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Introduction

Europalia celebrates its **40th anniversary** by inviting a truly fascinating guest: China. Europalia is one of the leading arts festivals in Europe and each edition attracts more than one million visitors. During **four months**, Belgium and its neighbouring regions celebrate the diversity of Chinese culture by hosting hundreds of breathtaking events.

The Middle Kingdom's fascination and appeal have never been stronger. China has taken centre stage, whether in the media or in our daily lives. But how much do we really know about the culture, art and philosophy of this immense civilisation?

After the Olympic Games and before the Shanghai Universal Exhibition in 2010, **from 8th October 2009 to 14th February 2010, europalia.china** offers the European audience a unique opportunity to discover all aspects of Chinese culture and lifestyle. 60 years after the creation of the People's Republic of China, europalia.china aims at rising above the usual clichés and **presenting the true authentic dimension of an age-old art of living in the time of globalisation and technical progress.**

For over two years now, Europalia has been collaborating with the **Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China** and its excellent network of local partners. In China, 19 provinces, cities and independent regions, 58 museums, libraries, archeological institutes, and numerous public and private cultural institutions have contributed to the organisation of the festival. A distinguished committee of experts and over 200 cultural partners in Belgium and in Europe have been working to offer the richest and most extensive picture of Chinese cultural and artistic life possible.

The festival europalia.china is supported by **two general commissioners**: DONG Junxin for the People's Republic of China and Claire Kirschen for Belgium.

About 50 exhibitions and 450 performances follow four main themes: Immortal China, Contemporary China, Colourful China and China and the World. These events are organised in collaboration with 210 partners, in 75 cities and 5 countries. In total, more than 1000 artists will take part in the festival.

Each theme is illustrated by a key exhibition:

Son of Heaven at the Centre for Fine Arts represents *Immortal China* and is devoted to the emperors. On display are some of the most beautiful works of art selected from 5,000 years of China's glorious past. The strong partnership between Europalia and the Chinese authorities has allowed exceptional pieces to be shown outside China for the very first time.

The State of Things, again at the Centre for Fine Arts, illustrates *Contemporary China*. In this exhibition, Chinese artist AI Weiwei and Belgian artist Luc Tuymans bring together with FAN Di'an, Director of the National Art Museum of China, a dialogue between Chinese and Belgian artists.

The Orchid Pavilion. The Art of Writing in China at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts highlights the theme *Colourful China*. The origins and significance of calligraphy in the Chinese culture are brought to light.

At the Royal Museums of Art and History, **The Silk Road. A journey through life and death** represents *China and the world*, while taking the visitor on a breath-taking journey through the little-known regions between Xi'an and the Tianshan mountain range.

The exhibition displays a wide range of exceptional artefacts from a large number of national and regional museums and research institutes.

Numerous other exhibitions illustrate these four themes **as well as performances:** 450 taking place in more than 75 cities and 5 countries.

The performances of the *Shanghai Peking Opéra Troupe*, of the *LIN Zhaohua Theatre Studio*, of the *Guangdong Modern Dance Company*, of the *China National Acrobatic Troupe*, as well as the concerts of the *China National Traditional Orchestra*, of the *HK Chinese Orchestra Ensemble*, of LIU Sola or of the *Hanggai Band* are but a few examples of the tremendous events in the **performing arts** programme.

In the **literature** section, europalia.china organises a large number of readings, meetings and residences for artists coming from all around the world. Among them will be several stars of contemporary literature such as WANG Anyi, MO Yan and SU Tong.

As part of the **film** programme, Europalia presents, among others, melodramas of the 30's, revolutionary movies, kung fu movies and small socio-realist productions. The programme will also feature famous filmmakers such as XIE Fei, JIANG Wen, TIAN Zhuangzhuang and WANG Quan'an.

The programme also includes a focus on the twinning between Chinese and Belgian cities, such as Shanghai and Antwerp, or Beijing and Brussels. There is also a focus on Hong Kong, on the Province of Jiangsu and of Guangdong, on Chinese female artists and on shadow and puppet theatre.

In addition, europalia.china is also celebrated in November at the **Théâtre National** and during the first weekend of December in **BOZAR**.

On the Mont des Arts, a **Tea House** acts as the festival's information point **from 17th September 2009 to 14th February 2010**. All the festival brochures, posters, leaflets and catalogues are available, as well as information about Chinese culture and traditions. The tea house is a place to drink tea or to enjoy the diversity of Chinese cuisine, but also to discover all aspects of Chinese culture, through encounters, workshops and performances.

The **Chinese New Year** celebration will close the europalia.china festival on **14th February 2010**.

THE ORCHID PAVILION

The art of writing in China

Dates: 14.10.2009 > 31.01.2010

Venue: Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium
Rue de la Régence 3 - 1000 Brussels
www.fine-arts-museum.be – T. 02 508 32 11

Organisation: NAMOC (Beijing), EUROPALIA International, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium

Curators: FAN Di'an, Director of the National Art Museum of China (NAMOC), Beijing
FU Hongzhan, Director, Department of Painting and Calligraphy, Palace Museum (Forbidden City), Beijing
LaoZhu (ZHU Qingsheng), Co-curator, Professor at the Beijing University
André Kneib, Lecturer at the *Ecole des langues orientales* and at Paris IV Sorbonne
Jean-Marie Simonet, Co-curator, Honorary conservator of the Royal Museums of Art and History

Working committee: FAN Di'an, LaoZhu (ZHU Qingsheng), YANG Yingshi, André Kneib, Jean-Marie Simonet, Dirk Vermaelen, Astrid Beauduin, Sophie Van Vliet, Brita Velghe.

Subject: The origin of Chinese script and the development of the art of writing (calligraphy) and its various functions throughout the centuries.

Period: 353 > 21st century

Artifacts: 120 calligraphies

Lenders: NAMOC (Beijing), Palace Museum, Forbidden City (Beijing)

Scenography: WEIFING, NAMOC (Beijing); Royal Museums for Fine Arts

Catalogue: 240 pages - 30 x 20.5 cm
NL - FR (Ed. Mercatorfonds)

Opening hours: Tuesday > Sunday 10:00 > 17:00
Closed on: 01.11.2009, 11.11.2009, 25.12.2009, 01.01.2010

Visits: Guided tours T 02 508 33 33
Nocturnes: Carolina Haraké T 02 508 34 12

Synopsis

By Jean-Marie Simonet, co-curator of the exhibition

Calligraphy has close ties with language and writing, and consequently, with the Chinese spirit and sensitivities. In China, calligraphy also holds the dominant position with regard to painting, which is defined as an art of brush strokes.

This situation is obviously very different from the West, where writing and calligraphy play a marginal role compared to painting and other forms of expression in our pantheon of visual arts. Faced with these intercultural aesthetic differences, the exhibition will focus on historical facts and direct confrontation with masterpieces.

In an introductory section presenting Chinese writing and the origins of calligraphy, the exhibition will concentrate on a historical event, the calligraphy of the Preface of the Orchid Pavilion in 353, and on the literary and pictorial illustrations that describe the circumstances of its creation. This masterpiece gave rise to numerous copies that served as models over the centuries. The disappearance of the original manuscript by the seventh century helped incarnate it as an emblem of unattainable perfection in calligraphic art.

The setting of the Orchid Pavilion will be the focus of a series of sections describing in detail the many forms and functions of calligraphy in the Chinese world. The room layout of the Musée des Beaux-Arts (Fine Arts Museum) is ideal for a concentric arrangement of this kind. The order of approach will be as follows:

1. The importance of calligraphy in classical culture.
2. Calligraphy in the exercise and glorification of power.
3. Writing methods according to religious practice.
4. The place of calligraphy in literary creation.
5. Chinese painting and its calligraphic aesthetics.
6. Calligraphic creativity: the art of the brushstroke.
7. Modern Chinese calligraphy on the eve of globalization.

With regard to the selection of exhibition pieces, special mention must be made of the generosity of the Beijing Palace Museum (Forbidden City) - seventy works from the Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties have been selected. These include two of the oldest handwritten copies of the Preface to the Orchid Pavilion, which are extremely rare, as well as several masterpieces of painting and calligraphy from the Song golden age. Other major pieces will be loaned by the National Arts Museum of China (NAMOC), which has a wealth of more recent collections.

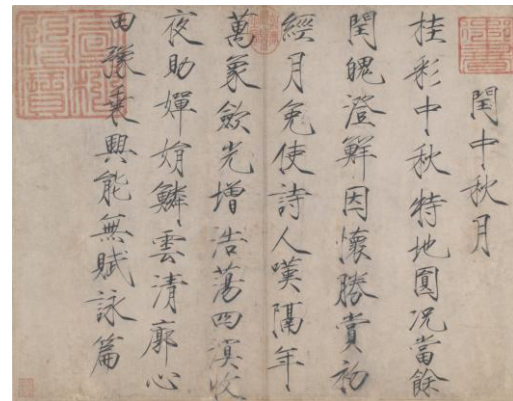
In the same way as it is unnecessary to understand musical theory or to read a score in order to appreciate music, the exhibition's curators have concluded that it is unnecessary to be able to read Chinese writing to appreciate calligraphy. The exhibited works will be presented in a detailed yet accessible manner.

I- Chinese writing



Oracle Bone Shang dynasty

III- Calligraphy and politics



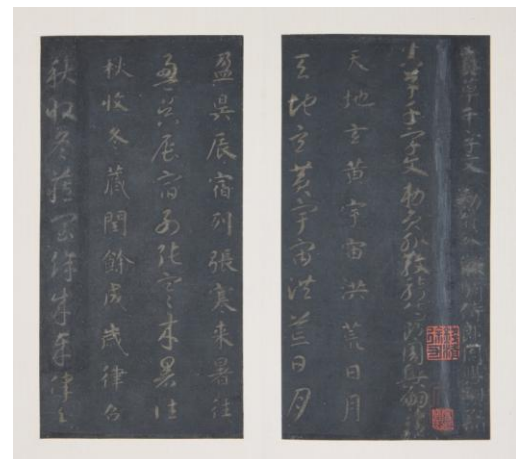
Song Emperor Huizong (1082-1135)
Mid-autumn Poem

V- Calligraphy and religion

II- Calligraphy and classical tradition

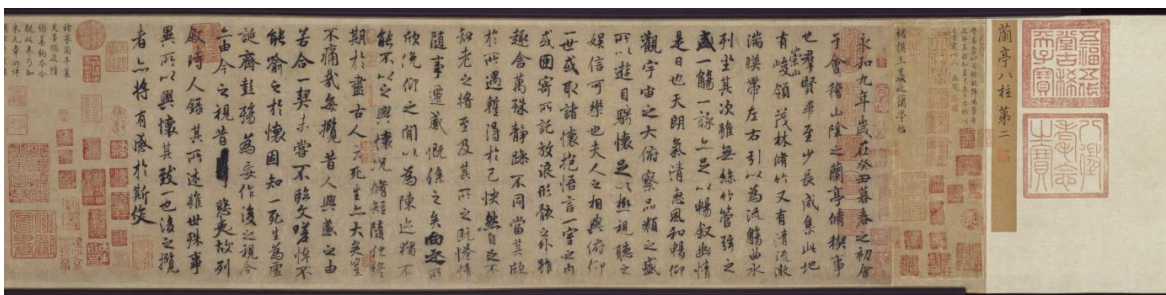


Yan Zhenqing (709-785)
Record of the Duobao Pagoda (detail)



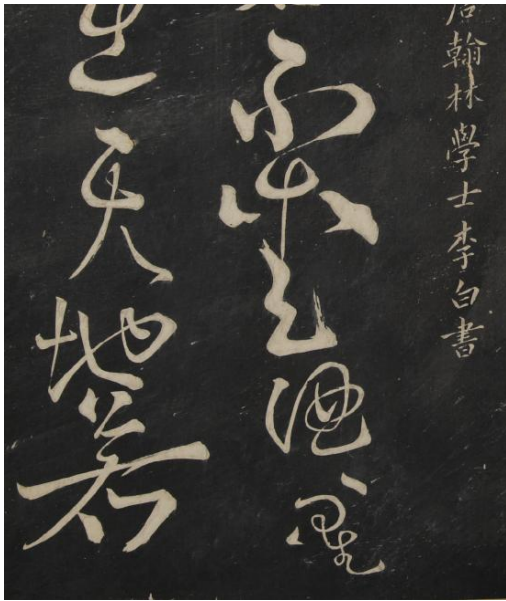
Zhiyong (mid 6th – beginning 7th century)
The Thousand-character Essay

IV- The Orchid Pavilion



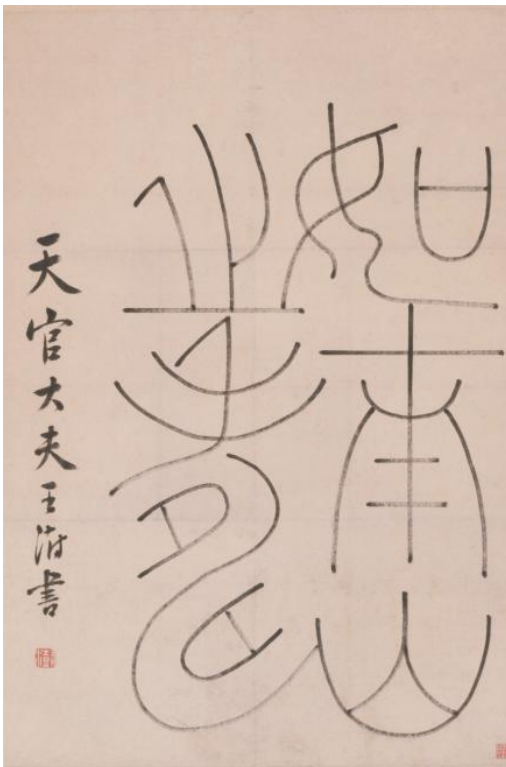
Wang Xizhi (original work), Chu Suiliang (596-659, copy)
Copy of Preface to the Orchid Pavilion

VI- Calligraphy and literature



Li Bai (701-762): 'Drinking Alone in the Moonlight'

VIII- Calligraphy and brush strokes



*Wang Shu (1668-1743)
A long life like that of the Mountains of the South*

VII- Calligraphy and painting



Ma Yuan (1140-1225): Water (detail)

IX- Calligraphy and concepts



Wei Ligang (1964) : Swimming fish, walking crab