THE REVOLUTION CONTINUES: New Art From China

EDUCATION PACK

Secondary Schools
THE REVOLUTION CONTINUES: New Art From China

This education pack highlights a selection of key works from the forthcoming exhibition, The Revolution Continues: New Art From China, which opens in the new gallery.

As world attention focuses on China's economic development and massive cultural upheavals, all of which are embodied in the transformation of Beijing prior to the 2008 Olympics, Chinese artists have emerged after years of containment by the strictures of the national ideology. The Western art world, hungry for new spectacle, has embraced these new artists with enthusiasm, but the art is changing so fast the Western viewer has little means of assessing or understanding the background to these extraordinary developments.

The Revolution Continues: New Art From China, provides a link between the rebellious spirit of the current generation of artists' work and the state of anxiety evident during the years of the Cultural Revolution that ran from 1966.
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   Analysis of themes running throughout the exhibition, useful vocabulary and relevant works.

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THEMES
The Cultural Revolution began in China in 1966 when the Communist party leader Mao Zedong aligned himself with the young faction of the communist party that was known as the Red Guard. The motivations behind the Revolution were to rid China of old ideas and customs and eliminate the class hierarchy in favour of the proletarian ideals that were part of the Marxist doctrine. The alignment of Mao and the Red Guard resulted in a full on attack of old Chinese culture and values. Homes were searched and property was seized or destroyed. National monuments and historical architecture were also damaged. The new visual productions of the Cultural Revolution included billboard paintings, woodcut prints, slogans, Mao’s portrait, badges and books. They were created to establish a new visual culture for the China of the Revolution. Under Mao, artistic expression was limited to the government approved style of socialist realism. Though Mao’s rule is regarded as a time of artistic oppression (where there was a gap in Chinese art) in reality it was a social climax leading, in time, to a radical change in Chinese art influenced by the spirit of rebellion and the visual production of the Mao years.

Keywords and terms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rebellions</th>
<th>Hierarchy</th>
<th>Nationalism</th>
<th>Customs</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Revolution</td>
<td>Proletariat</td>
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Key Works:

- **Zeng Xiaogang**, *A Big Family*, 1995
- **Shi Xinning**, *Mao and McCarthy*, 2005
- **Zeng Fanzhi**, *Tiananmen*, 2004
- **Wang Guangyi**, *Art Go*, 2006
COLOUR

Colours have expressive qualities. An artist may choose to use a specific colour in their work because it indicates a feeling or mood. For example, the colours in a painting can be used to express what the subject matter may not show, especially if the work is abstract. The meanings different colours appropriate are often specific to culture. Countries display their national colours which symbolize their values and identity on flags. The colour red came to symbolize the Cultural Revolution in China. When the popular slogan read ‘the whole country being awash with red’, the colour represented the people’s enthusiasm for a communist utopia. Although Communism and the red banners of the Soviet revolution came from outside China, red is also a colour rooted in Chinese culture that has been reinterpreted through time and history. The red phenomenon of the Cultural Revolution was executed on an enormous scale in both public and private life. The flags and slogans dominated the public spaces, while Mao badges, red books and Red Guard armbands adorned individuals. Red came to be a complex trigger suggesting fanaticism and terror, glory and agony, illusion and disenchantment.

Keywords and terms:

Identity       Conformity       Idealism       Emotive
Symbolize      Interpretation    Mood

Key Works:

Zeng Xiaogang, A Big Family, 1995       Zhang Haiyang, Anti-Vice Campaign Series 001, 2005
Qie Jie, Portrait of Mao, 2007
The word ‘collective’ can be read literally as ‘grouped individuals’. Collectivism is a term that stresses human independence and the importance of a community or group over the individual. The concept of a collective was developed as a primary belief in the People’s Republic as a means for people to learn, understand and share their lives. Since the forming of the People’s Republic in China in 1949 mass assemblies have become a prominent part of political movements. These types of gatherings under collectivism have been interpreted as a ‘family’ movement. During Mao’s era the concept of ‘collective’ even extended to family photos, which would be taken according to a formula that satisfied an official sense of public aesthetics.

Keywords and terms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Public/Private</th>
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<tr>
<td>‘The People’</td>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Uniformity</td>
<td></td>
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Key Works:

Zeng Xiaogang, Bloodline, 2005
Yin Zhaohui, Untitled Face, 2007
Yue Minjun, Untitled, 2005
During the period of Revolution in China the West was experiencing a visual revolution in the form of Pop Art. Lead by such artists as Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg and Roy Lichtenstein, Pop artists appropriated images from the media and mass culture. The artists embraced the production values of the media image and incorporated the printing technique into their creation of art. Pop Art addressed Western society’s fascination with the quick, readymade and mass produced. It examined all forms of media images, the celebrity icon and political icon being the most notable. Despite the different political climates between the West and China Pop Art provided material that was of interest to Chinese artists as it dealt with issues of representation.

Keywords and terms:

Representation      Icon      Repetition    Media/Mass Culture
‘The West’            Technique      Politics

Key Works:
Shi Xinning, Yalta No.2, 2006          Feng Zhengjie, Chinese Portrait Series No. 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 2006
Wang Guangyi, Materialist’s Art, 2006   Zhang Hongtu, Long Live Chairman Mao Series #29, 1989
REALISM

The term Realism refers to depicting things as they appear in everyday life. In painting this means creating compositions that are about what the eye can see, similar to a photograph. Under Communism the type of art which represented the ideals of Marxism and the proletariat was called Socialist Realism. It functioned as a way to allow artistic production within the constraint of the Communist ideals. Art produced under these constraints has often been disregarded for its lack of authenticity because it was either commissioned or sanctioned by the government, which has been seen as undermining artistic expression and authorship. In both Russia and China artists have addressed the legacy of their countries’ political history by appropriating the realist style in their contemporary work.

Keywords and Terms:

Expression  Censorship  Authenticity  Ideals
‘Cynical Realism’  Appropriation  Composition

Key Works:

Shi Xinning, Royal Coach, 2006  Zhang Xiaogang, My Dream Little General, 2005
Wang Guangyi, Porsche, 2005  Zhang Haiying, Anti Vice Campaign Series-005, 2005
Since the early twentieth century the simplification of many traditional Chinese characters, the result of one of the government enforced curriculum changes, has been a controversial issue in cultural and political circles. The purpose was to reform and popularise the Chinese language in order to change the basis of the education system to reflect the ideals of the Revolution. The characters of traditional Chinese writing are unique because the artistic value of the calligraphy can sometimes overpower its literary meaning. The character continues to be used in Chinese art for its aesthetic value and communicative purposes.

**Keywords and terms:**

Abstraction, Language, Communication, Tradition

Literacy, Systems of belief, Modernism

**Key Works:**

*Wu Shanzhuan*, Today No Water No. 29, 2007

*Shen Shaomin*, Unknown Creature-Three Headed Monster, 2002

*Qie Je*, Portrait of Mao, 2007
MEMORY

History books attempt to give a factual account of happenings in the past, organizing them in a temporal fashion. The presence of communism in China has meant government approval of educational materials and mass media in the past. An individual’s recollection of history may not always resonate with the accounts of history transcribed for the Collective. Inspired by personal memory and recollection, artists have employed unique styles such as cynical realism to produce work that addresses the socio-political history of China in an ambiguous fashion. While the work is always engaged in politics, the artist maintains a cynical distance and avoids taking an active stance.

Keywords: Tension History Cynicism Narrative Subjective Ambiguity Amnesia

Key Works:

Li Songsong, In God We Trust, 2006
Fang Lijun, 1996.6.1, 1999
Zhang Yuan, Brilliance, 2007

THE BODY

The body is a key subject or starting point throughout the history of artistic and scientific enquiry. An unforgettable mood of suffocation can be traced directly back to the years of the Cultural Revolution. The silence has also been demonstrated in the artist’s use of their own body in performance pieces. The use of the human body in art compels the viewer because it directly relates back to one’s sense of self. It evokes reflection on what it means to be living, and, in turn, what it means to die. Contemporary Chinese artists often use the body to communicate about that which is suppressed or unrecognized in Chinese society.

Keywords: Performance Self Physicality Gender

Key Works:

Xiang Jing, Your Body, 2005
Zhang Dali, Chinese Offspring, 2003-2005
Cang Xin, Communication, 2006
Yin Zhaohui, Untitled Face, 2007
KEY WORKS
Zhang Xiaogang was born in 1958 and grew up in western China's Sichuan Province. The third of four sons born to government officials, he was 8 in 1966 when the Cultural Revolution touched off a decade of political and social upheaval in China. His parents were later sent to work in the countryside, leaving him and his three brothers in the care of an aunt for several years. He spent much of his childhood drawing. In early 1976, like so many youngsters in China, he was sent to farm in the countryside. But after Mao died later that year and the Cultural Revolution drew to a close, colleges around the country began reopening and Xiaogang enrolled at the Sichuan Academy of Art. He studied Soviet-style realism but his interests gravitated toward Western art, particularly the works of van Gogh, Gauguin and Dalí.

Xiaogang’s paintings are inspired by his family photos taken during the Cultural Revolution period (1950s – 1960s), as well as the European tradition of surrealism. His portraits consider the idea of identity, belonging and personality by placing it in contrast with the Chinese culture of collectivism. In his work the collective is represented by ‘family’ – immediate, extended and societal – which forms the main theme around which he bases his work. Individual characteristics are replaced with a mono-appearance, highlighting conformity which is emphasised by the family line of red running throughout the painting.

The portraits translate the language of photography into paint. Using the composition of formal photo studio poses and a greyscale palette, the figures become nameless and timeless. The occasional splotches of colour create abnormalities which promote a sense of self-assertion and defiance in contrast with the passive gaze of the subjects.

Discussion points

- How do these paintings of family photographs compare to your family photographs? Do you notice any similarities of differences?
- The term Surrealism is used to describe an artistic period that has inspired Zhang Xiaogang in creating his Big Family series. What do you see in these paintings that gives them a surreal quality? Can you note similarities between these contemporary paintings and other artists associated with Surrealism in the early 20th century?
- The artist focuses on the faces of the people he paints. What can you tell about them from looking at their faces? Can you read their emotions? What feature do you notice the most when you look at the faces? Why do you think the artist chose to emphasize that feature?
Wu Shanzhuan

New Artwork No. 1
2008
Acrylic and oil based marker pen on canvas
200 x 300 cm

Born in Zhoushan, China in 1960, Wu Shanzhuan's work spans over 20 years and includes paintings, installations, performances, photography and drawings. As one of the leaders of the Chinese Conceptual Movement in 1980s, Shanzhuan was the first artist in China to incorporate textual pop references into his work. The pivotal 1986 installation, *Red Humour International*, laid the foundation for his distinctive and sophisticated approach to painting, which forgoes image in favour of text from political, religious and media sources.

Shanzhuan’s use of text in his work confuses the boundary between text and painting thus echoing the visual nature of Chinese writing. Using a mixture of English and traditional Chinese characters, his texts are removed from their original context and stripped of meaning. In his *Today No Water* series, of which this work is an example, the works are conceived as a graphic novel with each canvas presenting a chapter propelling the narrative. However, this narrative cannot be read in a straightforward way, since it is composed as a stream of consciousness. This is conveyed by the mess of shapes and text. What his work tries to understand is the construction of systems of belief through symbols, phases and linguistic references. He comments on the manufacture of these systems through presenting fragmented phrases and images which consequently lose all value both culturally and literally. In this way we can see that he is referring to the movement during the Chinese revolution in which the government attempted to replace traditional Chinese with a new simple version.

“Wu Shanzhuan is the engine behind China’s avant-garde his power of talent not yet really discussed. In the mid 1980’s his paintings were related to the memory of the Chinese Cultural Revolution expressed as simplified characters, falsely typed characters official seals in red colour, a trumpet and the panda, questioning the violence of ideology the individual had to withstand.”

Source: China Art Book

**Discussion Points**

- Wu Shanzhuan’s paintings are *abstractions* of the characters that make up the Chinese language and he sometimes attempts to make them unreadable as words. When you look at the painting does it look like the characters have been made into pictures? Can you see similarities between the artist’s work with language and graffiti or street art you may encounter when walking around the city?
- What makes this painting different from others you have seen in the show? Think about technique and the materials used in relation to the subject matter? How are they related?
The Australia-based Chinese artist Shen Shaomin stocks up in his studio with ghastly animal bones. A good command of this distinctive raw material - also a metaphor for death - facilitates his search of a spiritual world which has been long floating afar.

Shaomin adopts the role of being anthropologist, scientist, and author of his own fabricated mythologies. Constructed from real animal bones, his sculptures collectively create a bestiary of fictional creatures that are wondrous, frightening, and strange. Reminiscent of Borges's Book of Imaginary Beings, his absurd creations exude an ancient wisdom, authenticating the magic of fable and folklore, while alluding to contemporary issues of genetic modification, consequence of environmental threat, and concepts of the alien and exotic.

In pieces such as *Three Headed Monster* and *Mosquito*, the skeletal remains of 'extinct' creatures are presented with the validity of museum display. Their colossal scale reinforces their imagined prehistoric origin as Jurassic curiosities and spiritual Totems. Assembled from genuine ossified animal parts, his creatures are simultaneously familiar and perplexing, indicating a warped and uncomfortable process of evolution. Often carving into his surfaces, Shaomin adorns his creations with scrimshaw, further entwining humanistic reference into his disturbing zoological evidence.

**Discussion points**

- Shen Shaomin’s work sculptures look similar to the type of exhibit you might see at the Natural History Museum. Does this look like real animal to you? Explain why or why not.
- The artist has created his creature from cow bones and inscribed the bones with text. Do you think he is attempting to tell a story about the creature he has created? How does this use of text compare with other artwork you have seen in this exhibition?
Zhang Haiyang

**Anti-Vice Campaign Series 001**
2005
Oil on canvas
300 x 400 cm

Zhang Haiyang’s Anti-Vice Campaign series takes as its subject the Chinese government’s recent initiatives in eradicating prostitution and pornography. Executed on monumental scale and in faux social realist style Haiyang’s paintings use the devices of propaganda for non-politicised means: his works neither advocate nor criticise illicit activity, but draw from the associated issues of power, exclusion, vulnerability, and perception to create images of emotive discord.

Finding his source material on the internet, Haiyang translates photographic images with subtle painterly manipulations to enhance mass media techniques and their conflicting messages. He does this by creating a link between the guard and the prostitute through the use of the colour red. His tones – dramatic reds over cold greys - refer to both authoritative iconography and strip club sleaze, while his stylised figures are made to look strangely hyper-real, like characters in a computer game, or celebrities overexposed by the paparazzi. Conflict is at the core of this work with women objectified by their equally desirable and degrading portrayal and the victim positioned against violent authority.

Behind each of these paintings is a complex story: of destitution, desperation, abuse and entrapment, side effects of economics, migration, and progress; the human costs of commodity culture. By changing the way prostitution is represented and perceived by the government, Haiyang’s paintings strive to convey the human condition, with all its indignities and weaknesses.

**Discussion Questions**

- Zhang Haiyang finds his source material for his paintings from media images. Can you describe the qualities of his paintings that are similar to a photograph?
- The color red has a strong presence in this painting. Is it used to differentiate the people in the image or does it indicate a unity between them?
- What does this painting indicate about the role of women in Chinese society?
Feng Zhengjie studied to MA level at the Fine Art education department of the Sichuan Academy of Fine Art between 1988 and 1995. After 1989, Zhengjie rejected both socialist realism and Western academic art, turning instead to the questions raised by China’s emerging contemporary art scene. He developed a more critical outlook with regards to society.

In response to the new issues confronting China, Zhengjie decided to take inspiration from the popular images he had grown up with in rural Sichuan. After considering the different forms of idolization in Mao’s era and during the years of economic development since the 1980’s he found the authority of the idol particularly suspicious. What could have been hidden behind those deceptive faces?

Since starting the series China in 2000, Zhengjie has been concentrating on iconic beauty and making his fake idols assume an element of reality. Reminiscent of Warhol’s screen printed celebrities, Feng’s paintings reflect a vision of futuristic pop. Auras are shining in the background to glamorize the falsity, while colours are applied in the paintings like stage lights, to embellish the expressions and gestures. The unfocused eyes of the idols suggest the emptiness beneath the surface.

Painted in a massive scale, Zhengjie’s canvases can be seen to replicate the billboards which inspired his work. Without the usual text, or accompanying products, his paintings closely examine the visual aspect of their hard-sell ethos. Removing all distraction of the advertisements’ product, he exposes the empty essence of temptation, magnifying the glamorous appeal of a fantasy lifestyle and the impossibility of attaining it. These disposable wishes are conveyed through his highly refined painting technique which glorifies the glossy allure of advertising as epic, enduring, and numbingly empty.

Discussion Points

- How do you think the artist portrays the people he paints. Is it a critical view?
- What is an icon?
- The artist uses a limited palette of bold colour and white to give the appearance of a light shining in the background? Can you describe the quality of light in the painting?
Yue Minjun is considered one of China’s leading artists whose paintings, sculptures and installations always feature uniform laughing faces. These laughing faces are in fact the faces of Yue Minjun himself. Using both the exaggerated expressiveness of cartooning and the stylistic rendering of graphic illustration, Minjun depicts his cloned doubles as contorted and grotesque, all scalded pink skin and maniacal toothy cackles.

Immediately humorous and sympathetic, Minjun’s paintings offer a light-hearted approach to philosophical enquiry and contemplation of existence. Often basing his compositions on well known European masterpieces and iconic Chinese art, he subverts the grandiose aura of art history through his adaptation of pop art sentiments and techniques.

The brilliantly white teeth which fill the grinning mouth are reminiscent of a toothpaste advert transform the artist into an icon perhaps representing the spiritual emptiness of the contemporary world.

Yue Minjun has commented that he senses an unrecognized power whose centre is unknown, but which can engineer/manipulate the behaviour of human being through intimidation and terror. This power constitutes a kind of violence that can make human behaviour change progressively. Can the works of Minjun be said to be self-portraits? Does his artwork present any insight into the conflict between individuality and collectivism?

Source: Pyoart.com

Discussion Points

- The artist repeats the same image of himself in the painting. What do you think he is saying about his identity by illustrating an entire group of people who look like him?
- What kind of emotion does the painting portray? Is it just the faces that convey emotion or do you feel that colour also indicates emotion?
- What does it mean to be an individual?
For Yin Zhaohui, photography works in and with consumer culture since its presentation replaces the ‘real’ with image-ideals, establishing a ‘normalcy’ of perception based on degeneration and distance. Working from photographs rather than from life models, Zhaohui appropriates photography’s mechanical aesthetics to emphasise and heighten this alienation.

In his paintings of the body, Zhaohui concentrates on distinctly human features -- such as the hands and face -- to disrupt this system of expectation. Devices such as greyscale palette, forced lighting effects, and areas of intensified focus reinforce an unnatural perception of these intimate details, creating a jarring sense of the uncanny.

Rendered with clinical austerity, Untitled (Fingers), on first glance, appears as an abstraction of cylindrical forms - like an Escher-esque pile of sausages - implausibly entwined, weirdly seductive and repulsive with their organic suggestion. Zhaohui’s paintings interpret the inherently human as something alien and dead. He executes this painting with a slick pop veneer, framing his inanimate appendages in the language of commodity fetishism.

“The entangled fingers, hidden faces and fragmentary bodies in Yin Zhaohui’s paintings might not be human but only bear a resemblance to human organs because they carry the same negative feelings resulting from desires: pain solitude, betrayal, alienation, violation and punishment.”

Discussion Points

- The face is linked to an individual’s identity. Does a close up of another body part seem more or less intimate than a portrait?
- The framing and the colour choice contribute to the abstract look of this work. What other elements of the composition contribute to this aesthetic?
- Do you think these paintings resemble photographs?
Jing’s eerily life-like sculptures confront the viewer with both a noticeable outward appearance and inner psychology. The works range from the larger than life to miniature; cast in bronze or polyurethane, they draw from a classical tradition and aesthetic to portray the experiences of contemporary women. She depicts teenagers clubbing, shopping, and primping offer a veneer of generic beauty, sparsely accessorised with synthetic looking props and latest fashion trends; their appearance of dull innocence is contradicted through their expressions of violence, depression, and melancholy.

In *Your Body*, Jing presents a gigantic nude, made from painted fibreglass, the figure is unnerving in detail, her expertly faux finished skin radiating a sickly, waxen pallor. With no hair to be seen and slumped on a simple wooden chair she has a doll-like presence which is devoid of emotion. She towers over the viewer as a strangely goddess-like figure with her vacant gaze projecting downward with oppressive force. In contrast with the classic figures of women who are exulted and worshipped her naked body conveys the emotion of vulnerability and self aware inadequacy, humility and dissatisfaction.

**Discussion Points**

- Does this sculpture feel human to you? Consider the type of materials the artists has used to create this work.
- How does the size of the sculpture impact your viewing experience? Can you compare it to other works of sculpture in this or another exhibition you have seen?
- What do you think the artist is communicating about the female body? Does this sculpture reflect the image of a contemporary woman?
Trained in China, Shi Xinning’s paintings are influenced by both social realism and European styles. Using the authoritative qualities of both, he embarks on history painting with a twist.

Through these works Xinning investigates dynamics of both the West’s Eurocentric, and China’s isolationist previous world views. Humorously illustrating the Chairman’s import and omnipresence in 20th century Chinese society, his placing of Mao into the fabric of western collective conscience seems entirely plausible whilst highlighting the impossibility of such an event, being so at odds with the political reality. Infusing propaganda currency with a sense of normality and humility, he re-authors the most cherished moments of collective memory creating a possible but untrue mythology based in Hollywood gloss and unabashed optimism.

Taking his imagery from iconic press photos, Xinning’s canvases seemingly represents the world as we know it in a faithful way. The Yalta Conference is painted in a familiar 40s sepia tone and the Queen Mum in a carriage emblazoned in newspaper black and white. It is only on second glance that the artist’s insertions and alterations become evident. In his other work, Yalta Conference, Mao is nestled between Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt and chatting happily with royalty, Mao takes his place amongst the great leaders of the 20th century.

Discussion Points:

• Does an artistic alteration of the past change the way you view a historical event?
• How would you describe the artists view on the media image, critical, neutral or positive?
• There is a sense of movement in the painting. Can you describe the elements of the composition that contribute to this effect?
• Look at the blurred hand, where has Shi Xinning placed us, the viewer?
RESOURCES
Resources

Survey Books

*China Art Book* eds. Uta Grosenick and Caspar H. Schubbe. , Dumont

*The Revolution Continues: New Art From China*, Saatchi Gallery with introduction by Jiang Jiehong
Jonathan Cape, Random House (London)

Internet resources

The Revolution Continues: New Art From China -

http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/new_art_from-china.htm

Zhang Xiaogang

http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/zhang_xiaogang.htm.en

http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/art/arts_and_entertainment/visual_arts/article3233277.ece


http://www.artrealization.com/contemporary_chinese_art/artists/zhang_xiaogang/zhang_xiaogang.htm

http://arts.guardian.co.uk/flash/page/0,,2264468,00.html

Wu Shanzhuan

http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/wu_shanzhuan.htm.en


http://www.hanart.com/search.php

http://www.artzinechina.com/display.php?a=256
Shen Shaomin
http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/shen_shaomin.htm.en
http://www.galerieursmeile.ch/nav/top/artists/text/default.htm?view_ArtistItem_OID=65

Zhang Haiyang
http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/zhang_haiyang.htm.en

Feng Zhengjie
http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/feng_zhengjie.htm.en
http://www.initialaccess.co.uk/artist.php?id=31&exid=2
http://www.redmansion.co.uk/artists/fengzhengjie.htm

Yue Minjin
http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/yue_minjin.htm.en
http://www.mooreandmooreart.co.uk/articles/news.asp?news_id=977

Yin Zhaohui
http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/yin_zhaohui.htm.en
http://www.auragallery.net/art/press.asp?id=66

Xiang Jing
http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/xiang_jin.htm.en
http://www.kwaijunghin.com/artists/Sculptors/XiangJing/abstract_eng/
Shi Xinning
http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/shi_xinning.htm.en
http://www.chinatownconnection.com/shi-xinning.htm
http://www.articlealley.com/article_161138_47.html

Videos

Interview with Artist Zhang Huan:
http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/saatchionline_tv/videoplayer.php?video=707&mr=1

Excerpts from a new hour long film about the rise of Chinese contemporary art by Pia Getty:
http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/china_power.htm

Asia Society's Melissa Chiu discusses some of the most important contemporary Chinese artists including Zhang Huan, Xu Bing, and Yang Fudong.
http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/saatchionline_tv/videoplayer.php?video=726

Interview with Zhang Xiaogang from 2007:

Transcript also available.
GLOSSARY

**Abstractions** - The thought process or artistic technique through which ideas are distanced from objects. In general *Abstraction* is used in the arts as another word for abstract art. It refers to art unconcerned with the literal depiction of things from the visible world it can but it can also mean an object or image which has been taken from the real world, or indeed, another work of art.

**Communism** is an ideology which is said to be the created by Karl Marx and Engels. It can come in many forms. It is considered the most influencing theories in the 20th Century causing most of the major revolutions which happened afterwards.

**Cynical Realism** began in Beijing in the 1990s and refers to a contemporary Chinese art movement specifically in the form of painting. It came into being as a result of a movement away from the collective mindset which had existed since the Cultural Revolution. As such it is a movement dedicated to the pursuit of the individual. Often taking a humorous stance the major themes are the political events of Revolutionary China from 1911 to the current day.

Artists particularly associated with Cynical Realism include Fang Lijun, Liu Wei and Yue Minjun (although he rejects this association)

**Expressivism** is considered the first theory of Art to significantly challenge the imitation theory entrenched in Greek Antiquity. Art in this category communicates ideas and feelings.

**Socialist realism** is a genre of realistic art which seeks to promote and further the goals of socialism and communism. Although techniques can be related to those of social realism it is not to be confused. Social realism is a type of art that realistically depicts subjects of social concern such as murder, poverty and prostitution.

**Maoism** specific form Communism associated with the dictator who led China through the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong. It distinct characteristics were deliberately emphasised against those of Russian Communism.

**Pop Art** is a visual movement which became common in the UK during the 1950s as well as in the US. Artists such as Andy Warhol have become considered the figureheads of the movement. It employs the techniques and of advertising, comic books in a movement against culture which has been seen as elitist.

**Propaganda** are messages which attempt to influence and control the ideas of people. They can be delivered to their audience through a number of means but were most successfully used in the Cultural Revolution through the posters which promoted communist ideals.

**Tiananmen Square** were the protests of 1989 in China which ended in the Tiananmen Square Massacre where thousands of students were killed by the governments’ soldiers. This event which served to bolster censorship also forced Art and Artists underground.

**The West** a generic term which refers to the culture or society of the west. During the Cultural Revolution the west was seen at odds with the their ideology and was viewed with suspicion. The use of western references would have been controversial.

**Utopia** is the name for an ideal community and society which is utterly perfect. Taken from the literature of the 16th century it has been a constant theme in Art since that time. Socialist realism and communist propaganda often used the idea of an utopia as a driving force for change.