

Shanghai Journal 3-8-15

Ni Hao,

This is my last Shanghai report for 2015. I screened my film at NYU-Shanghai on Tuesday evening. The Chinese and Pakistani students were quite interested and had lots of questions. More faculty than students came so I was glad to get the students talking. Faculty also had lots of positive comments on the film – its value in their own teaching, and for reflecting back on their own experiences in school (including French and Belgian faculty which was interesting to me). I gave a copy to the library so people can use it in their classes.

On Wednesday I kidnapped Ravi after his class so we could go to Pearl Tower. It was a good time because there weren't long lines and it was a clear day. Below I try to give you a 360 view of Shanghai. The scale of the city is mind-boggling – hope this gives some sense of that.



Entering Pearl Tower



Decorations in the lobby for Lantern Festival this week.



Facing the Bund along the Huangpo River scanning to the right above, scanning left below.



Right of river is Puxi – left is Pudong. Century Ave – NYU Shanghai is way down past the tall bldgs.



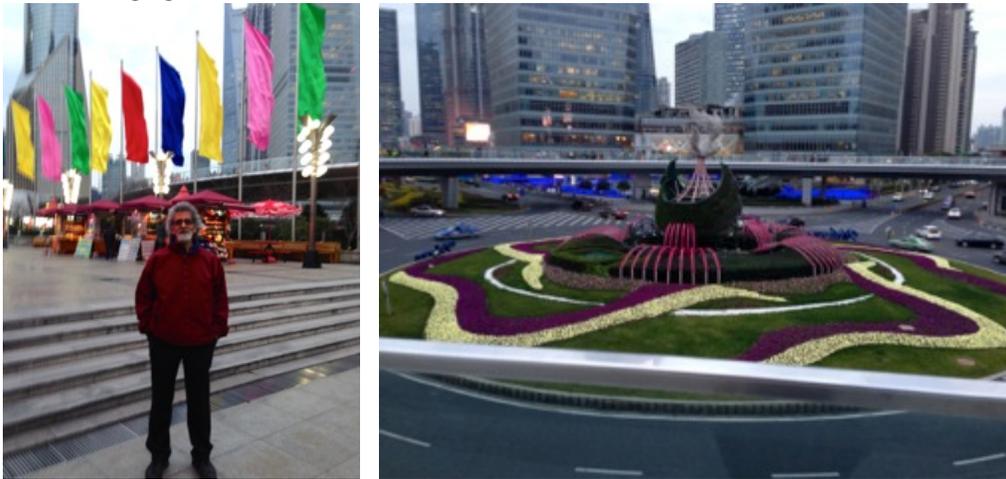
Looking left on other side of Pudong toward Puxi again. The river wraps around like a U.

There is a very nice museum in the basement of Pearl Tower with dioramas depicting Shanghai at different points in it's history, starting as a small fishing village 4000 years ago, through several dynasties, moving to what they call "semi-colonization" by foreign powers in 1800s, up to today. Although writing this I realize there was nothing about the revolution. The descriptions

in the exhibit were somewhat schizophrenic – as if the arguments about how to frame things were divvied up to writers from different camps. So some of the descriptions are very strong about the imposition of the French, British and Americans as a form of imperialism while other descriptions smooth over and laud how these relationships made Shanghai an international center of trade. The visual images and dioramas illustrate both stories. Too dark for photos but here are two, one of old Shanghai. There was a gruesome photo of how foot binding was done that was truly horrifying – and is certainly not captured in the dainty footwear displayed.



By the time we left Pearl Tower it was dusk and the city was lighting up for the evening. It was lovely, though very cold after a warmer start to the day. I love this gorgeous flower display in the evening light.



On Thursday I took the metro with Ravi, Thierry and Yuning to East China Normal University -the partner with NYU-Shanghai. It is about 40 minutes from here on the Puxi side of the river. Ravi has another office there and will go a couple of times a week for seminars and to work. Apparently, NYU-Shanghai started at the ECNU campus and then ran out of space and moved to Pudong when they were given their current building. It's too bad since ECNU is a beautiful campus and the Century Avenue building where NYU-Shanghai is now located looks like the corporate building it is.



It was really interesting to read the red flags all over campus with various slogans about learning.



The building where Ravi's office is located has a huge statue of Chairman Mao in front with low wall in Chinese and English, "Seek truth, foster originality and live up to the name of teacher."





We went to lunch at a faculty/student restaurant on campus where the food was delicious. I wish I had remembered to take photos because the presentation was beautiful too - So much better than the cafeteria at NYU-Shanghai in Pudong.

In the morning on the way to the metro I finally tried a street food I have passed by for weeks and wanted to try – a buckwheat pancake with fried egg and sauce. It actually was not as good as I had been imagining. I also have looked for an opportunity to take a photo of the covering people on motorcycles wear when the weather is cold. It is like a puffy blanket with arms and mitts to hold the handlebars – and comes in lots of colors and materials. Really clever I think.



While I was making dinner Thursday evening there were fireworks bursting all over the city to celebrate the Lantern Festival marking the turn to the new (lunar) year. In the neighborhoods all around us fireworks went off one area at a time, almost like a rotation. It was fun to stand at the windows and watch this ongoing display of light, color and sound.

On Friday, I again spirited Ravi away from work to go to the Municipal Museum. It describes the development of Shanghai with old maps and photos and a huge model of the city. There were also exhibits of the plans to make Shanghai a green city and a 360 degree movie taking viewers from the airport on one side of the city, through all the new developments, to the airport on the other side of the city – dizzying, and very impressive. If they follow through with green planning the city will be spectacular.



On Friday evening Ravi organized a group good-bye dinner for me. We went to an Indian restaurant in Puxi that turned out to be really good.



[Chuck, Larry, Lee, Thierry, Promethee, Ravi]



[Yuning, Barbara, Douglas]

We were there for so long the metro closed part way through our trip home and we had to exit and find taxis to get home!

Yesterday I dragged Ravi for side by side foot massages. It is really a full body massage with special attention to the feet (including cupping) and truly heavenly. I'm really going to miss this! Fun to do with Ravi and he ended up liking it too. Maybe he'll go back after I'm gone!



That afternoon, another group outing was organized by Jun, a Chinese professor, to the China Art Museum (of contemporary art) located on the site of the 2012 Expo in a part of the city we hadn't yet seen (in Pudong). It is enormous. Ravi and I spent almost the whole time in a temporary exhibit on Chinese masters who were influenced by French painters. The photo on right is a painting of Indian poet Tagore who spent some time in China in the 1920s with Chinese poet Xu Zhimo painted by Jiang Jianzhong in 1924. We bought a print of another painter we really liked called Poetry of Song People by He Tianjian, one of the masters in the exhibit.



After the museum, Ravi and I peeled off from the group to have my last dinner at our favorite vegetarian restaurant. We had all our favorite dishes and brought leftovers for lunch before I leave. My flight leaves today (Sunday) at 4:30 p.m. Shanghai time and I arrive at Newark at 7:30 p.m. Sunday New York time!

It has been a wonderful adventure, and hopefully I will be back here again with Ravi next spring. Looking forward to seeing you all!

Zai Jian! Lee

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