The Counterfeit Outsider: Qigong Drawing, Peasant Woman, and Modernism of Chinese Contemporary Art

by

Wei Zhang

Submitted to OCAD University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Contemporary Art, Design, and New Media Art Histories

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2022

Abstract

After being professionalized by the *Long March Project* in 2002, former rural factory worker Guo Fengyi (1942-2010) began to become the renowned mysterious peasant woman artist as soon as questions about her artist identity had been raised. There are many ways to discuss her relationship to the elite praxis of Chinese contemporary art, yet existing conversations hardly elicit the study of her and her art; instead, it charges at the elite center of the Chinese art world, arbitrarily places her drawings in many different elite-designated curations and problematized her existence by classifying as an outsider for their own need. Addressing the problems, this paper seeks to re-examine Guo's outsider position in the Chinese art world in three contexts. First, Guo's visual form in comparison to the socialist visual culture and contemporary art practice in the post-socialist period; second, the self-authorization in her drawing that faces the intersection of feminism discourse and modernization; third, the subjugation of her as part of the normalized "peasant participants-urban art personnel" collaboration in the Chinese art world. By examining these overlooked contexts that are associated with Guo's drawings, this project confronts the role of an outsider, explores the potential of the understudied heterogenous female in Chinese contemporary art, and hopes to give light to plights that not only Guo Fengyi but also many heterogenous others are facing in an era of internationalization.

Acknowledgments

If one does not look into the deep valley, one does not understand the depth of earth; I am grateful to many for preparing me to stand where I can peak into the depth of contemporary art history.

I am extremely grateful to the faculty and staff in the program of Contemporary Art, Design, and New Media Art Histories who have inspired and encouraged my work in the field. I owe a special and deep thanks to my primary advisor Dr. Charles Reeve, for his durational academic advice, stimulating conversations, and insightful edits that shape my nebulous ideas into clarity. I also owe a particular and deep thanks to my secondary advisor Dr. Alice Ming Wai Jim, for her patience, inspirational comments, and rigorous questions that played a major role in bringing this project to fruition. I am also deeply indebted to Prof. Jim Drobnick for sharing his profound knowledge of art writing throughout the second year of the program. Thank you to Prof. Susan Blight and Dr. Soyang Park who have influenced me in my years of study at OCAD University.

My greatest thanks are owed to my parents who invest unwavering love, care, time, and finance to make me a privileged youth in his academic pursuit. I also say thank you to Ziting Gao for the editing advice and the camaraderie we share. Thank you to my partner Kate Han for your unconditional love and support.

Finally, this major research paper was written on the ancestral and traditional territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinaabe and the Huron-Wendat, who are the original owners and custodians of the land on which we stand and create. I am indebted to the land and them.

Table of Contents

Guo Fengyi's Chronology

1942 Born in central Xi'an, Shaanxi Province.

1962 Received high school diploma in Xi'an. After graduation worked as the quality control staff in the local rubber factory.

1987 Retired from the factory because of arthritis.

1989 Drew the first qigong painting after daily practice in June. Began to draw on a daily base.

2002 Met with Lu Jie. Traveled to Yunnan Province to participate in *The Long March Project*. Worked with U.S. feminist artist Judy Chicago.

2003 First group exhibition in Beijing.

2005 First Solo Exhibition in Beijing *Who is Guo Fengyi?* First international appearance at Yokohama, Japan. Works appeared in Sydney, Australia, and Prague, Czech in the same year.

2010 Death in Xi'an.

2013 Featured at 55th Venice Biennale *The Encyclopedic Palace*.

2021 Featured at 13th Shanghai Biennale *Bodies of Water*.

Introduction

Featuring the theme of 'trans-species collectivity and fluid solidarity', the 13th Shanghai Biennale *Bodies of Water* (2021) investigates the interconnectedness between humans and other lifeforms, nature, and culture. Holding at the Power Station of Art (PSA), beside the bank of the Yangtze River, the core of the hydrographic network in southern China, the exhibition's locale aptly connects to the exhibition's aqueous theme. Seeking to probe the discourses of ecology, hydrology, and post-humanism, the theme is derived from materialist philosopher and feminist Astrida Neimanis's claim that "[t]he flow and flush of waters sustain our bodies, but also connect them to other bodies, to other worlds beyond our human selves."[1] Under this deliberate theme, the exhibition explores a range of aqueous forms and ways they interconnect, while all pointing to a feminist perspective that concerns gender, race, nature, and culture.

By orienting the post-humanism and feminism perspective, the 13th edition of the Shanghai Biennale seeks to destabilize its patriarchal history and further highlights its importance as the "gateway to the west". As the first cultural event officially organized in the state-sponsored galleries, the earliest editions, as art historian Wu Hung notes, inaugurate the 'global' era of the contemporary Chinese art exhibition industry.[2] After two decades of evolvement, Shanghai Biennale gradually adjusts itself to the international biennale norm – summoning works that are not only from Chinese art hub but also from around the global. Following the same tendency in 2021, curator Andrés Jaque commissioned thirty-three artworks from overseas, nearly half of the

[1] Shanghai Biennale, "13th Shanghai Biennale: *Bodies of Water",* E-flux, April 2, 2021, https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/386291/13th-shanghai-biennalebodies-of-water/

[2] Wu Hung 巫鸿, "The 2000 Shanghai Biennale: The Making of a Historical Event", Art Asia Pacific 31, 42-49. https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/wuhung/files/2012/12/2000_2000-Shanghai-Biennale-pp42-49.pdf.

total of seventy-six works, and sought to align them with Chinese artists' works under an overarching feminism theme.

Foreign artists' work set the feminist undertone of the whole exhibition. Entering the exhibition space, audiences' eyes are captured by gigantic, knotted crimson cords, hanging from industrial ceilings seventy feet above the ground, identified as Cecilia Vicuna's installation *Quipu Menstrual (*2006). (figure 1) Resembling a melting glacier in nature, with its color borrows the metaphor of menstruation from the gendered female body; the work is fluid, and feminine. Proceeding down the hall, one will be greeted by dark hollow pieces that are made from steel and painted plywood.[3] Setting in the middle of the central room, *Bird and Lava #01*(2021) (figure 2) quietly challenges the volume of PSA's finite space. New York-based artist Torkwase Dyson's conception of the piece arises from her concern about blackness and liquidity, which in her view are in solid connection. Her works challenge PSA's modern architecture or perhaps any other possible human-built infrastructure.

The adjacent hall features paintings by the late Chinese artist Guo Fengyi. With several small sketches and mostly long scrolls, her works are all beautifully enigmatic. Flowing lines and intricate patterns conjure visions of either a deity or a human organ system in a way different from the practice of contemporary art, yet the massive visual and scale partially resemble the Chinese maximalist features. The Chilean poet, the metropolitan resident, the Chinese outsider woman, and many others, their co-existence engenders automatic trans-cultural dialogues. Revisioning the position of the Chinese woman, who peeks inside the room of contemporary art from the doorstep, perhaps, is one of the curatorial group's strategies when mitigating the longstanding critical

[3] "Torkwase Dyson at the 13th Shanghai Biennale", Pace Gallery, Accessed March 3, 2022, https://www.pacegallery.com/journal/torkwase-dyson-shanghai-biennale/

relationship between Chinese contemporary art and its outsider. However, even though outsiders' visuals are welcomed, their ideas never are. While the whole exhibition pours out a spectrum of ideas via eardrum-piercing sounds, dazzling videos, and dense wall captions, Guo's drawings hang without captions in the quiet side room where bewildered visitors can finally pick themselves up with her inner-directing drawings and in a sober, cold light. The discrepancy of receptions parallels their co-existence and points to what lies underneath the surface of the rich togetherness, a hidden order.

Most of Guo's works were drawn between 1990-2006, while other works are dated much closer to the present and half are directly commissioned – Guo again becomes the most noticed outlier in dates. One of her miniature paintings entitled *Hongfanfanghetuzhitu Diagram of Hong Fan's study of Hetu* (1990) (figure 3) sets an example. Consisting only austere visual elements of numbers and lines, the work implies a mysterious order of beings on a mundane sketchbook paper. Sadly, since Guo Fengyi passed away in 2010, many questions about what she drew will remain unanswerable. But besides the grief, questions arise too. Many of the works are created only intended for a private cause but why her works are joining the public exhibition that summons seventy-six works from around the world? Guo Fengyi was a woman from rural land who neither had access to philosophical terms like "bodies of water" and feminism nor received any art education in her lifetime. So how did her drawings become art that is of a global era?

Guo's works have been cemented in many domestic and international art events, juxtaposed beside renowned Chinese contemporary artists' pieces that helm the direction of Chinese contemporary art. Before becoming an artist, she was a retired factory worker in the rural countryside of Xi'an. Her meditation-derived paintings are part of the qigong practice that she performed to cure diseases gained from lifelong labor. Alongside other peasant artists, Guo was

featured as a creative genius from the countryside in The Long March Project in 2003.[4] Depicted as persistent and diligent in their long and lonely creative career, these Chinese peasants were made to become new art celebrities. Their shining halo concealed the truth that peasants' creativity has not become part of art modernization since the 1980s when contemporary art, as much as many other new cultures, was on its way to becoming exclusively urban affairs. In the art sphere, the phenomenon of restaging western style lasts long – as a daring response to the official Anti-Spiritual Pollution campaign in 1983, which temporarily resurrected social realism in national exhibitions to consolidate the nation's socialist system. The proletarian mass again became the protagonists yet augmented by the style of the new learned western one, and these new practices all have been delivered in art academies and urban cultural capital. However, the contradiction lies underneath – the new representation of the proletarian subject is disconnected from the true rural mass. And decades later the disconnection sets off a problematic conversation that once became exacerbated by the appearance of an outsider woman, who was regularly termed a peasant woman artist, at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013. Outsider artists, rural population, modernism art genius, and modernism ideal congregate in the same art hub, yet their relationship became unfathomable. Peng De, a male professor at Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts, published a timely tirade entitled *Guo Fengyi Phenomenon* in his blog, and attacked her appearance at major international art exhibitions as nothing else but mocking contemporary Chinese art. In a time when more and more foreign-trained Chinese male contemporary art virtuosos earn a whole world's praise, the thrive of peasant artists touches the bedrock of modernization, questioning the Chinese art world if they too belong to the progressive-minded bandwagon. Contemporary Chinese art's short history has become an

[4] Gu Yi, "The 'Peasant Problem' and Time in Contemporary Chinese Art." *Representations*, no. 136 (2016): 54–76. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26420578.

encounter zone of urban meets rural, and gender differences. Resonating with Sasha Welland's reading of contemporary Chinese art as a "Masculinist Avant-garde", a case study like Guo's can help people to understand the outsider, especially female, creativities' plight. However, the biennale's theme of *Bodies of water*, and the constructed togetherness needed for the global context, seals her extraordinary path, and her own counter-truth to male-led modernism.

A foreign curatorial team, a feminist statement, an aqueous theme, and dozens of artists from around the world: in such a globalist aura, Guo's profile safely transforms into a cosmopolitan artist. One dazzling concept follows another and the rest of the show's lavish display of modernist art concepts aligned with the refreshing visual of her drawing, suggesting she is someone she is not. Under the deliberate curatorial theme, Guo and other forms of art are interconnected and interdependent, yet under the lens of Shanghai Biennale's history of modernism, her art never comes together with the rest but remains a part of the far entanglement between her peasant and female identity, the divided cultural heritage in the nation, and its progression.

This Major Research Project examines histories that shape Guo Fengyi's artist identity today and how Guo's private practice of drawing had been placed and misplaced, on the high road of the modernism movement. In Chapter one, I highlight two parallel circumstances in post-socialist China: in private, how Guo became the isolated qigong drawing artist under the socio-cultural circumstance; and in public, the movement that searches for modernism ideal and form in the art sphere in the 80s. I argue that the privately practiced qigong as the condition of Guo's artmaking, though conflicts with artists and critics' patriarchal promotion of art as for a "larger social cause", unexpectedly lead her visual subject to grapple with the convention of socialist visual culture. In the modernism movement of Chinese art, it is natural to employ a new form to express a new idea. Therefore, the criticism of idea takes place concurrently with the criticism of

form. For Guo, the criticism of lacking ideal is made explicit in public, and about style and form, less so. Instead of repudiating her visual form, critics often associate her drawing style with traditional culture by suggesting a similar calligraphic quality. Similar but not identical, the association with traditional culture suggests that Guo's using of lines not only is an alternative and new visual form but also firmly sits outside of contemporary art. Furthermore, I make comparison between Guo's drawing and Maximalist. By structuring their visual and conceptual relevance, I suggest another way which Guo can emerge in the discourse of contemporary art, and what prevents it.

The Long March's search for new potentials in peasant art fostered contact between the outsider woman and urban-based female artists under a critical frame for the first time in Chinese contemporary art history. In Chapter two, I examine Guo's participation in the event at Lugu Lake in Yunnan, the sixth site of The Long March Project, which is organized to introduce international art to Chinese rural communities, and vice versa. Her participation exposes the troubling nature of the category of "peasant woman artist". Feminist scholar Tani E. Barlow famously argued the different notions behind the term *funü* 女性 and *nüxing* 妇女 in a specific time around the socialist and post-socialist era, suggesting these terms point to different womanhood and serve different roles in the state's ideological construction. Echoing Barlow's theoretical groundwork, I discuss that the self-authorization embedded in Guo's site-specific drawing *May 5th Lugu Lake*, and the identity of the peasant woman artist that is framed by the urban art circuit, is contradicting. Lu Jie, the male chief curator of Lugu Lake Project and The Long March, implicitly authorizes two categories of women artists to generate feminist conversations in a modernism-ridden condition. Contradicting the male authorization, in her drawing Guo expressed a desire for self-liberation that was no less vivid than her urban peers.

Building on the discussions in chapters one and two, in chapter three I explore the relationship between non-urban participants and Chinese contemporary art in the framework of peripheral-central. Guo's presence at the 13th Shanghai Biennale constitutes the "rural participant-urban art personnel" mode of collaboration that deeply roots within not only The Long March but also Chinese contemporary art's profit-orienting norm. The circulation of her work under the brand of contemporary art, the role of a peasant woman artist as elite's authorization, and the lack of hers engender an observation that echoes with what Gayatri C. Spivak noted: "the subaltern cannot speak."[5] More specifically, the Chinese subaltern artist cannot express her past and creativity in the ambience of the elite male-led Chinese contemporary art. To place her in the contemporary art world means to peel off the expression and keep the form, and to tell stories about her art without her telling.

[5] Gayatri C. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Colonial Discourse and Post- Colonial Theory*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, (London: Routledge, 2015), 104.

Chapter 1

The Meeting of Rural Creativity and the Storming Contemporary Art

1.1 When Rural Meets Urban

The Encyclopedic Palace (2013) at 55th La Biennale di Venezia included works of two self-taught Chinese artists. The first is Lin Xue (1968-2020) from Hong Kong, and the other is Guo Fengyi (1942-2010) from the county of Xi'an, Shaanxi. A month after the vernissage, Peng De, a professor at Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts, published an online tirade entitled *Guo Fengyi Phenomenon*, singled out Guo and deemed her international appearance at the pinnacle art exhibition as nothing else than mocking contemporary Chinese art: "[M]anifesting China via Guo Fengyi's painting is an affirmation that in the Chinese art world there has no ideology, no culture, and no modernity."[6] Two conditions can explain Peng's hostility. First, making an appearance at a major biennale equates to announcing the success of a Chinese artist, and inscribing the successful internationalization of the Chinese art world through the artist's exemplary achievement; second, her work does not conform to the critical aesthetic trend and the practices in Chinese contemporary art. Her drawings are overtly superficial. For the male critic and a considerable part of the institutionally trained artists in the nation, it was hard to witness a peasant woman's untamed drawings becoming a façade of Chinese contemporary art in Venice, especially since she has never been considered part of the modernizing conversation. Encouraged by Peng's

[6] Peng De, *"Guo Fengyi Phenomenon"*, Sina Collection (blog), July 9th, 2013, http://collection.sina.com.cn/ plfx/20130709/0956119460.shtml

heated criticism, terms like 农村大娘鬼画符 *Rural old-womanish daub* appear to devalue Guo's position in the world of Chinese contemporary art. It is interesting to point out that Lin Xue, Guo's ally at *The Encyclopedic Palace*, who is reportedly urban-based and who is also male, has never needed to bear negative criticisms of content and gender. Though Lin's minutely detailed rendering of the natural world resembles the similar linear aesthetic of Guo's, his self-taught practice of painting nature has been described by critics as a seclusive master who takes refuge in nature from the urban world.[7] Descriptions from online catalogs hints that Lin sought for revitalizing the practice of the educated *Wenren* Literati class, though he never received any art education, nor he had any affiliation with art groups. The practice of working in an isolated world for inspiration, for Lin, approximates the noble seclusion from traditional elite culture; for Guo, reaffirms her position as a female outsider. The divergence of reception is a result of a sexist male-dominated art world. Anthropologist Sasha Welland argued for the gendered Chinese contemporary art as "masculinist avant-garde".[8] Resonating with this notion, the double display of rural/urban relocation exemplifies the extension of the problematic gender discourse in Chinese contemporary art.

The presence of the rural/urban discourse in Guo's historiography marks a moment of meeting with the urban modernism that has been invisible to her entire life. Following the party directive of joining education and labor, Guo began to work in the local rubbery factory right after receiving her high school diploma in 1962. She never received any formal artistic training during

---

[7] Chen Fang Fang 陈芳芳, "Daily and Essence – Lin Xue's Untitled" 《日常与核心–林穴的无题画》, *LEAP 藝術界*, September 2, 2013, http://www.leapleapleap.com/日常与核心–林穴的无题画/?lang=zh-hans.

[8] Sasha Welland, *Experimental Beijing: Gender and Globalization in Chinese Contemporary Art* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 26.

her upbringing, a time when both the modernist curriculum of aesthetic education and the Republican period are superseded by socialist reality. Modernism thoughts rejuvenated in the 1980s after decades of stagnation, and art education was restored in institutions by following the iconic Republican-era educator Cai Yuanpei's claim, "Replacing religion(politics) with aesthetic education."[9] However, the rural home of Guo remained a place too far to reach for such urban hub influence. Because of working under harsh conditions, Guo struggled with health.

Drawing for healing her labor injuries was, following the Hegelian thoughts, a self-activity needed by the working class. The nature of Guo's factory job exacerbated her suffering from arthritis, a common chronic disease endured by women who make living from manual labor. To soothe the symptom, Guo embarked on practicing Qigong, a traditional Chinese healing practice that involves body movement, breathing, and meditation to constantly transmit the healing energy through the body. As part of the healing process, she started to draw the spiritual experiences down in June 1989 and visualized a handle of biomorphic, intricate, and phantom-like images. She later referred to the images as the documentation of visualizations acquired during qigong practice, the drawing activity nonetheless is an act of ensuring individual survival. Neither did she expect any audiences other than herself, nor were her drawings taken into the critical relationship between the socialist art traditions problematized by modernists and the storming thoughts of freeing art from religion and politics. Cultural advancement thoughts had its geographical boundaries between hot urban and the far rural, the drawings may not. Guo drew on a complex binding of practicing healing and an unfulfilled curiosity for the outside world. In Rosario Güiraldes's exhibition catalog, she describes her curiosity as "[G]uo makes drawings of international and national monuments that

[9] Gao Minglu 高名潞, *Total Modernity and the Avant-Garde in Twentith-Century Chinese Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2011), 78.

are physically inaccessible to her, such as the Egyptian pyramids of Giza, the Eiffel Tower, and the Statue of Liberty."[10] With the discovery of her drawings by urban gallerist, the geographical boundary also began to blur, so was the boundary of private and public. Her drawings came under the watch of male and female artists, critics, and city audiences, whose scrutiny is gendered and urban.

Beijing and New York-based gallerist and artist Lu Jie, who was traveling to explore folk art and artists throughout China, spotted Guo's ghost-like image in 2002; Lu was struck by these images' aesthetic quality that he in art schools had never seen. Foreign-educated Lu then decided to introduce Guo from the distant countryside into his curatorial project *The Long March*. The unexpected participation set forth her art career as a branded outsider in the domestic art hub, yet Guo debuted as an artist more ordinarily on the other side – three years later her drawings began to circulate in exhibitions in first East Asia, then Euro-America. The description of *The Long March Project*'s catalog constructs Guo and her drawings as a unity as if not only the drawings but also the body of the heterogenous woman is what struck people the most. Reifying the drawing-body duality in the curatorial context, the catalog strikes the viewer with an opening sentence, "The Body of Guo is that of a vessel."[11] Subjects in her drawings may, or may not, have a specific gender. But under the vision of unifying Guo's body and the drawings, the gender and geographic specificity of the painter becomes inescapable, if not doubled.

Is the joining of her body and the drawings necessary? The fifth edition of Taipei Biennale (2006)'s catalog provides an alternative formulation for and perhaps answers directly to this

[10] Rosario Güiraldes, "The Ungovernable Images of Guo Fengyi" in *Guo Fengyi: To See from a Distance*, E.d. Joanna Ahlberg (New York: The Drawing Center, 2020), 31.
[11] "Guo Fengyi: Who is Guo Fengyi?", *Long March Project*, accessed June 6, 2022, http://longmarchproject.com/en/lm25000/guofengyi-whoisguofengyi/

conflation. The catalog writes, “People’s corporal vessel does not seem to interest her nearly as much as the energy that each of us projects out into the world.”[12] Implying the corporeality in her drawings does not belong solely to her but belongs to people in the universal sense, this later formulation distances Guo’s body and the drawings and correspondently consolidates her position as a thoughtful artist who abstractly conceives art. Nonetheless, the Long March Project’s formulation signals her preclusion from meeting conditions of modernist thoughts, namely the advancements of culture and aesthetics that are commonly led by those who are based in urban and who are preferably male.

1.2 A Brief History of the Masculinist Chinese Contemporary Art

Flaring the flame of modernism and new patriarchal signs, Chinese contemporary art is a bonfire lit upon the ember of New China’s cultural history. And New China, quoting from Tani E. Barlow, is founded on the Oedipal Crisis of patricidal sons.[13]

In comparison with the skyrocketing socio-economic growth since Chinese economic reform, the new cultural movement became lesser known after the high socialist period’s stagnation. More gravely, the modernist cultural advancement was turned down again in the early 90s and only re-loosed around the millennium. At this time, the expression of freedom in the nation faced political calamity. Marked by the ardent protest at Tiananmen Square in 1989 promoted by leftist writers, artists, students, and intellectuals was ended by the central government’s brutal

[12] “Introduction: Guo Fengyi”, *Dirty Yoga 2006 Taipei Biennial 限制級瑜珈 2006 台北雙年展*, accessed June 6, 2022, https://www.taipeibiennial.org/2006/9-guo-works-e.html

[13] Tani E. Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 320.

military measure.[14] The tragedy, later known as the *89 Incident*, sent out a clear message that authorities had again tightened the free cultural expression in need of securing the central place of socialism ideology from the threatening western liberal thoughts. To bypass the tightening cultural censorship, artists had either to go underground or go abroad. As a result, the overseas appearance of Chinese artists increased in the following decade. Featuring Political Pop and Cynical Realism as the two major genres, works that boarded the international train in the 90s were produced largely in the hands of progressive-minded male artists who received formal training in fine arts academies and found their artistic ambition could serve better abroad. Exemplified by Wang Guangyi, who is the son of a railway worker and became a new art movement leader by blending the image of socialist propaganda and western commercial advertisement; and the wealthy-born Fang Lijun, who defiantly challenges societal realities with mockery figures. The significance of international appearance reached a peak at the turn of the 21st century when the nation was bringing herself, both economically and culturally, in closer connection to the world. China thrived to become a part of the global economy at the time and the culmination was concluded by the accession to World Trade Organization in 2001. Meanwhile, more and more Chinese artist at auction houses overseas sold their works with a surreal price. Naming a few, Wang Guangyi's painting *Mao AO* (1988) sold for $4 million at Philips' auction house in 2007; Cai Guoqiang's set of gunpowder paintings sold for a record-breaking number of $9.5 million at Christie's auction house in Hong Kong in the same year. Their monetary success, though raved in society, had never become a part of China's economic system. To fill the void of the potential art market, not only domestic auction

---

[14] Lu Sheldon Hsiao-peng, *China, Transnational Visuality, Global Modernity* (Stanford University Press, 2001), 127.

houses sprung up in cultural capitals, but new cultural complexes also boomed in scale by occupying dilapidated buildings and abandoned industrial sectors. The establishment of 50 Moganshan Road in Putuo, Shanghai, and the artists' congregation at 798 Art Zone in Dashanzi, Beijing were featured as some of the key moments. As a result, the government again loosed cultural expression to encourage the free creation of art in China. The artists who thrived abroad began to rejoin the domestic market, contributed works to the circuit while harvesting wealth, and kept inscribing influences as the Chinese contemporary art powerhouses.

Female artists were in a situation where, as critic Xu Hong describes, "a group of men sit around and discuss what artwork by which female is up to their standards for participation, or which aren't."[15] The drawings of female artists were more of a subject for criticism than appreciation. Chastising the excessive concern about "personal trivialities and emotions" in female artists' work, the male-dominant Chinese contemporary art world castigated their lack of "larger culture and society concerns".[16] Art critic Peng's attack on Guo aligns with the prevalent masculinist criticism, that she painted only for a personal cause, and she unquestionably failed to meet the expectations about whom will represent a socially progressive facet of Chinese contemporary art. What mattered was not only what she drew, but also who she was. In the masculinist world, multiple challenges are potentially faced for a thorough study of Guo's drawings – first, to read modernist significance into her work; second, to treat her as a female artist who struggles to meet a male standard. However, instead of conceiving her works as ambiguous qigong derivatives that constitute gendered trivialities, this project reimagines her works as in close relationship with socialist and post-socialist cultural life, and her works are responses to the society

[15] Xu Hong, "Walking out of The Abyss: My Feminist Critique (1994)" in *Total Modernity,* 193
[16] Ibid.

where rules are set by gender and body.

1.3 Images rendering the social situations

"The body, in the very act of being acknowledged, was a social body and must have varied according to social norms and structure."

— John Hay, The Body Invisible in Chinese Art? 1994[17]

谁是郭凤怡 *Who is Guo Fengyi* (figure 6)*,* a long scroll work painted by Guo in 1993, addressed her individuality and the imaginative freedom in a society where individual bodies are politicized by invisible frames. Contradicting the conventional reading of private qigong visions, the female figure in her drawing counters the visual culture convention of women in the socialist period. Six different faces vertically join in a totem pole fashion - one over another, either upright or upside down, while the last one crouches down at the far bottom. Recognizing each from the whole, they are the face of a wide-eyed, horned deity, an embellished female face, and less-detailed masks with quiet eyes. Surrounded by the dense, multicolored wave of lines that in microscope resembles a flower stamen but are reminiscent of a gauzy fin if viewed in whole. Though monstrous, the amorphous entity appears elegant, fragile, and feathery light. Looking closer at the decorated female face at the center, we see that the face wears lush eyeshadows and curved eyebrows, assembling the outlook of a modern, natural female face. Its central position drags viewers' attention, yet its upturned visual order makes it stand out as the most beautiful and private

[17] John Hay, "The Body Invisible in Chinese Art?", *Body, Subject & Power in China* (The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 63.

sector of the drawing - as if cradled by the otherwise grotesque scene. Unlike the specific historical background in socialist images, the white margins decontextualize the amorphous body from any possible social landscapes, warning the viewers that the female face is as beautiful as it is fictional, and is in itself naturalizing. The unconventional delineation of the female face breaks away from the convention of depicting the woman subject that Guo well experienced in her life - the dominating socialist visual culture that asserts the social role of women via both appearance and context.

In socialist art that rallies female participation in productive labor, gender differences are eliminated by painting the female figure in a male worker's attire. The female subject appears coarsely dressed, masculinized, and denaturalized. Exemplified by *Nütuolajishou*, the Female Tractor Driver, one of the most circulated symbols of socialist woman that had appeared on magazine covers, news reports, official documents (figure 4), cinematics, and even RMB banknote's decorative illustration.[18] (figure 5).

Taking the banknote illustration as an example, the front image features 梁军 Liang Jun, the first female tractor driver in China and the later exemplary worker in tidy short hair, with sleeves rolled up and wearing the white-collared shirt inside of the apron – suggesting both her capability of maneuver and possession of advanced machinery knowledge. Driving the tractor to reclaim waste rural land as state farms, her face is radiant with not only charm but also enthusiasm for socialist production. It is also noteworthy that her first name Jun 军, which literally means military, is a popular gender-neutral first name given to newborns in the socialist period. Though

[18] Daisy Yan Du, "Socialist Modernity in the Wasteland: Changing Representations of the Female Tractor Driver in China, 1949–1964." in *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 29, no. 1 (2017): 55–94. http:// www.jstor.org/stable/26426653.

the figure appears already less masculinized and coarse than its earlier versions, it sends out a message that to achieve a likeness between women and men in social function, women need a man's appearance. Liang is depicted as doing the same work as men in the female tractor driver image, which is a norm in the socialist visual culture that advocates the equal role of women in socialist production. However, the visual representation of Liang on a one-yuan banknote existed as nothing but the party's own feminist rhetoric, which follows Mao's dictum of "Women hold up half the sky".[19]

In fact, Liang was the only female student out of seventy students in the machinery class. Following this ratio, it is impossible to balance the number of male and female tractor drivers, if not slipping into extreme disproportionality. Nonetheless, to be the equally active and stalwart working woman in visual culture, one must wear as clean and simple as men and must cut off long hair to be physically capable of sprinkling sweats. In terms of visual features, Liang's presence in the visual culture is always less colored and less beautified. On the relationship between individual appearance and one's societal function, historian Tina Mai Chen notes, "…[t]o displaying one's inclusion in, or exclusion from, the national community of socialist China, clothing choices placed one in a particular location within the national community."[20] Resonating with this read, from a public vintage point the female tractor driver's clothing decodes her role. Can we say in a similar vein that the imaginary appearance of the female in Guo's drawing decodes her lonely stance? Or

[19] "妇女能顶半边天" frequently appeared on the newspaper *People's Daily* issued by CCP's Central Committee. The existing English translation "Women hold up half the sky" fails to interpret the term Women in socialist context, in which the women subject refers to an identity fixed to social roles rather than a universal gender group. Please see the next chapter for further discussions.

[20] Tina Mai Chen, Dressing for the Party: Clothing, Citizenship, and Gender-formation in *Mao's China, Fashion Theory*, 5:2 (2001), 145.

in an opposite way as feminist cultural critic Dai Jinhua argues, "the lonely stance transforms women's escaping outlet in reality into merely a standpoint in spirituality?"[21] Echoing Dai's read, the practice of qigong drawing authorizes Guo a visual space to perform the spiritual standpoint when reality provides her no way out.

Fusing with the centralized female face's forehead in *Who is Guo Fengyi,* there appears a figure sitting in a meditation posture - arms naturally lie down with legs presumably crossed, suggesting an intimate connection between the unconventional beauty and the practice of qigong. The sitting figure makes visible qigong's social function of healing numerous wounded bodies in nation, and the consequent popularity. The qigong fever that permeated in the 80s was, argued by sociologist David A. Palmer, a self-organized movement that provided a utopian political space allowing individual empowerment, freedom, and subjective capabilities within a market of physical health and spiritual development.[22] However, Guo's incorporation of the qigong figure seeks no alignment with the public movement but pursues its spiritual function in an enclosed, private situation. Furthering quoting Palmer, qigong is a social correspondence made by the growing number of sick people who seeks a cure, and who became fervent promoters of the

[21] "正是这种孤独处境，把女性的现实出路转化成一种精神立场。" Dai discusses the double bind of women when she barely suits the new male-led urban culture yet lost support from the old masculinist socialism that defeated feudal order.
Dai Jinhua,《浮出历史地表：现代妇女文学研究》Surfacing onto the Horizon of History: A Study in Modern Women's Literature (Zhengzhou: Henan Renmin Chubanshe, 1980), 30.

[22] David A. Palmer, Qigong Fever: Body, Science and Utopia in China (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 47.

miraculous path of healing.[23] The practice only becomes a public movement after it proven effective in many households.

Qigong not only performed the function of physical healing but also enabled Guo to spiritually express what was repressed by the systematic subjugation of the woman's body. As noted by scholar Jian Xu, "Qigong is a form of interaction that transcends the constraints deployed by state."[24] Situation of losing the ability to work could become worse if the social welfare system collapses. Following the de-collectivization of the rural economy in 1978, responsibility for old age, social housekeeping, disabilities, education, and welfare decayed in the unit of households.[25] In response to these changes, the *All-China Federation of Women (ACFW)* established research groups in many counties to, as claimed, "steadfastly protect the interests of the masses", while at the same time, as feminist scholar Tani E. Barlow argued, reestablishing the Central Committee of CCP's prior definition of what constitutes a woman in the society.[26] Arguing in a similar tone, feminist scholar Lydia H. Liu notes that ACFW subordinate and dominate all inscriptions of womanhood in the official discourse, and deemphasized the difference between men and women in socialist production, thus automatically denying the female-centered expression.[27] The naturalizing sensation in *Who is Guo Fengyi?* laps at the edge of these problematic discourses,

[23] Ibid, 155.

[24] Jian Xu, "Body, Discourse, and the Cultural Politics of Contemporary Chinese Qigong" in The Journal of Asian Studies 58, no. 4 (1999): 961–91. https://doi.org/10.2307/2658492.

[25] Tani E. Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism*, 256
[26] Ibid, 255
[27] Lydia H. Liu, "Invention and Intervention: The Female Tradition in Modern Chinese Literature".

conveying an imaginary woman's stance that is different from the state's archetype, and behind the drawing an author who states the counter-truth.

However, the zealot nature of qigong's public effect dominates the narrative of its function in private. Qigong grandmasters, those who are supernatural and omniscient in eyes of the pupils, were soon detected by the state as orienting to a mass religiosity. After a period of popularity, qigong practice came under the state's regulation. More specifically, qigong was labeled as a dangerous movement that can nurture cult leaders whose claimed ability to deploy transcending power to individuals threatened the socialist ideology of Marxist philosophy and historical materialism.[28] Proposing to part qigong from a religious sector, qigong masters are required to obtain a license to conduct teaching, and many immaterialism qigong groups disbanded. After receiving approval from the party's headquarter, the 2nd World Qigong Conference was successfully held in Xi'an in 1989. Proposing the rational and scientific way of practicing qigong against the cult trend, the conference marked the accumulation of the state's regulation and another official administration of the body. It is noteworthy that, the nation's most infamous qigong master Li Hongzhi, who fled to the United States after his group teaching network disbanded, fustigated that the modernism art movement in China is getting worse and worse by copying western modern styles. Li commented contemporary art while is harmful to the painter's body and morality, also destroys the upright ideas root in what he categorizes as "ancient art".

Coincidently, Guo produced her first qigong drawing in the same year in Xi'an while the conferential criticism of qigong deviation took place at her doorstep. Showcasing an overt spiritual,

---

[28] Jian Xu, "Body, Discourse, and the Cultural Politics of Contemporary Chinese Qigong." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 58, no. 4 (1999): 961–91. https://doi.org/10.2307/2658492. Page. 962

idealism tendency in her later creations, a clear line is drawn between her practice and the broader social consensus. She was reclined in alienation. Nonetheless, when Guo's qigong drawings are crossing from the border of private to the contemporary art sphere at the turn of the millennium, it soon becomes inescapable from context judgments. Comments such as "lacking ideal" and "no aesthetic" underlie its false religiosity, which, in fact, is no more than an affirmation of her outside position from the now state-regulated qigong. The more important message embedded under the unconventional rendering of the female face remains understudied by contemporary artists and viewers in China today. The common yet incomplete interpretation of her drawings reflects contemporary artists' strong desire of progressing beyond socialist art and a fetish for the grand narrative over private cause; however, it is hard for them to tell that her drawing also stood in a confrontational posture.

1.4 Outsider Artist and the Alternative Form

The last few sections examined the deeper socio-cultural association with the public in Guo's private qigong drawings. To further discuss her private drawing's outsider-ness as an abstract concept in terms of form, one must survey the art sphere in public to locate her position.

Instead of prolonging any conventional definition of modern or contemporary, the movement in Chinese contemporary art is, as visual theorist Tang Xiaobing notes:

> It did not simply refer to art from contemporary period, but rather designated artistic practices that challenged existing conventions, foregrounded conceptual breakthroughs, and constantly explored new medias and new frontiers.[29]

[29] Tang Xiaobing, *Visual Culture in Contemporary China: Paradigm and Shifts* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 225

To select and study the western style is merely giving form to the modernism ideal; without ideals, the movement degrades into different schools.[30] Guo's style of drawing is different from the movement that readily serves a public ideal. But can she be considered an artist whose style and form are also adequately new to a new ideal?

The drawing practice is one thing for Guo to address herself, but quite another in contemporary art scholars' formulation. Artist and critic Xu Tan discusses her relevance to vernacular Chinese culture after an interview in 2007:

> …Guo's approach to artmaking resembles *wu,* an ancient spiritual practice and belief system that has historically prevailed in vernacular culture in Chinese society. *Wu* practitioners are those who either possess innate special healing abilities or have acquired them through training. The public's faith in the healing abilities of the *wu* has persisted since ancient times and remains in some rural areas of China today. Despite advances in modern medical science, many still search for complementary treatments within this tradition - particularly when modern medicine has failed.[31]

Subsuming her drawings under protocols of conventional culture, Xu's description generates a latent resistance from contemporary art as a modernism movement against Guo without direct formulation. The resistance becomes reductive in terms of further contextualizing her drawing but effective to secure the elite and modernism position of the contemporary art sphere.[32]

While formulated by male critics as against the modernism practice, the visual of Guo's end products often receive discussions about their relationship to Chinese calligraphy. In the work, the drawing *Chinese Dragon* (figure 7) resembles the visual quality of a calligraphy work, though

---

[30] Gao Minglu, *Total Modernity*, 79

[31] Xu Tan, "The Story of Guo Fengyi" in *To See from a Distance*, 73

[32] Ge Shiheng 葛士恒, "Superiority of the viewer: the "fever for peasants" in contemporary art" 《观者的优 越 —当代艺术中的'民工潮"》 in 2009 Central Academy of Art Collection of Essays about the Youth Critics Award 《中央美术学院青年艺术批评奖论文集》(Beijing: Central Academy of Art, 2009), 50-63

the line grows on paper to conjure the vision of a dragon. Looking closer at the work, the calligraphic character of 中国 *China* appears twice at the top and bottom of the scroll, connected by sharp-ended, curl yet poised lines that unify a winding pattern. Similar calligraphic lines grow from the Chinese characters, enclosing them into an entirety that is in reminiscence of a serpentine spiritual beast. In the renowned art critic and curator Johnson Chang's essay, he discusses Guo's borrowing of traditional concepts, physical and metaphysical structures, and the calligraphic quality that closely connects with Chinese philosophy.[33] Following Chang's discussion, what receives the most spotlight about qigong drawing's form is the visual quality and the relationship with calligraphy, and an overall visual commonality that can possibly makes sense of her work via an understanding of the traditional practice.

In Chinese calligraphy, the physical act of waving is governed by a transcending state of mind. On the correlation between line, body movement, and mind in calligraphy, art historian Kao Yukung notes:

> The numerous changes of nuance in the shape and shade of each character, which are dictated by the artist's act of writing, should convey to readers information concerning the physical actions and mental states which control the determined form.[34]

Comparably, the movement of the brush solely dictates the appearance of Guo's drawing in her work. But they are innately different in terms of controllability. Calligraphy has been studied as

[33] Johnson Chang, "Another Universe: Who is Guo Fengyi" in *Who is Guo Fengyi.* ed. Lu, Jie (New York, Beijing: Long March Foundation, Long March Space, 2005), 7

[34] Kao Yukung, "Chinese Lyric Aesthetic" in *Words and Image: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy and Painting,* ed. Murck, Alfreda, and Wen Fong (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991), 79.

an external actualization of the calligrapher's refined idiosyncrasy, which also marks a sophisticated self-containment resulting from strict training. Discussed by many exhibition catalogs, Guo is comfortable with, first, the brush as a traditional writing tool, and second, the use of lines as a form deeply seated in Chinese pictorial tradition, yet her visual outcome reflects the contrary ungovernability and, according to catalogs, suggests an anomaly spiritual deviation. On the commonalities, Güiraldes in The Drawing Center's catalog describes Guo's directing of energy become possible via the movement of strokes, only to be objected by Kathleen M. Ryor's observation in the next essay, "Formally her work is nothing like traditional ink painting or calligraphy."[35] The formulation around the similarities and differences between calligraphy and qigong drawing nonetheless accomplishes two goals. First, to position qigong drawing on the outside of any contemporary art trends; second, to suggest qigong drawing as a heterogenous, and perhaps alternative, form of the tradition. In fact, it is futile to discuss the outside position by comparing the visual form to calligraphy, given that calligraphy, as a way of spiritual experience, has been frequently used for conception in Chinese contemporary art.

The metaphysical experience of calligraphy earns manifestation in Fujian-born artist Qiu Zhijie's *Assignment No. 1 Copying the "Orchid Pavilion Preface" 1,000 Times* (1990-1995) (figure 8) Calligraphing a thousand times the famous calligraphy piece Orchid Pavilion Preface, which was written as the preface of thirty-six poems composed at a literati gathering in the East Jin dynasty (317-420 CE), Qiu aims to innately reconstruct the literati's meditative state of mind instead of visual innovation.[36] The calligraphic characters are unceasingly lost in the act of re-writing and becomes invisible on the ink-smeared, pitch-black paper. Qiu's practice is, as Gao

[35] Kathleen M. Ryor, *To See from a Distance*, 66
[36] Wu Hung, *Primary documents*, 188

Minglu categorizes, the method of Maximalism, which "emphasizes the spiritual experience of the artist in the process of creation as a mode of self-examination outside and beyond the confines of artworks."[37] Gao also notes "diary" is often used to name a work in the maximalist approach. Also exemplified by Qiu's title of "assignment", the artist suggests the meaning of the work derives from the durational experience of making instead of directly decoding the visual product. Gao defines Chinese Maximalism as rebellious against the visual-centered contemporary art practice by emphasizing the artist's durational spiritual search.

Some maximalist work even shows a great similarity to Guo's drawing practice. To "get some spiritual release" and "inspirational experience", Wang Luyan, Chen Shaoping, and Gu Dexin (naming themselves the New Mark Group) follow "strict collective rules" and painted geometric diagrams only consisting of numbers and lines[38] (figure 9), a way Guo also used in her drawing *Diagram of Hong Fan's study of Hetu* (1990). Guo's drawing follows the diagram of *hetu* The Ancient Yellow River Diagram which numerologically represents the ancient cosmos, she conjures a new vision of the *hetu* and showcases her private engagement with the unfathomable ancient knowledge. Comparing her drawing to the contemporary artist group's artmaking, there is no more yet no less, but an equally emotionless and meaningless sense of compositional freedom. Though the number and line drawing appear tentative if comparing to Guo's later figure-like drawings, the feature of the abundance of lines is inherent in her whole drawing career and reveals, if detected by contemporary viewers, a durational experience demanded by the qigong spiritual research.

[37] Gao Minglu, *Total Modernity*, 314
[38] Gao Minglu, *Total Modernity*, 319

Though sharing the same durational experience of artmaking, the same excessive use of lines and other visual forms, and the same focus of spiritual research, the maximalist practice is nonetheless an elitist way that Guo Fengyi does not partake in. As argued by art historian Gu Yi, "[The] durational experience becomes the only reliable benchmark for whether the peasants' creative abilities are recognized."[39] While for the elite contemporary artists, the durational investment is a well-received, if also well-awarded, endeavor.

The discussions of Guo's visual form, spiritual research, and durational experience did not happen before the most immediate narrative was in the process of emerging – the feminism discourse that instantly absorbed her when she debuted the Chinese contemporary art circuit by joining the Long March Project's gendered sector. Qiu Zhijie as the co-curator of the Long March Project, might have already detected the maximalist potential in Guo's drawing. However, Guo did not slip away from the dominant narrative designated by the curational team. The next chapter will be discussing Guo and the Long March Project's interwoven history in the double-lens of feminism and Chinese modernism.

[39] Gu Yi, *The "Peasant Problem"*, 63

Chapter 2

The Feminism theme in The Long March Project and Guo's Self-authorization

2.1 One Feminist Call, Two Classes of Female Artists

Guo ascending into contemporary art project is less of a mutual exchange between an artist in the distant land and urban art circle than the latter's one-directional investigation into the biggest social class's artistic potential under the backdrop of Chinese art globalization. The beginning of Guo's professionalization started from taking part in the *Long March Project: A Walking Visual Display.* Following the grand rhetoric of an "art seeding machine", Beijing and New York-based gallerist and curator Lu Jie started an art tour in 2002 by following the historical framework of 长征 *Chang Zheng*/Long March, trailing through different sites throughout the nation and seeking to establish a strong foundation of contemporary art in the public realm. On the historical long march route where communist propaganda was disseminated to the mass of workers and peasants seven decades ago, Lu wished to introduce contemporary art to the non-urban community in a similar manner. Lu initially planned events at twenty sites, though the number only counted to twelve after announcing the project's middle stage closure because of, as Lu later reflected, "insufficient theoretical and curatorial preparation."[40] At site six, the shore of Lugu Lake at the remote corner of Yunnan Province, Guo and a dozen of Chinese female artists received an invitation from Lu to gather at a guesthouse on the bank of Luoshui to work and learn with the pioneering U.S. artist

[40] "On-Site Criticism: Long March – A Walking Visual Display", host by Li Xuejun, *Long March Project*, April 10, 2003, http://longmarchproject.com/en/discourse/changzheng-yigexingzouzhongdeshijuezhanshixianchangpipanhui/.

Judy Chicago, who proposed the site six's theme "What if Women ruled the world" in her own second wave feminism fashion.

Structuring a new relationship between art and place, Lugu Lake was chosen for the feminism theme because of its relevance to the subject of women. As the historical hometown of the Mosuo community, and broadly the minor ethnicity of Naxi according to the Chinese social engineering system, Lugu Lake is well-known for its matrilineal culture and the robust tourism economy brought by it. Asking to consider the Mosuo society as a feminist inspiration, Chicago inquired the Chinese artist group, "Just like in the Lugu Lake area, 'if women ruled the world', what would the world be like?"[41] However, the reality of The Long March's self-organization dwarfed the charisma of this universal feminist call - Lugu Lake, as the only site reserved among twelve for the feminist artists' congregation, and as the only detour from the historical route, was more like an exile island. Many artists cooperate with The Long March Project at different sites with different themes, and the Long March's history of peasant artists' collaboration testified that the latter shared even more thematic freedom, but why Lugu Lake and Judy Chicago's proposal become the first protocol for Guo to step forward as an artist? For what immediacy that she was registered in the gendered artist group instead of just artist?

Guo's presence problematized the discussion of the rural/urban divide in the gender discourse – under Lu Jie's authoring, a peasant woman artist and urban-based female artists came in contact under a critical frame for the first time in Chinese contemporary art history. In stricter terms, Guo like many other peasant artists who participated in the Long March Project was no longer a peasant worker – due to the restructuring of the rural economic system in the 90s and

[41] Welland, *Experimental Beijing*, 138.

driven by omniscient modernism cause, rural mass was on exodus; many flocked into the urban area in a time of increasing agricultural land repurposing and higher cheap labor demand in the cities. But what makes them constitute the ever-fading rural identity was the distance from the heated center of the art world.

Therefore, what further differentiates Guo and urban female artists was not regional but socio-cultural. The modernist role of a female artist socially refers back to urban female artists' life experiences in two ways. First, they live on the frontier of modernism policies' influence that is either a higher institution or a cultural capital, and second, they receive art educations that can both practically and theoretically weaponized them to enter a world dominated by the opposite gender. The term female artist relates to Guo in a minimalist manner – though she can register the spiritual expression of personal stance in private drawing practice, it is yet to socially merge. And when it surfaces, the identity of Guo is immediately organized by a male curator and subject to an American artist's proposal. The role of the female artist is incomplete for her, and only through incompleteness can Lu hope for a breath of fresh air in Chinese contemporary art's unchanging elite praxis. A peasant woman's creative activity can only emerge and become valid in a modernism discourse via the dichotomy of peasant art versus urban contemporary art, even though it is what Lu claimed that the Long March Project aims to break and rebuild. [42] If the female artist role of Guo is coded towards the peasant creative activity, and thereby fits in a feminist dialogue, then the single category at Lugu Lake unavoidably implodes into two.

Annexing Guo to the large gendered category of artists only to bring out the trans-national female dialogue, which is even larger, showcases Tani E. Barlow's notion of "contemporary

---

[42] *"Lu Jie from Long March Space talks about Guo Fengyi"* 长征空间卢杰谈郭凤怡, Sina Collection(blog), July 9, 2013, http://collection.sina.com.cn/plfx/20130709/1343119501.shtml.

belief" about the woman subject in China.[43] In Lugu Lake's conversation of female ruling the world, it is believed by the curator that women can naturally co-contribute to this dialogue by sharing experiences about bodies that are either physical or intellectual, educations that are either high or low, and relations that is either societal, familial, or personal. However, Guo and urban artists share fewer common grounds than differences.

The differences between Guo and others magnify the truth that reassessing her role as a female artist is much needed by the curatorial theme for the trans- dialogues, first social, and then national, which at the same time underlies the expectation of their different subjectivities in a modernism frame. Their different subjectivities constitute what Barlow notes as historical catachreses in Chinese modern history, that one is *nüxing*, the liberated individual woman who reversed the normativity for women in the socialist society to western ways, and another *funü* the socialist subjecthood of women concerning the domain of family and nation-state.[44] These two terms are used broadly to politicize the subject of women in socialist era and are used constantly to correspond these artists' identity in the modernism era of contemporary art. Elaborating on Barlow's framework, I categorize two kinds of women artists at Lugu Lake as, one is *nüxing yishujia* individual female artists who are capable of critically responding to the leftist western center of feminism represented by Judy Chicago's presence, another is *yishujia funü* peasant woman artist whose art, permanently targeted by the Long March's modernism goal, is codified by the curator in direction to the massive realm of culture. However, it is important to discuss if the latter category is also a historical misread, a temporary and incomplete identity only subject to Chinese contemporary art's socio-cultural history. Can Chinese female artists be feminists and

[43] Tani E. Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 16.
[44] Ibid, 90.

practice self-liberating without being overridden by the cause of modernism? The light shines into this complexity by examining Guo's site-specific drawing for Lugu Lake, in which her expression of self is as vivid, and lonely, as her urban counterparts.

2.2 Authorizing the Self in Decontextualization

"The Long March Project must process 'tradition' to search for modernity – it is impossible to sidestep the former to reach the latter."[45] Following this logic, at site one Ruijin, the first rally point of the historical long march, Lu proposed the theme of futurism; at site two Jinggangshan, the first base of the Red Army's guerrilla operation, Lu proposed the theme of self-organization. Lugu Lake has never been part of the revolutionary history and its matrilineal culture never gets involved in the long march's revolution per se, it is a realm outside of any modern patriarchal convention. The detachment between the feminism theme and the original long march is clearly showcased in the work of Lei Yan, who is a participating artist at Lugu Lake and who was a soldier. In Lei's digitally produced twin work *What If the Long March Had Been a Women's Rights Movement* (figure 10), she questions "what if" by featuring female activists standing on a plain with a background of soldier marching in one-, and male-party leaders wearing 1930s female hairstyles while the background soldiers march backwardly in another. Lei conceptually bridged the thematic disconnection by employing her critical consciousness. The "what if" in Lei's title echoes with the "what if" theme proposed by Chicago who has more interest in Lugu Lake's matrilineal culture than the history of the revolutionary march. However, Lei's work stays odd

[45] "而且我一直觉得"长征计划"既然是在做"现代性"，那么所谓的"传统"在其中是不可能一语带过的，因为艺术是不可能不经过传统而直接到达前卫", *"Interviews: About Guo Fengyi by Lu Jie"* 采访：卢杰谈郭凤怡, Art Forum, May 6, 2013, https://www.artforum.com.cn/interviews/5065.

with the perspective of a female ruling world. Standing on the revolutionary soil, the anachronistic representation of female activists, such as Cai Chang and Deng Yingchao, is merely the ersatz of their high-ranking husbands, and queer-haired male leaders are mocked but still unremoved from commanding positions. It is hard to unify these three subjects at Lugu Lake – the revolutionary past of the long march, local matrilineal culture, and the western feminism brought forth by Chicago. While most artists wavered choosing which is the right subject of feminism, Guo decided in the least troubling manner – after a brief exploration of the site, she quickly fled the scene after detecting, and gathering, the disharmonized energy.[46]

Channeling the power gained through her physical and spiritual experience of Lugu Lake, Guo executes the drawing *Lugu Lake on June 5th.* (2002) (figure 11) Though the title suggests associations with specific time and place, she executed the work in a decontextualizing fashion. On the rice paper scroll, the drawing depicts a massive subject in vertical order. Its eye-catching headpiece gives away the first impression of the overall massiveness. Not only upward but also ceremonial, the headpiece's visual complexity resembles the character of *Feng Guan* phoenix hat, the headgear of traditional Chinese wedding attire that was once elite women's dress but habitually worn by commoners in the Qing dynasty. Smearing lips red, contouring eyebrows long and slim, the figure appears beautified and equally ceremonial. In front of the chest, a blushing red hydrangea suggests a female subject and a bridal identity belonging to a marriage occasion. The massive lines swaddling the body, though they might suggest another piece of traditional wedding attire, are executed in Guo's very personal style. The drawing decontextualizes a bride from the wedding scene, which marks a woman's transfer from her father's family to the family of her

[46] Güiraldes, *To see from a distance,* 33

husband. The white borders cut off the imagination of both her past and future life, orienting the viewers in a transient temporality where she authorizes herself.

In contrast to the bride outside of any male household, family roles dominated Guo's life. Married early in her life, Guo gave birth to four children. A few years after retiring from the production frontline, her children attend universities. By the time she participated in the Long March Project, Guo had been living in a multigenerational household and perform a custodial role for her grandsons when their parents are away. Though lacking further records from her children or grandchildren to re-affirm, sporadic writings delineate a woman who oscillates between the upright role of working woman promoted by socialist feminism and the role of, in the Confucian way, a "virtuous wife, good mother." From one role to another, Guo found her everyday reality losing support from the old socialist narrative and unsuitable for the new socio-economic reality. The decontextualized bride, whether reflects herself or not, can only appear in a spiritual stance, and can only emerge from the qigong drawing practice where Guo habitually retains the secret of her own social relations. Guo's decontextualization is either a passive reflection or an active resistance.

Instead of serving as a visual reference to observable Mosuo culture at the site, *Lugu Lake on June 5th* touches deeper on the abstract idea of an unruled woman. The observed matrilineal culture at Lugu lake is s temporal resuscitation in line with self-marketization rather than a living tradition. The Mosuo marriage tradition reformed conforming to the state marriage law of "one husband, one wife". What occurred to the artist group was, as Welland argued, a romanticized idea re-created for tourism.[47] The Mosuo marriage tradition of *Zouhun* 走婚/*Walking Marriage*, which

[47] Welland, *Experimental Beijing*, 146.

requires men to travel at night to accompany women thereby ensures women's authority in the household, also existed in name but not reality. Men who had a lesser social role in the Mosuo community were transregionally mobilized to work in urban spaces due to rural economic reform in the 90s. The tradition of matrilineal culture, while remaining freer in appearance than the nation's marriage law, was profoundly diminished by the latter. The divergence between an actual female ruling world and a superficial matrilineal community perhaps was, what Guo recognized in the spiritual search, the disharmonized energy.

In a more critical way, the urban artist Zhang Lun reflected upon the reality of tourism consuming Mosuo's past while also challenged the authority of Chicago in her conceptual work *Lugu Lake – Happy Existence.* (Figure 12) Turning a Mosuo family hearth into a photography studio, Zhang organized fifty villagers to take photography with Judy Chicago, transforming the American feminist into a tourist site and the cover photo of a tourist site ticket for local people.[48] Though Zhang's performance art was aborted with Chicago's boycott, it reveals a moment of converting the western centered feminism to the subject of her art, while it is the other way around for most of the time. Both Guo and Zhang showcased that what was designated by Lu for them was instantly destabilized in their own authorization.

Like Zhang's performance art approach, other peers at Lugu Lake answered to Chicago's call by using western ways and conceptions in their art, and representing the elite, academic praxis that differentiates from Guo's drawing practice. Li Shurui, who would graduate from Sichuan Fine Arts Institution two years after she traveled to Lugu Lake, carried out the work *Seeing Mountains* (figure 13), a site-specific environmental art installation assembled on the water surface by using

[48] Ibid, 161.

mosquito nets and bamboo poles, mundane materials for inhabitants alongside the labyrinthic river system of Yunnan province. Only beginning to instruct at Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in 1993, environmental art was still a chic academic practice at the time. Li proposed that the juxtaposition between minimalistic tents and the backdrop of mountainous landscape refers to the Chinese literati culture, while the paddling water unveiling the tent's interior suggests the concept of voyeurism, which was defined by feminist visual theorist Amelia Jones as a visual practice that often objectifies female body as the source for visual pleasure in the tradition of Euro-American visual culture.[49] Su Ruya also employed the subject of the bride to convey the feminist message in the performance piece *Goddess Mountain Eternal Woman* (figure 14). Wearing a nightgown and a floral crown, performing herself as the unreachable bride to men by standing on the edge of a sailing boat, elegantly throwing to the lake surface her rose petals - a western adopted, cosmopolitan sign of romantic love.[50]

But as many Chinese art historians argued, within the modernism movement of Chinese contemporary art, forms do not supersede the idea. The deep involvement of Guo's idea about a self-authorizing woman in her creative practice cannot be flattened by the alien visual form, which is merely the result of lacking art education.

2.3 ***Sailing from Lugu Lake to The Sea of Contemporary Art***

Lu Jie discussed the Lugu Lake project's achievement and failure in an interview in 2006:

[49] Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (Abingdon Oxon England: Routledge, 2012), 74
[50] Ibid, 159.

> [I]t's interesting that the majority of the artists copied American feminist artists in their work. Of all the portions of the Long March Project, this was the one that failed. At the same time, it was this failure that made it the most celebrated portion of the Project.[51]

Besides lamenting the failed exploration of local ties beyond the academic praxis of western form and concept at Lugu Lake, Lu bittersweetly applauded its current form as meeting the condition of modernism. Welland's record of local nonchalance also affirmed the missing connection with the locals and how their practices are, in local eyes, bizarre and foreign:

> A Mosuo teenage boy commented, "It's no different from all the films and television dramas filmed here. They come, we don't really know what they've done, and then they leave, and we never see them again."[52]

But the question always lies underneath that, is it a real success for artists if they did meet Lu's expectation of "processing tradition to achieve a modernity"? and isn't it unsuccessful if artists must negotiate with male-designated conversations to produce feminist art?

Though Lu rarely spoke about Guo's participation at Lugu Lake, she remained an essential dimension of the Long March Space's modernist condition. Guo's drawing kept circulating in several other Long March Spaces exhibitions and several group shows in major cities in the nation. On the international stage, Guo became featured alongside celebrated Chinese artists at Yokohama Triennial in 2005 and Gwangju Biennale in 2007. At the solo show *Who is Guo Fengyi? (2005),* the curator described Guo's work as mirroring "our actuality", which offers us, as said by the online introduction, "a drawing of what we are ceasing to be while providing a sketch of what we are becoming". Many drawings at the site were drawn by Guo at home before she collaborated

[51] Lu Jie, Interview by Hsingyuan Tsao, *Filip 2*, Filip Magazine, 2006, https://fillip.ca/content/the-long-march-project.
[52] Welland, *Experimenting Beijing*, 162.

with the Long March. By forging connections between the drawings and the audience, the introduction attempts to re-authorize the function of qigong drawing from "healing herself" to evoke a public "self-discovery". The statement marks a sense of displacement that her drawing is somehow private, yet somehow public – a question no more for her who remains reticent.

Few years later, Guo openly spoke about her artmaking, she said, "I am producing drawings that are contemporary, these are not ox-demons and snake spirits."[53] Fitting her into academic analysis, art critics Song Yi argued that Guo upgraded her drawing by her perception of what it means to be stylistically modern.[54] Song notes that Guo purposefully elongated the scale of drawing when she knows work will be mounted for exhibition occasions. But she may not know that exhibition is also a door to the art market. Guo and The Long March came into a collaborative relationship after the Lugu Lake project. She drew under Lu's decade-long commission. Her visual forms are repeatedly adapted to contemporary art norms and the driving force of capital. What appears mesmerizing is not only forms but what is integral to her, which still exists in an open-ended manner today. Only by decoding the entanglement between Guo and the Long March, can a new layer of her drawing start to reveal.

---

[53] In interview with Xu Tan in 2007, Guo said "我的画就是当代的绘画.....我没搞牛鬼蛇神", where 牛鬼蛇神 *ox-demons and snake spirits* is a term referring to half God half demon figures that possess a human body but a head of ox or serpent. The term was widely used by Maoist propaganda as a rhetoric to demonize potential western ideological enemies.

[54] Sammi Liu, "A Discussion on Guo Fengyi's Artmaking: Qigong Drawing? Spiritual Creativity? Self-taught Art?" "谈郭凤怡的艺术：气功绘画？灵性创作？自学艺术？" Interview with Song Yi, Lin Yu, and Zhang Yuling, *Art is Poison No.44*, June 29, 2020, Long March Foundation, http://www.longmarchspace.com/zh/articles/page/2/

Chapter 3

Peripheral versus Central – Representation of Peasant Woman Artist in Art Institutions

3.1Rural Participant in Contemporary Art

As Guo became more celebrated after her mysterious drawing had grown wilder from domestic to international or vice versa, contextualization about her, paradoxically, became more and more succinct.

In the 13th Shanghai Biennale's online list of artworks, fourteen of her featured works share one caption, while other artists' works, however, are less in number, earn more articulated and nuanced interpretations for each piece. In contrast, the Long March Space gave a close read of the iconographies by categorizing five different types of subjects in her early exhibitions.[55] Though her works in the biennale are courtesy of the Long March Space, the iconographic studies of her drawing seldomly present.

The lack of fixed contextualization can be seen as the curator's strategy. By leaving most of her works unexplained to the public, the curatorial team discourages the close reading of the context, thereby navigating the focus on the quality of visual forms and highlighting the mysterious nature that can give space for audiences' imagination. However, the act of not telling does not quite match with the rest of the show's profuse contextualization. In contrast with the density of her personal history and her durational involvement in Chinese contemporary art, at the exhibition, she becomes an artist who is Xi'an based, and who is readily interested in Chinese

[55] Early studies from the Long March Space categorized Guo's work in five – the geographic series, the I-Ching theory series, the bodily series, the series of human and deities, and the western series.

art for a life-long time. The simplification aligned her with other artists in a way Gu summarized, "incessant global flow of personnel, ideas, and capital"[56], and made her images more easily to access for audiences even without acknowledging her tangled past. But removing relations to any social-historical context impairs the accurate reading of her images; without contexts, Guo's images easily become a celebration of lines, and her identity safely transforms into an artist, which is a wrong identity that cannot be referred back to herself. The show's hesitance to give light to the social contexts silenced the expression within her images.

The intention of fashioning her identity is not unprecedented. For example, *Lugu Lake – If Women Rule the World (Undated, but presumably around 2002),* is a work first shown in the solo exhibition *ShanShui Diagram* (2014). The title adopts the thematic name of the early Lugu Lake project proposed by Judy Chicago. Contradicting the simple, if not sloppy, titling habit of her own, the exquisite use of a hyphen suggests the title is probably given by the Long March Foundation who later rightfully claimed ownership of Guo's commissioned works after her death. Polished titles not only made places for her drawings in Long March's prestigious art-commodity collection but also fabricate her profile to meet their modernist expectations about artists, who are always articulated and well-educated. To make Guo a member of the contemporary art pantheon, the fashioning of her identity cannot be done in a day and night, but it is a continuous process, starting from the former projects to stints at different international art shows a decade later, numerous modified appearances in art institutions reflect the goal of registering her drawing under the brand of contemporary art.

[56] Gu Yi, *The Peasant Problem*, 63

At the Shanghai Biennale, the mishmash of Guo's drawings and other artworks is an accumulation of the decade-long reconceptualization of her visual forms from their own context. Guo's drawings from the early years were never intended for an art interpretative community. Starting from the Lugu Lake project, her works crossed the private line. The Long March became the sole spokesman of her works created both before and after ascending into public. But since her early works root in private, only Guo herself can properly contextualize what is being captured. Whether she spoke about it or not, her speech evaporates fast. "Who can speak for her work" becomes a question needless to ask when contemporary art cuts off her historical past from the anticipated future; the upward transition of her work from the private to the heated center of contemporary art will become nothing but a pale fantasy if without the facilitation of art institutions like the Long March. As argued earlier, the exploration of Guo was Long March's one-directional investigation, the result of Guo's firm presence in the art hub, however, favors both sides, and perhaps favors Long March more. The uni-directional survey of non-urban subjects and the consequential success of the surveyor is a highly normalized collaboration mode in the world of contemporary Chinese art.

Cooperation between urban art crew and non-urban participants happens first in, and then made popular by, the novel genre of performance art in the 90s. For example, *To Raise the Water Level in a Fishpond (1997)* (figure 15) is a piece made by following the mode of cooperation. Organized by the renowned Chinese artist Zhang Huan. For the work, Zhang recruited forty migrant workers who were unable to continue their rural-based occupations and mobilized to urban areas to make a living under the onslaught of urbanization. In the photographic documentation, sixteen migrant workers are standing in the pond in silence, leaving their upper torso unclothed, and satelliting Zhang who poses at the center and outstandingly holds a young boy on his shoulder.

The work's concept, described by the artist, is to position participants within the context of men's futility in the face of nature's force. Rural-origin migrant workers are the most suitable subject for the context of futility, given their enormous population in the urban space and their *Cao Gen* grassroot position in the urban system.

However, the collaboration reveals deeper divergences between contemporary art personnel and their rural partner. The spotlights and the speaking right heavily favor the former. This situation has been exemplified by photograph documentation of Zhang's work that was shown in New York in 2001. Instead of giving space for participants' biography, he assertively identifies the participants beside him as "construction-site workers, fishermen, and other laborers, all from the bottom of society." In urban Chinese society, their bottom position is consolidated more by their rural origins than by the division of their occupations. In the western art view of a Chinese social context, rural-to-urban migrants, urban citizens, and their differences are, at best, nuanced differences between low-end occupations and white-collar workers, and at worst, differences between rich and poor that coexist in the city, if not referencing the urbanization history and the modernism discourse in contemporary China. The deeper societal situation became redundant to mention when the "construction worker, fisherman" identity can suffice the idea of "man versus nature". The relationship between the artist and his partners set forth a prototypical mode of collaboration in the art world where artists stand in the center and are highlighted, and rural participants are on peripheral and in dim light. Happening first in the genre of performance art, its profitable mode of "low cost, high return" inspired artists and curators to engage with other forms of art that are yet to be introduced to the urban, economic world.

3.2 Ineffable Ideas, Versatile Forms, and Subjugated Body

In contrast to the popular collaboration mode in performance art where the urban artist solely dictates the visual and the idea, Guo's idea hibernates in "unknowability" while her visual forms are subject to Long March's brand of contemporary art. However, the center-peripheral structure remains powerful to detect the mechanism behind the authorization of Guo's peasant woman artist profile. Though many historical and social conditions can nurture audiences' judgements about Guo's self-authorization, the Long March sketched out very few beyond vernacular culture such as I-Ching and *Hetu* Yellow River Diagram, which merely fulfills their own appetite for "traditional culture" as a condition of searching modernity. Thus, "unknowability" marks the basic reception of her artmaking in almost all Long March catalogs; to maintain the unknowability naturally demands the audience to know less. Guo's art practice becomes fixed to the peasant woman artist identity, which is a highly ideated label subject to the contemporary art world's self-sustaining engagement with new art forms outside the existing elite praxis. Such identity passes from cultural collections to art shows, from galleries to biennales, but never escapes the urban art circuit, and can never be placed in Guo's self-understanding of social being.

Taking a Foucauldian lens, the mythical way that Guo's artworks are fixed to her peasant woman identity is by the subjugation of knowledge. Surveying through all modernism-related contexts, the practicing of qigong is inferior to modern medicine, the non-urban origin is placed lower than capitalized urban after economic reform, and the creative practice in private is less progressive than the innovative contemporary art. Following the hierarchy of knowledge, the Long March and Lu welcomed the peasant women aboard the flagship of contemporary art, which they believe is a superior status to where she was. Borrowing Gayatri C. Spivak's analytic model of

representing a minor culture under the backdrop of a higher one, the representation of Guo's peasant woman identity in the gallery is, "[a] concept-metaphor without an adequate referent."[57] Equivalent to this claim, the image of Guo in the gallery and her lived experience shares a great discrepancy. Spivak notes that the system of representation of culture from a minor heritage came in handy when "securing one's own culture". In this context, the construction of her profile asserts counterfeit backwardness to secure the ideological progressiveness of contemporary art. Resonating with Spivak's analytical term, rural participants, or the subaltern who cannot speak for themselves, must remain silent about the work and must concede space for the dominant culture to vocalize. Welcoming Guo's creative visual forms but denying the reading of her self-authorization, the peasant woman artist is a temporal construction yet timelessly justified by the dominant discourse of modernism.

Spivak's thought-provoking question "Can the subaltern speak?" resonates with Guo's case yet remains unanswerable in the current art world where her works and the idea of "beautiful, alien, and opaque" posthumously circulate. The disabled woman in socialist discourse, the peasant woman artist in feminism discourse, and the unspeakable artist in contemporary art, Guo is the subaltern subject in multiple layers. Through the ease with her qigong drawing and her self-authorization can we hope her legacy to break free from the subalternity. Guo's story represents one of many cases in the most critical time of Chinese art. It will be exciting to see them supersede the domination, or frustrating to see them the other way around. Guo's work will remain tethered to gender, social, and cultural hierarchies in the Chinese contemporary world. All that is complicated in the assigned identity and meanings will

[57] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Making of Americans, the Teaching of English, and the Future of Culture Studies." *New Literary History* 21, no. 4 (1990): 781–98 https://doi.org/10.2307/469185.

inevitably clash with her self-authorizing expression in the works. The finally revealed differences will surface a voice about her past and creativity, as she answered to a male artist in the unpublished interview, "[I] am not playing with superstition, what I draw is contemporary."[58]

[58] Laura Hoptman, *To See from a Distance*, 14.

Bibliography

Barlow, Tani E. *Questions of Women in Chinese Feminism.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004.

Chen, Tina Mai. "Dressing for the Party: Clothing, Citizenship, and Gender-formation in Mao's China." *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* 5, no. 2(2001), 143-171. DOI: 10.2752/136270401779108590.

Dai, Jinhua. 《浮出历史地表：现代妇女文学研究》*Surfacing onto the Horizon of History: A Study in Modern Women's Literature.* Zhengzhou: Henan Renmin Chubanshe, 1980.

Du, Daisy Yan 渡言. "Socialist Modernity in the Wasteland: Changing Representations of the Female Tractor Driver in China, 1949–1964." *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 29, no. 1 (2017): 55–94. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26426653.

E-flux. "13th Shanghai Biennale: *Bodies of Water".* April 2, 2021, https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/386291/13th-shanghai-biennalebodies-of-water/

Ge, Shiheng 葛士恒. "Superiority of the viewer: the 'fever for peasants' in contemporary art 观者的优越 —当代艺术中的民工潮" *2009 Central Academy of Art Collection of Essay about the Youth Critic Award* 中央美术学院青年艺术批评奖论文集. Beijing: Central Academy of Art, 2009.

Guo Fengyi: To See from a Distance. E.d. Joanna Ahlberg. New York: The Drawing Center in association with SCAD Museum of Art, 2020. Published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same title, accessed March 2022. https://drawingcenter.org/bookstore/books/drawing-papers-142-guo-fengyi-to-see-from-a-distance.

Hay, John. "The Body Invisible in Chinese Art?" *Body, Subject&Power in China.* The University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Jie, Lu. Interview by Hsingyuan Tsao, *Filip 2*, Filip Magazine, 2006. https://fillip.ca/content/the-long-march-project.

———. Art Forum. *"Interviews: About Guo Fengyi by Lu Jie"* 采访：卢杰谈郭凤怡. May 6, 2013. https://www.artforum.com.cn/interviews/5065.

———. *"Lu Jie from Long March Space talks about Guo Fengyi"* 长征空间卢杰谈郭凤怡, Sina Collection. July 9, 2013. http://collection.sina.com.cn/plfx/20130709/1343119501.shtml.

———. ed. *Who is Guo Fengyi.* New York, Beijing: Long March Foundation, Long March Space, 2005.

Jones, Amelia. *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts.* Abingdon Oxon Enngland: Routledge, 2012.

Kao, Yu-kung. "Chinese Lyric Aesthetic." in *Words and Image: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy and Painting.* Ed. Alfreda Murck & Wen Fong. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991.

LEAP 《藝術界》Chen Fang Fang. "Daily and Essence – Lin Xue's Untitled" 《日常与核心–林穴的无题画》. September 2, 2013. http://www.leapleapleap.com/日常与核心–林穴的无题画/?lang=zh-hans.

Liu, Lydia H. "Invention and Intervention: The Female Tradition in Modern Chinese Literature." in *Gender Politics in Modern China: Writing and Feminism.* Ed. Tani E. Barlow. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993.

Liu, Sammi. "A Discussion on Guo Fengyi's Artmaking: Qigong Drawing? Spiritual Creativity? Self-taught Art?" "谈郭凤怡的艺术：气功绘画？灵性创作？自学艺术？" *Art is Poison. No.44*, June 29, 2020, Long March Foundation, http://www.longmarchspace.com/zh/articles/page/2/

Long March Project 《长征计划》. "Guo Fengyi: Who is Guo Fengyi?", *Long March Project*. Accessed June 6, 2022. http://longmarchproject.com/en/lm25000/guofengyi-whoisguofengyi/

———. "On-Site Criticism: Long March – A Walking Visual Display". Host by Li Xuejun. April 10, 2003, http://longmarchproject.com/en/discourse/changzheng-yigexingzouzhongdeshijuezhanshixianchangpipanhui/.

Lu, Sheldon Hsiao-peng. "Art, Culture, and Cultural Criticism in Post-New China." *New Literary History* 28, no. 1 (1997): 111–33. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20057404. Accessed April 2022.

———. *China, Transnational Visuality, Global Post Modernity.* Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2001.

Minglu, Gao. *Total Modernity and the Avant-Garde in Twentith-Century Chinese Art*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2011.

Pace Gallery. "Torkwase Dyson at the 13th Shanghai Biennale". Accessed March 3, 2022, https://www.pacegallery.com/journal/torkwase-dyson-shanghai-biennale/

Palmer, David A. Palmer. *Qigong Fever: Body, Science and Utopia in China.* NewYork: Columbia University Press, 2007.

Peng, De. "Guo Fengyi Phenomenon", Sina Collection (blog), July 9th, 2013. http://collection.sina.com.cn/ plfx/20130709/0956119460.shtml

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "The Making of Americans, the Teaching of English, and the Future of Culture Studies." *New Literary History* 21, no. 4 (1990): 781–98. https://doi.org/10.2307/469185.

———. "Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, 66–111, 1st ed. London: Routledge, 2015.

Taipei Biennial《台北雙年展》. "Introduction: Guo Fengyi", *Dirty Yoga 2006 Taipei Biennial 限制級瑜珈2006 台北雙年展*, accessed June 6, 2022, https://www.taipeibiennial.org/2006/9-guo-works-e.html

Tang, Xiaobing. *Visual Culture in Contemporary China: Paradigm and Shifts.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Welland, Sasha Su-Ling. *Experimental Beijing: Gender and Globalization in Chinese Contemporary Art.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018.

Wu, Hung, and Wang, Peggy. *Contemporary Chinese art: primary documents.* New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010.

———. "The 2000 Shanghai Biennale: The Making of a Historical Event", *Art Asia Pacific* 31, 42-49. https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/wuhung/files/2012/12/2000_2000-Shanghai-Biennale-pp42-49.pdf.

Xu, Jian. "Body, Discourse, and the Cultural Politics of Contemporary Chinese Qigong." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 58, no. 4 (1999): 961–91. https://doi.org/10.2307/2658492.

Yi, Gu. "The 'Peasant Problem' and Time in Contemporary Chinese Art." *Representations*, no. 136 (2016): 54-76. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26420578. Accessed March 2022.

List of Figures

Figure. 1

Quipu Menstrual by Cecilia Vicuña, Dyed wool Installation, View at the Power Station of Art as part of the 13th Shanghai Biennale, 2021

Figure. 2
Bird and Lava #01, by Torkwase Dyson, BiAcrylic, plywood, steel, two pieces, each 361 × 638 × 244 cm, View at the Power Station of Art as part of the 13th Shanghai Biennale, 2021

Figure. 3

Diagram of Hong Fan's study of Hetu (1990) by Guo Fengyi, View at the 13th Shanghai Biennale, 2021

Figure. 4

Liang Jun driving the tractor, Cover design of People Pictorial vol. 1, no. 2, August 1950

Figure. 5

Liang Jun driving the first tractor of China on 1-yuan banknote issued by the People's Bank of China, 1962 (3rd set of renminbi)

Figure. 6

Who is Guo Fengyi by Guo Fengyi, Color ink on paper scroll, Long March Foudnation, 1993

Figure. 7

Chinese Dragon by Guo Fengyi, Ink on Rice paper, Long March Foundation, 1990

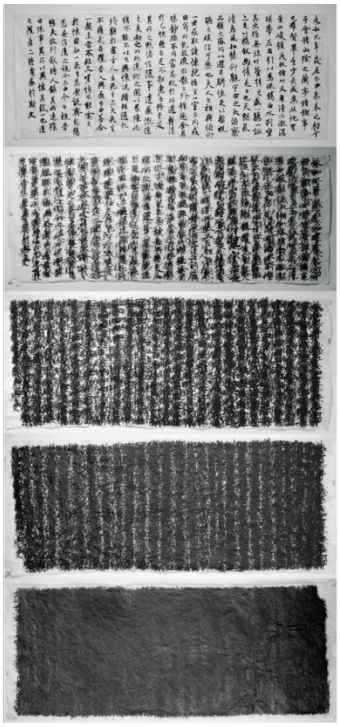

Figure. 8

Assignment No. 1 Copying the "Orchid Pavilion Preface" 1,000 Times (1990-1995) by Qiu Zhijie, Ink on paper, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

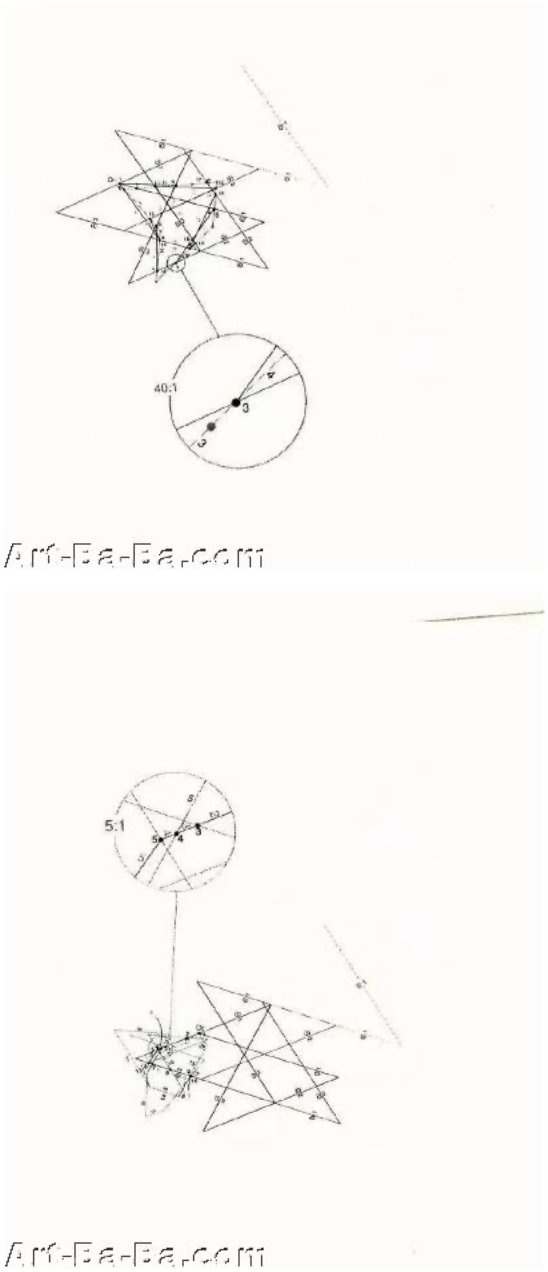

Figure. 9

The Works of The New Mark Group No.1 & No.2, Drawing on paper, The New Mark Group (Wang Luyan, Gu Dexin, Chen Shaoping), Unpublished works, 1990

Figure. 10

What If the Long March Had Been a Women's Rights Movement? by Lei Yan, Photograph, Lugu Lake, Yunnan, 2002

Figure. 11

Lugu Lake on June 5th by Guo Fengyi, Ink on rice paper, Long March Foundation, *2002*

Figure. 12

Lugu Lake – Happy Existence by Zhang Lun, Color photography of the conceptual art, Lugu Lake, Yunnan, 2002

Figure. 13

Seeing Mountains Seeing Water by Li Shurui, Installation, Lugu Lake, Yunnan, 2002

Figure. 14

Goddess Mountain Eternal Woman by Su Ruya, Performance art, Lugu Lake, Yunnan, 2002

Figure. 15

To Raise the Water Level in a Fishpond by Zhang Huan, 1997, Color photograph of the performance art, Zhang Huan Studio, Courtesy of Pace Gallery.