

Eulogy for Cheng Beiho

I'll never forget my days with Cheng Beiho. It's well known that the most advanced artists in China came out of the traditional painting program at the Hangzhou academy, and the period from 95 to 2005 was the heyday. That's where I met Mr. Cheng. He didn't teach by telling his students what to do—instead, he set an example. Often when we met he would talk about ordinary things—sports, the weather. We all knew that during the Tien Anmen period he had been politically active, he made posters and political art. Afterwards he showed in the west and made a more universal art. Mr. Cheng did a lot to help us understand the art trends in the west, but I still find his post-modernism hard to understand. His thinking was so deep.

Once we were organizing a show of Mr. Cheng's students at the school. We came back to the gallery after taking a lunch break and he was lying on the floor sleeping soundly in the middle of all our work. That's what I mean. His thinking was so far ahead.

Xiao Mei-ling, Hou Wu Fan and myself were inseparable in those days. They used to call us the Gang of Three. Prof. Cheng asked us to help him with an installation. We were to urinate on lamp posts at streetcorners around Hangzhou. Naturally this was difficult for Mei-ling so Mr. Cheng asked her to drive a truck around the city blowing confetti. That was the kind of man he was—so flexible and so considerate of others.