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I recently took a trip to Dafen which is in the suburbs of Shenzhen. This neighborhood is world famous for its production of oil paint replicas. Back in the 90s, a Hong Kong businessman brought 20 artists to what was kind of a peaceful hamlet outside of Shenzhen.



They set up shop and started cranking out oil paintings which were replicas of famous paintings by Van Gough, Da Vinci, and others who have been dead more than 70 years (and thus out of copyright).

Soon, more and more artists and art workers began locating to Dafen. Today, there are over 5000 artists and art workers. Its no longer a hamlet but more like a gated community surrounded by busy bustling streets. The Dafen Oil Painting Village streets and alleyways, however, are quiet, walkable, and full of art shops selling oil paintings, watercolors, sculptures, and other art.

Although the economy here started as studios that produced replicas, there are lots of shops selling original art by artists from all over China. **The selling of replica art is still a big business. Hundreds of millions of dollars big, that is. Most of the buyers are from the USA and Europe;** many of which are hotel chains.



**Despite most of the business coming from large orders from abroad,** this place is a great place to stroll around and find that special work to put on your wall. The choices are plenty as there are several hundred shops. You can even commission an artist to paint an image of your choosing. How about a self portrait? Want to immortalize your favorite landscape? Just bring a pic and I'm sure any of these talented artists can help you out.

We arrived at Dafen by bus from the Shenzhen city center. Our first order of business was to get some



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food. So we found a family run restaurant selling “Chang Fen”, a rice noodle dish commonly found at dim sum restaurants. The lady was making her homemade noodle using a special steamer.

Everything was made to order and she would spread the noodle in liquid form onto a tray and sprinkle in some green onions, pork meat, and egg. Then the tray was placed into the steamer and after a couple of minutes removed. She would then scrape the noodle out and serve it with a garlic soy sauce. Very tasty indeed.

After breakfast, we went to the Dafen art museum.

This museum houses many original works by artists from all over China. Many of them were oil paintings in a western style but with Chinese influences. Others works used traditional Chinese inks and styles.

One of the attractions of the museum was the enormous stone carving sitting outside of its doors on the pavement. The carving is a three dimensional replica of a famous Chinese painting called “Along the River During Qingming Festival.” The detail was just incredible and the enormity of this piece of stone was impressive. The scene is an ancient busy Chinese city center with people bustling about their daily business.

After the museum we walked around the streets and alleyways to browse some of the stores. It was a peaceful morning and we could see artists working on new paintings right outside their own shops. Many shops have showrooms which you could spend time browsing. Since we weren't in the market for any piece of work, we simply strolled around the quiet streets and admired the art. I now know where to go when I need to decorate a new home!





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[Last edited by ForumEditor on 6-Mar-2009 13:52]



Post by: [LongShot](#) Time: 3-Mar-2009 12:03

Nice, never heard about this part of Shenzhen before, always heard it was a rather soulless place. So... any idea how much a nice replica painting would cost?

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