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A social history of painting inscriptions in Ming China (1368-1644)

Wang, W.

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Author: Wenxin Wang

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Stellingen

1. Painting inscriptions written in the Ming era are objects that can be physically handled, added, removed, and circulated; while they are also texts that can be multiplied, trimmed, and transmitted.
2. Ming painting inscriptions survive in two main forms: inscriptions available from extant paintings, and inscriptions outside paintings in textual anthologies.
3. Ming painting inscriptions played multiple roles in the social, cultural, and economic dimensions of the Ming society.
4. Ming painting inscriptions were meant for a social history, and their roles can only be illuminated when they are understood in the social circumstances of their conceptualization, production, utilization, and circulation.
5. Painting inscriptions are important because they shaped and are shaping the knowledge of Chinese painting inside and outside China.
6. The vast majority of existing studies focus on inscriptions on paintings, but they largely neglect anthologies as another source.
7. Art historical scholarship that derives from dealing with European art has problem in framing Chinese painting of a dual value system, in which inscriptions contributed value to the system as a whole.
8. The issue of inscriptions prompts a critical review of the previous curatorial and publishing practices related to Chinese paintings bearing inscriptions.
9. Inscriptions were made in a context prior to the idea of “discipline” came to China; therefore, they are intrinsically interdisciplinary and should be studied under various branches of knowledge.