INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

JOAN LEBOLD COHEN

Interviewer: Jane DeBevoise **Date:**31 Oct 2009 **Duration:** about 2 hours **Location:** New York

Jane DeBevoise (JD): It would be great if you could speak a little bit about how you got to China, when you got to China – with dates specific to the '80s, and how you saw the 80's develop. From your perspective what were some of the key moments in terms of the arts?

Joan Lebold Cohen (JC): First of all, I should say that I had been to China three times before the 1980s. I went twice in 1972, once on a delegation in May for over three weeks, which took us to Beijing, Luoyang, Xi'an, and Shanghai and we flew into Nanchang too because there were clouds over Guangzhou and the planes couldn't fly in.

This was a period when, if you wanted to have a meal and you were flying, the airplane would land so that you could go to a restaurant (Laughter). They were old, Russian airplanes, and you sat in folding chairs. The conditions were rather...primitive. But I remember going down to the Shanghai airport and having the most delicious '8-precious' pudding and sweet buns – they were fantastic. I also went to China in 1978. For each trip, I had requested to meet artists and to go to exhibitions, but was denied the privilege.

However, there was one time, when I went to an exhibition in May of 1972 and it was one of the only exhibitions that exhibited Cultural Revolution model paintings; it was very amusing. I tried to find out more about it, but there were no artists in sight, and there was nobody to interview who could possibly answer my questions. So, when my husband and I had the possibility to live in China in 1979 – Jerry was trying to get his law firm the right to practice law in China, and an official of the Beijing City Government saw this opportunity with Jerry to have his Chinese staff learn to practice international law (China desperately needed to understand it so that it could formulate its own laws to attract foreign investment). That was the carrot that Jerry held, and we were invited to reside in Beijing so he could teach international law to Beijing City officials. He was not allowed any more than a perfunctory visit to the university – it was much too dangerous.

The most dangerous people in 1979 were lawyers, or, well, law professors, and artists – the two groups of people we were of course most interested in! So, in 1979, through a series of good-luck moments, we were invited to take up residence in the Peking Hotel, which was really the only good place in town back then. You could stay at the Friendship Hotel, but it was really bad news. There were a couple of other hotels where some journalists were put up; one near Tiantan and the Overseas Chinese Hotel – but they had limited resources and were not nice places to stay – not that the Peking Hotel was very nice, but it was the nicest! And so with discussions in January, decisions firmed up in February and then residence in March, we began living in Beijing in 1979.

Jerry was practicing law part-time, and creating this course in international law for Chinese officials. And of course the question for me was, how was I going to make contact with the artistic community? I had lived abroad before; I had lived in Japan and had been invited to give some lectures on American art, and I had the foresight to pack some slides of contemporary international art, which had been what most people were interested in. They were interested when I was in Japan, so I figured they'd be interested in it in China as well. I asked our hosts if they could arrange for me to meet artists and visit the Art Academy, and the first person

I met was Liu Haisu. He was a very important artist who had really created with his friends the first Western style art school in 1912. He was a teenager, and he was very interested in oil painting and painting from life. He had been in trouble – he had always said what was on his mind, which of course was a very bad idea during the Mao years, so for thirty years he had really been on ice and in trouble – anyone who spoke out in China had trouble. By the time I was in Beijing, he was being re-habilitated, and staying at the Peking Hotel, where we were. He was preparing for his first solo show at the National Art Gallery too. So, I was introduced to him and I had a very nice interview with him; he was surprised that I knew something about the background of contemporary Chinese art – of course I knew very little, but he was amused by the fact that I knew that he had a tremendous fight with the establishment about having nude models. He was a very kind old man. His wife was there too and they were both very gracious. We met, conversed and I photographed him, and then went to see his show. While his show was on, his great rival's [Xu Beihong's] wife picketed Liu Haisu's show because they had a tremendous ideological fight about how to modernize Chinese art. Xu Beihong had won a government scholarship in 1919 or in the early 20's and went to France, learned academic painting, especially oil painting, and became well recognized; he lived in Europe for about ten years, and then went back to China and became Head of the National Art School. He was a very attractive person, a truly handsome guy and must have been a sweet-talker with all the right people. I think he was in Nanjing when he devised that the real way to modernize Chinese art – which of course was something everyone wanted to do – was to use ink to incorporate perspective, deep space and foreshortening techniques, like his famous horses, which you see everywhere - everyone has them on t-shirts, on flags and so on and so forth. He wanted everyone to follow him. He soon became Head of the Peking Art School and then in 1949 as a loyal Chinese became Head of the new Central Art Academy, but was sent to be re-educated in 1951, had a stroke, and that was the end. And of course, the best thing any hero of the Revolution could do was to die and that's what happened, in 1953. So, he continued to be a hero because he couldn't talk back. That was my beginning.

My unit then introduced me to the Central Art Academy and I was thrilled to be able to go there. We talked to each other about the possibility of artistic exchange and their interest in all kinds of things, and my deep interest in Chinese art. They welcomed me, they showed me their little art gallery, and I went around with them and asked them all kinds of questions about the paintings on the wall, which I looked at with great interest. Everyone was gracious. It was clear that they were as interested in me as I was in them, because Deng Xiaoping had just come to the US and it was a big moment of embrace.

There was a new 'kiss-kiss' relationship between China and America, so everyone was going to end up happily ever after, and everyone was following the line. I had mentioned that I had given lectures in Japan about contemporary American art and they said "Oh how wonderful, that's what we would be interested in, and so would you like to give lectures here on contemporary American art?" I kept notes on the questions I was asked, because that was part of the fun.

(JD): From memory, what were those lectures, who came, who did you talk about, and what were their reactions?

(JC): Well, first of all, putting on the lecture was an event; I needed slide projectors but they were hard to find! I had the slides. There were some businessmen who were living at the Peking Hotel, so I think I must have borrowed a slide projector from them, and then went to Hong Kong and bought a slide projector for the American mission. This was before it became an embassy. It was a liaison office and they had this very laid-back cultural officer. I remember saying "You mean you don't have a slide projector?" and I said "I'm going to buy you one and bring it up here" and so I did. I set up two slide projectors which at that time was a big deal, because most people just had one slide projector for one image, so having two images running at the same time was considered 'new media'. (Laughter)

I wanted to have a big screen to show this fantastic material, so I worked with Maria Fang – she was the first foreign student to go to the Central Art Academy, and she got there because - Claire Roberts told me this -

her father was Naxi descent, a national minority from the Western mountains in Lijiang; he must have been a graduate student at the end of World War II in Washington D.C. where he met his German wife, Maria's mother. They had thirteen children! Each one more beautiful and brilliant than the next! A truly incredible and beautiful family. I had by good luck met Maria during Christmas time in 1978 in Cambridge; her family lived nearby in Watertown. So here she was, the only foreign student at the Central Art Academy. At the time, the Central Art Academy was three minutes from the Capital Hospital, and close to the Peking Hotel. She was lovely and eager and willing to help me on my mission, which was to find out more about contemporary Chinese art. By Chinese standards at that time, she was treated very well – she had a special cook, and she had her own little isolated ward where she ate. She was very popular, and a lot of Chinese would drop by, and so that is how I would meet them, and I would, you know, ask them if I could see their work and we would begin a conversation.

In any case, there was an English teacher – a so-called English teacher – named Tommy Wu, who I think had been in the Guomindang air force, and had a lot of political troubles. He had been in the tank for I don't know how many years, for re-education. He was an English teacher, but knew only a few words of English. So Tommy, Maria and I were 'the force'. So, continuing, I said, "Well maybe I could borrow bed sheets from the Peking Hotel to make a screen", so we spoke to technicians at the Central Academy, and finally someone said, "Oh, you want a big screen!" And of course they had a big screen for films (Laughter). So we set ourselves up in their big auditorium, and there must have been 900 people crammed into that room. The excitement was palpable. This was the first time that they had seen Jackson Pollock and Nicky de Saint Phalle as well as all the Modernists. I also talked about the Bauhaus and those involved in the Bauhaus, like Paul Klee, Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius, and many others. The response was so unbelievable and thrilling.

At that time, people were also beginning to have access to magazines. There were two things that were highly valued back then: magazines and cameras. At that time, you had to list what you were bringing with you when you entered the country – I would go to Hong Kong rather frequently – you had to list the number of cameras you had, so that what you brought in you also took out. I knew that one of the nicest things I could do was to bring cameras to various people, so what I did was take the cameras apart and bring the camera parts in one by one; that way I was able to meet the desires of my friends. Nowadays, they don't care whether you bring cameras in or not, but in those days, the only cameras that [Chinese] people had were large format cameras of a German variety, if I recall correctly. I can't remember what kind of camera I had, but it was the kind that took photographs a certain way, different from that of the large-format camera. So, I received a lot of work being a freelance photographer because I knew many foreign correspondences interested in candid shots. It was very exciting for me, and something I did on the side.

I made this initial introduction through Maria to the Central Academy, and I met one of the key people to take me around to meet all of the old masters; Li Keran, Li Kuchan, Wu Zuoren. Tommy Wu's English was quite limited at the time, and as I went over those notes, I couldn't find the book that I had taken notes in. I must've thrown it out, because I realized that a lot of the interviews I had were just, well, black was white, where white was also black. Those were the answers I got, so I realized that after a year of residence in China what I had been told was rather upside down and something I needed to cast aside and begin again. On one hand, I had access to many amazing old masters. But on the other hand, in those days, how did you find out who the good Chinese artists were? I went to the National Gallery every week or every few weeks, and what you saw there was a pig in a poke. The people who showed there knew the directors or knew the more influential art members of society and weren't necessarily the best artists out there. Everyone lived in such modest, pitiful conditions in those days. I would visit artists in their quarters and often would find three of them living in a room with what we would presume to be a coffee table and a bed. These places were so tiny and modest, and yet the artists were so eager to share and invite me for a meal to talk. Magazines were the thing at the time. They were all looking at magazines, but I knew they were really just reading one book [on Freud], and I knew

that because when I was giving lectures I would always get questions about Freud: what did I think of Freud? His [Freud's] book on dreams must have just been translated and made available in 1979. Also, surrealism became the accepted 'modern' form of art, because the establishment said it was okay. But abstract art wasn't okay, because you couldn't tell whether the abstraction had some kind of hidden message within it, whereas with surrealism you could recognize the lips and strawberries, and so on. They were recognizable, so they couldn't be bad. That's how the establishment decided. So, that seemed to be the style that many young people were experimenting with - work inspired by Freud and encouraged by the establishment.

Oh, Yuan Yunsheng, when I first met him, asked me, "Well what are they saying about Miró and Dali?" And this was 1979; who had ever thought of Miró and Dali for twenty years? They were for us a very old hat, but it really brought to focus the fact that these people had been excluded from the art world for thirty years and they were coming from a different direction. But of course the whole issue of abstraction was such a debate, and I remember Wu Guanzhong, who I always admired, said, "Well look at marble. You like beautiful marble with all of its striations, and that's abstract!" And he was respected, you know, he had gone, like Zhao Wuji, to France after WWII, and had gone on a government scholarship. They were friends, Zhao Wuji and Wu Guanzhong, and Zhao Wuji stayed and became a world famous French-Chinese abstract expressionist whereas Wu Guanzhong, as a loyal Chinese, returned and faced the music and went through absolute hell. But he always stuck to his principals, and I always look at his paintings, and think 'It's like a Raoul Dufy', who was such a hot artist in America and Europe in the '50s. I mean the French artists were always looked at as, well – you know, the 'great artists'. It was before the real horizon of abstract expressionism. And so Wu Guanzhong obviously was very sympathetic to what was going on in France in the late '40's, when he was there. And still, he's painting today and producing prints, and I am so impressed. I saw a whole bunch of wonderful prints that had been made from his paintings that were for sale at 798 [art district] last year. It's really nice to see that he has had such success.

(JD): Can we talk a little bit more about the lectures you gave? Do you remember if you gave lectures on modern art, and secondly, if it was modern art, was it chronological or did you pick certain artists that you particularly liked? How did you structure your lectures?

(JC): I did two lectures on contemporary and modern art, and so the early period must have been on the 20's, because I remember focusing on the Bauhaus and Franz Marc, the Blue Rider and Matisse and I suppose Picasso too; but then there was a second lecture which I hadn't finished writing out. But I think what I said was pretty irrelevant. I think the images were really what counted, and so for the second lecture, they encouraged me to show slides even though I hadn't finished my commentary about them because they were so eager to see more. I showed what would've been considered the most up-to-date artists, like Nicky de Saint Phalle, the abstract-expressionists, the surrealists, and the minimalists. I also talked about the New York School; I'm sure I can find these notes for you at some point. At the time, I had been contracted to give a third lecture, but I had to leave China for other reasons in the interim.

Unfortunately, the politics changed. The establishment, the Politburo decided there was too much 'Love America' and so things changed. We had the third lecture, but not in the big hall; instead, we had it in a discreet room with just a few students, maybe thirty to fifty students, I can't remember. When the professor introduced me, I said that I would be happy to entertain questions, but the professor said, "Mrs. Cohen is very tired and she can't take questions," and it was the first vivid political lesson I learned about how things were to be carried out this time around.

I have had subsequent lessons since. For example, I was living in China from 2002-06, when two officials from the Central Academy of Art came. My husband was telling them how I had given these lectures in 1979, and how I was the first American to ever talk to the Central Academy. He also pointed out that no one at the Academy knew about it because they were all either dead or put on the shelf by 2000, and so there was

no institutional memory or history present about this event. So they said "Oh you must come and do three lectures again." So, I did, but I said I wanted to talk about Chinese art this time and they said "Wonderful" and I said "Really? Me, a foreigner, talk about Chinese art?" And they said "Oh, yes." So, I wrote out the lectures, and had all the slides digitalized and had all of the material ready well in advance for these lectures at the Central Academy. Now, the lectures weren't going to be publicized and they were going to be held in a small room. Many friends on the faculty wanted to come to the talk but they didn't know when it was going to happen. The dean of the Academy, who had been invited, came up to me and said, "I feel so embarrassed, I want to introduce you, but then I have to leave for a very important dinner so you'll have to forgive me, I am so embarrassed." I said, "Of course, I understand." So he introduced me and then when off to his dinner. Now it just so happened that I was going off to Wuhan that same year, and the Wuhan Arts School invited me to give a lecture, and I said I would, and the head of the Wuhan Art Academy said, "I am so embarrassed, I have to go to an important dinner at the university, and so I am going to have to leave after I introduce you." They didn't put me into a little room but the point was that the head of the Academy would not have to take any responsibility for what I had to say; I had three slides in my lecture of about 200 slides that referred to Tiananmen. So it was clear that my lectures were too political and potentially explosive, and they did not want to be responsible for it. If they were not in the room, they couldn't be responsible for what I had to say. I guess what this meant was that they gave you a lecture in a tiny room with just a few people and with nobody important present.

(JD): And this was in 2000?

(JC): That took place in 2006.

(JD): Right, so it still goes on. They are very sophisticated. But go back to the lectures you gave people in the 1980s - in terms of people's reactions, your reference to Freud is very interesting.

(JC): The whole subconscious was a whole new world. It was as if the Chinese had no subconscious until then. (Laughing) It was hilarious! I remember that in 1981, the National Museum of Fine Arts in Boston sent the first contemporary show to Beijing and Shanghai. The reactions to the show were hilarious. First of all, I won't name anyone, but an important artist said, "Boy, they didn't even send the Renoirs!" They hadn't figured out that there was a difference between art from America and art from France, and of course, American painting was going to be a huge disappointment. They did send seventeen abstract paintings, but it was as disappointing as Russian painting for heaven's sake. Maybe more! (Laughing). They did however send a Jackson Pollock, and one of my friends in Shanghai, Qiu Deshu, wrote me this incredible letter about how thrilled he was to see that Pollock painting. He wrote about how it freed him from all the constraints that he had felt in his artistic life, and how he was given a new lease to explore new and express more. It was wonderful. Having said that, most people didn't feel that way. Most people thought, "American painting is so boring." (Laughing)

(JD): So when did you get to meet people, how did you get to meet them, and how did you find people like Wang Keping, and the Stars? How did you find them and what were they looking at? I mean the academies had access to some materials, but they weren't in the academies at the time.

(JC): I religiously went to shows at the Central Art Academy, at their little exhibition hall in their museum. One of the shows consisted of copies of Western paintings that had been made by Chinese artists who went to Russia as well as satellite Communist nations. They were paintings, copies of Modigliani and other artists. And I looked at them, and I thought, (laughing) "They don't look like the originals at all." So the vision of these foreign artists through their Chinese eyes was hilarious.

(JD): These paintings, these copies, were made previously? When they traveled to these countries?

(JC): Chinese artists who were training in Eastern Europe and in Russia would have made them in the 60s or 70s. Some of them went to Hungary and East Germany, so they would have seen Western art.

(Q): That's truly post-modern.

(JD): Yes, and so they were being hung in this museum. Fascinating.

(JC): Yes! And people would say, "Oh, there's a Modigliani!"

(JD): How interesting. But when you went to visit the Central Academy, you were able to go into the studios at that point in time, and you were able to go to the classroom. Did you see, when you talked to them, what books they were looking at?

(JC): Sure. Well, I developed this very nice relationship with a number of the young graduate students. I mean they were of an age of sophistication, had been rusticated for ten years and were interested in the world, especially the arts. I would say the people in the Chinese Painting Department were much more inward. It was still considered very dodgy to talk to a foreigner. I mean, Xing Fei and I never became friends until she moved here, and we've now become very good friends. But she said to me, "Well you know as a Chinese traditional painter, you were discouraged from consorting with a foreigner, it was polluting, you know..." I mean we [foreigners] would ruin it for them. But there were other artists, like Sun Jingbo for instance, who was just so open-minded, and Chen Danqing too, and they were my good friends, and both belonged to groups. They belonged to the Contemporaries, and so I got invited to their events. They were the people who made contacts for me in other cities. For instance, Yuan Yunsheng and Yuan

Yunfu made the contact with Ya Ming for me. I avoided at any cost any kind of official affiliation, because if you did that, you were locked into this impossible schedule. That happened to me once in Sichuan, and it was a disaster. But, I was able to wiggle out of it. Usually I would go with my slide projector, my slides and my lecture, and I would give a talk and then stay around for three days, and by the third day, some wonderful artist would emerge. I always had to stay three days. It was sort of difficult, but I would get taken around the studios to meet artists and teachers. I remember meeting Zhang Xiaogang that way. Seeing his work immediately, I just knew. And, who was the pop artist who made soldiers with pencils?

(JD): Wang Guangyi.

(JC): Wang Guangyi, right. Same with him. I mean, the minute I saw those works I knew that they were important. Now, how I met the Star Stars I can't quite remember, but we became great friends, and I learned their story; that they had been denied the right to go to art school. I felt really bad for them, so I told them, "Look, I'd be happy to do a talk just for you. Just give me a place, I have a little slide projector, so if you have a place with an outlet of sorts, I'll do a lecture for you, if you'd like that." And they said, "Wonderful." And so we did, and I went to Wang Keping's studio – you must have been often – and he was such an agent provocateur. We had a Halloween party and he came to it.

(JD): Wang Keping at the Beijing Hotel, which was really quite a daring move at that time.

(JC): Oh it was. And he had to fight his way in. I mean he was…

(JD): He was defiant.

(JC): Absolutely. I mean the only thing that saved him was marrying that French woman. I think he would have been arrested otherwise. But he loved provoking them. That was what he did best. It was really something.

(JD): So the Stars…

(JC): Yes, so I visited them many times, and lived through the great crisis with Ya Li and Li Shuang. Then she started going out with this Frenchman.

(JD): Emmanuel Bellefroid.

(JC): Bellefroid! Right. He was a regular employee of the French Embassy, and they were an item. Then she got arrested, and was sent to labor re-education for two years!

(JD): I mean, that was one of the worst situations I've heard of about any artist.

(JC): It was terrible.

(Q): Can you explain that point, because I don't really know what that means. (Laughter)

(JC): Well, within the Star Stars, there was this very charming couple. Li Shuang was the girl and Yan Li was the guy, and they seemed to share a studio and were very friendly. Li Shuang met a French diplomat, somebody associated with the Cultural Department of the French Embassy, I believe. And they took a shine to each other, and she visited him multiple times, and somebody in the Chinese establishment caught on to it and didn't approve, and thought that this beautiful Chinese artist was being wronged by this evil foreign Frenchman, so she must be punished for being such a loose woman. They arrested her, and they took her off to a labor camp for two years. I guess she had been living part-time in the French compound. Oh, the French ambassador and a whole host of people objected and petitioned the Chinese government to re-think it and release this poor young thing, and that it was an outrage. After two years, she was finally released, and she did go off and marry Bellefroid and live in Paris. I don't remember seeing her in Paris, but she was there. She and Bellefroid were in residence in California for one year at which point we met. I remember Li Shuang saying, "Oh I really like it in California, because there are so many Chinese." (Laughing) Yes, there are many more Asians in California than there are in Paris.

(JD): Going back toWang Keping - he lived in his parents' house if I can remember correctly, and he had somewhat of a studio with a lot of wood sitting around, as well as all sorts of sculptures. Was that his parents' apartment?

(JC): Yes, apartment. I just remember a single room with a bed, and he had a few things around. I don't remember the context at all. But, I remember him being very funny and very provocative and well, just flaunting his naughtiness. He was a lot of fun. And, I mean the others were too, let's see…

(JD): There's Ma Desheng.

(JC): Ma Desheng. He was always full of the old kick and got around quite well. It's so tragic. I had to testify for him when he got in this terrible accident and I think he's now a paraplegic. I had to testify in court for his potential. He was a serious artist who had been denied entrance into the Art Academy because he had polio as a child and was on crutches. The Chinese excluded people who weren't 'perfect', so to speak. We have other friends who are impaired in some way, and are excluded from school too. But it's interesting that most of that group, who are often quoted as 'amateur artists', that is by definition an artist without a classical education, hadn't had the opportunity to go to the Academy. They were all so fired up and ambitious that virtually all the ones that I've heard of have ended up really becoming someone to follow. Bo Yun, a professor of art history now Tsinghua University, and the artist who was a realist… Oh golly, why don't I get my book; all the names have escaped me, I'm really sorry about that.

(JD): During that time, regarding those involved in the Academy, like Yuan Mingfu, was he aware of what was going on with the Stars, was there a dialogue between them, what was the relationship between the people who were more attached to the Academy and those more amateur and outside the Academy's system?

(JC): From my perspective, everybody had his own little fortress, his own little compartment, and they were very separate from one another. There seemed to be no dialogue between academies. For instance, there was a Central Art Academy, there was an Academy of Arts and Crafts, and they each had very talented faculty and students with no conversation between them. Nothing was ever shared, nobody was invited to each other's lectures, and they each had their own little fortresses that were very evident. And, the jealousy between them was extreme. So the Stars would never be invited into the establishment. There would be no contact between them, and everything was very discreet, and of course I was living in the Peking Hotel, so every word I ever said was recorded, every phone call was recorded, and I was always terribly afraid I might get my friends in trouble. Every time I went to visit the Art Academy, I had to sign in: who I was and where I was going. After

a while I would sign in as Minnie and Mickey Mouse, but, well I don't think those slips were ever read. It was very upsetting to think that I might cause trouble for my friends. So I tried to be as discreet as possible, in a situation where it was hard to be discreet. I mean, I looked different. We didn't have to be followed because everyone could see us. I remember thinking that in the wintertime, I could bundle up and put on goggles and perhaps pass the eye, but I don't think I could (laughing). And of course we all traveled by bicycle, but that's another story (laughing).

(JD): Did you see the Stars 1979 or 1980 exhibition?

(JC): No, I had a skill of somehow missing the crucial moments. Also, there was a very important Oil Painting Artists Association show, which I missed too. The problem was communication. There was no communication. Not only between institutions, but I remember going to Xi'an and conveying to a group of avant-garde artists details about the ongoings in Beijing, at which point I realized I was the communicator; that they had no way of finding out what was going on in other places, and so I traveled all over China to all these arts schools. I went to Guangzhou many times. In those days, to go from Hong Kong, you had to go through Guangzhou, take the train from Hong Kong to Guangzhou and then fly to Beijing. It wasn't until 1981 when non-stop flights were around, which of course excluded Guangzhou, and so it got left out.

(JD): Let's talk about that for a second. Because you had an unusual ability at that point in time to travel to different center cities in China. Could you describe with a couple of examples how these places differed or how they were similar? I mean you were saying there was very little communication, so Beijing was Beijing, and the Beijing Central Academy was its own little world, and same thing when you went to Shanghai, and then Guangzhou. What is your sense of the comparison, particularly in relation to contemporary artists, or artists who were different? And, for those who were slightly experimental?

(JC): Well the most experimental people in Beijing seemed less experimental than those in Shanghai, for instance. Qiu Deshu was a pioneer of change, and I spent a lot of time with him. I went around with Tang Muli in 1980, who introduced me to a whole range of academic people and people experimenting and we just by chance hit on Qiu Deshu at a workers' cultural palace or something, and it was such a nothing-institution and show, but it was an experiment. He was really reaching out for something new, and that was very exciting. In Guangzhou, I went to the Academy a number of times and gave lectures. One time when I gave a lecture, it was in a hall where Mao and Hua Guofeng were hanging side-by-side and my slides were on either side. I just loved that. I got back to the hotel and laughed all night. It just amused me so much, seeing Nicky de Saint Phalle next to Mao and Hua Guofeng. Hua Guofeng's portrait really didn't come down until I guess the end of 1980. When I first went to China in 1972, Mao was everywhere. Many of those sculptures were taken down by 1980. For instance, all the academic institutions would have huge sculptures, about ten feet to twenty feet tall of Mao. Many were removed and sometimes replaced by Lu Xun, or some other dead hero (laughing). Deng, by contrast, kept a low profile.

(JD): But you say that Shanghai was more experimental and the Stars group aside, the academic group within Beijing was still relatively focused on realist oil painting, which actually continues today. Shanghai as you mentioned—

(JC): Well the only arts school that was open was the Drama Academy, and the Drama Academy seemed to be more welcoming. It was like the Gongyi meishu xueyuan [Central Academy of Arts and Crafts] of that time. Gongyi was more welcoming to ideas although it was still very stiff. I always thought the faculty there was much more interesting, and certainly the airport project in '79 (which was organized under the auspices of the Central Academy of Arts and Crafts) was really big news, and continued to be until it got walled over. Zhang Ding organized it and Yuan Mingfu was his sort-of assistant. So, Yuan Yunsheng, who had been in exile all during the Cultural Revolution, basically since his graduation, since being sent to Changchun and only released in '77, I think, and went to Xishuang banna… Anyway, he was the only non-Central Academy artist to be invited to do work on the murals. In 1979, October 1st, the new airport in Beijing was opened.

The old airport was, well, I have slides of it with me - it was just a little room with some writings of Chairman Mao, but really a nothing-place. So this new capital, this old capital with a new look, now had a new airport, and somebody must have said, "Oh, yes, we have a new airport, but don't you think we ought to decorate it?" So they sort of scratched their heads and said, "Oh yes, the fellow who is Head of the Academy of Arts and Crafts may be the right person for this job." And so that was Zhang Ding, and Zhang Ding was invited to decorate three very large halls, which were restaurants or rest halls, or important people's halls. I believe there were a number of VIP rooms. And it was really the talk of all the art in China. I was lucky enough to meet these people, and be taken to see the airport project in process, as well as to photograph it. Of course, the big news was Yuan Yunsheng's mural, a very large mural of the Water Festival of Dai people - who lived on the Thai border and beginning of the hot season, I believe on October 15th - throwing water, which I guess is meant to be cleansing. It's a famous festival all over South East Asia. So, he took two very large walls and had this enormous mural that included more than one hundred figures, and two of them were of nude ladies bathing in the river. Of course, that was big news. New Beijing Airport! Two nudes! For everyone it was a huge flap, and Hua Guofeng said, "Oh, how terrible." And Deng Xiaoping said, "What is all the fuss about?" But, people were taken out to view it and there were articles in the newspaper about it. Finally, after some months, a curtain was put up over the nudes, and then of course everybody rushed out to the airport and looked under the curtain to see the nudes. Then, about a year later when Zhang Ding or some other important person in the Ministry was out of town, they put a wall over it. Having said that, the happy part of that story was that by 1988, the airport was looking for money, and sold the room, which was a restaurant to a private entrepreneur who thought, "Well, we might as well take down the wall." And, so the wall was taken down and the mural was absolutely intact and had not been ruined in any way. Now, that's a very happy story. However in the 1990's, a new airport was built and the old airport was defunct. I mean, nothing was going on there, you couldn't visit it, and you couldn't find out what was going on. Then, of course, before the Olympics, a new airport was opened, and they reopened the other, but the only way you could enter it was if you were flying Hainan Airlines or South China Air. Unfortunately, I haven't taken either of those airlines, so, I don't really know whether the murals exist anymore. Now, you can't just go to the airport and catch your plane. You have to go up to the section where there used to be a restaurant, if you want to know if the murals have survived. No one knows for sure, not even the artists.

(JD): That's a great story. There were distinct regional differences at that time.

(JC): I loved the group in Xi'an. They were very experimental. They must have seen pictures in magazines of Abstract Expressionism. They were using old tires and wax, and all kinds of materials, materials that were surprising at that time in China. And, they were very cute, very charming people, and we always had a fun dialogue. The 80's were a time of great hope. Everybody was so excited for the new China. This was going to be a new world. They were going to have a 'just' China, where virtue was going to be, well, the opposite of what it was during the Cultural Revolution, and nobody had really gotten over that. It was going to be beautiful. And then of course, 1989 happened, and the disillusion was just palpable. But it was really about that time that China became a part of our world, connected to the world. This may also have been related to the fact that foreign media were in Tiananmen Square, simply because Gorbachev was coincidentally visiting China at the time to commemorate the death of Hu Yaobang. That brought the world into China in a way that China never was in itself, because nobody in China outside of Beijing knew anything about anything because so much information was suppressed. But somehow, that was a real turning point in terms of China being a part of our world; and then came the changes in the 1990's and the millennium, of course. I attended the 30th Anniversary and the 50th Anniversary, and of course the changes were quite dramatic. Nothing as dramatic as the 60th Anniversary of course (laughing).

(JD): From '79 to the time you left, how long were you there?

(JC): I left the summer of '81. I was so discouraged when I left, and I remember thinking, 'I don't want to come back'. And the reason was, I always read Chinese history and so I knew about this intellectually, that people spread rumors, and some of the rumors about me got back to me unfortunately, and I was so disheartened, and truly blue, that I just couldn't wait to leave. I just wanted to get out of there and not head back for a long time, which was unfortunate for research, but it was a real taste of real-China, the anger, the jealousy, and the suspected motives. "Oh, she's just in there to get cheap paintings." Well I hope that my gift to the Smith College Museum is a gesture of the fact that I wasn't just there for cheap paintings. I was there as a photographer and as an art historian trying to make sense of the new coming out of China. But it just made me so depressed at the time.

(JD): And when did you go back?

(JC): Well, I went back quite regularly because Jerry started living in Hong Kong in '81 as his law firm opened an office there as well as one in Beijing, and I was still teaching at the Museum School. It was all very complicated. I was living in New York and we had just moved to New York in '81. I was teaching in Boston. My mother was very ancient in St. Louis, and my husband was in Hong Kong; so, there was a lot of commuting in those days. But I went back regularly; perhaps not as regularly as I should have. I think I didn't keep in touch with many the same way – I remember meeting a young artist who was starting to tell me about all the performances that they were doing on the Great Wall, and I just didn't follow up because I was busy seeing old friends. And, you know, you see old friends and you don't have time to make new friends. You don't necessarily have the same avenues. Old friends won't necessarily know the new people with all the 'new' going on in their lives. It was harder to get reconnected.

(JD): But how did you feel when you went back and met those old friends? I remember when you continued writing in newspapers and various magazines…did you find your old friends changing over the 80's? Did you see differences in the way they approached their goals, their aspirations, specifically between1981 to 1985, and then 1985 to 1987?

(JC): When I returned to New York, there were a number of artists who came for certain reasons, and I think that in general, most of them have returned. Some of them have returned sooner than later. The experiences that these artists had were very different. The reactions they had to coming to America were very different. And, I remember, one artist, who was brought here by someone who had a great collection and was starting a gallery, was commissioned to specifically paint Tibetan paintings because Tibetan paintings were hot on the market. This artist didn't want to do that. He spent a year here and he was very angry, and I didn't blame him. I thought he was being exploited. But, that was the extreme. Other people came, like Yuan Yunsheng. He came because he thought he would be freed, and he was free, but he was also a nobody. Who had ever heard of Yuan Yunsheng? I tried everything I could. Ethan gave him a show in SoHo, and I showed his work in various places and introduced him to people in various situations, got him commissions… Oh, he did a wonderful commission at Tufts, it's the best painting he ever did. But he had big ideas and felt his paintings should sell for $10,000. Nobody had ever heard of him though. It's pretty hard to sell a painting for $10,000 when nobody's ever heard of you and they don't really understand where you're coming from. On the other hand, there was Chen Danqing. He loved doing street portraiture because he met all these weird people. He felt he would never have had a chance to meet these people in such an intimate way unless he painted their portrait, and he loved doing so. Others thought, "Oh. I'm not going to paint portraits on the street. What an insult." I used to give parties for the artists who came to the US every year; we lived in our little apartment down the street, before we moved here. Every year I would invite all the Chinese artists I knew to come over. And, the crowds kept getting smaller, and smaller, and smaller until I realized, "Oh, they all hate each other." So, it was very complicated, and I learned all kinds of things through the artists who came over and with whom I was friends. I tried to help whenever I could, but some were pretty aggressive about saying, "Give me $1,000 now," and I wasn't in a position to anti up money like that. In any case, it was very much a mixed picture. Some of them came as

students and Chen Yifei was the superstar. He was the Michael Jackson; amazing in the sense that he was the Andy Warhol, really. He was a star in China and he was a star here. He knew all the right people. He had a show on 57th street, and the Ambassador of China came up from Washington to attend the show. I mean, you know, he just knew how to do it. And he changed his painting style – he saw what Americans would like, and that's how he painted. And then he wasn't so interested in painting any more, so he just let other people paint it for him [laughing]. But, I really admire Chen Yifei because he was somebody, and he knew how to negotiate power, and he was generous.

(JD): I have heard many stories of him actually helping other artists who arrived and going to see their shows and not setting himself apart despite his unique success.

(JC): Yes, he was a very generous person, no question about it. He was very happy about receiving help too. I mean, I felt so happy for the success of the artists that we were able to help. I now feel so thrilled that we were able to play some small role in helping them achieve what they were looking for. I only feel sad that every one of them hasn't become such a success, or when they finally did get here, that they didn't like it, for one reason or another. Nothing makes me more upset than the bitterness I see in at least one of the artists for whom I had great hopes. It's just tragic.

(JD): If I may ask, many of these artists, obviously pre-Tiananmen, were coming to the US for opportunity, for freedom, for exposure -

(JC): For money!

(JD): (Laughter) For money, right, for money. An example of one who came, who has become extremely famous and whom you knew before his fame, is Ai Weiwei. Can you describe your encounters with him?

(JC): Oh yes. I had a wonderful, wonderful time with him. I was curating a show at Sarah Lawrence College in 1987, and I wanted a painting by Ai Weiwei included into the show. He was living in the lower east side, and so he gave me his address. I didn't know the neighborhood at all, so I was feeling somewhat tentative about going down. I got to the address and there was this funny old lady standing there. I said, "Does Ai Weiwei live here?" And she looked at me and said, "Never heard of him." And, I looked at my number again, and the number on the building and I saw his name someplace and I said, "Oh yes, he does live here. Look!" And she looked and said, "Oh, you mean Wee-wee!" [Laughing] And I said, "Yes." I must say that the odor in the building matched the appellation. So, I went up in the elevator and I found Weiwei's apartment and it was a single cell, with one mattress on the floor and one television. There were congressional hearings at that time – one of the periodic catharsis sessions where Congress goes through this cleansing of the terrible things that people do to each other and how they lie and cheat. Weiwei loved it. He said, "Wow, to think that a country can do this! And on television too!" He was absolutely fixated on watching this congressional hearing and thought somehow, why can't China be like that. I mean he didn't say that, but it was clear this was what he was thinking. And so we looked at some of his paintings. I remember taking them down into the street because I photographed them – that's the photograph that I have (points to wall). Somebody else must have been there because someone must have taken picture of Weiwei and me. And we selected something. I'm not sure I really understood what he was doing. I'm not sure I really understood what those paintings meant. A lot of people wondered. But they had a kind of fascination, and over time I think I've understood better what the significance of those paintings were.

(JD): Very early on he was trying to create images that were pop-like and used Mao to conflate images of Mao and dollar bill signs. Doing this was something that became obviously more popular during the beginning of the 1990s – the show that you were preparing for was in '87, and Weiwei came here in the early 80's, correct? And then he stayed through—

(JC): And then he stayed through and he ran out his visa and wasn't interested in renewing it, and I was so worried that he was going to be deported as an enemy alien or something like that, and I begged him to regularize it, and he said "No." He wasn't going to do it. And then of course in 1989—

(JD): On principle or –

(JC): Yes, on principle.

(JD): Why?

(JC): Well, I don't know. I mean it was just a typical Weiwei kind of decision; why should he tell me? I don't have Weiwei's picture. Oh yes, here it is (pointing to the catalogue). Well, it was a Mao image. It's taken me a long time to really understand, to understand the many layers of the implications of these paintings. You could always understand them at a certain level, but he was clearly confronting the establishment straight in the face. My son Ethan who has had a gallery downtown since 1988 has shown Weiwei. I've always been proud of the fact that Weiwei has had a straight vision. He was always eager to go right for the jugular in whatever – I mean there was no pussyfooting around. There was nothing subtle about his work. And, that takes a lot of courage it seems to me. Especially since he had grown up, the child of a so-called rightist in exile in Urumchi which was pretty much the end of the earth at that point. But he did have the opportunity to go to film school and he said to me many times that his real love was for animation, and he certainly has caused a lot of animation (laughing).

(JD): So when he was here, when you saw him, he didn't have, like many of the artists of his time, a lot of local audience and or reception at all. Were these artists looking to be shown or were they really working on their own projects without being concerned about finding galleries?

(JC): I think they all wanted galleries. I think they were lost souls. I think it was very difficult for them. Weiwei had very good English, and he befriended Ethan, and Ethan did give him his first show. But, for Ethan to give a show was a very kind of limited window for them, you know, they wanted to be in the Museum of Modern Art. That was a pretty tough call. They were all looking for recognition and felt rather disconnected. It was very difficult. I think that Chen Danqing made more inroads, in meeting artists - Western American artists – in having dialogues, because he was very attractive and spoke well, although he seemed very unsure of his English. It's so strange because he communicates brilliantly yet is quite unsure of it.

(JD): And did people like Chen Danxing and Ai Weiwei fraternize, or were they very separate in terms of community? You said that the community was closer in the beginning and then sort of drifted apart. Were there subgroups within the community or…

(JC): I was working on a project about Chinese film. It was a film about Tibet made by Tian Zhuangzhuang, a 6th generation filmmaker. It was a very experimental film in the late 80's called The Horse Thief. And, I was doing a lot of research about it because I was writing a paper about it, and, there was a ceremony that was so weird and wonderful and I was trying to identify it, so I was talking to various specialists about Tibet – I got the head of the Newark Museum who was a Tibet specialist to view it with me, and I went to the Tibet Center at the Case Western Reserve in Cleveland to view it with a real Tibetan. From all the people I interviewed, nobody could give me a sense of authenticity of any of this. So then I decided I would interview Ai Weiwei and Chen Danqing separately. I viewed the film with them, and they gave me totally different view of what that film was about, which was revealing about who they are. It was fascinating. Weiwei said, "Oh, its about the attempt of the Tibetans to be Tibetan. It's about the Chinese oppression of Tibetans." And, Chen Danqing said, "Oh, we're trying to civilize these people - I'm Mao's little boy, I always have been." Even though Chen had been from a rightist family, he grew up with all kinds of disabilities because of his background; he was still Mao's little boy, and Weiwei was not, and that's a tremendous difference in terms of their ideological stance, where they come from, and where they are going. And of course each of them has been a huge success going back to

China. Each of them has made tremendous contributions. Chen Danqing – he's a rockstar! People, thousands of young people attend his talks. He's very handsome and glib and he writes very easily and well. He's very well read. He doesn't read English though, isn't that interesting? I mean, you'd think that somebody who is as comfortable as he is in Western culture, and as intellectual as he is, and who can speak English, could read English. But he doesn't. I've always thought of that as strange. Weiwei, of course is on the other end of the spectrum.

Back to the 1980s. I had a camera, and I wrote for Art News, and the Asian Wall Street Journal which had 20,000 English-reader users, but it might as well have been nothing. I mean it was like writing for the moon (no one in the US was interested in art), but my articles were translated into the Can Kao Xiao Xi, so everybody in China read them. I was considered a 'friend' of China, and they always wanted to know what an outside opinion was on any issue, any show, how it was reviewed, and such. From this I got to be very well known, not only because I went around to so many different art schools, but also because of the articles I wrote. I got invited to these people's houses, to these tiny little apartments, was given incredibly good food and friendship and was always made welcome. I mean I went out to dinner every night, compared to Jerry who went out twice in two and a half years (laughing). So our worlds were very different, but the artists realized they had something to gain by seeing me. I was a foreigner. I didn't remember going to the Shanghai Academy but there was a woman official who said, "You should criticize these paintings!" And I kind of looked at her and thought, "I'm not going to criticize anything." I believe that in terms of criticizing works of art, there is always something good that you can say about it, so why be destructive. First and foremost, I'm not Chinese. There's no reason for me to tell so and so how to paint. I'm there to just understand what they are trying to express. I mean, I am a very straight shooter. I am not one of those people likes to say "Oh, how wonderful," just to say it. But I try to be gracious and sincere. And I think that people respected me for that. I tried to be business-like. I tried to tell their story, to report and follow their achievements, and that was my mission. I hope I did a decent job. I was certainly the only one doing it.

(JD): One of the things that seems very clear is that there were women artists – there were women practicing art at the time, but very, very few of them have had any level of visibility and success in an external way. Can you talk a little bit about that; what you saw in terms of women artists in China?

(JC): Well, I was never clever enough to be alert, to specifically seek out women artists until the 1990's. When my consciousness was raised, and the year of women was inaugurated in 1995, the big Women's Conference was held, and they had the first shows of women artists. I went to the National Gallery and saw the big show and discovered some fantastic women artists and pursued them; I met with them, and proposed exhibitions for them. I had two very clearly mapped out exhibitions. But being that I was no longer employed by the Museum of Fine Arts – I had given up my teaching job and was here [in China] as an independent scholar and curator without much of a base. It's hard when you don't have money, and you need money for shows. So I sent this around to maybe twenty different museums and galleries and got twenty different responses, all saying, "Sorry." Actually, one particular proposal that I had for one museum related to an arts school near New York, they kept stringing me along for three years. They said they were going to do it, but then they dropped me. But, I was so focused on promoting these Chinese women artists, and several of those women have really made it big and are now in MoMa's collection. But, when you asked to meet Chinese women artists back then, they brought you to some ancient, nice lady who painted with watercolors, which wasn't exactly what you had in mind. Finding the women artists was difficult. They are discriminated against, they are excluded from shows, and it's pitiful.

(JD): But what did you observe in the 80s? I remember a lot of them were working in teams. Which team was doing the mural for the Beijing Hotel? That was a couple-team. There were quite a few of these couples working together, but the woman didn't ever reappear after the man became famous, if I remember correctly.

(JC): Yes, those two. Zhou Ling and Liu Bingjiang. Well that mural was not exactly a very good example, but one example that I found rather startling was in the Beijing Airport. It was commissioned by the woman, the couple was on the faculty of the *Gongyi Meishu Xueyuan*, and she got the commission, but his name was put first. And I remember asking about that. I said, "Who got the commission?" "She got the commission." "So why is his name first?" "Oh, that's part of the Chinese custom". His name is Li Huayi from the Central Art Academy, and his wife's is, oh golly, I know their pictures are here and I can't remember her name. It's as if these women didn't exist, it's very tough. I mean some women like Cao Fei have certainly made it.

(JD): But she's a much later generation artist.

(JC): In the 1980s, I didn't press the way I should have. I remember in '89 meeting Shen Ling, but I met her at the same time I met her husband, Wang Yuping. I have a wonderful painting of hers in the other room. And I think that she's done quite well. She's had some good shows.

(JD): You met Yang Yanping, right?

(JC): Yang Yanping, of course, I met her, because she showed with the Oil Painting Artists Association. She was doing oil painting then. I really encouraged her – I saw both her oil paintings - which I admired - and her ink paintings, and I just felt that she was much better as an ink painter. And I really encouraged her to go back to ink painting because I felt that her real talent came out there. She has developed brilliantly. She and her husband came here mid- 80's on some kind of fellowship and stayed here and became hugely successful commercially. I saw her recently. She had a show last fall, but alas, what a terrible time to have a show. I don't think anybody came and apparently nobody bought, but the paintings were wonderful. Her husband, you know, does these big horse paintings and everyone loves them. So I think it's been a very happy time for them. And I said to her, "You've been such a success. It's been so wonderful." And she looked at me and she said, "Well, we're a success when some Chinese artists get millions of dollars." And I thought, "Oh nothing has changed." I mean, be grateful for what you have! No, that is not the Chinese way.

(JD): So your feeling is that during the 80's, there weren't that many women practicingart in a visible way, as far as you know, although there were women in the art academies.

(JC): Yes. Oh here, I've just found her. Qian Zhenghuan and Li Huayi. They did the 'Tail of White Snake' for the airport, and she was the one who got the commission, and he put his name first. There is a very nice ink painter who has gone on to become quite prominent and, I'm trying to think of her name, (flipping through magazine). She was a graduate student at the Central Art Academy in the '79 and '80 period. And it was clear that she was going to be – she did socialist realism painting, very strong and very brilliant, and because of her pitch, the fact that she was doing socialist realist painting assured her a success in academic and art circles. And there was also a woman Dean at the Central Art Academy who I greatly admired. She passed away.

(JD): Zhou Sicong.

(JC): Yes. But these women were really the exceptions. There were one in a million. I mean, women just weren't given much attention at all.

(JD): And so when the men were giving you introductions, you were being introduced to other male artists. You weren't being introduced—

(JC): And it was my mistake. I should have insisted. I realized that in the 90's. After 1995, after the year of the woman, I realized that I had not pressed; and I began meeting a lot of women artists and I saw some wonderful talent. And there were two different exhibitions that I developed and proposed to various museums. One was particularly good for an academic kind of university art gallery where you could have an ongoing project for a week or two, where you would have student input, but it wasn't to be.

(JD): Just maybe as sort of a final thing, I think you've seen an enormous change of reception of Chinese art in the West. Let's talk particularly about the United States. In the 80's when you were writing and had come back from China with all this fresh information, what was your feeling about the interest among Americans and the American art world vis-à-vis Chinese art? Did you see that change during the 80's? Lets just speak specifically to America and maybe New York since that's where you were at the time.

(JC): I would say that when I was asked what I was doing and I was saying I was working in the field of contemporary Chinese art, people would say, "What?!" And I would say, "Yes, contemporary Chinese art." And they would say, "Oh, is there any out there? Don't the Chinese only paint Maoist socialist realist work?" And this was in the '80's. So I would say "No," and sometimes I would even show slides to prove my point.

I remember I had an old friend who was a very high-class dealer. At least he thinks he's high class. And I showed him some slides and he just laughed. I mean, you have got to be kidding me right? Oh and I made a proposal to the director of the NYU gallery, and do you know what he said to me? "We don't show third-world art." He went off and became the director of some other important museum.

I'll give you another example. The Guggenheim. The curator would not see me, even the secretary wouldn't see me. They mailed everything back to me. I mean, it was absolutely, clam shell-closed. There was no way that anybody gave it any credibility. And then of course the 90's weren't so different. But then the year 2000 hit and it seemed to be the key turning point, and I guess Sotheby's started having sales rather suddenly as well. It's very interesting to observe the relevance of a country's economy with its art world perception. The minute a country becomes an economic power player, for example, Japan or Korea, its art becomes much more dear. This is exactly what happened with China. The minute that China's economy became what it is today, people thought, "Oh, there must be something interesting, let's have a look." Then the frenzy, which of course had a lot to do with the fact that Chinese are famous gamblers. Uli Sigg even named his show 'Mahjong', and mahjong is of course a famous Chinese gambling game. If you know Chinese who play mahjong, they do it night and day and are fanatical about it. And Zhang Xiaogang became the chip and what fun. It didn't mean anything except fun. And then of course the economic situation changed and so did the market.

(JD): Yes, but it seems to have gone right back up! Based on the last auction in Hong Kong, the Chinese are still in the game. We've all folded, but they are all still in the game. The Chinese in fact came to it quite late; there was a lot of interest in Europe. You had the Venice Biennale, and the China Avant-garde show in '93. You had much more interest. Oxford had a very interesting show in 1993 too. You know there was more interest around during the 90's among Europeans.

(JC): [Pointing to Wang Keping's wooden sculpture] And this was of course in the first 1979 Star-Star show, and I showed it in my exhibition in 1982 at Smith College. The painting The Chinese Dream went from the Smith College Museum to the Boston City Hall Museum, and then to the Brooklyn Museum, and the Brooklyn Museum curator would not show this torso because he found it too provocative. And that Wang Keping called *Idol*, and the original piece was in the 1980 show at the National Art Gallery. The original piece was made of wood and then Wang Keping, upon arriving in Paris, made six casts in bronze, and I have one of them. It's a little bit larger than the original wood piece, but it was such a scandal in that time, because you just did not criticize or make jokes about Mao. It was absolutely impossible, and this clearly was a joke.