



# Chinese Landscape Painting as Western Art history

*James Elkins*

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This is a provocative essay of reflections on traditional mainstream scholarship on Chinese art as done by towering figures in the field such as James Cahill and Wen Fong. James Elkins offers an engaging and accessible survey of his personal journey encountering and interpreting Chinese art through Western scholars' writings. He argues that the search for optimal comparisons is itself a modern, Western interest, and that art history as a discipline is inherently Western in several identifiable senses. Although he concentrates on art history in this book, and on Chinese painting in particular, these issues bear implications for Sinology in general, and for wider questions about humanistic inquiry and historical writing.

Jennifer Purtle's Foreword provides a useful counterpoint from the perspective of a Chinese art specialist, anticipating and responding to other specialists' likely reactions to Elkins's hypotheses.

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