

Huang Rui's artistic activities 1976-1984

Key Dates in Chinese History and Art 1976-1984

1976

On the evening of April 3rd, at the spontaneous demonstration of mourning for Zhou Enlai on Tiananmen Square, Huang Rui hung the Heroes' Column with paper and recited his poem "The People's Grief". He was arrested on April 7th and held for questioning. After the earthquake in Tangshan, near Beijing, on July 28th, Huang Rui was set free. His poem, "The People's Grief", was printed in 400 copies and circulated as a "counterrevolutionary document" by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, which was then still dominated by the so-called Gang of Four.

Jan. 8, Premier Zhou Enlai dies in Beijing.

Feb. 21-29, United States President Richard Nixon makes historic visit to China.

April 4, From the end of March crowds begin to gather in Tiananmen Square to mourn the death of Zhou Enlai. Over two million people from all over China made the trip to Tiananmen Square.

April 5, the Tiananmen Square Incident. At 9PM, ten thousand soldiers, from local militia, three thousand policemen and five battalions of army personnel surrounded the crowd gathered at Tiananmen Square. The forces attacked the crowd and made mass arrests.

July 28, at 3:42AM a 7.8 scale earthquake struck at Tangshan in Hebei province and effects were felt in Beijing and Tianjin. Over 242,000 people were killed.

Sept. 9, Chairman Mao Zedong dies in Beijing.

Oct. 6, under the authority of Mao's successor Hua Guofeng and veteran cadres, the Gang of Four is arrested. This symbolized the end of the tens years of Cultural Revolution.

Oct. 21, in Beijing 1.5 million soldiers and civilians demonstrated in an impressive display of force to celebrate the fall of the Gang of Four.

1977

Huang Rui took part in the first university entrance exams after the Cultural Revolution. He wanted to enter the Central Academy of Art, but was not accepted.

He made sketches for the painting *The Interrogated* and began to paint small-scale landscapes in oil. Meanwhile, his contact with poets such as Bei Dao, Mang Ke and Yan Li intensified.

Later in the year, he began to paint *The Interrogated*.

April 15, the fifth volume of Mao's Selected Works is published.

July 16-21, the Third Plenum of the Tenth CPC convenes in Beijing and retroactively appoints Hua Guofeng as the Chairman of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) and Chairman of the Military Commission of the CCP Central Committee. Deng Xiaoping is restored and named Vice Chairman of the Central Committee of the CCP.

Dec., the national system of university entrance exams resumes.

In the spring, Huang Rui entered the Worker's Artistic Creation Department and was introduced to teachers such as He Baosen and Chen Shaoping. He finished the oil painting *The Interrogated*. It was exhibited by the Worker's Artistic Creation Department. Huang Rui went on to paint "April 5th, 1976".

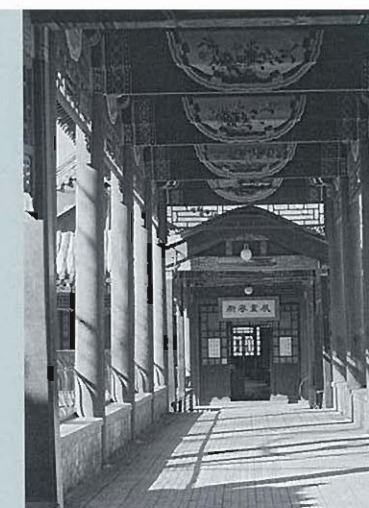
In October, Bei Dao, Mang Ke and Huang Rui met in their private courtyards and founded the literary magazine *Today (Jintian)*. Huang Rui was the art editor. The People's Publishing House brought out a collection of *Tiananmen Poems* that included Huang Rui's "The People's Grief". On December 23rd, the first issue of *Today* was distributed at the Xidan Democracy Wall in Beijing. The mimeographed copies sold out on the first day. In the course of publishing *Today*, Huang Rui met the woodcut artist Ma Desheng. The two became lifelong friends and collaborators.

In the course of publishing *Today*, Huang Rui met Qu Leilei, Zhong Acheng (who became the writer A Cheng), and Bao Yun.

In March he went to the opening of the New Spring Painting Exhibition. He knew some of the participating painters, and was stirred up by the exhibition. In April Huang Rui participated in the Jintian Poetry Reading at Bayi Park. He painted the stage background on bed sheets.

In early April, when sketching in Yuanmingyuan (the Old Summer Palace), he decided to organize "The Stars"

March 1979, the New Spring Painter's Exhibition in Zhongshan Park showcased government supported new art. / photograph by Li Xiaobin



April 5, Central Committee of CCP approved of the report from the Department of United Front Work and the Department of Public Security over reinstating the rights of all 'rightists' condemned from 1957 and onwards.

May 18, remains of a seven-thousand year old prehistoric culture were discovered in Hemudu, Zhejiang province.

June 26-28, the First Plenary Conference of the Family Planning Group of the State Council advocates that couples only have one child or two daughters at the most.

Aug. 11, the short story "Scar" is published in Shanghai's Wen Jiang Daily. The story has strong repercussions within society.

Nov. 18, Hua Guofeng wrote the title for the to-be-published Poems from Tiananmen, a collection of poetry and polemics published, recited or distributed on Tiananmen Square throughout April 1976. The collection included "The Mourning of the People" by Huang Rui.

Dec. 18-22, the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee convenes in Beijing. The guiding policies of "class struggle" and the "continued revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat" are overturned.

March, an exhibition of French 19th century landscape paintings opens at the China Art Museum.

Jan. 1, China and the United States normalize diplomatic relations.

Feb. 17, the Chinese army launched a "war of defensive retaliation" against Vietnam along the border region of the two countries.

April 30, the State Council announced its approval for laid-off urban youth worker to return to their former workplaces.

Nov. 26, Deng Xiaoping states that: "We are primarily a planned economy with elements of a market economy, thus a market economy with socialist characteristics."

1978

1979



Sept. 1979, The First Stars Exhibition, paintings hung on fence from left first two Huang Rui's works, third work by He Baosen. / offered by Huang Rui

exhibition, aimed at Beijing's amateur artists, open to any subject matter, form, and material.

Huang organized it with Ma Desheng, and found a venue with the help of the Beijing Artists' Association. He found participating artists and met Wang Keping through Qu Lelei.

Huang Rui visited the April Photographic Society exhibition, and became friends with Chi Xiaoning, Li Xiaobin, Wang Zhiping and other photographers.

In May, he led the founding meeting at 76, Dongsishitiao and named it "The Stars Exhibition".

On September 27, The Stars showed their works in the park adjacent to the east wing of the National Gallery, including *Yuanmingyuan*, *New Life*, *Testament* and *April 5th*, 1976

On September 29th, they clashed with the Dongcheng District Public Security Bureau. On the 30th, the Stars had a discussion meeting with their friends from the underground democracy magazines. Huang Rui opposed staging a protest march.

On October 1 (National Day), he read aloud the Stars protest note and took part in the protest march to the city government building.

From November 23 to December 2, The Stars exhibited their works at Huafangzhai in Beihai Park, with the help of Liu Xun, chairman of the Beijing Artists' Association.

Sponsored by Liu Xun, Huang Rui, Ma Desheng, and Wang Keping became members of the Beijing Artists' Association. With the support of Jiang Feng, chairman of the Chinese Artists'

Dec. 6, the Xidan Democracy Wall is sealed off.

Feb., the New Spring Painting Exhibition opens in the waterside pavilion of Zhongshan Park.

April, *Today* organizes its first outdoor poetry reading.

Oct., *Today* organizes its second outdoor poetry reading.

Sept, the murals at Beijing Airport are completed and opened to the public. Yuan Yunsheng's painting of the Water-Sprinkling Festival attracts controversy.

Sept. 2-7, The First Stars Exhibition opens in the garden on the east side of the China Art Museum.

Sept. 29, the Public Security Bureau bans the exhibition.

Oct. 1, members of the Stars and pro-democracy publications organize a protest demonstration and march.

Nov., Jiang Feng assumes the post of Chairman of the China Artists' Association.

Nov. 23 - Dec. 2, the Stars Exhibition opens for a second time in Huafangzhai in Beihai Park.

May 17, the Central Committee of the CCP holds a meeting mourning the death of Comrade Liu Shaoqi in the Great Hall of the People.



Jan. 1983, Huang Rui in the old streets of Shaoxing. / offered by Huang Rui

Association, the second "Stars" exhibition took place on the third floor of the National Gallery from August 20th to September 7th. Huang Rui showed several new oil paintings, including *Strings Lament*, *Four Seasons* and *The female road worker*. In autumn, at the invitation of the Central Academy of Fine Arts' (CAFA) student union, he took part in a CAFA symposium, together with four other Stars.

At the invitation of several artists outside Beijing, Huang Rui and Ma Desheng (accompanied by Chen Yansheng) decided to travel far and wide, and used the chance to spread the word about the Stars. From late October to early January 1981, they visited 26 cities and gave about ten talks on "The Stars and Contemporary Art", to an audience of hundreds at the Artists' Associations of Pucheng in Shanxi, and of Xi'an, at the Sichuan Art Academy's main auditorium, at the Guiyang City Artists' Association, at the art department of the Guangxi Teachers' College in Liuzhou, at the Fine Arts School of Guilin City, and at the graduate students' dormitory of the Guangzhou Fine Arts School.

Ai Weiwei, a "Stars" member, left for the US to study. Li Shuang was detained for marrying a French diplomat.

Huang Rui began a large series of Beijing daily life scenes in multilayer lacquer technique.

Huang Rui painted "Democracy Wall", because the real Democracy Wall was torn down.

He resumed his private life, frequently meeting poets and painters.

Today was closed, because the paperwork for its registration was "incomplete".

Self-edited and printed collection of poetry "Meaningless Poems".

Regularly attended scholarly discussions organized by *Today*.

Aug. 30 - Sept. 10, Zhao Ziyang is appointed the Premier of the State Council.

Sept. 26, the Central Committee of the CCP issues details concerning the trial of Lin Biao and Jiang Qing (Madame Mao) Anti-revolutionary groups.

March, Li Xianting's *Meishu* magazine publishes a special report on the Stars Exhibition.

July, "Of the Same Generation" exhibition opens in Beijing.

Aug. 20 - Sept. 7, the Second Stars Exhibition opens in the China Art Museum.

April 20, the People's Liberation Army Daily published a leader from its special correspondent: "The Four Cardinal Principles shall not be trespassed - On the film script of *Unrequited Love*." The film writer Bai Ye endured continuous attacks and criticisms in the following three years.

June 14, the Central Committee of the CCP releases "A Summary of the Forum on Urban Public Security in Five Major Cities: Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Wuhan". A policy of "comprehensive administration" which emphasizes public order is implemented.

Nov. 1, the Research Institute of Traditional Chinese Painting is established in Beijing.

1982

Due to the launching of the "Campaign Against Spiritual Pollution", the "Stars" activities came to a low ebb.

Painted abstract Beijing street scenes and Chinese brush paintings.

Travelled to Wutaishan with the poet Mang Ke, and to Beidaihe and Qinhuangdao with poets Jiang He and Ling Bing.

Met female Japanese exchange student Fujiko Tomo, continued to travel throughout southern China.

At A Cheng's suggestion, began reading "1587: A Year of No Significance", "Daodejing", and other Chinese classics.

1983

In spring, Huang Rui continued to travel in southern China and became fascinated by the Chinese feeling for form in Suzhou's gardens.

Then he became acquainted with a foreign painter for the first time. He was intrigued by her minimalism, and simplified his own paintings under this influence.

Prepared formalities for marrying abroad, together with Wang Keping.

From August 14th to August 21st, exhibited his works together with those of Ma Desheng and Wang Keping at Zixinlu Elementary School in Xuanwu district, Beijing. The Exhibition was ordered closed on the 19th by the Beijing City Public Security Bureau.

Was criticized by name in internal documents of the Arts' system, and heard later that Huang Rui, Ma Desheng, and Wang Keping were barred from taking part in exhibitions, from having their names mentioned in any media, and from joining any government organization.

April 13, the Central Committee of the CCP and the State Council announced their intentions to punish "grievous economic crimes and misdemeanors."

Sept. 1 - Nov., The Twelfth National Congress of the CPC convenes in Beijing.

April 13 - May 5, an exhibition of German Expressionist paintings opens at the Minority Palace of Culture.

Sept. 13, Chairman of the China Artists' Association, Jiang Feng dies after being labeled an ultra-leftist and undergoing criticism.

Jan. 12, Deng Xiaoping states that it should be permitted for a portion of the population to become rich first, whether in urban or rural areas, and wealth through honest toil is a righteous thing.

Feb., the oldest extant portion of the Great Wall is discovered in Shaanxi province. This section is over 200 li in length, and built of stone.

Oct., the Second Plenary Session of the 12th CPC establishes Campaign Against Spiritual Pollution as a nationwide movement.

Dec. 26, the entire nation launches celebrations for the 90th anniversary of the birth of Mao Zedong.

April 2, Zhang Daqian, master traditional Chinese painter dies in Taipei.

May 5 - 25, a Picasso exhibition opens at the China Art Museum.

Aug. 14 - 21, Ma Desheng, Huang Rui, and Wang Keping exhibit their works at Zixin Road Elementary School. The exhibition is closed by the public security bureau on the 19th.

Oct. 6 - 18, an exhibition of Edvard Munch opens at the China Art Museum.

Huang Rui painted several paintings exploring spatial structures.

Early in the year, Li Shuang left for France, in May Wang Keping went to France, and in July Huang Rui obtained the visa to go and live in Japan.

In August, Huang Rui held a successful individual exhibition at the Central Gallery in Osaka. Met abstract Japanese painters Kazuo Shiraga and others. He was influenced by the trend and entered into the Japanese age of "abstract expressionism".

Huang Rui had left the stage of Chinese art, until going back to Beijing temporarily from 1992 to 1994.

(Translated by Jacqueline Winter.)

Invitation to the First Stars Exhibition

Huang Rui at home in his small kitchen cooking. His mother, in the background, offered by Huang Rui



1984

Jan. 24 - 29, Deng Xiaoping inspects the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) of Shenzhen and Zhuhai.

April 26 - May 1, United States President Ronald Reagan visits China.

April 28, in discussions with President Reagan, Deng Xiaoping states the key point in Sino-US relations is the Taiwan question.

Sept. 26, the Chinese and British governments issue a joint communiqué on the issue of Hong Kong. The communiqué states that on July 1, 1997 the Chinese government will resume sovereignty over Hong Kong, and that on the same day the British government will return Hong Kong to China.

Oct. 1, in celebration of the 35th anniversary of the founding of the PRC, magnificent troop parades and masses of people march in Beijing.

(Translated by Henri Stéphan Benaim.)

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