

During the Ming dynasty (1368 - 1644) China's economy was characterized by rapid exponential success, however, artists of the time had to face increasing mistrust and decline in imperial patronage. Leading to new dependencies on private supporters, this change of affairs also revived the amateur-scholar as the ideal artist; valuing individual expression over laborious craftsmanship and the former representational style of court art. Celebrating motifs of reclusion and endurance: awkwardness and asymmetrical composition became fostered formal signature features of the era. Serving the growing social imperative of cultural distinction (proving ones taste), these new styles were soon highly prized by a burgeoning culture of new collectors. The question for today would be: to what extent does this sound (all too) familiar?

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