



From the Masses to the Masses

Teachers' Guide

Masses to Masses > Intro Paragraph

From the Masses to the Masses, the third installment of the Beyond the Border series, relates the story of an artist's life in revolutionary China. Follow the life and career of Jin Zhilin, from his classical training and initial success under the revolutionary regime to his imprisonment during the Cultural Revolution and eventual redemption through the revival of traditional folk art after he was ordered to Yan'an, provincial cradle of the communist revolution. Featuring extensive interviews with Jin and former students from his days in Yan'an, and images of their original artwork, *From the Masses to the Masses* illustrates the difficulties artists face in times of political upheaval and government-mandated artistic standards.

Masses to Masses > Bio of Professor Jin Zhilin

Jin Zhilin is an accomplished oil painter best known for reviving the role of traditional Chinese folk art in modern China. He once served as director of research for the Department of Folk Art at Beijing's Central Academy of Fine Arts.

Jin was born in 1928 in Luannan county, Hebei province. In 1944, he was accepted into the Beijing Training School, where he studied Chinese landscape painting under Mr. Wu Jingting. In 1947, he entered the Arts department of the Peking National Arts College, where he studied western painting from masters such as Feng Fasi, Wu Zuoren, Xu Beihong; and traditional Chinese painting under masters Li Keran and Qi Baishi. He graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1951, and began teaching in the academy's Painting and Oil Painting departments, as well as the Dong Xiwen Studio.

Jin pursued his decades-long interest in Chinese folk art after moving to Yan'an, in northern Shan'xi province, in 1973. There, Jin worked in the local mass arts office and the cultural relic administration office. More importantly, he and his students were trained in traditional paper-cut art by peasant women from the surrounding countryside. In 1980, Jin and his team organized a major show of this art and published an accompanying book honoring the folk artists of Yan'an.

In 1986, Jin returned to Beijing to take the post as Director of Research at the new Department of Folk Art, at the Central Academy of Fine Arts. He still serves the Academy as a tutor for graduate students. He is also a member of the Chinese Artists Association.

Professor Jin's master oil paintings, including the monumental historic painting Nan Niwan, the portrait Village Head, and landscapes such as Well Sinker, were collected and shown in the 20th Century Chinese Art Exhibition, the 20th Century China Oil Painting Exhibition, the 100 Years of Oil Portraiture in China Exhibition, and 50 Years of Chinese Arts. The first oil exhibition for Jin was held in 1961. Other solo oil shows include the Print of Life (held in Beijing, 1995 and Paris, 2000).

Masses to Masses > Mao Zedong's Instructions to China's Artists

Excerpts from “**Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art**” by Mao Zedong (May 1942). [From *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tsetung*, Foreign Languages Press (Peking, 1971.)]

“Comrades! You have been invited to this forum today to exchange ideas and examine the relationship between work in the literary and artistic fields and revolutionary work in general. Our aim is to ensure the revolutionary literature and art follow the correct path of development and provide better help to other revolutionary work in facilitating the overthrow of our national enemy and the accomplishment of the task of national liberation.” (p. 250)

“To defeat the enemy we must rely primarily on the army with guns. But this army alone is not enough; we must also have a cultural army, which is absolutely indispensable for uniting our own ranks and defeating the enemy.” (p. 250)

“The purpose of our meeting today is precisely to ensure that literature and art fit well into the whole revolutionary machine as a component part, that they operate as powerful weapons for uniting and education the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy, and that they help the people fight the enemy with one hear and one mind.” (p. 251)

“What are the problem that must be solved to achieve this [revolutionary] objective? I think they are the problems of the class stand of the writers and artists, their attitude, their audience, their work and their study.”

The problem of class stand. Our stand is that of the proletariat and of the masses. For members of the Communist Party, this means keeping to the stand of the Party, keeping to Party spirit and Party policy. Are there any of our literary and art workers who are still mistaken or not clear in their understanding of this problem? I think there are. Many of our comrades have frequently departed from the correct stand.” (p. 251)

“Writers and artists should study the various classes in society, their mutual relations and respective conditions, their physiognomy [human character or features] and their psychology. Only when we grasp all this clearly can we have a literature and art that is rich in content and correct in orientation.” (p. 256)

“Only by speaking for the masses can he [the artist] educate them and only by being their pupil can he be their teacher.” (p. 269)

“But at the same time, in our criticism we must adhere firmly to principles and severely criticize and repudiate all works of literature and art expressing views in opposition to the nation, . . . to the masses and to the Communist Party, because these so-called works of literature and are proceed from the motive and produce the effect of undermining unity for resistance . . .” (p. 275-75)

“What we demand is the unity of politics and art, unity of content and form, the unity of revolutionary political content and the highest possible perfection of artistic form. . . . Therefore, we oppose . . . works or art with a wrong political viewpoint. . . .” (p. 276)

Masses to Masses > Timeline

1911

The Republic of China is established, ending the Qing Dynasty.

1919

May 4: The May Fourth movement, also known as the “Chinese Enlightenment.”

1928

Jin Zhilin is born in Luannan county, Hebei province.

1936

Mao Zedong arrives with thousands of fellow communists in Yan’an, in the remote northwest of China, the cradle of the Chinese communist revolution.

1942

Mao Zedong reveals his vision of how art must serve politics, at the Yan’an Forum on Art and Literature.

1944

Jin is accepted to the Beijing Training School, where he studies Chinese landscape painting.

1947

Jin is admitted to the Peking National Arts College, where he studies western painting and traditional Chinese painting.

1949

October 1: The People’s Republic of China is founded.

1951

Jin graduates from the Central Academy of Fine Arts, and is assigned to teach at the Central Academy.

1956

Mao Zedong unveils the Communist Party's new policy on culture, in which literature and art were to be guided by the slogan "Let a hundred flowers blossom." The new policy was, at least in part, a response to intellectuals' dissatisfaction with totalitarian control.

1957

February: Mao invites intellectuals to criticize the Communist Party and its policies.

June: The anti-rightist campaign targets "rightists" who had accepted Mao's invitation to take part in the Hundred Flowers movement and criticize the Party.

1958-60

The Great Leap Forward, a failed effort to accelerate the country's economic development with a militant socialist approach. It causes three years of economic crisis. More than 30 million people die of starvation.

1959

Jin is ordered to Yan'an for the first time.

1961

Jin's first oil exhibition is held.

1966

The Cultural Revolution begins. Jin is imprisoned by his students.

1971

Lin Biao dies.

1973

Jin is released from labor camp and assigned to Yan'an, where he works in the local mass arts office and culture relic administration office.

August 24-28: At the Tenth Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, Deng Xiaoping is reelected to the Central Committee after six years of political exile.

1976

September 9: Chairman Mao dies.

October 6: The Gang of Four, including Mao's wife, is arrested. The Cultural Revolution is declared to be at an end.

1978

Jin surveys the countryside around Yan'an, in search of master paper-cut artists.

November 19: The first big-character posters appear at Xidan intersection of Beijing—marking the beginning of the Democracy Wall movement.

1979

January 1: Normalization of US-China relations takes effect.

1980

Jin and his team organize a major exhibition of paper-cut art and publish a book honoring the folk artists of Yan'an.

1981

April: The first campaign against "bourgeois liberalization," attacking liberalization in literature and the arts.

1983

October: April: The second campaign against "bourgeois liberalization," also known as "spiritual contamination," begins.

1985

January 1: Deng Xiaoping's speech advocating an open-door policy for China is published.

1986

Jin returns to Beijing, where he becomes director of research at the new Department of Folk Art at the Central Academy of Fine Arts.

December 23: Students in Beijing demonstrate in favor of freedom and democracy.

December 31: The Chinese government announces limits on all demonstrations, blaming a plot to overthrow the government.

1987

January 1: Over 2,000 students demonstrate in Beijing against the limits on demonstrations.

January 24: The third campaign against “bourgeois liberalization” begins.

1989

April-June: A series of student demonstrations demanding freedom and democracy lead to a hunger strike by three thousand students and, eventually, the massacre at Tiananmen Square when government troops occupy the square.

1995

Jin’s “Print of Life” solo oil show is held in Beijing.

2000

Jin’s “Print of Life” solo oil show is held in Paris.

Masses to Masses > Glossary

agricultural collectivization

In collective farms, a group of farmers work the same land (not privately owned), and are paid a share of the farm's output instead of wages. Agricultural collectivization is the process of establishing these farms from a system based on private ownership.

bourgeois

Literally, a person, idea or behavior associated with or typical of the middle class.

In Marxist theory, the "bourgeoisie" (noun form) is the social class that owns the means of production in a capitalist society, and by virtue of the conflict over wages are in a permanent conflict with the "proletariat," or labor class.

The bourgeoisie are often associated by Marxists and others with the following values: conformism, conservatism, consumerism, philistinism, greed, hypocritical religiosity, and nationalism.

See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bourgeoisie> for more.

Cultural Revolution

A shortened name for "The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," a movement initiated by Mao Zedong in 1966 to purge China's intellectuals and others who were insufficiently "red." Probably driven by a power struggle at the highest levels of government, it was led by Mao and the "Gang of Four," including Lin Biao and Jiang Qing (Mao's wife).

Students across China were encouraged to abandon their studies and join the "Red Guards," a volunteer organization that began by primarily supporting Communist

propaganda, but later killed, tortured, and imprisoned many supposed “counter-revolutionaries” and their relatives.

By the end of 1966, the Red Guards went on a massive campaign to destroy religious structures and religious institutions, destroy “counterrevolutionary” art and architecture, and burn ancient scrolls and books.

Many prominent party leaders were also “purged” and punished. Future premier Deng Xiaoping was even sent to work in an engine factory.

In time, the most violent stage of the Cultural Revolution gave way to an extensive “cult of personality” and reeducation campaign. Mao Zedong was promoted to godlike status as the “red sun,” the center and source of all things red. At the same time, young urban intellectuals were sent to the countryside to live and work alongside peasants. Justified by the resulting rustication of the nation’s youth, this move was probably intended to remove future potential rivalries to the power of Party leadership.

The Cultural Revolution ended in 1976 with the death of Mao Zedong and the arrest of the Gang of Four.

More information at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_Revolution.

folk art

The creative expression of ordinary people without a formal education, knowledge of art history, or aspirations to producing fine art, especially in countries with a fine art tradition. Usually reflects traditional culture and finds its expression in everyday, utilitarian or festive items.

free enterprise	A system in which private individuals and businesses are free to organize and operate for profit in a competitive system with little or no government interference.
paper-cut art	As the name implies, works of art primarily associated with cutting paper into different patterns and shapes, and assembling the cut-outs into a final creative expression. May include cutouts for window decorations, clothes-making stencils, or embroidery patterns for shoes. The primary form consists of two-dimensional illustrations.
proletarian	The “labor” class; the class of industrial workers who live based on wages, selling their time and effort as opposed to reaping profits from assets (as would the bourgeois or capitalist class).
propaganda	The systematic dissemination of a cause, ideology, or doctrine using different types of media, including art. Propaganda is often subtle or even deceitful, and its use of art is considered by some to be a “hijacking” of art’s true purpose.
Red Army	Also called the People’s Liberation Army, the Red Army was first established as the military arm of the Communist Party of China. It is now the national military of the People’s Republic of China.
Red Guards	The legions of volunteers who led the purging of intellectuals and others who were insufficiently “red” during China’s Cultural Revolution.
rusticated	Caused or compelled to live in the country and become rustic.
Socialist Idealism	More than an artistic movement, socialist idealism was a state-prescribed propaganda effort that used art to support Communist Party ideology and Mao’s “cult of personality” as part of the Cultural

Revolution. Paintings in this style highlight the joy of living under the revolution with broad, toothy grins, and idealize red skin.

Socialist Realism

Another artistic movement that doubled as a propaganda strategy, socialist realism glorified “the masses” – workers, peasants, and soldiers – through a quasi-realistic portrayal of their daily life.

woodblocks, woodcut prints

A traditional Chinese printing method, in which an image was engraved or overlaid on a block of wood and then printed on paper. Today, woodcut prints are used solely for artistic purposes.

Masses to Masses > Websites

<http://condensedchina.com/>

Condensed China: Chinese History for Beginners. A brief, broad history of China. Linked by the Washington Post. Includes a helpful list for further reading.

<http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/chinesehistory/>

UCSD Modern Chinese History Site. Extensive selection of book reviews, critical essays and bibliographic sources for studying the history of Modern China. Published by the University of California at San Diego.

<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/1999/china.50/flash.html>

CNN: Visions of China. "Tracks the nation's tumultuous path from an imperial court to the 21st century." Informative multimedia presentation.

<http://www.asiasociety.org/arts/chinaphotos/>

Fifty Years Inside the People's Republic. On-line catalog of the Asia Society exhibition featuring images 25 Chinese and Western photographers and an essay by Rae Yang, author of Spider Eaters. Also features comments by the photographers, and selections of poetry that illustrate the photographs.

<http://www.tsquare.tv/chronology>

20th Century China: A Partial Chronology. Tracks Chinese history from 1919 up to the massacre at Tiananmen Square in June 1989.

<http://kaladarshan.arts.ohio-state.edu/exhib/gug/intr/intropage2.html>

China: 5,000 Years. On-line version of the exhibition that appeared in the Guggenheim Museum SoHo and the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. Covers major trends in Chinese art since 1850.

<http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/fineart/html/chinese/index.html>

Chinese and Japanese Art History: WWW Virtual Library. Maintained by Nixi Cura, a PhD candidate at the New York University Institute of Fine Arts. Provides information on symposia, conferences, grants, and other items of interest to scholars of Chinese and Japanese art history.

<http://museums.cnd.org/CR/halls.html>

Virtual Museum of the Cultural Revolution. Published by the China News Digest, this growing archive holds a variety of writings and first-person historical records from the Cultural Revolution. They are seeking volunteers to translate many documents from Chinese into English.

<http://art-bin.com/art/omaotoc.html>

Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung. An extensive selection of Mao's thoughts and advice on subjects ranging from the class struggle to education, frugality, and art. Translated from Chinese.

<http://www.morningsun.org>

Morning Sun: a Film and Website About Cultural Revolution. A polished site supporting the documentary film "Morning Sun." Includes extensive reference material and multimedia library, including music, art, and even radio broadcasts.

<http://media.mmm.edu/scrapbook/scrapbook/index.html>

Scrapbook of the Revolution: Interpreting the Mao Era. Created by Susan Jacobson, an Assistant Professor of Digital Media at Marymount Manhattan College and a PhD student of Arts and Humanities at New York University. Built around a selection of images from a family photo album purchased at a Beijing Flea Market, dating from the Cultural Revolution.

<http://www.wellesley.edu/Polisci/wj/China/CRSongs/crsongs.htm>

Songs of China's Cultural Revolution. Offers downloadable MP3 files of actual recordings of such classic favorites as "The East is Red," "Long Live Chairman Mao!" and "Little Ping Pong Ball."