Traditional Painting in New China: Guohua and the Anti-Rightist Campaign

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The Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957 and 1958 had dire consequences for many of China's artists, just as it did for hundreds of thousands of China's intellectuals (Link 1984:11–14). A sculpture instructor and Communist Party member at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, for example, refused to testify against the artist Jiang Feng, the academy's director and a man to whom he felt personal loyalty. The sculptor was declared an "extreme rightist" and sent to a labor camp at Xingkai Lake in Heilongjiang on the Soviet border. His entire sculptural output for the following years, 1958 to 1979, was a small box filled with crudely carved tree roots, work conducted in secret without professional tools or materials (interview with A 1986).

Such stories have been related to journalists and scholars by scores of embittered Chinese artists and intellectuals during the past decade (Cohen 1987:42). In many cases, readers can only lament the loss of an artistic life, even if the man or woman survived. A result of the campaign that has not been adequately described, however, is its effects on the artists and administrators who remained at their jobs.

The Anti-Rightist Campaign had its immediate origins in the Hundred Flowers Movement of 1956 and 1957. Initially envisioned by the leadership as a liberalization of Communist party control of culture, the Hundred Flowers was intended to inspire Chinese intellectuals to contribute to the technological and economic development of the new Chinese state (Macfarquhar 1989; Goldman 1989). It coincided with Khrushchev's attempts to de-Stalinize the Soviet Union and the resulting political explosions in Eastern Europe.

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Mao Zedong, apparently believing that an opportunity to openly criticize individual Chinese administrators would prevent Hungarian-style popular uprisings, transformed the cultural campaign in April of 1957 into a mandatory, nationwide reevaluation of party leaders and administrative policies (Goldman 1989:46). When the party rectification unexpectedly revealed that popular dissatisfaction existed on an unmanageable scale, the leadership launched a campaign to punish the complainers rather than to address their complaints.

In the field of art, the rectification campaign began with attacks by traditional Chinese painters on the pro-Soviet administrators who governed them. Ironically, it ended by condemning both the Communist art leadership and the most articulate traditional painters. The campaign redirected the whole world of art toward a synthesis of Chinese and Western art, but did not resolve the fundamental opposition between native and Soviet forms.

The Communist party art leader Jiang Feng (1910–1982), officially declared the leading rightist in the art world in 1957, was accused of opposing the Communist Party by his refusal to support guobua, traditional Chinese painting (Laing 1988:28–29). This article will briefly describe the process by which enthusiasm for guobua was established as a test of party loyalty, consider the question of what the party meant by guobua, and summarize the results of the Anti-Rightist Campaign for Chinese pictorial art.

**Guobua: The Term**

The term guobua has been used in the People's Republic of China to categorize any work painted in ink, with or without color, on a ground of Chinese paper or silk. It is used to distinguish modern Chinese works painted in traditional media (fig. 1, p. 579) from Chinese works in Western media (fig. 2, p. 580) and is usually translated "traditional Chinese painting" (Beijing waiyu xueyuan: 257), even when such paintings are not traditional at all (fig. 3, p. 580).

Such a term was unnecessary in pre-twentieth-century Chinese writing, in which all painting was Chinese unless otherwise specified. In the imperial period, the primary way of categorizing painting was by subject matter, such as landscapes, birds-and-flowers, or figures. The twelfth-century catalogue of the Huizong emperor, for example, was divided into ten subject categories (XHHP; Ho 1980:xxvi). As late as 1937, when Western art had become important to many educators and intellectuals, the Sinocentric convention was maintained. The catalogue for the Second National Art Exhibition, held under the auspices of the Nationalist Ministry of Education, included one volume dedicated to contemporary calligraphy and painting and another to contemporary Western-style painting, designs, and sculpture. The former was assumed to be Chinese, but it was unnecessary to so label it (Jiaoyubu 1937).

Before 1957, the term guobua was used by some Chinese writers, including Jiang Feng, to refer simply to medium. For others, however, guobua required traditional techniques. The term can be translated in various ways. Most commonly, it is an abbreviation for zhongguobua, Chinese painting. It might also be rendered

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1 The traditionalist Xu Yansun believed that the painting of Zhang Ding and Li Keran was not guobua, and that the work of Ye Qianyu harmed the tradition of guobua (MS 1957, 8:16).
"native" painting, or even "national" painting (Kao 1988:xxi). Such an understanding of the term, which goes beyond painting materials, implies continuity with traditional Chinese technical or stylistic traditions. These two usages, one referring only to medium and the other to medium and style, can be contradictory when a painting uses Chinese materials in radically untraditional ways.

The most extreme examples of such untraditional zhongguobua were produced during and immediately following the Cultural Revolution by young socialist realist figure painters. National exhibitions during this period divided paintings into sections for zhongguobua and oil painting. In such a context zhongguobua refers only to medium. A typical example is the 1974 ink-and-color painting Before the Meeting (Xuanjianghui qian, fig. 4, p. 581) by the young Cantonese artist Wu Qizhong (b. 1944). Publications label the work zhongguobua, Chinese painting, but the only traditional aspects of the composition are that the title is inscribed vertically on the picture and that the artist applied his name with a seal. Among the new stylistic aspects of the picture are the emphatic use of Western perspective, highlighting and shading in the depiction of the foreground furniture, and the use of color and chiaroscuro to define the forms of the figures. The subject, figures in a library, is equally modern.

In short, the term guobua, or zhongguobua, is one of such imprecision as to be problematic for the historian of Chinese art. It excludes work in Western media, even if painted by Chinese artists, but in recent usage its relationship to Chinese painting of the past may be tenuous.

The origins of the term probably should be sought in Meiji Japan, where the term nibonga, Japanese painting, was used in opposition to yōga, Western painting (Takashina 1987:21–22). As Kao Mayching has pointed out, traditional Chinese painting was called guocuibua (painting of national essence) or guobua (national painting) in the early twentieth century to distinguish it from oil painting, which was called xihua, yanghua, or xiyanghua (Western painting) (Kao 1983:373). The traditional Chinese distinctions between figure painting, landscape painting, and bird-and-flower painting were retained, but in twentieth-century China such definitions formed a second tier of subcategories within guobua.

The term guocuibua links Chinese painting to the National Essence movement of the 1910s and 1920s, an intellectual effort that initially sought to differentiate Chinese people and culture from the non-Chinese, but which gradually came to be associated with antipopulist upper-class Chinese values. In literary composition, for example, advocates of National Essence theory rejected the use of vernacular language in favor of a modified classical Chinese (Schneider 1976:84, 88–89). The conservatism of National Essence thought was to some degree a response to the more liberal and pro-Western New Culture movement exemplified by followers of the leftist writer Lu Xun (1881–1936).

The related term xin guobua (New National Painting) was coined during the 1910s by a group of Cantonese artists who were heavily influenced by the realism of Westernized Japanese painting. These artists, now called the Lingnan School, were relatively progressive, both politically and artistically. Ralph Croizier has described them as occupying a middle ground between conservatives and radicals. Their goal was to create a new form of painting that was both modern and national (Croizier 1988:72, 110–114).

In China, Western art flourished primarily in the academic world, where most schools had been established on Western models (Kao 1983). Chinese painting was maintained, largely outside the academy, in relatively traditional ways: as leisure activities for intellectuals who supported themselves by other means or as careers
for professional artists who lived by selling Chinese paintings. Chinese painting of the first few decades of the twentieth century ranged from very detailed, colorful flower paintings similar to those painted for the Qing court to loose, abstract landscapes. Most Chinese painting could be differentiated conceptually and stylistically from Western painting by the following characteristics: brushwork followed the conventions established by earlier masters and was appreciated for its own sake; compositions were conventional and could often be related to those of earlier masters; and painting themes were frequently abstract and poetic, most commonly limited to generalized landscapes, beautiful birds and flowers, ancient scholars, or mythological figures. As a corollary to the last trait, identifiable, contemporary subjects were relatively infrequent. Chinese painting relied on conventional strokes of ink and spacing to create necessary effects of depth and volume, but the illusion of three-dimensionality was seldom an artistic goal. Chinese artists avoided the sharp contrasts of light and shade that are used in much Western art to describe volume and illumination, and generally did not use foreshortening and vanishing point perspective, even though such Western devices were known in early twentieth-century China. Realistic depictions of human beings were relatively uncommon. Although such Western ideas as exhibitions and art journals affected Chinese painters (Li 1979:1–9), the health of Chinese painting—its collecting, connoisseurship, creation, and transmission—depended in general on personal rather than institutional relationships, the complicated social fabric of China’s urban centers.

The destruction of the old social order in which traditional Chinese painting flourished was a primary goal of the Communist revolutionaries. The establishment of the communist system in China after 1949 was thus a direct threat to the survival of Chinese painting, for it disrupted the social and economic relationships with which it was associated. Both the practitioners of guohua and those with the means to purchase the paintings were generally considered part of the socioeconomic problem the Communists sought to eradicate. In the early years of the People’s Republic, it was widely believed both within the party and outside it that traditional guohua had no future under the new régime (Li Keran 1950: 35; Li Hua 1950: 39). The communist art administrators, in the tradition of the New Culture movement, were predominantly interested in Western artistic forms, both those that were imported directly and those that arrived via Japan. Their artistic activity in the pre–1949 years had focused on woodblock prints, a genre to which the writer Lu Xun had introduced the Shanghai leftists in the 1930s, folk art, and cartoons (Laing 1988: 12–16; Sun 1979). Those who had studied traditional painting in their early years, such as Shi Lu (1919–1982), largely abandoned it in favor of the more progressive woodcut genre (Shi 1983:75–80).

One of the art world’s major issues in the 1949–1957 period was what role,

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2The portraiture of the Shanghai artist Ren Yi (1840–1896) is a significant exception to this generalization, but conventional subjects such as birds, flowers, and generalized historical figures are an important part of his œuvre.

3For a glimpse of the complex art world of preliberation Shanghai, see Silbergeld 1987:15–23. C. T. Li 1979 makes more refined distinctions between types of preliberation Chinese painting than space permits here.

4Guohua exhibitions were held in Shanghai between 1952 and 1955, but sales to party officials were organized in advance “to encourage artists” (Mi 1955:10–11). That sales were in need of such encouragement has been confirmed by interviews with Shanghai artists.

5Shi Lu studied traditional painting with his older brother, Feng Jianwu. His pseudonym was taken from the names of two figures he admired, the iconoclastic seventeenth-century painter Shi Tao and the writer Lu Xun. Interview with Feng 1986.
if any, traditional Chinese painting should play in the new society. The fundamental question was whether traditional painting should be preserved, reformed, or simply eradicated. One sign of this ambivalence was the decision made soon after liberation to retrain artists in Shanghai to become illustrators of books that would appeal to and edify the masses. An oddly mixed group of comic book artists, calendar print designers, and traditional Chinese painters was assembled for Marxist-Leninist thought reform, instruction in the principles of the new art, and practical training in technique, especially in Western figure drawing. The classes included artists in their forties such as the landscapist Lu Yanshao (b. 1909; fig. 6, p. 582), those in their early thirties such as Cheng Shifa (b. 1921), those in their twenties such as Wang Guanqing (b. 1931), and teenage artists such as Yao Youxin (b. 1935). Slightly older artists, such as Wu Hufan (1894–1968; figs. 1, 3), were not included. Some of the participants recall the pathetic efforts of older Chinese painters as they struggled to master pencil drawing. Others remember the ideological fervor the political sessions inspired in the young. Those who succeeded in mastering the new techniques, especially drawing, and the new ideology were given jobs as illustrators in publishing houses. This concentration of talent in the field of illustration has flowered in subsequent decades with a steady stream of high-quality illustrated books.

The publishing house classes and similar programs broke down the distinctions between Western and Chinese painting by requiring that all artists master figure drawing in the Western style. Such a change in fundamental approach led to significant changes in the style and subject matter of Chinese painting, including a new emphasis on realistic depiction of human activity. The older Chinese painters of landscapes and birds-and-flowers were protected in some periods, but implementation of party policy, particularly in the field of art education, ensured that a substantial number of young artists were trained in Western styles and in the predominantly Western specialty of figure painting.

Conflicts soon emerged between the advocates of traditional guobua and the new guobua painters. The terms they used and the meanings they attributed to their terms help to define the differences in approach. The label given to each kind of art carried great symbolic value. The period between 1949 and 1957 saw a steady increase in use of the term caimobua, color-and-ink painting, as a replacement for guobua. By avoiding the term guobua, with its many conservative, nationalistic, and potentially antiforeign implications, some critics explicitly referred to the medium of the painting rather than the style. “Color-and-ink painting,” closely related to the standard descriptive conventions used by Western museums (fig. 14, p. 585), seems to possess the same neutral value as “oil painting.” As we will see, the term was far from neutral, for it implied that a valid form of art existed even when the traditional media had been separated from traditional styles. Some traditional Chinese painters believed that confusing the two terms favored new styles, thus posing a serious threat to their art.

Jiang Feng and the Art Academies

The national art academy system, established soon after the founding of the People’s Republic, absorbed several of the most important art schools of the pre-1949 period. In addition to inheriting buildings and faculty, the new academies

6Interviews with artists associated with Shanghai publishers.
retained an emphasis on mastering Western techniques and on synthesizing native and Western styles. The National Beiping Art Academy, headed by the influential art educator Xu Beihong (1895–1953), was reestablished as the Central Academy of Fine Arts on April 1, 1950. Xu, who had studied in Japan and Europe, was a proponent of European academic art. The policies of his academy contributed strongly to a synthesis of Chinese and Western styles, most notably by emphasizing realism as an aesthetic goal (Li 1979: 91–98). Xu became famous for ink paintings of noble horses (fig. 5, p. 581), a theme that had patriotic overtones during the war against Japan (Li 1979: 97). A work of 1940, Horses demonstrates both his enthusiasm for the expressive possibilities of Chinese ink and his interest in Western academic conventions of anatomy, perspective, chiaroscuro, and composition. When the academy was reestablished in 1950, most of Xu Beihong’s instructors were retained (Wang, Zhao, and Zhao 1988:99). They included artists trained as oil painters in the realist mode, such as Wu Zuoren (b. 1908), a few traditionalists, such as the elderly Qi Baishi (1863–1957; fig. 7, p. 582), and artists such as Li Keran (1907–1989), who were interested in applying Western approaches to synthesize new, more naturalistic styles of Chinese painting.

Additions to the faculty were made from the ranks of the revolutionary artists, who began teaching early in 1950. The printmaker Yan Han (b. 1916) conducted classes in “creation,” which concerned the proper choice of subject and the execution of a finished picture. The doctrinal basis for the new art, Mao Zedong’s “Yan’an Talks on Art and Literature,” was taught by the poet Ai Qing and others (interview with B 1987).

Under Xu Beihong’s direction, the academy did not have separate departments for Western and Chinese painting, but taught a principally Western-oriented curriculum that emphasized academic drawing (interview with B 1987). This tradition was retained after 1949 and was transplanted to Hangzhou where the National Hangzhou Art Academy became the East China campus of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1950 (Wang, Zhao, and Zhao 1988:99).

The Hangzhou Art Academy, staffed by such luminaries of traditional art as the bird-and-flower painter Pan Tianshou (1898–1971) and the landscapist Huang Binhong (1864–1955), had strong and separate guobua and xihua (Western painting) departments before 1949. In accordance with Beijing standards guobua and xihua were combined into a single department in 1949 (Deng 1957:16). The post-1949 curriculum stressed figure painting, outline-and-color technique, and realistic rendering, all of which were alien to the academy’s best-known guobua painters. The reputation of Pan Tianshou, for example, was based on his freely brushed interpretations of birds, plants, and mountains (fig. 8, p. 582). He, and other old masters, had few teaching duties, but worked instead in such areas as the conservation institute. The most important classes were in the Western subjects of drawing, sketching, and watercolor painting, and resources were concentrated on developing young faculty to replace the old guobua artists. The goal of the period was to create popular art (puji yishu) that would be didactic in function but have widespread visual appeal.

The key figure in the Chinese art world of the 1950s and in the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957 was Jiang Feng. Jiang (né Zhou Xi) was born in 1910 into a family of urban workers in Shanghai. Although he had little formal education, he joined an evening art club where he met many students and intellectuals. By the age of twenty-one he had become involved in left-wing politics. He was one of thirteen young artists chosen to participate in a woodblock print class organized by Lu Xun in the summer of 1931. Lu Xun’s class was a seminal influence in the
development of revolutionary woodblock prints in China, a movement to which Jiang Feng devoted the next twenty years of his life. A vivid Jiang Feng print of 1931 depicts terrified anti-Japanese protestors being gunned down by Nationalist soldiers (fig. 9, p. 583).

After Jiang joined the Communist Party in March of 1932 he became more closely associated with Lu Xun's confidant, the Communist writer Feng Xuefeng. Soon thereafter, Jiang and his left-wing friends, including the poet and art student Ai Qing, were arrested while attending an Esperanto class. Jiang and Ai wrote to Lu Xun from prison that they had organized to continue studying while in jail. Jiang was rearrested soon after his 1933 release, but Lu Xun continued to support his artistic development by sending a book of German expressionist prints to him in prison (Jiang 1983 shang: 128–138, 315–319).

Jiang Feng's prints are not the best of the revolutionary woodcuts, but his enthusiasm and charisma made him extremely significant as an art educator, organizer, and administrator. Moreover, the ideas he developed during his period of association with Lu Xun and other left-wing artists in Shanghai strongly affected his later administration of the Chinese art world.

Jiang's group was antipathetic to much that was taught in art academies run by the Nationalist government, particularly the academy in nearby Hangzhou. The college students were said by Huang Shanding, one of Jiang's colleagues, to be painting nothing but apples, bananas, and women's thighs (Jiang 1983 shang: 400). As late as 1978, Jiang himself expressed contempt for the pretentiousness of "high art" and quoted Lu Xun's view that art must be divided into the "art of the oppressors and the art of the oppressed" (Jiang 1983 shang: 130). On the basis of his later administrative record, we may assume that Jiang placed most varieties of guobua in the former category.

Jiang's career after the Japanese invasion of 1937 was devoted to administration of woodcut propaganda artists at the Lu Xun Academy of Arts, the Communist art school at Yan'an, where he served as head of the art section. His growing interest in Soviet socialist realism was revealed by his exultant comment to young communist artists on the eve of the liberation of Peking: "Now we can paint oil paintings!" (interview with C 1986). By 1954, he had begun to develop a theoretical justification for practice of this foreign art: oil paintings were as popular in the USSR as new year's pictures (nianhua) were in China (Jiang 1983 shang:79). After liberation, Jiang turned to writing about art rather than practicing it, and produced many articles about premodern European painters (Jiang 1983 xia).

During the 1950s, Jiang was a key figure in the transformation of the preliberation art academy system on the Soviet model. Mao Zedong was not particularly interested in pictorial art, which left implementation of his general doctrines in the hands of the art leadership. Jiang directed the reorganization of the National Hangzhou Art College between 1949 and 1951 and was the most influential leader in the Central Academy of Fine Arts from 1951 to 1957. One significant program

7 A distinction is made here between meishu, art that is limited to the visual arts, and the much broader term yishu, arts. Yishu encompasses meishu, but also includes drama, opera, music, and film, realms of greater immediate concern to Mao than pictorial art. The title of Mao's 1942 cultural manifesto, "Yan'an Talks on Literature and Art" refers to yishu. Mao, along with Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, and Zhu De attended a 1953 viewing of Dong Xiwen's oil painting The Founding of the Republic at Zhongnanhai (Wang, Zhao, and Zhao: 100), but Mao's opinion does not seem to have been published. The occasional high-level policy speeches that mention meishu or painting specifically tend to be those of Zhou Enlai, Zhou Yang, and Chen Yi.
conducted during Jiang’s tenure was the Central Academy’s postgraduate class in oil painting, held between 1955 and 1957. Conducted by Konstantin M. Maksimov (b. 1913), the only Soviet painter to teach in China as a foreign expert, the class prepared an elite corps of young artists for careers as teachers, administrators, and propagandists. The students were young art professionals drawn from the national art academies, publishing houses, and the military (interviews with participants 1986, 1988).

By the mid-1950s, Jiang Feng seems to have successfully evolved from a revolutionary idealist to a competent party bureaucrat. He had reorganized the art world and guided it through several political movements. Yet, his obedience to party directives had limits. When tested, he refused to admit error where he believed none existed, and, in the summer of 1957, he was punished by the title of Number One Rightist in the Art World. Probably because many artists initially defended him against criticism, he was further convicted of organizing an “anti-party group.” The reasons he was so vigorously attacked are complex. One element was his long-term association with followers of Lu Xun. Mao Zedong’s favorable opinion of Lu Xun’s writing did not prevent the purge of his followers, including the writers Hu Feng and Feng Xuefeng (Goldman 1971). If Lu Xun’s group were to be ousted, as they were, by opponents in the Ministry of Culture and Central Propaganda Department, Jiang Feng also was a likely target (interview with D 1988).

A second element seems to have been tension between central authority, which Jiang Feng exemplified, and the ambitions of provincial bureaucrats. Once the academy in Hangzhou was reorganized as the East China Campus of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, it was directed by leaders in Beijing. For reasons that remain unclear but that are undoubtedly related to a plan to move the campus to Shanghai, complaints were made against Jiang by the Zhejiang party committee. Furthermore, during the early stages of the Hundred Flowers Movement in 1956, old guohua artists at the academy in Hangzhou had complained to Vice-Minister of Culture Qian Junrui about Jiang Feng’s administration of the college. Qian reported their opinions to Mao himself, who immediately decided that Jiang was in error (interview with D 1988). The investigation of the provincial committee concluded, not surprisingly, that Jiang Feng had seriously opposed the party (MS 1957, 8:13).

A third element was rivalries within the art world that led to attacks on Jiang’s authority. Between 1953 and 1957, Jiang Feng held the most powerful posts in the national art administration. He was Acting Director and Party Secretary of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, as well as first Vice-Chairman and Party Secretary of the national Chinese Artists Association (Jiang 1983 shang:323–24). These titles made him the party spokesman and the most influential policymaker for art, but at least one of the other vice-chairmen, Cai Ruohong, frequently disagreed with Jiang Feng on policy (Jiang 1983 shang:331). The two men gradually found themselves leaders of opposing factions, a situation believed by some colleagues to have its roots in disagreements of the early 1940s.

Although these intraparty conflicts may have been the real basis of Jiang’s problems, the crime that was most fully detailed in the press was Jiang Feng’s alleged attempt to eradicate the practice of guohua.8 Of direct interest to our theme is that

8An important sub-text to the debate was direct competition between oil painters and guohua painters. The change in party policy to improve the status of guohua painters was perceived, probably correctly, as a threat to the careers of oil painters. After the formal opening of the Institute of Chinese Painting, old oil painters and printmakers, many of whom were allied with Jiang Feng, and a delegation of Maksimov’s students, including He
many previously unpublished differences of opinion regarding guohua, cimohua, and Western-style drawing were pulled into the open during the Anti-Jiang Feng Campaign. Pronouncements about the status of guohua were used as evidence against both unreformed conservative painters and left-wing party members sympathetic to Jiang Feng.

In order to discredit Jiang's administrative record, the Ministry of Culture called many guohua artists to provide evidence against him. Although never stated in these terms, the thrust of the argument was that Jiang remained an unrepentant Westernizer even after Zhou Yang, as party spokesman on culture, issued his 1953 call to continue and develop the national tradition (Zhou Yang 1953). Moreover, in 1955 a Shanghai arts leader had attacked Peng Boshan, Deputy-Director of East China's Cultural Department and Chief of the Shanghai Propaganda Bureau, for his failure to support national painting (minzu huibua; Mi 1955). Peng had already been removed from his posts for "Hu Fengism," a political crime that included association with the condemned writer Hu Feng, as well as support for subjectivism and individualism (Goldman 1971:151–57). The 1955 article was an early warning that incorrect views of Chinese painting could be interpreted as anti-Communist.

As we have seen, complaints against Jiang Feng had come to Mao Zedong's attention as early as 1956. He had, as well, been mentioned unfavorably in an article the preceding year (MS 1955:1:9). By the fall of 1957, Mao mentioned his name in an important speech about the Anti-Rightist Campaign. Mao's remarks linked Jiang with General Gao Gang (1902–1954?), who allegedly died by suicide after being denounced (Boorman 1967, II:235), and with the writers Ding Ling and Feng Xuefeng, who were declared anti-communists within the ranks of the Chinese Communist Party (Union Research Institute 1976:362, 381). The printmaker Yan Han, who was declared Number Two Rightist in the Art World, believes Mao himself selected Jiang Feng as a primary target of the campaign (interview 1988).

Once it had been determined that Jiang Feng was to be the focus of the Anti-Rightist Campaign in the art world, those who had worked with him were recruited to provide evidence against him. Those who failed to cooperate, like the young sculptor mentioned above, became targets themselves. The guohua painter Li Keran had been criticized with Jiang Feng in 1955 (MS 1955, 1:8). Now it was his duty to report Jiang Feng's opinion that, with the exception of outline-and-flat-color painting, Chinese painting was incapable of development. Such a view, voiced by Jiang in 1949, would exclude most types of traditional brushwork and most ink painting from the canon of acceptable art. Jiang indeed intended such a limitation, for he further said that while Qi Baishi's ink paintings were excellent, his type of painting had reached the end of the road and could not be further developed (Li Keran 1957:19). Qi Baishi (1863–1957), a guohua painter in his nineties, was lionized by the party during the 1950s for his contributions to the national heritage (Woo 1986: 40–43; fig. 7).

Kongde (fig. 2), marched on the Ministry of Culture to demand similar privileges for oil painters. Yan Han, although himself a printmaker, led the march, which took place on May 25, 1957. As far as I have found, their concerns were not addressed by party authorities (Deng:48; interviews with participants).

9Yan had worked closely with Jiang Feng to establish a Printmaking Department at CAFA in 1953. During the rectification movement of 1957 he had openly criticized the injustice of the entire rectification procedure and had attempted to protect Jiang Feng from what he considered to be factionally motivated attacks. Mao's involvement in Jiang Feng's case became widely known during the Cultural Revolution, according to other sources.
The bird-and-flower painter Pan Tianshou reported that in a 1950 meeting on the reform of guohua, Jiang Feng had predicted that guohua would die out and be replaced by oil painting. His reasons were that guohua was incapable of reflecting reality, that it was unsuitable for large public paintings, and that it lacked international character (Pan 1957:22). Others reported that Pan Tianshou and other bird-and-flower painters were required to paint figures and new year’s pictures (Deng 1957:16).

While Jiang Feng was notoriously direct in stating his opinions, he was also a dedicated Communist, and his ideas about guohua were clearly in the mainstream of party thought in the years immediately following 1949. Zhou Enlai directed, on July 6, 1949, that popularization was to take precedence over the raising of standards.\(^{10}\) He added a plea for new popular arts, adding, “The old literature and art . . . is already moribund” (Zhou 1981:391–92). The regional art administrator Lai Shaoqi described artistic activities in East China as concentrating on cartoons and art for the masses during the period 1949–1951 (1954:5). The printmaker Li Hua wrote an article in 1949 that condemned the quest for spirit consonance,\(^{11}\) interest in the effects of brush and ink, the inscribing of poems, and such so-called "formalist" arts of literati amusement. He wrote that the new art must be realistic and must avoid many traditional subjects. “Expressing the truth of real life . . . is the highest realm of art; therefore there is no place [in the new society] for the development of landscape, bird-and-flower, or ‘the four gentlemen’ paintings” (Li 1950:41; MS 1957,6:4). Ai Qing published a 1953 lecture in which he warned guohua artists that the party’s encouragement of Qi Baishi’s old-fashioned painting was an exception, not a party policy that might apply to other painters. He further condemned practitioners of traditional guohua as liars (Ai 1953). Both men were critical of artists who copied old art.

Jiang Feng himself adopted a much more moderate public stance after Zhou Yang’s 1953 speech at the Second National Conference of Writers and Artists. In the published text of an important talk originally delivered on September 25, 1953, Jiang Feng wrote, “From the works of some artists it has been proved possible to use guohua techniques and tools to describe real life. . . However, diehard guohua artists who advocate the conservative point of view criticize Chinese paintings that depict new contents and use [any] failings [they find] as an excuse to reject the reform of Chinese painting” (1953:6). Jiang singled out for praise a number of specific works of art, including didactic new year’s pictures by such artists as Yan Han, Li Keran, and Shi Lu. New year’s pictures of the period usually adopted the outline-and-flat-color technique, on the theory that it appealed to the masses. The subjects were didactic but cheerful, as in Yan Han’s The Bride Speaks (China Pictorial 1952, 1:n.p.). A young peasant woman is depicted enjoying her frugal wedding, presumably because she has entered the marriage voluntarily. Li Keran’s picture of model workers at Beihai Park is one of the few landscapes in the group, but this contribution to the new art may be unique in his oeuvre for its garish color (fig. 10, p. 583). Jiang further praises guohua by the figure painters Ye Qianyu (Shi-nian:21) and Jiang Zhaohoe, the academic bird-and-flower painter Yu Feian, and the

\(^{10}\)See Chang 1980 for a study of Chinese painting organized around the themes of popularization and raising of standards.

\(^{11}\)The term spirit consonance, qiyan, has spawned a large body of interpretive literature. In art theory, it is usually traced to the fifth-century writer Xie He, who used it in the first of his "Six Laws of Painting." As used by Li Hua, it probably implied an affinity with the self-expressive and anti-naturalistic goals of literati painting.
landscapist Li Xiongcai (Shinian: 43). Ye was a former cartoonist who, in Jiang’s example, employed the outline-and-color mode. He later developed a quick, sketch-like method of painting in ink. His figural forms were based on a sound knowledge of Western drawing. Jiang Zhaohe, a largely self-taught painter, developed a way of using Chinese ink and paper to paint extremely realistic portraits (Liu 1984: 239–250). Neither were traditional in their approach. Li Xiongcai was a painter of the Lingnan school, typically painting landscapes with strong and somewhat Western effects of light and volume. Of the group, only Yu Feian, who specialized in highly detailed outline-and-color bird-and-flower paintings, might be considered a traditionalist. He supported the new government by dedicating to the nation delicate pictures of auspicious flowering plants.  

In a similar report published in October 1954, Jiang Feng made particular mention of landscape sketches in ink by Li Keran and Zhang Ding as examples of the successful reform of guohua, claiming that the works were executed with traditional technique but were drawn from life in a relatively scientific manner (Jiang 1954: 6; fig. 11, p. 584). These paintings appear in reproduction to be much more successful as works of art than many other nominally realistic guohua landscapes of the period; however, they would seem to represent, not traditional technique, but use of the traditional media in a very Western way. There was clearly significant confusion within the party about what guohua was and what it should be, but in 1954 the differences were largely glossed over. The party had decided, probably in conjunction with the 1953 Second National Congress of Art and Literary Workers, that guohua was not to die out but was to be reformed so that it was both realistic and socially useful.

The charter of the party-directed Chinese Artists Association, published in 1954, stipulated that the association would uphold the Marxist-Leninist literary and artistic principles of the Chinese Communist Party and would adopt socialist realist creative methods (MS 1954, 2:10). One of its lesser duties was to promote study of the art heritage, so as to develop China’s “excellent national artistic tradition.”

Lai Shaoqi’s 1954 article in People’s Daily summarized the general understanding of party guidelines. It asked old guohua artists to break with convention and create new styles to express new realities and urged that the artists raise standards based on the pre-existing foundation of their art, so that Chinese creative work might be filled with national style. However, the author concluded with an exhortation that the backward aspects of guohua should be eliminated (Lai 1954: 5).

While the preliberation world of traditional Chinese painting was gradually eradicated, the heritage of the Western-style academies of the pre-1949 period remained very strong. Although the inclusion of guohua in the curriculum guaranteed its survival, it was programmatically reformed. The examination for admission to the six national art colleges in 1955 required passing, along with written examinations and a four-hour “creation” on a set theme, a four-hour examination in Western drawing (MS 1955, 6:20). For aspiring guohua students, then, traditional training was clearly insufficient.

In a 1955 review of the Second National Art Exhibition, Cai Ruohong praised

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12 For a typical example of Yu’s work, but not the one Jiang Feng mentions, see MS 1956, 6: cover. See Laing 1984 for assistance in finding published works by guohua artists.
13 The six national art colleges were the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, the East China Campus of the CAFA in Hangzhou, the Northeast Academy of Fine Arts in Shenyang, the Southwest Academy of Fine Arts in Chongqing, the South-Central Art Academy in Wuhan, and the Northwest Art Academy in Xi’an.
the progress made in both landscape and figure painting, advances he attributed to the selection of subjects from actual life, such as the construction of new China and the labor of the people. He stated party policy on technique as follows: "... we oppose the simple adoption of Western techniques to replace those of guohua, but also oppose the conservative idea that if there are no traces of the brushwork of the ancients it is not guohua" (1955:14). Cai further advocated both the Western-inspired practice of drawing from life and the Chinese custom of copying ancient pictures as ways to improve painting.

Zhang Ding’s review of the same exhibition described problems the party then recognized in guohua. In nationalistic terms, similar to those of Zhou Yang, he acknowledged guohua to be "the heritage of our excellent tradition." The problems in the practice of guohua were those of conservatism and nihilism. He instructed the conservatives, those who simply followed the ancients and were alienated from actual experience, to draw from life. Zhang Ding defined the nihilists (in our terms, the Westernizers), as young artists who had a tendency to undervalue Chinese tradition. They could correct their faults by copying old paintings, particularly works of the Tang and Song periods. Zhang advocated that the art leadership play a more active role in organizing guohua in order to develop all genres, but that the greatest efforts be devoted to figure painting. In his view, paintings that hoped to express the life of society must do so by depicting the people who compose it (Zhang Ding 1955).

At least part of this policy had already been put into practice by 1955. Guohua artists at the major art academies were required to study drawing from life. In addition to rendering live models, old guohua artists in Hangzhou, such as Pan Tianshou, were allegedly required to draw plaster casts of famous European sculptures (interview with E 1987). In 1954, the old Chinese painters in the Cai mohua Department at CAFA had reportedly not been assigned to teach courses but instead were still taking drawing and reform classes themselves under the direction of Western-style artists (Zhang 1955). On the other hand, young artists were sent on government-sponsored trips to copy figure paintings on the walls of the Dunhuang caves and Yonglegong temple (interviews with F 1986, and G 1987; MS 1954,4:49).

The freshman fundamental course for painting students at the East China campus in 1954 consisted chiefly of developing skills in draftsmanship. The administration divided students into the caimohua major or the oil painting major on the basis of the student’s attainments in Western drawing. Contrary to expectations, those most skilled at Western-style drawing were assigned not to the oil painting major but to the caimohua division (interview with G 1987).

Young faculty with strong training in Western art such as Fang Zengxian and Zhou Changgu were assigned to teach caimo figure painting. The styles of Fang and Zhou involved sketching with brush and ink in a way that enriched Western drawing with some of the lush, wet brush effects characteristic of the Shanghai school of bird-and-flower painting (fig. 12, p. 584). The two men were given opportunities to sketch from life in China’s border areas and contributed to a romanticized view of minority life by depicting Tibetans as colorful but not foreign. There was ample room for innovation on the part of these young faculty members because figure painting was not overshadowed by the influence of respected senior artists such as the bird-and-flower specialist Pan Tianshou or the landscapist Huang Bin-hong.

14 For Zhou's work, see Laing 1988: fig. 29.
Nevertheless, the style that they developed and taught was controversial within the academy. Pan Tianshou, for example, complained that the faces of the figures looked smudged because of the use of Western conventions of rendering light and shade (interviews with F and G). On the other hand, activist elements at East China claimed that charming pictures such as Zhou Changgu’s *Two Lambs*, which depicts a pretty girl watching her flock, made use of minority peoples for petty bourgeois purposes. The painting was ultimately submitted as part of the Chinese entry to an international exhibition in Warsaw, where it won a gold medal, thus legitimating the new style and treatment of the subject (interview with E). Artists who painted new *guohua*, such as Zhou Changgu and Li Keran, were subjected to attacks from both extremes. Conservatives criticized their innovations as failures to maintain *guohua* standards. Communist extremists attacked them as insufficiently political. Tensions between artistic nationalism and Soviet socialist realism worsened as the official line became increasingly contradictory. Between 1953 and 1956, the tenets of Soviet socialist realism were balanced with vaguely worded calls by Zhou Enlai and Zhou Yang to “inherit the national tradition.”

**The Hundred Flowers Campaign**

In mid-January of 1956, Zhou Enlai kicked off the party’s campaign to “Let One Hundred Flowers Bloom” with a call to use the professional skills of China’s intellectuals in a more productive manner (Goldman 1971:159). Whereas the policy of the preceding years had been aimed at educating the youth of China to function as artists in the new state, the 1956–1957 period encouraged old artists to exhibit skills that were primarily attributable to their preliberation training. Publications from 1956 reveal that an unprecedented variety of styles was tolerated in the traditional media.

One important Beijing exhibition of 1956 displayed works that were highly conservative. Bird-and-flower or animal paintings by Yu Feian (MS 1956,6:cover) and Xie Zhiliu (fig. 13, p. 584) resemble Qing court painting in composition, meticulous technique, and subject matter. Pan Tianshou’s loose flower painting (fig. 8), one of the most beautiful of the published works, shows only the most subtle, if any, influences of his involuntary study of Western drawing. Wu Hufan’s blue-green style landscape possesses only the barest hint of modernity in its slightly photographic cropping of foreground and its photographic scale relations between foreground, middleground and distant landscape elements (fig. 1). Such work is very similar to the traditional paintings he exhibited in the 1930s (Jiaoyubu 1937, II:141).

The Second National *Guohua* Exhibition of the same year included works by veterans of the Shanghai illustration class, including Lu Yanshao, who demonstrated his recent mastery of Western-style perspective in a picture of a child teaching her mother to read (fig. 6, p. 582). Fang Zengxian’s *Every Grain is Hard Work* is typical of the new *guohua* of the younger generation, particularly as practiced in Hangzhou (fig. 12, p. 584). Fang’s successful rendering of the gesture of a stooping peasant required competence in the fundamentals of Western perspective and anatomy. Although the figure, a model of socialist virtue, might be similarly positioned by an oil painter, the dynamic brushstrokes that outline his form and the carefully varied tones of ink evoke the wet brushstrokes of earlier Shanghai artists, including Pan Tianshou. In works of the same year, middle-aged artists such as Shi Lu and Li Keran soften Western landscape views with more Chinese effects of ink or line (MS
The Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957

As we have seen, the Anti-Rightist Campaign made available to the historian documentation from party files and individual memories about earlier periods. This political cataclysm is significant for the subsequent era because of the massive personnel changes that occurred with the purges of prominent teachers and administrators, and also because it established a single party posture on *guohua*.

The primary targets of the movement were those who spoke out against the leadership in the Hundred Flowers period. They were declared to be "rightists" in late 1957 and punished in various ways, including labor reform and internal exile. Many of the rightists were unreformed traditionalists, but an equally important thrust of the movement was directed against members of the party leadership. The issues behind the Anti-Rightist Campaign as applied to party leaders were complex and included conflicts over standards of party discipline, fundamental disagreements over the role of art in communist China, and personal animosities which dated back to the 1930s. One attack charged that Jiang Feng and two of his associates, Mo Pu and Yan Han, were unhappy with Mao Zedong's 1942 rectification movement in Yan'an and believed the party to be too hard on intellectuals (Deng 1957:17).

Merle Goldman has described the Anti-Rightist Campaign conducted among writers as a factional struggle between Vice-Minister of Culture Zhou Yang, a literary critic, and the followers of Lu Xun. Zhou Yang advocated use of national forms in literature, while Lu Xun's followers often preferred foreign styles (Goldman 1971). Although the situation in the art world was largely independent of that in literature, the factional issues and alliances were parallel, with Jiang Feng often promoting Soviet or Western forms of art while Cai Ruohong often supported *guohua*. Jiang Feng's old associates Feng Xuefeng and Ai Qing were prominent rightists in the literary world, to the bureaucratic benefit of Zhou Yang. The vacuum created by Jiang Feng's purge from the art world was, at least briefly, filled by Cai Ruohong.  

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15See Laing 1988:23–27 for discussion of other events of the period.
16A similar institute in Shanghai had been in operation since 1956.
17The most vigorously condemned of the traditionalists was Xu Yansun, Vice-Director of the Beijing Institute of Chinese Painting, who was accused of organizing an anti-party group involving Wang Xuetao, Chen Banding, Ye Gongzhuo, and others. His errors included accusing the party of not understanding *guohua* (MS 1957, 8:16).
18Cai and Hua Junwu remained the nation's most prominent art leaders until purged in 1967.
One aspect of the proceedings against Jiang Feng involved finding the contradictions between Jiang's statements of the pre-1953 period and those of the Ministry of Culture officials in 1955 or 1956. As we have seen, the party line concerning guobua seems to have been somewhat in flux during the 1953 through 1956 period. A formal statement of Jiang Feng's crimes appeared in August, 1957, with reports of the Ministry of Culture meetings to criticize Jiang's antiparty statements and actions (MS 1957,8:11–13,15). His alleged crimes were that he considered the Chinese painting question to be an academic matter, not a political issue, and that he rejected suggestions made by Vice-Minister of Culture Qian Junrui in 1955 about improving methods of teaching guobua. Furthermore, he had spoken out against criticism of his administrative record, which presumably came from his rivals in the party, by defending the art policies of the Yan'an and early PRC period as necessary under the conditions of the time: "At that time art had to serve politics... In our reflection of the people's life and struggle, I ask, under the conditions then, who had leisure to appreciate Xu Beihong's horses? Actually, no one issued a decree that female comrades should not wear sheath dresses (qipao) and male comrades not wear Western suits, but everyone wanted to wear blue cotton work clothes—this was revolution! It was necessary to be spartan... When people criticize me, I ask, what is wrong with this?" (MS 1957,8:12).

In spite of Jiang Feng's critical remarks about the social utility of Xu Beihong's horse paintings, he was personally blamed for propagating the Xu Beihong teaching method at the expense of all others (Ye 1957:35). Xu believed that Western-style academic drawing was necessary training for all art students, including guobua painters. A further accusation made against Jiang Feng in 1957 was that he was responsible for confusion in terminology between guobua and caimohua. The dispute over terminology, like many other intrinsically minor issues, was inflated into a major crime. Jiang's alleged advocacy of the term caimohua was used as evidence of his opposition to the party central's directive to inherit the national tradition (Jiang Zhaohe 1957:36). Indeed, erratic use of terminology may be found in publications of the 1955–1957 period, although a Caimohua Department had been established in Hangzhou in 1952 (Deng 1957:16) and at CAFA soon thereafter. Some artists considered the two to be parallel but different types of painting, and the terms guobua and caimohua equatable with traditional and revolutionary painting, respectively (MS 1957,6:4). Jiang Feng was criticized by such artists as having advised students that as long as they had access to Chinese brushes and paper, knew how to draw, and approached true scenes, they would be able to make very good guobua, presumably with no need for traditional technique. Indeed, Jiang Feng's official statements of 1954 apply the term guobua to any works painted in the traditional media.

However, Jiang is quoted elsewhere as saying that if the departments and divisions in the academy were to be described by medium, such as Oil Painting Department, the Guobua Department should also be renamed by its medium of color-and-ink, cai mo, as well. Those who insisted on retaining a unit called "guobua" Jiang labelled narrow nationalists (Jiang Zhaohe 1957:36) and apparently ignored, for the department of CAFA was called the Caimohua Department by 1954. During the Anti-Rightist Campaign the name of the Hangzhou Caimohua Department was explicitly criticized as denying the tradition of guobua (Deng 1957:16).

By about 1954, many art administrators began using "color-and-ink painting" (caimohua) as a descriptive term to include most twentieth-century painting in the traditional media, but in exhibition catalogues and announcements the terms were
interchanged in an almost random fashion. There was indeed confusion about terminology, although whether anyone in particular was to blame and whether this was a crime will not concern us here.

During the party rectification and the early days of the Anti-Rightist Campaign, Jiang Feng was defended by the most important members of the academy’s faculty (Laing 1988:28–29). The Ministry of Culture was blamed for “marrying the disaster to the man” in dumping its failure to respond to the needs of guohua artists on Jiang’s back (Deng 1957:16). Many Yan’an veterans such as Yan Han and Mo Pu went down with Jiang Feng. By September, however, most followers of Xu Beihong had succumbed to the intense pressure to condemn Jiang Feng, with the dramatic result that some who had received his strongest public support criticized him in print and on the podium. Interestingly, the result of this compliance was that they escaped being tagged rightists themselves, were able to return to their teaching and painting, and continued the work which Jiang Feng had encouraged them to perform.

Conclusion

It was reported in December of 1957 that the Caimohua Department at Hangzhou had been renamed the Guohua Department (MS 1957,12:8). Wu Zuoren had described the situation clearly the preceding May: “We must recognize that there is an argument between proponents of old and new guohua principally over the issue of whether guohua requires a basis in [Western style] draftsmanship” (MS 1957,8:11). The same dichotomy between the old and the new continued after the Anti-Rightist Campaign, but from this time on, works painted in the traditional media, both old and new, have been called by the same term. Rather than resolving the fundamental conflict between old and new Chinese painting, party authorities dealt only with the terminology question. Henceforth, all would be called guohua or zhongguohua and would be supported. The nationalistic associations of the term were appropriate in a period of growing tension with the Soviet bloc, but in practice the term came to refer only to medium, thus impoverishing and somewhat confusing the critical vocabulary of Chinese art.

Guohua, chiefly new guohua, was vigorously promoted by the new leaders of the Chinese Artists Association during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Nevertheless, Jiang Feng’s demise and the end of caimohua did not lead to radical changes in the administration of the national art academy system. On the contrary, the Soviet-style curriculum he helped establish had a profound influence on subsequent art. Figure drawing remained the core of all art instruction in China. Young artists, even those outside the academies, still gravitated to figurative subjects and synthetic styles.

The Jiangsu artist Ya Ming (b. 1924) chose a typical style and subject for his generation in his Peddler of 1958 (fig. 15, p. 585; reproduced MS 1959,11:23), which combines the old and the new in ways precisely spelled out on the pages of the official journal Meishu. The Song painting Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk (fig. 14; MS 1956,2:15) was published in Meishu two years before Ya Ming painted his picture of minority people at market. Ya Ming adopted a Song title, Huolangtu, the traditional medium of ink and color on silk, the widely accepted gongbi technique, and even such specific motifs as ladies stretching cloth from old paintings. However, he brought the old style up-to-date with modern subject matter, effective use of Western drawing, and a popularizing emphasis on the voluptuous beauty of his female subjects. He placed his figures against a blank silk ground, as an ancient
painter might, but the emphatic gestures of his women and the complex grouping of figures in space are evidence of well-assimilated Soviet influence.

During the Great Leap Forward, the art bureaucracy, probably inspired by party enthusiasm for folk songs and the poems of Chairman Mao, identified folk murals and Chinese paintings as appropriate forms for the current era. Critics justified the works of Ya Ming and his older Nanjing colleagues, who depicted modern subjects in the traditional medium, in nationalist and populist terms: "Chinese painting is our nation's precious art treasure, with unique national style, a long history, and excellent traditional skill; it is loved by the masses and valued by our party" (Ouyang 1959:2).

Nevertheless, the polarity between traditional styles and socialist realist styles remained. In periods when party controls were relaxed, as they had been in 1956 and were again in the early 1960s, the older generation was encouraged to emerge and bring forth relatively traditional landscapes and bird-and-flower pictures (figs. 1, 8, 13). Young guobua artists continued to be trained in Soviet draftsmanship. Although older artists might produce acceptable works during periods of strict political control (fig. 3), the works of the young were more widely publicized (figs. 4, 12, 15). The two coexisting standards for guobua, those of the old Chinese painting and those of the new, thus continued to vie for official recognition.

The outcome of this rivalry was weighted in favor of the new. Although the virtues of traditional painting were officially recognized after the Anti-Rightist Campaign, praise for genuinely traditional artists could not, and was probably not intended to, turn the art world as a whole back to traditionalist art. Some native elements were preserved for nationalistic purposes. Financial and institutional support may have served to increase the publically visible artistic output of some older artists, such as Wu Hufan and Lu Yanshao, but most painters who were assigned to the Institutes of Chinese Painting in 1957 were unable or unwilling to train students.

The art academy system that taught the new art, on the other hand, was self-perpetuating, with graduates of the art colleges often retained as teachers at their alma maters. The emphasis on mastery of figure drawing and on the virtues of serving the party and state were predominant even in periods of relative liberalization. The political usefulness of guobua artists trained in socialist realist techniques during the Cultural Revolution goes without saying (fig. 4), but a survey of the art world of the 1980s makes clear the influence of those trained by Soviet standards. As new China's first generation fades away, artists educated in the 1950s have taken charge of the art bureaucracy. The heads of most major art academies in the 1980s were the elite of their generation, oil painters trained either by Mak-simov or in Leningrad. Second to the Soviet-trained oil painters in administrative influence have been their colleagues who were trained as socialist realist guobua figure painters.

One of the crucial artistic issues in the first half of the twentieth century was whether Chinese styles, Western styles, or a synthesis of Chinese and Western art was most appropriate for modern China (Sullvian 1989:171–185). In the post-1949 period, Communist Party art administrators were charged with deciding which of these forms of art were politically correct and which were to be eliminated. All aesthetic choices thus became political, and the fate of an artist's chosen style in the national political struggle could affect every aspect of his or her life.

Three approaches to painting contended in the 1950s. Conservative practitioners of traditional Chinese painting were probably the most numerous, if not the most vocal. The new Communist art leadership vigorously promoted Soviet socialist
realism. Painting professors in national art academies continued to provide a third option, a more narrowly defined synthesis of Chinese and Western art.

The theoretical conflicts of the Anti-Rightist campaign originated in battles between traditional painters and admirers of Soviet-style painting. In typical Maoist fashion, the party smashed the spokesmen for both extremes, condemning both Jiang Feng and the conservative guohua painters he was accused of suppressing.

Such a result made it unwise to advocate either pure traditionalism or the extreme remolding of guohua. The Chinese art world, particularly during the period between 1957 and the mid-1980s, might better be described as having a spectrumlike range. In this formulation, traditional art and Soviet-style painting remain at opposite extremes; practitioners of synthetic Chinese-Western styles span the hues in between.

The Chinese art world of the 1950s, divided as it was into nativist, Soviet, and synthetic Chinese-Western modes of painting, gave physical form to conflicting cultural assumptions. These conflicting views were common to many realms of Chinese intellectual endeavor, and the attempts to resolve their differences have profoundly changed China.

While the Anti-Rightist Campaign brought many of the conflicts between the old guohua and the new into the open and resulted in the purge of some effective advocates of new guohua, the changes of the preceding decade were not reversed. The term caimohua, with its relatively objective and neutral description of the medium, was all but expurgated from the vocabulary of art theory, but it was indeed this new guohua, which incorporates Western techniques and modern subjects, that is the basis of much Chinese painting today. While guohua artists in the post-Mao era have built upon the "heritage of their national tradition," the tradition they inherited was irrevocably altered by the political and artistic choices of the 1950s.19

List of References


19Work of the post-Cultural Revolution period has been affected by new influences, including Japanese, American, European, and contemporary Soviet painting. Battle lines may have been laid down in the mid-1980s between the new internationalists and a more inward-looking art establishment. The terminology question was reopened during the 1988-1989 exhibition season, during which two major exhibitions referred to all paintings in the traditional media as shuimobua, water and ink or ink-wash painting. See Zhongguo xiandai yishu zhan 1989 and Beijing guoji shuimo huazhan 1988.

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China Pictorial [CP].


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### Glossary

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