

Art's Public Lives: Sculpture in China After 1949

by

Vivian Y. Li

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Doctoral Committee

**Associate Professor Joan Kee, Chair
Professor Alexander D. Potts
Professor Martin J. Powers
Professor Wang Zheng**

To the artists and the lives their art affected

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Glossary of Names

Chinese Names

Ai Zhongxin, 艾中信 (1915-2003)
Cai Guo-Qiang, 蔡国强 (1957-)
Cao Chunsheng, 曹春生 (1937-)
Ceng Zhushao, 曾竹韶 (1908-2012)
Fan Di'an, 范迪安 (1955-)
Feng Hejun, 冯贺军 (1963-)
Fu Tianchou, 傅天仇 (1920-1990)
Guo Moruo, 郭沫若 (1892-1978)
Hua Junwu, 华君武 (1915-2010)
Hua Tianyou 滑田友 (1901-1986)
Jiang Quangui, 姜全贵
Li Jinfa, 李金发 (1900-1976)
Li Pingfan, 李平凡 (1922-)
Li Qisheng, 李奇生
Li Wencai, 刘文彩 (1887-1949)
Liang Qichao, 梁启超 (1873-1929)
Liang Sicheng, 梁思成 (1901-1972)
Lin Huiyin, 林徽因 (1904-1955)
Lin Wenzheng, 林文铮 (1902-1989)
Liu Kaiqu, 刘开渠 (1904-1993)
Long Dehui, 龙得辉 (1932-)
Long Xuli, 龙绪理
Lu Dingyi, 陆定一 (1906-1996)
Lu Xun, 鲁迅 (1881-1936)
Luo Yaohui, 罗耀辉 (1933-)
Ma Gaihu, 马改户 (1928-)
Ma Li, 马力 (1915-1995)
Omura Seigai, 大村西崖 (1868-1927)
Qu Qiubai, 瞿秋白 (1899-1935)
Song Dong, 宋冬 (1966-)
Sun Meilan, 孙美兰 (1931-)

Teng Baiye 腾白也 (1900-1980)
Wang Bingzhao, 王炳照 (1934-2009)
Wang Guanyi, 王官乙 (1935-)
Wang Jinyuan, 王静远 (1884-1970)
Wang Linyi, 王临乙 (1908-1997)
Wang Nan, 王楠
Wang Tao, 王韬 (1828-1897)
Wang Zhaowen, 王朝闻 (1909-2004)
Wu Biduan, 伍必端 (1926-)
Wu Mingwan, 伍明万 (1932-)
Wu Zuoren, 吴作人 (1908-1997)
Xiao Chuanjiu, 萧传玖 (1914-1968)
Xu Beihong, 徐悲鸿 (1895-1953)
Yang Fayu, 杨发育 (1930-)
Yu Jianhua, 俞剑华 (1895-1979)
Ye Shengtao, 叶圣陶 (1894-1988)
Ye Yushan, 叶毓山 (1935-)
Yin Xiuzhen, 尹秀珍 (1963-)
Zhan Wang, 展望 (1962-)
Zhang Fulun, 张富纶 (1939-)
Zhang Songhe, 张松鹤 (1912-2005)
Zhao Shutong, 赵树同 (1935-)
Zhou Enlai, 周恩来 (1898-1976)
Zhou Yang, 周扬 (1908-1989)

Russian Names

Nikolay Tomsky (Николай Томский, 汤姆斯基), 1900-1984
Matvey Manizer (Матвей Манизер, 马尼泽尔), 1891-1966
Nikolay (Nikolaevich) Klinduhov (Николай Клиндухов, 尼古拉·尼古拉耶维奇·克林杜霍夫)
Kerbel Lev Efimovich (Кербель Лев Ефимович, 凯尔别), 1917-2003
Elagin (Елагин, 叶拉金)
Vladimir Tolstoy (Вл Толстой, 托尔斯泰)

ABSTRACT

Art's Public Lives: Sculpture in China After 1949

by

Vivian Y. Li

Chair: Joan Kee

This dissertation considers through sculpture how after the Communist Revolution in 1949 the official line in China for art to serve “the people,” or *renmin*, sought to institutionalize a new value system in the arts. Specifically, how did the idea of “the people” shape artistic practice and how did the artist through his or her artwork will the concept of “the people” into being? What was the role of sculpture in mobilizing the masses around the idea of “the people”? The case studies of three important sculptural projects—*Monument to the People’s Heroes* (1952-1958), the *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition* (1964), and *Rent Collection Courtyard* (1965)—reveal the actual challenge of shaping into concrete form an idea on which the Chinese state grounded its own sense of nation. By focusing on how sculpture was interacting with its audience rather than what is being represented, this study asserts the centrality of sculptural aesthetics involving three-dimensional scale, materiality, and process in engaging the viewer with the politics of postwar socialist China. Sculpture’s significance under the leadership of Mao Zedong lies not

only in how sculpture functioned as a visual and tangible national symbol to assert a certain definition of “the people,” but also in how it posited a new kind of people, or humanism, for the world during the rise of international Maoism in the 1960s and 1970s. By way of rigorous visual analysis, archival research, and personal interviews, this study also reveals the uneven development of cultural production on the ground versus the state’s absolute vision, which included tasking artists in early Communist China to create a new culture for a new nation.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

“Statue of an Ancient Hero” (*Gudai yingxiong de shixiang*), a famous 1930s children’s short story written by Ye Shengtao recounts the destruction of a statue by the very stones which construct it. The prideful stone at the top of a heroic ancient figure standing in a public square becomes self-conscious when he is reminded by the stones at the statue’s base that they were all once at the beginning a single stone block. Eventually the stones all become aware of potentially representing a “fake” hero and decide to quit supporting the false idol. They dismantle themselves so that “the statue suddenly fell, like a swimmer jumping into the water from a height.”¹ In the end the stones are repurposed to build a new road and reportedly are happy being equals with each other and with their newfound utilitarian purpose.

The stones’ sudden self-iconoclasm in a bid for equality on the ground reflects the desire for what in the early 20th century was the awakening of a unified national consciousness after many years of war, corruption, and foreign encroachment. Specifically, a desire for a democratic revolution that existed since the late 19th century and that the Chinese Communist Party claimed inheritance to in its coalescence of a nation based on the equalizing concept of “the people” after the 1949 Communist Revolution. The final position of all the stones on the ground thus represents not only the toppling of a social hierarchy, but also the utopian social leveling of all

¹ Yeh Sheng-Tao, “Statue of an Ancient Hero,” *Chinese Literature* (March 1954): 132.

difference. Besides its intense sociopolitical implications, Ye Shengtao's short story about the dramatic toppling of a heroic statue in a square also recognizes a new understanding of the role of material and space in shaping that order in 20th century China. The effortlessly changed status of the sculpture in the story from a heroic icon to a quotidian road therefore poses a question not only to the politics of the day, but also to the function of sculpture for modern times: is sculpture the function of the pedestal on which it is placed or of the physical space surrounding it?

Sculpture invites thinking of art not in isolation but in terms of juxtaposition, where its materiality and space are measured only when the material of art is juxtaposed next to another, whether it is the body of the viewer, other bodies or structures in its immediate built environment or social setting, or other artworks and images. The act of juxtaposing assumes a reason for the juxtaposition. Yet, unlike other ways of analyzing objects through relationships, such as comparison that assumes a degree of commensurability between the objects being compared, juxtaposition does not seek to define and classify. Thinking about objects through juxtaposition does not assume an incommensurability either, but rather recognizes the contingent nature of the relationships created by the juxtaposition. Looking at sculpture as a function of what it is juxtaposed to at a given moment and the relationships and experiences that is thus created is an attempt to circumvent the issues surrounding existing methodologies—specifically comparison, iconology, cultural politics, and narrative—used to regard and understand modern art in China, and in general modern art outside of Euro-America. Each method has contributed in different ways to the understanding of the history of art and culture in modern China, for instance the reception of foreign art forms and practices by comparing Chinese modern art with its counterpart in Europe and later Soviet art; the meaning of Maoist period visual imagery in the arts; and the impact of politics on the lives of artists and institutions in Communist China.

However, they also tend to be predicated on problematic binaries, such as East/West, original/derivative, or authoritarianism/democracy. Such binaries subsequently order the artworks into a listing or cataloging of supporting evidence for these binaries rather than analyze the art object or its artistic, social, and political agency. By thinking about sculpture in terms of its physical space and the different juxtapositions and relationships in which it participated, I place sculpture made in China after 1949 in conversation with the immediate and larger artistic and sociopolitical worlds in which it was created.

To consider modern art through sculpture in China, as did various Chinese art and culture writers in the first half of the twentieth century, is therefore also to reconsider the experience of viewing art and the meaning of this modern, and decidedly public, social activity. Does the experience of viewing entail just seeing, or something more active, such as witnessing or performing? What did the experience of art supposedly offer in early Communist China and how was this experience defined by sculpture? The contemporaneous variety of methods for the public viewing of art practiced in the early People's Republic, from outdoor street exhibitions to the institutional space of museums, indicates an increased awareness of the conditions and context that frame the viewing experience.

The driving concept of the viewing experience in the People's Republic of China was founded on imagining "the people," which the Chinese Communist Party exhorted artists "to serve" (*fuwu*) in their artistic practice. In Mao Zedong's pivotal Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art in 1942 that became adopted as the official rubric for artistic and cultural production in Communist China, Mao clearly posits the audience for art and literature as being the masses of "the people," constituted by the social groups of the workers, peasants, and

soldiers.² Despite Mao's unequivocal pronouncement at Yan'an for artists and writers, though, "the people" in fact describes a rather elusive concept. As contemporary novelist Yu Hua recounted in the opening of his recent book, *China in Ten Words*, where he began with the word *renmin*, when he grew up in Maoist China during the 1960s and 1970s everybody was taught to recite, "Since 1949 the people are the masters." In retrospect he writes of the word *renmin*, "I can't think of another expression in the modern Chinese language that is such an anomaly—ubiquitous yet somehow invisible."³ Although Mao's Talks at Yan'an delineated his and the Party's position that servicing the trinity of the proletariat was to be the insistent focus of cultural production, the actual tremendous shifts in politics and the definition of "the people," along with the contentious issue of how exactly to interpret Mao's dictum, were what came to characterize art and cultural production in the early People's Republic.

When the People's Republic of China (*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo*) was established in 1949, the Communist party institutionally appropriated the term of the people, *renmin*, not only for the name of the new nation but also from its official national newspaper, the *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao*) to its currency, the people's money (*renminbi*). In addition to the Communist party's emphatic ubiquitous use of "the people" to symbolize the arrival of the governance by and for the people in the making of history, existing historical institutions and spaces also had to be reconfigured in the present to serve Mao's vision of the progression of history. Therefore, the spectral anonymity of "the people" and its impact on the arts and culture of Communist China was undeniably visceral in how it shaped as well as was willed into form by artists and their artistic production. In dealing with officially recognized sculptural works from the early

² Mao Zedong, "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art," trans. Julia F. Andrews, in *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893-1945*, ed. Kirk A. Denton (Stanford: Stanford University, 1995), 460-461.

³ Yu Hua, *China in Ten Words*, Allan Barr, trans. (New York: Pantheon, 2011), 3.

Communist period, this dissertation project also will interrogate the changing concept of "the people" as one that was increasingly less about multiplicity than it was about a collective will. This study will in addition explore the inherent inconsistencies and contradictions of a united "people" sculptors had to anticipate, navigate, or resolve in their artmaking.

The first chapter provides an overview of the development of sculpture in China since the early 20th century followed by three case studies that epitomize sculpture made for different scales of viewer engagement and in various sites of public space devoted to representing "the people" in China after 1949: *Monument to the People's Heroes (Renmin yingxiong jinianbei)* in Beijing's Tiananmen Square that was completed in 1958; the *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition (Sichuan diaosu zhan)* in 1964 that opened at the China Art Museum in Beijing; and *Rent Collection Courtyard (Shouzu yuan)* made in 1965 in the then remote western province of Sichuan.

The first sculpture case, *Monument to the People's Heroes*, was the first post-1949 memorial sculpture in China. Conceived just two months after the founding of the new government, it was methodically planned and constructed from 1952 to 1958 to commemorate events that preceded the founding of the nation. *Monument to the People's Heroes* was part of Mao's larger transformation project of Tiananmen Square, the centuries-old site of imperial politics, into a grand "people's square." Made by a collaborative team of leading architects and sculptors, *Monument to the People's Heroes* consists of a giant granite obelisk in the shape of a stele with eight marble panels at the base of its shaft that depicts a narrative progression of seven turning points in modern Chinese history culminating in the final Communist Revolution. The study of the making and construction of *Monument to the People's Heroes* reveals the inherent

problem of imagining and physically scaling the diversity of “the people” to the ideals of a unified new nation.

Besides large-scale sculpture in public spaces, the other kind of sculptural works commonly seen were works of small-scale primarily shown in art exhibitions. The second case study, the *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition*, was acclaimed for its works showing the new intimate relationship between artists and their subjects of “the people.” By analyzing key works in the exhibition, this chapter explores the meaning of affect and form, and their relationship to the discursive notion of experience. The increased regulation and contained range of officially acknowledged experiences began especially with vigor in the aftermath of the disastrous Great Leap Forward from 1958 to 1961 where tens of millions of people died in the ill-planned national prioritizing of industrial over agricultural production. The *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition* demonstrates the gradual visual typecasting of the characteristics of “the people” in tandem with the expanding notion of “the people” in China to encompass the contemporary ambitions of China within the shifting world order of the early 1960s.

The third case of *Rent Collection Courtyard* was created collectively in 1965 by the sculpture faculty and graduate students of the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in collaboration with the art staff at the rural manor-house museum in which it is permanently installed. Situated not in an outdoor public space like a square or in an art exhibition hall, but in a former landlord’s private rural manor home that was repurposed into a public class-education museum, *Rent Collection Courtyard* is a 96-meter long sculptural installation comprising 114 life-sized clay figures. In six continuous tableaux, the work depicts the story of downtrodden farmers submitting their harvest as rent to their landlord in pre-Communist revolution China. Done as part of the rural Socialist Education Movement in the early 1960s to reassert the authority and

faith in the Party after the Great Leap Forward by dramatizing the rhetoric of an even more horrific pre-Communist Revolution past of class struggles, *Rent Collection Courtyard* reflects a heightened narrowing of characters of “the people” as well as its enemies that presages the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). This chapter considers how the art team’s manner of collective production that incorporated the countryside and its members of “the people” on the one hand presented a new paradigm for artistic production that was readily reproduced and propagated nationally and internationally. On the other hand, the creation of *Rent Collection Courtyard* also exemplifies the practical and conceptual limitations to truly creating an art for the people.

The choice of these three discrete cases—a large-scale monument, smaller-format sculptures designed for gallery exhibition, and a large-scale sculptural tableau—may seem arbitrary, but they represent the major types of sculpture that structured the discourse of Chinese postwar sculpture. Unlike the writing of postwar sculpture in Euro-America that turns on the sculptor’s approach to space and form, sculpture in postwar China was first understood in terms of the predetermined social setting and scale to which the sculptor was commissioned to respond to in their work.

One must exercise caution in addressing the omnipresent surveillance as well as censorship and self-censorship during the Maoist period, especially when analyzing officially celebrated artworks such as these. Yet the undeniably real repercussions of the art of this period on art and culture in modern and contemporary China as well as around the world more generally warrant serious study and questioning. By exploring the nature and making of sculpture in relation to the art discourses and sociopolitical elements of the early People’s Republic, this study seeks to contribute towards clarifying as well as complicating the relationship between

artists and the Communist state. In so doing, it proposes how we can understand the development and significance of sculpture in modern art outside of Euro-America and capitalist societies.

CHAPTER 2

Sculpture Reconsidered: Art, Life, and the Space In Between

Zhao Zhiqian's *Seated Buddha* made in 1862 is remarkable for being one of the earliest visual representations of a Buddhist sculpture (figure 1). Despite the abundance of Buddhist sculpture, scholarly antiquarians of the Ming and Qing periods were typically engrossed with studying and reproducing the inscriptions at ancient Buddhist grotto sites for their historical content and calligraphic aesthetics more than the sculptures. Zhao's *Seated Buddha* shows a seated meditating Buddha whose body and halo are tightly circumscribed by an arch. The archaic characters in large seal script at the top identify the figure as Amitabha Buddha, while an ink rubbing positioned immediately below the figure, assumedly of an inscription on the sculpture's actual base, is dated 530 CE.⁴ The arched background and the inscribed rectangular base on which a Buddha image sits resonates with the conventional composition for sculpted steles of seated Buddhas. This intentional association with the sculptural is advanced by the crisp, clean outlines of the pictured forms to convey an impenetrable, solid surface.

However, despite the visual overtures to sculpture and its physical properties, the image of the Buddha is neither painted in emulation of a sculpted object nor as a transcendent, otherworldly deity but rather like a real person. Depth and volume of the seated body are alluded to, but by an inconsistent arrangement of light and shade between the equally unconvincing lines of drapery folds. Furthermore, the face is executed as a flat, stylized human face. Zhao's

⁴ According to the ink rubbing however, the Buddha image it describes is of Sakyamuni.

meticulous pictorial reference to the sculptural object all except in the execution of the central image demonstrates the problem in the imaging of sculpture of having to reconcile sculpture's actual material and three-dimensional objecthood with its artistic illusion. The precarious nature of sculpture's oscillation between real and illusion, which can be viewed as its limiting precondition or its versatile strength, became key to the modernization of art and society in 20th century China.

Sculpture offers a unique springboard from which to address art and practice in post-1949 Communist China since the codification of "sculpture" itself was an integral part of the discussion about how to reform art in China for the 20th century. The practice of sculpture preceded its consideration as an artistic category by 7,000 years. Though sculptures have been made in China since Neolithic times, the scholarly attention to sculpture began in China only in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Sculpture's establishment as a legitimate art form and practice was facilitated in the early 20th century by the introduction of Euro-American categories of art terminology and theories via Japan into Chinese art education, the circulation of writings about sculptors and sculptures viewed by the increased Chinese artists and intellectuals studying abroad in Europe, the training of Chinese sculptors abroad, and the growing number of exhibitions in China of sculpture and outside of China of Chinese ancient sculpture. Hence, the institutionalization of sculpture is intimately tied to the development and globalization of art's conception and practice in modern China.

The earliest concentrated study of sculpture as an aesthetic medium that was available in China was Omura Seigai's 1915 book *Shina bijitsushi (History of Chinese Art: Sculpture)*. Although sculpture in China was already a scholarly pursuit in the work of other Asian scholars, collectors, and Sinologists such as Okakura Kazuo, Édouard Chavannes, and Stephen Bushell

earlier in the late 19th century and 1910s, Omura Seigai was the first to posit Chinese sculpture as part of art history rather than an object of anthropological or archeological study.⁵ One of the first graduates of the inaugural sculpture department at the Tokyo School of Art in 1893, Omura taught East Asian and Western art history at his alma mater and coined the term *diaosu* for sculpture.⁶

After the 1902 acceptance by the Qing court of the proposal to adopt the Japanese educational model of teaching subjects, which included the arts and sciences, sculpture began to be taught in the first decade of the 20th century with the establishment of art departments in teacher colleges for the training of primary and secondary school art teachers. The earliest sculpture classes were offered at the Shanghai Fine Arts School (*Shanghai meishu xuexiao*) and the first departments devoted to sculpture were subsequently established at the Hangzhou Art School (*Hangzhou yishu zhuanke xuexiao*) and the Beiping Art College (*Beiping yishu zhuanke xuexiao*) in the 1920s. Since the late 1920s there were exhibitions of both ancient and contemporary Chinese sculpture, such as the first national art exhibition in 1929 which included contemporary Chinese sculpture, to publicly present the art of sculpture in China as practiced from ancient to contemporary times.

The paradoxical endeavor in early 20th century China to retroactively historicize and establish an artistic tradition of sculpture and at the same time locate the tradition's legacy in

⁵ Chavannes (1865-1918) published in 1909 his two volume *Mission archéologique dans la Chine septentrionale* (Paris: E. Leroux) with nearly 500 photographic plates of primarily stone sculptures dated by inscription from his six month research trip throughout north China. In 1914 Chavannes also published *Six Monuments de la sculpture chinoise* (Paris: G. van Oest and Cie). In another early influential book of Chinese art in Europe and America, the two part volume *Chinese Art* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1904 and 1906) by Stephen Bushell (1844-1908), the author proposed at the beginning of his chapter on Chinese sculpture that “There are no relics of carved stone in China to be compared in importance or antiquity with the ancient monuments of Egypt, Chaldea, and Susa” (Bushell, vol. 1, 1904, 30).

⁶ Liu Libin, *Period Sculpture: Studies on Modern Sculpture during the Republic of China (Shidai diaoxiang: minguo shiqi xiandai diaosu yanjiu)* (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2012), 61.

modern art underscores a general critical shift in attitude to the importance of the relationship between art and its physical space, in other words scale. Scale as created by sculpture establishes a certain relationship with its external surroundings and in turn an understanding of the world as experienced by its viewers. The remarkable versatility and ubiquity of sculpture allowed by its ability to be scaled down to participate in material culture and interior spaces or scaled up to impress religious and state power characterizes how sculpture stretched across social hierarchies of space to frustrate neat classification in Chinese premodern art and art history.

The challenge of delineating the fine arts category of sculpture in the early 20th century indicates how sculpture's versatile and ubiquitous nature continued to elude easy categorization. According to early 20th century Chinese publications and exhibitions, sculpture included a wide diversity of objects in hard materials from stone effigies of Buddhist deities to cast bronze ritual vessels. In addition to the ambiguity surrounding what existing forms can be appropriately identified as sculpture, there was also uncertainty about its exclusive techniques. For example, in a review by the painter and arts writer Yu Jianhua of an ancient sculpture exhibition organized by the Shanghai Art Museum (*Shanghai meishuguan*) in 1948, he questioned the show's inclusion of bronze vessels that were cast and earthenware objects that are made from neither carving nor modeling but rather pattern molds.⁷

The questioning in early 20th century China of what is sculpture not only speaks to the nascent reception of foreign sculptural concepts and techniques, but also to the serious interest in articulating sculpture's domain and role in the modern reconceptualization of art. Sculpture entailed a new perception of art's materiality, the role of the artist as a maker of objects, and the viewer as an active presence in the space of art. For instance, the neologism for sculpture,

⁷ See Yu Jianhua, "Some Thoughts After Seeing Dunhuang and Sculpture Exhibitions" (Kanle Dunhuang, diaoke liang zhan de yidian ganxiang), in *Meishu huibao* 1 (1948), 3.

diaosu, consisting of *diao*, or “to carve,” and *su*, or “to model,” reflects not only two basic approaches to sculptural practice but also recognizes the sculptor’s direct and visceral engagement acting on a material. Rather than accepting the globalizing modernist project that assumes the a priori existence of a tradition of Chinese sculpture that simply needs to be retrieved or treating the idea of sculpture as a fully formed importation from abroad, this chapter considers how the development of sculpture in China in the first half of the 20th century moved the discourse and practice of art into the space of the viewer. More widely this chapter explores how the variable nature of sculpture’s scale was able to embody the different concerns and desires for the rescaling of artistic values and the place of sculpture’s insistent materiality in modern society.

Measuring Up to the World: Sculpture in Modern Art Discourse

Until the early 20th century, literati scholars in China regarded worked sculpture as associated with the aristocracy and its patronage due to the medium’s characteristically costly and laborious material requirements. For instance, the celebrated Qing scholar Gu Yanwu (1613-1682) perceived such passionate devotion and patronage of Buddhist sculptures as an uneducated and effeminate enterprise representative of female rulers. Writing about Longmen in his *Records of Epigraphical Writings*, Gu observed:

Empress Dowager Hu of the Latter Wei was devoted to the Buddha, and she had the cliff excavated to make grottoes inside which were carved Buddha images....Later people followed her in having them made, and though practically all of them are worn down, the carving of Buddha images has not ceased even now. Most of the ignorant folk who consider the carving of a Buddha to be a work of merit that will result in the reciprocation

of blessings are women...Most inscriptions here were by Tang people, dating from the Zongzhang era (668-670) to the reign periods of Empress Wu (690-705). Hence, we know that during the time of the three dynasties of Northern Wei, Northern Qi, and Tang, there was always a female ruler who made these things for worship and adornment.⁸

Gu's critique of the irrational "ignorant folk" of predominately women casts the large-scale production of sculptural images on the cliff not as feat of artmaking but as an extravagant act of adornment and object making.⁹

Sculpture's characterization as a labor-intensive and costly art form mostly commissioned by the aristocracy contrasted with the aesthetics of naturalness and simplicity prized by the predominant literati culture that emerged in the late Tang period (618-907). Sculpture's low status as a serious art form persisted in early 20th century China. For example, even while the modern sculptor Guo Qiande, who participated with his sculpture *Bust of a Man* in the 2nd National Exhibition in 1937, was promoting the importance of sculpture in modern-day China, he questioned if foreign visitors to the groundbreaking international exhibition of Chinese art in London in 1934 were aware of the premodern sculptures' lowly status as craft made by uneducated and illiterate "vulgar artisans" (*yongsu gongjiang*) who are "neither ghosts nor people" (*fei ren fei gui de*).¹⁰ Guo's pejorative reference to the social inferiority of sculptors in

⁸ McNair, *Donors*, 62.

⁹ In Chinese literati art and culture, on the other hand, naturally found "sculpture" of fantastically shaped stones that are unworked by artists suggests though that another kind of understanding and experience of three-dimensional works was also present in premodern Chinese art besides that of carved sculpture in religious settings. The Chinese literati veneration for stone, or lithophilia, can be traced as far back as the third century BCE. Records of rocks used to frame and punctuate the design of emperor's gardens also date to more than 2,000 years ago. By the 12th century, stone collecting was an established field of connoisseurship with the publication of Du Wan's *Cloud Forest Catalogue of Rock (Yunlin shipu)* introducing the art of rock aesthetics. The literati penchant for naturally formed three-dimensional works of art appreciated the stones not so much for their representational value, but for the metaphorical connotations allowed by their very materiality and scale.

¹⁰ Gao Qiande, "The Science of Chinese Sculpture (Zhongguo diaosu kexue hua)," in *Daxue yue kan (University Monthly)* 1, 10 (1942): 22.

his article chooses not to question but rather confirm the disparaging social status of sculptors in premodern China as a valid deterrent to appreciating sculpture in modern times.

With the call for reforming the function and experience of art in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, however, the longstanding disregard among Chinese literati and Chinese society at large toward sculptural production as a legitimate category of artistic practice gradually shifted. The appeal of sculpture became also widely accepted in the early decades of the 20th century due to the increased number of Chinese artists and intellectuals who were able to study abroad in Europe through work-study programs in the first decades of the Republican period (1912-1949). Even for those who did not study art, they were struck by the ubiquitous presence of sculpture in public spaces, such as in the collections of prestigious museums and on squares in Europe. For instance, Zhou Enlai, the future first premier of the People's Republic of China, became familiar with sculpture by viewing them first-hand during his European travels, such as on a visit to the Luxembourg Museum while he was in Paris on a work-study program in the early 1920s. He sent a postcard of Auguste Rodin's *Age of Bronze* to a fellow student leader, Shi Sun, in China. Zhou wrote on the back of the postcard, "The *Age of Bronze*, this is a work by Rodin, who is so famous that I do not need to bother to introduce him. This sculpture is on display at the Luxembourg Museum."¹¹

Zhou's assumed familiarity of his friend implies not only the height of fame that the contemporary French sculptor was enjoying in Europe at the time, but also how by the 1920s knowledge of sculpture and contemporary Euro-American art was a part of the common lexicon of young social and political reformers. Most of the earliest accounts of sculpture in the early

¹¹ Hyewon Lee, "The Cult of Rodin: Words, Photographs, and Colonial History in the Spread of Auguste Rodin's Reputation in Northeast Asia" (Ph.D. diss, University of Missouri-Columbia, 2006), 69. Postcard is in the collection of Tianjin History Museum.

20th century in fact appeared not in art journals, but in influential political magazines written and edited by young May Fourth intellectuals, like *Young China* (*Shaonian zhongguo*), *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian*), and *Current News—Study Lamp* (*Shishi xinbao—Xuedeng*), which were widely read by young activists and reformers including Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai.¹² These publications circulated not only writings on modern science and democracy, but also reports and translations of articles on modern and contemporary Euro-American art and culture, including sculpture. The young poet and philosopher Zong Baihua, for example, published his article “Reflections After Seeing Rodin’s Sculpture” (*Kanle Luodan diaoke yihou*) in the March 1921 issue of *Young China*, where he describes his experience visiting the recently opened Rodin Museum in 1920 in Paris on route to Germany to study philosophy and aesthetics. Therefore, the discourse of sculpture in China initially developed not in the vein of modernizing Chinese art and aesthetics, but from the larger platform of modernizing Chinese society in general and the new social function of art in modern society.

Through these influential political journals sculpture and sculptors were thus often attributed political significance in early Republican China, as epitomized in Guo Moruo’s satirical poem, “Gangster Ode.” In response to the Japanese press’ portrayal of the Chinese students’ anti-Japanese demonstrations during the 1919 May Fourth Movement as the work of “gangsters” (*feitu*), the emerging poet while studying medicine in Japan wrote the satirical poem relating himself and his fellow May Fourth compatriots with other modern “gangster” writers and artists who are revolutionary in their respective fields, including Rodin. In “Gangster Ode”

¹² Lee, “The Cult of Rodin,” 68. The May Fourth Movement was a pivotal anti-imperialist, cultural, and political event on May 4, 1919, where student demonstrations in Beijing and other large cities across China protested the Chinese government’s weak response to the unfair treatment of China in the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles at the close of World War I. This movement created an upsurge in nationalist sentiment and politically radicalized many young intellectuals.

that was originally published in the political journal *Current News—Study Lamp* and was later included in his earliest collection of poetry, *The Goddesses* (1921), Guo wrote:

Rebelling against art of classical secret, low-down buffoon Rodin!
Rebelling against poetry of royal grandeur, thick-headed monster Whitman!
Rebelling against literature of aristocratic holiness, short-lived Tolstoy!

Now come from North, South, East, and West,
All gangsters of art and literature revolutions!
Long live! Long live! Long live!¹³

Sculpture and its practitioners were thus discussed not so much as part of a specifically “European,” or “Western” culture but an inclusive international culture with which the young Chinese intellectuals of the early 20th century desired to associate and identify with in justifying and advancing their own vision of China’s modern society.

Sculpture started significantly shaping artistic discourse in China in the latter half of the 1920s when the ruling Nationalist Party established Nanjing as its capital and China entered a relative period of stability until the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. In the late 1920s increased writings began appearing centered on the question of space in the modernization of Chinese art along with the perceived failure of the traditionally privileged two-dimensional arts of calligraphy and painting to effectively shape society. The most prominent of these writers were artists and intellectuals returning from their studies abroad to fill new posts in Republican China, such as the renowned art theorist and critic Lin Wenzheng (1902-1989). Lin returned to China in 1927 to become head of the newly established National Hangzhou Art School shortly after he graduated in art history from the Sorbonne in Paris.

¹³ Guo Moruo, “Feitusong” (Gangster Ode), in *Xuedeng* (Shanghai), January 23, 1920.

In his essay “Do Not Forget Sculpture and Architecture” from his influential 1931 book *What is Art? (Hewei yishu?)*, Lin argued in order to modernize Chinese art “the narrow path” of literati painting could not be relied on since “regular people do not even know what it is.”¹⁴ Instead, he argues, painting cannot exist and develop exclusively, but it also needs the simultaneous development of sculpture and architecture to form a closer relationship with society. Lin therefore sets up a relationship between legibility, or art that can be understood by “regular people” (*putong ren*), and the spatial and plastic arts of sculpture and architecture. He implies that legibility in art should not reside in the visual alone, but in the stimulation of all the senses in the everyday experiencing and awareness of space. A modern restructuring of art based on space, in Lin’s formulation, is thus more democratic and would allow “regular people” access to the arts.

Lin’s observation and warning not to forget sculpture and architecture also reflects the changing notions of viewership. The art viewer was no longer imagined as being an individual, or even more specifically an educated, urban viewer, but a member of the larger population of “regular people.” Government commissions of large-scale sculpture, predominately of political and military figures, also started appearing in a number of large cities such as Shanghai, Wuhan, and Nanjing in the late 1920s and early 1930s during the stable years of the Republican period. They were produced and installed on elevated bases in recently opened public areas, such as in new parks and squares that were repurposed from private imperial or elite spaces. The contemporary visible nationwide implementation of large-scale sculpture intended for crowd viewership in new public spaces resonated with Lin’s call to increase regular people’s physical access and thus viewership of the arts.

¹⁴ “putong ren geng bu zhi yishu weihe wu le.” Lin Wenzheng, “Do Not Forget Sculpture and Architecture (Mo wangji le diaoke he jianzhu),” in *Selected Writings on 20th Century Art History in China (Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu wenxuan)*, eds. Lang Shaojun and Shui Tianzhong, (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1999), 270.

In his provocatively titled book *What is Art?*, Lin furthermore proposes redefining art by the space it occupies instead of by the artwork's representational content. Positing that "all arts belong to architecture" and that architecture compels the arts to "serve the space" like a palace hall for a monarch, Lin maintains that there is an innate dependence between the arts where "architecture needs sculpture to decorate it and a hall needs paintings."¹⁵ The subsequent importance of architecture as well as sculpture and painting within the architectural framework underscores not so much the individual artwork's artistry and visual representation so much as each one's physical capacity as an aesthetic object to occupy lived space and thereupon transform society simply by virtue of being there. As he suggests, the function of architecture is "to bring together the people with today's environment."¹⁶ Therefore, Lin poses space as the traditionally overlooked common thread that unifies the arts and that will allow the intended modern audience for art, the masses of "regular people," to encounter and understand art. Lin proposed the viewing of art hence not as a visual practice of the disembodied gaze where the viewer is the passive receiver, but as a spatial event with social efficacy that could physically bring people together.

Lin's assumption of the anonymous masses as the intended viewers for modern art is indicative of the dominant belief of his generation of May Fourth intellectuals that the country's uneducated rural majority and their popular culture are the keystone of modern Chinese art and culture. The May Fourth Movement in 1919 witnessed a major shift in intellectuals' regard of the masses and their popular culture from one of derision to one of respect.¹⁷ Such post-May Fourth efforts as the folklore movement of the 1920s that saw scholars going to the countryside

¹⁵ Lin, "Do Not Forget," 271, 274.

¹⁶ Lin, "Do Not Forget," 275.

¹⁷ See Hsiao-t'i Li, "Making a Name and a Culture for the Masses in Modern China," *Positions* 9 (2001): 33-38.

to collect and preserve folk literature, the popularization trend, or *dazhonghua*, in literature, and the 1930s work of writers and artists traveling to the countryside to learn about folk art and culture in the Communist-controlled areas, embody the diversifying and popularizing of ambitions of the new generation of cultural intellectuals. By the early 1930s when Lin Wenzheng published his book, popularization did not just entail broadening the defined field of culture to include indigenous forms and knowledge, but also broadening the recipients of this reconstituted culture to include the uneducated masses. Through Lin's proposed spatial framework for art and its new viewership, the development of architecture and sculpture becomes thus imperative in the discourse of art's modern function in China and Chinese society.

While sculpture in Republican China became involved on one hand in the reconceptualization of the viewer and the viewing of art spatially, on the other hand sculpture was also evoked in the rethinking of Chinese art and culture in the larger, more conceptual space of a global art history, most notably by the prominent art educator and painter Xu Beihong. After studying in Paris and Berlin from 1919 to 1927 Xu Beihong returned to serve in numerous teaching posts in Republican China and was a vigorous promoter of Chinese modern and contemporary painting through exhibitions he helped organize in Europe in the early 1930s. Most notable are the exhibitions "Chinese Painting Exhibition" in Milan from 1933 to 1934 that also traveled to France, Germany, Belgium, and the Soviet Union, and the "Chinese Contemporary Painting" exhibition in Berlin in 1934 (figure 2). Though he is therefore most well-known for his artistic and professional contributions to modern painting, he also promoted sculpture as a critical aspect of the renaissance of Chinese art in modern times.¹⁸

¹⁸ Xu also personally supported the promising young sculptor Hua Tianyou to pursue his studies of sculpture in China through an apprenticeship and later as a study abroad student in Paris in the 1930s and 1940s.

In the 1930s Xu wrote several articles extolling renowned sculptural works he encountered during his travels in Europe, most notably the Parthenon (figure 3) and its sculptural program designed by Phidias in the 5th century BCE, as well as various works by Michelangelo that he saw in museum and church collections. For example, in his 1935 essay introducing the Parthenon that was published in *Central Daily News (Zhongyang ribao)*, Xu meticulously described the history as well as the material, layout, and dimensions of the Parthenon to convey precisely the layout of the rich architectural and sculptural program that once adorned the building's structure. Xu in his article lauds also the complex program of sculptures and reliefs that once surrounded the Parthenon, including the absent statue of the ivory and gold Athena by Phidias that the Parthenon originally housed.

Describing the Parthenon as “the largest sculpture and site of sculpture in the world” and Phidias' Athena statue as one of the ancient seven wonders of the world “praised worldwide,” Xu in his article details also the later demise of the temple site as it transformed into a church during the Middle Ages and an ammunition storage room during wartime in the late 17th century.¹⁹ He also laments the modern-day looting of the Parthenon where most of its surviving sculptures have been removed and dispersed to the national museums in Paris and London.²⁰ Because of the controversial provenance especially of the Elgin Marbles at the British Museum, Xu states that “knowing this I cannot enjoy the British Museum.” Xu's reverent and empathetic view of the Parthenon and its convoluted history casts the Parthenon not so much as a piece of foreign “Western” or “European” art and art history but as a part of a larger world history. The

¹⁹ Phidias' statue of Athena was actually not considered one of the official seven ancient wonders of the world. Though it was nevertheless acclaimed in the ancient world, Phidias' later statue of Zeus for the god's temple in Olympia was one of the actual seven wonders.

²⁰ In 1787 the Frenchman Comte de Choiseul-Gouffier transported to France two sculptural pieces that fell from the Parthenon structure, which he bequeathed to the Louvre after his death. In 1812 to 1813 Lord Elgin managed the removal of half of the surviving sculptural works at the Parthenon which was acquired by the British government in 1816 and thereupon entered the collection of the British Museum.

Parthenon thus acts as a tangible portal for Xu Beihong and his reader to access the temporal, material, and spatial history of art in the world.

The international repute and breadth of the material history of the Parthenon inspired Xu to reconsider Chinese art history also from a spatial and material perspective of permanence and ruin. Xu Beihong in his later essay in 1948, “The Movement to Revive Chinese Art,” reflects on shaping the future of Chinese art starting from reshaping its past. Reflecting again on the Parthenon along with other celebrated sculptures of European art history such as the sculptural reliefs on the mid-2nd century BCE Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, Francois Rude’s *La Marseillaise* in the early 19th century, and Auguste Rodin’s *Gates of Hell* in the late 19th century, Xu critiques Chinese scholar’s general indifference to comparable architectural and sculptural masterpieces in China “left by our ancestors” which were “right in front of us” as signs of a “great people,” such as the Great Wall, Temple of Heaven, Longmen, and Yungang.²¹ Through these famed sculptural sites in China, Xu posits the commensurability of Chinese art and culture to the artistic monuments of European culture. As in the exhibitions of modern Chinese oil and ink paintings Xu organized in Europe at the time through which he proposed exemplars of modern Chinese painting as comparable to those of European modern painting, the comparison of Chinese with European sculptural monuments allowed Xu to strategically engage Europe with China in a larger field of global art history.

Furthermore, Xu’s essay explicitly advocates not only the importance of sculpture and architecture in the study of art, but the urgent development of their legacy in modern times. Concluding that the problem he is addressing is of today and the future of art, not what has been

²¹ Xu Beihong, “The Movement to Revive Chinese Art (Fuxing Zhongguo yishu yundong),” in *Xu Beihong’s Discourse on Art (Xu Beihong lunyi)*, ed. Wang Zhen (Shanghai, Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2010), 187. Originally published on April 30, 1948 in *Yi shibao*, Tianjin.

done in the past, Xu exclaims, “We cannot become full on today’s empty stomach!”²² Like Lin Wenzheng, Xu Beihong similarly asserts the neglected arts of sculpture and architecture as key to the modernization of Chinese art. Yet for Xu sculpture’s and architecture’s importance laid not in the social endeavor of democratizing artistic literacy, but more in the project of retroactively regaining the former glory of Chinese art. Through his activities exhibiting Chinese art in Europe in the early 1930s Xu was conscious of the burgeoning field of Chinese art that was being internationally published, collected, and praised by collectors and exhibitions abroad, most notably in the largest exhibition of Chinese art at the time, the International Exhibition of Chinese Art in London from 1935 to 1936.

As Xu’s article “The Movement to Revive Chinese Art” demonstrates, concomitant with the problem of how to evaluate art in modern China was the question of how to re-evaluate its received premodern art history. The “belated” appreciation and practice of sculpture as well as architecture for centuries in the arts of China, which were as Xu Beihong wrote “right in front of us,” became labeled as symptomatic of the failure of Chinese art history to recognize and assess artistic value as compared to the people of other countries. Xu’s selection and description of these particularly massive and visually striking architectural and sculptural wonders in China—the Great Wall, Temple of Heaven, Longmen, and Yungang—speaks to also the importance given to the scale of physical presence in denoting the greatness of a culture and in turn its people in the world. Xu Beihong chose large-scale structures like the Parthenon that are towering and sprawling, which can thereby impress a grand physical presence “right in front of us.” That these ancient sites are also of various locations in China and are representative of hundreds to thousands of years of history elevates them to the profile of being the permanent

²² Xu Beihong, “The Movement to Revive,” 188.

cultural anchors of the Chinese nation. Thus, according to Xu Beihong sculpture is presented not so much as a premodern artistic practice to be revived in modern times, but an indication of a national imperative within the expanded contemporary framework of world art history. The values that governed art and culture in China in the past Xu believed had to be renewed, or in the parlance of the times “revived” (*fixing*).

In addition to arguments for regarding sculpture and more broadly Chinese modern art by way of different pertinent spatial relationships—from Lin Wenzheng’s social space of the viewer to Xu Beihong’s national space of China and the world—sculpture also entered Republican artistic discourse in the debates on visual representation. The conveying of a sense of three-dimensional space grew in importance in general artistic pedagogy and practice in China at the turn of the 20th century through the institutional adoption of modeling techniques, such as one-point perspective, anatomy, and shading, in art instruction. The importance of denoting three-dimensional space to faithfully and accurately depict reality became a line of debate in the discourse on the modernization of art. Subsequently, sculpture became recruited in the service of such early 20th century art reformers in their endeavors, such as Lin Zhou, a painter and the secretary general of the Association of Chinese Artists in France.

In his article “Contemporary Chinese Sculpture” in the catalogue of the show *Exhibition of Contemporary Chinese Paintings* at the Musée Cernuschi in Paris in 1946, Lin condemns the historical disregard of Chinese sculpture and the anonymity of Chinese sculptors as “due to some basic social and psychological problem”²³ with Chinese art and culture (figure 4). Subsequently he writes, “In Europe, the system of art is sculpture that guides painting, and to ensure his [the

²³ Lin Zhou, “La Sculpture chinoise contemporaine” (Contemporary Chinese Sculpture), in *Exposition de peintures chinoises contemporaines (Exhibition of Contemporary Chinese Paintings)*, exhibition cat., (Paris: Musée Cernuschi, 1946), 33.

artist's] technique, the painting begins by studying the statue and determining the play of light and precise rendering of proportions. In the hierarchy of Chinese art, it is the opposite where sculpture mimics painting."²⁴ In his advocacy for the employment of sculpture to remedy the absence of three-dimensional space in Chinese art, in particular Chinese painting, Lin characterizes sculpture as a defined object in space that can by its physical nature cast light and shadows and presumably exhibit accurate and "precise" proportions. Sculpture is hence assumed to be like an object in a still life rather than an artwork that is itself an interpretation of reality that confers a codified meaning. In artistic practice sculptural representation is thus understood essentially to be akin to a faithful three-dimensional reproduction of its depicted reality that therefore can aid the other visual representational arts, namely the two-dimensional art of painting, in representing depth and space accurately.

According to the French academic training of art in the early 20th century under which Lin Zhou studied and thus was likely reflecting on, the foundational creative activity of sketching from plaster models, essentially sculptures, had been an integral part of the general curriculum at the *École des Beaux-Arts* for painting, sculpture, and architecture students since the school's education reforms in the last quarter of the 19th century. Sketching from plaster casts was held as a critical platform for demonstrating a student's artistic solution to a visual problem and his or her originality.²⁵ Lin's admiration for the utilization of sculpture in artistic practice was shared by other art reformers of the Republican period, such as Xu Beihong in his arguments for rigorous realistic depiction. Xu actively promoted in art training the sketching of

²⁴ Lin, "La Sculpture chinoise," 34.

²⁵ Albert Boime, "The Teaching Reforms of 1863 and the Origins of Modernism in France," in *Art Quarterly* (Autumn 1977): 14.

plaster casts of sculptures, which became foundational to Xu's realist aesthetic ever since his formative studies at the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris in the early 1920s (figure 5).

After Xu returned to China in the late 1920s and rose to prominence through numerous leadership posts he held in art academies and eventually the position of president of the prestigious Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in Beijing and chairman of the China Artists Association (CAA) in the early People's Republic, he integrated the sketching of plaster models into the curriculum of the major art schools in China and set strict requirements for sketching that all art students had to master.²⁶ Thus, the supposedly "[European] system of art" where it is "sculpture that guides painting" that had only been in recent decades adopted at the *École des Beaux-Arts* at the time of Lin Zhou's and Xu Beihong's training there became largely influential in conceiving the relationship between sketch, space, and realism that would have profound significance and development in the art practice of Communist China.

The diverse views on sculpture as represented by Lin Wenzheng's call for the scaling of art to the space of society, Xu Beihong's concentration on the scaling of Chinese art values to the space of the world, and Lin Zhou's argument for the scaling of representational space to visual reality were all attempts to articulate a reconsideration of the space of the viewer in modern art and more generally art's relationship with modern life. However, as will become apparent in the following section about the practice of sculpture in Republican China, their discourses that evoked sculpture as a three-dimensional object occupying space rather than as a complex visual representation itself also highlights the misalignment between sculpture as theory and sculpture as practice. The fascination with sculpture in the early theorization of modern art contrasts with the tentative shift in Chinese art and society to the actual practice of sculpture. As Alex Potts has

²⁶ *Xu Beihong: Pioneer of Modern Chinese Painting* (Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2011), 90.

observed in the modernist engagement with sculpture in Europe, the continued dominance of painting in theorizing art and visual representation makes it essential “to distinguish between an actual shift from painting to work in three-dimensions and a fascination with imagining depicted forms taking shape in three-dimensions.”²⁷ Similarly, modern art theory in China was preoccupied by the two-dimensional artistic traditions of calligraphy and ink painting. Nonetheless, through such desires to rethink the value and function of art through its relationship with space in the early 20th century, sculpture as a discourse and gradually as a conventional art practice thus assumed its modern role as a credible mediator between art and life.

Sculpture as an Art Practice in Republican China

The raised profile of sculpture in the late 1920s and 1930s in Chinese art circles and art discourse also can be attributed to the return to China of many first generation sculpture art students who studied abroad in Europe, mainly in Paris, to fill new posts in various art academies and art and cultural bureaus.²⁸ They brought back with them invaluable first-hand experiences viewing, studying, and making sculpture in Europe. For example, Li Jinfa, an already accomplished young avant-garde poet in China and one of the first Chinese art students to study sculpture in Europe, visited monuments and museums in Berlin in 1922 with Lin Wenzheng and the painter Lin Fengmian (figure 6). On his return itinerary to China in late 1924 to early 1925

²⁷ Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 105.

²⁸ From 1911 to 1933 twenty-six art students studied abroad sculpture in Europe, Japan, and North America, with more than half of them studying at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Fourteen sculpture students studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, six at the Lyon Specialty School of which four later continued at the École des Beaux-Arts, two in Rome, two in Brussels, three in Tokyo, two in the U.S., and one in Canada. See Liu, *Period Sculpture*, 12-13.

he stopped by Venice, Florence, and Rome to visit famous museums as well as sculptural works in palaces, churches, and public squares. Many students also took advantage of the economic downturn in Europe during the 1930s global depression to travel, such as the sculpture student Wang Ziyun who traveled extensively in Europe to study exhibitions and sculpture in 1936, which he recalled as “the year of tourism” because many countries were promoting tourism.²⁹

The majority of Chinese sculpture students studying abroad elected to train at the prestigious École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris in the studios of French academic sculptors Henri Bouchard (1875-1960), Paul Landowski (1875-1961), Paul Niclausse (1879-1958) and Jean Boucher (1870-1939). For example, Wang Linyi, who would later become chair of the sculpture department at Beiping Art College in 1946 and would continue in this capacity when the school became the Central Academy of Fine Arts after the Communist Revolution, trained from 1931 to 1935 in the studio of Henri Bouchard (figure 7). The group of sculptors teaching at the École des Beaux-Arts represented some of the most eminent neoclassical figurative sculptors during the interwar years, as can be seen by a sampling of Henri Bouchard’s oeuvre of large figurative sculptures arrayed in his Paris studio in the early 1930s (figure 8). This group of established sculptors was also much sought after for large-scale public sculpture commissions, such as Paul Landowski’s over eight feet tall granite monument to fallen soldiers, *The Phantoms*, that was commissioned to commemorate the pivotal WWI Battle of Marne at the original battle site (figure 9). Other celebrated contemporary French sculptors working in the vein of neoclassical figuration, such as Auguste Rodin, Aristide Maillol (1861-1944), and Antoine Bourdelle (1861-1929), attracted the most admiration from the Chinese sculptors even though the Chinese sculptors were also aware of the contemporary sculptors of

²⁹ Liu, *Period Sculpture*, 60.

the emerging anti-figurative and anti-monumental trend in Euro-American art during the interwar years. However, the Chinese art students predominately favored earlier modern forms closely associated with the late 19th and early 20th centuries, such as Beaux Arts architecture, large-scale public monument, and the City Beautiful movement that their teachers and mentors embodied in their art practice and commissions. For example, Li Jinfu went to Berlin to study with Archipenko in the early 1920s but was dissuaded after seeing Archipenko's works in person, which he found "too abstract." Hua Tianyou after seeing the modern sculptures exhibited at the Louvre remarked that it was "nothing much" (*meiyou shenme dongxi*) and frequently visited the Rodin Museum instead. Such artists' refusal of the latest trends in modern sculpture in Europe and favoring instead the neoclassical monumental, figurative approach that was also very much in practice in Europe at the time underscores that they were not ignorant of the latest developments of sculpture in interwar Europe. Rather they had a different agenda and stakes for modern visual representation, one that could contrast with the supposedly inadequate artistic modes practiced in China in the past and that could portray the artist's new focus on the visceral realities in real space.

Some Chinese sculpture students additionally worked closely with their teacher as a studio assistant on commissioned public sculpture projects, such as Liu Kaiqu, the future lead sculptor of the *Monument to the People's Heroes* in the first decade of the People's Republic, for Jean Boucher.³⁰ Some sculpture students also achieved a certain amount of fame while abroad, such as Hua Tianyou, who studied at the *École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts* from 1933 to 1947. His figural study *Female Bather (Yunü)* won the silver prize at the Paris Spring Salon (Paris Salon de printemps des arts) in 1941 and his *Pondering (Chensi)* won the gold prize at the

³⁰ Liu, *Period Sculpture*, 13, 28.

Paris Spring Salon two years later in 1943 (figure 10). Additionally, from 1946 to 1948 Hua's sculptures such as *Bombardment (Hongzha)*, *Maternal Love (Mu'ai)*, and *Young China (Shaonian zhongguo)* were acquired by the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris, the Paris city government, and private collectors in Europe (figure 11), thus showing not only his work's acceptance in Europe, but also his mastery of French academic notions of sculpture.

While abroad the Chinese sculpture students as well as other members of the expatriate community of Chinese artists and intelligentsia also became conscious of the burgeoning collection and exhibition practices of the category of "Chinese sculpture" abroad that had begun at the turn of the 20th century. The development of the field of Chinese art and sculpture culminated in the groundbreaking International Chinese Art Exhibition in London that introduced the arts of China to audiences in Europe and America. One gallery was devoted exclusively to "Buddhist Sculpture" (figure 12).³¹ The Association of Chinese Artists in France organized a group of more than twenty Chinese artists to view the show. Held at the Burlington House from November 28, 1935 to March 7, 1936, the exhibition showcased approximately 3,080 objects loaned from various private and public collections worldwide in fifteen countries, including loans from China, England, Germany, France, the U.S, and Russia. The loans from private collections in England made up about half of the loans while the loans from the Chinese government accounted for approximately a third of the show.³²

The exhibition attracted 420,048 people from different countries and the attention of major English and Chinese publications, such as the *Times* in London and *Da gongbao*

³¹ For more information about the historical development of collecting and exhibiting Chinese sculpture outside of China see Stanley Abe, "The Modern Moment of Chinese Sculpture," in *Misul charyo* 82 (2012): 78-92.

³² "Reflections on Attending the London International Chinese Art Exhibition (Zhuang Shangyan, "Fu ying canjia lundun zhongguo yishu guoji zhanlanhui ji)," in *Chinese Learning and Modern Civilization Series: Art (Zhonghua xueshu yu xiandai wenhua congshu: meishu lunji)*, volume 5, eds. Chen Guoning and Cai Qiulai, Taipei: Zhongguo wenhua daxue chubanshu, 1983), 14.

(*L'Impartial*) in Tianjin which both published special issues devoted to the exhibition, as well as art publications such as *Meishu Shenghuo (Arts and Life)*.³³ After seeing the objects in the show, many of which were ancient Buddhist sculptures, the sculptors in the Association of Chinese Artists in France group who would a couple of decades later become leading sculptors and educators in Communist China—Wang Ziyun, Ceng Zhushao, and Hua Tianyou—developed interest in studying Chinese premodern sculpture.³⁴ They would revisit and develop premodern sculptural themes in their artistic practice and teaching in the early 1960s when China started turning away from Soviet models and exploring indigenous alternatives. Thus in the 1920s and 1930s Chinese art world, sculpture was understood in the realm of the international modern arts and culture in which China and its artists aspired to become active players.

Though sculpture was therefore acknowledged as an established form of art by the late 1920s within Chinese art and intellectual circles in China and abroad, Chinese sculptors who trained abroad upon their homecoming to China had to deal with a society largely unaware of what is sculpture. As Li Jinfa recounted, when he came back to China and told people he made sculpture, or *diaoke*, most people misunderstood that he “engraved seals” (*ke tuzhang*).³⁵

Furthermore, though Liu Haisu had promised Li Jinfa to open a sculpture department at his Shanghai School of Fine Arts and establish a sculpture professorship for Li in anticipation of his

³³ Widespread awareness in China of the unprecedented international exhibition in London of Chinese art and China's crucial participation in the exhibition was also emphasized in the high profile exhibitions of Chinese loans in China before and after the London show. The Chinese government arranged an exhibition of the Chinese loans in Shanghai from April 8, 1935 to May 5, 1935 and again in Nanjing upon their safe return to China for three weeks in June 1936. These shows were daily covered in the Chinese press and attracted up to 3,000 viewers including artists and archeologists from across the nation.

³⁴ In 1930 Hua had mailed a photograph of a wooden sculpture of his son's head to Xu Beihong, who was teaching at Central University in Nanjing. Xu recognized Hua's talent and recommended Hua to work on the preservation project of the sculptures at the thousand-year-old Baosheng Temple in Suzhou. While working on this project, Hua became interested in premodern Chinese Buddhist sculpture before Xu supported Hua to study sculpture in Paris in 1933, where he remained studying for the next fifteen years. Hua also had served as the president of the Association of Chinese Artists in France while studying in Paris.

³⁵ Liu, *Period Sculpture*, 168.

return in 1924, the enrollment did not materialize because of the still ambiguous notion of sculpture as an artistic practice in China. Although Li a few years later in 1928 became appointed instead as the head of China's first sculpture department at the Hangzhou National Art School with an inaugural enrollment of six sculpture students, in light of the vague social status of a sculptor in the early Republican period Li still chose many times to identify himself more as a poet than as a sculptor. Unsatisfied with his own sculpture works compared to his poetry, he once critiqued his sculpture as simply a "commodity ordered by the public."³⁶ Equating his sculptural artworks as a made to order commodity, or a manufactured object produced for a purpose outside of the autonomous space of art, echoes the longstanding literati disregard for sculpture in premodern China. Li's experiences of frustration show that though art administrators and art schools were eager to offer sculpture in their curriculum and employ Li for his coveted foreign expertise and experience to integrate sculpture into modern artistic practice, the anticipated introduction of sculpture as a formal art practice in China was anticlimactic as sculpture as a veritable art form was slow in gaining traction in society. The desire for art through sculpture to intervene in the real space of modern society thus conflicted with the understood autonomous space for art.

The second generation of Chinese sculptors returning from abroad faced similar social challenges, such as Liu Kaiqu, a prominent sculptor since the 1930s. After he returned to China

³⁶ "Yi jie shi gong ren dingzao de shangpin." Li Jinfa, "Shi wen da", in *Wenyi huabao* 1, n. 3 (February 15, 1935). Most first generation Republican period sculptors of the 1920s did not solely sculpt but also painted and studied painting too while studying abroad in Europe, such as Jiang Xiaojian, Pan Yuliang, and Teng Baiye. They exhibited their sculptures as well as their paintings in solo exhibitions, group exhibitions, and publications in China. For example, Jiang Xiaojian, who was a co-founder of the Heavenly Horse (*tianma*) Society (1919-1928) to cultivate Euro-American modern art and culture, displayed his sculptures and paintings at the society's exhibitions. Li Jinfa on the other hand studied symbolist poetry along with sculpture while in France, thus becoming a pioneer of symbolist poetry in Chinese. He wrote three collections of poetry while in Paris and Berlin from 1921 to 1925, which earned him a literary reputation in the 1920s and 1930s in China. The well-known ink painter Wu Zuoren also experimented with making sculptures and reliefs though he did not undergo professional sculpture training abroad.

from France in 1933, his neighbors would often refer to him as a “maker of clay Buddhas” (*zuo ni pusa de*) and the police regarded him warily as a street peddler and would often harass him.³⁷ Therefore, although the early generations of sculptors were enthusiastically received as artists within modern intellectual and artistic circles familiar with sculpture’s status within Euro-American art, the general public still perceived them as artisans rather than artists. Moreover, at the same time sculpture and its profession were making inroads into the art and culture of the Republican period, an implicit division formed between sculptors who trained abroad as “modern” artists and Chinese sculptors of religious effigies who continued to be treated as mere artisans or “traditional” sculptors. Therefore, though sculpture had a widely accepted social function and standing abroad in modern-day Europe, North America, and Japan where early Chinese sculptors trained, once the Chinese sculptors returned to China they had the formidable challenge of shaping the relevance and function of sculpture on the ground in Chinese modern society and distancing themselves from their “traditional” or “folk” sculptor contemporaries. The discourse to “revive” Chinese sculpture hence necessitated in practice not so much the general promotion of sculpture’s standing in modern China, but a consciously arrived at differentiation between “modern sculpture” and sculpture’s past as “traditional” and popular.

Although the conditions for the practice and art of sculpture were bleak, this paucity also posed an opportunity for these first generations of returning sculptors trained abroad to carve out an artistic identity for sculptors and modern sculpture in China. Besides filling teaching positions in newly established sculpture departments of art schools, the first generation of Chinese sculptors, such as the painter and sculptor Jiang Xiaojian who returned in 1915, Li Jinfa who returned in 1925, and Wang Jinyuan, the first Chinese female sculptor, who returned in

³⁷ Liu, *Period Sculpture*, 92.

1928, largely depended on portrait commissions of esteemed educators, thinkers, and political leaders by private individuals or for public and government institutions. The predominance of portraiture in 1930s and 1940s Chinese sculpture is discernible in the sculpture section of the second national art exhibition in 1937, where thirteen out of the eighteen total sculptural works were portrait busts (figure 13).³⁸ Portrait sculptures in the mid and late Republican period were used for private collection or public commemoration of eminent contemporaries and the events in recent history in which they participated, such as Jiang Xiaojian's 1928 statue of Chen Qimei, an early Nationalist party figure who was instrumental in the overthrow of the Qing imperial government (figure 14), Li Jinfu's 1936 portrait of the painter and collector Huang Shaoqiang (figure 15), and Teng Baiye's early 1930s portrait of the political and military leader of the ruling Nationalist Party, Chiang Kai-shek (figure 16).

The public installation of sculpted portraits of such individuals, especially those closely allied with the ruling Nationalist Party, also acted to politicize public space, thus creating a didactic model for public space. As Federica Ferlanti argues in her study of the construction of new public spaces that appeared during the 1930s New Life Movement, a government movement to instill Confucian virtues into modern life, the Nationalist's touted construction of new public spaces for the use of urban citizens clashed with the government's occupation and policing of these spaces.³⁹ By filling public squares and parks with sculptures of contemporary Nationalist politicians and military leaders in public space, the nation and its people became conflated with the ruling political party.

³⁸ The other sculptures consisted of a copper tortoise, a relief of a laborer at work, and a full-length statue of a worker carrying a pole on his shoulder. See *A Special Collection of the Second National Exhibition of Chinese Art Under the Auspices of the Ministry of Education: Part III: Modern Chinese Occidental Paintings, Design, and Sculpture*, 1929.

³⁹ Federica Ferlanti, "City-Building, New Life, and the 'Making of the Citizen' in 1930s Nanchang," in *New Narratives of Urban Space in Republican Chinese Cities: Emerging Social, Legal and Governance Orders*, eds. Billy K. L. So and Madeleine Zelin (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 45.

The effect of seeing such usually highly elevated single figure statues in public spaces during the Republican period is elucidated in the writer Lu Di's description of seeing Liu Kaiqu's commemorative statue to the anonymous soldier, *Nameless Hero (Wuming yingxiong)* in Chengdu. It was commissioned in 1943 by the Chengdu city government to commemorate Sichuan province's war dead during the second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) (figure 17). With the outbreak of the war in 1937 many single-figure statues of anonymous soldiers to honor the war martyrs began appearing in public spaces, such as Liu Kaiqu's *Nameless Hero*. In his evaluation of the sculpture, Lu first describes such details as the soldier's gestures, poise, and facial expression as illustrative of the character of soldiers, such as his focused eyes and advancement forward which displays "the matchless spirit of a hero" and the tightness of his lips which Lu feels expresses the soldier's "deeply resolute character and persevering and diligent spirit."⁴⁰ In conclusion, though, Lu Di considers the two-meter tall sculpture itself in the context of its elevated position on the solid five meter high base: "Against the blue sky, the sculpture appears magnificent, sturdy, and powerful...from all four sides it [the statue] gives viewers an extremely dignified, stable, and powerful impression."⁴¹

Lu's self-reflection on the act of viewing and experiencing the elevated sculpture elicits a different form of response than when he was describing its representation. Terms such as "magnificent" and "sturdy" describe how the sculpture on its pedestal with its physical and material qualities of height and weight provokes the viewer to feel rather than think about the artwork, in contrast to the earlier more socio-politically rehearsed responses that attempts to anthropomorphize the depicted content, such as the soldier's "persevering and diligent spirit." Though the increased insertion into public space of statues of Nationalist government personages

⁴⁰ Lu Di, "Two Works by Liu Kaiqu (Liu Kaiqu de liang jian kediao pin)," in *Zongli 1* (1948): 4.

⁴¹ "Zai na lanse de tiankong zhe." See Lu, "Two Works," 4.

explicitly politicizes the space by virtue of its depicted content, the statues' deliberate elevation above the viewers also politicizes the space by regulating how the viewers are forced to look at the statues and not just know the depicted character but consciously feel its lofty, imposing presence.

Additionally, Republican period public sculptures of figures usually were two meters tall no matter the scale of the surroundings, such as Liang Zhuting's *Nameless Hero* (*Wuming yingxiong*). Erected in Guangzhou in 1934 to commemorate those in the 19th Route Army who lost their lives in the early skirmishes against Japanese aggression, the two meter tall life-size sculpture of a young soldier that serves as the focus of the memorial and visitors' commemoration activities is severely dwarfed by the soaring obelisk and the dramatic and austere neoclassical colonnade (figure 18). In the late 1940s due to technological advances the size of the sculpture statue could increase. Thus, sculpture through its increased size and scale in public space entered a new relationship with the viewers and its environment that would develop in the People's Republic. For example, a six and a half meter tall statue of Chiang Kai-shek by Zhang Chongren that is illustrated in the April 1946 article "Sculpture—An Expression of Emotions" according to the Chinese caption was a "spectacular sight" (*qiguan*) at Shanghai's Victory Parade celebrating the end of the Sino-Japanese War a few months ago (figure 19).⁴²

Yet the photographic image is not of the installed statue but rather an image perhaps of its removal or installation. The image is closely cropped around the statue's head that is slightly tilted. Several men to the left appear at the base of the head to steady it with their outstretched arms while a couple of other men are positioned to its right on its shoulder to secure something below. The image objectifying the sculpture's head by showing it being comparable to the size

⁴² "Sculpture—An Expression of Emotions (Diaoke—qingxu de biaoqian), *Life* (*Shenghuo*) 4 (1946): 15.

of a human body and tilted rather than properly installed suggests that the experience of the sculptural object's grand scale more than its representation of Chiang Kai-shek created the "spectacular sight" described in the caption. This view of the sculpture as a massive physical object of Chiang Kai-shek shows that by the late 1940s large-scale sculpture in public space, which would become the hallmark of sculpture in early Communist China, was already beginning to blur the world of visual illusion with the viewer's real world of physical and emotional experiences.

Appearing in the same 1946 article, "Sculpture—An Expression of Emotions," a portrait photograph of Liu Kaiqu in his studio also is telling of the elevated status of sculptors in Chinese society by the late 1940s compared to a decade earlier (figure 20). Liu is shown dressed smartly in trousers, a tie, and sweater. He stares pensively out of a window while his right arm casually rests on a ladder propped by the window and his right leg is confidently raised on the ladder. The distant lights outside the window below suggests the urban setting and multistoried building that houses his studio, thereby further locating him in a cosmopolitan city setting and augmenting his modern appeal. The only hint to his profession is the tall but obscure sculpted figure in the shadows standing behind him on a table. Liu here is not portrayed toiling in the filthy base material of clay as a "maker of clay Buddhas" like he was called when he first returned to China, but as a contemporary maker and observer of modern life. Liu's carefully composed portrait of a sophisticated and confident artist in his pristine studio shows the changed image of sculptors by the mid-20th century as modern artists who are equally as refined and worldly as their contemporaries in painting and calligraphy.

How to Sculpt for the People

In the 1950s and 1960s of the early People's Republic, sculptors primarily showed their work through commissions of large-scale sculpture for public spaces or smaller-scale "armature sculpture" (*jiashang diaosu*) for exhibitions. The most prestigious exhibition was the biannual National Art Exhibition organized by the national art professional organization, the China Artists Association (CAA), followed by regional and provincial exhibitions also organized by branches of the CAA, as well as special exhibitions sponsored by large state work units.⁴³ Such a dichotomy of sculpture production arose from the intense engagement of the Chinese modern sculpture artists and theorists with their counterparts in the Soviet Union in the realization of a socialist model for modern sculpture.

With increased official contact with Soviet artistic theories and practices, sculpture as well as the other arts became formally perceived as distinct forms of communication each defined by how they physically transmit meaning to the viewer, assumed as the anonymous masses of the proletariat class consisting of the farmers, workers, and soldiers. Already in the late Republican period during the social and political chaos of the Sino-Japanese War, advocates of each art form were arguing for the distinct artistic identity and relevance of their art form to the shaping of a new modern society. In his 1939 essay "Sculpture and the War of Resistance," Liu Kaiqu promoted sculpture's permanence and three-dimensionality as unique assets to aid in the dissemination of political ideology. He argued that sculpture placed in squares could be seen

⁴³ For example, the first national art exhibition of the People's Republic in 1949 consisted of 548 works by 301 artists, of which there were 23 sculptural works by 14 sculptors. See Li, "Clay, Wood," 25.

by and influence “thousands of people now and in the future”⁴⁴ wherever the masses may congregate. Small-scale sculpture too, Liu asserted, can be placed anywhere indoors, such as in a courtyard or study, so that it has the capacity to be even more interwoven into the fabric of the lives of the individual (*wuren*) and unconsciously influence them at the personal level. Overall, sculpture he claimed has the inimitable power to influence people’s thinking and feelings by physically and “completely mixing with the life of the masses.”⁴⁵ Discussion of sculpture’s permanence and influence on viewers in the late Republican period, such as with Liu Kaiqu’s article, shows the pivoting of the discourse of sculpture away from the earlier artistic and global ambitions of advancing art and culture in modern society. Attention shifted instead toward conveying a contemporary national ideology for the future.

Liu Kaiqu’s characterization of sculpture as an art with the permanent capacity to convey and support a certain ideology became the dominant view of sculpture in the People’s Republic. In 1958 Fu Tianchou, a prominent sculptor of the late Republican period and a professor in the prestigious Central Academy of Fine Art’s (CAFA) sculpture department in Beijing, published his influential book on sculpture techniques and concepts, *How to Make Sculpture (Zenyang zuo diaosu)* (figure 21). *How to Make Sculpture* was part of a series of how-to art books published by the People’s Art Publishers (*Renmin meishu chubanshe*) in the late 1950s during the Great Leap Forward to help popularize the production of art. Each book written by a leading artist of

⁴⁴ Liu Kaiqu, “Sculpture and the War of Resistance (Diaosu yu kangzhan),” in *The Collected Art Writings of Liu Kaiqu* (Liu Kaiqu meishu lunwen ji) (Jinan: Shandong meishu chubanshe, 1984), 52. Originally published in *War of Resistance and Literature and Art* (Kangzhan yu yishu), issue 1, 1939.

⁴⁵ “Wanquan yu minzhong shenghuo xianghun.” From Liu, “Sculpture and the War of Resistance,” 53.

the art medium being discussed would focus on explaining the basic concepts, styles, and techniques unique to how the medium physically conveys meaning.⁴⁶

Echoing Liu Kaiqu, Fu in his introduction presents sculpture as being distinct from other arts in its mode of communication. Unlike the continuous narrative development of theater or the pace and melody of music, Fu asserts that sculpture stands in actual three-dimensional space, is made of durable materials, stands permanently outdoors, and uses the human figure to “address people with a lofty and determined call.”⁴⁷ Though painting is comparable and can express space and volume, he posits that painting achieves its spatial illusion through perspective, shading, and colors whereas sculpture’s spatial expression is real (*shizai de*). Unlike Liu Kaiqu’s formulation of sculpture’s unique identity though, Fu as well as the authors of the other manuals in the series stressed the arts’ common goal of communication. The shared emphasis placed on the arts in conveying knowledge in Communist China shows the conception of knowledge as being constructed through affect, or the experience of sensations, whether through music or the visual arts. As this series of manuals indicate, by the end of the first decade of the People’s Republic the generally accepted function of sculpture as well as the other arts revolved around addressing and conveying knowledge to the masses, or “the people.”

In the 1950s with the introduction of Soviet models of modern sculpture, which theorized sculpture’s communication value with the masses, the nature of sculpture became contingent on the function and size of the space and expected viewers. Before 1949 sculptural training in China had followed the French academic model, where the first year would be devoted to sketching, plaster copying, and the clay modeling of heads, while the second and third years

⁴⁶ Other books in the series include *How to Paint Still-Lives* (Zenyang hua jingwu) by Wu Zuoren, *How to Make Oil Paintings* (Zenyang hua youhua) by Ai Zhongxin, and *How to Make Prints* by Li Pingfan.

⁴⁷ “...chonggaoyizhi de zhaohuan.” Fu Tianchou, *How to Make Sculpture* (Zenyang zuo diaosu), Beijing: People’s Art Publishers (Renmin meishu chubanshe), 1958, 1.

would emphasize figural composition and anatomy. After 1949 sculpture was taught according to the Soviet pedagogical model, which was similar to the French model since the techniques and methods were comparable. However, the Soviet model was more concerned with practicing a more “scientific approach” to the promotion of art’s ideological purpose to serve the people by framing sculptural production according to the intended viewership.⁴⁸

The Soviet approach to sculpture is discernible in their classification of different types of sculpture based on the conditions of viewing and the size of viewership, specifically indoor sculpture (*shinei diaosu*), outdoor sculpture (*shiwai diaosu*), and exhibition pieces (*jiashang*), in contrast to the traditional European categories of sculpture that are based on the different types of composition, particularly portraiture, busts, and figures. The Soviet framework for thinking about sculpture was introduced into China through the publication of two key translations in the early 1950s. They became the two most influential texts on sculpture in the early People’s Republic for theorizing the socialist form and function of large-scale sculpture made for public spaces. In 1952 the Chinese publication of *The Great Function of Lenin’s Monument Propaganda Plan* (*Liening jinianbei xuanchuan jihua de weida zuoyong*) by Vladimir Tolstoy imparted to sculptors along with art writers and administrators the importance of monuments as spatial and permanent propaganda of the nation’s and party’s values (figure 22). Two years later saw the publication of the Chinese translation of Nikolai Tomsy’s authoritative 1953 book about monument-building, *Issues in Soviet Memorial Sculpture* (*Sulian jinianbei diaoke wenti*) (figure 23).

⁴⁸ Many Soviet artists also had trained in Paris, such as Vera Mukhina who, like Wang Linyi, was Antoine Bourdelle’s student at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and Matvey Manizer, the vice-director of the Soviet Art Research Center and director of the Pushkin Plastic Arts Museum. Yin, *The Eternal Symbol*, 190.

These two publications provide a written summary of Soviet theories on sculpture that were gaining currency in China also through personal contact during the fervent art and cultural exchange of professional colleagues between China and the Soviet Union beginning in the early 1950s. For example, during the making of the China-Soviet Friendship Building in Shanghai in 1953 (today's Shanghai Exhibition Hall), the sculpture department of the National Art School in Hangzhou sent twenty-six people to participate and learn how to make large-scale sculpture from the Soviet sculptors Kerbel Lev Efimovich, Muravin Lev Danilovich, and plaster cast expert surnamed Elagin who were dispatched together to Shanghai to build the 7.7 meter tall memorial monument in front of the building. Later, Efimovich and Danilovich, as well as Matvey Manizer, a renowned Soviet sculptor who was the vice-director of the Soviet Art Research Center and the director of the Pushkin Plastic Arts Museum, visited the construction site in Beijing for *Monument to the People's Heroes* and advised the sculptors.⁴⁹ The importance given to the ideas of the Soviet experts can also be seen when the lead architect of *Monument to the People's Heroes*, Liang Sicheng, visited the Soviet Union in September 1953 as the final design of the monument was nearing completion. Upon his return to Beijing, Liang advocated paying more attention to the viewer's various possible sightlines and positions from the monument so that even those far away could still see the monument, suggesting his acquired awareness of the Soviet sculptors' concentration on the viewing experience.⁵⁰

Such a notion of viewership from the top of the monument, though, privileges seeing the monument from a bird's eye view rather than the human eye. Subsequently, sculpture along with the architectural built environment and the multitude of mobile viewers inhabiting the space

⁴⁹ Yin, *The Eternal Symbol*, 190-191. Though the *Monument to the People's Heroes* planning committee in the early stages had sent a letter to the Ministry of Culture asking to invite experts from the Soviet Union, specifically a painter and a sculptor, to guide their work, in the end none came.

⁵⁰ Yin, *The Eternal Symbol*, 168.

are seen as a single system so that the humans are not regarded as detached from the environment. Such a view of sculpture and the built environment, therefore, was formative in shaping the assumption of the public in Communist China as a static, anonymous entity waiting to be molded. In the early People's Republic in the 1950s with the contact with Soviet experts and reliance on Soviet models, the making of monumental memorial sculpture was held in high esteem. Starting with the inaugural monument of Communist China, *Monument to the People's Heroes*, it became an honor for every large city to have a large-scale monument.

The characteristic large-scale of outdoor sculptures made during early Communist China also exemplifies the understood relationship between the viewer, space, and sculpture introduced by the Soviet texts and training in China. In *Issues in Soviet Memorial Sculpture* Tomsky, a well-regarded Soviet sculptor most known by the 1950s for his public sculpture commissions such as his statue of the Communist Party leader Sergey Kirov, argues that monuments have three primary characteristics: 1) to show social struggle and mass activities that reflects the intimate relationship between the nation and the people; 2) to express the thoughts and feelings of the people and therefore be historical material; and 3) to make an address to the people (figure 24).⁵¹ The emphasis on the people, or *renmin* as it was translated in the Chinese version, inserted the viewer into the monument making process.

Introducing the categories of “monument sculpture” (*jinianbei diaoke*) and “indoor sculpture” (*shinei diaoke*), Tomsky posits that monuments “directly face the vast masses of people” in a square or at a large important building, unlike indoor sculpture's more limited

⁵¹ Nikolai Tomsky, *Issues in Soviet Memorial Sculpture (Sulian jinianbei diaoke wenti)* (Beijing: Huadong renmin meishu chubanshe, 1954), 8.

viewership and address to individuals.⁵² Therefore, the construction of a monument must be sensitive to the multiple possible changing positions and the concomitant shifting scale between the work and the mobile mass viewers by providing a clear silhouette for the distant viewing of the whole sculptural structure and details to satisfy close-up viewing.⁵³ Large-scale sculpture reflects how sculpture was scaled according to the potential size of the masses that the space can accommodate. A key concern of the sculptor according to Tomsy is the assurance that everyone can view and thus receive the supposedly codified message of the sculpture. Tomsy also argues that the successful making of a monumental sculpture cannot be achieved by simply enlarging a small scale sculpture because of the complex issues of visual scale that need to be handled, such as perspective and foreshortening when seen from a distance, and should be dealt with from the outset rather than after the sculpture is magnified. The different concerns of large scale and small scale sculpture further entrench the rationale for treating monuments differently from indoor sculpture.⁵⁴

Despite Tomsy's stress on the consideration of the relationship between the sculpture and its intended setting and audience, the fourteen photographic images in his book of sculptural works are oddly devoid of any indications of the sculpture's setting or scale. The selected works illustrated instead attempt to depict contemporary monumental and small-scale sculpture of the Soviet bloc as the modern continuation of classical and Renaissance art, as can be discerned by the inclusion with the photographs of contemporary sculptures from the Soviet bloc a photograph of the 5th century BCE Roman *Discus Thrower* and two of representative works by Michelangelo

⁵² “zhijie mianxiang zhe guangda de renmin qunzhong.” In the footnotes the translator writes that there is not a Chinese equivalent to indoor yet, but that “indoor” (*shinei*) is chosen to contrast with “monument sculpture.” Tomsy, *Issues in Soviet*, 3, 9-10.

⁵³ Tomsy, *Issues in Soviet*, 17.

⁵⁴ Tomsy, *Issues in Soviet*, 17.

in the 16th century. For example, Tomsky's own *Sergey Kirov Monument* is shown against a stark blank background, therefore giving no indication of scale or setting. Only its elevated base implies its probable public audience and placement (figure 25). Vera Mukhina's famous 1937 *Worker and Collective Farm Girl* similarly fills the image space and is presented against a blank background (figure 26). Its pedestal is also cropped out of the photograph save for the top of the pedestal where the statue stands, thus further confounding the viewer's attempt to grasp the scale and intended site and function of Mukhina's 24.5 meter tall sculpture. Unlike in his textual narrative of sculpture, Tomsky therefore appears to posit in the conspicuously austere photographs a consistent visual uniformity advancing sculpture from classical Rome to Renaissance Italy and finally modern Soviet Russia and its allies. Moreover, large and small-scale sculptures uniformly are stripped of their scale and context for the purpose of presenting sculpture objectively against a blank background. Such closely cropped, frontal photographic images of sculpture created to achieve an objective representation of sculpture reflects an existing convention of photographing sculpture that has been practiced since the late 19th century, and so the images chosen for the book may have been simply an unconscious or pragmatic decision by Tomsky or his publisher. Whether or not intentional though, the contradiction between the textual and photographic arguments in Tomsky's *Problems in Sculpting Soviet Monuments* meant readers lacked visual examples to study the author's theories of sculpture in practice.

In contrast, in *The Great Function of Lenin's Monument Propaganda Plan* the four photographic images of recent sculpture works from the Soviet bloc provided are pictured with their larger surrounding context. However, the larger view the reader is privy to is limited to just a few select visual cues purposefully included to mislead the viewer in inferring the sculpture's

scale. For example, the sculpture of a female and male farmer holding aloft their harvest crowns the gate to the entrance of the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition Hall (today's All-Russian Exhibition Center) in Moscow (figure 27). The rest of the gate on which the sculpture sits is cropped out, while the exhibition hall draws the viewer's attention by being directly below and behind the gate framed neatly by the central archway of the gate. The sculpture thus appears to be of comparable size to the exhibition hall. Yet another photograph of the sculpture with the entire gate and from a different angle with the exhibition hall reveals that the gate is actually smaller than the hall and so the scale of the sculpture in the book is deceptively magnified (figure 28).

Similarly, in the book's image of Yevgeny Vuchetich's *Soviet War Memorial* sculpture in then East Berlin, the memorial sculpture appears grandiose on the hill (figure 29). Because of the clear, continuous line dividing the ground and the hill, the hill seems to act as a second pedestal that further elevates the sculpture. The sense of the sculpture's grand scale and the height of the hill are further augmented by the impressive flight of stairs on the hill and the diminutively scaled figure at the bottom. The visual conceit of a ledge that appears near the hill and the overhanging tree foliage in the foreground intimately frame the picture to imply that the photograph was taken from a relatively close proximity to the memorial. However, when compared with other photographs of the *Soviet War Memorial*, it is clear that the photograph in the book must have been taken from a far distance and that the ledge and tree foliage were added afterwards to inaccurately map the scale of the memorial scene in relationship to the viewer's position so that it is actually smaller than it appears. Whereas Tomsy in the images in his book sterilizes and objectifies sculpture and its history by extracting its context and scale, the images in Vladimir Tolstoy's book aggrandizes the scale and position of sculptures in socialist societies.

The images of indeterminately scaled sculptures in Tomsky's book would then also likely lead readers to unduly magnify them by applying the distorted scale suggested in Tolstoy's book. Assuming artistic transmission is seamless is thus shown here to be problematic since the transmitter and the receiver each have their own agendas. For the majority of Chinese readers who more likely would just skim through the images more than peruse the text of these two major translated reference books, they would be therefore impressed with a misleading standard for "large-scale" in sculpture and its relationship to the viewer.

By the late 1950s leading sculptors, such as CAFA sculpture professors Fu Tianchou and Wang Linyi, were utilizing Tomsky's ideas and terms to debate the relationship between large-scale sculpture and the viewer.⁵⁵ Fu and Wang in each of their articles that appeared in the official art professional journal *Meishu* (*Art*) discussed the differences between "outdoor sculpture" (*shiwai diaosu*), which was used interchangeably with "large-scale sculpture" (*daxing diaosu*), and "armature sculpture" (*jiashang diaosu*), or small-scale portable sculptures intended for indoor purposes, usually exhibitions and collection.⁵⁶ While Wang's argument for the need to discern the difference in the making and viewing of outdoor sculpture and indoor sculpture is similar to Tomsky's view, Fu contends that the relationship between the work's placement, function, and visual scale are not necessarily fixed, so that large-scale sculpture can be both indoors and outdoors and have decorative as well as memorial functions.⁵⁷ In his conclusion, Fu asserts that the proportions of a sculpture should be determined by its specific environment while

⁵⁵ See Fu Tianchou, "About Outdoor Large-scale Sculpture" (Guanyu shiwai daxing diaosu), *Meishu* 7 (July 1959): 16-17, 15; Wang Linyi, "Discussion on Large-Scale Sculpture and Sculpture on Architecture" (Tan daxing diaosu he jianzhu shang de diaosu), *Meishu* 11 (November 1959): 48-51; and Xiao Baocheng, "Discussion on Whether or Not Peasants Like *Jiashang* Sculpture" (Tan nongmin shifou xihuan jia shang diaosu), *Meishu* 7 (July 1958):23.

⁵⁶ Rather than using Soviet examples to support his arguments, Wang praises and comparatively analyzes the large-scale outdoor statues of Rodin and Bourdelle and favors Bourdelle's memorial to Marseilles for its "compositional stability and architectural feeling" more so than Rodin's memorial sculptures. See Wang, "Discussion on Large-Scale," 49.

⁵⁷ Fu, "About Outdoor," 16.

its height by the sculpture's distance from the viewer. Regardless of the differing points of view between Fu Tianchou and Wang Linyi, their discussions both share the assumption that scale is created by a sculptural work's relationship with the size of its viewership as much as its surrounding environment.

According to Cao Chunsheng, one of the early sculpture students at CAFA who from 1959 to 1964 was awarded the opportunity to study sculpture at the renowned Repin Art Institute in Leningrad (present-day St. Petersburg), Soviet sculpture education also highlighted the uniqueness of large-scale sculpture in its curriculum.⁵⁸ In contrast to the French-inspired sculptural training he received at CAFA, Cao found that the Soviet model of sculpture education and practice stressed quick production, where students were required to produce a new sculptural piece each week, and preparation to make large-scale sculptures through numerous exercises and assignments to create life-size sculptures.⁵⁹ Cao, like other selected Chinese students who studied at the Repin Art Institute, became a prominent sculptor and art educator in New China. After he returned he assumed a professorship in the sculpture department at his alma mater and shared his experiences and knowledge gained in the USSR through his teaching, writings, and lectures, including the concepts for designing and constructing large-scale sculpture.⁶⁰ Thus, through such avenues of cultural exchange between Chinese and Soviet sculptors as translated writings, Soviet experts in China, and study abroad opportunities at the Repin Art Institute, the

⁵⁸ Formally named the Ilya Repin Leningrad Institute for Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in 1918 after the Russian Communist Revolution, the Repin Art School was originally the imperial academy of art founded in 1757. In 1957 it celebrated its 200th anniversary and was one of three art schools in the USSR with approximately 800 students. By 1957 it was also the training ground of Russian socialist art for foreign students from North Korea, Mongolia, Albania, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, East Germany, as well as China. The twenty-five Chinese students who have studied at Repin by 1957 studied in the oil painting, printmaking, sculpture, history of art, and art theory departments. See "200th Anniversary of the Repin Art School" (Liebin meishu xueyuan jianxiao erbai zhounian jinian), *Meishu (Art)*: 12 (December 1957): 19-20.

⁵⁹ Cao Chunsheng, interview with the author, August 28, 2014.

⁶⁰ See Cao Chunsheng, *The Flowers of Spring and Fruits of Autumn: the Works of Cao Chunsheng (Chunhua qiushi: Cao Chunsheng zuopin ji)*, ed. Lü Pinchang (Changchun: Jilin meishu chubanshe), 2013.

significance and uniqueness of large-scale sculpture became generally debated and accepted into the discourse of Chinese modern sculpture by the end of the first decade of the People's Republic.

The correspondence of sculpture's surrounding environment and its potential viewer capacity with the sculpture's visual scale in Tomsy's and Wang's interchangeable use of "outdoor sculpture" with "large-scale sculpture" assumes sculpture's propaganda function in a large public space that can reach a mass of viewers. The Communist state paid particular attention to large-scale outdoor sculptures and increasingly regulated their construction, content, and appearance. By the end of the first decade of Communist rule, large-scale sculpture had become formally integrated into the official propaganda apparatus for outdoor spaces. In June 1959 during the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961), the nationwide campaign to rapidly industrialize, the central party committee in Beijing notified all provincial and city leaders of the need to organize and inspect the profusion of outdoor propaganda, or literally "street propaganda" (*jietou xuanchuang*), especially in time for the tenth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China on National Day, October 1, that year. Citing problems of artistic quality in sculpture as well as wall paintings and written slogans promoting the Great Leap Forward, it critiqued the content of the works as being "exaggerated" (*fukua*) and formally "clumsy and inferior" (*zhuolie*), therefore destroying the "orderliness and beauty" (*zhengjie he meiguan*) of the city and historic sites.⁶¹ The circular stipulated further that sculptures made

⁶¹ The circular also remarks that the calligraphy and posting of posters are "sloppy and careless" (*liaocao*). Communist Party Central Committee, "Circular of the Central Party Regarding Investigating and Reorganizing Sculptures, Wall Paintings, and Slogans in Large Urban Sightseeing Areas (Zhongyang guanyu jiancha he zhengdun dachengshi, youlan diqu diaosu, bihua, biaoju kouhao de tongzhi)," June 4, 1959, Guangdong Provincial Archives, archive number 214-1-396-054-055.

henceforth must be approved by a party committee leader and must be “designed and created by a highly skilled artist” to ensure the ideological content and artistic quality of the work.⁶²

In an addendum of suggestions by the Beijing Committee on Street Propaganda Small Group, the group reports that there are 1,930 existing “street propaganda objects” (*jietou xuanchuangpin*) and other “common large-scale permanent propaganda” (*leifan duo, bijiao daxing he guding de xuanchuangpin*) in Beijing. In their statistical listing of the seven types of these propaganda objects in Beijing, the small group stated that there are eleven sculptures. The other six kinds of structural vehicles for propaganda that they listed are 138 propaganda and slogan boards, 824 newspaper reading boards, 128 outdoor exhibition spaces, 448 advertisement boards for films, 186 public news boards, and 195 business advertisement boards.⁶³ Declaring that the purpose of street propaganda is “to serve politics” (*wei zhengzhi fuwu*) as well as “to serve the beautification of the city” (*wei meihua chengshi fuwu*), sculpture’s outdoor visibility, open accessibility, and structural permanency made it essentially an object of propaganda and a means of ordering urban space comparable with that of other such platforms as news and advertisement boards meant for the visual broadcast of information.

The central government’s treatment and circumspect management of sculpture commissions for their propaganda potential is also demonstrated earlier in a 1954 circular issued from the central government notifying all regions to cease “the flood of constructing memorial monuments and memorial museums” that was inspired by the publicized construction of

⁶² “juyou jiaogao shuipin de yishujia sheji sushi.” Communist Party Central Committee, “Circular of the Central Committee Regarding Investigating.”

⁶³ Communist Party Central Committee, “Circular of the Central Committee Regarding Investigating and Reorganizing Sculptures, Wall Paintings, and Slogans in Large Urban Sightseeing Areas, Addendum: Beijing City Committee Authorized Street Propaganda Small Group’s Suggestions Regarding Reorganizing and Managing Street Propaganda (Zhongyang guanyu jiancha he zhengdun dachengshi, youlan diqu diaosu, bihua, biaoju kouhao de tongzhi, fu: Beijing shiwei pifa shiwei jietou xianbo lingdao xiaozu guanyu zhengdun he guanli jietou xuanchuangpin de yijian),” March 25, 1959, Guangdong Provincial Archives, archive number 214-1-396-054-055.

Monument to the People's Heroes in the capital.⁶⁴ Ten years later the Communist state betrayed an increasing wariness over the visual communication of outdoor sculpture as conveyed in a follow-up directive in 1964 from the central government. Citing the need to more “strictly” (*yangge*) control the building of martyr memorial parks and related structures nationwide, the directive promulgated that no place can build or expand commemorative structures such as memorial halls, martyr parks, and large-scale sculptures any longer and that those already being built had to seek approval from their appropriate regional or city Communist Party committee. In addition, building projects already in progress that involves important historical issues or persons related to the Party and the People’s Liberation Army would require the approval of the central government in Beijing.⁶⁵ Therefore, with the government’s increased sensitivity to the function of monuments and other outdoor sculpture as powerful vehicles of public propaganda in Communist China, their administration became increasingly supervised by the central government in Beijing. However, as suggested by the 1964 circular that brings up the central government’s earlier 1954 injunction on the construction of monuments and memorials that apparently went unheeded, the actual long-term cooperation of local officials with central government in following their promulgated regulations is questionable.

In contrast with the phenomenon of large-scale sculpture, the other category of sculpture production that emerged during the People’s Republic was armature sculpture. “Armature sculpture,” is a neologism borrowed from the literal translation of the Russian term used for small-scale sculpture. Referring to the supporting armature in the sculpture’s construction,

⁶⁴ “*dujue lanxiu jinianbei, jinianguan deng xianxiang.*” from Communist Party Central Committee, “Circular of the Central Committee State Council Regarding the Building and Repairing of Memorials and Their Related Problems (*Zhonggong zhongyang guowuyuan guanyu jinhou xiujian jinian jianzhuwu deng you guan wenti de tongzhi*,” November 18, 1964, in *Selected Writings of the Central Communist Party Propaganda Work, 1957-1992* (*Zhongyang gongchangdang xuanchuan gongzuo wenxian xuanbian 1957-1992*), Volume 4 (Beijing: Xuexi chubanshe, 1996), 385.

⁶⁵ Communist Party Central Committee, “Circular from the Central Committee State Council,” 385.

armature sculpture describes sculptures of portable dimensions meant for interior display and exhibition. According to Fu Tianchou in his book *How to Make Sculpture*, armature sculpture is usually two to eight feet high, or in general, “larger than traditional sculpture and smaller than commemorative sculpture.”⁶⁶ This general reference reveals how large-scale commemorative sculpture was defined by an extra human scale while small-scale sculpture was understood to be scaled by the human body. This discrepancy reflects how the two different functions of sculpture—communication and affect—were defined and classified more by scale than subject matter or form.

Due to the controlled environment allowed by the enclosed interior space, armature sculpture in China was further delineated as being less limited by its environment than large-scale sculpture. More attention was placed on details for the close up view, since viewers were allowed to see the work at a closer proximity than large-scale sculpture. The closer proximity of viewing presumed in armature sculpture, as suggested by small-scale sculpture’s attention to surface details, implies a different conception of the viewer and sculpture’s affect on its viewer compared to those for large-scale monumental sculpture. By looking closely viewers of small-scale sculpture are expected also to be more slow and deliberate in viewing. Unlike large-scale outdoor sculpture too, small-scale sculpture was measured by the human body rather than its built environment and hence was made to offer a more personal viewing experience. The deliberate and intimate viewing of small-scale sculpture made it conducive not so much to portraying an immediately legible ideological message to a mobile, mass viewing public, but to intimate depictions such as people engaged in prosaic activities. For example Li Shouren’s two and a half feet tall *Little Painter (Xiao huajia)* (1955) depicting children at play (figure 30) and

⁶⁶ Fu, *How to Make Sculpture*, 121.

Pan He's almost three feet tall *Hard Times (Jianku suiye)* (1957) of a flute playing soldier and his younger listener (figure 31). Scale thereby determined not only the function of the sculpture and its supposed relationship with the viewer, but also the visual content of the work.

Because small-scale sculpture is characterized by intimacy in terms of scale, viewer interaction, and subject matter, tactility became a predominant quality of small-scale sculpture, such as Ma Gaihu's *Old Sheep Herder (Lao yangguan)* (figure 32). *Old Sheep Herder* was Ma's graduation piece from a three-year sculpture training workshop he attended with a cohort of other young sculpture professors from across the nation. The special workshop, organized by the Ministry of Culture and taught by the invited Soviet sculptor Nikolay Klinduhov, was held at CAFA from 1956 to 1958.⁶⁷ The exhibition of their works, which opened in June 1958, displayed forty pieces, but because of time constraints only four works were selected for public critique by Klinduhov as well as CAFA sculpture professors Liu Kaiqu and Hua Tianyou, CAFA Communist Party Committee member Chen Pei, and the painter and CAFA's president Wu Zuoren.⁶⁸ Of the selected four works that were critiqued, Ma's *Old Sheep Herder (Lao yangguan)* was lauded for its compelling realism that was in part attributed to the sculptor's first-hand knowledge working as a sheep herder in his youth. The judges evaluated that his intimate

⁶⁷ Nineteen students, who were young sculpture professors representing each of the main art schools in China, graduated from this special workshop, though other sculptors and interested parties attended as informal observers. The practice of critiques was new in Chinese art education and introduced by the Soviet experts. Klinduhov later served in the 1970s as the dean of the Department of Sculpture at the Moscow Academic Art Institute. See "Sculpture Training Class Graduation (*Diaosu xunlianban biye*)," *Meishu* 7 (July 1958): 24. In the aftermath of worsening relations between China and Russia, in 1961 to 1963 CAFA organized another national sculpture research class, this time led by Liu Kaiqu. See Li, "Clay, Wood, Metal," 28.

⁶⁸ The event was open to the public and attracted more than two hundred attendees including students of CAFA, the Central Academy of Arts and Crafts, as well as other interested parties such as local factory workers. See "Notes on the Sculpture Training Class Critique (*Ji diaosu xunlianban chuanguo dabianhui*)," *Meishu* 7 (July 1958): 25.

experience with sheep herders and sheep herding made the depicted subject appear real and authentic.⁶⁹

In addition to the sculptor's personal narrative growing up in the countryside that resonated with his sculpture's subject matter, Sun Meilan, a critic and professor in the art history department of CAFA at the time, also praised the work for making it feel like the viewer is actually there looking at the old sheep herder in the countryside.⁷⁰ The feeling of immediacy, or of the viewer being present on the scene, may have been caused by the attention in Ma's sculpture to enlivening the sculpted figure through not just its forms and gestures, but the sculpture's materiality. Contrary to Chinese modern sculpture previously where the physical hard material surface of a sculpture does not commonly interact with the subject being depicted, the stone surface where the old sheep herder holds the sheep is impressed into the contours of the jacket. Hence the actual material nature of the hard stone is integrated into the sculptural illusion of the jacket's soft surface, creating a more complex relationship between the sculpture's material surface and the represented portrayal. By reason and touch the stone is not soft, but through the experience of seeing it appears to be soft. Besides displaying Ma Gaihu's virtuosity and skill to visually surpass the stone's actual material limitations, the inherent tensions between material reality and represented illusion as well as the senses of sight and touch causes the viewer to question the relationship between empirical and learned knowledge.

Sculpture's oscillation between illusion and reality, as revealed through vision and tactility, became increasingly vague especially after renewed efforts to popularize the arts starting in the late 1950s with the Great Leap Forward. Amateur art training classes were set up in farming, military, and factory work units to teach their members how to create art. These

⁶⁹ "Notes on the Sculpture Training," 28.

⁷⁰ "Notes on the Sculpture Training," 28.

classes offered nationwide were based on the belief at the time that farmers, workers, and soldiers—“the people”—would be able to represent their own everyday reality, or at least the politically sanctioned version of it, more authentically and so hence more realistically accurate than professional artists. As a result of several of these amateur training classes there were many exhibitions dedicated to showcasing artworks made by peasants, soldiers, and workers, such as the 1978 exhibition of sculptures created by factory workers in Chongqing (figure 33).

Besides showing images of the small-scale sculptures made and exhibited by a corps of factory workers in Chongqing, the exhibition catalogue *Selected Sculptures of Chongqing Workers* also shows images of viewers physically connecting with the sculptures. For instance, a group of men dressed in their clean class-identifying work clothes are portrayed animated in discussion over a group of small-scale sculptures in the exhibition sitting on a table in front of them (figure 34). In another image a group of children, who according to the caption are the children of the factory workers, are seen gathered around a set of stools and carefully modeling small clay figures. Another image shows a viewer in a group reaching his hand out to perhaps grasp or mimic the raised arm of a dynamically posed sculpted figure (figure 35). These images in the exhibition catalogue not only present sculpture as an elementary art form of “the people” whose techniques of clay modeling could be mastered even by children, but also stress the physical accessibility of sculpture spatially and through touch to highlight sculpture’s function also as a social phenomenon.

For example, in the image of the group of men viewing the clay sculptures, unlike the paintings and calligraphy hanging at eye level on the wall behind them the group of small-scale sculptures is at the men’s waist level, thus stressing their dominance over their experience of their viewing. As they stand over the sculpted menagerie of crudely modeled figures the workers

appear to be casually engaging one another as they gesture at the figures. Held in the context of an official exhibition, such a presentation of sculpture implies the viewer's authority over their perceptions and also works to blur the spatial boundaries between sculpture and object, art and life, and low art and high art in pursuit of a more engaged, affective art for "the people."

In the other image from the exhibition of a dynamic male figure, the figure's arm thrusts forward as if to proffer itself to the viewers, one of whom responds eagerly with his own outstretched hand. In the 1970s as small-scale sculptures became less mimetic and more dramatic and theatrical in their expressions and poses, such as in the male sculpted figure here, their depicted veracity or realism became not as important as their capacity for performativity. According to Alexei Yurchak in his study of the nature of Soviet rhetorical paradoxes in late socialist Russia, after the death of Stalin "it became increasingly more important to participate in the reproduction of the *form* of these ritualized acts of authoritative discourse than to engage with their constative meanings."⁷¹ Likewise in the radical political environment of the 1970s during the Cultural Revolution when people were scrutinized for their loyalty to the Party, form became increasingly read as performed rather than representative of a truth or reality. The tactile quality of small-scale sculpture thus becomes externalized. Tactility in sculpture no longer signified a questioning of the limitations of the sculptural material, but an invitation to viewers to perform their supposed new found authority over their own perceptions through the act of touching. The intentionality of touch thereby becomes part of the performance of the real.

The history of modern sculpture in China is closely linked with the evolving visions and notions of knowing the real, from real space to modernize early 20th century Chinese art and society to real experiences and sensations that manifest the official narrative of "the people" in

⁷¹ Alexei Yurchak, *Everything was Forever, Until It was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2006), 25.

Communist China. From the outset when it was first considered a legitimate mode of artistic production in Republican China, sculpture was valued and understood as a didactic form of art to consolidate a coherent national body of people in new public venues such as in squares, parks, and exhibition halls. Similar to how the religious devotees in the past used sculpted effigies to imagine an alternate realm to the social order of real life, sculpture was used in the early to mid-20th century to imagine an alternative reality, though this time in the production of real space.

CHAPTER 3

The View from *Monument to the People's Heroes*

Monument to the People's Heroes, the lone vertical structure standing directly on the more than seventeen acres of empty paved granite that is Tiananmen Square in Beijing, embodies a question that puzzled numerous architects and sculptors more than half a century ago: what should be the form, scale, and function of a commemorative monument built in the new political heart of the nation and the world's largest public square? *Monument to the People's Heroes* (*Renmin yingxiong jinianbei*) rises thirty-eight meters, or more than four meters higher than the gate of Tiananmen, making it the tallest structure on or surrounding the square.

Despite the material effort to lend authority to the monument through its superlative height on the square, the monument's verticality standing in the middle of the vast square without any nearby buildings or structures to scale it can be visibly understood only in relation to the wide expanse of the square that camouflages and dwarves it. Walking south through Tiananmen Square away from the iconic fortress of Tiananmen, the former south imperial gate to the Forbidden City, one might not at first even notice the distant single marble and granite obelisk in the middle of the square (figure 36).⁷² The smooth light grey surface incised with the outlines of the monument body's rectilinear granite stones echoes the light grey smooth rectangular granite stones of the square. The monument structure is also isolated by the empty distance of the square surrounding it—only after walking more than 200 meters (about the length

⁷² This has been changed since the Beijing Olympics in 2008 when two large TV screens playing contemporary government propaganda images were installed in recent years. They face Tiananmen and bisect the square.

of two football fields) over to its west does one finally reach the wide façade of the Great Hall of the People, and another 200 meters to the monument's east sits the sprawling National Museum of China. The ambiguous scale of the monument created by its visual anonymity and physical isolation in relation to the square heightens the already disorienting scale of the infinitely expansive Tiananmen Square that is conspicuously not scaled to humans but to the pre-existing built environment of Tiananmen.

The monument's function to commemorate the "people's heroes" only comes into focus as one draws near enough to the monument structure to be able to read on the face of the monument the large gold eight-character inscription—"Eternal glory to the people's heroes" (*renmin yingxiong yongchui buxiu*)—written in Mao Zedong's hand. Though the monument appears miniaturized by the emptiness of the square from far away, close-up it looks like an overblown stele and the viewer is now miniaturized. Upon reaching the foot of the monument and ascending the white marble stairs to the viewing platform at its base, the viewer becomes aware of the monument's didactic nature in the eight white marble reliefs that cover all four sides of the base. The large reliefs depict a narrative progression of seven selected historic turning points in modern Chinese history that culminates in the final Communist Revolution (figure 37).

Beginning with the Opium War in 1839 to the Communist Revolution in 1949, the marble reliefs on the base of the monument belie a certain sequence of history with which the new state desired to be identified as its logical conclusion. The monument's significance as the first construction project to legitimize the new nation is clear from the prioritizing of its planning. The Communist Party leadership started discussing the monument as the keystone to plans to create Tiananmen Square even before its forces finally entered Beijing in March 1949. On the day before Mao Zedong declared the Communist nation's founding on October 1, 1949, the

newly installed leaders of the People's Republic performed a laying of the foundation stone ceremony for the monument in front of the gate of Tiananmen (figure 38).⁷³ The relationship between it and the political stage of Tiananmen Square after the establishment of the People's Republic of China has been well studied by scholars such as Wu Hung, Geremie Barmé, and Chung-tai Hung.⁷⁴ Yet even though the political reasons for the Party's interest and investment in building a new spatial order starting with *Monument the People's Heroes* may appear self-evident, the relationship between *Monument to the People's Heroes* and its notions of public space and the emergence of a national public, or "the people," in modern China has yet to be considered.

The austere and ambivalent visual scale of *Monument to the People's Heroes* from afar contrasts with the detailed white marble narrative reliefs for the individual viewer that are only visible up close when the monument reveals its conflicting ambitions. The monument's three views of different scale, legibility, and meaning reflect the monument's goal to resolve through its different scales of experience the ambiguous relationships between the masses, the people, and the individual in the social reorganization of post-Communist revolution China. The public space that is of interest here is the physical space and form in the city. As Georg Simmel posits

⁷³ On September 30, 1949 the first Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference closed with the monument's groundbreaking ceremony at its chosen site south of Tiananmen. On this last day of the conference, the attendees had selected the new officials of the central government and approved the construction of the monument to the people's heroes and Mao Zedong's inscription for the monument. See "Eternal Glory to Martyrs of the Revolution! At Yesterday's Groundbreaking Ceremony for the Monument to the People's Heroes National Martyrs Chairman Mao Reads Inscription" (Geming xianlie yongchubuxiu! Wei guo xisheng de renmin yingxiong jinian bei zuo zai shoudou longzhong dianji Mao zhuxi xuandu beiwen), *People Daily (Renmin ribao)*, October 1, 1949, 2. Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Song Qingling, Li Jinshen, Huang Yanpei, Zhang Bojun, Guo Moruo and all the conference participants attended the ceremony. See Ma Yi, "Notes on *Monument to the People's Heroes*" (Renmin yingxiong jinianbei huaxu), in *The Reliefs of Monument to the People's Heroes (Renmin yingxiong jinianbei fudiao yishu)*, eds. Ma Ding and Ma Gan (Beijing: Kexue puji chubanshe, 1988), 14-16.

⁷⁴ Chang-tai Hung, "Revolutionary History in Stone: The Making of a Chinese National Monument," *China Quarterly* 166 (June 2001): 457-473; Wu Hung, *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the Creation of a Political Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago; London: Reaktion Books, 2005); Geremie Barmé, *The Forbidden City* (London: Profile, 2008); Haiyan Lee, "The Charisma of Power and the Military Sublime in Tiananmen Square," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 70:2 (May 2011): 397-424

in his 1903 essay “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” humans do not experience phenomenon as they exist in themselves but rather through how they interpret and categorize them through forms. Social forms thus “inform not only the cognitive realm, but any and all dimensions of human experience.”⁷⁵ To speak of a public space, especially in authoritarian Communist China where the production of space and its symbols are controlled by the state, may seem odd. But rather than treating the space of authoritarian governments as a static construct that does not merit critical study, this chapter seeks to historicize and analyze how state commissioned forms in China such as *Monument to the People’s Heroes* physically and visually sought to construct a new relationship between the people and the nation in the early People’s Republic.

Development of Public Space in Early Modern China

Before the 20th century, thus, the Chinese city was a relatively autonomous compact walled society managed by the community itself. However, a shift in urban administration occurred in the early 20th century when many of China’s large cities such as Shanghai, Chengdu, Nanjing, Hangzhou, Guangzhou, and Wuhan began to each have a municipal government. Thus, urban life and the cityscape became increasingly organized by the central government. The administrative system of a modern municipal government, in contrast with the old district magistrate’s *yamen*, and its physical extensions of a civic center and public buildings such as the city hall, the square, and the hospital, were patterned after the English model.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Donald N. Levine, ed., *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1971), xv.

⁷⁶ Frederic E. Wakeman and Wen-hsin Yeh, *Shanghai Sojourners* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California: Center for Chinese Studies, 1992). 5.

The critical construction of dedicated civic spaces to embody public or collective values in the city came to the forefront during this time, and especially during the relative stability of the Republican period in the 1920s and 1930s when there was a push to redesign the urban fabric of major cities. Newly planned outdoor public spaces developed with the modernization and planning of cities, such as squares functioning as traffic circles. For instance, the square in Xinjiekou, the new business district of Nanjing, was part of the re-planning of Nanjing into the new capital city starting in the late 1920s. The square of the new administrative area in the Greater Shanghai Plan (*Da Shanghai jihua*) began construction in the 1929 but never finished because of the Second Sino-Japanese War (figure 39).

At the time Chinese architects and city planners, many of whom studied abroad in Europe or America, notably the Beaux Arts training program at the University of Pennsylvania, or were trained by teachers who had studied abroad, were aware of contemporary urban planning and theories.⁷⁷ For example, the city planners of Nanjing entrusted to rebuild it into the new capital city in 1927 studied widely existing capital cities that were planned and constructed in the last few decades, such as Paris, Vienna, Tokyo, London, New Delhi, Canberra, and Ankara.⁷⁸ In the early 20th century the most compelling urban planning theories in international circulation were based on the assumption that built space had a direct impact on the social behavior and

⁷⁷ Several foreign architects also established offices in China, mainly Shanghai, during this period of intense urban planning and construction and so regularly discoursed with their Chinese colleagues on best practices for the modernization of the Chinese city. They designed new urban buildings or entire cities, like Shanghai-based American architect Henry K. Murphy who built several buildings at the prestigious Tsinghua University in Beijing and was hired by the Nationalists in 1928 to help reorganize Nanjing into the nation's new capital. Foreign architects also were sometimes invited to serve on city planning and architecture committees as consultants and to augment a project's cosmopolitan status, such as the inclusion of the Shanghai-based German architect Emil Busch on the judging committee for the design competition of the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum in Nanjing in 1925. Delin Lai, "Searching for a Modern Chinese Monument: The Design of the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum in Nanjing," in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 14, 1 (March 2005): 29.

⁷⁸ Charles D. Musgrove, "Building a Dream: Constructing a National Capital in Nanjing, 1927-1937," in *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900-1950*, eds. Jianmin Zhao and Bruce J. Dickson (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 2000), 142.

organization of its inhabitants, such as the City Beautiful Movement which advocated that beautifying the city would elevate the moral and civic disposition of its residents. One of the earliest Chinese translations from the burgeoning field in Europe and America of the modern urban planning movement was Tian Yi's 1913 article in the Young Mens Christian Association (YMCA) China publication *Progress (Jinbu)* entitled "Improving the Ideal City" (*Gailiang chengshi zhi lixiang*). The article was a translation of the pioneering publication of the first major urban planner, Ebenezer Howard, titled "Garden Cities of To-morrow" originally published in 1898 and reissued in 1902.⁷⁹

In these early years of urban redevelopment in China, the concept of "public" (*gonggong*) in referencing the built environment thus appeared to describe different types of publically accessible places offering community services. For instance, in 1925 in one of the earliest articles introducing city planning theories drawn from several English and American sources, the author Zhang Rui identifies as the second major issue in city planning the determination of the appropriate location for "public places and architecture" (*gonggong changsuo huo jianzhu*), such as post offices, libraries, and community social clubs as well as outdoor places such as parks and recreational areas.⁸⁰ These public places, though, were mostly enclosed spaces with socially specific functions, except for the malleable outdoor spaces like parks.

City parks usually claimed from previously exclusive areas such as private or imperial gardens appeared in the first decades of the Republican period. The flagrant opening of private or privileged places of luxury into publicly accessible spaces witnessed a fundamental transformation in their social function. The resulting ambivalence of their multiple public

⁷⁹ Tian Yi, "Improving the Ideal City" (*Gailiang chengshi zhi lixiang*), *Jinbu (Progress)* 3, 5 (1913): 40-54.

⁸⁰ The other three issues of city planning the author lists are an adequate waterway and roadway system to accommodate transportation in the city, protection of private property and how to increase the public good. Zhang Rui, "City Planning" (*Chengshi jihua*), *Eastern Miscellany (Dongfang zazhi)* 22:11 (1925): 62.

functions demonstrates how open public spaces were not merely intended for conspicuous leisure, the mediation of traffic and pedestrian flow, or the representation of civic and state power. More importantly they were used as venues for education, national propaganda, and political mobilization by the state. During the early Republican period, for instance, several imperial gardens and altar grounds opened as public parks in Beijing in the 1910s and 1920s, such as the transformation of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) imperial Altar of Soil and Grain west of Tiananmen into the popular Central Park in 1914 and the opening in 1925 of Capital Park, which three years later was renamed Citizen's Park (*Shimin gongyuan*), located on the grounds of the former Altar to Earth outside of Andingmen, a gate northeast of the Beijing city wall. Both of these parks were constructed by the Nationalist government for the explicit purpose of reforming and educating the public as well as publicizing the government's effectiveness working in the public's interest, such as through the exhibition facilities at Central Park that would promote the merits of hygiene in shows organized by the Department of Internal Affairs or showcase goods produced by reformed prisoners at "model prisons" as curated by the Department of Law.⁸¹ The construction and institutionalization of public space was therefore already being utilized in the Republican period in shaping the public's relationship with and perception of the state.

However, the construction of these new public spaces did not mean the uncritical viewership and officially prescribed utilization of them by their intended users. For example, the more didactic Capital Park was less popular than Central Park. Capital Park was festooned with slogans preaching moral principals and its north part featured the World Garden (*Shijie yuan*), a world map drawn by rocks representing mountains, grass representing bodies of water, and

⁸¹ Madeleine Yue Dong, "Defining Beiping: Urban Reconstruction and National Identity," in *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900-1950*, eds. Jianmin Zhao and Bruce J. Dickson (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 2000), 127.

flowers to delineate national boundaries. The map of China pointedly had details indicating the treaty ports and land China had lost, while couplets on a wooden board on the edge of the garden read of phrases such as “remembering the national shame.”⁸² More visitors recorded visiting Central Park not for its educational offerings, but to enjoy its picturesque and leisurely spots, such as the fashionable restaurants of Bushixin and Chunming guan that served Chinese and Western food or the Laijin Rain Pavilion. The writer Shi Tuo described the regular comingling of different social and status groups at Central Park, writing that “among the college students were prostitutes, in the middle of prostitutes were merchants; mixed among the merchants were concubines; and next to them were gentlemen, and professors... a long row in a confusing mixture.”⁸³ Hence, a flexibly defined “public space” in the city that has unspecified or diverse social as well as added political functions, such as the city parks, notably emerged during the Republic of China under the Nationalist state.

The early development of public spaces administered by the state during the Republican period coincided with the converging notions of physical space and psychological space that was emerging in Europe and America as well, specifically the psychological space of the modern nation as manifested by a nation’s monuments. The physical monumental forms seen through the lens of “national forms” and “national characteristics” were embedded in the landscape of modernized cities that Chinese viewed while abroad, such as the scholar Wang Tao. In his famous *Jottings and Drawings from Carefree Travel (Manyou suilu tuji)*, the first Chinese travelogue about Europe published in Shanghai in 1890, Wang not only noted the institutions he visited on his trip from Hong Kong to Scotland, such as the opulent palaces and museums in Paris and London, but also lauded the spacious and orderly physical scale of the European urban

⁸² Dong, “Defining Beiping,” 129.

⁸³ Dong, “Defining Beiping,” 127.

space. For instance, in post-Haussmann Paris Wang marveled at the magnificent tall buildings of six floors or more, the planned space between buildings, and the standardized measurements of the widened streets lined with trees. Wang Tao's emphasis on the architecture and layout of the city in his narrative descriptions of the modernized European countries he visited forms a close relationship between architectural forms, the nation, and the experience of urban space codified in the chronological narration of his globetrotting (figure 40).⁸⁴

Other late Qing travelers abroad, who unlike Wang Tao were sent officially by the court to study foreign political and social models, were struck by places that explicitly functioned as sites of national commemoration and described them with the term *jinian*. *Jinian* is a modern-day neologism in Chinese that has emotional and psychological connotations dealing with memory. The character *ji* means to record while *nian* means to recall. For instance, the diary of Qing official Dai Hongci records one of the earliest usages of the term *jinian* when he visited nine European countries in 1905 as part of a Qing court delegation with four other high-ranking officials to study each country's political system of constitutional monarchy and republic.⁸⁵ Besides using *jinian* to describe objects with national connotations, like the gifts from China they gave their foreign hosts as *jinian pin*, or souvenirs, and looted Chinese imperial objects he viewed in museums which he described as "being engraved on one's bones and heart, unforgettable reminders (*jinian wu*)," Dai also used *jinian* to describe structures that evoked public or national memory, such as the Memorial Hall (*Jinian tang*) at Harvard University built

⁸⁴ Wang Tao, *Jottings and Drawings from Carefree Travel (Manyou suilu tuji)*, (Changsha: Yuelu shushe chubanshe, 1985), 84. Accompanying *Jottings and Drawings from Carefree Travel* are fifty hand-drawn illustrations of landscape dominated by similar single-gable buildings that are supposed to represent the vastly different places Wang visited. This homogeneous treatment suggests that the illustrator, Zhang Zhiyi, never saw the places firsthand and had to be creative in his pictorial interpretation of Wang's descriptions.

⁸⁵ Lai, "Searching," 26.

in 1878 to honor students who lost their lives in the Civil War.⁸⁶ Thus, *jinian* was understood not as a sensual response to a physical object or a spatial context, but as an emotional connection to the national memory it represents, from foreign invasion to civil war.

The method of coalescing the sense of a collective nation through the emotional identification of individuals with physical monuments emerges in the observations of the eminent historian Liang Qichao, the father of Liang Sicheng, the modern Chinese architect and chief architect of *Monument to the People's Heroes*, when he visited Westminster Abbey in 1919. After seeing the tombs and monuments of the various politicians, scholars, and writers who contributed to British society, Liang surmised, "Westminster Abbey does not recognize an individual but rather the nation of Britain...If foreigners like me are so moved by it, how touched would a British native be? Westminster is such an extremely solemn and righteous cultivation of personality, such an extremely vivid cultivation of national spirit."⁸⁷ Thus, here *jinian* not only had a commemorative purpose of historical and national importance, but also possess the ability to elicit a certain patriotic emotional response between the viewer and the commemorative space, such as Liang's response to Westminster Abbey. Through such experiences and observations abroad as made by Wang Tao, Dai Hongci, and Liang Qichao in the late Qing and early Republic, new ideas of urban spaces, specifically commemorative places, as nationally constituted, experienced, and remembered gained currency in China.

By the 1910s and 1920s the term *jinian* became commonly used in reference to objects or places of remembrance, such as *jinian hui* (commemorative gathering), *jinian guan* (commemorative museum), *jinian ce* (commemorative album), *jinian zhang* (commemorative badge), *jinian ge* (commemorative song), *jinian youpiao* (commemorative stamp), and *jinian ri*

⁸⁶ Lai, "Searching," 26.

⁸⁷ Lai, "Searching," 26.

(commemoration days).⁸⁸ It was in this context that in the field of sculptures, monuments, and architecture *jinian* also became synonymous with the English term “monumental,” as can be seen in the English and Chinese bilingual guidelines to the international design competition in 1925 for the mausoleum for Sun Yat-Sen, the first provisional president of the Republic of China.

In the English version of the competition guidelines it requested that proposals be “preferably in classical Chinese style with distinctive and monumental features.” Yet in the Chinese version of the guidelines, “monumental” was translated as *jinian*, thus eliciting proposals from Chinese architects that were modeled on commemorative architectural memorials, such as the winning entry by the Cornell University trained architect Lü Yanzhi (1894-1929), which was modeled on the Lincoln Memorial that recently had been completed in 1922 (figure 41). Proposals from Europeans and Americans, in contrast, were modeled after large, stately Chinese architectural structures, such as the third place honorable mention of the elevated tall pagoda form surrounded by four smaller pagoda pavilions sent by Francis H. Kales who practiced in Shanghai (figure 42).⁸⁹ Proposals from European and American architects noticeably looked more to visually grand Chinese structures as formal precedents, while Chinese architects modeled after structures that functioned as sites of national commemoration. As architectural historian Delin Lai has noted, this divergence suggests that whereas “monumental” denotes a relationship with size, “*jinian*” connotes instead an emotional relationship with national memory.⁹⁰ Therefore, in Republican period China *jinian* was a well-established and

⁸⁸ Lai, “Searching,” 26.

⁸⁹ By September 25, 1925 forty proposals were received and the jury awarded three winning entries and seven honorable mentions. The three winners were Chinese while two of the honorable mentions were also Chinese. All the Chinese winners had trained in the U.S. in the Beaux Arts tradition primarily at the University of Pennsylvania. For a critical study and analysis of Sun Yat-sen’s Mausoleum and specifically how it negotiates “classical Chinese style” in its planning and design see Delin Lai, “Searching for a Modern Chinese Monument: The Design of the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum in Nanjing,” in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 14, 1 (March 2005): 22-55.

⁹⁰ Lai, “Searching,” 26.

urgent concept related to nation building and history, but its physical manifestation was still open to wide interpretation.

The nascent strategies employed in determining the appropriate appearance and scale of the commemorative monument is exemplified in the case of *Monument to the Martyrs in the Railway Protection Movement*, one of the first urban commemorative monuments in China. It was erected in 1913 in Chengdu's Shaocheng Park, one of the earliest parks in China and the first one in Sichuan province. Today known as People's Park, Shaocheng Park opened in 1911 and was formerly the campgrounds for the Qing bannermen.⁹¹ *Monument to the Martyrs in the Railway Protection Movement* honors the 1911 Railway Protection Movement, the first organized protest involving both elite reformers and commoners. The movement, initiated in Sichuan, was provoked when the Qing imperial government planned to nationalize local railway development, thus transferring control from the provinces to foreign banks. In support of Sichuanese ownership of Sichuan railroads, the movement saw over ten thousand protestors on the streets of Chengdu, Sichuan's provincial capital, in August 1911. The popular movement ended in bloodshed as Qing government troops moved in on the crowds. The loss of life and the momentum created by the tragedy led to the Wuchang Uprising in Hubei province a couple of months later, which eventually resulted in the overthrow of the Qing court.⁹²

Designed by the Japan-trained engineer Wang Nan, *Monument to the Martyrs in the Railway Protection Movement* consists of a brick obelisk crowned by five small pagodas. Its

⁹¹ By the 1920s the park was a large operation for moral education, political propaganda, and patriotism like Central Park and Capital Park in Beijing equipped with an education hall, an exhibition hall, museum, library, zoo, and gymnasium among other facilities. Similar to Central Park and Capital Park, it was also popular for leisurely activities such as strolls and tea drinking in the park's teahouse. See "Chengdu Memories: Shaocheng Park's *Monument to the Martyrs in the Railway Protection Movement*" (Chengdu yinxiangji: shaocheng gongyuan nei de Xinhai baolu shishi jinianbei), *Daolu Monthly* 46.1 (1935): 3. Bannermen were elite Manchu, Mongol, and Han Chinese military forces loyal to the Qing court.

⁹² Wang, "Street Culture," 63.

base is elevated on a red brick plinth and shielded all around by a closed viewing platform so visitors can walk up to view the monument's reliefs of colorful Sichuan folk designs more closely (figure 43). The thirty-two meter tall obelisk, which is six meters shorter than *Monument to the People's Heroes*, and the one-meter tall characters of the same inscription bearing the name of the monument on all four sides suggests the designer's intention for the memorial to be visible for miles in the sprawling park so as to unite a community of disparate strangers near and far in their shared viewing experience of the monument. The *Monument to the Martyrs of the Railway Protection Movement's* towering height became not only a landmark of the park but also of the city of Chengdu and Sichuan, as can be seen in its frequent inclusion in representative images of the city or province such as in the photo essays "Scenes from Sichuan Province" in 1929 and "Young Companion Readers' Train Travels: Scenes of Chengdu" in 1935 published in the *Young Companion (Liangyou)* (figure 44)."⁹³

In *Monument to the Martyrs of the Railway Protection Movement* the combination of unconventionally scaled, conventionally heroic European memorial forms with Chinese commemorative structures epitomized the formal strategy for early modern monuments in China. The obelisk appears short because of its elaborate three tier base that is about half as tall as the obelisk itself. Its crown of multiple miniature pagodas and large-scale inscription on each face of one-meter tall characters, unlike the traditionally smaller sized inscriptions on steles, creates a conspicuous amalgamation of different commemorative forms rescaled from their usual proportions to fit together. The monument's collage of disparate, re-scaled forms is indicative not just of the monument maker's endeavor to create a uniquely modern Chinese prototype, but

⁹³ Li Depei, "Scenes from Sichuan Province" (Sichuan jingwu), *Young Companion (Liangyou)* (1929): 26; Gong Jingwei, "Young Companion Readers' Train Travels: Scenes of Chengdu: *Monument to the Martyrs of the Railway Protection Movement* (Liangyou duzhe luxing lieche: Chengdu jingwu: Xinhai qiubao lu si shi jinianbei)," *Young Companion (Liangyou)* 107 (1935): 18.

also the fundamental problem of how space should be scaled and for who in public space and modern society at large.

The attendant uncertain scale for the modern monument in China is evident in the Chinese translation of the term “monument” at the time as “commemorative stele” (*jinianbei*) and “commemorative pagoda” (*jinianta*), which were used interchangeably despite the divergent structural and visual qualities these two translations provoke.⁹⁴ A stele is a flat inscribed stone slab that is one to two meters high and of varying thickness and perhaps with a decorative top and base, whereas a pagoda is a multi-tiered tower traditionally intended for storing Buddhist sutras or relics. Though both the stele and the pagoda are involved in commemoration, the stele is an object made for the act of commemorating the written content and imagery carved into its surface while the pagoda is an architectural structure that houses venerated objects. The two Chinese translations of monument imply an understanding of monuments to function as commemorative, permanent, free standing objects in space. Yet the wide range of spatial scales suggested between the stele and the pagoda belies a conscious ambivalence in the actual realization of monuments and the public space it is intended to shape.

The closest physical and functional equivalent to the Euro-American concept of the monument in the premodern Chinese city is the stele due to its usual permanent material such as stone or bronze. Furthermore, its unified composition consisting of a top, body, and base and its function as a spatial marker of a specific location to publicize and commemorate the patron’s religious faith, an event, or a certain ideology are characteristic of the general form and functions of the historic monument in Europe and America. Many steles from Shaanxi province in north

⁹⁴ For example in a collective letter dated December 16, 1952 from the East Branch of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Hangzhou to the planning committee for *Monument to the People’s Heroes*, the writers in their request to participate in the project refer to the monument as the *jinianta*. See Yin, *The Eternal Symbol*, 94.

China, for instance, were inscribed describing the reason for their installation at major crossroads or in open fields in the countryside, like the 6th century limestone Shaanxi stele decorated with Buddhist imagery in the Victoria and Albert Museum collection (figure 45). The inscription on the stele describes that the stele stood “in front of the village beside the nine roads” for the promotion of Buddhism to whoever may pass.⁹⁵ The inscription reads further that the stele was erected so “that travelers, resting themselves at this spot, may venerate the sacred images...that whether they are clergy or laity their hearts may be influenced, and whether they be monks and nuns or unordained, they may look upon this column with respectful eyes.”⁹⁶

Like the Victoria and Albert’s Shaanxi stele, steles were commonly situated in open outdoor areas in transitory or remote spaces outside rather than inside the city or town. In the city steles usually would be erected in private spaces associated with an organization or clan, such as in a temple courtyard or funerary structure. The stele’s placement in these specific spaces of an already-formed community within the city compared to its open placement outside the city with a far more diverse and random viewership implies that the stele’s location in the city was dictated by how premodern urban space itself was intimately ordered by social function while the space outside the city walls was left unregulated.

The social significance of steles in their usual stone or bronze permanent material was not only to publicize but to leave an enduring commemoration of events, individuals, or schools of thought that can remain publicly accessible for future generations. Even the first dated stone stele in China inscribed in 219 BCE in celebration of the empire’s unification under the first emperor of China, Qin Shihuangdi, was not erected in the city or a location with an ensured

⁹⁵ Dorothy C. Wong, *Chinese Steles: Pre-Buddhist and Buddhist Use of a Symbolic Form* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 67.

⁹⁶ “Stele,” Victoria & Albert Museum, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O74102/stele-unknown/>, accessed July 8, 2014.

concentrated viewership, but on the side of Mount Yi in Shandong province. Six other similar steles were commissioned and carved over the next ten years, but were also erected at mountain sites in the recently conquered eastern areas of the Qin empire—Mount Tai, Lagye, Zhifu, Jieshi, and Kuaiji.⁹⁷ The steles thus served as enduring commemorative markers of the Qin emperor's expanded territory that would stand the vicissitudes of time and history rather than as representative or a vehicle to address a prescribed existing public. The practice of placing commemorative steles in the natural landscape outside the city for the benefit of an unknown public therefore shows a conscious relationship between time and space maintained in premodern China as understood between the timelessness of the unregulated space outside the city and the fleeting temporal logic of the bustling city and its physical structures.

Steles were also not so much appreciated for their physical form and structure by the literati since the Song dynasty (960-1127), but rather for what its durable materiality preserved: the written word.⁹⁸ The historical value of the textual content and the formal aesthetics of the calligraphic inscription carved onto the stele's surface allowed antiquarian scholars to appreciate and study history and ancient epigraphy through their visits to steles and by making rubbings of the inscriptions. Visiting ancient steles became such a learned pursuit that court paintings on the subject of scholars appreciating a stele started appearing as early as the Song period. The *Painting Catalogue of the Xuanhe Era* (1119-1125) (*Xuanhe huapu*) lists six paintings titled *Reading a Stele* (*Dubei tu*) and two paintings titled *Reading a Stele by Pitted Rocks* (*Dubei keshi tu*) attributed to Li Cheng (919-967). The Ming period (1368-1644) hanging scroll *Reading a*

⁹⁷ Clarissa von Spee, "Visiting Steles: Variations of a Painting Theme," in *On Telling Images of China*, ed. Shane McCausland and Yin Hwang (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University, 2014), 214.

⁹⁸ Stanley Abe, "From Stone to Sculpture: The Alchemy of the Modern," in *Treasures Rediscovered: Chinese Stone Sculpture from the Sackler Collections at Columbia University* (New York: Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, 2008), 7-8.

Memorial Stele (Dubei tu) (figure 46) centuries later shows a continuation of this thematic subject by portraying two scholars in conversation in front of a tall stele set in the vast natural wilderness of towering mountains and trees.

Steles hence eventually became a physical man-made motif of the open timeless landscape, such as in the 17th century Qing period handscroll *Going out for a Hunt in the Mountains of Heaven (Tianshan chulie tu)* (figure 47). An army of cavalry cut a sinuous route through a magnificently tall mountain gorge made up of cascades of fancifully shaped rock formations. The large stone stele taller than the rock on which it stands precariously in the valley of the gorge heightens the dangerous potential as well as sense of wonder of the mountainous landscape. The extraordinary white stone stele installed on the tall rock precipice as if by the divine rather than man augments the eternal grandeur of the scene as if, like the mountains, the stele has always been there. The stele's intentional positioning as a nonfunctional object in the wild natural landscape intensifies its celestial power and aura of permanence so that its deliberately historic nature can be easily forgotten. The construction and positioning of the largest stele in China, *Monument to the People's Heroes*, at the axis of old and new political power in the capital of Beijing therefore not only was a revisionist treatment of the past meaning of a stele as being removed from lived reality and time, but also an appropriation of the timeless aura and expanse of the awe-inspiring natural landscape into the service of the state at Tiananmen Square.

Public Space as the People's Space

Monument to the People's Heroes essentially represents a turning point in the concept of public space in modern China where public space's didactic utility and political program collapsed into the relative autonomy users of public spaces enjoyed. The case of *Monument to the People Heroes* shows how the monument's planning committee in close consultation with the Communist state endeavored to shape into existence a paradigm of civic public space that is explicitly organized in service to the unifying notion of the nation's politicized masses, or "the people." As one of its sculptors, Fu Tianchou, reflects, *Monument to the People's Heroes'* special characteristic is its "populism" (*renminxing*) so that it "stands in the heart of the people" (*shu zai renmin xin zhong*).⁹⁹ How this envisaged notion of "populism" became ascribed to *Monument to the People's Heroes* will be explored in the planning, design, and function of the monument, as seen in the context of the square; the overall monument; and the reliefs on its elevated base. The different scales of perception used to address the viewers embodied in these various views of *Monument to the People's Heroes*, however, do not in fact work together. Rather their isolated function and views reveal the inability to codify the various characterizations of the gathered crowds of viewers—the virtuous masses, the politicized people, and the anonymous individual—under the rubric of *renmin*. The shifting assumptions of the viewer from different perspectives of the monument calls into question what such conventions as the masses, the people, and the individual in the young Communist nation actually mean and

⁹⁹ Fu Tianchou, "Monument to the People's Heroes Three Characteristics (*Renmin yingxiong jinianbei san jue*)," in *The Reliefs of Monument to the People's Heroes (Renmin yingxiong jinianbei fudiao yishu)*, eds. Ma Ding and Ma Gan (Beijing: Kexue puji chubanshe, 1988), 1, 3.

shows how significant objects such as the monument can effectively defy such social hierarchies just as much as they theoretically are made to visibly reinforce them.

The initial proposals and the character of the final plan of the monument deserve critical analysis for what they reveal about the overall goals of the organizers in conceptualizing not just the first major monument in Communist China but a monument that had to establish a new spatial hierarchy and authority at Tiananmen, the gate of former imperial power. The Beijing Municipal City Planning office from the outset solicited design proposals across the nation for *Monument to the People's Heroes* and received more than 170 proposals reflecting a diverse pool of formally abstract and figural interpretations of “monument” and “the people” as per Mao’s inscription. Several designs laid a tablet horizontal on the ground to symbolize its proximity to “the people,” while others proposed a figural representation of “the people”—the worker, farmer, and soldier—raised on a tall vertical column similar to Vera Mukhina’s celebrated stainless steel monument *Worker and Collective Farm Woman*, one of the first welded sculptures that was made in 1937 for the World’s Fair in Paris (figure 48).

Proposals of pavilions, halls, and gates were the first to be rejected since the committee felt that a straight and tall monument was needed to visually embody the lofty concept of heroes and their acts.¹⁰⁰ Besides not appearing “lofty” enough, these proposed structures of pavilions, halls, and gates also scaled the monument in relation to its implicit architectural complement across the square, Tiananmen, and thus approached the monument as a repurposing of imperial architecture and space. For instance, one proposal presents a pavilion on a raised platform with stairs on which sits a horizontal rectangular monument bearing Mao’s inscription (figure 49).

¹⁰⁰ Wu Liangyong, “The Achievement of Creating *Monument to the People's Heroes* (*Renmin yingxiong jinianbei de chuangzuo chengjiu*),” in *The Reliefs of Monument to the People's Heroes* (*Renmin yingxiong jinianbei fudiao yishu*), eds. Ma Ding and Ma Gan (Beijing: Kexue puji chubanshe, 1988), 4.

The viewing platform is surrounded by a railing and at each corner statues of an animal head spouts water below. The low design of the railing with pronounced mounts intentionally echoes the imperial palace architecture of marble railings at Tiananmen while the animal heads spouting water at the four corners are a simplified version of the ornate rows of dragon head water spouts at the foundations of the palace buildings (figure 50). Such proposals incorporating imperial architectural elements for *Monument to the People's Heroes* were attempts not only to appropriate preexisting forms in the imperial space of Tiananmen, but to repurpose them and to visually harmonize with the spatial program and timelessness of the gate of Tiananmen. The outright rejection of proposed pavilions, halls, and gates expresses an unequivocal restraint on drawing directly from imperial imagery and paradigms of space.

By virtue of the nature of pavilions, halls, and gates as structures of passage, some of the rejected proposals of low elevation structures for *Monument to the People's Heroes* also drew on the Chinese imperial notion of the axis. Rather than an executed visual ordering of increasingly elaborate facades and vistas like in European palaces, as epitomized by the Palace of Versailles in Paris, the axis in imperial Beijing functions primarily as a line of gates regulating access to the imperial palace. Such proposals were hence also more visually mindful of the monument's address to Tiananmen, such as one proposal for three parallel gates all with sloping roofs and arched gateways that mirrored the same architectural motifs that would be found in the following gate on the axis line, Tiananmen (figure 51). In this proposal *Monument to the People's Heroes* was conceived not only visually but conceptually as a continuation and preservation of the imperial axis of power to the Forbidden City and thus was also placed out of contention. Such conceptions of "monument" relied heavily on preexisting visual motifs and spatial ordering but did not appear to attempt an approach to incorporate Mao's notion of "the people" into its design.

At the other extreme were proposals of futuristic, unadorned geometric structures that were more conscious of creating a large-scale monument in relation to the viewer rather than Tiananmen. The monuments of such proposals can only be seen and approached but not entered by the viewer, such as a proposal of a single fortress-like rectangular monument flanked by smaller upright rectangular protrusions on the sides and reliefs on the front and back (figure 52) and another of a tapering tower consisting of four tall rectangular slabs supported by a broad base (figure 53). A separate proposal displays four tall nondescript architectural columns standing equidistance from each other to resemble smokestacks and the industrial future (figure 54). Although the description of another futuristic proposal details that it would have stairs at its base to enable viewers to reach the platform on which the monument sits, it explains that the monument body would be a large enclosed cube that has no entrance (figure 55).¹⁰¹

The futuristic structures' stringent nonrepresentational sterility and inaccessibility scaled to the imagined person in the public space is made explicit by these plans' inclusion of the silhouette of a single figure to denote the large-scale of these monument structures. Besides communicating the monuments' large-scale in relation to the human body, these futuristic proposals also reveal the imagined relationship between the individual with the monument. In the proposal of the fortress-like mausoleum, the figure is characterized as a diminutive by-passer who does not face the monument as he walks along some faintly drawn curves suggesting the trajectory of his movement away from the monument. The figure is also drawn at the periphery of the monument to emphasize his distance and suggested alienation from the monument structure. In contrast, in the plan for the cubic monument that would allow the viewer to ascend

¹⁰¹ Beijing huayuan, ed. *Making of a Masterpiece—50th Anniversary of the Monument to the People's Heroes (Kaipi dazuo--Renmin yingxiong jinianbei luocheng wushi zhou nian jinian ji)* (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe), 2010, 21-22.

stairs to the monument, the viewer is shown as standing in front of the monument directly regarding it. Although both plans show two different relationships between the viewer and the monument, one indirect and the other direct, the scale of the viewing masses of the monument on the square, theoretically “the people,” is curiously not in any of them represented by multiple people but instead by a lone upright individual apparently imagined solely for the sake of scaling the visionary, pristine utopia.

The empty, ominous atmosphere in the futuristic proposals for *Monument to the People's Heroes* is reminiscent of the drawings of other futuristic monumental architectural renderings for capitals in other authoritarian states at the time, such as Mario Palanti's (1885-1979) designs for edifices in Mussolini's Rome and other Italian cities in the 1930s (figure 56). The inclusion of a teeming crowd of small figures surrounding the foot of a building and holding banners in Palanti's full length drawing of a formidable vertical Art Deco-like edifice shows the monumental ambitions of the architect. Monumental in the futurist proposals for *Monument to the People's Heroes* as well as in Palanti's proposal for the construction of Mussolini's Rome is understood as not just simply large but more specifically large enough where the structure miniaturizes the physical size of the human body by the structure's size and austere formal appearance. Even the lone leader on his grandstand waving at the masses below in Palanti's drawing appears diminished by the building's height and severe lines along with the precise line of gargoyles directly above him. These similarly dehumanizing, enigmatic proposals suggest that the common monumental architecture of authoritarian governments that are usually just attributed to the egomaniacal character of the commissioning dictator can be physically typified as isolated and austere structures that sought to dominate the landscape through its sheer inconceivably enormous size and visual and structural uniformity. In short, such monumentality

attempts to create an inaccessible presence over the scale of the upright human body. While the proposals for *Monument to the People's Heroes* all attempted to approach the idea of “monument” as scaled to the square’s existing concepts of space and imperial structures or scaled to the monumentality of models from other authoritarian states, their rejection because of their lack of a coherent address to the viewer also suggests the still nascent and unformed concept of “the people.”

The final stele form of *Monument to the People's Heroes* proposed by the University of Pennsylvania trained architects Liang Sicheng and Lin Huiyin was a hybrid of imperial architecture that acknowledges Tiananmen, but also repurposed and rescaled to excessively grand proportions. For instance, the monument’s inscribed rectangular stele body, the white marble railing and balustrades carved with cloud scroll decorations along the double viewing platform at the base and the crowning palace roof directly echoes the marble balustrades that line the paved walkway through Tiananmen and the hip and gable curved tiled roof on top of Tiananmen. Lin and Liang’s design proposal at first met intense criticism from the majority of the planning committee, many of whom mocked it saying that a tortoise mount, or *bixi*, that traditionally is reserved for steles of the imperial court or high officials should be constructed underneath the monument. Yet the importance of the written word, namely Mao’s inscription, and more specifically its visibility and prominent location on the monument in the end prevailed as the determining theme of the monument (figure 57).¹⁰² Many of the other initial proposals did not clearly designate a blank space on the monument for Mao’s inscription (figure 58), such as in the four smokestack-like structures (m) or the three parallel gates (b). Others presented Mao’s inscription as a minor component of the monument, such as on the façade of the fortress-like

¹⁰² Jun Wang, *Beijing Record: a Physical and Political History of Planning Modern Beijing* (Singapore; Hackensack: World Scientific, 2011), 328-329.

monument proposal (a), on the face of the cubic monument (c), or on a relief of the pavilion with animal head spouts (d).

Considering the two known criteria for *Monument to the People's Heroes* of not only designing a monument, but also one that can accommodate Mao's inscription, Lin and Liang were aware that a tablet would have to be present on the monument to bear the inscription. Also, the traditional function of steles to engrave meritorious deeds and events as well as its association with calligraphy made it an even more appealing form of support to carry Mao's inscription. Zhou Enlai gave the final approval of Lin's and Liang's proposed design for *Monument to the People's Heroes* because it could remarkably exhibit Mao's inscription on its tall and straight form. A longer inscription elaborating the historical movement of the last few decades of popular revolution that was penned by Mao and written in Zhou Enlai's hand would go on the reverse side of the stele body.¹⁰³ "Bold reliefs," the resulting eight marble reliefs, were then decided to adorn the stele at its base to illustrate some major historical turning points that would support Zhou Enlai's inscription.¹⁰⁴

In addition to the explicit imperial visual structures and motifs that echo the traditionalist proposals for *Monument to the People's Heroes* of pavilions and halls, the final *Monument to the People's Heroes* also integrates the monumentality of the futurist proposals. The solid grey granite of the monument's pavilion roof and stele body imparts a sense of uniformity and sterility to the monument and renders the roof into a nonfunctional decorative motif. The monument's visual and material homogeneity contrasts starkly with the bright colors and organic

¹⁰³ Zhou Enlai's inscription on the back of the monument reads, "Eternal glory to the heroes of the people who laid down their lives in the people's war of liberation and the people's revolution in the past three years! Eternal glory to the heroes of the people who laid down their lives in the people's war of liberation and the people's revolution in the past thirty years! Eternal glory to the heroes of the people who from 1840 laid down their lives in the many struggles against domestic and foreign enemies and for national independence and the freedom and well-being of the people!"

¹⁰⁴ Wang, *Beijing Record*, 328-329.

materials of the yellow ceramic tile roof and vermilion wooden structure of Tiananmen. The disorienting temporal and physical shift experienced between scales as one approaches the monument on Tiananmen Square, where the monument changes from appearing miniaturized to an exorbitantly blown-up stele close up, also contributes to its sense of monumentality. At the same time, the scale of the human body as one approaches the monument transforms from feeling magnified to gradually feeling marginalized by the monument. The final combination of the two spatial tendencies evident in the proposals for *Monument to the People's Heroes* of assimilating the former imperial monumental scale and forging a new futuristic monumental scale demonstrates how *Monument to the People's Heroes* was intended to symbolize a redefinition of people's relationship with the state.

The incorporation of imperial architectural elements into the design of *Monument to the People's Heroes* not only was a matter of scaling the monument to Tiananmen, but also rescaling Tiananmen and the imperial past to the new spatial order of "the people" and its square. Although Tiananmen symbolizes the defunct imperial past, it is also the focal point of the square and still functions as the active gate to the Forbidden City, transformed after the demise of the Qing dynasty into the Palace Museum, as well as the grandstand for Mao Zedong and other leaders of the Communist Party during state ceremonies and national celebrations. On the other hand, the upright frontality, non-utility, and harsh visual austerity of the granite body of *Monument to the People's Heroes* functions like a tombstone in the middle of the square. It often serves as the rear marker of the crowd on Tiananmen Square during celebrations, when everybody is facing the leaders addressing them from the height of Tiananmen, or as the center of somber memorial activities (figure 59). In such memorial rituals centered on *Monument to the People's Heroes* the crowd is pictured not as a constant sea of people, but as a systematically

mobilized crowd of people who appear as anonymous rows of dots diminished by the scale of the monument. Representing “the people” of post-Communist revolution China, the masses have transformed here into the ordered people of the nation paying respect to the martyrs of the people. Besides viewing the marble reliefs, the broad platform at the base is designed to accommodate small crowds to pay respects and lay wreaths.¹⁰⁵ Official and nonofficial gatherings for the commemoration and giving of wreaths to distinguished individuals who contributed to society have taken place at the *Monument to the People’s Heroes* ever since the monument’s official opening on Labor Day, May, 1, 1958.¹⁰⁶ Whereas Tiananmen was therefore the visual and de facto dynamic face of the square, *Monument to the People’s Heroes* was envisioned as the comparable central anchor of the square that marks it as the people’s square. The association of solemnity, death, and sacrifice with the Communist state’s commissioned *Monument to the People’s Heroes* not only acts as a foil to the vibrancy of Tiananmen but also places the monument in an intimate visual and functional relationship with Tiananmen. The monument’s appropriation of the visual ornaments and imperial structures of Tiananmen co-opts the cultural authority of the former entrance gate to the imperial palace into the spatial order of the new state.

The spatial erosion of the former imperial order had already begun almost half a century before the Communist Revolution with the overthrow of the Qing court, or the last imperial dynasty, and the establishment of the Republic of China led by the Nationalist government. The five hundred year old “dragon vein,” or the 7,500 mile long main north-south axis of imperial power running through the main gates of the Outer City, Inner City, Imperial City, and Palace City, was first ruptured in January 1913 on the anniversary of the fall of the Qing dynasty and

¹⁰⁵ Wu, “The Achievement of Creating,” 6.

¹⁰⁶ Chu Ying and Fu Jin, “Eternal Glory to the People’s Heroes (Renmin yingxiong yongchui buxiu),” *People’s Daily (Renmin ribao)*, May 2, 1958, 2.

the founding of the Republic of China. On that occasion the doors in the gate towers surrounding the Imperial City, or what is today Tiananmen Square, were removed and the walls between these gate towers were destroyed for ease of traffic. Locals thereafter could walk freely in and through this area for the first time.¹⁰⁷ For centuries previously the most central gateways on the north-south axis to the Imperial City were reserved for only the emperor and his court, so most of the time the gates surrounding today's Tiananmen Square were seen closed. During the Republican period the area in front of the gate of Tiananmen also became an impromptu site for popular commemorations, such as the commemoration of the 1911 overthrow of the Qing court on October 10. The area also attracted mass protests, such as the political protests of May Fourth in 1919 and the May Thirtieth Movement in 1925, because of its proximity to the central government authorities housed in Zhongnanhai (figure 60).

Despite its importance in Republican China as a site of mass mobilization, in 1949 the area in front of Tiananmen hardly resembled a formal modern public area, let alone a modern square, as it was still filled with imperial architecture and trees.¹⁰⁸ Structures such as the four hundred year old ornamental stone dragon pillars, stone lions, and most conspicuously the approximately one hundred meter wide and five hundred meter long Corridor of a Thousand Steps (*qianbulang*) on either side of the processional path that traveled through the area of the future square and terminated at its intersection with the gate of Tiananmen were all still standing (figure 61).¹⁰⁹ The imperial administrative buildings of the six ministries (*liubu*) and other major government agencies flanked either side of the Corridor of a Thousand Steps and also would

¹⁰⁷ Shuishan Yu, "Redefining the Axis of Beijing: Revolution and Nostalgia in the Planning of the PRC Capital," in *Journal of Urban History* 34 (2008): 574.

¹⁰⁸ The three-story Tiananmen gate was made in 1420 during the Ming period as the south gate to the palace. Due to a fire in 1457 Tiananmen was repaired into its current form. A fire in the late Ming again burned it down and in 1645 it was reconstructed and finished in 1651 and given the name Tiananmen.

¹⁰⁹ Yu, "Redefining the Axis," 584.

have to be cleared in order to widen the area into a viable square.¹¹⁰ Moreover, when the Communist state came to power and moved the nation's capital back to Beijing from the Republican capital of Nanjing, the heart of the "dragon vein" was still centered on the palace, or colloquially the Forbidden City. The focus of the new axis of power in the People's Republic was to be relocated from the Forbidden City to Tiananmen Square. *Monument to the People's Heroes* would usurp the imperial city as the new center, thereby making the imperial space of old Beijing the crucial palimpsest for power in New China.

According to Liang Sicheng the complementary functions and identities of Tiananmen and *Monument to the People's Heroes* was the intended effect. Liang Sicheng in his 1951 letter to Peng Zhen, the mayor of Beijing who was administrative head of the Monument to the People's Heroes Construction Committee (*Renmin yingxiong jinianbei xingjian weiyuanhui*), argued that *Monument to the People's Heroes* and Tiananmen are the two most important architectural structures and symbols of the People's Republic. He asserted that it would be appropriate for them, therefore, to appear formally different so they could act as a visual "foil" (*chentuo*) for each other and to ensure that the monument did not appear as a "reproduction" (*chongfu*) of Tiananmen. The monument should hence "stand erect, solid, and with a stable base" (*chuli xunzhi, jianshi, genji wengu de li zai dishang*) rather than have a strong horizontal element with openings like the base of Tiananmen, such as a wide base to house a exhibition hall as was being considered at the time. To illustrate his point Liang drew a sketch of the vertical monument sitting on top of a base with three entrance openings and Tiananmen next to it for

¹¹⁰ On the west side of the corridor was the Ming administrative buildings of the Five Armies (*wujun dudufu*) and the secret police (*jinyiwei*) and the Qing buildings of the Ministry of Punishment (*xingbu*), the imperial procurate (*duchayuan*), and the imperial prison (*qintianjian*). On the east side of the corridor both Ming and Qing built the Ministry of Rites (*libu*), Ministry of Revenue, Ministry of Civil Office, Ministry of Public Works, and the Imperial Hanlin Academy.

comparison (figure 62). The monument is drawn shorter than Tiananmen and without a crowning motif in order to underscore Liang's assertion that mimicking the broad base of Tiananmen to accommodate an exhibition hall and with entrance openings would physically diminish the vertical proportions of the monument's body and the appearance of its stability. Although arguing against the use of the base to house an exhibition hall was the point of his analysis, the nature of Liang's argumentation shows the importance placed on preserving the monument's visual integrity and independence vis á vis Tiananmen.

In the letter Liang also included another comparison sketch of Tiananmen and his preferred design for the monument as a tall column crowned with a miniaturized pavilion roof and standing low on the ground that is similar to the eventual *Monument to the People's Heroes* (figure 63).¹¹¹ The monument here appears slightly taller than Tiananmen as was planned in recognition of the structure's present-day authority, but Liang also exaggerates the proportions of the monument to make it appear as large as Tiananmen. The wide base with openings of the monument in the first sketch is replaced by a narrower base of the same height on which stands the monument, but here the monument is drawn slightly wider and taller with the additional roof motif to suggest a more robust and stable monument than the alternative with openings in the base. Besides manipulating the scales between the two sketches of the monument to visually promote his preferred design, Liang's distorted scaling in the latter sketch of the monument to make it proportional to Tiananmen also reveals the overriding concern for the monument to have the ability to stand its own ground next to Tiananmen. Although much of the visual authority of the new order borrowed from that of imperial times, this was done so strategically. By

¹¹¹ Liang Sicheng, "Letter to Peng Zhen (zhi Peng Zhen xin)," August 29, 1951, in *Collected Works of Liang Sicheng (Liang Sicheng quanji)*, Volume 5 (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 2001), 128.

measuring against the past *Monument to the People's Heroes* could then represent a new modern authority of “the people.”

In his important 1951 letter to Peng Zhen, Liang Sicheng also touched upon the scale and relationship of *Monument to the People's Heroes* to the viewer. Liang advocated the need to synthesize the longstanding stele form with the architectural scale of a pagoda, echoing the unresolved physical parameters of the large-scale memorial sculpture between commemorative *jinianbei* (stele) and *jinianta* (pagoda) during the Republican period. Though he was a staunch supporter of a stele format to accommodate Mao's and Zhou's inscriptions, Liang felt that the stele form would require modifications because it is traditionally “short” (*aixiao*) and “grave” (*yuchen*) and thus lacks heroic character.¹¹² Liang posited that *Monument to the People's Heroes* would be more analogous to an architectural structure rather than a stele because of its grand height that surpasses Tiananmen. Further, he argued that whereas a stele is conventionally composed of a single stone, the great height and size of *Monument to the People's Heroes* requires a sheath of multiple granite bricks to reinforce the sixty ton single granite stele body bearing Mao's and Zhou's inscriptions. It would thus look like a “patchwork stele” (*baina bei*) which would not appear lofty and would be “uncomfortable” (*bu shufu*) to viewers. Therefore, Liang posited that the monument should be built not in the conventional form of a stele but instead as a tall commemorative architectural structure like a pagoda. In order to clarify its architectural identity rather than that of a sculptural object, Liang also advocated using a roof motif to crown the monument.¹¹³

¹¹² Liang Sicheng, “The Process of Designing *Monument to the People's Heroes* (Renmin yingxiong jinianbei sheji de jingguo),” December 15, 1967, in *Collected Works of Liang Sicheng (Liang Sicheng quanji)*, Volume 5 (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 2001), 462.

¹¹³ Liang, “Letter to Peng Zhen,” 129.

Though in his text he discussed the problem of the unusually large stele's size as potentially confusing the viewer's senses, Liang's accompanying sketch in the letter of two similarly sized steles but with different sized people standing next to each one implies that what is actually at stake is not the monument's identity defined by its size but by its scale to the upright human body of the viewer (figure 64). The sketch displays a large stele more than two times the height of the person standing besides it and a stele of the same height and size but composed of bricks and five times the height of the person standing besides it. The problem posed by Liang's two sketches is not so much about the size of the object, but rather the dramatic reduction in scale of the viewer and the risk of the monument appearing like an oddly overblown stele. Liang's preference to scale *Monument to the People's Heroes* to architecture like a pagoda rather than a person exposes the underlying issues that the modern large-scale sculpture in public space raises and the inadequacy of the usual conflation of large size with large scale—What should be the new standard for scale in the space of the new nation? Against what should largeness be measured in modern times? Should sculptures in outdoor public space be scaled to the viewer or to the built environment, and conversely how should sculpture scale the viewer and the built environment? The choice of scaling *Monument to the People's Heroes* to the architectural models of the pagoda and Tiananmen is revealing of the address of the monument to preexisting spatial orders rather than to the masses of people it allegedly is meant to serve and represent.

Liang's sketch of a single person rather than a crowd next to the brick stele representing *Monument to the People's Heroes* further implies that the space of the square was conceived not so much as a "public" space for the nation's people to mobilize, but simply the unrestricted space of the outdoors. The interchangeability of the term "outdoor sculpture" (*shiwai diaosu*) with

“large-scale sculpture” (*daxing diaosu*) at the time in the writings by Chinese sculpture theorists, such as Fu Tianchou and Wang Linyi, also indicates a conscious disassociation between space and the psychological space of the public (*gonggong*) that had emerged in the Republican period. In the early years of Communist China there was a move instead to normalize a sanitized, pristine notion of the public and public space in Communist China. According to Rosalyn Deutsche in her book *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*, public space is a realm between the state and the society to which it is held accountable.¹¹⁴ The deliberate treatment of Tiananmen Square as a homogeneous space in the planning of *Monument to the People’s Heroes* demonstrates the already incipient envisioning of the post-Communist Revolution square as a stage for visual enactments of the socialist nation as a seamless union of “the people” and “the people’s government” rather than also a potential site for spontaneous mass mobilizations and confrontations between the state and society.

Tiananmen Square thus was not so much a square for people, but a space to perform the cohesive nation. As Elias Canetti has observed, “A foreboding of threatening disintegration is always alive in the crowd,” so that the crowd “seeks thus to rapidly increase and absorb everyone.”¹¹⁵ The creation and expansion of Tiananmen Square and the making of its first new structure, *Monument to the People’s Heroes*, reflected the transformation of the singular pathway for individuals to traverse and enter the Forbidden City into a national stage to receive and celebrate large jubilant crowds, or masses of “the people.” The two series of the Corridor of a Thousand Steps that led to Tiananmen and flanked the future area of Tiananmen Square was intended to give courtiers coming to pay respects to the court a feeling of foreboding. This disempowering effect was deemed inappropriate for the commemorative and edifying nature of

¹¹⁴ Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 274.

¹¹⁵ Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* (New York: Viking Press, 1962), 17.

the square and the capital of a socialist nation and so the corridors were consequently removed.¹¹⁶ The new intended purpose of the cleared space to not simply be a transitional space, but the dominant space of the nation's square that can hold as large a crowd as possible is perceptible on the first National Day, October 1, 1949, when Mao announced the founding of the People's Republic of China and an estimated 300,000 people filled the square. Mao famously ordered on this occasion that the square be expanded so that it could hold 500,000 people. Mao's desire may have referred to his dissatisfaction with the physical limitations of the square's space, but it also testifies to his assumption that the crowd of the masses will naturally expand to fill the square if given the space. The space, therefore, had to be able not only to accommodate the crowd, but also anticipate and encourage its growth.

Aside from coming to Tiananmen Square to receive tutelage from seeing and hearing Mao, people also came to feel and be a part of the crowd. As Beijing native Naihua Zhang once recounted, after the Cultural Revolution started in 1966 and her father's role as the chief engineer and manager of a British-owned coal mine became a social liability, she was discriminated against and was no longer a popular student in her class. However, what "really shook [her] to the core" she recalls was two years later when she was denied participation in the 1968 National Day celebrations along with the rest of her school that was selected to be part of the "sea of people" on the square that year that would in the end "surge" forward toward Mao Zedong on top of Tiananmen.¹¹⁷ As Zhang describes, "This incident had a chilling effect on my psyche.

¹¹⁶ Yin, *The Eternal Symbol*, 36.

¹¹⁷ Naihua Zhang, "In a World Together Yet Apart: Urban and Rural Women Coming of Age in the Seventies," from *Some of Us: Chinese Women Growing Up in the Mao Era*, eds. Xueping Zhong, Zheng Wang, Bai Di (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 4.

Tiananmen Square can hold up to 100,000 people—100,000 people! And I could not be one of them, could not be a drop of water in the sea."¹¹⁸

Zhang, who willed a general indifference to her fallen status and regular ill treatment experienced during the Cultural Revolution, could not fathom how her individual status mattered to her relationship to the crowd where all are made anonymous and equal. This denial was an affront to Zhang as she realized that her individual experience was purposefully made to affect her relationship and access to a reality greater and brighter than her own as represented by the physical, ideological, and psychological expanse of Tiananmen Square. Here, the public space of the largest square in the world until 1976 not only acts to congeal a politicized *renmin*, or “the people” in the organized political activity of the day, but just by its legendary immeasurable scale attract and welcome all who desire to experience as well as be a part of the largest “sea” in China and to become lost in its waves.¹¹⁹ According to Hannah Arendt, the masses that totalitarian governments so successfully tap into are the majority of the population who are neutral, politically indifferent people, or those who have “never been ‘spoiled’ by the party system.”¹²⁰ The national space here in Tiananmen Square is thus conceived as an arena to receive crowds of willing spectators to represent the virtuous masses uncorrupted by political or personal agendas. Consequently, those who come do so not to be politically persuaded, but in anticipation of the crowd.

Even if they could not attend the celebrations, the widely reproduced grand and theatrical photographs of the national celebrations created a longing to be part of the imagined assembled

¹¹⁸ Zhang, "In a World Together," 4.

¹¹⁹ The area of Tiananmen Square is thirty hectares, six times larger than Moscow's Red Square, and for eighteen years was the world's largest square. Merdeka Square with an area of 100 hectares in Jakarta, Indonesia surpassed Tiananmen Square when it was finished in 1976.

¹²⁰ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Schocken Books: New York, 2004, 414-415.

masses (figure 65). Such photographs as the one that appeared in the *People's Pictorial* (*Renmin huabao*) of the celebration on Tiananmen Square for the tenth anniversary of the People's Republic are many times taken from just above the crowd to display a homogenous sea of joyous people that rapidly telescopes indefinitely into the distance. The faces all turned away from the viewer, supposedly looking up at Tiananmen from where Mao is seen in an adjacent image speaking, suggests that the viewer is given the privileged view of seeing the crowds from an elevated vantage point near Tiananmen. The viewer is therefore not a member of the crowd looking up at Mao on Tiananmen, a dignitary with Mao up on the Tiananmen gate dais returning the people's ardent gaze, or an omnipresent viewer with a bird's eye perspective. Instead, the viewer is positioned on the scene though from a removed, inaccessible angle, like on a raised architectural structure, for the sole purpose of seeing the faces of the crowd. The image of the crowd is disorderly to appear as a spontaneous occurrence rather than an organized one. The angle and crop of the image is likewise concentrated on just capturing the uniform smiling expressions of their disembodied heads and triumphant raised arms. Only from the scale of architecture can such a clear view be offered showing "the people" as a unified body with many heads covering the unobstructed expanse of space between *Monument to the People's Heroes* and Tiananmen. Architecture thus scales not only the structures on Tiananmen Square but also the image of a sea of masses to signify the young nation of "the people."

Like the quintessential image of the unending crowd of virtuous masses in Communist China published in the *People's Pictorial*, the crowd at Tiananmen is rarely visualized in official media images from behind like they were in Republican China, such as in the photograph of demonstrators in front of Tiananmen in support of the anti-foreign May Thirtieth Movement that was published in the Shanghai newspaper *Eastern Miscellany* (*Dongfang zazhi*) in 1925, or from

the ground level in another photograph of the demonstrators in the same article (figure 66).¹²¹

Viewing the crowd from the back highlights the different directions members of the crowd are moving. While the majority of demonstrators appear focused to the front toward Tiananmen in the background, several figures in the foreground of the picture are walking away from Tiananmen, perhaps leaving in boredom, disagreement of the crowd's aims, or just to take a break. Regardless the reason, the image of the crowd taken from the back seems haphazard and far from mobilized and united in their cause.

Additionally, the view at the ground level highlights the discrete bodies of the individuals and the scattered distance between them, hence further portraying a disjointed and disorganized gathering rather than a cohesive and continuous visual human tapestry, or the remarkable “sea of people” that Naihua Zhang and many other people who grew up in Communist China commonly describe the assembled crowd in Tiananmen Square. Whereas such visualizations of the crowd in Republican China scaled at the ground level actively attempted to discredit the implicit unified authority of the disgruntled mobilized crowd as representative of popular opinion, the appropriation and careful modeling of the mobilized crowd in Communist China impresses a strong image and belief in the harmonious national face and voice of the masses as “the people.”

While the designers of *Monument to the People's Heroes* concentrated on scaling the new monument to the pre-existing spatial order of architecture to help codify the architectural scaling of the crowd and masses into “the people,” the base of the monument acted separately as the viewer's direct access to the monument. Oftentimes the base in commemorative sculptures during the Republican period was more than two times the height of the sculpture. The base, therefore, served simply to elevate the sculpture, usually a figurative representation, above the

¹²¹ May Thirtieth Movement protests opposed the Shanghai municipal government's shooting and killing of Chinese protestors in Shanghai's International Settlement on May 30, 1925.

heads of the viewers to distinguish sculptural space from lived space and to allow the sculpture to be seen not only from far away but also by many viewers simultaneously. Whereas the base of Republican period commemorative outdoor sculptures in general functioned just as a supporting apparatus for the sculpture proper with possibly a plaque identifying the personage or event that the sculpture commemorates, the base of *Monument to the People's Heroes* actively operates almost as a separate sculpture independent of the stele-like monument body. Rather than functioning as a mere pedestal to extend the sculpture's verticality and height, the base in *Monument to the People's Heroes* is horizontally enlarged substantially enough so that it complements the monument body's verticality while also accommodating viewers to see the eight narrative marble reliefs that cover all four sides of the base. The base of *Monument to the People's Heroes* is accessible to visitors by stairs and the reliefs are scaled large in relation to the human body at a height of two-meters and placed just slightly above eye level (figure 67).

Upon leaving the space of the crowd on Tiananmen Square and ascending the stairs onto the viewing platform for the eight marble reliefs, one is met with repetitive portrayals of the imagined crowd throughout China's modern history. Rather than choosing to impart the history of the Communist Party, the reliefs by different renowned sculptors depict a certain event in Chinese modern history starting with the destruction of opium in 1839 that forced the First Opium War; the Jintian Uprising that led to the Taiping Revolution in 1851; the Wuchang Uprising that led to the 1911 Revolution when the final Qing emperor abdicated the throne; the May Fourth Movement of 1919; the May Thirtieth Movement (1925); the Nanchang Uprising (1927); the Second Sino-Japanese War (1931-1945); and the crossing of the Yangtze River during the Chinese Civil War that led to the takeover of Beijing and the successful Communist Revolution in 1949. These events were meticulously chosen after a series of debates and

revisions in 1952 and 1953 by a team of historians led by Fan Wenlan (1891-1961), a Chinese Marxist historian who was instrumental in shaping official Chinese revolutionary history with an emphasis on the theme of the people's struggle against feudalism and imperialism.¹²²

Visually the majority of reliefs also portray a strong uniformity in their similar composition of a compact line of figures united in a single continuous horizontal movement. Despite the different sculptors in charge of each relief, endeavors were made to ensure such a level of uniformity across the reliefs so that they would be read together as a body of work. Liu Kaiqu, director of the art group charged with creating the reliefs, decided that each relief would be depicted in three levels of depth within a total twelve centimeters thickness in order to control the scale of the figures.¹²³ The majority of the sculptors had studied abroad in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, such as Wang Linyi, Hua Tianyou, and Ceng Zhushao, or studied monuments of European sculpture from their teachers who did study abroad, such as Wang Bingzhao who graduated from the Hangzhou Art School.¹²⁴ Thus, in the making of the reliefs they drew on especially ancient Greek models of group compositions in reliefs, such as the famous reliefs of the Parthenon friezes. For example, Wang Bingzhao's low relief of the Jintian Uprising shows a deluge of multiple overlapping armed footmen filling the pictorial space like the compact dynamic composition of battle scenes, albeit on horses, from the similarly low reliefs of the

¹²² See Li Huaiyin, "Between Tradition and Revolution: Fan Wenlan and the Origins of the Marxist Historiography of Modern China," *Modern China* 36, 3 (May 2010): 269-301.

¹²³ Yin, *The Eternal Symbol*, 159.

¹²⁴ Though the artists who worked on *Monument to the People's Heroes* maintained a language of anonymity and selflessness during production, in retrospect this high profile official project to make the nation's monument in Tiananmen Square is seen as forming a "protective umbrella" (*yi ba baohu san*) over a group of some of the most outstanding sculptors, architects, and other art professionals of that generation from the numerous political campaigns of the 1950s. Whenever any big-character posters appeared at the work-site publicizing issues in a campaign, they were immediately torn down or covered over so as not to disturb the work. See Ma Yi, "Notes on *Monument to the People's Heroes*" (Renmin yingxiong jinianbei huaxu), in *The Reliefs of Monument to the People's Heroes (Renmin yingxiong jinianbei fudiao yishu)*, eds. Ma Ding and Ma Gan (Beijing: Kexue puji chubanshe, 1988), 16.

Parthenon (figure 68). As a group the art team of sculptors also traveled in October 1953 to various sculpture sites and temples in China, such as Datong, Yungang, Taiyuan, Maijishan, and Longmen.¹²⁵ Wang Linyi cites the well-known Northern Wei relief *Offering Procession of the Empress as Donor with Her Court* at Longmen as the linear, horizontal inspiration for the composition of figures in his May Thirtieth relief (figure 69).

Besides models of other sculptural reliefs, the reliefs of *Monument to the People's Heroes* also reflect the impact of two-dimensional compositions of crowds, which may have been due to the draftsmen of the reliefs being not the sculptors but a group of invited painting professors from the Central Academy of Fine Arts, such as Wu Zuoren and Dong Xiwen. According to the painter Yan Han, who was vice director of the art group, the sculptors felt self-conscious about their drafting skills and their historical knowledge and so enlisted the group of painters for the task of drafting the reliefs to be sent for approval to Mao and other officials.¹²⁶ The final sculptural reliefs likely were not faithful interpretations of the drafts, though, as suggested by a comparison of Dong Xiwen's pencil draft for the relief of the Wuchang Uprising with the final marble relief by Fu Tianchou. Fu Tianchou abbreviated and focused the sculptural relief by reducing the background of incoming figures emerging from behind a wall to just two figures and altering the disarray of figures twisting or gesturing in different directions in the front and the back into an emphatically repetitious series of bodies all charging forward at the same angle and in the same direction (figure 70). The relief's visual standardization is further stressed in the steady line of guns, therefore demonstrating the objective of portraying the action and composition of the historic crowd of masses in the reliefs as cohesive and united.

¹²⁵ Yin, *The Eternal Symbol*, 163.

¹²⁶ Other painters who participated in the drafting phase of the monument's reliefs were Gu Yuan, Ai Zhongxin, Feng Fayi, Li Zongjin, Wang Qi, Wang Shikuo, and Zhang Wenxin. See Wu, "The Achievement of Creating," 13; and Yin, *The Eternal Symbol*, 117-118.

Though Fu Tianchou removed the last male figure in the relief's draft, who apparently is hitting a gong as he looks back, he replaced him with a figure of a soldier looking back with his mouth open to suggest that he is calling out to the people behind him. The figure in the middle of the draft image who is also looking back to call forth the crowd remains in the final relief. The prominent motif of the open mouthed figure looking back in fact frequently appears in the majority of the other reliefs in *Monument to the People's Heroes*, such as in the second relief of the Jintian Uprising by Wang Binzhao (figure 71), the fifth relief of the May Thirtieth Movement by Wang Linyi (figure 72), and the final relief of the Communist Revolution by Liu Kaiqu (figure 73).

This recurring and distinctive aural component in the visualization of the crowd in the *Monument to the People's Heroes* relief cycle is reminiscent of the fascination with the representation of aural expression in the Chinese modern woodcut movement of the 1930s.¹²⁷ Starting in the early 1930s in trying to bring together popular support against Japanese aggression and escalation with the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, several woodcut artists created startlingly provocative graphic images of shouting figures usually leading or ushering forward a crowd of people, such as Hu Yichuan's *To the Front* in 1932 (figure 74) of a man in the foreground leading an innumerable throng of mask-like faces trailing him in the background. Li Hua's *Forward* in 1936 depicts an open-mouthed man also in the foreground holding a flag that reads "Down with Imperialism." He looks back at the crowd of people that

¹²⁷ Painting faculty from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, such as Wu Zuoren and Yan Han, were recruited to help draft the reliefs which the sculptors then worked off and modified for the stone medium. Yin, *The Eternal Symbol*, 117-118.

fills the space behind him too, but this time the crowd is also singing apparently the fighting lyrics written below (figure 75).¹²⁸

The iconic *Roar, China!* (figure 76) by Li Hua in 1935 epitomizes the woodcut movement's fascination with the aural, though uniquely by showing a single screaming figure writhing in pain against the ropes binding his entire body, even his head. Although he is not shown participating in a crowd, as Xiaobing Tang has observed the naked bound and blindfolded figure elicits the compassion of the viewer to "join him in crying"¹²⁹ through the only mode of expression he has left, his voice. Implicitly the aural cry as a rallying point suggests the formation of a crowd, regardless if the crowd of people appears in the pictorial space.

Similarly, though each relief is titled to represent a particular actual event that occurred in modern China, the reliefs of *Monument to the People's Heroes* do not depict the definitive action that characterizes the event's importance, such as the officers who opened fire on protesters during the May Thirtieth Movement or the engagement with Japanese combatants during the Sino-Japanese War. In striving to follow Mao Zedong's view of "the people as the driving force of world history" and to portray Zhou Enlai's written inscription incised on the back of *Monument to the People's Heroes*, the sculptors chose instead to depict the anonymous mobilized masses of different social groups rather than any specific individuals or famous leaders.¹³⁰ The reliefs thus portray the formation of a crowd that foreshadows imminent action rather than the action of the famous event itself. Like the importance of the rallying cry that can

¹²⁸ The lyrics read, "The imperialists' guns and swords are on our necks, / The traitors put our hands and feet in shackles! / How detestable that some of our own people could turn into executioners for the enemy! / Willingly falling on their knees before the barbaric imperialist force! / Forward! Forward! / Arise, you who refuse to be slave!" Translation from Chang-Tai Hung, "Two Images of Socialism: Woodcuts in Chinese Communist Politics" in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39, 1 (January 1997): 40.

¹²⁹ Xiaobing Tang, "Echoes of *Roar, China!*: On Vision and Voice in Modern Chinese Art," *Positions: east Asia cultures critique* 14, no. 2 (2006): 472.

¹³⁰ Fu, "Monument to the People's Heroes," 7, 9.

be heard from a great distance to cohere and maintain the expansive crowd, as argued in the visual program of the eight marble reliefs, the tall, erect body of *Monument to the People's Heroes* likewise acts as a prominent beacon visible anywhere by the crowd of people assembled on Tiananmen Square. However, while the rallying cry conveyed visually in the woodcuts of the 1930s is meant to awaken the pictured crowds as well as actual crowds of viewers into action, *Monument to the People's Heroes* as a site of commemorating the revolutionary masses implies the agitated crowd's obsolescence in the present.

The reliefs' function to normalize the notion of the crowd is ostensibly reflected in the strong use of repetition in their individual compositions and serial arrangement together. The recurring organization of the figures along the linear foreground in each panel and the shared ground line of all the panels neutralize the erratic passion and violence usually associated with crowd behavior (figure 77). The finished, pristine surface of the carved reliefs in marble fully articulates the line of overlapping but distinct full-length bodies of the crowd. This contrasts with the 1930s woodcuts' graphic starkness and incomplete forms that are suggestive of the disorganized crowds. As one circumambulates the viewing platform of *Monument to the People's Heroes*, the repetition of the monotonous orderly crowd of each relief highlights a certain social class, such as workers in the relief of the Opium War, soldiers in the relief of the Wuchang Uprising, and young intellectuals in the relief of the May Fourth Movement, therefore asserting the crowd as literally and figuratively a recurring pattern in modern Chinese history. By standardizing and classifying the appearance of the crowd regardless of the setting and circumstances of each historical event, the unpredictable and volatile power of the crowd is defused. The multiplicity of "the people" is thus acknowledged by the deliberate diversity of

social groups represented, yet not in its celebration but rather to make the visual argument for the unified will of “the people” that excises personal and political differences.

The relief’s palatable version of the codified crowd reflects the relief’s prescribed didactic function, as is modeled in such depictions as the oil painting, *Red Generation after Generation (Daidai hong)*, published in a collection of prints of ink and oil paintings collectively created by Beijing working, farming, and military work units in 1972 (figure 78).¹³¹ The oil painting, labeled as being collectively conceived by the work unit at the Summer Palace in Beijing, shows how the reliefs of *Monument to the People’s Heroes* are used to teach generations of people from all walks of life about the major turning points in the history of modern China. The group of young children standing in front of one of the reliefs with a guide gesturing at it suggests that she is explaining its significance, while men in green military uniforms and a woman in a nondescript red shirt stand to the left around the corner looking up as if they are studying the reliefs on their side too. The two shadows of figures in the painting’s foreground represent other people of unknown age and backgrounds who also come to admire and learn from the reliefs at the monument base.¹³² Although the painting certainly suggests a diversity of viewers as per its title, one generation is only tacitly represented in the painting—the past

¹³¹ *Selected Artworks of Beijing Workers, Farmers, and Soldiers (Beijing shi gongnongbing meishu zuopin xuan)* (Beijing: Beijing renmin chubanshe, 1972).

¹³² Each of the lead sculptors of the planning committee sculpted and supervised the production of a relief. Ceng Zhushao made the first relief, “Opium War;” Wang Bingzhao made the second relief, “Jintian Uprising;” Fu Tianchou made the third relief, “Wuchang Uprising;” Hua Tianyou made the fourth relief, “May Fourth Movement;” Wang Linyi made the fifth relief, “May Thirtieth Movement;” Xiao Chuanjiu made the sixth relief, “Nanchang Uprising;” Zhang Songhe made the seventh relief, “Guerilla Warfare: War of Resistance Against Japan;” and Li u Kaiqu make the eighth relief, “Crossing the Yangtze and Liberating the Nation.” See Ma, “Notes on *Monument*,” 17-39. The events to depict were selected by a team of historians from the Chinese Academy of Social Science’s Modern History Research Institute led by historian Fan Wenlan in consultation with the monument’s planning committee and party officials. The difficulty of depicting some of the proposed events was a prominent issue, such as Mao’s opinion on January 19, 1953 where he questioned how such abstract events proposed, like guerilla warfare, can be represented. The historians Fan Wenlan, Zheng Zhenduo, and Xu Dechang also delivered lectures on the selected historical events to the artists as part of their preparation. Military veterans of the Sino-Japanese War also met with the artists to share their experiences and stories. See Yin, *The Eternal Symbol*, 164.

generations of mobilized crowds such as the army of charging soldiers in the relief in the background. Besides receiving tutelage from seeing Mao and being part of the sea of people in front of Tiananmen, visitors to the monument come to receive tutelage from the depictions of orderly crowds of past generations.

The more complicated relationship designed in *Monument to the People's Heroes* between the base and body of the monument than in previous commemorative sculptures mirrors the unresolved tension between the grand visibility presented by the national monument and the ambivalent viewing experience of the individual viewer. The disparity between the visual and physical scales of perceiving not only the monument but also oneself seeing the monument from different vantage points—from afar on the square, at the monument base, and on the monument proper—demonstrates that monumentality is not just confined to its common physical and psychological characteristics of grandiosity, permanency, or memory as Wu Hung has questioned in his study *Monumentality in Early Chinese Art and Architecture*, but also to the temporality of the monumental experience.

From far away *Monument to the People's Heroes* as scaled to architecture appears as a miniature structure sitting on top of the flat abyss of the square. As its actual grand size comes into focus the closer one draws to the monument, though, it conversely miniaturizes the viewer until he or she climbs up the steps to the monument's viewing platform, where the two meter (approximately 6.5 feet) tall reliefs scaled large to the human body returns the viewer back to the "normal" size of the body. The ability of the viewing experience of *Monument to the People's Heroes* to dramatically make the big small and the small big demonstrates the planning committee's attempt to physically encapsulate the actual uneven hierarchy of the nation of "the people" in molding the crowds of visitors into a predetermined image of the virtuous masses, the

politically aware people, and the uncritical individual. As part of the crowd in front of Tiananmen with the monument in the background to receive the grace and instructions of Mao, the monumental sea of people scaled to the architecture of the square represents the empowered nation that can even engulf and dwarf the grand monument. Yet in memorial ceremonies where the crowds are pictured mobilized around the monument structure in precise fields of dots the popular masses are transformed into a politicized body commemorating the founding of the nation (figure 79). On Tiananmen Square it is only on the viewing platform of the monument's base that the individual can experience and recognize himself or herself and the surroundings as scaled to the terms of one's own body.

Hence, in the history of the *Monument to the People's Heroes* since its completion in 1958 the viewing platform for the marble reliefs has also served as the ad hoc stage for various individuals to gather and claim a voice. Often such events of spontaneous crowd formation were sparked initially by popular, unofficial commemorations for individuals who have fallen out of favor with the state, most notably Zhou Enlai and Hu Yaobang. For example, in 1976 during Qingmingjie, the annual day to honor the dead on April 4, people spontaneously began to gather around *Monument to the People's Heroes* in commemoration of Premier Zhou Enlai, who died earlier that year with only a nominal official commemoration because of his strained relationship with party leaders at the time.¹³³ The popular outpouring of tens of thousands of mourners around *Monument to the People's Heroes* left wreaths of paper flowers and poems in eulogy of the deceased leader on or above the viewing platform (figure 80). Some people also stood on the viewing platform to recite poems, many of which were veiled criticisms of the current

¹³³ Qingmingjie changes slightly each year according to the Chinese traditional lunar calendar, so usually it falls on April 4 or 5.

government, such as the photograph of a woman reciting a poem as the crowd flowing around and down from the viewing platform listens and copies it down (figure 81).

The improvised nature of the scene showing the precariously perched speaker among the surge of listeners behind her and spilling out to the monument's base sharply contrasts with the staged images of Mao Zedong and party officials alone and elevated to address the gathering of "the people" in front of Tiananmen across the square. Rather than using the platform to view the didactic reliefs, the speaking individual in such instances look out from the viewing platform to address the assembled spontaneous crowds on the square. The marble reliefs of the orderly, united crowds in turn become transformed into a poignant backdrop for the present. In what would become known as the April Five Tiananmen Incident, the potential danger of the unofficial, impromptu crowd formed to collectively remember Zhou Enlai alarmed the central government. By night the government cleared away the wreaths and poems, drove out and arrested mourners still gathered around the monument, and cordoned off the monument so nobody could approach or reach the monument's viewing platform. The humanly scaled appeal of *Monument to the People's Heroes'* viewing platform was not lost on the state as they recognized it as the last public space for individuals left in plain sight of the nation.

Monument to the People's Heroes became the site again for popular uprising thirteen years later when another popular official died. After the death in early April 1989 of Hu Yaobang, a progressive high official respected by intellectuals and students, mourners again spontaneously gathered around *Monument to the People's Heroes* to lay wreaths of paper flowers at the monument's base (figure 82). In a few days, however, the gathering turned into popular protest primarily organized by students from several schools and universities that lasted for more than two months. Like the April Five Tiananmen Incident, the protest ended on June 4

in the aggressive eviction of the demonstrators from the square centered on *Monument to the People's Heroes* and its viewing platform, which again served as the informal speaking podium for leaders of the protests. Many articles appeared in the Chinese Communist party's newspaper, the *People's Daily*, soon after about June Fourth, as it is popularly known in China, or the Tiananmen Square Massacre as it is popularly known abroad. These reports framed the event as a "reactionary riot" (*fangeming baolun*) and discredited the violent forced removal of the protestors as "rumors" (*yaoyan*) perpetuated by foreigners and labeled the students as "traitors" (*panguo*) to the people.¹³⁴

Among such published articles then, a short article about the "restoration" of *Monument to the People's Heroes* that also appeared at this time seems mundane but is profound in what it is meant to publically convey. Printed on the front page of the June 17, 1989 issue, the article only indirectly references the June Fourth protest in describing the damages sustained by the monument's base, reliefs, and marble railings that are covered in "reactionary" (*fanggeming*) slogans, poems, and cartoons. The article also lists the damaged 2,700 square meter lawn, the fire damage on the base and stone steps, and the toppled streetlights and flagpoles in front of the monument as if filing a crime scene report. The writer also praises the various units of city workers who worked diligently on returning the monument and its surroundings to the original spatial order. Many central government and city officials also visited the site, such as major general Fu Bingyao, who voiced the imperative task of restoring *Monument to the People's Heroes* to as it was because it represents as he described "the heart of the Chinese people and all

¹³⁴ Qiu Yongsheng, Huang Zhimin, Yi Jianru, Zhang Baorui, and Zhu Yu, "Peaceful Withdrawal—No Deaths: Interviews with Witnesses at June 4 Tiananmen Square" (*Heping cheli—wuren siwang: 6 yue 4 ri Tiananmen guangchang qingchang danshiren fantan lu*), *People's Daily (Renmin ribao)*, September 19, 1989, 5.

the people of the world.”¹³⁵ In personifying the monument as the heart of “the people” nationally and internationally that has suffered countless injuries and conveying the government’s personal concern in healing and repairing the monument announces that the political and spatial order of the square is assuredly also restored. Since the June Fourth Incident access to the monument has been permanently closed to the public (figure 83). The desire at the dusk of the Communist Revolution and the dawn of the new People’s Republic of China to define and transcend the complexities of different scales of social organization—the masses, the people, and the individual—is shown as a utopian proposition, albeit one whose physical construction was fundamentally problematic.

¹³⁵ Pan Shantang, “Monument to the People’s Heroes Original Appearance Restored” (*Renming yingxiong jinianbei huifu yuanmao*), *People’s Daily (Renmin ribao)*, June 17, 1989, 1.

CHAPTER 4

Sculpture and the Form of Experience

In the world today, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines. There is in fact no such thing as art for art's sake, art that stands above classes or art that is detached from or independent of politics.

With these definitive words of Mao Zedong's famous speech delivered at the 1942 Talks at the Yan'an Forum for Literature and Art, art for art's sake and communism were pronounced to be antithetical. Consequently, one would expect that after 1949 pre-1949 practices and theories of art would fundamentally change. In some ways that is what happened. Artists became required to live and work in the countryside or factories to learn from first-hand experiences how to affect their newly intended viewers of "the people." Refined works of art, even if of acceptable revolutionary subjects such as farmers, workers, or soldiers, were lambasted as being concerned only with "formal beauty," such as in the reception of the sculpture *Returning Overseas Female Worker* (*Guiguo huaqiao nugong*) in 1954 (figure 84). The over three feet tall sculpture depicts a young, vibrant Chinese woman returning to help rebuild China.¹³⁶ Despite its patriotic subject matter, though, the sculpture was criticized for its

¹³⁶ These tendencies in subject matter and form in Chinese modern sculpture were in large part due to the dominance of the French school before and continuing after 1949. Many prominent sculpting professors had studied abroad in Paris the renowned works of Auguste Rodin and Aristide Maillol, such as Liu Kaiqu, Wang Linyi, the head of the sculpture department at CAFA, and Hua Tianyou, another sculpture teacher at CAFA. Michael Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 163.

focus on formal beauty and appearing like “she just got out of the water.”¹³⁷ Such an interpretation likely derived from the fine treatment of drapery folds that accentuate the curves of the worker’s female body as she stands in graceful contrapposto. The potential sensual affect in the suggestion of the female worker’s body below the undulating thin fabric runs counter to the socialist notion of the de-sexed feminine body of the moral, upright woman.

Though the indictment of the overemphasis on formal beauty typifies the framing of this kind of critique in the arts of the early People’s Republic, the example of *Returning Overseas Female Worker* is also revealing of how form in art operated after 1949, arguably with even more intense focus than before. The crux of the critique of *Returning Overseas Female Worker* was not of the consideration of form itself, but rather the lack of consideration to form. The sculpture was deemed guilty of mismatching form with affect, or specifically a voluptuous form with the desired austere affect. Rather than a wholesale jettisoning of formal art training and issues, Chinese art in the 1950s and 1960s can be characterized by a concentration on the relationship between form and affect. By way of first-hand experience, such as artists going to the countryside or factory to make sketches of their experience, artists were believed to be able to acquire special insight into how to create art about “the people” that would better affect its viewers.

The discussion between affect and form reached a milestone in the acclaimed *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition (Sichuan diaosu zhan)*, where the success of the exhibited works was attributed to how the sculptures of steadfast martyrs, contented post Communist Revolution farmers and laborers, and determined revolutionaries demonstrated the Sichuan artists’ intimate knowledge acquired through their experience working with and understanding “the people.” The

¹³⁷ Sullivan, *Art and Artists*, 289.

Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition opened in early 1964 at the China National Art Gallery (*Zhongguo meishu guan*) in Beijing and later toured Shanghai, Wuhan, Guangzhou, and Chongqing (figure 85).¹³⁸ The diverse visual array of 81 figurative sculptures offered on display covered the last nine years of artistic production primarily in the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute's young sculpture department, some of which had appeared in previous national art exhibitions and were already collected by the nation's preeminent China National Art Gallery, such as Wu Mingwan's *Animal Breeder (Siyangyuan)* (1962-3), an earlier version of which exhibited at the National Youth Art Exhibition in 1956 (figure 86); Long Dehui's *Awaken (Juexing)* (1960), an earlier version of which was shown at the Socialist Countries Art Exhibition in Moscow in 1958 (figure 87); and Wang Guanyi's *Independence (Duli)* (1964), an earlier version of which was included in the second National Art Exhibition in 1963 and also exhibited abroad (figure 88).¹³⁹

Soon after its opening the major national presses published articles about the exhibition, such as in the *People's Daily* and *Guangming Daily (Guangming ribao)*. The national flagship art journal of the China Artists Association (CAA), *Meishu (Art)* devoted a special issue to the exhibition with reviews penned by preeminent contemporary artists and critics.¹⁴⁰ The CAA also held two special symposiums for artists in the capital to study and discuss the exhibition. Additionally, leaders of the CAA traveled to Chongqing to visit the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in an attempt to ascertain and copy the strength of the school's art educational and working model.

¹³⁸ Today the gallery's official English name is the National Art Museum of China (NAMOC).

¹³⁹ Jiao Xingtao, ed., *Sichuan Fine Arts Institute Department of Sculpture, 1939-2009 (Xing—Sichuan meishu xueyuan diaosuxi xishi, 1939-2009)*, (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2010), 86-90.

¹⁴⁰ Wang Zhaowen, "Blossoms of a New Reality—Viewing the *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition*" (Xin hua xin shi--kan sichuan diaosu zhanlan), *People's Daily (Renmin ribao)*, April 24, 1964, 6. An image of Wang Guanyi's *Independence* was also printed in the *People's Daily* April 15, 1964, page 6; and an image of Guo Qixiang's *Female Herder* appeared in the *People's Daily* on September 7, 1965, page 6. Both were labeled as from the Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition.

The unprecedented attention that the exhibition received widely in the Chinese arts world is telling of the growing importance ascribed to experience with “the people” in informing the artwork’s affect and form. The relationship between experience, affect, and form at play with the reception of the sculptures in the *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition* bears investigation because this relationship informed and changed the terms of art and art practice over the early People’s Republic. An examination of the relationship between experience, affect, and form in art through key works in the *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition* challenges the still pervasive assumption in Cold War art and cultural scholarship that China under Maoism was a realm of pure ideology and asceticism without any consideration of form. However, this chapter is also a mapping of the fluctuating relationship between experience, affect, and form as a consequence of the changing meaning and shape of experience with the turbulent sociopolitical circumstances and definition of “the people” in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Artists on the Move

The concept of experience, specifically the experience of the purported downtrodden proletariat class, played a pivotal role in constituting the subjectivity of “the people” and nation building in Communist China. With the understanding of experience as the source of the truth of reality, experience came to play a prominent role in legitimizing a new national history of the proletariat around the shared experience of the struggle and exploitation of “the people.” In addition, the notion of experience as the gateway to the real was key in persuading belief in the art world that artists’ experience “entering life” (*shengru shenghuo*) by living and working as farmers and workers could lead to an artist’s complete understanding of the life of “the people,”

and that it was the artists' moral duty to convey the lived experience of "the people" through their art. "Life" here is a generic term of the Maoist period used to describe the realm of reality occupied and experienced by "the people."

In contrast to normative suppositions in dynastic China, where works of art were treated as revealing of the artist's personal experience, during the People's Republic experience was rarely identified as one's own but as representative of a class or subgroup within or outside of the Communist social matrix of the people. Experience as a result also became regarded as the source for the genuine subjectivity of "the people." For example, during the rural focused Socialist Education Movement in the early 1960s self-identified victims of oppression and exploitation gave oral histories and delivered public testimonials of their supposed classed experiences under the landlord in pre-Communist Revolution China for the overt purpose of educating the younger generation as to the veracity of class struggle. Additionally, in the latter part of the Cultural Revolution once schools resumed courses, many urban school children at least once each semester had to eat a meager meal of wild vegetables and rice husks to experience the impoverished life of the masses.¹⁴¹

Such institutionalized activities centered on receiving experience, whether secondarily through the act of listening or primarily such as through the act of consuming unsavory foods, demonstrate the discursive nature and scope of experience during the Maoist period. Ostensibly institutionalized forms of experience were driven by the belief that individuals can empathize with each other through the sharing of common experiences of "the people." The widespread institutional staging of these select sociopolitical experiences more significantly though also molded a distinct socialist identity. As Joan W. Scott has noted, "It is not individuals who have

¹⁴¹ Zheng Yan, interview with author, October 19, 2012.

experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience.”¹⁴² Through the act of experiencing, the actor was believed to be able to penetrate the surface of the real to arrive at a truer hidden reality. In the particular case of artists, through their regular practice of working with “the people” in the countryside or factories they were expected to learn how to better emotionally affect the viewer in their art by first being made privy to the truer hidden reality of “the people” through their experience.

The works in the *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition* were primarily portraits of types of workers, soldiers, and farmers that were created from sketches the art students and their teachers collected during organized visits to the countryside and factories. For example, Guo Qixiang’s *Female Herder (Nü mugong)* (1964) was inspired by a sketch he made of a Tibetan female herder he saw while he was sent for two months to work in the Tibetan region of Sichuan province (figure 89).¹⁴³ In the summary report of the two Beijing artists’ symposiums that was published in *Meishu* in March 1964, the artists in attendance agreed that the success of the *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition* was due largely to the school’s success in “taking the red road” because each sculpture student and teacher participated in manual labor in the countryside or factory for a substantial one third of the year, which surpassed the amount of time other art schools in the country allotted for it (figure 90).¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Joan W. Scott, “The Evidence of Experience,” *Critical Inquiry* 17: 4 (Summer 1991): 781-782, 779.

¹⁴³ Guo Qixiang, “Some Experiences from Life and Artmaking (shenghuo he chuanguo zhong de yixie tihui),” in *Sichuan Fine Arts Institute Department of Sculpture, 1939-2009 (Xing—Sichuan meishu xueyuan diaosuxi xishi, 1939-2009)*, ed. Jiao Xingtao (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2010), 127. Originally published in the May 1965 issue of *Meishu*.

¹⁴⁴ “Socialist Sculpture’s New Developments—Capital Artists Symposium on ‘Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition (Shehui zhuyi diaosu de xin shouhuo—shoudu meishujia zuotan ‘Sichuan diaosu zhanlanhui),’” *Meishu* 3 (1964): 14. The SFAI curriculum requirement for sketching and laboring in the countryside or factory actually fluctuated dramatically in the early 1960s according to the unstable political climate and official stance regarding the relationship between politics and education. On September 20, 1958 on the front page of the *People’s Daily* the central party issued a resolution criticizing the neglect of the party to labor in education at large, thus making labor a necessary part of education. In 1958 and 1959 the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute therefore initiated education reforms emphasizing student participation in labor and political work, including organized “mass art trainings” to train

The prerequisite activity of working for an extended period of time in the countryside or in the factory developed in the mid-1950s as a standard practice for artists in an attempt to bridge the distance between art and life in the process of artmaking. Though the state mandated practice of art students going to the countryside and factories to create works depicting farming and industrial labor was borrowed from the Soviet art curriculum, the Chinese official adoption of this practice nationwide in the late 1950s went a step further by requiring art students also to experience the life of their subjects by eating, living, and working together with them, or what popularly known known as the “three-togethers” (*tongchi*, *tongzhu*, *tonglaodong*). The nationwide adoption of live sketching while working in the countryside or a factory in the mid-1950s to its eventual establishment as an art form in the early 1960s further imply the growing relationship between experience and artmaking in China that artists had to increasingly contend with in their practice.

The widespread adoption of live sketching in the arts of the early People’s Republic not only established the primacy of basing artmaking on first-hand experience with “the people,” but also represents a new corporeal demand on the artist. At the Second Cultural Congress Meeting

communes in the countryside in the techniques of sketching, ink painting, drawing, design, and theory. In May 1960, SFAI officially reduced the amount of classroom instruction from 32 to 27 weeks per year while time to be spent on labor increased to ten weeks. Additionally, students were to spend half a day each week doing work unrelated with their studies as well as seven weeks out of the year working in the countryside or at a factory. During the period of national famine shortly thereafter, however, to decrease food consumption the work requirement reduced and attention was shifted back to education. Notably the “Higher Education Temporary Work Item List” (*gaodeng xuexiao zanxing gongzuo tiaolie*), also known as the “Higher Education Sixty Items,” stated that politics should not take precedence over education. Issued by the state in September 1961 and endorsed by Zhou Enlai in March 1962 as a reaction to the persecution of many intellectuals and artists during the Anti-Rightist Movement of the previous years, the “Higher Education Sixty Items” refocused schools on the quality of education. SFAI class time thereafter increased to 43 weeks per year while labor reduced to four to six weeks per year. Yet, this counterbalancing act was shortlived when a few months later Mao Zedong gave his “Speech at the Tenth Plenum of the Eight Central Committee” on September 1962, where he claimed that class struggle is still ongoing and that capitalism could threaten socialist society from within. In response to this abrupt change in political climate, SFAI sent teachers and students as work teams to surrounding countryside and factories again. By August 1965, it was officially mandated that over their four year enrollment, all students at SFAI would spend 18 months involved in socialist education and work outside of the school, effectively decreasing class time. See Liu Zhaoquan, ed., *History of the Sichuan Fine Art Institute (Sichuan meishu xueyuan xiaoshi)* (Chongqing: Sichuan meishu xueyuan, 1990), 91-92.

(*wenhua hui*) on September 23, 1953 Zhou Enlai called specifically for artists and writers to physically travel to the countryside and factories and to enter life not as a spectator, but instead to breath together with the working people and thoroughly enter the masses' struggle by "becoming one with the life of the masses" (*he renmin qunzhong de shenghuo dacheng yipian*).¹⁴⁵ A year after Zhou Enlai's invocation, in the April 1954 issue of *Meishu* the celebrated cartoonist Hua Junwu created a cartoon to accompany his satirical short story of an artist who spends decades toiling with a model in his studio to improve his technique. Throughout the story the artist rejects repeated invitations from a prosperous steelworks factory to paint their factory life and achievements. Prefacing his article and cartoon with a dedication to "those cadres who do not plan on making any art," Hua's cartoon shows a panel of the artist at his easel beginning to paint a young model. Another panel illustrated below portrays the artist, his easel, and model in the same positions and with just a little more progress in his painting of the model (figure 91).

The slight progress on the canvas strikingly contrasts to the visible advancement in the artist's and model's age: the artist is now bald with wrinkles, a long beard, and slumped shoulders while the model is also bald with wrinkles, a mustache, and a slump in his posture. Hua's cartoon and story critiques not only the production of artists who stay in the studio and shun immersing themselves into the life of the rural and factory laborers, but also the unhurried nature of art production within the controlled space of the studio. Working in the studio permits the careful study of models unlike the random conditions of sketching live subjects in the fields or factories in real time. The physical demand on the artist to leave his studio and live and sketch the working people therefore signals not only acquiescence to political dictates, but also

¹⁴⁵ Zhou Enlai, "The Duty of Art and Literature Workers to Fight for the General Line" (*Wei zongluxian er fendou de wenyi gongzuozhe de renwu*), in *Zhou Enlai's Discussions on Art and Literature (Zhou Enlai lun wenyi)*, Wenhua bu wenxue yishu yanjiu yuan, ed., (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1979), 50.

its appeal to critical realism over studied realism. As Wu Xueshan argues, the ardent endorsement of the physical movement of the artist's body from the studio into the life of the masses in the early People's Republic also "transformed the artist's 'body' into a medium" (*jiang yishu jia de "shenti" meijie hua le*).¹⁴⁶ As demonstrated by the immobile and feeble body of the artist in Hua Junwu's cartoon, the artist's body more than any particular medium or art form was targeted as the site of critical intervention in post-1949 artmaking to make art that can better affect "the people."

The issue of the art students' sincerity in understanding the masses during their fieldwork trips to gain "experience" or the actual effectiveness of this practice to their artmaking is not of importance so much here as to how this experiential program intervened in the artistic process. Working and studying life in the countryside or factory sought to institutionally transform the role of the artist into the conscientious transmitter of affect based on primary knowledge produced from the experience. For instance, in recalling his student years Long Dehui, one of the first sculptors who graduated from the sculpture department of the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute (SFAI) in 1955, related in a 1964 essay that initially as a teacher leading his students down to work and study in the countryside he was solely interested in finding novel subject matter rather than engaging in understanding the lives of the farmers. When he returned to his studio in the city he would subsequently depend on a model to wear farmer's clothes to aid in the making of the piece. Long also described sometimes utilizing a fan to blow on the model so that her clothes would flutter and move or using wires to shape the clothes to the desired form.

But he writes that after his many failed efforts in artmaking he realized "in the end what is made does not reflect lived reality, but only what the figure is doing, so it cannot move people,

¹⁴⁶ Wu Xueshan, "Ideology of Form: 1950s 'Sketch Movement'" (Meijie yishi xingtai: 1950 nian dai de "Suxie yundong"), *Art Research (Meishu yanjiu)* 1 (2015): 69.

or even myself.”¹⁴⁷ Long’s narration of not sincerely entering the life of the masses and conceiving works as the official exercise is intended is tantamount to a confession of his betrayal of the public trust to express their lived reality. Long’s anecdote also reveals how the final product’s visual efficacy was judged as contingent on experience, where visual affect without direct experience is judged inauthentic and subsequently emotionally ineffectual. Artistic content based on artifice, such as the model dressed up as a peasant girl and the blowing fan and wire to simulate moving cloth, rather than real experience thus was regarded not only as an ethical dilemma but also artistically inferior. Realism in art practice was therefore not simply confined to describing the visual strategy of the final artwork, but also the process of artmaking that can claim objectivity to something that actually happened and the artist as its witness and moral purveyor. Realist technique as crafted through the established foundations of experiencing and live sketching since the mid-1950s was hence colored by a strong demand on the artist’s physical and psychological experience in the artistic process.

Promotion of the artist being physically on the scene rather than in the studio also made live sketching the dominant realist approach to studying and accumulating the different experiences of “the people” above other common forms of preparatory study, such as photography and models. As Ai Zhongxin summarized in his 1961 essay “Smart Little Notebook—Discussing Sketch,” sketch is the “bridge” (*qiaoliang*) between life and artmaking and is the most intimately related to life (*shenghuo*).¹⁴⁸ The realist authority of the live sketch to the exclusion of photography and models is further epitomized in Lu Ding’s criticism of sketching from photographic images of scenes from the countryside or factory, including

¹⁴⁷ Long Dehui, “Shared Fate with the Working People” (Yu laodong renmin gong mingyun), in *Sichuan Fine Arts Institute Department of Sculpture, 1939-2009 (Xing—Sichuan meishu xueyuan diaosuxi xishi, 1939-2009)*, ed. Jiao Xingtao. (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2010), 128.

¹⁴⁸ Ai Zhongxin, “Smart Little Notebook” (Congming de xiao benzi—suxie za tan), *Meishu* 5 (1961): 47.

photographs taken while one is actually sent down, as producing “fake” (*xujia*) sketches “copying” (*linmo*) from photographs that are far from “real life.”¹⁴⁹

Similarly Wu Zuoren in his essay on sketch also maintains that using photography in the making of art rather than sketch is synonymous with remaining alienated from real life. Wu also disparages the use of models, including the artist’s enlistment of working people to sit as models, as being more concerned with capturing detail rather than the feeling of the moment and the spontaneity of their movements in real life. The intention of sketch, Wu asserts, must not be to create a work of art, but rather must “start from feeling” (*cong ganqing chufa*).¹⁵⁰ The purpose of art to elicit an emotional response from the viewer was therefore regarded as not obtainable by formal or deliberate means such as via photography or the model, but solely through the unpremeditated and intuitive quality of experience epitomized by live sketching. The majority opinion in Chinese art discourse in the late 1950s and early 1960s of the inimitable power of the live sketch to capture experience thus further indicates the authority of experience in discussing affect in art and art practice of the early People’s Republic.

Live sketch’s intimate association with capturing the affect of experience was not arbitrary, but rather also arose visually from its quick and spontaneous nature, which was understood to capture the “essence” of a subject’s real character and emotional state as experienced and observed by the artist. Sketch became the foundational method to achieve an economy of form in order to ultimately represent the presumed deeper, hidden truth of reality found in experience. In his article “Discussing Sketch,” Wu Zuoren advises artists that when sketching one should first look at the whole “to capture the subject’s inner truth” (*zhuazhu shiwu neizai de zhenshi*) and then “concisely draw its forms and movements, and do not waste ink [on

¹⁴⁹ Lu Ding, “Correct Attitude for Sketch” (*duanzheng suxie de taidu*), *Meishu* 10 (1954): 19.

¹⁵⁰ Wu Zuoren, “Discussing Sketch” (*Tan suxie*), *Meishu* 9 (1954): 19.

detail] but rather show its rich content. This kind of sketch is honest and simple, succinct and substantial, and already essentially reflects the truth of reality that can then affect (*gandong*) others.”¹⁵¹ Wu directly conflates the visual concision and precision of sketch with the “truth of reality” of experience and sketch’s ability to emotionally affect and influence its viewer. Conversely, Wu’s description suggests that art production that is belabored and finished with copious detail would not be true to life and be able to attain the ultimate goal of emotionally affecting its viewers. The value of sketch thus lied visually in the quickness of its execution to succinctly capture the essence and “truth” of an experience, rather than the studied academic approach of the studio model.

Live Sketch and Its Discontents

Before the establishment of the People’s Republic the use of sketch in art education had already existed, but varied across different art schools. It was not until the 1950s that sketching, in particular live sketching, became nationally promoted among artists in New China and eventually became a foundational requirement in art schools. In the actual creation process the artist was expected to sketch studies of details and their subjects during their time in the field or the factory and then return to their studio space in the city to design and execute their works. As the visual product from these trips to the countryside and factories of scenes and people the artist had witnessed, the making of live sketches rose in prominence and importance in the art world of

¹⁵¹ ”bing buduo fei bimo er biaoxiang chu fengfu de neirong. Zheyang de suxie shi chengshi pusu de, jianlian er chongshi de, shizhi shang yi fanying le xianshi de zhenshi, jiu neng gandong bieren.” From Wu, “Discussing Sketch,” 19.

the early People's Republic as it sought to formally incorporate the notion of "the people" into the artistic process.

Sketch, or *sumiao* or *suxie*, literally "rapid drawing," was first associated with the experience of "the people" and lived reality by Cai Ruohong. At the time Cai was the vice-chairman of the China Artists Association (CAA) and previously a teacher at the Lu Xun Art School in the pre-revolution Communist base camp at Yan'an and an arts editor for the *People's Daily*. Cai wrote an essay in the January 1954 issue of *Meishu* on the importance of sketching from real life for realism. In the essay Cai writes, "[We] must continuously enter all forms of life, and must recognize that the foundation of our art production is the sketching of these forms of life... In my opinion to be called a realist painter, we should see how many sketches has the artist made."¹⁵² Therefore, in the early People's Republic, the role of the artist was marked by an imperative of social responsibility that was to be reflected not simply through the depiction of overtly political art, but also in the politicization of artistic practice via sketching.

In the following month on February 16, the CAA held a special symposium on sketch that accorded with Cai's position on sketching from life as the determining metric for realism in New China. The forty artists who attended drew up the following formal resolution: "We all recognize that a realist artist must always sketch. This not only is to record life and practice technique, but also to help artists more deeply examine life."¹⁵³ Hence, regardless of the working medium, the artist's experience with his or her subject matter, as evidenced and accumulated through sketches, was thus perceived as a prerequisite for realism in the Chinese art world beginning in the mid-1950s.

¹⁵² Cai Ruohong, "Opening a Broad Path for Artistic Creation" (Kaipi meishu chuanguo de guangkuo daolu), *Meishu* 1 (1954): 12.

¹⁵³ The symposium was held on February 16, 1954. "February Activities of the China Artists Association's Creation Committee" (Zhongguo meishu xiehui chuanguo weiyuan hui eryue fen de huodong), *Meishu* 3 (1954): 36.

At the same time in early 1954 publications of independent sketches also began appearing, such as a whole page in the January 24th issue of *People's Daily* titled “Sketches of the Countryside” (*Nongcun suxie*) that was devoted to nine sketches portraying agricultural cooperatives, plowing in the field, and vignettes of rural life. Selections of these sketches were reprinted the following month in *Meishu* (figure 92). In commenting on the positive response to the sketches from its readers in the March issue of *Meishu*, the writer Duan Bingguo praised the sketches as being “vivid” (*shengdong*), “true” (*zhenshi*) and “simple” (*pusu*) in their portrayal of rural life and its people.¹⁵⁴

The nine sketches in fact assert a certain definition of sketch that could have attracted such responses. Though each one is labeled as being drawn by a different artist, all nine sketches share similar technical and compositional features. For example, the meticulous use of line and shading to delineate as well as suggest the body posture and light on the figurative forms could make the images appear “simple” and “vivid” in their execution. The variable heaviness of the line to differentiate depth and distance between the figures in the foreground and the setting in the background coupled with an intimate, level point of view as if the viewer is there on the scene along with the artist may have caused Duan to describe the image also as “true.” The figures of each vignette are shown isolated from the viewer and engaged in their own activity, save for the sketch from above of an old lady seated on the floor. She looks toward two suggestive shadows of figures in front of her that imply her possible awareness of the viewer of the sketch in their positioning.

¹⁵⁴“zuo le shengdong de miaohui...women huanying ta, yinwei tamen zhenshi, pusu de miaohui le nongcun shenghuo he nongmin xingxiang.” From Duan Bingguo, “We Like True and Simple Works” (Women xiai zhenshi pusu de zuopin), *Meishu* 3 (1954): 41.

The sketches' carefully modeled forms, closed composition, and level viewpoint proposes sketch as an immediate but voyeuristic preoccupation that visually produces a finished array of random scenes depicting figures at work in generic settings, whether it is in the local party office or out in the fields. The patent commonalities in the nine sketches of "Sketches of the Countryside" that circulated in such dominant official national publications as the *People's Daily* and *Meishu* imply not only an early systematic attempt to establish sketch as a viable, independent visual art form, but also its common conditions and conventions.

Though there was not much variation in the composition and drawing style in the "Sketches of the Countryside," a diversity of technical approaches was also introduced during sketch's ascent in artistic importance. In the mid-1950s *Meishu* began publishing sketches by foreign leftist artists, many of whom were involved with the Communist party in their home country, such as sketches by the English artist and illustrator Paul Hogarth (1917-2001) and the Danish cartoonist Herluf Bidstrup (1912-1988). Hogarth, a descendent of the famous 18th century English art satirist William Hogarth, had recently published in 1953 his book *Defiant People: Drawings of Greece Today* drawn from his travels in post-civil war Greece.¹⁵⁵ Selected sketches from his book appeared in the February 1954 issue of *Meishu* showing his even, abbreviated line drawings of Greek life and current events (figure 93). In February 1955 the CAA invited Bidstrup to China and held an exhibition in Beijing of his sparsely detailed pencil sketches showing figures against a blank background as if extracted from their settings. These sketches were created during Bidstrup's travels in China, three of which were published in *Meishu* in April 1955 (figure 94). By portraying foreign leftist artists as avid practitioners of sketch during the CAA's official introduction of sketch as a realist technique, live sketching is

¹⁵⁵ The Greek Civil War (1946-1949) was between the Greek government backed by Great Britain and the U.S. and the Greek Communist Party backed by Yugoslavia, Albania, and Bulgaria.

presented to denote a modern development of realist artists in not only the Chinese art world, but also in the international contemporary art world. Thus, sketch is elevated to an important global phenomenon in modern art history and a common platform for Chinese artists to dialogue with their socially conscious counterparts abroad.

Besides publications, exhibitions devoted to sketch also began appearing starting in 1954. A national exhibition the CAA organized that originally was planned to only exhibit watercolors at the last minute transformed into an exhibition of watercolors and sketches that opened in the former Forbidden City in August 1954. In the March 1954 national call in *Meishu* for participation in the watercolor and sketch exhibition, the CAA organizers stipulated that they wanted works by CAA members and nonmembers made since 1950, namely after the Communist Revolution, that “show our country’s beautiful landscape, reflect our developing economy, portray the lives of our working people, and depict figurative images...everything that can present today’s new life and spirit, scenery, and drafts in watercolor, ink, or sketch.”¹⁵⁶ Such a broad call allowed a variety of interpretations of sketch, such as Ai Zhongxin’s bird’s-eye-view drawing of an entire lumberyard that uses light and dark contrasts for dramatic effect (figure 95); Si Tuqiao’s low vantage point portrait of the American representative speaking at the Asia and Pacific Rim Peace Conference held at the newly constructed Peace Hotel in Beijing in 1952; and Shao Yu’s austere drawing of a young worker’s face that is finely articulated in profile in contrast to the rough and casual lines that describe his hat and hair (figure 96).

¹⁵⁶ “zuopin de neirong keyi biao xian zuguo zhuangli de shanhe, fanying wo guo de jingji jianshe, miaoxie laodong renmin de shenghuo, kehua renwu de xingxiang...fan yiqie neng fanying jintian xin shenghuo xin qixiang de renwu, fengjing, jingwu ji zuowei chuanguo zhunbei de huagao, wulun shuicai, shuimo, suxie.” From “Chinese Artist Association Organized Watercolor and Sketch Exhibition Call for Participation” (*Zhongguo meishu xiehui zhuban shuicai he suxie zhanlanhui zhengji*), *Meishu* 3 (1954): 36.

The Second National Art Exhibition in Beijing in the following year formally established sketch as a significant and independent art form rather than a mere preparatory stage in the artistic process. The Second National Art Exhibition was originally planned to open in February 1955 but delayed until March 1955 to allow for the inclusion of sketches. One section of 51 pieces was devoted to sketches out of the exhibition's total 996 works (figure 97). The inclusion of an independent category of sketch was unprecedented in any of the previous national art exhibitions held during the Republican period or in the first national art exhibition in 1949 after the Communist Revolution.¹⁵⁷ Though sketching had been practiced before in some areas of art in modern China, it was not formally organized and rigorously promoted as a valuable, independent art form on a national scale as it was starting in 1954 through publications, exhibitions, and visiting foreign artists under the auspices of the CAA and the leadership of Cai Ruohong. As the examples of sketches and their public promotion in the early codification of sketch demonstrate, sketching encompassed a variety of figural and scenic subjects and uses of the line and shading in drawing. More than an absolute way of drawing, the realist character of the technique of sketch rather lies in its predominantly low vantage point and close-up compositions that convey an immediate and intimate relationship between the figural or landscape subject and the artist as surrogate viewer.

Though the artistic process of entering life, live sketching, and finally producing the artwork worked to incorporate experience into the making of art, the appropriate mining and application of experience in the actual art process was actually never clear and was a point of contention. For example, during the Hundred Flowers Movement in the late 1950s of relative political liberalization, the painter Xiao Bianzhou critiqued fundamentalists who he felt regarded

¹⁵⁷ Of the 996 works in the Second National Art Exhibition, 51 were of sketches and drawings. See Wu, "Ideology of Medium," 65.

too literally the leadership's command for artists and writers to become one with the masses. Once when he along with other artists were sent to a factory, Xiao recalls that the factory leader advised them to forget their identity as artists and furthermore to conceal from the other workers that they are artists in order for them to thoroughly "become one" (*da cheng yi pian*) with the workers rather than be "aloof spectators of life" (*shenghuo zhong de lengyanpangguan zhe*).¹⁵⁸ Xiao argues that this imposition against identifying and behaving as an artist and foregoing the live sketch entirely in pursuit of a pure experience impedes the authenticity of the resultant artwork. Subsequently, he describes how in such extreme cases artists are left just to generalize their experience without any sketches produced from the experience and resort to "reclaim[ing] a hollow political concept" (*chou chu kongdong de zhengzhi gainian*) by studying and referencing existing images in published pictorials, artworks, and media images of farmers, soldiers, or workers. The resultant artwork, Xiao posits, therefore becomes a "formulaic, generic, and flat and uninteresting" (*gongshihua, gaihuihua, pindan kuzao*) didactic illustration.¹⁵⁹ Xiao's conflict with the factory leader reveals the actual vague understanding of the relationship between the process of artmaking vis-à-vis the experience of "the people" and the artist's resultant dependence on existing politically acceptable visual culture to inform his work.

The increased politicization of the live sketch and experience during the late 1950s and early 1960s in the politically sensitive period of the Anti-Rightist Movement (1957-1959) and the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961) also noticeably narrowed the diversity of experiences artists could sketch. In a 1962 symposium report titled "Entering Life and Production—the Experience of the Beijing Art Worker Group" printed in *Meishu*, the participants discussed issues in art production. Though the majority of artists in the Beijing Art Worker Group

¹⁵⁸ Xiao Bianzhao, "How Artists Experience Life (Meishu gongzuo zhe ruhe tian shenghuo)," *Meishu* 1 (1957): 43.

¹⁵⁹ Xiao, "How Artists," 44.

reportedly agreed on the transformative value of experiencing and “entering life,” they cited the persistent problem of everybody drawing the same subjects and themes of the worker, such as the worker “at work, at rest, or wiping away perspiration” so that “nothing new can develop.”¹⁶⁰ With the growing excessive emphasis on portraying members of “the people” and their subjectivity as just revolving around his or her classed relationship with work, live sketch also gradually became recognized as a hindrance to art’s progress.

The official standardization of sketching as a cornerstone of art education and artmaking also shows the politicization of sketch and experience brought to its logical conclusion as the sociopolitical parameters of “the people” became more restricted and narrowly defined during the Cultural Revolution. This can be viewed in the numerous publications of model sketches of workers, farmers, and soldiers that were prominent in the late 1960s and 1970s. With the galvanization of then cultural leader Jiang Qing’s mandate for the visual arts to convey a broad optimism, or “red, bright, and shining” (*hong guang liang*), the sketch became an actualized vehicle for ordering the subjectivity of “the people,” as in the 1977 publication *Selected Sketches of Workers, Peasants, and Soldiers* (figure 98). The formal conventions of the live sketch as seen here, such as the consistent arrangement of a single frontal facing head drawn against a blank background, renders these sketches more like a collected scientific study of specimens rather than portraits of various individuals encountered and drawn by different artists. The labeling of each drawing by the sitter’s social class and profession further objectifies the figures as well as the iconographic occupational clothing and attributes, such as the protective goggles of the female steel mill worker or head scarf of the laborer (figure 99).

¹⁶⁰ “...shangban, xiaban, xiuxi, cahang, deng zhe lei bieren hua guo de ticai, er qie wei neng cong zhe xie ticai zhong you shenmen xin de faxian.” From “Entering Life and Production—the Beijing Art Worker Group Discusses Their Experience (shengru shenghuo yu chuanguozuo—Beijing budui meishu gongzuozhe tan tihui),” *Meishu* 6 (1962): 4.

However, none of them, even though defined here by their classed profession within the Communist social rubric of worker, soldier, or peasant, are portrayed engaged in activity, suggesting that showing the working distinctions of the proletariat class is not really the objective here. Unlike the live sketches of various working people in publications of the mid-1950s, such as the published 1955 collection of sketches, *Sketches of New China (Xin zhongguo de sumiao)*, by Paul Hogarth (figure 100) during his travels in China in 1954, the 1977 publication idealizes the working class as a cast of generic characters all with robust and smooth round faces and with eyes gazing vacuously into the distance. For example, in contrast to the sketch of the detached female steel mill worker, Paul's sketch of a similarly labeled factory worker shows him as being self-consciously aware by warily looking directly at the viewer and with his lips slightly parted in the uncertainty of the moment (figure 101). The desired critical realism from which sketch emerged in mid-1950s China transformed by the 1970s into a fictional realism to buttress the politics and the harmonious myth of "the people."

The many sketches by different artists in *Selected Sketches of Workers, Peasants, and Soldiers* illustrating workers, soldiers, and farmers argue through their visual consistency and order the unity of "the people." The plethora of published manuals of compiled sketches readily available in the 1970s, such as *Selected Sketches of Workers, Peasants, and Soldiers*, were used by art students to not only study excellent figurative examples to aid in their modeling technique, but also to teach the purpose of sketching as primarily to build an archive of anonymous faces—the face of a laborer, the face of a worker, the face of a farmer (figure 102). The conventions and systematic collection of sketches that the basic art student and later artist becomes trained to amass during periods "experiencing" life in the countryside or factories imparts the entire social terrain for which the artist is responsible for mapping and also positioning individuals within.

The live sketch emerged out of the ambition not just to make forms true to a perceived “reality,” but to the embodiment of experience’s corporeal, immediate, and spontaneous qualities in art and the making of art. By requiring artists to experience real life and to eschew the use of models and other visual aids such as photography, in theory, precludes an overdependence on pictorial conventions and the artistic production of character types. Yet at the same time the official Communist narrative consisting of the virtuous farmers, workers, and soldiers dictated the existence of only certain experiences at the expense of others. Consequently, a paradox developed between the state’s official cultural mandate for “art to serve the people” and the state’s demand at the same time for the artist’s application of a rigorous realist technique through experiencing, observing, and sketching figures. The distance between the actual experience in the art process and the politicized conventions of experience imposed on the art process created only a partial impression of life after the Communist Revolution, or what contemporary artist Yun-fei Ji calls of the final art work a “complete lie.”¹⁶¹ The use of a qualified notion of experience as the measure of reality undermines any realist claims to prevail over certain tastes and preconceptions in the representation of the people.

When Secondhand Experience Becomes Primary

The question of the relationship between experience, affect, and form in art was foregrounded in the *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition*. Though no published reviews were overtly critical of the show or its works given the level of political surveillance at the time, several reviewers addressed in their reviews unnamed colleagues who were unimpressed and critical of

¹⁶¹ Melissa Chiu, “Ghosts, Three Gorges, and Ink: An Interview with Yun-fei Ji,” in *Yun-fei Ji: the Empty City* (St. Louis: Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, 2004), 80.

the work's distorted and crude forms. Several reviewers even used these critiques to argue for the need of new standards in the evaluation of socialist art, standards that would stress artists' political knowledge and experience with "the people" over form. For example, Hou Cheng's review of the show, "Learning By Finding Difference—the Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition" and the art critic Hua Xia's exhibition review "The Standard for Critiquing Works" both appeared in the national newspaper *Guangming Daily* as responses to friends who were critical of the show. Such reviews suggest the existence of critics of the show, albeit silenced without a public platform through which to directly voice their discontent.

More significantly such reviews as Hou's and Hua's also reflect a concerted effort to use the success of the show as an opportunity to prove that effective art comes less from form and more from the artists' first-hand experience living and working with "the people," which had been institutionalized for the past ten years. The report in *Meishu* regarding the Beijing artists' symposium on the occasion of the sculpture exhibition also mentioned some criticism of the show, such as the evident immature skill level and practices of the sculptors and the "exaggerated" and unrefined forms in their works. However, these critiques were attributed to the young sculptors' still budding development so that the criticisms were deemed negligible to the overall value of the show.

Arguably, though, it was exactly the problematic and unprecedented exaggerated and squat, block-like forms of many of the works that made them so affective with a sense of immediacy and spontaneity, characteristics that also were valued and appreciated at the time in the live sketch. As Wang Zhaowen stated in his review of the exhibition, the sculptors' did not choose to portray dramatic, "intense movements" (*qianglie de dongzuo*), but instead ones with the expressive power of the moment so that the viewer feels like he or she is "at the moment

observing” (*fangfu zhengzai guanचा*) the figure.¹⁶² Though not necessarily considered conventionally beautiful forms per se, many of the celebrated works’ distinctive awkward modeling and treatment of the sculptural material contributed to their sketch-like, immediate quality that made the viewer conscious of their viewership as if they were experiencing the moment along with the sculpted representation, or as Wang describes “observing” the sculpture.

The distinctly exaggerated, disproportional block-like nature of the sculptures in the *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition* derived from the sculptors’ intensive study of the 9th century Buddhist sculptures in Dazu in Sichuan province (figure 103). After the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s Chinese sculptors shifted their focus away from foreign paradigms to domestic models in a search for a uniquely “Chinese” form of modern sculpture. For instance, at CAFA Wang Linyi began researching Han (206-220) sculpture and Hua Tianyou studied Tang (618-907) sculpture. Other sculptors chose to travel the country to study vernacular sculpture, such as in Wutaishan, Yunnan, and Qiaozhou, and cave grottoes, such as the recently excavated Dazu.¹⁶³

The palpable heaviness of the deliberately unworked material of many of the sculptures in the Sichuan sculpture exhibition, as well as their disproportioned bodies of small heads and giant bottoms, imparted to them a naïve, archaic quality, such as in Guo Qixiang’s *Female Herder* (figure 104). The demure female figure stands like a single block that tapers slightly toward her small head. Like the compact composition and rough articulation of forms in the figural statues at Dazu (figure 105), her two arms are modeled close to the body to hold a pail in front. The rotund forms echoed in her face, arms, and dress coupled with the even-handed treatment of the plaster surface echoes the sculpture’s physical stability and palpable, heavy presence in real space. Like the majority of the works in the exhibition, *Female Herder* also

¹⁶² Wang, “Blossoms,” 6.

¹⁶³ Sullivan, *Art and Artists*, 163.

curiously has no base to mark the sculpture's space as separate from the viewer's space. Thus, the sculpture's relationship with its surroundings, and most importantly with the viewer, is left unresolved. Consequently, the viewer's encounter with the sculpture becomes immediate and direct because of the ambivalent demarcation of space between the viewer's space and the sculpture's space. The experience of actually being there is thus imparted to the viewer of the exhibition through the sculpture's deliberately naïve form and material treatment.

The exhibition sculptures' purposefully unworked and unfinished general appearance also reflects the spontaneity and unstudied quality of the moment valued too in the live sketch. For example, Yang Fayu's sculpture *Jingpo Militiaman (Jingpo minzu bing)* in 1963 of the Jingpo ethnicity in Yunnan province is concentrated not so much on the figure and his slightly tilted forward profile, but on the materiality of the mass of stone from which he appears to emerge and at the same by which he is engulfed. The stone further is fashioned to look like a block of freshly cut stone except for a couple of details of leaves framing his right shoulder to suggest the tropical setting of Yunnan (figure 106). The sense of immediacy is augmented by the strategic integration of the stone material into the work where the actual mass of the stone acts both as a painterly atmospheric conceit in the sculptural representation and as a piece of scarcely worked stone to heighten the presence and occupation of the sculpture's illusory space in the real space of the viewer. The unworked stone mass's dominance and employment in a painterly and expressive fashion is a departure from the conventional treatment of the material in previous modern sculpture works in China, which strove to conceal and transform the physical properties of the material. The use of the sculpture to create uniquely distorted, crudely modeled forms, as introduced by the contemporary study and appropriation of Chinese premodern sculpture and its archaic elements, allowed a rethinking of sculpture's emotional affect through

the forms already inherent in the sculptural space and material. The powerful employment of sculpture's intrinsic properties not only is a mere byproduct of the Sichuan sculptors' utilization of traditional Chinese sculpture, but also signals a formalist turn in Chinese sculpture in the 1960s.

Global Racial Revenge and the Expanded Notion of “The People”

The *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition* in 1964 was also remarkable for the notable sculptural depictions of African revolutionary radicals in the early 1960s' expanded notion of “the people” and their shared experience in forming a narrative of global exploitation. The praising of the works portraying Chinese minorities and Africans of the “new generation of the world's revolutionary people”¹⁶⁴ operated in promoting the greater unity of “the people” and its shared universal class struggle that transcends national, ethnic, and racial boundaries.

Before the 1960s, generic, exoticizing portraits of foreigners by artists from their travels abroad were common, such as Li Hu's 1956 ink painting *Portrait of an Indian Female (Yindu funü xiang)* (figure 107). Symbolic depictions of different races with the Chinese were also frequently used to represent themes of friendship and abstract universal goals, such as Li Pingfan's 1959 watercolor print *We Want Peace (Women yao heping)*. Created to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the World Congress of Advocates of Peace held simultaneously in Paris and Prague in 1949, Li's print was the silver prize recipient in the Leipzig International Print Exhibition held in East Germany (figure 108).¹⁶⁵ Li's *We Want Peace* portrays three generic

¹⁶⁴ Cao Chengfeng, “Awaken, Independence, Mother” (*Juexing, Duli, Muqin*), *Meishu* (March 1964): 11.

¹⁶⁵ Chen Ye, ed., *New China's Art Classics: 1950s (Xin Zhongguo meishu jingdian: 1950s)* (Wuhan: Hubei meishu chubanshe, 2004), 168. The World Congress of Advocates of Peace was a predecessor to the World Peace Council,

young girls—an African, a Caucasian, and a Chinese—lined up vertically behind the Chinese girl with a hand on each other’s shoulders. The sweetness of the round faces and naive thick black outlines is augmented by the oversized dove in the Chinese girl’s arms. Though the Chinese girl is positioned in the front and holding the dove, the girls’ similar facial features, expression, and size shows no clear indication of a hierarchy led by the Chinese girl, but instead highlights their commonality.

In contrast, in mass printed and circulated political propaganda posters, which are by function and design more visually literal and overt in their political message than the other arts, the artists represented China in the 1950s as politically advanced when depicting it on the world stage, though right behind or on equal footing with its “big brother” the Soviet Union such as in the poster *The People All Over the World Firmly Support Peace* (*quan shijie renmin jianjue baowei heping*) by Yi Miao in 1951 (figure 109). The poster’s iconography obviously conveys the socialist political rhetoric of U.S. imperialism threatening world peace that is challenged by the long line of representatives of the socialist bloc. Each representative holds their country’s flag and all of them point accusingly at a decrepit man crouching on the ground dressed in the stars and stripes of the U.S. flag. What is of more interest here, though, is the ordering of socialist countries by race, where China, North Korea, and Vietnam, respectively, are shown directly behind their leading Russian peer. They are followed by the representatives of the Eastern European countries and finally Mongolia, the former Qing Chinese territory and then Soviet satellite country. The racially determined ordering of the line of Socialist countries and its mapping onto the international Soviet power hierarchy is made further explicit by the selected angle of perspective which drastically diminishes the size of everybody behind the Vietnamese

which was established in 1950 based on the Soviet policy of world peace against the “imperialism” of the U.S. Pablo Picasso’s lithograph, *The Dove*, was adopted as the emblem of the congress and later the World Peace Council.

representative. Thus, the poster image suggests that there existed already in early Communist China a correlation between ideas of race and the ordering of world powers. The grouping of the three Asian countries together to abruptly interrupt the white racial unity of the line in Yi's poster implies though not only the vanguard position of Asia in the Communist world struggle, but also their alienation within the Soviet bloc. In the early 1960s when China began to more aggressively assert itself on the international stage independent of the Soviet Union, Chinese artists started depicting China instead with a diversity of races around the world rather than just with those of the Soviet bloc, thereby promoting the People's Republic as the leader of the much larger realm of "the people."

In the aftermath of the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s, Mao endeavored to position China as the legitimate leader of not only the proletariat of China but the entire "exploited" Third World of many former colonial countries that have recently gained independence. The Third World here derives from Mao's "Three Worlds Theory" (*san ge shijie de lilun*), which China formally articulated to the world in 1974 but had been in development since the late 1940s in Mao's earlier theory of intermediate zones (*zhongjian didai*). The Three Worlds Theory became more imperative to China's foreign policy after the landmark Asian-African conference in 1955 in Bandung, Indonesia.¹⁶⁶ The unprecedented large-scale gathering of twenty-nine African and Asian nations, including India, China, Japan, Vietnam, Iraq, and several recently independent African states, met to promote Afro-Asian economic and cultural cooperation, to oppose

¹⁶⁶ On April 9, 1974 Deng Xiaoping officially stated Mao's three worlds theory to the UN. Mao's theory of intermediate zones represents his first conception of China's international stance. According to his theory, China and other oppressed non-Western countries composed an intermediate zone between the U.S. and the Soviet Union rivalry. The U.S. and its allies would hence attempt to dominate the countries of the intermediate zone to conquer the Soviet Union, so it would benefit the intermediate zone countries to unite in anti-colonial and national proletariat revolution. Mao's conception of the landscape of international politics thus already endeavored to decentralize the importance of Russia in the global class struggle. See Jack Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 5.

colonialism, and to deal with Cold War tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The meeting was pivotal in establishing the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961 of states not formerly aligned with the U.S. or Soviet bloc and which desired to chart an independent path of global development.¹⁶⁷

In the existing Euro-American Three Worlds model the world is divided according to ideology, where the U.S. and its allies, or “the West,” is identified as the first world, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe make up the second world, and Asia, Africa, and Latin America comprise the third world. In contrast, in Mao’s reconfiguration of the Three Worlds model the first world consists of the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the second world contains the allies of the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and the third world consists of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Labeling the first world as imperialist superpowers and proclaiming the duty of the Third World to combat them, Mao’s Three Worlds Theory in effect alienated the Soviet Union on the international stage as party to global white supremacy and positioned China as the leader of the international conflict of the colored races.¹⁶⁸

In the early 1960s China nationally and internationally sought to establish its global image as the leader of the Third World, from economic and social aid to young postcolonial African nations such as Algeria, Ghana, and Tanzania to Mao’s official proclamations of support for members of the Third World against political intrusions and abuses of the First World. For example, in the early 1960s Mao periodically issued statements in support of the struggles of “the people” in the Congo, Japan, and the African-Americans in the U.S. These were published

¹⁶⁷ The Bandung conference was organized by Indonesia, Burma, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and India. Though the U.S. was not invited to participate, leftist activists such as the African-American writer Richard Wright attended and he helped publicize the event through his book based on his trip, *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference* (London: D. Dobson, 1956).

¹⁶⁸ Robeson Taj Frazier, *The East is Black: Cold War China in the Black Radical Imagination* (Durham: Duke University, 2014), 113.

and circulated in various languages along with reprints on relevant editorials from the *People's Daily* and images of Mao with foreign dignitaries and organized mass rallies of people in China showing their support for the “anti-imperialist” cause of Third World people abroad (figure 110).¹⁶⁹ These statements and mass rallies in China explicitly in support of “the people” elsewhere imparts, especially to international communities of people marginalized in their home society, the image of the Chinese as a large yet benevolent utopian state that can transcend racial identity and national politics and boundaries, or as Andrew F. Jones and Nikhil Pal Singh call a “new humanism.”¹⁷⁰ Such demonstrative gestures and their publication and wide circulation also worked in China to announce and persuade the extension of the idea of “the people” to now encompass, by way of their shared experience of oppression, the people of other nations and races.

One of the earliest artworks promoting this expanded global notion of “the people” united against Western “imperialist” powers and Mao as the leader of the Third World is epitomized in Wu Biduan’s and Jin Shanyi’s mass reproduced and iconic 1961 oil painting *Chairman Mao Standing with People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America* (figure 111). The subdued, pale palette of flat planes of whites, yellows, and grays of the figures’ clothing in the oil painting complements the subtle shades of brown, tan, and white skin colors. The figures’ orderly frontal arrangement all gazing intently at Mao is punctuated with the peculiar gestures of mutual

¹⁶⁹ In Japan China’s support was for the Japanese opposed to the 1960 Japan-U.S. treaty of military alliance. The Chinese support was for the Congolese against the 1961 CIA sponsored assassination of the first democratically elected Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba.

¹⁷⁰ Often in Chinese correspondences with African-American activists the Chinese writers would impart that the activists are not alone in their struggle because they can rely on their Chinese comrades, such as in Chinese poet Zuo Zhongling’s poem to African-American activist Robert William when Williams was in exile in Cuba. Titled “To Robert Williams,” the last few lines read: “Look around at the whole world. / On the banks of the Yangtze where the sun is rising, / You have six hundred and fifty million brothers in arms.” See Robeson Taj Frazier, *The East is Black: Cold War China in the Black Radical Imagination* (Durham: Duke University, 2014), 117. Andrew F. Jones and Nikhil Pal Singh, “Guest Editors’ Introduction,” in *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 11, 1 (Spring 2003), 8.

affection that nears the homoerotic between individuals of different races, such as the two Middle Eastern men at the far right holding hands or the red veiled Muslim woman casually leaning her hand on the shoulder of an unveiled pale skin woman in a formal blue skirt suit who seems oblivious of the Muslim woman, let alone her personal gesture. These acts of intimate touching between cross-racial and transnational “brothers” and “sisters” act as visual reverberations of the main act of touching in the center where Mao is seen shaking hands with an African man with his left hand placed additionally on top of their hands in the more powerful role to give reassurance and the promise of solidarity. The parade of representatives of Third World nations who appear in awe of Mao, and the African male as the direct receiver of his grace, submits an immaculate and tender view of the harmonious denizens of the Third World under Mao’s stewardship. It also embodies the idea of the Third World as defined not so much by ideology as by race and ethnicity, exemplified in the central image of the dark skin African, in envisioning Mao’s worldview as the leader of the world’s subaltern groups. The prominent positioning of the narrative of race, and therefore biology and nature, in Mao’s Three Worlds Theory suggests that China’s kinship with the Third World people is more profound than China’s past friendship with the Soviets that was founded solely on shared ideology.

The dramatic positioning of the contrasting dark African figure in *Chairman Mao Standing with People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America* not only is visually strategic, but also is highly symbolic of the intersecting hierarchies of race and world politics in China’s political discourse of the 1960s. The Chinese Communist Party’s concentrated interest in Africans and people of African descent not only lay in the desire to establish political and economic ties with the new postcolonial African nations, but also in the internationally acknowledged historic exploitation of Africans in the global slave trade in which China was not complicit. For example,

in the 1963 Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation meeting in Tanzania, China contended that Russians had no business in Africa because they are white.¹⁷¹ By positioning itself as the legitimate champion for Africa because of their similarly colored skin, China by extension modeled itself as the rightful champion and international voice of the entire oppressed Third World starting with Africa. The deliberate direct association of touch between Mao and the African figure in *Chairman Mao Standing with People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America* witnessed by the rest of the Third World therefore visualizes Mao in his new international order.

Unlike in the oil painting *Chairman Mao Standing with People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America*, the conspicuous depictions of African figures in the *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition* are portrayed not so much as tranquil figures enthralled by Mao, but as independent, unyielding revolutionary fighters, such as Long Dehui's plaster cast sculpture *Awaken (Juexing)* of an African male holding broken chains (figure 112). With the changed political climate that required Chinese people to accept Africans as their own, the inherent characteristics of sculpture were employed to recreate the image of Africans in the Chinese imagination from a backwards race into a revolutionary people. Since the late 19th century after the British and French forces defeated the Chinese in the Opium Wars (1839-1842 and 1856-1860), prominent reformers such as Liang Qichao, Kang Youwei, and Sun Yat-sen began theorizing how a country's strength is biologically determined by race. In such constructions, Africans were consistently isolated as being biologically destined to be subjugated by others, such as in Liang's famous conception of the five races of white, yellow, black, red, and brown. Liang believed that the white and yellow races were the superior races while races such as the black race did not have the capacity to

¹⁷¹ Robin D.G. Kelley and Betsy Esch, "Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution," in *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society* 1, 4 (1999): 9.

evolve. Liang's theory on the relationship between race and nation in the early 20th century became incorporated into primary school curriculum.¹⁷²

Similarly, in the famous *Great Dictionary of Zoology (Dongwuxue da cidian)* in 1923, Africans were said to remain subjugated because of their "rather long head, many protruding teeth, and a quite low forehead... This type of people have a shameful and inferior way of thinking, and have no capacity to shine in history."¹⁷³ Kang Youwei had earlier likewise remarked that nobody would marry the "monstrously ugly black" unless they wanted to corrupt their racial makeup.¹⁷⁴ As Frank Dikötter has shown, by the end of the Republican period many people in China viewed themselves and others according to race.¹⁷⁵ The reported official and unofficial local harassment and prejudice experienced by the 118 African college students who came to Beijing in 1961 to 1962 as part of a special study abroad program demonstrates how Africans were still largely perceived as the inferior, subservient race even as the Chinese state decreed otherwise.¹⁷⁶ Therefore, although China was asserting itself as the leader of the Third World as signified by the government's support and public embrace of the historically subjugated African people, this shift in Chinese world politics and policy also involved the need to reformulate longstanding racial distinctions between Chinese and non-Chinese in order to make their new association through the shared experience of the oppressed "people" palatable and convincing to the Chinese public.

For example, in *Awaken* Long Dehui focuses on and re-contextualizes the biological forms of an African man that were thought abominable in the early 20th century into the familiar

¹⁷² Frank Dikötter, "Racial Identities in China: Context and Meaning," in *The China Quarterly* 138 (June 1994): 407.

¹⁷³ Du Yaquan et al., *Great Dictionary of Zoology (Dongwuxue da cidian)* (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1927, 1st edition 1923), 15.

¹⁷⁴ Frank Dikötter, "Racial Identities in China: Context and Meaning," in *The China Quarterly* 138 (June 1994): 405.

¹⁷⁵ See Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1992).

¹⁷⁶ Michael J. Sullivan, "The 1988-89 Nanjing Anti-African Protests: Racial Nationalism or National Racism?" in *The China Quarterly* 138 (June 1994): 443.

visual tropes of a revolutionary. The back and shoulders of the depicted African male are confidently thrown back to show him holding a pair of broken shackles in his right hand. His exorbitantly bulging biceps highlighted by the reflective surface implies that his recent liberation quite possibly was won through his own power and will rather than through anyone else's leadership or guidance. The remarkable focus on the rawness of the exposed, unworked durable material in Long's *Awaken* dovetails with the work's militant content to affect and impress the viewers. As one reviewer of the show noted of the works depicting African figures at the beginning of the exhibition, "As soon as you enter the exhibition you feel the powerful and combative energy."¹⁷⁷

More than half of the sculpture *Awaken*, though, concentrates on the descending silhouette of his advancing leg, which the reviewer Cao Chengfeng described as "like a cliff,"¹⁷⁸ and the long drapery of his magnificent robe that flows to his feet onto a rocky ledge. While some writers questioned the visual strategy of the leg's silhouette as appearing too "empty" (*kong*),¹⁷⁹ the solid materiality visibly underscored here in the figure's lower half that also functions as the sculpture's actual base connotes the robust body and powerful character of the African figure. Long Dehui's handling of the sculptural material to merge the strong durability and palpable presence of the material with the depicted figure's character signals a shift in the portrayal of Africans to being formidable and alert fighters. However, Long Dehui's bold handling of material is undermined by the exaggerated portrayal of the African male as possessing superhuman physical strength in his massive biceps and the intense focus on his body, thus creating a powerful visual personification of liberation and revolution by force, yet not one

¹⁷⁷ Hou Cheng, "Finding Differences and Learning with an Open Mind—Discussing 'Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition'" (Zhao chaju xuxin xuexi—mantan 'Sichuan diaosou zhanlan), in *Guangming*, May 7, 1964, 4.

¹⁷⁸ Cao, "Awaken, Independence, Mother," 11.

¹⁷⁹ Hou, "Finding Differences," 4.

that strives to depict the African people as true to life humans. As exemplified by Long Dehui's extreme use of materiality and scale in *Awaken*, rather than demystifying the biological caricaturing of the African body invented in the formation of racial and national hierarchies, the African physique is just dramatically romanticized in the formation of new racial and national hierarchies in China in the early 1960s.

The depiction of the African female revolutionary also was created through employing familiar revolutionary imagery and concepts, though this time of the de-sexualized socialist woman, such as in Wang Guanyi's *Independence (Duli)* created in 1963 that was also shown in the *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition* (figure 113). The female is identifiable by her head scarf as being a farmer or laborer, thus immediately making her accessible to the Chinese viewer by assigning a set of experiences to her from the Communist social narrative. Her loose fitting tunic over her entire body not only covers the curves of her female body, but also accentuates her masculine coded features such as the broad shoulders, thick arms, and square jaw. Such masculine features were customary in the picturing of the new socialist woman in the People's Republic, where the socially enlightened, liberated socialist woman is often problematically represented in terms of her acquisition of male behavior and physical traits.

The African female holding a gun in Wang's *Independence* also is a popular motif borrowed from socialist revolutionary visual culture. Since 1949 Chinese women holding weapons were visually represented in socialist films, such as *Daughters of China*, *Zhao Yiman*, *The Youth in the Fires of the Battle Ground*, and *The Battalion of Red Women*. The image of the militant woman became ubiquitous in posters and magazine covers, and in 1961 Mao wrote a poem to praise Chinese women militia. The common imagery of the militant Chinese women thus became projected internationally onto the African female in the Chinese imagination and in

representations since the early 1960s, as can be seen too in Long Xuli's *African Mother* (1963) that was also exhibited in the *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition* (figure 114). Chao Yinian's propaganda painting *Oppressed People Unite to Oppose U.S. Imperialism* (*Bei yapo minzu liahe qi lai jianjue fandui mei diguozhuyi*) in 1964 also portrays an African female, in this case charging the frontlines with a gun raised prominently above her head (figure 115). The mapping of familiar image conventions of the revolutionary Chinese people, like the women with a gun, now onto the representation of people of other races and nations further demonstrates the movement of the notion of "the people" into the global sphere.

One of the most acclaimed pieces from the *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition*, Long Xuli's *African Mother* (*Feizhou muqin*), that appeared on the cover of the special issue of *Art* (*Meishu*) on the show and was later exhibited abroad, interestingly combines militancy with sentiment by conflating love for "the people" and the nation with the mother's personal love for her child (figure 116). Initially inspired by the contemporary Indonesian folk lullaby *Darling* (*Baobei*) that was popular in China in the early 1960s about a mother singing her child to sleep as they await the return of her husband who is fighting with the guerilla army, Long Xuli specifically utilized a range of visual material: live sketches he drew of mothers with their children; a photographic image of an Angolan mother and her attire that he found in a journal of international news, *World Affairs* (*Shijie zhishi*), which he used as the model for the mother figure; and the head scarf fashion of the African female in Wu Biduan's and Jin Shangyi's painting *Chairman Mao Standing with People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America* (figure 117).¹⁸⁰ By assembling and building on these existing visual motifs of clothing, customs, and physical

¹⁸⁰ See Long Xuli, "The Making of *African Mother*" ('Feizhou muqin' chuanguo jingguo), *Meishu* (May 1964): 34; and Long Xuli, "The Making of *African Mother*" ('Feizhou muqin' de chuanguo jingguo), *Sichuan Daily* (*Sichuan Ribao*), January 20, 1965, 3.

features pertaining to African people and motherhood, Long Xuli established a new image and narrative of the revolutionary African mother.

Long Xuli's *African Mother* depicts a kneeling African female who grips close with her right hand a rifle while her left hand tenderly holds the hand of her baby strapped to her back. The central focus here is on the personal connection between the mother and baby as signified in the touching of her contented face with the baby's cheerful face as she turns her head toward him. However, *African Mother* visually also asserts an odd relationship that attempts to transcend the different scales of social organization—the nation, the people, the ethnic group, and the family—where the threatening gun and saccharine portrait of the mother and baby's touching faces work in uneasy tension with each other. In the statement of the artist, Long Xuli explains that within the depicted motherly love is also “the national ethnic (*minzu*) hate for the enemy” since her child's survival depends on the survival of the nation's people (*minzu*).¹⁸¹ Thus her baby personifies the nation body as defined as an ethnic group of the people, or *minzu*, who requires attention as well as protection. Though Long Xuli writes that he was torn between focusing on the mother's relationship with the gun or the baby before he finally chose to have the sculpture focus on the mother and child, the unresolved tension of the gun and the mother and child portrait nevertheless remains noticeable and heightened in the viewing experience. As the viewer walks around the sculpture the proximity between the gun on her left side and the baby on her right side shifts so that sometimes the gun and mother and child portrait appear far apart while at other times dangerously close (figure 118). Despite Long's intentions, the sculpture offers competing forms of experience between what one actually see of the work versus what is

¹⁸¹ Long, “The Making,” 34.

said about it. In the viewing experience *African Mother* in fact vacillates between advocating revolution through the barrel of a gun and arguing against it.

Love of “the people” as symbolized by the gun is positioned visually and materially in *African Mother* in parallel and in close proximity with the unperturbed maternal love between the mother and child, therein attempting to romanticize violence by discounting the dangerous potential of the gun. Variations of Long Xuli’s well-publicized and mass-reproduced image of the radicalized mother and child portrait with a gun can be seen nationally in the portrayal of the herculean African female revolutionary who can be both a mother and revolutionary fighter too, such as in the propaganda poster *Get out of Africa, American Imperialists! (Mei diguozhuyi cong feizhou gun chuqu!)* of 1964 (figure 119). It also inspired artists abroad in radical leftist publications to garner support for revolutionary change through violence, such as a similar image of a mother and child portrait with a gun that appeared in the Black Panther Party newspaper, *Black Panther*, in September 1969 and was reprinted on the cover of the March 1970 issue of the Asian American magazine *Gidra*. In both of these instances, though, Long Xuli’s pyramidal sculptural image that requires viewing in the round is compositionally modified for the two-dimensional printed page and the African mother is replaced with a Vietnamese one for U.S. audiences (figure 120).

The distinct racial turn in the visual output of the Chinese art world of the early 1960s toward representing the ethnicities of the Third World, such as with Long Dehui’s, Wang Guanyi’s, and Long Xuli’s sculptures, thus reflects the added racial valence to the definition of “the people” and their experiences. In attempting to visualize another notion of “the people,” however, the sculptors had to also adapt their existing vocabulary for picturing revolution with preconceived notions of biological exceptionalism predicated on race. Long Xuli’s *African*

Mother especially epitomizes the love for “the people” that young artists at art schools like the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute were trained to witness and empathize in their experiential studies sketching in the countryside and factories and to manifest and evoke in their own works. The critical success of the *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition* in 1964 reflects the visual strategies of some of the earliest cohorts of sculpture students and teachers trained in the art curriculum of the young People’s Republic developed to promote the idea of making “art to serve the people” that found resonance with contemporary revolutionaries and activists worldwide in the circulating visual culture of the radical left. However, that resonance depended on the paradox between a realist attention to the specific and an over reliance on the general that in the end produced partial, but hegemonic discourses on individual subjectivity, nationalism, and race.

CHAPTER 5

Redefining Artistic Value: *Rent Collection Courtyard*

In late August 1966 during the incipient stages of the Cultural Revolution in China, students and teachers at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing smashed with axes and shovels the school's plaster cast collection of established sculptural masterpieces (figure 121).¹⁸² Used as models from which the school's students made sketches as part of their basic training, the plaster cast collection included Michelangelo's *David*, *Venus de Milo*, and the *Apollo Belvedere* as well as Buddhist sculptures from various renowned cave temples in China. With the demonstrative destruction of the plaster casts of what were deemed canonical artworks, the scales for measuring artistic value in the still young Communist nation were symbolically and definitively overturned. A month later the large-scale exhibition of one of the most important sculptural works in Chinese modern art, *Rent Collection Courtyard*, opened in Beijing's former Imperial Palace, or the Forbidden City as it is popularly known, in the room once used for ancestral veneration (figure 122).

Rent Collection Courtyard, a 96-meter long sculptural installation consisting of 114 life-sized clay figures, depicts scenes of downtrodden farmers bringing their harvest as rent to an actual landlord, Liu Wencai, during pre-Communist revolution China (figure 123). Built in 1965 in a courtyard in the countryside where rent was collected, the figures are originally arranged in

¹⁸² During the period from August 1966 to 1976, Mao Zedong attempted to regain central control over the direction of the Party. He called on the masses, particularly the youth who became called the Red Guard, to rebel against those people in the Party and other social institutions deemed reactionary or counterrevolutionary.

six successive tableaux portraying each stage in the collection of rent—the submission of rent, the inspection of the grain, the removal of the chaff and the measuring of the grain, the settling of accounts, the forcing of rent payment, and the final revolt showing a gathering of a few disgruntled young male farmers (figure 124).¹⁸³

Soon after its creation in the previous year *Rent Collection Courtyard* was pronounced an official model artwork by Jiang Qing in February 1966 and subsequently it inspired similarly grand, life-sized sculptural installations nationwide, such as the 300-figured *Family Histories of the Air Force Fighters* made around 1967 and the 106-figured *The Wrath of the Serfs* completed in 1976 (figure 125).¹⁸⁴ *Rent Collection Courtyard* was also completely or partially reproduced and exhibited in many other major cities besides Beijing such as Shanghai and Wuhan and later in ally countries Albania and Vietnam as socialist art from China par excellence.¹⁸⁵ Within the Chinese art world Wang Zhaowen, a sculptor turned influential art critic and editor-in-chief of *Meishu (Art)*, praised *Rent Collection Courtyard* as the “atomic bomb of the art world” worthy of study by all artists.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Variations of total number of tableaux include four tableaux for the original and a multiple number of variants existed in later revised versions of *Rent Collection Courtyard*; see “Speech by Comrade Zhao Shutong,” in “*Rent Collection Courtyard* Clay Sculpture Group Work Experience Study Symposium” (*Shouzu yuan* nisu qunxiang guangmo zuotan hui shang de fayan), published by China Artists Association for internal study (1966), in “Shouzu yuan,” Sichuan Cultural Bureau, PRC Sichuan dossier no. 124, Sichuan Provincial Archives.

¹⁸⁴ The designation of “model,” or *yangban*, status to works of art in Maoist China began in early 1965 when the opera *The Red Lantern* was lauded in the *Theater Journal* as being an “outstanding model.” Later that year, the same journal praised *The Red Lantern* along with the opera *Shajiabang* as “models of the revolutionizing of Peking opera.” Subsequently, Jiang Qing enthusiastically appropriated the term in her reviews on art. See Paul Clark, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 57, 59.

The concept of presenting models of desired characteristics and morals occurs not only in this period and in China. However, here I speak to how the “model” concept was used to rigorously regulate human behavior and public opinion in the context of the Cultural Revolution. Other models in art during this time included the eight model operas identified with this epithet in 1967, Liu Chunhua’s model painting *Mao Goes to Anyuan* also in 1967, and Hu county in Shaanxi province that was named in 1972 as the model art commune for its advancement of folk painting.

¹⁸⁵ A fiberglass recreation of *Rent Collection Courtyard* also exhibited in the city hall of Toronto, Canada in 1987 and Japan before returning back to China. Ye Yushan, interview with author, May 22, 2013.

¹⁸⁶ “Meishu jie de yanzidan.” From “Sichuan Dayi Landlord Manor Exhibition Hall’s Color Sculpture ‘Rent Collection Courtyard’—Discussion Proceedings (Sichuan Dayi dizhu zhuangyuan chenlieguan 《Shouzu yuan》caisu—zuotanhui jilu),” in “Shouzu yuan,” Sichuan Cultural Bureau, PRC Sichuan dossier no. 124, Sichuan

The significance of *Rent Collection Courtyard* has often been attributed to the way in which its narrative content aligns conceptually with the ideals of the ruling Communist party. Despite the frequent narrative of class struggle that came to characterize the *Rent Collection Courtyard*, one might still ask, “What was *Rent Collection Courtyard* a model for?” since it appears an unlikely candidate for such a distinction. According to the “three prominences” rubric that Jiang Qing advocated and used in the assessment of artworks during the extreme radicalism of China’s Cultural Revolution, the ten-year period with which the nearly three decades of Maoist period art is often conflated, art had to 1) portray positive characters, 2) emphasize the heroic in the characters, and 3) focus on a protagonist among the main characters.¹⁸⁷ *Rent Collection Courtyard*, however, fails to satisfy any of these criteria. Instead of optimism, the sculptural group depicts the suffering of farmers young and old as they progress from carrying their heavy bags of harvest to their torment under the violent hand of the landlord and his hired men (figure 126). There is also no recurring protagonist in the six tableaux and the only hint of heroic determination happens where a restless young male peasant strides purposefully forward towards the landlord (figure 127). However, two of the landlord’s men restrain him. Even the ending shows only a random grouping of young men, some standing next to each other while others stand or sit alone (figure 128). The figures seem more pensive, though, than clear and bold in their next course of action.

This “failure” to fulfill the three prominences laid out in the rubric rather indicates that *Rent Courtyard Collection* achieved its epithet as a “model” sculpture and an “atomic bomb” in

Provincial Archives. Describing a phenomenon as analogous to an atomic bomb was a common practice during the 1960s because China was actively developing nuclear weapons at this time. In October 1964, China successfully exploded its first atomic bomb and two years later in October 1966 it launched its first nuclear missile. In June 1967 China detonated its first hydrogen bomb.

¹⁸⁷ Stefan R. Landsberger, “The Deification of Mao: Religious Imagery and Practices during the Cultural Revolution and Beyond,” in *China’s Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution: Master Narratives and Post-Mao Counternarratives*, ed. Woei Lien Chong (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 149.

the art world in 1965 not because it epitomized or set the touchstone for art during the Cultural Revolution. Instead, *Rent Collection Courtyard*'s model status bespeaks a larger issue in the arts than its mere function as political propaganda: what constituted artistic value in new socialist China. In his 1942 speech at the Yan'an Forum for Art and Literature, Mao Zedong called on the gathered artists and writers to make "art that serves politics." After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 when the state was ideologically conflated with "the dictatorship of the people," the slogan for art and culture gradually transformed into a call for "art to serve the people." Artistic value thus revolved around the concept of "the people" which *Rent Collection Courtyard* became lauded for achieving, primarily through the notions of the three-combinations (*sanjiejie*), a collective work method comprised of the political leader, the artist, and the people; making art in a vein of naturalism that "surpasses life" as lived by the people (*gaoyu shenghuo*); and having mass character (*qunzhonghua*), or making art that the people would enjoy.

The resounding national acclaim for *Rent Collection Courtyard* therefore lies in how it was able to actively engage with these three concepts of what socialist art was imagined to encompass. Rather than illustrating Communist notions of art and the social organizational unit of "the people" through the artwork's content, as was the prevalent artistic strategy employed in response to the call for art to serve the people, *Rent Collection Courtyard* convincingly collapsed the distance between art and life by making art itself a credible means of social mobilization. *Rent Collection Courtyard* and its reception gave traction to the official perception that the people's relationship to art in new China should no longer be defined as art's passive receivers but as its source, producers, and critical audience. This chapter's analysis of the creation and reception of *Rent Collection Courtyard*, though, will also demonstrate the need to reconsider the

history of art in the Maoist period more critically besides the predominant narrative mode or the institutional structures and official language for art and culture at the time.

Collective Work Revisited

The installation space of the rent collection courtyard is part of the sprawling twelve-acre, 350-room countryside estate of the former landlord Liu Wencai in the remote western Chinese province of Sichuan. Under the local Communist government it became repurposed into an exhibition hall and opened in 1959 as the Dayi Landlord Exhibition Hall administered by Ma Li, the Wenjiang county propaganda chief who would later initiate the making of *Rent Collection Courtyard* (figure 129).¹⁸⁸ The successful collective production of the artists, the political leader, in this case Ma Li, and the masses, here the local Dayi community of farmers, in the making of *Rent Collection Courtyard* elevated *sanjiejie*, or three-combinations, to the ideal artmaking method for socialist art.¹⁸⁹

The team who made *Rent Collection Courtyard* was in fact a uniquely diverse mix of roughly twenty people altogether, including a script writer, a photographer, seven academically trained sculptors from the nearby art academy, the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute (SFAI), and the venue's art staff that consisted of the two painters Zhang Fulun and Tang Shun'an, the sculptor Li Qisheng, and a third generation folk sculptor Jiang Quanguai, as well as volunteer assistants

¹⁸⁸ The manor museum's name in 1966 was changed to Dayi Class Education Exhibition Hall and changed once more in 1980 to Liu's Family Manor Museum. Denise Ho and Jie Li, "From Landlord Manor to Red Memorabilia: Reincarnations of a Chinese Museum Town," *Modern China* 41, 4 (July 2015): 4.

¹⁸⁹ See "Large-Scale Clay Sculpture Exhibits in Beijing (Daxing nisu qunxiang "Shouzu yuan" zai Beijing zhanchu)," *Chongqing Daily (Chongqing ribao)*, December 27, 1965: 3; Li Shaoyan, "Learn from Sculpture Workers (Xiang diaosu gongzuozhe xuexi)," *People's Daily (Renmin ribao)*, November 29, 1965, 3; Wang Zhaowen, "A Leap Development in Revolutionary Art (Feiyue fazhan de geming yishu)," *People's Daily (Renmin ribao)*, November 29, 1965, 3; and Hua Junwu, "A Good Sculptural Model Worthy of Study (Zhide xuexi de diaosu hao yanbang)," *People's Daily (Renmin ribao)*, October 31, 1965, 4

who taught at the local elementary school (figure 130). The elaborate orchestration of this unique collaboration across many disciplines and work units was made possible by the vision and official authority of Ma Li. As an amateur poet and graduate of the Lu Xun Art Academy in Yan'an, as well as an active patron and reformer of Sichuan opera in the early 1960s, he echoed Mao's Yan'an Talks by encouraging the art team to learn from each other and "break old frames and foreign frames" to stage revolution in sculpture.¹⁹⁰

Ma Li's interest in sculpture stemmed from his view on vernacular and folk art, such as Buddhist temple sculpture, as potential inspiration to create a new visual culture that would connect with the layman viewer. Observing the ubiquity of Buddhist sculpture in the city, countryside, mountains, and road sides "poisoning the working people's thinking," he proposed "Why can't we use these forms to denounce the evil crimes of the landlord class?"¹⁹¹ In 1960 with the major reinstallation of the galleries at the Dayi Exhibition Hall in response to visitor evaluation over its first year of operation, Ma Li already began encouraging the employment of sculpture in the making of exhibits. Likewise, during their preparation work the art team of *Rent Collection Courtyard* visited several temple sites to study various sculptural approaches to relevant issues, such as at the 9th century Dazu cave grottoes and its narrative strategy and composition depicting Buddhist parables of daily life as simultaneous narratives in sculptural tableaux (figure 131). They also studied sculptural strategies to diversify facial expressions in a large group, such as in the considerable set of larger than life-size figurative sculptures of five hundred luohan in the Tang period Baoguang Temple situated in the northern district of Xindu in Chengdu (figure 132).

¹⁹⁰ Wang Zhi'an, *Songs that Reached the Heavens: the Legendary Rent Collection Courtyard Clay Sculptures* (*Hongtian juechang: Shouzuyuan nisu qiguan*), (Chengdu: Tiandi chubanshe, 2001), 192-196.

¹⁹¹ "Women weishenme bu keyi yunyong zhe yi xingshi lai kongsu dizhu jieji de zui'e!" From "Dayi Landlord Manor Exhibition Hall Uses Color Sculpture."

Ma Li, though, not only encouraged the art team to study preexisting sculptural techniques to reach a new audience, but also exhorted the team to combine their talents and variety of expertise. For example, the notable folk sculptor Jiang Quanguai who was hired onto the museum's staff in 1964 for the purpose of making *Rent Collection Courtyard* and other sculptures for exhibition was responsible for shaping most of the figures' clothing so that they are reminiscent of the fluid, scroll-like treatment of drapery in late Buddhist sculpture, as in the several flourishing curves of fabric around the sleeves, front, and sash of the disheveled tunic on the mother weighed down with a baby on her back (figure 133). However, since his sculpted faces also appeared stylized like bodhisattvas, or Buddhist deities, Zhao Shutong, one of the art school's sculpture professors and leader of the team who many times finished the figures so they all would appear visually unified, would revise the faces with a greater attention to anatomy so that it was "a modern peasant face."¹⁹² Jiang also taught the rest of the art team the folk sculpture techniques used to make lasting clay sculptures like the ones built for temples. Such vernacular techniques usually involve a wooden armature and cheap, readily available basic materials for shaping and modeling, such as hemp, wheat stalks, rice husks, wire, clay and sandy soil. In the case of *Rent Collection Courtyard* a framework made of a wooden armature and wire was fixed into the ground where the figure would stand (figure 134). The framework was then swathed in straw ropes, covered with layers of straw mixed with mud to shape the general form, and then finished with a finer mixture of clay, sand, and cotton for details when the structure was almost dried. The straw, sand, and cotton elements ensured the final clay construction's durability because they prevented the clay from cracking once it completely dried.¹⁹³ Though the academically trained sculptors on the team were uncomfortable using black round glass for

¹⁹² Wang, *Songs that Reached*, 240-246.

¹⁹³ "Folk Clay Sculpture," *Chinese Literature* (March 1966): 134-135.

the eyes as was common in folk sculpture because they feared it would look “fake” (*jia*), they capitulated when farmers who visited responded favorably to the glass eye insertions saying they gave the figures “character” (*shenqi*) (figure 135).¹⁹⁴ The composite of various sculptural techniques and methods collectively possessed by the art team combined with Ma Li’s concentration on optimizing religious sculptures’ connection with the lay viewer to contribute to the collective making of a new visual culture.

Additionally, the large scale series of sculptural tableaux to be completed in four months in time for National Day also required the unprecedented employment of an opera troupe to aid the sculptors’ work. Once the team had collectively selected which stories to portray in *Rent Collection Courtyard*, the composition for each story was decided on by each team member preparing a proposal followed by a group discussion where they would select the best ones to develop.¹⁹⁵ However, given the time constraints to plan and create 114 life-sized figures, the art team did not have enough time to make preparatory sculptural models, so Ma Li organized the local opera troupe to perform the tableaux vivants under the direction of the art team and in the courtyard where the sculptures would be situated. The photographs of these tableaux populated by the actors in dramatic poses and gestures were used to create four drafts and then the final narrative and storyboard in the two-dimensional from which the art team had to transfer directly into full-size sculpture (figure 136).¹⁹⁶ The unprecedented collaboration of folk and academically trained sculptors as well as experts in other creative fields, such as theater and photography, created a new kind of visual culture that was lauded for combining traditional

¹⁹⁴ “Speech by Comrade Wang Guanyi,” in “*Rent Collection Courtyard* Clay Sculpture Group Work Experience Study Symposium (*Shouzu yuan nisu qunxiang guangmo zuotan hui shang de fayan*),” published by China Artists Association for internal study (1966), in “Shouzu yuan,” Sichuan Cultural Bureau, PRC Sichuan dossier no. 124, Sichuan Provincial Archives.

¹⁹⁵ “Speech by Comrade Zhao Shutong.”

¹⁹⁶ Wang, *Songs that Reached*, 165-167, 222-230.

Chinese sculpture techniques, modern sculpture techniques of neoclassicism from the French academic school of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and political considerations of the people's viewpoint and notions of class struggle emphasized in Soviet socialist realism to realize a new, distinctively Chinese modern socialist art.

Ma Li also underscored from Mao's Yan'an Talks that the artists should learn from the masses. Mao in addressing the issue of power dynamics between the artists and the masses asserted:

Experts should be respected; they are valuable to our cause. But we should also remind them that no revolutionary artist or writer can produce any work of significance unless he has contact with the masses, gives expression to their thoughts and feelings, and becomes their loyal spokesman. Only by speaking for the masses can he educate them and only by becoming their pupil can he become their teacher. If he regards himself as the master of the masses or as an aristocrat who lords it over the "low people," then no matter how great his talent, he will not be needed by the people and his work will have no future.¹⁹⁷

Professional artists in the People's Republic would usually just focus on observing and sketching potential subjects they found in the countryside to then develop later back at their studio. The art team that produced *Rent Collection Courtyard*, following the museum's practice of using sculpture to depict selected oral narratives they collected, instead employed the narrative content and information gathered from "the people" in the countryside as the basis for the series of multiple simultaneous narratives. In the three-combinations approach epitomized by *Rent Collection Courtyard* "the people" hence served more as the source for content information to fit the sculpture group's state-mandated theme of class struggle rather than as equal collaborators with the artists and the leader. In anthropological fashion, the sculptors in their preparatory work

¹⁹⁷ Mao Zedong, "Talks at the Yanan Forum on Art and Literature," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Volume 3 (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), 80.

visited former tenant farmers arranged by the local party unit who would recount theirs and their family's history of victimhood under the landlord. Locals also described the landlord and his men to the sculptors, while others even stood as models as the art team was creating *Rent Collection Courtyard* (figure 137). The artists also emphasized their "open-door production" (*kaimen chuangzuo*) approach where they left the doors to the courtyard open while they were working, so curious locals would often stop by to see their work in progress and offer them feedback.¹⁹⁸ Such personal interactions between the art team and the local community during the production of *Rent Collection Courtyard* were commended for realizing the three-combinations approach where authorship lied not solely with one artist, but also with the people as well as the supervising official. Claims to the intimate empathetic link between the artist and the intended rural viewing masses thus granted the work sociopolitical import and authenticity in representing the artist's successful triumph over his or her assumed a priori emotional distance from the masses.

Yet the narrative of the grassroots, popular origins of *Rent Collection Courtyard* and the artists' selfless serving of the people diminishes the complex issues surrounding the sculpture production's institutionalized context and the real difficulties specific to collaborative work. For example, the official presentation of the artists' listening and learning from the victimized local community in their collection of oral narratives ignores the artist's selection of stories. Such circumstances required the artists to edit out the diversity of oral narratives, some of which placed the landlord in a positive light in addition to those that were critical of the landlord, which they heard during the preparatory process.¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, the crucial participation of the local

¹⁹⁸ *Rent Collection Courtyard* collective sculpture team, "The Planning and Designing of the Clay Sculpture 'Rent Collection Courtyard' (《Shouzu yuan》 nisu chuangzuo de gousi sheji)," *Meishu* issue 5 (1965): 4.

¹⁹⁹ Wang Guanyi, interview with author, May 2, 2013; Li Qisheng, interview with author, May 23, 2013.

farmers, or “class victims” of the landlord, elides the key problem of the informant’s subjectivity in understanding oral histories. The relationship between the informants’ personal interest and the state’s interest in pursuing the state-mandated production of *Rent Collection Courtyard* as part of the Socialist Education Movement in the countryside was especially complicated. For instance, in the extreme case of Leng Yueying, who gained a degree of celebrity in claiming that Liu Wencai forced her to breast feed him because of his frail health as portrayed in the *Rent Collection Courtyard*, her story has since been recanted. According to her nephew, she composed her story with the help of Zhu Binkang, a female vice-director of the Organization Department of Dayi County, and gained preferential treatment such as obtaining a courtyard building on the landlord’s former estate.²⁰⁰ The assumption of the ingenuous, naïve people of the countryside who the artists needed to study and learn from thus overlooks the pragmatism and agency of the many individuals who represent “the people.”

The ideal of harmonious collaboration becomes further complicated when examining the role of professional sculptors from the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute. Even more uncommon at that time in China than *Rent Collection Courtyard*’s much publicized direct creation and exhibition of art in the countryside was the involvement of professional urban sculptors in its making.²⁰¹ Much like the art academies in Europe and Japan on which they were first modeled, art academies in modern China served not only as teaching environments, but also as the institutional homes for groups of practicing art professionals. Along with other leading artists employed by the China Artists Association in support of its art and propaganda activities, artists working at the national art academies, including the SFAI, were selected to complete large-scale

²⁰⁰ Luo Dawen, interview with author, January 17, 2013.

²⁰¹ The team from the SFAI sculpture department comprised of the two teachers Zhao Shutong and Wang Guanyi, and graduating students Li Shaoduan, Long Xuli, Zhang Shaoxi, and Fan Degao. Sculpture department graduating student Liao Dehu also participated but because of illness had to leave midway.

commissions predominately in urban settings.²⁰² Accordingly, the SFAI usually received commissions, or assignments, from the Ministry of Culture in Beijing, provinces, or cities. With the rising prestige of the school's sculpture department especially after the 1964 *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition* held in the China National Art Gallery in Beijing, the SFAI sculpture department was receiving increasingly more invitations for commissions in 1965.²⁰³

Thus, as can be expected, when the reputed professional sculptors at the SFAI first received the invitation letter from the rural museum in Dayi in early 1965 to participate in the making *Rent Collection Courtyard* as part of the Socialist Education Movement and the Recalling Bitterness Pondering Happiness (*Yikusitian*) campaign occurring in the countryside, some people in the school objected to participating in the project.²⁰⁴ Arguments stood that the project would simply be making an illustration so that "it is not worth it" (*meiyou gaotou*), while others remarked that since it was to be made in the base material of clay it was not making sculpture but "making models" (*gao moxing*) so had no artistic value. Others complained that it would be made in the countryside so that "no matter how good it is nobody would know of it" (*gao zai hao ye meiyou ren zhidao*).²⁰⁵ The prospect of going to the countryside to support class struggle also posed a hindrance to the career advancement of the young sculpture professors. One of them, Wang Guanyi, already had had two works shown in the prestigious national art

²⁰² American sculptor John T. Young observed that the advantage of this system is that it "creates a highly qualified, competent, and tightly-knit group of like-minded artists who can easily collaborate in an effective way," though the system risks the "danger of inbreeding and exclusivity." See John T. Young, *Contemporary Public Art in China: A Photographic Tour* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1998), 123.

²⁰³ Long Dehui, "My Experience as School Representative Dispatched from SFAI to Dayi (Guanyu wo shou xueyuan paiqian qu Dayi lianxi gongzuo de jingguo)," letter correspondence to Feng Bin, September 11, 2000.

²⁰⁴ In July 1957, in order to counter the rural population's resistance to rapid collectivization, Mao Zedong proposed a socialist education campaign (*shehui zhuyi jiaoyu yundong*) and it was formally initiated in August 1957 under a formal directive calling for a "large-scale socialist education campaign targeting the rural population." See Joshua Vogel, *Canton under Communism: Programs and Politics in a Provincial Capital, 1949-1968* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 205. The *yikusitian* movement was to teach farmers about class struggle and theirs or their elders' pre-liberation hardships and sufferings assumedly so that they can to enjoy the happiness of the present-day.

²⁰⁵ "First Revolutionize Thinking, then Revolutionize Sculpture (Xian ge sixiang de ming, zai ge diaosu de ming)," *People's Daily*, July 20, 1966, 2.

exhibition in Beijing, but he had to turn down the invitation to participate in the next national art exhibition in order to accept the assignment of *Rent Collection Courtyard*.²⁰⁶ Additionally, disagreements between the folk sculptor Jiang Quanguai and the sculptors from the academy also contributed to rising tensions within the team from the outset. During one group meeting, for example, one of the school's sculptors told Jiang, "I have not yet found anything worth learning from you."²⁰⁷ To what extent and in what manner each of the artists on the team produced *Rent Collection Courtyard* of their own volition and belief in purely "serving the people" is thus questionable.

The difficulty of gauging the artists' intentions is compounded by the hardening of the relationship between ideology and life starting in the late 1950s when personal emotions were deemed not only inferior but suspect for corrupting one's class love for the party and the people. Traditional literati art, which privileged personal emotions, was therefore frequently denigrated and regarded with suspicion during this time. Often one's actions and motives were judged by how one performed sincerity. Consequently, one's sincere love of the party and the people increasingly became a prerequisite to the successful meeting of an obligation or completion of a task done in the name of the people. Ironically, serving the people also came to function as a protection against being accused. Studying Mao's writings became, for example, a strategy for endowing credible sincerity to a task or activity. For instance, during the making of *Rent Collection Courtyard* when the team might appear complacent they would study the 1949 document "Report from the Chinese Communist Party Seventh Central Committee Second

²⁰⁶ Christof Büttner, "The Transformations of a Work of Art: Rent Collection Courtyard, 1965-2009," in *Art for the Millions: 100 Sculptures from the Mao Era*, eds. Esther Schlicht and Max Hollein (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 2010), 26. Wang Guanyi, interview with the author, November 21, 2013.

²⁰⁷ "Speech by Comrade Zhao Shutong."

General Congress.”²⁰⁸ To avoid seeming prideful when they were satisfied with their work, the team diligently studied Mao’s 1944 essay “Lay down burdens and start the struggle”²⁰⁹ and *Wang Jie’s Diary* (*Wang Jie riji*), a book written in 1965 about a selfless cadre.²¹⁰

The artists themselves were further reminded near the completion of *Rent Collection Courtyard* of the importance of their sincerity and earnestness in the evaluation of the work. During a private press meeting in Dayi in September 1965 to discuss how to nationally promote *Rent Collection Courtyard*, the convener Hua Junwu, who worked at the time as the arts editor of the *People’s Daily*, suggested to the sculptors that they also contribute writings to the newspapers about the artmaking process and experience. Yet he advised them “not to treat it as a work assignment.”²¹¹ Wang Zhaowen, who was also present as editor of *Meishu* (*Art*), assured the sculptors that when they write about the creation of *Rent Collection Courtyard* not to fear that the work journal they kept is a “record of ‘quarrels’” (*‘chaojia’ de jilu*) or their differences during their collective work, but advised them just to edit and summarize the main points. The conscious management of one’s attitude towards work, artmaking in this case, which may be done through reading politically approved texts or through stating the artist’s intention as free from external motivations, reveals how the notion of “serving the people” operated not only as the conceptual organizing principle for artmaking in a Communist China, but also as an artist’s strongest credible alibi when his or her sincerity may be put into question.

In the published articles and official reports, the art team’s collective artmaking and any instances of conflicts and disagreements were politically contextualized. Such politicized

²⁰⁸ “Zai Zhongguo gongchangdang qijie zhongyang weiyuan di er ci quanti huiyi shang de baogao.”

²⁰⁹ “Fangxia baofu, kaidong jiqi.”

²¹⁰ “Grasping Thought, Grasping Method: *Rent Collection Courtyard* Creators Discuss Problems of Collective Artmaking (Zhua sixiang, zhua fangfa: ‘Shouzu yuan’ zuozhe tan jiti chuanguo zhong de ji ge wenti),” *Meishu*, June 6, 1965: 12.

²¹¹ “buyao dancheng gongzuo renwu.” From “Sichuan Dayi Landlord Manor Exhibition Hall’s Color Sculpture.”

treatments of conflict can be found, for instance, in the art team's formal account describing the making of the sculpture group. Published in the January 1966 issue of *Art (Meishu)* titled "The Planning and Designing of 'Rent Collection Courtyard,'" emphasis was placed on how the team worked together to popularize sculpture in the countryside. The article declared that "strong political content is contingent on high artistic quality. Without high artistic quality political content will become weak."²¹² To overcome the obstacle of the conflicts that arose from their diverse professional backgrounds and skill levels, the art team wrote that they read Mao's writings and studied Maoist thinking to realize that "we must endeavor for the party, not ourselves; we must have collective thinking, not a person's distracting thoughts; we must have a unified style, not a person's uniqueness."²¹³ By portraying the study of Mao's writings as the antidote for their divisiveness in collective work, conflict in collective work is cast as a problem that is non-existent in true socialist art. Thus, the political rhetoric that came to immerse *Rent Collection Courtyard* not only omits or negates the complex issues that may counter the official line, but also functions to create an ideal, discursive idea of a socialist art that "serves the people," such as here with the deliberately harmonious depiction of collective work. The political rhetoric also overshadows the significance of the artistic innovations in *Rent Collection Courtyard*, such as the inconceivable idea of building a whole suite of life-size sculptures to narrate a story and the amalgamation of Chinese Buddhist and French academic sculptural

²¹² "Zhengzhixing yu qiang de neirong, ying yaoqiu yishuxing yu gao. Meiyou jiaogao de yishuxing, zhengzhi neirong jiang sui er bei xueruo." From *Rent Collection Courtyard* collective sculpture team, "The Planning and Designing," 1.

²¹³ "Yao dang de shiye, buyao geren shiye; yao jiti guannian, buyao geren zanian; yao you tongyi de fengge, bu yao geren tuchu." From *Rent Collection Courtyard* collective sculpture team, "The Planning and Designing," 1. This article was later revised and republished in the *People's Daily* underscoring instead the importance of having correct political thinking before artmaking. See *Rent Collection Courtyard* collective sculpture team, "First Revolutionize Thinking," 2.

techniques to make a new visual culture, that were made possible by the unlikely meeting of various creative minds and talents through the framework of collective creation.

The People As Judge

When *Rent Collection Courtyard* finally opened on the occasion of National Day on October 1, 1965, one elderly farmer visiting the show upon seeing the first tableau raised her walking stick in preparation to hit the figure of the landlord's henchmen. Rather than condemn the old woman for attempting to vandalize the artwork, though, the sculptors and media praised her act.²¹⁴ Her impulsive reaction was interpreted as her having instantly understood the piece and was lauded as confirming the veracity of the scene of peasants suffering under the hand of the landlord and his men and the "class" burden of rent payment. In Wang Guanyi's explanation of the event in his talk about the making of *Rent Collection Courtyard* to a gathering of artists in Beijing in late 1965, after restraining the old woman the artists invited her and her five other elderly companions, who were also tenant farmers of Liu Wencai, to explain *Rent Collection Courtyard* during which many other visitors listening to them spontaneously cried and recalled their own stories of suffering (figure 138).²¹⁵ Several similar vivid accounts of emotional engagement, from uncontrollable weeping with the peasant figures to malicious spitting at the villainous characters, were read as verifying the realism of the sculptural group and the truth of its portrayed content (figure 139).

²¹⁴ Liu Kaiqu, "Sculpture Art's Revolution (Diaosu yishu de geming)," in *The Collected Art Writings of Liu Kaiqu (Liu Kaiqu meishu lunwen ji)* (Jinan: Shandong meishu chubanshe, 1984), 112. Originally published in *Guangming ribao*, November 27, 1965; "Speech by Comrade Zhao Shutong;" "Speech by Comrade Wang Guanyi."

²¹⁵ "Speech by Comrade Wang Guanyi."

Transcending reality to reveal a universal truth, or in the terminology of the time “revolutionary realism plus revolutionary romanticism,” was a commonly accepted aim of the arts in early Communist China. Zhao Shutong and Wang Guanyi, the two professors from the SFAI’s sculpture department who became the lead sculptors of the team who created *Rent Collection Courtyard*, remarked that they endeavored to make art that “surpassed life”²¹⁶ (*gaoyu shenghuo*) in reference to Mao Zedong’s assertion from his talks at the Yan’an Forum that “life as reflected in works of literature and art can and ought to be on a higher plane, more intense, more concentrated, more typical, nearer the ideal, and therefore more universal than actual life.”²¹⁷ In accepting the Soviet Union as the model for art and culture in the 1950s, *gaoyu shenghuo* became integrated into socialist realism until 1958 during the Sino-Soviet split when Mao called for artists instead to strive for “revolutionary realism plus romanticism” in their art. The national acclaim of *Rent Collection Courtyard* was in large part due to its convincing joining of realism and romanticism via the art team’s commitment to realism coupled with its extraordinary visual scale. The sculpture’s blurring between documentary reality and dramatic artifice has come to define its artistic and historical legacy that continues to this day to fascinate and stimulate new interpretations.

Realism in *Rent Collection Courtyard* was measured not only by its visual strategy, but also by its accuracy to a lived reality. The 114-figure series of sculptures was composed around seven main “emotional joints” (*qingjie*) or main plot points in each tableau depicting a dramatic confrontation between the landlord’s villainous henchmen and the peasants (figure 140). Much as a narrative of a play or opera unfolds over time, the artists explained the progression of

²¹⁶ Wang Guanyi, interview with author, April 13, 2013; Zhao Shutong, interview with author, May 28, 2013.

²¹⁷ Mao Zedong, “Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art,” trans. Julia F. Andrews, in *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893-1945*, ed. Kirk A. Denton (Stanford: Stanford University, 1995), 470.

emotions they wanted to communicate to the viewers as they traveled through the sculpted sequence as “tears, hatred, and then strength” (*ku, hen, jing*).²¹⁸ The seven main points are based on stories the art team else heard from former tenant farmers of Liu Wencai or read from previously written reports and oral histories collected by the museum staff, such as the henchman watching the peasants enter the courtyard and a henchman raising his leg to kick a woman on the ground as her husband is taken away (figure 141). The artists’ emphasis on how keenly they listened and collaborated with the locals reflects how realism resided not just in the artwork alone, but also in its documentation of real life and the artists’ complete identification with the attitude and intentions of the people they were to represent while in denial of their own. The art team’s endeavor for realism as a semblance to lived reality also involved regular trips to the market and to the grain depot to make numerous onsite studies of local people through drawings and photography to help them vary and enliven in clay the many figures in *Rent Collection Courtyard* (figure 142).

Nevertheless, *Rent Collection Courtyard*’s final staged appearance of idealized bodies has often been compared with *yangbanxi*, or the model revolutionary operas that were also promoted during the Cultural Revolution.²¹⁹ This comparison, however, is only partially warranted. Whereas *yangbanxi* is dominated by conventions of Chinese traditional opera such as standardized gestures like striking a pose (*liangxiang*), highly schematized character types, and exaggerated facial expressions to convey to the viewer that what they are viewing is deliberately made, these opera conventions are employed primarily in the six main plot scenes which comprise only half the entire 114-figure installation. The vocabulary of tragic expressions and

²¹⁸ “Speech by Comrade Zhao Shutong.”

²¹⁹ See Ellen Johnston Laing, *The Winking Owl: Art in the People's Republic of China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 62; and Audrey Topping, “‘The Rent Collection Courtyard’: Art for Another Public,” *Art in America* 62 (May 1974): 73.

evocative gestures of the remaining figures stands in stark contrast with the contrived, stylized heroism and optimism or explicit political posturing that characterizes the *yangbanxi* as well as much of the artistic and cultural production in Communist China since the late 1950s. This cast of extras, or “middle characters” (*zhongjian renwu*) as are called the characters representing ordinary people in theater, fills the transitional spaces and corners and displays suggestive gestures and poses in mundane experiences, such as sitting, watching, and waiting.

The “middle characters” also garnered more critical attention than the seven dramatic main narrative scenes (figure 143). For example, Wang Zhaowen especially marveled at the expressive nature of various instances of hands in *Rent Collection Courtyard*, such as the girl’s hands gripping the basket pole in the corner between tableaux one and two, the mother and daughter pulling together a basket of grain in the corner between tableaux two and three, and the mother gripping the prison bars in the corner between tableaux three and four (figure 144).²²⁰ Wang Zhaowen’s praise reflects how the art team attempted to make the figures sentient by conveying their subjectivity through gestures. As Wang Guanyi described in his talk to other artists in Beijing, in the team’s group discussions about the difference in making evocative forms in the three-dimensional rather than the two-dimensional, they would often place more attention on the figures’ hands over the head and facial expressions to convey their real-life character, such as the old man lying on the ground with his head facing down so that his face is not visible. Wang relates that the artists endeavored to connote through the old man’s hands rather than his visage his life as an old laborer and his hatred for the landlord.²²¹

²²⁰ Li Yan, ““Discussing Wang Zhaowen’s Art Criticism in the 1950s and 1960s—the Case of *Rent Collection Courtyard* (Lun Wang Zhaowen wu liu shi nian dai de meishu pipin—shi yi daxing nisu 《Shouzu yuan》 weilie),” *Guancha (Art Observation)* 3 (2004): 86.

²²¹ “Speech by Comrade Wang Guanyi.”

The sculptors' focus on gestures rather than bodily poses and movement to enliven the clay figures in space reveals not so much a politicization of the inherent body, such as the sought after 'hands of a laborer' in the case of the old man on the ground, but more so their desire "to make the viewers feel the same as the sculptures."²²² Vilém Flusser posits, unlike functional movements of the body such as the arms of a swimmer in water, the gesture is an "expression of a subjectivity"²²³ and its significance and effect on the viewer ranging between "truth (authenticity) and kitsch"²²⁴ cannot be satisfactorily explained. Whereas the melodramatic gestures of the main plot scenes may be deemed "kitsch" in their conspicuously causal depictions of class struggle, such as the young boy's raised left arm in anticipation of the blow of the henchman's raised whip or the mother's right hand reaching out to her baby as she is being dragged away towards the open backdoor of the courtyard (figure 145), the gestures of the middle characters appear "true" or convincingly self-aware and natural in the ambiguity of their reason and meaning. The interpretive latitude of gestures and physical relationships among the cast of middle characters not only serves to animate the clay bodies, but also depicts them as emotionally sentient beings.

The art team's conscious relationship to factual reality and restraint from exaggeration and disbelief also determined what they chose to include and exclude. For example, during planning they considered portraying Liu Wencai's ostentatious fifth wife, who was an opera singer, as a background character. Yet in the end they decided against her inclusion, concluding that she would likely never have come to the filthy rent collection courtyard and would only serve to distract viewers from the overall theme of class struggle. However, after much debate

²²² "Speech by Comrade Zhao Shutong."

²²³ Vilém Flusser, *Gestures*, trans. Nancy Ann Roth (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 162.

²²⁴ Flusser, *Gestures*, 7.

the team finally decided to include the figure of Liu Wencai, the only figure in *Rent Collection Courtyard* based on an actual person, since it was possible that he visited the rent collection courtyard and to primarily indicate in the work his prominent role as the owner of the courtyard. In the final revolt tableau, though, since Liu Wencai died a year before the Communist Revolution reached Sichuan they chose instead to portray the young farmers walking out of the courtyard to choose their next course of action as an invitation to the visitor to also be aware of the world today outside the courtyard as they exit the courtyard too.²²⁵ Hence, the art team's commitment to the plausibility of what could have actually happened in the real courtyard presents the sculptural installation as not a consciously made production but a consciously made recreation, thus intensifying the documentary claim of the sculpture.

The likewise emotional moderation of *Rent Collection Courtyard* developed in a process of trial and error and discussion within the art team. For example the figure of the imprisoned mother unable to pay rent changed several times, including one instance where the mother is made to point accusingly towards the figure of the landlord, before it was decided that this rendering was too exaggerated and “fake” (*jia*) and was altered finally to depict her holding the prison bars in desperation.²²⁶ However, such realist considerations became the subject of political scrutiny during the late 1960s at the height of the radical Cultural Revolution when *Rent Collection Courtyard* was accused of “cheating” the masses because it was deemed not revolutionary enough. Subsequently, reproductions of *Rent Collection Courtyard* were revised to be more visually and emotionally deliberate in conveying the ideological content of class struggle, such as raising the head of the old man lying on the ground as well as changing his expression to anger and lifting his finger to point at the figure of the landlord (figure 146). In

²²⁵ Wang Guanyi, interview with author, October 18, 2013.

²²⁶ “Speech by Comrade Wang Guanyi.”

addition, scenes considered more revolutionary and heroicizing of the peasants and the Communist Party were appended to the last tableau so that as many as twenty additional figures were added to the original one hundred and fourteen. Print material publicizing photographic images of the original Dayi sculpture group was also edited, such as the erasure of the mother attempting to restrain her son from joining the fray in the final tableau of revolt in the 1968 Foreign Languages Press picture book, *Rent Collection Courtyard: Sculptures of Oppression and Revolt* (figure 147). One foreign visitor to the exhibition of the *Rent Collection Courtyard* recreation at the Forbidden City in Beijing, which included the peasants holding at gunpoint the landlord and his thugs along with a glowing portrait of Mao Zedong lit by flashing neon lights, commented that whereas in the original installation the sculptures elicited sympathy and empathy, in its revised version the sculptures embodied fury.²²⁷

Despite the artists' adherence to realism over excess in the making of *Rent Collection Courtyard*, the final grand scale and visually random presentation of 114 life-size figures arrayed around the perimeter of the courtyard space immediately disrupts the realism of the sculptural illusion in a bid for a higher plane of meaning. The original plans for *Rent Collection Courtyard* divided the courtyard periphery into separate enclosed rooms in which one family's story of rent collection would unfold as a series of organized narrative scenes. Later, though, it was decided that the message of class struggle would be more powerfully presented as a play portraying not just one but many families' struggles together simultaneously. According to Zhao Shutong, by showing countless families in the same time and place the art team sought to collapse depicted and real time and place in the psychological space of the viewer.²²⁸ The artists' diagram of the spatial layout of the courtyard labeled with the progression of emotions *Rent Collection*

²²⁷ Laing, *The Winking Owl*, 62.

²²⁸ Zhao Shutong, interview with author, May 28, 2013.

Courtyard was planned to elicit, from low to climax and then low again, shows how the sculptural installation was conceived not just laterally as a series of sculptural tableaux, but as a tableau of the whole courtyard space that anticipates the viewer (figure 148). The positioning of the spectator at a comparable height and at ground level with the clay figures, and originally without any barrier to encourage the viewers to walk amongst the sculptures, exposes him or her as not just an invisible observer. The intentional overlapping of the spatial orders of the viewers' real space and the illusionary space of the sculptures transforms the courtyard into a stage on which the visitor becomes cast into the role of the judge of the sculptural representation's reality and transcendent truth, such as the elderly woman's melodramatic affirmation with her walking stick.

Today in post-Maoist China *Rent Collection Courtyard's* blurring of realism and the romantic element in socialist art in support of the politics of class struggle has led to debates over its anachronism and relevance as a permanent exhibit still in the courtyard of the former landlord's manor that is now converted into a history and antiquities museum. *Rent Collection Courtyard* as a monument to such absolutes as reality and its universal truth has also attracted the attention of several contemporary artists, most notably Cai Guo-Qiang who partially reproduced the iconic sculptural group at the Venice Biennale in 1999. Suggesting that such monuments may better serve as ephemeral constructs, Cai left his clay recreation to dry and crumble in the heat of the Venice sun (figure 149).²²⁹

²²⁹ Many collectors and museums, such as the Guggenheim and Annie Wong Foundation, approached Cai to acquire his *Venice Rent Collection Courtyard*, but he planned for it to, as he wrote to Harald Szeemann, "disintegrate and vanish with time." Cai though entertained the idea of allowing the broken dried and cracked clay remnants of the artwork be acquired when he was approached by the Museo Civico della Ceramica in Italy. In the end, though, the museum's proposal to acquire the clay pieces for its permanent collection was not realized. See Cai Guo-Qiang, e-mail correspondence with Harald Szeemann, November 20, 1919 [sic] (1999), in "Cai Story," 2000-2002, 2011.M.30, box 662, folder 3, Harald Szeemann Archives, Getty Research Library; and Dario Vertimiglia, letter

The People as Mass Audience

During the Maoist period, the visual affect of a sculpture piece on its viewer not only measured the work's accuracy and realism, but also its mass character (*qunzhonghua*). Presuming that the masses would prefer works that reflect their lived reality because they can better recognize and appreciate them, creating art that serve "the people" denoted also making art that is well-received by the masses through its recognizable content, legibility, as well as visual artistry. *Rent Collection Courtyard* was praised in this regard for its advancement of the value of mass character in art. In one of the early professional articles about the sculpture group summarizing discussions about it in the art world, Wang Zhaowen concluded that *Rent Collection Courtyard* is a "revolutionary, mass characteristic, and nationalistic creation."²³⁰ Farmers viewing the work were also often quoted as exclaiming, "This [*Rent Collection Courtyard*] is our story, our drama!"²³¹ to show their appreciation of the work.

The emphasis on the viewing masses as the final judge of an artwork's success can be traced to the formation of the Communist Party's stance on art and culture before the revolution. In the leftist art and cultural realm at Yan'an a palpable tension developed between the demand on the writers and artists to quickly produce and circulate visual propaganda that the rural farmers could quickly understand and the desire to also edify the people through creating art of superior visual artistry. Artists producing visual culture on the ground therefore had to negotiate the appropriate balance between popularization (*puji gongzuo*) and the advancement of artistic

correspondence with Cai Guo-Qiang, November 26, 1999, in "Cai Story," 2000-2002, 2011.M.30, box 662, folder 3, Harald Szeemann Archives, Getty Research Library.

²³⁰ "geminghua, qunzhonghua, minzuhua de chuanguo shijian." From Wang Zhaowen, "Sculpture's New Soldier (Diaosu xin bing)," *People's Daily (Renmin ribao)*, January 4, 1966, 6.

²³¹ "Zhe cai shi women de shu, women de xi!" From "Speech by Comrade Wang Guanyi."

standards (*tigao gongzuo*). Subsequently, in 1938 the Communist Party established the Lu Xun College of Literature and Arts (*Luxun wenyi xueyuan*, or colloquially abbreviated as “Luyi”) at Yan’an to train the influx of eager young artists arriving at the Communist base to elevate the artistic standards in producing socially conscious art.²³² By 1947, though, the aspect of mass character became officially incorporated into the Communist rubric for judging artworks. In the instructions sent by the Central Work Committee (*Zhongyang gongwei*) to all party bureaus and Lu Dingyi (1906-1996), the head of the Central Propaganda Department from 1944 to 1952 and 1954 to 1966, concerning an art and literature contest organized by the Propaganda Department to showcase the best artworks produced in the Communist Party administered areas, it read to select works for recommendation based on the “masses’ reaction (*qunzhong de fangying*).” It described that “a good work must reflect the struggles of the masses, and influence the masses’ struggle.”²³³ A combination of the work’s political and artistic character should guide evaluation of the artwork, the notice continues, but the political should be prioritized.

The Maoist period concept of mass character therefore reflects the legacy of the party’s Yan’an period on popular art and culture, the masses, and political propaganda. However, mass character since the 1950s with the establishment of the Communist state no longer involved a desire to elevate the masses so much as institutionally close the subjective disparity between the two groups of the uneducated masses and the artists and intellectuals through empathy. For instance, after the Communist Revolution artists’ and intellectuals’ visits to the countryside and

²³² Luyi offered classes in drama, music, literature and visual art. After June 1944 the visual art department course offerings included drawing, sketching, Chinese folk art, world painting and a practicum in creative work. See David Holm, “Art and Ideology in the Yanan Period, 1937-1945” (Ph.D diss., University of Oxford, 1979): 83.

²³³ “Yi ge hao de zuoping bixu fangying qunzhong douzheng, you dui qunzhong douzheng you yiding yingxiang.” From Communist Party Central Committee, “Instructions from the Central Working Committee on Awarding Art and Literary Works (*Zhongyang gongwei guanyu pingjiang wenyi zuoping wenti de zhishi*),” in *Selected Writings of the Central Communist Party Propaganda Work, 1937-1949* (*Zhongyang gongchangdang xuanchuan gongzuo wenxian xuanbian 1937-1949*), eds. Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu bangong ting and zhongyang dang’anguan bian yan bu, Volume 2 (Beijing: Xuexi chubanshe, 1996), 666.

interactions with the masses were mandated in the national education curriculum. Instead of going purposefully to educate the masses or engage with rural popular culture as did early 20th century intellectuals, however, there developed a new assumption that intellectuals and artists are inherently flawed by a sense of superiority that would be remedied through their direct contact with the uneducated masses. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, like other artists sculptors after 1949 regularly went to the countryside to study and gather sketches and drawings of rural life as well as carry out the required “three togethers” of living, eating, and laboring with the farmers in the countryside. Then they would return to their studios in the city to plan and execute the artwork, which would then be exhibited in the city or enlarged into sculpture for urban public spaces. Therefore, the countryside represented for the young urban artists an unfamiliar land from which to draw artistic inspiration as well as find potential subject matter; the crucial historic and nostalgic site of the peasant-led Communist revolution; and a significant aspect of their professional development and career.

Thus, the art team for *Rent Collection Courtyard* was not as preoccupied with visualizing a specific scene from reality as they were with making the clay figures in the courtyard’s simulated reality as sentient as possible in order to affect the feelings of the viewer. For instance, Wang Guanyi described that near the completion of *Rent Collection Courtyard* the Dayi county People’s Liberation Army unit came to visit and use *Rent Collection Courtyard* as a “class-education classroom” for the new recruits. Many of the recruits started crying upon seeing *Rent Collection Courtyard* to the point where the army officer guiding the group through the sculptural tableaux could not explain further because of the constant interruption of emotional outbursts. Wang surmises that since many of the soldiers were from peasant class backgrounds, they naturally identified with the sculpted scenes, which called forth “intense class emotions”

(*qianglie de jieji ganqing*).²³⁴ The art team's and media's serious regard of the recruits' impulsive and melodramatic reaction to *Rent Collection Courtyard* also implies the by then accepted notion that art is to be judged by the people—the emotional, unruly spectator rather than the usual urbane art audience. Furthermore, during the making of later recreations of *Rent Collection Courtyard* around the country in the 1960s, different segments of society uninitiated in art were organized into advisory groups. For example, many People's Liberation Army officers, Red Guard, and old workers reportedly discussed late into the night their views on how to modify the last "Revolt" tableau with the artists who were working on the Forbidden City version of *Rent Collection Courtyard*.²³⁵

Accounts of extraordinary viewer reactions to the point of emotional hysteria with *Rent Collection Courtyard* not only were earnestly recounted by the artists and media to show the powerful visual effect of the life-size sculptures, but also were used to suggest the desired absence of piety to art in the viewing of socialist modern art. The spontaneous viewer reactions of farmers and army recruits in rural Sichuan to *Rent Collection Courtyard* became an integral part to the sculpture group's legendary status as an "atomic bomb in the art world" as it transformed from a mere propaganda exhibit in a rural class-education exhibition hall in remote west China to a leading art exhibit in the nation's gallery of art in Beijing at the end of 1965. A year later it became also the only exhibit open in the Forbidden City to represent Chinese art and culture during the ten-year Cultural Revolution. The convincingly unrestrained emotional response of regular people unfamiliar with art toward the sculpture group augmented its mass

²³⁴ "Speech by Comrade Wang Guanyi."

²³⁵ "Clay Sculpture Group *Rent Collection Courtyard* Reproduction Exhibits in Beijing (《Shouzu yuan》 nisu qunxiang chongxin fuzhi hou zai Beijing zhanchu)," *People's Daily (Renmin ribao)*, December 3, 1966, 1.

character and hence facilitated the rapid ascent of *Rent Collection Courtyard* to the level of the people's fine art.

Despite the remarkable effectiveness of *Rent Collection Courtyard*, the organizers of the exhibitions in Sichuan or Beijing featuring the sculpture also endeavored not to leave to chance the spectators' spontaneous reactions. *Rent Collection Courtyard* was an exhibit embedded in the Dayi Landlord Class Education Exhibition Hall's series of exhibits visitors would view before reaching the rent collection courtyard in the back of the estate, such as a construction of the infamous water dungeon where Liu Wencai allegedly imprisoned delinquent rent payers. At the height of national red tourism to Dayi to see *Rent Collection Courtyard* during the early years of the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s, Leng Yueying, the farmer who popularized the myth of the water dungeon by giving testimonies of her experience being locked in there, was also a main attraction at the museum. Leng regularly presented her story to the hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of museum visitors they received daily from across the nation (figure 150).²³⁶ Likewise, the national debut show of *Rent Collection Courtyard* opened on December 24, 1965 in Beijing's China National Art Gallery with thirty-seven reproduced figures depicting only three parts—submitting rent, measuring rent, and revolt. Large-format photographs of the entire original *Rent Collection Courtyard* installation and sculptures in Sichuan also hung from the walls (figure 151).²³⁷ At the show that officially opened on December 2, 1966 in the Forbidden City, a full revised version of *Rent Collection Courtyard* was accompanied by lines and excerpts from Mao Zedong's writings that covered the hall's walls as well as large-format

²³⁶ Zhou Yongxuan, interview with author, May 28, 2013.

²³⁷ "Large-Scale Clay Sculpture *Rent Collection Courtyard* Exhibits in Beijing," 3.

photographs of the original *Rent Collection Courtyard* installation in Sichuan.²³⁸ Additionally, in the introduction area to the exhibition read the phrase “The Imperial Palace is the Largest Rent Collection Courtyard (*Gugong shi zuida de shouzu yuan*),” a moniker which became part of the identity of the former palace during the Cultural Revolution (figure 152).²³⁹

While the excessive didactic inscriptions politically contextualized the reading of the sculpture group, the numerous large-format photographs on the walls surrounding the gallery dictated how visitors were to view the sculpture by capturing the sculpture at a certain angle, scale, crop, and lighting for dramatic effect. As Li Lang, a writer and editor of *Meishu* in the 1960s, recounts when he went with members of various media and art publishing groups to photograph *Rent Collection Courtyard* in Sichuan in 1965, they realized that during the day in natural light the brown clay sculptures would appear dull. They then decided instead to photograph the sculpture group at night and to use large spotlights borrowed from the local opera troupe to create a dramatic contrast.²⁴⁰ The use of focused artificial lighting to dramatize the scenes and a high vantage point looking down at the figures, except in the last tableau of revolt, thereby heightens the famers’ miserable situation to elicit viewer sympathy (figure 153). Thus, the iconic black and white images of *Rent Collection Courtyard* that came to visually define the

²³⁸ “Large-Scale Clay Sculpture *Rent Collection Courtyard* Exhibits in Beijing,” 1. Since all other art and cultural institutions were closed in Beijing, the sculptors led by SFAI sculpture professor Long Dehui were given just about a month to recreate *Rent Collection Courtyard* for the Palace Museum in time for October 1, National Day, so that the Red Guards could visit the special exhibition after seeing Mao in Tiananmen Square. After briefly opening on National Day, the art team continued working to complete the exhibit for its official opening in December. Long Dehui, interview with author, January 25, 2013.

²³⁹ In the 1971 *Introduction to the Imperial Palace* booklet, the contents were divided into four parts that reflect the influence of *Rent Collection Courtyard*: 1) The Imperial Palace is of the Working People’s Wisdom, Blood and Sweat (*Gugong shi laodong renmin zhihui he xuehan de jiejing*); 2) The Imperial Palace is the Ming-Qing Feudal Political Center (*Gugong shi mingqing fengjian tongzhi de zhongxin*); 3) The Imperial Palace is the Largest Landlord Manor (*Gugong shi zui da de dizhu zhuangyuan*); 4) The Imperial Palace is Testimony to the People’s Burial of Feudal and Imperial History (*Gugong shi renmin maizang fengjian wangchao de lishi jianzheng*). See Feng Hejun, “Courtyard Within a Courtyard—Rent Collection Courtyard at the Imperial Palace (*Yuan zhong yuan—Shouzu yuan zai gugong*),” *Forbidden City (Zijin cheng)* 138 (June 2011): 107.

²⁴⁰ Li Lang, interview with author, November 13, 2013.

sculpture group in its national and international circulation presented the sculptures as figures in two-dimensional socialist realist art. The inclusion of the photographic images and didactics reveals that though the people's role in being the judge of the exhibitions in Sichuan and Beijing was highlighted, the viewing experience included the organizers' direct assertions of the political.

Along with its exhibition in the young nation's premiere art and culture venues, *Rent Collection Courtyard's* elevation to fine art status in new China was precipitated by its exclusive coverage in the arts world, such as by *Meishu (Art)* which devoted a whole issue to the sculpture group in January 1966, the China Artists Association's organization of sculptors from the art centers of Beijing, Tianjin, Shenyang, and Hangzhou to visit Dayi and study in situ the original *Rent Collection Courtyard*, the inclusion of the sculpture group in art textbooks such as a special section devoted to the sculpture group in a 1971 middle school art textbook published by the Sichuan People's Publishers (figure 154), and the sculpture group's transfer into literati art forms, such as the *Rent Collection Courtyard* handscroll. The spliced photographic panorama of the original sculpture group in Dayi was mounted as a handscroll on paper, published in 1966 by the People's Art Publishers, and sold as a collector's souvenir at the exhibition in the Forbidden City (figure 155). Conventionally a format designed for the intimate viewing of an ink painting that requires the viewer to study frame by frame the lengthy painting as he or she physically advances through the scroll, the handscroll of *Rent Collection Courtyard* via photography instead asserts sculpture as worthy of the longstanding prestigious status of ink painting. Inviting a more individually paced, individually scaled viewing experience different from the live group viewing experience of the life-sized sculptures in exhibitions, the handscroll serves as a document of the viewing event and also signifies that *Rent Collection Courtyard* has passed the judgment of "the people" to become an established masterpiece of contemporary art. Yet the red inscription on

the scroll's simple brown paper cover that reads "Never Forget Class Struggle" (*qianwan buyao wangji jieji douzheng*) and the scroll's accompanying pamphlet introducing the landlord in Sichuan and explaining tableau by tableau the narrative of the sculpture group serve as reminders of the intentional political packaging of the piece.

The sensationalized emotional affect of *Rent Collection Courtyard* and the overtly political curation of its viewing functioned to set the stage for visitors nationwide to mobilize around the sculptures and concomitantly the notion of class struggle. A 1966 documentary film titled *Rent Collection Courtyard*, for instance, and starring the sculpted figures of *Rent Collection Courtyard* ends with a crowd of vibrant youths occupying the stage of the Dayi courtyard. As the youths, implicitly the inheritors of the sculptural figure's class struggle, pump their fists and shout in unison slogans that also appear on screen exhorting never to forget class struggle, the sculptures are faintly visible in the background (figure 156). The film produced by the Beijing Television Station, which is now the China Central Television (CCTV), was shown nationally in celebration of National Day in 1966.²⁴¹ Likewise, visitors to the exhibition of a revised recreation of *Rent Collection Courtyard* in Shanghai in the late 1960s reportedly sang "The East is Red" and shouted slogans such as "Never forget class struggle! Remember blood-and-tears hatred." Back in the class exhibition hall in Dayi more than ten years after the sculpture piece was created and the radical political climate of the Cultural Revolution had run its course, the museum staff still had to wipe off layers of spittle that accumulated on the figure of the landlord in *Rent Collection Courtyard* every night before going home.²⁴²

This recurring evidence of the viewer's emotionally charged physical engagement with the sculptural figure of the landlord epitomizes the enduring nature of the courtyard's

²⁴¹ Clark, *The Chinese Cultural*, 206.

²⁴² Shanghai Municipal Archive, B244-3-143, 146 and 156.

performance space to enliven the spectators as well as the permanent cast of characters rendered in clay. *Rent Collection Courtyard* in hindsight can also serve to illuminate Mao's caustic critique of the arts in a 1965 circular to the arts world, where he admonished its leaders and practitioners for insufficient socialist reform in the arts. In the circular, Mao declared that cultural production was still dominated by "dead people" (*si ren*), or art that emphasized "feudal" and "capitalist" art of aesthetics over serving the people.²⁴³ Though Mao does not elaborate further on his meaning of "dead people" in the arts, *Rent Collection Courtyard's* ability to emotionally engage and enliven its viewers as much as make its clay figures sentient poses as a plausible rejoinder to his critique.

Popularizing the Popular

The sudden transformation of *Rent Collection Courtyard* from an exhibit in a parochial class education exhibition hall in Sichuan to the main exhibition in the country's premiere art museum in Beijing within just a few months was actually planned as such before its opening in Sichuan in October 1965 because it had earlier already caught the attention of national arts officials. Shortly after they arrived at the class education exhibition hall in the summer of 1965, the SFAI professors Zhao Shutong and Wang Guanyi met with the venue's leaders to discuss ways in which the sculptures could be exhibited or publicized in the city to reach a wider

²⁴³ Mao in his circular said his rebuke was addressing all arts and he listed drama, folk arts, music, fine arts, dance, film, poetry, and literature as some examples. Mao Zedong, "Comments on Literature and Arts (Guanyu wenxue yishu de pishi)," in *Selected Writings of the Central Communist Party Propaganda Work, 1957-1992* (*Zhongyang gongchangdang xuanchuan gongzuo wenxian xuanbian 1957-1992*), eds. Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu bangong ting and zhongyang dang'anguan bian yan bu, Volume 4 (Beijing: Xuexi chubanshe, 1996), 334.

audience and the attention of the art world.²⁴⁴ After favorably responding to a photograph of the completed first tableaux depicting rent submission, the provincial art and cultural leaders in Sichuan then sent the photograph on to art leaders in Beijing. The photograph as well as narrative attracted the interest of Hua Junwu and Wang Zhaowen. Along with an entourage of more than ten people, including filmmakers and representatives from the major national papers *People's Daily*, *Guangming Daily*, and *Meishu* in Beijing and major provincial media such as *Sichuan People's Daily*, *Sichuan Daily*, and Sichuan People's Publishing House, Hua Junwu and Wang Zhaowen visited the nearly completed *Rent Collection Courtyard* in September to decide how to promote it.²⁴⁵ Hua Junwu, in his leadership position as the art editor of the *People's Daily*, instructed the presses present to “vigorously publicize and popularize nationally” *Rent Collection Courtyard* once they returned to Beijing.²⁴⁶

The widespread promotion of *Rent Collection Courtyard* outside of the courtyard in Sichuan to the nation and soon after the world delves into the paradoxical relationship between sculpture and media culture. The permanent and unwieldy material quality of sculpture from the outset can thwart any effort to disseminate sculpture for the wider political consumption of “the people” across the nation. Permanency and portability refer to contrary physical relationships to space—while permanency implies immovability, portability implies the easy circulation of an object through space. The improbable propagation of *Rent Collection Courtyard* predominately through sculptural recreations and photographic images shows how with each resulting quotation

²⁴⁴ Zhang Fulun, interview with author, November 5, 2013; Zhang Shaoxi, interview with author, November 15, 2013.

²⁴⁵ “Sichuan Dayi Landlord Manor Exhibition Hall’s Color Sculpture.”

²⁴⁶ “Xiang quanguo dali xuanchuan tuiguang.” From “Sichuan Dayi Landlord Manor Exhibition Hall’s Color Sculpture.”

of the original, *Rent Collection Courtyard* in Dayi became paradoxically ever more famous as well as displaced.

Before the making of *Rent Collection Courtyard*, sculpture constructed of cheap materials such as clay was already commonly employed to mediate the viewing experience in class-education exhibitions halls which dotted the Chinese countryside since the early 1950s to support land reform and collectivization campaigns. For example, sculptures appear frequently in the extensive 194-page exhibition catalogue published in 1953 detailing and promoting the goals and success of land reform and collectivization in south central China (figure 157).²⁴⁷ In the exhibition catalogue, the crudely modeled sculptures are shown integrated into the exhibition as life-sized figures reenacting alleged horrific stories of peasants tortured at the mercy of the landlord class (figure 158). In 1958 a new wave of class-education exhibition halls were established throughout the country. In order to support and later to divert attention from the disastrous land reform and collectivization efforts of the Great Leap Forward, more exhibition halls were created to further advance the Communist Party's project to expose and eradicate class struggle. Between August and September 1958 the Ministry of Culture convened two conferences on antiques and museums, one in Zhengzhou and the other in Hefei. The resolution passed by the conferences called for the campaign of "establishing museums in every county" and "establishing an exhibition room in every village."²⁴⁸ In this context the former luxurious twelve-acre manor estate of Liu Wencai was thus converted by the Sichuan Cultural Bureau into a class-education exhibition hall that opened in 1959.

²⁴⁷ The south-central region of China denotes the provinces of Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hainan.

²⁴⁸ On October 1958, the Party Committee of Dayi County formally announced the formation of a preparatory committee to manage the construction of the museum, with delegates from the Propaganda Department of the Party's Dayi County Committee, the Rural Work Department, Industrial Bureau, and the Bureau of Culture, Education, and Health. See Xiaoshu, *The Big Landlord Liu Wencai (Dadizhu Liu Wencai)* (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 2011), 4.

According to records at the Dayi museum, the use of sculpture to reenact the crimes of Liu Wencai reportedly surpassed the persuasiveness of even the exhibits of actual historic objects. Functional objects such as whips, seals, and land deeds were displayed as criminal evidence, but visitors reportedly “did not think them deeply profound” (figure 159).²⁴⁹ In their audience evaluation, the Dayi museum staff noted that the didactic text and exhibits of objects allegedly used by the landlord were insufficient in captivating visitors. If any part of the exhibition did attract attention, it was usually out of admiration for the luxurious objects and magnificent estate rather than the intended effect of class hatred toward the landlord’s exploitation of their labors that presumably supported his extravagant lifestyle. For instance, the recently constructed baroque “dragon bed” displayed as the bed of Liu Wencai elicited visitors to remark that they would be willing to die if given the chance to sleep on his bed. One cultural officer from the nearby city of Chengdu suggested that such focus on the landlord’s wealth would cause the visitors to envy his lifestyle. Subsequently, the museum shifted the focus of its exhibits to horror and violence and the use of sculpture in creating artistic exhibits in 1960.²⁵⁰ Thus, five years before the making of *Rent Collection Courtyard*, the staff of the manor museum already began experimenting with utilizing sculpture in its exhibits as a means to appeal to visitors rather than simply displaying functional historic objects where audience experience was harder to predict and manage.

Over four years the museum art staff experimented with constructing sculpture using various materials such as clay, plaster, and stone, and sometimes with color, to depict the alleged crimes of the landlord. They also attempted varying the size to see which ones were more

²⁴⁹ “Dayi xian dizhu zhuangyuan chenlieguan yingyong caisu wei jieji jiaoyu fuwu.” From “Dayi Landlord Manor Exhibition Hall Uses Color Sculpture.”

²⁵⁰ Xiaoshu, *The Big Landlord Liu Wencai (Dadizhu Liu Wencai)* (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 2011), 11.

successful in catching the attention of visitors.²⁵¹ According to museum reports, the initial exhibitions of almost life-size, one meter tall figurative sculptures wearing real clothes and with hands and feet made out of plaster and dioramas of about one foot tall figures depicting the landlord's alleged crimes were favorably viewed by "the masses" (*qunzhong*).²⁵² The large scale figures were better received, though, than the one foot tall ones reportedly because the viewers said they could see the larger ones more clearly. The museum's art team continued their attempts at making life-size scale figures, at one point with wax feet and hands attached to bodies clothed with real clothes and stuffed with rice straw (figure 160). However, the ephemeral materials posed practical problems, such as the rats eating the rice straw and the wax melting in the hot summers of west China.²⁵³ Plans drawn after National Day in 1964 for a sustainable life-size permanent installation depicting over multiple tableaux the landlord's crimes during rent collection thus expanded on these previous sculptural experiments at the Dayi museum to direct viewer reaction.²⁵⁴

Unlike the display of actual objects to support and lend credibility to the narrative of the landlord's alleged crimes, the sculptures were used to create reenactments of the alleged crimes. In the Dayi exhibition hall, or rather "collection hall" (*chenlieguan*) as it was formerly identified as when it opened in 1959, sculpture reportedly could create a more profound impression on the visitors than the actual historic objects on view and their accompanying didactic text because of sculpture's artistic character that transcends its object and material identity as formed, dry clay. The intended message of its narrative could be also understood immediately even by illiterate visitors who could not read the didactic text explaining the political significance of an object and

²⁵¹ "Dayi Landlord Manor Exhibition Hall Uses Color Sculpture."

²⁵² "Dayi Landlord Manor Exhibition Hall Uses Color Sculpture."

²⁵³ "Dayi Landlord Manor Exhibition Hall Uses Color Sculpture."

²⁵⁴ From "Dayi Landlord Manor Exhibition Hall Uses Color Sculpture."

would not grasp, for example, how the exhibit of a particular grain measure or rice thresher related to the landlord's oppression. Though visually naïve and unconvincing in their rendering, such as the masklike faces and stiff, affected poses of the life-size clothed figures depicting two of the landlord's henchmen assaulting a farmer (figure 161), the increased employment of sculpture in lieu of actual objects in the exhibition hall's exhibits signals a shift in the museum's function from collecting specimens of class struggle to producing spectacles of class struggle.

Museums, as they have frequently been used since their inception in late 19th century Europe, nonetheless often function to support a particular political movement mainly through the collection and exhibition of objects. In a 1952 national circular from the central government instructing every province, county, city, and area propaganda department to focus and organize efforts to collect objects from private hands for land reform exhibitions.²⁵⁵ Museums proved their adherence to reality, albeit the institutionally-approved version, therefore through their collection and exhibition of actual objects from land reform and the life of Liu Wencai. Thus, the museum's job success depended largely on accumulating a similar stock of historical articles that provided evidence for the political campaign against landowners, from alleged land documents to weapons of torture. *Rent Collection Courtyard*, though, signaled a sensational turn in exhibition conception. The mundane objects may have been indexical to a lived reality, but as Mao proposed with "making art more universal than life" and the shift to an indigenous "revolutionary reality and revolutionary romanticism" in the aftermath of the Sino-Soviet split, a higher truth could be attained by forms that could not be achieved simply through actual objects.

²⁵⁵ Communist Party Central Committee, "Instructions About Collecting Valuable Historical Relics During Land Reform (Zhongyang guanyu zai tudi gaige zhong shouji you jiazhi de wenwu de zhishi)," July 30, 1952, in *Selected Writings of the Central Communist Party Propaganda Work, 1937-1949 (Zhongyang gongchangdang xuanchuan gongzuo wenxian xuanbian 1949-1956)* Volume 3, eds. Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuanbu bangong ting and zhongyang dang'anguan bian yan bu. (Beijing: Xuexi chubanshe, 1996), 387.

Reconstructing reality and reality itself thus became ambiguous endeavors that dovetailed in the early to late 1960s at the height of the Cultural Revolution through the national propagation of *Rent Collection Courtyard*. The subsequent nationwide production of the sculptural group and its local variants likewise saw different places in the vast country employ the vehicle of sculpture to produce their own local narratives of class struggle and, accordingly, the general ubiquity of class struggle.

Since the fateful planning meeting of the artists and the state media in September 1965, *Rent Collection Courtyard* was destined for national dissemination and thus began its discursive trajectory carried in various media outside of its permanent site in the courtyard in Dayi, Sichuan province into national and international visual culture. The remarkable malleability of the notion of *Rent Collection Courtyard* to inspire more sculptural works in spite of its obdurate material permanence can be attributed primarily to its clay material and its appealing direct tactile quality that can be shaped simply by the fingers. Liu Kaiqu in his 1939 article already observed the unique material potential of sculpture in the face of the more portable and popular art forms, such as prints and cartoons, that were gaining a foothold in the artworld at the time.

In defense of sculpture in this period of uncertainty in art and its criteria, Liu sought to prove sculpture's relevance as a vehicle by countering the argument that sculpture is elitist because it is limited to urban consumption and is expensive to make because of the materials and labor required. He argued that creating sculpture in rural areas and inexpensively is possible, as sculpture materials such as clay, wood, and stone are naturally available everywhere. Since the sculptural product is traditionally not intended to be portable and cannot be cheaply reproduced, Liu instead focused here on its production and suggested that its materials' ubiquity makes possible sculpture's multiple probable sites of production rather than its multiple reproductions.

Similarly, *Rent Collection Courtyard* was disseminated not through its copies, but more specifically through the multiple reenactments of its production across the nation.

Rent Collection Courtyard's celebrated utilization of clay seemed to fulfill Liu Kaiqu's argument for the vernacular potential of sculpture especially to signify the countryside. The sculptures in the *Rent Collection Courtyard* were often praised for being constructed not with durable materials, but with the clay locally extracted. *Rent Courtyard Collection*'s use of clay from the countryside to make sculpture in the countryside was therefore interpreted politically in the press as creating art that was accessible and representative of the peasants, who comprised the majority of the Chinese population.²⁵⁶ In the 1966 article "A Revolution in Sculpture," published shortly after *Rent Collection Courtyard* opened in Sichuan, Wang Zhaowen criticized similar sculptures also on the themes of class struggle and oppression located in the city on public buildings and in museums and exhibitions for still being made of the finer materials of bronze, stone, marble, and granite rather than clay like *Rent Collection Courtyard*. He argued, "Art must be brought to their [the working people's] doorstep,"²⁵⁷ and hailed the *Rent Collection Courtyard* made of clay locally extracted, shaped, and installed in the countryside as the new touchstone in sculpture. Hua Junwu also lauded *Rent Collection Courtyard* as a *yangban*, or model, for "mak[ing] our new socialist sculptors from the city walk into the vast countryside."²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ After *Rent Collection Courtyard* caught the attention of art leaders in Beijing and entered the national arena, Ma Li and the staff of the Dayi venue museum in the countryside were marginalized as credit and voice was given over to the SFAI and its participating sculptors. By the end of 1965 Ma Li's original intentions to paint *Rent Collection Courtyard* to complete his vision for appropriating the techniques of traditional Buddhist sculpture, which were usually painted, for contemporary socialist propaganda was overridden by the newfound authority of the SFAI sculptors. The SFAI sculptors believed instead that the added color would make the figures appear gaudy, which would detract from the narrative's somber tone of oppression and suffering. From "Dayi Landlord Manor Exhibition Hall Uses Color Sculpture."

²⁵⁷ "A Revolution in Sculpture," *China Reconstructs* (1966): 31.

²⁵⁸ See Hua Junwu, "A Good Sculptural Model Worthy of Study (Zhide xuexi de diaosu hao yanbang)," *People's Daily (Renmin ribao)*, October 31, 1965, 4.

Hua and Wang's comparison concerning not only sculptural materials, but also the rural or urban context of sculptures reveals the imbricated values of power latent in the material. Clay historically has been associated with the non-elite in contrast to the more permanent materials that have been employed to create lasting sculptural symbols of authority in the past, such as ritual bronze vessels and stone steles, as well as the granite and marble *Monument to the People's Heroes* in modern times. In the context of the beginning of the Cultural Revolution when Wang's article "A Revolution in Sculpture" was published, the choice of material used in the *Rent Collection Courtyard* also was put to work in tandem with Mao's charge that year to "Bombard the Headquarters" and exterminate the so-called counterrevolutionary bureaucrats especially found in the urban institutions of power.

The selection of clay in the famous sculptural installation of the *Rent Collection Courtyard* represented at this time thus both an outright rejection of the corrupt authorities in the city and an honoring of the artless farmers and workers in the countryside. Hence, on the eve of the Cultural Revolution *Rent Collection Courtyard's* widely celebrated and heavily politicized use of clay effectively reversed the art hierarchy by prioritizing the basic material of clay and the medium of sculpture. The use of clay was therefore deemed suitable for constructing a prominent commemorative artwork to the workers' and peasants' subjugated past and implicitly their leadership role in the present.

The art world's focus on the economy of making *Rent Collection Courtyard*, such as Hua Junwu's praise of the sculpture group that just cost three yuan a figure to make and the speed of only four and a half months to complete, also characterized *Rent Collection Courtyard* as overcoming the physical and financial obstructions to producing and installing sculpture in the

countryside.²⁵⁹ The fast and thrifty production claim of *Rent Collection Courtyard* not only mirrors the exaggerated claims of fast and cheap production encouraged during the Great Leap Forward a few years earlier, but also presents the clay material as thrifty and easy to shape into even a grand masterpiece of art. Subsequently, the utilization of clay and its supposed straightforward technical and manual approach spurred at the height of the Cultural Revolution a nationwide movement to locally reproduce *Rent Collection Courtyard*, as it was in Wuhan, Chongqing, and Shanghai (figure 162).

Emphasizing sculpture as a narrative vehicle, other cities chose instead to create sculptural productions of local stories of oppression by following the production model of *Rent Collection Courtyard*. They would use clay to create collectively a grand, multi-figured series of life-size tableaux installed onsite on the real scene of the alleged crimes based on oral histories from “the people” that the artists collected, such as Guangdong’s more than 200-figured *Holy Infant Orphanage* (1966-1968) made by the sculpture department of the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts portraying the suffering of the orphans under the Catholic administration (figure 163); the 33 life-size figured *Old Foolish Man of Dashu* in Sichuan created by the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in 1966 for the Dashu commune (figure 164); and the 106-figured *Wrath of the Serfs* in Lhasa completed in 1976 for the Lhasa Revolutionary Museum. Sculptors from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing and Lu Xun Art College in Shenyang created a highly dramatic

²⁵⁹ For example see Hua Junwu, “A Good Sculptural Model,” 4. According to the famous sculptor Pan He, who was active since the establishment of the PRC, “every piece we ever did was done in a hurry. The government always gave us a deadline and a certain range of subject matter. Rushed freedom has a kind of limitation—you can’t jump too far.” See John T. Young, *Contemporary Public Art in China: A Photographic Tour* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1998), 87.

sculptural production elevated on a stage and completed with painted murals to depict the enslavement of the Tibetan “serfs” by the “feudal” lamasery (figure 165).²⁶⁰

These three prominent sculpture groups based on the model of *Rent Collection Courtyard*, however, elevated the sculpture work back onto a higher ground away from the viewer. Coupled with their constructed scenes of an illusionistic space with its own buildings and structures and painted backdrop separated from the viewer space, these new works treated the sculptural installation as self-consciously made and presented similar to traditional theater rather than a convincing theater of reality that seeks to incorporate the viewer as in *Rent Collection Courtyard*. In its nationwide iterations, the model of *Rent Collection Courtyard* therefore became no longer about a local phenomenon in remote west China that advanced Chinese socialist art, but a national political movement where the artwork and place are no longer physical entities but a rote spectacle.

Even if trained professional sculptors were not available, the ease of shaping clay and its cheap and ready availability, as well as the medium’s assumed class identity, also allegedly compelled amateur sculptors to make their own reproductions of *Rent Collection Courtyard* or local stories of oppression and exploitation, such as the thirty life-size figured *Family Histories of the Air Force Fighter* that exhibited in Beijing in 1968 and was made by six “ordinary fighters” who have never received artistic training; and the 136 life-size figured sculpture group in Mentougou outside of Beijing in 1969 that portrayed the pre-revolution lives of the local miners built by the younger generation of miners from stories they collected from their elders (figure 166). Many times these exhibitions would be part of the larger experience of the viewer to impart the suffering of the peasant class to especially the younger generation. As one scholar

²⁶⁰ “Red Artist-Soldier and the Revolution in Fine Art Education,” *Chinese Literature* (September 1969):91.

recalls, while he viewed a local recreation of *Rent Collection Courtyard* in his youth during the late Cultural Revolution when schools were gradually resuming classes, there was also a sound element from the loudspeakers in the exhibition denouncing the landlord class. The viewing of the sculptural group was also incorporated into a larger comprehensive experiential program that included eating a meager meal of rice husks and wild vegetables so that the students can experience, or *tiyan*, the impoverished life of the masses in the countryside.²⁶¹ The multisensory experience that surrounded the viewing of *Rent Collection Courtyard* implies further that the purpose of nationally disseminating the model sculptural group was not so much a matter of circulating its visual image, but the experience of its production and viewing where members of “the people” can lend their voice of victimhood or feel the experience of victimization to buttress the state’s argument of class struggle.

Many foreign countries, after seeing *Rent Collection Courtyard* in Beijing or learning about the sculpture group from the 1968 Foreign Languages Press picture book, *Rent Collection Courtyard: Sculptures of Oppression and Revolt*, requested to have the sculpture group travel to their country for exhibition (figure 167).²⁶² During the Cultural Revolution, a full recreation in the more durable material of plaster along with painted backdrops and props were shipped to Albania, the only Eastern European nation to side with China after the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s, where it opened in the capital city of Tirana on April 28, 1968. At the close of the exhibition the sculpture group was gifted to the president, Enver Hoxha (figure 168). Yet in encouraging international audiences to follow Maoist militant thought, in this version for

²⁶¹ Zheng Yan, interview with author, October 19, 2012.

²⁶² The picture book consists of photographs primarily of the Sichuan version of *Rent Collection Courtyard* as well as some of the revised tableaux at the ending from the Palace Museum version in 1966 and the Albania version in 1968. The book was translated into at least six languages: Esperanto (*Rentkolekta korto argila statuaro*), Portuguese (*O pátio da cobrança das rendas esculturas de barro*), German (*Hof für die Pachteinnahme*), Spanish (*El patio de los arriendedos*), French (*La cour des fermages*), and English.

international consumption the farmers are shown to be predominately reliant on the leadership and guidance of the army and Mao Zedong in the increased insertion of army soldier figures and images of Mao in the new “Seizing Power” tableau added after the scene of revolt (figure 169). A partial reproduction of some of the new revolutionary pieces of the peasant revolt made for the Albanian version and large-format photographs of the original Sichuan installation were sent to Vietnam too earlier in 1968. *Rent Collection Courtyard* thus became part of the culture of delegation between socialist and communist governments after the Sino-Soviet split in an endeavor to succeed the Soviet Union’s earlier export of Socialist Realism from Russia to China and the Eastern Bloc in the 1950s.

These cultural channels formed an alternative modernity to the system of modernity set up in Europe and America that witnessed the traveling of works and experts between socialist and communist countries. This alternative modernity brokered between the socialist states, that in theory attempted to reform the relationship between art and society, also attracted attention from artists and curators in Euro-America who were at the same time also contemplating art and the artist’s role in society. For example, the celebrated curator Harald Szeemann learned of *Rent Collection Courtyard* through the picture book published by the Foreign Languages Press and was taken by the collaborative nature of the work as well as its “realistic, anti-monumental” artistry.²⁶³ He attempted without success to have it included in his watershed international exhibition of contemporary art, *documenta 5: Questioning Reality-Image Worlds Today*, in Germany in 1972. In the wake of the turbulent times of the late 1960s and early 1970s radicalism charged with the Cultural Revolution in China in 1966, American student protests against the Vietnam War in 1967, European student demonstrations such as in Paris in 1968 and

²⁶³ Harald Szeemann, e-mail correspondence to Feng Bin, September 1, 2000. "Cai Story," 2000-2002, 2011.M.30, box 662, folder 3, Harald Szeemann Archives, Getty Research Library.

Germany in 1968 and 1969, and the liberation movements in the so-called Third World, the role of the artist in society was being urgently interrogated by such critical shows as Documenta.²⁶⁴

The circulation of the photographic images of *Rent Collection Courtyard* outside the orbit of the socialist states and non-aligned countries after de-Stalinization transcended the theme of class struggle, the people, and the courtyard as it became further quoted, or fragmented, and therefore distanced from its original. Even from the outset the sole primary source from which the world outside of China knew the sculpture group, the Foreign Languages Press book *Rent Collection Courtyard: Sculptures of Oppression and Revolt*, is in actuality a composite of photos of the original sculpture group mixed with the later more deliberate and politically charged versions made during the Cultural Revolution for exhibition at the Forbidden City in 1966 and in Albania in 1968. The book circulated through Euro-America in the concentrated network of leftist bookstores spanning Munich, Paris, London, New York, Chicago, and San Francisco, as well as through branches of Chinese Friendship Organizations established in the 1970s in several countries that served to create and foster unofficial cultural, political, and economic “people to people” relations. Some Euro-American artists were inspired by the radical social critique, albeit an officially institutionalized radicalism, of *Rent Collection Courtyard* to make works that are also relevant to contemporary social issues, such as the English sound artist Nigel Ayers who created an experimental sound piece in the early 1980s called *Rent Collection Courtyard* to

²⁶⁴ More than two decades later as curator of the Venice Biennale in 1999 Szeemann became embroiled in the copyright debate between Cai Guo-Qiang and the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute over Cai’s appropriation of *Rent Collection Courtyard* for his recreation at Venice. Szeemann was alleged by some Chinese critics to intentionally have Cai realize his earlier dream to include the sculpture group in Documenta 5 by reproducing the work at Venice. Szeemann responded to such allegations in a personal note to Feng Bin, the director of the Art Museum at Sichuan Fine Arts Institute who supported Cai and Szeemann: “There must be a misunderstanding: The Redness was never a problem for me concerning Chinese Art. But the Courtyard is a fantastic cooperative art work that’s it. But meanwhile I worked with so many non-red Chinese artists that I don’t understand the reduction on Redness concerning my interest. See Harald Szeemann, fax correspondence with Feng Bin, April 8, 2002, “Cai Story,” 2000-2002, 2011.M.30, box 662, folder 3, Harald Szeemann Archives, Getty Research Library.

critique the desperate shortage of affordable housing during the Thatcher years.²⁶⁵ Since 1970, German painter, teacher, and Maoist among a vibrant community of Maoists at the Kunsthochschule in Kassel, Reiner Kallhardt, was inspired by the “expressive power of particular figures”²⁶⁶ in the original Dayi sculptures in the first part of the book as well as by the apparently grassroots and collective production of *Rent Collection Courtyard*. Transforming the sculpture group into a model for his teaching, he and his students have over the years studied and discussed *Rent Collection Courtyard* and the social function of art in class.²⁶⁷

Other artists used the later more exaggerated, spectacularly propagandistic images of *Rent Collection Courtyard* as a representation of Maoism to critique all systems of power, such as Paris-based Icelandic artist Éro’s late 1970s *Chinese Paintings* series which juxtaposes Maoist visual imagery with postcard images of European and American tourist sites to look askance at both the capitalist and Communist political systems and their equally slick visual appeal. Éro selected one of the more theatrical images of armed peasants triumphantly striding forward with a flag unfurled behind them that is taken from the ending of a later version of *Rent Collection Courtyard*. The famous Gothic dome of the Doge’s Palace in Venice serves as their backdrop (figure 170).²⁶⁸ For a number of artists though, such as the Nigerian sculptor Sunday Jack Akpan who in 1989 participated in the groundbreaking *Magiciens de la Terre* exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, the full range of *Rent Collection Courtyard*’s image quality and variety of expressions and gestures was its most captivating aspect rather than its means of production or politics. He used the Foreign Languages Press picture book of *Rent Collection Courtyard* as a

²⁶⁵ Nigel Ayers, email correspondence with author, March 31, 2012.

²⁶⁶ “Reiner Kallhardt in Conversation with Esther Schlicht,” in *Art for the Millions: 100 Sculptures from the Mao Era*, eds. Esther Schlicht and Max Hollein (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 2010), 184.

²⁶⁷ Reiner Kallhardt, interview with author, September 28, 2011.

²⁶⁸ Éro, interview with author, May 18, 2014.

reference book to study how to express different human emotions and movements in the medium of sculpture (figure 171). According to fellow sculptor and art historian Chika Okeke-Agulu, the catalogue of *Rent Collection Courtyard* was unlike most other sculpture study books available at that time, which would usually focus on only a certain category of poses, gestures, or facial expressions. The Foreign Languages Press book was popularly consulted by Nigerian sculptors in art school like himself when Okeke-Agulu trained in the 1980s because “it had it all.”²⁶⁹ The varied international reception of *Rent Collection Courtyard* demonstrates its multifaceted artistic and visual appeal that cannot be satisfactorily essentialized to merely the allegiance or curiosity of Euro-American artists in the 1970s to Maoism and red politics.

Since the 1980s due to China’s accelerated economic reforms and opening up, the presentation and reception of the original *Rent Collection Courtyard* in Dayi gradually grew distant from the rhetoric of class struggle and the extreme radicalism of the Cultural Revolution. Although since 1966 the landlord’s rural manor museum that commissioned *Rent Collection Courtyard* served as a class-education exhibition hall, the museum in order to stay relevant with the tides of social, political, and economic changes has since the early 1980s altered its mission to cultural tourism. As a result, over time the museum removed the didactic signage promoting class struggle, white-washed the alleged bloody hand-prints of victims on the wall of another exhibit, and converted the room displaying alleged torture instruments used by the villainous landlord and his henchmen into a porcelain gallery.²⁷⁰ Yet while signs can be easily removed, marks on the wall can be painted over, and objects can be shelved, the indelible, immovable presence of the famous 114 life-sized figured monument of *Rent Collection Courtyard* demands historic acknowledgement of the once emotionally charged scenario the inanimate sculpture

²⁶⁹ Chika Okeke-Agulu, interview with author, May 24, 2014.

²⁷⁰ Ho and Li, “From Landlord Manor,” 21.

group enabled. Today the museum, however, values the fragile clay sculpture group not so much for its place in Maoist history but as foremost “a masterpiece in Chinese art which status will not diminish with the passage of time” to justify the continued presentation and conservation efforts of *Rent Collection Courtyard* within the transformed role of the museum.²⁷¹

Once when asked what he would do if he possessed the power and authority to decide on the future of *Rent Collection Courtyard*, Liu Xiaofei, a descendent of *Rent Collection Courtyard*'s defamed landlord, said he wishes not only will it continue to be on display indefinitely, but that also all the removed exhibits that have slandered his grandfather can be brought back and re-exhibited for the judgment of the people today.²⁷² Beginning in the late 1990s after Liu Xiaofei retired, he started visiting the museum more often and was able to reactivate the people's theater of *Rent Collection Courtyard* by drawing crowds of curious listeners around him, only this time ironically to hear him vehemently denounce the truth value of the sculpture group and the experience of class oppression it depicts (figure 172). His ability to personally confront the ghosts of politics and history through the physical sculpture group, however, has been curtailed in recent years when the sculptures' capacity to actively form and engage crowds of people in the courtyard space was obstructed by the installation of protective screens all around the courtyard (figure 173).²⁷³

Since the installation of the protective screens, Liu Xiaofei has delivered his emotional counternarrative of *Rent Collection Courtyard* instead in front of a group of sculptures showing a landlord attacking three peasant figures made later in 1977 that is situated in the introductory vestibule before one enters the rent collection courtyard (figure 174). The original *Rent*

²⁷¹ “Nisu 《Shouzu yuan》 zai zhongguo yishu baoku zhong de diwei jiang bu hui suizhe shijian de liushi er xiaoshi.” From docent narrative script, Liu Family Manor Museum, 2011, 11.

²⁷² Liu Xiaofei, e-mail correspondence with author, August 5, 2014.

²⁷³ Liu Xiaofei, e-mail correspondence with author, January 21, 2014.

Collection Courtyard henceforth has become a historic relic anxiously conserved by its caretakers at the museum. Moreover, since 1996 *Rent Collection Courtyard* has been designated a Major Historical and Cultural Site Protected at the National Level (*quanguo zhongdian wenwu baohu*). There are at present over four thousand such designated monuments in China administered by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage which are prohibited from being demolished.²⁷⁴ As the museum, nation, and world which *Rent Collection Courtyard* helped define inexorably changes, the clay sculpture group remains preserved in the present-day by protective glass and large curtains of opaque screens that effectively puts the courtyard stage of the sculptures into an uneasy standstill between the past and the future (figure 175).

²⁷⁴ See 2011 edition of docent script of the Liu Family Manor Museum.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

When looking at photographs of Cai Guo-Qiang's *Venice Rent Collection Courtyard* for the 1999 Venice Biennale, as well as of his subsequent versions—*New York's Rent Collection Courtyard* and *Bilbao's Rent Collection Courtyard* for his 2008 to 2009 Guggenheim Museum retrospective and *Taipei's Rent Collection Courtyard* for his 2009 solo exhibition at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum—it is easy to mistaken that they are of the work still in progress. In the tableaux narrating the iconic scenes of despondent farmers at the mercy of the landlord's lackeys (figure 176), figures comprised of steel wire frames or steel wire frames clad with a makeshift wooden armature are interspersed with the completed clay figures. However, this odd mixture of unfinished figures with the finished clay ones constitutes the final installation of Cai's *Rent Collection Courtyard*.²⁷⁵ Cai never intended for his *Rent Collection Courtyard* to be another quotation of the 1965 *Rent Collection Courtyard*. Instead it was planned to be perpetually in a state of process and ambiguity. For the first few days of the piece's exhibition in Venice, Cai requested that the sculptors continue working on the sculptures as visitors walked amongst them. Interpreted by critics as adding a performance dimension to his work, the early visitors to the artist's *Venice's Rent Collection Courtyard* in effect were cast like the local farmers who would

²⁷⁵ Cai deliberately endeavored to create the appearance of a random array of clay figures in different stages of completeness. As per his instructions to the team of sculptors at each venue, Cai would also specify how many figures to leave incomplete or partially complete, as for *Bilbao's Rent Collection Courtyard* where Cai listed that of the 73 total figures, 50 should be completed with clay, 8 with some clay, 6 with wood and steel, and 9 with steel only. See "*Rent Collection Courtyard*," Cai Guo-Qiang Studio Archives.

visit during the making of the original *Rent Collection Courtyard*. The unfired clay of Cai's *Rent Collection Courtyard* also accentuates the fragility of the fugitive clay material and ensured that the work was never stable. His emphasis on process and temporality in his *Rent Collection Courtyard* mirrors his fascination with the physical and material processes involved in the original *Rent Collection Courtyard* more than its political narrative content and propagandistic function. As he observed of the presentation of the original *Rent Collection Courtyard*, which he first encountered in his youth, "apart from the narrative depicted in the story, the sculptural process was also depicted as a story."²⁷⁶

Engaging with the original *Rent Collection Courtyard* for the Venice Biennale also appealed to Cai because it allowed him to reflect on differences and connections in the global development of modern art, namely the tradition of realistic sculpture which began in Europe and was adopted in China in the early 20th century just as the form and concept was being abandoned by European artists. Venice's history as a center of Renaissance sculpture was also not lost on Cai, who remarked, "You think of [realistic] sculpture as dead, but there you saw it being reborn again" through his *Venice's Rent Collection Courtyard*.²⁷⁷ Hence, instead of being a commentary on art and politics in Mao period China or exemplifying the original intention of *Rent Collection Courtyard* as a space defining piece of Communist propaganda, Cai's *Rent Collection Courtyard* is an experimental juxtaposition of postwar Chinese and Euro-American notions of sculpture: the move away from sculpture as a self-contained object and its eventual dematerialization in Euro-America combined with the preoccupation on the viewer's behavioral space and movement as well as belief in the documentary quality of sculpture in China.

²⁷⁶ Erik Eckholm, "Expatriate Artist Updates Maoist Icon and Angers Old Guard," *New York Times*, August 17, 2000, E1.

²⁷⁷ Eckholm, "Expatriate Artist," E1.

Similar to Cai's *Rent Collection Courtyard*, this dissertation considers modern sculpture and its variegated discourse in early to mid-20th century China by evaluating it not in terms of modern sculpture's concerns and developments elsewhere, particularly that of Euro-America or later the Soviet Union to which modern art in China is often compared, but by recognizing the distinctive social, political, and artistic contexts in which it developed and actively participated. Yet as the case of modern sculpture in China illustrates, the different co-existing modernities of the 20th century did not develop in a vacuum, but rather in relation, or more specifically in juxtaposition, with each other. For example, the concepts of civic monuments and space as having a direct impact on the social behavior and organization of its inhabitants to which *Monument to the People's Heroes* is deeply rooted, and art as the product of direct experience as in the *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition* are distinctively late 19th century developments in Europe. Their continued traction in postwar mainstream practice and relevance in the People's Republic, in contrast to the anti-figurative and anti-moumental turn in postwar Euro-American art, reveals a different set of agendas, issues, and circumstances for modern art production in China rather than simply a derivative or backward period of art and culture in China.

Such a form of modern art entrenched in the incipient problems of modern art of late 19th century Europe also allowed artists and cultural authorities in postwar China and the Soviet bloc to view and claim socialist realism as the rightful lineage in the development of modern art in the 20th century as opposed to the contemporaneous artistic practices and concerns happening in postwar Europe and America. Created by Cold War cultural politics, the distorted and oversimplistic dichotomy pitting socialist realism against a supposedly democratic and free abstraction (or "capitalist abstraction" as it was often described in socialist countries), appeared too in art writings and exhibitions that circulated in postwar Europe and America. Though the

rhetoric of clear artistic boundaries drawn on national, political, and formal allegiances in the postwar Soviet and Euro-American art worlds alike have been well-documented and problematized through recent scholarship, the legacies of global postwar art's competing modernisms and universalisms are still apparent in the diverse practices of contemporary sculpture in China.²⁷⁸

After the watershed 1979 meeting of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee, popularly known as the Thought Liberation Conference where the new party leader Deng Xiaoping declared that the adverse aspects of Mao's theories about political, economic, and intellectual life could be abolished, the art and cultural worlds rejoiced at the potential ramifications for artistic expression and freedom. According to the sculptor Ye Yushan, who participated in the conference:

Deng Xiaoping said, "Whatever Mao said that is right, we will do. If it's not right, we won't do it." The effect on art was tremendous. Before, art was required to have a subject matter. But during this conference they said this was wrong—it's ok to have subject matter, but it's also ok to have art without subject matter. That was really great for us, a liberation...Another major theme of this conference picked up on something Mao himself said: "Let a hundred flowers bloom." That was a good direction for the arts in China. One hundred types of "flowers" would make for rich diversity in all of the arts.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸ See Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Nancy Jachec, *The Philosophy and Politics of Abstract Expressionism, 1940-1960* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); *Figuration Narrative: Paris, 1960-1972* (Paris: Réunion des Musées nationaux, Centre Pompidou, 2008); Christina Kiaer, "Was Socialist Realism Forced Labour? The Case of Aleksandr Deineka in the 1930s," in *Oxford Art Journal* 28:3 (October 2005): 321-345; Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann, eds., *Art of Two Germanys—Cold War Cultures*. (New York: Abrams and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2009); Alex Potts, *Experiments in Modern Realism: World-making, Politics and the Everyday in Postwar European and American Art* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2013)

²⁷⁹ Young, *Contemporary Public Art*, 27.

Despite overturning the demand for artists to continue producing by-then formulaic portrayals of the worker, peasant, and soldier trinity, artists were called on to still serve “the people” and its politics in the new party policy of Four Modernizations focused on modernizing the fields of agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology. At the Fourth Congress of Writers and Artists held later in 1979, Deng declared that the national task now was the Four Modernizations so that the new scale for evaluating writers’ and artists’ works would be based on how they support and promote the government’s efforts.²⁸⁰

Hence, to keep sculpture relevant in post-Mao China the China Artists Association under the leadership of Jiang Feng, Liu Kaiqu, and Hua Junwu established in 1982 the National Guidance Committee for the Construction of Urban Sculptures to develop public sculpture for the beautification and modernization of urban space. This new institutional organization helped create over four thousand sculptures in urban public areas in the next ten years.²⁸¹ Under Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms the increased decentralization and privatization of institutions in China, including art institutions, also meant that artists and especially sculptors had to find alternative means besides the government to fund their artistic production. With the gradual re-introduction of market competition in the post-Mao China of the 1980s, public sculpture firms began forming and advertising to potential domestic and international clients, such as the China Sculptural and Mural Art Corporation.

The inaugural catalogue of the China Sculptural and Mural Art Corporation in 1985 is indicative of the new artistic and institutional developments in sculpture in post-Maoist China (figure 177). After a foreword written by Liu Kaiqu endorsing the sculptural firm and its promise “to beautify our environment, bring peace, happiness and inspiration to our lives” are

²⁸⁰ Deng Xiaoping, *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), 201-202.

²⁸¹ Young, *Contemporary Public Art*, 27.

images of existing sculptures, mostly in outdoor public settings in different cities and institutions across China. They were all made within the last five years by established sculptors who the company acts to represent. Explicit political content is conspicuously absent from any of the works in the catalogue in contrast to the politically charged socialist realist sculpture prevalent in China less than a decade ago. Instead of workers, peasants, and soldiers, the figurative works are portraits of actual people executed in the academic realist tradition, abstract female figures as poetic allegories, or classical female beauties modeled abstractly or in the academic realist tradition. For instance, Fu Tianchou's *Memorial Statue of Xu Beihong*, 1983, is a standard sculptural bust made for the Xu Beihong Memorial Hall in Beijing (figure 178), while Wu Mingwan's sculpture *Life*, 1984 consists of exaggerated abstract forms suggestive of the female body made for the Sichuan Fine Arts Institutes's Art Gallery (figure 179). Similarly, Sui Jianguo's apparently smaller-scaled *Melody*, 1984 of three abstract white flute players executed with minimal details and curving lines imply feminine forms to evoke the sculpture's poetic theme (figure 180). Xie Xiang, Li Xiangsheng, Ye Bin, and Yang Qirui's 5.7-meter tall *Peony Fairy*, 1983 in Luoyang's Wangcheng Park (figure 181) and Pan He, Wang Keqing, Guo Qixiang, and Cheng Yunxian's also large-scale romantic realist sculpture of a girl looking over her shoulder at a dove in *Peace*, 1984 for Nagasaki's Peace Park in Japan (figure 182) further demonstrate the new emphasis on classical concepts of beauty and allegory through female forms and figures, whether abstract or realist in approach. The only political work in the catalogue is created for the politics of another country, Li Shouren's 4.5-meter tall *Monument to the Martyrs of Djibouti*, 1984, for the People's Palace in Djibouti City, the capital of the African nation of Djibouti (figure 183). Its particular inclusion in the catalogue appears more to

showcase the ability of the firm's sculptors to create for an international clientele, though, more than the sculpture's political associations.

The catalogue's rich visual presentation of a versatile and broad array of subject matter, styles, and scales of settings reflects not only the impact of decreased political regulation on art production in post-Maoist China, but also the China Sculptural and Mural Art Corporation's attempt to appeal to a wider range of potential clients' needs and demands that are different than the more finite ones of the Chinese Communist Party in the past. The corporation's agenda to assert itself into the national and international market for sculpture, in which it desired to operate, is made explicit in the last page of the catalogue. On the page is a list of the twelve overseas branch offices of the firm's parent organization, the China State Construction Engineering Corporation, where the text describes orders can be placed. With the exceptions of Hong Kong and Macau, the offices are all located in nonaligned countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, such as Thailand, Iraq, and Libya. The appearance of new for-profit firms like the China Sculptural and Mural Art Corporation to delegate national and international public sculpture commissions to leading sculptors, many of who established themselves earlier by making socialist realist works, indicates not only the adaption of the sculpture production system to the changing national and international political climate, but also to the introduction of art as a lucrative commodity in post-socialist China.

As older sculptors with established careers from the recent socialist past were exploring new work methods and genres as well as adjusting their production to a shifting sociopolitical situation and system, a new generation of artists born in the early 1960s after the disastrous policies of the Great Leap Forward and during the subsequent Cultural Revolution were employing the medium of sculpture to question the new institutional motivations for sculpture

production in post-Maoist China. A case in point is Zhan Wang's *Artificial Mountain Rock* series. Begun in the mid-1990s the series was initiated as a critique of large-scale scholar rock groupings that the artist observed were being arbitrarily recast as public sculptures to decorate the outdoor space of new high-rise buildings. The resulting unconvincing combination of Chinese stone aesthetics traditionally found in the natural setting of private gardens with gleaming modern skyscrapers prompted Zhan to facetiously propose instead to plate the scholar rocks in stainless steel to better complement the cool polish of the buildings made of industrial glass and steel.²⁸² As in the computer generated proposal, *New Picture of Beijing, Today and Tomorrow's Capital—Rockery Remodeling Plan*, in 1995 (figure 184), Zhan inserts his stainless steel covered rocks in front of the new West Train Station in Beijing, which was at the time critiqued as a crude mixture of traditional and modern architectural motifs and styles. The ambiguity of the stones' form and depth caused by the rocks' distinctive reflective surface is augmented by the contrast of the grainy image of the train station in the background. The fantastically large, organic forms that are obviously digitally collaged into the architectural setting frustrate any attempts to determine its spatial relationship with the train station. Unlike the function of public space and sculpture as construed in *Monument to the People's Heroes* to scale "the people," Zhan refuses to scale his "public sculpture" in relation to any politically contextualized narrative or concept, such as the notions of a timeless Chinese aesthetic tradition and a rapidly emerging modern nation that are exemplified in the hybrid architecture of the new West Train Station.

Zhan's *Artificial Mountain Rock* was realized in the following year in his *Artificial Mountain Rock*, 1996 in Beijing (figure 185). Using his previous experience patiently shaping

²⁸² Britta Erikson, "Material Illusion: Adrift with the Conceptual Sculptor Zhan Wang," *Art Journal* 60, 2 (Summer 2001), 77.

hard materials as a jade carver, Zhan laboriously transformed regular rocks as well as curiously shaped scholar rocks he found for his *Artificial Mountain Rock* series by pounding the stainless steel sheets onto the rock's surface and then polishing the rock's new metallic surface.²⁸³ The rock's intricate edges, crags, and curves that create the admired dynamic play between negative and positive spaces and complex layers of depth in Chinese stone aesthetics are smoothed and camouflaged by the uniform, undulating skin of stainless steel. The stainless steel's reflective surface that constantly projects the shadows, lights, and forms of its surroundings further undermines the viewer's depth perception of the actual rock. As a result, the bulky stainless steel structure is not meant to be seen as a scholar rock, but rather a modern parody of one to critique the superficial employment of traditional arts and aesthetics magnified as a decorative motif for the sole purpose of complementing the nation's modernization efforts.

Other young sculptors have sought to upend altogether sculpture's important role in postwar China of creating and regulating a certain social order and anonymous viewer. Consider Song Dong and Yin Xiuzhen in their *Chopsticks*, 2006 (figure 186). In their collaborative work on a pair of eight-meter long chopsticks, Song Dong and Yin Xiuzhen independently conceived and worked on one chopstick each. The two artists designed this particular collaborative work method in 2001 and coined it "The Way of Chopsticks," or *kuai dao*, founded upon the dual nature of chopsticks. According to their method, each of the two artists would develop and work independently and secretly on a chopstick based on a predetermined theme and then show the pair of finished chopsticks as one work.²⁸⁴ Created under the theme of Beijing, *Chopsticks*, 2006 was the second time the two artists used their collaborative method. Thus, it surprised Song Dong and Yin Xiuzhen when they unveiled the pair of chopsticks together and discovered that

²⁸³ Erikson, "Material Illusion," 78.

²⁸⁴ Song Dong, correspondence with Christine Starkman, April 20, 2015.

both had chosen to portray the central imperial axis in the heart of their hometown of Beijing. While Yin created a three-dimensional diagram of the present-day axis, where a finely stitched nylon slip covers the foam core of her chopstick as well as the miniaturized structures constructed also of foam, two vertically drawn maps of the axis—one from an 18th century map and the other from a contemporary map—are hammered into the all-over stainless steel surface of Song’s chopstick (figure 187). The hammered images of the maps run parallel with each other down the length of the chopstick.²⁸⁵

Despite the similarity of their respective subjects, Yin Xiuzhen and Song Dong, Yin’s husband, greatly diverged in their representation of Beijing’s central axis as it progresses from Yongdingmen Gate to the Drum and Bell Towers in the north. While Yin’s three-dimensional scaled-down diagram of the buildings and structures that make up the axis are legible, Song’s maps hammered sideways on the stainless steel surface are illegible. Whereas the viewer of Yin Xiuzhen’s chopstick can easily look at and identify the architectural structures along the axis, Song Dong’s chopstick requires the viewer to lower oneself to the ground and look closely sideways at the maps to begin deciphering the names, in Chinese and Romanized pinyin, along the axis. Without this physical effort of the viewer the sideways letters and characters pounded into the reflective stainless steel surface appear at first glance like traces of arcane hieroglyphics (figure 188). Song Dong’s intentional offering of an ambivalent viewing experience compared with Yin Xiuzhen’s painstakingly detailed and sewn three-dimensional representation is also reflected in his casual selection of the maps that decorate the surface of his chopstick, which according to the artist he found one day just searching on the Internet.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵ “The Way of Chopsticks: Song Dong and Yin Xiuzhen, June 20-July 28, 2006,” exhibition press release, Chambers Fine Art, 2.

²⁸⁶ Song Dong, correspondence with Christine Starkman, May 29, 2015.

The strikingly dissimilar modes of mapping and scaling, viewing, and attention to detail that resulted from the artists' method of separate collaboration allows a diversity of ways for viewers to engage and understand the chopsticks individually as well as in relation to each other.

To quote Song Dong:

I haven't thought too much about for whom I make what I make. What I hope to achieve is an unpredictable effect, an unforeseen type of relationship. [For the artworks] in the China Art Gallery, for example, the relationship is quite predictable. Perhaps the work I have done will not be seen by the people whom I have invited to see it; perhaps other spectators will see it and won't have any reaction, or perhaps they will feel something... I like this indefiniteness.²⁸⁷

Unlike the art of mainstream sculptural practice in early Communist China that sought to communicate a finite idea, as epitomized in the prestigious national exhibitions held at Beijing's China Art Gallery, Song Dong's and Yin Xiuzhen's chance collaboration in *Chopsticks*, 2006 reveals their conscious effort to mitigate the artists' mediation between the viewer and the space of the viewer through their art.²⁸⁸ Their planned ignorance of the affect of the sculptural artwork until the moment the two finished chopsticks are unveiled together as a single artwork additionally shows their rejection of the tenets of the art practice of the former generation. Art's affective predictability and social responsibility to a predisposed audience, as grandly epitomized by the modern-day central axis in Beijing on which stands the 20th century additions of *Monument to the People's Heroes* and Mao's Mausoleum, are the legacies of the art and culture in postwar China that still has resonance and holds great significance in Chinese contemporary art and culture.

²⁸⁷ Francesca Dal Lago, "Space and Public: Site Specificity in Beijing," *Art Journal* 59, 1 (Spring 2000): 81.

²⁸⁸ The formal English name for the China Art Gallery is today the National Art Museum of China (NAMOC). Since its official opening in 1963 the mission of the National Art Museum of China, or *Zhongguo meishu guan*, has been to exhibit and support the development of modern and contemporary art in China. See "National Art Museum of China: History," <http://www.namoc.org/en/about/history/>. Accessed September 17, 2015.

Monument to the People's Heroes, the *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition*, and *Rent Collection Courtyard* reflect not only the impact of a distinct period of social and political discourse and events on the arts, but also how sculpture's scale and materiality played an instrumental role in the construction of new social and political orders in China after the Communist Revolution. They also demonstrate how the space and material of sculpture were explicitly employed to physically represent the victorious political scaling over social contradictions of "the people" in the new nation. The significance of the three sculpture cases, however, also illustrates how the variable scale of sculpture actually throws the persistence of these contradictions into sharp relief. The three parts of *Monument to the People's Heroes* as seen from the square, the monument base, and the viewing platform of the monument worked against each other rather than in unity to resolve the different scales of the body politic; the *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition* reveals the competing experiences offered between what was said and what was actually seen in the exhibited works; and *Rent Collection Courtyard* highlights the modern divide between the countryside and the city that the sculpture group was credited with bridging. As much as Maoist period sculpture concerned itself with defining and commemorating space or with realizing in physical form a selected memory of an experience, its legacy today is rooted in choosing what to forget and the significance of that forgetting.



Figure 1. Zhao Zhiqian, *Seated Buddha*, 1862

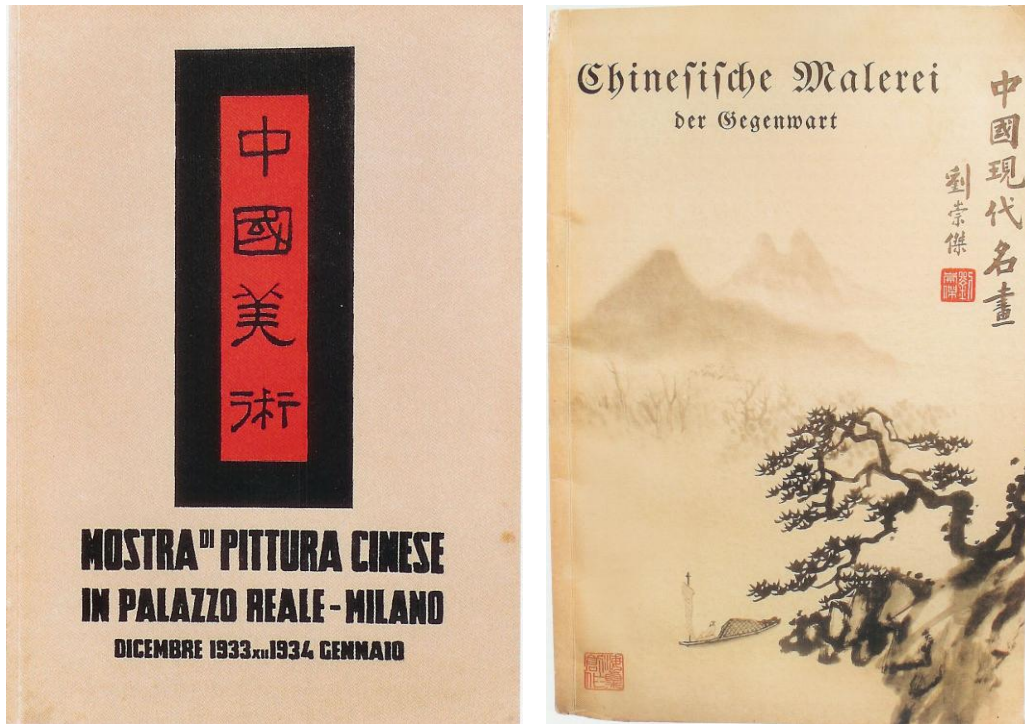


Figure 2. Catalogue cover of *Chinese Painting Exhibition* (Mostra di Pittura Cinese), Palazzo Reale, Milano, 1933-1934 (left); Catalogue cover of *Chinese Contemporary Painting*, Prussian Academy of the Arts in Berlin, January 20 - March 4, 1934 (right)



Figure 3. Parthenon, Athens, Greece, 432 BC



Figure 4. *Exhibition of Contemporary Chinese Paintings* (Exposition de Peintures Chinoises Contemporaines), Musée Cernuschi, Paris, 1946

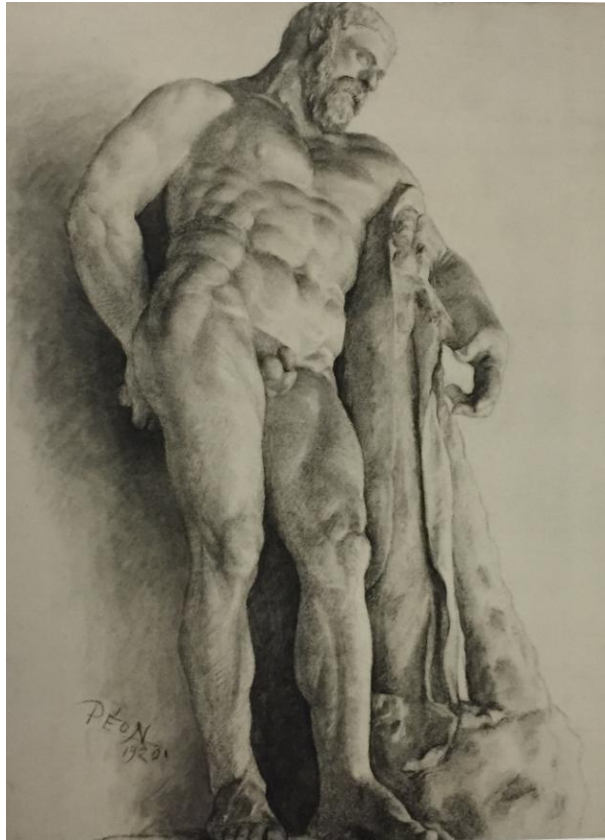


Figure 5. Xu Beihong, sample sketches of plaster casts: *Satyr*, 1919-1927 (left) and *Hercules*, 1920, charcoal on paper (right)



Figure 6. Group photograph (from left to right): Li Jinfa, Lin Fengmian, and Lin Wenzheng
Berlin, 1922

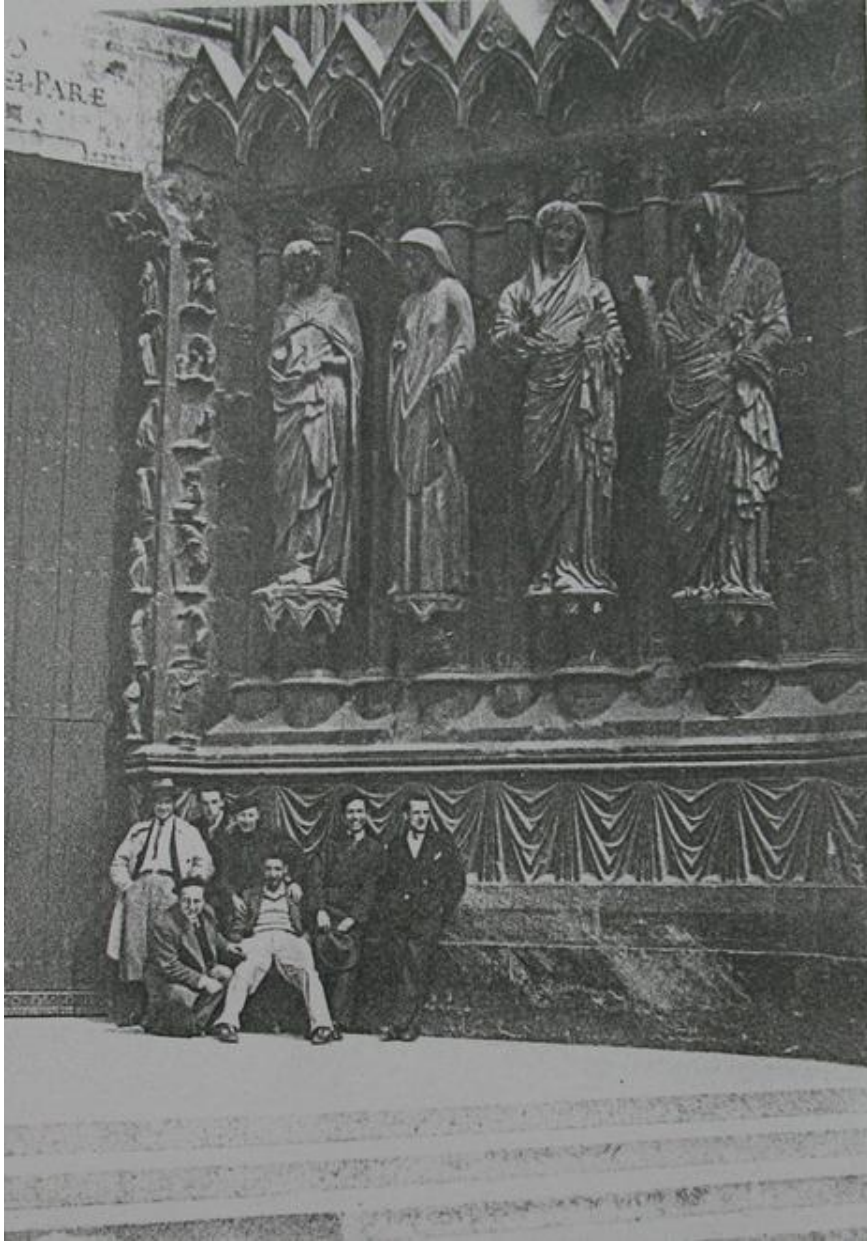


Figure 7. Wang Linyi (second from right) with other students of Henri Bouchard, early 1930s, Paris



Figure 8. Henri Bouchard in his studio, early 1930s, Paris



Figure 9. Paul Landowski, *The Phantoms*, Oulchy-le-Château (Aisne), Butte de Chalmont, France, 1935, granite, 8 x 8.6 x 4.3 meters (top); *The Phantoms* as seen in the distance after its inauguration ceremony, 1935 (bottom)



Figure 10. Hua Tianyou, *Pondering (Chensi)*, 1943

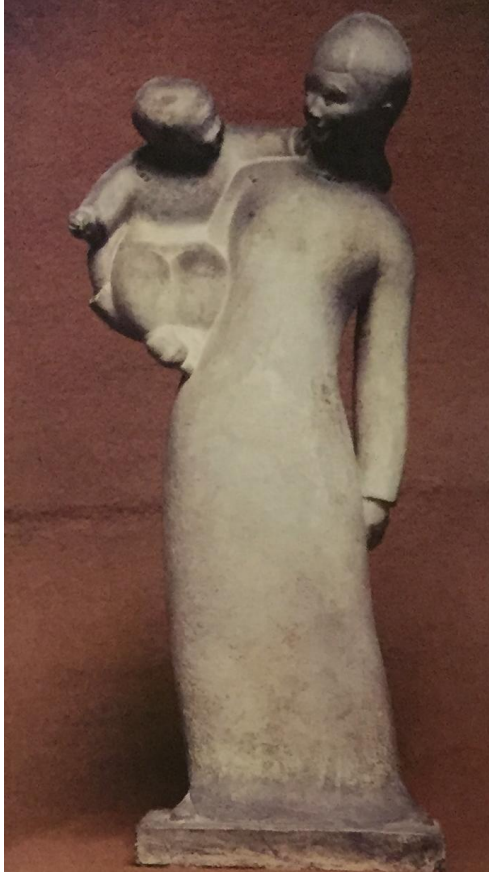


Figure 11. Hua Tianyou, Clockwise from bottom left: *Bombardment*, *Maternal Love*, *Young China*, and installation view of Hua Tianyou's solo exhibition upon his return, Beijing, 1948

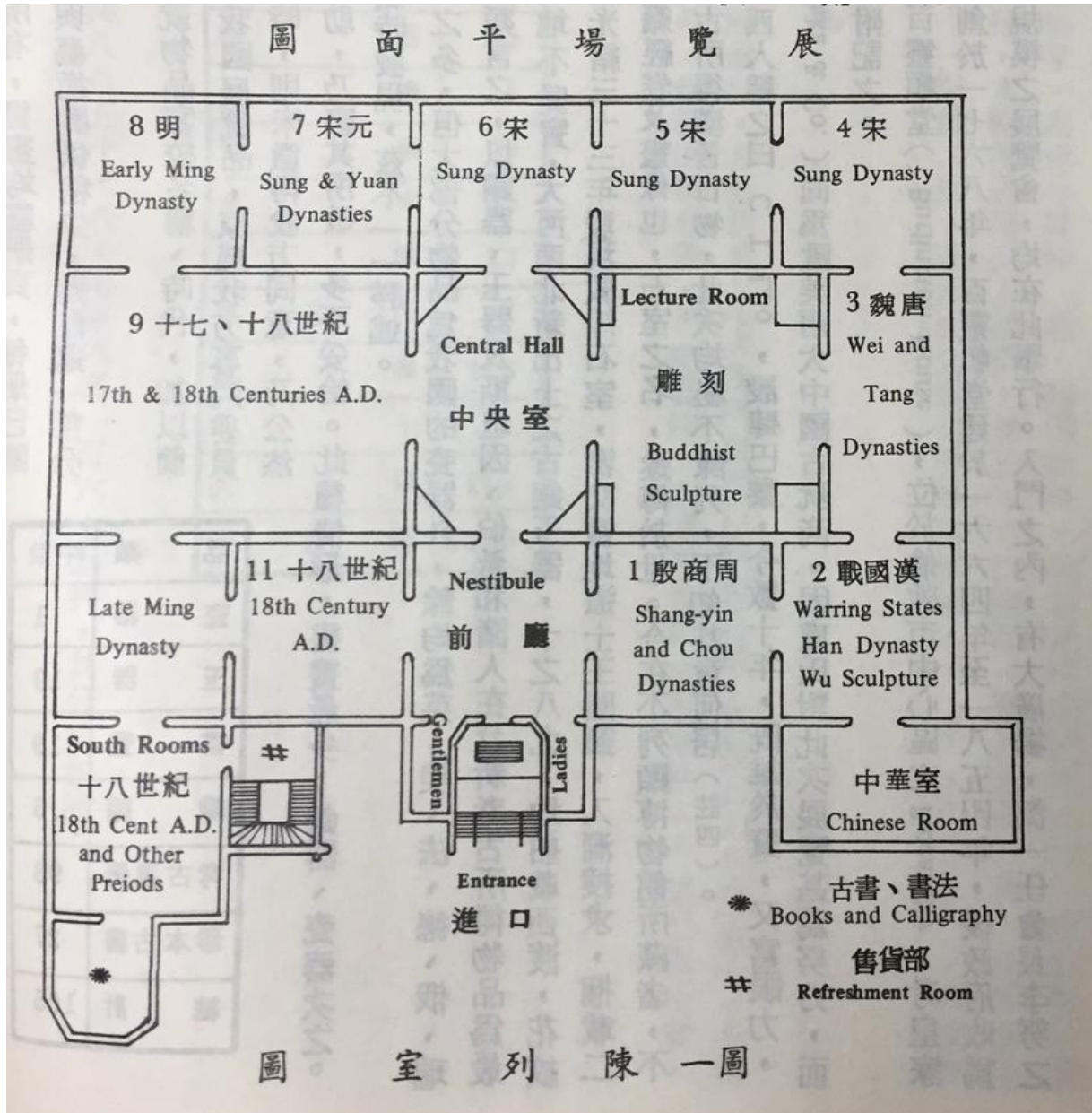


Figure 12. Exhibition layout for the *International Chinese Art Exhibition*, London, 1935-1936



Figure 13. Examples of portrait busts (left to right): Guo Qiande's *Bust of a Man*; Li Jinfu's *Huang Shaoqiang*; Jin Xuecheng's *Head of a Young Woman*; and Chen Wanyi's *Bust of a Woman*; Second National Art Exhibition, Nanjing, 1937



Figure 14. Jiang Xiaojian, *Chen Qimei*, Shanghai, 1928 (in early 1950s was destroyed), bronze, height: 8 meters tall with pedestal

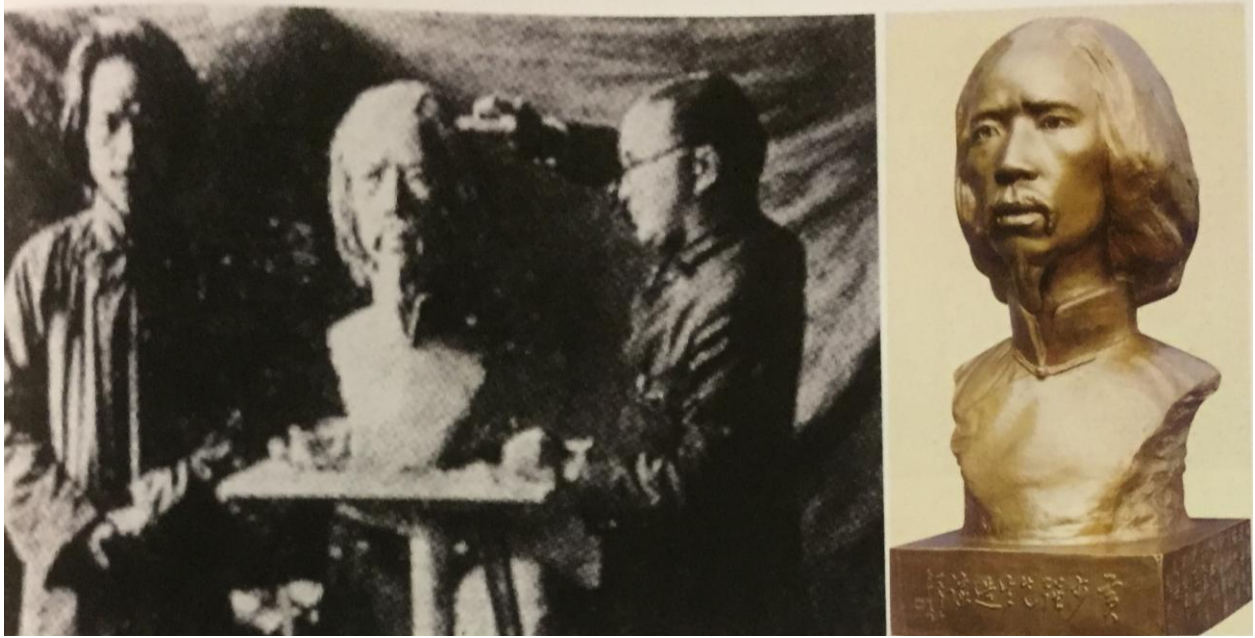


Figure 15. Li Jinfan, *Huang Shaoqiang*, 1936



Figure 16. Teng Baiye, *Chiang Kai-shek*, 1930s



Figure 17. Liu Kaiqu, *Nameless Hero (Wuming yingxiong)* (left); Original installation view at the head of a major thoroughfare (destroyed in 1966 during the Cultural Revolution; today a reproduction is installed in front of Chengdu's People's Park), Chengdu, Sichuan province, 1943 (right)

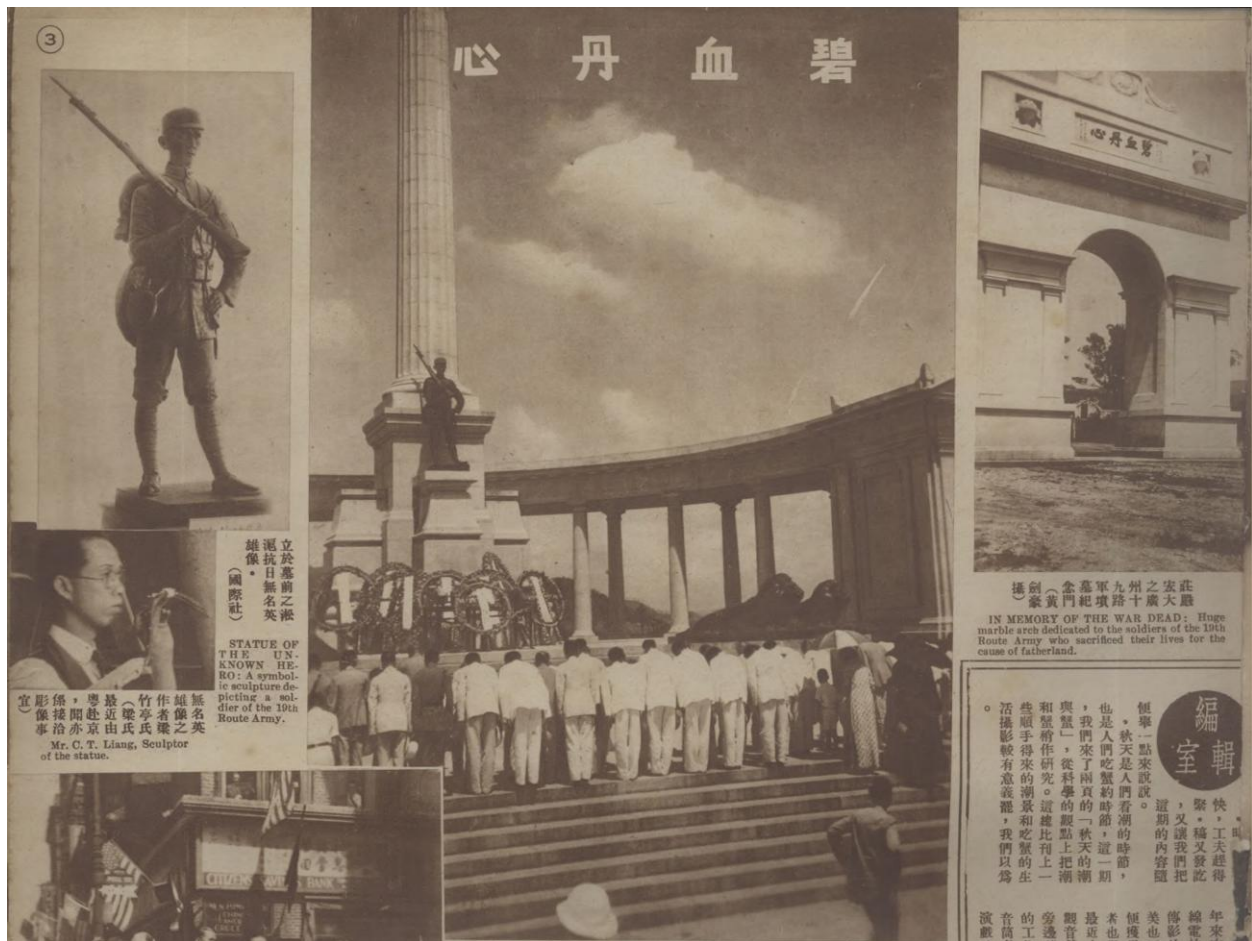


Figure 18. Liang Zhuting, *Nameless Hero (Wuming yingxiong)* and installation view, Guangzhou, from *Young Companion (Liang you)*, 1934: 3



Figure 19. Zhang Chongren, *Chiang Kai-shek*, from “Sculpture—An Expression of Emotions” (Diaoke—qingxu de biaoqian), from *Life (Shenghuo)* 4 (1946): 15

現表的緒情一刻雕

·描壯影畫獨新界世·



▲雕刻室中之劉開劉
Artist Liu Kai-jue

雕刻室中之劉開劉，正專注於其作品。他身著簡樸之衣，神情專注，彷彿與世界隔絕。其周圍之環境，充滿了藝術創作之氣息。



▲描壯影畫獨新界世·

黃君之肖像，由劉開劉所刻。其神情莊嚴，展現了藝術家之精湛技藝。



▲作生姿態動靜皆神·
之肖像劉開劉

此為黃君之肖像，由劉開劉所刻。其神情莊嚴，展現了藝術家之精湛技藝。

The profile of Gengzi, shown by artist Liu Kai-jue, shows dignity and craftsmanship.



▲雕刻室中之劉開劉
Artist Liu Kai-jue

雕刻室中之劉開劉，正專注於其作品。他身著簡樸之衣，神情專注，彷彿與世界隔絕。其周圍之環境，充滿了藝術創作之氣息。



▲作生姿態動靜皆神·
之肖像劉開劉

此為黃君之肖像，由劉開劉所刻。其神情莊嚴，展現了藝術家之精湛技藝。

The giant statue of Generalissimo Chiang, by famous artist Chang Ching-shan, was a novelty in Shanghai's Victory Parade held some days ago.

煙香貴名 **馬白** 製配式美全完 品出司公草煙華福





Figure 20. From “Sculpture—An Expression of Emotions” (Diaoke—qingxu de biao xian), from *Life (Shenghuo)* 4 (1946): 15



Figure 21. Fu Tianchou, *How to Make Sculpture*, People's Art Publishers, 1958

列寧紀念碑宣傳 計劃的偉大作用

Вл. 托爾斯泰著



上海人民美術出版社

Figure 22. Vladimir Tolstoy, *The Great Function of Lenin's Monument Propaganda Plan* (*Liening jinianbei xuanchuan jihua de weida zuoyong*), Shanghai People's Art Publishers, 1952

蘇聯紀念碑雕刻問題

湯姆斯基著



華東人民美術出版社



Figure 23. Nikolai Tomsky, *Issues in Soviet Memorial Sculpture* (*Sulian jinianbei diaoke wenti*), China East People's Art Publishers, 1954

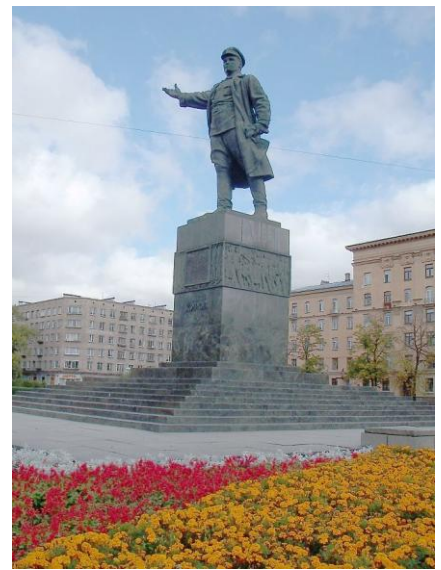


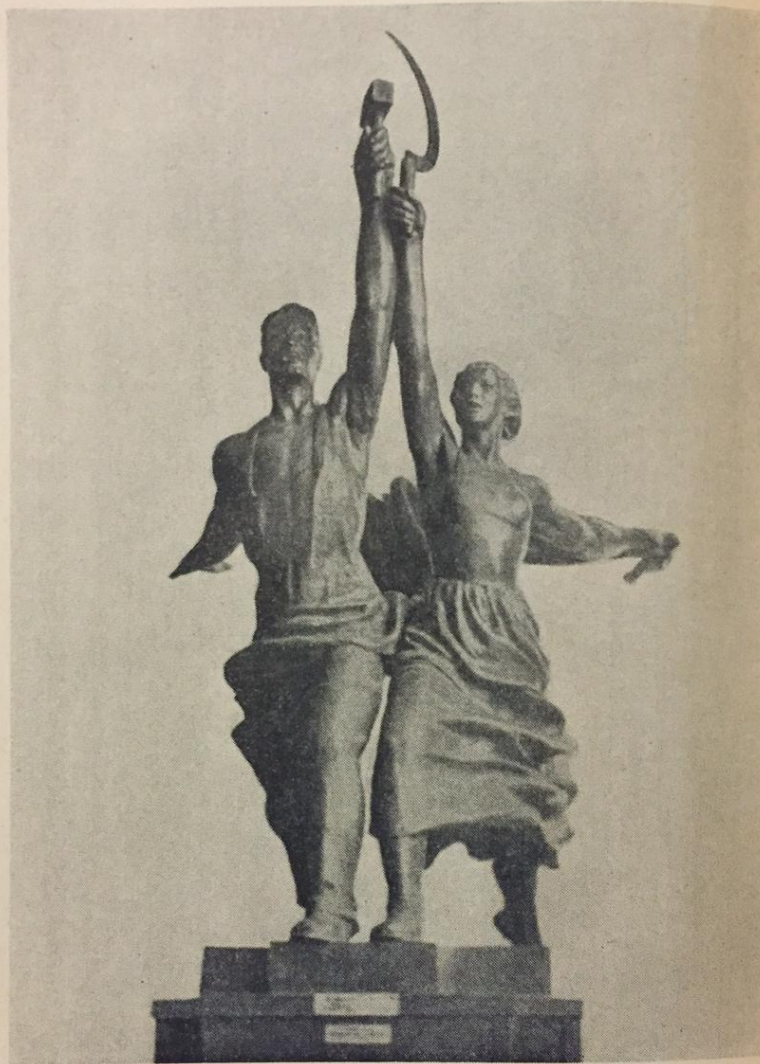
Figure 24. Nikolai Tomsky, *Sergey Kirov Monument*, St. Petersburg, 1937 (left); installation shot (right)



C·M·基洛夫（紀念碑的石膏模型）

Н·В·湯姆斯基

Figure 25. Nikolai Tmsky, *Sergey Kirov Monument*, St. Petersburg, 1937, from *Issues in Soviet Memorial Sculpture*



工人與集體農莊女莊員

В·И·穆希娜

Figure 26. Vera Mukhina, *Worker and Collective Farm Girl*, 1937, From *Issues in Soviet Memorial Sculpture*



Figure 27. All-Union Agricultural Exhibition Hall, detail of front gate, 1939, Moscow, from *The Great Function of Lenin's Monument Propaganda Plan*



Figure 28. All-Union Agricultural Exhibition Hall, overview shot, 1939, Moscow

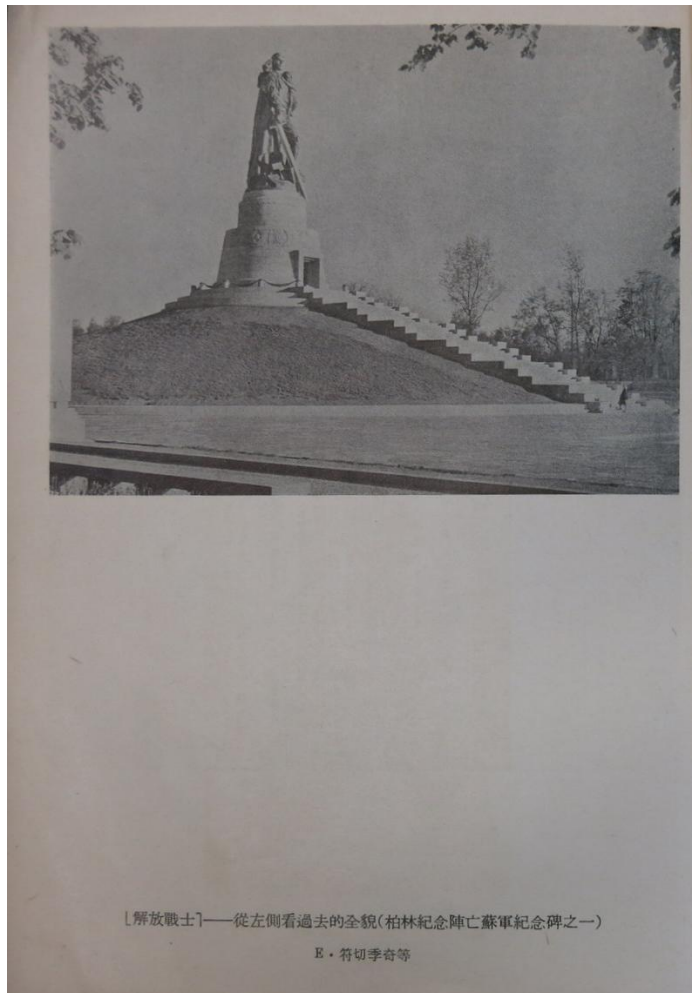


Figure 29. Yevgeny Vuchetich, *Soviet War Memorial* Treptow Park, Berlin, 1949, height: 120 cm. (39 ft.), from *The Great Function of Lenin's Monument Propaganda Plan* (left); Detail of park today (right)



Figure 30. Li Shouren, *Little Painter (Xiao huajia)*, height: 30.3 inches, 1955, China National Art Gallery



Figure 31. Pan He, *Hard Times (Jianku suiye)*, 1957, height: 33.5 inches, China National Art Gallery



Figure 32. Ma Gaihu, *Old Sheep Herder (Lao yangguan)*, 1958



Figure 33. *Selected Sculptures of Chongqing Workers* exhibition catalogue, cover and an example of an exhibit, Chongqing People's Publishing House, 1978



松藻煤矿二井举办的工人雕塑展览。

在工人雕塑创作活动的影响下，有些厂矿的向阳院也开展了泥塑活动。



Figure 34. *Selected Sculptures of Chongqing Workers* exhibition catalogue, Chongqing People's Publishing House, 1978



Figure 35. *Selected Sculptures of Chongqing Workers* exhibition catalogue, Chongqing People's Publishing House, 1978



Figure 36. *Monument to the People's Heroes*, front view from the north, 2014

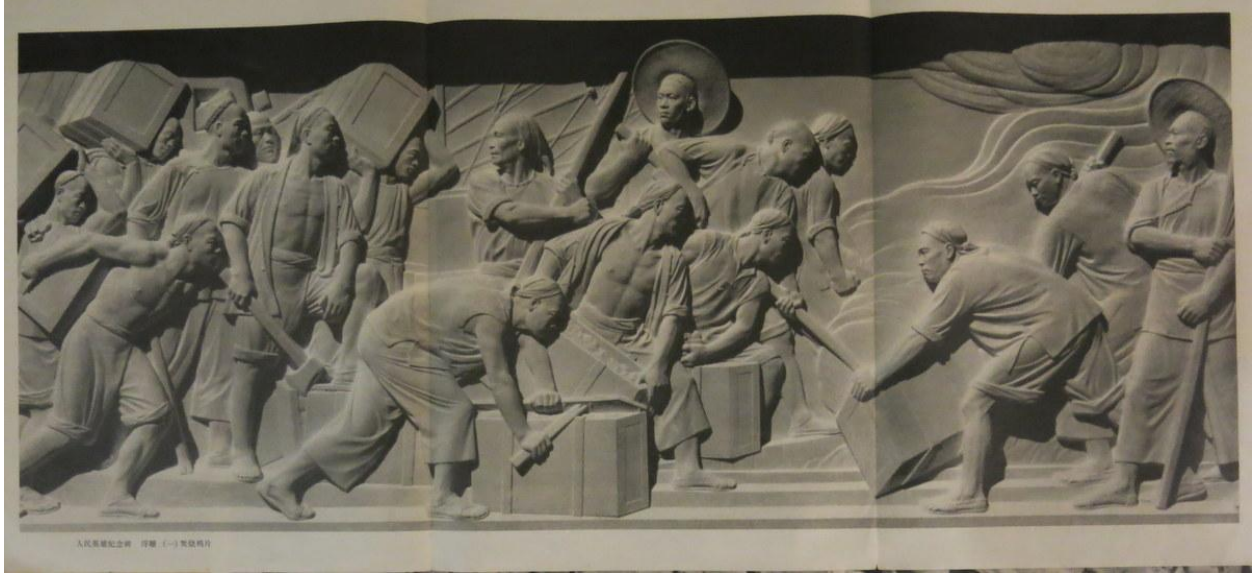


Figure 37a. Ceng Zhushao, “Opium War,” *Monument to the People’s Heroes*, marble, first relief

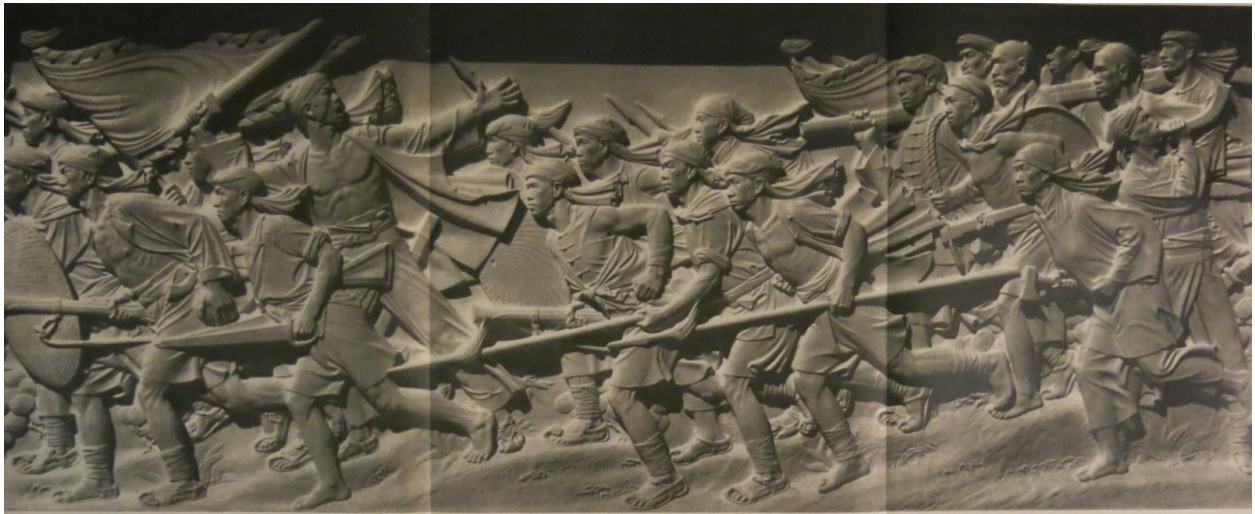


Figure 37b. Wang Bingzhao , “Jintian Uprising,” marble, second relief



Figure 37c. Fu Tianchou, “Wuchang Uprising,” marble, third relief



Figure 37d. Hua Tianyou, “May Fourth Movement,” marble, fourth relief



Figure 37e. Wang Linyi, "May Thirtieth Movement," marble, fifth relief



Figure 37f. Xiao Chuanjiu, "Nanchang Uprising," marble, sixth relief

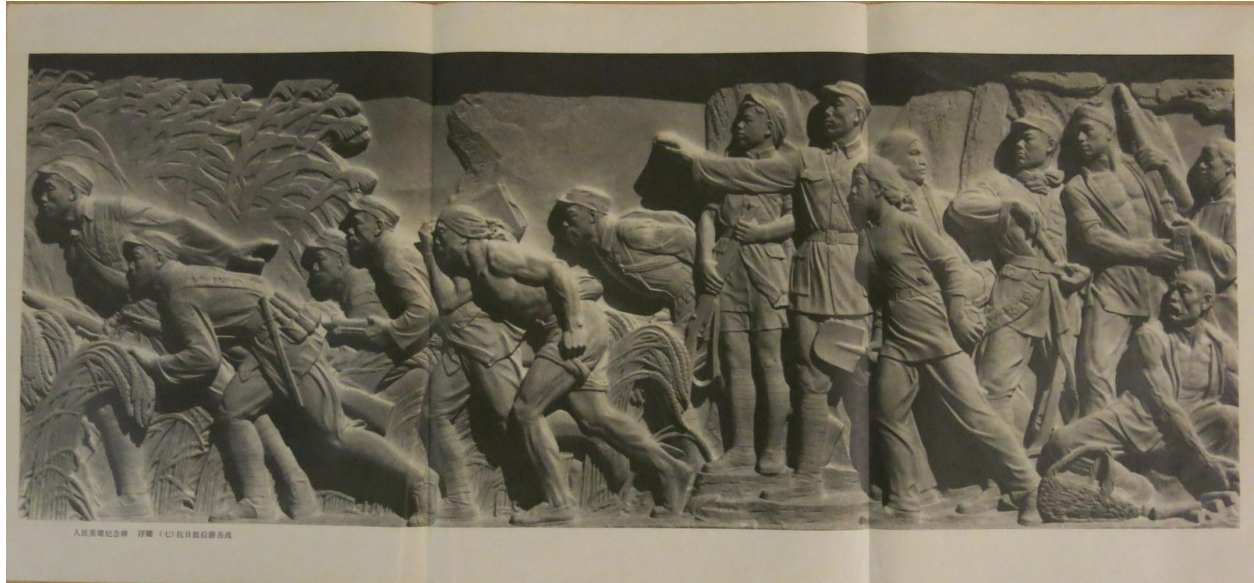


Figure 37g. Zhang Songhe, “Guerilla Warfare: War of Resistance Against Japan,” seventh relief



Figure 37h. Liu Kaiqu, “Support the Front Line, Welcome the People’s Liberation Army, Victoriously Cross the Yangtze River, Liberate the Nation,” marble, eighth relief (top); In situ view of relief with flanking smaller reliefs of celebration and assistance to soldiers (bottom)



Figure 38. *Monument to the People's Heroes* laying of the foundation stone ceremony starting with Mao Zedong (above) and preceded by Mao Zedong (below left) and Zhou Enlai (below right) delivering remarks, September 30, 1949, Beijing

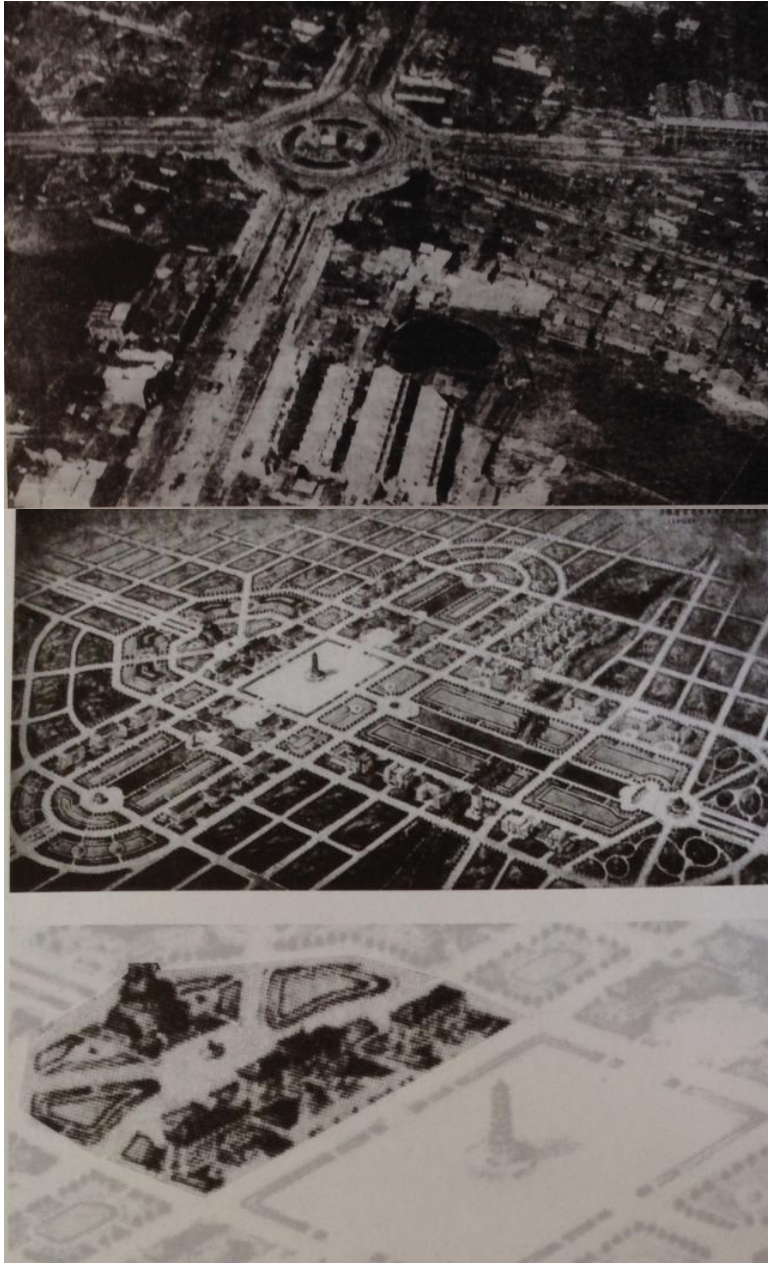


Figure 39. Aerial view of Xinjiekou Square in the 1930s, Nanjing (top); Cross-shaped plan for Shanghai administrative area according to *Da Shanghai Jihua (Greater Shanghai Plan)* and detail of square between the Shanghai City Government Building and the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall across, 1929 (bottom)

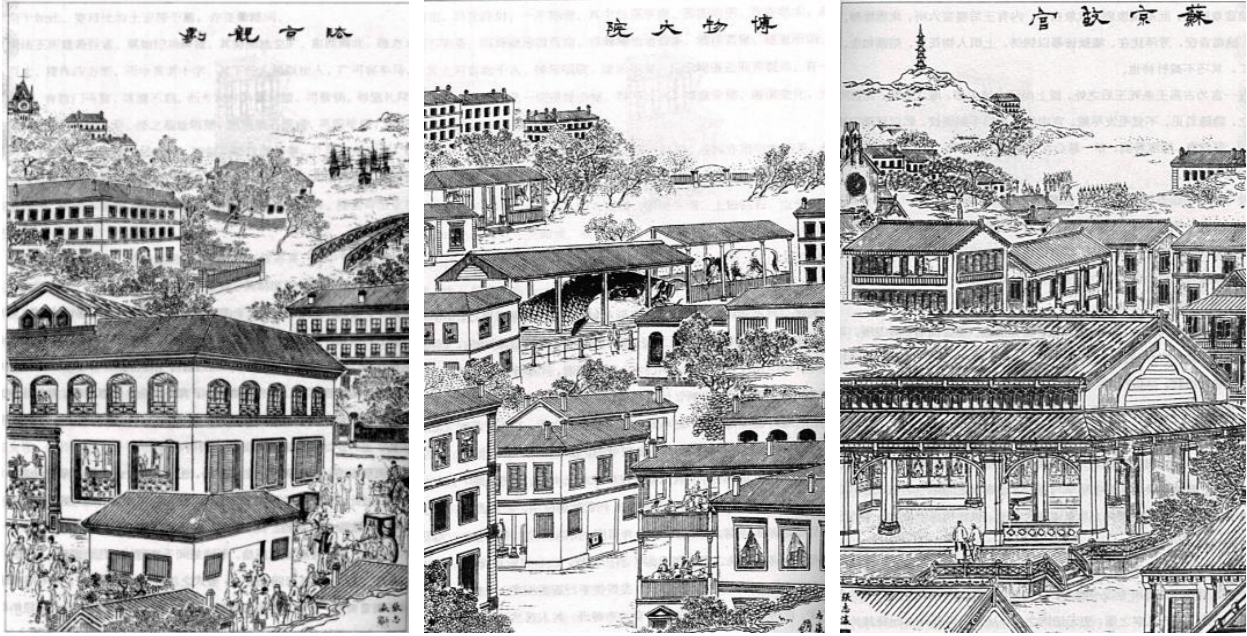


Figure 40. Wang Tao, *Jottings and Drawings from Carefree Travel (Manyou suilu tuji)*, illustrations by Zhang Zhiyi, 1890; from left to right: Paris, British Museum, Edinburgh

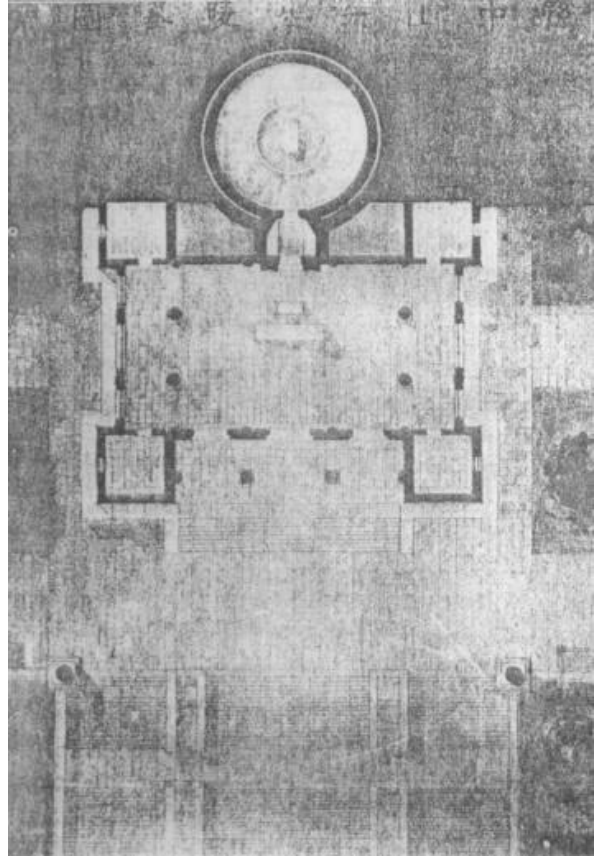
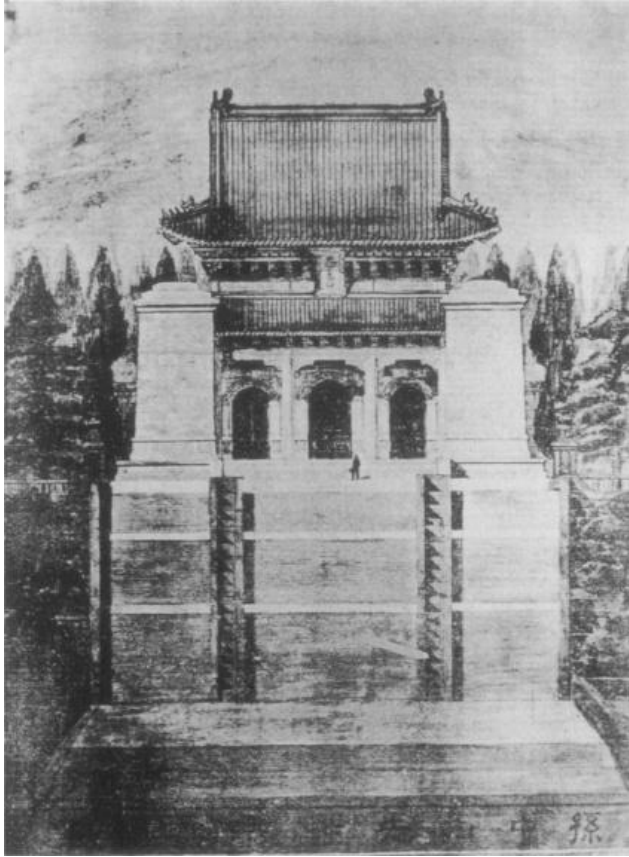


Figure 41. Lü Yanzhi, proposed design for Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, 1925 (left); plan and elevation view of the Sacrificial Hall and tomb chamber (right), winner of first place award



Figure 42. Francis H. Kales, proposed design for Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, 1925, winner of third honorable mention

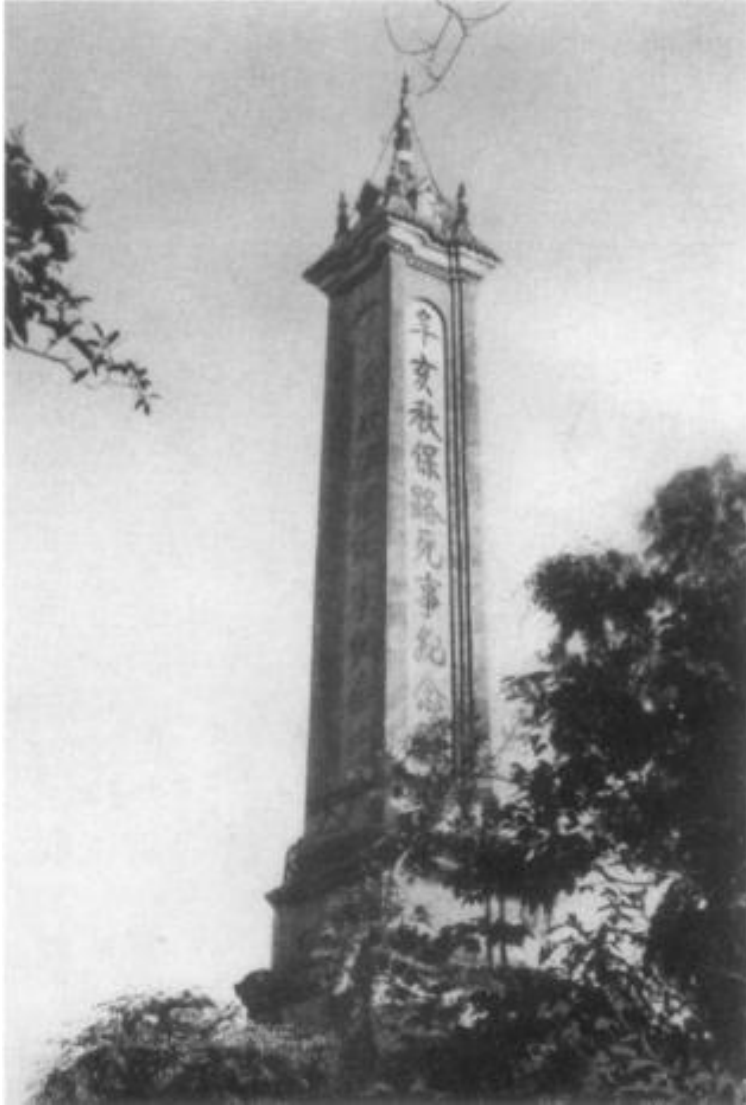


Figure 43. Wang Nan, *Monument to the Martyrs in the Railway Protection Movement*, Chengdu, 1913 (left); modern-day view of monument (right)



The tomb of an emperor in Han Dynasty located in Chongtu, Szechuan's Capital

漢昭烈帝陵墓在成都南關外五里許戶侯廟內



The Revolutionary Monument in Public Recreation ground

成都古白花灣
辛亥秋保路死事紀念碑
在成都公共體育場內



A suburb scenery in Chongtu



仁壽縣之土地信人
蜀地之迷信
深土人信人
坡地信人
千餘畝地
Stick "gods" seen on the hills, a superstition of the natives

李德培 攝影
四川景物
FROM SZECHUEN PROVINCE



夔州，之取來十惜國于，產四 奏鹽
。改造法製其年數，全甲鹽川
Manufacturing salt in the old ways



Farming as come many thousand years ago

巴蜀農人之插秧



Laundry - by hitting

浣衣
川人襪衣喜用棒擊



A year of harvest

資州人民之收穫

Figure 44. "Scenes from Sichuan Province" (Sichuan jingwu), *Young Companion (Liangyou)*, 1929, photo by Li Debei



Figure 45. Stele, Shanxi province, Northern Wei, 520, limestone, 1.73 meters, Victoria and Albert Museum



Figure 46. *Reading a Memorial Stele (Dubei tu)*, Ming dynasty, 14th-15th century, Zhe school, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst Köln



Figure 47. Detail of *Going out for a Hunt in the Mountains of Heaven* (*Tianshan chulie tu*), Qing dynasty, 17th century, handscroll, ink, and color on paper, Art Institute of Chicago



Figure 48. Vera Mukhina, *Worker and Collective Farm Girl* (reproduction), original work dated 1937

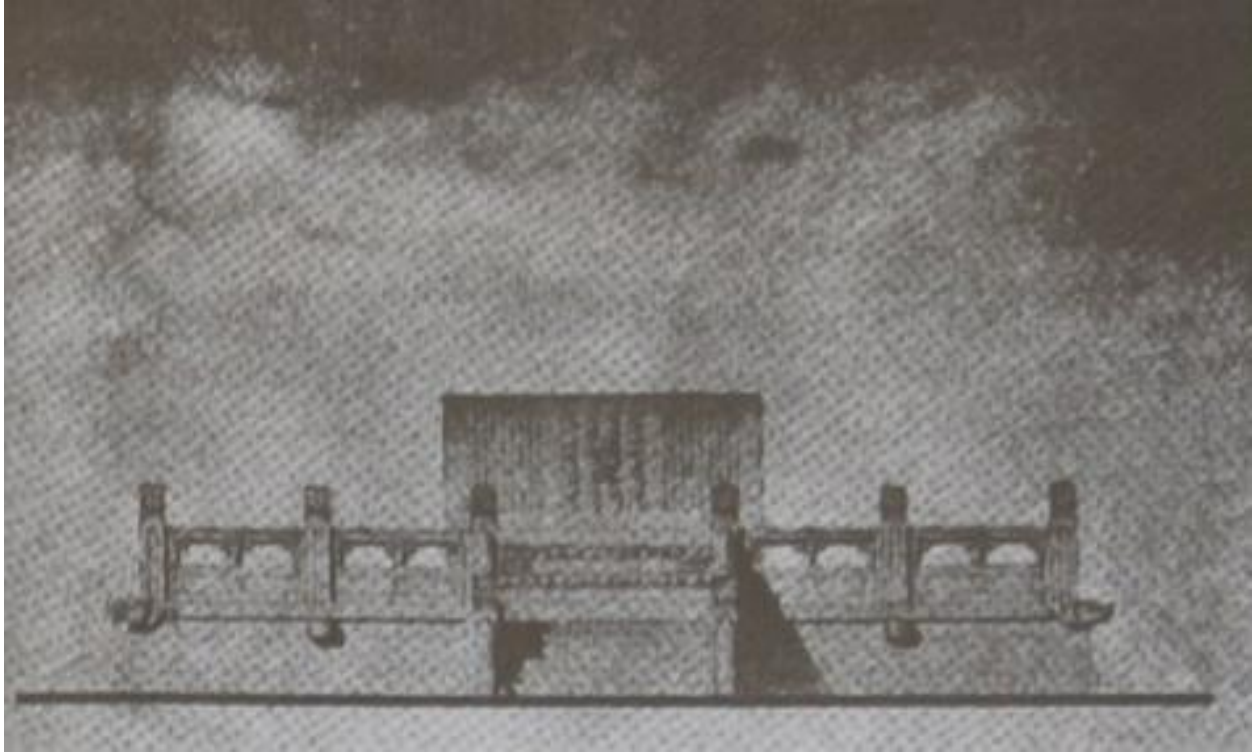


Figure 49. Short plans: Monument surrounded by railing and four corners have animal heads with water, monument is in the center and one side is the inscription



Figure 50. Palace pavilion with dragon head spouts, Forbidden City, Beijing

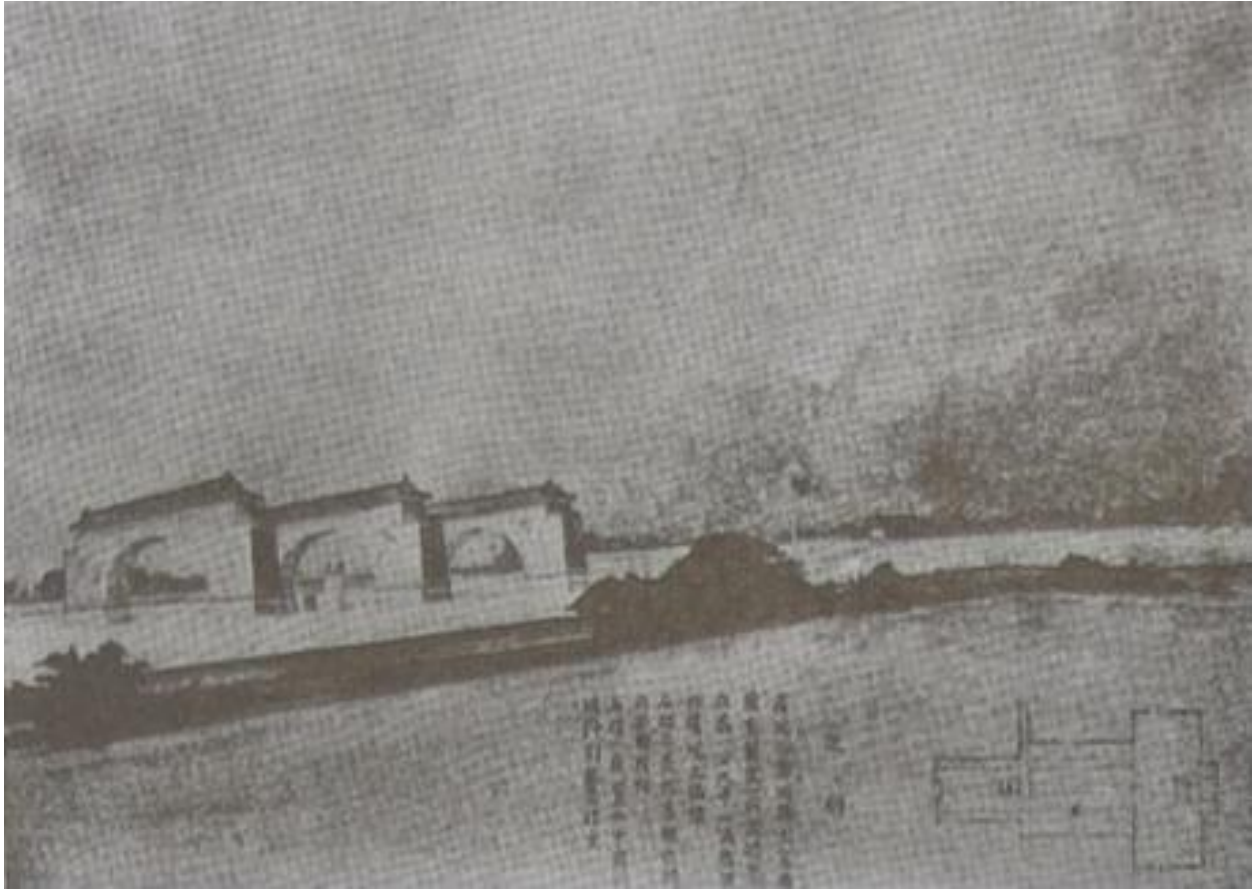


Figure 51. Three gates in parallel proposal



Figure 52. Proposal of pavilion with protrusion on every face of monument and on front and back faces are reliefs

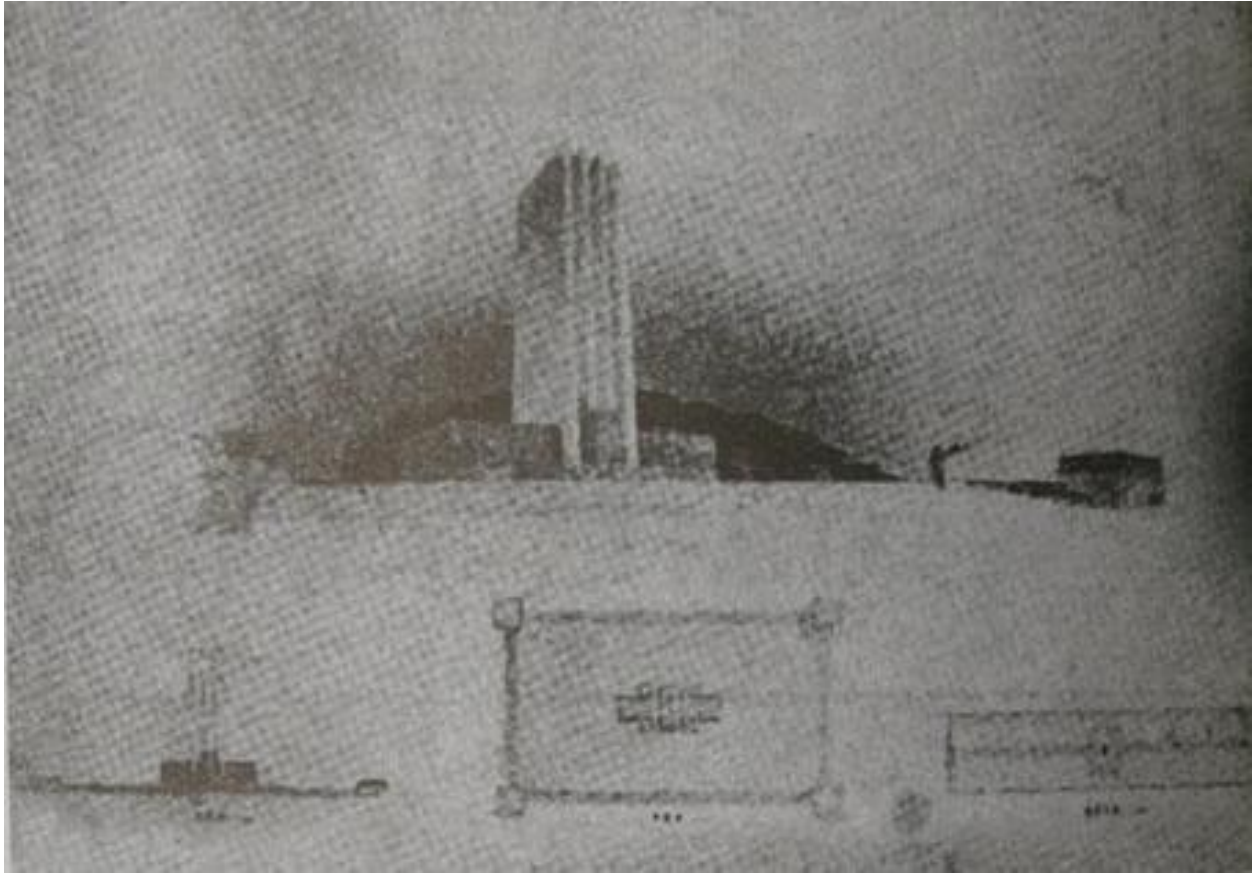


Figure 53. Front and back of monument are on the base and gradually tapers as it goes up, the column is made of four flat slabs put together

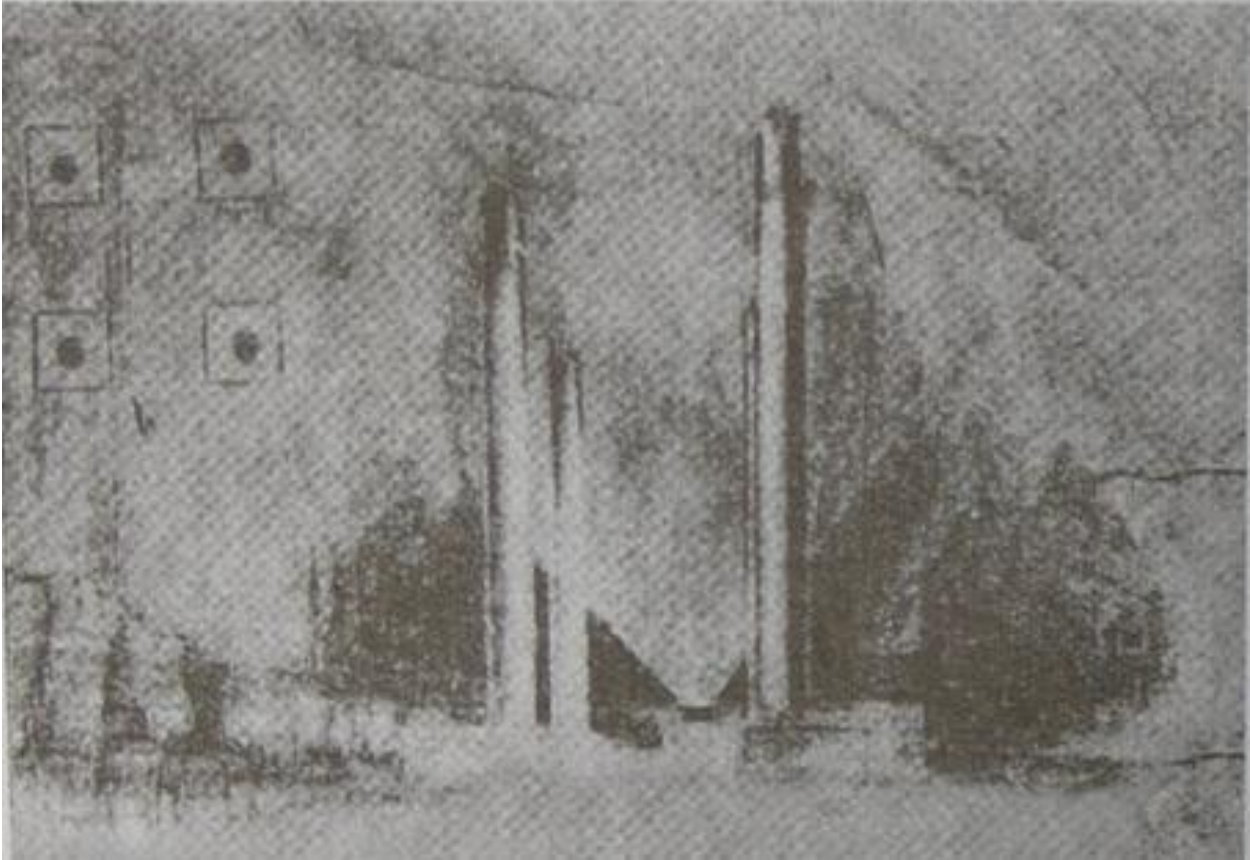


Figure 54. Group of four same architectural smokestack structures

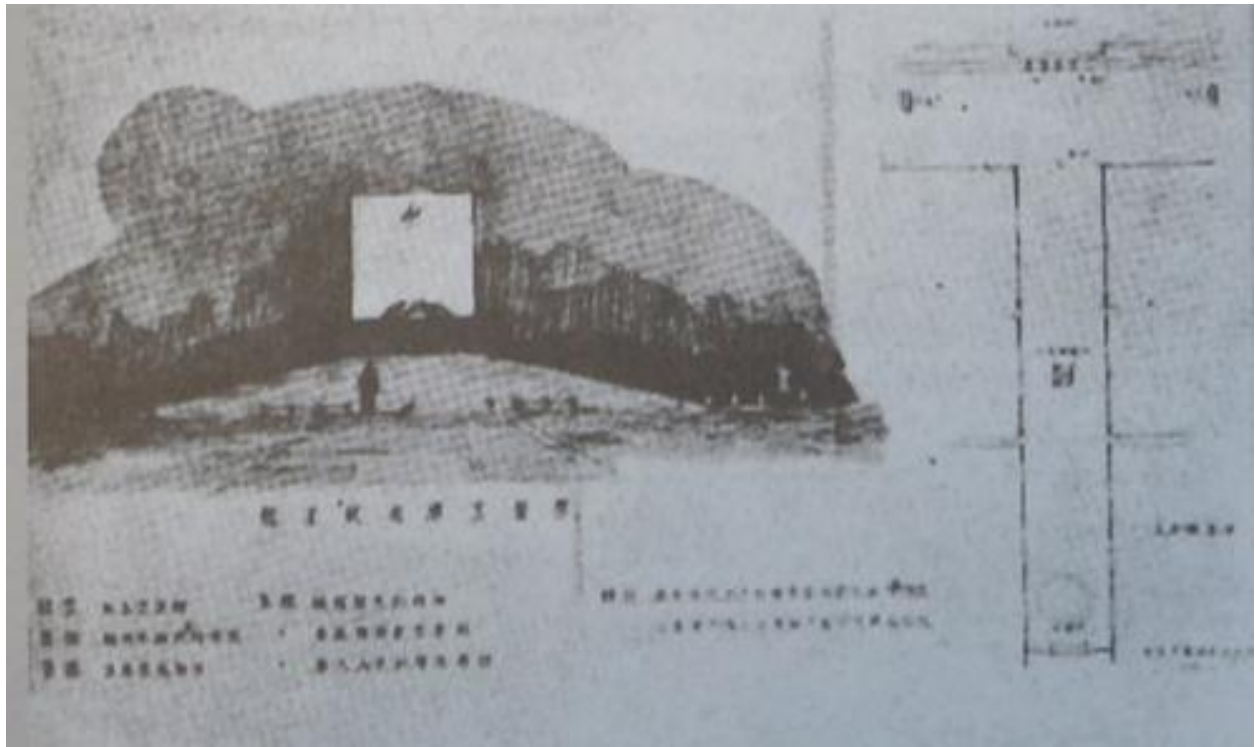
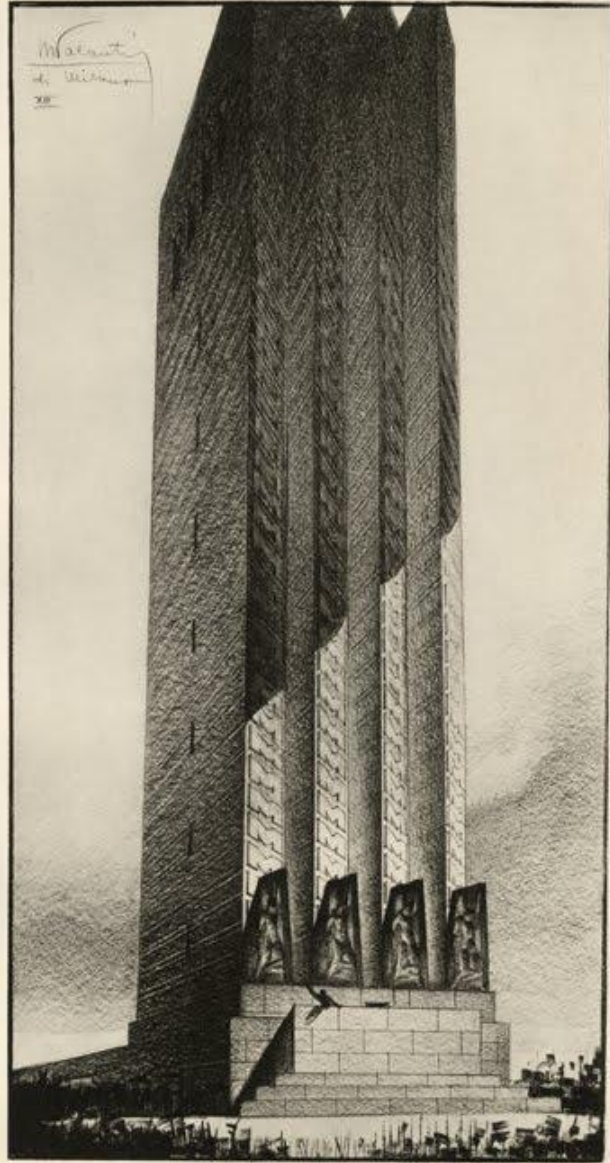


Figure 55. Proposal of cube raised on a base with flight of stairs leading up to a platform

TAV. X.



*Studio iniziale d'assieme del
"Quadrivirato" Soluzione E*

Figure 56. Mario Palanti, sample building plan for Mussolini's Rome, 1930s



Figure 57. *Monument to the People's Heroes*, front with Mao Zedong's inscription, 1952-1958, granite and marble, Beijing

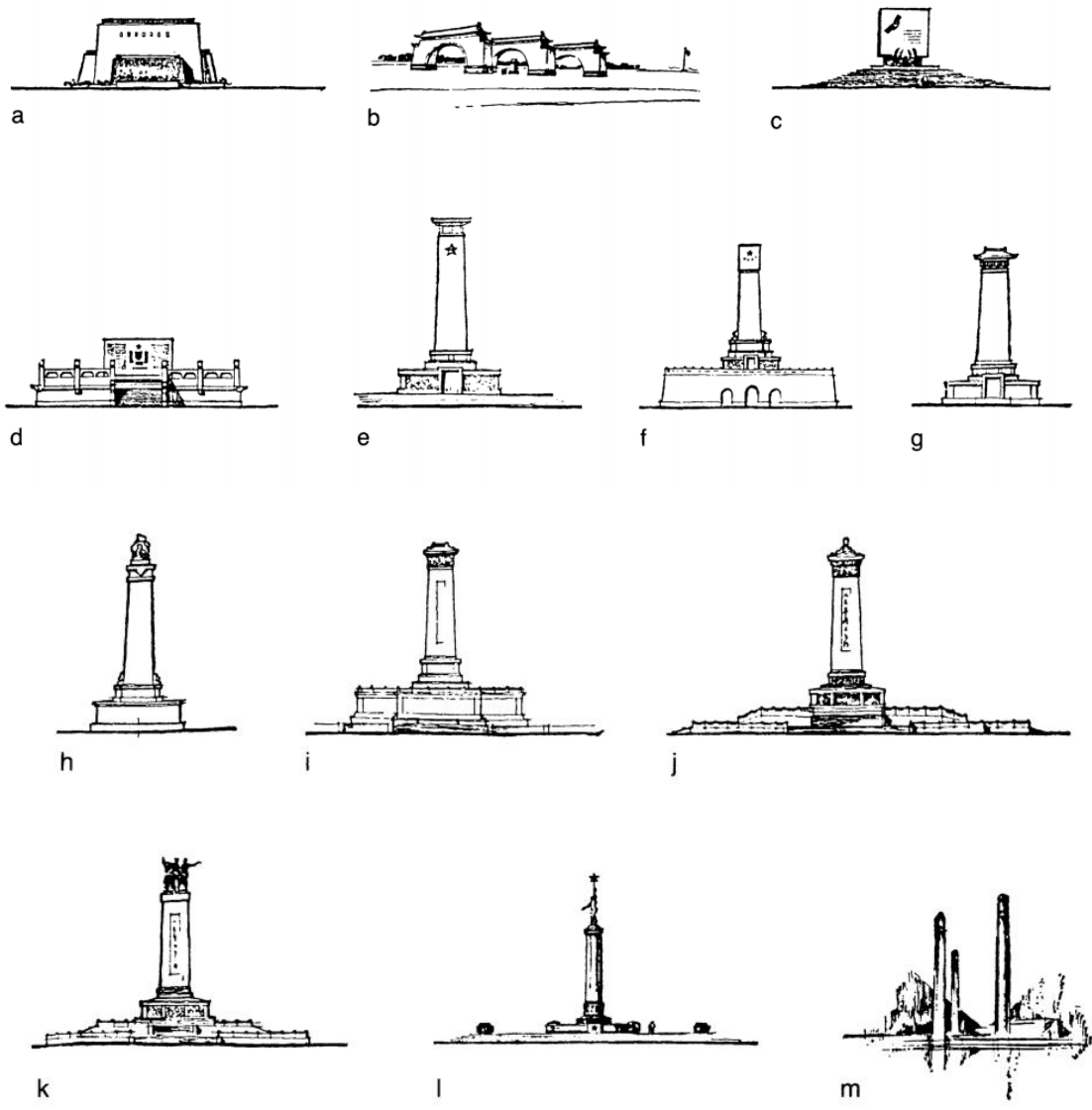


Figure 58. Initial proposals for *Monument to the People's Heroes*, 1950

向人民英雄致敬

4月5日是清明节，首都的少先队员成群结队地到天安门广场瞻仰人民英雄纪念碑，并且敬献花圈

本报记者 苍石摄



◆ 东城区前圆恩寺小学的少先队员在向人民英雄纪念碑献花圈

◆ 人民英雄纪念碑前



◆ 参加致敬仪式的小鼓手



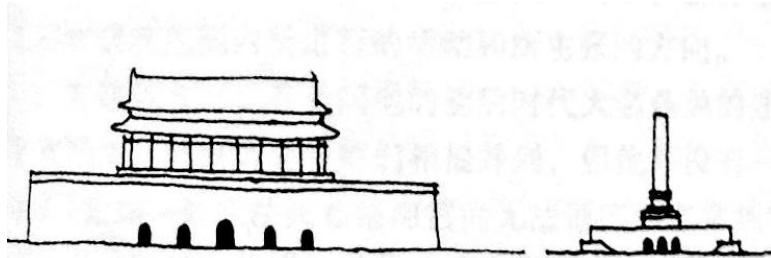
Figure 59. “Paying Respects to the People’s Heroes” (Xiang renmin yingxiong zhijing), pictures of Qingmingjie ceremony on April 5, 1962 at *Monument to the People’s Heroes*, from *People’s Daily*, April 6, 1962



Figure 60. Tiananmen Square, Beijing, with demonstrators in support of the May Thirtieth Movement in Shanghai, from *Eastern Miscellany (Dongfang zazhi)*, 1925



Figure 61. View from the south of Qianmen in the foreground and Tiananmen in the distance (future Tiananmen Square located between Qianmen and Tianamen), 1900, photo by Salzmann, E.V. (top); View of Tiananmen Square flanked by Corridor of a Thousand Steps (below left); Clearing of Tiananmen Square area in early 1950s (below right)



图三

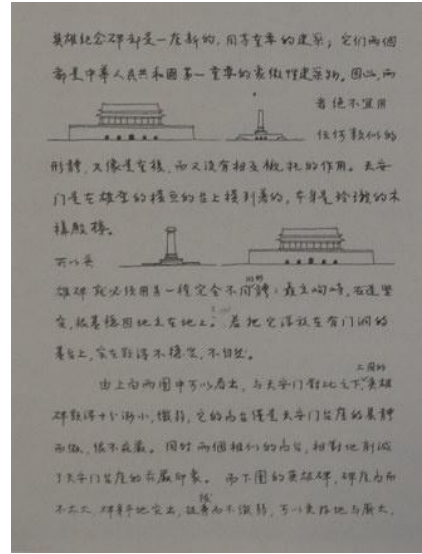


Figure 62. Liang Sicheng, sketch of proposed *Monument to the People's Heroes* with Tiananmen, in a letter to Peng Zhen, the mayor of Beijing, August 29, 1951 (left); Detail of actual third page of letter with sketch (right)

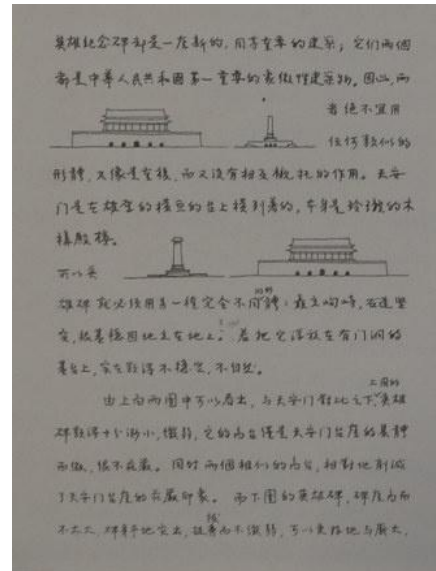
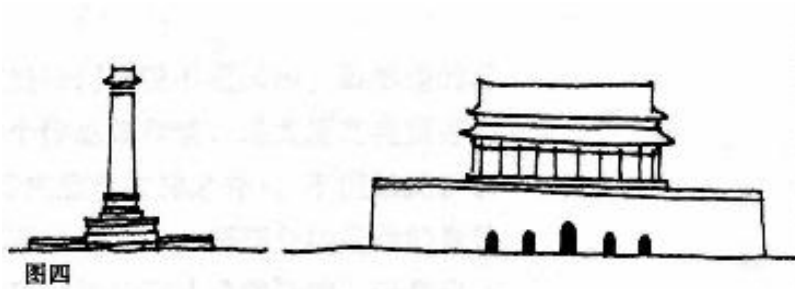
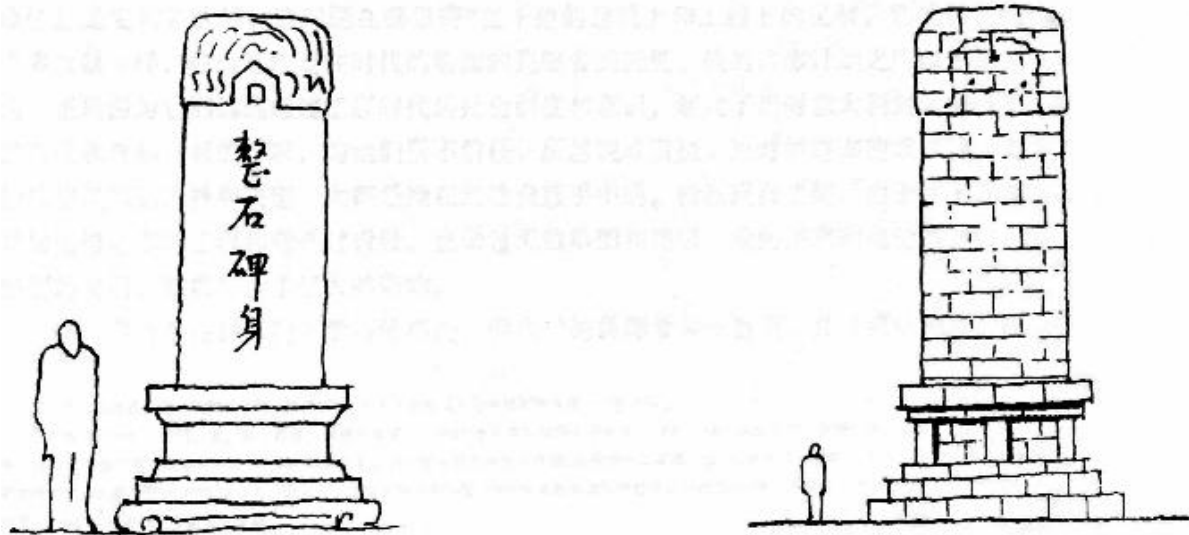


Figure 63. Liang Sicheng, sketch of proposed *Monument to the People's Heroes* with Tiananmen, in a letter to Peng Zhen, the mayor of Beijing, August 29, 1951 (left); Detail of actual third page of letter with sketch (right)




庙宇的柱子，在牌坊改碑而定的人们所设置的牌坊，使碑身如回廊舒展出去，同牌坊上的石坊面相呼应。

(4) 天安门台座下回廊的门洞与一个亭廊的城门洞相似，是必要的交通孔道，比例上宜大洞小，十分稳定。碑身四面宜成阻碍，不宜可以绕行，而且我们期望的是人民大众在回廊绕行。无妨，回廊洞窟在空间上既无必需，在结构上又不合理；比例上宜小洞大，‘鼓鼓’太平，在视觉上使碑身漂浮不稳定，宜有存在的理由。

总之，人民英雄纪念碑不宜放在高台上，而高台下不宜回廊。

关于碑身，从后一个没有字样的碑形，也有许多考虑之点。传统的习惯，碑身是一塊整石。

一块整石碑身之六丈，而柱身或石壁之柱脚，它是一塊刻以碑文的纪念碑建筑物，若做成碑形，最得成为一塊碑。



读而成的‘百衲碑’，很不壮观，给人的印象很不舒服。因此，在一次的讨论会中我曾申述过，张景惠、老舍、陈宝、以及于位先生都表示赞同。所以我认为做成碑形不合宜，而应该考虑：宜的多块砌成的一种纪念碑建筑物的形制。因此顶部很平，我很赞成注意顶部的交代。可惜这三件图的上部样式都不能令人满意。我敢在这上面学一次，再予以其他困难奉呈。

柱子已和上长宜谈利碑的四面用一块整石，四块合成，这固不是绝对对称不利，但我们不妨先打一量量。前後两端，以长18公尺，宽6公尺，以计算，每块重约212吨；两侧的所观，宽4公尺，重量约137吨。我们没有适当的运输工具，就是轻铁车皮也得载重五十吨，到了城区，四吨台能乘用更多的人口数力，每日接收数十公尺，行在时间堵塞交通，行远的地方，街面全部被毁，必




Figure 64. Liang Sicheng, sketch of a traditional stele and an enlarged stele as *Monument to the People's Heroes* with human figure, in a letter to Peng Zhen, the mayor of Beijing, August 29, 1951 (top); Detail of page five and six of letter with sketches (below)

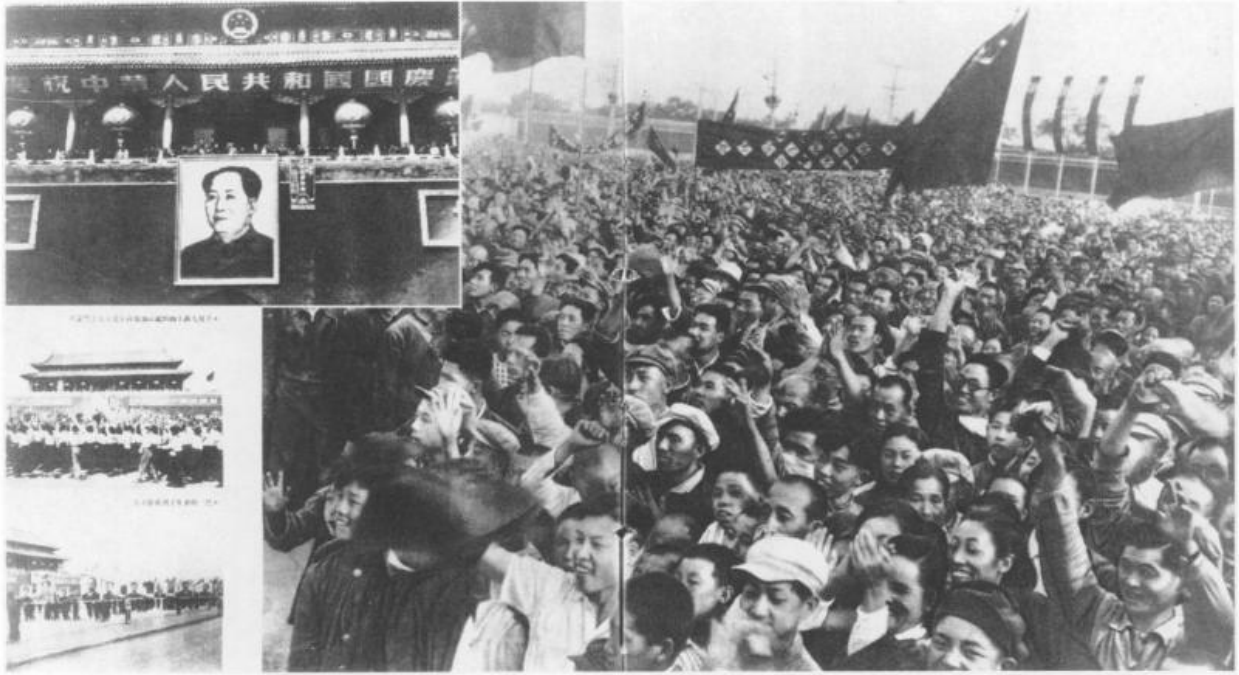


Figure 65. National Day rally on tenth anniversary of the People's Republic, 1959, from *Renmin huabao* 1 (July 1950)



Figure 66. Tiananmen Square, Beijing, with demonstrators in support of the May Thirtieth Movement in Shanghai, from *Dongfang zazhi*, 1925

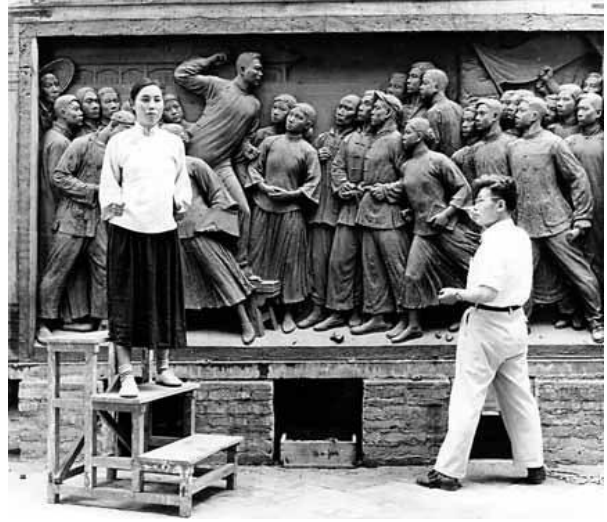
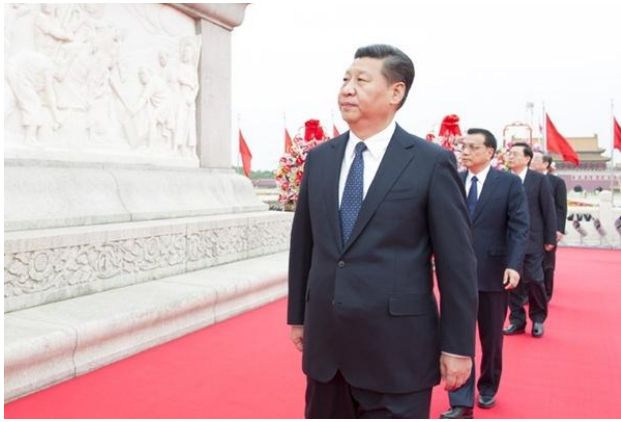


Figure 67. Leaders including President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang offer flowers at the Monument to the People's Heroes, September 30, 2014 (left); Hua Tianyou looks at female model while sculpting the fourth relief of the May 4th Movement in Beijing in June 1953 (right)

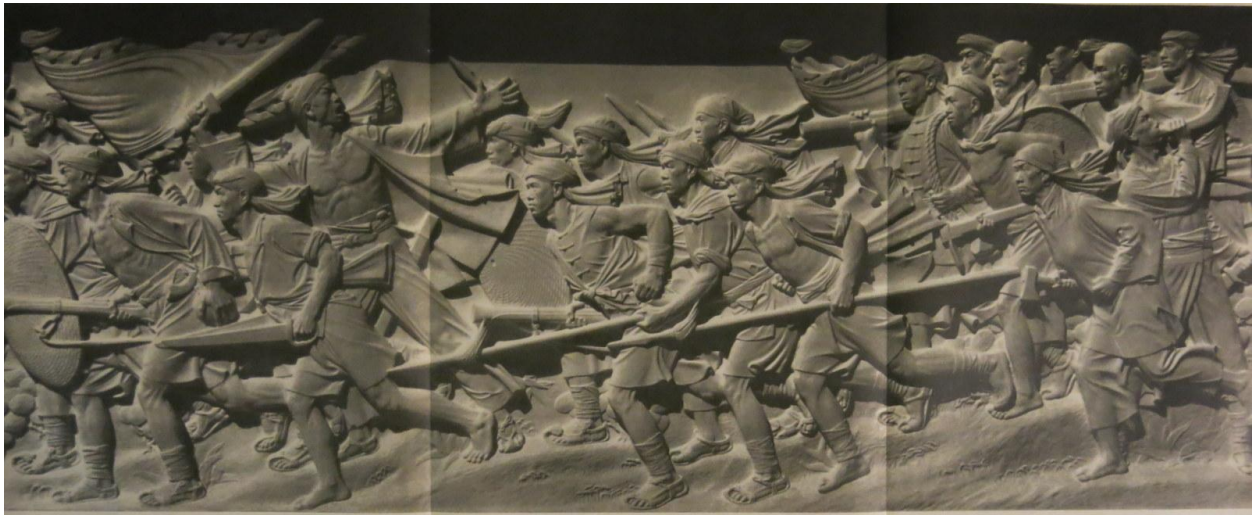
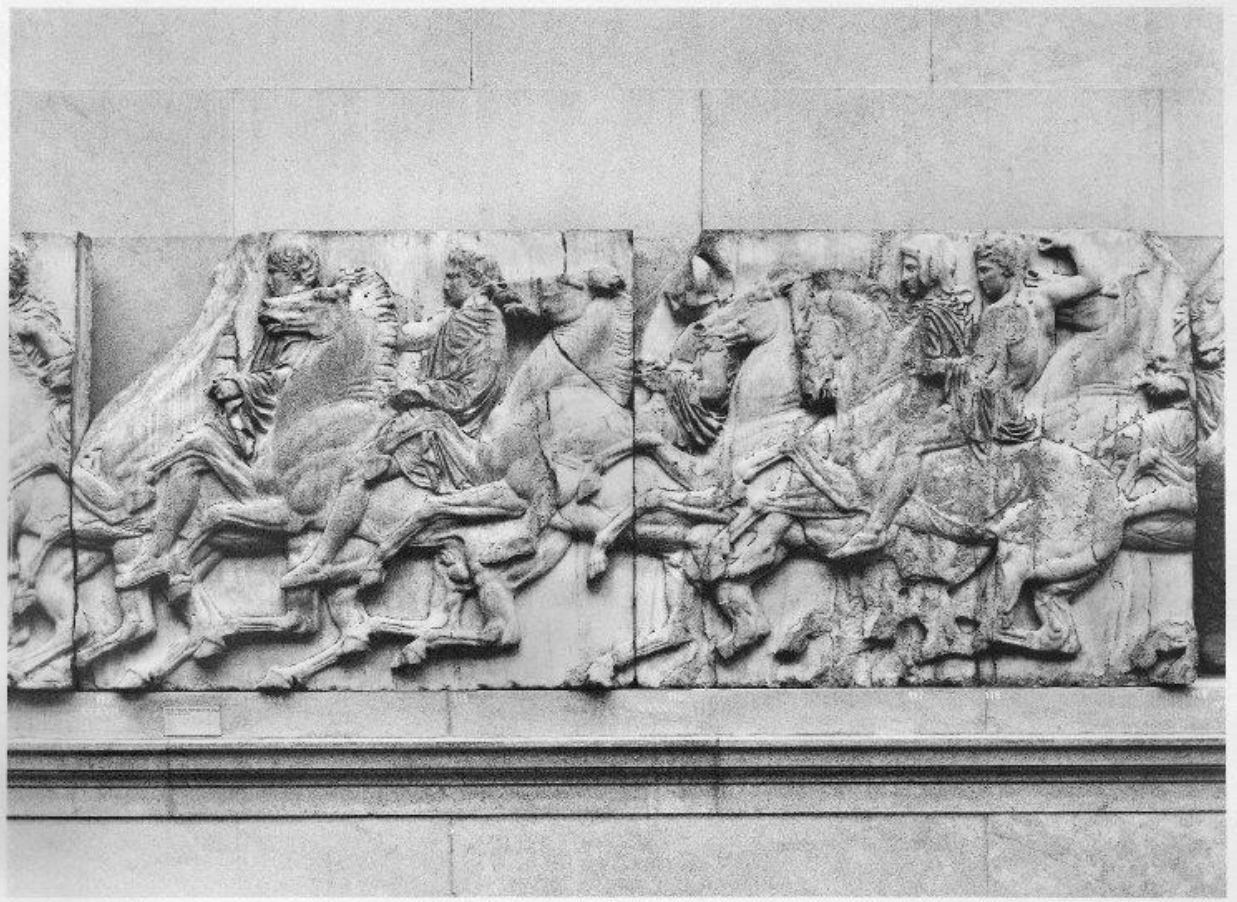


Figure 68. Marble relief, north frieze of the Parthenon, procession of horse-drawn chariots. British Museum (top); Wang Bingzhao, "Jintian Uprising," marble, second relief (below)



Figure 69. *Offering Procession of the Empress as Donor with Her Court*, 522 CE, Fine, dark-gray limestone, 80 inches x 9 feet 1 1/2 inches (top); Wang Linyi, “May Thirtieth Movement,” marble, *Monument to the People’s Heroes*, fifth relief (below)

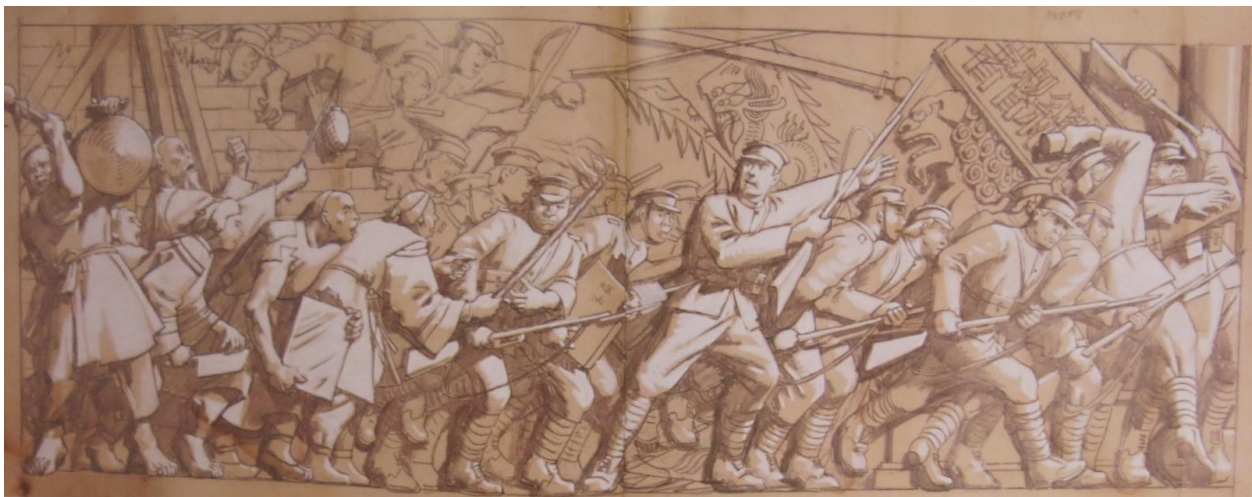


Figure 70. Fu Tianchou, "Wuchang Uprising," 1958, marble, *Monument to the People's Heroes*, third relief (top); Dong Xiwen, sketch for "Wuchang Uprising," 1953, pencil and gouache on paper, *Monument to the People's Heroes*, 11.4 x 30.7 inches (below)

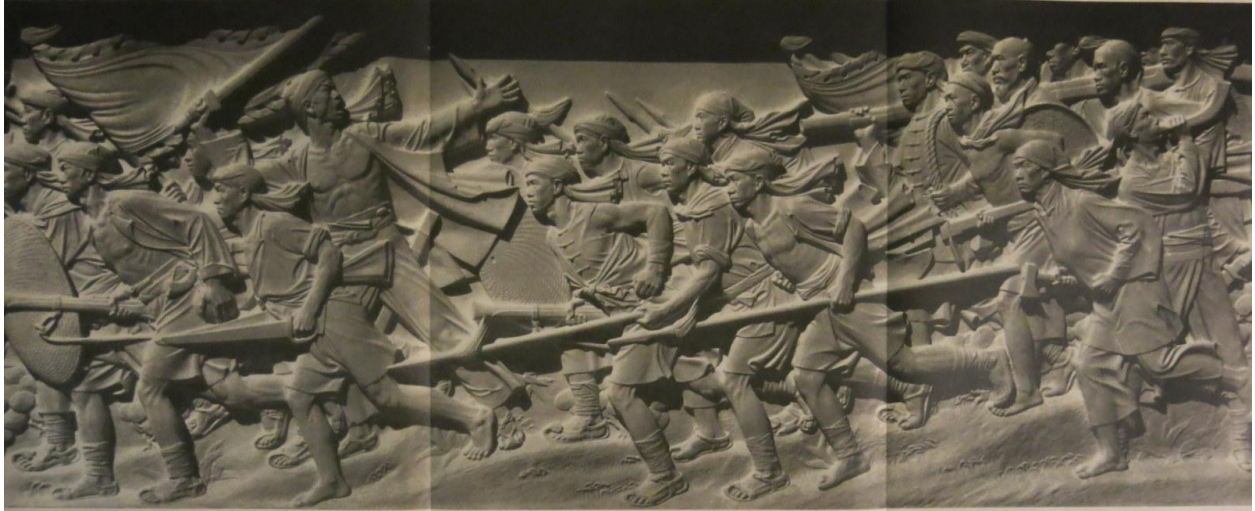


Figure 71. Wang Binzhao, “Jintian Uprising,” marble, *Monument to the People’s Heroes*, second relief



Figure 72. Wang Linyi, “May Thirtieth Movement,” marble, *Monument to the People’s Heroes*, fifth relief



Figure 73. Liu Kaiqu, “Support the Front Line, Welcome the People’s Liberation Army, Victoriously Cross the Yangtze River, Liberate the Nation,” marble, *Monument to the People’s Heroes*, eighth relief



Figure 74. Hu Yichuan, *To the Front*, 1932, woodblock print, 20 x 27 cm.



Figure 75. Li Hua, *Forward*, 1936, woodcut



怒吼吧！中国

Figure 76. Li Hua, *Roar, China!*, 1935, woodcut, 20 x 15 cm.



Figure 77. Four faces of base with reliefs (top to bottom): East side of Opium War and Jintian Uprising; Back (south) side of Wuchang Uprising, May Fourth, and May Thirtieth; West side of Nanchang Uprising and War of Resistance Against Japan; Front (north) side facing Tiananmen with Mao's inscription of Communist Revolution



代代红(油画)

颐和园集体创作

Figure 78. Summer Palace workers' collective creation, *Red Generation after Generation* (*Daidai hong*), ca. 1972, oil painting



Figure 79. Offering of wreaths to *Monument to the People's Heroes* on occasion of 60th anniversary of end to Second Sino-Japanese War, September 3, 2005



Figure 80. Popular mourning of Zhou Enlai at *Monument to the People's Heroes*, Tiananmen Square, Beijing, April 4, 1976



Figure 81. Woman reciting poetry at the informal commemoration of Zhou Enlai as everyone listens and copies, *Monument to the People's Heroes*, April 4, 1976



Figure 82. Popular mourning of Hu Yaobang at *Monument to the People's Heroes*, Beijing, April 15, 1989



Figure 83. *Monument to the People's Heroes* barricaded, 2014



Figure 84. *Returning Overseas Female Worker (Guiguo huaqiao nügong)*, 1954

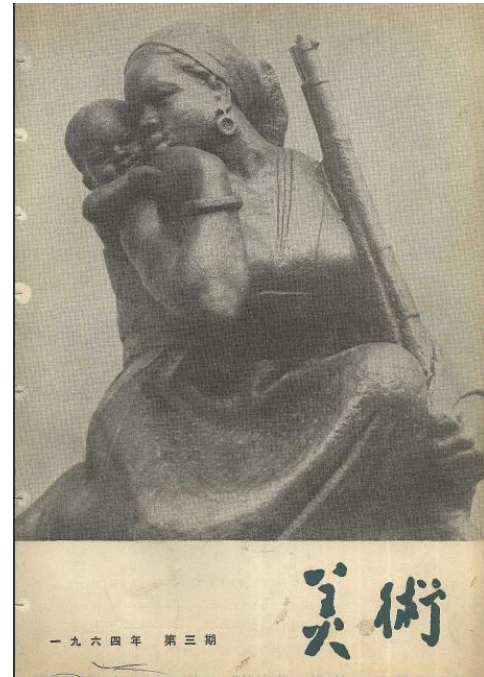
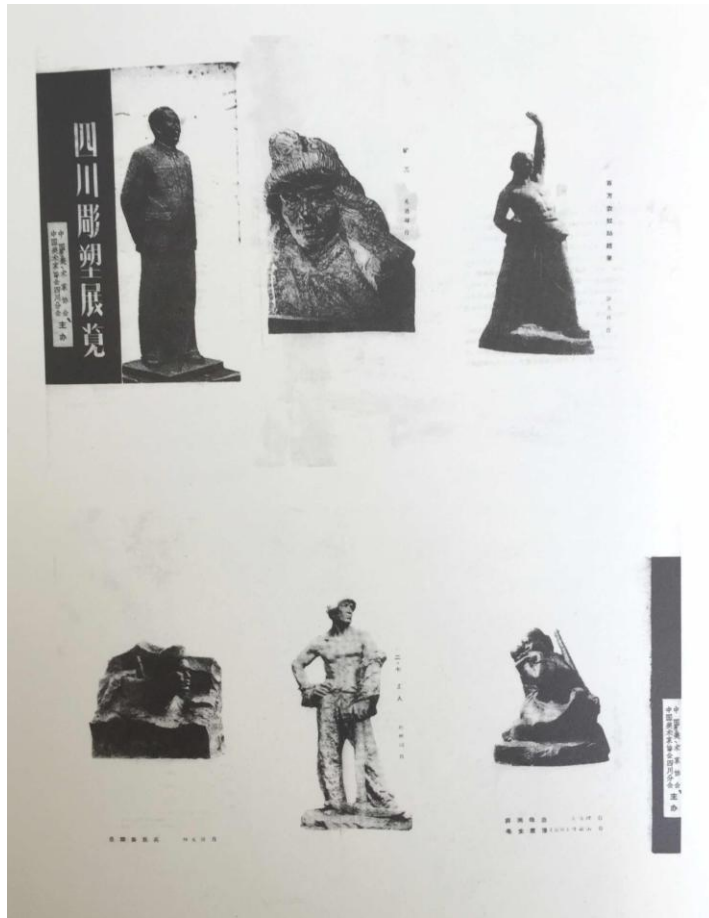


Figure 85. Cover and sample pages from *Sichuan Sculpture Exhibition* catalogue, 1964 (left); Cover of *Meishu* exhibition special issue in March 1964 (right)



Figure 86. Wu Mingwan, *Animal Breeder (Siyangyuan)*, wood, 1963, 75 x 20 x 18 cm. (2.46 x 0.66 x 0.59 ft.), China National Art Gallery, Beijing



Figure 87. Long Dehui, *Awaken (Juexing)*, plaster cast, 1960 135 x 106 x 62 cm. (4.43 x 3.48 x 2.03 ft.), China National Art Gallery, Beijing



Figure 88. Wang Guanyi, *Independence (Duli)*, 1964, China National Art Gallery, Beijing



Figure 89. Guo Qixiang, *Female Herder (Nü mugong)*, plaster cast, 1963-4, 103 x 55 x 34 cm. (3.38 x 1.80 x 1.15 ft.), China National Art Gallery, Beijing



Figure 90. School photos of Sichuan Fine Arts Institute students “experiencing life” (*tiyan shenghuo*) working in the countryside in the early 1950s (left); and in 1954 (right)

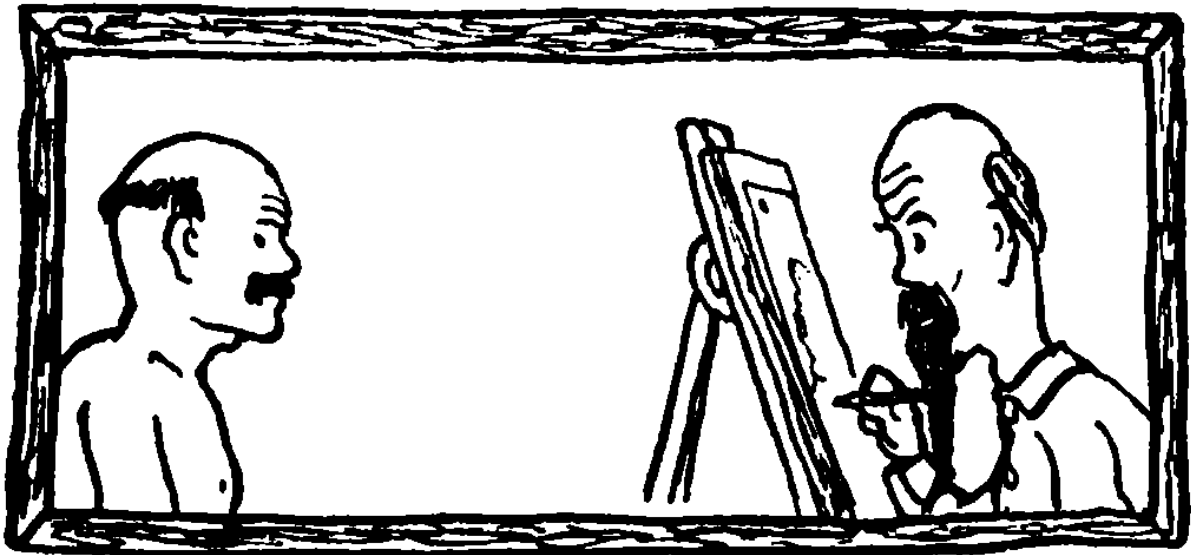
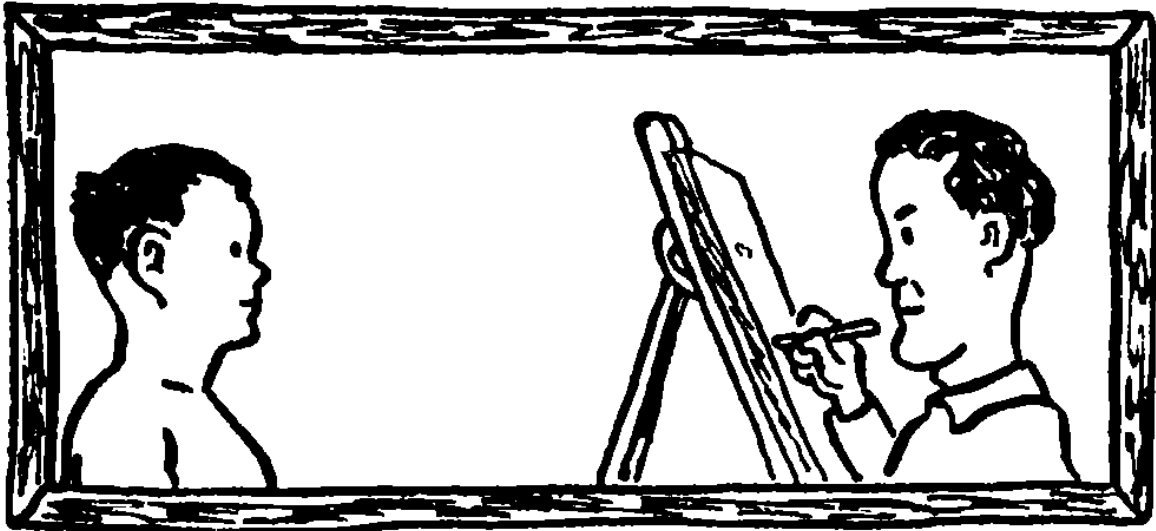


Figure 91. Hua Junwu, "Paying No Attention to Outside Matters" (Liang er bu wen chuang wai shi), *Meishu* 4 (1954), p. 17

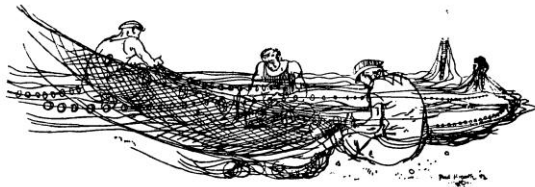


Figure 92. “Sketches of the Countryside,” January 24, 1954, *People’s Daily (Renmin ribao)*, p. 5 (left); reprinted selections in *Meishu 2*, February 1954 (right)



保羅·荷加斯
速寫

雅典近郊荒蕪的修道院中的教堂。



海德拉島上的漁人，在納粹佔領時期，他們為了爭取自己的自由和獨立，參加了海上游擊隊，表現了英勇的戰鬥精神。



The Ambrosini Plot, Goukline

在塞開海軍工會領袖安巴羅斯和他的同志們的法庭中，整次展播著他們的親朋們和從該拉伊亞斯地方來的工人們。



阿萊拉在古時是雅典的市場，現在是服裝、食品店和食品工廠匯集的中心。

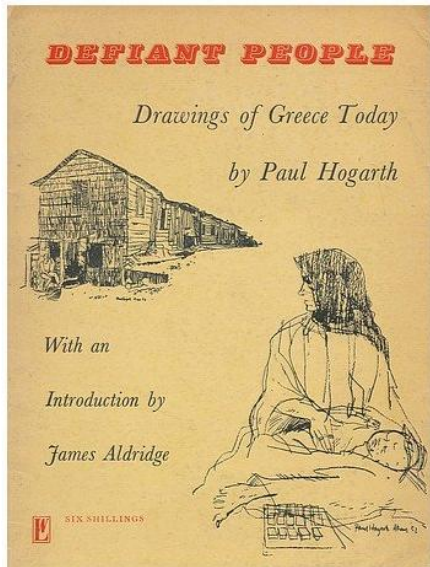


Figure 93. Sample pages in “Sketches by Paul Hogarth” (Bao luo he jia si suxie) from *Meishu 2* (1954), p. 30-34 (top); Cover of Hogarth’s book *Defiant People: Drawings of Greece Today* (bottom)

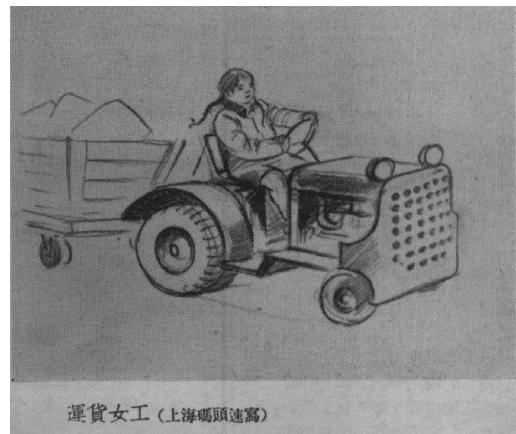


Figure 94. "Danish Artist Herluf Bidstrup: Sketches of Travels in China," *Meishu* 4, 1955, page 37



Figure 95. Example of sketches from “Watercolor and Sketch Exhibition”, *Meishu* 8 (1954): Ai Zhongxin, *Lumberyard*, 44.7 x 28 cm.

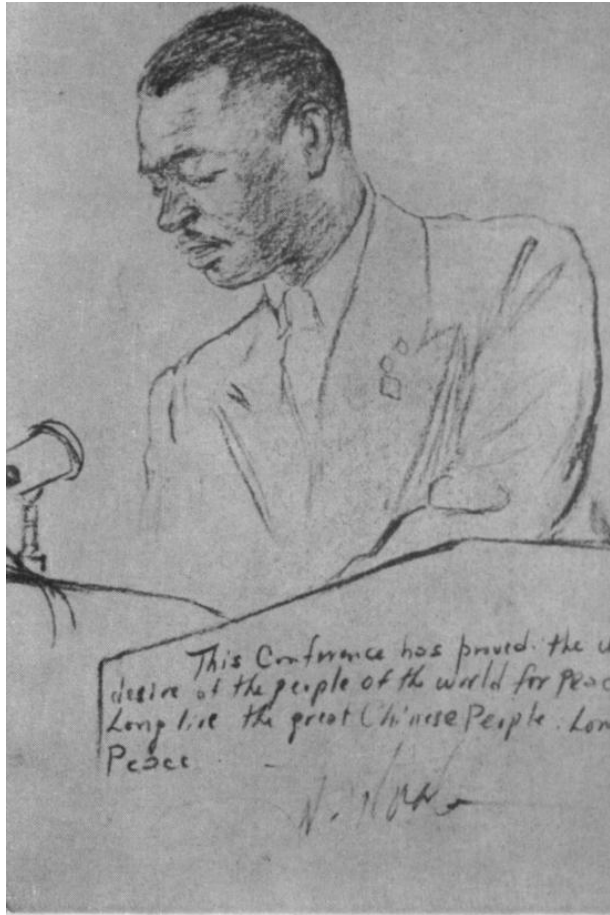


Figure 96. Examples of sketches from “Watercolor and Sketch Exhibition”, *Meishu* 8 (1954), p. 29-30: Si Tuqiao, *American Representative Speaking at the Asia and Pacific Rim Peace Conference*, 24 x 32.5 cm. (left); Shao Yu, *Wuchang Shipbuilding Worker*, 31.3 x 47 cm. (right)

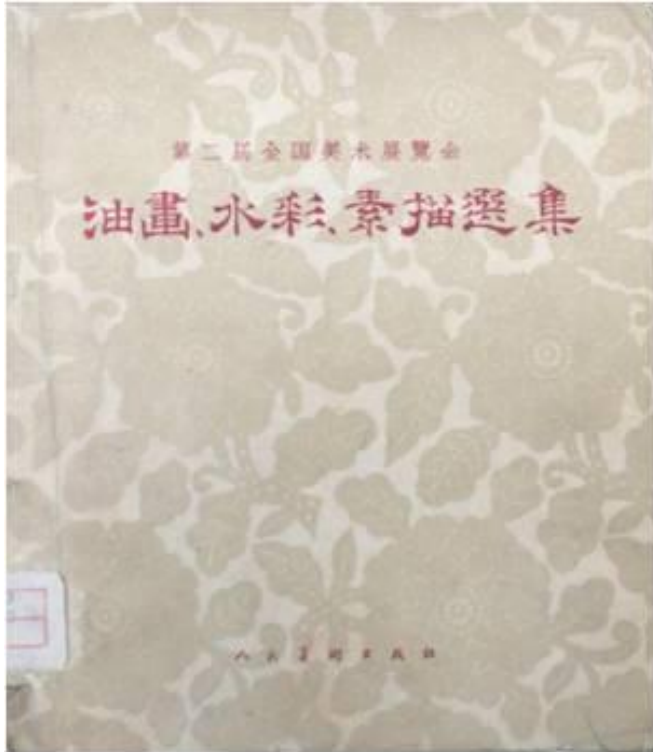


Figure 97. Cover of *Second National Art Exhibition: Selections of Oil Painting, Watercolor, Drawing*, 1955 (left); Example of a sketch from the exhibition (right)

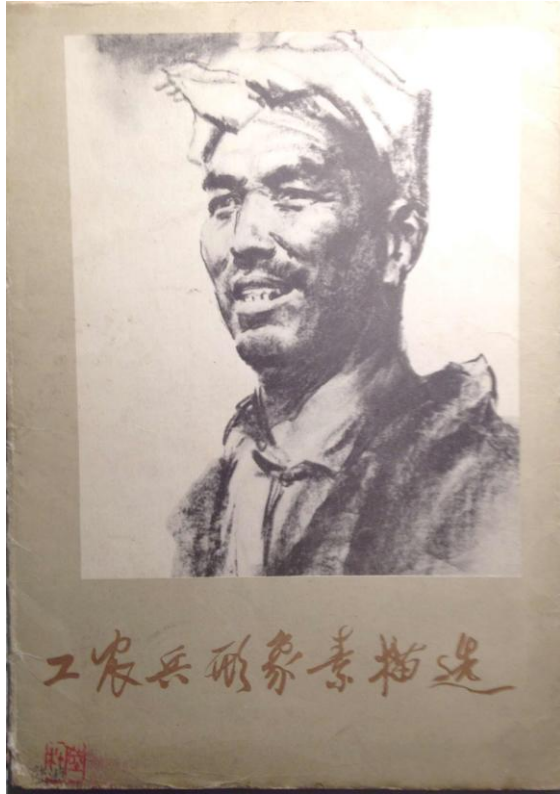


Figure 98. Examples from *Selected Sketches of Worker-Peasant-Soldier* Cover page with Chen Yifei's *Farmer* (left); Lou Jiaben's *Oil Worker* (right), People's Fine Arts Publishing House, 1977



Figure 99. Examples from *Selected Sketches of Worker-Peasant-Soldier*: Zhao Bojun's *Steel Mill Woman Worker* (left); Zhao Youping's *Construction Site Cook* (right), People's Fine Arts Publishing House, 1977



Figure 100. Paul Hogarth, *Sketches of New China* (*zai xin zhongguo de sumiao*), 1955, People's Art Publishers (Renmin meishu chubanshe)



Figure 101. 1977 published sketch of worker by Zhao Bojun (left); 1955 published sketch of worker by Paul Hogarth while traveling in China (right)



Figure 102. Various published sketch collections for art study published in 1970s *Selected Figural Drawings* (detail of contents at top and cover on bottom right); *Reference for Chinese Figural Techniques* (bottom left); *Live Sketch of Workers, Farmers, and Soldiers* (bottom middle)



Figure 103. Details of sculptural reliefs, Song dynasty (9th century), Dazu, Sichuan Province



Figure 104. Guo Qixiang, *Female Herder (Nü mugong)*, plaster cast, 1963-4, 103 x 55 x 34 cm. (3.38 x 1.80 x 1.15 ft.), China National Art Gallery, Beijing

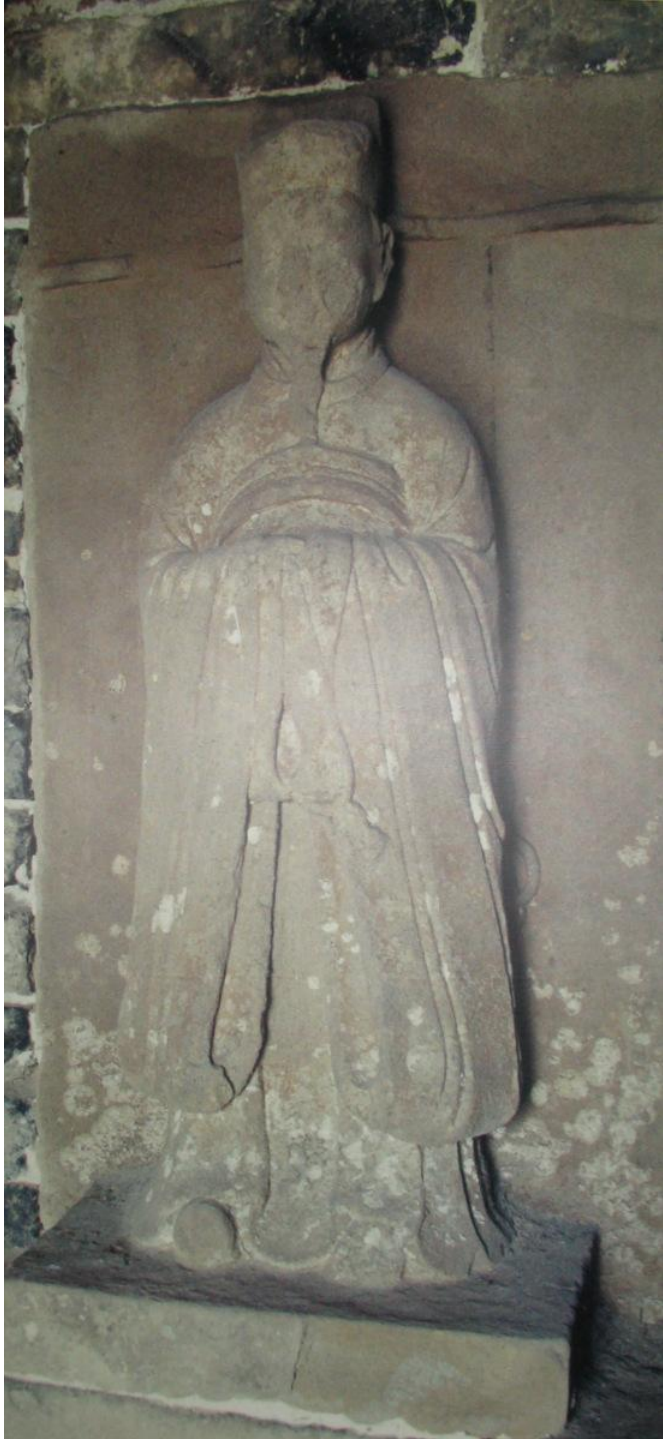


Figure 105. Detail of figurative sculpture, Song dynasty (9th century), Dazu, Sichuan Province



Figure 106. Yang Fayu, *Jingpo Militiaman (Jingpo minzu bing)*, stone, 1963



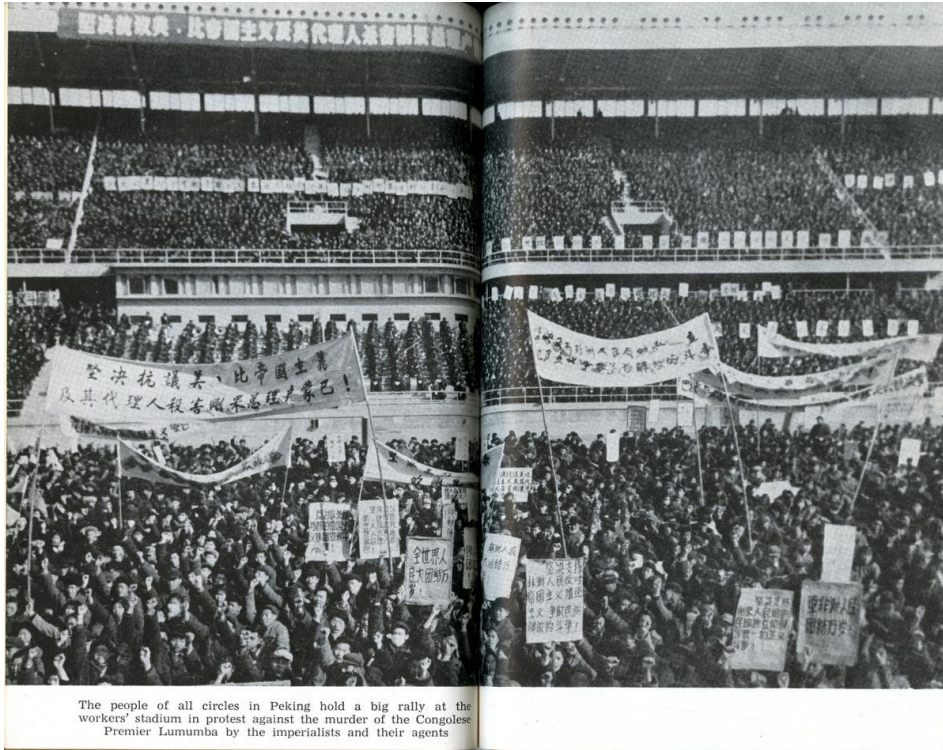
Figure 107. Li Hu, *Portrait of an Indian Female (Yindu funü xiang)*, ink and color, 1956



Figure 108. Li Pingfan, *We Want Peace (Women yao heping)*, watercolor print, 1959



Figure 109. Yi Miao, *The People All Over the World Firmly Support Peace*, 1951, 53 x 40 cm.



The people of all circles in Peking hold a big rally at the workers' stadium in protest against the murder of the Congolese Premier Lumumba by the imperialists and their agents

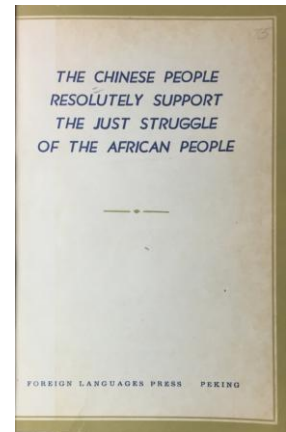


Figure 110. *The Chinese People Resolutely Support the Just Struggle of the African People*, cover and image of mass rally of support for Congo in Beijing, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1961



Figure 111. Wu Biduan and Jin Shangyi, *Chairman Mao Standing with People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America*, oil on canvas, 143 x 156 cm., 1961, China National Art Gallery, Beijing



Figure 112. Long Dehui, *Awaken (Juexing)*, plaster cast, 1960, 135 x 106 x 62 cm. (4.43 x 3.48 x 2.03 ft.), China National Art Gallery, Beijing



Figure 113. Wang Guanyi, *Independence (Duli)*, 1963



Figure 114. Long Xuli, *African Mother (Feizhou muqin)*, fiberglass, 1963, 100 x 85 cm. (3.25 x 2.78 ft.), China National Art Gallery, Beijing



Figure 115. Chao Yinian, *Oppressed People Unite to Oppose U.S. Imperialism*, 1964, 53 x 77 cm.



Figure 116. Long Xuli, *African Mother (Feizhou muqin)*, fiberglass, 1963, 100 x 85 cm. (3.25 x 2.78 ft.), China National Art Gallery, Beijing

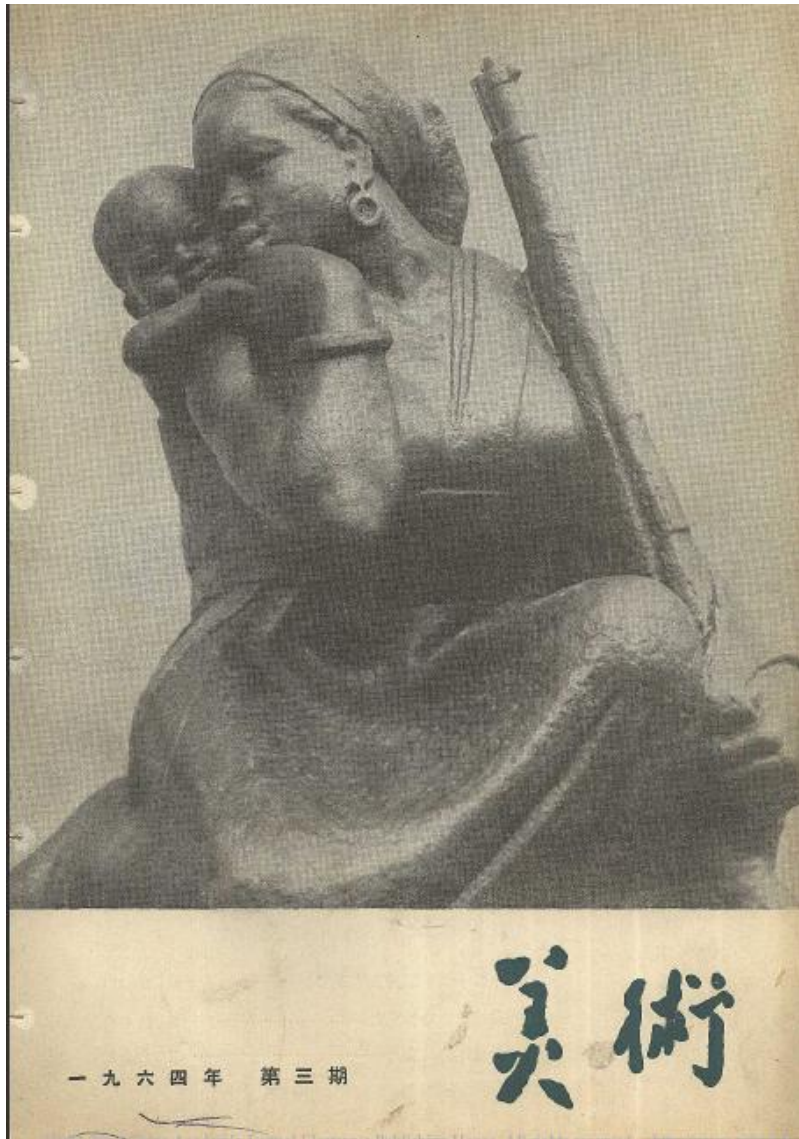


Figure 117. Long Xuli, *African Mother (Feizhou muqin)* (left); Detail of African female in oil painting *Chairman Mao Standing with People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America* (right)

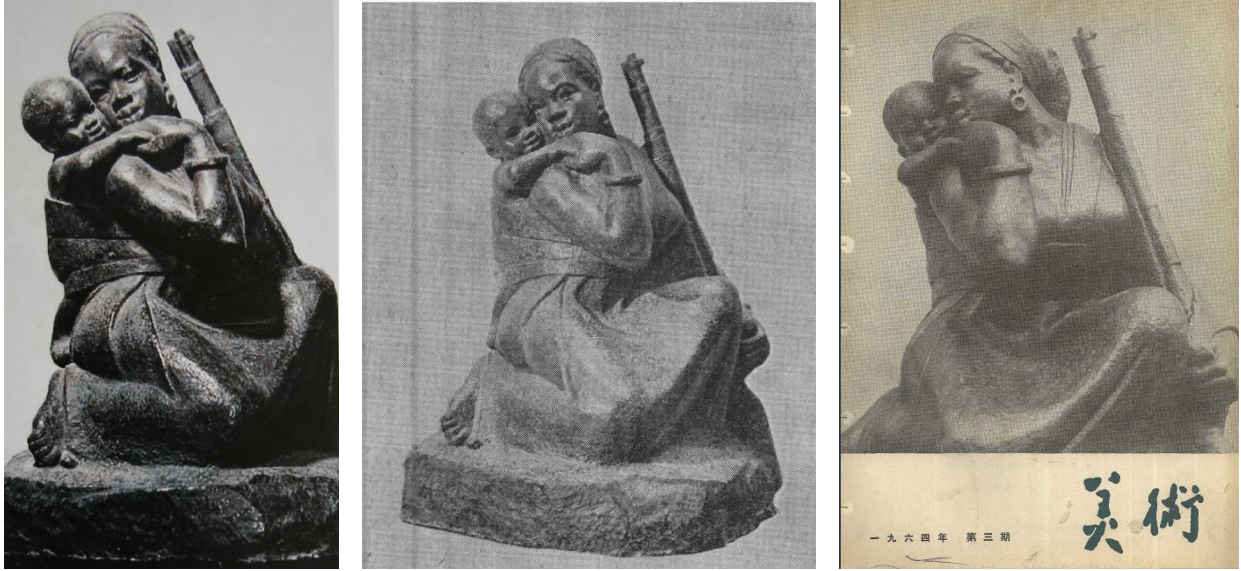


Figure 118. Long Xuli, *African Mother (Feizhou muqin)*, various views, fiberglass, 1963, 100 x 85 cm. (3.25 x 2.78 ft.), China National Art Gallery, Beijing

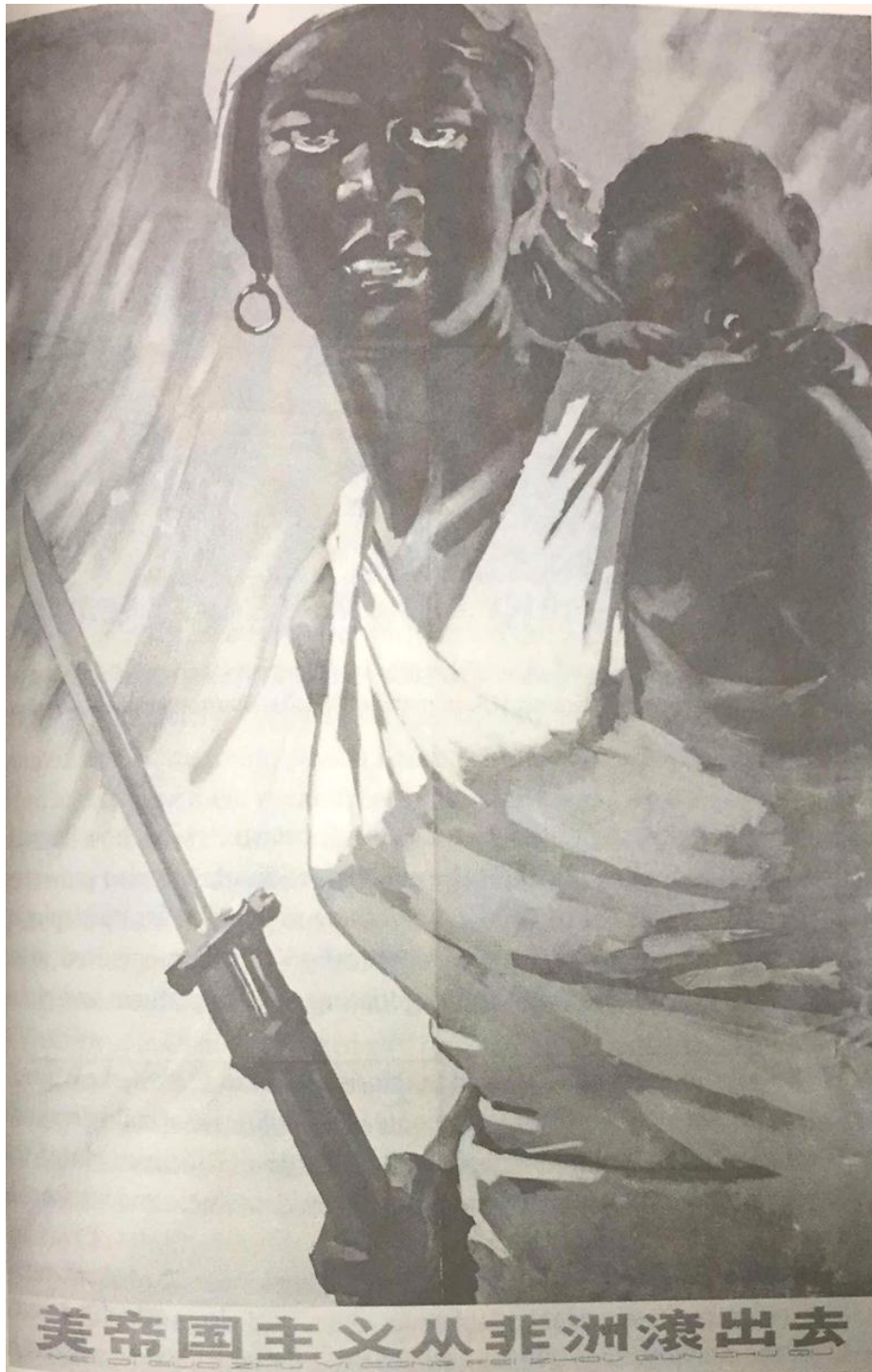


Figure 119. *Get Out of Africa, American Imperialists*, 1964



Figure 120. Cover of *Gidra*, March 1970



Figure 121. Destruction of sculptural models, Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, 1966



Figure 122: *Rent Collection Courtyard* installation overview, Dayi County, Sichuan Province, 1965 (top); Installation in 1990s (bottom)



Figure 123. Figure of Liu Wencai in *Rent Collection Courtyard* (left); Liu Wencai, ca. 1940s (right)

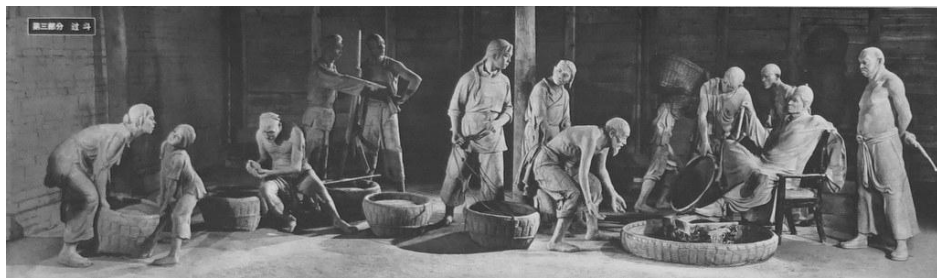


Figure 124. Rent Collection Courtyard, tableaux (top to bottom): Tableau I: Rent submission; Tableau II: Grain inspection; Tableau III: Measuring grain; Tableau IV: Settling accounts; Tableau V: Forcing payment; Tableau VI: Revolt



Figure 125. *Wrath of the Serfs* (detail), Lhasa, Tibet, 1976



Figure 126. *Rent Collection Courtyard*, Tableau I: Submission of Rent



Figure 127. *Rent Collection Courtyard*, Tableau IV: Settling Accounts



Figure 128. *Rent Collection Courtyard*, last tableau of revolt



Figure 129. Opening of Dayi Landlord Exhibition Hall, Dayi country, Sichuan Province, ca. 1959



Figure 130. Group portrait of sculpture team and assistants for Rent Collection Courtyard, Dayi Class Education Exhibition Hall, Dayi County, Sichuan Province, 1965 (top); Art team in discussion, Dayi Class Education Exhibition Hall, Dayi County, Sichuan Province, 1965 (bottom)



Figure 131. Overview of Dazhu's sculptural reliefs, Song dynasty, Sichuan Province (top); Detail of tableaux of various Buddhist parables on daily life (bottom)



Figure 132. Art team visit 500 Luohan installation at Baoguang Temple, Tang dynasty, Xindu district, Chengdu (left); View of 500 Luohan today (right)



Figure 133. Detail of mother with children, *Rent Collection Courtyard*, 1965, Dayi County, Sichuan Province (left); Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara (*Guanyin Pusa*), 1282, Yuan dynasty, dated 1282, Metropolitan Museum of Art (right)



Figure 134. Painter Zhang Fulun wrapping wooden armature in straw ropes during the making of *Rent Collection Courtyard*, 1965, Dayi Landlord Exhibition Hall, Dayi County, Sichuan Province



Figure 135. Glass eye detail, from Tableau IV: Settling Accounts, *Rent Collection Courtyard*, 1965, Dayi County, Sichuan Province



Figure 136. Photos of opera troupe tableaux, 1965, Dayi County, Sichuan Province



Figure 137. Sculptor Wang Guanyi showing alleged victims Leng Yueying (center) and Luo Erniang (left) the figures in *Rent Collection Courtyard* depicting their combined stories, 1965, Dayi County, Sichuan Province



Figure 138. Six female visitors explaining *Rent Collection Courtyard*, 1965, Dayi County, Sichuan Province (left); The six women viewing and weeping with a figure in *Rent Collection Courtyard* (right), from *Renmin ribao* (*People's Daily*), December 26, 1965



Figure 139. Acrobatic troupe from North Vietnam visits *Rent Collection Courtyard* exhibition in Beijing, from “*Rent Collection Courtyard* Receives Foreign Friend’s Enthusiastic Support: They Realize Viewing *Rent Collection Courtyard* is the Best Classroom to Study Mao Zedong Thought and Class Struggle,” *Renmin ribao* (*People’s Daily*), July 12, 1966: 2

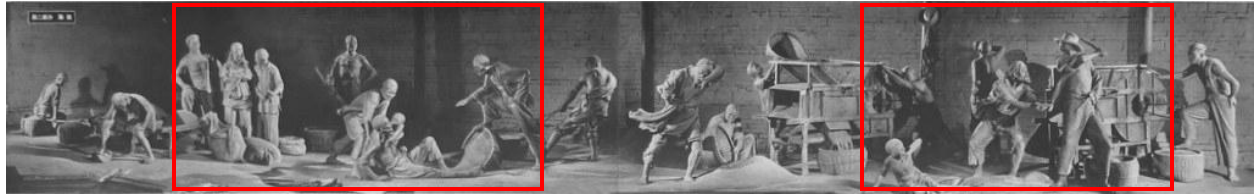


Figure 140. Seven main “emotional joints,” *Rent Collection Courtyard*, 1965



Figure 141. Detail of first tableau of submitting rent (top); Detail of forcing rent payment (bottom), *Rent Collection Courtyard*, 1965, Dayi County, Sichuan Province



Figure 142. Study photographs from art team's onsite studies, Dayi County, Sichuan Province, 1965

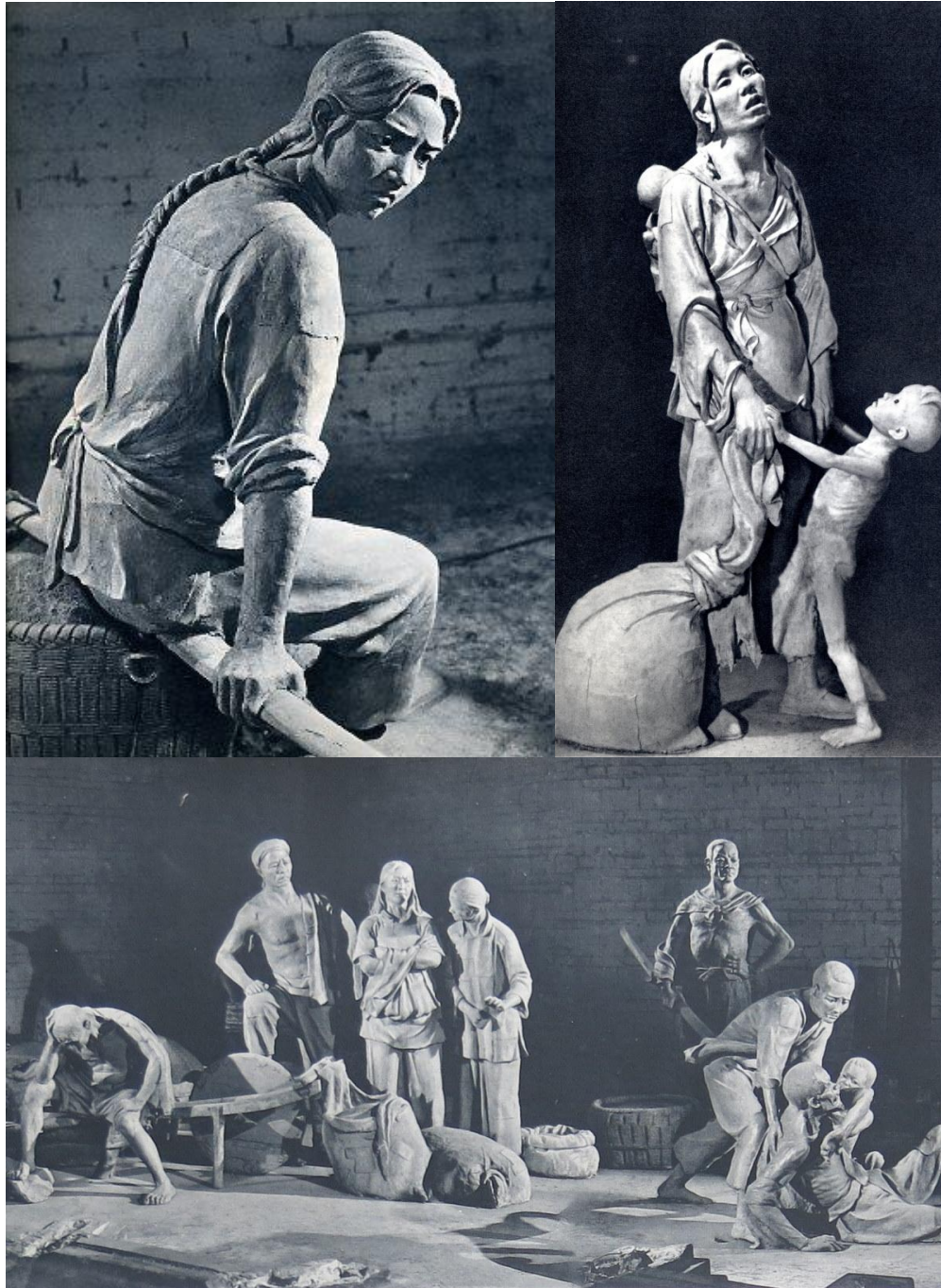


Figure 143. Detail examples of figures sitting, waiting, and watching, *Rent Collection Courtyard*, 1965, Dayi County, Sichuan Province

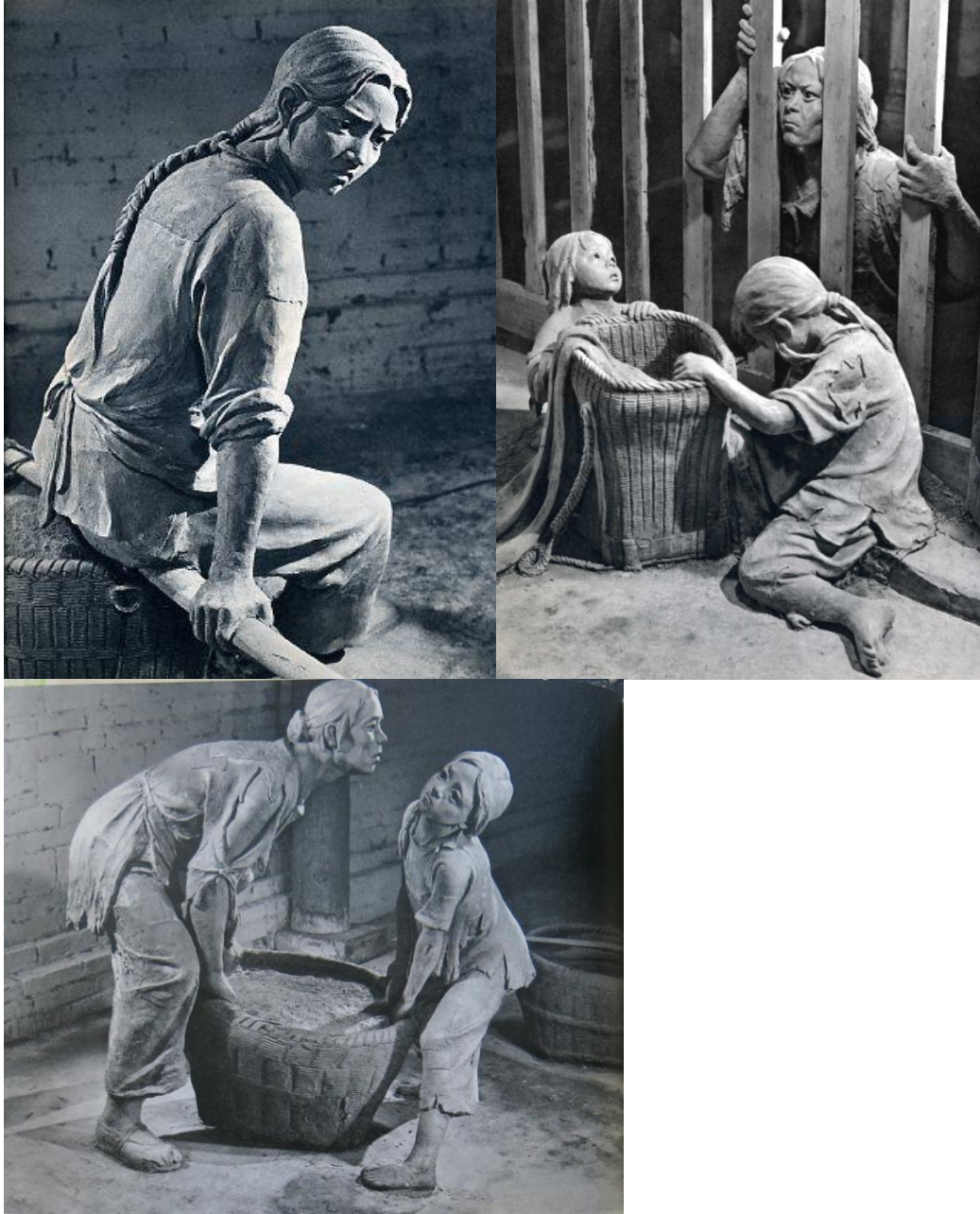


Figure 144. Instances of hands (clockwise): girl gripping pole, mother gripping prison bars, and mother and daughter pulling basket of grain, *Rent Collection Courtyard*, 1965, Dayi County, Sichuan Province



Figure 145. Top: Detail of tableau of grain inspection, bottom: detail of tableau forcing payment, *Rent Collection Courtyard*, 1965



Figure 146. Tableau of settling accounts and detail of revised figure of old man, *Rent Collection Courtyard*

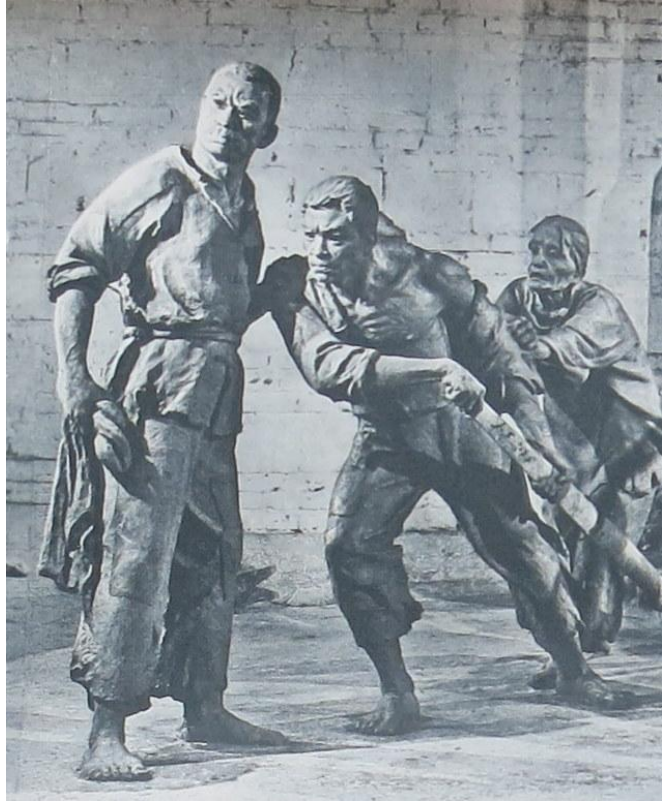


Figure 147. Detail of last tableau of revolt, *Rent Collection Courtyard*, 1965, Dayi County, Sichuan Province; Version of detail from 1968 Foreign Languages Press book *Rent Collection Courtyard* with figure of mother erased (left); Version from handscroll, 1966 (right)

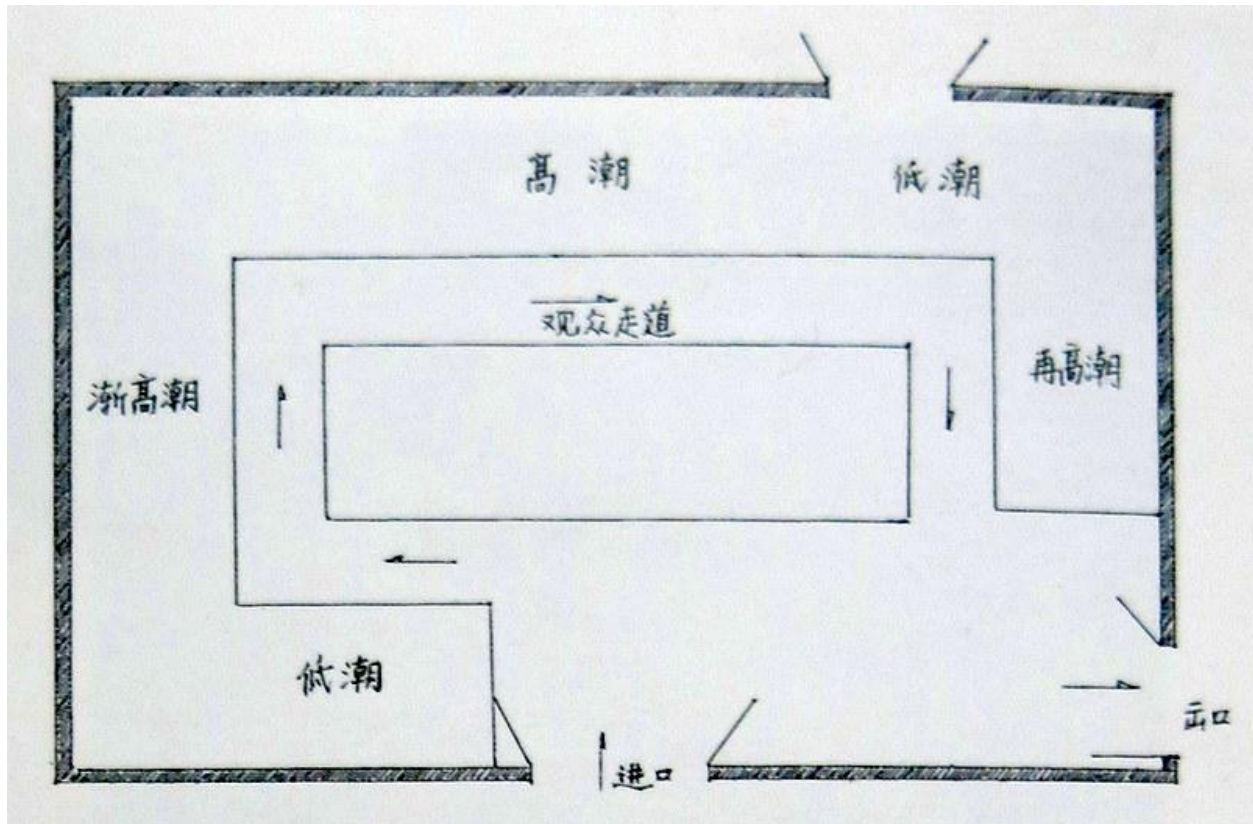


Figure 148. Diagram of viewer movement and notes of the progression of emotional climax in courtyard space (installation view below of courtyard)



Figure 149. Cai Guo-Qiang, *New York's Rent Collection Courtyard*, recreation of his *Venice's Rent Collection Courtyard* for the Guggenheim Museum, New York 2008



Figure 150. Leng Yueying conducting a Recalling Bitterness Pondering Happiness (*yikusitian*) session in the rent collection courtyard retelling her experience in the landlord's infamous water dungeon, Dayi County, Sichuan Province, 1966



Figure 151. *Rent Collection Courtyard* exhibition installation views, China Art Museum, Beijing, December 1965



Figure 152. “The Palace is the Biggest Landlord Manor” section in *Introduction to the Palace Museum*, 1971, Beijing (cover on right)



Figure 153. Tableau one of rent submission, *Rent Collection Courtyard*, handscroll, 1966, People's Art Publishers

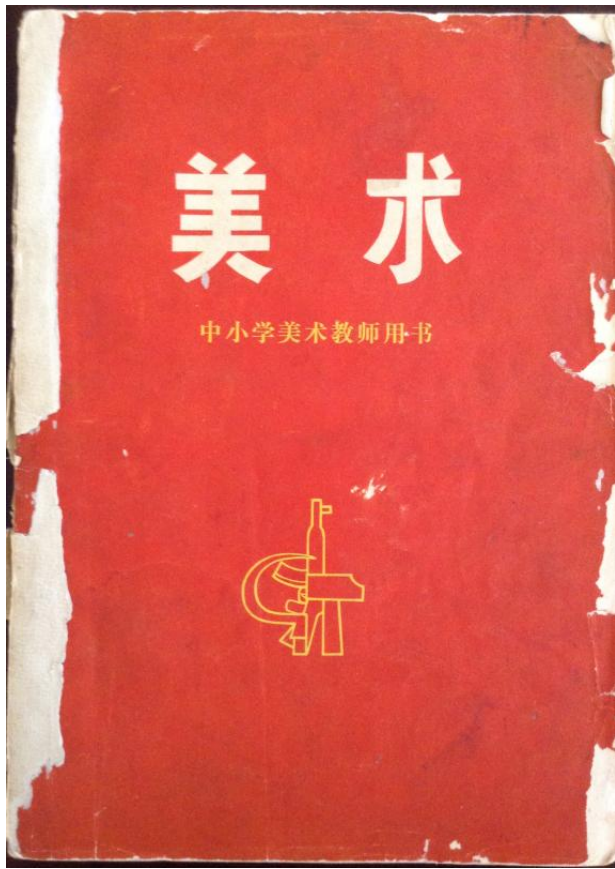


Figure 154. *Art (Meishu)*, Middle school textbook (teacher edition), 1971, Sichuan People Publishers

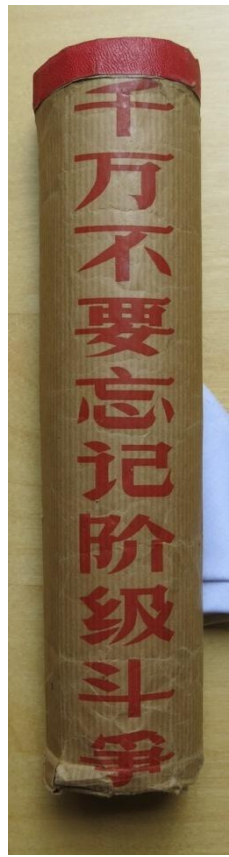
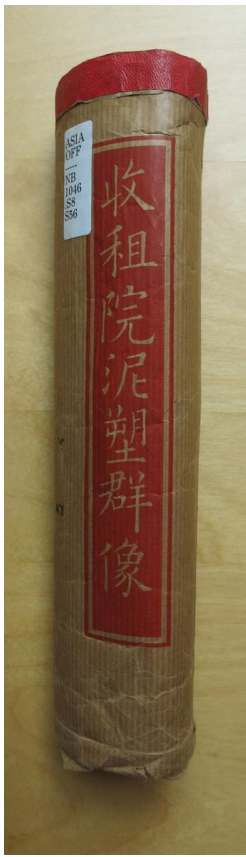


Figure 155. *Rent Collection Courtyard*, handscroll (top and bottom left); Scroll cover recto reading “*Rent Collection Courtyard Clay Sculptural Group*” and verso reading “*Never Forget Class Struggle*” (bottom right two images), 1966, People’s Art Publishers



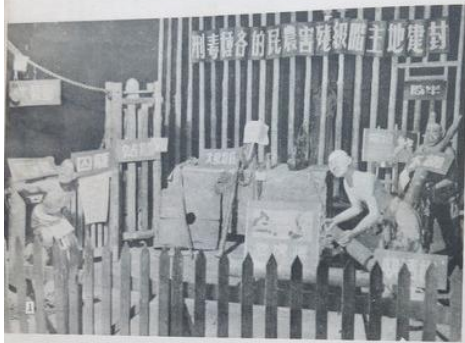
Figure 156. *Rent Collection Courtyard*, film, Beijing Television Station, 1966; clockwise from bottom left: title frame of film, film poster, last scene of film with youths shouting in courtyard



Figure 157. Sample pages from the “South-Central China Land Reform Exhibition” catalogue, 1953; clockwise from top left: exhibition opening ceremony, exhibits of false land deeds and rent measurement tools; exhibits of torture instruments; opening ceremony of exhibition

地主罪惡滔天

農民仇深似海



1. 這是地主階級用來殘害農民各種刑具。
2. 這是湖南省宜章縣五區會市鄉『聯共』委員惡霸地主吳純正、吳黃生、金偉等專門用來殘害農民和共產黨員的刑具『背手銬』，在他們的『背手銬』下受害的農民不計其數。
3. 湖南省安仁縣三區洋塘鄉惡霸地主許時雨派組員許夏來偷了他的穀子，許夏來慘遭毒刑後還被他用木棍活活的抽死。這是地主許時雨用來殘害農民的工具。
4. 一九四一年三月，湖南省慈利縣環六堡惡霸地主朱雲初，藉修族祠為名，向農民大肆派款，農民朱雲堂被派光洋五十元，一時無

- 法拿出，只交了光洋五元，惡霸朱雲初便說他不進『族祠』，把他放在『站籠』裏活活悶死。
5. 這是湖南省嘉禾縣行鄉鄉定里村大惡霸地主雷雲谷殘害人民所用的刑具『快活籠』。農民雷光漢的女兒因交不起租，曾被這『快活籠』夾了一天一夜，後來把女兒光漢送給雷雲谷做了頭才得倖免，光漢因為受不了雷家的虐待，偷偷回家也被抓去夾了五天。
 6. 湖南省桂陽縣地主劉伯龍的『丫頭』李花，因錯用大斗量了糧食給農民，劉伯龍就把她的兩個大姆指綁在雷公尖(刑具)上，選用木棍往下釘，釘得她手指頭鮮血直流，手指骨也被他釘碎了。



Figure 158. Sculptures in exhibition “South-Central China Land Reform Exhibition,” exhibition catalogue, 1953

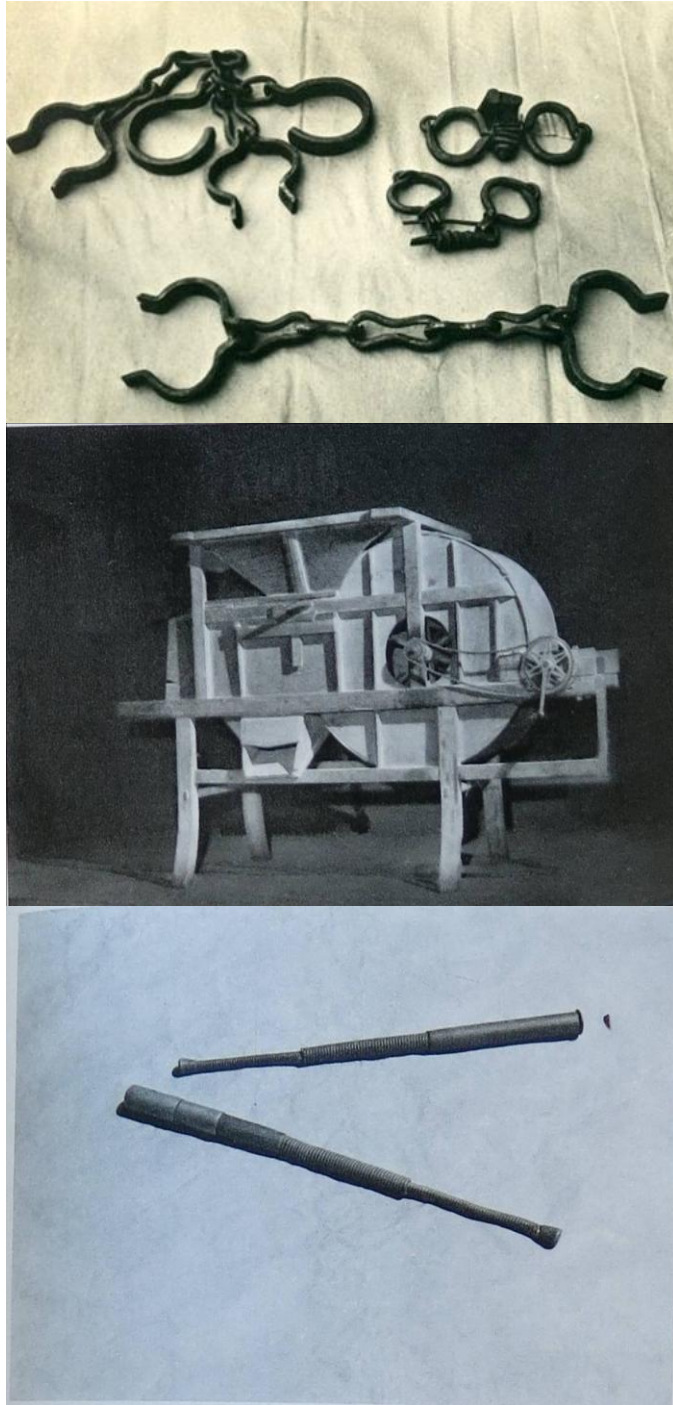


Figure 159. Exhibits of alleged historic objects used to exploit tenant farmers, Dayi Landlord Exhibition Hall, ca. 1959, Dayi County, Sichuan Province: handcuffs, trick winnower, steel whips (top to bottom)



Figure 160. Sculpted scenes with wax hands and feet, early 1960s, Dayi Landlord Exhibition Hall, Dayi County, Sichuan Province



Figure 161. Sculpture with wax hands and feet, early 1960s, Dayi Landlord Exhibition Hall, Dayi County, Sichuan Province



Figure 162. Color clay recreation of *Rent Collection Courtyard*, exhibition installation, Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, 1969, from *Hubei ribao* (*Hubei Daily*), May 15, 1969



Figure 163. *Holy Infant Orphanage* and former orphan residents viewing work, Holy Infant Orphanage, Guangdong, Guangzhou Province, 1966-1968, more than 200 figures



Figure 164. *Old Foolish Man of Dashu*, Dashu Commune, Sichuan Province, 1966



Figure 165. *Wrath of the Serfs*, Tibetan Revolutionary Museum, Lhasa, Tibet, 1976



Figure 166. Details of *Family Histories of the Air Force Fighter*, Beijing, 1967 (left), and *Miners of Mentougou*, Mentougou, Beijing, 1969 (right)

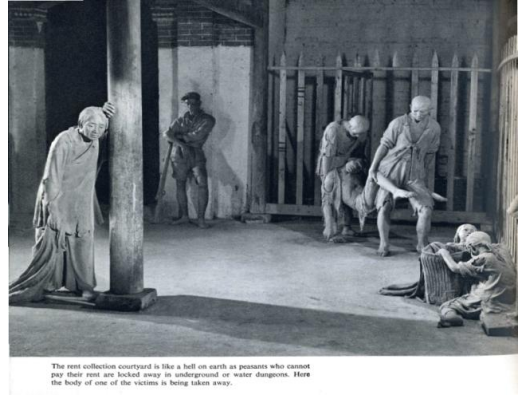
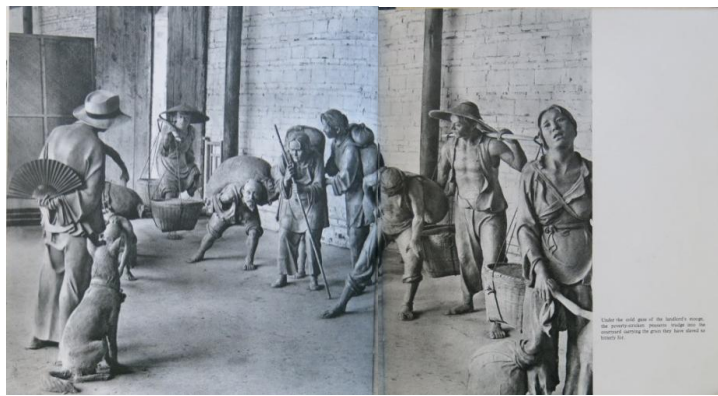
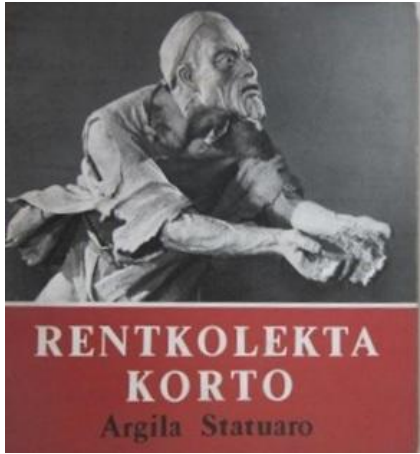
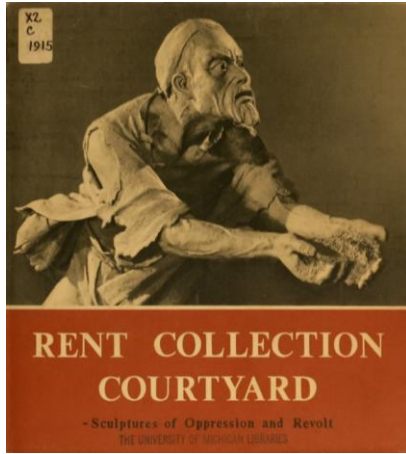


Figure 167. Samples of *Rent Collection Courtyard: Sculptures of Oppression and Revolt*, Foreign Languages Press, 1968, left to right: English, French, Esperanto (top); Sample page spreads from the book (bottom)



Figure 168. *Rent Collection Courtyard*, exhibition catalogue, cover, Tirana, Albania, 1969



Figure 169. *Rent Collection Courtyard*, capture of Liu Wencai in final tableau “Seizing Power,” version for Albania, 1968



Figure 170. Érro, *Chinese Paintings (Venice)*, 1975-1978, oil on canvas



Figure 171. Figurative cement sculptures by Sunday Jack Akpan at his studio, Nigeria



Figure 172. Liu Xiaofei denouncing the crimes depicted by *Rent Collection Courtyard* as false, 2000s, Liu Family Manor Museum, (formerly Dayi Landlord Class Education Exhibition Hall), Dayi County, Sichuan Province



Figure 173. Narrow visitor walkway surrounding the courtyard and *Rent Collection Courtyard* created by walls of screens, Liu Family Manor Museum, Dayi County, Sichuan Province, 2012



Figure 174. Liu Xiaofei denouncing the crimes depicted in *Rent Collection Courtyard* in introductory vestibule before visitors enter the actual *Rent Collection Courtyard*, 2013



Figure 175. Top: *Rent Collection Courtyard* today with screens (left); *Rent Collection Courtyard* earlier without screens (right)



Figure 176. Cai Guo-Qiang, *Venice's Rent Collection Courtyard*, installation view at 48th Venice Biennale, clay, steel, wood, 1999

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中国雕塑壁画艺术总公司

中国建筑工业出版社



Figure 177. *Selected Works of Chinese Contemporary Sculptural and Mural Arts, China Sculptural and Mural Art Corporation, 1985*

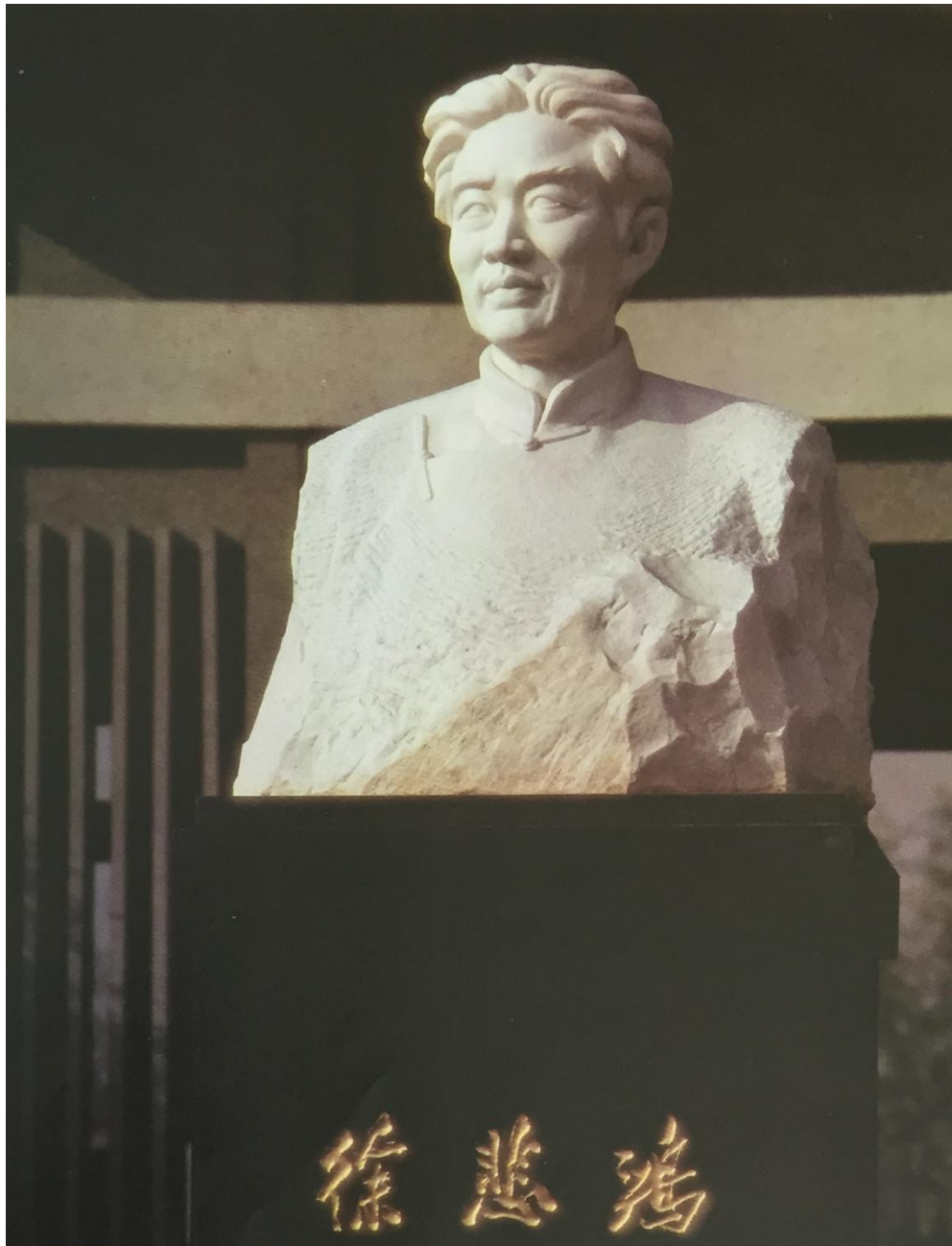


Figure 178. Fu Tianchou, *Memorial Statue of Xu Beihong*, 1983, marble, 80 cm. (2.62 ft.), Xu Beihong Memorial Hall, Beijing



Figure 179. Wu Mingwan, *Life*, 1984, Sichuan Fine Arts University Gallery



Figure 180. Sui Jianguo, *Melody*, 1984



Figure 181. Xie Xiang, Li Xiangsheng, Ye Bin, and Yang Qirui, *Peony Fairy*, 1983, 570 cm. (18.7 ft.), Luoyang's Wangcheng Park



Figure 182. Pan He, Wang Keqing, Guo Qixiang, Cheng Yunxian, *Peace*, 1984, Nagasaki's Peace Park in Japan

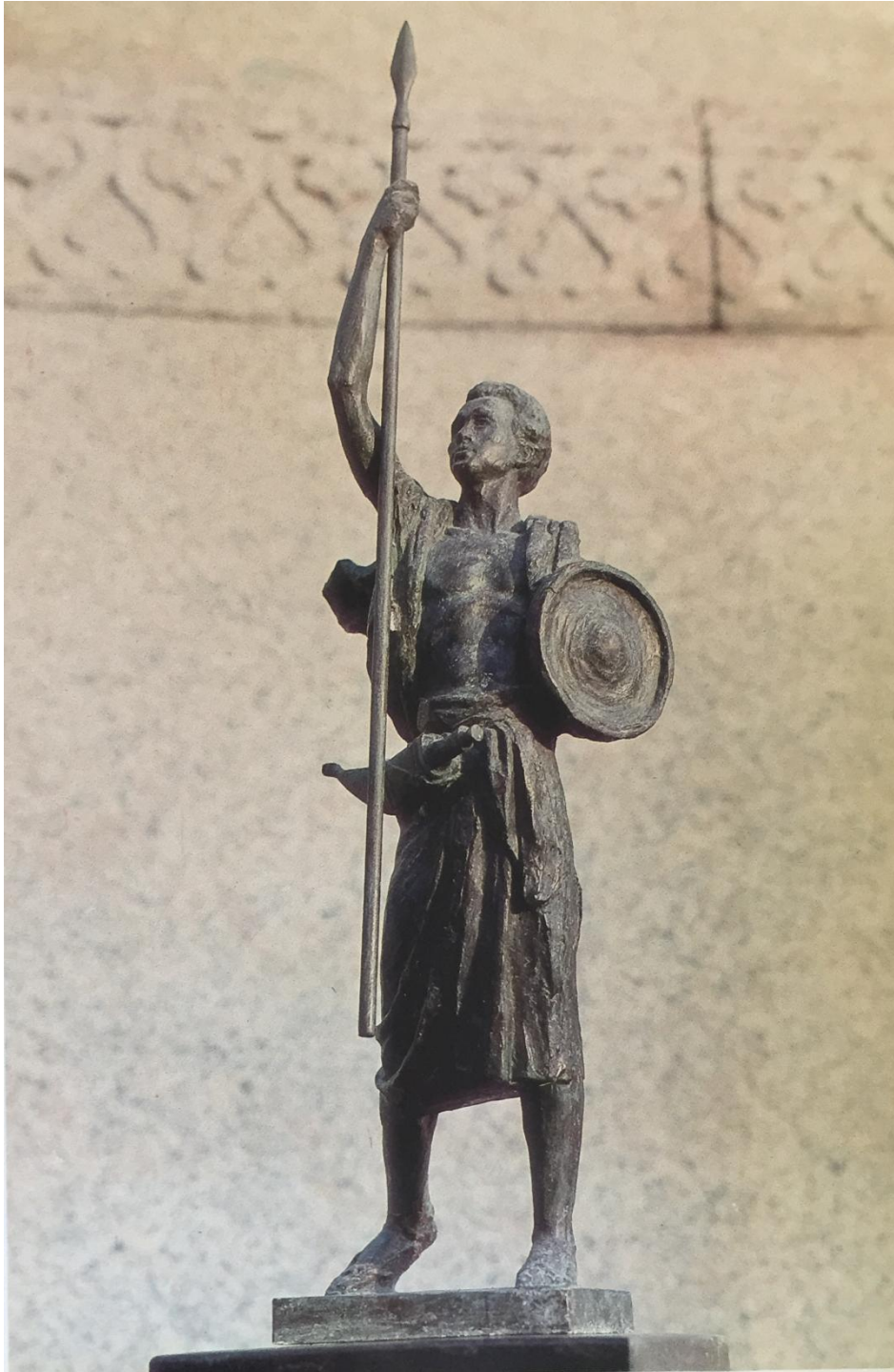


Figure 183. Li Shouren, *Monument to the Martyrs of Djibouti*, 1984, 450 cm. (14.76 ft.), People's Palace of the Capital of Djibouti, Republic of Djibouti



Figure 184. Zhan Wang, *New Picture of Beijing, Today and Tomorrow's Capital—Rockery Remodeling Plan*, 1995, Computer generated proposal for West Train Station, Beijing



Figure 185. Zhan Wang, *Artificial Mountain Rock*, 1996, Stainless steel



Figure 186. Song Dong and Yin Xiuzhen, *Chopsticks*, 2006, stockings, thread, foam and stainless steel, 792.5 x 30.5 x 30.5 cm. (26 x 1 x 1 ft.), Gift of the Chaney Family Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston



Figure 187. Song Dong and Yin Xiuzhen, *Chopsticks* (detail), 2006, stockings, thread, foam and stainless steel, 792.5 x 30.5 x 30.5 cm. (26 x 1 x 1 ft.), Gift of the Chaney Family Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston



Figure 188. Song Dong and Yin Xiuzhen, *Chopsticks* (detail), 2006, stockings, thread, foam and stainless steel, 792.5 x 30.5 x 30.5 cm. (26 x 1 x 1 ft.), Gift of the Chaney Family Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

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