

Speaking Notes, Exhibition Opening, Hong Kong, June 9, 2012

I'm honored to be here today on behalf of PEN American Center, and welcome you all to the opening of "The Silent Strength of Liu Xia." I had the wonderful opportunity to see Liu Xia's work when it premiered in New York, and I am thrilled that we were able to help the Independent Chinese PEN Center bring her work to Hong Kong. It is an understatement to say this is the most momentous part of this exhibit's worldwide tour—so far.

I wish we were all in Beijing, with Liu Xia herself welcoming you—though I know she didn't even want to know where her photographs were going. But because she has been cut off from all of us, her work must speak for her. And we all must see it, absorb it, and spread word of it. Of course hers is not the only story that needs telling, and we must remember that there are many like her who are suffering from illegal house arrest, and dozens who are behind prison walls, like her husband and our friend Liu Xiaobo.

But as she sits quietly in her apartment in Beijing, and scandals erupt around her, we must not let her forced silence be taken as quiet submission. We must remind the world that she and her husband are being punished for his work and her connection to him. We must continue to work to free them both.

So please, tell your friends, your family, your colleagues about this exhibit. Tweet it, weibo it, blog it. Support Liu Xia, Liu Xiaobo, and their friends and colleagues in the Independent Chinese PEN Center who are working to create the space that will allow all of China's citizens to express themselves freely. Be the drop of water that will create enough ripples in this giant pond to be ineluctable.

So that the next time this exhibit is on Chinese soil, it is in Beijing.

Here's to Liu Xia!

Sarah Hoffman

Freedom to Write Program Coordinator

PEN American Center

