

Harmony

— A Beautiful World

世界因和而美

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世界因和而美

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因和而美 Shanghai Expo — A manifestation of “he 和” (harmony)

一位新加坡艺术家观摩上海世博会的感悟 梁林美均 May Leong

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因和而美

一位新加坡艺术家观摩上海世博会的感悟

梁林美均 May Leong

因和而美，是我观摩上海世博会后的感悟。

不知出自谁人的巧手，成就了上海世博会这样的神奇瑰丽的图卷。

用尽了世上所有的颜色，冷色，暖色，中间色；饱和，浅淡，诸层次……

使用了各个画派的笔触，传统的，现代的，古典的，超前的；抽象的，具象的；还有东方的，西洋的……

靠什么不可思议地糅合出如此协调、瑰丽的图卷？

答案是一个“和”字。

和 上海世博会的精髓

不分民族，肤色，国籍；
不论发展中国家或发达国家；
不论疆土大或小，人口多或少；
不论社会制度或宗教信仰；
平等地、友好地、融洽地在一起。

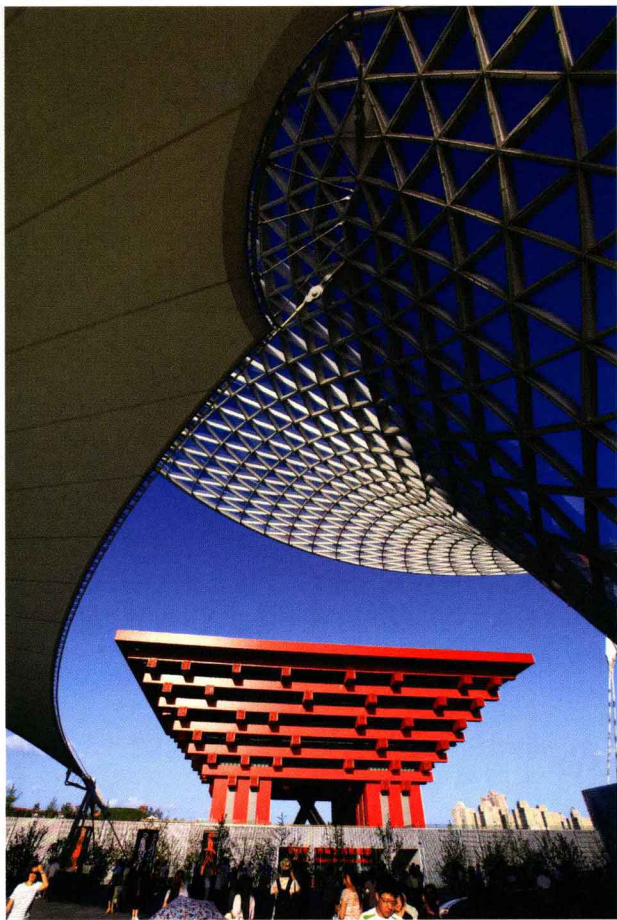
主题、展馆、展品，全都体现了人类和自然、人们和人们之间的和谐相处。中国老百姓有一句口语叫“和美”，正是道出了此中的道理，有了“和”，才有“美”。

和 上海城市的襟怀

世博期间，上海到处洋溢着和的氛围。其实，上海世博会的精髓，也是上海城市襟怀的延续。

海派书画，海派料理，海派演技，海派风格，

中国国家馆和世博轴



海派文化……所有“海派”的形成，都与上海“海纳百川”的城市襟怀密不可分。

历史条件，地理位置，人文积淀……多方面的因素，造就了上海那独有的襟怀——“海纳百川，和而不同”。

“城市，让生活更美好”，上海就是这样的城市。

世博会是展示人类文明进步的大舞台，它呈现了各个领域的奋斗进程，也启示着人们思考未来。它融合了世界各国的新技术、新理念、新文化之大成，各种思想、理念、观点，在这里交流、碰撞，必能迸发出新的火花，从而激发人们向上进步。这次上海的世博会，给了上海人乃至全中国的人们在现场或是通过电视屏幕，同190个国家及56个国际组织的246个展馆亲密接触的机会，相信经过184天的世博会期，加上会前会后、台前幕后等的多种工作进程，一定会让中国人有了前所未有的积极的变化。对于中国，2010年可能是一个里程碑，将来在历史上，也可能会划分出前世博和后世博两个阶段。希望并相信中国必会在世博后出现又一次腾飞！

我的中国情缘

1978年，一位巨人出访新加坡——这个被人们称为“地图上小红点”的多元种族国家，会见了我们当时的总理李光耀先生。邓小平先生抵达新加坡的那天，我也正好抵达北京，和伟人擦肩而过。那个年代新加坡的年轻人不能个别到中国旅游，我是参加了会计师协会的团体才得以到中国一游。家父在1927年来南洋之后就没回乡过，那时我是家人中第一个到中国的，心里特别兴奋。回想起来一切都是天意，就这样缘分延续到今日，只一转眼，犹如昨日。

在邓小平先生到达新加坡的前几天，中国驻新加坡商务代表处（当时新加坡和中国尚未建交）的代表就已交代我们，请我们新加坡贵都大酒店属下的金凤楼川菜厅承办在总统府举行的宴请邓先生的晚宴。我荣幸地接到通知后，立马请来了我们的中国台湾籍主厨师傅沈广元先生（已故）商议。考虑到邓先生已经年近八旬，又是四川人，就特意设计了“去骨樟茶鸭（北京鸭吃法）”和“宫保鸡丁”等菜单，还特地用了台湾制作的仿明青花瓷盘盛菜。

VIP宴会当天我已身在北京了，又特意打电话到新加坡贵都（当时长途电话还得由接线生接线，可不像现在那么方便）询问宴会情形。得知晚宴顺利，邓先生和夫人

吃得很满意，还用了半份豆沙窝饼，我放下了心，由衷地高兴。

正是邓先生访问新加坡之后，加速了新加坡人们关心中国大陆的热潮，各界人士都对中国大陆的改革开放寄以厚望。

先父林甲岩先生于1927年从原籍广东潮汕的惠来县^②南渡重洋，到了马来西亚（后移居新加坡）。他虽然在新加坡定居了四十多年，经营建筑业，并于1969年开创了贵都酒店（集团）的事业——现在我们家族仍在马来西亚的吉隆坡、马六甲（郑和下西洋访问过的地方）、槟城（徐悲鸿先生在此居住过并在抗战时去办过展览），越南的胡志明市有贵都酒店，然而心中的中国情结，却仍是十分浓厚，衷心盼望中国兴旺统一，老百姓有好的生活，所以家父常常在同我们的言谈中回忆家乡，流露期望，给了我们很好的熏陶和影响。

我是移民的第二代了。新加坡那时是英国殖民地时代，都是英校，只有当时来自不同籍贯的华侨先辈办有不同的宗乡会馆，设立华文学校、医院，为南来的乡亲们服务，老师都是中国来的。我外子梁国安是第五代华侨，受纯英语教育。我庆幸我从小学到高中毕业都在华校就读，被灌输以中国传统的道德思想和价值观，例如忠、孝、仁、爱、礼、义、廉、耻。我在华校时用中华书局出版的《中华文选》作语文教材，其他学科也全都以华文教授，从中不但学到了汉语，也学到了不少关于中国文化、历史地理等方面的知识，所以对于中国，我也有着相当的感情，多少可以理解先父的意愿。

20世纪80年代中，正值新加坡经济低迷，很多工商界人士都有向外投资的意向。正是在这些因素的促使下，我们开始了对中国大陆投资的探讨。在1978年我第一次游中国之后，1984年，我又去了潮汕采购陶瓷，开设潮州菜馆。1986年与友人孟祥辉女士一起游玩了三峡。孟祥辉的二舅庄希泉早年也在南洋生活过，而且是新加坡南洋女子中学的创办人之一。他的儿子庄彦岭先生是北京侨办主任。由此，孟女士在1985年到北京投资了亚太大厦，我由她介绍认识了厉家菜的厉善麟先生。厉家菜乃中国第一批注册的个体餐厅，各国政要巨贾多在此进过餐。1998年6月，时任美国总统克林顿访华，曾到厉家菜订餐，厉老先生将我赠给他的手制紫砂茶壶转赠给了克林顿总统，总统回国后，特意来信致谢。厉老的女婿王尚礼加入了贵都酒店在北京的金凤楼中餐厅任经理。在1991年贵都退出管理后，王尚礼在1994年开设了北京宫餐馆，专营正味的北京菜，以保留老北京的饮食文化。该酒店的业主乃孙中山先生的曾侄孙孙必胜，香港友人和国家体委合作举办的奥林匹克饭店，由贵都管理，也是因这层关系。在1989年中，我曾写信通过前国家

新加坡国家馆前的音乐喷泉



② 惠来县是非常小的县，几乎少有机会遇到同乡。几年前在中国台湾驻新加坡代表处，遇到胡先生（胡宗南的儿子）的夫人，证实是惠来人，还说一口惠来话，当场把我乐喷了，因为我不会说。



梁林美均 May Leong 女士的绘画作品

体委主任伍绍祖向邓小平先生致意，支持他改革开放，结果邓办传真至奥林匹克饭店“高瞻远瞩”四个字，也在国家体委主办的月刊上登载了此事。

已故吴崇仁先生一直是我在上海的顾问，我于1987年经友人介绍与他结识。我们在上海投资了“上海贵都大饭店”。上海真不愧为“海纳百川”的城市，投资谈判十分顺利，我们在1987年10月只用了3天便达成了意向，21天就签下了投资6000万美元的合同。

说起中国民间习俗，有六十年为一个甲子的说法，令我覺得大有道理。20世纪30年代的上海，也曾繁华过，而被人们称为“小巴黎”，留下了外滩的建筑。到30年代中期日军侵华战争波及全中国，上海就日渐衰落了。1949~1978年，中国是封闭的，在这期间也都与世博是隔绝的。1978年起，邓小平先生主张改革开放，果然，上海又显现了勃勃生气。经过六十年一个甲子，上海较之30年代更加繁荣了，也由于这样中国才得以于1982年重返国际展览组织。90年代初，当时高寿89岁的汪道涵先生首次提出举办世博会，终于在1992年中国申博成功了，这也是有史以来世界上第一个申博成功的发展中国家。

1992年在邓小平先生南巡前几个月，上海贵都大饭店终于顺利开业了，主持开幕典礼的是前上海市市长汪道涵先生，并有缘成为我的忘年交。1993年海峡两岸汪辜会谈在新加坡举行，我有幸请他到我们当时的贵都酒店品尝那闻名的台式大饼油条。在80年代，中国来访新加坡的友人们，都会品尝我们贵都这道特色早餐，如黄胄、启功、王个簃、李富荣、伍绍祖、吴平、谷牧、顾秀莲，等等。2000年汪先生来新加坡，我又私下带他到马来西亚，由我的大哥拿督林孔怀（贵都酒店集团董事长）全程陪同汪老，访问了马六甲（江泽民先生和朱镕基先生都曾去过），又到了吉隆坡、槟城等地，一路下榻在当地的贵都酒店，还在槟城的贵都酒店敞开心花园楼阁，欣赏了南洋果王榴莲。汪老回忆到1957年跟随周恩来总理赴万隆会议时的情景，在那时学会了吃榴莲。

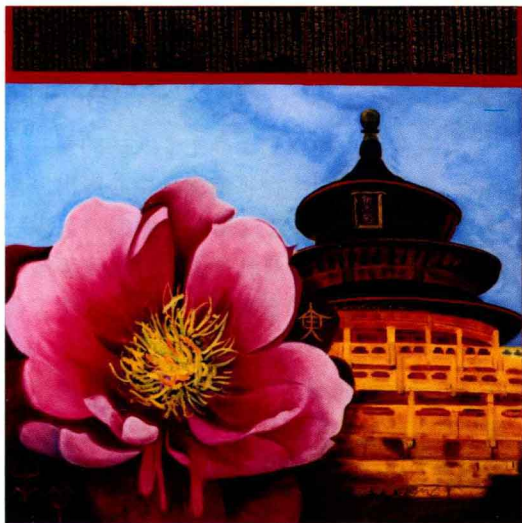
然而，那年代在另外一些城市的投资，也有不很顺利的，然而这些并没有使我对中国的信心受挫。1997年青岛贵都大酒店开业了，不久便遇到亚洲金融风暴的影响。也因此，使贵都在中国的业务，有些转让，有些结束了。1994年我们又在上海华山路投资建造了比利华酒店公寓，中间暂停了几年，2002年重新启动，2003年开业，又遇到“非典”的影响，直到2005年起市场才又逐渐旺了起来。

以上经历,使我感受到中国大陆的改革开放是渐进式的,在逐步的积累之后,到了2003年以后,就有了蓬勃的发展,真令我惊喜、振奋、钦佩!也庆幸自己能见证和参与了中国五千年以来的一次重要的变革。自2008年北京奥运会之后,中国赢得了全世界的尊敬,今后若能加强软件的建设,迈向更优雅的社会,那中国就是当之无愧的泱泱大国了。

记得1992年上海贵都开业时,外滩只有每逢星期六,或有VIP到访才亮灯,而南京路上只有照明的路灯,暗昏昏的……而现在,外滩和陆家嘴都闪耀着明亮耀目、璀璨美丽的节能灯光,而今时的世博园区,更是灯光美若仙境了。

面对着灯光有若繁星点点的上海夜景,我感觉到斗转星移,时光过得真是太快了。30年对于一个国家来说,只是短暂的一瞬,而对于我个人而言,就是一生的将近三分之一了。回想80年代时,被我爱称为“宝贝”的女儿梁纯仪(Cheryl)还只是读小学的小女生,而现在,她已经是澳洲毕业的会计师,并在1997~1998年在北京工作。她同她的先生傅志明是同窗,女儿临盆前回新加坡待产,他们为自己的孩子取了个很有意义的名字——傅华兴,就是期望中华民族复兴的意思。现在,小华兴也已12岁,小学即将毕业了。我的儿子梁瀚辉(Derek),那时就更小了,而现在,也已是过而立之年的男子汉了,也常来上海和北京视察业务。

梁林美均 May Leong 女士的绘画作品



海派文化 对我的启示

更值得一提的是,改革开放以来,文化艺术方面也同样有了长足的发展。我庆幸生逢其时,沐浴到了文化发展的春风。几年来,有幸认识了多位老一代的艺术大师,首先黄胄先生1986年访问新加坡时,品了我的茶后,即兴画了一幅《弥勒品茶》图。还有启功先生,也在品了我的茶后,题字“茶乐”,画了竹子,还在王个簃先生的高足黄葆芳先生教我画的《紫藤》图上,给我题了诗,以后潘受先生还题了和诗。程十发先生、谢稚柳先生、唐云先生也到新加坡题了字,有几位大师还耳提面命亲自教诲。以上几位都已作古,我对他们深深地鞠躬。1997年,我参展于“上海第一届艺术博览会”,此后又连续参展多届。同年,在上海美术馆举办了个人的油画展览会,有幸得到汪道涵先生、程十发先生为我的画展剪彩。

这又使我回想起改革开放的初期,在展览会看到当时艺术品的风格、品种还比较单

调，而现在则是风格缤纷多彩，真可谓“百花齐放”了。

基于以上体验，我在1999年改革开放20周年时，画了一幅题名为《盛世三友》（松、鹤、梅）的油画，寓意“友谊、和平、创造”（有别于中国画传统中的岁寒三友）。2003年为庆贺中国改革开放25周年，我又作了大幅油画《孔雀牡丹》，歌颂改革开放给国家和人民带来的繁荣与和谐。这两幅画现在还挂在坐落于北京金宝街的蔡元培故居的厉家菜的四合院餐馆，另还有两幅《孔雀牡丹》如今都展出于上海华山路湖南路口华山绿地对面的比利华服务公寓中。

在上海“海纳百川”的城市精神感召之下，友人陆国强介绍我认识了书圣王羲之的68代孙王盾先生，谈论探讨了中国书法艺术。他提议我练习阿拉伯字会对书法有帮助，又因英国一位收藏家对我一幅《玫瑰》油画后面提的一首英文诗（Love without the end 永恒的爱）和我的手书英文字很感兴趣，促使我突发奇想，何不将中文书法的元素融入到阿拉伯字之中呢？如果将中文诗词翻译成英文，又以英文书法来介绍给外国友人，对于弘扬中国文化岂不更好吗？这次上海世博会正是一个很好的展示和发布的机会。

1978年中国大陆改革开放之初，我到了大陆。同年，我也到了台湾。当时台湾盛行的“茶艺”给了我很大的影响。之后我就开始冲饮功夫茶和收藏茶壶（特别是朱泥小壶），还自创了一套冲泡功夫茶的方法，提倡“茶乐”。几位大师都为“茶乐”留下了墨宝，汪道涵先生、启功先生、唐云先生、谢稚柳先生、郭佈诺闰骐（溥仪妻子婉容的弟弟），溥杰也写了北京宫的牌匾等。1990年起我就自己动手制作紫砂茶壶，所制各色朱泥小壶，被誉为“均壶十八式”（我专制小壶以别于曼生十八式的壶，只给唐云先生制作了一把提梁铁头壶是中壶）。这些壶曾两次在香港文化中心展出，也在上海艺博会展出。1993年海峡两岸举行汪辜会谈，我请汪道涵先生题字“茶乐”，请唐云先生作画《一路顺风》，寓意祝愿会谈顺利，中国早日和平统一。由我手制两个紫砂茶壶取名“汪辜壶”，在会谈结束后，分赠给汪老和辜振甫先生，也表达了我对两岸和平统一的美好祝愿。

在饮茶制壶的陶冶中，我开始领略中国传统文化的深奥，也悟到了茶文化的精深意蕴。茶，就是人介于花和树木之间，茶叶终年吸取天地浩然之气，饮茶也就是人同大自然的对话。1851年第一届世博会时，上海人徐荣村就以茶叶和丝绸参展于伦敦世博会。150年后的今天，更多人认识到茶不但体现了中国人“天地人”三才融合的传

梁林美均 May Leong 女士亲手制作的“汪辜壶”





新加坡国家馆屋顶花园

统文明，同时也恰恰符合现代人绿色生活的理念。全世界对茶的称谓都以中国南北方的发音为基调，如Cha或Te，可见饮茶文化都是由中国传至西方的。所以我就向友人们提议，将每年的5月31日定为“茶乐日”，届时人人手持茶杯，“愿茶香飘拂世界，以茶汤纯净心灵”。

好友陆国强在世博会前的一个饭局上说，要好好拍摄世博所有展馆的照片，我说到时我将细细地观摩世博会，体会当时没人和如今人山人海的感觉。大家觉得，倒不如制作一本画册，以志这次世博盛会。就这样他又找了志同道合的朋友夏青根先生和王刚先生等一起来做成这本画册。

我有幸应马来西亚旅游局的邀请，参加了马来西亚馆的开馆仪式，并于当天参观了四个馆，包括新加坡馆。隔了两三天的白天和夜晚又看了其他的馆，真是美不胜收。印象深刻的馆有中国馆、英国馆、法国馆、瑞典馆、西班牙馆、德国馆、马来西亚馆，当然还有我们自己的新加坡馆。我上海的许多朋友都很喜欢新加坡馆的建筑设计，特别是陆国强先生。新加坡馆采取圆形设计，在世界不同国家中展示，正体现了我国的包容性。屋顶花园代表了新加坡是花园城市，人们在这样的城市里，也能够感受到大自然，保护大自然的心理便会油然而生，这恰恰符合了本届世博会的主题。屋顶花园中的胡姬花更是让上海朋友们赞赏有加。这花园城市模型正是人人向往的“Better City, Better Life”。也是由于陆国强先生给我看了他拍摄的新加坡馆还有其他场馆的照片，使我看到了上海世博会的成功、精彩、难忘，看到中国蒸蒸日上，越来越富强，所以我们就决定将这些美好的景象做成一本画册，呈现给大家。

我要为中国欢呼！为上海叫好！希望中国明天会更好！也祝全世界的人们生活得更加美好，正如本届世博会的主题：

BETTER CITY, BETTER LIFE!



梁林美均 May Leong 女士留影于上海世博会新加坡国家馆前

Shanghai Expo ——A manifestation of “he 和” (harmony)

By May Leong 梁林美均

A Singaporean artist's impression of the Shanghai Expo

My tour of the Expo leaves me a deep impression and awareness that harmony begets beauty. One keeps wondering, who would possess such superb skills to produce this masterpiece that epitomises all the colours of the world, in their various shades and rendering, and applying the diverse artistic styles: a blend of traditional and modern, classical and surrealistic, abstract and concrete, as well as oriental and occidental. The answer can be found in one word: “he 和” (harmony).

Harmony —— the essence of the Shanghai Expo

People have gathered here in a congenial atmosphere and in the spirit of equality and friendliness, regardless of race, colour or nationality, irrespective of developing or developed country, territorial size or population, social system or creed. The themes, pavilions, exhibits at the Shanghai Expo all showcase the harmonious existence between different people and between mankind and nature. The Chinese have a saying: “he mei 和美” that aptly describes such harmonious state. One sees beauty only where there is harmony.

Harmony —— the openness of Shanghai

Shanghai overflows with a harmonious ambience during the Expo. In fact, such essence of the Shanghai Expo is only an extension of the spirit of the openness of Shanghai.

Such elements transform Shanghai into a melting pot that leads to the renowned “Shanghai Style” in calligraphy and paintings, culinary art, performance art and the distinctive character of the “Shanghai Style”. Various factors such as the historical background, the geographical location, the accumulation of human experience, have contributed to the special

characteristic of Shanghai that is accommodating and all encompassing. “海纳百川，和而不同” (“Hai na bai chuan, he er bu tong” - The sea takes in hundreds of rivers, harmonious but different) .

“Better City, Better Life” — that is what Shanghai really is. The World Expo provides a grand stage for the display of the advancement of human civilization, looking forward to the future by drawing on the experiences endured in making progress in various fields.

The Expo has brought together the achievements of the various countries of the world in new technologies, new ideas and new cultures. The interaction and close contact of such diverse thoughts, concepts and viewpoints would surely inspire us to reach for greater heights.

The people of Shanghai, and even the rest of China, would have the opportunity to remain in close contact at first hand or through televised broadcasts with 246 pavilions represented by 190 countries and 56 international organizations. Added to this is the experience in the various organizational tasks, there is therefore no doubt that at the end of the 184-day World Expo, it will leave an unprecedented impact on the Chinese people. 2010 shall probably be a milestone year in the history of China, defining a pre-Expo era and a post-Expo era. There is the fervent hope and belief that China will achieve another leap forward after the Shanghai Expo.

Affection towards China

In 1978, a man of great stature visited Singapore, a multi-racial country described as “a small red dot” on the world map. He met with the then Prime Minister of Singapore Mr Lee Kuan Yew ,as I was travelling and arrived in Beijing on the same day as Deng arrived in Singapore. At that time, young Singaporeans were not allowed to tour China as individuals, and I had to join a group tour organized by the Society of Accountants to make the trip.

My father had not returned to motherland since moving to Nanyang in 1927, and being the first in the family to have the opportunity to visit China, I was extremely excited. Looking back, I can only sum it up as God’ s will and my connections with China have remained until today. Everything is as fresh to me as if it had happened yesterday.

Several days before Mr Deng’ s arrival, our Golden Phoenix

Sichuan Restaurant at the Singapore Hotel Equatorial received an order from the China Trade Representative’ s Office (diplomatic relations between Singapore and China had not been established then) to provide the catering for the banquet in honour of Mr Deng at the Presidential Residence (Istana, Singapore). It was indeed a great honour, and upon being notified, I immediately held discussions with our Taiwanese master-chef, the late Mr Shen Guangyuan. Taking into consideration that Mr Deng was nearly 80 years old and originated from Sichuan, we planned a special menu that included “boneless smoked duck (Peking Duck style)” and “sauteed diced chicken with hot pepper” . The dishes were served in Taiwan made blue and white porcelain ware, replicas from the Ming Dynasty.

On the day of the VIP banquet, I was still in Beijing. I made a telephone call to the Singapore Equatorial (long distance call had to be made through the telephone operator) to enquire about the outcome of the banquet. I was both relieved and elated to hear that the banquet went on smoothly, and both Mr Deng and his wife expressed satisfaction with the food, and even finished half the bean-paste pancake.

It was after this visit by Mr Deng to Singapore that provided the fillip for Singaporeans to take a greater interest towards the new developments in China. There were general expectations and high hopes in the mainland’ s reform and opening-up initiative.

My late father, Mr Lim Kah Ngam, migrated from the prefecture of Huilai in Chaoshan, Guangdong, to Malaysia in 1927 and later moved on to Singapore. Although he settled down in Singapore for 40 years and had established himself in the construction industry as well as starting the Hotel Equatorial Group in 1969, his business empire extended far beyond Singapore. Our family still owns the Hotel Equatorial in Kuala Lumpur, Malacca (of Admiral Cheng Ho’ s fame), Penang (where Artist Xu Beihong lived and held exhibitions during the war) in Malaysia and in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Despite all these achievements, his emotional ties with the motherland had remained strong. He looked forward to the day when China became a prosperous and united nation where the people all led good lives. Such sentiments were always expressed by my late father in his conversations at family gatherings, recalling old times in his hometown. We were greatly influenced by his thoughts and love of the motherland.

I belong to the second generation of the Chinese immigrants. At that time, Singapore was under British Colonial rule, and only English Schools were set up. The early pioneer overseas Chinese who came from different provincial origins would form associations to cater to the needs of their clansmen such as the establishment of Chinese schools and hospitals. The teachers were recruited from China. My husband Leong Kwok Onn is Fifth Generation overseas Chinese, and like many others, he was educated in English. I deem it a great blessing that I was educated in a Chinese school throughout my school career whereby I was inculcated with the traditional Chinese virtues and moral values such as fidelity, piety, benevolence, love, propriety, justice, integrity and honour. The text book that I used in school for the learning of the Chinese language was “Zhong Hua Wen Xuan” published by the Zhonghua Book Company. All other subjects were taught in Chinese and thus I was not only able to master the Chinese language, but at the same time, acquired considerable knowledge on Chinese culture, history and geography. All these account for the deep feelings that I have developed towards China, and in a way, I could comprehend my late father’s aspiration towards China as well.

In the 1980s, Singapore was facing an economic downturn, and many businessmen were looking for investment opportunities abroad. Under these circumstances, we also began to make enquiries on the prospect of investing in China. After my first tour of China in 1978, I went again in 1984 to purchase porcelain and ceramics in Shantou, Chaozhou, and to open up a Teochew restaurant in Singapore. In 1986, I went on a sight-seeing tour of the Three Gorges with my friend, Madam Mun Xianghui. We were told that Senior Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, had earlier travelled in the same cruise ship as we were travelling.

The second uncle of Madam Mun, Zhuang Xiquan, had spent his early years in Nanyang. He was also one of the founders of Nanyang Girls’ High School in Singapore. His son, Zhuang Yanling, held the position as Chief of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office in Beijing. As it happened, Madam Mun went to Beijing in 1985 and invested in the Asia-Pacific Building. Through her introduction, I became acquainted with Mr Li Shanlin of the Li Family Imperial Cuisine fame. His restaurant was among the first to be granted “ge ti hu” (individual

entrepreneurs) status. Many distinguished political and industry leaders have dined here including the team of former U.S. President Bill Clinton who had a meal at the restaurant in June, 1998.

On that occasion, the revered Li, presented a gift to President Clinton. It was a YiXing Purple tea pot handmade by me and presented to Li previously. Upon his return to the U.S., the President wrote to Li to express his appreciation. Two U.S. Treasury Secretaries have also left mementos in the restaurant by signing their autograph on Dollar Notes.

Wang Shangli, the son-in-law of Li, had served as manager of the Golden Phoenix Restaurant at Olympic Hotel, managed by Hotel Equatorial in Beijing until 1991. In 1994, Wang invited me to partner with him to open the first Beijing Palace Restaurant, specialising in genuine Beijing cuisine so as to preserve the culinary culture of old Beijing. The owner of the Beijing property was the grand nephew of Sun Yat-sen, Sun Bisheng. Hotel Equatorial was the operator of the Olympic Hotel which was established by my Hong Kong friends in collaboration with the National Sports Council. In view of my such involvement, I wrote a letter to Mr Deng Xiaoping in June 1989 expressing my appreciation and support for his initiative for “gai ge kai fang” (reforms and opening-up). The letter was sent through Wu Shaozu, the former Chairman of the National Sports Council. Deng responded via a fax sent to the Olympic Hotel with four Chinese characters: “高瞻远瞩” (aspiration with foresight). An article was written and published in the monthly bulletin of the National Sports Council regarding this incident.

In 1987, through the efforts of friends and the late Mr Wu Chongren, our long-time Advisor in Shanghai, we decided to invest in the “Shanghai Hotel Equatorial”. True to Shanghai City’s reputation as “hai na bai chuan” (the sea takes in hundreds of rivers), our negotiations for the project proceeded without a hitch. Within 3 days after negotiations began in October 1987, we reached an agreement of intent, and within 21 days an agreement was signed closing a deal involving an investment of 60 million U.S. Dollars.

The Chinese folklore on the topic of the “60-year Jia Zi cycle” is quite interesting. In the early 1930s, Shanghai was a bustling city and became known as “Little Paris”. It left a legacy of unique buildings on the Bund (wai tan).

In the mid-1930s, war broke out as a result of the Japanese

invasion into China and Shanghai suffered tremendous setback. Between 1949 and 1978, China adopted a closed-door policy and was completely alienated from the World Exposition. From 1978, as a result of the “gai ge kai fang” (reform and opening-up) policy advocated by Deng Xiaoping, Shanghai was revitalized and thriving. After a 60-year “Jia Zi” cycle, Shanghai has become even more prosperous than in the 1930s. Consequently, China rejoined the World Exposition organization in 1982. In the early 1990s, 89-year grand old man, Wang Daohan, first initiated China’s bid for the World Expo, and eventually succeeded in 1992. China became the first developing country to have succeeded in bidding for the World Expo.

In 1992, a few months prior to Deng Xiaoping’s tour of the South, Shanghai Hotel Equatorial duly opened its doors for business. The opening ceremony was officiated by the ex-mayor of Shanghai, Wang Daohan, who became my close friend since then. When the Cross-Strait Wang-Gu talks were held in Singapore in 1993, I had the privilege to invite Wang to savour our renowned Taiwanese style “da bing you tiao” (a variation of pita bread and croissant) at the Hotel Equatorial. Many friends from China who visited Singapore have all tried this special breakfast menu at the Hotel Equatorial, including Huang Zhou, Qi Gong, Wang Geyi, Li Furong, Wu Shaozhu, Wu Ping, Gu Mu, Gu Xiulian and others. When Wang Daohan visited Singapore again in 2000, I made private arrangements for Wang to visit Malaysia. My elder brother, Dato’ Lim Kong Wai (Chairman of Hotel Equatorial Group) accompanied him throughout his tour that included Malacca (of Admiral Cheng Ho’s fame; Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji also visited), Kuala Lumpur and Penang. He stayed at the respective Hotel Equatorial in each town. At the Penang Hotel Equatorial, he was given a special treat to taste the king of fruits — durian. Wang recalled that he had his first taste of durian when he accompanied Chou Enlai to the Bandung Conference in 1957.

In those days, we had our share of setbacks too. Some of our investments in other city in China ran into difficulties. Despite such setbacks, I never lost confidence in China and its market. In 1997, Qingtao Hotel Equatorial opened for business and was soon in the shadow of the Asian financial crisis. The impact of this financial turmoil has also caused some of the Hotel Equatorial business in China to change hands or terminated.

In 1994, we had invested in the construction of Spottiwode Service Apartments in Huashan Road, Shanghai. The project was stalled for a few years, and was only resumed in 2002. It began business operations in 2003 but had to face the impact of SARS. The market only improved from 2005 onwards. From what I have related above, I can only conclude from personal experiences that the initiative for reform and opening-up advanced progressively but steadily. The result can be seen when the country flourished and headed for prosperity from 2003 onwards. I take a personal sense of pride, excitement and admiration at such success and felt deeply honoured to have the opportunity to witness and be part of the process of this social innovation in the long history of China. The success of the 2008 Olympic Games gained the respect of the world for China. If efforts can be made to strengthen the provision of software, and advance towards the building of an elegant society, China will definitely assume the role as a superpower nation.

I remember the days when Shanghai Hotel Equatorial was opened for business in 1992. The lightings at the Bund (wai tan) would only be switched on during Saturdays or VIP visits. And Nanking Road was lit with dull street lamps. But now things have changed dramatically — the Bund and Lu Jia Zui are brightly lit with energy — saving lightings and the area surrounding the World Expo is so beautifully lit that gives the feeling of fairyland.

As I gazed at the night scene of Shanghai with its myriad of lights, reflections of the past flashed through my mind. Thirty years is only but a short span in the history of a country, but for me, it represents almost a third of my lifetime. Looking back at the 1980s, I recalled the days when my daughter Cheryl (I nicknamed her “precious baby”) was only a pupil in primary school. Now she has qualified as an accountant from Australia and has worked in Beijing in 1997 and 1998. Her husband, Poh Chee Beng, was her classmate. She returned to Singapore for the confinement of her first child who was named, Fu Huaxing. This name is full of meaning as it depicts the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Little Huaxing is now 12 years old, and will be finishing his primary education. My son Derek was even younger in those days, but now he has grown up, having completed his national service in Singapore and is well into his 30s. He travels often to Shanghai and Beijing to look after the family business.

Shanghai-style (hai pai) culture —— my enlightenment

One matter which is of particular noteworthy is the manner that culture and art flourished by leaps and bounds since the reform and opening-up.

I am most fortunate to have the opportunity to be closely associated with the arts and culture. For the past several years, I had the chance to meet some grand masters of the older generation. Firstly, it was grand master, Huang Zhou, who visited Singapore in 1986. I served him tea, and he proceeded to paint an impromptu painting “Maitreya savouring tea”. Similarly, Qi Gong, having savoured the tea that I served, wrote the Chinese characters “cha le” (happy tea) against a bamboo background. In addition, Qi Gong also composed a poem and wrote it on my painting “ziteng (Chinese wistaria)”. This painting was tutored by my master, Huang Baofang, a brilliant student of Wang Geyi. Later, in consonance with the poem composed by Qi Gong, a respected calligrapher, Pan Shou, also wrote a poem of his own on the same painting. Other grand masters such as Cheng Shifa, Xie Zhiliu, Tang Yun and many others have also presented me with their calligraphy and painting works during their visits to Singapore. I had the privilege of receiving personal tuition from some of these masters who have since passed away. I owed them a great gratitude. In 1997, I exhibited my works at the “1st Shanghai Art Exposition”, and had participated in several subsequent expositions. In the same year, I also held my solo oil painting exhibition at the Shanghai Museum. I was honoured by the presence of Wang Daohan and Cheng Shifa to officiate the opening ceremony. This brings to mind the monotonous style of the art works at the beginning of the reform and opening-up. But now the art scene is so colourful and lively, it is truly a case of “let a hundred flowers bloom”!

Inspired by my personal experiences as mentioned above, in 1999 on the 20th anniversary of the reform and opening-up, I painted an oil painting entitled “3 friends in a prosperous world” using the pine tree, crane and plum flower as the subject. These denote “friendship, peace and building the future” (not to be confused with the traditional Chinese painting —— 3 friends in the cold winter).

Again in 2003, on the 25th anniversary of opening-up, I painted a large oil painting entitled “Peacock and Peony” to glorify the success of reform and opening-up that brought prosperity and harmony to the China and its people. The two paintings are now still on display at the former residence of Cai Yuanpei at Jinbao Street, Beijing, where the Li Family Cuisine Courtyard Restaurant is operating. Two more paintings with the same title “Peacock and Peony” are also displayed at the Spottiswoode Service Apartments at Huashan Road, Shanghai.

In the spirit of “hai na bai chuan” (the sea takes in a hundred rivers), and through the introduction of my friend, Lu Guoqiang, I became acquainted with Mr Wang Dun, the 68th generation descendant of the celebrated calligrapher, Wang Xizhi. Mr Wang Dun and I had an interesting discourse on the art of Chinese calligraphy. He suggested that I practice the Arabic script in order to improve my calligraphy. Added to this was the interest shown by an English collector with regard to my handwriting of an English poem, “Love without end”, which appeared at the back of my oil painting “Rose”. This led me to the fantastic idea of integrating the elements of Chinese calligraphy into the handwriting of Arabic. I thought to myself, if we translate Chinese poetry into English and present such translation to our foreign friends in the form of this new innovative calligraphy, it will certainly be a more effective way of promoting Chinese culture. The Shanghai Expo was therefore a most appropriate opportunity to showcase this art form.

When the reform and opening-up was first implemented in 1978, I was in mainland China. In the same year, I also visited Taiwan. At that time, “Cha yi” (Chinese tea culture) was in vogue in Taiwan and I took a great interest in “Cha yi”. I began to indulge in the art of “kungfu tea”, a type of Chinese tea ceremony, and collecting teapots (especially the small red clay teapots). I developed a special method for brewing “kungfu tea” and described such drinking pleasure as “cha le” (happy tea). I have in my collection calligraphy works on “cha le” written by well-known masters such as: Wang Daohan, Qi Gong, Tang Yun, Xie Zhiliu, Gobulo Runji (younger brother of Puyi’s wife, Empress Wan Rong). The signboard of Peking Palace Restaurant was in fact written by Pujie, brother of Emperor Puyi.

Since 1990, I started to produce handmade Zisha teapots