

A Forgotten Celebrity

Wang Zhen (1867-1938), Businessman, Philanthropist, and Artist

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The name Wang Zhen is unfamiliar to most young people in today's China. Even worse, he has been almost unknown in his own country for more than forty years, and his paintings are collected principally outside of China. It is not an uncommon situation under the Communist regime that some celebrities who lived prior to the founding of the People's Republic, and who were involved in various political activities, suffer the fading away of their names. A considerable part of modern Chinese history is covered in this way by a great gray mist of political ambiguity. In the case of Wang Zhen, who was better known as Wang Yiting, two other factors have negatively affected his reputation: his having worked for the Japanese as a comprador, and the support he gave to, and admiration he received from, the Nationalist regime. A decline in his popularity was thus more or less inevitable after the founding of the People's Republic. Wang Zhen's relative obscurity today demonstrates again that art history has not been free from the influence and sometimes domination of politics, especially when the artist himself was an activist on the political and cultural stage. It was only in 1988 that a book on his art was published in Shanghai. Ironically, its publication was sponsored by a Japanese company as an expression of gratitude for what Wang Zhen had done after the great 1923 earthquake in Tokyo.

In contrast to his relative obscurity in recent times, the 1931 edition of *Who's Who in China* presented Wang Zhen with more titles of social involvement than, seemingly, any individual could bear. Besides being a comprador and an artist, he was also known as:

... chairman of the board of directors of Wah Cheng Fire and Marine Insurance Company; director of the Chinese Electric Power Company; chairman of the Shanghai City Chamber of Commerce; vice chairman of the General Chamber of Commerce;

chairman of the board of directors of the Bureau of Municipal Affairs for Shanghai City; in charge of communications , and of Agriculture, Labor and Commerce under Dr Sun Yat-sen's regime in the first year of the Republic; founded the Lung Hua Orphanage; served on the committee, either as chairman or member, of the Anti-Kidnapping Society; the China Philanthropic Association; the China Red Cross Association ; the Shanghai Public Benevolent Cemetery ; the ZungTsi Tang; the China International Famine Relief Association; Lester Hospital; the Government Famine Relief Commission; the Huai Ho Conservancy; the Buddhist Laymen 's Society; the Kure Karma Buddhist Association ; and about fifteen other minor institutions of charity and forty institutions of education, including the Great China University; ...Bureau of Municipal Affairs , Municipality of Greater Shanghai .⁴

From this list, one can assess the many facets of Wang Zhen's life and accomplishment. He was, during his time, one of the key figures in the business sector and was also among those with a measure of political clout. And last, he was a Buddhist layman, a believer in its teaching and its messages. In his time , he could have accomplished all of these only in the treaty port of Shanghai which, after the Opium War of 1839-42, was a metropolis on the rise, and in which old norms could be reaffirmed and new ones sprang into being. Nowhere else could he, a simple apprentice- tu rn ed-comprador , rise so quickly and associate with so many institutions and organizations in the city while cutting across the boundary between the native and the foreign.

Wang Zhen the Man

Wang Zhen was born in 1867 in Shanghai as the second generation of an immigrant family from Wuxing in Zhejiang province. At age fifteen, he became an apprentice in a traditional bank known as *qian-zhuang*, owned by Li Pingshu. At the same time, he studied Japanese in the Guang Fangyan Guan language school. Later, he acquired a compradorship in a Japanese firm, the Dada Shipping and Transportation Company, which was to merge with another company to form the Riqing (Japan-Q ing) Shipping and Transportation Company. He worked in these companies steadily and used them as the bases for his rapid rise in fortune and prestige. This continued unabated until the outbreak of the war in 1937, when anti-Japanese sentiment

was strong. Soon after the Japanese occupied Shanghai, a disillusioned Wang Zhen felt the need to prove his loyalty to his own country. Resisting approaches from the Japanese occupation government to serve its causes, he decided to leave for Hong Kong, only to return the next year, fatally ill. He died the morning after having died in his beloved city.⁶

Wang Zhen's artistic training began in the family, with painting a passionate preoccupation of his father. In 1882, when Wang Zhen was sixteen, he studied painting with Xu Xiang, a disciple of Ren Yi (1840-1895). Later Ren Yi noticed this talented youth and agreed to receive him as a disciple. For a period of time Wang Zhen's painting can be linked directly to this Shanghai artist, the personification of *Haipai* (School of Shanghai). In about 1914, when Wu Changshuo arrived in Shanghai, Wang Zhen seized the opportunity to become his student; he shifted his allegiance and style to this master, with whom he was often mentioned. He was reported to be decisive as a businessman;⁷ as a painter he was prolific, turning out a large volume of works in little time and flooding the growing market with his personal visions.⁸

This then is our man, who linked business to art in what might appear to be an odd combination. His concerns were multiple and he had many personas and likely endured inner torment because of them. He was a Japanophile,⁹ just as he was a patriot, a conflict of enormous dimensions at his time. A Japanese visitor, Sawamura Yukio, was startled by the contrast between his westernized manner and his Chinese-style residence;¹⁰ he also observed the chameleonic shift in mood and expression when Wang Zhen changed topics from business to art.¹¹ Wang Zhen was a private man, so we know little about his inner thoughts, but just as apparent was his penchant to direct his energy outward as a way to transform society for the better. As much as he was a man of action and of organization, which the 1931 *Who's Who in China* made eminently clear, he was also one of idealism and peace, tinged with Buddhist compassion and a belief in karmic retribution. He nearly put himself on the line for the revolutionary cause, but pulled back at the last minute to care for, so it was said, his aged mother.¹² Ultimately he was a man of tradition, pushed by circumstance to be at the vanguard, though he himself was less than modern.¹³ Thus, if self-doubt began to plague him, there was always a religious conviction to which he could appeal:

Time lingers not, even as I scratch my hair.
 The erstwhile schoolboy now is an old man.
 What have I done in all my life?
 I look at the mirror, feeling but old and gray.
 By the window then,
 Let me drink from the inkwell,
 Let my bald brush freely crisscross [the paper surface]
 - this well-loved, worn broom.
 When exhalation rises, I can dispense with wine.
 Poems and verses well up easily and are sung.¹
 I believe the waves of doom have gone on a very long time;
 The Heaven is crippled and the world is covered in dust.
 How many know that I have stood alone and faced the storm!
 I only pray to the Buddha to raise his hand.
 With a peaceful heart, I wrote this on my birthday.¹

This was written in 1936, two years before his death, when an aging Wang Zhen thought that he had made his peace on the eve of Japanese invasion. Little did he realize that he was to face yet another, his most severe, moral test.

Wang Zhen the Philanthropist

As a successful businessman and a Budd hist, it was natural for Wang Zhen to be involved in relief and charity work, both governmental and private. The 1931 edition of *Who's Who in China*, cited above, listed a number of organizations with which he was connected. He was also the founder of the Longhua (Lung Hua) Orphanage, which eventually was to perish in 1937 in Japanese bombings. In 1919, when the five provinces of Henan, Hubei, Anhui, Zhejiang, and Jiangsu endured floods, Wang Zhen, enlisting Wu Changshuo's help, painted and printed a great many pictures of refugee victims to raise funds.¹ The extent of his involvement in charities was such that it was said that:

In Shanghai there were no charities without Master [Wang]'s involvement. If his name was not found in the trustees list of any charity, it would not be persuasive enough to call on people's support. By and large, charitable groups were not well financed. Yet, in their attempts [to render aid] often they strove for the utmost. As a result, their income was not able to meet the expenses and they had to turn to Master [Wang] for help... Master [Wang]

used to say that 'in charitable activities, people naturally are willing to contribute money.' On those occasions when [charitable organizations] could not raise funds, Master [Wang] would come up with his own paintings and calligraphy and raise huge sums of money for them.¹

On the one hand, it was his social skill and contacts among the wealthy and powerful that enabled him to raise money when necessary, and on the other, he could call on his own artistic skill as a potential source for needed funds. One of his best works is an album entitled *Yinguo Fenming* (Karma Illuminated) which features, among others, the beggars and homeless victims of famine (figures 1-3). It is clear that his depictions of refugees and street people were not done simply out of curiosity, but stemmed from a deeply ingrained sense of compassion and sympathy. We shall return to this album.

Wang Zhen and Art Associations

Such was Wang Zhen's zeal for charitable activities that one of the first art associations he joined was the Yu Garden Charitable Association, founded in 1909.¹ In purpose and nature, this was a new, emerging phenomenon, different from the elegant gatherings in Shanghai's past such as those led by Li Tingjing, Wu Zonglin, or Jiang Baolin.¹ The association membership was predicated neither on social class nor on literary accomplishment but was open to artists at large. It allowed members to gain financially in activities undertaken at the association's site, but also endeavored to establish viable funds to aid in disaster relief. Subsequently, Wang Zhen joined other art organizations as well. There was the Haishang Tijin Guan, which featured many renowned artists and for which Wang Zhen served at times as chairman. There was also the Shanghai Shuhua Yanjiu Hui (Shanghai Research Association of Painting and Calligraphy) for which he served as a trustee. This was an enlightened organization that attempted to bring together artists of divergent approaches, both Chinese and Western, before conflict and intolerance were to damage the united front.² In the thirties, Wang also lent his support to the efforts of Sun Xueni, Qian Shou tie, and He Tianjian in establishing the Chinese Painting Association. Its manifesto was new for the time, breaking through the isolationist tendency to espouse an international outlook. In particular, it was mindful of the depressed state of China and

Chinese painting in the light of potential and actual threats from rival cultures and traditions, especially from Japan:

In today's world, when comparisons across cultures are inevitable, everywhere it makes us feel ashamed and angry. In particular, it is the ever-weakening state of our painting circle that compels us to realize how heavy a burden [we must bear] in the coming years. We can no longer allow this to slide or just blame each other. It can be seen that countries in Europe and America are doing their utmost to fully develop their own cultural heritage in order to express their national identities. And the art of painting is truly the best tool through which to express cultural values. From the standpoint of its disposition, it is that through which life and morality can be brought to their highest level.

The Japanese are akin to a stepchild (nephew) of our culture. Even so, because of their temperament and system, they are not able to be exactly like us. However, in their propaganda in international cultural forums, they often consider themselves as the masters of the eastern artistic heritage. This causes us to realize, most profoundly, the folly of not striving for self-renewal...

We often hear that countries in Europe and America, as well as our eastern neighbor Japan, all have painting associations. An overview will find a variety of organizations, some public and some private. Some were organized by the painters themselves, and the government provided them with vital support. Others were led by the government, in line with whose guidance the artists took part in organizing them. Some were brought to being by virtue of social forces, on account of which painters had a chance to unite. Others came into being solely by virtue of the actions of the painters themselves.²¹

Through his activities in these organizations, Wang Zhen made his presence felt. He was, unlike other artists of his time, an organization man, emboldened by his experience in the business world. One may even go so far as to state that he derived a degree of self-identity by associating with other artists. It can be observed that he rarely if ever played the role of an instigator. More likely, with his financial strength a major consideration in everyone's mind, he served as a key supporter whenever and wherever funds were short. He was an artist himself and also a 'patron saint' for other artists, often assisting

them to arrange exhibitions, sell works, and introduce them to new patrons, including his Japanese clients.²² An example is his maneuver to promote Wu Changshuo into what maybe termed superstardom. Beginning from the days when this master settled in Shanghai, in about 1914, when he could scarcely rely on selling his paintings for subsistence (a fan from his hand could barely fetch 200 *wen*), Wu Changshuo reached the apex of artistic fame and became one of the best known figures in painting, in both Shanghai and Japan.²³ We shall not deny Japan a critical role in bringing out his genius. So says Wang Geyi in his *Memoir*:

Master Changshuo's painting was highly thought of in Japan. Consequently, even when members of the Japanese cabinet came to Shanghai, they would hold dinner parties at the Six-three Garden (a Japanese residence house in the Hongkou district) and issue an invitation to Master Changshuo. [Wang] Yiting and I would accompany Master Changshuo to dine in the Six-three Garden in a car sent by them. After the usual politenesses, Master Changshuo would invariably paint a few strokes before going into the dining hall ... After Master Changshuo died, those Japanese friends organized a small exhibition [of his paintings] in the Six-three Garden in his honor."

And later, Wang Zhen himself rode on Wu Changshuo's coattails to fame. Their names were often linked as two of the finest in Shanghai.²⁵

Wang Zhen as an Artist

Wang Zhen's art belonged in an urban setting. His was not the classic, orthodox style, then under increasing attack from contemporary critics as being irrelevant to society.²⁶ Neither, however, did he the westernizing style in order to force a decisive break with the past. As mentioned above, his lineages were twofold, that of Ren Yi the *Haipai* artist, brilliant, flashy and effervescent, and that of Wu Changshuo, the master of calligraphy and seal carving, who introduced the antique spirit *ofjinshi* into his painting. From Ren Yi, he learned to polish his technique and to master the figurative and various motifs and effects. From Wu Changshuo, he took the driven impact and irresistible tempo for his own usage. In fusing the opposites, he emerged as an artist of a forceful vision, recognizable amidst Shanghai's diverse trends.

Paralleling this swing in style and approach was his change of conceptual framework, from *Tart pour l'art* to *Tart pour la vie* - thematically and also in terms of the usage of art as a means to raise funds for charitable activities, including support for art associations. This explains the prolific quantity of Wang Zhen's work in existence, often made up of repeated images and replications as much as of original works and brilliant innovations.

Tart pour la vie could easily merge with Buddhist beliefs and compassion: this would prove to be a forceful motivation for Wang Zhen. Or to put it in another way, it was because of his Buddhist beliefs that he evolved an idea approximating *Tart pour la vie*.¹ In thematic terms, social concerns are not evident, perhaps, in his early paintings. For instance, his 1892 *Landscape with Buffaloes and Herdboys* closely followed his teacher, Ren Yi, and was based on one of his works.¹⁷ Gently composed, with delicately applied pale ink and light colors, it is different in style and appearance from those later paintings we normally associate with Wang Zhen. Another painting, *A Hen and Chicks* in the Jilin Provincial Museum, done a year later, reflects considerable influence from Ren Yi.² Neither of these paintings many indication of the social concerns he embraced later. What interested him in both was the vocabulary of art and the expressiveness of color and ink, purely artistic considerations. It was later that Wang Zhen felt an urgency regarding contemporary ills and began the search for solutions.

In the aforementioned album, *Yinguo* Fenming painted in 1913, half of the leaves depict street people in contrast with the other half which depict several subjects ranging from genre scenes to scholars and Buddhist saints.²⁹ His depictions sometimes approach caricature. The underlying sentiments are compassion, sympathy, and, to a degree, impatience toward those who were indifferent. The inscription on the first leaf (figure r), which features a family of four rendered homeless by a flood, highlights the belief in karmic retribution:

Disaster comes, south of the Yangzi and north of the Huai.
 People can hardly survive without food.
 Once they were very rich.
 Now they've become poor to this extent.
 The wife is sweeping with hunger, and the children wailing for food:
 Such a sad and miserable scene it is...
 Alas, when they were rich, they did not give succor to the poor.



Figure 1. Wang Zhen, *Yinguo Fenming* (Karma Illuminated).
Album, dated 1913, leaf a. Ching Yuan Chai collection.



Figure 2. Wang Zhen, *Yinguo Fenming*.
Album, dated 1913, leaf b. Ching Yuan Chai collection.



Figure 3. Wang Zhen ,*Yinguo Fenming*.
Album , dated 1913, leaf e.ChingYuan Chai collection.

He was speaking as a philanthropist and leader of relief organizations, pointing his finger at those misers who had not extended a helping hand toward the needy and warning about the future consequences of such callousness. Underscoring the urgency was a cry for the karmic law, to compel people to be charitable. Thus the last line could have had a powerful impact on potential donors.

The second leaf of the album (figure 2) portrays a simple beggar holding a long bamboo stick, confronting a barking dog. The last lines in his poetic inscription read:

... My two feet have covered the worldly trails.
One shoulder carries all the sadness from the past to the present.
I no longer take any food given in contempt;
You, the village dog, should not bark at me anymore.

Pride in poverty is the theme of this leaf, a firm conviction insofar as Wang Zhen was concerned. It also reminds us of the Longhua Orphanage, in which he offered food and shelter to over a hundred people. Not merely charity but respect for human dignity was foremost in Wang Zhen's intent. If broadened, this was the attitude that could lift China out of her abject humiliation in the early twentieth century.

Far more enigmatic is the fifth leaf in this album (figure 3). Here Wang Zhen depicts a man sitting on the ground, his mouth open, attempting to shout. His left hand holds a bell and the right a leash linked to a little dog with a big container in its mouth, walking toward passersby and begging from them. The blind man's staff and a basket are laid by his side. The title for the leaf is 'Dao is silent.'

Why does this man utter no words?

With a stick and a bell, he stays on the street
shouting every day, all day long.

Those who understand the Way (Dao) would give him pennies
or offer food.

Those who do not understand the Way ignore him as dumb.

The Dao is silent, for it matters not whether the beggar shouts or cries. However loud his cries, for those unwilling to help they fall on deaf ears. This album represents Wang Zhen's belief about life in the cycles of birth and rebirth, as do most of his Buddhist paintings and paintings of popular subjects. They harbor his simple and yet profound desire for a better life and society for all human beings. This sense of universal fraternity that filled his paintings and inscriptions on them went beyond narrow nationalism. It was this sentiment that moved him to raise a huge sum of money for the victims of the great earthquake of 1 September 1923 in the Tokyo area.

A large proportion of Wang Zhen's paintings are Buddhist in subject, fulfilling at least two functions, to serve the needs of clients, thus satisfying certain obligations, and to fulfil his own religious duties. Some are solidly composed and very powerful; in brushwork and in imagery, he displays a full mastery. Especially after he became a disciple of Wu Changshuo, Wang Zhen's brush moved directly from the cautious into a state of sureness and boldness. The *Bodhidharma* in the University Art Museum at Berkeley, California, is a good example (figure 4). Aside from the image, the most intriguing aspect is the halo that Wang Zhen rendered; it is almost invisible until one observes the painting for a long time and from different angles, after which the variegated ink tones begin to reverberate. In this alone one can discover the innovative power of Wang Zhen, who combines two visual languages, traditional Chinese and western European. The arrangement of elements is also interesting; one observes that he made most of the objects in the painting similar in size. A tree on the top of a cliff is

Figure 4.
Wang Zhen, *Bodhidharma*.
Hanging scroll, undated.
University Art Museum ,
University of California,
Berkeley.



not much larger than the figure, and the cliff and distant mountains are mingled together into an area of paler and darker ink patterns. The figure, although depicted in a simple and most casual way, is solid in posture, expression, and mood. The whole painting is in perfect balance and in harmony with the theme: detachment from worldly life and entrance into the eternal.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that Wang Zhen was a complex individual, one whose life from rags to riches is in itself a remarkable story. The metropolis of Shanghai was a crucible for his emergence as well as a place where he could win acceptance, however humble his beginnings. Wealth won him social status, charity won him universal esteem, and art brought him personal satisfaction. There used to be literati artists and professional artists, but the comprador artist is indeed a unique phenomenon, not seen before the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Did his post demean his art? No, it lent him a breadth of vision and an acuteness of perception. In a city where power and corruption were synonymous, he was one of the few innocents. Even in the last days, when he found himself torn between a country that he loved and another that he admired, he managed to exit in grace. He was an passionate individual, a true celebrity, and an extraordinary artist. And yet, he has been almost totally forgotten in his home country and cast into a state of political ambiguity. Only through his works of art has his existence attained salvation.

Notes

1. See Wang Renze, 'Wang Yiting' in *MinguoRenwuZhuan*, IV (Beijing, 1984), 255-260.
2. See *Wang Yiting Shuhua Ji* (A Collection of Wang Yiting's Calligraphy and Painting) (Shanghai, 1988). Wang Zhen was far better known outside mainland China in regions such as Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan. See Cathay Art Museum, *Bailong Shanren Wang Zhen Shuhua Daguan*, (Taipei, 1982), in three volumes.
3. *Shenbao* (Shanghai News) (5 September 1923), 3.
4. See entry under Wang Zhen in *Who's Who in China*, Fourth Edition (Shanghai, 1931), 415-416.
5. Sawamura Yukio, *Shanhaijimbutsu Insho Ki*, (My Impression of Shanghai Figures) (Tokyo, 1930), 18-19. Sawamura Yukio was an accredited journalist for the *Osaka Daily News* in Shanghai. Also see Chen Dingshan, *Chunshen Jiuwen* (Taipei, 1960), II, 26. At the approach of Japanese visitors, 'Yiting shut his door and refused to step out. Chronically ill, he asked for nothing but dying; thus the Japanese dared not force him.'
6. See Qiu Yu, 'Coming Back From Wang Yiting's Memorial Service,' *Shenbao* (15 November 1938), 3. In the memorial service, there were no Japanese present at all. One western name, however, appeared on the guest list.
7. Xi Nan, 'Wang Yiting in My Memory, I,' *Shenbao* (15 November 1938), 3.
8. Some of Wang Zhen's paintings are so carelessly painted that one would think they were produced quickly to meet the needs of clients. The highly mobile and modernized city of Shanghai offered Wang Zhen an art market to produce as much as he could. It is true even now that if one were to organize a Wang Zhen exhibition, one could find hundreds of his works without difficulty. His prolific output in fact devalued his art. Even though he also painted some truly fine works, art historians and connoisseurs tend to lump his all too numerous works of careless quality with his best work, and to judge the artistic level of the whole as not outstanding.
9. See Chen Sanli, *Bailong Shanren Tihua Shi* (Poetic Inscriptions for Painting by Bailong Shanren) (Shanghai, 1936), I, 15. One of Wang Zhen's trips to Japan took place in 1931. On that trip, he led a group of well-known artists such as Zhang Daqian, Qian Shoutie, Wang Geyi and Zheng Manqin. His impression was vividly recorded: 'With my walking stick, my visit here has become a memorable event, although I was walking in pictures all day long.'

10. Sawamura, *Shanghai Jimbutsu*, 18-19. In cidentally, Wang Zhen's residence, the Zhi Garden, was in the old Chinese city, Nanshi (South Market).
rr. *Sawamura, Shanghai Jimbutsu*, 19.
12. See Wang Renze, 'Wang Yiting,' 257.
13. Wang Zhen was a man who treasured traditional values. Chen Dingshan, in his *Chunshen Jiuwan*, II, 26, records: 'after Wu Changshuo died, the price of his painting dropped dramatically. But [Wang] Yiting bought them all at a high price. Even when he encountered cases when it was Wu Dongmai who painted under his father's name, he still bought them without asking any questions.' In addition, to commemorate Wu Changshuo, he and Wu Dongmai founded the Changming Academy which was staffed by the master's friends and students, such as Cao Zuochao, Pan Tianshou, He Tianjian, Ren Jingshu, Hu Dinglu, Wu Zhongxiong, Xue Feibai, Zhu Wenyun, Zhu Lesan. See Wang Geyi, *Wang Geyi Huiyi Lu* (Shanghai, 1982), 76-77- At the time when Lin Fengmian and others were pioneering a revolution in art, Wang Zhen was personifying the traditional ideal of loyalty to one's teacher. Accordingly, the Changming Academy tended to be traditional in outlook in its curriculum. The following story was told to me by the Canadian art historian, Ralph Croizier, who in turn cited Pang Xunqing as a source: In an art school where Wang Zhen was the director (presumably the Changming Academy), students wanted very much to paint from human models, but feared Wang Zhen's objection. So they would set up a model and paint when Wang Zhen was not around. As soon as he appeared at the gate, students would hide the model immediately and pretend to be doing something else.
14. The origin of the text mentions *wuyan* (quatrain) and *qiyan* (poem with seven-character lines).
15. Quoted from *Wang Yiting Shuhua Ji, nianpu*, 2.
16. This event is reported in the *Wang Yiting Shuhua Ji, nianpu*, entry under 1919. It is also related in Wu Changshuo's *nianpu*, see *Wu Changshuo Shuhua Ji* (Taipei, 1985), entry under the same year.
17. See Xi Nan, 'Wang Yiting in My Memory,' 18.
18. For this art association, see Yang Yi, *Haishang Molin* (Taipei, 1975), entry 438, under Qian Hui'an, which reprints its charter. Gao Yong and Li were among the organizers. See also Qian Huafo and Zheng Yunei, *Sanshi-nian Laizhi Shanghai* (Shanghai in the Past Thirty Years) (Shanghai, 1984, 6r).
19. For these gatherings, see Gao Yong's preface to *Haishang Molin*, 1a.
20. This Shuhua Hui was organized by collectors and artists in Shanghai in 1910, with Li Pingshu at the helm. For the growing intolerance among artistic factions after the May Fourth Movement, see Chen Duxiu, 'A letter

- to Li Zhi,' in Lang Shaojun, *Lun Zhongguo Dangdai Meishu* (On Chinese Modern Art) (Nanjing, 1988), 20. In this correspondence, Chen Duxiu made it clear that he tried to eliminate the orthodox heritage: 'An orthodox school such as this, which became an icon that allowed people to worship it blindly, should be done away with; otherwise, it would be the biggest obstacle to our importing realism and refining Chinese art.'
21. See Hu Huaisheng, 'Shanghai di Xueyi Tuanti' (Research and Art Associations in Shanghai) in *Shanghaishi Tongzhi Guan Qikan* (Shanghai, not dated), number 334, 902-903.
 22. Thus, he participated in an art exhibition in Paris in 1930, organized by Xu Beihong who visited Wang Zhen right after returning from France and who thus became acquainted with more artists in Shanghai.
 23. See Qian and Zheng, *SaJShinian Lai*, 55: 'After [Wu Changshuo] became friendly with Yiting, the former would correct the latter's writing, and the latter would bring in art business for him by using his comprador office and the name of the Japanese Riqing Shipping Company to be of Wu Changshuo's paintings.'
 24. *Wang Geyi Huiyi Lu*, 89.
 25. See Chen, *Chunshen Jiuwen*, li, 24: 'Whenever people talked about who were the most famous artists [in the city], the answer was always Wu Changshuo and Wang Yiting.'
 26. See note 20, Chen Duoxiu's letter. Also Lin Fengmian, in *Zhongguo Huihua* (Hong Kong, Furang Shufang 1974 reprint of the 1946 edition), 44. Chen Duxiu launched an attack on Chinese traditional art: 'Chinese art has long been separated from the living world. Chinese people have been used to seeing art as something that has nothing to do with them. Therefore, art is art, and life is life. Art expresses neither its time, nor the artist's individuality. It is neither "l'art pour l'art," nor "l'art pour la vie."'
 27. See Claudia Brown and Ju-hsi Chou, *Transcending Turmoil: Painting at the Close of China's Empire* (Phoenix, 1992), figure 76. One of the intriguing features of this work is that most of the objects depicted in it are in pairs: two buffaloes, two boys, two trees, two geese, and two groves of bamboo. This could be due to the penchant of the Chinese folk tradition for auspicious symbolism, or may simply be due to compositional needs.
 28. Photograph of this painting is unavailable.
 29. According to the inscription appended to the album, Wang Zhen wrote this album for an extended period, writing at the end that 'this album was painted seventeen years ago; no matter whether [it] be an immortal, a Buddhist, a beggar, or a vagrant, so long as it came to my mind I would paint it.' His keeping it for so long indicates that he was fond of it.