

## Realism From China

NEW YORK CITY — "Realism From China: A Search for the Universal Image from Nineteenth Century European and Russian Influences," an exhibition of paintings and sculpture by five contemporary artists

from the People's Republic of China, will open Thursday, May 15, at the Grand Central Art Galleries, Inc.

Realism in art had its inception in tumultuous Nineteenth Century Europe when industrialization promised

luxury for the few but misery for the many. The so-called Revolution of 1848 created a new toughness of mind and an insistence on observing life as it was, rather than as it ought to be. Realism was conceived in art and in literature as a universal language of social consciousness to ex-

press the sufferings and triumphs of the common man. Mid-Twentieth Century China, like Nineteenth Century Europe, experienced a period of revolution, reformation and industrialization from which art could not remain impregnable. The paintings and sculpture by Jin

movement created by a group of artists known as the Wanderers (peredvizhniki), eight years after Gustave Courbet — embodiment of the realist movement in France — served as the impetus, beginning in 1855, toward an art that provided intelligible imagery and



Zhang Hong Hian, *Close to the Land*, oil on canvas, 33¼ by 68 inches

Gao, Wang Jida, Zhang Hong Nian, Chen Dan Qing and Li Wuan Wu are evident of an enduring realist tradition — proof that despite ironies and inconsistencies in the history of realism, there is a collective, universal image that continues to serve society regardless of national, ethnic or chronological boundaries.

Russia, too, struggled to emerge from the throes of revolution and the rapid changes engendered by industrialization; the Russians strode into the modern era with their own realist art

meaningful content to all strata of society.

Traditional Chinese paintings, executed with a soft brush, ink and/or watercolor is an extremely subtle idiom. Although the five artists in the "Realism From China" exhibition do not work in the traditional Chinese style, their concepts are rooted in China's traditional philosophies of life and art. In the literature on Chinese painting, there are many references to a *tao*, or way. The aim in Chinese painting has been to express *tao* as a

# Painting and Sculpture Exhibition opens May 15 at Grand Central Art Galleries



**Chen Dan Qing, Tibetan Nomads at Rest, oil on canvas, 30 by 38 inches.**

basic belief in the order and harmony of nature.

The painters, Jin, Zhang, Chin and Li, and the sculptor, Wang, all attended the Beijing Central Fine Arts Academy, but over a span of forty years they received four distinct types of art instruction while China was developing rapidly with problems compounded by its overwhelming size and a population well over 1,000,000,000. All of these artists during Mao's Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) spent time in the countryside, Tibet and Mongolia, because of Mao's feeling that art, like literature, needed to be oriented toward the broad

masses of people.

In 1980 the National Exhibition Hall in Beijing exhibited "French Landscape and Peasant Painting from France" which included works by Corot, Millet, Breton, Courbet and other Nineteenth Century French Masters. The period 1978-1980 had been a transitional one for Chinese art when the social realist ideas imparted by the Soviet Union (Big Brother to China during the 1960s) and vestiges of the earlier French School finally coalesced. The Chinese Communist Party, understanding that the arts would stagnate without contact with Western culture, advocated a new party line:

**Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom and a Hundred Schools of Thought Grow.**

The exhibition will continue through Saturday, June 7.