

# transnational dialogues

跨境  
对话

BILINGUAL  
JOURNAL  
AND  
LABORATORY

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1. THE TRANSNATIONAL RESEARCH CARAVAN AT  
ZAJIA LAB, BEIJING



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For videos, pictures, up-to-date information on our project or a digital copy of the journal, you may visit the website:

[www.transnationaldialogues.eu](http://www.transnationaldialogues.eu)

The Transnational Dialogues is an initiative of



a transnational membership organisation promoting democracy, equality and culture beyond the nation state. It believes that social and political change requires artistic and cultural engagement as much as other forms of engagement. It seeks to promote alternative forms of political subjectivity and collective political action.

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1. VIEW OF THE EXHIBITION "JUST WHAT IS IT ABOUT THE END OF THE WORLD THAT MAKES IT SO APPEALING?" AT V ARTS CENTRE, SHANGHAI, 2012

# TRANSNATIONAL DIALOGUES

## THE PROJECT

Throughout 2011 and 2012, the transnational cultural and political organization European Alternatives had been running the Transnational Dialogues, an exchange project between Europe and China. Young artists, curators, researchers and intellectuals from all cultural fields engaged in a series of activities in Europe (France, Great Britain and Italy) and China (Beijing, Chengdu, Chongqing, Shanghai and other locations). The activities included numerous transnational camps and research tours, the staging of artistic interventions in urban settings, instigating a great number of video-interviews with Chinese and European cultural figures, and maintaining a blog, which is now accessible along with several videos, photos and articles on the project's website

[www.transnationaldialogues.eu](http://www.transnationaldialogues.eu).

This publication brings together some of the results and discussions of this atypical Sino-European Youth Think Tank.

## THE CONCEPT

The issues at stake were many and all quite sensitive. Economic development, labour conditions, civil rights, democracy, freedom of expression, urbanization, the state and the market, public space, **commons**, independent art spaces, the role of the artist, etc. Anyone familiar with the Chinese context knows the frustration which originates from openly discussing such issues in depth. In order to avoid a likely stalemate, the discussion moved from the halls of academia to the studios of visual artists, where **art itself became a common ground for everyone to exchange their views and develop new thoughts.** Therefore, we took art as a language (read Adeline de Monseignat, p. 32), and yet further, the artist as a privileged interpreter of society (read Alessandro Rolandi, p. 31) and as a powerful impetus for change (read Ni Kun and Yang Shu, p. 6).

Another core reason behind this complex research project was within the consideration that the public perception of China in the EU remained generally blurred and of a narrow scope. Most of the time China is seen merely as

a massive producer of goods and services – which it actually is – yet nevertheless, **China remains and, even more so, shall continue to be a major cultural producer.** The analysis of this aspect, fundamental but often neglected in European discourse, will help not only to better comprehend China and its' future developments, but also to try and foresee how Chinese cultural production will influence Europe's (read Niccolò Milanese, p. 20). A second major aspect being the role of artists and cultural producers within the Chinese context (read Zandie Brockett, p. 9; Luigi Galimberti Faussone, p. 30), where the economic and societal structures, as well as the natural and urban landscapes, are changing so quickly and dramatically that individuals, as well as entire communities, are often suffering from physical and psychological displacement throughout many areas of the country (read Ségolène Pruvot, p. 18). In this respect, the research questions evolved around as to how the artists perceive, reflect upon and give expression to these changes, and how actively and openly they deal with these issues within their own local or national communities (read Robin Resch, p. 22; Ni Kun, p. 23; Lu Xinghua, p. 26). Finally, the ultimate goal of this project was that of looking at China as if it were a special mirror, through which we can gain a better understanding of the European present and possible future.

## THE TRANSNATIONAL RESEARCH CARAVAN

Among the many activities of this year-and-a-half-long-project, the Transnational Research Caravan (27<sup>th</sup> September – 6<sup>th</sup> October 2012) is the one worth highlighting. On that occasion, artists, researchers, curators and thinkers from China and Europe engaged in a research and production trip to map innovative cultural practices, foster new and existing relationships, document, and work towards a sustainable continuation of exchange between cultural innovators. Across the cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu and Chongqing, a group of eight young Europe-based artists, curators, critics, researchers

and art managers met with their counterparts in the most radically different settings, from the opening of the Shanghai Biennale to the cafés of Beijing, from the rural villages of Sichuan to the urban undergrounds of Chongqing (read Lonneke van Heugten, p. 5; Mike Watson, p. 2). The trip was filmed by two journalists and video-makers, Cecilia Anesi and Giulio Rubino, whom are now in the process of assembling a short documentary, of which some extracts may be viewed on the project's website.

## THE JOURNAL

The Transnational Dialogues journal originates from the Caravan, from which it has taken the three main research topics, each with a distinct section, which constitutes its focus:

I. Commons / Independent spaces: The aim is to identify and develop alternative models along the dichotomy of private vs. public, which dominates the cultural and artistic discourse, as much as the economical and social one, and to explore issues such as gentrification, the market, autonomy and informal economy.

II. Urbanisation / Occupation: The aim is to understand how the rapid urbanization of rural areas and change of land use management systems (from collective in the villages to state-managed in the city) is impacting upon traditions and social relationships, as well as questioning the identity of those whom have been affected by such sudden changes amidst the Chinese landscape.

III. Role of the artist / Education through art: The aim is to research new models for the production and dissemination of knowledge, exploring alternatives to the traditional educational systems and the role of artistic spaces in promoting education, self-formation, and open-ness to the surrounding community. Furthermore, the focus is also upon which role the artist can play as an educator and healer of the many social wounds of contemporary society.

Each section is divided into four episodes: an introduction, which gives the background of the topic and highlights the most relevant issues; two reflections, which elaborate on some of the most significant aspects of the topic;

an action, which shows examples of artistic practices related to the topic; an extra, which tells about other related activities within the Transnational Dialogues project. The main language of the publication is English, but two articles per section, both by Chinese and European authors, have been given in translation in order to promote the circulation of the journal to a Chinese audience. The publication is freely available in both print and digital formats.

The journal collects the contributions of all participants of the Transnational Research Caravan (Luigi Galimberti Faussone, Lonneke van Heugten, Lorenzo Marsili, Niccolò Milanese, Ségolène Pruvot, Robin Resch, Mike Watson and You Mi), as well as those of some of the people that had held an active role in supporting the Caravan's journey (Zandie Brockett, Lu Xinghua, Ni Kun, Alessandro Rolandi, Wang Shuo and Yang Shu) or whom had been actively involved in other activities of related to the project (Boliang Shen, who was part of a group of Chinese artists and curators whom toured Italy in May 2012, and Adeline de Monseignat, who participated in the conclusive trip across Shanghai and Beijing in December 2012). More information on the authors is to be found at the end of the journal (p. 34).

## AN INVITATION TO THE READER

In conclusion, towards inviting readers to engage with the publication, we here reproduce the closing statement of Mike Watson's article "What We Don't Know Won't Hurt Us" (p. 29):

With regard to education, and the questions I came to China to find answers to [...], I would say the impenetrability of China holds something vital for our self-knowledge in Europe. Above all it was reconfirmed for me that the key to rethinking politics, education and social models resides not in what we know, but in what we don't know. [...] **China is a palette with which we can repaint Europe, and, who knows, perhaps the reverse is true.** I'd urge researchers working everywhere to let their inadequacies take control, to be led by their subject of study and to question all their assumptions, all of the time.

## INTRODUCTION

### QUESTIONING INDEPENDENCE

Stella TANG

An important wave of occupations of artistic spaces caused by the impact of increased austerity measures on the cultural sector has brought concepts of autonomy and self-management to the foreground of public discourses in many European countries. Theories around the “commons”, together with the surpassing of the state-market dichotomy, have become equally relevant for political as for artistic experimentation. **But what do state and market mean in China, and in particular what third space of autonomy exists between the two for the Chinese cultural community?**

The country’s rapid economic development over the past twenty years has blurred any clear divide between what is public – and deeply entwined with political bureaucracy, – and what is private and market-driven. The state and the market overlap considerably and constantly: in the ownership regime, in the direct or indirect political control of sensitive areas of production, including the media and culture, in the close association if not outright overlap of successful entrepreneurs and leading party members. In a country where the political is closely associated with control and censorship, and where the market is still allowed to display animal instincts partially constrained in the West, the transformation of the state-market dichotomy into a partial overlap results in a **state-cum-market** hegemonic complex that is potentially dire news for independent cultural producers. Against this background, however, thriving communities of artists and intellectuals struggle to open spaces for independent cultural production, fostering participation and collectivity, as well as processual and empowering relations in the cultural field.

Communities of autonomy are not new in recent Chinese cultural history. The birth of contemporary art in China is closely associated with the emergence of artistic villages; beginning in the 1990s, artists tended to group together in abandoned areas at the outskirts of Beijing to share their then semi-clandestine passions. The most famous of such early artist villages is probably that of the Summer Palace, where some of the most daring performances were conceived and acted in front of fellow artists, some foreign journalists and embassy personnel,

and, more often than not, police. Most of the artists and curators that would come to define the period of maturity of Chinese contemporary art – from Zhang Huang to Li Xianting, from Rong Rong to Fang Lijun, – originate here. 798 Art District, in a post-war factory complex, appeared in the early 2000s after artists were evicted from the grounds of the Summer Palace. Started as a more or less spontaneous coming together of artists, the district rapidly transformed into one of the hippest “cultural zones” of Beijing, first opposed and now showcased by public authorities.

Art districts have recently experienced explosive development. With local governments tasked to implement the 2011 five-year plan for the development of creative industries in China, and perhaps with an afterthought on the ease of controlling potentially tumultuous artists when “aggregated” in closed spaces, the government now embraces such developments, renaming them “creative zones” and promoting them as part of tourism packages. As certain art districts become prime locations, rental often grows out of control, businesses with higher capital move in, and gentrification processes take shape. From underground hideouts to over-the-counter shopping malls, successful villages might now seem yet another happy marriage of the state and the market for the pursuit of added value and international recognition.

However, this does not necessarily mean that art and artists necessarily turn into flat spectacles of cultural consumption. Indeed, such dense spaces of artistic production potentially open a setting to foster participation on multiple levels. In Taopu art district in Shanghai, for example, artists frequently invite philosopher Lu Xinghua (read his article on p. 26) to engage in cultural and political discussions, developing an interdependent relation between artistic practices and political and philosophical reflection that extends to an online platform initiated by the artists and a large array of cultural activities. In the village, this constellation has the form of a loose think-tank or collective, which is active in the creation of a “public voice” for the artists grouped together in the village. In such moments, even when not

openly proclaimed, there is a **de facto** rejection of governmental attempts at employing creativity to drive commodification processes, fostering in their place the autonomous development of critical cultural and political communities. Indeed, as we went around inquiring as to people’s conceptions of independent spaces, it became increasingly clear that a fixed, physical space may not be necessarily an advantage, but instead sometimes a hindrance to artistic autonomy. Emphasis was placed on the creation of free moments of inter-personal relations, understood as temporarily liberated spaces through a constant process of claiming and reclaiming the artistic ground. Spaces of independence are thus projected onto a temporal line of evolution and become in many cases “shared time” of artistic production; the bodies of the artists effect a polite refusal, a “I would rather not”, refusing to be economically or politically recuperated.

Art Praxis Space is a collective of three artists based in Chengdu (they collaborated with this journal in the co-production of an art book; read article on p. 23). In their long-term project in the fast changing social landscape of the Kunshan village, the artists independently depart on their own research around different facets of village life, creating works that weave together in a narrative the changes the Kunshan area is undergoing. While their work could be aptly called a critical intervention, the artists rather exercise an emotional and kinetic approach – they call upon their childhood memories living in the countryside and direct an affective gaze toward village life, engaging the local community and creating “spaces of freedom” for both artists and inhabitants to express their feelings towards urban regeneration and gentrification processes initiated by the local government. They take open space, private houses, moving vehicles and used and untouched land as their field of work, extending the actions over long periods of time. A temporary space-time is constructed based on dedication to each other and to a common cause, a genuine expression that escapes the commercial system and any attempt to be restrained by investment in “creative industries” and land valorisation. This stance is hardly unexpected.

**The status of “non-profit” organisation does not exist in China, and the cultural system does not provide any funding for the arts.** Rare galleries that want to run on a not-for-profit basis, such as the photography hub **Three Shadows** started by artists Rong Rong and Inri, undergo endless problems in clarifying their legal status and accessing resources. When asked about the meaning of independence, Shu Yang (read his article on p. 8), the founder of OrganHaus gallery, called it “a kind of self-marginalization”. As much as a certain degree of self-marginalization is claimed and wished for, OrganHaus stands in a factory-turned art district, largely recognized and even promoted by the government (which commissioned artists to make mural graffiti on all the buildings flanking the street leading to the art district, which is in turn just across from the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute). Many attempt a hybrid approach, merging temporal precarity, inter-personal approach, and physical presence. Chengdu-based artist Caibao Ye started an initiative right from his living room. The initiative, called Family Art, is a very personal response to the lack of independent art spaces in the city. He opens up his home to artist friends to exhibit, serving as a curator. The works range from paintings, installations to performance. One artist, Jianjun Chen, claimed that his painting had a sensual relation to the body and demanded the work be put in bed; the curator followed suit, and after getting up every morning placed the painting carefully in his bed. Like Caibao Ye, many other artists have set up independent “unofficial” galleries and space for artistic exchange. Where and what are these spaces? How do they function, and who is behind them? What strategies do they adopt when breaking open a field for cultural production? Who and how do they engage? With **Transnational Dialogues** we have conducted a series of research trips and exchange visits to pose these questions. To get the full answers from those working behind the scenes, read through this journal or log on to [www.transnationaldialogues.eu](http://www.transnationaldialogues.eu) for full-length video-interviews.

# REFLECTION

## QUESTIONS FROM A RESEARCH TRIP

Lonneke van HEUGTEN

### LOOSE ENDS

In Beijing no one seemed to notice me. It was my first time in China and I felt strangely comfortable as a stranger, like being an extra in a movie. A calming sensation, which lured me into being lost alone in the streets multiple times. When I joined the Caravan, I discovered that a "Transnational Research Caravan" is a tricky thing: there were many trans-nations already present within each Caravan member as well as in the people we met. Over the ten days of travel, I felt connected to those whose passions are the arts and the social world they live and work in. I was confronted with issues I superficially seemed to understand well. And sometimes I realized I didn't after all. Here are some quotes that stick in my mind, together with some of my impressions.

### IS ART A COMMON GOOD?

Recently in Europe there has been much discussion and even outrage over cuts in arts funding, resulting from the economic crisis. The indictment to art is that it has become removed from society, and is therefore not worthy of support. A sentiment that is reinforced by the idea of the creative industries that has invaded cultural policy: art should be useful or at least profitable. In China, this indictment is unthinkable, as art is often not considered to have a social or political use. Being an artist is a relatively accepted occupation only because art has proven to be a (sometimes) profitable commodity. Thus the creative industry mantra is a perfect match. It is present in urban planning and has actively led to the creation of spaces for art production, as well as a certain tolerance for artist-generated ones. At the moment this discourse seems to be adding momentum to contemporary art production in China. Not-for-profit art organisations, on the other hand, are something relatively new. Foundations are not recognized as such in China, so they have strong ties with the international art world, gaining support from abroad. To talk about a "third space" independent of state or market was difficult, because these two seem so enmeshed that they create a net through which only the global art market can slip in and out. So, even though our terms were far from common, there was a similar need for a stronger discourse on other values of contemporary art. More discourse on the role of art and artists in Chinese society could open up different kind of spaces for art.

### THE ARTIST IS NOT A STRATEGIST

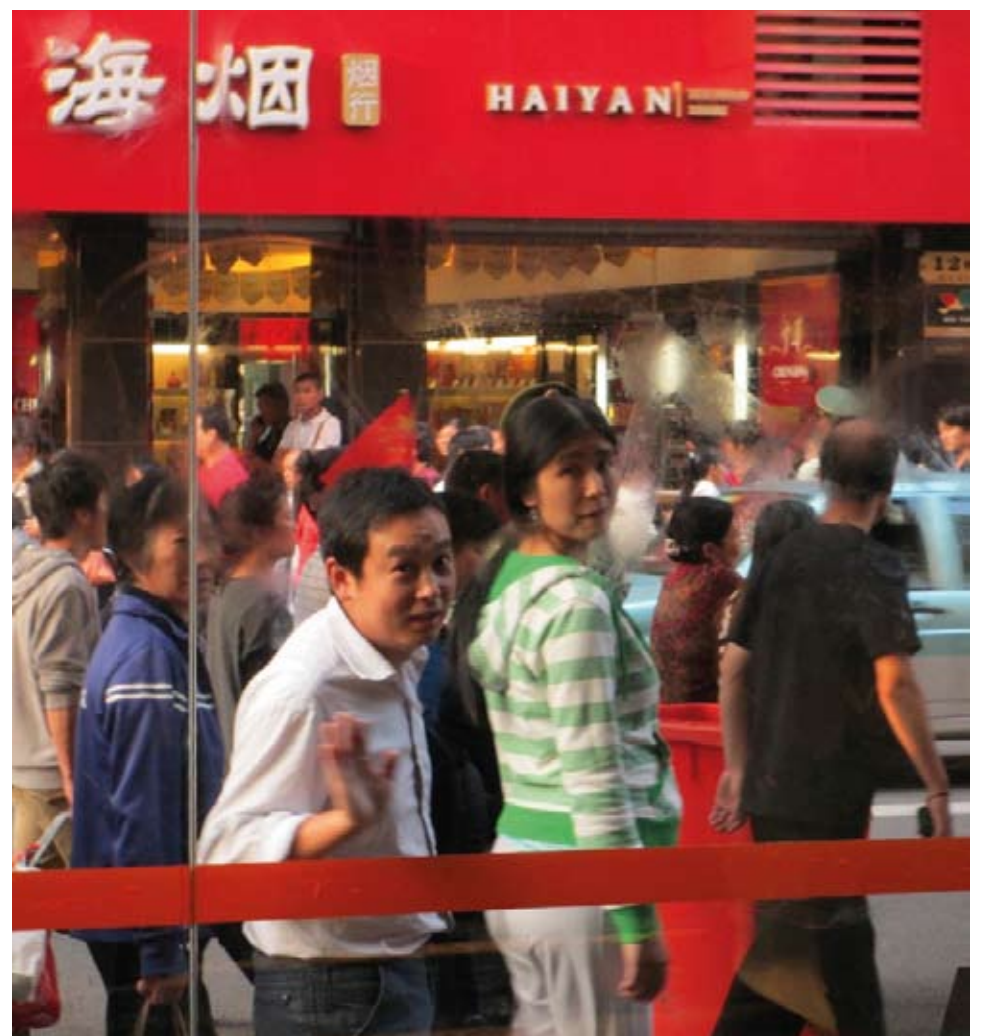
Most people, which includes artists, know the limits of what is tolerable in their context. There is no need to speak about these limits, because they are understood bodily. But as a researcher, you can assign the word "strategy" to the way these limits are made visible, temporarily dissolved, or stretched. For the Chinese artists we met, they are different for each, as well as multiple and constantly changing. One strategy is to produce "art that sells" to sponsor doing "real" art that is socially and politically engaged. Another strategy is, if an artist has acquired an established economic status, to sponsor and promote younger artists. A third strategy is to make critical and political art for the international market whilst presenting "more safe" art in China. A fourth is to discursively dissociate your art from the political, whilst letting the artwork speak for itself. And besides all these individual or collective strategies, it is often curators and institutions that play a large role in who may enter into the (international) art market, what art is shown in China and what discourses circulate.

### ART HAS NO POWER

The potential of art to encourage audiences and participants to think about their reality, is its power. The question is where artists can position themselves when the link between art and society in China is ambiguous and multifold. The images the Caravan leaves me with is like a loose collection of threads. Small knots form where perspectives of people tie up. Other threads sprawl. Work has to be done to tie the ends together and create something of which we yet don't know the shape. A common thread, a life-line or a balancing cord between Chinese and European concerns for spaces of art. Through which we can keep finding common ground.



1.



2.

1. A PERFORMANCE BY ARTIST GIROLAMO MARRI (PARTICULAR)

2. FROM WITHIN THE INTERCITY PAVILIONS AT THE 9TH SHANGHAI BIENNALE

# I. COMMONS/ INDEPENDENT SPACES

## ON THE INDEPENDENT ART ORGANISATIONS IN CHINA

NI Kun and YANG Shu

Independent art organizations began to appear in China sometime near the year 2000. In the 90's, the development of contemporary art in China had, after the Tiananmen Square incident in 89, switched quickly from engaging in dialogues or reflecting on political ideology of China through spontaneous art practices of individuals to a questioning of the reality of the country going through market-oriented economics and urbanization (such is of course a simplified description, the facts are much more complicated). The shift made by the Chinese cultural elite in the "post-'89 age" could be deemed as a pragmatic change after having gone through political ruthlessness (they cannot help but passively opt for it with a certain degree of compromise involved). From the perspective of creativity alone, the most exploratory and experimental art genres in the 30 years since the reform and opening up of China are poetry in the 80's, literature and Chinese rock-n-roll in the 90's, and contemporary art after the year 2000, the fields of poetry, literature/music, images/visual arts have been rebuilt and re-constructed, they represent different ages and are simple responses of a long since closed and imprisoned people to the enlightenment brought by re-encountering the Western

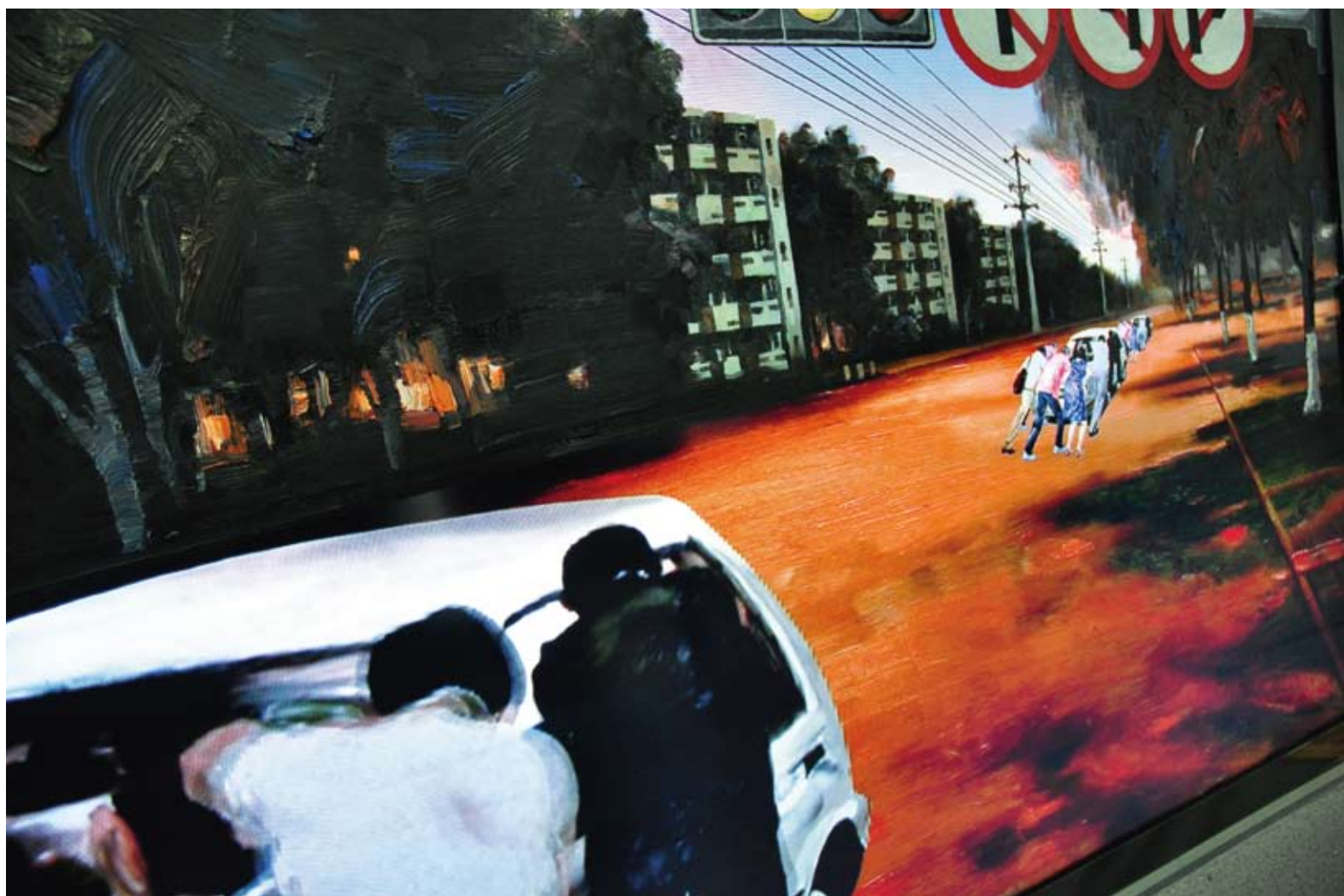
civilization. The 90's had been a difficult time for contemporary art in China, but it was also the time when the dialogue between Chinese contemporary art in the true sense and the Western world began, some Chinese artists were chosen and invited by Western curators to participate in the exhibitions held in Western countries, it was considered at that time an alternative approach to success.

To put the factor related to the so-called success aside, the real significance of it is that it revealed an approach that was independent from the path according to the standard set by the official artist association. (Note: China Artists Association is a governmental organization, which holds nationwide exhibitions every year, participating artists are required to submit works conforming to the ideology of the nation). From this point of view, it is no doubt an important promoter of Chinese contemporary art.

Following frequent contacts with the Western world, the contemporary art world in China had, since the late 90's, begun to reflect upon the approach that had been clearly chosen according to the "Western view", artists once again started to take action, they curated and held exhibitions. A series of new

movements with "exhibitions/projects" as the subject of art practices were able to become active in major cities of art such as Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou and Chongqing sometime around the early year 2000. The "Long March Project" (originally named as "Long March: A Walking Visual Display" with Lu Jie as the general curator, Qiu Zhijie as the executive curator), presented in 2002, was one of the landmark events of art. The exhibitions and projects of art are bound to bring about the development of art organizations and institutions, and the emergence of alternative art spaces is a natural outcome. In June 2001, "Kunming Art Loft Community" - the first artist community with loft style studios in China - was founded, it was an art district made of artist workshops, galleries and design studios, which directly led to the founding of the 798 Art Zone (Beijing) and Moganshan Art District (Shanghai). During the same period, a non-governmental film society similarly founded by artists, ended up being banned, as opposed to the former which have been contained by the government. The reason is that when art-related groups work as a community in the society, whether the government, as a supervisory body, is able to intervene and infiltrate within the community

and include it in the economic planning of the government will to some degree determine the fate of those organizations they build. (1. From the onset of their establishment, the art districts founded spontaneously by artists involve many practical issues, the government, in order to absorb the art districts, opts for some plausible supportive policies. The positive side is that the art districts are able to gain access to additional social resources at the beginning stage in the short term with the intervention of external forces, such as the government, as benign aides, but such support is limited to the government's understanding of the art districts which remains on building a profitable economy of art, and that would be a problem; 2. The backdrop for the burgeoning of non-governmental film organizations and movie clubs in major cities in early 2000 is the popularity of digital video cameras and computerized film-making techniques, many young people spontaneously picked up the machine to shoot films, built non-governmental platforms, organize their own communities and seminars and held 'independent film festivals'. Since being banned, similar establishments appeared in the forms of 'image exhibitions', 'non-governmental film foundations' and other related studios.)



1.

1. AN ARTWORK BY ZHOU XIAHOU (PARTICULAR)

## 中国独立艺术机构简述

倪昆/杨述

An important twist for the contemporary art eco-system in China after the year 2000 is the influence from commercial capital sometime around 2005. It was as if overnight the art market and trading of art have become the entirety of art itself. The booming art market directly leads to the proliferation of art galleries, art media, art expos, auctions of art works and enrollment expansion of art schools may be viewed as results under the same influence. Experimental arts have been hugely impacted by the commerce-dominated art market, while painting has become the mainstream media until this day. That is the background for the appearance of independent art organizations, and it is a common trait for them to keep a distance from commerce-oriented operation, the main sources and structure of funds would instead determine their operation model and value orientation. Even so, an "independent organization" has several significances: 1. It is independent from the government and art establishments, which exaggerates the significance of being there and does not have a specific standpoint; 2. A non-profit art organization, its independence shows in being non-commercial, however, its choice of art projects and approach of the organization are often of middle-class taste owing to the financial background of the investors; 3. An artist-run-space, which is similarly non-profit, stresses the design and practice of experimental, cultural and artistic projects, is the most vital model in China currently. The Organhaus Art Space is one such art establishment, other organizations subject to this category are the Arrow Factory (Beijing), Borges Libreria (Guangzhou) and Yangtze River Space (Wuhan), etc. (One notable character of the Organhaus Art Space is that it stays independent by alienating itself and keeping away from the art market, and focuses on the experimental side and cultural nature of projects. Its focus on the interaction with the Western art world also makes it unique in China. Regarding the art projects of the Organhaus Art Space, 50% of them are international projects such as the international artist-in-residence projects and curator exchange programs. The aim is, with the continuing execution of the projects, to strengthen and promote the

development of local art eco-system, grasp and absorb information from the sites of the Western art world, and find possible discourses for self-positioning). "Art teams/ projects" usually constitutes the recent art organizations with "community" as main trait, participating artists would follow some sort of self-stipulated rules/standards to start art practices with specific objects. The more active among them are the Forget Art project (Beijing) by Ma Yongfeng (which proposes art's non-intervention/micro-intervention of reality and blurs the boundary between art and real sites), HomeShop (Beijing) (To start conversations according to the nature of different spaces, to blur and question the boundary of the spaces), Art Praxis Space (Chengdu) (which stresses the localization of art, with sociological surveys as a starting point and starts conversations based on existing social logics), and Tong Yuan Ju (Chongqing) by artist Wang Haichuan (With the demolished arsenal factory as an object, starting and multi-dimensional sociological dialogue with multi-topics by the method of test/measurement), etc. Strictly speaking, a self-defined art team may be deemed as an independent art project that brings forth diversified questions directed toward specific context of the reality of China, including the questionings of art establishments themselves, the topics of social sites and historical and political issues. In brief, the current independent art organizations and projects by "art community" in China are very important, they present some new possibilities in the development of contemporary art in China. The self-alienation of independent art organizations is not so much about the gesture itself, but to refuse the institutionalized production of commercial art. It is difficult though since China has no independent foundation system, a certain capacity that shall develop along with the system of art has become a personal action of some individuals, we who devote ourselves in the action can do nothing but be more courageous and persistent.

Translated from Chinese by  
**FANG Liu**

独立性艺术机构在中国的出现可以从2000年之后算起，在之前的90年代，中国当代艺术的发展在‘89天安门事件’之后，迅速的由自发性的通过个体艺术实践来介入讨论或反映意识形态下的政治中国事实，转向了针对市场化，城市化进程下的中国具体现实的提问（当然这是一个简单而粗放的描述，事实比这要复杂得多，本文不作更具体的书写）。中国的文化精英们在‘后89时代’的转向，可以被看成为在经过残酷的政治洗礼后的务实性转变（这里面也存在着一定程度的妥协因素，是被动下的无奈之举）。单纯以创造性这个角度来看，中国最具备探索和实验精神的艺术类型，在中国改革开放之后的这30年中，80年代的诗歌，90年代的文学和中国摇滚乐，2000年之后的当代艺术，都是不同时代的代表性门类，这也可简单的回应一个长期被封闭及禁锢下的民族在遭遇西方文明的再启蒙洗礼之后，分别在‘文字，文学/音乐，图像/视觉艺术’等领域所展开的再建和重组。90年代的中国当代艺术是一个艰难的时代，同时它也是真正意义上的中国当代艺术和西方对话的开始，部分中国艺术家被西方策展人挑选参加在西方的展览，这在当时被看成为获得成功的另外一种途径，抛开这些所谓的与‘成功’有关的因素，它真正的意义更在于它指出了一条独立于官方美协标准的发展之路（注：中国美术家协会，官方机构，每年举办全国性美术大展，要求参加的艺术家创作符合国家意识形态要求的作品），从这个意义上说，它是中国当代艺术发展的重要助推剂，这是毋庸置疑的。

随着中国和西方接触的频繁，中国当代艺术界自90年代后期开始反思这种带有明显的‘西方视角’的被挑选的艺术方向。艺术家再次开始自发的行动起来，策划和举办展览，新一轮的以‘展览/项目’作为艺术实践主体的运动在2000年初期前后，在北京，上海，杭州，重庆等中国主要的艺术城市，得以积极的发生，2002年的‘长征计划’（由卢杰总策划，邱志杰执行策划，原名为‘长征- 一个行走中的视觉展示’）则是其中的一项标志性艺术事件。艺术展览及艺术项目的发生，势必带来艺术组织，艺术机构的发展，‘替代性艺术空间’的出现，则是自然的后果。2001年6月，中国第一家LOFT艺术家工作群‘昆明创库艺术区’正式成立，由艺术家工作室以及相关的画廊，设计工作室等组成的集中型艺术生态区，



2. AT THE ORGANHAUS ART SPACE, CHONGQING

# I. COMMONS/ INDEPENDENT SPACES

(continued from page 7)

直接影响及催生了之后的798艺术区（北京），莫干山艺术区（上海）等，不过联系到2000年初期同时发生的，由民间电影人组织发起的民间电影社团，同样的由艺术家，创作者发起推动的独立性民间组织，其命运一个是被政府所收编，一个所面对的则是被政府禁止取缔的命运。究其原因，其实质在于当艺术群落联接为‘共同体’而真正在社会上发挥作用时，作为监管部门的政府机构是否可以介入及渗透至这些区域并将其纳入到政府的经济规划中去，将在某种程度上决定这些组织的命运。（1，由艺术家自发发起的艺术区在成立之初就涉及到很多具体层面的问题，政府选择通过某些倾斜性的扶持政策而对其进行改造收编。好的一面在于艺术区的初期建设因为政府等外在力量的介入而在短期内获得更多的社会资源，这对于发展存在着良性的辅助力，但是这种支持的前提是政府关于艺术区的理解是停留在打造艺术经济盈利体的构想之上，要创办所谓的创意产业园区，并且以经济指标作为建设参数来指导和规划园区的建设，这就很有问题了；2，2000年初期在主要大城市出现的‘民间观影组织’，‘电影社团’，其存在背景是DV机器的普及以及电影制作技术的电脑化，一大群年轻人自主的拿起了机器，从事自发性的影像创作，进而成立组织机构，搭建非官方的团体和平台，传播串联，组织讨论及举办‘独立影展’。被取缔后，目前以‘影像展览’，‘民间电影基金会’，以及相关的工作室的形态出现。）

中国当代艺术生态在2000年后的一个重大的拐点应该是2005年前后开始的来自商业资本的影响。仿佛一夜间，艺术市场和作品买卖成为了艺术的全部。艺术市场直接催生的是画廊的大面积成立，艺术媒体，艺术博览会，艺术拍卖，以及艺术学院的扩招，都可以看成为是这种影响辐射之下的连带反应。实验性艺术实践因为商业市场的缺失而受到了大面积的影响，绘画成为了主流媒介，一直延续至今。独立性艺术机构的出现就在此背景之下，与商业保持距离成为了这些独立机构的一个共同特征。而机构资金的主要来源和构成则决定了机构的不同运作模式和价值去向。即使如此，‘独立机构’在当前中国依然存在着迥然不同的几种意义模式，其一，其‘独立’的对象为政府及艺术体制，它强调存在本身的意义而没有太明确的价值立场；其二，不以商业为目的的非盈利性艺术机构，它的独立性体现在非商业性，但是又因为投资方的商业背景，在具体艺术项目的选择和机构方向的设定上，对于中产阶级趣味的迎合是其显著的特点；三，由艺术家或创作者发起成立的艺术机构（Artist-Run-Space），有着同样的非赢利性定位，偏重实验性和文化性艺术项目的设计和和实践，是当前中国最具活力的机构。‘器·Haus空间/Organhaus Art Space’就属于第三类的艺术机构，其他的同类型艺术机构还有‘箭厂空间Arrow Factory /北京’，‘博尔赫斯书店/广州’，‘扬子江论坛/武汉’等。（器·Haus空间在机构运作上最显著的特点，在坚持远离艺术市场的前提下，以类似于自我放逐的方式来保持独立性，强调艺术项目的实验性和文化针对性。机构特别强调与西方艺术界的互动，这在国内也显得尤其的特殊，Organhaus的国际艺术家驻留项目，策展人交换项目等国际性项目占了全部项目的50%，其目的在于通过这些具体而持续的项目发生，强化和推动当地艺术生态的建设，把握和吸收来自西方艺术现场的信息，为自我定位寻找

对话点。）最近的以‘共同体’为特点的艺术组织，其通常以‘艺术小组/项目’为组织结构，参加艺术家按照某种自我约定的规则/标准展开对象明确的艺术实践，比较活跃的有艺术家马永峰的‘Forgot Art/北京’（明确提出艺术对于现实的‘不介入/微介入’，模糊艺术和现场的边界），‘家作坊/Home Shop/北京’（针对不同的空间属性进行对话，模糊及质疑空间的边界），‘实验工作坊/ Art Praxis space/成都’（强调艺术的‘在地性’，以社会学的调查为工作起点，针对现成社会逻辑展开对话），艺术家王海川的‘铜元局/Tong Yuan Ju/重庆’（以拆迁的兵工厂为考察对象，以‘测试/测量’为工作方法而进行的多话题多维度的社会对话）等，自我定义的艺术小组从严格意义上说，可以被看成为是一个独立性艺术项目，是对当前具体的中国现实语境而展开的差异化提问。其对话对象有针对艺术体制本身的，有针对中国社会现场的主题问题的，也有针对历史和政治方面的提问。总之，中国当前的独立艺术机构以及‘共同体’艺术项目在中国的实践是非常重要的，我们可以把它看成为中国当代艺术自我发展过程中的某些新的可能。独立性艺术机构的‘自我边缘化’，其目的不在于对于姿态的强调，而在于拒绝这些已经体制化了的商业艺术生产，其困难更在中国先天缺少的独立基金会制度，某种应按艺术制度去发展完善的自我建设在中国正进一步演变为某些来自个体的个人性行为，这是一种无奈，也让我们这些投入其中的人需要有更多的勇气和坚持。

1. EXHIBITION MANIFESTO AT ORGANHAUS, CHONGQING

1.





# ACTION

## ART SPACES IN BEIJING

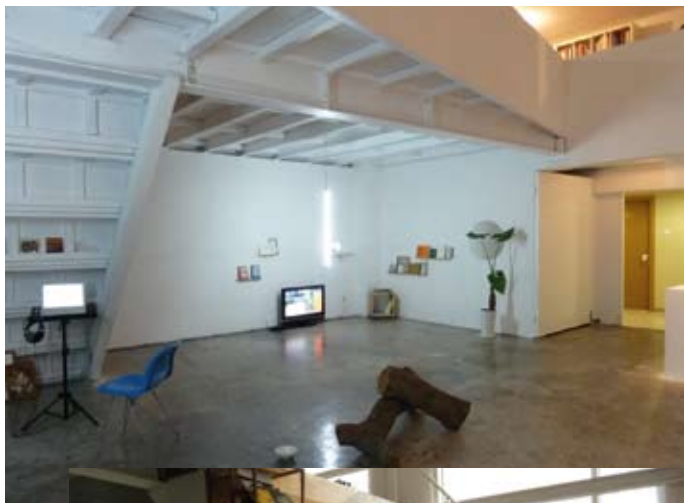
Zandie BROCKETT

Beijing: backyard to the powers that command the People's Republic and a buzzing population of nearly 30 million, the rapidly developing landscape extends beyond the horizon's infinite cranes and towering skyscrapers. **Evolving along side the city itself is an expansive artistic terrain**, where a complex infrastructure of artist-run, state-run, for-profit, not-for-profit, and alternative spaces coexists with thousands of artist studios and China's leading arts university, Central Academy of Fine Art. The rapid evolution of the arts infrastructure in China, has blurred the lines that separate and define each of its sectors. Although confusing to any outsider, the collision of financial models, organizational missions and modes of public outreach have resulted in a spontaneous fusion whose future remains unknown. The forces at work, whether political, financial or educational prove to be strong hindrances in the development of an arts infrastructure based upon Western models. The financial burden is the primary hurdle that many organizations face while operating in the not-for-profit, education-focused and alternative-programming realms. As a result, spaces have started to fuse financial

practices, thus birthing new curatorial philosophies. Commercial galleries and not-for-profit institutions no longer remain purely as such, but rather exist as hybrid forms of not-for-profit galleries and commercial spaces providing alternative programming. There are also a handful of DIY, self-funded spaces. Alongside the eclectic blend of financial models, comes the nebulous definition of the individuals running these spaces; the curator serves also as a dealer and collector. Although the current system has found a temporary means for existence given its environmental limitations, the continued development of the city and its society requires a system, if only for itself, that is able to engage the vast public in a way that challenges and progresses the collective conscious, yet is also able to remain operationally solvent. Despite the slew of commercial galleries that litter Beijing's major art districts, namely 798 and CaoChangDi, **a few anomalies challenge the definition of a commercial space by transforming their mission beyond producing selling exhibitions.** For example, The Pavilion, the Guangzhou-founded Vitamin Creative Space's Beijing outpost, serves as a venue

to engage a larger audience with its artist-produced projects. Recently the space was transformed into House M; meant as a stopping ground for the wanderer, Lee Kit's reflective space could be utilized as merely a resting point, or even a place to lay one's head for the paying guest. Alongside such projects, it serves as a base for workshops lead by artists-in-residence, experimental sound concerts and an extensive contemporary (Chinese) art archive available to the browsing soul. Yet the way in which a space like this funds itself is through the commercial sales of its represented artists. In contrast, Three Shadows Photography Centre, founded by the famed photographers RongRong and Inri, attempts to maintain its not-for-profit mission of bringing photography to all. Unfortunately the current climate has not yet warmed to the idea of philanthropic giving or tax-free government support, and perhaps never will. As a result the space has turned to a variety of alternative solutions, including operating an artist residency program, a photography school, and most recently +3, its commercial entity. Yet being recognized for their more academic contributions to photography, Three Shadow's commercial space has suffered from building a client base and programming that is external to the photography centre. Aside from the gallery world, there are several organizations that manage to exist without a commercial component, thus allowing them to maintain an ethical soundness and purity in curatorial practices. Most notably, the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA) stays focused on its educational mission through generous funding from the Belgian collector, Guy Ullens. With a stable source of (Western) funding, it is the closest one can get to a museum, as defined by a Western standard. Implementing a well-trained administrative team, the space is able to draw a large audience for its superior programming. Unfortunately, the only way to recreate an organization of this stature is likely through the gifts of another generous collector, particularly one who is understanding of the Western museum philosophy. Yet museums aside, a movement towards more

local, alternative spaces finds oneself stumbling upon Arrow Factory or HomeShop. With a prevailing DIY feeling, both Arrow Factory and HomeShop are small spaces that are self-funded and curated by the founders themselves. Operating autonomously, they incorporate a wide range of programming that aims towards involving and interacting with a dominantly local audience. Their space alone declares their mission, for Arrow Factory is a storefront situated in one of Beijing's hutongs; their rotating exhibitions are merely installed and locked behind a glass wall for any passerby to see. HomeShop, also located in a hutong, has a larger site that grants a few artists workspaces as well a decent sized common area for roundtable discussions or activities, and a kitchen with attached dining area for experimental meals. Interestingly enough, the founders of these spaces, although rooted in Chinese heritage, are Western in regards to nationality and education. It is the understanding of a need for public outreach, a community dialogue and innovative programming that allow for the success of such spaces. Although having over a 5,000 year-old history, **modern China and its contemporary art world have quite literally come into existence over the past 35 years.** Further, the modernized West has tremendously influenced its establishment, as China, its population and culture turns to its Western role models for clues on ideal modes of existence, subject aside. Resulting is a fusion of Western aesthetic and Eastern mentality. But in specific regards to the art world, perhaps this borrowing and tweaking of Western models is not well suited to the vast Chinese public. We have already witnessed the beginning of the spontaneous collision of two ideologies, but we must be mindful that China, culturally speaking, is 30, 40, if not 50 years behind its Western counterparts and thus has not yet found the most efficient system. Perhaps the solution does not stem from the West, but rather from its own long-standing heritage. After all, given the vast diversity of our world, it is not possible for one ideology to be omniscient.



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1. 2. VITAMIN CREATIVE SPACE, GUANGZHOU.  
COURTESY THE PAVILION AND VITAMIN CREATIVE SPACE

# EXTRA

## IT'S ABOUT THE COMMONS - WITNESSING OCCUPY MOVEMENTS AND STREET DEMONSTRATIONS IN ITALY

BOLIANG Shen

# I. COMMONS/ INDEPENDENT SPACES

"The 'Occupy' movement is not a carnival-style entertainment", but on May 12th, at the Piazza Verdi next to the University of Bologna, what I saw looked just like that: students wearing costumes of ancient Roman generals, medieval knights or pirates and holding placards with creative slogans addressing different social and political issues gathered at the square under the sun, they drank beer, engaged in animated talks... when dawn drew near, a truck carrying a rock band drove across the square, following behind was a long procession formed by groups of students, smoke of fireworks lighted to herald the procession gradually spread and seethed in this old, red city known for its tradition of radical resistance. The "Global Strike Day" march had just began - "in the eyes of the Chinese, this is a spectacle, another disguise under the protection of capitalism", said the artist Zhou Xiaohu who was with me.

At the time, I and four other artists and curators (i.e., Ma Yongfeng, Ni Kun, You Mi and Zhou Xiaohu) were invited by European Alternatives, a European civil society organization, to participate in the art exchange in Rome and Bologna as part of the Transeuropa Festival co-hosted by the European Alternatives and the Transeuropa Network, which took place in 14 cities across Europe. Transeuropa Festival is an annual festival of politics, culture and arts all over Europe. It started in 2010 in the context of economic crisis with the goal of seeking alternative solutions for the crisis through a series of social mobilizations, actions, art movements, workshops and forums.

In the two art exchange events held at MACRO in Rome and at Teatrino Clandestino in Bologna, Ni Kun introduced the open art intervention projects "Rebuilding Kunshan" and "International Organhaus Art Space Artist In Residence Project", organized by the "Organhaus Art Space" in Chongqing, of which he is the executive, and the "Experimental Workshop", an art group in Chengdu. Ma Yongfeng introduced his "micro-intervention" project - "Dragon Fountain Bathhouse" performed in 2010, "micro-practice" project - "Youth Apartment Exchange Project" presented in 2011, and the "micro-resistance" project of this year

- "New 'Big-Character Poster'" which made graffiti on site and took place in Bernard Controls, a French factory located in Daxing, Beijing. All of them were carried out by Forget Art, a guerrilla art group founded by Ma. Zhou Xiaohu described the first season of "EATS Expressional Art Therapy Studio" - "One Person One Story", a work he showed in Shanghai's "TOP Building" art event in 2011, "My Communism: Poster Exhibition" co-organized by several Shanghai artists, and the "Future Festival", an ongoing forum for long-term observations and dialogues on contemporary art organized by artists in Shanghai. You Mi talked about the activities and discussions regarding "alternatives" and public space, which she organized or participated in China and Europe. I introduced "Multi-future", a practice and creation inspired by James Scott's "Seeing like a state", which examines the tendency of simplification in China, a complicated site.

From the eruption of the global financial crisis in '08 and '09 to the outbreaks of "Arab Spring" and "Occupy Wall Street", all kinds of occupations, protests, mobilizations and radical politics have been acting like flames spreading everywhere. Nevertheless, we can only get to know one another through smoke and phantoms. "Is your art against capitalism?" "Is your art anti-modernist?" - These have been the looking-for-comrades type of questions that we often encountered. I asked about the connections between the current radical movements in Italy and the Italian communism tradition started by Antonio Gramsci and Palmiro Togliatti, the student and worker movements in the '60s and late '70s, radical authors we are familiar with such as Pier Paolo Pasolini or Dario Fo, and even the left-wing extremist group "Red Brigades" in the '70s. The answers I got in general were: "There are maybe a certain loose connections, but those are not important, we were very young or not yet born then. What's happening now is primarily influenced by global trends."



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1. VIEW OF PIAZZA VERDI, BOLOGNA



2.

2. ARTIST MA YONGFENG IN ACTION, BOLOGNA, 12TH MAY 2012

On the other hand, it is not like the “May Revolt” of ’68 in France, as many people have understood – “a group of young people growing up after the war revolted against a prosperous society”. Italy is experiencing a serious financial and social crisis. The young people I met showed anxiety over employment after graduation, and expressed concerns over tax hikes and the high suicide rate in this city. According to a BBC report, there was a “White Widows March” in Bologna the weekend before we arrived, husbands of the women in the march killed themselves under the burden of deep recession, many were business men – that reminded me of a passage mentioned in the “Capital”, which has often been ignored: do not blame individual capitalists, they are victims of capitalism too. Reports of infectious suicides were all over the place. This March, a craftsman burned himself to death in front of the local tax court. Two days before we arrived, Maurizio Cevenini, a beloved left wing party leader and former mayoral candidate in Bologna, threw himself off a council building. His funeral was held on 12<sup>th</sup> May, the whole town was in grief. Ma Yongfeng’s “micro-resistance” event scheduled for that morning at a square near the city council was moved to the afternoon on the same day at Piazza Verdi next to the University of Bologna.

Back in China, movements of “micro-interventions”, “micro-practices” and “micro-resistance” had been well received. Would the effect and meaning of “micro” become difficult to execute or express anything in the mighty context Bologna, where people have been so agitated? Continuing the pattern of creating graffiti on site in Bernard Controls, Ma wrote sentences on recycled cardboard, scrolls of fabric, flags of Italy and the EU, some were with indefinite indications such as “Sensibility is Under Control”, “Action is the Product” and “You Can Steal ‘Now’, but Future is In Our Hands”, some were reflections on radical demonstrations – “Do Not Let the Protest Become a Pollutant-Free Ethical Gesture”, “Is It A Revolt Without Revolution?” and so on. He also interacted with the students, asked them to write down their thoughts. However, in the deluge of slogans and graffiti of Bologna, could their words be noticed and understood as delicate and firm heterogeneity? After the brief exchanges, would the students deviate somewhat from the radical way of thinking they have been used to for the thoughts written down by themselves?

Lorenzo Marsili, co-director of European Alternatives, asked what if someone from a radical group challenges him? Ma Yongfeng replied: “I’ll ask him to explain his point of view in one sentence, then I’ll write that sentence on a cardboard and give it to him in exchange of the placard he is holding.” That was an interesting idea, but, no one came forward to challenge, and each group kept to itself. There were some minorities who could hardly blend in, who stood by and watched. A Chinese friend who studies at the University of Bologna said: “Protests and demonstrations happen here almost everyday, they have become a way for the people here to participate in public life, express opinions and positions, or legal channels for criticism, just like we, Chinese, tweet our complains online...”.

I had a long conversation about the issue with Sara Saleri, a member of European Alternatives, who has studied semiology with Umberto Eco. She thought that the student march we saw should not be deemed as a typical example of all the “Occupy” protests and street demonstrations happening in Italy. Those young people were simply expressing themselves, they were anxious over the future, but had limited understanding of the substantial problems of the society. She admitted that street protest as a legal public means has a long tradition. However, she stressed that around the time when the financial crisis started, street movements began to have whole new forms and claims. She described to me the “San Precario” intervention movement since its launched in 2004. The movement portrays San Precario as the patron saint of workers whose life and employment are precarious. San Precario has appeared everywhere in Italy, catholic rituals have been mimicked to invoke concerns about workers’ circumstances, which have already led to many changes. She also mentioned the “wave” movement (“L’Onda”), a student movement in 2008. It opposed budget cuts and commercialization of education. It called for a model of autonomy for educational institutions by the students; also the occupations of social, cultural and even natural resources such as the occupation of Bartleby Social Center and highways by the students and citizens in Bologna in 2009, and its claim of co-managing the resources.



- 1.
- 2.

1. PREPARING THE ARTISTIC INTERVENTION WITH MA YONGFENG
2. VIEW OF THE TEATRO VALLE OCCUPATO, ROME

# I. COMMONS/ INDEPENDENT SPACES

(continued from page 11)

“Commons”, “common goods” are terms mentioned often in the above movements, but they are relatively new concepts to Chinese readers. The easier examples are “Wikimedia Commons” and “Pirate Parties International” (PPI). The latter, first appeared in Sweden in 2006, started by opposing corporate copyright law’s restrictions on online downloads and hindrances of circulation of knowledge, and supporting legalization of online resource sharing. Later it grew bigger and expanded to many countries. Its claims have also been extended, by advocating openness and transparency of online information, government transparency and protection of civil rights, establishing a freer civilization and opposing outdated patent laws and monopoly. “Online governing” is another trait of the parties, they take advantage of online social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to allow party members exercise their rights, announce policies, collect opinions and eliminate hierarchy. Its political stance has thus been established. Last September, the Pirate Party in Germany took 9% of the vote in Berlin elections. It was allowed to enter Berlin Parliament for the first time in history. Some people consider that the inception of alternative governance model.

It is necessary to mention that, one reason for “commons” to become a keyword is closely related to Elinor Olstrom’s brilliant research on the concept – which won her 2009 Nobel prize in economics. Her study rip the notion of the negative connotation derived from the well-known article “Tragedy of the Commons” by Garret Hardin in 1968. Also, I must mention the book “Commonwealth”, co-written by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, and “The Common in Revolt”, a collection of dialogues between Judith Revel and Antonio Negri. Both are important sources on “Commons” in Italy. This year, the Transeuropa Festival in Bologna held symposiums on issues of digital commons, co-working and co-housing, new chapter of European commons and immigration policies.

In Rome, posters advocating water as a common good are often seen, the campaign started last year based on nationwide queries made by two legal scholars of International University College of Turin. According to the result, most Italian considered that water should be deemed as a common good and managed by the people, so they oppose privatization of water. Shortly after, on June 14 2011, the famous theatre Teatro Valle, built in the 18th century and located along the Pantheon and the Senate, was occupied (Luigi Pirandello’s “Six Characters in Search of an Author” made its debut there). The theatre used to be managed by the ETI (Italian theatre association); then the ETI was closed and the theatre shot down due to high costs and

decline of the industry. It was said that the theatre would be bought by a tycoon and converted into a restaurant. Therefore, workers of the arts and entertainment were mobilized through the internet to occupy the theatre, they claimed that culture is a common good, just like the water and the air, and the theatre shall be managed by the citizens. Now it has been almost one year now since the Teatro Valle was occupied, shows have been put on almost every night, performances are open to all citizens who pay as much as they wish. The occupiers and citizens ensure the quality of the performances through public assemblies – “We don’t need to vote, we listen to the reasons of those who say ‘No’.” The occupiers who accepted to be interviewed by me admitted that those were simply the first step of the occupation; they need to develop an alternative managing model of “common wealth theatre” in order to resolve financing and workers’ payment issues, and introduce the model to the government and citizens. For the time being, occupants still make their living from jobs outside of the theatre, they take turns to guard the theatre 24 hours a day, so the government wouldn’t have any chance to evict them – “the government does not even shut off the water and light, probably for fear of further intensifying the conflict...”.

Similar occupations have erupted involving several other theatres in Rome and many cultural institutions across the country. A popular, current topic is about an abandoned skyscraper in Milan, which has been occupied since 5th May. The plan is to convert the building into a “common wealth” art centre, called “MACAO”. Many institutions, colleges, organizations and individuals have started to submit future projects for the space to the occupants.

In Rome, an audience asked about the current fever in China of building museums. Zhou Xiaohu replied frankly that “those are simply some art ‘houses’, and we do not benefit from them” – “But, I believe one

day we will occupy those ‘houses’ as well.” Regarding the above-mentioned issue that whether the “alternative” art practices in China are part of the global “anti-capitalism” movement, Ma said that what is important in the world today is not movements with clear guiding ideology, but numerous “tenuous” movements that are organized voluntarily by the people.

Afterwards I asked Sara Saleri and Gian Paolo Faella, PhD in History of Ideology at the University of Bologna, whether the movements of “commons” and “alternatives” are a direct revolt against capitalism, or just an improvement plan for the status quo. They admitted that opinions have been divided among participants, albeit those opinions derive from the desire for change. “Down with capitalism” is a political appeal belonging to a distant future. That is certainly too reserved in the eyes of a radical. Slavoj Žižek once said that if we try to improve capitalism inside the system, it would only extend the life of capital, the beast, and make modern states, “committees of administering common affairs of the entire capitalist class” even healthier.

In “Socialist and Communist Literature”, Chapter 3 of “Manifesto of the Communist Party”, Marx mentioned how the German socialists emasculated the literature of French socialism and communism: “German socialism forgot, in the nick of time, that the French criticism, whose silly echo it was, presupposed the existence of modern bourgeois society, with its corresponding economic conditions of existence, and the political constitution adapted thereto, the very things those attainment was the object of the pending struggle in Germany... To the absolute governments, with their following of parsons, professors, country squires, and officials, it served as a welcome scarecrow against the threatening bourgeoisie.” – I thought of the above passage when discussing about “capitalism” beyond the context of real situations of both sides.



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1. “NO COMPROMISES” READS THE NEW ITALIAN FLAG BY MA YONGFENG

2. EUROPEAN ALTERNATIVES VOLUNTEERS HELPING WITH THE ARTISTIC INTERVENTION

## 事关“共享”： 意大利占领与街头 运动亲历记

作者: 申舶良  
日期: 2012年5月25日

I also asked, if expanding the context of “commons” in which the backgrounds of members of co-governance and the circumstances are more complicated and diversified, will the model fail or end in disaster, like various communes or utopia in the past? Gian Paolo Faella considered it a very important question in the practice regarding “commons”, what resources could be “common wealth” shall be judged carefully – they shall be limited to resources on which the subsistence of all people rely and cultural resources shared by a community. To me, instead of establishing a country where everything is eventually a commons, **the entire work regarding “commons” shall aim to the autonomy by the people on certain public resources,** consequently make a government become a more idealized “limited government”.

I am tired of asking questions that aim for “a clear direction” or “the final goal”, which probably came from the habitual way of thinking imprinted on us by Leninism: a movement must have clear goals and plans designed by an authoritative figure or the highest commission, which would instruct the masses to strictly carry them out. Maybe we can bring up here the legacy of the German revolutionist Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin’s contemporary: contrary to Lenin’s favour of control and giving orders, Luxemburg emphasized the importance of disorder, noise and active, large-scale social events. She stressed the creativity and morale of each participant, deemed

a revolution as “a complicated and organic process”, any division or intervention to the process would threaten the vitality of the organism as a whole – which are quite similar to “chaos” “complexity” and “self-organization”, concepts of modern science. Alexandra Kollontai, a Luxemburgist from the elite of the Soviet Bolshevik, also thought that to accomplish a revolution and create new forms of production is like riding on uncharted waters, therefore, action itself is superior than a blueprint or plans. She asked: “Can the smartest manager of a feudal estate invent early capitalism by himself?”. Similarly, without action, we should not expect the experts trained within the frameworks of capitalism and socialism be able to build a wonderful model for the future.

(Special thanks to members of European Alternatives: Lorenzo Marsili, Luigi Galimberti Faussonne, Sara Saleri, Gian Paolo Faella; occupiers of the Teatro Valle: Federica Giardini, Laura Verga, Emiliano Campagnola; James C. Scott, “Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed”; You Mi, Ni Kun, Ma Yongfeng, Zhou Xiaohu and his wife, Zhu He and Ou Ning who have helped me with the trip and this article.)

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Translated from Chinese by  
**FANG Liu**

“‘占领’不是 年华式的娱乐”，5月12日，在意大利博洛尼亚大学旁的Piazza Verdi广场，我所见却大致如此：学生们身着古罗马将军、中世纪 士、海盗等奇装异服（编者按：这些学生其实是当地大学共济会的成员，可能正在为自学校 业而庆 ）高举针对不同社会、政治议题的创意标语，聚集在广场的 下 ，高谈 论，发泄着过 的少壮精力和心气……直至白日将近，一 车载着摇滚乐队穿过广场，各路学生团体汇作长队追随 车，队首 起烟火，在这座有着素有激进抵抗传统的意大利红色老城沸腾弥漫：“全球 工日”的穿城游行 开始——“对中国人来说，这是一场‘景观化’的游行，是资本主义保护下的另一种 方式，”同行的艺术家周啸虎对我说。

是时，我与四位中国艺术家和策展人一同应欧洲公民社会组织“欧洲替代性 (European Alternatives)”之邀，参与该组织与“跨欧洲网络 (Transeuropa Network)”于全欧14个城市举办的“跨欧洲盛会 (Transeuropa Festival)”在罗马和博洛尼亚两市的中欧艺术交流活动。“跨欧洲盛会”是2010年始在全欧经济危机的语境下发起的年度政治、社会、文化、艺术盛会， 在通过一系列社会动员、实践、艺术活动、工作坊和论坛，为危机之下的欧洲寻求一种“替代性 (alternative)”解决方案。

在罗马当代艺术馆MACRO和博洛尼亚的小剧场”Teatro Si”进行的两场交流中，倪昆介绍了他担任执行负责人的重庆“器·Haus空间”与成都艺术小组“实验工作坊”联合主办的开放性艺术介入项目“昆山再造”和“器·Haus空间国际艺术家驻留计划”。马永峰介绍了他发起的游 性艺术机构“forget art”2010年进行的“微干预”项目“ 洗 ”，2011年进行的“微实践”项目“ 年公 交换”和今年在北京大兴法国工厂Bernard Controls进行的“微抵抗”项目“新‘大字报’”现场涂鸦。周啸虎介绍了2011年他参与上海“ 大楼”艺术活动的作品“EATS表达性艺术治 工作室”第一 “一人一故事剧场”，上海数位艺术家联合策划的“我的共产主义：海报展”，还有上海艺术家们联合发起的长期观察、讨论当代艺术的流动论坛“未来的节日”。由宓谈了她在中、欧两地策划和参与的各种关于



# I. COMMONS/ INDEPENDENT SPACES

(continued from page 13)

“替代性”和公共空间的活动和讨论。我介绍了针对詹姆斯·斯科特 (James Scott) 所言“国家的视角”对中国这一复杂现场中事物的简化而进行的实践与创作项目“各种未来”。

从08、09年全球金融危机，到去年“阿拉伯之春”和“占领华尔街”，各种占领、抗议、动员和激进政治的图景有如到处授粉的火焰，我们只能透过它的烟雾和幻影去认识彼此的现实。“你们的艺术是否反资本主义？”，“你们的艺术是否反现代性？”——这种“寻找同志”般的发问是我们常常遇到的。我问及意大利当下的激进运动与自葛兰西和陶里亚蒂以来的意共传统，60、70年代末的学生、工人运动，我们熟悉的激进作者帕索里尼或达里奥·福，乃至70年代极左恐怖组织“红色旅”有何关系或传承，回答也多是：“或许有些散漫的联系，那不重要，那时我们还小或未出生，当下运动首先来自全球风潮的感召。”

那也并非如许多人理解的68年法国“五月风暴”——“一群在战后成长起来的年轻人，起来反抗一个欣欣向荣的社会”，意大利如今确实面临严重的经济、社会危机，我接触到的年轻人们对走出校园求职表示焦虑，并诉说当地缴税压力和自杀高发等问题。据BBC报道，一场“白寡妇游行”在我们到达博洛尼亚前的周末爆发，参与游行的女人们的丈夫全因不堪经济危机后的重负而自杀，其中包括许多商贾——令人想起《资本论》中常被有意忽略的一个观念：不要谴责资本家个体，他们也是资本主义体系的受害者。关于传染式自杀的报道比比皆是：今年3月，一名手艺人当地税务法庭门口自焚抗议。我们到达前两天，受博洛尼亚市民爱戴的左翼政党领袖、市长候选人毛里奇奥·切维尼尼 (Maurizio Cevenini) 在市政厅坠楼自杀，5月12日上午举行葬礼，全城默哀。这令“跨欧洲盛会”邀请马永峰原定该日上午在市政厅附近广场进行的“微抵抗”活动改于下午在博洛尼亚大学旁的Piazza Verdi广场进行。

在国内的环境下，马永峰的“微干预”、“微实践”、“微抵抗”活动都有很好的效果。在博洛尼亚群体沸腾的“强”语境下，“微”的作用和意义是否会变得难以操作和言说？他延续在Bernard Controls进行现场涂鸦的做法，在回收纸板、织物长卷和意大利、欧盟国旗上喷写并不具有明确指向性的话语，如“感觉在控制之下”，“行动就是产品”，“你可以窃取现在，但未来还掌握在我们手上”，以及对激进运动进行反思的话语，如“‘反对’只是另外一种政治正确”，“不要把抗议变成无公害的道德姿态”，“这是一场没有革命的反抗吗？”……他同时与在场的学生进行交流，请他们写其所想。然，这些话语在博洛尼亚铺天盖地的标语和涂鸦中是否

能成为一种微弱而坚硬的异质存在而被注意和领会？现场的简短交流后，学生们写出的所想是否能对他们已成惯性的激进思维方式有所偏离？

“欧洲替代性”的负责人洛伦佐·马西里 (Lorenzo Marsili) 曾问，如果在场的其他激进团体前来发难该怎么办？马永峰答：“我就请他用一句话说明他的观点，把这话喷在硬纸板上送给他，也请他把手中的标语送给我。”这是有趣的思想交换，但，并没有谁来发难，各路团体都自顾自地游走，还有难以融入这些团体的有色人种在周遭徘徊观望。博洛尼亚大学的中国留学生朋友说：“上街、抗议和游行在这儿几乎天天发生，已成为他们参与公共生活、表达观点和立场的方式，或是合法的宣泄渠道，就像我们中国人刷微博发牢骚……”

我就此与生活在博洛尼亚的“欧洲替代性”成员莎拉·萨莱里 (Sara Saleri) 长谈，莎拉曾在博洛尼亚跟随翁贝托·艾柯 (Umberto Eco) 学习符号学，她认为我们不能简单地将当天看到的学生游行视作意大利全部占领和街头运动的缩影——那些只是年轻人在表达自己，他们充满对未来的焦虑，但与实质性的社会问题接触有限。她承认街头抗议作为一种合法的公共生活传统由来已久，却也强调在经济危机前后，街头运动确实有了全新的形式和诉求。她向我讲述2004年以来的“圣无保 (San Precario)” 干预运动——塑造新圣徒“圣无保”为工作、生活无保障 (precarious)、无编制工人们的守护圣徒，使“圣无保”在意大利处处现身，进行戏仿的天主教仪式，唤起人们对工人问题的关注，促成过许多改变。她还谈及2008年学生反对国家教育经费削减、教育商品化掀起的运动“浪潮 (L' Onda)”，呼吁建立学生自治的教育机构模式；2009年学生和群众对博洛尼亚Bartleby文化中心、高速公路等社会、文化、乃至自然资源的占领和“共享化”管理。

“共享体 (Commons, 亦译作‘公共事物’)”、“共享物 (Common Goods)” 是上述运动中常被提及的热词，对中国读者而言，这些还是相对新异的概念，较易理解的实例是“维基共享资源 (Wikimedia Commons)” 和“海盗党 (Pirate Parties International, 简称PPI, 亦译作‘盗版党’)”，后者于2006年现身瑞典，起初反对企业版权法对网络下载的限制和知识流通的阻碍，支持网上资源共享合法化，后来在多国发展壮大，触及面拓展至倡导网络信息公开透明，政府行政透明，保障公民权利，建立更加自由的文明，反对僵死的专利制度和独占特权等。“网络问政”是该党另一特色，利用传说中的“Facebook”和“Twitter”等社交网络媒体使党员们在网上充分行使权利，提出政策主张，收集民众意见，模糊等级制度，由此确定政治立

场。去年9月，德国海盗党获得了将近9%的得票率，首次进入柏林州议会，有人将其视作一种替代性治理模式的萌芽。

必要一提，“共享体 (Commons)” 成为近年间的“关键词”，与埃丽诺·奥斯特罗姆 (Elinor Olstrom) 因对“共享体”的出色研究获得2009年诺贝尔经济学奖关系甚巨——她的研究使“共享体”摆脱了加勒特·哈丁 (Garret Hardin) 1968年的著名文章《共享体的悲剧 (Tragedy of the Commons)》赋予此词的负面意味。此外，亦不可不提作为意大利“共享体”运动重要思想资源的安东尼奥·奈格里 (Antonio Negri) 和迈克尔·哈特 (Michael Hardt) 合著的《Commonwealth》，以及《朱迪斯·来沃尔 (Judith Revel) 和安东尼奥·奈格里的对话集《The Common in Revolt》。本届“跨欧洲盛会”在博洛尼亚就数字化共享体 (Digital Commons)，合作工作 (Co-working) 与合作居住 (Co-housing)，欧洲共享体新篇章和移民治理等问题进行了专场讨论。

罗马街头，常常可见呼吁将水作为“共享物”运动的海报，该运动始于去年都灵国际大学 (International University College of Turin) 两位法律学者的全国问卷——问卷显示，绝大多数国民认为水应作为一种“共享物”来由民众共同管理，反对对水的私有化经营。此后不久，在去年6月14日，位于古罗马万神殿和意大利参议院附近的18世纪著名剧院“Teatro Valle”被占领，路易吉·皮兰德娄的《六个寻找作者的剧中人》曾在该剧院首演。该剧院原属意大利剧院协会 (ETI) 管理，该协会今已解体，剧院亦因成本高昂和行业惨淡而关闭。据传该剧院将由一位巨商收购，改建为餐馆。为此，通过网络动员，文化、娱乐工作者在剧场集结占领，宣称文化应与水和空气一样作为“共享物”，由市民共同管理。如今，“Teatro Valle”的占领将近一年，几乎每晚都有剧目上演，以自愿出价购票的方式向全体市民开放。占领者和市民以公共议事的方式对申请上演的剧目进行品质把关——“我们不用投票，而是倾听那些说‘不’者的理由。”接受我采访的占领者们坦言，这些只是占领的第一步，他们需要发展一套“共享剧院”替代性经营模式，能切实解决剧院运营中的经济问题和工作者的酬劳问题，并将这套方案向政府和市民推行。目前，占领者们还是靠着在剧院之外的工作维生，他们轮流驻守，使剧院24小时处于有人的状态，这样政府就不能发动“强拆”——“政府甚至没有采用停水、停电等措施，大概因为他们担心矛盾进一步激化……”

类似的占领活动在罗马其他数家剧院和意大利全境的多家文化机构中爆发，最近流行的



1.

1. MA YONGFENG INSTALLING A HUGE BANNER IN PIAZZA VERDI

2. 3. WRITINGS FROM THE VOLUNTEERS AND THE PASSERS-BY, PART OF THE INTERVENTION BY ARTIST MA YONGFENG

话题是米兰的一座废弃的摩天楼，在5月5日被数千人逐层占领，欲建成“共享”艺术中心“MACAO”，许多机构、学院、组织和个人纷纷向占领者提交未来的项目方案。

在罗马的交流中，有观众问及中国当下的美术馆建设热潮，周啸虎坦言他认为那不过是一些艺术的“房子”，我们并非这些建设的得益者——“但我相信有一天，我们也会‘占领’这些‘房子’。”对前文中遇到的问题，有关中国的“替代性”艺术实践是否是全球“反资本主义”运动的一部分，马永峰称他认为当今世界重要的不是那些有着明确指导思想的运动，而是无数自发组织的、“微弱”的运动。

交流过后，我问“欧洲替代性”成员莎拉·萨莱里和博洛尼亚大学观念史博士让·保罗·费拉（Gian Paolo Faella），“共享体”和“替代性”运动是一种直接针对资本主义的反抗，还是只是一种针对现状的改良方案？他们也坦言参与者的意见并不一致，多是出于改变现状的愿望，“打倒资本主义”还是个稍嫌遥远的政治诉求。对激进分子而言，这当然是不彻底的态度，齐泽克就认为在资本主义体制内进行改良又是在延长资本这头恶兽的寿命，使现代国家这个“管理整个资产阶级的共同事务的委员会”更加健康。

《共产党宣言》第三部分《社会主义的和共产

主义的文献》中提到德国社会主义者对法国社会主义和共产主义文献的阐释：“德国的社会主义恰好忘记了，法国的批判（德国的社会主义是这种批判的可怜的回声）是以现代的资产阶级社会以及相应的物质生活条件和相当的政治制度为前提的，而这一切前提当时在德国正是尚待争取的……这种社会主义成了德意志各邦专制政府及其随从——僧侣、教员、容克和官僚求之不得的、吓唬来势汹汹的资产阶级的稻草人。”——跨越双方现实情境谈及“资本主义”一词时，我会想起这段话。

我还问到，如果“共享”范围扩大，共同治理者的背景和状况变得复杂多元，这种“共享”模式会不会像历史上的各种公社或乌托邦实验一样，以失败甚至灾难告终？让·保罗·费拉认为这是“共享体”实践中非常重要的问题，所以实践者对哪些资源可以作为“共享体”的判断非常谨慎——限于人人赖以生存的资源，小型共同体共享的文化资源等。对我来说，这种“共享体”的意义或许并非最终建立一种事事“共享”的国家模式，而是对部分公共事物进行公民自治，从而使政府成为更加理想化的“有限政府”。

我厌倦了就一种实践的“明确指向”或“终极目标”进行提问，这或许是列宁主义为我们烙下的一种思维方式：一场运动必须有明确的目标和方案，由一个先知先觉的权威人物或最高委员会事

先设计，指导群众进行严格的实施。或许在这里，与列宁同时代的德国革命家罗莎·卢森堡的遗产更宜重温：相对列宁对控制和命令的爱好，卢森堡强调无序、喧嚣和活跃的大型社会活动活动的重要性。她强调每位参与者自身的创造力和士气，认为革命是“复杂的有机过程”，对这一过程的任意分割或干涉会威胁整个有机体的生命力——这与现代科学中的“混沌”、“复杂性”、“自组织”概念颇有互通。苏联布尔什维克内部的“卢森堡分子”亚历山德拉·柯伦泰也认为，完成革命和创造新的生产形式是在未知的水域中行船，因此，“行动”本身胜于蓝图或作战计划，她问道：“最聪明的封建庄园的管理者能够自己发明早期的资本主义吗？”——同理，若不动，我们也不要指望在资本主义和社会主义生产框架下学习知识的专家们铸造出多么精美的未来模型。

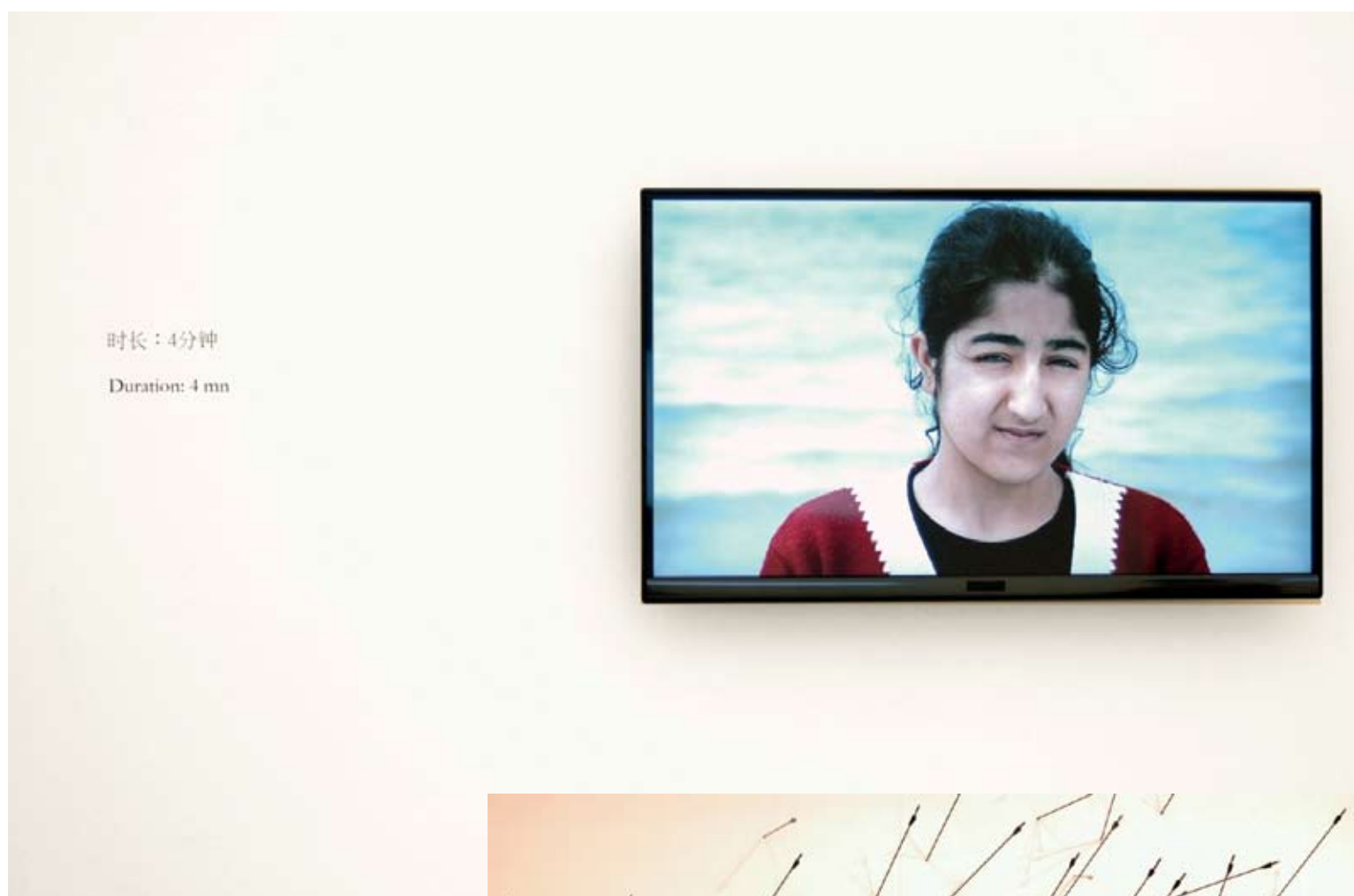
（特别感谢“欧洲替代性”成员Lorenzo Marsili, Luigi Galimberti Fausone, Sara Saleri, Gian Paolo Faella；“Teatro Valle”剧场占领者Federica Giardini, Laura Verga, Emiliano Campagnola；James C. Scott《国家的视角：那些试图改善人类状况的项目是如何失败的》；由宓，倪昆，马永峰，周啸虎夫妇，朱赫，欧宁对此行、此文帮助。）

The original article of this slightly edited version has appeared in Artinfo China, 25th May 2012.



2.  
3.

AT THE 9<sup>TH</sup> SHANGHAI BIENNALE





IN CHONGQING



# INTRODUCTION

## ON URBAN PLANNING: AN INTERVIEW WITH WANG SHUO

Ségolène PRUVOT

Wuang Shuo is an architect and urban planner based in Beijing. Wuang Shuo could be described as one of the members of the “creative class”: He has lived and studied in various places including Bangkok, Taipei and New York and Rotterdam. In Beijing, he co-founded the **Meta-Project** studio. In his practice, he is running a project called **[Meta:Hutongs]**, that investigates the intertwining between different layers of the city to understand the urban planning models of tomorrow. Wuang Shuo is interested by the interplay between tradition and modernity and particularly by space-making, space-use and production. He proposes to develop a multidisciplinary, multimedia and participative approach to understanding the city while remaining critically orientated. Here you can read why he thinks Chinese cities can give us a hint on what will be the cities of the future.

### Wang Shuo, what are you trying to achieve with your work?

My objective is to observe the current trend of architectural development and to understand how the cities have been transforming in the last decade. I am focussed on the reality of change at many layers: in the economic, political and social sphere. From there on, with Meta-Project, we want to find solutions for the next decades.

### How would you describe urban planning in China today?

Too often in today's urban planning practice one looks at the city from a top-down perspective. There is a lot of discussion on what is happening on the ground, but in the end the perspective remains top-down. This is partly because we have been developing very fast. We did not have time to research and develop models and tools that work. At the moment, they are all too abstract, such as the model of the garden city or eco-city. These are far from what one learns from the ground, when one takes the time to look at various factors. Today in China we are stuck in a dichotomy. We often talk of the historical value of old buildings and neighbourhoods, but at the same time the city is being cruelly destructed and the old quarters are smashed to build high-rise buildings. In a few words, **we have been caught between Utopia and Dystopia.** Most people think one has to choose between one and the other. I actually believe that there are many in-between spaces we can learn from.

### What have you learnt from your research about Beijing?

I have learnt that all urban conditions are the result of many layers of accumulation. It a bit like a palimpsest in ancient Greece, these manuscripts used many times, on which each time the text was erased and one would write again. In a city it is the same and there is always something that remains from the previous use. In our researches we always try to decode the information in all the different layers and find the relationship between the different layers. For instance if there is a layer that is all about the economy, one about local politics and there are also the relationships between people. We are interested about the magnetism between these layers. We also want to understand how change in one layer affects the others. It is only possible to foresee the possible effects of one urban intervention if one has looked at all the layers and at their interactions.

### You lived both in China and Europe where you worked as architect and urban planner. What are for you the main differences between European and Chinese cities?

I think the main difference lies in the structure of ownership. In European cities, transformation is very smooth because houses are privately owned. Each building has been upgraded generation by generation. In China ownership has been undergoing dramatic changes for the last 100 years. The urban space changed as a result of the changes of ownership. It resulted in very mixed situations on the ground. There is both good and bad sides about it. The bad side is that it is hard to give a red line to development plans. On the bright side, it creates a lot of uncertainty and this uncertainty might lead to some sort of new urban emergencies, which can be quite lively and give us a hint on what a future city could be.

Even what we thought were good development models for the urban space created today difficult situations. Some European and American cities have lost energy; they are not the vibrant places they used to be. **Now Chinese cities look very messy and chaotic but they have energy;** from this can derive something new and unconventional. It's a strange hybrid city but it may lead to a new, different model of urban planning. We may need new guidelines to plan our future cities. When one plans a district it is maybe not the proportion of green and public space that will make the difference. It is highly possible that the decisive factors lay somewhere else. That is why our research is based on the reality but is not meant to have direct effect. It is meant to inform our thinking about the future city.

### What will be the future of Chinese cities?

There have been many expectations from the top about Chinese cities, but the real strength of Chinese cities is that they have not been following any model. Many good new things can emerge from this uncertainty. It could also potentially lead to very gloomy situations but I am sure there is a way to accompany the changes for the best!

1.



2.



*“Emergence is a change that occurs from the bottom-up. When enough individual elements interact and organize themselves the result is collective intelligence... It is a phenomenon that exists at every level of experience and will revolutionize the way we see the world.”*

Steven Johnson

#### **About the [Meta:Hutongs] Project**

*The Hutongs in the center of Beijing produce themselves as an urban laboratory of innovative substances, from which new knowledge can be learnt. New knowledge would allow urban interventions to tap into the real problem of the present – a present in which the inside spaces, the narrow paths, encounters, observations, experiences have together emerged as a living organism – the hutong has itself become another creature, an new “urban vernacular” inside the megacity.*

*As people are becoming increasingly obsessed with the utopian idea of preserving the historical status of Hutongs, in the relentless dystopia of reality, Beijing’s Hutongs are still disappearing at a rapid pace, be it torn down for new high-rises, or substituted by remodeled fake-antiques. Between the Utopia and Dystopia, [Meta:Hutongs] looks at the present.*

*Going beyond a nostalgic view of the past utopian form of “Hutongs”, [Meta:Hutongs] – a two year long research project - seeks to understand the most compelling quality of life in Beijing through an on-going series of interdisciplinary investigation and production.*

*[Meta:Hutongs], brings together researchers, urbanists, media artists, curators and at a later stages, universities to conduct a series of workshops, publication, and events around a key set of issues related to the reality of Hutongs. The project is intended to span between urban research, social intervention and art installation, to reveal the unique quality of the urban emergence, that have grown out from the bottom of the alleyways and inside of the courtyard houses, by the individual people in a collective and constant effort.*

1. BEIJING’S HUTONGS

2. THE XIZHIMEN AREA. COURTESY WANG SHUO.

3. URBAN RENEWAL OF THE GULOU HUTONG AREA, BEIJING

3.



# REFLECTION

## WHERE CHANGES HAPPEN

Ségolène PRUVOT

As Europeans we have diverse images in mind when it comes to Chinese cities. The ones in my mind were not very attractive. The first one for me is the representation I had of Beijing after my first visit: that of a grey, industrial city covered by a thick mist of suspicious composition, a city broken into pieces by long, large and loud avenues ruled by their master – the car. In a few words, a city dedicated to economic activities and the pursuit of wealth rather unwelcoming to pedestrians and human life. The other very strong image I had – and probably share with many – is that of an isolated house in the middle of regeneration works and high rise buildings, that of the confrontation between the past and the modern city expanding at all costs. Finally, the image of the giant and complex highway junctions and road rings, which are strong components of the Chinese urban landscape, stayed with me a long time after my trips to China as one of its striking characteristics.

None of these images can tell the complexity of the Chinese cities of today. None of them is totally wrong or totally true. But all of them hold a small piece of truth, with can uncover a fascinating story: that of a country and society changing at a very fast pace. Looking at different faces of Chinese cities taught me a lot about China and the power dynamics currently at play. Here I would like to share some of this with you.

Of course, these remarks are limited to my observations during our trip to Beijing, Chengdu, Chongqing and Shanghai. In all of these places, we had the chance of visiting the arts districts of the city. Most of them are located outside of the very centre of the cities. I had also previously crossed other cities at the border between China and Mongolia.

## II. URBANISATION/OCCUPATION

### CHANGES THAT TELL A LOT ABOUT THE FORCES AT PLAY IN CHINESE SOCIETY

Chinese cities have been growing extremely fast: their geographical scale has expanded enormously in the last 20 years and so did their population. In 1950, only 30% of the population lived in an urban environment, it is today more than 50%. To date this has given rise to the birth of 19 mega-cities of over 10 million inhabitants (compared with Europe, this is about the size of London and Paris urban agglomerations), 22 cities that have between 5 and 10 million inhabitants, and more than 800 cities between 500 000 inhabitants and 5 million. It is important to note that the definition of urban areas in China is quite different: cities are spread over a very large geographical area, including areas that look almost rural and are not built. This is for instance the case of the Chongqing agglomeration, which is spread over 82 300 square meter (nearly the size of Austria) according to You-Tien Hsing in her book *The Great Urban Transformation*, and is home to 28 million inhabitants.

In my opinion, **the most interesting part of the story is linked to land ownership and land use rights.** In China, land is owned by the state in the cities (urban land) but is owned by the village collectives in the villages (rural land). Urban land can be developed for high rise buildings; the possibility of building is lower in rural areas. As for development, a system has changed after 1988 'when the country's land leasehold was formally established, thereby separating land ownership from land use rights' as You-Tien Hsing points out.

From that point on it was possible to make money by developing land and renting buildings even when land ownership formally remains with the state or the village. If land passes from rural to urban land its value booms. Therefore state actors and various state Agencies, as well as regions and cities started to speculate on land development: firstly appropriating the land while rural before transforming it into urban land, and then either developing it directly or leasing it out to private properties to develop. In parallel within the city, pressure for a higher density use of the most desirable parts of the urban land has grown and the system of expulsion of traditional inhabitants started.

Behind the real estate development of China resides a whole world of power struggles between different levels of government and collectives of people defending their rights to stay where they are or to be compensated adequately for the loss of their homes. To defend their homes and villages and be in a position to get an adequate part of the money people would make by developing their land, people mobilised and initiated structured and informal collective action contesting state policies and actions and requiring the respect of the rule of law.

It is fascinating to see how some villagers – when their villages were being progressively integrated in the expanding city – have collectively taken advantage of the situation to get richer, while some other



1. MEETING WITH THE STUDENTS OF THE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE OF THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG AT DASHILA(B)

2. AT DASHILA(B), BEIJING

## ARTS DISTRICTS: ENCLAVES OR SPACES OF FREEDOM AND CREATION?

collectives have been disintegrated by well organised and sometimes violent and dividing pressures from land developers (public or private). The strategies of those willing to make profit out of more intensive land use are getting more and more elaborate to expulse residents, now that violent expulsions are more and more contested and in public view in prominent media both within and outside China. Similarly people are organising themselves in the hutong of Beijing and in central urban residential areas to defend their rights to stay and have a say in the evolution of the place (sometimes in collaboration with state agencies themselves such as in the Dashilab project).

But, however successful some movements have been - such as for instance in Guangzhou and Shenzhen - to keep control of their land and become the main beneficiaries of the real estate boom, most of the times the villagers are losing out in the development process.

When people are moved from their rural land they are now most of the time somehow compensated for the loss of their land, but the compensation is often very low in comparison with the profit the developers can make. But everything is not a question of compensation. In case of relocation, it is not only their home that people lose, but also sometimes their main activities and their social network and organisation. The type of buildings they inhabit changes drastically since they often go

from farms to apartment blocks. Moreover, people from the same village or community are often geographically separated, which disrupts the network of relations and the local collective organisation they had found.

Various artists we met have worked on this context and deal with it in a very imaginative way. **The artist becomes the witness of changing times, the passers of history or even a social actor** who relieves people from some of the pain they experience during the unsettling processes of dislocation and change of lifestyle (see article by Robin Resch).

The second important discovery for me in China was the way the market forces give some space of freedom to artists and also how the government, appropriating the discourse of smart and innovative cities, tries to use artists and trendy districts to boost economic development.

It is surprising to realise the global influence of some urban planning theories, specifically when one doubt they are very good. China seems to have totally appropriated the discourse of 'creative cities', which has become so popular around the world. Chinese cities are positioning themselves in the race to be considered as cool places to be for young artists and designers, which is believed to lead to regeneration, innovation and further growth. One example of clever urban marketing strategy is that of Beijing during the urban design week. Along the highway linking Beijing airport to the city, all the signposts were holding 'Beijing Smart Cities' banners thus showing to visitors how innovative Beijing is. The Shanghai Biennale is another example on how art is promoted to raise the local and international profile of a city.

Finally the position of the arts districts in cities is very interesting. They are both places of market, deals and money, of relative freedom, but could also in a way be considered as enclaves. The art market is booming in China. As some of the artists were becoming rich and appreciated, some of them have developed

spaces dedicated to arts, which are both laboratories for new ideas and collaborations between artists and places where buyers can come and buy art.

One first key example of this is the appearance of the 798 art district in Beijing in the 90's. Its success has led to its commercialisation. Once an industrial factory dedicated mainly to making and showing art, it has now moved to a lively district where there is still art and galleries but where one can also have coffee in trendy and upcoming coffee shops and do some clothes shopping. It is now also in most of the tourists' guides, offering a nice window to tourists looking for some different places. The success of 798 - before an alternative and almost subversive place - is being recuperated by the authorities, which are funding the development of an innovation area - a part of the district developed to host creative industries. The most subversive and contestatory artists have had to move to other more precarious spaces than 798, and these spaces are increasingly under threat.

Today the government also supports arts and artists by redeveloping industrial districts in other cities such as in Shanghai, where artists have access to nice studios to work and exhibit, or even nice grand villas like in Chengdu. These are great spaces for artists to produce art and many of them really appreciate it. However, the art district in Shanghai was located at the margin of the city. One question therefore remains unanswered: are these mostly spaces of innovation and creation, which can boost innovation in the city or artistic ghettos where artists are prevented from interacting too much with the communities around?

**Are these spaces of independent thought and freedom or spaces that keep artistic creation under control by offering it the best spaces to comply with market expectations?**

It appears that today the Chinese cities encapsulate some of the main changes happening in China and that looking at the way they are built and function can tell us a lot about the society and the way it reinvents itself. The spaces of negotiation, contestation and freedom are not necessarily fixed in the urban fabric and what Chinese cities reminded me is that those spaces are often temporary and precarious, but always find a way to reappear.



## II. URBANISATION/OCCUPATION

### EVACUATE, RECLAIM, OCCUPY. ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF URBAN ACTIONS

Niccolò MILANESE

'Evacuate: soon to be demolished'. The red signs can be seen on the squat houses of the now unemployed workers of a former weapons factory in central Chongqing. Those red signs, we ask ourselves, could they not be on any of the buildings we see in the city, old or brand new? How soon is 'soon'? And are they signs of hope or signs of despair? Of success or failure? The questions have no answers: it is as if the whole city is potentially available for redevelopment, and such an eventuality would not be regarded by all as undesirable. **Is the city also potentially all available for demolition?** These are not questions about Chongqing or any particular city. The questions lead to deeper questions of history, of progress, of time and change. The limits of modernity are, of course, to be defined differently in China and in Europe, and, of course, differently defined in different parts of China and Europe. The very meaning of 'urbanity' is itself at stake. The two historical contexts, Europe and China, are not unconnected, and that is part of the difficulty in posing the questions about modernity. The deliberate repression of China's historical past and traditions, the Great Leap

Forward and the Cultural Revolution – the Communist Revolution itself – link profoundly 'European' history, thought and technology with contemporary Chinese self-understanding in a necessarily problematic way: China is at once supposed to be 'behind' Europe's technological progress and radically 'in advance' of Europe in political and social revolution. **Buried in this paradox – which haunted Lenin and Trotsky with respect to Russia before Mao and his successors with respect to China – are surely the preconditions for the highly peculiar form the Chinese economy has taken.** The development of the economy cannot be disconnected from the overarching historical narratives dominating the imaginations of its human, corporate and political actors. The development of apartment blocks in Chinese cities, and small urban villages, named after European cities, countries or American clichés ('Salzburg', 'Sunset boulevard', 'California Dream' etc.) so amusing for a Western visitor, are perhaps expressions of this historical paradox. Whereas this kitsch might be seen as revealing a suppressed desire for the West, its economy and freedoms (and for some Chinese it

surely is), it is at least as plausible that these 'recreations', these 'testaments' to a re-appropriated past, are future-orientated monuments to China's revolutionary destiny. There is a historical struggle between political systems for meaning and significance which is deeper than the struggle between capitalism and communism: it is ultimately a struggle for history itself. Perhaps the bigger threats are not these '-isms' about property ownership, but firstly genocide and deliberate erasure or repression – central aspects of both Chinese and European history in the 20th century, of course in different ways – and secondly the bleach of hyper-consumerism which risks making forgetting into the most desirable commodity in the 21st century. The 'occupation' of urban spaces – a leitmotif of the early 21st century itself at strong risk of commodification – needs then to be understood to go beyond the physical occupation of space and become the reoccupation of history. Going beyond the familiar urban distinction between 'invited' spaces and 'created' spaces, occupied spaces need to become at once spaces of reclamation, historical re-actualisation and multitudinous proposition. 'Factories' of artistic

production or artistic exposition, a kind of urban space which has caught imaginations in Europe's largest cities as well as now increasingly in Chinese cities (the 798 art district in Beijing of course, but also more recently the Shanghai Contemporary Art museum, the zones of 'creative industries' etc.) risk firstly commodifying art in a way now highly familiar to us but secondly risk inscribing art in one specific historical narrative of modernity. Short of constructing our own autonomous villages or virtual spaces – which carries its own risks of irrelevance – we have to occupy what is available to us. I am not pleading for conservative attitudes or in favour of tradition, **I am pleading against blindness to the historical projections governing our societies by their impregnation in our minds – call them ideologies if you will.** These historical projections are traceable throughout the urban fabrics of our cities, just as they are traceable through the fabrics of our languages and gestures, also at a micro-level. Bringing together people from different parts of the world in a common space is perhaps one way of making conscious these traces, as long as we are open to differences and not only to commonalities.

1. URBAN RUINS IN CHONGQING



1.

## 疏散，收回，占领。 — 论城市运动的意义

尼可罗·米兰尼斯(Niccolò Milanese)

‘疏散：即将拆除’。红色的警示贴在重庆市中心一些房屋上，现在被前军工厂的失业工人占住着。我们自问，那些红色的警示难道不也会出现在城里其它或新或旧的房子吗？‘即将’是多快？它们代表希望还是绝望？成功抑或失败？没有答案。整个城市仿佛潜在地可被重建，而且这样的结果即使出现，也不见得大家都不乐意。是不是整个城市也都潜在地可被拆除呢？这些问题并不专属于重庆或任何特定的城市。它们指向更深层的有关历史，进步，时间与变化等层面的问题。中国和欧洲彼此对现代性的界定当然有别，即便是中国和欧洲的各个地方也必然有不同的界定。‘城市化’的含意本身正岌岌可危。

欧洲和中国各自的历史脉络之间并非互不相干，而这正是提出有关现代性的问题时所遭遇困难的部分原因所在。对中国过去历史和传统的刻意压制、大跃进及文化大革命—共产党革命本身—必然地把‘欧洲的’历史，思想和工业技术和当代中国的自我了解以颇受争议的方式联系起来：中国一方面被视为在工业技术方面‘落后’于欧洲，同时却在政治和社会革命方面激进地‘超前’于欧洲。这种悖论—在毛之前的俄国时期困扰着列宁和托洛茨基，毛之后的中国则继续纠缠毛的后继者—当然是中国在经济方面所采取的极度特殊形式的前提条件。经济的发展和主宰了人文的，企业的和政治的舞台主角想像力的历史叙事是不可分离的。

在欧洲访客眼中显得特别有趣的是，中国的城市里有许多以欧洲都市或美国的陈词滥调所命名的小区及城中村（‘萨尔茨堡’，‘日落大道’，‘加州梦’等），它们或许也是上述历史悖论的一种呈现。这些陈词滥调或可看作是揭露了一种向往西方世界的富裕与自由（对有些中国人的确如此）的隐藏欲望，至少同这些重新占有过去的‘游乐场’及‘证词’是中国革命的命运之面向未来的纪念碑的说法一样貌似合理。历史上不同政治系统间对意义与价值之斗争比资本主义和共产主义之间的斗争要更加深刻：终极意义而言是对历史本身的争夺。或许更大的威胁并非在于这些‘主义’们对私有制的争议，反而首先是种族屠杀和刻意的抹灭或压制—二十世纪中国和欧洲共有的主题，以不同方式呈现；其次是美化过度消费主义，冒着把遗忘变成二十一世纪最受渴望的商品的危险。

‘占领’城市空间—一个二十一世纪初的主旋律，也处于被商品化的危机之中—必须超越对空间的物理性占领而被理解为是对历史的再占领。脱离城市里熟悉的‘被邀请进入的’空间和‘被创造的’空间的差别，被占领的空间必须立即成为收回的空间，历史的再实现和包罗广泛的命题。艺术生产或艺术展览的‘工厂’，一种在欧洲的最大城市以及在越来越多中国城市之中唤起想象的城市空间（譬如北京的798艺术区，以及最近的上海当代艺术馆，各个‘创意产业’园

区等），它们首先以我们现在非常熟知的一种方式，冒着把艺术商品化的风险，其次是把艺术陷于按照某种有关现代性的特定历史叙事来阐释的危险。由于缺乏我们自己的自治村或实际空间的建设—它们本身亦有变得无关紧要的风险—我们必须占领眼前现有的。我所诉求的并非是保守的态度或对传统的偏好，而是反对那些在我们心中酝酿、宰制了社会的历史投射的盲目无视—称之为意识形态好了。这些历史投射透过我们城市的肌理是有迹可循的，就如同透过我们语言和姿态的肌理，还有从微观的层面都找得着它们的踪影。让来自世界不同角落的人们聚集在同一个空间里可能是意识到这些痕迹的一种方式，只要我们不仅限于对共同点，对差异性也能保持开放的态度。

Translated from English by Fang Liu

1. ARTISTS ROBIN RESCH AND YANG SHU  
GREETING...

2. ...CHONGQING'S SPRAWLING URBANIZATION



1.

2.



# ACTION

## THE VANISHING CITY - SPATIAL MEMORY AND (ARTISTIC) RESEARCH

Robin RESCH

Economic growth and overall expansion lead to a drastic velocity of spatial transformations across most urban areas – causing a radical vanishing of the former cities. Returning to China with the Transnational Research Caravan, one of my central questions was as to how these vibrant processes were reflected within artistic practice? While confessing that – having visited the more formal venues of the Beijing and Shanghai art scene and conversations with artists, curators and gallery owners – I remained with an open question. Therefore, it proved to be such a refreshing experience once we arrived in Chongqing and had the chance to gain insight into **one artistic research project conducted by the artist Wang Haichuan in the “Copper Cash Manufactory”.**

This former communist factory wasteland, located in a central area of the city was the locale for Wang Haichuan’s artistic expertise and creation of site-specific works over the past four years. Like many other industrial sites of Chinese urban development, the former factory was being removed to a greater location in the outskirts of Chongqing and was chiefly substituted by high rise architecture. What remained untouched were the former workers’ housing complexes with their very typical ensembles of traditional brick stone, two-story housing – thus representing an image of the “old China”.

After visiting the most modernized cities of the country, setting foot on the ground of the Copper Cash Manufactory felt like entering a

fragment of a different era. This former residential site which used to offer shelter to the majority of factory workers now mainly remains as an abandoned apartment complex. Just a very few of the former inhabitants were silently refusing to move away into one of the newly-constructed residential complexes built in either the proximity of the area or other parts of the city. Throughout talks with local inhabitants and artists, it became clear that for the few people remaining in the houses, most of them having lived here for decades, moving away would be like leaving behind an existential pattern of their personal history. What we see here in micro could be discussed on a broader scale towards the issue of spatial transformation and a discourse upon the importance of the cultural memory of spaces in contemporary China. Whomever strives throughout the main cities cannot avoid being hypnotized by a projection of global-city urbanism. Furthermore, as we take a closer look at the typology of the Chinese city with its architecture, spaces, buildings, (few) squares, streets and vast areas as a representation of history, an archive of a living model of shifting epochs – **the Chinese city space is becoming heavily censored towards an imagery of the mere commemoration of the present.** It’s this radical selection process of spatial references in the urban fabric – the silent politics of remembering spaces - that is of heavy presence in the main cities and raises questions that the artist

## II. URBANISATION/OCCUPATION

Wang Haichuan, who generally deals with the relationship between Chinese spirit, the present situation and collective memory, worked and researched upon.

**Haichuan started on-sight**

excursions walking around the area, having conversations with the inhabitants, taking photos and videos, making drawings and paintings. In this way he slowly approximated himself to the area and gained the trust and respect of the inhabitants. Doing this, he found that the people, unlike most Chinese, would be scared to be kicked out whilst traveling during the national holiday period – where the Chinese tradition is to travel to visit family in different states. Departing from here, the artist came up with a poetic response where he transformed some of the left-over materials of former inhabitants and created a kind of **holiday** indoor space. He designed deck chairs, beds and cupboards from various left-overs and painted a huge sunny-seaside landscape upon one of the walls, so people could have a relaxing holiday atmosphere, even though they were not leaving their homes.

With his subtle interventions, Wang Haichuan proves a certain sensitivity to the space itself, shows respect to its inhabitants whom over time became evermore familiar and raises questions concerning the city development which appears to be discussed with urgency – the vanishing of former sights and identity, traditional houses vs. the contemporary executed high-rise copy and paste architecture and the

monotonous chorus of a shifting urban scenario.

Coming from Europe wherein city development strictly obeys an imperative of “Let’s remember to remember”, on arriving in Chongqing, it was impossible to not smell, witness and listen to the longed for image of a “global-city” performance, emphasized by a highlight representation of the contemporary. I wonder how long this image shall last for and, even more importantly, what shall be lost when we radically tear down the old and replace with the new? What remains of ones past when one merely remembers the present? Doesn’t this solo show of the contemporary cause a destabilizing effect upon its population – a gap in the shape of time and space – leaving behind what we might be searching for in the future – the vanished Chinese city?



1. ARTIST WANG HAICHUAN INTRODUCING THE “COPPER CASH MANUFACTORY” PROJECT TO THE TRANSNATIONAL RESEARCH CARAVAN

1.



2.

2. “ONE ERA BRIDGE” (2012) BY ROBIN RESCH. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



# EXTRA

## “KUNSHAN - UNDER CONSTRUCTION” ARTISTIC PROJECT

### “昆山在造” 艺术项目

As part of “Transnational Dialogues”, European Alternatives has given its support to a multi-year artistic project in the former rural village of Kunshan, Chengdu (Sichuan), where a group of local artists engaged with the people who had suffered from the – de facto forced – relocation from their original rural housing to the newly built residencies. One of the project’s outcomes is the publication of the bilingual research book “Village Politics Being Watched” in cooperation with the Chongqing-based independent not-for-profit art space Organ Haus. Two texts are here reproduced from the book: firstly, an introductory contribution by the curator of Organ Haus, Ni Kun, which illustrates the context and the reasons behind the “Kunshan – Under Construction” artistic project; then, a focus on one of the project’s several artistic activities, namely, Chen Zhou’s “Everlasting Pavilion”.

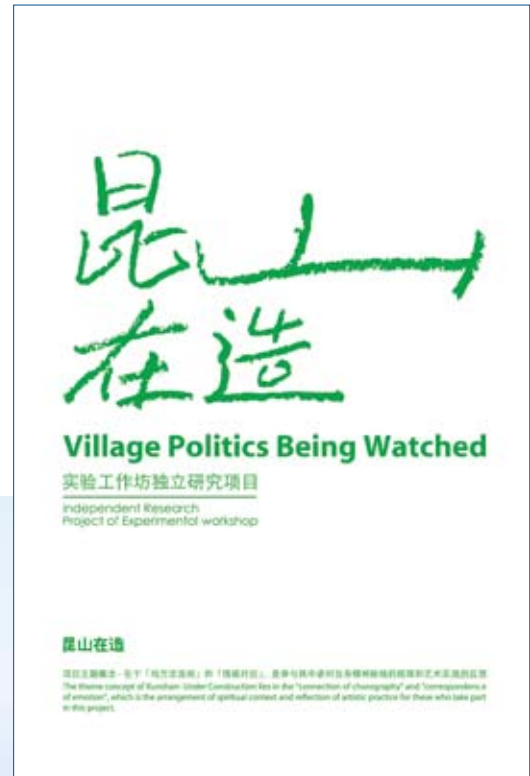
作为“跨国对话”的一部分，欧洲替代性为有关四川成都昆山被拆迁农村一个历时数年的艺术项目提供支持，一群当地艺术家积极对那些被迫从自己农村的家迁离并搬入新建住宅的村民的处境进行了解并参与其中。该项目的成果之一是和重庆的非营利性独立艺术空间器•Haus合作出版了双语研究书“被观看的乡村政治”。此处的两篇文章即来自这本书。首先是器•Haus的策展人倪昆开宗明义介绍“昆山在造”艺术项目的背景及脉络。然后则聚焦于该项目的数个艺术行动之一，陈周的“长在亭子”。

1. KUNSHAN VILLAGE NEAR CHENGDU, SICHUAN

1.

2. THE PUBLICATION “VILLAGE POLITICS BEING WATCHED” ABOUT THE ARTISTIC PROJECT TAKING PLACE IN THE RURAL VILLAGE OF KUNSHAN

2.



## II. URBANISATION/OCCUPATION

### THE “RE-CONSTRUCTION” OF THE “UNDER CONSTRUCTION”: VILLAGE POLITICS BEING WATCHED

NI Kun

The “socio-artistic” intervention research project “Kunshan – Under Construction” started in 2010, with the ongoing “new rural construction” in rural China as the subject of the survey and the New Kunshan Village, Shuangliu County of Chengdu City [1] as the survey sample, the project is a comprehensive, multi-dimensional art intervention project with multi-views that includes field researches, creation on the site, short-term theme-specific workshops, interdisciplinary seminars and exhibitions. Two parallel domains of dialogue have been automatically formed since the project started: critical intervention coming from the reality and historical-cultural domain, and construction and inference of artists’ own systems of art. As a research art project that stresses on text and archives, the foundation for sustaining the “Kunshan – Under Construction” is mainly on field researches made by artists that lasted over a year since 2010 and their numerous threads of relations rebuilt subsequently with the land. Issues regarding the transformation from the Kunshan Village to the New Kunshan Village, the government-led alteration of the rural village, farmland use, the composition and changes of local economy, and relocation of local residents etc. are all taken into the artists’ considerations. This is a system of dialogue that appeals to emotions, which forms the main frame for thought and creation of the artists at the first stage. “Connection through local annals” and “emotional correspondence” are the project’s specific channels of connections. Since 2012, creation of localized intervention became the new and major practice. “Kunshan – Under Construction” is first and foremost an art intervention project, which means how we judge and view the ongoing process will affect the basic form and tendency of the project. An art project with real incident as its main subject of dialogue often confronts this issue - what is the primary nature of the project? It is not only a question about art itself, but also a question of values. Therefore, to maintain the openness of the project and stress on the diverse and different viewing angles of the artists, not to assume or prejudice the results of the project and to

make sure the “micro-intervention” or “no intervention” of artistic intervention in form, to refuse treating the creation as a spectacle or object of consumption, and, to clarify and construct the inner logics and discussion subjects of the work of the artists, all of them are methods, and all the more so, a position.

China’s rural problems are systematic problems, their complexities lie in the unavoidable split and divergence between the reality of peasant economy and the new rural construction whose core pursuit is maximized profits.

And China’s radical turn on the policy of rural construction in general started in the 80’s will need more time to dispel the habitual inertia built in the past. Therefore, it is foreseeable that the on-site artist practice happening at this rural scene will get responses in two systems: 1. in time, the art practice with the overall project as its observed subject will become a “heterogeneous” on-site fact, the project itself will, along with the real incident, become the subject of discussion and dialogue; 2. the artists’ individual practice of intervention will eventually be discussed according to the inner logics of the artists’ art, meanwhile, specific context of the environment will develop against the background of independent art projects with different topics from time to time, and become intertextuality with the context of artists’ creation.

New Kunshan Village is located in the basin of Jinma River, southwest of Shuangliu County, Chengdu City, China, 6 kilometers away from Shuangliu County and about 10 kilometers away from Chengdu City. It is a model village, modified from a farmland, under centralized management in large scale, a demonstrative village of provincial socialist new rural construction, and one of the “ten best well-off villages”.

### ‘在造’的 ‘再造’：被观 看的乡村政治

倪昆

‘社会-艺术’介入类研究项目“昆山在造”开始于2010年，它以当下中国农村在建的‘新农村建设’为观看考察对象，以成都市双流县昆山新村<sup>①</sup>为介入考察样本而具体展开的包括田野调查，在地创作，短期性主题工作坊，跨学科讨论会，主题展览等在内的多视角多维度的综合性艺术介入项目。项目自启动之始就自主的搭建着两个平行的对话场域：来自现实及历史文化场域的批判性介入，以及针对艺术家创作实践的自我艺术体系的建构推行。作为一项强调项目文本及文献线索的研究型艺术项目，“昆山在造”可持续实施的最主要基石在于艺术家们自2010年起的一年多的在地田野考察以及由此与土地重续起的万缕联系，昆山村与昆山新村间的变迁，由政府主导的居住的农村庄落形态的社区化转向，田地使用及在地经济组成及变更情况，以及在地居民的迁移等问题，都被纳入到艺术家的考察视野。这是一个以情感作为介入支点的对话体系，它组成了艺术家第一阶段最主要的思考及创作框架。「地方志连结」和「情感对应」则是实施项目连接的具体通道。2012年起，在地介入创作则成为新一轮的主要实践手段。

“昆山在造”就实质而言它首先是一项艺术介入项目，这也就意味着我们如何判断及观看这个不断行进中的现场，将影响项目的基本形态和走势。以具体现实作为最主要对话对象的艺术项目往往存在着何为第一性的问题，这既是个艺术内部问题，更是个价值取向问题。也因此，保持项目自身的开放性，强调艺术家观看角度的多元性及差异性；对于项目结果的不设定和不预判，明确艺术介入在形态上的‘微介入’或者说‘不介入’；拒绝创作落地时的景观化及消费化；清理及构架艺术家作品的内部逻辑及讨论主体，是方法，也更是立场。

中国的农村问题是一个系统问题，其复杂性在于普遍存在的小农经济现实与在建的以追求经济最大化为核心目的的新农村建设间的天然存在的裂痕和分歧，而80年代开始的中国在农村建设总体思路上急剧转向，也将注定需要更长的时间来消化及缓平因惯性而造成的路径依赖。也因此，可预计的会发生在这个乡村现场的艺术实践将会在两个系统里产生回应，其一，以整体项目作为观看对象的艺术实践将在时间的叠加中成为‘异质’的现场事实，项目本身将与具体的环境现实一起，成为待讨论和对话的对象；其二，以切片形态介入的艺术家个体实践，将最终回到艺术家具体的艺术逻辑线索中展开讨论，同时，具体的环境语境也将在不定期的主题设定下，以独立艺术计划的背景展开实施，并与艺术家的创作脉络形成互文。

注<sup>①</sup>：昆山新村位于中国·成都双流县城西南部金马河流域，距双流县城6公里，距成都约10公里。为四川省农用地转变为规模集中经营的样板区、省级社会主义新农村建设示范村，“全国十佳小康村”。



1.

1. WORKSHOP OF THE TRANSNATIONAL RESEARCH  
CARAVAN AT THE BLUE ROOF ART CENTRE,  
CHENGDU

## CHEN ZHOU'S EVERLASTING PAVILION - 30TH APRIL 2012

### Work Description:

Grave plays an important role in the identification of clan identity in rural China. The fieldwork in Kunshan village, Shuangliu town, Chengdu indicates that the ancestral graves there are located near the villagers' house. This shows that the living people always bear the deceased in their mind and also shows the living people's respect towards the deceased. In the process of land transfer, the graves of local villagers' ancestors and relatives are moved into a temporary place and waiting for another move. In Kunshan village, the use of land is ambiguous and things on the land are always floating. Therefore, the permanent grave is designed to be used in Kunshan village and other places. Such a permanent grave can be moved to any place conveniently and the digging of grave can be avoided.

and waiting for another move...

### Implementation of Work:

Phase One: Seek the business people and technical workers who can make the design come true. Moreover, ask if they encounter the problem of grave removal. (Recorded by video)

Phase Two: The selling leaflet of permanent grave "Everlasting pavilion" is made.

Phase Three: The "Everlasting Pavilion" is moved to install in the temporary graveyard of Kunshan village and promote the "Everlasting Pavilion" all the way. (Recorded by video)

The land left for clan sacrifice and burial becomes smaller and smaller. Everyone hopes that their deceased relatives and they themselves after death have a place to rest. The "Everlasting Pavilion" adopts the humanized design. It is the combination of "pavilion" used in the past burial and Jigongche (a small handcart). It can move the whole grave into any place where the Jigongche can reach. In this way, the grave can be preserved permanently and the digging of grave can be avoided.



1.



2.

### 作品描述:

墓地在中国乡村的宗族身份认同中占有重要的作用,田野调查中我发现成都双流昆山地区的祖坟一般在村屋周围,生者心中永远留有逝去亲人的位置,更是对曾经存在过生命的尊重。土地流转过程中,当地村民的祖先和亲人的墓地搬入临时的安置点,等待下一次搬迁。在土地用途模糊不清的昆山村,土地上的承载物始终是一种漂浮、移动的状态。所以,构思设计一种长久墓,不仅昆山村可用,百家姓的每个人都可以使用。可以

### 背景资料:

### 作品实施:

一阶段:在昆山村周围寻找实现此设计的商家、技工,并随访他们是否遇到祖坟被迁的情况。

(视频记录)

二阶段:制作永久墓“长在亭子”的推销传单。

三阶段:将“长在亭子”搬运到昆山村的临时墓地安装,一路上向行人做“长在亭子”的推销。

(视频记录)

留给宗族祭祀和丧葬的土地越来越少,每个人都希望逝去的亲人或以后必定逝去的自己有块地方能够安息。“长在亭子”采用更为人性化的设计,将以前昆山村地区惯用的丧葬“亭子”和鸡公车相结合,可以十分方便地将墓整体移动到任何鸡公车可以到达的地方,以此墓可以长久保留,避免被掘坟。

1. ARTIST CHEN ZHOU EXPLAINING THE EVERLASTING PAVILION TO THE VILLAGERS OF KUNSHAN, SICHUAN

2. A POSTER ADVERTISING THE EVERLASTING PAVILION

3. THE MOVABLE GRAVE "EVERLASTING PAVILION" AMONG THE "NORMAL" GRAVES AT KUNSHAN CEMETERY

4. ARTIST CHEN ZHOU CARRYING THE EVERLASTING PAVILION TO KUNSHAN CEMETERY



3.

4.



AT 798 ART DISTRICT, BEIJING





## INTRODUCTION

## A FESTIVAL THAT LEADS THE AUDIENCE TO A CELEBRATION

LU Xinghua

## 1. We want the festival, not the audience

*The Festival to Come*<sup>1</sup>, an experimental group made up of artists and theorists, is committed to become a platform of Chinese contemporary art for discussions, planning and exhibitions to connect artists, theorists and art institutions. It is based on a belief we come to insist more and more: artists no longer attract the audience to come to their works, but summon the audience to join "the festival to come". Artist as a title is transitional. Artists are making the costumes for the "festival to come", they will eventually disappear into the people and the festival, and become part of the procession of celebration. In the procession towards the "festival to come", the so-called audience will disappear, and artists will not be the ones to guide. We think that what artists are going to build is a temporary tent or stage, to prepare for the final meeting and celebration.

We think that, artists are not waiting for their audience, but rushing to the "festival to come" with the audience together, they are fellow travelers. When the "festival to come" does happen, there won't be any so-called audience or artists in the crowd. Brand-new games will be running in the festival, which are not designed or controlled by anyone. Running to the "festival to come" is a preparatory stance that shows the advent of the future. Maybe we shall ask: can the artists borrow any strength from the "festival to come"?

1.



1. PHILOSOPHER LU XINGHUA (LEFT) IN CONVERSATION WITH ART CRITIC MIKE WATSON (RIGHT) AT SHANGHAI TAOPU ART DISTRICT

<sup>1</sup> Translator's note: The author uses the same Chinese term for the "Festival to Come" as an experimental group and the "festival to come" for its literal sense. d.

## 将观众带向欢庆的节日

陆兴华

## 1- 要节日，而不是观众

未来的节日 (Festival to Come) 是一个艺术家和理论家组成的实验小组, 致力于成为中国当代艺术里的一个讨论、策划、展示平台, 去接通艺术家、理论界和艺术机构三者。发起这一组织, 是出于我们越来越坚持的这样一个信念: 艺术家不再是在将观众吸引到自己的作品前, 而是在召唤观众加入到那个未来的节日; 艺术家自己也处于一个过渡的身份里, 是在为“未来的节日”制作道具, 他们自己也将最终消失于人民和节日之中, 成为欢庆的队伍里的一员; 在走向未来的节日里, 并没有观众这个身份和队伍, 艺术家也不是他们的指路人。我们认为, 艺术家所要去搭建的, 是一个临时的帐篷或舞台, 是在为那一最终的汇聚和欢庆做筹备。

我们认为, 艺术家不是在等待他们的观众, 而是正与观众一起奔向节日, 是同路人。节日到来, 欢庆的人群里将没有观众, 也没有艺术家。节日状态里运行的, 将会是全新的游戏。在那里, 玩家与游戏一体, 再没有人在设计和控制游戏。奔向未来的节日, 这是一种预备式姿态, 是在展示一种先期到来的未来。倒反而应该问一下: 艺术家能从这样的未来的节日中借到什么力量呢?

## 2. Will the qualified audience emerge finally?

In a recent discussion, Chinese sound artist Yan Jun claimed that avant-garde artists should not care about how many audiences are present, and one serious audience is worth more than ten thousand audiences seeking for entertainment. Such a point of view, popular among contemporary artists in China, is rather conservative, we think. It is also fine even if there is only one good viewer/listener; one viewer/listener is plenty enough as an audience - artists with this attitude couldn't help fantasizing that good audiences will return; art performances are waiting for good audiences; art performances are meaningful and become even more meaningful for having the audiences; art is prepared for the qualified audiences.

**Should we not ask seriously: is there still a place for the "audience" in an art space today?** Vanguard music performances, event-based artworks can find less and less audience for being avant-garde, can that be an excuse for self defense? Art is saved only when the capable and engaged audience is finally here?

Is there still a position for the "audience" in the event-based performances? That issue contains three sub-topics worthy of further discussions: 1) Shall we deem anyone present an audience? 2) Is there any way to define the

## 2- 合格的观众最终会到来吗?

中国声音艺术家颜峻最近讨论到: 先锋艺术家不应在乎到场观众的多少; 来一万个来娱乐的观众, 还不如来一个认真倾听的观众。这个看法, 我们认为, 在中国的当代艺术家中间很流行上, 仍相当保守。哪怕有一个好的观/听众, 也是好的。一个观众, 也是观众。这一态度, 仍会让艺术家去抱这样的幻想: 好观众会回来的; 艺术表演, 是在等待好观众的到来; 有了观众, 艺术表演, 才有意义, 会更有意义; 艺术是为合格的观众预备的。

但是, 我们是不是得认真问一问了: 今天的艺术空间里, 真的还会有“观众”这一位置吗? 先锋音乐表演, 事件性的作品, 由于它们的前卫, 越来越找不到观众, 这找不到观众, 也能成为一个自我辩护的理由? 知趣和投入的观众的到来, 艺术才有救了?

在事件式表演中, 真的还有这一“观众”位置吗? 这问题中又含有三个子议题, 它们特别值得我们作进一步的探讨:

- 1) 不该把在场者当观众? 2) 无法设定观众?
- 3) 人们起初是观众, 作品、装置或表演, 是来解放他们, 使他们终于可以不做观众?

audience? 3) Are the art works, installations or performances meant to free the audience from being the audience eventually?

We noticed that, during Marina Abramovic's performance "The Artist Is Present" (2012), the audience fell into two categories: those itching to act and those wary and timid; no one was indifferent. On the scene, nobody was able to be absolutely neutral aesthetically and politically. We think that this work is commendable for challenging the position of the audience.

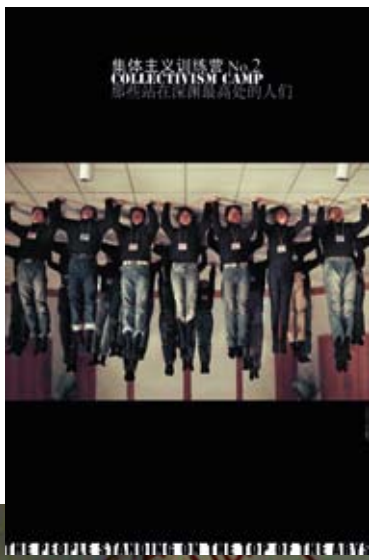
To an artist, what kind of audience he wishes to attract or how does he want the audience to approach his work depends on how he presents his work. It is planning as well as strategic calculation: what are the different consequences of setting up a work as a performance, an installation or a celebration? And am I ready for the consequence of my choice? We don't think most contemporary artists in China are ready for the consequences. They still expect to acquire the sense of power through the existence of the audience. This is something we need to think about further.

Relational Aesthetics seems to have the least demand on the audience among recent artistic trends. It considers art works make up for social gaps, they are where people in urban space converge, and will become the site of festivals and celebrations. How shall we

understand the convivialité or festivity at the exhibition sites of the kind of works it advocates?

One artist that the Relational Aesthetics refers to most is the Cuban American artist Gonzalez-Torres, especially his work "candy spills" which 1) framed the visitors to put the candies into pockets or to follow suit as others took the candies; 2) the shape was changeable, it slid upon touch; 3) with the corny image (candies), the artist succeeded in creating a new life for the work; 4) one third of the remaining work was left to the audience to finish; 5) the work wove its way into the society through the audience. We found that, in the work of Gonzalez-Torres, the audience came to complete the work. The audience was the one that would come and was coming. The audience came to complete the work and then took away the work, they brought the work to the society, to become fibers of the society. Among all the possible expectations an artist might have of his audience, is there a more positive one than this one?

What the Relational Aesthetics shows here is only a partial celebration and a fragmented festival. Can it not be more comprehensive?



1. A POSTER BY ZHOU XIAHO, PART OF THE "MY COMMUNISM" EXHIBITION AT TOP CONTEMPORARY ART CENTRE, SHANGHAI, 2011. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST.



2. A SKETCH OF PHILOSOPHER LU XINGHUA BY ROBIN RESCH. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

1.

2.

### 3. How to liberate the position of 'the audience'?

In 2012, the Festival to Come group hosted the screenings of *Capital*, a film made by Alexander Kluge, in Beijing, Shanghai and Hangzhou. We found that it was extremely difficult in practice trying to liberate the audience – a task that shall be assumed by any work of art today – while encouraging the audience to enter the site and be the author themselves. The audience refused to leave their position because they felt insecure. If we have forced them to come out, I believe they would kick and scream.

What clever ways shall we deploy to remove them from their position as the audience and to act? What does that mean to us that the revolt of the audience against films with Kluge's method or of Godard's 'audience's cinema' when played in a museum? Kluge pointed out in an interview ("Undercurrents of Capital: An Interview with Alexander Kluge", *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* Volume 85, Issue 4, 2010) that *Capital* is not his movie, but the audience's. A director is simply a supplier of raw materials for criticisms. He considers that the final completion of a film is in the brains of the audience. The audience comes to the movie in order to join it and to converge and form a new political scene. By the end of the screenings of *Capital* at Minsheng Art Museum and Tongji University from November 30 to December 1, 2012, many artists thought that we, Festival to Come group, organized the screenings of this leftist film to impose an abstract theory on the audience. They said that there was in fact no movie on the screen, and we still asked them to see it, which was offensive, and we had taken the advantage of the audience. They thought the whole thing a prank, could be at most called behavior art which provides no contents of a movie.

On the surface, this was a discussion about "Can a theory be made into a movie or vice versa?" and "What is the use of a movie being made into a theory?" Those artists were in fact asking: what contents you leftist directors are offering the audience? We consider that this attitude is quite reactionary: they still think movies are like fodders used to feed the audience! The movies made by Kluge and Godard are exactly against it, and they are made to

annul the position of the audience. A theory-based movie, such as Kluge's *Capital*, is a movie removed of images and a movie rid of the Hollywood style stories, though it might become a minus after that. Such a film might be hollow, so as to invite the audience to enter and start political fights inside it.

To make a theory into a movie is to make use of the montage which, according to what Kluge said, has existed in human brains since the ice age, mix words and images together. And, what Kluge has done is to give raw materials to the viewers and be processed in their brains - true "post-production". Dialectical montage has existed before the movies were invented. Words and theories must respect both what the cameras can do and what human can do about it. A theory-based movie is first and foremost a movie, it elaborates a theory by means of a movie, and invites the audience to go inside the movie. What would happen after that?

Films and videos presented in a museum can finally escape the control of the directors and producers, a viewer who wonders past the screens or stops in front of a screen and meditates has the final say as to how long he wishes to stay. The rule of 3-minute theological meditation, a general presumption regarding the viewing experience in a museum – has been broken. We miss the rest of a video once we walk away from the screen. In a museum we are unable to watch the missed part. The length of a video or a film is far longer than the time a viewer would stay in a museum. That way it helps to break the position of the audience and liberate them.

我们注意到，在阿布洛莫维奇的《艺术家的场》（2010年）里，观众都逼成两股：跃跃欲试者，和颤颤噤噤者；没有人能无动于衷。在现场，没有人可以真正做在审美-政治上完全中立的观众。我们认为，这个作品对于观众位置位置的挑战，是很值得称道的。

对于艺术家而言，想要有什么样的观众，或他们想要观众怎么来接近他们的作品，事关他们自己到底想要怎么来呈现“作品”。这是一种谋划，也是一种策略式算计：让“作品”成为表演（performance）、装置和节庆这三种艺术表达模态的后果，分别是什么？我准备随这一后果吗？我们认为，大多数中国当代艺术家还未准备好接受这些后果。他们仍对观众位置带给他们的权力感抱有期待。这是特别值得我们进一步去深思的。

关系美学似乎是近期艺术思潮中对观众的要求最宽松的一种艺术思潮。它将艺术作品看作是社会缝隙里的弥补，是人们在城市空间里的集结点，是要成为节庆的现场的。我们怎么来理解它所主张的作品展示现场的那种convivialité（喜气/暖融融）或festivité（节味儿）？

关系美学借重最多的艺术家，是古巴艺术家Gonzalez-Torres，最依重的作品，是他的“墙角糖果堆”。它：1）陷害观众往口袋里装，或跟风地装；2）形式不凝固，一碰就倒、散；3）借老套图像（糖果），作者能欲擒故纵、绝处逢生；4）将作品余下三分之一留给观众去完成；5）作品像蛛丝一样被观众缠进社会。我们发现，在Gonzalez-Torres的作品中，观众是前来帮助最后实现作品的。观众是那个将要和正在到来者。观众来实现作品，同时又带走了作品，到社会中，成为社会纤维。在艺术家对于观众的各种期待中，我们还能找到比这更积极的态度吗？

关系美学展现的，是一种以点盖面的态度：局部的欢庆和点、片的节日。是不是可以抱一个更全面的態度？

### III. ROLE OF THE ARTIST/ EDUCATION THROUGH ART

(continued from page 27)

#### 4. Are the artists warming up for others that are coming?

Only when people coming from different places converge can the situation change. If a group of artists get together to finish something, with no clear political mission in mind, what they can achieve would be no more than a stipulated assignment. Mallarmé the poet considered that a public square needs to be cleared up and waits for new comers. We are here singing and dancing just to warm up and encourage the people we are waiting for (they are not audiences any more). It will not be our generation to decide the destiny of China fifty years from now. Maybe we shall set the future destiny of China as "pending", that would be fascinating. Therefore, we shall be even more hospitable and pious, and expect, instead of the audience, the new unity and new people.

To warm up means to start discussions and performances enthusiastically, let our bodies warm up together, and to stir up our courage. The significance of our arguments and discussions is not to prove right or wrong but to evoke courage in every participant. Since the artists have already spoken, they shall now join the crowd, which is the true goal for them. Franz Kafka had expressed the same thing in *Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk*. Claiming that "I am a famous artist." in front of the crowd would only expose one's own poverty. Labor division is what we shall put an end to, people who make art and those who raise pigs are equal.

To modify thought in the form of sermons is just like to adapt a novel for the screen, i.e. the reproduction of a speech. Sermons need to concern about the audience, they become more and more pleasing to the ear till there is no stopping them. On the other hand, thought doesn't need to be preached like sermons, everyone has the ability of thinking, it is innate and self-sufficient, and it can be awakened when one is communicating. Many would cry out: "Help! I cannot open my eyes!" It turns out that the more people come to rescue, the more complex the help becomes - the result of the cultural 'enlightenment' of modern China. At first one might need an eye doctor, and then a psychiatrist, then a scientist... It is easy to ask for help but the consequences might

be rather complicated. Similarly, movies are supposed to be simply a communist machine, the best tool to preach or enlighten, who would have guessed Hollywood would turn movies into a complicated tool to dominate consumers all over the world, people become the audience who pay.

Everybody is on his way to the "festival to come", there is no base but a few tents and costumes, and no one knows if those objects will be useful for the people that are coming. Active waiting it is, and we have no other options anyway.

We come here to warm up the event. The main actors have not yet arrived; we are here to create the atmosphere. Actions of art or thought do not come from other people, they are in everyone like body heat, but we must go to the public square and join others so as not to freeze to death alone.

Translated from Chinese by  
FANG Liu

(continued from page 27)

#### 3-如何克服“观众”的位置？

未来的节日小组在2012年主持了克·格电影《资本论》在北京、上海和杭州的放映活动。在活动过程中，在让观众进入艺术现场，自己来成作者这一件事上，我们深深地感到：解放观众，实际上是任何作品在今天都得预设的任务，而实行起来，难度则相当地大。难就难在观众是不随便离开他们的位置的：他们会感到不安全。如果我们强拉他们出来，他们会声嘶力竭地反抗。应该用什么巧妙的办法将他们从观众的位置上开，迫使他们去直接行动呢？克·格式的方法和达尔式的“观众电影”在美术馆里放映时遭遇的观众的反感，对我们意味着什么呢？克·格在访谈（“Undercurrents of Capital: An Interview with Alexander Kluge”，The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory Volume 85, Issue 4, 2010）中指出，《资本论》不是他的电影，而是观众的电影。导演只是一个供批判用的原料的供应商。电影的最终完成，他认为，是在观众的脑子里。观众来看电影，是来加入到电影中，汇合成一个新的政治场景

2012年11月30日-12月1日，在这场《资本论》献映活动在民生美术馆和同济大学的收官现场，有很多艺术家认为，我们未来节日小组组织放映的这部左·电影，是在强加给大家一种理论；实际上其实没有电影，却叫他们去看，是冒，至少是占了观众的便宜，是恶作剧，只能算作行为艺术，并没提供作为内容的电影本身。

表面上，这是在讨论“理论可以做成电影，或电影能做成理论吗？”，“做成理论的电影，是干什么用的？”，这些艺术家实际是在问：你们左·导演拍的电影里到底有什么内容提供给观众？我们认为，这种态度是很反动的：电影，他们认为仍是在用原料观众而克·格和达尔拍的电影，是在反对这一点，是要用电影行动去取消观众的观看位置。

理论电影，如克·格的《资本论》，正是去了电影影像之后的电影，是电影减了好莱坞故事片后的电影，尽管，这之后，它可能是负数了。

这样的电影可能真的是空心的了，是要邀入观众到这个空的场地里，在里面开始政治斗争。用电影来做理论，是在动用克·格所说的从川时代就已存在于人脑的蒙太奇，来话语和图像；而且，在克·格手里，是将原料交给观看者的脑子，被各自处理，被真正地“后期制作”。辩证蒙太奇，在电影发明前，就存在了。话语和理论必须同时尊重像机所能做的一切和人对这些影像所能做的一切。理论电影，首先也是电影，是用电影方式来做理论，并将观众邀请到其中，真进一步做下去？

展示于美术馆的电影和视频，终于能脱导演、发行者对它们的控制：观众的观看，成为前的游走；在作品面前沉思、观照多长时间，由观众说了算；三分钟的神学式沉思，是我们大家的对美术馆里的观看的预设，在这里被打破。我们一离开视频，就会看，放视频的美术馆里，我们是无法弥补看的。视频或电影的时长，远远超过观众在美术馆里留的时长。一种展示方式，有助于打破那个观众位置位置，本身是有解放观众的作用的。

#### 1- 艺术家：为正在到来者暖（ ）场？

只有当多个方向的人马汇集，情势才会有变化。一群艺术家坐在一起，如果没有明确的政治使命，那就只是为了完成命题作文。诗人马拉美认为，广场是要清理出来，等待新人的。我们在这里又又，只是暖场，我们等待将要到来的人们（他们可不是观众了）。展望未来五十年，决定中国命运的将不是我们这代人，而且，事实上，我们也许应该将中国的未来命运设为“待定”，这才引人入胜。所以，我们应以更多的好客和，等待新共同体，新的人民，而不是观众的到来。

暖场的意思是，让我们先热烈地讨论和演出起来，让我们的身体在一起相互取暖，加我们身上的勇气。争论和讨论的意义，不是证明谁对谁，而是给参与的每一个人都带来更多勇气。艺术家已发过言了，就应该卷入到人群里去，这是艺术家的真正。夫在《歌手约和子民族》中也说了这个意思。走到人群前说“我是著名艺术家”，这只能显得你很倒。劳动分工，是我们应该推翻的，做艺术的人和的人的分工，是平等的。

把思想改编成适合布道的形式，就像把小说改编成电影，成了话语再生产。布道总要照顾听众，要好听些，再好听些，最后就没有车了。思想也不需要被布道的，就像之前说的，思想的能力，每个人身上都有，是一种潜能，不用叫外卖的，在交流时，人人都可以在自己身上唤，自给自足的。

很多人会说，我不开，需要帮助，结果，帮助他的人也越来越多，帮助也变得越来越复杂：这就是现代中国的文化“启蒙”的后果。一开始要眼科大夫，后来就要心理医生，再后来要科学家来关了……说出来，以为很容易，后来发现很复杂。也比如，电影本应该是一架共产主义机器，最好的布道或启蒙工具，哪里知道，路会杀出个好莱坞，把它当成了统治全球消费者的工具：人民成了的观众。

大家都在往节日现场的途中，没什么基地，只有几个帐篷，制作的道具，也不知道正在到来者会否用到。这是一种积极的等待。除了这个，我们其实也没有什么其他选择。我们都是来暖场的，主要演员没到，我们在这里先造造气。艺术行动或思想行动，是不需要别人带来的，对于每个人来说，都是体温一样存在于自己身上的，但我们必须要到广场上去与别的身體集合，在家里独着，会死的。只有在广场上，抱团取暖，这种体温，才散失得慢些。



# REFLECTION

## WHAT WE DON'T KNOW WON'T HURT US

Mike WATSON

China is a foreign place. A faraway place. A place of complex social codes and clear governmental directives. It is a place of masses and ant like migrations. Of communities, of family, and of eating together. A place of martial arts, of military parades, discipline, of Chinese food and Chinese speakers, of the Great Wall, and the firewall. A wall of people, a wall of smog, a wall between a European world history and an unknowable future. China is bleak, and yet China is a land of opportunity. It is opaque to the outside world, yet it is vital that we learn to 'know' it better.

In October 2012, I and 9 other researchers from the across the EU (to be specific, from the UK, France, Italy, Holland and Germany) spent ten days in 4 Chinese cities: Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu and Chongqing. With moleskine notebooks, laptops and a host of expectations we arrived from our different departure points – all in themselves culturally different from one another – , met one another in many cases for the first time, and devised a methodology, which over ten days would be tested, discarded, reassumed and transformed. It was a strategy of failure. A strategy that had as its fundamental premise the fact that we as outsiders could not hope to avoid the inherent problems associated with being from outside, looking in at a culture and trying to understand it. Our every question would naturally presuppose an answer. We either had to rethink the act of questioning itself – in one evening, before the meetings, seminars and interviews commenced – or we would have to admit from the offset of our awkwardness as a group, as a presence, a European mob. We moved like gangly students from art district to social centre, from talks on urban regeneration, to talks on free education and the commons, hiding our coke cans from each other and from 'the Chinese' in a bid to stay awake whilst maintaining ethical credentials. There would be only one way to avert farce. We would have to be subjects of the experiment we were conducting, questioning at every point our own relevance and neutrality. A gonzo approach, a kind of immanent critique played out in real life, which would shift from near parody of our position as academic and artist researchers as our inquiries fell flat in front of student groups,

to parallel situations played out in 'real life', as - for example – we struggled between six of us to carve meat from a spit roasted leg of lamb served outside a Beijing restaurant, whilst all around the locals effortlessly enjoyed the same meal. To be sure, there were moments of hilarity, just as there were frayed nerves. German efficiency collided with a relaxed Italian attitude and English sarcasm frequently went down like a lead balloon with everyone. What the Chinese made of this will remain largely unknown and unknowable.

For my part, travelling so that I could research the possibility of setting up a free education system, delivered from a network of international art spaces, the trip was part daunting task and part thrilling opportunity. For me – a point I have reached in conversation with people across Europe – one major problem with rethinking education resides in the fact that every possibility open to thought must derive from the existing system in which we were schooled. As such, interacting with a people who were schooled differently, and who hold very different values – some of which cannot be easily understood by Europeans – was bound to hold up an interesting mirror to life in Europe and, as such, challenge some of the fundamental assumptions we make. Again, this could only be approached by getting 'the Chinese' to tell us what they know without prejudicing what they told us either in the form of the question asked or in the fact that it was us that called the meeting seminar or interview.

### How does a researcher approach a given community as an equal?

One workshop hosted in October by Zajia Lab, Beijing, in collaboration with guest artists from Europe and China, and of which I was a part, aimed at addressing precisely this problem. For example, if a Chinese person were asked, 'What do you think of state ownership?' by people from a country in which private ownership is possible, it would allow for varied answers, but ones that, by necessity, respond to a presupposed novelty or problem. Given this, participants were asked to formulate questions that did not presuppose an answer: so, for example, the tricky issue of ownership in a country in which the state owns all property and punishes criticism of this policy would be approached

(in reference to a building, car or public space) with the rather more naive, 'Who owns this?' Evading any presupposition – in the form of a critique of a system of ownership alien to our own – on the part of the questioner led to many rather more esoteric questions, such as 'Who owns art?' and, a personal favourite, 'Is art normal?'

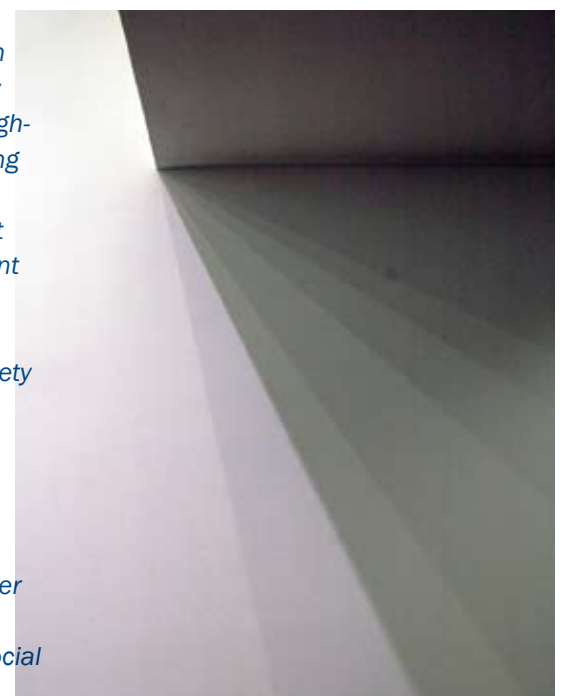
In addition to the size of China, its cities and its population – and the difficulties in understanding such a large diverse place – attitudes are very different and little can be assumed. For example, members of the Chengdu-based artist group Organhaus, who concern themselves principally with the prescient issue of urban development in a rapidly developing country, took us on a tour of an area of Chongqing to show us what 'gentrification' in China looks like. We visited one of the few remaining undeveloped areas of the city, where we were shown a traditional market and some small houses not dissimilar to British 1930s council homes, albeit surrounded by skyscrapers as if under siege by a hypermodern mentality. Tellingly, though, peeking through the window of one of these houses, I saw, hung on the living-room wall where one might expect a romantic rendition of a rural landscape, a photograph depicting a cityscape full of skyscrapers. It seemed as if the inhabitants aspired to live in a new building, the type which would soon be built over their house. In this light, the familiar model of behaviour whereby the construction of skyscrapers is seen simply as an incursion by the forces of capital upon an established community is somehow inadequate. One artist explained that the modern amenities that come with a new apartment in a skyscraper or high-rise are much sought after. Trying to comprehend the complexity of the situation in a country that looks bound to become dominant internationally is a daunting yet important task that requires patience and an immense subtlety in approach.

One motorised rickshaw ride in Beijing summed up perfectly the situation that the socially conscientious artist or researcher faces. The question 'Who owns this?' would be bizarre in any social situation, but when addressed to a rickshaw driver in motion by

his passengers, the response, a mixture of bemusement and fear, nearly resulted in collision with an oncoming vehicle. In communication between the artist and the community, something is arguably often lost in translation. If the artist wants to engage in the important issue of Chinese modernisation, this issue needs to be addressed through a level of dialogue between Western and Chinese artists that has hitherto been unseen. Communication in either direction has so far barely scratched the surface.

With regard to education, and the questions I came to China to find answers to - particularly regarding the feasibility of an international free mode of education – I would say the impenetrability of China holds something vital for our self-knowledge in Europe. Above all it was reconfirmed for me that the key to rethinking politics, education and social models resides not in what we know, but in what we don't know. As such comparison and contrast with vastly different cultures - and in such a way as to come away not saying 'I have discovered, or understood this, this and this', but, rather in such a way as to delay judgement and to let wonder reign – is vital. China is a palette with which we can repaint Europe, and, who knows, perhaps the reverse is true. Above all, I'd urge researchers working everywhere to let their inadequacies take control, to be led by their subject of study and to question all their assumptions, all of the time.

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1. AI WEI WEI'S ARCHITECTURE AT GALERIE URS MEILE, BEIJING

### III. ROLE OF THE ARTIST/ EDUCATION THROUGH ART

#### THE ARTIST IS IN THE GHETTO

Luigi GALIMBERTI FAUSSONE

I had never thought that I would be confronted with a life-size statue of Elvis Presley in a corridor of a Miami-style villa, visited during my journey through art galleries and studios across China. Even though China and its people are restless creators of the Surreal, I must admit that that thing was definitely by far out of place, especially should one consider that I had found myself in an artist's studio in the outskirts of Chengdu, Sichuan. However, it was not (only) a question of bad taste. That is why in the following paragraphs I shall reflect upon the Elvis' statue, its meaning and implications, which are by far greater and more interesting than one might expect.

The entire question revolves around the institution of the art district in China, how it has evolved and, often, degenerated.

This trajectory may be well illustrated by the case of the 798 Art Zone, located in the Dashanzi suburb of Beijing. This former industrial area began to attract artists from the mid-1990's on, due to the extremely low rental prices. However, after a decade or so, the district became well known to the general public and had come to attract a growing number of private galleries, which made the prices rise higher and higher until the point where as the number of galleries increased, that of the artists came to rapidly decrease. Today, despite a few qualified presences which still persist (e.g., Galleria Continua, Long March Space, Pace Beijing, UCCA), the 798 Art Zone has turned into a second-rate Disneyland of contemporary art, with by far more tourists than collectors or art lovers.

The evolution of the 798 Art Zone did not go unnoticed to either political or economic spheres, which are quite often a single entity in today's China. In fact, they understood that artists and art galleries might be a powerful drive for the renewal of undervalued urban areas. If in the case of 798 Art Zone this process was in some way natural, this is not what has happened with the new art districts which have been developing throughout China in recent years, such as Shanghai's Taopu or Chengdu's Blue Roof districts. In both instances, the local government, together with the real estate company in charge of the urban renewal of each area, created the art district from scratch with a clear goal in mind of increasing the

economic value of the soon-to-be-built constructions.

However, these two cases have also presented several significant differences. On the one hand, what I saw in that mockery of a villa with a blue swimming-pool beneath the permanently grey and polluted sky of Chengdu was a direct product of the degeneration of the art district model, which, now miles away from its origins, had become a government-controlled instrument serving the economical and political purposes of the Chinese government which considers (and treats) the contemporary art market as yet another sector by which it can exercise its domination. In this context, all the artistic and social urgency which were the foundations of the initial cultural flourishing of the 798 Art Zone is totally absent. Of course, this commercialization of art comes at the high price of bad artists and artworks, such as the infamous Elvis' statue.

On the other hand, Shanghai's Taopu art district offers some interesting points for analysis, despite sharing an origin similar to that of Chengdu's Blue Roof. In fact, as recently as 2009 Taopu was just another abandoned factory – a textile mill complex to be precise – in the peripheral Putuo District. However, almost three years following its establishment, the place now thrives with galleries and artists' studios. Furthermore, some of the most recent exhibitions in Taopu have obtained considerable popularity within the art sector not only for their quality, but also for their social and political content. In particular, this has proven to be the case with the "My Communism" exhibition, held at TOP Contemporary Art Center in the fall of 2011. The exhibition, which consisted of more than a hundred A0-format posters designed by over sixty artists from all over the world (e.g., Rossella Biscotti, Tania Bruguera, Zhou Xiahou, Zhuang Hui & Dan'Er), directly questioned the notion of communism and what it represents for today's China, aiming to constitute a new art international which would "free Chinese contemporary art from its actual quagmire", as one of its curators, the philosopher Lu Xinghua, wrote in the introductory text of the show. The works on display reflected the audacity of the argument, questioning the communist ideology, but also its grievous union with capitalism, which clearly



characterizes contemporary China. However, how could such an exhibition take place without being sanctioned by the ever-present governmental censorship, which most likely would not have permitted it anywhere else in Shanghai? The answer must be found in the very model of the art district. In fact, in addition to the economic benefits that an artistic presence seems to bring to the real estate market, the local governments happily sponsor the birth and growth of art districts (e.g., through heavily subsidized rents) in order to exert a more efficient control on artists and to limit the influence that their works may have on the general public. As in the case of Taopu, the art districts are generally located in peripheral areas of the main urban centres and are "protected" enough to discourage the uninvited visitor to step in (e.g., private security patrols the entrance). Hence, although in Taopu it is safer and easier than elsewhere to exhibit critical artworks, thereby allowing a creative artistic process to more or less freely occur, this tolerance is granted only due to the district being de facto inaccessible to the general public, thereby relegating it as an artists' ghetto.

In conclusion, the institution of the art district, which has a key role in the contemporary Chinese artistic production, remains at a critical point with all of its contradictions. However, since it tends to produce more assimilated, sterile and overly commercial art rather than being a safe harbour for artists' creativity and freedom of expression, this model necessitates radical change. Therefore, either the walls of these ghettos have to be knocked down or new ways have to be found in order to allow the art to go beyond the confines of the art district wherein it is produced, without being trapped in the censors' net. The role of the artist in contemporary Chinese society, who may change from a passive spectator to an active protagonist, strongly depends on how this question will evolve in the next few years.



1. A TURQUOISE BLUE SWIMMING POOL UNDER THE EVER-GRAY SKY AT THE BLUE ROOF ART DISTRICT IN CHENGDU

2. FACING ELVIS PRESLEY IN AN ARTIST'S STUDIO

# ACTION

## SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PRACTICES: DOING ART IN BEIJING

Alessandro ROLANDI

From 2008 to 2009 I conceived several performance art and experimental theatrical events which brought together Western and Chinese artists and which were held in unpredictable situations (improvisations in an art fair or in the neighborhood of galleries, for example) involving an element of risk and of unexpected interaction with the public. The surprising interest and complex feedback I received convinced me of the potential of social practice through art in China, in this specific historical moment.

In 2010 I started to collaborate with artist Ma Yongfeng - who founded the ForgetArt project - and our activity represented an important shift towards public intervention and micro social-practice. Our approach has been to raise a form of social and political awareness by pushing the boundaries of a space or an action and strictly avoiding repetition, in order to escape categorization and remain independent. With this in mind Megumi Shimizu and I held an event on the topic of the disparity between the ratio of men and women all over Asia and we asked the **Caochangdi village's folk-dance ladies' group** to accompany our performance (writing numbers and statistics concerning this issue on the floor of a space with white chalk). The piece's name was 100-120 (the current women/men ratio in China), and the local ladies agreed to join us under two conditions: that we would not treat this moment as an art opening and that we would invite more people from the village than from the Beijing art crowd.

With the project WO BU SHUFU, in 2011, I wanted to explore the more difficult topics of subversion and dissent in China's contemporary art scene. I collected via a USB slideshow, a number of simple unplanned artistic gestures of protest and critiques of the system based on humour, spontaneity and wit. The goal was to communicate to the outside world a fresh perception of engaged artistic practice in China, and to give a glimpse of the complex dialectic in play nowadays between censorship and self-censorship and how it is impossible to seize one from the other and to understand one without the other. Chinese artists always answer the question "Where are the boundaries?" with the response WO BU SHUFU, or "we don't know". People's lives and actions test these

boundaries but there is never a clear line. Actually, **in China as with everywhere else, I consider the topic of self-censorship in artistic practice to be a very interesting and prominent one, as it proves the influence of direct authoritarianism but also of the subtler but no less dangerous market forces, which restrain freedom of expression.** After these experiences based on testing the value and the impact of social practice, I felt it necessary to combine independent resistance and an educational approach which aims to foster new progressive and emancipatory contents in contemporary Chinese society. I became familiar, through the reading of "The ignorant schoolmaster" with the research Jacques Rancière conducted on radical learning methods, and with the archive he put together (recently published in the volume "Proletarian Nights") to document the spontaneous forms of expressions (from poetry to music, political theories, philosophy, literature, theatre and plastic arts) of obscure self-taught workers, artisans and non-educated people subjected to hard daily labor in XIX century's France.

I took my time to reflect on the long historical list of references: from the Russian avant garde's legacy, to Rudolph Steiner's collaboration with the Waldorf family which give birth to the Waldorf-Steiner Schools (currently undergoing an interesting revival in China together with the Montessori method), from the Bauhaus functional aesthetic, to Joseph Beuys's notion of social sculpture, from Camillo and Adriano Olivetti, to the Reggio Emilia kindergartens, etc. Somehow, the efforts in these experimental directions had been left aside too early or were suffocated both by ideology and commodification. I thought - if not in form, at least in the aim and inspiration - to re-invent this path, leaving behind its old ideological matrix. This would be a challenging task for today's artistic practice; it might be a way to go beyond mere critical deconstruction, giving us a chance to rescue the social bond from being dissolved into the economic model.

In 2011, I contacted Mr. Guillaume Bernard of Bernard Controls Asia, knowing that he was interested in art practice related to social responsibility and visited his factory in the outskirts of Beijing. This meeting was the beginning of the

discussion and the process that led to the Social Sensibility Research and Development Program, which is currently ongoing. Every two months an artist (Chinese or foreigner) is invited to spend time in the factory and create a participatory project involving workers, employees and managers of the factory in various ways. The program focuses more on the process and on the interaction between the artists and the people than on the actual production of final works as physical objects, although these are not excluded.

**The artist's presence is a disturbance that interrupts the nature of both the physical and mental space in the factory**

providing a fringe territory where existing norms become more flexible and individuals interact in a fragile, uncomfortable and undefined way; this is potentially very interesting, as it triggers a constant negotiation in terms of human empathy, authority shifts, social customs, working rules and codes of behavior. The outcome of this process is the result of this negotiation and complex encounter: it cannot be anticipated and it is too unpredictable to be framed within the linear production logic of the company.

The project does not respond to quantitative criteria and is conceived over a long-term period; its interest lies in its potential to open new possibilities and new norms within the socio-economical and cultural spheres. Artists are encouraged to structure their interaction around critical issues and avoid bland visual entertainment: every intervention must maintain a questioning attitude, raise discussion and confront the people in the factory with contradictory scenarios to stimulate their reaction and invite their critical participation. In this sense we try to escape the conceptualization of the current capitalist profit-oriented logic and avoid the risk of turning even art

practice into a tool to help the system running smoothly. After implementing the Social Sensibility Program for 2-3 years in Beijing, we are planning to extend it to the other Bernard subsidiaries in Europe and South America; meanwhile the program will try to attract the attention of other foreign and Chinese companies, whose standard policies in terms of social responsibility are still far from this kind of commitment. In a more general way, I see the importance of foreign cultural operators in China today as a network of small independent initiatives and creative communities that are growing side by side with the few local ones. In Beijing, independent creative spaces run by foreigners such as Za Jia Art Lab (founded by Ambra Corinti and Rong Wang Rong), Homeshop (by Elaine Whig Ho), Arrow Factory (by Rania Ho), Studio Metaestetica (by Carlo Santoro) and the late comer TJ in China (by Daniel Ruanova and Meli Barraghan) are giving Chinese artists the opportunity to create experimental work outside the commercial market, and the official academic sphere. They encourage local artists to interact with foreign artists and allow them to reach out to a different kind of public.

Although this is only at an early stage, it is a promising reality that uses artistic expression to analyze the complex interrelations of cross-cultural knowledge, politics and ethics and can hence support personal and political transformation without resorting to violence. It is sensitive to power and resistance and it is a source of emancipation in the sense that uses art to disclose how we are made and how we make ourselves. Social change promoted in this way would be the result, in Michel Foucault's words, of "a patient labor giving form to our impatience for liberty".

1. CURATOR FRANCESCO PETRUCCI (LEFT)  
IN CONVERSATION WITH ARTIST  
ALESSANDRO ROLANDI (RIGHT) AT CAOCHANGDI  
ART DISTRICT, BEIJING



### III. ROLE OF THE ARTIST/ EDUCATION THROUGH ART

# EXTRA

## THE LANGUAGE OF ART. LIPS ARE SEALED, WINDOWS STILL CLOSED?

Adeline de MONSEIGNAT

How does one speak of China after having visited only Shanghai and Beijing over a significantly short period of 10 days, in occasion of the final trip of European Alternatives' China-EU project? One does not. One might let the Chinese speak of their own country, but when communication is hard or impossible and the message hardly gets across, one turns to 'Art as a language', as Beijing-based curator Zandie Brockett puts it. This was the ingenious key used by researcher Luigi Galimberti Faussone to unlock the language barrier and enter in dialogue with the Chinese community in order to build a bridge between Europe and China, for the sake of opening up to inevitable socio-political issues.

To borrow the words of art critic Mike Watson, who was involved in the first part of European Alternatives' China-EU Project, 'In communication between the artist and the community, something is arguably lost in translation'<sup>1</sup>. Undeniably. And not only would performance artist Girolamo Marri agree with that, but he would actually use this as a tool. And he did. After four years spent in China, Marri understood that sometimes, and ironically, when translation is lost, communication could be gained. In his performance at Moganshan's V Art Centre (Shanghai), called **Join me for I have seen the LED light of the Hanpocalypse** in a show entitled **Just what is it about the end of the world that makes it so appealing**, Marri speaks up - or does he? If the title of the show, the title of his performance and his 20-odd-minute speech are not about the economy of words, they certainly are about absurdity, humour, but most of all, miscommunication - or mistranslation, should I say. Marri's character is on stage, a flame-red (and flammable) polyester costume for attire - a visual contrast between Marri's fair albino colourings and the country's vibrant colour of the flag. As the artist starts talking, it doesn't take long for his face to match the flag's shade, the colour of revolution. Anger takes over. Silence replaced by shouts. I can confidently call his performance

groundbreaking. No exaggerations, the stage collapsed. But the stage wasn't the only thing to break. Performed entirely in English in front of a Chinese-dominant crowd, Marri's speech broke some taboos, like the only-child policy or the Internet censorship policy. Yet he did not **speak** about these issues, he only **hinted** at them, by means of sarcasm. However the content of his speech, meant to be translated to the audience by a Chinese man sitting at a desk by his side, was left un-translated as Chen Hangfeng, his fellow performer, makes a point to ridicule the over-the-top outsider character that Marri played. In this duo spoken-performance, it was neither of what these two characters said that was significant. **What spoke to me was the unspoken; all that was lost in translation was gained in meaning**, and that meaning came across in a form of communication, or perhaps non-communication, thanks to the language of Art. It just goes to show that sometimes, not talking about an issue but performing about it speaks louder<sup>2</sup>.

It is no coincidence that artist Girolamo Marri and Beijing-based artist Jing Jing Lin know each other and share common **threads** in their practices. 'Violent', says Marri, sarcasm aside (for once), while describing Jing Jing's work, as I am shown a photograph of a delicate rose. One could imagine my puzzlement, yet I was to look closer. And I saw the **thread**.

The vulnerable skin of the lip-like petals are slowly and rhythmically perforated, gradually being brought closer together to the heart of its rose by means of a thread, to a point of complete closure. This act is both silently violent and violently silent. **To me, if those fleshy petals resemble lips, they hint at silence, but also abstinence**. The 'only-child policy'<sup>3</sup> topic is one hardly anyone ever speaks of. Coming from a western culture where asking questions like 'do you have any siblings?' is amongst the common ones as you meet someone for the first time, here in China, you run the risk of opening up a wound that only asks to remain closed. Reports have shown the high numbers of forced

abortions, female infanticides, boy-kidnappings and not to mention other demographic challenges, such as gender gap. It was only by the end of our 10-day trip that I realised Jing Jing was the only Chinese female artist we had encountered. Was it just a coincidence or was there more to it? Researcher Galimberti Faussone, on his then second Chinese escapade, pointed out the issue was raised in the first part of the Project. Not only are there very few women in China (rate of 118 males for 100 females<sup>4</sup>), but also evidently also few female artists. An article that came out in November 2012<sup>5</sup> shows hope for that to change, with a projection for the 'one-child policy' to see some adjustments in 2013. If there is some hope for the future of China, the current climate is still quite a heavy one. With regards to the Internet censorship policy, the political and ideological background is assumed to be one of Deng Xiaoping's favourite sayings in the early 1980s: "If you open the window for fresh air, you have to expect some flies to blow in.", proving their imperative mission to protect the Communist Party of China's values and political ideas from other ideologies. In keeping

this in mind, Gabriel Lester's work takes on an interesting reading. The Dutch artist, who was invited to exhibit at Shanghai's Mingshen Museum, was constrained to show only two out of three of his installation pieces. "It is because of the heavy climate", I was told. "Heavy climate?", I thought. After days of being shown and told about artworks running the risk of censorship<sup>6</sup>, I immediately thought this was the case here. However, when taking into account that, for this third installation, Lester requires the perfect climatic conditions to create the illusion of blowing (yet static) feather-light cotton curtains, with fabric hardener for only medium, one would understand that, for once, the climate here referred to wasn't a political one, but rather an atmospheric one. The humidity level was irreversibly too high. Yet, I couldn't help but think it was a shame for these beautifully delicate curtains to remain in boxes. Maybe China's heavy climate wasn't prepared to "open the window", yet it probably hadn't realized the latter was still closed. For as long as China will not be ready to open its window, there is enough of a gap for us to, silently, communicate through the language of Art, I sure hope.



1.

<sup>1</sup> Watson, M., ArtReview, 'Now Hear This', Mike Watson, China; Lands of the free?, p.43

<sup>2</sup> Marri has done other performances, like one in an elevator, where, dressed up as a journalist, microphone in hand, he does not interview anyone and remains in silence.

<sup>3</sup> This policy was introduced in 1978 and initially applied from 1979

<sup>4</sup> "The result is that more than 35 million women are 'missing'", wrote

journalist Tania Branigan in 'China's greater gender crisis', Guardian, [accessed on 20 December 2012] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/02/chinas-great-gender-crisis>

<sup>5</sup> 'Birth rule could be relaxed', China Daily, [accessed on 20 December 2012] [http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-11/28/content\\_15964734.htm](http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-11/28/content_15964734.htm)

<sup>6</sup> Examples of works considered "not appropriate to be shown" include

paintings by Galerie Urs Meile artist Wang Xingwei, where many of his works depict soldiers in compromising or degrading positions. The figure of the soldier in China is supposed to remain one of a hero. Anything going against that thought may be censored.

# 艺术的语言 嘴被阖上了，窗依然关着吗？

阿德林·德蒙赛拿 (Adeline DE MONSEIGNAT)

随着欧洲替代性(European Alternatives)的中国-欧盟项目的最后行程，仅在北京及上海短暂停留了十天，如何说起中国呢？说不了。让中国人自己谈谈他们的国家吧，却几乎无法交流，只好求助于-如驻北京策展人张桂才(Zandie Brockett)所说-“艺术作为一种语言”。这是研究员路易居·加林波提·佛松尼(Luigi Galimberti Faussonne)使用的巧妙方式，借此跨越语言障碍，和当地人对话，为欧洲和中国之间不可避免的政经议题搭起一道桥梁。

借用参与了欧洲替代性中国-欧盟项目第一部分的艺评人麦克·华特森(Mike Watson)的话-

“在艺术家与当地人的沟通中，一些含意在翻译之后遗失了<sup>i</sup>。毋庸置疑。行为艺术家吉罗拉莫·马里(Girolamo Marri)不仅会表示同意，他还会拿它当工具使。他也这么做了。马里在中国生活了四年，他发现令人意想不到的，沟通有时候是在翻译不了时达成的。他在上海莫干山的视界艺术中心一个名为<究竟是什么使得世界末日如此吸引人？>的展览所发表的行为表演<我看见了外星人的LED灯光，快加入我>中大声疾呼-或者，他有吗？如果展览主题，表演名称以及他那二十多分钟的演说无关乎用字的精简，它们绝对是关于荒谬，幽默以及，更甚者，沟通不良-或误译。

马里所扮的角色身着火红的聚酯戏服站在舞台上-他那涂得像白化症者一般白的身体和代表这个国家的旗帜的颜色形成强烈对比。艺术家开始说话，不多久他的脸就涨红得和旗帜相若，革命的颜色。愤怒开始接管。叫喊取代了沉默。这是一场突破性的表演。没有夸大的意思-舞台倒塌了。但破坏了不仅仅是舞台。在一个中国观众占多数的舞台完全以英语演出，马里的演说

打破了一些禁忌，譬如一胎化政策或互联网审查制。然而他并不直接谈论它们，只是透过讽刺加以暗示。搭档演出者陈航峰扮演旁边一个坐在桌前本该为观众翻译的中国男子，非但没有对演说内容进行翻译，还调侃马里所扮的这个夸张的外来者角色。

这个双人说话表演所传递的意义并不在于这两个角色说了什么，而是他们没有说出的，那些在翻译后失落的意义透过艺术的语言反而显得更有意义，沟通-或非沟通-也由此达成。因此有时候用表演来代替说要比说了表达得更多。<sup>ii</sup>

艺术家吉罗拉莫·马里和驻北京艺术家林菁菁彼此相识并享有艺术上的共同点并非偶然。

“暴力的”，一反一贯的讥讽，马里如是形容菁菁的作品-一张娇嫩的玫瑰的照片。可以想见我的不解，直到我再凑近些，总算了然。

无助唇样的花瓣被缓慢有序地刺穿并用一根线包住花心缝死阖上。无声地暴力，暴力地无声。我觉得如果这些新鲜的花瓣象征嘴唇，它们暗示着沉默，以及禁欲。一胎化政策<sup>iii</sup>几乎无人谈及。在西方文化里，“你有什么兄弟姐妹吗？”是人们初次见面常问的问题之一，然而在中国，这个问题可能揭开人们隐藏的伤口。研究数据显示有大量的强迫流产，女婴谋杀，男孩遭绑架等问题存在，更遑论其它人口方面的挑战，譬如性别差距问题。

这十天的旅程接近尾声时，我才了解到菁菁竟然是我们所接触到的唯一的中国女性艺术家。这只是一个巧合，还是有其它原因？已经来第二次的研究员加林波提·佛松尼告诉我们，这个主题上一次也有被提出。在中国非但女人远少于男人

(男与女的比例是118:100<sup>vi</sup>)，显然女性艺术家也很少。一篇发表于2012年11月的文章<sup>v</sup>预测一胎化政策将在2013年被适度调整，我们可以期待一些乐观的改变。

即使中国的未来值得期待，当下的气候依然很沉重。互联网审查制的政治思想背景可能来自邓小平在1980年代初最喜欢说的话之一：“好比打开一扇窗户，苍蝇蚊子也是会飞进来的。”证明了中国共产党的紧要使命就是保护党的价值和政治理念不受其它意识形态的侵入。以此为前提，加布里埃尔·莱斯特(Gabriel Lester)的作品提供了一个有趣的解读。这位荷兰艺术家受邀在上海民生现代美术馆开个展，然而他的三件装置作品只有两件被展出。“这是因为气候太沉重了”，我如是被告知。“气候沉重？”我想。经过这些日子以来不断地听闻有关艺术品冒着被审查的风险<sup>vi</sup>以后，我马上联想到这又是一个例子。然而，考虑到莱斯特的第三件装置作品需要完美的气候条件以布料固定剂为薄如羽毛的棉帘制造飘动的(但静止的)幻觉，之前谈及的气候，指的不是政治上的，而是天气上的事。湿度太高了。然而，我忍不住为那些锁在箱里纤细美丽的布帘感到可惜。或许由于沉重的气候，中国还没准备好去“打开窗户”，又或者它还没有意识到其实窗户依然是关着的。

尽管中国还没准备好去打开它的门窗，我依然希望总有个足够大的缝隙容许我们通过艺术的语言进行沉默的交流。

Translated from English by Fang Liu

<sup>i</sup> Watson, M., ArtReview, ‘现在听听这个’, 麦克·华特森, ‘中国: 自由之地?’ 43页

<sup>ii</sup> 马里还作过其它的行为表演作品，其中之一是在一个电梯里面，他扮成记者，手持麦克风，却始终保持着沉默，没有访问任何人。

<sup>iii</sup> 这项政策于1978年被提出，并于1979年开始实施。

<sup>vi</sup> “结果造成超过三千五百万个女性‘失踪’了”，记者坦尼亚·布蓝尼根在其文章‘中国更大的性别危机’中写道，卫报，[2012年12月20日资料库]

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/02/chinas-great-gender-crisis>

<sup>v</sup> ‘生育政策可能将放缓’ 中国日报，[2012年12月20日资料库]

[http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-11/28/content\\_15964734.htm](http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-11/28/content_15964734.htm)

<sup>vi</sup> 被视为“不适于展出”的例子包括麦勒画廊代理的艺术家王兴伟，在他的许多作品中，军人以不体面或屈辱的姿势呈现。在中国，军人的形象必须是英雄式的，任何与之违背的作品都可能被审查禁止。

2.



1. "MELANCHOLIA IN ARCADIA" (2011) BY GABRIEL LESTER. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

2. GIROLAMO MARRI PERFORMING AT THE OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION "JUST WHAT IS IT ABOUT THE END OF THE WORLD THAT MAKES IT SO APPEALING?" AT V ARTS CENTRE, SHANGHAI, DECEMBER 2012. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

3. "ROSE ROSE" (2012) BY LIN JINGJING. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



**BOLIANG Shen** is currently based in Beijing, working as a journalist for ARTINFO CHINA as well as a curator. He has participated in various domestic and international art events, including the 3rd Gwangju Biennale International Curator Course (2011). He was the curator of Multi-Future Project (2011-2013) as well as project manager of the Art Writer/Journalist Workshop of the Academy of Reciprocal Enlightenment, 9th Shanghai Biennale (2012). He has also translated many books, theories and essays on contemporary art and culture written by Boris Groys, Anton Vidokle, ect.

**Zandie BROCKETT** is a Beijing-based curator, critic, consultant, and photographer from Los Angeles. With a B.A. in sociology and photography along side a M.A. in business management, she now works as the international liaison and studio manager for Chinese artists, Liu Xiaodong and Yu Hong. She is also working on several curatorial projects across China.

**Luigi GALIMBERTI FAUSSONE** is currently involved in several projects related to artistic research and production across the world (most recently in China and Myanmar), with a particular focus on socially and politically engaged visual arts. In addition to his undergraduate and postgraduate studies in sociology and international relations respectively, he has recently been awarded *cum laude* a master degree in art management.

**Lonneke van HEUGTEN** is a researcher, writer and dramaturge. She has also worked on production and marketing of cultural projects and theatre festivals. She completed the Master International Performance Research with Distinction at the University of Amsterdam and the University of Warwick. Her thesis won the Theatre Institute Netherlands' Dissertation Prize 2011 and will be published. Currently she is writing her PhD on curating and performance at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA).

**LU Xinghua** is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Tongji University, Shanghai. He mainly engages in contemporary French philosophy and studies of contemporary art theories. In recent years, his research has focused on Derrida, Barthes, Rancière, Agamben, Badiou, Zizek. He collaborates with contemporary art institutions, such as Shanghai's TOP Contemporary Art Center with which he organized the "Future Festival" in July 2011. His publications include *Exigences Partagées* and *The Purpose of Contemporary Art*, among many others.

**Lorenzo MARSILI** is co-director of European Alternatives and coordinator of the European initiative for media pluralism. He has qualifications in philosophy and Chinese studies. He has previously worked as editor for cultural and philosophical publications.

**Niccolò MILANESE** is co-president of European Alternatives. He has university qualifications in philosophy and political science, and has also worked as a journalist, a researcher and poet.

**Adeline de MONSEIGNAT** lives and works in London. Her sculptural, installation-based and ink works come from her interest in the Uncanny, the body, motherhood and the Origin. She was awarded the Catlin Art Prize, Visitor Vote Prize (2012) and was long listed for The Threadneedle Prize (2012). She studied at UCL, Slade School of Fine Art, Parsons The New School, New York and City & Guilds of London Art School.

**NI Kun** is a curator from Organhaus, an independent art organisation located in the 501 Art Warehouse, in Chongqing. Organhaus exists primarily for young and experimental multimedia artists with a focus on the urbanisation of China and the progress of artistic cooperatives globally. It aims to give energy and practical experience to contemporary Chinese artists – facilitating the cutting edge practice and international cultural exchange through their residency programme.

**Ségolène PRUVOT** is co-director of European Alternatives. She is the coordinator of Transeuropa Festival. She studied cities and the dynamics of urban development

in Paris and London and has developed specific knowledge and understanding of European cities, notably during her practice as an urban planning analyst in London and as collaborator of the URBACT European programme. She has also been involved in developing artistic and cultural actions in public space with European Alternatives (e.g., POLIS 21, Transnational walk). Her interests and activity also include gender equality and feminism.

**Robin RESCH** is an artistic researcher and independent curator. As a founding member of Artoholics e.V. - tracing on social, cultural and urban phenomena, he is currently coordinating a trans-local artistic research project between Berlin and the Brazilian metropolis of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Salvador initiated by Urban Dialogues. Besides projects on artistic research as a tool for transformative processes within urban space, he coordinates workshops and exhibitions. Furthermore, he is assisting at the art school of Berlin-Weißensee in the Masterprogramm Spacestrategies, where he is developing a tool kit for urban exploration techniques.

**Alessandro ROLANDI** has been living and working in Beijing since 2003, as a multimedia and performance artist, director, curator, researcher, writer and lecturer. His work focuses on social intervention and relational dynamics; his aim is to expand art practice beyond existing structures, spaces and hierarchies and engage directly with reality in multiple ways. Member of the Forget Art collective, he is the founder and director of the Social Sensibility Research & Development Program at Bernard Controls Asia in 2011, (currently ongoing). His work has been shown, among other venues at: Venice Biennale 2005 and 2011, WRO Wroclav Biennale 2011, CCD Photofestival Beijing 2009, 2010-2011, Museo Pecci, Milano 2011, MCAF Gent 2008, FUSO VideoArt Lisbon 2012, Under the subway, New York 2012, UCCA Beijing, 2012. He was nominated by the Global Board of Contemporary Art among the best performance artists for the Alice Awards 2011 together with Megumi Shimizu for the performance "Something on the way".

**Stella TANG** is a Chinese-born political activist. She now works in Italy as a journalist and philosopher.

**Mike WATSON** is a critic writer, and curator, currently in residency at Nomads Foundation in Rome, where he is carrying forward a long term research project on the possibilities allowed by art and the utilization of art spaces for reshaping the education. Mike holds a PhD in Philosophy (Aesthetics) from Goldsmiths College and is writing a book entitled 'Joan of Art: Towards a Conceptual Militancy' for Zero books.

**WANG Shuo** is an architect, writer and researcher based in Beijing. He has practiced extensively in New York, Rotterdam and Beijing in the field of architecture and urbanism research. He now focuses on the practice of META-Project with partner Zhang Jing and Max Fu. The work of Wang Shuo is characterized by a research driven approach, and is intended to bridge design and research with interdisciplinary collaboration. One of his main interests of research has been the intensifying urban dynamics in contemporary metropolis in Asia and new forms of emergent urban spaces. He has developed a series of urban research projects and is actively extending the idea into multiple dimensions of contemporary medium, including writing, video, website, art installation and exhibition.

**YANG Shu** is a painter and sculptor. He is also the director and co-founder of the independent art space Organhaus and lecturer at the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in Chongqing.

**YOU MI** is a media artist, independent curator and writer. She has also worked in the theatre and film at an earlier stage. Her focus now is to bring together visual art, performance and space, and her practice in the crossing over of these fields is informed by her interest in socio-political matters. As a media artist, she has exhibited in Europe and the States, and she writes about art and cities for various publications in China and Europe, including *Abitare*, *Case da Abitare* and *Stylepark*. She is now recipient of the "German Chancellor Fellowship" granted by the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung.



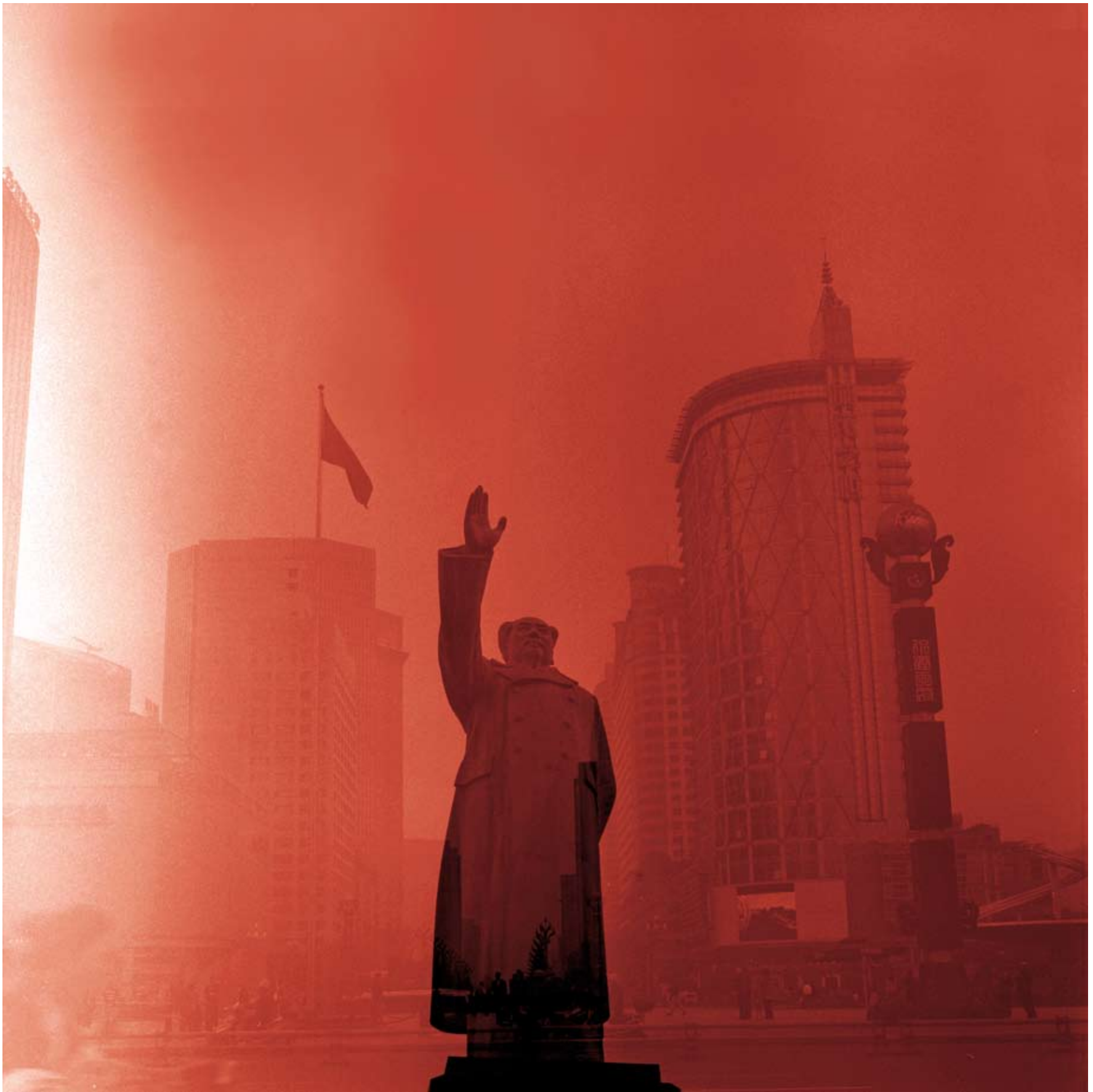
1. VIEW OF THE LIMA PAVILION WITHIN THE INTERCITY PAVILIONS PROJECT AT THE 9TH SHANGHAI BIENNALE

2. AT THE 9TH SHANGHAI BIENNALE

3. PARTICULAR OF THE LIMA PAVILION "ALL THE REPUBLIC IN ONE" BY ARTIST JOSE CARLOS MARTINAT

**PHOTO CREDITS**

ADELINE DE MONSEIGNAT: **5** (LEFT), **16** (TOP, MIDDLE, BOTTOM-RIGHT), **28** (BOTH), **29** (TOP AND MIDDLE), **35** (MIDDLE)  
 CECILIA ANESI: **1**, **7**, **8**, **17** (TOP-SMALL AND BOTTON-SMALL), **21** (RIGHT), **22** (LEFT), **23** (BOTTOM), **26**, **30** (TOP)  
 CLAUDIA ROSSINI: **2**, **6**, **16** (BOTTOM-LEFT), **29** (BOTTOM), **31**, **35** (TOP AND BOTTOM)  
 LUIGI GALIMBERTI FAUSSONE: **5** (RIGHT), **21** (LEFT)  
 MIKE WATSON: **30** (BOTTOM)  
 ROBIN RESCH: **17** (BIG), **20**, **22** (RIGHT), **27** (BOTTOM), **36**  
 RUBEN MIR UGOLINI: **10** (BOTH), **11** (TOP) **12**, **13**, **14**, **15** (BOTH)  
 ORGANHAUS, CHONGQING: **23** (TOP), **24**  
 THE PAVILION AND VITAMIN CREATIVE SPACE 2013: **9** (BOTH)  
 VALERIA TOMASULO: **11** (BOTTOM)



1. "MAO PERFORMING ANGELUS NOVUS"  
6X6 DOUBLE EXPOSURE  
ILFORD 400, BY ROBIN RESCH (2012).  
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST