

division: Spalte, Abtünung, Bereich...

very like those of the Peruvian ancestors. This idea, that the world of the dead constantly intersects with our own, is found around the globe: from Mexico's Day of the Dead to Japan's Bon festival, families gather every year – in cemeteries or elsewhere – to eat, drink and be very merry with ^{dead} deceased relatives. Death is a division within, not a boundary of, the community. In China, where death changes relationships but does not dissolve them, an annual, domestic reunion with the ancestors has for centuries been a central family ritual. The bodies of the dead are not physically present, as in Peru, but their spirits are, and they come to dwell ^{live} for a time – in likenesses made specially to receive them: the whole history of portrait painting in China is inextricably linked to images made to serve in these ritual dialogues with the ancestors.

Schriften

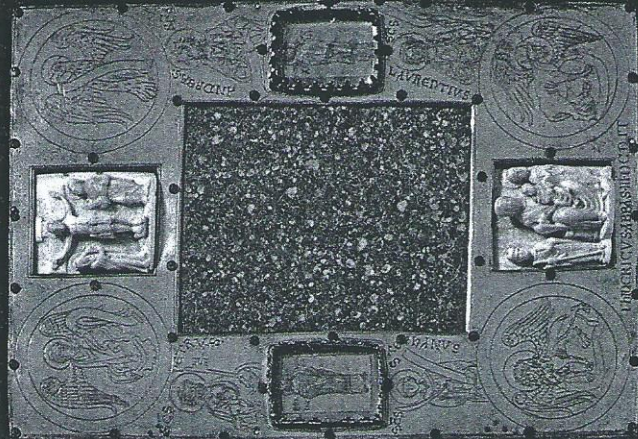
untrennbar

In the British Museum is a pair of paintings created for precisely this purpose: two 'ancestor portraits', painted on silk hanging scrolls, from the Ming dynasty – probably around 1600. A man and a woman, each seated on a wooden chair which is almost covered by their deep red robes, stare out from a background of plain dull gold. Each scroll is over two metres high – these dead ancestors are unquestionably larger than life. They are, however, anything but life-like: the faces are impassive, devoid of any emotional or psychological responses. ^{teihnungs-empt}

Jan Stuart is Curator of Chinese Art at the Freer-Sackler Galleries in Washington:

People wanted a portrait that would reproduce the heaven-endowed quality of a face, which would record the enduringly significant facial features, not as seen or encountered in any particular moment – so not frowning or smiling, not by daylight or by night. That is why there is no light or shade: these are intended

Over: Ming dynasty ancestor portraits. The man wears a prominent badge that indicates his rank – or perhaps that of a descendant



Saying Mass over the bodies of the dead: German portable altar, around 1200. On the back are the names of the saints whose relics, each carefully labelled (below), are contained in the cavity behind the altar-stone

