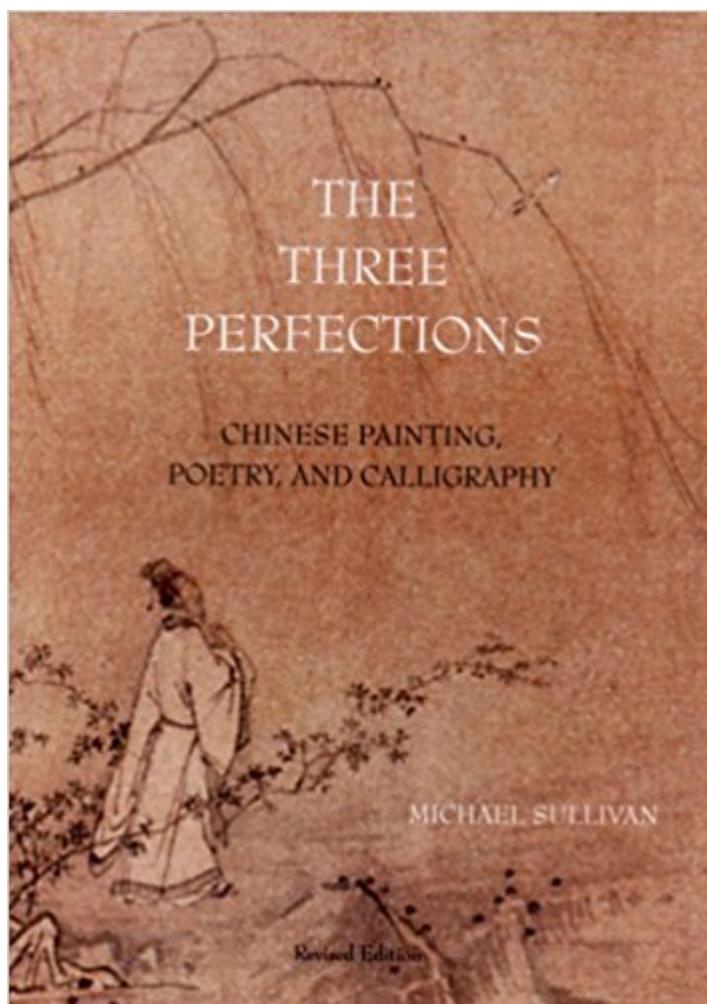


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# The Three Perfections: Chinese Painting, Poetry, And Calligraphy



## **Synopsis**

What do the Chinese write on their paintings? Why do they write on them? In this newly revised volume--now illustrated in color--Michael Sullivan provides a lucid and engaging analysis of the intimate relationships among painting, poetry, and calligraphy in Chinese culture. The fundamental unity of writing and painting is shown to be an ancient, though still valid, concept in China. Twenty-six luminous reproductions of celebrated works of art illustrate key aspects of this superb union of literature and the visual arts.

## **Book Information**

Hardcover: 88 pages

Publisher: George Braziller; Rev Sub edition (October 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0807614521

ISBN-13: 978-0807614525

Product Dimensions: 10.5 x 7.8 x 0.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 7 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #474,118 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #197 in Books > Arts & Photography > Other Media > Calligraphy #1248 in Books > Arts & Photography > Painting #2165 in Books > Arts & Photography > History & Criticism > Criticism

## **Customer Reviews**

Michael Sullivan, Emeritus Fellow of St. Catherine's College, Oxford, is the author of *The Arts of China*, *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art*, and *Art and Artists of Twentieth Century China*.

Michael Sullivan's "The Three Perfections: Chinese Painting, Poetry, and Calligraphy" (Rev. Ed., 1999) is, in short, a beautiful book. It is not a comprehensive examination of the history of Chinese painting; rather, Sullivan starts with what seems a fairly trivial question (i.e., "What, and why, do the Chinese write on their paintings?") and uses that question as a stepping stone into an essay that is both lucid and thoughtful. The color plates, as printed in this edition published by George Braziller, are lovingly presented on high-quality paper. Particularly worth seeing are Ma Yuan's "On a Mountain Path in Spring" and Shen Zhou's "The Poet on a Cliff Top". (I would like to include the plate of my favorite Chinese painting, Fan Kuan's "Traveling Amid Mountains and Streams", in this listing, but such a large painting -- it is more than two meters high -- deserves a page larger than it

would admittedly be practical to print.) Overall, though, an excellent volume, and one that will always have a place on my bookshelf.

Even the whole book only has 64 pages in its earlier edition, this is a classic about the core spirit of Chinese arts, that poem, calligraphy can be organically integrated with painting, to present more than just painting itself. An Englishman Who Can See What Many Chinese Artists Can't! That's a pleasant "surprise".

Beautiful and very informative book on a sometimes obscure topic. I used it for teaching non-western art in my AP Art History classes.

It is a wonderful book to realize Chinese culture.

perfect

Good book in great shape. I enjoyed the paintings and the poems. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in art.

"The Three Perfections" is a thin little book and takes about an hour to read, but that's an hour very well-spent. Sullivan does a wonderful job of explaining to the western reader in an engagingly erudite manner why Chinese paintings, well, have writing on them. In the process he touches upon the history of this phenomenon and on the different types of inscriptions and their varying significance as well as describing the fully-developed Chinese art theories on the interdependence of painting, poetry, and calligraphy. All along he keeps the discussion concrete with multiple examples, usually with an accompanying illustration--and these alone are well worth the price of the book. By the end of it, someone who has loved East Asian art for a long time such as myself will still come away with a new appreciation of the subject, but Sullivan's friendly, unpretentious, and lucidly clear delivery is ideal for the curious beginner as well. In short, this fine little volume is perfectly enjoyable, informative, and aesthetically pleasing.

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