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- 1 This biographical dictionary of modern and contemporary Chinese artists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is a reference work that has been keenly awaited by professionals and admirers of modern Chinese art alike. At a time when China is fascinating the world, when its contemporary artists are on show in all the biennales and major exhibitions of the planet, when the auction houses are organising special sales in New York, Hong Kong and London, it is increasingly difficult to identify those artists who are trying their chances on the international art market in ever increasing numbers each year. The limited number of Chinese family names makes identification even more difficult and, as the art lover, the exhibition commissioner, the critic and the collector of Chinese art are generally not speakers of Chinese, they quickly get lost among all those Wongs and Huangs, Chans and Chens, whose alphabetic transcription changes depending on whether they come from the north or the south, from Beijing or Canton. This dictionary is the updated version, considerably revised and greatly enriched, of a biographical index of 800 Chinese artists that the author Michael Sullivan had published in 1996 as an appendix to his work *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*. This new version contains about 1,800 names followed by a succinct biographical entry, indicating, wherever possible, the year and place of birth, education, specialisation, places of residence in chronological order, positions held, travels, significant works and exhibitions of these artists. The names are classified alphabetically by their romanisation (Mandarin and Cantonese for those from the south) with their Chinese characters.
- 2 The author, Michael Sullivan, is one of the major Western pioneers in the field of modern Chinese art history and criticism. After graduating from Cambridge in

architecture in 1939, he left for China during the War with the International Red Cross; there, he met his wife Khoan, with whom he was to befriend many Chinese artists who had returned from abroad or would later do so, such as Zhang Daqian, Lin Fengmian and Pang Xunqin... These artists and those who followed them were to give the couple numerous works which would gradually constitute a collection, a catalogue of which Sullivan published in 2001 as *Modern Chinese Art: The Khoan and Michael Sullivan Collection*. It was while he was in China in the 1940s that he undertook an in-depth study of traditional Chinese art, before going on to write a doctorate in the history of Chinese art at Harvard. He subsequently taught at the University of Malaysia, where with Khoan he founded the University's art museum; he returned to London in the 1960s to take up a position at the School of Oriental and African Studies, and then went on to become Head of the Department of Oriental Art at Stanford from 1966 to 1984, finally settling in Oxford where he is Fellow of Saint Catherine's College. His work *Chinese Art in the Twentieth Century*, published in 1959, was the first critical study on the subject.

- 3 Although the author is an expert in his subject, it must be said at the outset that this latest publication is by no means a treatise on art but a straightforward biographical index for consultation, which will be of no use to those wanting to find out about modern Chinese art, as it contains only scant indications about either the nature of the works of these artists or the movements or schools to which they might belong, apart from an occasional and very succinct description of their work. Michael Sullivan also makes it plain in his preface that the period covers the artists who were active during the twentieth century (even if they were born in the nineteenth century) and the early twenty-first century and that calligraphers, too numerous, have been left out of the work, except those who also engaged in painting. Furthermore, while it was begun thanks to his efforts, this is a collective work, for which many correspondents sent him information about the youngest artists, chosen on the grounds of their appearance in various exhibitions, biennales or publications in recent years. Depending on the circles in which these correspondents move, this leads to oversights or imbalances, especially so in the case of the Hong Kong artists, with the absence of ceramic artists like Fiona Wong, Chris Lo and Annie Wan who are contemporary artists in the fullest sense and perhaps among the best representatives of Hong Kong art. Also very regrettably missing from the work are cartoonists, be they artistic, satirical or political, like Zunzi from Hong Kong, who is nonetheless very much present in many contemporary art exhibitions, while some mainland Chinese cartoonists are included. It is clear, however, that this kind of work is subject to controversy, and the author does indicate in his preface its subjective character, taking full responsibility for its choices.
- 4 Overall, it is the notes on the early twentieth century artists that are the best documented and the most interesting, being no doubt the work of Sullivan himself. The listing of the artists' particular field is indicative of the changes undergone by modern Chinese art. Among the older artists the greatest number are painters of *guohua*, a term designating traditional Chinese landscape painting. What is interesting, however, is that these painters disappear from the index of the younger generations, not that they have ceased to exist, but that they are no longer on the crest of the wave or, for the more audacious among them, are to be found under the headings of experimental calligraphy or new ink painting. Moreover, classification is difficult, not to say impossible today, with most artists working in mixed-media, moving between performance and installation, photography and painting. Moreover, photography

remains outside this index apart from a few exceptions—photographers who combine their work with another medium. In a general way, there is a blurring of the boundaries between particular fields of specialisation.

- 5 The work also contains more than seventy portraits and photos and a specific index of the major Chinese schools and academies of art with details of their development and name changes over the course of history. In a nutshell, this is a small manual that will prove very to be useful to the point of being indispensable. Finally, an additional work that researchers, critics and art professionals alike might find useful is the extraordinary bibliography compiled by the Australian scholar John Clarke, entitled *Modern and Contemporary Asian Art. A Working Bibliography*, which can be viewed on the University of Sydney's website, on the author's homepage, where one can find references to virtually everything that has been written on the subject in English.
- 6 Translated by Peter Brown