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for weekly detailed introductions of renowned artworks for us to respect their determination to aspire to greater heights.

It is a pity we cannot tell when the chaotic situation in our motherland will settle down. After the war, there was a lengthy clamour for a national art exhibition. Today, it is still an empty dream.

This commemorative publication aims to assume the responsibility of giving life to art in this desolate island country, but can it? Only time will tell.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to friends who have helped directly, especially the few who have contributed their views to the publication.

ENDNOTES

1  The author probably wrote this essay as a foreword for the Post-War Art Festival’s commemorative magazine.

SUNYEE AND HER ART

No one can deny the statement that art is a lofty occupation; to say that it is a well-paying one, though, is not necessarily true. Even though a famous piece of art from the Tang and Song dynasties has been valued at several hundreds of thousands of dollars, and a work by Pablo Picasso has been sold for several tens of thousands of sterling pounds, these are partly due to historical value and the artist’s genius in technique. Who among most artists has not struggled to make ends meet? Destiny rarely smiles on artists. Does art have to be treated with indifference from now on? No. Never! The hardships in life may have reduced artists’ material comforts, but they can never suppress the desire for artistic creativity. It is because of this sheer enthusiasm that the culture of mankind is sustained and carried forward. Historically, the people that have shouldered this task have mostly been male; noteworthy women are extremely rare.

Sunyee (沈雁) is precisely one of these rare women.

She is outwardly refined and inwardly intelligent: lively and quick-witted, fluent yet reserved, noble and pure in spirit, she has great ambitions.

More than ten years ago, Sunyee graduated from an art academy in Shanghai. Not satisfied, she went to Japan and studied in Tokyo for three years. Still unsatisfied, she simply flew to faraway Europe and toured Paris, the world’s art capital; Rome, where ancient achievements stand; Spain, the country of songs; and London, the congregating point for cultural artefacts. She explored their endless treasures and was richly nourished. She studied intensively the meticulous and outstanding compositions of past masters, and viewed in detail the new styles of famous contemporary artists. She never adored them blindly, treating them instead with critical appreciation.

At the same time, Sunyee picked up her brush and painted in situ. The splendour of the fog over the River Thames, the coquettish dancers in Casablanca, the ancient ruins of Italy, and the magnificence of the Palace of Versailles have all come to life in her hands. Such a method of studying and painting on the spot has greatly advanced her artistic progress. It has also cautioned her against slackening. In her pursuit of the origins
Dear teachers and students, I am greatly honoured to be invited by Principal Liew today to talk to you about the arts.1

As everyone is aware, I have always been an artist. Hence, it would not be difficult for me to paint for you. However, to ask me to speak to everyone — that is quite challenging. So, what I shall be speaking may not be satisfactory to you. For that, I beg your forgiveness.

As Principal Liew has announced, the subject of my talk today is “The Arts and Life,” a theme that was also provided by her. However, as I feel that its scope is too wide, I can only speak generally.

First, let me explain what the arts are.

In the past, many philosophers and artists have given many definitions of “the arts.” Some have said, “The arts are the expression of emotions.” Others have said, “The arts are the imitation of nature.” Yet others have said, “The arts are about using as little material resources as possible to express the eternal and unlimited spirit.” I feel that each is entitled to his opinion and there is no cause for much criticism. However, what the famous Russian man of letters Leo Tolstoy said is most appropriate: “The arts are an inner force within humankind. People use materials and symbols to convey their emotions to others, kindling a resonance in their hearts.” He also said, “The arts are a part of our life. From childhood games to religious work, all are expressions of different arts.”

Simply put, the arts are what humankind produces in the process of creating “natural beauty” and “the beauty of life.” From this explanation, it can be seen that the arts and life are closely related. Now, let us talk in detail about the categories of the arts.

The arts, though wide-ranging, may be classified into three broad categories. The first is spatial art, such as painting, sculpture and architecture, among others. Next is temporal art, such as music, poetry, and song. The third is multi-disciplinary art, such as film,