

QUO VADIS ARS SINICA? REFLECTIONS ON SINO-WESTERN DIALOGUE*

Marián GÁLIK
Institute of Oriental Studies, Slovak Academy of Sciences
Klemensova 19, 813 64 Bratislava, Slovakia
galikm2@gmail.com

My paper begins with a short evaluation of what European and Chinese *Transcultura* members have done and published in Chinese from the 1990s up to the present time. I have devoted the first part of my contribution to the history of the interflow between European and Chinese art that began with the Greco-Gandharan art in the 2nd cent. A.D., then proceeded during the Mongolian Yuan Dynasty (Marco Polo), and reached a peak of impact (if not a great response) in the 17th – 18th centuries during the Jesuit mission in China and in Europe during these centuries. Mutual enchantment on both sides ended after the end of the Jesuit mission and after Herder's and Hegel's critical attitude to China and its culture. In the first years of the 20th century and later, Chinese students in the US and Europe started to be interested in Western art and schools of art were set up in China. In the 1920s and 1930s artists combined pictorial art with poetry, or criticism. In the 1950s Xu Beihong defeated Lin Fengmian and followed Mao Zedong's line. During the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976) nearly all contacts with foreign countries were severed. Gradual change came only after Mao's death in 1976. In 1985 a New Wave Art claimed freedom in art, but up to the end of the 20th century the Chinese government was more or less unfavourable to the Chinese avant-garde art. The situation in Chinese art from 1985 up to now is briefly analysed in the last part of the paper.

Key words: European arts, Chinese arts, their histories, mutual enrichment in 21st century

In 2004 I published my first musings on the topic of collaboration between the Western and Chinese philosophers, the possibility of Sino-Western dialogue and the elaboration or construction of new philosophy (ies) for our global age in the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol. 31, No.1, pp. 65 – 81. Later it was published in Chinese in the *Festschrift* for Professor Tang Yijie 汤一介: *Tanxun*

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zhen shan mei 探寻真善美 *Searching for Truth, Goodness and Beauty*, ed. by Hu Jun 胡军 and Sun Shangyang 孙尚扬. Peking: Peking University Press 2007, pp. 535 – 549. I have to admit that there was no response to it and I am afraid that there were no readers of the two versions except Professor Chung-ying Cheng 成中英, the editors of both versions, Professor Yue Daiyun 乐黛云, the wife of Tang Yijie, who received it as the first Chinese readers.

Even if my stone prepared for the future global philosophy of Sino-Western orientation remained neglected by its future builders, I would like to express my admiration for the works of Yue Daiyun and Tang Yijie, two outstanding members of the Chinese Transcultural, for their work for the common cause: the mutual dialogue and Sino-Western cultural interflow. Of course, the merits of Professor Alain le Pichon should be highlighted. More than any other member of European Transcultural, he participated in the joint-venture *Dialogue transcultural* 跨文化对话, starting in 1999 and publishing materials both in Chinese and in French concerned with many questions related to intercultural communication and understanding. *La Licorne et le Dragon. Les malentendus dans la recherche de l'universel*¹ was published both in French and Chinese versions. A very good selection of the issues 1 – 16 from the journal *Dialogue transculturel* appeared in a Chinese version under the title: *Yingjie xinde wenhua zhuanxing shiqi* 迎接新的文化转型时期 [Greeting a New Era of Cultural Reformation], 2 Vols. Shanghai: Shanghai wenhua chubanshe, 2006. 785 p.

On this high level cultural forum it is necessary to point out that the Chinese have done much more for the spreading of European culture to China than the Europeans and Americans have done for Chinese culture. At first in the 17th and 18th centuries it was the Chinese who gave much to Europeans through the mediation of Jesuit missionaries, although they also introduced to China European science and scholarship. In the 2nd half of the 19th century and later it was outstanding Chinese philosophers starting with Yan Fu 严复 (1853 – 1921) who translated and introduced into China mainly the English philosophers: Thomas Huxley, Adam Smith, Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill and Edward Jenks. Bertrand Russell followed and Hu Shi 胡适 (1891 – 1962) who acquainted Chinese with American Instrumentalism and in general American Pragmatism.

As the different mostly European philosophies reached China for the most part in the form of the history of philosophy, we must be ready for all eventualities. *We should have in mind that in China, during a very short period of time (practically from the end of the 19th century until about the mid-1930s)*

¹ Peking: Peking University Press 1995 and Paris: Éditions – Diffusion Charles Léopold Mayer 2003. I do not have its Chinese version.

they had to become acquainted with the whole development of Western philosophy from high antiquity down to those times. The cognitive process that happened in Europe (at least in intellectually advanced countries) organically and naturally from the era of the Renaissance, was condensed in China into a few decades. In the 1930s and later the impact of Marxism-Leninism prevailed over all systemo-structural entities of philosophy, and after 1949 Maoism, or Mao Zedong sixiang 毛泽东思想 Mao Zedong's thought, became overwhelming, and to be followed by all. If we look at the outcome of the project entitled "Germany's Impact on Modern Chinese Intellectual History" (Deutschlands Einfluss auf die moderne chinesische Geistesgeschichte) initiated by me at Munich University in 1969 and led by Professor Wolfgang Bauer (1930 – 1997) up to 1989, we find that in the years 1970 – 1984 together 120,028 items were devoted to Marx and Engels in China, among them 1235 titles concerned with their philosophical works and 31 titles of Marxist works on different forms of art.² All fields of intellectual history comprising philosophy, language, religion, literature and different forms of writing, art, economics and society, psychology, education, science and research, politics, history, law and also warfare and sport are represented in these years by 120,367 titles, that is only 339 items more than those devoted to the two Marxist classics.³ I do not have the bibliography of writings devoted to Mao Zedong in these years.

Since I have been put by chance among those in this conference who should speak about Beauty, and Beauty is the most important part of aesthetics, and also of art, I shall mention here the case of Zhu Guangqian 朱光潜 (1897 – 1986), up to his death the most prominent modern Chinese aesthetician. He cannot be well understood without Edmund Bullough's theory of psychic distance, without the theory of empathy (e.g. that of Theodore Lipps), Fechner's psychophysics, Benedetto Croce's aesthetics, and some elements from other writers. But he always remained within a certain mycelium or hotbed prepared by the indigenous Daoist tradition.⁴ As for Croce, who before the writings of Sabattini, seemed to be a Crocianist, we find more sound evaluation: "Needless to say, not very much survives in Chu Kuang-ch'ien's aesthetic theory",

² BAUER, W., CHANG PENG, LACKNER, M. *Das chinesische Deutschland-Bild der Gegenwart. B. Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels im chinesischer Schrifttum 1970 – 1984. Eine Bibliographie.* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1989. 853 p.

³ BAUER, W., CHANG PENG, LACKNER, M. *Das chinesischer Deutschland-Bild der Gegenwart. A. Deutsche Kultur, Politik und Wirtschaft im chinesische Schrifttum 1970 – 1984. Eine Bibliographie.* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1982. 1174 p.

⁴ The reader may find the great force of Daoist tradition in the excellent essay by SABATTINI, M. "The Concept of 'Aesthetic Experience' in the Theory of Chu Kuang-ch'ien." In *Papers Presented to the XXI. International Congress of Chinese Studies*, pp. 204 – 211.

although Zhu “goes on maintaining that he is merely correcting, with no intention of demolishing the foundations of Croce’s thought.”⁵ Zhu Guangqian was one of the thousands of Chinese intellectuals coerced to write self-criticism in 1956 for following the reactionary ideas of Croce.⁶ If Marx and Engels were eulogized in more than twelve thousand items, Zhu Guangqian’s works were mentioned during those 14 years only 6 times. Before that period only two essays by Zhu Guangqian were indicated in the bibliography Wolfgang Bauer, Shen-chang Hwang (eds.), *Germany’s Impact on Modern Chinese Intellectual History. Deutschlands Einfluss auf die moderne chinesische Geistesgeschichte*, but these two from the year 1959 were concerned with Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749 – 1832) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770 – 1831), acceptable for Chinese Marxists.⁷

The situation for the whole of Chinese culture and its Sino-Western cultural interflow started to be better in 1979 when the Chinese Mainland was opened for the second time after the beginning of the 20th century, especially after the May Fourth Movement of 1919. During the so-called Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976) nearly all Western culture with some exceptions was inaccessible for Chinese people. Only after the “Suzhou case” when *La Dame aux camélias* by Alexander Dumas fils was at first proclaimed as “pornographic literature” and then rehabilitated by those in power, could it be read and newly published. It happened 80 years after it was published for the first time in China in 1899 in the translation by Lin Shu 林纾 (1852 – 1924). The situation in all fields of contemporary culture came to be different, but this was not without problems in the 1980s and partly in the 1990s. It was just the same also in the field of the arts.

The interflow between European and Chinese art has a long history. It started with the so-called Gandharan Greco-Buddhist art in the 2nd century A.D., especially in the paintings and sculptures of Buddha, similar to those of Apollo, but with some Indian features.⁸ It came later to China, where, for instance, the statues of Buddha during the times of Tang Dynasty (618 – 905) have more

⁵ SABATTINI, M. “‘Croceanism’ in Chu Kuang-ch’ien’s Wen-i hsin-li-hsüe.” In *East and West*, p. 13.

⁶ ZHU GUANGQIAN, “Wode wenyi sixiang fandongxing” 我的文艺思想反动性 [Reactionary Character of My Literary Mind]. In *Wenyi bao* 文艺报 [Literary Newspaper], Vol. 12, 1956. For more about the spirit of the times in China in the 1950s see SABATTINI, M. “Tra critica e autocritica: Zhu Guangqian e il dibattito sull’esthetica negli anni Cinquanta.” In FINDEISEN, R. D., GASSMANN R. H. (eds.) *Autumn Floods 秋水 Essays in Honour of Marián Gálik*, pp. 363 – 386.

⁷ Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1982, pp. 199 and 225 – 226.

⁸ AUBOYER, J., GOEPPER, R. *The Oriental World. Landmarks of the World’s Art*. London: Paul Hamlyn Limited. See Slovak edition *Umenie Orientu. India a juhovýchodná Ázia, Čína, Kórea a Japonsko*. Trans. by Jozef Genzor, pp. 34 – 45.

oval, fuller faces which is probably a result of the ideal of beauty of that period.⁹ The next time for meeting of European and Chinese art were the journeys of Marco Polo (ca. 1254 – ca. 1334) and two members of his family to China in the time of Khubilai Khan (1260 – 1294) during the Yuan Dynasty (1260 – 1368).¹⁰ Although Marco Polo had enough opportunities to see many paintings in China, he mentions only the decorations in the imperial palaces or portraits of famous rulers in one of the castles in Shanxi Province.

The story was greatly changed after the coming of Matteo Ricci to Macao and Guangdong Province at first in 1595 and later to Nanchang, Nanking, and at last to Peking on January 25, 1601. Being one of the greatest scholars his age, and the most famous missionary in China up to our days, he was wrong when he wrote that the Chinese productions “are lacking any vitality”, but they allegedly “possess the ingenious trait of preferring that which comes from without (probably from Europe, M.G.) to that which they possess themselves, once they realise the superior quality of the foreign product”.¹¹ On the other hand, Ricci was happy to see the intense interest that the works of art he brought to China aroused among the Chinese intellectuals and artists. They included devotional pictures painted by the priest Giovanni Nicollò who lived in Nagasaki and Arima and the engraving of souls in purgatory presented to the Emperor Wanli 万历 (1573 – 1620), the most curious and liberal among the Emperors of the Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644).¹² At first two books made an impact on the Chinese painting of the 17th century: Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg, *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, published in Cologne between 1572 and 1616 in six volumes, showing attractive panoramas of some European cities of the Renaissance age, and the other *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines*, with engravings of Jesus Christ published in Antwerp in 1593. These had an impact also on Chinese painters who learned from them the use of chiaroscuro and perspective. Some of the Chinese painters such as Li Rihua 李日华 (1506 – 1635) or Zhang Ruitu 张瑞图 (1570 – 1641) had contacts with Ricci, and Zhang Hong 张宏 (1157 – 1668) very probably borrowed some devices from the *Evangelicae historiae imagines* and from Braun and Hogenberg’s *opus magnum*. But apart from Li Rihua who was interested mostly in the innovative devices of European paintings, the European impact remained only external and

⁹ KLIMKEIT, H.-J. (ed.) *Japanische Studien zur Kunst der Seidenstrasse*, p. 62.

¹⁰ MOULE, A. C., PELLIOT, Paul (eds.) *The Description of the World*. 2 Vols. London: G. Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1938. Cf. also well-known extensive treatment by OLSCHKI, Leonardo. *L’Asia di Marco Polo. Introduzione alla lettura e allo studio del Millione*. Venezia-Roma: Istituto per la collaborazione culturale, 1978.

¹¹ Citations are taken over from SULLIVAN, M. *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art*, p. 43.

¹² Loc. cit.

these devices did not become a part of the Chinese systemo-structural entity, although we find them in some painters like Gong Xian 龚贤 (ca 1618 – 1688). After December 1715 Giuseppe Castiglione (Lang Shining 郎世宁) (1688 – 1776), an Italian Jesuit, had a “considerable impact on Chinese court taste for over half a century”.¹³ The greatest difficulty for him and his younger confère was that unlike the Jesuits of Ricci’s time, they could no longer paint according to their most pious wish *omnia ad maiorem Dei gloriam*, but for the secular needs of the Emperor. Castiglione’s works done for the Imperial court could serve to some extent as models for the symbiosis of the Chinese and European art. Probably the best painting of this kind is a handscroll, *A Hundred Horses in a Landscape*, now at the National Palace Museum, Taipei, where the Western elements are transformed to some extent to delight Yongzheng 雍正 Emperor (1723 – 1735) but not to discomfort him.¹⁴ Sometimes Castiglione had Chinese collaborators helping him, for example, he painted the figures and a Chinese companion the landscapes. For about two hundred years or a bit less, the foreign missionaries tried to teach the Chinese artists the European methods of painting, but their achievement was meagre.¹⁵ The Chinese soil was not prepared to accept and creatively absorb it. The intensity of tradition as well as of artistic taste was so strong. The Chinese structure remained for the great part intact. The impact of European art did not last long after the dissolution of the Society of Jesus in 1773. Early 19th century connections with European paintings were more remarkable in South China, in Macao and in Canton but they were not done by Europeans of Castiglione’s talent, and Chinese artists were mostly craftsmen imitating the European models.

For the 17th, 18th and partly also for 19th century admiration of Chinese art or better to say its different imitations was typical of Europe. As in China, interest came from the highest strata of European society, Emperors, kings and aristocrats (mainly in architecture) and merchants (mainly in handicrafts). It was the time of *chinoiseries*, exotic kinds of fine art and literature. It was a product of an inadequate knowledge of exotic countries. Exotic comes from the Greek word *exotikos* and means foreign and was applied to everything beyond the borders of the Greek world. China, although known to some extent to some European countries, still remained unknown in many aspects, including the arts. The Chinese were autarkic and tried more to hide than to make known. Europeans were different, they were much more curious. Chinoiseries of

¹³ Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 71 and a colour plate 5.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 79. For this period see also XIANG DA 向大, *European Influences on Chinese Art in the Later Ming and Early Qing Period*. Trans. by WANG DEZHAO 王德昭. In *Renditions. A Chinese-English Translation Magazine*, pp. 152 – 178 supplementing in a wonderful way the data from Sullivan’s masterpiece.

different kinds, like the dresses made of silk, fans and porcelains with pseudo-Chinese decorations were much in vogue. The Chinese motifs had a great impact on European painting, architecture, and gardens of the Baroque and Rococo times. It is enough to read an extensive and well illustrated book by Madelaine Jerry, *Chinoiseries. Influence du goût chinois sur les arts décoratifs en Europe*, Fribourg: Office du Livre 1981.¹⁶ Antoine Watteau (1684 – 1721) was the first to become famous as a creator of chinoiseries in painting. He was followed by François Boucher (1703 – 1770), and tapestries from Beauvais in France became famous in Europe.¹⁷ Apart from chinoiseries more works imitating the original Chinese works or presenting the engravings or drawings of Chinese artists were presented in Athanasius Kircher's *China illustrata*.¹⁸ Some others followed and this time has been analysed in the excellent book by Michael Sullivan. For some reasons Sullivan did not appreciate chinoiseries very much, since he regarded them as a phenomenon of European taste, which did not bring to Europe the essence of Chinese art, its principles. That was too a high demand transgressing the possibilities of European scholars, or volunteers, because of the inadequacy of knowledge of faraway countries, including China. Exoticism was fashionable even up to the beginning of the 19th century in Europe in different realms of social activity. The last chinoiserie in England was Robert Jones' decoration in the Interior of the Royal Pavilion, Brighton, 1820 – 1822. It was after Gottfried W.F. Hegel proclaimed that Orient (including China, M.G.) has to be “excluded from the History of philosophy”, and even before him Johann G. Herder (1744 – 1803), who regarded China as an “embalmed mummy without a thinking mind”.¹⁹

Mutual enchantment ended on both sides at that time. The Chinese were angry because of the Opium policy of the Western imperialist powers, the Europeans were more interested in trade and in new concessions and open ports. The Chinese had an interest in governmental, military, educational, and technological knowledge after 1840 and in 1898 Zhang Zhidong 张之洞 (1837 – 1909), expressed the view supporting gradual reform according to the slogan

¹⁶ I know it from the German translation by WIESINGER, Liselotte. *China und Europa. Der Einfluss Chinas auf die angewandten Künste Europas*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981.

¹⁷ Cf. pp. 13 and 17 – 36.

¹⁸ See WALRAVENS, Hartmut (ed.) *China illustrata. Das europäische China Verständnis im Spiegel des 16. bis 18. Jahrhunderts*. Weiheim: Acta Humaniora, VCH 1987. This is a catalogue of an exhibition in the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, Germany, March 21 – August 23, 1987. The title of the original book by Kircher was *China monumentis qua sacris qua profanes, nec non variis naturae et artis spectaculis, aliarumque rerum memorabilium arguments illustrata*. Antwerp, 1667. Another book of this kind was Joachim von Sandrart, *Teutsche Academie der Bau-, Bildhauer- und Malerkunst*, 1675.

¹⁹ ROETZ, H. “Philosophy in China? Notes on a Debate.” In *Extrême Orient*, p. 50.

“Chinese learning for the cultural foundation, Western learning for practical needs”.²⁰ There was no place for the arts. In the first decade of the 20th century when the number of Chinese students abroad, mainly in United States increased rapidly, the situation changed. In Paris there were at that time so many painters that they founded the Association des Artistes Chinois en France. French educated students set up new schools in Suzhou, Nanking and Hangzhou. Xu Beihong 徐悲鸿 (1895 – 1953) and Lin Fengmian 林风眠 (1901 – 1991) were better artists. Xu Beihong very soon followed Mao Zedong’s line and in his handscroll painted in about 1940 very probably followed Mao’s instruction from the end of the 1930’s concerned with the so-called “national forms” in literature and art.²¹ The early 1930s brought some new artists onto the scene, combining the pictorial art with poetry, or criticism, like Li Jinfa 李金发 (1900 – 1976), Teng Gu 滕固 (1901 – 1941), Wang Duqing 王独请 (1898 – 1940) and some others. Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881 – 1936) propagated Georg Grosz, Franz Mazereel and Käthe Kollwitz.²² Some of the greatest painters such as Qi Baishi 齐白石 (1863 – 1957) remained unaffected by Western or Japanese influence. Zong Baihua 宗白华 (1897 – 1986), an admirer of German culture and of Goethe remained faithful to his Chinese ideas although he was a follower of European Expressionism.

Mainly after 1953 the arts schools in the PRC were reformed and different branches of literature and art criticized the situation in culture beginning with Yu Pingbo 俞平伯 (1900 – 1990) and his understanding of the novel *Honglou meng* 红楼梦 *A Dream of the Red Chamber* in 1954, Hu Shi and his concept of American Pragmatism, Hu Feng 胡风 (1902 – 1985) and his understanding of critical realism different from that coming from Engels’ teaching in 1955, and later. Mao Zedong’s theory from Yan’an in 1943 became victorious. According to it the political or social aspect of the work of literature or art was primary and the so-called “particle of art” secondary.²³ Not all Western ideas were rejected, but some Western techniques were used for some crude works of art as in *The Rent-Collection Yard* modelled in clay (1965).²⁴ During the Cultural Revolution

²⁰ TREADGOLD, D. W. *The West in Russia and China. Religious and Secular Thought in Modern Times. China 1582 – 1949*, p. 101

²¹ GÁLIK, M. “La discussione sulle “Forme nazionali” nella letteratura cinese.” In *Cina* (Rome), 1973, Vol. 10, pp. 3 – 16.

²² For Kollwitz impact in China see WITTRIN, G. “Die Einflüsse von Käthe Kollwitz auf die chinesische Graphik zwischen 1931 und 1949.” In *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Ges.-Sprachw. Reihe*, pp. 741 – 747.

²³ Cf. MCDUGALL B. S. *Mao Zedong’s “Talks at Yan’an Conference on Literature and Art”: A Translation of the 1943 Text with Commentary*, 1980, esp. pp. 27 – 28; BIRCH, C. “The Particle of Art.” In *The China Quarterly*, pp. 3 – 14, esp. 4 – 5.

²⁴ Michael Sullivan, op. cit., p. 189.

(1966 – 1976) all contacts with foreign countries were severed, and what remained or came into the hands of the Chinese public was nearly tantamount to zero.²⁵ Only Mao Zedong's death in 1976 brought gradual change. In 1978 shortly after Deng Xiaoping defeated the Gang of Four and in 1979 a few modern European artists such as Bonnard, Klimt and Matisse were introduced into China, but the Futurists were condemned. The situation was not clear even in the first part of the 1980s and Lin Fengmian returned to Paris in 1984. At that time the "anti-spiritual pollution campaign" raged over China, but it did not last too long. It was mostly directed against the Chinese artists but even at this time it was possible to organize exhibitions of the Italian Renaissance, Picasso and Munch. In 1984 Diliujie quanguo meishu zuopin zhanlan 第六届全国美术作品展览 The Sixth National Art Exhibition was held at the National Gallery, Peking. With its political themes, it helped to prepare the '85 Movement (or New Wave Art 1985, or simply New Avant-garde), and supported *chuangzao ziyou* 创作自由 freedom of creation. It rejected Socialist Realism with its revolutionary romanticism and even traditional Chinese art. At the end of 1985 after many different countries of the world, Rauschenberg's Overseas Cultural Exchange was shown in the China Art Gallery in Peking and Rauschenberg's and Andy Warhol's pop art had an immense impact on contemporary Chinese artists. In 1986 the freedom of expression went further questioning not only traditional styles, and promoting art approximate to Dada or Chan 禅 Buddhism. It seems that it has transgressed the borders of official cultural policy and the first exhibition of that year organized at Zhejiang Art Gallery was closed three hours after opening. In September of that year Xiamen Dadaists opened another exhibition with specimens of such art. Huang Yongping 黄永砵 was one of the leaders of this movement. Diverse groups in many Chinese cities did the same in Xuzhou, Luoyang, Shanghai and Guangzhou. In 1987 a meeting for avant-garde art was held at the end of March, but in April at first the authorities from above banned the scholarly communication among the young artists and later all the activities were banned and a nationwide exhibition could not be realized.

In 1988 these obstructive acts ended and the exhibition of Xu Bing's 徐冰 *Tianshu* 天书 *Book from the Sky* became a milestone in the '85 Movement. He

²⁵ During the years 1966 till 1972 not a single book from foreign literature was published in the PRC. In 1973 only the collection *Baodai shixuan* 鲍狄埃诗选 *Selected Poems of Eugene Pottier* appeared on the book market. Raffaello Giovagnoli's *Spartacus* appeared in 1975. See more about the situation in GALIK, M. "Foreign Literature in the People's Republic of China between 1970 – 1979." In *Asian and African Studies*, 1983, Vol. XIX, pp. 55 – 95.

is probably the most outstanding contemporary Chinese artist.²⁶ On 5th February 1989 the Zhongguo xiandai yishuzhan 中国现代艺术展 Chinese Avant-garde Exhibition was opened in Peking. It was closed two times during the next two weeks. The Tiananmen Incident following the student demonstration meant a heavy blow. In January 1990 the journal *Zhongguo meishubao* 中国美术报 *Fine Arts in China*, which spread knowledge about Chinese avant-garde art was closed. Chinese artists worked in the difficult conditions and left China or worked more for the audience abroad. Nick Knight wrote a monograph tracing the situation of the development of Chinese avant-garde art in relation to the foreign countries. He understood well that the People's Republic of China may well take full advantage of integration of this art, not welcome at home, into the striving for globalization abroad.²⁷ In the field of contemporary literature we do not see such a success. The shift in emphasis from inner politics to the foreign, especially into the rich capitalist countries has its *raison d'être*. Pragmatic Chinese politicians and theoreticians very quickly understood after the first successes of Chinese artists abroad, that these may change the image of China among the population of the Western world after it was badly damaged on June 3 – 4, 1989. After 1990 the Chinese art expanded geographically to nearly all the great cities of Asia, Europe and the US. We mention here the Centre d'Art Santa Mónica Barcelona 1995, Kunstmuseum Bonn 1996, Singapore Art Museum 1997, Bronx Museum of the Arts 1997, Vienna Secession, 1997.²⁸ It is necessary to say that the “official position of the Chinese government was unfavourable to the avant-garde art throughout the 1990s.”²⁹

After 2000 the Chinese government helped the contemporary artists, but did it also mean a change of policy in literature and art? There was a Mahjong exhibition in Bern in 2005 and in Hamburg in 2006.³⁰ In a catalogue of this book we read that some works by Huang Yongping up to that time should be rejected because of diplomatic reasons. Is it true, or not? If it is true then it may mean that in China there is no full freedom of expression not even in the 21st century.

The most important aim of this cultural forum is, according to the words of Professor Alain le Pichon, “to discuss some of the key concepts and key words representing distinctive values in their respective cultures, and to consider, in a

²⁶ SILBERGELD, Jerome, YING Dora C.Y. (eds.) *Persistence/Transformation: Text as Image in the Art of Xu Bing*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.

²⁷ KNIGHT, K. *Imagining Globalisation in China. Debates on Ideology, Politics and Culture*, pp. 118 – 143.

²⁸ GAO MINGLU (ed.). *Inside out: New Chinese Art*, pp. 197 – 201.

²⁹ SHELDON, H. L. *China, Transnational Visuality, Global Postmodernity*, p. 143.

³⁰ FIBICHER, B. (ed.) *Mahjong. Chinesische Gegenwartkunst aus der Sammlung Sigg*, p. 34.

reciprocal spirit, the opportunities for an EU-China cultural alliance”. The third topic of our cultural forum was to consider “the diverse aesthetic approaches, patterns and values in both the Chinese and European cultures today”. But I think that reflecting the history of Beauty and art in both of them, and its special problems during this long and ever changing history is necessary in order to understand the present state and its characteristic features.

Lu Sheldon in his book *China, Transnational Visuality, Global Postmodernity* characterized the whole post-Maoist art as “avant-garde”. Many years, or even decades, will probably be needed before some new more adequate term will be found for this phenomenon. The name Japonism, or Japanism is known from the history of art since Philippe Burty (1830 – 1890) wrote about “Japonisme” in 1872 in the journal *La renaissance littéraire et artistique*, ten years after the World Exhibition in London.³¹ He coined it as “the study of the art and genius of Japan”.³² Hundreds of books and articles were needed before the invaluable book by Siegfried Wichmann’s *Japonismus. Ostasien-Europa Begegnungen in der Kunst des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Hersching: Schuler Verlagsgesellschaft, appeared more than one hundred years later in 1980. The meeting of “ukiyo-e” 浮世绘 images of the fleeting world helped to change radically the art of the second half of the 19th century, mainly of the French Impressionists like Edouard Manet (1832 – 1883), Claude Monet (1840 – 1926), Edgar Degas (1834 – 1917), Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864 – 1901), Paul Gauguin (1848 – 1903), other European painters, such as Vincent van Gogh (1853 – 1890) and Anglo-American James MacNeil Whistler (1834 – 1903). I doubt that something like that will be repeated in the new meeting of contemporary Chinese and European art from the 1980s up to our days. The Chinese New Avant-garde creations, are much less original and innovative than the works of the Western Impressionists. We have seen many similar works in the socialist countries in Europe and in other parts of the world in the time of the Cold War and Iron Curtain. The Chinese paintings, mainly those concerned with Mao Zedong, may be regarded only as an object of criticism, without being axiologically valuable. I have in mind those exhibited in Prague.³³ It is also difficult to understand how it is possible that such an oil painting as Mao Zhuxi

³¹ BUDDE, H. *Japanische Farbholzschnitte und europäische Kunst: Maler und Sammler im 19. Jahrhundert*. In *Japan und Europa 1543 – 1929*. Hrsg. von Doris Croissant, Lothar Ledderose et alii, pp. 164 – 177.

³² SATO, T., WATANABE, T. “The Aesthetic Dialogue Examined. Japan and Britain 1850 – 1930.” In *Japan and Britain 1850 – 1930*. Exhibition Catalogue, p. 14.

³³ KESSNER, L., NEDOMA P. (eds.) *Tváře a těla Říše Středu. Čínské umění devadesátých let*. [Faces and Bodies of the Middle Kingdom. Chinese Art of the 1990s.] See also Kessner’s interesting study: “Faces and Body in the Middle Kingdom”, not paginated, especially the parts concerned with Chairman Mao.

qu Anyuan 毛主席去安源 Chairman Mao goes to Anyuan “has been auctioned off in an art fair for about one million Chinese yuan...”³⁴ Other works of the new Chinese pop-art were also sold for high prices or won grand prizes including Cai Guoqiang’s 蔡国强 imitation of the clay work called Shou zu yan 受阻院 The Rent Collection Courtyard at the 1999 Venice Biennial.³⁵ With the advent of a global market in the realm of art in the 1990s the imitation (even the fake) became a highly priced product. Whether these works are also invaluable pieces of art is questionable. How great is the difference distinguishing the Chinese *nouveau riches* among the artists in and outside China from Vincent van Gogh who did not sell even one of his paintings now so famous and highly estimated in the world. Contemporary Chinese Dadaism also seems problematic to me. How long it will remain on the Chinese artistic scene? José Pichoan in his *Historia del arte*, vol. 9, characterized Dada as a “meaning of negation”. In this meaning the works of the Xiamen Dadaists in 1986 – 1987 were fully justified. Are they even now? Probably yes. At least Huang Yongping may be proud of himself for participating in 40 selected group exhibitions from 2000 – 2008.³⁶ I prefer much more the sad and unhappy faces of Zhang Xiaogang reminding me of European Expressionism, faces similar to that of Edward Munch (1863 – 1944), full of hidden fear, uncertainty and hopelessness. Such faces are to be seen often in China.

Xu Bing’s works are understood and analysed differently. His best known *chef d’oeuvre* A Book from the Sky, alias Xi shi jian 析世鉴 A Mirror to Analyse World³⁷ has attracted most attention. My understanding is connected with the findings of those who worked on the project “Germany’s Impact on Modern Chinese Intellectual History”, with 120 028 books, essays and translations connected with Marx and Engels in the years 1970 – 1984, which did not need to appear in China in so great a number. I do not suppose that Xu Bing attempted with his most important work to “dismantle thousands of years of Chinese tradition in one stroke”.³⁸ It would be very unwise from him.

³⁴ SHELDON, H. Lu, op. cit., p. 142.

³⁵ See YAO, Pauline J., *Between Truth and Fiction: Notes on Fakes, Copies, and Authenticity in Contemporary Chinese Art*, pp. 4 – 5.

³⁶ Available at <http://www.gladstonegallery.com/huang.asp?id=375>; Cf. STANLEY, K. Abe “No Questions, No Answers: China and A Book from the Sky”. In *boundary 2*, 1998, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp. 169 – 192 or CHOW, R. Ed. *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory. Re-imagining a Field*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001.

³⁷ LLOYD, A. W. “Binding Together Cultures with Cords of Wit”. In *New York Times*, June 18, 2000. See also CHOY, H. Y. F. “Playing with a Language of Six Thousand Years: Xu Bing’s *A Book from the Sky*”. In *Minima sinica*, 2010, No. 1, pp. 60 – 78.

³⁸ SHELDON, H. Lu, op. cit., p. 153.

According to my view he wanted to destroy that of which he was a witness as a young boy and man. On the other hand I am critical of his Wenhua dongwu 文化动物 Cultural Animals. He could certainly find another more appropriate object for his critique of “cultural transference” than the pigs in their high season with unreadable words and *characters*.

We cannot foresee the future development of Chinese or European art in the age of globalization. I personally do not think that this last meeting of European and Chinese art will bring such great results as that around Manet, van Gogh, Gauguin, Toulouse-Lautrec and Pablo Picasso. I hope that it will be more valuable than in the age of chinoiserie, because now we may know each other better than in the 17th – mid 19th centuries.

Better knowledge of each other is very important and needed. It is necessary to produce new critics and artists understanding and trying to follow or practice the instructions of intercultural (or if you prefer of transcultural communication). They are not so many, although it is quite difficult to practice them in order to achieve a desirable aim. Intercultural learning has a short history in the US and Western Europe. As far as I know it did not begin as yet in China. Excessively optimistic eulogies of the equality between the Han and different nationalities are a cause of this shortcoming of Chinese cultural policy. Intercultural learning starts:

- 1) from *the perception* representing the process of reflection of the things or phenomena of the outer world with the help of the sense organs,
- 2) proceeds through the critical attitude to *cultural self-awareness* and *ethnocentrism*,
- 3) then the *awareness* of the axiological values of other cultures
- 4) and finally *understanding* and esteem towards them.

An essential condition of this intercultural learning and eventual understanding, successful communication, is always a *mutual exchange*, the good will on both (or many sides) to prolong, to continue on this *long and troublesome process*. Probably the best way would be to follow the “non-hegemonic discourse” of Jürgen Habermas recommended by him in *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, Boston: Beacon Press 1979.

I personally think that contemporary Chinese art needs to stress more its *Chineseness* of different kinds both highlighting it in a non-provocative manner, and/or criticizing it. In the year 1985 “wenxue xunken” 文学寻根 “searching for roots” initiated by Han Shaogong 韩少功 who is here with us, started in China.³⁹ It was an ingenious idea followed by critics⁴⁰ and writers. It is a pity that it did not last long.

³⁹ HAN SHAO GONG. “Wenxuede ‘gen’ 文学的 ‘根’” [“Literary ‘Roots’”]. In *Zuojia* 作家 *Writers*, pp. 2 – 5.

More time and energy should be devoted to spreading the knowledge of Chinese art, traditional, modern and contemporary in the Western countries, and of Western art in China. Probably not so much time and energy should be devoted to new exhibitions in the Western European Cities, because less has been exhibited in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe.

Small conferences should be devoted to different aspects of contemporary art and literature sponsored by government and private institutions. Maybe the financial help of the Hanban 汉办 Chinese Language Council International may be asked for it. Confucius Institutes in the whole Europe may become the places which may help to realize the ideals proposed in the “Draft Project Plan for a China-Europe Cultural Summit” and also help to lay “solid foundations for a more significant communication and exchanges in the field of humanity between China and Europe”.

More books especially illuminating different aspects of contemporary art should be first written and then published. Let us say about Beauty. In Umberto Eco and Girolamo de Michele *Bellezza. Storia di un'idea dell'Occidente* there is not one picture of a Chinese, which we can understand, but in Robert Cumming's *Great Artists Explained*, London: Dorling Kindersley Limited 1998, there is not one Chinese among the 50 European painters. More has to be done through intercultural teaching and learning. Chinese and Oriental art should be taught, at least, to some extent in the secondary schools. Small books and treatises should be written and published, for instance, the collection *Proches Lointains* published by the Shanghai Wenyi chubanshe and Desclée de Brouver, Paris. More English versions would be welcome.

As the only European Sinologist invited to this conference, I claim that more Sinologists should participate and more time and probably organizational skills should be devoted to them. Even the best Transcultural scholars could not understand all the specificities of the Chinese mind and its implementation in different spheres of its culture.

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⁴⁰ HUANG JICHI. “Zhongguo dangdai wenxue de wenhua ‘xungen’ taolun shupin” 中国当代文学的文化 ‘寻根’ 讨论述评 [“A Review of the Discussion on ‘Root Seeking’ Culture in Contemporary Chinese Literature.”] In *Wenxue chuantong yu xiandai* 文学传统与现代 *Literary Tradition and Modern Times*, pp. 173 – 178.

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