

## Chapter Four

### Shanghai: the writing of art history

Shanghai was the publishing centre of modern China. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, magazines and newspapers proliferated, owing to innovations in print technology and the need to disseminate ideas and information to readers in ever-changing times. Scholars looked to the nascent mass media industry as a means of employment and used their considerable intellectual skills to draw attention to and mediate the many cultural changes that were taking place. Huang Binhong was no exception. (Figure 4.1) He was closely involved with the newspaper industry as editor and head of the art department of the *Shenzhou Daily* and the *Eastern Times* newspapers.<sup>1</sup>

In early 1912 Huang Binhong began to write a regular column for the *Shenzhou Daily* entitled *Shenzhou yuedan* 神州月旦. The newspaper, established by Yu Youren 于右任 prior to the 1911 revolution, was managed by Wang Pengnian 汪彭年, who was also from Anhui.<sup>2</sup> Huang's columns were short and continued with great regularity, sometimes daily, until late 1913.<sup>3</sup>

From then until the end of 1914 he also wrote longer articles on subjects as diverse as art, history, literature, epigraphy and philosophy. These articles appeared daily and reflect the diversity of Huang Binhong's interests and his ability to write with frequency and on a broad range of cultural subjects. Titles include "Spiritual civilisation associated with Chinese art," "Talented women in troubled times," "Books are valued overseas," "A record of travels to Mount Jiuhua," "Ancient and modern discourses on ink," and "A record of collecting imperial seals".

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<sup>1</sup> Huang Binhong, "Zi xu," in *Huang Binhong wenji, zazhubian*, p.561.

<sup>2</sup> Wang Zhongxiu, letter to the author, 26 August 2003.

<sup>3</sup> *Huang Binhong wenji, shuxin bian*, Appendix 1, pp.4-13.

Huang Yongming 黃永明 recalls that when his father was working at the *Shenzhou Daily*, he would read, paint, entertain friends during the day, go to work at the newspaper in the evening and not return home until very late at night.<sup>4</sup> According to the artist's daughter, Huang Yingjia 黃映家, Huang put a great deal of effort into his writing. Unlike painting, which was a source of pleasure and relaxation, writing demanded great concentration.<sup>5</sup> Huang Binhong's manuscripts, now in the collection of the Zhejiang Provincial Museum, are heavily re-worked, often in multiple drafts.

In 1919, Huang Binhong began to write for the newly created *Weekly Art Journal* (*Meishu zhoukan* 美術周刊). This was a supplement to *The Eastern Times*, one of Shanghai's highest circulating newspapers. *The Eastern Times* was established in 1904 by Di Chuqing, the manager of the Youzheng Publishing Company, which also published the magazine *Famous Chinese Paintings*, the rival to the *National Glories of Cathay*.<sup>6</sup> Di launched many different supplements in an attempt to increase readership of *The Eastern Times*. A notice for the new journal promotes a practical approach to combining old and new learning for the good of China's future.

We have chosen things that are unique to China and which have been enthusiastically welcomed by people in various European and Asian countries. We have divided them into eight categories: carvings, national painting, artisanship, miscellaneous vessels, short essays, scholarly writings and catalogues, translation and photography. We have chosen gems from many thousands of years of art works to improve the lives of four hundred million people, using both new knowledge and old learning to counter shortcomings and uphold our strengths, promoting industry so that we may move ahead swiftly to secure a rich and strong future.<sup>7</sup>

Most articles published in the art supplement do not carry the name of the author. The contemporary Huang Binhong expert Wang Zhongxiu 王中秀, however, argues that, based on literary style and Huang Binhong's later writings, many of the articles on art, decorative arts,

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<sup>4</sup> Wang Zhongxiu, *Huang Binhong nianpu*, p.84.

<sup>5</sup> Huang Yingjia, conversation with the author, 10 December 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Wang Zhongxiu, *Huang Binhong nianpu*, p.173. Huang Binhong edited *Famous Chinese Paintings* from 1925 to 1926. According to Lin Yutang, Di Chuqing was a visionary publisher who set the standard for modern newspaper publishing. He published a detailed editorial policy and developed a range of weekly supplements relating to special areas of interest such as education, women, art, English and children. See Lin Yutang, *A History of the Press and Public Opinion in China*, pp.104-106.

<sup>7</sup> *Huang Binhong wenji, shuxin bian*, Appendix 2, p.62.

literature, epigraphy and history are in fact written by Huang, including “Imperial seals of the Zhou dynasty,” “Old Western porcelain,” “Chinese characters found on ancient clay vessels,” “Painting on cotton,” “The export of artworks,” “Eastern studies come to the West,” “Famous bamboo carvers,” “Ornamental rocks from Lake Tai,” and “Shexian inkstones,” all published between August 1919 and April 1921.<sup>8</sup> As with his writings for the *Shenzhou Daily*, the breadth of subject matter reflects the wide-ranging cultural debates of the late 1910s and early 1920s and hints at the atmosphere of heightened nationalism fostered by China’s unfair treatment at the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 and the ensuing May Fourth Movement, when students took to the streets petitioning for radical change. Yet the subjects also show that Huang Binhong’s primary concern was with cultural continuity, bringing an awareness of the past into the present.

### **The True Record**

Huang Binhong was associated with a number of organisations that were specifically interested in Chinese and Western art. A good example is his involvement with the art and current affairs magazine *The True Record* (*Zhenxiang huabao* 真相畫報), edited by Gao Jianfu (高劍父, 1879-1951) and Gao Qifeng (高奇峰, 1889-1933) and published in Shanghai between June 1912 and March 1913, for which Huang Binhong was a staff member and a contributing writer. The Gao brothers, like Deng Shi and Huang Jie, were from Guangdong. Inspired by study in Japan, they sought to modernise Chinese brush and ink painting through the assimilation of Western techniques and approaches.<sup>9</sup> *The True Record* was outward-looking and reflected the spirit of the new republic and a society in the process of change. It covered “the latest news of the realm” embracing “politics, society, industry, commerce and education”.<sup>10</sup> Pictorial imagery included news photography, satirical cartoons and reproductions of artworks,

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<sup>8</sup> Huang Binhong wenji, *shuxin bian*, Appendix 2, pp.61-65. The art supplement *Weekly Art Journal* continued until 28 October 1919. From 4 November it was renamed *Literature and Art Journal* (*Wenyi zhoukan*) and continued until 26 April 1921. Many of the columns that Huang Binhong published in *The Eastern Times’ Weekly Art Journal* appear reworked in later essays published under his own name, for example in magazines such as *Art View* (*Yi Guan*) and *Academic World* (*Xueshu shijie*). See Wang Zhongxiu, *Huang Binhong nianpu*, pp.147-148.

<sup>9</sup> See Hong Zaixin, “Guchui geming zhong de yishu zhenxiang: ‘Zhenxiang huabao’ suo shi Huang Binhong yu Lingnan sanjia de guanxi,” *Duoyun* 44 (1995), pp.54-61.

<sup>10</sup> Ralph Crozier, *Art and Revolution in Modern China: the Lingnan (Cantonese) School of Painting, 1906-1951* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p.68.

both ancient and contemporary. Interesting features were comparisons of paintings by artists from China and the West,<sup>11</sup> English proverbs translated into Chinese,<sup>12</sup> and a compilation of artworks “drawn by members of our staff” reflecting different approaches to art making, both Eastern and Western, including a landscape sketch by Huang Binhong.<sup>13</sup> (Figure 4.2)

In a preface to *The True Record*, Huang extolled the tradition of Chinese painting but placed it firmly within the larger context of world art:

My Guangdong friends have begun publishing the journal the *True Record* which will bring together various art forms from all over the world—international and national, ancient and modern. I very much like the way in which the journal will allow for communication between scholarship in Europe and Asia, promote the best of Chinese cultural essence, educate people in principles and conduct, and bring about quiet change and influence.<sup>14</sup>

For Huang Binhong the “Chinese cultural essence,” which included Chinese art and literature, could not be fully appreciated and understood unless it was viewed in an international context and exposed to international scrutiny. He also made clear that “Chinese cultural essence” had a political purpose, which was to “bring about quiet change and increased influence”.

Huang Binhong’s most significant contribution to the pages of the *True Record* is a series of art historical essays that span the life of the magazine. The essays were Huang’s first attempt at a systematic history of Chinese painting and predate the earliest acknowledged twentieth century art history text *Art History* (*Meishu shi* 美術史), written by Jiang Danshu (姜丹書, 1885-1962) and published by the Commercial Press in Shanghai in 1917.<sup>15</sup> It is likely the series would have continued had the journal not been closed down as a result of Yuan

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<sup>11</sup> See *Zhenxiang huabao* 1, no.12 (1912).

<sup>12</sup> *Zhenxiang huabao* 1, no.11 (1912), p.30.

<sup>13</sup> *Zhenxiang huabao* 1, no.10 (1912).

<sup>14</sup> *Zhenxiang huabao* 2, no.6 (1912), p.3. See also *Huang Binhong wenji, shuhua shang*, pp.47-48.

<sup>15</sup> At the time Jiang Danshu was teaching at the Zhejiang Provincial First Teachers’ College (*Zhejiang shengli diyi shifan*) in Hangzhou and wrote the text as teaching materials in order to comply with teaching guidelines issued by the education department of the new nationalist government. See Xue Yongnian, “Meishushi yanjiu yu zhongguohua fazhan,” *Xin meishu* 1 (1999), p.4.

Shikai's (袁世凱, 1859-1916) suppression of activities linked to the Nationalist Party (Guomindang 國民黨) in 1913.<sup>16</sup>

Beginning in 1923, Huang also became a regular contributor to the *National Studies Weekly* (*Guoxue zhoukan* 國學周刊), a supplement to the *Minguo Daily* (*Minguo ribao* 民國日報). The editor of the weekly, Hu Pu'an (胡樸子 Yunyu 韞玉, 1878/9-1947), was one of Huang Binhong's close friends.<sup>17</sup> Over the course of a year Huang Binhong published a serialised essay on the history of Chinese painting, which was carried over fifty-one issues (volumes 12 to 62). Huang began with prehistoric painting and works from the Three Dynasties period. He focussed on individual artists, quoted from earlier art historical texts, and provided his own commentary on the paintings. Because of the closure of the magazine in 1924, his serialised art history ended with the southern Song masters Li Tang, Liu Songnian (劉松年, ca. 1150-after 1225), Ma Yuan (馬遠, active before 1189-after 1225) and Xia Gui (夏圭, active early 1200s).<sup>18</sup>

### ***A Small Treatise on Ancient Paintings***

In December 1925, Huang Binhong published his first sustained overview of the history of Chinese painting, following earlier attempts at serialised art histories in the *True Record* (1914) and the *National Studies Weekly* (1923-1924). His history spanned pre-historical times to the early Republican period and was entitled *A Small Treatise on Ancient Paintings* (*Guhua wei* 古

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<sup>16</sup> The articles appeared in a broadly chronological manner, beginning with prehistoric art and ending with the Five Dynasties bird and flower artists Xu Xi and Huang Chuan. See Xu Zhihao, *1911-1949 Zhongguo meishu qikan guoyan lu* (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1992), pp.1-2.

<sup>17</sup> Hu Pu'an was from Jingxian in Anhui. He was a member of the Revolutionary Alliance and the Southern Society and one of the editors of *Journal for the Preservation of National Essence*. After 1911 he wrote for many newspapers and occupied management positions, including at the *Republican Daily*, *The Democrat*, *Pacific Newspaper*, the *Chinese People's Newspaper* (*Zhonghua minbao*) and the *People's Newspaper* (*Min bao*). Hu was also a professor at Chinese Public School (*Zhongguo gongxue*), Fudan Public School (*Fudan gongxue*) and Peoples University (*Guomin daxue*). After 1916 he occupied a number of official positions including secretary of the Department of Transport. In 1923 Hu Pu'an introduced Huang Jusu to Huang Binhong, and Huang Jusu became his student. See Chen Yutang, *Zhongguo jinxindai renwu minghao da cidian (quanbian zengdingben)* (2004), p.882, and Wang Zhongxiu, *Huang Binhong nianpu*, p.160.

<sup>18</sup> *Huang Binhong wenji, shuhua pian, shang*, pp.146-188.

畫微). It was published as a supplement to the magazine *World of Fiction* (*Xiaoshuo shijie* 小說世界).<sup>19</sup>

Huang's *Treatise* built on his previous writings and is one of the earliest historical surveys of Chinese art published in China. Chen Shizeng's (陳師曾, 1876-1923) *History of Chinese Painting* (*Zhongguo huihua shi* 中國繪畫史), published a year earlier, is regarded as the first modern history of Chinese painting.<sup>20</sup> Other books soon followed including Teng Gu's (滕固, 1901-1941) *Brief History of Chinese Painting* (*Zhongguo meishu xiao shi* 中國美術小史, Commercial Press, January 1926), Pan Tianshou's (潘天壽, 1898-1971) *History of Chinese Painting* (*Zhongguo huihua shi* 中國繪畫史, Commercial Press, July 1926) and Zheng Chang's (鄭昶Wuchang 午昌, 1894-1952) *A Complete History of Chinese Aesthetics* (*Zhongguo huaxue quan shi* 中國畫學全史, Zhonghua shuju, 1929) for which Huang Binhong wrote a preface.<sup>21</sup> Chen Zhenlian 陳振濂 has pointed out that Huang Binhong's art history derives from the tradition of Chinese art history writing, distinguishing it from later books that drew on Japanese and Western prototypes.<sup>22</sup> Huang Binhong is a pioneering twentieth-century Chinese art historian, whose contribution is often overlooked because of his adherence to a traditional writing style.<sup>23</sup>

Huang begins his treatise emphasising the importance of the inner spirit rather than the external appearance of an object. He highlights the particular significance of painting to national studies by stating that the earliest marks were pictograms and that “before writing there was

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<sup>19</sup> *Guhua wei* was republished in 1932 and 1933. See *Huang binhong wenji, shuhua bian, shang*, p.196. In a recollection written at the age of ninety, Huang notes that *Guhua wei* was heavily edited and what was published did not reflect the extent of the original text. See Huang Binhong, “*Jiushi zashu zhi yi*” section 4, *Huang Binhong wenji, zazhu bian*, p.571.

<sup>20</sup> *History of Chinese Painting* was published by the Hanmo Art Academy (*Hanmoyuan meishu xueyuan*) in January 1925. *A Small Treatise on Ancient Paintings* was also preceded by Chen Shizeng's essay “The Value of Literati Painting” (*Wenren hua zhi jiazhi*) published in 1921. Chen's essay was written in response to criticism of literati painting by the New Culture Movement, but rather than oppose reform, Chen argued for its essential qualities.

<sup>21</sup> Xue Yongnian, “Meishushi yanjiu yu zhongguohua fazhan,” p.51.

<sup>22</sup> Chen Zhenlian, *Jindai Zhong Ri huihua jiaoliu shi* (Hefei: Anhui meishu chubanshe, 2000), pp.228-242.

<sup>23</sup> Xue Yongnian, “Meishushi yanjiu yu zhongguohua fazhan,” pp.4-10; Chen Zhenlian, “Zhuzuo de jie yi: Chen Shizeng, liewai de Huang Binhong,” in *Jindai Zhong Ri huihua jiaoliu shi*, p.239. Wang Bomin, in *Zhongguo huihua shi* (written in the 1960s but not published until 1982 by *Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe*), p.745 concludes with the late Qing artist Wu Changshuo. The only mention of Huang Binhong is in an appended time line of Chinese art history where Huang Binhong is listed in the final entry for 1911 as the joint editor with Deng Shi of *Meishu congshu*.

image making [*hua*]”.<sup>24</sup> In his concluding remarks he stressed the importance of learning from the art of the past, because it was through the use of brush and ink technique that the inner spirit was expressed. This, he believed, was what distinguished Chinese art from that of the west.

Those who are studying painting tend to learn from contemporaries, but that is not the same as learning from the ancients. But learning from the ancients is not the same as learning from nature. What is meant by learning from the ancients is not the slavish copying of works of art. The ancients have already departed . . . . If you want to understand the paintings of past artists, their spirit resides in the detail of their use of brush and ink. It is not transmitted through their changing compositions . . . . In studying the ancients place emphasis on attaining a likeness of spirit and not a likeness of appearance. The style or appearance of a painting can change at any time, but the spirit does not change. It is just like walking along a path. If you are walking at night you cannot find the path, but with illumination there is no need to sigh that you have fallen or lost the way. The spirit that resides in ancient paintings and the findings of those who have observed and recorded it in scholarly writings and critiques act as a light for later scholars. Even a weak light can direct you to a level and easy thoroughfare that can lead to many places and from there you can travel speedily from post to post along a designated route as if in the daylight. It is not difficult.<sup>25</sup>

*A Small Treatise on Ancient Painting* is one of Huang Binhong's most important art historical writings and is a clear expression of his belief that the past has an important role to play in the present. Huang Binhong was not interested in a dead past or the past for the sake of the past. He was interested in communicating with artists of the past and bringing the past to life in the present through the use of brush and ink. For it is in brush and ink that the spirit resides. It is in the depiction of an abstract interior spirit, rather than an external likeness of form that Chinese artists of the past have excelled. Huang Binhong uses the metaphor of light illuminating a pathway at night to allude to the philosophical and technical principles of Chinese painting that he believed continued to offer important guidance to practitioners. Within Western art and thought, light has been widely used as a metaphor for knowledge, including religious or spiritual awareness. The metaphor of light was also used by Deng Shi and Huang Jie for the name of their organization *Shenzhou guoguang she*, which literally means “Association of the

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<sup>24</sup> *Huang Binhong wenji, shuhua bian, shang*, p.198. See also Huang Binhong “Huaxue pian shi yi,” in *Huang Binhong wenji shuhua bian, xia*, pp.480-482.

<sup>25</sup> *Huang Binhong wenji, shuhua bian, shang*, pp.237-238.

National Light of Cathay,” and the similarly titled magazine *Shenzhou guoguang ji*, which I have translated as *National Glories of Cathay*. Light was a universal metaphor that embodied the idea of learning and the spiritual. For Deng Shi, Huang Jie and Huang Binhong, light alluded to the inner spirit of Chinese art, or the “national essence,” and was most fundamentally expressed in Chinese painting through brush and ink technique.

### **Editorship of Art View**

From 1926 to 1929, Huang Binhong was editor of the magazine *Art View* (*Yiguan* 藝觀) published by the China Society for the Study and Appraisal of Stone and Bronze Inscriptions, Calligraphy and Painting (*Zhongguo jinshi shuhua yiguan xuehui* 中國金石書畫藝觀學會), of which he was also the head.<sup>26</sup> The society was open to art practitioners, collectors and connoisseurs. In addition to publishing the magazine, it organised public lectures and exhibitions.

The charter of the journal was to “preserve national essence, promote the light of the nation, research art, and cultivate the mind,” echoing the mission of *National Glories of Cathay* and its continuation *Cathay Outlook* (*Shenzhou daguan* 神州大觀) which ceased publication in 1922.

In the inaugural issue of the magazine, Huang wrote an important essay on Chinese brush and ink painting technique.<sup>27</sup> Entitled *Program for the Study of National Painting*

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<sup>26</sup> See Tsuruta, ed., *Minkokuki bijitsugakkō sotsugyōdōgakuroku*, Bijutsudantai kaiinroku shūsei, Kubosō kinen bunka zaidan Tōyō bijutsu kenkyūjo kiyō, pp.7-9, 27. The China Society for the Study and Appraisal of Stone and Bronze Inscriptions, Calligraphy and Painting was established in 1925 by Jiang Xuyun, Xu Jiyu and Wang Xuefan. Wang Zhongxiu also mentions Di Pingzi, Wang Shoucen, Sun Chunqi, He Shiji, Huang Binhong, Tao Mingxia, Song Ruoying, Wang Xuyun etc. See Wang Zhongxiu, *Huang Binhong nianpu*, pp.173-175. Volume two of the magazine appeared in April 1929, three years after volume one, during which time the name of the association was changed to Association for the Study of Chinese Art (*Zhongguo yishu xuehui*). The magazine was published by the revived Cathay Art Union, where Huang Binhong was the head of the art department. The content of the magazine was expanded to include western painting, engraving and other arts, as well as Chinese engravings on metal and stone, painting, carving, seals, poetry, literature and inscriptions on paintings. An advertisement on the back cover of volume 5 July 1929 stated that from volume 3 articles on theories of western art would be added, with news relating to the contemporary art world and commentaries on recently published works. In the words of the publishers and promoters, it was the only journal of its kind and one that “artists could not be without”. The magazine was illustrated with photographs of objects, rubbings, calligraphy, and painting. Among the examples of contemporary art published were a number of paintings by Huang Binhong.

<sup>27</sup> *Yiguan* 1 (1926) see *Huang Binhong wenji, shuhua bian shang*, pp.301-308. Other essays by Huang that were published in the magazine include “A Record of Travels to *Huangshan qianhai*” (*Huangshan*

(*Guohua fen qi xuefa* 國畫分期學法) it begins with the words:

In recent times the art of the East has become a subject of interest for learned westerners. Some have written books on the subject and their influence is gradually increasing. Chinese scholars, on the other hand, are all adopting Western ways. The study and practice of national painting [*guo hua*] requires serious research and the collection of historical artworks in order to discern the pure from the impure and determine the various artistic schools.<sup>28</sup>

To assist and encourage artists he outlines a four-stage program of study based on traditional ideas, synthesising the principles that, in his view, are essential to the study of Chinese painting. First, become familiar with painting materials; second, study works by ancient artists in order to understand the reasons behind the changes in painting techniques, and the differences between schools of painting; third, learn from nature and understand the character of the four seasons and of different terrain; and fourth, cultivate your personal character through a study of morals and literature.<sup>29</sup> Huang presents a detailed discussion of brushwork in which he examines the different characteristics of brush technique during different historical periods. The essay continues the efforts of Huang Binhong and others to counter the decline in interest in Chinese brush and ink painting. By advocating the study of brush and ink technique, Huang Binhong was making his own particular contribution to national studies. In his view brush and ink technique embodied the essence, or spirit, of Chinese painting, and by extension, China.

### **The Chinese Painting Monthly**

Another journal with which Huang had a strong involvement was the *Chinese Painting Monthly* (*Guohua yuekan* 國畫月刊), first published in 1934 by the Shanghai Chinese Painting Society

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*qianhai jiyou*, vol.1), "Introduction to the *Binhong caotang* Book of Impressions of Ancient Seals" (*Binhong caotang, gu yinpu xu*, vol.2), "Biography of the Ming dynasty Artist Shen Shitian" (*Mingdai huajia Shen Shitian xiansheng zhuan*, vol.2), "Chinese Characters on Ancient Seals Impressed on Pottery Vessels" (*Gu xi yong yu taoqi zhi wenzi*, vol.3), "Honglu on art" (*Honglu huatan*, vol.3), "Brush and Ink Painting in the National Art Exhibition" (*Meizhan guohua tan*, vol.3), "Zhoulu on Art" (*Zhou lu hua tan*, vol.4). See *Huang Binhong wenji shuxian bian*, Appendix 1, pp.40-42, Xu Zhihao, *Zhongguo meishu qikan guoyanlu*, p.35.

<sup>28</sup> *Huang Binhong wenji, shuhua bian, shang*, p.301.

<sup>29</sup> *Huang Binhong wenji, shuhua bian, shang*, pp.301-302.

(*Shanghai Zhongguo huahui* 上海中國畫會).<sup>30</sup> The objectives of the journal were to advocate art and the institutions that support it, enhance work practices, communicate the news of members, and promote the activities of the society. By allowing for the full development of the Chinese artistic spirit the society hoped to raise the standing of world art.<sup>31</sup>

One of Huang Binhong's most important essays on painting technique "The Essentials of Chinese Painting" (*Huafa yaozhi* 畫法要旨) was published in the *Chinese Painting Monthly* in 1934.<sup>32</sup> In the essay Huang borrows heavily from traditional Chinese art theory, but in so doing he also articulates his own ideas. He propounds a classification of artists and their art—literati paintings (*wenren hua* 文人畫), paintings by famous artists (*mingjia hua* 名家畫) and paintings by great artists (*dajia hua* 大家畫) and re-iterates the four traditional classes of artwork - competent (*neng* 能), excellent (*miao* 妙), divine (*shen* 神) and untrammelled (*yi* 逸).<sup>33</sup> Huang most admired paintings by "great artists" in the "untrammelled" style:

Only Great Artists and Scholar Artists can transcend [the categories of] competent, excellent, divine and attain the untrammelled class. In the creation of art, even with hard work and dedication you cannot necessarily achieve it!<sup>34</sup>

"Paintings by great artists," he went on to say,

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<sup>30</sup> Huang Binhong was one of the editors of the first three issues of the magazine, along with Wang Yachen, Zheng Xuewu, Lu Danlin, He Tianjian and Xie Haiyan. Articles by Huang Binhong included "The Spiritual is More Important than the Material" (*Jingshen zhong yu wuzhi shuo*, vol.1), "Literature to Talk about Ruling" (*Zhizhi yi wen shuo*, vol.1), "The Essentials of Painting" (*Huafa yao zhi*, vol.1, nos.1, 2, 3, 5), "On the Xin'an School" (*Xin'an pai lunlue*, vol.1, no.3), "Recent Developments in Chinese Landscape Painting" (*Zhongguo shanshui hua jin xi zhi bianqian*, vol.1, no.4), "In Discoursing on Art Draw on the Strengths" (*Lun hua yi qu suo chang*, vol.1, no.7). See *Huang Binhong wenji, shuxin bian*, Appendix 1, 43. Volume 4, edited by He Tianjian, was devoted to Chinese and Western Landscape painting. The journal ceased publication in August 1935, after only twelve issues.

<sup>31</sup> Xu Zhihao, *1911-1949 Zhongguo meishu qikan man lu*, p.113.

<sup>32</sup> See *Huang Binhong wenji, shuhua, shang*, pp.489-498. This essay built on an earlier article published in 1929 titled "Differences in the Moral Character of Artists" (*Huajia pingge zhi qu yi*) published in the magazine *Art Exhibition (Meizhan)* for the national art exhibition in 1929. See *Huang Binhong wenji, shuhua shang*, pp.466-467. In 1940, while living in Japanese-occupied Beiping, Huang published a reworked version of this theory of painting, distilled as *wu bi qi mo* (five brush methods and seven ink techniques). The essay titled "On Painting" (*Hua tan*) was published in the inaugural issue of the Sino-Japan Monthly (*Zhonghe yuekan*) under the pen name Yuxiang. This theory of brush and ink technique stands as one of Huang Binhong's most important artistic legacies.

<sup>33</sup> Zhang Haiguan in *Huapin duan* (during the Kaiyuan reign of the Tang dynasty) is thought to have first used the terms *shen*, *miao*, *neng* for classes of artists. During the late Tang dynasty, Zhu Jingxuan in *Tangchao minghua lu xu* adds *yipin* or the untrammelled class of painters to refer to a class of painters outside the above mentioned standards, who are not confined to ordinary techniques. Zhang Yanyuan in *Lidai minhua ji* placed *yi* in the highest position, above *shen*, the divine class. For a discussion of these terms and *yipin*, see S. Shimada, trans., J. Cahill, "Concerning the I-p' in style of painting I-III," *Oriental Art* 7, no.2 (1961), pp.66-74; 8, no.3 (1961), pp.130-137; 10, no.1 (1964), pp.19-26.

<sup>34</sup> Huang Binhong, "Huafa yao zhi," in *Huang Binhong wenji, shuhua bian, shang*, p.490.

synthesise the good points of the divine, excellent and competent. Such artists are able to compose poetry, and are adept at calligraphy and painting. They are restrained in their emotion and thought but unrestrained in their technique. They can paint to any format, even quickly and effortlessly ... and are interested in the true spirit. These are untrammelled paintings. There are very few great masters. Famous masters may appear once every few decades or hundred years ...<sup>35</sup>

In Huang Binhong's view the untrammelled class of painters (*yipin* 逸品) created works that were so superlative and unorthodox that it was not possible to consider them in the customary system of ranking artists. The meanings of *yi*逸 and *yipin* are complex and not consistent over time.<sup>36</sup> In this and other writings Huang uses the terms to discuss the Five Dynasties artists Dong Yuan and Juran, Song artists Guo Xi and Sun Zhiwei (孫知微, d. ca. 1020), Yuan artists Huang Gongwang, Wang Meng, Ni Zan and Wu Zhen, and the late Ming-early Qing monk artists Hongren, Kuncan and Shitao, as well as Yun Xiang and Zha Shibiao.<sup>37</sup> For Huang Binhong *yipin* paintings were those produced by artists who had achieved the rare feat of understanding and synthesizing all of the related traditional Chinese arts and yet transcending them to achieve a feeling of complete naturalness, placing emphasis on the spirit rather than the material nature of what is represented.<sup>38</sup> Huang Binhong identified strongly with untrammelled or *yipin* painting. It represented the ultimate in painting for him and was a classification to which he aspired as we will see when looking at his late paintings.

In the essay Huang Binhong proceeds to articulate his theory of brush and ink method. Brushstrokes, he says, should embody five characteristics; evenness or control (*ping* 平), presence (*liu* 留), roundness (*yuan* 圓), substance (*zhong* 重) and variety (*bian* 變). He cautions artists to make sure that their lines do not look like the head of a nail (*dingtou* 釘頭), a mouse's tail (*shuwei* 鼠尾), a wasp's slim waist (*fengyao* 蜂腰) or a crane's knees (*he xi* 鶴膝). He

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<sup>35</sup> Huang Binhong, *ibid.*, p.491.

<sup>36</sup> According to the Chinese dictionary *Hanyu da cidian* there are 14 definitions of “yi”: to run; flee; quick or rapid; release or set free; lose; rusticate or live in retirement; recluse or hermit; surpass or transcend; carefree and natural; leisurely and at ease; undisciplined or self-indulgent; decadent; beautiful; fault or error. See also S. Shimada, “Concerning the I-p’ in Style of Painting,” *Oriental Art* 7, no.2 (1961), pp.66-74; 8, no.3 (1962), pp.130-137; 10, no.1 (1964), pp.19-26.

<sup>37</sup> Huang makes many references to *yi* and *yipin* in his writings in art. See *Huang Binhong wenji, shuhua bian, shang*, pp.13, 147, 172-173, 214-216, 226-229, 250-251, 466-467, 470, 490. *Huang Binhong wenji, shuhua bian, xia*, pp.70, 402, 427, 429-430, 476-477.

<sup>38</sup> *Huang Binhong wenji, shuhua bian*, p.476.

then describes what he calls the seven essential ink methods: thick or viscous ink (*nongmo* 濃墨), pale ink (*danmo* 淡墨), broken ink (*pomo* 破墨), accumulated ink (*jimo* 積墨), scorched ink (*jiaomo* 焦墨), overnight ink (*sumo* 宿墨) and poured ink (*pomo* 潑墨).<sup>39</sup>

Huang writes as both an historian and a practitioner. He gives the reader a historical synopsis of the different ink methods, and reveals his own understanding of ink technique in the process. For example, in describing the use of thick ink, a characteristic of Huang's late, dark painting style, he emphasises the importance of light and void:

During the Jin, Wei and Six Dynasties period all artists used thick ink for calligraphy and painting. [Su] Dongpo is said to have commented: People who discourse on ink invariably regard its blackness most highly, and ignore its qualities of light. If it is bright but not black, then it is no good. But if black but without light, then it is without life or spirit. One must ensure that the quality of light is clear but not empty and as bright and spirited as the eyes of a young child. When the ancients used ink, they made a point of choosing high quality ink. If they had not used good ink then the beauty of their work would not have lasted as it has until today or continued to transmit that beauty into the future ...<sup>40</sup>

In this comment, Huang reveals a complex understanding of ink and the symbiotic relationship between dark and light. Blackness and darkness need to be imbued with a quality of light if there is to be life. Coming from Shexian, the home of fine ink, and having helped his father produce ink in the past, Huang Binhong was particularly attuned to the qualities of ink and the important role it played in the brushwork that transmits the spirit of the artist. Only when the artist's spirit was expressed in an untrammelled form could the ultimate quality of *yi* be attained.

### **Paintings for the ancestral shrine in Shexian**

While living in Shanghai, Huang Binhong made regular trips to Shexian, often timed to coincide with the Chinese New Year, when he would pay his respects to family members and ancestors. During a visit in late 1917 or early 1918, Binhong painted four large hanging scrolls

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<sup>39</sup> In "The Essentials of Chinese Painting" Huang mentions the seven essentials of ink in the text but only goes on to list six, omitting *pomo*. Huang does mention *pomo* in the extended text that follows, which suggests that the omission was an oversight. *Huang Binhong wenji, shuhua, shang*, pp.491-498.

<sup>40</sup> *Huang Binhong wenji, shuhua, shang*, pp.495-496.

for the family ancestral shrine, *Chunhui Tang*.<sup>41</sup> Huang Dinghua, Huang Binhong's father, led a project for its restoration and after the death of his father in 1894 Huang Binhong continued to take an interest in the ancestral shrine.

The paintings, which I will call the *Chunhui Tang* scrolls, are now in the collection of the Anhui Provincial Museum, in Hefei. They are remarkable for their size and the boldness of their conception. For Huang Binhong the creation of the paintings represented an important opportunity to express his respect for the many generations of ancestors that had preceded him, as well as to contribute to the continuing creative presence of the Huang family in Tandu Village. Painted when Huang Binhong was in his mid-fifties, the scrolls are a good example of the artist's style at that time. They confirm his interest in experimenting with brush and ink technique and painting styles as well as compositional structures. The works are signed variously "Pucun" or "Pucun Zhi".

The set of paintings is literally a homage to Huang Binhong's ancestors, particularly those from the Ming and Qing dynasties, whose achievements he records in lengthy inscriptions. In one scroll, Huang Binhong pays his respects to Huang Chungu 黄春谷 and quotes from two poems written by his ancestor that inspired his own painting.<sup>42</sup> (Figure 4.3) Binhong depicts a dwelling perched high on a dark, rocky outcrop. The darkness of the mountain has been achieved by the application of layer upon layer of parallel directional strokes, imbuing the painting with a theatrical kind of gravitas. The mountain is defined by a series of white zig-zag lines, that indicate raised areas of rock illuminated by light. (Figure 4.3a) These are in fact areas of paper that have been left void (*liubai* 留白) in the process of modelling the rock forms. The white paths, jagged and angular, like lightning bolts, lead the eye insistently through the painting. The painting suggests a diversity of artistic influences, but most notable are the dark, layered, monumental landscapes of the Song and, in particular, the angular, abstracted mountain forms of Li Tang. (Figure 4.3b) The dramatic contrast between the dry,

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<sup>41</sup> One of the scrolls is dated *Dingyi dong ri*, Winter 1917. Wang Zhongxiu, *Huang Binhong nianpu*, pp.135-136. *Chunhui* was the name of one of the eight clans of the Huang ancestors from Tandu village. The ancestral shrine *Chunhui Tang* can be traced back to the Ming dynasty. The shrine was burnt down in 1671 and rebuilt during the middle of the Yongzheng period (1723-1735). See "She Tandu Huang shi xian de lu," in *Huang Binhong wenji, zazhu bian*, pp.422-424, 462-463.

<sup>42</sup> For the four inscriptions, see *Huang Binhong wenji, tiba bian*, pp.78-80.

scorched black ink and the brilliant white voided pathways is an artistic device that Huang Binhong developed in his later years, until it became, in a much less mannered form, a defining characteristic of his mature style.<sup>43</sup> This is a fascinating early manifestation of Huang Binhong's disciplined resolution of solid and void achieved through a dramatic use of layered dark ink and brilliant white light, or void.

In another of the paintings Huang records that the scrolls were made on the occasion of the refurbishment of the ancestral shrine. (Figure 4.4) In the inscription he refers to the chaos of the late Ming and his ancestors' flight and the lack of access they had to the family ancestral shrine. He mentions Huang Quefu 黃確夫, who lived in the state of Wu 吳 and died far away from the ancestral home, and Huang Baishan and his son Fengliu Shanren who lived for many years in the states of Chu 楚 and Yue 粵. Huang Binhong commented that he had read a number of family histories and wanted to ensure that later generations did not forget their forebears. He notes his own return to the village to plant the Eastern family fields and collect stories about the family. Time, he said, had passed very quickly and he had been living in Shanghai for some ten years.

In this work, a large solitary figure dressed in a white robe and carrying a staff walks into a dark and rocky mountain landscape. (Figure 4.4a) The figure's pathway is blocked by a

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<sup>43</sup> The antecedents of this painting style may be seen in the 1909 painting for du Bois-Reymond and his wife discussed in Chapter Three. Two slightly later paintings that are stylistically similar may be found in *Huang Binhong xiansheng huaji* (Hong Kong, 1961, plate 3). One depicts the Longqiu waterfall at Yandang Mountain in Leqing county Zhejiang. The painting is dedicated to a Mr Junpu and is undated, but was most probably painted around 1913 when Huang Binhong was fifty years old. As with the first *Chunhui Tang* scroll the mountains feature distinctive angular pathways of void, which give an abstract structure to the rocky forms and at the same time offer clear passageways for the eye to travel through the landscape. The second painting, dated 1916, shares the same, characteristic treatment of the rocks and mountains. It is inscribed with a poem by the Song calligrapher Lu You (Fang Weng, 1125-1210). In this rather unusual composition tall pine trees dominate the foreground of the painting, providing shelter for a cluster of temple buildings nestled at the foot of a rocky mountain outcrop. The spirited geometric abstraction of the rock forms enliven the painting. The painting is signed *Binhong sanren* (Bin has a water radical). It is a good example of a work in which Huang Binhong is seeking to express an individual artistic style, inspired by art and literature of the Song dynasty, regarded by him as the pinnacle of creative achievement. See *Huang Binhong hua ji* (Hong Kong 1961, plate 5). A painting of Mount Jiuhua, which also bears a stylistic resemblance, was inscribed by Huang Binhong in 1916. In the inscription Huang notes that it is an old work, of some ten years prior, painted following a trip to Mount Jiuhua in Southern Anhui. Huang Binhong explained that it was his aim to paint the soul of the mountain, which was still fresh in his mind. Whilst earlier and not as monumental nor accomplished as the *Chunhui Tang* scroll, Huang Binhong also uses layers of dark ink to build up the highly stylised form of the mountain and reserves clearly defined zones of void to indicate light falling on its many faces, creating a striking graphic effect through a drama of dark and light. The painting is in the collection of the Williams College Museum of Art in Williamstown, Massachusetts and is part of a gift of Huang Binhong paintings made by Hong Kong alumni Dr Tao Ho. See Chu, ed., *Homage to Tradition*, cat.1, pp.50, 176.

huge overhanging rocky outcrop, suggesting the obstacles in life that must be overcome. Beyond the mountain of rock, an empty pavilion with a thatched roof and two upright pine trees beckon. The pavilion is silhouetted against dark mountain peaks and represents an area of calm within a rather gloomy landscape.

The *Chunhui Tang* scrolls are an impressive tribute to the Huang family and their connection to Tandu Village in Shexian. The paintings do not describe the region of the Huang ancestral home in any literal sense, although the lofty mountains may refer to Huangshan. Rather they are conceptual landscapes that, through the depiction of tall and rugged mountains, indicate the lofty achievements of family members. Huang Binhong's use of layered ink suggests the height, volume and substantiality of mountains in Southern Anhui, including Huangshan.<sup>44</sup> The scrolls represent an attempt to synthesise a variety of artistic influences including elements of the local landscape, as well as works by admired artists from the past. The paintings also highlight Huang's interest in abstracting forms from nature, using layered ink to achieve a monumental effect and distinct zones of void. At the age of fifty-four these characteristics were manifest in his paintings but would not evolve into a fluent and distinctive artistic style for another thirty years.

### **Writings about Shexian and Xin'an artists during the Shanghai period**

While living in Shanghai, Huang Binhong continued to research family and local history, including artists associated with the Xin'an school. In 1919, at the age of fifty-six, Huang published a detailed history of the restoration of the clan land, known as *Rende Zhuang* 仁德莊 in an essay entitled "Reflections on Cultivating Land" (*Ren geng gan yan* 任耕感言). This essay was part of an extensive family history called *A Record of the Huangs from Tandu, She County* (*She Tandu Huang shi xiande lu* 歙譚渡黃氏先德錄), which in turn formed part of

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<sup>44</sup> The central tree in the fourth scroll, with its distinctive feathery leaves, is typical of the Shexian area and is known as *Xiang qun shu*. Bao Yilai, conversation with the author, Anhui Provincial Museum, Hefei, 26 April 2004.

his miscellaneous writings (*Binhong zazhu* 濱虹雜著).<sup>45</sup> This lengthy document was the culmination of many years of research and drew on earlier family histories, notably those compiled by his ancestors Huang Sheng, Huang Lü and Huang Cisun.<sup>46</sup> Huang Binhong was concerned that the family history had not been written beyond the generation of Huang Lü and if left any longer would be even more difficult to recover.<sup>47</sup> In this document Huang Binhong traces the family history. The focus is on the period from the Eastern Jin (317-420), and the reign of the inaugural Emperor, Sima Rui 晉元帝司馬睿, when his ancestor Huang Ji 黃積 (*Yuanji* 元集) was appointed magistrate of Xin'an.<sup>48</sup> Huang documented the family link with the Xin'an region for one thousand five hundred years, a family lineage in which Huang Binhong belongs to the thirty-seventh generation.

From September 1919 to June 1921, Huang also wrote numerous short articles relating to Xin'an subjects for columns in the arts supplements to the *Eastern Times*. And later, in 1926, while he was editor of *Art View*, he and his second wife Song Ruoying, whom he had married in 1920, published many short articles about Huangshan artists in an essay titled *Huangshan huayuan lunlüe* 黃山畫苑論略. (Figure 4.5) While editing the *Chinese Painting Monthly* in 1935 he published a short article giving an overview of the Xin'an school entitled *Xin'an pai lunlue* 新安派論略.<sup>49</sup>

It is worth noting that Huang was writing these lovingly detailed records of his family connection with Tandu Village and Shexian, at the height of the May Fourth era (ca. 1915-1927), a period that has been described by Yü-sheng Lin as one of “totalistic iconoclasm” and “totalistic anti-traditionalism”.<sup>50</sup> The effect of this tumultuous era on Huang Binhong was to intensify his research into aspects of traditional Chinese culture and history.

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<sup>45</sup> “Ren genganyan,” in *Huang Binhong wenji, zazhu bian*, pp.476-490; “Rende zhuang yitian jiuwen,” in *Huang Binhong wenji, zazhu bian*, pp.471-475; “She Tandu Huang shi xian de lu,” in *Huang Binhong wenji, zazhu bian*, pp.420-470.

<sup>46</sup> Huang Sheng and Huang Lü published *Tandu zazhi* and Huang Cisun *Tanbin suo zhi*.

<sup>47</sup> *Huang Binhong wenji, tibiai bian*, p.152.

<sup>48</sup> Huang Binhong shared the name *Yuanji* with his tenth generation ancestor. In 1886 the family deemed it important for Huang to change his name to avoid bad luck. See *Huang Binhong wenji, zazhu bian*, p.421, and Wang Zhongxiu *Huang Binhong nianpu*, pp.18-19.

<sup>49</sup> See *Yiguan* 6, no.10 (1926), and *Huang Binhong wenji, shuhua bian, shang*, pp.309-341. See *Guohua yuekan* 1, no.10 (1935) and *Huang Binhong wenji, shuhua bian, xia*, pp.20-22.

<sup>50</sup> See Yü-sheng Lin, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Anti-traditionalism in the May Fourth Era* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979). On 4 May 1919 thousands of students in

## Paintings with art historical references

As others were turning away from the past or actively excoriating it, Huang Binhong created many works that referred directly to the paintings of historical artists. In colophons on dated paintings spanning this period, he refers to artists from the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing.<sup>51</sup>

Whilst none of Huang's paintings are direct copies, we can see him consciously studying aspects of particular artists' styles. For example he re-works the detailed articulation of trees and fantastic mountain and rock forms of Song dynasty artists Li Tang and Wang Shen (王誥, 1036 -?), the ethereal, freehand landscapes of Yuan artists, and the abbreviated dots which are carefully layered to create form in the paintings of Wu Li, one of the orthodox masters of the Qing dynasty. (Figure 4.6) Binhong's paintings differ greatly in artistic style and reflect his wide-ranging exploration of landscape painting and his active synthesis of a variety of art historical styles. His paintings were influenced by his own continuing art historical and textual research and his viewing of the many historical paintings that came through the art market and the *National Glories of Cathay*. He made an ink sketch of a painting by the female artist Wang Shen, for instance. (Figure 4.8) In the later finished painting, he deliberately elongates the rock forms and creates his own poetic rendition of the original, experimenting with subtle ink and colour wash.<sup>52</sup> (Figure 4.7)

One of the most interesting paintings that Huang created during this period dates from 1925 and is a dark, rather stylised work inspired by a walk in the mountains. (Figure 4.9) The painting is inscribed:

Climbing tall mountains and gazing out into the distance,  
Gentlemen in ancient times did this to give expression to their feelings and to confirm  
their own learning.

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Beijing began a patriotic protest following the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, which sought to settle claims associated with the First World War but which favoured Japan at great territorial and financial cost to China. The repercussions were far-reaching and ongoing.

<sup>51</sup> Other examples include 1909 "Landscape in style of Gong Xian" (ZPM 24396); 1921 "Landscape in style of Yuan artist" (Zhongguo meishuguan, ed., *Huang Binhong jingpin ji*. Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1991, plate 5); 1922 "Landscape in style of Zheng Min" (ZPM 24248); 1924 "Landscape in style of Wang Shen" (*Huang Binhong jingpin ji*, plate 7); 1928 "In imitation of Yuan artists brush work" (Zhejiangsheng bowuguan, ed., *Huang Binhong juewei huaji*. Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1993, p.16).

<sup>52</sup> See T.C. Lai, *Huang Binhong (1864-1955)*, p.52.

Looking at the sunrise from Taishan [泰岱], and viewing the moon rise at Mount Huayin [華陰] are both ways to realize this.

[Han] Chang Li [韓昌黎, Han Yu韓愈] knows about past lives. When he was climbing Taihua Mountain [太華in Anhui], legend records that an official at Hua had to use all sorts of tricks to encourage him to come down from the mountain, because he so loved looking at the sunset.

It is just as Su [蘇公Dongpo] said, if you don't look now you may never have another opportunity.

I recently saw an inscription on a painting by Mudaoren Zheng Yisu [Zheng Min] which said just this.

My brother-in-law Zhaixin [宅心] is [Zheng] Yisu's ancestor, he studies hard, loves to roam in the mountains and has bought some land in Nanchong [南沖].

Painted after climbing a mountain and calling out [to a friend]. April 1925. Huang Pucun.

The painting is relatively small in scale but monumental in conception. It features a small figure in a pavilion situated over a waterfall, at the foot of a massive mountain range, dwarfed by the moody landscape. Huang has created dark mountain forms through the application of multiple layers of graded ink dots, obscuring the outlines of the primary forms seen in his earlier, more open paintings. The dots differ in shape and size. Some are tiny and regular, made with the tip of the brush, whereas others are irregular, created with an old or balding brush. One of the most striking aspects of this painting is the fluid vein-like passages of void (*liu bai*) that create numerous pathways of light through the landscape allowing the painting to “breathe”. The areas of void have a strong, graphic presence and combine with the solid or dark areas to create a landscape that is as much defined by darkness as it is by light. This method of creating light within the darkness of ink that Huang referred to in “The Essentials of Chinese Painting” gives the work a clear structure, a sense of energy and life, and in this respect anticipates aspects of the artist's later style.

The work is more lyrical than the *Chunhui Tang* scroll painting and the work for du Bois-Reymond mentioned earlier. The rounded mountain forms are softened by layers of ink dots. The approach may well have been tempered by Huang's experience of walking in the

mountains by day and night, observing their changing visage. The painting melds Huang's understanding of art historical styles with his experience of the landscape.

### Teaching, art associations and Western art post-1927

After the Nationalist Party assumed control in 1927 under the leadership of Chiang Kaishek (蔣介石, 1887-1975), Huang Binhong—now in his sixties and still active as a journalist and connoisseur—also became involved in teaching. He was employed at a wide variety of institutions teaching Chinese art history and theory including the Academy of Chinese Painting at Jinan University (*Jinan daxue Zhongguo hua yanjiu hui* 暨南大學中國畫研究會, 1928), the Shanghai Art College (*Shanghai meishu zhuanmen xuexiao* 上海美術專門學校, 1929), and the Changming Art College (*Changming yishu zhuanke xuexiao* 昌明藝術專科學校, 1930). Huang Binhong was also instrumental in the formation of the Chinese Academy of the Humanities (*Zhongguo wenyi xueyuan* 中國文藝學院) and was principal from 1930 to 1932.<sup>53</sup> In addition Huang taught Chinese painting technique. In 1928 Huang and a group of friends including Wang Shengyuan 汪聲遠, Hu Yunyu (Pu'an) and Xiao Tuigong 蕭蛻公 established an after-hours school for the study of brush and ink painting (*Guohua buxi she* 國畫補習社). Originally named the Shanghai School of National Painting (*Shanghai guohua xuexiao* 上海國畫學校), its purpose was to “develop *guohua* painting techniques using thorough and effective teaching methods”.<sup>54</sup> Huang was a tutor in landscape painting at the Academy of Chinese Painting at Jinan University (1933)<sup>55</sup> and at the Institute for Painting Research, Shanghai Art College (*Shanghai meizhuan huihua yanjiu suo* 上海美術專門學校繪畫研究所, 1936).<sup>56</sup> He also taught brush and ink painting to numerous private students and in 1934 he established a literature and art research class at home.<sup>57</sup> Many of Huang Binhong's private students were women. He mentored Gu Fei (顧飛, b. 1907) and Zhu Yanying 朱硯英,

<sup>53</sup> The *Zhongguo wenyi xueyuan* later became *Zhongguo wenyi zhuanke xuexiao*. *Huang Binhong nianpu*, pp.245-247.

<sup>54</sup> Wang Zhongxiu, *Huang Binhong nianpu*, p.186.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.306-307.

<sup>56</sup> Wang Zhongxiu, *Huang Binhong nianpu*, p.374.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.345-346.

two female students who were much younger than himself but with whom he maintained close contact from the 1920s until his death in 1955.<sup>58</sup> Included in the many letters that he wrote to them are words of advice about the study of Chinese painting and his views on painting and art history.<sup>59</sup> Through his interaction with students he gained important intellectual stimulation and access to the views of a younger generation.

During this period Huang was involved with a number of groups that looked to both Chinese and Western art in order to explore the future direction of brush and ink painting. In 1932 Huang Binhong, Liu Haisu (劉海粟, 1896-1994) and He Tianjian (賀天健, 1890-1977) edited the *Monthly of Picture Theory* (*Hua xue yuekan* 畫學月刊) a journal whose stated aim was to “research Chinese and Western painting [*huaxue*], ancient to modern, in order to seek out the future development of art”. Huang Binhong contributed an essay promoting the study of Chinese brush and ink painting called “Common Knowledge in the Study of Painting”. Other articles included “The Future of Chinese Art” by Chen Xiaodie 陳小蝶 and “Shitao’s Art and Theory” by Liu Haisu. The journal was well produced but did not survive beyond the first issue.<sup>60</sup>

The following year Huang Binhong and the Western-style painter Wang Jiyuan 王濟遠 joined others to establish a society committed to develop Chinese brush and ink painting by examining perspectives on Eastern and Western art. The Hundred Streams Painting Society (*Baichuan huahui* 百川書畫會) brought together practitioners of Chinese and Western style painting to research Chinese calligraphy and painting.<sup>61</sup> The name of the society was descriptive of its ideal.

Whilst there are a multitude of artistic paths that one can take, ultimately they unite, like one hundred separate streams that come together and make their way to the sea.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Other female students include Su Qianying and Huang Bingqing.

<sup>59</sup> Thirty-three letters to Zhu Yanying and twenty-six letters to Gu Fei are included in *Huang Binhong wenji, shuxin bian*, pp.13-33, 372-388.

<sup>60</sup> See Wang Zhongxiu, *Huang Binhong nianpu*, pp.283-284, and Xu Zhihao, *Zhongguo meishu qikan guoyanlu*, 86.

<sup>61</sup> As stated in their charter, the objectives of the *Baichuan huahui* were to research Chinese calligraphy and painting, collect reference works of art, publish, organise exhibitions and talks and carry out projects for government organisations and associations. See Wang Zhongxiu, *Huang Binhong nianpu*, pp.320-321.

<sup>62</sup> Hu Huaichen, *Shanghai de xueyi tuanti* (Shanghai: Shanghai shi tongzhi guan, 1935), p.90.

The philosophy of this society grew out of an awareness of the pressures of a volatile and pluralistic contemporary society and the need to ensure the ongoing creative transformation of Chinese painting. In many ways the society reflected the artistic philosophy of Huang Binhong, who would later express the view that in the future there would be no distinction between eastern and western art for the simple reason that all art was connected by a common spirit.<sup>63</sup>

In 1929, Huang Binhong was involved in the first National Art Exhibition held in Shanghai in April 1929. Two of Huang's paintings were exhibited and he was a contributor to the magazine *Art Exhibition (Meizhan 美展)* edited by a group of writers and artists including Xu Zhimo (徐志摩, 1896/7-1931). Other contributors included influential officials, artists and writers such as Ye Gongzhao (葉恭綽, 1881-1968), Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培, 1868-1940), Wu Hufan (吳湖帆, 1894-1968) and Shao Xunmei (邵洵美, 1906-1968).<sup>64</sup> Huang lent ninety-four historic paintings to a supporting exhibition, making him the single largest lender. Huang's involvement in the magazine and the two exhibitions confirms his status as an art historian, a practitioner and a collector/connoisseur. It also attests to Huang's connections and his ability to work with people of different ages, with different cultural interests but whose common aim was to promote an interest in and understanding of Chinese art.

Huang Binhong's growing consideration of the national and international dimensions of Chinese art was directly related to his residence in Shanghai, China's most westernised and dynamic city, as it was known in the twenties and thirties, the "Paris of the East". This extended to his involvement with associations engaged in cultural dialogue between China and other nations. For historical and cultural reasons much of this activity initially related to Japan. During the first three decades of the twentieth century numerous business and cultural associations were formed to promote dialogue between China and Japan. Art groups acknowledged China and Japan's long history of cultural interaction. In 1929, Huang was one of the judges of the Sino-Japanese Contemporary Painting Exhibition (*Zhong Ri xiandai huihua zhan*中日現代繪畫展).<sup>65</sup> He also attended a gathering of Chinese artists, including Wang

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<sup>63</sup> Huang Binhong, letter to Fu Lei, undated, *Huang Binhong wenji, shuxin bian*, p.215.

<sup>64</sup> See Xu Zhihao, *1911-1949 Zhongguo meishu qikan guoyan lu*, pp.53-58.

<sup>65</sup> Other judges were Di Chuqing, Wang Yiting and Wu Hufan.

Yiting, Zhang Daqian, Zhang Shanzi and He Xiangning, to create paintings, which were then sold to raise money to help fund a two-month painting trip to China by the Japanese artists Kurabashi and Watanabe.<sup>66</sup> The following year he was listed among the fifty-six members of the Sino-Japanese Friends of Art Association (*Zhong Ri yishu tongzhu hui* 中日藝術同志會).<sup>67</sup> Huang Binhong's contact with Japanese art historians and artists is also documented through the publication of a painting by the Japanese artist Tanabe Masa 田邊華 and a letter written by Tanabe to Huang Binhong praising Huang's art in the magazine *Scholarly World* (*Xueshu shijie* 學術世界) in January 1936.<sup>68</sup>

In the early 1930s, the Chinese government was increasingly interested in promoting Chinese painting overseas, notably in Europe. Brush and ink painting, or national painting, was distinct from Western painting and a suitable means of promoting Chinese culture abroad. Huang Binhong's paintings were well represented in a number of government-sponsored exhibitions, reflecting both his standing as an artist and his close connections with those responsible for the formulation of Chinese cultural policy. In 1930, Ye Gongzhuo organized an exhibition of Chinese painting to support an international exposition to celebrate one hundred years of Belgian independence. The exhibition, which opened in Belgium in June, included some one hundred and eighty works. Paintings by Huang Binhong, Xu Shichang 徐世昌, Gao Qifeng, Gao Jianfu, Lü Fengzi 呂鳳子, Di Chuqing, Chen Shuren 陳樹人, Wang Yiting 王一亭 and Xu Beihong 徐悲鴻 were given the highest level of commendation.<sup>69</sup> In a Sino-German exhibition of brush and ink paintings organised by Cai Yuanpei, together with Ye Gongzhuo, Chen Shuren, Xu Beihong and Liu Haisu, and held in Berlin in 1934, Huang Binhong was reported as having six paintings selected, the largest number of any artist.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Wang Zhongxiu, *Huang Binhong nianpu*, p.236.

<sup>67</sup> Other members of the friends association were Wang Yiting, Di Chuqing, Zhang Daqian and Zhang Shanzi. See Tsuruta, ed., *Minkokuki bijitsugakkō sotsugyōdōgakuroku*, *Bijutsudantai kaiinroku shūsei*, *Kubosō kinen bunka zaidan Tōyō bijutsu kenkyūjo kiyō*, 2-4 (1991), p.234.

<sup>68</sup> Tanabe Masa's letter thanked Huang for four paintings. He praised Huang Binhong's use of ink. He also mentioned five of six small works by Tanabe accompanying the calligraphy for Huang to distribute among his friends as an expression of friendship. The calligraphy is dated 22 May. A further colophon is dated 1931, which suggests that was the year in which the letter was written. See *Xueshu shijie* 1, no.8 (1936), and Wang Zhongxiu, *Huang Binhong nianpu*, p.267.

<sup>69</sup> Wang Zhongxiu, *Huang Binhong nianpu*, p.256.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.309-310.

Seventeen of the exhibited paintings were chosen to remain in Berlin, including two works by Huang Binhong.<sup>71</sup> Huang Binhong's participation in these high profile exhibitions, which promoted Chinese painting to audiences overseas, indicates the support he received from individuals such as Cai, Ye, Xu and Liu, key figures involved in shaping and implementing cultural policy at that time.

### Contact with Sinologists

Huang's contact with Europeans and Americans studying Chinese art began with his move to Shanghai in 1909 and continued throughout his period of residence there. Western interest in the study of Chinese art and archaeology increased dramatically during the 1920s and 1930s, a period when China was in political turmoil and the pressure to modernise and westernise caused much traditional Chinese art to continue to be devalued. In various letters to friends Huang Binhong made repeated mention of meetings with western Sinologists, sometimes years after they had taken place. Referring to Osvald Sirén (b. 1879), Auriel Stein (1862-1943), Paul Pelliot (1878-1945), and Victoria Contag, he conveys his respect for foreign individuals engaged in the serious study of Chinese art, archaeology and history.<sup>72</sup> He also mentions correspondence with the American academic Lucy Driscoll (1886-1964) and indirect contact with Michael Sullivan (b. 1916).<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., pp.353-354.

<sup>72</sup> Huang Binhong, letter to Fu Lei [1943], *Huang Binhong wenji, shuxin bian*, p.203.

<sup>73</sup> Paul Pelliot was in Shanghai in 1935. He was a member of the Executive Committee for the London International Exhibition of Chinese Art held at the Royal Academy of Arts in London from November 1935 to March 1936. See the Preface to the *Catalogue of the International Exhibition of Chinese Art* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1935), pp.v-viii, x. Perceval Yetts was also a member of the Executive Committee and Osvald Sirén was a member of the Foreign General Committee. For references to Lucy Driscoll see *Huang Binhong wenji, shuxin bian*, p.242. See also Zha Yongling, "Huang Binhong yu Zhongwai xueshu jiaoliu: jieshao meiguo Delisike jiaoshou gei Huang Binhong xiansheng de xin," *Xin meishu* 3 (1990). For references to Sullivan, see Huang Binhong, letter to Bao Junbai, [1948], *Huang Binhong wenji, shuxin bian*, p.368. See also Hong Zaixing, "Ti shijie yangguang qiu yishu zhendi: tan Huang Binhong xiansheng dui xueshu jiaowang de zhuojian gaoshi," *Han Mo* 15 (February 1990), pp.82-97; Hong Zaixin, "Shaojie xiren xueshu Hongyang dangdai guohua: guanyu Huang Binhong wannian he Su Liwen de yiduan jianjie duihua," paper presented at an international symposium on Huang Binhong and his legacy held by Fine Arts Research Institute of Chinese Academy of Arts and Zhejiang Museum, 27 August 2004, to be published in *Meishu shi yanjiu*, forthcoming; and Hong Zaixin and Wang Zhongxiu, "The Chicago Connection: Lucy Driscoll's Creative Approach to Chinese Art and Her Chinese Contacts from the 1910s to 50s," presented at the AAS Annual Conference Panel "China through Its Art: Collecting and Scholarship in Early 20<sup>th</sup>-Century U.S. and Britain," in Chicago, 31 March 2005.

Writing to Xu Chengyao in Shexian in the mid-1930s Huang Binhong remarked:

Yesterday Sirén, the Director of the Swedish Library, a man who is extremely fond of painting, said that the Xin'an school occupies a pre-eminent position in international art terms and is far superior to the most famous works by artists from Jiangsu and Zhejiang.<sup>74</sup>

Huang Binhong was pleased to convey to his friend from Shexian that his own views on the importance of the Xin'an school were supported and corroborated by a perceptive foreigner like Sirén.<sup>75</sup> It was important for Huang to be in contact with such people.

In the introduction to his book *The Chinese on the Art of Painting* written in Beijing in June 1935, and published the following year by Henri Vetch, Sirén acknowledged the assistance he received during his time in Shanghai.

Mrs Florence Ayscough who during my stay in Shanghai, in February 1935, read through the whole manuscript and introduced a number of valuable suggestions and corrections. Her deep interest in Chinese thought and her experience as a translator became to me a support and an encouragement, for which I rest under deep obligation.<sup>76</sup>

Florence Ayscough, whom E.A. Strehlneek also acknowledged in the foreword to his book quoted earlier, was a long-term resident of Shanghai and a respected translator of Chinese poetry and literature. She had been elected a member of the NCBRAS in 1906 and for many years held the position of Honorary Librarian.<sup>77</sup> It was Ayscough most likely who provided the introduction for Huang Binhong to meet Sirén during his stay in Shanghai in February 1935.

In the same letter to Xu Chengyao, Huang Binhong also referred to Victoria Contag:

There is a German woman called Contag [*Kongda* 孔達] who is fluent in Chinese language and literature. She has studied the theories of Su and Huang and can recite the names of books on calligraphy and painting. ... She is preparing to be an advisor to the Palace Museum and is editing a book of seals used by well-known artists of the Ming

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<sup>74</sup> Huang Binhong, letter to Xu Chengyao, 19 February [1936], *Huang Binhong wenji, shuxin bian*, pp.146-147.

<sup>75</sup> Throughout his period of residence in Shanghai, Huang Binhong continued to maintain a keen interest in the art and antiquities of his ancestral home. Writing to Xu Chengyao at around this time Huang lamented the continuing loss of antiquities from Shexian. Famine caused by serious flooding had forced people to sell their precious collections, which found their way to the antique market in Shanghai. Huang Binhong letter to Xu Chengyao, 1934, see Wang Zhongxiu, *Huang Binhong nianpu*, p.314.

<sup>76</sup> Osvald Sirén, Introduction, *The Chinese on the Art of Painting* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), p.6.

<sup>77</sup> See Florence A. Wheeler Ayscough, "The Library of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society," *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* XLVII (1916), pp.156-158.

and Qing dynasties for publication. She has already identified two or three thousand seals and continues to work tirelessly.<sup>78</sup>

The book Huang refers to is *Maler-und Sammler-Stempel aus der Ming-und Ch'ing-Zeit* (Seals of Chinese Painters and Collectors of the Ming and Ch'ing Periods), published by the Commercial Press Limited, Shanghai in 1940. In a foreword to a later edition, Victoria Contag and her co-author C.C. Wang (Wang Chi-Ch'ien, Wang Jiquan 王季銓, 1907-2003) provide some background to the project.

The present work began in 1935, when we photographed seals found on paintings of the former Palace Collection [*Gugong bowuyuan*], at which time the paintings were being examined by experts. It was while taking part in these meetings, that I met my co-author, C.C. Wang.<sup>79</sup>

Huang Binhong was one of a number of experts who were called upon to authenticate calligraphy and painting in the collection of the Palace Museum for a legal case that had been brought against the Director of the Museum, Yi Peiji (易培基, 1880-1937), and others.<sup>80</sup> The task of authenticating calligraphy and painting began in Shanghai in late 1935 where the core of the collection had been transported to Shanghai by the Nationalist government as a precautionary measure following from the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1931 and the threat of war.

Huang was recommended for the job by Ye Gongzhuo, who also wrote a foreword for Contag and Wang's book. Ye introduced Contag to Wu Hufan, who suggested C.C. Wang as a

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<sup>78</sup> Huang Binhong, letter to Xu Chengyao, dated 19 February [1936], *Huang Binhong wenji, shuxian bian*, p.147.

<sup>79</sup> Victoria Contag und Wang Chi-ch'üan [Wang Jiquan], *Maler-und Sammler-Stempel aus der Ming-und Ch'ing-Zeit*, (Shanghai, The Commercial Press, Limited, 1940) with forewords by Ye Gongzhuo, Wu Hufan and Victoria Contag, pp.1-XI. The later edition of Victoria Contag and Wang Chi-ch'ien, *Seals of Chinese Painters and Collectors of the Ming and Ch'ing Periods* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1966), has a preface by James Cahill and foreword by V. Contag and C.C. Wang, unpaginated. C.C. Wang was a member of the Executive Committee for the London International Exhibition of Chinese Art. Writing many years later he said that in 1935 he had the opportunity to look at the "entire painting collection [of the Palace Museum], one by one". He also noted "It was at that time that I met Victoria Contag, who was a young German scholar and another advisor to the committee". See "An Interview with C.C. Wang," in *Mountains of the Mind: the Landscape of C.C. Wang*, exhibition catalogue (Washington D.C.: Arthur M. Sackler Foundation, 1977), unpaginated.

<sup>80</sup> In a letter to Xu Chengyao Huang mentioned that "a friend" had invited him carry out the inspection work. See *Huang Binhong wenji, shuxin bian*, 146.

collaborator for Contag's project.<sup>81</sup> In a letter from Wu Hufan to Huang Binhong written in March 1935 Wu suggested that he bring "Dr Contag from Germany and Wang Jiquan" to visit Huang and view his collection.<sup>82</sup> It would appear that Huang first met Contag in connection with her book on seals and perhaps later during the examination of art works from the Palace Museum collection.<sup>83</sup> In an undated letter to a friend, Huang mentioned the presence of European and American connoisseurs during the inspections of artworks.<sup>84</sup>

Evidence of Huang Binhong's contact with Contag can be seen in an undated painting that he dedicated to her. (Figure 4.10) The painting is an austere ink landscape painted in an abbreviated brush style (*jianbi hua* 簡筆畫). Huang's inscription extols the virtues of the Xin'an School of painters:

In discussing painting, the piquant quality [*la* 辣] is superior. It is only artists of the Xin'an School who understood this and long guarded against painting in a lax and vulgar manner. This places them above artists of the Wumen and Huating schools. These are not empty words. Painted for Dr Contag who of course agrees with me on this.<sup>85</sup>

The painting reads as an extension of a conversation and the tone of Huang's inscription suggests familiarity and respect. Through his contact with Western Sinologists such as Contag and Sirén in the 1930s, Huang Binhong was attracted by their enthusiasm for Chinese art and Xin'an painting in particular, and used it to promote his own determinations of scholarship. His

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<sup>81</sup> See Wu Hufan's foreword to *Maler-und Sammler-Stempel aus der Ming-und Ch'ing-Zeit (Seals of Chinese Painters and Collectors of the Ming and Ch'ing Periods)* (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, Limited, 1940), p.VIII.

<sup>82</sup> Wang Zhongxiu, *Huang Binhong nianpu*, p.352. In June of that year Huang Binhong and Ye Gongzhuo introduced Contag to Yu Shaosong to view his collection. See Wang Zhongxiu, *Huang Binhong nianpu*, p.356.

<sup>83</sup> Huang Binhong was never a member of the museum's Committee of Reference (*Guwuguan zhuan men weiyuasn hui*). In my conversation with the late Zhu Jiajin, a connoisseur and long-term employee of the Palace Museum, he was insistent that Huang's work had nothing to do with the museum and that the museum never acknowledged Huang Binhong's findings regarding the authenticity of objects. The Yi Peiji case was, in his view, the result of political faction-fighting and there was no case to be made against Yi Peiji. Zhu's father Zhu Wenjuan was a member of the Committee of Reference and his brother Zhu Jiaji accompanied the museum objects during their transportation to Shanghai. Zhu Jiajin knew Ferguson and acknowledged his role in the Committee of Reference for the authentication of artworks, from the establishment of the museum in 1925, though he said he was most active post-1929. Zhu Jiajin, conversation with the author, Palace Museum, Beijing, 9 November 2001.

<sup>84</sup> Huang Binhong, letter to Fu Lei, dated 14 December [1943], *Huang Binhong wenji, shuxin bian*, pp. 210-211. It is unclear which inspection period Huang was referring to and who the European and American connoisseurs might have been.

<sup>85</sup> Private collection. *La*, which means hot and spicy or piquant, refers to the confident quality of brushwork from a practised hand.

contact with sinologists further confirmed for Huang the significance of Chinese art within an international context. The painting for Contag uses simplified brush strokes and its lighter calligraphic style inspired by the Xin'an school represents the importance of his ongoing endeavours in the interconnected fields of art history, connoisseurship and artistic practice.

Whilst Huang Binhong is regarded today primarily as a painter, during the Republican period he enjoyed the reputation of being a leading scholar and art historian. In terms of art history, he is best known for his role, together with Deng Shi, in compiling and editing *A Collectanea of the Arts*. But throughout his life Huang Binhong wrote many essays and short articles relating to art history, national studies and family and local history. He was tireless in his efforts to promote national studies and to remind his readers of the importance and value of maintaining cultural continuity.

Throughout his years in Shanghai, Huang Binhong continued to write in classical Chinese, using traditional formats including long and short essays and casual jottings (*suibi* 隨筆), despite the New Culture movement and the tide of Western learning which promoted vernacular Chinese and writings styles that drew on Japanese and Western models. The lack of a single, substantial work on Chinese art history, however, has led to his relative neglect as an art historian in his own right. Huang Binhong was a member of a transitional generation. His life straddled the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and two epochs in Chinese history. His language and style of writing reflect his traditional training and status as a classical scholar. That has made it difficult for modern scholars to recognize his contribution as an art historian.

For Huang Binhong writing, art publishing and painting offered interconnected ways of bringing the intangible cultural heritage to the forefront of people's consciousness at a time of national crisis. Chinese painting formed an integral part of the late-traditional Chinese scholar-official world-view, which valued poetry and refined sensibility, rather than the immediate material environment. For Huang Binhong, writing and painting were ways of remembering historical figures and cultural traditions and resisting the loss of a conception of culture that was endangered from many sides. This does not make him simply a conservative, but rather someone committed to revitalizing Chinese tradition within the exigencies of Chinese modernity. His traditionalism is inseparable from his recognition of and response to the

possibilities of social, cultural and political change. Huang Binhong was heartened by the interest of Western scholars in Chinese art, their ability to read classical Chinese, appreciate early Chinese art and authenticate paintings. But it was a source of profound grief to him that within China the cultural tide was pulling people in the opposite direction, towards the increasing embrace of Western culture and Western values. Writing, like painting, was an act of retrieval and remembering, in spite of the trend of history, which weighed increasingly heavily against him.