



CHINA  
2000  
FINE  
ART

**Shao Yixuan** (1886-1954) was born in eastern Zhejiang province in 1886, into a family of intellectuals where painting was somewhat of a tradition. His cousin, Shao Piaoping (1886-1926), a famous journalist who participated in the founding of Chinese communism, was a calligrapher in Beijing. His sister, Shao Yiping, was a painter. Later, his son, Shao Shaoyi, studied Chinese painting with Qi Baishi (1863-1957) and his daughter, Shao Youxuan (1915-2009), studied with Zhang Daqian (1889-1983).

Shao, himself, studied Chinese painting with the artist, Zhang Shuqi (1901-1957), who later became a professor at National Central University in the wartime capital of Chongqing. Although not widely known today, in the first half of the 20th century, Shao was recognized as one of the most important and influential artists of his time. He taught painting at the National Academy of Art in Beijing from its inception until sometime in the 1930s. While he was teaching there, Xu Beihong (1895-1953) was the Dean of the School. Shao was a close friend to his contemporaries, Qi Baishi (1864-1957), Huang Binhong (1865-1955), Chen Banding (1876-1970), Wang Mengbai (1888-1934), Pu Ru (1896-1963), Xiao Sun (1883-1944), Yu Shaosong (1882-1949), Yu Feian (1889-1959), and Zhang Daqian (1899-1983). This group of brilliant artists surrounding Shao, a kind of Beijing painting salon, shared intellectual and artistic pursuits and collaborated on paintings. The high quality of the cooperative paintings they created reflects the compatibility of their intellect, talent and the spirit of fraternity.

The art of Shao Yixuan can be characterized under the heading of literati painting, adhering to a stylistic branch that follows the individualists of the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. Those artists declared the right to individual expression and the necessity to carefully study nature, of which the painter himself forms a part. Shitao (1641 – c.1720), who took actual scenery, such as that of his beloved Mt. Huang, as a subject of his paintings, is the most renowned proponent of this style, and his painting profoundly influenced Shao. Additionally, the Shanghai school of painting penetrated into conservative Beijing, and Shao incorporated elements from the Shanghai style that exhibited free and spirited brushwork, emphasizing calligraphic abstraction.