

Fresco removal essay

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I am the only Chinese in our workshop and I may say I am the only one coming from a centralized country in our small group. In my country, everything is under supervised. The Wikipedia item "Chinese democracy" is blocked by Chinese authority. Any action involved with democracy was sensitive in China.

I come from Beijing, which is the culture centre of China. However, the graffiti art are not very common in Chinese cities, even in the international metropolis. People could not find graffiti territory in the city, such as the places like Delft railway station or Rotterdam railway station area. The reasons for it probably are: Chinese characters are different from the Latin letters. It is hard to apply the pop art to Chinese character. For another thing is, the wall could only be painted by the government. During the Cultural Revolution period, the Maoism mottos were painted in every public space, such as factories, schools, even in the bathhouses. The government or some companies do the advertising by painting the wall in rural area. People can easily find lots of graffiti about birth control in small villages which were painted by the local government. If the graffiti is a way to show the voice from a society, then in most Chinese cities, the voice only comes from the government.

Before I wrote this essay, I Googled "graffiti Beijing", and I was surprise to see this photo. (Figure 1) It was made by a Chinese artist Dali Zhang. According to Lyn Stuart of *Beijing Scene* in her article "Dialogue: The Graffiti Art of 18K (Formerly known as Zhang Dali)": "If you have been in Beijing long enough to get in a taxi, then you have seen his work: profiles spray-painted on condemned buildings, freeway bridges and neglected walls all over the capital. You wouldn't notice them in a Western city because the simple drawings would be quickly sprayed over with graffiti done by thousands of other layabouts, vandals, artists and political groups. But Beijing has almost no graffiti and the heads compete for space only with notices telling you not to park in front of gates or dump garbage, advertisements for venereal disease remedies and the ubiquitous Chinese character- *chai*, indicating that the building is about to be demolished. In fact, many of 18K's tags are intentionally placed right next to "chai" characters. Not only is graffiti on doomed walls [less likely to earn him a criminal record], 18K also has artistic reasons for associating his heads with condemned structures: the work is an attempt to engage in a dialogue with Beijing, a city where buildings come down faster than they did in wartime Berlin and London."



Figure 1: photo of art work by Dali Zhang

This graffiti of side portrait was very common in Beijing when I was young. I did not know who did this, I was asked my parents for this, but they do not know, either. It was so ugly and had no sense of beauty to me, besides it always appeared in some abounded areas. When I was been asked which kind of graffiti I would not to preserve, I would like to say the side portrait graffiti. But now, I have a different thought: all graffiti should be preserved, as long as they are not the advertisements of illegal business which were common in big cities in China. No matter if they are ugly or they offense some special groups, but they represented some people, if others are not agree with them, they could paint upon it. This kind of speaks and reaction is important to Chinese society, due to the people were silence in front of the government for a long time.

If I have a chance to paint on the wall, I would like to share my positive feeling with others. I would like to paint in the Hutong area in Beijing, which was considered as the icon of Beijing. I would like to write something about my good childhood memory in Hutong. I as a Beijinger, was born in Beijing, grow up in Beijing. During the recent decades, Beijing becomes an international city, lots of city immigrates come to Beijing from other Chinese cities or other country, I am proud of my culture and I want to share it with others by using graffiti.

At the last, I would like to say this workshop was the funniest workshop I ever be attended in and it was pleasant and evoked to talk to you.