ARTISTS UNDER REFORM: AN ANALYSIS OF PROFESSIONAL CHINESE GUOHUA PAINTERS’ RELATIONS TO THE PARTY-STATE IN THE POST-MAO ERA

by

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Abstract

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Yao-Hsing Kao, Doctor of Philosophy,
Department of Political Science, University of Toronto, 2010

This thesis is purposefully limited to examining the status of China’s professional guohua (Chinese national painting) painters and their relation to the Party-State. It tackles the above subject by studying the contents of important official documents issued by the party-state, by retelling the interactions between professional guohua painters and the party-state in several crucial social-political contexts, and by analysing the experiences, opinions, observations and critiques of four professional guohua painters. The time span of this study extends from 1949 to the late 1990s, while acknowledging the year of 1978, when China officially launched its reform program, as a critical dividing juncture for comparative reasons.

This thesis finds that a new favorable partnership was forged between the party-state and the professional guohua painters in the reform era. This was due to the impact of China’s political culture, changes in the ideology and policies of the ruling elite, the commercialization of art, and an emerging need to preserve guohua that is more instrumental to promote China’s cultural heritage and national soft power. It argues that the sustainability of such a partnership has been reinforced through a conscious differentiation between categories of art -- elite and non-elite, official and non-official, high and popular, public and non-public -- by Chinese cultural authorities as well as the artists themselves.
This thesis further asserts that the significantly improved economic conditions and the social status that professional guohua painters enjoyed in the 1980s and 1990s did not reflect on their cultural and political autonomy. Most of them consciously chose to be part of the institutional establishments under the party-state and showed limited aspiration in the quest for cultural and political autonomy. The “organized dependence” of professional guohua painters prior to the reform era was replaced by “conformity” of these artists towards the party-state.

Finally it suggests that, although China’s changing political environment will eventually give way to economics and the scale of ideological movements and cultural control will continue to decline, many professional guohua painters are likely to stay within the ideological and aesthetic boundaries set by the party-state and to be part of official arts agencies and institutions.
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Last but not least, my deepest gratitude goes to my wife Ann Chao for her unflagging love… and to God, who makes all things possible.
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<th>Full Name</th>
<th>Chinese Equivalent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BFAA</td>
<td>Beijing Female Artists Association</td>
<td>北京女美術家協會</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLPRA</td>
<td>Beijing Landscape Painting Research Association</td>
<td>北京山水畫研究會</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAA</td>
<td>Chinese Artists Association</td>
<td>中國美協</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAA</td>
<td>China Academy of Art</td>
<td>中國美術學院</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAAC</td>
<td>Central Academy of Arts and Crafts</td>
<td>中央工藝美術學院 (Academy of Arts &amp; Design, Qinghua Univ. since 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAFA</td>
<td>Central Academy of Fine Arts</td>
<td>中央美院</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCP</td>
<td>Chinese Communist Party</td>
<td>中國共產黨</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFLAC</td>
<td>China Federation of Literary and Art Circles</td>
<td>中國文聯</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPRI</td>
<td>Chinese Painting Research Institute</td>
<td>中國畫研究院</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDUCG</td>
<td>Municipalities Directly Under Central Government</td>
<td>中央直轄市</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFAG</td>
<td>National Fine Art Gallery</td>
<td>中國美術館</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMCH</td>
<td>National Museum of Chinese History</td>
<td>中國歷史博物館</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLA</td>
<td>People’s Liberation Army</td>
<td>人民解放軍</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
<td>中華人民共和國</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROC</td>
<td>Republic Of China</td>
<td>中華民國</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMB</td>
<td>Ren Min Bi (People’s Dollar)</td>
<td>人民幣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
<td>聯合國教科文組織</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</td>
<td>蘇維埃聯邦社會主義共和國</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZAFA</td>
<td>Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts</td>
<td>浙江美院 (China Academy of Art since 1993)</td>
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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

Since the extraordinarily successful economic reforms launched in 1978 China has in 30 years transformed from what some called a “poor backward Third World country” to the new engine of the world economy. To China’s intellectuals under reform, the dramatic social and cultural changes that were mainly attributed to the rapid economic growth seem to be two-fold. On the one hand, it is obvious that the development of a market economy has offered intellectuals in China opportunities to improve their economic status. On the other hand, some researchers have found that, without real expressive freedom in pursuing creative work and being cut off from state benefits, many intellectuals are full of anxiety and uncertainty and share wide-spread discontent. In sum, current studies affirm that the introduction of market mechanisms into the Chinese intellectual sphere has changed the patterns of interaction between intellectuals and the state. They generally point to an improved economic status for intellectuals, a weakening of their ties to the state, and their growing role in civil society (Brym, 1987; Hao, 2003).

While research into the relations between intellectuals and the state in contemporary China continues to thrive, similar studies of Chinese artists and their relations with the state are only beginning to receive attention. Given that such studies are still in short supply, and the nature of this relationship in the PRC is still open to debate, it is helpful to turn to the case of post-communist countries for comparison.

According to George Muskens (1992), the dominance of a planned economy and party-state control over the cultural sectors formally ended with the fall of former communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. The principles guiding the production and distribution of goods and services from cultural sectors in those

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1 For example, for a discussion on “the critical intellectuals”, see Z. Hao: Intellectuals at a Crossroads (New York: State University of New York Press: 2003), pp.119-204.
countries abruptly changed from “central planning” to “free market” almost overnight. Muskens further studied changes in the cultural sectors in Hungary and Poland, and the ways in which artists cope with them. He describes the transformation that took place in those countries as “a focused micro-cosmos of economic reconstruction, political and civic reform as well as social and psychological adaptation”. He also finds that neither country provided job security for their artists, or solved the inherent social question of artistic production and distribution. Therefore, their legitimacy was seriously impaired.

In their study, Goban-Klas and Kwasniewicz (1992) observe that artistic freedom was gained at a significant cost in Eastern Europe. They assert that in a market economy it is ultimately the audience that determines the status of art and artists. As the economic crisis limited the buying power of traditional cultural consumers, their level of participation in culture decreased. Finally, they suggest that the adaptation process of artists to the market economy will “bring about far-reaching qualitative changes in the artists’ self-image as members of the intelligentsia with regard to both their social status and social roles”.

In the case of China, as the transition from a closed state-planned economy to an entrepreneurial, market-oriented economy continues, prestigious and stable jobs provided by the state for artists are less attainable. However, matched by China’s amazingly consistent economic growth, the number of cultural consumers has in fact significantly and steadily increased. It therefore seems plausible to argue that the Chinese state has enjoyed a relatively high level of legitimacy amongst artists, given

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3 Abid, p.52-52.
that it has managed to create a better marketplace for them. In terms of the political implications of this development, Richard Curt Kraus (2003), after extensively examining the impact of the market on the system of state patronage of the arts in China, finds that a reactive loosening of political controls by the Chinese regime over culture and the transfer of arts from state control to a market system is by itself a profound political change. According to Kraus’ “embryonic civil society” argument, as professionalism in the arts sector gradually weakens the controlling abilities of the party-state, the meaning of rule is altered and explicit political reform follows.\(^5\) This may also indicate a gradual transformation of Chinese political cultural, as the market economy has undermined the principles of China’s official ideology and changed Chinese artists’ political values and attitudes.\(^6\)

Nevertheless, despite its remarkable success in achieving rapid economic growth and in providing professional artists with relatively stable financial well-being, China is still governed by an authoritarian regime, which has repeatedly relied on political movements and organizational structures to ensure that cultural activities would serve its interests. In fact, since the turn of the century, the party-state’s involvements in the fine arts have not declined as some would expect. On the contrary, in many aspects they have strengthened and expanded. This has been attained mainly because of a conscious differentiation between elite and non-elite, official and non-official, high and popular, public and non-public art by Chinese cultural authorities as well as the artists themselves. As the income of professional guohua painters continued to grow and society continued to diversify, some artists’ dependence on the party-state did not just decrease or disappear in simple absolute terms. Their dependence was replaced


by conformity – a form of submission without which the society could not be stable. This tendency is not universal but is typical for certain artists in the reform era. As free market principles continue to mix with authoritarian political ideologies in China, this interesting phenomenon provides current research with a good starting point to explore the relationship between artists and the state as well as between art and politics.

Rationale and Focus of the Study
Since the turn of the 20th Century, artists as a whole have had a precarious position in the history of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the People’s Republic. This study is purposefully limited to examining the status of China’s professional guohua (國畫 Chinese national painting) painters and their relations to the party-state. This research will tackle the above subject mainly by studying the contents of important official documents issued by the party-state, by retelling the interactions between professional guohua painters and the party-state in several crucial socio-political contexts, and by analysing the stories and opinions of four professional guohua painters. Excluding the background research on the cultural and political significance of guohua paintings in China’s history, the time span of this study extends from 1949 to the late 1990s, while acknowledging the year 1978, when China officially launched its reform program, as a critical dividing juncture for comparative reasons.

Why In-Depth Case Studies?
When loosely defined, the terms intellectual, cultural elite and artist inevitably over-emphasize or downplay the importance of certain sub-groups in their relations to the state. Even the term artists, seemingly the least confusing term among these three, could refer to so many different sub-groups with distinctive aesthetic and social
interests. For example, as a serious and leading scholar in art and politics of culture in
the PRC, Kraus (2003) includes popular and elite, amateur and professional,
commercial and noncommercial, official and nonofficial arts in his thought-provoking
it may seem to treat so many distinctive genres together in one study,” although by
grouping these categories together he develops a strong argument about how art is
related to politics. In his research, the term “art” and “arts” refer “not just to fine arts,
but also include literature, music, dance, drama, and the whole range of aesthetically
creative endeavors.”

It is easily understandable why many scholars choose to include various genres
with different natures into one social category: To capture the broad pattern of change.
It is important to identify general trends; in fact, the release of increasingly detailed
statistics, government documents and reports in recent years has opened up more
possibilities for the macro-level study of Chinese politics. Nevertheless, assigning art
groups with various practices and functions into one ill-defined general category
seriously diminishes the explanatory strength of the arguments made by recent
researchers on Chinese artists as well intellectuals. This also leads to a series of
legitimate questions, such as: “Do professional artists in different genres, e.g.
traditional Chinese guohua painting and Beijing opera, perceive the same self-image
and societal expectation as members of the cultural elite during the adaptation process
to the market economy?”; and “Do artists in the same genre with different training
backgrounds – such as guohua painters who completed formal education at state-run
fine art academies versus those who are self-taught have the same expectation for
more political change?”

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Indeed, it would seem awkward to suggest professional avant-garde artists and amateur paper-cutting artists share the same social/economic positions, and have the same interest in political change and influence on state governance in the present context. To more accurately capture the dynamic relationship of artists to the state in China under unprecedented transformation it is appropriate that we turn our attention to an in-depth case study on the life and attitudes of Chinese artists working in one strictly-defined genre. By using this approach, this project is able to examine more vigorously how the forces of Chinese culture, communist ideologies and western capitalist principles clash. With limited scope and purpose, this research chooses professional guohua painters as its focus.

Why Study Professional Guohua Painters?

I was raised in a family in which Chinese calligraphy and guohua painting has been a matter of common daily practice. My grandfather, who lived for many years with my parents until he passed away, practiced guohua diligently. My parents are active artists still teaching guohua painters. Although not a good painter, I have regularly practiced Chinese calligraphy and learned some basic skills of guohua painting since my childhood. In addition, during the past two decades I have been able to establish personal connections with many professional guohua artists in Taiwan, China and Canada, due to my work experience as a manager in several fine arts associations, academies and galleries. In addition, since the mid-1990s, with the growing popularity of term “cultural industry” in China, my personal interest in the development of China’s art market in general and the investment of guohua paintings in particular has continued to grow. This long-term aesthetic and practical involvement relevant to guohua paintings constitutes a strong motive and provides me with the background important for engaging in this research.
Furthermore, with all the above personal reasons being emphasized, this research chooses professional guohua painters as its focus for several important theoretical and methodological considerations. I shall briefly discuss these considerations in the remaining part of this introductory chapter and will re-address them in greater details in the following chapters.

**Guohua Painting – A Sacred Cultural Tradition**

Traditional guohua painting has been held in high esteem as the highest form of China’s aesthetic culture. It is an extraordinary part of Chinese cultural heritage and is distinguishable from other Chinese art and from western painting. In addition, while the artistic value of Chinese guohua painting has been highly appreciated by Chinese cultural elites, its practical use as an ideological act or statement has also been widely acknowledged by their ruling political elites.

Throughout Chinese history, well-established professional guohua painters were often patronized by emperors, nobilities and high-ranking officials (Cahill, 1985). In addition, when traditional systems of bureaucrat-selection compounded with the political and ideological nature of guohua paintings, it is not surprising that masterpieces were often produced by government officials. Many of these government officials viewed their works as having higher spiritual merit and shared their idealistic taste within a rather prestigious circle. As guohua painting is influenced by Confucian ideas it holds a unique mystique, and as such, this esteemed

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8 Starting in the late Ming Dynasty, in contrast to the orthodox school of the time, some painters such as Xu Wei, Shi Tao and “Eight Yangzhou Eccentrics” particularly emphasized personality, innovation and impressions in their works. Although mostly disassociated with the officialdom for different reasons, all of them used to study the classics and practice calligraphy for a career in government offices.

“high art” is an important means for its creators to convey not only artistic expression but also superior ethical, philosophical and political ideas. (see pic. 1-1, 1-2, 1-3)

Highlighting the dual education and cultivation purposes of guohua painting, i.e. the external influence on the masses and the internal elevation of the individual artists, Shao Qi describes the duality as an unbreakable sacred tradition [神聖傳統 Shen sheng chuan tong] that defies the continual change of dynasties.10 Therefore, the view of Chinese guohua painting being a marketable commodity has been historically problematic, resulting in numerous debates over the role of guohua painters as intellectuals under Confucianism.

In the reform era, private patronage for art is thriving and utilitarianism has become popular. Professional guohua painters -- artists traditionally considered intellectuals and heavily influenced by Chinese cultural traditions -- offer a unique opportunity for an in-depth case study, which would allow me to explore the impact of both the drastic socio-economic transformation (which happened in the artists’ adulthoods) and the basic political outlooks (which were largely shaped in the artists’ youth period) on Chinese artists’ life. Furthermore, my effort to identify the changes and the continuity of their values, attitudes and beliefs could advance our understanding of the roles and status of the artists as a social group vis-à-vis the state.

**Guohua Painting - A Powerful Political Tool**

The period between 1949 and 1978 saw an increase in the direct, active government role in overseeing the nation’s artistic production. During this time the government often imposed tight restrictions on styles and subject matters. This phenomenon was further compounded by the fact that critical judgment on artwork, in particular guohua

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painting was almost solely determined by a few very powerful political elites, who repeatedly relied on political movements and organizational structures to ensure that cultural activities, like painting, would serve their interests.

As a consequence, the discourse in art and cultural affairs were often at the centre of controversy and functioned as a catalyst in PRC power politics. The history of power struggles between Mao Zedong and his challengers, as well as inner party cleavages among Mao’s immediate subordinates and successors also suggest this proposition that the art were used to support and advance political aims.

In the reform era, when confronted with new ideological challenges especially encouraged by modern approaches from within China, as well as outside of China in the form of consumerism and various popular and avant-garde arts, Chinese leaders found guohua paintings particularly valuable in serving the interests of the party-state as a whole. Their functions could range from boosting the nation’s self-confidence and cultural pride to promoting specific social programs, such as “Anti-Spiritual Pollution”, “Anti-Bourgeois Liberalization” and “Harmonious Society”. In such a setting, research focusing on guohua painting -- an art form favored by the party-state in the 1980s and 1990s, not only for its style but also for the use of its content, is especially potentially productive for the study of relations between artists and the Chinese government. If we consider the fact that guohua painting was discriminated against for the very same reasons (its style and content) by the late 1970s, this research becomes even more interesting.

Guohua Painting - A Hot Commodity

Nearly all cultural production and distribution was tightly controlled by the state prior to the economic reform in 1978. The demand for guohua paintings started to recover slowly during the 1980s. With the gradual consolidation of economic liberation and
capitalist concepts, (which helped accelerate the re-structuring of the society), by the 1990s, guohua paintings moved steadily into the marketplace at an astonishing pace. When the phrase “cultural commercialization” was defined in the 10th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development (2001-2005) at the 5th Plenary Session of the 15th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in October 2000, the sale of guohua paintings as “cultural products”, both domestically and internationally, was further justified and encouraged by the party-state.

Far from the picture that the Chinese authorities had in mind when trying to curtail rapid growth in auction firms by limiting auctions to six companies in the late 1990s, the number of auction firms in China jumped to over 800 in 2006. Auction firms had built their businesses overwhelmingly on guohua paintings, due to their growing international and domestic markets. According to Zheng Xinjian, the Deputy-Director of the Culture Market Department of Ministry of Culture, on average over 15 billion RMB (about $2.6 billion CND) worth of artworks sold in auctions alone each year in China. Although it is impossible to estimate how much of this revenue was directly related to the sale of works by contemporary professional guohua painters, the sheer volume is still compelling as it indicates the possible impact of the commercialization of cultural products on current artists.

In fact, statistics show that, in addition to the works by the masters of the last century, the works of contemporary professional artists have also been aggressively sought after by collectors and investors. In 2007, the auction house Sotheby’s ran an auction line of “Fine Chinese (Guohua) Paintings.” According to statistics released by Sotheby’s, among the 246 paintings, 29 were sold for over HK$1,000,000 (approximately $128,000 USD each). The majority of these (27 out of 29) were by

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modern and contemporary guohua painting masters. Based on these statistics, in terms of the market value and investment return, guohua paintings outperformed all other forms of visual fine art combined, including watercolors, oil paintings, sculptures and printmaking.

Based upon the previous discussion, it is clear that the changes of the nature and scale of China’s cultural sectors since the late 1970s have been staggering. Since the turn of the new century, some scholars identify the cultural products sector as a future pillar industry upon which China’s economy will rest in the 21st Century. At the same time, the expansion of the art market in general, and the commercialization of guohua paintings in particular, has become one of the most significant developments in the overall economic transformation in China. The lives of those who study, practice and create guohua paintings therefore present an especially intriguing area of insight into the socio-economic transition in China.

Professional Guohua Painters under Cultural Reform

According to Kraus, at least four themes ran through discussions of China’s cultural reforms in the 1980s, including the attack upon the “iron rice bowl” (permanent employment), the restructuring of the “big pot” (egalitarian pay schemes), the professionalization of management for arts organizations and the diminution of state subsidies. All of these reforms were essentially meant to introduce contract systems for employment and a basic understanding of profit and loss in the state’s cultural sectors.

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12 One of the most practical experiences I’ve drawn from the art market in the past years is that Chinese guohua paintings created by professional artists in the modern era have been aggressively sought after by collectors and investors, because of their more recognizable authenticity and appreciation of their style and contemporary content. For more detailed auction results and analysis, see Sotheby’s official website, http://www.sotheby's.com.
14 Ibid. pp.55-56.
Interestingly, while deliberately streamlining its state-owned enterprises and government agencies due to budgetary reasons, in the 1980s the Chinese central government started to extensively provide guohua painters with unprecedented public work opportunities, outright financial supports, and patronage in various forms. Many local governments also established their own guohua institutes and offered professional guohua painters with various positions, honorary titles and cash subsidies. The same trend persisted in the 1990s and beyond. Obviously, the party-state’s treatment towards professional guohua painters has been contrary to its overall cultural reform agenda described by Kraus. These phenomena became even more intriguing in the light of the fact that much of the Chinese political elite had considered guohua paintings obsolete only a few years earlier.

Considering that scholars have generally pointed out that Chinese artists’ weakening ties to the state come as a result of a series of economic and institutional reforms, I am especially interested in investigating whether or not the professional guohua painters have become a more independent and therefore more critical social group in Chinese politics in the post-Mao era than they were in the previous period. It is not easy to make such judgements, as the grand socio-economic transformation is still in a relatively early stage. However, as China continues to experience drastic changes, an invaluable opportunity is afforded to investigate the dynamic relationship between professional guohua painters and the party-state.

It is obvious that the political attitudes of guohua painters as a social group towards the party-state have not received sufficient scholarly attention, particularly in light of their important roles in China’s cultural traditions, inherent connection to Chinese politics, and their tremendous economic opportunities in the reform era. It is my contention that although an increase in independent Chinese artists and their increasingly detached relation to the party-state is in keeping with the drastic
economic growth and subsequent profound socio-cultural transformations from 1978 through to the present era, these trends are not currently reflected in the case of contemporary professional guohua painters. Therefore, I propose a framework for this study that considers both the impact of these drastic socio-economic transformations and the impact of China’s political culture, for only this will treat professional guohua painters’ relation to the party-state as a dynamic continuum. In addition, it will allow me to explore more thoughtfully the reasons and consequences of the favoritism shown by the Chinese leadership toward professional guohua painters as a social group in the reform era.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the general theoretical and methodological issues related to this research. First, I will introduce the western theories on political culture and political socialization, and examine how they can be applied to the Chinese context. Then I will compare the changes in artists’ lives under drastic economic reform from both an international and domestic perspective, and from this suggest their theoretical implications to this research. The methodological section will justify the extensive use of both official documents and iconographic paintings produced by the party-state at important historical junctures and of professional guohua painters’ personal experiences and opinions as necessary materials for this research.

Chapter 3 will outline the general trends in the development of guohua painting and relationship between guohua painters and the state from imperial to pre-1979 communist China. I will show how guohua painting’s education and cultivation purpose was formed and has passed through different dynasties, which gives it the lasting cultural and political significance that is not seen in other art forms in China. This chapter will also present five types of relationships between guohua painters and the state in a broad historical context.
Chapter 4 will discuss how the cleavages between Chinese leaders on issues of aesthetics and cultural politics have influenced the fate of professional guohua painters in the PRC. I will approach this issue through an examination of the creation and the content of important iconographic paintings commissioned by various leaders contending for power and through a discussion of the formulation, implications and aftermath of several important historical documents on the arts. The particular time frame of this chapter extends from 1962 to 1978, because, for this research, it not only best reflects the interplay between and the fusion of arts and politics during the pre-reform era, but also provides important connotations for the analysis of the cultural politics during the reform era.

Chapter 5 will examine how and why the party-state has successfully strengthened professional guohua painters’ dependency on that body. This chapter will look at the means of the party-state to carry out institutional re-structuring and setting an ideological agenda, as the commercialization of cultural products continues to accelerate and society becomes more diverse. It will also assess the impact of this “organized dependence” on professional guohua painters’ artistic lives and political views in the 1980s and 1990s.

Chapter 6 will present the biographical details of four professional guohua artists’ learning and work experiences, along with their personal opinions, observations and critiques. These materials are gathered mainly through face-to-face interviews, supplemented by biographies, reports, commentaries, art reviews and personal albums by or about the artists. These four artists obviously do not constitute sufficient representation of professional guohua painters under the PRC. However, because of their personal connections with China’s elite fine art establishments and continuous exposure to major cultural and political movements and drastic socio-economic transformations since the establishment of the PRC, their personal
stories and views are of special value to our understanding of the relationship between professional guohua painters and the party-state in the PRC.

Chapter 7 will offer some major theoretical reflections of this research. It will include a discussion of how the party-state, in the face of the challenges imposed by the booming cultural market, has tried to use organizational structures and ideological campaigns to keep artists and art work in line with its political ideology. More importantly, it will show why organizational structures and ideological campaigns have been particularly effective for influencing professional guohua painters, by recapturing the deep-rooted dynamics of China’s aesthetic and political culture and by highlighting the capacity of the booming cultural market imposed on both professional guohua painters and political leaders under reform.
CHAPTER TWO
THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Political Culture and Political Socialization

Among the vast number of visual fine artists living and working in contemporary China, I consciously and purposely limited my research to professional guohua painters, since in comparison to other artisans, as a group, they have historically been assigned with a special social status in the broad Chinese cultural and political context. Furthermore, since I intend to explore professional guohua painters’ relations to the party-state in the PRC primarily by examining their stories and opinions, an assessment and comparison of their political values and attitudes becomes an essential aspect of my research. Therefore, it is important to discuss the concepts of “political culture” and “political socialization”, two important approaches for understanding how people’s attitudes and values differ among individuals and groups, and how these attitudes and values are formed.

The origins of political culture theories are found in anthropology, sociology, and psychology, which are related to some basic assumptions about culture in Marx’s and Weber’s works. In retrospect, the political culture approach has experienced a series of ups and downs during the past four or five decades. After its peak period during the 1950s and early 1960s, this approach went through an era of crisis and decline. More recently, however, it seems that this approach has reinvigorated scholarly attention, particularly in the study of comparative politics. Lucian Pye (1985) finds cultural difference as the primary explanatory variable for political development. Samuel Huntington (1993) argues that cultural differences are responsible for societal cleavages. In his rather “unorthodox,” yet pioneering study on the bond between art

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16 Though some of his assertions are debatable, at least, Huntington is right in putting an emphasis on cultural differences.
and politics, Richard Kraus believes calligraphy - “a metaphor for Chinese cultural legacy” offers “a clear and uncrowded window from which to survey contemporary Chinese society and politics”.\(^\text{17}\)

Political culture may be understood mainly in four different dimensions. In a more general sense, the first dimension refers to political culture as a set of individual orientations to politics among the people of a nation or group. For instance, Almond and Powell (1978: 25) define political culture as “the set of attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about politics current in a nation at a given time”. The second dimension, proposed by Almond and Verba (1963), argues that the essential element of political culture is citizens’ attitudes, include cognitive, affective and evaluative ones. The term “political culture” then is realized as the “attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system” (1963: 13).

The third opinion maintains that political culture is the result of socialization during the early formative years as well as adult experiences with governmental, social, and economic performance.\(^\text{18}\) The fourth idea is that political culture affects political and governmental structure and performance. Pateman, for instance, proposes that political socialization produces political attitudes, which in turn cause political behavior and underlie political structure.\(^\text{19}\)

Therefore, in an aggregated sense, the political culture of a given group comprises all the political values, attitudes and beliefs of its members. These rather abstract components of political culture of a given society pose long-lasting effects on its individual members’ actual political behaviors. They also help shape the outlooks of a given government’s political structures and may impede or promote its


performance. Political culture tends to endure because the most important elements are often reinforced by the process of socialization and are passed on from one generation to the next. For example, in explaining the psychological roots of China’s political cultures, Pye concludes that “[In China] political change is ceaseless, but the basic cultural patterns remain remarkably endurable.”20 In emphasizing the influence of cultural values, beliefs, and attitudes on the way that societies evolve, Lawrence E. Harrison persuasively states,

*It is much more comfortable for the experts to cite geographic constraints, insufficient resources, bad policies, and weak institutions. That way they avoid the invidious comparisons, political sensitivities, and bruised feelings often engendered by cultural explanations of success and failure. But by avoiding culture, the experts also ignore not only an important part of the explanation of why some societies or ethno-religious groups do better than others with respect to democratic governance, social justice, and prosperity. They also ignore the possibility that progress can be accelerated by (1) analyzing cultural obstacles to it, and (2) addressing cultural change as a remedy.*21

When connecting political culture with political socialization, continuity versus change is usually the major concern of studies of modern China. And the reason is clear. The focus of these studies is a communist regime that has adopted drastic measures and systems to reshape its people’s values and attitudes to replace those of the pre-revolutionary period. Political culture and political socialization help to explain, for example, why regimes adopt certain policies and how individuals have particular political outlooks, since they recognize the important role of cultural settings or environments and learning experiences in influencing social attitudes, cultural values and political outcomes. As a result, they stimulate increasing interest

among political scientists and have come to be applied to studies on Chinese society and politics especially in the 1960s.

Generally speaking, two lines of inquiry can be delineated from the literature of socialization: the micro level and the macro level. The micro level of inquiry is concerned with individual orientation, like feelings, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. In comparison, the major theoretical concern of the macro level of inquiry, as exemplified by Easton and Dennis (1969, Children in the Political System: New York: McGraw-Hill: 1969), is to assess the consequences of socialization for a whole political system. The concept of political socialization has been employed to analyze the process and characteristics of political systems. Its main object is to account for the way an individual is socialized and the similarities and differences among individual political outlooks and to allow researchers to probe the differences in the performance between different political systems.\(^\text{22}\)

In spite of the different theoretical concerns, these two lines of inquiry share one thing in common; that is, the same core assumption that early learning has important consequences for later political life. As a result of this argument, most of the political socialization literature has traditionally been concerned with the relative influence of pre-adult years. However, it should be noted that socialization is a continuous process extending throughout one’s life. People constantly encounter new socio-cultural events that challenge the behavior and beliefs they previously learned or imagined. In reality, history demonstrates that large-scale events, such as the American Civil War, the World War I and the Great Depression can either reinforce or challenge an adult’s political values, beliefs and behaviors.\(^\text{23}\)

\(^{22}\) For example, see Lucian Pye 1992.

\(^{23}\) For example, see Eric Foner, Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press: 1981). Reasserting the centrality of the Civil War to the people of that period, Foner believes that it deepened and extended the meaning of freedom into more areas of life. Similarly, World War II and the encounter with fascism also helped reshape people’s internal boundaries of freedom.
Applying these ideas to the relationship between professional guohua painters and the party-state is an essential aspect to my research. In particular, this research chronologically encompasses several important events that caused dramatic societal changes in China: the establishment of the PRC, the Cultural Revolution in the Maoist era, and economic reform from Deng Xiaoping’s era to the present. While the impact of the establishment of the PRC and the Cultural Revolution has been substantial and vigorously researched, the economic reform is still an on-going process and it is still too early to draw decisive conclusions concerning its affects on Chinese political culture. In spite of this, it seems plausible to argue that drastic environmental changes could influence (either revise or reinforce) people’s early political outlooks.

This proposition is especially appropriate to this research, because it focuses on contemporary professional guohua painters – a social group deeply and simultaneously influenced by the forces of Chinese political culture, ideological discourses and principles of western market economy. To more accurately understand guohua painters’ roles and status vis-à-vis the party-state, it is necessary to study the impact of the above-mentioned variables on professional guohua painters’ values, attitudes and beliefs. Equally importantly, this proposition would also allow me to explore more thoughtfully why Chinese policymakers have consistently shown favoritism toward professional guohua painters in the reform era, by bringing in important concepts of cultural traditions and political values.

Artists’ Lives under Reform: International and Domestic Perspectives

In terms of the overall reform process, there is a distinct difference between the so-called “shock therapy approach” (or “big bang approach”) taken by post-communist European countries and “gradualist approach” taken by China. While the former stresses irreversibility and quick changes on all fronts, the latter permits a
certain degree of flexibility and gradualism. Due to the fact that the relations between Chinese artists and the party-state in the reform era has not yet received enough scholarly attention and that studies of the relations between professional guohua painters and the state are even more scarce, it is useful to look at the artists’ overall situations in post-communist countries and in China itself for comparison.

With the fall of former communist regimes of Central and Eastern Europe, the dominance of a planned economy and of the party-state over the cultural sectors formally ended. The principles guiding the production and distribution of goods and services from the cultural sector in those countries changed almost abruptly from central planning to free market overnight. According to George Muskens (1992), the cultural sectors in post-communist countries have been reorganized predominantly according to free market principles since late 1989. As a consequence, without state interference and clientism, rather than creating and promoting art for the state, artists have enjoyed more cultural freedom. On the other hand, without a budget for subsidies and official recognition of privileges in the impoverished societies, artists in these countries have to run their own businesses to promote and sell their goods and services to meet the demands of their paying audiences and contractors.24

Musken further studies the changes in the cultural sector in Hungary and Poland, and the ways in which artists cope with them. He describes the transformation that took place in those countries as “a focused micro-cosmos of economic reconstruction, political and civic reform as well as social and psychological adaptation”.25 He finds that both countries failed to provide the artists and cultural mediators job security and did not solve the social question of how to distribute artistic productions.

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25 Abid.
Consequently, the legitimacy of artists was seriously impaired, as the artists lost prestige and economic security after sudden changes in politics and economics in those countries.\textsuperscript{26}

In terms of the artistic freedom in Eastern Europe, Goban-Klas and Kwasniewicz observed that it was gained at a significant cost in their study. As an economic crisis limits the buying power of the traditional cultural consumers, their level of participation in culture activities decreases. Finally, they suggest that the adaptation process of artists to the market economy will “bring about far-reaching qualitative changes in the artists’ self-image as members of the intelligentsia with regard to both their social status and roles”\textsuperscript{27}.

We can use the insights from Eastern Europe to consider how the artistic community in China has responded to cultural change. In China, since the late 1970s, the actual pace of commercialization in cultural sectors has been generally concurrent with the pace of economic reform. In such a process, cutting state-subsidies and increasing self-sufficiency were also inevitable. In fact, the Chinese government had deliberately started to streamline or outright shut down unprofitable enterprises and government agencies mainly due to budgetary and fiscal reasons in the 1980s. This tendency is well illustrated by the fact that the government reduced the military by 1,000,000 persons during the same period. It is almost impossible to estimate statistically the scale and impact of those changes on the community of fine artists. Although based on incomplete national data, Kraus’ study on state subsidies to performing-art troupes in China in the 1990s provides us with some important insights of the general trend. According to Kraus’ study, in 1985 there were still 3,175 state

\textsuperscript{26} Abid.

subsidized arts troupes, ranging from Chinese opera companies to symphony orchestras. By 1994, 20 percent had been cut. For the remaining 2,561 troupes, state subsidies constituted 56 percent of total expenditures, a reduction from 65 percent in 1985. Also, the study finds that although the surviving 80 percent of units enjoyed substantial budget increases by 2.5 times to 756 million RMB (about US$ 91 million) in this decade, they had to find alternative financing to keep pace with inflation and new expenses.  

Kraus’ study persuasively explains why so many artists in China have been anxious about reforms.

It is important to note that the case of China is a bit more complicated than Eastern Europe. As reform proceeds, while prestige and stable jobs provided to artists by the state have become less attainable, the number of cultural consumers from the private sectors has steadily increased as a result of rapid economic growth. Meanwhile, the country is still governed by an authoritarian regime that has repeatedly relied on political movements and organizational structures to control cultural activities. With such observations in mind, it can be argued that while the expansion of a market economy has generally weakened state patronage and created a new realm in which artists can increase their autonomy, the Chinese party-state’s ability to create a vibrant marketplace for cultural products and activities has simultaneously helped maintain its power over Chinese artists. Nonetheless, it is still far from clear how much of the Chinese party-state’s ability to maintain power is translated into its political legitimacy among Chinese artists. Even less clear are the long term effects of these seemingly contradictory developments on artists’ attitudes towards their political leaders.

28 Kraus, pp.214-215
Methodological Considerations

The literature reviewed above identifies political culture and the marketization of cultural products and activities as critical variables in defining China’s current socio-economic context, in which artists and the party-state interact with each other. With different theoretical emphases, the analysis presented treats artists as a loosely defined social group, as if they all enjoy the same opportunities and are faced with the same restrictions in the reform era. In fact, in comparison, it is striking that Chinese professional guohua painters face significantly different situations than artists in Eastern European post-communist countries. In addition, in China, the party-state’s handling of Chinese professional guohua painters is generally in disagreement with that of many other Chinese artists under different artistic genres.

In the 1980s and 1990s major local governments, especially on the provincial and municipal level, showed a great interest in establishing their own guohua institutes to support these artists. These institutes then become part of cultural enterprises exclusively financed and run by the public sector. They offered professional guohua painters various positions, honorary titles and cash subsidies. Similarly, with the introduction of the new term “cultural industry”, many public agencies responsible for propaganda and cultural affairs also showed interest in recruiting more professional guohua painters. This uncharacteristic development indicates that the status, as well as the function, of professional guohua painters as a whole would evolve in response to the drastic socio-economic changes brought about by the reform policy.

Thus, as socio-economic changes occurred in China, changes to the role and status of guohua painters would be in keeping with the general historical trend, according to conditions within the country. However, correlations among cultural discourses, marketization of cultural products and the professional guohua painters’
roles and attitudes towards the party-state remain unclear. It is therefore especially worthwhile to retell the personal stories of guohua painters and their interactions with the party-state in historical context. Recording these narratives is important in order to document the lives and careers of contemporary professional guohua painters, so as to explore the changes and continuities of their social roles and political attitudes. I will use a case study approach to obtain the necessary data. This approach involves studying important official documents, iconographic paintings and biographies and by intensively interviewing professional guohua painters. Doing so will also help provide insight into the modern cultural and social context of China’s transition from a very different point of inquiry.

As part of this approach to research, I use the following research questions to guide both the literature review and the field research of this dissertation: What have impact has the traditional political culture and the growing commercialization of cultural activities had on professional guohua painters’ views towards their own roles since 1978? What are the implications of institutional reforms and the emergence of professionalism in their patterns of interaction with the party-state? As a social group, how are professional guohua painters different from other artists in relation to the new social stratification in the reform era? Do they see themselves as obligated to express specific content within the execution and presentation of their art in the reform era? If so, how is this developed and what does it include? And above all, what theoretical implications or new knowledge can we obtain from this inquiry on Chinese politics?

**Primary Historical Materials vs. Semi-Structured Intensive Interviews**

Official documents published at important historical junctures are, for obvious reasons, considered significant primary historical materials by historians and political scientists. Meanwhile, the connections between iconography and politics are also
widely recognized by social and political scientists. For instance, Victoria E. Bonnell finds that Soviet political posters were extensively used to legitimate institutions and establish relations of power.29 Often commissioned by political leaders competing for power or striving to maintain the status quo, the iconographic paintings produced by Chinese artists under the PRC have been used to rebuild narratives of past events and, therefore, are rich in political and ideological connotations. Through detailed analysis of certain important official documents and iconographic paintings, I will consider how politics and art are related from an innovative perspective that considers how inner party cleavages become reflected in cultural politics and aesthetics. These aspects are an often neglected phenomenon in China’s power politics, yet have influenced the fate of professional painters in the PRC.

To be considered primary historical materials, the official documents and iconographic paintings studied in this research are carefully evaluated by asking when and where they were produced and who produced them to judge their validity and authenticity. However, while recognizing the advantages of using these primary materials, I believe it is extremely important that we pay attention to the limitations of their explanatory strengths. Because, although the availability of government documents, reports and detailed statistics concerning arts and cultural affairs has increased significantly in recent years, their meanings and implications are still often obscure and leave their promulgators, executers and current readers ample room for reinterpretation. This issue is even more concerning because it is likely that the contents and wordings of certain controversial documents, for example the “February Outlines” and “June Outlines”, may have gone through substantial editing before being made available to the general public. Similarly, the ideological implications and

political effects of iconographic paintings, which were patronized by different Chinese political leaders and their supporters, were often magnified or distorted through reinterpretations.

Between late 1960s and early 1970s, some professional guohua painters overtly expressed their desire to reform the contents of guohua in order to keep in line with party-state’s new visions. Portraits of positive hero-type workers, peasants and soldiers combined with the material accomplishments of socialist society -- such as modern factories, construction sites, newly built railroad tracks and even roaring heavy machineries – moved to the center-stage of guohua painting.

A commentary titled “Innovations in Traditional Paintings”, published in Chinese Literature (Zhong Guo Wen Yi) in November 1972, praised such an effort, demonstrated in Yang Zhiguang’s work ‘The Newcomer to the Coal Mine’, as “representative of the guohua artists’ solution of the time as both artistically modern and politically plausible”. Another article titled “Using Chinese Brush and Ink to Paint the Newcomer to the Coal Mine” published by Introduction of Artworks (Mei Shu Zhuo Pin Jie Shao) applauded the painting for its “successful depiction of the refreshing and determining spirit of the young people in the great era of socialism”. (see pic. 2-1)

The desire and effort to reform traditional guohua painting demonstrated by Yang, along with many other artists, were truly admirable. Nevertheless, there was often a wide gap between reality and art, especially when political considerations prevailed over personal feelings. Yang Zhiguan did not reveal the true story behind his famous guohua painting for many years. The young female worker depicted with a shining smile in his work turned out to be a widow whose husband had recently died in an mining accident. She had to work as a replacement for her late husband in order to support her family. The artist was very impressed by her sadness when drawing the
first draft of the painting in the coal mine. Yet, in order to pass through levels of censorship so his work could receive exposure at the national level, the artist was left with no choice but to give up his true impression and hide his deep sympathy toward the poor woman.\(^{30}\)

Although I do not have enough evidence to verify the real stories behind similar works by other guohua painters, Yang Zhiguan’s acute discretion in 1972 may be seen as a common practice, because painters’ artistic as well as humanitarian concerns must give way to the official doctrines of the party-state, i.e. the “three prominences” and the “dual synthesis” of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism. Therefore, it can be argued that the written record related to those most-celebrated guohua paintings during the Cultural Revolution period may not represent the genuine inner feelings of their creators towards their subjects.

Because of these considerations regarding the integrity, interpretation and reinterpretation of historical documents, I therefore must give caution to the findings based on such primary materials and turn to an in-depth, grassroots approach in order to more accurately tackle my research questions. Between May 2008 and May 2009, I conducted semi-structured interviews with three well-established professional guohua painters in Canada. Thanks to the long-term friendships that I have enjoyed with these talented artists, I was able to repeatedly visit them in their private studios and invite them to my home to clarify their opinions on certain important issues and to further pursue many details about their stories and careers through face-to-face, comprehensive discussions.

Some may argue that the professional guohua painters I interviewed did not show strong enough aspiration in the quest for autonomy, because they were less

\(^{30}\) The story about Yang’s true impression of the female worker is revealed in Yi Ni “Embracing the Goddess of Beauty – Biography of Yang Zhi Guang” (Yong Bao Mei Shen: Yang Zhi Guang Zhuan) (Shanghai: Shanghai Literature and Arts Press: 1999).
interested in politics, or were politically less risk-prone by nature. Because this research focuses on the changing environment, in which artists and the party-state interact, rather than individual artists’ personal thoughts, motivations and limitations, it cannot determine how valid the above proposition may be. In fact, methodologically, it is very difficult to identify the real motive behind certain political actions as well as the real disincentive of not taking certain political actions. Therefore, I also included the case of Fan Zeng, who has been politically and socially much more active than his peers. Also he was one of the rare professional guohua painters who explicitly showed his “dissidence” during the students’ demonstration in Tiananmen Square in 1989. His story not only reflects the key findings of this research but further highlights the importance of the macro cultural and socio-economic environment that shape both the artists’ and politicians’ decision-making. It also helps to illustrate that the artists’ ideals and preferences can change and perhaps in the end are not very explanatory in studying their relationship to the Chinese party-state.

During my field research period, I also interviewed several “younger” Chinese professional guohua painters who were born between the 1940s and 1960s, during their visits to Taiwan and Canada. Meanwhile, I was engaged in extensive discussions with many scholars, critics, dealers and collectors in the field of fine arts in Asia and Canada. Their experiences, stories and opinions all greatly helped me advance my understanding of the unique characteristics of guohua paintings as the carriers of China’s cultural tradition, tools of power politics and as desirable cultural commodities. This invaluable learning process enabled me to treat professional guohua painters with due sensitivity and compassion, when discussing their roles, and relations to the party-state under the PRC.
Who and What Exactly Are Being Studied?

As opposed to merely “guohua painters” or “master guohua painters,” I have chosen professional guohua painters as the focus of this research, because they are methodologically less problematic to define and are more representative as a distinctive group of people who share the same cultural background and experience similar social-political changes. For purposes of clarity, a “professional guohua painter” is strictly defined as a person who took at least formal, college level aesthetic training, received recognition from prestigious institutions, and is still actively working in the field of guohua paintings.

The four artists included in this research were all born in the 1930s. Although not typical intellectuals, they share many similarities with Chinese intellectuals of the fourth generation defined by Li and Schwarcz, in terms of their learning, work and life experiences.31 I am convinced that the stories and comments drawn from professional artists of this generation are particularly significant to this project’s understanding and analysis of the changes and continuities of the relationship between guohua painting artists and the state during the PRC era for two obvious reasons. First, already knowledgeable enough to appreciate key political and cultural events, these artists witnessed and were influenced by the anti-Japanese war, liberation, the Anti-Rightist Movement, the Social Education Movement, the Cultural Revolution,

31 Li Zehou and Vera Schwarcz propose that there are six generations of Chinese intellectuals. According to their schematic form, the life of the interviewees of this study tightly coincides with that of the fourth generation of modern Chinese intellectuals who spent their youth in a turbulent period during the anti-Japanese War and the Civil War between the Nationalists and the Communists. Intellectuals who belong to the third generation defined parameters of thought and action in a decisive, innovative fashion during the revolutionary period of the 1920s. Following from this it was this fourth generation who not only accepted, but expanded these parameters. The four professional guohua painters included in Chapter 6 of this dissertation are university graduates and attached to state institutions for most of their lives. In this sense, their roles and social status are similar to “traditional Chinese intellectuals” who participated in a nationwide competition for public employment. During the pre-reform era, they derived their livelihood exclusively from income as loyal servants of the party-state just like other intellectuals. For Li and Schwarcz’s more complete viewpoint, see Six Generations of Modern Chinese Intellectuals in Chinese Studies in History, Volumn.17, 2, 1983/1984, pp.42-56.
and Reform, as well as policies for the opening-up of the PRC. Second, although retired from formal government organizations, many of these artists still hold important positions in various mass organizations that command tremendous respect from artists of younger generations, and they continually exert influence on the Chinese cultural community through various mechanisms and personal connections.

The rationale and merits of these cases included in my research are further strengthened by these artists’ educational backgrounds. Education offered by fine arts academies has played a crucial role in the development of fine arts in the PRC. To this day, contemporary professional guohua painters who are still working are overwhelmingly the product of a controlled arts education system. The four artists in this research graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA), the Central Academy of Arts and Crafts (CAAC) and the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts (ZAFA). For decades, these academies were the only schools that were recognized as the nation’s “focal fine arts academies” (重點美術學院) and categorized as “central level institutions” (中央級單位). Therefore, they were and still are not only representing the highest educational standards in Chinese national aesthetics, but also ideologically and politically the most important fine arts academies in China.³²

The cases included in this thesis obviously do not constitute a sufficient representation of professional guohua painters under the PRC. However, because of

³²Although the CAFA was officially established in 1950, its origin can be traced back to the Beiping (now Beijing) National Art School (北平國立藝術學校) which was created by the Nationalist government in 1918. It therefore can be considered as the first modern art school in Chinese history. The ZAFA was founded by Cai Yuanpei in 1928 and had been directly under the Ministry of Education of the ROC until 1949. The symbolic status of the CAFA and ZAFA as the leading academies for fine arts throughout modern Chinese history is well recognized by both Chinese and foreign scholars. The CAAC, a relatively new elite fine arts academy, was established in 1956. Its founding members, including staff and students, were exclusively from three departments of the CAFA. By 1963, China had accomplished two waves of incorporation and readjustment of art academies and schools for higher education. According to a document issued by the Ministry of Culture in 1956, the CAFA, ZAFA and CAAC were the only three “focal fine arts academies” (重點美術院校) of the entire country. Their mandate was two-fold, i.e. “to foster professional artists and teachers with higher political awareness and artistic standards” and “to engage in researches and experiments in fine arts education in order to play an exemplary role for the entire country”.
the experiences that these participants had, which include continual exposure to major political events and movements and the drastic socio-economic transformations since the 1930s, their observations, comments and critiques are of special value to understanding the relations between professional guohua painters and the state in the PRC.

Instead of “Chinese brush painting” (中國毛筆畫) or “Chinese water-ink painting” (中國水墨畫), I consciously adopt the term “guohua painting” (國畫) which is literally translated from “Chinese national painting” or “painting of the Chinese traditional essence” (中國傳統國畫 zhong guo chuan tong guo hua) (see pic. 2-2). I do so, because, in addition to aesthetic and technical considerations, this art form is heavily influenced by Chinese traditional philosophies and political thoughts, especially Confucianism. It also has been an important means to convey cultural and political significance throughout Chinese history and has been largely a practice of intellectuals. As the result, some scholars and even artists themselves treat traditional literati painting (傳統文人畫) as a synonym for guohua painting, although the scope of the latter is more extensive. In this sense, the term “literati tradition” is conflated with the term “national essence” and may create unnecessary methodological problems. This differentiation presents an important caveat. In my discussion, the term “guohua painting” mainly refers to the expressions, principles, techniques and materials, rather than the superficial contents of the painting. Therefore, as long as a vertical scroll depicting a soldier cleaning his rifle is in accordance with Chinese aesthetic requirements, which can be objectively determined by calligraphic connotations and brushworks, and painted with Chinese-style ink and pigments, it is still considered a “guohua painting” in this dissertation. (see pic. 2-3)

As already illustrated by the experiences drawn from Eastern Europe, in the transition from a state-planned to a market-oriented economy, the production and
distribution of artistic products is much more subtle than the case of goods more
directly related to people’s everyday-life (such as manufacturing and trading a bicycle
or a bag of rice). This is particularly true in the case of guohua paintings, because
their artistic and market values are traditionally even more difficult to determine than
those of other traditional visual artworks such as wood carvings or lacquer paintings.
Without a contextual understanding of the of guohua painting in Chinese culture and
Chinese politics and the unbreakable relations between professional guohua painters
and past state ruling apparatus, we can not accurately depict the current relationship in
a market economy between professional guohua painters and the Chinese party-state.

The major theoretical and methodological issues addressed above will be
revisited in the following chapters, as they are crucial to our understanding and
appreciation not only of guohua painters’ cultural and aesthetic qualities, but also of
their long association with social, political and economic powers and functions. This
proposition allows us to think vertically in a historical and cultural context in order to
understand how the relationship between professional guohua painters and the
party-state have changed and stayed the same over time. In the next chapter, I will
introduce the evolution of guohua and different types of relations between guohua
painters and the state from past to present. Outlining only general historical trends, it
is presented in three chronological stages: The imperial era, 1911 to 1949, and 1949 to
1979.33

33 In Taiwan, Chinese historians tend to treat the First Opium War (1840) as the dividing point
of ancient and modern Chinese history. They also use the May Fourth Movement (1919) as the dividing
point for modern and contemporary Chinese history. In the Chinese art market, the categorizing of the
guohua paintings is anything but standard. Neither artists’ life spans nor changes of style necessarily
coincide with major historical events. For the purpose of this dissertation, I use the establishment of the
ROC (1911) and the PRC (1949) as dividing points to vigorously compare the continuities and changes
of guohua painting.
CHAPTER THREE
GUOHUA: A REFLECTION OF CONTINUITIES AND CHANGES IN CHINA’S CULTURE AND POLITICS

While it is necessary to present sufficient background on guohua painting as a reflection of continuities and changes in Chinese culture and politics, an effort has been made to include only those periods, events and ideas that are the most relevant to this research from a macro-historical perspective. As such, the following discussion only intends to outline a general historic trend and is presented in three chronological stages: the imperial era, 1911 to 1949, and 1949 to 1979. The imperial era only traces back as far as the seventh century, when professional artists started to appear regularly in imperial courts. In this chapter, I will show that throughout most of Chinese history, guohua painting is functional to both rulers and artists as a significant statement of political and emotional expression; and that the status and attitudes of professional guohua painters often echo the official ideologies and macro socio-economic circumstances of their time, either positively or negatively.

Also, in my discussion of the Qing Dynasty, during which painters of different schools interacted with one another and certain traditional norms were rapidly breaking down by the market economy, I will identify four types of relations between professional guohua painters and the state. Due to the fact that an artist’s life and career was often in constant change, these “prototypes” are sometimes not as straightforward as we expect them to be. Nevertheless, they are useful for building a good contextual understanding of the triangulation of state, guohua painters and guohua paintings, with which I can further investigate the current relationship between the party-state and professional guohua painters in the PRC under reform.
Guohua Painting from Imperial to Communist China

A Sacred Tradition with Cultural and Political Significance

Most galleries and auction houses in and outside of China usually categorize guohua painting into three chronological sub-fields: ancient, modern and contemporary. While the works from the three stages are quite different in their topics and styles, the core aesthetic principles of guohua painting, which will be discussed in the following sections, remain strikingly robust.

Some Chinese art historians have tried to explain guohua in broad cultural and social contexts. For example, Soame Jenyns observes, “The whole spirit of early [traditional] Chinese [guohua] painting ministered to the need of the religious and social order; its ambition was to encourage good and discourage evil. Artists conceived that it was their duty to warn the dissipated and admonish the extravagant, and above all to transmit the values of earlier and better days.”

Jenyns also uses a story from the life of Confucius to illustrate the point: After viewing the portraits of the heroes and sages, tyrants and degenerates on the walls of the palace of Ching Wang of the Zhou Dynasty at Loyang (洛陽), Confucius turned to his followers and exclaimed, “Here you see how the house of Zhou became so great. As I use a bronze mirror to reflect a recent scene, so antiquity may be pictured as a lesson for posterity.”

In agreement with Jenyns’ observation, Zhang Liguo further finds that Chinese paintings were educationally functional for painters themselves. According to Zhang, Chinese painters submerged in an environment that pays special attention to relationships defined by Confucianism, consciously refine themselves through constantly learning not only painting skills but also proper social conducts to achieve

35 Ibid, pp.35
mastery.” Similarly, when examining the development of painting in China, Shao Qi finds a close tie among the practice of ancestor worship, the rise of intellectuals (who originally served as officials in religious ceremonies in courts) and the maturity of portrait and landscape paintings. Meanwhile, Shao confirms the dual cultivation purposes of Chinese painting as being an external influence on the masses and an internal elevation of the individual artists. He describes the above-mentioned duality as an unbreakable “sacred tradition” [神聖傳統 shen sheng chuan tong] that defies the constant change of dynasties.

Indeed, throughout Chinese history, while the value of Chinese guohua painting has been highly appreciated by cultural elites, its practical use as a political act or statement has also been widely acknowledged by political elites. It is also found that well-known guohua painters either come from or are patronized by cultural and political elite classes. Most historians are satisfied with the fact that Emperor Ming of the Han Dynasty (漢明帝 A.D.28 - 75) built his imperial collection and systematically organized professional painters and artisans to paint huge murals in Buddhist temples in Louyang. Although little information of the activities of the court academy has survived, the custom of recruiting talented artists to the imperial household can be traced back to as early as the Six Dynasties (A.D.220-589) when the political elite classes systematically started to inject more impetus into the advancement of guohua painting. Since then, through ceaseless interactions between painters and their patrons, and through collective and individual studies of the artists, guohua painting has developed into one of the highest forms of cultural achievement.

37 For a detailed discussion, see Q. Shao: Zhong Guo Hua In Mai (The Literati Origin of Chinese Painting) (Shanghai: Shanghai Calligraphy and Painting Press: 2004), pp3-19.
Tang Dynasty

Yan Liben (閻立本 A.D. 601-673), one of the most famous Chinese portrait painters, started his career as a court painter and a low ranking official under Tang Taizong’s reign (唐太宗 A.D. 599-649). Like all artists of the imperial court, Yan was commissioned to paint scholars, generals, foreign diplomats, and deities, including the portraits of 24 of the greatest contributors to Taizong’s reign and 18 scholars who served Taizong when he was still the Prince of Qin. Yan is most famous for “Emperor Taizong Receiving the Tibetan Envoy” [步攆圖 bu nien tu] and “Scroll of the Emperors” [歷代帝王圖卷 li dai di wang tu]. Both show the main figures considerably larger than the other subordinate figures. In addition, each figure’s relative merits (or inferiority) are carefully depicted with various positions, vivid facial expressions and outfits. Because of this type of painting, Yan moved up to one of the highest positions in the government, the Right Chancellor [右丞相, you cheng xiang].

Wu Daozi’s (吳道子 A.D. 686 -760) ability to transform figural representations by vivid realism made him the greatest painter of his time. Wu served as the Chief Scholar of the Imperial Education [內教博士, nei jiao bo shi] - a high-ranking honorable civil official responsible for educating the heirs of the emperor - under the reign of Tang Xuan Zong (唐玄宗 A.D. 685-762). It is said that his depictions of Hell were so terrifyingly real that "many people, after seeing the paintings, ceased wrongdoings and cultivated a moral life and followed vegetarian diets, which caused fish and meat markets to plummet.”³⁹

From a prestigious family, Wang Li (王維 A.D. 701-761) passed the civil service entrance examination in the year of 721 and also had a successful career, rising to become the Left Chancellor (左丞相 zuo cheng xiang). Compared with Yan and

³⁹ Li Fang (925-996) (eds.), Taiping Guangji (Records of the Taiping era), Volum 212.
Wu’s paintings which emphasis realistic expressions of the subjects, Wang’s work represents another different yet important trend of guohua painting. Wang is best known for his poetic depiction of quiet scenes of mountains, water and mist with deceptive simplicity, which can only be attained through self-cultivation and achieved without conscious effort. Although none of Wang’s original paintings survive, critics found that copies with similar qualities give us a good sense of his works, namely that, “Wang Wei’s attitude toward his landscape was subjective. He sought to delve beneath external likeness for significant form.”\(^{40}\) Wang’s aesthetic approach was highly appreciated by Su Shi in the Sung Dynasty and thereafter profoundly influenced what became known as the literati school of guohua painting.

Yan, Wu and Wang’s stories of prestigious painters and successful statesmen highlight the dual identity of these talented painters in the Tang imperial court. While each excelled in the domain of guohua painting in a different way, they all maintained good relationships with the emperors and gained tremendous reputations among their peers, Zhou Fang, Han Huang, Han Gan and Li Sixun to name just a few, also had successful careers as scholar-officials.

**Sung Dynasty**

It is a widely accepted notion that the Sung Dynasty is the most splendid period in the history of guohua painting. With the tremendous resources and the collective efforts of the Sung emperors and the extremely talented court painters, the works by the court painters during the Sung Dynasty represent one of the highest aesthetic achievements in China. And the achievement of Emperor Hui Zong’s (宋徽宗 A.D.1101-1126) Imperial Painting Academy [畫院 Hua Yuan] stands out as a marvelous example.

The establishment of the academy at the capital city Bien Liang by Hui Zong provided a great impetus for the painters of the day. It granted special patronage to the established painters and sponsored the training for the most promising ones. Compared to other professionals, the members of the academy enjoyed honorable positions and were even granted certain official ranks.\(^{41}\)

Eager to combine ancient models with new sentiments, Hui Zong often presided at competitions and interfered with the artists’ works. Members of the Imperial Painting Academy were often ordered to paint subjects with detailed descriptions corresponding to objects. Expected to paint precisely following specific rules and canons, they had to submit sketches for imperial approval, before working on important commissioned pieces. This ensured the faithful realization of the emperor’s aesthetic tastes. In 1126, the year before the fall of Bien Liang to the Nuchen’s Liao Dynasty, Zhang Zeduan (張擇端 A.D.1085-1145) was commissioned to paint the capital in a long hand scroll entitled “Going up the River for the Spring Festival” [清明上河圖]. Considered a precious jewel in the history of Chinese painting, the scroll vividly illustrates the economic and social activities in the Sung capital and surely conveys to its audience an unmistakable impression of a “prosperous Cathay” under Hui Zong’s reign.

As a great artist and connoisseur in his own right, Hui Zong is also a great imperial collector of art in Chinese history. The catalogue of his painting collection, known as the “Xuan He Hua Pu” [宣和畫譜], has survived and provides us with important messages. Arranged according to their subjects, 6,396 paintings are categorized into ten classifications, such as paintings of fur and feather, Taoist and Buddhist scenes, human affairs, palaces, houses and foreign tribes to name a few.

\(^{10}\) During Hui Zong’s reign, the members of the academy were permitted to wear a scarlet-purple dress and the pei-yu, a fish-shaped jewel made of gold and jade. Both symbolized that court painters in Sung Dynasty were indeed officials of rank.
Statistically, a very large portion of the imperial collections of the Song court had themes closely related to religion and politics.\(^{42}\)

Indeed, the existing paintings by professional painters in the courts of the Tang and Sung dynasties often demonstrate significant social educational functions and political meanings. In terms of their artistic expression, they are usually realistic, rich in colors, and in accordance with restricted rules and regulations, in order to “serve state orthodoxy and play a central role in the ritual affirmation of the imperial cult”.\(^{43}\) However, this “professional tradition”\(^{44}\) represents only part of the relationship among guohua paintings, artists and state.

Due to the failure of ambitious social and economic reforms directed by the north Sung court, the state’s moral authorities declined sharply. The state ideology was questioned and the discourse between the scholar-officials sharpened. It is under this political and social unease that the Literati Painting School gradually became popular especially among those intellectuals who were rejected from the mainstream political arena of the times. This school is established on the artistic views of Su Shi (蘇軾 A.D.1036-1101) of the north Sung dynasty, who at first served as a government official and then suffered many years of persecution imposed by his political foes in the court.\(^{45}\) Both ideologically and artistically becoming a counterforce against the

\(^{42}\) For detailed numbers and a statistical analysis of the catalogues, see S. Jenyns (1966), pp.107.
\(^{44}\) James Cahill divides the development of the art of Chinese painting into three phases. The first phase begins with the Han Dynasty and ends with the North Sung Dynasty. He defines this period as “professional tradition”. For a detailed discussion, see J. Cahill, *The History of Chinese Painting* (Taipei: Lion Publishing Co., Ltd., 1985), pp.139.
\(^{45}\) Su Shi passed the imperial examination at an early age. He then entered the civil service and was promoted quickly for his impressive talent, and soon became an active participant in politics. But after the age of 30 or so, he found himself caught in political trouble for his disagreement with the reformers led by Wang Anshi (王安石 A.D. 1021-1086). Subsequently, for more than 30 years, he was mostly in exile as a low-level local official in remote provinces. Su Shi’s early enthusiasm in court politics displayed the ambitious aspects of his beliefs. Nonetheless, because of the ongoing troubles during the second half of his life, he leaned towards the Taoist and Buddhist beliefs. These tendencies are reflected in his paintings and aesthetic theories, which profoundly influenced future artists.
orthodox court tradition, this private art form is more concerned with impressionist ideas and symbolic values.

Su Shi claims, “Those who judge [the merit and artistic value of] paintings by form-likeness show merely the insight of a child.”46 To him, the expression of the artist’s inner feelings through affective and persuasive language in painting is more interesting and important than its purely mimetic and descriptive role. With an emphasis on individual expression and innovation, Su’s idea of literati painting gradually gained popularity among intellectuals and exerted a significant influence on the development of painting in later generations. Painters following this tradition started to shift their focus from “mimetic representation” [寫形, xiexing] to “self-expression of one’s inner feelings” [寫意, xieyi]. They also used poems, seals and signatures to add more significance to their works, which also had political and ideological implications (see pic. 3-1). Therefore, it can be argued that the rise and flourishing of the literati painting in China was an outcome of the declining legitimacy of the state during the Sung period.

Yuan Dynasty

The establishment of the Yuan Dynasty in 1279 represents an important impetus to the division of the northern and southern schools of Chinese painting.47 More importantly, it also spurred new types of relationship between intellectual painters and the state for centuries to come. To illustrate this, first I shall look at the artists of the court, particularly the famous scholar-official painter Zhao Mengfu (趙孟頫

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46 This is a translation of Su Shi’s own words, “Lun Hua Yi Xing Si, Jian Yi Er Tong Lin”. The complete script can be found in Su’s poem entitled “Shu Yan Ling Wang Zhu Bu Suo Hua Zhe Zhi” (Comments on Official Wang’s Painting Entitled “Broken Sticks”).

47 Some scholars use “the Southern School” and “the Northern School”, instead of “the Academic (Imperial) Tradition” and “the Literati Tradition” to describe the two major trends of guohua painting. Yet, most agree that it is during the Yuan Dynasty that the division was permanently consolidated.
A.D.1254-1322), and then turn to the Four Masters of the Yuan Dynasty\textsuperscript{48} in the context of the political and social confrontation between the Mongols and the Han Chinese.

Yuan emperors tried to imitate the Confucian conservatism adopted by their predecessors through paintings of moral themes executed in the traditional imperial style. These paintings became an important part of the official propaganda. Their appreciation of guohua painting, however symbolic, also helped to cultivate an image of themselves as proper rulers of the Han culture majority. Although the Yuan Dynasty never established an independent painting academy, it did have a “Director-General for Various Categories of Artisans” \textsuperscript{[諸色人匠總管府]} and a “Bureau for Imperial Manufacture” \textsuperscript{[將作院]}. Both institutes provided many talented professional painters with formal civil positions. The religious, portraiture and documentary paintings, which were commissioned by the court and cited in “the Record of Yuan Dynasty Painting and Sculpture” \textsuperscript{[元代畫塑記 Yuan Dai Hua Su Ji]},\textsuperscript{49} clearly follow the academic professional tradition, although understandably mixed with certain Mongolian elements and characteristics.

To many Chinese artists, in the context of the acute confrontation between the oppressing Mongol minority and the oppressed Han majority, providing service to the Yuan court proved to be a difficult choice. This predicament is illustrated by Benjamin Elman in his book \textit{A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China}. Elman finds that the orthodox dao learning \textsuperscript{[道學 daoxue]} in the Sung, Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasty derived its rigorosity and popularity in part from the continuous struggle between Han insiders and non-Han outsiders. Led by the

\textsuperscript{48} “The Four Masters of the Yuan Dynasty” is a term used to collectively describe the four guohua painters Huang Gongwang (1269-1554), Wu Zhen (1280-1354), Ni Zan (1306-1374) and Wang Meng (1301-1385). They worked during the Yuan period (1206-1368) and consolidated the Literati School position as the leading trend in Chinese painting until the early 20\textsuperscript{th} Century.

\textsuperscript{49} See \textit{Zhong Guo Mei Shu Cong Kan} (Beijing: Xin Hua Book Store: 1964)
neo-Confucian philosopher Zhu Xi (朱熹 A.D. 1130-1200), Chinese intellectuals devised an orthodox lineage of the Way [道統 daotong], in which they anointed themselves the direct heirs of the legendary sage kings and Confucius as well as differentiating themselves from non-Han political elites.50

It becomes fascinating to look at the life of Zhao Mengfu, who was a member of the Sung imperial family and the most celebrated calligrapher and painter of his time. Zhao accepted the offer of the Yuan emperor to serve at the court and was eventually raised as a first class official – the highest rank in the traditional “Nine Class Civil Official System”. Zhao received serious criticism from his contemporaries for his service in the Yuan court. However, Zhao also an able administrator and a very shrewd politician, Zhao strived to revitalize the traditional canon of Chinese painting at the Yuan court. His decision to be part of the state ruling apparatus paradoxically served the all-important purpose of reasserting Han cultural autonomy under the foreign Mongolian regime.

As Zhao Mengfu took a cooperative stance with the non-Han regime, the Four Masters of the Yuan Dynasty [元四大家] represent a different relationship between artists and the state. The Four Masters are often praised for their integrity. None of them enjoyed a relationship with the Mongol ruling elites even remotely as good as Zhao Mengfu did. According to history, one of the masters, Huang Gongwang (黃公望) was wrongly accused and imprisoned during his brief service as a local official under the Yuan court. After his release, Huang decided to give up his career in the government, spending much of his time traveling and painting. Wang Meng (王蒙), the grandson of Zhao Mengfu, did not succeed in his short career in the Yuan court. According to his biography, Wang later exiled himself to the remote mountainous

50See B. Elman, A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China (Berkeley: University of California Press: 2000), pp. 621.
area near Hangzhou to avoid persecution. Wu Zen (吳鎮), who used to make his living as a fortune-teller, was a sincere believer in Buddhism and Taoism throughout his life. Living almost like a hermit, Wu explicitly showed his desire to become a part of nature, often expressing his contempt for the political elites with inscriptions in his paintings. Quite contrary to Wu Zen, Ni Zan (倪瓚) was born into a very wealthy family. Caring nothing about politics and with an immense inherited fortune, he designed his own garden and mansion in Wuxi (無錫), where he stored his collection of masterpieces of the previous dynasties and exchanged ideas with his contemporary artists. Nevertheless, with the increasing political and social turmoil and the oppressive taxes laid onto the rich landowners by the Yuan emperor, Ni became aggressively “anti-government” during his later years. He was taken into prison for his resistance to excessive taxation. It has been established that, after being released from prison, he distributed all his possessions to his friends and wandered throughout the relatively peaceful coastal area and continued to paint until he passed away at the age of 68. Ni is best known for his autumn landscape with an atmosphere of solitude and his obsession for cleanliness, which are thought to reveal his moral character and dissatisfaction toward the political and social turmoil of the time.\(^{51}\)

Yuan rulers were in severe tension with their Han subordinates. It was thought that they were never truly interested in Chinese painting and didn’t preserve the tradition of the Hua Yaun Academy (畫院). This may have interfered with the progress of professional tradition, i.e. the orthodox painting style sponsored by the

\(^{51}\) The Four Masters all consciously emulated the works by the masters of the pre-Tang period, who used predominantly calligraphic brushstrokes and ink to depict landscape in an impressionistic manner. They collectively brought the literati tradition of painting to its maturity and have been revered throughout the later periods as the major exponents of the Literati School. To them, it is imperative for painters to cultivated spiritual loftiness, refined manners and knowledge through studies of the classics and through intimate interactions with nature, which are then physically realized on a piece of paper or silk through highly skilled handling of the calligraphic brush. For a detailed discussion on the style of their works, please see W. Fong, *Sung and Yuan Paintings* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art: 1973), pp.111-113.
courts and political elites. Yet, at the same time, it helped to create a social context, in
which two types of relationships between the artists and the state co-existed. They
coincide with two different attitudes of Chinese intellectuals toward politics as
described by Confucius: “If the Way prevailed in the world, there would be no need
for me to involve [in politics]; if the Way fails to be implemented, I will float out to
sea on a raft.”

Zhao Mengfu appeared to believe that if he were to contribute his
talent and fulfill his duty to the troubled country, he would need to maintain proper
relations with the ruling elites. Yet, the Four Masters decided to follow the second
line of the Confucian philosophy, by staying away from the political world, because
in their opinion, the Way (道統 Daotong) was not and could not be implemented by
the heterodox Yuan rulers.

Ming Dynasty

Beginning in the fourteenth Century and extending into the early twentieth Century,
the Ming and Qing dynasties are the grand transitional periods from ancient to
modern China. During these periods, the literati tradition continued to be dominant.
Nevertheless, the internal reforms and changes in the State as well as in society, and
the increasing contacts with the outside world had a profound influence on guohua
painting and artists.

Although there were no such patrons of guohua like Sung Hui Zong in the
following years, in many ways, such as with systematic institutional and financial
support and immense personal involvement, the emperors of the Ming Dynasty
(A.D.1368-1644) did re-establish the tradition of recruiting professional painters to
work in the court. While scholarly painters further developed their self-cultivation of

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52 Translated from The Analects, Book XVIII: 天下有道丘不為易也 tian xia you dao, qiu bu yi ye and
Book V: 道不行浮於海 dao bu xing cheng fu fu hai.
personal performance, professional academic painters were again instructed in realistic representation, in emulation of the styles and techniques of the Sung court painting. To a certain extent, this revival of orthodox aesthetic views may be interpreted as the Ming emperors’ and political elites’ intention to revive the old glory of the Han culture, after China experienced nearly a century-long “dark period” under foreign rulers. Aimed at conveying the virtue of the emperors and the majesty of the current dynasty, large-scale figural narratives were favored as typical images during the early Ming. In the 86-foot-long horizontal scroll, the Imperial Procession Departing from the Palace [出警圖 chu jing tu], 1,099 figures, 785 horses, and imperial carriages drawn by elephants are all carefully displayed in great detail. The Ming emperor depicted in the military uniform is considerably larger than his guards – a practice commonly seen in the imperial tradition. Meticulously executed magnificent landscapes and flower-and-bird compositions were also in demand to decorate the palaces and important offices during this period.

The Ming court never formally established the Hua Yuan Academy within its government system. During the Hong Wu (洪武 A.D.1368-1398) and Yong Le (永曆 A.D.1403-1424) periods, the recruited professional painters were assigned to various positions ranging from official in charge of government documents [中書舍人 Zhongshu Sheren], expectant official [翰林待召 Hanlin Daizhao], and official responsible for royal construction and engineering [營繕授承 Yingshan Suocheng]. Many works by professional painters of the Ming court are preserved in the two Palace Museums (故宮博物院) in Taipei and Beijing, and evidently testify to the high

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53 For detailed images and discussions, see C. Na, The Emperor’s Precession: Two Scrolls of the Ming Dynasty (Taipei: The National Palace Museum: 1970).
54 According to the existing official record of the Palace Museum in Beijing, during the Ming Dynasty there were between 100 and 200 painters who used to work in the court as officials of ranks. This number doesn’t include artisans without official ranks called “hua shi” [畫師] – when literally translated, the person who paints in the court. For a more detailed discussion, see The Palace Museum (ed.), "Ming Dai Gong Ting Yu Zhe Pai Hui Hua Xuan Ji (Selections of Imperial Paintings of the Ming Dynasty )" (Beijing: In Wu Press: 1983)
standards of the paintings produced in the Ming court. However, with the substantial weakening of overall strength of the state, especially since the reign of Emperor Shengzong (神宗, A.D.1563-1620), paintings of the academy tradition suffered a corresponding decline. On the other hand, sponsored by a rising wealthy merchant class, literati painters had already become very well established outside of the domain of direct state interference.

Around this time, great master Shen Zhou (沈周 A.D.1427-1509) and his student Wen Zhengming (文徵明 A.D.1470-1559) founded the famous Wu School, whose members were mostly experts not only in painting but also calligraphy and poetry. Both Shen, once a tax captain, and Wen, once an expectant official, were born into aristocratic families and studied classics in their youth in order to climb the social hierarchy. Their biographies do not say much about their brief service in the Ming government. Nevertheless, Shen and Wen were respected by the leading officials of the court for their reputation as talented scholar artists. Together with Dong Qichang (董其昌 A.D.1555-1636), an art theorist, calligrapher and painter, they played a major role in further consolidating the status of the literati school in Chinese history.

While the Ming state’s overall power was declining, the rise of the merchant class since the mid-Ming period directly spurred the demand for cultural products. It also facilitated cultural exchange domestically and internationally. In this context, two findings are particular relevant to the discussion on the artists’ relation with the state. First, the bureaucrats in the Ming Dynasty experienced one of the darkest periods of servants of the emperors in Chinese history. Records show that not only their status declined, but their salaries also were pathetically low. As the traditional Confucian values consistently faced serious challenges from within and outside the intelligentsia, by the mid-Ming utilitarianism had become popular and the value of the “cultural products” was reconsidered. Hence, guohua paintings that were once beyond the
reach of all but political and cultural elites in the previous dynasties suddenly became readily available to the general public. Secondly, with the booming of the trading cities since the mid-Ming era, the wealthy merchants’ ideal of identifying with the scholar-gentry class was realised by patronizing the artists and by actually becoming members of their class. As a consequence, the dual quality of guohua painting as sophisticated artwork and as a trade commodity with market value was further consolidated.

With their economic prosperity and open opportunity, more affluent cities such as Huizhou, Yangzhou, Shanghai and Tianjin drew talented painters from all over China. By the late Qing Dynasty, in addition to galleries, individual intermediaries and certain art organizations had already actively engaged in the art business. Many affluent merchants enjoyed the company of professional artists and supported them with their patronage. At the same time, the literati artists still maintained their relatively high social status on their own merits.

It is said that the famous artist Zhao Mengfu, a Yuan dynasty statesman, once wrote out a text named the “Heart Sutra” [心經, Xin Jing] in exchange for some fine tea. A long scroll by Qiu Ying (仇英, A.D.1494 -1552), now in the Cleveland Museum, was accompanied by the same short Buddhist text by Wen Zhengming, a highly esteemed Literati School master. A colophon dated A.D.1543 by Wen Zhengming’s oldest son, mentions how Zhou Fenglai, a noted wealthy collector in Kunshan, commissioned his father to make up the writing. It also shows how Wen Peng marked

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55 In his book, *Chinese Painting and Modern China*, Liu Xilin lists all the major Chinese painting organizations between the late Qing and the ROC period. According to his research, quite a few art organizations either directly sold artworks or served as mediators for their members. The profits were usually shared between artists and the organization. Although obviously not comparable to the scale of the Chinese art market in our times, the thinking still applies to modern society. For instance, “Shanghai Seal, Calligraphy and Painting Association” once chaired by the leading figure of the Shanghai School I Chang-shuo (1844-1927), made selling the works for its members one of its mandates. For details, see Liu Xilin, *Chinese Painting and Modern China, Zhong Guo Hua Yu Xian Dai Zhong Guo* (Guanxi: Guanxi Art Press, 1997) pp.469-478 (attachment).
his status as his father’s agent, the buffer between the artist and the explicit exchange of money for artwork. I have also learned that on another occasion Zhou Fenglai paid Qiu Ying the sum of 100 ounces (兩 liang) of silver outright for a hand scroll to be given as a birthday gift to Zhou’s mother.56

It is certainly misleading to assume that the painters would be free thereafter from the influence of the political elites or would become artistically less respectable than their predecessors. The above-mentioned new trends since the mid-Ming dynasty simply pointed to a new possibility for the painters. Before the mid-Ming dynasty, well-established professional painters were often assured regular income from their official posts or patronage from political elites. On the other hand, those who dissented from the official ideologies of their time shared their own idealistic tastes within prestigious cultural circles and demonstrated great contempt for commercial activities. The emergence of utilitarian thinking since the mid-Ming started to erode the orthodox Confucian doctrines within officialdom and society at large, which helped change the roles and attitudes of painters and eventually spurred the commercialization process of guohua painting.

Qing Dynasty

As the last imperial period in China, during which tradition collided with modernity, Qing dynasty provides us with an important socio-economic context for the classification of guohua painters. Four types of painters will be discussed in the following sections. The first type follows the imperial academic tradition (professional painters who work for the state). The other three follow the literati tradition with variations, including “orthodox” (literati painters who enjoy support or

honorary status from the State), “innovating” (literati painters who voluntarily keep distance from the influence of the state and innovate their works) and “eccentric freelancing” (literati painters who become professional in order to make a living).

Painters of Imperial Academic Tradition

In 1644 the Manchu minority took over Beijing and consolidated their power as the new ruling power for the next 273 years. The Qing rulers, while maintaining their political control by heavy-handed measures, were determined to adopt Confucianism as the official ideology for administrating the country. Due to such an approach, the early Qing emperors, particularly Kang Xi (康熙 A.D.1662 - 1722), Yong Zheng (雍 正 A.D.1723 - 1735) and Qian Long (乾隆 A.D.1736 - 1795), were genuinely conscious of cultivating the cultural industry, so as to win the support of Han intellectuals. Furthermore, the three emperors were all highly cultivated in traditional Han culture and were proven to be great patrons of guohua painting.

Based on the archival evidence, upon arrival at the Qing court each painter had to undergo a period of probation, during which he received only an allowance for food, a position similar to that of an art student in the Hua Yuan Academy in the Sung Dynasty. Although no clear evidence of painters’ ranks were found during the periods of Kang Xi and Yong Zheng, archives show that, under the reign of Qian Long, once admitted to court, painters were graded and given a rank. According to Zhang Hongxing’s detailed archival research, in 1741 the Workshops of the Department of the Imperial Household announced a proclamation that six artists were to be graded first rank and to receive a monthly allowance of eleven liang of silver each, four artists were to be graded second rank and receive nine liang each, five artists were to be graded third rank and to receive seven liang each. These monthly allowances
equated with those of the highest rank in the reign of the Qian Long Emperor. In addition to monthly allowances, according to Zhang, luxury goods, special leaves of absence and posthumous rewards could all provide incentives to court painters to contribute their talents. On the other hand, the threat of punishment also effectively acted as a warning to court artists. For instance, in 1747, the famous first rank court painter Jin Kun (金昆) was dismissed from his post after he painted one of the eight banners in the wrong position by mistake in a commissioned documentary painting of the grand military review.

With continuous support from the three emperors and through the collective efforts of the court artists, the tradition of professional guohua painting reached another peak in the mid-Qing period. Often based on actual incidents, many of the imperial paintings were collaborated works by court painters recruited in China and from European countries. These court artists expertly combined traditional Chinese subjects and composition with western realistic painting techniques. With great political and ideological significance, theses paintings were created not only to glorify the emperors, nobles and persons of great contribution, but also to help consolidate the mandate and legitimacy of the Manchu ruling elites. Although a few painters did have limited influence in the court, due to their personal favoritism received from the emperors, most court painters basically functioned as professional technical bureaucrats loyally serving the court.

**Painters of Literati Tradition**

With the increasing strength of the Manchu regime, many Han intellectuals chose to stay loyal to the Ming Dynasty. The dialectic nature of the relationship between the

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58 Ibid., pp167.
artists and the state of the Yuan Dynasty was repeated to a certain extent in most of this period. Similar to the Yuan and Ming dynasties, the most important achievement of guohua painting in Qing dynasty continued to come from the literati tradition.

Again, this trend must be examined in relation to the political and ideological circumstances of the time. Manchu’s brutal takeover and subsequent cultural suppression during its early reign, exemplified by the case of “imprisonment due to literary inquisition” [文字狱 wen zi yu], was a tremendous psychological shock to many Han intellectuals who harbored strong nationalist sentiments and cultural superiority.\(^{59}\) Later, from the eighteenth to nineteenth Century, the rise of the wealthy merchant class in the lower Yangtze River region provided liberated intellectuals with opportunities to market themselves. This was the real socio-economic context in which the Qing artists painted. Their feeling of resentment, discomfort, dissatisfaction and desire to avoid politics and to achieve financial independence was often reflected in the styles and contents of their works. In order to examine more closely their relations to the State in this period, I shall further discuss literati painters in three specific categories: Orthodox, Innovative and Professional Eccentric.

**A. Orthodox Literati Painters**

The orthodox literati painters can best be represented by “the Four Wangs” [四王], which includes Wang Shimin (王时敏 1592-1680), Wang Jian (王鉴 1598-1677), Wang Hui (王翚 1632-1720) and Wang Yuanqi (王原祁 1642-1715). Among the four, Wang Shimin and Wang Jian were civil officials of the Ming Dynasty. With the end of the Ming dynasty, they both left their posts and never served in the Qing court.

\(^{59}\) During the reign of Yong Zheng and Qian Long, many of the scholars were mainly from the lower Yangzi region around Suzhou, the birthplace of the famous Wu School, founded by Shen Zhou and Wen Zhengming, and were brutally persecuted for their written materials that were not related to politics. As a result, many intellectuals began archaeological research in order to avoid wrongful accusations.
Wang Hui, a student of Wang Shimin and Wang Jian, was born into a well-off family with artistic traditions and was the best known among the four. According to his biography, as a sixty-year-old civilian Wang Hui was commissioned by the Kangxi Emperor to record the momentous event of the emperor’s second southern tour. Wang Hui and his assistants -- mostly professional imperial painters -- broke the journey down into episodes and designed a series of twelve massive scrolls, which are now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York. Wang Yuanqi, grandson of Wang Shimin, was born two years before the fall of the Ming Dynasty. He passed the imperial examination in 1670, when he was twenty-eight. Unlike the other three Wangs who never held any civil posts under the Manchu emperors, Wang Yuanqi made his career all the way up to Deputy Minister of Interior Affairs (戶部侍郎). He was also the chief editor of several catalogues of important imperial painting and calligraphy collections under Kang Xi’s reign.

The works of the “Four Wangs” exhibited a great attachment to learning from the orthodox skills of the previous literati masters that were particularly appreciated for their mastery of traditional brushstroke techniques. None of these painters served as an imperial artist per se, but they received praise and, in some cases, patronage and honorary status from the emperor. They often shared companionship with powerful high-ranking officials and were well associated with famous masters and peers. They tended to take a more compromising and flexible stance in the face of dramatic political change. They did not necessarily support the foreign regime but neither did they outright stand up against it.

B. Innovative Literati Painters

The Four Great Monk Painters – Hongren (弘仁), Kuncan (髡殘), Ba Da Shan Ren (八大山人) and Shitao (石濤), who all lived during the Ming-Qing interregnum,
represent another type of the literati painters in the Qing Dynasty. Ba Da Shan Ren and Shitao were descendents of the Ming royal family and received considerable education in their youth. It is believed that, after the fall of Ming, they became monks to avoid political turmoil and possible persecution. Hongren and Kuncan did not have royal connections, but were enthusiastic about imperial examination and used to extensively study Chinese classics, in hope of becoming civil officials in the court. Kuncan became a monk immediately after the last Ming emperor Chongzhen (崇禎皇帝) hanged himself in 1644. Hongren waited for three more years after realizing that it was impossible to reverse the political reality. It is reasonable for us to imagine that all four would have had promising careers, should the Ming Dynasty have had lasted for a few more decades.

Since they were involved in the contemptuous life of officials and they were also devoid of personal ambition, these monk painters were progressive artists who broke the conventional rules and standards established by masters in the past. They painted mainly to express their concepts and bitter feelings about the fall of the Ming Dynasty and the end of the orthodox Dao tradition. Ba Da Shan Ren was particularly interested in applying symbolic references to express his unhappiness with the political reality.

Another notable group that also worked along this non-orthodox literati line was the “Eight Masters of Jinling” (金陵八家). This group was centered in Jinling (today’s Nanjing), which was of symbolic importance as the capital city of the early Ming Dynasty. By gathering in the old capital, these painters manifested their opposition to the rule of the new dynasty. Like the Four Monks, they disregarded conventions and emphasized personality, innovation and impressions in their works. Although disassociated with the official state painters for different reasons, all of the Eight Masters of Jinling had studied the classics and practiced calligraphy as a career in government offices.
In general, painters falling into this cohort tended to take a non-cooperative or even an antagonistic stance against the ruling elites. Powerless within the political reality and the new social order of the time, they tended to disassociate with politicians or even society as a whole. An aspect of this can be seen in the way many of these artists often gave away their works as gifts, as they were not particularly interested in exchanging them for money or other material returns.

C. Professional Freelance Literati Painters

The above-mentioned two expressions of the literati tradition, respectively represented by the Four Wangs and the Four Monks and the Eight Masters, all reflect the hardship of the political realities of the early Qing Dynasty. In contrary, from the eighteenth to nineteenth century, merchants in the lower Yangtze River region, particularly in Yangzhou and Shanghai, began to hold great economic power and helped create a new socio-economic context for literati painters. With the intention of upgrading their social status, they replaced the role of the merchants in Anhui province (徽商) in the Ming Dynasty and became important patrons of the art. These merchants, eager to pursue literati taste, displayed their cultural refinement not only in collecting good paintings of past dynasties, but also in patronizing contemporary painters. According to Ginger Cheng-chi Hsu, in the eighteenth century, Yangzhou’s wealth and demand for culture drew men of talent from all over. The merchant-patrons’ minds were open and their tastes were wide-ranging. In terms of painting connoisseurship they leaned toward literati taste but were not confined by it. Famous painters were often invited to live in the household of a merchant to make portraits, depict scenic villas, and to copy important collections, which often resulted
in a long-term patron-client relationship. On the other hand, a new generation of educated professionals dwelt in and found financial support from the urban private sector, and they no longer viewed public service as their ultimate goal.

The traditional classification of scholar, craftsman and merchant also became blurred. In this context, the eccentric painters active in Yangzhou during the eighteenth century, collectively known as the Yanzhou School [揚州畫派], serve as an outstanding example of the liberated literati painters who tried to achieve financial independence by marketing themselves. Biographers of these literati artists, e.g. Zheng Xie (鄭燮 1693-1765), Jin Nong (金農 1687-1763) and Huang Shen (黃慎 1687-1772), record explicitly that they depended on selling paintings as their major source of income. This overt “buying and selling” practice may be interpreted as a great leap forward, compared with the emphasis on the ideas of an “exchange of favor” for the business-minded literati painters of the Ming dynasty.

In another essay, Hsu studies the commercialization of painting in Yangzhou and reaffirms a very important consequence of such a development. For example, there was an overt challenge to the traditional Confucian norm regarding guohua paintings and painters. According to Confucian ideals, members of the literati class were expected to devote themselves to public service and assume educational leadership. One who took painting as his principal activity to make a living was considered a craftsman or an artisan at best. With the rise of the Yangzhou painters in the eighteenth century, social disapproval of the professional literati painters, who were increasingly involved in commercial activities relaxed. This trend was further

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61 The list of names constituting the famous Eight Eccentrists of Yanzhou [Yanzhou Ba Guai] has varied. To avoid unnecessary confusion, I use the term Yanzhou School to include all the painters of similar talents, agenda and inspiration in Yanzhou in the eighteenth century.
strengthened by the commercialization of paintings in Shanghai in the nineteenth century.

It would be naïve to suppose that all these professional freelance literati painters were successful at selling their art. In fact, many of them, both in eighteenth century Yangzhou and in nineteenth century Shanghai, were poverty-stricken at the end of their lives. Nevertheless, commercialism of the merchant-bourgeois society facilitated a non-traditional route for the scholar-painters. It also created room for the popular professionals and a new type of relation (or “no relation”) for guohua painter vis-à-vis the state.

The Republic Era (1911 – 1949)

In addition to changes at the domestic level, changes that affected the status of guohua painting and the role of artists had also already taken place at the international level prior to the establishment of the Republic of China in 1911. With the series of military defeats of China by the western powers and Japan, debates over the correct Chinese response to these drastic changes became the center of the intellectual activities in the final years of the Qing Dynasty. Some found Chinese culture to be backward and that only through a total westernization (全盤西化 quanpan xihua) could China be made into a viable nation. Others aspired to modify Chinese culture with more advanced science, technology and ideas from the west (西體中用 xiti zhongyong). Still others upheld traditional Chinese culture and insisted that it must be preserved at all cost.

After the funding of the Republic of China, Cai Yuanpei, the Minister of Education, established a new educational system modeled on the west. In terms of aesthetics education, Cai emphasized both compatibility and diversity. Later, the Literary Renaissance of 1917 hailed the importance of literature and art in modern society. These were all recognized by many as new forces to revitalize guohua
painting. The period between 1917 and 1921 marks the most visible focal point of the turbulence that includes various events, such as the New Culture Movement, the May Fourth Movement, the merchants and workers’ strikes as well as other social and political activities advocated by the intellectuals. The May Fourth Movement of 1919 particularly reiterated the importance of literature and art in modern society and encouraged literati and artists to pursue individual independence. The validity of guohua painting not only as a representation of Chinese culture but as valid type of art form and means of communication, was faced with an unprecedented challenge from both within and outside Chinese society. As a result, many guohua painters increasingly expressed dissatisfaction with traditional literati taste, as various western art genres and aesthetic ideas continued to pour into China on a massive scale. In this context, the solid realistic expression highlighted by nineteenth century European art (a novel form of artistic representation to Chinese artists) also started to show its influence on Chinese art. Many art students were attracted to European techniques. Some of the well-established traditional guohua painters also decided to incorporate western techniques and ideas into their own works. Meanwhile, Japanese-style brush painting, which had already adopted contemporary subjects and realism, was introduced into China at an increased rate, due to improved transportation time and intimate cultural connections between the two countries. Its strong impact on guohua painters is particularly noticeable in the Lingnan School [嶺南畫派] in the Guandong area of China (see pic. 3-2).

In a time of drastic political, economic and psychological changes, it is natural that new disciplines emerge and prosper. Nevertheless, although we may see the May Fourth Movement as an important event pushing guohua painting into the modern era,

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it is worth mentioning that the Movement itself made no direct effort to replace Chinese traditional painting with new art. In fact, between the 1920s and 1940s, without sustainable institutional constraints or guidance, individual artists were able to emerge from existing schools and set out on their own to work in styles of their choosing. Although many guohua painters combined two or more styles to meet specific aesthetic purposes of the time, there were people who still insisted on the traditional methods and core principles. As time progressed, guohua paintings of this period developed into three basic styles: traditional, modified traditional and non-traditional guohua painting. It is important to point out that while the means and methods of expression became much more diverse, the governing “Six Principles” specified by Xie He (謝赫 A.D.479-502) remained to function as a guideline to guohua painters.

Often recognized as a time of riots, wars and revolution, the Republican Era proved to be an important period during which modern Chinese art emerged and thrived. The establishment of modern art educational institutes, including Shanghai Art School in 1912, Beijing Art School in 1918 and the National Art College in 1928, enabled more talented youths to receive professional training. Periodicals and books published in the 1920s and 1930s about the collection of the National Palace Museum greatly expanded knowledge and interests in guohua paintings amongst the public. The Forbidden Palace was opened as a museum and the guohua paintings there by masters of different dynasties became available for public viewing.

65 Xie He, an art historian and critic in the Six Dynasties (222-589 A.D.), established the “Six Principles”. Their permanence remains a testament to their importance within guohua painting. These principles are spirit resonance, bone method, correspondence to the object, suitability to type, division and planning, and transmission by copying. According to Xie, the foremost of the six is spirit resonance [氣韻生動 qiyun shengdong], without which a painting is devoid of any serious artistic merit.
The changes mentioned above also had an impact on the Chinese art market. In addition to older guohua paintings, the demand for works by well-established contemporary artists, e.g. Wu Changshou (吳昌碩 1844-1927) and Qi Baishi (齊白石 1863-1957), was constantly high. Collectors from foreign countries – Japan in particular – were also very active in the Chinese art market during the Republic period. With all the social and political unrest, an estrangement between the world of the economic elites and that of the guohua painters expedited the commercialization of painting in China.

The Pre-1979 PRC Era

The establishment of the People’s Republic of China symbolizes the beginning of a new era for Chinese society as a whole including the practice of guohua painting and the fate of the artists. Given the complexity of the topic, researchers differ in categorizing and characterizing the stages of development of guohua paintings in the PRC. Still, general trends can be identified in three related issue areas: The official ideology on guohua painting, the role of guohua painters, and the market for guohua painting.

Before 1949, following the spirit of the Yenan Talk by Mao Zedung in May 1942, communist artists from the “liberated zone” had spent years producing pro-communist propaganda, mainly in the form of woodblock prints (see pic. 3-3) and “modern New Year’s pictures” (see pic. 3-4). In 1949, the Chinese Communist party’s ideological beliefs became formal policies. Julia F. Andrews’ observation

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66 Since the 1990s, many auctions held in China have been filled with guohua paintings recovered from Japan. According to the quality and quantity of the Chinese paintings that have been brought back from Japan so far, the number of Chinese guohua paintings transported there during the Republic period is staggering. For detailed statistics, see Zhongguo zhan shi wen wu sun shi liang ji gu jia mu lu (A General Catalogue for Cultural and Art Works Plundered during the ROC Era) (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan Press, 1991).
regarding the new regime’s official view toward literature and arts can be summarized in two points. First, literature and arts should serve the people, inspire the political enlightenment of the people and encourage the people’s enthusiasm. Second, Communist art workers should quickly train many art cadres and remold artists to serve the workers, peasants and soldiers, and should use modern painting technology to issue art in large quantities for the masses.\(^{67}\)

The First National Art Exhibition held in Beijing in 1949 exemplified the official ideology as well as the artists’ concerns of the day. Among the 301 artists whose works were selected, only 27 of them exhibited guohua painting. It is also worth-mentioning that Qi Baishi, a renowned great master in traditional guohua painting, did a portrait of an old peasant for that particular event. The subsequent period between 1949 and 1978 manifested the absolute dominant government role in overseeing the nation’s artistic production. The party-state often imposed tight restrictions on styles and subject matters. This phenomenon was further compounded by the fact that the critical judgment on artworks was almost solely determined by a handful of political elites, who repeatedly relied on political movements and organizational structures to ensure that cultural activities would serve their interests. At the same time, theoretical issues such as the appropriate ways to modernize guohua painting also continued to perplex Chinese politicians and artists.

Given the complicated nature of the issue and the continual disruptions caused by political movements, it is difficult to generalize the characteristics of the guohua painting during this period as a whole. However, by examining the works created by professional guohua painters between 1949 and 1979, some important tendencies (both differences and similarities vis-à-vis their predecessors) can still be identified.

For example, although artists often borrowed techniques and ideas from western or socialist realism as a new way of expression in their works, most continued to employ the spirit and skills of traditional guohua painting. They differed in their opinions of whether their work should be used as a tool for purposes of propaganda. However, in order to “serve the state and the masses”, many were prone to add “political significance” and “revolutionary implications” to their works, particularly when the subjects were not directly meeting the requirement of the time. Some artists managed to create remarkable guohua paintings that largely conformed to the party’s political agenda and the aesthetic standards of the time, while still maintaining the basic principles valued throughout Chinese history.

Meanwhile, important changes also occurred in the relationships between artists and the state. For the first several years after the establishment of the Communist China, some professional guohua painters still earned their living by receiving payments for works commissioned mainly by well-established painting stores, such as Rong Bao Zai (荣宝斋) in Beijing and Duo Yun Xuan (朵雲軒) in Shanghai. Although the market was very limited, the supplies were stable and the prices were reasonable.68

With the beginning of the “Anti-Rightist Movement” in 1957 and the following “Great Leap Forward”, the prices of guohua paintings dropped sharply. The situation was further worsened, due to comprehensive merging of private galleries with those run by the state in the same period. Later, during most of the Cultural Revolution, even the state-run galleries ceased to function. By the time devastating political movements came to an end in China, the market for guohua painting or any other type

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68 According to Wang Zhian, a renowned Chinese art critic, prior to the time of the “Anti-Rightist Movement”, the price of Qi Baishi’s guohua painting was around 7 RMB per square foot, while the average salary was around $30 to 50 RMB. In other words, the paintings by great masters were quite affordable to average PRC citizens. Note that in the year of 2006, the average price of Qi’s guohua painting reached $80,000 per square foot.
of artwork had experienced corresponding setbacks due to the following ideological and practical reasons.

First, in an attempt to end once and for all “merchant profiteering at the expense of the common good”, the Chinese Communist leaders tried to eliminate private markets altogether. Therefore, most private commerce was taken over by the state-run enterprises or local communes. No significant meaningful art market (or any other form of market) was possible under such an economic system.

Furthermore, technically, all art created by professional painters belonged to the state. For the artists, selling their artwork was simply forbidden and institutionally unfeasible.

The second reason for the set-back to the market evolved before the implementation of the “Open Door Policy” where Chinese leaders made it a priority to rebuild the country under a communist ideology. Due to this the entire society was in the grasp of revolutionary fever. Guohua paintings, especially the traditional ones, were considered as non-revolutionary or even counter-revolutionary. Psychologically, for the general public, the incentive to collect guohua paintings was at a low point.

Third, with the defeat of the Nationalist Government, those who were at the top of pre-revolutionary society, be it political, cultural or economic elites, either fled or were wiped out. Under decades of planned economy, in which ordinary people received wages barely high enough to sustain their daily lives, most were uninterested in buying art or anything not essential to daily life.  

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70 In the preface to a book, Qian Juntao, a well-known collector and prominent Chinese seal inscriber through the ROC and PRC periods, vividly describes how he acquired an original two by four foot guohua painting depicting lotus flowers and cicadas by Qi Baishi. According to Qian, it was framed and hung on the center wall for sale for 100 RMB in an art gallery in Beijing in 1949. He visited the gallery several times between 1949 and 1954 and eventually bought the painting for 100 RMB in 1954 – six years after he first saw it. For details, see “Zhong Guo Gu Wan Hang Qing Bou Lan (The Market Prices of Antiques in China)”, Shanghai: Li Xin Press (1995), p1-2.
As briefly discussed at the beginning of this section, during the pre-reform era, there was a short period of time in which a limited trade of artworks did exist in big cities such as Beijing and Shanghai. However, the overall environment in China was extremely hostile towards a market economy in general and to the commercialization of artwork in particular. Still, the long-term effect of political campaigns on China’s cultural market goes far beyond its economic aspects, and the scope of this current discussion.

Concluding Remarks and Important Findings

This chapter covered a time-span from imperial to pre-1979 communist China, with an intention to further explore the reform era (1979-2008) in a more detailed and dynamic way. There are several general trends in the development of guohua painting and the relationship between painters and the state during this period, which are particularly relevant to this thesis. I began by showing that guohua painting has been held in high esteem as the highest form of China’s aesthetic culture and has primarily been an activity of the elevated mind. As the esteemed ‘high art’ requiring a unique mystique and conditioned by Confucian ideas, guohua painting is indeed an important means to convey high artistic expression and demonstrate the ethical superiority of gentlemen to ordinary people.\(^71\) Moreover, it is believed that these spiritual elements can only be derived from a painter’s personal artistic and moral quality, without which she or he can never attain the status of a master. This dual education and cultivation purpose has passed through different dynasties and given guohua painting the lasting cultural and political significance that is not seen in other forms of Chinese art.

The chapter then discussed how guohua painting and calligraphy share a unique and inseparable origin. In addition, since the beginning of the Literati School in the Sung Dynasty, guohua painting has often been accompanied by poems or annotations written in calligraphy. It is conventional wisdom that, through constant practice, a person may become a good artisan but will never become a master of guohua painting, if she or he lacks brushstroke skills and strength or spirit (氣, qi) derived from calligraphy. And calligraphy has been a powerful instrument of political and cultural dominance for elite classes in China. This inherent nature gives guohua painting a unique status that further distinguishes it from works by artisans in other media, such as bronze, jade and porcelain. It also differentiates guohua painting from other new forms of painting, such as sketch, watercolor and oil paintings that were more recently introduced into China.

I continued my argument by elaborating on guohua painting’s practical use as a political act or statement, as has been widely acknowledged by ruling political elites. Therefore, throughout Chinese history, it is found that well-known guohua painters were often patronized by emperors, nobility and high-ranking officials. In addition, when the traditional system of bureaucratic selection is compounded with the demanding nature of guohua paintings, it is not surprising to learn that masterpieces were often produced by professional civil officials. Recruited to serve state orthodoxy and cult and assured of a regular income, these professionals upheld orthodox tradition and followed specific rules and canons. On the contrary, painters


73 Beginning in the late Ming Dynasty, in contrast to the orthodox school of the time, some painters such as Xu Wei, Shi Tao and the “Eight Yangzhou Eccentrics” particularly emphasized personality, innovation and impressions in their works. Although mostly disassociated with officialdom for different reasons, all of them the classics and practiced calligraphy in order to establish a career in government.
following the literati tradition appeared to be less compliant to the existing norms and were more adventure-minded.

As part of my argument I suggested that official ideologies as well as ruling elites’ personal preferences were either an impetus or a hindrance to the development of guohua painting of the time. Both scenarios could either spur new types of relationships or strengthen existing ones between painters and the state. As illustrated in the case of the Qing Dynasty, a talented literati painter had options. These included working outright for the state as a loyal servant; accepting favoritism from the state or from political elites as a prestigious artist; consciously trying to keep a distance from state influence as a sincere pursuer of spiritual satisfaction; becoming non-cooperative or antagonistic toward the state as a dissident artist; or by pursuing painting as his principal career to make a living as a professional without caring much about politics.

The final point that I raise in the chapter is that the view of guohua painting as a marketable commodity has been historically problematic. It has resulted in numerous debates over the role of guohua painters being part of intellectuals under Confucianism. The dual quality of guohua paintings as sophisticated art and a cultural commodity became obvious and more acceptable when private patronage for art thrived and utilitarianism became popular.
CHAPTER FOUR

AESTHETIC DISCOURSE AND POWER POLITICS IN CHINA UNDER MAO

Liu Kang convincingly draws aesthetics and politics as a dialectic in contemporary China. He explains through this argument why culture played such a significant role in the politics of the PRC. Liu finds that the Chinese revolution enriched the meaning and function of aesthetics and endowed culture with a double mission. Culture became, first a principal weapon in the political struggle for state power, and second, a key to constituting a revolutionary class-consciousness in the making of the revolution. Therefore, the aesthetic discourse, which was embedded in both real politics as well as cultural politics, was at the forefront of China’s political arena. Liu states, “In political power struggles, the aesthetic discourse was subject to instrumentalization; in cultural politics, it was often at the centre of controversies and functioned as a catalyst in political movements, such as the Cultural Revolution.”

Meanwhile, it has almost become a tradition to say that intellectuals, by virtue of their class, were the chief target of almost all major campaigns under Mao through the early 1940s to 1976. It is therefore convenient to assume that professional painters, who had historically played an important symbolic, as well as practical role in the Chinese intellectual tradition, suffered tremendously under Mao. Following this assumption, the subsequent interpretation of history is that, only with the death of Mao and the fall of the Gang of Four could professional painters and intellectuals be emancipated from tight ideological control. The above proposition regarding the collective fate of professional painters under Mao is plausible in that it reflects the overall trend of the time and many personal experiences and stories testify to this.

Nevertheless, this claim is established based on the questionable premise that Mao was in total control of cultural politics in China. This does not consider the rifts between Mao and his challengers, the struggles within the inner party, and the cleavage among Mao’s subordinates and successors.

With the above understanding in mind, in this chapter, I consider how politics and art are related from a different perspective: how inner party cleavages on cultural politics and aesthetics have contributed to power politics and influenced the fate of professional painters in the PRC. Given the specific purpose of this research, I intend to approach this topic through a detailed examination of two related issues. The first is exploring the creation and content of important iconographic paintings commissioned by various groups rivaling for power shortly before, during and immediately after the Cultural Revolution. The second is discussing the formulation, implications and aftermath of several important historic documents and policies on arts during the same period.

After providing an overview of the relationship between professional guohua painters and the party-state during the pre-reform era, this chapter focuses on the period extending from 1962 to 1978. This time frame is chosen not only because it witnessed some of the most severe power struggles, but also because, for this study, it best reflects the interplay between and the fusion of arts and politics in the history of the PRC.

**Guohua Painters in Mao’s Era: from Exclusion to Organized Dependence**

When critically investigating the relationship between professional guohua painters and the party-state during the pre-reform era, it is useful first to turn to historical facts and evidence from the 1940s to the 1950s. One of the most important and interesting findings appears to be that, with the establishment of the PRC, professional guohua
painters were further marginalized, even though the majority of the other visual artists were automatically encompassed into the “big united family”. The underlying reason for this differentiation was ideological. In the years following Mao’s Yen’an Talks in 1942, acclamation was designated mainly to two types of artworks in the “old liberated areas” (老解放區). The first referred to works that displayed outright ideological and political content. The second included works strongly associated with popular and folk traditions. As a consequence, in terms of visual arts, the CCP had already promoted woodblock prints, posters, New Year’s pictures, comics and picture story books prior to 1949. Guohua painting, with its overtly elitist cultural origin, happened to belong to the territory opposite to those popular arts that the CCP had especially encouraged. This status inevitably was further aggravated by the fact that the majority of professional guohua painters had lived and practiced in urban areas under the Nationalist government during the Civil War period.

The speech to the First All-China Conference of Writers and Artists by Zhou Yang, the Cultural Commissar of the party, in July 1949 is a good illustration of the party’s anti-elitist attitude towards the arts. In his speech, Zhou Enlai talked about various forms of visual arts and their contributions to and potentials for the communist revolution, but didn’t mention guohua and calligraphy, the two most significant visual arts of China’s “high culture”. According to Arnold Chang, this clearly indicated the party’s conscious effort to “link these forms with the feudal decades of the literati tradition”. 75

With the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the Soviet-style centrally-planned economic system was hastily introduced and implemented in China. As a result, the scale of the guohua painting market steadily shrank and many already marginalized professional guohua painters inevitably started to experience financial hardship, in

75 Arnold Chang (1980), pp.11.
addition to a declining social status. As a result, based on existing documents, personal letters as well as artists’ biographies, by 1956 Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai had continually received pleas and complaints from professional painters and had started to consider possible solutions. In the Second National Committees of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference in 1956, Chen Banding (1876-1970), an artist famous for his traditional style flower-and-bird guohua paintings, proposed to establish institutions exclusively for the research of Chinese guohua paintings. Chen’s proposal was soon passed on to the Ministry of Culture. In the same year, “The Report on the Establishment of Guohua Painting Institutes in Beijing and Shanghai” by the Ministry of Culture was approved by the State Council under Zhou. The official mandates of the institutes as specified in the report were to elevate and promote the creation of guohua, to train guohua experts and to engage in theoretical research on guohua painting.76

In May 1957 the Beijing Guohua Painting Institute (北京中国画院) became fully operational. In October, People’s Daily published an editorial that hailed the new development as “an impulse of Chinese painting celebrated by professional Chinese painting artists”.77 Nevertheless, the establishment of the Shanghai Guohua Painting Institute was delayed till 1960, due to the sudden interruption caused by the Anti-Rightist Campaign. In addition to Beijing and Shanghai, prior to the Cultural Revolution, Jiangsu, Guandong and Hubei Provinces also established similar institutes fashioned after the Beijing Institute.78 Taking the Beijing Institute as an

77 This quote is a translation of an excerpt from an article titled “On the Establishment of the Beijing Guohua Painting Institute – Great News for the Painting Community” originally published in Fine Art Magazine in June 1965. Part of the text can be found in Zou Yuejin (2002), p.62.
78 Jiangsu Guohua Institute (Guohua Yuan) was established in 1962. Guangdong Painting Institute (Hua Yuan) was established in 1962. Hubei Fine Art Institute (Mei Shu Yuan, 美術院) was established in 1965. Although named slightly differently, these three institutes were basically modeled after their predecessors and evidently stressed guohua painting.
example, its leaders and fellow artists were directly nominated and hired by the Ministry of Culture. The first honorary chair of the Beijing Institute was Qi Baishi (1864-1957), the most esteemed traditional guohua master of the twentieth century in China. The first chair, Ye Gongchuo (1881-1968) and his deputies Chen Banding (1876-1970), Yu Fei’an (1889-1959) and Xu Yansun (1876-1961) were all famous for their achievements of classic bird-and-flower and figural guohua paintings, styles and topics that would soon come under repeated and relentless criticism throughout most of the 1960s and 1970s. The professional artists first received monthly allowances from the government in the name of “transportation fees and special allowances” which eventually became outright salaries.

A few Chinese leaders, noticeably Zhou Enlai, may have genuinely cared about the future of guohua painting and the well-beings of professional guohua painters who had experienced financial difficulties since the establishment of the PRC. It is therefore not surprising that the majority of the established professional guohua painters had a very positive attitude towards the government’s new policy. For example, after becoming a member of the Beijing Painting Institute, Li Keran openly expressed his commitment to repay the party and state by continually innovating his thoughts and elevating his skills so he could better paint the motherland. In reality, many existing artworks, through either individual or collective efforts by the members of these institutes, indeed reflected the artists’ sincerity to “repay the party and state”.

From the party-state’s viewpoint, although the original purpose of these institutes was multi-faceted, their foremost function was not to please professional guohua painters coming from the old society. In reality, prior to the Cultural Revolution, these five institutes had effectively helped the party reeducate and administrate professional guohua painters who were originally outside the party and the state’s scope. Some people describe the policy in a more straightforward manner, arguing that the main
reason for the existence of these institutes was simply to turn professional guohua painters into loyal servants of the party-state by formally putting them under tight political and ideological supervision.\textsuperscript{79}

Over time, under the party-state’s omnipresent governance, professional guohua painters became more used to working and living as part of the state apparatus, like most artists and intellectuals had already been doing. The party-state exerted tight control over their lives by means of a central job allocation system and constant ideological education and political movements. This type of “organized dependence” manifested not only by dictatorial decision-making at the top, but also by the faithful implementation of cultural policies by various institutions and agencies.\textsuperscript{80}

\textbf{Aesthetic Discourse and Power Struggles}

\textbf{Mao Zedong vs. Liu Shaoqi from 1962 to 1966}

The years between 1959 and 1962, became known as the “Three Years of Natural Disasters” because an estimated 20 million Chinese people died due to a widespread food shortage that was the direct result of the failed Great Leap Forward. Amid the growing disenchantment with Mao's radical ideas, Liu replaced Mao as the head of state and strengthened his influence within the CCP. Lui embarked on relatively more pragmatic economic reforms, including an end to rural communes and the restoration of some economic policies used before the Great Leap Forward. With bolstered prestige within the party starting in 1959, Liu, in his reports to a conference for 7,000 CCP cadres in January 1962, voiced his intention to challenge Mao's political status as the number one leader. In the report, Liu remarked that the great majority of people

\textsuperscript{79} For detailed discussion, see Lu Peng, \textit{A History of Art in Twentieth Century China (20世紀中國藝術史)}, (Beijing: Peking University Press: 2007), pp.498.

had suffered from many shortcomings and mistakes in the past several years. While Mao openly admitted the errors he had made and offered self-criticism at the conference as the chief orchestrator of the Great Leap Forward, Liu appeared not to be willing to share the responsibility as the actual administrative leader of the time. Moreover, Liu’s oral report reversed the official conclusion as to the cause of the nation-wide famine. Instead of “70 percent natural disasters, 30 percent human errors”, Liu pinpointed the mistakes of the Central Committee as the main reason of the difficulties. He even suggested that renowned military General Peng Dehuai, who was criticized and removed from the Politburo by Mao in 1959, may have been in many respects right about the mismanagement and disastrous consequences of the Great Leap Forward.81

In order to link art to these historical events, we need to explore the creation of several famous iconographic paintings in the early 1960s, presumably under the direct influence of Liu’s close ally at the time Deng Xiaoping. According to art historian Julia Andrews, two major campaigns to fill the walls of the Museum of Revolutionary History were launched between 1958 and 1961. As early as 1958, a plan was in place to create an iconographic work about the “Uprising by the Railroad Workers and Coal Miners of Anyuan in 1922” (安源路礦工人起義) to honor this milestone event in the CCP’s revolutionary history. However, the first version created in 1959 was allegedly rejected under Deng Xiaoping’s direct intervention. The reason provided by Andrews is quite convincing: “Whatever details [of the painting] may have been criticized in 1959, it is probable that the key issue involved differences over who would be portrayed as the maker of party history, Mao Zedong or someone else. Shifts in historical interpretation inevitably followed the policy shifts or personnel

changes resulting from high-level power politics.”82 This indicates that Deng Xiaoping, who had little personal attachment to fine arts, was already very sensitive to the momentous implications of iconographic historical artworks to Chinese politics, long before he became the most powerful leader in the PRC from the late 1970s.

In 1961, due to the disastrous failure of the Great Leap Forward, Mao was forced to give up much of his political power in the state administrative system, while Liu Shaoqi assumed the post of head of state. In the same year Hou Yimin, a party committee member at the Chinese Artists Association (中國美協 CAA), was assigned to produce a better version of a historic event of 1922 in Anyuan. It is not surprising that Hou’s final work, displayed in the Museum of Revolutionary History’s grand opening was titled “Liu Shaoqi and the Anyuan Coal Miners”. In this huge painting, Liu, young and determined, and followed by angry coal miners and railroad workers, clearly asserts his leadership at this significant revolutionary event. (see pic. 4-1) Around the same time, several commissioned historic paintings depicting Mao’s early activities in rural and mountainous areas of Hunan province were also completed.

The above can be interpreted as that, by recreating those historical events in monumental artworks, Liu and Deng intended to reaffirm Liu’s image as the leader of Chinese revolutionary workers, while exclusively asserting Mao’s role as (merely) the leader of peasants’ revolution. They explicitly heightened Liu’s status and stressed his contributions to the party at least as Mao’s equal. In addition, with the party’s constant emphasis on the role of proletarian workers in the new China, to portray Liu as the true leader in this image of revolutionary workers was historically suitable, ideologically correct and politically necessary for Liu and his supporters. The above-mentioned paintings depict the two different roles of the two leaders. Thus the

image presented is not only an interpretation of party history that corresponds more closely to the view of Liu and Deng, but also vividly reflects the *realpolitik* of the time.

In 1963, Mao began to launch counter-attacks against Liu Shaoqi for party leadership, stating that the idea of class struggle must always be fully understood and applied. Starting in 1964, the “Socialist Education Movement” and the following “Four Cleanups Movement”, with the stated goal of cleansing politics, economics, ideas, and organizations, further exaggerated the conflicts between Mao and Liu. In the same year, Mao openly expressed his dissatisfaction with the overall development of literature and the arts since the establishment of the PRC in unmistakably critical terms in an official document known as the “Instruction of June 27, 1964”. Mao exclaimed:

*During the past fifteen years, many (not all) of the [officials] have not followed the party’s line [on literature and arts]. They have acted like bosses, rather than uniting with the workers, peasants and soldiers and reflecting the revolution of socialism and its achievements.*\(^{83}\)

Prior to 1964, although concerned with the development of cultural affairs in the new China, Mao’s criticisms against various cultural targets had been periodic and sporadic. Therefore, the timing of the “1964 Instruction” and the messages revealed in it were particularly intricate. It appears that Mao’s critical comments towards officials in charge of cultural affairs coincided with his changing views towards international and domestic politics of the time. On the international front, this period was dominated by the further isolation of China, as the growing tensions between China

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and the USSR continued to intensify. Although there is no particular event that marked the onset of the Sino-Soviet split, it became a permanently established fact in about 1964. In China, after this time, the Soviets were denounced as "revisionists" and listed as an opponent to its revolution. On the domestic political arena, following the “Anti-Rightists Movement” and the “Great Leap Forward”, Liu Shaoqi’s prominence as a pragmatic politician had become a challenge to Mao's position of power and the division between Liu and Mao became more pronounced.

Around the same time as the rectification of literature and art began, Mao openly denounced the literature and art circles as “acting as high and mighty bureaucrats, not being with the workers, peasants and soldiers and not reflecting the socialist revolution and socialist construction”. He further warned that, “In recent years, they have slid right down to the brink of revisionism. Unless they re-mould themselves in real earnest, at some future date they are bound to become groups like the Hungarian Petofi Club.”

More evidence is needed to consolidate a definitive linkage between Mao’s criticism and his grave concerns about the external and internal threats of revisionists and the bourgeoisie to his own political authorities. Still, it is plausible to argue that the logic of the cultural policies of Mao and his supporters that followed between 1965 and 1966 pointed to the above assumption. This is also in agreement with Liu Kang’s finding that “Mao always suspected that bourgeois ideas and values had infiltrated and corrupted the cadres and intellectuals and that it was necessary to start from cultural and ideological spheres to launch a revolution.”

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84 Quoted from Mao's Instruction Concerning Literature and Art of June 27, 1964 delivered at a meeting of the All-China Federation of Literature and Art Circles. The original text can be found in Mao Zedong - Five Documents on Literature and Art (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967)
85 Liu Kang, pp155.
The Stormy Impact of Three Historical Documents in 1966

In January 1965 Mao replaced his warning of “bourgeois elements in the party” with “party persons in authority taking the capitalist road”. Although Mao was becoming more menacing in tone and specified the possible location of his enemies, few people, if anyone knew whom, exactly, Mao was referring to. In retrospect, it was the three important official documents issued between February and May 1966 that directly contributed to Liu’s removal from the party and defined the course of action for the Cultural Revolution. Therefore, getting a clear idea of the sequence and the impact of these three historical documents is particularly relevant to our understanding of how inner party discourse about cultural affairs became the centre of power politics and functioned as a catalyst in political movements. These three 1966 documents include the “Outline Report on the Current Academic Situation” (known as the “February Outline”) issued on the 22nd of February, the “Summary of the Forum on the Work in Literature and Arts in the Armed Forces with Which Comrade Lin Biao Entrusted Comrade Jiang Qing” (known as “Summary of the Forum”) issued on 10 April and the “May 16 Circular”.

February Outline

By the end of 1959 more and more political elements had been injected into the dispute regarding Wu Han’s Beijing opera “The Dismissal of Hai Rui” (海瑞罢官), a play about an upright official who dared to contradict and admonish the then reigning Jiajing emperor of the Ming dynasty. Although initially instructing that people should learn from Hai Rui, in early 1966 Mao ordered the “Group of Five in Charge of the Cultural Revolution” (文化革命五人小組) led by Peng Zhen (彭真) to investigate the controversies surrounding the play and its writer. The most acute controversy then was naturally the political implication of the opera to Mao, as it was suggested that
Hai Rui’s story was a plot to express discontent with the purge of Peng Dehuai by Mao merely a few months earlier.

February the 5\textsuperscript{th} 1966, the “Group of Five” presented the findings of its investigation, the “February Outline”, to the CCP Standing Committee of the Politburo. The “February Outline” was immediately discussed and approved by the Committee chaired by Liu Shaoqi. It explicitly distinguished between two approaches to the problem of Wu Han (吳晗): one approach would treat such a problem as a political issue and the other would treat it as merely a serious academic issue. It emphasized that Wu’s case was academic rather than political and should be dealt with based on the principle of “seeking truth from facts”. Furthermore, although refraining from mentioning particular names, the document launched criticism against radical intellectuals and even called for the rectification of incorrect ideas among some leftists who had acted like “scholar-tyrants”.\textsuperscript{86}

While the “February Outline” insisted on targeting leftists nationwide – largely a reflection of the views of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, Mao had already suggested the real enemies were in fact within the party. When translated into power struggles at the highest levels, disagreements on issues that would normally be dealt with in cultural and academic realms were quickly magnified into rivalries between class enemies and became fatal. Studies on the real impact of the “February Outline” on Chinese artists are in short supply and are often controversial. However, my interview with one particular artist provides important insight into the subject and reveals that the “February Outline” not only departed from Mao’s disapproving position against

\textsuperscript{86} The excerpts of “February Outline” can be found in various books and articles. However, to my surprise, I have not been able to find its full text in either English or Chinese. My interviewees have suggested that the excerpts of “February Outline” that are available to the general public nowadays is selective and may even have been revised to serve the interests of certain political leaders. This theory seems reasonable, given the fact that Deng Xiaoping was the main patron of the outline and was later labeled as one of the two chief enemies within the Party by Mao and Mao’s supporters.
Wu, but also deviated from his conception of the purpose of the rectification campaign.\textsuperscript{87}

M. P.,\textsuperscript{88} whose story will be presented in greater detail in Chapter 6, studied and taught from 1957 to 1989 at Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts (浙江美院 ZAFA) which is now known as the China Academy of Fine Arts (中國美院 CAFA). It is one of the two most prestigious art schools directly administered by the Ministry of Culture under the State Council.\textsuperscript{89} The following description is developed from a semi-structured interview that I conducted with M. P..

M. P. was once one of the Deputy Secretaries of the Party Branch and briefly served a member of the “Three Man Core Group”, a de facto decision-making body at the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts during the early stage of the Cultural Revolution. When the “February Outline” was disseminated throughout the nation through the omnipresent party system from February to March 1966, he was travelling with the academy’s class of 1966 to a rural area in Zhejiang Province. The purpose of the trip was to help students create artwork based on real landscapes and lives. This production of artwork was to assist students’ in their upcoming graduation exhibition to be held at the academy. In March 1966, M. P. received several phone calls and telegrams from the academy demanding his early return to the school to study the “Outline”. As the head of the team, although knowing the importance of the trip to his students, M. P. reluctantly shortened his trip, leaving his colleagues and students behind, and returned to Hangzhou.

\textsuperscript{87} This thesis will record and discuss the story of Professor AA, one of the three interviewees, in greater details in Chapter 6. It is important, however, to use his personal experience to help advance our understanding of the current subject.
\textsuperscript{88} This particular interviewee does not wish to reveal his full name in this thesis, due to sensitive personal reasons.
\textsuperscript{89} The other is the Central Academy of Fine Arts located in Beijing. As members of these elite institutes, the faculties and graduates of the two schools have exerted great influence not only on the arts but also on arts administration in China. In 2008, for instance, almost all major positions in charge of arts and cultural affairs at the national or central level were assigned to those who graduated from the Zhejiang and Beijing Academyies.
Shortly after his return, M. P. was particularly grieved by the suicide of his supervisor J. T. in J.’s office at the Ministry of Cultural Affairs of Zhejiang Province. M. P. observes, “It seemed that J. had gone through the intensive study of the “Outline” and was convinced that he would not be able to survive the criticisms that would be laid upon him.” M. P. further asserts that J.’s death was not an isolated case but a genuine reflection of the widespread fears and worries among artists about the political implications of the “Outline”. M. P. explains,

*Under Liu and Deng, notorious persecution of professional artists and intellectuals at the grassroots level had already proceeded for several years since the ‘Socialist Education Movement’ and the “Four Cleanups Movement”. We, as average artists and intellectuals, didn’t know much about the power politics at the top. We personally knew of the stress on the “Outline” throughout all administrative echelons and it sent out a strong and unmistakable signal that more political labels and hardships were still ahead. I was also criticized and could have been labeled as a “leftist scholar-tyrant”, if the “Outline” had not been overruled by the “May 16 Circular”.*

According to M. P.’s personal experience, however brief, the impact of the “Outline” on artists of the time appeared to be immediate and direct between February and May 1966. Superficial studies of the content and wording of the “Outline” tend to reach the conclusion that it was intended to ease anxiety and to prevent a widespread purge in the cultural and academic spheres. However, the experiences of concerned individuals at the grassroots level have actually pointed in the opposite direction. The “Outline” actually further aggravated the situations of many professional artists – especially those who had already been politically and ideologically labeled. The effect of the “Outline” partially explains why many professional artists and intellectuals supported
Mao when he publicly summoned the nation to switch direction and to “bombard the headquarters”, i.e. the Party Central Committee, a few months later.\(^9\)

**The Summary of the Forum**

“The Summary of the Forum”, a formal document also known as “The Summary”, has a lengthy title: “The Summary of the Forum on the Work in Literature and Arts in the Armed Forces with Which Comrade Lin Biao Entrusted Comrade Jiang Qing”. It seems ironic that the forum that produced the Summary was convened between February 2\(^{nd}\) and 20\(^{th}\) 1966 – which was exactly the same time as the “Group of Five in Charge of the Cultural Revolution” produced the “February Outline”. Arranged by Lin Biao, four leaders (of the PLA General Political Department, the Propaganda Department and the Ministry of Cultural Affairs) attended the forum chaired by Jiang Qing. As soon as the forum ended, Chen Boda, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan were requested to revise and subsequently expand the record of the forum into a ten-thousand-word document that would then be distributed throughout China. In March, this revised document was presented to the Central Committee for approval by the Central Military Commission. In April, the document was disseminated throughout the party.

The Summary’s key points were made known to the general public through the PLA Daily. It affected people in the following ways. First, “The Summary” fundamentally denied the cultural policies of the past seventeen years (1949-1966) because they were manipulated by bourgeois representatives of the “black line in literature and arts” (文藝黑線). Secondly, unlike other previously published documents which did not specify the targets of criticism, it pinpointed Liu and Deng

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\(^9\) On August 5, 1966 Mao’s “To Bombard the Headquarter - My Big Character Poster” was posted in Zhong Nan Hai (中南海). This event was soon made into numerous iconic propaganda posters that vividly reminded people who were their “true enemies”, most notably Liu Shaoqi.
as the biggest patrons of the black line and therefore the main targets of criticism. It resembled the first open attack at the Liu-Deng alliance with a pretext of inner party discourse in cultural affairs at a key conjuncture. Last but not least, it also enabled Jiang Qing to officially take control of the army’s cultural apparatus and to eventually dominate the arts for most of the next decade. In sum, at a time when the inner-party cleavage between “Liuists” and “Maoists” became increasingly acute, “The Summary”, an official document on literature and art generated by the Central Military Commission and applauded by the PLA, was destined to become a critical factor in realpolitik.

Since “The Summary” was issued only one month prior to the publication of the even more influential “May 16 Circular”, it is difficult to identify and evaluate the impact of “The Summary” by itself. Nevertheless, a good sense of the far-reaching effects of “The Summary” on artists’ lives can still be established, if we consider the fact that the party had to officially criticize and overrule “The Summary” with a formal document in May 1979 - shortly after Hu Yaobang became the head of the party's Propaganda Department.91

May 16 Circular

The “May 16 Circular”, also known as the Circular, was the product of an expanded Politburo meeting held from May 4 to 16. Its official name is “Circular of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution”, containing an appendix entitled “A Chronicle of the Struggle between

91 This new document was presented by the PLA General Political Department and then approved and disseminated by the Central Committee. It overtly and specifically delivered the party’s resolution on rehabilitating the artists and artworks unduly criticized and affected by the Summary. Its lengthy title is “Notice of Recommendation Concerning the Abolition of the Summary of the Forum on the Work in Literature and Arts in the Armed Forces in February 1966” (關於建議撤銷--九六六年二月部隊文藝工作座談會紀要的請示的通).
the Two Lines on the Cultural Front from September 1965 to May 1966” (一九六五年九月到一九六六年五月文化戰線上兩條路線鬥爭大事記). Many historians and Chinese scholars consider the “Circular” the official document that triggered the beginning of the ten-year turmoil. It circulated within the party as far down as the county (縣 xian) level. It started by announcing the Central Committee’s decision to revoke the “February Outline” and to dissolve the “Group of Five in Charge of the Cultural Revolution”, calling the “Outline” by the “Group of Five” fundamentally wrong. Three of the ten errors listed in the “Circular” included

- covering up the serious political nature of the struggle between classes in cultural and academic affairs
- demanding a rectification campaign against the staunch leftists in a deliberate effort to create confusion, defuse class alignments and divert people from the real target of struggle
- allowing various “monsters and ghosts” to continually reign in the cultural sphere, ranging from the press to fine arts.

The “Circular” became the main official document, since it clearly outlined Mao’s stance on the controversies in the cultural field since late 1950s. It directly pointed out that cultural activities were completely dominated by the authorities within the party - most notably Liu Shaoqi. The Circular declared,

*We must thoroughly criticize bourgeois reactionary thinking in the academic field, the media, publishing and arts, and seize the power of leaders in the cultural arena. … [because] once the opportunity is ripe, [the revisionists within the party] will attempt to grasp power, to transform the proletarian dictatorship into a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.* 92

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An article commemorating the tenth anniversary of the “May 16 Circular”, published in the Beijing Review in May 1976, described how people and PLA soldiers earnestly held rallies and meetings to celebrate the tenth birthday of the historic document. It stated,

*The ten years of the Great Cultural Revolution was a decade in which hundreds of millions of Chinese people, led by the great leader Chairman Mao, waged repeated struggles against the capitalist-roaders in the party and won great victories. During this decade, army-men and civilians throughout China smashed resolutely and in good time the schemes of Liu Shaoqi, Lin Biao and Deng Xiaoping to restore capitalism, scathingly criticized their counter-revolutionary revisionist line, and seized back that portion of party and state leadership they had usurped, thus ensuring that our country will continue to advance victoriously along Chairman Mao’s revolutionary line.*

Indeed, many professional guohua painters became natural targets of harsh criticism during the Cultural Revolution, due to their elitist and presumably “feudalistic,” “old-fashioned” and “non-revolutionary” practices. Yet, beneath the surface the criticism of particular painters, as well as their works, were often linked to political motives. The discourse in the cultural field was therefore an extension of a prolonged struggle between two political factions. With different firsthand experiences with precarious cultural policies prior to the Cultural Revolution, it is natural that professional artists viewed the above-mentioned documents through different lenses which eventually led to different interpretations. For instance, some artists may ironically “favor” “The Circular” by the Maoists over the “Outline” by the Liuists, by arguing that “The Circular” was originally intended to narrow the scope of enemies too willfully and loosely defined by the “Outline”. Nevertheless, with the convincing historical evidence that so many professional artists suffered between the

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mid-1960s and the mid-1970s, it is perhaps not all that important to judge which document had “better intentions” towards professional artists. Given the specific purpose of this research, the key message here is that carefully formulated documents and policies on the arts were and still are an indispensible part of power politics in the PRC.

**Mao Zedong’s Application of Arts to Re-create History**

By 1967, the struggle against Liu was virtually complete. Liu’s reputation as a key revolutionary leader in the shaping of CCP history was also discredited. In October 1967 an exhibition with the title *Mao Zedong’s Thought Illuminates the Anyuan Workers’ Movement* was organized at the Museum of Revolutionary History. Although the National Labor Union assumed the official role as the organizer of this exhibit, evidence indicates that the “Cultural Revolution Small Group” led by Jiang Qing acted as the real organizer behind the exhibition. It is estimated that more than two million people attended the exhibition by its closing date in late 1968. At the same time, Hou Yimin’s famous painting “*Liu Shaoqi and the Anyuan Coal Miners*” was attacked as “poisonous weeds”. The artist himself became an easy and certain target of severe political criticisms during the Cultural Revolution, although he merely faithfully performed his duty as a professional arts worker hired by the State. Years later, in order to “make up for his mistake,” Hou was given an opportunity to paint another work called *Chairman Mao and the Anyuan Coal Miners*. (see pic. 4-2)

Only by appreciating the *realpolitik* of the early 1960s can one make full sense of the timing and scale of the didactic exhibition in the newly-established Museum of Revolutionary History in 1967. The purpose of the exhibition was to fill the walls of the museum with monumental paintings, and, according to its title *Mao Zedong’s Thought Illuminates the Anyuan Workers’ Movement*, these works were to reassert the
pre-eminent role of Mao, not Liu, in the early urban Communist movement. This contextual understanding is crucial to our comprehension of the publicity blitz between 1967 and 1968 that focused on an artistically unpromising painting by a young college student. *Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan* by Liu Chunhua was one of the seven portraits of Mao for the historic exhibition in 1967. (see pic. 4-3) Many reports and discussions have talked about the creation of this painting that depicts the young Mao’s earliest visit to Anyuan in 1921. This image is pivotal to the development of PRC art history. One such report is made by Julia Andrews, who observes that:

> The paintings for the exhibition were created in a collective studio set up in the museum. A fellow participant has described with some sympathy Liu’s intense anxiety as the exhibition date drew close and he remained unsatisfied with his image. Indeed, he was still working in the gallery when the exhibition opened.  

Andrews also mentions that there were rumors of how the young artist received a great deal of advice from fellow artists and his work may have been heavily retouched by a Soviet-trained professor. All things considered, Liu’s painting may indeed have faithfully reflected a young artist’s imagination and sincere admiration towards the great leader at the beginning of his career. Yet, it should also be obvious that, from an aesthetic point of view, the painting would not have inspired such enthusiasm, if it were not for the adoration and propaganda given to this image by Mao’s de facto spokesperson, Jiang Qing.

After the painting was singled out by Cultural Revolution authorities as a model artwork, close to nine hundred million copies were printed and distributed throughout the nation in 1968. In order to further establish this as iconic, many well-established

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95 Ibid.
artists and professors were required to copy the work by Liu so they could “improve” their art and elevate their political and ideological awareness.\textsuperscript{96} Furthermore, as the preceding discussion has indicated, the influence of Liu’s painting on China’s political arena went well beyond the realm of aesthetics. An article titled “The Political Workers of Anyuan Will Always Be Faithful to Chairman Mao” by the Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee of the Anyuan Coal Mines, was published in 1968. After affirming Mao’s role as the initiator as well as the leader of the “Workers’ Revolutionary Movement of Anyuan”, the article commented on Liu’s painting:

[The painting] deals a heavy blow at China’s Khrushchev. In order to grab credit for himself, China’s Khrushchev together with his trumpeters set up a black exhibition which viciously tampered with the revolutionary history of Anyuan, turning it upside down. During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the revolutionary workers rose to smash this "monument" of China’s Khrushchev to smithereens. Since this revolutionary oil painting Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan vividly reproduces the true history of the early struggle between the two lines following the founding of our party, it pictures our red hearts full of warm love for Chairman Mao. Greatly moved, we coal-miners of Anyuan, our blood surging with enthusiasm, pledge with determination: Always be loyal to Chairman Mao and follow Chairman Mao closely forever in waging revolution.\textsuperscript{97}

However dogmatic this article may sound, its messages unmistakably reflected the subsequent political realities after the Mao-Liu break following the “first phase” of the Cultural Revolution – a phase characterized as an initiation of the revolution by Mao. In Mao’s words, this phase stretched from the publishing of Yao Wenyuan’s criticism on Wu Han’s play “The Dismissal of Hai Rui” (海瑞罢官) in November 1965 to the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee in August 1966. In the session, Mao personally finalized the definite verdict of Liu by

\textsuperscript{96} For a detailed discussion, see Julia F. Andrews (1994), p.339.
\textsuperscript{97} Quoted from China Pictorial, Issue No. 9, 1968, pp16-17.
pronouncing the main target of the present movement as “knocking down China’s Khrushchev and other capitalist roaders within the party through mass line”. 98

Therefore, to the Cultural Revolution authorities, “Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan” not only served as an effective weapon in the political struggle for power, but also as key to consolidating a revolutionary class consciousness. Some articles used the painting to connect the workers’ strike in Anyuan in 1922 and the Autumn Harvest Uprising [秋收起义] along the border of Hunan and Jiangxi Province in 1927, in which many workers and peasants together joined the Chinese Communist Revolution. 99 Thus, the painting “Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan” was an integral part of a strategy to consolidate Mao’s image as the undisputed leader of both revolutionary workers and peasants. At the same time, while celebrating Mao as the true leader, the painting became a testament against the “distortion and ambition” of Liu. This image was also interpreted as a powerful reminder to the mass of the early struggle between the capitalist and proletarian lines following the founding of the party – an approach necessary to continually rally support for the purge of Liu and Liu’s allies.

**Jiang Qing (Protégé of Mao) vs. Zhou Enlai**

The tension between Jiang Qing and Zhou Enlai during the Cultural Revolution period is well known to many mainstream Chinese historians. The attack launched by Jiang Qing and the other radicals of the Cultural Revolution Small Group on the

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99 Similar comments can be found in periodicals such as *Chinese Literature* and *China Reconstructs* between 1968 and 1969. The same is mentioned in Maria Galikowski (1998), pp172.
so-called “black painters” in 1974 particularly serves as a good illustration of the
tension and the politicization of aesthetics in the PRC.

Starting in the early 1970s, a few professional guohua painters were instructed to
paint the so-called “export-oriented” guohua paintings to generate much needed
income for the State. It is believed that Mao Zedong personally initiated the idea.
Zhou Enlai, the Prime Minister at the time, then assigned the task to the departments
responsible for foreign trade and foreign affairs. Also in 1971, the People’s Republic
of China became the sole legitimate member in the UN as they replaced Taiwan. With
this increasing international recognition, the Chinese PRC leaders realized that there
would not only be many more Chinese embassies abroad, but also many more
dignitaries visiting China. Culturally appropriate interior decoration for these
embassies, hotels, and restaurants became a concern. According Zhou’s instruction,
there should be a different treatment concerning “inner” and “outer” art. The subjects
of the latter, as long as they were not anti-revolution, feudalistic or immoral, should
be landscapes and flowers-and-birds – genres to better represent China on the
international scene.\textsuperscript{100} It is worthwhile to emphasize that in the early 1970s, many
professional guohua painters, especially those of the older generation, were still
detained in “ox-pans” [牛棚] and “May Seventh cadre schools” [五七幹校]. Some
were relocated into forced labor in remote rural areas. Sprawling throughout China
during the Cultural Revolution period, these programs were essentially designed to
help re-educate party cadres, officials and intellectuals, by purging their errors and
eradicating their “class misconceptions” through intensive manual labor and
ideological studies. An article by Pan Gongkai (潘公凱) in a periodical (\textit{Mei Shu,}
Fine Arts) vividly describes the inhuman treatment that his father Pan Tienshou

\textsuperscript{100}Chen Yinde, \textit{Examining Chinese Arts from Overseas (Hai Wai Kan Da Lu Yi Shu)} (Taipei: The
(1897-1971), one of the most influential traditional-style guohua painters in modern Chinese history, endured before his death. Pan states, “The keeper of the ‘ox-pan’ (牛棚) ordered my father to collect garbage in the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts. As the [former] president of the academy, he treated such a lowly job with great respect and salvaged everything that might be still of use. Due to years of both physical and psychological torture, he lost more than thirty pounds. … His insistence on upholding an intellectual’s conscience inevitably invoked even more severe persecution. Deprived the right to medical treatment, he passed away with great injustice in 1971.”

It was under such a hostile environment that Zhou’s new policy came into effect and facilitated a brief period of respite for professional guohua painters. Starting in early 1972, some professional guohua painters were called back to major cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai, Xi’an and Guangzhou, to create traditional guohua paintings without any additional stipend. Many were provided with quality art supplies and much better living conditions in the hotels, and were allowed to paint their favored subjects.

Amidst the height of the Cultural Revolution, this unexpected short revival of guohua paintings took place rather quietly. Under the protection and patronage of individual powerful politicians such as Zhou Enlai, professional guohua painters were commissioned to create images for official buildings, hotels and restaurants designated exclusively for overseas guests. A good portion of the art was sent to overseas embassies and offices as decorative works that showed a particular view of Chinese culture. Also, many were given as gifts to foreign dignitaries or sold outright to foreign visitors at state-run Rongbaozhai (榮寶齋) and Heping Huadian (Heping Painting Store, 和平畫店). Ironically, these images were to meet the aesthetic needs

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of overseas audiences and customers as these “outer” paintings were almost exclusively in traditional styles that were considered incompatible to communism and what it decided were the needs of the masses. Much of this so called “bourgeois art” by professional guohua painters therefore found a sanctuary outside of China during the Cultural Revolution. The artists were also sincere in contributing their talents to the state, regardless of the mistreatment they had previously suffered. Although the artists at this time were granted much better working and living conditions and temporarily freed from excessive ideological interferences, these “Hotel School” guohua painters were merely instrumental to the State and were still very vulnerable to the precarious political environment.

By the end of 1973 when Zhou Enlai became seriously ill, Jiang Qing launched the “Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius Campaign”. Its main target of criticism was to be the already deceased Lin Biao, yet the campaign was in fact aimed at discrediting Zhou because Jiang wanted to gain power within the party. As part of this campaign, Jiang seized a catalogue full of traditional-style paintings designed for international sale, and collected hundreds of paintings from the hotels and had them destroyed. The “dual-line policy” supported by Zhou became a focus of this campaign, and the paintings were denounced as being “revisionist” meaning that they showed Confucius ideology. These images were condemned under Jiang’s campaign as “black (illegal, poisonous and adversarial)”. Support for the guohua painters abruptly stopped. Jiang and her supporters’ criticism towards Zhou’s new policy may be well illustrated by their statement that “A handful of people with ulterior motives in the fine arts circle continued to make use of [traditional] paintings to stir up trouble, distort and vilify the realities of socialism and give vent to their dissatisfaction with and hatred of
socialism … Under their pens, brightness has been turned into darkness and happiness into disaster.”

Following the first exhibition of its kind of “black paintings” at the National Art Gallery in Beijing in the spring of 1974, many more similar exhibitions were held elsewhere throughout the country between 1974 and 1976. With the campaign, the list of the “black painters” soon multiplied and went far beyond the artists working in the hotels. Under ruthless attacks by Jiang Qing and the other members of the Gang of Four, who tried to dictate the ideological line of the party during the final years of the Cultural Revolution, many famous professional guohua painters were once again persecuted on a nationwide scale. Many became the subject of intense criticism as “wild, strange, black and reckless” and, in some cases, counterrevolutionary. (see pic. 4-4)

The fundamental issue behind the condemnation of those traditional guohua painting as “black paintings” was that the existence of those images was interpreted as spreading particular ideological and political ideas. Zhou Enlai maintained that China should have two standards for art, one for domestic and the other for foreign consumption, and this view was in fact politically and economically logical at the time. However, this two-standard approach for guohua paintings overlapped into ideological territory, over which Jiang Qing claimed to have unquestioned authority. Instead of the Cultural Group of the State Council that was under Jiang Qing’s firm control, foreign affairs and foreign trade agencies carried out Zhou’s direction and directly commissioned these traditional guohua painters to create works for foreign consumption.

Upholding her fundamental beliefs and trying to re-affirm her authority over the cultural sphere, Jiang Qing rejected the need for dual standards. By initiating the “Black Painting Exhibition”, Jiang implicitly denounced Zhou’s policy of promoting non-political guohua paintings as a move to satisfy the needs of imperialism and revisionism and as not expressing the vision of communism. The mode of expression and subject matters of all artwork were once again, after the campaign, tightly restriction. Only realistic representations of revolutionary heroic figures that were still in favor with the party were promoted. The campaign brought with it severe consequences for more than just artists. The already limited commercial activities of cultural products were once again interrupted, as art stores such as Rongbaozhai, Duoyunxuan and Heping Huadien were criticized and forced to readjust their management. These state-run institutions could only sell certain products and had to ban traditional paintings. The intense criticism against guohua painters of traditional styles lasted until the fall of the “Gang of Four” in 1976, after which new cultural policies allowed traditional guohua paintings to be produced and sold.

Deng Xiaoping vs. Jiang Qing

With the end of the Cultural Revolution, profound political changes in China had resulted in significant cultural developments as early as the late 1970s. To understand these developments, it is useful to analyze and compare the “official voices” in regards to art and literature in China from 1976 to 1977. In August 1976, thirty-five editorials and articles published between January and June 1976 on Hongqi, People’s Daily, PLA Daily, Beijing Daily and Guanming Daily were edited into a book titled “To Concentrate the Fire On Deng (Xiaoping) and To Uphold the Revolution in Literature and Art” (Ji Zhong Huo Li Pi Deng, Jiang Chi Wen Yi Ge Ming). In these articles, the words from Mao’s famous “Talks at Yan’an Forum on Literature and
Art” were repeatedly cited to justify the Cultural Revolution and the cultural policies of the time. They were used to show the country the new direction in culture and in turn made traditional art work illegal as it did not conform to these new views of the country. (see chart 4-1)

In less than a year, fourteen editorials and articles published between March and June 1977 in the very same newspapers and periodical were also edited into a book titled “To Raise the Great Flag of Chairman Mao’s Line on Revolutionary Literature and Art Even Higher”. Ironically, but expected, Mao’s same words in the Talks in Yan’an in 1942 were also reiterated throughout the book to relentlessly criticize the cultural policies that were so widely praised on a national scale only a few months prior. (For comparative details, see chart 4-2)

As in the past, cultural discourse was brought to the forefront of China’s political arena. The same famous comment Mao made in 1966, which was so widely cited by Jiang Qing and other radicals to attack their political foes during the Cultural Revolution (including Liu Shaoqi, Lin Biao and Deng Xiaoping) was repeatedly used to criticize the “Gang of Four”. They were once again described by their rivals as the opposition class taking an adversarial ideological line: “You are making the socialist revolution and yet don’t know where the bourgeoisie is. It is right in the Communist Party – those in power taking the capitalist road. The capitalist roaders are still on the capitalist road.”

103 All thirty-five articles can be found in Ji Zhong Huo Li Pi Deng, Jiang Chi Wen Yi Ge Ming (To Concentrate the Fire on Deng Xiaoping and To Uphold the Revolution in Literature and Art), (Beijing: People’s Literature Press, 1976).

104 All fourteen articles can be found in Geng Gao Di Ju Qi Mao Zhu Xi Ge Ming Wen Yi Lu Xian De Wei Da Qi Zhi (To Raise the Great Flag of Chairman Mao’s Line on Revolutionary Literature and Art Even Higher), (Guangzhou: Guangdong People’s Press, 1977).

105 This is a quote from “Great Historic Victory”, an editorial celebrating the defeat of the “Gang of Four”. It was jointly published in People’s Daily, Red Flag Journal and Liberation Army Daily on Oct. 25, 1976. Its full English translation can be found in China Reconstruction, issue No.1, January 1977.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continually March Forward on Chairman Mao’s Line on Literature and Art – Learn from the Talks</td>
<td>It is of great importance to use Mao’s Talks as a weapon to criticize Deng Xiaoping’s revisionist line. The Cultural Revolution, best characterized by model operas, has realized Mao’s line on revolutionary literature and art.</td>
<td>1976 0601 Hong Qi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Evidence Is As Solid As Mountains. These Is No Way To Deny It.</td>
<td>Following Mao’s line, revolutionary literature and art has made heroic workers, peasants and soldiers the focus. Deng, on the contrary, intended to return to the old path of feudalism, capitalism and revisionism.</td>
<td>0407 Ren Min Ri Bao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Course of Revolution on Literature and Art Must Not Be Altered</td>
<td>Inspired by revolutionary model operas, all types of literature and art works have made tremendous advancement. Deng wrongly accused them and intended to return to the revisionist path.</td>
<td>0523 Ren Min Ri Bao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proletarian Revolution on Literature and Art Proceeds Amidst Fierce Struggles with the Capitalist Enemies – Learn from the Talks</td>
<td>We need to further understand and use the Talks as a weapon to criticize Deng. We need especially to create heroic images of workers, farms and soldiers.</td>
<td>0523 Guang Ming Ri Bao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insist on Revolution on Literature and Art and Continually Criticize Deng – Learn from the Talks</td>
<td>All literature and art works are at the service of different classes and political lines. In accordance with Mao’s instructions in the Talks, model operas are faithful reflection of socialism.</td>
<td>0527 Guang Ming Ri Bao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>We Will Not Allow Deng To Alter the Fundamental Mission of Socialist Literature and Art</strong></td>
<td>The perfect images of proletarian heroes will be the center of socialist literature and art. Deng’s real intention is, through re-controlling this territory, to revive capitalism.</td>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Fundamental Mission of Socialist Literature and Art Is To Create the Images of Model Heroes of Proletarian Class – Learn from the Talks</strong></td>
<td>(as title)</td>
<td>0421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attacking Revolutionary Model Operas Is Denying Revolution on Literature and Art</strong></td>
<td>Revolutionary model operas are a faithful reflection of Mao’s line on revolutionary literature and art. To support them is to support Mao’s instructions. Deng’s attack on them is aimed at preventing flowers from blooming.</td>
<td>0312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workers, Peasants and Soldiers Love Model Operas – Rebuking the Absurd Criticism on Revolutionary Model Operas by Unrepentant Capitalist Deng Xiaoping</strong></td>
<td>(as title)</td>
<td>0421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learn from Revolutionary Model Operas and Insist on Revolution in Sculptures</strong> (by the Sculpture Team of “The Tax-Collecting Mansion” and the Department of Sculpture, Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts)</td>
<td>Inspired by model operas, fine art students recruited from workers, peasants and soldiers have created many significant sculptures. One blooming flower helps all kinds of flowers to prosper.</td>
<td>0423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hold on Tight to Our Painting Brushes and Fight Forever</strong> (by the CCP Committee of Hu County, Shanxi Province)</td>
<td>Learning from the experiences of model operas, amateur painters in Hu County have created a lot of heroic images. The progress in the works of fine arts is unprecedented.</td>
<td>0405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raise Higher the Great Banner of Chairman Mao’s Line on Revolutionary Literature and Art – In Memorizing the Talks</td>
<td>The “Gang of Four” sought to replace the banner of Mao’s line with theirs. It is imperative to follow Mao’s guideline of “Double Hundreds” in the Talks.</td>
<td>1977 0523 Ren Min Ri Bao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expect More Good Artworks – In Memorizing the Talks</td>
<td>The “Gang of Four” attempted to establish their own system inside the party and seriously hindered the development of literature and art.</td>
<td>0523 Guang Ming Ri Bao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March Forward With the Great Manner of Chairman Mao’s Thoughts on Literature and Art – In Memorizing the Talks</td>
<td>The “Three Prominences” promoted by the “Gang of Four” is a serious distortion of life and history. Under their control, literature and art became utter lies,</td>
<td>0601 Hong Qi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imitating Premier Zhou’s Glorious Example, March Bravely Along Chairman Mao’s Line on Literature and Art – Learn from The Talks</td>
<td>Steadily against the monopoly of the “Gang of Four”, Premier Zhou is a sincere defender and practitioner of Mao’s guidelines of “Double Hundreds”.</td>
<td>0524 Ren Min Ri Bao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premier Zhou Is the Model of Executing and Defending Chairman Mao’s Line on Literature and Art – In Memorizing the Talks</td>
<td>Zhou is responsible for the creation of the great opera “The East Is Red”. We should follow Chairman Hua’s leadership and expect a spring of hundreds of flowers.</td>
<td>0525 Jie Fang Jun Bao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Work of Revolutionary Literature and Art Belongs to the Party, Not to Gangs – Denouncing the Revisionist Line of the “Gang of Four” on Literature and Art</td>
<td>(as title)</td>
<td>0401 Hong Qi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman Mao’s “Talks” Shines Forever</td>
<td>It is imperative to insist on the leadership of the party, rather</td>
<td>1977 0611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Main Message</td>
<td>Source</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>March Forward According to the Directions of Chairman Mao’s Talks – Struggle to the End with the “Gang of Four” and All the Enemies</td>
<td>than Jiang Qing, on literature and art, and uphold Mao’s guidelines of “Double Hundreds”.</td>
<td>Ren Min Ri Bao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We Must Change Our Standing Point</td>
<td>Only through standing with workers, peasants and soldiers and all the proletarian classes can we create real works of literature and art.</td>
<td>0501 Guan Dong Wen Yi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glorious Milestone – Learn from The Talks</td>
<td>The “black models” created by the “Gang of Four” are anti-revolutionary. Workers of literature and art must learn from the Talks and stand firmly with workers, peasants and soldiers.</td>
<td>0521 Guang Ming Ri Bao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be Part of the Struggles of the Workers, Peasants and Soldiers – In Memorizing the Talks</td>
<td>Under the control of the “Gang of Four”, literature and art was entirely detached from real life. Workers of literature and art must insist on Mao’s directions and serve workers, peasants and soldiers.</td>
<td>0523 Ren Min Ri Bao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insist on the Guideline of “Double Hundreds” to Make Literature and Art Prosperous</td>
<td>(as title)</td>
<td>0521 Guang Ming Ri Bao</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Deng Xiaoping vs. Hua Guofeng

The consolidation of Deng’s power during the political awakening of the public, which emerged after the fall of the Gang of Four, was anything but smooth. Between October 1976 and May 1977, the legacy of the Cultural Revolution loomed over the entire nation. Lu Peng, a well-known critic of contemporary Chinese art, described the period as “a continuation of the Cultural Revolution without the Gang of Four”. Lu Peng asserts that party and state officials, under the direction of Mao’s successor Hua Guofeng, actively blasted the old revolutionary doctrines and lines established by Mao by means of various types of propaganda, which not surprisingly included paintings. Hua clearly understood the capacity of cultural bureaucracies in consolidating or discrediting his political statutes as the legitimate successor of Mao.

Richard Curt Kraus’ observation of the coup against the Gang of Four in Beijing persuasively proves this. Kraus writes, “According to Zhang Pinghe, who was promoted to national propaganda chief by Hua Guofeng, the recapture of the Ministry of Culture took higher priority than did taking control over Tianjin, China’s third leading city.”

As we can see from this quote, control of actual territory was less important than control of culture and the spread of cultural products as propaganda. Soon, professional artists were involved again in the political power struggle, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. Obvious examples include the sudden and extensive appearance of images of Hua Guofeng in various exhibitions and publications. Applying different media and art forms, artists commissioned by the state portrayed the new Great Leader chatting with Mao or hosting official congregations. One of the most famous paintings of the period was “With you in Charge, I Am at Ease” which recorded the moment when Mao passed his mantle to Hua. Other popular but less

overt themes include peasants and workers celebrating Hua’s remarkable performance -- particularly in the Shanxi and Hunan provinces -- and Hua visiting areas of disasters. Standardized portraits of Hua were also massively reproduced and distributed throughout the nation, just like the ones of Mao had been in the recent past.

History tells us that Hua’s period in the PRC era was short-lived. However, in terms of PRC art, the abundance and quality of artworks praising one particular individual within a short time frame brilliantly reflects the thinking of artists during this time. Jin Shangyi, Liu Wenxi, and He Kongde were just a few examples of prominent professional artists who participated in this surge of artworks for Hua Guofeng. With perhaps a few rare exceptions, these artists had no personal emotional attachment to Hua whatsoever. Most of them did not even know or care about his career background. Nevertheless, based on their living and work experiences in the past decades, these artists had become ideologically apt at changes, and technically well-trained to perform their duties as loyal propagandists for their “great political leader” - a synonym for the party-state of the time.

Unknown to most of the artists at the end of 1978 was that, while enthusiastically praising Hua with styles and skills learned from Mao’s era, there was an intense political power struggle within the CCP Politburo brewing. In terms of power politics, the reform-minded “practicists” led by Deng Xiaoping, Hua and his “whatever policy” appeared to be the largest obstacle blocking the way for the reform program and their political interests. To clear the ground for a reformation of official ideology, Deng and his supporters gradually intensified their attack on the hard-line Maoists. One of the most effective strategies to achieve their goal was to challenge the legitimacy of Hua by rectifying the injustices caused by the ultra-leftist thoughts and reinterpreting the roles of the old revolutionary leaders in the past.
In this changing political environment, artists were bound to serve as an important weapon for Deng and his political supporters, either voluntarily or involuntarily. In May 1978 Hu Yaobang’s monumental proposal that “practice is the sole criterion for testing truth” opened up space for greater flexibility and revision of the Maoist creed. Many professional oil and *guohua* painters quickly responded by re-infusing their passion and talent mainly to the three sets of subject matters: rectification of the injustices, commemoration of the innocent and passionate young students, and reinterpretation of the revolutionary figures of the recent past. The first category was exemplified by the idealized portraits of Zhang Zhixin, a party member who criticized the idolization of Mao and the party’s ultra-left line during the Cultural Revolution and was executed in 1975. The second was best illustrated by paintings depicting students who participated in the “April 5th Movement” in 1976. The third was characterized by humanistic and people-loving images of old revolutionary leaders, such as Zhou Enlai, Chen Yi and Peng Dehuai.

Although many consider Zhang Zhixin a heroine for confronting the party, she insisted she was a “true Marxist” and faithful member of the CCP. Much of her criticism regarding Jiang Qing and comments on Mao were shared by those Communist leaders who joined Deng during Deng’s power struggle with ultra-leftists. In a fierce political zero-sum game, publically proclaiming Zhang as a model communist and revolutionary martyr through artistic visual images, Deng and his supporters certainly scored easy points at the expense of Mao’s faithful successor Hua.

The paintings depicting young students defending the temporary memorial for Zhou

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107 In January 1976 Zhou Enlai passed away and caused great sorrow throughout the nation. In April of the same year, a powerful mass movement arose in Beijing and many other cities across the country to commemorate Zhou and oppose the Gang of Four. This movement was in essence an expression of support for correct leadership, as represented by Deng Xiaoping. The CCP Political Bureau labeled the Movement a “counter-revolutionary incident” and dismissed Deng from all his posts both inside and outside the party.
Enlai and mourning for their beloved late Premier during the “April 5th Movement” also served the interests of Deng in a similar way.

At the same time, the sudden surge in numbers of portraits of the old revolutionary leaders, particularly those of Zhou Enlai, in the late 1970s, was by no means accidental. The First Prize winner of the Chinese National Arts Exhibition commemorating the 30th anniversary of the founding of the PRC in 1979 was a guohua painting titled “People and the Premier” depicting Zhou comforting a group of villagers who had just experienced a devastating earthquake. (see pic. 5-4) Zou Yuejin (2002) specifically discusses the political implications of the increasing popularity of Zhou Enlai as an artistic topic. According to Zuo, the charismatic image of Zhou, who played an essential role in reinstating Deng’s political status, worked nicely at legitimizing Deng as a future leader in the awakening of the bitter aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. Worthy praises of Zhou Enlai with visual artworks signified the mistakes of the Gang of Four and the ultra-leftist practices in the past. These images therefore also worked against Hua’s dogmatic Maoist line. In addition, the artistically recreated images of the revolutionaries of the older generation provided Deng with a strong connection to the past, which was essential to strengthening his claim to be an appropriate leader.\footnote{A similar approach was repeatedly used by Deng’s immediate successor Jiang Zemin, who has very limited connections with the old generation of revolutionaries. Designed by his propaganda and thought work advisors, Jiang stands beside or sits with Deng in various portraits and propaganda posters to iterate his direct ties with the great leader(s) of the past.} Hua’s unexciting career record, as a faithful believer of Mao and responsible bureaucrat after the establishment of the PRC, looked extremely pale in comparison.
Concluding Remarks and Important Findings

In the current discussion I do not wish to over-emphasize the use of visual artworks as a political weapon in deciding the outcome of power struggles in the PRC, for there are other obvious factors simultaneously affecting the course of history. Neither do I suggest that Chinese artists were merely political instruments only passively responding to their responsibilities as art workers serving the party-state, for there have been many of examples exhibiting artists’ sincere aesthetic and moral attachment to their work.

This chapter, however, has clearly shown that the discourse in art and cultural affairs were often at the center of controversies and functioned as a catalyst in PRC power politics. Chinese leaders and their advisors undoubtedly understood that artworks, especially iconographic paintings that were produced at important historic conjunctures based on the preferences of their patrons, could effectively work either for or against individuals or factions in high-level power struggles. The history of power struggles between Mao and his challengers and the inner party cleavages among Mao’s immediate subordinates and successors are support this proposition.

This chapter has also shown that during the pre-reform era, Chinese artists with imperatively idealized social roles as a messengers and interpreters for the mass were compelled to perform politically under tremendous psychological and administrative constraints. As a result, their suffering persisted throughout this period while recognizing that these observations correctly identity a general trend, generalizations based on macro-level research has its limits. And, although the availability of government documents, reports, and detailed statistics has increased significantly in recent years, their meanings and implications are frequently still obscure. Their promulgators and executers, as well we current readers, are left with ample room for reinterpretation. This issue is even more troublesome, because it is likely
that the contents and wording of certain controversial documents, such as the “February Outline” and “June Outlines”, may have gone through substantial editing, with content missing or replaced with euphemistic wording, before being made available to the general public. We therefore have to give caution to the findings based on such types of “first” and “secondary” information and to turn to in-depth grassroots case studies to understand and explain more accurately the changing dynamics among power politics, cultural policies and artists’ lives and perceptions in the PRC.
CHAPTER FIVE: IMPACT OFIDEOLOGICAL,
INSTITUTIONAL AND ECONOMIC TRANFORMATIONS

Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, China gradually moved away from a Soviet style state-planned economy to a market oriented economy and opened its gates to the outside world. In addition, with the appointment of the liberal-minded Hu Yaobang as the Secretary General of the party, the belief that ideology should not stand in the way of economic reform gained momentum throughout the country. As a result, the country started to experience a gradual relaxation of control over personal activities and an expansion of public space in the 1980s. Many people in China also started to sense a limited degree of ideological and intellectual pluralism. All these changes, along with rapid economic development, jointly contributed to the improvement of the lives of Chinese people, including artists, as a whole.

In the 1980s, gradually recovering from decades of suppression, Chinese artists generally welcomed the changes brought by the reform and opening-up. Many artists had high expectations that their artistic careers and economic status would get better in the future with these developments. In the 1990s, many artists, like many intellectuals and officials, either directly joined the fever of “jumping into the commercial sea” or took second jobs related to commercial activities. Although studies specifically on the Chinese artists’ attitudes towards the phenomenon are still in short supply, some research on Chinese intellectuals is available. The findings generally suggest that intellectuals had great expectations to improve their economic life, to utilize their professional knowledge and expertise, to find a good channel for self-actualization, and to become more autonomous.109

Although professional guohua painters have been traditionally viewed as and indeed behaved as intellectuals and artists, their experiences during the reform era were special in several aspects. This chapter treats institutional rearrangements, ideological favoritism and economic transformation - especially the rapid expansion of China’s culture market amidst continual ideological discourse in the 1980s and 1990s - as critical variables in this relationship. It will conclude by demonstrating that although the rapid expansion of the culture market substantially boosted individual professional guohua painters’ social status and economic well-being, most of them chose to stay within the official ideological and aesthetic boundaries and often chose to be part of official arts agencies and institutions. This was mainly due to institutional rearrangements and ideological guidelines taken by the party-state. As a result, although their “organized dependence” upon the party-state gradually decreased, their conformity towards the party-state simultaneously increased. Their situation therefore, not only significantly differed from that of artists in Eastern Europe, but also in obvious disagreement with the experiences of performing artists, such as ballet dancers, theatre actors and opera singers; and even the situation of other visual artists working in different art forms - including woodblock print makers, oil painters and watercolorists.\(^{110}\)

It is, nevertheless, important to note that professional guohua painters’ conformity toward the party-state did not necessarily translate into political support. In fact, as their conformity towards the party-state increased, their discontent towards the “velvet prison with Chinese characteristics” may have grown overtime. This

\(^{110}\) Professional woodblock print makers are a good example of this. These artists were intensely concerned with political and social problems. Following the footsteps of Lu Xun, they were considered the artists creating revolutionary images. During the pre-reform era, woodblock print organizations were created to set aesthetic standards and to support production. Departments of woodblock printing were set up in academies of fine arts. Woodblock print artists were attached to publishing houses and art research institutions to create illustrations where needed. In the reform era, these artists were no longer seen as the creators of orthodox models, they had lost their status within the world of fine arts and many have economically suffered.
reflection will situate the following description of individual professional guohua painters’ experiences and opinions in context and will be covered in more detail in Chapter 6. This will also allow an analysis of those experiences and opinions through the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 7. For comparative reasons, the time span of this chapter extends from 1949 to the late 1990s, while acknowledging the year of 1978 as a critical dividing juncture.

1. Cultural Sectors under Reform in Comparison: International and Domestic Perspectives

Given their intrinsic nature, cultural sectors under communist regimes experienced drastic economic reform and were confronted with more ideological interference, compared with other economically more straightforward domains. Before discussing institutional transformation and its impact on professional guohua painters in the reform era, it is important to look at the artists’ overall situations in this time period. It is also worthwhile to compare the artists’ situation in post-communist countries and in China.

With the fall of the former communist regimes of Central and Eastern Europe, the domination of planned economies and states control over cultural sectors formally ended. The principles guiding the production and distribution of goods and services from cultural sectors in those countries abruptly changed from “central planning” to “free market” almost overnight. According to George Muskens (1992), there are two main reasons why cultural sectors in post-communist countries were reorganized predominantly according to free market principles after 1989. The first is that without state interference, artists in post-communist countries have enjoyed more cultural freedom. The second is that without state patronage and official recognition needed for privileges in impoverished societies, artists had to provide products and services to
meet the demands of paying clients in the market. Muskens further studied the changes in the cultural sectors in Hungary and Poland, and the ways in which artists coped with them. He found that both countries failed to provide the artists with job security and also did not solve the inherent social question of artistic production and distribution. The two countries’ legitimacy was therefore seriously impaired.

In their study, Goban-Klas and Kwasniewicz observe that, with sudden structural changes of the cultural affairs system, artistic freedom was gained at a significant cost in Eastern Europe. They found that in the market economy, it is paying clients who ultimately determine the financial wellbeing of artists. As the economic crisis limited the buying power of cultural consumers, the level of participation in culture decreased and therefore has a negative impact on artists’ overall livelihood. Finally, they suggest that the adaptation process of artists to the market economy will bring about far-reaching qualitative changes to their self-image as members of the intelligentsia with regards to both their social status and social roles”.

In China, since the late 1970s, the actual pace of the commercialization of the cultural sector has been generally concurrent with the pace of economic reform. In such a process, cutting state-subsidies and increasing self-sufficiency were also inevitable. In fact, the Chinese government had started the deliberately streamlining or the outright shutting down of unprofitable enterprises and government agencies due mainly to budgetary/fiscal reasons in the 1980s. It is almost impossible to estimate statistically the scale and impact of those changes on the fine arts community. Yet, Kraus’ study on state subsidies to performing-art troupes in China in the 1990s,

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although based on incomplete national data, provides us with some important insights to the general trend.

According to Kraus’ study, in 1985 there were still 3,175 state subsidized arts troupes, ranging from Chinese opera companies to symphony orchestras. By 1994, 20 percent had been cut. For the remaining 2,561 troupes, state subsidies constituted 56 percent of total expenditures, a reduction from 65 percent in 1985. Also, the study finds that although the surviving 80 percent of units enjoyed substantial budget increases by 2.5 times to 756 million RMB (about US$ 91 million) in that decade, they had to find alternative financing to keep pace with inflation and new expenses. Kraus’ study persuasively explains why so many artists in China have been anxious about reforms. Therefore, institutionally, it becomes striking that the situation of professional guohua painters significantly differs from that of artists under different artistic genres (including professional painters working in other art forms) both in Eastern European post-communist countries and in China.

2. China’s Professional Guohua Painters under Reform

2-1 Expansion of Guohua Painting Institutes in the Reform Era

Throughout the Cultural Revolution, most professional guohua painters were under constant criticism. Many of them experienced serious persecution especially during the “Movement of Criticizing Black Paintings” (批黑畫運動) between 1973 and 1976. In December 1977, as Chinese society was gradually recovering from the nightmarish Cultural Revolution, the Ministry of Culture established an ad hoc arrangement called the “Chinese Painting Creation Unit” (中國畫創作小組). Rather than creating actual artworks, the unit’s most important task at the time was to help

113 Kraus, pp.214-215
114 The political implications and a few individual cases of the “Movement of Criticizing Black Paintings” are respectively discussed in Chapter 3 and 5 of this thesis.
those badly mistreated professional guohua painters regain their reputations. It was also responsible for making necessary arrangements for those who survived the horrors of the Cultural Revolution to return to or be reassigned to proper posts. It was out of such political correctness and practical necessity that Anhui province and Tianjin municipality both founded their guohua painting institutes in 1979.

In 1981, the ad hoc Chinese Painting Creation Unit itself was upgraded to the “Research Institute of Guohua Painting” (中國畫研究院). The first president of this institute was Li Keran, who also suffered horribly during the Cultural Revolution. In his congratulatory speech, the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Culture Lin Mouhan (林默涵) praised the research institute as the model for all provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government (中央直轄市 MDUCG). Lin’s comments represented the voice of the central government and were unmistakably heard by local governments. In the following few years, over twenty provinces established their own guohua or fine art institutes. It is beyond the scope of this research to list all of the painting and fine arts academies established by all levels of governments in China. However, the following chart is useful in depicting the sudden boom of cultural enterprises at all levels of governments in China in the 1980s (see chart 5-1 on page 118).

The interest in establishing guohua institutes shown by major local governments, especially provincial governments, in the 1980s continued throughout China in the 1990s. Many municipal governments also followed the trend and created their own corresponding mechanisms. When the entire nation, including many state-run cultural enterprises and troupes were under serious pressure to streamline for budgetary considerations, the impulse behind expansion of these guohua institutes was especially inconsistent with the typical norm. Nevertheless, this new development
### Chart 5-1 Major Guohua Institutes Established between 1879 and 1988

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Level of Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anhui Calligraphy and Painting Institute</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tianjin Painting Institute</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>MDUCG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guizhou Chinese Painting Institute</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heilongjiang Painting Institute</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shantou Painting Institute</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Special Economic Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanxi (陝西) Chinese Painting Institute</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xinjiang Painting Institute</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beijing Chinese Painting Research Institute</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>the Ministry of Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chongqing Chinese Painting Institute</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>MDUCG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fujian Painting Institute</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guanxi Calligraphy and Painting Institute</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaoning Painting Institute</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sichuan Calligraphy and Painting Institute</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhejiang Painting Institute</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebei Painting Institute</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yunnan Painting Institute</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jilin Painting Institute</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiangxi Calligraphy and Painting Institute</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanxi (山西) Fine Art Institute</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ningxia Calligraphy and Painting Institute</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henan Calligraphy and Painting Institute</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shenzhen Painting Institute</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Special Economic Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shandong Painting Institute</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

appeared to be in agreement with the party-state’s practical needs of the late 1970s and early 1980s. As the reform and opening-up accelerated, economic, cultural as well as ideological needs also became increasingly important. Established either shortly before or during the reform era, guohua institutes became part of cultural enterprises financed and run by the state and various provincial and municipal governments. Many guohua painters were offered various full-time positions, honorary titles and cash subsidies by these institutes, even although some painters were not considered formal employees.

2-2. Reassertion of Chinese Artists Association (CAA) over Professional Guohua Painters

In terms of mass organization, the basic organizational structure of the re-established “All-China Federation of Literary and Arts Circles” and “Chinese Artists Association” remained virtually unchanged from the time of their suspension in 1966. They and their branches in various provinces, cities and autonomous regions have been under the direct supervision of the leadership of the party committees at every level. For instance, according to Article 1 and 2 of its latest Charter revised in December 2008, the Chinese Artists Association is under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and serves as a bridge between the party and government and artistic circles. It follows the basic party line, insists on “serving the people” and being true to socialists principles. By promoting the “main theme” (主弦律) as well as diversification, it unites and organizes artists to actively devote themselves to

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115 Basically a euphemism for official propaganda, the term “main them” has been quite extensively used by China’s official art organizations since the Fourteenth Congress of the CCP in 1992. It includes “artworks that help facilitate: 1. nationalism, collectivism and socialism; 2. reform and opening-up; 3. modernization; 4. national unity; 5. social progress; and 6. people’s welfare”. Quoted (translation) from Yun De, Cultural Viewpoint (Wen Hua Shi Dien)(Kunming: Yunnan People’s Press: 2001), pp.62-63.
the reform as well as to socialist modernization and the national spirit. After sixty years since its establishment, the CAA’s absolute submissive relationship to the party-state remains unchanged.

Financially fully supported by the party-state since the 1980s, the CAA has also strengthened its roles and functions by establishing new “creation centers”, “exhibition halls”, “exchange centers” and “friendship societies”. Its branches also expanded at the provincial, municipal and autonomous regional levels. After the party-state announced in the late 1990s its agenda to further commercialize China’s cultural industries, this uncharacteristic expansion was further justified and had an important impacted on professional artists’ careers and lives. The above observation is well-proven by Wu Guanzhong (1919-2010), perhaps the most renowned living guohua painter and oil master both internationally and domestically, who calls the CAA a “massive overstuffed bureaucracy” and “means to fame and gain”. Wu’s comment substantiates the argument that professional painters who stayed within the boundaries set by the party-state enjoyed much better working opportunities and career prospects during the reform era. Although more studies are needed to find out if a similar expansion also happened within the CCP itself - notably its propaganda system - at different levels, it should be logical to assume that tendency, given the deeply embedded dual hierarchical administrative system under the PRC.

116 The latest version (in Chinese) of the Charter of the CAA is revised in December 2008 and can be found on the CAA’s homepage at www.caanet.org.cn.  
117 In July 2007, Wu publicly made several critical comments about the CAA. He criticized, “In the West, there are many artists associations. Those associations basically sustain themselves by the virtues of the artworks produced by their members. In China, from the national to local levels, there are so many painters who don’t know how to paint and yet still rely on the State…… The Artists Association has become a massive overstuffed bureaucracy, offering a livelihood to a great number of people. These people in turn take advantages of their titles and positions given to them by the Association, artificially forcing up the prices of their own works and maximizing their personal interests in the market.” The text is translated into English by the current author. For Wu’s detailed comments, please see July 18, 2007 (Hong Kong) Wen Hui Daily (文匯報) and January 09, 2008 (Guangzhou) Southern Weekly (南方周報).
2-3 Expansion of the Party System in Fine Arts Academies

In the pre-reform era, fine art academies -- functioning as work units (danwei) well integrated into China’s political structure -- provided their members with material benefits, social services and career prospects. In the reform era, although there have been different degrees of marketization and increasing liberalization in institutional and personal activities in fine arts academies, the party has made clear its intention to continue its influence on current and future professional artists directly through its own system. The most obvious indicator of such intention is the expansion of the party system within those academies during recent years. Since the turn of the century, the secretaries of the CCP Committees have been ranked administratively above the presidents of several fine art academies. New corresponding re-adjustments have also been made at lower administrative levels within these academies of symbolic political significance, including the Central Academy of Fine Arts and the Chinese Academy of Fine Arts. For instance, there are a number of sub-units subordinated to the Chinese Painting Department of the Chinese Academy of Fine Arts, such as landscapes, flower-and-bird and figural painting sections. Structurally, in the past, the party’s commission extended as far and as deep as the department level. Nowadays, all the sections subordinate to the Department have established new corresponding party commissions.

It is not my intention to argue that the party now has more oppressive control over fine arts academies than in the pre-reform era, because, obviously, it has used its influence to provide incentives, while lessening imposed punishments. However, by explicitly elevating the status of its members and extending its structure in these academies through formal administrative adjustments, it is evident that the party desires to ensure these that these prestigious institutions continue to train artists according to officially accepted art forms and norms. In this sense, it can be argued
that the CCP has regained and is consolidating its influence on professional artists through these institutional and regulatory measures.

2-4 Other Institutionalized Incentives

In the reform era, in addition to creating more employment opportunities, the party-state also provided professional guohua painters with many extra privileges through periodic regulatory adjustments. For instance, since the early 1990s, official titles, such as “Artist Receiving Government Special Subsidy” (領有政府特殊津貼藝術家) and “First, Second and Third Class National Artists” (國家一二三級美術師), have been specifically designed for and awarded to professional artists.

Although the title “Artist Receiving Government Special Subsidy” is also awarded to non-visual artists, such as Beijing opera singers, it has predominantly been awarded to professional painters, especially guohua painters. As well as an initial monetary prize. This award guarantees its holders monthly grants for the rest of his or her life. The titles “First, Second and Third Class National Artists” gives their winners a status that can be equated to a formal position in the academic and government system. For example, nowadays, the status of First Class National Artists is comparable to the rank of full professor in a University. To receive this title, one must meet certain political, academic and artistic criteria. Among them, the most clearly defined criterion is that, after becoming a Second Class National Artist, one must be selected for the National Arts Exhibition (全國美展) jointly held by the Cultural Ministry and Chinese Artists’ Association and wins one of the first prizes in the Exhibition. An artist is qualified for the same promotion, if he or she has been selected for the National Exhibition twice and wins one of the second prizes, or has been selected into the Exhibition three times and wins one of the third prizes.
In comparison, the above classification system carefully designed for professional artists shares some striking similarities with China’s imperial civil-service examination system. Amongst others things, it persistently announces official ideologies and standards in aesthetics, although its scope and rigor is less rigid than the old examination system. Also, it generously awards those who follow this system with both grants and titles. Moreover, these titles have become an important resume for professional guohua painters who wish to appeal to collectors and investors and succeed in the current Chinese cultural market.

Competing in such a system, the artists are mainly judged by the Cultural Ministry and Chinese Artists’ Association. In reality, these arbitrators are under tight control of the party. Therefore, it is essentially the party that enjoys the final authority as to who succeeds at what in the public domain. Over time, through such mechanisms the party-state has also been able to exert a direct influence on some artists’ economic being, because their performance in the market (supposedly governed by capitalist principles) is related to recognitions granted by the party-state.

3. from Organized Dependency to Conformity

By the end of the 1990s, with the introduction of the term “cultural industry”, many public agencies responsible for cultural and propaganda affairs were also interested in recruiting professional painters trained by the art academies. In sum, most professional guohua painters have enjoyed better opportunities to receive outright financial supports or sponsorship in various forms from government agencies at different levels. Based on this, it seems plausible to make an assumption that

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The greatest irony is, while enjoying the benefits both directly and indirectly provided by the State, these professional artists hold proprietary rights of their own works. As a matter of fact, it was an open secret and common practice for many of them to use public resources to create and display artworks for personal purposes.
Chinese authorities enjoyed a high level of legitimacy amongst professional guohua painters after 1978. Yet, as explained in the previous sections, the issue proved to be more complicated than that. As the party-state attained remarkable success in providing professional guohua painters with more stable financial well-beings and better opportunities, it continually relied on institutional strata to “guide” the painters’ activities to best serve its own interests. Its success relied largely on the intrinsic nature of guohua as an elitist art form tightly associated with China’s cultural politics and a desirable commodity under an expanding mixed market economy, in which artists and their patrons were exposed both to great opportunities as well as challenges.

In the previous chapter, I extensively discussed the basic principles that have been used to decide the aesthetic and market values of guohua paintings done by professional artists prior to the establishment of the PRC. In the modern era, the assignment of monetary value to any artwork, such as a piece of guohua painting, is still a much more complex process than assessing the value of a piece of gold or a bag of rice. In his book on the art market in the west, Tom McNulty lists five major determining factors concerning the value of artworks - including the popularity of the work style, the artist’s reputation, rarity, condition and provenance.  

McNulty’s observation, exclusively focusing on the more mature western art market, seems particularly true in the case of guohua paintings in contemporary China.

Guohua paintings are heavily valued based on the artists’ reputations more than any other form of art (except, perhaps, Chinese calligraphy), for the cost of the raw materials used to create the painting is often negligibly low. For example, a four by two foot guohua painting by a contemporary master such as Wu Guanzhong, currently

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valued in the millions of RMB, represents less than ten dollars worth of xuan paper and a tiny quantity of bottled ink and color pigments. The artists’ reputations are often directly tied to their association with public cultural agencies and establishments. Furthermore, artists often need to be part of institutionalized efforts to have their works recognized and publicized, which is an important precondition for them to perform well in the market. As a consequence, being part of government-run cultural agencies and establishments (including reputable fine art schools of higher education) became an important badge of honor especially for the less famous professional guohua painters. This type of connection was also essential for success especially in the newly recovered cultural market.\textsuperscript{120}

In addition, “non-governmental establishments” such as the omnipresent China Federation of Literary and Art Circles (中國文聯 CFLAC), and Chinese Artists Association also played a crucial role in influencing the careers of professional guohua painters.\textsuperscript{121} A membership in these associations was often a requirement for taking part in many important conferences and exhibitions. An appointment of a formal title in these associations at various levels could immediately give a boost to a painter’s reputation and the market value of his or her works a boost, which technically speaking was not necessarily a faithful reflection of his/her artistic achievements. As an implicit result, the party could still, in many respects, affect professional guohua painters’ artistic and economic lives, because of its deep

\textsuperscript{120} The transition from a closed state-planned to an entrepreneurial market-oriented economy is arguably more straightforward for the production and distribution of goods and services directly related to everyday-life than is the case of artistic products. Nevertheless, it doesn’t require expertise in art-appraisal or art-marketing to appreciate certain basic rules in cultural market. With similar artistic talents and educational backgrounds, painters endorsed and publicized by representative institutes are more marketable than those who are not.

\textsuperscript{121} Both China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, and Chinese Artists Association have their corresponding mechanisms at national, provincial and municipal levels. Nowadays, the CCP is still able to effectively execute its cultural policies through its Party units within these associations at all levels.
infiltration in these allegedly “non-governmental” organizations through its Department of Propaganda.

From the professional guohua painters’ perspective, whether they liked it or not, the advantages of being part of the incentive scheme designed by the party-state are obvious. These advantages, however, came with a price, i.e. their autonomy as a whole. How do we then understand this phenomenon? In explaining social patterns in a post-revolutionary Chinese industry, Andrew G. Walder presents his famous “organized dependence” theory which highlights the close interaction between the subjective exercise of authority and flexible rewards systems. He persuasively points out that such reward systems “link an array of both rewards and punishments - and not just wage levels and bonuses - to a broad range of employee behavior and attitudes”.\(^{122}\) Organized Dependence Theory is persuasive, when describing the relationship between artists and the party-state in the pre-reform era, not only because the alternatives available to artists were extremely limited, but because the authorities were much more willing to resort to punishments to ensure that artists would be in line with its expectations. As a result, professional guohua painters’ economic and social dependence on work units, their political dependence on the party-state and their personal dependence on supervisors was inevitable.

In comparison, during the last two decades of the 20\(^{th}\) Century, the party-state’s policies towards professional guohua painters were formulated predominantly on the basis of rewards, encouragements and persuasions. In addition, the marketization of their works and increasing private patronage for their activities decreased professional guohua painters’ economic dependence on the party-state. As such, Walder’s model may become increasingly irrelevant to the current discussion. Examining types of

adaptation by individuals within the culture-bearing society, Robert, K. Merton, an influential sociologist, identifies five responses to the ends-means dilemma, i.e. conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion. According to Merton, conformity exists when people accept both the cultural goal of material (monetary) success and the culturally approved means to achieve the goal.\textsuperscript{123}

My previous discussion highlighted professional guohua painters’ significantly improved social status and economic gains as a direct result of the ideological favoritism and institutional incentives that they enjoyed. Therefore, borrowing the basic idea of Merton’s typology, it may be inferred that professional guohua painters adapted much more easily to the new social orders and had much less incentive to take a deviant approach, when compared to artists facing similar types of situations. Their adaptability in the reform era is reflected and compared with that of others in figure 5-1 and 5-2 (on page 142).\textsuperscript{124}

4. Cultural Heritages and Ideological Discourse – Invisible Forces at Work
4-1 Development and Controversies in the Post-Cultural Revolution Period
The interplay between and the fusion of arts and politics significantly influenced the fate of many professional guohua painters during the pre-reform era – as already discussed in Chapter 4. Although with different focuses and intensities, similar discourse continued in the reform era. There had been a few important new developments in China’s art world by the end of the 1970s. Among them, two events particularly challenged old ideas and existing establishments and signified the beginning of a relatively relaxed era for Chinese artists. The first was the surge of the

\textsuperscript{124} Merton stresses that his classification refers to role behavior in specific types of situation, not to personality. According to him, the types of adaptation listed in his model represent are more or less enduring response, although people may shift from one alternative to another as they engage in different sphere of social activities. For a detailed discussion, see ibid.
“wounded arts” (傷痕美術). The second was the beginning of unofficial art exhibitions organized by individual groups. These two factors jointly encouraged new aspirations to modernize Chinese art and opened up new possibilities for many Chinese artists.

The emergence of the “Wounded Art Movement” corresponded with the growth of “wounded literature” (傷痕文學). Awakening from decades of constant censorship, repression and persecution during the pre-reform era, in the post Cultural Revolution period some artists began to express the agonies caused by the chaos and disorder during the Cultural Revolution. In stead of “artificial heroic images” of political leaders and soldiers, peasants and workers, they turned to depict the “real world” and reflect their true feelings about the ordinary people and landscapes that surrounded them. Consequently, there was a rejection of the official aesthetic views that had been arbitrarily imposed on artists in the past decades prior to the reform era. The most important one under criticism was the “three prominences” (三突出),125 as it seriously limited the artists’ freedom to express themselves.

With implicit political motivation, the “Wounded Art Movement” forecasted a more relaxed, versatile, as well as controversial artistic environment of the immediate future. Between 1979 and 1983, a series of the famous Stars Exhibitions vividly reflected artists’ desire to create an autonomous realm for art. Most of the members of the Stars Group had received no formal training in art and were not affiliated with any official art institution. In September 1979, after the Artists Association in Beijing declined the Stars Group’s application to use its gallery, they decided to hold their first public exhibition at the east fence of Beijing’s China National Fine Arts Gallery.

125 Jiang Qing’s central aesthetic theory was based on the so-called “socialist realism – revolutionary romanticism”. Her reductionist mode was summarized as “Of all the characters, stress the positive ones. Of the positives characters, stress the heroic ones. Of the main heroic characters, stress the central one.” For detailed discussion of Jiang’s model [yangban] of mass entertainment and art production, see Jerome Silbergeld and Gong Jisui, Contradictions: Artistic Life, the Socialist State, and the Chinese Painter Li Huasheng, (Seattle: University of Washington Press: 1993), pp.43-44.
In the exhibition, the self-taught artist Wang Keping presented his work entitled *Idol*, a wood sculpture of a re-shaped image of Mao and a Buddha with an immediately recognizable star above its forehead. The fact that this sculpture boldly revealed only two years after Mao’s death that Mao had been worshipped as a new religion indicates the ideological significance of the exhibition. The next artistic work using an image of Mao with a similar critical approach did not appear in China until 1988, when Wang Guangyi did a series of oil paintings that recaptured Mao’s standard portrait (see pic. 5-1 and 5-2 on page 126).

At the same time, there was obvious confusion, and occasional contradictions, over the bureaucratic control of artists in the early stages of the reform era. Some reports reveal that the newly appointed chairman of China’s Artists’ Association Jiang Feng and the vice chairman of the China Art Gallery visited the exhibition and took a rather positive stance towards the event. However, only two days after the opening, it was denounced as illegal for “disturbing citizens’ normal lives” and was closed down by the Beijing Public Security Bureau. On the 1st of October, the 30th anniversary of the founding of the PRC, the group’s members organized a protest march in the name of artistic freedom. Eventually, the exhibition was reopened and ran from November 23rd to December 2nd in Beihai Park in Beijing.

With the permission of Jiang Feng, the Stars Group held their second exhibition at China’s National Fine Arts Gallery in August 1980. Jiang’s decision to introduce the Stars Group to exhibit at China’s most prestigious art gallery was controversial. Some argue that Jiang was truly sympathetic towards the young amateur artists, because of his own background as a self-taught revolutionary artist. Others think that Jiang intentionally wanted to show a tolerant stance towards new aesthetic ideas, because of his painful experience as one of the most famous victims of the

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Anti-Rightist Campaign. Some believe Jiang simply responded to the thinking among the reform leaders in the party at the time. Still others speculate that he thought the “avant-garde style artworks” would serve as a good negative education for the masses, because of his strong convictions in socialist art. Although it is not evident what led to Jiang’s decision, one thing which is certain is that Jiang underestimated the interest and sympathy towards these amateur artists from the general public. The attendance figures for the Stars Group second exhibition reportedly reached 200,000 in ten days. These developments in the fine arts world were concurrent with new trends in other cultural fields. The more obvious example was the new wave in movies directed by Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige. These adventure-minded artists intended to keep their actions as “legal” as possible, while constantly testing the red lines established by the cultural authorities, as well as public security authorities. The result was a series of such reactions to the official aesthetic views and ideologies, which is now collectively called the “85 New Wave Fine Arts”. This monumental movement is formally recognized as the birthplace of China’s avant-garde art which has been extensively presented in the forms of both political pop art and cynical realism. In February 1989, only a few months before the brutal crackdown at Tiananmen Square, the momentum of the New Wave Movement reached its peak, when nearly three hundred artworks were displayed in the “Exhibition of China’s Modern Fine Arts” at Beijing’s China National Fine Arts Gallery. (see pic. 5-3)

More studies and evidence are needed to correctly depict professional guohua painters’ true feelings toward this new movements led by the radical, young generation in China’s art world from the late 1970s to the late 1980s. It is safe to say

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127 By immersing themselves in popular culture, both political pop and cynical realism artists find much common ground on realities accessible to them. But while the former deal more with the visual reality of propaganda art and mass culture, the latter approach the reality of their immediate surroundings and personal acquaintances.
that their attitudes towards these new voices in the art world were mixed. On the one hand, many were sympathetic to the young artists’ endeavor to challenge the ideological and institutional constraints put up by the party-state. On the other hand, many were troubled by the strong dissident political implications demonstrated by political pop artists and were equally wary of the vulgarity and meaninglessness expressed by cynical realism artists. Furthermore, in defending many aesthetic principles that they had traditionally upheld, many professional artists of the older generations simply disagreed with these avant-garde artists’ views and approaches. For example, Wang Qi (1918 - ), who served as the deputy chair of the CAA in the 1990s, directly criticized both the contents and the aesthetic standards of the “Exhibition of China’s Modern Fine Arts”. Wang called the exhibition “full of depression, anger, ridicule, confusion, disorder and anxiety … paying no attention to styles and techniques”. 128

4-2 Persistent Ideological Discourse in the 1980s and 1990s

Both conservative hardliners and reformers of the party were aware of the possible social and political consequences inherent to the emerging consumerism, as the reform deepened in the 1980s and 1990s. The fact that most cultural products entered the market and became part of ordinary people’s lives turned into a double-edged sword, simultaneously helping and hindering the party-state. Whenever the party felt that its predominance was challenged, the significance of art was emphasized and the cultural sector became the target.

128 These comments by Wang Qi were first published in Fine Arts (美术), the most influential magazine of the field in China, in April 1992. They can be found in Li Heng, Commenting the New Wave of Literature and Arts in the New Period (Xin Shi Qi Wen Yi Xin Chao Ping Xu, 新時期文藝新潮評析) (Kaifeng: Henan University Press: 1997), pp.462-463.
In 1980, the conservatives in the Department of Propaganda voiced their intention to combat “bourgeois liberalism”, which generated serious anxiety among artists given their excruciating memories of the recent past. Fortunately, criticism was limited only to individuals. However, after a mild respite in the first couple of years in the early 1980s, “Anti-bourgeois Liberalism” revived in full force as an “Anti-spiritual Pollution Campaign” in 1983, after Deng personally presented what would become the official definition of spiritual pollution: “The substance of spiritual pollution as dissemination all varieties of corrupt and decadent ideologies of the bourgeoisie and other exploiting classes and disseminating sentiments of distrust towards the socialist and communist cause and to the Communist Party leadership.”

The campaign in 1983 was intended to focus on the creators of cultural works, aiming mainly at works and materials considered 黑 (pessimistic and violent) and 黃 (pornographic). At this time, the conservatives tried to take advantage of the campaign more effectively in order to oppose those aspects of society that they disliked. The campaign soon extended beyond the scope that Deng had intended and raised fears among artists. Yet, the economic reform continued to gain momentum at the same time. As the reformist leaders such as Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang further consolidated their power, the campaign eventually subsided. In 1985, a new campaign to oppose “fawning after and worshiping foreign things” was initiated by the hardliners within the party. This time they tried to persuade the Chinese people to refrain from pursuing individualism, consumerism and cosmopolitanism. As Deng Xiaoping and Hu Yaobang defended their open policy, the campaign was soon dampened. In early 1987, following recent demonstrations for freer expression and democracy by intellectuals and students, Hu Yaobang was forced to resign because of

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accusations of "mistakes on major issues of political principles". After Hu’s dismissal, a large scale “Movement against Bourgeois Liberalization” (反資產階級自由化) was launched. However, in May, the Prime Minister and Acting General Secretary of the Communist Party, Zhao Ziyang simply proclaimed in a speech that the situation was under control, warning against using attacks on bourgeois liberalization to pursue leftist matters. To make sure that his message was heard, he reportedly opened his speech by telling the audience that he himself had already discussed the issue in details with Deng Xiaoping.\(^{130}\)

The most important ideological backlash occurred in the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen massacre. The mainstream media was dominated by stories of the ideological implications of market reforms and the need to oppose both bourgeois liberalization and peaceful revolution. This period lasted until Deng made his famous “Southern Tour” to break the impasse between hardliners and reformers by stating his unmistakable resolution to prevent leftism from slowing down the reform process. At the same time, the post-1989 leadership was also determined to learn from the mistakes of the 1980s and the experiences of the Soviet Union. To them the importance of maintaining a stable socialist system through propaganda could never be overemphasized. In her assessment of the period of relaxation in the art world between the late 1970s and early 1980s, Maria Galikowski argues that it was politically engineered by Deng Xiaoping and his supporters to secure his position as leader. Once that position was secure, Deng did not hesitate to re-assert organizational and ideological control of the party over artists.\(^{131}\)

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\(^{130}\)It is reported that Zhao Ziyang made the speech on May 13, 1987. For detailed report, see *Frontline Monthly* (Hong Kong: Qianshao Yuekan), January 2005, pp.18-21.

Throughout the 1990s, the party’s propaganda departments strengthened their censorship role through various state organizations at their equivalent levels. Media and scholarly reports that touched on sensitive topics had to be approved by the relevant party or government organizations. Legally this arrangement meant that professional guohua painters’ activities, including artistic expression and academic discussions, were now under the discretion of the party-state.

In addition, during the first half of the 1990s, the Party under Jiang Zemin strongly promoted nationalism and patriotism, understanding that they are a cost-effective way to strengthen social unity and mitigate political pressure, at least temporarily. In 1993, the Central Propaganda Department issued a plan for patriotic propaganda work. Part of the plan was to increase the number of museums and memorial sites, mainly for patriotic education. In 1995, Jiang urged the party cadres to “stress politics” (講政治). This was viewed as a direct response to the mounting challenge to the credibility of his leadership, which had already been dampened by rampant corruption amongst government officials. In the same year, as part of the party’s efforts to improve its legitimacy, Jiang proposed a return to socialist core values and traditional Chinese values. All the approaches above testify that Chinese leaders had grave concerns over the declining legitimacy of the Chinese regime and the eroding self-confidence amongst its people. In discussing the surge of xungen (尋根), which means to search for one’s own roots or origins in China in the late 20th Century, Lai Mingyan writes,

*The identity problem generated in such a foreign-facing course of modernization made nationalism almost a necessary recourse for legitimation purposes…… Deplete of the substantive contents of socialism, this ideological vision of a different modernity has to lean heavily on the part of national characteristics for*

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justification, channeling renewed attention to cultural traditions that can confer a distinctive national identity while actively engaging with multinational capitalism in post modernity.\textsuperscript{133}

Under such a push towards national cultural traditions for self-assertion, the renewed interest in guohua painting, which is traditionally considered the jewel of China’s rich civilization and aesthetic culture, was inevitable. This ideological and political impulse unintentionally, but effectively, gave the status of professional guohua painters another boost in the reform era. This was a privilege not shared by other visual artists such as oil painters, woodblock print makers, watercolorists and sculptors.

Ideological and cultural discourses in the 1980s and 1990s were different in their nature, compared with those in the pre-reform era. In the pre-reform era, they were more closely associated with sheer power politics. In the 1980s and 1990s, they largely concurred with contradictions triggered by accelerating economic development and changing social norms. Those series of events in the last two decades of the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century prove that the party itself did not always speak with one voice. They also attest that the mechanism established by the party in the reform era has relied less on negative sanctions and censorship. Instead it has effectively employed positive schemes over cultural affairs. This observation holds particularly true for guohua paintings.

5. Economic Development and Professional Guohua Painters

5-1 Initial Commercialization of Guohua Paintings

Retrospectively, by the mid-1970s buyers from Hong Kong and Japan had already become major customers of guohua paintings. The trade then was limited to cultural

commodity stores and state-owned galleries with characteristics of planned economy. With the official launch of the Four Modernization in late 1978, accumulating much needed capital by stepping up the volume of foreign trade became China’s top priority. Guohua paintings soon became an important commodity for export, since they were not only culturally desirable but very “cost effective”. With the expanding cross-straits exchanges and Taiwan’s increasing purchasing power in the 1980s, Taiwanese dealers and collectors also joined the “treasure-hunt” for works by both established and rising artists. As elsewhere, in China paintings were sold or traded through various means. Given the embedded cultural values of guohua paintings and the emphasis of personal connections (guanxi) in Chinese society, actual transactions of guohua paintings among people were often very personal in the pre-reform era. Often the artist may give a painting as a gift to show his/her affection or respect towards the recipient, to return a favor or to “smooth things up”. In addition, because of the economically and ideologically un-favorable environment towards the cultural market prior to 1978, artists as well as private owners initially had little knowledge and experience about trading their possessions. The “new” idea that guohua paintings could be commodities soon had a significant psychological impact. Many were quickly influenced by entrepreneurial-minded collectors and dealers from overseas and were no longer shy of openly offering their possessions for sale.

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134 In the 1960s, in order to shorten the tedious process of transferring Lu Yanshao (1909-1993) from Shanghai Guohua Painting Institute to Zhejiang Fine Art Academy, one of my interviewees M. P., who was the deputy secretary of the CCP branch in the Academy, discussed the issue with H. J. over the phone. As requested, M. P. asked Lu Kunfeng, a teacher at the Academy, to paint a huge bamboo painting as a gift to H. J. and quickly resolved the issue. During our interview, M. P. joked that he used a bunch of bamboos for the successful exchange of a true master. The intimate friendship between M. P. and Lu Yanshao lasted until Lu passed away in 1993.

135 In late 1970s, when China had just opened its door to the world, the listed price of a small landscape painting (68 by 48 cm) by Li Keran was around 10,000 RMB in Beijing. The author owned two original ancient stone rubbing calligraphy albums which were priced at 3,500 RMB at Beijing Heritage Store (or Cultural Commodity Store, Wen Wu Shang Dien) at the same period. Nowadays, the market value of the two albums remains the same, while the painting by Li can easily fetch 2,000,000 RMB at a well-advertised auction.
Therefore, it can be argued that the establishment of the fledgling trading mechanism of guohua paintings in the early stages of the reform era was fundamentally influenced by the unintended joint efforts of overseas businessmen and collectors. In the 1970s, the trading of paintings was mainly between individual foreign buyers and Chinese state-run galleries. Only since the early 1980s have buyers gradually tried to deal directly with private owners, agents and sometimes artists themselves. In this initial period, although many agencies and individuals profited, professional guohua painters did not necessarily receive their fair share of the profits. This is consistent with Clare McAndrew’s description of the features of a primary art market. This art market is described as representing a system through which artists work with brokers from an agency or sell their artworks directly to collectors. The price points in this market are often much lower than in the secondary art market where dealers and auction houses offer artworks for subsequent resale to their customers.

Meanwhile, treating guohua painting as a commodity still appeared to be problematic for many professional guohua painters, due to the legacy of the “sacred tradition” found almost exclusively in guohua painting. It also appeared that professional guohua painters, who used to extensively study under the masters of the older generation, were especially less adaptable to the idea of commercializing their

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136 A good example is that early but shrewd collectors in Taiwan bought all they could of works by Lin Fengmien (林風眠), who was old but already famous before 1948. Lin’s ink and brush paintings represent a successful synthesis of traditional Chinese and modern western schools. He destroyed most of his works during the Cultural Revolution for ideological and political reasons.

137 In 1981, James Lin, a Torontonian, visited Zhou Changgu, a professional guohua teacher at Zhejiang Fine Art Academy. At his studio, Zhou gladly traded three guohua paintings for a foolproof camera with Mr. Lin. In 2006, two of Zhou’s works with similar topics, styles and sizes were sold at Shanghai Gong Mei Auction House for $50,000 and $120,000 USD respectively. This also confirms Clare McAndrew’s assessment about price points in the primary and secondary markets.

own works. A Taiwanese art collector Frank Lin told the author about his personal experience dealing with such artists in 1980:

I visited Mrs. Zhou Cicong (1939-1996) and Mr. Lu Sheng (1935-) at their rather humble house in Beijing. The couple were both teaching at the Central Academy of Fine Arts. Zhou was already the winner of several important national and international exhibitions then. They received me warmly in their tiny living room which occasionally served as a painting studio. After they showed me some very well-executed large paintings, I expressed my intention to purchase a few of them. They declined my proposal before I even had a chance to make them an offer. They told me that those paintings were not for sale but 'belonged to the state'. Very disappointed, I commented, 'It is honorable that you are content with your existing [poor] state of affairs'. Mr. Lu immediately replied, 'We are not poor at all.' To break the embarrassment, Mrs. Zhou offered a few smaller pieces for sale. However, I left their house empty-handed, because my mind was so preoccupied by those large magnificent paintings. ...... That was our first and only encounter. I really should have shown them more respect and accepted the offer.  

Lin’s frustrating experience could well be just one of many similar stories that happened between entrepreneurial-minded overseas buyers and “traditional” intellectual-minded artists in the 1980s.

As the artists were trying to comprehend and cope with the changes, factors that are not in most economists’ parameters continued to play a role in bolstering the prices of guohua paintings. For example, in 1989 China’s Ministry of Culture issued a list of 140 important artists of the PRC era, of whom the overwhelming majority are professional guohua painters. Although the exact correlation between the proclamation of the list and the market value of a guohua painting is still yet to be confirmed by more detailed research, positive causal ties between the two are readily

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139 Zhou and Lu were trained by some of China’s best figural guohua masters of the 20th Century, including Jiang Zhaohe, Li Keran, Ye Qianyu and Liu Lingcang. Their student Wang Mingming is the president of Beijing Institute (北京畫院) and deputy chair of the Chinese Artists Association (中國美協). Zhou’s guohua paintings are on average 30,000 RMB per square foot in 2008. The story-teller Frank Lin is the author’s friend, a businessman and an art collector living in Taipei. For an example of Zhou’s work, see pic. 5-4.
observable according to the general trends in the 1990s. The prices of the paintings by
the artists included in this list multiplied on the secondary markets.

5-2 Continuous Expansion of Cultural Markets in the 1990s

In the early 1990s, terms such as cultural market, cultural industry, cultural institution
and cultural economy started to appear in official discourse. A series of related
policies and regulations were also formulated and practiced, which would eventually
help accelerate the further expansion of the art market. In 1993, a national work
conference aimed at regulating the cultural market was held. After the declaration of a
15-year plan in 1995 that officially declared cultural industries to be an integrated part
of national development, the Ministry of Culture established a Cultural Industries
Department within its administrative apparatus. The “Asian Financial Crisis” in 1997
did have a brief impact on the cultural market, but the domestic consumption of
Chinese guohua painting in China grew steadily.\textsuperscript{140} Galleries, academies, agencies,
and auction houses, either established by the private sector or supported by different
levels of governments, multiplied. Many public and private enterprises also started to
their own collections of artwork. Some even established their own museums to
preserve and display these precious collections. Not surprisingly, guohua paintings
were still their favorite subjects.

By the end of the 1990s, pushed by the huge demand from both domestic and
international markets, the value of guohua paintings by contemporary Chinese
masters had surged tremendously. In terms of the investment return, guohua paintings
had outperformed all forms of cultural products in China. For example, one of the

\textsuperscript{140} This refers to a period of financial crisis that gripped much of Asia beginning in July 1997, which
raised fears of a worldwide economic meltdown due to financial contagion. While China was much less
affected by the crisis compared to other countries of the region, such as South Korea, Thailand and the
Philippines, its GDP growth slowed down sharply.
seven similar paintings entitled “Ten Thousands Red Mountains” by Li Keran, was sold in Hong Kong in the 1960s for $300 HKD (about $40 USD). This painting was then resold by Jiade Auction House in Guangzhou in 1999 for $4,070,000 RMB (about $600,000 USD).\(^{141}\) The works by more recent professional guohua painters, such as Lu Yanshao (1909-1993) and Cheng Shifa (1921-2007), have also been aggressively sought after by collectors and investors. In the 10 year period, from the late 1980s to the late 1990s, the price of their works increased on average by five to ten times.\(^{142}\)

Throughout the 1990s, the reform program continued to give rise to a booming cultural market and cultural industry encompassing performance, film, commercial publishing, fine arts and cultural exchanges and training programs. With the gradual consolidation of economic liberation and capitalist concepts, the phrase “cultural commercialization” was first defined in the 10\(^{th}\) Five-Year Plan (2001-2005) for National Economic and Social Development. This provided justification for the sale of guohua paintings as “cultural products” both domestically and internationally. Indeed the commercialization of cultural products in China has continued to expand in the 21\(^{st}\) Century, predominantly according to free market principles. Some even identify culture as a future pillar industry upon which the economy will rest.\(^{143}\) Similar to other industries and businesses, the rapid expansion of the market for guohua paintings has repeatedly raised concerns about “overheating” throughout the past decade. Far from what the Chinese government had in mind since the


\(^{142}\) Take Lu Yanshao’s works as an example. In 1990 there were 10 guohua paintings sold in Christie’s and Sotheby’s. The average price was about 30,000 RMB per piece. In 2000, the average price jumped to 300,000 per piece. Detailed 1990 hammered prices can be found in Dangdai Shuhua Jianding Yiyishu Shichang (Appraisals of Contemporary Calligraphy and Paintings and Assessments of Art Market)(Shanghai: Shanghai Book Store Press: 1994), pp.132. All the 2000 hammered prices in English are listed in www.artron.net by Artron China.

announcement of its intention to curtail the rapid growth of auction houses by limiting
auctions to six companies in the late 1990s, the number of auction houses in China
had jumped to over 800 by 2006.

Generally, although the party-state remained the chief patron of arts in the 1990s,
it began to substantially share its patronage with the market. According to Kraus, this
kind of fast (and unstoppable) expansion of the commercial cultural market would
inevitably supplement the State’s employment plans and erode its dominance in arts.
This was due to the fact that the arts bureaucracies under the State found themselves
responsible for producing and supervising a smaller proportion of arts in China. Kraus
terms this change as “China’s second patronage revolution” that redefined the
relationship between state and artists. 144 Kraus is correct in many respects, especially
in describing the general trend of the state’s continuous retreat from subsidizing arts
and artists in the 1980s and 1990s. Nonetheless, the State’s attitudes and treatments
towards professional guohua painters under the market economy appeared to be
inconsistent with Kraus’ observation.

144 According to Kraus, China’s first patronage revolution provided employment to artists, raising their
economic well-being, while replacing them under enormous political influence. With the ongoing
second patronage revolution, the State’s dominance over the arts and artists has seriously eroded, as the
market for commercial culture continues to expand. For detailed discussion, see Richard Kraus (2004),
pp. 64-65.
Fig 5-2.1: Merton’s Typology of Modes of Individual Adaptation (in the US in the 1960s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modes of Adaptation</th>
<th>Culture Goals (monetary success)</th>
<th>Culturally Approved Means/Ways to Achieve Goals</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conformity</td>
<td>(+) acceptance</td>
<td>(+) acceptance</td>
<td>upper-middle class Americans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>(+) acceptance</td>
<td>(−) rejection</td>
<td>thefts, cheats, prostitutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritualism</td>
<td>(−) rejection</td>
<td>(+) acceptance</td>
<td>bureaucratic adherence to routine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retreatism</td>
<td>(−) rejection</td>
<td>(−) rejection</td>
<td>Drug addicts, vagabonds, derelicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebellion</td>
<td>(±) rejection of prevailing values and substitution of new values</td>
<td>(±) rejection of prevailing values and substitution of new values</td>
<td>political revolutionaries, religious prophets, radical social activists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Robert K. Merton (1968) argues that strain occurs when frustrations and injustices emerge from the interrelationship between cultural goals and the institutionalised means available within the social structure. While recognizing Merton’s typology is designed mainly to explain the four types of deviant adaptations to conditions of anomie, I find his description of conditions fostering a conformity mode of behavior illustrative of the case of China’s professional guohua painters in the reform era.

Fig 5-2.2: Modes of Individual Painters’ Adaptation in China in the reform era

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modes of Adaptation</th>
<th>Culture Goals (monetary success)</th>
<th>Culturally Approved Means/Ways to Achieve Goals</th>
<th>Types of Painters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conformity</td>
<td>(+) Acceptance</td>
<td>(+) Acceptance</td>
<td>professional guohua painters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>(+) Acceptance</td>
<td>(−) Rejection</td>
<td>self-taught painters without professional training and official recognition but economically dependent on the market - ghost painters and forgers - artisan painters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritualism</td>
<td>(−) Rejection</td>
<td>(+) Acceptance</td>
<td>party-state cultural affair bureaucrats/administrators?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retreatism</td>
<td>(−) Rejection</td>
<td>(−) Rejection</td>
<td>marginalized amateur painters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebellion</td>
<td>(±) rejection of prevailing values and substitution of new values</td>
<td>(±) rejection of prevailing values and substitution of new values</td>
<td>dissident painters with explicit political aspirations, avant-garde artists with no or little monetary concern</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER SIX
THE LIVES AND CAREERS OF PROFESSIONAL GUOHUA PAINTERS IN THE PRC

This chapter presents four professional guohua painters who were all born in the 1930s and share many similarities with Chinese intellectuals of the fourth generation, as defined by Li and Schwarcz, especially in terms of their education, work and life experiences during the pre-reform era, as already explained in Chapter 2. Their stories as well as their views and critiques, will be further analyzed in the next chapter for theoretical reflection.

Part 1. Mao Wei
From Child Actress to Fine Arts Student

Mao Wei, the youngest daughter of a telecommunication technician and a medical doctor, was born in 1934 in Chengdu, Sichuan Province [四川成都]. Mao Wei’s father passed away when she was only 7seven. Her widowed mother, a gynecologist, singled-handedly raised Mao Wei and her sister (born in 1922) and brother (born in 1926). In Sichuan, during the Anti-Japanese War period, influenced by her elder brother and sister, Mao Wei was already active as a child actress in various stage plays that were, to a certain extent, political propaganda. In 1948, Mao’s brother, who was a student at the renowned Beijing University, moved to Taiwan and was only able to return to China over 30 years later. Due to her brother leaving China for Taiwan, Mao Wei faced serious political consequences during the Cultural Revolution. In 1950, Mao entered the “China’s Railroad Literature and Art Working Troupe” [中囯鐵路文藝工作團] as a practicing member. Although already an experienced actress, she still dreamed of becoming a professional painter. After being referred by the troupe to the Department of Fine Arts at the Tianjin Normal University, she became
an auditor and practiced fundamental sketching techniques for five months. This learning experience prepared her for the entrance examination of the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA).

In 1951, after passing the written and technical examinations, Mao Wei was asked to attend an interview, which would be the final obstacle standing between her and her dream of being a painter. Knowing that Mao was very likely to be asked why she wanted to study fine arts, Mao’s sister, who was politically more knowledgeable, made the following suggestion: “If the interviewer is Xue Beihong himself, you should express your desire to become an exceptionally great painter, because he would appreciate an ambitious young mind. If it’s someone else, you must say that you wish to contribute your artistic talents to the party and the masses.” The interview turned out to be rather straightforward. In front of several paintings, the interviewers asked Mao to identify her favorite one and specify the reasons. Her eloquent answers allowed her to join the academy the following year.

From 1951 to 1954, during the interval between the Korean War and the Anti-Rightist Campaign, when the country was in the high spirit of reconstruction, Mao was trained by some of China’s best professional painters at the country’s most prestigious fine arts school. There were close to 120 new students, of which 80 were in the Department of Painting. Prior to the Anti-Rightist Campaign, under the leadership of its first President Xu Beihong (who served between 1949 and 1953) and his immediate successor Jiang Feng (who served between 1953 and 1957), the academy had engaged in a series of attempts to reform traditional style guohua paintings. While Xu upheld solid western-style academic training and Jiang stressed more the actual experience and practice in real life, they both held strong a conviction that the style of realism was essential to the reform of Chinese painting. Also, largely due to Xu Beihong’s aesthetic view, most teachers recruited by the CAFA in the
1950s showed a great interest and talent in synthesizing western techniques with guohua painting. The more famous included Wu Zhouren, Zong Qixiang, Jiang Zhaohe and Li Keran. Thus, Mao Wei and her classmates had to learn various forms of painting skills, including sketching, watercolor, opaque watercolor, oil painting and guohua painting. To be ideologically correct, before the Anti-Rightist Movement, guohua painting at the academy was periodically called color and ink painting (彩墨畫).

Mao Wei’s learning experience at the CAFA was a successful and memorable one, although its duration was suddenly, without explanation, shortened from five to three years. At the academy, many teachers genuinely cared about the students’ overall character and moral standards, in addition to their painting skills. Mao Wei was once reprimanded in private by her guohua teacher Zong Qixiang (1919-1999), because she copied one of Zong’s works and gave it to a friend as a gift without acknowledging its origin. Mao’s comments on this experience:

*I was young and had little understanding of proper conduct in the cultural community. This lesson by Mr. Zong has thereafter constantly reminded me of the importance of showing respect to other artists’ achievements. If I copy someone’s painting, I always acknowledge the original artist. This is an important principle that guohua painting masters have observed. He taught me not only the importance of not plagiarizing others’ works – both intentionally and unintentionally – but also to be honest to people, including to myself.*

**From Central Academy of Fine Arts to May 7th Cadre School**

In 1954, although having sincerely expressed her determination to serve in “remote and difficult” areas of the country, Mao was first assigned to the “Beijing Fine Arts Creation Unit” [北京美術創作室]. Mao Wei recalls:

*It was a place that many of my classmates dreamed of. Directly under the Beijing Municipal Government, it was an elite fine arts unit which enjoyed abundant support from the party-state. Being part of it meant that you would most likely*
further develop your career as a professional painter. Yet, when I reported to the unit with an official paper from the CAFA, the Unit told me that they had not been notified of my assignment by their superiors. Extremely confused, I returned to the academy for advice. The leaders of the CAFA appeared to be surprised as well. After waiting at home for a few days, I was reassigned to the Popular Printed Publications Press [北京通俗文讀物出版社]. Only much later did I hear a rumor that another new graduate with a ‘better family background’ managed to get the authorities to overrule the original arrangement through ‘guanxi’. A formal assignment document from the CAFA would still not guarantee my position. This simple incident alone indicates how complicated things could get, when different factions within the party and different agents of the State all tried to compete with one another on ‘critical issues’ in the cultural sphere.

Mao Wei worked at the Popular Printed Publications Press as an artistic editor between 1954 and 1956, one year before the “Anti-Rightist Movement”. The responsibilities of an artistic editor for a publishing house were quite different from members of an elite fine arts unit. Instead of working with other master painters and creating art work commissioned by the state, working at the publishing house meant that she was responsible for more editorial and administrative trivialities. Nevertheless, there were still plenty of opportunities for her to paint and her life was rather ordinary and peaceful, compared to most of her life during the pre-reform era. However, in 1956 she was suddenly reassigned to another working unit. According to Mao Wei, this reassignment was part of a bigger maneuver in arts affairs of the time. As the party-state decided to elevate the artistic standards of workers, peasants and soldiers all over the country, many professionally trained young artists were reallocated to the grass-roots level in order to “serve the people”. As a consequence, she was transferred to the Culture and Arts Working Group [文化藝術工作團] under the General Political Department of the PLA [解放軍總政治部]. Mao Wei recalls:
I was the only university graduate in my entire unit. My duty was straightforward: to teach soldiers basic painting skills. The predominant direction of the time in the Chinese art world was still Soviet realism, which was considered a much better artistic style to politically convey ideas and to “serve the people”. In order to meet the practical needs of the time, I spent lots of time teaching amateur soldier artists how to sketch – especially portraits. Guohua painting was my favorite art form, but I didn’t get much chance to practice it.

In 1957, although not directly affected by the subsequent “Anti-rightist Movement”, Mao Wei was transferred from the Army to the Literacy Publication Press [文藝出版社] and became an artistic editor again. She still could not be certain if the sudden decision was made because of her brother being in Taiwan. However, given the fact that the General Political Department of the PLA was politically and ideologically more critical towards its members, her reassignment to a less sensitive position during the height of the Anti-rightist Movement was normal. In 1959, as the nationwide three-year-famine started, many young intellectuals (including artists) were directed to the countryside to alleviate the pressure in the metropolitan areas.

Without being consulted, Mao Wei was reallocated to Jilin Province in the remote north-eastern region and became a teacher at the Jilin Fine Arts College [吉林藝專]. Recalling her material life as a fine arts teacher at the college during the famine period, Mao Wei says:

Food shortage was obvious. Compared to my students, I felt very lucky that I didn’t have to suffer from hunger. The director of my department even implicitly encouraged teachers to purchase food from local peasants. At the beginning, I was very hesitant, because it was against the state’s policy. Soon, it became a necessary practice and an open secret amongst teachers and staff.

Mao Wei taught various classes in fine arts for several years in Jilin. During this period, she did not feel strongly about the intense aesthetic discourses and power struggles in Beijing. Starting in 1964, following the order of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, the two main orchestrators of the “Socialist Education Movement”, many
teachers and students from universities and colleges were re-grouped and sent to the grassroots level in the name of various work teams. At around the same time, Mao Wei was reassigned to the Division of Arts under the Light Industry Bureau of Jilin Province [吉林省輕工業廳美術處]. Little did she know that her career as a professional art worker would soon come to an abrupt end, because of her brother being in Taiwan and Hong Kong, which at this time was ideologically and politically against the party. Mao Wei remembers:

I had previously confessed to the party about my brother’s situation, believing that the party would understand my stance. By the end of 1965, the nation was on the brink of total chaos. Many units, including those engaging in fine arts activities, had ceased routine functions. One day, when I returned to my work unit from an official business trip, I saw a big character poster accusing me of being a spy working for Taiwan and Japan. The allegation was based on the fact that my brother, who moved to Taiwan in 1948 and then married a Japanese woman there, was now living in Hong Kong. Coincidentally, Zhou Hetong (周和桐), a famous Chinese opera singer and a close friend of our family, had performed in Hong Kong a few months earlier. Short of any hard evidence, they decided to put me under surveillance and continually demanded my confession and repentance. I was even locked in a small room for three months. It was very tempting to just write down something, hoping the ridiculous situation would end soon. I consider myself extremely lucky that, when I picked up the pen and started to ‘confess’, the person monitoring me ‘cautioned’ me in secret not to make up things that I didn’t do. I don’t remember who he was, but I am still grateful for his compassion. I could have been in much bigger trouble in the following years, had I ‘confessed my guilt.

As the worst militant struggle period of the Cultural Revolution gradually died down in 1969, Mao Wei was given a chance to self-criticize in public, which was more like a deal to “save everybody’s face” except hers in exchange for an official pardon from the party authorities of her unit. In late 1969, she was sent to the May 7th Cadre School [五七幹校], a reform institute that combined manual labor with extensive thought education proliferating throughout China during the Cultural
Revolution. She worked and received “re-education” for two years at the Cadre School in Yanbien, Jilin Province [吉林延邊], an autonomous area designated to China’s Korean minority at the borders of China, North Korea and the USSR. Mao recalls:

*The School was originally a farm called the Orchard Farm (Guoshu Nongchang, 果樹農場). During the Cultural Revolution period, its head office needed to use arts to promote socialist ideologies, just like many other places did. Since, artistically, I was the only professionally trained artist at the entire school, I had many opportunities to paint, almost exclusively, propaganda signs and posters for presentations. Creating those works was a political task that required fewer personal feelings towards the real objective world. Still, to any person who loved to paint, working indoors with brushes, ink and pigments was no doubt a luxury, compared with working outdoors with shovels and sickles. This might be the only reason why I didn’t feel so terribly miserable for those two long years in Yanbien.*

**From Cadre School Member to Vice President of Association of Female Artists**

In 1971, Mao Wei was given permission to leave the May 7th Cadre School and reunite with her husband who was an engineer working for the Ministry of Petroleum Industry in Jingmen County, Hubei Province (湖北省荊門縣). Her first job in Jingmen was at childcare in a kindergarten. Later, with her painting skills and educational background, she became a graphic designer for the Ministry. After the construction of the refinery plant in Jingmen was completed, Mao and her family were allotted a dwelling house in Beijing in 1974. Their life steadily improved thereafter.

As a “fourth generation professional artists”, eager to make up for her deprived years of the past, Mao Wei continued to study and practice guohua painting - her favorite subject, during the 1980s. After retiring from her official post in 1989, Mao taught guohua painting in Beijing’s University for the Elderly [北京老人大學] for
several years. Around the same time, she joined a few other female professional painters and became one of the core members of a private artistic salon in Beijing. They called the group “Stones of Five Colors”, derived from the name of the substance that the Chinese legendary goddess Nu Wa (女媧) used to mend the broken sky. They held small-scale exhibitions and regular meetings to exchange opinions on fine arts. Initially, the members of “Stones of Five Colors” were exclusively graduates from the Central Academy of Fine Arts. With expanded membership, this civil group was renamed the “Beijing Female Artists Association” (BFAA, 北京女美術家協會) and held an all-member conference for the first time in 1991. The female artists democratically elected Mao Wei as the association’s vice-president. The first honorary-president was Xu Beihong’s widow Liao Jingwen (廖靜文). The elected president, He Yunlan, was the wife of Liu Boshu, the chair of the “Chinese Painting Research Institute” [CPRI, 中國畫研究院] in Beijing. In the same year, the association held its debut exhibition at the Art Gallery of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. Over seventy members took part in the exhibition, a large-scale arts show exclusively organized by a non-government-funded civil organization. Mao Wei comments:

At that time, since the Association was not subordinate to or sponsored by any government agency and all its members were alumni of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, we were able to uphold certain values that we considered important. For example, we stressed treating all members as equals. We also focused more on the artworks’ intrinsic aesthetic values, rather than the political and ideological implications. These principles appealed to many professional artists who were dissatisfied with the existing dominant mechanism in the arts world. It was also our consensus that we should not distance ourselves from society. With our feminine nature, we also felt that we should try to make our society more

145 The “Chinese Painting Research Institute” was first established in 1981. It was renamed the “Chinese National Painting Institute” (CNPI, 中國國家畫院) in 2006. Administratively, it has been directly under the Ministry of Culture and is now equated to the highest research institute of guohua. However, its ambition to represent the highest artistic and academic standards in guohua may be best described as highly controversial.
peaceful and beautiful. The results of our first exhibition in 1991 were very encouraging. Many female professional artists in and outside Beijing wanted to join us.

Between 1992 and 1994, Mao Wei and her associate members continued to hold exhibitions, meetings and seminars in Beijing. By the end of 1994, the association already had over one hundred members, even though it was still not yet an organization registered with the government. Therefore, all the work that the association had already done was still, according to government regulations, considered “un-official”. At first glance, the accomplishment that Mao Wei and her colleagues had managed to achieve may have appeared insignificant to many foreigners and even Chinese people at that time. However, in comparison to stories of many other unregistered/unofficial grassroots organizations during the early 1990s, when the state resumed tight political and regulatory control over society, the association’s success over the same period is rather remarkable.

Under the PRC, mass organizations have been directly run or predominantly controlled by the party-state. The most famous and influential establishment amongst civil arts groups is the China Federation of Literary and Arts Circles (CFLAC). The largest alliance of this kind in China, the CFLAC supervises the Chinese Artists Association which can exert direct influence on Chinese artists – including most professional guohua painters. Although the funding of FLAC and CAA also comes from membership dues and private donations, the majority of it comes from state allocations, both at the national and local levels. These organizations provide professional guidance to their group members by sponsoring performances, exhibitions, artistic creations, research, training programs and international exchange opportunities. They also reflect specific viewpoints by censoring both the themes and contents of art publications.
Under such well-established institutional constraints, the relative success of the Beijing Female Artists Association as an “unregistered civil organization” prior to the mid-1990s seems to be closely related to two important factors. First, the aim and some of the core values of the association were largely in agreement with the social norms and agenda that the party-state was trying to promote through arts and cultural activities of the time. Those innovative projects launched by the party-state included the Task of Spiritual Production, Spiritual Civilization Offices, Top Five Projects, and Civilized Work Units. Therefore it can be argued that, instead of threatening or diminishing the party-state’s capacity to control society, the association had unintentionally helped promote the soft form of social control that the party-state was trying to achieve. Second, because China was experiencing a drastic socio-economic transformation in the 1990s, its regulatory system was fluctuating and incomplete. Therefore, the association’s key members were able to effectively use their good guanxi (relationships), most obviously their husbands and classmates from the CAFA, in the cultural community to obtain predictability and often to enjoy expediency.146 When the above two factors, i.e. important ideological agendas at the party-state level and critical interpersonal connections at the grassroots level, combined and operated effectively, the law and police systems seemed almost irrelevant.

In 1995 the association decided to register with the government and to become a formal civil society organization, with a very practical reason in mind. As a private non-profitable organization, trying to serve its members better, the association needed more financial support. In order to be entitled to receiving financial supports from both public and private sources, it had to have proper legal status. In 1995 the

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146 The centrality of personal networks in Chinese society frequently noted by Chinese and foreign scholars, both historically and in modern times. For detailed discussion on guanxi, see Thomas Gold, Doug Guthrie and David Wank (eds.) Social Connections in China: Institutions, Culture, and the Changing Nature of Guanxi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2002).
Association received its first major private donation of 200,000 RMB from an entrepreneur in Dongguan, Guandong Province [廣東東莞]. Technically speaking, not yet formally registered with the authorities (i.e. Civil and Cultural Administrations of Beijing), the association was still not considered a legal establishment. It did not have its own bank account and therefore was not able to receive the donation. Mao and her colleagues then decided to temporarily deposit the money into the account of the CPRI as an alternate arrangement. During that time, the president of the Institute was Liu Buoshu, husband of one of the Association’s core member, He Yunlan.

**Views on Roles and Functions of Fine Arts Civil Organization**

Mao Wei maintains that if an artist wishes to profit in the cultural market, he or she can achieve success, to a certain extent, through individual efforts. Nevertheless, artists still need to be organized to interact with and to serve society more effectively. In her view, the continuous expansion of registered civil arts groups in China will produce a “grey domain” in which artists can take more coordinated action to pursue their collective interests and to exert more influence on society. She believes that, with gradual expansion of more autonomous fine arts groups, professional painters will still have opportunities to expose the public to their works. This can be the case even though the artist are not necessarily in agreement with the lines of the current fine arts establishments, which are still heavily administratively controlled and ideologically influenced by the party-state. According to her, professional artists will eventually be able to break away from excessive interference from the party-state. This was obviously unthinkable during the pre-reform era, when political and ideological considerations dictated almost every aspect of her life.

In the years between 1995 and 2000, with many other smaller exhibitions and activities, the BFAA organized “The Joint Exhibition in Celebration of the World
Women’s Conference in China in 1995”, “The Joint Exhibition in Celebrating the Return of Hong Kong to China in 1997”, “The Joint Exhibition of Female Artists in Beijing, Hong Kong and Macau in 1999” and “For a Full New World – The Joined Exhibition on Environmental Protection in 2000”. Mao Wei was the vice-president (1995 - 2002) of the association and was especially proud of her role in making these events a huge success.

From March to June 2000, supported by the China Environmental Protection Foundation, the BFAA launched a series of art operations, including symposiums, improvised art shows and interactive art activities, with the theme of environmental protection. The high tide of the event was a “green art” exhibition in the China Art Gallery, the most prestigious national art gallery in the country. Over 200 exhibits by female artists and children from Beijing were shown and received extraordinary media attention. It is also worth mentioning that, instead of government agencies, HongYuan Group and Hong Mei Industry & Commerce Ltd Cooperation, two privately-owned enterprises in Guandong province, provided major financial support for this event and waived the repayment.147

At around the same time period, Mao Wei and other members of the BFAA also showed a certain enthusiasm for developing entrepreneurial projects, although achieving only limited success. In Liulichang [琉璃廠], known for its cultural street markets since the Qing Dynasty, in cooperation with local galleries, the Association held regular shows featuring their member artists. When a painting was sold, the artist and the gallery would contribute about five percent of the profits to the association -- a practice was already conducted in the cultural community in Shanghai in the late Qing Dynasty.

147 This is quoted from the preface of For A Full New World – A Summary of the Joint Art Operations of Environmental Protection, an album publish in 2000 commemorating the event.
With the rapid growth of the private sector in China, there was a trend of an increase in sources of non-official patronage of the arts in the 1990s in China. Yet, despite all the alternative sources of support, civil arts groups, along with many other similar civil organizations, were not able to enjoy the autonomy they had originally wished for. Based on her personal experiences, Mao Wei gives some important reasons:

First, artists were still seen as crucial mouthpieces of the party-state, second only to journalists and writers. After the Tiananmen massacre, selective attacks on prominent artists perceived as a “threat” to stability were made obvious to all professional artists. It was simply not practical to expect our members to express their opinions freely either in their works or through their comments, although we did strongly distinguish ourselves from other government-funded organizations and strove to treat all members equally. Second, by the mid-1990s, although economic reform in the culture and arts sphere had already begun for several years, private sponsorship for arts groups and activities was still not a fashionable practice. Many shrewd collectors and investors started to purchase paintings by famous professional artists, and yet people were still hesitant to sponsor cultural groups and activities both for economic and ideological reasons. Without stable financial independence, private organizations would always be under the shadow of party-state interference. For example, nowadays it cost about 200,000 RMB to rent a mid-sized exhibition hall at the China Art Gallery for a week. Even if you could afford to pay the rent, you still needed to advertise your own show, which was already very expensive in the 1990s, whereas with government support the gallery and mainstream media were almost automatically at your service. The implications were obvious – political and ideological controls were simply replaced by economic ones. Finally, due to the high standard of qualification for membership, the members of the association were almost exclusively professionally trained artists. Therefore, our personal affiliations with the party, the government as well as state-funded academic and artistic institutes were inevitable. Although many of the members were deeply dissatisfied with the current establishments that they had been a part of, we were still under psychological and practical constraints imposed by those establishments. This helped the association to function even more smoothly, when the issues being discussed were less controversial. However, when
politically and ideologically sensitive initiatives were on the table, it did constitute a problem and affected our decision-making.

In retrospect, the themes of the four most important exhibitions organized by Mao Wei and her colleagues between 1995 and 2000 stayed well within the limits set by the party-state. In addition, their timing nicely corresponded to major national campaigns or “events of the day”. For instance, in 1996, the CCP launched a nationwide Spiritual Civilization Campaign. While the CCP’s Central Committee established a special Committee on the campaign, similar committees were also formed at the local level. To meet their mandates, these ad hoc local party committees certainly welcomed and even encouraged artistic activities initiated by local civil groups. It was particularly those endeavors that carried positive messages for society at large. In this sense, promoting awareness of women’s rights and environmental protection through the arts was a rather innovative and encouraging step in China and by doing so the association helped promote China’s image as more “civilized” and was considered a group that “needed to be unified” by the party.

Mao Wei immigrated with her family to Canada in 2002 and has continually maintained a close relationship with the Beijing Female Artists Association. She has also held several solo and joined guohua painting exhibitions in Canada, China and Taiwan, including the association’s ten-year-anniversary celebration exhibition in Beijing in 2004. According to its member’s directory published in 2004, the Association is now “under the leadership of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles” and is the “most influential female artists group [in China]”. 148

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148 These are direct quotes (translated from Chinese) from the Introduction of The Member’s Directory of the BFAA, which was co-edited by Mao Wei and other member artists and published in 2004. About 140 artworks, mainly guohua paintings, are also included in the directory.
Part 2. Zhu Junshan

Early Learning Experiences and Cultural Affiliations

Zhu Junshan was born in Huilai County, Hebei Province [河北懷來] in 1934. Prior to 1949, he had accomplished his elementary education and part of his secondary education under the Nationalist Government. Zhu made it abundantly clear that his learning experience in both an “old style” private tutoring school and the more standard public schools in his childhood had a tremendous impact on his development as an educated man and artist. According to Zhu, it is difficult to imitate the spirit and character of literati painters of the old days, such as masters in the Song Dynasty, because we are living in such different material conditions. Still, sometimes he feels mentally closer to the masters of the past than to many of the professional artists who started their education after 1949. As a child, he recited many articles and quotes from Chinese classical literature and memorized many poems written in the Tang and Song Dynasty. The schools he went to followed the curriculum designed by the Nationalist Government. In addition, before the Chinese Communist regime introduced the simplified Chinese characters in about the mid-1950s, he was already an adult. Therefore, he considers himself in many ways different from most professional artists of the younger generations, who started schooling exclusively under the influence of the Chinese Communist regime.

As explained by Zhu, he is more comfortable using traditional Chinese characters (fantizi) than simplified ones (jientizi), although he studied and worked under the Chinese Communist regime for several decades. This inclination is due not only to his learning experiences in his youth, but also to his career as a professional guohua painter and teacher. He states,

*I spent a lot of time practicing calligraphy, because I not only like it but also need to master it, in order to control the ink and brushes when I paint guohua.*
Writing in daily life is one thing, practicing Chinese art is another. All the Calligraphic works of past dynasties, including handwriting, stone rubbings and woodblock prints, are in the traditional format. Due to the intrinsic nature of this art, it is impossible to fully express the beauty of Chinese calligraphy with simplified characters, whether displayed as a particular piece or accompanied with guohua paintings. Nowadays, I still prefer writing and reading in traditional characters to simplified ones.

Becoming a Professional Artist

According to the resolutions of the first and second National Congress of Literature and Art Workers in 1949 and 1953 respectively, educational goals for fine arts academies were readjusted to be in line with Mao’s 1942 Yan’an Talks. To assert Mao’s idea that the production of art should be a political tool, under the supervision of Jiang Feng, the curriculum of the PRC’s fine arts academy system was molded to conform very closely to the Soviet model. In 1955 Zhu entered the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing. In 1956 he, along with all the teaching staff and students in the three departments specializing in decorative and empirical arts, were transferred to the newly established Central Academy of Arts and Crafts (CAAC). Zhu describes the division of the CAAC from the CAFA in 1956 unexpected but understandable:

The CAAC was meant to be the best academy in decorative, graphic and industrial designs. To a certain extent, its establishment was also political and ideological. In order to allow the arts to serve the state’s practical needs – especially for many massive construction projects at the national level, its curriculums paid great attention to the studies of how to adapt fine arts to practical lives. Although the name of the school also emphasized the “crafts” aspect, its fundamental goal was not to train skilled craftsmen but to train the best professional artists for the State. The graduates of the school were expected to harmoniously apply artistic designs craft manufacturing, constructions and science.

149 In 1999, as part of the reorganizational maneuver of higher education in Beijing, the CAAC became the Fine Arts Academy, Qinghua University [清華大學藝術學院].
By the end of the 1960s, the staff and students of the CAAC had played an important role in the so-called “Ten Major Constructions of the Capital” [首都十大建设]. Even during the Cultural Revolution period, when most fine arts academies ceased normal operations, the CAAC still completed several important projects, including the building of the crystal coffin for Mao, and the construction and decoration of the Beijing Hotel [北京饭店].

Given the CAAC’s close association with the CAFA, although its teachers were mostly specializing in particular crafts, such as wood carving, graphic printing, pottery and carpet weaving, many of them were also talented and well-trained in Chinese traditional painting. Zhang Ding (張仃), Pang Xunqin (龐薰琴), A Lao (阿老) and Wu Guanzhong (吳冠中) were just a few. At the CAAC, Zhu majored in mural and lacquer carving, but he continued to study calligraphy and guohua painting with great enthusiasm. Especially in the conjuncture of the late 1950s and early 1960s, with increasingly strident Chinese nationalism, indigenous forms of art became ideologically appropriate in China’s fine art academies. In 1961, due to the change in ideological preference, copying traditional arts was incorporated into the academy’s curriculum. In the following two years, Zhu, already a teaching assistant, travelled extensively with other teachers and students of the academy in Gansu, Xinjiang and Shanxi Provinces. In addition to sketching, when necessary, they also helped to preserve or restore the treasures of the past, such as the statues and murals of the Dun Huang Grottoes [敦煌石窟], the Hetien Relics Sites [和闐遺址], and the murals and stone carvings found in ancient crypts.

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150 The “Ten Major Constructions of the Capital” was launched in the 1960s. The project included some of the major public buildings in Beijing, such as the Great Hall of the People, the Museum of Revolutionary History, the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse and the People’s Cultural Palace.
Experiences as a Professional Artist under Mao

By July 1957, Zhu had received formal training in the arts at two of China’s top academies. It was in these years that Zhu learned his first major political lesson as an adult under the PRC, with the start of the “Anti-Rightists Movement” (1957-1959).

Zhu states:

*Given the purpose and the status of our school, ideological education and thought work constituted an important part of our curriculum. Most teachers and students thought we could at the very least tell the difference between rightists and leftists but we were all wrong. It was quite obvious to us that Jiang Feng, supposedly the spokesperson for Mao in the arts, had been faithfully executing the party’s cultural policies based on Mao’s famous Yan’an Talks in 1942. How could he possibly be named ‘Number One Rightist’ in the art world and be accused of leading an anti-party group?*

Unlike other issues in aesthetics, questioning whether guohua should be reformed by applying western ideas, techniques and training systems had created two sharply divided camps in the Chinese art world by 1957. Furthermore, this division was fueled by political leaders who were outside of the art world. Jiang Feng, however, apparently did not believe that the leadership wished the aesthetic views and educational policies modeled after the Soviet system during the past few years to be drastically overturned. A political shock to Zhu, Jiang Feng’s unexpected humiliation taught Zhu more about China’s cultural politics, both in theory and in actual practice.

Zhu’s final years as a student at the CAAC largely coincided with the Anti-Rightists Movement (1957-1959) and the Great Leap Forward (1958-1960). In accordance with the dominant ideology of the time (i.e. nationalism) teachers and students at the academy vigorously studied, innovated and reapplied various traditional Chinese folk arts. In 1961, new textbooks written by modern as well as ancient Chinese artists and theorists were introduced to the campus. Some senior
professional guohua artists in Beijing were recruited to the newly established “Beijing Guohua Institute”. Nevertheless, this “new direction” seemed merely to swing, temporarily to the other side of the spectrum specified by Mao’s 1942 Yan’an Talks, i.e. “to march forward along the path of the fine arts of Chinese nationalist socialism” (中國的民族的社會主義美術創作道路). One of the slogans that impressed Zhu the most during this period was “To Modernize National Art Forms; To Nationalized Modern Art Forms” (民族形式現代化；現代形式民族化). Zhu’s learning experience at one of China’s top fine arts academies during the Anti-Rightist Movement suggests that the Communist leaders, especially Mao, continued to adopt an ambivalent strategy towards professional guohua painters. They liked to gain the support from established painters but were cautious about the symbolic meanings and values that these artists may represent - such as literati aesthetic views.

According to Zhu, between the fall of 1965 and the spring of 1966, part of the staff and students of the CAAC were organized into a work team and sent to Suzhou, Jiangsu Province (江蘇省蘇州市) to participate in the Social Education Movement. Between 1970 and 1972, the entire academy was transferred to Shijiazhuang, Hebei province (河北石家莊). Under tight military control, they labored in the fields and were forced to pinpoint the counter-revolutionists hiding among them. Laboring was hard but still tolerable to him. The most unbearable things for him were to live in the shadow of the unknown and to be deprived of the right to paint. In 1972, during their final months in Shijiazhuang, teachers and students of the academy were finally allowed to paint during their spare time after farming. Without proper equipment and materials, Zhu used whatever was available to sketch landscapes and people in the country. Recalling his experiences at the CAAC during the remaining years of the Cultural Revolution, Zhu says:
I witnessed many professional painters in my school, including the old revolutionary painters from Yan’an, not only attacked by workers, peasants and soldiers but also badly insulted by their younger colleagues and students. For example, the President of the CAAC Zhang Ding, a hardcore revolutionary artist since the Yan’an period, was labeled as a ‘black painter’ by Jiang Qing during the Cultural Revolution. In 1974, in the academy, about fifty of his works were displayed in an exhibition room and criticized as being ‘black paintings’. His works, which were predominantly painted with ink and brushes, were accused of being shadowy, gloomy and pessimistic and the themes were considered unhealthy to society. Several days after the exhibition ended, I passed by the exhibition room and discovered that Zhang’s paintings were still on display. Some discarded on the floor and were damaged, but most of them were still intact. Admiring their beauty and substance, I secretly gathered all of the paintings and made them into a big roll and hid them. I guess most people were either uninterested or simply too frightened to preserve them. However, I felt that it would be an absolute shame to leave those great paintings unattended. In 1978, after Zhang was rehabilitated, I visited Zhang at his residence and returned all the paintings to him. Totally not expecting to see his works again, the old man first opened his eyes wide and then started to cry.

According to Zhu, even during the Cultural Revolution period because of the state’s practical needs, the professional artists of the CAAC were still periodically assigned various missions, usually under tight ideological constraints. Zhu participated in some of the missions, including the design of Mao’s coffin. Still, far from being immune to the political and ideological interferences, he was personally accused of siding with “bad elements”, due to his close relationship with the ex-president of the CAAC, Pang Xunqin (1906-1985). Zhu carried the accusation until Pang Xunqin’s name was cleared in 1978.

Career During Confusing Period of Gradual Liberation
Since 1978, as the country started to modernize, many large public art projects were launched by the State mainly because of a great public demand for them. About the same time, Zhang Ding was reinstated as the President of the CAAC and was in charge of several huge public art projects – including the decoration of the Beijing Airport lounge, for which he created the famous mural *Nazha Defeats the Dragon King*. Being on the teaching staff at the CAAC, Zhu was fortunate to be recruited into Zhang’s work team and personally witnessed the processes of several monumental public fine arts projects. Zhu states:

*Between the late 1970s and the early 1980s, as professional artists, we certainly felt somewhat liberated by the recent reform and opening-up to the world. Nevertheless, with more freedom of expression, it sometimes became more challenging to create art – especially public art. During the Cultural Revolution, directions to artists were often explicit. However, at the early stage of the reform era, different aesthetic thoughts and directions arose. Nobody seemed to know anymore where the boundaries were.*

Zhu’s comments are vividly reflected in the handling of Yuan Yunsheng’s controversial mural *Water Splashing Festival*, which was part of the larger Beijing Airport project. Yuan started to work on his mural in 1978, shortly after the Gang of Four was denounced. Therefore, his subject matter, a festival of the minority Dai people throwing water on their bodies to clean all the evil away, was assumed to represent certain political and educational meanings. Still, with the full support of the director of the airport construction committee Li Ruihuan (李瑞環), who later became the head of the Communist Party Propaganda Department, Yuan’s work caused a serious controversy due to the scene of a group of nude women on the mural. While the mural was allowed to be displayed to the public, the nude figure section was first covered up by the airport authorities with a piece of silk cloth and than a wooden
board until 1990. On the surface, it was an “ethical” issue. In reality, it was overwhelmingly a part of the continuous struggle between political and ideological discourses within the party.

Zhu became even more active in the arts community in the early 1980s. In 1983, he was commissioned to single-handedly create a mural titled “Spectacular Lava Landscape” (熔岩奇觀) in Rong Cheng Hotel in Guilin [桂林榕城飯店]. This work was part of a series of projects to decorate some of the best hotels that received a fast growing number of foreign guests after China opened to foreign trade and tourism. In the mid-1980s, Zhu continued to be involved in several other projects to decorate more government agencies and public buildings.

To the Chinese art world, the mid-1980s was also a period characterized by the “85 New Wave Movement” which overtly challenged paintings of traditional styles and was considered the driving force behind Chinese avant-garde art. Amidst such artistically vigorous but turbulent times, according to Zhu, he and other colleagues of his generation considered themselves more than just art workers for the state. They saw themselves as defenders of traditional aesthetic views, which are more appropriately represented by guohua paintings. Under the guidance of some of the best guohua masters of the time, including Li Keran and Zhang Ding, they continually adopted styles and materials of guohua paintings to their commissioned public works.

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152 This particular piece by Zhu Junshan was recorded as one of a few major public mural artworks in 1983 in China. For details, see Wang Qi (ed.), Dang Dai Zhong Guo Mei Shu (Contemporary Chinese Fine Arts) (Beijing: Contemporary China Press: 1996), pp.312.
153 Nowadays, major public places of official functions in the PRC, such as the Great Hall of the People and the State Council, are overwhelmingly decorated with guohua paintings. Other forms of painting, including oil painting, are practically non-existent in these important official buildings.
Zhu’s close association with some of the most prominent guohua masters in Beijing granted him opportunities and privileges that many professional artists could only dream of. He co-founded the Beijing Landscape Painting Research Association [BLPRA 北京山水畫研究會] and thereafter served as the Secretary General of the Association for several years. Li Keran, one of the most respected guohua landscape painting masters of the 20th Century, was invited to be the Honorary Chair of the Association. Bai Xueshi, a senior professor who had taught guohua painting at the CAAC and CAFA for several decades, became the acting Chair of the Association. Among the most active members were Zhang Bu, Li Xingjian and Yao Kui, who later all achieved remarkable artistic success and who benefited from the rapid expansion of the cultural market in the 1990s and after.

According to Zhu, the BLPRA was intended to be purely academic, since its core members were mostly young teachers from the CAAC and CAFA, who wished to develop personal painting styles but with a modern feel, while upholding traditional use of guohua materials and techniques. Nevertheless, the development of the association in the 1980s coincided with the overall relaxed cultural atmosphere and increasingly acute debates between competing aesthetic views that were a direct consequence of the ideological confusion at the time. After the BLPRA was registered under the Beijing Artists Association as a mass organization, it quickly gained support from many well-recognized guohua masters in Beijing, who overwhelmingly defended the status of guohua as “the art” of the nation. Zhu states:

The core members of the Association were all born in the 1930s and shared similar learning experiences and cultural affiliations during our early learning stages. In the mid-1980s we were already in our fifties: a golden period for most professionals. In many ways, we were technically well-trained to serve the State. Nevertheless, we had also wasted so much precious time and energy, due to excessive political movements and ideological interferences during the pre-reform period. It was our passion to seize this precious opportunity to
refocus on Chinese brush and ink painting and to pursue our own personal styles as Chinese artists. At the same time, in the eyes of well-recognized guohua masters, of whom many were our teachers, we somehow represented the hope of our and future generations. It was not true to say that we were happy with our lives and not concerned with politics. Nevertheless, to devote our limited energy to our own arts and research seemed to be more urgent, practical and rational than anything else.

During the second half of the 1980s, the Association not only held several joined exhibitions in Beijing, but also took part in many shows in other parts of the country. With increasing international cultural exchange activities, Zhu and other core members of the Association were more than once invited to Japan to demonstrate their guohua skills and to exhibit their paintings. During the same period Zhu published five art albums and books in China and Japan. Two of them specifically focused on theoretical and technical aspects of guohua’s innovations, i.e. “Modernization of Chinese Landscapes” and “How to Paint Flowers with Chinese Brushes and Ink” (published in Japanese). Meanwhile, Zhu worked as a full-time teacher giving classes on Chinese landscapes and watercolors at the CAAC. His busy schedule and achievements in both academic and administrative fields during the first decade of the reform era may have reflected the eagerness of the “fourth generation professional artists” to make up for their deprived years of the past.

According to Zhu, by the end of 1980s, the majority of professional artists of his generation were somewhat surprised by the openness of the new CCP leadership towards new ideas in the world of fine arts. The feelings of the professional artists of the older generations towards this new development were mixed. On the one hand, they welcomed a more relaxed cultural atmosphere, which meant decreasing interference from the party-state in their work. On the other hand, they directly
encountered serious challenges to the traditional aesthetic views that they were trying to revitalize.

**Critique of Cultural Policies and Commercialization of Cultural Products**

Even in the 1980s when the market economy was still in its initial stage, trade of artworks began to reemerge. Using the difference in income and living standards as well as favorable currency exchange rates, overseas buyers often managed to achieve incredibly favorable prices from China’s professional guohua painters, who were still recovering from the recent painful memories and trying to improve their financial situation. Zhu says,

> As professional artists who were trained and employed by the State, with the still vivid bitter experiences of the 1960s and 1970s in our minds, many of us were amazed by the fact that our paintings were suddenly of some monetary value in the 1980s. Prior to the reform era, we gave our works to our colleagues, friends and students as gifts to show our appreciation, friendship or encouragement. In those cases, we often inscribed the names of the receivers on the paintings. We also exchanged our own works amongst each other for different reasons, with no financial incentives involved. By the early 1980s, I had already owned quite a few guohua paintings from my teachers and colleagues, only occasionally repaying the authors with my own works or some other small gifts, such as a box of watercolor pigments.

Zhu’s comment indicates that inscribing the receivers’ name and occasionally adding sophisticated and elegant dedications on guohua paintings - a practice to show personal attachments between artists and receivers - was still commonly observed by professional guohua painters during the pre-reform era. This can be seen as a piece of evidence to show the continuity of guohua painting even during the period of tight ideological control and rampant political interference. Zhu’s comment also helps explain why there have been so many guohua paintings bearing dedications and
receivers’ names for sale in auction houses and galleries during the past twenty years or so. In the current guohua painting market, due to the reoccurring problems of imitated works, works with receivers’ names coming from reliable sources are often sold for higher prices than those without. This phenomenon also shows the openness of the general public towards the commercialization of cultural products - including those artworks originally with strong personal attachments.

Zhu’s guohua paintings have been collected by several important public galleries in China, Japan and Switzerland. Since the mid-1990s, he has regularly resided in his studio in Beijing and has been invited to participate in many cultural activities. His guohua paintings have been sold in several well-established galleries and auction houses in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. In 2007 the government of Huilai County, Hebei Province proposed to build a gallery to honor his artistic achievement. Construction was still underway when the interview took place. When asked about the development of the current guohua painting market in China and its impact on professional artists of the present time, Zhu comments,

*It is not at all a cultural market that people from capitalist societies, such as Canadian society, would easily understand. In China, at the macro-level, the Central Government has so many means to interfere or to a certain extent manipulate the cultural market under the name of the market economy. The most effective and obvious ones are through periodic regulatory and institutional readjustments, which often provide extra authority and privileges for certain bureaucrats in charge of cultural affairs, arts dealers and professional artists. At various grass-roots levels, these people have also worked together to create and defend their own interests. For instance, “Artist Receiving Government Special Subsidy” (領有政府特殊津貼藝術家), a fashionable term, suddenly emerged a few years ago in the Chinese cultural community and is in contradiction when the idea of fair competition in the cultural market. This is not to say that subsidies are necessarily bad. Yet, when the title and monthly grant is awarded without measurable, objective criteria and is used to appeal to collectors and investors, the injustice and unfairness already existing in the Chinese cultural community is only further substantiated. As a consequence, many young*
professional artists are finding life harder, if they decide to rely on their own talents and venture into the ‘free market’.

Largely coinciding with Zhu’s personal experiences, the author’s own observation also confirms the existence of “institutionalized unfair competition” among professional artists in the current market. For instance, the Beijing Chinese Painting Research Institute [中國畫研究院], which was established in 1981 under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Culture,154 was renamed the National Painting Institute of China [中國國家畫院] in 2006. Regardless of its actual academic reputation and artistic performance in the past 25 years, with its new signboard and the public image-boosting advertisement that followed, the Institute suddenly became comparable in status to the national painting institutes of the imperial days, e.g. the Imperial Institute of the Song Dynasty. The current President of the Institute, Long Rui (1946 - ), who received his undergraduate degree at the CAAC in 1966 and his graduate degree at the CAFA in 1980, is no doubt a good professional guohua painter with an adequate reputation. However, considering his current achievements and contributions, it sounds farfetched to compare Long with the head of an institute that by definition represents the nation’s highest aesthetic standards. Yet, after 2006 the mark-up of Long’s works, as well as other artists from the recently renamed Institute, clearly surpassed the price of works by other professional artists of similar backgrounds and standards. This observation does not necessarily mean that those favorably treated are content with this regime. It simply suggests that, in the reform era, regulatory and institutional changes carried out by the party-state could be as an effective incentive to influence professional artists.

154 Originally the Institute was only an ad hoc arrangement called “Chinese Painting Creation Unit” (中國畫創作小組) set up in 1977 by the Ministry of Culture. Its most important task at the time was to help those badly mistreated professional guohua painters to regain their reputations and to make necessary arrangements for them to return or be reassigned to proper posts. The more detailed discussion on its background history can be found in Chapter 4 of this thesis.
Views on Relations between Artists and Politics in Post-1989 China

In general, as a direct result of the more lenient ideological line of Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, the influence of the party’s propaganda system was in steady decline throughout the 1980s. However, the post-1989 CCP leadership sensed that, in order to effectively rebuild and then maintain its legitimacy, it must re-strengthen its political thought work, while continually stressing the merits of the market economy.

Throughout the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, the party’s propaganda system had effectively reassumed a guiding role in Chinese society.

Zhu points out that there is an “obscure but still traceable linkage” between the development of guohua painting and the political atmosphere in China in the reform era. Between 1985 and 1989 the art of guohua painting as a whole was under relentless criticism by some modern day artists and arts theorists. Some radicals challenged the meaning and value of the very existence of (traditional style) guohua painting in the new historical context, the reform era. At the same time, the “85 New Wave Movement”, the birthplace of contemporary Chinese avant-garde arts, also had a profound impact on many professionally trained guohua painters of the younger generation. These artists named their works “new literati painting” (新文人畫). This type of “guohua paintings”, although appreciated for the skillful application of traditional brush and ink, was immediately identifiable by the delicate, solitude, playful and decadent sentiments in them. Some artists even introduced erotic and mysterious elements into their works, which met the particular tastes of wealthy, young urban buyers. It is clear that these artists tried to break away from present day politics and the “sacred tradition” that had been a burden to guohua painters since the

155 Amongst many young critical artists, the most representative figure was Li Xiaoshan, then still a graduate student at the Nanjing Academy of Fine Arts. In 1985 Li published an article “My Opinion on Chinese Painting” in the Jiangsu Art Magazine (Jiangsu Huakan, 江蘇畫刊). The article announced the end and death of Chinese traditional painting and soon led to a series of debates in the Chinese fine arts community about the future of guohua paintings.
Tang Dynasty (or even earlier). Nevertheless, they showed great interests in the unorthodox literati elements periodically found in Imperial China.\(^{156}\)

Zhu comments that the sudden popularity of unorthodox guohua paintings between 1985 and 1989 as possibly due to a rather relaxed social atmosphere and ideological confusion of the time. However, in the post-Tiananmen era, as the party-state strived to re-establish their legitimacy, professional guohua painters of traditional styles inevitably became much more appealing to the leaders of China for good reason. As Lin Mingyan suggests, once modified and propagandized by the hegemonic state, the renewed attention to national cultural traditions was often understood and represented in terms of “deepening” the process of modernization from the level of science and technology to the structure of the national cultural psyche.\(^{157}\) Therefore, by advancing and promoting guohua paintings, the essence of Chinese national pride, guohua painters were instrumental to the party-state by helping to uphold China’s (and therefore the CCP’s) image both internationally and domestically as a country of great cultural traditions. Also, by delivering traditional values and displaying positive images of “great men” of the past as well as the present, they voluntarily or involuntarily helped to promote patriotism and nationalism. All of this was essential in order to consolidate social unity and to portray the state as a modern civilization.\(^{158}\)

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\(^{156}\) Zhu’s comment on the practices of the new literati painters in the late 1980s may be further illustrated by my discussion in Chapter 3 on painters of the Yangzhou School in the Qing Dynasty. While artistically talented and culturally well-cultivated, those painters created paintings according to the taste of wealthy buyers and tried to achieve economic independence through marketing themselves. By doing so, they also overtly challenged the traditional Confucian scholars’ views on guohua paintings and the social role of their creators.


\(^{158}\) For instance, in 1994 the National Exhibition of Guohua Paintings was held in the China Arts Gallery in Beijing. It was a highly important national event organized by the Ministry of Culture and the CAA. In the Exhibition, dominant themes were portraits of great writers, philosophers, hermits and legendary sages of history, and scenes of the glorious days of past dynasties, e.g. Han and Tang.
Part 3. M. P.\textsuperscript{159}

From Railroad Worker’s Family to Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts

M. P. was born into a railroad worker’s family in Shandong province in 1934. He learned drawing and calligraphy for many years as a child under the guidance of his mother who was talented in paper-cutting and embroidery. Between 1948 and 1950, M. P. joined the Xue Feng Arts Work Troupe [雪峰藝術工作團], a cultural and fine art work unit of the PLA, and served as a practitioner. Between 1950 and 1953, M. P. studies sketching and woodblock print with Shen Zhiyu (沈之瑜) and other professional artists at the Shanghai Fine Art School. In 1953 he entered Nanjing Normal University, envisioning becoming a high school fine arts teacher after graduation. He majored in oil painting and woodblock print – two rational choices to meet with the ideological tendencies and aesthetic views of the time. M. P.’s oil painting teacher was Fang Ganmin (1906-1984) who studied in Paris in the 1920s. His woodblock print teacher was Liu Lun (1913- ) who had already been known as a master printmaker in the “Liberated Areas” prior to the establishment of the PRC.

Nevertheless, influenced by his early exposure to Chinese traditional arts, between 1955 and 1957, M. P.’s interest turned again to guohua painting and he continued to practice it under the influence of several important modern artists in Nanjing. One of them was Fu Baoshi (1904-1965) who painted the famous “Such is the Beauty of Our Mountains and Streams” (江山如此多駿), on which Mao Zedong personally inscribed the title, for the Great Hall of the People in 1959. After passing the highly competitive entrance examination, in 1957, M. P. was admitted to the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts (ZAFA), which was one of a few leading fine arts academies directly under the Ministry of Culture.

\textsuperscript{159} This particular interviewee does not wish to reveal his full name in this thesis, due to sensitive personal reasons.
Between 1957 and 1961, in a period considered to be artistically more in favor of the art of guohua painting, he extensively studied various arts forms under the guidance of the elite-style professional training. This training experience at the ZAFA provided him with an even more solid ground to develop his arts. After his graduation, M. P. served at the ZAFA as a teacher and an administrator between 1961 and 1989. In 1989 he left the academy and immigrated to Canada with his family. For the past two decades, he has made annual trips to China and has actively engaged in several public art projects and continued to work on his guohua paintings in both Beijing and Hangzhou, except for a few years between 1992 and 1995. He has been able to keep his pension and a house assigned to him by the school. The academy has also received him as a guest speaker many times during his periodic stays in Hangzhou.

M. P.’s formal learning experience at the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts was accompanied by the launch of the Anti-Rightist Movement and the Great Leap Forward that followed. During this period, despite all the economic setbacks and nationwide famine, guohua painting was experiencing an encouraging outlook. A sustainable effort was made, especially by professional artists at higher education establishments, to infuse guohua painting with new content and meaning. Guohua painters reintroduced traditional landscape and flower-and-bird paintings and began to strongly encourage the development of figural paintings with a more Chinese appearance. M. P. states,

Pan Tienshou, who was the president of the academy between 1959 and 1966, paid special attention to the constant development of guohua. Pan’s aesthetic views were different from the ones of Xu Beihong and Jiang Feng in many aspects. He was not in objection to synthesizing painting skills of the west into guohua. Yet, in his mind, it was of great importance that guohua maintained its own characteristics. Under his guidance, the academy established a “figural painting workshop” that was made up of several talented figural painters, such as. Fang Zengxian, Zhou Canggu and Li Zhenjian. The mandate of the workshop
was to study how to paint contemporary figural paintings using traditional Chinese materials and techniques. With the artists’ talents and efforts and the academy’s full supports -- including the supplies of painting materials, models, special allowances for travels and relatively easy access to reference books -- these artists’ achievements were remarkable. They reached a new peak for Chinese figural paintings, which was and still is very difficult for the subsequent guohua painters to surpass.

M. P.’s observations are consistent with the studies of some historians of Chinese art. For instance, Arnold Chang characterizes the period between 1957 and 1965 as “a period of raising artistic standards” and stipulates that “traditional [guohua] painters were encouraged to work at developing new forms that would be suitable for the depiction of the new China. By the early 1960s, some painters seemed to be primarily involved with formal problems and less concerned with the representation of revolutionary content”. 160 Ellen Johnson Laing describes the period as “poetic”, during which artists were more concerned with matters of technique and aesthetic sensibilities, instead of strong political overtones. 161 This was achieved only after Jiang Feng lost a power struggle with the Ministry of Culture over his attempt to modify traditional guohua painting with Soviet Realism.

Remembering his life as a student at the academy, M. P. says, 

*Generally speaking, during the four years that I studied at the academy, the country was in serious economic trouble and lives were very hard for many people. At the end of the school year of 1960, the president of the academy, Pang Tienshou, awarded me an honorary flag-like banner for academic excellence. The banner was given only to one top student, because it was custom-made and actually cost the school some money. Due to a tight budget, the second and third best students were awarded Pang’s original paintings, which were “free” at the time. It was a true reflection of the material deficiencies of the time. However, most teachers and students at the academy worked really hard and genuinely believed that it was our responsibility to artistically challenge our predecessors.*

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and ourselves. It was an ideologically liberal and aesthetically inspiring period.¹⁶²

After his graduation in 1961, M. P. was chosen to stay and teach in the academy, due mainly to his academic performance. His active role as a party member also made him a promising candidate to become an administrator for the school. In the same period, Zhou Enlai made several public talks on literature and the arts that expressed his “personal views and concerns” about excessive government interference in artistic issues. As an experienced politician, Zhou reiterated that artworks committing political errors should not spread unchecked. Nevertheless, he repeatedly emphasized the importance of raising the quality of artworks and recognizing the talents and skills of professional artists. By praising traditional guohua painters’ contribution in depicting the life of the new age and providing people with pleasure, Zhou was also clearly in favor of more diverse artistic expressions and cultural values of traditional guohua.¹⁶³ Perhaps in correspondence with the Premier’s views, an increasing number of landscape and flower-and-bird paintings were published in official fine art publications. M. P. comments:

In addition to teaching students, I carried out much administrative work. I was mainly responsible to the party system. During the few years prior to the Social Education Movement, with all the cultural discourse amongst Chinese leaders, the party’s cultural policies were relatively flexible. I really felt optimistic about the future and was very sincere in serving and working with the teachers and students at the academy, according to the way I understood the party’s policies.

¹⁶² M. P. showed the author an old photograph recording the moment when Mr. Pang was presenting a big banner to M. P., the honor student of the year. After many years, M. P. joked, “I was very proud of receiving the banner then. Now I truly feel regretful that I was not in the second or third place. If that would have been the case, I would still own an original painting by Mr. Pang, which is of great value in the present time as opposed to the banner that I received then.”

According to M. P., in contrast to the highly uniform nature of paintings created during the Cultural Revolution, individuality and academic exploration was permitted and sometimes even encouraged at the academy in the early 1960s. Many professional painters in the academy were fairly open-minded. In terms of guohua painting during this period, the method of infusing conventional painting techniques with new social contents was more frequently applied. M. P.’s guohua teacher Pan Tienshou, the president of the academy at the time, also experimented and created works in such a fashion. While acting as a teacher and administrator, M. P. continued to benefit from the teachings of important guohua masters of the time at the academy.

Views on Professional Painters’ Lives during the Cultural Revolution

Art and politics were very tightly linked during the Cultural Revolution, during which art was more overtly used as a means to spread personal worship and justify the government’s policies. Artists were therefore more directly forced in certain directions that were dictated by official ideology. Some opportunistic artists, who showed loyalty to the party and followed the rules of the days, suddenly gained privilege and became part of the elite circles. On the contrary, those who appeared to be less flexible and became more outspoken, due mostly to confidence in their own talents, beliefs and academic credibility, usually suffered the most during this period. M. P. provides a vividly contrasting example:

In 1967, when the young artist Liu Chunhua’s oil painting ‘Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan’ was hailed as a model artwork, a corresponding nationwide learning movement was also launched. In the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts, teachers were ordered to assemble to ‘comment’ on Liu’s work. My colleague S. C., who studied oil painting in East Germany (the GDR) for several years between the late 1950s and the early 1960s, carefully expressed his reservations on the technical merits of the painting. His comments were immediately distorted by

164 The interviewee wishes to keep this particular artist anonymous.
some attendants as an insult to Chairman Mao. Consequently, the party labeled him as a ‘German Revisionist Liner’ and made that ‘incident’ an official record in his personal file. As a consequence, S. C. suffered many serious criticisms during the Cultural Revolution. A professionally well-trained and talented oil painter, he eventually decided to discontinue oil painting and turned his focus to guohua painting. His decision was just a faint and silent ‘protest’ toward the injustice done to him in such a period of turmoil.

In 1974, upon receiving an order from the Department of Propaganda of Zhejiang province to “reinvestigate the cases of the a few wrongly accused artists”, M. P. immediately destroyed the so-called “black materials” (黑材料) in S. C.’s personal file. Challenged by other party members at the academy, M. P. insisted that his action was in line with the latest order from the party. M. P. recalls:

*In order to show my support, I volunteered as a ‘teaching assistant’ for S. C. in his classes for about a year. S’s guohua painting skill is very good and he has now become a very famous guohua painter. However, without the arbitrary and unnecessary political interference during the Cultural Revolution, he could have been one of the greatest oil painters of our time.*

The Party’s Central Propaganda Department has historically delivered its orders and opinions by means of various documents, such as directives, notices and decisions. However, the effectiveness of such a system depends largely on local officials who put the party’s policies into practice. It was not as reliable a means to control professional artists as one would imagine, especially when factional struggles and political upheavals were rampant. M. P.’s personal experiences dealing with the local Propaganda Department in Zhejiang province during and after the Cultural Revolution convincingly testify to the limitation of the system, which lasted and can still be observed well beyond the pre-reform era. Yet, the boundaries set by the party system were also well perceived by professional artists most of the time, although theses limits were often without legal grounds.
Based on M. P.’s personal experiences during the Cultural Revolution, in spite of the fact that many professional artists were persecuted, more than a few local party cadres and government administrators in charge of cultural and ideological affairs were willing to exert flexibilities on policy implementation and even offer protection to artists within their power. M. P. recalls:

In 1973, Zhang Tiesheng, a young farmer challenged the college entrance examination system by handing in a blank test sheet but was still admitted to Tie Ling College of Agriculture 鐵嶺農業學院. He was celebrated as a national model by Jiang Qing for his famous political statement written on the back of the test sheet. The Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts, along with many others, then received an order to send representatives to Tie Ling College of Agriculture in the northeast to meet this young student and to ‘learn’ from him’. When requested by a high ranking party official to represent the academy at a meeting in the Northeast, I replied in a sarcastic tone that, ‘I would love to go, as soon as we change the name of our school the from Zhejiang of Fine Arts to the Zhejiang Academy of Politics.’ He just smiled and ended the conversation. As I can recall, the academy ended up sending a young staff member to attend the ridiculous meeting at the Tie Ling College of Agriculture in the northeast.

M. P. gives another example to support his observations that, within their power, local party cadres in charge of cultural and ideological affairs were willing to exert flexibility on policy implementation:

Starting in March 1976, there were mass demonstrations, especially noticeable in Nanjing and Beijing, against the dishonoring of Zhou Enlai’s memory. In Hangzhou, many students, including those from our academy, also went to the streets and some of them eventually took over a commercial building of downtown Hangzhou. One day in April 1976, while C. B., the Minister of Department of Propaganda of Zhejiang Province, was receiving me, his secretary presented him with an urgent document regarding the recent incidents. The document accused the students’ protest in Hangzhou as an ‘occurrence in the nature of the [1976] Tiananmen Incident’ and demanded that measures be taken immediately – meaning to arrest students. C. B. asked me for my opinion. I suggested that although the document referred to the situation in Hangzhou as an ‘occurrence in the nature of the [1976] Tiananmen Incident’, it didn’t

165 The interviewer wishes to keep this particular person anonymous.
necessarily mean that they were the same. A much experienced and prudent senior party cadre, C.B. stared at me with wide-open eyes and didn’t say a word. I can not say that C.B. entirely agreed with my opinion. Nevertheless, it has been proven that, in dealing with the students’ protest in Hangzhou in 1976, the Zhejiang authorities in charge of culture and propaganda affairs indeed took a fairly lenient approach. Some students were briefly detained and then released. Nothing came even close to the terror that students in Beijing experienced at roughly the same time.

M. P.’s personal experiences during the Cultural Revolution demonstrate that at the grass-roots level, more than a few party officials, government bureaucrats and institute administrators were not so dogmatic. They often exercised personal discretion and skillful manipulation within their sphere of cultural policies. Sometimes, they also provide personal protection.

In M. P.’s view, many false accusations and persecutions happened during the Cultural Revolution. Many of these accusations originated from pre-existing personal disagreements and misunderstandings amongst peer artists. Some testified against their colleagues out of pure opportunistic reasons. Some were forced to criticize themselves and others due to imposed or perceived threats. Contradictions and controversies among artists were often academic and artistic in nature, but after being magnified and distorted by political and ideological agendas, they became incredibly destructive. After the disastrous Cultural Revolution ended, those who took the political storm as an opportunity to accuse and even use violence against other artists and colleagues tried to evade their own liabilities by blaming a few prominent political figures.

M. P. described his personal relations with most of his colleagues at the academy during the Cultural Revolution as very good. Because of his academic performance as a student and later his dedication to serving the school as a teacher and administrator,
he had already commanded much support from the members of the academy before the Cultural Revolution started. Furthermore, reflecting on his work experience at the academy, M. P. felt that he was even more respected by most of his colleagues in the later years, because he explicitly refused to join the political struggle against Pan Tienshou during the Cultural Revolution. Due to his uncooperative stance vis-à-vis the intension of some high ranking party cadres of the time, M. P. was labeled as “the most powerful academic authority” (大學術權威) on a big character poster at the academy. As a consequence, he was forced to leave all of his posts at the academy, including being the deputy director of the CCP committee. M. P. avows:

*I did not care about my underserved reputation. Pan Tienshou was a great teacher who cared about his students. Pan’s wife even made a coat for me in a cold winter evening, when I was still a student and was too poor to buy one. It’s a shame that I was not able to protect him. There was no way I could have denounced him for my own benefits during the Cultural Revolution.*

According to Ma, the Cultural Revolution period wasted time and energy, yet many professional guohua painters were still able to create excellent works through different means and for different reasons. M. P. has treasured several guohua paintings painted by his colleagues Fang Zengxian (1931- ), Li Zhenjian (1922-1992) and Guan Liang (1900-1986). In his opinion, to reach a supreme artistic level in realistic figural paintings done with traditional Chinese brushes and ink, the State’s involvement was an absolute necessity. For instance, it provided the artists with travel expenses to obtain inspiration, the means to employ models in their studios, as well as all the materials needed to actually finish the paintings.

M. P. showed some emotion, when talking about his guohua painting collection by Guan Liang, one of a few artists who studied abroad and mastered both guohua and oil paintings in the history of contemporary Chinese fine arts. After M. P. was
ordered to “stand aside” for refusing to join the political campaign against Pan Tienshou, he invited Pan’s closest student Hong Shiqing (1929-2008) to visit Guan Liang. M. P. recalls:

*During the Cultural Revolution, Guan Liang was watched and was under constant criticism because of his ‘foreign connections’. By the time we visited him, his house had already undergone several rounds of ‘search and confiscate’. Hong and I took with us some dry noodles, a couple of brushes and a few pieces of xuan paper. In order to avoid intrusion and troubles, we locked the front door and moved a table and a few chairs to the backyard. That afternoon, after finishing our meal, Guan started to sing Chinese opera and did several guohua paintings depicting various figures from Beijing opera stories. Then, realizing that all of Guan’s personal seals had been confiscated, Hong immediately made a seal for him from a piece of discarded wood found in Guan’s backyard. I took home a couple of paintings by Guan that day and have treasured them ever since.*

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### Views on Changing Relations between Professional Guohua Artists and the Party-state in the Market Economy

In China, it has long been a tradition that most guohua painting collectors, who are mostly intellectually and aesthetically knowledgeable, collect only well-known names. One reason for this is that the value of a guohua painting is closely associated with the reputation of its author, unlike a handicraft - such as a jade statue or a lacquer box. The market price of a casual work by a famous guohua painter at a social occasion, for instance, often exceeds that of a well-executed masterwork by a talented artist unknown to the public. In the reform era, guohua painting’s intrinsic quality has become vastly more distorted, when snobbery and monetary considerations outweigh cultural and aesthetic ones, and dictate the tastes of collectors and investors.

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166 Guan Liang studied oil painting in Japan between 1918 and 1922. He devoted a lot of time to figural paintings in the style of guohua during the PRC period, maybe because of the shortage of materials for oil painting and his personal interests in traditional Beijing opera. In 2008, on average, one of Guan’s figural guohua paintings sold in various auction houses in China and abroad for around 30,000 RMB (around 4,800 CND) per square foot.
According to M. P., one of the immediate negative consequences of this distortion is that, while a relatively small number of “famous” professional guohua painters continually take advantage of the reputation and resources from the State to fetch an incredible amount of wealth in the marketplace, many frustrated artists are not even able to support their daily lives. Some are compelled to act as shadow painters who fake works of the guohua painting masters of the past and the present day. Some repeatedly produce so-called commercial decorative pictures, in order to survive economically in the increasingly commercialized “competitive” art world in China. Sadly, this type of unfairness is largely created and aggravated by the existing official establishments and supposedly competitive market mechanism.

According to M. P., this unfairness is not likely to go away in the foreseeable future:

As a professional artist, I really could not think of a better job than being a professional painter (or more specifically a professor) at fine arts academies in China during the reform era. While the majority of cultural workers, just like many other government employees who lost their “iron rice bowl” in the reform era, became gravely concerned with their economic well-being, many professional guohua painters who decided to stay in official establishments really flourished.

Throughout the 1980s, M. P. continued to serve at the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts as a teacher, which allowed him to directly witness the gradual and subtle, but important changes in the relationship between professional painters and the party-state, as the market economy started to create a more relaxed social-political and social-cultural context for cultural activities. According to M. P., by the end of the 1980s some professional guohua artists in Zhejiang had already engaged in small

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167 Imitating the works of leading guohua painters, both past and present, is widespread in China. Academically this practice has been considered one of the necessary ways to master the skills of guohua painting. On the other hand, it has created problems of authenticity especially in the market. Nowadays, forging has become even more rampant mainly because it is extremely lucrative. In many cases, skillfully and thoughtfully created fakes could fool even leading experts in the field.
scale trading of their own works. Buyers from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan, due to their geographical, linguistic, cultural, and buying power advantages, visited individual artists from door to door and were normally able to achieve deals that satisfied both professional painters and their private patrons. In the mid-1980s, M. P. learned that one of his colleagues sold over a hundreds guohua paintings to a Taiwanese dealer for about twenty thousand RMB, the price of a two by four foot guohua painting by the same artist nowadays. That artist was very pleased with the deal then, because his yearly salary as a professor in Zhejiang Academy was less than 200 RMB. By the end of the 1990s, none of M. P.’s colleagues were totally immune to commercial activities of some kind – either voluntarily or involuntarily. Their lives continued to improve significantly in the new century. Nowadays, some of M. P.’s students from Zhejiang Academy can afford to build luxurious private residences and studios on the scenic West Lake (西湖).

Therefore, it would be quite reasonable to imagine that, compared with the Mao era, the capacity of the party-state to control professional artists in the 1980s and 1990s diminished, as they have achieved differing degrees of financial independence. Nevertheless, because of guohua painting’s cultural significance, elitist nature and unique way of evaluation of its aesthetic and market values, the opposite may be proven to be true. In fact, the party has been able to exert a tremendous amount of influence on professional artists in the reform era, paradoxically by using the market as means for control. Furthermore, unlike in the pre-reform era, this control in the cultural sphere has in fact strengthened through regulations and laws issued by formal legislative and administrative bodies both at the national and local levels.

According to Ma, in the 1980s and 1990s party propaganda departments have enjoyed an increasing influence over the re-allocation of new public resources created by the market – most noticeably contract opportunities, financial aid and long term
subsidies. Some other economically less direct, but equally effective ways to control professional artists include providing (or disallowing) positions, titles, awards, reputations and opportunities for public appearances.

_In sum, it is true that the party has readjusted its political priorities and its role in Chinese society in the market economy. People of different professions and social status in China may perceive the change differently. From professional guohua painters’ perspective, there are now even more incentives to comply with the party’s cultural policies than ever before. On the other hand, although often not made public or specified in written documents, the disadvantages for the artists to take an opposing or uncooperative stance against the party’s cultural policies are obvious._

This trend has continued and actually became more aggravated in the 1990s and beyond. According to M. P., by the late 1980s, at least on the surface, the President of the ZAFA was still the number one leader of the academy. A few departments, such as the Department of Guohua Painting and the Department of Arts and Crafts, remained headed by non-partisan professional artists. Nowadays, after 30 years of reform and opening-up, the party system in the academy is thriving more than ever, quite contrary to what people would normally imagine. Before the mid-2000s, although acknowledged as the de-facto number one leader of the academy, the Secretary of the CCP Committee administratively still ranked after the president. However, officially since the mid-2000, the Secretary of the CCP Committee has been ranked above the President of the Academy. In other words, the party’s control over the academy -- and therefore the professional artists working at the academy -- is further consolidated through formal institutional and regulatory measures.168 To further expand its system of control, the CCP has also established its corresponding

168 The same administrative arrangement is also made at the CAFA and the Fine Arts Academy of Qinghua University (previously the CAAC). According to the administrative structure of these two important fine arts education organizations, the Secretary of the CCP Committee ranks higher than the President of the Academy. Of interest is that many important universities with symbolic implications and ideological significance, such as Beijing University and the People’s University, still rank their presidents above the secretaries of the CCP Committee.
unit in each department at the academy. Furthermore, although artists who are not party members are still assigned various roles in the academy, more party cadres are increasingly taking up important administrative positions. According to M. P., it is not to say that academic and artistic achievements are irrelevant. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the party has successfully revitalized its methods of control in fine arts academies, reaffirming its unmistakable intention to continue its ideological hegemony over current as well as future professional artists.

The other aspect of the party’s interference on professional guohua artists’ lives in the reform era has been through its hegemonic official aesthetic views, norms and values. They were explicitly articulated or implicitly disclosed in artworks and discussions published in leading national art magazines and newspapers, by the process and results of artwork selection of important national exhibitions, and through acquisitions by publicly funded galleries. In addition, these official aesthetic views, norms and values were reinforced by the appointments of Soviet-trained artists to key administrative positions in almost every major art academy in China. This type of interference may appear less threatening, but is still effective in dictating how artistic careers will proceed. One example that M. P. used to highlight his view is the unbelievably slow development of abstract guohua painting in the past thirty years. M. P. reveals:

By the mid-1980s, some of my teachers and peer guohua painters in Hangzhou, including myself, had attempted to further develop their works by incorporating techniques and spirits from traditional guohua painting and those from modern abstract painting. Lu Yanshao, for example, created over a hundred experimental abstract paintings with traditional Chinese brushes, ink and xuan paper (宣紙) at his studio before he passed away in 1993. Effort at artworks like these, which were not consistent with the ‘mainstream’ aesthetic views supported by the party-state, have been neglected and sometimes intentionally hampered. Nowadays, Chinese professional guohua painters feel free to create or experiment with whatever topics and styles they want. Some younger artists have
even tried to impress people by introducing erotica into their “guohua paintings” and achieved limited commercial success. Nevertheless, without the party-state’s support or consent, which can be delivered or expressed through ideological, institutional and financial means, it is very difficult for professional guohua painters to quickly establish their reputations and achieve financial gains.

Since the turn of this century, M. P. has accomplished several commissioned works in Beijing and Qufu, Shangdong Province [山東曲阜]. His guohua paintings appeared in several auctions in China and all fetched “very reasonable prices”. Based on his continuous affiliations with the Chinese art world and his close association with some of the most influential professional guohua artists in China during the past several decades, M. P. anticipates that the party-state will continually exert effective influence on professional guohua artists through ideological, institutional and financial means. On the other hand, most professional guohua painters will continually choose to stay in the current establishments, with plenty of incentives and justifications.
PART 4. FAN ZENG

Brief History of Fan’s Life in the 20th Century

A descendent of Fan Zhongyan (范仲淹, 989-1052 A.D.), a prominent politician and literary figure in the Song Dynasty, Fan Zeng studied history, literature and painting at a young age. In 1958 Fan enrolled at Nankai University in the history department. In 1960 he was transferred to the CAFA where he studied guohua painting with some of China’s most famous professional painters. After graduating, he worked at the National Museum of Chinese History (NMCH) until he became a teacher at the CAAD after the end of the Cultural Revolution.

Comments on Fan’s life during the Cultural Revolution have been controversial. For instance, some denounce Fan as opportunistic and phony, mainly based on the claim that he made a false charge against Shen Congwen (沈從文, 1902-1988), a famous historian and one of the finest Chinese prose stylists of all time. In his biography, Fan admits that, due to the tremendous pressure from the authorities, he did write one big character poster in the late 1960s against Shen, who had sincerely cared about him and had supervised his research on Chinese ancient costumes at the National Museum of Chinese History. Nevertheless, Fan stresses that he is ashamed of such behavior and that he has confessed his mistake at several public occasions after the Cultural Revolution ended. This type of regrettable personal behavior in such a time of turmoil is a matter of subjective moral judgments. Substantial and more objective evidence indeed show that Fan, like many other intellectuals and artists at that time, also suffered seriously during the chaotic period. In 1966, Fan was labeled as a “counter-revolutionary” and suffered both physically and mentally for his alleged careless criticism of Jiang Qing. Between 1970 and 1971 he was sent to the May 7th
Cadre School in Xianning, Hubei Province [湖北咸寧] to labor and receive political education. In 1972, he returned to Beijing to create portraits of ancient Chinese figures for the National Museum of Chinese History. In the same year his mother and two elder brothers passed away, one after another, very likely as the result of political persecutions as well as their poor living conditions.

Fan’s historical figural paintings, in terms of both their content and style, often celebrate core Confucian doctrines such as loyalty, filial piety, harmony and humanity. They repeatedly depict famous heroes, thinkers, scientists, scholars and artists as well as legendary figures throughout Chinese history and are welcome by both the public and private sectors. With a deep passion for traditional Chinese culture, he once described himself in a self-appraisal as "crazy for painting; good at calligraphy; occasionally writing poetry and articles to express feelings; enjoying reading books and studying history; somewhat knowledgeable of the rules and changes of the past and our time".170

Already flooded by propagandistic arts when the ten year Cultural Revolution ended, Chinese society welcomed Fan’s traditional style figural paintings with enthusiasm. Culturally appropriate and ideologically favored by the Chinese leaders in charge of cultural affairs, Fan was allowed to travel to Japan to hold a solo exhibition in 1979. As the nation was still recovering from the aftermath of a series of political movements, the opportunity was extremely precious to Fan who was still considered a young teacher at the CAAC by most of his colleagues.

Easily understood and appreciated by Japanese audiences, many of whom were also familiar with Chinese history as well as literature, Fan’s works caused an immediate sensation. In 1983, the Fan Zeng Art Gallery opened to the public in Japan

170 Fan has extensively cited this passage (translation) on various occasions. Shao Yingwu simply uses this calligraphic work as the preface for the book *Pictorial Biography of Fan Zeng* (Hebei: Hebei Education Press: 2002).
- a rare honor for foreign artists. The market value of Fan’s guohua paintings increased dramatically in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Japan. In 1984, after a series of successful exhibitions in Hong Kong and Japan, Fan donated over three million RMB (over $400,000 USD) to establish the Department of Oriental Art at Nankai University in Tianjin and later became the dean of that department. This private donation by one guohua painter to an educational institute was very significant (and is still noteworthy today), especially considering the fact that the monthly income of a full professor was still only a few hundred RMB (less than $100 USD) in this period. Furthermore, retrospectively, 1984 was only one year away from the monumental 85 New Wave Movement – a fine arts movement which overtly challenged paintings of traditional styles and was considered the driving force behind Chinese avant-garde art.

As the criticism of traditional guohua paintings continued to mount towards the mid-1980s, Fan’s contribution of over three million RMB to establish the Department of Oriental Art at Nankai University could be viewed as a statement of his intention to defend Chinese aesthetic views and was certainly celebrated as “patriotic behavior” by the party-state. Fully aware of the various controversies surrounding Fan, Zhu Junshan and M. P., two of the interviewees presented earlier, hold positive opinions of Fan regarding Fan’s achievements and personality displayed between the end of the Cultural Revolution and the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre. Zhu Junshan, who worked in the same office with Fan between 1978 and 1984 at the CAAC, made the following comment about Fan:

Fan was more expressive of his passions than most of our peers. During the Cultural Revolution, I was accused of siding with “bad elements”, due to my close relationship with the ex-President of the CAAC Pang Xunqin (1906-1985). I bore this false accusation until Pang Xunqin’s name was cleared in 1978. Upon learning the news, Fan posted a calligraphic work on the wall of our shared office, quoting a sentence by the most famous poet Li Buo (李白) of the Tang Dynasty. It said, “my small raft has passed through ten thousand mountains (輕舟已過萬重山)”. 
舟已過萬重山” - a very appropriate reflection of my feeling at the time. Artistically and academically, Fan is obviously a very talented artist who has more thoroughly studied Chinese art history than most contemporary guohua painters. His ability to draw portraits with monotone calligraphic lines (白描技法), especially in the 1970s and 1980s, nicely fills in the gap between ancient and modern guohua figural paintings. However, his impulse for justice and a more ideal world, compounded by his outspoken comments, especially in his forties and fifties was in general respectable but often not prudent.

All things considered, Fan obviously enjoyed much more economic independence and higher social status than other professional guohua painters of his age during the early stage of the reform era. This may have inspired him to become a more active scholar-artist and attributed to his rather “bold” moves to openly promote certain sensitive ideas in the 1980s. For instance, according to his biography, in November 1984, Fan made a public speech at the auditorium of Beijing University to express his views on “mother country, arts and life”. In the speech, he encouraged his young audience to cultivate an ambition to take the country’s revival as their own responsibilities and open up their minds to different messages. Furthermore, he urged them not to be content with the current situation but to uphold the spirit of innovation.\textsuperscript{171}

A few years later, a very well-established artist already viewed by some young students as their “mentor”,\textsuperscript{172} Fan’s showed his support for the demonstrating students in Tiananmen Square. As a direct result of his involvement in the 1989 movement, between 1989 and 1993 he was forced to leave China and was in exile in France. According to my informants, Fan did not directly play any significant role during the movement. However, it is established that, as the movement built up its momentum, he personally donated a good deal of money to show his support of the

\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., p.143.
Movement and allegedly handed the donation to one of the student leaders in person. Already a high-profile public figure, Fan’s stance at such a sensitive moment was immediately noticeable to the public as well as the party-state. Although some have speculated that Fan’s move in 1989 was politically opportunistic, it is undeniable that it took conscience as well as a great deal of courage to publically demonstrate his support through actual action.

Although his life in France is usually obscurely described as a period during which he lived in a comfortable house and extensively visited museums and places of interests in Europe, his uneasy relationship to the party-state during that period was evident. For example, in 1992 Fan briefly visited Toronto with the intention of holding a solo exhibition. This constituted an immediate concern to the local Consulate General of the PRC. It is alleged that the exhibition was eventually called off as a result of some “prudent considerations” of the organizers.¹⁷³

After returning to China in 1993, Fan spent the majority of his time creating collaborative paintings with his friends in Beijing. According to my informant, Fan’s unusually lax schedule upon his return from his four year in exile indicates that China’s artistic circle and cultural market were cautious of his past history and current status. Years later, he returned to the Department of Oriental Art Department at Nankai University and was later reinstated as the dean of the same department. Still, his relation to the party-state remained a tense one for most of the 1990s.

Fan’s Changing Attitudes and Relationship to the Party-state

Although it is difficult to pinpoint the actual reasons, there is no doubt that Fan’s attitude towards the party-state has obviously changed since his return from France.

¹⁷³ I learned this story from some local artists and collectors, who are acquaintances of Fan, but wished to remain anonymous.
He has thus far clearly showed his sincerity to make up for his “mistakes” through his articles, public speeches and donations. Furthermore, for the past few years, Fan has actively promoted Chinese traditional culture, Confucian doctrines and patriotism. Fan has quite successfully transformed himself into an intellectual painter who can and is willing to carry out the guohua painting’s “sacred tradition”, e.g. its education purposes on the masses. In 2009, exactly twenty years after the 1989 student movement, which Fan personally supported, Fan published his latest book. In the book he uses “When the Great Way (Dao) Prevails, All under Heaven Comprehend” (大道昌明天下聞) as the title for a commentary chapter on the thirtieth anniversary of China’s reform and opening-up. The same book also includes a speech he made earlier at Nankai University to his students. In the speech, Fan expresses his supportive stance towards the party-state:

You are extremely fortunate to live in such a great epoch. You can study in a very peaceful and harmonious environment. You can devote yourselves to [the well-being of] mankind. You can choose your professions freely and pursue your own dreams. All of these could only be dreamed of in my generation.\(^\text{174}\)

In March 2007, Fan contributed ten of his most important guohua paintings to the Palace Museum in Beijing. In May 2008, he donated 10 million RMB to the victims of the Wenchuan (汶川) Earthquake. In March 2009, CCTV, China’s most influential but ideologically rigid network, broadcasted a three-day-series titled “Fan Zeng on Fine Arts” (Fan Zeng Tan Yi). In the program, in addition to his paintings and calligraphy as well as literature, Fan talked extensively about nationalism and the superiority of Chinese culture. In April 2009, Fan was appointed as one of two

“Special Consultants on Multi-Cultural Affairs” by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

According to one of my informants, the correlation among Fan’s supportive stance towards the party-state’s ideological and cultural agenda, his official image as “the representative master” and the rising of his works’ market value in this decade is apparent. Indeed, even with all his talents, reputation and wealth, Fan’s appointment would still be highly unlikely, had the Chinese government showed its disapproval to UNESCO. The price of Fan’s works in the international market in the 1980s was already very high. In one of the books written by Fan Zeng himself, he recalls that in 1980 two of his paintings were sold for 100,000 and 50,000 HKD (about $13,000 USD and $6,500 USD, respectively) in a joint exhibition in Hong Kong. In the same book, he also writes that in 1983, on average, his paintings were sold for JPN¥ 8,000,000 each in Japan. (Based on the historical USD/Yen exchange rate released by the US Board of Governor of the Federal Reserve System, this was equal to $32,000 USD each).¹⁷⁵ Domestically, since the second half of the 1980s, as the demand of guohua paintings gradually increased, the price of Fan’s works also experienced a corresponding boost in China. In the 1990s, however, seemingly as a consequence Fan’s uneasy relation to the party-state, many domestic auction houses and galleries declined to sell his works. While the value of many other professional guohua painters’ works sharply increased, as the cultural market continued to expand, the price of Fan’s works actually fell during this period. Based on the statistics gathered by Artron Art Market Monitoring Centre, a private organization based in China, from 14 well-established and reputable auction houses in China, in 2000, only

¹⁷⁵ These numbers provided by Fan himself may be selective and therefore inaccurate. Still, devoid of a more concrete and detailed estimate, they are indicative of the market value of his works in the 1980s. For details, see Thirty-Three Prose by Fan Zeng (范曾散文三十三篇), (Hebei: Hebei Education Press: 2001).
18 guohua paintings by Fan Zeng were sold in auctions for 377,036 RMB (about $19,300 USD each). In comparison, in 2005, there were 123 works sold in auctions for 37,269,640 RMB (about $44,560 USD each). In the spring of 2009 alone, there were 37 works sold for 17,526,720 RMB (about $70,000 USD each).\(^{176}\)

Given that there are many factors that could influence the mark-up of artists’ works in the cultural market, it is difficult to draw a conclusive positive correlation between a professional guohua painter’s relation to the party-state and the market value of his or her works. Nevertheless, Fan Zeng’s case seems to point in that direction. When Fan enjoyed a smoother relationship with the party-state in the 1980s, as well as in this decade (2000s), the market responded positively to his works. The opposite is also true: when Fan had a more tense relationship with the party-state, particularly in the early 1990s, the market value fell. In addition, it may also be argued that there is a similar correlation between Fan’s relative social status and his personal attitudes towards the party-state and public affairs. As an intellectual painter of symbolic meaning, Fan was able to command even more public resources, both domestically and internationally, when acting more in line with the party-state’s agenda and concerns, which is still arguably different from out-right support of the party-state.

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\(^{176}\) These statistics can be found on [www.artron.net](http://www.artron.net) run by Artron Art Market Monitoring Centre. Detailed figures specifically about the market prices of Fan’s guohua paintings are listed on [http://index.artron.net/auctionpic.php?artist=%E8%8C%83%E6%9B%BE&tpcd=02010200000](http://index.artron.net/auctionpic.php?artist=%E8%8C%83%E6%9B%BE&tpcd=02010200000)
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

The first task of this chapter is to summarize the specific focus and objective of this dissertation. Second, it presents the key findings of this dissertation. Third, it deals with the theoretical implications of the key findings and suggests future scenarios regarding the relationship between professional guohua painters and the party-state.

Focus and Objective of the Study

With an expanding market economy and increasingly open society, the quality of life in China had no doubt improved by the end of the 20th century. Scholars generally agree that a more pluralistic intellectual and cultural environment emerged in the reform era, as a result of economic reform and openness (Goldman and Lee: 2002; Kraus: 2004). These tendencies all had an impact on Chinese artists as a whole.

Nevertheless, while recognizing the importance of identifying the general trends of Chinese artists’ socio-economic status and conditions and their political autonomy under the PRC, this research suggests that more rigorous operationalization (specification and differentiation of the term “artists”) and more detailed in-depth case studies are necessary to explore the relationship between the artists and the state. In reality, even when strictly defined, the term visual fine arts (to which guohua painting belongs) can still mean many different aesthetic endeavors and expressions. While the term “modern visual arts” refers to photography, video and filmmaking, the term “traditional visual arts” includes guohua painting, watercolor, oil painting, sculpture, printmaking, design and crafts. Moreover, with different training backgrounds, ideological properties, social functions, artistic natures and market orientation, even the artists who fall into the category “traditional fine artists” are much less homogeneous then one would like to believe. This problem is increased further by the
fact that political leaders, the general public and artists themselves may all have different normative expectations towards the role of various artists specializing in different genres, because the characteristics of their art is profoundly conditioned by the deep-rooted cultural heritage and socio-economic conditions of a given society.

The key aspects of this research are limited to professional guohua painters, which highlight how the extensive experiences of professional artists under constant political, ideological, social, and economic changes since the establishment of the PRC are more illustrative of the special relationship between these artists and the state than one would initially expect. Moreover, this dissertation focuses on empirical material that extends primarily from 1949 to the late 1990s, while acknowledging the year of 1978 as a critical dividing juncture for comparative reasons. Therefore, there is an important limit to the scope and purpose of this research. It is not an exploration of the overall impact of reform on China’s art world and cannot offer a comprehensive framework for explaining the relations between all artists of various genres and the party-state.

However, in light of professional guohua painters’ central role in China’s cultural traditions and their inherent connection to Chinese politics as well as the tremendous economic opportunities they gained during the reform era, this study documents their relation to the Chinese Party-state in the 1980s and 1990s and provides us with a distinctive perspective on the issue of artists’ autonomy and its political implications. By investigating the impact of political culture, cultural policies and market expansion on professional guohua painters’ social status and political attitudes, this dissertation can also immediately contribute to comparative studies on the relation between other professional artists of different genres and the Chinese party-state under economic, cultural and political reforms.
Key Findings of the Study

Summary of Professional Guohua Painters’ Backgrounds and Careers

Although the artists depicted in Chapter 6 experienced very similar aesthetic training at the university level, they do demonstrate different sociological attributes in terms of their gender, birth-place and family background. They also show discrepancies in their affiliation with the party, state agencies, NGOs and private enterprise in the cultural market. More importantly, some were involved in politics more deeply either voluntarily (such as Fan Zeng) or involuntarily (such as M. P.). Therefore their sociological backgrounds are reasonably balanced (see Fig. 7-1 on page 211).

Although their stories, observations and critiques obviously constitute only a limited representation of professional guohua painters, these narratives are significant as they indicated the differences and similarities within the experiences of these artists. They are valuable in themselves, but they also help reveal the relationship that professional guohua painters had and continue to have with the party-state.

Changing Relationship: From Structured Dependency to Conformity

When discussing changes of the politico-economic environment affecting artists in China, scholars constantly bring up the following intertwined themes: the reduction of state subsidies; the demand to professionalize management of cultural organizations; more financial sources provided by an expanding cultural market; and the loosening of ideological control through de-politicization and decentralization. Indeed, in the 1980s, when China gradually adjusted its economic structure from being centrally planned to a market-dominated one, more than a few professional art groups were faced with financial challenges and a good number of artists were forced to leave their work units. In the 1990s, when earning an income in the cultural market became a feasible option, many professional artists chose to break their ties with the public
sector and jump into the “commercial sea”. A logical assumption that follows is that these interlocking developments would foster a trend towards decreased dependency of artists on the party-state and eventually bring about a higher degree of autonomy for individuals and quicker de-politicization of their working environment (Kraus 2004, Pan 2000, He 2000)

While acknowledging that professional guohua painters were inevitably influenced by the general trends at the macro-socio-economic level, this research finds that their experiences were different from those of other Chinese artists under the reform. They enjoyed better state patronage, while continually benefiting from China’s booming cultural market in the 1980s and 1990s. It also asserts that the significantly improved economic conditions and the social status that professional guohua painters enjoyed in the 1980s and 1990s did not reflect on their cultural and political autonomy. Most of them consciously chose to be a part of the institutional establishments under the party-state and showed limited aspiration in the quest for cultural and political autonomy. The “organized dependence” of these artists prior to the reform era was replaced by “conformity” of professional guohua painters towards the party-state. The unique situation faced by China’s professional guohua painters in the reform era is a direct result of the ideological favoritism and institutional arrangements (in both the state administrative system and the party structures) articulated by the post-Mao Chinese leadership.

**Ideological Favoritism**

Unlike some of the old revolutionaries, Deng Xiaoping showed little personal attachment to the fine arts and viewed the restructuring of the arts world as merely peripheral to his political and economic program. Deng’s immediate successor, Jiang Zemin, also showed little interest in the fine arts as a whole. Yet, the post-Mao
Chinese leaders and their advisors apparently had learned valuable lessons from their predecessors from the pre-reform era. The post-Mao leaders were keen to use traditional fine arts as an important means to convey moral imperatives, advance state ideologies and boost their own images both domestically and internationally.

During the 1980s, while advocating greater flexibility in the application of official ideologies to revise certain dogmatic Maoist creeds, post-Maoist leaders were also concerned with foreign influences on China’s society as a whole. They launched a series of social movements such as the Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign in 1983; a campaign opposing the “trend of worshiping things” and “contamination from abroad” in 1985; and a movement against “bourgeois liberalization” in 1987. These were efforts that were directed at alleviating the impact of foreign influences on the masses. They also considered these social movements as powerful weapons in combating the lack of confidence in the party and socialism.

On the other hand, to the professional guohua painters, the 1980s represented a series of new aesthetic and ideological challenges to their arts, which were launched by modern and sometimes radical approaches from within and outside China. As illustrated by the interviews in Chapter 6, when confronted with these challenges, professional guohua painters sought to re-affirm their art by drawing upon the rich resource of traditional Chinese culture. When facing the challenges imposed by “non-official arts” – represented by western popular culture and avant-garde art -- the bonds between the party-state and professional guohua painters were strengthened.

Throughout the 1990s, gradually emerging from the shadow of Tiananmen Square and the collapse of the Soviet Union, Chinese leaders vigorously proposed a return to Chinese cultural traditions. This was a crucial approach to promote nationalism and patriotism and one of the important symbols of those traditions was guohua painting. This trend towards nationalism came to be known interchangeably
through different terms – such as “deepening modernization”, “spiritual civilization” and “soft national power”, and much attention was paid to these ideals by China’s political and cultural elites. The potential effects of cultural power in the international arena also received attention among China’s policymakers. This mentality was evidently reflected in the remark by Yun De, a professional writer and commentator specializing in the development of China’s literature and arts:

_The Chinese nation possesses its own unique aesthetic standards and its five thousand-year-old cultural traditions have been its spiritual source for ceaseless revitalization… In addition to other factors, national culture is one of the greatest foundations of China’s national power._”

As can be seen from this statement, the focus on national culture was related to the power of the party-state. A significant aspect of promoting national culture was that the party-state inevitably upheld the art of guohua painting, the highest form of China’s aesthetic culture and an important instrument for cultivation (education) in Confucian tradition. Therefore, the party-state’s favoritism towards professional guohua painters throughout the final two decades of the last century did not originate from guohua paintings’ aesthetic utility. Rather, it was based on its social and political function, such as the ability of the paintings and painters to deliver and sometimes represent “positive messages”. In part through guohua painting China was presented as a spiritual civilization, where nationalism and patriotism were depicted and promoted through cultural icons to the society already over-saturated with western popular cultural products and more importantly with the values and ideas that were masked by those visible commercial products.

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177 This comment was made in 1998 by Yun De, a professional writer and commentator specializing in the development of China’s literature and arts in reform era. This text (in Chinese) is quoted (translation) from Yun De (2001), pp.108-109.
Institutional Arrangements and Regulatory Adjustments

In the 1980s and 1990s, as China deepened its economic reform and gradually retreated from its patronage scheme in the cultural sectors, most artistic troupes and cultural institutions in China were under tremendous pressure to streamline because of budgetary considerations. During the same period, major local governments throughout China, especially provincial governments, established their own guohua institutes. During the same period, numerous municipal and county governments also created their own corresponding establishments or mechanisms.

At the same time, the Chinese Artists’ Association also strengthened its role by establishing new “creation centers”, “exhibition halls”, “exchange centers” and “friendship societies”. The branches of this association also expanded considerably into various provinces, cities and autonomous regions. This change therefore had an impact on the professional guohua painters’ careers and lives, by creating more working opportunities and, for some, better career prospects during the reform era.

Furthermore, the party-state also provided professional guohua painters with many extra privileges through periodic regulatory adjustments. For instance, since the early 1990s, titles such as Artist Receiving Government Special Subsidy and First, Second and Third Class National Artists have been specifically designed for and awarded to professional artists. This type of mechanism persistently underscores official ideologies and standards in aesthetics, by generously awarding those who follow national ideology with both grants and titles. These rewards, often practiced with flexibility and subjectivity, further help enhance their winners’ performance in the current Chinese cultural market, which is now only partially governed by capitalist principles best characterized by maximizing competitiveness and minimizing governmental interference.
Since the late 1990s, the party has also made clear its intention to continue its influence on current and future professional artists directly through its own system. As discussed in Chapter 5 and illustrated by the interviews in Chapter 6, the party has effectively put the country’s fine arts administrators, arbitrators and trainers, such as the Ministry of Culture, the Chinese Artists’ Association and fine arts academies under its direct supervision. For instance, the fact that the party explicitly elevated the status of its members and extended its structure in fine arts academies through formal administrative adjustments reveals its intention to consolidate, not to diminish, its influence on art and professional artists through formal institutional and regulatory measures.

It is necessary to reiterate that I do not maintain that professional guohua painters were satisfied with the relatively “bigger cage” that the party-state designed for them in the reform era. Neither do I suggest that all professional guohua painters wished to gain recognition from different official institutions and to win competitions that were under the direct supervision of the party-state in order to succeed in the culture market. However, I do claim that the institutional arrangements and regulatory adjustments discussed above provide professional guohua painters with not only job security, but also access to public recognition and status. This recognition and status granted by the party-state or by “non-governmental” institutions and organizations closely associated with the party-state, are important to professional guohua painters in order for them to pursue financial gains in the cultural market and to fulfill their senses of artistic achievements, however sordid and superficial these gains and achievements might appear to some. Over time, this scheme brought about a qualitative change to professional guohua painters’ relations with the party-state. As the income of professional guohua painters continued to grow and society continued to diversify, guohua painters’ dependence on the party-state did not just decrease or disappear in
simple absolute terms. Rather, their dependence was replaced by conformity – a form of submission without which the society could not be stable. This tendency is obviously not universal to all artists. It is typical to professional guohua painters in the reform era -- especially those who tried to do well in a hybrid cultural market mixed with capitalist principles and Chinese socialist characteristics.

**Theoretical Implications of Key Findings**

As a way to further elaborate on the key findings of this study that I outlined above, the diagram (see Fig. 7-2 on page 212) illustrates the complex relation of the party-state with professional guohua painters (box A), Chinese culture tradition (box B) and the culture market (box C). I propose a framework for this study that considers not merely the impact of state policies and regulations, but the influences of China’s cultural traditions and booming cultural economy. From the diagram we can see the connection between ideological favoritism and institutional arrangements (A-1 and A-2). It also allows us to view the professional guohua painters’ relationship to the party-state as a dynamic continuum and to explore the driving force behind the favoritism that the party-state has shown towards guohua artists and their paintings.

To further illustrate this point, at the Sixth National Art Exhibition in 1984, the largest since 1949, eight artists received honorary awards and only two of them were not guohua painters. No watercolorists or oil painters received this national recognition.178 Also, from the stories told by my interviewees, these professional guohua painters were generally given special opportunities and the sense of responsibility to defend guohua as the essence of national pride. For example, based on the interview with Zhu Junshan, we clearly see that as China opened to the world,

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guohua paintings were chosen as the art to represent the nation. Professional guohua painters were therefore provided with more secure jobs and prestige by the party-state. The case of Fan Zeng, who enjoyed the privilege of displaying his works to the world at a relatively young age in the early 1980s, also illustrates this favoritism towards guohua paintings – especially paintings that depict China’s rich cultural traditions and heroic past.

Treating professional guohua painters’ relationship to the party-state as a dynamic continuum allows us to explore the driving impetus behind those institutional arrangements and regulatory adjustments (A-2). Important institutional arrangements and regulatory adjustments are not created in a vacuum. They generally reflect an essential set of political beliefs and values held by the leadership that concern current issues (box B). Based on the experience of my interviewees, promoting cultural traditions were often interpreted in terms of “deepening” -- the process of modernization from the level of material development to the level of psychological advancements by the Chinese leaders in the reform era. Guohua paintings, which carry the “sacred traditions” and represent the essence of Chinese national pride, therefore became a valuable instrument to reassert China’s image as a country of great cultural traditions and to resist the ideological and cultural challenges from the west. Consequently, institutional arrangements and regulatory adjustments that promoted professional guohua painters’ status and economic well-being were conveniently justified, as they were often connected and in line with the party-state’s grand ideological schemes. The support given to guohua painters was incorporated into the party-state’s grand ideological schemes and should not merely be viewed as cultural policies and employment programs. For instance, titles such as “First, Second and Third Class National Artists” (國家一二三級美術師) and “Artist Receiving Government Special Subsidy”, which are discussed in Chapter 5, have been
predominantly awarded to professional guohua painters, guaranteeing the holder an initial monetary prize and monthly grants.

These reward systems obviously have little to do with creating more employment opportunities. Their actual effects on the overall artistic development of the country are also debatable. However, they are symbolic of the party-state’s cultural and ideological beliefs. Commenting on the favorable conditions experienced by professional guohua painters, M. P., one of the artists presented in Chapter 6, simply describes the employment of professional guohua painters in fine arts academies in China during the reform era as “the best job” that an artist can dream of. However, without giving sufficient consideration to the effective and persistent input of Chinese cultural traditions (box B) that influenced both the policy makers as well as the artists, we can not comprehend all of the dynamics depicted in box A.

In addition, considering the reemergence of the culture market (box C) as an important force, Fig. 7-2 helps to explain why the dynamic depicted in box A has continued to be sustainable and why the improved social and economic status of professional guohua painters has not spurred aspirations to break the boundaries imposed by the party-state. My rationale is simple and straightforward in that even for the well-celebrated and well-subsidized professional guohua painters, financial support or sponsorship from government agencies alone still had its limits. As in China’s ideological discourse, market forces have become an indispensible power to justify and support the party-state’s culture policies. The main difference between professional guohua painters and other professional artists is that the former perceive their career prospects under market economy differently. Based on the interviews with Mao Wei and M. P., while many artists broke their ties with the party-state with little hesitation as the reform deepened, most professional guohua painters decided to stay
in official establishments and established their positions and reputations before turning to the market for profit.

To further illustrate my point, Merton’s typology is applied to illustrate the case of professional guohua painters in Chapter 5. This typology considers monetary success and culturally approved means to achieve such success as conditions for fostering different modes of individual adaptation. In the reform era, the booming culture market allowed professional guohua painters to pursue their goals of monetary success with culturally approved means, which involved commercialization of their works and talents. Also increasing private patronage for professional guohua painters tremendously reduced the financial costs of the public sectors in satisfying their “sense of success” and therefore ensuring conformity. Without introducing the impact of China’s booming culture market (box C), the dynamic relationship between professional guohua painters and the party-state in the reform era (box A) can not be sustained for more than three decades (1978-2009).

Finally, this thesis notes foreign influences (box D) as a variable that also plays a role in Fig 7-2. The spread of western culture and political values in China after the reform began in the late 1970s has been consistent. Ideological elites of the party strongly believed that such “soft power” was the most important tool with which the western countries implemented their strategies of “peaceful evolution” especially in the 1990s (Sheng Ding, 2008). The party-state formulated initiatives aimed at rejuvenating China’s traditional culture and integrated such initiatives into its national image building and foreign policies. This was mainly in response to the growing threats from outside of the country – both real ones and those perceived by the political leaders. As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, foreign influences had a mixed effect on the traditional roles of professional guohua painters and helped to expand the very meanings and purposes of guohua painters’ own art and life. It is therefore
obvious that box D has a dynamic relation to box A, and further research will help expand on how this relation can be understood.

Furthermore, from this diagram what is implied is that foreign influences (box D) also closely interact with Chinese culture (box B) and China’s cultural markets (box C) in the reform era. As globalization and technology, such as the internet, continues to reshape the traditional understanding of national culture and has facilitated interpersonal communication in various forms, foreign influences can be expected to become more significant in this century. What exact impact these influences will have on China’s cultural policy makers and professional guohua painters, as well as how they will interact with Chinese cultural traditions and the cultural market remains to be seen. Along with this we will have to continue to question what implications this has had and will have on Chinese artists’ relations to the party-state. These are the issues that are recognized by this thesis, but should be addressed by future research.

**Trends since the Turn of the Century**

In the early part of this decade some artists and cultural officials started to point to the rapid expansion of guohua painting institutes all over China as “unfair” and demanded changes. They were particularly critical of the privileges that professional guohua painters enjoyed in these institutes. The most frequent issue was that many of the guohua painters who were hired were in fact more busy at making money for themselves than contributing their talents to their employers even though they were subsidized and celebrated by the central government and by local governments. Although some institutes started to improve their regulations and management skills as a response to these accusations, the same problem persisted. In 2007, Wu Guanzhong, a respected Chinese painting master, publicly requested the authorities to abolish all public painting institutes and to curtail the power of CAA. According to
Wu, only by doing this can the unfair competition be ended. His voice, although controversial, reflects an important fact that the structurally created favoritism in the cultural world is still alive and well in China.

Still, the more comprehensive way to understand such a phenomenon in the current era is to investigate all of the interactions among the variables presented in Figure 7-2. For this discussion the most significant continuities and modifications of the party-state’s approach, which have influenced the life of professional visual artists’ in this century, are summarized in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Party-led “non-governmental arts organizations”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Dominance of important “non-governmental organizations” in arts affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Promotion of the “main theme” in arts such as socialist modernization and the national spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Expansion and strengthening of party system in fine arts academies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use of regulations and the market as a means of control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Emphasis of Chinese cultural heritage and traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Clear guidelines on how to present certain sensitive topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Rewards (both material and non-material) for complying artists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifications:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Much fewer outright use of arts in propaganda and political campaigns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Relatively light control over private art activities (research, exhibitions and discussions)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Encouraging private sponsorship and investment in the fine arts through macro-level official mechanisms (more standardized taxation, favorable regulatory methods)
- Cultural policies based more on legal than on moral or ethical principles

Generally speaking, since the turn of the century the party-state’s strength and involvement in actual activities in the Fine Arts has not declined as some would expect. On the contrary, in many aspects they have strengthened and expanded. This has been attained mainly because of a conscious differentiation between categories of art -- elite and non-elite, official and non-official, high and popular, public and non-public -- by Chinese cultural authorities as well as the artists themselves. Rather than moral principles and ideological preferences, the continuous success of such a strategy will mainly rely on a sustainable culture market and a more reliable and clearly defined regulatory framework, as the party-state justifies its control over the fine arts and deals with the disparity among social groups of different artistic endeavors.

As more and more Chinese policymakers stress that China must develop its “soft power” -- a capacity of winning influence abroad by persuasion and appeal, and integrate such capacity into its rising strategy -- the party-state will continue to give top priority to rejuvenating and utilizing the nation’s cultural traditions. Therefore, it is certain that the party-state will continue to provide strong support to its favored artists - predominantly those who are representative of China’s high culture and are

179 The concept of soft power has been widely discussed in the field of international relations research. Although still elusive, it generally includes a nation’s culture, political values, and the substance and style of its foreign policies and institutions. When applying the concept to China, scholars tend to emphasize its cultural traditions and inherent values. For a detailed discussion, please see Sheng Ding, *The Dragon’s Hidden Wings: How China Rises with Its Soft Power* (Lanham: Lexington Books: 2008). pp. 45-48.
willing to stay within the limits set by the party-state. As this may well be the case, the party-state may have to practice such favoritism in a less direct and more diversified manner. Compared to other artists and cultural workers in China, professional guohua painters may well be more inclined to choose a path within the existing institutional framework than to strive to reform it. This is not to say that professional guohua painters are content with the party-state’s current cultural policies or that they are by nature more politically submissive to the authorities than other professional artists. Yet, as illustrated by the personal stories and experiences recorded in Chapter 6, such tendencies may continue to endure.

China’s changing political environment will eventually give way to economics and the scale of ideological movements and cultural control will continue to decline. Nevertheless, based on past experience, such a process will be painstakingly slow. Consequently, it can be expected that within the foreseeable future, many professional guohua painters are likely to consciously choose to stay within the ideological and aesthetic boundaries set by the party-state and to be part of official arts agencies and institutions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Mao Wei</th>
<th>Zhu Junshan</th>
<th>M. P.</th>
<th>Fan Zeng</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place of Birth</td>
<td>Sichuan</td>
<td>Hebei</td>
<td>Shenyang</td>
<td>Jiangsu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year of Birth</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>1938</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents’ Background</td>
<td>- technician (telecommunication) - M. D.</td>
<td>- intellectuals</td>
<td>- railroad workers</td>
<td>- intellectuals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>- CAFA</td>
<td>- CAFA - CAAC</td>
<td>- Nanjing Normal University - ZAFA</td>
<td>- Nankai Univ. - CAFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Membership</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (admitted in 1950s)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership of Artistic NGOs in China (selected)</td>
<td>- CAA in Beijing - BFAA</td>
<td>- CAA - BLPRA</td>
<td>- CAA in Zhejiang</td>
<td>- CAA in Nantong - CAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Affiliation with Renowned Private Corporation in China (selected)</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Beijing Painting Store</td>
<td>Poly Auction Co. (Guangdong)</td>
<td>Beijing Ronbaozhai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fig. 7-2: Factors Influencing Professional Guohua Painters’ Relationship to the Party-State in Reform Era

BOX - B
Chinese Cultural Traditions
- political culture
- aesthetic culture

BOX - A
Party-state
* Cultural Policy Makers
* Fine Arts Managers

BOX – A.1
ideological favoritism

BOX – A.2
* institutional arrangements
* regulatory adjustments

Professional Guohua Painters

BOX - C
Cultural Market
(commercialization of arts)

direction of direct impact

direction of less direct influence

BOX - D
Foreign Influence
- political
- cultural
- economic
- ideological
Pic. 1-1
Emperor Tai Zong Receiving Foreign Envoys
[Bu Nien Tu] (localized image)
Artist: Yen Liben (閻立本, circa 601 - 673)
Year: circa 640s

Pic. 1-2
Casual Gathering of Intellectual Officials
[Wen Yuan Tu] (localized image)
Artist: Han Huang (721-787)
Year: Unknown

Pic. 1-3
Emperor Qianlong Inspecting Royal Troops
[Da Yue Tu] (localized image)
Artists: Giuseppe Castiglione and Jin Kun
Year: circa 1740s
Pic. 2-1
The Newcomer to the Coal Mine (Guohua)
Artist: Yang Zhiguang (1930 - )
Year: 1971

Note: This guohua painting received extensive attention in the 1972 National Fine Arts Exhibition and was considered one of a few excellent guohua paintings of the time. It was “sold” to the National Fine Arts Gallery of China in 1972 for 100 RMB.
Pic. 2-2
Title: Early Spring (Guohua)
Artist: Guo Xi (1023-1085)
Year: Unknown

This work is considered one of the great masterpieces of China’s guohua tradition. It is a rare example of an early painting.

Pic. 2-3
Title: Spotless (Guohua)
Artist: Fang Zengxian (1931-)
Year: 1976
Pic.3-1 Title: Painting of Old Tree and Weird Stone (Guohua, Literati Painting)
    Artist: Su Shi (1037-1101)
    Year: Unknown

Pic.3-2 Title: Burning Down the Palace of the Qing Emperor (Guohua)
    Artist: Gao Jianfu (1879-1951), Ling Nan School
    Year: Circa 1920
Pic.3-3 Title: Rent Cutting Meeting (Woodblock Print)
   Artist: Gu Yuan (1919-1996)
   Year: 1943

Pic.3-4 Title: A Prosperous Year (Modern New Year’s Painting)
   Artist: Unknown
   Year: Circa 1960s
Pic.4-1 Title: *Liu Shaoqi and the Anyuan Coal Miners* (Oil Painting)
Artist: Hou Yimin (1930-)
Year: 1959

Pic.4-2 Title: *Chairman Mao and the Anyuan Coal Miners* (Oil Painting, localized close-up image)
Artist: Hou Yimin (1930-)
Year: 1968
Pic.4-3 Title: Chairman Mao Goes to Anyuan (oil Painting)
Artist: Liu Chunhua (1944 - )
Year: 1967

Pic.4-4 Title: A Good Bird (Guohua)
Artist: Huang Yongyu (1924- )
Year: Circa 1970s

A similar painting by Huang was featured in the Black Painting Exhibition and was accused of “scoffing at the Cultural Revolution and socialism” by his detractors.
Pic. 5-1
Title: Idol (Wood Sculpture)
Artist: Wang Keping (1949- )
Year: 1979

Pic. 5-2
Title: Mao AO (Oil Painting)
Artist: Wang Guanyi (1957- )
Year: 1988
Note: The above installation and performance work was presented in the “Exhibition of China’s Modern Fine Arts” at the National Fine Arts Gallery of China in Beijing. On the second day after the opening, Xiao fired two shots at her work with a real hand gun and aroused serious controversies.

Pic. 5-3
Title: Conversation
Artist: Xiao Lu (1963-)
Year: 1989

Pic. 5-4
Title: People and Premier (Guohua)
Artist: Zhou Cicong (1939-96)
Year: 1978

Winner of 1979 National Fine Arts Exhibition
BIBLIOGRAPHIES


