

China as an Issue

Artistic and Intellectual
Practices Since the Second
Half of the 20th Century

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Inside-Out Art Museum

China as an Issue: Artistic and Intellectual Practices Since the Second Half of the 20th Century, Volume 1

— Edited by Carol Yinghua Lu and Paolo Caffoni

China as an Issue is an ongoing lecture series organized by the Beijing Inside-Out Art Museum since 2018. Chinese scholars are invited to discuss topics related to China or the world, as well as foreign scholars to speak about China or international questions involving the subject of China. Through rigorous scrutiny of a specific issue we try to avoid making generalizations as well as the parochial tendency to reject extraterritorial or foreign theories in the study of domestic issues. The attempt made here is not only to see the world from a local Chinese perspective, but also to observe China from a global perspective. By calling into question the underlying typology of the inside and the outside we consider China as an issue requiring discussion, rather than already having an established premise. By inviting fellow thinkers from a wide range of disciplines to discuss these topics we were able to negotiate and push the parameters of art and stimulate a discourse that intersects the arts with other discursive fields.

The idea to publish the first volume of *China as An Issue* was initiated before the rampage of the coronavirus pandemic. When the virus was prefixed with “China,” we also had doubts about such self-titling of ours. However, after some struggles and consideration, we have increasingly found the importance of

discussing specific viewpoints and of clarifying and discerning the specific historical, social, cultural and political situations the narrator is in and how this helps us avoid discussions that lack direction or substance. We can consider the contributions here as documents of an ongoing conversation within their own historical circumstances. Even though these talks were originally addressed to a Chinese audience, through the process of translation and the editorial work on this English edition, we made room for further discussion and clarification with inserted footnotes that expand on certain concepts and references. We aimed to challenge the idea that the subject matters presented here are only relevant to China “experts” or “sinologists.” We hope that readers will think beyond each author’s narrative presented in the article’s concept itself and also consider the author’s individual starting points and cultural positioning. Readers are expected to take a multidimensional and flexible perspective when entering into these dialogues.

Why Seek Out Asia?

— Sun Ge

This paper was composed from a lecture presented at the Beijing Inside-Out Art Museum on October 20, 2019, with slight revisions made by the author. It was presented on the occasion of the book launch for *The Asia Moment: Creating an Alternate Mode of Understanding the World* (Xun-zhao yazhou: chuangzao lingyizhong renshi shijie de fangshi, Guizhou People's Publishing House, October 2019) with Sun Ge as the speaker and Li Zhiyu as the guest interlocutor with the book's editor, Fan Xin moderating. The text is translated by Carrisa Fletcher.

I am very fond of the Inside-Out Art Museum.

Though it is just an art museum, I feel that its contents are manifold. We know that art is rather remote from the observed forms of real life, because it is not possible to see reality placed on a stage or displayed in a gallery. It must be transformed by means of imagination to create new forms, thus establishing a fractured connection with our experiences in real life—only then will the audience find it worthwhile to visit. I like the atmosphere here, and I have long felt that intellectual history should be handled in this way. By “handled in this way,” I mean to say that the issues which intellectual history must discuss are in fact separate from those practical problems which we ordinarily see in the newspapers, in broadcasts, or online, and they too must be transformed; intellectual history does not directly address practical problems, and is not responsible for giving out prescriptions for practical problems, but intellectual history certainly has concern for practical problems, which is then presented in another fashion.

The relationship between discussions of intellectual history and reality is thus similar to the relationship between art and reality, a kind of fractured connection. My search for Asia in fact involves a similarly fractured pondering and seeking. I had a student in

Shanghai many years ago, who has now become a teacher herself: she bought this book online, and two days ago, she sent me her post-reading response on Wechat. She said: I thought that reading this book was like entering a forest filled with brambles—in it, there was nothing but thorny plants that tripped one up and looked quite troublesome. I felt that the forest of Asia was filled with all kinds of problems with no easy solutions. I thought she expressed it quite well, and I wrote back to her saying that I was still struggling in it now. She responded, Professor, I see now.

This is my real predicament, as well as the message which the title of this book seeks to convey: Where is Asia? Actually, I am still looking, and I believe that we are all looking together.

This book was, to a very great extent, a product of collaboration between myself and my editor. By collaboration, I do not mean that he and I wrote it together, but rather that he took my less-than-conscious trains of thought in the writing process and fed them back to me through his selection of pieces and arrangement of each chapter. This is what shaped the book, and in fact I had not conceived of this format at the beginning. For me this was an amazing experience. Some of the essays were previously included in other books, and some were published in journals and

then thought no more of; actually, there have always been these texts which I have quite sporadically flung everywhere. I have pursued various problems, or rather I have been pursued by various problems, writing about them and then putting them aside. So it is in this sense that this is a product of collaboration between myself and my editor. But this process also prompted me to retrospectively consider that, although the writing process was not designed in advance, in looking at the results, it has taken the first steps in achieving one thing, which is to regard “Asia” as an issue requiring discussion, rather than an established premise. Why did I want to do this? What transformations did I experience in the process of doing this? Answering these questions is an opportunity for self-examination, which is actually quite meaningful.

I ran into this problem last year during a lecture course at Tsinghua University. In the mid-1990s, I wrote three book reviews for *Reading* (Dushu)¹ on *Thinking from Asia* (Cong yazhou chufa sikao)², a set of seven volumes in a collection of essays by the University of Tokyo Press. The titles of these three books reviews consisted of three questions: The first piece was called *What Does Asia Mean* (Yazhou yiwei zhe shenme), the second was called *What Do We Seek in History* (Zai lishizhong xunzhao shenme), and the

third was called *What Is the Carrier of Universality* (Pubianxing de zaiti shi shenme). I have to honestly admit that, after completing the book reviews, I forgot about them. Why? Because as far as I was concerned in the mid-1990s these three questions were essentially hollow. These three questions represented my true feelings at the time and represented the problem awareness stimulated by this collection of Japanese essays. But apart from a feeling there was no substance, and I did not have the corresponding store of knowledge. So they were hollow, and after writing the book reviews, I set this matter aside. I did not think that I would later continue to follow the path of these three unanswered questions. After that, I completed a few concrete empirical studies which touched upon different aspects; but looking back from today's perspective, I am still in the midst of these three questions. However, where I am now, these three questions have all become substantial. They have been transformed into real problem structures that can be developed, and are furthermore closely related to one another. But none of this represents a plan that I intentionally designed in advance—I certainly didn't think through these questions and then found ways to gather materials to argue them, it wasn't this kind of process. I didn't set this out for myself in the mid-1990s as a

thing that I must do in this lifetime. How did it take shape? Even I cannot say, and this is a point that I wish to share with my young friends: Whether or not you pursue academic research in the future, I think that there are certain fundamental questions in life which may arise when we are unprepared, or haven't thought things through. As long as we are willing to confront them, you will discover one day that these questions may have defined your life. In terms of my experiences, these initially insubstantial questions later developed substance, and that substance helped me to write books, and publish an array of arguments—but in fact, none of these are important. What is important is still the questions themselves, and for me, these questions have always represented certain feelings. That I have presented these feelings in the form of theories, or in the form of intellectual history, is of secondary importance.

Having explained this premise, I would like to first respond to a question that was just posed by the moderator. He commented that, for several generations of scholars, from Yan Fu to Liang Qichao and further into the post-May Fourth period, our Chinese intellectuals have shared and passed down the most fundamental of issues, which is that, since the Opium War, we are no longer the center of the world. Not

only we are not the center of the world, we have been beaten by others until dazed and confused. Yet we still do not know how we lost. Under these circumstances, there is no other way to rise anew but to learn from our strong adversaries. This logic has not only been China's logic since the early modern era, it has in fact been the logic of Japan and the Korean Peninsula as well. So we say "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application (*Zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong*)"³, while the Japanese say "Japanese spirit, Western techniques (*Wakon Yōsai*)" — both sayings essentially have the same meaning. But the problem is that, once we began studying, our anxieties and the array of practical predicaments which we faced caused essence and application to be inverted. After this inversion, "application" became the "essence." As for where "essence" went, who knows.

I'm sure that the young friends from university who are sitting here have a question: have we not been following the path of using the framework of Western theory and concepts from the West to explain our problems all along? Has this approach of ours been wrong from the beginning? I personally have always found it extremely difficult to clearly address this question. Where does the difficulty lie? Since I began discussing Asia, I have long been misunderstood by

others, saying that Ms. Sun is opposed to the West. I say that I am not opposed to the West, what I am opposed to is Western hegemony and Western-style hegemony. Western hegemony stems from the substantive West, not only from real Western political and economic power, but also from the Western cultural ideology. Western-style hegemony is internalized, and is produced by us as Asian people, consisting of the hegemony practiced by the third-world elite with the aid of Western power. This hegemony and the hegemony of the West support one another. I'll hazard a somewhat politically incorrect statement: in a certain sense, the same kind of collusive relationship has formed between our critical intellectuals and Western ones. This statement naturally must be explained. Since the function of Western critical intellectuals in the West has to be regarded as positive, in today's globalized landscape, it is necessary to have such critics in the West tearing at the foundations of hegemony. The corresponding Western-style intellectual criticism practiced internally by us is also important and valuable work. But when such work forms an incontestable attitude of political correctness, then it raises suspicions of hegemony.

There may be people asking: Are you not contradicting yourself? How can a valuable thing turn into

hegemony? I'd like to start here in introducing my approach to discussing problems. I have never addressed problems with a sense of binary opposition, and I also essentially never talk about problems in the sense of entitative thinking. Please note, everyone, that I said entitative thinking, not entitative concepts. Actually, I use a great many entitative concepts, and Asia itself is ultimately first and foremost an entitative concept, so I am not a postmodernist. But when we do away with binary thinking, the first thing that must be destroyed is that type of entitative thinking. We say that Western theory is specious when used to explain our own problems, but this is a different matter from saying that Western theory has no value. In other words, we cannot package up the "West," but rather must disassemble it, and then develop a functional understanding of it. Therefore, just as we cannot package up our own history and society, we will find that such a "packaged" West in fact does not exist.

Many people say that if we did not draw on Western theory today, we would have no means of expression, but in drawing on it, we sense another difficulty. This problem cannot end here, we have to continue pursuing it—why is it like this? As a matter of fact, if we take a moment to examine the way in which several generations of Chinese intellectuals

have perpetuated Western theory from the late Qing Dynasty to the present, we will discover a fundamental characteristic—not only China, but the whole of East Asia, or, generally speaking, perhaps the majority of the regions in Asia all feature this characteristic: that is, when Western theory entered our context, it immediately underwent two clandestine shifts. The first shift is that it became highly abstracted. We Asian intellectuals often express problems in more theoretical and abstract terms as compared to Western intellectuals—why? This is because the first shift was one of form, and after this shift, it seemed that theory had to be this way. If you write a Master's thesis or doctoral dissertation and do not include any abstract theory in it, it is like that most advisors would say, this thing of yours is unacceptable, it lacks theoretical loftiness. What is theoretical loftiness? It is a set of abstract concepts which we ourselves do not necessarily understand. The abstract is useful, of course, but to use it in such fashion is misplaced. Theory should not be reduced to a set of concepts. Western colleges naturally feature many similarly simplified operations, but when people with genuine theoretical accomplishments use theory in their own contexts, the approach is different. The setting of a theoretical topic helps them develop their understanding of their experiences, rather than

retrieving experiences. In their discourses, one topic thus leads to another topic, moving forward one step at a time, and in the end, they may have come quite a long way from the original topic. I will return to this issue in a moment, but first I would like to talk about the second shift. The second shift involves the living nature of Western theory, including its abstract concepts—they're all alive. Why? In their own context, no matter how abstract theories are, they always open to concrete empirical problems. But after entering our context, it is quite unfortunate to say, the theories failed to be open to our real experiences, and our real problems could not be connected to them. Having arrived in our context, these flowers rooted in the soil of Western society and culture were pulled from the earth and converted into decorative arrangements—naturally, they did not live long. So the second shift is that vital, living theory became static, no more than a few fixed concepts, no more than a few rigid frameworks. Consequently, accurate outlines are unattainable for many experiences, and these can only be unsoundly stuffed into a given theoretical framework. I believe that the vast majority of us are currently in this kind of situation, so there is no need to give examples. Of course, at the same time, I must emphasize one point, which is that true theoreticians also stand among us

scholars, and when they reflect on theoretical questions, they reject these two shifts. Such scholars thus have a shared characteristic, in that they have the capacity for theoretical thinking, and regardless of the origin of the theoretical tools they employ, they will not be held captive by the tools.

This state of knowledge naturally is not unique to China. In the 1950s, historical circles in post-war Japan also discussed this issue, and in contemporary Japanese intellectual circles, like us, most people mechanically applied Western theories, perfunctorily copying liberal theory alongside Marxist theory. Such theories were thus converted into big sticks. For instance, today we talk about universality and universality is really a useful stick. As soon as another person starts talking, if you cannot get a word in edgewise, you beat them with the stick, saying, what you say is quite interesting, but that's an individual case and has no universality—so the other party has basically been crushed to death by you. Given these circumstances, how did a handful of Japanese intellectuals rethink things? Here I will give an example of reassessment by historians. The most influential theories in historiography stem from Germany, and the German historiographical theories are the most abstract, giving rise to a group of masters who are extremely difficult to read.

But the German historiography has its own social context, and those theories are thus inseparable from social life. But after these things were transplanted to Japan, they were converted to Japanese-made Western-style historiography. Japanese historians appropriated the concepts of Western historiography to encapsulate their own experiences, producing Japanese historiographical research. One famous historian was named Uehara Senroku, and he said: If we take this kind of historiography to engage in collaborative research with historians in the United Kingdom and Germany, such research would be meaningless. Why? On the one side, the historiographical research has a social context, and it is open to social experiences; on the other side, the research has no social context, and the historiography drifts away from social life. This analysis still has vitality even today, and scholars in Japan are currently reinvestigating the questions that Uehara raised in that period, seeking to perpetuate Uehara's thoughts on world history. Uehara's analysis also applies to us. What is our social context, ultimately? We do not have the social background for Western theory, but it is not that we do not have social context: what kind of plants, what kind of forests could our soil grow? I do not believe that this is a question that can be settled with the support of argumentation, and it is

first and foremost a real political dynamic issue. Moreover, as history has unfolded up to the present, this question has not needed anyone to argue it—it is already arrayed in front of us.

One fundamental state of knowledge which we face today is that more and more people are beginning to take an interest in Asia. I believe that, if the Inside-Out Art Museum had held a forum on this theme twenty years ago, basically no one would have attended. In fact, approximately twenty-odd years ago, while I was writing the three book reviews mentioned above, a group of scholars from South Korea came to visit the Editorial Board of *Reading* (Dushu) under Joint Publishing, and they asked to have a discussion of Asia with Chinese scholars. *Reading* organized a conference at the time, and all of the attendees were studying the West—they said to me, you're the only person studying Asia, and you should talk about it. Now the situation is completely different, and now there are many more scholars more capable than I am analyzing Asia or a particular region of Asia. No one has to mobilize them—history demands it.

But today, another problem stands before us. Given the state of knowledge today, is it possible to effectively discuss Asia? You mustn't think that I am insisting that we cannot use Western analytical tools—

this is not where the crux of the problem lies. Western concepts can be used. But they cannot be used in the manner engendered by the dual shifts which I was just speaking of. If Western concepts are to be used, we must first relativize them, and convert them into a regional, historical and localized product: only then we will know what steps they have passed through, what transformations they have experienced, and only then it is possible for us to share in them. But today, there are only a handful of experts on Western theory among us who strictly operate in accordance with such procedures, while the majority of people do not adhere to such procedures. So it is necessary not only to continue engaging in work in this area, but also to pursue a deeper level of engagement. In regionalizing the West, we have an opportunity to relativize ourselves. I sometimes hear criticism, saying, you always talk about Asia, but never mention China, what do you mean by that? Are you trying to do away with China? I say, don't worry, China is not that fragile, and even if I wanted to do away with it, I wouldn't be able to. Because apart from speaking and writing, I do not have any practical functions. In reality, the work I wish to achieve is to get rid of false questions and generate true questions, and enable these true questions to grow as much as possible, so that they can effectively help

us analyze the various phenomena emerging in reality. This is also the reason why I reject intuitive discussions in academic research. Going back to the issue I just mentioned, we must relativize Western theory, and then, through this relativization, we must relativize ourselves. The objective of relativization is not to do away with China, but rather to allow China to effectively find its place in human history. Asia will not allow China to represent it—China is only one part of Asia. However, we know that, to a very great extent, Asia's diverse ethnic cultures are inherent to China. Furthermore, as Mr. Fan Jinshi remarked, citing the words of Mr. Ji Xianlin, the four cultural systems of China, India, Ancient Greece and Islam come together in only one place on Earth, that is, in Dunhuang and the Xinjiang region. So, can China be equated to Asia? I think that studying the Asian elements intrinsic to China is a true question of much value, but the significance of such research does not lie in proving that China is tantamount to Asia. My book includes discussions dedicated to this issue, so I will not pursue the discussion further here. In fact, if we lacked this awareness, we might fall into the trap of egocentricity, like the United States. Many so-called patriotic youths say online that we must replace the United States, that China has never received fair treatment in the past,

and now that we have become powerful and ascended to the stage of history, we must replace the United States. This actually is not patriotism—this is harmful to the country. Practically speaking, any country that seeks to be the center of the global landscape is ultimately courting a great deal of trouble for itself, while in theoretical terms, seeking to become the center means striving for hegemony. The Chinese government has an extremely important slogan, and if it could be put into practice, I think it would be the direction with the best prospects for China's future development, and that's win-win cooperation. Win-win cooperation is a form of expression of the universality I discuss, taking the principles of Asia as the critical juncture. This new universality differs from the established one, and it certainly is not a stick to beat people with, but merely an agent for enabling the establishment of equal and mutually understanding relationships between a manifold array of particularities.

This new kind of universality which I have sought to pursue may only be regarded as the conclusion of empirical research in our academic training today, or it might be viewed as a fine aspiration, but it struggles to be considered as a principle. Why? Because the latent Western-centrism in Western theory following the two shifts still dominates the imagina-

tive faculties of intellectual circles. Within this atmosphere of knowledge, only one form of universality is recognized, that is, the abstract, consolidated and homogenized imagination which is prevalent today. In other words, it is the belief that universality has vast coverage, and is the shared attribute of all things. But such things do not exist in this world: the things people can see are particular, but we do not place value on particularity. In order to manufacture universality, it is necessary to carry out abstraction of visible, specific things, abstractifying them into relatively hollow categories, and then applying them in turn to the interpretation of various particular things. But abstract categories generally lack concrete content, thus they have inadequate analytical power: in order to enhance their analytical power, a subconscious shift has emerged. We spoke of democracy today, and everyone said that it's a universal value, but actually what we often specifically imagine is American-style democracy. Democracy comes in many forms, so why is only American-style democracy universal? Actually, the reason is quite simple: the history of the West is a history of egocentrism, which demands that the world have an Other, while simultaneously demanding that the Other cannot have its own logic, but rather must exist on the margins of our world; furthermore, it can-

not replace us at the center, but the Other must consume all the products provided by us at the center, including the material and the spiritual. I feel that this kind of unitarity constitutes a very important part of the foundations of Western theory. For instance, the most typical example is Hegel's philosophy of history. In Hegel's view, the center of history cannot even lie in France or the United Kingdom, but can only reside in Germany, and can only consist of the most distinctive culture, as represented by the Germanic people. Western theoretical circles have experienced continuous adjustments since Hegel, but we must note that these adjustments chiefly unfolded in the mode of deconstruction rather than construction. When we discuss the principles of Asia, we cannot merely be satisfied with criticism, but rather have an imperative need to create another approach for considering, perceiving and understanding the world. The subtitle to this book⁴ was also added for me by Fan Xin, and I am very grateful to him for putting a finger on the issue that I am exploring. I'd like to further emphasize that this alternate mode of understanding the world must be theoretical in nature, and cannot merely consist of empirical analysis. But I don't know if you will take this statement and return to the so-called Western theory with which we are familiar, which have been highly

simplified following the two shifts—I hope that it won't be done in this way. The theory needn't necessarily be in such an abstract format as Western theory, but it certainly must have the energy to penetrate the empirical. It is arguable that, in Chinese academic circles, apart from a handful of experts who have truly researched the issue, the Western theory consumed by most people is a counterfeit product, a knockoff. If we truly seek to apply Western theory, then we must begin by concentrating our efforts on the original canons, so that we can at least realize that Western theory is not so simple, and is not something that can be arbitrarily packaged up by relying on a few key words.

Given these circumstances, can Asia have its own theory, and does it need its own theory? My answer to both questions is yes, we have to have our own theory, and we need to have our own theory. Why? Because our historical climate and culture cannot be effectively explained using Western theory. If we observe Asia from a Western perspective, what we see will forever be chaos and backwardness. If judged using Western values and standards, it is indeed chaotic and backward. But the question is, are Western-style standards the only thing in the world? For instance, in Chinese culture, there is a very special state

of affairs, in that ordinary people like to go their own way. One could say that the Chinese people have more freedom than Westerners in terms of their social life. Why? Because Chinese people are not so particular about the external order as Westerners. Someone will probably correct me immediately, saying, wrong, the Chinese people are not free. The actual freedoms of the Chinese people are a lack of restraint and responsibility, unaccompanied by differentiation between power and duty; these are manifestations of political immaturity, so they are not true freedoms, and such fragmented freedom is the foundation of autocracy. But I would say that, although the Chinese people indeed lack Western-style freedoms in many areas, they also have many freedoms that Westerners do not have. For instance, Chinese people often handle matters in accordance with their own personal standards, and do not set much store by laws and regulations. Of course, this produces many negative results, but it also has a positive role. For instance, during the Wenchuan earthquake, many people spontaneously went to the disaster zone to give aid, to the point that the roads to the disaster zone were jammed; it is very difficult to imagine such a situation in a Western society under law.

We may as well turn our gaze to the inherent log-

ic of Chinese society. From the historical era to the present, Chinese society has been driven by a different kind of dynamic, but attempting to explain this dynamic using the theory of civil society would be somewhat off the mark. So we must produce a theory apt to this historical climate and culture. This theory could be abstract, of course, but I personally believe that, in the current stage, it would perhaps be more apt to produce specific and concrete theories. I have already written a great deal about this, so they will not be addressed here owing to time considerations. Can theory be presented in a concrete form, or presented in an empirical, one-off state? This is a thorny matter with which I am currently still struggling: I still haven't reached the end of this road, and I must continue to fight my way forward. If one were to engage in theoretical reflections on a one-off experience, that would signify that an abstract approach could not be used, and the various conclusions that were reached naturally could not be copied elsewhere. So in writing a conventional PhD dissertation, this kind of operation likely would not be of much assistance. But this could help us make some discoveries when confronting reality. I hope that it will become a new form of theory that is able to effectively interpret our history and society. It is only that certain links must still go a step

further before it can finally be completed. I am only just beginning this process now.

Why is it necessary to begin with principles to discuss Asia? The reason is quite simple: because Asia is an absolutely untenable category in the sense of Western theory. Asia's nonconformity and its cultural diversity are the starting point for discourses on Asia, but since the early modern era, Western internalization has left it incapable of independently existing in a self-sufficient state. These characteristics mean that, no matter what, Asia cannot possibly serve as a Western-style unit of discourse. So, if we seek to treat Asia as a discursive object, it is necessary to have corresponding principle-based conditions. Someone might ask, why must Asia be treated as a unit of discourse? Isn't there globalization now? What I'm trying to argue is that today's globalization is still dominated by Western capital, and the mainstream cognitive mode which it promotes obstructs the possibility of producing alternative understandings of the world. New modes of understanding the world may be forged from the history and reality of Asia—the issue is whether we are willing to further this work, starting with principle-based reflections.

I also must add one final point regarding the significance of treating Asia as a geographical category.

When discussing the principles of Asia, I intentionally incorporate the physicality of Asia into principle-based discussions. Generally, when Asia is used as a symbol, its geographical attributes are easily disregarded. Why do I seek to emphasize its geographical attributes? We know that each geographical space is different. In my book, I have cited certain studies by American geographers, who found that studies in geography which strive for homogeneity among multiple subjects have the poorest academic quality, because they can only discuss abstract concepts that everyone knows; while studies of higher quality do more to address particular subjects. If Asia as a category is to have subjectivity, it certainly must contain the levels of historical geography; the reasons for this go without saying. So how is it to be integrated with symbols, concepts and ideas? One point of integration which I have found is a clue provided to us by Watsuji Tetsuro in *Fūdo*, though it is not pursued to its end. The term *Fūdo* refers not only to the objective natural environment, but also to subjective social life. When we speak of human affairs and natural conditions in a given place, what are we trying to say? An individual's personality and social customs are bound up with the natural local environment. For instance, Chongqing people eat spicy food, because the region has high hu-

midity; but once they developed the habit of eating spicy food, their dietary judgment became inseparable from spicy flavor. This involves the local conditions as well as human affairs, which are entangled with one another. Addressing problems in this way not only involves understanding a problem as inseparable from its specific context—the greatest effect lies in being unable to directly appropriate it, thus giving it meaning in intellectual history. Following the introduction of Yoshimi Takeuchi's *Asia as Method* and Yūzō Mizoguchi's *China as Method* into China, many people now use the formulation “as method”: “Beijing as method,” “film as method,” “the Inside-Out Art Museum as method”... But in the wake of “as method,” a danger emerged: if everything can be treated as a method, then the specific context is no longer important. But when we emphasize the geographical conditions of Asia, what we are emphasizing is that the context cannot be replaced or appropriated. Only under these circumstances can it enter a special state in the true sense and allow for discoveries to be made. Today, we see too many academic operations that lack localization, and therefore lack context. We say that the seeds of modernity emerged in China's Song Dynasty, and the more we say it, the more we think that's how it was. But by truly engaging with the historical

context of the Song Dynasty, you will find that those elements of modernity in the Song Dynasty, if they existed, firstly were something else, and secondly were not that important. So what does it mean to confront one's own history? What we are confronting is such context, and context is necessarily localized.

In this sense, I think that Asia is the best subject. Someone once asked me, you are seeking out the principles of Asia, why not seek out the principles of Africa? Why not Latin America? Actually, I believe that there are certainly people in Africa and Latin America discussing similar questions, and they may just be approaching the discussion in a different way. But for me, within the scope of my limited understanding, I can issue the rough assessment that the untidy diversity of Asia is absolutely unparalleled in the world. What we seek now is not tidiness amidst untidiness, nor is it common ground amidst differences. It is to transform "difference" itself into the subject, and allow it to be open. This view is essentially empirical, and people often believe that the empirical is unimportant. So in the sense of principles, are we not warranted in pursuing a radical revolution?

Bringing Back “Self-Criticism”

— Hong Zicheng (through Zhang Zhiqi)

In 2017 the Beijing Inside-Out Art Museum organized the exhibition entitled “Self-Criticism” (Ziwo piping). Carol Yinghua Lu, Luo Xiaoming and Su Wei convened the exhibition and organized a series of lectures alongside.

Carol Yinghua Lu explained the basic reasoning underlying this themed exhibition event in her essay *Starting with Oneself* writing, “As a participant in the contemporary art scene, I have witnessed a general tendency towards self-complacency and self-isolation in recent years. There is a staggering contrast between the prosperity of artistic production and the scarcity in thinking. A fundamental change has occurred among to the self-perception of artistic practitioners in terms of their class nature. They make constant adjustments to the extent of compatibility between themselves and the reality, merely on a utilitarian basis. They have acquired a conservative front of those with a basted interest, timid and overcautious, carefully sustaining the relationship between art and capital. Within the art community, the experience and understanding of art is homogenized, superficial and flimsy, being confined by its very own being. Yet, there is a self-justified acceptance of the certainty that individual fates are being constrained and defined by the reality of the system. There is a rush in playing the witness to visible values and experiences. Many in the art community make frivolous commentaries on social phenomena in their artworks, without engaging in any commitment or theory to trying to understand the political and historical reality that we are in. Moreover, there is a tendency to defend this lack of engagement on the basis of being faithful to art. In the face of today’s reality, it is far from sufficient to have a critical perspective. To perceive social and political matters from a moral standpoint, to turn politics into merely a moral issue; such is a deep-seeded mindset among many of us.”

In June of the same year, Professor Hong Zicheng was invited at Inside-Out to give a speech on the topic of “Bringing Back Self-Criticism.” Jiemian News reporter Zhang Zhiqi compiled a report based on

an audio recording of the lecture and published it in Jiemian News on June 23, 2017. The original title was “Bringing Back ‘Self Criticism:’ Repaying the Historical Debt Left by the Reflection Movement in the 1980s.” (Chongti “ziwo piping”: shi changhuan 80niandai fansi yundong liuxia de lishi zhaiwu). With the consent of Jiemian News the full text by Zhang Zhiqi has been translated into English by Lisa A. Orcutt and is published below. Some words have been revised by Hong Zicheng.

Today, the term “self-criticism” is slightly unfamiliar and even stigmatized by certain political connotations; seemingly distant from our daily lives, people generally tend to avoid its use. However, we must acknowledge that in traditional culture and contemporary political practice, “self-criticism” once occupied a pivotal position.

In Confucian practice, self-criticism is the basis of a whole set of skills for cultivating the self. *The Analects of Confucius* state that “every day I must examine myself on three counts.” Self-reflection is not only the core requirement of Confucianism for shaping ideal character, but it is also the necessary starting point for projecting an ideal world from the inside out.

In various political movements following the founding of New China in 1949, criticism and self-criticism were a kind of “governmentality” that was closely allied with power. As political tools, criticism and self-criticism were powerful means of exercising control, deterrence and restraint on the individual, in addition to being an efficient way to integrate individuals into the collective. By requiring people to expose, reflect on, and criticize themselves, the individual became negated, and simultaneously attained entry to participation in collective life. In this sense, self-criti-

cism and self-denial were precisely for the purpose of self-recognition and self-preservation.

During the ideological emancipation movement (sixiang jiefang yundong) of the 1980s, criticism and self-criticism revolved around the examination and negation of the Cultural Revolution. The purpose was to return to (or reconstruct) a Western-style enlightenment ideal. But as for this “enlightenment ideal” itself, it was accepted wholly without reflection.

The latter two forms of self-criticism are exactly what Hong Zicheng, professor of the Department of Chinese at Peking University, has been researching for the past 20 years. In his book *Materials and Annotations* (Cailiao yu zhushi, Peking University Press) published last year, Hong Zicheng analyses the moral issues that actors in various art and literary criticism movements since 1957 faced. In another book published in the 1990s, *Authorial Position and Self-Awareness* (Zuojia zitai yu ziwo yishi, Shaanxi People's Education Press, 1991), Hong discusses three different positions on historical and personal issues among authors of “scar literature” (Shanghen wenxue)¹ and “reflective literature” (Fansi wenxue)² that emerged in the 1980s.

In a recent speech on the theme of “self-criticism” delivered at the Inside-Out Art Museum, Hong

Zicheng began his talk by discussing his research on the history of Chinese modern and contemporary literature. Then combining personal experience and reflection, he set out to explore the question of how modern and contemporary writers and intellectuals view themselves and tell their own stories, while simultaneously dealing with complex historical heritage and current societal circumstances.

Heroizing the Victims has Prevented Us From Thinking About Our Own Historical Responsibility

Hong Zicheng believes that self-criticism is sorely lacking in today's society, and that self-satisfaction and self-segregation are now becoming the general trend. This is perhaps due to current complex social conditions, as well as a variety of complicated historical reasons.

As Hong sees it, as part of the ideological emancipation movement of the 1980s, there appeared a trend to reflect on the Cultural Revolution that had only just ended. This urge to reflect was not only aimed at examining important historical issues, but it also emphasized individual reflection. In general, this trend was carried out under the framework of the

“New Enlightenment” (Xin qimeng). The 1980s was an era when subjectivity and humanitarianism were highly lauded, so it is not surprising that a profusion of “scar literature” and “reflective literature” narrating the catastrophic effects of the Cultural Revolution emerged. This can be regarded as a highpoint of self-criticism in the 1980s.

How should we evaluate the reflection movement of the 1980s? Hong Zicheng believes that its continued significance is not to be underestimated. But looking back from today’s perspective, we should also acknowledge the many problems that existed, and which still continue to this day. By revisiting the notion of self-criticism today, we are to a certain extent endeavoring to repay the historical debt left by the reflection movement of the 1980s.

In his book *Authorial Position and Self-Awareness*, written during the late 1980s, Hong Zicheng analyses three types of approaches that writers of the 1980’s reflection movement took to deal with historical and personal problems. Most literary works reflected on history by creating fictional heroes, and identified historical errors through the narration. But this approach also avoided self-reflection to varying degrees. In terms of ideology and artistic method, this type of writing highlighted the suffering of the Cultur-

al Revolution and the figure of the historical survivor, and performed a sort of tragedizing of history. Emphasis on suffering was the mainstream of literary creation during those years. Suffering is of course a historical fact, and many ordinary people, as well as cadres and intellectuals, had a difficult time during the Cultural Revolution. Many even lost their lives, so it is of great significance to provide historical testimony in literary form. However, Hong Zicheng argues that as a general ideological tendency and aesthetic image, the unrestricted highlighting and rendering of the suffering victim is also worthy of our reflection and examination.

In the literature of the 1980s that focused on themes of historical reflection, “tragedy” became the mainstream, and there were very few elements of comedy or absurdity—which might in fact have held more critical power. However, as Milan Kundera, Slavoj Žižek and other thinkers have pointed out, in modern capitalist society, genuine classical tragedy does not exist. Those who have experienced the Cultural Revolution will often realize that there are actually profound absurd and ridiculous elements within the countless tragic events, fates, and psychological outcomes of the Cultural Revolution. However, this aspect has not been effectively explored, and much

about this historical period is still simply perceived as arising from the “classical” antagonistic patterns of just/unjust, good/evil, and beauty/ugliness.

It was reading Albert Camus’s *The Plague* in the early 1980s that sparked Hong Zicheng’s interest in looking closer at the phenomenon of literary heroization of historical victims. For Hong, *The Plague* was both allegorical and highly realistic. The book explores human attitudes and actions in the face of major, cataclysmic historical events through narrating a fictional Europe in the Middle Ages, which is threatened by a plague originating in Northern Africa. In his book *My Reading History* (Wode yuedushi, Peking University Press, 2017), Hong Zicheng points out that *The Plague* is a first-person novel written in the third person. It chronicles the whole process from the appearance of the plague, to the closure of the city, to the numerous deaths caused by the disease, and finally the victory and control over the plague and the lifting of the city blockade. The narrative strictly adopts the tone of a historical witness. At the end of the novel, readers will suddenly realize that the person who had been telling the whole story in the third person was the protagonist of the story—the doctor who participated in controlling the plague and helping the patients. One line in the novel deeply impressed Hong

Zicheng: after the plague passed and everyone was celebrating victory, the protagonist Dr. Bernard Rieux, says: “To cure everything that we can cure, while waiting to know or see”—Dr. Rieux (in fact, Camus) continually emphasizes his lack of knowledge “I don’t know.” The actors in the novel do not consider themselves to have a thorough grasp of the historical roots of the disaster or the historical logic of its evolution. But Camus and Dr. Rieux are by no means historical nihilists.

The obsession with identifying and thoroughly understanding “historical laws,” and the aesthetic preoccupation with the heroization of sufferers and victims, can actually hinder historical actors’ lucid understanding and deeper inquiry into their current situation. Hong Zicheng believes that it is necessary to let go of this notion of the “universal victim.” As Tzvetan Todorov, a French critic who once lived in the socialist system, said, “If no one wants to be a victim, we all nonetheless want to have been victims: we aspire to the status of having been a victim.” People yearn for such a status because the greater their suffering, the greater their power and right to be compensated.

Binary Divisions of Right and Wrong May

Mask the Complexity of Contemporary History

In “reflective literature” of the 1980s, there are also a few works where a historical turn occurs, and the protagonist wakes up from their hallucinations of being a hero and realizes that they are just an ordinary person, thereby getting free of their Don Quixote style fantasies. Yang Jiang’s *Six Chapters of Life in a Cadre School* (Ganxiao liuji) is representative of this type of work. Another 1980s literary mode of reflection is to try to reconstruct the enlightenment role of the literati heroes that have been lost in the Cultural Revolution through serious and even harsh self-reflection and self-blame, as in for example, Ba Jin’s *Random Thoughts* (Suixiang lu).

Literary circles have given mixed reviews of Ba Jin’s *Random Thoughts*. Some critics think that it is not very literary. To this, Mr. Ba Jin has responded that *Random Thoughts* was not written as a literary work but to provide testimony for history. Mr. Wang Zengqi and the novelist Zhang Jie have stated they believed Ba Jin’s introspection reaches a level approaching cruelty, and that *Random Thoughts* was written with painstaking efforts.

In Hong Zicheng’s opinion, Ba Jin is a very im-

portant writer of the 20th century who has developed his own unique narrative and aesthetic style. This style can be summarized as: panoramic, with a trilogy-like structure, and a sincerely confessional narrative approach. The narrator in his novels is fully invested in bringing about some type of intervention, and always has a moral attitude that clearly defines between good and evil. In *Random Thoughts*, Ba Jin also implements this artistic style, using his own experience to remind people not to forget history. This persistent and sincere attitude and writing, even today, is invaluable and indispensable.

However, there are still some blind spots in Ba Jin's reflections on history and himself. His thinking on historical issues was carried out within the framework of "Enlightenment" thought, in which humanitarianism and humanism were the main criteria for evaluating history. The historical mission of "Enlightenment" in China is far from complete, but this idea of "Enlightenment" itself also needs critical evaluation and reflection. Moreover, Ba Jin also placed too much emphasis on the moral dimension of things. Morality is a powerful weapon, but as an evaluation system and lens for viewing history it has its limitations. The binary division of historical events based on moral indicators, such as good and evil, right and wrong, beauty

and ugliness, authentic and inauthentic, rebellious and obedient, persecutors and persecuted, etc. will to some extent hinder us from having a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of contemporary history. Contemporary China is a pan-political and pan-moral society; the political has penetrated into the daily lives of ordinary people, and into their speech and actions. The standard of moral judgment has also penetrated deep into people's thinking.

As one Japanese political scientist put it, “a society that flaunts noble morals is also a society that proactively tolerates and relies on the moral corruption of its subjects.” In the process of exposing the moral problems of the criticized, the critics often adopt immoral methods; only, it is political power that gives this “immorality” a veneer of justice. In contemporary critical movements, the morality of the critic is not necessarily much higher than the morality of the criticized—it is sometimes even worse. Such a phenomenon is exactly what we need to think about. If we determine the boundaries between good and evil, right and wrong, critics and criticized only from the moral dimension, and further hold these boundaries as absolute, the complexity of things becomes all too easily obscured.

Looking back on contemporary historical experi-

ence, Hong Zicheng said that in contemporary times, the boundary between the critic and the criticized is not as clear and absolute as the “scar literature” and “reflective literature” portray. He used his personal experience as an example, discussing how during one political movement, he had criticized and also been criticized by others, and had even written articles attacking some writers and literary views. Hong talked about how the relative positions of the critic and the criticized are often reversed or transformed. He stressed how further discussion is needed to understand what the ideological and emotional basis of such transformations are, and what kind of psychological and personality rifts occur as a result. Sometimes in this day and age it seems that criticism and self-criticism have evolved into a ritual without substance. For example, Hong Zicheng said that during the Cultural Revolution, a reactionary clique “viciously attacking the proletarian headquarters” was uncovered among the professors of the Department of Chinese Language and Literature at Peking University, which repeatedly carried out criticism meetings within the department. The crime was a vicious attack, but the content of the vicious attack was not to be spread and had to be kept secret from the critics. In this way, the criticism meetings were more like an absurd drama: the critics had

no idea of the cause of their fury. Hong Zicheng recalled hearing of another such “practical” use of Mao Zedong thought employed in one of the May Seventh Cadre Schools: a fierce ideological struggle about whether or not to throw away a moldy cake. It reminded him of what Milan Kundera once said about Kafka’s novels: “Dostoyevsky’s protagonist seeks punishment for his crimes, and Kafka’s protagonist seeks out crime in order to punish.”

In the essay *The Moral Issues of “Contemporary” Critics* (Dangdai pipingjia de daode wenti), which was included in his book *Materials and Annotations* (Cailiao yu zhushi), Hong Zicheng writes about how Zhou Yang was criticized for being a “counter-revolutionary double-dealer” during the Cultural Revolution and examines moments of “reversal and chaos” in various critical movements of the literary and art circles. Hong Zicheng notes that the purpose of his analysis is “not to ‘muddy the waters’ or view history as a hopelessly confused tangle, thinking that there is no right or wrong, beauty or ugliness, good or evil, or that those ‘links’ (historical participants) locked in the ‘historical chain’ do not differ from each other in thought and character; instead such discussions allow us to clarify the basis of the relationship between power and morals in contemporary

political life.” In an era where the two cannot be distinguished from each other, or in an era when moral evaluation has become an important tool of political struggle, “morality can only exist within the coercive limits of power and in specific form, while power manifests its own social significance through its association with moral authority.”

During the lecture, Hong Zicheng discussed the example of Noboru Maruyama, a Japanese scholar who was a researcher of modern Chinese literature and thoughts. Hong pointed out that Noboru Maruyama, who was born in 1931, became interested in modern Chinese literature through conducting comparative research of the histories of modern Japan and China. Such comparative research sought an avenue for Japanese critique; the same can be said to be the original intention of most Japanese-Chinese studies of the post-war period. As a student, Maruyama participated in the left-wing democracy movement in Japan, but the later events in China caused him to go through a painful reevaluation of his position. From the criticism of Hu Feng to the anti-rightist struggles, many writers who Maruyama admired suffered persecution, such as Feng Xuefeng and Ding Ling. Later, the Cultural Revolution happened, which shocked him. In the book *Lu Xun, Revolution, History* (Lu Xun, Geming, Lishi,

Peking University Press, 2005), Maruyama wrote that he developed acute nephritis in the 1960s, and needed dialysis to stay alive. According to the medical knowledge at that time, the doctor told him he might have only two or three years left to live. Knowing this, he wrote “the first thing that came to my mind was how could I die like this without ever going to China. The second thing that came to mind was that I must not die until I see the day when China recognizes that the Cultural Revolution was a mistake.” As an honest thinker and scholar, he did not avoid this task, nor did he simply go back on his original ideals. After studying the writings of Lu Xun and clarifying his own thoughts, Maruyama came to a conclusion: Lu Xun used “resistance” and transformation of the conceptual resources that resonated with him, to construct the “most subjective way of connecting” the individual with the chaotic flow of the era; the way to obtain what Maruyama called the “most subjective way” is not to deliver oneself up to a certain direction, position, or cause without reservation, “not to leap forward at new possibilities,” “but to understand one’s current position and ability, then meticulously do what must be done; this will help guarantee forward progress.”

Hong Zicheng discussed how the construction of

the “most subjective way” that Maruyama talked about is by no means an easy task, and that “resistance” is necessary to produce unique “thinking structures” and modes of action. “Resistance” here includes both the courage to face the reality that one may not want to see, as well as the “self-criticism” that comes with self-reflection. The objects of “resistance” can be summarized and imagined as: rigid thought frameworks, the pressure of powerful trends, self-satisfaction arising from a sense of justice, fear of isolation, biased understanding of one’s ability, etc.

Therefore, Hong Zicheng continued in his lecture, in addition to “starting with oneself,” the practice of self-criticism also needs to include consideration of the problems of “what to say” and “how to say it.” In the postmodern era, with its complex history and social environment filled with ambiguities, and in an age of linguistic diversity, it is worth thinking about how we should face the self and narrate the self. We must realize that a sincere attitude alone is not enough. The question of ideological resources is even more important, that is, what are the references and evidence through which we reflect on ourselves and identify the cracks in our emotions, thoughts, and behaviors? And are they up to the task? — This is an issue that gives us cause for concern.

Hong Zicheng Notes:

The above is a summary of my talk by the reporter Zhang Zhiqi. I'd like to add that "self-criticism" could sometimes also be an escapist way to gain peace of mind. When discussing Kafka's novel *The Burrow* in his book *For a Boundless Realism: Kafka-Picasso*, Roger Garaudy writes: "Can reflection protect the individual? Compared to the author's later great trilogy of works *The Trial*, *Amerika*, and *The Castle*, anxiety about such a question is better answered and expressed in Kafka's short story *The Burrow*." In the book, an animal living underground in a burrow reflects on its existence. At first, it experiences a sort of cowardly sensation of relaxation, no longer feeling any oppression or opposition to itself: "I have changed places, I have returned to my burrow from the upper world, and I feel the effect immediately. It's a new world that gives me fresh strength; whatever in the upper world felt like tiredness doesn't apply here." Happily caught in its own illusions, the animal becomes divorced from reality. In such an imaginary and ethereal vacuum, everything becomes or seems to be comfortable: "I would be perfectly happy if only I could succeed in resolving my own inner turmoil."

On the Founding of *The Scholar Journal*

— Wang Hui

This text was originally presented in the form of a lecture at the Beijing Inside-Out Art Museum on December 1, 2018 and is published here with slight revisions by the author. The lecture, titled “On the Founding of The Scholar Journal,” was part of a series of academic events for the exhibition “The Lonely Spirit,” with Professor Wang Hui as the speaker and Su Wei, Senior Curator at the Inside-Out Art Museum, moderating. The text is translated by Carrisa Fletcher.

Introduction

Today we will discuss the founding of the series *The Scholar* (Xueren). At the point when *The Scholar* ceased publication in 2000, I wrote an article—at the time, *Twenty-First Century* (Ershiyi shiji)¹ journal of Hong Kong had requested that I made a submission, so I produced a review and discussion of academic thought in the 1990s revolving around the two periodicals *The Scholar* and *Twenty-First Century*, focusing on the discussion of *The Scholar*. *The Scholar* was essentially edited by myself, Chen Pingyuan and Wang Shouchang, with each of us taking turns serving as the executive editor for an issue. I was the executive editor for the final issue, and I wrote this article just after completing the editing. I ask Mr. Su Wei to read the paper on my behalf, but first I will say a few words. I think that the two periodicals *The Scholar* and *Twenty-First Century* essentially represent the first round of responses by intellectuals to the changing times after 1989. 1989 was an extraordinarily unique point in history: not only was it quite unique and important in China, to a certain extent, the world today was also defined by this historical moment. Without 1989, the China of today might not be the same as it is now, and the world of today might differ from how it is now as

well. But for those of us living after 1989, it is not easy to be aware of what has defined us. This is why I say that history is sometimes important, because, to a certain extent, it exists unconsciously: a person's actions and values are defined by this premise, without knowing what this premise is. 1989 represents a very special transitional period for both China and the world, a symbolic boundary marker for what we now speak of as the end of the Cold War, as well as globalization. After the great turning point of 1989, the contemporary circumstances compelled every individual to make a choice as to what path they would follow. Looking back on it today, we see that individuals who were formerly part of the same community later followed completely different paths: there were those who joined the market economy and started a business, those who pursued scholarly work, those who left home, and even those who died, in a diverse display of the vicissitudes of life, spurring one to ponder the meaning of time. A feeling of fatefulness emerged in the wake of that historical period. Although each individual exercised their own free will in making their choice at the time, the significance of these choices was not entirely clear, and no one was able to clearly assess the impact of the decision they made. In this sense, it was not you who decided: rather, the de-

cision was made by the subsequent social development and changes, as well as various encounters experienced by you and others.

Just now, I mentioned the significance of *The Scholar* and *Twenty-First Century*. I think that *Twenty-First Century* has adhered more closely to the intellectual trends and theories. After 1989 (primarily concentrated in the 1990s), we were not able to discuss certain issues domestically, and the papers could only be published in *Twenty-First Century*, so papers on the important political discussions and the most sensitive topics did not appear domestically, but rather in *Twenty-First Century*. I was an author too, and later I took part in the editing as well, serving on the editorial board. Although this journal still exists today, it is no longer particularly influential, because there is now a certain amount of room for discussion on the Chinese mainland region. *The Scholar* had the look of an extremely academic periodical: we would often publish academic papers of twenty or thirty thousand characters, or even sixty or seventy thousand characters. The development of this style was also tied to a specific history, which is that, on a certain level, the authors did not make appeals to their readers and audiences. Papers are written for people to read, of course, but from the perspective of academic research, not appeal-

ing for noisy reverberations was what brought about the periodical's purity—it didn't make much profit, and was entirely an academic endeavor. If we look back, *The Scholar* differed from other periodicals in that the most important scholars in the humanities in our generation were then in a key period of accumulating here, and creating there, and essentially all of them published papers in *The Scholar*, including Chen Lai, Liu Dong, Yan Buke, Ge Zhaoguang, Chen Pingyuan, Wang Shouchang, Li Ling, and so on. Their scholarly achievements were concentrated in the areas of literature and historiography, particularly Chinese literature and history, while a minority were related to philosophy. This scholarly community actually had an ambiguous existence: they had no journal press or organization, but to a certain extent, all of these individuals regarded *The Scholar* as their garden. So *The Scholar* played a very special role in the cultivation of humanities scholarship in the 1990s. At the time, the concept of a core journal did not exist, and everyone quite authentically published papers in *The Scholar*, and sent their most important papers to *The Scholar*. This extremely marginal periodical thus wielded extraordinary influence in contemporary scholarly circles. *The Scholar* also had another characteristic: it was a periodical born out of the political shock of

1989, and was in fact a response to 1989. But its mode of response was quite different from *Twenty-First Century* and *Reading* (Dushu)² journal—its response was fairly circuitous. There was an awareness that the major changes in that era were forcing a generation of people to make a choice about the future, and its choice was, on a certain level, to develop academic autonomy, and to use this fairly autonomous academic approach, rather than a direct method, to respond to the tremendous changes encountered in 1989. Direct responses at that time were political in nature, but what we faced after 1989 was truly globalized history. Many things were changing, and the very concept of “history” thus experienced a schism: before, the “history” everyone talked about seemed clear, but now, the approaches for talking about history have become fragmented. In this context, from today’s perspective, the choices made by *The Scholar* display a certain degree of significance. *The Scholar* was a response to the path followed by our generation of scholars in the 1980s, and its principal approach was to allow oneself to revisit history, while the method for revisiting history was to reconstruct the ties to the history. This is also the reason why intellectual history, academic history, and cultural history became major themes in *The Scholar*: all of these address our ties with history,

while also calling for approaches for a new critical understanding of how we defined ourselves and history in the past. Although there were direct political motivations at the time, the particular cultural attitude which informed the journal was not so clear, and *The Scholar* was subjected to some criticism for this reason. For instance, I recall that Professor Li Shenzhi said to me, the most urgent issues nowadays are political issues, so why does *The Scholar* not directly address political issues? I replied, first, if it were to discuss politics, it could not be published—that's the objective state of affairs. Second, we did not make this choice to avoid political risk: rather, from the outset, we hoped to have a cultural choice, and hoped to provide a relatively autonomous space for scholarship and culture.

We persevered for ten years in compiling and publishing this periodical. A host of factors ultimately led to the halt of publication of *The Scholar*: apart from the fact that we few editors were all very busy, there was a kind of pressure, which I think was tied to the changes which the academic system as a whole was then experiencing. What changes was the academic system experiencing? From the outset, *The Scholar* emphasized academic history and academic standards, which were proposed in response to the particu-

lar chaos of the 1990s, but this mantra was quickly institutionalized. So its unique message at the beginning was thereafter blurred—it had meaning at the beginning (including political meaning, I believe), but then it was lost. The second reason is the high degree of institutionalization today for all periodicals, universities, research organizations, and so on: these ensnare almost all scholars, particularly young talented people, within the institutional structure. If you do not publish papers in the core journals which they have designated, you will achieve nothing. We were already encountering this problem in the later era of *The Scholar*: soliciting manuscripts from my generation wasn't such a big problem yet, because these scholars were already professors. We also hoped to attract new people, but when new people had papers, they would certainly hope to gain points at their own institution, which could be calculated as achievements. The system for calculating achievements has become overwhelming today, and everyone has been woven into it. At the time, I felt that it would be quite difficult to continue producing this periodical. I also thought about looking for young people to carry on with it, but after discussing it, I felt that it would be better for young people to recreate it, rather than carrying on—they had new ideas that could create a new universe.

So the journal became a display in a documentary exhibition. *The Scholar* and *Twenty-First Century* differ in this respect: *Twenty-First Century* is supported by the Institute of Chinese Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, so it can carry on regardless of whether or not it is influential. *The Scholar* is the only periodical I know of in that period which did not have the support of an institution—we'll talk about its funding sources in a moment. Now I'd like to ask Su Wei to introduce this article.

Full text of “A Short Decade. *Twenty-First Century* and *The Scholar*”

I have two stacks of periodicals on my desk: one stack is *Twenty-First Century*, and the other is *The Scholar*. The birth of these two periodicals was inseparably tied to the storms of the late 1980s. In the early 1990s, private periodicals almost entirely vanished on the mainland China, and the once-brilliant scene of academic periodicals was no more: even *Reading* (Dushu) struggled to speak as freely as it had in the 1980s. Under these circumstances, *Twenty-First Century* became a rarefied public space for the Chinese mainland intelligentsia. If one wished to discuss the state of Chinese thought since 1989, the role played by *Twenty-First*

Century goes without saying. As I recall, the principal topics of discussion which constituted the intellectual history of the 1990s, such as the debate over radicalism and conservatism in early modern Chinese thought, the debate over the issue of state capacity, the debate over institutional innovation, et cetera, all appeared first in this periodical, before expanding to other publications on the mainland China. In the last few years, the mainland intelligentsia have rarely engaged in true discussions, and many valuable topics have become pretexts for wrangling and fistfights in the media, with the mutual assigning of labels followed by the launch of punitive expeditions being the most common format. Within such a highly politicized atmosphere, with no means of directly addressing political issues, it certainly is not easy for *Twenty-First Century* to organize these important discussions. I hope that such discussions can continue to unfold.

In reading these periodicals, I am inescapably reminded of the scene in the early 1990s. In the period of time after 1989, intellectual circles faced enormous pressure, while also bearing a profound sense of a historical setback. But as I recall, the contemporary discursive atmosphere was somewhat better than it is now. For this reason, I'd like to look back on the situation in this era, though many of its events are no

longer clear in my memories. Many people have already engaged in discussion of *Twenty-First Century*. As we commemorate the tenth anniversary of this periodical, let us discuss the first academic periodical to be founded by intellectuals themselves on the Chinese mainland in the 1990s—*The Scholar*, which can perhaps illuminate certain aspects of the academic atmosphere on the mainland in this decade. The founding of *The Scholar* was followed by a surge in private periodicals, a gratifying sight to we three editors. A little over two years prior to this, the company of Mr. Takatsutsu Mitsuyoshi, which had long funded the publication of *The Scholar*, went bankrupt, and Professors Itō Toramaru, Ozaki Fumiaki, Kubosaki Shinobu, and Takahashi Nobuyuki of Japan drew a certain sum from their own salaries to support the publication of the last three volumes of *The Scholar*. Given this situation, and considering the workloads of the three editors, we decided to temporarily suspend publication of *The Scholar*. In October of last year, on the day before I left Beijing for a trip to the United States, we completed the final volume (Vol. 15) of the series for *The Scholar*, and in consultation with Chen Pingyuan and Wang Shouchang, I wrote a brief note explaining the suspension of publication. When I returned to Beijing this July, the repeatedly delayed 15th

volume had just been published, thus drawing a decade of editing work to a close. Modern Chinese history has seen the emergence of a host of private periodicals, but most have been short-lived, with some lasting one or two years, and some lasting three or five year; periodicals which can persevere to reach ten years are a rare sight. In the early 1990s, this series published on the mainland worked in concert with *Twenty-First Century*, published in Hong Kong, responding to different trends in their respective academic environments. Over the last ten years, *The Scholar* quietly did its work and pursued publication, and even if relevant reports or debates emerged, we made no response. This was the mutual agreement of we three editors at the start of publication. Now that our work at *The Scholar* has reached its end, I should perhaps say a little something about our ten years of effort. This is an explanation for the readers, and for the friends who cared about and supported *The Scholar*, an explanation stemming from my personal experiences.

The Scholar was founded in 1991, but its founding was first proposed in the fall and winter of 1989. In December of that year, which was particularly frigid, a few Japanese friends whom I had not met before came over from Tokyo to Beijing: Mr. Takahashi

Nobuyuki, and a woman from Mr. Takatsutsu Mitsuyoshi's cleaning company. At Beijing Peace Hotel, I also met the legal expert Mr. Kuroda, then pursuing advanced studies at Fudan University, whom they had invited to help; Professor Kubosaki Shinobu, who was then pursuing a degree in Chinese philosophical history at Peking University, was also in attendance. Following the summer of 1989, out of concern for Chinese intellectuals, a number of Tokyo's scholars of Chinese studies, including Professors Itō Toramaru, Maruyama Noboru, Ozaki Fumiaki, et cetera, had proposed that Takatsutsu and Takahashi (whom our Japanese friends later jokingly referred to as the "Two Takas") give assistance to the Chinese. They therefore established the Preparatory Committee for the International Friendship Academic Foundation, with the hope that contributions from Mr. Takatsutsu's company would serve as the initial funding, and other companies or organizations could later be attracted to join (this vision seemingly never came to pass), to support the cause of international scholar, and particularly Chinese scholarship. These scholars of Chinese studies introduced Mr. Takatsutsu and Mr. Takahashi to a few friends and scholars in Beijing. Upon his arrival in Beijing, Mr. Takahashi immediately set out to make contact with a number of scholars. On that same day, I

went with Lin Gang and Sun Ge to meet them at the hotel: at the entrance, we saw that Chen Pingyuan and Huang Ziping on their way out, so we knew that they had already met with them, but we did not know what they had discussed. After entering the room and exchanging greetings, Mr. Takahashi explained their reasons for coming: Since 1989, a number of friends in Japan had been extremely concerned about the situation of the Chinese intelligentsia, and hoped that they could do something to promote genuine private interactions between the two countries of China and Japan. They planned to apply to the State Education Commission to establish a private university, and had therefore specially invited the legal expert Mr. Kuroda to come to Beijing with them. Amidst the grey atmosphere of 1989, such words sounded more like tall tales than a cause for rejoicing. I candidly stated that applying to establish a university was impossible, and proposed that they might fund the publication of an academic publication. Although this was a conservative proposal, as far as I know, none of our friends in Beijing believed that this could be achieved either. Mr. Takahashi did not commit to either a yes or no, but when I met again with Mr. Takahashi and Mr. Takatsutsu two years later, they told me that this proposal had profoundly inspired them. As expected, the idea

of establishing a university had been discarded after getting in touch with relevant authorities.

Why did the “Two Takas” take the initiative to support Chinese intellectuals? On the one hand, they were encouraged by Professors Itō Toramaru, Ozaki Fumiaki, and other Japanese scholars; on the other hand, 1989 ignited a fervor in people around the world who were concerned with the fate of Chinese society. But the aspirations of the “Two Takas” themselves had the most direct of motives. Mr. Takatsutsu was the board chair of a small cleaning company, and Mr. Takahashi was an official with the Office for Counter-measures to Aging Issues of the municipal government of Mitaka: he had been visiting China since the age of 39 to study the Chinese language, and had a passion for civil cultural exchanges between China and Japan. The two of them had been friends and classmates while attending Hosei University. Their studies coincided with China’s Cultural Revolution, as well as a revolutionary era of turbulent student movements around the world. Both were active in the contemporary student movement, and Takatsutsu was also the chair of the student union at Hosei University. They were both arrested and imprisoned in the course of the movement. Following his release, Takatsutsu left university to inherit the family enterprise, becom-

ing the board chair of the cleaning company. After Takahashi was released, he began working for the municipal government of Mitaka: due to his history of imprisonment, he was unable to get a position in a better department. At the time, few people were willing to go to the Office for Countermeasures to Aging. But Takahashi assiduously pursued the work, conducting surveys of the state of public welfare in Sweden, the United States and China at personal expense, and carefully designing countermeasures to aging problems for the municipal government of Mitaka. Through his prolonged efforts, Mitaka became a model city throughout Japan for its handling of public welfare for the elderly, and Takahashi himself consequently drew widespread attention in Japanese society for a book he wrote on senior welfare. Three years earlier, he had resigned from his position in Mitaka and taken a position as a professor in the field of public welfare at a university in Kyushu. These were the two true idealists whom I met: having come of age in the 1960s, they acknowledged the immaturity and failure of the movement, but in their hearts, they had never abandoned the ideals of their youth. Once certain conditions were met, they were willing to pay the price for their ideals. I recall that, when *The Scholar* was first founded, Mr. Takatsutsu brought a few senior

employees from his company to Beijing: after the meeting, his colleagues said to me that, every time Mr. Takatsutsu returned to Tokyo from Beijing, he would tell them that the work of *The Scholar* was truly “interesting.” Mr. Takatsutsu did not know the Chinese language, and at the beginning, he supported our work primarily to help his friends in their endeavors. It was only after becoming acquainted with us that he began to develop this “interest.” But what was his interest? The colleagues at his company did not understand. That was the reason why Takatsutsu invited his colleagues to meet us editors. His colleagues said that now they understood what the board chair meant by saying it was “interesting.” I think that his “interest” involved an understanding of and respect for our work, as well as friendship and esteem arising from working together. The practices of *The Scholar* signified that, in a world where globalization and nationalism go hand in hand, in an era rife with mammonism, true internationalism without thought of seeking any personal profit was still possible. Over the course of ten years, every time a volume of *The Scholar* was published, Takatsutsu and Takahashi would both fly out to Beijing, and apart from paying for the authors’ remuneration and the publishing expenses, and dis-

cussing matters related to *The Scholar*, we also had many opportunities to chat, and became true friends.

So why did my friends and I propose the founding of a periodical in the winter of 1989? This was not an offhand idea. In the month prior to the arrival of these Japanese friends in Beijing, I recall that, on the day martial law was lifted in Beijing, a few friends pooled their lunch money and entrusted *Reading* (Dushu) magazine to convene the first meeting of intellectuals since “June Fourth,” in the hope that we could regain momentum to pursue serious academic work, and capture our experiences and failures in the 1980s in the form of academic research. I remember that there were two fairly salient views at the meeting: one was negative, arguing that, until the political situation changed, it would be impossible for the intelligentsia to do anything; the other view was fairly positive, arguing that, even if it were impossible to directly discuss the issues before us, we should still remain committed to academic research, and engage in self-reflection. At the meeting, I quoted the words of Max Weber in *Science as a Vocation*, in an attempt to provide a certain ethical basis for my own research work. These ideas had already developed into a consensus through private discussions with Jin Dacheng, Chen Yangu, and a few other friends after “June Fourth”:

namely, that even in the harshest of environments, we must not abandon academic research; rather, it was a matter of vital urgency that we engage in systematization and criticism of modern thought and scholarship, in an effort to examine the setbacks we encountered in the late 1980s through the approach of historical research. But we did not have our own periodical.

Against this backdrop, when the “Two Takas” asked my opinion, I offered the proposal of founding a periodical. It is also for these reasons that, although *The Scholar* was later specifically edited by Chen Pingyuan, Wang Shouchang and myself, in our hearts, this periodical was the shared product of many people in Beijing’s intellectual circles. The three of us just did a little concrete editing and liaison work in addition to the writing.

After the initial meeting with our Japanese friends, changes occurred in my own life. First, there were a number of setbacks following the movement, and then I received orders to go to Shangluo Mountain, deep in the Qinling Mountains, where I stayed for more than half a year. When I returned to Beijing in October 1990, the situation there had already experienced a major shift. Around May of that year, Tokyo Woman’s Christian University, where Professor Itō Toramaru taught, had invited Sun Yushi, Huang Houx-

ing, Chen Pingyuan and Wang Shouchang to visit Japan and engage in academic exchanges. This event was sponsored by the newly founded Preparatory Committee for the International Friendship Academic Foundation. After returning to Beijing, Pingyuan, Shouchang, Kubosaki Shinobu had gathered at the home of Sun Yushi to discuss the matter of publishing a periodical. Upon my return to Beijing, this idea was revived, and after consulting with various parties, Shouchang, Pingyuan and myself assumed the office of editors. In early 1991, on a frigid morning, we invited a few friends to a gathering at Ladle Garden (Shao Yuan) at Peking University to address the topic of “issues in academic history”; in reality, this marked our first announcement of the plans for the publication of *The Scholar* to our friends. Apart from we three editors, I recall that Liang Zhiping, Qian Wenzhong, Ge Zhaoguang, Liu Dong, Yan Buke, Chen Yangu, Jin Dacheng, Lei Yi, Wang Wei, Kubosaki Shinobu, and so on were all there, and Professor Pang Pu was also in attendance. In March 1991, I traveled to Tokyo with Zhang Liwen, Qiang Liqun, and Chen Lai to participate in the second conference sponsored and convened by the Preparatory Committee for the International Friendship Academic Foundation. I recall that the theme was “Modernization and Nationalization: The

Course of Asian Modernization and Ethnonational Factors.” The conference revolved around “The Influence of Confucianism on the Deep Spiritual Structure of Modern and Contemporary Intellectuals,” and was divided into the two subthemes of “Modern Western Science and School of Zhu Xi—Focusing on the Concept of *Gezhi* [Investigating the Materiality of Things]” and “Lu Xun’s Awareness of ‘Historical Intermediates.’” During our visit to Japan, Professors Itō and Ozaki, the “Two Takas,” and I engaged in discussions regarded the publication of a periodical.

That year coincided with Professor Ozaki’s research sabbatical at Peking University, so we three editors had many opportunities to discuss the publication efforts with him. We initially suggested that Professor Ozaki also serve as an editor, taking charge of soliciting submissions from Japanese scholars. Professor Ozaki later contributed significantly to the work, but due to various considerations, he was not listed as an editor. Before publishing *The Scholar*, we chiefly addressed three issues: first, the title of the periodical; second, the publishing press which would publish it; and third, the aim and orientation of the periodical. Let’s first talk about the title of the periodical. The three of us each submitted proposals, but our opinions differed. Finally, Wang Shouchang remarked that the

Research Institute of Chinese Philosophy and Culture had once had plans to publish a periodical, but had been hindered by various obstacles; the intended title had been “The Scholar.” Mr. Qi Gong had reportedly been asked to create the title in calligraphy. Pingyuan and I felt that this title aligned more or less with the aim of our periodical, so we agreed with Shouchang’s proposal to adopt this title. With respect to the publication of the periodical, our first choice was SDX Joint Publishing Company: Pingyuan and I paid a special visit to Shen Changwen, who was then the editor-in-chief and president of SDX, and he invited us to directly make contact with a particular editor regarding this matter. After several rounds of negotiations, SDX agreed to publish the periodical, but it was unable to guarantee our request for publication six months after the submission of manuscripts; at the same time, the required publishing fees were much more than we could afford. Around the time of the Spring Festival in 1991, I went to Yangzhou to visit my parents, and met up with my university classmate Wu Xingfei: at the time, he had just become the director of Jiangsu Literature and Art Publishing House. I discussed our plans for *The Scholar* with him, and he immediately expressed his willingness to take on this project; he was able to guarantee the publishing time,

and the fees were also somewhat cheaper compared to Beijing. After returning to Beijing, I informed Pingyuan and Shouchang of the situation, and they both felt that it was acceptable. Professor Ozaki remarked that it was just as well that the periodical not be published in Beijing, as our objective was to proceed quietly, without too much fanfare. This was likely our best option at the time. *The Scholar* was published by Jiangsu Literature and Art Publishing House beginning in 1991, and Mr. Zhu Jianhua served as the executive editor, up until the final volume this year.

The key to whether a periodical can be handled well resides in its aim and objectives, as well as the capacity to realize said aim and objectives. Prior to the gathering at Ladle Garden in Peking University, a few friends had already launched efforts in the area of academic history, but my own energies were directed more toward the area of early modern intellectual history. So, when Pingyuan proposed that the discussion take the themes of academic history and academic standards, et cetera, Shouchang and I both agreed, and the friends around us endorsed the idea as well, though I knew in my heart that each of us had a different understanding of academic history and academic standards, as well as different perspectives for approaching the issue.

The study of academic history is a specialized field, so in such a highly politicized era, why would so many scholars take an interest in a field seemingly remote from politics? Why were scholars in an array of different fields willing to publish their respective views on a field which is in fact quite difficult to clearly define? Thinking back on it, there were several reasons. First, after 1989, the intellectual world engaged in reflections on the 1989 People's Movement; the basic trends of these reflections echoed the discussions on radicalism which were then unfolding in *Twenty-First Century*. Many scholars believed that the approach in the 1989 People's Movement had been insufficiently mature, and that this was tied to some extent to the characteristics of social trends of thought in the 1980s. The question of how to understand Chinese history and reality thus became a kind of intrinsic requirement. Academic history seemed to provide a space for discussion of relevant issues on the two levels of scholarship and politics. Second, in terms of the objective conditions on the mainland China in that period, publishing papers that were political in nature was impossible, even for those scholars who were most concerned with political issues; this aspect was quite different from the circumstances of *Twenty-First Century*. People had to find a comparatively safe acad-

emic space to develop their thinking. Third, and in my opinion, most importantly, there was an intrinsic relationship between the above two points and the repositioning of intellectuals. In an era of political inaction, intellectuals had to find a suitable approach to convert their ethical fervor into a means of taking a stand in society. These circumstances happened to coincide with scholars' reflections. Academic specialization became the expression of this approach. According to my recollections, the question of how to address the relationship between politics and scholarship was on the minds of many scholars: we had just experienced or were then experiencing a scene of social unrest, and were situated within an exceedingly grim political atmosphere, but our consensus at the time was not to intervene directly in political issues, but rather to strive to form relatively independent academic fields, so as not to swiftly transform academic research into another kind of political commentary. The defeat in 1989 caused everyone to realize that this kind of excessive political zeal influenced people's judgment, while rigorous academic research would serve as an important avenue for us to understand Chinese history and society.

By taking academic history and academic standards as its themes for discussion, *The Scholar* was

tied to the above reflections from the outset. Academia and politics are inseparable, but rigorous and careful research is required even when discussing politics and other pressing social issues. In other words, the more pressing the issue, the more careful, independent thinking is required. In this sense, it was imperative that *The Scholar* uphold the inherent normativeness of scholarship. However, the significance of scholars is not determined by scholars' own definitions: rather, it is the attainments, vision and judgment of the scholars themselves which truly play the deciding role. The rigorousness of academic research is the manifestation of such attainments, vision and judgment. However, under the circumstances emerging after 1989, such ideas in fact created an ambiguous state of knowledge, which called for intervention in history and society through an academic approach, while also requiring that this be manifested in an "academic" (i.e., "apolitical") form. That academic history and academic standards became the topics of discussion for a time carried certain political implications, but in the process of becoming topics of discussion, the subtle political considerations which they hinted at seemed to gradually disappear. In reviewing the course of thought in intellectual circles on the Chinese mainland in the 1990s, there are many aspects of this discussion on

academic history which merit recapitulation. The practices of *The Scholar* in this respect provided a golden opportunity for research on academic and intellectual history, and it achieved a certain degree of success, but if we consider the initial starting point, we must acknowledge that indistinct aspects remain in terms of the thinking in that period. Solely relying on the transformation of the academic approach cannot guarantee that we have a broadened historical and intellectual perspective, and at times, so-called pure academic research may also sink into another kind of blind conformism. In the wake of the development experienced in the 1990s by Chinese society, including the education system, discussions on academic history and academic standards have provided slogans and models in the course of the professionalization and specialization of scholarship, but the intent to gain a renewed understanding of our own history and practices by means of these discussions has gradually been obscured. In terms of my personal observations, the content of *The Scholar* is fairly expansive, and the study of academic history is only one aspect of it. Apart from its papers, which amount to fifteen volumes and approximately 8 million characters, the greatest achievement of *The Scholar* is that: in a depressed and constrained era, it provided a place to

many young scholars devoted to academic work, and also provided a space in which a generation of scholars could grow. I myself cannot evaluate the academic contributions of *The Scholar*, but I am clear on one point, which is that the vast majority of the achievements here formed an important contrast with contemporary public opinion in the media. A fair number of the scholars who are active today in certain fields in the humanities and social sciences were authors and friends of *The Scholar*. For me personally, my reflections and research after 1989 were closely tied to the editing and publication of *The Scholar*.

Ten years have passed, and the mission of *The Scholar* is drawing to a close. Perhaps one day we ourselves, or perhaps the younger generation, will resume the undertaking of *The Scholar*. In the course of this decade, Chinese society has experienced an intensive transformation, and the intellectual world of that era has also experienced irreversible divisions. Such is history, the history that we have experienced. I occasionally think about the scene in that era, which evokes complex emotions. It is quite moving that people could retain mutual respect and understanding, perseverance and indomitability in a period of crisis and suppression. Advocacy of research on academic and intellectual history and advocacy of respect for

basic academic standards were once important topics for humanities circles on the mainland China. Compared to the practices of today, and the practices of contemporary “scholars on social media” and “intellectuals on social media,” the principles which sustained scholars in taking a stand in society during a special era seem precious, and so fragile! It is easy to attribute all of this to an autocratic environment, but this cannot explain one fundamental fact: In the more constrained period of the early 1990s, scholars were nevertheless able to exhibit greater self-discipline, tolerance and a sense of calling, as well as greater respect for the cause of scholarship than today. The independent character of scholars and intellectuals is closely tied to intellectual practices, and ought to be established as a kind of working ethical code, rather than boastful words spoken for others’ ears—this was the original intention in the founding of *The Scholar*. I have heard people describe the invective, wrangling, libel and attacks which pervade our surroundings as the exercising of democracy, and I believe that people will inevitably represent all such things as the “independent spirit” of intellectuals, and so on; in my view, this is an absurdity akin to equating McCarthyism with democratic practices. Chinese society has achieved many extraordinary advances, and the cause

of scholarship has seen a little development, but we have not yet truly cultivated an atmosphere for conscientious discussion of the issues, and an approach for using academic research to intervene in social problems. I regard this as our own failure, a failure deeply pervading the marrow of our academic community. There are no dignified grounds on which this failure can be defended.

However, it is false to regard the wrangling within so-called “intellectual circles” as the totality of the academic world in mainland China. The carnival manufactured by the media is merely a mirage, and the performances of a few individuals cannot represent the intellectual circles of China. I myself am ignorant and ill-informed, yet I can still perceive the tenacious efforts of friends and scholars who are few in number, though not too few, and perceive the strength which they put forth in quiet research and reflection. In contrast with the clamors of the media, these silent endeavors appear feeble, but sometimes silence is necessary, and isolated investigation is necessary too. Most importantly, to unwaveringly pursue exploration, even in the face of misunderstanding and outright attacks, is the mission of scholars, as well as the destiny of intellectuals with the capacity for independent thought. Several of the papers published in *Twenty-First Centu-*

ry have incited fierce debate, but who now can entirely deny the work of those independent explorers? Looking back on the discussions of the past decade, the papers which are impressed most deeply upon our minds comprise those texts which came under attack: many are only now understanding the historical foresight demonstrated in the texts over time. Similarly, in reviewing the academic achievements of the past decade, many of the works which can draw our attention anew are those studies which were produced through prolonged accumulation and research, yet did not necessarily make a stir (I certainly do not mean to say that works which do make a stir do not represent excellent research), once again demonstrating the need for ongoing investigation and accumulation in academic work. All of this more or less makes me feel that the work completed by *The Scholar* was not in vain. The conscientiousness and passion which informed the era of publication of this periodical is worth being cherished by myself and my friends.

Conversation

SU WEI I would first like to invite Professor Wang to introduce a few of the important directions for scholarship during the decade of work on *The Scholar*, as

well as any transitional changes which took place over the course of those ten years.

WANG HUI It's already so long ago that it would take a great deal of effort and rereading to carefully separate out the threads of that era. However, there is one point that everyone can see: the scholars of my generation who are currently active in scholarship and research on the humanities, such as Yan Buke, Li Ling, Ge Zhaoguang, Chen Pingyuan, Chen Lai, et cetera, and including myself as well, continue to pursue this work even today. Interestingly, there was a very strong sense of community back then, but today this sense of community has already disappeared. We all know what we experienced together, but our respective orientations as researchers differ. This difference was already present within the series *The Scholar*, and if one were to conduct an archaeology of contemporary knowledge, *The Scholar* might be a factor.

I'd also like to say another few words about the small Japanese community mentioned just now in the article. I think this requires explanation, because Chinese-Japanese relations have experienced extremely intense changes between the 1980s and today, with many ups and downs; a group of Japanese politicians essentially monopolize the entire historical narrative,

but many Japanese intellectuals have a different attitude toward history. The Japanese scholars and friends who supported *The Scholar* are among the generation in Japanese society which has engaged in criticism of history in Japanese society, so we were able to form an internationalist connection with them. Although Chinese scholarship and international exchanges are much more substantial now compared to that era, such models for connections seem to be increasingly rare, and there is scant possibility of forming an academic community transcending national origin.

By the time our editing of the periodical concluded, Takatsutsu Mitsuyoshi's small company had gone bankrupt. His company had been a very small cleaning company, and he was not really able to speak Chinese. Takatsutsu Mitsuyoshi and Takahashi Nobuyuki took part in the Japanese student movement of the 1970s, which later failed. They were both arrested. Japan certainly had a few idealists like these individuals: Professor Maruyama Noboru of the University of Tokyo was a Japanese Communist; he was expelled from the Japanese Communist Party for criticizing the party, and was later reinstated. He was a professor at the time, and he was arrested and imprisoned due to his support for the student movement. Ozaki Fumiaki was also arrested for taking part in the student move-

ment. But the fluctuations of history are sometimes ironic, and cannot be guided by any individual. I recall that, around that time that our editing of *The Scholar* concluded, Ozaki Fumiaki faced a choice: he had graduated from the University of Tokyo, and at the time, the university wanted Ozaki to return and teach there. The University of Tokyo is the best university in Japan, and being hired by the University of Tokyo will raise a professor's academic status to a greater or lesser extent. But Ozaki was extremely hesitant at the time—of course, at the urging of Itō Toramaru and Maruyama Noboru, he ultimately still went. The reason for his mental resistance was that, back in the days of their student movement, the University of Tokyo had been regarded as the ruling order, and had been the target of their rebellion. So when he was suddenly asked to return and accept a position as a professor, he faced the internal problem of how to rearrange the convictions and ideals of his youth.

Takatsutsu and Takahashi faced similar circumstances, particularly Takatsutsu: he had still been the chair of the student union at the time of his arrest, and in order to survive, he had no alternative but to take over his father's cleaning company, and become a petty capitalist. After becoming a member of the petit bourgeoisie, he felt that he was a traitor. He thought

constantly about what kind of link there was between himself now and the things he had done when he was young. So when we offered the proposal of founding a periodical, both Takatsutsu and Takahashi felt completely obligated to do it. Takahashi was a low-level official working in the Office for Countermeasures to Aging Issues of Mitaka in Tokyo: he had directed some of his ideas toward research on the issues of social welfare and the elderly, but he felt completely obligated to help Takatsutsu work with us on the collaborative periodical. As the president of a company, Takatsutsu used his own money to help us—though it wasn't much, he always explained it to his subordinates. There were always some among his subordinates who did not understand what their boss was really doing, so on two or three occasions, he brought over groups of the mid-level administrators at his company to chat and have a meal with us, so that they would understand the significance of this work. Under today's system, we have an array of large-scale foundations, but the operational logic behind them is another matter. With this small amount of support, in the end, a foundation was never established—only a preparatory committee was created, and nothing ever took shape. Actually, it was just Takatsutsu himself handing over funding to pursue this endeavor. I'm re-

lating this context to explain that, although we edited the periodical, it was inseparable from their support. In today's globalized era, such support is perversely not easy to find, and I have always felt respect and gratitude toward them. While writing this article, I made a special effort to talk about their affairs. I feel that it would be extremely difficult to find such support again today: this is the legacy of another era, which should be cherished.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1 In the face of the internationalization beginning in the 1990s, while producing this periodical, did you make comparisons with the relevant international periodicals of that period, chiefly in the Western countries? Just now you mentioned that it proceeded with a focus mainly on domestic cultural history and academic history, and I think that such lateral comparisons are very common today, but the conditions at the time may have been different—what were your thoughts on this aspect at the time?

WANG HUI On the one hand, this periodical seemed to be quite conventional, consisting of scholarship on the humanities, and revisiting history. But on the other hand, it proposed a set of approaches to academic standards and academic history, which were more or

less tied to a fundamental requirement in international scholarship, but aligning with international conventions was not our primary motivation. Objectively speaking, the series *The Scholar* was likely the most internationalized periodical among the contemporary Chinese academic journals: not only was our founding process itself international, at that time, apart from Japanese scholars, the authors who published papers in our periodical also included American, South Korean and European scholars. We would translate their submissions into Chinese, and later we also directly published papers in English and Japanese. Of course, directly publishing in English and Japanese was more difficult for our readers, so we still made the greatest efforts to publish translations, and these papers were all first published in *The Scholar*. This is also the reason why, in the mid- to late 1990s, a few years after the founding of *The Scholar*, this periodical had already developed a certain degree of influence, particularly in international academic circles related to China. For instance, a long paper of mine in the first issue addressing scientific concepts was quickly translated into English and published in *Positions*. *Positions* was founded around the conclusion of the Cold War, and it is regarded as a very important journal with respect to Asia scholarship.

I recall that I went to Sweden in 1993 to attend a conference, with the theme of “Individuals, Society and the State in Contemporary China.” many important domestic and international scholars on China studies assembled there in what could be described as the last large-scale gathering on academic thought after the 1980s and prior to the major divergence in intellectual circles in the mid-1990s. People of different inclinations today were still united then, but this did not take place domestically, but rather in Sweden. A relatively small number of people went from the mainland China: there were five people including myself and Chen Pingyuan, Wang Yuanhua, Zhu Weizheng, and Zhang Zhiyang; in addition, the mainland scholars Bei Dao, Gao Xingjian, Gan Yang, Liu Xiaofeng, Li Zehou, Liu Zaifu, Li Tuo, Liu He, and Gao Jianping traveled from Europe and the United States; Lam To-kwan of Oxford [University Press] in Hong Kong was there as well, along with Jin Guantao, Liu Qingfeng and Fong Ching Chen of the Chinese University of Hong Kong; there was also Yu Ying-shih, Yu-sheng Lin, Ou-fan Lee, Hao Chang, et cetera, who came from the United States but had an early background in Taiwan; and in Sweden, there was Torbjörn Lodén, Göran Malmqvist, and Chen Maiping; I remember that Su Shaozhi, Yan Jiaqi, and others who

had gone into exile overseas were there as well. The critical opportunity for the conference was that Liu Zaifu was then serving as a visiting professor at Stockholm University. These communities engaged in a round of discussion overseas, and this discussion had brought together different intellectual elements, but at the time, everyone was still able to sit together, and now they may even not be able to sit together. One of the topics of discussion at the time was reflection on domestic scholarship, and judgment on Chinese society: in particular, the writers discussed the meaning of exile, and the significance of the Chinese language—whether the Chinese language was really their homeland, and how scholarship on the humanities could reflect on our position in the global flow. There had been discussions at the conference at the time, and a debate arose after the meal, with quite serious disagreements at times. Later, some of us went together to Russia, traveling from Stockholm to St. Petersburg by boat, and then walking everywhere in St. Petersburg. Prior to this, someone had interviewed me, and I had made reference to these matters—China is tied to the early modern history of Russia, so how do we evaluate the enormous changes that have occurred in Russia? When we visited Russia, Boris Yeltsin was in office. I recall that, at the time, I was

very young and very poor, and I had never felt like I had money, but as it turned out, when I went to exchange money in Russia, one US dollar was exchanged for 1300 rubles: I was using a little leather bag like the second-hand traffickers of the 1980s, tied at my waist, and I stuffed the rubles inside—that scene left a very deep impression on me. A flurry of discussions was taking place in this community all at once, and history was constantly being recalled by the contemporary circumstances—I thought that this was a vision. I’ve written in the past about the state of contemporary Chinese thought, and I began by talking about a few conditions, one of which was that these discussions, whether academic or intellectual in nature, differed from the 1980s and earlier periods: intellectual discussions in the 1980s and earlier essentially consisted of discussions within domestic intellectual circles, but the people who were referenced and who directly participated in intellectual discussions in the 1990s and thereafter all featured an international character, which was rather different from the past.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2 Professor Wang, I’m a graduate student in the Department of History studying intellectual history, and I’ve heard scholars from the elder generation, like you, say many times that we have to tear

down the barriers to pursue investigation and reflection. In general, we've read many books and reflected on them, but when we really think about putting pen to paper to write something, we still find that we simply do not know how to begin. I don't know whether you experienced difficulties similar to ours in the period when you were attending school? Do you have any experiences that you could share with us?

WANG HUI The path or methodology of scholarship is always based on the individual's aspirations, and emerges when he sets the question. In the past, an emphasis was placed on traditions—that is, the classics, or what we refer to as a scholarly lineage, which is quite different from the modern era. I think the most important issue may be what questions you are actually asking. When you pose academic questions that are particularly important to you, or questions which you have personally faced, you want to answer these questions. In general, the basic pattern of a scholar is, when I pose a major question, I necessarily have to find a place to get started. One encounters many questions on the path of scholarship, and questions also have many facets, so one must always find an avenue by which one can get involved. In terms of my own field of work, I think that this is the first step. The sec-

ond step is that you slowly discover your own limitations, because if your question has sufficient weight, you will find that it is impossible to truly answer it by relying on your existing knowledge and methods, so you will always be going back and forth between doing and learning. The idea of breaking down barriers is just a saying—in reality, it is not possible for people’s thinking to have such a clear thread. This always develops naturally in the course of your investigation of your question, and the importance of specialized training lies in enabling you to have a fundamental approach for getting started. Even if you are involved in another field, you will still address it with a fairly specialized approach—you know that these fields are not something you can casually enter into, and you always have to have a very long process. This is my own perception—I think that there is no completely constant approach, and it always gradually takes shape through long-term reading and reflection.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3 Professor Wang, I recall that you also took part in editing the magazine *Reading* (Dushu) from 1996 on—during the few years that you simultaneously participated in editing *The Scholar* and *Reading*, what comparisons did you make between the two magazines, and how do you think *Reading* is dif-

ferent today versus the earlier period when you were the editor-in-chief?

WANG HUI That last question is not for me to answer, but rather is for the readers to answer. I began editing *Reading* in 1996, and continued until the summer of 2007, for a period of roughly eleven and a half years. The period from 1996 to around 2000, approximately four years, overlapped with my time as editor of *The Scholar*. However, the two publications were extremely different in terms of their nature. The reasons are quite simple: *The Scholar* was an academic periodical, and *Reading* is a magazine—that's the first point. Second, the community of readers and the community of authors for *Reading* were both much broader compared to *The Scholar*, because the issues which it addresses include almost everything. The point in common is that their author communities, particularly the author communities in the past, were primarily focused on literature and history. Third, since *Reading* is a monthly magazine, it has to respond to a certain extent to contemporary life, and its interactions with the readers differ from *The Scholar*, which just involved the scholars and friends with whom we were familiar, pursuing academic research. *Reading* is different: during the period when we were editing, a huge number

of reader letters would arrive every month, and we would generally select a few extracts to include at the end each month, so the rate of response was quite fast. Of course, it's different now: the period when I was editing *Reading* coincided with an era in which major changes were taking place in publishing and printing, with the transformation ushered in by computerization: when I began pursuing editing work, it was still the era of using movable type printing, and movable type printing was used for proofreading as well. The proofreading workload for a first, second and third draft was relatively high, and the work cycles were comparatively long: a periodical had to be prepared two months in advance before it could be printed. But following computerization, it could basically be produced in one or two weeks.

I have not only made a comparison with *Reading* —at the time, Zhu Wei was editing *Sanlian Lifeweek Magazine* (Sanlian shenghuo zhoukan), and we also discussed these issues. I found that producing a weekly or biweekly publication is also different from producing a monthly publication. A weekly publication becomes topical, and if it is not current, then the publication cannot be sustained. *Reading* is quite special: it requires you to have not only depth of thought, but also depth of knowledge, while also calling upon you

to have a response. This response is not necessarily an immediate reaction to the events currently taking place, but a response of a certain depth is always demanded. If the response to practical issues in *Reading* were identical to the media, then it would lack the characteristics of *Reading*; but if *Reading* were completely unable to make a response, then it would be like *The Scholar*, so *Reading* is actually situated between a few sides. The greatest strength of publications like *Reading* lies in the capacity to set the topic of discussion: it doesn't run on a daily basis like the media, but it does have the capacity to capture issues. At the same time, once an issue has arisen, these topics of conversation will slowly begin to filter out into the media—for instance, through the editor of a media outlet issuing a response to *Reading*. There is one other difference between *Reading* and *The Scholar*: *The Scholar* is an academic periodical drawing a certain degree of attention from intellectuals, while *Reading* must cater to a broader community of non-specialized readers. Furthermore, it must set out from a specialized field, while also being able to raise wider-ranging issues with broader significance through the work of the specialized field. Therefore, if *The Scholar* is a scholars' periodical, *Reading* is a fairly typical intellectuals' periodical. The community of authors for

Reading brings together the old, middle-aged, and young, from those in the older generation like Professor Fei Xiaotong and Professor Jin Kemu, to somewhat younger folks like Li Shenzhi and Wang Meng; below that is our group here, and below that are a few overseas students and scholars who are currently taking shape. To a certain extent, *Reading* also plays a relatively flexible role in terms of its style. *The Scholar* had a clumsy style—for instance, the essays I wrote were clumsy, and essentially did not give much consideration to readers' issues. But when I was serving as the editor of *Reading*, I was obliged to consider these issues. I think that the on-the-scene presence of *Reading* has also transformed or cultivated a younger generation of intellectuals: to write articles for *Reading*, they have to change their style, and have to learn how to use a somewhat more readable approach to explain issues which are not necessarily very readable. Another point in common is, what does *Reading* want? Although *Reading* takes an interest in a diverse array of practical issues, it still seeks to accumulate knowledge, and also to engage in reflection following the pursuit of knowledge. It does not immediately declare a position on issues which have just arisen—of course, every individual has a position or attitude, but your attitude or position can only be presented

through the pursuit of well-grounded knowledge. The readers of *Reading* seem to be fonder of this approach: if they were to discover that you were merely declaring a position to make noise, then they would no longer like to read this magazine; they wish to see that you have uncovered issues they did not know about, and placed them in an intellectual space. Within an intellectual space, debates between people with different positions and different views can be tolerated, permitted and encouraged. In the past I've used the example of asking, what kind of space is *Reading*? It's like a round dining table—if the table were not there, if we had different opinions, with you saying what you have to say, and me saying what I have to say, then everyone would walk away. But with the table, we can create a kind of distance as well as a kind of connection between people through the existence of the table, with both distance and connection, and creating this kind of space allows the issues to be presented. The relationship between *Reading* and politics differs from that of the media: the political nature of *Reading* is stronger in comparison with *The Scholar*, but *Reading* also disagrees with the idea that all periodicals must discuss politics—our hope was to create an independent space. If a social space is always dominated by one voice, then other so-called spaces in fact merely

serve as its extension, and this really becomes a problem. What we need is the formation of an autonomous space, and as long as this has taken shape, it will naturally develop its own significance. I truly feel that what our society needs most today is this kind of space: within such spaces, different people can gradually form a field for taking an interest in their own problems. Such a field would have a certain degree of autonomy in and of itself, and when raising its voice on social, political or other issues, it would not directly be the voice of a single individual, but rather the voice would be channeled through the field, and thus would be more powerful and more significant than directly discussing these ever-fluctuating affairs.

In the 1990s, *Reading* had a political background, as well as a commercialized background. These commercial publications had not yet emerged in the 1980s, so any academic publication would be able to have a very high volume of circulation—at its highest, *Literary Review* (Wenxue pinglun) may have had up to 300,000 copies in circulation. *Reading* did not reach such a large scale, but because *Reading* had a humanistic nature, it held a very unique position among publications like *Literary Review*, *Philosophical Research* (Zhhexue yanjiu) and *Social Sciences* (Zhongguo shehui kexue) in China. It was different in the 1990s:

publications like *Girlfriend* (Nuyou) and *Cosmopolitan* (Shishang) emerged, and suddenly these things appeared in newsstands on street corners. Most of the workforce of editors-in-chief and editors for the particularly important academic publications of the 1980s were reorganized after 1989, for political reasons, of course; and after the reorganization, the face of these publications changed, so no one placed value on these publications anymore. *Reading* did not fall within this scope: it was the publication of a publishing house, so its editing workforce did not experience any changes, and since it did not change, it conversely attracted the attention of many people. At the time, Mr. Shen Changwen was the editor-in-chief for *Reading*, and he was very sensitive to issues of public interest, so by the 1990s, the sales volume for *Reading* was greater than in the 1980s; however, by the 1990s, it faced the challenges of commercialization, so there was a period of time when it pursued readability in its articles. When I started as the editor, I had heard certain views on *Reading* within academic circles, saying that it had begun to be out of touch with academia: the articles pursued readability, and were rather disconnected from the latest academic advances, so continuing to edit *Reading* was somewhat problematic, as it had to link up with cutting-edge thought in academia, but at

the same time, it could not produce academic papers, but rather had to pursue readability. So the reforms that I made after I got there were in the hope that the magazine's articles could reflect the latest thought and issues. The most dynamic individuals of the 20th century were people in literature and history, and the objects of criticism, from the Anti-Rightists Movement to the Cultural Revolution, were also people in the field of the humanities. But the 1990s differed from the past: by the 1990s, the most dynamic individuals were economists like Li Yining and Wu Jinglian: this was a major transformation ushered in by globalization, and deviating from the field of social sciences became very difficult. But *Reading* had originally centered on literature and history, so we had to make a decision as to whether it was necessary to increase the ratio of social sciences. For instance, in the late 1990s, *Reading* discussed the Three Rural Issues, bringing in Wen Tiejun, Lu Xueyi, and Li Changping to publish articles in *Reading*, which was unprecedented in the history of *Reading*. At the time, we also encountered some problems by putting in these authors: in that period, the critiques and evaluations of me were that my work was not reader-friendly, but I would never acknowledge that; later, I thought that maybe there was some truth to it, but I myself did not feel that my work

was difficult to read. Furthermore, with respect to the articles written by Professor Jin Kemu in the 1980s, his writing was quite good, but if you want to talk about reader-friendly, I do not think it was easy to read either. The articles of the 1980s discussing Heidegger and Nietzsche, were they reader-friendly? They were not reader-friendly, but within a certain atmosphere, non-reader-friendly writing had become trendy, and difficult text could also be regarded as good. But when you seriously went to produce a magazine, obscure writing became a problem. Returning to the kind of issues experienced by *The Scholar*, just now the audience mentioned the problem of knowledge, how we confront knowledge, and I have always believed this to be an important issue. In certain eras, for instance, in the era of the European Enlightenment of the 18th century, or the Renaissance period, or certain special periods in China, including when we were editing *The Scholar* in the 1990s, we engaged in profuse discussions of economics, literature and historiography: these things were actually quite difficult to read, but everyone took delight in talking about them, and there would discuss all the time. But from another perspective, these things all created enormous obstacles to reading. So in terms of the issue of the difficulty or easiness of knowledge, sometimes it is necessary

to tear down the barriers to reading; but if you go too far in pursuit of reader-friendly writing, it becomes very difficult to do any kind of in-depth work.

SU WEI Just now audience members mentioned the issue of barriers, and also mentioned the period of overlap between the periodicals *Reading* and *The Scholar*: the thought and debate of the 1990s are also a fairly important part of our exhibition here, and on this screen everyone can see the founding of the journal *The Scholar*, as well as the spiritual debates that people had thereafter, the debate between the so-called New Left and the liberal faction, et cetera. I understand that Professor Wang Hui's academic experiences began with the study of literature: on the one hand, you did not suspend these studies in the 1990s, but rather abundantly participated in the discussions on literature, films and art; on the other hand, you also founded a journal like *The Scholar*, which led toward the specialization of academia, with in-depth research in the field of knowledge. These two aspects seem to be in parallel, in that neither is saying that everyone should return en masse to the ivory tower, and never again come in contact with the lively reality of broader literature and art. So I would like to ask Professor Wang to introduce the contemporary interactions and

discussions between the literary and artistic circles—for instance, during the Debate of the Two Wangs, the Debate of the Two Zhangs³, and other such discussions, in what way did you participate, and what conclusions did you reach?

WANG HUI I actually did not directly get involved in the discussion between the two Zhangs, because I was completely unacquainted with Zhang Wei; later, I became somewhat acquainted with Zhang Chengzhi. I participated a little more so with respect to the two Wangs, Wang Shuo and Wang Meng. This was a prelude to the discussions on the spirit of the humanities, which can be traced back to the initial emergence of Wang Shuo's works in the 1980s: the enormous transformation ushered in by Wang Shuo, along with the emergence of Wang Shuo's films—these events were quite important. Just now when I was viewing the exhibition, I saw that there are many pieces involving films. I myself was drawn into the contemporary discussions on cinema around the year 1985, when I was quite surprisingly asked to discuss the 1985 New Wave Movement. Professor Dai Jinhua did not come today—otherwise, we could have reminisced together, and perhaps stirred one another's memories. At the time, I was pursuing a doctoral degree at the Graduate

School of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and I remember that Professor Qian Jing of the Institute of Literary Research, the assistant to Professor Zhong Dianfei, was very active in the contemporary film circles, and he pulled us into this discussion. Everyone knows Zhong Dianfei, Ah Cheng's father: he wrote *The Battle Drums of Cinema*, and in the 1950s, he was the biggest Rightist in film circles; during the 1980s, he supported these new things. Professor Zhong Dianfei also once worked at our Institute of Literary Research, and when he returned to the film circles, he took a few people with him. Later, Zhang Jianyong, the editor-in-chief for *Contemporary Cinema* (Dangdai dianying), who had originally been a colleague in the Department of Modern Literature at the Institute of Literary Research, later he was also brought over to the Center for Research on Contemporary Cinema by Professor Zhong. At the time, after Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige had shot their films, they encountered a great deal of difficulty and obstruction in film circles: they were preceded by Xie Jin, Xie Tieli, and others in the third generation directors of China, as well as directors like Xie Fei in the fourth generation, who had already attained a certain status, but film circles were not well-prepared with respect to how to accept the fifth generation. Once the

fifth generation had emerged, the fourth generation became rather blurred: actually, the cinematic achievements of the fourth generation were underestimated in that period, because some parts of them were fairly sophisticated, but what the era called for was rebellion. In the fifth generation, Zhang Yimou said that, when they were filming *One and Eight*, how should they film it? Any way that the textbooks say they cannot film, that's how they will film it, so the camera was inverted. Anyway, they say the lights cannot be arranged, then that's how the lights will be arranged, anything the textbooks say is unacceptable, that's what they did, and in every case, it was the opposite, which certainly created a strong rebellious effect. This is not to say that it was artistically sophisticated, but the rebellious effect was underlaid by true passion, which I think is very important. Once this kind of passion began to fade away, and it was reduced to being different for the sake of difference, then it was over. In my view, the end of the fifth generation began when the connotations started to disappear. They had had some innate inadequacies from the outset, and their connotations had originally relied on a kind of confrontational passion, which was bestowed by the era. So one might say that these films, like *Yellow Earth* were depressing, but they were underlaid by an abun-

dance of emotion, which could cause you to experience the heaviness of the earth, and they carried history on their backs: all of these things were manifested in them, and once the long take emerged, they carried a kind of power, which was the relationship they formed with history, but once this power began to be recognized, and their passion began to decline, no one wanted to watch such things anymore. Wang Shuo's films emerged against this backdrop—*Ocean Flame* was probably the earliest. Later he produced *Samsara*: we all went to see the premiere, and also engaged in a discussion. Objectively speaking, Wang Shuo's films made great contributions to Chinese cinema, and these contributions primarily lie in language, speaking natural dialogue. Everyone had originally thought that natural dialogue does not belong in films: the fifth generation directors did not even need dialogue, while previous films consisted entirely of prepared lines, and suddenly he brought out this kind of dialogue. But another aspect is that he nullified all other things: for instance, the innate passion and power that had sustained the fifth generation were nullified the moment his lines were spoken. *Samsara* was by Huang Jianxin, who had previously filmed *The Black Cannon Incident* and *Dislocation*, both of which were existentialist works. I remember at the time when we were dis-

cussing *The Black Cannon Incident*, everyone said that it was well-shot, but the deepest impression was Li Yiming telling him with illustrations that, this thing of yours lacks absurdity, here it lacks abstractness, and there it lacks absurdity. Later, *Dislocation* came out, and when we saw it, we felt that it was truly “dislocated,” even though overseas film critics now feel that *Dislocation* was pretty good. But once he filmed *Samsara*, you could see the artistic tension in it: his approach to filming was the approach of the fifth generation, while the language in it was the language of Wang Shuo’s films. Within this special context, there began to be a so-called “Wang Shuo fever.” By the time of the discussion on the spirit of the humanities in the 1990s, Wang Shuo had become a phenomenon. I remember the first time that I met him was in 1986 at *People’s Literature* (Renmin wenxue). Liu Xinwu had called us over while acting as the editor-in-chief for *People’s Literature*: Yu Hua was there at the time too, and a few avant-garde authors who had just emerged were at the scene; they also called over a few critics, and I remember there was Li Tuo, myself, and Chen Xiaoming. I think that they were extraordinarily unfair to Wang Shuo at the time, because he was not accepted by orthodox publications like *People’s Literature*, and he felt very discomforted by it. For that reason,

Wang Shuo had previously attempted to write a modernist novel, in order to change up his style, and show that he was actually able to do this too; of course, he later no longer needed to take such an approach to prove himself.

By the 1990s, in 1992, Deng Xiaoping went on the southern tour, and from 1993 to 1995, he followed the thinking of the southern tour, and a great tide of commercialism began to spread across the south: at that point, the issue of joining the market economy became a problem faced by every intellectual and cultural field. Furthermore, beginning in the late 1980s and into the 1990s, the intellectual and cultural fields, as well as the commercial field, were all highly chaotic, thus giving rise to cultural discussion on the spirit of the humanities. After 1989, only economic issues could be discussed, and other problems seemingly could not be discussed at all, but cultural issues became a new problem due to the rise of consumer culture. Some intellectuals began engaging in criticism of these things, and around the year 1994, *Reading* magazine had a discussion of the “humanistic spirit”, which was not very sophisticated, in my opinion. I’ve previously evaluated the depth and issues of the critiques in that period. I recall that Wang Meng once sent Jiang Yuanlun to find me, saying that he wanted

to have a discussion with me, and ask my opinion regarding these issues. Later, in his home, the two of us had a fairly long dialogue; Jiang Yuanlun made an audio recording, and suggested that it be published in *Reading*. I did not agree, for a few reasons: one reason was that I had my doubts regarding a few theoretical issues involved in the discussions on the spirit of the humanities, and furthermore I did not really agree with Wang Meng's work *Escape from Sublimeness* (Duobi chonggao). He held a fairly positive and what could be described as a fully welcoming attitude toward Wang Shuo, but my approach was somewhat different. Mr. Wang Meng was very polite, and he said, you can publish any point of view. Apart from feeling that my own thinking was not yet sophisticated, another reason was that several of my very good friends were involved in the discussions on the spirit of the humanities, and if we had a difference of opinion, we might as well talk about it amongst ourselves.

From today's perspective, the discussions which were then taking place in *Reading* magazine firstly made important contributions to presenting the humanistic spirit anew. But in terms of theory, I had doubts to some extent: the principal starting point for the contemporary discussions on the humanistic spirit was the belief that the capitalist mode of the market

economy itself was acceptable, but Western capitalism was underlaid by Protestant ethics and other spiritual values. This is a highly Weberian discourse, but the discussions in China seemed to presuppose that Western capitalism was, in a word, fairly clean and fairly ethical. Modernization had to be informed by a new ideological foundation, so they proposed intervening in the discussions of this issue from the perspective of the humanistic spirit, which quite sensitively captured the phenomenon of the loss of the spirit of the humanities, as it was referred to as the time. So the discussions in *Reading* were likely a turning point for stimulating the intellectual discussions of the 1990s, and I feel this was quite important. In that period, articles by both Wang Meng and Wang Shuo were published in *Reading*, forming a trend of argumentation, which was something that gradually took shape. One can also quite clearly see that, once the Wang Shuo phenomenon began to make headway, it immediately stopped gaining any ground. The reason is always the same: once anything seizes such a large share, its power is no more.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4 Professor Wang, your article mentioned that the founding of the journal *The Scholar* was originally influenced by Weber's lecture *Science*

as a *Vocation*, and I wanted to ask what kind of relationship you and your community developed to this lecture in that era? How did you understand the relationship that Weber spoke of between academic work and practical life?

Wang Hui: Weber's essay *Science as a Vocation* came as a small booklet. From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, we were indeed influenced by it. But I will only briefly say that the context in which Weber wrote this essay was the period of the First World War: in other words, German society was involved in an unprecedented political transformation, and at such a time, what were scholars to do? One approach was to become involved in the clamor of war, while the other was to become involved in advising and strategizing. These were the two most representative approaches. Weber's discourse was actually quite special: if Weber's "science as a vocation" were interpreted as apolitical, as merely an explanation of professional ethics, that would actually be misleading. In reality, what Weber emphasized is that you must first have an academic code of ethics, and only then can you develop academic autonomy. His various questions about reality and the world were developed through autonomous research. His interventions in politics, interventions in society, were all accom-

plished through autonomous processes, thus the underlying emphasis was on the issue of autonomy. Amidst extremely major political changes, people are quite easily swept up in the tide, and in Weber's view, being swept up in such things was in contravention of academic ethics, as you have no autonomy—this was the point that he emphasized. So this idea was also embodied in my emphasis on these things at the time: I certainly was not saying that we must only engage in scholarship, and take no interest in politics or society, but rather was saying that we must find an approach through which we can provide things developed through independent research in this world, with respect to our understanding of this world, which are not trends, not propaganda, not the bewitchment of general ideology, and not advising and strategizing. I am not opposed to the advising and strategizing going on at many think tanks today, but even a think tank must be informed by independent research. Always following the commander's will or someone's personal interests is unacceptable. Weber himself was a direct participant in politics, so his discourses were informed by a dialectical understanding of the relationship between academics and politics.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 5 Professor. Wang, this year is the

centennial of Lu Xun writing “A Madman’s Diary” (Kuangren riji). I don’t know if you have developed any new views in recent years on Lu Xun and the matter of May Fourth, or if you have any new ideas about our present situation in connection with the centennial?

WANG HUI The issue of May Fourth essentially reemerges in alternating periods. Each time it emerges, different people will offer different interpretations, and each time the interpretations contain praise and criticism. During the period of our studies, I likely wrote an essay in commemoration of May Fourth in 1989. It seems like I didn’t write anything special in 1999, but in 2009 I wrote about it again, and right away we’ve reached another decade: it seems like there are discussions on this topic every other decade. In the 30 years from 1989 to 2019, I feel that the challenges or criticism faced by the image of May Fourth and the literary world of Lu Xun have multiplied in comparison with the past. In the past, May Fourth was essentially a symbol of intellectual liberation or rational enlightenment. At the same time, under special historical conditions, its rejection and exposure of Chinese history, and its exposure of the oppression embodied in Chinese history and traditions, were im-

portant wellsprings stimulating or cultivating one generation after another of new youth. The actual implications of May Fourth are more complex than that, and May Fourth encompasses different standpoints and forces. Over the last 30 years, likely beginning in the early 1990s, it has increasingly carried overtones of conservatism. May Fourth marked the first wave of proposals for the systematization of national heritage, and that initially involved the exorcising of demons, which is more or less the idea presented in “A Madman’s Diary”. The exorcising of demons meant that there were many monsters in our traditions, leading to problems in our national spirit, so it was necessary to clear them away through the systematization of scientific research.

But in the period from the late Qing Dynasty to May Fourth, the intellectual and cultural fields in China indeed felt enshrouded by a great defeat, as well as certain intense yearnings and delusions about the world of the Other arising from this defeat. I think that, having had such delusions, we must acknowledge the truth that lies within them—the defeat was true. Lu Xun actually differed from others in his analysis of defeat: in other words, the premise from which Lu Xun always proceeded was developed from failure. The first issue was to acknowledge defeat: he empha-

sized that you must acknowledge that you were defeated, that the situation in which you find yourself is quite true, otherwise you do not know what you will become. He regarded failure as the starting point for reconsideration to understand history and the past; he re-analyzed defeat from within, developing his own political and cultural ideas, and he was therefore unmerciful in criticizing his own history. Another aspect is that acknowledging defeat certainly does not mean standing on the side of the strong, but rather quite the opposite; Lu Xun opposed this as well. You'll see that he engaged in a great deal of criticism in discussing the Han and Tang dynasties or the interpretations of Chinese traditions in *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction* (Zhongguo xiaoshuo lueshi), but he also drew heavily upon them; he criticized Laozi and Zhuangzi quite severely, but if you read his earlier classical essays, many of the phrases stem from Laozi and Zhuangzi. He had a fierce concern for reality, and he certainly said some things in his contemporary context—and how are these things to be understood today? I think that it is necessary to engage in careful analysis, without treating his words as dogma, or regarding these words as something that can be cast aside without any reflection. Many people today feel that his criticism of Chinese traditions was in fact excessive,

including his criticism of traditional Chinese medicine, or his criticism of Beijing opera, and people will often mention that it would certainly be wrong if you were to regard these statements as dogma. But on the other hand, one cannot lose sight of his reasons and grounds for raising these issues in his contemporary period, which arose under special conditions. So, as to how we approach May Fourth today, I think that this is an extremely complex issue, because May Fourth itself is full of twists and turns. To me, the most important significance of ‘May Fourth’ does not lie in the slogans it put forward: those slogans were extremely important in the contemporary period, but from a modern perspective, these slogans are all common sense. The most significant aspect of May Fourth is that—and this is related to our discussion of *The Scholar* and *Reading* today—it marked the first time that “culture” was proposed as an independent category, and that an emphasis was placed on culture. Many people were saying at the time—for instance, Zhang Shizhao wrote in a letter to Chen Duxiu that Yuan Shikai’s restoration of the imperial order meant that the Republic of China would soon be finished, so it was unacceptable if he went off to discuss culture and did not take an interest in political issues. So he founded the weekly publication *The Tiger* (Jia Yin):

by the 1920s, Lu Xun regarded *The Tiger* as conservative, but at the time when the publication was founded, because it targeted Yuan Shikai's restoration of the imperial order, the publication was shuttered for a period of time, as a direct result of its intervention in politics. *New Youth* (Xin qingnian) was different: Chen Duxiu was an extremely political figure, and later he became the first general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party. However, Chen Duxiu said from the outset that *New Youth* will not discuss politics, instead they will discuss culture. Questions like this have to be posed concretely: what kind of politics did he actually want to discuss, and what kind of culture did he want to discuss? He said that politics would not be discussed, because in his opinion, contemporary politics involved two kinds of politics. The first kind of politics was party politics: after the founding of the Republic of China, so many political parties had emerged within the legislative assembly, quarreling fit to shake the earth, such that it was impossible to attend to general society and the people's livelihoods; they were always scrambling after power and wealth, so if you were to discuss that, it could only benefit these people playing with politics. The second kind of politics was warlord politics: in that era, regional political power was all tied to military force, and after

the founding of the Republic of China, a state of civil war had arisen in a number of regions, much of it due to the possession of military power. If you were to discuss that, first, people would not let you discuss it, and second, you would not have an effect anyway. Conversely, what issues did *New Youth* and other related publications discuss? They discussed the issue of young people, education, women, independent choice in marriage, schools, and vernacular language; and after that, they discussed the issue of labor, the lives of ordinary farmers; the issue of Confucianism and traditions, et cetera, were included as well. The culture he spoke of was a culture which encompassed all of these issues: he sought through these discussions to create a category for culture, and to intervene in the process of political and social change through the category of culture. By this period, the politics in which he intervened no longer held its original meaning. This is because it was not until this period that people were able to recognize that gender, marriage, youth, language, and labor were and are the most fundamental political issues of the 20th century until today in the 21st century. In other words, through the discussion of culture as an independent category, the connotations of politics and the boundaries of politics were revised, greatly expanding the original significance of politics. As of

today, if you sought to separate out these things, then it would not be possible for you to truly understand politics, because these things are all part of politics. So while the significance of culture and the significance of academic work would not appear to have such strong immediacy, they can form an independent force to intervene by means of their discursive practices and cultural practices. The Beiyang government later instituted educational reforms and textbook reforms, and family issues emerged: when we look back today on Chinese history in the last century or two, our fundamental mode of existence today was established by the culture of that era—this is the greatest of politics.

You can criticize May Fourth, but without such movement, the female participants who are present here might still have to bind their feet, and they would not be able to share the same space with their male classmates, and would still have to be partitioned into another world: this is a fact, and this was the state of affairs in the contemporary period. It would have been very difficult for our other social issues, such as the issue of equality and labor issues, to enter the field of vision of politics. So I think that the most important enlightenment which May Fourth offers today lies precisely in this. Media of our time is very developed

today: we encounter many sociopolitical issues, and then a few individuals talk about these issues in the media. But note that these discussions are discussions of the matter as it stands, and the autonomous space which had arisen in the previous step is conversely lacking, to the extent that the energy to revise these issues themselves is not there. The New Culture Movement fostered a few generations of people: the principal figures in the Communist and Nationalist parties thereafter, and the principal figures in the cultural field, were all central figures within this tide. So I think that this cultural movement could stand to be reassessed: May Fourth certainly had its problems, and its extremes, but it should not be hastily negated on the basis of the current value system; rather, we must first understand their situation in that era. Furthermore, the creativity in the work of that generation is still worth our consideration today.

SU WEI Professor Wang, thank you for sharing today. To follow up with what Professor Wang said—he spoke of engaging in cultural discussion and cultural production through the approach of the previous step, the approach of an autonomous space, and this made me think of much of the work that is currently being done by certain educational institutions, such as uni-

versities, and cultural institutions, including museums, which has slowly disappeared from the mainstream world of today, and which should be regarded as having inherited this spirit, and participating in the political framework by creating autonomous spaces and the possibility of greater depth. So I would like to pose one last question to Professor Wang, as the concluding remarks for today, which is: what are your views on the concept of “mainstream values”?

WANG HUI I also want to raise a question in redefining of mainstream values in which all of you have engaged. This is because, in the era when my generation grew up, mainstream values were always rejected: no one was willing to place themselves in the category of mainstream. I think the question of what the true mainstream is also serves to redefine the question of what the false mainstream is. What is the mainstream? My understanding is that it consists of those vast and profound things which have been suppressed in our discourses and even in our consciousness, but which will exercise a decisive influence on the future. Whether or not mainstream values can come to the surface depends on the efforts of a few intellectuals. Under the vast majority of circumstances, many people will be unaware of their existence: many major so-

cial changes are already brewing there, informed by powerful forces, but the majority of intellectuals are insensitive to these things, and they do not see these things. Just now, I was speaking of May Fourth: were they able to suddenly discover these issues because these issues had emerged for the first time? Of course not. These issues were all problems which we had faced on a daily basis in our quotidian lives, but they were acutely aware that, at that moment in time, these issues will become the true issues guiding the future. So they raised up these issues, and at the time when they raised them up, the fields of society and culture were unfamiliar with and uncomprehending of these things. This unfamiliarity and incomprehension were not because they were so new, but rather because they had been suppressed to such a terrible degree. So in this sense, I think that in order to discuss the mainstream, it is necessary to examine its most expansive elements. The vast elements sometimes come to the surface, like an undercurrent which sometimes rises up, but sometimes sinks down. The most difficult and most significant work is to reveal these very real things which will truly decide the future, but which we are not quite able to realize. The so-called future consists of the development of reality: it is no utopia, but rather what comes after us. I think that for

thought, art and culture to gain power, it is necessary to find a certain form for these things—the form is extremely important. When I think about the New Culture Movement, it brings up so many issues, but without the form of vernacular language (although many people today are very critical of vernacular language), you would not know how the New Culture Movement would have taken shape. Our literature thereafter, the language of our entire daily lives, including the language of art, all experienced major changes for this reason. Everyone should also note that, since the late Qing Dynasty, the influential figures who have arisen in many fields were not necessarily specialists in their given field, such as Kang Youwei, Hu Shizhi, and Lu Xun: none of these individuals were dedicated artists, and in fact they did not solely discuss art, but rather sought to discuss the issue of form amidst the changes to the culture as a whole. The height and depth of their question lay in the fact that it was part of their general cultural movement and cultural reflections; only then could it develop power. Since we are at the museum today, I'll say a bit about the issue of form, which is important: form is a very important avenue for you to discover your ideas, and your creativeness can be revealed through this aspect. I think that the issue of cre-

ativity arises from the interaction between these two aspects.

SU WEI Thank you, Professor Wang, and thanks to everyone for listening so attentively to our lecture.

“Salon, Salon” New Spring Seminar: A Beijing Perspective

— Carol Yinghua Lu with Gao Minglu,
Huang Rui, Lü Peng, Shao Yiyang, Wang
Hui, Xu Jian, Yan Zhenduo, Yin Shuangxi,
Yuan Jia

The issue of “periodization” has for a long time been at the center of political debate. The current historical narrative of the origin of Chinese contemporary art stresses its rupture from the fine art tradition since 1949, and describes contemporary art as being in a “transitional” state in terms of its relationship towards art from before the Cultural Revolution. Although dualistic narrative structures such as politics vs. art, orthodoxy vs. heterodoxy, oppression vs. submission, independence vs. dependence etc. might have a certain historical legitimacy in specific contexts, they are far from being adequate when it comes to describing the versatility, complexity and fluidity of both the current and historical realities.

The “New Spring Seminar,” which took place March 18, 2017 at the Beijing Inside-Out Art Museum, was organized by Liu Ding and Carol Yinghua Lu during the exhibition “Salon, Salon: Fine Art Practices from 1972 to 1982 in Profile – A Beijing Perspective,” to investigate the complex artistic system full of “inner contradictions” that have gradually taken shape since 1949. The conference transcripts were translated by Carrisa Fletcher and edited by Angie Baecker.

CAROL YINGHUA LU I'm Carol Yinghua Lu, the director of the Inside-Out Art Museum, as well as the joint curator of the "Salon, Salon" exhibition currently being held at the museum, and I'd like to warmly welcome everyone to participate in this afternoon's New Spring Seminar for the "Salon, Salon" exhibition. Please allow me to represent the Art Museum, alongside Liu Ding, in welcoming each of the distinguished guests and experts who came especially to participate in this seminar. Before the seminar begins, I will briefly introduce each of the guest speakers here today, and I'll be introducing each guest by order of their names in pinyin: Gao Minglu, art historian and professor at University of Pittsburgh and Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts; Huang Rui, artist; Lü Peng, curator, art critic and art historian; Shao Yiyang, art historian and associate professor at the Central Academy of Fine Arts; Wang Hui, intellectual and professor at Tsinghua University; Xu Jian, historian and professor at Sun Yat-sen University; Yan Zhenduo, artist; Yin Shuangxi, art historian and associate researcher of the editorial department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts; Yuan Jia, artist.

Additionally, apart from myself, there are two other participants: Su Wei is a young critic who recently joined us at the Inside-Out Art Museum as our

senior curator, and Liu Ding is an artist and curator, as well as the joint curator of this exhibition; he and I will serve as the moderators in today's seminar. Before the seminar begins, Liu Ding will briefly describe the origins of our exhibition, as well as some issues that will be addressed in today's seminar.

LIU DING Good afternoon, everyone! First of all, I'd like to welcome everyone visiting our exhibition, and thank everyone for finding the time to participate in this seminar. I'll start by introducing myself: my primary identity is as an artist engaged in creative work, and in the last few years I've also dedicated some energy to curating exhibitions. The exhibitions I've curated essentially answer or explore the questions I've encountered in my creative work or in practice. From the perspective of an artist, what I puzzle over is: As it has developed up to the present, what is so-called contemporary Chinese art; how do we interpret the term "contemporary art"; what relationship does it have with the contextual reality in China; and what are its sources and historical origins? Over a longer time frame, with respect to the Chinese art world, what place do older, middle-aged and young artists, or even older, earlier generations, have in today's historical narrative? At least in my observations from the per-

spective of an artist, these issues have seen insufficient exploration, and are fairly ambiguous. This feeling unceasingly pushes me to look back and look inward, hoping to clearly identify a path, for the relationship between the historical reality that we provide, the historical reality we participate in, the names we give, the labels we give at different periods in time and the present day, and what influence various historical scenes have on the present day. As latecomers, when we look back on the past from today's perspective, what methods should we use to look back? These questions are actually all around us, and they are also puzzles and reminders in my work with Carol Yinghua Lu. We set out from this puzzle to pursue a study on "The Reverberations of Socialist Realism," and the "Salon, Salon" exhibition is Part Three of this study.

The first project consisted of observations and reflections on an overarching time period, while the second project involved observations on two cases from the period between the late eighties and early nineties. These reflections return to an earlier decade, from the late stages of the Cultural Revolution all the way to the "Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign." There are a few questions here that particularly interest us: The first question is, what gave rise to the se-

ries of artistic movements and social movements in 1979? This is an extremely important question. The second question involves the so-called issue of “undercurrents” and “cutoff”¹; this was also addressed by Professor Xu Jian this morning. What we are considering is the manner in which certain artistic reflections from before New China evolved up to the present day, after their redirection in New China and particularly after the redirection of artistic views that occurred during the War of Resistance in 1938, and what connection they have to our reality today. There is also the so-called relationship between the individual and *Realpolitik*, how *Realpolitik* and the individual functioned in certain time periods, and how they interacted; these details very much puzzle us, so we will draw on this decade in an attempt to see what the situation really was.

CAROL YINGHUA LU Our intentions in organizing today’s seminar were actually to pay tribute to the original New Spring Seminar held after the “New Spring Art Exhibition”² of January 1979. Of course, we didn’t experience it personally, nor did we experience the circumstances surrounding that seminar. But we hope that there is a possibility, with each of the experts, particularly those who personally experienced it, as well

as researchers who have pondered and written on this time period to some extent, gathering together for discussion on how we set forth from the present to reopen it, a possibility of finding some comparisons or reflections on that time period. As a start, I'd like to first ask one of the sponsors of the "New Spring Art Exhibition" back then, the artist and expert Yan Zhen-duo, to give us a look back. Mr. Yan, please begin.

YAN ZHENDUO I'm not very good at giving speeches in front of such a big crowd, particularly so many scholars and experts, and I'm also quite nervous, so if I speak incoherently at times, everyone please forgive me.

I can still clearly picture that period of history in my mind even now. With respect to the origins of the exhibition, it actually wasn't a spontaneous affair, but rather a natural growth process in that period of time, that is, the period from 1977 to 1979. The reason why it grew and developed naturally had to do with the people I was in contact with at the time. At that time, I was working at the Beijing Fine Arts Company³—it was a production unit, and I was assigned to the Fine Arts Company after graduating from the Academy of Fine Arts. The Fine Arts Company thus brought together a group for painting. In terms of the senior

members, everyone from the sculptor Zhang Songhe to several painters who had painted the subject of “Zhang Zhixin” were there, and Liu Xun and others were there as well; there were also some who had graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts, such as Pang Jun, among others. There was a group of people who had all studied oil painting at the Academy of Fine Arts: in the beginning, they had been at the Fine Arts Studio, but later there was a big restructuring in 1956 or ’57, or 1962, I’m not sure, and they were merged into the Fine Arts Company—the enterprise supported them, the state was not willing to take that responsibility. Later I graduated and then went there: by the time I arrived, many people from this group had already gone to the Academy of Painting; at this time, the Academy of Painting was a comprehensive institute for painting. After I went there, I mostly painted portraits of the chairman, paintings of the embassies: these kinds of paintings were needed as decorations in certain rooms in our overseas embassies and foreign embassies in China. During the Cultural Revolution, we were essentially all sent to do labor, but we were sort of staggered, so we were still able to paint. At the time, I rejoiced that I had been assigned to the Fine Arts Company, I thought it was very good—many more paintings were being produced at the Fine

Arts Company than were being painted at the Academy of Fine Arts, and the standards were no longer subject to the academy's paradigm: there was a little more painting from nature, and we were more able to create on the basis of our own understanding of art.

In 1977, a graduate student admissions notice was sent out for the Academy of Fine Arts, but due to a misunderstanding, I failed to sign up to participate in the examination: later, I applied for a work transfer from the Fine Arts Company to the Beijing Fine Art Academy. During this transitional period, which stretched out to one year, I had a space of time that I could allocate freely: I could do the things I was interested in, hold exhibitions that more fully displayed my artistic views, and thus the “New Spring Art Exhibition” came into being. Mr. Jiang Feng, who had not yet been reinstated, but was highly respected, wrote the introduction for the “New Spring Art Exhibition.” Only after the “New Spring Art Exhibition” did we have the establishment of the Oil Painting Research Society.

At the same time, because I was attending school—at first I was at the Normal Academy of Arts,⁴ and later I went to the Academy of Fine Arts—I also came in contact with many teachers, and during this process, I felt the suffering of these teachers. In their

artistic pursuits, they had a conflicting mentality of wishing to speak and not being allowed to speak, and what they said, and did, and painted were not at all the things they truly wished to say in their hearts. Amidst that atmosphere, people suppressed many things in their hearts, and the conditions weren't there to display or express them. But in chats with students who were truly relatively close, everything could be discussed.

I'll give the example of Mr. Dong Xiwen. Mr. Dong Xiwen was asked to revise *The Founding Ceremony of the Nation* painting due to political requirements, at a time when he was gravely ill: at the beginning, he was repainting it himself; later, as his illness grew particularly severe, he had his son Dong Shabei act as an assistant. Dong Shabei did modern art, he was certainly no good for this thing, his skills were inadequate, and the result was that the painting was ruined—now there was essentially no way to restore it. Mr. Dong was later confined to his sickbed: at the time, I had a classmate, Zhang Jiayi—he was a childhood playmate of Dong Shabei's, and later he became a classmate of mine at the Affiliate High School of the Normal Academy of Arts. Because he lived extremely close to the home of Mr. Dong, when Mr. Dong Xiwen fell ill, this classmate of mine, Zhang Jiayi, often

went to his home to visit him, and they had a very good relationship. He shared a recollection with me—he said that one time in a chat with Mr. Dong on his sickbed, he said: “In my life, I have really never painted something that I truly wished to paint in my heart.” I discussed this when CCTV interviewed me as well, and my heart was really pained when I said it. This was truly the predicament of the old artists. There is also the example of Wu Dayu of Shanghai, who did abstract art: this was more typical, his personality allowed him to make the choice to be isolated from the world like that. Mr. Dong was actually quite forbearing: he imposed demands on himself to keep up with the times, he was a party member, and he was also a student of Mr. Wu Dayu; the line from this is extremely clear. This includes when I went to university at the Normal Academy of Arts—I was influenced by Mr. Wei Tianlin and Mr. Wu Guanzhong, who had studied abroad in Japan. When they saw my paintings, they both had opinions on the Soviet Union set, always saying that art wasn’t like that. When they saw my sketches, they particularly admonished me, saying: “Your sketches are the things you feel and experience, and are to be drawn in a rather relaxed way; saying that this set of paintings of the Soviet Union is a technique, that’s fundamentally irrelevant to art, and can-

not reflect personality; you can't be over-trained for that kind of thing—once you're over-trained, you forget what your feelings are.” At that time, it was the early 1960s, and there were many, many things that left an impression on me and touched the deep places in my heart. Later, I felt that the Fine Arts Company was very free—it would be better than returning to the Academy of Fine Arts, and I could paint according to my own ideas. Since there were connections for production and customization there, I would be able to avoid the literary and art circles: due to production requirements, I was able to visit the Beijing Library and read periodicals on the social sciences, and I was able to see directly what was being done abroad, and what things they were painting. At the time, I had this need in my heart, so in early 1978, we came back from sketching to do the first exhibit, the “Joint Exhibition of Landscape Sketches by Four Individuals,” and suddenly we discovered that we didn't have to do a political background check. The public response to that exhibition was quite good. What we had painted was all landscapes, nothing the least bit political: of course, painting landscapes was also a production requirement, we were also painting subjects like Shaoshan⁵, but the majority were created from the perspective of China's natural scenery, and the response was pretty

good. Given this state of affairs, we kind of germinated a new idea, thinking about whether we could use the paintings we had painted in our own studios and our own homes to do an exhibition: this would at least involve genuine realization and expression of art. It just so happened that I had some connections and was able to get a space, like the Waterside Pavilion at Zhongshan Park, and the Waterside Pavilion would also cover all the expenses. I contacted everyone, and everyone was willing to participate. This kind of event aligned with a desire that had long accumulated in everyone's hearts, a desire which had also long been suppressed since the Cultural Revolution, so everyone hoped to bring out their paintings from home. This exhibition could only take shape due to the special state of affairs in that historical period. The preparation time was about half a year, and an enormous number of people took part, there were people from every class. At the time, I had this thought that, no matter if you were young or old, including Mr. Dong, and including those closest to me, like Feng Guodong and Zhong Ming, who were still kids at the time, no matter your seniority or qualifications, as long as they really had personality and wanted to express something, they would be allowed to join in. This exhibition didn't have any kind of grand concept, the most important

thing was that we participants of all different ages were gathered together, highlighting freedom of expression and creative freedom. Actually each of us were of the younger generation, but the older generation had a subtle, unobtrusive influence on us, so the “New Spring Art Exhibition” emerged on the foundation of this inheritance—it wasn’t something that suddenly burst forth.

LIU DING Thanks to Mr. Yan for sharing the reasons why he initiated the “New Spring Art Exhibition” in that era; next, we will ask Mr. Huang Rui to speak. Mr. Huang gave a talk this morning in layman’s terms on the origins of the “Star Art Exhibition” in 1979. In that era, the art world had given rise to a situation where the old, middle-aged and young generations of artists were all part of the same artistic phenomenon. Despite their different educational backgrounds and origins, as well as their feelings on society, the different generations’ disparate means of expression for reflecting on history, and the different genes they had inherited in the course of history, in that brief moment, they all came together for a common dynamism in the contemporary art scene through simultaneous participation in a number of art activities and exhibitions—this is an extremely important point.

HUANG RUI We were a little bit different, we didn't study painting at a specialized school and set out to be artists. For us, being an artist was a responsibility in life, and painting was a kind of spiritual pursuit. As I said this morning, I've seen Chairman Mao on four occasions in my life. The third time I saw him, I decided to take the path of rebellion, to separate myself from the collective movement, separate myself from politics, and take my own path. The decision at that time wasn't on a spiritual level, but rather physical instinct helped me make this decision. At a time when all the children were crushed by sorrow⁶, it sent a chill up my spine, a breath of defiance rushed upward. I felt that God had imperceptibly given me a command, and my time of liberation had truly begun. At the time, my uncle was working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and he brought me some records from Europe: I took the records home and holed up to listen to them, wow! It was like a new world. Starting with Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, this world was a genuine world, with truly weighty emotions. I'm not talking about ordinary emotions here, but the kind of spiritual feelings linked to art. So I continuously associated with these sympathetic, like-minded people, establishing contact with poets in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Starting in 1971, there was an underground salon movement

among poets, like Bei Dao, Bao Jia, and Genzi, among others. They also had several factions: Bei Dao probably belonged to the Salon Faction; there was also the Baiyang Lake Faction, including Mang Ke, Yan Li, a big group of people. These people truly had vision and foresight—for instance, there was a poem by Shi Zhi, and at the very beginning, he said:

As the cobwebs mercilessly enshrouded my stove
As wisps of smoke rising from the ashes sighed
the lament of poverty
I still obstinately smoothed the ashes of
disappointment
Using beautiful snowflakes to write: believe in
the future

Using reality to criticize reality—this was the decision. Challenging the past, breaking away and confronting the past—this became our task. The new era and the new task compelled us to challenge the era of the past.

So this group of people in the “Stars Art Group” was of course inspired by the “New Spring Painting Association”—we hoped that we could follow the path of organization, to exhibit a certain scale and power. Our group was roughly similar in age, and we were all from Beijing; those like Wang Luyan and Zhu

Jinshi also had connections to the “No Name Painting Association”—they belonged to both sides. At the time, we (myself, Ma Desheng, Wang Luyan, and Zhu Jinshi) also had one foot in the study class at the Working People’s Cultural Palace mentioned by Mr. Yan—actually, we were all the best artists pulled from the factory and enterprise units and sent there for training. Of course, like Mr. Yan, as well as He Baosen and other figures who joined our painting association, we all had particularly liberal ideas. Our class also exhibited the atmosphere of the new era: it was very transparent, opening a window onto society, and looking toward Western modern art.

The “Stars Art Group” hoped to embody a new kind of consciousness. We decided to hold the exhibit outside the Art Museum, to reflect a scene of art outside the system and in opposition to the pieces in the so-called “National Art Exhibition” inside. At the time, there were three principles for selecting pieces: they had to be different in terms of the subject, different in form, or they had to represent a new experiment in terms of techniques of expression or the materials used. People like Zhong Ming and Feng Guodong from the “New Spring Painting Association” seemed more like the people from “Stars.” Many people have had a misunderstanding, thinking that Feng Guodong

was also a member of “Stars,” but that wasn’t the case at all. Actually, it was just that kind of moment in history, our choices were naturally very similar. Of course, the idea that we had selected a sensitive time and a sensitive place, and that our works would certainly be seized by the Public Security Bureau, also drew in democratic activists from the “Democracy Wall” to support us, ultimately forming the first truly organized protest parade since the founding of the state, mainly composed of activists in the democracy movement. This was a parade “demanding political democracy, and demanding artistic freedom” held at the critical moment of the 30th anniversary of National Day.

LIU DING Thanks to Mr. Huang Rui for sharing some of the motivations and their organization leading up to the “Stars Art Exhibition” of late 1979. Next I’d like to ask Mr. Yuan Jia to speak, as he was the youngest artist participating in the “New Spring Art Exhibition” at that time—at the time he was only 16, and of course he was engaging in art at home. In addition, Mr. Yuan Jia has engaged in a great deal of exploration and observations on the work of artists in his father’s generation over the last few years, which is all quite interesting. So I’d like to first ask him to share a little about

his work and the experiences he himself went through at that time. In terms of life stages, a 16-year-old is extremely young, and may only have a vague concept of the overall atmosphere at that time, but that's just my speculation. So I'd like to ask you (Yuan Jia) to talk about how such experiences converge in a particular historical period.

YUAN JIA As for my participation, I really can't say much about it. Because, as you (Liu Ding) said, I was 16 years old at the time: actually it was a very passive situation, I had bumped into the "New Spring Painting Association," and then there was the "New Spring Art Exhibition." Thinking back today, it (the exhibition) was probably a stimulus for me! When I saw that our exhibition here was called "Salon, Salon," along with today's "New Spring Seminar," I felt this particularly strong flavor, the flavor of that era, a feeling that kind of hit me in the face. As Mr. Liu Ding said in his introduction just now, for the last ten years, I've been doing some simple curation work. Doing (curation in) the "modern" segment has extremely important significance, and is also extremely interesting, especially because the 1970s are situated between two major historical periods, preceded by the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, and followed by the Opening and Reforms

of the 1980s, so this stage is very easily overlooked. Although we have many people here, including Mr. Gao Minglu, present here, who have produced monographic studies on the “No Name Painting Association” and so on, many of the events that occurred in that time period, such as the airport (mural),⁷ “Stars Art Group,” the “April Photography Society,” etc., there is still insufficient understanding of these historical events. Generally speaking, we can easily overlook art history from the 1970s to the early 1980s, whether subjectively or objectively, consciously or unconsciously. This reminds me of the 2008 Beijing Olympics—at the time, I was curating an exhibition called “Mao Zedong.” A few days after the opening ceremony at the Olympic Games, we also put together a seminar: at the time, we invited Mr. Wang Hui, who is also present, and he gave a particularly brilliant speech, you can easily find that speech online even now, and at the time, *The Boston Globe* also very quickly produced a long commentary and feature story. But at that seminar, many people were addressing one particular problem in their speeches: the opening ceremony at our Olympic Games had a grand narrative, a themed performance: in the historical narrative, the Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing were all included, but our modern period was entirely excised, why?

It may have been because we were too close to this period of history: it still carries some pain, and we still haven't sorted out the causes, so it has always been avoided to some extent. For people of our age, I am a little younger than most of the experts here today—I'm post-1960s, and you're all post-1950s, you're all true witnesses and participants in this period. I've been imbued on this side with the influence of these flavors, so I have feelings and emotions about this period of history, so I hope to provide some clarification, to the best of my ability. For us, in the growth stage from child to youth, our hearts were actually perpetually in a state of extreme discordance, our values and standards of judgment were extremely divided. At the time, I was at the Affiliate High School: back then I had just started school, and right away there was the airport mural, and then the "Stars Art Exhibition" event. The Affiliate High School was on the eastern side of the Art Museum—after getting out of class, I would run over to see their "Stars Art Exhibition." Just now I was chatting with Mr. Huang Rui—at the time, Wang Keping and I, along with Qu Leilei and Ah Cheng, we were all previously acquainted due to family reasons, so we were more willing to run over and join in the hubbub. This exhibition was completely different from the atmosphere on campus at that

time. At the time, the intellectual foundation that we were given in art education was extremely fragmented, and reality and the classes were two entirely different things. Concepts in painting were like this as well. To give a simple example, the values and standards of appraisal we used to discuss painting for Western painting versus our Eastern painting were absolutely poles apart. Even today, it might be very difficult to get a handle on this thing, for instance, what we would speak of in Chinese painting, from the start, you talk about what is the mood, what is the tone, what is the brushwork—this kind of things simply aren't the most important standards as value criteria in the modern Western painting that we're coming into contact with now. In a discussion of Western painting, many of the things we have internally also aren't standards we use in Chinese art today, so these two things were in a state of fundamental discordance in the period when we were receiving an education. In addition, of course art and politics are even more inescapable, and this is something that also didn't have a particularly clear concept at the time. To truly speak of the relationships between politics, society and artistic forms, contemporary art focused more on the socialist qualities of art. But as an ideal in that era, we felt that pure art, aestheticism, formalism and non-ideologized things had

more appeal. At the time, even as freshmen at the Affiliate High School in 1979, we were already paying attention to this discrepancy, but education couldn't provide us with the capacity to consider it on a profound level. At the time, our classmates included one or two with particularly good English, so they were already working on some sort of New Marxism, they were extremely radical, but also extremely confused, reflecting a conflicting state of resolve juxtaposed with ignorance. So for my participation in our art exhibition, it was a *Tribute to Cézanne*, painted in 1981. Because in this period from 1979 to 1981, I was particularly enamored of Cézanne's paintings. This was quite rebellious for art education at the time. In that period, I didn't have the kind of self-aware social rebelliousness and revolutionary spirit that Mr. Huang had, it was just that the highly constraining environment of our school atmosphere at that time gave rise to a kind of defiance, and the means we found of defiantly confronting reality was through art using modernist methods to resist the past—that is, the so-called subject-foremost⁸, “red, bright and shining” paintings. Because I was ultimately either a painter, or a craftsman. When I started studying Cézanne, I was searching for Cézanne's artistic spirit, painting skills and techniques of expression in a number of extremely inferior prints

—I tried to paint approaching quite closely to him, so that I could experience, could feel Cézanne's grasp of the world and of society. Even finally for the frame, I chose a Western-style gold frame, the overall mood was to use modernist method to approach our current reality and traditions. This was a true situation. But when we look back after so many years later, just now Liu Ding also brought up this question: what do we actually signify in terms of contemporary art, where did we come from? This certainly is a question. We were swept along by a rapidly changing society, borrowing other people's willpower and truth, to tactfully express what we were thinking: this may be the real reason why we approach this period of history in such a veiled fashion and even conceal it. In fact, we are all unable to jump, unable to escape this important growth period of the 1970s and 1980s: even if it's the original sin, it still had an enormous impact on us afterward, directly or indirectly, so to a certain extent, this pursuit of rebellion was ultimately alienated. It's like a painting that we saw today: looking at this thick square of white, you naturally associate it with the woman's scarf painted by Rembrandt. This was his means of narration, of expression: the white color should be comparatively rich, with brush strokes of color, and the heavy colors behind it should be com-

paratively thin, thus creating a penetrating feeling of space. We have already transformed this kind of thing into a tenet in our understanding of art: this is the only form of expression that is valuable expression, is beautiful, and consequently such things are already subtly influencing our present. The relationship between art and politics is the same. In reality, we divide it into many sectors, such as the official art sector, as well as private, institutional, commercial and many other sectors: they have no reciprocal cause and effect, each saying its own thing—so we cut up this period of history, and once it's cut into pieces, we then go so far as to dilute the oppositional elements. The result is that, for a very long period of history thereafter, our value systems and our judgment of art have existed in a divided state. 798 is 798, Song Zhuang is Song Zhuang, the academy is the academy, the Art Museum is the Art Museum—this phenomenon has to be broken. Now this is why the “Salon, Salon” exhibition is particularly interesting: it places many different influences and many different explorations or processes on a platform, interposed and threaded amongst one another, allowing us to make out the general contours of a society from so many phenomena. This interpretive method is particularly interesting, and that's my experience of this exhibition.

CAROL YINGHUA LU Thank you, Mr. Yuan Jia. Earlier, we were also thinking about the form in which this seminar should move forward. It seems that, in an ordinary seminar, it should be the participants themselves who speak, but we were thinking that, after the three artists speak, each of the experts could be invited to speak, based on the closeness of their relationships with the decade from 1972 to 1982, as far as possible. Next I would like to invite Mr. Gao Minglu to speak. Looking back over the last few years, a great deal of the work by Liu Ding and myself has unintentionally been in dialogue with some of your work: as Mr. Yuan just mentioned, much of our work is established on the older generation, established on this foundation. We have read many of your books, and in your narrative on art history there is a question, a question that also hovers over our work, that is, in the book on contemporary Chinese art history in the years 1985 and 1986,⁹ which you wrote in 1987 alongside Mr. Wang Xiaojian as well as several young art critics, in the foreword, you cite the views of a number of art historians from Europe and the United States in proposing that art history is contemporary history. In other words, at that time, you first brought up a concept of contemporary art, and proposed a methodology for narrating history from a fractured perspective; you ar-

gued that the people writing history are simultaneously participants in history, and through their writing, they can forward a certain historical trend. This kind of fractured appeal and new starting point for writing on art is a question that we have long pondered as well. In the course of this research, we discovered that, aside from fragmentation, much of the time there are actually various undercurrents or various points of connections playing a role. Your writing on art history touches upon the concept of fragmentation; in addition, a few years ago, you completed a very profound, very meticulous study on the “No Name Painting Association,” so today we very much hope to hear you talk about how you look back on this era, as well as how you view the relationship between the work in that era and the subsequent period of the 1980s in your writings and your views on art history.

GAO MINGLU It's good that you've brought up that question—first of all, thanks to the two curators, Liu Ding and Carol Yinghua Lu, for putting on this exhibition. Just now Carol Yinghua Lu also took me to see the exhibition, and at times I was quite moved: this exhibition is done in a way that's extremely honest, with a great deal of materials from different aspects—politics, art, cultural practices, and so on—all placed to-

gether. This is a very, very good exhibition, and of course as I viewed it, I felt that it was particularly near to my heart. When the Cultural Revolution erupted in 1966, at the time I had graduated from middle school, and then I was sent to work in the mountains and the countryside. The participants in “Stars” and “No Name,” some of them were older than me and some were younger than me, pretty much in the same generation.

When I saw these things today, I felt that that earlier era was particularly close by. 1972 to 1982, 1972 was the starting point for many things—just now Carol Yinghua Lu told me that this exhibition treats Nixon’s visit to China as the temporal starting point. But in my view, if it’s from the perspective of art, there was another extremely important event in 1972, which was the art exhibition in China, in the midst of the Cultural Revolution, to mark the 30th anniversary of the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art—it was the first official, large-scale art exhibition during the Cultural Revolution. This exhibition was divided into Chinese paintings, oil paintings, and “linked pictures” (lianhuanhua)—it was an extremely large-scale exhibition. My feeling is that, prior to 1972, there was mainly Red Guard art, in what is called the “sea of red”¹⁰: before I went down to the countryside in 1968,

I took part in carving the stencil plates, printing pamphlets, painting and so on; I call the art after 1972 the “imperial temple”, revolutionary art truly entered the imperial temple—that is, it moved into grand artwork in regular art exhibition halls. Before, it had all been pamphlets and “dazibao” (big-character posters) by workers, peasants and soldiers, all that kind of (products of the) movement. So choosing 1972, from the perspective of art, this was an extremely interesting transitional period. As for 1982, I’m still not quite clear on what statement this exhibition is making on that year.

CAROL YINGHUA LU As a point in time, 1982 references the conclusion to political rehabilitations of the Rightists in the Cultural Revolution.

GAO MINGLU So it’s also established on the foundation of a political event. Nevertheless, my point is that this time period, although our discussion is focusing on art phenomena in Beijing—of course, Beijing is not only representative, but also arguably conflicting, dramatic and prolific, the most obvious and the most prominent—but outside of Beijing, there were also many similar phenomena. In 1972, I was painting too, at the time I was still out in the countryside in Inner Mongolia, but

I frequently returned to Beijing; at the time, I felt that information was spreading especially fast—if something happened over here, everyone knew about it, some sort of exhibition, some sort of activity, they would rush over here. I often visited Shanghai, as well as Tianjin, Beijing and other big cities, each place had a kind of integrated, coherent thing.

At the time, places like the mass cultural centers were playing a huge role, revolving around a big group of professional and amateur painters. The divisions of the institutional school, the vanguard or avant-garde, official, new wave, traditional and so on, these things actually came later, at the time it was all very jumbled together. The group of people participating in the official “National Art Exhibition” and the provincial and city art exhibitions were quite distinct, there was a very small number of people participating. But there was a huge group of young amateurs studying painting who gathered at the mass cultural centers, mostly doing sketches of people and landscapes, and in the different regions there was this potential for painters who painted well to become idolized, showered with popular adulation. This widespread phenomenon of sketches and landscapes was actually based on an amateur community outside the imperial temple—once they developed clear modern pursuits

and goals, they would form the so-called “amateur avant-garde,” and at that point there were people calling themselves the “Stars Art Group.”

We may be able to understand the curators’ selection of the time period from 1972 to 1982, displaying all these things, as an attempt to tell us that this era was multi-faceted, but it was also experiencing a kind of transition, a kind of trend—what was this trend? I believe that it was a latent trend toward the modern or the contemporary.

Just now, the moderator asked why we wrote the book *Contemporary Chinese Art History, 1985-1986* in 1987: the most direct reason was that, on July 1, 1987, a Chinese modern art exhibition held by the Japanese was set to open at the Agricultural Exhibition Center in Beijing—due to Hu Yaobang stepping down, the “Anti-Bourgeois Liberalism” campaign emerged, forcing it to be suspended. Someone from the Secretariat of the Art Workers’ Association came looking for me, bearing a confidential document from the Propaganda Department of the CCP, which stated that young people were not permitted to hold large-scale rallies or anything else—I still remember this document quite clearly even now. Couldn’t do that—at first, I wanted to move the group for the “85 Movement”¹¹ to the Agricultural Exhibition Center, progress

had actually been quite smooth (earlier), but there was no way, so I had no choice but to send a letter, to explain to everyone. It was in this context that I later decided to sit down and write about this period of history for the “85 Movement”—that was my initial idea. But to write it, I had to have a philosophy for writing history, I had to have an idea: just at that time, the 1980s had become a cultural craze, many discourses on history were emerging, drawing in a great deal of Western historical studies, including art history. I asked myself, why should we write about art history that is currently happening? Actually, the content of that book, based on the outline we had drawn up, its description began in the 1970s, starting with the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976—the chronology of the book was from 1976 to 1987, more or less ten years. This included the earlier “New Spring Art Exhibition” in Beijing, the “Twelve Individuals Painting Exhibition” in Shanghai, as well as the “Stars Art Group,” “Oil Painting Research Society,” “Half Art Exhibition,” abstract art, traditional ink painting, and many other artistic phenomena, but the discussion focused rather more on the activities of youth communities in 1985, ’86 and the first half of ’87. Zhou Yan was from the Central Academy of Fine Arts, a dynamic young critic—at the time, he was translating (Ernst)

Gombrich's *Art and Illusion*; Wang Xiaojian was the editor of "Art"(Meishu)¹² magazine, a colleague of mine as well as an active young critic; Shu Qun was part of the Northern Group, a pioneer in the "85 Movement" and a fluent writer; Wang Mingxian was a standard-bearer for the trend of modern Chinese architecture in the 1980s; and there was also Tong Dian, a graduate student in sociology at Nankai University, who was doing a social survey on the "85 Movement" for her dissertation. We were all participants in 1980s culture, and we had a common goal—we started writing in the latter half of 1987, and completed the book in mid-1988. We had originally planned to publish it prior to the opening of the 1989 "Chinese Modern Art Exhibition," but not only did we not finish in time, because of "June 4," it was suppressed for three years, and it wasn't published until 1991. Looking back on it today, although I have certain regrets, it was the first history of Chinese contemporary art.

At the front of the book, I wrote a foreword, entitled, *All History is Contemporary History* (Yiqie lishi doushi dangdaishi). This idea was borrowed from the Italian aesthete Benedetto Croce. Actually, the main issue that I brought up at the time lay in the legitimacy of writing contemporary art history: at the time, there was still no one writing contemporary history, and

treating these two years as a node in history presented an issue of legitimacy. In the essay, I mainly set out from this perspective, proposing that all history is contemporary history. This means that our personal involvement, our feelings, when later generations look back, they can understand what this era is, what the value of this era is, what the involvement of the participants in this era was, and what things they appealed for, advocated, and promoted. At the time, this was the main idea, so it gives shape to this thing, and this thing can be re-criticized and considered from today's perspective, and we ourselves also engage in introspection. But the core issue here is about contemporaneity: what is contemporaneity? This needs answering. Actually, at the time, the "contemporary" as we understood it was the cultural and intellectual value of that era. Croce's view was mainly that, when we look back at history, we inevitably carry the viewpoint of contemporary people. But I want to emphasize that, with the contemporary mentality of self-awareness and involvement, the 1980s were just such a spontaneous era. I've actually never used the concept of "fragmentation," nor do I believe that the "85 Movement" appeared out of the blue—quite the contrary, I believe that it was a re-emergence of the Enlighten-

ment of the 20th-century, particularly the early 20th-century.

Actually, over the last ten or so years, one big issue that the West has discussed in particular is contemporaneity. Ten or twenty years ago, everyone knows that the discussion at the time was about post-modernism. The postmodern was a critique of the modern. And after the post-modern came the contemporary, because over the last ten years or more, not quite twenty years, the post-modern has already declined, it's no longer so popular, and what it's been replaced by is contemporaneity. The issue of contemporaneity first involves defining what contemporaneity, or contemporary art, or cultural philosophy are, from a philosophical perspective.

Second, there is the issue of division into periods: among the various views, the earliest starting point is 1945, that is, the end of World War II and the start of the Cold War; this demarcation is used in the majority of Western textbooks, treating 1945 as the starting point for the contemporary era, as well as the starting point for contemporary art. Another view is that the 1960s were the starting point for contemporary art. Because, as everyone knows, the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s in China really had an impact on the “May 68” unrest in France and the student movement

in the United States. I remember that, when I was organizing the exhibition “Conceptual Art: Points of Origin, 1950s–1980s” opening in New York in 1999, each of the nine curators was responsible for a different region: one curator from Canada brought a young Canadian’s imitation in the 1970s of the “linked pictures” (lianhuanhua) drawn by the Red Guard in China. It seems that influence of China’s Red Guard, the European and American student movements, and the conceptual art that emerged in the 1960s can be regarded as a general international trend. So, designating the 1960s as the starting point for contemporary art makes sense in a certain way. That set of things from the Red Guard of the Cultural Revolution, singing and dancing in the streets, street performances, and so on, do these visual things count as contemporary art? Let’s set aside the purely ethical factors—purely ethical things might be too concretely focused—if we view it from the perspective of visual culture, political language, presence, and these other so-called theories of contemporaneity popular in the West since the 1980s, perhaps we can place the art of the Red Guards within the same contemporary scope for discussion.

The third method of division for the contemporary era has been the most popular in the last twenty

years: it regards 1989 as the starting point for contemporary art, and has basically achieved a consensus. Even in the last two days, the Guggenheim held a forum to introduce their October exhibition on Chinese contemporary art, defined as the period from 1989 to 2008: 1989 was the end of the Cold War, and the (Beijing) Olympics were held in 2008, so that was basically the definition. If we take this definition to China's present, is it rational in the sphere of Chinese contemporary art? This definition is somewhat controversial: in the introduction to the works, it was set at 1989, but actually, the principal artists taking part in the exhibition all made their first appearances in the 1980s, and the exhibition in fact included a number of works from the 1980s—for instance, several pieces by Huang Yongping on display in the exhibition were actually created prior to 1989. So, here and internationally, there is certainly a difference of opinion on this issue of contemporaneity. I recall that a conference on contemporaneity was held at the University of Pittsburgh in the United States in 2005: at the time, a number of international philosophers, historians and art historians were invited, and I took part as well. The conference revolved around the issue of distinguishing between modernity and contemporaneity, and a collection of papers from the conference was published, in-

cluding an essay of mine: the opening mentioned my belief that Chinese modernity is permanent contemporaneity. Why do I say this? Because contemporaneity in the Chinese linguistic context is constantly changing: for instance, early on there was the “new era,” “new rationality,” or the “modern era”; later, in the 1980s, you had the slightly different “avant-garde” and “vanguard” (actually, the avant-garde and the vanguard appeared in the 1930s). So the different eras were all pursuing a so-called currentness, and this currentness always leaned toward new things, modern things. If these things used the fixed definitions of modernism and modernity or the definition of post-modernism, it would be problematic. Because China doesn’t have the clear logic of pre-modern, modern, post-modern and contemporary, so Chinese modernity may well include what we speak of today as Chinese contemporaneity: its characteristics are certainly closely associated with historical dislocation, so it is necessary to restore it to the circumstances of the given era for discussion. It is a kind of temporal progression or spirit of the age, and perhaps it can be called modernity, contemporaneity. For me, it’s all the same. Since the 20th-century, any era has (contemporaneity), and it’s always out of sync with conventions and the West.

When we wrote—in 1985, 1986, when we were writing the book *Contemporary Chinese Art History, 1985-1986* we certainly believed that the mid-1980s reflected some sort of value in contemporary Chinese art history, did it not have a kind of explosiveness, and contemporaneity? Of course it did. At the time, and even today, I believe that it did. I have my own interpretation. Many people have ideas different from mine, and I am not willing to force things on anyone, but this is my view, and perhaps one I share with other fellow-thinkers. Like today's "Salon, Salon" exhibition, it certainly presented an analysis of and emphasis on current modernity or contemporaneity, and in that era, it certainly had a kind of extremely salient change and transformation. But the mid-1980s were different: if you'll allow me to speak of the "85 Movement," it emerged in China in the early 20th-century, and was another look back and resurgence of a kind of dream and ideal of the May Fourth period. At first, this early ideal contained two sides: one side was social structure, this was later incorporated into certain things in the Soviet Union socialism camp, all the way to Mao Zedong, the path of social revolution; and the other side was the question of cultural modernity, but social factors interfered with this aspect of the dream, and it was lost. And this cultural thing, I believe, cultural in-

tegrality emerged once again in the mid-1980s, regardless of whether you call it the rise of a second enlightenment, or the pursuit of modernity, or human nature and whatnot, I believe that the 1980s was a general reversion with the reemergence of this kind of culture, or a second cultural enlightenment, giving shape to a comprehensive movement. So I believe that this was an extremely important indicator of contemporaneity in contemporary Chinese art history. And the art from the 1970s to the first half of the 1980s, I call it “post-revolutionary”: that is, it is still entangled in politics and culture, intensively manifesting in the conflict for art in that era between practical functionalism and aestheticism. Actually, that book of ours was a comprehensive explication of Chinese art history after the Cultural Revolution, but it focused on 1985 and 1986. Talking about the contemporary era from the perspective of the “85 Movement” doesn’t mean talking about fragmentation, but rather talking about history as a whole from the point of eruption. I’ll say this much now, and we can continue the discussion.

LIU DING Thanks to Mr. Gao for sharing ideas with us about the 1987 book. Just now, you very tactfully asked why it’s from 1972 to 1982, and you also mentioned that, in art, 1972 refers to the historical event of

the grand art exhibition marking the 30th anniversary of the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art. In our research, 1972 is a comprehensive formulation which outlines several important factors, primarily grouping together (Chairman) Mao's fatigue toward the Cultural Revolution in 1969, Lin Biao's plane crash in 1971, the art exhibition marking the 30th anniversary of the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art, and other events. For instance, an extremely important text is on display in the exhibition, a 1968 essay by Mao Zedong commenting on poetry, which was published in the 1978 "Poetry Periodical" (Shikan)¹³; this has never been made public before. As for 1982, it's actually also a comprehensive formulation, because in our view, periodization is a foundation of historical research, but it is absolutely not a fixed foundation: the proposal of these nodes of time is the result of some comprehensive judgments. For us, one important clue for marking the line at 1982 is the political rehabilitation of the Rightists in the Cultural Revolution; the second is that the Constitution abolished the "Four Freedoms" of the Cultural Revolution era, as well as freedom of labor strikes; the third important clue is that a group of people who started attending university in 1979 started graduating, and this actually represented another intellectual resource and spiritual resource. As for where

the spiritual resources of this group of people came from, if we're narrating up to the 1980s, that will require a separate discussion. Although this group of people attending university were in their 1940s, 1920s, teens, an extremely diverse composition, the spiritual resources they brought in were extremely different from the spiritual resources in the entire period from 1972 to 1982. Similarly, our exhibition also presents the redirection for many artists of their lives and creative paths after experiencing a series of events from 1979 until about 1982: some had already given up on art; some had become artists within the official system, starting to make arrangements for stable work and life in the future; some had left the country; and some had lost their voices—all kinds of circumstances were present. They formed a diverse composition. We regard this phenomenon as a process of “everything returning to its place” after 1982. For the youngest cohort of people who participated in 1979, their spiritual resources had the potential to converge with the group of people starting university in 1979, that was a new beginning for the 1980s. Next, I'd like to ask Mr. Lü Peng to speak, because in the late 1980s, with the support of the Hunan Fine Arts Publishing House, he was writing quite incisively about the decade of the 1980s. His writing on art history has continued up to the

present, and he also writes about Chinese art history in a way quite loaded with personal feelings and personal opinions. As we glanced through his introduction to the 1970s, as well as his general histories of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, we could see many quite clear expressions of personal cognitive involvement in the historical narrative—this is extremely important, as well as extremely interesting, and provides quite significant value to our research today, so next I'll invite Mr. Lü to speak.

LÜ PENG I'm relatively familiar with the period of the 1980s and the period of the 1990s. I participated in some of the activities in the 1980s, and I'm fairly familiar with some of the artists—though their ages varied from high to low, they were relatively close together in a general sense. For instance, He Duoling and Luo Zhongli of Sichuan, they were a little older, but in the 1980s and 1990s as a whole, for the vast majority of the time, everyone was all together, and it felt as if there wasn't that big of a generational divide. Besides, like with Zhou Chunya, Zhang Xiaogang, Ye Yongqing, and Mao Xuhui, they were pretty much the same in age, born in 1956, 57, 58. So some of the art phenomena that took place from the 1980s to the

1990s, we have a pretty fair understanding of it, and we personally experienced some of the events.

I'd like to think back for a moment on why I originally wanted to write about the 1980s, and later write about the 1990s, including later art from the early 21st-century, how this logic came about; and then I will discuss my feelings and views on today's exhibition.

My reason for writing about the 1980s was quite simple. I frequently visited Beijing in May, June to October 1989, because our unit, the Theater Association of the Literary Federation, was doing a TV drama, and I was the producer, and at the time, we were appearing in court in Beijing. It was also around that time that I met Mr. Gao, in Beiguanfang *hutong*, after meeting Mr. Li Xianting, I met Mr. Gao Minglu. In Beijing, of course we knew that the "June 4" incident certainly couldn't be avoided, it had a huge impact on our generation. Our film was sold to the China Audio and Film Recording Company prior to "June 4," and after "June 4," they were experiencing problems with distribution, so that led to the lawsuit. In the second half of the year, a friend of mine named Yi Dan, who was also a collaborator on the book about 1980s art history, and a professor in the Department of Chinese at Sichuan University—originally, he was maybe go-

ing to go to the United States to continue studying, because it seemed like it didn't make a whole lot of sense to stay in the country, and he didn't know what to do. Later we talked about, did it make much sense to go to the United States? He said the United States didn't make much sense either. So what were we to do? One day I thought, maybe we could just spend some time writing about art history in the last decade. Why write about that? At first the reason was very clear that the new art from this decade wasn't our own thing, it was our generation's thing. But because of (June 4) 1989, the last decade had become hazy, and maybe couldn't even be addressed. At the same time, the art from this decade had been called into question, at least that was the political atmosphere at the time. So couldn't we put it down in writing? It was just this simple idea. In the 1980s, I was living in Chengdu, I was kind of familiar with Chengdu, and I also frequently visited Beijing, Shanghai and other cities, including Hangzhou, and I often had could read magazines or periodicals like "Fine Arts in China" (Zhongguo meishu bao)¹⁴, I could learn about the situation of art in that decade. We thought that this was our generation's thing, we had to record it, whether we wrote well or badly, however they looked at us, this would allow later generations to pass judgment. Looking

back today, this was practically our most important starting point, because we weren't the main participants in the artistic movements of the 1980s, and in that context at the time, we didn't have any particularly personal reason for writing this book. There had been a critical turning point moment in 1988 when Li Luming of Hunan Fine Arts Publishing House asked whether I could write a book about modern Chinese art history. I declined at the time, I said there was no need to write it. Because I spent the 1980s constantly translating Western art history—in particular, I was translating and writing about Western modern art history. So I said, oh, I was really familiar with this, these artists, whether they're from the north or the south, their things, including the people right next to us—Zhang Xiaogang, Zhou Chunya, He Duoling, I was really clear on who they studied with, who influenced them, and we really knew about the situation of the models they studied in Western art history. But I felt that there wasn't any particular interest in writing about these things, so I declined. But after "June 4," the situation then raised a new question for use: What did the last ten years matter? If our last decade was just simple copying and imitation, or just simple learning, then did that period of history exist or not? If it did, what kind of history was it? How should we an-

swer such questions? Under the impetus of this kind of logic, what we wanted to ask was: Even if there were many artists whose artistic style or patterns of speech were Western or perhaps belonged to a particular school, could the learning period for a particular artist become history, or not? For instance, we often played around at the Chengdu Art Academy to scrape a living, in the studios of He Duoling and Zhou Chun-ya, and everyone would be listening to music and chatting. I remember one time, when He Duoling painted *Youth* (Qingchun), he had an album of paintings by (Andrew) Wyeth at his side, and pigment from the oil painting was all over the place on Wyeth's album a complete mess. I said: You're not paying much attention to preserving this album, soon you won't be able to use it anymore. He said it didn't matter, as long as he finished this painting. I have extremely profound memories of these events, including the scene in Zhou Chunya's studio, which also had some portraits in the style of (Amedeo) Modigliani. When we look back now and think about that period, many of the portraits he painted were very sensitive to Western modernism. So what kind of issues did these phenomena explain? The result was that we very quickly started writing this book, probably around November. The two of us divided up our tasks, and by the Spring Festival in

1990, we had written more than 400,000 characters in all, finished it and sent it off to the publisher. But due to the political context at that time, the publisher wasn't able to release it, and it wasn't published until the spring of 1992. I remember very clearly, at the time Guangzhou had started putting together the "Guangzhou Biennial Exhibition," so we sent a box of books to Guangzhou at the time, and everyone took one. I also asked whether everyone could give a little money, use money to buy the book, and give a little support to the market economy.

The reasons for writing the second book, *Contemporary Chinese Art History: 1990-1999* (Zhongguo dangdai yishu shi: 1990-1999) were very simple. Through the 1990s, I'll tell you frankly, most of the time I was trying to make a living, running a company, doing odd jobs, because the entire family, young and old, needed you to pay for daily living expenses. Although I had been Assistant Secretary-General at the Literary Federation for five years, I later resigned. Actually I didn't resign, but my performance wasn't very good, because at any academic conference, I would talk about my own opinions, but I was the Assistant Secretary-General, so the secretary of the Party Leadership Group and the Publicity Department would often call out my name and say: You should be careful,

Lü Peng, you're the leader of the Theater Association now, you simply cannot represent yourself to speak on academic matters, you can only represent the organization in expressing views on today's artistic phenomena, you cannot possibly have your own views, and if you must express your personal views, then take yourself elsewhere. So I had poor performance like that. By 1990, after I was laid off, I was doing creative work at home, and under these circumstances, the majority of the time thereafter I was trying to make a living. Because the unit had put me on leave without pay, people from the 1950s and 1960s are all very familiar with this phrase, on leave from your job but with no wages, you had to find food to eat on your own. One day, probably a certain day in 1998, by chance I was drinking wine and coffee in a little restaurant of Tang Lei's, the former wife of Zhang Xiaogang—a group of people had come over from Beijing, including Fang Lijun and Wang Guangyi, and when they arrived we got to chatting, and while chatting we talked about this. Wang Guangyi said that another decade was about to pass by, are you going to write an art history for the 1990s; I said there was no need to write, there was nothing all that interesting, and I said I know all about this decade, from the Venice Biennial Exhibition in 1993, and especially in 1995, there were some

artists already independently participating in the biennial exhibition and international exhibitions. But I thought that every time people came over to my place, the problems they talked about always had to do with money, money, money, and who was selling this many US dollars, selling more than 200 hundred US dollars, selling more than 2000 US dollars, and I didn't know how to write about this kind of situation. But Wang Guangyi said: If you don't write it, I think no one will write about the 1990s again. It was just because of this sentence. Actually I didn't have any particularly complicated opinions, just a sudden baffling sense of responsibility: alright, then we'll write about the 1990s. Looking back, thinking about what actually happened in the 1990s, and how to approach it. Finally I spent a year writing about the 1990s.

Once I finished writing it, the book was published in 2000. At that time, Yan Shanchun came and said to me: Are you going to take the test to be a graduate student under Fan Jingzhong? At the time, I made two requests: the first was no test, and the second was that I didn't want to stay in Hangzhou. I said that I was making my own living, and running a company, I didn't have time purely for studying, it could only be carried on at the same time. The result was that they agreed, and I went to sit for the test. In that time, I was

focusing on one question—there was a teacher at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, probably a teacher who no one's that familiar with, who more or less said this to me: Lü Peng, we've all read your book about art history in the 1980s and 1990s, we feel that it still has some value today, but many of us teachers question the position you took in writing it, you set out to defend this avant-garde art, contemporary art, modern art—how exactly are they valuable? What connection do they have to 20th-century Chinese art history? This comment really moved me. I thought, since that's what you have to say, I'll finish this task. So I spend two or three years completing *20th-Century Chinese Art History* (20 shiji zhongguo yishu shi). My goal was very simple, to clearly express the events that occurred between 1979 and the present, and see what connection these 20 years had to China throughout the 20th-century. The first edition of this book, *20th-Century Chinese Art History*, was completed in 2006, and it was published by Peking University in late 2006.¹⁵ This art history spanned the history from the late Qing to 1976, and there were very good connections. Returning to the Cultural Revolution, returning to 1949, returning to 1929, returning to 1840, this allows us to grasp what relationship there actually is between the art phenomena of today and our art phenomena and art

history of the past. I used this method to examine and grasp this century. Beginning with the late Qing Dynasty, obviously the main gist was prior to the Opium War, checking in a little bit with the late 18th-century and early 19th-century. One important historical issue that I wanted to talk about was, modern art history from 1979 to 2000 was pretty good, contemporary art history was pretty good, but what connection did it actually have to our last eighty years, hundred year, or hundred-odd years?

We carefully explored the connections between past and present from the perspective of history, scholarship, and so on, and it was precisely during this writing process that we fully realized the relationship between past and present. In the 1980s, I translated a number of works on Western modern art history, and what gave me the deepest impression was the revolution in language, and the issue of methodology. In particular, there was one passage that I remember quite clearly, a passage by Herbert Read in his *A Concise History of Modern Painting*: The entire history of modern Western painting is history in visual form. This passage was engraved deeply on my memory. I also thought that the history of Western modern art and painting, from Impressionism and Post-Impressionism all the way to the 1960s and 1970s, was al-

ways discussing a revolution in speech patterns as a whole. And at our schools, particularly for many professors and teaching in the History Departments, there's an extraordinary interest in Italian art history since the Renaissance, all the way up to research on historiography in the era of (Erwin) Panofsky, they are quite adept in Western art history, but they have not the least bit of interest in the contemporary era. Later I realized that, when Gombrich published and republished his *The Story of Art*, he was continuously revising it, and as he revised, he would push the time forward: he pushed it from Impressionism and Post-Impressionism almost all the way to World War II. Every time he pushed it, and every time he republished it, he would think about it. So, we could look at how Gombrich incorporated the art phenomena before his eyes in this process of moving forward. Under the circumstances, the things we were familiar with since the Opening and Reforms seemed rough and slipshod, they all had problems with respect to their intellectual value system and so on; in language and form, they didn't seem to be that different of creations compared to the West and modernism, so where was their value? At the time, the most fundamental thing was changes to the conception of history, changes to the methods of considering issues in historiography, and this was in-

troduced from considerations of the issue of new historiography, which had been extremely in vogue in the West beginning in the 1960s and up to the 1980s. At this time, the issues of so-called style, so-called language were no longer so pure, they had been tied to our politics, society, religion and other things, even tied to our archaeological methods. So, with respect to certain artistic phenomena, we wouldn't treat one as gold and the other as a scrap of tile, regarding them as two things with different values. If they had simultaneously been excavated at Mawangdui, then a piece of gold leaf and a piece of tile would be equally important, because they can all reflect the historical flavor of that era.

December 1978 determined the fundamental changes and possibilities that occurred after the Opening and Reforms, changes that influenced our modern art or contemporary art: is it really unclear where the value lies? It's extremely clear. We later studied further, with a clear understanding of new historiography, to break up the theory of Eurocentrism as a whole, while simultaneously incorporating the histories of various countries, various regions and various peoples at different periods in time, to have a fresh take on history. It was only then that the problems with Hegel's essentialism were truly revealed. So what is the con-

temporary era? In my view, the most important indicator is the conclusive end to essentialism: in the 1960s, a group of philosophers including (Jacques) Derrida and (Michel) Foucault completed a truly post-critical, humanistic approach to essentialism. This was the contemporary era. All problems were thus no longer unitary, no longer absolute, even if it was a Nanjing painter seemingly using the (artistic) language of surrealism, or the 1985 painting *Adam and Eve* by Meng Luding and Zhang Qun, even though it quite clearly appropriated (Salvador) Dali's style, we can easily and clearly see where its value lies.

At this time, we returned to the key point of the matter: simple language analysis was useless, it wasn't an issue of whether or not the language of Western surrealism was borrowed. Painting isn't that simple, and the complexity of painting lies in situational understanding, the understanding of context. It's not history unless you understand the reasons. So in this sense, after completing the book on the 1990s, I formed the personal view that: Even if we are writing art history, first we still have to judge history, and after making a historical judgment, then we can make an aesthetic judgment, or a judgment on linguistic form, and move forward with synchronicity. That is the only way that we can avoid bias in our approach to many

different phenomena. Otherwise, you'll have great difficulty understanding it—particularly in the 1980s, there were many professors at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, from the teachers to the professors, they were all still young, such as Sun Weimin, Yang Feiyun, Jin Shangyi, their creative works were nicknamed as neoclassicism—whatever term they used, doesn't matter—it was painting in classical realism, and when these creations emerged in 1987, 1988, what did they mean, and where was their value? After the “85 New Wave movement”, in 1987 and 1988, particularly in 1989, what was the focal point of Chinese contemporary art—that was the crux of the matter. You could see that every stone had been bathed in God's sunlight: the issue was which stone had really been bathed in sunlight, and which phenomena were making a reappearance. This was an issue of the conception of history.

With reference to today's exhibition, I feel that it is quite excellent: the reason is that, when we were researching the interval from the Cultural Revolution to 1978, we were of course aware that a series of official exhibitions were held between 1972 and 1975, but we also discovered that there were many changes from one exhibition to the next. Up until 1976, like the painting *Seizing of the Presidential Palace* by Chen

Yifei, you would discover that, indeed, nearly every artist had experienced changes. Although we can all comment simplistically that these things all used the methods of realism, this term doesn't mean all that much. (One must) carefully analyze these artists' specific expression, and why it was expressed in that way in this context. This kind of expression was on display in the exhibitions, and it is precisely this point that is significant. So initially, the first time I saw *Pioneers* — which was completed by Chen Yifei and Wei Jingshan—in Shanghai, I felt at the time that it was painted very well, very solid, and the brush strokes seemed very natural and unrestrained. Later when the *Seizing of the Presidential Palace* appeared, we were awfully excited, because this painting was so great. Although we could analyze it from the perspective of color, composition, and many other aspects, we knew that, in the final analysis, it was a product of realism, and the subtle changes were the stuff of history. It was just that, as I was writing the history of art in the 20th-century, no matter how long it was—for instance, the first edition was 1 million characters, the second edition was 800,000 Chinese characters, the third edition was 760,000 characters, because I was continuously revising it—we found that, in writing a general history, many transitional periods were omitted, or one might

say, were passed over with the stroke of the pen; this was something that couldn't be helped. But this wasn't a simple issue of writing history. It's just that we sometimes needed brick fragments, needed details, like the materials and historical documents in this exhibition, to analyze (the period) from the Cultural Revolution to after the Opening and Reforms, the different perspectives and different circumstances of those artistic changes. And for people like us, who were studying history, these subtle changes were extremely important. So that's why I said to Liu Ding, an exhibition like this, historical documents like this, if you arranged them all together in an anthology of tens of thousands of characters, it still wouldn't be enough; it ought to be a study of several hundred thousand characters, to allow the circumstances in this period to shine through more clearly, and then you'd have a clearer understanding of 1978, '79, '80, '81, '82, and thus a clearer understanding of 1985 and '86. Actually, that's just how history is.

Originally we would often speak of improvements in painting practices: later there was Chen Duxiu's so-called "revolution," which I need not go into. But in researching or observing artistic phenomena, there are also formulations like "continuous," "continuing changes." These continuous changes are precise-

ly what we should emphasize highly in observing a historical period of brewing change. That is the significance and importance of this exhibition: now that these materials are all on display in this exhibition, the next step is, what role can these materials play? This is well worth the attention of our researchers.

CAROL YINGHUA LU Thank you, Mr. Lü Peng. The term you mentioned, “continuous,” is particularly apt. Actually, historical research can very easily be led about by the dominant signs or images, or, as Mr. Xu Jian said this morning, we are more inclined to be compromising on these matters, to compromise on certain norms that we already accept and tacitly recognize. But actually, in research, when you revisit for a careful examination, a profound description, to discover this clues for continuity, that’s an important working pathway for us to more profoundly understand history.

Next, I’d like to ask Mr. Yin Shuangxi to speak. Mr. Yin himself not only participated in art and exhibition practices in the 1980s, recently he also published a collection of critical essays. This critical anthology selected from 20th-century art criticism essays, and the book is called *Selected 20th-Century Chinese Essays on Art Criticism* (20 shiji Zhongguo meishu piping wenxuan). In our letter of invitation to each ex-

pert, we laid out some questions, on which we hoped to seek advice from the experts today, which are: When the two terms “fine art” (meishu) and “art” (yishu) are used in China, what are the underlying motivations? When do we use the term “fine art”? When do we wish to use the word “art”? What are the rational possibilities of this term? By coincidence, I’ve seen that, in this critical anthology, Mr. Yin also revisits the concept of “fine art,” so I’d like to ask Mr. Yin to speak on this point; he’s also brought us a PPT, which he said would be a pleasant surprise for Mr. Huang Rui.

HUANG RUI I’m done for.¹⁶

YIN SHUANGXI First of all, I really approve of this exhibition, it’s a very academic, scholarly exhibition. In the last decade, there have been a number of retrospective exhibition, including retrospectives on the “85 New Wave Movement,” as Huang Zhuan, Fei Dawei, and Gao Minglu have all done one after another. Moving forward from the “85 New Wave Movement” (things) like the Deshan open-air exhibition on the “No Name Painting Association” put on by Gao Minglu gradually pieced together the links and chains of history. On this occasion, Carol Yinghua Lu and

Liu Ding combed through the decade of the post-1970s to remind us that history is not fractured, it has continuity: some historical periods may have been breathtaking, while other historical periods may have been quite prosaic, but this breathtaking effect often rose out of the prosaicism. Generally, the people engaging in history will often have a particular focus and profound memories of history's breathtaking moments, but observations of the quiet transformations taking place in history's prosaic interstices place rather more demands on the historian's inner strength—that is, being able to see the tangible within the intangible, I feel that this is fairly important. Because in the general histories written by Minglu and Lü Peng, I personally feel that they were writing grand narratives, because they are people with grand vision and charisma, so they are often organizing and planning large-scale exhibitions. I've collaborated with both of them in the past, where I did specific things—so in my research process, there is always a specific plan, small things, until now I've never had the idea of writing a generational history or general history. I like to start with a particular case, and do one essay after another, that's my habit.

When Carol Yinghua Lu invited me on this time to take part in this seminar, I was a little rushed for

time, so I just put in some materials to talk about my own simple views. I'll just speak a bit about the relationship between Mr. Jiang Feng, the president of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, and fine arts in the 1970s.

(Slide projection)

This is Jiang Feng at the founding ceremony of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. We can see that, behind him, there is a portrait of Mao Zedong, and a five-pointed star. This is a kind of appeal representing the mainstream. He was an old cadre who came over from Yan'an: in 1949 he was selected as the vice-chairman of the China Art Workers' Association and the vice president of the East China campus of the Central Academy of Fine Arts; in 1951, he was recalled from Hangzhou to Beijing, to serve as the vice president of the Central Academy of Fine Arts; and not long after the passing of Xu Beihong, he was appointed as the acting president. Jiang Feng died in 1982—the point in time studied just now by Liu Ding and Carol Yinghua Lu—and coincidentally, the date of his passing was September 13.

Jiang Feng was actually trained by Lu Xun. Let's take a look at this photograph: the third one in the back row, with Lu Xun behind him, is Jiang Feng; this was a group of people (involved in) modern Chinese

woodcuts, including Chen Yanqiao, and Lu Xun had also invited over Uchiyama Kakitsu of Japan to train the first generation of modern woodcut artists in China. Lu Xun was the founder of Chinese woodcuts, and the highest honor in woodcutting circles is the Lu Xun Woodcut Award.

This is a piece by Jiang Feng in 1937, *March on North Station*. Actually, from the raised flag, you can see that it's the Blue Sky with a White Sun, because during the War of Resistance, the Nationalist and Communist parties were allied. In the distance, there is a group of university students raising a school flag, and these are workers in the front holding an iron crowbar. One can say that, at that age, he was also a youth actively participating in revolutionary marches.

When Jiang Feng came to the Central Academy of Fine Arts, he strongly supported the spirit of the speech at the "Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art," and advocated the development of New Year pictures (nianhua).

This photograph is all young students at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, coming from Section 3 (School of Literature and Art) at North China University, coming over from Yan'an, eighteen or nineteen years old. Here the one furthest to the right is Deng Shu, the wife of Mr. Hou Yimin, who is still alive

now. At the time, Deng Shu painted this kind of *nianhua*, giving an outline with line drawing and then applying color. At the time, the entire value system of the new Chinese fine arts circle was such that painting *nianhua* was honored with an award at the “National Art Exhibition.” All of the oil painters and traditional Chinese painters all started painting *nianhua*, and if you weren’t painting *nianhua*, you essentially had no status in fine arts circles. So *nianhua* and linked pictures (*lianhuanhua*) were the highest forms of painting at the time. In different historical periods, the status of different (artistic) mediums has varied, and we can observe which types of painting were accorded a mainstream position in each era, just as, today, everyone says that contemporary art must have new media, and if it doesn’t have new media, the curator can’t do anything with it; if a curator did an exhibition entirely of paintings, it certainly wouldn’t be contemporary (art) —this is the consensus among many people.

In these circumstances, Li Keran also started painting *nianhua*. This is his painting, *Model Workers in May Day Parade at Beihai Park*, and below is the sketched version. Li Keran had been a graduate student in the Department of Oil Painting at the Hangzhou School of Art, and his sketches were quite good, but at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, he was

only allowed to teach an outline class, that is, a line drawing class; in the upper right-hand corner is the syllabus from his lectures. At the time of the founding of New China, traditional Chinese painters were actually compelled to turn toward the creation of *nianhua*. During that period, model worker parades in parks were a type of reward, and recuperation at Beidaihe and other places was also a benefit for model workers. The greatest turning point in Jiang Feng's destiny was the criticism launched against him in 1957, and he was arrested as the ringleader of an anti-Party Rightists group. I won't go into this process today. Then in the later stages of the Cultural Revolution, arriving at the early activities of the "No Name Painting Association," these young people came forward. In 1977, there was a "National Art Exhibition" event, and in 1978, "Today" (Jintian)¹⁷ magazine was founded—there is a kind of connection between two things that merits our reflection. Jiang Feng re-emerged in 1979, and the Central Committee decided to appoint him as an advisor to the Ministry of Culture. He became an advisor in April, by August he was institute director, and in November he was selected as the chairman of the China Art Workers' Association and the party committee secretary of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, rebounding with, one might say, astonishing

speed to the highest position of leadership in the fine arts world. And in 1979, he wrote an introduction to the “New Spring Art Exhibition,” and also visited the first “Star Open-Air Art Exhibition.”

In January 1979, the introduction written by Jiang Feng for the “New Spring Art Exhibition” was published in the first 1979 issue of “Reading” (Dushu)¹⁸ magazine, attracting a huge amount of attention. He actually didn’t say anything all that surprising, but he argued that landscapes and still lifes could be painted, that painters could also form painting associations, and that everyone had negotiated so that a review system wouldn’t be put in place: this was meant to better strengthen painter’s sense of political responsibility toward society and toward the people. For the time, this argument was quite astonishing, because previously (paintings) had to be of figures, expressing lofty revolutionary themes, while painting these landscapes and still lifes had been a sentimental thing of the petite bourgeoisie, which had always been subjected to criticism. I once asked this question of Wu Guanzhong, I asked why he later didn’t paint figure paintings: he said his idea had been to move away a little from right and wrong, and just paint landscapes, still lifes, that kind of thing.

This is the exhibition catalogue of the “Star Art

Exhibition”; these are all here in the “Salon, Salon” exhibition. After this exhibition was put on display, Ye Qianyu read Jiang Feng’s introduction and wrote a letter to Jiang Feng—he was extremely moved, and he said to Jiang Feng: The introduction you wrote for the “New Spring Art Exhibition” makes one feel quite excited.

WANG HUI Why are there two handwritten copies of Ye Qianyu’s letter, a horizontal version and a vertical version—what happened there? Is it the same letter?

YIN SHUANGXI These materials came from the family of Jiang Feng, and on the right side is the original letter to Jiang Feng; because he used a writing brush to write it, possibly in cursive script, other people had difficulty making it out, so the family hand-copied the contents on one side so that everyone could read it. This is a transcript of the discussions at the second exhibition of the “Oil Painting Research Society” on October 13, 1979, at Huafang Studio. I saw a mimeograph here in the “Salon, Salon” exhibition: this one is different, the two characters for Huafang have both been smudged. This point actually wasn’t necessary. This exhibition of the “Oil Painting Research Society” caused a great stir, why so? Because Zhou Yang came

to see it, and also gave a speech—the artists immediately printed it out and distributed it. After the 1979 “Star Art Exhibition,” this “Oil Painting Research Society” had also been founded. I went through to identify the signatures: now, it was signed by 34 people, and in the middle, there is a symbol which I don’t know the meaning of—it’s a little bird, someone used this symbol as a substitute for a signature. I would guess that it was Yang Yanping, she painted a little bird about to fly away, and as a female artist this signature of hers is very interesting.

And now we are looking at the letter Huang Rui wrote to Jiang Feng—this is the nice surprise I brought for Huang Rui.

HUANG RUI I don’t have this document.

YIN SHUANGXI You couldn’t possibly have this document, you mailed it away, and at the time, there wasn’t a custom of keeping a copy for the record. “Comrade Jiang Feng, hello, we are the ‘Stars Art Group’; after a year of efforts, we have created many new pieces, and each of us has improved to varying degrees; our pieces are in conformity with the Party’s four cardinal principles. We hope to hold the third ‘Stars Art Exhibition’ this year. We hope that you and the other lead-

ers of the Art Workers' Association will have an opportunity to see our pieces, and give us guidance and assistance. If you are interested, please tell us how we may get in contact with you." This was the letter sent to Jiang Feng's home, and it's the original copy; let's look at another original document.

This is a letter to Jiang Feng written by Ma Desheng. At the beginning, he writes: "Uncle Jiang, hello! I had originally thought to visit you and report on the situation of the painting association and the call for an exhibition, but I was afraid your work is too busy, impacting your rest, (so) I wrote this letter..." The letter was four pages in all, the fourth page on the right isn't completely unfolded. From these two letters, we can see that Huang Rui and Ma Desheng were the most active core of the "Stars Art Group," directly seeking out the highest leaders in the fine arts circles to organize the exhibition. Huang Rui and Ma Desheng also said, we are still young, after all, still immature in many respects, moreover we have just broken free of ten years of suppression, it's difficult to control being improper. They did several self-criticisms—I reckon that, prior to this, they had done one self-criticism with Jiang Feng and the others for some improper incidents, hoping for continued support.

HUANG RUI Jiang Feng came to see the 1980 “Star” exhibition at the museum, and afterward he was very angry, he was truly quite incensed, because he had recommended that we shouldn’t display certain pieces, yet we put all them out anyway.

YIN SHUANGXI Had you shown all the pieces to him in advance?

HUANG RUI We showed them all to him, and he said: My recommendation is that you don’t included these few pieces in the exhibition, it’s not the time yet.

YIN SHUANGXI It’s not the time yet. This is a source I discovered, a letter to Jiang Feng written by Wei Chuanyi, who was then the Dean of Studies at the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, dated August 28, 1982, thanking Jiang Feng and the Central Academy of Fine Arts for being able to “admit Cheng Conglin and Qin Minglai for advanced studies at the Central Academy of Fine Arts.” There had originally been a quote, and finally they added an extra quota. In addition, Luo Zhongli was to go to Belgium to reproduce a painting, to reproduce a painting at a museum overseas; in the meantime, he had completed 42 oil paintings, and he wanted Jiang Feng to grant his support to do an exhi-

bition. This also demonstrates that, after his rehabilitation, Jiang Feng was arguably extremely supportive of the young painters and modern art from each of the schools and institutes. This is the slide exhibition that Gao Minglu and Wang Guangyi did at Zhuhai Academy of Painting. This is a bulletin—Minglu should be particularly familiar with it. My intention in showing this bulletin is for everyone to see the people who participated: there's Ge Weimo, the secretary at the Secretariat of the Art Workers' Association; Shao Dazhen, the editor-in-chief of "Art" (Meishu) magazine; Zhan Jianjun, the chairman of the Arts Council of Oil Painting of the Art Workers' Association; Wen Lipeng, the vice-chairman of the Arts Council of Oil Painting of the Art Workers' Association; Chen Peng of the China National Academy of Arts; Zhang Qiang, the president of "Fine Arts in China" (Zhongguo meishu bao), and the editor-in-chief, Liu Xiaochun; and Guo Shaogang, the president of the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts. My point is that the key leaders and artists from the government and academic institutes and groups all broadly participated in the activities of young people during the era of the "85 New Wave Movement." Now, some people describe the "85 era" and the young artists of that generation as heroes resisting the mainstream—I think this binary under-

standing isn't aligned with the historical facts. These young painters were fully in contact with the system, and you cannot say that they were using these older predecessor, that would mean depicting these young people as quite contemptible; they sincerely made contact with the older predecessor, and hoped to win their support. I have this belief that there was no element of resistance, nor any base exploitation, that they sincerely wished to gain the help of the older generation, while fully exploiting the possibilities and spaces within the system to do things.

Finally, I'd like to show a photograph from the opening of the 1989 "Modern Art Exhibition." I didn't reach out to Minglu, I still don't fully recognize this row of people in the back.

This is Gao Minglu giving a speech at the opening—during the opening, I was doing logistics for the exhibition at the museum. The host was Fan Di'an, and behind him we can see Liu Kaiqu in the glasses, and we can also see the tall fellow Feng Jicai, along with Zhan Jianjun; this is Shao Dazhen, and next to him is Ge Weimo—at the time, he was secretary at the Secretariat of the Art Workers' Association; this is Tang Dacheng, the secretary at the Secretariat of the China Writers Association; and this is Liu Boshu. We can see that all the key leaders in the fine arts circles

were present at this opening, and (we can see that) the “Modern Art Exhibition” wasn’t a rebellion by a closed-doors group of young people, but actually was fully in cooperation with the system. Because the sponsor was “Art” magazine, the Secretariat of the Art Workers’ Association held a meeting to discuss this issue: at the time, the National Art Museum of China was discussing whether or not to approve this exhibition, and the Art Museum said that we should do whatever the Secretariat of the Art Workers’ Association decided. In between, both sides actually granted their support in the negotiations—Minglu was running all over the place at the time to do this work. Just before the opening, Minglu sent myself and Tang Lei, the former wife of Zhang Xiaogang, to the Art Museum to discuss an issue with the venue: the Art Museum clearly explained to me that performance art would not be allowed. At the time, their concept of performance art was not very clear, they mainly meant that nothing sudden or improvised could happen in the exhibition hall. But in the end it happened anyway—once the artists entered the venue, there was some behavior that the sponsors couldn’t control. Through this photograph, I hope to demonstrate that the official and the private was actually closely intermingled in that era, the whole of society was on the cusp of the Open-

ing and Reforms, and everyone felt the spring tide surging in, and realized that it was necessary to have some changes; as for how to change, that wasn't at all clear. But that isn't to say that one group of people wanted to change another group of people, although there was a very small minority of people who were rather stubbornly conservative. For instance, in this photograph of the exhibition you have Liu Xun: Liu Xun was the secretary at the Secretariat of the Art Workers' Association and the chairman of the Beijing Art Workers' Association; he and Jiang Feng, Hua Junwu, and Cai Ruohong were all leaders of the Art Workers' Association, and they were all old revolutionary cadres who came over from Yan'an. But Hua Junwu and Cai Ruohong expressed profound resentment toward modern art, while Liu Xun and Jiang Feng had fairly open and fairly supportive attitudes: among the elders, they had a forgiving attitude toward the new wave. So we should try to revisit the original historical context as far as possible, to appreciate that the individual response toward the tide of historical change wasn't always carefully considered and planned out. Sometimes history moves forward amidst this kind of muddled popular feeling: the scenes where history takes place are chaotic, and later become systematized and clarified in historians' narra-

tives. As we say, “History is the historians’ history” it’s seemingly not the same history as the history that took place back then. That’s what I wanted to talk about.

LIU DING Thanks to Mr. Yin Shuangxi for sharing with us briefly about the circumstances of “togetherness” just now: actually, this is also the content that we were trying to state clearly, trying to express and understand in this exhibition. How we express “togetherness” is actually extremely important, and is even more important for the reality of art today. If you say that we have a theory of a dividing line¹⁹ and a reality of a dividing line after 1989, then today, the relationship between contemporary art and official art again becomes a new reality: how should we interpret this issue? Particularly in a time of transformation, when people of all different backgrounds converge together bringing their experiences, (the issue of) how this behavior should be expressed is extremely important. Trying to describe the development of art history and intellectual history since New China through profound and subtle expression is imperative.

Next we’d like to ask Mr. Wang to speak, because *De-Politicized Politics* (Qu zhengzhi hua de zhengzhi), which Mr. Wang Hui published in the late

1990s, is an extremely important book. In the 1990s, this book provided us with new food for thought. The series *A Century of Intellectual History* (Bainian sixi-ang shi), which Mr. Wang published later, also opened up some new perspectives. He used extremely careful words to consider and exhaustively rethink the history of the last hundred years, describing our position in the world, and explore the issue of how to describe ourselves. Mr. Lü Peng also expressed a concern just now which reminded me of a curator from the Museum of Contemporary Art in Poland, who came two days ago to see the exhibition: after seeing the exhibition and listening to the narration, she said that this art looked just like their own art, but the thought, logic and motivations behind it were in fact quite different. There was also the author Claire Bishop, who wrote a book about participatory art, reflecting on the process of participation in contemporary European art based on Eastern European and Russian resources, which was quite interesting. I saw that, as she described the intellectual resources in Eastern Europe and Russia, she gave a detailed account of the appearance of modernity after the 1968 movement. Actually, we also find that, with many things, once they migrate to China, many are extremely similar in their superficial form, but the impulses and political orientations that

inform them are utterly different: this requires careful rethinking and consideration in all forms of writing, and even requires deliberation on the significance of each word. One example is the word “resistance”: in a liberal society, does the meaning of “resistance” have the same significance that it does in China, today and in the past, and is there any word that can allow it to be re-expressed? I won’t say anymore, instead I’ll ask Mr. Wang to speak.

WANG HUI I’m a layman—through chance and happenstance, I’ve often had some contact with friends in the art world. Listening to everyone speak just now, I was considering it from the perspective of a different field, and I find that there are some points of intersection, as well as some slightly different observations. I’ll talk about a few impressions:

First, regarding the period from 1972, where the exhibition begins, to 1982, everyone is looking at it more from the perspective of art history, and treating the sociopolitical history as the backdrop. But I feel that one very important issue is that, this was a transitional period, it breaks apart the general scholarship on the two “thirty-year” (periods), because it separates out 1972 to 1982, so it’s no longer this “thirty-year” narrative from 1949 to 1979. 1976 onward is another

segment—in the last few years, everyone’s been discussing the issue of the two “thirty-year” (periods), is it oppositional and fracturing, or is it integrated and mutually non-negating? In fact, the relationship between the two “thirty-year” (periods) is complicated: there is fragmentation, but there is also continuity, as this exhibition highlights. Just now we read the short introduction to the “New Spring Painting Association” written by Jiang Feng in the 1979 “Reading” (Dushu) magazine, and I noticed the narrative on the political side, because there was a phrase in it tied to that era, he said: Freedom of association is our fundamental right, and we can form schools of painting. He mentions the schools of painting later, the first thing he talks about is freedom of association. (Based on) Jiang Feng’s narrative, when he was to resume his work after the Cultural Revolution, in what sense were his key ideas and resources ultimately connected to the past history? Freedom of association is a right under the Constitution. During the era of the Cultural Revolution, the “four big freedoms” were also added, the so-called “Speaking freely, airing views freely, big-character posters, and big debates.” The Cultural Revolution began in 1966, and initially it gave rise to popular association, smashing the party-state system, which had previously been increasingly unified; but in

practice, the “four big freedoms” were tied to factionalism, mass violence, and many other unimaginable (things). In 1982, the Constitution repealed the “four big freedoms,” retaining the provision on freedom of association, but in practice, it was already extremely difficult to put this provision into practice.

These commentaries also reminded me of another thing, the 1983 anti-spiritual corruption movement. After this movement started, Zhou Yang was forced to engage in self-criticism at the Propaganda Department of the CCP: as he was explaining his reports on humanism and the issue of alienation, he said that the concept of “alienation” was not his invention, it was Hegel’s invention, a thesis by the young Hegel, and later Marx also applied this concept. He defended himself by saying that he once gave a report to Chairman Mao on these affairs in 1964, and he gained Chairman Mao’s support, it was Chairman Mao who supported his exploration of the issue of alienation.²⁰ After Deng Xiaoping watched Zhou Yang’s inspection, a commentary was included in the *Selected Essays of Deng Xiaoping* (Deng Xiaoping wenxuan). What did Deng Xiaoping say? I only remember the gist, basically he said that, when Zhou Yang defended himself saying that he reported to Chairman Mao in 1964 on the issue of “alienation” and gained Mao’s

support, actually Chairman Mao was deceived by him. Why? Because the atmosphere in 1964 was still the Sino-Soviet dispute, anti-revisionism, and prevention of revisionism, in preparation for the Cultural Revolution; in other words, the theory of “alienation”—in particular, the theory of “socialist alienation”—was actually one of the theoretical starting points for the Cultural Revolution. We can thus find a bizarre phenomenon, where a theoretical starting point for the Cultural Revolution was remobilized as a theoretical starting point for rethinking the Cultural Revolution after the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution. Deng Xiaoping said that the “theory of socialist alienation” presented socialism as an illusory thing, which was unacceptable. I recall that, in his commentary on the Xidan Democracy Wall, Deng Xiaoping also had a similar argument: he said that the essence of Wei Jingsheng and these people or the Xidan Democracy Wall was “speaking freely, airing views freely, big-character posters, and big debates,” calling for cultural revolution. The 1982 Constitution (Xianfa) entirely removed the “four big freedoms” and freedom of labor strikes.

With reference to 1972 to 1982, I thought of this issue of disputing history. This is the entangled relationship between the theory of the Cultural Revolution

and the theory of anti-Cultural Revolution, opposed and connected, overlapping and equivocal. I don't wish to treat it as a circular cycle, I'd rather observe the fractures, discrepancies and changes in this phenomenon of repetition. Actually, once Deng Xiaoping was rehabilitated, his attitude toward the Xidan Democracy Wall also changed, first supporting it, and later rejecting it; his attitude toward mass movements was also the same. Just now, Huang Rui mentioned Shi Zhi's poem, *Believing in the Future* (Xiangxin weilai): actually, *Believing in the Future* can also be interpreted from many different perspectives—for instance, the interpretation of the future was a concept arising from the 20th-century revolutionary movement and modern pursuits as a whole. Descriptions of dark and light also achieved their most typical expression in that history. His poetic imagery can be placed alongside the later understanding of the Misty Poets, and it can also be placed within the state of affairs of the 20th-century for re-narration. In this relationship, there is continuity as well as fragmentation: without the fractures, there wouldn't be new politics, but the rise of new politics is premised on history, and there is potential for narration from a separate line of thinking.

Seeing the exhibition just now, it also suggested the issue of timeliness. Prior to 1972, the most impor-

tant political event was the Lin Biao “September 13 Incident” in 1971. But prior to the Lin Biao incident, there were already important changes burgeoning in Sino-American relations: Kissinger’s first visit to China was in July 1971. It was not that the “Lin Biao Incident” led to the easing of Sino-American relations, but rather that an important turning point was already present prior to the “Lin Biao Incident”: this was the 1969 Sino-Soviet border war. The development from the dispute between the two parties in the early 1960s to the two countries resorting to arms in 1969 took less than ten years. The war between the two countries led to many changes: there were many reasons for the Cultural Revolution to tend toward its conclusion, but the border war and the outburst of the potential for a wider-scale military conflict between China and the Soviet Union was certainly one of the most important external factors. As national defense gradually became the dominant issue, revolution in the cultural sphere and internal revolution became rather difficult. In a word, we can regard the Sino-Soviet split, Sino-Soviet dispute, Cultural Revolution, border war, changes in Sino-American relations, the “Lin Biao Incident” and so on as a sequence of historical changes, not a simple chain of causation, but rather a sequence. After the “Lin Biao Incident,” the domestic political situation

experienced significant changes, and international relations, particular the relationship between China and the United States, began to accelerate. On the domestic side, “Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius” campaign began in early 1974, followed by “Evaluating Legalism, Criticizing Confucianism” in 1975. In 1975, within the party, due to the establishment of the State Council Research Office, revolving around the socialist commodity economy and bourgeois rights, the Leftist and Rightist factions within the party were already embroiled in a fierce debate. The law of value, which was regarded after 1979 as the fundamental theory of the Opening and Reforms, had actually already been proposed in 1975. Sun Zhifang, Gu Zhun and so on are now regarded as the principal theoretical founders of the Opening and Reforms, but in fact, not only had these fundamental theories already arisen in the theoretical debates around 1975, the actual history of their formation is even earlier—it can be traced back to the Chinese Communist Party’s response to the “20th Congress” of the Soviet Communist Party. They were issued in the period from 1958 to 1959, the reason being that, in 1956, there was ongoing introspection aimed at the Soviet Union’s internal issues in relation to Stalin, as well as new political trends: Mao Zedong gave a speech on contradictions among the

people, “On the Ten Major Relationships.” In 1958-1959, Gun Zhun and Sun Zhifang separately released papers on value and the law of value, while Zhang Chunqiao and others published papers on bourgeois rights. These theoretical discussions were all connected to the Sino-Soviet debates, and were also tied to evaluations of Soviet socialism and Chinese socialism. I feel that these historical threads and faintly discernible connections are extremely interesting, and are helpful to our understanding of where the impetus for change came from, and the origin of the political impetus for the various cultural movements in the period from 1972 to 1982.

This process of the emergence of the “National Art Exhibition,” the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Yan’an speech, the establishment of the National Art Exhibition Office by the State Council in 1971, the beginnings of organization, et cetera, which was discussed just now, occurred precisely at the moment when changes were occurring in Sino-American relations. Why did events in the art world play such a heterogeneous role in all this? The country’s leaders, leaders in the art world, and young artists jointly constituted the conditions for the impetus and rise of these events. Under what political context did this heterogeneity form? This point is extremely im-

portant to understanding 20th-century art history. The Chinese revolutionary war had the mass line, “From the masses, to the masses,”²¹ which had an enormous impact on culture and art, but prior to the Cultural Revolution, in a period when the bureaucratic system and academic institutions were gradually consolidating, this kind of heterogeneity was unfortunately increasingly diminished. To a certain extent, the triumvirate of young, middle-aged and old cadres, intellectuals, and the worker and peasant masses was formed precisely during the political movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and also experienced new divisions and recombinations in the course of the Cultural Revolution. After the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution, some political leaders of the older generation, leaders in the artistic sphere from the older generation, and artists from the older or middle-aged generation returned to the stage, and precisely in this era, due to the unique circumstances of the Cultural Revolution, they experienced powerful engagement with the young artists rising from among the ordinary workers and the masses. In the modern and contemporary era, as the bureaucratic system and academic system were increasingly solidified, it is difficult for this kind of phenomenon to take place—can we imagine that the National Art Museum of China or the Academy of

Fine Arts could broadly open up to artistic communities with no academic or institutional background like the “No Name Painting Association” and “Stars Art Exhibition,” as in that era?

I very much agree with what Mr. Yin said, for many years we have continued to use Western discussions on the mainstream and non-mainstream to understand this relationship, but this relationship has quite some difficulties explaining the origins of 20th-century politics, including the issue of the relationship between the “imperial temple” and the popular. Just now we saw the New Year picture (*nianhua*) by Li Keran: does this *nianhua* count as “imperial temple,” or does it count as popular? A few years ago, I saw a painting exhibition by Yuan Yunfu, which used color, perspective, pen and ink, not to mention the source material, which included many elements from literati painting, decorative works, and popular *nianhua*. The boundaries between popular and elite art are therefore mobile, which is important to understanding the most fundamental characteristics of this era. In fact, the sphere of contemporary politics and the intellectual sphere are both currently rethinking this era, but based on this exhibition and everyone’s discussion, the discussions in the art world in some respects seem to be

moving ahead, and are able to fairly richly present this issue.

Many years ago, I saw two exhibitions by Yuan Jia: one was at a brewery, and was essentially the art of the Mao Zedong era, including paintings and sculptures; the other was at the National Centre for the Performing Arts, primarily oil paintings from 1949 to the 1980s. The exhibitions had a certain connection, both touching upon Chinese art from 1949 to the 1980s. The two exhibitions' method of re-narrating history was very interesting, because they couldn't antagonistically describe the relationship between the mainstream and the popular, the elite and the masses, you would discover that that was unsuitable as a description of artistic practices in that era. This is not to say that there were no tensions within it, but obviously (one could not) describe it based on the framework prevalent today. Where did these changes come from? Why did it seem to be not particularly apt to describe that era using these concepts? This is a question. I'm afraid that one cannot, in narrating the binary relationship between China and the West, one cannot say that these current methods are Western and therefore cannot describe China, because in the China of today and the China of those years, the relationship between the

mainstream and the popular, the elite and the masses has also experienced important changes.

Culture and politics in 20th-century China were not solely founded upon 1949. I believe that these events should be regarded from the perspective of the 20th-century as a whole. On a global scale, there are probably very few countries like China, which experienced such widespread social mobilization in the 20th-century, the elite of the upper-crust to the lowest strata of villages were all organized into a mighty flood. In Chinese society, due to war, revolution, land reform, and unprecedented cultural movements, different people broadly participated in the political process. This process changed the meaning of the state, the meaning of political parties, the meaning of social movements, the meaning of worker and peasant movements, as well as the meaning of artistic movements and artistic practices, which we are discussing here. Just now we saw that, in the “New Spring Painting Association” and the “Star Art Exhibition,” the issue of the relationship between amateur and professional was gradually clarified, and it wasn’t a simple relationship. Does Qi Baishi ultimately count as popular or professional. In other words, how should we ultimately narrate this issue of relationships? To understand 20th-century politi-

cal history, intellectual history and art history, I'm afraid we will always face this kind of issue.

Just now, Mr. Lü Peng was also talking about the 20th-century, and Mr. Gao Minglu mentioned the issue of contemporaneity and modernity. Recently I've been writing the introduction to my book on the 20th-century, and it inevitably raising the issue of how to evaluate and understand the 20th-century. Writing history for the 20th-century is extremely difficult—why so? This concept of contemporaneity is quite special: modernity has the characteristic of a temporal sequence, (but) as I heard said, all history is contemporary history. I thought that the most important characteristic of the 20th-century was synchronicity. What do I mean by synchronicity? Strictly speaking, from a conceptual perspective, the 20th-century is the first century of Chinese history, because the category of centuries previously didn't exist. Beginning in the 20th-century, this concept of centuries was no longer just a product of the Christian calendar: rather, this concept was a product of general world history, which accompanied the significance of early modern geography. 20th-century China is an intrinsic part of this world history, and conversely, without Chinese history, so-called world history would be unfounded. China's 18th-century, 19th-century, or earlier centuries, and

other domains were all products of the 20th-century, prior history that the 20th-century created for itself upon its birth. The creation of prior history is an interesting thing—just now we were speaking about the artistic sphere, actually the sphere of intellectual history is nearly identical: the narrative of the 20th-century was initially created in the late Qing era, and the century was first regarded as the fundamental scope for the narration of Chinese history around 1901 or thereabouts, not around 1840. Once the 20th century began to be used to describe China's history and real situation, this historical boundary was no longer limited to China. Not only is China there, the United States is there, France is there, Russia is there, and Turkey is also there. In a word, all countries fall within the general narrative of 20th-century history. This marked the construction of synchronicity.

If we look at thought in the late Qing Dynasty, what issues were figures like Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Zhang Taiyan discussing? Aside from discussing China's reforms and revolution, ethno-nationalism and nationalism, they were discussing the issue of the European revolution, the issue of the French revolution, the issue of the Russian revolution, the issue of the American revolution, the issue of the Turkish revolution, and the history of all these regions be-

came prior history for the construction of 20th-century Chinese history. Your politics, your ideas, your consciousness are all built upon the recognition, understanding and interpretation of these prior histories. Just now, Liu Ding mentioned that, if people from Poland or perhaps other countries came over to see this exhibition, they might feel that it was quite familiar. This isn't at all strange, and there's no need to therefore feel that Chinese art is either particularly great or particularly uncreative. The fact is that the 20th-century has a widespread phenomenon of "interaction with prior history": China's "Cultural Revolution" was the prior history to the 1968 French revolution, and without the Chinese revolution, there would be no "Cultural Revolution," there would be no narrative of Europe in 1968; without the narrative of 1968, we would have no way to implant the definition of modern art within the history of contemporary art. This is an era of interaction with prior history, an era of transforming other people's stories in the course of world history into one's own story, thus the history of the 20th-century has no historical periodicity in the strict sense. We all know that Huang Yanpei said the history of a dynasty's rise and fall is historical periodicity, but the tide of the 20th-century could not possibly repeat the periodic patterns of the past. From the per-

spective of political discourses, from Jia Yi and Chao Cuo of the Han Dynasty all the way to Huang Zongxi and Gu Yanwu at the turn of the Ming and Qing dynasties, their method of political discourse always began with a discussion of the Three Dynasties, and then used the experiences of previous dynasties or the ancestors to present arguments on contemporary politics: in other words, they were narrating contemporary politics under the framework of dynastic periodicity. But what was the situation of political discourses in the 20th-century? 20th-century political discussion was the French Revolution, the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution, the American Revolution, all of these became our own history. In the artistic sphere, one already had the Greeks, the Romans, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, romanticism, classicism, modernism, post-modernism and other trends arriving in wave after wave. 20th-century history was the history of incorporating other people's history into one's own history, and simultaneously it was a process of creating and transforming one's own history into a globally synchronous history. In this sense, precisely because it is synchronous history, although the modernist, progressive conception of history was prevalent in this era, the primary characteristic of this era happened to be smashing the temporal framework of modernity, treat-

ing imbalanced, displaced relationships as its premise, and no longer adhering to, what other people treat as the modern era, we treat as the pre-modern era, in perhaps inverted logic. The 20th-century is in a displaced relationship. Back then Marx used an advanced Asia and a stagnant Europe to describe the global situation in the latter half of the 19th-century: the relationship between advancement and stagnancy had already begun to be inverted, but it was not until the 20th-century that this narrative of inversion became the narrative of displacement. The relationship between advancement and stagnancy, the relationship between the elite and the masses, the relationship between the “imperial temple” and the popular, the relationship between professional and non-professional are all a part of this displaced relationship, and it is very difficult to discuss it within a linear temporal relationship. Different factions and isms struggled for their own position of hegemony within particular political relationships. In striving for this position of hegemony, they adopted different strategies, and mobilized different peripheral relationships, and were able not only to seek external resources, but also to have internal self-production. In the artistic sphere, gaining some sort of opportunity for exhibition internationally, or obtaining some sort of support from the Art Workers’ Association or acad-

emic institutions, or how to open up international and domestic markets, political and commercial displacement, these were already difficult to judge from a unitary perspective. We also understand the political nature of art only through these mutually entangled relationships. Actually, the political has itself been homogenized, and has been influenced by the homogenization of Europe's early modern historical narrative. In the media world, how to define the relationship between art and politics touches upon reinterpretations of the political nature of the media world. Refusing to interpret the relationship between art and politics from a unitary perspective is particularly necessary in the era of de-politicization, because many topics which themselves seem political are the products of de-politicization.

Just now we heard Mr. Yan mention that, when he was young, he was working at the Beijing Fine Arts Company, and he was able to visit the library, and look up what other people were painting in the same era. In other words, that was your prior history—your prior history couldn't simply be narrated using the history of your own elders, your prior history simultaneously was rooted in another domain. The complexity of such relationships is an extremely important characteristic of the 20th-century. In order to understand

this era, we have to realign, and ask about the potential issues in the narrative of 20th-century history. This process of reshuffling is seeking its own process—how do we reshuffle? It's your narrative logic. In this sense, the entanglement of art and politics is extremely reiterative. Just now in the exhibition I saw the subject of "Zhang Zhixin," and I immediately thought of Liu Hulan, and I also thought of Sister Jiang: in this narrative sequence, Zhang Zhixin is slightly given the image of an intellectual, for instance in the image where she's playing the violin. The image of "Zhang Zhixin" is an accusation against the Cultural Revolution, and later it could even be regarded as a condemnation of the revolutionary era, but by placing its composition within the sequence of 20th-century art, one discovers different significances. From the covers of the 1930s, the covers of Leftist magazines, and the statues and painted works of the 1950s, to the image of Zhang Zhixin molded during this period, and to other historical narratives of the same period, it seems that they are permeated by one typical characteristic.

From the perspective of interaction with prior history, the image of "Zhang Zhixin" seems to have characteristics of both saint and victim. If we regard the Chinese revolution as if it were like the history of a religious revolution, and observe the relationships

between painting from that era and religious painting, the relationships between art and religion, and art and revolution can also be made out. The painting *Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan* depicts an interlude in revolutionary history, but can we see in its composition the intertextual relationship with European religious painting? In narrating the political history, art history, and intellectual history of this era, due to its contemporaneity, people often forget where the center of contemporary art actually is.

What was the center during the “Cultural Revolution”? Model operas were the center. The advertising posters had strong integration, with literati art, popular art, heroic narratives and popular narratives forming a comprehensive motif; drama, literature, music, dance and so on were all integrated as well. Western opera, early modern Russian and European stage plays, and China’s big operas and local operas were all assembled into an organic narrative form, which I feel more or less had the characteristics of epic drama, as well as the characteristics of religious drama. We can’t look at art and politics, revolution and religion as simple opposites, but rather should simultaneously observe the mutually infiltrative relationships between them. The energy that coalesced in this century in the exploration of different art was an energy known to every house-

hold, which is rarely seen. I remember that, the time when I participated in the discussion at the painting exhibition organized by Yuan Jia, Mr. Zhong Han said a few words that left a particularly deep impression on me. He was explaining two pieces—one was Dong Xiwen's *The Founding Ceremony of the Nation*, and one was Zhong Han's *Back View Along the Riverside*, and although it was just a short commentary, it left a very deep impression on me. During his explanation of *The Founding Ceremony of the Nation*, the sketches were brought out at the exhibition, and he spent the whole time analyzing to what extent the perspective relationships reflected the relationships between Chairman Mao and the people surrounding him. Mao was the leader, but at the same time, he was a member of the leaders' collective, thus he needs to have a prominent position, but it couldn't go beyond the bounds of a proper sense of proportion. Mao is at the center of the tableau and is roughly a half step or one step in front of the other leaders: there is not much random placement, but in terms of the perspective, he appears prominent without being towering. The distance coming forward couldn't be too far—if it were too far, it would violate the logic of the collective leaders, with one person being too prominent; but a leader must also indeed be present, one had to find a

viewpoint within the perspective relationships that could give prominence to his position. There is also which corner the images of workers, peasants and soldiers in it would appear in. This is a typical method of composition when creating motifs in religious painting.

Mr. Zhong Han said at the time that, when painting revolutionary paintings, the most important thing is handling the relationships between three groups: the leaders, the Party and the people. The relationships between these three groups—when he painted the back view, other people had already painted it, and he asked himself, how should it really be painted? And finally he painted the back view. In paintings from the era of the European Renaissance, different painters often painted the same subject, but they had different ways of approaching it: for instance, the relationship between Jesus and his disciples is one, and da Vinci's *The Last Supper* found a unique form of presentation. The logic seems to be consistent.

Just now Mr. Yan and Mr. Huang brought up their experiences and feelings. In art, and even in politics, the role of emotional tension in writing politics often transcends the macroscopic narrative. Just now we were talking about how the narratives of the mainstream and the peripheral could perhaps be smashed,

but to return to the original topic, the reason why people have accepted these narratives for a rather long period of time is because they have emotional truth. For instance, just now I mentioned that there is a type of continuity between Shi Zhi's *Believing in the Future* and the concept of time in the 20th-century revolutionary era, but according to Mr. Huang Rui's impressions, it is quite likely that the political tendencies of the two were mutual opposites. What should be done with this emotional truth in historical narratives?

Emotional truth is actually the political core of art, displaying its value orientation: although, from another perspective, the tense relationship between this kind of strong emphasis itself and its object isn't necessarily a true historical relationship, emotional relationships are very important in art history, intellectual history, and cultural history. In saying that the 1964 "theory of alienation" was a theory of the Cultural Revolution, we cannot deny that, when Zhou Yang brought up the "theory of alienation" in the 1980s, his basic motivations and emotional orientation were specifically anti-Cultural Revolution. In writing contemporary history, for instance, the narrative on 1985 and 1987 by Mr. Gao Minglu, the significance rests in his narrative of the issues as a witness at the scene; if people later rewrite this period of history, its implications will

have already experienced changes. These are some fundamental issues in historical narratives.

A few days ago, because the Guggenheim was doing an exhibition on 1989 to 2008, they asked me to discuss this topic with them. Ms. (Alexandra) Monroe said that they had drawn on my narrative in the two books *China's New Order* (Zhongguo de xin zhixu) and *The End of the Revolution* (Geming de zhongjie) to periodize the history. My narratives weren't directly related to art history—the Guggenheim was treating 1989 to 2008 as one period for the narrative on art history, and they had also found a theoretical bridge between art and politics. From the perspective of art history, we could challenge this periodization, because no periodization is absolute, and all these relationships are in the process of experiencing changes. But based on these two exhibitions, I felt strongly that contemporary art exhibitions have started turning into the vanguard in the reinterpretation of contemporary history. In the two exhibitions created by Yuan Jia early on, at that time it was still fairly difficult in the intellectual sphere to discuss this issue to such an extent. In painting from 1950 to 1960, there are many works by “Rightist” painters—at the time, I had a particularly deep impression. Those painters who were exiled to the border regions (including Xinjiang and Inner Mon-

golia) surprisingly painted such brightly colored images, with such thriving vitality. I once asked Wang Meng—after becoming involved with the “Rightists,” he had lived in Xinjiang for ten-odd years, but the Xinjiang under his brush was much brighter than the background he later described. How does one describe such a historical situation? How does one approach these experiences of “Rightist” authors or painters, and the atmosphere expressed in their pieces, which is quite different from our understanding today? These are all critical moments, some crevices for reaching deeply into history’s interior. I personally don’t have a better explanation, but without these works of art and experiences, it seems that it would be very difficult to find a critical moment to explain the internal texture and complexity. From this perspective, as a part of the 20th-century, that era shouldn’t simply be negated. The 20th-century was an axis of historical change, and although the cost was enormous, the events that occurred, and the density of the various events that took place, is something that has never been seen before in human history. There are very few periods in Chinese history which experienced such concentrated change. Consequently, on the one hand we must undoubtedly engage in extremely deep introspection on the 20th-century, because many tragedies took place in the 20th-

century, including the two (world) wars, and so on; on the other hand, we must find new narrative methods for how we grasp the originality of this century. I've been talking for too long, let's let the others speak.

SU WEI I have a question for Mr. Wang: you mentioned the issue of interaction with prior history, which reminded me of an essay—Zdenka Badovinac, the curator of the Ljubljana Museum of Modern Art in Slovenia, once mentioned in a piece entitled “Contemporaneity as Points of Connection” the issue of how to establish an art museum, or how to establish her own narrative in an Eastern European country and a post-socialist environment. She started by acknowledging that creative works in Eastern Europe lag behind Western Europe as a whole—although you would say this was dislocation or divergence, in that era there were truly many artistic practices and artistic creations that substantially lagged behind Western artistic creations, and she acknowledged this reality. How does one face this reality, or rather, how does one create one's own narrative within this reality. She used the concept of the “Global South.” 20 years ago, the “Global South” was still a relatively advanced concept, and she was suggesting the issue of how to reestablish a camp in a non-Cold War setup, or rather

in the aftermath left behind by ideological opposition. This camp would no longer be ideological, and the fields it was associated with would extend more toward the local and latent levels of society and culture. I'd like to ask you to explain, from within your ideological system, how one can currently understand the issue of camps? Although the issue of East and West no longer constitutes systematic opposition, but for nations like ours and the people here, just like in Eastern Europe, how do we establish a camp based on cultural entities or intellectual entities? Is this a possibility? Is this issue present in your reflections on modernity and contemporaneity? Because I have found that this issue is actually fairly important: in particular, in many cultural and artistic interactions, we really feel the divergence and dislocation; on a very concrete level, the world isn't completely flat, but rather is especially complex and craggy.

WANG HUI From an artistic perspective, I'd have to give a lot of layman's opinions, and I don't want to speak out of turn. With respect to the modern era, one fundamental phenomenon that has emerged is that synchronicity has become more distinct. This is since the 20th-century, and by the contemporary era, it is even

more so. This could have some impact on art history or on artistic practices.

In the 20th-century, particularly its latter half, there was this perspective of two camps. The primary motivations for self-renewal in the 20th-century came from “opposition,” from “camps,” from “competition between systems”: the so-called competition between socialism and capitalism was the major impetus for the changes occurring within the respective systems. Some time ago, at Harvard, I was discussing liberal democracy, populism and so on with several scholars. I suggested that the peak era for liberal democracy was the Cold War period: although some people speak nostalgically of the 19th-century, the primary form of 19th-century politics was autocracy—the Vienna system was an autocratic system, and it was maintained all the way until the end of the First World War before finally experiencing major changes. The peak era for liberal democracy was after the war, and it was during the Cold War period—in other words, in a period when there was competition between systems. Conversely, the socialist period, although a general fall from power emerged in 1989, that was also a period with the most internal tensions and the most vitality. Socialism is relatively young, and Chinese history is also fairly special, because during the revolutionary

period, politics with a certain amount of vitality had already come into being. Just now I was talking about the relationship between the elite and the masses, which one might say was different from the relationship between cadres and the masses under a bureaucratic system: all of this developed and emerged during the civil war, a so-called “integrated” relationship. The main political crisis today is that systems competition is no longer present. My fundamental viewpoint is that there are multiple factors in the crisis of democracy: one external factor is that it no longer has competition between systems, and it no longer has the impetus for self-renewal. Although many people criticize the theory of the end of history, this mentality of “the end of history” is precisely a product of the disappearance of competition between systems. Compared to the Cold War era, the importance of differences in political ideology has already been substantially weakened. If the focal issue were still differences in political ideology or political form, we could continue to use old discourses to critique contemporary politics; but between different political ideologies, there are fewer and fewer substantive differences. Prior to 1989, the differences between socialist systems and liberal democratic systems were extremely important, and these differences were the starting point for ex-

plaining nearly all problems—today, many people still use this as an explanation. But for the main problems that we see arising in every society today, these formal differences have next to no impact on the formation of these key issues. On a certain level, not to say that nothing has changed, but the fundamental problems like the wealth gap, immigrants, cultural conflict, issues of race and religion, any sociopolitical ideology will face the same problems. In this sense, the concept of the original camps has experienced major changes—this is the first point.

To a certain extent, the concept of the “Global South”—including Asia, Africa, and Latin America—is also a perpetuation of the concept of the “Third World,” but the “Global South” is no longer established on the relationships within the category of the “Third World,” it’s experienced major changes, and the original, fundamental discourses on history have already begun to be rejected, even within the Third World. This is a very clear characteristic. But it would be difficult to form a true camp using the concept of the “Global South.” The logic of Chinese globalization—“One Belt, One Road”—thoroughly smashes the differences in this camp. How does one ultimately rebuild politics in the artistic sphere and in the intellectual and cultural spheres? This is an era that raises

new questions, and you will find that the old discourses and foundations are all encountering major difficulties—this is the second point.

Third, this is closely related to the situation created by the 20th-century. Just now I was talking about synchronicity and imbalance: one must have synchronicity to have imbalance; without synchronicity, there is just divergence or essential differences; if we are all in the same era, then divergence and differences can be described as imbalance—that is, even though they are different, these differences are related, and we recognize the existence of the same related system. There was also a similar phenomenon with respect to art writing in the 20th-century. Everyone often senses this difficulty, which is that dislocation emerges in the relationships between different histories. We often feel this dislocation: for instance, in the political sphere we talk about proletariat revolution, but in the first half of the 20th-century, the scale of China's working class was extremely small, and next to no workers truly participated in the entire course of the revolution, the majority were peasants, but then what is a proletariat revolution? This is not just a class issue, it's a problem that emerges in nearly all spheres. We often use dislocation to describe these phenomena, but what is dislocation, ultimately? Dislocation may

be the fundamental characteristic of universal history in the 20th-century: its premise is composed of so-called synchronicity, and without synchronicity, the need for such transplanted categories wouldn't emerge. But nearly all of the politics of the 20th-century occurred within this universal domain: divergences in the specific historical conditions are combined with universal politics to form these epochal political characteristics.

Finally, I feel that some obscuring barriers should be done away with. This barrier is that most people will lightly follow the logic of divergence to establish new discourses, rather than understanding the significance and composition of an era through the relationship between divergence and universality. "I" am different from "you," so I will certainly discuss the issues of divergence and the self in this sense. Only in an extremely self-aware political sense do these discourses on divergence have meaning. The most important politics and most original politics of the 20th-century were all products of the combination of universal politics and specific conditions, arising in the process of seeking breakthrough points in universal historical relationships. Politics is like this, and art is like this as well. Every time the interpretation of universal vocabulary is combined with specific conditions, it causes

the internal texture of universal politics to experience changes. Change is the display of creativity. If you want to return to the topic of particularity, you will perversely be unable to build true politics. This is like with China's Cultural Revolution and Europe's 1968 (student movement): there were enormous differences between the situations, but they've been organized within the same relationship for discussion—these are regarded as being within the universal political relationship, movements that had different situations but were mutually instigating. In this relationship, different figures express their appeals by creating their own politics arising in response to imbalance. They are unable to return to particularity to narrate themselves. The powerful political narratives of the 20th-century all arose in this fashion: despite efforts to seek divergence, the fact is that they didn't do anything “special” in the ordinary sense. For instance, there's the Interpretative School started by Minglu, the Mono-ha (School of Things) of Japan, these narratives all fell within an overarching relationship: each sought their own uniqueness, but each narrative of uniqueness was aimed at the construction of a new universality, otherwise we would be unable to understand its meaning.

The early modern fringe politics of the 20th-century fundamentally created a new, global political era,

but this “global politics” was not universal politics in the ordinary sense, it was not Western-centric universalist politics, but rather politics filled with the sense of imbalance and internal tensions of so-called synchronicity. We have to understand it in this sense. I don’t know whether the “camp” you speak of will emerge in the future. And would you translate zhenying (阵营) as “camp” or “faction”? If it’s “faction,” it would have a little more connection to the deconstruction of essentialism, which Mr. Lü Peng mentioned just now.

Lastly, I’ll say a few words about the issue of “deconstructing essentialism.” This issue was put forward in the early 20th-century, and China’s most representative, most profound thought on deconstructing essentialism was when Zhang Taiyan used Yogachara to deconstruct all universality, deconstruct Hegelian teleology, deconstruct the essentialness of all cognitive domains, and deconstruct the “self” created through cognition and language. He revealed the illusoriness of the “self” itself. This was his work in the period from 1905 to 1911. His ontological revelations were discussed in the sense of the philosophy of Buddhism and the Equality of Things, it was a type of non-ontological ontological discussion. Today’s contemporary art is directly related to this. If contempo-

rary art is observed within the context of the 20th-century, I feel that the most contrasting element of the 20th-century is the disappearance of transcendentalist or utopian dimensions: even if we discuss the future, it no longer has the dimension of the future of that time. I once summarized several key dimensions of the intellectual sphere in the 20th-century, including challenges to Western universalism. The first dimension was challenges to the temporal narrative, including challenges to the theory of the stages of development in social form; next was the dimension of space, that is, how to ultimately build one's own political body, imagine one's own world, where the borders of one's world lie; the third dimension consisted of the products of language and cultural forms, the use of classical Chinese or vernacular in the literary sphere, or the use of other languages in the artistic sphere were in fact all forms of creative self-expression, that is, establishing one's relationship with oneself through linguistic forms or symbols, to shape self-expression; and the final dimension was the continuous discussion of transcendent dimensions, including the dimension of religion, and also including the "future" in the secular, temporal sense, that is, the dimensions of another world, such as Kang Youwei's Great Harmony, Zhang Taiyan's Equality and Balance, communism and other

socialist ideals, and so on. Ultimately, the expression of this element in contemporary thought and artistic practices is fairly weak. The disappearance of this element also caused contemporary thought to experience a huge crisis. I remember around ten years ago, Zhan Mingxin organized a conference called the “Future of Utopia” at Duke University. We found that it is increasingly impossible today to create a utopia. This refers not only to future utopias in the practical sense—even the creation of other hypothetical possibilities has become increasingly difficult. With respect to this point, today, how are the relationships between art, thought and politics reconstructed? This issue may be the biggest challenge faced by artistic movements, from its inception in the 1870s until today.

CAROL YINGHUA LU Thank you, Mr. Wang Hui. In our work, we apply several methodologies to revisit history and reimagine the past, and your many works are among our principal intellectual resources. Today we have also invited Ms. Shao Yiyang—Ms. Shao’s field of research focuses on Western art history. One of our starting points for inviting Ms. Shao was actually her personal connection with the period of art we are discussing at this exhibition: to a certain extent, this connection came into being through her father, Mr. Shao

Dazheng. Beginning in the mid-1980s, Mr. Shao Dazhen served as the editor-in-chief of “Art” (Meishu): he was an extremely open-minded art historian, and at the time, “Art” magazine provided an important platform for many young artists and the practice of “New Wave Art.” In our exhibition, we are presenting a discussion about Impressionism and formalism, and Mr. Shao Dazhen’s discourses are an extremely important factor in that. So we’d like to listen to the understanding that Ms. Shao has of that period of time.

SHAO YIYANG I’m very happy that Carol Yinghua Lu and Liu Ding invited me to participate in this seminar, to learn from everyone in the older generation, and also to discover many details about this period of history. I didn’t personally experience it, but I have done a bit of research about this period of history—this was in my PhD dissertation at the University of Sydney, on Chinese art in the 1980s to 1990s. My advisor was John Clark: he specialized in Asian art, principally the aspect of modernity in Asian art, and he had his own views, particularly with respect to Chinese modern art. In focusing on this period, I primarily used the swathe of materials from Beijing and the Central Academy of

Fine Arts, as these were materials that I could grasp fairly easily.

I began pursuing my PhD in 1998, and I completed my dissertation in 2003: one of the main viewpoints in it was that official (art) and unofficial (art) could not be completely separated. At the time, the mainstream narrative in the West on Chinese modern art was: the official is always conservative, and the unofficial is always avant-garde, that is, there are clear distinctions between conservative and avant-garde, official and unofficial. But I argued that this was a fuzzy area, and there wasn't such a sharp differentiation in China. Because at the time, as Mr. Yan Zhen-duo said earlier, at the time, they were closely integrated with the so-called official or institutional school of art. In addition, the majority of those whom we now speak of as avant-garde artists, including Mr. Huang Rui, all learned from and were mutually connected to the so-called official, institutional school of artists to varying degrees; moreover, many other artists engaging with the contemporary period also emerged from the academic institutions, so this was my principal viewpoint on the contemporary era. I've also read the books by Mr. Gao Minglu and Mr. Lü Peng, which helped me a great deal in terms of the materials.

With respect to my father, Shao Dazhen, he proposed some influential viewpoints in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Since he wasn't subject to the environment of modern art at the time, his discussions on the beauty of abstract art, as well as his defense of abstract art, defense of Impressionism, defense of nude art, as well as (discussions of) what realism is, including his defense of the works of Luo Zhongli, all played a certain role in the fine arts world. Just now I was skimming through the text that Carol Yinghua Lu wrote for this exhibition, which mentions this essay written by my father, quite early on, written in 1979, about the issue of the Impressionism. At the time, he was the first to come out in defense of Impressionism. Impressionism wasn't accepted at the time: of all the things in Western art history, China only accepted realism, everything had to be realism, so this essay argued that Impressionism was a part of realism. I think that my father wouldn't have believed in terms of academic principles that Impressionism was realism, because I was also introduced to the field of Western art history by my father and mother. I never heard any comments at home that Impressionism was realism: I think his intention in saying these things may have been the same intention as in the letter written by Mr. Huang Rui to Jiang Feng, saying that "We are com-

mitted to the Four Cardinal Principles.” If one didn’t say that, how else could it be said? If one didn’t say that, under that political environment, was it really possible that Impressionism could have been officially accepted? So I think that when my father said, “Impressionism is realism,” it was likely a statement made under this kind of historical conditions. In addition, Impressionism does actually have realist style: in the broadest sense, any good art has realist significance, even in modern and avant-garde art—for instance, (Gerhard) Richter also labeled his large abstract paintings as realism. I think that this was my father’s intention.

I’ve also read what Carol Yinghua Lu wrote about this debate continuing into the 1950s, the controversy surrounding Impressionism: that is, when my father was discussing Impressionism in the 1950s, these are the things he wanted to say, to say that Impressionism should be accepted, but at the time, he wasn’t allowed to say it. I remember that the group of people who studied in the Soviet Union were quite pitiable: everyone thought that they were accepted by mainstream society, that the government had sent them, that they were extremely happy to have been sent, but actually they were not welcomed back, because by that time, Sino-Soviet relations were already

very bad. They were quickly labeled as “Soviet revisionists,” and they had no opportunity to express their own views; the Cultural Revolution began not long afterward, and they were sent down to the countryside to be reformed, and they were not allowed to teach. Later, it wasn’t until 1978 that they were finally able to write about European art history. When they had just returned, they did have an opportunity, and very excitedly participated in writing about one period of European art history. That red book on European art history, a very thick book, was collectively written by them at Xiangshan (Fragrant Hills), and later our textbooks were written on that foundation. But not long after the book came out, they were prohibited from teaching, and were quickly criticized as “Soviet revisionists,” and then nationalism rose up.

When we talk about this period of history, we always talk about suppression by the Soviet Union or the influence of the Soviet Union, but actually it wasn’t the Soviet Union suppressing us, it was quite plainly us suppressing ourselves: those things from the Soviet Union were never implemented, just like the things from the West were never truly put into practice. When those like Mr. Jin Shangyi and Mr. Zhan Jianjun later said that they particularly liked Soviet oil paintings, these were all things from after 1978: be-

fore that, if you wanted to paint things from the Soviet Union, you simply wouldn't be allowed to paint. Oil paintings had to be painted similarly to New Year picture (nianhua): as Mr. Yin said, one had to learn from the people. A situation where things from the Soviet Union were suppressing us simply never emerged. Just like when it was later said that certain situations were brought about by complete Westernization, what complete Westernization, were we Westernized? There simply was no such thing as complete Westernization. So these were all misunderstandings, and when we say now that Soviet art history had such an impact on us, and suppressed us for so many years—this is completely untrue, and actually it was feudal centralism plus nationalism that suppressed us.

GAO MINGLU I'll add one point. After I arrived in the United States, I became acquainted with a PhD student studying Western art history, an American, and he wrote something and gave a lecture in the classroom, talking about what the Chinese people were saying about learning from the Soviet Union. He believed that Chinese people learning from the Soviet Union actually wanted to learn about the (era) before the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union's criticism of realism and the Peredvizhniki (The Wanderers). Actually,

the Peredvizhniki and the earlier criticisms of realism were brought out later and linked to Stalin's proposal of socialist realism, because Stalin had previously occupied a dominant position in Russian realism. At the time, before the "Cultural Revolution," Chinese artists have published many albums about the Peredvizhniki and critiques of realism, and actually Chinese artists really wanted to study these things, because that was an especially representative institutional school.

SHAO YIYANG That's right, what my mother studied in the Soviet Union was French neoclassicism and the Russian Peredvizhniki, and this aspect is what she mainly taught after returning.

YIN SHUANGXI I'll put in a few words—Jin Shangyi once talked about what Minglu was saying just now, about the differences between Soviet culture and Russian culture. He said that we had to make a clear distinction, that we liked Russian culture, like the ballet *The Nutcracker*, Tchaikovsky's music, that was true European culture, and the Soviet things were different from that.

SHAO YIYANG Many of my parents' teachers in the Soviet Union had studied in France, and they could speak

French. The period when my parents were attending school was the Khrushchev era, which is regarded as their period of opening and reforms, so they had a very high degree of acceptance for modern art. But the Russian things and modern things that my father and the others studied were useless in China, and it wasn't until after 1978 that they wrote that pamphlet, *A Brief Discussion of Modernist Art* (Xiandai pai meishu qianyi). Apart from the things he studied in the Soviet Union, he also translated many sources from the United Kingdom and the United States. Seeing it just now, I think this exhibition is pretty good: this period from 1972 to 1982 is an era that we often overlook; the PhD dissertation I wrote was after 1978, and 1978 serves as a juncture because there began to be formal school education in the fine arts. It seems that there were several interruptions between 1979 and 1985, because a group of people were overthrown during the “Anti-Spiritual Corruption” campaign; later, there was also the “Anti-Liberalization” campaign, and another group was overthrown during the 1989 student strike—this history is constantly repeated. This is like the constant repetition that Mr. Wang Hui mentioned: our paintings of Sister Jiang, paintings of Liu Hulan, paintings of Zhang Zhixin are the same, but we want to summarize and discuss them—of course, this isn't

traditional Chinese culture, our period of history has some big problems, so now artists constantly discuss this issue of, if Sister Jiang were painted from the perspective of Western art history, it would be equivalent to crucifixion, always the subject of the sacrificed. Mr. Wang Hui is quite right in saying that Western art history and Christian art history have this point of origin: their peak was in the 17th-century, and after the 17th-century, the Western art world no longer painted this kind of subject. In the 19th-century, they also painted propaganda paintings, and by the 20th-century, they were no more. But until the 1980s, our artists were actually only allowed to do propaganda paintings—shouldn't we examine the issues we have in our culture? So I think that the importance of the history of the “New Spring Paintings Association” and the “New Spring Painting School” rests in their introspection and rebellion against that kind of politics, and that kind of culture: some may have gone further, while some went at a slightly slower pace, but they were all a kind of breakthrough. I think that the institutional school may not have gone as far as the unofficial artists, because they were subject to more restrictions. For instance, my father didn't dare to say that Impressionism was the start of realism, but it wasn't realism—he couldn't say that, and if he had, it couldn't have

been placed in this historical narrative, couldn't be expressed, couldn't have a dialogue, couldn't generate an impact, so there was a reason for this. When we consider history, we have to pay attention to this point. This group of people didn't write these things, say these things, paint these things out of ignorance, actually there was always a reason and a story behind it. For instance, the issue of formal art was one of the most important issues of the 1980s: formalism itself actually didn't have the most important significance—from the “New Spring Painting Association” to the “Stars Art Group,” I've always believed that they had social and political significance, along with economic factors; and they all wanted to make a breakthrough, because even when artists created purely abstract works of art, they still had sociopolitical significance, because they wanted to cast off the state of being fettered, cast off the state of only being able to paint mainstream propaganda paintings. Just now, Mr. Yan Zhenduo said that he was originally only able to paint portraits of the Chairman—when Richter was in East Germany, he was also only able to paint portraits of the chairman. If you didn't want to paint portraits of the Chairman, these were the only commissions. Without other commissions, this was the only form—it

wasn't until later, when there were other commissions, that there could finally be other forms.

YAN ZHENDUO There were decorative paintings for the embassies, the consulates in China, and the hotels.

SHAO YIYANG On the one hand, the emergence of Impressionism was due to the emergence of the middle class; on the other hand, it was also due to the emergence of unofficial commissions, so there was market demand. Of course, this was also a breakthrough of the internal need that artists had, why? He didn't want to paint mainstream paintings, as Mr. Yan said, so many people didn't want to paint these paintings, and when he painted abstract paintings it also signified a kind of resistance, so abstract paintings never had just an aesthetic significance, abstract paintings with only an aesthetic significance were just a canvas. So I think that, at that time, even those who were advancing at a slower pace still had modern significance, and we can't talk about modern art separate from the historical conditions. I'll just say this much.

YIN SHUANGXI I'll add a word—in Jiang Feng's introduction, aside from giving an analysis on freedom, he also proposed that painting could enter the market,

and this comment was the harbinger for art entering the market. Wu Guanzhong's piece at the "New Spring Art Exhibition" was sold off, for how much money? A little over 80 yuan, and he was incredibly excited, this was the first painting he sold.

YAN ZHENDUO Mr. Ye exchanged that painting of Yuan Jia's with you, you made a match—I really didn't know that Mr. Ye had commissioned that painting.

SHAO YIYANG Just now Mr. Yin mentioned the "Chinese Modern Art Exhibition" of 1989. I also remember that my father took me to see this exhibition—at the time, I was still young, and didn't really understand. At that point, the exhibition still wasn't open, we went in the first couple days to review the display for the "China/Avant-Garde" exhibition, so I saw the modern paintings, and my father said with great pride: I held meetings all day yesterday, struggling to bring over these few paintings. Whose paintings were they? It was a portrait of Mao Zedong by Wang Guangyi, covered with a grid pattern My father also said that he spent a long time explaining, and finally the leaders of the Art Workers' Association and the Literary Federation agreed, so these paintings were finally put up. The artist was certainly quite happy. My father said that he

also struggled to bring in those images of bald heads painted by Geng Jianyi, he said they were really quite good, and after getting permission to exhibit them, he was very happy.

I also remember that, although I was young at the time, looking at these paintings, they were very different from the paintings I had seen before, and I really liked them. My father said that “Art” (Meishu) magazine didn’t have an easy time when they wanted to participate in this exhibition. Because “Art” magazine was a mainstream magazine, official media. The exhibition was jointly sponsored by “Art” and “Art News of China” (Zhongguo meishu bao)—Mr. Gao was also committed always to this work. The exhibition ultimately had to reach a compromise with the Literary Federation, and some pieces could be displayed, such as performance art. So I remember that on the day it opened, my father took me to see it, and I saw that there were (people) selling fish inside, and also hatching chicken eggs, it was quite lively. My father said that these things could stir up trouble, because such pieces might get shut down. Later it wasn’t just by reason of these few pieces—the moment Xiao Lu fired the gun, the exhibition was shut down. Xiao Lu, her father Xiao Feng was also a friend of my father’s, they had both studied in the Soviet Union. A few days be-

fore the exhibition, Xiao Lu came to our house to borrow a sewing machine to sew a piece of red cloth. She had originally thought to put a piece of red cloth behind her artwork, but later she said she thought the effect wasn't good, so she didn't use it, and so later she fired that gun. Of course, she didn't say anything beforehand about wanting to fire a gun, she just said that she wanted to borrow our family's sewing machine to encircle it with a piece of red cloth, I remember that quite clearly.

LIU DING Thanks to Ms. Shao Yiyang for sharing her personal experiences and her views on some of the discourses by her father's generation. Actually, this is also what we wanted to express in the exhibition, that is, "art" as separate from the discussion of art, the emergence of conceptual terms in art: what were the historical motivations behind it, and what symbolic meaning did it represent. This is really worth exploring, because in past narratives on art history, the symbolic, conceptual terms weren't discussed most of the time. Actually, this shines a light on the issue of "political motivation." This includes Jiang Feng, this kind of art official and artist: in 1957, he had a series of discussions opposing Impressionism and opposing traditional Chinese painting, but by 1979, he had become a

proponent of openness—this was quite complicated. This includes Zhou Yang, who was mentioned just now—these people had a complex understanding of issues in art, which weren't fully expressed in the artistic sphere, but which are extremely important to considerations today. What relationship there was ultimately between this fragmentation and perpetuation, what it ultimately was with respect to today's realism, including our discussion just now about the meaning of emotions in history—for a long period of time, as we looked back at realism, how it should be done and evaluated, this was all actually lacking in expression. Finally, I'd like to ask Mr. Xu Jian to speak, because his *Famous Mountains* (Mingshan) and *Undercurrents* (Anliu) were both extremely important books—although they didn't address the category of contemporary art, it's extremely interesting to address fragmentation and perpetuation through the categories of archaeology and museum studies.

XU JIAN I actually spoke for some time this morning, so I should keep it short. I'll start by saying a little about my experience in viewing the exhibition. At first, I felt it was strange to have 1972 to 1982. I have always advocated the method of revisiting in the study of academic history. Revisiting is not at all an objective and

isolated process: we are both interpreters and performers on the stage, and we have to bestow some significance upon it, to form our impetus for revisiting. Just as Mr. Wang Hui bestowed significance on this decade from within two “thirty-year” (periods), when I first saw the exhibition, I still hadn’t thought of it. The thing that most directly drew my attention was that this was a decade of sudden easing of pressure, sudden release. During this period of decompression, many things that had long been suppressed were suddenly released.

The notion of a period of release of pressure alerted my attention: the art of 1972 to 1982 actually wasn’t art in isolation, but rather was a mirror image of society as a whole. It was not just art that was decompressing—other aspects of society and culture and other branches of learning were all decompressing. Consequently, the changes in art were almost in concert with the changes to other branches of learning and other fields. After “Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius” in 1972, this led to the sudden emergence of an Indian summer scene: many academic periodicals resumed publication, and archaeology, museums, and artist associations all began to emerge from the cadre schools and even from cowsheds. There was of course a practical reason for this: we were to hold a national

exhibition, in which various aspects of diplomacy were to be put on display, to establish ties with the Western world. However, what these people did went far beyond the extent of resuming academic periodicals, arranging exhibitions, and putting up a façade: at a critical juncture, they expressed long-suppressed ideals and aspirations using methods in keeping with the style of that era, turning it into an event that had great value in establishing the discipline. This aspect not only emerged in art, but could also be seen in various other fields.

Conversely, with respect to 1982, the divisions and changes in art were also a reflection of changes in that era. Mr. Wang spoke about the issue of the *Constitution* (Xianfa), which was a very important reminder for me, it's something I had thought of before. The pressure reappeared, and although the specific content of the pressure had changed, the pressure caused art to experience fragmentation and distortion. Many of those present were participants, and I don't know whether they felt this at the time, that they originally regarded themselves as revolutionaries and trailblazers, and then suddenly discovered that they had become anti-revolutionaries, moving into opposition with the revolution, in a complete inversion of their

status: this was actually the re-imposition of pressure, or a signal of the reappearance of pressure.

YAN ZHENDUO I'll just add one simple comment—after 1982, someone from the Ministry of Public Security had his eyes on me. But he didn't find anything to play with, so it was left unresolved.

XU JIAN Right, so the reason why we're recalling it now, there was actually a reason why everyone parted ways beginning in 1982—it was the result of changes to society as a whole. So I think that art from 1972 to 1982 had two orientations: in terms of the vertical relationship of pressure–response, it was an era of disintegration, a period of release of pressure that actually wasn't all that brief in duration; in terms of the horizontal relationship, it was at a continuous level where there was political pressure, and no field could escape the larger environment.

In the face of this period of easing of political pressure from 1972 to 1982, how did art present itself? Constrained and concealed voices would emerge, and different voices would give rise to conflict. Artists following different paths and engaging in different practices would come into conflict with artists, and artists would be in conflict with the audience, because

the works of art that the audience expected to see were often discrepant with what the artists were doing: this morning, Mr. Huang spoke of how some people criticized the “Star Art Exhibition,” criticized New Wave art, saying that the paintings weren’t likenesses and weren’t painted at all well. There was a disconnect between the audience and artists; there was also a disconnect between art leaders and artists; and there was even a disconnect between artists and artists. To be frank, I don’t think that Jiang Feng was truly able to understand the art of 1979. After returning to the center of power, he was unable to acutely experience what was happening at the cutting edge of art. Of course, this lack of understanding can be seen in all of the various industries: the old cadres couldn’t understand, but they were able to express their support as administrative leaders quite well; but as an artist, Jiang Feng was completely able to express that, “I fundamentally don’t know what you’re doing, and I don’t know what it means.” In Jiang Feng’s introduction to the “New Spring Art Exhibition,” what I personally was most interested in, which was also emphasized in quotation marks in the original text, was “creative democracy,” which emphasized the sense that opportunities were emerging within various trends during the decompression period. So, this decade of

decompression would also be expressed as a decade of many contradictions and conflicts. Only high pressure would lead to a high degree of unity, so decompression would give rise to diversity and conflict. Consequently, in writing about this decade, as Liu Ding just mentioned, do we use the concepts of “undercurrents” or “multiple currents”? This is only one possible approach to writing, but the substantive divisions and divergence are undeniable.

In my upcoming piece of writing, there may be another set of concepts that is similarly suitable for analysis of the “New Spring Art Exhibition” and “Star Art Exhibition.” I borrowed Max Weber’s ideas of “disenchantment” and “re-enchantment.” But in a slight divergence from Weber, I don’t believe that disenchantment and re-enchantment are unidirectional processes finished in one go: rather, they can repeat under different circumstances, with different people constantly engaging in disenchantment and re-enchantment for different purposes. My personal theoretical position is that, I don’t believe that we can pull (ourselves) back to scenes in history, we are forever unable to return to an objective “scene,” but we can form different means of description and interpretation, which also constitute the pluralism and multi-directionality of history.

How is “enchantment” formed? Let’s address our subject today, which is, how do we write about 1972 to 1982? I’ve previously summarized how “enchantment”—a kind of indescribable magical power—is bestowed, wiped away, rewritten and thickly described. The symbolism of ordinary things, the contextual illusoriness of things in concrete situations, and the use of simple, direct logic to refine complex events are all common arts of enchantment. So, the observations and writings for “revisiting the situation” that I mentioned are also the result of a kind of disenchantment and re-enchantment. This approach of alternately bestowing a simple, direct logic or over-interpreting the symbolic significance is better able to reveal the interactions and conflicts between various ideas and practices during this period of decompression. For instance, on the day of the “Stars Art Exhibition,” a group of police officers surrounded the young artists. This incident can be described as a change occurrence, and it can also be described as political suppression of art: however, if we combed through all the records, perhaps we wouldn’t find any evidence that someone gave the order; but the study of circumstantial re-enchantment can help us find the emotions that were truly present in a seemingly chance event, and such emotions can be accurately perceived.

So, as we write about art from 1972 to 1982, using disenchantment and re-enchantment, although we dare not have extravagant hopes of revisiting the scene, by using situational methods to discover the various voices and appeals at the scene, and amplifying them so that everyone can hear, the reemergence of a pattern of “undercurrents” or “multiple currents” is still feasible.

In addition, similarly through consideration based on situational methods, when I saw the exhibition today, I discovered two very interesting dimensions which are worth excavating, and which could perhaps become a supplement to the current exhibition. First, from the “New Spring Art Exhibition” to the “Stars Art Exhibition,” and even in more recent periods, artists seem to be coming from a community with clearly marked boundaries, with the Central Academy of Fine Arts and the offspring of the Central Academy of Fine Arts at its core, with a unique status; furthermore, as artists, their influence is not at all confined to art—this community also influences other communities, including literature and so on. Why did such a community take shape? Why the Central Academy of Fine Arts? Why has no other community emerged, composed of the scions of Peking University

or Tsinghua, that could similarly exert such a profound influence on other fields?

HUANG RUI Right now the sun is still shining from on high, and it still hasn't set; painters have never established an influence on China.

XU JIAN I first became aware of this community through reading an essay by Zhang Langlang—he later published a book, *Memories in Dayabao* (Dayabao jiushi). Reading this would give us a deeper level of understanding of the situation of art from 1972 to 1982. In other words, it seemed like the period of easing of pressure burst out suddenly, but that actually wasn't the case. The pattern of “multiple currents” or “undercurrents” during the decompression period was actually foreshadowed earlier, during the period of pressure—this is perhaps more in keeping with the original meaning of “undercurrents.” This group of scions didn't just emerge onto the historical stage after 1978, or rather, after the end of the Cultural Revolution: tracing back through the previous ten years, they and their friends were all similarly influential figures. This community is very interesting and also quite significant, and worth tracing back along the dimensions of depth and breadth.

The other dimension is the horizontal dimension. The “Star Art Exhibition” actually may not have just been an event for artists. As I just mentioned, the on-duty police officers acting under orders were also important “performers” at this event, and there were many other such “performers.” The sources of knowledge were also very complex: the “modernist knowledge” of the artists participating in the exhibition did not just—or perhaps I should say, to a very large degree, it did not stem from the inheritance of art itself. Mr. Huang Rui mentioned that he had a large number of records, and other people also brought back albums of paintings from overseas. This artistic liberation movement had complex sources of knowledge, and merely addressing the inheritance of techniques and methods is useless; it also had a complex human structure, and merely addressing the artist community is also useless. So, I hope that we can also move along the horizontal dimension to further engage in disenchantment and re-enchantment. This is what I wanted to talk about, thanks.

LIU DING Thanks to Mr. Xu Jian for sharing, that was quite interesting. Actually, within the art world, there have been a great deal of reflections and commentaries with this degree of depth: in observations within the

art industry, commentaries on the family background and sources of knowledge of the artists active in the 1970s are quite common, so this was described rather briefly in this exhibition. What we wanted rather to reflect on in this exhibition, using these source materials, was: how is information disseminated within a sealed environment, and on what dimensions, on what levels is it disseminated, and on what levels does an invisible network of radiation or network of association then take shape. For instance, in the exhibition, we are particularly examining the issue of “not talking about politics,” and exploring what the significance of non-discussion was in this time period? We feel that, here, non-discussion is more important than so-called resistance.

In addition, where were the motives and political impetus for the artists and other young people to come together and head for the street corners in the 1979 “Star Art Exhibition”? Where were the possibilities? Where was the earlier foreshadowing? Expressing these (things) is extremely important, and this actually also has a certain symbolic significance. In research, these reflections on trends in literature and art since New China all have an extremely important significance for drawing lessons. Even today, it’s still the same, it’s very significant. Even when faced with

more open, more diverse possibilities, social resources are actually highly concentrated, and this is still and extremely real issue today. I'll keep it brief—finally, I'd like to ask Su Wei to speak, because he was involved quite closely in this project, and he also has many reflections of his own with respect to his research on modernity.

SU WEI I'll just say a few words—everyone has been sitting all afternoon without any breaks in between, so I'll keep it brief. I'd also like to bring the conversation back to art itself, the issues within art. I'd like to share with everyone why there's been a return to historical appeals and urgency: this kind of contemporary, urgent appeals are emerging not only within the “Salon, Salon” exhibition, but also in my own exhibitions and now increasingly in historical research.

To begin with an example, just now we were discussing the issues raised by Mr. Shao Dazhen in the 1970s with respect to beauty in form and Impressionism: this discussion occurred in 1956 and 1957 in the journal “Art Research” (Meishu yanjiu), regarding the issue of whether or not Impressionism was actually realism. This reemerged in 1979, and appeared again at the point of the late 1980s: the discussion wasn't about Impressionism, but rather about “linguistic

purism.” By the 1990s, a new group of artists had emerged, like Qiu Zhijie, et cetera: they emerged from a dissatisfaction with the visual narrative of “pop art” and “cynical realism,” setting out from the perspective of language to pose challenges, and then extrapolating out to the issue of so-called conceptual art. From this perspective, it seems like there was this thread about language, seems like there was this kind of continuous thread from the discussions about Impressionism, to the discussions about beauty in form, to the discussions of the 1990s. There were actually many similar threads, including the thread on visual evolution, and some textual threads on evolution setting out from theory. These linguistic, visual, and textual logic and threads are simultaneously present within the production of contemporary art today. A problem has emerged here: namely, we lose sight of the fact that this logic is quite often simplified. For instance, the discussions about Impressionism, which I mentioned just now, one central issue they were discussing actually wasn’t an issue of language, but rather the issue of “I.” The issue of “I” is an issue of the right and freedom of expression, and is not an issue of form per se. Wu Guanzhong’s essay addressing “beauty in form” wasn’t saying that form isn’t beauty, but rather was addressing the issue that “I” have no possible

freedom to express beauty in form, and actually was bringing up the most central position of the issue of “I.” This is similar to what Li Xianting said in *What Is Important Is Not Art* (Zhongyao de bushi yishu)²²: in the process of the rise of Chinese contemporary art, the question of value was paramount, and language could only be a secondary issue. Although we cannot completely take a binary view on language and value, as these two things are often entangled, their simplification will certainly lead to distortion in historical narratives.

By the 1990s, a new generation of people had raised the issue of language and logic, opposing the visual narratives of “cynicism” and “pop art,” but they actually weren’t trying to raise the issue of language. It was more of a backlash against essentialism, as Mr. Lü Peng mentioned, sociological narratives, and the things produced by the contemporary era that were loaded with colonialism, a colonial mentality. This was loaded with the issue of the value system, or the issue of discussion of cultural values. But looking at it now, much of this simplified logic—and this includes the logic of art history, a kind of logic is also present in art history, for instance, narrating the history of contemporary art from the perspective of politics and resistance—this logic was simultaneously present

within this environment produced by contemporary art. And at the same time, they had a mutual disconnection, and seemed to be mutually fragmented, mutually unrelated, but on revisiting the historical scene, one would often discover that this logic was itself entangled together. The writing of history, producing of theories, experiences of artists, discussions of linguistic development, and so on, all of this logic was entangled together. Here, the most fundamental motivations were still related to politics. This method of politically motivated narratives on the course of development of art has been quite decisively abandoned in the contemporary era. This point in time gives me a personal sense of crisis: what methods can I use to approach contemporary art? What possibility is there for introspection on the level of art criticism and curation? For artists, it's already been thirty years since they "lost" the guidance of a world view, and when this thing of guidance is attenuated down to nothing, what will creativity be confronting? At this point, we can actually see that all of this fragmented logic has found legitimacy for its existence—art is expressing a kind of unprecedented, friendly attitude where all of this simplified logic is acceptable. Without controversies, without the issue of creating new dimensions, without the issue of creating methodologies, and even without the

issue of creating new (artistic) language, it seems like everything is possible. This friendly attitude has become the most nihilistic thing in current artistic production—I don't know whether that can be said for cultural production. Many events have taken place with the container of nihilism. From my personal perspective, breaking open this container, or jumping out of this container to look at the situation is a particularly big appeal, a thing of urgency.

Actually, the biggest perplexity here stems to a great extent from politics. In particular, we can see that, in the evolution of contemporary art, the legitimate status of the principle of de-politicization has been consolidated, and the legitimate place of de-historicization has also been consolidated. To be sure, this state of affairs has quite a positive significance for certain time periods, especially with the advent of so-called globalized discourse, and with the rise of the market, bringing new imaginative power and stimulations, this kind of de-politicization and de-historicization certainly had legitimacy and significance. But this thing is always a product of fragmentation. Legitimacy is also fragmented: a single discourse occupies the position of legitimacy, in which our predecessors and successors seemingly don't exist, and the enemies and friends who fostered this discourse don't exist. At this

point, I think, what are the political genes of our art? How should we confront these genes in ourselves? It may be very difficult for me to discuss this state of affairs from the perspective of an ideological system, but with respect to this issue of genes, I can think of the issue of my spiritual atlas, or that of each of us participating in art. In my own system of practices, with respect to creation, curating, writing, or writing art history, it's whether or not I can establish this spiritual genealogy. Within this genealogy, what you play is not a role or a self, but rather the identification of a certain textual logic, creative logic, emotional logic or linguistic logic, with a homogeneous, non-differentiated background and origin. It's like having different detectors that can sound out different fields and different times and spaces, allowing the spiritual dimension to slowly grow and take shape in this process of detection. This schizophrenia plays a positive role, thinking from different standpoints, from within and from without, above and below, left and right—only then can we truly reflect on what politics actually means to us, rather than just looking at things from the perspective of resistance, the strong and the weak. The sharp volte-face in literature and art instigated by politics in the late 1930s would then be more richly presented to us. I'll just say these few words.

CAROL YINGHUA LU I don't know if the experts present here have anything more to add?

LIU DING Today's seminar has gone a little long, but we still hope to have a discussion segment, because what each of you has shared has actually been extremely concrete, and has quite abundantly and quite clearly expressed each practitioner's experiences and true feelings from a personal dimension. If we could have a discussion, that would be an extremely good thing.

GAO MINGLU Everyone's discussions just now were all quite good. They were very enlightening—first of all, Mr. Wang Hui was discussing the issue of synchronicity just now, and I think that what I found to be rather significant in his discussion was, the issue of synchronicity has been a core concept in the West with respect to the issue of globalization for the last ten or twenty years. What is synchronicity? All of us are living in the same moment, but each of us has a different history, each people, each region and each nation has its own history: China has five thousand years of history, while some countries have three hundred years of history. Regardless of the type of historical system, we are all growing in the same moment, and this synchronous moment emphasizes common experiences,

the common experiences of the present—this is an extremely important foundation for globalization.

Recently, a British philosopher Peter Osborne wrote a book called *Anywhere or Not At All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, in which he sought to explore the implications of the philosophy of contemporary art, because post-modernism, modernism, and classicism all have their philosophies, but what is the philosophy of contemporary art? That's the question he addressed in this book. What I think rather interesting is, Wang Hui has extended the “synchronicity” commonly applied to globalization in the past ten or so years to the entire 20th-century: not just China but the whole world, the whole 20th-century is like this. But this issue doesn't seem to be the same in research by Western scholars. “Synchronicity” only begins to emerge after globalization in 1989. Prior to this, the 20th-century experienced the first and second World Wars, and later the post-war Cold War. Humanity was divided into groups, that is, humanity and its history was subjectively divided around the core of “us.” This was the characteristic of modernity. But obviously, the issues of modernism and modernity can be traced back to before Baudelaire, they can be traced back to before the mid-19th-century. Post-modernism later emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, in a kind of rebellion

against what came before; and then with the end of the Cold War, globalization and the liberal economy emerged, even though the issue of how to eliminate the communist ideology, as represented by China, was still present after the end of the Cold War. But the “synchronicity” occasioned by globalization no longer emphasized the differences between the “us” in different groups and regions, instead saying that “each individual” was in the same globalized era. So one formulation is, the 150 years from 1840 to 1989 is called “cosmopolitanism,” and after 1989 it begins to be called “globalism.” So this is how “synchronicity” is discussed in the Western discursive context.

For Wang Hui, the entire 20th-century was an integral whole, so I was thinking, why is this so? Westerners may not accept this framing—the integrity of the 20th-century, as proposed by Wang Hui may be aimed more at the historical narrative of China since the 20th-century. The “interaction” (intertextuality) you just mentioned, where the modern in China and the West is interrelated, that’s certain, but after all, in real history, the development of synchronicity has its own logic. So what Wang Hui proposed today, this is certainly informed by your specific focus. Wang Hui, would you say that “synchronicity” is the same in different countries and regions? How would Trump inter-

pret it, and how would the Syrian refugees interpret it? They may not be the same, and this is an issue for your hypothesis of mutual modernity.

The second thing I'd like to talk about is, just now Su Wei's discussion was also quite good, but it had a problem: he argued that, whether in contemporary art or in culture, the status quo at present is nihilistic. This judgment and description are accurate—there is such a status quo. Because since the 1970s, the various final stages—the final stage of humanity, the final stage of history, the final stage of philosophy, the final stage of science—had already reached the final stage, and this “nihilism” was truly already present, all the more so in the final stage of art. Is this nihilism ultimately moving forward, or moving backward? In my view, the “synchronicity” you speak of is connected to all of these final conclusions above: in *Concepts of Western Art* (Xifang yishu guannian), which I wrote, the second-to-last chapter discusses this issue; I titled it “The Reemergence of Boundlessness” (Wubian de zaixian)—after the final stage, one inevitably moves toward boundlessness and nihilism. The last chapter was “Contemporaneity is the Fictitious Reemergence of Globalism” (Dangdaixing shi quanqiu hua de xuni zaixian). Due to its emphasis on so-called synchronicity, contemporary art has moved

toward a kind of hollow, globalist discourse which attempts to grasp that which cannot be grasped; actually, this is a kind of forced, fictitious reemergence. I believe that this discourse itself doesn't have much value—it describes a kind of phenomenon, but doesn't demonstrate an answering significance: how should humanity proceed. It's just a description of perplexity itself, but this description has been strengthened by many Western scholars, and even mystified and utopianized.

For instance, with the end of the Cold War, it seemed that political camps no longer existed: in the past, we always talked about “we're this and that,” and now we talk about “each individual,” and the individual has become the core subjective value of globalization. There's economic globalization, and in the art world there is also the globalization of exhibitions, international biennial exhibitions, and so on; there is also the application of digital, scientific and virtual technology, et cetera, which has smashed the language of the past; so proposing “synchronicity” on this foundation means regarding an illusory, idealized thing of new pluralism as a utopia, but this new construct is nihilistic, it lacks spirituality, and has even been profitized—as Su Wei just said, it has no direction. But I hold different attitudes toward the two views of “posi-

tive global utopia” and “negative nihilism,” in and of themselves. I think we should be looking for something (to solve the problem), and what would that thing be? I agree with what Su Wei just said about pluralism, standing at different perspectives, standing in your, my or their positions—that is to say, standing within different language systems left behind by history to make judgments. But this thing necessarily still has to find an existing theoretical system and narrative position, (so) it can be self-sufficient and constructive. This self-sufficiency cannot simply consist of the deconstruction of Derrida and the others—I don’t agree with that thing, that thing can seemingly mold history into anything at all. Aside from not being deconstruction, excessive reliance on essentialism and anti-essentialism is unfeasible as well—we have to find something new. So it’s particularly important that, whether from an individual, democratic perspective, or from an international, globalized perspective, or from a national, cultural perspective, we have to establish our own theoretical system. This theoretical system will involve combing through history as well as rethinking the Western logic on modern history as a whole, and reviewing and examining how we ourselves developed from past history. Can we find such a thing? To put it simply, in order to interpret the con-

temporary era, we must first have specific theoretical methods of interpretation, otherwise we bring in existing discourses and concepts, which are intermingled, and it can't be explained clearly. This was the focal point in my latest research and reflections.

WANG HUI I'll take a moment to respond to the questions that Minglu raised. The reason why I bring up the issue of the 20th-century—first of all, in terms of its historical significance, as I just said, China's 20th-century has two significances:

The first significance, with respect to China, is that the century as a temporal framework in historical narratives only came into universal use in the 20th-century. In terms of the course of actual development, I also feel that China did not have a 19th-century in the European or Russian sense. In the history of the Qing Dynasty, the Qianlong and Jiaqing eras were flourishing periods for the imperial dynasty, and it also attained a very high level culturally. In comparison with the history of Europe and Russia in the 19th-century and their cultural achievements, during this same period, China was merely in the process of decline from its peak in the 18th-century. It was not until the 20th-century, particularly after the New Culture Movement, that a new situation finally emerged. Whether this sit-

uation was good or bad can be discussed another time, but this was a completely different beginning. In literature, art and other fields, the West takes the 19th-century as its central axis, with the dual revolution—namely, the French Revolution and the British Industrial Revolution—as the beginning of enormous changes. Russian literature and art also take the 19th-century as their central axis. In narratives of European history, the 19th-century therefore serves as the axis—in current discussions of the early modern era, many people still regard the 19th-century as the scale or center. But China didn't have a 19th-century. In terms of literature, our previous peak was *Dream of the Red Chamber* (Honglou meng), and next it wasn't until Lu Xun in 20th-century that it could be called another peak. So perhaps we can say that, in between, there wasn't the connecting point of the 19th-century like in European history. This is the first thing.

Secondly, the basic narrative of world history also takes Europe's 19th-century as its central axis: with respect to the European historical narrative, the 19th-century occupies a central position, so in tracing ahead and tracing back, the 19th-century is always the center, and the movements in relation to modernism and post-modernism also take the 19th-century as their basic axis. The rise of European universalism is also a

product of the 19th-century. In the 20th-century, since various movements—chief among them being the movement for national liberation, which spread to all regions, while actions in the pursuit of respective agency pervaded the entire world—were about to smash the basic historical narrative of 19th-century Eurocentrism, it was necessary to establish a new axis: it was only in the era of the 20th-century that a universal, global historical narrative finally had substantive significance. From the perspective of the 19th-century, if non-Western regions weren't a part of colonial history, then they belonged to the imaginary realm of Orientalism. The 20th-century was arguably an unprecedented period of calamity in human history, but this century was also the era of the Russian revolution, of the Chinese revolution, and of the non-Western world seeking its own agency. The concept of a “century” also emerged universally. In 1901, the Japanese socialist Kotoku Shusui published *Imperialism: Monster of the 20th-Century*; a young person studying abroad in Japan, Feng Siluan, published a discussion of the 20th-century and imperialism in a publication founded in Yokohama; and Liang Qichao, Yang Du and group after group of people began (engaging in) theoretical discussion and historical analysis of the 20th-century. During this era, these people transformed the entire

narrative of historical morphology centered on Europe into the narrative of Chinese history, thereby give rise to fierce challenges to the narrative of European universalism. The examination of the uniqueness of Chinese history was premised upon the birth of universal history. Zhang Taiyan criticized the Western universalist narrative of history, and launched an inquiry into the uniqueness of Chinese history, revolving around historical narratives, patriarchal clan society, national militaristic society, and other issues. The debates between Zhang Taiyan and Yan Fu, and the debates arising in this period between Liang Qichao and his teacher, Kang Youwei, all revolved around this axis. With the birth of the concept of a century, Kang Youwei's "theory of the Three Ages"²³ could no longer be maintained. Why is the 20th-century specifically pointed to as an era of synchronicity. Under the concept of the 19th-century, synchronicity can only discuss Europe as the center: only in the 20th-century did the advent of the era of universal history accompanied by imperialism spread to every corner of the world: resistance against imperialism and struggles for one's own autonomous position thus became the symbols of this era. This isn't a simple conceptual issue, it's a political process. Whether in Western art history or other fields of Western history, their mainstreams

took Europe's 19th-century as their axis; we must seek a historical narrative that fits China, and also fits the new global relations.

The last point that Minglu brought up just now is consistent with what I was talking about just now, the dimension that's lacking among the various dimensions. 20th-century people unhesitatingly proposed their imaginings for the future, and different people with different orientations all unhesitatingly proposed different directions. The process began diminishing in the 1970s, because everyone was disgusted with it—they felt a very strong feeling of suppression, so they began a process of estrangement. Amidst the ruins, apart from the nihilistic feelings we spoke of, there was an extreme resurgence of religion. It was not until these issues emerged that we gradually understood that this emptiness and nothingness was being filled with something, and that questioning of these issues emerged. Filling the void created by the lack of this dimension—we can see all kinds of fillers, everywhere. In fact, these fillers aren't nihilistic, they're just some new fetishisms. But the emergence of new fetishisms is premised upon nihilism. With respect to this point, we need to understand why the 20th-century so unhesitatingly proposed its imaginings of the future.

I'll bring up another issue connected to the Soviet Union. My re-comprehension of modernism occurred in 1992: the incident that greatly shocked me at the time was seeing the exhibition "The Great Utopia" at the Guggenheim. In my experience, this exhibition was one of very few exhibitions that left an incredibly deep impression on me. It was a large-scale exhibition entirely about Russian and Soviet modernism, filling the eight stories of galleries in the Guggenheim. The modernism that we've been in contact with all unfolded within the context of Western modernism in the 1980s, and the small minority of Russians who occasionally brought it up all emerged under their perspective. The "The Great Utopia" exhibition revealed how modernism and radical politics were combined so intensely, and it made me feel that art history should be rewritten. That day, after seeing "The Great Utopia," I ran over to the Metropolitan (Museum of Art) to see the modern paintings, and the latter were so lifeless and powerless. In the era from (Kazimir) Malevich all the way to Stalin's Soviet Union in the 1930s, the relationship between abstractness and politics, and the dialogue between the two had such a huge impact—looking back on it today, I still can't understand the shock at that time.

In short, the history of art must be rewritten. I re-

member that when I was editing for “Reading” (Dushu), I compiled essays by several graduate students at the Academy of Fine Arts, including one essay entitled “Debates on Matisse at the Lu Xun Academy of Art in Yan’an” (Yan’an Lu Yi de Madisi zhi zheng)” and another piece addressing Gu Yuan’s (woodcut), “Ma Xiwu’s Way of Marriage Counseling” (Ma Xiwu hunyin tiaojie fa). The radical Marriage Law²⁴ triggered some consequences in tranquil, conservative villages, and within the revolutionary political movement, Ma Xiwu, the chief justice of the People’s Court, was obliged to pursue mediation; Gu Yuan created this piece using a woodcut. At the time, in order to advocate and promote Ma Xiwu’s method of marriage counseling in the border regions, an editorial was published in “Liberation Daily” (Jiefang ribao), and Gu Yuan’s woodcut, “Ma Xiwu’s Way of Marriage Counseling” was printed in the editorial. The extremely revolutionary, extremely radical Marriage Law, on encountering the extremely traditional rural society, gave rise to calls for unique art and unique politics. In writing art history, I feel that how we re-narrate modern art is an important issue. After the 1980s, the shock of abstract forms in art for us gradually diminished; after entering the new century, politics experienced changes as well, and we entered

an era of de-politicization. We must reconstruct the 20th-century to observe the process of the birth of politics in that era, and explore the secrets of the interactions between culture and politics in that era. Only then can we find a new starting point for the issue of analyzing the contemporary era.

SU WEI I'll just add a few words to Mr. Wang—you mentioned "The Great Utopia" exhibition of 1992—Boris Groys has written about the overall origins of Russian avant-garde art, nationalism, and later contemporary art, using a coherent method to discuss the history of the development of modern art, integrating the three things into one and regarding them as one thing. In fact, those two or three years after 1989 were actually a honeymoon period for Eastern Europe and Western Europe: at the time, some people predicted that Eastern European art would certainly move into the Western system, move into the Western market; but there were also pessimistic predictions saying that it would only be accepted by the market, and wouldn't truly be accepted by the Western (art) world. As expected, today, 20 years later, we indeed see that Eastern art is still discussed in a marginal position. This label of communism has many hidden layers that haven't been pulled away. A similar thing happened to

Chinese art: it experienced a similar process, except that the legend of Chinese art as disseminated through the discourse of globalization seems to be more dispersed, but substantively, it is still recognized within a marginal space, or else rejected. Similarly, our historical production of art is presented as a closed structure and hasn't truly gained recognition in the West: the West still universally treats contemporary (art) as a bridge, a false construct for looking at China's localness, while the internal structure and logic are still experiencing a discursive and communicative dilemma.

SHAO YIYANG Two weeks ago, I saw an exhibition at MoMA similar to "The Great Utopia" Mr. Wang was just talking about: MoMA's fourth floor is all Russian avant-garde art, marking the centennial of the October Revolution; and two days ago, at the Centre Pompidou in France, I also saw that the whole building had Soviet contemporary art on every floor, with exhibits all the way from post-1989 to the present, which was also quite powerful. Perhaps now there will be another re-exploration of global modernity. I hope that there will be a good exploration, because then it would no longer be a collective utopia, and then we would see whether it is possible to achieve a re-examined, pluralistic and individualistic new utopia.

CAROL YINGHUA LU I'll have to play the part of the closer to this conference, because we've already exceeded our time by one hour. Finally, I'd like to thank each of the experts for your generosity, not only your generosity in terms of your time today, but also for all your work in the past, which has been an important intellectual resource for us. Our being able to put on this exhibition and hold this discussion this afternoon all proceeded under the premise of engaging in a dialogue with your work. So thank you, everyone.

Finally, I want to particularly thank Mr. Yan Zhenduo, because it was due to his encouragement and advocacy that we organized this afternoon seminar today, so a special thanks to you!

The Revolt of the Unseen: Starting with Pang Tao's New Works

— Carol Yinghua Lu

Pang Tao was born in 1934 in Shanghai and began to study painting with her artist parents Pang Xun Qin and Qiu Di in her childhood. Between 1977 and 1979 Pang Tao collaborated with her husband Lin Gang in creating several commission paintings on Chinese revolutionary history. In February 1979, she participated in the “New Spring Art Exhibition” at Hua Fang Zhai in Beijing’s Zhongshan Park, which was the first landscape and still-life painting exhibition independently organized by artists after the Cultural Revolution. In 1984, Pang Tao lived in Paris for a year, as part of the first group of artists sent by the government to study art in Europe. Pang Tao retired from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1989 and since 2000 has been making work related to contemporary events including the September 11 attacks and the 2008 Sichuan earthquake.

The 1980s: art world as a “combat zone”

Born in 1934, Pang Tao was already in her middle age when the Cultural Revolution came to a close. However, the “new era” also ushered in a stage of renewed vitality in her artistic creation. The 1980s has seen in China the incipient modern art movement against the backdrop of the reform and opening up as well as the liberation of the mind. During this period when individuality and diversity of art were promoted, the artists were again allowed to create with more freedom. The supportive creative environment was cherished by artists at various stages of their careers. For young artistic students newly enrolled after the Cultural Revolution, this was a precious opportunity, yet it was more so with artists in their middle or old age that were already part of the art establishment, as they had wasted their best years on the all-too-frequent political campaigns: hence their avidity to start new creative practices based on their own ideas. It was this period that witnessed the spectacular coming of age of Pang Tao’s art.

Since the late 1980s onwards, the mid-1980s has been constructed as a major combat zone in the historical narratives concerning contemporary Chinese art. Words denoting belligerence are frequently used in

these accounts, such as confrontation, disputation, campaign and turbulent currents, triggering a particular historical imagination. Such narratives persisted, became a norm, and left an indelible mark in later historical accounts. A rough generalization would reveal the confrontations in these depictions to be normally between the young and the middle-aged (along with the old), the new wave and the academic group, the modern and the traditional, and between sensibility and humanity, conceptualization, theorization, aestheticism and formalism. One fact should be underlined: for those responsible for these accounts, the 1980s were their formative years where their intellectual and career development started. In the beginning, these narratives set out to counter the institution of artistic evaluation, which was a conservative, closed system. However, the new system of evaluation, constructed as a collective effort by the new generation of artists and critics, was no less closed and exclusive than the old institution that they had rejected. These narratives and claims have left a general impression, that the middle-aged and more elderly artists as a group are absent from the artistic reform of the 1980s, and that they have—even worse—functioned as an incarnation of the abstracted notion of a conservative artistic establishment. It follows that these artists,

though part of the same space-time of transformation and made their contributions nonetheless, have been excluded by the younger generation from the current category of contemporary art that has gradually crystallized since the 1990s. This category of contemporary art, progeny of a particular space-time, has an ambiguous and insular implication: it defines the contemporary based on a narrative of a certain feeling that is collective, over-generalized, and external to art. In other words, it fails to capture art on an individual level. Accounts as such do not allow for an even-handed analysis and evaluation of artists like Pang Tao. The specific endeavors of these artists who work within art establishment, along with the particular artistic questions that confront them, have been lost in these accounts.

Towards the end of the Cultural Revolution and into the turn of the 1980s, some of the more liberal cultural officials and artists took the opportunity to promote an artistic atmosphere that was actively progressive. Artists were for this reason allowed to freely commune, to host exhibitions, and to make themselves heard. According to official statistics alone, the number of painting groups registered at the Fine Arts Association reached 166 from 1979 to 1980. Artists in these groups—old or young, professionals or amateurs

—were able to put their works on display in exhibitions such as the “New Spring Art Exhibition” and the “Stars Art Exhibition,” which was a long-awaited opportunity for them.

In the meantime, more senior artists and theorists including Wu Guanzhong and Wu Zuoren have in their practice and various assertions foregrounded formalist concerns—abstraction, coloration, decoration, and the formal beauty of art—as the fundamental issue for the freedom of creation and liberation of the mind. To take formalistic issues as fundamental is a response to the history of the preceding decade, when the artistic language and explorations were politicized by ideological needs. Endeavors as such unfettered art from ideological restraints and facilitated diversified artistic explorations, thus becoming the fountainhead of Pang Tao’s artistic reform. Lin Yan, Pang Tao’s daughter, was a student in the oil painting department in the Central Academy of Fine Arts. She recalled what was happening at this moment:

Wu Guanzhong was as keen on painting the countryside *en plein air* as everyone else. His success in the market won his fame, therefore quite a few would think that he was the epitome of the generation. Rather, there were many who

explored their own styles and new ways of painting in the more liberal, open social environment. Pang Tao was in the vanguard in the Academy of the quest for one's own artistic language as an alternative to the realist method. She was able to transform so quickly in such a thoroughgoing way because she had started her exploration way before the Cultural Revolution. This also explains why intellectuals and artists perceived the reform and opening up as the second liberation. With the policy, she was allowed to fully explore her mind and tap into the power of artistic language in a more heartfelt manner.

Pang Tao graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1955. The imperative of the socialist realist style in New China wrenched Pang Tao from her childhood interest and forced her to adopt a realist approach. Her works around the time of her graduation were primarily landscapes and portraits *en plein air*, with bright grey being the predominant tone. This was in compliance with the institution of artistic education and ideology increasingly dominated by Soviet realism. After graduation, Pang Tao started to teach in the Academy, and was sent on a field trip to Yunnan so that she could create illustrations for ethnic textbooks.

Pang Tao took the opportunity to closely observe the unique local landscape, topography as well as customs in Yunnan. The materials she gathered during the trip enabled her to complete a watercolor series. On returning from Yunnan, Pang Tao started to explore ways to transform her artistic style by attempting a few abstract drafts, yet the exploration was soon interrupted by the sudden initiation of the “Anti-Rightist movement.”

Luckily, the germination of creativity was not completely destroyed in the movements. The artists waited quietly for its new dawn. In February 1929, Pang Tao’s younger brother Pang Jun initiated the “New Spring Art Exhibition” along with other friends, including Yan Zhenduo, his colleague in the Beijing Art Company. It was the first major exhibition of landscape and still life oil paintings after the Cultural Revolution that was independently organized by artists. The exhibition took place at the Huafangzhai in Zhongshan Park, Beijing. More than thirty artists were invited to participate. There were senior artists educated and active before 1949, including Liu Haisu, Xu Xingzhi, Wu Zuoren, Pang Xunqin, Wu Guanzhong, and Wei Tianlin; Pang Jun and Yan Zhenduo’s generation were largely schooled in their theories and practices. There were middle-aged artists educated after

1949, namely Lin Gang, Zhu Naizheng, Yuan Yunfu and Cao Dali who were either Pang Jun and Yan Zhenduo's peers or a few years senior to them. There were also a handful of amateur artists that studied with these middle-aged artists during the Cultural Revolution. The exhibition was primarily on landscapes *en plein air*, still life and other apolitical pieces of oil painting. Nevertheless, the highly diversified and individualized artistic style vividly differed from the works during the Cultural Revolution, which were confined to socialist realist representations and subject matters. The works were curated according to the diverse artistic language of the works: hierarchies based on age, title and experience were made irrelevant. The exhibition also took on the form of a salon, which was unique of the time. On its opening, most of the middle-aged and amateur artists jointly set up the Beijing Oil Painting Association. In their pamphlets there is a brief manifesto entitled "The banner of beauty," which contains the words as follows:

Political democracy is the solid basis for the democracy of art. The inception of new artistic trends and the recognition of individual styles should be key to the slogan "letting a hundred flowers bloom."

Beauty is a glorious banner / the ideal of scientific communism is the greatest beauty humanity has seen, which is expounded by Marx in his genius theory. Art, in the meantime, delineates such beauty with its unadorned coloration methods. Let we, the honest and conscientious artists, hold up the banner of beauty, and fight for the people, democracy and four modernities with our fully committed hearts.

In this manifesto, the artists working within academies and institution stayed attuned with the current situation by strategically evoking the slogan “letting a hundred flowers bloom:” the policy from the “first seventeen years” (1949–1966) was now used as a ploy to defend a diversified art and personal freedom on institutional and political levels. Meanwhile, the banner of “beauty” also heralded in a stage of personal explorations of artistic forms. This manifesto expressed the heartfelt feelings of middle-aged artists who as a group invariably desired to resume a norm of artistic autonomy and longed for political democracy as well as an optimal social space. These artists had spent their youth—from the liberation to their own graduation and early academic careers—witnessing and experiencing how ideology could increasingly

strengthen its control over art, and had therefore accumulated grievance against the lack of creative freedom. Many of them during the Mao era had created on compulsory political commissions to represent the revolutionary history, or had been asked to carry out other political tasks. Once art was freed from the political imperative, these artists would regard the imminent start of unimpeded artistic creations—which should have been normal—as the beginning of a new spring for art. Their rich experience amassed over time and earnest desire to create immediately made them the vital force in formal explorations and the cultivation of the artistic language.

The mural in the Beijing Capital Airport, completed in 1979 as a collective effort of both the middle-aged and the older generation of artists, was a tremendous achievement in terms of the exploration of a viable art form. As an important gateway to the outside world, the mural was designed to represent the non-political elements of China, such as its rich ethnic cultures, technology, myths and natural landscapes. These less political-laden, more relaxed materials animated the massive mural of an intensely decorative and lyrical style. The mural project was led by Zhang Ding, professor of Central Academy of Arts and Crafts, and was the result of the collaboration of more

than forty painters, craft artists and a few students majoring in mural painting from the Academy. Many of them, including Li Huaji, Quan Zhenghuan and Yuan Yunsheng, used to study with Pang Tao in the Central Academy of Fine Arts.

As the freedom of creation was greatly enlarged, artists started to reinstate their experience with abstract and impressionist art, which was once regarded taboo and transgression. They sought to continue the modernist experience before the Cultural Revolution or even the liberation as part of their action in the new time. Pang Tao took part in the “New Spring Exhibition,” enrolled as a member of Beijing Oil Painting Association, and in the meantime started her exploration on various fronts: she was mobilizing variegated resources from her artist art and was ready to give full play to her own talent that had been misused earlier on. She went on an excursion with Lin Gang to Guilin in 1981. On her return to Beijing, her style underwent a substantial change. Though traditional ways of delineating objects were still adopted, the paintings were already demonstrating earlier signs of a highly abstract method, which attempts to break down the natural objects and represent them with pure colors, lines and planes. *Travels in Lijiang* and *Travels in Guilin* epitomizes her exploration during this journey.

This landscape series explores extensively on the front of minimalism and represents specific objects and scenes with abstraction; their composition is also manifestly decorative and graphic. Meanwhile, Pang Tao was experimenting on ways of using sand as a medium. She adopted her father Pang Xunqin's advice and applied pulverized marble to paintings. In some of the paintings created on her return from Guilin, including *Travels in Lijiang II*, sand was used as a primary medium.

In this triptych, the entire foreground is dominated by a simplified, abstract representation of a section of the Elephant Trunk Hill, which figures a smudge of pale red ocher. The softness of the color gives moderate tension to the picture. Details are deliberately left out in the main landscape of the painting, as Pang Tao adopted the unique technique to use the sand as her medium. With the use of sand grains of different sizes and coarseness, the technique gives a rough surface and craggy texture to the painting. The texture of the sand also sets off the geometrical color block of an inverse cone in the foreground, making it less nondescript and richer in details than it would have been otherwise. The middle ground is largely an empty space strewn with pale grey sails. In the distant ground are the geometrical mountain and its reflection

painted in the faintest purplish grey with a tint of red. To be able to provide the painting with distinct textures marked a milestone in Pang Tao's march away from the dictates of realism. By replacing the close delineation of specific landscapes and scenes with the artistic communication through materials and texture, the artist importantly translates the mainstream realist discourse into a different language. Such translation served as a paradigm for the emergence of abstract paintings towards the late 1980s.

However, while being the culmination of the artistic experience of both Pang Tao and Lin Gang that had been accrued prior to the Cultural Revolution, this piece of work incurred severe criticism especially from Jiang Feng, an established senior artist who was then the head of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. Despite having been a CPC party member and a left-wing artist for a long time, Jiang deeply suffered from abuse and maltreatment after the start of the "Anti-Rightist movement". He returned to politics and leadership after the Cultural Revolution, and—along with the new generation of leaders who had suffered during the previous decade—urged to phase out the after-effect of the Cultural Revolution and championed humanism and democracy. He drafted a heartening preface to the "New Spring Exhibition," which evoked the

authority of the constitution to encourage free organization of exhibitions and art societies, and contended for no censorship and free trade. He highly commended activities of the free art societies and was enthusiastic about the freedom of association and a democratic, constitutional government. He was therefore popular among artists. Nevertheless, being one of the founding fathers of fine arts in New China, he still held fast to the realist dogma and was uncompromisingly intolerant to abstract art. He was on many occasions openly critical to Wu Guanzhong's essay entitled *On Abstract Beauty* (Guanyu chouxiang mei)¹, and was scathing to Matisse and Picasso, dismissing them as worthless.

For Jiang Feng, *Travels in Lijiang II* was also an abstract painting. He was therefore critical to Pang Tao and Lin Gang. The two artists tried to explain away by arguing that theirs was not an abstract painting, but rather a portrayal of a corner of the Elephant Trunk Hill along with its reflection and the Lijiang River in the back. To drive this point home, Lin Gang specially added a canoe—painted with white strokes—drifting on the river to the top right corner of the painting. However, this was not persuasive enough for Jiang Feng. As Pang Tao recalls it, Jiang would “point the finger at the painting and interrogate who it was

between us that was mainly responsible; he was so fierce and it would simply not do to confess that it was Lin Gang, as Lin came from the liberated area and to say it was him would raise havoc. Yet to say it was under my father's influence was understandable, so we ultimately erased Lin Gang's name and only kept mine to avoid further interrogations and trouble".² Triggered by a discussion on abstract art at a committee meeting of China Artists Association in 1982, Jiang Feng went furious and collapsed. This incident cost him his life. As Wu Guanzhong puts it in memory of Jiang Feng, "he died in defence of realism in its war against abstract art. His objection to abstract art is an issue of faith and not of selfish concerns".³

In the meantime, Pang Tao was no less uncompromising in her exploration than Jiang Feng in his fight for realism. She once spoke of her mind at this time when facing frustration and difficulty: "I was no longer a woman of twenty-three and had long quit fearing and retreating. I was determined to carry on my exploration." Apparently, Jiang Feng's criticism did not deter Pang Tao in her earnest desire for exploration. For her, artistic creation, contemplation and the freedom of formal explorations is the holy trinity of faith worth a lifelong commitment, and aestheticism—

which certain art historians would associate with her — appears an irrelevance in comparison.

As Lin Yan—Pang Tao's daughter—sees it, quite a few realist paintings won accolades from the market. These paintings, exemplified by the works of Jin Shangyi, Yang Feiyun and Wang Yidong, have steered from the dictates of socialist realism towards an aestheticized realism. Pang Tao and Lin Gang refrained from this ornate realist style favored by the market, and chose to plough on to explore the new ways of free creation. In so doing, they have distanced themselves from their peers and society.

The rivalling young generation

Pang Tao created her oil painting *Travels in Guilin* in 1981. With its equal division of the vista, the painting transforms the familiar formal rules: the mountain placed right at the middle halves the scene, hence the symmetry of both the mountain and the picture. The dark mountain sets off a few golden saplings. The water and the distant mountain are both color blocks, creating a decorative effect.⁴ In a similar manner, *Travels in Guilin II* (1980)—which also belongs to this series—creates the horizontal and vertical symmetry with the mountain and its reflection, while the symmetrical

structure is usually avoided in traditional paintings. Both the landscapes attest to the artist's acute sense of pattern and geometrical form, while communicating the process of abstraction—which transforms realist portrayals into abstract patterns—with practiced ease. In addition, *Travels in Guilin II* resembles the wash painting in the delicately dreamy atmosphere it creates.

In 1984, *Travels in Guilin* was exhibited in the "Sixth National Exhibition of Fine Arts." The exhibition was held against the backdrop of tightened political discipline, which featured campaigns against "mental contamination" and "bourgeois liberalism." The magazine *Art* (Meishu), mouthpiece of the art establishment of the time, published in its first issue of 1984 an editorial entitled *For the Sixth National Exhibition of Fine Arts* (Yingjie diliujie quanguo meizhan). The editorial chastises practices that "blindly mimic modernist styles of the West" and "promoting artistic ideas that champion the abstract 'humanity,' 'the value of human existence,' 'self-expression,' as well as a certain 'pure art' that transcends class and politics." It even indicates that these works that are "poisonous to the mind and unorthodox in formal terms" are answerable for the mental contamination among certain groups. This editorial is characteristic of the official

position and policy of the time, and as a result, strictures were applied to the mental outlook of the works on display. The 3,239 exhibits were therefore predominantly “following the realist method of creation as the primary principle; the works are generally based on and reflecting real life, many being artistic representations of real-life situations.”⁵

Such regression was disappointing, as it signaled the presence of an intangible but real discipline that kept a tight rein on man’s mind. The theory workshop of the "Sixth National Exhibition of Fine Arts" followed the inauguration of the exhibition. The workshop also took places in nine cities all over China to be in line with the exhibition of different genres of art.⁶ As Peng De recalls, who was then present at the workshop as a young critic, “two schools violently disagreed on the future of Chinese painting at the workshop on traditional Chinese painting in Nanjing. At the time, a competing exhibition was held in Shaanxi, which completely consisted of works failed to be selected for the national exhibition. Those works were not necessarily radically original, but such open rivalry had never been seen.”⁷ The appraisal and selection process of the exhibition was not commensurate with the diversified development of Chinese art during the period. In January 1985, a seminar on the exhibi-

tion was held among teaching staff and students in the Central Academy of Fine Arts. At the seminar the point was made more clearly: national exhibitions as such tend to prioritize the subject matter over artistic concerns, leaving artistic creation obstructed by excessive bureaucratic interference. The model of national exhibitions—which inevitably involves obtaining endorsements from different levels of bureaucracy—is therefore not an ideal showcase for the advancements and achievements of Chinese art.⁸

The disaffection with the uniform appraisal system of art establishment was then translated into action. Soon, a collection of works that failed to enter the "Sixth National Exhibition of Fine Arts" was published by the Shaanxi People Fine Arts Publishing House (Shanxi renmin meishu chubanshe). An eponymous report also occupied the front page of issue 15 in 1985 of *Fine Arts in China* (Zhongguo meishu bao), a newly launched art newspaper. Introduction to a selection of works was also included in the coverage.⁹ The general reflection on the national exhibition also heightened the tension between the young generation of artists and the official appraisal system. It also spurred the young artists and critics into the exploration of new arenas for discussions, new appraisal systems as well as new channels of showcasing their

works: all these are ways to break through the institutional monopoly of the evaluation of art. After the Chinese economic reform, officials overseeing ideological education were still negotiating the boundary to the liberation of the mind. For this reason, the degree of ideological control was vacillating between two poles. At the end of 1984, as the campaign to “eliminate mental contamination” was drawing to a close, the social atmosphere again relaxed, which provided the young artists with the opportunity to finally intervene.

Driven by the collective disappointment with the tightened political control and its embodiment in the Sixth National Exhibition of Fine Arts," associations of young artists have mushroomed in multiple cities since the latter half of 1984. These associations would normally host internal exchange of works and discussions to start with, while exhibitions would come only afterwards. The year 1985 was named by the United Nations as the International Youth Year. As a response, the Chinese organizing committee of the International Youth Year spent six months preparing for—and finally presenting—the "Art Exhibition of Chinese Youth Moving Forward" (Qianjin Zhong de zhongguo qingnian meizhan), which was hosted in the National Art Museum of China in April, 1985. The

jury of the exhibition mainly consisted of artists and critics in their middle ages, and works of a modern urge created by young artists made way into the exhibition for this reason.

These 572 pieces of work by young artists from mainland China have something in common: they are the result of philosophical contemplation and conceptualization, which sets them apart from the works by the more senior artists. The exhibition had strong repercussions that were beyond expectation: it coincidentally entitled the young artists to act as the spearhead of development. Works of graduation from art academies all over the country in 1985 showed signs of development, too. The young students objected to plot paintings, to forms that employ only a simple plot to represent a theme, to art of only formal beauty, and to works that are merely visually stimulating. They championed “conceptual art,” and advocated the communication of their ideas and concepts with symbols: a method that can be better realized with the realist training they have received in the academies. Such trends were observed in the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts, and the then Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts.¹⁰

The four award-winners of the 600 works in the "Art Exhibition of Chinese Youth Moving Forward"

have to various degrees adopted the modernist method, and are generally “inclined to a non-conventional style that signals a pioneering spirit towards a new territory.”¹¹ A painting entitled *In the New time: The Revelation of Adam and Eve* aroused controversy during assessment, but was finally awarded the prize. It was jointly authored by Zhang Qun and Meng Liding, the then second-year students from the oil painting department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. The surrealist scenes of the work are distinct from plot paintings. With the symbolic method, the painting associates the disobedience of Adam and Eve with the image of the youth in China. In so doing, the painting enacts young Chinese people’s passion for explorations into the future, and corresponds to the theme of the rebellion and radicalism of the youth in the course of “moving forward.”

That the art world disintegrated into different “battalions” was an important phenomenon of the 1980s. In May 1985, The Fourth Conference of China Artists Association was held in Jinan, which furthered the split between the younger and older generations. The council re-election was the primary agenda of the conference. However, when it was suggested that the older generation should stay in power, the provincial delegations of Hubei, Hunan and Shandong jointly

filed formal complaint. "The following day of the conference saw complete chaos, with the young and middle-aged delegates leaping towards the microphones to voice their minds. Hua Junwu, the then leader of the association, stormed off in a rage. The conference ended up with the triumph of the older generation. That the young New Wave artists often appeared as unofficial and oppositional later on has everything to do with the result of the conference."¹² These two incidents, when considered in association with the "Sixth National Exhibition of Fine Arts," jolted the young artists into reality, which is the tenacity and limitation of the conservatism and inertia of the official ideology. In the beginning, what bore the brunt of criticism—and what was rejected—were mainly the conservative forces and their appraisal system as part of the official ideology. Nevertheless, as the debate raged on and hostility escalated, artists working within the institution were made scapegoats for art establishment and its appraisal system, regardless of the relatively neutral attitudes of these artists. Such conviction is far from fair, as at this moment, all artists and theorists in China were facing a common fluctuating political atmosphere. Some of the more discerning and judicious among them had been waiting for the occasion to rise for them to act.

These artists responded the moment opportunity knocked and the situation eased up. The Huangshan Oil Painting Conference and the National Oil Painting Conference were held in 1985 and 1986 respectively, with the participation of both senior and young artists. The Huangshan Oil Painting Conference was held in late April 1985 in Jingxian, Anhui, and was hosted by the Fine Arts Research Institute of Chinese National Academy of Arts along with the Anhui branch of China Artists Association. Altogether more than seventy artists were invited to participate, among them were a few young and middle-aged oil painters and critics from all over China, as well as young artists returning after having studied or travelled overseas. Oil painters and critics of the older generation, including Wu Zuoren, Wang Zhaowen, Liu Haisu, Ai Zhongxin, Luo Gongliu and Wu Guanzhong, were mostly present at the conference, and some of them gave their talks.¹³ Next to forty academic papers were produced during the conference; among the authors were middle-aged artists and critics including Cao Dali, Wen Lipeng, Li Xiushi, Zhang Qiang and Tao Yongbai, but there were also young students such as Chen Danqing and Zha Li. Many lectures on the development of art overseas were also scheduled during the conference.

A tolerant and practical attitude prevailed among

the middle-aged and more senior artists present at these conferences and seminars. They were no less keenly aware of the strictures imposed by the conservative environment for artistic creation, and therefore championed the coexistence of—and contention between—different schools and approaches. They thought highly of the pioneering spirit and the courage of the younger generation, but were resolved to march onwards following the old course. They would readily promote the new styles represented by the new artists, but in the meantime drew attention to the numerous artists that ploughed on along the old path and sought opportunities of reform therein. They should neither be neglected nor underestimated.¹⁴

As the young artists gradually made their name, critics of the younger generation were also playing an increasingly important role in the theory and criticism of fine arts. Among these young critics were a few mature graduate students—such as Lang Shaojun, Shui Zhongtian, Liu Xiaochun, and Pi Daojian, just to name a few—enrolled in the academies of fine arts nationwide after the reform and opening up policy was adopted. Many highly perceptive theorists from local artist associations began to be known to the field, too, such as Gao Minglu, Li Xianting, Peng De and Jia Fangzhou. In 1985, Shao Dazhen was inaugurated as

the new editor-in-chief of *Art* (Meishu). In the same year, new platforms such as *Fine Arts in China* (Zhongguo meishu bao), *The Trend of Art Thought* (Meishu sichao), and *Painters* (Huajia) were launched, while *Jiangsu Art Monthly* (Jiangsu huakan) underwent a major reform. All these occasioned the emergence of a large number of theorists, who then introduced and promoted quite a few artists of the new wave. The collective effort of the theorists and the artists have furthered the advancement of New Wave art in China, which gradually entered the center of arena in the art world. The movement was later named “85 New Wave Movement (Bawu xinchao)”, yet it was not a phenomenon exclusive to the artistic realm; rather, it was part of a more general liberation of the mind sweeping the country in the 1980s. It had everything to do with the enlightenment urge prevailing in the intelligentsia of the time, and powerfully interacted with the development in all fields including culture, philosophy, aesthetics and literature.

By and by, artists who entered middle or old age in the 1980 ceased to occupy a decent place in accounts written from the perspective of the young: they were either regarded as the epitome of the conservative academic group hostile and antithetical to modern art, or gradually made invisible in historical narra-

tives. The majority of them taught within academies of art, and were therefore dismissed all too easily by the young as conservative: mannerists, aesthetes and neo-academists were the labels usually applied to them. Apparently, hard as they tried, by sticking to the old ways and advancing their original artistic styles, the middle-aged and old artists could hardly contend with the new painters armed with their new styles, new forms, and new notions.¹⁵

The *History of Contemporary Chinese Art, 1985-1986* (Zhongguo dangdai meishushi 1985-1986) was completed in 1988. The collection is testimony to the endeavors of theorists of the new generation, who charted boundary of modern art according to their own perspective, position and standard of evaluation. Its last chapter uses a sociological approach to summarize the tendency and variation of multiple forces in contemporary Chinese art from 1977 to 1986. The variation is primarily reflected in terms of the changing number of people involved. The numbers of organizers of each year's modern art events—including exhibitions, workshops, demonstrations, discussions, seminars, publications as well as important documents and manifestos—were calculated as an estimate of the size of people joining modern art each year. As the figures show, the number remained zero in 1977 and

1978, and grew to 37 in 1979. In 1980 the number soared to 201, yet fell back to a double-digit level from 1981 through 1983. During 1983 and 1984, the figures remained low due to the ongoing campaign to “eliminate spiritual pollution:” there was only 6 involved in modern art in 1984. However, the number soared again to 926 in 1985 and peaked at 3475 in 1986 as the result of a more relaxed political atmosphere, for the government suspended the “opposition to bourgeois liberalism.” In a diagram on the change of interest in different aspects of art, people’s interest in modern art—as compared to that in political art, ancient or modern foreign art, ancient Chinese art, Chinese folk art, academic art, artistic techniques, etc.—shows a similar curve and tendency over time. These studies set off to demonstrate that Chinese modern art became the main current. The chapter also provided an explanation as to what Chinese modern art was:

It is not necessarily located in the coordinates of modernist art in the West, yet neither can it be fully dissociated from notions and styles of the latter. [...] To be specific, a thing is called modern art if it puts forward a new concept (or expresses it through a creative piece of work) dis-

tinct from any phenomenon in the history of Chinese art, and if it starts a new wave or a new movement in the art world.

This definition became somewhat of a common ground in the art world of the time and the years that followed. It even became a norm to identify the quintessential value of modern art to be its distinctness within art itself. In other words, modern art according to the definition possesses value because it is different from the artistic phenomena in the past and that it puts forward new notions. As a matter of fact, such highly generalized definitions have largely adopted novelty as their evaluation standard. It is also for this reason that works once dubbed modernist can be superseded by new pieces of art in a new context and lose its modern attributes. To illustrate the temporal dimension of modern art, the chapter instances a few artistic events variously taking place from 1976 to 1986, including the mural at the Beijing Capital Airport and Wu Guanzhong's series of essays entitled *Fine Arts and Formal Beauty* (Huihua yu xingshimei). During the early years after the Cultural Revolution, these events had been construed as integral to the development of Chinese modern art. Nevertheless, in the context of 1985 and 1986, which is the primary focus of

the collection, neither of them should be considered "modern" in any sense of the word. It is also mentioned in the collection that Wu Guanzhong's concept of formal art has already become part of the dogma of academic art, which "generally refers to a neutral and calm school of art that is inclined towards pure art, and that is neither involved in nor rigorously opposed to the new wave." However, "the new, emerging wave is already sees it its enemy."

This new wave is literally the "New Wave" that constituted the primary focus of the *History of Contemporary Chinese Art, 1985-1986* (Zhongguo dangdai meishushi 1985-1986). Even though the New Wave art has been indiscriminately identified as modernist even since, the truth is not necessarily so. Zhang Qiang, the then director of *Fine Arts in China* (Zhongguo meishu bao), conducted detailed investigation on all groups involved in the New Wave, and concluded that

It is normally considered—even by quite a few artists within the art circle—that all young artists from the multifarious groups and schools are modernist. However, such claim is not precise and does not stand close investigation. As I have mentioned earlier on, these artists, consciously or

not, have set their ultimate goal to be the quest for modern art's development in China. Viewed from this perspective where traditional art is regarded as its counterpart, it is not too far from the truth to call them modernists. However, they are at once related to and different from the modernists in the West. To indiscriminately regard them as modernists would cause terrible misunderstanding.¹⁶

The authors of this collection are all critics to whom the 1980s were their formative years where their intellectual and career development began. According to their assessment of Chinese modern art, the New Wave art was roughly what they defined as modern art at the time. Though the collection also paid some attention to the middle-aged artists who partook in the development of the same decade wherein the critics found themselves, these critics who earned their name with their involvement in the New Wave art would still disparage these artists, describing them as followers of pure art and an aestheticism. Such tendencies of these middle-aged artists were then ascribed to Wu Guanzhong's remarks on and practices of formal beauty and abstract beauty since 1979. Admittedly, these critics have given credit to the emanci-

pation of form and art language from political contents after the Cultural Revolution. However, they also contended that formal explorations as such along with the pursuit for individualized artistic style “have inevitably confined their [the middle-aged artists’] innovations within the scope of mannerism,” which has made these explorations “diametrically different from the New Wave art which regards its ultimate concern to be the enigmas of the cosmos, life and all living thing on earth.”¹⁷ According to these New Wave artists and theorists, in 1985 and 1986 alone, there were almost as many mannerist, “pure art” exhibitions and events as there were of the New Wave. These events emphasized on the aesthetic language and sought to stand out from the others; these qualities in turn defined the “diversification” in these middle-aged artists’ terms, yet collectively they have exerted minimal influence upon the society.¹⁸ It is worth noting, however, that even though these exhibitions and activities featuring middle-aged artists did not seem to wreak havoc in society, these artists—with their active explorations—still influenced one another in their collective quest for a more extensive visual language.

The marginalized middle-aged and senior artists

The New Wave theorists then applied the sociological approach to the classification of the participants in modern art: those who were above 55 years old were classified as “old.” those between 36 and 54 were considered “middle-aged,” and those who were below 35 were regarded “young.” As the statistic reveals, among those involved in modern art, there were only 102 senior artists, which accounts for 2.1% of the total; 253 middle-aged artists, accounting for 5.3% of the total; 4,462 young artists, taking up as much as 92.6% of the total. Through these figures, the chapter in *History of Contemporary Chinese Art, 1985-1986* demonstrates that this modern art movement is primarily one of the younger generation, with only less than 10% middle-aged and senior participants. More precisely, 1980, 1981 and 1983 were the years that saw marginally larger participation of these artists; during the rest of the decade, the proportion of middle-aged and senior artists involved in modern art remained lower than 10%.¹⁹

Accounts as such have largely overlooked an important fact: by attacking art during the Cultural Revolution and introducing western modern art, these artists who entered middle or old age after the liberation of the mind have literally cleared the ground for the New Wave art, if not directly promoted it. Shao

Dazhen, for instance, contributed a series of articles entitled *An Overview of Modern Art in the West* (Xifang xiandai meishu liupai jianjie) to the first two issues of *World Art* (Shijie meishu), a magazine newly launched by the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1979. These articles introduce the major schools in western modern art, including neo-impressionism, late impressionism, symbolism, fauvism, cubism, futurism, expressionism, dadaism, surrealism, abstract art, pop art, intuitionism or op art, action painting, and superrealism. This series was later reprinted as *A Survey of Modernist Art* (Xiandaipai meishu qianyi) in 1982, and was widely circulated among young artists and art students as the go-to primer for western modernism. Shao Dazhen also made a few public speeches all over China, which profoundly influenced the art world at the time and indirectly led to the emergence of modernist art in China in the 1980s.²⁰ It is not to be overlooked that all the New Wave artists were in one way or another influenced by the middle-aged and more senior artists, and benefitted from the trail they had blazed or the liberal environment they had fought for.

For some of these more senior artists, formal explorations concern not form alone, but contain value implications. Formal explorations enable the artists to traverse freely the fields of artistic language, col-

oration, institution of art education and cultural subjectivity without any direct political involvement, yet any in-depth investigation in each of these fields will inevitably carry political undertones.

In fact, in the "Sixth National Exhibition of Fine Arts," there did exist works by middle-aged and senior artists that hallmarked an important break from the past in terms of the artistic language used. With their deliberate transgression of the taboo, Pang Tao's *Travels in Guilin* and *Travels in Guilin II* are the epitome of such innovation. These works exemplified the reform that was quietly brewing in the formal realm, a reform that was led precisely by a middle-aged artist. However, it proved difficult for the reform to arouse controversy during the 1980s when "the table was turned amidst the 'chaos' of the art world." At this moment, people were overwhelmed by tokens of what were wrongly construed as modernism: a wide range of new publications on art theory, aesthetic concepts and schools of modern that the young artists championed. "Art was most arbitrarily divided into 'the New Wave' and 'the traditional,' which was to a large extent responsible for the alienation and misunderstanding among artists. Sometimes there was very strong antagonism, too."²¹ Many New Wave artists were trained in the academies, yet the affinity they had developed

with the old artists and the academic heritage was not sufficient to keep their revolutionary urge at bay. On the contrary, the specific historical moment only aggravated their disagreement with the older generation. The formal exploration and individualized expression of the academic artists were dismissed by the young as “aesthetic,” “academic,” “conventional” and “conservative,” and were consigned to oblivion. Admittedly, these qualities do exist in the works of certain academic artists, yet to apply these terms indiscriminately to Pang Tao’s artistic practice would be highly unfair and far from the truth. To revisit the history inherent in Pang Tao’s creative process helps us to unpick the polyphonous modernist exploration during the 1980s.

A modernist education before 1949

The tension between the older and younger generation of artists arose also from their different perceptions of—and experiences with—modernism. Pang Tao was born and educated in a modernist background: she had been immersed in modernism since young, yet the modernist imperative confronted her again in the 1980s and brought her art into maturation, ushering in a highly creative phase in her art. In a letter to Pang Tao, Huang Yongyu complimented Pang Tao on her

development: “I was stunned by your enormous outburst of creativity after the Cultural Revolution! If only you are still in your thirties or even forties, so that your experiment with modern art may be more vigorous and thoroughgoing! You are one of the few very talented artists who have the know-how to sketch well, to apply colors to a canvas, to structure a painting, to convey the sense of depth, and to grasp the rhythm created by the tension between motion and stillness as well as between the mass and emptiness. A painter needs to be sufficiently steeped in tradition before she can demonstrate her originality in a most breezy way.”

What makes Pang Tao’s case special is that her early works were created in the wake of a quite different tradition than that of her peers, despite the fact that these works also appeared realist. Pang Tao’s career as an artist had begun before 1949, and the subject of modernism that confronted her was therefore different from the “modernist art” frequently referred to in the New Wave movement. To a certain extent, what she sought to continue and intervene is the modernist tradition as the progeny of the May Fourth Movement. This tradition is distinct from the practices of modern art during the New Wave movement, which followed the large-scale translation of western theories into

Chinese. Pang Tao was convinced that, unlike her father's generation, the young art students were not directly exposed to the western context to which the modern culture and the modern urge in art had been an integral part. For this reason, she was slightly uneasy about the modern art practices in the New Wave and consciously distanced herself from them. She observed that

In the spring of 1986, on the "National Oil Painting Conference," Shui Zhongtian gave a presentation with slides on the history and development of Chinese oil painting. The audience was fascinated by the *Spring* and *Bottled Flowers* by Qiu Di and *Portrait of Qiu Di* by Pang Xunqin shown during the presentation. However, nobody apart from Wen Lipeng knew who Qiu Di was. This was the first time after 1949 that Qiu Di's works were introduced to the public.²²

Being a middle-aged artist, Pang Tao was soon to face the destiny that once befell her parents: her exploration and breakthrough were to be overshadowed and taken light of by the younger generation of artists. Her parents epitomize a generation of artists that were educated before 1949 and had highly diversified edu-

cational backgrounds. Before 1949, they had started their artistic creation and had developed their distinct styles and approaches, and had formed their own value systems and ideas where art was concerned. After 1949, many of them began to work within various art institutions in New China, and their influence upon Chinese art was felt in different ways.

Pang Tao's father, Pang Xunqin, was an important founder of the art establishment in New China. He studied in Paris in the 1920s exploring modernist art, and initiated the Storm Society (Jue Lan She), a modern art group, with fellow artists in 1931. In 1933, he was resolved to set up an advertisement company that belonged to the Chinese people, because he noticed that all advertisements along the railways connecting Shanghai, Hangzhou and Nanjing were created by foreign companies. In 1951, the State Council adopted his advice and merged the two applied arts departments from the Central Academy of Fine Arts and its East China branch. The move, along with years of discussions and preparations amidst him, Wu Lao and Xie Bangxuan, laid the foundation for the Central Academy of Arts and Crafts that was ultimately founded in 1956, where he served as vice president. Pang Tao's mother Qiu Di was also an excellent painter. Qiu Di moved from Fuzhou to Shanghai in

1925 to study in the western art department in Shanghai College of Fine Arts, and on graduation in 1928 went to Tokyo to study oil painting. She returned to Shanghai in 1930, and won an award in an exhibition organized by the Storm Society before she became a member there. Before 1949, she and her husband had both been involved in the secret activities leading to Shanghai's liberation. After 1949, Qiu Di worked in the Research Institute of Craft Art from 1953 to 1957 as a fashion designer while keeping the habit of painting and designing houses on sheets of paper.

When Pang Tao was born in 1934, her father Pang Xunqin was preparing for the third exhibition of the Storm Society. She spent her childhood moving about with her parents during the anti-Japanese war, yet were nevertheless nourished by their conversations and engagements with the cultural elites as part of their circle. These people include Liang Sicheng, Lin Huiyin, Wu Zuoren, Chang Shuhong, just to name a few. Some artists among them had been colleagues with her father back in their days in the Peking National Art Academy. Some were professors and academics from the Hangzhou Academy of Art who were on exile in Sichuan province because of the Japanese invasion. In her late years, Pang Tao often fondly recalled the anecdotes of these figures, which demon-

strates the indelible mark they left on her childhood. She used to comment that “I greatly benefitted from the time I spent with these people from the art academies.” There were departments of drama, fine arts and music in the art academy. Pang Tao still remembered her experience of watching an anti-Japanese play staged by a few drama students in the Yuanling county in Sichuan province, of listening to violin recitals of pieces by Schubert, Mozart and Beethoven over the monthly evening performances, and of watching Peking Opera: all taking place when she was only three. She also learned to play the piano as a child. The passion for music and the artistic sensibility she has developed since then was to inform all her artistic practices throughout her life.

Highly intelligent with rich life experiences, Pang Tao stood out as a child. At the age of four, while in Kunming, she won the third prize in the National Children’s Painting Competition in 1938. In 1948 and 1949 her parents held exhibitions for her and her younger brother Pang Jun in Guangzhou and Shanghai respectively. In 1949, Pang Tao was enrolled in National Hangzhou Academy of Art. On being enrolled, she found herself disappointed with the overwhelming political atmosphere in the academy. In 1951, Pang Tao resat and passed the entrance exami-

nation of Central Academy of Fine Arts, and was transferred to Class A of its Painting Department. During the time, there was no independent oil painting department in the academy. Students were therefore schooled in all varieties of painting. The department had an extraordinary faculty during Pang's time there. Among instructors of oil painting were Xu Beihong, Wu Zuoren, Ai Zhongxin, Dong Xiwen and Xiao Shufang; for engraving, there were Gu Yuan, Yanhan, Huang Yongyu; for traditional Chinese painting, Qi Baishi, Li Keran, Li Kuchan, Liu Lingcang, among many others. Each of the instructors was outstanding artist with a distinct personal style, yet the realist method still predominated the basic trainings in the academy. Pang Tao found the whole set of realist training uninteresting, but she had to follow nonetheless. In September 1953, Pang Tao became a graduate student in the Painting Department of Central Academy of Fine Arts, majoring in watercolor. Apart from watercolor, there were also majors such as sketch and painting in ink and color in the Academy. Among her peers who were enrolled in the same year with her, Zhan Jianjun and Liu Boshu studied painting in ink and color, whereas Jin Shangyi and Ge Weimo studied sketch.

Since a child, Pang Tao has been deeply affected

by the generation of artists educated before 1949, whose doctrines and ideas had a formative influence on her. Her early adult years were spent in the Central Academy of Fine Arts where she received her basic training with an intense realist tendency. She then started teaching in the Academy until her retirement in 1989. She was the first generation of artists who received the formal training after the founding of new China. The coming of age of her and her art coincides with that of the art academies in China after 1949, as the teaching system and approach were both taking shape during the process. What was crucial to the process was the ideology with which the new state government identified itself. On finding themselves not completely at ease with the powerful new set of ideology, Pang Tao and her parents started their undertaking to reorient themselves according to the new reality.

The promising early exploration

The all-too-frequent political campaigns of the 1950s did not stop the artists from seeking ways for artistic development. After the “Hundred Flowers Campaign,” which famously proposed to “let a hundred flowers bloom” and to “let a hundred schools of

thought contend,” a few contentions soon ignited controversy. These contention include “to nationalize oil painting,” “impressionism is not realism,” and “peony is no less good than lilac.” Each of these contentions carried different implications. The contention to “nationalize oil painting” was initiated by Dong Xiwen, and was intended as a response to Mao Zedong’s proposition for the Chinese characteristic of music, made in a meeting with musicians in 1956. Artists reacted differently to this contention, and provided insights into the ways to translate the western tradition of the oil painting into an art form with distinct Chinese characteristics. Some proposed for the oil painting to draw upon the techniques of traditional Chinese paintings, and some suggested that oil paintings should be created as part of the continuum of the traditional Chinese culture. The contention that “impressionism is not realism” directly responded to an earlier tendency to confuse the two schools. The debate, as a result, contributed to the knowledge and renewed evaluation of impressionism within the Chinese academia. The contention that “peony is no less good than lilac” is directed at the censorship and restrictions imposed upon the content of newly created traditional Chinese paintings. All of these discussions took place in the mid- or late 1950s. The color mechanism at

work in the impressionist art—in which a certain object absorbs certain spectral colors and appears as the colors it reflects—can be applied to the understanding of the reasons why these debates prevailed at the time. To a certain degree, the first generation of artists after 1949 internalized and processed their specific socio-political context, which is then reflected in these contentions they produced. However, the “Red, bright and shining” features of the Cultural Revolution was soon to predominate the entire color spectrum of the time, overshadowing the development of anything different.

Because Pang Xunqin had earlier suggested that “an outsider to a field should not lead a group of experts,” he was condemned as a rightist and an “anti-Party individual” during the Anti-Rightist Movement. In great distress, Qiu Di died of heart failure in the Beijing Union Hospital in April, 1958. Pang Tao was also penalized for not having dissociated herself from her father’s reactionary influences. She was asked to teach round the clock as a punishment. She taught everything from engraving classes to traditional Chinese painting classes: the heavy teaching load left her no time for study or independent research and publication, let alone the participation in the workshop by the Russian artist Maximov. She was denied any training

opportunities, and her employment was accompanied by many restrictions.

Another important event taking place during this period was her marriage to Lin Gang. A fellow artist, Lin Gang was senior to Pang Tao by nine years. He was expelled from school for his involvement with progressive student movements in Sichuan in 1944, and went to the liberated area under the control of the Communists afterwards. He was enrolled in the fine arts department in the North China United University in 1946: the university and Peking National Art Academy were merged into the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1949, where Lin Gang worked as an associate of the research section before being enrolled as a graduate student and then a teaching assistant in 1951. He won the first prize of the national New Year painting competition with the painting entitled *Zhao Guilan at the Gathering of Heroes* in 1951. The year also witnessed his first meeting with Pang Tao. During the honeymoon between China and Soviet Union, Lin Gang was sent on a government-sponsored study trip to Soviet Union. He spent six years in St. Petersburg, where he was exposed to a wide variety of artistic pursuits and ideas. “He sharpened his idea that painting is an ‘art,’ as he came to realize that his notions of painting had been inflected by too many non-artistic values.

His master of sketches was Rembrandt, and he admired the coloration of impressionist artists: all these he wished to combine with the freehand brushwork paintings in traditional China.” In 1959, Lin Gang went back to China and married Pang Tao shortly before graduating Ilya Repin Leningrad Institute for Painting, Sculpture and Architecture. She gave birth to Lin Yan, their daughter, in 1961.

In 1964, the Central Academy of Fine Arts started its socialist education movement ahead of time. The entire staff as well as students were then relocated to Xingtai, Hebei province. After the catastrophic Xingtai earthquake, the majority of staff and students were evacuated, while only a few teaching staff—including Pang Tao—were asked to remain to teach the overseas students. Most of the overseas students then came from Southeast Asian countries such as Myanmar and Thailand, and South Asia like Nepal, along with East European countries including Bulgaria, Poland, Czech Slovakia and Hungary. The staff that remained were required to teach, to take these students to paint en plein air, and to do manual labour. In 1965, she was involved in the creation of a mural as part of China’s aid for Guinea. Her draft was selected, but she was banned from the project the moment the Cultural Revolution began. This painting of hers was ultimate-

ly enlarged, created and sent to Guinea after incorporating many “red, bright and shining” elements of the time.

Apparently, on graduation, Pang Tao was not given much liberty for artistic practices and explorations. Then the Cultural Revolution started. All classes were cancelled in the university, and in their place were endless meetings of criticism and denunciation. Pang Tao witnessed the injustice inflicted upon some of her old instructors and colleagues, and she would stand up for them whenever possible. At a party meeting, someone attacked the painter Huang Yongyu, finding fault with one of his paintings where an owl has only one eye open. According to this malicious interpretation, the open eye was busy searching for the weaknesses of socialism, whereas the eye closed meant turning a blind eye to the weaknesses of capitalism. It was apparently a forced argument, but was sufficient to condemn Huang as a counter revolutionary. Pang Tao bravely pointed out that owls sometimes do that: they indeed have the habit of closing one eye while keeping the other wide open. Huang was therefore rescued from the threat of persecution. Until the end of the Cultural Revolution, Pang Tao scarcely produced anything except for a few watercolor pieces. Like most artists who worked within the institution, she

mainly created on state commission or to fulfill the political task; these works include her illustrations for the textbooks designed for ethnic students, her draft for the mural as part of China's aid to Africa, along with her wall newspapers created from 1970 to 1973 when she was transferred to work in the countryside. In 1975, a teaching team was set up in Central Academy of Fine Arts. As part of the team, Pang Tao went to the Dalian shipyard and Dazhai village to teach in open schools. Her job was to run painting classes for rural workers and children, as well as to perform propaganda duties. In her spare time she also created landscapes en plein air and life sketches. These works, along with the landscape paintings and portraits produced in Pang Tao's business trips to Guilin and Yunnan in the 1950s, were created as "source materials" for further creations. Nevertheless, her experiments with colors were already visible in these "studies." These works were to foreshadow her outburst of creativity later on.

The years from 1975 to 1978 was for Pang Tao a period for collaboration. In 1975, commissioned by People's Fine Arts Publishing House, she collaborated with Zhan Jianjun in creating a series of linked pictures (*lianhuanhua*) entitled *Stubborn Girl* (Jiang guni-ang), which features a girl from Inner Mongolia who

fought fearlessly and cleverly against KMT secret agents. She started the project by visiting Inner Mongolia so as to glean relevant materials, and sketched sixteen colored drafts before enlarging them into watercolors. She then followed the style of revolutionary realism, and collaborated with Lin Gang and others in creating several paintings on the revolutionary history. Shortly before the death anniversary of Premier Zhou Enlai on 8 January, 1977, the couple created two large paintings featuring the much-admired politician within only two months. These works were *Premier Zhou, Our Closest Friend* (1977) and *Crossing East* (1977). Among the many schools of revolutionary realism, the one that Pang Tao and Lin Gang epitomized was of a more lyrical nature. They selected their subject matters meticulously to avoid some of the more popular representations, including those of the joining of forces during the war or of the catchphrase “you can count on me.” Their often offbeat subject matters—such as the battlefield after a defeat—set them apart from the positive, eulogizing works of art and the political propaganda that prevailed at the time. Soon afterwards, they were involved in a project of historical paintings led by the Museum of Revolutionary History. Based on the scene of Mao Zedong writing poetry during the Long March, the couple created a painting

entitled *Endless Poem on the Long March* in 1977. While collaborating, Pang Tao usually took care of the sketches of the color pattern and Lin Gang the structural composition, but there were also exceptions to the arrangement. When they composed the *Endless Poem on the Long March*, Pang Tao also created a draft based on the materials she gathered. It was her draft that was adopted in the final version of the painting. *Eventful Years* (1979) (also named *On the Long March*) marked the last time when Lin Gang accepted a commission on paintings of the revolutionary history. The work represents the third time where General Zhu De crossed the snow-covered mountains and marshes during the Long March, and its theme was the loss of individual lives during the war. The couple represented the tragic scene with great subtlety and reserve. The overall tone of the painting was dark and somber. The grassland on the foreground, along with the grey blanket that covers the lying soldier on the right and the vegetation, were painted by Pang Tao. She employed once more the technique used in the foreground of the *Endless Poem on the Long March*: she used freehand brushwork to give a general idea of the growing grass in greyish green, and applied fine strokes of bright greyish yellow, greyish purple and greyish green to delineate the blades of grass in an off-

hand manner. The grassland was then highlighted by tiny blossoms in a lovely shade of light yellow. Lin Gang also painted part of the grassland: the lefthand section of the painting, the general arrangement of figures, and the application of strokes show unmistakable consistency with Lin Gang's works. The direction of all strokes also corresponds to the internal structure of the painting. If one chooses to study the non-political, non-historical sections of the painting as standalone pieces of art, it is easy to feel the artists' fine sensibility and tenderness for life. Paintings as such were created as part of a political task. Nevertheless, the issue of an artistic language was still at stake to the artists in the course of their collaboration. They treated the painting's overall design with utmost sincerity and seriousness, and pursued the perfection of structure and the vivacity of color. They endeavoured to further their understanding of the artistic language in relation to form, and sought to study and to advance their artistic creations. These facts account for their continued creativity after the period of political commissions. When art was finally liberated from the constraints of subject matters and realist imperatives, the two artists proceeded to carry out their distinct artistic practices and develop their own systematic creative approaches in the 1980s.

To a certain extent, the marriage to Lin Gang and the collaboration of the couple contributed to the synthesis of the disparate artistic experiences of the couple. What they had in common was their education and teaching experiences in the Central Academy of Fine Arts. Apart from that, the couple had very different trajectories during the years before they met. Pang Tao's color sensibility had everything to do with her upbringing. She has been exposed to works by Picasso, Braque, Matisse and Rousseau since young. Her parents could not afford rolls of wool when she was small, so her mother Qiu Di would buy yarn scraps and work them into nice multi-colored jumpers. She ascribed part of her sense of color to these colorful patchworks.

Lin Gang received a different set of training. After the first two years of basic training as a painter at the Ilya Repin Leningrad Institute, he was enrolled in Boris Ioganson's studio. At the time, Ioganson was a highly reputed senior painter in the Soviet Union. His training emphasised structure, strength, wholeness, and density. He championed a more "freehand" technique, stressing that paintings were made of strokes and need not be finely polished. As for oil paintings, he suggested the use of color to communicate spacial magnitude and depth. Colors, instead of sketches,

were what was needed when an object was delineated. The nuance of color and its subtle changes were also part of the representation of depth as well as shifts in mood or subject matters. The ideal color scheme in a painting should be for Ioganson “airy” and “breathable:” no matter it is a landscape or a portrait, the orchestration of colors should be rich and subtle, and the colors should correspond to one another to form a “symphony of colors.”²³ On returning from the Soviet Union, Lin Gang applied the ideas and techniques that he had learned—including Rembrandt’s transparent method—to the creation of historical paintings and his teaching. Though with different learning experiences and under disparate influences, both Pang Tao and Lin Gang were attentive to coloration and considered color as essential to oil painting. The emphasis on color was to show vividly in their later works. The modernist urge inherited from her parents and imparted by her husband filtered into Pang Tao’s own creations, and remained a consistent lifeline throughout her career.

By 1979, both Pang Tao and Lin Gang had deserted political commissions and earnestly proceeded from painting *en plein air* to free creations. Pang Tao and her family went to a fishing village in Shandong to paint *en plein air* in 1979. Most of the works feature

reefs of various shapes and forms, and capture the ever-changing seascape with great precision and life. Pang Tao was highly attentive to the objects' change of shade in natural light. When teaching her daughter Lin Yan to paint, Pang Tao would ask her to tell the colors of everything in the vista, and point out to her the relation between the profusion of colors and the light: hence the training of her daughter's color sensibility. In these seascapes, the reefs manifest a wide range of shapes and textures: the sides facing the departing waves have developed rough furrows after years of exposure to the climate, whereas the sides embracing the arriving waves have smooth, gentle surfaces dark with an oily sheen. These reefs, each distinct in its own way, allowed Pang Tao to bring into full play her talent for delineating a wide variety of textures as well as for close observation and faithful representation of forms. White waves break against the black reefs: the distinct character of the reefs, which are grim, resolute, enduring yet free, were brought to life in these paintings. The entire scene is one of vigor and gravity at the same time, and has a liberating effect on the viewers. Even though these works can still be categorized as realist imitations of natural landscapes, it is still fair to argue that the urge for an abstract representation of the Guilin landscape a

year later had already been pulsing in these seascapes. Her paintings en plein air also mobilized a wide spectrum of sophisticated hues, ranging from warm and cold greys to bluish, greenish, yellowish and brownish greys. She was almost orchestrating her colors with a degree of subtlety only comparable to music.

In 1982, Pang Tao and Lin Gang were invited to teach in a workshop in Kashgar, Xinjiang. On their return, Lin Gang created the *Sandstorm* series inspired by the violent movement of giant trees struggling against the sandstorm as their train entered Xinjiang. The series features a more direct use of elements like form, color and rhythm, and represent the imagery with a more liberal approach. In 1983, Pang Tao visited Dunhuang and created a few desert landscapes of freehand brushwork. These works resemble Lin Gang's series in terms of their shared subject matter, material and tone.

A renewed rendez-vous with modernism, and a quiet reform

Into the 1980s, the state sponsored experts on music, dancing and drama to go on study trips to Europe. However, those from the field of fine art were not provided such opportunities, as Jiang Feng and other

leaders of the field championed the principle of combining revolutionary romanticism with realism, and believed that it was not necessary for artists to learn from Europe. The opportunity only emerged after the death of Jiang Feng. Pang Tao was among the first government-sponsored artists to go to Europe to study. Her peers were mostly interested in the nineteenth century and what they had learned in the Chinese academies, and were disaffected with—if not resistant to—the modernist art easily available everywhere. She carefully studied the art collections in galleries and museums of Paris and all across Europe, and was deeply enriched by the things she saw: ancient Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Assyrian art, the Renaissance, art of the nineteenth-century, impressionist and modern art, contemporary art, African and Mayan art, Indian and Asian art, and traditional Chinese art that travelled to Europe. She was awakened to the fact that European modern art was nourished by both African and Asian influences. As she once put it, “the nineteenth-century impressionists—Van Gogh included—were interested in 'flatness' under the influence of ukiyo-e and its technique of 'single-lined delineation with flat coloring;' this connection also helps me to understand my father's interest in them.”²⁴

In the meantime, she closely observed how train-

ing was conducted within the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-arts de Paris. During her study trip in Paris, she was assigned to study in a skills studio in the academy. She still remembers vividly how the walls of the studio were full of post-its of figures and formulas on the making of pigment oil and paper, and how, after each day's of training, the instructor would ask the students to restore the studio to its original state. The process of tidying and cleaning together led Pang Tao to the realization that the study on, and production of, pigments and materials are by no means purely technical matters: they are integral to the serious, scientific attitude towards the undertaking of artistic creation. In Pang Tao's opinion, this is precisely something that her parents' generation missed during their time in Europe. "By the time when my father and Xu Beihong came back from Europe, the trend had been against technique and tradition, so they had not studied anything along this line and used only linseed oil for the seven or eight decades that followed. It was only after we reached Europe that we realized that there has been the distinction between quick-drying and slow-drying oils since the Renaissance. The knack is to make sure there is resin in the oil, which helps retain the color of the painting. Another thing that I

learned was the way to make the transparent pigment.”²⁵

The significance of this study trip to Paris was beyond a broadened horizon and the acquisition of techniques used to produce painting materials. The immediate experience with the West seems to have renewed and rejuvenated her upbringing and explorations in modern art. She was to proceed henceforward with more assurance. There is something distinct in her pre-1949 modernist experience: it is the synthesis of an open mind to European art and the self-awareness of—if not confidence in—the native Chinese tradition. Her parents’ generation desired to translate the European and Japanese modernist resources and experiences into the cultural tradition intrinsic to the Chinese soil; western art would in this way nourish the Chinese intellectual tradition and contribute to a new approach that suits Chinese reality. Their project was different from the blind veneration for the West—especially Western Europe and America—prevalent in the Chinese society after the reform and opening up. As Pang Tao sees it, the New Wave artists were mostly following the western experience in a superficial and piecemeal way. Compared to her parents’ generation, they were not equipped with suf-

ficient knowledge and understanding of western culture.

The legacy of the year in Paris was threefold. It inspired Pang Tao to produce and publish her book designed for teaching: *Research on Painting Materials* (Huihua cailiao yanjiu). She was acutely aware of the fact that artists, beleaguered by the scarce choices of painting materials and their shabby quality, found it difficult to create freely in the new time for art. Therefore, she started to experiment on new and innovative painting materials as a sideline to her own artistic creations, and provided an extensive summary of the formula and how-tos of numerous western painting materials. After rounds of experiments, discussions and revisions of drafts, the book was ultimately published in 1995. It soon became wildly sought-after and was reprinted many times. The study investigated four aspects of painting materials: the ways to produce them, the selection and appraisal of materials, ancient and modern techniques related to materials, and the selection of paper. It is as much as an extensive guide to the steps of making painting materials (often with illustrations) as a survey to the origin and development of each of these materials in the West. It also includes a thorough and systematic reflection on the situation of Chinese oil painters from the perspectives of artistic

ideals and painting materials. Furthermore, it introduces for the first time in China the Canson acid-free paper from France, which can be used for the creation and mounting of engravings. Pang Tao's study and experiment on the painting materials took place at a time when the industry of art product was yet to take shape in China and when existing products were of a poor quality. Her explorations were therefore crucial for an improved durability of the works by Chinese oil painters.

The second aspect of her Paris legacy was the creation of a series of works featuring bronze wares. Back in the 1950s and 1960s, Pang Xunqin was devoted to the study of Chinese decorative paintings and their history, forms and styles. He was primarily interested in the silk paintings of the Western Zhou dynasty, the bronze decorations of the Warring States period, the relief brick sculptures of the Han dynasty, the Dunhuang murals, the murals in the Yongle Palace, as well as the wood engravings in the Ming and Qing dynasties. His monograph *History of Chinese Decorative Paintings* (Zhongguo lidai zhuangshihua yanjiu), published in 1982, was a collection of his studies and discoveries. The memory of her father encouraged her to revisit her father's intellectual legacy. It also animated her thoughts about integrating Chinese cultural sym-

bols into contemporary art productions and about revisiting the rich resources of traditional Chinese patterns from the perspective of formal language. Her explorations along this line were both of a private origin and part of a larger context, which could be understood as her reflection upon the worship of the West that prevailed during the first few years after the reform and opening up.

The 1980s saw a fever for Chinese culture both at home and abroad. For the artists, the opening up means a less restricted access to the artistic and intellectual developments in the West, but it also means that “tradition” was no longer a forbidden area. In an essay entitled *Impressions on the Creations of Contemporary Oil Paintings* (Dangdai youhua chuanguo yinxiang), Shui Zhongtian observed an ongoing tendency in artistic creations. “On the one hand, there has been the growing interest of oil painters in the ancient Chinese culture and a variety of remote, primitive lifestyles. On the other hand, there is the fascination with western modern art. The approach to represent ancient Chinese culture with western artistic forms has appealed to many young and middle-aged artists, and have given birth to many curious, original pieces exemplifying such amalgam. Paul Klee’s signs with the inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells, the fantasy of

an earthenware, the Chinese shepherds represented with photographic realism, Mondrian and Tai-chi, the eight trigrams, you name it. To put them in words may make them appear incongruous or absurd. However, close investigation of these works may lead to the conclusion that there do exist ingenuity and originality.”²⁶ He has pointed out that the oil painters’ interest in—and representation of—ancient cultures is distinct from the China fetish in the Chinese and western academies. Nor is it nostalgia that leads nowhere. Confronted by western art and thoughts, the artist desired to restore the fountainhead of originality inherent in the Chinese tradition, and to rediscover the cultural tradition previously suppressed and negated. Their interest is, in other words, to revisit after five decades the “anti-tradition campaign” of the May Fourth Movement. Li Xiushi’s *Thoughts on the Inscriptions on Bones or Tortoise Shells* (Jiagu xiasi), *Ancient Inscriptions Talking in Dreams* (Jinshi mengyu) and *Thoughts on a Bronze Ware* (Qingtong duanxiang) are good examples in this regard.

As part of the collective homecoming to Chinese traditions, Pang Tao painted flying Apsaras of Dunhuang, and drew upon the structure of color blocks in Chinese calligraphy on the overall design of a painting (*Untitled R85*). She tried to mobilise the language of

the patterns and imagery on flat surfaces in order to differentiate herself from the emphasis on the perspective and mass in western art. The exploration and practices during this period led to the creation of the series of *The Bronze*. Pang Tao once explained her selection of the bronze as her subject matter: “I went for it because the Chinese bronze wares are highly distinct and very Chinese. In contrast, the painted potteries of the Majiayao culture bear so much resemblance with those of the Mesopotamian culture. My wish has been to renew and reenact the vigorous imagination of my ancestors by freely applying vivid colors to these patterns. I hope in so doing these works would be set apart from both their ancient predecessors and their counterparts in the West.” Since the work entitled *Vague Impression* in 1984, Pang Tao has started to base her works upon the shape of bronze wares, and to construct an exuberant world thereupon with her dazzling spectacles of warping and distilling these shapes and applying colors to them.

The following decade saw Pang Tao use bronze wares as her subject matter. *The Revelation of Bronze-Jiao* (1985) was inspired by the Four-ram Square Zun, a ritual bronze from the late Shang dynasty. The picture represents the head of a ram and is structured as an inverted triangle. The representation of bronze

wares of all shapes and forms, in fragments or entirety, is part of an overall orchestration of form and color. *The Revelation of Bronze: Green Mosaic* (1986) features the diverse contours of bronze wares, which are colors with all shades of green. It is nothing less than a kaleidoscope of green. The distribution of light is communicated through subtle gradations of color. The wide spectrum of green used in the painting is comparable to the turquoise embedded on the Shang bronzes. The “Bronze” series of Pang Tao stands out with its spectacular use of color, its abstraction of forms and its experiment with flatness: all being the result of a whole decade of contemplation and practices on the artist’s side.

The exploration over this period has roughly undergone two phases. The first phase took place before 1990 and 1991 where Pang Tao started to abstract the bronze forms and to experiment with color in a diverse and daring way. The second phase saw her experiment with the abstract form represented through the flattened units of color. The experiment was conducted under the inspiration of the bronze patterns which she broke down and reconfigured with simply colors, lines and planes. The bronze paintings produced in the first phase have highly generalized forms. The use of the brush is comparatively more expres-

sive, and the colors are vivid and rich. Complementary colors are sometimes used together with impressive audacity, while similar colors are often most finely aligned. The second phase was hallmark by the formalization of the bronze patterns. The contours of the bronze wares are retained, to which colors are applied with the method of flat coloring. In each of these zones of coloration, utmost care was taken to make sure the nicety of strokes and the nuance of colors are accurately conveyed. The artist's meticulous work contrasts small forms with the large, relaxed organization with the dense, and clear outlines with the blotchy, hence the sense of space, depth and vivacity and a certain musical rhythm that the paintings communicate.

In the mid-1980s, Wen Lipeng—the then head of the oil painting department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts—and Ge Pengren, a fellow colleague of Pang Tao, used to frequent Pang Tao's place and discuss the teaching of oil painting. Their joint effort led to the establishment of the Fourth Studio in the oil painting department in 1985. Lin Gang, who had been overseeing Studio No. 2, was asked to act as the director of the Fourth Studio. The Fourth Studio was modelled on modern art education: it encouraged individualized style and imagination of students and supported

their fertile and unhindered explorations of modern art. It was subject to challenges from the society, the Academy and the field even during the relatively liberal 1980s; leaders of the Academy would, for instance, ask the instructors from the Studio to modify their syllabus. At the moment, Pang Tao had just returned from Paris and embraced the concept and principles of the Fourth Studio. In a foreword written for a student exhibition of the Fourth Studio, Pang Tao pronounced the aim of the Studio:

People ask for different things from art. The Fourth Studio was set up being awakened to such reality. It aims for serious and sincere explorations and more thoroughgoing studies on western modern art. We want to blaze a path that belongs to our own, which requires a wide exposure to western modern art as well as a close study of the treasure of Chinese art over history.²⁷

Apparently, such was her own artistic credo, too. In 1988, Pang Tao radically disagreed with the then head of the engraving department on the proportion of the training of sketch, coloration, creation and quick sketch respectively. Pang Tao suggested that the first three modules were essential training and should each

take up 30% , whereas quick sketch should account for 10% of the overall training. However, the head of the department later announced that sketch, creation and quick sketch took up 30% respectively of the training whereas coloration only took up 10% . Pang Tao was resolved to leave the engraving department after the disagreement. She joined the Fourth Studio until her retirement in 1989.

A free spirit and her creative world

Pang Tao's explorations on modern art, which was integral to a collective undertaking that liberates artistic form and language from political imperatives, was profound and thoroughgoing in many ways. Within only a short period of time, she opened up multiple possibilities for the future development of art. She overturned the habitual ways of structuring a picture. She jettisoned the old ways of mimicking nature, and embraced a more subjective representation of natural landscapes with a strong sense of form. She experimented on coloration with audacity and complexity. She drew upon and renewed the ancient Chinese tradition. She conducted scientific studies on painting materials and was ready to experiment with a wide range of materials. She understands only too well the crav-

ing of the artists for artistic autonomy and formal explorations during the “new age,” and approached these issues with the legacy of her distinct modernist upbringing, profound learning and intellectual integrity. She was an illustrious figure among her generation of artists who were in their middle ages during the turbulent 1980s.

Pang Tao opened up vast possibilities for her art in the 1980s. Nevertheless, her extensive exploration of art was not immediately recognized during the decade defined by new notions and innovations. The comparatively conservative institution and art academies also failed to do it justice. In addition, she deliberately averted herself from the orientation of market and the commodification of art education. She declined all commercial invitations and political titles, and was adamant to stay invisible and away from the limelight. The new generation of critics and theorists that dominated the artistic arena focused primarily on the profusion of new notions, new forms and new discourse promoted by the younger generation of artists. Some middle-aged and senior artists led a revolution that set out to diagnose and redress some of the more intrinsic problems of art, yet it was muted in the cacophony of novelty. Pang Tao’s artistic practice was for this reason distanced from the often superficial

modernist practices and discourse prevalent at the time. In obscurity she toiled, joining the constellations of modernist artists working before and after 1949 and carried forward their fecund, sophisticated legacies. Her creativity has bloomed for a few times since the early 1980s. Now in her eighties, she still demonstrates remarkable artistic vitality and keeps producing new works.

The creations in the mid-1990, which actively utilized a wide range of materials, were a continuation of the landscapes using sand as a medium in the early 1990s. Her creations during this period were still part of her formal exploration and liberation. She experimented on the painting materials and later on, the medium of creation. Because Pang Tao's practices were never sufficiently exposed for her to receive immediate attention, recognition and responses, her explorations and creations during this period were also of a piecemeal nature. Only a handful of works from each series have been kept. Later on, the stress, frictions and problems that had been forcefully present in her life since the 1980s receded as she entered old age. Since 2000, Pang Tao's abstract art has paid closer attention to the social reality and displayed deeper reflections on humanity. Her works also showed more reserve and gravity.

Pang Tao was struck by the September 11 attacks in 2001 and created a series of works on grief and mourning. The anti-terrorist wars Bush started following the attacks evoked the artists' childhood memory: she and her parents were forced to move, to live on exile, to be on their feet the moment they heard the air-raid siren, and to shudder at the real-life stories on the horrors of war. In a spirit of mourning for the innocent lives, the artists created a series of paintings: *Tribute to the Innocent Souls* (2004), *Witness of Tragedy* (2002), and *Mingled Tears* (2002). The series was intensively solemn in character. In 2008, a catastrophic earthquake hit Wenchuan, China. Many heartrending and touching stories were covered by the media. The artist registered the phenomenon to be the first time since the Cultural Revolution that genuine human emotions and self-sacrifice have been massively reported. Deeply touched, she painted *Hope I* and *Hope II* (2008). Both these paintings were structured in a way that an entrance facing the blue sky communicates a sense of hope in a playful way. In 2017, the artist at the age of 82 created another extraordinary series of new work entitled *Change of Color Gradation*. The series combines screen print and hand painting, and deftly creates a two-fold visual experience of space through the contrast of these two media. In

terms of its structure, the artist adopted the method of symmetry used in *The Revelation of Bronze*: blocks of pure color were used as the basic layer, and the center of the picture was intentionally left blank. She also added clef symbols to the painting out of her life-time passion for classical music. Using the blank space at the center, she deftly altered the orientation of the subject matter of the paintings with her rich visual experience accrued over the past decades. This series of works gave shape to a world of color, lines and shapes interwoven with one another. Like *Travels in Lijiang* created in the early 1980s, this series is also intensely experimental and vigorous in terms of its artistic language. While in Paris in 1985, Pang Tao saw a retrospective on Kandinsky in Centre Pompidou and observed, “In his later works, there was carefully conceived composition. It took him a great deal of effort.”²⁸ In turn, Pang’s original words on Kandinsky could be an apt description of her latest works.

Conclusion

Pang Tao’s works were largely overlooked by the New Wave artists and critics, and are scarcely referred to at present. Even though the New Wave art largely distinguished itself later on by posing as unofficial and op-

positional, it is not hard to observe—on revisiting the historical context of the time—that it was coextensive with the artistic reform championed by a few liberal and conscientious artists within the art establishment and academies: those in their middle or old age. It could even be argued that their disagreement was little more than different priorities they had regarding artistic creation.

All these activities took place against an important intellectual background in the 1980s, namely the process of understanding modernism.²⁹ The primary controversy throughout the development of art over the 1980s has been the nature of art, or “what is art.” After the “Stars Art Exhibition,” the general understanding of, and debate over, self-expression has played a role, too. The controversy over self-expression was more essentially that concerning the freedom of creation. Its broader significance would be to liberate the mind and to allow artists to express in a way they chose and willed. The works by Zhong Ming and Feng Guodong, two artists from the Beijing Oil Painting Association, distinguished themselves from those of a realist nature or communicating a sense of formal beauty. These works were mainly expressions of their own ideas, and manifested a modernist tendency to conceptualize and theorize. To them, the art form is no

more than the carrier of thoughts and ideas. In other words, such doctrine marks the divide between Pang Tao's generation and the younger artists in terms of their different understanding of art.

For Pang Tao and artists more senior to her such as Lin Gang and Wu Guanzhong, exploration of form is to a degree congruent with that of the content of art, and served as the carrier of, or camouflage for, something else more quintessential, namely the modern impulse. The same went for the New Wave movement where the use and expression of new concepts were taken synonymous with the quest of modern art and the avant-garde. The two groups of artists resorted to different ways of creation, but were after the same ideal of the freedom of art. There was no fundamental difference between them. Some critics after 1985 would crudely dismiss Wu Guanzhong and Pang Tao as "aesthetes." This was a prejudice typical among the New Wave artists, and was not justified. As Wu Guanzhong wrote from 1981,

As craftsmen of fine arts, we regard form as the primary aspect of the profession. However, our misery starts with it, too. We are not denying that we want thoughts, content, and the effective communication of a general mood, [...] yet these

need all be in combination with their own relevant form, which is the bone marrow of art. The form gives life to them, and they cease to exist with the destruction of form. [...] The content is not to rule over the form. It puts form to use. It makes requests to the form. It courts the form and curries its favor. However, if the content were the husband and form the wife, no male chauvinism should be allowed to keep the matrimonial harmony.³⁰

However, in the 1980s, the simple difference over the choice of artistic priorities between the two generations of artists was magnified through the frequent confrontations, resulting in a certain alienation if not polarization. Since the 1990s, contemporary art has been categorized with the New Wave being their major reference point and standard of evaluation. This has widened the chasm between the art establishment represented by the middle-aged and senior artists in the 1980s and the young New Wave art that later evolved into contemporary art. Many among Pang Tao's generation, along with many artists older than her, have not been able to steer as swiftly from the composition of political commissions to highly individualized creations, and have therefore lost their cre-

ative edge. This has also made the institution they occupy appear dated and conservative. Nevertheless, the failure of a group should never be applied to the assessment of any individual, and the career trajectory of exceptional individuals should not be overlooked. By revisiting the case of Pang Tao, it is hoped that her artistic achievement—along with the history she partook in and its internal mechanisms—will be made visible in its entirety.

How We Deal With the Virus Determines What It Is

— Xiao Yin

This article was first published on the author's WeChat public account "Xiao Yin's Poetry" on March 23, 2020. The text is translated by Lisa A. Orcutt.

I'm in Wuhan. Today is the 60th day of Wuhan's lockdown. The spring sunshine is so wonderful, one doesn't want to think of yesterday.

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus in Wuhan was fierce, sudden. Like a storm, it has swept beyond our borders and rages throughout the world. The death toll in Italy has now surpassed that in China, truly distressing. The emergence of the novel coronavirus has made all other diseases appear secondary and marginal. Proliferating swiftly and elusively, it has given each of us cause for anxiety. This anxiety seems to contain a subtle and profound understanding that the virus itself, in fact, has nothing to do with ideology, race, or belief systems. Our understanding of the virus lags far behind the virus's understanding of us.

The fact is that up till now, humans have not understood the novel coronavirus. It is certainly not the plagues described in *Oedipus* and *The Plague*, although it triggers a similar panicked human response. The description of viruses in traditional texts needs to be re-understood, and the same goes for our depictions of unknown fields in medicine, and obstacles to information transmission. And yet, the people of the world are firmly convinced of the safety and reliability of the current human medical system and social structure.

But the novel coronavirus has precisely exploited

our conviction. Relying on human social chains for its rapid spread, the virus made a decentralized, undifferentiated attack on us. In the spring of 2020, it has pierced holes through what we had been so proud of: civilization, the economy, our so-called “global society.” Like an invisible man with his human mask removed, it mingles with crowds of merry-makers, it merges with the capital on Wall Street, it is mixed in with oil, natural gas, and various scarce resources, silently proclaiming: Please pay for the mistakes you have made.

Humanity is no longer an integrated whole, perhaps it never was. The novel coronavirus has simply exposed those mistakes that in past years had been covered up by states, governments, political parties, capital, work units, colleagues, family members, and even by ourselves. Each side lashes out at the other, at the same time as each claims to have achieved exclusive victory. Behind these claims of victory are in fact interests, status, power, and inequality dressed in the guise of fairness. The invisible man waited for a long time, but today he has us by the throat.

The above is not meant to place blame for what went wrong in any specific incident. In the end, there are many types of reasoning that can explain—even perfectly—life and death on this earth. As we face

these mistakes, the only thing that resists explanation is how we can review our past and face the future in due time. I don't think that failure is a punishment or retribution sent by "mysterious things," and it is certainly not some sort of "judgment" — such ideas refer exactly to the kind of "disease metaphor" I oppose. I believe humans will eventually manage to *repel* the virus — please note that this is not some kind of "victory." It may be possible to make the virus temporarily disappear, just like I believe that cherry blossoms will bloom every year, the sun will rise every day, and the stars will follow their courses in the sky, but not because of human existence.

The possibility of the mutation and disappearance of the novel coronavirus is a matter of strategic change. Just as the form of water is constantly shifting, the virus is also looking for a suitable way to co-exist with humans, and this search, I think, is both two-way and inevitable. How can human society find its opportunity for a change of direction? Or has this change already started? It's hard to say. In an article written in the early days of the epidemic, I wrote that when a megacity becomes a black hole, absorbing all resources and forming an indestructible network with other super black holes, and a viral attack occurs (here I refer not just to medical viruses), will our only op-

tion will be to rely on “downtime” to solve the problem?

City and country lockdowns have finally transformed into worldwide lockdown. This azure planet will tremble in various extreme states, as disaster looms closer and closer. As an extremely fragile body, the individual can only hide in the confines of their highrise residence and pray for blessings, or, as James C. Scott (author of *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*) has said, flee from the nation state and return to the mountains and valleys.

It doesn't seem possible to go back to a tribal life of the outdoors, and neither can we return to uncultivated wastelands in our search for survival. However, if we imagine ourselves in the Tang Dynasty and view our current situation from a more far-reaching historical perspective, we may find that the novel coronavirus is by no means “some kind of virus.” Such a realization both includes medical knowledge and transcends it—what we are facing is no longer a problem that can be solved by “just the right medicine.” Rather, it seems more like a “syndrome” that is difficult to name, more like another *us* that we are already closely entangled with. Thus, the “doctors” will face an unprecedented test of morals, ethics, and clinical care methods.

How we deal with the virus determines what it is. We need to revise the stubborn attitudes and ways of understanding viruses that have developed since the Middle Ages. For instance, naming a virus “such and such virus” seems to prove that the virus comes from elsewhere. How to choose between critical and mild symptoms also presents moral dilemmas. All of the meaningless arguments and accusations show how fragile humans are in the face of the virus, and so we fabricate names in search of some kind of illusory consolation. And yet such naming does nothing to bring us sure comfort.

The past sixty days in Wuhan were harrowing for everyone who experienced them. Faced with such loss of life, we must do more than silently mourn. Deep reflection and checkpoints are needed to expose problems with the medical system, public opinion, expert decision-making, top-level organization, levels of official governance...Of course, things are far too complicated to be summed up in a few sentences. Each point of inquiry uncovers more questions that must be faced and resolved. Clarifying these things may help us to clearly see the real relationship between humans and viruses. This is how we can respect the dead and protect the survivors.

I often ask myself, what if I am a carrier of the

virus? I have swiftly developed a deep fear of such self-inquiry. It is as if we have been served a death sentence at this moment, but it has yet to be made public. Just when Death is hovering over the city, it seems that everyone is busy playing baccarat and roulette. Perhaps that sounds too deterministic, but it is indeed the case. Each person rushes to establish their status as “healthy” as soon as possible, rapidly forming two categories of people: diseased and healthy. At the same time, they want to quietly erase this division. I suddenly realize that I too have been thinking this way. For example, I feel really ashamed and anxious at having to fill in more than two health codes.

You and I will live forever in this world full of contradiction and uncertainty, I feel dismayed at the thought of it. Slavoj Žižek said in an article today: “We always have to bear in mind the global picture of the world we live in, with all the paradoxes this implies.”¹ Philosophers are always good at drawing a blueprint for the future for humanity, and using theory to describe a beautiful vision for us—reality is always imperfect, there must be a more advanced perfect world awaiting us—maybe God’s heaven, maybe communism.

It’s a bit like a game I played as a kid: two chil-

dren stand on a playground tossing a sandbag back and forth. One child stands in the middle, trying to jump up and grab it. But catching the sandbag was near impossible, as it would fly through the air like a swallow in the sky. The spring winds blow strong, and everything is gray. The game of this world continues on; it never stopped.

Contributors

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Gao Minglu was born in October 1949 in Tianjin. He received a Master of Arts degree from the Chinese National Academy of Arts in 1984. In 1991, he was invited as a visiting scholar to conduct post-doctoral research at The Ohio State University. Later he obtained his Ph.D. from Harvard University. He was a professor at the Savannah College of Art and Design in the United States. He is currently a professor in the Department of History of Art and Architecture at University of Pittsburgh, and the Department of Fine Arts at Sichuan Fine Arts Institute.

Hong Zicheng was born in Jieyang, Guangdong Province in 1939. He graduated from the Department of Chinese at the Peking University where he has been professor since 1961. He has been dedicated to the education and research of Chinese contemporary literature and Chinese new poetry. His major publications include: *A History of Chinese Contemporary Literature* (Zhongguo dangdai wenxue shi, Peking University Press, 1999; english translation Brill, 2007), *Questions and Methods* (Wenti yu Fangfa, SDX Joint Publishing, 2002), *Materials and Annotations* (Cailiao yu Zhushi, Peking University Press, 2016), among others.

Huang Rui is an artist born in Beijing in 1952. He is one of the initia-

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Liu Ding is an artist and curator born in Changzhou, Jiangsu in 1976, and now lives in Beijing. His artistic creation and exhibition practice start from the perspective of intellectual history, organically connecting history and contemporary times and tracing and gazing from various angles, to expand the narrative of the subjectivity of Chinese art with multiple clues.

Lu Peng is a curator and art critic. He was Editor in Chief of the journal *Theatre and Film* (Xiju yu dianying, 1982–1985) and Executive Editor at the magazine *Art & Market* (Yishu · shichang, 1990–1993). In 1992, he served as Artistic Director of the Guangzhou Biennale (officially titled the First Guangzhou Biennial Art Fair). He is currently an associate professor at the College of Arts and Humanities of China Academy of Art and director of Museum of Contemporary Art Chengdu.

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and Economy in Transition (Harvard University Press, 2003). In Chinese: *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought* (Xiandai zhongguo sixiang de xingqi, SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2004).

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Yan Zhenduo, born in Jixian, Hebei Province (Jixian is now in Tianjin), is a famous oil painter who graduated from the Fine Arts Department of the Beijing Academy of Fine Arts in 1963. He then graduated from the Oil Painting Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1967. He is the first class painter at the Beijing Painting Academy. At the end of 1970s, he organized the artist group Beijing Oil Painting Research Association, and held the “New Spring Art Exhibition” and other exhibitions.

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Yuan Jia was born in 1963 in Beijing. He graduated from the Affiliated High School of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1983 and from the Department of Decorative Arts of the Central Academy of Arts and Crafts in 1987. From 1987 to 1989, he stayed at the Central Institute of Arts and Crafts as a designer in the Environmental Art Research and Design Institute. In 1989 he went to Sweden for one year of further study at the Hantverkets Folkhogskola School in Leksand. Now he is the Secretary General of the Mural Art Institute of the Public Art Department of the National Academy of Fine Arts.

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Why Seek Out Asia

1. Eds. *Reading* (Dushu) is a monthly Chinese literary magazine. The journal was first published in April 1979.◀
2. Eds. *Thinking from Asia* (Cong yazhou chufa sikao) is a series of seven volumes compiled by Yūzō Mizoguchi, Takeshi Hamashita, Naoaki Hiraiishi and Miyajima Hiroshi published by Tokyo University Press in 1993-1994.◀
3. Eds. The idea of “Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application” was initially proposed by Feng Guifen in his *Protests From the Cottage of Feng Guifen*, written in 1861 after the Second Opium War. At the time, leading Chinese thinkers were interrogating how to approach the threat posed by encroaching Western states. Feng argued for China’s self-strengthening and industrialization by borrowing Western technology and military systems, while retaining core Neo-Confucian principles.◀
4. Eds. *Creating an Alternate Mode of Understanding the World* (chuangzao lingyizhong renshi shijie de fangshi).◀

Bring Back Self Criticism

1. Eds. “Scar literature” or “literature of the wounded” is a genre of Chinese literature which emerged in the late 1970s during the “Boluan Fanzheng” period, soon after the death of Mao Zedong, portraying the sufferings of cadres and intellectuals during the tragic experiences of the Cultural Revolution and the rule of the Gang of Four.↵
2. Eds. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a group of writers rediscovered the absurd nature of the Cultural Revolution from a political and social perspective, and traced its history back to the preceding years, moving from revealing social errors to summarizing historical lessons. Compared with “scar literature”, “reflective literature” is more calm and rational.↵

On The Founding Of The Scholar Journal

1. Eds. *Twenty-First Century* (Ershiyi shiji) is a Hong Kong intellectual journal published bi-monthly, with a high standard of contributions both in the social sciences and the humanities, which played an important role in Chinese intellectual life from the early to the mid-1990s.↵
2. Eds. *Reading* (Dushu) is a monthly Chinese literary magazine which has great influence on Chinese intellectuals. It is based in Beijing. The journal was first published in April 1979. In 1996, Wang Hui and Huang Ping became executive editors. The magazine has tended to raise issues not previously discussed and carries a wide range of political opinions, including the views of Chinese liberals, the Chinese New Left, and generally anti-neoliberal views.↵
3. Eds. "Debate of the Two Wangs" and "Debate of the Two Zhangs" refer to the debates that took place at the beginning of 1990s. At the time, several scholars and writers in the main literary publications discussed over the issue of the loss of the humanistic spirit (renwen jingshen) in contemporary Chinese intellectual life. Wang Meng,

Wang Binbin, Zhang Yiwu and Zhang Chengzhi were the major figures in the event.↵

Salon Salon New Spring Seminar

1. Eds. *Salon Salon: Fine Art Practices from 1972 to 1982 in Profile – A Beijing Perspective* written by Carol Yinghua Lu and Liu Ding breaks the model of before and after 1966-1976 and disturbs the post 1989 commercial categorizations which still create a fissure between the official and the avant-garde when both were intrinsically twisted together. The period is considered to be full of transformations, conflicts and entanglements, and artistic practices during this period are interrelated undercurrents instead of isolated cutoff. ↴
2. Eds. The Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party held in 1978 manifested the government's intent to close the chapter on the Cultural Revolution and move the country toward a new period of reform and openness. Individual artists responded quickly to these new conditions. At the end of 1978, artist Yan Zhenduo approached his brother-in-law Chen Xiangyuan, who oversaw Zhongshan Park and asked for permission to hold an art exhibition in the Waterside Pavilion of it. Yan Zhenduo organized the exhibition with his colleague and close friend Pang Jun, they invited

artists from different generations and educational backgrounds to participate, and asked specifically for landscape and works of still life. Paintings of natural scenery had been criticized during the Cultural Revolution as decadent and bourgeois. Showing them in public was nothing short of fresh air. Jiang Feng wrote a preface for the exhibition and strongly supported it, which then inspired a new wave of artists organizations throughout the country. In February 1979, the “New Spring Art Exhibition” was held successfully and involved 36 artists in total.↵

3. Eds. The system of Art Companies existed from about 1950s to 1970s. Together with official artists associations, art academies, art magazines, art museums etc, constituted a whole system to create, distribute and customize art in the New China. Art companies closed after China moved to market economy.↵
4. Eds. Beijing Normal Academy of Arts was founded in 1956. It was principally composed of several instructors who had graduated from Furen University, mainly artists who had studied abroad in Japan.↵
5. Eds. Shaoshan is a city in Hunan Province, China.↵

6. Eds. This expresses the excitement other children felt when they saw Chairman Mao, which triggered Huang Rui's rebellious mindset.◀↓
7. Eds. The mural in the Beijing Capital Airport, completed in 1979 as a collective effort of both the middle-aged and the older generation of artists, was a tremendous achievement in terms of the exploration of a viable art form. As an important gateway to the outside world, the mural was designed to represent the non-political elements of China, such as its rich ethnic cultures, technology, myths and natural landscapes. The most famous piece was *Water-Splashing Festival. An Ode to Life* painted by artist Yuan Yunsheng. Tropical colors, crisp lines and sensuous curves of three naked women washing their long tresses. It was inspired by the traditions of the Dai minority in Yunnan province and was considered to mark the difficult rebirth of the "aesthetic movement" in Chinese art after decades of political turmoil in the 1960s and 70s.◀↓
8. Eds. The original Chinese definition is “主题先行”. “Subject-foremost” refers to the situation when meaning of an artwork is valued before artistic language.◀↓
9. Gao Minglu (ed.), *Contemporary Chinese art*

history, 1985–1986 (Zhongguo dangdai meishu shi 1985–1986), Shanghai People’s Fine Arts Publishing House, 1991.◀↓

10. Eds. The original Chinese phrase 红卫兵美术, refers to a predominant propaganda art during the Cultural Revolution aimed to shape the public’s loyalty towards the Communist Party and the country.◀↓
11. Eds. A name for the conceptual and provocative artworks created in China between 1985 and 1989 that reacted to Socialist Realism, which had dominated Chinese art since the 1950s. The movement reached its pinnacle with the 1989 “China/Avant-Garde Exhibition” at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing.◀↓
12. Eds. “Meishu”, first published in 1951 as “Ren-min meishu” (The People’s Art), was relaunched under its present name in 1954. It is sponsored by the China Artists’ Association, which is controlled by the Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party. Cancelled for ten years during the Cultural Revolution, it began to publish again in 1978.◀↓
13. Eds. *Shikan* was founded in 1957 and mainly published contemporary poetry and poetry review. It was cancelled during the Cultural Revo-

- lution and republished in 1976 after the permission of Chairman Mao. Many leaders of the nation including Chairman Mao, Zhu De, Chen Yi and Jiang Zemin published their work on it.↵
14. Eds. *Fine Arts in China* is a state-level specialized art newspaper approved by the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT), regulated by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of The People's Republic of China and sponsored by the China National Academy of Painting (CNAP).↵
15. English edition: *A History of Art in Twentieth-Century China*, Edizioni Charta, Milan 2010.↵
16. Original Chinese Text: 完蛋了 (Oh no).↵
17. Eds. "Today" (Jintian) is the title of a Chinese literary journal. Founded in 1978, it was the first non-official literary journal in the People's Republic of China since the 1950s. It ran for nine issues until it was censored in 1980. It was revived in 1990.↵
18. Eds. "Reading" (Dushu) is a monthly Chinese literary magazine which has great influence on Chinese intellectuals. It is based in Beijing. The journal was first published in April 1979. In 1996, Wang Hui and Huang Ping became executive editors. The magazine has tended to raise is-

sues not previously discussed and carries a wide range of political opinions, including the views of Chinese liberals, the Chinese New Left, and generally anti-neoliberal views.↵

19. Original Chinese Text: 分野 (individual expression).↵
20. Eds. In 1963, literary theorist and Marxist thinker Zhou Yang presented a report "On the Military Tasks of Philosophy and Social Science Workers." This report criticized those revisionists in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia that—reading the young Marx of the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*—preached so-called humanism by using the concept of alienation. The report was read and revised by Mao, and it was then used as study materials for cadres. During the Cultural Revolution, however, when Zhou Yang was denounced as a “counter-revolutionary double dealer,” it was suggested that Zhou had all along advocated supra-class views on human nature. Once rehabilitated, Zhou appeared to reverse his position of the early 1960s. In March 1983 he presented a speech "An Inquiry into Several Theoretical Questions of Marxism" to a meeting commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the death of Marx, admitting that his ear-

lier views were one-sided and in some respects simply wrong. Furthermore the association of discussions of Marxist humanism and alienation with "revisionism," led in the Cultural Revolution to the glorification of inhuman activity. The criticism that followed the text publication in the "People's Daily" (Renmin Ribao), caused the removal of its deputy editor Wang Ruoshui, and Zhou Yang's self-criticism.↵

21. Eds. The original text is “从群众中来，到群众中去”的群众路线.” The mass line is the political, organizational and leadership method developed by Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party during the Chinese revolution. The essential element of the mass line is consulting the masses, interpreting their suggestions within the framework of Marxism-Leninism, and then enforcing the resulting policies.↵
22. In “Fine Arts in China” (Zhongguo Meishu Bao), Issue 51, 1986.↵
23. Eds. The political thinker and reformer of the late Qing dynasty Kang Youwei introduced the idea of progress in history, drawing mainly upon the theory of the “Three Ages” which he attributed to Confucius himself: The first age was a time of Disorder (jueluan shi), the second age of Emerg-

ing Peace (shengping shi), and the third age of Great Peace (taiping shi).↵

24. Eds. The New Marriage Law that was promulgated on 1 May 1950 gave women legal equality with men.↵

The Revolt Of The Unseen

1. Wu, Guanzhong, *I Owe Painting: an Autobiography* (Wo Fu Dan Qing), *The Collected Works of Wu Guanzhong: A Life of Boundary Crossing*. Unity Publishing House, Beijing 2008, p. 85.↵
2. Pang, Tao, *An Autobiography* (unpublished), compiled by Peng Weihua.↵
3. Wu, Guanzhong, *cit.*..↵
4. Chen, Zui, “Thoughts on the Sixth National Exhibition of Fine Arts from the Formal Perspective, and Some Ideas on the Future Direction of Chinese Oil Painting,” in *Discussions on the Oil Painting* (You Hua Tao Lun Ji), Liu Yushan and Chen Lusheng (eds.), People’s Fine Arts Publishing House, Beijing 1993, p. 282.↵
5. Ibid.↵
6. The "Sixth National Exhibition of Fine Arts" took place on 1 October, 1984. The exhibition was mounted in nine cities based on its 15 different genres. Oil paintings were displayed in Shenyang, engravings in Chengdu, traditional Chinese paintings in Nanjing, linked pictures books (lianhuanhua), illustrations and children’s books in Shanghai, New Year pictures in Hangzhou, watercolors, gouache, and paintings

from Hong Kong and Macau in Guangzhou, cartoons in Changsha, propaganda paintings and sketches in Xi'an, and sculptures, murals and lacquer paintings in Beijing. A total of 3239 works were exhibited. See Zou, Yuejin, *A History of Fine Arts in New China, 1949-2000* (Xin Zhong Guo Mei Shu Shi), Hunan Fine Arts Publishing House, Changsha 2005, p. 199.↵

7. Peng, De, "Who Drove the New Wave: to the Young Enthusiasts," in *A Selection of Peng De's Works: an Author's Selection* (Peng De Zi Xuan Ji) Beiyue Literature and Art Publishing House, Taiyuan 2015, p. 30.↵
8. Jia, Fangzhou, "The Prelude and Beginning of the 85 New Wave Movement," in Fu Zhongwang and Sun Zhenhua (eds.), *An Investigation of the Historical Facts of 1985 Fine Arts: Proceedings of Hubei Art Gallery Symposium* (Ba Wu Mei Shu Shi Shi Kao Ju), Hebei Fine Arts Publishing House, Shijiazhuang 2015, p. 168.↵
9. Ibid.↵
10. Zou, Yuejin, "With a Formal Revolution: Chinese Modernist Art over 1979-1989," *cit.*, p. 204.↵
11. Zhang, Qiang, "Here is the New Start: An Exhibition of Chinese Youth Moving Forward," in *New Wave of the Painting* (Hui Hua Xin Chao),

- Jiangsu Fine Arts Publishing House, Nanjing
1998, p. 5.↵
12. Peng, De, *cit.*↵
 13. Zou, Yuejin, *cit.*, p. 200.↵
 14. Shui, Zhongtian, “Impression on the Creation of Modern Oil Painting,” in *Discussions on the Oil Painting* (You Hua Tao Lun Ji), *cit.*, p. 302.↵
 15. Gao, Minglu et al., “Modern Art and Culture I: an Overview of Chinese Modern Art Movements,” in *History of Contemporary Chinese Art, 1985-1986* (Zhong Guo Dang Dai Mei Shu Shi) Shanghai People’s Publishing House, Shanghai 1991, p. 607.↵
 16. Zhang, Qiang, “A Study of a Few Features,” in *New Wave of the Painting*, *cit.*, p. 86.↵
 17. Gao, Minglu et al., *History of Contemporary Chinese Art, 1985-1986*, *cit.*, p. 532.↵
 18. Ibid.↵
 19. Ibid., p. 610.↵
 20. Zou, Yuejin, *cit.*, p. 199.↵
 21. Zhang, Qiang, “Since When Was There Art Groups?”, in *New Wave of the Painting*, *cit.*, p. 84.↵
 22. Pang, Tao, “Qiu Di: A Chronology”, *Qiu Di*, Jiangsu Education Publishing House, Nanjing 2006, p. 140.↵

23. Shui, Zhongtian, “From the ‘Revolutionary’ Narrative to Contemplations on ‘Life’: the Evolution of Lin Gang’s Art,” Xu Zhengyun (ed.), *Lin Gang*, People’s Fine Arts Publishing House, Beijing 2000, p. 12.↵
24. Pang, Tao, *An Autobiography*, *cit.*↵
25. Ibid.↵
26. Shui, Zhongtian, “Impression on the Creation of Modern Oil Painting,” *cit.*, p. 297.↵
27. Pang Tao, “Preface to the Fourth Studio” (Unpublished), p. 6.↵
28. “Pang Tao from Paris” (Pang Tao jizi bali), *Fine Arts in China*, Issue 6, August 17, 1985, p. 2.↵
29. Zou, Yuejin, “With a Formal Revolution: Chinese Modernist Art over 1979–1989”, *cit.*, p. 198.↵
30. Wu, Guanzhong, “The Content Determines the Form?”, *cit.*, p. 199.↵

How We Deal With The Virus

1. The article of Slavoj Žižek entitled “Is Barbarism with a Human Face Our Fate?” was published on *Critical Inquiry* on March 18, 2020. The Chinese translation of the article was published by *Sanlian Life Weekly* (Sanlian shenghuo zhoukan) on March 22, 2020.↵