

Compare and Contrast Shen Zhou v. Joeng Soen

It is interesting to study the differences and similarities between different works of art from different cultures and different periods in history. For instance, the *Poet on a Mountain Top* and the *panoramic view of the Diamond Mountains* are the two works of art that this paper has focused on. Firstly, the *Poet on a Mountain Top* is a painting that was done by an ancient Chinese artist called Shen Zhou who lived during the Ming Dynasty in 1500. It is basically a landscape painting done on hand-scroll and its measurement is around 40 cm by 60.2 cm (Stokstad and Cothren 803).

This painting shows a mountainous landscape which seem to be covered in snow. There are also a few parts where there are trees and a few buildings visible in between the trees. In the background, there is a horizon but it is not very distinct or clearly visible as it has one color implying that it could have depicted chilly or rainy weather. Another important feature in the painting is that there is a man holding his walking stick on top of the mountain at the central part and he is facing the poem written above. The man and the poem are perhaps the most important elements of this painting since the painting is named after them.

On the other hand, *panoramic view of the Diamond Mountains* was done by a Korean artist called Joeng Seon, who lived during the Joseon Dynasty. The painting was done in 1734 ("VCM" 1). It is also a landscape painting done on a hanging scroll and has measurement of 130.1 cm by 94 cm (Stokstad and Cothren 811). The painting also shows a mountainous landscape but with very many steep mountains unlike the *Poet on the Mountain* painting which has only three visible mountains. There is also visible vegetation and the color used is almost similar to that on the first painting. The other important detail of this painting is the presence of a written poem above the mountains, just like the former painting.

In addition, the two paintings have rough textures, and similar colors which are noticeably dull. They are mainly gray and dark in some parts to show vegetation. The rough texture is depicted by the not so clear edges of the details in the paintings, and actually in the *Poet on a Mountain Top* painting, the painter seems to have used sketches to show some of the details of the painting, such as the buildings. The other important similarity between the two art pieces is that they are both literati art paintings.

Literati paintings are generally paintings that had some written texts passing a certain message. In the case of *Poet on a Mountain Top*, there is a poem that when translated, shows the thoughts the poet has about the nature and weather around him when he views his surroundings. The translation is, “White clouds like a scarf enfold the mountain’s waist; Stone steps hang in space—a long, narrow path. Alone, leaning on my cane, I gaze intently at the scene, and feel like answering the murmuring brook with the music of my flute” (Stokstad and Cothren 803). The writing on the *panoramic view of the Diamond Mountains* is however not a poem but just some brief comments the painter, his name and the date of the painting.

There are noticeable differences between the two works of art. One of them is that while the *Poet on a Mountain Top* was a Chinese painting; done by Shen Zhou, the other one was done by a Korean painter; Joeng Seon. Shen Zhou’s painting was more of an abstract painting that did not represent any real mountain or landscape in China but the painting by Joeng Seon was an actual artistic representation of the Diamond Mountains in Korea. Many of his other paintings were also paintings of actual scenes (“VCM” 1). Shen Zhou’s work however represented a philosophy of the Ming Dynasty which argued that it is the mind that has basis of reality, and not the physical world (Stokstad and Cothren 803).

Also, the painting by Shen Zhou has more details than that by Joeng Seon. Joeng Seon shows that the primary focus of his painting was on the mountains and vegetation but Shen Zhou also focused on other features such as horizon, buildings, man and this shows that he had a broader perspective of what elements are present in an environment (Stokstad and Cothren 804). Lastly, these two paintings have more similarities and only a few differences. It appears that the painters in both cases would get inspired by their surrounding environment to do the painting although Shen Zhou applied more philosophy than Joeng Seon.

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Work Cited

Stokstad, Marilyn and Michael W. Cothren. *Art History*. 5th ed. Boston: Pearson Education Inc, 2014. Print.

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