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Cover calligraphy Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿, Tang calligrapher and statesman

Cover illustration Detail from Chinese *Anti-opium poster*, c. 1895. "*Quan shi jieshi dayan wen*" [Essay Urging the World to Give Up Opium]



West Lake from Wang Villa (*Wang Zhuang*), *Lois Conner*, 2008

The editor and editorial board of *East Asian History* would like to acknowledge the contribution made to the journal by Professor Geremie Barmé.

Geremie has been editor of *East Asian History* since it began under this title in 1991, and was editor of its predecessor *Papers on Far Eastern History* from 1989. In this period, he has sustained and promoted the importance of the journal as a forum for rigorous and original historical scholarship on China, Korea and Japan. Encouraging and exacting in equal measures, he has been generous to scholars taking their first steps in learned publication. During Geremie's tenure, *East Asian History* has become a major journal in the field, noted for its consistently high standards of scholarship and the care taken in its production. His editorship stands as an example and a challenge to the new editorial team.

Sometimes words flow easily
As soon as he grasps the brush;
Sometimes he sits vacantly,
Nibbling at it.

Lu Ji, from *Literature: A Rhapsody*

Translated by Achilles Fang, "Rhymeprose on Literature: The Wen-Fu of Lu Chi (A.D. 261–303)", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 14, 3/4 (Dec., 1951): 527–66, p.534

或操觚以率爾
或含毫而邈然
陸機文賦

The editor and editorial board of *East Asian History* would like to acknowledge the contribution made to the journal by Marion Weeks.

Marion joined what was then the Department of Far Eastern History in 1977. From that time, she was involved in various capacities with, first, *Papers on Far Eastern History*, and then *East Asian History*, for which she served as business manager from its inception. By the time of her retirement from the Division of Pacific and Asian History in November 2007, Marion had become the heart and soul of the journal.

Over the years she worked with many editors—Andrew Fraser, John Fincher, Sydney Crawcour, Ian McComas Taylor, Jennifer Holmgren, Geremie Barmé, Benjamin Penny—as well as numerous associate editors, copy editors, printers and, of course, countless authors and manuscript readers. All owe her an immense debt of gratitude.

East Asian History would certainly not have been the same without Marion—at times, without her, *East Asian History* may not have been at all.



Imperial Summer Retreat, Chengde, *Lois Conner, 2000*

THE SHANGHAI FINE ARTS COLLEGE AND MODERN ARTISTS IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE (1913–1937)

史 Jane Zheng

In the past two decades of studying modern Chinese art history, Shanghai 上海 has attracted researchers' attention as "a city of tremendous importance as well as enormous complexity".¹ There are two distinct trends in the study of "Shanghai modernity" in painting. Shanghai was the financial capital of China, and the economic relations between Shanghai artists, art and the art market in the late nineteenth century have been one focus. James Cahill points out the significance of economic factors behind some major shifts in the scholar-amateur tradition of Chinese painting, and suggests that the exploration of the interrelationship between art and its socioeconomic context should be, "a major direction in future studies of Chinese painting".² Julia Andrews notes that the way artists and artisans were supported both economically and socially was transformed in the Republican period, causing changes in traditional Chinese painting.³ Secondly, as scholar-amateur painting and its enjoyment were primarily private activities before the Republican period, the emergence of a public art space is a modern phenomenon. Jonathan Hay explores visual features shared by Shanghai paintings and the urban setting,⁴ while Leo Ou-Fan Lee believes that an understanding of modern Shanghai culture must be based on its urban spaces as well as the daily life of people in the city.⁵ A number of studies have discussed Shanghai mass culture and "the public space of painting" produced by "technological circumstances, the fictional

/School Painting," in *Haipai huibua yanjiu lunwenji* [Studies on Shanghai School Painting] (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2001), p.1005.

² James Cahill, "Introduction," in *Artists and Patrons, Some Social and Economic Aspects of Chinese Painting*, ed. Chu-tsing Li, (Lawrence: Kress Foundation Department of Art History, University of Kansas, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City in association with University of Washington Press, 1989), pp.161–63.

³ Association for Asian Studies annual meeting, Chicago, 31 March–3 April 2005, "Session 77: Modern Institutions of Art in Republican China," <<http://www.aasianst.org/absts/2005abst/china/c-77.htm>>, viewed 5 July 2006. Traditional Chinese painting has been called *guohua* 國畫 since the late Qing period.

⁴ Jonathan Hay, "Painting and the Built Environment in Late Nineteenth-Century Shanghai," in *Chinese Art: Modern Expressions*, eds Maxwell K. Hearn and Judith G. Smith (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), pp.61–101.

⁵ See Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930–1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p.7.

The author is grateful to the two reviewers and journal editors for their valuable comments and the interviewee, Ms Lu Youlan, for her support. The author is also grateful to

/Ms Rosemary Tan for helpful proofreading and the University of Hong Kong for research funding and facilities.

¹ Jason C. Kuo, "Visual Culture and Shanghai

⁶ See, for example, Jonathan Hay, "Painters and Publishing in Late Nineteenth-Century Shanghai," in *Art at the Close of China's Empire Temple*, ed. Ju-hsi Chou (Arizona: Arizona State University, 1998), pp.134–88; Ellen Johnston Laing, "The Fate of Shanghai Painting Style in Early Twentieth-Century China," in *Haipai huibuayanjiu lunwenji*; Julia F. Andrews, "Commercial Art and China's Modernization" in *A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth-Century China*, eds Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 1998), pp.181–212.

⁷ Jason C. Kuo, *Discovering Chinese Painting: Dialogues with American Art Historians* (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 2000), p.195.

⁸ See David Clarke, *Modern Chinese Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.14.

⁹ Association for Asian Studies annual meeting, Chicago, 31 March – 3 April 2005, Session 77.

¹⁰ Association for Asian Studies annual meeting, Boston, 11–14 March 1999, "Session 158: Modernity and Patronage in Visual Culture of Qing China" <<http://www.aasianst.org/ahsts/china/c-158.htm>>, viewed 5 July 2006.

¹¹ See Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern*; Jonathan Hay, "Painting and the Built Environment," pp.61–101; Chen Ruilin, "Yuefenpai yu Haipai Meishu" [Calendar Posters and Shanghai School Paintings] in *Haipai huibuayanjiu lunwenji*, pp.467–80; Richard Vinograd, "Visibility and Visuality: Painted Women in Late Nineteenth-Century Shanghai," in *Haipai huibua yanjiu lunwenji*, pp.1073–101; Julia F. Andrews, "Commercial Art and China's Modernization," in *A Century in Crisis*, pp.181–212; and Ellen Johnston Laing, *Selling Happiness Calendar Posters and Visual Culture in Early-Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004).

¹² The Shanghai Fine Arts College changed its name seven times during its history. Its final official title, declared in 1931, was

environment and pictorial magazines".⁶ Jason C. Kuo states that "the mass-produced calendar-posters from the 1930s and 1940s in fact embody Chinese modernity better than traditional Chinese painting".⁷ Scholarly attention has also been drawn towards the role of public exhibitions and art critics in creating a new public space for art in China.⁸

These two perspectives recognize the development of the art economy and the emergence of a public sphere as two important conditions for the creation of "modern artists" in Republican Shanghai. They also contribute to an understanding of "Shanghai modernity" in painting, a phenomenon more relevant to the new conditions of the art world than either painting styles or techniques. The modernizing functions of "new artistic institutions or institution-like structures" have stimulated scholarly interest.⁹ Institutions, including magazines, museums, schools, dealers and auction houses were important forces in transforming twentieth-century Chinese art and in nurturing "modernity in its various guises", suggesting a wide area for further study.¹⁰ For instance, while studies of the publishing industry (calendar posters, books, magazines, etc.) have dominated "artistic institution" research, little attention has been paid to other institutions such as colleges, art clubs, exhibitions, galleries and museums.¹¹ Moreover, there has been little research regarding the interrelationship between the two perspectives. How did the emergence of artistic institutions relate to the transformation in how artists were supported economically? Did the emergence of these new artistic institutions cause any change in the social context of artists, and how did this influence their practice?

This article takes the art school as a new focus for exploring these relationships, concentrating on the Shanghai Fine Arts College (*Shanghai Meizhuan* 上海美專),¹² the most important private art school in Republican China. It looks at the College's history from 1913 to 1937 and focuses on its impact on artists and their practice from an economic perspective. It argues that the College created modern artists who were active in the public domain by integrating their activities into the economy and society. Firstly, the College urged artists to step out of their private world and to be engaged in art-related vocations in the public sphere. Secondly, the College's exhibitions prompted artists to be involved in the Shanghai art market and enmeshed their art practice with market mechanisms, making use of the College's connections with the institutions of the art market.

/the Shanghai College of Fine Arts (*Shanghai Meishu Zhuanke Xuexiao* 上海美術專科學校). Its popular abbreviated name is *Shanghai Meizhuan* 上海美專. The College was founded by a businessman, Wu Shiguang 烏始光 (1885–?). Liu Haisu 劉海粟 (1896–1994), the College president from 1919 to 1952, is famous

/for a dispute with the Warlord Sun Chuanfang in the Nude Model Incident of 1926. For the curriculum and teaching methods in the College, see Jane Zheng, "A Local Response to the National Ideal: Aesthetic Education in the Shanghai Art School," in *Art Criticism* 22.1 (2007): 29–56.

Drawing Artists into Modern Vocations

The salary system of the College, as well as the education it offered, contributed to the changing way that artists found economic support since the College instituted new payment policies that bound artists to the institution. In this context, scholars usually emphasize the emergence of art shops (fan shops, antique shops, mounting shops, etc.) and art clubs in initiating the participation of artists in public art activities.¹³ However, these early institutions were relatively simple, organizing the sale and distribution of artists' work, but did not significantly change artists' means of making a living.

The art school, a new category of artistic institution in twentieth-century China, exerted more complex and stronger economic controls over artists. It organized artists' time and activities, and paid salaries according to the new criteria of the organization. This payment was not made according to how closely the artists' tastes and techniques approached those of the ancient masters, nor to the prices their works could fetch in the market. Rather, salaries were linked to the position occupied in the organizational hierarchical,¹⁴ the academic merits of teachers and the amount of work assigned. In 1935, the teaching staff of the Shanghai Fine Arts College was categorized into four classes. The first class comprised graduates from Chinese or overseas professional schools or higher institutions with at least seven years' teaching experience in institutions of the same sort, together with important publications in the field. The second class required at least five years' teaching experience together with publications. The third class comprised graduates with three years' teaching experience, and the fourth class comprised graduates with accomplishments in the subject studied. First-class teachers were paid 3.5 *yuan* per hour; second class, 2.0 *yuan* per hour; third class, 1.5 *yuan* per hour; fourth class, 1.2 *yuan* per hour.¹⁵ Thus, the College changed the basis of payment from the admiration of the artists' work to their contribution to the organization and bound the artists to the institution. This was common to all modern art schools and the Shanghai Fine Arts College, as an early case, deserves particular noting.

The main factor that distinguished this College from others was that its salaries were rather low. The main reason for this was that the College was private and had to raise its own funds. As a result, it constantly experienced financial difficulties. I have argued elsewhere that during the Republican period the College (originally a tutorial art school providing commercial art training) changed its role to that of providing "aesthetic education" and later to education in traditional Chinese painting. These transitions were rooted in the College's struggle for survival under severe financial pressure. In order to control costs, it paid teachers and staff very low salaries—a conclusion that might contrast with Mayching Kao's claim

¹³ Shan Guolin noted that, "the increasing number of art shops both signified and advanced the expanding of the art market" (see, "Painting of China's New Metropolis: The Shanghai School, 1850-1900," in *A Century in Crisis*, p.21.)

¹⁴ The College headmaster, director, the teaching head and ordinary teachers were paid according to their rank.

¹⁵ See the salary criteria for the Shanghai Art College for May 1925, in the Shanghai Meizhuan Dang'an [Archives of the Shanghai Fine Arts College], held in the Shanghai Archive House, hereafter cited as SMZDA. Salary levels in the early days of the College are unclear. This ranking system was used after the College registered at the Ministry of Education and had to abide by the criteria of the Ministry, however, the specific rates differed between schools. Rates at the College were much lower than those in government-run art schools.

¹⁶ Mayching Kao, "China's Response to the West in Art: 1898–1937" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1972), p.220.

¹⁷ Li Jinfa, *Li Jinfa huiyilu* [Reminiscences by Li Jinfa] (Shanghai: Shanghai dongfang chubanshe zhongxin, 1998). Birth and death dates for people mentioned in this article are given where they are available. Unfortunately, in many cases, relevant records cannot be found.

¹⁸ Zhang Tianqi graduated from the Shanghai Fine Arts College and worked as director of the Correspondence Department and as Teaching Affairs Assistant for fifteen years. In 1933, the Shanghai Fine Arts College shut down the Correspondence Department. Zhang found this training still in demand in the market, so he established his small private art school in the French Concession (see the Regulations of the Grotesque Peak Chinese Painting Correspondence Art School for 1933, SMZDA, Q235-03-00502).

¹⁹ Yu Jifan 俞寄凡, who left the Shanghai Art College and joined the Xinhua Art Academy 新華藝術專科學校 in 1927, also taught there.

²⁰ See the registration documents of the Flying Sound Chinese Painting Correspondence School from 1936, SMZDA, Q235-1-1921.

²¹ Personal Interview with Mrs Lu Youlan at Lu's home in Shanghai, 16 July 2003.

²² Richard E. Caves, *Creative Industries: Contracts Between Art and Commerce* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), p.21.

²³ Many artists' reminiscences stress this point. For example, Lu Yanshao 陸儼少 recalled his painting education in this way: "As I did not have any other skills and it was extremely hard to sell paintings, it was often difficult to maintain my livelihood. Famous artists such as Feng Chaoran 馮超然 and Wu Hufan 吳湖帆 did not experience these difficulties... I would have liked to live independently as a Chinese painter but the property of my family was too meager to support me. I had to think of other ways to earn a living". Lu Yanshao, *Lu Yanshao zixu* [The Autobiography of Lu Yanshao] (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1986), p.29.

that artists working in schools were the most fortunate as schools provided much-needed financial support.¹⁶ According to Li Jinfa 李金髮 (1900–76), however, his salary at the Shanghai Fine Arts College amounted to only 40 per cent of that paid by the National Hangzhou Art Academy in 1925, and was insufficient for artists to make a living.¹⁷

As low salaries pushed artists to look for other sources of income, they engaged in art-related occupations off campus. Some teachers taught concurrently in several art schools, some did other art-related part-time jobs, and others operated their own schools. Zhang Tianqi 張天奇, for example, detected a gap in the market for art training by correspondence and set up his own school, the Grotesque Peak Chinese Painting Correspondence Art School (*Qifeng Guobua Hanshou Xuexiao* 奇峰國畫函授學校).¹⁸ He invited several instructors in the Chinese Painting Department at the Shanghai Fine Arts College, for example Gu Kunbo 顧坤伯 (1904–70) and Zhu Wenyun 諸聞韻 (1894–1940), to teach part time in his school.¹⁹ Lu Yifei 陸抑非 (1908–97) was another instructive case. His daughter, Lu Youlan 陸友蘭, told the author that her father's College salary was not enough to live on and so he also did part-time jobs such as painting and calligraphy appraisal, designing, and fan paintings. In 1936, he founded his own private school, the Flying Sound Chinese Painting Correspondence School (*Feisheng Guobua Hanshou Xuexiao* 飛聲國畫函授學校).²⁰ Lu Youlan said, "All these were only for earning a living".²¹ Similarly, Huang Binhong 黃賓虹 (1865–1955) also set up a private school—the Art Study Studio (*Wenyi Yanjiu Ban* 文藝研究班)—in his house, in addition to giving Chinese painting lessons at the College. Richard E. Caves notes that, in the free market environment, "Although starving artists are numerous, starved artists are not".²² Thus, to a degree, the College itself caused artists to involve themselves in the broader society, as it did art students who also had to take up various art-related occupations.

When painting was simply a leisure activity of literati officials with time for artistic cultivation, it merely offered pleasure but never imposed financial pressure on the artists. The beginning of an art market in China, however, created professional artists who earned a living from their artworks as commodities, and who were exposed to the economic pressures of the market. As supply in the art market usually exceeded demand, life could be very difficult for artists who had to live on the sale of their paintings before they had established their reputation.²³ This situation was exacerbated by the emergence of art schools that produced artists in large numbers. Far more art lovers dreaming of becoming professional artists obtained professional art training and graduated with formal academic qualifications. Anselm Strauss points out that:

Generally speaking, the decision to enter art schools hardly calls for much soul-searching or anxious weighing of occupational alternatives,

and it is easy to see why. Neither does the decision necessarily rest on anything more than the recognition that art can be turned to some serious purpose.²⁴

As a result of the growth in enrolments at the Shanghai Fine Arts College, the largest art school in Shanghai, far more art students were confronted with severe economic pressure at graduation. This is typical of art schools in general in modern times, as Richard E. Caves notes: “the number of students graduated each year from qualified programs of specialized study greatly exceeds the number who can become income-earning professionals.”²⁵

The anxieties of art students were explicit in their writings. One article by Bai Shi 白石 entitled “Where Do Artists Go?” [Yiren hezhi?] reads:

Usually those who study art have a worse destiny and poorer life than ordinary people. This is an unchanging principle...artists are human beings after all. Spiritual life is not able to fill your stomach... . Some artists are not able to stand the suffering and stop working as full-time artists... . Some artists persist with their professional art career but suffer from poverty... . Both options are difficult: the former is for life, the latter is for art and spirit.²⁶

The story of student Liang Xiaohong 梁小鴻 is another case showing the severe pressures that accompanied graduation. Liang was originally an accountant but wrote a letter to Liu Haisu, the school headmaster, expressing his aspiration to study art. He was permitted to study with a tuition fee waiver and a five *yuan* subsidy each month for working part time at the College. During his three-year course, he enjoyed the training and atmosphere in the College but at the same time he was embarrassed by his financial predicament. In particular, seeing his aged father suffering to support the family, he blamed himself for his rash decision. At graduation, he wrote:

Now I will go back to society, and behave differently. I do not dream, idealistically and individualistically, of being an artist any more. I will take the place of my father, to endure sufferings to earn food for myself and my family.²⁷

According to College statistics, the majority of graduates gained employment, largely as art teachers in primary, secondary and higher schools. The rest worked in the press, and in political, commercial, industrial, and other fields (Figure 1 overleaf).²⁸ Thus, the College trained art students primarily for modern salaried jobs rather than as professional artists for the art market.

²⁴ Anselm Strauss, “The Art School and Its Students: A Study and an Interpretation,” in *The Sociology of Art and Literature*, eds Milton C. Albrecht, James H. Barnett and Mason Griff (London: Duckworth, 1970), p.162.

²⁵ Richard E. Caves, *Creative Industries*, p.21.

²⁶ Bai Shi, “Yiren hezhi?” [Where Do Artists Go?] in *The 15th Yearbook* (Shanghai: Shanghai Fine Arts College, 1935), pp.125–26.

²⁷ Liang Xiaohong, “Tajin le yishu de yuandi” [Entering the Art Field] in *The 15th Yearbook*, pp.129–32.

²⁸ For details about students' vocation and employment, see the *25th Anniversary Book of the Shanghai Fine Arts College*, (Shanghai: Shanghai Fine Arts College), 1937.

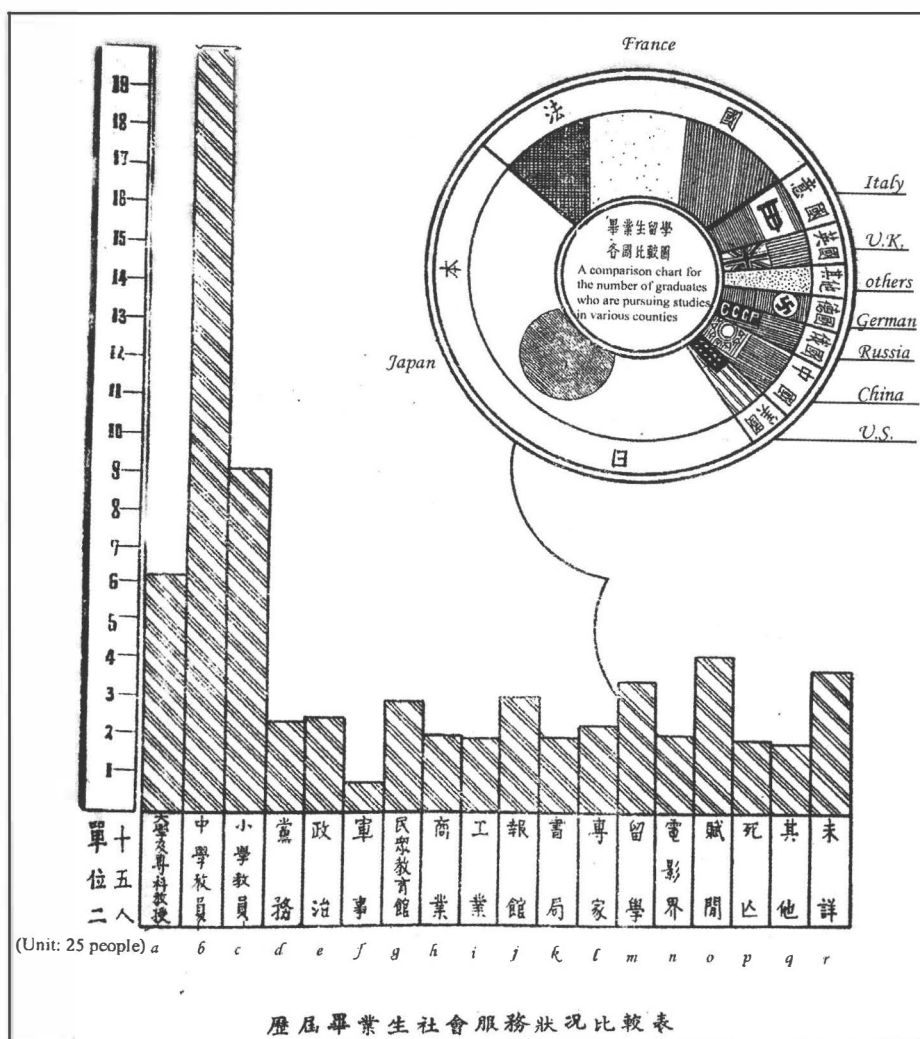


Figure 1

A chart showing statistics for graduates' vocations and further studies, from The Commemoration Book of the 25th Anniversary of the Shanghai Fine Arts College, 1937

Vocations from *a* to *r* are as follows:

- a* = teaching staff at colleges or above
- b* = teaching staff at secondary schools
- c* = teaching staff in primary schools
- d* = party affairs
- e* = politics
- f* = military affairs
- g* = mass education
- h* = commerce
- i* = industry
- j* = the press
- k* = publishing
- l* = experts
- m* = pursuing studies overseas
- n* = cinema
- o* = unemployed
- p* = dead
- q* = other
- r* = unknown

Artists and Art Practice in the College's Art Exhibitions

²⁹ Xiong Yuezhi ed., *Shanghai tongshi* [A General History of Shanghai], Vol.5, *Wan Qing shehui* [Late-Qing Society] (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1999), p.436.

In addition to the administration of the school and the way it educated its students, the non-educational activities of the College deserve attention. Raising funds for the school's maintenance was always imperative, in particular through its connections with other institutions and the Shanghai art market. As noted above, from the 1860s, commercialization had extended into traditionally non-profit fields like education and culture.²⁹ Although the goal of the College was not to make money, it developed commercial functions that played an important part in stimulating the

involvement of artists in the market and the transformation of their artworks into commodities.

The commercial function of the College can be illustrated with the following examples: first, none of the school's art periodicals were free, despite its purported aim of "new art and new culture". Advertisements were encouraged in them and in the College's yearbooks.³⁰ In one issue, eight pages of advertisements for goods and services unrelated to art were included (Figure 2). In addition, the College operated a shop selling painting tools and other paraphernalia, which became an important source of funds.³¹

The most direct way the practice of artists was commercialized came in school exhibitions where raising school funds (rather than encouraging students and displaying the latest works of the teaching staff) was the main goal. Through these art exhibitions the College functioned as a powerful art dealer in the Shanghai market.

I.

This commercial function was first demonstrated by the College's art collection system. A large number of artists, other than the teachers and students of the College, were urged to participate in the College's commercial art exhibitions. One example was the 10th Anniversary School Art Exhibition which had the purported aim of "displaying students' work from the past ten years and raising funds for the College".³² In reality, students' works were exhibited in only five classrooms; twenty rooms, however, were devoted to exhibitions of the works of graduates, Correspondence Department students, current and prior teaching staff, the works of other artists from outside the College and private collections.³³ Famous artists attracted the highest interest from the College. For instance, at the Ancient and Contemporary Masters' Painting and Calligraphy Exhibition, many well-known artists from outside were invited in addition to College teachers such as Zhu Wenyun, Pan Tianshou 潘天壽 (1897–1971) and Wang Yiting 王一亭 (1867–1938).³⁴ A letter from the College to Zheng Manqing 鄭曼青 (1902–75)³⁵ introduced the purpose for the exhibition and the general history of the College,

³⁰ Price charts were printed on the back of these periodicals. For example, the price for *Art* in 1921 was 0.25 *yuan* for one issue and 0.9 *yuan* for four issues through one year, see *Meishu* [Art] 2 (31 March 1921). In the same issue the following statement was found: "This periodical is for art and aesthetics research and is distributed throughout the country. If you place an advertisement in it, your company will earn a national reputation. This will help you to attract customers and promote your business". It also said that it was influential in South /OVER

Figure 2

A page of advertising in The 14th Yearbook of the Shanghai Fine Arts College, 1934, p.129



/Asia and had the lowest advertising rates for any art periodical in the world. A full-page advertisement on the back cover cost 100 *yuan* for a year, whereas a quarter-page advertisement in an ordinary position cost 3.75 *yuan* per issue.

³¹ See *Meishu* 2.4 (31 March 1921).

³² See the Regulations for the 10th Anniversary Art Exhibition of the Shanghai Art College, 1921, SMZDA, Q250-1-233.

³³ The exhibition was held at two places; the art school and the Shanghai Girls' Art School. See the record of the meeting to discuss the exhibition on 20 June 1921, SMZDA, Q250-1-233.

³⁴ This exhibition was designed for fundraising, see, SMZDA, Q250-1-254. In 1923, Zhu Wenyun and Pan Tianshou were employed by the College to establish the Chinese Painting Department. Zhu and Pan were invited to submit paintings for the College exhibition (see Letter to Zhu Wenyun and Pan Tianshou, 4 April 1923 in SMZDA, Q250-1-254). Wang Yiting was a school board member who first suggested holding this exhibition (see Letter to Wang Yiting, 3 April 1923, SMZDA, Q250-1-254). The rates for artists can be found in newspapers from that time. See also Wang Zhongxiu, et al., *Jinxiandai jinshi shubua-jia runli* [The Professional Rates of Painters, Calligraphers and Epigraphers in Modern and Contemporary Times] (Shanghai: Shanghai huabao chubanshe, 2004).

³⁵ Zheng Manqing worked as a professor and as the head of the Chinese Painting Department at the College from 1926 to 1930. In 1922, he was not yet on the staff.

³⁶ Letter to Zheng Manqing from the College in August 1922. SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

³⁷ See Fan Shaoyun's letter to Liu Haisu, 4 December, 1922. SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

³⁸ See Ye Zhifa's letter to Liu Haisu, 21 January 1922 and 3 February 1923; Liu Haisu's letters to Ye Zhifa, 5 February 1923; Liu Haisu's letter to Zhu Jichen, 10 March 1923; Zhu Jichen's letter to Liu Haisu in 1923 (date unknown) and Liu Haisu's letter to Fan Shaoyun, June 1923, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

³⁹ Zhang Junmai was a prominent Chinese philosopher, public intellectual and political figure, a major exponent of Chinese liberalism

and then continued: "With the highest admiration for your renown as a calligrapher, we earnestly request your works".³⁶ Fan Shaoyun 樊少雲 (1885–1962) not only created paintings for the exhibition but also helped the College to collect works from other artists.³⁷ Among other artists who sent their works to the exhibition were Ye Zhifa 葉指葵, Zhu Jichen 朱季辰, and Chen Jia'an 陳迦庵 (1886–1945), all well-known in the local art scene.³⁸ Liu Haisu also sought help to contact artists that he did not know well. For instance, he wrote to Zhang Junmai 張君勱 (1886–1969) to invite Lin Zongmeng 林宗孟 and Xu Juren 徐菊人:³⁹

You agreed to request works of calligraphy from Xu Juren and Lin Zongmeng, [but I did not hear from you]. I presume that you must be preoccupied with official affairs and have not had time to contact them for me. I would be grateful if you could ask them soon.⁴⁰

The College did not just invite Shanghai artists. Just as that the Shanghai art world incorporated artists from a wide area and also had links with other cosmopolitan centers, as Jonathan Hay notes,⁴¹ the College also collected work from artists in other cities or provinces, such as Beijing 北京 and Guangzhou 廣州. One letter was written by Liu Haisu to Chen Shizeng 陳師曾 (1876–1923), a leading artist in Beijing:

Many thanks for promising paintings to support the building projects of the College. As you requested, we are mailing 40 pieces of 4-inch-*liuji*-cotton 六吉棉 paper and 20 pieces of *xuan* 宣 paper. Please select what you like and give the rest to Wang Mengbai 王夢白 (1887–1934) and his students...⁴²

Another letter was delivered to Gao Jianfu 高劍父 (1879–1951) in Guangzhou two weeks later, requesting him to help with the fundraising.⁴³ Even collectors of painting and calligraphy were sent letters with the same purpose, for example, One letter delivered to a Shanghai collector in relation to the 10th Anniversary School Art Exhibition said:

We greatly respect you for your painting and calligraphy collection, and your profound connoisseurship. We can only imagine the number of antique treasures in your collection. We are writing to you, hoping that you might provide us with some of your treasures to support our institution.⁴⁴

One collector, Yao Jichen 姚機臣, later donated eight artworks.⁴⁵

/and a prominent theorist of human rights. He was also a member of the College board.

⁴⁰ Liu Haisu's letter to Zhang Junmai, 6 March 1923, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁴¹ Jonathan Hay, "Painters and Publishing," p.165.

⁴² Liu Haisu's letter to Chen Shizeng,

/20 August 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁴³ Liu Haisu's letter to Gao Jianfu, 20 August 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁴⁴ A letter to the artist Zhuang in 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-233.

⁴⁵ A reply to Yao Jichen in 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-233.

Some of the artworks were donated by artists, as in the examples noted above, but in most cases the College purchased large quantities of paintings at low prices, suggesting a commercial motive. Many of the artists invited by the College were happy with these arrangements, asking for particular prices and not compromising. One specific case concerned a local artist named Xu Ne'an 徐訥庵. Xu received a letter signed by Wang Yiting and Liu Haisu, introducing the College exhibition, enquiring about his rates (*runli* 潤例) and any possible discount.⁴⁶ A week later, Xu replied, attaching a price list, explaining that these prices already included a 50 per cent discount and expressing thanks to his patron.⁴⁷ The next day, the College sent another letter to Xu, informing him of the size of paintings and quantity they required, and promising him 150 *yuan* as payment.⁴⁸ A month later, Xu received the *xuan* paper, but he found its size was not the same as had been agreed.⁴⁹ He replied immediately, stating that he was not able to accept the size they had sent, also requesting them to make half or the whole of the payment:

I received your letter and the paper. However, you told me before that you wanted fifty 3 *chi* by 4 *chi* paintings [one *chi* equals one third of a meter], not 4 *chi* by 5 *chi*. I checked the paper you mailed to me; more than ten pieces were too big, not the size we agreed. I now plan to reduce fifty of them by 4 or 5 *cun* [one *cun* equals one tenth of *chi*] to fit the "big 4 *chi*" size and the remaining twenty pieces by 3 or 4 *cun* to the "big 3 *chi*" size ... if you insist on the size you sent, it will be really hard for me to meet your order. By the way, thanks for promising the payment. I hope half of the payment can be made now. I would actually appreciate it if the full payment can be made. I will start painting as soon as hear back from you.⁵⁰

In a subsequent letter to Wang and Liu, he explained even more frankly that he only painted to make a living (*wei qiu shi zhi bi* 為求食之筆).⁵¹

Stella Yu Lee notes that Shanghai artists of an earlier period "were able to overcome their scruples and enjoy unashamedly the profits they had earned by their own efforts."⁵² This notable commercialism formulated in the late nineteenth century was further developed by the College's art exhibitions. As a commercial operation, the College shared the profits with artists. According to its regulations in the 1930s, half of the profits from the works of professors and two-thirds from those by students belonged to the College.⁵³ When it did not receive the expected number of artworks for its exhibition, it urged artists to work harder. For instance, at one school administrative meeting in 1935, it was noted that not enough paintings had been received for the exhibition—the agreed solution was to urge artists to submit what they had promised, or even more.⁵⁴

Along with the effective art collection system demonstrated above, the College also had a strong distribution system. At most school art exhibitions,

⁴⁶ A letter to Xu Ne'an from Wang Yiting and Liu Haisu, 7 June 1922. SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁴⁷ A reply to Wang Yiting and Liu Haisu from Xu Ne'an, 13 June 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁴⁸ A letter to Xu Ne'an, 14 June 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁴⁹ At that time in Shanghai, the price of a commission was decided by the painting's size.

⁵⁰ Xu Ne'an's letter to Wang Yiting and Liu Haisu, 28 July 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁵¹ Xu Ne'an's letter to Wang Yiting and Liu Haisu in 1922 (date unknown), SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁵² See Stella Yu Lee, "Art Patronage of Shanghai in the Nineteenth Century," in *Artists and Patrons, Some Social and Economic Aspects of Chinese Painting*, ed. Chu-ting Li (Lawrence: Kress Foundation Department of Art History, University of Kansas, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City in association with University of Washington Press, 1989), pp. 225–26.

⁵³ See the discussions for the 24th Anniversary School Art Exhibition, SMZDA, Q250-1-33.

⁵⁴ See the record of the second general administrative meeting, 19 February 1935, SMZDA, Q250-1-32.

⁵⁵ According to Ping Jinya, the first lottery company in Shanghai was set up by Americans in 1898. Their lotteries were called *lūsòng piào* 呂宋票 (*lūsòng* ticket) or *bogē piào* 鴿票 (pigeon ticket). In the early Republican period, the local authority jointly issued lotteries with charitable institutions to raise money. A number of lottery shops were set up and the lottery became popular as one way to fund charities in Shanghai. See Ping Jinya, "Jiu Shanghai de dubo" [Gambling in Old Shanghai] in *Jiu Shanghai de yandu chang* [Drugs, Gambling and Prostitution in Old Shanghai] ed. Shanghai Wenshiguan (Hong Kong: Zhongyuan chubanshe, 1989), p.111. The combination of art exhibition and lottery emerged in the late Qing period. In 1907, the Shanghai painter Pu Hua 蒲華 (1834–1911) organized the Shuhua Zhuzhen Hui (The Painting and Calligraphy Society to Provide Relief for Victims in Disasters) in the Xu Garden 徐園. 123 artists donated artworks; some of them were by great masters of the Qing. Each lottery ticket was sold for 3 *yuan* and could be exchanged for the artwork that bore the corresponding number. Lucky lottery buyers might receive more valuable artworks. See Wang Zhen, *Ersbi shiji Shanghai meishu dashi nianbiao* [A Chronology of Twentieth-Century Shanghai Art] (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2005), pp.14–15.

⁵⁶ See the record of the second school administrative affairs meeting, 16 March 1935, SMZDA, Q250-1-32.

⁵⁷ The eight selling outlets in Shanghai included the Shanghai Fine Arts College; the Global Chinese Students' Union (*Huangqiu Zhongguo Xueshenghui* 環球中國學生會); Shanghai Scientific Machine Institute (*Kexue Yiqisuo* 科學儀器館); Contemporary Research General Art Institute (*Shixue Tongyi guan* 時學通藝館); The Commercial Press (*Shangwu Yingshuguan* 商務印書館); The Shanghai Ball Game Ground (*Shanghai Paoqiu Chang* 上海拋球場); The Shanghai Longgong Bank (*Shangbao Longgong Yinhang* 上保龍公銀行) and the Shanghai Huhai Commercial Bank (*Huhai Shiyue Yinghang* 滬海實業銀行) (see the Regulations of the 10th Anniversary School Art Exhibition, SMZDA, Q250-1-233).

⁵⁸ These letters are collected in the Shanghai

paintings were sold by lottery.⁵⁵ For instance, at the Contemporary Chinese Calligraphy and Painting Exhibition in the Philippines in 1935, all the artworks were assigned marked prices but as few sold, lottery tickets were eventually issued.⁵⁶ School archives document that at the 10th Anniversary School Art Exhibition, all the paintings were sold by lottery. The Shanghai Girls' Art School at the junction of Ximen and Linyin Road was the assigned place for drawing lots and there were eight outlets for selling tickets in Shanghai.⁵⁷ Hundreds of letters were delivered to influential people to promote the lottery: the commander-in-chief of Zhejiang Province, Lu Yongxiang 盧永祥 (1867–1933); the commander-in-chief of Jiangsu Province, Qi Xieyuan 齊燮元 (1879–1946); the Shanghai governor, Shen Baochang 沈寶昌; editors and journalists from the Commercial Press (*Shangwu Yingshuguan* 商務印書館) and the Chinese Book Press (*Zhonghua Shuju* 中華書局); the élite in education (for example, Shen Xinqing 沈信卿) and other influential figures; the South Asian Tobacco Company (*Nanyang Yanco Gongsi* 南洋煙草公司); other schools; merchants, and its own graduates.⁵⁸ Moreover, the College sent letters to all its board members, inviting them to join the fundraising team to actively promote these tickets. The letter stated:

In order to promote these tickets as widely as possible, we hope you, our board members, could sign your names on the notice... [This exhibition] is to raise funds for the consolidation of the College foundation. We are expecting your support. Please find attached a soliciting notice for your signature. Please sign it and distribute the lottery tickets as widely as possible. Many thanks for your support!⁵⁹

At the exhibition, Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929) contributed the most. He sold 200 lottery tickets and donated a further 400 *yuan* to the College, a total of 800 *yuan*.⁶⁰ At another art exhibition in 1935, 1,900 lottery tickets were issued. Teachers were responsible for distributing 645 tickets; students' parents were assigned 760 tickets.⁶¹

Finally, most art exhibitions of the Shanghai Fine Arts College were held on a large scale. The 10th Anniversary School Art Exhibition for instance, had 6,000 artworks.⁶² One of the College's letters to Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1860–1940) stated that several hundred paintings were collected from artists for an exhibition and that if each painting could fetch 50 *yuan*, the College would be able to raise 20,000 *yuan*.⁶³

/Archive House, SMZDA, Q250-1-233.

⁵⁹ A letter to all board members concerning sale of lottery tickets, 11 May 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-233.

⁶⁰ See Liang Qichao's letter to Liu Haisu, 29 June 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-32.

⁶¹ The record of the second administrative

/meeting, 16 March 1935, SMZDA, Q250-1-32.

⁶² Special notice for the art exhibition for the 10th Anniversary of the Shanghai Fine Arts College, SMZDA, Q250-1-233.

⁶³ A letter to Cai Yuanpei, November 10, 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

Although the Shanghai Fine Arts College had a purpose different from that of art shops in making money, it played a major role as a commercial art gallery eclipsing that of specialist art shops in Shanghai. The College had a well-organized system with a division of labor, wide networks for collection and a strong marketing and distributing system. It also had the involvement of influential figures for promotion. Moreover, the College's fundraising exhibitions were held frequently and for the noble cause of art education. The Shanghai Fine Arts College, in this way, played an active part in the Shanghai art market.

II.

As noted above, the commercial characteristics of Shanghai art had been formulated far earlier than the emergence of modern art schools.⁶⁴ Such commercialism was explicit in the College's art exhibitions and was viewed as a standard to which the College artists were urged to conform.

College exhibitions had financial gain as their major concern rather than any real devotion to art. As a result, they required large quantities of work and allowed artists limited time to complete them. This resulted in a rising number of hastily created artworks. Stella Yu Lee notes that Shanghai artists rushed works to meet market demands by sacrificing artistic principles and quality.⁶⁵ This was evident in the work at the College's art exhibitions. At the College's Ancient and Contemporary Masters' Art Exhibition, for instance, the College requested Ye Zhifa to paint 45 pieces.⁶⁶ Ye eventually did fifteen paintings and fifteen calligraphic works, and his son Weishen 為莘 did five paintings and ten calligraphic works.⁶⁷ The College also requested 50 pieces each from Lin Zongmeng and Xu Juren⁶⁸ and more than 30 pieces of work by Wang Yiting⁶⁹. Zhu Wenyun and Pan Tianshou did twenty paintings each⁷⁰ and Zhu Jichen twenty pieces of calligraphy.⁷¹ Chen Shizeng, Wang Baiyuan 王白淵 (1902–65) and Wang's student did 60 paintings in total.⁷² As the dates for exhibitions were set, artists were not allowed the time they felt necessary to complete good-quality works. The most extreme example was Xu Ne'an, who the College asked to do 100 paintings.⁷³ According to Xu's reply to Wang and Liu, he had not begun his work by 28 July due to a dispute related to payment and the size of the paintings,⁷⁴ and the paintings were due by the end of August. This meant that he had to complete 100 paintings within a month or at least three paintings a day. This sharply contrasted with the old, refined way of painting in which an artist took five days to complete a mountain and ten days to paint a river (so-called *wu ri yi shan shi ri yi shui* 五日一山十日一水). In order to work more quickly, Wu Changshi 吳昌碩 (1844–1927) and Wang Yiting's free and fast style was favored by many painters. Chen Shizeng for instance, specifically

⁶⁴ Shanghai School paintings (*haipai huihua* 海派繪畫) acquired special characteristics due to the Shanghai market environment in the nineteenth century. See Hay on the Shanghai leisure publication market ("Painters and Publishing," p.170). Stella Yu Lee notes that commercialism was the impetus of the new style arising in Shanghai. It was basically a product of the merchant-bourgeois society (see Stella Yu Lee, "Art Patronage of Shanghai," p.228). On the commercialism of Shanghai school paintings see also Shan Guolin, "Haipai huihua de shangyehua tezhen" [The Commercial Nature of Shanghai School Paintings], in *Haipai huihua yanjiu lunwenji*, pp.559–73.

⁶⁵ See Stella Yu Lee, "Art Patronage," p.228.

⁶⁶ See Ye Zhifa's letter to Liu Haisu, 3 February 1923, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁶⁷ See Ye Zhifa's letter to Liu Haisu, 21 January 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁶⁸ A letter to Lin Zongmeng, 16 August 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁶⁹ A letter to Wang Yiting, 3 April 1923, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁷⁰ Letters to Zhu Wenyun and Pan Tianshou, 4 April 1923, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁷¹ A letter to Zhu Jichen, 10 March 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁷² See Liu Haisu's letter to Chen Shizeng, 3 August 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁷³ See Wang Yiting and Liu Haisu's letter to Xu Ne'an, 7 June 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁷⁴ Xu Ne'an's letter to Wang Yiting and Liu Haisu, 28 July 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁷⁵ Chen Shizeng's letter to Liu Haisu, 3 August 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

asked the College for the sort of paper suitable to do Wu Chang-shi's style. He wrote:

I am very glad to help you and your School. Please mail me *liuji*-cotton-paper and *xuan* paper. Mr. Wu Changshi often uses this kind of paper; it is cheap and good quality. After receiving the paper, I will try my best to scribble (塗抹 *tu mo*) together with Mengbai.⁷⁵

Figures 3 and 4

Left: Chen Shizeng, Landscape Painting, dated 1921, in Chen Shizeng huaji [Collection of Chen Shizeng's paintings] (Tianjin: Tianjin meishu chubanshe, 1960). Right: Chen Shizeng, Lotus, date unknown, *ibid*.



Here, both Wu's style and the word "scribble" suggest that he would rush up something inferior. Unfortunately, I cannot find examples of artworks exhibited in those exhibitions, however Figure 3 and Figure 4—two paintings by Chen Shizeng—demonstrate the point. Although both are good quality, Figure 3, a gift for a friend, obviously took longer because of the dense and delicate strokes and dots. This painting is imbued with an aura of detachment from worldly considerations, which is intensified by the poem in the colophon. Figure 4, by contrast, appears to have been finished more quickly, with big brushes that unevenly mixed ink and water scribbling across the paper and with smaller brushes to fill in some of the blank spaces with flowers, stems and seedpods. The style of Figure 4 is closer to that of Wu Changshi. The paintings that Chen sent to the College's painting exhibition might well have been similar to this in style but many details might have been omitted and the quality might have been much lower.

Secondly, a painter's fame rather than the quality of their work was emphasized at school exhibitions. Jonathan Hay notes that fame as a form of capital could be turned into tangible gain.⁷⁶ Shen Zichen 沈子丞 (1904–96)⁷⁷ recalled, at that time, there were some special “criteria” for judging the “quality” of paintings in the Shanghai art market. Some art merchants and vendors believed that only what could be easily sold was considered good. Thus, fame was sometimes directly equated to value; “[Works by] famous artists are good, while by the anonymous are bad”.⁷⁸ As the College was concerned only with financial gain, it had to cater to the customer in whose mind fame was the criterion for judging a painting's quality. At the Ancient and Contemporary Masters' Art Exhibition, the College invited celebrities to join the exhibition in addition to artists, including Zhang Zhongzhi 張仲之, Shen Xinqin and Huang Yanpei 黃炎培 (1878–1965).⁷⁹ The College was proud of the participation of celebrities. In one school letter to Cai Yuanpei, Liu Haisu mentioned that Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927), Liang Qichao, Wang Yiting, Wu Changshi, Chen Jia'an, Chen Shizeng, etc., had all contributed their calligraphy to the exhibition.⁸⁰ When requesting famous artists to paint for the exhibition, the College pointedly reminded them to sign their names on the works. One letter to the artist Zhu Jichen praised his calligraphic techniques and expressed deep respect for him. At the end, it said:

When you complete your calligraphy could you sign your greatly respected name on each work, as we expect to rely on it [for promotion of the works]. We are infinitely grateful to you!⁸¹

Thirdly, at these exhibitions, existing market tastes and criteria for valuing artworks were followed by the College instead of being challenged. In one letter to Xu Ne'an, the only requirement the College raised about the painting quality was that:

These artworks are to be exhibited in Shanghai and both Chinese and foreign connoisseurs will look at them. Please note that subjects bearing dense brushwork in the painting are most favored by customers... . You are a famous artist in Shanghai; I think you understand.⁸²

The requirement that more effort was put into the execution of a painting was no doubt a reflection of the psychology of the market.⁸³ The Shanghai Fine Arts College stuck closely to market tastes so it also applied this requirement to its artists.

Generally, paintings that were easy for artists to produce and also favored by the mass market were made in great numbers for the College's art exhibitions. These were usually characterized by free brushwork, repetition of popular subjects and the signatures of well-known artists.⁸⁴

⁷⁶ Jonathan Hay, “Painters and Publishing,” p.172. An artist's fame can be judged by the frequency with which they feature in newspaper reports, important art exhibitions (for example, the Chinese Art Exhibition in Europe organized by Xu Beihong in 1933; exhibitions organized by the Ministry of Education), and influential art associations (for example, the Chinese Painting Society 中國畫會, the Art Garden Painting Research Institute 藝苑繪畫研究所) and so on. As Hay notes, “fame had traditionally been associated with difficulty of access to the master's works, but now became associated with public exposure and accessibility”; see “Painters and Publishing,” p.173. For more details regarding the Shanghai Art School and its contribution to modern artistic celebrity, see Jane Zheng, “A New Ladder Leading to Celebrity: The Shanghai Art School and the Modern Mechanism of Artistic Celebrity,” *Art Criticism* 22.1 (2007): 7–28.

⁷⁷ Shen was a Shanghai artist, specializing in figure paintings in the traditional Chinese style.

⁷⁸ Shen Zichen, “Xuehua huiyi suotan” [Random Talk About the Experience of Learning to Paint] *Duo Yun* 7 (November 1984): 117.

⁷⁹ See the letter to Zhang Zhongzhi, Shen Xinqin and Huang Yanpei, 27 March 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁸⁰ See Liu Haisu's letter to Cai Yuanpei, 10 November 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁸¹ A letter to Zhu Jichen, 10 March 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁸² A letter to Xu Ne'an, 7 September 1922, SMZDA, Q250-1-254.

⁸³ According to Stella Yu Lee, Shanghai art patrons were Yangzhou salt merchants, Southern China merchants and Japanese tradesmen. See Stella Yu Lee, “Art Patronage,” p.226.

⁸⁴ This situation was similar to that of the nineteenth century where, as Stella Yu Lee notes, “it is not surprising that works produced under such conditions or in such a state of mind would be hasty works depending on easy efforts or improved accidents. Attractive and fashionable they might be, but too facile to bear much thought”, see “Art Patronage,” p.229.

Conclusion

This article has examined two aspects of the Shanghai Fine Arts College namely, its administrative structure and its art exhibitions that aimed at raising funds. It demonstrated that the way the College was structured encouraged artists into modern vocations while the exhibition program stimulated their activities in the art market. These had the effect of reinforcing existing commercial formulae for traditional Chinese-style painting. In general, the College played an important role in the emergence of modern artists from private, literati circles into a public, professional arena.

As artistic institutions developed from shops that were concerned with one aspect of the art trade in the late nineteenth century (such as fans or mounting) into more complicated organizations like the Shanghai Fine Arts College in the early twentieth century, they began to exert stronger economic control over artists. As a result, economics grew to be an increasingly important and complex factor in the twentieth-century Shanghai art world and became fundamental in the constitution of "Shanghai modernity".

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