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Brian Chu, Professor of Art travels to Taiwan and China

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Brian Chu

Professor of Art

Assistance from the CIE Major Grant helped me travel to Taiwan and China in summer 2015. In this 70-day trip I satisfied my three goals of research, teaching, and international education program development.

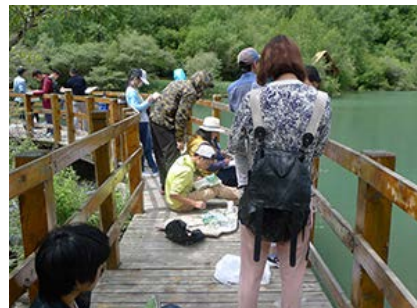


Professor Brian Chu visiting the Terracotta Army in Xian

My research consisted of visits to museums, archeological sites in Taipei, Sichuan, Yunnan, and Xi'an. The travel was extensive, including Huanglong Valley, Jiuzhaigou, Zoige, and Langmusi in Northwestern Sichuan province, Ligiang (Yunnan Province) and Xi'an. The travel brought me to large cities, lush green mountains, high elevation prairie land, and a wide range of landscapes that are the sources of traditional Chinese paintings. The visits to cities and villages of minority people such as Qiang, Yi, Muslims and Tibetans gave me a new understanding of the multifaceted Chinese culture in its long history of evolution and integration. In cultural sites and museums, this travel culminated in a grand review of the art history knowledge that I have accumulated, which has since sparked a renewed passion in my research.

I was invited to teach for one and a half months at the College of Fine Arts at Chengdu University (CDU) on their Foreign Expert Exchange program. CDU offered excellent assistance to my travel both on campus and during the two teaching excursions at Shangli and Songpinggo. The excursions gave me experiences of the rural lives outside of the big city, in places of natural beauty and cultural diversity. The setting induced casual interactions with CDU students, colleagues, and locals.

My activities on campus included teaching studio art courses, giving lectures on my work and on teaching pedagogy, and discussions on curriculum development. In addition, I gave a lecture in the College of Liberal Arts to literature and journalism students. Living on CDU's campus gave me the opportunity to observe the teacher-student relationship, classroom dynamic, educational philosophy, and cultural underpinning in pedagogy. In an atmosphere of warm acceptance and curiosity, I was fully engaged in this opportunity to directly interact with Chinese colleagues with spontaneity. My travel in vicinity of Chengdu - the fifth largest city in China with 14 million population - were mainly to historic sites such as Dufu's Thatched Hut, Sanxingdui Museum, Wuhou Shrine, Dujiangyan (a 2000 year-old irrigation system), and ancient monasteries at Qicheng Mountain. In the developed part of the city, I saw traces of traditional culture persisting in the fast-paced urban life. China's progress in westernization, and the choices made in the process, will be a most valuable phenomenon that UNH students can learn through an international education program that I hope to develop.



Plein air class at Songpingo, Sichuan



Tibetan Monastery in Sichuan

My third goal of developing an UNH international education program received positive responses in meetings with CDU President Wang and the Foreign Affairs Office. CDU was enthusiastic to develop exchange programs with UNH and seemed to have the experience and facility to host a J-Term course. I plan to propose a short-term study abroad course in studio art and art history, based on the CDU campus with excursions to major Chinese cities. Having gathered valuable information in this trip, I feel the need to visit China again in the winter climate to fully assess the travel logistics to make a successful J-Term proposal and its eventual experience for our students.

This trip allowed me to integrate scholarship, teaching, and educational development in a most enriching way. The conversations I had with Chinese colleagues gave insights on cultural underpinnings in both cultures, of which I am eager to become a liaison through my teaching. I would like to take this opportunity to thank CIE for providing start-up funding for a program I intend to continue to develop, to fulfill our shared goal of furthering education through the exchange of knowledge and scholarship at a global scale.





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