

Gallery Tours (Discover China Through Art)

China Institute Gallery Art Education Program

DCTA Tour Guide

Blooming in the Shadows: Unofficial Chinese Art, 1974 – 1985

September 15 – December 11, 2011

Introduction

Contemporary Chinese art has taken the art world by storm in the last decade through heralded museum exhibitions, well-read publications, and heavily attended art auctions. However, even with all this attention, few exhibitions have asked the question of how—against the background of thirty-five years of Socialist Realism—this internationally-oriented artwork suddenly appeared and why it captured the attention of the international art market. *Blooming in the Shadows: Unofficial Chinese Art, 1974-1985* will introduce the work of three unofficial Chinese art groups who worked in this vein: the No Name Group, the Stars, and the Grass Society—all of which arose following the end of the Cultural Revolution and helped launch the avant-garde movement in China. These artists pursued creatively diverse paths to personal artistic freedom under the political circumstances of the time. *Blooming in the Shadows* will examine this work produced in the critical decade after the end of the Cultural Revolution leading up to the Communist party's 1985 decision to allow modern artistic practices.

The exhibition is directed by Willow Hai Chang, Director of China Institute Gallery, and co-curated by Kuiyi Shen, Director of the Chinese Studies Program and Professor of Asian Art History, Theory, and Criticism, at the University of California San Diego, and Julia Andrews, Professor of Art History at Ohio State University and a specialist in Chinese painting and modern Chinese art.

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Exhibition Highlights



Temple of Heaven 1, Zhang Wei, No Name Group

Oil on paperboard, 20.5 x 25 cm, 1976

Beginning in 1973, the No Name Group was simply a group of self-taught and self-motivating artists who avoided the public for their own political and physical safety. The landscapes they created have unique compositions and color chords.



Silent, Wang Keping, Star Group

Wood, 48 x 24 x 23 cm, 1978

The Star Group was active from 1979 to 1983 in Beijing. Every artist pursues freedom and self-expression in their artwork. They organized a demonstration for continuing their exhibition on October 1, 1979 which brought wide attention at the time. They presented two exhibitions in 1979 and 1980. These unofficial artists set the stage for political democracy and artistic modernism that would become axiomatic to post-Cultural Revolution China.



3-5 Times Shouting, Qiu Deshu, Grass Society

Ink on paper, 51 x 106 inches, 1980

The Grass Society was founded in the fall of 1979 in Shanghai. This group of artists threw themselves into the pursuit of non-political ink painting, with the conviction that experimental ink painting had as much claim on modernity as did any other form of art.

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For further information about the exhibition, and to explore a variety of dynamic, interactive resources including a photo gallery from the exhibition, lesson plan and information about other upcoming exhibition-related programs and events at China Institute, please visit <http://www.china360online.org/featuredresources/>.