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Humanities, 3rd Period

December 2, 2016

Meeting of the Minds: An Artistic Conversation

**Augustus:** (testing different poses for a selfie) No… I must appear to be of great power and youth. It is necessary to have absolute perfection. By Jupitar! What *will* my followers think of me?

**Fan Kuan:** (painting nearby) Excuse me, I don’t mean to interrupt this “propaganda” of yours, but would you mind moving elsewhere?

**Augustus:** Did someone just tell *me* to move? Excuse me, but do you know who Iam? I am Augustus, the successor of Julius Caesar! I am the emperor of the Roman Empire and have established the Pax Romana!

**Fan Kuan:** Your narcissistic ways are disturbing the process in which I capture the spirit resonance. My texture and brush stroke must reflect my response to this orderly universe. A balance between li and qi should be mastered.

**Augustus:** The people in your painting are of such miniscule size! It simply does not make any sense to me. Human anatomy is a beautiful subject matter for sculptures and other artistic forms. I have created a Golden Age my friend, a revival of the Greek arts.

**Fan Kuan:** You poor man! I was just like you once, until I turned to seek spiritual enlightenment. I am a Chinese landscape painter of the Northern Song Dynasty. I try to portray man’s harmonious existence in this vast universe. We are but insignificant compared to nature and this world. Thus, I find this “selfie” commotion to be rather egocentric and contradictory to my Daoist and Neo-Confucian beliefs.

**Augustus:** Hmmm… these views *are* intriguing, if I do say so myself. Although I cannot agree with a majority of them, I can relate to this spiritual hierarchy in a sense. The gods rule in superiority from the heavens, deciding upon our future as an empire. Anyone who views my posts on the media can see that the gods ordained *me* to be emperor of Rome! (stands proud and continues posing for pictures)

**Egyptian Scribe:** (walks past and sees Augustus posing) Wait! You are doing it all wrong!

**Augustus:** How so? Can’t a handsome man take a handsome selfie?

**Egyptian Scribe:** Why, don’t you want the gods to recognize you? How will your soul survive after your death?

**Augustus:** The gods already have recognized me. They chose me to be emperor! My presence and power will forever be shown in the great deeds and construction projects I have accomplished. What look do you propose I go for?

**Egyptian Scribe:** (directs Augustus’s hands and head) You must be seen in profile. Let me help you. Turn your head and body sideways. Yes, but make sure your chest and shoulders are facing frontward so they can be seen easily. You already have large hands to show your social status. That’s good. Try to look at the camera while your head is turned!

**Augustus:** I can’t hold like this for much longer! How is this supposed to make me look any more fit to be a leader? Quick! Take the portrait!

**Egyptian Scribe:** (takes picture and turns to Augustus) Very good! You will be alive and well in the afterlife my friend. You shall be buried with your projects and belongings. There are not many of my skill set around here, so you may appoint me to write your Book of the Dead if you would like. I will work many long hours, paying special attention to detail. Now all we have to do is find some way to include some writing in this portrait…

**Fan Kuan:** Yes, I agree. Calligraphy should find its place among every piece of art. They must exist harmoniously, like man and nature. Great attention and time should be put forth.

**Augustus:** Well, at least this portrait shows my status… This seems worthy of a post! What should I comment?

**Fan Kuan:** When I let go of who I am, I become what I might be…

**Egyptian Scribe:** You should write down all the evil things that you haven’t done...

**Augustus:** I’ve got it! I shall write: “*I* found Rome a city of bricks and left it a city of marble.”

**Fan Kuan and Egyptian Scribe:** (shake head and return to own activities)

End of Scene

Sources

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