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# Standing Wave

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王之博  
WANG  
ZHIBO

駐波  
standing wave

## 目錄 Contents

《巨浪高企的靜止》 柯蒂斯 L. 卡特 著 <i>Standing Wave</i> by Dr. Curtis L. Carter	5-13
紙上作品 <i>Works on paper</i>	15-19
油彩 畫布 <i>Oil on canvas</i>	21-33, 44-59
《王之博的輓歌式園林景色》 凱蒂·希爾博士 著 <i>The Elegiac Parks of Wang Zhibo</i> by Dr. Katie Hill	35-42
簡歷 <i>Biography</i>	60-61

## 巨浪高企的靜止

柯蒂斯 L. 卡特 著

在香港馬凌畫廊的支持下，王之博得以亮相於2013年度紐約軍械庫藝術博覽會，也標誌著她繼參與2009年比利時安特衛普美術館群展後，首次進軍西方美術界的重要時刻。1981年，王之博生於浙江，並一直在杭州生活及工作。2008年，她畢業於中國美術學院油畫系，獲頒藝術碩士學位。自此，王氏的畫作在中國各地的博物館及畫廊展出。自2005年第二屆成都雙年展後，王之博曾先後參與2007年上海博物館群展，2008年北京今日美術館及南京青和當代美術館，2009年國立台灣美術館，2012年北京舉行的中國青年藝術家扶持推廣計劃，及國內各城市中私營畫廊的展覽等。

王之博紐約之行，正值中國當代藝術在當地的畫廊、博物館，以及歐洲展館的主流展覽中廣受歡迎之際。她加入了全球藝術家從東方遷徙至西方這一趨勢，踏上同樣的西征之路。這風氣始於上世紀八十年代，曾顯赫地出現於二十世紀的全球藝術動向，也正是把焦點從西方轉移至東方的逆轉現象。

當今天才橫溢的新進中國藝術家，包括王之博在內，都致力於尋找一種視覺語言，藉以探索當代藝術及人類生命複雜的層面。王氏活於一個中國藝術文化及全球大轉變的動亂時期<sup>1</sup>。生活轉變的中國，包括文化大革命後的社會變遷以及在全球化的影響下，中國引進西方藝術與本土前衛藝術的萌生。王之博及她的同輩面對同一個重要課題：如何在來自西方美術全球性影響的裨益下保留中國本質。

王氏的藝術根源又可追溯到哪裏？不少當代藝術家把目光投放在個人主觀性之上，視之為自己的藝術來源。他們把創作的焦點放在個人化的美學觀點、自尊、甚至獨立靈性或精神，把它們當作抗衡不公平、受壓制的社會鬥爭的樣子。現今的藝術家勇於把自我關切具體化，通過藝術探索人性各方面的意義<sup>2</sup>。當然，王之博也不例外。她依靠內心生活作為自己主要的藝術根源，對探索超越自我環境的藝術與文化同樣抱著好奇。

當被問及如何評價自己創作的方式，王之博回應道：

「我相信我作畫的其中一種方式與人類學者的研究方法極為相似，那就是實地考察。唯一不同之處：我不需要長期居住在一些陌生的文化及國家裏。我可以四處遊蕩，又可在互聯網上及書籍中涉獵圖像與文字，這些都是自己日常生活的一部分。從中發現自己日常生活的種種痕跡及細節，原來早已存在於人類文化系統之中，就像原始的社交工具及裝飾品。又或是人類學家所探討的建築風格。最關鍵的是，這些痕跡及細節之間的微妙關係，可以經時間及空間的改變而更具意義。時間是指過去及現在，而空間則是這種與別處。」<sup>3</sup>

王之博參與軍械庫藝術博覽會的十三幅作品，全都創作於2012年，以建築空間及地點為主題，也經常引用大自然。王氏以自己建造的圖像為作畫的主要元素，沒有抄襲客觀世界。

<sup>1</sup> 參考朱莉亞·安博魯斯等，《一個世紀危機：現代與傳統在二十世紀中國藝術》（紐約：古根海姆博物館，2010）。

<sup>2</sup> 呂勝、林林、高建群等主編，《30年首飾：從1979年的藝術和藝術家》（香港：Timezone B, 2011），149, 175-178頁。

<sup>3</sup> 王之博訪談（2013年1月18日）。



她的作品含有象徵性元素，但這些元素大部份都是虛構的，是藝術家根據歷史及今天的圖像加以想像及創造出來。因此，王之博把建築及雕刻的元素與自然界的現象，包括樹木、石塊及流水，並列起來。

王氏參與紐約展覽的作品，包括描繪住宅外牆的《我們只是愛美藝》、茂林花園般的《人造美昏》及偶爾較抽象及強調色彩的構圖《三個挫折》。王氏的畫作予人一種對大自然及其與建築環境的不同觀點。在這些作品中，大自然與建築的結合並不令人覺得安然，而部份作品更存在明顯的張力。在《基座》裡，構圖後方的樹木與位於前方的建築及雕刻毗連一起，給人一種格格不入的感覺。圖像裡的和諧被一種蓄意的雜亂替代了；文化分裂也令組成畫作的不同元素之間產生不協調的感覺。《無題(後院)》展示一棟現代化的房子，窗旁放置了一個烤架，圍繞四周的卻是羅馬式圓柱。王之博的畫作散發出一種刻意的雜亂、不協調的氛圍。縱然她沒有故意傳遞任何關於社會訊息，畫家至少也提供了一個寄予，表明嘗試將東、西方歷史及當代全球性的複雜文化融合一起，有一定的困難。

那些營造了當今生態及社會動盪的對衝力量，能否復和？也許藝術家在自己的畫作裡捕捉了它們和譜共存的潛在性。毫無疑問，這裡展示的作品都有一股務求達到安妥的意向，就像藝術家曾經用過的隱喻：捕捉巨浪高企都靜止的一刻。表面上，巨浪有規律地向前移動；若對衝力量旗鼓相當，當它們迎頭相撞時，將互相抵消，結果就是瞬間的靜止。王之博利用這巨浪的隱喻，帶出她的藝術哲學。她透過作品，在人類每天面對著混亂、不平衡的環境，人工建築與大自然的相互競爭中，創造出巨浪高企的靜止。在王氏的畫作中，往日的強勢標誌(古典派及文藝復興派的建築及雕刻)與當今建築交於一點，讓觀者有靜態的空間。《無題(後院)》便是其中的例子。觀者欣賞作品時，因沒有人物的存在，更能享受畫中的寧靜。或許，正如藝術家自我表述，她刻意把人物排斥於外，好讓建築物(代表人工環境)與大自然直接對話。

王之博的畫作與中國藝術文化如何拉上關係？有如中國傳統文人的畫作，王氏的風景與室內場景都是自我想像的創作，不像西方畫作般基於外來事物。那麼，她的畫作所描述的大自然，是為讓觀者聯想起傳統文人的山水畫嗎？也許是的。傳統的文人畫作着重引領觀者進入及思忖充滿山川、磐石、樹木、池水與瀑布的自然想像。其實，中國古代的帝王園林同樣企圖創造這種美麗的環境，作為一所令皇族與理想中的大自然靠近的避靜之處。皇室花園裏并非有條的建築之間，蘊藏著山石、奇異的植物，甚至是小橋流水。傳統中國的山水畫就是這樣引領觀者在不用置身其中之餘，卻可進入那個理想的自然世界。即使畫中包括人物，他們也不是主角。

王氏的畫作中沒有人物的存在，是否代表著她向傳統中國畫家人追求的寧靜安穩致敬？如果是真的，我們也找到不少相反的證據。比如說，《綠色故鄉》明顯地表達一個美麗寧靜的畫面(水池旁邊種有一株熟帶樹，中央則有供石)，但產生出來的效果，卻是一種視覺上的混亂感。這並不代表作品失败了。作品故意把觀者的注意力帶到畫中的主題：凸顯今天的混亂時勢是由不同的文化、思維、環境所引致。另一個相近的主題也在《基座》出現。位於構圖的前方噴泉前的階梯，是根據仿法國式的園藝設計，但引領至噴泉的卻是中國式樓梯。王氏畫作中的不和諧正好與傳統中國風景畫所表現自然界與人類的和諧及秩序形成直接的矛盾。

在某方面，王之博及她同輩的畫家所面對的，令人聯想起二十世紀初的一群中國畫家。他們之中包括高奇峰(1889-1933)及高劍父(1879-1951)兄弟創立的嶺南畫派。在同期的中國畫家中，高劍父的畫作以促進西方美術見稱，目的是以中國及西方藝術的綜合體為基礎，創立一種新的圖像語言(供中國前衛藝術之用)，從而反映中國社會的轉變。他的方法

包括運用西方繪畫肖像技巧、光影及線條透視於中國傳統文人作畫的筆法、用墨、調色等技巧<sup>4</sup>。

除了高氏兄弟，龐薰琹(1906-1985)及林風眠(1900-1991)等畫家曾赴法國探討馬奈、莫內、塞尚、梵谷、德蘭、高拉曼克等畫家繪畫新技法的，嘗試把東、西方美術的分歧縮短<sup>5</sup>。不同的中國畫家因著他們在巴黎及西方其他國家的經歷，而選擇把不同的藝術導向帶回祖國。當中包括前衛派的風格——後印象派、立體派、野獸派、超現實主義、達達主義，都改變了西方傳統的藝術路向。林風眠選擇把現代主義者馬蒂斯及莫迪里安尼的前衛派風格帶回中國。然而，不是全部的前衛派風格都是從西方國家而來，好像徐悲鴻(1895-1953)則鍾情於較保守的十八世紀浪漫現實主義，並以此創作構圖及肖像描繪，以抗衡中國傳統繪畫及西方現代主義的影響<sup>6</sup>。

儘管畫派把政治目的及社會批判都吸納在美學之中，但王之博的畫作則避開任何直接的政治或社會性。王氏作畫的靈感多來自古典建築及文藝復興時代的美術，她選擇尊崇較古老的西方文化，而不是那些曾經吸引二十世紀初中國藝術家的巴黎現代藝術。

這現況凸顯了如何理解不同文化藝術這個問題。不論二十世紀初的中國藝術家或是現今一代的藝術家得到西方的青睞，都遇上同一個的問題。現今的中國藝術家被接納於西方的美術世界，接觸新觀眾；但西方觀者也總會產生一個問題，就是如何連繫兩地的文化差異。近期中國藝術在西方市場上，卻不少免要面對東、西方的文化差異。中國文化藝術那些複雜堅固的根源，往往對歐美的西方觀眾來說，很難理解。

現今中國美術在西方的成功，只局限於高層次的藝術行業，包括畫廊、收藏家、拍賣行、博物館及雙年展等。它們只佔據整個市場的一小部分。到現在為止，西方廣大的觀眾群，大部分都沒有機會認識中國當代藝術。中國固有的文化及美術觀，能否在西方國家獲得長久的成功呢？這仍有待觀察。

從上文所述，王之博的畫作融合了西方及中國的美學元素。也許有人爭論，西方美術的傳統手法會削弱她作品中的中國特性。但是，中國學者許江及高士明則反駁中國畫家運用西方美術技法，是為「豐富當代的中國美術發展」<sup>7</sup>。推而論之，王之博及其他中國畫家的作品包含西方藝術技法，為西方觀眾建立了橋樑，讓他們可以更好地了解中國藝術。王之博為中國當代美術發出了她獨到而清新的聲音。她創造的畫像美輪美奐，同時也為尋找中國美術的方向提供一條可繼續探索的路。

柯爾斯 L. 卡特博士多年來處於美國及中國教學，是著名的哲學系美學教授。他的論文多次被收錄在中國大學的學術期刊，當中包括北京大學出版社等。卡特博士現於北京一所中國當代美術團體任國際策展人。二零零八年三月，卡特博士被委任為一個專門研究中美兩國文化及教育交流的政府代表團之一。

<sup>4</sup>Christina Chu,《後印象派及其追隨者：中國西方的藝術革命》，載於朱莉亞·安德魯斯及 Kuyi Shen,《危機中的一個世紀：現代與傳統在二十世紀中國的藝術》(紐約：古根海姆博物館基金會, 1998), 68頁。

<sup>5</sup>高英聖,《西方風格繪畫運動與二十世紀早期中國教育改革》，載於《新亞學術通訊》第四卷(1993), 99頁。

<sup>6</sup>見邁克爾·沙利文,《二十世紀中國藝術和藝術》(柏克萊及倫敦：加州大學出版社, 1994), 58, 71, 72頁。Kuyi Shen,《西方的誘惑》，載於朱莉亞·安德魯斯及 Kuyi Shen,《危機中的一個世紀：現代與傳統在二十世紀中國的藝術》(紐約：古根海姆博物館基金會, 1998), 177, 178頁。

<sup>7</sup>高士明及許江, 載於 Lee Ambrosy 文章「全球概念」與中國當代藝術的境遇,《藝術論壇》, Com. Cn, SinoPop (2010年7月10日)。

## Standing Wave

By Dr. Curtis L. Carter

Wang Zhibo's appearance in the 2013 New York Armory Show, under the auspices of the Edouard Malingue Gallery of Hong Kong, marks her first venture into the Western Art World apart from a group showing in Antwerp, Belgium in 2009. Born in Zhejiang in 1981, Wang lives and works in Hangzhou, China. She earned an MFA degree in oil painting at the China Academy of Art in 2008. Since then, her paintings have been shown in an impressive list of museum and gallery exhibitions in China. For example, since a showing in the Chengdu Biennial in 2005, Wang has participated in group exhibitions at The Shanghai Museum (2007), the Today Art Museum in Beijing and the Nanjing QingHe Contemporary Art Museum (2008), the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Art (2009) and the China Young Artists Project in Beijing in 2012, as well as in selected private Chinese galleries in various Chinese cities.

In making the journey to New York, Wang joins the global migration of artists from East to West, where Chinese contemporary art is welcomed into the main stream of art being shown in New York galleries and museums as well as elsewhere in European venues. This movement, which began in the 1980s, is a reversal of the direction of global art from West to East that occurred intermittently throughout the Twentieth century and beyond.

Like many talented emerging Chinese artists today, Wang Zhibo is in search of a visual language to explore certain complexities of contemporary art and human life. Her life span from 1981 to the present marks a period of tumultuous changes in Chinese art and culture, alongside global changes in the world at large.<sup>1</sup> The changes for life in China encompass the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution and also the influences of globalization that brought western art and the emergence of avant-garde practices into Chinese art. A main question facing Wang and others of her generation is how to maintain some sense of Chineseness in the art while also benefitting from the global influences arriving from the West.

What then are the likely roots of Wang's art? A notable portion of today's artists look inward to the subjective as the wellspring of their art. These artists focus their creative output on more personal aesthetic characteristics concerned with self-esteem, and possibly spiritual autonomy, as a wedge against oppressive societal struggles. For example, artists today do not shy away from externalizing subjective concerns, using their art to explore a range of expression that bear on the meaning of humanity.<sup>2</sup> It would not be a surprise to find Wang among those who rely on the inner life as a principal source of their art, notwithstanding her interest in investigating the art and

<sup>1</sup> See Julia Andrews et al, *A Century of Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of China* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, Soho, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Editors-in-chief: Lv Peng, Zhu Zhu, Kao Chienhui, *Thirty Years of Adventures: Art and Artists from 1979* (Hong Kong: Timezone 8, 2011), 149, 175-178.



culture beyond her immediate environs.

When asked to comment on her methods for creating art, Wang replied:

"I think I am correct in saying that one of my working methods is similar to that of an anthropologist. Like he or she, I engage in on-the-spot investigation. The difference between us, though, is that I do not need to leave China and live in a different place with an unknown culture and nation for an extended period of time. I can investigate through travelling as well as learning from pictures and words found on the internet and in books. I can then combine these findings with elements from my daily life, which is interesting enough, I think. I believe that the traces and details of daily life are as central to the system of human culture as the original social tools, ornamentations, and architectural styles that are researched by anthropologists. The most important point is the relationship between these traces and details. These can be traced meaningfully in time and space, where time refers to the past and now, and space refers to the here and elsewhere."<sup>3</sup>

The 13 works in Wang's Armory exhibition created in 2012 feature architectural spaces and places with frequent references to nature. In these works, Wang focuses mainly on the constructed pictorial elements that comprise her paintings using these to refer to, without copying, objects in the external world. The paintings contain representational elements but the representations are mainly, if not entirely, fictional in the sense that they are creations of the artist's imagination using pictorial elements drawn from history and the present. In this context, Wang juxtaposes architectural and sculptural elements with images of natural forms, including trees, stones and flowing water.

The spaces explored in Wang's paintings for the New York show include residential facades as in *We just love beautiful views*, garden-like spaces with trees as in *Artificial Twilight*, and the occasional more abstract pictorial space emphasizing color as in *Three Setbacks*. Wang's paintings offer a different perspective on nature and its relation to the built environment. The marriage of nature and architecture in these works is not sanguine. In some of the paintings there is evident tension between architecture and nature. The trees set in the park as the background of the composition in *Bases* appear uncomfortably adjoined with the architecture and sculpture in the foreground. Harmony inside the pictorial space is replaced by a sense of premeditated disorder. Cultural disjunctions also contribute to the sense of discord between elements forming the paintings. In *Untitled (Backyard)*, a modern-looking house with a metal grill over a window is framed with adjacent Roman style columns. Indeed, a distinct element of cacophony exudes throughout the paintings. If there is no overt social message, there is at least the hint that all is not well in the complexities manifest in our attempts to merge historical and contemporary global cultures of East and West.

Can the opposing forces that contribute to ecological and social unrest today be reconciled? Perhaps the potential for harmonizing these forces exists in the stillness captured in the imagination of the artist. Throughout the images shown here there

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Wang Zhibo on 18 January 2013.



is an unmistakable striving for tranquility that the artist likens metaphorically to the stillness captured in a standing wave. The wave appears to be constantly moving forward, but when the two moving forces responsible for the wave are of equal strength, but operating in opposite directions, they cancel each other out. The result is then a momentary state of stillness. Wang finds in this metaphor of the wave the psychological concept underlying her work as an artist. In her paintings, she aims to create the stillness of a standing wave in the midst of disorder and imbalances found in the everyday human environments where architecture and nature compete as opposing forces. The forces of the past (Classical and Renaissance architecture and sculpture) and the architectural present also converge in Wang's paintings in ways that invite reflection. See, for example, *Untitled (Backyard)*. In part, the quietude that one experiences in viewing these works is heightened by the absence of people. Perhaps, as the artist hints, she intentionally absents people from her pictorial spaces to allow the architecture representing the built environment and nature to carry their own revelations.

How are Wang's paintings connected to Chinese art and culture? As in the traditional Chinese paintings of the Literati, the landscapes and interiors in Wang's paintings are creations of the mind, rather than representations of external nature as it might appear in western paintings. Are the references to nature in her paintings intended to recollect in the minds of the viewers the nature tradition found in the paintings of the Chinese Literati artists? Perhaps in part. Recall, for instance, that pictorial space in the Literati tradition of painting was intended to invite the viewers to enter into and contemplate the imagined spaces of nature filled with mountains, rocks, trees as well as ponds and waterfalls. Indeed, the imperial gardens of enlightened Chinese rulers sought to create such an aesthetic environment as a refuge to keep them as close as possible to idealized nature. The imperial gardens included an orderly arrangement of architecture embellished with rocks, exotic plants and trees, even flowing streams of water. Traditional Chinese brush and ink paintings extend to the viewer an invitation to enter into and contemplate the beauties of an idealized natural landscape without actually being present in the picture space. Even where human figures appear in the paintings, they do not dominate.

Is the absence of people in Wang's paintings perhaps a way of paying covert homage to the peaceful tranquility sought by traditional Chinese artists in their art? If so, there are never the less contrary forces at work here. For example, in the painting *Green Fault*, the elements ostensibly intended to contribute to the tranquil beauty of a scene (a tropical tree placed near to a pool with scholars' rocks placed in the center), end up creating a sense of visual disorder. This is not a failure in the composition. Rather, the composition draws attention to a main theme in the artist's paintings: to show the presence of disorder in today's world brought about by bringing together in the environment, and also in our minds, disparate elements of culture. A related theme appears in the painting *Bases*. The steps leading to a fountain in the foreground of the park beyond echo French landscape design, while the steps leading to the fountain carry a Chinese design. The expressions of disharmony in Wang's paintings seem in direct contrast with the traditional celebration of harmony and order existing between nature and persons reflected in traditional Chinese landscape paintings.

In some respects, the situation facing Wang and her generation recalls the circumstances faced by the generation of Chinese artists in the early part of the twentieth century that included the Lingnan School of Chinese painting established by the brothers Gao Qifeng (1889-1933) and Gao Jianfu (1879-1951). Gao Jianfu's art was influential in the advancement of Western art ideas among other Chinese artists of the period. His aim was to create a new pictorial language for the Chinese *avant-garde* based on a synthesis of Chinese and Western art suitable to express the changes taking place in Chinese society. His approach involved attending to portrait painting, lighting and shade, and linear perspective found in Western art and applying these elements to Chinese brush strokes, composition, inking and coloring in the manner of the Literati tradition of painting.<sup>4</sup>

These painters as well as others, such as Pang Xunqin (1906-1985) and Lin Fengmian (1900-1991) ventured to Paris to explore the new options for paintings including the individual styles offered by Manet, Monet, Cezanne, van Gogh, Derain and Vlaminck and others, in an attempt to bridge the gaps between Chinese and Western art.<sup>5</sup> The types of Western influences Chinese artists chose to bring back to China based on their experiences in Paris and elsewhere in the West varied considerably. Among the choices was a range of then *avant-garde* styles - Post-impressionism, Cubism, Fauvism, Surrealism, Dada - all at work changing the course of Western traditional art. Lin Fengmian (1900-1991) chose to follow the modernists Matisse and Modigliani in bringing *avant-garde* modernism to China. Not all of the influences coming from the West could be considered *avant-garde* though. For example, Xu Beihong (1895-1953) favored a conservative Eighteenth century romantic realism. He used it to create landscape and portrait paintings in opposition to both Chinese traditional painting and the Western modernist influences.<sup>6</sup>

Unlike the Lingnan School and its followers, who chose to incorporate political aims and social critique in their aesthetic, Wang eschews any direct political or social aims in her art. Taking a longer look backward into Western art, she finds inspiration in Classical architecture and Renaissance art, choosing to pay tribute to these older Western cultures instead of the Parisian modern artists that attracted the attention of Chinese artists earlier in the twentieth century.

This point raises the question of understanding art across cultures. Both the Chinese artists of the early Twentieth century and the present generation of artists seeking attention in the west face this issue. It is also the case that as Chinese artists today enter the Western art world, seeking new audiences, their western viewers must address the issue of how to bridge the cultural differences represented in such transitions. Current presentations of Chinese art in western markets require that the audience be confronted with the issue of cultural differences between East and West implicit in the shift from a Chinese culture with complex and rich artistic roots not easily accessible to western audiences in the United States and Europe.

At the present time, the success of Chinese art in the West is mainly confined to the high end of the art world consisting of galleries, collectors, auction houses, museums, and biennales that reach a small segment of the population. There is not yet a wide

<sup>4</sup> Christina Chu, "The Lingnan School and Its Followers: Radical Innovations Southern China," in Julia F. Anderson and Kuiyi Shen, *A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth Century China* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Foundation, 1998), 68.

<sup>5</sup> Mayching Kao, "The Beginning of Western-style Painting Movement in Relationship to Reforms of Education in early Twentieth-Century China," *NASA Asia Academic Bulletin* 4 (1983): 99.

<sup>6</sup> See Michael Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth Century China* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1996), 59, 71, 72. And Kuiyi Shen, "The Lure of the west," in Julia F. Anderson and Kuiyi Shen, *A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth-Century China* (New York: The Guggenheim Museum, 1998), 177, 178.

appreciation or understanding of Chinese contemporary art among the western populous at large, Can the aesthetic values that are grounded in a Chinese cultural understanding accomplish longer term success in the West? This is a matter that remains to be seen.

From what has been said already, it is clear that Wang's art incorporates elements of both Western and Chinese art. Some might argue that the inclusion of Western art conventions diminishes the Chineseness of the art. On the other hand, Chinese scholars Xu Jiang and Gao Shiming have argued that Chinese artists' employment of Western art practices serves mainly to enrich the cultivation of contemporary Chinese art.<sup>7</sup> Following this line of argument, the presence of western art practices in Wang's and other Chinese artists' work may indeed serve to bridge the understanding of their art for western audiences. Wang brings to Chinese contemporary art her own voice, original and fresh. The images are beautifully constructed and mindfully provoking of thoughts about a direction for Chinese art that invites further explorations.

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<sup>7</sup> Gao Shiming and Xu Jiang cited in Lee Ambrozy, "Reading Globalization and Chinese Contemporary Art", *ArtForum*, July 2010.