Liu Kang

Siew, Sara, Liu, Kang

Published by National Gallery Singapore

Siew, Sara and Kang Liu.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/110043

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=3343892
Having lived in Nanyang for some time, I feel a sense of emptiness, as if adrift in a vast ocean, unable to see the familiar and kind faces of my brothers and sisters, and unable to enjoy my parents’ and my wife’s love. I also feel an unspeakable aridity, as though trudging thousands of miles in the desert, unable to find any dewdrops and greenery, or any villages. Unknowingly, my mind has become unconscious; my senses are numbed, and even my muscles and blood vessels are about to stiffen.

This, I believe, is caused by a lack of a local cultural atmosphere, especially in introducing the quintessence of the art of our motherland [China]. This can be considered the people’s misfortune, and also the fault of the people and organisations responsible for promoting culture.

In direct response to this shortcoming, the Photographic Exhibition of Artefacts and Landscapes from the Motherland (祖国文物摄影展览会) organised by Nanyang Siang Pau (南洋商报) has great significance and meaning.

For those who have returned to and come from the motherland, this photographic exhibition will elicit nostalgia. Fellow overseas Chinese will realise that the motherland is actually a magnificently beautiful country. The current armed conflict, corrupt government and ruined economy cannot conceal its beautiful landscape and elegant artefacts. The overseas Chinese whose palpable longing grows daily are led to deep contemplation, and find their love for the motherland grow.

Equally important is that this exhibition may allow our international friends to gain a better understanding of Chinese culture, thus increasing our standing in the international community.

Rome, the capital of Italy, enjoys the reputation of La Ville Éternelle (the Eternal City). The city earned this name because of the historically magnificent architecture, sculptures, and paintings of the West that are concentrated in it. Scholars are drawn to Rome to study the profound mysteries of Western cultural art while tourists go in search of Western ways.
Most people consider visiting Rome one of life's greatest privileges and some consider the city representative of Western cultural art.

In the East, a city of comparable significance to Rome would be Peiping (北平). Its majestic spirit, grandeur and dignified bearing display the magnanimity of a huge country. This is something no other country can claim to match.

Peiping is situated in the Hebei plains (河北平原) and its architecture best reveals the unique character of China — disciplined but not austere, opulent but not superficial, characterised by balance and internal harmony. The decorative motifs are majestic and striking, lofty and beautiful, and have reached an artistic peak. Comparing Peiping to Europe, the United States, India and Japan is like comparing an aristocratic lady to a peasant girl.

Peiping was not built in a day. Its appearance today is the result of a long-drawn plan and a construction spanning five to six centuries. Without great foresight and capable artisans and craftsmen, the city would not have been realised.

Let us move on to Nanjing (南京), the capital of the republican government. We are immediately greeted by shades of red, which is rather embarrassing. The buildings reveal desolation and poverty, and create a sense of unease. I do not deny that this is the result of material inadequacy and conditions. However, where have the people's wit and intelligence gone? I cannot help but ask this question.

Fortunately, the heavens have been kind to us. We have been bestowed with bright and beautiful scenery, lush green forests and bamboo groves that are worthy of our love.

Taiwan, which was regained after the war [with Japan], gives us joy and remorse at the same time. Joy, because we have recovered a beautiful and precious island that adds to the regeneration of the motherland; remorse, because in a short period of time they have had impressive achievements, and yet we have not been able to make full use of what has been left behind. Such idle talk of development!

Even amid the chaos and jostling at the exhibition, as well as the surge of emotion evoked by the images, I strove to appreciate the works as I would pieces of art; this is the attitude every viewer should have, or the photographers' efforts and intent would go to waste. It is essential to notice the beautiful composition, appropriate camera angles, adequate lighting, and the poetic and artistic effect that results. The photograph must captivate and excite viewers, and produce a deep and beautiful happiness. This is why photography has come to be recognised as an art form. Generally, this is also the final objective of every photographer.

Wei Huan (维桓) is a veteran photographer. As his skills are well known, there is no need to elaborate on him. Especially deserving of mention is Xue Feng (雪峰), who has displayed the characteristic enthusiasm and fervency of a fresh novice in his dedication towards honing his craft. One may find it incredulous that such big strides of progress are possible in such a short period of time, yet the evidence is before our very eyes, and it is up to you to believe it!

ENDNOTES
1 Peiping is the former name of Beijing.
2 The identity of this photographer could not be confirmed at the time of print.
Most people consider visiting Rome one of life’s greatest privileges and some consider the city representative of Western cultural art.

In the East, a city of comparable significance to Rome would be Peiping (北平). Its majestic spirit, grandeur and dignified bearing display the magnanimity of a huge country. This is something no other country can claim to match.

Peiping is situated in the Hebei plains (河北平原) and its architecture best reveals the unique character of China — disciplined but not austere, opulent but not superficial, characterised by balance and internal harmony. The decorative motifs are majestic and striking, lofty and beautiful, and have reached an artistic peak. Comparing Peiping to Europe, the United States, India and Japan is like comparing an aristocratic lady to a peasant girl.

Peiping was not built in a day. Its appearance today is the result of a long-drawn plan and a construction spanning five to six centuries. Without great foresight and capable artisans and craftsmen, the city would not have been realised.

Let us move on to Nanjing (南京), the capital of the republican government. We are immediately greeted by shades of red, which is rather embarrassing. The buildings reveal desolation and poverty, and create a sense of unease. I do not deny that this is the result of material inadequacy and conditions. However, where have the people’s wit and intelligence gone? I cannot help but ask this question.

Fortunately, the heavens have been kind to us. We have been bestowed with bright and beautiful scenery, lush green forests and bamboo groves that are worthy of our love.

Taiwan, which was regained after the war [with Japan], gives us joy and remorse at the same time. Joy, because we have recovered a beautiful and precious island that adds to the regeneration of the motherland; remorse, because in a short period of time they have had impressive achievements, and yet we have not been able to make full use of what has been left behind. Such idle talk of development!

---

Even amid the chaos and jostling at the exhibition, as well as the surge of emotion evoked by the images, I strove to appreciate the works as I would pieces of art; this is the attitude every viewer should have, or the photographers’ efforts and intent would go to waste. It is essential to notice the beautiful composition, appropriate camera angles, adequate lighting, and the poetic and artistic effect that results. The photograph must captivate and excite viewers, and produce a deep and beautiful happiness. This is why photography has come to be recognised as an art form. Generally, this is also the final objective of every photographer.

Wei Huan (维桓) is a veteran photographer. As his skills are well known, there is no need to elaborate on him. Especially deserving of mention is Xue Feng (雪峰), who has displayed the characteristic enthusiasm and fervency of a fresh novice in his dedication towards honing his craft. One may find it incredulous that such big strides of progress are possible in such a short period of time, yet the evidence is before our very eyes, and it is up to you to believe it!

---

*Endnotes*

1. Peiping is the former name of Beijing.
2. The identity of this photographer could not be confirmed at the time of print.