Photographs and Other Archival Materials

All images have been kindly provided by the family of Liu Kang.

1. Candid photograph of Liu Kang, date unknown.
2. Liu Kang sketching, date unknown.
3. Liu Kang with his painting materials, date unknown.
4. Liu Kang in the Shanghai countryside, 9 September 1927.
5. Liu Kang and Chen Jen Hao, 1929.
13. Liu Kang and Sunyee at Jean-François Millet’s house and atelier, date unknown.
15. Liu Kang painting in his studio at home, date unknown.
16. Liu Kang writing, date unknown.
17. Liu Kang at the Pammukale travertine, Turkey. Date unknown.
19. Liu Kang at the Louvre, date unknown.
24. Detail of Liu Kang’s passport, issued on 28 December 1928. Liu Kang determined his age according to the Chinese lunar calendar. This might explain why he is listed in the passport as being 18 years old when he was in fact 17.
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Though known primarily as a visual artist, Liu Kang was also a writer. The essays that form this book were chosen because they paint a compelling portrait of Liu Kang: as a free-spirited artist who sought to understand all forms of beauty and the myriad workings of culture.

Liu Kang had wide-ranging interests and an inquisitive spirit. He believed that an open mind is the mark of a true artist. This selection intends to highlight this aspect by featuring the wide range of topics he touched on; besides visual art forms such as calligraphy and prints, there are also essays on music, dance, literature, philosophy, interior decoration, and medical science.

Liu Kang's insights on art reveal, variously, his concerns as a first generation artist, an art educator, and a leader of art societies. His essays contain intimate musings on his beliefs, ideas, and feelings about art. At the same time, they tell a larger story, bearing witness to Singapore’s history from its early days of nationhood, and the growth and development of art and culture in this context. The desolation of the post-war art scene; the status of art in times of nation building; the growth of national identity and cultural character — these are some of the concerns that recur in Liu Kang’s writing. For this reason, his essays are presented in a chronological sequence.

Sara Siew
Editor