The Artist Statement of Wang Qingsong

(Photography, video, sculpture and oil works, 1996-2026)

Part One: Hysterical Reality （Photography）1997-2024

Part Two: Challenging Reality （Video）2008-2014

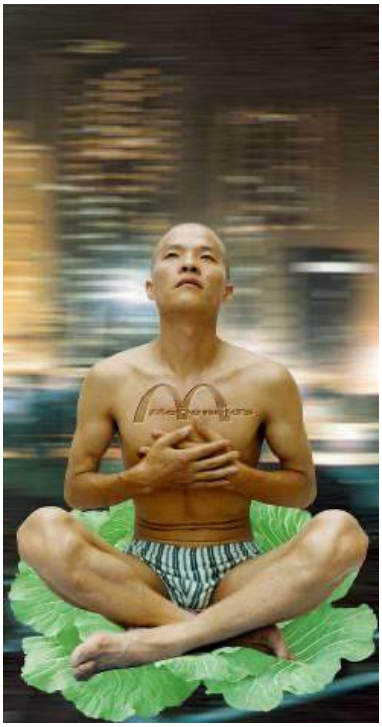
Part Three: Mundane Reality （Sculpture）2007-2008

Part Four: Personal Reality (Oil Works) (1995-1997)

Part Five: Introverted Reality (Oil works) 2008-2012

Part One: Hysterical Reality **---** Photo works (1997-2024)

Today's China has experienced a dynamic evolution from its traditionally agronomical roots into a commercial superpower. Economic development has taken top priority in governmental policy and as the nation evolves, its people evolve even more drastically. The citizenry appears full of aspiration and satisfaction with the achievements of reform and infrastructural development but find trouble introspecting toward change from within. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the grand morphological trends taking place. As exemplified by the Chinese motto, "One change a year, one big change in three years, and one unidentifiable transformation in five years," today's China is a creature wholly of its own. This rich contemporary nation provides me with a huge resource for artistic inspiration. I desire to let my camera narrate these fluctuant times. Through its lens the motions invisible to the public eye become suddenly bare.



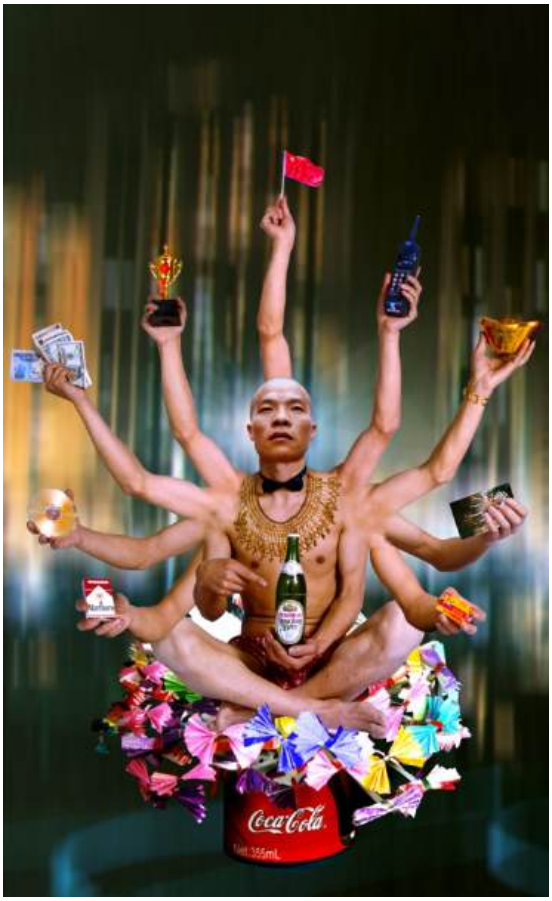
Thinker, 180x90cm,1998

Catcher, 180x90cm, 1998

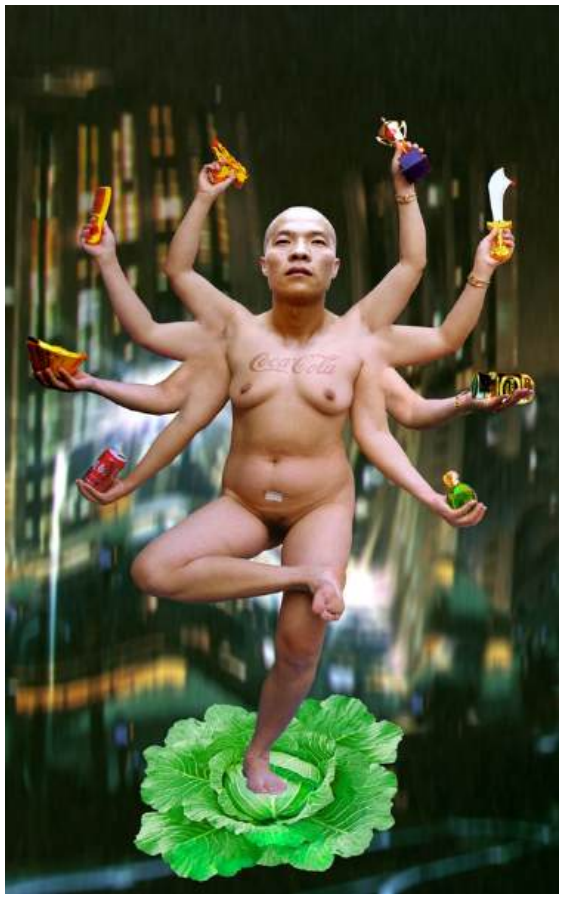
Prisoner, 180x95cm, 1998

A nation with China's immense population must feed, transport, shelter, and clothe an entire fifth of the world's population. The interaction of these national necessities and the superfluity of consumerism create a fascinating interplay within contemporary China. Thus, with housing trends that moniker new developments, "Chinese Manhattan", "Oriental Versailles", and "Modern SOHO", one cannot help but notice the latent social contradictions of need and want. Likewise, food has received its own share of irony, with the arrival of McDonald's and Pizza Hut in China. It is well known that in the US these places carry reputations of easy affordable dining, but in a newly consumerist culture their roles are redefined. Here in China, they are wholly fetishized, becoming high class cuisine as well as notorious points of social gathering, whether on a date or a serious dinner. These forms of quasi-religiosity surrounding western materialism, and the endless dialectics brought about by Chinese culture and Euro-American commercialism developed my thinking for these photographs. These notions can be found in "***Thinker***" (1998), "***Prisoner***" (1998), "***Catcher***" (1998), "***Requesting Buddha series***" (1999), "***Can I Cooperate with You***?" (2000), "***Look Up! Look Up!***" (2000), "***Bath House***" (2000), "***Forum***" (2001), and "***Beggar***" (2001).

Buddhism, the quintessence of Chinese traditional culture, has accompanied our civilization for thousands of years. It is a belief system that comforts as well as improves our people in character and in feeling. The Buddha used to save the suffering through its propagation of selflessness and charity. However, in the current commercial society, the respectable Buddha has also changed. It reaches out its hands not with charity and compassion but instead with an insatiable lust for money and material goods. The "***Requesting Buddha***" Series (1999) is the faithful representation of such a phenomenon, overflowing with desire, hypocrisy, and exaggeration.



Requesting Buddha No.1, 180x110cm, 1999



Requesting Buddha No.2, 180x110cm, 1999

"***Court Ladies with Flowers***", a classical piece in Tang dynasty, displayed the extravagant decadence of the imperial court. However, this portrayal did not shy away from criticism displaying the detachment from reality necessary within privilege. These ecstasies were merely the superfluous self-ascribed illusions of the listless wealthy. That is precisely the point in which I found interest in this work. With the rampant consumerism going on, pop culture trends spread fast, we see a lot of fake nouveau-riche who dress themselves with in-style jewelry and fashion brands. They look fabulous, confident, and happy. But inside their heart, they must feel very timid that their finances all come to this. It is obvious why I entitle this work as "New Women". When women were liberated, they were confronted with a realm of fresh difficulties. They need to have a fantastic outlook, sustainable heart, welcoming tough positions, and harrowing circumstances. In fact, most exterior appearances are fake and fabricated. Often, behind the facade lies suffering and worry. This begs the question of whether our women truly stand as "modern" or "liberated"?

New Women, 120x220cm, 2000

Court Ladies with Flowers, 46x180cm, Zhou Fang, Tang Dynasty, collection of Liaoning Museum.

"***Can I Cooperate with You***" was influenced by the Tang-Dynasty court artisan Yan Li Ben entitled "*Sedan Chariot Figure*". The original painting portrays the political marriage of Tang-Dynasty Emperor Taizong giving the beloved Princess Wencheng to the Master of Tibet. This is one of the only paintings depicting an act of diplomacy from early Chinese history. Chinese people are proud of that historical moment, as well as the world-renowned prowess of Tang China. I reapplied this historical painting to a current reality, yet I repositioned the major components. In the original, the Chinese emperor (enlarged to show his supremacy) was sitting on the sedan while the foreign envoys came to pay tribute to him (minimized to show less importance). In the new piece, a foreigner (British diplomat), representing commercial and colonial power, sits on his tricycle while the Chinese people come to promise cooperation and friendship. This photo to me represents Chinese diplomacy in today's global market.

Sedan Chariot Figure, 38.5x129.6cm, Tang Dynasty, by Yan Liben

Can I cooperate with you? 120x200cm, 2000

Finding Fun, 120x150cm, 2000

"***Finding Fun***" appears to be a reinterpretation of an old painting but is in fact a greater conglomerate of my own observations. It reflects my own opinion on the fiscally minded professional. Those whose efforts exist entirely in relation to profit. Money never can buy happiness. Nowadays everything is considered in terms of "finding fun." To tint this work with sentiments of China's old literati, I change the color of the photo into cold tones, echoing the cold hypocrisy of my people's psyche.

I remembered that when I was a child, I would often go to the public baths with friends. Most homes did not contain their own bath. Back then, the "bathroom" was the place where children played and had fun. I would swim as if in a pool whilst in the bathtub. When I grew up, China had experienced dramatic changes through global assimilation and modernization. Rich families installed bathrooms, electricity, and gas water heaters at home. The public bathhouses have begun disappearing from our lives. However, they are being reconstructed and refurbished by people who have an eye for their commercial value. These public bath houses are reborn as fancy "Bathing Centers" offer services of all varieties, such as manicure, pedicure, massage, fine dining, and even karaoke. They have adapted to the lust for consumption. Wealthy professionals even use them as centers of negotiation and business. Thus, bathhouses also become centers for the sex trade, as that is one of the easiest ways to bring in high profit. This fad, although utterly unnatural and obscene as a Chinese cultural item becomes ever more popular in the modern nation. I have placed my models as iconic of this trend in "***Bath House***."

Bath House, 120x150cm, 2000

What haunts my mind more than anything is the status and fate of Chinese intellectualism throughout its history. In our empty modern era, people have cast their doubt on the heroes and ideals of the past. I wanted to capture this loss of hope replaced with a hoarding desire for money and power. To compare the past and present, I re-appropriated the old and well-known masterpiece "*Night Revel of Han Xizai*", one of the most celebrated pieces of traditional Chinese figure painting. The piece reflected the turbulent post-Tang Dynasty atmosphere reeling in the torrents of political change. Depicted is the life of the worried imperial official and respected intellectual, Han Xizai. He was powerless in realizing his ideals of Chinese stability and reconstruction. To "cleanse" himself, he chose to escape through numbing pleasures and "indulge in" comfort. After several centuries, even though the Chinese dynasties have changed frequently, the status of the intellectual has remained the same. With some thoughts on this question, I created "***Night Revel of Lao Li***". It is a portrait of contemporary Chinese reality, displaying the situation of contemporary intellectuals.

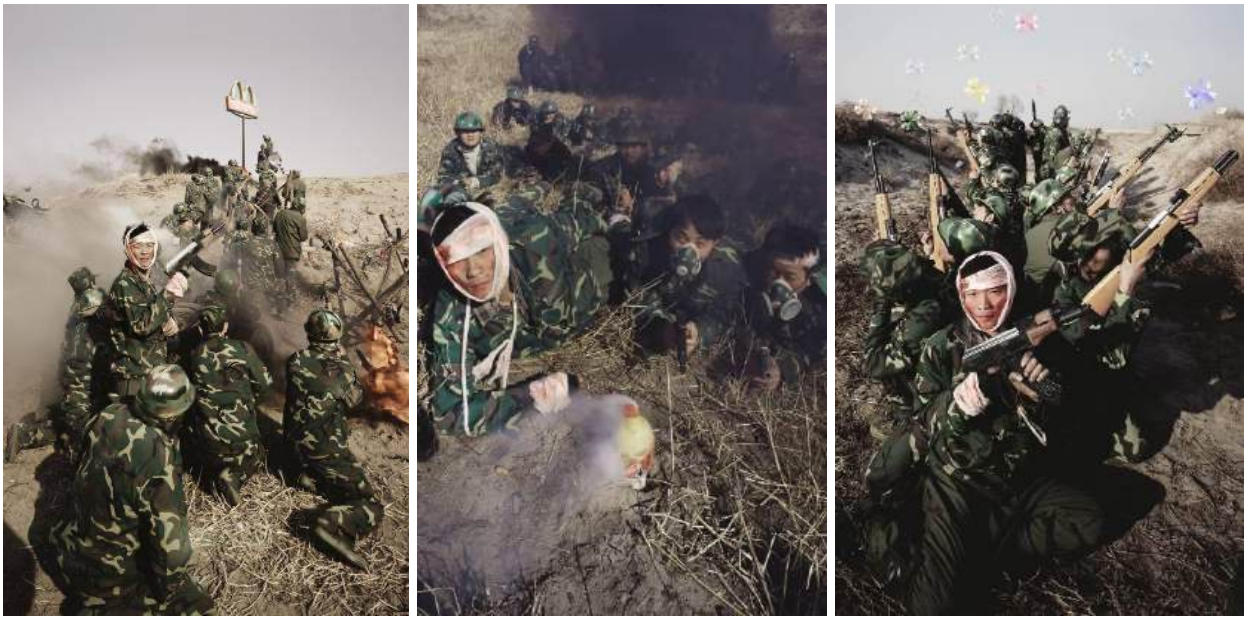
Night Revels of Lao Li, 120x960cm, by Wang Qingsong, 2000

Detail of ***Night Revels of Han Xizai***, by Gu Hongzhong, 28.7x 335.5cm, Tang Dynasty, collection at Palace Museum.

The collection of making cultural references to Tang Dynasty masterpieces is more than an emulation or homage to the great art works in the classics. It is more because of the connection to the historical moments. Tang Dynasty is the most important times in Chinese history when the supreme sovereignty and power took precedence over many other issues. However, there hinted at some hidden drawbacks, for example, people tended to look for more funny and indulgent lifestyles, rather than seeking for more considerations to be prepared for less prosperous times. So, the

comparisons are drawn between the historical pieces and new scenes are recreated to highlight the glossed-over concerns and worries.

The "***Another Battle***" Series (2001) is influenced by the images of patriotism and heroism heavily displayed in the old films that I watched in childhood. The heroes gave their lives for the liberation of New China in movies like "*Landmine War*", "*Guerrilla War*", "*Three Liberation Wars*", etc. I used to dream about becoming a soldier. Up until now, this dream has not been realized. Nowadays economic reconstruction is like a war in of itself. A war that progresses so rapidly and intensely to represent military campaigns. In this war, we must face contradictions of modernity and history, as well as national culture and global economy. Thus, I call these contradictions "***Another Battle***". In this battle, we too are "defending our country", without artillery blasts or gunshots taking place. I portray myself as a defeated commander. Of course, there is no winner at all in this battle.



Another Battle Series #6, #4, #1, 180x120cm each, 2001 (8 pieces in total)

One of the more striking scenes in the streets of Beijing, is the gathering of beggars around foreign embassies and consulates where the rich people of China and the world alike come and go. When I came to Beijing and saw this in 1993, I felt a severe emotional pain at the sight. So, I did a performance, called "*Beggar*" (1993-1994). For three days, I walked on the street in Sanlitun, where foreign embassies and bars were located, and asked for money from foreigners only and did not give any reasons when they asked. However, this failed, and I did not get any money nor sympathy.

In 2001, I put this memory into a photo piece, and called it "***Beggar***." However, by 2001, my perspective was wholly different. Besides the significance, we give to paper currencies, I also want to satirize the pompous indifference the rich direct at the poor. This is the situation occurring with China's own people as the gap widens between respective classes.

Beggar, 120x200cm, 2001

Forum was triggered by China's "achievements" in 2001. Our citizens were elated with our entry into the WTO, the honor of hosting the 2008 Olympic games, and our qualification for the football World Cup. All these "achievements" seemed to convince people that we had reason to be a confident nation and people Therefore many cosmopolitan cities organized international forums on the environment, population, economic growth, etc. "***Forum***" aims at expressing my skepticism toward the superficiality around creating a spectacle out of China's daily reality. Why do we feel the need to make every achievement seem bigger and better than it truly is?

Forum, 120x210cm, 2001

To express the cadences of my reflection on our past, my consideration of the present, and my depiction of the future, I find that urban government sculpture iconography suits these needs best.

However, I alter these sculptures to pose doubt about whether our achievements are what they seem. Embodying this “doubt”, I pose myself as a bystander in the triptych work entitled “***Past, Present, and Future***” (2001). The models are smeared with mud as well as silver and gold powder, hinting at the transition from revolutionary times to the age of modernization. The entire work is also alluding to the future we hope for. The models’ poses imitate those of the monumental Communist state sculptures still found in some cities in China. I hope this work achieves the effect of reflecting upon the archaic past, reconstructed present, and wholesome future.

Past, Present and Future, 175x800cm, 2001

In 2002, I photographed two triptychs called "***Pre-Incarnation***" and "***Incarnation***". Here I have three live models mockingly imitate ancient sculptures to represent our unique treatment of the past. Here we see the ironic contradiction of praising the past whilst simultaneously destroying its remnants in the present. Such skewed beliefs can be found heavily in our present education system.

Preincarnation, 190x (120+110+120) cm, 2002

Incarnation, 190x(120+115+120)cm,2002

Nowadays children are excessively focused on obtaining popular consumer goods and fashionable merchandise. So, in my scroll-photos of "***Knickknack Peddler***" (2002) and "***Preschool***" (2002) as well as "***Follow me***" in 2003, I parody the ridiculous and self-contradictory beliefs and actions within the Chinese educational system. In these photos, I portray a peddler selling various foreign goods. My role is that of an old man that nurtures new beliefs within the minds of new generations, a village teacher who teaches them popular slogans and bits of wisdom in Chinese and English alike.

Knickknack Peddler,120x400cm, 2002

Knickknack Peddler, 25.5x70.4cm, Li Song, Song Dynasty, Collection of the Palace Museum (Beijing)

The folk history of "knickknack peddlers" is a very long one in China. Itinerant peddlers selling their wares even today often wander endlessly from one place to the next in cities and villages alike. Historically, they served as a valuable source of information for locals to learn about the outside world. They alone spread information to the far countryside for there was no telephone, cable, or email. Due to their mobility, "Peddlers" could act as spies during China's revolutionary periods. There are many historical examples of ancient paintings depicting a "Knickknack Peddler" on which my photo is based. Many ancient painters have expressed their feelings towards life through portrayals of the "Peddler". For example, the painting that inspired my work is from the Song Dynasty, wherein the painter aimed at expressing the joys of childhood and the worries and happiness of the peddler. I replaced the ancient items with popular contemporary food, brands, etc. Such "Peddler" that used to be selling convenient goods to kids on the streets are disappearing from our society, despite them being a symbol of societal reconstruction. These peddlers are being replaced "super-markets" all over the world. Kids have lost fun to have direct interactions with the street peddlers. They need to explore on the stacks of goods or search online which become an interior closed experience, lacking human touch and engagement. Maybe soon, robots will take

care of human needs. People are replaced by robots which steal the enjoyment of connecting with the process of looking for, finding, and engaging with the product or even making the product by hand. Craftsmanship will be completely taken over by 3-D technology.

Preschool,120x160cm, 2002

Continuing the reflection upon our destruction of traditional culture, the gigantic models portrayed by three live persons in "***Three Graces***" ironically display the praise of the past whilst unconsciously damaging our history. As said before, nowhere else are these notions better displayed than in our present education system in China. Today children are mainly focused on acquiring popular consumer goods and fashionable merchandise. So, in "***Preschool***" I attempt to parody these ridiculous and self-contradictory beliefs. I hope to consider the ramifications of the well-known Chinese slogan "Education Should Start off from Children".

Three Graces, 120x160cm, 2002

Art Express,120x200cm, 2002

In both art and economy, we see an intense intermingling between foreign culture and the residual effects our own traditions. In "***Art Express*** ", inspired by the many famous international art biennales, people are so eager to get onto the “Art Express” busses. Clearly visible on the signposts are Venice Biennale, Documenta, Sao Paulo Biennale, Istanbul Biennial destination signs. I also add “Qingsong Biennale”, “Songzhuang Biennale” (Songzhuang is an artist colony in east Beijing), a “Biennale of Hell”, and a “Biennale of Heaven”. Nowadays, across the world, there are more than hundreds of biennales which boosts the art economy to some extent.

Port, 120x380cm, 2002

In "***Port*** ", I capture several people standing around and on top of a large boat. On the boat, there is a red flag, as well as a banner of the United Nations, both hanging from poles. Amongst them I put many triangular banners with famous international commercial brands, supposedly representing the victory of conquest. The gaze of the people in “***Port***” looks ahead, despite being surrounded by heavy dark smoke foreshadowing a dark future.

Another possible scenario is portrayed in "***Sentry Post***" where "refugees" try to push through the sentry post comprised entirely of tin cans displaying famous international brands. I stand as a border guard on high alert, holding a Coca-Cola can as a grenade. In “Sentry Post’, I built a barbed-wire border line fence strewn with foreign products, where the products look like explosives, then I set them on fire, preventing outsiders from entering the city.

Sentry Post, 120x680cm, 2002

I took the name of my work “***Follow Me***” from the first and hugely popular English language-teaching program shown by CCTV (China State Television). The show began in 1982, during the early years of economic reconstruction. This English teaching series had sixty programs, which were repeatedly broadcast for twelve years. It had 10 million viewers and sold over 30 million textbooks, setting a Guinness record for a language learning program. Many Chinese people got a glimpse of the western lifestyle from “Follow Me.” Farmers, workers, soldiers, and students, even monks at Lama Temples, enjoyed watching the program. The show provided a window into what foreigners eat and wear and how they live. Many people in Mainland China consider “*Follow Me*” as the Bible for learning oral English. For example, one young soldier in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, was featured on CCTV Headline News as a national hero because he studied English so well. In the 1980s, “*Follow Me*” helped Chinese people realize their dreams of going overseas to further their studies. The English teaching TV program’s significance went far beyond learning English. It helped the Chinese learn about the West and the world just as China emerged from its closed-door policy.

Follow Me, 120x300cm, 2003

In the 1980s, I also enjoyed watching “*Follow Me*” while I was studying in high school. However, I could never keep up with the program. Twenty years later, Chinese economic reform has brought many dramatic changes to the country. China now has a myriad of exchanges with global industries from all over the world. China hosted the 2008 Olympics in Beijing and the 2010 World Expo in

Shanghai. At least on the surface, China is communicating well with the rest of the world. However, when I look at myself, I see a “backward” guy, still failing to speak English. Such thoughts inspired me to create my photograph “***Follow Me***” In 2003. For the shoot, I constructed a huge four-meter wide and eight-meter-long blackboard in the Beijing Film Studio. We scribbled various Chinese and English slogans and phrases referencing change in Chinese history and culture. The content was mainly taken from Chinese English-training textbooks and manuals. From the early TV series of “*Follow Me*” to my photograph “***Follow Me***”, it has been my dream to realize the well-known slogan: “China Walks towards the World, and the World Learns about China”.

In the winter of 2003, I created the “*Fake Flowers*” series. The primary flower I used was the peony, a popular symbol in China of national brilliance and prosperity, as well as our national flower. I made the petals out of fresh vegetables and raw slices of mutton and beef. I shot one set when they were nice and fresh, and then later reshot them after placing the “peonies” in a deep freeze for a week. This work records a literal depiction of the transition from prosperity to decay, along with my hope of freezing such materialistic decadence which once was pure fleshy desire.

Ethereal Beauty and Auspicious Snow, 120x280cm, diptych, 2003

Red Peony, White Peony and Frosted Peony*,* 240x110cm x 3 pieces, 2003

In the summer of 2003, I created "***China Mansion"*** (120x1200cm) and "***Romantique"*** (120x650cm). Both works were shot in the 19,000-square foot Beijing Film Studio. This studio formerly hosted important film crews, including those for the model revolutionary operas during the Cultural Revolution and more recently Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill*. Today, the largest film studio in China has regrettably been torn down to make room for commercially ambitious real-estate development projects.

China Mansion*,* 120x1200cm, 2003

"China Mansion" sums up my perception of Chinese social reality during the current stage of globalization. China has been very enthusiastic about inviting foreign experts in economics, technology, architecture, and culture to give support and guidance to its modernization programs. These foreign specialists helped create economic opportunities and introduce alternative points of view for China. However, the culture clash creates many social contradictions. This phenomenon triggered me to shoot and direct "***China Mansion***." In the staging of "***China Mansion***" I invited models to play the parts of foreign guests, mimicking poses in paintings by Ingres, Courbet, Manet, Gauguin, Klein, Boucher, Rembrandt, Rubens, Man Ray, and several other artists. I wanted my models to communicate across centuries and at the same time create a discourse with Chinese culture, to create certain amiable relationships. It seems my hopes were in vain. It's easy to see my visible confusion as I stand at the door greeting guests, as they enter "***China Mansion***," filled with the chaos of both Chinese and western imagery across the ages. The host is at once a conservative, but also a fashionista. On the left of the photograph, the host wears a banner of welcome. But on the right, the armed guard, like a terra-cotta soldier, looks like a thief, preventing the honorable guests from freely circulating and instead forcing them to leave something valuable behind in the host's "***China Mansion***."

Romantique*,* 120x650cm, 2003

Detail of ***Romantique***

In “***Romantique,”*** one seems to walk into a land that is one part the heaven of Christian doctrine and the other a pastoral Chinese garden. The decor is made up of cheap artificial greenery and flowers. The little ponds in the paradise emit a light mist created from dry ice. Viewers can imagine a false happiness in this fabricated paradise. Models act out the poses from western masterpieces by Masaccio, Velasquez, Botticelli, Raphael, and Matisse. There’s a Chinese golden Buddha, beautiful princesses, as well as livestock. To create conflict, I juxtapose a western girl with a Chinese man and his daughter, highlighting the potential conflicts of international dialogue. These people are very happy, peaceful, and without desire. Like “***China Mansion***”, the imagery, and relations between the subjects of “***Romantique***” are manufactured and forced, embodying a latent chaos and confusion ever-present within fabrications of happiness, and especially within man-made utopias. For me such fabricated ideals are like a daydream, a bubble of momentary lived fantasy.

“***Competition***” focuses on the power of advertisements and the misconceptions that they create. For this photo, I constructed a chaotic backdrop where over 20 people are depicted in a frenzy of competition. Some are even fist fighting while jostling for ad positioning on a huge billboard; the struggle for the most optimal outdoor ad placement is associated deeply with power and influence. The struggle for ad placement is not unlike a battlefield, strewn with casualties after a combat for power. Today one brand wins, and the next day its competitor will replace it with even better positioning. Every single day new ads go up and old ones fall, bound to be scattered in pieces and discarded on the ground under newly erected billboard advertisements.

Competition,170x300cm, 2004

In “***Competition***”, I constructed a huge wall that stood about 14 meters high and 40 meters across, and then posted on it over 600 pieces of paper (110x90cm each) on which I wrote in traditional Chinese calligraphy style and in felt tip pen or magic marker. On them are a random selection of slogans and phrases from the advertisements that bombard us every day. These ads include both domestic and international information about companies and brands, such as home rentals, educational programs, restaurants, foot massage, etc. Everything is advertised, from items as big as

airplanes (e.g. BOEING) or as small as vinegar and condoms. On this gigantic wall, I portray the fight for advertising as fierce as a struggle for military power, with inevitable casualties on the battlefield. I have also included some of the most famous brands that proliferate China, such as Shell, McDonald's, Durex, Starbuck's, along with a few of the anecdotes behind them and the misunderstandings that arise in translation. Altogether, I've used around 3000 varieties of products and services on my wall to show the effect of the mass advertising campaign that surrounds us.

In terms of form and content, the outdoor advertising onslaught is not unlike the big character posters ("Da Zi Bao") posted by competing factions during the Cultural Revolution. In the past, the streets were hung with posters from struggles over political beliefs. Now the struggle is over financial power and profit margins. Advertisements for items consume our vision like a rash growing out of control across our public spaces.

***Billboard**,* 170x300cm, 2004

In "***Billboard***" (170x300cm, 2004), I continue my investigation of the power of ads and commercial images. I reproduce a huge billboard that reads "Art Works of Wang Qingsong" in gigantic bold letters, in homage to the huge advertising billboards that line the Second and Third Ring Roads around Beijing. Life goes on under the shadow of these huge billboards. We can see some passers-by reading these gigantic ads while others pay them no heed. Instead, they play chess, buy vegetables, or otherwise carry on with their day-to-day activities. Do we recreate our lives to follow the images depicted in the ads? How much power do these words exert on our mind and eyes? I am interested in the physical and mental space that lies somewhere in between advertisements and the reality of our lives.

Tramp, 120x190cm, 2004

"*Tramp,*" created in 2004 described a homeless couple living on the street. They seem to be full of aspirations for a wonderful future. Scattered around them are redundant things, such as coins, rotting food and garbage. Saddam Hussein's capture is seen on the headline of the New York Times. These minutes but sensitive portrait stories are my way of demonstrating the horrible life of the poor bound to endlessly wander the streets.

In the summer of 2005, I made "***Come! Come!***" (170x200cm x 3 pieces). It involved 800 models, 5 trucks moving props, 8 passenger buses, 5 garbage trucks of all kinds, and nearly 40 assistants to finish. I chose a location for the shooting on the outskirts of Beijing, on the Hebei Province border. I specifically chose a remote area where licensing and security issues could be avoided. The weather was perfect for the photo shoot since there was little sunlight, but nevertheless the temperature was quite hot.

"***Archaeologist***" (2004) was shot inside a 3 meter by 8-meter cave where I placed 30 nude models covered in mud. In the photo, they look as if corpses, remains from ages passed. I pose as an archaeologist conducting research amongst the human remains, in order to express my on-going reflections on what is real and what is false in contemporary life. For my own perspective, it often seems that the modern individual appears deadened in mind and soul. Their unmoving remains hold the only clues to understanding the reason for their sudden demise, their corpse a manifestation and victim of our desire-obsessed contemporary society.

Archaeologist, 280x140cm, *2004*

"*Come! Come! Come*!" is a triptych of color photos shot from the same vantage point with an 8 by 10 large-format camera placed on a scaffolding nearly five meters tall. The triptych's left panel comprises a frontal portrait of 800 "demonstrators" holding a sampling of historically significant slogans and banners, ranging from the Opium War of the 1840's, (one of China's first large-scale global conflicts) all the way up to the present. These slogans and banners from recent events were chosen from a variety of history books and records that I've been reading over the last several months.

Come! Come! Come! (170x200cm x 3 pieces).2005

On the triptych's right panel, the "demonstrators" hold slogans and banners from many of the best-known advertisements seen during the period of Economic Reform (1980's to present). These include both local Chinese brands as well as several foreign brands. Together, the banners cover an interesting array of advertising concepts and slogans as well as a poignant record of the changing aspirations of the populace. The middle image in the triptych depicts a pile of debris scattered across an otherwise untouched landscape. The debris is comprised of the historical slogans, ads, banners, and the daily garbage remaining after a large-scale event, a demonstration, or some sort of general gathering.

The triptych gives the viewer three very different images of the same road and landscape. In this work, I use this outdoor landscape setting polluted by "demonstrators" to pose questions such as "What Is Coming?" "Who Is Coming?", "How Does It Come?", and "Why Is It Coming?". and especially "Why Is It Happening on The Same Road?" Are the crowds generating slogans, garbage, or commercial advertisements? Historic changes of diverse impact often take place simultaneously, while seemingly going down one and the same path. But one thing is certain: The middle road, littered with garbage appears abandoned, nevertheless one sees smoke and fire in the distance, hinting at some sort of struggle or chaos, one feels uncertain if the dispute has just left or is arriving imminently.

Each of the images is shot using wide-angle lenses. I have deliberately cropped the people standing closest to the camera on the left-hand panel without omitting them from the frame. On the right, I've let those tiny figures in the distance remain in the far corners of the shot. I mean to place history in the forefront as a forewarning of the danger of incoming commercialism. This embodies my fear that as commercialism or consumerism move ever closer, the risk of them overwhelming us and over-powering all that has come before us grows as well.

Home,120x250cm, 2005

Poisonous Spider,170x180cm, 2005

In November 2005, I rented Beijing Film Studios for nearly a month and created some new works including "***Home***" and "***Poisonous Spider***". For these I built up a demolished home and created a poisonous web made of barbed wires respectively. These two works include imagery that intrigued me as they were drawn from childhood memories. ***"Home"*** comes from my early callings of my curiosity about our old family house hiding long forgotten treasures. I threw in a lot of garbage, including daily waste, electrical debris, chemical waste, etc. Until now, I do not completely understand if the demolished houses strewn around China's cities once sorted will reveal hidden treasures. Probably bigger profits can be created from their demolition. Spiders made from barbed wires hint at the inherent relationship of danger and attraction. The barbed-wire web has clung to a variety of worms and insects for food. In today's commercial world, everyone is like a spider feeding from various merchandise. I parallel these arachnid morsels through the decay of refuse which I collected over several months.

My photoshoot sets often grow into full-blown installations, as it did in "***Dream of Migrants***" (2005). The term "migrants" is considered very derogatory in China. It denotes an aimlessly drifting population, moving from one home to another, especially from the countryside to big cities in search of work. These groups are also known as "unauthorized population flow". The term hints at the risk of extensive alienation. This "floating population" is marked with demeaning characteristics such as bad hygiene, general instability, and inherent volatility toward others. In Beijing alone, there are

nearly 3 million “migrants”. They all carry a dream and look for opportunities as they flow from their hometowns into bigger cities. They stimulate the local economy via their labor, aiding in urban development. They also bring forth a lot of destabilizing social factors, such as the plight of their undocumented children who are unable to study and the lack of consistent housing.

This population is accustomed to being shepherded from one city to the other rendered helpless by their poverty and bad reputation. Some people optimistically recognize them as a vibrant force, but most regard them as manifestations of a social sickness. Some of the terms used for these groups are “Tramps, loafers, gangsters, free-loaders, vagrants etc.”

Now they are given some credit seeing as they are the city’s builders and workmen. Their interests are sometimes taken seriously, including welfare, minimum salary, and insurance among other rights. There is still a long way to go to offer egalitarian rights to people from the countryside who work in the big cities

***Dream of Migrants**,* 170x400cm, 2005

I am empathetic toward this “Migrant” population. I think they hold dearly to their dreams and like nothing more than to be recognized for their contributions to China’s cities. Their dreams are often hard to realize, as their early dreams of moving to cities conflict with their harsh realities as they discover only after they arrive.

In 1993, I moved to Beijing, from the faraway Jinzhou, in the Hubei Province. Jinzhou is a very small city. I too had my own big dreams regardless of the huge scale of Beijing, the capital city with a population 100 times larger than my hometown. I witnessed firsthand the dramatic social changes occurring in China’s urban areas. I survived because of the knowledge that my situation was not special, and there were tens of thousands of hopeful people just like me, pouring into China’s cities trying to realize their dreams.

Now it has been almost 30 years since I moved to Beijing. Looking back, I enjoyed my past experiences of being a hard-working laborer in the art world through observing the large number of populations who fled away from their villages and migrated to the cities to make a living. Now the economy in China is not getting so well that might endanger a lot of poor people’s lives. We are hoping the world will be reopened as soon as possible as we all need the global economy to be revived soon so that we can all go back to normal life. But maybe this is the long-awaited dream to

come true, as the global pandemic arising in 2019 will linger in our world for a long time.

Dormitory, 170x400cm, 2005

Like "***Dream of Migrants***", (and in another work "***Dormitory***") (2005), I often depict the pursuit of personal dreams and work opportunities in the big capital city of Beijing. In the Beijing Film Studios, we constructed "Dream of Migrants", which ended up with being the height of a three-story building. At first glance, this structure seems to exhibit Chinese civil architecture, but upon further examination, one finds it also contains themes of Soviet as well as a diverse array of European influences. We can see the historical brilliance as well as the ominous potential danger of a hybridized construction. I depict the land in front of the building as dirty and moist to allude to the hardships of city life and the struggle of fulfilling dreams. I use the cold under-spoken colors to create a sense of disappointment. The general feeling of this work will aim to reflect the inherent conflict nomadic populations experience when their dreams do not meet reality. I insert various details so the viewers can discover from this photograph the vast emotive and experiential spectrum of migrant populations.

"***Dormitory***" (2005) depicts the complexities of pursuing personal dreams and work opportunities in Beijing. In the Beijing Film Studios, I constructed a "huge dorm" composed of 160 models, with about 30 couples playing husbands and wives within their beds. In this structure, the height of a nine-story bunk bed, one finds so many chaotic scenes, teeming with art history references. On the walls, I put many popular posters, which you frequently see hanging in low-income living quarters. You seem to walk into a place containing their dreams, expectations, and hardships, all representing the phenomena of the migrating population, who left their dear homes and familiar settings to start anew in a large city.

In 2007, I made **"*The Glory of Hope*"** and **"*UN Party*"**. "***The Glory of Hope***" looks back at China's difficult past when the nation went through obtaining the rights to host the 2008 Olympic Games. However, I think the uncertain future under the guise of euphoric happiness is not in actuality that promising. The muddy ground represents the reality of China, an inherently agricultural country. The five figures look out at the horizon as one family unit. Chinese people are so fond of their future dreams. Their ethos is more forward-looking and hardworking than anything else. So even if the road is murky, they still step forward.

***The Glory of Hope**,* 240x180cm, *2007*

"***UN Party***" refers to the globally renown international gatherings, forums, conferences, and dinners that are often held. In the left panel over 1300 people sit around U and N shaped tables, enjoying cheap fast-food while taking part in heated discussions and expecting a bright future. However, in the right panel, all that remains are leftovers and chaos. The clouds of smoke overshadowing the black secretive place represent a deeply gloomy fantasy.

***UN Party**, diptych,*170x280cm x 2 pieces, diptych, *2007*

In May 2008, I built a site-specific installation at the PKM Gallery Beijing space. The interior was completely covered in ubiquitous red, white, and blue striped plastic tarpaulin material notoriously blanketing much of China's evolving urban landscape. I transform the gallery into a circus-like construction site, echoing the consumerist sense of impermanence.

Gallery, 160x190cm x2 pieces, 2008.

"***Hard-seat Compartment***" (2008) is a photo triptych comprised of three images: the first portrays a completely empty train carriage; the second is a train carriage with luggage and a man played by me sitting in front of a bowl of instant noodles, the third is the same train carriage crowded and filled up with passengers and their luggage. The mood is imbued with all the gloom one feels in a hectic messy place. I hope for the viewer to feel the same frustration and claustrophobia. A cheap "Hard-seat compartment" ticket is a very common choice for train passengers in China. These hard-seat unreserved carriages are often crowded with passengers and luggage piled up in the most messy and unsafe ways. Many people travel long distances in hard-seat, and when they stop somewhere and finally disembark their unsettled and depressing feelings from the hard ride dwell within their hearts. I have personally experienced many of these grueling trips with people sprawled everywhere. The chaos and disturbance of hard-seat travel left me with anxiety and breathlessness. This work reflects those journeys and movements from city to city and what people are willing to do and to tolerate to move and improve their lives.

Hard-seat Compartment, 160x210cm x 3 pieces, 2008

I have observed the ongoings of hospitals for many years. These experiences come from the plights of family members, me, and various friends. There are only a very small percentage of people, who hold government or corporation positions, who can get reimbursed for the cost of hospitalization. However, a large majority of the people in China must pay money ahead of time due to lack of subsidized medical care. When my son went to the hospital for a checkup the doctor told him roughly to be quiet. This was when he was only three years old and terrified of doctors. My mother died of cancer and was refused an extended stay in the hospital for treatment due to an inability to

pay. I was also once maltreated while staying in a ward with an old man who died next to me. His relatives cried for a whole day in front of the dead body. Many friends had similar experiences. Many times, we demanded a response from the hospital staff, and often, there was no friendly answer to our pleas. In "**Nutrients**" (2008), I was invited by the world brand of fashion leader Christian Dior (CD) to create a photo work. Nowadays, fashion pervasively intrudes into our lives. We must heed what the fashion leaders enact and watch engrossingly. Otherwise, we are labeled as old fashioned and obsolete. But CD represents only large corporation deals. I am not against fashion, but I want people to take a cautious approach to such phenomena. Therefore, in a large, dilapidated house, I built a last supper inspired scene, decorated with bottled IVs to show the absurd state of our health care services. Hinting that over-reliance on both fashion and bottled IV's exposes our illnesses of consumerism, perhaps they are just bags of useless water.

Nutrients, 160x300cm, 2008

I have been thinking creating a work about hospitals and inpatient treatment for quite some time. When I was invited to the Northern Stage in Newcastle, UK to do a theatre project, I found out people came to theatres for easing their minds, like seeking physical health improvements when patients go to the hospital. Do they get any real "treatment" and satisfaction, either from theatres or hospitals? With this question in mind, I came to the idea of transforming the UK's Northern Theatre into a hospital ward. The Stage One Theatre seemed to be a fitting place to house 300 patients, medical staff, and other participant models. On September 13, 2008, with the full support of Northern Stage staff and 300 volunteers, this project was realized in a photograph.

It was an amazing experience that the actors and actresses did not like to remove their bloody make-up to eat lunch. They were still excited and joking with each other when they were eating meals. They found a relief from being frightened of some terrors and now they could conquer that sense of fear from emulating and participating in a really funny way.

Temporary Ward, 180x320cm, 2008

*"**888,888 Darts and 666,666 Darts**"* consist of 2 real objects with repeated layers of broken paper dabbed over for over two months. The two underlying objects are two dartboards, semi-destroyed after being hit repeatedly by darts (supposedly 888,888 and 666,666 times refers to numerology representing good luck in Chinese folk tradition). I want to demonstrate that a game of chance such as darts is potentially dangerous and irrational if not controlled. The human mind can lose touch with sanity if persons fall into behaviorally obsessive psychosis. Sometimes violence and madness can be born from apparently safe and routine situations. Neutral emotions mutated by the vacuity and boredom of repetitive games and actions can become monsters in themselves.

888,888 Darts and 666,666 Darts, each 150x120cm, 2008

In February 2009, I was invited by a French magazine to come to France and shoot some photo works. At that time, I decided to make another work for myself, "***Safe Milk***". In an old castle in France, I invited Western fashion models to work with me in staging a revisiting of "*The Last Supper*". Around 2008-2009, there was a nation-wide consumer scandal in China, involving tainted infant formula, milk, and milk powder. Contaminated with melamine, it endangered the health of infants and small children. I made this photograph on a large 9-meter-long table, placing on its yoghurt and milk, and asking models to bare their breasts. It was such a valuable experience that an American pregnant woman volunteered to work with me on this photograph before giving birth a few days later.

Romeo and Juliet, 120x170cm, c-print, 2009

Safe Milk, 160x300cm, 2009

At the same time, I also made "***Romeo and Juliet***", shooting two models dressed in Dior dresses, representing the well-known love story. The black model acts out Juliet, standing inside a cave while another white girl acts out Romeo coming to meet her. The scene in this photograph is idyllic and was shot in Da Vinci's Museum in a small town 2 hours outside of Paris.

Recently I have been thinking about how both commerce and humankind fail in their attempts to coexist. Even though humankind produces the merchandise, the merchandise comes back like a boomerang to dominate humankind adversely. The dilemma posed by humanity and merchandise is a long philosophical inquiry with no solution. What we do know is that the world is what we make of it, or we are what the world makes of us.

From October 2008 to January 2009, I returned to the multiple meanings and connotations imbued in terms such as "internationally famous brand names," the phenomena, which we fabricate for commercial promotion and marketing purposes. I collected all sorts of advertisements from real objects such as soft drink bottles, delivery boxes, product packaging, medicine bottles, as well as paper advertisements from newspapers, magazines, and invitations. Then I reproduced them in hand-written notes and posters in 3,000 pieces of paper, each sized 85x110cm, then glued them onto a massive moveable wall made of corrugated asbestos tiles, sized 75x200cm, fixing hand-made ads layer by layer. Within seven days, we scratched off the layers of original commercials and mounted them onto a 12-meter-high and 25-meter-long setting of broken, worn-out, dilapidated-looking abandoned wall.

Together, this gigantic mosaic of broken strips from advertising materials makes an eye-catching semi-abstract painting. This process of production and destruction is like a game of building blocks. We enjoyed building up something new and then destroying it to create a style wholly different, and this production process will no doubt continue within the art world repeatedly. I chose to name this work "***Debacle***" in reference to "***Competition***" (2004), because the similarities between the two works are obvious, with a sort of fierce competition going on continuously. "***Debacle***" is more pessimistic, depicting the utter failure of all commercial and corporate marketing schemes. These are the contradictions inherent in "***Competition***" and "***Debacle***" and within market economy forces.

Competition,170x300cm, 2004

Debacle, 170x300cm, 2009

From August 2009, I started to work with 200 models over 15 days in shooting the 42-meter-long "***The History of Monuments***". This work is my reflection on what is told about civilizations, beauty, virtue, and all their standards and norms. The models are smeared with mud and placed into the carved-out contours of the photo's backdrop. Chinese traditions are handed down from generation to generation with many official documents, poems, literature, works of drama, etc. Often the leadership likes to summarize their achievements during their reign. Each dynasty has its interpretations of its dynasty and the former dynasties. It is undeniable that many such versions are misguided and inaccurate. I am interested in why history is distorted by the shimmer of specific people who have the power to overshadow the brilliance of others. I am not interested in who will be selected and remembered by history, I am more interested in how I can interpret my part in history within the length of paper, since one roll of Kodak paper is as long as 45 meters. I simply juxtapose all the images, icons, figures, objects along this wall and put them together across different times.

History of Monuments, 125x4200cm, 2009-2010, printed on one roll of Kodak paper

Detail of "***The History of Monuments***", 125x4200cm. 2009-2010, c-print

Around the time I shot "***The History of Monuments***" in 2009-2010 (120x4200cm, c-print), I started to prepare for "***Follow Him***". During the whole year, up until 2010, I collected and bought a whole array of used books, magazines, and dictionaries teeming with literature, poetry, laws, and college preparatory materials. I collected them and put them onto huge stacks of shelves. Then I let all these books get extremely rotten and dirty. Like a real scholar who reads an infinitude of books but fails to write anything, I littered the ground with my failed attempts.

In “***Follow Him***”, one finds a huge library with 20 tons of collected books. It took me a year to set this up since I had to leave the books out in the elements for them to collect dust and dirt. In this image, I am talking about the education problems in China. Knowledge is taught, but not learnt, by many people who fail to understand the deeper meaning of things. They don’t know the meaning of study in general. They study for their parents’ approval, for their grandparent’s honor, but never for themselves, for the love of knowledge. Therefore, we see so many students trash their books after examinations leaving them to decay.

Follow Him, 130x300cm, 2010

In 2011, I made two artworks related to faith, belief and ideals, “***Goddess***” (180x250cm) and “***Temple***” (180x300cm). In the 500 square meters of my new studio in Songzhuang, I built with clay a Goddess in Mao-suit imprisoned by scaffolding and green mesh nets, surrounded by garbage and livestock. My inspiration came from a boat trip approaching the Statue of Liberty in 1999 during a foggy and rainy night. I found the statue rising from the water like Venus, pure and sacred. It is symbolic of freedom and democracy and a yearning for self-independence. However, I found many people lose ideals and hope, dreaming only of how to obtain wealth and gratifying comfort. Some people might find these works are like negotiations between Western and Chinese idealism. But I think no matter which is righter, they both fail in realizing the dreams they represent. Either voluntarily or forcibly, through drastic social, political, and economic integration, our traditions are lost. So, I made these two works to commemorate the lost world, and a hope for the future which might be rebuilt and revived.

Goddess, 180x250cm, 2011

"Approaching the Statue of Liberty by boat for the first time in 1999, Wang Qingsong had visions of Botticelli. ''It was just a little bit like 'The Birth of Venus,' '' he said. ''It was a goddess born from the water.'' Twelve years later, he took that image as inspiration for ''Goddess,'' featuring a 26-by-19-foot clay sculpture built in his studio in Songzhuang, an artist' village on the outskirts of Beijing. As with all his work, Wang constructs elaborate tableaux, which he then photographs and dismantles. For ''Goddess,'' he imagined Lady Liberty in a Mao suit, a reflection of China's struggle between two ideals: the beliefs of the chairman and the tenets of democracy. The scaffolding around the sculpture alludes to the vast unfinished construction sites in China; the chickens that wander through the rubble enjoy a freedom that he believes the Chinese people do not. Though he has had only a few direct confrontations with the authorities (usually over nudity), Wang expects ''Goddess'' to be controversial. ''People have lost their dreams and their ideals,'' he said. ''As an artist, as a citizen, I am very puzzled about where we are going and why we are lost.'' *Julie Bosman* (http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/10/16/magazine/LOOKchina.html?ref=magazine)

In 2011, after making ***"Goddess***" I created "***Temple***". In which one can see a huge happy Buddha surrounded by about 2000 statue heads. In tribute, we see the bowing heads of over 250 people. According to Buddhist scripture, Buddha believes that people are born naked and shall leave the world naked. That is why the people are naked smeared with mud. On the other hand, the worshippers have different postures signifying the conflicts of different beliefs/religions in the world, especially affected by the struggle for economic hegemony.

Temple, 180x300cm, c-print, 2011

Follow You, 180x300cm, 2013

The education issue in China, as well as in the world, has been the center of my creativity during the last several years. I made "***Follow You***" after "***Follow Him***" and "***Follow Me***". In a large studio, I placed 120 school tables and 240 chairs in the huge background of blackboard walls, and 240 people who were invited only to doze off on the tables. I was sitting in the middle and having an IV

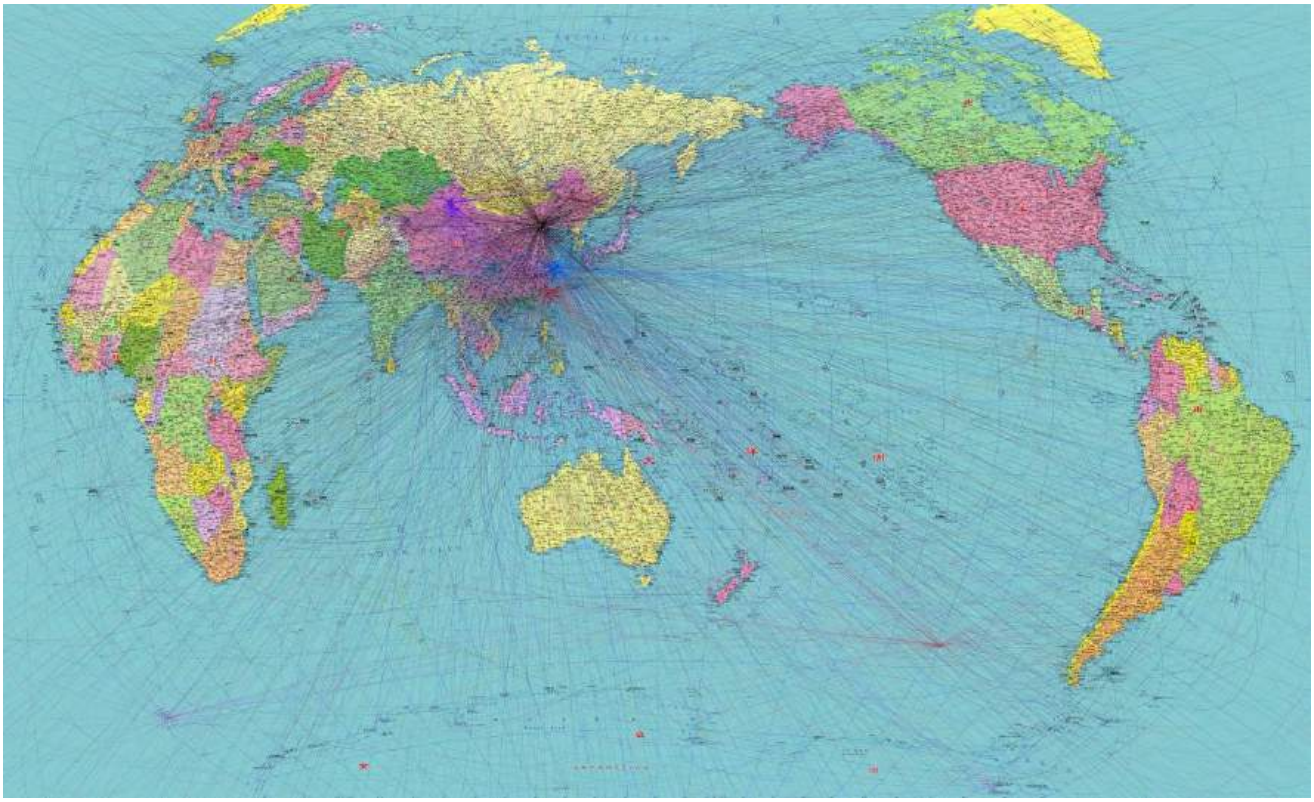
drip while still watching the teacher attentively who remains invisible. I allude to the huge waste of books and time for the students who are so tired of studies that they cannot even stand one more lesson.

From "***Follow Me***" to "***Follow Him***" and "***Follow You***", the huge burden of exams and so–called knowledge, appears as the power that can change your destiny, but remains never realized by the young and old alike. I evolve from a very young lecturer to a middle-aged erudite scholar and back to a senior student….

In the spring of 2013, I received the honor of being invited to the Chinese Pavilion of the 55th edition Venice Biennale. Like the previous discussion about fashion brands, consumerism, and people's fascination with foreign products in "***Nutrients***", "***Safe Milk"***, and "***Temporary Ward",*** I made a huge medical room decorated with various charts containing the ailments of the sleeping patient on the operating table. He lies spread out with lots of bloody tendons and used tubes scattered around the room. If one notices clearly, he will find all the IV bottles are displaying foreign beverage brand labels.

ICU, 180x300cm, 2013.

"***The Map of The World***" (2013) was created exclusively with the use of computer software. It was not shot with a camera; no lenses were involved. However, it took two years to finish the final version after a great many test runs. It was impossible to purchase a sufficient HD version of the world map. The lines were all created by hand manipulations. The world becomes at once global and digital. The center that radiates these airline routes is the capital of China, Beijing. Worldwide, China is a very important country with a strong economy. No one could ignore the importance of China.



The Map of the World, 180x300cm, 2012

In 2014, I worked at the White box Contemporary Art Center in Beijing. Since 798 was such a hotspot for youngsters, I made a huge blackboard and put a ladder across it. In one photograph, we to find a vast array of logos from international companies, mostly top 500 world-wide MNCs. In another photograph, one finds only the names of universities worldwide, subsequently smeared off by others. Nowadays, the world revolves around money. Money comes from MNCs and MNCs employees were all graduates from highly respected universities. One thinks of the saying that knowledge could change one's destiny. The Chinese say, "there is a golden house inside the books." The ladders in two photos rely on each other. But in another perspective, they form a pyramid, meaning they reach a precipice, a global "ladder" per se, one that is of course dominated by money… "***One World, One Dream***", which sounds weird and impossible. But who knows? Maybe it is true that the world has evolved entirely around money.

One World, One Dream, 180x225cm x 2 pieces, 2014.

In 2016, ten years after a photo work created in 2006 confiscated was unveiled.
http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/pollack/wang-qingsong1-25-11.asp

“Wang Qingsong, whose photographs are a mix of Western and Chinese cultural icons, works on the grand scale of a movie director, setting up elaborate scenarios with dozens of models in order to take a single picture (he is often compared to Gregory Crewdson and Jeff Wall). *Blood of the World* was to be a monumental work, packed with reenactments of scenes of battle from famous paintings in western art history and infamous news photographs, from Eugène Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* to Eddie Adams' famous Vietnam-era *Execution of a Vietcong Prisoner*.

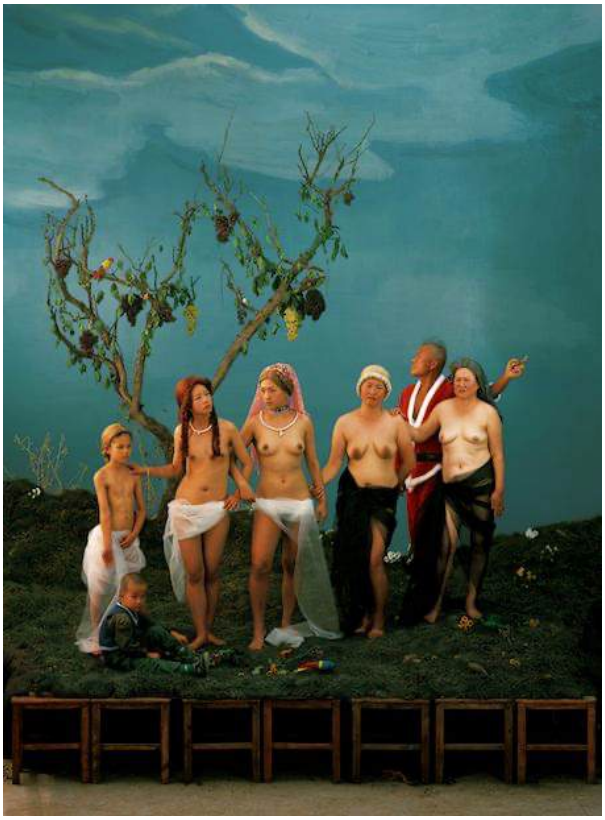
The blood of the World, 180x250cm, 2006-2016

“To make ***The Blood of the World***, Wang spent six months designing a set that took a month to build: 3,000 feet of mud and dirt, with towering hills and deep foxholes in front of a painted backdrop of a smoky sky. On the day of the shoot, he added several horses, two tanks, a truck, animal carcasses and 200 actors, many of them naked and smeared with paint to play the part of cadavers in the battle scene. On an extremely cold day in November 2006, Wang Qingsong took his place atop a 50-foot-tall scaffold overlooking the set, which occupied an unheated hangar in the middle of an agricultural development about an hour outside of Beijing. Like a very calm general, he passed orders to his crew who then moved the extras into place. Everyone, especially those asked to disrobe, was freezing. The scene took more than four hours to set up.

The shoot was supposed to be top secret. In China it is illegal for more than 20 people to gather without a permit. Nudity is also illegal, even if in no way pornographic. I was there that day, as was Matthew Collings and a BBC crew, who were covering the event for the British TV program *This Is Civilization*. “– Barbara Pollack, from Artnet.
https://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/pollack/wang-qingsong1-25-11.asp

In 2017, invited by the Museum of Leipzig, I made a photo work based on Hans Baldung Grier’s painting “Seven Lives of Women”. “*Forever and Ever*” creates a vivid metaphor of the time lapse and life journey of human beings, from infant, to baby, to adolescent, to adult, to senior…

Seven Ages of Woman, by Hans Baldung Grier



Forever and Ever, 180x250cm, 2017, Wang Qingsong

Around same year, I made two photo works discussing perspectives and complex relationships between men and women, power dynamics…. The works somehow reveals the vice of power politics, the deep dark deprivation of female agency.

***Interview*,** 80x100cm, 2017

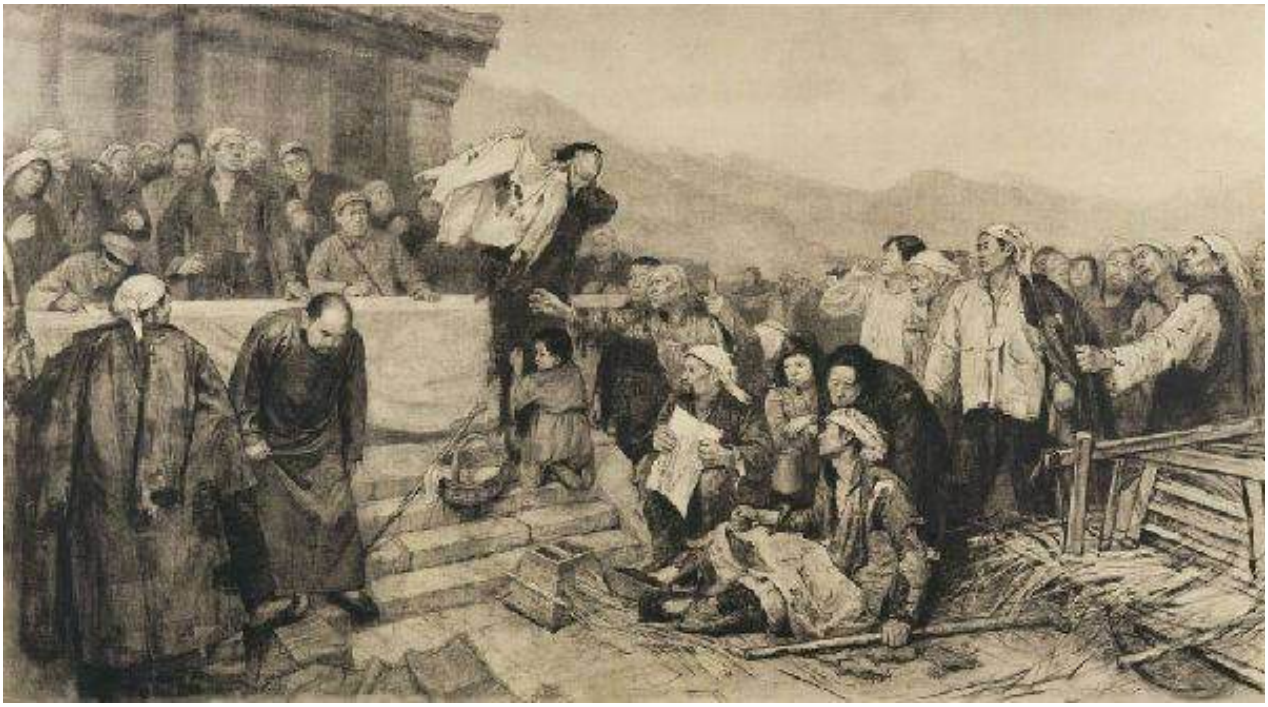
Santa Wang, 120x150cm, 2017

A second time to work overseas since 2008. Ten years have passed. I was very fortunate to have worked with a group of people from Michigan, the US in realizing a photo shoot in a cold winter in 2018.

Following is a report by Angie Baecker.
https://www.citylab.com/design/2018/02/socialist-art-from-china-remade-in-michigan/553745/
"In winter 2017, as the Distinguished Artist of the University of Michigan, Qingsong visited Detroit and Highland Park several times along with U-M students and staff, looking for warehouse-like settings with industrial appeal to stage a new shooting "A Tale of Two Cities."

"He explored those areas of Detroit established in the 19th century in the wake of the railroad boom and then relocated in the 1960s, as part of urban renewal efforts. These sites and deserted settings resonated with Qingsong who is drawn to urban landscapes in transition, cities on the move grappling with issues of social unrest. He eventually found a site in Highland Park on the remains of the former Sander's Factory to stage this new piece. On February 17th, Qingsong invited about 50 local people from Detroit and 40 from the U-M. The contrast and similarity between Highland Park and Cao Chang Di, two inner cities within metro Detroit and Beijing, which have both interesting histories in the tumultuous times in the past and at present, have inspired the artists of both communities to create a new piece discussing the possibility of artistic revival of old cities at the new times.

Inspired by a classical drawing created by Wang Shikuo (1911-1973), a Chinese realist painter, Qingsong recreates a new image, instilling contemporary urban life into a representative piece portraying social and political exploitation, change and transition. In the neighborhoods of Highland Park, extensive vacancy and abandonment have led to new ways that people remake disinvested space—ruins voyeurism gives way to residents, artists, and entrepreneurs curating spaces in their own vision and as template for the future of the city. This project ended up in both this photography and related archives will contribute to the hope for another narrative to city building, one that uncovers traces of the past, its erasures and demolitions, while engaging with the community through artistic practice to construct a new, vibrant vision for urban regeneration." --- By Angie Baecker.



***The Blood-stained Shirt*,** 1950s-70s, drawing by Wang Shikuo

The Blood-stained Shirt, 180x300cm, 2018, by Wang Qingsong

Looking back over the last decades, almost each of my piece has some sort of signage in either Chinese or English to signify the times and spaces that this photo work was created. I become so obsessed with the logos, signages, letters… Since the internet becomes more and more rampant intruding into each of our life, I realize many new terms used by netizens

are become more and more popular which are strange to the outsiders. This new terminology has specific reference and will only make sense to people who understand this web language. Therefore, in 2018, I made two panels of different signages and hang them up on the most popular small streets on the way to the highway from downtown to Beijing Capital Airport. As this street is widely used by city dwellers, I was stopped most of the time as the traffic needed to go on. For me the disruption of the traffic by my signage represents the disruption of communication in everyday life.

Welcome Boulevard, 120x200cm, 2018

One Small Step forward, One Big Stride Civilized, 120x200cm, 2018

Bequeathing Buddha, 180x130cm, 2019

Around the end of 2019, the pandemic erupted in Wuhan, China and quickly spread out to the world. It breaks down our life and work routine. At the beginning, I just wanted to practice calligraphy. I chose some cheap advertising paper I used to write and scribbled some brands and their advertisements collected over these years. When I realized that this pandemic would not be over within a short period of time, I began to write in a neater manner, thinking of a new way to present this work in the exhibition that would open on July 11. As planned, the theme of the exhibition would be the title of the work "Question a Brick Wall”. This work was not as easy as making “Competition” in 2004 or “Debacle” in 2009. This time I was not writing calligraphy, but rather drawing and painting calligraphy and logos in more clarity and detail. I must draw each one repeatedly and paint many times one layer on top of another layer. In total, I did about 400 pieces of advertising paper within four months.

The installation is 8.3 meters in height and the width is almost 5.4 meters at Tang Contemporary in summer 2020. On this huge poster wall, there are nearly 1,000 corporate brands, mainly those of Fortune 500 companies. The rest are some most recent popular product brands on the Internet, some common ones in our lives, including logos of art galleries and cultural institutions, and several brands from my hometown Jinzhou, Hubei Province. There are also my favorite and commonly used product brands. It took me more than four months to hand paint all these advertisements. Every day, I lay on the table for more than 10 hours. I sat on the sofa for so long that “carved” out a big hole into the sofa. My presbyopia glasses changed from 100 degrees to 300 degrees. So, it is not exaggerating at all to say that I spent a great deal of time and energy into making this work.

At the end of May 2020, there appeared a second spike of COVID-19 in Beijing. The return made me suddenly feel more concerned how I could finish another work, leaving me worried and suspended. Originally, it was scheduled to be shot indoors, inside China National Film Corporation's film studios in Huairou Township. I planned to rent a studio there. But after I went there, I learned that it would be impossible to shoot indoors because

this work would require 500 people to enter the scene. During the lockdown, organizing 50 people to shoot indoors would not be allowed. Being caught off guard, I must give up my indoor shooting plan. After discussing with the curator, I decided to shoot outdoors. After I made the decision, I drove around to find a suitable shooting location. In the end, when I saw an outdoor scene, I found it not so bad at all. However, I didn't give up. I still wanted to find other indoor venues. So, I asked private studios in Daxing Township if they allow for 500 people to shoot indoors. Finally, after rounds of communicating with so many people, I learned that no one in charge dared to approve so many humans doing indoor activities during the pandemic. So, I aborted the original ideas.

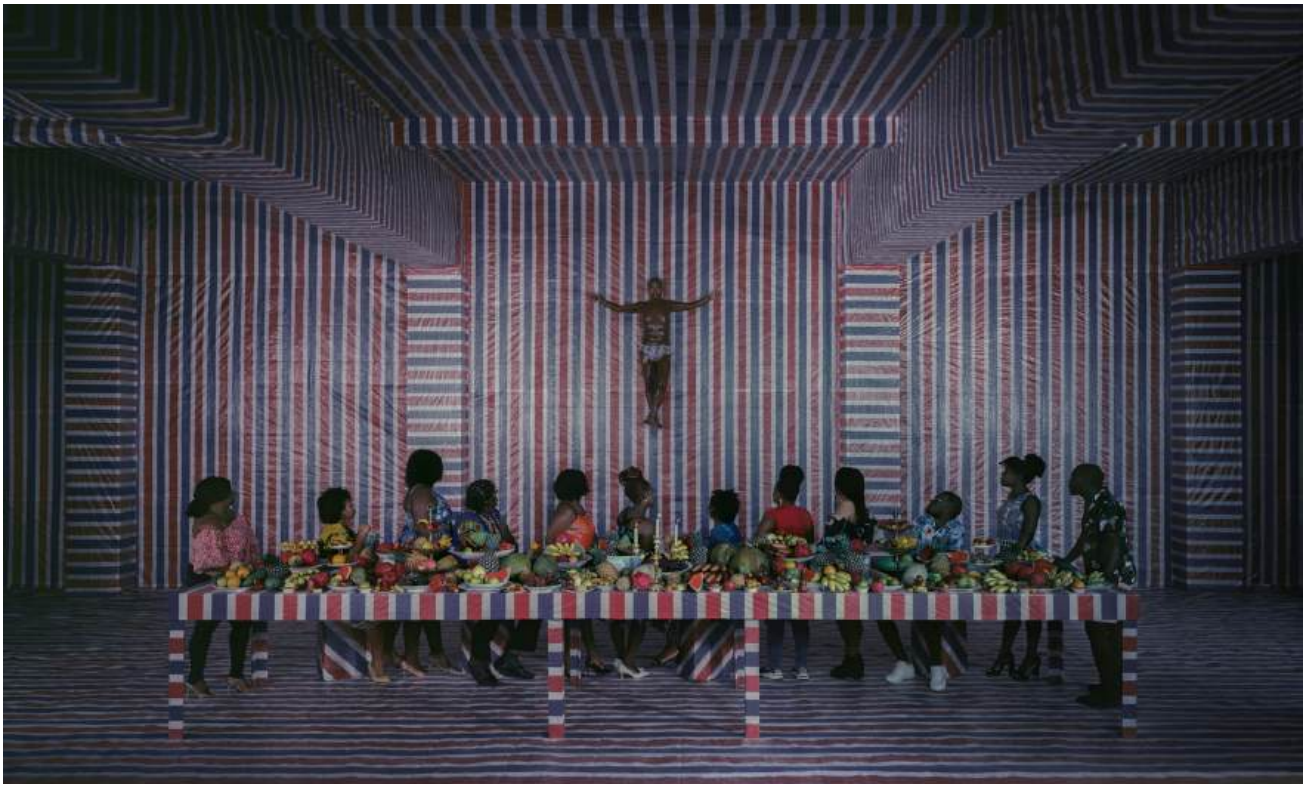
Question a Brick on the Wall, 280x180cm, 2020

Then I went to Fangshan Township again to see this outdoor venue. That day I went, it was overcast and grayish, just like the gloomy mood of people under the second wave of epidemic in Beijing. The sky gradually turned orange when driving back to the studio. At sunset, I looked outside the window and "On the Field of Hope" resonated in my mind. I switched on the phone and played this song. Along with the melody, I imagined the outdoor shooting scene, and decided to name the work "On the Field of Hope".

On the Field of Hope,180x300cm, 2020

Overall, I hope my photographic works witness and emulate hopes and frustrations of Chinese people in the reconstruction of socialism through Chinese characteristics. I came to Beijing in 1993, and experienced these significant social, historical, and artistic developments over the last decades. By depicting these visual stories in my photographs, films, and sculptures, I hope viewers clearly recognize my attitude towards these current phenomena.

My next project will be focused on making some films. It has been every Chinese's dream to produce his or her own movie based on his or her own stories. I am not an exception. I will explore how the much-extended antenna of film can enrich the stories which I want to share with my viewers.



We are Together, 180x300cm, 2021

Intervention Project
“Adding Luster to Yulin” 《我为玉林添光彩》

Yulin Community Project by Wang Qingsong
(Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China, 2024-ongoing)

“Adding Luster to Yulin” series, No.1, c-print, 2024.

Intro to the brief history of Yulin community:

The history of Yulin can be traced way back to the earlier Three Kingdom times (220-280 A.D.) Its name has something to do with imperial army. Yulin has exhibited a new life since the founding of New China in 1949. In particular, in the 1980s, when Yulin became a very popular area for young people to follow the fashion expressed by the residents living here. These residents lived together in state-owned enterprise dormitories at the beginning of the economic reform. They were very proud of being the city builders as working class was highly celebrated at that time. They demonstrated a leadership in their own chic styles which local residents followed suit in clothes, hairdos, ways of talking.

Later in 1990s onwards, it become a new locale for artists, poets, musicians to move in. The earliest western lifestyle with pubs, bars, underground music, became such a fad. Nowadays, in 2020s, Yulin becomes a tourist attraction with its unique community twist in architecture, fashion, cuisine, music, etc. It boasts of many tourist attractions such as Little Pub where a pop song “Chengdu” started its first release by Zhao Lei, a singer and lyric writer. There are cafe shops, wine bars, and theatres. It becomes a rendezvous for many cosplayers to show up and take photos. They become influencers and start to attract more young people from other cities to come here to take photos and post Little Red Book, TikTok.

“Adding Luster to Yulin” series, No.2, c-print, 2024.

Yulin community is not a big area. It has only 2.7 square kilometers with around 120,000 people living here. In 2021, it was listed as Sichuan Grassroots management model community. When Qingsong moved into this neighborhood in 2024, he started to think of shooting some photo works in relation to this community. Hence this intervention project arises.

Qingsong has been making photo tableaus since 1990s with his creative films sets inside movie studios. Many of his works are related to the lives and experiences in urban cities. He throws doubts into deep-rooted cultural norms, values and ingrained human vices exhibited through social changes and economic ups and downs.

“Adding Luster to Yulin” series”, No.3, c-print, 2024.

Draft of preparing for shooting “Adding Luster to Yulin” series, No.3

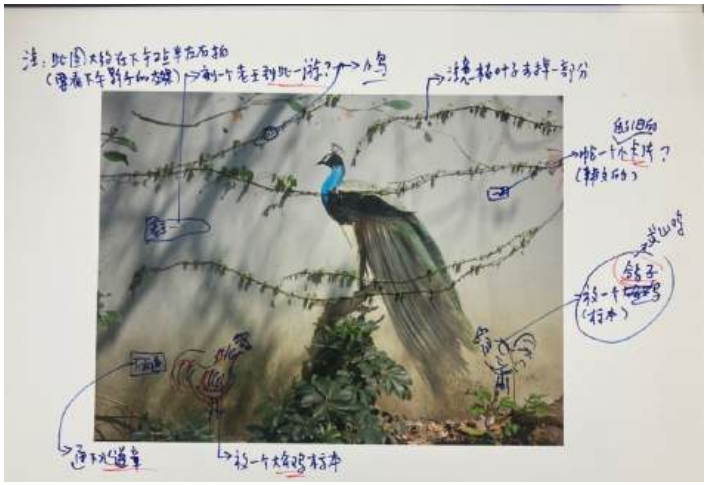
“Earlier this year （2025）, I moved into an older neighborhood in Yulin. In my free time, I often stroll through the streets, listening to the bustle and hustle of the city, experiencing first-hand how community culture permeates every corner of life. Public spaces like the renowned cultural venues “Little Tavern,” “White Night,” and “Wild Ground,” which have emerged during the community's development, serve not only as gathering points for community culture but also as spiritual landmarks for community interaction.” （artist statement, Wang Qingsong, 2025）

“Adding Luster to Yulin” series No.4, 2024

“Adding Luster to Yulin” series No.5, 2024

“Community culture represents an important and common form within Chinese culture. It carries and enriches the everyday lives of ordinary people, connecting and transmitting traditions and modernity, mainstream and folk elements within the mundane. Undoubtedly, Yulin Community stands as one of Chengdu's most vibrant and representative cultural landscapes.”

“I noticed many vacant walls and building facades in the neighborhood adorned with nostalgic, uplifting, and hopeful images, radiating warmth and aspiration. This inspired my photo project, “Adding Luster to Yulin.” Without altering or damaging the existing murals, I enriched them with more vibrant and playful elements—incorporating everyday objects found in real life. I hope this “glow of everyday objects” will infuse the walls with more of life's warmth, presenting a more contemporary, concrete, and comprehensive reflection of our era's spirit.” （artist statement, Wang Qingsong, 2025）



“Adding Luster to Yulin” series No.6, 2024 Preparing for shooting “Adding Luster to Yulin” series No.6

In these tromp-L’oeils (deceiving the eye), Qingsong finds intimate connections with those old relief murals. Even if their traces are becoming obsolete, he applies his technique of intervention to adding up new objects, food, plants, from everyday life, into the forgotten scenes, trying to energize the beliefs and dreams and add luster to the city. In this way, he likes to have a conversation with the silent walls and leftover memories in an old neighborhood.

“Adding Luster to Yulin” series No.7, 2024

Preparing for shooting “Adding Luster to Yulin” series No.7, 2024

“Adding Luster to Yulin” series No.8, 2024

“Adding Luster to Yulin” series No.8, 2024

“Adding Luster to Yulin” series No.,9 2024

Stay tuned: Intervention continues in more cities and countries worldwide.

Part Two: Challenging Reality (Video/Film) 2008-2014

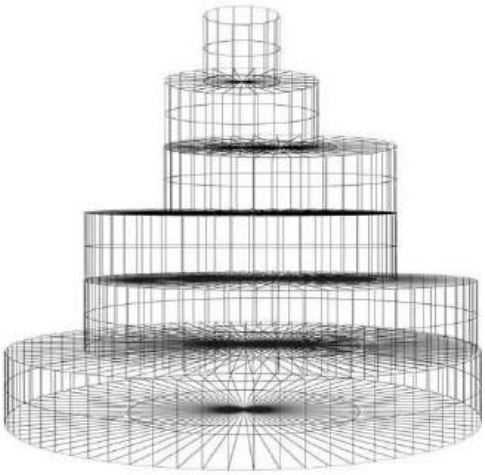
1. **Skyscraper,** 5 minutes, 35mm, 2008

***Skyscraper*,** 5 minutes, 35 mm film, 2008

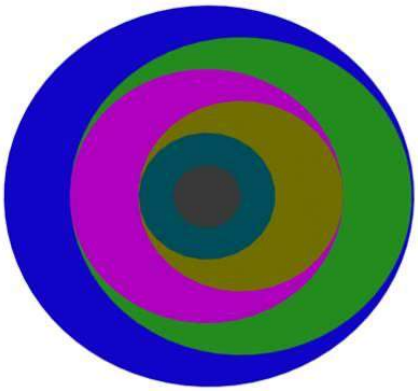
The video "***Skyscraper***" depicts the construction of a fantastical installation about 35 meters by 45 meters, built by 40 workers within a month or so in Changping County, 30 miles north of Beijing. The scaffolding's iron bars are painted with gold color to make them look shiny and brilliant under the sunlight. This golden scaffolding signifies the glory and wonder brought on by drastic changes through urbanization. The soundtrack at the end of the video plays "Silent Night" together with images of colorful fireworks celebrating the Chinese New Year, hinting at a very peaceful while melancholy world.

Through this video piece, I want to analyze how dramatic social changes, skyscraper construction in China, have little to do with the happiness of humanity. I chose this location and accidentally found a poor village which had been contaminated with pollution resulting in deformities in the children. My photo works consistently depict my skepticism in the face of such dramatic transformations, involving human interventions through the less-than human methods and attitudes of the developers. This "Skyscraper" is like a Greek god growing magically from a smoky ground and looming high above the earth. The whole process of the scaffolding construction emulates the processes of beginning and ending construction of high rises we witness all around us.

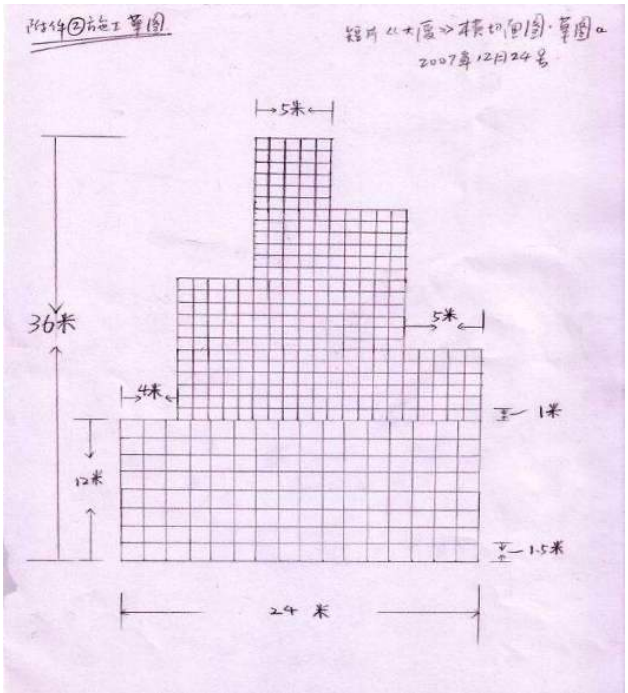
Working process of the film



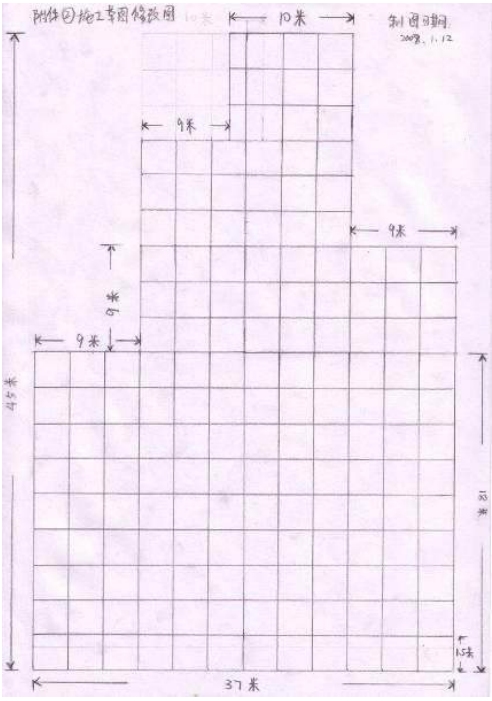
“Skyscraper” – sketch 01



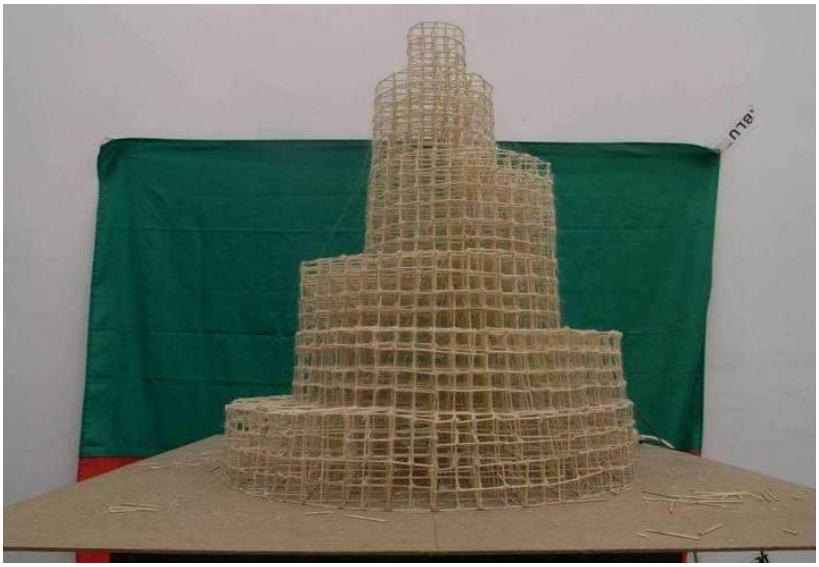
Upper view



Draft 1: 30m in diameter, 36m in height



Draft 2: 37m in diameter, 45m in height



Marquette with tooth-picks, December 2007

Shooting location, village in Changping District, Beijing. January 2008

Front view of 24 meter high

Construction site, Changping County, Beijing, 2008

2. “***Iron Man***”, 4 minutes, 35 mm film, 2008

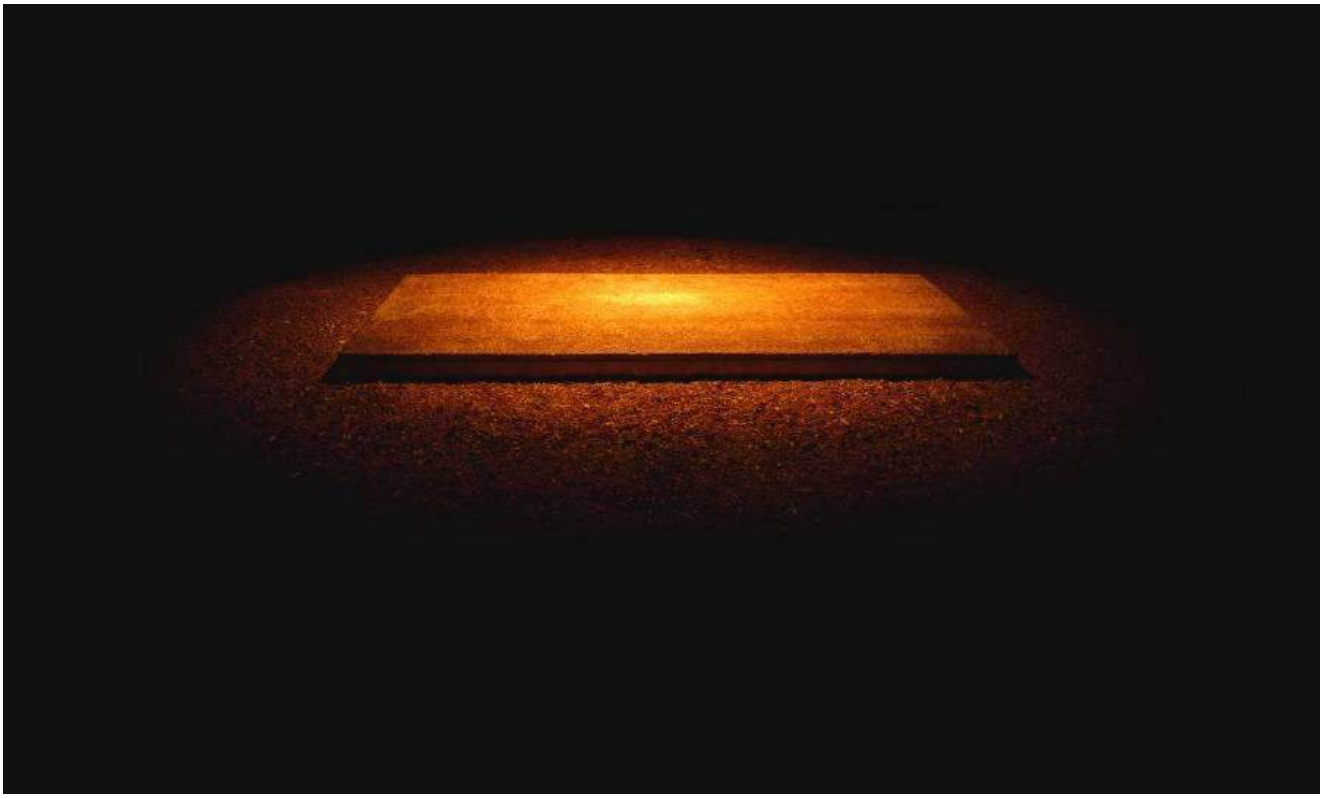
Iron Man, 150x120cm x 2 pieces, 2008

A poster from the Cultural Revolution entitled “To Live like Such a Person” refers to the appreciation of being a brave, honest, and heroic citizen. In our childhood, we have been taught how to live our lives and why we live in certain classes. These heroes were taught to act as great models for us to emulate as we grew up.

However, the real world is very tough, stifled with conflict, war, violence, strife, controversy, fighting and combat. People have to face up to all these severe situations. To be a hero means a lot of suffering, bravery, insistence, and all sorts of feats of stamina in order to combat the unexpected disasters.

In “Iron Man”, I created a hero in my own image affectionately referred to as “Iron Man”. This term “Iron Man” refers to an oil worker hero (I worked in the oil-fields for over eight years) who dedicated his life to developing the Chinese oil industry in the early 1960s. In this video the strong-minded hero has been beaten up but always straightens up his head facing sideways as if “Taking Death as Merely Going Back Home”. He avoids the fist by using Chinese “Tai Chi” (a Chinese body-exercise utilizing slow meditative physical exercises designed for relaxation, balance and health). Finally, though losing hair and teeth in the course of the beating, he still smiles at his opponents. Is this a fact of life or an absurdist satire against all forms of violence? What is an “Iron Man”?

3. ***123456 Chops***, 4 minutes, DV, 2008

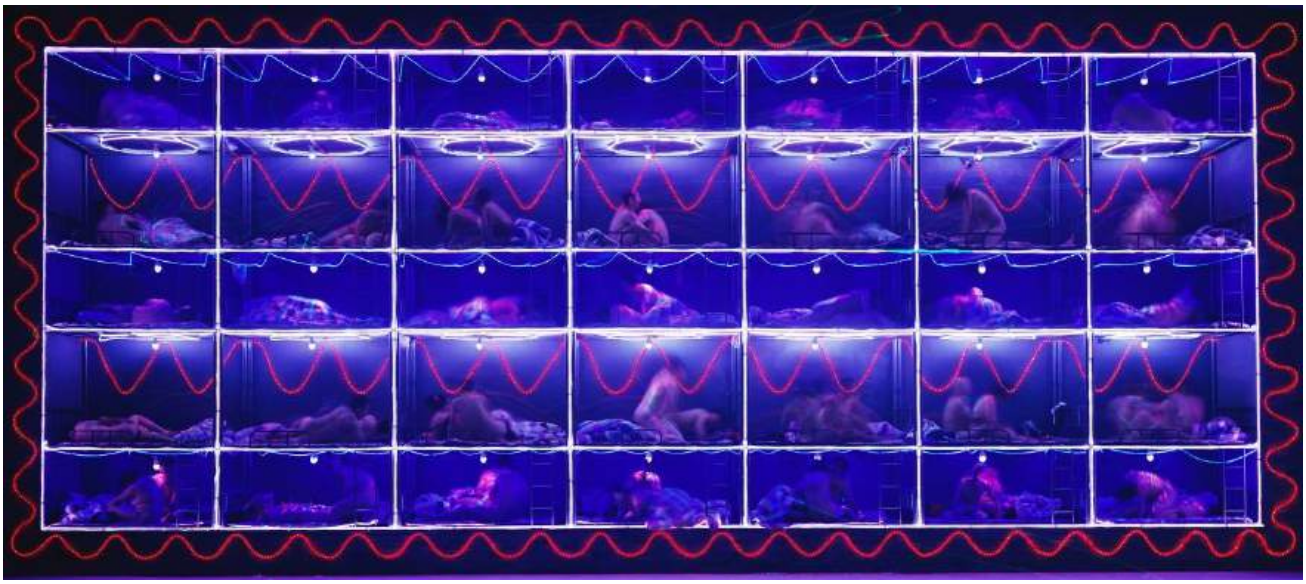


123,456 Chops, 120x200cm, 2008

In dim light, a man dressed in the clothes of a lunatic or an institutionalized patient approaches a huge chopping block and throws the carcass of a goat onto the block. Then he begins coldly and wildly cutting the carcass into pieces hour-by-hour, day-in-and-day-out. The lone actor's anger, violence, suffocation, sadness, disappointment, are all depicted in this methodical cutting action, in a disturbing piece that anyone who has felt the need to vent anger can relate to. Perhaps this venting is the best means available to deal with unresolved feelings of anger, hatred, and self-defense, we are entangled in, at the behest of far worse mental diseases.

During the production of this video, I tried to buy a pair of big-bladed machetes from a kitchenware shop. The knife vendors all looked at the artist with suspicion and watched carefully as he exited the store. Either they told him there were no such hacking knives, or three or four people came together in suspicion of him. He was assumed to be a sick person or a potentially dangerous and crazy guy. In this exercise, the artist quickly realized life is full of dangers, terrors, violence, insecurities, suspicions, etc.…

4. **Happy Bed,** 5 minutes, HD DV, 2014



Still from “Happy Bed”, 4-minute, DV, 2014

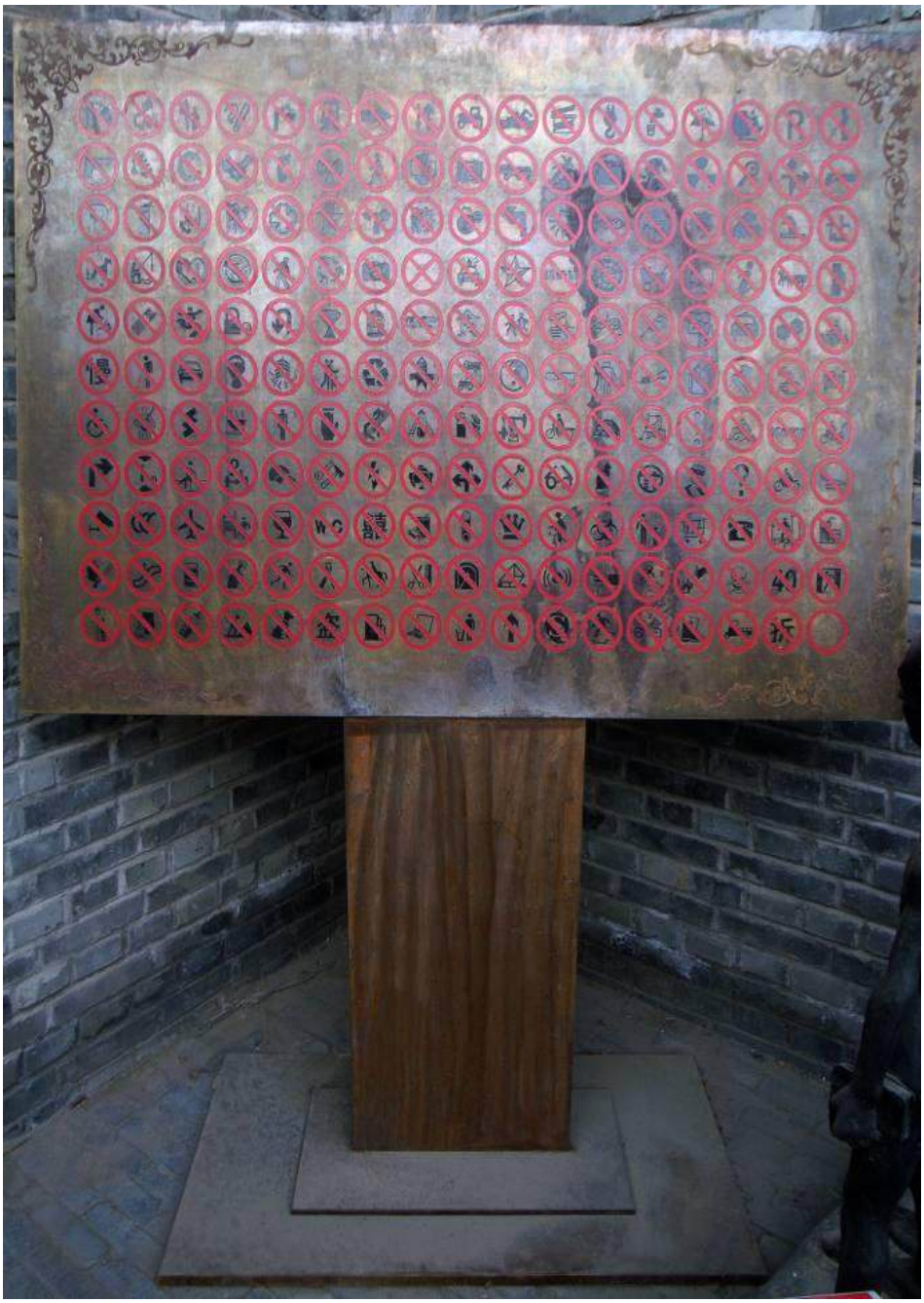
This is a secret party, invite-only, for “lovers”. The whole work is seeing for fantasia and fallacies. All humans have dreams and desires, not meaning anything negative. So, the big supporters and builders of city life, the floating population, migrants and their concerns are a big issue to be well-taken care of in the first place in big cities. These are the hard-working people who build the skyscrapers but not granted affordable residence, hence having no access to enjoying life and love. They live in temporary shelters, labor in fields which provide the services for prosperous mega-cities. But like what I shot in “***Dormitory***” they remain invisible and anonymous. Their life including sex life with partners or lovers is an issue just neglected.

In “***Happy Bed***”, they could enjoy moments of love-making and harmony. This is a 4-minute long video work featured 35 “couples” onto a dorm setting so close to each other but still wrestle in the squeezed hamlets for making love. This video was quite prominently in the Essen Museum in 2015, thanks to the daring curatorial efforts of William Ewing.

Following these short videos, I plan to make a feature long film about my own personal experience, addressing the concern of migrants and their ambitions and losses after moving to big cities and lost contact with their homes. Struggle and Strain will unveil the whole process of making a living in a hard and unfriendly environment.

Part Three: Mundane Reality (Sculpture) 2007-2008

"*WELCOME PANEL*" is a bronze panel of banned (forbidden) signs that are engraved onto bronze. I collected a variety of public forbidding signage and then used them to create my own prohibition signs inspired by daily experience. It is like recording the evidence that taboos of all sorts, enforcing social conventions, creating rituals of behavior, cultural protocols, always restrict and alter our minds. In fact, boundaries, rules, and constrictions are the factors that tempt and encourage humans to do exactly the opposite, secretly wishing to indulge in all that is forbidden.



Welcome Panel, 146x100x180cm, bronze, 2008, in an edition of 6

"***Luggage***" is a selection of suitcases from my own journeys as well as others. I've collected much luggage, starting with bundles of the 1920s. People move around and always carry their belongings in parcels or suitcases. So, the style and design of the luggage also represent the times in which people are situated. I've collected luggage from the early war-time traditional Chinese bundles, 1920s Shanghai colonial-time suitcases, current style backpacks, and trolley-wheel suitcases from nowadays and memorialized all these in life-size bronze sculptures.

Then I hand painted them with original colors, flowers, patterns, and designs, directly onto the bronze bags and suitcases. Monuments to which we travel and human movement in general reflect a flow of time, as well as a flow of social change, and the flow of people's tastes. To date I have made 30 bronze suitcase sculptures, and my plan is to make 200 total unique pieces. When they are put together, one finds the traces of a grand history of people moving from one place to another.

Wang Qingsong paints on bronze sculptures, 2009

Part Four: Personal Reality – The Earlier Oil Paintings: (1995-1997)

a. Competition Series, 1995-1996
b. Dysphasia Series, 1996-1997
c. Our Life is Sweeter than Honey series, 1996-1997

a. *Competition series*, 200x170cm, 1995

b. Dysphasia Series, size variable, 1996-1997

Dysphasia series, 50x40cm each, 1994-96

Dysphasia, 175x225cm, 1995

Dysphasia, 175x225cm, 1995

c. Our Life is Sweeter than Honey, oil on silk velvet, size variable, screen, 1996-1997

Our life is sweeter than honey, 175x300cm, oil on velvet, 1995-1996

Part Five – Insightful Reality (Oil works) 2008-2012

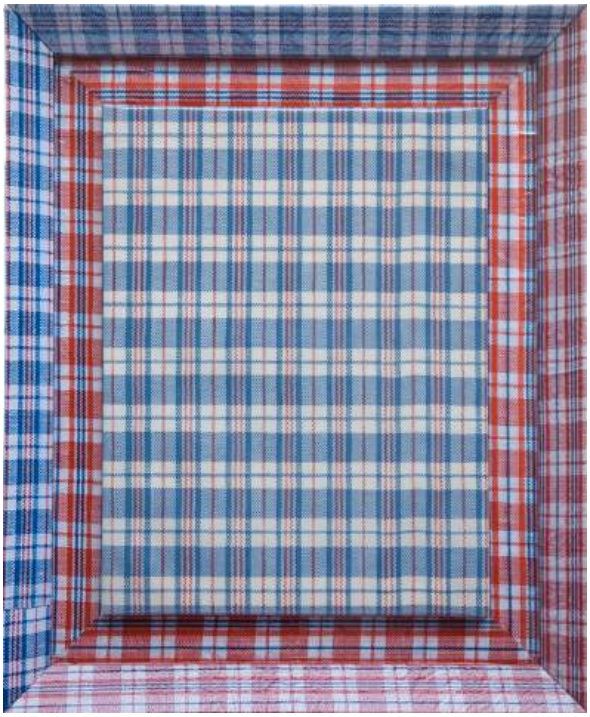
Collaged Experiment on Canvas

Grid series, sizes variable, 2008- current

(Press release of a solo show at Gallery 100, Taipei)
Grid Paintings, Nov. 10 – Dec. 12, 2012

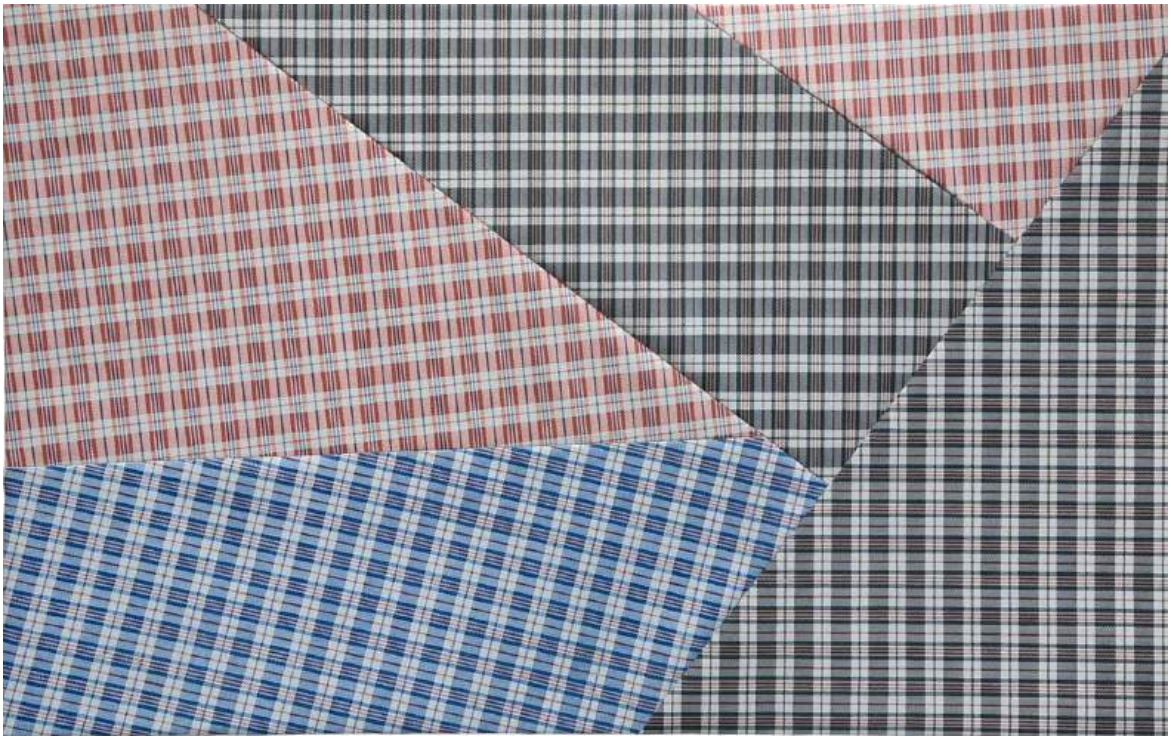
The Gallery 100 is pleased to announce the coming exhibition Grids Painting, the latest series by the contemporary Chinese conceptual photographer Wang Qingsong at the Dunhua Space on view from November 10, 2012. Nearly 4 years of working process along with the consistently parody critical style Wang has been applying to his artworks, this time the artist turns his attention to the inner contradiction arisen in conceptual paintings. Grids Painting Series resonates with abstract geometrical forms in minimal art, giving a general impression of rationality that is usually conveyed through contemporary conceptual paintings. Wang deconstructs the formation of textile bag patterns in different color grades and adopts the idea of photographic pixel to transmit the appearance of an object onto canvas. The whole process of painting becomes an overly repeated and mechanized manner; the artist has to reduce his own expression and creativity accordingly to the minimum level.

As a result, the subjectivity of creator is forced to give up the throne to merely play the role of carrying out the duplicate manner as an intermediary mechanism and a contributor of physical laboring. With this formula, such artistic practice of reprinting patterns of textile bag would, however, be able to produce photorealist images, which challenges the autonomy of painting itself and simultaneously reveals the internal crisis of emotion deficiency in the overly pursuit of objectivity and cerebralism in contemporary conceptual art.

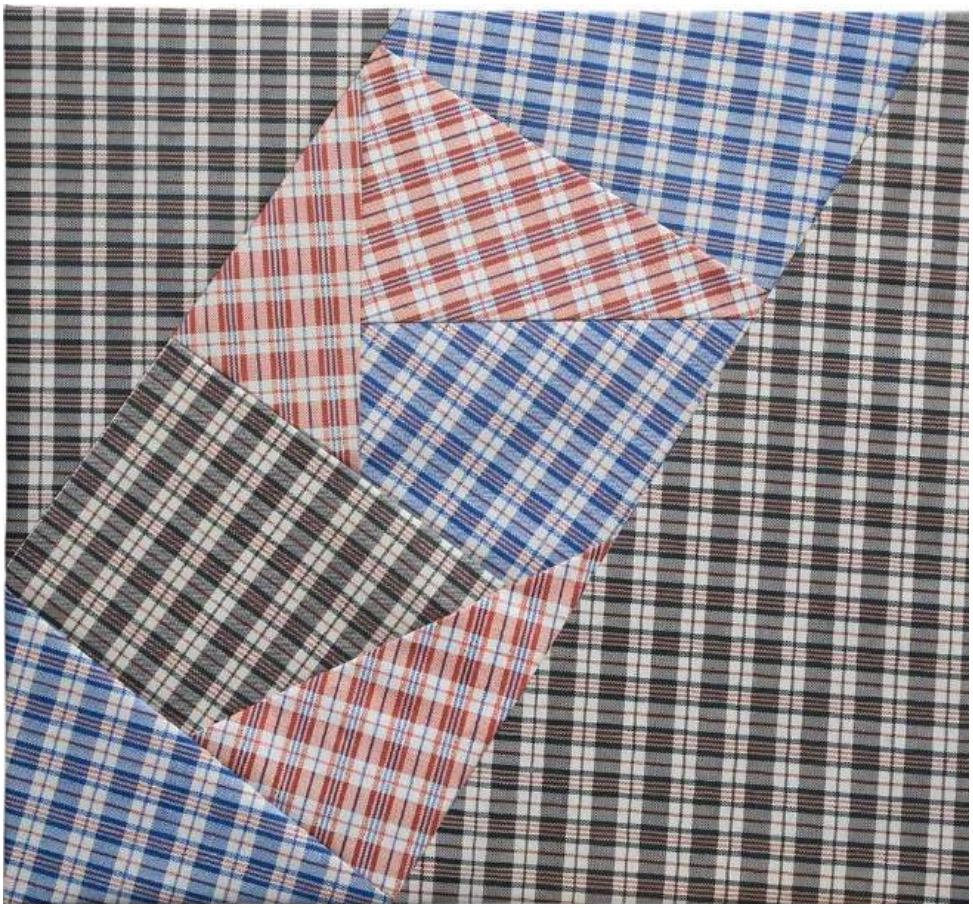


Red Grid Slanted,69x59x11cm,oil on canvas

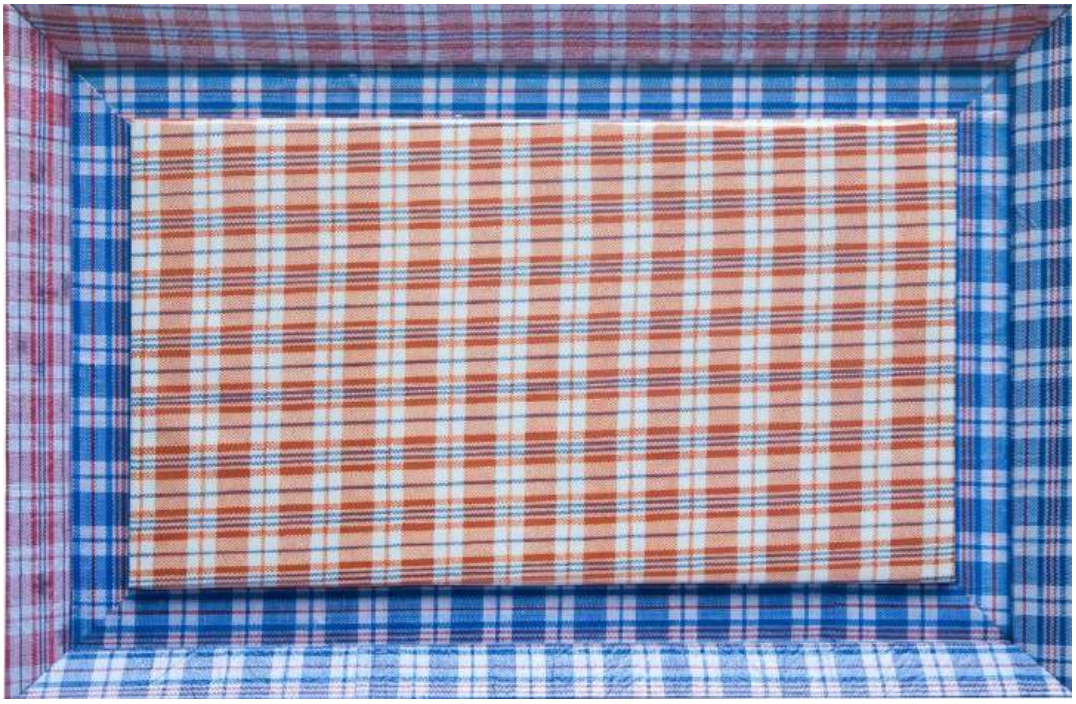
Blue Grid,114x94x11cm,oil on canvas, 2008-2012



Mixed Grids,295x186cm,oil on canvas, 2008-2012



Mixed Grids,180x165cm, oil on canvas, 2008-2012



Red Grid, 94x144x11cm,oil on canvas, 2008-2012

Black Grid,84x74x11cm,oil on canvas, 2008-2012

Public Collections

the Cernuschi Museum, Paris, France
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, USA
Albertina Museum, Vienna
Berkeley Art Museum, California, USA
Buffalo AKG Art Museum, USA
Harvard Art Museum, USA
High Museum, Georgia, USA
Kruizenga Art Museum, Michigan, USA
Museum of Contemporary Photography / Columbia College, Chicago, Illinois, USA
Norton Museum of Art, Florida, USA
Rose Art Museum | Brandeis University, USA
RISD Museum, USA
The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, USA
Peabody Essex Museum, USA.
Museum Hanmi, Korea.
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia.
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA.
United Art Museum, Hubei, China.
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia.
The Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, China
Hubei Art Museum, Wuhan, Hubei Province, China.
Daegu Art Museum, Daegu, Korea.
John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art, USA.
Taikang Group, China
White Rabbit Art Museum, Sydney, Australia.
Guangdong Art Museum, Guangzhou, China,
M+, Hong Kong.
Asia Society, New York City, USA.
San Francisco Museum of Art, San Francisco, USA.
Gallery of Modern Art, Queensland, Australia.
Denver Art Museum, U.S.A.
Institut Valencia d'Art Modern (IVAM), Valencia, Spain
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK
Artium, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain
J. Paul Getty Museum, USA.
Hammer Museum, USA.
San Diego Museum of Art, USA.
Billstone Foundation, Spain
Aspen Art Museum, USA.
Baltimore Museum of Art, USA.

MUMOK, Austria
New Orleans Museum of Art, USA.
Philadelphia Museum of Art, USA.
Cisneros Foundation, Miami, USA.
Mori Art Museum, Japan
Smart Museum of University of Chicago. USA.
Brooklyn Museum. USA.
Williams College of Art. USA
The Moscow House of Photography, Russia
Maison Européenne de la Photographie (MEP), Paris, France
National Art Museum of Brazil, Brazil
Oriente Foundacion, Portugal
Art Tower Mito: Contemporary Art Museum, Japan
JGS Foundation, New York, USA.
Queensland Art Gallery, Australia
The International Center of Photography. New York, USA.

Awards and Grants
2003
Asian Cultural Council grant, NYC, USA

2006
Outreach Award from Recontres de le Photographie, Arles, France

2017
Artist-in-Residence Research Fellowship from the University of Michigan, USA

Other Professional experiences:

2018 – now
Artistic director for Chengdu Contemporary Image Museum, China.

Affiliations
Member of China Photography Association Curatorial Committee

Curatorial Work
2020 November
A Tale of Two Cities, Chengdu Contemporary Image Museum, China.

2020 May
Rising and Falling: *Contemporary Video/Film Exhibition*, Chengdu Contemporary Image Museum, China

2019 November
She Speaks, Chengdu Contemporary Image Museum, China.

2019 April
Golden Panda Excellence Award Artists, Contemporary Image Museum, Chengdu, China.
Landscaping, Guangzhou Contemporary Art Museum, China.

2017 April – July
Chief curator for *Rip it up: the Second Edition of Changjiang International Photography and Video Biennale*, Changjiang Museum of Contemporary Art, Chongqing, China.

2016 September
Chief curator for *Benchmark: the 10th year of Large Format Photography*, Pingyao International Photography Festival and won the Celebrated Curator Award.

2015 April – July
One of the Three curators for the First Edition of Changjiang International Photography and Video Biennale, Changjiang Museum of Contemporary Art, Chongqing, China.

Teaching Experiences:

Oct.-Dec. 2020	Guest Professor at Academy of Arts and Design of Qinghua University.
2008-2014	Guest Professor for the U.S. art schools including U-M, Amherst, SAI-arc...
Sep.-Dec. 2017	Guest Professor at the National University of the Arts, Korea.