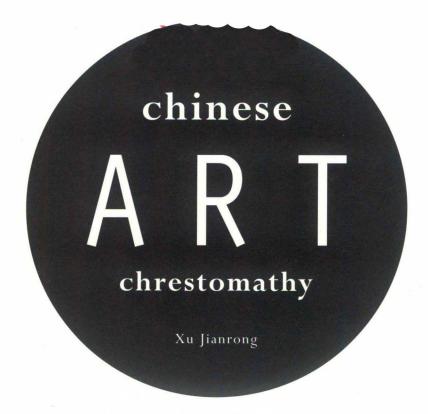


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Xu Jianrong

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As the only ancient culture that exists over 5,000 years, Chinese culture absorbs new energy from constant innovation and yet still manages to stay true to its tradition.

Ancient Chinese people have already understood the importance of innovation and tradition and they have recorded it in their poems. A line of verse from "the Books of Changes" said "周虽旧邦, 其命维新 (Although Zhou was an ancient state, it had a reform mission)", meaning only innovation could ensure the growth and the vitality of a nation.

Like the poems, various Chinese arts have faithfully recorded the tradition and the changes of Chinese culture after its 5,000 years evolution. In the book we have introduced various great artworks of different dynasties, and we hope that we can present a visual history of Chinese culture and give the readers a more artistic perspective to look at Chinese history and culture.

The Chinese people believe that numbers are related to propitious or ominous

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spirits, and the number "nine" is said to represent supremacy and harmony as nine is a homophone of the Chinese word for "long" (久). Therefore, I divided the book into nine chapters, in the hope that Chinese culture can be handed down through generations.

In Chapter one I give a general idea of Chinese culture reflected in artworks.

Chapter two introduces the art from pre-dynasties period to Han dynasty.

Chapter three mainly introduces Chinese architectural art and the cultural legacy bearing within architectures in state level, regional level, and family level.

Chapter four discusses Chinese calligraphy art, traditional Chinese paintings, and the art of Chinese seal during Jin Dynasty, Tang Dynasty, and Song Dynasty.

The fifth chapter "Approaching Nature" mainly deals with the art of calligraphy and paintings (primarily landscape and bird-flower paintings) of the Jin, Tang, Song and Yuan Dynasties and the harmonious spirit between man and nature illustrated in the garden architecture of past dynasties. Harmony between man and nature supplements the concord between man and society, guaranteeing the sustainable development of Chinese civilization in case of a discord between man and society.

Chapter six elaborates the spread of Buddhism and the development of China's Buddhism art.

Chapter seven discusses the art development from late Tang and Song to Ming and Qing dynasties and the changes and innovations in art concept and form in this transition period.

The eighth chapter "Gentlemen Chasing after Beauty" elaborates on the aesthetic standards toward female characters in Chinese art.

The ninth chapter "Skill as Bible" mainly introduces the arts and crafts in ancient China and the role they play in imperceptibly carrying forward traditional Chinese culture amid people's everyday activities.

I am deeply indebted to Li Xin, director of Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House, who initiates the idea of making this book and offers great help to the book's conception and the structure.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Li Xiuxia, Wang Zheng, Hua Min, Hu Yurun, and many other people who help on the book's printing, and to Huang Chun, our editor-in-charge who offers the pictures and photographs for the book.

Xu Jianrong Shanghai, Sept. 28, 2013

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Endless Culture Organization

1.1 Chinese Long Scroll

The 2008 Beijing summer Olympics unfolded with an overwhelming Chinese long scroll painting art and projected China's 5,000-year history and life through this unique art form, making Chinese long scroll once again become the center of the public attention.

Looking back to Chinese arts history, most of the classic works of calligraphy and paintings were created based on the form of long scroll.

We human beings record history through text and visual art—paintings. While in China the people developed a special art called calligraphy that combines the attributes of both text and painting. Chinese calligraphy has been regarded as a form of visual text and has inspired the creation of Chinese long scroll.

Chinese long scrolls, also known as handscroll and scroll painting, is a major form for displaying Chinese calligraphy and painting art.

During China's Spring and Autumn period and Warring States period, people wrote text not on papers but on bamboo and wooden slips. One ordinary article usually was used hundreds or thousands of bamboo slips which were bound together in sequence with thread made by cowhide.

Bamboo and wooden slips have made a major impact on China's bookbinding design. Many old Chinese literature and artistic works were scroll-bound even after the invention of paper. That is why sometimes the word "chapter" is translated into "卷" ("scroll") in China. And many Chinese writers nowadays will divide their works of fiction by using the word "卷" ("scroll"). For example, scroll one, scroll two.

A Chinese scroll generally consists of five parts, namely "天头" ("sky's head"), "引首" ("introduction head"), "画心" ("picture heart"), "拖尾" ("trailing tail"), and "隔水" ("separating water").

The head margin of a Chinese long scroll is called "天头" ("sky's head") or "玉池" ("jade pool"). It is usually made of dark-colored silks with horizontal length of about 70 cm, and serves as the protection and decoration to the main body of the scroll.

"引首" ("introduction head") is the blanket part in front of the main passage of the scroll, and is at where the title or the general introduction of the work is written. It usually has a horizontal length of 130 cm.

"画心" ("picture heart") is the main body of a scroll and is at where the artists put

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their works. Different scrolls may have different lengths for picture heart. The length for picture heart ranges from 20 cm to several meters based on the works the scroll presents.

The end of a scroll is called "拖尾" ("trailing tail") or "跋尾" ("remaining tail") and has horizontal length of about 400 cm.

The space between each part of the scroll is decorated by light-colored silks called "隔水" ("separating water"). Scroll maker uses these silks to separate each section.

It is noted that in some cases there will be "副隔水" ("secondary separating water") which is usually 15cm in length.

A scroll could be as long as tens of meters when completed unfolded. A scroll should be opened on table from right to left with a 100cm*40cm space exposed at a time. The remaining part will be gradually unrolled with the previous part being rolled up at the same time. This format enables the artwork to depict a continuous narrative or journey.

Since the long scrolls can have extremely long picture heart, ancient Chinese artist can put basically everything in his/her mind into long scrolls. For example, the sceneries in Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, or a mountain that crosses thousands of miles, or even a story that last over a thousand years.

Long scrolls are particularly good at delivering images with lasting artistic conception. Eastern Jin Dynasty artist Gu Kaizhi's famous long scroll painting Luoshen Appraisal Painting is regarded as one of the representative long scroll works.

The painting is inspired by the article Luoshen Appraisal, a romantic story written by Cao Zhi, a famous poet during the Three Kingdoms period.

Luoshen Appraisal Painting starts with Cao Zhi's encounter with a beautiful Goddess named Luoshen at Luoshui River and ends with Luo Shen's leave. The work is filled with mixed emotions and feelings of joy, sorrow, desire, disappointment and nostalgia.

The mountains, flowing river, trees and the figures in the picture together deliver to the readers a sense of limitlessness in both the space and the time.

German writer and art critic Ephraim Lessing once stated in his book Laocoon that poetry is an art of time and painting is an art of space.

However, Chinese long scroll painting, due to its almost limitless length, seems to possess the merits of both poetry and painting and is able to depict the dynamic development of a story or an event.



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The "Banquet of Han Xizai" scroll consists of five parts. The first part portrayed the scene of Han Xizai and his guests listening intently to the sister of Li Jiaming from the musical institute play the Chinese lute, stressing the beginning moments of the performance when everyone fixed their attention and eyes upon the girl who had strike a chord with the audience by sounding euphonic notes. The hands of Han Xizai hung loosely due to his concentration; the young man sitting next to him on the bed leaned forward and gripped his knees with the left hand to maintain a balance, setting off his intent attention. The second part portrayed the scene of Han Xizai pounding a drum in person for the maiko Wang Wushan who, with her hands on her hips, danced around lithely. In this part also appeared a monk who, with arched hands and stretched fingers, seemed to just finish applauding or saluting and whose eyes were fixed upon the drumming Han Xizai rather than the maiko. The painter displayed this scene about the ascetic monk decently and properly. The third part portrayed the intermission scene of the banquet and the fourth part depicted the geisha girls playing the wind music. The last part portrayed the end of the banquet; while some of the guests left without further delay, others were flirting with the geisha girls, reluctant to part. A both passionate and lonely atmosphere pervaded the whole picture and the anxiety and disappointment toward the future of their.life lurked behind the seeming enjoyment of the intoxicated pleasures; this frustrated mood in turn encouraged the persistency and hope in people's hearts. The scroll made ingenious use of screens and beds to separate the scenes, enabling each part to be an independent painting and it also served to join every part together, making the scroll a unified and whole painting.

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