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The Crimson Red
Paint Brush See Page 33

Tap into your precious artistic heritage



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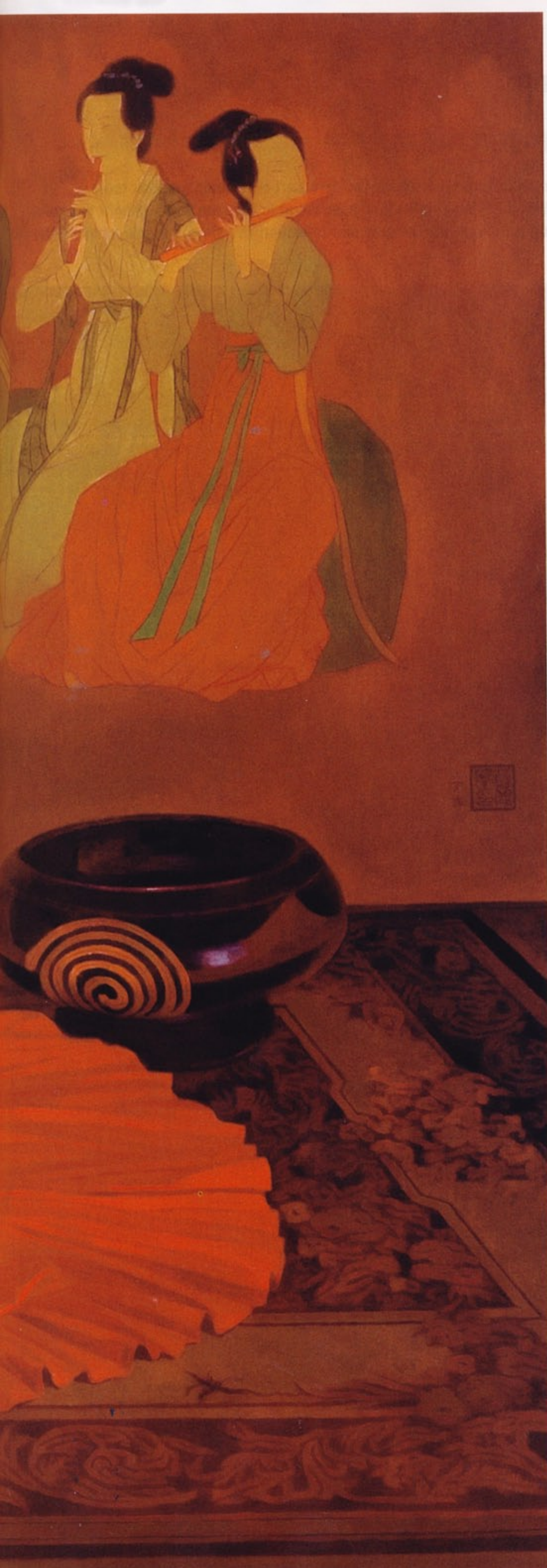
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Yanqun Xue remains deeply influenced by his heritage and his early years in art, developing his techniques within proximity to his memories of the past

Tapping into a precious heritage

How it all began

Perhaps because of my inherent slowness, I didn't speak any words until I was 3 years old. Instead I just doodled on paper with my mother's red and blue pencils. Every time I returned home from walking, some new content and ideas would be added onto paper. Year after year, the cabinet drawer's in our house were choked up with rough sketches and scrap paper. These fragmentary memories formed the remote world of my childhood.

Catching the moment

It was a summer evening at the seashore. The setting sun snuggled up to the far mountain's bosom, and dyed the sky like a sea of rose. The golden waves sparkled while the fishing boats lay interspersed in the bay. From the shadow of luxuriantly green mountains, the sound of children's songs fluttered indistinctly in the air. I sat on the reef motionlessly melting into this golden moment. I wanted to record all these influences onto paper. I, a pupil in grade one in the elementary school, remembered this scene and this moment.

Now there are tall buildings standing in great numbers - the scenery in my memory no longer exists, but the melodious young children's songs and the moment in time which aroused my heart and soul actually have been kept in the bottom of my heart, and appear at times in my dream.

This was an attic in the school facing to the north. Outside the windows, various types of roof were scattered about. On the horizon was the blue bay where the cargo ships pass by. The factories opposite were braving the white smoke, and threw a sea of light at night. Accompanying the piano sound from the music classroom next door, I spent most of my time here after class. My teacher directed me to come in front of the window. Thus, as a seven year-old pupil I published my first work - "The Beautiful City". Then came the second, and the third. Now they have all vanished

Art in the Making completing an oil painting

1 MULTIPLE LAYERS WITH TRANSPARENT PAINTS

I used to paint onto the white canvas. The white reflection can make the dark part of the painting look more transparent. Especially in human body painting, this kind of reflection is essential to brighten and highlight the main part of the body. Even if using a direct painting technique, the bottom color reflection still plays this role because the dark pigment is not thick.

STAGE 1

Draw the outline on the paper first, then spread paint powder on the back. Put the paper onto the canvas and draw the outline to pass the contour line onto the canvas, and confirm the outline using a brush.



STAGE 2

Load brushes with Sienna, Yellow Ocher or Ultramarine, mixed with a little turpentine, to draw the approximate light and shade, and to make the color approaching the background or the dark color.



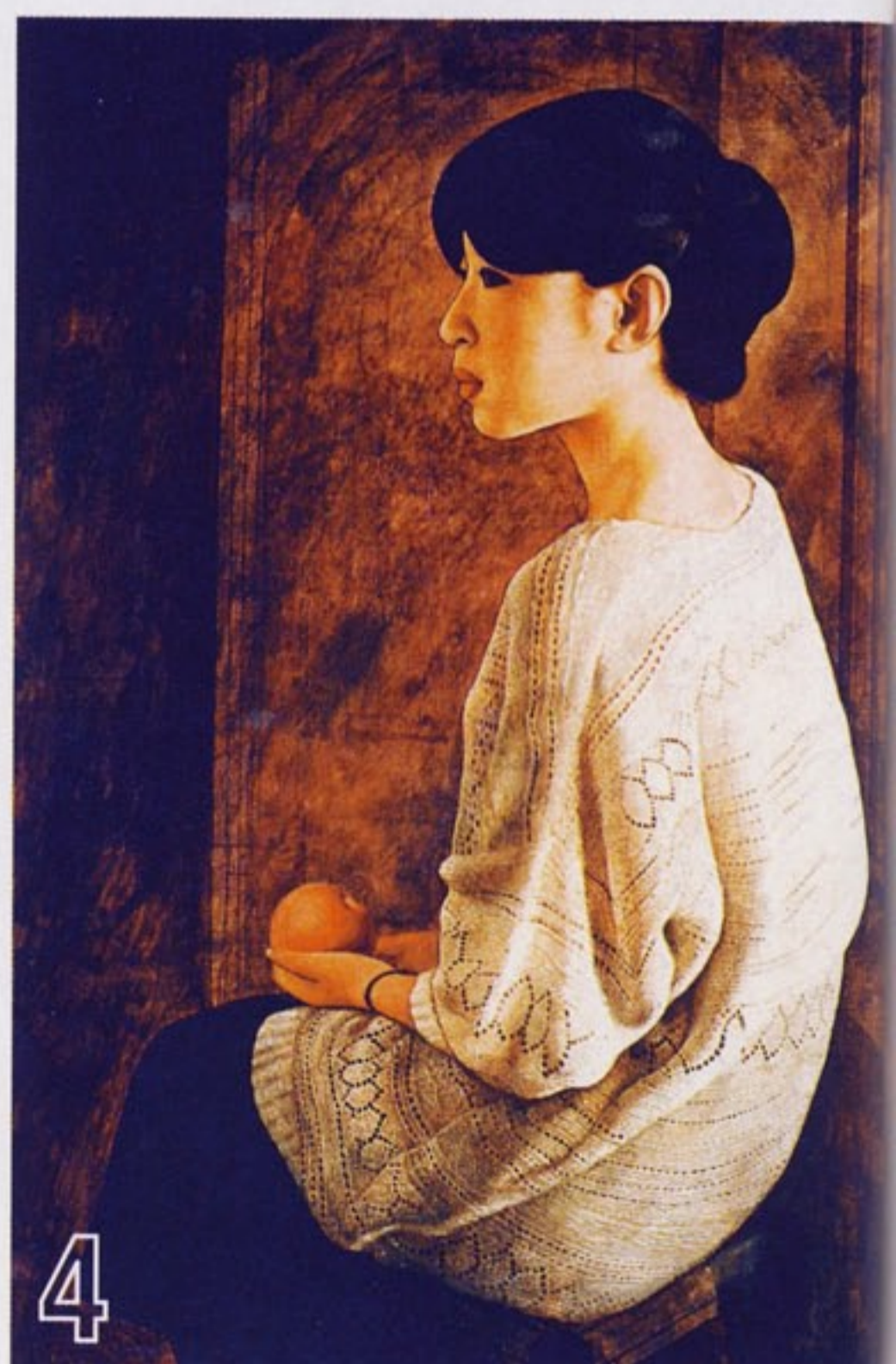
STAGE 3

Wait till the surface is dry, then use a soft hairbrush and dipped in lead white to suggest the bright part. Meanwhile, adjust it with a soft brushes and fingers, to form the skin texture and the sense of reality, which is needed. When it's necessary, lightly sweep the dark part with brushes or the finger to strengthen the reflections.



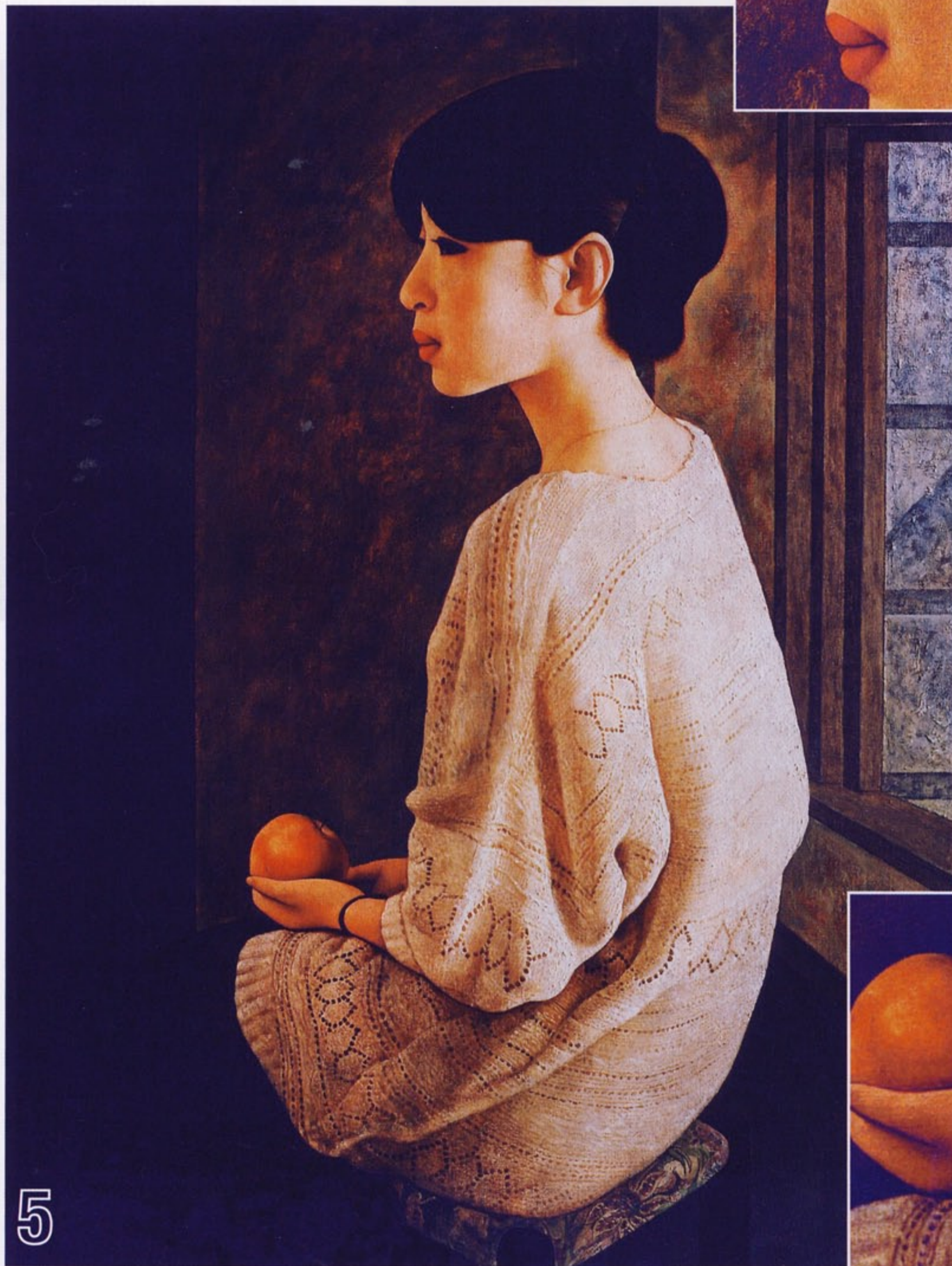
STAGE 4

After it is dry, draw the hairline with a fine brush, and tinge the canvas with transparent pigment, making the corresponding details. Increase the pigment thickness in the bright area if you think this is suitable.



The reason for painting

Why do we paint? It is a question that has been asked for centuries. Some people paint to express their emotions, others to tell a story, and some to create a beautiful work of art. The reason for painting is as diverse as the human mind.



5

The Red Apple, oil on canvas, 31 x 23" (80 x 60cm)

The painting is a study of light and color, showing the woman's face and the texture of her dress. The background is dark, making the subject stand out.



STAGE 5

Adds some cool color as needed to the background. The color should be distinct with a thin layer. Lightly sweep on the thick paints, to create the bottom surface texture.

Paint the body and repeat step three and four, adjusting the details, reducing the area portrayed, repairing and maintaining the outline edge, and arranging the contour line. Then perfect the image and color contrast until it is complete.

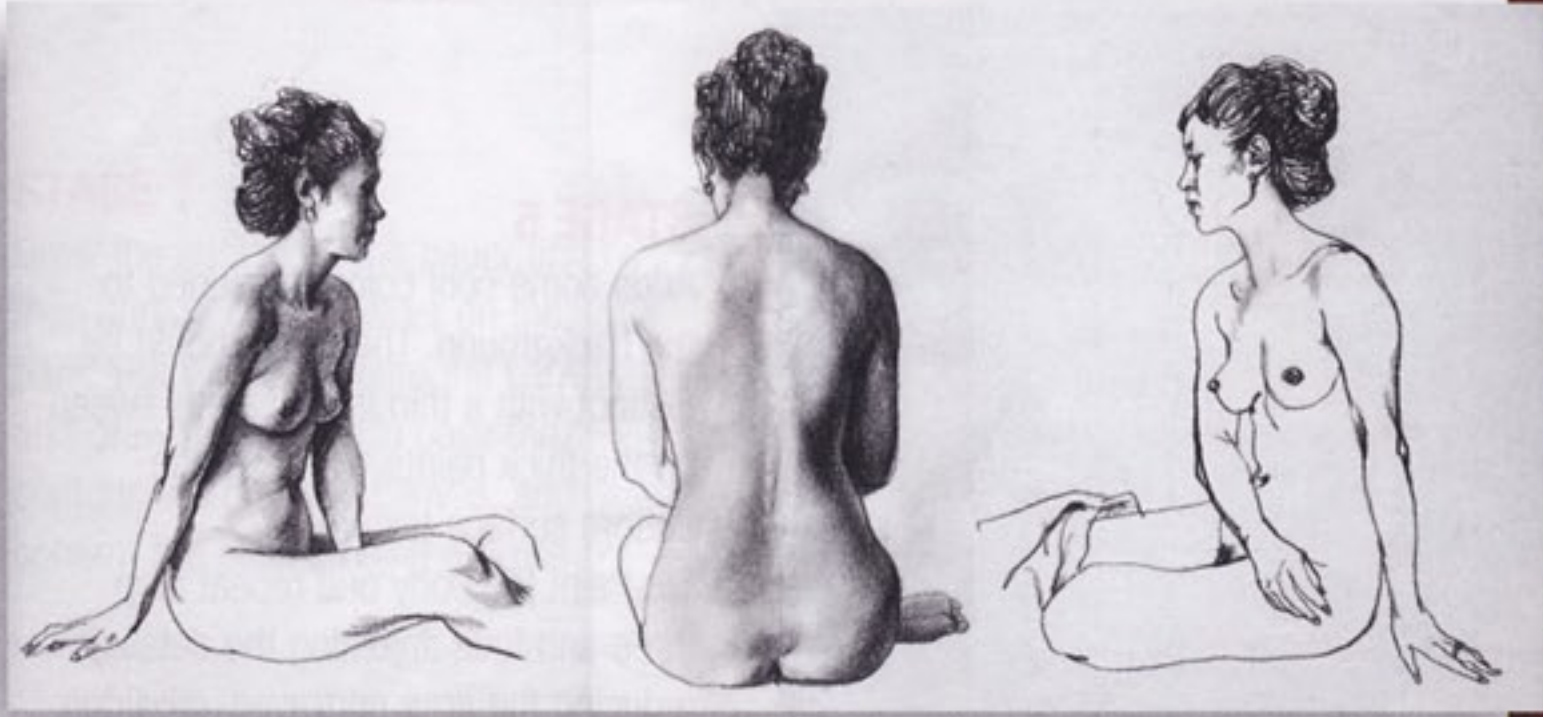
After the painting is complete, superficial reflections may appear uneven, so you need to do some processing on it. Wait till the surface is completely dry, mix beeswax melted with turpentine, which is heated up. After cooling, it will form a paste-like wax. Apply it evenly on the surface of the painting, to build a satin film. It creates unification and protects the surface.

Art in the Making 2 PAINTING FROM SKETCHES

Sketching is a method suitable for a painter to collect the reference material, recording what he wants. But not all sketches can be used for oil paintings. When choosing the sketch for a painting, there are two factors to consider:

- **THE FIRST IS THE FORM** - some of your sketches will possess an intrinsic factor which will be a motive for drawing. This may be in combination with other factors.
- **THE SECOND IS ITS CONTENT** – sketches that can arouse an emotion or a psychological experience.

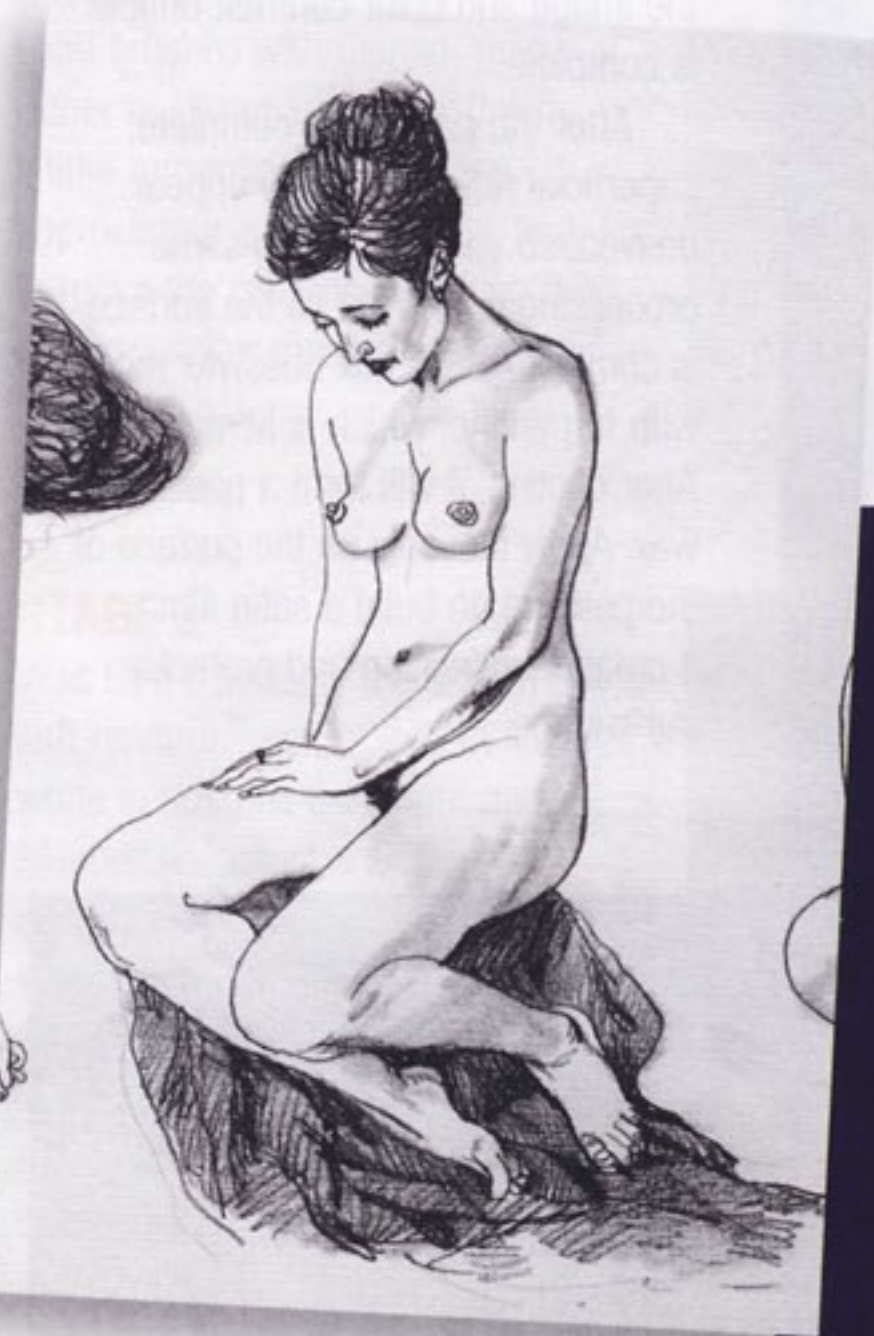
Because sketches can only provide the purer and simpler source material for the painting, we must also consider other factors such as volume, tone, and a sense of reality.



Sketch for "The Red Clouds", forms the composition factor with more framing lines.



The Red Clouds, oil on canvas, 38 x 50" (97 x 130cm)



- only the gratitude is left forever. I often have such feelings, recollecting my elementary school, my teacher, and my window.

The fascination with the canvas

The canvas is another window of mine. Each time I sit down in front of the canvas, an excitement exudes from my heart, as if I am facing a bride whom I never met before. I long for the line and color to appear, guiding me in a veil of mystery. I gather my feelings, closely observe the unceasing marks I make to figure out the ones I like, and carefully inquire into what I am painting, arriving on the unknown shores of art. There are certainly traps, disappointments and depressions, but who can give up the pleasure of the attempts because of the myriad of possible defeats?

The reason for painting

Why do I paint pictures? Because I love to paint. It is very important to one's sense. Listening to Mozart's music, the clear exquisite melody, unadorned and yet refined puts me into a painting mood. I have neither the noise from the mortal world, nor the heaviness of historical burden. This music comes as if from heaven. It sways your mood and purifies your mind. An oil painting may not have a particular plot or purpose; but what would be left if it did not have the line and color? Therefore, as an artist you do not have to cater to other people by painting what is "crooked" to your own eyes.

For decades, I always painted the people around me. Sometimes I was inspired by their spirituality; sometimes I was moved by their appearance. Sometimes I vigorously demonstrated their innermost feelings; sometimes I only drew upon support from their exterior image, causing it to become the carrier of the message in my painting, thus my own style somewhat drifted away.

Frequently, I face the canvas, gazing at it at a loss, not knowing what may appear on it. Then, some accidental factor, for example the room's light, or a trace underneath the layers of paint, or even the combination of several lines, can suggest and become the deciding factor in the future direction of the painting. This brings me back to remembering the tide in my childhood, bending down and fumbling in the shallow water, wondering what was hiding between the water plants. This kind of expectation makes me so excited. Each footstep on this land leads to something or somewhere – all of this is my harvest.



Art in the Making 3 ALLA PRIMA

Alla prima means to complete a painting in a single session by using opaque paints which obscure the underpainting.



STAGE 1

Make the sketch on the canvas, paint in the approximate light and shade areas and form the space.



STAGE 2

Briefly paint the hair, the dark parts and the shadow with dark color, carrying over to the background, and co-ordinating the dark area and background.



STAGE 3

Lay down the middle range tone, considering the tonal passages and the brushwork to fit the body. Do not overwork the details at this stage – give special emphasis to the overall color and the relationship between light and shade.



STAGE 4

Establish the detail thoroughly. Use some linseed oil to link up the layers, then portray the body with bold paints, adjusting the background.

“What is style? Like any beginner I also tried to 'establish' a style but the attempt to put another's nose on to your own face often proves to be disastrous.”



STAGE 5

Describe the details, draw the different colors and give it the sense of reality. After it has dried thoroughly, you may use a glaze or wax to finish the surface of the oil painting.



Art in the Making 4 MAKING AN OIL PAINTING FROM A PHOTO

Using photos for an oil painting is a topic which has been discussed frequently. Artists are using cameras more - that is an undeniable fact. The camera enables the painter to benefit from convenience when capturing vivid painting references, but. It can easily cause stiff images and the degeneration of color. So how you use the camera is the key to success or failure as a painter.

To me the photos are the vivid reference and arouse my life experiences, as do other source materials, which await creative processing. Used this way they cannot therefore deactivate my natural feelings about painting.



An artist's style

What is style? It is what is right to the painter. Like any student who makes a debut in art, I also attempted to follow fashion and try to "establish" some kind of style. The attempt to put another's nose on to your own face often proves to be disastrous. You can respect the difference between yourself and others, and also pay attention to the "face", which you draw continually, which is yourself. It is the differences between you and others by which others can recognize you.

In search of the 'eternal' meaning of things perhaps makes me partial to symmetrical composition. Although this may be stereotypical, it has religious implications through its mystical nature. That's why I am repeatedly attracted to Ancient Egypt and the Middle Ages. I once gazed at "The Brera Altarpiece" for a long time - the disciples stand out abreast in row, in an inexpressive manner, the static body expressing an uncommon tension. Standing in front of them, distracting thoughts come to mind. Hold your breath to feel this sacred moment. The form powerfully delivers the subject.

The Chinese connection

I was at the Chinese Painting Hall in the Forbidden City Museum, Beijing. I saw the "Han Xizai - the evening banquet chart". The dark silk surface may have changed with age, but it actually lets mineral pigments shine through that send out a spooky brilliance. The joyful banquet, portrayed with dance and the lonely and sorrowful main character, was unified in the picture scroll, which is not higher than one foot. It unexpectedly shocked me with its strength. The great charm of ancient Chinese painting, with exquisite brush character and with its simplest essentials and stately nature, does not fade after several hundred years. I find myself in dialogue with the masters of ancient times. This precious heritage, which our ancestors have given to us, has sustained me throughout my artistic life. □



About the artist

Yanqun Xue has enjoyed a celebrated career in art spanning over two decades. He has exhibited extensively and participated in art events throughout Asia and North America. His artworks have also appeared in publications throughout Asia, North America and in the United Arab Emirates. He has been represented in many commemorative exhibitions as well as being featured in prestigious art auctions. In addition Yanqun Xue has held solo exhibitions and has contributed to group exhibitions. He was recognized as an artist of considerable merit early in his career, as demonstrated by his collection of awards from 1984 onwards. Listed here is a sample of his artistic activities and awards.

1984	The 6th National Fine Arts Exhibition Silver Medal, Beijing, China	1989.	Exhibition of Chinese Oil Paintings, Tokyo, Japan	1993	Oil Paintings of The Northern-East China, Hong Kong	1996	Contemporary Chinese Oil Painting Exhibition, New York, USA
1984	Excellent Art Works Exhibition Excellent Award Shenyang China	1989	The 7th National Fine Arts Exhibition Bronze Medal Shanghai, China	1994	Famous Art Works in Modern China, Tokyo, Japan	1997	Chinese Portrait Art 100 Year Anniversary Exhibition, Beijing, China
1985	1st National Teacher's Painting Exhibition Excellent Award Beijing, China	1989	Art Works in Liaoning Shenyang China	1994	Cotemporary Chinese Oil Painting Exhibition Redwood USA	1998	Asian Art Exhibition, Vancouver, Canada
1987	1st Oil Paintings Exhibition of China, Shanghai China	1992	Auction of Christie's Swire, Hong Kong	1994	Auction of Christie's Swire, Hong Kong	1999	Art Works Auction in Vancouver Vancouver Art Gallery, Canada
1987	Oil Paintings of The Northern-East China, Shenyang China	1992	Auction of Christie's Swire Sept Hong Kong	1994	Arts Exhibition of Luxun Academy of Fine Art Hong Kong	2000	Solo Exhibition, Vancouver, Canada
1987	Master Pieces of Contemporary, Art in China, Tokyo, Japan	1992	The Art Festival of Great Wall 1st Award Beijing China	1994	Auction of Standard Swire, Taipei, Taiwan	2001	Art Works Auction in Vancouver, Vancouver Art Gallery, Canada
1987	Oil Painting Works Exhibition, Beijing, China	1993	1st 90's Biennial Art Fair Guangzhou China	1994	Excellent Oil Paintings of China, Hong Kong	2003	Solo Exhibition, Vancouver, Canada
1988	Cotemporary Chinese Oil Painting Exhibition, New York, USA	1993	Famous Artist's Oil Paintings Exhibition Shenyang China	1995	95's Famous Oil Painting Works of China, Taiwan, Taizhong, Taiwan	2004	Group Exhibition, Vancouver, Canada
		1993	3rd Exhibition of Sports in Art Bronze Medal Beijing China	1995	Asian Art Festival (Oil Painting Exhibition) Singapore	2006	Rong-Bao-Zhai Art auction, Beijing, China
		1993	Auction of Christie's Swire, Hong Kong	1995	Auction of FuSwire, Singapore	2006	Dao-Ming Fine Art Auction, Shanghai, China
				1996	Solo Exhibition, Taipei, Taiwan		
				1996	Chinese Oil Painting Exhibition, Beijing, China		