

2010

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Recent and Upcoming Conversations in China

June 21, 2010 in [Uncategorized](#) by [jwasserstrom](#) | [Permalink](#)

This post follows up on previous ones, such as those found [here](#) and [here](#), that have focused on the way that public conversations about China can complement other kinds of methods for communicating ideas and information about the country, from lectures given by one person to written works ranging from essays to books. One thing that has inspired me to revisit this subject is that I've become addicted (and this certainly qualifies as a "positive addiction") to the [Sinica podcasts](#) hosted by Kaiser Kuo.

We've mentioned these before at "China Beat," but they deserve another shout out—and not just because my [China in the 21st Century](#) came in for some positive (and humorous) attention from Kaiser and guest Jeremiah Jenne of the [Jottings from the Granite Studio](#) blog in the "Review of China Books" episode that just aired (see the summary and list of books provided [here](#)). Recent shows (and all of the ones I've listened to so far have been lively and engaging) have tackled a variety of topics, such as the role self-censorship plays in Western discussions of Chinese politics, that are likely to be of interest to "China Beat" readers. And I know for a fact that many topics tackled in the Sinica conversations are of interest to "China Beat" contributors. After all, without any prior coordination (though people involved in both projects are in touch with each other from time to time) they aired an [episode on Chinese science fiction](#) right around the time that this blog was [running a post](#) on the same subject; and they also ran a [show on the Honda strikes and related issues](#) not long after I'd published [something on the same topic at the Huffington Post](#) (during China Beat's vacation period) and while I was just starting to write a longer commentary on the subject that's [just appeared on Foreign Policy's website](#).

Most Sinica episodes are made up of discussions between people who join the multi-talented [Kaiser](#) (he's known to some primarily as a shrewd analyst of contemporary Chinese culture, but to others primarily as a member of Beijing rock bands) for face-to-face conversation. Two of my favorite parts of the China books episode, though, were short pre-recorded commentaries by [Danwei's](#) Jeremy Goldkorn (in which he made an excellent case for the value of Sang Ye's [China Candid](#) as a work that everyone interested in the PRC of today should read, while also stressing the importance to publications dealing with earlier periods in Chinese history) and the [Guardian's Jonathan Watts](#) (who wove together neatly discussion of several different books that are all framed as travel tales, but use journeys as jumping off points to explore many different kinds of issues).

A second reason for revisiting the theme of dialogs is that, following closely on the heels of the conclusion of a series of events of this sort sponsored by "China Beat" and other local entities held here in Irvine, I'll be taking part in five Shanghai ones. Four of these will be held on successive July Sundays and jointly sponsored by the [M Restaurant Group](#) and [CET Academic Programs](#), at a locale [we've mentioned here before](#) (the same Glamour Bar at M on the Bund where the Shanghai International Literary Festival is held each March). Full details about this series of "Cosmopolitan Conversations" can be found [here](#), and regular readers of this blog will see that nearly everyone who will be joining me on stage (Paul French, Graham Earnshaw, Lijia Zhang, Evan Osnos and Howard French) has written for this site in the past, while the one person who doesn't fall into that category (Tess Johnston) is someone whose participation in last year's literary festival was [discussed by one of our contributors](#).

I'm delighted that the fascinating writers just listed have all agreed to join me in discussing topics ranging from Americans in Old Shanghai to blogging about 21st century China. And I'm very grateful to [Tina M. Kanagaratnam](#) and Jeremy Friedlein (director of [CET's Shanghai program](#)) for all they did to make this line-up of events possible.

The fifth Shanghai event I'll be taking part in, which will be held at a different locale one week before the M on the Bund/CET series starts, also has "China Beat" connections. It will be a discussion of the 2010 Shanghai Expo (and World's Fairs and Expos of the past) that will be part of an ongoing series of [urban studies workshops](#) organized by "China Beat" contributor Anna Greenspan and the person with whom I'll be exchanging ideas will be Nick Land of Urbanatomy, whose new book on the topic was [excerpted on this site](#) not long ago. (This event will take place at Mesa Manifesto 748 Julu Road

on Sunday June 27, from 4-6 p.m., with 35 RMB charged at the door—but that will get you your first drink as well as, we all hope, a lot of food for thought.)

And a final note about “China Beat” connections: I’m not the first person involved with this blog to have a tie to CET. For as I recently learned, both CB’s founding editor Kate Merkel-Hess, and its current editor, Maura Cunningham, are alums of this excellent study abroad program.

To keep up with the latest happenings at CET Shanghai (and their many other study abroad locations), check out the [CET Facebook page](#).