osmanthus”. Another message of the picture is a homophony-based auspicious rebus for longevity. 耄mào “octogenarian, very old” in the inscription addressed to Mr. Wu An 恣庵先生 corresponds to a depiction of a cat 貓māo.

The text-image relation here is counterpointing. The message unambiguously translates into a wish for a long and wealthy life.

The autumnal theme is reflected in landscape paintings as well.

33 ЖВ Осінні гори, Autumnal Mountains by a 19th-century artist after the Song dynasty paintings, ink and colours on silk, 109 x 70 cm, was acquired from the Jaspar collection. The name mentioning the season is stated on the colophon written awkwardly in clerical script (隸書lishū): 秋圖 “The Tableau of Autumn”. Besides a colophon, no language clues of specific intellectual or sensory experiences are given. Instead, it is a classical landscape with mountain peaks, many trees, a distant narrow band of a waterfall, and rocks in the wider flow of a river in the foreground. This depiction suggests that it is full of sounds of nature: howling winds, whispering and cracking of tree branches, and burbling and gushing of water. [Nelson 1998] Its dominating mode is the image.

However, the next landscape has a lot of sensory suggestions not only through image mode means but also through imagery from an inscription.

317 ЖВ Мудреці у павільйоні, Sages in a pavilion, signed 吴历 Wu Li, ink and colours on paper, 60 x 125 cm, was acquired from the Jaspar collection. This scroll is an imitation of landscapes by Wu Li 吴历 (1632–1718). It carries the very same inscription as another work attributed to Wu Li: dated 1702, 秋山草閣 Straw Pavilion in Autumnal Mountains was proposed as lot 654 at an auction by 西泠印社拍賣有限公司 Xiling Yinshe Auction Co., Ltd. in the autumn of 2005 [Xiling 2005].

An elaborate landscape tinted with light hues of green and brown dominates the picture. Among the mountains and forests, there is a pavilion as a “point of pause” as defined by Esther Jacobson-Leong [Jacobson-Leong 1976]. The painting is certainly perceived as the anchorage in this image-text system. However, there is a small inscription in the upper left corner. It is executed in quality regular script (楷書 kǎishū), followed by two name seals both executed in relief (朱文 zhūwén). The inscription is as follows:

煙裏村庄木葉黃/石橋西近讀書堂/秫田最喜秋收早/酒熟先烹紫蟹嘗

“In a village enveloped in smoke, the trees turn yellow. There is a reading grotto west of the stone bridge. We are happy that the millet is harvested early. The wine is ready, but first, we help ourselves to purple crabs.”

The inscription doesn’t follow any of the regular poetical meters. It also appears to be an original creation without quotes from famous poems that would add allusions to authors, ideas, and historical settings. Yet it plays an important role in engaging spectators in feeling the dimensions and the very “air” of the painting.

There is neither a reading grotto nor a village enveloped in smoke painted in this tableau. Thus the poetical description widens the picture of an already vast landscape. As we already know, it sounds like swishing winds and burbling water. The text speaks explicitly about tastes and smells and seasonal activities. The smoke may arise from roasting millet. The notion of seasonal food is impressive regarding mentioning one particular species

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of crabs. The said species is a specialty in the Tianjin area. Millet is also grown mostly in the northern regions of China.

Wu Li was a native of Jiangsu and studied in Macao. There is no proof that he ever traveled as far North as Tianjin. Another intriguing detail about this painting is that the imitated author was a Catholic priest, so the difference in the lifestyles and spiritual beliefs could also play a certain role in the message from the person who came to the idea of creating this imitational scroll. Could it be a hint to imitation, as well as the two relief fake seals of Wu Li? The image-text relationship of this tableau is counterpointing and very rich in imagery.

### **Results**

Of all seven artworks, only four pieces may get the highest appraise from the point of view of the traditional Chinese “three perfections”. These are 9 景, 153 景, 293 景, and 437 景. Their pictorial features and penmanship are equal in quality, and the accompanying verses draw inspiration from the classical poetry. Considering that the major part of the museum painting collection consists of copies, remakes, and imitations of classical subjects, it is hard to perceive some inscriptions through the lens of “simplicity and directness of Chinese classical poetry” as put by Wilt L. Idema [Idema 2019]. However, some artworks still contain inscriptions that demonstrate these “virtues” of directness and presence in the moment, addressing their contemporaries and future audiences with personal messages grounded in sensory experiences, emotional reflections, and hints to intellectual aspirations. The inscription may even break the rules for poetic meters, but still carry a big load of realia.

To summarize the experiences suggested by image and text modes, their “palette” is broad. Olfactory stimuli hinted by inscriptions can be either pleasant like cassia (osmanthus) or irritating like smoke. Inscriptions or images may suggest the feeling of chills in a garden or gusts of wind in the mountains. The notions of autumnal festivals and seasonal treats in inscriptions reflect the cultural settings. Some visual elements even imply that the audience is familiar with the subtleties of insect metamorphoses.

The artists aimed to impress their audience by implying that by contemplating a painting one would imagine all sensory experiences suggested by the image and some keywords in the accompanying inscription. Hints from the intellectual realm and suggestions of sensual experiences complement and enhance each other.

### **Conclusions and perspectives of research**

As expected, the analysis of semantics of images and texts along with the image-text relations from both contemporary Western and traditional Chinese point of view revealed a very rich material.

The decoded messages become a powerful tool in representing the Chinese paintings for the museum’s patrons. When translated into the curator’s narrative, the very mentioning of sensory experiences transgresses cultural barriers and efficiently engages the audience in an interaction with artworks. Quotes from the classical poetry, explanations on the imagery enhance the audience’s experience.

The curator’s talk is an old and tried format of museum programs. Presented in the modes of an image (demonstration of artworks) and text (the curator’s commentary) it is already a multimodal activity. However, there is always a possibility to develop and implement interactive programs aimed at various audiences, especially the people with sensory impairments. The image-text messages of the Chinese painting translated into curator’s narrative may be further transformed into multimodal events employing olfactory, palpable, and thermal stimuli that become new modes of communication at the museum.

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