

Xu Beihong (1895-1953)**Chronology of Xu Beihong**

[simplified after Boorman, 1967-79; Wang & Xu, 1994 [the most detailed chronology]; Low & Chow, 2008; Xu & An, 2009]

- 1895 July 19, born in Jiangsu, father a schoolmaster and craftsman who taught painting, family of three boys and one girl.
- 1904 began to study painting with father, copied Wu Youru's illustrations for lithographic pictorial *Dianshizhai Huabao*.
- 1908 fled from flood in Yiyong with father.
- 1912 father ill, went to Shanghai and studied Western painting at Shanghai Drawing and Fine Arts Academy but left after several months due to lack of money. Returned to Yixing, where married due to parental order. Became painting and drawing instructor at a middle school.
- 1913
- 1914 father died, went to Shanghai.
- 1915 went back to Shanghai did illustrations and advertising. First met Jiang Biwei 将碧微, began study of French. Asked Gao Jianfu and Gao Qifeng for instruction.
- 1916 met painter and educationalist Zhou Xiang. Entered Zhentan University (Université Aurore), continued study of French.
- 1917 First wife died of illness. Married Jiang Biwei, with whom later two children.
May, went to Tokyo with Jiang Biwei where studied painting until November when returned to Shanghai because could not pay his expenses.
December, Kang Youwei wrote him a letter of introduction to Beijing.
- 1918 January, received a scholarship from North Sea Government in Beijing to study in France.
March early, through Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940) became tutor at Painting Research Institute of Peking University.
- 1919 March 20, left Beijing with Jiang Biwei for France.
May, with Jiang Biwei reached Paris. Enrolled at Académie Julian in Paris.
Winter went to Lausanne.
- 1920 enrolled at École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts in Paris under Albert Besnard (1848-1934) with François Flameng (1856-1923) as his teacher. Mme Dampt, wife of sculptor Jean-Auguste Dampt, introduced Xu to Pascal Adolphe-Jean Dagnan-Bouveret (1852-1929) to whom he generally took his work for criticism on Sundays.
August, sent text to *Beida*, a painting magazine, 'On reform of Chinese Painting'.
- 1921 July, went to Berlin [for next twenty months] because of currency devaluation of Mark against Franc. Met Chinese students Xu Zhimo, Chen Yinke, Yu Daxiong, Yang Gongshe, Yang Gongzhao
August, took part in *Tiangoubui*, [Heavenly Dog Society] organized by Chinese students.
Autumn, from now on exchanged friendship [studied painting?] with Arthur Kampf (1864-1950) the Rektor of the Hochschule für Bildende Künste, 1915-1924.
[Brief search in 2009 at Universität der Künste, Berlin, revealed no record of Xu Beihong from lists of Kampf's studio students kept in their archive].
- 1922 remained in Berlin. Went to zoo everyday to draw animals. Continued to study painting, including copying in museum especially Rembrandt's portrait of his second wife.
Late autumn, travelled to Leipzig and Dresden.
Winter, borrowed money to buy two original works by Kampf.
Wrote to Kang Youwei and Cai Yuanpei calling for founding of Art Museum in China.
Did charcoal work of a dragon.
- 1923 Spring, returned to Paris and continued study with Dagnan-Bouveret.
Exhibited at Salon des Artistes Français.

1924

1925 end of autumn, met Huang Menggui 黄孟圭, from Fuzhou Education office through Chinese Consul-General Zhao Songnan 赵颂南. Due to exhaustion of funds that winter took up Huang Menggui's suggestion to visit his younger brother Huang Manshi 黄曼士 in Singapore so he could earn money by portraits, leaving Jiang Biwei in Paris.

1926 February, returned to Shanghai.

May, returned to Paris. Summer went to copy masterworks in Brussels.

October, returned to Paris.

1927 April, stayed with Huang Manshi in Singapore.

Spring went to Switzerland, where saw works of Hodler in Zürich and renaissance masterworks in Italy.

May, exhibited nine works at Société Nationale des Beaux Arts.

September, returned to Shanghai.

appointed professor of newly opened art department, National Central University, Nanjing.

Affected long hair, flowing tie of Quartier Latin.

December 26, Jiang Biwei gave birth to his son Boyang 伯阳 in Shanghai.

1928 became co-founder and chair of painting at Nanguo Arts Academy on invitation of Tian Han 田汉, a communist theatre scholar and playwright. Left in late April due to pressure from Jiang Biwei. Also took up Nanjing post.

October, Head of Department of Fine Arts Peking University

1929 January, resigned, resumed direction in Nanjing until 1936. Affected Chinese dress and once more took up Chinese brush and ink.

April 10 to May 3, 1st National Fine Art Exhibition open in Shanghai. Organizing committee included Li Yishi, Lin Fengmian, Lin Wenzheng, Xu Beihong, Xu Zhimo. Xu Beihong resigned due to dissatisfaction with inclusion of modernist work and joined in polemic beginning with his essay 'Huo' [Perplexity] published on April 22. Countered in May by short version of a longer, possibly never published, rebuttal by Xu Zhimo.

July 3, Dagnan-Bouveret dies.

November 20, Jiang Biwei gives birth to his daughter Lili 丽丽 in Nanjing.

1930 completed oil painting *Tian Hong and his 500 Retainers*.

November 28, reputed affair of Xu Beihong with his student Sun Duoci began when he painted her portrait at home.

Relations with Jiang Biwei finally broke down.

1931 Spring, exhibition of his work in Brussels.

May early, together with Pan Yuliang took a group of students to Beijing. Gave lectures at Nankai University, Tianjin.

1932 held joint exhibition with former head of Suzhou Art School Yan Wenliang.

1933 completed oil painting *Waiting for Our Liberator* [*Ximobou*], begun in 1931.

January 30th, Hitler appointed Chancellor of coalition government. SA held torch-lit victory parades depicted by Arthur Kampf.

February, Xu Beihong as invited national representative for exhibition of modern Chinese paintings held in Musée Nationale des Écoles étrangères, Jeu du Paume [until 1940].

Accompanied by Jiang Biwei on European travels.

June, exhibition of his work in Brussels.

This year went to London to copy Velasquez' *The Toilet of Venus*.

November, exhibition of his work in Berlin by Verein der Berliner Künstler reported in *Tagesblatt* November 18, including the attendance of Kampf, and in Frankfurt.

December 19, opening of Chinese Modern Painting exhibition in Milan.

1934 February 19, exhibition of Chinese Modern Painting in Frankfurt.

April late, reached Moscow

- May, exhibition of Chinese Modern Painting held in Moscow and Leningrad.
 August 31st, Andrei Zhdanov proclaims the doctrine of Socialist Realism as official Soviet policy in literature and the arts.
 Autumn, Xu and Jiang returned to China via Vladivostok. Declined invitation to do a portrait of Chiang Kai-shek and put under Guomindang surveillance.
- 1935 went to Guilin to organize Guangxi Provincial College of Art. Sketched at Mt Huang with Zhang Daqian.
 Promoted exhibition of Soviet Prints in Nanjing and Shanghai.
- 1936 formed *Moshe* [The Silent] group with Wang Yachen and Yan Wenliang. Went to Guilin and Yangshuo for a while.
- 1937 May, exhibition of his work in Guangdong, Hong Kong, Changsha.
 July, on outbreak of Sino-Japanese War, he went with department when it moved with university to Chongqing in Sichuan Province.
- 1938 October, took six hundred works to Hong Kong in preparation for his exhibition.
- 1939 March, exhibition of his work in Singapore, proceeds devoted to relief in China. He toured Indonesia and Malaya. Painted *Put down your whip*, from play by Tian Han. Heroine acted by Wang Ying 王莹 of New China Theatre Troupe which toured Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaya.
 December, went to India at invitation of Rabindranath Tagore.
- 1940 painted many portraits of Tagore and did a pencil portrait of Gandhi. Exhibition of his work at Santiniketan and Calcutta.
 Painted *Yu Gong, the foolish old man who removed the mountain* in both oils and Chinese ink and colours (144 x 421 cms).
- 1941 February, came to Singapore for exhibition in Penang of 98 ink paintings 27 sketches and 48 ink paintings which raised Straits Dollars \$14,000 for anti-Japanese war effort.
- 1941 December 8, 12.30am Japanese attacked Kota Bharu in Malaya before attack on Pearl Harbour at 01.08 am on December 7 US' time.
- 1941 December- early 1942, Xu returned to Chongqing via ship to Burma with part of his SE Asian and Indian works. Others were lost in another ship torpedoed by Japanese.
 February 15, Singapore fell to Japanese.
 Xu's remaining works in Singapore hidden in Chong Boon School run by Hokkien people, and by Han Wai Toon 韩槐准 in a rambutan garden. They were recovered after 1945 then sent to Beijing.
- 1942 in Chongqing, continued as professor of Central University and founded National Art Research Institute of Academia Sinica. Met future wife Liao Jingwen 廖静文.
- 1943 went on sketching trips to Mt Qingcheng and other places with students and teachers.
 Formally divorced Jiang Biwei.
- 1944 late summer, became seriously ill for rest of life.
- 1946 January, married third wife Liao Jingwen, with whom two children.
 August, Director Academy of Fine Arts later from 1950, Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing.
- 1947 published 'The current problems of Chinese Art'.
 1948 published 'Recollections and future prospects of Chinese art'.
 1949 March, went to Prague for World Peace Conference, calling in Soviet Union on the way back.
 May, late, returned to Beijing
 July, late, Chairman of Chinese Artists' Association
 October, Delegate to Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.
- 1950
 1951
 1952

1953 September 26, died in Beijing.

Collection of works and books donated to the Chinese state.

December, Memorial Exhibition attended by Premier Zhou Enlai.

1954 former residence designated Xu Beihong Memorial Museum

1983 Museum moved to new site.

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