

Nong Fu (Farmer)

Statement of Interest:

There are two things in my life that I have never lost interest in: art/design and my culture.

Having grown up in the suburbs of a small town southeast of Houston, Texas, my education seldom presented opportunities that encouraged me to engage outside the context of my own home. After my first year at Parsons and living in New York City, I developed an understanding of how social systems as well as the actions of individuals interconnect to impact the world as a whole rather than just to the context in which one lives. Knowing this, I fine-tuned my aspirations as an artist and designer towards a direction that I felt was more purposeful and capable of having long-term results.

I am currently a junior in the Architectural Design department. As an American Born Chinese (ABC), the social division between ABCs and immigrants from Mainland China has always troubled me. In my experiences, this division results from the language barrier and differences in cultural understanding. Too often this creates a sense of shame for the ones born overseas and it is this perception that fortifies this separation. I also find this problematic because it means a huge loss of information and communication from generation to generation. Growing up, my interest in my culture came naturally to me. I studied hard in Chinese School and kept up with Asian pop culture. An inner part of my heart has always been burning to return to China and work there. But I rarely admitted to it because I had a fear of being rejected and not fitting in if I were to go overseas.

My first summer back home from college, I worked in a restaurant that consisted of migrant workers from China and well as ABCs. It was my first time in an environment where the two groups got along and were able to work together. After all, we had to, to keep business up. I felt an innate happiness. And I found my extra efforts in studying Chinese very rewarding. Subsequently, by working at the restaurant, I gained enough confidence to openly speak about my future goals of applying my art/design skills abroad in China.

Thus, I began to prepare myself. When I returned to my second year at Parsons, I started going to Chinese School again. Then, with Parsons the following summer, I went to China for the first time. We spent a month in Beijing and Shanghai collaborating with University students on multimedia projects. I, however, found myself most intrigued by the increasing consequences that globalization has had on the contrast in living situations between the upper and lower class populations. I found myself naturally prone to taking photos of old villages and alleyways as opposed to the skyscrapers and commercial building like I had originally expected. And I found myself particularly interested in the difficult lives of migrant workers who leave their farms to work in the city to provide for their families. When I went to Shanghai, I was disgusted by all the pollution created from the 2010 Expo construction. Now after having gone there, I had a

glimpse of the cost that China's environment and people are paying for its economic progress. Beneath the glory, I watch videos, read articles, and talk to people about how cities are being built fast but not to last. Because of the limited amount of time and the lack of architects, quality is forsaken and consequences are ignored when constructing buildings in many parts of China. People are not building for the people. I felt hurt and somewhat betrayed when I first heard this. Then I felt determined, determined to alter this system or to take part in bettering it. But to truly change something effectively, I will need a more thorough understanding of what I am dealing with.

This past semester at Parsons, I was learning about sun patterns and passive heating strategies. I found myself becoming increasingly frustrated not because I was unable to understand the material, but because I was learning about nature through a computer monitor and not through personal experience. Being a firm believer in learning through experience, I registered for WWOOF China (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms). WWOOF is an international organization that provides food and housing in return for your services to help on a farm. Having firsthand experience on a farm will not only increase my understanding of nature and how to live more sustainably, it will also increase my ability to design according to nature and sustainability, sustainability meaning looking ahead to deduct and maintain balance between two or more things that will result in more harmony and well-being.

Originally, I came to Parsons to major in design and technology because I wanted to win an academy award for animation. After having realized that my education empowered me with the capabilities and the connections to apply my knowledge far beyond that of the television screen, I switched into the Architectural Design department. My focus changed to reshaping urban experiences through an understanding of movement, space, and social interaction that would improve the quality of life in the city. After my first trip to China, my passions have extended to helping those in China who are being left behind or buried under the country's economic boom. Some of the most valuable lessons I learned as a student of Parsons are to never do anything I do not believe in and to always seek the truth. Whether I work in the city or in the more rural areas, I can apply my city knowledge to improve sustainability through design and technology for rural areas, or I can apply my rural knowledge to increase sustainability through design and technology in cities. Sustainability is not about making something last forever, but it is about how something existed and how it affected the things around it, causing a cycle of effects that leaves an impression on the future.

Project Proposal:

After having grown up in the suburbs and pursuing my education in the city, it is time I experience life in a rural setting. The theme of the Shanghai 2010 World Expo is Better City, Better Life. This upcoming summer, I want to compare and contrast how design and technology engages the environment at the World Expo and on local farms through WWOOF China. I cannot accomplish my ambitions as an artist/designer alone. I will also be searching for and make connections with people pursuing a similar goal to mine along the way.

Target Travel Dates: June 1 - Aug 10, 2010

Expo Duration: May 1 - Oct. 31, 2010

I aim to work on 1-2 different farms and go to the 2010 Expo, but not in any particular order.

Some possible farm types and locations (I am selecting farms that allow at least a 1 – 2 month stay):

Organic Farm in Shanghai (organic vegetable supplier for 2010 Expo)

Organic Farm in Hong Kong

Farm in Liaoning

Farm in Kunming

Farm in Guangzhou

Outline Budget:

China Visa	\$65
Two way ticket from New York to Shanghai	\$1200
Shanghai Expo Ticket (7 day pass)	\$200
Hotel in Shanghai	\$800
Food	\$500
Travel expenses to local farms (bus, trains, taxis)	\$1000
Documenting Equipment (camera/video recorder)	\$600
Misc. Expenses	\$500
Total:	\$4,885

Farm In Shanghai

HOST NAME: Jane Tsao	
Email	jane@biofarm.cn
Date of Membership	2009/05/24
Name of contact for host	Jane Tsao
Person Responsible for visitors	Jane Tsao
Languages Spoken	
Address	8019, ChuanSha Rd, Liu-Tuan, Pudong, Shanghai , China 201202
Nearest large city	Shanghai, China
Directions from nearest city	Please refer to our website: www.biofarm.cn at Contact us
Type of abode	Organic farm-vegetables and fruits
Telephone	+86-21-58599853 or +86-21-400 6200 789
Fax	+86-21-5156476
Mobile	+21-138 177 94023
Website	www.biofarm.cn
Type of work done at host's	organic farming, farm tour guiding, farmers market selling etc.
Atmosphere	natural, rural, friendly, organic, chinese old village
Climate	Spring& autum are pleasant, summer is hot, winter is cold.
Best time to come	open to wwoofers whole year, but March to December are preferred.
Number of Simultaneous Guests permitted	at most 6 persons
Permissible duration of stay	If qualified, we welcome long-stay friends to promote organics as long as possible.
Jobs for WWOOFer	
Are children welcome?	No
Message from the host	BIOFarm would be very proud to be the first organic farm registred under WWOOF China. BIOFarm is assigned as an organic vegetable supplier during 2010 Expo. We welcome one who would like to learn organic farming and to enjoy organic life in China.
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Farm In Liaoning

HOST NAME: Wutianhe Huang	
Email	walton2000@mail.china.com
Date of Membership	2005/12/27
Name of contact for host	Huang Wutianhe
Person Responsible for visitors	Huang Wutianhe
Languages Spoken	
Address	Hujiapu Village, Qianying Country, Xiuyan County, Anshan City, Liaoning Province
Nearest large city	Dalian City, Liaoning Province
Directions from nearest city	take bus to get off at Xiuyan Count bus stop
Type of abode	Village home
Telephone	0086-0412-7863529
Fax	NA
Mobile	13521448383
Website	NA
Type of work done at host's	farmwork
Atmosphere	village atmosphere
Climate	humid in summer , very cold in winter
Best time to come	April to May
Number of Simultaneous Guests permitted	1 or 2
Permissible duration of stay	1 month
Jobs for WWOOFer	
Are children welcome?	Yes
Message from the host	Hello alternat email: wth2008.e@mail.china.com
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HOST NAME: WWOOF China	

Photos from China Trip (Summer 2009)

View of a farm from the Great Wall-Beijing



Shanghai



Shanghai



Shanghai Skyline on a Sunny Day



Work from Parsons:

Spring 2008 Tryptic called “Displacement” concerning the displaced population resulting from the Beijing Olympics



Spring 2009 Architectural concept model exploring the relationship of speed, time, and movement between two opposing forces

