

A Beijing Artist- "Deng"

A Beijing artist, who will be referred to here as "Deng", witnessed the daily developments of the Student Movement, and painted fifteen oil paintings before and after the Tiananmen Square massacre. Deng's paintings were exhibited at the Asian American art Centre as part of the 1990 International Memorial Arts Festival. These works stand as a counterpoint to the hundreds of artists who bore witness worldwide. Deng painted, as he says, "to make people remember what happened".

About a painting entitled, "Unanimous Call for Democracy", he says, "The situation at this time was that almost all of Beijing, every person had stood up. Including grandmothers, popsicle sellers, housekeepers, children, all supported the students. Some by just standing there. That's the simplest way to support the students, just to come out of their house and stand there. It was raining every day.

• • •

In another work, Deng painted faces crying profusely. He says, "When I was painting this, the government spokesman, Yuan Mu's propaganda speech came on calling the student movement a riot. He was lying and you knew he was lying. The reason why they had to give this speech was to make the people outside Beijing believe that the massacre at Tiananmen Square was a riot, that the students and trapped intellectuals were criminals. I was very upset and very angry."

In another painting entitled, "After June 4th", Deng says, "This painting's story represents what happened to China after the crackdown. Two babies sit in a carriage. Their mother is separate from them. She's dead or is held back, leaving her children alone. A soldier has taken over the carriage holding an empty pitcher used to feed children. The world is in complete chaos because a soldier cannot replace a mother. They are machines. The people of China, the children, will go hungry. The artist is in the background. He is touching the light bulb, knowledge, which is darkened. The newspapers are not getting the truth, so when there is no truth the light bulb is out. After June 4th, everything in the world seemed gone, everything finished. The military was victorious and we worry, how can the children survive?"