

W: 栋帆，你是什么时候去纽约的？

C: 2014 年 10 月。

W: 那时候快临近万圣节了吧。

C: 是的，我现在还能记起当时的场景。布鲁克林威廉斯堡的橱窗里气氛浓郁而邪魅，夜间各种街头妖魔鬼或僵尸装扮的行人，我和 Inna 拎着行李箱穿梭其中。在这诡异而寒冷的气氛里，我们开始了纽约的生活。

W: 这让我想到了《北京人在纽约》中一句著名的台词：“如果你爱他，就把他送到纽约，因为那里是天堂；如果你恨他，就把他送到纽约，因为那里是地狱。”

C: 的确如此。直到现在，我都觉得纽约非常迷人。它是梦想云集的地方，充满了魅力，同时又让人琢磨不透，甚至有些残酷。



W: 在去纽约之前，你在做什么？

C: 2008 年，我从中国美院毕业，怀着雄心壮志希望做些理想的事情，很幸运不到三个月就遇到了正在筹备画廊的 Inna。之后我在清影艺术空间做了四年的展览执行和两年的艺术总监，直到 2014 年我离开杭州前才结束画廊工作。我在杭州工作的七年很幸福，与许多优秀的艺术家、设计师、音乐人、学者和电影工作者等朋友们因艺术而交集。如今大家都在各自的领域有所建树。

W: 那时的杭州还没什么画廊吧。据我了解，现在杭州聚集了不少出色的年轻艺术家，但行业的生态结构仍然不太健全。

C: 嗯，很多国美毕业的艺术都转移到北京和上海。也有很多人选择留在杭州，他们的创作状态特别好，大家都为了实现理想而摸着石头过河。去纽约之前，我在工作中学习到了很多，这必然会影响到滋养创作。我二十几岁时在街头创作公共艺术，到了三十岁我又重新回到了工作室，开始认真严肃地思考创作，两年后去了纽约。

W: 我也是杭州人，最早知道你，是通过你在杭州街头创作的公共壁画。应该是 2010 年左右，当时这件事还上了新闻。你在中国美术学院学的是公共艺术吗？有什么学生时代的故事也可以分享一下。

C: 不是。我在综合艺术系的综合造型工作室，我们平时都叫它第三工作室。系里一些老师在当代艺术界享有盛誉，教学上也非常负责。同学们的思维都很活跃，大家求知若渴。现在回想，这种学术氛围还是蛮不错的。可惜当时我只感受到了压抑和焦虑，大二学期结束后就果断休学了。

W: 什么给你带来了这么大的焦虑？你后来重返学校了吗？哪些老师在教你？

C: 焦虑源于自身，同时缘于我对当代艺术的彷徨失措。我在校外晃荡了一年。重返校园后，我们工作室导师调整为刚从日本归来的管怀宾老师，我跟他学习装置，跟高士强老师学习录像。而我的毕业创作却是四张大画，导师对我都很包容，竟然让我顺利毕业了。我至今心存感激。杨福东老师对我也有很大的鼓舞，虽然他不曾教过我，但我一直视他为师长。刚毕业后不久在北京尤伦斯展览上遇到，他讲“艺术之路是要脚踏实地，一步一个脚印，这只是万里长征的一小步”，虽然话不是讲给我的，但我记在了心里。后来我们成为了朋友，每次见面他都会开门见山地聊对我新作的看法，一针见血的提出批评。亦师亦友的相处与相望，一直在激励着我，我在创作上不敢懈怠。

W: 你的专业学习内容很多元化，但为什么你的创作兴趣一直集中在绘画上？

C: 这应该是我从小形成的志趣。我儿时在看包装白酒的瓦楞纸上临摹连环画岳飞传，被父亲看到后一顿夸奖。之后就一发不可收拾，逢年过节或长辈过寿，我都会提笔创作一幅。稍大一点后，我发觉专业学习画画可以逃离枯燥的高中生活，就孤注一掷地背井离乡走上了艺考之路。上美院时，我迷失于光怪陆离的当代艺术，绘画让我第一次拥有了独立创作的意识。在人生之路上，绘画提供了让我可以停歇和自我疗愈的港湾。我在绘画里沉迷和思考，绘画又给我打开了全新的世界。虽然我的创作有多样的形式和载体，但其表象之下的精神一直是绘画。它关乎纯真与自由，关乎情感、精神和生命的能量。

W: 《屋顶》是你出国前的最后一组作品，它背后还是藏着观念艺术的工作方式，这可能和你的专业背景有关联。之前听你简单介绍了这件作品的创作方法。它和天目里有些渊源，你可以具体介绍一下当时是什么情况。

C: 我记得那是 2014 年的夏天，美术馆的吴天带我和艺术家易连参观了天目里的工地。主办方准备组织一场工地里的展览，邀请了几位杭州的艺术家每人创作一件作品。他们希望我能做一件涂鸦。当年我因公共空间的创作而被大家知晓，虽然我始终都在强调“空间绘画”的概念，但是还是被误以为是涂鸦艺术家。

W: 看来当时你不太接受涂鸦艺术家的这个角色定位。

C: 现在看来，对这种身份标签的焦虑是一种艺术家青春期的叛逆。因此策展人邀请我在天目里的工地涂鸦时，我决定在工地上展出彩色的“屋顶”，与建筑对话。这组作品只是保留了形状和色彩。我当时觉得把它当作出国前的最后一组创作，是蛮有意义的。

W: 但这件作品和主办方的诉求差距很大吧。

C: 是的。不出所料，策展人还是需要涂鸦。作品未能展出，我就退出了展览。转眼七年过去，天目里建筑落成，这组作品放置在展厅地面上，夜幕降临时作品会映射到玻璃幕墙上，彩色的屋顶仿佛悬停在窗外的中央公园之上。等待了七年的展览，我驻足其间像站在时间的河流里。

W: 事隔七年，你从纽约回到杭州，这件作品也在天目里展出，这像是一种命运安排。而此前又是什么动力让你去到纽约，并且决定在那里创作和生活？

C: 2011年夏天，好朋友 Candida Höfer 和 Herbert Burkert 为我们安排了纽约之旅。这是我和 Inna 第一次访问纽约。首次打开一座城市的方式很重要，我们莫名地爱上了纽约，回国后又用了三年的时间准备，时机成熟就自然的飞去了纽约。



W: 背井离乡的生活不太容易吧。放弃一切再面对未知，认识新朋友、学习新规则，重新开始和适应新的生活，这应该需要不少时间。

C: 是的，一切都是全新的。2016年我们经历了各自父亲的相继离世，携手走过痛苦和黑暗之后，我和 Inna 正式在纽约市政厅结婚。两个人在纽约的生活要简单快乐很多。人生的至暗时刻之后，我开始学习和练习如何放松，创作也进入到了全新的时期。

W: 在纽约，华人艺术家有自己的圈子吗？我想知道，你们这些人是如何与那边的艺术界相处的？

C: 其实人数并不多，大家基本都会有交集过。每年有新人来，也有旧人离开，这其实跟国内差不多。有的在大学里上课，有的通过美术馆或机构获得支持，有的与画廊项目合作，有的兼职打工坚持创作……在纽约大家都各显神通，努力地工作，快乐地生活，创作更好的作品。

W: 有混得特别好的华人艺术家吗？其中有你的同辈人吗？

C: 不喜欢“混”这个词，有点鱼目混珠的感觉，不是很恰当。

W: 看来你不太待见成功学。那你们如何融入当地的文化和生活？

C: 在纽约住久了，更不会理会“如何融入当地文化和生活”之类的问题。纽约的文化多元，价值观也不是单一的，我们自己就是纽约文化图景的一部分。我身边有很优秀的同辈人，互相之间支持和鼓励。比如我的朋友孙云帆和 Dave Liang 就非常优秀，他们的乐队“上海复兴方案（The Shanghai Restoration Project）”每年都有新专辑问世。我们在 2019 年合作过两次音乐和绘画的即兴演出。孙云帆还专注于视觉艺术创作和美食，他们家的西班牙海鲜饭是在纽约吃过最地道美味的。



W: 我很好奇，身处在那个环境里，你们如何理解老一辈旅美华人艺术家的工作呢？

C: 我认为老一辈艺术家创造了他们时代的传奇。以前从书上读到过他们在纽约的精彩故事，刚到纽约时我会很好奇地去寻踪觅迹。比如老一辈旅美艺术家都曾去过“纽约艺术学生联盟（Art Students League of New York）”画过画。学校就在中央公园附近，我每天早上赶地铁去画室。当我写生了几个月人体后热情消退，才发觉身边全是老人，后来我就回家安心创作了。住的时间久了，慢慢会发现传奇就在你身边。大家都一样要面对当下的生活，都要直面新的创作。

W: 新一代华人艺术家和老一辈的关系怎么样？代际之间会有互动吗？是否会关注彼此的工作？



C: 不但有互动，而且大家在生活中还会相互关照，会经常约着聚餐聊天。比如，张宏图老师是最早来纽约的华人艺术家之一，他至今笔耕不辍，十分活跃。他那满头银发和利落牛仔褲形成了反差，身上充满着能量和热情。他经常带孙女来参加我的展览和 Open Studio，我们也会去他在皇后区的家里做客吃饭。张老师亲自手磨的意式浓缩咖啡很好喝。德庆老师是伟大的艺术家，生活之中又是低调谦逊的人。他聊起艺术真知灼见，一针见血。亦师亦友的关系让我受益匪浅。德庆老师不喜欢公开活动，但这些年也参加

了很多次我们的家庭聚会。他也会亲自到场支持我的展览。我们经常不定期的见面，他总会开门见山地说：“时间不多，我们聊聊艺术。”

W: 谢德庆老师是位纯粹的艺术家，他确实是一代人的传奇。你生活中有这样的朋友应该很受鼓舞吧。那边的华人策展人呢，他们是一种怎样的工作状态？你们之间会不会因为相同的身份背景而产生更多工作和生活上的互动呢？

C: 她们大多是在美术馆、非营利机构或画廊里工作，同时也在做独立的研究、策划和写作。我没法聊他们普遍是怎样的工作状态，因为每个人不太一样。一起工作过的策展人，我会熟悉一些。我近期在纽约的展览比较密集。一月在皇后区圣约翰大学 Yeh Art Gallery 由王辛策划了《庇护所》。十月在布鲁克林否画廊由海良策划了《漫长的黎明，海盗与诗人在黑暗中吹口哨》。她俩都是非常的优秀和勤奋的策展人，我们合作共事很愉快。



W: 我不太了解王辛，你们的合作项目具体是什么样的？

C: 她是一名现居纽约的策展人和艺术史研究者，现为纽约大学艺术学院现当代艺术史博士候选人，兼任惠特尼美国艺术博物馆的 Joan Tisch 研究员，同时在筹备有关亚洲未来主义的特别展览。我与王辛的合作就像在一起“酿酒”。我们从一开始就达成共识，希望新展览就像一场冒险。为此我创作了全新的作品。展览前，她在我的工作室里策划了几次活动，包括两次我与“上海复兴方案”合作的音乐绘画即兴创作现场，和一次在工作室里的新作发布酒会。在这个“发酵”过程中，我画出了全新的黑白作品，在校园中式建筑前完成了公共作品《彩色的中山路》。画廊空间的展览开幕后，我又与“上海复兴方案”实现了一场现场即兴表演。紧凑的活动之后，新冠疫情全球爆发，展览被迫暂停对外开放。



W: 突入其来的疫情终止了这个展览吗？后期有什么补救措施吗？

C: 疫情给参观展览带来了很大不便，我们想过不少办法但无济于事。整个纽约的艺术行业都在疫情中下沉。去年六月的时候，王辛与主办方、China Institute（华美协进社）一同组织并主持了的线上座谈《Meet the Artist: Myth as a Contemporary Practice—a Conversation with Chen Dongfan》，他们在线上分享了我居家隔离期间的生活和创作。后来《庇护所》一直延期到了八月，撤展时我、Inna、王辛和机构总监 Owen Duffy 在现场有个小仪式，大家带着口罩在庇护所里举杯。



W: 在纽约是否有机构会专门代理或推广中国艺术家？

C: 有，但是不多。纽约有几家非营利机构会支持和推广中国艺术家，比如美国华人博物馆经常有别出心裁的主题群展，也有一些私人运营的画廊和机构，空间面貌和学术方向都各有不同，新兴的小画廊更受年轻人的喜欢。我朋友何雨创立的否画廊就是一个非商业模式的艺术空间。

W: 我知道否画廊。现在社交媒体很方便，空间距离不会阻碍信息传播。我偶尔能在微信朋友圈看到他们的展览内容。

C: 是的，很活跃，我们有过多次的合作，尤其是 2018 年的公共项目《龙与花之歌》得到了何雨和画廊的全力支持。否画廊是从公寓画廊开始逐渐完善为今天的构架，在展览做得越来越专业的同时，又在现场组织不同主题与社区互动的演出或活动。否画廊以艺术家作品为原点链接到不同的创作者。这些机构虽然规模都不大，但提供了在纽约可以看到中国艺术家创作的窗口，也成为了在美华人创作者聚集和交流的场所。对于作为创作者的我而言，他们更像是同时代的同行者。互相之间的鼓励和支持非常重要。等时间过去，留下的是好的艺术和艺术的故事。

W: 国外同行如何看待你的创作？你的中国身份是否会成为他们价值判断的要素？

C: 我不知道，也没有问过。现在“中国身份”这个话题在华人艺术家中也很少聊了。我的创作没有特意去强调身份的问题。

W: 你有特别熟络的国外同行吗？我指那些对你的纽约生活产生实际影响的朋友。

C: 我的工作室在皇后区长岛市，是一座全是涂鸦的三层工厂风格的建筑，引荐我入驻这里的是艺术家 Walter Robinson。我们第一次见面是在 Jeffrey Deitch 画廊。2016 年，Jeffrey Deitch 重新开放伍斯特街画廊后为沃尔特举办了回顾展。好朋友 Seton Smith 带我和 Inna 去参加他的这个展览。之后我们慢慢就熟络了。有一次他专程来参加我在日落公园的 Open Studio，他直言道：“这个鬼地方太偏僻了，你值得拥有更好的工作室！”，之后我就搬到了他工作室的隔壁。这些年他见证了我纽约的展览、活动和艺术项目，看着我逐步的成长。



W: Walter Robinson。我在 2019 年时看过你俩在清影空间举办的以肖像为主题的双人展。我记得介绍里说他在美国是一位有影响力的艺评家。



C: 是的，认识他后我才开始了解纽约的图像一代（The Pictures Generation），也才知道了他作为艺术评论家的传奇故事。他在 70 年代与他人共同创办过艺术杂志 Art-Rite，之后担任过 Art in America 的新闻编辑和 Artnet 的创始编辑，做过电视节目的记者，他还是传奇艺术家团体 Colab 的活跃成员和 Printed Matter 的联合创始人。至今他除了旺盛的个人创作外，仍然保持着艺术媒体人的热情。他的 Instagram 账号上会第一时间分享纽约的最新艺术讯息和评论，这成为了我在日常生活中了解这座城市艺术资讯指南。这些年我们亦师亦友，如果我身上有些许美国当代艺术家的气息和工作习惯的话，肯定是受他的影响。周末我们在展览开幕上相遇，他总会笑着拥抱：“Hi, kids！”，然后风风火火地赶赴下一个展览。

W: 看来你在纽约有不少忘年之交。



C: 是的，非常庆幸 Robinson 怂恿我搬到这间工作室。这之后，我又认识了另一个邻居 Judith Weller，她的雕塑作品坐落在曼哈顿第七大道，是纽约时装区的标志。她已八十多岁高龄，但仍然每天开车来工作室里创作。Judith 第一次走进我的彩色工作室时快乐得像个孩子。她惊讶于我和她所知晓的中国艺术家迥然不同。她允诺我可以在任何时候敲开她工作室的门获得帮助。每隔一段时间她会敲门来探望，门口远远望一眼就知晓我在尝试新的创作，她会由衷地为我高兴。2018 年我在纽约中国城创作了《龙与花之歌》，纽约时报为我做了整版的人物专访，Judith 看到后写了长长的邮件祝贺我。纽约解除居家隔离后很久，我仍没去工作室。有一天，我收到了她发的邮件，催促我差不多该回工作室里创作了。

W: 我想，你有这样的邻居作伴，一定不敢懈怠工作……刚才你提到了《龙与花之歌》，它算是你在纽约从事艺术创作的一个小高潮吗？

C: 《龙与花之歌》是我非常重要的作品。这原是纽约市交通局和华埠共同发展机构面向社会公开征集的公共项目，旨在提倡市民使用公共交通出行和促进当地社区的旅游和商业。在“艺术桥”工作的 Sally Hong 找到否画廊的何雨，极力希望我能够参与这个项目。我计划好暑假回国，犹豫不决时 Inna 陪我走访了这条位于中国城的宰也街，竟然发现第一次来纽约时 Candida 和 Herbert 带我们来吃过的第一家餐馆就在这条街道上。之后调查了解到宰也街是亚裔社区最古老的街道，历史上它有臭名昭著的“血腥之角”之称，商户每天早上都要清洗地上的血迹。

W: 是什么原因使唐人街在历史中遭受过如此可怕的暴力？

C: 这也是我的疑问。后来我了解到持续了六十多年的《排华法案》，它是在美国历史上针对自由移民所作出的最重大的限制之一。我希望身体力行地在现场即兴创作，用色彩和笔触写生出这条街道的精神和肖像，通过“爱与和平”的主题作品让大家来关注被人遗忘的美国暴力排华史，通过艺术让大家关注亚裔社区的移民历史。

W: 这件作品的实施过程是怎样的？有什么社会回应吗？

C: 我的方案是直接 61 米长的街道上创作面积 4800 英尺的巨幅绘画，这样的街头作品在纽约也未曾有过先例，方案竟然全票通过了。八天的创作过程就吸引了很多人的关注，之后 Fox 电视台、NBC 电视台、纽约时报、纽约邮报、Time Out 等媒体都亮相报道。这条街道成为了 2018 年纽约夏天最靓丽的风景线，大量游客涌入中国城来合影留念。纽约市交通局的数据显示，该艺术项目为宰也街带来了日均 1.8 万人，共一百多万人的观众流量，这比以往增长了 111% 的人流。之后每年夏天，宰也街都会变身成为绚丽的彩色之街。这成了一种传统项目并延续至今。

W: 纽约观众对绘画的关注度怎样？和其它媒介的艺术相比，绘画在艺术界处于怎样的位置？

C: 纽约观众对绘画还是情有独钟的。艺术机构举办的绘画展览非常多。很多年轻艺术家也选择绘画作为创作媒介。绘画在纽约还是很重要的。

W: 华人画家在美国艺术界中的上升空间怎么样？这些年，你或者你的同僚是否探到了一些门道？

C: 这个很难讲，这让我想起了王俊杰（Matthew Wong）。他是加拿大华裔艺术家，自学成才。2018 年他在纽约 Karma 举办个展，广受赞誉，这个展览令我印象深刻。可他在事业起步阶段选择自杀结束了生命。王俊杰英年早逝的消息令当代艺术界扼腕叹息。大家都认可他是一个被恶疾缠绕又在 35 岁时过早陨落的艺术天才。他虽然专注绘画创作只有五六年时间，但勤奋地留下了近千张画作。在他离世一年后，他的作品引发了市场的狂热追逐。

W: 他的经历符合大家对天才的理解，但这是一件很残酷的事。我们永远无法预估，机遇以何种形式降临到自己身上。我们的工作也无法与外界的评价隔绝。纽约的氛围对你的绘画产生了怎样的影响？



C: 对绘画中纯粹精神的探求，对图像表层中视觉愉悦的直接表达，对行动绘画中身体行为的实践，对作品创作过程中的观念思考。简而言之，是纽约自由自在的生活状态和艺术实验的无畏精神影响了我的绘画。

W: 在你的创作中，是否受到了美国艺术家的直接影响？

C: 一开始我受欧洲艺术家的影响比较大，之后我开始看美国艺术家的作品。那些展示了艺术家一生创作的回顾展让我印象深刻。比如布尔乔亚（Louise Bourgeois）在 MoMA 的回顾展，会让我思索自己这一生该要创作什么样的作品。很多艺术家的作品会启发我的新创作，但是直接影响往往不是来自于视觉艺术家。2019 年，我在工作室里为《庇护所》潜心创作黑白作品，就受到了约翰凯奇（John Cage）的即兴音乐创作的影响。我反复地听《The Ten Thousand Things》，研究他的作曲理念，同时思考自己的创作方法。约翰凯奇和巴赫开始影响我对视觉的感受。

W: 一些国内画家会将中国现当代艺术的历史作为个人创作的参考坐标。我想知道, 你作为一个旅美中国艺术家, 如何看待这个问题?

C: 哪里都不是中心。现在, 也不是一个存在艺术权利中心的时代。艺术家可以选择怎么做。可以以历史作为参照来推进自己的工作。但这只是一种方法, 它不应该是唯一的途径。

W: 这些年来, 有不少中国艺术家在美国的艺术机构举办大型展览。你对这些展览是何感想?

C: 好的展览大家都会去看。记忆中曹斐和厉槟源在 MoMA PS1 的个展都非常受欢迎, 尤其曹斐的个展特别受年轻人欢迎。艺术家邀请来自纽约中国城的 hip 组合肆意暴力 (The Notorious MSG) 在美术馆做了一场演出。艺术家曹斐也登台表演, 至今还历历在目。去年郭凤仪在美国的首个美术馆个展“遥视”在纽约绘画中心 (The Drawing Center) 展出, 呈现了三十多件最具代表性的作品。虽然受疫情影响, 但展览口碑特别好。这些展览也让我们意识到, 中国当代艺术越来越有影响力了。

W: 聊聊你在纽约工作室吧, 它在什么位置? 在美国的艺术家是否也有串门的习惯?

C: 我目前的工作室在纽约皇后区长岛市 MoMA PS1 的附近, 这是一间有高耸天花板和巨大窗户的白色工作室, 入驻前我用了 11 天的时间将工作室绘满了色彩和笔触, 将毛姆小说《月亮与六便士》的场景在纽约重现, 试图营造一个纯粹的精神空间。我把工作室称为花园, 这里组织过朋友聚会、音乐和舞蹈的演出、艺术实验项目等等, 慢慢成为纽约最活跃的艺术家工作室之一, 还上过当地杂志的封面。受新冠疫情影响, 围绕工作室而展开工作的生活戛然而止, 在空置了半年后, 决定换到楼上小一点的工作室。在把工作室刷白退还的前一天, 组织了一场朋友周桐和他乐队的音乐演出, 大家带着口罩在忐忑不安中听了一场阔别半载的音乐现场。



W: 纽约艺术界的社交活动频繁吗, 这是否已经成为了你们工作的一部分?

C: 艺术领域的活动是非常密集的, 而且每个区域的受众都不太一样。如果你不有所节制地去参与, 容易迷失在纽约的光怪陆离中。2019 年, 我用了一整年时间画了 52 本手绘书。因为每周必须完成一本, 所以我的大部分时间都是在工作室里度过。借此我逐渐远离了不必要的公开活动, 平时只和少数朋友们在私下聚会时交流。



W: 听说你有不少驻地和旅行创作的经验, 这为你的艺术提供了什么?

C: 去往远方, 生活在别处, 适度的陌生感会让感官的体验更敏锐。这是一种非常古典和浪漫的创作模式。很多时候, 精彩的经历并不能为艺术提供什么, 但会滋养灵魂。对于短暂的人生来讲, 这个更重要。



W: 你如何理解公共艺术和画室创作之间的关系? 如何平衡两者?

C: 我的创作目前基于空间和时间而展开。公共艺术是特定空间之中的大型创作, 架上绘画是特定时间之内的系列创作。在空间里爆发, 在时间里消耗, 而空间和时间的界限是模糊的。想想如果抽离掉时间和空间, 还会剩下什么。本质的艺术问题是一样的。因此, 这两者对于我而言并不需要平衡。

W: 新冠疫情中, 你和你的同行们是一种怎样的工作和生活状态?

C: 我们都在做力所能及之事。很多朋友离开了纽约。只要天塌不下来, 生活都要继续。我印象最深刻的是纽约疫情期间被打砸抢之后的 SOHO。难以置信 2020 年纽约 SOHO 如今就像好莱坞的灾难片, 路边的商店都用木板把店面封闭了起来。一周之后艺术家们走上街头, 在密封的木板上画上独一无二的艺术作品, 整个商业中心变成了巨大的艺术画廊。艺术又一次点燃了人们生活的希望!

W: 的确振奋人心, 这让人们看到了艺术家的魔力与社会责任感。你这次回国准备待多久? 有什么工作或者旅行计划吗?

C: 一整年我都会在国内, 计划圣诞节前回纽约。无论生活和工作如何变动, 创作都会持续。目前我正在四川成都 A4 国际驻留艺术中心驻留, 接下来会在成都生活和工作一段时间。中间也会去参加北京、深圳和上海的艺术博览会。至于旅行计划嘛, 只能把工作当作旅行了, 哈哈, 心情置换一下, 马上就可以进入度假模式。

W: 你在国内接受了艺术训练, 而你的爱人在国内也有自己的画廊, 你们应该有很多艺术行业的朋友。你们回国的这段时间, 拜访了同行吗? 有些什么感触?

C: 我感觉大家很努力但不太开心, 艺术领域也不可避免地内卷了。回来久了, 我也有点理解这种状态了。我太太是一个如太阳般热情的人, 很乐于与人交流, 这么多年来我一直受到她的鼓舞。这段时间我认识了很多艺术行业之外的新朋友, 他们做事情纯粹又投入, 比较聊得来。

W: 聊得大一点, 你如何看待国内的当代绘画?

C: 我觉得很难提出一个结论。绘画太不好说, 因为绘画很难, 它本身就是一个窄门。许多画家能坚持这么多年创作都是值得尊敬的。画还是要在现场看原作, 具体聊, 有就是有、没有就是没有, 要说的和在做的都在画里面, 绘画扯不了谎。

W: 你对中国当代艺术的机制有什么个人体会?

C: 效率高效, 硬币的两面。

W: 这次天目里的展览, 是你近几年工作的回顾, 它给你带来了什么收获?

C: 今天杭州的天目里, 就像是真实得可以触摸的海市蜃楼。八年的时间, 天目里终于落成, 由衷地赞叹李琳的浪漫和坚持。每次回杭州做个展都像是回家交成绩单, 心里有些紧张。感谢正宁的邀请, 因为这个展览, 我见到了许多数年未见的同学和朋友, 非常开心。展览呈现了一百多件作品, 时间跨度有七年多。现场就像是一个绘画的公园, 移步换景, 布置得很轻松, 可以慢慢看很久。每天观展的人络绎不绝, 展览很受年轻人的喜欢, 成为了争相打卡的网红展。这让我明显地感受到时代已经悄悄改变了。



W: 你觉得在中国做展览与在纽约做展览有什么不同？

C: 国内做事很灵活，能够调动的社会资源比较多，朋友们都倾情相助，特别有人情味。这次展览的策划和布展基本是在半个月內完成。我们四个好朋友齐心协力地去做一件事，激发了彼此的创作欲望，工作本身就快乐。展览期间又组织了三场对谈¹和一场声音与绘画的即兴现场²，邀请到各行各业杰出的创作者。每次展览就像种下了一颗未来的种子，理想和浪漫不曾改变，大家累点但是值得的。



W: 接下来，你在创作上有什么阶段性的目标吗？

C: 多感受，与人交往，与人合作，尝试让自己与不同城市做一些联接性的创作，同时希望能够在城市里实现一些公共作品。

W: 你是否考虑过将主要的创作空间移到国内？你计划在纽约居住多久？

C: 我喜欢安居乐业不要改变，但现实却是颠沛流离、不停地折腾。未来谁也说不准，只能做好眼前的事。目前纽约的工作室和公寓一直空着，每个月都还在交房租，压力有点大，但也是没有办法的事情。

W: 如果回国，你会选择住在哪里，北京，上海，还是杭州？

C: 上海。



陈栋帆纽约工作室 Chen Dongfan Studio in New York, 2019



1 Daily News
一场关于日常生活和呼吸的圆桌谈

嘉宾：陈栋帆、邓鑫、李西朵、李孜、郦亭亭、刘呗宁、卢涛、宋笑梅、唐筠、万晓利、汪建平、王秋华、徐益英、易连、虞琼洁、张洽、张征、赵洋、Lin



秉烛游
一场关于绘画的讨论

主持：刘呗宁、李晟翌
嘉宾：曹澍、陈栋帆、段馨、刘语桐、潘望舒、商思敏、沈翰、王婧、吴杉、项一帆、谢雯、郑文昕



日常
一场关于艺术与设计的讨论

主持：刘呗宁、卢涛、虞琼洁
嘉宾：陈栋帆、陈飞波、方宏章、凌建、郦亭亭、梅数植、王欲成、吴永红、张弥迪、张晓晓



2 即兴呼吸
一场不可复制的声音与绘画现场

策划：张征
绘画：陈栋帆
钢琴：许如卿
即兴人声与声音：Bianco 以及现场观众参与

W: When did you make your way to New York?

C: It was October 2014.

362

W: I'm also a Hangzhou native and first became aware of you and your work by way of the murals you made on the city's streets. It must have been around 2010 and the event was also covered by the media. You studied public art at the CAA, right? Do you have any stories from your student days you'd like to share?

C: That's not entirely correct. I was in the department of Total Art. We all called it Studio Number 3 at the time. Whilst attending dutifully to their tutorial duties, a number of the department's faculty were also of considerable standing in the contemporary arts. My classmates were all very active in their thinking and everyone was really thirsty for knowledge. Thinking back on it, that kind of academic environment was really quite amazing. It's a shame that at that time all I felt was pressure and anxiety, ultimately deciding to take time out in my second year.

W: Close to Halloween, right?

C: That's right, I still remember the scene. The thick, mischievous draw of windows through Williamsburg, Brooklyn; people on the streets dressed up as all kinds of zombies, ghosts and ghouls; Inna and myself dragging our luggage through the thick of it all. It was in the midst of such an unusual atmosphere we began our life in New York City.



W: This reminds me of a famous line from A Native of Beijing in New York: "If you love him, then send him to New York, it's heaven there; and if you hate him, then send him to New York, it's hell."

C: That's it precisely. I've found New York most fascinating ever since. It's a place where dreams accrue; alluring but at the same time indecipherable, even somewhat cruel in places.

W: What was it made you worry? Did you go back? Who taught you?

C: The anxiety came from within me, my still having been also somewhat at a loss when it came to the subject of contemporary art. I spent my gap year loafing around. After I returned to campus, Professor Guan Huaibin had been assigned responsibility for our studio having just returned from Japan. I studied installation with him whilst working with Gao Shiqiang on video. My graduation work however consisted of four large-scale paintings. In the end the faculty was all very forgiving and allowed me to graduate without a hitch. I'm still incredibly grateful even now. Albeit he never taught me, Professor Yang Fudong also had an encouraging influence on me and I thought of him as a mentor all the same. I met him again not long after graduating at the Ullens Centre for Contemporary Art (UCCA) in Beijing where he said, "One needs to be grounded when it comes to art; every footfall is but a small step on a long march." I still remember this vividly, even though it hadn't been addressed to me directly. We became friends later on and every time we meet his perspectives on my latest work always seems to open new doors; his criticism is very incisive. Each of us is working towards our respective goals and he's proven an endless source of encouragement for me, as a friend and as a mentor, meaning I never dare get lazy with my work.

W: What were you doing before you went to New York?

C: I graduated from the China Academy of Art in 2008 filled with ideals about what it was I wanted to do. Within three months I was fortunate enough to bump into Inna who was making preparations to open the gallery at the time. In the four years after I continued with the Inna Art Space as an exhibiting artist, two of those wherein I also functioned as creative director for the space. That brings us to 2014, prior to my leaving Hangzhou and when I finished working at the gallery. The seven years I spent working in Hangzhou were very happy and allowed me - with art as a premise - to mix with a vast number of artists, designers, musicians, film-makers and academic friends. All of them continue to make outstanding contributions in their various fields.

W: If I'm not mistaken there still weren't all that many galleries in Hangzhou at that time. In my personal understanding there are a great many exceptional young artists in Hangzhou, yet the state of the industry there still isn't quite what it ought to be.

C: That's right. A lot of artists graduating from the CCA (China Academy of Art, Hangzhou) relocate to Beijing or Shanghai. But there are also many that choose to remain in Hangzhou who are also working in really great ways, finding for the stepping stones toward realizing their respective ideals. Prior to my leaving for New York I learned a lot by way of my work, things which inevitably influenced and nourished this. From having made art in public space throughout my twenties, at thirty I returned to the studio to focus on my practice in earnest, two years after which I went to New York.

W: Albeit your major itself was very multifaceted, why was it your practical interests focused consistently on painting?

C: It's most likely a leaning I developed in childhood. When I was little, I was praised by my father for a series of illustrations I made from The Legend of Warrior Yue Fei on a cardboard box for Chinese liquor. After that nothing would stop me. I would pick up my brush to make a painting whenever there was a holiday or if an elder relative was celebrating their birthday. When I was a little older, I found studying painting formally was a way to escape from the humdrum of high school life. It was thus I settled to leave my hometown and set out on the road towards an artistic vocation. When I started at the CAA, I was confused by the outlandishness of contemporary art. Painting gave me the first sense of creating for myself alone. Through the course of my life, painting has offered me a harbor of sorts, ported in which I can rest and heal; revel and contemplate. It opened up a whole new world for me. Albeit my work exists in multiple forms and upon a variety of supports, beneath these there's nevertheless an essential consistency, a painterly spirit. Something about innocence and freedom, feelings, the potential of spirit and vital forces.

Date: 8.7.2021

W: Wang Jiang C: Chen Dongfan

363

W: Rooftop was the last work you made before leaving China. Beyond its surface there is a kind of conceptualism, perhaps something connected with your educational background. I previously heard you give cursory introduction to the means of this work's production, some of it originating in the OōEli complex itself. Could you possibly give a few more specific details on the situation at that time?

C: I remember the summer of 2014 when Wu Tian from the art museum took artist Yi Lian and I to see the site for what would become the OōEli. The proprietors were preparing to arrange an exhibition on the site, inviting a number of artists from the Hangzhou area to each contribute a work. They had wanted me to make a piece of graffiti specifically. It was that year I had gained a certain level of prominence through my work in public spaces. Albeit throughout it all I foregrounded the notion of "painting in space", I was nevertheless misapprehended as being a graffiti artist.

W: It seems at that time you weren't willing to accept being assigned the role as a graffiti artist.

C: If I look at it now, my qualms about such an identifier were a rebellion in a youthful kind of way. As a result, when the curator asked me to create a graffiti work for the OōEli site, I decided to exhibit these colorful Rooftop, a dialogue with the architecture. The series retained form and color alone. At that time I intended to make this my last work before leaving China, hence it is quite significant for me.

W: But didn't this work diverge somewhat from what the organizer had requested?

C: That's right. As was perhaps to be expected, the curator had indeed wanted a piece of graffiti. I thus withdrew from the exhibition and the work was never exhibited. Now it seems in the blink of an eye, seven years have already passed. The OōEli complex premises are already finished. Now the same sits on the floor of the exhibition hall and when night falls, it can be seen reflected in the glass facade, the colored rooftops appearing as if suspended in the park beyond the window. It's an exhibition I waited seven years for and finding myself in the midst of it is like standing in the passages of time.

W: Seven years have passed and you've now returned to Hangzhou from New York. Now this work is exhibited in OōEli. It seems somehow as if it was fate. What was the impetus for your moving to New York and deciding to work and live there?



C: In the summer of 2011, my good friends Candida Höfer and Herbert Giovanni Burkert helped us arrange a trip to New York. It was Inna and my first time there. How one makes one's way through a city the first time is crucial, still for whatever reason we fell in love with it. After returning to China we spent three years preparing and when the time was right, we flew to New York.

W: It can't be easy living so far from your country of birth. To give up everything, face up to the unknown, make new friends, learn new rules, start over and get used to a new way of life. Things like that do take time.



C: Yes, everything was completely new. In 2016, both of us had to shoulder our fathers' passing. Hand in hand, Inna and I passed through darkness and pain, and we made our vows in New York City Hall. It's very easy to live happily as a couple in New York. Having passed my life's darkest hour, I started to learn to relax; my work also entered a whole new phase.

W: Is there a specific circle catering for Chinese artists in New York? I'd like to know how you all get along in over there?

C: As it happens we're not actually all that numerous. In general, we've all come into contact with one another at some point in time. Just as new faces arrive each year, people from before also leave. It's more or less the same as back in China. Some artists will be in college, others getting support from art museums or other organizations, collaborating with a gallery on some projects or otherwise working part time whilst trying to continue with their work... Everyone in New York expresses themselves for themselves, works hard, lives happily and makes the best work they can.

W: Is there any Chinese artist comes to mind who's a particularly good mixer? Anyone of around your own age?

C: I'm not fond of this word "mix" as it brings to mind the Chinese proverb "to fix fish eyes with the pearls," namely to present a sham as genuine, so it doesn't seem quite fitting.

W: It seems you're not a great believer in the success principle. How is it you go about navigating local life and culture?



C: The longer you stay in New York, the less thought you give to issues like "How to navigate local life and culture". New York is highly multicultural and there's no one fixed set of values, we're all just pieces of the puzzle that makes up the city. I have a number of very outstanding contemporaries and we all pull together to support and encourage one another. Take my friends Sun Yunfan and Dave Liang for instance, both exceptional individuals. Their band The Shanghai Restoration Project releases a new album every year and in 2019 we collaborated on two separate improvised performances of live painting and music. Sun Yunfan is also engaged in the visual and culinary arts. The paella they make at their place is the most authentic I've tasted in New York to date.

W: I'm curious as to how in such an environment you relate to the work of previous generations' overseas Chinese artists in America?



C: For me the previous generations' Chinese American artists created the folklore of their times. I've read some really great stories and when I just arrived in New York used out of curiosity to go from place to place trying to find their traces. Any artist from before would for instance have gone to draw at The Art Students League of New York at some point or another. The school is situated close to Central Park, and I would catch the subway early each morning to visit the studio there. After several months of life drawing, my enthusiasm waned on my realizing that everyone around me was much older. Following that I went back to making work in the comfort of my own home. The more you live here, the more you discover the real legends are right by your side. Everyone has to face up to the here-and-now; to their new work.

W: What's the relationship like between older and newer generations of Chinese American artists? Is there any interaction? Do you all keep up with each other's projects?

C: Not only is there interaction, on top of that we all take care for one another from day to day and we often get together to eat and chat. Mr. Zhang Hongtu for instance, one of the first Chinese artists to come to New York, he still works very prolifically to this day. His head of silver hair contrasting with his neat denim pants,

his demeanor is filled with energy and enthusiasm. He often brings his granddaughter along to my exhibitions and Open Studio, just as we too attend dinners at his home in Queens. The espresso made from beans Mr. Zhang grinds himself is really something. Mr. Deqing too is an outstanding artist but is at the same time very low key and modest in his manner of living. He is always very astute and insightful when it comes to art. His opinions are always penetrating. To be with someone who is both a friend and a mentor is most beneficial for me. Albeit Mr. Deqing is not all that fond of social events, these last few years he's made an appearance at many gatherings in our home. He also shows up at my exhibitions to offer his support. We meet up from time to time and whenever we do so he is sure to say, "There's not much time so let's cut to the chase and talk about art."

W: Mr. Xie Deqing is an artist in the purest sense; truly a legend of his generation. It must be very invigorating to have such a friend in your life. As far as Chinese curators in New York are concerned, what kind of ways do they work in? Is it possible by chance that you tend to interact and work together more because of your shared background?



C: They mostly work in museums, non-profit structures or galleries whilst at the same time conducting research, writing or planning events independently. I can't make any general statements about the ways they work because everyone is different. I'm more familiar when it comes to those curators with whom I've worked in person. I've exhibited quite a bit in New York recently. In January there was *Sanctuary* at St John's University in Queens, curated by Wang Xin. After that in October came "Long Dawn, Pirates and Poets Whistling in the Dark" at Brooklyn's Fou Gallery curated by Hai Liang. These curators are both very exceptional, very hardworking and it's always a pleasure to work alongside them.

W: I'm not all that familiar with Wang Xin. What projects is it in particular that you've worked together on?



C: Wang Xin is a curator and art historian currently based in New York. She's currently a doctoral student in the History of Contemporary Art in New York University's Fine Arts division and is conducting research into the work of Joan Tisch at the Whitney Museum, whilst at the same time also working on organizing a special exhibition focusing on Asian futurism. When I work with Wang Xin the process akin to a kind of "fermentation". We instantly reached a mutual understanding and hoped the new exhibition would be an adventure of sorts. I set to work on creating something completely new with this in mind. Prior to the exhibition, Wang Xin orchestrated a series of events to take place in my studio, including an improvised collaborative live painting and music performance between myself and The Shanghai Restoration Project, along with a drinks reception in the studio held to present the new work. During the course of this "fermentation," I painted a new series of works in black and white and completed the public piece "Technicolor Zhongshan Road" in front of a Chinese style pavilion on the campus of St John's University. After the exhibition opened at the gallery, I realized a further improvised performance together with The Shanghai Restoration Project. The pandemic exploded following this compact event and we were forced to temporarily close the show to the public.

W: So it was the sudden arrival of the virus that drew the exhibition to its premature close? Was there anything you were able to do following as a remedy?



C: The pandemic made it very inconvenient as far as visiting exhibitions goes and we considered many other options but were unable to do anything about it. The entire New York art world collapsed under the weight of the pandemic. In June last year, together with the team at the venue, The China Institute, Wang Xin orchestrated and oversaw the online discussion "Meet the Artist: Myth as a Contemporary Practice — A Conversation with Chen Dongfan" in which I shared online aspects of my life and work whilst self-isolating in my home during the pandemic. Later, *Sanctuary* was ultimately extended until August. During deinstallation, Inna, Wang Xin, space director Owen Duffy and myself conducted a small ceremony on the site where - all wearing our masks - we made a toast together inside the sanctuary.

W: Are there any organizations in particular that work to represent and promote the work of Chinese artists?

C: There are, but not that many. There are a number of non-profit organizations in New York that support and promote the work of Chinese artists. The Chinese People's Museum of America for instance frequently holds very creative, thematic group exhibitions. There are also some privately run galleries and other spaces, all of them distinct in terms of space and scholarly orientations, the newer, smaller spaces amongst these tending to be more popular with a younger crowd. My friend He Yu has also founded the Fou Gallery, a non-commercial art space.

W: I am aware of the Fou Gallery. All these things are made very convenient by social media, as physical distance doesn't limit the transmission of information. I will see the content of their exhibitions every once in a while, on my WeChat feed.

C: Yes, they're very active and we've collaborated on various projects, the 2018 public fixture *Song of Dragon and Flower* having been supported by the vested energies of both He Yu and Fou Gallery. Fou started as an apartment gallery, refining itself gradually into the space's present structure, their exhibitions becoming not only more specialized but with them also arranging various performances and events of differing themes as a means to foster interaction with local communities. Fou creates links between different practitioners, taking artists' work as a point for departure. Albeit these spaces aren't all that large, they offer a window via which it's possible for New York to get a glimpse of Chinese artists' work nevertheless. They have become places where Chinese American practitioners can meet and interact also. For me as a practitioner myself they're a sort of companion to our times. It's very important for us to encourage and support one another and as time goes by, what's left behind will be good art and its narratives.

W: How do foreign practitioners in the industry see your work? Does your identity as Chinese in any way enter into their assessment of its value?

C: I don't know, I've never asked. Nowadays the issue of "Chineseness" is one very rarely discussed by Chinese artists. My work doesn't go out of its way to foreground questions of identity.

W: Are there any foreign artists with whom you're particularly close? I'm referring to friends who have had a palpable influence on your life in New York.



C: My studio is located in Long Island, Queens inside a graffiti scrawled, a three-story factory style block. It was artist Walter Robinson who recommended I set-up there. The first time the two of us met was at the Jeffrey Deitch gallery. In 2016, after newly opening their Wooster Street premises, Jeffrey Deitch organized a retrospective for Walter. It was our good friend Seton Smith who took Inna and I to see the exhibition. We started to become friends following this. One time he took a trip specifically to attend my Open Studio in Sunset Park, stating without mincing his words: "This fucking place is so out of the way, you deserve a studio better than this!" After that I moved into a studio next-door to his. These last few years he's borne witness to all my New York exhibitions, events and creative fixtures, watching, step by step, as I've matured.

W: Walter Robinson. I saw the portrait themed exhibition the pair of you made at Inna Art Space in 2019. I recall that in the introduction to the exhibition, it stated he's quite an influential art critic in the United States.

C: That's right. It was after meeting him I started to look into The Pictures Generation of New York, than to learn the legendary tale of his role as an art critic. In the 70's, along with several others, he founded the publication Art-Rite, following which he went onto become editor of Art in American, founding editor of Artnet and also worked as a TV journalist. He was also an active member of the artist collective Colab and one of the co-founders of Printed Matter. Until today, aside from having created a staggering body of work, he possess still the passion for artistic media. He's always first to share the latest items of New York art information and art criticism on his Instagram page and it has become a guide for me detailing all information on art relating to the city. Over the years, we've become both friends and mentors to one another. If there's anything about me even a hint of which represents an American contemporary artist and such artist's work habits, it's most certainly due to his influence. Should we happen to run into one another at a weekend opening, he always offers a smiling hug, followed by a: "Hi, kids!" before proceeding to race over to the next show.

W: It seems you have quite a number of older friends in New York.

C: I guess you're right. I feel fortunate to have had Robinson incite that I relocate to this studio. Following the move, I also became acquainted with Judith Weller, another of my neighbors whose sculpture sits on the 7th Avenue in Manhattan as a symbol of the New York garment district. She's already over eighty years old but still drives to the studio to work each day. The first time Judith entered my brightly colored studio she was happy like a child. She was surprised as I was so utterly different from any other Chinese artist she knew of. She promised me that I could always knock on the door of her studio if ever I needed help with anything. Every once in a while she'll come knock on my studio door to pay a visit. Glancing in from the doorway, she always knows when I'm trying out something new and is always genuinely pleased for me. In 2018 when I made *Song of Dragon and Flower* in New York's China Town, the New York Times gave over a whole page over to a personal profile on me. When Judith saw this, she wrote a long email congratulating me. Quite some time after New York lifted its quarantine regulations I still hadn't been to the studio, then one day, I received another email from her, stating that I really ought to come back to the studio and get back to work.

W: I guess that with a neighbor like that for company you never think to neglect your work... Just now you mentioned *Song of Dragon and Flower*, does this amount to a small climax of sorts in your New York practice?



W: What was it in the area's history caused such dreadful violence to occur around Chinatown?

C: *Song of Dragon and Flower* was a crucial work for me. The fixture was originally an open-call public project for the area co-organized by New York City Transit Authority and the Chinatown Partnership to encourage people to travel by public transport and promote travel and enterprise in the area. Sally Hong at ArtBridge had contacted He Yu at Fou stating she earnestly hoped I would participate in the fixture. I however had planned to return to China during summer vacation. Unable to decide what to do, Inna and I went to take a walk along Doyers Street in Chinatown, realizing that one restaurant Candida and Herbert had taken us to when we first visited New York had been there. After a little research, I learned Doyers Street was the oldest street to be home to the city's Asian community and that it was notoriously given the name "the bloody angle," with local business owners having to wash away blood stains from the ground at the start of every day.

C: That was my question too at the time. Later on, I got to know about the Chinese Exclusion Act that continued for over sixty years, one of the greatest limitations placed on freedom of immigration in American history. I wanted to live up to my word and improvise a work in situ for the project, sketching the street's spirit, its likeness in colors and brushstrokes. I wanted to take the themes of "love & peace" to bring people's attention to America's violent anti-Chinese history, using art to raise awareness of the city's Asian immigrant communities and their histories.

W: How about the realization process of this work? Was there any response from the community?

C: My proposal was to create a colossal painting 4,800 square feet in size and stretching the entire 61 meter length of the street, an outdoor work the likes of which had never been seen previously in New York. In the end, the response to the proposal was one of unanimous approval. The eight-day process taken to complete the work attracted the attention of a large number of people, with media including Fox TV, NBC, The New York Times, Time Out and so on, all competing to cover the project. The street thus became arguably the most beautiful piece of scenery to be found in New York that summer in 2018, with a great number of visitors all converging on Chinatown to take photos to commemorate the occasion. The New York City Transit Authority's statistics show that the project brought an average of 18,000 people to Doyers Street every day, totaling a cumulative volume of around 1 million all in all, a flow of around 111% more than any previous average. Every summer following this, Doyers Street is transformed into a street decked in gorgeous colors, a fixture that continues until this day.

W: How does painting stand in New Yorkers' estimations? Compared that is with other artistic media. What kind of a position does painting occupy in the art world there?



C: Painting occupies a unique place in the hearts of New Yorkers and the art spaces here organize a great many painting exhibitions. There are a lot of young artists also who make painting their medium of choice. It's very important for New York.

W: Do you feel Chinese painters are afforded any leeway for upward motion? Are there any windows for this either you or those around you have managed to locate?

C: It's terribly hard to say. But this makes me think of Matthew Wong. He was a self-taught Canadian Chinese artist. He held a solo exhibition at Karma in 2018 to very wide acclaim, an exhibition that had a profound influence upon me also. However, just as he was moving up in the echelons of his vocation, he committed suicide, ending his life. The news that Wong had passed away so soon aroused great distress in the art world. Everyone recognizes he was an artist of considerable talents who, having just passed 35, was simply lost too soon to grip of some terrible condition. Albeit he'd only invested himself fully in his painting practice for some five or six years, he worked tirelessly, leaving behind some thousand or so paintings. One year since his passing, market demand for his works is still rampant.

W: His story seems more or less in line with what most understand as genius. This seems quite callous however. We will never be able to foresee in what way any individual will be affected by their circumstances. Our work as well can never be separated from outside evaluation. What kind of influence has New York's atmosphere had on your painting?

C: The pursuit of the purer, more essential spirit of painting, to directly express jouissance in the surface of an image, the implication of the body's motions in the practice of action painting, my conceptual musings during the making process. Put simply, the free, easy way of life in New York, the refusal to pale from creative experiment here has all been an influence on my work.

W: Has your work been influenced by American artists in any way?



C: To begin with I was very much influenced by European artists and it was only later I began to look at the work of Americans. I carry with me a very profound image from certain retrospective exhibitions, shows displaying an artist's life's work. Louise Bourgeois' MOMA retrospective for instance got me thinking about what kind of things I wanted to accomplish practically while I'm alive. There are a great many artists whose work has inspired certain of my own new pieces, yet often the impetus for my works doesn't come from the visual arts. In the studio, whilst immersed in creating the black and white works seen in *Sanctuary*, I was influenced in part by the improvisational techniques John Cage employed in his music. I listened to *The Ten Thousand Things* over and over again, researching his modes of composition, at the same time thinking about my own way of working. It was thus that John Cage and Bach came to have an influence on my feelings regarding the visual.

W: There are certain Chinese artists who take coordinates from the canon of Chinese modern art. I would like to know as a Chinese artist in America how you feel about this?

C: There's no center, these are no longer times where there exists any right to this in art. An artist can choose for themselves how to move forward. Of course one can use history as a means to give one's self a practical impetus. But this is but a single way to go and oughtn't be the only one.

W: In the last few years, there have been quite a number of Chinese artists who have arranged large scale exhibitions in US spaces. What are your thoughts on these exhibitions?

C: Everyone will go see a good exhibition. I recall Cao Fei and Li Binyuan's solo shows at MOMA PS1 being very well received, especially Cao Fei's with the younger crowd. The hip-hop collective The Notorious MSG were also invited by artists to New York's Chinatown to perform in the art museum. Cao Fei also took to the stage to perform, it's still very vivid in my mind. Last year Guo Fengyi's first US solo museum exhibition *Guo Fengyi: To See from A Distance* was shown at New York's Drawing Center, featuring more than thirty of the artist's key works. Although influenced by the pandemic, the exhibition was held in high esteem nevertheless. These exhibitions bring us to acknowledge the growing influence of Chinese contemporary art.

W: Let's talk about your New York studio. Where's it located? Aren't artists in America somewhat in the habit of dropping by unannounced?



C: My present studio is in Long Island City, Queens, not far from MOMA PS1. It's a high-ceilinged studio with massive windows. Prior to moving in I spent eleven days daubing the entire studio with color and brushstrokes, re-realizing the backdrop to Somerset Maugham's novel *The Moon and Six Pence* in New York. It was an attempt to embody a purely spiritual space. I call the studio a garden and have held there meetings between friends, performances of music and dance, experimental creative projects and so on, gradually allowing mine to have become one of the most dynamic artist's studios in New York, having even taken the cover space of a local magazine. This studio-centric lifestyle was brought to an abrupt halt by the novel Coronavirus pandemic. A half year's having passed somewhat uneventfully, I decided to move to a smaller studio upstairs. The day before I white-washed and moved out of my former studio my friend Zhou Tong and his band performed in the space. Still somewhat ill at ease and wearing masks, for the first time in a long time we were able to bear witness to a live music performance.

W: Are there regular social events in the New York art world? Has this equally become a part of your work?



C: There's a whole plethora of events take place around the arts here. Not only that, but their respective attendees are not necessarily all quite the same. If one is not careful, it's east to get lost in the bizarre, motley place that is New York. In 2019 I spent an entire year working on a series of 52 artist's books. As I had to complete a volume each week I spent the majority of my time in the studio. As a result, I gradually established a distance between myself and all but the essential outdoor pursuits, only really meeting with a small number of friends to catch up at home.

W: I've heard you have a lot of experience with residencies and making work on the go whilst traveling. What has this offered your practice?

C: Going back and forth between places, living far from home, an appropriate level's strangeness has the function of honing one's perceptions. It's a very classical, romantic way of working. A lot of the time, even the best experiences won't do anything for one's practice, albeit they might be chicken soup for the soul. In this short life, maybe this is more important.

W: How do you see the relationship between working in public space and working in the studio? How do you balance the two?

C: At present my work basically develops between space and time. Whereas public pieces are larger in scale and exist within a particular spatial context, work that takes a set support exist in series given to a particular time frame. Whether erupting in space or consuming time, either way the borders between the two are ambiguous. I like to about how if one were to pull away from the two dimensions, what would be left? The same is true of the question regarding the fundamental nature of art. As a result, in my opinion establishing balance here isn't all that necessary.

W: What are the circumstances of you and others in your industry in the midst of the pandemic as concerns your working and every day lives?

C: We are all doing the best we can. Many of my friends have left New York. But as long as the sky doesn't fall we still have to get on with our lives. It was the looting that took place in Soho that left me with the deepest impressions of New York during the pandemic. It's hard to believe that Soho in 2020 could come to resemble a Hollywood disaster movie in that way, the shops lining the streets all boarded up. Around a week later, artists took to the streets, covering the boarded-up shopfronts with a unique array of artwork, the entire shopping district transforming into a massive gallery. Art once again managed to rekindle peoples hope for life.

W: That's truly inspiring. It's things like that allow people to appreciate the power of artists, their sense of social duty. How long will you stay in China this time around? Do you have any plans for your work or to travel at all?

C: I plan to stay the entire year in China, returning to New York for Christmas time. Regardless of what shifts might occur in my working circumstances or daily life, I will still continue to make. I'm currently participating in a residency at the A4 Art Museum's International Residency Center and plan to remain a while to work in Chengdu following that. In the interim, I'll also travel to Beijing, Shenzhen and Shanghai to attend art fairs. As far as travel goes, I guess I make travel my work, haha, allow myself to refresh, after that, I think very soon I'll switch to vacation mode.

W: You were trained as an artist in China, your partner also has a gallery there. I guess therefore that you have a lot of friends in the industry. Have you visited any of these industry people during your return to China this time? If so what were your thoughts?

C: My impression is that although everyone's still working hard they're not necessarily contented. The art world also proved unable to avoid the turmoils that gripped the nation. Having been back a while now I'm better able to understand the situation. My wife is a very magnetic, warm and caring person and is very fond of interaction and throughout the years I've received her constant encouragement and support. Recently I've also made the acquaintance of a number of friends not involved directly in the art industry, all of them very rigorously invested in their respective endeavors. They're all pretty easy to relate to.

W: Just to expand on the subject, what are your thoughts on the state of contemporary painting in China right now?

C: I think it's very hard to give any real verdict. Paintings an awkward one, for reason in part of its complexity, that and its providing only a very narrow way in. The fact that so many painters are able to persevere so many years is in itself worthy of respect. Paintings are a thing whose original one has to see in situ, to talk about in concrete terms, if it's there, it's there, if not, then it's not. What it is one wants to say, wants to do, all of that's in the work, it doesn't give room for untruths.

W: What's your experience of the structures of Chinese contemporary art?

C: Very versatile, economical, efficient; you get to see both sides of the coin.



W: The exhibition at the OōEli complex functioned as a retrospective for the last few years' work, what do you feel it left you with?



C: Today's OōEli in Hangzhou is a real mirage in concrete, something unbelievable one can nevertheless touch. It's taken eight years, but the complex has finally been realized and I earnestly applaud Li Lin's romantic spirit and perseverance. Every time I return to Hangzhou for a solo show it's a little like going home with your school grades, I always get a little anxious. I was thankful for Zhenning's invitation, as this exhibition allowed me to meet up again with a number of former classmates and friends whom I hadn't seen for many years, this made me very happy. The exhibition displayed over a hundred works spanning a period of some seven years or so. The show's site resembled a park composed of paintings, moving through which one might alter a given scene. The space was organized in a very composed, relaxed way, allowing that one be at ease to observe for an extended time. Every day people would come in their droves to see the show and it was very popular with a younger crowd meaning it went almost viral on the net. This gave me a clear sense of how the times have already started quietly to shift.

W: What do you think are the differences between exhibiting in China and in New York?



C: In China everything's very flexible, the civic resources ones afforded are quite plentiful. Everyone pulls together to help one another, there's a real sense of the human touch. Preparations for the present exhibition were basically completed in a period of about two weeks. We were four close friends working together enthusiastically to get the thing done, stimulating one another's creative appetites. This work in itself was all very enjoyable. During the period of the show we arranged three discussion forums along with an improvised live painting and music performance, inviting exceptional practitioners from a variety of diverse fields. Every show is for me like planting a see for the future, a kind of romantic idealism that never changes. Everyone was a bit tired but it was all worth it.

W: So what's next? Do you have any set goals for the next stages of your practice?

C: Go out to see new things, meet with friends, collaborate, try get myself to make some works that are connected with different cities. I also hope to be able to realize some works in urban public space.

W: Have you ever considered making China your practical base? How long are you planning to remain in New York?



C: I like being settled and being able to enjoy my work, I hope this will never change. But reality is a drifting unpredictable place, everything's always very restless. No one can say what will happen in the future, all we can do is focus on the here and now. Up until now my New York studio and our apartment there have just been standing vacant and every month we still have to pay rent so there's quite a lot of pressure. But at the same time there's nothing really we can do about it.

W: Should you return to China, where do you think you'd go? Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou?

C: Shanghai.

1 Daily News

Panel Talk on Daily Life and Breathing

Guests:

Chen Dongfan, Deng Xin, Li Xiduo, Li Zi, Li Tingting, Liu Beining, Lu Tao, Song Xiaomei, Tang Jun, Wan Xiaoli, Wang Jianping, Wang Qiuhua, Inna Xu, Yi Lian, Yu Qiongjie, Zhang Qia, Zhang Zheng, Zhao Yang, Lin

A Tour In Candlelight

Discussion on Painting

Moderators:

Liu Beining, Li Shengzhao

Guests:

Cao Shu, Chen Dongfan, Duan Xin, Liu Yutong, Pan Wangshu, Shang Simin, Shen Han, Wang Jing, Wu Shan, Xiang Yifan, Xie Wen, Zheng Wenxin

Daily

Discussion on Art and Design

Moderators:

Liu Beining, Lu Tao, Yu Qiongjie

Guests:

Chen Dongfan, Chen Feibo, Fang Hongzhang, Ling Jian, Li Tingting, Mei Shuzhi, Wang Yucheng, Wu Yonghong, Zhang Midi, Zhang Xiaoxiao

2 Improvise - Breathing

Uncopyable Live of Sounds and Paintings

Organizer: Zhang Zheng

Painting: Chen Dongfan

Piano: Xu Ruqing

Improvised voice and sound art: Bianco and audience's participation

