

# CHINA & REVOLUTION

## 中国与革命:

当代艺术中的历史、戏仿和记忆  
HISTORY, PARODY & MEMORY  
IN CONTEMPORARY ART



### PART A: ATTENDANCE

Duration of Exhibition:	21 January-19 March 2011
Opening date:	Thursday 3 February 2011
Total days open:	50 days
<hr/> Total Attendance	<hr/> 11109
Average attendance per day	231
This total includes Attendance to opening	228

### Attendance by schools/education groups

Arlia College	20
Box Hill High	40
Drouin Secondary College	30
Footscray City College	24
Francis Xavier Primary School	97
Glen Eira Language School	14
Kardinia International College	45
Kew High School	13
King James College	26
LaValla Catholic School	18
Lilydale Heights Secondary College	25
Melbourne City School	17
Melbourne Girls Grammar School	16
Moonee Ponds Primary School	116
NMIT BA Illustration	20
NMIT Graphic Design	24
Our Lady of Mercy	34
Northcote High School	8
Northern Bay College , Geelong	18

Pascoe Vale Secondary College	23
Penola Catholic College	27
RMIT Architecture	12
RMIT Foundation Studies (Art, Design & Architecture)	73
RMIT LOTE	9
RMIT Media & Communication	75
RMIT TAFE Fashion Design	17
RMIT V.C.E program	33
RMIT Visual Literacy	9
Rossbourne School	11
Sacred Heart College, Kyneton	22
Sacred Heart Primary School	71
St Albans Secondary School	20
St. James College, East Bentleigh	45
School of Art RMIT	11
University High School	19
Victorian College of the Arts Secondary College	18
Wesley Secondary College	24
Western Autistic School	22
Williamstown High	20

## PART B: PUBLIC PROGRAMS AND ASSOCIATED EVENTS

Exhibition Opening Thursday 3 February 6-8pm RMIT Gallery  
Attendance 228

**Speakers:** Suzanne Davies, Director, RMIT Gallery  
Professor Stephanie Hemelryk Donald, RMIT University  
Chen Bao Quan singing "Standing Guard for Our Great Motherland"



**Public Program:** The fate of a painting and artists in the Cultural Revolution

Friday 21 January 12-1pm RMIT Gallery

Attendance

33

Chinese- Australian Painter Shen Jiawei in conversation with guest curator Professor Stephanie Hemelryk Donald. Chen Bao Quan singing "Standing Guard for Our Great Motherland".



**Public Program:** Missing Histories and Childhood in the Cultural Revolution

Thursday 3 March 12-1 pm RMIT Gallery

Attendance

20

Discussion with Professor Stephanie Hemelryk Donald, Curator of the exhibition, and Dean of the School of Media and Communication at RMIT University.



**PART C: PUBLICITY**

**Print Media Responses**

The Saturday Age, *Galleries*, 'China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in Contemporary Art', 5 February 2011.

The Age (Melbourne) Magazine, '8 Art Shows: China and Revolution', Penny Webb, p. 86.

The Age, *In the Galleries*, 'China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in Contemporary Art', 29 January 2011.

**Electronic Media Response**

'Chinese New Year' ABC 774 Drive, Thursday, 3 February, Professor Stephanie Donald, School of Media and Communication RMIT University.

SBS Radio, interview with Jiawei Shen at 11.30am on Thursday 20th of January.

### **Print Media Advertising**

Gallery Magazine, 'China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in Contemporary Art', February Edition, p 32.

Herald Sun, *Entertainment*, 'China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in Contemporary Art', 27 January 2011, p 56.

Herald Sun, *Exhibitions*, 'China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in Contemporary Art', 3, 5, 10, 19, 26 February 2011.

Trouble Magazine March 2011, 'March Salon,' p10.

### **Online Advertising**

Art Almanac, 'RMIT gallery', <http://www.art-almanac.com.au/index.php?c=mel#r>, (Accessed 24 Jan 2011)

Art Guide, 'China and Revolution', <http://www.artguide.com.au/exhibition/china-and-revolution/>, (Accessed 11 Jan 2011)

Arts hub, 'China and Revolution', <http://www.artshub.com.au/au/event/melbourne/exhibitions/china-and-revolution-119368>, (Accessed 10 Jan 2011)

Art What's On, 'China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in Contemporary Art', <http://www.artwhatson.com.au/rmitgallery/china-and-revolution-history-parody-and-memory-in-contemporary>, (accessed 24 Jan 2011)

Museum Gallery Services, 'China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in Contemporary Art', [http://www.magsq.com.au/02\\_cal/details.asp?ID=986&varPeriod=1](http://www.magsq.com.au/02_cal/details.asp?ID=986&varPeriod=1), (Accessed 21 Jan 2011)

My247, 'China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory', <http://my247.com.au/melbourne/RMIT-Gallery/whats-on/China-and-Revolution-History-Parody-and-Memory-i.205470>, (Accessed 17 Jan 2011)

NAVA, 'China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in Contemporary Art', <http://www.visualarts.net.au/>

Only Melbourne, 'China and Revolution', [http://www.onlymelbourne.com.au/melbourne\\_details.php?id=28659](http://www.onlymelbourne.com.au/melbourne_details.php?id=28659), (Accessed 11 Jan 2011)

RMIT University Media and Communication, 'China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in Contemporary Art' <http://rmit.org.au/browse/Our%20Organisation%2FDesign%20and%20Social%20Context%2FSchools%20and%20groups%2FMedia%20and%20Communication%2FNews%2FEvents%2Fby%20title%2F;ID=f5x47n9sxfsa;STATUS=A> (Accessed 4/02/2011)

RMIT Gallery, 'China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in the Contemporary Art', <http://www.rmit.edu.au/rmitgallery>, (Accessed 11 Jan 2011)

Saatchi Gallery, 'Current Exhibitions', [http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/dealers\\_galleries/Info All/current\\_exhibitions/dg\\_id/15863](http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/dealers_galleries/Info All/current_exhibitions/dg_id/15863), (Accessed 14 Jan 2011)

Twitter, 'Our new exhibitions China and Revolution, Japan: Kingdom of Characters & Revolutionising anime all open Feb 3, 6-8pm. Don't miss out!', <http://twitter.com/RMITGallery/status/25774455942815744>, (Accessed 17 Jan 2011)

White Hat, 'China and Revolution', <http://www.whitehat.com.au/DatesM/01Jan/24.asp>, (Accessed 11 Jan 2011)

### **Online Response**

Beat Magazine, 'RMIT reveals summer exhibitions', <http://www.beat.com.au/arts/2011/01/12/rmit-gallery-summer-exhibitions/arts-astro-boy-exhibition-hello-kitty-mamoru-oshii-news-pokemon-production-ig-pu>, (Accessed 14 Jan 2011)

China and revolution E-Invite, <http://www.stephaniedonald.info/files/ChinaInviteRMIT.pdf>, (Accessed 11 Jan 2011)

HighBeam Research, 'Revolutionary Chinese Art comes to RMIT Gallery', <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P3-2219173831.html>, (Accessed 11 Jan 2011)

Mutual Art, 'China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in Contemporary Art', <http://www.mutualart.com/Events/Exhibitions/China-and-Revolution--History--Parody-an/2D6966DA5BA00939>, (Accessed 10 Jan 2011)

Philthosophy, 'Archive for February', Mentions opening of China and Revolution, <http://www.philthosophy.com/2011/01/>, (Accessed 14 Jan 2011)

Prof Stephanie H Donald Webpage, <http://www.stephaniedonald.info/index.php?s=events>, (Accessed 10 Jan 2011)

RMIT FriendFeed, 'Shen Jiawei, a monumental painter in China during the Cultural Revolution at RMIT Gallery this Fri 12-1 All welcome', <http://friendfeed.com/rmit>, (Accessed 21 January 2011)

RMIT Newsroom, 'Chinese artists to discuss nation's revolutionary art', <http://www.rmit.edu.au/print;ID=s6tnrfuono64>, (Accessed 11 January 2011)

RMIT University School News, 'Symposium-China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in Contemporary Art', <http://mams.rmit.edu.au/2jc3lvfa7v44.pdf>, (Accessed 11 January 2011)

Stonnington Leader, 'Here's to a happy year of the rabbit', <http://stonnington-leader.whereilive.com.au/> (Accessed 11 January 2011)

Studies of Asia, 'China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in Contemporary Art' <http://studiesofasia.wikispaces.com/What's+new%3F%3F> (13 January 2011)

Universities Website, 'Revolutionary Chinese Art comes to RMIT Gallery, Link to RMIT Newsroom, <http://academics.ws/newspiece-150427.html>, (Accessed 14 Jan 2011)

Wotnews, 'Revolutionary Chinese Art comes to RMIT Gallery', [http://wotnews.com.au/provider/rmit\\_university/711/](http://wotnews.com.au/provider/rmit_university/711/), (Accessed 11 Jan 2011)

## **Media Release 22 December 2010 Revolutionary Chinese Art comes to RMIT Gallery**

The relationship between the political poster art of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and its impact on contemporary Chinese art will be explored in an upcoming exhibition at RMIT Gallery.

China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in Contemporary Art exhibition at RMIT Gallery from 21 January to 19 March 2011 will feature original posters from the University of Westminster's extensive collection and works from collaborating artists Liu Dahong, Shen Jiawei, Li Gongming and Xu Weixin.

The exhibition re-evaluates the Cultural Revolution through "propaganda" poster art produced in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as through oral histories collected by the curators in 2008-2009.

China and Revolution is co-curated by Professor Stephanie Hemelryk Donald, Dean of the School of Media and Communication at RMIT University, and Professor Harriet Evans, Coordinator of Asian Studies Research at the University of Westminster.

The exhibition aims to open dialogue between the past and present with the work from artists who experienced the revolution first-hand, as well as through the display of original political posters carrying political and social messages to the Chinese masses.

Professor Donald has commented that the refusal to give more than a cursory glance backwards at the years of the Cultural Revolution is also a refusal to allow an entire generation to remember its childhood in any detail, and to work openly from those memories in configuring their adult lives.

“The posters here speak to codes of revolutionary romanticism, rural lyricism and hyperbolic movements for change. In combination, these posters give a sense of the energy, confusions, clarities and pressures of the time,” said Professor Donald

RMIT Gallery Director Suzanne Davies said visitors would be able to immerse themselves in vibrant audio and visual reminders of the Cultural Revolution.

“Liu Dahong’s video Radio Exercises satirises the early morning exercise regimes broadcast by megaphone over the radio in his youth, and we anticipate a variety of responses from audiences depending on their age and background,” Ms Davies said.

Sydney-based, self-taught artist Shen Jiawei, whose youthful achievements as a monumental painter in China in the mid-1970s were well known, will speak with Professor Donald at RMIT Gallery on Friday, 21 January, about the fate of a particular painting, and the life stories of artists in the Cultural Revolution.



## **China and Revolution opens with a flourish**

China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in Contemporary Art officially opened at RMIT Gallery on 3 February. It was ushered in with a surprise rendition of a song from the Cultural Revolution.

Singer Chen Bao Quan celebrated the start of Chinese New Year by bursting into song, in honour of his friend, Sydney-based Chinese artist Shen Jiawei, who had flown down for the opening.

Coincidentally, the two men – who met in Melbourne in the late 1990s - discovered that in 1974, when Mr Chen took his entrance exam for Xiamen Normal College singing “Standing Guard for Our Great Motherland”, Shen Jiawei was painting his famous masterpiece, also titled “Standing Guard for Our Great Motherland”.

Mr Shen’s large work, reproduced in large quantities as posters during the Cultural Revolution, is one of the main works in the exhibition. It has become an embodiment of the narrative of the Cultural Revolution – at one time highly regarded and then consigned to a rubbish dump after the end of the tumultuous period known as the “10 years of chaos”.

The exhibition China and Revolution explores the relationship between poster art of the 1960s and 1970s, specifically the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, and contemporary artists whose work engages a conscious dialogue with that period. It is on at RMIT Gallery until 19 March.

The exhibition arises from research undertaken through an Australian Research Council Discovery project. According co-curator Professor Stephanie Hemelryk Donald, Dean of the School of Media and

Communication at RMIT University, the motivation for the research was to locate the past in the present and to re-evaluate the way in which memories are fashioned and preserved through aesthetic re-use.

To that end, Professor Donald and Professor Harriet Evans, Coordinator of Asian Studies Research at the University of Westminster, worked closely with the artists involved in the exhibition – including Shen Jiawei – whose professional lives were shaped by the politics of the 1960s.

In opening the exhibition, Professor Donald spoke about how for many Chinese individuals now aged over 40, the memory of those years and the knowledge of the effects that they had on their childhoods, adult relationships and career ambitions, are still acutely painful.

“This period is often dismissed as “10 years of chaos”. However, for many of those people, now aged over 40, the memory of those years and the knowledge of the effects that they had on their childhoods, adult relationships and career ambitions are still acutely painful,” Professor Donald said.

RMIT Gallery director Suzanne Davies said that it was important for the gallery to show the results of exhaustive research into poster art of the Cultural Revolution, as well as showcasing contemporary artists whose work engages a conscious dialogue with that period.

“On opening night, people who had lived through the Cultural Revolution were mesmerised with the works because it brought the past alive to them. These posters literally frame politicised narratives of China’s recent history,” Ms Davies said.

Professor Donald will give a talk at RMIT Gallery on Thursday 3 March from 12-1 pm which examines memory and childhood during the Cultural Revolution.

“This is a period of Chinese history that involved a series of extraordinary political events, which destroyed lives, stopped careers, defined language and aesthetics,” Professor Donald said.

“The refusal to give more than a cursory glance backwards at those years is a refusal to allow an entire generation to remember its childhood.”

Missing histories and childhood in the Cultural Revolution

Speaker: Professor Stephanie Hemelryk Donald,

Curator of the exhibition, and Dean of the School of Media and Communication

12-1 pm Thursday 3 March

## **FIVE MINUTES WITH SHEN JIAWEI**

Interview by RMIT Gallery: for media use – please feel free to reproduce any part of this interview.

When Chinese Australian artist Shen Jiawei started painting, art schools were closed during the period of the Cultural Revolution, so he was largely self-taught. Today he is regarded as an artist whose work is known for its academic and literary qualities.

Shen Jiawei’s monumental work ‘Standing Guard for Our Great Motherland’ (1975) appears in the RMIT Gallery exhibition China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in Contemporary Art, from 21 January – 19 March 2011.



**Question:**

When you started out on your journey as an artist, how did you master things like technique, and composition? Were you able to access traditional Chinese art for ideas and inspiration?

**Answer**

I started out to learn to be an artist when I was a high school student, but seriously to be an artist since 1968. At that time my generation's artists jumped over all training courses which should have passed for the beginners in normal time, and straight to create large compositions on canvases. As largely self-taught artist, my way was to copy masterpieces' prints which were reproduced in foreign magazines.

Most of these pictures were thought "poisonous" by authorities, but we could learn a lot by looking at elder artists' private collections, if they trusted us. From that I learnt a lot, especially composition. On the technique level, I kept drawing from life in my sketch books every day in those years, and painting portrait studies from life often. My friends would sit for me as volunteer models. We were needed by the political movement to do a lot of propaganda works, from that practice I learnt to be a real artist, and of course, an artist servicing political power.

During all of 1960s and 1970s I didn't touch traditional Chinese art. I studied Chinese traditional art history in mid 1980s and fell in love with it. In my later works I got a lot of ideas and inspirations from Chinese ancient masterpieces; you can see it from my later works such as *Wise Men From the East* (2001), *1972 Imperial Palanquin* (2002).

**Question:**

Did you have other artists to work with during this period, or were you isolated? Was it possible to exchange ideas and debate the nature of art, for instance?

**Answer**

I always worked together with a group of young artists in a "mate relationship" during later 1960s at my home town or in earlier 1970s in Northeast China. We were all art lovers and beginners. We helped and taught each other. From 1970 to 1976 I worked as a farmer-soldier in a huge military organization which was so called "Heilongjiang Production and Construction Corps of PLA". It was formed by over 60 largest farms with a half million ex-high school students worked there with elder ex-PLA soldiers. From these students, about 30 or more talent art beginners were chosen and called to join an artist group called "Art Creation Studying Class", which opened in winter season every year in the headquarters of the Corps in a middle scale city Jiamus locating on up northeast near Russian border.

At that level as beginners, we were all interested in the painting skill and techniques, not the art theory, and the tough ideology system forbade us to debate the nature of art. However we exchanged what we had learned from studies of the techniques, and even much more; we stole a lot of forbidden foreign literary books from permanent closed libraries, read and discussed about what we had learned from these books.

Some of us, including myself, established our rebellious thinking against Maoism through this reading and discussing, but we only debated it in a very close small group and never turned it to real acts, until Mao's death. This preparation could explain why since 1978 we had already started to create many art works which were against Maoism and the "Cultural Revolution".

**Question:**

You began work as an artist within an authoritarian regime, in a country that privileged manual labour. How was your position as an artist viewed within this culture?

**Answer**

When I started to be an artist in the Corps since 1970, my position was not only an artist. I belonged to a group called "the amateur artists of workers, peasants and soldiers". It meant we belonged to the labour working class, not intelligentsia as the professional artists.

But at the same time I also belonged to another group: we were ex-Red Guards and high school students coming from cities, so we were "Petty Bourgeoisies". Mao said that we needed to receive "re-education" from the workers, peasants and soldiers. On this level, we were still did not belong to the working class.

You used the word "authoritarian regime" for Mao's time. During the "Cultural Revolution", Mao's China was a "totalitarian regime", with Mao the only dictator, not the CCP. Mao also played the role of spiritual teacher, the cult leader as the god. Mao punished huge number the intelligentsia and forced them to be labour slaves for their whole lives. But that does not mean that in Mao's China authority "privileged manual labour"; the "privileges"

only existing on papers. Mao had never looked after peasants' lives. Peasants were second citizens and the first victims of Mao's economic catastrophe. Today we know there had more than 40 million peasants hungered to death from 1959 to 1961, Mao, not the weather, made this great famine.

When I was thirsty for knowledge as a teenage and needed studying in the art college, Mao closed all of libraries and universities in China since 1965 and 1966. I wasted about ten years for normal studies, as same as my generation in China. Mao used the state force to send my generation to countryside to do labour work.

But Mao's "re-education" policy had a little positive side for me. I had lived and worked together with elder working class people for many years and had become a member of them, and this let me to understand about Mao's evil and China's real situation in that years.

During those years I thought of myself as a revolutionary at first, and an artist at second. Even today, I think myself as a thinker at first and as an artist at second. The Culture Revolution made me to be a political history painter in today.

Question:

The creation of art was strongly regulated by the CCP during the GPCR. Can you talk about some of these restrictions, and why they were demanded, and how, as an artist, you were able to work within this framework?

**Answer**

With many minor restrictions, the main principle which was clearly explained in Mao's famous booklet *The Speeches in Art Forum in Yan-an in 1942*, it was: "Arts obey the proletarian politics, arts service for workers, peasants and soldiers". Before 1964, the Party asked artists using the way of "Socialist realism", which come from Stalin's Soviet Russia.

Since Mao wanted to be the Big-Brother of the world revolution, he changed this calling. Via his wife Jiang Qing, it became "Revolutionary realism combines revolutionary romanticism". What different between these two styles? For Stalin's one, it only asked on the political contain of the art works had to be following Party's line, but on the technique level, artists could keep using the traditional realist skill system, which start from the Renaissance, via Rembrandt, Caravaggio, Velazquez, Colbert, until Ilya Repin (including impressionist skills but not modernist). But Mao's one refused all of these traditions, the fashion taste could use these three words to describe: "Red, Glossy, Bright". This was a hiding restriction, and final at one day it was used to against my work.

As a Russian art masters' fan, I followed the principle of "learn from the nature", to try caught the complex and beautiful color of morning lights in my work. As a self-believing revolutionary artist, I thought I could find the cross point between my personal interesting subject and the Party's politics willing. The result was *Standing Guard for Our Great Motherland* (1974). I painted the two soldiers' faces as real life, with the natural color of winter morning sunshine. This work was selected to the National Art Exhibition in Beijing.

But the chief curator, who was Mao's relative, thought that two faces were not strong enough, and ordered her trusted artist to change them, made them to be bigger, redder, and looked more angry. Today we can see the changed faces from the poster. One copy of this poster is shown in the RMIT Gallery now.

Question

In the catalogue for the exhibition *China and Revolution*, you write; "When a thing reaches its extreme, it reverses its course. Extremeness led to the extinction of the Chinese propaganda art". What has been the continuing influence of propaganda art on you as an artist who produced such works?

**Answer**

In that article I discussed the history of Chinese propaganda poster during Mao's time. For myself I was not a poster artist, although I did a few commissions of that, and my oil painting *Standing Guard* was published as poster. If asking me what has been the continuing influence of propaganda art on me, my answer is, as I said: "the Cultural Revolution made me to be a political history painter today".

During Mao's time, Mao was the only one mind, the Party was the teacher, and our artists were tool, were brushes only. In that time I privately debate the politics, and dreamed that one day I'll do my history painting which would be big different with the Cultural Revolution model. Since 1980s most Chinese artists had never touched political subject any more when they had free to paint any other subjects, but I had never. Of cause now as a freelance artist I have my own mind, and I refuse to be a teacher in my works. I try to discuss what the truth of history is with my viewers. About continuing influence, I think there is, but on an opposite direction.

Question:

You studied at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing from 1982 to 1984. How did this change the way you painted, or thought about your art work?

**Answer**

The two years studies in the CAFA from 1982 to 1984, didn't change my approach too much. Of course it was important for me as a professional artist, I got time and opportunities to research painting techniques in a top art college with a group of top artists. But what changed me more is, in the whole 1980s and until today, that I've kept reading widely, on which I'd built my career as a political artist.

Question:

When you moved to Australia in 1989, you supported yourself financially for the first two years by drawing portrait sketches for tourists at Darling Harbour, Sydney. How did this impact on your artwork, and your development as a portrait artist?

**Answer**

From 1989 to 1991, I tried hard to survive as an artist when I came to Australia with no money in my pocket. I had to draw portrait sketches for tourists. But I didn't waste these years as an artist. Because I made a serious decision, I asked myself to carefully draw each portrait just like study as an art student in college. Through this kind of tough training, I'd become a real professional portraitist. For instance, after 15 years, when Princess Mary sat for me for a limited short time, there was only 1 hour left for me to draw a head study in pestle and charcoal pencil, but I had done it so well. This sketch is now in the collection of the Danish court.

Question:

One of your works from this era, 'Standing Guard for Our Great Motherland' (1975) is in the China and Revolution exhibition at RMIT Gallery. It also appeared in the China: 5000 Years exhibition in 1998 at the Guggenheim Museum in both New York and Bilbao. How do you see this work today?

**Answer**

When this work was shown in the Asia Society Museum in New York in September 2008, in an interview with Emily Park, editor of The Wall Street Journal, I faced a same question from her. My answer was: "I am proud of it." My answer came from subconsciousness, which even surprised myself. Afterwards I explained why I am proud of it in an article on a newspaper. Because it proved, I as a single ordinary person without any powerful background, facing the bad time, struggling with an awful fate, finally got an achievement. When I painted this painting at 26, I didn't get any formal art training, but even we look at it today, it is still a nice painting with good and professional artistic qualities.

Today we discuss what ART exists in the propaganda works in Mao's time. My opinion is, most propaganda works are not art, but some art works could be propaganda.

This painting of mine is an art work but not a propaganda. It depends on whether the work came from deep heart of the artist or not. The Party wanted me to be a tool only, but I tried to be a human at first, while being a communist fighter. The situation was similarly like during the middle age, although they both believed a same god, but Martin Luther challenged the Rome church.

My fellow artist Chen Danqing (陈丹青) answered the similar question and said: "It had no difference to the Renaissance artists: they painted Jesus in their time, and we painted Chairman Mao during Cultural Revolution time." We may argue that but Mao was a cult leader, couldn't compare with Jesus. But for artists who lived in their own times, as the believers, learned the religion feeling through their personal experience, were similar. Of course now we had already awakened from that cult of Mao, it's over and I celebrate it.

Question:

Some of your well known portraits include former Melbourne Lord Mayor John So in a possum skin cloak, Crown Princess Mary of Denmark, and the portrait of John Howard, the former Prime Minister of Australia. When you paint people who are destined to be important historically, what is the legacy of the monumental works you did for the Cultural Revolution?

**Answer**

During the Cultural Revolution I painted the "monumental works" such as Standing Guard that all "look up" the revolutionary heroes. They were heroic, taller than normal people. However, I did far more not enough to compare with the fashion at that time, so that the soldiers' faces were changed by order.

But at the same time I privately painted a lot of portrait studies of my fellow colleagues in a naturalist qualities. My portraitist career started from these studies, which were against the ideology fashion of those years. This was the real legacy of my early life left today.

However, today I am doing a total different job when I was painting official portrait for the distinguished Australians. During Mao's time in China, nothing existed about this kind west traditional portraiture. If compare my works between in these two times, maybe only can say, that today when I painting these portraits, I didn't "look up" and try to make them look like "heroic".

I fully understand they were important historic figures, and many years after my works will become a part of our nation's history myth, but when they were sitting in front of me, I saw them as normal human being, as same as myself. I tried to record their real true images on my canvas. On the portraiture area, I think myself as a naturalist, with a little symbolism.

For interviews contact RMIT Gallery.

## PART D: AUDIENCE RESPONSE

- Very inspiring artwork. Now more able to understand the culture of Chinese people.
- Beautiful. Hard to see this in Australia, this was a real treat. Amazing art here.
- Really interesting, worthwhile time spent!
- Fantastic! For me perhaps, the best exhibition I have experienced here.
- Helps our young Chinese students to understand and appreciate a significant period in their history.
- It was an amazing exhibition! Awe inspiring and very informative. What a wonderful journey the artist has taken. My students were very happy to hear an artist talk of his experience and life working and living in China during Mao's time. The singing man also amazing! –Stella Craig, art teacher, Killester College.
- Very intriguing! Would like to see more contemporary Chinese art.
- Great tenor doing the song. (opening night) Very interesting background to the period of propaganda.
- Amazing art!
- Very good exhibition, well done!
- Too much to take in 'one' look. Appreciated the depth and art work. Also took me back to my studies.
- Excellent, more please.
- Very interesting!
- So interesting! Thank you!
- Interesting, especially as I have been to China.
- Enjoyable and interesting look at the genre!
- Thank you, we loved it!
- Hard to believe this was all such a short time ago.
- Interesting reference. Good show
- It's awesome exhibition. It brings back my childhood memory...the happiness one. A million thanks go to you.
- Interesting background information on artists and times
- The talk on the background and displays showed what the era was like
- A deeper understanding into culture and language

**PART E: EXHIBITION MATERIALS**

List of works

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**Liu Dahong**

*Good Friends* 2008  
oil on canvas 40 x 50 cm  
Shanghai, Courtesy of Stephanie Hemelryk Donald

*Fairytales of the Twelfth Month* 2007  
(based on 1987 oil painting)  
Print 104.5 x 74.5cm, Shanghai

*The Awakening of Insects* 2007  
(based on 1988 oil painting)  
Print 101 x 74cm, Shanghai

*Four Seasons* 2006  
(based on a 1991 oil painting)  
Four prints 56 x 90cm each  
Shanghai, Courtesy Liu Dahong

**Xu Weixin**

Shui Tianguang from Chinese Historical Figures  
1966 -1976 2006 - 2010  
Oil on canvas 200 x 250cm  
Beijing, Courtesy Xu Weixin

*Chinese Historical Figures* 1966 - 1976, 2010  
(reproduction based on 2006-2007 oil paintings  
each 100 x 250cm) Print 65 x 40.5 cm Beijing

*Untitled* 2006-2009  
Video documentary 9.07 mins, Beijing

**Shen Jiawei**

*Standing guard for our Great Motherland* 1975  
Poster 53 x 77cm  
China, Courtesy of Shen Jiawei

*Standing guard for our Great Motherland* 1974  
Photo print on canvas 140 x 167cm  
China, Courtesy of Shen Jiawei

**Stephanie Hemelryk Donald and Leicia Petersen**

*I cannot escape...* 2010  
Video documentary 6.46mins Shanghai  
Courtesy of Stephanie Hemelryk Donald

**Li Gongming, Liu Jianzhao**

*Movement of New Propaganda Posters in China* 2010  
video documentary 10 mins  
Guangzhou, Courtesy Li Gongming

**Liu Dahong, Xia Guofu**

*Physical Exercise on Public Announcement System* -

*Puppet Chapter* 2005  
Video animation 4.04 minutes  
Shanghai, Courtesy Liu Dahong

*Sixteen National Congresses of the Communist Party of China* 2008  
Video animation 4.35 mins  
Shanghai, Courtesy Liu Dahong

**Anonymous**

*Aerial drawing of Dazhai and surroundings* undated  
China

**Hanxiang**

*Celebrating a good harvest* 1972  
Poster 77.5 x 53cm, Hebei

*Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters of Shanghai Workers Down with Soviet revisionists*  
1967, Poster 53 x 77.5cm, Shanghai

**Jilin Lu Yi Revolutionary Rebel Army**

*Learn from the workers, peasants and soldiers* 1967  
Poster 53 x 77cm, Jilin

**Anonymous**

*Hold high the revolutionary banner of proletarian criticism* 1967, Poster 54 x 79.5, Shenyang

*Revolutionary Rebel Headquarters of Shanghai Publishing System*  
*Get rid of selfishness and develop public spirit* 1967  
Poster 53 x 77.5cm, Shanghai

**Dai Ze**

*The great victory of Langfang* 1975  
Poster 53 x 77.5cm, Shanghai

**Sun Xuecheng**

*I accompany granny on her way to night school* 1973  
Poster 53 x 77cm, Tianjin

**Song Wenzhi**

*Daqing flowers on the banks of the Yangzi River* 1975  
Poster 77 x 54cm, Jiangsu

**Jinggangshan Community Beijing Film Academy**

*Our literature and art is all for the masses (White haired girl)* 1967, Poster 66 x 55cm, Beijing

Courtesy of Harriet Evans, collection of University of Westminster

## Exhibition Catalogue

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*China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in Contemporary Art*  
RMIT Gallery, University Publishing Service, the University of Sydney, July 2010

## Exhibition Photographs

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Exhibition Report: China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in Contemporary Art  
21 January - 19 March 2011

