

福岡アジア美術館

Guide to
the works ③

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Collection of the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum

China/ Avant-Garde

Thu 30 March -- Tue 30 May 2000 Asia Gallery B

"China / Avant-Garde", the large-scale exhibition which compiled the results of former Chinese contemporary art, was held at the end of the 1980s, when 85 Movement converged after creating a great movement in the middle of 1980s and the avant-garde art activity gradually decreased. Here, we will give the introduction focusing on this historically significant exhibition and the two artist groups, "Yuan Ming Yuan Artist Village" and "Beijin East Village", formed after the exhibition, mainly based on the photograph data.

I China/ Avant-Garde

In 1989, when the reform and liberation policy had reached its climax, "China / Avant-Garde" was held at Chinese Art Museum in Beijing. Artists of wide generation participated in this exhibition, ranging from the members of "the Stars" who were the pioneer of the Chinese avant-garde art, or artists all over China who played an active part in 85 Movement, to those who were the new generation leading Chinese contemporary art in the 90s. Generally speaking, there existed a strong implication of summing up 85 Movement that was decorated with idealism. The artists of 85 Movement shared lofty ideals that they would indulge in absorbing modern art of the West and reform a Chinese culture completely. On the other hand, it also has a significant meaning by presenting other ways of expressions such as giving performance and making installation were powerfully presented in this exhibition. In installation, the two artists Xu Bing and Lu Shenzhong, who had both the origins of Chinese culture and critical mind to the current society, attracted public attention with their large scaled work. Besides, provocative installations were seen, as of Gao Chang's work using many condoms. In performance, Tang Song and Xiao Lu started a shocking event to be taken to the police by firing a handgun against their own work "Dialogue". As a whole, it can be said that playgame elements decreased since the middle of the 80s and the art expression dealing with the actual world came in sight in numbers. In other words, the exhibition, which was originally held with the intention to recall 85 Movement, actually turned out to be a new breakthrough to the Chinese contemporary art. However, the exhibition itself was closed down for 5 days because of the above-mentioned "shooting event" and compelled to be closed down two more days when a bomb scare notice was sent to the museum. 4 months later from this event happened the Tian'anmen event and the Chinese government began to restrain the liberation policy to that point. Li Xianting, who was an art critic and planned the whole exhibition, kept giving a powerful backing to the Chinese avant-garde art through his art newspaper "Fine Arts in China." But he lost opportunities to hold any domestic exhibition for a while after the Tian'anmen event and the Chinese avant-garde art kept going underground.

*Fine Arts in China: The art newspaper published by Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts, first issued in June 1985. It played a leading role to draw 85 Movement which became active at this period and made a great contribution to "China / Avant-Garde." It suspended publication in 1991.

◎Tips of viewing

■Major groups in the 85 Movement

1. The North Art Group

It mainly consisted of Wang Guangyi and other northeast painters. Originally, the work had strong tendency of surrealism but changed its style to the political pop (see the other side) afterwards.

2. 21st Century Group (Beijing)

Jianhai, Sheng Qi, Kang Mu were the main members. They made the performance in which they wrapped up their boy in a long cloth or have their bodies painted by audience with watercolors. In 1986, they did a performance at Beijin University, and in 1988, they performed on the Great Wall of China as their stage.

3. The Pool Society (Hangzhou)

Zhang Peili and Geng Jiangyi were the main members. They made an installation, cutting out person's patterns of t'ai chi from cardboards and pasted them onto the outer wall. Also, they created coldhearted realism paintings restraining feelings, which became the basis of the Cynical Realism afterwards.

4. Xiamen Dada (Xiamen)

The group organized by artists like Huan Yong Ping and Li Chun raising dadaism as a banner. It plainly expressed skepticism and distrust to realism, using waste for their work or burning the exhibition work.