

林学大

丹青不知老，  
富贵如浮云  
——刘岱松女士

## “南洋艺术之父”林学大先生厦门回顾展 北京资深藏家 刘岱松女士

自唐以降，王维首开文人画之先，下承董、巨，经元、明四家，继之以西风东渐，画坛不断地追求开拓，继往开来。林学大先生以其儒雅之性情，典雅之画风，中西合璧，成为南洋画坛文人画之先驱。

林先生曾参与创办两所美术学院。在二十世纪上半叶动荡波澜的岁月里，华北徐悲鸿（1895~1953，江苏人）任北京的中央美院首任院长；华中林风眠（1900~1991，广东人）时任杭州的国立艺术院首届校长，即今天的中国美院；岭南林学大（1893~1963，福建人）在1923年和1938年分别参与发起成立厦门美专和南洋美专，并任南洋美专首任校长，学生远自英、美、澳、捷克、印度、印马等地，影响遍及岭南、台湾以及东南亚地区。在那些困顿波折的年月，他凭藉坚持与决心，引领以新马独具的热带风情、多元文化为特质的南洋艺术风格。

能创办一所高等学府已是伟大，若能创办两间则为传奇。厦门美专虽因抗战爆发而被迫停办，南洋艺术学院今天却已成为东南亚地区学术地位最高，影响力最大的艺术高等学府，覆盖新加坡、马来西亚、印尼、泰国和台湾地区，影响绝不仅限于一国或一个小区域。也由于此，当时很多鼎鼎大名的中国艺术家如徐悲鸿、赵少昂、刘海粟、关山月、罗铭，以及台湾地区的国宝级艺术家林玉山等先后南下访问南洋美专并拜会林先生，互相以书画切磋交流。

因忙于教职，他的创作传世很少，包括油画、国画书法和在当时相当前卫的拼贴。但每作必有所感，有感必有寄情，画风沉厚极具个人面貌。他的中国书画作品自汉碑出，融西洋写生与光影变化，有文人逸趣。水墨常以梅竹入画，梅之隐逸高洁不畏霜雪与竹之中空外直淡泊坚忍成为他笔下最能写其心意的题材。西画构思精巧、布局经典、设色高雅，深得欧洲印象派及野兽派之精髓，又暗合东方古雅韵味，作品曾赴英伦展览。如作于1938年（时南洋美专创校）的静物瓶花，优雅沉静，显示出他深沉的浪漫主义写实功力，和文人清新雅逸的胸怀。作于1952年的巫族婚礼，用色沉浑，构图精致，以厚稳的笔触拉开景深，表现天性闲适、亲好自然的马来族同胞布置于椰林中若隐若现的婚宴情境，是一件充满南洋韵味的精品。

林先生的作品尺幅不大，却张张精彩、件件可观。作品为新加坡国家美术馆、马来西亚国家美术馆和南洋美院等收藏，民间收藏的机会极少。藏家皆视为秘宝，不轻易示人。本人有幸收藏油画两幅，水墨一幅。作于1955年的静物“鲁迅像”，以白、红、黄三个色块表现出中国新文化运动的舵手鲁迅、书籍著作和写作诗稿，将鲁迅这位20世纪初的文坛领袖之挺拔精悍凝练犀利的精神表达地淋漓尽致，也藉此寄托自己以美育教化世人、推动优秀传统文化的文人情怀。作于1952年的静物“书房”，巧妙表现了文人的书房这样一个颇难处理的题材。因为旧式的窗棂、书架与书桌之间，架上的书籍纸张之间造型颜色非常接近，处理起来需要高明的技术和取舍的巧思。水墨作品“枇杷”由林学大先生亲自题签，以西洋画的光影技巧融入水墨，以写实辅写意，清瘦枯寂的意境一如其人。

林先生有一方闲章“丹青不知老，富贵如浮云”引自杜甫诗《丹青引》中“丹青不知老将至，富贵于我如浮云”，正是其一生淡泊名利、甘于奉献，“美在其中，乐亦在其中”的人格写照。林学大先生当时身处南洋这个东西方交促、多民族融合的地区，以及残酷的二战和其后剧烈的社会动荡这样一个大时代，在艰苦的办学条件下，虽百折而不挠，与美专相依为命。

他相信，艺术是社会意识形态之反映，更是人类情感经历之表现，是坚韧，是锤炼，是真情流露。他坚持贯彻自己对美术教育的理念，力求以美育启发、教化、提升，为社会有益。

70多年前，林先生在一片荒原上开创了新马美术教育之基业，并以其伟大的人格和孜孜不倦的热忱，秉承国父孙中山先生名言以自勉“以吾人数十年必死之生命，立国家亿万年不死之根基”，终身奉献给南洋的美术事业，赢得“南洋美术之父”之美名。

在林学大先生逝世近半世纪后，终于有此机会让他的作品回到故里，将去国后这75年的沧桑，如丝线般一路串起那美丽而珍贵的明珠，呈现给故国故土！

# LIM HAK TAI: A LIFELONG DEDICATION TO ART RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION IN XIAMEN

By Ms Allison Liu Daisong  
Beijing Art Collector

The history of Chinese literati painting began with Wang Wei of the Tang Dynasty. Through the ages, towering figures like Dong Yuan, Ju Ran, and the Four Masters of the Yuan and Ming came and went. Eventually Western artistic influences left their mark on China. Artists were constantly seeking to break new ground as they inherited the past and inspired the future. In the case of Mr. Lim Hak Tai, a refined temperament, an elegant artistic style and a fusion of the East and West had converged marvellously to make him the pioneer of Nanyang literati painting.


Mr. Lim established two art academies. In the turbulent years that were the earlier half of the 20th century, several outstanding men had headed art academies in different parts of China. In the north, Xu Beihong (1895–1953; a native of Jiangsu) became the first Director of Beijing's Central Academy of Fine Arts. In the central region, Lin Fengmian (1900–1991; a native of Guangdong) became Xu's counterpart at Hangzhou's China Academy of Art. In the south, it was Lim Hak Tai (1893–1963; a native of Fujian) who co-founded the Xiamen Academy of Fine Arts in 1923, and then went on in 1938 to participate in the establishment of the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA)—of which he was also the first Principal. NAFA's students from as far as Britain, USA, Australia, Czechoslovakia and India, not to mention Indonesia and Malaysia. The influence of the Academy was felt in southern China, Taiwan, and throughout Southeast Asia. Through the years of hardship and setbacks, Mr. Lim pressed on with perseverance and determination. He is known today as the champion of Nanyang Art, a style characterised by tropical qualities unique to this part of the world, as well as a sense of cultural plurality.

Being under of one tertiary educational institution would have constituted greatness in itself. To have founded two is the stuff of legends. Although the Xiamen Academy of Fine Arts be closed due to the Sino-Japanese War, NAFA, on the other hand, has become the most prestigious (academically speaking) and influential tertiary institution for arts education in Southeast Asia today. Indeed, its influence is far from limited to a single country or a small area, but reaches across Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Taiwan. Thus, it was only natural that highly renowned Chinese artists like Xu Beihong, Zhao Shao'ang, Liu Haisu, Guan Shanyue, Luo Ming, as well as Lin Yu-shan, a national-treasure level artist from Taiwan, came visited NAFA in the past and met Mr. Lim, with whom they engaged in amicable artistic exchanges.

Being preoccupied with academic duties, Mr. Lim left only a small number of artworks. These include oil paintings, traditional Chinese paintings and calligraphy, as well as collages, that represented a rather avant-garde genre in those days. Each piece is charged with inspiration and personal feelings. They generally show a firmly grounded style and a strong personal distinctiveness. Mr. Lim's works of Chinese calligraphy and painting exemplify the traditional literati's taste as they incorporate influences from Han steles and Western life painting (with its interest in variations of light and shades). What he often rendered in ink were plum blossoms and bamboos. These are both time-honoured symbols: the former are about the way of a hermit, lofty character and resilience, while the latter speak of uprightness, simplicity and steadfastness. By virtue of such symbolism, they became the subjects closest to the artist's heart. As for Mr. Lim's Western-style paintings—some of which

had been exhibited in Britain—the artist’s sheer brilliance, classic composition and tasteful colouring embody not only the fine essence of European Impressionism and Fauvism, but also a classical elegance rooted in the East. For example, in *Still Life—Flowers* painted in 1938 (the year of NAFA’s founding), there is a settled courtliness, in which we see a collected yet well-executed romantic realism, underpinned by a literatus’ refreshing vision. In *Malay Wedding* (1952), the colours are controlled, the composition exquisite, even as the steady brushwork creates pictorial depth. Half-hidden amidst coconut trees, Malays are marrying and feasting, their relaxed temperament and attachment to Nature so evident in this masterpiece that overflows with Southeast Asian flavours.

Mr. Lim’s paintings are not large in size, but each one is a remarkable piece. Most of them are found in the collections of Singapore’s National Art Gallery, the National Art Gallery of Malaysia, NAFA and so on, such that they rarely get to be possessed by private collectors. Those who do keep these treasures do not show them to others readily. I myself am fortunate enough to have collected two oil paintings and one Chinese ink painting by Mr. Lim. One of these, *Lu Xun Statue* (1955), depicts the titular helmsman of China’s New Culture Movement (along with his books and writings) by means of three masses of colour, which are white, red and yellow respectively. This painting vividly brings out the spirit of Lu Xun, a leader of the early 20th century literary community—i.e., his lofty uprightness, vigour and condensed incisiveness. Also encapsulated here are certain sentiments of the artist himself—his desire to edify the masses and keep fine cultural traditions alive through art education. The second work is *Study* (1952), which deals with a rather difficult subject (a literatus’ study) ingeniously. There are close similarities in terms of forms and colours between the old-fashioned window lattice, bookshelves and desk, and also between the books and sheets of paper on the shelves. Resolving this difficulty demands not only technical prowess, but also cleverness in deciding what to keep and what not to. The final piece, the ink painting *Loquat*, bears Mr. Lim Hak Tai’s personal inscription. Here, the chiaroscuro of Western art is integrated in the ink rendition. Through this xieyi approach enhanced by realism, an aura of physical sparseness and quiet austerity is formed, mirroring the artist himself.



We are reminded of a leisure seal in Mr. Lim’s possession that says, “丹青不只老，富贵如浮云”. These words were taken from Du Fu’s poem *A Song of a Painting*, which proclaims, “Painting indefatigably, oblivious us to age, I deem riches and honour to be floating clouds.” Surely they are an apt description for how Mr. Lim had been enjoying art and showing commitment all his life (but hardly any interest in gaining fame and fortune). Geographically, Mr. Lim Hak Tai was based in Southeast Asia (Nanyang), a confluence of the East and West, a region where multiple ethnic groups commingled. Chronologically, he was a witness not only to the brutal Second World War, but also to the period of seething social turmoil that erupted in its wake. These were very difficult times for founding a school, yet he proved to be indomitable as he stayed with NAFA through thick and thin.

He considered art to be a reflection of social ideologies, an expression of human emotions and experiences, an endeavour that requires firm tenacity and much honing, an outflow of true feelings. He insisted on carrying through his ideas about art education, through which he sought to inspire, instruct and elevate others so as to bring good to society.

Mr. Lim was working on barren land, figuratively speaking, over 70 years ago when he laid the foundation for art education in Singapore and Malaysia. Driven by his sublime personality and a tireless passion, he strove to live out this famous quote by Mr. Sun Yat-sen, the Father of the Nation of China: “With a life that will surely end in a matter of decades, we shall establish a foundation for our nation that is to last for aeons.” Having devoted his life to art-related work in Southeast Asia, he is honoured today as the Father of Nanyang Art.

Now, nearly half a century after his death, there is finally an opportunity for Mr. Lim’s artworks to return to his hometown. The vicissitudes of the 75 years since he left China are like a silk thread that goes through these beautiful, precious pearls. And what a fine jewel it is to present to the country and city of his origin!

(Translated by Ng Kum Hoon)