Contemporary Art

and

the Exhibitionary System: China as a Case Study

Linzhi Zhang

Department of Sociology

Queens' College

October 17, 2018

This dissertation is submitted for

the degree of doctor of philosophy in Sociology

Declaration

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It is not at all the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

I further state that no part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

Signed *Linzhi Zhang*.

Date   **17 Oct 2018**

Abstract

Contemporary Art and the Exhibitionary System: China as a Case Study

by Linzhi Zhang

The challenge of contemporary art, unlike in art history, has only recently been identified in sociology. Furthermore, an overly philosophical orientation, has undermined sociological explanations of artistic production. To remedy this, I propose a sociology of exhibitions. This entails a shift of focus from the elusive subject matter of art towards the tangible exhibition, and the construction of a new framework: the exhibitionary system, which also stands for the physical, institutional, and network environment of exhibitions.

The central question in the sociology of exhibitions is to explain how the exhibitionary system shapes artistic production. The answer was sought by observing exhibition making in the Chinese exhibitionary system, from which quantitative data about 1,525 exhibitions, held in 43 exhibition spaces between 2010 and 2016, were also collected.

I argue that the exhibition context shapes the physical basis of individual artworks and the construction of an artist's oeuvre. Through the contextualised creation of artworks for public viewing, artists aim to raise their visibility, which is crucial for artists' career prospects and symbolic consecration. An artist's visibility is, however, constrained by where she exhibits and with whom she co-exhibits. My method for measuring visibility reveals its binary nature, divided along a singular dimension and a collective dimension. Yet no binary division between the non-profit and for-profit is found within the exhibitionary system with regards to the selection of artists. Rather, both sectors contribute to a dual selection of marketable artists. A model of professional autonomy, which reconciles "art and the market" on the level of practices and awareness, prevails in the exhibitionary system.

The sociology of exhibitions has solved persistent theoretical problems in the sociology of art. My empirical findings give rise to new research questions. Finally, I have offered a dialogue between studies of non-western and western cases within the same framework.

Acknowledgements

At the end of this long and lonely journey with countless sleepless nights, I thank **Karl Marx**, **Max Weber**, **Thomas Kuhn**, and **Theodor Adorno**, for alluring me to this bitter-sweet pursuit. I can still recall the thrill standing in front of a new world, opened by the first sociology seminars. The perfectly enthusiastic introduction to sociology given by **Luo Jiade** has enlightened me. And if my Heidelberg mentors **Prof. Schwinn** and **Dr. Albert** did not tolerate my bold yet not so rigorous ideas, I would not be able to develop them further in this dissertation.

I want to thank my supervisor **Patrick Baert** who did not mind teaching me the elementary. If I were an "unserious" artist, you were my curator. And **Martin Fuller**, thank for your intellectual support in my lonely pursuit of a minor subject. My gratitude is beyond words. I must also thank the friends who have helped generously to improve the readability of this dissertation. In particular, **Peter Willian Walsh**, without you, I do not know how much longer this would take me. Certainly, without the funding of Cambridge Trust CSC, this project would not have been possible.

I need to thank all the informants who facilitated my field research, from which I acquired not only data, but also friendship. Among all, I want to thank **Liang Shuo**, **Bao Dong**, **Gao Ruyun**, **Xiao Ya**, **Lin Shuchuan**, and **Han Chunyang**. Without your support, the quality of my empirical research would be compromised. I was very delighted and rather surprised to have felt, among you wonderful people, for the first time in my life, that I was not an outsider.

My dear sociology cohort, your company has been the best experience provided by Cambridge. In particular, it has been a great pleasure to have you as a friend, **Diane Barlee**! I am also grateful to a non-sociologist friend, **Zhang Meng**, who has helped to retrieve

thousands of data entries and patiently removed each duplicate.

I dedicate this doctoral thesis to my dear mom,
even though you prefer a grandchild in human flesh.

15 October, 2018, Cambridge

Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Chapter I

Towards A Sociology of Exhibitions

"I started to organise shows for ink painters at the age of 17. They were all great artists. [..] They have made a lot of money too. Yet most of their paintings are bought and then locked in a safe [Chinese ink paintings are finished on paper and can be rolled when not in display], like securities certificates, before they are even rolled open again by the buyers. I wonder whether they [these artists] would have a bit of regret. Many of their works are not even seen by people." (Curator 1)

The above remarks were made by a curator, Lin, who switched from the curating of ink painting to that of contemporary art. In China, art that is currently being made can be roughly divided into two genres. The first genre are ink painting and calligraphy, which are indigenous to Chinese culture and have their distinct and long history here. The other is contemporary art, which was imported from western culture and became a distinct category in mainland China since the late 1970s. The two genres of art are usually exhibited in two different art systems and traded in separate markets. Only the genre of contemporary Chinese art can be considered as part of the so-called global art world, which is dominated by western art institutions.

Among the many differences between the two genres, Lin highlights here the significance that he views as attached to exhibitions in each genre of art. In ink painting, it seems that the sole purpose of showing art is to sell that art, as reflected in the fact that the exhibitionary halls of museums can be rented by artists to boost sales of their works. Once the work is sold, as Lin says, it is locked in a safe, becoming invisible to the public.

With contemporary art, by contrast, the exhibiting of art encompasses more than mere attempts to sell that art. Here, exhibition making is considered as a creative undertaking, which needs to fulfil certain curatorial standards. The very showing of artworks reflects a recognition of their value; it delivers the message that they are worth seeing. Lin therefore appears to identify with the idea that 'good art needs to be, or should be, seen' – a strong ideology within western art, which explains, in part, his turn to the curating of contemporary art.

With that said, Lin's perception might be biased by a belief in artistic autonomy, another ideology that conceals the economic function of the exhibition and its inevitable entanglement with the art market. As a matter of fact, any exhibition of contemporary art is potentially an occasion to sell art. Although exhibitions in not-for-profit venues, such as Biennales and museums, do not sell artworks directly, sales can still be negotiated outside the exhibition space. The sophisticated display techniques that distinguish a gallery exhibition from the display of artworks in art fairs or auctions, can also be denounced as marketing strategies to promote sales.

Nevertheless, the judgement that the significance of exhibition in contemporary art goes beyond the sale of art remains accurate. Even from the perspective of art economies, exhibitions are indispensable to contemporary art, not primarily as the means to sell art, but as the means to consecrate art. Any art economies cannot function without the consecration of art, because the economic value of art is fundamentally based upon a belief in its artistic value (Bourdieu, 1985; White and White, 1993). In contemporary art, exhibitions contribute precisely to the construction of such a belief. It does so through the public presentation of artworks, for which a "white cube" environment and sophisticated display techniques have been developed (O'Doherty, 1986; Klonk, 2009; Lam, 2013). Given that sales of art can actually be made without exhibitions, the economic function of exhibitions is only secondary. However, the possibility for an art economy to function without exhibitions is largely concealed by the stigmatisation of selling artworks without a history of exhibitions. In the primary market of contemporary art, these stigmatised practices mostly refer to sales made by circumventing the mediation of galleries that mount shows for artists, such as selling directly from artists' studios and sending freshly made artworks to auctions. Deeply immersed in the standard practices in the market of contemporary art, western observers can be easily confused by how the market of ink painting and calligraphy in China works: sales are usually made through private negotiations, without the mediation of galleries; museums can be rented by any artists who

are able to afford the museum exhibition as a means of marketing. Yet, regardless of how 'deviant' these practices may seem, the market of ink painting does not violate the basic rule for any art economies. That is to say, this market of ink painting functions because these artists' reputations mainly derive from memberships of official art organisations such as Artist's Associations and Art Academy (Andrews, 1994; Kharchenkova, Komarova and Velthuis, 2015). The truly revealing insight can be obtained from the case of Chinese ink painting and calligraphy, is that sales of art can be made without the typical kind of public exhibitions found in contemporary art. From these exhibitions, people expect the achievement of certain curatorial standards and a distance from the direct sale of art.

To conclude from the comparison between the two genres of art, when the function of consecrating art is overtaken by other types of art institutions in the economy of ink painting, exhibitions can bear a mere economic function. For the mere purpose of sale, the curatorial standards and any other means to aggrandise symbolically the artworks in display are redundant. By contrast, in contemporary art, exhibitions must play an active role in the symbolic consecration of art. Specifically, exhibitions consecrate the art in display through the sophisticated public presentation, supported by a discipline that provides practical guidance on exhibition making, and an ideology that values the direct sensory perception of artworks. This ideological emphasis on the visibility of art and on the act to see art in exhibitions, as Lin's story of "securities certificates" indicates, is mostly absent from the genre of ink painting and calligraphy.

However, in the sociology of art, neglected has been the idea that exhibitions are an important means to consecrate art, and are therefore indispensable to the social production of art. Consecration of art is generally attributed to art critics and artistic discourses (Bourdieu, 1993; Baumann, 2001; Allen & Lincoln, 2004). Even the price of an artwork is recognised as having symbolic meaning, signifying and justifying the artistic value of this work (Velthuis, 2005). Exhibitions, however, are absent from the analysis of symbolic consecration of art. Instead, exhibitions are studied as organisational outputs of museums (Zolberg, 1981; Alexander, 1996; Lachmann et al., 2014), as the major contribution of curators (Heinich and Pollak, 1996; Acord, 2010), and as occasions for social interactions (Vom Lehn et al., 2001; Bachleitner and Ashauer, 2008; Fuller, 2015a) – but rarely as the means to consecrate art.

Moreover, exhibitions are also related to the social production of art through its entanglement with the production of artworks. Since the 1970s, the production of artworks has become increasingly integrated with the making of exhibitions. Many artworks are not

only created for exhibitions, but also created on the site of the exhibition. A prominent example is *The Weather Project* by Olafur Eliasson, commissioned by Tate Modern in 2001. The artist created a sunset scene in the Turbine Hall and invited the visitors to the experience the scene, and not to look at any particular objects. The creation of this piece of artwork thus amounts to the making of the exhibition. Accordingly, exhibition making goes beyond the arrangement of artistic objects that are already finished before being moved into the exhibition space, but entails the operations that complete the material, visual, experiential and semantic features of artworks. However, these important practices and the impact of the exhibition context on the production of artworks have not been thoroughly investigated in the sociological study of artistic production.

In brief, in sociology, exhibitions have not been adequately addressed in relation to artistic production. This is not to say that sociologists have neglected the significance of exhibitions in their studies of art. But the formulation of concepts and theoretical frameworks to identify and analyse the distinct role of exhibitions in artistic production, remains underdeveloped.

To fill the literature gap, in this dissertation, I investigate exhibition making as an important model of artistic production. Exhibition making is not to be equated with the curating or the installation of the exhibition, the two subjects attracting the most attention in research on exhibitions. The curating of an exhibition refers to only those tasks of the curator(s). The installation of an exhibition refers to the work takes place in the exhibition room before an exhibition opens to the public. I intend to explore the entire process of exhibition making, including the planning, conceptualisation, installation, opening, viewing and closure of an exhibition. In this perspective, curators are not the only 'creators' of exhibitions. Artists, who are responsible for the most important elements of the exhibition, must also be recognised as exhibition makers. However, artists usually cannot initiate the making of an exhibition. Those who can are another two types of exhibition makers: gallerists, which in my dissertation can be either a gallery's owner or the manager; and artistic directors, who are, with the assistance of senior curators, if there are any, responsible for the exhibition programmes in non-profit exhibition spaces such as museums and independent art spaces. These two types of exhibition makers operate exhibition spaces, and decide which artists to include in their exhibition programmes.

As such, this thesis aims to answer the following broad research question:

How is art produced in the process of exhibition making?

In answering this question, I take up the primary undertaking of the sociology of art: to decipher its social production. I do so by proposing two important changes to the sociology of art, which are to do with its analytical perspective and its theoretical framework. First, I propose to study the elusive subject matter 'art' through the perspective of concrete and tangible exhibitions. This new angle is what I call a 'turn' **from art to exhibition**. Second, I propose to look at exhibition making in an institutional system – what I term **the exhibitionary system**. This new framework does not only describes the social world of exhibition makers as an institutional system embedded in personal social networks, but also explains how this system shapes artistic production. The exhibitionary system as a framework is developed from my observations of contemporary art practices and my critique of existing frameworks. The turn from art to exhibition, in conjunction with the framework of the exhibitionary system, amount to what I call a **sociology of exhibitions**.

In the following, I will first explain the turn from art to exhibition in the sociology of exhibitions: why I propose the turn, what the turn entails, and how the change of analytical perspective offers solutions to persistent problems in the existing literature. I will then go on to unpack the central research question of this dissertation, specifying the three sets of derivative subquestions, as a steer to my field research. Finally, to provide an overview of the structure of this dissertation, I will summarise the content of each chapter and illustrate the connections between them.

1   From Art to Exhibition

The sociology of art is primarily concerned with the social production of art. Although art can also mean a type of activity or experience (Livingston, 2016), most sociologists, choose to understand the social production of art as the social production of artworks. Moreover, they also share a holistic view of artistic production that acknowledge and distinguish the contribution of various actors involved in the series of social operations that bring about artworks. In this holistic view, the process of artistic production is divided into three segments of a sequence. An art work is first produced materially by the artist and his or her support personnel; then it is distributed, mediated or consecrated – a variety of terms have been used to call this second segment – by dealers, critics and curators; and finally it gets received and recognised by an audience. The social production of an artwork continues after the completion of its materiality and only ends with the attainment of recognition. The holistic view of artistic production and the corresponding sequential division have

captured the essence of artistic production as a social process. This underlying idea is thus fairly consistent with the definition and ontological discussion of art in philosophy, although such philosophical discussion is rarely cited in the works of major theorists in sociology of art. Bourdieu and Becker, for instance, do not dwell on the essence of art and build their theories upon existing discussion in the philosophy of art.

Yet despite its merits, I propose to shift away from this dominant analytical perspective for two reasons. Before turning to those reasons, it must first be stated that the turn from art to exhibition is not a turn away from art. It is a change of analytical focus towards the exhibition, which constitutes a concrete, tangible and essential context for the examination of artistic production. Exhibition is defined in my dissertation as the *public* and *scenographic* presentation of artwork(s) embedded in *narratives*. Exhibition making, accordingly, refers to the various operations that enable such kind of artistic presentation.

This shift is, first, a necessary adjustment to accommodate the transgressive practices in contemporary art. It is made in an attempt to develop new concepts and frameworks for changes in the modes of artistic production, hitherto inadequately addressed, which are entailed in the transition from modern art to contemporary art. Given the increasing intertwining of artistic production and exhibition making, exhibitions provide a fresh and fruitful vantage point from which the production of contemporary art may be viewed.

The second reason for the turn is that the sequential division of artistic production does not correspond to reality, because it neglects the consolidation of recognition towards the artwork upon the maker. That is, in real world practices, an artwork by an artist with a stable career does not go through the sequence to become an artwork, because it is often recognised as artwork before it is even materially produced. For such a recognition has already been bestowed on the artist, and concomitantly upon all the works she makes, so long as the artist's career persists.The production-mediation-reception sequence also causes a terminological confusion in the use of "production". The "production" of art seems to refer to the whole sequence, and at the same time only the first section – material production.

To avoid these problems, the analytical division deployed in my study of exhibition making is based on the three essential elements of exhibitions: artwork(s), artist(s) and the audience. The social operations involved in exhibition making are understood as directing towards these three elements. Although exhibition making follows a distinguishable sequence of phases, the set of operations directed at one element may extend across several

phases. I also dissolve the division between producer and mediator (or distributor), as I view artists, curators, gallerists and artistic directors all as exhibition-makers, who are responsible for different elements in the exhibition. Artists are mainly responsible for the artworks, whereas other types of exhibition makers – with the power to initiate exhibition making – are mainly responsible for the selection of artists and bringing in the audience. Unlike a piece of artwork, an exhibition does not have a single author.

In sum, the turn from art to exhibition is an adjustment of analytical perspective. The new perspective, as this dissertation hopes to demonstrate, allows us to capture the new features of contemporary art, to integrate an artist's career with the process of artistic production, and to see, in a thoroughgoing fashion, what exactly are the sociological dimensions of art.

1.1 The challenge of contemporary art

In western art history, art is usually classified by both period and its artistic features. Art develops here from classical ancient Greek art, to Byzantine art, to renaissance art and to modern art. I have come to understand this development as manifest in the four dimensions of artwork: changes take place in the material, technical, stylist and ideational dimension of artworks (L. Zhang, 2013). That is, transformations in art have entailed changes to the materials that make it, the techniques that handle it, the style that it embodies, and the ideas that underpin it.

The current art era is called contemporary art, a label coined in the 1980s (Smith, 2006). In terms of period, it refers to art produced after the Second World War. In terms of artistic features, however, art historians have not successfully generalised about contemporary art practices that are immensely diverse (ibid.). This extreme diversity can be seen in the material, technical, stylist and ideational dimensions. Materially, anything – canvass, resin, stuffed animals, and even human faeces – can be used in artistic creation. Similarly, all manner of techniques are adopted in contemporary art: BioArt uses biotechnology; installation art uses a variety of engineering technologies; video art adopts all aspects of film-making and computer science technology, performance art requires theatre stage work; even sociological and anthropological methods are also used by artists in their "artistic intervention". Each artist's pursuit of his or her own 'approach' or 'language' has rendered the dissolution of 'style' as a collective label. Even in the most traditional art form painting, the most prominent contemporary painters, such as Gerhard Richter and Anselm Kiefer, unlike Monet and Picasso, are not categorised under any style. Ideation-

ally, especially with the appearance of conceptual art and performance art, contemporary art is virtually limitless. For instance, Maria Abramovic could sit in MoMA for 700 hours for a piece of contemporary art performance. Ai Weiwei could bring 1,001 Chinese citizens to Kassel as an art project called "Fairytale".

Perhaps the best way to generalise about contemporary art, then, is provided by a sociologist Nathalie Heinich. Heinich (2014a, 2014b) concludes that a fundamental paradigm shift is involved in the transition from modern art to contemporary art. According to her, when modern art, say, impressionism and cubism, transgresses the classical figuration or figuration itself, contemporary art transgresses the common sense boundaries of art. That is, the paradigm of contemporary art is to transgress the very concept of art.

The transgressive nature, or challenge, of contemporary art has been a problematic in art history for decades. It was first perceived by art historians in the 1960s when Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* caught the attention of Arthur Danto. From then on, the expression "end of art history" has been repeatedly evoked. Art historians conclude that the practices of contemporary art challenge the ways art history used to look at art (Belting, 2003; A. C. Danto, 2014). The languages of *style* and *iconography*, the two most important tools in art history, cannot be applied to conceptual art and abstract painting (Belting, 2003). Art historians have been unable to develop new methods for the historiography of contemporary art (Smith, 2006). The tendency within the discipline is to view art as a "sociological category", using the words of the art critic Donald Kuspit (2005).

Given the growing acknowledge of the social essence of art among art historians, it seems that sociology can provides a better angle to the study of contemporary art. After all, in the sociology of art, no such crisis feeling has been evoked. This does not mean, however, that existing sociological apparatus is adequate to accommodate the new practices in contemporary art. In fact, as Heinich (2014c) warns us, the concept of art as being essentially modern art may persist; and this obsolete understanding of art may cause misunderstandings of current artistic practices in all disciplines that study art. The sociology of art, which often also deploys concepts from art history, is no exception.

It follows that the sociological concepts, methods and frameworks developed from observations of modern art must be re-examined before being applied to the analysis of contemporary art. By way of illustration, let us begin with the concept of style. As a style in modern art is often extracted from the practices of several artists, and thus, in essence a collective label, the concept of style has been adopted by sociologists to indicate the relation between a type of artistic creation and a social group. For instance, Crane (1987)

studies style as a "social phenomenon", associating the rise of a certain social group with the appearance of a certain style. Bourdieu's (1993) concept of "(artistic) positions"[1] in the field of cultural production is also related to artistic style. He identifies three positions in the late nineteenth century French literature field: 'social art', 'art for art's sake', and 'bourgeois art', each of which corresponded to a style (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 166-169). In the era of contemporary art when artists refuse to be grouped in the same style and art historians fail to *name* the style,[2] theoretical frameworks based on the concept of style understandably become problematic.

Another example is the concept of conventions used in Becker's theorisation about the production of art. Becker (1974, 2006) understands the production of art as a series of choices made within a range of possibilities. These choices can be about, using my own categories, material, technical, stylistic and ideational dimensions of the artwork. Conventions are then, in Becker's theory, to determine which materials, techniques, styles and ideas are accepted and delineate the boundary of the range of possibilities. In contemporary art, however, as the examples I took to describe the extreme diversity of contemporary art shows, the range of possibilities has been immensely extended. Certainly, Becker defines conventions rather loosely; and there can always be conventions that fit Becker's almost encompassing definition. Nevertheless, it is also certainly difficult to identify conventions regarding either the materials, techniques, styles or concepts of artworks.

Hence, I propose to view artistic production from the angle of exhibitions, in the hope of building new concepts and frameworks for contemporary art. This proposal is consistent with changes in curatorial practices, as charted by art historians and other types of art scholar, which have resulted in the intertwining of exhibition making and production of artworks. It is their work that in part led to my definition of exhibition as 'the *public* and *scenographic* presentation of artworks embedded in *narratives*'. This definition contains three key aspects. First, the process of exhibition is by definition public. Therefore, the display of artworks in places inaccessible to the public, say, an artist's studio or a collector's mansion, does not count as exhibition. Second, the arrangement of artworks matters. Not all forms of public display of artworks are exhibition. Exhibition is to a certain extent a normative concept that entails the fulfilment of certain curatorial

---

[1]The concept of positions first appears as "artistic positions" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 30), but then Bourdieu tends to use "position" instead. As I will reveal in the progress of discussion, "artistic positions" convey the meaning better than "positions".

[2]The dissolution of style, which designates the "end of art history", is only the dissolution of style as a collective label. It does not mean that there is no resemblance at all among artworks by different artists, only that such resemblance becomes a threat to an artist's singularity, whereas in modern art, the resemblance indicated a collective art movement.

standards, which also evolve. According to the current standards, the Salon exhibition in the eighteenth century is hardly an exhibition. Today, an exhibition is supposed to be a piece of scenographic work, that is, the exhibition is designed to integrate the exhibition space for a holistic experience of art. Third, the presentation of nonverbal artworks is always facilitated by texts. Texts are actually part of the scenography, but they warrant their own place in the definition, because, unlike visual and experiential elements, they are verbal and therefore more accessible to sociological analysis. And these texts also fulfil an important distinct function. They can justify the selection of artworks, and articulate the connections among the different elements of the exhibition such artworks, lighting, and concepts.

Since the 1990s, the role of exhibitions has attracted attention from art scholars (Greenberg, Ferguson, & Nairne, 1996; Staniszewski, 1998). Recently, many more have turned to a history of exhibitions for a new perspective on art history through the viewpoint of exhibitions (Altshuler, 2013; Myers, 2011; Cagol, 2015; Ribas, 2015). Their accounts testify to what Nathalie Heinich identifies as a paradigm shift underlying the transition from modern art to contemporary art.

Changes in curatorial practices can be summarised by what I call *the creative turn* and *the scenographic turn.* The creative turn refers to the change of curating from "a secondary administrative, scholarly task to a creative, quasi-artistic practice" (von Hantelmann, 2011, p. 7). This change is commonly attributed to Harald Szeeman and the exhibition *When Attitude Becomes Form* curated by him in 1969 (Altshuler, 2013; Gleadowe, 2011; von Hantelmann, 2011). Szeeman invented the structured thematic exhibition, in which artworks in the exhibition are selected to form a theme. Before this, curating an exhibition entailed mainly the organisation of finished artworks according to art historiographic narratives. After the creative turn, curators got more involved in the creation of exhibits (Wade, 2001; O'Neill, 2007). And curators were not the only ones to became more creative in exhibition making. There is another dimension to the creative turn, which can be attributed to the other two renowned curators Peter Plagens and Lucy Lippard. They invited artists to create for the exhibition, rather than selecting finished artworks to fit a particular theme (Altshuler, 2013). In this, the exhibition becomes a way to organise artistic creation. Artworks are produced for exhibition and even on the site of exhibition.

The scenographic turn refers to the change towards a more holistic design of exhibitions. Borrowed from theatre design, in which scenography means to create the en-

vironment of performance by synthesising various elements such as objects, space, texts, lighting, sounds and even bodily movements (Howard, 2009; McKinney & Butterworth, 2009), this approach emphasises the audience's experience of the space. To be precise, scenography in exhibition making refers primarily to the integration of the exhibition context with the planning and installation to create a holistic experience of art (Lam, 2013). The exhibition context includes the physical features of the exhibition rooms and sometimes the character of the city in which the exhibition takes place. In brief, the scenographic turn concerns the curatorial standards, the ways to showcase artworks. After the turn, the scenographic effect and the coherence between the different elements in the exhibition became an important standard. This standard affects not only curators but also artists themselves (Klonk, 2009; Heinich, 2014a). That is, artists consider the scenographic effects in exhibiting the works when conceiving the artworks.

Both turns have led to the integration of exhibition making with the production of artworks. Turning to the making of exhibitions, we can at least extend our analysis to artworks that are only materially complete in an exhibition space. In contemporary art, artworks go beyond the portable, tangible, fixed-sized objects, but amount to "the whole set of operations, actions, interpretations, etc. brought about by this [an artist's] proposition" (Heinich, 2014b). Moreover, as art historians have gained new insights from a history of exhibitions, we may be able to develop new concepts to replace the outdated ones developed from the study of modern art.

1.2   Beyond the sequential division

Sociology explains how art comes into being through a series of social operations. These social operations go far beyond the artist's efforts in creating the artwork as a material object. Dealers, critics and curators, and even the general public, all contribute to the social production of art. This holistic view of artistic production is shared by major theorists in the sociology of art. Bourdieu (1993), among others, goes particularly further by including in list of actors who contribute to the genesis of art, "the whole set of agents whose combined efforts produce consumers capable of knowing and recognising the work of art as such, in particular teachers (but also families, etc)" (p. 37). Yet calling all these actors "producers" is counter-intuitive and, moreover, does little to distinguish the different roles of different actors.

Consequently, in sociological analysis, the process of artistic production is often divided into, as I have already pointed out, three segments of a sequence. To recap,

the first segment is often called the production of art or the material production of art. The third segment is called the consumption or the reception of art, which conveys its recognition as art by a public. In naming the segment between production and reception, however, there is some terminological variety. Becker calls it the "distribution of art". Bourdieu and his followers use the term "consecration" or the "symbolic production of art" – the production of the belief in its value. Hennion and Heinich prefer the term "mediation". Although all of these sociologists, recognise more or less that the operations conducted by dealers, critics and curators are essential to the social process of artistic production, Becker's term "distribution" conveys the weakest of such a recognition. He talks about the operations of dealers and museums mainly with respect to their rewarding artists financially. Bourdieu states clearly that while artists produce the material work, dealers and critics produce the belief in the value of artwork. The term mediation does not entail a distinction between symbolic and material production, but emphasises the operations which enable an artwork to be perceived and appropriated by those other than its creator" (Heinich, 2012, p. 697).

This sequential division is guided by the idea that artworks exist not only qua materiality, which is in turn supported by a philosophy of art that deals with the essence of art, as a question of either definition or ontology. The definition of artwork tries to distinguish artwork from non-art objects, while the ontology of art enquires into artworks' modes of existence. These two tasks sometimes overlap but are in principle different. Attempts to definition art try to exclude other kinds of cultural objects, such as cultural goods of mass production and artefacts created as tools, whereas the ontology of art does not look for modes of existence uniquely present in artworks.

For ontologists, artwork lies at the intersection of two ontological categories: the physical object, and human intention. That is, artworks are the product of human intentions but also depend for their existence on the materiality of objects. Most ontologists attempt to reconcile the duality within artwork of materiality and intentions. For instance, Roman Ingarden suggests that artwork ontologically depends both "on the subjective operations of the artists and the recipients" and what he terms "the material basis" (Ingarden, 1962, p. 235). Artists create the material basis of artwork, then the artistic potentials contained in the material basis only becomes fulfilled by the recipients' interpretations. The *material basis*, namely the material carrier of an artwork, refers to the ink printed on papers that convey the sentences in a novel, the paints and canvass that make up a painting, and notes sheets that record a piece of music. Yet the material basis contains

indeterminacy, incompleteness, with regards to the theme, content or concept that the artist intends to convey in a piece of artwork. For instance, in Friedrich's painting *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, the front side of the person is not portrayed. And in a novel, for instance, the interior of a room is never fully described. Therefore, each interpretation of the artwork suggests a possible way of completing the artwork itself (Ingarden, 1962, p. 236-238). The artistic potentials in the material basis are also actualised only when its viewers recognise the aesthetic qualities of the work (ibid.).

Other philosophers have attempted to fathom what makes artwork different from other kinds of things. The essentialist school have tried to explain art by a single essential type of property that all artworks share.[3] They believe that artwork can be defined by possession of this single property. Most philosophers of art have abandoned this essentialist thinking. Some aestheticians acknowledge the influence – sometimes the decisive influence – of non-aesthetic properties (J. Levinson, 2003, p. 12). Some even reject the existence of an intrinsic aesthetic property altogether and argue for its dependence on people's perception instead (J. Levinson, 2003, p. 10). This tendency amounts to a turn towards "conventionalist" definitions of art (Stecker, 2003). One of this type of conventionalist definitions is provided by Arthur Danto (1964). He argues that with the development of artistic practice, art has become distinguishable from non-art only by the use of art theory. Others think that what defines artwork is an internal historical relationship to the established artworks, with such a relationship being recognised by art experts (Adajian, 2016).

To sum up, the philosophical understanding of artwork identifies three of its essential and interrelated elements: (a) the material qualities that make artwork an object; (b) the aesthetic qualities that can only be *fulfilled in the contemplation of the audiences* make an object a cultural object; (c) the recognition by art experts that makes a cultural object an artwork.

The sociological sequential analysis, as it turns out, more or less corresponds to these three elements. The material production refers to the first element; the mediation or distribution refers to the efforts to fulfil the second element, to which the reception of the audience is indispensable; and the consecration refers to the growth of recognition among art experts – the third element. Except for the terminological confusion in calling both

---

[3]Formalism is a perfect example. Clive Bell states that, "in each, lines and colors combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions"(Bell, 1997, p. 15). He called "these relations and combination of lines and colours, these aesthetically moving forms" (ibid.) *Significant Form*, which is the one quality common to all works of visual art.

the first section and the entire sequence, the production of art, this analytical division seems to be well grounded.

The problems with this analytical division, therefore, can hardly be detected on the theoretical level. They only reveal themselves, when we look at the actual social process of artistic production. In real-world practices, the production of artworks is organised under the career of each artist. That is, artworks are produced as some artist's artworks, which depend on the artist's career and are not very likely to survive the waning reputation of their creator. In other words, recognition is bestowed *not* upon each individual artwork, but rather upon the artist. Artist-focused practices began institutionalised with the establishment of the dealer-critic system (White and White, 1993). In the Academic system, the one that preceded the dealer-critic system, artworks were selected to the Salon relatively independently from their creators (ibid.). The dealer-critic system, by contrast, promoted the sale of artworks by the same artist as a whole, thereby strengthening the dependence of artworks' success on the artist's career.

So, in philosophical discussion, we can talk about a sequence of operations in which the production of an artwork ends with its attainment of recognition from art experts and the general public. However, in reality, an artwork is often recognised as art before it is even materially produced. This is because the recognition is accumulated in the reputation of the artist. What then happens after the material production of the artwork is the pursuit of a growing reputation, which may fail. The social production of art is therefore also the production of the artist. In the above sequential division, however, the production of the artist can hardly be incorporated into the picture and herein lies its principal problem.

Other problems with the sequential division stem from the roughly assigned distribution of labour among different art producers. First, the distinction between production and mediation/consecration/distribution of art still reserves authorship for only the artist. This somehow situates sociology in the same position with the ideology of authorship, which many sociologists aim to unmask. Second, the sequential division neglects the overlap of roles and contributions. For instance, it wipes out the mediation conducted by artists themselves before dealers, curators and critics take the role of mediation. In reality, artists are not ignorant of the audience, whom they aim to reach through their artworks. As a matter of fact, almost no artworks are conceived without envisaging an audience.

To solve these problems, in the turn from art to exhibition, I propose a different analytical division for the study of exhibition making as a social process. My proposal presupposes two significant changes in perspective. First, the operations in the making of

exhibitions are not divided into the production, mediation, and reception of art, but to the operations dealing with *artwork(s)*, *artist(s)*, and *audience(s)*, respectively. I recognise artwork(s), artist(s), and audience(s) as the three essential elements of the exhibition, towards which operations involved in exhibition making are directed. Second, concomitantly, rather than separating artists as producers from the mediators, I include artists, curators, gallerists and artistic directors all as exhibition makers. The latter three types of non-artist exhibition makers, although they are usually not engaged with the material production of artworks, are included in because they are mainly responsible for the two other non-artwork elements.

In recognising the three elements of the exhibition, I thereby contest two intuitive ideas common to its conventional understanding. Although exhibition, the outcome of exhibition making, is defined as the public presentation of *artwork(s)*, it is also the public presentation of the *artist(s)*. This refers not only to the fact that artists usually present themselves physically at the opening of an exhibition, but also that an artist's career relies on the continuous release of new artworks through exhibitions. The ideology of authorship does not work without an oeuvre. Although artists take the main responsibility for artworks in exhibition making, they should not be considered the authors of an exhibition – not, at least, the sole authors. Even in the case of a solo exhibition of a particular artist, that artist has been given the opportunity to exhibit by a gallerist or an artistic director. Without being given that opportunity, an artist cannot become the authors of exhibits. That is why gallerists and artistic directors must also be viewed as exhibition makers. Together with senior curators, they have the power to initiate exhibition making. They contribute to the exhibition by selecting artist(s) to as the authors of the exhibits. In other words, for these curators, gallerists, and artistic directors, artists are the outcome of exhibition making.

Another intuitive idea that an artwork's audience *comes* to an exhibition obscures the fact that visitors are actually *brought in* to an exhibition by exhibition makers. Without the press release, newsletters, and invitations circulated in advance of an exhibition opening, visitors would hardly be aware of a new exhibition. And an exhibition without an audience could hardly be described as a public presentation of art. Moreover, the professional audience, meaning those who are also themselves exhibition makers but are not involved in this particular exhibition, may bring future exhibition opportunities to the artist(s) featured in an exhibition. Hence, apart from operations dealing with artists and artworks, the rest majority of work in exhibition making aims to bring in more audience.

Since artists are usually engaged with artworks, the other three types of exhibition makers are responsible for creating this third essential element of an exhibition: the audience.

In brief, here I talk about artists as an essential element of the exhibition, not as authors of the exhibits, but as the "exhibits" themselves; the audience, who are only drawn in and captivated by the efforts of exhibition makers, constitute another essential element; finally, artwork, of course, remain the exhibits, as by conventional definition. With this change to an artwork-artist-audience division, I incorporate the production of artists into the analysis of artistic production, and thereby, solve the principal problem with the dominant sequential division in existing literature. Here, artists are produced in the process of being selected and re-selected to the exhibitionary system, a process that is strongly affected by the artists' reception by the professional audience.

The second change in perspective enables us to see the multiple roles taken by a single type of actors. Although I have stated that the non-artist exhibition makers contribute mainly to the non-artwork elements, their efforts are also directed towards artworks, though not towards the materialisation of artworks. Rather, they deal with artworks through selecting artists who would fulfil their standards for artworks, and, certainly, also through what is called the mediation of art. In a similar vein, although artists rarely focus on the publicity work that aims to draw in audiences, they create the exhibits in the hope of captivating the audiences. That is to say, here, the distribution of labour does not occur along the differentiation between the three elements, but the different types of actions taken upon them.

2 Unpacking the Process of Exhibition Making

Having clarified the analytical perspective deployed in this dissertation, I can now go on to unpack the process of exhibition making. Even though I reject a sequential division of the process as my analytical perspective, I recognise the routine that the making of any exhibition follows, which can be divided into four phases: the planning, installation, viewing, and closure. Not surprisingly, this sequential division has been a convenient way to unpack exhibition making in existing sociological studies, only that each phase has been studied, typically, separately. This is because different strands in sociology have picked different phases in exhibition making as their principal object of analysis, which is consistent with their particular understanding of exhibition. Unlike in art history, museum study or curatorial study, the focus of these sociological studies is not confined to the role

of curators or to the installation phase. Nevertheless, as each strand holds a different understanding of exhibition, the link that connects the various parts of exhibition making, is missing, which prevents an overarching understanding of the phenomenon.

In my framework, this missing link is the central goal to produce art. That is to say, the three types of operations in exhibition making, given the analytical division I have introduced above, – the production of artworks, the selection of artists, and the efforts to bring in audiences, all serve the purpose of producing art. To understand the relevance of audiences to artistic production, I must first introduce briefly a key concept in my framework, *visibility*, which I elaborate in greater detail in Chapter Two. An artist's visibility refers to the degree to which a professional audience is aware of that artist. A professional audience for this artist refers to the other exhibition makers who have not been engaged in the planning and installation of his or her exhibitions. Visibility is an important resource in the exhibitionary system and an important means to consecrate art, as I implied in the opening of this dissertation. The efforts to bring in the professional audiences to an exhibition are, in my framework, intend to raise the visibility of the artists and artworks in the exhibition.

This means that the production of art in exhibition making is examined through the production of artworks, the selection of artists and the pursuit of visibility for the artists. Consequently, my broad research question is divided into three questions regarding these topics respectively.

2.1 Literature review

Exhibition making is certainly not a new subject matter for sociology. Three different strands of sociological studies can be identified from the existing literature.

For organisational sociologists, exhibitions are the platform to examine external influences on art organisations. Zolberg (1981, 1984) first raised the argument that museum exhibitions reflected conflicting visions projected by their various stakeholders. Alexander (1996) developed Zolberg's idea by analysing data concerning more than 4,000 exhibitions held by 15 large American museums, from 1960 to 1986. Information on funding resources, and the format and the content of exhibition was extracted. Alexander identified three exhibition formats: popular exhibitions, accessible exhibitions and scholarly exhibitions. The content of exhibitions was categorised according to the artistic styles and the origins of artists featured the exhibitions. Alexander found out that funders' preferences affected the format of exhibitions but not their content. Alexander (1996) argued that the relative

autonomy of museums, as suggested by their control over the exhibition content, resulted from curators' efforts to resist pressures from the funding parties. A recent study in this strand tested the assumption that collectors have gained more power in contemporary art by looking at collectors' shows in four leading New York Museums from 1945 to 2010. If collectors are indeed gaining more power, we would expect the number of collector/patron exhibitions to increase. Lachmann, Pain, and Gauna (2014) shows that although the number of collectors did increased, the percentage of collector shows actually dropped. The authors therefore conclude that museum professionals managed to safeguard their autonomy from the powerful sponsors.

Symbolic interactionists treat exhibition as a site of (artwork-)human interactions and meaning creation. Vom Lehn, Heath, and Hindmarsh (2001) conducted analysis of video recordings of naturally occurring actions and interactions of visitors in various museums and galleries. They discovered that visitors tended to view an artwork in light of other artworks nearby. Visitors were also encouraged to view particular artworks, brought to their attentions by other visitors; the interactions between them shaped each other's way of perceiving the artworks. In a similar vein, Acord (2010) examined how curators' actions are influenced by artworks, which are believed to have agency within Latour's (2005) framework Through three case studies, she illustrated that curators were compelled to adjust the curating plan, change the exhibition narrative or create a new theme in the installation process – due to unexpected physical or aesthetic associations that emerged from putting artworks together in the same space.

Other sociologists observe that exhibitions, and openings in particular, are social occasions where people meet, make connections and reunite. Thornton (2009) narrated how the same group of collectors, artists and dealers meet during the preview period of either Art Basel or Venice Biennale. The global art world was depicted as a small village where a phone call could allow a dealer to know enough about a new collector. In a more sociological field research of the New York and Berlin art scenes, Fuller (2015a, 2015b) observed the importance for artists to attend openings as part of their career building, making themselves known and obtaining exhibition opportunities. These observations were further confirmed by visitor's survey conducted by Bachleitner and Ashauer (2008), which revealed that it was social relationships that brought most people to the openings. Although most visitors claimed to come to inform themselves of recent artistic developments, they were either invited by the artists or some other friends related to the event. This leads the authors to observe that the opening, in which the artworks actually recede

to the background, whereas the artist as a person comes to the foreground, serves a specific social function.

To summarise, funding decisions take place in the planning phase of exhibition making; artwork-human interactions are situated in the installation and viewing phases; and the social gathering in the opening day indicates the climax and the start of the viewing phase. The closure phase, which involves the removal of exhibits from the exhibition site, and the documentation of the photos and texts concerning the exhibition, actually eludes the attention of these sociologists. Their choices of focus are determined by different views of exhibition: exhibition as an organisational output, a space for meaning-making, or a platform for network-building.

Despite the insights provided by each of these research strands, scholarship lacks an overarching framework to integrate the full range of operations and exhibition makers involved. That is why, in this literature review, I have sought to highlight the need for a new framework, and one that can integrate the different phases. For such an integration, I recognise the link that connect them all: the goal to produce art. This approach, which has hitherto been absent from the literature, sees the social production of art as achieved in exhibition-makers' efforts to complete exhibitions.

2.2 The research questions

Given the artist-artwork-audience division and the overarching goal to produce art, the process of exhibition making entails three aspects: the production of artworks, the pursuit of visibility for artists featured in the exhibition, and the selection of artists to exhibitions. The former two aspects can be examined in the making of any particular exhibition, in which a routinised process composed of four phases – planning, installation, viewing, and closure – has been identified. It is to be emphasised again that the operations that aim at artworks and audiences extend across several phases. But the examination of the third aspect needs to consider the act of making exhibition programmes, which I call *programming*. Artists are selected to exhibitions by gallerists, artistic directors, and curators, who run exhibition spaces and make exhibition programmes, rather than each individual exhibition. An exhibition programme comprises typically a fixed number of exhibitions for a certain period of time. The selection of artists is conducted in the programming. It is an on-going process that steers the making of each individual exhibition.

Given the definition of exhibition as the *public* and *scenographic* presentation of artworks embedded in *narratives*, the production of artworks in exhibition making goes

beyond what is commonly understood as material production in the production-mediation-reception sequence. To recap, the arrangement of artworks matters, and the verbal articulation of the relationships among artworks is equally essential. Therefore, in the exhibition context, the production of artworks spans from the planning phase, in which artist may prepare the compositional elements, to the installation phase, in which artists and other exhibition makers then complete the material, spatial and narrative elements of the artworks. Artists are the principal – but not the only – exhibition makers responsible for this element. In the planning phase, artists usually inspect the exhibition venue, visualise their plans of creation, send the proposal to the curators or artistic directors, and communicate with them to work out the details. In the installation phase, artists and their support personnel work together to complete the material, visual, experiential and semantic features of the exhibition. The production of artworks is hence integrated into the making of exhibition, which is further formatted by a set of ideologies, routines, and standards.

The operations aimed at bringing in audiences, and thereby raising the visibility of the exhibition, also extend across several phases in exhibition-making. In the installation phase, that is, before the opening, there is standard publicity work, such as publishing and disseminating press releases and exhibition posters, as well as sending special invitations to relevant curators and artistic directors. After the opening, interviews with featured artists, and reviews, whether solicited or unsolicited, are released to maintain people's interest and awareness. Documentation of the exhibition in pictures and catalogues helps it to reach a larger audience including those who cannot visit the exhibition due to various factors such as busy schedules and expensive travel costs. The websites of major exhibition spaces also archive their past exhibitions, making information available beyond the constraints of time and location.

As a matter of fact, the efforts to pursue visibility for an artist also go beyond the above operations typically involved in the making of one exhibition. Exhibition makers, especially gallerists who engage in the careers of some particular artists, also attempt to reach a larger and more relevant audience for them by raising the visibility of the exhibition spaces, in which the artists' exhibitions take place. The visibility of an exhibition space amounts to the amount of regular visitors it has been able to win over. That is to say, apart from bringing in audiences for a particular exhibition, these exhibition makers who run exhibition spaces also aim at bringing in audiences as an overarching task.

Another overarching task for non-artist exhibition makers is to search for artists to fill in their programmes. For those who operate exhibition spaces, exhibition making

is actually in essence a matter of programming. Programming is the annual, biennial or triennial planning of a more-or-less fixed number of exhibitions that form a single entity. It entails first the decision upon the frequency of exhibitions, and the proportion between solo and group exhibitions. Programming also means a constant search for new artist,which usually follows pre-determined artistic and non-artistic criteria. Then, programming involves furthermore the coordination among different artists and curators to arrange the schedules of exhibitions. Among the various tasks, the selection of artists is central to programming.

Consequently, my broad research question, which concerns the production of art in the process of exhibition making, becomes the umbrella question for the following sub-questions:

- **How do the beliefs, standards and routines concerning exhibitions shape the production of artworks?**

- **What are the major factors that constrain exhibition makers' efforts to pursue visibility for artists? How can we measure visibility of artists?**

- **Do non-profit exhibition makers select the same group of artists as gallerists? Are artists selected either for their marketability or for their recognition by peer artists, given the widely accepted dualism of market demand and peer recognition?**

In answering the first question, I aim to reveal aspects of the production of artworks that tend to be neglected by a prevailing assumption in the existing sociological literature. In this assumption, artworks are produced in an artist's studio as objects isolated from each other and from the exhibition space. The idealised isolation is as problematic as the common understanding that equates the production of artworks with the production of their material basis in the perspective of the production-mediation-reception sequence. I intend to show how artworks are produced in the exhibition context, in relation to the exhibition space and to each other.

In answering the second set of questions, I aim to explore the concept of visibility by analysing its underlying mechanisms and proposing a method to measure it. This, I hope, would enable the application of visibility in future quantitative research.

In answering the third set of questions, I aim to look beyond the dualism of art and the market, as well as the dualism of for-profit and non-profit art institutions. These

two kinds of dualism have served as important analytical tools for understanding the social world of art producers. However, they are also often intertwined with ideologies of contemporary art that cloud the observations even of those who intend to unmask these ideologies, the most persistent one of which is the belief in artistic autonomy. It conceals that – this is my hypothesis – the deep entanglement between peer recognition and the market demand already occurs in the creation process of artists; but such reconciliation is not necessarily manifested in an alliance between the for-profit and non-profit sectors with regards to the selection of artists. I intend to test my hypothesis in the matter of selection of artists in the exhibitionary system.

The answers to these questions are also sought *in* the exhibitionary system, because the art institutions of this system are not only the anchor points for resources and procedures, but also the *actual physical spaces*, in which exhibitions take place. To limit the scope of examination, I first excluded biennales and other kinds of recurring international exhibitions from the analysis and focused on the local level. As such, I studied exhibition-making in museums, galleries and non-profit independent art spaces that are based in the local art scene, where physical presence is important. I then selected the case of contemporary Chinese art.

This requires the clarification that although China is considered peripheral in the global art world, it remains an eligible case for the study of contemporary art. Because contemporary Chinese art was generated amidst the diffusion in China of western contemporary art, western standards regarding artistic creation and exhibition making are generally applicable there.[4] An exhibitionary system consisting of galleries, museums and non-profit independent art spaces, whose earlier founders were westerners, has also been established in China.

There are at least two reasons that make the Chinese case ideal for my research. Contemporary art in China began as a subversion to the socialist aesthetics and the official art system that defends it. The political confrontation with the state aesthetics has driven contemporary art outside the state-funded museums. This also renders the impact of state funding almost entirely absent from the exhibitionary system of contemporary art. By contrast, in most western countries, although the state is usually absent from the discussion, it has always acted as a third player in the art system (Alexander 1996; 2017). Therefore, with minimum interference from the state, the Chinese case constitutes an ideal

---

[4]The very idea of a centre-periphery structure implies a recognition of the hegemony of the western centre from the periphery. Without such a recognition, the centre-periphery structure breaks into two independent blocks.

window onto the issue of art and the market, the topic of the third research question. Moreover, the exhibtionary system in China is of a smaller size than those of the 'central' Western countries, as reflected by numbers of exhibition spaces and practising artists. Given a fixed amount of time that a researcher could invest in field research, investigation of a smaller exhibitionary system is more likely to yield accurate generalisations, as a sample of a correspondingly smaller size is adequate.

I began the data collection with an explorative field work in Beijing and Shanghai, the two cities in China that are home to the majority of exhibition spaces and art professionals in China. My main undertaking was to observe the process of exhibition making in galleries and museums, though I sometimes also became a participant by helping with a few minor tasks. These observations yielded some clues relevant to the research questions concerning the production of artworks and the pursuit of visibility. Yet the focus on what took place inside the exhibition space also impeded my understanding of relevant operations outside the exhibition context. To remove this blind spot, I extended my investigation in a second phase of field work, in which both quantitative data and qualitative data were collected. In this phase, the two major tasks were, first, to interview exhibition makers about how they organise artistic production, or how they selected artists for exhibitions; and second, to collect quantitative data about exhibitions for the measure of visibility, in order to examine the selection of artists from a quantitative aspect. The two kinds of date amounted to a triangulation that validates my observations.

3   The Structure of this Dissertation

The sociology of exhibitions involves a change of perspective and the construction of a new framework. In the present chapter, I have explained the change of perspective entailed in the turn from art to exhibition. In **Chapter Two**, I elaborate the theoretical framework, which I term the exhibitionary system. Built upon a critique of existing frameworks, this new framework makes necessary adjustments to accommodate the novel practices of contemporary art. It identifies the beliefs, standards, and routines regulating the making of exhibition, explains the social world of exhibition makers as an art system, and relates this system to the production of art. In particular, I elaborate on the concept of visibility, one of the major new concepts developed for the study of contemporary art. Indeed, visibility stands for an important mechanism by which the exhibitionary system shapes artistic production.

Chapter Three justifies my case study selection. It starts by discussing the two reasons that I chose to study exhibition making in local art institutions. I discover that the so-called global biennale system depends on social interactions at the local level. Moreover, solo exhibitions, which are the dominant exhibition format on the local level, have been neglected by researchers. The rest of the chapter introduces and details the case of contemporary Chinese art. A literature review is also incorporated into this introduction, as most existing research on contemporary Chinese art consists of documentation produced by art historians. This chapter ends by mapping out the major institutions in the Chinese exhibitionary system. In so doing, it prepares the groundwork for the next chapter on the field research.

Chapter Four explains the research design of this dissertation, and elucidates the collection of qualitative and quantitative data in the field research. Participant observation and interviews were used to collect qualitative data, while quantitative data of exhibitions was retrieved from online data bases. The analysis of qualitative data generates ideas for concept development and theory building. The analysis of quantitative data, for which the primary method used is social network analysis, aims to develop instruments for measuring concepts and testing hypotheses. In brief, the findings of this dissertation are based upon detailed ethnography of the making of nine exhibitions, 56 interviews with exhibition makers, and a quantitative data set of 1,525 exhibitions held in 43 exhibition spaces between 2010 and 2016.

The research questions of this dissertation, which I outlined in the section above, concern the production of artworks, the pursuit of visibility, and the selection of artists. Each of the three empirical chapters, Chapter Five, Six and Seven, deals with one topic. I begin with the production of artworks in **Chapter Five**. I demonstrate that the production of artworks is embedded in the scenographic handling of the exhibition space, as well as in the construction of each artist's oeuvre. This means an artwork is conceived by the artist in relation to an anticipated, or potential, exhibition context. Here, the exhibition context refers not only to the physical environment of an exhibition, but also to the public appreciation and critical examination of artworks. It follows that, first, the material and ideational dimensions of an artwork are shaped by the physical features of the exhibition space, resulting from the artist's attempts to create an ideal scenography. Second, each artwork is created in relation to what the artist has already made and is planning to make, in order to receive a positive reception by the critical audience who usually value coherence in an artist's oeuvre. Artworks that may muddle an oeuvre, say, those artworks

emerging from contingencies in the creative process, are normally kept out of sight from the exhibitionary system.

In **Chapter Six**, the starting point of my analysis is that visibility is generated in the exhibitionary system through the visiting of exhibitions. Thus, the factors that impact on the exhibition-visiting behaviour of the professional audience are those that constraint exhibition makers' efforts to pursue visibility for the artist. I observe that the key to raising an artist's visibility is through an ideal exhibition trajectory. The different exhibitions in the trajectory would bring in audience for the artist, through the attraction stemming from the reputation and social capital possessed by different exhibition spaces and co-exhibiting artists. Consequently, I propose a network-based method to measure the degrees of visibility of artists identified in my quantitive data set. Given the significance and dominance of solo exhibitions in the local exhibitionary system, it is an intriguing finding that an artist's visibility cannot be reduced to his or her performance in solo exhibitions. I find out that an artist's visibility has two irreducible dimensions: a singular dimension, and a collective dimension. Moreover, an artist highly visible in one dimension can be hardly visible in the other. There are only very few artists who have high visibility in both dimensions.

In **Chapter Seven**, I examine the two kinds of dualism, with regard to the selection of artists, in the exhibitionary system. Using the exhibition network data, I first test the hypothesis formulated by Moulin and Vale (1995) that the non-profit and for-profit exhibition spaces form an alliance in selecting the same group of artists. My data presents a much more complicated collaborative networks, in which both alliances and segments exist, depending on the exhibition format and the scope of examination. With regards to the dualism of market demand and peer recognition, I argue that, with the limitation of currently available analytical tools, a quantitative examination cannot be conducted yet. Based upon the qualitative research, I maintain that market demand and peer recognition is reconciled in a model of professional autonomy, in which the generative and practical cognitive schemata inform the artist's creation of marketable artworks.

I summarise the empirical findings in this dissertation's **Conclusion**. There, I also highlight the two important trends in sociology that I draw upon. First, I draw heavily upon the dialogue with other disciplines such as philosophy, art history, museum studies, and curatorial studies. And this dissertation, I hope, would contribute to the on-going interdisciplinary discussion. Second, I relate my dissertation to the cause of decolonising sociology. By showing the relevance of studying peripheral cases to theory building, I aim

to bring studies of western and non-western cases into dialogue. Furthermore, I also outline two directions for future empirical research that can be developed from this dissertation. The two directions regards the use of visibility as an important measurable variable.

Chapter II

The Exhibitionary System

Introduction

This chapter sets out the theoretical framework for the sociology of exhibitions, namely what I term the exhibitionary system. Its institutional infrastructure consists of exhibition spaces, which are at the same time the physical environment of exhibitions. Its network foundation is constituted by the personal and informal relationships among exhibition makers. The exhibitionary system is built upon the function of exhibitions to raise the visibility of artworks and artists.

However, I do not begin the chapter with elaborating the definition of exhibitionary system. Rather, I first clarify my method for theorisation in section one. A framework is conventionally named after its term for the social world of art producers, such as "art world" or "art field". However, this conventional practice conceals the logical sequence in constructing theoretical frameworks. That is, a framework must first define its research subject — artistic production, and then construct the social world of art producers by considering its impact on artistic production. According to this logical sequence and a corresponding structure underlying any framework, I critique existing frameworks. And I incorporate solutions to the problems I identify from the examination into the construction of the exhibitionary system as a new framework.

In section two, I elaborate the social mechanisms for artistic production and thereby, answer the central question in the sociology of art. As I define artistic production as the production of artworks and that of artists, the social mechanisms for artistic production are also two-fold. They reside in two types of actions involved in a loop of exhibition making. The first type are the evaluative actions of non-artist exhibitions, entailed in their

selection and re-selection of artists. These actions amount to the production of artists. The evaluative actions are social actions because the competence to evaluate art is acquired from sufficient exposure to artworks, which are conventionally considered to be good art, and to the ways of articulating artistic judgement, which are often either conventional or cognitively schematised. Furthermore, such competence is bounded, because non-artist exhibition makers only evaluate artists who have come visible to them. The second type are the creative actions of artists, which have already been explained by Becker and Bourdieu as social actions. I highlight, specific cognitive schemata, derived from western art historiography, that inform artists' creation of artworks as an oeuvre, rather than isolated individual artworks. In brief, I elaborate the social mechanisms for artistic production through crucial concepts including art-historiographical schemata, oeuvre, and visibility.

Finally, in section three, I expand on the institutional and network foundation of the exhibitionary system. In particular, I explain why an institutional view combined with a network view enables the conceptualisation of social mechanisms for artistic production. In other words, I construct the social world of exhibition makers in light of its impact on artistic production. In so doing, I elude the sterile debate between Becker and Bourdieu, and refocus the attention on the central problem: to decipher the social production of art. Furthermore, the incorporation of a network view enables the use of social network analysis as competent methods for my empirical research.

1 Towards a New Framework

In this section, I outline my strategies to construct a new framework. Theoretical frameworks in the sociology of art pivot upon social mechanisms for artistic production. This central question further requires the definition of artistic production and that of the social world of art producers. Based upon this structure, I critique existing frameworks, including Howard Becker's theory of art world, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of art field, and an institutional approach that I identify as developed mainly by H. White and C. White, Raymonde Moulin, and Diana Crane. I identify problems in existing methods of theorisation and propose the solutions in my theoretical construction.

Problems with these frameworks arise from, first of all, the separation between artists and artworks in their definitions of artistic production. This separation does not correspond to real-world practices, in which the production of artworks are organised within each artist's career. To solve this problem, I propose the concept of oeuvre. It

reveals that the artist's creative process is penetrated by career considerations. Furthermore, the separation between artists and artworks results in a lack of theorisation about the mechanisms through which artists are produced, even though sufficient discussion has centred around the artist's creative process. As a remedy, I therefore not only aim to improve existing sociological explanations for the artist's creative process, but also to incorporate the non-artist exhibition makers' evaluative actions into my theorisation.

In defining the social world of art producers, Becker and Bourdieu have initiated a sterile debate on whether interactions or structures are the fundamental building blocks of this milieu of production. To remedy the flaws on both sides of this debate, and to reconcile interaction and structure, network sociologists have proposed a network view. They see art producers as interconnected through various types of social relationships. Despite the merits of a network view, this solution is provided without justifying how such a shift of view would improve the sociological understanding of artistic production. My decision to define institutions and networks as the two building blocks of the exhibitionary system, by contrast, facilitates the identification of sociological dimensions in artistic production.

1.1 The structure of a theoretical framework

Compared to art history and philosophy, sociology is a late comer to the study of art. Yet the sociology of art has come to occupy a distinct position by explaining the social production of art. This central undertaking and its significance may seem obvious to many, but doubts have been raised within the discipline of sociology and from other disciplines. It is claimed that sociology has failed to capture art itself (Gombrich, 1975; Zangwill, 2002; De la Fuente, 2007). Therefore, I need to clarify first briefly why such doubts are preposterous.

These doubts originate from a division of labour that many sociologists have come to assume in the process of disciplinary building (Zolberg, 1990; Tanner, 2003; Hauser, 1974). This division of labour has been understood as a "context" versus "art itself" contrast. Sociology studies "the social context" in which art is produced and received, the transformation of art institutions, and all other social phenomenon "surrounding" art. In contrast, art history and aesthetics deal with art "itself", be it the forms, the iconography, the meaning, or materiality of artworks.

Believing in such a division of labour, many sociologists have also attempted to approach artworks as a remedy to the resulting inevitable limitation of sociology. These attempts often came hand in hand with a debate whether art itself *can* be studied in soci-

ology. The debate was first taken up by German sociologists in the 1960s. Adorno argued for a sociological analysis of the structure of artworks, while Silberman limited sociological investigation to the social effect of art (Bürger, 1978). In 1985, French sociologists dedicated a conference to the discussion about a sociology of artwork. Antoine Hennion was a supporter, whereas Heinich was sceptical of sociological interpretations of artworks (Raynaud, 1999). Recent attempts to "bring art itself back to sociology" can be seen in the "new sociology of art" (De la Fuente, 2010, 2007), as well as a strand of research based upon the agency of artworks (Acord & DeNora, 2008; Acord, 2010; Domínguez Rubio & Silva, 2013; Domínguez Rubio, 2012, 2008). These sociologists, more or less inspired by Latour's theory (Pierides & Woodman, 2012; Latour, 2005), claim to study art itself by exploring how artworks, qua materiality and meaning, shape human actions.

Regardless of whether these attempts succeed, the assumption that sociology does not deal with art "itself", is based on a misconception of art and a lack of dialogues with other disciplines. In Chapter One, I investigated the meaning and definition of art in philosophy and art history, disciplines that some sociologists believe study art itself. I have shown that even in these disciplines, the social essence of art is fundamental to their understanding of art. In brief, art is what people recognise as art. In fact, as I have shown, the production-mediation-reception sequence used in major sociological theories of art is constructed in a philosophical fashion, which renders it inadequate for the sociological investigation of art. Given the well acknowledged social essence of art in other disciplines, the very starting point of the attempts to approach art "itself", outside the social domain, are not grounded.

Therefore, by explaining the genesis of art through a series of social operations, sociology justifies its relevance to the study of art.[5] Accordingly, I identify the fundamental problem in the sociology of art as determining the concrete **mechanisms** through which the social world shapes artistic production. The merits of any theoretical framework are judged upon the ability to answer to this question.

Early sociologists, such as Adorno (1978) and Hauser (1974), sought the answer in the relation between artistic production and society. They explored how the content and structure of artwork reflected the social structure. Thus, the sonata-form of instrumental music shows a part-whole relationship that parallels the relationship of individual and society (Adorno, 1984, p. 160, cited by Witkin, 1998, p. 52). These early attempts can be

---

[5]Certainly, sociologists, as those in the "new sociology of art", can also explain how art shapes human actions; but this undertaking, regardless of the fact that objects have no original intentionality or agency to take actions, is not central to sociology.

summarised as frameworks for "art in society" or "art and society" (Heinich, 2012).

With the development of sociology of art as a sub-discipline, to study "art *like* a society" becomes a more common approach (Heinich, 2012, p. 190, my italics). This concurred with the establishment of Bourdieu's and Becker's frameworks as the two dominant ones in sociology of art. Both theorists deal with art "like" a society. They narrow down the scope of the social world that shapes artistic production to that of the art producers. Becker (2008) simply defines his "art worlds" as the worlds of art producers. Although Bourdieu (1993) also situates the artistic field in the field of class relations, he specifically states that his fields refer to the microcosms of the specialists (p. 181).

This means, in the contemporary sociology of art, central to any framework is the problem of mechanisms through which the social world of art producers shape artistic production. The answer to this question depends, further, on how the research subject – artistic production – is understood. The identification of the research subject defines a framework from the outset, as it locates the social mechanisms by which art is produced. If, say, artistic production is understood as the production of artworks, the social mechanisms are to reside in the creative process of artists. The question follows: how do these social mechanisms emerge from the social world of art producers? In this regard, one needs a further explanation of who the producers are and in what way they constitute a social world.

In sum, a framework defines *artistic production* and the *social world of art producers*, and fundamentally, explains how the former is shaped by the latter. With this structure, an adequate framework thus solves the central problem of *social mechanism.* I hereby identify three essential aspects of a framework, where the former two aspects stem from the elaboration of the third. My evaluation of existing frameworks entails unpacking them according to this structure. Included in my examination are not only Bourdieu's and Becker's theories, the two dominant ones frequently cited in theoretical discussion, but also what I identify as an institutional approach. The institutional approach, developed and deployed by White and White (1993) and Crane (1987), typically examines the transformation of the art system. An art system is defined as an alliance of institutions adhering to a set of "beliefs, customs and formal procedures" with the "central purpose to produce art" (White & White, 1993, p. 2). The western art system has transformed into what is now termed as a "dealer-curator" system (Moulin, 1994; Moulin and Vale, 1995). This strand of research is rarely evoked in theoretical discussion, probably due to its strong empirical orientation and insufficient theorisation. I include this approach in my

examination because I recognise some theoretical potentials in this approach, which will become clear in further elucidation. By contrast, Latour's actor-network theory is, as discussed, not relevant to the primary undertaking of this dissertation: the social production of art.

	Artistic Production	The Social World of Art Producers	The Social Mechanism
Becker	Material production of artworks	Art World	conventions, resources
Bourdieu	Material and symbolic production of artworks	Art Field	positions, habitus
The institutional approach	Artistic careers	a Dealer-Curator System	*institutional alliance*

Table II.1: The Structure of Theoretical Frameworks

As Table II.1 shows, a framework is conventionally named after its definition of the social world of art producers. I also follow this convention in identifying an institutional approach and terming my own the exhibitionary system. Moreover, in existing frameworks, the definition of the social world is often the most clearly and explicitly articulated aspect. This definition is also always given prior to the elucidation of the other two aspects – research subject and social mechanism. This way of articulating theories conceals the logical necessity to define the social world of art producers in light of the explanation of social mechanism for artistic production. I also contest the decision to describe the social world of art producers first, because the first step towards theoretical construction is clarifying the research subject – artistic production. Therefore, I begin my examination of existing frameworks with their understandings of artistic production.

1.2 Integrating artist and artwork

The understanding of artistic production defines a framework from the outset. Problems with definitions of artistic production, therefore, can be fundamental. Yet existing frameworks have separated artists and artworks when defining artistic production. From this separation, indeed, arises the first major problem with existing frameworks.

Bourdieu and Becker both understand artistic production as the production of art-

works. For Becker (2008), it is the material production of artworks. For Bourdieu (1993), it is the material and symbolic production of artworks. Regardless of the difference, for both theorists, artwork is the only output of artistic production. The institutional approach adopts a distinct view. It understands artistic production as the making of artists' careers. Yet this understanding is not disconnected from the production of artworks. Rather, it is based upon the observation that the production of artworks is organised within each artist's career, as I have explained in Chapter One. This insight regarding artistic production holds important theoretical potential for the institutional approach. It highlights the need to understand artistic production not only in the production of artworks, but also the production of artists, because artworks are only able to be continuously recognised as artwork when their makers' careers endure.

However, as the institutional approach shifts the analytical focus away from artworks to art institutions, its potential to integrate the production of artworks with that of artists remains undeveloped. Certainly, Bourdieu (1993) also points out that the artist is "created" by an ideology that attributes the identity of creator to the artist only despite the contribution of other actors (p. 76-77). Yet this observation is made in isolation from the production of artworks.

Consequently, the attempts to determine the social mechanisms for artistic production are also directed towards two separate social processes. While Bourdieu and Becker explain how the social world of art producers impact on the creative process of artists, the institutional approach explains how artists make careers (see Figure II.1, page 44). In the following, I examine first the social mechanisms in each process proposed by existing frameworks, and then come back to the problems caused by separating the two processes.

Bourdieu and Becker on the creative process

With regards to social mechanisms for the creation of artworks, Bourdieu and Becker are further divided in their explanations. To provide a common ground for a better comparison between the two, I summarise the three commonly deployed mechanisms in the social theories. They are: a *conventional mechanism*, a *cognitive mechanism*, and a *materialist mechanism*. These three mechanisms are based upon three fundamental characteristics of the social world. The sociology of art also relies on these general mechanisms, because the very possibilities of a sociology of art emerge from the fact that a large portion of artistic practices fit the definition of social actions.

First of all, conventions are one of the elementary components of our society (Searle,

1995). Social actions are enabled by mutual agreements regarding the fashion, the meaning, and the expected outcome of actions. Second, society is enabled by shared knowledge, consciousness or awareness, as well as corresponding cognitive formats that regulate them. This means, on the one hand, as Simmel (1910) elaborates, society as constituted by individuals hinges upon the consciousness of each individual that she is associated to others. This consciousness makes sociability possible. Simmel calls this view the "epistemological theory of society". Despite the use of "epistemology", he actually emphasises on individuals' social orientations only, which are also essential for social actions. Hence, I need to highlight, on the other hand, the cognitive capacity that underlies social actions. Actions are often the outcome of cognitive processes that involve processing information, application of knowledge, and deployment of competence. Social factors penetrate into this cognitive process, because knowledge is commonly acquired in socialisation (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) and competence merges from, although cannot be reduced to, acquisition of knowledge and accumulation of experience (Collins, 2010). In other words, the cognitive mechanisms in sociology amounts to the thesis that cognition is embedded in a social process. Moreover, there are recognisable formats regulating human cognition, namely "schemes of perception and appreciations" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 64). These schemes, due to their collective nature, are also studied in cultural sociology (DiMaggio, 1997). Drawing upon the terminology of psychology and cognitive science, I call them cognitive schemata. Third, there is a strong materialist tradition in sociology, which can be attributed to Karl Marx. Social actions are determined here by the social positions, which can be best described by classes, of the actors. This materialist mechanism relies upon a quasi-causal relationship between patterns of socio-economic factors and patterns of social actions.

Having clarified these three mechanisms, I can now compare Becker's and Bourdieu's explanations of the artist's creative process as a social process. Becker offers the most straightforward and almost banal answer. He emphasises *conventions* and *cooperations* to reveal the fact that art is made collectively and not by artists alone (Becker, 1974). Conventions, in this framework, refer to all kinds of standardisation, common practices, and references to past solutions. These conventions create a confined space of limited possibilities, within which artists can choose the paths they take in finishing an artwork. Conventions also help to coordinate the cooperation between artists and other co-producers.

Bourdieu's answer is more sophisticated. He conceptualises the relation between

artistic production and the social world of producers as that between *position-takings* and *(artistic) positions.* Position-takings refer to cultural products made by artists; positions refer to the anchor points for certain amounts of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital. Artists can occupy certain artistic positions and they launch position-takings. Here, position-takings arise "quasi-mechanically" from the relationships between positions (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 59). Bourdieu argues that position-takings are determined by the power relationship between positions, not by producers' wills or consciousness. However, the effect of positions on position-takings is mediated by the producer's habitus, which inform the producers of available positions that can be taken (ibid., p. 62, p. 64). Habitus is defined by Bourdieu as the embodied "schemes of perception and appreciations", juxtaposed with wills and consciousness (ibid., p. 64). Habitus, furthermore, is acquired from the social world of producers.

It is therefore clear that while Becker deploys a conventional mechanism in his explanation, Bourdieu uses mostly (but not only) the cognitive and materialist mechanisms. In other words, while Becker reserves the black box for the artist to select paths in the space of possibilities,[6] Bourdieu opens the black box. He argues that the artist's decision is informed by their cognitive schemata – an important element of habitus, and conditioned by available positions in the field.

The problem with Becker's use of the conventional mechanism is the lack of clarification and differentiation among various types of convention. As a fundamental component of the social world, it is impossible to reject the relevance of convention. In Chapter One, I pointed out the immensely enlarged space of possibilities that renders the conventions less perceptible, on the use of materials, techniques, styles, and concepts in artworks. However, I do not argue that conventions on other aspects of artistic production vanished in contemporary art. In fact, although the dominant paradigm in contemporary art is to transgress, there are always mutual agreements. After all, even a paradigm to transgress can be called a convention. It is, therefore, necessary to distinguish between different types of convention and specify the ones applicable to the study at hand, for it becoming a useful concept. My solution to this problem is to map out the concrete norms in exhibition making. Norms are conventional standards for social actions. The most important standards, which I have highlighted in Chapter One, concern the scenography of the exhibition space.

---

[6]Bourdieu also uses the term "the space of possibles" to describe the complex of all existing position-takings (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 30). Here the space of possibles is rooted in a structuralist understanding of meaning: the meaning of an artwork is only determined in relation to existing works. The appearance of a new work modifies the possibilities in this space. In Becker's theory, possibilities refer to the materials, resources, and formats can be used in a piece of new work.

Bourdieu is frequently criticised for his materialist mechanism, although he intends to mediate the impact of capitals and power (deposited in positions) through habitus. Regardless of whether he succeeds in providing a better materialist mechanism, I contest the very application of a materialist mechanism in the sociology of art. As discussed in Chapter One, the concept of artistic positions has become less applicable for contemporary art, due to the dissolution of style as a collective label. We can no longer associate a style with a certain social group of artists characterised by their possession of different types of capitals. This association fails us not because art critics and historians no longer deploy the concept of style. The reason lies in that artists who share similarity in their artworks cannot be identified as a social group anymore. They may come from different social backgrounds, and have no actual social relationships because they never have met each other, as revealed in Crane's (1987) case of the New York art scene between 1940 and 1985. She observes that as the art world transformed, artists in the two then newest artistic styles Photorealism and Pattern Painting, unlike those participated in the movement of Pop Art and Minimalism in the 1950s and 1960s, did not form groups through social interactions. They were simply put together by dealers on account of (alleged) similarities in their artworks (Crane, 1987, p. 32-33). Therefore, the concept of position and the materialist mechanism enabled by this concept are no longer useful in a new framework for contemporary art.

By contrast, the cognitive mechanism indicated by the concept of habitus remain valid, although I have reservations about the corporeal entanglement Bourdieu assigns to habitus. He situates habitus beneath the level of consciousness (Wacquant, 2016, p. 66). However, in fact, it is difficult to see how secondary habitus, the part of habitus that is acquired from "school and other didactic institutions" (Wacquant, 2016, p. 68), can operate completely beneath the level of consciousness. Furthermore, in explaining artist's creation, only the generative and practical competence enabled by cognitive schemata matters. Whether such competence operates on the level of consciousness is of no significance for our current undertaking. Among these cognitive schemata, in my framework, I highlight those that are indicated by categories and classifications used in art historiographies. I call them art-historiographical schemata, on which I will elaborate later in section two.

Lack of explanations for artistic careers

In regards to the making of artistic careers, the institutional approach does not have a distinct theory. This question is mostly answered in empirical art market research.

Notably, the assumption of an institutional alliance can be mistaken for a mechanism. This assumption is suggested by coinages such as "dealer-critic system" (White & White, 1993) or "dealer-curator system" (Moulin & Vale, 1995). Specifically, Moulin and his colleaguepropose that there is an overlap between the selection of artists by leader galleries and leader museums (Moulin, 1994; Moulin & Vale, 1995). This amount to saying that artists' careers are made in the selection process of dealers and curators. This idea is consistent with my argument that artists are produced in the exhibitionary system, where they are selected and re-selected to create artworks for public presentation. I do however, criticise this approach, for its equation of explanation with description in this approach. The institutional alliance does not explain the process of selecting artists. It is a mere hypothesised description of the social world of art producers. It postulates a certain structure in an art system, which can be only verified or rejected in empirical research.

It could be argued that social mechanisms for artistic careers can be identified from Bourdieu's theory, although his theory is meant to explain the production of artworks. The opposition between peer recognition and market success in the art field (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 39) is apparently an answer to the production of artists. I reject this answer for the same reason that I reject the assumption of an institutional alliance. The opposition between peer recognition and market success describes the feature of the social world of art producers. Again, a dualism between the judgements and powers of two groups of people – the peer and the collectors, remains a hypothesis to be tested by empirical data. Moreover, there is another reason to reject peer recognition and market success as mechanisms for the production of artists. These two terms describe the *reception* of artists, not the *production* of artists. Here, I detect another problem caused by the holistic view and the production-medition-reception sequence. It is a problem that can only be explained, if translated into my terminology. That is, in the reception of an exhibition (and the exhibiting artists), the actors involved are not the exhibition makers who have contributed to the exhibition. This shift of actors changes the nature of social actions involved and also the perspective of analysis. However, such a change is ignored in Bourdieu's theory, because in the holistic view of production, reception is also "production".

In brief, no distinct social mechanisms have been identified regarding the production of artists. This problem is mistaken for one that determines the structure of the art world. The reason for this confusion is probably that artists themselves belong to the social world of producers, who cannot easily be considered as being produced. In this dissertation, determining the structure of the art world is an empirical task. A framework

only explains the building blocks of this social world. Moreover, there is also a tendency to confuse the reception of artists with the production of artists. As already indicated in the articulation of this problem, my solution entails a change of terminology. This has enabled me to understand the production of artists as the efforts of exhibition makers: non-artist exhibition makers give artists the opportunities to become artists; and then together with the selected artists, they *strive for* a better reception of the exhibitions and the artists. In my framework, these processes constitute a loop of exhibition making, which I will clarify further in my overarching proposal to go beyond the separation itself.

Beyond the separation

After examining existing explanations of artistic creation and artistic careers, I now come to my principal objection to the very separation of the two processes. As this problem stems from understanding artistic output as either the artwork or the artistic career, the solution to this central problem is therefore, to incorporate the interdependence of artists and artworks into the definition of artistic production. My concept of oeuvre, proposed to understand the production of artworks as the construction of each artist's collection of artworks as an entity, draws upon such an interdependence. On the one hand, the identity of an artist is not only an ideological construct, but also fundamentally relies on a continuous output of artworks. On the other hand, artworks are created by artists as a coherent entity for the pursuit of artistic careers. The introduction of oeuvre, of which I give a clear definition in section two, allows me to integrate the making of artistic careers into the artistic creative process.

Furthermore, my turn from art to exhibition, as discussed in Chapter One, enables me to treat both artists and artworks as the outcomes of exhibition making. To be precise, the production of both is integrated into a loop of exhibition making (see Figure II.2). As artists are selected by exhibition makers, they are given the chance to create artworks for exhibition. In the creative process, artists create oeuvres suitable for public presentation. Through exhibitions, artists, together with the supporting exhibition makers, strive for visibility. An artist's visibility, which is essentially a cognitive link between the visible and the viewer, corresponds to the awareness of this artist among exhibition makers. This awareness is indispensable to the evaluative process of non-artist exhibition makers. Hence, visibility is a prerequisite for artists to be re-selected. Because of this relational nature, visibility becomes a crucial concept that completes the loop. It relates back to the evaluation process of non-artist exhibition makers.

Within this loop, I can furthermore, locate the social mechanisms for artistic production not only in the artist's creative process, but also in the artistic evaluation of artists by exhibition makers in their constant research of exhibitors. Indeed, the production of artists entails both the selection made by non-artist exhibition makers and their pursuit of visibility for artists. However, the pursuit of visibility aims for the re-selection of artists. Hence, the production of artists eventually resides in the non-artist exhibition makers' evaluation process. As discussed, existing frameworks have not addressed this evaluation process. To cover this blindspot, therefore, constitutes another major task in constructing my own framework. Bourdieu's (1993) elaboration of artistic perception and appreciation touches upon a similar process. Yet he focuses on the competence to recognise, perceive, and judge art, and undermines the competence to articulate such judgements. I contend that the latter competence is equally relevant in artistic evaluation, when non-artist exhibition makers select artists. I argue that artistic evaluation goes beyond what he discussed as the reception of art as a cognitive and perceiving process solely that does not entail further actions. I thereby need to explain how the evaluative actions of non-artist exhibition makers differ from artistic judgement or appreciation. Concerning the production of artworks, as Becker's and Bourdieu's explanations of the artist's creative process are inadequate, I use the concepts of scenography and art-historiographical schemata to improve their theorisation. I will elaborate and define these new concepts in section two.

1.3 Restructuring the social world of producers

For Becker (2008), the social world of art producers is an art world, a network of cooperative links among different producers such as artists, support staff, craftsmen, and other co-producers. For Bourdieu (1993), it is a space of objective relationships among position-takings and positions – an artistic field of production. The art field is further built upon an opposition between peer recognition and market demand, and another opposition between the established and the avant-garde.

Becker and Bourdieu see their theories as competing frameworks (Becker & Pessin, 2006; Bourdieu, 1993). Other scholars have recognised their intentions and an *interactions* versus *structure* debate underlying their competition (De Nooy, 2003; Bottero and Crossley, 2011). This debate between the duo have thereby become the focus in existing discussion regarding the definition of the social word of producers.

Bourdieu (1993) clarifies that field is irreducible to a population, whereas Becker (2006) acknowledges only the impact of intersubjective relationships among upon human

actions. Hence, although both talk about constraints placed upon producers, Becker refers to the conventions created by earlier producers and limited resources provided by co-producers, whereas Bourdieu means the structured constrains imposed by the logic of the field.

Certainly, as those who have recognised the debate also contend (De Nooy, 2003; Bottero and Crossley, 2011), this debate indicates that both frameworks are equally flawed, because each neglects what the other emphasises. A debate on structure and interaction is a sterile one, because a full picture of the social world requires both subjective interactions and objective structure. For instance, De Nooy (2003) argues that, while the forces of objective relations must be mediated by human interactions to have an impact, human interactions can also transform objective relations.

Furthermore, social network analysis has been proposed as a potential remedy to settle the sterile debate. It is argued that SNA is compatible with both Becker's and Bourdieu's theories and reconciles structure to interactions (De Nooy, 2003; Bottero and Crossley, 2011). Social network analysis (SNA) understands the social world as composed of relational ties among different sets of actors. SNA has also developed a set of sophisticated methods to model and visualise these ties based on mathematical graph theory and matrix multiplication. As Becker himself refers to cooperative links, which are one type of social ties, Becker's art world is made easily compatible with social network analysis. For his part, Bourdieu rejects social network analysis. Therefore, network sociologists need to clarify first that Bourdieu's rejection is unjustified. Bottero and Crossley (2011) argue that Bourdieu actually referred to empirical networks in an under-theorised and tacit way, because otherwise there would be missing links between positions and habitus. De Nooy (2003b) approaches the matter from a methodological angle. He proves that there are no fundamental technical differences between the method Bourdieu uses, namely correspondence analysis, and social network analysis. The two methods can generate the same type of spatial map, which Bourdieu uses to indicate the structure of the field. Network sociologists also make a strong case for SNA based upon its capacity to measure symbolic capital and social capital (S. P. Borgatti, Jones, & Evertt, 1998; R. S. Burt, 2000; Anheier, Gerhards, & Romo, 1995; De Nooy, 2003b; Bottero & Crossley, 2011). In brief, SNA looks at concrete social ties among actors, but is also able to identify structure in the distribution of social and symbolic capital. Envisaging the social world of art producers as interconnected networks seems a perfect way to reconcile Becker' and Bourdieu's ideas.

By contrast, the institutional approach evades the debate between Becker and Bour-

dieu, by regarding institutions as the basic building blocks of the social world. Of course, compared to interactions, structures, and networks, institutions are less fundamental in the sociological hierarchy of concepts. Though inevitably deployed in the elucidation of both Bourdieu's and Becker's theories, institutions are not considered as fundamental building blocks there. In fact, because interactions in institutions are structured and routinised, using institutions as the building blocks of the social world eludes the sterile dualism of structure and interaction. This is a theoretical advantage resulting unexpectedly from the institutional approach's strong empirical orientation that prefers tangible institutions as analytical foci. Moreover, the institutional approach is also compatible with social network analysis. Both the "dealer-critic" (White & White, 1993) and "dealer-curator" (Moulin & Vale, 1995) systems imply that the collaborative networks are an essential component in the institutional system. But certainly, collaboration, in SNA, is only one type of social links that constitute networks. Crane's (1987) understanding of networks is more consistent with a sophisticated view of networks in SNA. She observes an acquaintance network among artists, through which almost all artists are connected (p. 30).

I use institutions and networks as the two basic building blocks for my definition of the social world of exhibition makers. In so doing, I draw upon the institutional approach because of its compatibility with different frameworks. Furthermore, this decision also stems from my major criticism for the existing discussion. I contest not only the sterile dualism Becker and Bourdieu have diverted scholarly attention to, but also the fact that their debate ensues from a general theoretical concern, rather than a specific one in relation to artistic production. Consequently, the solution provided by SNA is also flawed due to the same reason, regardless of my reservations over the equation of network positions with artistic positions (see Anheier et al., 1995; Bottero & Crossley, 2011). No matter whether they argue to see the social world of art producers as a field, a world, or a network, these sociologists have neglected the same central problem in the sociology of art. That is, they have not justified themselves by the benefits that their views can bring to the understanding of artistic production.

By contrast, I conceptualise the social world of art producers on account of the feasibility of identifying and developing social mechanisms for artistic production. This feasibility arises from my use of institutions and networks as the two building blocks. I define the exhibitionary system as a set of exhibition spaces embedded in the informal social networks among exhibition makers. Exhibition spaces are those art institutions that hold regular exhibitions and separate them from the sales of art. Institutions are the

anchor points for norms and routines in exhibition making; they are also the physical spaces in which exhibitions take place. Therefore, they allow the elaboration of scenography as a normative standard that shape the physical features of artworks. The concept of oeuvre is also conceived in this exhibition context, because exhibition normally presents a collection of artworks, intended for public appreciation and critical examination. Networks are the other building blocks, because they are an important medium for social interactions, information circulation, and knowledge diffusion. As such, this medium is indispensable for non-artist exhibition makers in their evaluating of artists. Visibility, which is a relational term and indicates the cognitive ties among exhibition makers, can also be better conceived in a network view of the social world.

Hence, by defining the social world of art producers as an exhibitionary system, I elude the sterile debate between Becker and Bourdieu, incorporate the merits of social network analysis, and most importantly, facilitate the formulation of social mechanisms that I have developed to explain artistic production.

In summation, although a framework is conventionally named after its term for the social world of art producers, it must first define the research subject. The social world of art producers also needs to be defined in relation to how it shapes artistic production. The failure to understand artistic production in its full social operations, directed towards both artworks and artists, and the failure to account for such operations in constructing the social world of producers, constitutes my principal criticism of existing frameworks. I have outlined here how to integrate artists with artworks, and how to restructure the social world of art producers using the two building blocks – institutions and networks. In the following two sections, I will explain my solutions and the major concepts developed for these solutions.

2   The Social Mechanisms for Artistic Production

In the exhibitionary system, artistic production unfolds in a loop of exhibition making, through which both artists and artworks are produced. Correspondingly, the explanations for artistic production draw upon two types of social actions involved in the loop. These are artists' creative actions, and non-artist exhibition makers' evaluative actions in their selection of artists.

As discussed, Becker and Bourdieu have developed accounts of how the creative actions are social actions, deploying conventional and cognitive mechanisms. In this sec-

tion, I elaborate on my use of these two mechanisms for the production of artworks in the exhibition context. I understand the exhibition context as both the physical environment of art, and the symbolic space for the public and critical appreciation of art. *Scenography* and *oeuvre* stand for the normative and cognitive formats stemming from the artists' awareness of the critical audience and the physical space. Certainly, artists have in most cases developed the capacity to comply with these formats in their creation.

The non-artist exhibition makers' evaluative actions, however, as shown in section one, have not been theorised. Artistic judgement, which Bourdieu has successfully translated from aesthetics and into a sociological category, hinges upon the actors' competence – acquired in their socialisation process and by accumulation of artistic knowledge – to conceive opinions on artworks. Yet this is only one aspect of artistic evaluation. It entails, furthermore, the competence to articulate these opinions. The articulation of these opinions is a competence that only develops from familiarising with existing ways of articulating. Therefore, artistic evaluation is a type of social actions, because the two-fold competence to evaluate art — to judge and to articulate the judgement — emerges from the acquisition of artistic knowledge and ways of articulation. The former is largely of a conventional nature; and the latter are either conventional or schematised. In addition, non-artist exhibition makers can only evaluate those artists of whom they are already aware. In other words, only artists who are visible to exhibition makers are evaluated and can thus eventually be selected.

It is notable that artists also rely on their evaluative competence to choose among the possible paths that can be taken during creation. Artists and non-artist exhibition makers are therefore subject to the same set of normative formats and cognitive schemata. In the exhibitionary system, I highlight those represented by the *scenographic* standards, and the *art-historiographical schemata* – formats that also undergird the idea of *oeuvre.*

2.1 Artworks in exhibition

In the exhibitionary system, artworks are created within the exhibition context. They are created to suit the physical features of the exhibition spaces, and to gain the awareness or, preferably, recognition of the professional audience and the general public. For the former purpose, artists consider the scenographic principles. For the latter purpose, artists create artworks according to the standards of a well-structured oeuvre.

I have already introduced the concept of scenography in Chapter One (see page 11). Here I elaborate on its impact on artworks. In brief, the normative requirements from
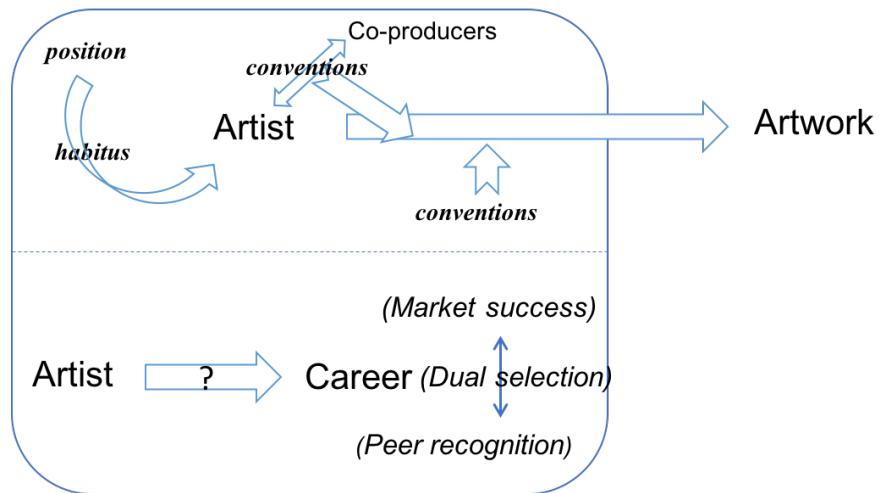
Figure II.1: The explanations in existing frameworks
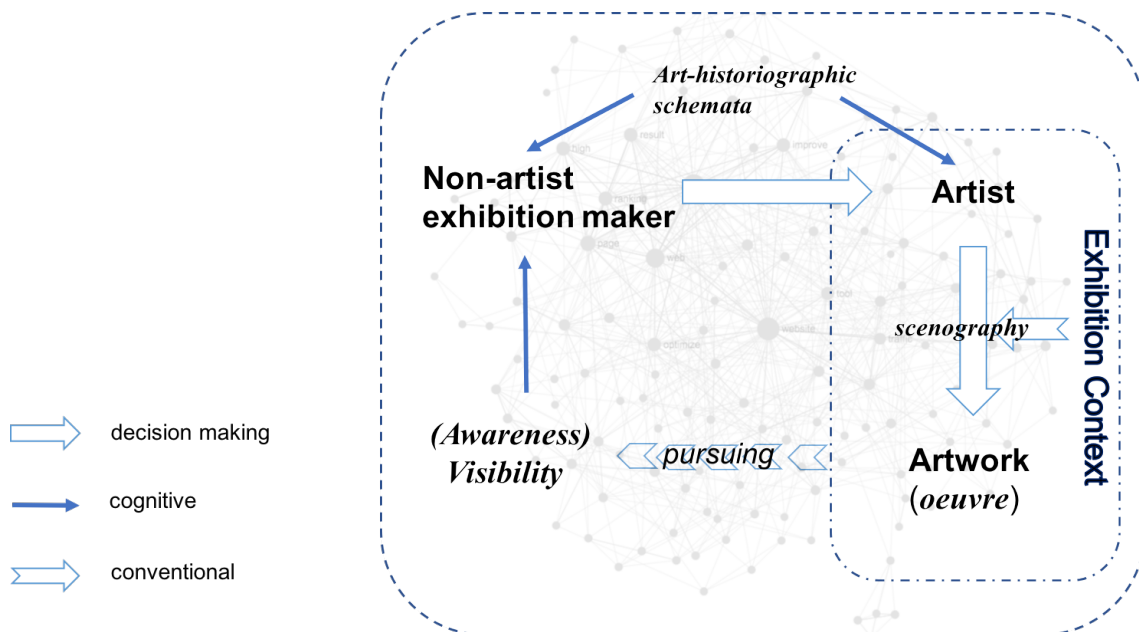
Figure II.2: The Exhibitionary System

a scenographic handling of exhibition is to integrate the exhibition space into the creation of artworks. Artworks are to be planned and installed for a holistic experience of art inside the exhibition space. This means artists need to coordinate the spatial, visual, and experiential relationships among the various components of a work, all of which constitute the material basis of the artwork, if it is an object; or the exhibition as a whole, if the artwork goes beyond objecthood. Artworks are, therefore, created in physical relationships to one another, and to the exhibition rooms in which they will be installed.

As the concept of oeuvre was only briefly introduced in section one, I therefore here explain its definition and its significance. An oeuvre is to be distinguished from an entire body of artworks. The latter refers to all the works that an artist has created. The former includes only artworks that are recognised as finished and qualified. And this recognition is granted, in this dissertation, the moment the artworks are open to critical examination in an exhibition. The construction of an artist's oeuvre, as it follows, is done through a series of exhibitions – solo exhibitions in particular. But an oeuvre is constructed from an entire body of artworks. The selection, organisation, and differentiation of the latter gives rise to the former. The material production of artworks, the topic Becker addresses, therefore amounts to only the first step towards the construction of an oeuvre. This process of construction is most conspicuous in the posthumous making of some artists' oeuvres in art history (see Heinich, 1996), through which we have come to know artists by their masterpieces, and not by their many other works. It is therefore clear that there is a hierarchical structure within an oeuvre: some are judged to be the most valuable, others are less so, and the rest may be studies or unfinished works only. But there is also a horizontal axis to the structure of an oeuvre. In many cases, this axis is temporal, epitomised by Picasso's Blue, Rose, and Cubist Periods.

With this said, the construction of an oeuvre belongs to the practices of western art historiography. This fact may cause the impression that an oeuvre is only constructed posthumously. In fact, art history writing is rarely disentangled from contemporary art narratives. Coinages of styles, for instance, as the example of Impressionism shows, are often made by contemporaries and become part of art historical terms. Hence, the construction of an oeuvre begins with the organisation of the first few artworks, and only continues posthumously, if the artist manages to survive "the verdict of history" (Moulin, 1987, p. 27). Moulin (1987) notices how the awareness of art historical judgements influenced artists, who composed their artistic biographies and catalogues accordingly, and had the inclination to archive every traces in their creation. However, he does not explore

this further.

That is to say, noticeably, even though art historians mourn an alleged "end of art history", the awareness and cognitive schemata contained in art historical writing have a persistent impact on artists' creation within contemporary art. What actually ends in art history, is the "single meta-narrative" (A. C. Danto, 2009, p. 140), not the art-historiographical narratives and the underlying schemata. In the transgressive paradigm, the idea of progress and a teleological development within an artist's oeuvre might be less prevailing (Heinich, 2014a), but other ideas remain valid in contemporary art. Schneeman (2012) investigates specifically what he terms an "historiographic consciousness". By this he means that artists are aware of the lines of traditions in art history, the idea of progress, and the imperative of the new, with which they actively comply (Schneeman, 2012, p. 62). That is to say, artists create artworks in the expectation of organising them in a certain structure. For instance, artists normally create new works in reference to old ones, including those made by themselves and by others. They intentionally continue with or rebel against certain artistic traditions. Schneeman (2012) also suggests that artists have obtained this awareness from training in art schools. In the "Crit" chapter of her book *Seven Days in the Art World*, Thornton (2009) presents an anthropological narration of seminar discussions in California Institute of the Arts. She shows that contemporary artists are trained to narrate their own works. It is reasonable to assume that artists develop such a capacity for narration from familiarisation with the narratives of art historiography.

I conclude that the awareness to create an oeuvre stems from the art-historiographical schemata, which artists may have acquired from their artistic training. This awareness is not only shared by artists who create artworks, but also by those who evaluate artworks: peer artists, curators, gallerists, and, even collectors. For instance, curators receive training in art history and curatorial studies, which entails the teaching of organising artworks in exhibitions. Like artists, they have acquired the same – if not a stronger – awareness and capacity to identify and create structure within an artist's collection of artworks. Given this awareness, an artist is often evaluated by the merits of her oeuvre. This means that an artist's career depends not on a few well-recognised artworks, by which famous artists are always known to the public though, but a collection of qualified artworks. In other words, both quality and quantity matter. Moreover, the merits of an oeuvre also stem from its internal coherence, and thus, the connections between artworks. Therefore, artworks are often conceived by an artist in relation to what he has created before and might create in the future.

To create artworks for an exhibition – i.e., the space for critical examination of artworks – artists comply with the idea of constructing an oeuvre. They also comply with the possibilities enabled or constrained by the physical features of an exhibition space. This means that artworks produced in the process of exhibition making are usually created more or less as an interrelated entity that furthermore stands in coherence with the exhibition environment. Artworks that disturb the coherence of such an entity may instead be kept out of sight, rendered invisible. Such a coherence is often also articulated verbally and emphasised in exhibition texts, such as press releases, descriptions of artworks, and wall texts. Hence, in this dissertation, the symbolic production of artworks – for which artistic discourses is an important means in Bourdieu's theory – dissolves into the construction of narratives in the exhibition texts. The material production discussed by Becker, as mentioned above, is only the first step towards constructing an oeuvre. In viewing the production of artworks in the exhibition context, we have thereby gone beyond the division between material and symbolic production of artworks. Moreover, we have also revealed the creative process as penetrated by the awareness of audience and thereby gone beyond the division between the production and mediation of art.

2.2 Artistic evaluation as social action

Artistic evaluation is the core of the decision-making process in selecting artists for exhibition. Even though non-artist exhibition makers must also consider non-artistic factors, such as the geographic origins, ages, and even (regrettably) genders of artists, the artworks and artistic outputs of the artists are central to their considerations. It is also the evaluation of artworks that constitutes a problem specifically for the sociology of exhibitions, because artwork often elude a sociological inspection. Hence, the main task here is to explain this evaluative action as a type of social action.

There are two aspects that testify to the involvement of social mechanisms in non-artist exhibition makers' evaluation of artists (and their artworks). First, the competence to evaluate art emerges from, even though it is not reducible to, a significant amount of experience with what is conventionally considered as good art. The competence to evaluate art, furthermore, is developed from a familiarisation with widely accepted ways of articulating artistic judgements. With this said, I understand artistic evaluation to be a two-fold process. Artistic evaluation is not a mere *perception* or *judgement* of art; it is to conceive an opinion and then to *articulate* that opinion in an intelligible way. This competence for articulation is underplayed in Bourdieu's (1993) discussion of art

perception, but it is the other essential aspect of artistic evaluation. Non-artist exhibition makers often need to justify their selection of artists, for the purpose of gaining support not only from others with whom they might make the decision jointly, but also from the anticipated audience. Furthermore, this competence for articulation enables the verbal presentation of artists in exhibition through texts and narratives. Second, given that exhibition makers have developed both competences, their evaluation is further bounded; clearly, people can only evaluate what comes to their attention. Hence, the issue of *visibility* — from the perspective of artists, who are to be selected, or *awareness* – from the perspective of non-artist exhibition makers, who make the selection — comes into play.

In his "Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception", Bourdieu (1993) successfully transforms the aesthetic matter of artistic judgment (J. H. Levinson, 2003) into a sociological undertaking. He does so by incorporating the competence to judge art to "habitus" or a form of "embodied" cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2002). He points out that the competence to appreciate art cannot be reduced to experience with art or the acquisition of artistic knowledge. This is also the reason why, I conjecture, Bourdieu resorts to a concept of "habitus" that suggests corporeal entanglement with the cognitive capacity. This emergent nature of the capacity to judge art is also applicable to the ability to articulate artistic judgement in an intelligible way.

Despite its emergent nature, I would like to draw the attention back to the cognitive foundation of the competence to evaluate art. Such competence emerges from sufficient cognitive exposure to artworks and artistic narratives. First, the competence to judge art develops in first accepting as knowledge the outcomes of evaluation made by earlier generations and a senior peer group. This kind of knowledge is in nature conventional, as it is formed of the mutual agreements on evaluative opinions. This artistic knowledge is acquired from school training, say, through learning art history. But the more contemporary component of the artistic knowledge, which is formed of evaluative opinions of a senior peer group, is acquired through socialising with them.

Second, the competence to articulate artistic judgement stems from a familiarisation with existing ways of articulation. This familiarisation enables the exhibition makers to formulate their own opinions. I highlight here two kinds of formats for ways of articulation. Conventions on ways of articulation have typically been evoked as some distinct "art languages". This impressionist perception has been substantiated by the case of an "International Art English" (Rule & Rush, 2013). Certain propensities and preferences, such as an excessive use of nouns and incomprehensible expressions, and preferences in the use of

vocabularies are detected. The art-historiographical categories, then, constitute another important social format for the articulation of artistic judgements. Artistic judgements on an artist's collection of artworks, specifically, are deployed in the construction of oeuvre. By way of illustration, the concept of oeuvre, and the corresponding ways of perceiving a collection of artworks as such, enables the exhibition makers to justify the selection of artists on the grounds of features in the artists' oeuvres. As how it is often stated in a press release of an exhibition, artists are portrayed as significant, by statements such that their artworks display a stable development, a coherent structure, or a diversity in the use of artistic media or approaches.

Once manifested verbally, these ways of articulation become what are commonly referred to as the criteria for evaluation or selection. However, I do not use the term criteria, because it evokes the impression that ways of articulation are external to the evaluative process. By contrast, the way of articulation moulds the artistic perception as a cognitive process. It shapes the way that artworks are perceived. Moreover, the term criteria fails to convey the tacit nature of artistic judgment and its resulting opinions. With this said, I acknowledge that results of artistic judgment cannot be fully articulated. Against this difficulty of expression, the social formats for articulation facilitate the communication among exhibition makers about the results of their judgements by providing a common point of reference.

Finally, the selection of artists is made within a limited number of artists who become visible to the exhibition makers responsible for making decisions. Awareness and visibility are the two sides of the same coin, because visibility essentially demands a conscious audience. As exhibition makers are at stake in this current exploration of artistic evaluation, I explain the matter as awareness. Awareness depends on the information circulated in the networks among exhibition makers. The importance of social networks as channels of information diffusion has been established as a fact in SNA (Granovetter, 1973; Burt, 1992). Research about the deployment of networks in the selection of musicians (Foster, Borgatti, & Jones, 2011) and composition of artistic programmes (Kawashima, 1999) has also testified to the validity of this general argument in the specific art world.

Furthermore, network analysts also argue that certain network positions enable the occupants to be better informed. They have found out that actors who are the connecting points for several subgroups — groups which would otherwise have no connections to one another — are the best informed (R. Burt, 2004). Due to "network homophily" (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001), people tend to form circles of homogenous

networks. Information circulated within a close friendship circle is often repetitious and redundant. But those who connect to different groups may have access to information that is not repetitious and thus more diverse. However, usually, in a large network, only a limited number of people will occupy such positions, and other actors are more likely to be situated in a group within which overlapping information is shared. Certainly, exhibition makers do not rely passively on the information obtained through their networks. They also actively seek out new artists by going to exhibitions, or visiting artists' studios. Yet such searches are then particularly confined within the recommendations of others and the established visibility of exhibition spaces. This, then, once again becomes a general sociological question.

2.3 Visibility

Visibility has been frequently used by sociologists in the study of art, but in most occasions, it is not a clearly defined academic concept. I therefore first define the concept of visibility. I do so by developing useful implications given by existing usages of this word, and by clarifying further crucial aspects absent from these usages. Most importantly, visibility is essentially a relative term, which requires a specification of "visible to whom". I define an artist's visibility in relation to the awareness of a professional audience, who are exhibition makers but not yet involved in the making of this particular artist's exhibitions. Then, I go on to justify why visibility, distinguished from recognition, is a significant concept. Finally, I explain how visibility can be pursued in exhibition.

Definition of visibility

Although an exhibition space or a curator can also have visibility, the production of artists is the central problem here; therefore, I examine usages of visibility with regards to artists only. Depending on the context, sociologists have used visibility to refer to participation in art fair or art exhibitions (Quemin, 2013; Baia Curioni, Forti, & Leone, 2015), the extent to which an artist has attracted the attention of dealers or buyers — used interchangeable with publicity (Moulin, 1987), or simply prominence (Zolberg, 1981; Moulin & Vale, 1995). Usages that are closest to academic definitions are only found, to my knowledge, in works by White and White (1993) and Fuller (2015a). White and White (1993) conclude that the dealer-critic system provided visibility and publicity for the Impressionist artists. Here visibility means the possibility of being seen in public exhibitions, while publicity means the attention artists received from critics in the form of published reviews (p. 150). Fuller

(2015a) speaks of visibility in artists' efforts to make careers. He understands visibility as "the act of making one's artwork and persona as an artistic noticeable to a public" (p. 13). To make careers, artists need to build connections and maintain a physical presence in major artistic events, and particularly, in gallery openings. Here, visibility means social capital. To be precise, Fuller (2015a) uses Granovetter's (1973) concept of "weak ties" and refers to the exhibition opportunities obtained from making connections with some curators during a gallery opening. Visibility also means the mere physical presence of artists, as Fuller (2015a) also argues for the importance of being physically involved in a local art scene.

The above understandings of visibility centre around the idea of exposure and attention. Yet an academic definition of visibility based upon this idea alone is not adequate. Above all, it does not touch up the relational nature of visibility. That is, visibility is only meaningful in relation to the "recipients" of visibility. Even though in Fuller's definition, "a public" is mentioned, a clear definition of visibility requires a close examination of the people who see art.

Bowness (1989) identifies four successive circles of audience: peer artists, critics, dealers and collectors, and finally the general public. The succession means to suggest that peer artists are always the first audience that give an artist a primary visibility, whereas the general public is usually the last to know a certain artist. In contemporary art, however, it is difficult to tell who constitute the first audience (Moulin and Vale, 1995). Curators, dealers, and collectors can be equally well informed of new artists, depending on which artists are at stake. However, there is still a distinct knowledge gap between two types of audiences: the professional audience and the general public. The professional audience are in a better position to be aware of emerging artists. Becker (2008) also makes a similar distinction between the professional audience and the public audience. His distinction is made according to the audience's familiarity with the conventions used in artistic production. In my framework, the knowledge gap is created by the involvement in exhibition making. I define the professional audience as those who have been or will be involved in exhibition making, whereas the public audience do not and will not have experience in making exhibitions. Specifically, for an exhibition, the professional audience refer to those exhibition makers who were not involved in the planning and installation phases of this particular exhibition.[7] My distinction hinges upon *actions*, which are easier

---

[7]Certainly, critics who do not act as curators are excluded from the professional audience in this definition. However, such an exclusion is acceptable because, nowadays, there are fewer critics who do not take the role of curators.

to observe than familiarity with artistic conventions as a standard used by Becker.

In this dissertation, an artist's visibility is mainly related to the professional audience. I define an artist's visibility as the degree to which a professional audience is aware of the artist. Awareness and visibility are thereby the two sides of the same coin. As Cole and Cole (1968) stated in their study of physicists' visibility in the academic world, there are people who can be more easily seen, and also people who can easily see. The artist's visibility to the general public can instead be called publicity. Certainly, as the general public often still remains the last circle of audiences, a high publicity usually means, sometimes also causes, a high visibility as well.

An artist's visibility is two-fold. An artist can be known personally by the audience; an artist can also be known by his or her artworks alone. There is therefore a distinction between *visibility via work* and also *visibility via body*. This distinction draws upon Graw's (2009) separation of artists from celebrities as such, as well as Fuller's (2015a) emphasis on artist's physical presence. Celebrities as such are famous for being famous only, whereas artists have works circulating independently from themselves (Graw, 2009). Visibility via *body* is more important for celebrities as such, while an artist's visibility is primarily determined by his visibility via work. Visibility via work also extends an artist's visibility beyond time and space. The extension is tremendously significant in cases of canonised artists. Da Vinci was only visible via body to some of his contemporaries. Yet his works have kept him visible for centuries long and he will remain visible in the future. This extension of an artist's visibility via work entails direct visual perception, as well as mediated perception through texts, images, or videos. Direct visual perception requires the physical presence of the audience. That is, in most cases, an artwork becomes visible to those who visit the exhibition. The mediated perception of artworks, by contrast, is not confined by time or space. An artwork can become visible to a much larger audience.

Theoretically, with the exception of performance artists (Graw, 2009), an artist can be visible via work alone and remain physically invisible.[8] In practice, the artist as a person is rarely detached from the works. The reason may lies in that, as Fuller (2015a) agues, presenting themselves physically in social activities helps artists to remind curators of their existence and thereby strengthen their visibility in the art world. This amounts to saying that visibility via body is a straightforward means to obtain exhibition

---

[8]In performance art, there is a still distinction between the artist's body as artistic medium and the artist's body as the corporeal creator. When the artist is putting on a live performance, the artist's visibility via work and via body is identical; but when they use video recording to preserve the ephemeral performance and showcase video art instead, the two becomes separated.

opportunities, as direct social contacts facilitate collaboration, or at least, the intention for collaboration. Another reason is suggested by Heinich (2014a). She conjectures that the strong public presence of an artist seems to be a remedy for the relative absence of the artist in the material fabrication of artworks. To a certain extent, therefore, the visibility of an artist via body in exhibition openings strengthens the artist's authorship of works. The deliberate choice of remaining physically invisible, a practice that transgresses the idea of physical presence, has paradoxically, brought the graffiti artist Banksy extra visibility.

With the example of Banksy, it also becomes clear that visibility does not necessarily stem from artistic judgments on the quality of art. The positive judgement on quality means recognition. Visibility is not in the domain of artistic judgement. The professional audience can be aware of an artist but not recognise the quality of his or her artworks. For instance, White and White (1993) already talks about group exhibition as a medium for attracting publicity (meaning visibility to art critics) in the late nineteenth century, for which negative reviews also worked. The distinction between recognition and visibility is also suggested in Fuller's (2015a) treatment of value and visibility as two different elements. Value refers to the judgements of curators and dealers on artistic quality. However, in contemporary art, quality becomes a fuzzy concept. My distinction between artistic qualities and non-artistic qualities hinges upon the four dimensions of artworks I have recognised: material, technical, stylistic (singular), and ideational dimensions (L. Zhang, 2013). That is, an artwork is essentially composed of the materials that make it, the techniques that handle it, the style it embodies, and the ideas that underpin it. Characteristics related to these four dimensions are artistic qualities; others are not. According to this definition of artistic qualities, Ai Weiwei's "Fairytale" project can be recognised because of the quasi-political idea contained in the act of challenging visa as an institution and presenting foreigners in a massive number. His own political engagement, which caused him a long-term detainment, is not an artistic quality. Yet it brings him high visibility. By the same token, exorbitant auction prices have brought Damien Hirst high visibility, and the simple mysterious act of remaining physically invisible raised visibility for Banksy.[9]

---

[9]The act of remaining anonymous can be said to be an idea that underpins Banksy's artworks. I contest this opinion, because this ideational dimension is not contained in each of his individual artworks. The artist can be, however, considered as a performance artist and thereby, the idea of being physically invisible can be viewed as an ideational dimension of his or her performance art.

Relevance of visibility

Visibility resides in the *cognitive* dimension of the art world, not in its artistic dimensions as determined by artistic judgement. However, visibility is related to artistic evaluation. As I have already clarified, artistic evaluation contains artistic judgement, but also involves cognitive and conventional operations. An artist can only be selected to participate in an exhibition, when his or her information is present to the curators or artistic directors who make the decisions. In other words, visibility impacts upon the awareness of exhibition makers and therefore their selection of artists.

This does not mean, however, that visibility amounts to what Fuller (2015a) understands a type of social capital. Visibility is a relational term, but the relationship between the visible and the audience is a cognitive tie. On the one hand, cognition does not involve an exchange of social resources. Only personal relationships entail resource exchanges. And the cognitive ties are also often asymmetrical. This means, the artist who is known by the audience often does not know the audience in return; the more visible the artist, the more unlikely. There is then hardly any possibility of personal relationships involved. On the other hand, an artist's visibility to the curator cannot be deployed by the artist as a type of capital. We can only say that an artist with a high visibility via body has, possibly, a good amount of social capital, if this artist maintains close personal relationships with her audience. Otherwise, the artist's visibility only means she would be considered by other exhibition makers when making exhibition programmes. It does not equal definite exhibition opportunities.

Despite being conceptually disentangled from recognition, visibility is equally related to the symbolic consecration of art. First of all, visibility is the prerequisite to recognition, as it alone stands for the possibility of obtaining recognition. A hardly visible artist, regardless of the artistic qualities of her works, can never be widely recognised. Second, the mere fact of public visibility contains a symbolic meaning. This symbolic meaning is particularly significant compared with ink painting in China, as I have revealed in the opening paragraphs of this dissertation. In the western context, since the right to exhibit in public – which was reserved for members of the Academy (Luckhurst, 1951) – became inclusive in the era of modern art, visibility has been deployed as an important means. The Impressionists knew quite well the tactics for raising publicity (White & White, 1993). In Moulin's (1987) study of the French art market, some dealers said that "the success of abstract art was due entirely to publicity".

The impact of visibility has been strengthened in contemporary art. The growing importance of visibility is mourned as "the loss of standards of creative excellence" (Kuspit, 2005). A more neutral conclusion is that a high visibility itself is adequate to demonstrate the singularity of an artist (Heinich, 2000, 2014a). In the transgressive paradigm of contemporary art, artists need to hold a singular position, which can be obtained by making an "artistic event" (Heinich, 2000). An artistic event is defined by its ability to "mark a date", to raise public attention. In her elucidation, an exhibition that attracts a lot of visitors can be an artistic event; the sale of a painting at an exorbitant price can also be an event. Although the concept of an "artistic event" is not developed further in her later theory about contemporary art. Heinich's arguments amount to that a high visibility makes an artist singular, regardless of the sources of the visibility. I argue that, the diversity in contemporary artistic practices constitutes a challenge to the professional audience's competence of artistic evaluation. Artistic qualities, given the immensely enlarged four dimensions of artworks, become almost all-encompassing, and thereby, are also paradoxically redundant. Visibility, as a consequence, has become more relevant than ever.

Visibility and exhibition

Among the multiple ways of obtaining visibility, exhibition is indispensable and highly effective. It is the only way of making artwork *directly* visible to a large professional audience. In particular, the importance of exhibition is strengthened by the ideology that the visual and experiential information contained in artworks can only be known adequately via direct sensory perception. Other ways of seeing art directly, such as in the artist's studio, in the collector's private mansion, and auction previews, are available to a limited audience. Although the public display of art in art fairs is less exclusive, the targeted audience in that context are the collectors, and the primary purpose is to sell art.

An exhibition exposes both the artists and the artworks alike. In a common daily setting, an artist is only physically visible to her friends and all those who have personal connections to her. In the exhibition context, and at the opening of an exhibition particularly, the artist becomes visible, identifiable, and approachable, to a larger audience. She might give a tour, talk to the audience, and pose for photos. The importance of exhibition lies equally in its exposure of artworks. An artist can maintain his or her visibility via body as long as she actively attends exhibition openings, events, and parties. The visibility via work, by contrast, can only be sustained by regular presentation of artworks in

exhibitions. An artist without new artworks exhibited for a certain amount of time may even lose their identity as artist.

The visibility an exhibition brings to the artist comes from two sources. First, an exhibition attracts visitors who come to see the exhibition on site. The artist is therefore directly visible to exhibition visitors. Yet these visitors must be physically present. Mediated visibility, in the form of journalist reports, interviews, reviews, and online clips, is often also generated at the occasion of exhibition. Through these media, the exhibition reaches other audience who do not come to the exhibition site. These information-recipients constitute the second source of audiences.

In brief, visibility is generated by the audience's act of visiting exhibitions. The larger an exhibition's audience is, the more visible the exhibiting artist would be. Yet this visibility does not occur naturally, but can only be pursued. The professional audience does not commonly walk into an exhibition without the anticipation of its time, location, and featured artists. As highlighted in Chapter One, all these audiences are brought in by exhibition makers' efforts to raise the visibility of exhibitions and the artists featured. Yet to what extent these efforts succeed, is an empirical issue to be answered later.

3 The Exhibitionary System

Art institutions must meet two criteria for being the institutional infrastructure of the exhibitionary system. First, it must hold regular exhibitions of contemporary art. Second, no sale is made on the site of exhibition. These two criteria limit exhibition spaces to four types of art institutions: galleries that separate sales of art from their consistent exhibition programmes of contemporary art; museums that primarily feature contemporary art; independent art spaces that focus on exhibition exhibiting rather than other types of activities; and *Biennales* (in capitalised to distinguish them from biennales as one type of recurring shows), which refer here to all types of large-scale international shows including biennales and triennials.

The inclusion of different types of art institutions might be thought to resemble the "dealer-curator" system of Moulin. However, the exhibitionary system is constructed in a different way. It is built upon the function of exhibition to expose artworks and artists to a public, that is, to raise the visibility of art. The exhibitionary system includes both galleries and museums, not because of any assumed alliance between the two. Instead, the four types of art institutions count because they are all important exhibition spaces that

contribute to exhibition making. Although the economic function of exhibitions can not be denied, the exhibition space is a physical locations for the showing of art, which is strictly and physically separate from that for the selling of art. The latter location is epitomised by art fairs, where sales are made on site. Consequently, this physical separation between show and sale disentangles conceptually the exhibitionary system from the art market. The tendency to equate the two in the institutional approach is thereby avoided.

These exhibition spaces are further embedded in social networks among exhibition makers. These networks are built by various types of *personal* and *informal* relationships such as friendship, collaboration, alumni, and simple acquaintance. They are important medium for exchanges of resources, which connect the exhibition spaces and foster collaborations. Specifically, networks are an important medium for information circulation and knowledge acquisition, through which networks have a bearing on the social operations involved in artistic production.

3.1 Art institutions as exhibition spaces

Exhibition space: a definition

Only those art institutions that hold *regular exhibitions* with *no sale on site* are exhibition spaces. This definition thereby excludes institutions that are dedicated to other kinds of artistic activities, such as talks, artists' residence, and archives. Nor are auction houses and art fairs included. Certainly the definition of exhibition has already indicated a demarcation between exhibition spaces and auctions houses alike. Yet nowadays the scenographic elements of exhibitions are also introduced into auction previews or booth displays. To strengthen the demarcation, I point out that art fairs and auction houses do not fulfil the second criteria of an exhibition space, namely, no sale on site.

This second qualification, which is also the key to conceptually disentangling the exhibitionary system from the art market, demands further clarification. No sale on site means there is a physical separation between sale and show in an exhibition space. This separation is achieved in galleries through the typical architecture design to separate office and warehouse from the exhibition rooms (Velthuis, 2005). And in the other three types of exhibition spaces, sales of art simply do not take place, although exhibitions always attract potential buyers.

On the one hand, this criteria does not require an isolation of the institution from the sale of art or the art market. Thus, it allows the recognition of commercial galleries

with consistent exhibition programmes that operate in the primary market as important exhibition spaces. Despite their selling of art, for almost a century, before museums took the mediation of contemporary art in the 1970s, galleries were the principal space to showcase new art (Moulin & Vale, 1995). They have also contributed to the development of exhibition making, including the normalisation of solo exhibitions and the introduction of display techniques to exhibitions of living artists (White & White, 1993; Jensen, 1996; Ribas, 2015). Unlike museums, however, they are often regarded primarily as market places and neglected as exhibition spaces in both sociological research and art historical writing. In the "exhibitionary complex" (Bennett, 1988), a similar coinage to mine, for instance, museums were the sole space under scrutiny.[10] Correspondingly, gallerists are often regarded primarily as dealers rather than exhibition makers.

On the other hand, this criteria draws upon an evident characteristics that distinguishes exhibition spaces from auction houses and art fairs definitively. As indicated, museums and biennales are often the sole institutional foci for the study of exhibitions because they do not sell artworks. Despite this, museums and biennales are not entirely disentangled from the art market, even though they do not play dual roles as do galleries. The entanglement stems from the economic function of exhibitions, which inevitably attract buyers. The showing of artworks can always be an occasion to sell, as sales can still be negotiated outside of these not-for-profit shows. As a matter of fact, the Venice Biennale, now the archetype of non-profit biennales, charged commission fees until 1972 (Ricci, 2017). The separation of non-profit exhibition spaces from sales of art is thereby only evident in the fact that sales do not take place inside the exhibition rooms. In this sense, galleries relate to the market in a similar way, as here sales also take place outside of the exhibition rooms. Art business, only known to the gallery owner and staff, occurs in the office or warehouse. Exhibitions, open to the art professionals and the public, take place in the show rooms. With the rise of art fairs, the separation between sale and show in galleries is achieved further in the separation between regular gallery shows and displays in the gallery booths of art fairs. The growing contribution of art fair sales to galleries' income (Horowitz, 2011, p. 135) also means that galleries can afford to concentrate on the show rather than the sale in their regular exhibition programmes. Therefore, auction houses and art fairs can be definitively disentangled from the exhibitionary system by their combination of sale and show in the same physical location.

---

[10]Despite a similar coinage, the exhibitionary complex arises from a Foucauldian critique of museum spaces as as public displays of power. The argument is based upon the close relationship between state building and public museums. Hence, it is not a concept relevant to this dissertation.

Exhibition spaces, except for Biennales, are at the same time the physical spaces where exhibitions take place. In fact, Biennales also commonly deploy the same venues for each edition. Some of these venues are museums and independent art spaces. Only that these venues are not occupied permanently by Biennales, as they only last a few months and take place every two, three, or five years. That is to say, Biennales also often correspond to fixed physical contexts of exhibition.

I further contend that these institutions are important as physical environment for exhibitions. Viewing institutions as *physical spaces* is a perspective rarely found in the existing literature. I argue that his perspective is particularly beneficial for the study of contemporary art, given that the exhibition context becomes integrated into the making of artworks (Heinich, 2014a). Thus, the physical features of the exhibition space become relevant in understanding the production of artworks, particularly so with regards to the scenographic standards for exhibitions. The interior of an exhibition space usually constitutes a "white cube". This means first literally that walls are painted white, windows are sealed and the rooms are filled with bright unnatural lighting. This setting allows the space becomes neutral and capable to accommodate any artworks. Furthermore, the white cube also contains a symbolic connotation that the very isolation of art from the outside world indicates its quasi-religious status (O'Doherty, 1986). The white cube became the dominant interior format for galleries and museums of western art since the 1940s (Klonk, 2009, p. 13). Now in contemporary art, the interior remains neutral so that it can be easily transformed by the artist. Despite the more or less standard interior, not every "white cube" is the same. The space can be structured differently depending on the architecture of the building. The specific spatial characters of an exhibition space, together with the interior, constitute the physical context of artistic production. It is a physical context that must be borne in mind by the artist at the point of their creation of artworks.

Variations in programming

The more conventional definition of institutions, which invokes routines, resources, and norms, is certainly also applicable to exhibition spaces. Their four types represent variations in the routine of exhibition making. These variations do not occur so much in the routine of making a particular exhibition, which is carried out more or less the same way in each exhibition space, but in programming. As introduced briefly in Chapter One, programming is the annual, biennale or triennial planning of a more or less fixed number of exhibitions as an entity. Programming also refers to the main task of non-artist exhibition

makers. For them, who usually operate the exhibition spaces, apart from making each individual exhibition, exhibition making means first to determine the number of exhibitions for a certain period. It also means to select artists, and then, to finalise the schedules of each exhibition.

Variations in programming are related to the organisational structures of these institutions, and the physical features of their exhibition rooms. Organisational structures concern how non-artist exhibition makers come to their decisions. Physical features concern the holding capacity of their exhibitions, which have a significant impact on the number of artists, the type of artists (in terms of the average sizes of their works), and the frequency of exhibitions in the programme. Because a large exhibition hall requires labour-intensive installation and un-installation phases, a reduced frequency of exhibitions helps to reduce the workload.

Since the 1970s, the standard format of *Biennales* is to invite a curator to act as director and distribute the curatorial responsibility among a group of curators (Altshuler, 2013). There are also national pavilions in some Biennales, which are organised by the hosting countries. Curators, again, are usually responsible for these national pavilions. These Biennales entail a long planning phase because of their large roster of featured and large-sized artworks presented. Correspondingly, they also only take place every other year, or with longer intervals in between.

Programming in *museums of contemporary art* is usually done by the artistic directors working in concert with senior curators. Junior curators are not usually decision makers in the programming, but rather only facilitate the detailed work entailed in installation of exhibitions. Museums typically have several large exhibition rooms. Although their exhibitions can last as long as six months, the number of exhibition rooms allows them to hold more exhibitions. The schedules of exhibition programmes are often more or less fixed at least one or two years in advance of the openings. But it usually does not entail the same process as in the planning of Biennales.

Exhibitions in *galleries* are organised by either their owners or the managers. The exhibition rooms of galleries, except for top galleries, are usually smaller than those of museums. Gallery shows are also shorter, with the number of shows subject to the strong seasonality commonly perceived in the market place (Thornton, 2009; Fuller, 2015a). Compared to museums, galleries are more flexible in the scheduling of exhibitions.

It is, however. difficult to outline a distinct position for *independent art spaces*, because diverse organisational structures exist. They can be run by artists, art founda-

tions, individual collectors, or jointly by any of these actors.[11] These spaces usually claim to foster artistic experiments (Blessi, Sacco, & Pilati, 2011). Yet given the involvement of both galleries and museums in the cutting-edge of art (Moulin & Vale, 1995; Horowitz, 2011), a certain openness to artistic experimentation is hardly a defining feature of these independent art spaces.

As the selection of artists is central to programming, I need to highlight a difference between galleries and the non-profit exhibition spaces. Gallery programmes centre around a roster of artists, whereas non-profit spaces are not dedicated to the careers of a few artists. Hence, gallery shows are mostly solos exhibitions, which are an ideal format for building artistic careers. By contrast, Biennales are typically group exhibitions.[12] The ratios of solo to group exhibition in museums and independent art spaces are situated in between the relative extremes of galleries (mostly solos) and Biennales (mostly group). As non-profit spaces often avoid repeat showcasing of the same artists, their exhibition makers are constantly looking for new artists to exhibit. Gallerists are also in constant research for new artists, for other reasons. It is not easy for galleries to maintain a stable roster, because on the one hand, they drop artists who turn out to be 'bad' artists; whereas on the other hand, 'good' artists, given the chance, 'upgrade' to better galleries. Certainly, the new commercial opportunities enabled by new artists also motive galleries' search. Although quality of artworks is always given as the primary concern in selecting artists, other factors irrelevant to quality are also involved in the selection of artists, such as their personality and geographical locations (Moulin, 1987; Velthuis, 2013). This is most evident in Biennales, for which the geographic origin of the artists is a crucial factor.

3.2   Networks among exhibition makers

Exhibition makers are connected to each other through various types of *personal* and *informal* relationships. These include friendship, collaboration, alumni, and simple acquaintance. These networks undergird the exhibitionary system as the medium for the circulation, distribution, or exchange of two types of resources. The first type is knowledge and information, the accumulation of which can give rise to visibility (awareness). They have bearings on actors' cognition and decision making. The second type is support and recognition, the exchange of which entails social actions, such as providing advices for and

---

[11]Some artist-run galleries are actually commercial galleries that sell artworks of the artist founders, such as those described by Sharon (1979). In my definition, they are not independent art spaces, but simply galleries.

[12]In national pavilions, though, there are quite often solo exhibitions.

opportunities of exhibition. The accumulation of these resources leads to consolidation of social and symbolic capitals. In the exhibitionary system, cognition and decision making concern the evaluative actions by non-artist exhibition makers, as well as artist's creative actions. Actors' social actions refer mainly to the act of visiting exhibitions, which is a generative source of visibility.

In brief, networks are a medium for information diffusion, knowledge acquisition, and collaboration. Networks can foster the institutional alliance assumed by the institutional approach or the collaborative networks postulated by Becker. They are also the carrier of social and symbolic capital, crucial concepts for Bourdieu. However, in this dissertation, networks are used as fundamental building blocks because a network view of the social world constituted by exhibition makers facilitates the conceptualisation of visibility, and the explanation of artistic evaluation and creation as social actions. Moreover, the network view enables me to deploy the methods of SNA in solving two related empirical questions: how visibility can be pursued; and how is the exhibitionary system structured through the way that different artists are selected to different exhibition spaces.

In the following, I will first introduce how exhibition makers are related to each other according to a network view. And then I will explain how these connections are relevant to my sociological explanations for artistic production.

The mass and the cliques

The various types of informal relationships among exhibition makers constitute a large loosely connected network, in which multiple cliques exist. This means, first, almost any two exhibition makers can be connected, through a limited number of intermediaries. In SNA, this is called "the small world theory", supported by mathematical modelling and social experiments (Travers & Milgram, 1969; Newman, 2000). Empirical data also proves the relevance of "small-world" networks to the production of musicals (Uzzi & Spiro, 2005). Theoretically, this means that all people in this network will be exposed to the same sets of information and knowledge. It is, however, rarely the case in actual practices, largely due to the existence of cliques, which withhold certain information from others. Therefore, one cannot claim that these interconnected exhibition makers share the same pool of information and knowledge. Nor, by far, can one claim that they uphold the same way of exhibition making. However, the existence of this large loosely connected network suggests a method for mapping out the scope of a social world of exhibition makers. I deployed this method in the empirical investigation of the present study. That is, I determined the

scope of my analysis by identifying the members of the most visible sector of this large network.

Second, exhibition makers may form subgroups, in which there are more frequent interactions, meetings, exchanges of resources and the like going on. In SNA, such subgroups are called cliques (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005). Cliques exist because each exhibition maker has only a limited number of close friends, or people whose opinions she truly appreciates (Rosenberg & Fliegel, 1965). However, as discussed in the problem with Bourdieu's concept of artistic positions (see page 9), these cliques shall not be regarded as members of artistic styles. While artistic orientations can be hardly associated to formation of cliques, geographical and organisational foci can cause noticeable patterns in network buildings. According to the thesis of "network homophily" (McPherson et al., 2001), exhibition makers in geographical proximity are more likely to build connections; exhibition makers affiliated to the same organisations, such as art schools, galleries, museums, and art magazines, are also more likely to develop connections. Artists with different approaches may belong to the same clique, as I have observed in the field research.

Given that institutions foster network formations, naturally, informal personal networks also connect the formal institutions. The embeddedness of formal institutions in informal networks is a central argument in SNA (Granovetter, 1973; R. S. Burt, 1992; Mizruchi & Stearns, 2001; S. P. Borgatti & Foster, 2003). This embeddedness can be particularly significant in the art world, as the degree of institutionalisation seems relatively low here. This low degree is epitomised by the fact that even legal contracts between artists and galleries, which are arguable a highly institutional format, are not actually binding (Moulin, 1987, p. 117). A gentlemen's agreement is more prevalent. The operations of exhibition spaces, such as the search for artists and the publicity work undertaken to bring in exhibition visitors, often rely on the informal networks. As already discussed, non-artist exhibition makers obtain information for their selection of art through networks. Invitations to exhibition openings, press releases, and exhibition reviews are often circulated through networks. To a certain extent, the networks of an exhibition spaces constitute an important source of visitors and thereby visibility for exhibitions in this space. This is because people show support, a type of social capital generated by networks, to an art institution by paying regular visit to its exhibitions.

Exchange of cognitive and social contents

I have already explained the cognitive bearing of networks upon the artistic evaluation of non-artist exhibition makers in section two. They rely on the knowledge and information acquired from their networks to develop the competence to evaluate. There is another reason for them to rely on information/knowledge acquisition for decision making. That is, the capacity to evaluate art is bounded, even though such competence has been developed. Assuming one could know by name or at least a few artworks of a thousand active practising artists, it is unlikely that one could have sufficient information to be able to form judgement on each of these artists. Neither can one always develop an opinion, even when information is sufficient. The immensely enlarged space of possibilities in contemporary art, I argue, has compounded the difficulty in developing a original opinion. These artworks cannot be evaluated on a common ground, given the presence of various materials, techniques, approaches, and ideas. When a original opinion evades the exhibition makers, they tend to adopt the evaluative opinions by others. Certainly, for each exhibition maker, opinions by a few particular persons only are more likely to be adopted. Here again, social factors play an part. For instance, psychologists find out that people tend to agree with their friends' judgements (De Nooy, 2003a). Another important source from which to adopt opinions are the decisions made by other exhibition spaces.

What remains so far unspecified is the relevance of networks to the actions of artists. I thereby complete my justification for a network view of the social world with this specification. In section two, I have clarified that artists also rely on their evaluative competence for their creation. This means, networks also influence the artist's creative process through the acquisition of competence to evaluate art. Furthermore, the exchange of support and recognition in the networks also influence an artist's visibility and creation. First, the members of a clique, to which an artist belong, are the primary and most stable audience for this artist. As already indicated, cliques withhold certain information and resources inside the group. Mutual support in the form of going to each other's exhibition is one type of these resources. Among the many opening invitations that one exhibition makers may receive, she prioritises those from exhibitions of the clique members. For a young artist, this means his primary visibility depends to a certain degree on his social capital — resources that can be generated from his personal networks. Second, exhibition opportunities can result from the social capital an artist has accumulated from his networks. These opportunities can be generated by both clique membership and "weak

ties", connections with less close friends or simple acquaintances. Exhibition opportunities obtained this way may be more for group exhibitions than solo exhibitions. For solo exhibitions, the selection of artists is often regarded more artistic rigorous and less subject to social inclinations. For artists who go beyond the stage of early career, visibility or exhibition opportunities generated by social capital are usually much less significant. Still, the clique membership, remains crucial for them. That is, they still value the mutual support in the form of giving criticism to artworks. The difficulty and doubts an artist encounters in his or her creation is an issue too personal to be shared with any friends, but only the most trusted ones. Only opinions of the clique members are considered worth listening to, whereas other people are considered to have only a superficial understanding of the artist's works.

In brief, for non-artist exhibition makers, networks are an important medium for information and knowledge acquisition, which impact on their evaluative actions involved in the selection of artists. For artists, in addition, networks are important sources of audience and exhibition opportunities. In other words, social capital accumulated by the artist can generate visibility. Certainly, these informal networks also connect exhibition spaces to form an exhibitionary system.

Conclusion

The exhibitionary system creates order, certainty, and intelligibility for the seemingly vibrant and spontaneous artistic production. Similar ideas to this central argument also underlie most sociological theories of art. And the mechanisms I propose here belong to the two most commonly deployed in sociology: the conventional and the cognitive mechanisms. The former relies on the conventional dimension of the social world, the latter the cognitive. My contribution has been the identification and specification of these mechanism in the production of contemporary art, the particularity of which has not been sufficiently addressed and theorised.

I have also solved the persistent theoretical problems in the sociology of art, which are also related to the problematic analytical sequence I have outlined in Chapter One. The integration of artists with artworks in the same framework of the exhibitionary system has enabled me to consider the production of art in a loop of exhibition making. Visibility is the crucial concept that connects the production of artworks to that of artists in this process. In the exhibitionary system, artists and those who are important contributors to

their careers are informed by the same set of cognitive schemata that shape their evaluation of art, and thereby, the production of artworks.

In the three empirical chapters of this dissertation, my concepts will be further elaborated, and the mechanisms I developed here will be substantiated by empirical data. For a better understanding of these empirical data, I must first introduce the case of contemporary Chinese art in the next chapter.

Chapter III

From Global to Local: The Case of China

Introduction

In this chapter, I explain my decision to study the case of contemporary Chinese art and the local exhibitionary system in China. Despite the current enthusiasm for globalisation and a concomitant interest in a global biennale system, this dissertation studies exhibition making on the local level. In this regard, I pay close attention to museums, galleries, and independent art spaces in China. The first section justifies the turn of focus from the global level to the local art scene, on two grounds. First, exhibition making on the global level depends on the interactions among exhibition makers in the local art scene. Second, the interest in biennales has also diverted scholars' attention away from the significance of solo exhibitions, which is the dominant exhibition format on the local level. Hence, I also argue for an emphasis on solo exhibitions in the study of exhibition making on the local level.

The subsequent section elucidates further the factors that make the Chinese case ideal for my research purposes and the empirical investigation. It is fist necessary to clarify the two distinct art systems in mainland China: contemporary art in the exhibitionary system; and ink painting in the official art system. Observations made about the former are not applicable to the latter. This dissertation focuses on contemporary Chinese art solely. I then situate the examination of China in the trend of studying the formerly underrepresented areas in the sociology of art. I question the relevance of recent attempts, which are compromised by the assumption of a distorted gulf between the centre and

the periphery (Western Europe and America versus rest of the world). I argue that the meaning of studying the peripheral areas, lies in the new perspectives that emerge from analysing "deviance" to western standard practices. In the case of China, the deep entanglement of the exhibitionary system with the art market, without the interventions of a third power – the state, opens up a new window into the issue of art and the market. This issue has been particularly clouded by an ideological belief in artistic autonomy. Moreover, I also show that contemporary Chinese art is a small research field, ideal for fieldwork. This means, the navigation in the field can be relatively easier, and only a small sample is needed to substantiate my generalisations.

The final section of this chapter provides a detailed description of the exhibitionary system in China. I introduce its unique historical development over the past three decades, which can be divided into three phases. The exhibitionary system began with a breakaway from the established official art system in the late 1980s. It then underwent a gallery boom, followed by an economic crisis. Only after 2010 have norms and standard practices been established, which signified the consolidation of a exhibitionary system. As the preparatory work for field research, I also elucidate my methods to identify local exhibition spaces, and accordingly, map out the major exhibition spaces in the exhibitionary system in China.

1   Turning towards the Local

Given the proliferation of biennales worldwide and the emergence of a so-called global art market in which leading galleries operate on a global scale (Bydler, 2004; Crane, 2009; Buchholz, 2012), one can possibly identify a so-called global exhibitionary system. However, it is difficult to determine the boundary between local and global. My distinction between the two is made purely based upon the types of institutions, but not their global impact, nor their aspiration for a global vision. The extent of global impact is difficult to gauge and the attempt to achieve a global vision may fail. By the way of illustration, among the many Biennales around the globe that all typically aim for a global vision by featuring international artists, only a few have become globally recognised. Many other can be hardly compared to a museum – MoMA, for example – in terms of their global impact.

In this dissertation, I distinguish between the exhibitionary system on the global level and that on the local level. On the global level, it consists of biennales and other recurring international group exhibitions. I will refer to it simply as the global biennale

system. Group exhibition mounted by a curatorial team is the dominant exhibition format here; curators and artists are the major exhibition makers. On the local level, the exhibitionary system consists of commercial galleries, museums, and other independent art spaces. Both group and solo exhibitions exist but solo exhibitions are more common. Gallerists, curators (independent or affiliated with museums), and artists are the major exhibition makers.

This distinction does not deny globalisation in the local art scene, nor the global impact of the institutions I identify as local. The crucial difference between exhibition making on the local and global level hinges upon the modes of interactions among exhibition makers. On the local level, there are frequent and direct face-to-face interactions. As Fuller (2015a, 2015b) observes, physical presence is important in a local art scene; art professionals need to maintain the direct face-to-face contacts. By contrast, in the global biennale system, as a biennale often typically invites new curators for each new edition, they are unlikely to be involved frequent interactions generated by repetitive collaborations. As biennales often feature artists on a global scale, the exhibition makers involved do not usually reside in the same local art scene. The geographical distance hinders face-to-face interactions. The frequency of interactions is not comparable to those on the local level, given that these recurring shows only take place every two, three, or five years.

My dissertation chooses to investigate exhibition making on the local level for two reasons. First, the strong home bias in the global biennale system, that is, artists featured in various biennales come predominantly from the countries or the continent where the biennales are located, indicates the stark geographic foci of network formation. Considering the crucial role of social networks in exhibition making, I conclude that the social networks that support the local exhibitionary system are also the very foundation for the global biennale system. It is therefore important to look at the social interactions on the local level, which also concern the majority of all art professionals. Second, as group exhibitions, large-scale international exhibitions in particular, have attracted significant scholarly attention, which is unfortunately less drawn to solo exhibitions. In response to this, I argue for an emphasise on solo exhibitions, because they have become the dominant the exhibition format on the local level. Historically, solo exhibitions have also contributed to the development of display techniques and artistic creation. Certainly, as group exhibitions are also present on the local level, my study of exhibition making on the local level does not occlude analysis of the other exhibition format.

1.1   The home bias in the global biennale system

With more than 150 biennales and other kinds of recurring international shows in over 50 countries (Sassatelli, 2017, p. 12), the global biennale system is of a considerable size.[13] The formation of a global biennale system can be attributed mainly to two important developments. These are the diffusion of biennales to areas outside Europe and North America since the 1980s, and the emphasis on geographical/racial diversity in western biennales since the 1990s. The first development is epitomised by the appearance of biennales in Havana (1984), Istanbul (1987) and Dakar (1989) (Coates, 2014). The second development arose because curators of western art biennales introduced artists of different origins into the shows. This began with the presentation of African American artists in 1993 at the Whitney Biennale and the inclusion of Chinese artists in Venice Biennale 1993 (Altshuler, 2013). Among these biennales, there is also a noticeable hierarchy in terms of global recognition. It is widely recognised that Documenta and the Venice Biennale are preeminent. Among all other biennales, the Gwangju Biennale, the Bienal de São Paulo, the Biennale of Sidney and the Istanbul Biennial are most prominent. This is evident in that they are frequent entries in scholarly research.

The diversity in the origins of participant artists is considered as the most defining character of these biennales. However, many scholars cast doubt on the global vision that most biennales boast. This critical view is supported by statistics of artists' origins in nine editions (1969-2007) of Documenta (C. Wu, 2009). Before 1997, the percentage of artists born in North America and Europe constituted over 80% of all artists in Documenta and remained at the level of 60% after 2000. The percentage of artist living in North America and Europe was even higher, 90% before 1997, which then declined to 60% in 2007. C. Wu (2009) also discovered a flow of artists from "peripheral areas" – such as Latin America, Asia, and, Africa – to the "centre" – North America and Western Europe. Statistics concerning the origins of artists in prominent western museums yield similar results. For instance, in 2003, out of the 87 artists exhibited in Centre Georges Pompidou, 39% were French artists and 32% were American artists; in MoMA, American artists made up 62.5% of all exhibitors (Quemin, 2006, p. 528-529). This leads to a criticism of western dominance in the global art world.

However, the above statistics only show that art exhibitions located in America and

---

[13]Not all biennales are intended for international artists, which seem to be the defining feature of biennales. For instance, the Whitney Biennale is a biennale exhibition of contemporary American art that shows American artists only.

Western Europe are not as globalised as the researchers assumed. A dominance of western artists on the global scale can only be determined when western artists also dominate in international shows located in the "peripheral areas". Statistics of artists in the Havana Biennial (1984-2012), the Istanbul Biennial (1987-2011), and the Gwangju Biennale (1984-2012) gathered by Morgner (2014) reject the assumption of western dominance. Istanbul Biennial had the highest percentage of western artists (the US, Italy, Spain, France, Germany and UK) among the three biennales in "peripheral areas". This percentage, 28%, does not testify to a dominance, considering 22% of the artists came from Turkey and 38% from small countries that are not usually specified in statistics.

In fact, it is more accurate to talk about a home or continent bias, rather than the dominance of western artists, in the global biennale system. All the statistics in existing literature demonstrate that biennales in both the "periphery" and "centre" exhibit predominantly artists in geographical proximity, that is, artists from either the countries or the continents where the biennales take place. In Morgner's (2014) statistics, East Asian artists constituted 34% of all artists in the Gwangju Biennale; in the Havana Biennial, 45% of all artists came from Latin America; Turkish artists led in Istanbul Biennial, taking up 22% of all artists; Documenta, located in Germany, also featured more western European artists (60%), with German artists as the leading group (23%). Despite a lack of longitude statistics, I also discovered a continent bias in in the Bienal de São Paulo and Shanghai Biennale, the two biennales absent from Morgner's (2014) data. I examined the 2016 editions of both biennales. The percentage of western artists was low in both biennales: artists based in the US, France, Germany, and the UK constituted 37% of all artists in São Paulo; the percentage was only 26% in Shanghai. Instead, both Biennales showed a strong home bias. Artists based in Brazil constituted 29% of the Bienal de São Paulo, and artists based in China constituted 30% of the Shanghai Biennale. The continent bias was even stronger. Latin American artists represented 45% of works in São Paulo. Similarly, 49% of works in Shanghai were crafted by Asian artists.[14]

To conclude, regardless of its location, statistics reveal that the largest demographic in each biennale comes from the continent where the biennale takes place. It is unjustified to criticise the Western Biennales for their preference for Western artists, while Asian bi-

---

[14]The lists of artists were retrieved from the websites of the two biennales, see `http://www.bienal`
`.org.br/post.php?i=2430` and `http://www.shanghaibiennale.org/en/artist/showlist/75.html`. The Shanghai Biennale did not give full information about artists' places of birth or places of base. I therefore googled each artist but there were five artists whose current bases were unclear. The statistics of artists' origins here refer to the places of residence. Interestingly, Asian artists were absent from São Paulo and Latin American artists were absent from Shanghai.

ennales favour Asian artists, and Latin American biennales favour Latin American artists. The researchers who gathered these statistics, however, do not explore the reasons for the home bias. I argue that, the home bias in the global biennale system testifies to the importance of the local art scenes, which is the topic of the coming section.

1.2   The importance of the local

In exploring the reasons for home bias in the global biennale system, I have zoned in on two explanations that testify to the importance of the local art scene. First, to a certain extent, the "bias" is intended. Biennales, especially those in the periphery, also have the intention to present local art scenes in addition to a global vision, or as opposed to the western vision (Altshuler, 2013). The geographical focus of a biennale is usually on the continent where it is hosted. In other words, although "globalisation" is a buzzword for all exhibition makers, the emphasis on the local scene is not less valued.

Second, social networks among exhibition makers, which are often built in the local art scenes, are indispensable for exhibition making on the global level. This also explains why the scope of an international show is always constrained. Curators are the arbiters of these international shows, yet their selection of artists is constrained by their knowledge of artists, which in turn relies on the social networks they build. Geographic location, as researchers of social networks have discovered, is perhaps the most basic source of network building (McPherson et al., 2001, p. 429–430). Curators are more likely to have better knowledge of artists who are closer to them in geographic location that those who are distant. Although the internet has enabled the sharing of images of artworks over long distance, artistic evaluation is rarely completed, as least as how it is commonly stated, until a work is experienced in its original form. In order to make decisions, curators often need to book a studio visit to see the works and talk to artists. Then to keep informed of artists' new works, curators also need to maintain an adequate frequency of interactions. This a demanding task when a large geographical area needs to be covered. This is why the organisation committee of a biennale always has several curators on board to accomplish the project that strives for a global vision.

The home bias of biennales, in other words, can be attributed to the geographical foci of network formation. A similar explanation is proposed for the home bias in the global art market. In private art collections, Velthuis (2015) discovers that art collectors tend to collect artists from their own country or area. For instance, works by South American artists constituted 89% of South American art collections; and for Asian, North

American and European collections, the figures are respectively 82%, 76% and 43%. In addition, galleries tend to represent local artists: Dutch galleries represent mostly Dutch artists and German galleries represent mostly German artists (Velthuis, 2013). To account for this home bias in the art market, Velthuis (2005; 2013) gives the following explanation: trust and collaborative relationships between galleries and artists are easier to build and maintain when physical distance is short. This explanation evidently deploys the observations in SNA research about network formation but remains impressionist in its understanding of networks as impetus for trust and economic collaboration. In the making of international exhibitions, which do not engage in direct art sale, the social networks are an important channel through which to circulate information. The underlying mechanism, as explained in Chapter Two, is an informative and cognitive one.

1.3   The neglected solo shows

Another reason to examine the local level exhibitions is to explore the role of solo exhibitions. Art historians have mainly focused on group exhibitions – the large-scale international art exhibitions in particular, in a recent turn towards a history of art exhibitions (Altshuler, 2013; Coates, 2014; Sassatelli, 2017). Exhibitions that are recognised as "history making" (Altshuler, 2013), such as the frequently mentioned *When Attitudes Become Form*, curated by Harald Szeemann, are mostly group exhibitions, which art historians also see as "the primary site for curatorial experimentation" (O'Neil, 2007, p. 14). By contrast, solo exhibitions are generally neglected in art history writing or curatorial study, probably due to their "largely celebratory, spectacularised and market-driven focus" (Ribas, 2015, p. 15).

Indeed, it is actually commercial galleries that have normalised and popularised solo exhibition as an exhibition format. Although solo exhibitions can be dated back to 1706 (Luckhurst, 1951, p.53), for almost two centuries, the one-man show was slightly stigmatised due to its overt commercialism and association with "rejection by the Salon" (Mainardi, 1991). Only with the rise of modern art and professional art dealers, who managed artists' careers, have solo exhibitions became normalised. In this regard, the Impressionists were the earliest group of artists who benefited from the gallery system and mostly had one-man shows, even though they made their debut as a collective movement through group shows (White &White, 1993, p. 99). At the turn of twentieth century, solo exhibitions became "widely employed as a weapon to redress the exclusion of the past, to construct a canonical history of modernist artists" (Jensen, 1996, p.111). Gradually,

non-retrospective solo shows were made for young artists too, as in the case of Picasso and Matisse. Jensen (1996) believes that the rise of solo exhibitions undermined the idea of group exhibitions in Paris, which primarily occurred in the public sector only after 1900 (p. 137).

In contemporary art, solo exhibition is the dominant exhibition format on the local level. This applies to exhibition programmes in all three types of local exhibitionary spaces. Gallery exhibitions, certainly, are predominantly solo shows. It is uncertain when museums started to favour the format of non-retrospective solo exhibitions.[15] Nevertheless, nowadays, even in museums, solo exhibitions, usually with new works commissioned, also comprise at least half of the museum's exhibition program.[16] Probably because the singularity of the artist is considered the strongest drive for artistic experiment, independent art spaces also mount predominantly solo exhibitions. In fact, even in the national pavilions of the Venice Biennale, the showcasing of a single artist became popular after 1986 (see Figure III.1). Since then, the national pavilions of these leading western countries have been reserved for a few top artists only.
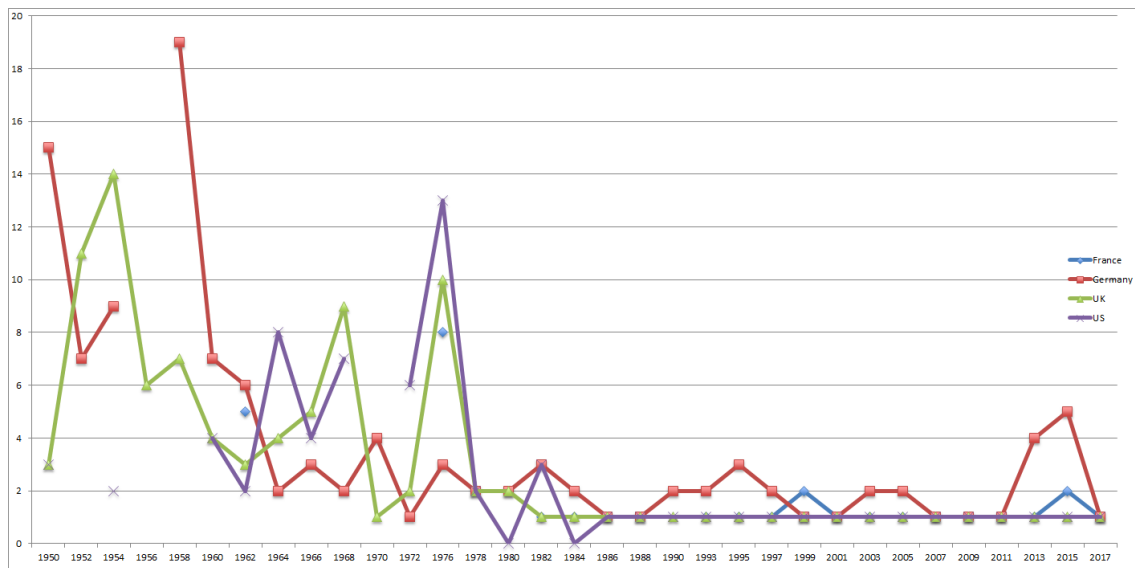
Figure III.1: Number of artists in the national pavilion 1950 - 2017, France, Germany, US, UK.

The dominance of solo exhibitions can be perhaps related to "extreme individualisation", a direct consequence of the transgressive nature of contemporary art (Heinich,

---

[15]The uncertainty comes from the lack of art history research about exhibitions of modern art, especially solo exhibitions (M. Ward, 1996; Ribas, 2015).

[16]The exact proportion of solo exhibition varies according to the museums. For instance, the New Museum in New York typically emphasises solo shows; 16 out of 18 exhibition in 2016 were solo exhibitions. The Museums of Contemporary Art Australia had eight solos out of 15 exhibition in the annum 2015-2016.

2014c). An artist is supposed to be singular and thus only a solo exhibition can fully present this singularity. In fact, solo exhibitions are strongly associated with artists' careers in contemporary art. This can be seen from the CVs of artists, which amount to lists of exhibition records, where solo exhibitions are placed on top. Solo exhibitions are the standard exhibition format for the artist's debut and her periodical public presentation of new works. Solo exhibitions also amount to recognition from the art institutions, which are at the same time the host exhibition spaces. Artists start their careers with solo shows, usually in a small gallery or in an independent art space. After the debut solos, artists ideally have solo exhibitions every one or two years in order to maintain and raise their visibility. Solo exhibitions with major museums then indicate a stable and rising career. This often culminates in semi-retrospective,[17] celebratory solo exhibitions.

Despite this evident importance, the impact of solo exhibitions on artistic creation has not been sufficiently addressed. Art historians have only suggested possible connections between exhibition formats and artistic creation. For instance, Monet's series paintings were only conceivable with the popularisation of one-man or one-room shows in the 1890s (M. Ward, 1996, p. 326); Picasso continued to produce paintings more suitable for salon presentation, although he did not need to showcase these works in salons (Cottington, 1988, p. 353). Given the transformation in the exhibitionary system since the 1970s, where production of artworks is integrated into exhibition making, an in-depth investigation of the relations between solo exhibitions and the artist's creation is necessary.

To conclude, even though there is a noticeable trend of globalisation in the exhibitionary system, it still has a strong local foundation. It is therefore important to return to the local art scene, where most of the daily interactions between exhibition makers take place. Moreover, as solo exhibitions are often neglected in existing literature, the focus on the local level, where both group and solo exhibitions are present, allows an in-depth exploration of solo exhibitions while at the same time not neglecting group exhibitions.

2   The Curious Case of China

I select the Chinese local art scene, which refers to the contemporary art scene in mainland China,[18] to conduct empirical investigation of exhibition making. Although contemporary art emerged in China with almost no exhibitionary infrastructure in the late 1970s, an

---

[17]In contemporary art, solo exhibitions of living artists are rarely entirely retrospective and often include at least a few new artworks.

[18]The Hong Kong art scene differs significantly from that of mainland China and is therefore not included.

exhibitionary system managed to develop over the course of three decades. There are now a significant number of galleries, museums, and independent art spaces that specialise in contemporary art in China. Therefore, contemporary Chinese art (CCA) is most deserving of analysis and detailed study.

However, some researchers and art experts believe China to be an anomalous case. Specifically, in art market research, many believe that the "Chinese model" challenges the western models (Vine, 2006; Velthuis and Baia Curioni, 2015).

To contest such a misleading belief, I clarify a distinctive characteristic of the Chinese art scene. There are two distinct types of art currently made in China, and accordingly, two separate art systems. These are: contemporary art in the exhibitionary system; ink painting and calligraphy in the official art system. Misunderstanding often stems from not distinguishing between these two art systems or not specifying the art system under study. The contemporary art sector, which this dissertation focuses on, has always been part of the global art world. Contemporary Chinese art and the exhibitionary system in China, while shaped by the local dynamics, developed as the mimesis of the western models of contemporary art. By contrast, ink painting and calligraphy, which is native to the Chinese culture and has been incorporated into the political regime since the founding of the People's Republic of China, is based upon different models. The understanding of contemporary art, as developed in the sociology of art, is hardly applicable for the study of ink painting.

As one of the peripheral areas underrepresented in current research, the case of CCA provides more than simply an image of "the other". Rather, as a "deviant" peripheral case, the Chinese case constitutes an ideal window into the issue of art and the market. The power distribution between the duo constitutes the core of a discussion on artistic autonomy (Bourdieu, 1993; Graw, 2009; Crane, 2009; Buchholz, 2015). But the state has always been another important power acting upon artistic production through public funding, and thereby deserves a distinct position in the discussion of artistic autonomy in the western context (Alexander 1996; 2017). By contrast, in China, we are able to examine the relationship between art and the market without the interference of a third party, because here, the state funding is almost absent from the exhibitionary system of contemporary art.

Moreover, China is also an ideal site for field research, for two reasons. First, as contemporary art only emerged in the late 1970s, a thorough understanding of its history in China demands less preparatory work. Thanks to this short history, most

pioneer artists, who initiated the movement towards contemporary art, are still alive. The collection of first hand data, by interviewing living artists, is therefore possible. Second, the exhibitionary system in China is relatively small with regards to the number of art institutions and practising exhibition makers. Given a fixed sample size, the smaller the population is, the more valid a data sample is.

2.1   The two art systems

Although "contemporary art" literally means "art that is currently made", it refers to a specific genre of art. It is a term indigenous to the western art history that is organised by periodisation. In China, apart from this genre of "contemporary art", artists also create ink painting and calligraphy, which does not fit the definition of contemporary art.

Ink painting and calligraphy created by intellectuals has historically had a superior status in China.[19] This prestigious art form, together with oil painting of socialist realism, were integrated into the communist art system in the 1950s (Andrews, 1994). This official art system was built as part of the state apparatus with the founding of the People's Republic of China. Modern and contemporary western art were rejected as representing the decadent, western bourgeois ideology.[20] The only legitimate art forms were socialist realist oil painting, traditional ink painting and calligraphy, amateur peasant painting, and propaganda posters (Andrews, 1994; Lu, 2015). Art was sponsored exclusively by the state and used for propaganda. Artists became cultural bureaucrats in this system consisting of, among others, art academies and artists' associations.

Therefore, when a few young Chinese artists took up styles of western modern art, such us primitivism, cloisonnism and formalism in 1978-1979, they asserted a dramatic subversion of the established official art system. Soon after, in the mid 1980s, installation, video and performance art were also adopted by avant-garde Chinese artists. The avant-garde art, though it deviated from the socialist aesthetics, was initially accepted in the official art system. It was then forced to develop in the private sector, after the 1989 Tiananmen Incident put an end to the short-lived liberal environment. In the 1990s, following the western trend, the name "contemporary art" was also adopted in China (Smith, 2006; J. Zhang, 2009). In the following twenty years, institutions for contemporary art grew rapidly.

---

[19]Yet art history as a discipline, which now also shapes our perception and understanding of ink painting, was only introduced to China at the end of the nineteenth century.

[20]Before the foundation of the PRC, western modern art was already introduced into China. Exhibitions of western-inspired art were organised by artists regularly in the 1930s (Joy & Sherry Jr, 2004, p. 316). But such development was interrupted by enduring wars in the country.

	Ink Painting and Calligraphy	Contemporary Art
History	Re-organised in 1950s, reformed in the late 1970s	Emerged in the late 1970s
Institutions	Official organisations	Private galleries and private museums
Paradigm	Realism and politicised	Innovation and transgressive
Collectors	Domestic collectors	Foreign collectors before 2006, domestic collectors increasing
Prominent artists	Wu Guanzhong, Qi Baishi, Wang Mingming	Zeng Fanzhi, Wang Guangyi, Ai Weiwei

Table III.1: The Chinese Art Systems

A comparison between the two art systems, with regards to the historical, institutional, normative, and economic aspects, is given in Table III.1. A few prominent artists, whose artworks may represent the artistic differences between the two genres, are also named. Certainly, the devision between the two art systems is not clear-cut. Marketisation of art, for instance, was first introduced to the official art system under the "Reform and Opening-up" policy initiated in 1978. The entrepreneurial spirit cultivated in the official art system also encouraged the proponents of contemporary art to construct their own market (DeBevoise, 2014; P. Wang, 2010).

Conflicting observations about Chinese art emerge when no distinction between the two is made. On the one hand, China is the world's second largest art market; on the other hand, China is also considered peripheral in the global art world. The first observation concerns the entire Chinese art market, to which sales of ink painting and calligraphy contribute the majority of the turnover. The second observation only concerns contemporary Chinese art. With regards to ink painting and calligraphy, China is central to this global art world that includes mostly East Asian countries.

Therefore, generalisation about Chinese art or a so-called "Chinese model" can be dubious. Researchers may make misleading conclusions about Chinese art when they have only researched one of the art systems. For instance, Velthuis and Baia Curioni (2015) believe that the development of an art market in China observed by Kharchenkova, Komarova, and Velthuis (2015) contests the thesis of globalisation as the diffusion of western

models. However, as public auctions and galleries as gatekeepers did not exist in China, where a long history of art trading did exist, it is hard to deny the strong influence of western models on the construction of a Chinese domestic art market. Moreover, the official art organisations, which are the only foci of the above research, only play a role in the market of calligraphy, ink painting and realist oil painting. These official art organisations do not participate in the market of contemporary art. They also do not impact beyond the Chinese context, because the market of ink painting in China is not globalised insofar as western auction houses are not allowed to deal in this market. Therefore, the existence of an official art system in China cannot be seen as a challenge to the western models of contemporary art, because the official system concerns another genre of art.

Having explained the two distinct art systems, I thereby clarify that the theoretical framework for contemporary art is not applicable to the system of ink painting and calligraphy. In this dissertation, I focus on contemporary Chinese art, a genre not generalisable to all forms of Chinese art.

2.2   The meaning of the periphery

China, together with other countries such as Brazil, India and Russia, belong to the peripheral areas of contemporary art. Certainly, these peripheral areas are under-represented in research, in comparison to the US, Germany, France, and the UK. Despite the enthusiasm to extend the research foci, the meaning of studying these peripheral areas often remains vague in existing literature.

A collection of art market research edited by Velthuis and Baia Curioni (2015a), titled *Cosmopolitan Canvases: The Globalization of Markets for Contemporary Art*, incorporates studies of art markets from a comprehensive array of geographic areas. In concluding studies of art markets in Russia, India, Brazil and China, the editors conclude that the cases of these peripheral areas have proved the feasibility of market models different from the western art market model (Velthuis & Baia Curioni, 2015b). They argue that the western model is based on the separation of a primary market, where galleries and individual dealers mediate the transactions, and a secondary market, which is mainly controlled by auction houses (Velthuis, 2005). In China, however, artists sent artworks directly to auction houses (Velthuis & Baia Curioni, 2015b, p.15). Moreover, they believe that Europe and the US began to adopt organisational patterns from the peripheral areas. They claim that, Damien Hirst consigning a work directly to the auction house in 2008 "could be seen as inspired by Chinese market practices" (ibid. p. 16). Also, online auction

has gained more success in India than in western countries (Khaire, 2015).

However, these interpretations tend to postulate a gulf between the centre and the periphery by confusing the ideal type of western market model with actual practices. The separation between the primary art market and the secondary art market is only an ideal type. Deviances to this ideal type, which can be observed in peripheral areas, exist equally in the western practices. As Moulin (1987) puts it, the most common type of dealers in contemporary art are resellers, who are not considered the most typical dealers, who supposedly manage artists' careers. On the other hand, artists have been trying to cut out the middle man ever since the modern art market was established in the west (White and White, 1993, p. 127-128; Moulin, 1987, p. 56). A most recent study of the western art market shows that even museums buy artworks straight from artists, thereby cutting out the intermediaries (Resch, 2015, p. 55). After all, the artist-dealer relationship is "essentially a struggle over power and an established artist is able to manoeuvre in the market by his own wish" (Moulin, 1987, p. 56). The observation that artists sell artworks through auction houses, therefore, cannot be used to indicate a different market model.[21] By contrast, the market models in China are actually strongly influenced by the western ones, considering that even the idea of auction houses was imported to China in the 1990s.

The focus on practices that apparently departed from western standards came hand in hand with concerns about possible disruption caused by Chinese artists to the western art market. Responding to these concerns, Barbara Pollock, an expert in contemporary Chinese art, notes the followings:

> Let's be honest. Many successful European and American artists already operate this way [...] In many ways, Chinese artists are looking at how transactions really take place in the West, rather than accepting our mythologies about how they ought to take place. (Vine, Phillips, & Pollack, 2007, p.49-50)

These words also lead to my answer to the meaning of studying the peripheral cases. Any art form, including contemporary art indigenous to western countries and ink painting indigenous to China, is maintained by ideologies. These ideologies generate what Pollock called "mythologies". By looking at a peripheral area, where contemporary art is not indigenous and certain "deviance" manifests, we may be in a better position to go beyond these mythologies and open up new perspectives.

---

[21]The observation made by Velthuis and Baia Curioni (2015b) is also only applicable to the period of the market boom, when Chinese galleries were newly founded but artists had already established their reputation. With the growing power of galleries in China, artists are now less likely to make careers outside the primary market.

In the case of China, the "deviance" is the absence of state funding in the exhibitionary system of contemporary art. This offers a new perspective on the relationship between art and the market. A dualism between art and the market is postulated in the defining ideology of western contemporary art. Art dealers, collectors, and artists are supposed to keep a distance from the market. Debate on the artistic autonomy, accordingly, often amounts to a discussion regarding whether artists can defend the eroding power of the market (Graw, 2009). In this dualist view, the power of the state is usually neglected. However, as argued by Alexander (1996, 2017), the state, through public funding for arts, has always been a determining power in the exhibitionary system. Therefore, the examination of the relationship between art and the market in the western context actually needs to isolate the influence of state funding from the observations. This difficult task is not necessary in the case of China. As already mentioned, the development of an exhibitionary system for contemporary art started with a breakaway from the official art system. The political confrontation drove contemporary art outside the state-funded museums in the 1990s. Although such confrontation was eliminated with the marketisation of contemporary art and the subversive art practices became accepted outside the official art system, public funding is mostly nonexistent for contemporary art. There is only one museum of contemporary art, Power State of Art, which is funded by the Shanghai municipal government primarily for the purpose of hosting the Shanghai Biennale. The major motive behind this biennale, however, as conjectured by art professionals in contemporary art who have gone through the political repression, is to profess a liberal and international image of Shanghai. Two other museums are affiliate museums of art schools that enjoy public funding indirectly. All other museums of contemporary art are private. They are either corporate museums or collector's museums. As non-profit organisations, they are only entitled to subsidies for low admission fees but not governmental funding for arts and culture. Independent art spaces are also financed by private sources only. Consequently, the minimum interference of the state renders the Chinese case ideal for the examination of the relationships between art and the market.

2.3   An ideal site for empirical investigation

China is also an optimal choice for empirical investigation thanks to the short history and the small size of the exhibitionary system. In 1979, a group of avant-garde and self-taught Chinese artists, called the Star Art Group,[22] staged their first exhibition on the railings of

---

[22]Founded by Ma Desheng and Huang Rui, its early members also included Ai Weiwei

the National Museum of Art. This exhibition is commonly regarded as the commencement of contemporary art in China. After three decades, despite the global prominence of many Chinese artists, the number of practising artists and art organisations in China is relatively smaller in comparison to the leading western countries.

As a researcher needs sufficient background knowledge to navigate the field, the short history of CCA is beneficial to my preparatory work. The short history also leads to a unique phenomenon: with very few deceased artists, almost all practising artists are contemporaries. The history of CCA is, therefore, actually a history of contemporaries. Accordingly, background knowledge of the informants could be partially acquired from art historical writings, before I would approach them in the fieldwork.

The size of a local art scene can be measured by the number of practising artists and the number of art institutions. As artists are not employees by conventional definition, it is difficult to ascertain the number of artists. The size of an art scene is therefore often indicated by the number of art institutions only. My observation about the small size of contemporary Chinese art scene is also based upon the number of exhibition spaces. For example, Quemin (2016) estimates the number of French galleries of contemporary art to be around two hundreds. Using a similar methodology, supplemented with informants' opinions, I estimate the number of galleries of contemporary art in China to be around one hundred. Given that the gallery sector is the most mature sector in the exhibitionary system in China, this small number suggests that the scale of the overall exhibitionary system is much smaller than those of leading western countries.

Given the small size of the research field, my choice of the Chinese case facilitates the collection of high quality data. Because the entire population of exhibition spaces and artists in China is small, I do not need a large sample size to cover the variations. Moreover, I can easily navigate and gain access to data in a small art world. According to the small world theory (Travers & Milgram, 1969; Newman, 2000), it is likely that all these contemporaries are connected to each other by a few intermediates. I can therefore reach a targeted informant through recommendations of other informants. In short, samples can be highly representative, while bias caused by limited access to data can be reduced.

3   The Exhibitionary System in China

The exhibitionary system in China has two distinct characteristics. First, it is situated almost entirely in the private sector. The establishment of an exhibitionary system is

enabled by economic resources generated in the art market, first the western art market and then the domestic market. This also explains why the gallery system is relatively more mature than the non-profit sector, as the latter has a shorter history and lacks support from governmental funding. Second, the exhibitionary system in China draws heavily upon western standards, because contemporary art is not indigenous to China. On the one hand, the earliest exhibition spaces in China were mostly founded by western expatriates. In particular, domestic collectors took almost two decades to accept contemporary art. The heavy dependence of CCA in its early history on the western art market also facilitated the diffusion of western standards in China. On the other hand, western standards are generally accepted by Chinese exhibition makers. After all, a centre-periphery structure is only maintained by the recognition of the western hegemony from the peripheral areas. Without such a recognition, the structure falls into segments instead.

Certainly, in establishing a domestic exhibitionary system, there were also efforts to resist the power of western curators in the global biennale system. The attack was often directed at western curators' attempts to orientalise and politicise CCA (P. Wang, 2010), but not at the curatorial models and norms in exhibition making. By contrast, "universalism" and "professionalism", which are mostly derived from western standard practices, together with the curatorial models, were actively embraced by Chinese curators (J. Zhang, 2009; H.Wu, 2001). The adoption of these standards, were also deemed by curators a necessary means to refocus on the quality of artworks, as opposed to political implication or cultural identity, in the evaluation and selection of artworks. This means, most Chinese artists and curators believe that contemporary Chinese art only becomes autonomous when the "Chineseness" is eliminated, and for this end, the adoption of western standards is a necessary means.

In this section, I will first introduce briefly how an exhibitionary system became established in China. Then as the preparatory work for my fieldwork, I will identify the major exhibition spaces in China.

3.1   A brief history

The development of an exhibitionary system for contemporary art started with the breakaway from the official system after 1989. The breakaway was not intended by the avant-garde artists. In fact, during the 1980s, proponents of the avant-garde art wished to exhibit in the state-owned exhibitionary system and to a certain degree, they succeeded. The exhibition "China Avant-Garde" held in the National Museum of Art in February

1989 marked such success. However, in the following June, the Tiananmen Incident put an end to exhibition opportunities for experimental art in the official art system.

Three phases of development can be identified: the nascent period between 1993 and 2003, the transition phase between 2004 and 2009, and the consolidation phase between 2010 and 2015. The development also entails two aspects: the growing institutional infrastructure and the establishment of norms in exhibition making.

The early development: 1991 - 2003

In this phase, the exhibitionary infrastructure was composed of only a few galleries founded by foreign expatriates in the 1990s, who often started with display of works in hotel lobbies (Lü, 2013). These foreign expatriates most conveniently became the early art dealers, because the first collectors of CCA were also mostly foreigners. Although the appearance of these commercial galleries ameliorated the exhibition condition of CCA, it was generally difficult to exhibit CCA in the white cube in the 1990s. Artists had to seek all kinds of unusual venues: temples, night clubs, furniture malls, and public spaces such as streets and squares (H. Wu, 2001). Moreover, art exhibitions of avant-garde art were a political affront to the art officials. Many exhibitions were cancelled or forced to terminate earlier than planned (H. Wu, 2001). By contrast, commercial galleries provided a safe space for the public presentation of contemporary art (DeBevoise, 2014).

Another outlet for contemporary Chinese art was the exhibitionary system outside China. Hong Kong dealers were important mediators, and western curators started to explore contemporary art in China. Through their efforts, Chinese artists were introduced to biennales, museum and gallery exhibitions in the west. Confronted with the overwhelming power of western curators, some Chinese critics considered an scheme of "domestic empowering", for which they considered the domestic market an ally (P. Wang, 2010). These Chinese critics attempted to boost the domestic art market by organising auctions and biennales with sale on site. The goal was also to build a domestic system of art evaluation and selection (Wang, 2010, p. 79).

Despite the poor institutional infrastructure, curatorial models commonly used in western exhibitions, such as thematic exhibition and on-site production, were introduced into China by independent curators (H. Wu, 2001). The strong awareness of a western audience was also present in these early exhibitions. Indeed, they were all accompanied by English titles and catalogues.

During this early phase, the exhibitionary system was only in its nascency. The

art market was an important facilitating power and was also recognised as such by the Chinese artists and critics.

The transition phase: 2004 - 2009

With the burgeoning domestic market, an exhibitionary system started to take shape. Although a gallery boom characterised this phase of development, the non-profit sector also started to grow. I term this a "transition phase" because the economic crisis of 2008 caused a reshuffling in the gallery sector, the impact of which can still be observed in the following phase of consolidation.

Both international and Chinese dealers contributed to the gallery boom. Foreign galleries, led by those founded by East Asian dealers, were among the first to gather in the area that is now known as the 798 Art Zone (798) in Beijing. The attraction of China's emerging market to international galleries was epitomised by the entry of a leader gallery, Pace Gallery, to 798 in 2008. A large number of local galleries were also founded.[23] However, different practices co-existed in the gallery system during the market boom (J. Zhang, 2009; L. Zhang, forthcoming). For some galleries, art sales were separated from exhibition making. For other galleries, new exhibitions only served the purpose of selling works or raising prices. The economic crisis in 2008 drove most of the speculative dealers and those who failed to develop a consistent artistic programme out of the market (Pei, 2013; Z. Liu, 2016).

Meanwhile, private non-profit museums, founded by collectors or real estate corporations, also appeared. A few prominent ones are the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing founded in 2007, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Shanghai founded in 2005, and the Times Museum in Guangzhou founded in 2003. The first two are founded by collectors, the Belgian collector Guy Ullens and the Hong Kongese collector Samuel Kung, respectively; the third is founded by a real estate corporation, Times China Hold. Exhibition programmes of these museums started to review the history of CCA through retrospective group exhibitions, and celebrate established artist through solo exhibitions. Survey exhibitions were also organised to present the works of mid-career artists.

Artists who wanted to keep a distance from the feverish art economy started their own alternative, independent exhibition spaces. Both founded in 2008, Arrow Factory

---

[23]There is no reliable statistics available but the data from the oldest art fair, China International Gallery Exhibition (CIGE), could give us a clue. The number of new galleries – either local Chinese galleries or branches of foreign galleries – that appeared in the fair, was 12, 20 and 21 in 2006, 2007 and 2008 respectively.

in Beijing and AM Art Space in Shanghai intentionally chose locations remote from the gallery zones. Their exhibitions were project-based and site-specific, which emphasised integration of the exhibition context. The artworks created for these exhibitions were often not portable, and therefore hardly saleable.

The consolidation phase: 2010 - 2015

The turbulence caused by the economic crisis gradually came to an end in 2010, as indicated by the fact that the number of exhibitions returned to a pre-crisis level.[24] A museum boom is the most noticeable feature of this consolidation phase. Museums sprouted up all over China. Between 2010 and 2015, there appeared 17 new museums of contemporary art. In addition to reviewing history and celebrating renowned artists, these museums also aim to support young artists in their exhibition programmes. More newly founded independent art spaces, some of which go beyond the task of exhibition making, are devoted to assist with artistic projects of young artists and various forms of non-commercial art practices (Bao, 2014).

In addition to the growth of the non-profit sector, the consolidation phase is characterised by the establishment of norms in the gallery sector. The economic crisis has reduced the power of speculative dealers and facilitated the establishment of norms in gallery practices (L. Zhang, forthcoming). Emphasis on exhibition quality, which a few galleries already upheld during the market boom (J. C. Zhang, 2009), have now become a common statement given by gallerists. The strategy of supporting cutting-edge art in order to build reputation and make money from more traditional art forms such as paintings, is commonly used by western galleries (Horowitz, 2011). Notably, this strategy has also been adopted by many astute Chinese gallerists. They have learned to present themselves primarily as exhibition makers, rather than dealers. In the meantime, the development of art fairs and private pre-views for collectors has also facilitated the separation between sale and show. That is, galleries now focus on sale in art fairs, and on exhibition making in their regular gallery shows. In brief, the separation between sale and show, which is a defining character of exhibition spaces, has finally become established as a norm in gallery practices in China. In other words, a significant number of galleries in China now fit the definition of exhibition spaces.

---

[24]The figure will be shown in Chapter Four when I introduce the collection of quantitative data.

3.2 Identifying the local exhibition spaces

I have defined the local exhibitionary system as consisting of galleries, museums and independent art spaces. However, in identifying these exhibition spaces in China, three problems emerge. First, given the considerable degree of globalisation in the local art scene, the boundary between local and global is often blurred. It is thus difficult to locate exhibition spaces that enjoy a global reputation or simply operate on a global scale. In China, there are no indigenous art institutions with global reputation such as MoMA or Centre Pompidou. Hence, in my research, this problem mainly arises from the existence of many international galleries with a second or third base in China. In other words, the problem lies in deciding whether to include these foreign galleries as part of the local exhibitionary system. Second, there is a certain degree of volatility in each art system, because reputation and economic success can shift easily, and art institutions do not necessarily survive for long. In China, the volatility is noticeably high. Not only do galleries vanish easily, but museums can also lose their reputation. The decision of whether to include newly founded exhibition spaces in this examination poses a problem. The third problem, which concerns all social research in China, is a lack of reliable statistics. As the exhibitionary system resides in the private sector, and the understanding of galleries in China is not limited to my definition of exhibition spaces, statistics of companies officially registered as galleries are not relevant. The online databases, such as artfact.net used by Velthuis and Baia Curioni (2015b), are far from reliable. In artfact.net, for instance, Institute Cervantes Beijing (a language centre), Li Keran Academy of Painting (an art school), and even Long March Space (a commercial gallery) are in the same list of "non-profit arts organisations".

The task at hand, in brief, is first to identify eligible exhibition spaces of contemporary art from reliable sources, and then narrow the scope of examination to the relatively stable part of the local exhibitionary system by excluding a few newly founded international and local exhibition spaces.

I deployed different sources and criteria of inclusion in identifying the three types of exhibition spaces. For galleries, I drew upon Quemin's (2016) method that identifies galleries from participants of art fairs. This method eludes the trouble of defining galleries, but accepts the definition and criteria set by these art fairs. The more prestigious the art fairs are, the more strict their criteria. Therefore, it is a sound method that deploys the definition used by art professionals themselves. For participation in art fairs becomes the

crucial benchmark for both market success and reputation (N. Horowitz, 2011, p. 135), Quemin's method is also capable of differentiating galleries with different degrees of economic success and reputation. To a certain degree, art fairs are the exhibitions of galleries, where galleries strive for visibility. Galleries go to fairs not only to sell art, but also to raise and maintain their visibility to other art professionals and collectors. The reputation of the art fairs that a gallery participates in, indicates the reputation of the gallery. It is a consensus that top galleries are those that secure a place in four prestigious art fairs, which are Frieze London, Art Basel in Basel,[25] FIAC in Paris, and the Armory Show in New York (Quemin, 2006; Velthuis, 2013; Halle & Tiso, 2014). These art fairs require galleries to submit application every year and participation in previous editions does not guarantee an entry to the coming one.

In China, due to the existence of ink painting and calligraphy, not all art fairs are exclusively for contemporary art. But there were a few fairs that specialised in contemporary art during the time I conducted my fieldwork (2014-2016), and new ones keep emerging. I selected the three that are relatively long-established: China International Gallery Exhibition (CIGE) founded in 2005, Art Beijing founded in 2006 and Art 021 founded in 2013. The first two take place in Beijing and Art 021 is situated in Shanghai. There were around 300 galleries that ever participated in at least one art fair between 2005 and 2016.[26] Considering the high volatility in the gallery sector (Resch, 2015; Peterson, 1997), many galleries on the participant lists might not exist anymore. I thus considered only galleries that participated in at least one of the three fairs during the past three years (2014-2016). To decide whether the Chinese base of an international gallery belongs to the local art scene, I consider the process of localisation, which can be slow for some galleries. For instance, Tokyo Gallery entered China in 2002 but it was only after 2006 that shows of Chinese artists made up at least half of its programmes. Another example is a Korean gallery Arario Gallery. It opened a branch in Beijing in 2005, but did not sustain itself and closed in 2012. The gallery re-entered China in 2014, but set its new base in Shanghai. I decided that international galleries had to have survived in China at least five years in order to be included. Given the two criteria, the number of active galleries of contemporary art in China is estimated to be one hundred. I recognise these galleries as constituting the more stable part of the local Chinese gallery system.

---

[25] Art Basel has two branches, one in Miami Beach and one in Hong Kong. Art Basel in Basel is the most prestigious one.

[26] This does not mean that there were only 300 distinct participants over the course of 11 years. Not all organisations that appear in these art fairs can be qualified as exhibition spaces. Some are dealers without an exhibition programme. My filtering process was assisted by curators who have insider information.

In terms of museums, I relied on the judgements of my informants. As museums demand a large amount of investment, and contemporary art is not the most popular genre among Chinese elite, there are not so many specialised in contemporary art. But they are rather noticeable, due to their sizes. Most practising artists, curators and art journalists can name all these museums. A simple enquiry provided me with 21 museums that the art professionals considered qualified as museums of contemporary art.[27]

The identification of independent art spaces was much more difficult. My estimation was based on four sources. Bao (2014) provides a list of 12 art spaces founded by artists between 2001 and 2012. In 2015, three independent art spaces initiated the first Festival of Independent Art Spaces, which assembled 17 art spaces from all over China.[28] An art journalist listed 21 art spaces founded between 2007 and 2015 in his article published in the online art newspaper *99ys.com* (Zhao, 2015). In the early phase of my fieldwork, I also discovered four more spaces that were not listed in the existing sources. Ultimately, I arrived at a list of 41 art spaces. This list, although it is unlikely to be exhaustive of all, includes at least all independent art spaces that are known to a significant number of art professionals in China.

In brief, I identified around 100 galleries, 21 museums, and 41 independent art spaces as constituting the main body of the Chinese exhibitionary system of contemporary art. These numbers support my argument that the Chinese local art scene is a relatively small field of research.

3.3   A topographic map

In this section, I will present lists of major exhibition spaces in the two most visible cities, which also constitute the population from which my samples are drawn. These exhibition spaces with different degrees of visibility determine the local art scene.

The two metropolises

Beijing and Shanghai are the two most visible cities in China. The development of an art hub can be attributed to two important factors. First, art schools in a city promise the creation of artists. Second, a significant number of art institutions such as galleries and museums make the artists' careers possible. Beijing is home to the most prestigious art school China Central Academy of Fine Arts, and also boasts the renowned 798, where

---

[27]A list of these museums is attached in appendix A.

[28]See their website for details: `http://iasbeijing.org/participating-spaces`

successful galleries concentrate. In this regard, Beijing is "the unquestionable centre" of contemporary art (H. Wu, 2002, p. 28) and has always been the focus of art history writings. Shanghai, when gauged by the two main factors – art schools and an exhibitionary infrastructure, is less prominent than Beijing. With this said, another prestigious Chinese art school, China Academy of Art is located, not in Shanghai but in Hangzhou, some 170 kilometres away from Shanghai. Compared to Beijing, there are relatively fewer renowned galleries based in Shanghai.

However, Shanghai's visibility has recently been greatly elevated by the burgeoning of large museums specialising in contemporary art. Among the 17 museums newly founded after 2010, nine are in Shanghai, the smallest of which covers 1,170 square metres and the largest of which covers 16,000 square metres. These museums have expanded exhibition opportunities of contemporary art in Shanghai enormously, raising the number of shows and the holding capacity of the exhibition halls. As a consequence, although there are less artists based in Shanghai than in Beijing, Shanghai has becomes an optimal site to showcase artworks.

Other cities in China, even when they have a considerable number of artists (such as Hangzhou and Chongqing), lack the exhibitionary infrastructure. That is why many art students from other cities are attracted to Beijing and Shanghai after graduation. Contemporary art, after all, like in any other part of the world, tend to flourish in metropolises.

The most visible spaces

The visibility of galleries depends on both their economic success and reputation. As discussed in the methods used to identify galleries, economic success and reputation of galleries can be further indicated by the reputation of art fairs they participate in. I therefore distinguish between different tiers of galleries based upon the prominence of the art fairs they enter. It is now common for art fairs, especially the prominent ones, to have a gallery section and some other special sections for emerging galleries. Therefore, I also distinguish those galleries that occasionally enter the top art fairs from those that have secured a position in these fairs. In this dissertation, galleries that have had booths in the gallery section of all the past three editions of an art fair are considered to have secured a position in this fair.

In Table III.2, Tier 1 galleries refer to those galleries that have secured positions in at least one of the four top art fairs. As discussed, these top fairs are Frieze London, Art Basel in Basel, FIAC in Paris, and the Armory Show in New York. There are only six

galleries that have been able to enter the top tier: Long March Space (Beijing), Vitamin Creative Space (Beijing & Guangzhou), ShanghART (Shanghai &Beijing), Gallerie Urs Meile, Pace Beijing and Galleria Continua.[29] Only the first three galleries started their dealership in China.

Considering the geographic impact, I take participation in Art Basel Hong Kong as the criteria for visibility on the second tier. In other words, Tier 2 galleries refer to those that took part in four out of the five past editions (2013 – 2017) in the gallery section of Art Basel HK.

Tier 3 galleries are those that have been active in local Chinese art fairs in the past five years. That is, they participated in all of the past five editions in Art Beijing and CIGE (2012 – 2016), and all of the past four editions in Art 021 (2013 – 2016). Some of these Tier 3 galleries have also entered the gallery section but have not yet secured a position in Art Basel HK.

Tier 4 galleries are those that participate less frequently in local art fairs than Tier 3 galleries. In Table III.2, I list only a few that participated at least three times or those who participated in special sections of Art Basel HK. There are around fifty other more galleries which may be ranked below Tier 4.

As indicated above, Beijing and Shanghai are home to almost all galleries in the top three tiers. Therefore, Table III.2 lists galleries based in the two cities only. There are only three galleries based in other cities that can make to the list of Tier 3 galleries: L-Art Gallery, A thousand Plateaus Art Space in Chengdu, and Fine Arts Literature Art Centre in Wuhan.

The visibility of non-profit art spaces, including museums and independent art spaces, relies almost solely on their reputation. This is something of a conundrum, because unlike economic success, reputation is a fuzzy concept to measure. In the western context, rankings of non-profit art spaces are simply released by authoritative art media, such as *Kunstkompass* and *ArtFacts*, even though the methodologies are often dubious. In the Chinese art scene, these kinds of rankings are currently nonexistent. I had to draw upon the opinions of my informants and used a criterion of "word-of-mouth" for reputation.

Table III.3 only includes those museums that were relatively better recognised during the period in which I conducted my fieldwork. As explained, almost all museums of contemporary art are private. These museums mainly rely on investment from the

---

[29]Worldwide, only few galleries are able to afford the cost of these top art fairs. According to Velthuis (2013), only 10% of the entire gallery population are able to participate in the global art market.

Classification	Beijing	Shanghai
Tier 1	Pace Beijing, Long March Space, Vitamin Creative Space, Galleria Continua, Gallerie Urs Meile	ShanghART
Tier 2	Aye Gallery, Beijing Commune, Boers-Li Gallery, Magician Space, Platform China, Tang Contemporary, White Space Beijing, Soka Art	Leo Xu, Pearl Lam
Tier 3	Beijing Art Now, Gallery Yang, Star Gallery, Chambers Fine Art, Space Station, PIFO, Linda Gallery, Hadrien de Montferrand Gallery, Hive Art Center	Shanghai Gallery of Art, Aike-Dellarco, Antenna Space
Tier 4	C5 Art Centre, Asian Art Centre, NOA Art, Pekin Fine Arts, C-Space ...	Vanguard Gallery, Don Gallery, M Art Centre, J: Gallery, MadeIN Gallery, ifa Gallery, 55 Gallery ...

Table III.2: Major Galleries in Beijing and Shanghai

Location	Museum	Independent Art Space
Beijing	The Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA), Redbrick Art Museum	Tai Kang Space, Arrow Factory, Video Bureau
Shanghai	OCAT Shanghai, Power Station of Art (PSA), Rockbund Art Museum (RAM), Mingsheng Modern Museum	AM Art Space, Chronus Art Center
Other cities	Guangdong Times Museum, OCAT Xi'An, OCAT Shenzhen	Yangtze River Space

Table III.3: Major Non-profit Art Spaces

founders, revenue-generating activities, and sponsorship they can obtain from other companies. Yet sources of fundings do not seem to affect people's judgements of the quality of these museums, because the only state-funded museum, Power Station of Art, is recognised but not as the best. Arguably, the most recognised museum in China is UCCA, founded by a Belgium collector in 2007. The length of existence of a museum does not seem to be particularly important neither. Although UCCA is among the earliest museums built in China, some other older museums gradually lost their reputation, such as Today Art Museum and MoCA Shanghai. Other new museums, by contrast, have rapidly won recognition from artists, such as the OCAT museum franchises and Redbrick Art Museum. The OCAT museum franchises, currently comprising four museums in different cities with different focus on art medium, are built by a real estate corporation, the Overseas Chinese Town Group (OCT Group). The reputation of the franchises are built upon their curatorial team and research committee, which include leading curators, artists, and scholars in CCA such as Wu Hung, Zhang Peili and Huang Zhuan.

In general, probably due to their small sizes, independent art spaces are less visible than museums. The most well-known of these are relatively old, such as Tai Kang Space, Arrow Factory, and AM Art Space, all of which are founded before 2010. The new ones such as Video Bureau and Chronus Art Center, founded in 2012 and 2013 respectively, tend to support a specific medium, that is, video art, which is considered to have a narrow market. Some well-known independent art spaces, such as Institute for Provocation in Beijing, go beyond exhibition making. They are thus not included as exhibition spaces and therefore do not appear in Table III.3. It is also to be noted that the programming in Video Bureau and Yangtze River Space does not follow strictly the standard routines I have identified in most exhibition spaces. By way of illustration, Video Bureau works more like an independent cinema, because it serves mainly as an archive for video art and organises screening of video art only.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the background on the Chinese exhibitionary system, but also has reflected on the study of non-western cases in the sociology of art. The study of the peripheral areas shall not remain on the level of completing a so-called global vision, which is evoked by the observation of a seemingly unprecedented global art world. Instead, I have argued for the importance of the local art scene, as well as the possibilities of obtaining

new angles – on analysing the relations between art and the market, in the case of China – from the study of peripheral areas. By so doing, I have justified the decision of studying the case of contemporary Chinese art, which constitutes a relatively small field ideal for empirical research. I have also identified the major exhibition spaces, from which to draw samples for data collection. It is then the topic of the coming chapter.

Chapter IV

Methodology, Fieldwork, and Data

Introduction

This dissertation is a piece of mixed methods research that incorporates the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. The understanding of exhibition making obtained from qualitative data constitutes the foundation of concept developing and theory building. Quantitative data is then used to develop instruments to measure concepts and test hypotheses. The two types of data have also strengthened the validity of my generalisations, as they provide cross verification.

Qualitative data were gathered in the fieldwork, which was divided to two phases. In both phases, Beijing and Shanghai were my primary fieldwork sites. The first phase started in September 2014 and ended in June 2015. The overarching goal was to understand the process of exhibition making. Participant observation was the primary method used to collect a broader range of information. I observed how exhibitions were made in different galleries and museums. Interview was used to assist with the observation. The second phase took place between July and September 2016. The primary goal was to inquire further into themes emerging from the analysis of the data collected in the first phase. In the second phase, interview was used as it is more efficient in getting specific information. I interviewed directors and owners of different exhibition spaces find out how artists are selected to the exhibitionary system. My questions to artists concerned how they plan and organise artistic creation.

Quantitative data on exhibitions opened between 2010 and 2016 in 43 major exhibition spaces in China were retrieved from online databases and archives. An exhibition indicates the social tie between the artist and the exhibition space in the case of a solo

exhibition, and in addition, the social ties among artists in the case of a group exhibition. Therefore, the relationships indicated by exhibitions amount to a kind of social network and can be analysed as network data. Accordingly, social network analysis was the primary method for analysing quantitative data. It was deployed to measure the concept of visibility, to compare the selection of artists by different exhibition spaces, and to map out their connections.

Data collection raises two kinds of methodological problem, relating to, first, access to data, and second, data validation. Therefore, I will introduce the process of data collection by explaining how I gained access and improved data quality. In the collection of qualitative data, I selected different cases to ensure the variety and richness of information. I also endeavoured to develop and maintain rapports with my informants, as access to qualitative data is mediated by them. In the collection of quantitative data, my efforts were directed at sampling and validating data sources; here the problem of access did not apply.

1 Multi Phases and Mixed Methods Research Design

1.1 Exploratory sequential design

Mixed methods research involves the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Depending on the type of research, the two kinds of data can be combined in multiple ways. As my research is exploratory in nature, I started with the collection and analysis of qualitative data to identify key themes and concepts. In the second phase, I combined qualitative and quantitative methods to look for any underlying mechanisms in the themes identified, based on interpretation of both kinds of data. This research model is similar to what Creswell and Clark (2011) call an "exploratory sequential design" (p. 88), but for one important difference: while their model includes quantitative data only in the second phase, my model of exploratory sequential design involves mixed methods for explanatory purposes (see Figure IV.1).

My qualitative exploration started with a broad question: how are exhibitions made? To answer this question, I observed the whole process of exhibition making in different exhibition spaces. Interviews were also used to supplement my observations. Three themes emerged from the observations: the presence of *dense social networks* among exhibition makers, the overwhelming concern with *visibility*, and the *schemata* that guide the creation, organisation, and evaluation of artworks.
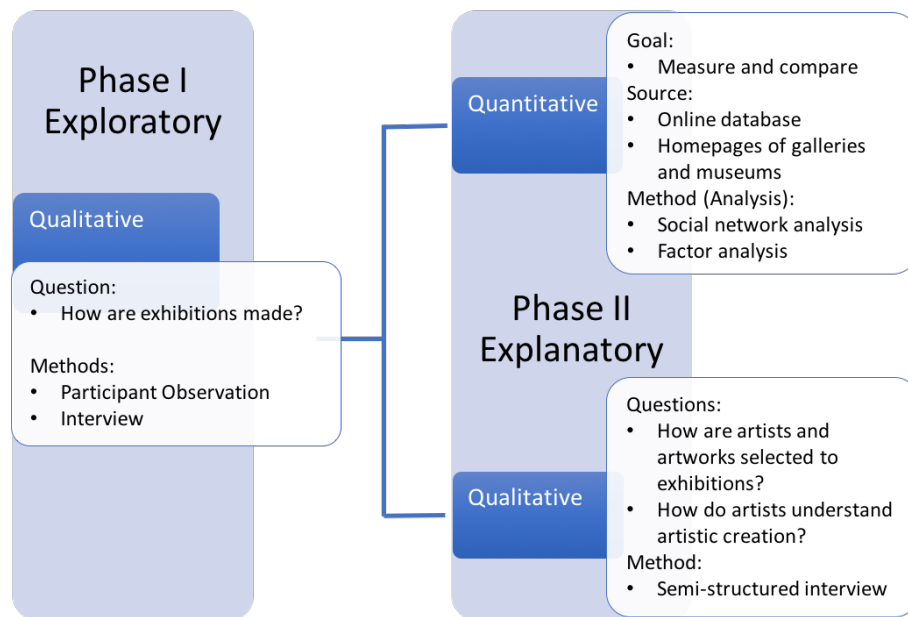
Figure IV.1: Research Design

The goal of the second phase is to explore the three themes further. To understand visibility in the exhibitionary system, interviews with the owners or directors of exhibition spaces were conducted. The interview questions for directors/owners of galleries, museums and independent art spaces focused on how they select artists for exhibitions and how they promote their exhibitions. For the examination of underlying schemata that guide their creation, I interviewed artists and encouraged them to describe their artworks and the connections between works. In the meantime, I acquired information of exhibitions, such as date, duration, and artists and curators involved, held by major exhibition spaces from online databases. The social network analysis of these exhibition data, can serve three ends. First, they can show the results of the selection of artists explained by the owners or directors of corresponding exhibition spaces. Second, they can be used to map out the social networks among different exhibition spaces. Third, they can also be used to measure the concept of visibility in the exhibitionary system.

Thus, I can use quantitative data to illustrate qualitative findings. Furthermore, any hypotheses developed from qualitative investigation can be tested by the quantitative data.

1.2   Methods

A method is not necessarily qualitative or quantitative. For instance, participant observation is usually associated with the collection of qualitative data, but it can also be used

to collect quantitative data. Therefore, methods are better categorised according to their objectives: either for data collection or for data analysis.

In my research, different methods are used in the collection of qualitative data and the analysis of quantitative data. Qualitative data were collected by participant observation and through interviews. Quantitative data were retrieved from online databases. For the analysis of quantitative data, I used social network analysis. In the following, I will introduce the methods used and why they were chosen.

Participant observation and interview

In the exploratory phase, participant observation is the major method for data collection, as it allows access to a broader range of information. The information gathered is typically also richer – something enabled by the amount of time spent by the the researcher recording his or her direct experience.

Although observation without participation is possible, particularly with the assistance of video streaming (Acord, 2012; Vom Lehn et al., 2001), the value of participant observation lies in the combination of participation and observation. By personally experiencing the activities under study, the researcher will gradually adopt an insider's perspective or at least obtain some aspects of the insider's perspective. Particularly in the art world, visual and experiential information are crucial but cannot be acquired adequately by verbal inquiry alone. Therefore, the researcher's direct experience is indispensable.

Participant observation also allows the researcher to understand how things are *actually done*, rather than how they are verbally presented as being to outsiders. Researchers have shown that the art world is maintained by a strong ideology that defends the symbolic value of art (Moulin 1987; Bourdieu, 1993; Graw, 2009). On a practical level, this means when art insiders talk to an outsider, the information they provide may be filtered by the ideology. As Velthuis (2005) experienced in his fieldwork, some interviewees refused to talk about price because of their "disinterest in profit". However, in the casual conversations after the interview, these informants inevitably referred to the high price of a good piece of art, which then revealed the true significance of price. Therefore, to see beyond the facades, such as the apparent disavowal of money, I used participant observation and spent a long time in the field.

I also used interviews to supplement my observations in the explorative phase. A principle advantage of the research interview, as compared with participant observation, is the efficiency in getting precise information. It also involves a change of perspective in

the data. Instead of being observed, the informant in an interview actively gives his or her opinions to the researcher.

When I ended the observation of a particular case, follow-up interviews allowed me to get information for activities that I could not detect through participant observation and its more informal lines of communication. For instance, I could inquire about the private communication between the artist and the gallerist, which was inaccessible to my observation. Interviews about past exhibitions also prepared me for the observation. As interview was only supplementary, the questions were limited to a specific exhibition, such as how the artist got noticed by the curator, how the plan of a commissioned work was conceived, and how artworks were adjusted in the installation phase.

Interviews were again deployed in the explanatory phase as the major means to acquire information. Different types of interviews were used to explore different topics. When interviewing the directors of exhibition spaces about their selection of artists, I used semi-structured interviews. This means, questions to all interviewees concerned the same set of topics, but were tailored according to the list of artists exhibited in each exhibition space. When interviewing artists about their creation, I used narrative interview, which encourages interviewees to provide their own detailed accounts (Flick, Kardoff, & Steinke, 2004, p. 206). The underlying patterns in artists' creative activities can only be identified from their narratives about their own works and how they conceive plans for creation.

Social network analysis

I have already introduced social network analysis (SNA) in Chapter Two, because it presents not only a set of methods but also a theoretical view of the social world. The quantitative dataset about exhibitions is treated as network data in this dissertation because exhibitions can be seen as the ties that connect the exhibition makers with each other and with the exhibition spaces. SNA is used to analyse exhibition data for two purposes. First, it is used to compile indicators for the measure of artists' visibility. Second, it is used to map out the collaborative networks among exhibition spaces.

For a better illustration, I need to introduce a few basic technical terms that are essential to my data analysis. First, there is a distinction between a *one-mode* network and a *two-mode* network (Pattison, 1994). A one-mode network is composed of ties among actors of the same type. For instance, in the art world, a one-mode network can be the friendship ties among artists, or the collaborative ties among exhibition spaces. However, a network composed of ties between artists and exhibition spaces – actors of two types –

is then two-mode. One-mode networks and two-mode networks are processed differently in SNA, because in two-mode networks, ties between the same type of actors exist only through the mediation by another type of actors. But it is also possible to transform two-mode networks to two one-mode networks through matrix multiplication, because in SNA, data are formatted in matrices.
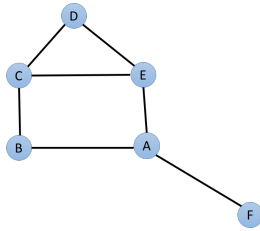
Figure IV.2: A Dummy Network

Second, centrality is an important measure that identifies actors that occupy central positions in a network structure. Actors with high centrality are considered to have more power or prestige. Among the three types of centrality measure, I deployed degree centrality and betweenness centrality in this dissertation.[30] Degree centrality measures how many ties that an actor has to other actors in proportion to all the possible ties in the network (Freeman, 1979). Betweenness centrality measures to what extent an actor mediates between other actors (Freeman, 1977). That is, if it is a friendship networks, actors with high degree centrality have a large number of friends, while actors with high betweenness centrality – who are usually called "brokers" (R. S. Burt, 1992) – are most able to build friendships among others by introducing two people who would otherwise remain strangers.

An actor with high degree centrality is not necessarily a broker because the friends of this actor may also know each other and therefore do not need this particular actor as a bridge. For instance, in Figure IV.2, actor A, C and E are equal in their degree centrality, but actor A has the highest betweenness centrality because F cannot be connected to the rest four actors without A.

Having clarified these basic terms, I can now explain how SNA is applied to the analysis of exhibition data. An exhibition network is a two-mode network, namely an artist-by-artspace network, which includes the ties between two types of actors. However, the network structure in a solo exhibition is different from that from that in a group exhibition. A group exhibition indicates a weak tie between each participant artist and the exhibition space, while also suggesting weak ties among the artists as co-exhibitors, mediated by the exhibition space or the curator. Therefore, it is possible to extract an artist-by-artist network from a group exhibition. That is, a network of group exhibitions

---

[30]The third type of centrality is closeness centrality, which is only useful when analysing indirect ties, by which two actors are connected through mediation of another actor.

can be analysed as an artist-by-artspace network; it can also be transformed to a one-mode, namely, artist-by-artist network. By contrast, a solo exhibition is a strong tie between the artist and the exhibition space. As no co-exhibitors are involved, a network of solo exhibitions is essentially two-mode and can only be analysed as such. In sum, group exhibitions and solo exhibitions need to be analysed separately.

To comply indicators for visibility, I deployed centrality measure of artists in the networks of solo and group exhibitions separately. For group exhibitions, there are two ways of analysis. First, two-mode centrality measure was used in the artist-by-artspace network. Two-mode centrality means only ties from the artist to the exhibition space count, not the ones from an artist to another artist. Therefore, two-mode degree centrality of an artist indicates how many exhibition spaces have held exhibitions for the artist, namely how diverse the artist's group-exhibition venues have been. Second, an artist-by-artist network can be derived from the group exhibitions network. I used betweenness centrality for an artist's centrality in this one-mode network, because it tells us to what extent the artist connects other artists who do not habitually exhibit together. In other words, an artist's betweenness centrality in the group exhibitions indicates how diverse the artist's co-exhibitors are. For solo exhibitions, which can be studied as two-mode exhibitions only, I calculated the artist's two-mode degree centrality, to find out how diverse their solo exhibition venues have been.

For the other purpose, namely to analyse the collaborative networks among different exhibition spaces, the most applicable method could only be identified in the process of analysis. First, through the visualisation provided by UCINET (S. Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002), the software I used for SNA, I obtained a direct perception of the connections between exhibition spaces indicated by communal artists featured in their exhibitions. In this visualisation, it is noticeable that certain patterns exist in the clustering of exhibitions spaces. Next, to identify these clusters, there are multiple methods available. I first applied *singular value decomposition* (SVD) (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005) to the artist-by-artspace network to see whether any underlying factors can explain the different selection of artists. Based upon these factors, certain artistic orientations of the exhibition spaces might be identified. To have a valid result, an ideal fitting rate would be between 70% and 80% (ibid.). A high fitting rate means a large percentage of the ties can be explained by the factors identified by the software. However, when applying SVD to my network data, 23 factors were necessary to reach an acceptable fitting. This means, the selection of artists was not determined by two or three deciding factors, and

no distinct artistic orientations could be identified. Therefore, I could only examine further whether there was simple clustering, regardless of whether there are any underlying artistic orientations, within the collaborative networks. The simple clustering might still prove that some exhibition spaces often showcase artists who are not frequently showed by other exhibition spaces. I therefore deployed *faction analysis* (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005). However, as two-mode faction analysis in UCINET can only identify two fractions, I had to transform the artist-by-artspace network to a one-mode artspace-by-artspace network. The ties of this one-mode network are artists, as a tie exist between two exhibition spaces if they showcased the same artist. Results identified seven factions with a fitting rate of 80%. Hence, finally, this ideal fitting rate means that faction analysis is a suitable method for my network data. It also means that, in the exhibitionary system, there are different segments which have their own preference of artists. Yet there are no simple underlying factors that can explain the formation of these segments.

Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is a statistical method used to identify latent factors from observed and correlated variables (Kim & Mueller, 1978). It can reduce the number of variables by first identifying a few hidden factors that can account for the variation in the data, and then generating new variables based upon the newly identified factors, which will be explained in details in Chapter Six. Factor analysis was used to improve the measure of artists' visibility. Through social network analysis, I obtained five indicators for the artist's visibility. Factor analysis then helped to reduce the number of indicators, which can be treated statistically as variables. Here I will only explain how I undertook the three essential steps in factor analysis, using the software for statistics, Stata.

First, among the factors identified by Stata, I selected the first two factors which together accounted for 87% of all variance shown by the five indicators. Then, based on the two factors, a more precise result of correlations between each indicator and the factor could be generated by the software. The correlations are called "factor loadings", which can indicate the extent an indicator loads onto a factor (Kim & Mueller, 1978). From the factor loadings, namely the relationships between factors and variables, we can understand what these latent factors mean. Consider the following case: if income, education, occupation, house value, number of public parks and number of crimes in neighbourhood are the five indicators of wealth, and factor analysis identifies two factors. While income, education and occupation load highly onto Factor 1, and the other three load highly onto Factor 2.

This means Factor 1 can be something common to the first three indicators, and Factor 2 to the other three. We could therefore call Factor 1 "individual socioeconomic status", and Factor 2 "neighborhood socioeconomic status" (Rahn, 2008). Finally, new variables based upon the two factors could be generated according to factor loadings. The two new variables could replace the five indicators in the original data. That is to say, an artist's visibility could be described by the two factors instead.

2   Fieldwork and the Collection of Qualitative Data

My fieldwork comprised three steps: sampling, gaining access, and data gathering. The first step was to identify the social setting and population relevant to the research question and narrow down the focus of investigation. The second step entailed gaining permission to conduct observation or interviews. The third step was to collect data on site.

In the field research, the key to obtain data and improve data quality is to tackle two kinds of problems: the tactical problem and the epistemological problem. The tactical problem concerns how to manoeuvre in the field, for instance, how to get access (Gray, 1980; Feldman, Bell, & Berger, 2003; Harrington, 2003), how to handle the power relationship with hosts (Arendell, 1997; Reich, 2015), and whether one should get more involved or remain an observer (Labaree, 2002). The epistemological problem centres on how to improve data quality and to validate the data (Cohen, 2000; Bloor, 2001; Becker, 2001; Driessens, 2014). The tactical and epistemological problems are related, because the depth and quality of the data are conditioned by how researchers negotiate tactical problems (Vidich, 1955; Harrington, 2003; Bondy, 2013).

Therefore, I will introduce how I conducted the fieldwork by focusing on how I solved the two problems. As noted, my empirical research was divided to two phases with different purposes. Accordingly, the solutions to the tactical and epistemological problems were also different.

The epistemological problem begins with the sampling. A rigorous sampling process involves deciding who and what to sample, what type of sampling to use and what size the sample should be. In the first phase of my fieldwork, the exhibition spaces were sampled because all exhibitions virtually by definition take place in an exhibition space. In the second phase, artists and exhibition spaces were sampled. In both phases, a combination of different types of sampling was used to maximise the inclusion of various information-rich cases. In terms of the sample size, because it took usually one to two months to

observe an exhibition, the number of exhibitions that were observed was ultimately determined by the usual constraints on time as well as those resulting from the research being conducted by a single investigator. In the second phase, the size of the sample was not predetermined. I continued the sampling until a point of saturation – when no new useful information arose – was reached.

The tactical problem arises when the researcher seeks to enter the field. In the first phase, my investigation required me to enter art institutions and observe the process of exhibition-making. Getting access to an institution was my primary tactical problem in the field. The key was to reach the right persons who could grant permission. After obtaining permission, I still needed to encourage and motivate my informants to provide with me access to further observations. In the second phase, based on my established contacts with art professionals, access to interviewees was gained easily.

The epistemological problem re-emerges during the data gathering. The challenge here is to get as much relevant, credible and validated information as possible. In participant observation, the challenge was to be present wherever and whenever exhibition-relevant activities took place. This was achieved by following the rhythm of the art professionals. In an interview, the challenge was to develop rapport with the interviewee in a short time. This was achieved by investing substantial time and effort in advance of the interview researching the biography and artworks of the artist when interviewing an artist, or the past exhibitions and artists involved of an exhibition space when interviewing the director or owner of this exhibition space.

2.1   Sampling

Case selection in Fieldwork I

The primary task in the first phase was to observe the process of exhibition making. The sampling, therefore, entailed the selection of exhibitions. As an exhibition must eventually take place in an exhibition space, the selection of exhibition cases proved, first of all, to be the selection of exhibition spaces. Although interviews were also used in this phase, the sampling of interviewees was determined by the sampling of exhibitions for participant observation, because I interviewed the people related to the selected exhibitions.

Exhibition spaces in Beijing and Shanghai make up the pool from which my sample was selected. In qualitative research, the most important principle of sampling is to reach "information-rich" cases (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). An information-rich case is a case from

which the researcher can derive most knowledge about the research topic. As Beijing and Shanghai are the two cities in mainland China where most exhibitions of contemporary art take place, it makes sense that I would more likely to reach information-rich cases there. Moreover, in view of the requirement that I be present for each case, it was more feasible to confine my investigation to the two cities.

The first criterion of selection was the exhibition space's age: how long it has existed. As mentioned in Chapter Three, exhibition spaces need time to establish a clear profile and become truly integrated into the art world. After examining all identifiable galleries and museums, I set the minimum length for inclusion as *five years* of existence for galleries and *three years* for museums.

Within the confine of age, the aim in sampling was to depict accurately the full variation of the art world. Therefore, I made sure that exhibition spaces of different locations (Beijing and Shanghai), different types (galleries and museums[31]) and different positions were included. A gallery's position depends on two factors, market success and reputation; whereas a museum relies on reputation only.

The sample size was determined by the constraints on time. It took at least one month to observe an exhibition from its conception to its opening. Considering the time needed to gain access, I settled upon a sample size of six to nine. However, the sample size could only be finalised when it came to the step of selecting exhibitions. When consent was given by an exhibition space, I selected one exhibition from the forthcoming ones in its exhibition programme. To observe the whole process of exhibition, I only selected exhibitions whose conception had not yet started, or had recently started. This criterion meant that only two or three exhibitions within each exhibition space were eligible.

Then, the practicalities of observing an exhibition became a major constraint: I could not be present at two locations at the same time. Therefore, coordination between the time and location of these exhibition became a key factor in selection. Another important consideration was to cover both solo and group exhibitions. Therefore, although I aimed for a sample size from six to nine, the sample was ultimately limited to six exhibition spaces.

As Table IV.1 shows, the final sample included three galleries and three museums. Because there are more galleries in Beijing and more museums in Shanghai, two of the three galleries were based in Beijing and two of the three museums were in Shanghai.

---

[31]Smaller non-profit exhibition spaces were not considered here because they are usually similar to galleries regarding exhibition programming. Museums are different from galleries and smaller non-profit exhibition spaces because the large exhibition hall of a museum conditions the exhibitions they make.

Name	Year est.	Type	Position	Location
M Art Center	2006	Gallery	Tier 4	Shanghai
Magician Space	2008	Gallery	Tier 2	Beijing
PIFO Gallery	2006	Gallery	Tier 3	Beijing
OCAT Shanghai	2013	Museum	-	Shanghai
UCCA	2006	Museum	+	Beijing
RAM	2010	Museum	+	Shanghai

Table IV.1: The sample of exhibition spaces (participant observation)

Galleries of different positions (Tier 2, Tier 3 and Tier 4) were represented. Museums with both higher and lower recognition were included: the two with high reputation are marked with a plus in the table. Detailed information on the selected exhibitions will be given in the section of data overview.

Interviewee sampling in Fieldwork II

In the second phase of fieldwork, I conducted interviews with directors or owners of exhibition spaces and artists. As Beijing and Shanghai are the cities in which not only exhibition spaces but also artists are concentrated, the fieldwork was again conducted in these two cities.

The most important consideration was to represent different types of exhibition space. As I had already established contacts with galleries and museums in the first fieldwork phase, I was not constrained by the time needed for access; furthermore, the interviews demanded much less time than did the participant observation. Therefore, I could simply begin with the sample determined for the first phase of fieldwork and extended the number of art spaces.[32] First, four more galleries, including a Tier 1 gallery that was not covered in the first fieldwork, were added. Second, two small independent art spaces were added, as they were absent from the sample for the exploratory fieldwork. One is run by artists and the other is supported by a corporate sponsor; the two represent the two major types of independent art spaces. The list of newly added art spaces can be seen in Table IV.2.

In interviewing artists, I used snowball sampling. Snowball sampling was particu-

---

[32]Some of the art spaces in the first sample were not interviewed again because relevant information was already collected in the first phase of fieldwork.

Name	Year est.	Type	Location
ShanghART	1996	Tier 1 G	Shanghai
Beijing Commune	2004	Tier 2 G	Beijing
White Space Beijing	2004	Tier 2 G	Beijing
Gallery Yang	2010	Tier 3 G	Beijing
Arrow Factory	2008	Artist-run, independent	Beijing
Tai Kang Space	2003	Corporate-affiliated	Beijing

Table IV.2: New exhibition spaces in sample II (Interview)

larly suitable because artists are what may be termed a"hidden" group, in the sense that a full list of all practising artists is seldom not available. It was therefore more fruitful to ask the artists to recommend other interviewees with specified criteria – such as age, gender, specialisation in certain art media – for recommendation.

My snowball sampling was a dynamic process, because I adjusted the criteria for inclusion according to the demographic characteristics of those already interviewed. By way of illustration, the first artists I interviewed were usually those born in the 1980s, because it was easier to approach interviewees of my age. I specifically asked them to recommend artists born in the 1970s. With the increasing seniority of my interviewees, I was able to eventually reach artists born in the 1950s, who comprise the first generation of Chinese contemporary artists. This method was also useful in reaching artists from different cities and different galleries.

The size of the sample was not predetermined. Instead, the sampling continued until a point of saturation or redundancy was reached (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), That is to say, when no important new information, insights or understanding could be gained from new interviewees.

In this way, I arrived at a sample of 30 artists of different ages, represented by different galleries, in different market positions, and specialising in different art media. It was borne in mind that these factors could influence how they perceived the issues that were raised in the interview. The detailed background information of these artists is provided in the data overview of this section (see page 118).

2.2 Gaining access

Access refers to the means or opportunity to approach informants and to gain data from them (Feldman et al., 2003). Gaining access means to obtain the opportunity for data collection. Access is not gained once for all, but requires a continual process. It starts with making initial contact, progresses to the gaining of permission to be present, moves then to the development of rapport with the researched, and ends with existing the field (Feldman et al., 2003).

This process was especially time-consuming as I needed time to reach the right person who could grant permission for me to observe in the art space. This permission could potentially be granted by any of the exhibition makers, either the directors or owners of an art space, artists or curators (independent or with institutional affiliation). Without knowing anyone in the art world who would introduce me to relevant figures in advance, I began with seeking permission from the directors of art spaces by approaching them directly on occasions of artistic events. As I gradually made friends with my informants, their personal connections to relevant curators and gallery managers significantly facilitated my process of gaining access.

The negotiation of access continued after I gained permission to conduct observation in an art space, as the permission granted by the person in charge needed to be recognised by all other informants involved in the exhibition-making. In other words, the collection of qualitative data depends ultimately upon the quality of collaboration between each informant and the researcher. In order to facilitate the collaboration with my informants, I paid respect for their privacy, showed my support by going to their events and doing favours in return. As a result, I managed to develop rapports with my informants, which encouraged their contribution to my empirical investigation.

Getting into the white cube

As noted, the process of gaining access begins with making initial contacts. There are different ways of doing this. Sending email is easy but may result in no reply. Being introduced by an insider is more efficient - but I did not know anyone at the very beginning of my fieldwork. Hence, I chose to make personal contact by going to events that my targeted informants would attend - and striking up conversation with them.

In Shanghai, this method of self-introduction worked well. The first success was Rockbund Art Museum (RAM). I went to a talk given by the museum director and ex-

plained my research to him. I then sent him an email attached with the information sheet and consent form. During our meeting, he signed the consent form and thus granted me permission to conduct ethnographic observation at RAM. The participation of a renowned institution such as RAM added immediate credibility to my research. This initial success eased considerably my access to other art spaces in Shanghai easier. When I talked to the executive director of another museum OCT Art Terminal Shanghai, I mentioned that RAM was a participant. She said that she used to work at RAM and immediately promised me access.

The assistance of a number of significant informants also helped to accelerated the accessing process. The first of these was an art journalist based in Shanghai, Mr Han Chunyang. As his job was to report art events, Han knew the location and time of all the important events in the art world. Han's information, which allowed me to target my contacts, substantially increased the efficiency of my socialising. He also introduced me to his own network in the art world. This network constituted the base for my further contacts with other art insiders.

In Beijing, after a few attempts at self-introduction yielded no results, I adjusted my strategy. First, I asked informants who were already familiar with me if they could provide an introduction. Second, instead of trying to go through the institutional bureaucracy to reach the director, I looked for other players who also had the power to grant me consent for observation in an art space. For instance, an in-house curator could equally grant me access which I had expected from the director. I started with the network that Mr Han provided. From this, I was able to reach another significant informant, Mr Bao Dong. An independent curator based in Beijing. Mr Bao collaborated with galleries or museums to mount shows. He was recently nominated by Independent Curators International for the ICI Independent Vision Curatorial Award. Fortunately, Mr Bao happened to be highly interested in sociology, and after I explained my project, he offered access to all of his ongoing projects that were due to take place in eligible art spaces included in my sample. With his introduction, I obtained access to UCCA and PIFO gallery. Meanwhile, another art journalist helped me to connect with the gallery manager of *Magician Space.* The gallery manager passed my invitation to the gallerist, who allowed me to conduct observation in his gallery.

At the close of December 2014, after five months' work dedicated to access, I had finally received permission to observe all of my targeted cases. But the accessing process did not end here.

Respect, reciprocity and rapport

Although a general permission to enter the art space was given, the process of exhibition-making incorporates a variety of activities, each requiring its own special attention. At the discretion of the hosts, when a new activity began, I always asked for permission to follow up. For instance, when I was in the gallery, the employees were usually doing their own jobs in a shared office. On one occasion, the gallerist came in and asked some of the employees to go to another room to discuss the catalogue. At moments such as these, I would ask the gallerist whether I could come along. I also needed to ask whether I was allowed to take notes, pictures, or record audio or video. In most cases, I was allowed to deploy multiple ways of recording. But occasionally I was asked not to audio-record conversations. In other cases, some hosts encouraged me to take photos so that they would have my recordings, for their own use.

Moreover, as the formal permission was granted by either the curator or the director only, further negotiations over access entails gaining consent from other informants, who are also involved in the exhibition-making process. My respect for discretion earned me their trust and opened up more opportunities for me to gain information. To illustrate, the hosts would share their recordings with me. Many of the galleries and museums sent me pictures and catalogues of the exhibitions. In one case, where the installation process was filmed by the gallery, I was given a copy of the film as well.

Furthermore, my success in developing rapports with my participants may be traced to my endeavour always to give something in return to my hosts. To convey my respect and appreciation, I frequented the events and lectures held by the art spaces. I also assisted in the making of some of the exhibitions. Although the issue of reciprocity was never raised explicitly when I negotiated access with the host art spaces, readily providing support doubtless aided the development of benevolent relationships with my informants.

Rapport can mean different things, such as trust (Jorgensen, 1989), reciprocity (O'Reilly, 2009), friendship (Wong, 1998), or some combination of the three (Springwood & King, 2001). The consensus is, however, that it refers to the desirable part of the researcher-researched relationship that facilitates data collection.[33]

In my case, rapports were developed in different types of relationship that brought

---

[33]Certainly, in real practice, once having developed relationships with informants, researchers cannot choose only the positive effects of these relationships. For instance, R. Horowitz (1986) warned that close personal relationships with one subgroup of the informants might prevent the researcher from developing rapport with other subgroups. In my fieldwork, there was no obvious conflicts between subgroups. Therefore, the problem Horowitz (1986) highlighted did not exist.

benefits in different ways. First, to some informants, I became a close friend with whom they could interact with beyond the exhibition-related context. Friendship was the strongest rapport that allowed me access to their genuine opinions and personal perceptions. Second, to others, I was an insider like any other colleagues in the art world. This means, although we interacted beyond the researcher-subject relationship, we remained on the level of colleagues. Through them, I was introduced to a larger group of people and events that were not directly related to the exhibition I was observing. This allowed me to extend my observation from a few specific exhibitions to the overall social setting of the art world. Third, trust earned from those with whom I only interacted in the research context was also helpful. As I routinely spent long periods in the office, often whilst staff worked until midnight, my industry came to impress even those who did not know me personally. As such, they also became more accessible and willing to assist me in understanding the details of their daily work.

2.3   Data gathering

My main tasks in the data-gathering phase included attending discussions; observing the installation process; going to exhibition openings and socialising with both exhibition makers and exhibition visitors; and conducting follow-up interviews.

In data gathering, the epistemological problem typically arises from the methods used. For instance, one of the common problems in participant observation concerns the recording of data. It usually results from the researcher's retrospective reconstruction of his or her experiences (Schwartz & Schwartz, 1955). The quality of data in this situation relies mainly on the researcher's memory, and comprehensiveness and accuracy of note-taking. In a research interview, however, when recording is allowed, such a problem does not exist.

In the following, I will introduce how I collected data by addressing the two major problems in participant observation and interview respectively. The major problem in participant observation is what I call *the problem of serendipity.* This means the researcher cannot plan the happenings in the research setting, but can only maximise his or her experience and observation by being in the right place at the right time for certain activities to take place. By contrast, in a interview, the researcher plans the questions in advance, but the major problem is then to develop rapport with the interviewees. Unlike in participant observation, the researcher only has limited time to manage the relationship with the researched in a interview. The researcher can only work on the question design,

because the relationship with the interviewee develops in the dialogue.

Navigating the problem of serendipity

Throughout participant observation, data gathering is necessarily limited to what the researcher has observed and experienced. It follows that to derive from the research site as much relevant information as possible, a researcher must be *in the right place at the right time.* My study is, of course, no exception to this rule, which might seem obvious and thus barely explicitly recognised by other researchers on ethnography.

The key to navigate this problem, which may be termed the problem of serendipity, is first of all to recognise the two dimensions involved: that of time and space. With respect to the first of these, the art professionals I studied are mostly night owls. Their diurnal rhythms are quite different to those of nine-to-five professionals.[34] This is true to the extent that it may be said, without hyperbole, that nothing significant happens in the morning. Business meetings are usually scheduled after 2 p.m. Openings of exhibition are typically on Friday, Saturday or Sunday – after 4 p.m. Parties always start with dinner and go on until after midnight. During the installation of an exhibition, due to time pressure, construction work may start as early as 9 a.m. in the morning – but very few artists show up before 10 a.m., with most arriving in the early afternoon and staying late in the evening. Accordingly, my observation usually started from 11 a.m. and ended when the last people went home. Working with this schedule gave me the greatest confidence that most of an exhibition's relevant activities were covered.

With respect to the second dimension of the problem of serendipity, that of space, most of the exhibition process took place inside the white cube. But when an external curator was involved, the first few meetings usually happened outside the art space, either in a cafe or a restaurant. In these situations, I would follow the discussion to these external locations. When the construction and installation work inside the art spaces began, I moved inside to the art spaces too. During this period, most of the activities related to exhibition making took place within the gallery or museum. On occasion, I went outside to follow the artists to their materials supplier, whether a small fabrication studio, or a large building-materials mall. In the evening of the opening day, all guests would move to a restaurant. In the duration of the show, artists, gallerists or curators

---

[34]There is a famous art publisher called Time Zone 8 specialising in contemporary Chinese art, as the Beijing Time is eight hours ahead of Coordinated Universal Time. However, the Chinese art community actually have diurnal rhythms of those who live in Time Zone 4 or 5, somewhere in middle Asia. That is to say, art professionals in China stay up late, usually until 2 a.m. and start their day late too.

would bring friends to visit. Eventually the artist would come and dismantle or remove the work.

Inside the art space, I observed two kinds of activities: (1) the communication and coordination between the staff members and (2) the construction work to mount the show. The two kinds of activities happened in different spaces: the former in the gallery or museum office, and the latter in the exhibitionary rooms. But the two kinds of activities were connected: the discussions instructed the construction work, while the construction might trigger a discussion. I thus constantly moved between the office and the exhibition room, taking pictures, notes, and sometimes voice recordings. There were also times when I could stay in one space and concentrate on either the office work or the construction process.

In a typical day of my on-site observation, I arrived at the gallery or museum at 11 a.m. The museum or gallery usually spared a chair for me in the office. I thus walked into the office like a full-time employee. After brief greetings with the staff members, I went out to the exhibition room, checked the construction work, and then returned to the office and took notes. I would ask the staff about their progress. When the artists arrived, I asked them about any new developments in the installation process that I had noticed. Occasionally, friends of the artists, or the curator, would come to have a look at the progress of the work. I would record all these activities.

Interview questions

I have explained rapport as the particular aspect of the researcher-researched relationship that facilitates data collection. Interviews, however, do not grant the researcher as much time as participant observation ever could to manage the relationship. In an interview, the researcher-researched relationship develops in the dialogue. The questions the researcher asks hence becomes the key to relationship-building. Accordingly, to improve the quality of data obtained from interviews, my efforts were mainly directed at designing questions tailored to the interviewees.

The first step was to identify the major barrier in developing rapport: art professionals' experience of being interviewed by journalists. This barrier produces two main problems. First, artists tend to provide information that is not relevant to the research topic, because they view the researcher as a journalist. This is what Harrington (2003) calls "the category bias" (p. 607). As a result, artists tend to focus on the meaning of their art works, is appropriate to journalistic interviews, but irrelevant to the concerns of

a sociologist. A second problem is that some established artists display signs of what may be termed *interview fatigue*. I derive this coinage from Clark's (2008) "research fatigue" and what Driessens (2014) captures by his notion of a subject being "over-interviewed". That is, they might have been interviewed so often, and responded to so many of the same questions, that they often prepare standardised answers to similar questions. The top artists, like celebrities, are not necessarily over-researched but are most certainly over-interviewed by journalists. It is perhaps not much of a stretch to suppose that a lack of enthusiasm in journalists' interviews has a negative impact upon their participation and enthusiasm in academic interviews as well.

The questions I designed, therefore, aimed to ameliorate these issues by clarifying my needs and igniting their interests. I did extensive background research on the interviewees by analysing their prior interviews with journalists. These journalist interviews revealed which questions had been frequently asked and how journalists framed these questions. Accordingly, I phrased any similar questions in a different way, so as on one hand, to signal to interviewees: "I am not a journalist", and on the other hand, to get relevant answers. Thus, for instance, journalistic questions for gallery manager regarding their selection of artists were usually framed in general terms. By contrast, I asked why they selected this or that artist *in particular*. A second example concerned celebrity artists, who, like other kinds of celebrities, often wish to present an image of themselves that is different from that presented by the press (Driessens, 2014). Therefore, to raise their interest, I asked these artists questions they were given less chance to address in journalist interviews. For instance, when interviewing Wang Guangyi, who is widely known for his *Great Criticism* propaganda posters and hence a "pop artist", I asked him about his installations, a subject that is more consistent with how he wishes to be viewed – namely, a multi-faceted artist.

The strategies proved to be effective. Impressed by my familiarisation with their works, and rarely showing signs of apathy or irritation at my questions, my interviewees, in general, may be said to have provided me with a wealth of relevant information, even introducing me to colleagues or fellow artists who they thought could better answer certain of my queries. Equally telling were the responses of the high-profile artists: they recognised my sociological perspective and discussed with me issues rarely raised in their published interviews with journalists.

2.4   Data structure and overview

The qualitative data I collected in the two phases of fieldwork can be organised into three data sets. The first data set comprises the information resulting from the nine exhibitions I observed and includes: video and audio recordings, catalogues and other related texts, photos, fieldnotes and interviews. The second data set includes interviews conducted in the second phase of fieldwork. The third data set integrates observations and personal experiences that are not specifically related to the aforementioned nine exhibitions and formal interviews. Rather, it concerns the general social setting of the art world, including how people are related to each other and why people go to exhibition openings.

In the following, I will introduce the specific exhibitions contained in the first data set and the background information of the interviewees contained in the second data set.

Specific cases of exhibition-making

The details of the nine exhibitions that I specifically investigated are given in Table IV.3. I observed the complete exhibition-making process of the six sample cases, from its planning (discussion of exhibition theme) to the closure (uninstalling the show and dealing with matters such as catalogue, organisation and payment). The three cases in the pilot study were not planned in my original research design. Rather, I came to the idea to inquire about exhibition-making by interviewing artists and curators after their exhibitions were opened. In this way, I started data collection earlier and was better prepared for the observation of the latter six cases.

Among the nine exhibitions, there are four group shows, all of which took place in museums, and five solo shows, three of which took place in galleries. Case 1 was a survey exhibition of young artists who were based in Beijing. It was therefore a good opportunity to know about Beijing artists, although the venue was located in Nanjing. Case 2 was a curated group exhibition that took place in a renowned museum. This exhibition highlighted the role of social networks in exhibition making, as the artists were all good friends with the curators. Case 3 was a solo exhibition of a highly recognised artist, Qiu Zhijie. It revealed how an established artist dealt with exhibition-making. Both Case 4 and Case 5 were debut shows of young artists in galleries. The artist featured in Case 4 was a local artist, but Case 5 introduced a Paris-based artist to the Chinese art scene. Case 6 was a solo show of an mid-career installation artist curated by a renowned curator invited by the gallery. Case 7 was a special exhibition organised by the museum

Case Type	No.	Venue (**M**useum/**G**allery)	Location	Exhibition Type
Pilot Study	1	AMNUA (M)	Nanjing	Group
	2	PSA (M)	Shanghai	Group
	3	AMNUA (M)	Nanjing	Solo
Sample Case	4	M Art Centre (G)	Shanghai	Solo
	5	Magician Space (G)	Beijing	Solo
	6	PIFO Gallery (G)	Beijing	Solo
	7	UCCA store (M*)	Beijing	Group
	8	OCAT Shanghai (M)	Shanghai	Solo
	9	RAM (M)	Shanghai	Group

Table IV.3: Case Information

with the assistance of an independent curator but took place in the museum shop. Case 8 was the 30 years retrospective show of a renowned video artist and also his first museum solo show in mainland China. The show was typically a celebration event for the artist. Case 9 was a group exhibition of nominees of an art prize funded by an external sponsor. The selection of artists was determined by a jury committee which involved both in-house curators and external critics and curators.

Background information of interviewees

Exhibition Spaces

The three museums, UCCA, RAM and OCAT Shanghai, whose directors or curators I interviewed, are founded in 2006, 2010 and 2013 respectively. Two are in Shanghai and one in Beijing. UCCA is the most renowned museum of contemporary art in China and has the ambition to extend their focus from contemporary Chinese art to Asian contemporary art. Rockbund Art Museum has a unique building that does not create a conventional environment of "the white cube", which has a strong impact on its exhibition programme. OCAT Shanghai is one of the museum franchise funded by OCT Real Estate Corporate. It focus on new media art and architecture. Like other museums of contemporary art in China, these three museums do not have a large curator team. None of them have more than five in-house curators including assistant curators. The directors, with assistance of curators, work out the exhibition programmes for the coming one or two years. The

structure of their exhibition programmes are similar. Exhibition slots are assigned to renowned, mid-career and young artists more or less evenly.

The two independent art spaces work differently. In terms of organisational structure, Tai Kang Space is similar to a museum; it has two in-house curators who are in charge of the exhibition programme. Tai Kang Space receives funding from the insurance company that bears the same name. Different from museums, Tai Kang Space rarely exhibit renowned artists but focus on mid-career and young artists. By contrast, Arrow Factory are run by three artists who reject institutionalisation. Financially it relies on the three artists, their friends' donations, and occasional funding from art foundations. Unlike curators or gallerists, the three artists do not have rigid plans, nor do they actively look for new artists to exhibit. They invite other artists they have noticed or recommended by their friends to create on-site, as the exhibition space is different from a conventional gallery space. The exhibition programme is very flexible and oriented towards on-site production.

Among the six galleries interviewed, there were one Tier 1 gallery, three Tier 2 galleries and two Tier 3 galleries. ShanghART is the oldest gallery, established in 1996, and Gallery Yang the youngest, established in 2010. The gallerists are either former artists, collectors or curators. Their gallery spaces vary a lot in size. Magician Space is the smallest (70 square meters) and can only host one single solo show at a time. ShanghART has seven exhibition rooms in different locations. Some galleries only represent mature artists; others are keen to nurture young artists. The average age of represented artists in both White Space Beijing and Gallery Yang is only 34. The preference mature artists is not unique to top galleries. For instance, the average age of artists in PIFO Gallery, a Tier 3 gallery, is 53, whereas it is 47 in ShanghART, the top gallery. Galleries' exhibition programmes are mainly to coordinate their artists' solo exhibitions. Group exhibitions are arranged occasionally, usually to fill the gap between two solo exhibitions. They sometimes also invite independent curators to mount shows.

Artists

Among the 30 artists interviewed, two artists are below 30 years old, 15 artists between 30 and 40, seven artists between 40 and 50 and six artists between 50 and 60. As introduced in Chapter Three, Chinese contemporary art started in 1978. Therefore, the first generation contemporary artists, such as Wang Guangyi (one of my interviewees), are only in their late 50s. That is to say, my sample covers all age groups.

Artistic medium has an impact on artist's creation. Contemporary artists tend to use multiple mediums but there are still a considerable number of artists who choose to focus on painting. Artists who use multiple mediums tend to favour installation and video more than paintings. Therefore, I distinguish painters from installation/video artists. There are 13 painters and 17 installation/video artist in my sample.
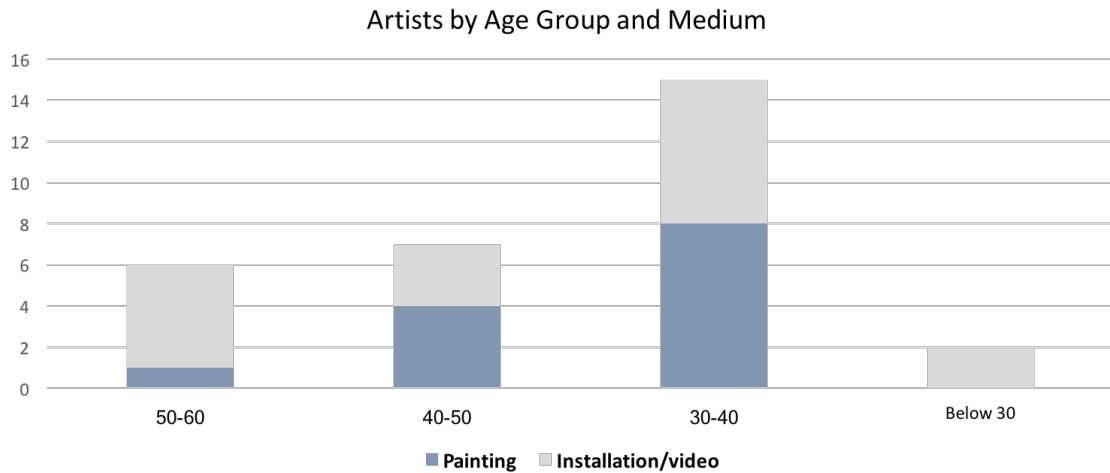
Figure IV.3: Artists by age group and medium

Twenty of the thirty artists have gallery representation; some have more than one gallery. Gallery representation makes a difference in the artist's creation. This means the artist has more or less secured exhibition opportunities in the gallery. The gallery will also help to create more exhibition opportunities outside the gallery. In other words, an artist with gallery representation is more involved in the exhibitionary system. His or her creation is accordingly more affected by the temporality, spatial structure and power distribution in the exhibitionary system.

However, having gallery representation does not mean the artist is economically successful. The artists in the sample differ a lot in their market performance. Moulin (1987) concludes that artists achieve a first success when the income from selling art was enough to support their living. Among the 20 artists with gallery representation, five have not achieved a first success yet. By contrast, four of them are extraordinarily successful in terms of prices and percentage of artworks sold. Three of the artists without a fixed gallery representation make good living on their artworks; the other seven, however, struggle with sale and show opportunities.

3 The Collection of Quantitative Data

The collection of quantitative data concerned three types of entities: exhibitions, actors and art spaces. For each exhibition, the title, type (solo or group), start date and end date, number of artists, number of curators, names of artists and curators were coded. For each actor, the identity (curator or artist), date of birth, gender, place of birth/nationality, and current base were coded. For each art space, year of foundation, location and type (gallery or non-profit) were coded.

The relationships among artists and the relationships between artists and art spaces, generated by exhibitions, comprise the main body of the data set. The other information concerns the attributes of exhibitions, actors and art spaces. For instance, for an exhibition, one attribute might be its type, which can be group and solo exhibition. These attributes enable distinguished analysis of the network data, say, solo exhibitions are to be separated from group exhibitions in the analysis.

The quantitative data set includes information about all exhibitions that opened between 1 January 2010 and 31 December 2016 in 43 exhibition spaces. In what follows, I will first introduce how I chose the sample, then move to the data sources, and end the section with a statistical description of the exhibitions in the data set.

3.1 Sampling

Exhibition spaces

Similar to the sampling for qualitative data collection, I also used art spaces as entries to extract quantitative data on exhibitions. In this way, the artists and curators involved in these exhibitions can be identified.

Not constrained by the access problem, I decided to include all art spaces that are relatively more visible as identified in chapter 3 in my sample. Moreover, unlike the ethnographic exploration, the collection of quantitative data was not constrained by geographical location. Therefore, the three Tier 3 galleries outside Beijing and Shanghai were also included in the sample, as were the two renowned museums in Guangdong province. This means the sample comprises 32 galleries of the first three tiers and the 13 non-profit exhibition spaces (eight museums and five independent art spaces) of good reputation.

This sample enhances the representativity of my data set for two reasons. First,

this sample comprises almost 30 per cent of all art spaces that can be identified in China. Second, by focusing on the more visible exhibition spaces, this sample can well represent the stable part of the exhibitionary system. As noted in Chapter Three, many art spaces cannot survive for long. The more visible exhibition spaces are often also those that have secured positions, the examination of them yield more creditable observations about the exhibitionary system.

However, the final sample size was constrained by availability of data, which I will clarify in the section of data sources.

Time period

The second step in the sampling was to decide which period to focus on. As the planning and making of an exhibition requires a long time, exhibition data covering a single year cannot show the entire population of artists who are active in the exhibitionary system. To capture them, it is necessary to have exhibition data covering at least the past few years. Data of a longer period of time is more likely to yield valid results.

Of course, data about exhibitions from the distant past may not reflect the current situation. It is particularly the case in China, because in the past 39 years the development of the art world was high volatile. The power distribution in the art world, which affects the selection of artists in the exhibitionary system, shifted quickly. The situation ten years ago, say, might be significantly different from the current one.

The key is then when to draw the start line, in order to analyse a stable period of contemporary Chinese art. According to my informants, the year 2010 represented a turning point for contemporary Chinese art, when it recovered from the economic crisis in 2008 and started to develop more steadily. To probe this observation, I used a small sample of seven art museums and twelve galleries. Figure IV.4 shows the total number of exhibitions held by these 19 exhibition spaces per year, from 2005 to 2015. It can be seen that the economic crisis had a strong impact on the exhibitionary system with the number of exhibitions plummeting in 2009. But then in 2010, the number of exhibitions went back to the level of the pre-crisis period and went up steadily thereafter. I therefore decided on the period between 2010 and 2016.

3.2 Data sources

There are two main sources of data on exhibitions. The first major source of data encompasses websites that function as databases and curate informations from various exhibition
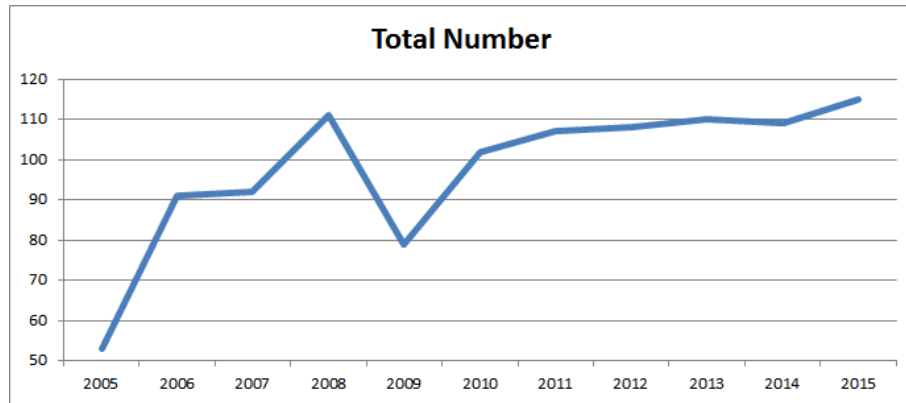
Figure IV.4: Number of exhibitions in a sample of 19 exhibition spaces, 2005 – 2015

spaces. In equivalent to their western counterpart Artfact.net, there are two such websites in China: Artron and ArtLinkArt. Another source is what exhibition spaces upload onto their own websites, which form online archive for their past exhibitions.

A large part of the data on exhibitions were derived from the first source. But the second source was used to triangulate data retrieved from the first source, because the information given by the website of an exhibition about its own past exhibitions is often accurate and complete. As a result of the triangulation, ArtLinkArt was chosen as a more reliable database than Artron.[35] Moreover, duplicates and errors sourced from the online database were detected and removed in the process of data triangulation.

Moreover, the second source was used when data were incomplete in the online database. A problem with ArtLinkArt is that it focuses on exhibitions of galleries, especially highly visible galleries. Exhibitions of some non-profit exhibition spaces or less visible galleries are absent or only partially recorded. In my case, twenty galleries and five non-profit exhibition spaces have relatively complete exhibition records in the database. But information about the other six galleries and eight non-profit exhibition spaces is not complete. Therefore, the exhibition data for these fourteen exhibition spaces had to be collected from their websites. However, when the data collection process ended in August 2017, the website of the Linda Gallery was under construction and hence no information about its past exhibitions could be assessed. The independent Yangtze River Space does not have its own website. Thus, these two exhibition spaces were removed from the sample.

The final sample, therefore, included 43 exhibition spaces comprising 31 Tier 1-3 galleries, eight museums, and four independent art spaces.

---

[35]Information of artists involved in these exhibitions is also much better organised in ArtLinkArt.

3.3   Exhibitions in statistics

The quantitative data comprises 1,525 exhibitions that opened between 1st January 2010 and 30 December 2016 in 12 non-profit exhibition spaces and 31 galleries. As results of network analysis and factor analysis will be presented in late empirical chapters, here I will only give a statistical description of these exhibitions.

Solo exhibition, as I have argued in Chapter Three, indeed dominate. The number of solo exhibitions is 1,071; that of group exhibition is 454. The ratio of solo and group exhibition is therefore 2.3:1. Solo exhibition is particularly favoured in galleries: 73 percent of all gallery exhibitions were solo exhibitions. In the non-profit sector, solo exhibitions also comprised 64 percent of the exhibitions.

The hierarchical distribution of exhibition opportunities is also clear. Although there were fewer group exhibitions, they concerned more artists. The average size of group exhibitions was twelve, including eleven artists and one curator. 2,634 artists (including those who are also curators) and artist's collectives, of which 28 actors acted as both curator and artist, were involved in all the 1,525 exhibitions. However, 1,924 artists have participated in group exhibitions only — they didn't have solo exhibitions; 1,539 artists in one group exhibition only. Only 710 artists had solo exhibitions, and only 219 artists have more than one solo exhibitions.

Curators do not seem to be indispensable in exhibition making. The role of curator is not clearly defined in China. A curated show in my dissertation refers to an exhibition with someone specified as the curator. Although a group exhibition needs an organiser, this organiser does not necessarily assign the title of curator to himself or herself. For instance, in a gallery, the artistic director works in a similar way as an in-house curator of a museum but does not call himself curator. Therefore, only half of the group exhibitions were curated. Most gallery solo exhibitions did not have curators, but 43% of the museum solo exhibitions did.

Exhibitions in museums lasted longer than those in galleries and independent art spaces. The average duration of exhibition was 62 days in museums, 46 days in galleries and 45 days in small independent art spaces. That is to say, although independent art spaces and museums are both not for profit, exhibitions in the former were shorter than those in museums, but more similar to galleries. This is probably because independent art spaces often organise performances and events, which do not last as long as conventional

exhibitions; whereas museums do not often hold these events.[36] On the other hand, the size of the exhibition hall of an exhibition space may make a difference on the duration of the exhibition. Smaller exhibition spaces can be more flexible, as it takes shorter time to mount an exhibition of a smaller scope. Galleries and independent exhibition spaces are more similar regarding the size of the exhibition hall, which is usually smaller than that of museums.

The Chinese exhibitionary system also shows a significant degree of globalisation in terms of the origins of artists exhibited. The percentage of artists from outside mainland China is about 30 per cent.[37] Although this percentage is lower than the percentage of foreign artists showed in MoMA or Centre Pompidou (Quemin, 2006), it demonstrates that the exhibitionary system in China is by no means isolated from the global art scene.

4 Ethics

The politicisation of contemporary Chinese art has gradually come to an end since the market boom that started in 2004. Even though Ai Weiwei is arguably the most prominent Chinese artist outside China, "dissident artists" are by far typical in China now. Therefore, no risks to my informants, who did not engage in any politically-oriented art, arose from my disclosure of their identity. Furthermore, my research concerns exhibition making only and entails no political implication.

Regarding researcher-informant power asymmetry, I was sometimes in a vulnerable position. My request for interview with the powerful curators and museum directors was occasionally rejected. Partially due to the minor visibility of sociology as a discipline in the public mind, some informants tended to perceive my standpoint as hostile. Even when I was given permission to conduct observation inside the exhibition space, my neutral standpoint was questioned by some exhibition makers. I felt so obliged to clarify my sociological viewpoint, that I even started a blog to write about sociology in Chinese for a general public. I was sometimes asked to send my notes, recordings, and writings to them, so that they can control my presentation of their exhibition spaces or the artists

---

[36]These events were also treated as exhibitions in my data set, when they concerned specified artists.

[37]In the database, there are only 1,619 actors with either known nationalities or specified places of work. Among these actors, there are 452 artists from outside mainland China. The percentage of non-mainland China artists is, therefore, 28 percent. Alternatively, as it is easy to distinguish artists born in mainland China from those born in Hong Kong by the spelling of their names (Cantonese versus Mandarin spelling), despite lack of information about many artists, I estimated the number of mainland Chinese artists as 1,990. Accordingly, artists from outside mainland China accounted for 30 percent of the population. The percentages calculated by the two methods are close to each other. Therefore, I estimate the percentage to be 30 percent.

they featured.

This interference in my autonomy as a researcher, I conjecture, arose from the prevailing concerns with public relationships in the art world. Among art professionals, neutrality is rarely evoked. They strive for a positive reception instead.

Due to the same reason, intriguingly, the majority of my informants, who did not perceive any hostility in my act of research, were confused by the option to stay anonymous in the consent form they read. Except for one single artist, all of they opted to disclose their identity.

However, I will only disclose their names, when I am certain that my presentation, by even the most far-fetched interpretation, would not tarnish their public images. In other cases, I will instead anonymise their names, together with the names of the institutions and persons whom I contacted but did not participate in my research.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained my research design that involves an explorative phase and an explanatory phase. The in-depth investigation has further entailed the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. The two types of data have jointly contributed to my understanding of exhibition making. I derived directions of exploration and insights for theorisation from the qualitative data. Quantitative data, then, verified and refined my impressionist observations obtained from participant observation. For instance, statistics on the ratio between solo and group exhibitions (2.3:1) verified my perception in the field that solo exhibitions were more common than group exhibitions. More importantly, quantitative data were used to operationalise and measure a crucial concept – visibility, and to examine the selection of artists, which were narrated by exhibition makers. In the following empirical chapters Five, Six and Seven, I will delve into the analytical arguments that are enabled by the two types of data.

Chapter V

Artworks, Scenography, and Oeuvre

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine how artworks are produced in the process of exhibition making. Existing research tend to regard the production of artworks as the material production of objects in an idealised isolation. That is, although the producers are situated in a certain social context, from which conventions of production and the need for framing arises, artworks are seen, by contrast, as isolated from context, and also from each other.

This idealised view of artistic production, which might be applicable to some artworks, is certainly not applicable to artworks produced in the exhibitionary system. These are artworks commissioned for exhibitions or intended for potential exhibitions. In the exhibitionary system, the production of artworks is situated in a certain physical environment and in the diachronic development of the artist's oeuvre. This situational process can be observed in the planning and installation phase of exhibition making.

Certainly, not all exhibitions involve the production of new artworks. Many group exhibitions bring together artworks that were commissioned for past exhibitions. Therefore, to best illustrate artistic production in the exhibitionary system, the cases I refer to here are mostly solo exhibitions for two reasons. First, solo exhibitions normally comprise mostly new works. Second, solo exhibitions are also widely considered the building blocks for an artist's career.

Drawing upon my cases studies, interviews, and observations, I will explain production of artworks as embedded in the scenographic handling of the exhibition space,

as well as the construction of each artist's oeuvre. That is, scenography and oeuvre are the two concepts crucial to my explanation. I will hence elaborate on the two concepts and their relationships to artworks in the first section, after clarifying the problems with existing research. In section two, I will deal with the material production of art, namely the making of artworks' material basis – the material carrier of an artwork, to which the artist's ideas and certain techniques may have been applied. I will reveal how the material basis of artworks are made to fit the exhibition space for certain scenographic effects. In section three, I will deal with the construction of an artist's oeuvre, which is the production of artworks as organised within each artist's career. That is, in this dissertation, the production of artworks are not only the making of their material basis, but also the making of artworks to form a well-structured oeuvre, to which the relationships among artworks are crucial. I will show the handling of these relationships in the selection of artworks and the use of narratives in exhibition making.

1 Artwork: Beyond the Isolated Object

1.1 The problematic isolation

Roughly speaking, the operations conducted upon artworks in exhibition making, to be examined in this chapter, take place before the exhibition opens to the public. Existing literature studies these operations under two themes: the material production of art and the framing of artworks.

The production of artworks as material objects is rarely the subject matter of sociology. Although arguing for a turn towards artworks, scholars of the "new sociology of art" (De la Fuente, 2010, 2007) look primarily at the social impact of artworks, rather than their production (Acord, 2010; Domínguez Rubio & Silva, 2013). The anthology edited by Becker, Faulkner, and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2006) presents probably the few exceptional studies of the material production of art. This process is understood as a series of choices made by the artist within a certain range of possibilities that are determined by artistic conventions. The examples of conventions given by Becker (2008) concern almost every aspect of artworks, ranging from their content to the visual patterns applied, the format of music writing, and even the producer's personal style. Despite being almost all-encompassing and therefore a fuzzy concept, Becker's conventions do serve a clear function: to enable artists to choose a path from amongst the rabbit warren of possibilities. Becker sees the task of sociology as to reconstruct this range of possibilities. This idea

carries over to Menger's (2006) study of Rodin's "unfinished works". Unfinished works amount to "studies, drafts, sketches, outlines and other preparatory states" of the finished works (Menger, 2006, p. 49). But Menger does not give a clear account of what then constitutes a "finished" work. In other words, he does not offer an approach to identify the distinction between unfinished and finished artworks. It seems that, therefore, he only intends to highlight the "could have been" and the emergent nature of the creative process. According to Menger, unfinished artworks indicate that the production of artworks cannot be fully executed according to a predetermined plan.

More sociologists address the framing of artworks, which is considered part of the mediation process. It occurs after the material production and to be carried out by mediators such as gallery owners and curators. These mediators craft texts and provide interpretation of artworks in order to accommodate the needs or expectations of the audiences (Joy & Sherry Jr, 2004). That is, framing usually refers to the handling of the non-material aspects of artworks. But "physical framing" is also posited by Acord (2009). It does not entail any physical editing of artworks but rather the curator's efforts to create a holistic effect for the exhibition according to the physical characteristics of artworks. For instance, two artworks might be placed together due to the compatibility of their hues. That is to say, artworks are given to curators or gallery staff, who then add interpretation and order of display to these finished objects.

These two strands of studies certainly fit the sequential production-mediation-reception understanding of artistic production, which I revealed in Chapter One as problematic. Here, I would like to give a specific grounding to this problem as it pertains to the production of artworks. In brief, this is the underlying assumption that artworks are created materially in artist's studio as independent objects, isolated from the exhibition context.

The isolation is two-fold. It is first the isolation of artworks from the exhibition space. This kind of isolation can be best illustrated by Becker's (2008) description of an imagined situation:

> Imagine that, as curator of sculpture of an art museum, you have invited a distinguished sculptor to exhibit a new work. He arrives driving a flatbed truck, on which rests a giant construction combining several pieces of large, heavy, industrial machinery into an interesting and pleasing shape. [...] the two of you discover that the door on the dock will not admit anything taller than fifteen feet; the sculpture is much larger than that. [...] even if you got

it into the museum, it would fall through the floor into the basement... the building will not support so much weight. Finally, disgruntled, he takes it away. (p. 26-27)

With this imaginary case, Becker intends to show that artists often create artworks that cannot be accommodated by the existing exhibitionary facilities. However, the idea implied in this tale that the sculptor has created his large sculpture without considering the holding capacity of the exhibition room is misleading. In reality, this rarely, if ever, happens. A second observation is that Becker's idea is rooted in an outdated yet persistent concept of artworks as (trans)portable, tangible objects of fixed sizes, which remain physical stable and independent in any context. Their production, accordingly, means the application of techniques, styles and ideas to a certain material medium. And the site of such production is typically the artist's studio. This notion of artworks, as I have stressed, is not applicable to the majority of works in contemporary art.

Second, it is the isolation of artworks from the artist, or more precisely, from the artist's other artworks. This means in the current understanding, an artist produce a piece of artwork without considering its potential connections to other works he[38] has already created and is about to create. Indeed, in the discussion of framing or the physical framing of artworks, the relationships among artworks in an exhibition are brought to light. However, artworks are not considered as constituents of an artist's oeuvre. Nor are artists considered relevant to framing. In fact, by contrast, curators are able to engage in physical framing largely because artists have already considered the relationships among artworks when conceiving plans of creation. Artworks are often created in relation to each other. Unlike the isolation from the exhibition space, this type of isolation from the artist is not caused by a failure to capture the new paradigm of contemporary art. It is a failure to understand the production of artwork as organised in each artist's career.

In contrast to these isolationist assumptions, in the exhibtionary system, I consider the production of artworks as embedded in the scenographic handling of the exhibition space and situated in the construction of the artist's oeuvre. The two concepts, scenography and oeuvre, which I have briefly defined in Chapter One and Two, are crucial to this perspective. Therefore, in the following, I will first elaborate on the relationships between artworks and the two concepts.

---

[38]My use of masculine pronoun only in the empirical chapters of this dissertation is my criticism for the invisibility of female artists in China.

1.2   Artworks and scenography

A difficulty to place the production of artworks within a single framework arises from the diversity of physical stances present in contemporary art. To deal with this difficulty, I identify two overarching categories of artworks, and relate artworks of each category to the completion of scenography respectively.

In her comprehensive accounts of contemporary art, Heinich (2014a) also provides a typology of contemporary artworks beyond objects. These are described in relation to modern art, as resulting from dematerialisation, hybridisation, ephemerisation and allographisation of artworks (p. 92-110). It will not be necessary to give a full account of each of these terms here, but only the art forms they concern. Dematerialisation can be seen in video art and experiential art. The former does not have any material features *per se*, and the latter invites the audience to the experience but not to look at the material components that enable the experience. Hybridisation, commonly found in installations, means a piece of artwork involves components of different physical forms. Ephemerisation refers to art forms such as happenings and performances that exist only for a short period. Allographisation means an artwork can have several editions, each of which is a *mise-en-scene* of the same artwork.

Heinich (2014a) also observes that the exhibition space becomes a constitutive element of the work in contemporary art. In my understanding, this is a common feature of the various artworks that go beyond objects. They come into being only when different components, some of which might be objects, are arranged in a certain way in the exhibition space. In other words, the production of these artworks is only completed in the scenographic staging in the installation phase of an exhibition. These artworks can be aptly termed *scenographic works.*

However, this category does not capture those works that remain objects, such as paintings, sculptures, photographs and small one-piece installations.[39] These artworks continue to take a significant proportion of all the artworks produced. This can be seen from painting remaining the most popular art medium in the market of contemporary art (N. Horowitz, 2011). Unlike the scenographic works, the scenographic staging of them in an exhibition does not interfere with their physical features. I call these *artifactual works.*

Both scenographic works and artifactual works are created to complete the scenog-

---

[39]Installation, despite the lack of a single definition, is probably the most common type of artworks in contemporary art. The definition given by the Tate Glossary refers to site-specific experiential art only. By contrast, installation in my dissertation means any three-dimensional works that do not use the traditional materials in sculpture or do not take a figurative shape.

raphy of the exhibition. The difference lies in that scenographic works are created in the scenographic staging, whereas the artifactual works are created as elements for the scenography. As scenography refers primarily to the handling of the exhibition space, this means, the production of both scenographic and artifactual artworks must take the exhibition space into consideration.

That is to say, the exhibition space constitutes a physical context that conditions the formation of the material basis of an artwork. Material basis, as I have introduced in Chapter One, refers to the material carrier of an artwork, upon which its existence relies. Developed in the era of modern art, this category yet remains applicable to contemporary artworks, although Heinich (2014a) observes the trend of dematerialisation. The exemplar experiential artwork, Yvs Klein's *Exposition du vide* (1958), which featured an empty gallery, also had a material basis: the physical features of the exhibition space. Video art relies on screening or projection to exist. Conceptual art can exist as a proposition but its realisation will by necessity entails a material basis. In brief, dematerialisation does not mean the elimination of material basis but the dissolution of object-hood.

For a better illustration, I highlight two dimensions of an artwork's material basis – the material and the ideational dimension, in which the impact of the exhibition space is most evident. The material features of an artwork, not to be confused with the material basis – the carrier of all the operations that have been applied to an artwork, include the physical features of the materials, the shape, and size. The exhibition space shapes the spatial relationships among the different components, the sizes and shapes of these components of scenographic works. For artifactual works, the exhibition spaces shapes only the sizes and shapes. The mechanism stems from the requirements for a good scenography, such as to assemble artworks in a certain harmony and to comply simply with the holding capacity of the space. The exhibition space can also be integrated into the ideational dimension of an artwork. This means the artist develops the concept of the work based upon the characteristics of the exhibition space: its physical features, the history of the exhibition space, or even the city in which it is located. Unlike the impact on material features, which is sometimes physically unavoidable, this kind of integration is subject to the artist's choice. This only happens in site-specific scenographic works, which usually cannot be reinstalled in a different context without becoming another artwork. By contrast, other scenographic works that only integrate the exhibition space into their material dimension can be re-installed. They are what Heinich (2014a) means by "allographic" works. Naturally, the ideational dimension of an artwork can only be manifest in

its material basis. That is to say, the material features of a site-specific work are certainly also shaped by the exhibition space.

To sum up, the production of artworks is embedded in the scenographic handling of the exhibition space. Artworks are either the direct outcome of scenographic staging or the elements of the scenography. For artifactual and allographic works, the embeddedness occurs in their material dimension. For some site-specific works, the embeddedness occurs in their ideational dimension.

1.3 Artworks and oeuvre

As stated in Chapter Two, the production of artworks is actually organised within each artist's career, which then in turn relies on the construction of an oeuvre. An artist's oeuvre is different from an artist's entire body of artworks. Whereas the latter refers to all the works created by the artist, the oeuvre refers to the part of the entire body that become recognised as finished artworks and organised into a collection of interrelated artworks. To grasp the difference between the oeuvre and the entire body of artworks, one needs to be reminded by Menger's (2006) discussion of unfinished artworks, which are excluded from the oeuvre of a living artist. Furthermore, the posthumous making of van Gogh's oeuvre elucidated by Heinich (1996) can be illuminating.

The posthumous construction is often done by critics and art historians. Van Gogh's oeuvre, for instance, can be attributed to the work of critics such as Aurier and Antoine (Heinich, 1996). These critics deployed three important tactics. First, they changed the perception of van Gogh's paintings by early critics as "only suitable as studies" (Heinich, 1996, p. 6), and recognised them as finished paintings instead. Second, they identified each work by van Gogh and attributed to the identified body of works a "real or alleged coherence" (ibid., p. 22). Third, they linked van Gogh to recognised trends, although some associations, such as calling van Gogh being both realist and symbolist, were paradoxical (ibid., p. 23-24).

The construction of oeuvres, certainly, serves the function to canonise deceased artists. We come to know *Mona Lisa* and *The Last Supper* as Da Vinci's iconic pieces, through the classification and selection of art historians. Yet similar efforts are also deployed in the career building of living artists. In fact, since the era of modern art, the construction of oeuvre usually starts when the artist is alive, develops posthumously, and is thereafter sustained by attention including new interpretations. In contemporary art, artworks launched through a series of solo exhibitions, which comprise mostly artworks

that have been recently made, come over time to form the artist's oeuvre.

However, there are two major differences between a posthumous construction and the construction of a living artist's oeuvre. First, the artists themselves play an important role in constructing their own growing oeuvre. Artists "command access" to their own works by articulating explicitly the concepts they intend to convey (Heinich, 2014a, p. 175). At the same time, critics also respect artist's legitimacy and use the terms coined by artists (Schneeman, 2012). Second, living artists do not include all of their creations in the exhibitions and therefore keep some works out of sight. The selection, which can be made by artists themselves or with the assistance of other exhibition makers, draws a boundary between the oeuvre and the rest of works made by the artist. A posthumous construction, by contrast, often involves the attempt to identify every piece the artist has made. In other words, for a living artist, the entire body of artworks includes more works than an oeuvre.

Despite these differences, the idea of structure implied in the posthumous making of van Gogh's oeuvre is also imperative in the construction of a living artist's oeuvre. The structure of an oeuvre refers to the differentiation of quality or significance among artworks, and also the relationships among artworks. In other words, there are a vertical structure and a horizontal structure. However, the construction of a vertical structure, which can be seen from, say, the difference between the visibility of *Mona Lisa* (c.1503-06) and that of *The Virgin of the Rocks* (c.1505) – another painting by Da Vinci, is heavily dependent on the recipients' evaluation. Therefore, my analysis from the perspective of artistic production focus on the horizontal structure, which can be "coherence" mentioned by Heinich (1996), as it is more subject to exhibition makers' own efforts.

Even though the importance of a horizontal structure is generally recognised, there is not a standard format for it. Coherence and gradual evolution can be merits, but could equally be said to reflect creative stagnation or a lack of experimental spirit. Contradiction, paradox and the absence of overarching themes might invite criticism, but might also be praised as a hallmark of singularity. However, as Heinich's research indicates, the tolerance of incoherence is more likely to be granted to established artists only. Therefore, we are more likely to observe the pursuit of a coherent oeuvre.

Hence, artworks are produced as constituents of a well-structured oeuvre. This means, for each solo exhibition, artists either consider the potential connections among works when producing new artworks, or filter out those works that would disturb the coherence. Texts in the solo exhibition also verbalise such a coherence, linking the works

shown in this exhibition together and highlighting for the visitors possible connections to the artist's previous artworks. I prefer here to avoid the term framing or physical framing, because the narratives have some grounding in the features of artworks. Through the selection and narratives in a series of solo exhibition, an artist's oeuvre would appear as a body of works categorised under several recurring themes, which may themselves be related.

2   The Completion of the Scenography

In this section, I will explain how the production of artworks is embedded in the scenographic handling of the exhibition space, drawing upon six cases of solo exhibitions. These exhibitions involved site-specific installations, allographic (video-)installations and artifactual artworks, which were mounted in exhibition spaces of varying sizes and spatial structures. The procedures and sites of production of these works fall into three models. First, studio production was used for artifactual artworks, which were materially completed in the artist's studio. Second, a combination of studio and on-site production was needed. That is, material components of the artwork were produced in studio but needed to be installed in the exhibition space to become an artwork. Third, the raw materials required to construct the artwork were brought into the exhibition space, with the artworks produced on site and installed there. In exhibitions where different types of artwork were presented, more than one model of production was deployed.

Regardless of the model or which combination of these models used, artists came to inspect the exhibition space when the planning of the exhibition started – unless they were already familiar with the space. When direct viewing was not practical, artists would refer to the floor map of the exhibition rooms. This is an essential step in the standard procedure of exhibition making. It allows the artist to develop an understanding of the artistic possibilities and limitations of a given physical and spatial context. This also clarifies why the scenario of Becker's disgruntled sculptor (see page 128) is rare.

In the making of solo exhibitions, the artists themselves often were the primary scenographers. In the cases I observed, although some curators and gallerists also contributed, all artists were given the power to design the space and the installation plan. Still, young artists are often more responsive to other exhibition makers' opinions about the scenographic staging of an exhibition.

In this way, artists conceive the creation of artworks with the consideration for

an ideal scenographic effect. For an on-site installation, this means to incorporate the characteristics of the exhibition space into the very ideas of the work. For artifactual works and allographic works, this means to accommodate the physical and spatial constrains of the exhibition space.

2.1 Conceptualisation

Among the cases I observed, two artists, Liang and Gao, chose to mount site-specific installations. Both artists took account of the spatial features of the exhibition spaces in the conceptualisation of their artworks. Liang's solo exhibition took place in a relatively large gallery of two storeys with several exhibition rooms. Gao's solo exhibition was in a smaller gallery with one single exhibition room. Liang was invited by the gallerist, who also invited a curator to facilitate the exhibition, to make an exhibition in the gallery for the first time. Therefore, Liang came to view the space first, devised the concept of the artwork, and communicated with the curator and the gallerists to set out the details of the installation plan. Gao, by contrast, had been in group exhibitions of this small gallery before and therefore was already familiar with the space. He was also given the full liberty to develop the concept and set out the details by himself.

(a) The main exhibition room for Liang   (b) The exhibition room for Gao

Figure V.1: The Exhibition Space as Physical Context

Yet artists' choices of scenography certainly cannot be separately from their own distinct artistic approaches. Liang, over a career of about twelve years, had developed multiple interests and worked with various media. He had also developed a working principle: to embrace the uncertainty and possibility as the construction unfolds, rather than using detailed planning. This also explained why he preferred on-site installations for his past two solo exhibitions. In this particular exhibition, the spatial relationship

between the two storeys of the gallery space was the key source of inspiration for Liang. The opening ceiling of the major exhibition room on the ground floor enables an aerial view of it from the corridor on the first floor (see Figure V.1a). This characteristic gave Liang the idea to separate the audience's viewing of the material basis of his work from the experiencing of it. For this purpose, he proposed to build a passage with a sealed ceiling that connected the entrance of the main exhibition room to the stairs (located in the room next to the main one) leading to the first floor. The audience who entered the exhibition would immediately find themselves inside the passage and unable to see beyond its walls. Yet the passage was the only route towards the first floor. Only when they arrived at the corridor on the first floor would they be able see the exterior and the structure of the passage they had gone through. Liang intended to play with the concept of viewing and experiencing art, and the contrast between fine and coarse – with a view, simultaneously, to exposing the production process. To these ends, the interior of the passage was to be left unwrapped with traces of fabrication exposed; whereas the exterior of the passage was to be camouflaged with fine wallpapers (see the installation pictures in Figure V.2).

Unlike Liang who had worked with multiple media before, Gao had been making small-scale kinetic installations and was then working on his first solo exhibition. He and the gallerist agreed on a clear objective for this debut show: to conclude his two-year long practices of kinetic installation with a room-filling on-site installation. Despite the variations, his kinetic installation typically involved moving threads within a confined space. Powered by small electric motors, the movements of the threads were controlled by pulleys. For this solo, therefore, accommodating his kinetic installation to the gallery space, a single exhibition room with six supporting columns, was the plan. There was, however, a problem. The columns disturbed the spatial continuity required for the smooth movements of the threads in the installation: the exhibition room was divided to an inner space surrounded by the columns, and an outer circle between the columns and the gallery walls (see Figure V.1b). Gao saw such a division as a natural way of keeping the material basis apart from the viewers, who would also disturb the movements if they walked into the space for the threads. Therefore, he mounted the threads in the inner space and left the outer circle clear for viewers to walk around the installation. These columns could also serve as anchor points, upon which pulleys and powering devices could be built and, importantly, hidden from view by an additional wrapping of the columns. Gao was not playing with any concepts as Liang did. In concept, his aim was simple: to create a space with densely overlapping moving threads.

From the artist's ideas to the materialised work, there are a lot of practical details to work out. Both artists conceptualised the works so that they could only be mounted directly in the gallery space, because these works were not pieced together by independent artefacts. As such, they figured out most of the details during the installation phase.

(a) View of the entrance in construction

(b) The spiral staircase in construction
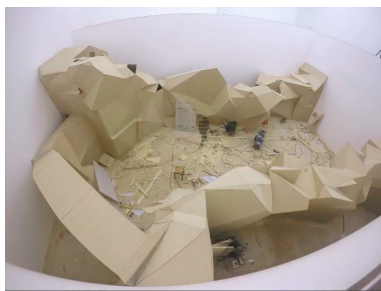
(c) Aerial view of the passage in construction
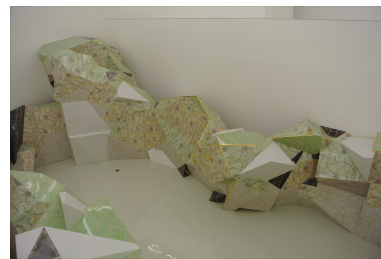
(d) Aerial view of the passage at the opening

Figure V.2: Installation Process of Liang's Solo

Liang needed the assistance of four carpenters to build the passage using light wooden panels. In accordance with his working principle that I explained above, Liang did not have a detailed plan of the route this passage would take, but adjusted it during the construction process. There was, however, a guiding idea to create variations for the visitor's experience and hence a better scenographic outcome. So the passage went up and down and entailed a spiral staircase. The consequent variation in the inner structure of the passage also produced a more aerial interesting view for visitors, who would later see the exterior of the same passage from the first floor.

In Gao's case, as the construction went on, his desired scenography changed. In the second week, when all the powering devices were already built along the columns from top to bottom (see Figure V.3a), he felt that the space would be too complex and condensed. So Gao dismantled all the devices and changed his plan radically. He reduced the dense

overlapping threads to a single thread and made it run in a loop, surrounding the columns and eventually going through the middle of the inner ring space. With this new plan, a theme could be finally decided upon for the exhibition.

(a) Construction for the original plan

(b) A Snapshot of the moving thread

Figure V.3: Installation Process of Gao's Solo

In sum, both artists conceptualised the artworks according to the given spatial characters of the exhibition space. We have seen how the artists tried to create a better scenography by separating the space for visitors to stroll in from the space occupied by the material basis. Artists' choices in dealing with these two kinds of space illustrates how the ideas of the artworks can be rooted in the exhibition space. Certainly, in the above two cases, the material features of artwork were also shaped by the exhibition space because the ideas of artworks only manifest in their material basis. Yet to illustrate better the impact of exhibition space on the mere materiality of artworks, I will turn to other cases in the next section.

2.2 Materialisation

Allographic works

Both of the two exhibitions I will use to illustrate allograhic scenographic works involved video installations. Since the 1990s, video art has become merged with installation in the sense that the screening or projection of videos involved specific arrangements (Horowitz, 2011). For instance, multi-channel video art requires the synchronisation of several videos and a specific placement of each screen. But a single-channel video displayed by a single monitor can be hang like a painting. Regardless, all video art is produced through two procedures. The video is first filmed or animated, and typically studio-edited, and then it

becomes a completed artwork when screened or projected in an exhibition. In my cases, the established artist Wang created three new multi-channel videos for his museum solo. The young Paris-based artist Yao brought two single-channel videos, one installation with multi-channel video, and two single-channel video installations to her first gallery show in China.

The themes of these video artworks did not derive from the exhibition context. Wang's solo took place in OCAT Shanghai, a museum with two large exhibition halls which could be described as standard white cubes. Wang's works were all devoted to the legacy of socialist realism, which the artist saw as having an enduring impact on Chinese art. Yet socialist realism has no connection with the characteristic of the exhibition context, neither the spatial or physical features of the museum halls nor the characters of the city Shanghai. The small gallery in Beijing that hosted Yao's exhibition had two standard white cube exhibition rooms. Yao's videos discussed several issues, mostly related to power and discourse. Moreover, as she was discovered by the gallerist less than a month ago at her solo exhibition in Palais de Tokyo, the initiation of a solo in China did not require any new works. Therefore, Yao's exhibition involved the reinstalling of works that were installed before in a different exhibition.

Although each artist inspected their exhibition spaces in the planning phase, their aim was to adapt the spatial relationships among the composing elements, the size and quantity of these elements into the specific spaces. Wang's multi-channel artwork *Whose Studio* (2015) can well illustrate the point. The concept of this piece derived from Courbet's famous painting *The Painter's Studio* (1854 - 1855). Courbet's painting includes art collector, art critic, lovers, priest, merchant, the poor, and a naked female muse in a depiction of his own studio. To appropriate similar compositional elements, Wang aimed to represent different social groups in this multi-channelled video art. Yet the number of social groups would be limited by the size of the exhibition hall. On the one hand, there was a maximum number of screens the exhibition hall could hold before it began to look overfilled. The size of the screens could certainly be reduced, but a considerably large size was needed to fill a tall exhibition hall. On the other hand, as the videos were projected onto the screens, it was technically challenging to show many videos without overlap. The artist decided on nine screens, although the nine social groups the artist selected did not cover all categories of those in Courbet's painting, still less those social groups in China.[40] The artist's rendering (Figure V.4) shows that nine screens filled the

---

[40]The nine groups are: children (wearing school uniform), the youth, the elderly, peasants, construction

exhibition hall almost to its full capacity. But this limitation did not alter the concept of this artwork.

库尔贝的画室
(Courbet's studio)
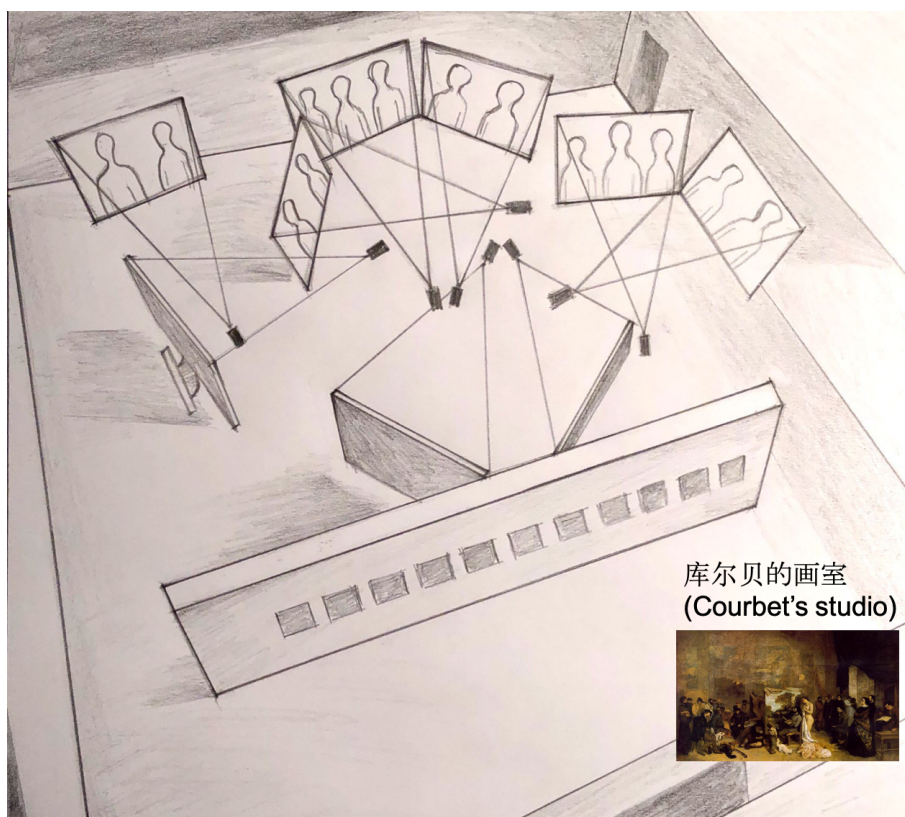
Figure V.4: Rendering of the installation plan of *Whose Studio* (2015) by Wang Gongxin

(Rendering replaced by drawing due to copyright issue.)

Yao's reinstallation of her major video installation *Sanzu Ding and its Motif* (2014) revealed similar operations upon artworks due to constraints of space. This work is composed of five videos, many images, and forged unearthed artefacts to present a semi-archaeological investigation of Sanzu Ding (a type of bronze vessel on three legs dated to the Bronze Age in China). When first installed in Paris, these components, the placement of which was visualised in a rendering beforehand, were spread along a long wall. The gallery in Beijing did not have a large exhibition room for a linear display. Yao hence arranged these components on three walls, reduced the distance between some artefacts, and commissioned some artefacts of smaller sizes for this new display. She and the gallery staff also needed to translate the French texts into Chinese and synchronise the five videos again. Despite so, the work remained the same one because the meaning did not change.

As we can see, although the handling of space is essential, space functions here

workers, the security guards (in uniform), businessmen and businesswomen, white-collar workers, and finally, in the middle, nude females, in homage to the female muse in Courbet's painting. Other social groups such as intellectuals and politicians are absent.

in much the same way that canvass does in painting: as a carrier for the components, bringing them together to become an artwork. The carrier influences only the size and shape of the components – but without intruding into the idea of the artwork.

Artifactual works

Artifactual works, unlike installations, are materially complete before they are moved to the exhibition room. They are more likely to support Becker's view of isolated production. However, the exhibition space is actually integrated into the production of these works in a similar way to that of allographic works. That is to say, the size of the artworks is often chosen according to the exhibition space. This derives from a basic principle in scenography: the exhibitionary hall should look neither too empty nor too crowded. The Salon display, with paintings from floor to ceiling can be an extreme example of "overfilled". Modern gallery display has long been based on the idea that each artwork needs its own space (Carrier, 1987). Yet little has been said about what this idea of display means for artworks. My artist informants developed their interpretations in the practices of exhibition making: an artwork that is given its own space must be able to "sustain" itself; it should not be "swallowed" by the exhibition hall. For instance, a small painting would probably not be able to sustain itself if it were the only one hanging on a large wall; in this case, the painting is "swallowed" by the exhibition space.

This principle has deep influence on the production of artworks. Yet such influence is hardly perceivable. Even the artist may become unaware of this simple scenographic principle, because the consideration of the size may become standardised and even internalised, especially when an artist with a stable career exhibits regularly in a certain type of exhibition space. The sensitivity to a particular type of exhibition space may also carry over into production of artworks not intended for an exhibition. Picasso's creation between 1905 and 1909 can illustrate this point: he continued to create one large-size painting each year, which was suitable for salon presentation, although he did not need to exhibit his works in salons any more (Cottington, 1988, p. 353). The exhibition space may therefore be seen to operate here as what may be called an *invisible framework*.

There are, however, instances where space becomes visible. One of such instances is when the artworks have not been created by taking sufficient account of the exhibition space. By way of illustration, consider the following two exhibitions that I observed, both showcasing paintings, the exemplary form of artifactual artworks. The two exhibitions took place in the same gallery. Figure V.5a is the exhibition view of a Chinese artist who

has been collaborating with the gallery for several years. Figure V.5b is the exhibition view of an artist based in Germany who came to China for the first time to mount his first solo show with LuXan gallery (not the real name). The German artist's paintings are conspicuously too small for the exhibition hall – a clear sign of his not bearing the exhibition space in mind when creating these paintings. By contrast, the Chinese artist who exhibited here frequently had a better command of the space, creating paintings of appropriate size.
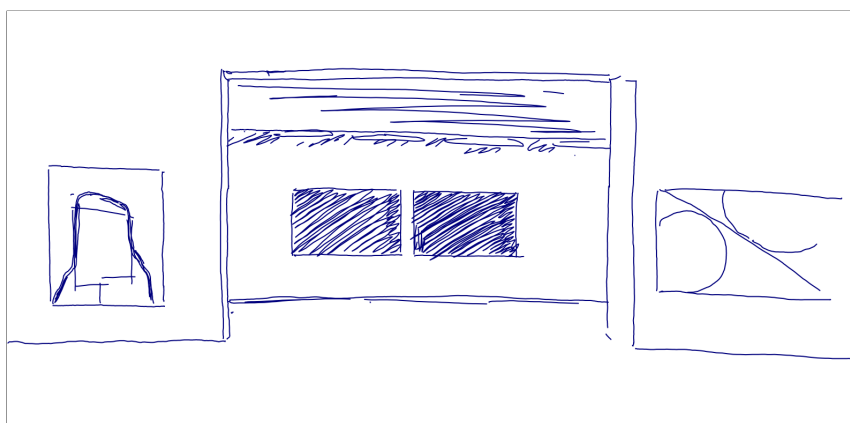
(a) Solo of a local artist
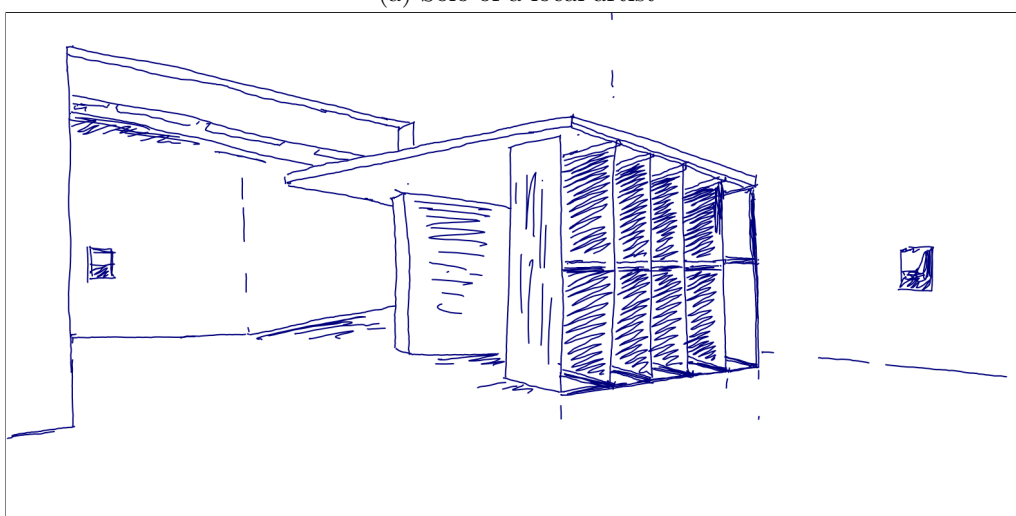
(b) Solo of a foreign artist

Figure V.5: The installation views of two exhibitions

(Photos replaced by drawings due to copyright issue)

An explicit concern with size was also expressed by a young artist, Yan. When asked about his current plan, Yan told me he wanted to create some larger canvasses. Only in the second year of his professional career, Yan had exhibited with several small galleries. He now intended to collaborate with better galleries. But these galleries usually have larger exhibition rooms, for which his previous paintings were too small. Numbers

may help to illustrate the point. Most of Yan's paintings were 60cm by 80cm, whereas for a gallery such as the one in the above pictures – similar to the sizes of galleries Yan wanted to work with, canvasses of 2m by 2m would create a better scenography.

In fact, as artists' careers develop, their paintings tend to become larger,[41] because artists usually start by exhibiting in small galleries, move on to larger ones, and then, if they manage to move further, eventually in spacious museum halls. The height of the exhibition room matters particularly. For a tall wall, a large canvass is needed, because the height extends an exhibition space vertically, which cannot be filled by stacking a number of paintings from bottom to top, unless one wants to go back to the Salon style of exhibition. In China, for instance, walls of a small gallery are typically three to four metres high, for which Yan's paintings of 60cm by 80cm are suitable. Walls of a medium-sized gallery is typically five to nine metres high, which require paintings that measure 2m by 2m minimum. And museums could have even higher ceilings. This helps to explain why top artists, who exhibit in large spaces, often produce large canvasses.

From this discussion, we can see that in the exhibitionary system space is integrated into the production of contemporary artworks. And such integration can be manifest in both the ideational and material aspects of the artworks. Site-specific artworks are often conceptualised according to the unique spatial features of the exhibition space. When an artwork is reinstalled in another gallery whose exhibiting space is different to that of the first, the artworks are also changed. They become, in effect, different artworks. They bear different ideas. Other artworks are shaped by the exhibition space only in terms of their size or the quantity of their compositional objects. When reinstalled in another place, they remain, fundamentally, the same.

3 The Construction of An Artist's Oeuvre

In this section, I will show how an artist's oeuvre is constructed through a series of solo exhibitions, or more precisely, through the selection of artworks and the use of narratives in exhibition making.

An exhibition is typically a selective showing. Although a standard solo exhibition is an update of the artist's newly created works in the past two or three years, not all works that have been created are exhibited. Any such selection of course depends on the

---

[41]Price may play a role here too. As shown by many researchers (Beckert & Rössel, 2004; Velthuis, 2005), larger paintings of the same artist are priced higher than smaller ones. As an artist's career rises, gallerists would raise his or her prices. Sizes can be a reasonable excuse for raising prices.

finite holding capacity of an exhibition space. But more importantly, exhibition makers aim to maintain the *coherence* of an exhibition and the coherence among many exhibitions, the artworks in which constitute the artist's oeuvre. Artworks that the artist and other relevant exhibition makers think not ready for critical examination (yet) are kept out. Then there is another kind of selection that results in the vertical structure of an oeuvre. As I have explained above that this matter goes beyond the scope of the present enquiry, I will only address here the kind of selection that consequently draws a boundary between an artist's oeuvre and the rest of the artist's works.

An exhibition is frequently also a collective presentation. Handling and articulating the relationship between the artworks is therefore an essential task in exhibition making. This entails not only a linguistic articulation through the narratives in exhibition, but also the mere visual or experiential articulation through the arrangement of artworks. I focus here the narratives, because they are crafted according to the visual and experiential features of artworks. Moreover, the narratives are also able to bring in the references to the artist's previous artworks and therefore hint at a well-organised oeuvre. Certainly, experiential art, which turns the entire exhibition into a single piece of artwork, can be an exception, where exhibition makers do not need to articulate any relationships between works, but the theme of this single work. Still, the reference to an artist's previous works can be present in such exhibitions.

In the following, I will refer not only to exhibitions that I observed, and documents of exhibitions that I did not manage to visit, but also interviews and observation I made in artists' studios. Because to understand selection, namely what the exhibitionary system tends to leave out, we must direct our attention beyond the confines of the immediate exhibition context.

3.1   Filtering out the experimental

In the selection of artworks for solo exhibitions, a basic principle is to filter out the experimental artworks. This may sound anathema to the notion of experimental artists, who ought to experiment and push the boundaries of art. Consistent with this view, in artists' own words, these experimental works are "peripheral" works, or works "merely for fun" instead. The word "peripheral" here signifies a cognitive schema that artists bear as to perceive a body of works in a core-periphery structure, a type of structure commonly found in a well-organised oeuvre. Artists often explain that they exclude some works from the exhibitions because these works are peripheral in the oeuvre. However, this explanation

seems tautological, when the very fact of not showing them appears to imbue them with that status. Therefore, to understand the selection better, we need to look beyond the artist's own terminology.

Therefore, I choose the term experimental artworks to describe artworks that are filtered out from exhibitions, as I traced the sources of their emergence. That is to say, they are the results of spontaneous creativity and experimentation. First, an important source of these experimental works lies in the emergent nature of the creative process. Contradictory to the romanticised idea of creation, an artist's creation can also be led by the anticipation of certain outcomes (T. B. Ward, Smith, & Finke, 1999). However, the outcomes can be rarely, as shown in the study of Rodin's "unfinished" works, "the logical consequence of a fully-controlled aesthetic innovation" (Menger, 2006, p. 54). Unexpected results emerge. At the same time, there is also spontaneous creation leading to surprises. Some of these unexpected results and surprises may inspire further exploration of a new artistic direction and *de facto* prepare for what might later become the core of the artist's practices. They are what Menger (2006) refers to as "unfinished" works – the preparatory states of finished works. However, many other surprises are simply left as how they are. They do not become the preparatory states of any new works. They are often materially complete, but are considered disconnected to an artist's previous artworks and current undertakings. As an artist puts it, they stand alone:

> These works cannot fit the logic of my previous works. When a work does not co-exist with others, you have entered a huge space of unknown. You seem to be capable of doing anything, but nothing makes you feel safe. That's why I will let them stand for a while. These are the things you cannot control in the process of painting. (Artist 12)

These remarks also reveal a sense of insecurity in the process of artistic exploration. It is due in part to this insecurity that artists usually do not showcase these experimental artworks. This conclusion was reinforced most plainly by the reaction of a young painter, who insisted that I should not ask him about a pile of paintings stacked in the corner of his studio.

Another source of the experimental artworks derives from the personal interests of the artists, who may endeavour to maintain the passion of creation in a way that is free from career considerations. As a curator related to me, being a professional artist is an incredibly harsh career to pursue (Curator 4). One is under constant scrutiny, with each

new exhibited artwork exposing the artist to fresh critical examination. The delight in artistic creation can be better preserved when the anxiety associated with the judgement of others is absent. Therefore, it is not uncommon for artists to create works for fun.[42] They are created intentionally, but not always for public shows.

Experimental works, then, are excluded from the exhibitionary system because the artists, and sometime the other exhibition makers, do not think they are ready for critical examination. That is to say, the decision to filter out these works can be made by artists themselves or with the assistance of gallerists and curators. Some artists have stronger opinions about their works, whereas others allow or even need a second opinion. Not without exception, an artist's confidence and power in asserting artistic judgment grows as his or her career rises. But regardless of who makes the final decision, its principal aim is the same: to maintain the coherence, and thereby enhance the credit, of an artist's oeuvre. In other words, the first step towards the construction of an oeuvre consists in the drawing of a boundary line between a oeuvre and the rest of an artist's entire body of works.

This kind of selection cannot be observed in the making of exhibits that are produced entirely on-site, because such works, if not selected, are often simply not materialised. They remain propositions. In exhibition making that involves studio production, we observe such selection because the works or their components remain in the artist's studio if not selected to the exhibition. This is why in my fieldwork I could often spot the "peripheral" works in painters' studios, but not so often in studios of artists who prefer on-site production.

Occasionally, of course, we do see the experimental works of living artists in the exhibitionary system. In exhibitions of an experimental setting, the concerns with an oeuvre is substantially reduced. *The Uncertain or the Shelved*, a group exhibition in ShanghART that opened in the summer of 2016 specifically showcased artworks or plans of artworks that were prompted by sudden inspirations but were ultimately abandoned or left unfinished. "Uncertainty about the potential development" or "self-doubt", the press release said, might be the reasons for works befalling this fate. The show, in which over ten artists participated, was mounted by the artistic director of the gallery.[43]

---

[42]Artists might also call them as such, though, to hide the insecurity.

[43]Curiously, the labels of artworks in this exhibition did not provide the name of the creator. The justification given by the organiser was to allow the audience to appreciate these works without the bias of expectation bestowed upon artists. Yet it seems to me at least equally plausible that another reason might be at play: to avoid artists' embarrassment and to encourage the participation of artists who would be otherwise unwilling to exhibit these experimental artworks.

Yet overall, the reluctance to showcase "peripheral works" or artworks "purely for fun" seems endemic among artists. So is the awareness to maintain a well-structured oeuvre. In the interview I had with the organiser of *The Untitled and the Shelved* after the opening, he revealed that some artists whom he had invited were not impressed by the idea of showcasing experimental artworks. Among the works shown in that exhibition, there were many that were originally conceived for these artists' solo exhibitions but eventually filtered out. Indeed, solo exhibitions are usually the focus of critical examination of an artist's oeuvre. The selection of artworks for solo exhibitions is therefore normally more strict. But experimental artworks can also appear in a solo exhibition. When I was visiting a painter's temporary studio, she showed me how she had progressed from one painting to another. She then mentioned that in her recent solo exhibition, she presented her creation process through a linear display of seventeen paintings, the last of which was the finished work. She thought the display of the preparatory states helped the visitors understand her finished works.

It then becomes clear that the distinction between finished and unfinished works, a matter which Menger (2006) has failed to clarify, lies in the artist's and other exhibition makers' recognition. As the case of van Gogh shows, his paintings were first considered by one critic as studies only, yet by later critics as finished works (Heinich, 1996). It is through certain actions that artworks are recognised as finished. In this dissertation, these actions include bringing the work to an exhibition for public viewing, while those invisible to the public are "unfinished". By the same token, it is very fact of not showing certain works makes them "peripheral".

Consequently, the boundary of an oeuvre is not clear-cut. An artist may develop the experimental works further and recognise them as their core practices. This certainly also depends on other exhibition makers' opinions. For instance, Liang, whose solo exhibition I introduced, has a strong personal interest in Chinese ink painting. His "core practices" is recognised as on-site installations. He has been practising ink painting for several years but never put these paintings into his solo exhibitions. However, recently, his ink paintings were brought by his gallery to art fairs. This might eventually result in the incorporation of ink paintings into his oeuvre, when a logical way to connect them is found. This leads us to the issue of narratives.

3.2 Articulating connections

The language used in the texts of exhibitions, such as press releases, wall texts and guide brochures, is notoriously opaque. For this type of language, the term "International Art English" was coined by Alix Rule and Davide Levine (2013) – a sociology PhD candidate and an artist, in their semi-academic research of exhibition press releases. They have observed, among other bad usages of English, an excessive use of nouns, verbosity, and a proclivity for incomprehensible expressions. These trends are also noticeable in the language of contemporary Chinese art. As this implies, it is a standard practice in China to have an English translation of every text in the exhibition. The Chinese gallery staff and curators have certainly also contributed to the so-called International Art English.[44] Secondly, similar trends also appear in the Chinese language in exhibitions, most notably a lack of clarity, and an abundance of vacuous concepts, many of which derive from western languages.

However, despite the obscurity of the art language, I argue that, the narratives in exhibition are successful in articulating what is of primary importance: the theme that brings together the artworks in the exhibition, and their connections to his previous works. That is to say, regardless of the opaque language, the objectives of the narratives are often comprehensible. They share the overarching aim of integrating the works in current and past exhibitions into a well-structured oeuvre.

As I have introduced briefly, different types of horizontal structures can be equally accepted as indications for a meritorious oeuvre. Yet in general, coherence is valued. Hence, the theme of an exhibition is used to articulate the coherence of artworks in this exhibition. And references to an artist's previous artworks are made to indicate the continuity and therefore coherence in the artist's various practices over a certain period. Here, however, arises a dilemma to balance between coherence and diversity in an oeuvre of contemporary art. In modern art, an artist could be defined by a single style and adhere to this style. In contemporary art, the transgressive paradigm requires artists to go beyond the boundary constantly, including the boundary of their own artistic practices. Consequently, each new solo exhibition of the artist must show development or change in his creative path. In historiography of modern art, such development or change is often called "progress", a word that becomes, however, questionable in contemporary art (Heinich, 2014a; Schneemann, 2012). However, at the same time, the importance of coherence,

---

[44]In one of the cases I observed, I translated the curator's words to English for the gallery as my token of gratitude.

which is also rooted in historiography of modern art, does not seem to fade away. That is to say, a well-structured oeuvre must display diversity on the one hand, and coherence on the other hand.

To illustrate how the narratives articulate the theme that connects artworks of the same exhibition, I refer to the opening paragraph of the guide brochure for Wang's solo exhibition, a case I introduced in the second section.

This exhibition presents three new multi-channel video works by artist Wang Gongxin, by which the artist examines, reorganizes and contemplates over his works over the last twenty years. They encompass his rethinking and experiments on artistic "reality" and "representation" through the medium of video. All of these three works having left the artist profound impressions, are appropriations of the various components of the artist's visual experience as he matured artistically, they are: nineteenth century French realist painting Courbet's *The Painter's Studio*, a photograph from the Cultural Revolution period, *Leifeng Reading* and China's "revolutionary realist" painter Wang Shikuo's epic work *The Blood Stained Shirt*. These works not only examine the presentation of "real spectacles" constructed by fictional "mage" and "illusion", at the same time, the constructed time and space synced with the videos explore the possibility of representing "reality" and "the presence of a state of mind".[45]

The theme was summarised as an examination of reality and representation, which the author highlighted by quotation marks. The three artworks were introduced as deriving from three realist paintings which shaped the artist's own visual experience. The narratives also stated the critical attitude of the artist towards the reality depicted in the three paintings, which was "constructed by fictional 'image' and 'illusion'". Even though the language in this short paragraph was by no means straightforward, the narratives did delivery a theme that was well grounded in the commonality of the three artworks.

The narratives that are used to connect artworks produced over a certain period can be best examined in a series of five solo exhibitions of the same artist in the same gallery. This artist, San (not his real name) obtained his primary visibility through a 2009 solo exhibition, *The Cola Project*, which took place in a small museum (now closed) in Beijing. He boiled down 127 tons of Cola, transforming the drink into solid matter. San

---

[45]This English translation is provided by the artist's studio and printed on the guide brochure.

then exhibited works made from the Cola-turned solid matter. The visibility brought him to a Tier 2 gallery in Beijing, in which he mounted five solo exhibitions from 2011 to 2017. Here are some excerpts from the press release of each exhibition:[46]

> The artist's *multifaceted* attitude towards object in his iconic piece "Cola Project" *is carried on* to this new exhibition. (2011)

> This exhibition presents the artist's *constant* passion to reveal the semantic world and his ability to return to the phenomenal world. (2012)

> After the "Palate Project" (2013 - present), the artist starts with his exploration of a new artistic dimension. [...] The artworks exhibited here present the artist's *enduring* object-focused principle of practices. (2014)

> His artistic practices expand over *a large range of media*, but *sense* and *colour* remain his foci. (2015)

> The exploration is carried out with *multiple methods* but guided with *one overarching topic*: the non-verbal expression of cultural boundary and corporeal sensation. [...] The way of expression used in this exhibition can be clearly *traced back* to the starting point that informed his "Palate Project". (2017)

I have highlighted the key words used to indicate the *conherence, recurring themes*, and *diversity* of the artworks San produced over seven years. From the above excerpts, we can also see a common strategy to balance coherence and diversity: to pin the diversity onto several underlying themes. The narratives acknowledged the diversity but attempted to fasten it to themes such as "object", "semantic", and "corporeal sensation".

These terms are, of course, rather obscure. This obscurity reflects the difficulty to highlight the multifaceted practices of the artist, while at the same time gluing the apparently divergent artworks together. The artworks in these five exhibitions involved divergent media, ideas, and technologies. For example, his first solo exhibition filled the exhibition rooms with chairs; the second solo contained five sets of installations including one that featured a gold egg carton containing one ordinary chicken egg; and the third solo comprised a few vibrant coloured paintings and artifactual installations.

With that said, it may be that the *ontological indeterminacy* of artworks also results in a certain degree of obscurity. Ontological indeterminacy, a concept of Roman Ingarden which I introduced in Chapter One, refers to the fact that every artwork is to certain degree incomplete and is therefore, open to interpretation. The narratives offered

---

[46]Source: the website of artist Sam's gallery.

by the exhibition makers are conditioned by the indeterminacy, which permits obscure interpretations. It then becomes a decidedly subjective matter whether an interpretation is plausible or far-fetched.[47]

Far-fetched or not, I maintain that the interpretation offered by the texts of exhibitions are more or less based upon the intentions of artists. The narratives articulate the connections that the artist intends to build among his artworks, regardless he succeeds or not. As we have seen in the cases introduced above, artists themselves considered the possible relationships between their previous works and the ones in conception. For instance, both Liang and Gao developed the methods they used before in creating their new installations. The new ideas were not isolated from what they have created in the past.

For established artists, however, the balance between diversity and coherence seems less relevant to the merits of their oeuvres. For instance, Yang Fudong is arguably the most prominent video artist in China. In the press releases of his gallery shows, there were usually only descriptions of the new works. The press release for his solo exhibition in a Shanghai museum, *Twin Tracks*, said that Yang explored overlapping and even contradictory artistic directions.[48] This type of narratives is, however, consistent with the observation that critics tend to use a diverse range of, and often paradoxical vocabularies in their comments on successful artists' works (Giuffre, 2001).

The observation that established artists are often exceptions to norms and standard practices in the art world is also implied in Heinich's (1996) study of van Gogh. Once the singularity of van Gogh has been certified, the difficulty to classify his works with existing categories becomes a hallmark of the artist's singularity. The same kind of difficulty, say, if it is manifested in a young artist's oeuvre, might be denounced as "an error, a monstrosity, an aberration or a scandalous breach of the rules" (Heinich, 1996, p. 31). Hence, I need to clarify that my arguments here about the construction of an oeuvre are more applicable to artists in their early and mid careers.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have challenged the idealised view of artistic production as the material production of isolated objects. Examining production of artworks in the exhibitionary system has enabled us to see the actual practices. The routines and norms in exhibition

---

[47]San is also represented by another gallery in London, which choose the themes "perception", "material transformation" and "consumption through material and temporal manipulation". These words are not entirely different from the choices of his Chinese gallery.

[48]source: `http://www.yuzmshanghai.org/newsletter/2015/july/twin-tracks/index-cn.html`

making shape not only the material features of artworks, but also the very ideas that undergird them. Moreover, an artist produces each artwork in relation to other artworks he has already created. The relationships between artworks are then articulated by the narratives in exhibitions. Through a series of exhibitions, the artworks that have been shown to the public combine to form a structured oeuvre, upon which an artist's career depends.

We have also moved beyond the confine of a sequential understanding of artistic production epitomised by the production-mediation-reception division. Artists themselves have well integrated the so-called mediation of art into the very production of artworks. They have acquired the cognitive schemata that enable them to perceive their artworks as an oeuvre – and one that is to varying degrees structured, and the awareness to deploy exhibitions as the medium to construct an oeuvre. We have also gone beyond the division between the material and symbolic production of artworks. The symbolic production, which is usually associated to artistic discourses, dissolves into the crafting of narratives in exhibition making.

The aim of this chapter has not been to unmask artistic experiments as well-planned and therefore deceiving. The simple truth is that artistic experimentation is often conducted according to formats in the exhibitionary system. Of course, the formats of production I have elucidated are not applicable to all artworks. There are experimental works, such as those made "just for fun", which are produced in circumstance akin to isolation. However, these works are filtered out from the exhibitionary system. They do not become visible artworks, and thus, amount to non-existent from a sociological perspective. By the same token, an artist with zero degree of visibility is hardly an artist. Hence, in the next chapter, I will turn to the topic of artist's visibility.

Chapter VI

Artist Visibility

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to provide an adequate understanding of artist's visibility in the exhibitionary system. Here, exhibition visitors are pivotal to creating visibility in a local art scene. Therefore, I start with an analysis of the exhibition-visiting behaviour of the professional audience. I find out that people tend to frequent exhibitions made by certain artists or held in certain exhibition spaces. They are also more active during certain times of the year and prefer exhibitions in the same city.

The patterns of exhibition-visiting may result in overlap between visitors to two exhibitions of the same artist. That is why an artist's visibility does not equal the simple addition of, say, two numbers of visitors to his two exhibition. Therefore, in the second section, I unpack an artist's visibility in the visibility of each exhibition, as well as in the combined effect of all the exhibitions. I call an artist's exhibition history an exhibition trajectory. The factors that influence any given exhibition stem from the patterns of exhibition-visiting: time, the number of regular visitors to the host exhibition space, and additionally, in a group exhibition, the visibility of co-exhibitors. The ideal effect of exhibitions in a trajectory reduces the probability of overlap in audiences and maintains frequent exposure for the artist. Yet an artist's exhibition trajectory is conditioned by the artist's productivity — the capacity to make many exhibitions — and the exhibition opportunities, which are largely created in a positive reception of the artist's past exhibitions.

To raise an artist's visibility, exhibition makers work on the visibility of each exhibition. They also strive for most favourable exhibition opportunities to achieve an ideal

exhibition trajectory for the artist. Partially aware of the patterns of exhibition-visiting, the exhibition makers often strategically arrange the time of their exhibitions and attempt to manage other relevant factors.

The extent to which the exhibition makers' efforts yield ideal outcomes, then, leads us to the issue of measuring visibility. Unlike the various artist's rankings that attempt to quantify, arbitrarily, the visibility of each exhibition, I propose to measure an artist's visibility through the characteristics of his exhibition trajectory. The frequency of exhibitions, the diversity of exhibition venues and, the diversity of co-exhibitors would reveal whether an artist has successfully extended his visibility over time and space to reach a diverse audience. I will illustrate my method by measuring the visibility of 457 artists selected from my exhibition network data set.

1 The Visitors of Exhibitions

The visibility an exhibition brings to the artist comes from two sources. First, all the visitors who come to the exhibition see the artworks and become aware of the artists who created them. Second, all those who read about the exhibition learn of the exhibiting artists and artworks. An audience might not visit a show but it can nevertheless become well-informed through journalist reports, reviews in art magazines, and other textual and visual representations. The visibility of an exhibition amounts to the number of exhibition-visitors and information-receivers. Accordingly, the visibility of an artist amounts to the total number of non-duplicate exhibition-visitors and information-receivers who intersect with an artist's exhibition trajectory.

Hence, to understand the factors that influence an artist's visibility, we need to find out what draws exhibition-visitors and information-receivers towards specific exhibitions. However, information-receivers are impossible to track, due to the wide accessibility of information. For this reason, my analysis focuses on exhibition visitors only. This focus, does not, however, undermine my research, but rather draws us closer to the local art scene, where physical presence is important (Fuller, 2015a). Because in the local art scene, those who are no interested in going to an exhibition rarely resort to reading of, researching it, and thereby often neglect it.

A typical member of the professional audience will tend to frequent exhibitions hosted by a limited number of exhibition makers, and those in a finite set of exhibition spaces. People visit exhibitions for two purposes: to socialise and to see art. Visitors are

thus drawn to an exhibition by two kinds of relationships towards the exhibition makers: friendship and recognition. Notably, most of these visitors do not have extensive artistic relationship networks. Their references and selective viewing, as well as the matter of mobility and temporality, result in identifiable patterns of exhibition-visiting.

These patterns of exhibition-visiting, as I will reveal in the next section, help us to understand visibility in the exhibitionary system. Of course, regularity is not the whole picture. Exhibition-visiting can diverge from these patterns, and uncertainty in the exhibition makers' pursuit of visibility occurs all the time.

1.1   The two motives

The purpose to socialise, such as the pursuit of a life style (Thorton, 2009), the need to build social networks and therefore careers (Fuller, 2015a), or simply to be seen in public (Prinz & Schäfer, 2015), is considered the primary reason why people go to exhibition. Indeed, the social reasons explain better why people still bother with going to exhibitions in an age, when visual representation is easily circulated via technology and digital media.

However, I argue that the ideology that values the direct sensory perception of artworks remains strong. This explains why the general public flood into museums and take selfies with the Mona Lisa. The attendees of exhibition openings in Bachleitner and Ashauer's (2008) survey also stated that they came to get informed of the latest artistic developments. In China, as I have observed, the importance to see art can be used as a strong defence. The curator and artist Qiu Zhijie's decision to feature Chinese folk art in the Chinese pavilion at Venice Biennale 2017 aroused a raging debate. Many Chinese artists and curators harshly criticised this curatorial project for "playing the Chinese card" and carrying out "self-orientalisation" (seen in articles circulated in social media). Supporters, however, argued that the criticism was not justified because these critics did not see the show but judged it based on pictures. This argument rests on the importance of direct sensory perception and effectively combats criticism.

However, the need to actually see artworks in exhibition, in order to establish precise and accurate judgment, varies according to the demands of the viewer's interest and perception. In some cases, members of the professional audience do not need to view artwork because they keep informed of new artworks in a casual fashion and out of personal interest. On the other hand, gallerists, artistic directors, and curators have stronger motivations to acquire precise information, because they are in search of artists for their exhibition programmes. For them, visiting exhibitions is an important way to

spot new artists and keep updated on new artworks from familiar artists. As I observed in the field, young artists often actively go to exhibitions to learn about the recent trends and meet new friends. Artists with stable careers go to exhibitions less frequently, but tend to make the effort to see their friends' artworks in exhibitions. By contrast, gallerists, artistic directors and curators visit exhibitions as part of their job. When I started my fieldwork in Shanghai, I went to various openings in order to build research connections. During this time, I noticed a person present at all these openings. I took him to be an extraordinary sociable person who befriended almost every artist in Shanghai. Later, I was told that it was this man's job to attend exhibitions and network. As the artistic director of a top gallery in Shanghai, he needed to keep abreast of artistic developments and help the gallerist select artists.

Theoretically, the two motives result in different preferences for time of visiting. Visitors who come for the socialising prefer the day of opening, to which most professional audience are also invited and welcomed. One is more likely to encounter other visitors who are also exhibition makers on the day of opening. For the purpose of seeing art, visitors do not mind the timing, but the opening day is often said to be "not the right time to see art". The exhibition makers in my case studies also admitted that, the opening is full of "small talks" (Fuller, 2015b). Visitors are often preoccupied with socialising and conversations, rather than artworks.

In actual practice, most professional audience end up visiting exhibitions on the opening days only. Only those who miss the opening due to busy schedule will visit an exhibition after the opening. To a certain extent, the visibility of an exhibition can be evaluated based on the size of the crowd present at the opening.

This is because, although the viewing of art is often framed as a demanding task, the two motives are entirely compatible, and for some, even inseparable. They stroll into an opening, meeting people and seeing art at the same time. Despite the ideology that emphasises full attention when viewing art, for peer artists, strolling into an opening suffices. Even for those who attend with the intention to select artists, there is often no need to return to see the artworks again. This professional audience is constantly exposed to artworks and do not need a long period of time to make a definite evaluation, though they do usually need to see more artworks by the same artist for a thorough evaluation.

1.2 Selective regular visiting

The professional audience go to exhibitions selectively. For the purpose of socialising, they rarely go to openings without knowing anyone related to the exhibitions. Rather, they tend to go to exhibitions in which their friends are involved as exhibition makers. For one thing, they are more likely to build contacts there, as their friends may introduce them to new connections. For another, they show their support to the exhibition makers. Visiting a friend's exhibitions, it seems, is an important way of maintaining friendship in the art world.

Those who visit exhibitions in order to see art do not usually rely on serendipitous encounters. This demographic only attend exhibitions where they think they are more likely to see work they enjoy. An evaluation, acquired from others or developed by oneself, often precedes the visiting. This can be best illustrated by the preparatory work done by gallerists who travel outside of China to visit exhibitions. In these cases there is always extensive research carried out, with the assistance of trusted curators and artists, ahead of the visit. For instance, the gallerist of PIFO gallery told me that before his first European trip, he had consulted curators and booked studio visits with artists whose artworks he had examined through pictures. The gallerist of Magician Space, who visits Europe every year, had already gathered a list of regular spots. Palais de Tokyo was certainly on that list, as he discovered there the Paris-based artist Yao, whose case I referred to in chapter five. In the local scene, the same principle applies. A member of the professional audience visits exhibitions where he recognises and appreciates the artists or the exhibition spaces.

In short, the selective visiting of the professional audience is based upon recognition or friendship, if not a combination of both. Certainly, it is difficult to separate the two. People's personal networks tend to be "homogeneous with regards to sociodemographic, behavioural, and interpersonal characteristics" (McPherson et al., 2001). Indeed, art often expresses the personality of the artist. Artists also become friends due to similarity in sociodemographic or behavioural characteristics such as age, education background, and non-artistic hobbies. In these instances it is only later that these artists develop regard for the art of their friends. The reasons for friendships among non-artist exhibition makers (such as curators and gallerists) can be more complex. Although their taste in art can be relevant, the persona of non-artist exhibition makers are also defined by other non-artistic traits such as generosity and economic success. Regardless of the reasons for friendship, recognition can stem from strong personal ties, which make the two inseparable.

Certainly, visitors also visit an exhibition without knowing anyone related to it. Recognition without any friendship involved is what I call reputation. Moulin (1994) understands the reputation of a gallery as its "past ability to have new artistic goods accepted by leading figures of the artistic establishment (influential collectors, museum curators, famous critics)" (p. 9). This understanding actually applies to artists and non-profit exhibition spaces, except that artworks are not called artistic goods in this non-profit context. This is not to deny the establishment of reputation spread by word of mouth among peers, without any institutional accreditation. But the accreditation by art institutions makes a word-of-mouth reputation more likely to circulate and be accepted by those without personal connections to the artists concerned.

Professional audience members frequent particular exhibitions and spaces because they are friends with the artists or the owners and managers of these spaces. In addition, they are sometimes interested in work because they appreciate the types of exhibitions that particular artists, owners, managers, or spaces put on. This means artists and exhibition spaces have a number of followers, who visit their exhibitions regularly. For instance, in Beijing, a significant number of artistic professionals pay regular visits to UCCA. In this line of thought, Zeng Fanzhi noticed that the same group of Chinese visitors went out of their way to follow his exhibitions all across the globe (Liang, 2016).

1.3   Location and time

Location and time affect the visiting behaviour of the professional audience. People tend to visit exhibitions in geographic proximity and are more active at certain times of the year.

Location first and foremost refers to the city where a given member of the professional audience is situated. Although, with modern transportation, inter-city mobility is much easier, people still tend to visit exhibitions in the cities they live in. Only special events and invitations that provide travel funds may draw them to another city. Certainly, zealous followers of a particular artist, as Zeng Fanzhi has noticed, tend to travel more. Even so, generally speaking, the number of art professionals who reside in a city determines the number of visitors who attend an exhibition in that metropolitan area. As exhibition spaces and art professionals tend to concentrate in a few cities, the exhibitionary system has a geographical centre-periphery structure (C. Wu, 2009). Exhibitions in cities with more exhibition spaces and a larger professional audience, with other factors controlled, are more likely to have a larger number of visitors. On a global scale, exposure in cities

such as New York, London, Berlin, and Paris gives an artist a higher visibility than they would receive in other cities. This is why moving to New York is considered to be an effective way to build a promising career (Fuller, 2015a).

In China, Beijing is the most visible city, while Shanghai is gradually catching up to the same level of prominence. The difference in visibility between Beijing and Shanghai is minor when compared to that of other cities such as Hangzhou, Chengdu, and Guangzhou. An exhibition in Beijing and Shanghai is more visible than those in other cities.

Visitors are then further constrained by intra-city mobility. The clustering of galleries is observed in most art hubs around the world (Moulin, 1987; Fuller, 2015a; Halle & Tiso, 2014). Yet among these clusters, visitors may prefer some to others. In Beijing, *Art Zone 798* and *Cao Changdi*, which are only less than three kilometres apart, are more popular spots than other locations. Not only galleries, but also non-profit museums and independent art spaces tend to gather in this area. In the aftermath of the economic crisis in 2008, many galleries moved out of *798*. This, according to many informants, meant moving out of the public mind. In Beijing, one of the most congested cities in China, most art professionals also avoid mobility problems by living in proximity to the two major art clusters. An exhibition located on the other side of the city requires strong motivations for people to suffer the inconvenience of intra-city mobility. In Shanghai, art professionals have no distinct preference for art clusters. Although galleries also tend to cluster in Shanghai, museums and independent spaces are relatively scattered. As intra-city mobility is relatively easier (Shanghai covers a smaller geographical area and is less congested), the professional audience is more comfortable with moving about in the city.

The temporality of the art world is shaped by seasonality and recurring major events. There are high seasons, with more exhibitions, and low seasons, with fewer events, in the exhibitionary system. Spring and autumn are usually the high seasons, whereas summer and winter are the low seasons. Weather seems to be an explanation for this, as people tend to be more active in better weather. Then, there are also major events that may change the geographic structure of the art world temporally. A major art event is defined by its power to attract an audience that would otherwise not visit a city regularly. The visibility of a particular city is thereby enhanced during the time of the event.

Exhibition makers I interviewed believe that exhibitions opened in high seasons are more likely to have a larger audience. It is, however, uncertain whether more exhibitions bring in larger audiences or a larger audience encourages more exhibitions. Regardless, seasonality plays a major role in China. As we can see from Figure VI.1, the high seasons

are roughly from March to June, and then from September to December, and the low seasons are February and August. This might be attributed to the holiday system and weather in China. The Chinese celebrate New Year according to the lunar calendar, in which the New Year is usually marked in late January and early February. As a result, very few exhibitions open in February. Most galleries tend to take a break in August, because it is the hottest month of the year. October, the month with a seven-day long public holiday (The National Day), has considerably less exhibitions than other autumn months.
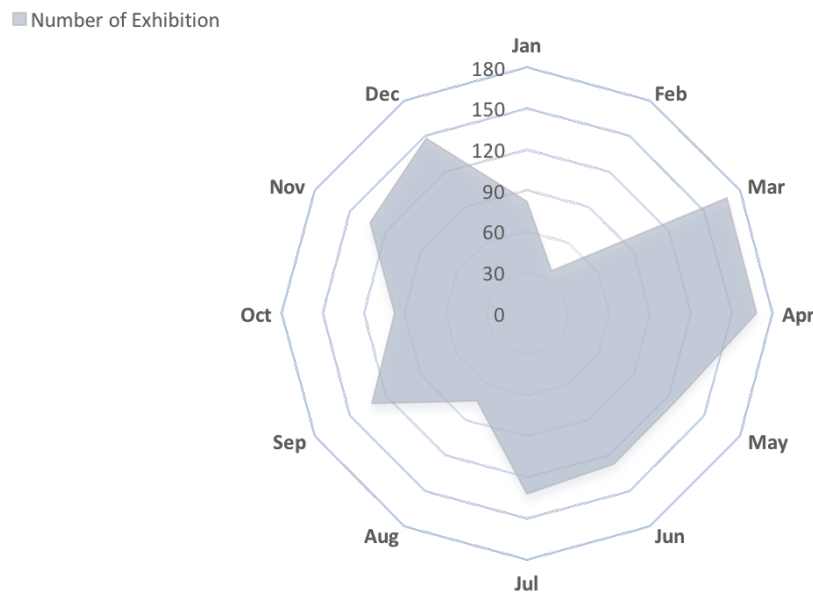
Figure VI.1: Number of Exhibitions per Month in China (sum of exhibitions between 2010 and 2016)

The two major events in mainland China that attract a large local and international audience, are Art Basel Hong Kong and the Shanghai Biennale. As many researchers reveal, the art fair Art Basel does not only attract collectors but also curators, museum directors and even artists (Thorton, 2009; Graw, 2009). Although Art Basel takes place annually in Hong Kong in March, those who make the effort to visit Asia tend to travel to mainland China as well. Therefore, the audience attracted by Art Basel Hong Kong have a significant impact on the global visibility of artists in mainland China. In fact, as the gallerist of White Space said, the move of Art Basel Hong Kong from May to March since 2015 has shifted the spring season in mainland China forward. Before the move, the spring season did not start until April, as the festivity of Chinese New Year usually ends in March.

Shanghai Biennale, on the other hand, takes place very two years in autumn.

The past few editions opened in either October or November. The Biennale attracts the international audiences, who would otherwise be drawn to Beijing. The visitors who attend the Biennale also seize the opportunity to visit the local exhibition spaces in Shanghai.

2   An Artist's Visibility: Efforts and Constraints

The visibility of any given exhibition, as manifest in the number of visitors, is determined by artistic factors, structural factors, and incidental factors. Artistic factors are related to artworks and curatorial arrangement of the artworks. That is, the quality, novelty of the artworks and scenography of the exhibition attract people to see the show. For exhibition makers with past records, quality actually means expectation of quality stemming from reputation. Structural factors refer to the distribution of social capital and reputation among different exhibition spaces. Certainly, the largest possible audience available in a city, given the temporal and geographic structure of the local art scene, also constrain visibility of any exhibition in this city.

Since I explore the visibility exhibitions can bring to an artist, artistic factors in solo exhibitions, innate to the artist, are irrelevant. The actual effect of an exhibition is constrained by the social capital and reputation of the exhibition venue, namely the visibility of the exhibition space, and the timing of the exhibition. In a group exhibition, artistic factors stemming from other co-exhibiting artists, play an additional role.

Exhibition makers are also more or less aware of these factors, and they often strategically deal with them. Therefore, in this section, by explaining the factors affecting visibility, I will also show how exhibition makers attempt to raise the visibility of artists by accommodating these factors.

I identify the key to raising an artist's visibility is to construct an exhibition trajectory that enables the artist to deploy the visibility of many different exhibition spaces and co-exhibitors. The goal is for the effect of many exhibitions to accumulate, and raise an artist's visibility through time. An ideal trajectory, therefore, equates to *frequent* exhibitions in *different* exhibition spaces, and in group exhibitions with *diverse* co-exhibitors.

2.1   The effect of a single exhibition

The visibility of the exhibition space

As indicated in my analysis of exhibition-visiting, an exhibition space usually has a number of followers, which amounts to the visibility of this exhibition space. These followers assure

a certain degree of visibility for all exhibitions in this particular space. Specifically, those followers who reside in the same city constitute regular visitors to exhibitions of this exhibition space.

The number of regular visitors is secured by the social capital and reputation of the exhibition makers who run the space. The social capital comes from the strong social relationships developed between the owner or manager of the exhibition space and other members of the professional audience, which motivate the latter to *support* the exhibition space. The reputation of an exhibition space refers to the attraction it holds as the site to see art. This reputation is built on the performance of past exhibitions. Social capital is founded on relationships. In contrast, reputation determines if members of the professional audience, who do not have a relationship to the exhibition makers, will visit the exhibition. The distinction can be seen in the opening day, divided to an inclusive reception for all visitors and the exclusive dinner for invited guests only. Friends of the exhibition space have access to the dinner, whereas those regular followers attracted solely by the reputation of the gallery do not. Certainly, it does not mean that dinner guests include all the friends of the exhibition space. The dinner guests may also include prominent curators and artists specifically invited by the exhibition makers, who do not frequent the exhibition space as zealous supporters but come for a particular event only.

The impact of regular visitors to an exhibition space is most conspicuous at the debut shows of young artists. When an artist does not yet have much visibility, the visibility of an exhibition is brought almost solely by the exhibition space. The comparison between the two debut shows I observed in two different galleries illustrates the point. Gao's debut show opened in late November 2014 and Yao's opened in January 2015. As an artist based in Paris, Yao had no artist friends in Beijing. Yet the opening of Yao's show, in terms of number and diversity of visitors, was much better attended. The gallery space was filled with people on the opening day. Many had to stand in the courtyard as the gallery was too crowded. Both Chinese and western curators were present. Apart from the gallery's own artists, I also saw other artists who were not closely associated with the gallery at the opening. By contrast, for Gao's solo, there were no more than 30 people in the exhibition room at peak time. Only his friends from the art school, other artists of the gallery, two curators and some art journalists came to the opening. Given that the size of an opening crowd indicates the visibility of an exhibition, the two exhibitions achieved different degrees of success.

It might be argued that artistic factors, such as quality of artworks, explains the

difference. However, after one and a half years, Gao also received invitations from a Tier 2 gallery and a Tier 3 gallery for his next solo exhibition. Gao's artworks are not less valued than Yao's, if we take the recognition of galleries of the same tier as an indicator of similar quality. Therefore, the difference can be better explained by the fact that Magician Space, a Tier 2 gallery that has secured a booth in Art Basel HK, is followed by many international and domestic curators and artistic directors. Artists speak highly of its exhibitions. On the other hand, the social capital of M Art Centre, a gallery that can be hardly qualified as Tier 4 and is absent from major art fairs, is limited to the gallerist's personal contacts. Not many curators pay regular visits to the gallery's shows. On this note, the gallerist's invitation to a renowned curator in Shanghai was even politely rejected.

The social capital and reputation of an exhibition space often remain stable throughout a given period of time. Therefore, the amount of regular visitors is often fixed. Standard publicity work, which entails sending press releases and invitations of upcoming exhibitions, only serves to notify regular visitors early enough for them to mark the date of opening in their calendars. Although publicity work also includes circulating the reports of the opening, soliciting exhibition reviews, and archiving past exhibitions in websites and catalogues, the actual effect is still constrained by the visibility of an exhibition space.

In the long run, of course, the visibility of an exhibition space is modifiable. Exhibition makers seek to extend their networks and build reputation. My informants stated that making exhibitions of good quality is the major way to build reputation. Even so, the criteria for good quality, is difficult to fathom. Museums usually choose to have renowned curators on board in order to ensure the good quality of shows. This is particularly important in China, as many museums are newly founded.

Galleries are often more active in building social networks, due to economic incentives. They maintain good relationships with museums and independent curators not only to raise the visibility of their own exhibitions, but also to win exhibition opportunities for their artists. Through art fairs, the ideal platform for social networking, some galleries also actively look for western galleries to represent their artists outside China. In this way, the artist is not constrained by the location and the visibility of the gallery. This then concerns exhibition trajectories, which I will address in the next section. For now, I will continue to explain other efforts made by exhibition makers to raise the visibility of a particular exhibition.

Timing

Although the social capital and reputation of the exhibition space affects all of its exhibitions, this does not mean that each exhibition has the same degree of visibility. The followers of the exhibition space are only part of the visitors to an exhibition. Other visitors are brought in by artistic and incidental factors. Moreover, given the temporal structure of the art world, the timing of an exhibition also causes variations in degrees of visibility among exhibitions at the same exhibition space.

Unlike the visibility and the location of their exhibition spaces which are not modifiable in a given period, schedules of the exhibition are easy to coordinate. Therefore, as I observed in the field, timing is the most common strategy used by exhibition makers. Exhibition makers often schedule the important exhibitions for high seasons. For galleries, important exhibitions are the solo exhibitions of the artists whom gallerists see as most promising. For museums, important exhibitions are solo exhibitions of renowned artists and flagship group exhibitions, as these make artistic statements. For example, Wang's solo in OCAT Shanghai was scheduled for March, because the museum specialises in video art and the museum director regarded Wang as an important video artist but less known in the Shanghai scene. The group exhibition of nominees of Hugo Boss Asia Art Prize is a flagship exhibition in Rockbund Art Museum; it takes place every two years and is usually scheduled for late October.

Alternatively, exhibition makers may plan the opening to coincide with Art Basel Hong Kong (in March) or the Shanghai Biennale (in October or November). For instance, aiming for a good starting point for Gao's career, the gallerist originally planned this debut show to open in the same weekend of Shanghai Biennale's opening (Saturday, 22th November 2014). It was postponed, however, to the second weekend because the catalogue could not be printed in time. The closure of Liang's exhibition was extended from 10 March to 17 March, a few days after the Art Basel Hong Kong ended, so that visitors who came to Beijing after Hong Kong would still be able to see the exhibition.

Co-exhibitors

In a group exhibition, the co-exhibitors also have an impact on visibility. Different artists may be attractive to different audiences. The diversity of audiences does not, however, result simply from the number of co-exhibitors. In terms of personal relationships, the art world is composed of interconnected subgroups in which artists and curators are densely

connected to each other but not to people outside the subgroup. In terms of artistic criterion, these subgroups may have their own preferences and are more likely to visit exhibitions of artists in the same subgroup.

Although an artist exhibits with many artists, these co-exhibits may belong to the same subgroup who share more or less the same group of audience. In this case, more exhibitions with the same type of co-exhibitors do not necessarily result in a growing number of audience, or a greater degree of visibility. By contrast, an artist who co-exhibit with those who would otherwise not exhibit together may enjoy the diverse audiences brought by co-exhibitors.

In my observation, exhibition makers do not seem to be aware of the impact of diversity of co-exhibitors. Instead, some artists prefer to co-exhibit with artists in their own subgroups. As an established artist told me, when receiving a group exhibition invitation, he looked for familiar names on the list of participants. Artists also often lament the competition of attention in group exhibitions. It is cognitively challenging for the audience to note each work in a group exhibition with more than thirty artworks. People are likely to remember novel and visually stimulating artworks and neglect others, particularly so in a large-scale group exhibition. However, such large-scale shows rarely take place in the local art scene. 85% of all group exhibitions in my data sample featured less than twenty artists. In China, a regular gallery show contains about fifteen artworks and a museum show usually contains between 20 and 30 artworks, a number that is not larger than a normal solo show.

Therefore, the competition among co-exhibitors, which can be the same for solo exhibitions of these artists, is not accentuated in a group exhibition. Contrary to common belief, the co-exhibitors of a group exhibition may bring more visibility to an artist. In fact, the most well-attended opening I experienced during field work, expect for the 2014 edition of Shanghai Biennale, was a group exhibition. Featuring 63 artists, the group exhibition of video art was curated by two curators and hosted jointly by three top galleries. The reputation of the galleries certainly contributed to the high visibility, but the diversity of co-exhibitors also attracted almost all the informants I knew in Beijing, who were either themselves the exhibitors or friends with the exhibitors.

2.2 The combined effect of a trajectory

We need to examine the *combined* effect of an artist's exhibition trajectory because an artist's visibility does not amount to the total number of visitors that attend each exhibi-

tion. As we have seen, there are identifiable patterns in people's exhibition visiting. These patterns may result in an overlap between the visitors of two exhibitions. Say, two exhibitions of the same artist in the same exhibition space may possibly have the same group of visitors. In this case, an artist's visibility remains the same but does not grow. Given the factors that cause overlaps in exhibition visitors, the best combined effect stems from an ideal trajectory that diversifies the exhibition spaces and co-exhibitors. In actual practice, artists can certainly only choose an optimal trajectory from the exhibition opportunities afforded to them.

It is also difficult to talk about a combined effect when there is a long interval between two exhibitions, due to the simple fact that attention does not last long in the art world. With new exhibitions opening every week (in high seasons), there is a fierce competition to capture lasting interest. Although an artist becomes known to the visitors of his or her exhibition, this awareness does not persist without further stimulation. An artist without launching new artworks in exhibitions, would gradually lose his visibility obtained from past exhibitions. This is what Fuller (2015a) refers to as "career time" and "entropic time" in his research regarding how artists perceive and experience time. In each city, there are "expectations about the proper duration of artistic development" (career time), and a failure to catch up with the pace results in the risk of losing the identity of artist (entropic time) (Fuller 2015a, p. 137). An ideal trajectory needs to maintain an appropriate frequency of exhibitions, which requires a certain level of productivity from the artist.

Availability of exhibition opportunities

An artist can only choose from the exhibition opportunities given to him or her. Above all, in a given exhibitionary system, the overall exhibition opportunities are determined by the number of exhibition spaces and the rhythm of their programmes. Most exhibition spaces have a fixed number of exhibitions, with a more or less fixed ratio of solo and group exhibitions. As the statistics of exhibitions in Chapter Four shows, these limited opportunities are fairly unevenly distributed. In general, it is more difficult to get an invitation to a solo exhibition than a group exhibition, although there are more solo exhibitions on the local level. A gallery representation changes the artist's exhibition opportunities significantly. It means the artist secures at least two solo exhibitions in the coming years. Those artists selected by more visible galleries, after a debut solo show, they are "in no way left idle, because there would be many group exhibitions awaiting for

them" (gallerist 3). Usually, an artist with stable collaborations with galleries does not need to worry about the frequency of exhibitions.

Exhibition opportunities arise as a result of past exhibitions. I have compared the effects of two debut shows manifested in the mass of the opening crowd (page 162). Exhibition opportunities an exhibition generates for the artist, namely group exhibition invitations the two artists received after the debut shows, can be another important indicator. After Gao's debut show, until the summer of 2016, he was invited to four gallery group exhibitions, two of which were in peripheral cities and two in Beijing. By contrast, Yao was invited to seven group exhibitions in both museums and galleries. These were all highly visible exhibition spaces such as UCCA, OCAT Xi'an, Pace Beijing and Gallery Yang. The invitations testify to the fact that the debut show has captured the attention of professional audiences. Indeed, again, Yao's debut show was more effective in creating opportunities.

In terms of creating exhibition opportunities, I contend, a group exhibition is not necessarily less effective than a solo exhibition. I will take Gao's trajectory as an example. Gao's debut solo show was initiated by the gallerist Lin because of a small art prize he won in a group exhibition. One of the curators who attended this debate show later included a piece of his work in a group show. This group show was in a small Gallery D, which is a neighbour to a Tier 3 Gallery Y in *798 art zone.* Through this group show, his work was spotted by the artistic director of Gallery Y, who was preparing for the opening show of the gallery's new space. Gao was therefore invited to exhibit in the opening group show. His visibility in the opening group show attracted the attention from a Tier 2 Gallery WS. The manager of WS then got in touch with Gao, and offered him the chance of a solo exhibition. Hence, visibility in a group exhibition may lead to opportunities for solo exhibition and vice versa. An exhibition trajectory often develops through a combination of solo and group exhibitions.

In order to pursue an optimal trajectory, young artists who do not get many opportunities, can hardly choose among different invitations. Artists who do not need to worry about frequency often go for exhibition spaces with higher social capital and reputation. Furthermore, for top artists whose visibility is mostly secured, exhibition trajectory is often not an issue any more.

Productivity

Quality seems to be the sole key word in the art world. Quantity, by contrast, is rarely mentioned, if not avoided, in an artistic conversation. In fact, quantity is a fundamental requirement for a professional artist. The career time of a particular art scene demands an appropriate frequency of exhibitions, and exhibitions demand new artworks. An artist's productivity is crucial in maintaining an appropriate frequency of exhibitions.

This appropriate frequency varies in different countries. According to Fuller's (2015a) observation, the career time in New York is compressed and in Berlin, more flexible. This means artists in New York need to have a higher level of productivity in order to keep up with the fast pace of the local scene. In Beijing and Shanghai, gallery artists, those who have stable collaborations with galleries, are expected to have a solo exhibition of new works every two or three years. Artists outside the gallery system are not confined to this rhythm, but certainly risk declining visibility without any exhibitions scheduled for the near future.

The demand for new works is higher in solo exhibitions than in group exhibitions. In China, to fill up an exhibition space, an artist needs between 15 and 25 artworks, depending on the volume of the exhibition hall. A group exhibition does not demand so many works from an artist. Usually two or three works are requested. Moreover, while solo exhibitions usually present an artist's new works, group exhibitions do not necessarily require new works.

The production of artworks takes time. Given that not every work is considered a mature output (Chapter Five), the amount of time an artist needs can be out of the artist's full control. As artist's productivity has is affected by the life cycle. Artist's productivity usually declines after a certain age, but there are also late-bloomers (Accominotti, 2009).

Hence, an artist's productivity constrains the frequency of exhibitions, solo exhibitions in particular. In my exhibition data set, only the four most diligent artists managed to have six solo exhibitions in the past seven years. This is the highest frequency an artist could maintain. Consequently, artists maintain their visibility through group exhibitions during the intervals between solos. In my data set, the average number of group exhibition an artist participated in, over the course of seven years (2010 - 2016), is five. In contrast, the average number of solo exhibitions by an artist in the same period of time is two. . This average number is derived from exhibition statistics concerning around 2,600 artists. The more visible artists among them have a much higher frequency of exhibitions.

An extreme case, for instance, is Sun Xun, an artist represented by several top galleries. He had 28 group exhibitions during these seven years, namely four per year. It is more common for active artists to participate in two or three group exhibitions each year.[49]

3   A Network Measure

Art professionals, concerned with quantifying the prominence of artists, produce various artist rankings, including those that look beyond auction results. Despite the often undisclosed methodology, the basic principle in these rankings is to add up the visibility of each exhibition in an artist's trajectory. Although this principle works, there are two major problems. First, the visibility of a given exhibition is reduced to the reputation of the exhibition space. As we have seen, the visitors of an exhibition can only be partially attributed to the reputation of an exhibition space. Another problem is the preoccupation with numerical precision, which leads to a weighted credit system that assigns each exhibition space a distinctive but arbitrarily determined weight, applicable to all exhibitions in this space. Second, when calculating the combined effect of an artist's exhibition trajectory, the possible overlaps between visitors of two exhibitions are not taken into consideration. Instead, an artist's degree of visibility is equated with the frequency of exhibitions in the exhibition spaces favoured by those who make the rankings.

The two problems dissolve in my method. Given the impact of a current exhibition on the future exhibition opportunities of an artist, there is actually no need to measure an artist' visibility through adding up the visibility of each exhibition. Rather, the characteristics of the trajectory can capture to what extent an artist has successfully extended his visibility and reached a diverse audience.

I therefore propose a method for measuring an artist's visibility by the characteristics of his exhibition trajectory. These include the frequency of exhibitions, and the diversity of exhibition venues and co-exhibitors (in group exhibitions). Moreover, I recognise the importance of group exhibitions, and thereby introduce a distinction between solo and group exhibitions in my method. In compiling corresponding indicators for this measure, I understand exhibitions as social ties and deploy social network analysis. I applied this method to a sample of 457 artists with both solo and group exhibitions in their trajectories. The results show that an artist's visibility is composed of a degree of visibility in the group exhibition network and another in the solo exhibition network. An

---

[49]It is to be noted that these figures are based on my sample of 43 exhibition spaces; not all of the exhibition records of artists are included.

artist can perform conspicuously differently in the two dimensions. There are very few artists who have obtained high visibility in both.

3.1   A note on methodology

Problems with existing approaches

I have defined an artist's visibility as the degree to which a professional audience is aware of the artist. Defined as such, the visibility of an artist can be measured directly by the number of professional audience members who know this artist. However, this requires surveying a considerably large sample of exhibition makers and compiling questionnaires regarding their knowledge of some hundred artists. A long questionnaire is unlikely to be completed, rendering it nearly impossible to work with a large sample size. Consequently, this method has only been applied to determine the visibility of less than 140 people. One example is the study of awareness and friendship ties among 139 writers in Cologne (Anheier et al., 1995) . Another example is a survey about visibility of 120 American physicists (Cole & Cole, 1968). The number of active artists in China, as identified in my data sample, goes far beyond this. Therefore, an indirect measure, taken by indicators that are capable of suggesting the number of exhibition-visitors, is more feasible.

Most artist rankings use indirect measure. Although the detailed methodologies applied there are rarely clarified (Quemin, 2015), a few basic principles are revealed (Moulin and Vale, 1995; Quemin, 2015b). They use the reputation of the exhibition venue to indicate the number of visitors, and the reputation of the art magazine to indicate the number of readers. *Kunstkompass*, for instance, allocates weighed points to an artist when the artist has an exhibition in the non-profit sector or gets reviewed by an art magazine. An artist receives more points for a solo exhibition than a group exhibition. The ranking by *Artfacts* considers exhibitions in commercial galleries too. Similarly, *Artfacts* also uses a weighted credit system that assign each institution a distinctive weight.

Indeed, the reputation of an exhibition venue does suggest that it will receive a certain number of regular visitors. However, as I have also shown, this factor is only one of the many that impact the visibility of a given exhibition. Artists who exhibit in the same exhibition venue do not get the same amount of attention. Variation in visibility is caused by characteristics of the artworks, the scenographic presentation, timing, and the type of exhibitions.

There is also much arbitrariness involved in the attempt to quantify the visibility

of each exhibition space by a weighted credit system. For instance, a basic principle in Kunstkompass is that "a solo exhibition in a prestigious museum is weighted more than a Biennale" (Quemin, 2015b). It is probably certain that a solo exhibition in MoMA gives higher visibility to an artist than the Shanghai Biennale, but the uncertainty comes when compare a solo exhibition in say, a Chinese Tier 2 gallery, with participation in Documenta. It is particularly baffling as why in *Artfacts*' ranking "gallery Thaddaeus Ropac weighs *over 3 times* more than [...] gallery Bernard Ceysson" (Quemin, 2015, my italics). Moreover, as Moulin and Vale's (1995) reveals, *Kunstkompass* only looks at the artist's visibility in a particular segment of the art world. Its preference for German artists is probably caused by the biased credit system that rates German exhibition spaces higher.

Moreover, the simple addition of points gained from each exhibition does not add up to an artist's visibility. Two exhibitions may bring the same group of visitors. The overlap is more likely to happen when an artist habitually exhibits in the same space and with the same co-exhibitors. An artist needs to move around to reach different audiences. Even top artists perceive this need. Zeng Fanzhi, for instance, is represented by Gagosian Gallery, which does not have a franchise in mainland China. Between 2011 and 2015, Zeng had solos in Hong Kong, London, Paris and New York, when he rejected the invitation from UCCA. However, when he noticed that it was always the *same* group of people from China that came to see his shows, he realised he needed an exposure in China (Liang, 2016). He contacted UCCA again and launched a semi-retrospective solo exhibition in Beijing in 2016. Although Zeng reached other audiences outside China, his previous exhibitions did not enhance his visibility in China.

In short, these artist's rankings, for the sake of producing seemingly rigorous and authoritative results, churn out a definite but arbitrary number quantifying each artist's performance in the exhibitionary system. However, such a numeral hierarchy is far from rigorous. After all, in real life, people may agree on a list of top 100 artists but not on who is to be the 97th, 98th, or the 101st. Given the many subgroups in the social world of art, many artists, who are not on the top list, may share the same degree of visibility, but are visible to different audiences. In sociological research, as Anheier et al. (1995) and Cole and Cole (1968) have shown, it is more meaningful to show the relational difference among artists of different groups.

My network-based method

My method is based upon the understanding of visibility I have built in the above sections: a network view of exhibitions as social ties, a separate treatment of solo and group exhibitions, and finally, the statistical method of factor analysis. I do not aim for a numerical ranking. I also avoid the arbitrariness involved in the quantification of the visibility of each exhibition, by considering the effect of each exhibition in the artist's eventual exhibition trajectory instead. This means that I measure an artist's visibility through the characteristics of his or her exhibition trajectory. The frequency of exhibitions measures the endurance of visibility, that is, to what extent the artist maintains his or her visibility over the years. The diversity of exhibition venues and co-exhibitors measures the extent to which the artist may have reduced the overlaps in audience, suggested by exhibitions visitors.

Before I proceed to elaborating the details of this method, I need to clarify the data sample used in this chapter. Although the entire data set of exhibitions identifies 2,634 artists (including artist's collectives), a large number of them are marginal in the exhibitionary system. They were either absent from solo exhibitions or group exhibitions. Considering the significance of solo exhibitions for an artist's career, those without a solo exhibition are marginal because they have not been introduced formerly to the professional audience yet. There are also 251 artists with no group exhibitions, despite having one, or more, solo exhibitions. Further information about them in my data set reveals that they are artists who are not based in China, or did not manage to continue with their careers after a solo, or are only recently introduced by galleries through debut gallery solo show. These artists are equally marginal to the Chinese local art scene. As it is meaningless to distinguish degrees of visibility among marginal artists, I focus on the 457 artists with both solo and group exhibitions.

The indicators for an artist's visibility are complied based on a network view of exhibitions, to which social network analysis can be applied. An exhibition indicates a tie between the exhibition space and the exhibiting artists; a number of exhibitions, therefore, constitute an artist-by-artspace network, which is composed of ties between two types of actors; it is a two-mode network (see Chapter Four). However, the network composition in a solo exhibition is different from that in a group exhibition. A group exhibition indicates a weak tie between each participant artist and the exhibition space, while also suggesting weak ties among the artists as co-exhibitors. Therefore, it is possible to extract an artist-

by-artist network from a group exhibition. To summarise, a network of group exhibitions can be analysed as a two-mode artist-by-artspace network; it can also be transformed to a one-mode artist-by-artist network. By contrast, a solo exhibition indicates a strong tie between the artist and the exhibition space. As no co-exhibitors are involved, a network of solo exhibitions is essentially two-mode and can only be analysed as such.

Furthermore, it is important to analyse group and solo exhibitions separately, for two reasons. First, I recognise the importance of group exhibitions for opening up exhibition opportunities for artists. In fact, the visibility an artist has obtained from a solo exhibition can be seen by the opportunities of group exhibitions it generates and vice versa. We need both formats to measure an artist's visibility. Second, there is no credible method for quantifying the difference between the two formats. The difference between solo and group exhibitions is similar to the difference between strong and weak ties: although strong ties are generally valued, the information brought by weak ties may be more diverse (Granovetter, 1973). Moreover, as explained, group exhibition network can be transformed to one-mode network, while solo networks cannot. The two cannot be analysed in entirely the same way.

An artist's exhibition frequency can be measured by his number of exhibitions – the first indicator of an artist's exhibition trajectory. Through simple matrix algebra, the number of exhibitions each artist has participated in – with distinction between solo and group – can be extracted from the network data.

The diversity of an artist's exhibition venues can be measured by an artist's two-mode *degree centrality* (see Chapter Four for definition) in the artist-by-artpsace network. This is calculated by the ties an artist has to exhibition spaces divided by all possible ties an artist can have. As group exhibitions and solo exhibitions need to be handled separately, there are two indicators, derived from an artist's *degree centrality* in solo and group networks respectively.

To illustrate the difference between frequency and diversity, Figure VI.2 shows the solo exhibition networks of nine highly productive artists. Each artist has had more than four solo exhibitions. The circle nodes refer to artists and the square nodes refer to exhibition spaces. The numbers on the ties indicate the frequency of exhibition. If an artist returns to the same exhibition space, this indicates a strong tie, but it only counts as a single tie. The diversity of an artist's exhibition venues can easily be identified through visualisation. The lowest degree of diversity in Figure VI.2 is found on artists 62 and 95, whose solo exhibitions were confined to two exhibition venues. By contrast, artist 335

(happens to be Ai Weiwei) has the most diverse solo exhibition network, as he did not exhibit in the same space twice. In group exhibitions networks, the same kind of analysis applies.

Figure VI.2: Artist-by-Artspace Network, solo exhibitions

The diversity of co-exhibitors is a characteristic of an artist's group exhibition networks only. This last indicator of an artist's exhibition trajectory is complied by calculating *betweenness centrality* (see Chapter Four for its definition) in one-mode artist-by-artist network, which tells us to what extent an actor bridges between people that would otherwise be disconnected. These actors occupying such a network position are called "brokers". Applied to an exhibition network, an artist's *betweenness centrality*, therefore, measures the extent to which this artist exhibits with group of artists that usually do not exhibit together. As it turns out, the artist with the highest betweenness centrality is not the artist that had most co-exhibitors – the number of co-exhibitors indicates the artist's degree centrality instead (for the difference between betweenness and degree centrality, see Chapter Four). In my data sample, this "broker" artist (identified as Cao Fei) had 289 co-exhibitors, almost 100 less than the artist (Yang Fudong) who had 382 co-exhibitors. This means, although the latter artist liked exhibiting with other artists, he exhibited with a more or less loosely interconnected circle of friends. By contrast, the broker artist

exhibited with those who probably do not belong to the same circle.[50]

Therefore, for each artist, I arrive at five indicators that define his exhibition trajectory: a) the number of solo exhibition, b) the number of group exhibitions, c) the diversity of solo exhibition venues, d) the diversity of group exhibition venues, and e) the diversity of co-exhibitors. Given that these different aspects of an artist's exhibition trajectory are subject to the same cluster of artistic and structural factors, these indicators may be correlated.

Hence, the final step is to seek out possible latent overarching indictors. Factor analysis, as introduced in Chapter Four, a statistical method used to detect latent unobserved variables from observed and correlated variables, serves this purpose. A new score system can be generated according to the newly identified overarching indicators. If the indicators can be synthesised to less than three, we can even visualise the variations among artists and obtain a straightforward perception of the variations.

3.2 Results

The two dimensions

As shown in Table VI.1, I identify two latent factors from the five indicators of an artist's exhibition trajectory. These two factors can explain over 87% of the total variance among the 457 artists. Moreover, the table shows the weights and correlations between each indictor and the factor. As we can see, Factor 1 is closely related to the three indicators derived from group exhibitions, shown in the table as *degree_gr*, *nbetweenness* and *NoExhgr*; Factor 2 is mostly defined by the two indicators derived from solo exhibitions, shown as *degree_solo* and *NoExhso*. Moreover, as the latter two indicators load highly onto Factor 2, it means that the two newly identified factors are not intercorrelated. Each indicator's lack of uniqueness means they all contribute to the overarching factors of an artist's exhibition trajectory.

Given these two factors and the distinct sources of each factor, I can conclude that an artist's visibility is divided along two dimensions. Factor 1, as it is derived from group exhibitions, represents the collective dimension; Factor 2, as it is derived from solo exhibitions, represents the singular dimension. The fact that the two factors are not intercorrelated means that the two dimensions are not reducible to one. This also testifies

---

[50]Yang Fudong's betweenness centrality is also quite high compared to other artists, though. Better examples to show the discrepancy would be Zhang Enli, Li Songsong and Liu Wei, who are all top 10 in the number of co-exhibitors, but fall behind top 40 in terms of betweenness centrality.

	Factor1	Factor2	
Cum. Variance	0.4974	0.8758	
	Factor loadings after orthogonal rotation		Uniqueness
degree_solo	0.2170	0.9214	0.1039
degree_gr	0.8804	0.3374	0.1110
nbetweenness	0.8947	0.1112	0.1872
NoExhgr	0.8967	0.2887	0.1125
NoExhso	0.2447	0.9131	0.1063

Table VI.1: Factor loadings (results of factor analysis)

to the importance of analysing solo exhibitions and group exhibitions separately.

I then generate new scores for each artist in both dimensions. After standardising the scores, namely making the scores of the two dimensions comparable on the same scale of one to ten, I visualise the positions of the 457 artists by a scatter plot in Figure VI.3.
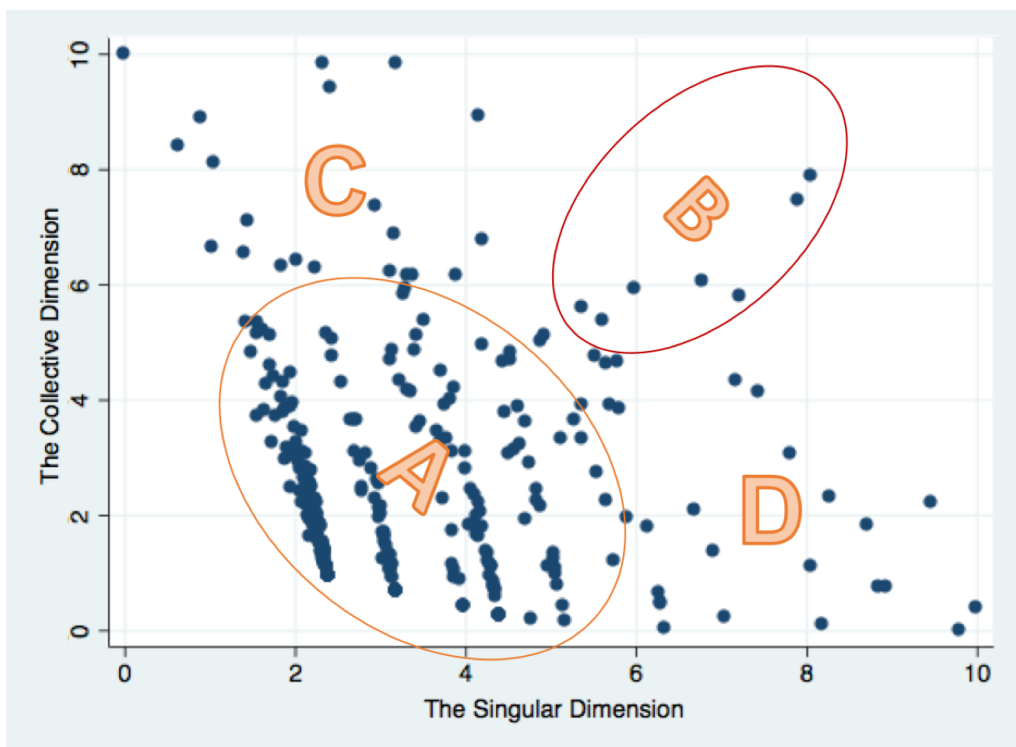

Figure VI.3: Visibility of Artists along the Two Dimensions

The variations

According to the clustering of dots in Figure VI.3, each of which indicates the position of an artist in the two dimensional measure of visibility, I divide the artists to four groups. However, as the relative difference between the groups is more important, I do not set fixed boundaries by defining the exact range of scores. The majority of all artists are located in area A, with a low degree of visibility in both dimensions. If I set the boundary as lower than five in absolute scores in both dimensions, the exact number of this group is 377, which constitutes 82% of all the artists in the data set. Only seven artists, in terms of absolute scores, make it to above five in both scores; among these seven artists, only two make it to above seven in both dimensions. These seven artists, as listed in Table VI.2, are situated in area B. There are 20 more artists, although their absolute scores are not particularly high, but they make it to the top 20% in both dimensions. They are situated in the fuzzy area between B and A.

Not surprisingly, the top seven artists are all artists represented by renowned galleries, if not more than one. This demonstrates that, although I did not quantify the reputation of each exhibition space, the impact of these exhibition venues is well integrated into my measure of visibility. Certainly, one may wonder why artists such as Ai Weiwei, Zeng Fanzhi, and Cai Guoqiang, who are arguably the most visible Chinese artists to a global audience, are absent from this top list. Their absence can be well explained by my orientation to the local art scene. My data set is gathered from the local exhibition spaces in China, which are less relevant to these artists who pursue global careers. Artists who have won global visibility are usually more senior. This is also why the highly visible artists in the local art scene are mostly born in the 1970s and even early 1980s (see Table VI.2). It is to be noted that these globally renowned artists are by no means invisible in my results. As we will see, they are generally highly visible in one dimension but less so in the other one.

In area C and D we find quite a few artists whose visibility diverges in the two dimensions. Artists in group C are highly visible in group exhibitions, but are among those who are least visible in the solo exhibitions. For instance, in the upper left corner of area C, there are 19 artists whose visibility score in the collective dimension is above six but below four in the other dimension. Artists in group D are to the opposite: highly visible in solo exhibitions and hardly visible in group exhibitions. 18 artists, similar to the mass in area C, are situated in the right lower corner of area D. In both group C

Name	Collective	Singular	Gallery(ies)	Year of Birth
LIANG Shuo	7.886657	8.057337	Beijing Commune (Tier 2)	1976
JIANG Zhi	7.456813	7.900206	Multiple Tier 2 & 3 galleries	1971
LIU Wei	5.779023	7.223824	Long March Space (Tier 1)	1972
HU Xiangqian	6.055014	6.782331	Long March Space	1983
YANG Xinguang	5.93078	5.986456	Beijing Commune, Boers-Li Gallery (Tier 2)	1980
CHENG Ran	5.358421	5.61829	Leo Xu (Tier 2), Galerie Urs Meile (Tier 1)	1981
LU Yang	5.590136	5.373641	Beijing Commune	1984

Table VI.2: The Most Visible Seven Artists

and D, there are prominent artists. What I mean by prominent artists here are those who are well-known in the Chinese local art scene to anyone who has spent a significant time there, as I did for my field research, and are relatively well-informed. For the sake of illustration, the three extreme cases in group C, for instance, are Shi Jinsong (b. 1949), Ding Yi (b.1962), and Xu Bing (b.1955), while the other two extreme cases in group D are Ai Weiwei (b.1957) and Xu Qu (b.1978).

Although these extreme cases are all senior artists, it is not to conclude that age explains the variations in visibility. I have run a logistical regression using age of the artist as an independent variable, but no statistically sound model can be built to predict the artist's visibility in either dimension by age.

Certainly, to explain what and how other factors are related to an artist's visibility, more background data about the artist is needed for further quantitative research. My proposal is to consider the productivity of the artist, the principal art medium used by the artist – which has something to do with the productivity too, and the artist's mode of collaboration with galleries. For instance, artists who are highly visible in group exhibitions but less so in solo exhibitions may have not been productive enough in recent years. For an artist always needs at least a dozen of new artworks for a solo exhibition. Moreover, more qualitative data is needed to explain the division of visibility into the collective and singular dimensions. Considering the dominance of solo exhibitions with regards to the number of shows and the significance attached to them, it is intriguing to see that an artist's visibility cannot be reduced to a single indicator based upon his or

her performance in solo exhibitions. But I will address in detail the research potentials suggested by my current results later in the Conclusion Chapter.

To conclude, these results measure the concept of visibility and identify the two distinct dimensions of the concept. Moreover, I have distinguished between four groups of artists based upon their degrees of visibility in both dimensions.

Conclusion

This chapter puts flesh on the bones of the crucial concept I developed for the exhibitionary system – the artist's visibility. I have analysed the factors that impact on an artist's visibility, dividing them into those that affect visibility of a particular exhibition and those that affect the combined effect of an artist's exhibition trajectory. Since an artist's exhibition opportunities are often actually generated by past exhibitions, the efforts to raise an artist's visibility aim ultimately for an optimal exhibition trajectory. A trajectory is optimal when it maintains for the artist an appropriate frequency of exposure, and allows him to deploy the visibility of many different exhibition spaces and co-exhibitors. In order to achieve this, artists and other supporting exhibition makers consider the visibility of the exhibition space, timing of the exhibition, and the visibility of co-exhibitors (in the case of a group exhibition), when choosing within the range of exhibition opportunities that they have been offered.

I have tested my method of measuring visibility using the exhibition data from the case of China. This method deploys indicators including the frequency of exhibitions, the diversity of exhibition venues, and the diversity of co-exhibitors to measure the merits of an exhibition trajectory. These characteristics of an artist's exhibition trajectory can reveal the extent to which an artist have successfully extended his or her visibility across time and exhibition spaces, and through the appeal of other artists' artworks (in the case of group exhibitions).

The results of the 457 Chinese artists have certainly quantified and visualised inner variations in artists' degrees of visibility. The most intriguing finding is that an artist's visibility is not reducible to his trajectory of solo exhibitions. This contradicts an impressionist understanding of artistic prominence as mostly manifested in solo exhibitions. My findings have revealed that artist visibility can diverge in the two dimensions – a collective dimension defined by group exhibitions and a singular dimension defined by solo exhibitions. These findings also point to directions for my future empirical research, which will

aim to explain the variations in artist's visibility.

Chapter VII

The Dual Selection of Artists

Introduction

In this chapter, I explain how artists are selected to partake in the exhibitionary system. Drawing upon both qualitative and quantitative data, I demonstrate a model of dual selection. In this selection process, capable artists, who can act as competent exhibition makers, are selected into both non-profit and for-profit art spaces. Furthermore, among these capable artists, those who are aware of their strive for meritorious oeuvres and do not reject marketisation, are considered marketable and favoured by the market.

I therefore contest the thesis of dualism in the existing literature, which argues for a division between the production for peers and for the market, as well as a binary structure divided along the for-profit and non-profit in the art system. In section one, I review the debate between the thesis of dualism and the institutional approach. Based on the review, I propose my own thesis of duality. This means, I maintain the validity of a categorical division, but reject the dualism on an empirical ground.

In section two and three, I substantiate my thesis of duality by empirical data regarding selection of artists in the Chinese exhibitionary system. On the one hand, the structure of the exhibitionary system is revealed as a collaborative network divided into segments. Non-profit and non-profit exhibition spaces are unevenly present in these segments. On the other hand, I identify a general preference for capable artists in the exhibitionary system, and a most common path of artistic creation, which reconciles market demand and peer recognition. In brief, between the romanticised model of autonomy and the heteronomous model, I discover a model of professional autonomy.

1   From Dualism to Duality

The local exhibitionary system consists of galleries, museums, and independent art spaces. A division between the non-profit sector and for-profit sector here is clear: galleries are important dealers in the primary art market, whereas the other two types of exhibition spaces do not engage in the sale of art. Because of this difference, there are two pairs of dual categories underlying existing discussion about the selection of artists. The first pair is the for-profit and the non-profit, or simply galleries and museums. The second pair is peer recognition and market demand, usually termed "art and the market".

Many sociologists assume that the two categories in each pair are opposing and potentially conflicting, and propose two kinds of dualism. The first kind of dualism postulates that museums and other non-profit art institutions operate separately from the art market, and thereby separately from commercial galleries. Accordingly, the two sectors may elect different artists for their exhibition programmes. This dualism is rarely clearly stated and only implied in the fact that the selection of artists in galleries and that in non-profit art institutions rarely appear in the same study. The second kind of dualism derives from Bourdieu's field theory, and views the opposition between market success and peer recognition, manifested in the division between the field of large-scale production and that of restricted production, as characteristic of the structure of an art field. A common interpretation of this opposition is that artists who are favoured by the market are less valued by their peers (Wuggenig & Rudolph, 2013; Buchholz, 2015). In this dualism thesis, therefore, the selection of artists by the market differs from the selection by art experts. Accordingly, some artists are selected for their marketability, while others for their artistic merits.

By contrast, the institutional approach and some organisational sociologists typically argue for the entanglement between the non-profit and for-profit (e.g. Zolberg, 1984; Alexander, 1996; Lachmann et al., 2014; Dimaggio, 1983; DiMaggio, 2003). Most notably, Moulin and his colleagues take the argument a step forward. They posit that the overlap between the non-profit and for-profit sectors indicates the reconciliation between peer recognition and market demand (Moulin, 1994; Moulin & Vale, 1995) . In other words, they assume that the dualism between peer recognition and market demand undergirds the dualism between the two sectors. The dissolution of the latter dualism, therefore, accounts for the dissolution of the former.

Drawing upon the difference between *dualism* and *duality* made by Giddens (1984),

I call the standpoint of the institutional approach a **thesis of duality**, as opposed to the above *thesis of dualism.* In the duality thesis, the conceptual duo, such as "structure and agency" (Giddens, 1984), "individual and society" (Elias, 1978, 2001), only indicates an analytical division. In the actual social process, the duo are mutually constituted and intertwined. In our current discussion, the duality thesis argues for the mutual constitution and interweaving in real-world practices between "non-profit and for-profit", as well as "peer recognition and market demand".

Hence, in what follows, I propose my thesis of duality, with regards to the selection of artists, to solve the debate between the thesis of dualism and that of duality. My proposal is based upon a critical examination of empirical evidence and underlying methodologies from both sides of the debate.

1.1   The hypothesis of overlap

Three bodies of evidence have been provided to show the entanglement between the non-profit and for-profit art sectors. First, the genesis of a non-profit art sector has been revealed as inseparable from the art market. Certainly, the establishment of non-profit art museums is typically related to the building of nation states (Barrett, 2011; Klonk, 2009). Yet the involvement of museums in on-going art practices came after the establishment of a modern art market (Crane, 1987; Moulin, 1994). And this development is not only driven by artists' and curators' pursuit of freedom from market constraints, but also made only possible by the support of a urban elite, who are actually also the major buyers of contemporary art (Dimaggio, 1983; DiMaggio, 2003). That is to say, the connection between the two sectors hinges upon the fact that the same group of patrons, say the urban elite, ultimately finance both sectors. Hence, museums are, using DiMaggio's (1983) metaphor, the "non-profit jewels" enmeshed in a "for-profit crown" (p. 82).

Second, more specifically, museums are influenced by the art market through corporate funding and collectors' sponsorship. A strand of continuous research on the funding sources of public art museums in America from the 1960s to 2010 (Zolberg, 1984; Alexander, 1996; Lachmann et al., 2014) has shown that museums are "willy-nilly linked to an external market whose speculations impinge upon their collection and exhibitions" (Zolberg, 1981, p. 120). This link is suggested by curators feeling the need to comply with the expectations of funders.

Third, galleries in the primary market have been revealed to consider more than marketability when selecting artists. The dual position of galleries, as both dealers and

art patrons, has been well-established by art market research (Bystryn, 1978; Velthuis, 2005; Horowitz, 2011;Resch 2015). Specifically, Horowitz (2011) has shown that the most astute dealers have mastered the strategy of building their symbolic capital by supporting cutting-edge art, which does not sell well, whilst generating economic capital from the sales of more conventional art forms, such as paintings.

To summarise, the three bodies of evidence indicate that the non-profit sector relies on the for-profit sector for financial backing, and the gallery sector considers not only the marketability but also the judgements of an artist's peers. In other words, galleries and museums seem to be equally subject to the powers of peer recognition and market demand. It is therefore reasonable for Moulin to assume an "informal coalition" (Moulin, 1994, p. 9) between galleries and museums. This idea underlies the perspectives of other sociologists working within the institutional approach, as suggested by the coinage of "dealer-critic" system (White & White, 1993) and the study of both sectors in the same research (Crane, 1987). Moulin and his colleague's (1995) argument is more explicit, as they argue that the cultural and the commercial sectors, thanks to the networks between dealers and curators, "almost entirely overlap" (p. 48). In particular, they argue that leader galleries and leader curators make the "same" choices in their selection of artists.

However, this claim about an overlap between the two sectors remains a hypothesis, for which Moulin and Vale (1995) do not provide any empirical evidence. The most likely evidence that could support their claim, as far as I know, is a journalist report that finds out: artists represented by the five top galleries including Pace, Gagosian Gallery, and David Zwirner received 30% of the solo shows of 68 American museums (Sutton, 2015). On the other hand, to argue for an overlap between the museums and galleries based upon the common financial backing is to descend into a crude materialism. Moreover, the strand of museum studies has emphasised that corporate and individual collectors are not the only funders of museums. Curators are subject to influences from other funders, the state chief among them.

Furthermore, there is no research that explores sufficiently the decision-making process in the programming of exhibitions. Similarly, no comparison between such a process in both sectors has been provided. Although Zolberg's (1981) interviews reveal the various expectations from different funders that curators need to take into account, the perspective is limited to the impact of funding on decision making. Many other, such important ones as artistic factors, are not included in the research. In fact, there is much research about how galleries select artists, concerning the process of selection and

re-selection (Thompson, 2009), the criterion used and the channels to obtain information for selection (Bystryn 1978; Velthuis, 2013). Comparatively, there is not sufficient research about how curators in the non-profit sector select artists. The statistics of artists' origins, cited in Chapter Three, shed no light on the decision-making process.

In the case of China, however, I would expect a higher possibility of accepting the overlap hypothesis. As the state does not act as a patron for contemporary art in China, the common financial backing between the gallery and non-profit sectors is highly visible. The establishment of the non-profit sector, as I have shown in Chapter Three, was not possible without the money generated in the art market. For instance, Arrow Factory and Video Bureau, the two well-reputed independent art spaces, were founded by artists themselves. Without the income from sales, artists cannot finance the independent art spaces that do not receive public funds. Evidently, museums are also built in part by private and corporate collectors for the purposes of presenting their own collections. Given the limited sources of funding in the Chinese museums of contemporary art, we would expect a stronger influence from the market.

1.2   An alternative model of artistic autonomy

The discussion concerning this second kind of dualism is a perplexing one, which is often framed as a debate on artistic autonomy. Moulin's ideas have been viewed as a "heteronomous model" (Buchholz, 2015), as he argues for the interdependence between peer recognition and market demand. I therefore must clarify that I distinguish between artistic autonomy in an ideological belief and artistic autonomy in a power structure. The thesis of duality does not reject the existence of artistic autonomy as an *ideology*. Rather, it is recognised as a defining feature of contemporary art. This recognition of the crucial function of ideological belief is common to the institutional approach (White & White, 1993; Moulin, 1987). The ideology of artistic autonomy also motivates art professionals to struggle against the 'eroding power' of the market.

However, whether these art professionals indeed possess the power to resist the so-called eroding power of the market becomes an issue concerning artistic autonomy as a *power structure*. It can only be determined by empirical investigation. Any assumption about the actual power distribution in an art system, before empirical evidence is provided, remain a hypothesis. With this said, to postulate that artists possess such power "against" the market, when professional artists ultimately rely on the market to survive, suggests a normative inclination for the ideological belief itself.

Given the distinction between ideology and power structure, my thesis of duality accepts peer recognition and market demand as dual analytical categories, but rejects the existence of a measurable antagonism between the two. I argue against the thesis of dualism on the ground of their failure, due to flawed methodologies, to present the two in a measurable antagonism.

From Bourdieu's theory of art field, Buchholz (2015) deduces a discrepancy between artists' possession of symbolic capital and economic capital. That is to say, artists who are highly recognised by peer do not enjoy market success. Wuggenig and Rudolph (2013) provide the evidence for such a discrepancy. They draw a sample of 83 artists from the names that 140 art experts gave as important artists in a survey. They compare the reputation ranking of the same 83 artists in ArtFacts and in Artprice. No strong correlation between their reputation and auction prices, as measured by the two rankings respectively, is found.

Although this evidence seems convincing, there are three major methodological problems. The first problem is that this data sample concerns only the top 1% of artists. Even the artists that are given as examples of those economically less successful, such as Dan Graham, Fischli/Weiss and Pipilotti Rist, are probably economically better off than the rest majority of contemporary artists. After all, while most artists are struggling to find gallery representation, cannot make a living from art, and must take other part-time jobs (Moulin, 1987), these artists are or were all represented by branded galleries including Lisson Gallery, Ileana Sonnabend Gallery and Hauser & Wirth.

Most importantly, to equate market success with auction prices is a common methodological pitfall in measuring the economic capital or market success of an artist. Firs of all, auction prices have nothing to do with an artist's income unless he himself consigns the work to auction house, which is considered to be almost scandalous and is notably less common after the market boom (2004-2007). Second, there are at leas two kinds of market demand, as economists have revealed. There are the demand for "art as asset" and the demand for "art as commodity" (Grampp, 1989), which produce two distinct kinds of market success. The demand for art as asset, typically found in auction houses, prioritises the potential of the painting's price to rise above any artistic considerations. A painting is simply referred to an "Andy Warhol" or a "Gerhard Richter" (Thornton, 2009). Yet in this domain, an artwork achieving market success is hardly indicative of the success of the artist, because there can be a vast price difference between artworks by the same artist. In the primary art market, by contrast, the same artist's artworks are usually priced within

a range of moderate variations (Velthuis, 2005). Also, price is not the only indication for market success here. A steady rise in price over an artist's career and the percentage of artworks sold, as interviews with my informants revealed, are more generally considered to be signs of market success.

Another problematic yet commonly deployed method for measuring reputation or recognition is present here too. Surveys are conducted as if an artist's "peers" are homogeneous. As my exhibition data used in Chapter Six shows, some groups of artists tend to co-exhibit with one another inside the group, but do not exhibit with some other artists at all. Although exhibition networks are not equivalent to the personal networks among artists, my results prove the existence of subgroups and the likelihood that they may uphold divided collective opinions. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that a rigorous sampling must take into account the existence of subgroups and their different sizes. It follows that a proportional sample is necessary to represent different opinions, because the peer artists are by no means a homogenous group.

A strong argument for the presence of a dualism between peer recognition and market demand is that it corresponds to our intuitive perception. Even Moulin and Vale (1995) talk about "art oriented to museum" and "art oriented to market" (p. 49), which in our current context shall be better formulated as "art oriented to fairs" and "art oriented to biennales". It seems rather easy for anyone with sufficient first-hand experience of the art world to tell the two apart. But there is so far no sound methods to verify our intuition. The difficulty lies in the fact that the only way to do so is to analyse and compare a large quantity of artworks showcased in art fairs and biennales. However, our current methods are ill-suited to this task. To my knowledge, a large-N analysis of the pictorial features of paintings is now possible, as shown by a fascinating study of figurative paintings by winners of an art prize in China (Xiang, 2016). With assistance of computer science, Xiang and her team have demonstrated that this art prize favoured paintings with yellow or red hues and such motifs as a girl, sofa and cow.[51] However, their methods can hardly be applied to the analysis of contemporary art works, the majority of which are not figurative paintings. Instead, most artworks in contemporary art are three-dimensional and cannot analysed in terms of hues or motifs. We can only hope that further advances in similar methods would enable us to verify our impression that artworks in fairs are distinctly different from those in biennales. However, there is another dimension to this dualism, namely the anchoring

---

[51]This study was also featured in the 2016 Data Stories column of *Science*: `http://www.sciencemag.org/projects/data-stories/finalists/2016`

of the dualism to artists. Even though the dualism between art for the peer and art for the market can be measured empirically, it does not follow that the same artist cannot take up both. The dualism thesis in terms of the selection of artists, therefore, entails furthermore an assumption that artists can only have one single artistic orientation. This assumption, again, needs verification.

I argue that the reason existing research has difficulty in presenting the two as a measurable antagonism lies in the fact that peer recognition and market demand are mutually constituted in real-world practices. Furthermore, even though the two are also perceived as different by artists, they believe that they can strike a balance between the two.

My argument is based upon a critique of existing arguments for this thesis of duality. First, Moulin and Vale's thesis of duality contains two self-contradictions. The first one resides at the level of terminology. They use the term "art and the market" to refer to the two contrasting powers in the art system. The juxtaposition of art and the market indicates that art is something created *outside* the market. However, at the same time, like other sociologists in the institutional approach, they actually view the production of art as situated in the market. That is to say, they view art *in* the market instead. Certainly, this inconsistency between "and" and "in" is only caused by a convoluted terminology. Other similar terms such as "culture and commence", "art and money", "aesthetics and economy", and "artistic value and economic value" also obscure the actual dualism. In previous chapters, I have also referred to "art and the market", adopting the conventional terminology.

However, in this chapter, I must clarify that I recognise the division to be between peer recognition and market demand, instead of between art and the market (see Figure VII.1). That is, I draw upon Bourdieu's distinction between production for the peer and production for the market.

Another self-contradiction lies in Moulin and Vale's (1995) false simplification of the relationship between the two kinds of dualism. In order to argue for a reconciliation between "art and the market", they state clearly that galleries stand for the market and the museums stand for the art. So that the overlap between the two institutional sectors means the reconciliation of peer recognition and market demand. This view contradicts another argument they uphold in the same article: galleries and museums are equally subject, simultaneously, to the power of both peer recognition and market demand. Even though the dualism between peer recognition and market demand undergirds the dualism
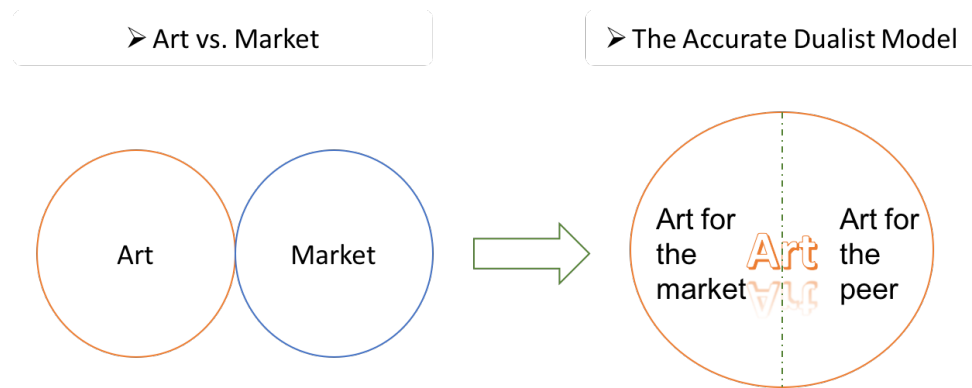
➤ Art vs. Market

➤ The Accurate Dualist Model

Art

Market

Art for the market

Art

Art for the peer

Figure VII.1: A clarification of the "Art and the Market" dualism

Art for the market

Art

Art for the peer

➤ How the second kind of dualism may persist

➤ A false simplification of the relationship between the two kinds of dualism

Gallery Artists

Museum Artists

Gallery Artists

Art for the market

Art for the peer

Museum Artists
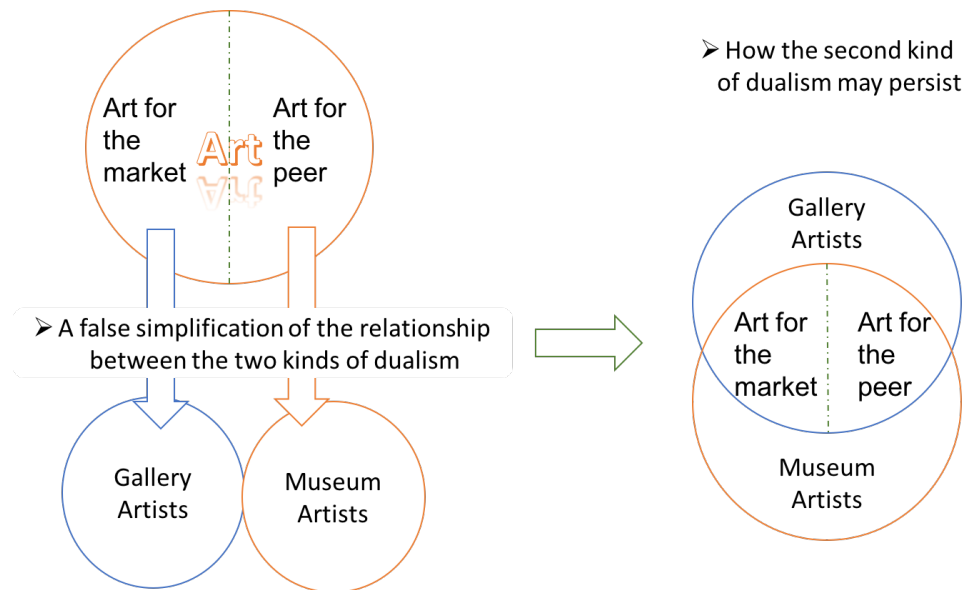
Figure VII.2: The relationship between the two kinds of dualism

between the non-profit and for-profit, the dissolution of the latter kind of dualism does not stands for the dissolution of the former kind; the dualism between peer and market can still persist. By way of illustration, with regards to our current subject of selecting artists, the choices by the market and the peer can be divergent; but so long as artists from each way of selection are both represented in galleries and also in museums, the overlap between the non-profit and for-profit sectors will still occur (see Figure VII.2).

In other words, the entanglement between the for-profit and non-profit sectors cannot be used as explanations for the interdependence between peer recognition and market demand. Rather, another explanation suggested by Moulin and his colleagues is more compelling:

[...] aesthetic worth thus defined and price were not independent. [...] In a confused dialectic, aesthetic judgment becomes a pretext for a commercial

operation, and a successful commercial operation may serve as aesthetic judgment. (Moulin and Vale, 1995, p. 55)

Thus, uncertainty tends to foster mutual constitution. Velthuis' (2005) research has also shown that people tend to, inevitably, resort to prices to justify artistic quality. Intriguingly, fine art is deemed high art largely because of the high prices it commands. Price has indeed obtained a symbolic meaning. This symbolic meaning of prices in the domain of fine art, therefore, distinguishes the art world from that of literature. Since Bourdieu constructs a dualism between the field of large-scale production and that of a restricted field mainly based upon his observations of the literature field, the validity of such a dualism in the field of fine art is dubious.

In fact, Bourdieu is not entirely on the side of dualism, even though this is a popular interpretation. His theory admits the potential of symbolic capital to be converted into economic capital and vice versa. Only that he thinks such a conversion takes time (Bourdieu, 1993). The temporality of the art world has noticeably accelerated. This is indicated by the fact that artists who fetch high auction prices are getting younger (Galenson, 2000). The trope of genius who obtains only posthumous recognition becomes a pure myth in contemporary art.

I provide an alternative mechanism for the mutual constitution of peer recognition and market demand, and thereby an alternative model of artistic autonomy. The above two mechanisms — uncertainty in artistic judgement and conversion between capitals over time — evoke a process of *reception*. They locate the mutual constitution of wide recognition and market success after the materialisation of artworks. The mechanism I propose, by contrast, resides in the artist's creative process, and in the process through which they are selected to become artists. In other words, the two-fold mechanism resides in the exhibitionary system. First, through the selection for exhibitions, artists who are not marketable at all are largely excluded from the exhibitionary system and therefore a chance of economic success. Second, in the creative process, artists incorporate artistic requirements for exhibition making into their creation of artworks, yet these requirements are also indispensable and beneficial for the marketisation of art. Hence, artists create marketable artworks without the bad consciousness of submitting to the market.

This two-fold mechanism suggests an alternative model of artistic autonomy – the model of professional autonomy, which is undergirded by a corresponding ideology. Professional autonomy is situated in between a romanticised model of artistic autonomy, in which artists are subject only to impulses, inspiration, and vibrant experimentations dur-

ing their creative process; and a model of artistic heteronomy, in which artists consciously create more works of the kinds that are popular with collectors. Here, artists create in the conscious pursuit of a meritorious oeuvre, being responsive to the critical opinion of their peers. At the same time, they diligently produce a sufficient quantity of artworks to maintain visibility, and aim to improve or develop over the course of their careers. No considerations of market demand are present. Despite this, the ability to create an oeuvre, in addition to the awareness of critical peers, and the willingness to accept marketisation, makes an artist marketable. In other words, an artist's marketability is built upon his competence as an exhibition maker. By the same token, although the exhibitionary system is conceptually disentangled from the art market, it is the very foundation for the marketisation of art.

To conclude, my thesis of duality is two-fold. First, I recognise the deep entanglement between the two sectors, given the substantial existing evidence of such an entanglement. However, I have reservations over the existence of a definite manifestation of this entanglement in their exhibition programmes. Therefore, in section two, I will test the hypothesis of overlap by comparing the selection of artists between the non-profit and for-profit sectors, using the exhibition data retrieved from 43 exhibition spaces including both types of exhibition spaces in China.

Second, I argue for the mutual constitution of peer recognition and market demand in the artist's creative process and in the exhibitionary system. I propose an alternative model of artistic autonomy, in which artists create marketable artworks with a strong autonomous orientation away from the market. In section three, I will elaborate on the model of professional autonomy, through an exploration of qualitative data derived from narrative interviews with artists and non-artist exhibition makers, including both gallerists and artistic directors.

2 Overlap and Distinction in the Exhibitionary System

In this section, I use the quantitative data set, the compilation of which was explained in Chapter Four, to test the hypothesis of overlap explained above. I approach the test from two perspectives. First, a direct comparison between artists selected to the galleries and those to the non-profit exhibition spaces can reveal the overlap or distinction between the two groups of artists. Second, the networks composed of collaborative ties between exhibition spaces — in this case, these ties are precisely the artists they have jointly selected

— can present the overlap or distinction of exhibition spaces. This second approach, deploying tools of social network analysis, can map out the structure of these collaborative ties and thereby an important dimension of the structure of the exhibitionary system. In other words, it gives a more direct and precise view of the possible "institutional alliances" among exhibition spaces.

In brief, results indicate that the hypothesis of overlap can only be partially accepted. The overlap is most significant when we focus on the 1,095 artists, constituting 40% of the entire population, who either had solo exhibitions or at least two group exhibitions. Yet the overlap between non-profit and for-profit sectors is hardly significant in their programmes of solo exhibitions only, which concerns 710 artists. In the collaborative networks among these exhibition spaces, there is no distinct division between non-profit and for-profit sectors. Furthermore, the structure of these networks cannot be explained by a few identifiable dividing factors. Rather, seven segments of small collaborative circles, within which exhibition spaces tend to collaborate more with one another than with those outside the circle, can be identified.

These results are intriguing as they contradict my expectation that the hypothesis of overlap is more likely to be accepted in the Chinese exhibtionary system, given that the market seems to be the only ultimate source of finance. However, I do not conclude that there prevails an artistic autonomy in the Chinese art scene, or an organisational autonomy in Chinese museums. I contend that the structure of the exhibitionary system manifested in the selection of artists is not directly linked to the relation between the market demand and peer recognition.

2.1   Artists in the two sectors

My data set comprises 2,634 artists who were selected into exhibitions opened between 2010 and 2016 in 43 exhibition spaces. Before I can compare artists in the non-profit and for-profit sectors, I must first clarify the characteristics of this data set, upon which my method of examination is based. First, among the 43 exhibition spaces, galleries and non-profit spaces are not equally represented. There are 31 galleries and 12 museums and independent art spaces. Of course, this imbalance has been justified by the uneven development of the two sectors (see Chapter Four). But this proportional sampling creates a larger number of artists selected by galleries than that of artists selected by non-profit spaces. Therefore, to what extent the two groups of artists overlap, cannot be determined by a single proportion of overlapped artists taken in the entire population of artists.

Rather, we need to calculate, separately, the percentage of artists in the gallery sector who are also selected to the non-profit sector; and the percentage of artists in the non-profit sector who are also selected to the galleries. We can then also compare these two percentages. However, given that the gallery sector is larger, the percentage of overlapped artists in this sector is likely to be lower than that in the non-profit sector.

Second, the data set contains a large quantity of artists who are marginal. These are artists who had no solo exhibitions, or even more marginally, had only one group exhibition. From my observations and interviews regarding the planning of exhibitions, I suggest that these marginal cases are in general insignificant for understanding artistic evaluation in the selection process. Non-artistic factors, such as availability, the cost of insurance and transportation (lending artworks), and geographical proximity, are more relevant to the selection of artists for a group exhibition. These marginal artists, given their large number, however, can cause biased understanding when interpreting the results. Therefore, it is crucial to define the scope of analysis. And an effective way to narrow down the scope, is to set criterion for inclusion by the artist's frequency of exhibition and the type of exhibition he participated in.

Given these two methodological principles, I begin with the list of all artists who had ever exhibited in the exhibitionary system. There were 431 artists who exhibited in both for-profit and non-profit sectors, with no distinction between solo and group exhibitions. Apart from these overlapping artists, there were 935 more artists in the non-profit sector; and 1,268 more in the gallery sector. The percentage of artist overlap is not significantly high: 31% in the non-profit sector and 25% in the gallery sector.

Next, I remove the 1,539 artists who appeared in one group exhibition only (they do not affect the number of overlapped artists). The result shifts with this smaller scope of examination. There were 179 artists who exhibited in non-profit venues only, and 485 artists in galleries only. The percentage of overlapped artists in each sector, therefore, increases. It is 47% in galleries, and much higher in the nonprofit sector: 70%. Certainly, this difference is also caused by, as already clarified, the fact that there were fewer artists in total in the non-profit sector in the data sample.

Then I further limit my examination to the 710 artists who had solo exhibitions. Within this scope, the number of overlapped artists drops dramatically from 431 to 73. The majority of all artists who had solo exhibitions only exhibited in one of the two sectors: 67% of all artists in non-profit solo shows are not in gallery solo shows; 87% of all artists in gallery solo shows did not appear in the programmes of the other sector.

This means, the overlap between non-profit and for-profit sectors is only significant if we consider solo exhibitions and group exhibitions at the same time. This is also reflected in the composition of the 431 overlapped artists identified before the distinction between solo and group exhibition was introduced. These artists can be divided to three groups. The first group A (see Table VII.1) are solo artists who exhibited in both sectors. Given the significance of solo exhibitions, this group indicates a *strong* overlap between the two sectors. The other two groups represent *weak* overlaps: artists in group B (further divided to B1 and B2) had solo in one sector and group in the other; artists in group C only appear in the group exhibition programmes. As shown by the numbers, artists of group B contribute most to the overlap. In other words, although the

	No	Non-Profit		For-Profit	
		Solo	Group	Solo	Group
A	73	1	-	1	-
B1		1	0	0	1
	301				
B2		0	1	1	0
C	57	0	1	0	1

Table VII.1: The composition of overlapped artists

two sectors do not make the same choices of artists in their solo exhibition programmes, virtually the same group of artists appear in their overall exhibition programmes. Of the solo artists in the non-profit sector, 80% are visible in the gallery sector, through either group or solo exhibition. Of the solo artists in the pro-profit sector, 54% are also selected to the non-profit sector, through either group or solo exhibition. 45% of all artists in the non-profit group shows have solo exhibitions in galleries.

Moulin and Vale's hypothesis also implies that the overlap might be more conspicuous in the most prestigious part of the exhibitionary system. This aspect of their hypothesis, therefore, also assumes a symbolic hierarchy that structures the exhibitionary system. The simple statistical comparison in this section is not capable of testing this assumption. This leads us to the next section, where I use social network analysis to examine the hypothesis of overlap on the level of exhibitions spaces.

2.2   Segments in the collaborative networks

An artist who has been selected to two exhibition spaces indicates a social tie between these two spaces. My quantitative data of exhibitions, therefore, can also present collaborative networks among the 43 exhibition spaces. The density of these networks indicates the similarity between exhibition spaces in their selection of artists.

As the marginal artists would reduce the density significantly and therefore the accuracy of analysis, I focus here on the solo exhibition networks only. Notably, the 73 artists identified as connecting non-profit and for-profit sectors in solo exhibitions are not the only ties in the entire networks among all exhibition spaces. There can be collaborations within the same sector, as galleries can select the same artists. Hence, in this approach, the result conveys a picture of the overall structure of the exhibitionary system.

The visualisation provided by UCINET in Figure VII.3 provides us a direct perception of the collaborations. The size of the node depends on the *betweenness centrality* (see Chapter Four) of the exhibition space. This means, the *smaller* the node is, the most distinct are, in relation to other exhibition spaces, artists selected to this exhibition space. In other words, they withhold their artists and do not select artists who are also showcased in other exhibition spaces. In this graph, non-profit art spaces are indicated with circle notes, and galleries with square notes. Therefore, we can also observe the overlap between the two sectors in a more precise fashion. Notably, there is one gallery Tokyo Gallery that is isolated from the loosely interconnected large network. This means, none of the artists represented by Tokyo Gallery have solo exhibitions in other galleries or museums. This may be explained by the fact that they have only recently started to feature Chinese artists. Although this gallery has existed in China for more than a decade, it probably chose to remain distant from the Chinese local art scene.

To decipher further the similarities between these spaces in terms of the artists they selected, there are multiple methods in SNA available for this purpose. The most suitable method was only determined in the process of analysis, which I explained in Chapter Four (see page 102). To highlight an important finding in this process, no distinct underlying factors can explain the variations in network formation. According to the results of *singular value decomposition* (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005), which, similar to corresponding analysis, can identify the latent dimensions of network formation, we need 23 factors to locate all variations on the same scale. Practically, given the large number of factors needed, this means these factors do not amount to any identifiable and sociologically meaningful

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
A	**1.67**	0.13	0.43	0.38	0.76	0.81	0.04
B	0.13	**0.17**	0.10	0.00	0.20	0.13	0.00
C	0.43	0.10	**1.50**	0.20	0.76	0.10	0.05
D	0.38	0.00	0.20	**1.33**	0.93	0.19	0.13
E	0.76	0.20	0.76	0.93	**2.53**	0.67	0.50
F	0.81	0.13	0.10	0.19	0.67	**1.61**	0.19
G	0.04	0.00	0.05	0.13	0.50	0.19	**0.50**

Table VII.2: Inter- and intra-faction network density

explanations. In other words, the assumption that these collaborative networks divide along the non-profit and for-profit binary, or the binary of market demand and peer recognition, is rejected.

By contrast, these collaborative networks can only be situated in different segments, although these segments are not entirely disconnected to each other. In Figure VII.4, I provide a simplified map of networks to show these segments. The simplification draws upon the results of *faction analysis* and the corresponding inter- and intra-faction density (see Table VII.2) generated in UCINET.[52] Within a segment, exhibition spaces collaborate more frequently with one another; the higher the intra-faction density, the more. In other words, a segment with high intra-faction density can be considered as an alliance.

Segment E constitutes the central component of the entire networks. This means exhibition spaces in E have rather diverse exhibition programmes that cover a large range of artists, who exhibit in various other exhibition spaces. In other words, these artists are likely to be more visible. Here we find four non-profit spaces — Shanghai Mingsheng Museum of Art, Arrow Factory, Tai Kang Space, UCCA; and seven galleries — Long March Space, Vitamin Space, Boers-Li, Beijing Commune, Aike-DellArco, Space Station and Hive Art Centre. According to the criterion specified in Chapter Three, these galleries are two of Tier 1, two of Tier 2 and three of Tier 3 – hence representing all three tiers in my sample. Certainly, considering that the non-profit art spaces in this segment are arguably the most well-known few, this means that among the six Tier 1 galleries, at least two are in close alliance with the most prestigious non-profit art spaces. Another Tier 1 gallery ShanghART is situated in segment C with two non-profit spaces. The other three Tier 1 galleries, which all have their first base outside China, do not seem to form

---

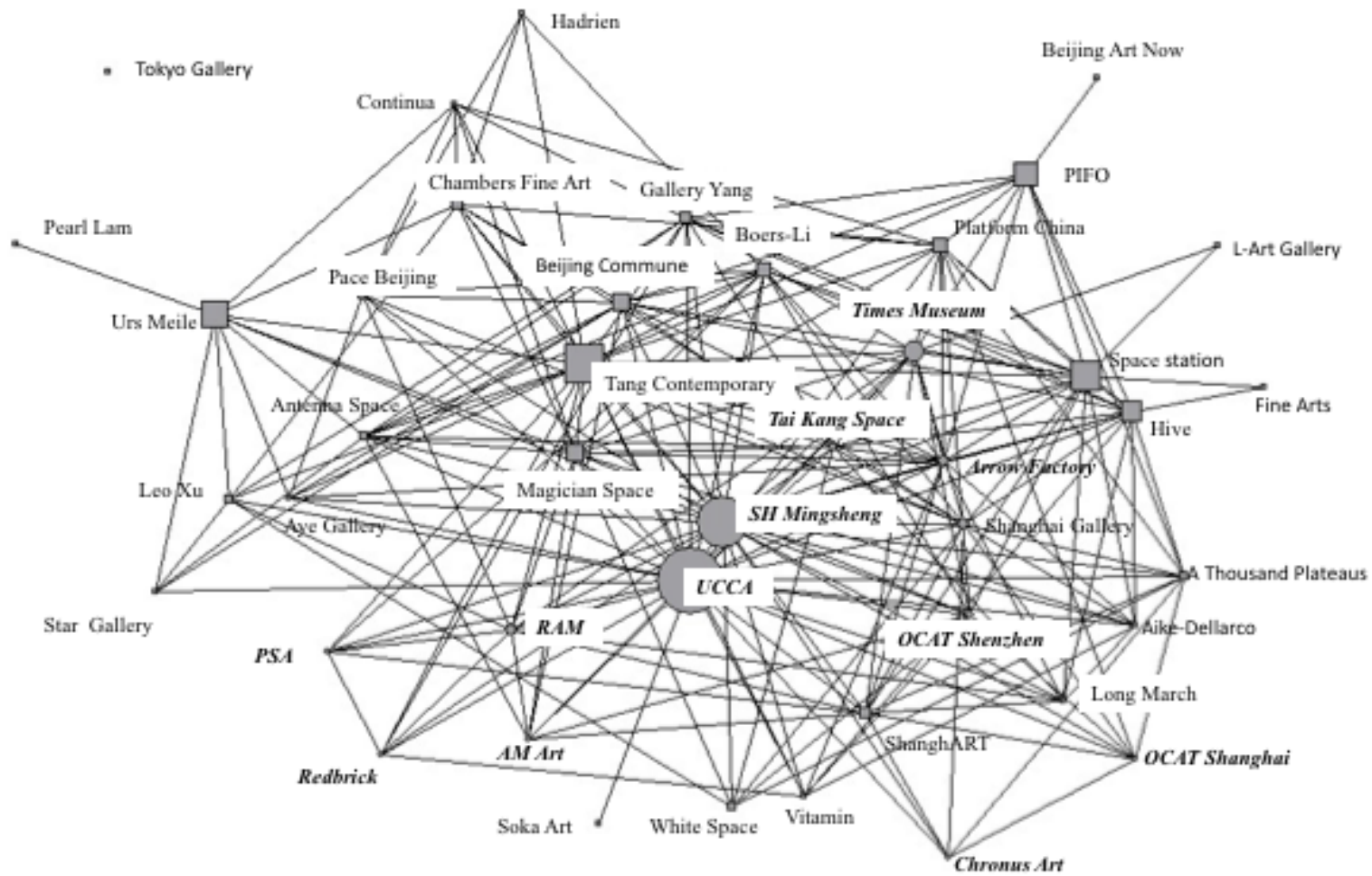[52]The intra-faction density is indicated by the diagonal of the table.

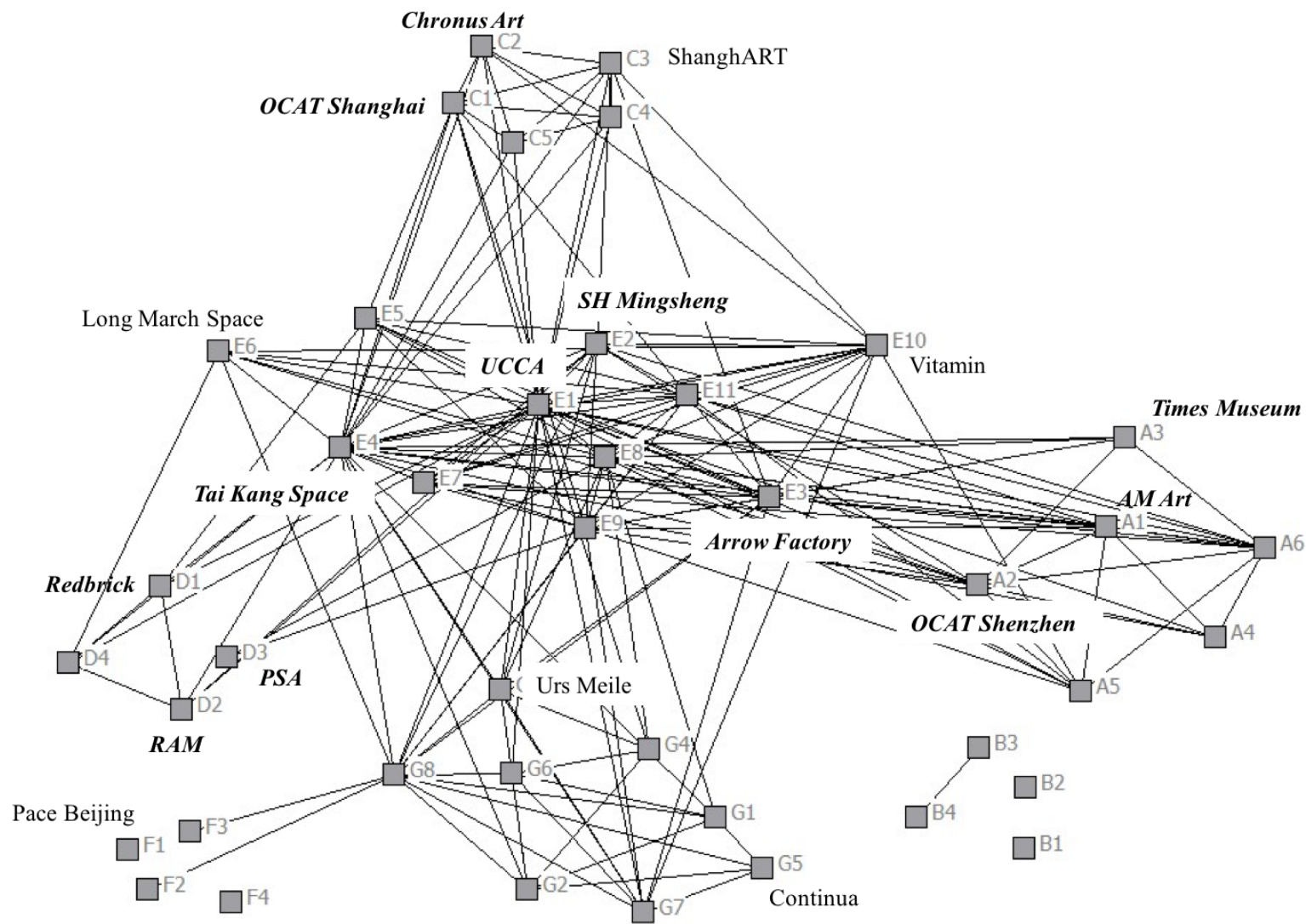Figure VII.3: Networks of Exhibition Spaces - solo exhibitions

Figure VII.4: Segments in the Networks (simplified) - non-profit spaces and Tier 1 galleries specified

alliances with Chinese non-profit art spaces, which might not be prominent enough for these international galleries.

Segment A also show a well-balanced ratio of galleries to non-profit spaces. There are two museums – OCAT Shenzhen and Guangdong Times Museum, one independent space – AM Art Space; and three Tier 2 galleries – Platform China, Magician Space, and White Space Beijing. Yet in this segment, the intra-faction density is not as high as that in segment E. Therefore, it means that these exhibition spaces are not particularly closely related. This qualification also applies to segment C.

Segments B, F, and G, which are composed of galleries only, also manifest low intra-faction density. Their members, therefore, cannot be considered as allies. Segment D, which has a intra-density similar to that of C, contains predominantly museums. Therefore, we can conclude that apart from these three museums, Red Brick, Rockbund, and PSA, most non-profit art spaces are enmeshed in gallery networks, which are also segmented.

To summarise the results from both analytical approaches, I conclude that there is no distinct binary division in the exhibitionary system in China. Yet nor is there significant strong overlap between the for-profit and non-profit sectors neither. A weak overlap, when both solo exhibitions and group exhibitions are considered, is indeed conspicuous.

The mere presence of weak overlap between the two sectors seems to prove, as the organisational sociologists would argue, that the non-profit art spaces have succeeded in resisting the power of the market. However, as indicated, the arguments for an organisational autonomy[53] are compromised by its inadequate exploration of the decision-making process in exhibition making. In particular, Lachmann, Pain and Gauna's (2014) study only looks at the percentage of collector's exhibitions in museums. There are many other channels, through which the art market can exert influence upon the museum. There are multiple reasons, not all economic, for museums to favour gallery artists, top gallery artists in particular. For instance, artists represented by galleries and followed by collectors can ensure corporate funding; art loans can be arranged by more experienced professionals; and these artists have their own team of support personnel who can greatly reduce the workload of the museum staff. As a matter of fact, as I observed in the opening of Cai Guoqiang's solo exhibition in Power Station of Art, the majority of support personnel

---

[53]The term they use is actually also "professional autonomy". But to avoid confusion, I modify their term according to the specific meaning assigned to it. They understand the autonomy resides in the power of curators to resist external influences from the environment of a museum. Therefore, I argue that organisational autonomy convey the meaning better.

came from his own studio.

Moreover, I identify an important non-artistic reason for the lack of strong overlap between the two sectors in China: a larger percentage of foreign artists were present in the exhibition programmes of non-profit sector. Of the 152 artists who had solo exhibitions in non-profit solo only, only 78 artists are Chinese, the rest 74 are foreign artists, who are unlikely to be represented by Chinese galleries. Among the 485 solo artists who exhibited in galleries only, only 82 could be identified as foreign artists.[54] Certainly, this means that the non-profit sector has a stronger international orientation. However, it then remains unkown, whether these foreign artists are mostly visible in the gallery sector outside China.

Therefore, there is so far no adequate evidence to link the structural characteristic of the exhibitionary system to the issue of artistic autonomy. I argue that, for the discussion of artistic autonomy, we need a qualitative perspective on the selection of art.

3   Exhibition Making and Professional Autonomy

In this section, I approach the selection of artists from a qualitative perspective. Based upon these qualitative findings, I also elaborate the model of professional autonomy that is uphold by the majority of exhibition makers, including artists.

Notably, it is not adequate to rely on narratives provided by non-artist exhibition makers who have the power to select artists. The criterion for selection that can be summarised from these narratives are not definite operational standards. They cannot, on the practical level, tell artists who are not selected and those who are selected apart. Nor can we understand why non-profit exhibition makers, as shown by the quantitative data, arrive at the same choices with galleries.

In the same fashion that I looked beyond artists' own terminology for the distinction between visible and invisible artworks in Chapter Five, I rely on my observations about the capabilities that artists will need to act as competent exhibition makers. Moreover, I extend my examination to artists, including those who are considerably or even highly visible, and artists who are marginal or even non-existent in my quantitative data sample. The comparison between these two types of artists reveals more about the definite standards that inform non-artist exhibition markers' selection of artists. Extending my examination to artists also provides a complete perspective on the selection process. Artists are mostly aware of the constant critical examination and selection that they are

---

[54]As the background information of many artists are missing, I distinguish their identity based on their names.

subject to. This awareness, which is actually also revealed in Chapter Five, steers artists' creation of artworks. Moreover, artists' reflexive narratives regarding their creative process and their careers provide a different perspective from that of those who make the selection.

In brief, I draw upon the narratives by both artists and non-artist exhibition makers, observations regarding exhibition making, and reference to actual results of selection in quantitative data. I conclude that, in the exhibitionary system, there is a general preference for capable artists. Capable artists are able to create an adequate amount of artworks, which can be furthermore organised into an oeuvre. In addition to these basic requirements, which not all artists can fulfil, the non-profit art spaces prefer artists with the capacity to create scenography, whereas galleries prefer artists with a collaborative attitude and strong awareness of pursuing artistic excellence.

3.1   The search for capable artists

In talking about how they select artists, gallerists, curators, and artistic directors deploy various narratives. Yet these narratives convey no distinct difference between a gallery and a non-profit exhibition space. The similarity in ways of articulation has also been observed by the artist Wang Wei who co-founded Arrow Factory with two other artists. When explaining to *Artforum* (China) how they selected artists, Wang noted the following:

> I realise that most commercial galleries also give similar answers to mine when explaining how they select artists. (W. Wang, 2013)

Below, I quote here six exhibition makers from both the for-profit and non-profit sectors. I have removed the identify of the narrators, so that these narratives can be judged without a presumption.[55]

> [We consider the following things:] first and most importantly, whether his artistic approach is among the *best* in his peer group; second, whether his works correspond to his persona; third, how his *peers* react to his art.

> We aim to give exposure to artists who are not so famous but deserve more recognition. [For young artists:] I would expect a *mature world view* that is aptly presented in their works. His art world is *unique* and *coherent.*

---

[55]Quotes from gallerists are the first, third, fifth ones. Two quotes are extracted from interviews they gave to art journalists.

Our criteria has evolved but the overall guideline is: different from what is trendy. They [artists] must be truly idiosyncratic. [...] Yet if there is an artist who is very strange, who has persistently been doing *individualised* research for many years, he [referring to another decision maker] would be interested.

We three [co-founders] must all agree that this artist is *interesting.*

We would like to represent *sincere* artists. [...] Their art must be grounded in their personal life experiences. [...] You can be moved and struck by their works.

Our only criterion is to select *good* artist. We don't care which medium they use.

Instead of suggesting a division between non-profit and for-profit, most of the terms used by the above exhibition makers can be summarised as some common criterion. They can be peer recognition – "how his peers react", singularity – "strange", "grounded in their personal experience", "unique", and excellence – "best", "coherent", "interesting".

However, these criteria by no means enable us to distinguish artists who are selected from those who are not. Even the most specific one – "grounded in the artist's personal experience" – remains purely subjective. It is hard to disentangle the creation of an artwork from the artist's personal experience. The most politically-oriented art can still be described as rooted in an artist's personal experience. For example, Ai Weiwei explained that his art derived from his own experience of Cultural Revolution; the terminology he often deployed, such as "self-criticism" and "revolution", indeed prevailed in China at the time of his youth (Sorace, 2014)

The inability of these criteria to articulate the differentiation, therefore, substantiate my theorisation of artistic evaluation. That is, the results of artistic judgement cannot be fully articulated. The conventional ways of articulation, as we have seen in these criteria, only provide a common reference for verbal justification, instead of offering solid and operational standards.

Certainly, even though gallerists emphasise on peer recognition as an important criteria for selection, they cannot deny that their galleries rely on collectors' demands. They admit that it is important to make sales (even for the sake of withholding a stable roster of artists), to be responsible for collectors, and advise them on how to maintain a "worthy" collection of art (Gallerists 2, 3 & 4). Hence, the marketability of artists,

although never articulated, remains a crucial criterion. Despite its indefinite nature, it lurks in the background. These lurking commercial considerations also enable the director of Tai Kang Space (an independent art space) to posit its distant position from the market, in multiple interviews she gave with Chinese art magazines (e.g. X. Liu, 2017). She stated that Tai Kang Space would like to provide space for experimental art that is unlikely to find expression in the gallery context, where market demands remain implicit. Another independent art space, Arrow Factory, is famous for its unconventional exhibition space located in a traditional Beijing-style residential area[56]. As quoted above, its founder Wang Wei finds it difficult to articulate the difference between their selection criterion from those of the galleries. However, Arrow Factory features only on-site installations, which usually cannot be preserved as saleable artefacts. Therefore, a certain distance from the art market does indeed manifest in the disregard for marketability of the works. The exhibition makers of these independent art spaces consider primarily the artistic merits of artists.

It is curious, then, why Tai Kang Space and Arrow Factory are closely connected to several Tier 1 and Tier 2 galleries, which are economically successful galleries. Equally intriguing is also that museums, such as UCCA and Mingsheng Modern Museum, concur with a particular sector of galleries. The directors of these museums do not even feel the need to clarify that they do not consider the marketability of artists. Therefore, the terminology used by these exhibition makers themselves has concealed the differentiation, and equally, the connection, between the non-profit and the for-profit sectors.

Hence, we must look beyond and consider the requirements laid upon artists as exhibition makers. In the exhibitionary system, artists are selected as exhibition makers, regardless of whether these exhibitions involve on-site selling of art or not. In Chapter Five, I explained the impact of the exhibition context on an artist's creation through scenographic standards and criteria for a meritorious oeuvre. Hence, to make a series of exhibitions, artists must be capable of producing a sufficient quantity of artworks, which can be furthermore organised as an oeuvre. The productivity of these artists must also endure over a significant length of period. Furthermore, the capacity of artists as exhibition makers also manifests in their mastery of the exhibition space: to act as scenographers.

In contrast to the opaque criterion articulated by exhibition makers, the criterion regarding artists' productivity can be quantified and therefore, are useful for telling artists

---

[56]To be precise, it is located in a Hutong. In Beijing, hutongs are narrow alleys formed by lines of houses with courtyard in the centre.

apart. Yet non-artist exhibition makers actually also imply, even though they do not explicitly articulate, these criteria in the verbal justification for their choices. The only exceptional explicit statement about the importance of artistic output came from a single gallerist, among the six whom I specifically interviewed and many other whom I had informal conversations with.

> We have met artists like that. His way of work allows him to produce two paintings a year. Excellent works. Yet we hesitated. Because we expect to make a solo for the artist every one or two years, and there would be group exhibitions and art fairs to deal with. Our artists must be able to follow the rhythm. [...] Yet this artist cannot. We had to pass him. (Gallerist 3)

In any other cases, artistic output was never brought up and often eluded by my interviewees when I enquired about it in the interviews. Most gallerists were loath to say that their artists are productive. Instead, they emphasised that, for instance, "on average, the annual output of each of our artists would not surpass twenty [artworks]" (Gallerist 4).

Still, the contrast between two artworks and twenty artworks per year is stark. As discussed in Chapter Six, creating for a solo exhibition requires minimum output of artworks, unless the artist creates a site-specific installation, which equally demands productivity. There, I have revealed the connection between productivity and an artist's visibility. Here, it becomes clear that an adequate artistic output determines fundamentally, whether an artist can be selected to the gallery system in the first place. For a top gallery, in addition, a stable and enduring productivity is expected, as indicated by the third gallerist quoted above: [an artist] who has been doing *persistently* some individualised research for *many years*.

One could argue that this criterion is less applicable to the non-profit sector of the exhibitionary system. Indeed, the matter of productivity is also absent here from the verbal justifications for selecting certain artists. In the art world, in general, quantity is rarely evoked in a conversation. In the non-profit sector, unlike galleries, the exhibition spaces are not concerned with the market potential of artists, nor do they expect artists to commit to future exhibition programmes or extra art-fair-oriented output.

However, the requirement for productivity is mediated by the expectation of a meritorious oeuvre from the artist. Regardless of how the merits of an oeuvre would be determined, the very prerequisite is the capacity to create a collection of artworks.

The criteria regarding productivity is therefore mediated by the artistic judgement on an artist's oeuvre, which cannot be disentangled from productivity. For instance, "a mature world view", as put by the artistic director of a museum, cannot be found in a few artworks. What remains beneath this expectation is, in fact, a requirement for productivity. In addition, museum curators expect a sufficient quantity of artworks from artists, because of the scenographic standards. The large volume of a museum exhibition hall demands a large amount of works, or, alternatively, works of a large size.

Hence, I identify a general preference for such productive artists, who can, furthermore, achieve either market success, or wide recognition by peers. The criteria regarding artists' productivity may strike as banal and insignificant. This intuitive perception is caused by the fact that sterile artists are not visible at all. They do not contribute to our understanding of artists. Our attention is rarely drawn to the fact that the canonised artists, such as Picasso and Qi Baishi (Chinese ink painter), are often prolific. Even van Gogh produced some 900 paintings in his short life time. Yet among the 30 artists whom I specifically interviewed, there were three artists who are sterile. One of them was a pioneer artist in an important art movement in the 1990s in China. Creative stagnation, that is, incapacity to create new artworks, prevented him from progressing in career. The other two young artists either took too long time to create one piece, or to simply conceive a new idea. These three artists are, not surprisingly, invisible in my quantitative data.

There is indeed, however, a distinction between galleries and non-profit art spaces in their preference for artists. The non-profit art spaces favour artists with stronger capacity to handle the exhibition space. In other words, scenographic standards are more valued here. By contrast, this capacity is not a fundamental criterion for artists in the gallery sector. Actually, artists are given opportunities in galleries to practice and improve their scenographic arrangement of artworks. To a certain degree, gallery solo shows prepare artists for future museum exhibitions, given that mastery of scenography is not inborn to artists.

On the other hand, galleries favour "serious" artists, as their works can be easily marketed. This leads us to the next section, which then deciphers the unintended concurrence between the galleries and museums in their selection of artists, and the relation between the exhibitionary system to the art market.

3.2   Serious artists and the marketisation of art

In the gallery sector, capable artists need to be, additionally, "serious", in order to be perceived as marketable. That is to say, the marketability of an artist hinges upon not only his productivity, but also upon his awareness and attitude. This means, first, he is consciously pursuing an oeuvre and artistic excellence, rather than subject to spontaneous, sporadic impulses and inspirations. Second, he is not against the marketisation of his artworks.

Unlike habitus, this *seriousness* can be consciously perceived and acquired by artists. In fact, it was thanks to my self-reflexive informants, that I was able to fathom what this term actually entails. When talking to me about how he could not sell a single piece in four years, which concurred partially the market boom (2004 - 2006), Liang did not conceal his slight resentment.In his own view, among many reasons for his "market failure", Liang highlighted one: he was not perceived as a "serious" artist.

> They [the new collectors of contemporary Chinese art] entered the market around 2008. I therefore did not exist in their awareness.[57] Furthermore, my works appeared to them as unserious, not having any recognisable personal style, not visually stimulating, nothing! Now this new collector [who started to like me], he looked at my works from that period, he was like: 'what the hell were you doing?' (laughter) Yes, just what were you doing, the hell? These whole mess! You were just playing around! Very unreliable! That is the impression, you know, they had of me.

Note that Liang is by no means an incapable artist. He is now highly visible in the current art scene (see Chapter Six). The quantity of his artworks is not large, but this is only because he specialises in on-site installation, which ordinarily demands much more efforts than a painting does. Within his favourite model of production, he is a productive artist. However, what distinguishes Liang from serious artists is the lack of awareness to construct an oeuvre. In other words, he produced a sufficient quantity of artworks, but was not aware of the connections among his artworks. Because he himself was not aware of any underlying themes, or a certain overarching motive, the organisation of his works into an well-structured oeuvre is difficult. His artworks were, therefore, considered to be disconnected and to be driven by sporadic inspiration, rather than a mature and

---

[57]Liang had great market records in the early 2000s but then went to the Netherlands when the market boom started.

sophisticated pursuit of artistic excellence. That is to say, given the efforts, competence, and devotion of non-artist exhibition makers, Liang's artworks can still be framed as constituting an oeuvre. He was just not able to formulate or facilitate this construction, which is furthermore hindered by Liang's negligence of preserving his own creations. He created artworks on the site of exhibition and then dismantled them after the exhibition.

By contrast, another artist, He Chi, who cannot make a living from art, is fully aware of the need to construct an oeuvre. He creates his own little online archive of artworks and organises them into different themes. He forwarded me the link to this website, so that I could have a better knowledge of his oeuvre before I interviewed him. However, he does not collaborate with the market at all:

> In fact, I know that every underlying thread in my creation, say, if I am a market artist, can be developed into a series of artworks with good market potentials. [...] Yet the only path, if there is one, that I follow, is freedom. Not passive, but positive and experimental, freedom.

He Chi's firm orientation away from the market is also perceived by a gallerist who once included He Chi in a duo-solo gallery show. She found it a shame that, despite being an good artist, He Chi was not "serious" at all (Gallerist 6).

As stated previously, the ideological belief in artistic autonomy is a defining feature of contemporary art. Artists without any autonomous orientation, namely those who pander to collectors in their relation of artworks, are seldom qualified as creators of fine art — even whilst artists who sell well are by no means stigmatised, but rather enjoy high visibility. In this regard, Graw (2009) has touched upon a paradox about the art economy, when she suggests that the orientation away from the art market might make an artist marketable at all. However, as revealed in the cases of He Chi, this autonomous orientation shall not lead to a thorough rejection of marketisation.

In fact, for each artist with an autonomous orientation, there are three main paths governing artistic creation. First, an artist does not pander to the market when developing new ideas, but creates more of a series that have been well received by the collectors. Second, an artist does not think about his market reception, but does consider the very development of his artistic path, the approaches of which he has the best command. He has a sense of the directions for future creations that can be related to his previous artworks. In brief, he self-monitors his artworks with a view to creating a well-structured oeuvre. Third, an artist creates spontanfeously whenever inspiration comes, with his exploration

of new mediums and approaches driven by passions and sudden impulses.

Artistic creation is often romanticised as following this third path. The first path is considered mostly heteronomous. The two unserious artists, He Chi and Liang Shuo, mostly opt for the third path. These artists, given their enduring productivity, make careers in the exhibitionary system, because they are capable exhibition makers.

The art market, however, favours artists who follow the second path for most of their creations. This is not to deny that such artists are not also subject to spontaneous inspiration. In fact, experimental artworks, which I disused in Chapter Five, largely emerge from traversals of the third path. But then, for career considerations, which are irreducible to market performance, these experimental artworks are kept out of sight.

In this second path of creation, artists have reconciled artistic merits and marketability, as well as the tension between economic reliance on and the bad consciousness of pandering to the market. The market potentials are incorporated into an artist's creation through the pursuit of a meritorious oeuvre. In fine art, the fact that coinages of artistic styles make art particularly marketable has been indicated in the study of "framing" (c.f. a particular study of CCA by Kharchenkova and Velthuis (2015)), and research on the western art market of early modern time (e.g. Jensen, 1996). In contemporary art, constructing an artist's oeuvre by terms of an art history fashion becomes a popular format in the marketing of this artist. This format is omnipresent in gallery texts, introductions of artists in gallery websites, and equally, in exhibition texts in museums, which I have already analysed in Chapter Five. As a matter of fact, gallerists whom I interview deem the work they have done to organise artists' collections most valuable for their artists.

Serious artists, furthermore, are alert to the 'eroding' power of market demands. Submission to the market is considered harmful; yet they perceive the different preferences of investment-oriented collectors and "serious" collectors. Similar to serious artists, serious collectors understand, appreciate, and value autonomous artistic pursuit. They, to a certain degree, belong to the peers. Yet, for more investment-oriented collectors, as one artist puts it, "good-looking", "shinning" artworks are more attractive (Artist 20). However, despite of the need to answer to these demands, serious artists have developed the capacity – at least they believe so – to focus on the pursuit of an well-structured oeuvre. Hence, the division between art fairs and biennales, has in fact facilitated their focus on creation of an autonomous kind.

Therefore, now I can finally offer my explanation for the unintended occurrence between galleries and museums/independent spaces. That is, in the domain of fine art, which

is indeed a field of restricted production – using Bourdieu's terminology, the production for the market is mediated in a model of professional autonomy. Here, an artist's marketability cannot be disentangled from his artistic merits. Marketability, in my thesis of duality, is to a large extend, built upon artistic merits. Only that certain unserious artists, despite being artistic meritorious and therefore surviving in the exhibitionary system, are not particularly marketable.

Certainly, an explanation of the dualism thesis can still be formulated, because gallerists select two types of artists (A+B). Type B captures marketable artists. And then, artists of type A are selected into programmes in museums and independent art spaces for their artistic merits. In this situation, artists in non-profit sectors (A) form subgroup of gallery artists (A+B); therefore, the two sectors agree in their selection of type A artists. In this way of explanation, the dualism between market demand and peer recognition persists in the separation between two types of artists. Here, museums also maintain a certain distance from marketable artists. Assuming this argument holds, we would observe a high percentage of artists with histories of gallery shows in non-profit exhibitions. Indeed, in section two, I showed that 70% – a significantly high percentage – of all artists in the non-profit sector had shows in galleries, when no distinction between solo and group exhibition is introduced. However, as already clarified, this high percentage is partially caused by a larger number of galleries and therefore artists with gallery shows in the population. That is, given the number of overlapping artists, they are more likely to be a significant part of the entire population in the non-profit sector. Considering that the number of galleries is almost triple that of non-profit art spaces, 70% is not much higher than 47%, which is the percentage of overlapping artists in the gallery sector. Furthermore, the percentage of artists with gallery shows in the solo exhibition programmes of the non-profit spaces drops to 33%, whereas being selected for solo exhibitions is commonly regarded as a solid indication of an artist's merit. Hence, the empirical data do not support the assumption that marketable artists and artistically meritorious artists represent two distinct categories of artist.

By contrast, as a distinct hierarchy exists in the gallery system, researchers have suggested that artists are first selected to smaller galleries for their artistic merits; among these artists, those who are more marketable 'upgrade' to galleries with large turnovers in the sales of art (Thompson, 2010; Bystryn, 1978). This means that, in the process of selection, only artists who are both marketable and highly recognised by peers survive in the top galleries.

However, it is not in the passage of time that two distinct criteria – marketability and artistic merit – may eventually become constraining for the same artist. As I have revealed, the requirements by these two criteria have long been integrated into the creative process of serious artists. This deep entanglement of marketability with artistic merit in the creative process and in the artist's career building, have eventually resulted in the difficulty, if not impossibility, of identifying an antagonism between peer recognition and market demand in empirical research.

Conclusion

Through the examination of artist selection in the exhibitionary system, I have argued against the two kinds of dualism that flawed existing discussion. These two kinds of dualism assume a distinct binary division between the for-profit galleries and the non-profit museums and independent spaces; and a division between the production for the peers and that for the market.

I have mapped out the structure of the exhibitionary system in its dimension of artistic selection. The collaborations among exhibition makers constitutes a much more complicated structure, rather than a binary or hierarchal one.

Nor is artistic production undertaken by artists with orientations to the peers and, separately, by other artists with orientations to the market. On the level of practices, artists create with an autonomous orientation that facilities the marketisation of art. I have therefore identify a model of professional autonomy, in which artists strive for both marketability and artistic merits through the pursuit of a well-structure oeuvre. The requirements deriving from exhibition making, therefore, are the very foundation for the marketisation of art. In other words, the exhibitionary system, which is not to be denounced as a deceiving facade, undergirds the art market.

Chapter VIII

Conclusion

I have proposed a sociology of exhibitions to solve persistent theoretical problems in the sociology of art. Some of these problems are rooted in an overly philosophical orientation, which underlies the mainstream social theories of art. This orientation has resulted in the separation between artists and artworks in existing definitions of artistic production. It also gives rise to a convoluted terminology that distinguishes between production, mediation, and reception, yet that regards all three at the same time as part of "production". Other problems emerge from an outdated or ill-conceived view of art. An ill-conceived view of art postulates wishfully that art resides "outside" the social domain, and thereby denounces the relevance of sociology to the study of art. This view stands in contrast to various disciplines that recognise the social essence of art. An outdated view of art, on the other hand, regards all art as modern art, from which current practices have departed. The paradigm of current artistic practices is to transgress the very notion of art (Heinich, 2014a).

The sociology of exhibitions reframes the study of artistic production by conceptualising it as exhibition making. In this new framework, the problems mentioned above dissolve. The production of art is no longer divided into production, mediation, and reception of art, but is examined in the production of artworks, the selection of artists, and the pursuit of visibility for artists. Here, both artists and artworks are the outcomes of exhibition making. Artworks only survive as artworks, when their creators' careers endure; and artists only establish careers through a continuous output of well-recognised artworks. The two intertwining processes, which amount to the social production of art, unfolds in the making of a series of exhibitions. Artists – who create the exhibits – and gallerists, curators, and artistic directors – who select artists to exhibit – are all exhibition makers.

Their practices of exhibition making are situated in an exhibitionary system, which stands for the physical and institutional environment of exhibitions.

I argue that the exhibitionary system provides formats for the creation of artworks and the making of artistic careers. In other words, routines, norms, and cognitive schemata that regulate the making of exhibitions have brought order, certainty, and intelligibility to the seemingly vibrant and spontaneous artistic production.

Drawing upon qualitative and quantitative data about the case of contemporary Chinese art, I have substantiated the above central argument through empirical findings about the exhibitionary system. To conclude this dissertation, I will first summarise these empirical findings about the exhibitionary system, which concern how artworks are created in the exhibition context, how exhibition makers pursue visibility for artists (and to what extent they succeed), and, finally, how artists are selected to partake in the exhibitionary system in the first place. Next, I will highlight the two research fields to which this dissertation has contributed to. Finally, I will indicate the two new questions arising from my explorative research about the exhibitionary system, and how they could be solved through further investigation.

1   Art and Exhibition

Exhibition is the *public* and *scenographic* presentation of artwork(s) embedded in *narratives*. Although I highlight artists themselves as exhibits too, artworks are the primary focus of the public eye for an exhibition. To follow the view of the general public, I began my explanations for artistic production with an examination of artworks in the exhibition context.

Artworks are materialised, installed, and narrated in the planning and installation phases of an exhibition. These take place in a specific exhibition space, which is not only a physical environment with white walls and unnatural lighting, but also a symbolic space for the public appreciation and critical examination of art. I have demonstrated that in this context, artworks are produced for an ideal scenographic effect, as well as for the construction of a coherent oeuvre. That is to say, the material and ideational dimensions of an artwork are shaped by the physical features of the exhibition space. Each artwork is created in relation to what the artist has already made and is planning to make, because an identifiable structure within an artist's oeuvre is widely recognised as the essential of bright career prospects. The career consideration is thereby incorporated into

the artist's creation, not through the awareness of the market demand, but through the awareness of creating an well-structured oeuvre. It ideally centres around a few underlying themes, shows traces of development, and manifests a good balance between diversity and coherence.

Yet artists' careers also depend on their visibility. For this reason, exhibition makers take great efforts to raise the visibility of the exhibition before and during the viewing phase. By circulating press release and invitations, and soliciting media interviews and critic reviews, they aim to raise awareness of these exhibiting artists among other exhibition makers. Eventually, success in pursuing visibility leads to further exhibition opportunities for these exhibiting artists. However, apart from the artistic factors innate to artists, the audience of an exhibition is often confined to the regular visitors of a given exhibition venue. The number of these regular visitors is further constrained by the social capital and reputation that this exhibition space has accumulated. Therefore, only when an artist manages to exhibit with various exhibition spaces, does she become less constrained and will have greater chance of being seen by a larger audience. Moreover, in a group exhibition, the visibility of other artists can be beneficial for any particular artist. Especially when her artworks are visually stimulating or conceptually provocative, an artist will be most likely to be noticed by the audience who are actually attracted into a group exhibition by other artists. Therefore, an ideal exhibitionary trajectory that involves different exhibition spaces and different co-exhibiting artists. Based upon this observation, I have also measured visibility of artists in China, according to the characteristics of their exhibtionary trajectories. Not surprisingly, only a few artists are highly visible. Yet the intriguing finding is that artists who are highly visible in group exhibitions can be hardly visible at all in solo exhibitions. The seniority of the artist is not a contributing factor in such an inconsistency.

Certainly, artists cannot make careers without being selected into the exhibitionary system in the first place. I have shown that there is no division – but also no significant overlap – between the non-profit and for-profit exhibition spaces with regards to their selection of artists. By contrast, I find out that most exhibition spaces prefer to feature capable artists in their exhibition programmes. A capable artist can create a significant quantity of artworks so as to form an oeuvre, within which diversity and coherence are well balanced. In addition to this general preference for capable artists, the difference between the gallery and the non-profit sectors lies in that, galleries prefer "serious" artists, whereas non-profit art spaces prefer artists who can act as scenographers themselves. Serious artists

213

have not only the capability, but also the awareness of creating a well-structured oeuvre. They do not submit to market demands, in the sense that they do not create a greater volume of their "best-selling" artworks. Yet they do not reject marketisation, in the sense that they create sufficient artworks to answer demands from art fairs, regular exhibitions, and biennales. They have, in brief, a collaborative attitude and they uphold the belief in their capacity to manoeuvre between "art and the market". I argue that, in summary, these serious artists uphold a professional ideology that facilitates the marketisation of art while at the same time does not offend the ideological belief in artistic autonomy. To be precise, the marketisation of art is enabled by the adequate productivity, a structure in the artist's oeuvre, upon which the belief in artworks' artistic value is constructed, and the artist's collaborative attitude. Therefore, even though the exhibitionary system is conceptually disentangled from the art market, it is yet the foundation of the market.

In brief, the production of artworks is organised in the construction of an artist's oeuvre. An artist's career depends on the merits of her oeuvre, as well as the capacity of those exhibition makers who support her in order to raise her visibility. The success in pursuing visibility leads to an ideal exhibitionary trajectory for the artist, and an ideal exhibitionary trajectory leads eventually to the status of a consecrated artist. This means that the singularity of a particular artist becomes recognised. Once this happens, an artist is much less constrained from the exhibitionary system, although this does not happen to the majority of the artists.

However, I do not argue that all artists and artworks are produced through the social mechanisms that I have identified. Rather, there are also artists and artworks situated outside the exhibitionary system. These artists are not considered "serious" enough or simply not capable enough for that system. And some artworks by serious artists can also be deemed too experimental and not ready for a critical eye.

2   The Two Trends in Sociology

I have situated this study of contemporary art within two research fields in sociology. The first is the tradition of venturing beyond disciplinary division in the sociology of art. I have draw upon findings from various disciplines that study art, and my critique of these findings, to develop my own concepts and arguments. The second field I have contributed to is the extension of research focus towards non-western areas. I identify with the pressing need to incorporate non-western social research into the development of social theories.
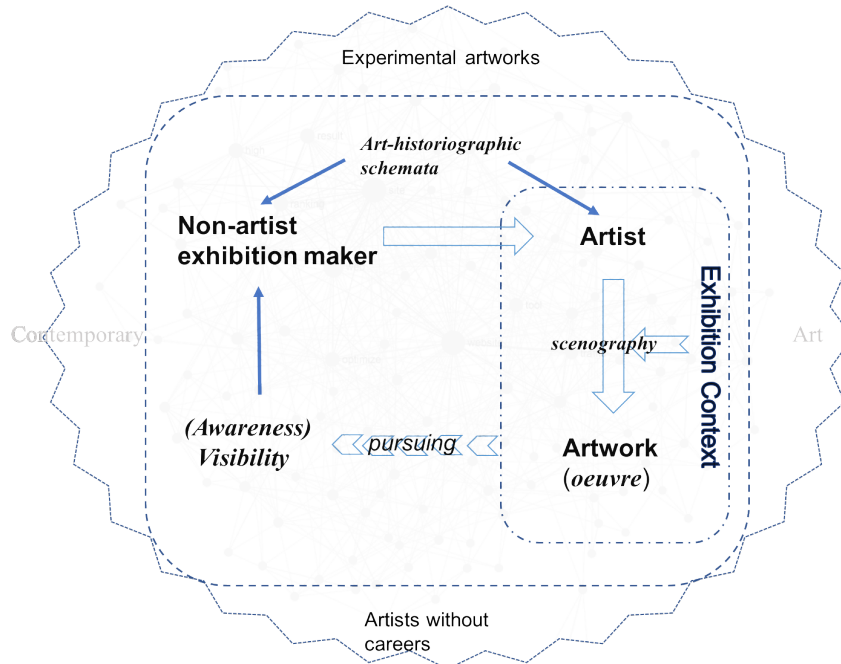
Figure VIII.1: Contemporary Art and the Exhibitionary System

In my work, I arrive at a dialogue between the centre and the periphery by positioning them within the same framework of contemporary art.

2.1   Interdisciplinary discussion

The division of labour among disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, psychology, and history, as argued by Adorno (1978) is "not to be attributed to the research subjects", but is "imposed from outside" (p. 210, my translation). As this division of labour is an important subject matter in the sociology of knowledge, it suffices to say that social, rather than research-related, factors have caused the unfortunate division. One of its unpleasant consequences is a lack of in-depth dialogues between different disciplines, which perpetuates misunderstandings and obstacles in the integration of different perspectives. Claims such as "against the sociology of art" (Zangwill, 2002), and "bring art itself back to sociology" (De la Fuente, 2007), testify to such adversity.

On the other hand, attempts to overcome the limitation of disciplinary division have always been present in the sociology of art. Adorno himself based his sociological analysis of music upon an examination of the structure of instrumental music (Witkin, 1998). Although his ambitious enterprise is compromised by the wish to draw a parallel between musical and social structures, other sociologists have successfully integrated approaches commonly deployed by art historians. Elias' (2010) research on Watteau's

painting *Pilgrimage to the Island of Love* (1717) is inseparable from an iconographic analysis of the picture. Similarly, the study of van Gogh conducted by Heinich (1996) also draws upon the construction of van Gogh's oeuvre, and thereby incorporates findings in art history.

In this dissertation, I aim to develop the tradition in the sociology of art that embraces interdisciplinary discussions. I have drawn upon the philosophy of art to justify the social essence of art and thereby the significance of sociological research on art. Yet I have also argued that sociological studies must not be misled by a pure philosophical definition of art. Mistaking philosophical analysis for real-world practices has led sociologists to a production-mediation-reception sequential division in understanding the social process of artistic production. Such a division, as I have shown in Chapter One, neglects the production of artists, causes a terminological confusion for the term "production", and conceals the overlap of roles and contributions by different producers. In order to solve these problems, I propose the artwork-artist-audience division. This analytical perspective derives from, instead of a philosophical dwelling, observations of the concrete operations involved in exhibition making. Notably, these operations are directed towards artworks, artists, and audiences.

Furthermore, the creative and scenographic turns in curatorial practices, which are charted by art scholars in curatorial and museum studies, inform my definition and study of exhibition. Only because art has become integrated with exhibition in actual practices, is this dissertation able to obtain new insights for understanding artistic production through the study of exhibition making. I have shown how artworks are produced in the exhibition context, and how artists are concomitantly produced through a series of exhibitions.

In particular, my research has revealed that the crisis of art history has been exaggerated. Contemporary art may seem the antithesis of art history. Its immense diversity has indeed nullified a "single meta-narrative" (Danto, 2009). However, art history continues to play a most crucial role in the production of contemporary art. With the dissolution of solid articulable standards, the verdict of art history seems to be the last resort – here art history is metonymy for time. Artists are also aware of the traditions in art history, which they aim to engage with in their own works. Here, art history means a collection of artworks that have been made and recognised. Most importantly, in this dissertation, I consider the persistent influence of art history as a discipline. The categories and classifications commonly deployed in art historiography continue to shape the perception of art producers, and therefore also inform their decision-making, either in

creating artworks, or in selecting artists. My concept of oeuvre derives from an analysis of narratives used by art historians and critics to describe an artist's artworks as an entity.

I have based my dissertation on an interdisciplinary dialogue between sociology, philosophy, art history, museum studies, and curatorial studies. Given this foundation of my dissertation, I hope, it can generate more interdisciplinary discussions.

2.2   A dialogue between the centre and the periphery

Sociology, a discipline that emerged in the late nineteenth century Europe, has been criticised by its underlying Eurocentrism and Colonialism. The discussion has further issued a call to decolonise sociology (Steinberg, 2016; Connell, 2018). The cause of decolonisation entails, certainly, first of all, the very act of studying non-western cases. In the sociology of art, non-western cases have been spotlighted. However, misunderstandings can be found in some case studies and these misconceptions are not always rooted in a Eurocentric bias. Instead, the lack of rigorous investigation and solid research is the main cause for scholarly errors. In these studies, the purpose of studying these peripheral cases is often unclear, while the intention to represent previously underrepresented areas predominates. To a certain degree, they belong to what Connell (2018) calls an "extraverted sociology in the periphery", which is a viable academic project but only reproduces the existing Eurocentric and Colonialist white sociology.

In Chapter Three, I have clarified that the case of China does not violate the general rule that any art economies only function with the consecration of art. Here, my main contention is that in different art economies, the function of consecrating art is taken up by different institutions. In contemporary art, the consecration, through the public presentation of art, is achieved in the exhibitionary system.

In this dissertation, the significance of the Chinese case lies in the unique power structure in its exhibitionary system of contemporary art. State funding is virtually non-existent here. This is in contrast to the western context, where the state intervene in the development of art through public fundings. As a result, thesis on the relationship between art and the market is biased, when the influence of the state as a third part is not identified and isolated from empirical observations of the western art systems. Therefore, the fact that state funding is virtually non-existent renders China an ideal case for the examination of art and the market, because there is no need to isolate the impact from the state. Moreover, my concept of visibility is inspired by the comparison between ink painting and contemporary art. In the former, the public viewing of art is not as much as

valued as in the latter. The fact that another art system for ink painting exists in China has enabled such comparison and thereby, my conceptualisation of visibility for a better understanding of contemporary art.

A proper dialogue between the centre and the periphery can be only based upon rigorous empirical research and clearly defined research questions. In this dissertation, I have positioned the the centre and the periphery within the same framework of contemporary art. I have identified concepts such as scenography and oeuvre from the study of the Chinese case, which are also valid for the study of contemporary art in the western context. After all, these concepts are not indigenous to China at all. Rather, they stem from the social world of art producers in the western context.

Hence, I thereby also highlight the difficulty intrinsic to the search of non-western indigenous concepts, even though the relevance of them has been greatly elevated in the on-going discussion about decolonising sociology. This difficulty arises from the fact that in the colonisation process, the colonised areas, as far as China is concerned, have attempted to abandon their own intellectual apparatus. The Chinese intellectuals have actively adopted the western scientific paradigms for a reconstruction of their own intellectual history (Kurtz, 2011, 2014). This also applies to art history. With the introduction of western art history as a discipline into China at the turn of nineteenth century, our current understanding of ink painting has been deeply shaped by the categories and classifications of western art historiography. The possibilities of retrieving the cognitive schemata and concepts indigenous to Chinese art, namely ink painting and calligraphy, without the assistance of historical research, have been significantly reduced.

3   The Two Directions for Further Empirical Research

Given the explorative nature of my research, new questions emerge from my empirical findings about the exhibitionary system. The first question is to determine relations of visibility to other variables such as reputation and the market success of artists. This requires further quantitative research. A second question is to understand the meaning of the differentiation between solo exhibition and group exhibition, a distinction which has been noticeably observed in this dissertation. As solo exhibition has been the primary focus of this dissertation, this question requires further inquiry about how exhibition makers approach group exhibitions. The answers to the two questions may also be related, because the binary nature of visibility derives from the division between solo and group

exhibition. As I have shown that visibility contains both a singular and a collective dimension, explanations for this division might lie in the different ways that each dimension relates to other variables.

As indicated in Chapter Seven, existing quantitative studies measure the prominence of artists mostly by auction prices and reputation rankings (see e.g., Beckert & Rössel, 2013). In this dissertation, I have identified and measured another variable visibility, which contains two irreducible dimensions. Given that high prices and wide peer recognition also lead to high visibility, I propose that future quantitative research can examine the relations between visibility, market success, and peer recognition. However, as discussed in Chapter Seven, I contend that a strict distinction between success on auction and on the primary market should be introduced in measuring the market success of artists. Moreover, I argue that peer recognition can only be accurately measured through a reputation survey, when the sampling takes into account the existence of subgroups and their different sizes. Exhibition makers in the same subgroup may uphold similar opinions. That is, I contend that a proportional sample is necessary to represent different opinions, because the peer artists are by no means a homogenous group. As far as I know, there is no existing research that deploys this method for an accurate measure. The different segments I have identified in the exhibitionary system would facilitate the identification of subgroups in exhibition makers too. Hence, developing a rigorous method for measuring peer recognition is the prerequisite to understanding how peer recognition is related to visibility. Despite the need to refine our current methodology, this type of quantitative research would eventually help to resolve the elusive issue of artistic autonomy.

In Chapter Six and Seven, I have discovered that the distinction between solo exhibition and group exhibition manifests in both artist's visibility and the exhibition programmes in the exhibitionary system. The irreducible collective dimension, indicated by group exhibitions, comes as an unexpected result in my research. As solo exhibitions dominate in the local art scene, and because my informants generally valued solo exhibitions much more than group exhibitions, I had anticipated an ancillary role for group exhibitions. Although it seems clear that young artists seize on the opportunities provided by group exhibitions, it remains unclear what role group exhibitions actually play in the art scene. I conjecture that, although singularity is particularly crucial for artists in contemporary art, it is still important to situate artists in relation to each other. These relations have been crucial for art history writing of modern art and might have remained so in contemporary art. And group exhibitions might serve as an important format for

drawing these relations. However, this explanation remains a hypothesis, which is to be tested in future qualitative research.

There is actually another potential direction for future research. It remains, however, compared to the above two questions, only visionary, due to our underdeveloped methods for analysing artistic features. As discussed in Chapter Seven, iconographic analysis of a large quantity of paintings is now possible with the assistance of computer science. However, the major challenge of contemporary art works stems from their immensely diverse artistic features. They are usually three-dimensional and entail much more information that cannot be reduced to pigments or motifs. Unfortunately, the only way to verify our impressionist perception of the dualism between art for the market and art for the peer is, by analysing and comparing a large quantity of artworks shown in art fairs and biennales. Assuming that future advances in such methods would allow us to do so, our sociological explanations of art would be significantly improved. That is, we would finally be able to identify a certain artistic orientation, and then, to relate it to a certain volume of social, economic, and cultural capital and a certain way by which these different types of capital consolidate in a social group. A materialist mechanism that underlies the social production of art might eventually be accepted on an empirical ground.

Bibliography

Accominotti, F. (2009). Creativity from interaction: Artistic movements and the creativity careers of modern painters. *Poetics*, *37*(3), 267–294. doi: 10.1016/j.poetic.2009.03 .005

Acord, S. K. (2009). *Beyond the Code: Unpacking Tacit Knowledge and Embodied Cognition in the Practical Action of Curating Contemporary Art* (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Exeter). Retrieved 2017-11-17, from `https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/bitstream/handle/10036/89473/AcordS_revisedversion.pdf?sequence=9&isAllowed=y`

Acord, S. K. (2010). Beyond the Head: The Practical Work of Curating Contemporary Art. *Qualitative Sociology*, *33*(4), 447–467.

Acord, S. K. (2012). Beyond the 'Code' : New Aesthetic Methodologies for the Sociology of the Arts. *Sociologie de l'Art*, *OPuS 9 & 10*(2), 69–86.

Acord, S. K., & DeNora, T. (2008). Culture and the Arts: From Art Worlds to Arts-in-Action. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *619*, 223–237.

Adajian, T. (2016). The Definition of Art. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2016 ed.). Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. Retrieved 2017-03-07, from `https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/art-definition/`

Adorno, T. W. (1978). Thesen zur Kunstsoziologie. In P. Bürger (Ed.), *Seminar Literatur- und Kunstsoziologie* (pp. 204–211). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Alexander, V. D. (1996). From philanthropy to funding: The effects of corporate and public support on American art museums. *Poetics*, *24*(2–4), 87–129. doi: 10.1016/0304-422X(95)00003-3

Alexander, V. D. (2017). Heteronomy in the arts field: state funding and British arts organizations: Heteronomy in the arts field. *The British Journal of Sociology*, *69*(1), 23–43. doi: 10.1111/1468-4446.12283

Allen, M. P., & Lincoln, A. E. (2004). Critical Discourse and the Cultural Consecration of American Films. *Social Forces*, *82*(3), 871–894.

Altshuler, B. (Ed.). (2013). *Biennials and Beyond. Exhibitions That Made Art History: 1962-2002.* Phaidon Press.

Andrews, J. F. (1994). *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1979.*

Berkeley; London: University of California Press.

Anheier, H. K., Gerhards, J., & Romo, F. P. (1995). Forms of capital and social structure in cultural fields: Examining Bourdieu's social topography. *American journal of sociology*, 859–903. Retrieved 2016-11-08, from `http://www.jstor.org/stable/2782154`

Arendell, T. (1997). Reflections on the Researcher-Researched Relationship: A Woman Interviewing Men. *Qualitative Sociology*, *20*(3), 341–368.

Bachleitner, R., & Ashauer, W. (2008). Die Vernissage als soziales Phänomen. In R. Bachleitner & M. Wichbold (Eds.), *Kunst-Kultur-Öffenlichkeit. Salzburg und ide zeitgenössische Kunst.* (pp. 120–135). Wien: Profil.

Baia Curioni, S., Forti, L., & Leone, L. (2015). Making Visible. In *Cosmopolitan Canvases* (pp. 55–77). Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198717744.003.0003

Bao, D. (2014). Rethinking and practices within the art system: The self-organization of contemporary art in China, 2001-2012. *Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, *1*(1), 83–95.

Barrett, J. (2011). *Museums and the Public Sphere.* John Wiley & Sons.

Baumann, S. (2001). Intellectualization and Art World Development: Film in the United States. *American Sociological Review*, *66*(3), 404–426.

Becker, H. S. (1974). Art As Collective Action. *American Sociological Review*, *39*(6), 767–776.

Becker, H. S. (2001). The Epistemology of Qualitative Research. In R. M. Emerson (Ed.), *Contemporary field research: perspectives and formulations* (pp. 317–330). Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc.

Becker, H. S., Faulkner, R. R., & Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. (2006). *Art from Start to Finish: Jazz, Painting, Writing, and Other Improvisations.* University of Chicago Press.

Becker, H. S., & Pessin, A. (2006). A Dialogue on the Ideas of "World" and "Field". *Sociological Forum*, *21*(2), 275–286.

Beckert, J., & Rössel, J. (2004). Kunst und Preise: Reputation als Mechanismus der Reduktion von Ungewissheit am Kunstmarkt. *KZfSS Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, *56*(1), 32–50. doi: 10.1007/s11577-004-0002-7

Beckert, J., & Rössel, J. (2013). The Price of Art: Uncertainty and reputation in the art field. *European Societies*, *15*(2), 178–195.

Bell, C. (1997). The Aesthetic Hypothesis. In S. L. Feagin & P. Maynard (Eds.), *Aesthetics.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Belting, H. (2003). *Art history after modernism.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bennett, T. (1988). The Exhibitionary Complex. *New Formations*, *4*, 73–102.

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1967). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge.* New York: Anchor. Retrieved from `http://perflensburg.se/Berger%20social-construction-of-reality.pdf`

Blessi, G. T., Sacco, P. L., & Pilati, T. (2011). Independent artist-run centres: an empirical analysis of the Montreal non-profit visual arts field. *Cultural Trends*, *20*(2), 141–166.

Bloor, M. (2001). Techniques of Validation in Qualitative Research. In R. M. Emerson (Ed.), *Contemporary field research: perspectives and formulations* (2nd ed., pp. 383–395). Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc.

Bondy, C. (2013). How did I get here? The social process of accessing field sites. *Qualitative Research*, *13*(5), 578–590. doi: 10.1177/1468794112442524

Borgatti, S., Everett, M. G., & Freeman, L. C. (2002). *Ucinet for Windows: Software for Social Network Analysis.* Harvard, MA: Analytic Technologies.

Borgatti, S. P., & Foster, P. (2003). The Network Paradigm in Organizational Research: A Review and Typology. *Journal of Management*, *29*(6), 991–1013.

Borgatti, S. P., Jones, C., & Evertt, M. G. (1998). Network Measures of Social Capital. *Connections*, *21*(2), 27–36.

Bottero, W., & Crossley, N. (2011). Worlds, Fields and Networks: Becker, Bourdieu and the Structures of Social Relations. *Cultural Sociology*, *5*(1), 99–119. doi: 10.1177/1749975510389726

Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The Field of Cultural Production* (R. H. Johnson, Ed.). New York: Columbia Univ. Pr.

Bourdieu, P. (2002). The Forms of Capital. In N. W. H. Biggart (Ed.), *Readings in economic sociology* (pp. 280–291). Malden, Mass: Blackwell.

Bowness, A. (1989). *The conditions of success: how the modern artist rises to fame.* London: Thames and Hudson,.

Buchholz, L. (2012). *The Global Rules of Art* (Doctoral dissertation). Clombia University, New York.

Buchholz, L. (2015). Art vs. Money? A Comparison of Three Models of Valuation. In C. Behnke, C. Kastelan, V. Knoll, & U. Wuggenig (Eds.), *Art in the Periphery of the Center* (pp. 424–439). Berlin: Sternberg Press.

Burt, R. (2004). Structural Holes and Good Ideas. *American Journal of Sociology*, *110*(2), 349–399. Retrieved 2016-10-18, from `http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/421787` doi: 10.1086/421787

Burt, R. S. (1992). *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Burt, R. S. (2000). The network structure of social capital. *Research in organizational behavior*, *22*, 345–423. Retrieved 2016-10-17, from `http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0191308500220091`

Bydler, C. (2004). *The Global ArtWorld inc: on the globalization of contemporary art.* Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala University.

Bystryn, M. (1978). Art Galleries as Gatekeepers: The Case of the Abstract Expressionists. *Social Research*, *45*(2), 390–408.

Bürger, P. (Ed.). (1978). *Seminar Literatur- und Kunstsoziologie.* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Cagol, S. C. (2015). Exhibition History and the Institution as a Medium. *Stedelijk Studies*(2). Retrieved 2017-03-27, from `http://www.stedelijkstudies.com/journal/exhibition-history-and-the-institution-as-a-medium/`

Carrier, D. (1987). The Display of Art: An Historical Perspective. *Leonardo*, *20*(1), 83–86. doi: 10.2307/1578216

Clark, T. (2008). 'We're Over-Researched Here!': Exploring Accounts of Research Fatigue within Qualitative Research Engagements. *Sociology*, *42*(5), 953–970.

Coates, R. (2014). From the Margins to the Center: The São Paulo Biennial, the Biennale of Sydney, and the Istanbul Biennial. *Museum Worlds*, *2*(1).

Cohen, J. H. (2000). Problems in the field: Participant observation and the assumption of neutrality. *Field Methods*, *12*(4), 316–333.

Cole, S., & Cole, J. R. (1968). Visibility and the Structural Bases of Awareness of Scientific Research. *American Sociological Review*, *33*(3), 397–413. doi: 10.2307/2091914

Collins, H. (2010). *Tacit and Explicit Knowledge.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Connell, R. (2018). Decolonizing Sociology. *Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews*, *47*(4), 399–407. doi: 10.1177/0094306118779811

Cottington, D. (1988). What the Papers Say: Politics and Ideology in Picasso's Collages of 1912. *Art Journal*, *47*(4), 350–359. doi: 10.2307/776984

Crane, D. (1987). *The transformation of the avant-garde: the New York art world, 1940-1985.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Crane, D. (2009). Reflections on the global art market: implications for the Sociology of Culture. *Sociedade e Estado*, *24*(2), 331–362.

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2011). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. SAGE.

Danto, A. (1964, October). The Artworld. *The Journal of Philosophy*, *61*(19), 571. doi: 10.2307/2022937

Danto, A. C. (2009). The End of Art: A Philosophical Defense. *History and Theory*, *37*(4), 127–143. Retrieved 2015-05-03, from `https://www2.southeastern.edu/Academics/Faculty/jbell/endofart.pdf`

Danto, A. C. (2014). *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*. Princeton University Press.

DeBevoise, J. (2014). *Between State and Market: Chinese Contemporary Art in the Post-Mao Era*. Leiden: BRILL.

De la Fuente, E. (2007). The 'New Sociology of Art': Putting Art Back into Social Science Approaches to the Arts. *Cultural Sociology*, *1*(3), 409–425.

De la Fuente, E. (2010). The Artwork Made Me Do It: Introduction to the New Sociology of Art. *Thesis Eleven*, *103*(1), 3–9.

De Nooy, W. (2003a). Artistic classifications as collective representations. In *Sixth conference of the European Sociological Association.* (pp. 1–13). Retrieved from `http://www.uva.nl/binaries/content/documents/personalpages/n/o/w.denooy/en/tab-one/tab-one/cpitem%5B98%5D/asset`

De Nooy, W. (2003b). Fields and networks: correspondence analysis and social network analysis in the framework of field theory. *Poetics*, *31*(5-6), 305–327. doi: 10.1016/S0304-422X(03)00035-4

Dimaggio, P. (1983). Can Culture Survive the Marketplace? *Journal of Arts Management and Law*, *13*(1), 61–87. doi: 10.1080/07335113.1983.9942078

DiMaggio, P. (1997). Culture and Cognition. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *23*(1), 263–287. doi: 10.1146/annurev.soc.23.1.263

DiMaggio, P. (2003). Cultural Enterpreneurship in nineteenth-century Boston: The creation of an organizational basis for high culture in America. In J. Tanner (Ed.), *Sociology of Art: A Reader* (pp. 178–193). Routledge.

Domínguez Rubio, F. (2008). *Beyond humanist patterns of explanation: thinking through Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty* (Doctoral Dissertation). University of Cambridge.

Domínguez Rubio, F. (2012). The Material Production of the Spiral Jetty: A Study of

Culture in the Making. *Cultural Sociology*, *6*(2), 143–161.

Domínguez Rubio, F., & Silva, E. B. (2013). Materials in the Field: Object-trajectories and Object-positions in the Field of Contemporary Art. *Cultural Sociology*, *7*(2), 161–178.

Driessens, O. (2014). Expanding celebrity studies' research agenda: theoretical opportunities and methodological challenges in interviewing celebrities. *Celebrity Studies*, *6*(2), 192–205.

Elias, N. (1978). *What is Sociology?* London: Hutchinson.

Elias, N. (2001). *The society of individuals* (M. Schröter, Ed.). New York: Continuum.

Elias, N. (2010). *Mozart and Other Essays on Courtly Art.* Dublin: University College Dublin Press.

Feldman, M. S., Bell, J., & Berger, M. T. (Eds.). (2003). *Gaining access : a practical and theoretical guide for qualitative researchers.* Walnut Creek, Calif; Oxford: AltaMira Press.

Flick, U., Kardoff, E. v., & Steinke, I. (2004). *A Companion to Qualitative Research.* SAGE.

Foster, P., Borgatti, S. P., & Jones, C. (2011). Gatekeeper search and selection strategies: Relational and network governance in a cultural market. *Poetics*, *39*(4), 247–265. doi: 10.1016/j.poetic.2011.05.004

Freeman, L. C. (1977). A set of measures of centrality based on betweenness. *Sociometry*(40), 35–41.

Freeman, L. C. (1979). Centrality in Social Networks: Conceptual Clarification. *Social Networks*(1), 215–239.

Fuller, M. G. (2015a). *Cities, canvases and careers: becoming an artist in New York and Berlin* (Doctoral Dissertation). University of Cambridge, Cambridge.

Fuller, M. G. (2015b). Less than Friends, More than Acquaintances: Artists, Markets and Gallery Openings in New York. *International Review of Social Research*, *5*(2), 120–129. doi: 10.1515/irsr-2015-0011

Galenson, D. W. (2000). The Careers of Modern Artists: Evidence from Auctions of Contemporary Art. *Journal of Cultural Economics*, *24*(2), 87–112.

Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society: outline of the theory of structuration.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Giuffre, K. (2001). Mental Maps: Social Networks and the Language of Critical Reviews. *Sociological Inquiry*, *71*(3), 381–393. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-682X.2001.tb01118.x

Gleadowe, T. (2011). Inhabiting Exhibition History. *The Exhihitionist*(4), 29–34.

Gombrich, E. H. (1975). *Art History and the social sciences.* Oxford: Clarendon.

Granovetter, M. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, *78*(6), 1360–1380. Retrieved 2016-10-17, from `https://sociology.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/the_strength_of_weak_ties_and_exch_w-gans.pdf`

Graw, I. (2009). *High Price. Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture.* Berlin: Sternberg Press.

Gray, P. S. (1980). Exchange and Access in Field Work. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *9*(3), 309–331.

Greenberg, R., Ferguson, B. W., & Nairne, S. (1996). *Thinking about Exhibitions.* Psychology Press.

Halle, D., & Tiso, E. (2014). *New York's New Edge: Contemporary Art, the High Line, and Urban Megaprojects on the Far West Side.* University of Chicago Press.

Hanneman, R. A., & Riddle, M. (2005). *Introduction to soical network methods.* Riverside, CA: University of California (published in digital form). Retrieved 2016-10-17, from `http://faculty.ucr.edu/~hanneman/`

Harrington, B. (2003). The Social Psychology of Access in Ethnographic Research. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *32*(5), 592–625.

Hauser, A. (1974). Ziele und Grenzen der Soziologie der Kunst. In *Sociologica. Aufsätze Max Horkheimer zum 60. Geburtstag gewidmet.* Frankfurt am Main: Europ. Verl.-Anst. (Festschrift Max Horkheimer)

Heinich, N. (1996). *The Glory of van Gogh: an Anthropology of Admiration.* Princeton: Princeton University Press,.

Heinich, N. (2000). What is an Artistic Event? A New Approach to the Sociological Discourse. *Boekman Cahier*(44), 159–168. Retrieved 2017-01-30, from `https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01202813`

Heinich, N. (2012). Sociologies of Art: With and against Art History. In M. Rampley, T. Lenain, H. Locher, A. Pinotti, C. Schoell-Glass, & K. Zijlmans (Eds.), *Art History and Visual Studies in Europe* (pp. 185–195). Leiden Boston: BRILL.

Heinich, N. (2014a). *Le paradigme de l'art contemporain: structures d'une révolution artistique.* Paris: Gallimard.

Heinich, N. (2014b). Practices of contemporary art : a pragmatic approach to a new artistic paradigm. In T. Zembylas (Ed.), *Artistic Practices. Social Interactions and*

227

Cultural Dynamics. Retrieved 2017-01-30, from `https://hal.archives-ouvertes`
`.fr/hal-01224472`

Heinich, N. (2014c, February). *The transgressive nature of contemporary art: interview with Nathalie Heinich | AMA | Art Media Agency.* Retrieved 2017-01-04, from `http://en.artmediaagency.com/`

Horowitz, N. (2011). *Art of the deal: Contemporary Art in a Global Financial Market.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Horowitz, R. (1986). Remaining an Outsider Membership as a Threat to Research Rapport. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *14*(4), 409–430.

Howard, P. (2009). *What is scenography?* London; New York: Routledge.

Ingarden, R. (1962). *Untersuchungen zur Ontologie der Kunst.* Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Jensen, R. (1996). *Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe.* Princeton University Press.

Jorgensen, D. L. (1989). Developing and Sustaining Field Relationships. In *Participant Observation* (pp. 69–82). California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Joy, A., & Sherry Jr, J. F. (2004). Framing considerations in the RRC: creating value in the contemporary chinese art market. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, *7*(4), 307–348. doi: 10.1080/1025386042000316306

Kawashima, N. (1999). Distribution of the arts: British arts centres as 'gatekeepers' in intersecting cultural production systems. *Poetics*, *26*(4), 263–283.

Khaire, M. (2015). Art Without Borders? Online Firms and the Global Art Market. In O. Velthuis & S. Baia Curioni (Eds.), *Cosmopolitan Canvases: The Globalization of Markets for Contemporary Art.* Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198717744.001.0001

Kharchenkova, S., Komarova, N., & Velthuis, O. (2015). Official Art Organizations in the Emerging Markets of China and Russia. In O. Velthuis & S. Baia Curioni (Eds.), *Cosmopolitan Canvases: The Globalization of Markets for Contemporary Art* (pp. 79–99). Oxford University Press.

Kharchenkova, S., & Velthuis, O. (2015). An Evaluative Biography of Cynical Realism and Political Pop. In A. B. Antal, M. Hutter, & D. Stark (Eds.), *Moments of Valuation* (pp. 108–130). Oxford University Press.

Kim, J.-O., & Mueller, C. W. (1978). *Factor Analysis: Statistical Methods and Practical Issues.* SAGE.

Klonk, C. (2009). *Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000.* Yale

University Press.

Kurtz, J. (2011). *The Discovery of Chinese Logic* (No. 1). Leiden Boston: Brill.

Kurtz, J. (2014). Disciplining the National Essence. In J. Tsu & B. A. Elman (Eds.), *Science and Technology in Modern China, 1880s-1940s* (pp. 67–91). Brill. doi: 10.1163/9789004268784_005

Kuspit, D. (2005, April). The Contemporary and the Historical. *artnet.com Magazine Features*. Retrieved 2017-03-15, from `http://www.artnet.com/Magazine/features/kuspit/kuspit4-14-05.asp`

Labaree, R. V. (2002). The risk of 'going observationalist': negotiating the hidden dilemmas of being an insider participant observer. *Qualitative Research*, *2*(1), 97–122.

Lachmann, R., Pain, E., & Gauna, A. (2014). Museums in the New Gilded Age: Collector exhibits in New York art museums, 1945–2010. *Poetics*, *43*, 60–69. doi: 10.1016/j.poetic.2014.01.004

Lam, M. C. K. (2013). *Scenography as New Ideology in Contemporary Curating and the Notion of Staging in Exhibitions*. GRIN Publishing.

Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the social: an introduction to actor-network-theory*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

Levinson, J. (2003). Philosophical Aesthetics: An Overview. In J. H. Levinson (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of aesthetics* (pp. 3–24). New York: Oxford University Press.

Levinson, J. H. (Ed.). (2003). *The Oxford handbook of aesthetics*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Liang, X. (2016, October). Duitan Zeng Fanzhi and Tian Feiyu: Shidai li de yishu he yishujia. [Zeng Fanzhi in dialogue with Tian Feiyu: art and aritst in time]. *Artnet News (China)*. Retrieved 2017-09-04, from `https://www.artnetnews.cn/people/duitancengfanzhiyutianfeiyushidailideyishuheyishujia-46640`

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications.

Liu, X. (2017, February). Tang Xin Taikang Kongjian Renxing di Chengzhang le Shiduo Nian, dao Jintian, hen Xinyun. [Tang Xin: Taikang Space has devoloped for ten years until today, we feel lucky]. *Hi Art*. Retrieved 2017-08-06, from `http://www.hiart.cn/feature/detail/2a9hrAu.html`

Liu, Z. (2016, June). Li Yilin: Yijia Taiwan Hualang de Ziwo Chengzhang [Li Yilin: the Development of a Taiwanese Gallery]. *Scope*(17), 88–93. Retrieved 2017-10-18, from `http://collection.sina.com.cn/ddys/zh/2016-06-16/`

`doc-ifxtfrrf0452374.shtml`

Livingston, P. (2016). History of the Ontology of Art. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2016 ed.). Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. Retrieved 2017-03-22, from `https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/art-ontology-history/`

Lu, S. H. (2015). Artistic interventions in contemporary China. *China Information*, *29*(2), 282–297. doi: 10.1177/0920203X15590346

Luckhurst, K. W. (1951). *The Story of Exhibitions.* Studio Publications.

Lü, P. (2013). *Fragmented Reality: Contemporary Art in 21st Century China.* Charta.

Mainardi, P. (1991). Courbet's Exhibitionism. *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, *118*, 253–265. Retrieved from `https://msu.edu/course/ha/446/mainardicourbet.pdf`

McKinney, J., & Butterworth, P. (2009). *The Cambridge Introduction to Scenography.* Cambridge University Press.

McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L., & Cook, J. M. (2001). Birds of a feather: Homophily in social networks. *Annual review of sociology*, 415–444.

Menger, P.-M. (2006). Profiles of the Unifinished: Rodin's Work and the Varieties of Incompleteness. In H. S. Becker (Ed.), *Art from Start to Finish: Jazz, Painting, Writing, and Other Improvisations* (pp. 31–68). University of Chicago Press.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mizruchi, M. S., & Stearns, L. B. (2001). Getting Deals Done: The Use of Social Networks in Bank Decision-Making. *American Sociological Review*, *66*(5), 647.

Morgner, C. (2014). The Biennial: The Practice of Selection in a Global Art World. *Empirical Studies of the Arts*, *32*(2), 275–282. doi: 10.2190/EM.32.2.h

Moulin, R. (1987). *The French art market: a sociological view.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Moulin, R., & Vale, M. (1995). The Museum and the Marketplace: The Constitution of Value in Contemporary Art. *International Journal of Political Economy*, *25*(2), 33–62.

Myers, J. (2011). On the Value of a History of Exhibitions. *The Exhihitionist*(4), 24–28.

Newman, M. E. J. (2000). Models of the Small World. *Journal of Statistical Physics*, *101*(3-4), 819–841. doi: 10.1023/A:1026485807148

O'Doherty, B. (1986). *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space.* San Francisco: The Lapis Press.

O'Reilly, K. (2009). Rapport. In *Key Concepts in Ethnography* (pp. 175–182). London: SAGE Publications Ltd. Retrieved 2016-05-19, from `http://sk.sagepub.com/books/key-concepts-in-ethnography`

O'Neill, P. (2007). The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse. In J. Rugg, M. Sedgwick, & O. Paul (Eds.), *Issues in curating contemporary art and performance* (pp. 13–28). Bristol: Intellect.

Pattison, P. (1994). Social Cognition in Context: Some Applications of Social Network Analysis. In S. Wasserman & J. Galaskiewicz (Eds.), *Advances in Social Network Analysis: Research in the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (pp. 79–110). SAGE Publications.

Pei, G. (2013, March). *Hanxi hualang jiti tuishi diaocha xilie zhier: waizi hualang jinru zhongguo de liangzhong tujing [Investigation of the collective retreat of Korean galleries (Part II): The two strategies of foreign galleries in China].* Retrieved 2017-10-18, from `http://gallery.artron.net/20130301/n312838_2.html`

Peterson, K. (1997). The distribution and dynamics of uncertainty in art galleries: A case study of new dealerships in the Parisian art market, 1985–1990. *Poetics*, *25*(4), 241–263.

Pierides, D., & Woodman, D. (2012). Object-oriented sociology and organizing in the face of emergency: Bruno Latour, Graham Harman and the material turn. *The British Journal of Sociology*, *63*(4), 662–679.

Prinz, S., & Schäfer, H. (2015). Die Öffentlichkeit der Ausstellung. Eine Dispositivanalyse heterogener Relationen des Zeigens. In D. Danko, O. Moeschler, & F. Schumacher (Eds.), *Kunst und Öffentlichkeit* (pp. 283–302). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

Quemin, A. (2006). Globalization and Mixing in the Visual Arts: An Empirical Survey of 'High Culture' and Globalization. *International Sociology*, *21*(4), 522–550. doi: 10.1177/0268580906065299

Quemin, A. (2013). International Contemporary Art Fairs in a 'globalized' Art Market. *European Societies*, *15*(2), 162–177. doi: 10.1080/14616696.2013.767927

Quemin, A. (2015). The Impact of Nationality on the Contemporary Art Market. *Sociologia & Antropologia*, *5*(3), 825–856. doi: 10.1590/2238-38752015v538

Quemin, A. (2016, November). Building a ranking of Contemproary Art Galleries in Paris: a Sociological Approach. St. Gallen: Conference: Art and Makert: Alienation or Emancipation?

Rahn, M. (2008). *Factor Analysis: A Short Introduction, Part 1.* Retrieved 2018-08-20, from `https://www.theanalysisfactor.com/factor-analysis-1-introduction/`

Raynaud, D. (1999). L'émergence d'une sociologie des œuvres: une évaluation critique. *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, 119–143. Retrieved 2017-03-03, from `http://www.jstor.org/stable/40690809`

Reich, J. A. (2015). Old methods and new technologies: Social media and shifts in power in qualitative research. *Ethnography*, *16*(4), 394–415.

Resch, M. (2015). *Management of art galleries.* Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz.

Ribas, J. (2015). Notes Towards a History of the Solo Exhibition. *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, *38*, 4–15. doi: 10.1086/681282

Ricci, C. (2017, July). At the Origins of Art Fairs: The Venice Sales Department after WWII. London.

Rosenberg, B., & Fliegel, N. E. (1965). The Vanguard Artist in New York. *Social Research*, *32*(2), 141–162. Retrieved 2016-10-30, from `http://search.proquest.com/docview/1297185428/citation/6E82A884744D4371PQ/1`

Rule, A., & Rush, N. (2013). *Triple Canopy – International Art English.* Retrieved 2018-08-13, from `https://www.canopycanopycanopy.com/contents/international_art_english`

Sassatelli, M. (2017). Symbolic Production in the Art Biennial: Making Worlds. *Theory, Culture & Society*, *34*(4), 89–113. doi: 10.1177/0263276416667199

Schneeman, P. J. (2012). Contemporary Art and the Concept of Art History: Influence, Dependency and Challenge. In M. Rampley, T. Lenain, H. Locher, A. Pinotti, C. Schoell-Glass, & K. Zijlmans (Eds.), *Art History and Visual Studies in Europe* (pp. 59–74). Leiden Boston: BRILL.

Schwartz, M. S., & Schwartz, C. G. (1955). Problems in Participant Observation. *American Journal of Sociology*, *60*(4), 343–353.

Searle, J. R. (1995). *The construction of social reality.* New York: Free Press.

Sharon, B. (1979). Artist-run galleries—A contemporary institutional change in the visual arts. *Qualitative Sociology*, *2*(1), 3–28.

Simmel, G. (1910). How is Society Possible? *American Journal of Sociology*, *16*(3), 372–391.

Smith, T. (2006). Contemporary Art and Contemporaneity. *Critical Inquiry*, *32*(4), 681–707.

Sorace, C. (2014). China's Last Communist: Ai Weiwei. *Critical Inquiry*, *40*(2), 396–419. Retrieved 2015-12-28, from `http://www.jstor.org/stable/info/10.1086/674120`

Springwood, C. F., & King, C. R. (2001). Unsettling Engagements: On the Ends of Rapport in Critical Ethnography. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *7*(4), 403–417.

Staniszewski, M. A. (1998). *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art.* MIT Press.

Stecker, R. (2003). Value in Art. In J. H. Levinson (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of aesthetics* (pp. 307–324). New York: Oxford University Press.

Steinberg, S. (2016, August). *Decolonizing Sociology.* Retrieved 2018-10-10, from `http://stanfordpress.typepad.com/blog/2016/08/decolonizing-sociology.html`

Sutton, B. (2015, April). *Artists from Five Galleries Dominate US Museum Shows.* Retrieved 2018-10-16, from `https://hyperallergic.com/195752/artists-from-five-galleries-dominate-us-museum-shows/`

Tanner, J. (Ed.). (2003). *Sociology of Art: A Reader.* Routledge.

Thompson, D. (2010). *The $12 Million Stuffed Shark: The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art.* St. Martin's Griffin.

Thornton, S. (2009). *Seven days in the art world.* London: Granta.

Travers, J., & Milgram, S. (1969). An Experimental Study of the Small World Problem. *Sociometry*, *32*(4), 425–443. doi: 10.2307/2786545

Uzzi, B., & Spiro, J. (2005). Collaboration and creativity: The small world Problem. *American journal of sociology*, *111*(2), 447–504.

Velthuis, O. (2005). *Talking Prices: Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art.* Princeton University Press.

Velthuis, O. (2013). Globalization of Markets for Contemporary Art: Why local ties remain dominant in Amsterdam and Berlin. *European Societies*, *15*(2), 290–308. doi: 10.1080/14616696.2013.767929

Velthuis, O. (2015). Are We in a New Era of the Art Market? In C. Behnke, C. Kastelan, V. Knoll, & U. Wuggenig (Eds.), *Art in the Periphery of the Center* (pp. 456–464). Berlin: Sternberg Press.

Velthuis, O., & Baia Curioni, S. (Eds.). (2015a). *Cosmopolitan Canvases: The Globalization of Markets for Contemporary Art.* Oxford University Press. (doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198717744.003.0001)

Velthuis, O., & Baia Curioni, S. (2015b). Making Markets Global. In O. Velthuis &

S. Baia Curioni (Eds.), *Cosmopolitan Canvases* (pp. 1–28). Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198717744.003.0001

Vidich, A. J. (1955). Participant Observation and the Collection and Interpretation of Data. *American Journal of Sociology*, *60*(4), 354–360.

Vine, R., Phillips, C., & Pollack, B. (2007, March). Money Talks Mandarin. *Art in America*, *95*(3), 49–53.

Vom Lehn, D., Heath, C., & Hindmarsh, J. (2001). Exhibiting Interaction: Conduct and Collaboration in Museums and Galleries. *Symbolic Interaction*, *24*(2), 189–216.

von Hantelmann, D. (2011). The Curatorial Paradigm. *The Exhihitionist*(4), 6–12.

Wacquant, L. (2016). A concise genealogy and anatomy of habitus. *The Sociological Review*, *64*(1), 64–72. doi: 10.1111/1467-954X.12356

Wade, G. (Ed.). (2001). *Curating in the 21st Century*. New Art Gallery Walsall.

Wang, P. (2010). *Responding to the world: Contemporary Chinese art, exhibitions, and criticism in the 1990s* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved 2014-03-05, from `http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:dissertation&res_dat=xri:pqdiss&rft_dat=xri:pqdiss:3432835`

Wang, W. (2013, March). Wang Wei Tan Jianchang Kongjian [Wang Wei on Arrow Factory]. *Artforum (China)*. Retrieved 2018-10-09, from `http://artforum.com.cn/words/4974`

Ward, M. (1996). What's Important About the History of Modern Art Exhibitions. In R. Greenberg, B. W. Ferguson, & S. Nairne (Eds.), *Thinking about Exhibitions* (pp. 318–327). London ; New York: Routledge.

Ward, T. B., Smith, S. M., & Finke, R. (1999). Creative Cognition. In R. J. Sternberg (Ed.), *Handbook of creativity* (pp. 189–212). Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press.

White, H. C., & White, C. A. (1993). *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Witkin, R. W. (1998). *Adorno on Music*. Routledge.

Wong, L. M. (1998). The Ethics of Rapport: Institutional Safeguards, Resistance, and Betrayal. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *4*(2), 178–199.

Wu, C. (2009). Biennials. Without Borders? *New Left Review*(57), 107–115.

Wu, H. (2001). *Exhibiting Experimental Art in China* (2nd edition ed.). University of Chicago Press.

Wu, H. (2002). Contesting Global/Local Chinese Experimental Art in the 1990s. *ORIENTATIONS HONGKONG*, *33*(9), 62–67. Retrieved from `http://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/wuhung/files/2012/12/Contesting-Global-Local-Chinese-Experimental-Art-in-the-1990s.pdf`

Wuggenig, U., & Rudolph, S. (2013). Valuation Beyond the Market. On Symbolic Value and Economic Value in Contemporary Art. In K. van den Berg & U. Pasero (Eds.), *Art Production Beyond the Art Market* (pp. 100–149). Berlin: Sternberg.

Xiang, F. (2016). *AwardPuzzle*. Retrieved 2018-10-14, from `http://awardpuzzle.strikingly.com/`

Zangwill, N. (2002). Against the sociology of art. *Philosophy of the social sciences*, *32*(2), 206–218.

Zhang, J. C. (2009). *Contested modernity the emergence of the Chinese contemporary art world and its struggle for meaning, 1990 to 2008* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Yale University.

Zhang, L. (2013). *A New Foundation for the Sociology of Art: The Social Ontology of Artwork* (Unpublished master's thesis). Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Germany.

Zhao, C. (2015, March). *Duli Yishu Jigou de Gaochao yu Tidaixing [The climax and replaceability of independent art spaces]*. Retrieved from `http://news.99ys.com/news/2015/0313/9_190313_1.shtml`

Zolberg, V. L. (1981). Conflicting Visions in American Art Museums. *Theory and Society*, *10*(1), 103–125.

Zolberg, V. L. (1984). American Art Museums: Sanctuary or Free-For-All? *Social Forces*, *63*(2), 377–392.

Zolberg, V. L. (1990). *Constructing a sociology of the arts.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Appendices

Appendix A

List of Museums of Contemporary Art in China

This list does not cover the ones that opened after 2016. Museums founded by the same corporate or individual in the same city do not count as two in this list.

Name	Location	Est.	Opening of New Venue
Museum of Contemporary Art	Shanghai	2005	
Today Art Museum	Beijing	2005	
OCAT Shenzhen	Shenzhen	2005	
Ullens Centre for Contemporary Art	Beijing	2007	
Ming Sheng Modern	Shanghai	2008	2010
CAFA Art Museum	Beijing		2008
Rockbund Art Museum	Shanghai	2010	
Times Museum	Guangzhou	2010	
Long Museum	Shanghai	2012	2013
OCAT Shanghai	Shanghai	2012	
Art Museum of NUA	Nanjing		2012
How Art Museum	Wenzhou	2013	
K11	Shanghai	2013	

OCAT Xi'an	Xi'an	2013	
Power Station of Art	Shanghai	2012	
Si Fang	Nanjing		2012
Himalayas	Shanghai		2014
Yuz Museum	Shanghai	2014	
Redbrick Museum	Beijing	2014	
A4 Museum	Chengdu		2016

Appendix B

List of quoted interviewees (by identity)

The IDs of these interviewees were assigned according to the sequence of their appearance in my field research.

No.	Role	Affiliation	Date of Interview
Curator 1	Curator	Art Museum of NUA	October 2014
Curator 4	Independent curator	None	multiple dates
Artist 12	Gallery artist	Gallery Yang	August 2016
Liang Shuo	Gallery artist (became)	Beijing Commune	Multiple dates
Artist 20	Gallery artist	ShanghART	September 2016
He Chi	Independent artist		August 2016
Gallerist 1	Gallery (artistic) manager	ShanghART	September 2016
Gallerist 3	Gallery manager	White Space	August 2016
Gallerist 4	Gallery owner	PIFO Gallery	multiple dates
Gallerist 6	Gallery manager	Yang Gallery	August 2016

Appendix C

Interview Guides

Interview Guide – Phase I

As my interviews in this phrase were based upon observations of exhibition making, I designed each interview according to the role of interviewees and the specific exhibitions under study. The following interview guide for curators encompass most questions and can serve as an template, variations of which were used for curators, artists, gallerists, and artistic directors.

There were also general interviews with curators I used in the explorative phase, for which another template was used.

Case-related interviews

Exhibition information & Exhibition-related materials to be collected:

Venue:

Curator(s):

Duration:

Number of artists/artist groups:

Number of artworks:

Size of the exhibition hall:

Exhibition catalogue

Floor plan of the gallery space

Video representation of the exhibition hall

Pictures of each gallery

Pictures of each work

Drafts of each work

Questions:

Block zero – curatorial team

The labor distribution within the curatorial team? (concept, narrative, description, design, installation, publicity) What does the curatorial work involve?

Block one – planning

Schedule: When did the project start? How long did it take for you to come to the final concept of your exhibition? What were the alternatives and why you discarded others?

Selection of and communication with artists:

1.1 When did you start to contact the artists?

1.2 Is the number of artists predetermined, considering the volume of the exhibition hall?

1.3 Criteria of selection? (variety in form, painting, installation, video, etc., the use of the exhibition space – hanging on wall, hanging from above, placed on ground)

1.4 Did the artists provide several plans for selection or you were deeply involved in the plan?

Block two – exhibition design

2.1 The design needs to take the size and volume of the artworks into consideration, how exactly does this work? Was the organisation of the works in plan as how we see it now (in the pamphlet)?

2.2 Which criterion are important when arrange the works? Say, the relationship between artworks, the size comparison, etc.? (how many kinds of relationship are there between works? In terms of content, size, colour or acoustic aspect)

2.3 Would you please reconstruct the process of locating each work?

2.4 Were there any adjustment in terms of the location of works?

2.5 Is there a designed tour line? Or the audience can start from anywhere and end by anywhere? Would the experience of the audience a consideration in your planning?

Block three — installation

3.1 Where did you start first? From the entrance? The building of the separation wall? Or?

3.2 Artists were told beforehand where to install their work? When did the work arrive in the hall?

3.3 How did you come to the idea of placing the pamphlet in the most inner circle?

3.4 Any unexpected things happen that you were not able to realise the artist's plan?

3.5 Any new ideas come up in the installation process? Serendipities in the installation process?

3.6 Any other interesting stories that you would like to share with me?

Block four — closure

Questions will be based on my observation

General Interviews

1. Can you explain the organisational structure of your museum?

2. How do you select artists?

3. How do you keep informed of artists? Or say, how do you know certain artists?

4. Is there an overarching idea in your curating work?

5. What do you see as the most important part of curatorial work?

Semi-structured Interview Guide – Phase II

Guide for artist

Block zero – career time

When did you graduate from art school? or when did you start to undertake the career?

Block one – artistic creation

1.1 Can you give me an outline of your collection of artworks?

1.2 How do you organise your creative undertakings?

1.3 Any problems or difficulties that trouble you particularly?

1.4 What are you creating now?

1.5 Any particular plans for future creation?

Block two – market history

2.1 Are you able to live on your creations? Since when can you make a living?

2.2 Do you have gallery representation?

2.3 Are there any of your artworks that are particularly popular?

2.4 Have prices of your works been raised?

2.5 How is your relationship with your gallery?

Guide for non-artist exhibition maker

The interviews were conducted based upon a thorough examination of the demography of artists featured in their previous exhibitions. Interview questions were therefore designed to incorporate the characteristics of their artists. The following template was designed for gallerist, but as it encompasses most questions, I included this one as a reference.

Block one – history

1.1 The time when your gallery/museum/space was founded, how did the market look like?

1.2 How did you come to your artistic foci?

1.3 What do you think that defines your way of managing a gallery?

Block two – relationships with artists

2.1 How do you select artists? Any preferences for age?

2.2 How do you collaborate with artists, representation or project-based?

2.3 How do you get to know new artists?

2.4 How do you schedule your annual programme?

2.5 What is the major drive for looking for new artists?

2.6 How do you select artists who you do not necessarily represent or enter into a long-term collaboration?

2.7 Why would you support "non-commercial" exhibitions?

2.8 What do you think of most beneficial among the work you do for your artists?

Block three – the market

3.1 How do you price an artist?

3.2 What is the price range of artists sold in your gallery?

3.3 The major channel of sale? Art fair or faithful collectors?

3.4 Is there a ratio of paintings to non-traditional art works in the sales?

3.5 Does the introduction of foreign artists facilitate sales?

3.6 Does participation in art fairs impact significantly on sales?

3.7 How to reconcile the situation when demand for certain artists' works surpass what they can produce?

Appendix D

Information Sheet and Consent Forms

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

RESEARCH PROJECT: THE EXHIBITING OF CONTEMPORARY CHINESE ART[1]

Your institution is being invited to take part in a research project. This project studies the process of creating contemporary art exhibitions in China. The research concerns the production of art, the establishment of social relationships, and the art-human interaction in the process of exhibiting art.

This information sheet advises you of the importance of your institution's participation in this project as an acclaimed institution in my field of enquiry. If you find anything unclear or would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

WHO IS ORGANISING AND PAYING FOR THE RESEARCH?

This study is being organised by Ms. Linzhi Zhang, a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology, University of Cambridge. Ms. Zhang has been working on the study of art for four years.
Ms. Zhang holds membership in The Research Committee Sociology of Arts and Culture (Swiss Sociological Association) and Der Arbeitskreis Soziologie der Künste (German Association of Sociology)

The Cambridge Student Registry Fieldwork Fund and Cambridge Trust are funding this research.

WHY IS THIS RESEARCH IMPORTANT?

Different from traditional sociology, which reduces art to the social context or political context in which art is produced, my research follows two new trends in the sociology of art. First, moving away from the metaphysical discussion about the relationship between art and society, sociology turns towards the enquiry of inner artworld. Second, instead of taking artworks as passive objects, sociology begins to acknowledge the agency of artworks. Therefore, my research refocuses the analysis upon the concrete actions and associations involved in the exhibiting process. Specifically, the research aims to reveal the human-art interactions taking place in the process of exhibiting. That is, art is not only produced by human beings, but art also transforms human beings. Thus, I will examine how the efforts of curators and artists give birth to artworks; and how the exhibiting of artworks shapes the actions of curators and interactions among artists, curators and critics.

Contemporary Chinese art (CCA) is barely touched upon in sociology. Therefore, my research will extend the frontier of knowledge in sociology of art, by adopting the new perspectives and embracing a previously underrepresented subject, CCA.

Moreover, as a Chinese student of social sciences who aims for an academic career in western countries, I hope to draw more interest to contemporary Chinese art.

WHO IS BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART

As contemporary art has a relatively short history in China and has experienced various difficulties in its early stages of development, currently there are only a few institutions and figures that have sustained a good reputation. To maintain the quality of my research, only acclaimed exhibition spaces are selected as sites of examination. The selection is based on the length of existence, the quality of exhibitions and the reputation of the exhibition spaces.

WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE

I will conduct participant observation in your institution. I will follow the creation process of one exhibition selected from your scheduled coming exhibitions. That is, I will participate in and observe the activities that are related to the exhibition-making in your institution, for instance, the discussions about exhibition proposals, the installation process of the exhibition and the opening of the exhibition. My participation or

---

1 The title of my research project was then changed during my writing up phase.

observation will be confined to the research-related activities.

Note: Participant observation is one type of data collection method typically done in the qualitative research. In participant observation, the observer participates in on-going activities and records observations. Through an intensive involvement with people in their cultural environment, usually over an extended period of time, the researcher aims to gain a close and intimate familiarity with a given group of individuals and their practices.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

Sociological research obeys strict ethical rules to mark certain that participants will not be harmed in any way by the research.

For individuals, any of the individual's private information (such as age, living address or phone number) will be kept confidential. If you prefer not to disclose your identity, all identifying information will be disguised (this includes, your name, position and any other contextual information that will identify you) in further publications of this research.

For institutions, all observations and records will only be conducted with the consent of your institution. I will not reveal any confidential information of the institution to a third party. If the director prefers not to disclose the identity of the institution, all identifying information will also be disguised. However, in order not to downplay your institution's contribution to the art, you can choose to have the identity disclosed.

With your consent, I will record the exhibition-related activities by taking fieldnotes. If you wish, you can check the fieldnotes to ensure the accuracy of record.

Digital record of the observations will be destroyed, and fieldnotes and consent forms will be locked away, and not retained for longer than necessary in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (United Kingdom).

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

The records of the observations will be analysed in my doctoral dissertation. The analysis may be further disseminated in conference papers or future publications (journal articles or books).

CONTACT INFORMATION

Ms Linzhi Zhang
PhD Candidate
Department of Sociology, Cambridge University
Queens' College, Cambridge,
CB3 9ET, UK
M: +86 18221186198 (China), +44 7790128731 (UK)
E: lz337@cam.ac.uk

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Department of Sociology

Consent Form

Title of Project: Assembling: The Exhibiting of Contemporary Chinese Art

Name of the Researcher: Linzhi Zhang

I am conducting participant observation as part of the research project previously illustrated. All research work will only be conducted with your institution's consent.

If you are interested in receiving further information about this project, please write your e-mail address beside your signature.

Please tick box

1. I confirm that I have understood these instructions and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my institution's participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any explanation.

3. I understand that any data collected from my institution will be used only for academic research

4. I understand that I can decide whether to have my identity anonymised.

   4.1 I prefer to disclose my institution's identity

   4.2 I prefer to anonymise my institution's identity

5. I agree to take part in the research project.

_____   _____ _____
Name of Participant (Institution)   Date   Signature

_____   _____ _____
Name of Researcher   Date   Signature

251