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徐悲鸿纪念馆编
中国和平出版社出版

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徐 悲 鴻 先 生

1895 — 1953

前言

在20世纪上半叶中国艺术步入现代之时，徐悲鸿无疑是举足轻重的关键人物。为了扭转当时中国画囿于成法、陈陈相因的习气和每况愈下的颓势，他以优秀知识分子的果敢、才智和学养，将西方精湛的写实技巧融入中国绘画，从而为传统艺术的革新开拓了广阔的道路。他承前启后、继往开来，被国际美术评论称为“中国近代绘画之父”。

徐悲鸿生于以出文人学士著称的宜兴，自幼随父学习诗、书、画、印，打下传统文化的雄厚基础。1918年，他在担任北京大学画法研究会导师之时，已成为新文化运动中倡导革新绘画的主要人物。1919~1927年，他赴欧洲苦学8年，以振兴中国艺术为出发点，经过深思熟虑，汲取了古典主义造型坚实的长处、浪漫主义富有运动感的特点、现实主义观察自然的方法、印象主义表现光色关系的技巧，取精用宏、尽微致广。1927年，他送交法国国家美展的9幅油画全部入选，显示了中国画家的卓越超群，令法国画界赞叹不已。在精通了西方绘画之后，他随即返回祖国，一面努力建立系统、科学的美术教育体系，一面以丰富、动人的创作成果展现这条融会中西、博大精深的艺术道路。他在20年代末、30年代初完成的史诗巨作《田横五百士》《徯我后》，以不让西方的精湛技巧和逸气逼人的中国气派奠定了中国油画的基石。他意到笔随，使画面自然地呈现出中国特有的虚实美，变化微妙的冷色轮廓线在传达空气感的同时，给人以独立的形式美感，隐秀雄奇的画面有如金石铿锵。他的素描突出中国画家用线的深厚功力，透明、流动的灰色调，具有水墨渲染一般的无穷韵味，令无数西方观众倾倒。

徐悲鸿研习西画的目的是回归东方，其高瞻远瞩和天才创造表现在其中国画的各个方面。在人物画上，他第一个将表现充分的人体引入，从而大大加强了人物形象的力度，灵活多变的线条与虚和曼妙的渲染完美结合，使中国画对于体积、空间的表现力空前丰富。《李印泉像》《泰戈尔》《九方皋》《巴人汲水》

运出神入化之笔，刻画人物个性和深邃的内心世界。传神阿堵，呼之欲出。《愚公移山》更以排山倒海之势，讴歌中华民族百折不挠、坚韧不拔的铮铮傲骨，它的浪漫主义手法、强烈的象征意义、令人叹服的造型功力，都在中国画的发展历史中，起着里程碑一样的作用。徐悲鸿的动物画也驰名中外，他熟练地运用解剖、透视和记忆形象的非凡能力，捕捉动物最为传神的瞬间，把猫的娇敏、牛的醇厚、鹅的喧闹、鹰的雄健描绘得淋漓尽致。他还极大地拓宽了中国画特有的寄情、比兴手法，在风雨中高鸣的鸡、与逆风拼搏的雀、虽负伤而保持尊严的狮，都浸透了画家不可遏制的激情和对民族振兴的渴望。那如风似电、奔向光明的神骏更是“一洗万古凡马空”，作为中国绘画的象征，出现在世界各地，代表着中国艺术的高峰。

徐悲鸿的画是创造精神的颂歌。在他的笔下，哪怕一花一草，一树一石，都巧妙地融合中西材料、技法之长，匠心独运，新颖迷人。他画梅时，先用尽情挥洒的浓墨在灰色纸上绘出树干，再以白粉点花，清丽典雅、一尘不染；画竹则以绘制巨幅油画的棕刷将竹干一挥而就。他擅以颜色加水墨染出大的块面，再以浓墨勾勒其间，显现出嶙峋之岩石，运用变幻的水墨巧留飞白而成妙丽的月光树影。《漓江春雨》更用大泼墨将线条融化，纯以酣畅的墨块抒写秀甲天下的奇景，使中国山水画别开生面。

徐悲鸿毕生以复兴中国绘画为己任，为发展美术教育呕心沥血。他爱才如命，竭尽全力扶助、推崇有才之士，荟萃群贤，培养了作为现今中国美术教育骨干力量的大批优秀画家，被世人誉为“画坛伯乐”。其高尚品德与其杰出的艺术成就一样影响深远，令人崇敬。台湾的美术评论称他为“中国绘画革命史的一颗明珠”，美国华人报纸尊他为“中国画圣”，便是明证。

这本画册收入徐悲鸿各个时期的代表作和生活图片，作为对他的纪念，同时也呈上我们对这位画坛巨匠的缅怀与追思。

Preface

In the early part of the twentieth century when Chinese art entered into its modern stage of development there arose an undoubtedly key figure—Xu Beihong. To redress the malpractice then prevalent among the painting circle, of desparately clinging to and blindly copying after the set patterns, and to check the deteriorating trend, Xu Beihong, with dauntless courage, great wisdom and profound learning typical of outstanding intellectuals, merged the exquisite western realistic painting techniques with traditional Chinese paintings, thus opened up a wide road for the innovation of the traditional art. As a result, he was acclaimed as "Father of Modern Chinese Paintings" by international arts critics for the pivotal role he had played in the Chinese arts circle.

Born in Yixing, a city noted for its long lists of renowned writers and scholars, Xu Beihong, ever since his childhood, had learned poetry, calligraphy, painting and seal engraving from his father, which placed him on a solid foundation for his grasp of the cultural tradition. As early as in 1918 when he was working as a tutor at the Institute of Painting Techniques of Peking University, he already became a prominent advocator of innovation among the painting circles during the New Culture Movement. From 1919 to 1927 he worked hard at Western paintings for eight long years with a view to reviving Chinese arts. After much careful consideration he explored deep and wide and absorbed the best while discarding the inferior. Finally he succeeded in mastering the solid modelling of the classicists, the striking sense of motion by the Romanticists, the keen insight into nature by the Realistists and the application of light and colour by the Impressionists. As a result of his hard work, the nine oil paintings he presented to the France National Exposition of Fine Arts were all accepted, which not only demonstrated the preeminence of the Chinese painters, but also left much for their French counterparts to admire. Having grasped the essence of the Western painting techniques, he immediately came back to China. From then on he busied himself with establishing a systematic and scientific fine arts educational system. In the meantime, he created a host of rich and enticing works to demonstrate his sound-based artistic road of combining Chinese and Western painting techniques. In the late 1920's and early 1930's, he finished his epic works "Tian Heng and His 500 Warriors", "Expectancies", which formed the corner stone of Chinese oil paintings by using exquisite techniques no inferior to the Western painters' and by conveying an intimate gracefulness typical of Chinese paintings. Because he could paint with great ease whatever came to his mind, the beauty of solidness and vagueness unique to Chinese paintings sprang naturally into his pictures. The outlines painted with the subtle application of cold colours, while conveying a sense of the air, impress people with a singularly external beauty, for the vivid landscapes in the drawings seem to be ringing with a fortitude. With regard to his sketches, they highlighted the Chinese painters' skills in applying the lines: the grey tones seemingly transparent and fluid, conveying an indefinite taste, cause great admiration on the part of numerous Western spectators. Xu Beihong delved into Western paintings with a clear aim in mind—serving the needs of the Orient. His broad vision and talented creative works are manifested in every aspect of his paintings. In painting people, he was the first to bring in the fully depicted human bodies, so that the expressiveness of the picture is immensely enhanced. The perfect combination of the varied and flexible lines with the hazy splendour in his works enriched Chinese paintings in the way of transmitting the sense of size and space. In Xu Beihong's works "Portrait of Li Yinquan", "Tagore", "Jiu Fanggao" and "Sichuan Folk Drawing Water" he made use of his marvelous painting brush to bring out the personalities of his characters and their inner-most emotions, so lively and real as if they are all ready to step down at your call. His other work "The Foolish Old Man who

Removed Mountains", depicting the figure with the momentum of an avalanche, unsurmountable dignity and sweeping power, is in fact an ode to the tenacity of the Chinese nation. This picture of his, with its romantic techniques, its striking symbolism and its admirable modelling of figures and scenes, represents a milestone in the development of traditional Chinese paintings. Xu Beihong is also famous far and near for his talents of painting animals. By virtue of his extraordinary ability to analyse, to use perspective and to memorize images, he is skillful in snatching the most expressive moment of the animals' movements, successfully depicting the swift elegance of the cat, the pure honesty of the ox, the bustle of the goose and the mighty posture of the eagle in flight. In addition, he pioneered new techniques of expressing emotions and exploiting symbolism, which are unique to traditional Chinese paintings. Under his painting brushes, the crowing rooster in a storm, the struggling lark, the injured but dignified lion, all are imbued with an uncontrollable passion of the painter and his longing for the rejuvenation of his nation. The galloping horses speeding for bright prospects are considered to have "discarded the time-honoured appearances of the horses drawn". This masterpiece of his, as a symbol of Chinese paintings, appears in many parts of the world and represents a peak in Chinese fine arts.

Xu Beihong's paintings invariably sing the songs of the creative spirit. With his wonderous painting brush in his hand, he made ingenious use of Chinese and Western painting materials and borrowed from the strong points of Chinese and Western techniques so that whatever he drew—even a flower, a blade of grass, a single tree or a rock, is full of the master's originality and unique fascination. When he drew a wintersweet, he first spread the ink over a piece of grey paper to make an outline of its trunk; then marked out the petals by using some white powder, hence producing a sense of purity and elegance. When he painted a bamboo, he did it with a coir brush used mainly drawing huge oil paintings, successfully bringing out the sense of firmness. He was expert in using water colours and ink to stain large patches on paper and then sketched deftly on them with thick black ink, producing the effect of water clashing against jagged rocks. By varying the ink water and leaving some blank white spaces, he ingeniously made out the moon light and shadows of trees. When painting "Spring Drizzle over the Li Jiang River", he first poured ink on paper to melt the lines, and then began to paint black inky patches to bring the superb scenery into life, thus breaking fresh ground in Chinese landscape painting.

Xu Beihong dedicated all his life to the rejuvenation of Chinese paintings. On the other hand, he took indefinite pains to develop China's education in fine arts. He valued talents and did all he possibly could to bring them up, so that a galaxy of top-flight painters have formed the backbone of China's fine arts education today. Accordingly, he is esteemed as "the Bo Le of the Painting Circle"—the talents scout. His lofty character, just like his outstanding artistic accomplishments, has an esteemable, far-reaching significance. Facts show that he is respected by many: art critics in Taiwan acclaim him as "a shining pearl in the innovation of Chinese paintings". Newspapers published by Chinese-Americans hailed him as "Saint of Chinese Paintings".

This picture album has selected Xu Beihong's representative works in different periods of his life as well as some of his pictures of daily life. It is thus published to commemorate his centennial birthday; meanwhile, we wish to express our sincere cherishing memory to this great master of the painting circle.

徐悲鸿小传

廖静文

1895年7月19日，徐悲鸿出生于中国南方的江苏省宜兴县屺亭桥镇，在烟波浩淼的太湖之西15公里。

太湖之滨是中国历代才子、诗人、画家荟萃之地，它不仅山水明媚，更有勤劳勇敢的人民和悠久光荣的文化传统。相传春秋时范蠡携西施在宜兴隐居，以制紫砂陶器为生，被称作紫砂的祖师陶朱公，至今宜兴有中国陶都之美誉。宜兴还有古迹“蛟桥”，是晋朝周处为民除害的斩蛟之地。徐悲鸿的父亲达章公就是一位正直不阿的画家，他精诗文、书法、篆刻，尤擅绘画，在山水、人物、花鸟上均有很深的造诣。他不慕功名，不求闻达，曾刻了许多图章，以明心志，如“半耕半读半渔樵”、“读书声里是吾家”、“闲来写幅丹青卖，不用人间造孽钱”、“儿女心肠、英雄肝胆……”他对艺术的热爱和追求以及做人的高尚品德使徐悲鸿受到很深的影响，并使徐悲鸿走上了绘画之路。

徐悲鸿6岁开始跟父亲读书，10岁随父亲乘舟赴溧阳时，便有“春水绿弥漫，青山秀色含，一帆风信好，舟过万重峦”的诗句，以即景成诗的艺术才华闻名乡里。他9岁读完“四书”《左传》后，便开始随父亲学画，每日临摹一幅吴友如的界画、人物。吴友如是清代末年最大的插图画家，能在尺幅之中描绘亭台楼阁、虫鱼鸟兽、奇花异草，以至千军万马。徐悲鸿每次随父亲进城时，必至画店观赏石涛、八大及任伯年等人之作，回家后凭记忆默写。在父亲的殷勤教导和勇于创新的前辈

画家熏陶下，他打下了中国绘画的坚实基础。在寂寞的、缺少玩具的少年时代，徐悲鸿悄悄地爱上了周围的许多动物，并且仔细观察和描绘它们，如温顺的牛、奔驰的马、嘎嘎鸣叫的白鹅、浮游于水面的群鸭、倦卧在墙角或戏于树上的花猫……都一一出现在他的笔下，宛然如生。

13岁时，家乡大水，达章公便携徐悲鸿去外地谋生。为人画人物、山水、花卉、动物，刻图章，写春联。那时只有城市才有人像摄影，所以他们经常为人画肖像。这对少年的徐悲鸿来说，是一种极严格的考验，对他日后在人物画方面的卓越成就有重大影响。当然，这种卖艺的生涯不只是对艺术功力的磨炼，也使他更多地接触了下层社会和劳苦大众，激发了他忧国忧民的感情，他在当时的画上常署名“神州少年”、“江南贫侠”，表达了他胸怀大志。

少年时代的徐悲鸿已在摸索创造新的绘画风格，当时的强盗牌香烟盒中附有动物画片，悲鸿很爱搜集，又见到各种动物标本，便对标本进行严格认真的写生。一些西方艺术大师的作品复制品更使他萌发了到欧洲去学习美术的朦胧愿望，然而冷酷的现实却横亘在他面前，流浪的生涯使父亲染上重病，他们不得不返回故乡。

17岁的徐悲鸿已成为宜兴知名的画

家，在宜兴女子师范、彭城中学、始齐小学三校教授美术。19岁时父亲病逝，悲鸿含着深沉的哀痛埋葬了父亲后，决定去上海寻找半工半读的机会。宜兴初级师范的语文教师张祖芬送别他时，殷切地勉励说：“你年轻聪敏，又刻苦努力，前途未可限量。我希望你记住一句话：‘人不可有傲气，但不能无傲骨’，我没有什么东西可送你就以这句嘉话为赠吧！”徐悲鸿从心底涌起无限感激，并终身铭记着这句嘉言，将它们作为座右铭。直到他生命的晚年，他仍带着温情对我说：“张祖芬先生可称我的第一位知己啊！”

1914年，徐悲鸿来到上海，一位在中国公学担任教授的同乡徐子明曾将悲鸿的画推荐给复旦大学校长，很受赞赏，并得到安排工作的许诺。当徐子明陪同徐悲鸿来到校长面前时，校长十分诧异，用耳语对徐子明说：“他年轻得像个孩子，如何能工作呢？”徐子明热烈地争辩说：“只要他有才艺，你何必计较他的年龄呀！”后来，徐悲鸿几次写信给复旦大学校长，都得不到回音；于是，徐悲鸿流落在上海。正在彷徨无计时，徐子明介绍他去找《小说月报》的编辑恽铁樵。徐悲鸿夹了自己的画和徐子明的信去见恽铁樵，很受青睐，并应允为徐悲鸿在商务印书馆谋一个画插图的小职，嘱徐悲鸿过几天去听回音。

这时，已是秋雨绵绵的季节，徐悲鸿没有雨伞，冒雨去探回音。恽铁樵先生愉快地说：“事情成功了！你不久便可搬到商务印书馆住。”一种温暖的感觉涌到徐悲鸿寒冷的身上。他立即赶回旅店，给母亲及故乡的朋友写信，说他已经找到了工作。信刚刚发出，忽然响起急促的叩门声。恽铁樵站在门前，手里拿了一个纸包，神色仓皇地说：“事情绝望了！”徐悲鸿急忙拆开纸包，只见里面除了自己的画以外，还有一个批件：“徐悲鸿的画不合用。”徐悲鸿觉得心猛然裂开了，血不断地涌上来，一种难以遏制的痛苦和失望强烈地攫住了他，他狂奔到黄浦江

边,想要结束自己的生命。混浊而奔腾的江水汹涌地冲击着江岸,轮船的汽笛尖锐地吼叫着。徐悲鸿解开衣襟,让无情的风雨打在他年轻的胸膛上。当一阵寒冷的战栗从脚跟慢慢传递到全身时,他才清醒地对自己说:“一个人到了山穷水尽的地步而能自拔,才不算懦弱啊!”

徐悲鸿回到了故乡,送走了第一个没有父亲的忧郁的除夕。镇上的一位民间医生用深厚的同情慰勉了他,并赠他一笔小款。于是,徐悲鸿再一次来到上海,但仍找不到工作。一个偶然的机,上海富商黄震之看到徐悲鸿的作品,十分赞赏他的天才和同情他的遭遇,慷慨地为他提供食宿。但不久,黄震之不幸破产,徐悲鸿又无所依靠。当时著名的岭南派画家高剑父、高奇峰兄弟在上海开设审美书馆,徐悲鸿画了一幅马寄去,大受赞赏。回信说:“虽古之韩幹,无以过也!”并请徐悲鸿再画4幅仕女图。这时,徐悲鸿身上只剩5个铜板,而4幅仕女图要一星期才能画完。徐悲鸿仅能每天以一个铜板买一团糍饭充饥。第六天和第七天便整日不食。当他终于夹着4幅仕女送往审美书馆时,天上正下着大雪,而高氏兄弟不在,徐悲鸿只好将画交给看门人收下,因饥饿难忍,不得不脱下身上单薄的衣服去当掉。

严寒渐渐消退时,徐悲鸿看到震旦大学的招生广告,去报名投考,被录取了。然而入学须交学费,他只好腆颜去向一位并非富有的同乡阮翟光告贷,阮翟光热情地接待和帮助他。于是徐悲鸿入学了,除攻读法文外,仍继续作画。一天,他从报纸上看到哈同花园附设的明智大学征求仓颉画像,便根据古书叙述,画了一幅仓颉画像应征,想得到一点稿酬,解决生活困难。几天后,明智大学派车来接他,盛赞他的作品,并请他去教授美术。徐悲鸿说明自己尚在求学,须待学期结束。

暑假来临时,徐悲鸿携带画具,来到明智大学。当时明智大学经常邀请一些

学者名流讲学。徐悲鸿因此结识了著名学者康有为、王国维等人。康有为发现徐悲鸿为艺苑奇才,请他为自己和亡妻以及朋友们画了像,并将自己的全部收藏供徐悲鸿尽情观览。徐悲鸿在康有为的指导下,遍临名碑,书艺得以精进,品味高深,逐渐形成了他那雄奇而潇洒的个人风格。

徐悲鸿拿到了明智大学给的一笔稿酬,决定去日本研究美术。1917年5月,徐悲鸿抵东京,整天寻觅藏画的处所观览。他感到日本一些画家已不囿于陈法,渐渐脱去积习,能仔细观察和描绘大自然,达到精深美妙的境界,这使徐悲鸿更坚定了融会中外技法的意愿。他在日本还结识了著名艺术家中村不折,看到他收藏的许多中国古代碑帖和日本绘画精品。中村不折还托徐悲鸿将《广艺舟双楫》的日文本带给康有为。

1917年12月,徐悲鸿来到北京,开始以他那生气勃勃、富有民族风格的绘画在中国艺坛显露头角,被北京大学聘为画法研究会导师。他在故宫看到大量优秀的中国古代绘画,从中汲取了丰富的营养。

当时北京的知识界很活跃,《新青年》《每周评论》等刊物对封建思想进行了猛烈的抨击,传播了民主主义的思想和文化。徐悲鸿也受到了深刻的影响,使他站在新文化运动的前列,成为中国画家中最坚决的革新者。他在北京大学的《绘学杂志》第一期上以《中国画改良论》为题,对中国画中的保守势力进行猛烈抨击,一针见血地指出:“中国画学之颓败,至今已极矣。凡世界文明,理无退化。独中国画之在今日,比二十年前退五十步,三百年前退五百步,五百年前退四百步,七百年前千步,千年前八百步。民族之不振,可慨也夫。”他认为中国画颓败的原因是:“曰守旧,曰惟失其学术独立之地位。”他慨叹地写道:“要之以视千年前先民不逮者,实为奇耻大

辱。”在如何进行革新的问题上,他明确地提出:“古法之佳者守之,垂绝者继之,不佳者改之,未足者增之,西方绘画可采入者融之。”由于傅增湘和蔡元培的帮助,徐悲鸿终于获得去法国留学的公费。1919年3月,徐悲鸿怀着向西方学习科学和民主,以复兴中国美术为己任的决心,从上海乘船启程赴法,开始了他艺术生涯中转折性的阶段。

徐悲鸿到达巴黎后,先在各大博物馆仔细观摩西方艺术的精华及比较他们与东方艺术的不同之处,数月绝笔不画。然后,入徐梁画院研习素描。随后考入巴黎国立高等美术学校,以弗拉孟、高尔蒙为师。每次竞试,都名列前茅。课余,便到卢浮宫和卢森堡美术馆研究各派的异同和各家的造诣。临摹普吕洞、德拉克洛瓦、委拉斯盖兹、伦勃朗等大师的作品。1920年冬,法国大雕塑家唐泼特介绍徐悲鸿认识了法国国家画会的领袖达仰·布佛莱。该画会反对陈腐守旧的法国艺术家协会,主张在吸收各派之长的基础上创新,在当时享有很高的威望。从此,徐悲鸿每星期天都去达仰画室聆听达仰的教导和参加该派艺术家们的茶会,尤其在与倍难尔的交谈中,深受教益。达仰勉励徐悲鸿说:“学美术是很苦的事,不要趋慕浮夸,不要甘于微小的成就。”他要徐悲鸿精绘素描,并养成默写的习惯。

1921年4月法国国家美展开幕,徐悲鸿从早至晚仔细观摩,走出会场时,才发现外面下着大雪,而他整天未进餐,又缺少御寒的大衣,顿时感到饥寒交迫,腹痛如绞,从此患了严重的肠痉挛症。他常强迫自己忍痛作画,现仍保存的一幅素描上便写着:“人览吾画,焉知吾之为此,每至痛不支也。”

这年夏天,病更剧,而学费已完全断绝,只好去柏林。徐悲鸿在柏林认识了柏林美术学院院长康普,并看到了门采尔、绥干第纪及康普的作品,感到在法

国见到的佳作虽多，仍受局限。他最爱伦勃朗的画，便去博物院临摹，每天都持续画10小时，其间连一口水也不喝。特别在临摹伦勃朗第二夫人像时，下了很大的功夫，觉得略有收获，但仍不能用在自己的作品上，于是更加努力。

1923年，徐悲鸿回到巴黎后，以油画《老妇》，第一次入选法国国家美展。再谒达仰，陈述学习虽无懈怠，但进步很少。达仰说：“人须有受苦的习惯，求学也一样……未历苦境的人往往缺乏宏大的志愿。最大的作家多是毅力最强的人，所以能达到很高的成就，为人类申诉。”达仰要徐悲鸿进一步精绘素描，油绘人体时认真作分部研究，务必体会精微，不要追求爽利夺目的笔触。徐悲鸿遵从达仰的教导，很见功效，于是更加努力。先后有《怅望》《箫声》《琴声》《抚猫人像》《远闻》《马夫和马》等杰作问世。仅1927年就有9幅作品入选法国国家美展，获得很高的赞誉。

1925年徐悲鸿还曾赴新加坡，为陈嘉庚及其所办的厦门大学作画，并在上海展出历年所作，引起文化界极大的兴趣。康有为当时曾写道：“徐悲鸿10年前为我及文慎公、沈子培尚书写像，惟妙惟肖。其于画，盖天才也。后游日本，又学画于法国、德国，深谙7年。今归出所画示我，精深华妙，陷秀雄奇，独步中国，无以为偶。其画固中国所未见，其画派亦中国所未有。”

1926年，徐悲鸿赴布鲁塞尔的博物院临画，他很爱鲁本斯的作品，认为他是古今最好的色彩画家之一。

1927年春，徐悲鸿赴意大利和瑞士，流连于圣彼得寺的名雕和西斯廷教堂的米开朗琪罗的壁画之前，纵情地欣赏了文艺复兴时代大师们的杰作，并浏览了庞贝古城，领略了西方古代艺术的气氛。

经过8年勤奋刻苦的学习和钻研，徐悲鸿感到自己已能在创作之前胸有成竹，并能尽情挥写，得心应手，于是，他带着精湛的绘画技法和广博的艺术知识，回到久别的祖国，致力于革新中国绘画的现实主义运动。作为一位诚实正直的艺术家，徐悲鸿的艺术活动和祖国的命运始终紧密地联系在一起。

1927年归国后，徐悲鸿与田汉、欧阳予倩共同创办了南国艺术学院。徐悲鸿在担任美术系主任的同时，开始创作巨幅油画《田横五百士》，歌颂被压迫人民所最可贵的富贵不淫、威武不屈的精神。

1928年，南京中央大学也聘请徐悲鸿担任艺术系教授，徐悲鸿提出不能辞去南国的工作。于是，他半月在南国，半月在中大授课。

1929年，徐悲鸿就任北京艺术学院院长。他以“一口反万众”的坚定态度聘齐白石为教授，极力促进中国画教学的革新。

痛感中国许多人才被埋没压抑，他创作了巨幅国画《九方皋》。几经易稿，把千里马遇到知己的欣喜和九方皋虽为樵夫，却具远见卓识的风度，表现得淋漓尽致。

1931年至1933年，徐悲鸿用了两年的时间，以《尚书》为题材，画出巨幅油画《徯我后》，表达人民反对压迫者，渴望得到解救的心声。

为了宣传中国美术，提高中国艺术的国际地位，1933年，徐悲鸿前往欧洲，举办中国画展。画展首先在巴黎引起强烈震动，参加开幕式的重要人士达3000人，展览应观众要求延长了15天，目录印至三版，报纸上的介绍文章达二百余篇。法国文豪保尔·瓦洛里专门为该展撰文介绍。徐悲鸿的作品受到公众的热

诚赞扬，法国政府购藏了他的《古柏》一画，法国报纸称赞该画可与巴比松画派大师卢梭相比。

随后，徐悲鸿又赴布鲁塞尔、柏林、法兰克福举办个人画展，获巨大成功。有50多家报纸杂志发表了赞誉文章。

徐悲鸿在意大利米兰、苏联列宁格勒、莫斯科举办的中国画展也引起轰动。该展的纪录片在意大利全国放映，被誉为自马可·波罗之后最重要的文化交流。苏联爱米塔日美术馆还专门成立了中国绘画的展室。徐悲鸿在撰写的《在全欧宣传中国美术的经过》一文中说：“吾此次出国举行中国画展，曾在法、比、德、意、苏展出7次，成立4处中国画展览室于各大博物院，总计因诸展而赞扬中国文化之文章、杂志达两万万份。吾于展览会一切接洽，在内在外，绝对未用政府名义……其岁糜国人巨款，号称文化基金之任何机关，皆未有一文之助，凡我国民，皆请注意于此点也。”

徐悲鸿从苏联带回了珍贵的列宁和托尔斯泰的面模，并促成了苏联版画在南京和上海的展览。

1935年，徐悲鸿赴广西，创作了山水画《漓江春雨》，以大泼墨的手法描绘甲天下的桂林山水，情景交融，笔墨淋漓，手法新颖独特，是中国大写意山水画的代表之作。

抗日战争爆发后，中央大学迁重庆，徐悲鸿回校任教，并创作了国画《巴人汲水》《巴之贫妇》等反映人民生活艰辛的作品。

1938年，徐悲鸿携带自己的作品去南洋，先后在新加坡、吉隆坡、槟榔屿、怡保举行画展，盛况空前。徐悲鸿将画展的全部收入捐献，救济祖国的难民。

1940年，徐悲鸿应印度诗哲泰戈尔之

邀,赴印度国际大学讲学,并在加尔各答举行画展。泰戈尔在画展序言中写道:“中国的艺术大师徐悲鸿在有韵律的线条和色彩中为我们提供了一个在记忆中已消失的远古形象,而无损于他自己经验里所具有的地方色彩和独特风格……我尽情地欣赏了这些绘画,我确信我们的艺术爱好者将从这些绘画中得到丰富的灵感……多言是饶舌的……这样,我就升起谈话的帷幕,来引导观众走向一席难逢的美好的盛筵。”

徐悲鸿为泰戈尔作了10余幅素描速写,并根据它们完成了中国画《泰戈尔》。伟大的诗人正在凝神构思一首美丽的诗歌,宁静而神秘的花园有着无穷的诗意。它是徐悲鸿的肖像画杰作之一。在泰戈尔的介绍下,徐悲鸿还为圣雄甘地画了速写像。

在印度,徐悲鸿创作了构思已久的巨幅国画《愚公移山》。画面以艰苦卓绝的精神和必胜信念震撼人心。在中华民族生死存亡的紧要关头,他以自己的画笔为坚强不屈的同胞写下了无愧于时代的伟大形象。徐悲鸿为这幅画作了一百多幅习作和画稿,最终使用了巨幅宣纸来表现剧烈运动中的人体。这在中国画中是前所未有的,它为中国绘画的发展揭开了新的一页,是历史与现实、西洋画与中国画的完美结合。

1942年,徐悲鸿回到重庆后,在极端艰苦的条件下筹建中国美术学院。同时创作了大量优秀的中国画作品,其中动物画占有十分重要的地位。他笔下的动物都寄托着画家自己的精神,具有强烈的时代感情。他喜写威镇百兽的雄狮,以“新生命活跃起来”的题词点出自己热望的民族觉醒与奋起。在祖国遭到侵略,人民遭受蹂躏之时,他作的则是怒目欲眦的负伤之狮。他画的骏马以一往无前的气魄和铮铮硬骨而受到世界各国人民的喜爱。“问汝健足果何用,为觅生苔尽日驰”,“直须此世非长夜,漠漠穷荒有尽头”,“山河百战

归民主,铲尽崎岖大道平”,画家的喜怒哀乐同那堪托死生的奔马已经融为一体了。在风雨中长啼的雄鸡、逆风而飞的麻雀、贪食未果的白鹅、颠预混沌的懒猫都在栩栩如生、脱纸而出的同时被赋予深刻的寓意,其弦外之音、画外之意给人以美好的回味与深刻的启迪。

1943年夏,徐悲鸿在青城山作了两幅气氛截然不同的人物画,而都取材于屈原的《九歌》。一幅是幽静山谷之中孤独的山鬼,另一幅是短兵相接的激战中为国捐躯的战士。不论是《山鬼》还是《国殇》,画家的悲愤之情皆溢于画外,同祖国的脉搏息息相通。

1946年,徐悲鸿来到北平,担任北平艺专校长。他聘请了许多有影响、有能力的优秀美术家到校任教。针对中国艺术教学的薄弱之处,他重视严格的基本训练,强调素描是造型艺术的基础,描写物象务求精确。同时,他也反对照抄对象,主张有重点地取舍,既要致广大,又要尽精微,提倡现实主义,要求学生以表现人民生活为己任,而不以抄袭古人为自足,倡导国画的发展与革新。

1949年4月,他作为新中国代表出席了第一届世界保卫和平大会。同年,被任命为中央美术学院院长,并当选为全国美术家协会主席。繁重的教学工作和社会活动并不曾使他停下画笔,他画了许多著名的劳动模范的肖像。而且,他还继续关怀着校外的青年。每天,当第一道晨曦射进窗子时,他便起床工作了。第一件事便是回复前一天收到的信件,它们绝大部分来自祖国四面八方热爱美术的青年,有人还将作品寄来,要求改正。徐悲鸿都一一作复,对每一卷寄来的画都指出优缺点,给予赞扬、鼓励或批评、建议。他因此缩短睡眠时间,数十年如一日。作为一个前辈画家,他感到有责任关怀年轻一代,同时,对自己学画的苦难历程的回顾,也经久不息地燃烧着他这种热情,因此,当代的许多优秀美术家在走向成功的道路上,徐悲鸿都曾给予帮助或寄予深情。

1951年,徐悲鸿带病去山东导沭整沂水利工程工地体验生活,画了许多民工肖像,准备创作巨幅油画《当代新愚公》。在构图期间,突患脑溢血,半身瘫痪。

1953年,徐悲鸿渐能起床行动,便到中央美术学院为毕业班学生和教师进修小组上课,他感到还有许多知识没有传授给他们,孜孜不倦地为他们讲课、改画、完全忘记自己还在病中。9月23日第二届全国文艺工作者代表大会开幕,他担任执行主席,主持会议。当晚,突发脑溢血,于9月26日逝世。来自全国的文艺界代表护送徐悲鸿遗体至北京西郊八宝山革命公墓安葬。

同年12月,徐悲鸿的遗作展览在北京举行,周恩来总理亲临参观,总理站在徐悲鸿遗像前,满怀怀念地指着徐悲鸿书写的对联“横眉冷对千夫指,俯首甘为孺子牛”说:“徐悲鸿便有这种精神。”总理赞扬徐悲鸿的作品融会了古今中外的技法,认为他的油画和素描也具有民族风格,是他自己生活年代的一位艺术大师。

徐悲鸿的故居被辟为徐悲鸿纪念馆,周恩来总理以遒劲的字体题写了“悲鸿故居”的匾额。

徐悲鸿的作品1200多件,他节衣缩食购藏的唐、宋、元、明、清及近代书画家作品1200多件,以及中外美术书籍、画片、碑拓10000多件,由家属全部献给了国家。

徐悲鸿只活了58岁,他的生命太短促了。但他那自始至终对祖国和人民的热爱却长存,他具有强烈爱国主义精神和精湛的艺术技巧的作品陈列在北京的徐悲鸿纪念馆里,激动着成千上万观众的心灵,引起人们对他深沉的怀念。

Xu Beihong: His Life in Art

Liao Jingwen

Xu Beihong was born on 19 July 1895 at Jitingqiao, a village fifteen kilometres west of Lake Tai in the county of Yixing in the south-eastern Chinese province of Jiangsu. The area around Lake Tai is renowned not only for its scenic beauty, but also for its cultural heritage. Generations of painters, poets and men of learning had congregated there, making the area rich in artistic and literary associations. It is also rich in the lore of historical personages and heroic exploits. Known as the pottery capital of China, Yixing is the home of the famous ceramic ware of that name. Tradition has it that when Fan Li (fifth century BC), a trusted official of King Gou Jian of Yue, resided in Yixing, he earned his living from making pots with the so-called purple clay of the locality. A famous site in Yixing is the Flood Dragon Bridge, reputed to be the very spot where the third-century General Zhou Chu slew the mythical dragon, ridding the local populace of the cause of storms and floods.

Xu Beihong's father, Xu Dazhang, was a painter, calligrapher and seal carver. He was also well versed in Chinese literature. Of all his accomplishments painting was his forte, and he excelled equally in landscapes, figures as well as birds and flowers. Some idea of his character can be gained from the

legends of the seals he carved for himself: they express his love of the simple life, his enjoyment of studying and painting, and his eschewal of fame and fortune. Xu Dazhang exercised a profound influence on his son, and it was his dedication to art that propelled Xu Beihong to becoming a painter.

From the age of six, Xu Beihong was tutored in reading and writing by his father. When he was ten, he was taken on a trip upriver to Liyang. The passing scenery inspired Xu Beihong to compose a poem which won him local reputation as a child prodigy. At the age of nine, having finished studying the *Four Books* and *Zuo Zhuan*, Xu Beihong began to take painting lessons from his father. His daily assignment was to copy an architectural or figural painting by Wu Youru, the greatest book illustrator of the late Qing period. Wu's skill was such that he was able to depict within a small area pavilions and buildings; animals, birds, insects and fish; unusual plants and exotic flowers; even battalions of troops and cavalymen.

Whenever Xu Beihong accompanied his father to town, he would visit a painting shop in order to see works by Shitao, Bada Shanran, Ren Bonian and other masters. Upon returning home he would paint from memory copies of what he had seen.

Thanks to his father's steady guidance and the contact with works by avant-garde artists of the past, Xu Beihong was able to lay a firm foundation in his Chinese painting.

During his childhood and adolescence, he had few playmates and few toys. He developed a passionate interest in the animals and fowl which he saw around him: the docile water buffalo, the prancing horse, the quacking goose, the ducks swimming in a flock, the cat dozing in a corner or frolicking from branch to branch...All these he would observe with keen interest and paint with an arresting life-likeness.

When Xu Beihong was thirteen years old, a serious flood devastated his village, leaving his father no choice but to make a living elsewhere. Taking Xu Beihong with him, Xu Dazhang moved away. Father and son began to earn a living from painting figure compositions, landscapes, flowers and animals, from carving seals, and from writing couplets. At that time photography existed only in large cities, while there was a demand for painted portraits in the smaller cities and towns. This experience in portrait painting was of vital importance to the development of the young Xu Beihong and proved to be a positive contribution to his later achievement in figure painting.

The life of the itinerant artists also brought Xu Beihong into close contact with the working classes, making him aware of their plight and concerned with their well-being. He was also acutely concerned with the political and social conditions in China. Two seals that he affixed on many paintings of this period bear the legends *Shenzhou Shaonian* (Young Man of China) and *Jiangnan Pinxie* (Poor Knight-errant of Jiangnan), which testify to his

commitment to China and his identification with the cause of the underprivileged.

Early in his career, Xu Beihong began to explore new styles of painting. In those days there was a brand of cigarettes called "Bandit" which, as a promotion gimmick, came with cards illustrated with animals, each tin containing a different picture. Xu Beihong liked to collect these pictures and he would copy each animal picture with the attention of doing a still life. Reproductions of masterpieces of Western paintings, when he came into possession of them, awoke in Xu Beihong a desire, albeit vague at first, to go to Europe to study art there. It was, however, a wish that had no possibility of becoming reality then, for the rigours of the itinerant life had seriously undermined the health of Xu Dazhang, and the two wandering artists had to return to their village.

At seventeen, Xu Beihong was already a well-known painter in Yixing, and he taught at three institutions: the Yixing Normal School for Girls, Pengcheng Middle School and Shiqi Primary School. At nineteen, after the death of his father, Xu Beihong decided to go to Shanghai where he hoped to find part-time employment to finance his art studies.

On the eve of his departure his colleague, Zhang Zufen, who taught Chinese language and literature at the Yixing Normal School, said to Xu Beihong, "You are young, bright and conscientious, and have a great future ahead of you. I hope you will bear in mind the saying 'A man should do without arrogance, but cannot do without pride.' Let this be my parting gift." It was a gift that Xu Beihong accepted with gratitude and which

was to serve him henceforth as a motto. Late in his life he said to me with great warmth of feeling, "Mr. Zhang Zufen was indeed my first true friend."

Xu Beihong went to Shanghai in 1914. A professor at the Institute of China, Xu Ziming, who was from the same village as Xu Beihong, commended the young man's paintings to the president of Fudan University. The president liked them and promised to give the young artist a job. But when he met Xu Beihong, he was quite taken aback by his youthfulness. "He looks like a child. How can he work in a university?" asked the president. Xu Ziming pleaded with him, saying, "If he has talent, what does it matter how old he is?" But Xu Ziming's efforts were of no avail, and several letters that Xu Beihong wrote to the president were unanswered.

Xu Ziming then arranged for Xu Beihong to see Yun Tieqiao, the editor of *Fiction Monthly*. With the letter of introduction and his portfolio, Xu Beihong went to see Yun Tieqiao who was impressed with his work and promised to find him a job as a book illustrator with the Commercial Press. He told Xu Beihong to return in a few days. It was autumn. Hatless and without an umbrella, Xu Beihong braved the chilling rain and returned to see Yun Tieqiao as he was told to do. He was greeted with good news, "All is arranged, and you can soon move to the staff quarters of the Commercial Press."

Delighted with the news, Xu Beihong rushed back to the inn to write to his mother and friends at home. No sooner had he posted the letters than Yun Tieqiao was at the door, package in hand and with the news that the job had fallen through. The package contained Xu Beihong's paintings and a rejection note, "Xu

Beihong's paintings do not suit our needs."

Bitterly disappointed, Xu Beihong ran in a blind frenzy to the bank of the Huangpujiang, the thought of ending his life going through his mind. The relentless pounding of the muddy water against the bank and the shrill whistle of steamships drove him to a pitch of despair.

Xu Beihong returned to his village and spent a melancholy New Year's Eve, the first without his father. A folk doctor in town, who was very sympathetic towards him, consoled him with kind words and gave him a small sum of money. Once again Xu Beihong went to Shanghai, but work still eluded him.

By chance a wealthy Shanghai merchant, Huang Zhenzhi, saw some of Xu Beihong's paintings; he felt sorry for the young man and offered to provide him with room and board. Unfortunately, Huang Zhenzhi went bankrupt shortly after, and once again Xu Beihong was left to his own devices.

At that time the brothers Gao Jianfu and Gao Qifeng, famous painters of the Lingnan School, had just opened a gallery called the Shenmei Guan (Gallery of Aesthetic Judgement). Xu Beihong sent a painting of a horse to the gallery for exhibition and it was highly acclaimed. A critique read, "Even Han Gan (the famous Tang Dynasty painter of horses) could not do better than this."

Xu Beihong was asked to submit four paintings on ladies. This took a week to complete, and all he possessed was five coppers to live on. He allocated one coin to each of the first five days, keeping himself alive with one ball of plain glutinous rice a day. On the sixth and seventh days he went without food. A heavy snow was falling when he took the four

paintings to the Shenmei Guan. The Gao brothers were out and Xu Beihong had to leave the paintings with the doorman. On the way home, he pawned the flimsy coat that he was wearing in order to buy himself some food.

In the spring Xu Beihong enrolled in Zhendan University after passing the entrance examination. To pay his fees, he asked for a loan from a man from his village, Ruan Zhaiguang, who was by no means a wealthy man, but who received Xu Beihong kindly and was willing to help him. Thus Xu Beihong entered the university where, besides studying French, he continued to paint.

Not long after, Mingzhi University held an open competition for a portrait of Cang Xie, the man to whom tradition attributes the invention of Chinese writing. Xu Beihong decided to participate in the competition, but before he painted the portrait he read all the records of Cang Xie in old texts in order to come to grips with the man behind the legend. The most that Xu Beihong had hoped to win with his submission was a modest fee to supplement his meagre resources. But to his surprise, his painting made such an impression on the university authorities that they offered him a position. Xu Beihong explained that he was a student and must await the end of term before making a move.

With the arrival of the summer holidays, Xu Beihong moved to Mingzhi University with his painting kit. The university regularly invited famous scholars to be guest lecturers. In this way Xu Beihong met Kang Youwei and Wang Guowei. When Kang Youwei discovered how talented Xu Beihong was, he asked him to paint portraits of himself, his late wife and his friends. He gave Xu Beihong free access to his collection

of calligraphy and rubbings, so he could study and enjoy individual items at his leisure. It was by getting to know these gems of calligraphy through many viewings under the guidance of Kang Youwei that Xu Beihong refined his taste, improved his own standard of calligraphy, and gradually formed his powerful and unrestrained style of painting.

With the fee that he earned from Mingzhi University for the Cang Xie portrait, Xu Beihong went to Japan, arriving in Tokyo in May 1917. He scoured the city for paintings to see and study. Some Japanese painters, not content with old styles, were able to free themselves from the accumulation of hackneyed methods and conventional expressions, and to develop their own individual styles through careful observation and description of nature. Xu Beihong was impressed with the ways that Japanese painters solved problems similar to his own, and seeing these alternatives to old styles strengthened his resolve to merge Chinese and Western techniques and methods. In Japan Xu Beihong made the acquaintance of the famous artist Nakamura Fusetsu who showed him his large collection of Chinese rubbings and Japanese paintings.

The arrival of Xu Beihong in Beiping in December 1917 marked the beginning of nation-wide recognition of his paintings, characterised by great vitality and an intense national flavour. Xu Beihong was engaged as a tutor by the Beiping University in the Art Research Association. During this period he saw many old paintings in the former Imperial Palace collection, which greatly expanded his knowledge and enlarged his understanding of traditional Chinese painting.

The Beiping of this period was a

centre of intellectual ferment. *The New Youth*, the *Weekly review* and similar publications regularly launched attacks on ideas and practices of the old order, at the same time disseminating new ideas of democracy to their readers. These new ideas had a great impact on Xu Beihong's thinking, placing him in the forefront of the modern movement and making him the most committed modernist among Chinese artists.

In an article, "On the Improvement of Chinese Painting", in the inaugural issue of *Painting Magazine* published by Beiping University, Xu Beihong strongly attacked the strangle hold of conservatism. On Chinese painting. He described Chinese painting as having reached the nadir of its decline. "Among world cultural phenomena the decline of Chinese painting is unprecedented."

In his opinion Chinese painting had declined steadily in the previous 700 years, and this he attributed to conservatism. On how to modernise Chinese painting, he urged artists "to preserve those traditional methods which are good, revive those which are moribund, change those which are bad, strengthen those which are weak, and amalgamate those elements of Western painting which can be adopted".

With the support of Fu Zengxiang and Cai Yuanpei, Xu Beihong finally obtained a government scholarship to study in France. He travelled by boat from Shanghai in March 1919. He was determined to learn what he could from Western art, science and democracy in order to bring about a renaissance in Chinese art. This was a turning point in Xu Beihong's life in art.

For several months after his arrival

in Paris, Xu Beihong did not touch his painting brushes. Instead he visited all the major museums, carefully studying the many examples of Western art on display, all the time making mental comparisons between Western and Oriental art. It was only after he had completed this period of initiation that he enrolled in the Académie Julian to study drawing. Later he joined the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts after passing its entrance examination. There he studied under Flameng and was regularly placed first or among the first in competitions. In his spare time he would spend long hours at the Louvre and the Luxembourg to study the works of various masters and various schools of art. Among the paintings he copied were works by Prud'hon, Delacroix, Velázquez and Rembrandt.

In the winter of 1920, Xu Beihong met Dagnan-Bouveret, leader of avant-garde French painters. After the meeting Xu Beihong made a habit of frequenting his studio every Sunday to listen to Dagnan-Bouveret expound his views and to talk to other artists who were present. He specially benefited from his conversations with Besnard. Dagnan-Bouveret gave Xu Beihong much good advice, counselling him not "to fall under the spell of the trendy and the modish", and cautioning him against being "content with small successes". He urged Xu Beihong to pay particular attention to draughtsmanship and to cultivate the habit of drawing and painting from memory.

In 1921 the annual Salon des Artistes Français was held in April. On the opening day Xu Beihong spent all day studying and copying the works on display. He left the exhibition at closing time to find himself in a heavy snowfall. Not having eaten all

day and not adequately dressed for such weather, Xu Beihong was overcome by hunger and cold and wracked by severe cramps in the stomach. This was to be the first of recurrent attacks of gastric spasm in years to come. Xu Beihong, however, did not permit these attacks to stop him from working, and there is one extant drawing which bears the inscription, "When people look at this, how can they guess that the pain was often unbearable?"

In the summer of 1921, Xu Beihong's health had not improved and his scholarship ran out. He decided to go to Berlin. There he met Kampf, president of the Berlin Art Academy, and had the opportunity of seeing his works as well as those by Menzel and Segantini. Because Xu Beihong loved Rembrandt's work above all others, he would copy the master's paintings on display in the museum, sometimes working for ten hours at a stretch without even stopping to drink a glass of water. He worked particularly hard on Rembrandt's portrait of his second wife and felt some measure of satisfaction with his effort. But what he learned from the exercise could not be applied to his own work, and for that reason he felt he had to try even harder.

On his return to France in 1923, Xu Beihong submitted a painting, "Old Woman", to the Salon des Artistes Français. Its acceptance marked the first time that a work by him was shown at the salon. To Dagnan-Bouveret he confided a general sense of dissatisfaction: he seemed to be making little progress despite working extremely hard. Dagnan-Bouveret's words of encouragement to him were, "In study as in life, only those prepared to go through the most arduous training can realise their grand aspirations. Take writers, for example. The greatest writers are those who persevere the longest, for only they can achieve universality in

their work."

Once again he emphasised to Xu Beihong the vital importance of drawing; he further advised him, when painting human figures in oil, to pay the utmost attention to each component of the composition and not to resort to shortcuts and superficially appealing touches. When Xu Beihong put this advice to practice he did see some improvement in his work. He therefore worked even harder, and the period that followed saw the completion of a series of masterpieces, including "Desolation", "The Sound of the Flute", "The Zither Lesson", "Stroking a Cat", "News from Afar" and "Horse and Groom". In 1926 alone, nine of Xu Beihong's paintings were exhibited at the Salon des Artistes Français and they won him high acclaim.

In 1925 Xu Beihong took a trip to Singapore where he did paintings for Chen Jiageng and for the Amoy University which Chen Jiageng founded. He held a retrospective of his paintings in Shanghai and the event stirred intense interest in intellectual and artistic circles. Kang Youwei wrote, "Ten years ago Xu Beihong painted portraits of Wenshen, Shen Peijian and myself; they were extremely life-like. He is indeed a genius painter. After travelling in Japan he studied for seven years in France and Germany. He now shows me his fine and penetrating paintings which combine a certain quality of reclusive refinement with extraordinary power. Not only is there no painter like him in all of China, but we have also not seen the like of his style."

Back in Europe in 1926 Xu Beihong visited the museums in Brussels for the express purpose of copying some of the paintings there. He admired Rubens and considered him to be

one of the greatest colourists of all time. In 1927 Xu Beihong travelled to Italy and Switzerland. In Rome he spent much time studying works by Renaissance masters, particularly the sculptures in St Peter's and the Michelangelo frescoes in the Sistine Chapel. He also went to see the ruins of Pompeii.

After eight years of hard work and intensive study, Xu Beihong felt that he had arrived at the stage where he could conceptualise his idea before embarking on a painting and go on to realise the concept to its fullest extent. He had developed as a painter and had acquired extensive knowledge of art. In short he was ready to return to China. There he would dedicate himself to the modernisation of painting, and this he would do through the realism movement in art.

Xu Beihong was not an ivory-tower artist concerned merely with his own art, but an artist passionately concerned with the larger issue of Chinese art. Therefore, his artistic activities cannot be recorded in isolation but have to be placed within the context of political and social events in China.

After his return to China in 1927, Xu Beihong co-founded the Nanguo Academy of Fine Arts with Tian Han and Ouyang Yuqian. Xu Beihong served as the head of its Painting Department. At the same time he began working on a large oil painting, "Tian Heng and his 500 Retainers". Tian Heng was an aristocrat of the state of Qi in the third century BC, who chose to commit suicide rather than submit to the victorious Han emperor. His 500 retainers, on hearing the news of his death, likewise committed suicide. Using this story of heroism and sacrifice as his subject, Xu Beihong painted a picture that glorifies a people whose spirit cannot be

crushed by military might.

In 1928 the Central University in Nanjing offered the professorship of fine arts to Xu Beihong. Because he did not wish to resign from the Nanguo Academy, a compromise arrangement was made whereby he spent half of each month teaching at the Nanguo Academy in Shanghai and the other half teaching at the Central University in Nanjing.

In 1929 Xu Beihong took over the position of president of the Beiping Academy of Fine Arts. In that capacity he recruited Qi Baishi into the teaching staff, against many dissenting voices. At the same time he worked hard to bring the teaching of Chinese painting up to date with the world.

Another work of large dimension by Xu Beihong at this time was "Jiufang Gao", executed as a Chinese painting. Jiufang Gao, a woodcutter who lived in the "Spring and Autumn" period, possessed extraordinary intuitive knowledge of horses. In his case his talent was recognised and put to good use, while talent found in many other cases was undetected and went to waste. It was regret for wasted talent among the common people that prompted Xu Beihong to tackle the theme. He made many drafts before he was satisfied with the horse's expression of delight in meeting someone who appreciated its true worth, and with the demeanour of Jiufang Gao, a woodcutter endowed with superhuman insight.

For two years from 1931 to 1933, Xu Beihong worked on a large oil painting, "Awaiting the Deliverer", ostensibly based on a theme from the ancient text, the *Shujing*, but in reality reflecting the people's chafing under oppression and their longing for liberation.

In order to promote Chinese painting abroad, Xu Beihong organised an exhibition of paintings by contemporary Chinese artists to be held in several cities in Europe. The opening in Paris in May 1933 was attended by 3,000 prominent people. The exhibition attracted so much attention that its duration was extended by fifteen days by popular demand. The catalogue went into three printings, and there appeared more than 200 articles and reviews in newspapers and magazines, one of them by the famous writer Paul Valéry. Xu Beihong's paintings were enthusiastically received and the French government sought one of them, "Old Pines", which journalists compared with works by the Barbizon School artist Théodore Rousseau.

When the exhibition was over, Xu Beihong travelled to Brussels, Berlin and Frankfurt with a show of his own paintings. It was highly successful in all these cities, and the paintings were favourably noticed in no fewer than fifty newspaper articles.

Meanwhile, the exhibition of paintings by contemporary Chinese artists travelled to Milan, Leningrad and Moscow, and in each city it was a major event. A documentary film of the exhibition, shown all over Italy, hailed it as the most important East-West cultural exchange since Marco Polo's travels to the Orient. At the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad, a gallery devoted to Chinese painting was established.

In his article "The promotion of Chinese painting in Europe" Xu Beihong wrote, "The exhibition of paintings by Chinese artists was held in seven cities in France, Belgium, Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union. As a result of the interest created, galleries devoted to the display of Chinese art were

without detracting either from his own unique style or from the national flavour which he had distilled from his experience... I have thoroughly enjoyed these paintings, and I am convinced that art lovers in India will derive much inspiration from them. It is time to stop the words, raise the curtain and lead the viewers to a splendid feast."

Xu Beihong did a dozen sketches of Tagore and, based on them, painted a portrait of the poet. Executed as a Chinese painting, the portrait shows the poet deep in thought, the tranquil garden which serves as background shrouded in a sense of mystery. This is one of Xu Beihong's best portraits. Through Tagore Xu Beihong met Mahatma Gandhi, who sat for a sketch.

It was while he was in India that Xu Beihong embarked on and completed a large Chinese painting, one which he had been planning in his mind for a long time. Its title is "Yu Gong Removing the Mountain". The story goes that a foolish old man chipped away at two mountains which blocked his doorway, firm in the conviction that if he began the task and his sons and grandsons continued with it, the mountain would one day be levelled. Xu Beihong's idea was to depict the invincible spirit of the Chinese people through the retelling of the story.

This was a time when the survival of China as a nation was at stake, and Xu Beihong expressed his hope for the future by painting a heroic image of his compatriot. In preparing for this painting he did more than 100 studies, and for the final version he used over-sized pieces of *xuan* paper for the torsos of men in strenuous action. This was something new in Chinese painting. In its realistic treatment of a subject of history and legend, its execution of the Western

treatment with Chinese materials, the painting broke new ground and marked the beginning of another chapter in the history of Chinese painting.

After he returned to Chongqing in 1943, Xu Beihong devoted much time to the organisation of the Chinese Academy of Fine Arts under extremely difficult conditions. In the same period he produced many fine Chinese paintings, a significant portion of which were of animals. Strongly contemporary in flavour, these are paintings in which the subject and the way it is depicted express the artist's innermost feelings. When, for example, Xu Beihong finished painting a ferocious lion, he would add an inscription, "the surge of new life", to convey his hope for the awakening of the Chinese people. At a time when the nation was ravaged by foreign invasion and the people trampled by aggressors, his lions are injured beasts bursting with rage.

Xu Beihong's horse paintings are known and loved throughout the world. His horses are creatures built on a strong skeletal frame and animated with superabundant energy; they symbolise the hope of a bright future for the nation. So powerful is the image of the spirited galloping horse that it carries the symbolism of life and death, and into this symbol the artist pours his emotions of anger, sorrow and joy. A cockerel crowing through a storm, a sparrow flying against the wind, a goose deprived of its feed, a lazy cat redolent of latent energy...all are endowed with a deeper meaning beyond their life-likeness, teasing the viewer with more than a hint of another dimension.

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established in four museums and universities. Copies of papers and magazines carrying articles on Chinese culture prompted by the exhibition numbered 200 million. In all my negotiations with institutions, never once did I invoke the name of the Chinese government... Nor did any so-called cultural institutions contribute one single dollar towards the expenses of the exhibition. This is a point which I hope all Chinese citizens would bear in mind."

On a trip to Guangxi in 1935, Xu Beihong painted "Spring Rain on the Li River" which celebrates the scenic beauty of Guilin. Executed in the splash-ink technique, it is a representative example of a large Chinese landscape in the *xieyi* style.

Following the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, the Central University moved west from Nanjing to Chongqing. Xu Beihong rejoined the university there. His works of this period, such as "Ba Woman Drawing Water" and "Poor Ba Woman", reflect the impoverished conditions of life of the people.

In 1938 Xu Beihong took a selection of his paintings to South-east Asia where they were exhibited in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Ipoh. The exhibitions were extremely well attended, and Xu Beihong donated the entire proceeds from the exhibitions to the China's Refugee Relief Fund.

In 1940, on the invitation of the Indian poet and philosopher, Rabindranath Tagore, Xu Beihong went to India to lecture at the International University and to hold an exhibition in Calcutta. Introducing the exhibition, Tagore said, "In his use of rhythmic lines and of colour, the Chinese master Xu Beihong revives for us the shapes and forms of antiquity which had faded from our memory,

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