

# FINE BRUSH PAINTING ART

花鸟 山水 人物 美不胜收

百余位作者二百余幅代表力作

学习 鉴赏 收藏 皆大受益



## 工笔画艺术

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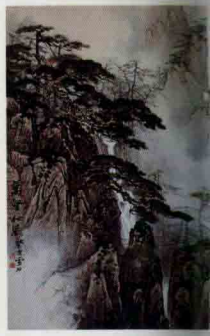
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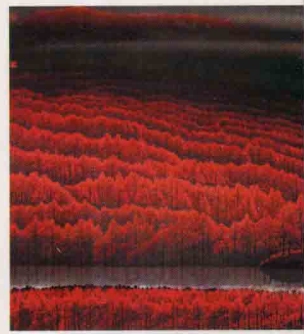
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# FINE BRUSH PAINTING ART

## 工笔画艺术



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## Preface

Chinese painting has a long history and fine national tradition. Although depicted with simple lines, the “silk fish” and the mythological portraits on the bronze ware and lacquered coffins of the Warring States Period over 2,000 years ago were characterized by bright colors and vivid images. The murals discovered in the Han tombs in Wangdu, Hebei Province, in 1952 depicted images of the subordinate officials of the owners of the tombs, and auspicious pictures of glossy ganoderma and grass. These displayed great progress in the expression of images. The landscapes on the Sichuan stone reliefs in the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD) were the earliest ancient landscape paintings. The “Six-Method Theory” propounded by the famous painter Xie He of the Southern Qi Dynasty (479-502 AD) summarized the previous painting and creative experiences and laid down basic rules. During the Tang Dynasty (618-907), great artistic developments were made, helped by the flourishing economy and the patronage of kings, princes and aristocrats. At the same time, the national culture was influenced by the import of Buddhism from abroad. The Tang murals in the Dunhuang Grottoes are representative of the brilliant cultural and artistic achievements of the period.

Later, Chinese painting gradually divided into figure paintings, landscape paintings and flower-and-bird paintings. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century, great changes took place in artistic styles, and the Southern and Northern schools began to form. Painters of later generations vied with each other in setting up their own styles. For example, Northern landscape paintings stressed a forceful and rough style, while those of the Southern school emphasized a quietly elegant and tasteful style. Xu Xi, a painter of the “boneless method,” and Huang Quan, a flower-and-bird painter, stood out. The latter enlivened his paintings by applying colors within outlines of bright halos.

Zhao Chang, of the Song Dynasty (960-1279), focussed on the direct observation of nature, and conferred on himself the title “Zhao Chang, Painter of Life.” Before the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), most painters drew on spun silk with a wet brush, using what was called “ink and wash.” Later, they painted mainly on *xuan* paper with a dry brush. Many paintings at that time were inscribed with poetic writing at the beginning or end and affixed with seals, organically integrating poetry and art; the painting, calligraphy and seal combining to broaden the painting’s aesthetic field and make the images more attractive.

The Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) saw the appearance of painters such as Shi Tao and Zhu Da (known as “Eight-Mountain Hermit”) and groups like the Yangzhou School. Breaking through old styles, expressing themselves fully, boldly and without constraint, they made great contributions to the transformation of ancient painting into modern and contemporary art.

The founding of the People’s Republic of China opened a new chapter in the history of Chinese art, raising Chinese painting to unprecedented heights. Particularly gratifying achievements have been made in the production of fine brush painting. A total of over 200 paintings of figures, landscape paintings, and paintings of flowers and birds by both famous and relatively unknown painters of the fine brush genre have been collected in this album, showing the latest achievements of Chinese fine brush painting. We offer this collection as a gift to art lovers in China and abroad.

Hu Jieqing, at the age of 93 in Beijing



## 序 言

中国绘画有着悠久的历史，有着优良的民族传统。距今约2000多年前的战国时代的“帛画”，青铜器和漆棺上的神怪画像，线条虽简拙，但都色彩鲜明形象生动。1952年在河北望都汉墓中发现的壁画，绘有墓主人的属吏形象的芝草等祥瑞图，其形象表现已有长足的进步。汉代（公元前206—公元220年）四川画像石写山写水已开古代山水画的先河。南齐（公元479—502年）画家谢赫提出的“六法论”总结了此前绘画创作的经验和基本法则。到了唐代（公元618—907年）经济走向繁荣，王公贵族的倡导使绘画有了很大的发展。与此同时国内文化又受外来佛教的影响，这一时期极其辉煌的文化艺术成就，可以敦煌石窟中所保存的唐代壁画为代表。此后，人物画、山水画和花鸟画渐渐有了分工。十世纪时，艺术格局有了较大的变化，开始出现了南北两大派别，后世画家竞相宗法，各立门户。比如北方山水画讲究雄浑粗犷，江南山水画则讲究幽雅淡远。在花鸟画创作方面，出现了擅长没骨法的徐熙，和花鸟画家黄筌。黄筌的画法是勾勒彩晕，层层渲染而使画面形态生动。至此，绘画题材已形成较为鲜明的花鸟画、山水画、人物画三足鼎立之势。宋代（公元960—1279年）赵昌注意直接观察自然物，自号为“写生赵昌”。元代（公元1271—1368年）以前的画家多用绢素作画，所用多湿笔，称为“水晕墨章”，元后才主要用宣纸作画，并多用乾笔。其时画前、画后又多出现题写的诗文，此即所谓的题跋，而在书画之外又加盖印章，从而使诗情画意有机地联系起来，绘画、书法、篆刻相结合，拓宽了绘画的审美领域，使形象更加引人入胜。到了清代（公元1644—1911年）又出现了石涛、八大山人、扬州画派等具有代表性的画家和画派，他们纷纷突破陈式，笔墨酣畅淋漓、豪放不羁，为古代绘画向着近现代艺术的过渡做出了贡献。

中华人民共和国的成立，揭开了中国美术史崭新的一页，使中国绘画达到了前所未有的高度。在工笔画的创作上，尤其有着令人欣喜的成就。本集共辑入一些知名或鲜为人知的工笔画家所作的人物画、山水画、花鸟画共二百余幅，展示中国工笔画最新成就之一斑。权作为奉献给国内外美术爱好者的一份礼物。

九十三岁胡絜青于北京

## Displaying the Charm of the Age

Traditional Chinese painting can be roughly divided into fine brush painting and freehand brushwork in terms of its form. Of these, fine brush painting is the more ancient, and brilliant achievements have been made in this field. The Han silk paintings unearthed in 1972 from the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-25 AD) tombs at Mawangdui in Changsha, the capital of Hunan Province, show a superb level of fine brush painting. The majority of paintings before the Tang Dynasty (618-907) were fine brush works. In the Song Dynasty (960-1279), although equal stress was laid on both fine brush painting and freehand brushwork, the former still had some advantages in Chinese painting. It was not until the Yuan (1271-1368) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties with the preference of scholarly painters for freehand wash paintings, that fine brush painting began to gradually decline. In the modern age, the fortunes of meticulous painting gradually improved with the innovations of far-sighted people influenced by the New Culture Movement. However, the rejuvenation of the Chinese art of fine brush painting has been achieved in more recent times. After the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, the state attached great importance to the national art. The principle of "Let a hundred flowers blossom and weed through the old to bring forth the new" for artistic creation was declared, and the development of Chinese painting entered a new stage. Many painters applied the techniques of fine brush painting in traditional Chinese paintings, New Year paintings, picture-story books and murals, and achieved gratifying achievements. Many excellent art works emerged during the period, including the paintings *Giving Mother a Test* by Jiang Yan, *The West Chamber* by Wang Shuhui, *Creating a Havoc in Heaven* by Liu Jilu, *Sharing Happiness* by Liu Wenxi, and *Yulan Magnolias* and *Oriole* by Yu Feian. However, after centuries of preference for freehand brushwork in the art world, fine brush painting was still not given the value it deserved. It was not until the 1980s, when spring finally arrived for art in China, that the art of fine brush painting really came to life again. Contemporary fine brush painting is extensive in subject-matter and varied in form, including figure paintings reflecting ancient historical subjects or present-day life, fresh and novel landscape paintings, and vivid and lively flower-and-bird paintings. The painters fall over each other in their eagerness to show their artistic and technical characteristics, and have made many innovations. It is gratifying to see that painters have become more and more aware of the great potential for expression and adaptability of fine brush painting.

Art reflects the times. As modern fine brush painting has progressed, creations and innovations have been made while integrating new content and forms, truly showing the general styles and features of the age. This picture album reflects the artistic features of fine brush painting during this period of transformation and development.

Pan Jiezi

November 17, 1998



## 展现时代风采

中国画从形式上区分，大致可以归纳为工笔画和写意画两大类。其中工笔画的产生源远流长，并有过辉煌的成就。1972年春在湖南长沙马王堆西汉（公元前206—公元25年）墓中发现的汉代帛画，就显示出工笔画的高超水平。在唐代（公元618—907年）以前，工笔画可以说是中国绘画的主体。至宋代（公元960—1279年）工笔画和写意画虽然并重，但工笔画仍然占有一定的优势。只是到了元（公元1271—1368年）、明（公元1368—1644年）时期，某些文人画家崇尚写意手法，提倡水墨画而致使工笔画日趋衰微。然而发展到了近现代，人们受新文化运动的影响，一些有识之士提出了革新中国画之后，工笔画才逐渐有了转机，不过中国工笔画艺术真正得到复兴还是在现代。1949年新中国成立之后，国家重视民族艺术，提出了“百花齐放、推陈出新”的文艺创作方针，中国画也随着整个文艺事业的发展进入了一个新的发展时期。不少画家在传统中国画以及年画、连环画、壁画等领域中，广泛地采用了工笔画技法，在实践中取得了可喜的成绩。出现了如《考考妈妈》（姜燕作）、《西厢记》（王叔晖作）、《大闹天宫》（刘继卤作）、《同欢共乐》（刘文西作）、《玉兰黄鹂》（于非闇作）等优秀作品。不过由于画坛积习甚深，致使工笔画这一画种尚未达到人们应有的重视程度。到了20世纪80年代中国大地才真正迎来了艺术的春天。这时工笔画艺术才得以显现出其蓬勃的生机。当今的工笔画创作题材广泛、形式多样，既有反映古典历史题材或贴近现实生活内容的人物画，又有意境清新、别开生面的山水画以及生机盎然、栩栩动人的花鸟画；画家们在艺术和技法的运用上也争相展示各自的特色，并皆有所创新。更为可贵的是画家们在实践与创新的过程之中，越来越发现工笔画艺术及其技法有着极大的潜能，其表现力之强、适应性之广，使其有着广泛的群众基础，也必然会有无限广阔的前途。

艺术反映时代，当今的工笔画艺术是在继承优秀传统文化的同时加以创造和革新的，它融进了新的内容和形式，在整体上真正展现出了时代的风采和面貌。这本画册正是反映这一转变发展时期工笔画的艺术风貌。

潘絜兹

1998.11.17

# An Overview of Chinese Fine Brush Painting

## Deng Fuxing

Fine brush painting, with its exact lines and rich colors, is quite different from traditional freehand painting. These two forms of art use distinctly different methods of painting. Here, we would like to give an introduction to the development of fine brush painting over the past centuries with a brief account of its artistic features and techniques of expression. At the end, we will give a brief description of the features and painting styles of contemporary fine brush painting.

### I

The painting *Figures, Dragons and Phoenixes*, discovered in a tomb in Changsha, Hunan Province, from the ancient State of Chu in February 1949, is the earliest known fine brush painting—it is also the oldest Chinese painting that has been found. The silk on which it was painted, which has deteriorated after more than 2,000 years, has turned black, and the original colors have also become difficult to identify. Vague as it is, we can still perceive in it the creative ideas and painting techniques of the earliest Chinese drawings. The figures, dragons and phoenixes, drawn with even and thin ink lines, are two-dimensional and highly decorative. The coordination between each part of the painting is stressed rather than perspective of space. The thin lines were drawn with a brush like a thin awl, which was different from implements and brushes used in Western oil paintings.

The difference between Chinese and Western paintings, however, may be traced back to an earlier period. Almost all the exquisite decorative patterns on the colorful pottery discovered on the upper and middle reaches of the Yellow River, produced during the Neolithic Age, were made up of lines. It can also be perceived that they were drawn with a sharp “pen” made of some kind of fiber. While some Western paintings of roughly the same period, such as the Turkish cliff painting *A Bull and Hunter* and the Sahara stone painting *A Herd of Cattle and the Herdsman* reflected images in the form of plane or projection. Therefore, differences between the methods of Chinese and Western ancestors in observing and reflecting objects and images existed as early as approximately 5,000-6,000 years ago. These early differences established quite separate directions of future development. Later, with the completion of their systems, under particular historical conditions, the differences increased. The painting *Figures, Dragons and Phoenixes* from the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) not only carried forward and developed the style of previous paintings, but also enlightened and guided later works.

An important change took place in Chinese painting during the periods of the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern dynasties (approximately during the 3rd-6th centuries AD), which, to a great extent, was caused by a prevailing social practice. Character evaluation was popular during the Wei and Jin dynasties. At first, this included evaluation of a person’s moral and political character, and was gradually transformed to evaluation of appearance, temperament and manner. Later, it influenced literary and artistic criticism, and led to an aesthetic reform, which was reflected in the attention to the off-painting images. Paintings before the Han Dynasty used lines and colors passively to depict objects, while the lines in the paintings during the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern dynasties gradually gained relatively independent aesthetic significance. The objects depicted, although not perfectly resembling those in real life, added special interest and charm relatively independent of the contents of the paintings. For example, in *Portrait of a Female Scribe* and *Painting Scroll of the “Ode to the Nymph of the Luo River”* by Gu Kaizhi, a famous painter of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420 AD), the folds in the figures’ clothing and flying ribbons, and the shapes of the mountain, river and trees show a temperament and interest relatively independent of the content of the paintings.

During the same period, Xie He, a painter and theoretician of the Southern Qi State, summarized the “six painting methods,” earning the title “painting master of a thousand years” from later generations. The main points of “lively flavor and tone” and the “bone-means use of the brush” stressed in the first two methods are aesthetic pursuits and standards independent of the objects, and the three requirements on the similarity of form or appearance are placed behind. The paintings and theories at that time reflected the artistic concepts and aesthetic pursuits stressing the implications off the paintings. In a sense, the basic artistic characteristics and aesthetic standards of Chinese painting were established during this period.

This was completely different from painting in the West. The basic characteristics and aesthetic standards of Western formative arts were established during the ancient Greek period. The major artistic pursuit of these artists,



with strong abilities of painting from life, was realism. Besides striving to achieve a similarity of form or appearance, they also attached great importance to "beauty in form." Although this was also independent of the subject, it was different from Chinese stress on implications off the painting. To quote an ancient Greek philosopher, beauty in form was derived from "flat-surfaces and three-dimensional images composed of straight lines and circles drawn with rulers, compasses and set squares," which was a concept of quantitative measurement. Later, further embodied in the concrete curves, geometric figures and the "golden section," it became an exterior or even objective standard and model. The off-painting implications in Chinese painting tended to be subjective; in a way it reflected the empathy between the painter and viewers. For example, the "muscles, flesh, bones and manners" in the wielding of the brush reflected the subjective moods, feelings and personalities of the painters. The major role of the lines was to express an active living state rather than modeling. Viewers appreciated, discovered and enriched the contents of the works based on their personal experiences and aesthetic accomplishments. Compared with Western painting, Chinese painting, like other traditional Chinese arts, was characterized by a stronger sense of subjectivity and subjective elements of the formative factors.

## II

For a long time, "helping the people through education" was seen as an important social function of Chinese painting. Thus, it is not difficult to understand why paintings before the Tang Dynasty (618-907) were mainly social and religious figure paintings. Even so, the subjective elements of various factors, including concepts and expression, can be perceived in a large proportion of figure paintings. In *Emperors of the Past Dynasties*, Yan Liben of the Tang Dynasty, obviously regarding the feudal obsession with hierarchy as more important than the rationality of realism and visual effect, depicted the emperors as big and tall, while servants were small, thin and weak. The figures and horses in *Lady of the State of Guo Going Sightseeing* by Zhang Ying, which were painted in splendid and bright colors, had strong decorative effects. In the considerable number of ancient murals in monasteries, temples, caves and tombs, the depictions of gods, Buddhas and the celestial world were filled with mysterious imagination. In the paintings of landscapes, birds and flowers developed later, the subjective elements became more and more conspicuous. For example, a single painting could contain the flowers of different seasons or a ten-*li* scene of the capital city or a thousand-*li* landscape.

Fine brush painting flourished during the Tang Dynasty, and in a sense, this was the peak period of its development. This was partly due to the fact that the fine brush paintings of the Tang Dynasty integrated the expressions and characteristics of previous periods, such as the force, expressiveness and purity of the lines, the rich and bright colors, and some forms and patterns, which changed during the following Five Dynasties period (907-960). As in the development of many things, a process of transformation took place when development had reached a certain limit.

The separate tradition of freehand brushwork came into being almost unnoticed during the later stage of the Tang Dynasty. The process of separation can be partly attributed to the following factors: First, due to continuous development, the compact and slow style of *shuti* (loose style) paintings was replaced with a loose and rapid one, and a style of simplified-stroke painting finally came into being. The *shuti* and *miti* (compact style) of paintings were differentiated in *A Record of the Famous Paintings of the Past Dynasties*, a famous work on the history of Chinese painting written in the mid-9th century. Many Tang Dynasty painters used *shuti*, including Zhang Sengyao, Wu Daozi and Wang Wei. Compared with *miti*, *shuti* was a branch of fine brush painting, but with a tendency toward simplification. The creative process of *shuti* paintings was quick. For example, when painting, Wu Daozi was said to "wield the brush as fast and magnificently as rolling thunder and flashing lightning." Second, the use of colors was changed to that of ink, such as Wang Wei's small ink painting *Snowy Stream* and the splash-ink landscape paintings of Zhang Zao. It was said that when applying ink, Zhang Yanyuan could make his paintings look like five-color ones. Third, the growing popularity of the themes of landscapes, flowers and birds stimulated the painters' creative enthusiasm, making them feel relaxed, free and natural; while the much looser requirements on similarity of form and appearance of natural objects than those in figure paintings gave them more freedom in creation. These factors combined formed the embryo of freehand brushwork.

Freehand brushwork was fundamentally an art for scholars. For a long time, it remained an art created and appreciated by a few refined Chinese scholars, being far less popular than fine brush painting. To express their feelings and the pursuit of grace, these scholars painted more freely and boldly, breaking with established rules.



They abandoned the artistic tradition of meticulous care and colorful and dazzling embellishment in favor of rapid movements of the brush without striving to achieve similarity in form and appearance. The influence of this style of painting was encouraged by theoretical works, giving rise to the freehand brushwork of the Five Dynasties and the Northern and Southern Song dynasties (approximately during the 10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries).

Although fine brush painting still made up a large proportion of the paintings of the Song Dynasty (960-1279), some changes had taken place in its appearance, brought about by its opposition to the newly developed freehand brushwork style. More and more painters began to reflect realistic themes in their scroll paintings, adopting a more realistic style, depicting fine and extremely detailed lines, and using light and elegant colors. Examples of this included the *Portrait of a Street Vendor* by Su Hanchen and *Apes Offering Fruits* by Liu Songnian. The use of rulers and compasses was even more contrary to the spirit of freehand brushwork.

From the above brief description of the development process of Chinese painting, we can see that fine brush painting was the origin of Chinese painting, and it was not considered to be an independent branch of painting until freehand brushwork was derived and split off from it. According to Tang Yin, a poet and painter of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), "*Gonghua* (fine brush painting) is like regular script, while freehand brushwork is like cursive script." During the Ming Dynasty, therefore, meticulous painting was called "*gonghua*." The Qing Dynasty lay Buddhist Yong Na wrote in *A Record of the News in the Neighborhood*, "Ma Zhen, a famous painter who lives in the central Shaanxi plain, is good at *gongbi* (fine brush painting)." This can be regarded as the origin of the term "fine brush painting," which has been used ever since.

### III

Freehand brushwork developed rapidly during the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties (approximately from the mid-13<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century). Besides contouring with lines, various painting techniques including dotting, dyeing, *cun* (the method of showing the shades and texture of rocks and mountains by light ink strokes in traditional Chinese landscape painting), and spreading. There were also various methods of applying ink and water, including the use of thick, light, dry and wet ink. Calligraphy was also integrated with painting to enrich its expressiveness. Thus, artists gained greater freedom in expressing their feelings and reflecting natural themes, enabling them to show their artistic characteristics more fully. During the Five Dynasties, Northern and Southern Song dynasties fine brush painting and freehand brushwork each occupied an equal position in the art world, opposing and adding brilliance to each other. During the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, however, fine brush painting declined and freehand brushwork took on the dominant role.

During the 500 years of the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911), fine brush painting with more popular themes and forms remained in rural areas and towns, where it already had a solid foundation. Among scholarly painting circles, it now attracted far fewer adherents. However, although it was at an ebb, some painters still tried to develop it and explore new directions. In a sense, freehand brushwork exerted a special influence on fine brush painting, enabling it to integrate some of the advantages of the former.

One important fine brush painter was Qiu Ying, one of the "four Ming painters" and "four Suzhou painters." While all of the "four Ming painters" produced many meticulous paintings, Qiu Ying was the most outstanding. Working with the greatest care, Qiu Ying depicted bright, beautiful and fresh green hills, blue waters and figures in thick and heavy colors. Appealing to both refined and popular tastes, his works exerted a great influence on the later paintings of female figures and folk paintings.

Chen Hongshou (whose assumed name was Lao Lian), a slightly later painter than Qiu Ying, showed strong artistic personality through his works. He excelled at exaggerating figures and flowers out of proportion in his works, which had strong decorative effects. A writer in the Qing Dynasty said of him, "His outstanding, open and upright force and style of painting were superior to those of Qiu Ying and Tang Yin. There was probably no one who could match him in the Ming Dynasty." Centuries later, Chen Laolian's works are still valued today, showing that the art of this 17<sup>th</sup> century painter was in line with the general tendency of development.

Two Qing Dynasty fine brushwork painters deserve mention—Yun Shouping, who worked at the beginning of the dynasty, and Ren Bonian, who worked at the end. Yun Shouping stressed a natural style by imitating nature, and used painting from life as an important means to free himself from old rules. He "changed the prevailing practice of applying bright colors," and "abandoned bright and resplendent colors in favor of true colors." He initiated the *mo*



gu (boneless) technique, injecting vitality into fine brush paintings of flowers and birds. Ren Bonian, a Shanghai-style painter of the late Qing Dynasty, absorbed both the spirit of scholarly freehand brushwork and the interest of the townspeople. At the same time, he also used Western techniques of painting from life. Many of his works tended toward freehand brushwork, but generally speaking, he was good at line drawing. *Immortals Offering Birthday Congratulations* was one of his representative works. His works, with a lively and softly fragrant style, established exemplary works for the enjoyment of both scholars and the common people.

All these painters added new characteristics and levels to fine brush painting through their various explorations.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, a great number of artists used both fine brush painting and freehand brushwork, with many works combining the two, either intentionally or accidentally. For example, Dai Jin of the early Ming Dynasty and his successor Wu Wei produced a considerable number of meticulous paintings with "flying and rapid strokes, changing speed abruptly from slow to fast, and fluctuating between meeting and departing," adding bright, fresh and rarefied taste to their meticulous paintings. The Qing Dynasty's "Four Wangs," represented by Wang Shimin, who centered on the lasting appeal of the ink, and the "Four Monks," headed by Monk Jian Jiang, famous for his cold landscape paintings filled with a feeling of formality, all influenced the forms of expression of fine brush painting.

The defects of freehand brushwork, potential or real, gradually became exposed after the end of the Qing Dynasty. During the May 4th Movement, in 1919, arguments over an "artistic revolution" began, criticizing weaknesses such as the use of outdated techniques and the blind pursuit of charm and beauty at the expense of content and relevance to real life. With the introduction of the Western techniques of life painting, skills in oil painting, woodcuts and Chinese freehand brushwork developed in China. Social turbulence and reform added more difficulties for fine brush painters during the first half of the 20th century.

Liu Kuiling and Yu Feian, two fine brush painters of flowers and birds who were born at the end of the 19th century, carried forward the ancient tradition in painting from life, either raising animals and cultivating flowers at home, or observing the forms of flowers and birds in parks. Both wrote monographs after deep observations and studies of their subjects. Liu Kuiling absorbed the Western techniques of life painting, while Yu Feian used the colors and patterns of *kesi* (a type of weaving done by the tapestry method in fine silks and gold thread). Both established their own unique painting styles.

Chen Zhifo and Pang Xunqin shared similar experiences. Both studied abroad—the former in Japan and the latter in France—and both were involved in ornamental design and art education after returning home, achieving a great deal in the theoretical study of art history. The effectiveness of their paintings was strengthened by absorbing foreign and folk patterns in their paintings of flowers and birds and figure paintings. Painters of meticulous figure paintings of the period included Liu Lingcang, Ren Shuaiying, Wang Shuhui and Pan Jiezi. Both Liu Lingcang and Ren Shuaiying had copied murals in temples, lamp paintings and New Year pictures when they were young, and their works always retained the simple and plain style of folk art. Pan Jiezi had been to the Maogao Grottoes at Dunhuang to copy murals, and these had a great influence on his art, forming a rigorous and deep style. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, meticulous figure paintings exerted greater influence on the public than flower-and-bird paintings, probably due to the themes and forms of the paintings. Wang Shuhui and Ren Shuaiying, two excellent and prolific illustrators of picture-story books, created many vivid paintings from fairy tales and historical stories. Four million copies of some of their picture-story books were printed, showing the popularity of fine brush painting over freehand painting.

These and many other fine brush painters, along with a great number of unknown folk painters, have struggled against various difficulties to keep their art alive, like sportsmen in a relay race who keep running to pass the baton of fine brush painting to painters of the next generation.

#### IV

The Chinese art world took on a new appearance in the 1980s when China entered a new historical period. Under the great trend of social reform and opening-up, Western culture and art flowed into China and traditional culture was revived and re-examined. After a long period of rigid and closed adherence to certain forms, and puzzled hesitation at the crossroads, artists now at last opened their artistic vision and ideological wings. It was