The Senses of Painting in China: 1790-1840

A lecture by MICHAEL J. HATCH



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What have art historians tended to value most in the history Chinese painting? How have those values led to the celebration of some periods of painting and to the neglect of others? Taking the under-studied period of early nineteenth-century painting in China as a starting point, this lecture examines some of the core values of Chinese painting scholarship in order to consider the possibilities for experiencing Chinese paintings anew. In particular, a sensory history of Chinese painting is proposed, one that shifts attention to the bodily appeals that paintings were designed to make to their audiences, not just in terms of vision, but also in terms of touch, smell, and sound.