

CHANGING CULTURES: THE  
IMMIGRATION OF CHINESE  
ARTISTS TO THE US

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The recent opening up of China has made it possible for many artists born and trained there to come to the United States. Although they initially gained permission to study in American art school, many elected not to return for reasons of artistic or political freedom. This paper will focus on the development of artists who have come to the United States from China since 1982. All had previously studied art in China, where many had already achieved professional reputations, exhibiting in important shows and teaching in major art academies. Comparing specific artists' work produced in China with that made in the United States, I will reveal aspects of cultural change (such as the choice of materials, subject matter, and style) and examine how their work has evolved since arriving in the West. I will also consider the impact of working under two different economic systems and the advantages of each. My research has been conducted in the Chinese art community in Greater New York and on three trips to China between 1978 and 1992.

Some case histories will reveal the impact of the Cultural Revolution, when artistic freedom was relentlessly squelched in the name of "revolutionary culture". From 1966 to 1976, during the last decade of Mao Zedong's leadership, artists were often sent to work in urban labor camps, to toil in the countryside among peasants in agricultural settlements, or forced to produce propaganda art in officially sanctioned Social Realist styles. As a result, some taught themselves to draw and paint before they were allowed to obtain any formal art education. All have endured

seperation from family members, culture shock, and economic

struggle in order to remain artists and make a new life in  
America. There vicissitudes in the West and their critical  
reception will also be discussed.